

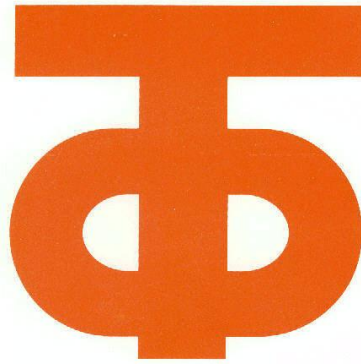
SHORT HISTORY

of the



357th Infantry Regiment

Regimental History
of the
357th Infantry



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Foreword

When you hear one soldier ask another what “outfit” he’s in, you may know that he is not talking about his division, battalion or company, but about the regiment with which he is serving. In the U.S. Army, the regiment is the “Big Family” unit. In other words, if one battalion of a regiment runs into tough going, it may be generally surmised that the other two battalions are in the near vicinity, ready to pitch in, or are already mixing it with the enemy themselves. When a regiment is given a number and name, it retains these, no matter in which war it may be fighting or in which country it may be occupying. Along with this number and name, handed down from war to war, and generation to generation, comes a certain amount of tradition which is absorbed by the recruit and carried on. Tradition and reputation did not come easily, but rather as a result of a series of hard knocks along a road studded with courageous sacrifices, of victories won at the price of blood and death, and of tests passed when the chips were down.

The intent and purpose of this brief history of the 357th Infantry Regiment is, therefore, to present the highlights of its training and action in this and the last World War, in an effort to show why it is regarded by insiders and outsiders as the best infantry regiment in the United States Army.

To the friends who fell, this account is humbly dedicated.



Dedication

This history is dedicated to all the officers and men of the regiment both living and dead who played such a gallant part in its making. To those who gave up their lives or parts of their lives to bring to the misguided people of Europe the philosophy of liberty and freedom goes undying glory.

We have come a long way together over seemingly unsurmountable obstacles and performed almost impossible tasks. This was accomplished by a display of individual courage and group teamwork. Every mission was accomplished, every objective taken, and although our forward path is marked by the graves and blood of our fallen comrades, their efforts were not in vain.

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to every member of the command for the way he performed his duties and I know that whatever the future holds for us, the same aggressive spirit and teamwork which has typified our actions so far in training and combat will lead us to new glory.

John H. Mason
Colonel, 357th Inf.
Commanding.

WORLD WAR 1

ACTIVATION AND TRAINING

The 357th Infantry was organized at Camp Travis, San Antonio, Texas, as a part of the 179th Brigade, which Brigade was the Oklahoma half of the Texas-Oklahoma 90th Division. Activation of the Regiment began on September 5, 1917 when the first contingent of recruits reported for duty. The regular course of training began immediately, so that by December a fairly proficient organization had been established.

With the completion of combat problems and maneuvers in February, the organization was prepared and trained for overseas duty. Before any material progress toward this end had been made, however, the ranks of the Regiment were depleted to provide replacements for the 28th, 35th and 82nd Divisions which were then about to sail for France.

During April new contingents of recruits were received and training was resumed. The war in Europe at this time had not yet reached the decisive stage, and much heavy fighting lay ahead. The report, therefore, that the Division was to go to France soon was not unexpected.

On June 20th the Regiment sailed, and eleven days later arrived at Liverpool, England. The stay in England was no longer than it took to change boats, for on the following day the organization went to Southampton, from which it promptly proceeded to the Continent and assembled in the vicinity of Aigney-le-Duc, France.

It will be recalled that most of the men were recruits with very limited training. Hence it was necessary to spend eight hours a day on such basic subjects as drill, bayonet exercises, minor tactics and maneuvers.

ST MIHIEL OPERATION

Following the completion of the training period when the Regiment was moving to its new area in the vicinity of Foug, orders were received to relieve elements of the 1st Division in the Saizerais sector of the St. Mihiel salient. On August 24th, the relief of the 16th Infantry was completed, the 3rd Battalion being the first unit in the division to enter the front line, taking its position on the night of August 21-22 after a three-day march. At this time, the troops received their baptism of fire, though no serious casualties were suffered.

The usual trench duties and patrolling were immediately taken up. The first patrol to leave the Division lines came from the 3rd Battalion. The Regiment also was the first in the Division to take a prisoner, a German deserter.

Persistent rumors long forecasted the coming offensive in this sector. Its imminence was now assured by the squeezing of additional units in the front line. The opposing forces in this sector, elements of the 332nd Regiment of the 77th Reserve Division, were experienced troops who had been in the sector for a long time and had it effectively organized in depth for defense. The trench system was some 7 kilometers in depth, connected with parts of the Hindenburg Line and protected by concrete dugouts and pillboxes. In front of this system were two or three kilometers of wire entanglements which had to be crossed.

After a four hour artillery preparation, the 357th jumped off in the attack at 0500 on the 12th of September. Despite the presence of two and a half kilometers of solid wire entanglements and trenches

filled with various obstacles the advance was steady and the battalions reached their objectives in record time. Heavy resistance was encountered, particularly from enemy machine guns, and it was from these weapons that the heaviest losses were suffered. Nearly 200 machine guns were taken or destroyed as the assaulting 357th infantrymen brought the enemy defenders under deadly accurate rifle fire and overran them. During the night, the enemy launched a series of savage counterattacks, but despite the ensuing hand to hand fighting, not a foot of a ground was yielded by the sturdy Americans.

By the 16th the 357th had battered its way through everything the enemy had to offer. From this date to the 10th October, when the Division was relieved by the 7th Division, the Regiment was engaged in stabilizing the Puvencelle area of defense. Because of failure to properly dig in, the outposts suffered heavy casualties from enemy shelling during this period. On several occasions, gas was also used. Colonel Edward T. Hartmann, Regimental Commander, was slightly gassed but was able to remain in command. On 27th September, a particularly heavy gas concentration claimed many casualties in the Regiment.

After being relieved on the 10th the Regiment assembled in the area around Pagny, and was not committed to further action until the 19th when the battalions marched to Septsarges and took up a position in support of the 3rd and 5th Divisions.

MEUSE-ARGONNE OPERATIONS

On 21st October, relief of the 5th Division was ordered, the 357th relieving the 6th Infantry in the vicinity of the Farm de Madeline. The Division was ordered to better its position in preparation for further advances. In compliance with these orders, the Regiment moved into the attack on the 23rd and succeeded in capturing its objectives, the towns of Bourrut and Bentheville, after some very bitter skirmishing. Machine guns seemed to be located everywhere in the towns, and artillery fire was particularly heavy, causing many casualties.

On the 24th the attack was resumed, and again heavy machine gun and artillery fire were encountered. The enemy was most reluctant about giving any ground without a high cost to the attacking American battalions. Initial efforts proved so costly and met with such determined resistance that the order was given to organize a line farther south and hold temporarily. This was done and held until relief by the 180th Brigade.

On the 25th and 26th of October the enemy attempted its last counterattacks, preceding each of them with heavy artillery barrages. The attack on the 25th was repulsed by rifle and machine gun fire, and a lot of nerve and stout-heartedness on the part of the soldiers.

Following these attacks, the Division was again ordered to improve its position. The 179th brigade, and especially the 357th, was almost exhausted from the constant bloody fighting and the resultant casualties. On the 30th, the 180th Brigade was ordered to relieve the 179th. Two days of attack by the 180th Brigade resulted in such heavy losses to that unit that the 179th was again ordered to the front to relieve it and resume the mission of exploitation. This relief was completed during the night of 2-3 Nov., and the attack was begun the following morning. None of the anticipated resistance however, was met, the Germans having made their getaway the night before. The Regiment pressed forward immediately and closed up to the Meuse River at Sassey and Montigny.

The orders of the Corps between 4th and 7th November stressed the reconnaissance of the river crossings as well as pushing patrols across the stream to keep contact with the enemy. During this time enemy artillery fire daily became heavier and enemy planes bombed the area nightly, making the situation trying on the patience of the men who were anxious to pursue the enemy and conclude the war.

The first crossing of the Meuse by the Division was made by a small patrol from the 2nd Battalion of the 357th. Later, the 1st Battalion, in attempting to put a ladder across the gap in the bridge at Sassey,

had to abandon the effort because of machine gun fire, and when the 3rd Battalion attempted to bring lumber to the river, they were stopped by the fire of machine guns and 77's.

On 9 November, information was obtained that the enemy was withdrawing and orders were received to have the Infantry cross the river at once. The 357th served as the advance guard for the 90th Division, the 1st Battalion crossing the bridge at 1700. The 3rd and 2nd Battalions followed in that order.

To cover their retreat, the Germans had left two companies, supported by machine guns, from each regiment. Accordingly the fighting that ensued the day before the Armistice was costly to the attacking forces. The immediate objective of the Regiment was the town of Baalon, held by the enemy in force. Initial success had been attained and the 3rd and 2nd Battalions were converging on the town when orders were received to hold the high ground overlooking Baalon.

On the night of the 10th, the Germans placed a heavy gas concentration on the town of Mouzay, despite civilian residents. Great efforts were made to assist the civilians, who suffered severely from the gas.

The 3rd Battalion was relieved from its duties by a battalion from the 360th Infantry and proceeded to Chateau Charmois for a rest. The 2nd remained in position and was still fighting when it was learned, at 0900, that the armistice had been signed and was to go into effect of 1100. The Regiment was immediately ordered to enter Baalon and clean up the town before that time. Patrols of the 2nd Battalion proceeded with this mission and, encountering little resistance, reported its capture at 1045. All fire promptly ceased at 1100.

The news of the armistice was received without particular excitement on the part of the troops, who promptly began improving and organizing the positions which they then held. The signing of the armistice ended 75 days, except 7 for the changing of sectors that the Regiment was under fire. With the exception of 48 hours, the Regiment was in the front line this entire time. It advanced farther and was in more engagements than any other Regiment in the Division. It had never failed to attain its objective or fulfill its mission.

THE PERIOD OF OCCUPATION

Notwithstanding the signing of the armistice, the Regiment remained prepared for any eventualities. However, some effort was made for the comfortable billeting of as many men as possible. The 1st and 3rd Battalions billeted at Mouzay and the 2nd in Baalon. Caring for returning prisoners of war and refugees formed most of the work during this time.

The 90th Division, being designated as one of the nine divisions of the army of occupation, started its march into Germany on the 23rd day of November. While the march was conducted under the usual precautionary measures, with advance guards protecting the route, the strictest discipline was enforced and considerable emphasis was placed on the appearance of the unit. The route of march went through parts of reclaimed France, Luxembourg, and crossed into Germany at Grevenmacher. During the period of occupancy the Division engaged in training, interior guard, and the protection of key points in the transportation system.

The 90th was the fifth division of the Army of Occupation to be withdrawn from Germany. Between 17th May and 22nd May, trains took the 90th Division from Germany to St. Nazaire, the port of embarkation, at which time the Division ceased to exist as an organization. Most of the men were finally returned to camps in the southwest before returning home.

WORLD WAR II

ACTIVATION AND TRAINING IN THE U.S.

The 357th Infantry was reactivated at Camp Barkeley, Texas on March 25, 1942, as part of the new triangular version of the 90th Infantry Division, VIII Corps, 3rd Army. The officer cadre was obtained from the 6th Infantry Division at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, and the 33rd Infantry Division at Camp Force, Tennessee. The enlisted cadre came entirely from the 6th Division. In contrast with other units which had been activated previously, the 357th Infantry was filled in almost entirely with recruits fresh from the reception centers. It was felt that men who were to live together for an indefinite length of time and who were to eventually fight together could be trained more efficiently if they were all started from “scratch” together.

The army had scrapped the idea of mobilizing all the men from one locality into a composite unit. Therefore, the blond haired, blue-eyed boys who came in from the middlewest and northwest gave argument to the idea that the new 90th was a 100 per cent Texas and Oklahoma Division. The preponderance of initial recruits, however, came from the reception centers at Camp Walters, Texas, Fort Sam Houston, Texas, and Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

The Regiment’s first commander was Colonel Edwin D. Patrick. His dynamic personality, tactical knowledge, and conscientious effort had a great deal to do with the high standard of proficiency gained by the Regiment during its initial training. Colonel Patrick has never been forgotten by the original men who knew him.¹

By the end of April, the Regiment had a strength of 158 officers and 3373 enlisted men, and basic training had gotten well under way. The eager ears of the new soldiers were now turned toward the rumor factory which was putting out the hot dope that the Division would sail within four months. To most, this was World War I all over again and not many gave thought to the fact that there were no friendly shores to land on nor were there any well-defined battle lines to slide into as there were in the last war. The soldiers in this war had to have it from the word “go” and be able to hit the ground fighting. That’s why a long period of intensive training was to follow before any ideas about ships and sailing were to be given any thought.

During the period August 8th to 12th, 1942, a cadre consisting of 231 enlisted men and 25 officers was sent to Camp Adair, Oregon, to form the 104th Infantry Division.

Basic training was now over and the Regiment spent most of its time in the field. Stress was always placed on physical conditioning, and road marches with full field equipment up to 15 miles were taken in their stride by the men who were just completing their first six months in the army. Most of the men were now wearing their first army decorations – marksman, sharpshooter, and expert rifleman medals, won on the range with the new M-1 rifle. The fact that the American soldier is traditionally a good shot was substantiated. Men who had been privates just a few short weeks ago are now sporting brand new corporal’s and sergeant’s stripes. Things were moving along.

On 15 September, the Regiment was motorized in conformance with the Army order to convert a limited number of infantry divisions into motorized divisions. The initial glee of those who thought

¹Major Gen. Patrick was killed on March 16, 1945 in the Phillipines. He was commander of the 6th Infantry Division and at the time of his death was up with his troops when struck down by a Jap machine gun.

their walking days were over was short lived, however, for the foot work continued. First and last, the Regiment was still a "paddle foot" outfit.

Lt. Col. John W. Sheehy assumed command of the Regiment on 20 November to replace Colonel Patrick who was assigned to a higher post. Lt. Col. Sheehy's long period of command had a profound effect upon the spirit and fighting qualities which the Regiment was to display later in combat. His knowledge of human nature and the problems of the common soldier won for him the respect and admiration of every man in the Regiment.

From 13th to 19th December, 1942, the Regiment took part in a one-week maneuver at Camp Bowie, Texas, completing battalion firing tests which comprised the firing of live artillery over the heads of the men for the first time, and the use of live small arms ammunition in attacks on simulated enemy positions. The Regiment was addressed by Lt. General Dan I. Sultan¹², then Major General in command of the VIII Corps, who stressed the importance of artillery in command, and assured the men that artillery support would not be lacking when the real thing came. This was later proved to be absolutely correct.

During the months of the December and January, the Regiment completed the Regimental Combat Team and Divisional Unit Training phases in the wooded hills surrounding Camp Barkeley. These problems were conducted under simulated combat conditions. The weather was extremely cold at times, but fires or other comforts which a soldier in combat is denied were taboo here also. The Regiment was now living outdoors more than it was indoors. The men were in fine physical condition, each having gained an average of 10 pounds, and were beginning to feel that they knew something about soldiering.

Concurrent with the above training, the Regiment conducted basic training for newly received filler replacements, most of whom came from the Atlantic seaboard states.

The men now knew their jobs, had learned to work as a team, and consequently were ready for some big scale maneuvers. On 26 January 1943, the Regiment moved with the Division 600 miles by truck to the vicinity of Leesville, Louisiana. During the two months the Division was engaged in Third Army maneuvers against the 77th Infantry Division. The piney woods in East Texas, and densely wooded swamps along the Sabine River and in western Louisiana made an excellent battle ground and gave them an inkling of what was to be required of them. The Regiment made an excellent record during this maneuver.

The 2nd of April found the Regiment back at its permanent station at Camp Barkeley. Training was continued with stress being placed on infiltration courses, small unit firing problems, range firing, and physical conditioning. The men were able to knock off 25 miles in less than 8 hours, carrying full field equipment. At this time, the deserving men were granted 15 day furloughs.

As the month of August drew to a close, most of the men thought the time had come for them to prove themselves. They did know, however, that Uncle Sam was not sparing any expense or being rushed when it came to readying for combat one of these crack units, which he was later to depend on to win the war by whipping a tough enemy in the field. Consequently, the 1st of September found the Regiment speeding west on seven full trains to the California-Arizona maneuver area.

During the five month interim between the Louisiana and desert maneuvers, the Regiment, as part of the Division, was de-motorized and reverted back to the status of a regular infantry division. The nature of the fighting overseas had shown that motorized divisions would not be required initially and could not be employed as effectively as could regular infantry.

By 11 September 1943, the Regiment was in place at its regular station, Camp Granite, California. This was a tent camp located some 40 miles east of Desert Center. Here rigorous training was

2 Lt. Gen. Sultan at this writing is in command of all American forces in the Burma-India Theater. •

conducted in the principles and privations of desert warfare. Although the fighting in North Africa had ended by this time, the training received in the desert was valuable from the standpoint of physical conditioning, moving and maintaining direction at night, operating efficiently with limited water and food supplies, and logistical experience.

After three weeks of Regimental Combat Team problems conducted in the vicinity of Salome, Arizona, from 21st October to 10th November, the Regiment, as part of the Division, engaged in 20 days of corps maneuvers in California against the 93rd Infantry Division. This is a division composed of colored soldiers which has since distinguished itself in action at Bougainville and during other major engagements in the Pacific. The skillful opposition offered by this unit during the maneuvers was most valuable to the Regiment in ironing out the final kinks and readying it for the tests ahead.

At the completion of the desert training period, the Assistant Division Commander, Brigadier General Samuel T. Williams informed the troops that this was their last maneuver. Although everyone knew what this meant, they did not mind saying goodbye to the desert with its sand, sun, chilly nights, and loneliness.

It was now time for the rumor factory to produce the location of the next station for the Division. Grade "B" output had it that the next trip would be back to Texas to Camp Barkeley, but Grade "A", with judgment and common sense added, brought out the name of Fort Dix, New Jersey. It was now time for staging. The training had been long, hard, and thorough. The men were now as ready as they could ever be for battle. They had been trained in every phase of army life and combat that the Army had to offer.

After a four day train ride from 26th to 31st December clear across the country, the Regiment detrained at Fort Dix. For the first time in nearly two years of training the men lived in regular barracks with steam heat and running water. Time was now devoted to weeding out the physically unfit men, securing serviceable equipment, range firing, and most important, the granting of final furloughs. Show-down inspections of clothing and equipment were the order the day. Replacements were received and by the 15th of March the Regiment was up to battle strength. On this day, the Regiment began moving by rail to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey. Here final issues of clothing and equipment were made and final physical examinations conducted. Only a very few failed to pass.

On the 22nd of March the Regiment moved to the New York port of embarkation and boarded "HMS Dominion Monarch", a 27,000 ton British ex-luxury liner which had been converted into a troop transport and turned over to the United States Army by the British government.

EMBARKATION AND TRAINING OVERSEAS

At 0545 of the 23rd of March, 1944, the Regiment sailed. To most, this was the occasion for the first goodbye to their homeland. As the convoy moved farther out, it grew until finally there were over forty ships of all classes, troop ships, tankers, aircraft carriers, destroyers, and cruisers. The 13 day voyage was without particular incident from a seaman's point of view, but many of the landlubbers spent considerable time feeding the fish, and expected to be sent to the bottom most every day by U-boats.

The Dominion Monarch docked at Mersey Docks, Liverpool, England, on the 4 April 1944. After de-barking at 1630, the troops loaded immediately on trains and moved to Kinlet Park (near Kidderminster, England). All elements of the Regiment were quartered here except the 1st Battalion which was quartered at Camp Gatacre nearby.

Intensive training was begun immediately with stress being placed on speed marches and on forced marches with heavy loads of weapons and ammunition. Covering 5 miles on foot in less than an hour was the way it went. This can and will be appreciated only by those readers who have walked up the steep English hills and who realize that the average rate of march for foot troops is only 2 ½ miles per hour.

During the stay in Kinlet Park, the men were granted short passes to the nearby towns. The soldiers, however, were not here for fun, but for the most serious business they had ever undertaken – and they knew it. Besides, when the evening came, a few hours rest was what was wanted most.

Only a few short months ago the speculators had said that the 90th Division would not see action until the initial landing units had proceeded far inland on the French mainland. They were not so sure now. Although guessing openly when D-Day would be was discouraged by authorities, each man, in his own mind, was doing quite a bit of thinking and wondering about it. The chances of guessing correctly were aided materially on the 13th of May when the Regiment moved 64 miles nearer the English Channel to Camp Race Course, Chepstow, Monmouthshire, Wales. It was here that the men had their first experience with enemy planes and bombs. Although the attack was not directed against the Regimental Camp but at a coastal city several miles away, the exploding bombs sounded as though they were falling in the next field. This occurred during the days before the advent of the flying bomb when the Germans still had a few planes left with which to harass Britain.

During the period from 14th May to 3rd June, the Regiment carried out usual physical conditioning training while making final preparations for the invasion of France. On 15th of May, Colonel Phillip Ginder assumed command of the Regiment to replace Colonel Sheehy who was attached to 90th Division Headquarters.

CAMPAIGN OF NORMANDY

By the 4th of June, final preparations had been made. Most of the men had over two years of hard training under their belts, and were in the best physical condition that they had ever been in their lives. Everything that was humanly possible in the way of preparations had been done. It was all over but the fighting.

On this day, the battalions entrained, traveled 30 miles to Cardiff, Wales, and embarked on two ships, the “S. S. Explorer” and the “S. S. Bienville”. At 0730 of the 5th, the ships sailed down the River Severn and dropped anchor in the Bristol Channel near Swansea, where the convoy assembled. By 0200 of the 6th, the convoy was underway toward France, following a route close to the coast of England. At this very moment, other men, many thousands of them, were “sweating out”, the few remaining hours before they were to make the greatest assault landing in history.

During this short voyage across the English Channel the actions and conversations of the soldiers who were about to tackle the biggest job of their lives is deemed worthy of mention. The apparent necessity for absolute secrecy for security reasons prevented the disclosure to these men of what their first job was to be. They knew, however, that the future held no picnic and that in a very short time they would be engaged in this bloody business called combat. Most were not worried too much. Things like seeing that equipment was ready and testing life jackets for leaks were the important ones now. Some who were satisfied that everything was in readiness were reading, others just taking it easy. Here and there a few final hands of cards were being dealt out with the brand new French invasion money for stakes. Some of the men were already talking about what they were going to do when they got back home. These were good soldiers, as they should be, for they were some of the best Uncle Sam had.

The submarine alerts which were sounded several times during the day did not bring much of a stir from anyone except possibly the ship’s Captain. As dawn of the 8th came and the world became real again, the sight which presented itself was indescribable. Many more vivid descriptions of D-Day and the days following have been written in other texts, but in a word it may be described as a show which is not presented very often. The price of a show of this type is too high. Ships and planes were everywhere. The big battle wagons were firing round after round into the coast, and the world’s finest air force was operating at full capacity. So were some of the Luftwaffe. Burning ships could be seen in the distance and a flaming plane hitting the water was not an uncommon sight.

At 0930 of the 8th, the convoy dropped anchor off Utah beach on the Cotentin Peninsula. Debarkation into big LCI’s began at 1200 and by 1245 the first elements of the Regiment, led by Colonel Ginder, were wading ashore. At this time, the Regimental Commander was notified that the prearranged transit area had not yet been secured by the 4th Division – which had made the initial D-Day assault landing – and that the Regiment would move instead into an area in the vicinity of Loutres.

The wearing of life jackets and belts undoubtedly saved many lives during the landing, as in some places the men, heavily laden with supplies and ammunition, had to go off the boats into water five and six feet deep. The most consoling thought at this time was the fact that the men working on the beach were Americans instead of Germans. The beach was still under fire and occasionally a barrage of 88’s would come in. No time was lost here, however, for the men were assembled rapidly and the march inland began. The Regiment closed in its assembly area at 1900.

On the 9th, orders were received to pass through elements of the 82nd Airborne Division near Amfreville by daylight of the 10th and seize and secure crossings of the Douve River west of St. Columbe. As this movement was being executed, the Regiment received its first casualties in land action against the enemy from 88mm fire. The saying that first impressions are the greatest held true in

this case, as this wicked weapon, employed so effectively by the enemy throughout the Normandy campaign, soon was familiar to everyone, and its name became almost a byword.

When daylight came, the 2nd and 3rd Battalions, from left to right, jumped off and met surprisingly little resistance. Signs of recent vicious combat between the Airborne men and the enemy were everywhere, and everyone felt in his bones it was just a matter of time until the show would start for the 357th. As the advance began, an officer in "L" Company was credited as being the first man in the Regiment to kill a German. They met face to face coming around the corner of a building.

At noon the enemy defense line was reached. Darkness found the Regiment still attacking in the face of withering enemy mortar and machine gun fire. It seemed that every German had an automatic weapon, and mortar shells seemed to follow the men right into their holes and ditches. Casualties were heavy and gains could be measured in yards.

World war II had begun in earnest for the new 357th Infantry. The day had been the longest the men had ever spent. The initial shock of seeing old friends struck down had been great and it was evident that much fierce fighting lay ahead. The hedgerow country of Normandy was nature's gift to the defenders. The countryside was divided into tiny fields, each bounded by a drainage ditch covered over with a high dense hedge. This offered an almost perfect defense system for the camouflage-wise Germans. It was all but impossible to see them and their cleverly constructed and camouflaged hedgerow positions. Snipers, dressed in camouflage suits, were most troublesome in the wooded areas and were responsible for many casualties behind the lines. It was days before many of the front line riflemen even saw a live German to shoot at.

The task was clear. The beachhead had to be expanded before any sizable forces could be landed and the battle of maneuver began. There was essentially one way that this could be done and that was by frontal assault by the infantry against prepared enemy positions. The enemy knew it and so did the men of the Regiment. Consequently, the days that followed brought one of the worst baptisms of fire ever undergone by an American infantry unit. To attack as long as there was daylight was the only order. To advance from one hedgerow to another, the distance of perhaps 100 to 200 yards, was a day's job and a costly one. The Germans were putting up fanatical resistance. Expenditure of ammunition on both sides was tremendous. Every field was literally pocked with mortar and artillery shell holes, 88mm shells whined down every road.

By the end of the 13th, the Regiment in 4 days of combat had suffered a total of 703 casualties, including 133 dead. It was during this time that the value of a steady stream of good reinforcements was realized. Attacks were being launched toward Gourbesville against unrelenting enemy resistance. On the 13th, Colonel Sheehy re-assumed command of the Regiment.

On the 15th, the 3rd Battalion captured Gourbesville after overcoming fierce enemy resistance. During this operation, the Regiment lost its beloved commander who had so recently taken command of the unit which he had helped mold during training. Colonel Sheehy was killed when his vehicle was ambushed as he was proceeding to front line positions. On the following day, Colonel George B. Barth, former chief of staff of the 9th Infantry Division during action in Africa, assumed command of the Regiment.

At this time, the 9th Division had driven across the Cotentin Peninsula to the coast and the drive toward Cherbourg had begun. To prevent the Germans from leaving or entering the peninsula was the mission assignment to the Regiment on the 18th. Following a 15 mile motor movement, the battalions moved into position during the 18th and 19th. During this operation, 66 prisoners, including 5 officers, were taken as they were attempting to infiltrate to the south through the 3rd Battalion lines.

The enemy immediately exerted pressure from the south in an attempt to break through to the entrapped forces in the peninsula. Simultaneously, other large groups were attempting to break out from the north and escape the trap. Sharp encounters resulted from these enemy efforts which were often

supported by armor, as well as heavy artillery and mortar fire. On the 21st, the 1st Battalion engaged a force of 160 Germans attempting to break out to the south, and succeeded in accounting for the entire force, capturing 125 prisoners.

The Regiment remained in this position, holding firm against all enemy attacks and patrolling aggressively to the south, until the 29th. By this time, the entire Cotentin Peninsula had been cleared and elements of the 79th Division, which had taken part in the siege of Cherbourg, moved to the south and relieved the Regiment from its positions. On the 30th, the Regiment closed into an assembly area near Houteville for a day of rest, the first since landing.

On the 3rd of July, the 90th Division attacked to the southwest with the 357th in Division reserve. Twelve additional battalions of field artillery were supporting the attacking elements, and the enemy was forced to give ground. On the 5th, the 357th was committed and began its advance on Beau Coudray, a small town whose capture was to develop into one of the toughest engagements of the entire war. It was located forward of strategic high ground which dominated the entire area and served as an excellent observation post for the crack German paratroop defenders. The ensuing six days saw the type of slugfest which is so costly to both sides. The Germans had mined and registered in with mortar and artillery fire all the approaches to the town. Any movement brought down pulverizing barrages, and any coordinated assault was invariably followed by savage enemy counter-thrusts. Often the assaulting troops found themselves face to face with counterattacking enemy armor and infantry before they had had time to consolidate their gains and prepare any type of defense. During the 6th and 7th when the enemy launched a series of particularly heavy counterattacks which almost succeeded in carrying through to the rear areas, the mortar platoon of Company "M" alone fired over 6000 rounds of ammunition. Cooks, drivers, anti-tank and service personnel were organized into a provisional company and put into the line to plug up gaps between the seriously depleted battalions. By dark of the 7th, the combined remnants of companies "C" and "K" had repulsed a total of 14 counterattacks supported by tanks during the day. Hand to hand fighting was raging in the "I" and "L" Company areas. These companies were surrounded and cut off from the rear and were being attacked from all sides. Lack of ammunition finally forced the surrender of the major part of these units.

On the 11th, the 2nd Battalion launched a flanking attack to the southeast, breached the enemy defenses and drove ahead 500 yards. Pressure applied on three sides forced the enemy to withdraw completely during the night of the 11th. This engagement had so weakened the enemy that a withdrawal from ground which he could not afford to lose was necessitated. By the same measure, this was the most costly engagement of the war for the 357th. During the six bloody days a total of 851 casualties, including 166 dead, were sustained by the Regiment.

The Division advance to the south continued against scattered resistance, and by the 14th, the Regiment had reached the Seves River. Here the advance was held up temporarily by order. Further offensive action was to be resumed on order from Corps, at which time the entire VIII Corps was to jump off as part of a general offensive. The invasion of the continent was now in its 39th day and the Germans still had strong forces and effective defenses surrounding the entire perimeter of the Allied positions. A coordinated effort would be required to break out. Attacks ordered by Corps were repeatedly postponed as a result of continuing inclement weather. As it later developed, fair weather was most essential from the standpoint of the air activity which was to precede and support the attack.

In the meantime, the Regiment remained in its position north of the Seves River near Nay. Aggressive patrolling and the volume of enemy artillery and mortar fire received indicated that the enemy maintained strong forces and formidable defenses on the southern bank of the river. Savage artillery and mortar duels accounted for casualties on both sides.

CAMPAIGN OF NORTHERN FRANCE



On the 25th, the Regiment, relieved from its defensive position by the 358th, moved to the east and made preparations to attack through elements of the 329th Infantry, 83rd Division, the following morning. On this day, the largest bombing mission ever made in support of ground operations was carried out. Three thousand planes blasted a two mile path through the German defenses to the west in preparation for the general offensive which was to crack the German line wide open.

During the first day of the attack, the 26th, stiff opposition was met in the Regimental sector. When the attack was resumed on the following morning, however, the enemy had withdrawn, leaving all roads to the south mined. Picking their way through the mined areas, the battalions moved forward rapidly against no opposition. By nightfall, an advance of nearly 10 miles had been made. The Germans, realizing what was happening to their line to the west, were faced with a choice of withdrawing or being encircled. This was the first time in over 50 days of combat that the men of the

Regiment had advanced such a distance into virgin enemy territory without having to fight for every foot of ground.

On the following day, the advance continued and it was learned that Coutances 10 miles to the south, was in Allied hands and that only isolated enemy groups would be encountered. The 1st, 2nd and 3rd Armored Divisions were operating far to the south, slicing their way forward. The Regiment was now out of contact with the enemy. The war of pursuit was on.

The Regiment had figured predominantly in the slugfest in Normandy and was now to play an outstanding part in the pursuit and final annihilation of vaunted German Seventh Army. After a two day rest and training period, the Regiment boarded trucks and moved 60 miles south through Coutances and Avranches, thence southeast to the vicinity of St Hilaire du Harcouet. The mission was to provide security for this area in general, and block all important road nets. Armored spearheads had just sliced through the area, and many bypassed enemy troops were still at large. Large numbers of these were taken prisoner while attempting to infiltrate to the south and many more were captured as a result of their ignorance of the rapid advances made by the Americans. Several panzer divisions were known to be in the pocket being formed to the northeast and an attempt by these forces to break out to the south was not unexpected.

On 5th Aug., the 90th Division was ordered to attack to the south with the mission of seizing and securing a crossing of the Mayenne River at Mayenne. To accomplish this mission, a potent, mobile force was required that could slash through to Mayenne in record time. And so the famous "Weaver Task Force" was organized, consisting of the 357th (Motorized), 712th Tank Battalion, 90th Reconnaissance Troop, 343rd Field Artillery Battalion, Company "A" 315th Engineer Battalion, Company "A" 315th Medical Battalion, one company of the 607th Tank Destroyer Battalion, and one battery of the 537th Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion. Under the able leadership of Brigadier Gen. William G. Weaver, Assistant Division Commander, this force moved to Mayenne and succeeded in seizing and securing the town, as well as a bridge which was stormed and taken intact before the surprised Germans could set off the charges they had placed on the bridge. Some stiff resistance was encountered but was quickly beaten down as the 1st Battalion surged into the town. Meanwhile, the 3rd and 2nd Battalions crossed the river to the south of town, using pneumatic boats. That this well planned, swift thrust had achieved complete surprise was evidenced by the number of enemy staff and troop laden vehicles which were destroyed as they unsuspectingly drove into Mayenne during the night.

Immediately following this action the 357th was selected to spearhead the Division attack toward Le Mans. This attack was to form the southern arc of the giant pincers which was to close around the German Seventh Army. The city of Le Mans was to form the pivot point for American forces which were to swing north and close the trap. Speed, therefore, was of paramount importance. Task Force Weaver was now split into two columns, one commanded by General Weaver and the other by Colonel Barth, Regimental Commander. These columns began their advance on Le Mans on the 6th, using different routes so as to converge on the city from different directions. The advance of these forces through defended territory was almost phenomenal in that it was one of the fastest advances in military history. The manner in which opposition was battered down might be offered as an example of perfected coordination of all forces and weapons in reducing resistance with a minimum loss of time and personnel. Enemy obstacles which could not be neutralized by artillery were pounded from the air by P-47's which were available on call at all times. The 140 miles from Mayenne to Le Mans were covered in less than three days, and scores of the enemy vehicles and guns were destroyed and more than 300 prisoners captured.

It was now time to swing north and snap the trap shut around a huge German force facing the British and American units to the north and northeast. On the 11th, the 90th Division followed by the 2nd French Armored Division, began its movement to the north. During the ensuing days, the advance

was steady against scattered resistance. The courage and fighting ability of the French soldiers using American equipment was superb. Burned out Sherman and enemy tanks found facing each other at close range gave mute evidence of the manner in which the French had gone in at close quarters with the enemy and destroyed him.

Making an already bad situation worse, air power was literally paralyzing the enemy. He did not enjoy the privilege of being able to deploy his forces in such a manner as to halt the Allied onslaught which was cutting his supply lines and routes of retreat. Moreover, the state of his communications did not allow him the knowledge of where to deploy these forces.

By the 19th, the Regiment had reached a point near Exmes, west of Chambois, and taken up positions to conform with the mission of stopping the entrapped the Germans from breaking out. In fulfilling this mission, the battalions met with nothing but success. The enemy made repeated fanatical surges against the line in desperate attempts to escape, but his fate was already sealed. The end was the same – dead Germans and burning vehicles lined the roads and covered the fields. Artillery fire was particularly effective during this operation throwing precaution to the winds and motivated only by an hysterical desire to escape from the pocket of death, the Germans lined up their tanks and vehicles bumper to bumper on the roads, often 2 abreast. They were rapidly reduced to junk by prepared artillery concentrations.

By the 21st, the last sparks of resistance by the entrapped Germans were burning out. The Regiment, having completed its job here, was relieved by elements of the 11th British Armored Division. What had once been the proud German Seventh Army of over 150,000 men was now undergoing the last stages of a process of complete annihilation. During this 10-day operation, the 357th captured over 1200 prisoners, killed countless others, and destroyed scores of vehicles. During that period, the Regiment suffered a total of only 30 casualties, including 4 dead. Besides the American and French forces, elements of a Polish Armored Brigade, as well as the British 11th Armored Division, were operating in the immediate vicinity and had been contacted by the Regiment. This was truly an Allied operation. It was in this manner the huge and powerful Wehrmacht was whittled down by the Allies and finally defeated.

The German line west of the Seine River had completely collapsed. America armored columns were lunging eastward at unprecedented speed and Allied air power was hourly raking the wildly fleeing enemy. To some, imminent victory in the west seemed certain. It was now a race against time.

In view of this situation, the Corps now had the mission of proceeding to Fontainebleau, 167 miles to the east, and crossing and securing the Seine River at that point.

Following the completion of this mission on the 26th without encountering opposition, the XX Corps was assigned the famous city of Rheims as the next objective. The 7th Armored Division was to spearhead, with the 90th and 5th Infantry Divisions clearing the left and right flanks respectively. The 357th again was selected to spearhead the Division, and moved out on the 28th. This drive carried through territory which had been the scene of such bloody and costly battles during World War I. This time, however, the Germans did not see fit or, more likely, were not able to defend the beautiful defensive terrain.

On the 29th, the Regiment crossed of the Marne River at Chateau Thierry. Although the bridge across the stream at this point had been placed under artillery fire by the retreating Germans, French Forces of the Interior had remained at their posts around the bridge and had prevented the enemy from destroying it.

After completing its initial mission of seizing and securing crossings of two Rivers – the La Vesle at Fismes and Jonchery and the Aisne at Pontavert, the Regiment moved through Rheims on the 1st of September, covering the last 23 miles on foot.

The gasoline shortage had now become acute and a delay in the advance was necessitated, a delay which many say was responsible for the lengthening of the war by several months. The supply lines had been stretched over hundreds of miles in the past few days.

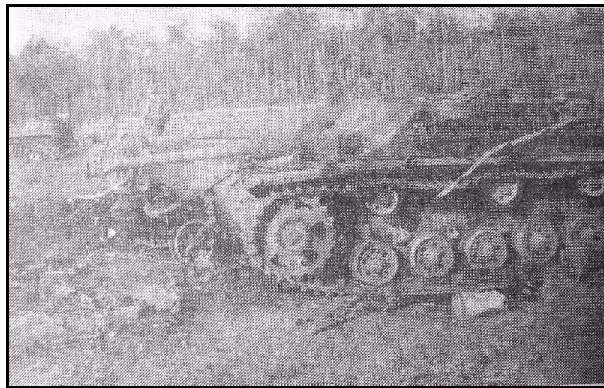
The Regiment bivouacked four miles east of Rheims to await further orders and a supply of gasoline. The bivouac area showed the scars of the last war – shell holes 26 years old were still discernible.

On the 5th of September, the advance to the northeast was resumed, passing through Verdun and the southwestern section of the Argonne forest, where the 2nd Battalion rounded up 50 Germans. The mission of the Corps was to advance as far east as possible. The city of Frankfurt was set as the objective. The Division was following the 7th Armored Division on the left flank.

The first opposition was met in the towns of Avril and Briey, east of Verdun. After two days of stiff fighting, these towns were overrun and over 400 prisoners taken. Movement to the east was then continued against scattered resistance and by the 11th, 2nd Battalion patrols indicated that the area between the Regiment and the Moselle River was clear of the enemy. On the 12th, the 3rd Battalion occupied the city of Uckange, encountering heavy enemy artillery fire coming from the east bank of the Moselle. Plans were now made for an assault crossing of the river but before the operation was effected, the Regiment was ordered to withdraw to the south and relieve elements of the 7th Armored and 5th Infantry Divisions near Homecourt. These forces had encountered unusually stiff opposition from concrete fortifications. The Regiment now had the mission of attacking these fortified positions as part of the general drive for Metz which was developing at this time.



Common sight at Chambois – a disabled tank



More abandoned and disabled equipment at Chambois

CAMPAIGN OF THE RHINELAND (Part I.)



The war of pursuit was at an end. The Germans had reached the fringe of their prepared positions and were now ready to extract a heavier price for advances. Enemy defenses in this area consisted of a concrete wall 20 by 30 feet forming the first fortification line. In front of this wall a strong outpost was maintained, manned by young, fanatical officer candidate school members. Initial attacks by the Regiment against this strong line resulted in heavy casualties and made it plain that a major effort would be required to break through. Weighing the cost of such an operation against the immediate strategic advantage that would be gained, brought the decision by Division that the Regiment would remain in its present general position and serve as a containing force.

The next 16 days saw savage artillery and mortar duels and aggressive patrolling by both sides, but no major offensive action. In addition to the almost constant artillery and mortar fire which the men were subjected to, the rainy, cool weather was a factor to be reckoned with, causing much discomfort and privation for the men who had to sit for days in rain-drenched foxholes.

By the 1st of October, plans were being made for an attack against the town of Maiziere-Les-Metz to the southeast. Capture of this strategic little town would allow a flanking of the enemy positions and place the Regiment in an excellent position to force the withdrawal from the fortified line. After the clearing and occupation of the large slag pile just northwest of the town by elements of the 1st and 2nd Battalions on the 3rd, the 2nd Battalion launched its attack against Maiziere-Les-Metz on the 7th. Almost half of the town was overrun before resistance stiffened and the fighting developed into a house to house affair. The Germans, fully realizing the strategic importance of this town, had orders to defend each house to the last man and this, precisely, is what they did during the next 22 days. Mines and booby traps were in every house, and artillery and mortar fire literally poured down day and night. Every weapon in the arsenal, including satchel charges and 105 and 155 self-propelled guns, were used against the stubborn defenders. It was not until the 29th, after the town had been reduced to rubble that the 1st and 3rd Battalions by coordinated assault succeeded in overrunning the town and liquidating the defending German Garrison. During the morning of this day, Colonel Barth was seriously wounded while observing the progress of the attack from a front line position. Command of the entire operation was then assumed by Lt. Col. John H. Mason, 3rd Battalion Commander, until the following day when Colonel Julian H. George arrived to take command of the Regiment.

The loss of Colonel Barth was sorely felt by the entire Regiment. His keen judgment, tactical skill, and employment of the principles of common sense, had been directly responsible for the many successes of the Regiment carried out with an absolute minimum loss of life. The evacuation of Colonel Barth marked the loss by the Regiment of its finest soldier.

The close-in fighting for this town had been savage and not without its price in blood. During the 27 day battle a total of 552 casualties, including 51 dead, was suffered. Enemy losses of crack troops drawn from the Metz area were estimated to be much higher. At this time, the fortress city of Metz was under heavy siege by other Third Army Divisions, and enemy resistance west of the Moselle was undergoing the process of rapid elimination.

On the 1st of November, the Regiment was relieved by the 377th of the 95th Division and moved back to Mercy le Bas, France for a short period of training and rehabilitation. This relief had been well earned by men who had continually occupied heavily contested front-line positions, for a period of over 60 days.

It was pouring rain and miserably cold the night of the 7th when the Regiment began its shuttle movement to the northeast. The 90th Division had been selected to establish a bridgehead over the Moselle River. This was considered a major task as it was known that the Germans maintained formidable defenses in this area and were prepared to defend them to the last. The French Maginot Line began on the eastern bank.

Following the assault crossing of the 358th and 359th before dawn on the 9th, the 357th crossed during daylight on the same day at Cattenom in the 358th sector and began its push inland. The men were fighting under terrific handicaps and against fanatical resistance. The heavy rains had swollen the river to many times its normal width, and constant enemy mortar and artillery fire had prevented the construction of a bridge across the raging stream. All supplies, therefore, had to be ferried across and hand carried to the front. Bedrolls and blankets were not included in these supplies and the rain-soaked men spent the miserable nights in the open without even so much as an overcoat. The wooded hills up which the men had to attack were covered by some of the heaviest enemy mortar and artillery concentrations of the war. Mostly shells which fell were tree burst, making their effect more deadly. A shell which detonated in a treetop can make a whole squad casualties in one clean sweep. Moreover, the Regimental sector included all the Maginot Line fortifications in this area. Although these outmoded fortresses were for the most part facing the wrong direction, they served as an excellent protection for the enemy machine guns and for belt-fed, automatic 75mm guns being used by the Germans.

Day after day new heroism cropped out. Enemy entrenchments dug in on the slopes of the steep wooded hills were overrun and the defenders annihilated in hand to hand combat. The advance had carried the attackers out of range of the guns on the west bank of the river, so most of these attacks were made without benefit of artillery support. Rifles and hand grenades are the weapons used in this fight. This is one of the ways in which the infantry is obliged to carry its share of the burden of fighting and winning a war.

By the 17th, the Regiment had broken through the entire enemy defense line, turned south, and in two days it closed up to the Nied River in the vicinity of Brecklange. Here the advance was halted on order. The crossing of the Moselle River by the 90th Division brought the personal commendation of the Third Army Commander, General George S. Patton, Jr., and was described by him as a feat of military arms unsurpassed.

After enjoying a thanksgiving turkey dinner on the 24th, the Regiment moved by truck to an assembly area to the northeast near Colmen. It was in this assembly area near Neunkirchen that the first elements of the Regiment, Company "A", set foot on German soil.

On the 26th, the 3rd Battalion attacked the town of Furweiler and ran into stiff opposition and fire from all types of weapons. By dark, however, this Battalion succeeded in taking the town, along with 107 prisoners. Furweiler was thus the first German town to be occupied in force by the Regiment. It was here that the first artillery fire from Siegfried Line emplacements on the east bank of the Saar River was received.

The mission was now to clear the entire west bank of the Saar River. Accordingly, when other elements of the Division on the right flank came up online with the 357th on the 29th, the advance to the east and southeast was resumed. Resistance in the form of mine fields, heavy artillery fire, and rearguard infantry action was encountered, but by the 3rd the Regiment had closed up to the Saar River. During this operation, the most intense artillery shelling thus far experienced by the Regiment was undergone by elements of the 1st Battalion when over 200 rounds fell on front-line positions in less than 16 minutes.

The next mission was no secret or surprise – to make an assault crossing of the Saar. On the eastern bank of this swift running stream began the first Siegfried Line pillboxes, and the operation promised to be a trying affair.

The 1st and 2nd Battalions moved across in assault boats before dawn on the 6th of December and advanced rapidly inland against surprisingly little organized resistance. The coming of dawn, however, brought fire from the enemy-manned pillboxes in the rear which had been bypassed by the advance units during darkness. The enemy artillery and mortar barrage, directed against the crossing site and the entire bridgehead, which was to last for the next sixteen days, also increased in intensity. Although this operation was not the costliest in battle casualties, it was certainly the most trying from the standpoint of human suffering and mental anguish. As during the Moselle crossing, nature had not befriended the attacking infantrymen. Heavy rains turned the eastern bank of the river into a sea of mud for nearly a mile inland. The entire area was literally studded with the enemy pillboxes and advances were not measured in feet or yards but in the number of pillboxes taken. The supply problem was the most difficult ever experienced by the Regiment. The idea of building a bridge across the swift stream was abandoned after the third day because of continuous heavy enemy fire on the crossing site and continued flooded state of the river. For many days the men lived and fought on one-third "K" ration units daily and the only water for many came from many shell holes and ditches. The weather remained cold and wet and losses from "trench foot" were almost unbelievably high.

The enemy began to counterattack immediately in the Regimental sector, the left flank of the Division, in an effort to turn the flank of the bridgehead and liquidate the entire infantry elements of the Division. In spite of the fact that the 357th was outnumbered three to one and fighting without armor,

the men held firm and took a huge toll of the fanatical Germans. Only a handful of reinforcements was being received, and each day saw the Regimental strength become smaller and smaller.

By the 20th, the great German counteroffensive through the Ardennes Forest, which had begun on the 16th, was still gaining ground. It was apparent that the Germans had massed their reserves for this, in their final offensive effort. If this thrust could be decisively crushed, the war in the west would assume new aspects. With the left flank of the German bulge only a few miles to the north, the Division bridgehead across the Saar had lost its strategic significance. Consequently, on the afternoon of the twentieth, orders came to prepare to withdraw to the west bank of the river.

During the early morning hours of the 22th, the Regiment completed its withdrawal. So well planned and executed was this operation, that the enemy did not suspect that a withdrawal was being effected. Counterattacks were made against a small covering shell during the night of the withdrawal, but such stiff resistance was put up by the small group that no hint was given that the positions were not fully occupied.

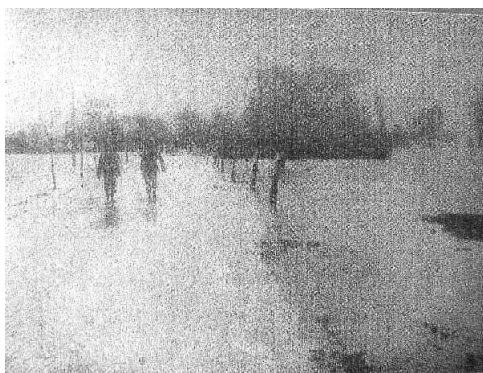
This operation was considered to be the most trying and gallant engagement ever completed by the 357th. During the fifteen hectic days, 35 pillboxes had been destroyed, over 600 prisoners taken, and an estimated total of 2000 casualties inflicted on the enemy. Every man in the Regiment had played his part, either in the line or by serving on the carrying parties which had been so methodically decimated by the constant enemy shelling. Particular commendation also goes to the men of the Anti-Tank Company and the battalion anti-tank platoons who filled the gaps in the line during the last trying days and provided the screen for the withdrawal.

There were, at this time, reports of a German buildup in the vicinity of Merzig, and a thrust south by the Germans would not be unlikely. Consequently, the Division went into a temporary defensive position along a general line running from Merzig northwest to the Moselle River at Beache. The 357th was in reserve, and on the 22nd moved 25 miles back into France to an area in the vicinity of the Monneren. Counter-attack plans were prepared to enable the Regiment to meet promptly any enemy penetration of the Division line.

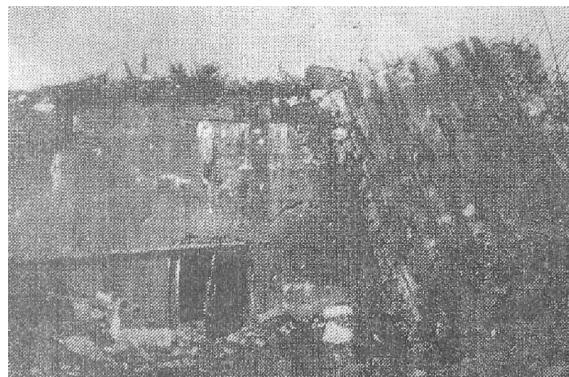
Although the situation was tactical, advantage was taken of the time to get some much needed rest. Hundreds of new reinforcements were received and were given valuable combat training at the 90th Division training center, set up several miles to the rear.

On Christmas day, every man enjoyed a fine turkey dinner, the 2nd within a month. This was a day for thanksgiving too, for other soldiers north were not so fortunate.

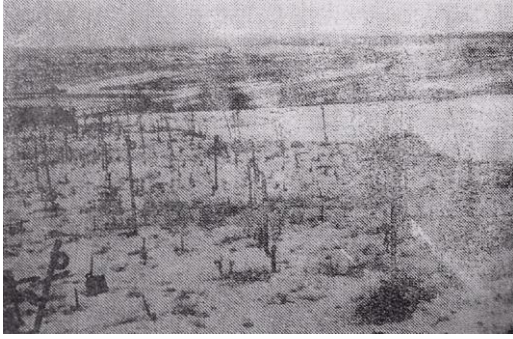
By the 5th of January, it was evident that the German threat from the north would not materialize. Defensive ideas were scrapped and thoughts turned to the offensive again. The Regiment was now up to full strength again and ready to go in every respect.



The swollen Moselle, the approach to the river



A demolished Maginot fort near Koenigsmacher

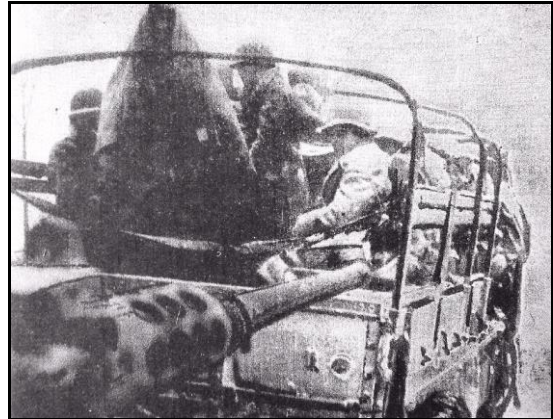


Mined barbed wire entanglements which covered approaches to Forts were frequent in the area



Smoke pots helped screen the Saar crossing site, Taken from hill west of river, above Siersdorf

CAMPAIGN OF THE ARDENNES



Bitter cold and heavy snow marked the movement to the Ardennes

On the 6th, the Division moved northeast into Luxembourg to take its place in the Battle of the Bulge. The 357th moved into an assembly area near Bavigne and immediately began making preparations for an attack against the Germans who had just a few short days ago boasted that they'd be back in Paris soon.

The attack to the north was begun on the 9th and met with immediate success. The enemy had strong forces in this area, but evidence of their disorganization was apparent. The advance of the Regiment to the north threatened the supply and withdrawal routes to the northeast, and as a result, many of the shivering Germans gave up, while others fought on to the bitter hand. On the 11th, the Regiment took over 1200 prisoners. This was particularly gratifying as many of them came from the German 5th Paratroop Division, the same outfit encountered by the 357th at Beau Coudray many months before.

The weather was extremely cold and nearly a foot of snow covered the ground. If the soldier was careless with his feet, he stood an excellent chance of losing them from "trench foot" or frostbite. The men were still wearing the same type of leather shoe which they had worn during the warm summer months, and it simply was not adequate footgear for soldiers who had to remain exposed to zero weather. Evacuations from exposure were heavy.

By now the Germans were attempting to pull as much of their force as possible out of the "Bulge". To protect this withdrawal, the enemy maintained a shell of rear guard defenders around the diminishing perimeter of his salient. To break through this shell and get at the retreating columns was now the job.

On the 21st, the Regiment moved into the famous city of Bastogne, Belgium, and attacked to the northeast the following day, capturing the town of Asselborn. A crossing of the Clerf River was forced on the 23rd, and by the 26th, the Regiment had closed up to the Our River, after smashing through tough opposition in the towns of Heinersheid, Lausdorn, and Binsfeld.



German prisoners from the 5th Paratroop Division at Doncols



357th Doughs moving into position for attack



An outpost near Doncols

CAMPAIGN OF THE RHINELAND

(Part II.)



Where the 90th tore a gap through the Siegfried at Habscheid

The Battle of the Bulge was now considered to be at an end. The last Germans had been driven out of their erstwhile salient and were now scampering for safety behind the Siegfried line. The Americans now took up where they had left off when so rudely interrupted less than six weeks before.

On the 29th, the 2nd battalion crossed the Our River in the face of heavy machine gun and mortar fire and took up positions on the high ground to the west. The Regiment was now deployed in three countries: Luxembourg, Belgium, and Germany (the Our River marked the western German boundary). The remainder of the Division was attacking to the northeast and the mission of the 357th was to protect the Division's right flank and block from that direction.

On the 6th of February, the 357th was relieved by elements of the 6th Armored Division and moved northeast into Germany to an assembly area in the vicinity of Winterspelt. This was where the Siegfried line began, as well as some more hard fighting. The Division now had the job of driving through these fortifications.

The initial attack during the night of the 7th gained some ground due to surprise and the advantage of darkness, but the dawn brought a deluge of fire from all types of weapons, firing from pillboxes seemingly located everywhere. The ensuing days brought a series of actions, fierce in nature and difficult to record. German artillery and Nebelwerfer fire was heavy and accurate, causing many casualties. The pillboxes were well constructed and expertly placed. Whole platoons of the infantrymen disappeared as a result of a German tactic of giving up a pillbox easily, then subjecting it to artillery and

mortar fire, forcing the attackers inside for shelter. It was then simply a matter of covering the doorway with fire, surrounding the pill box after dark, and blowing it in. This tactic that was short lived, however, and the men soon learned that it was safer outside of the fortifications than inside. The Germans learned this too as well-placed satchel charges blew their shelters to bits.

On the 16th, Lt. Colonel John H. Mason, Regimental Executive Officer and former 3rd battalion commander, assumed command of the Regiment.

For the enemy, it was simply a case of not having enough men to man all the fortifications. Even so, the fallacy of depending upon fixed defenses entirely was clearly shown. No matter how many pillboxes or bunkers there might be, the facts still remained that man had built them and man was tearing them down. The elaborate system of "dragons teeth" proved to be worthless and brought only exclamations of amazement at the expense and labor the Germans had expended.

By the 23rd, the last pillbox had been reduced to rubble and the Regiment closed up to the Prum River as the last Germans fled across to the eastern bank. On the following day, the Division was relieved by the 6th Armored Division and was assigned as Corps reserve.

The vaunted Siegfried Line was now a mass of twisted steel and blasted concrete. Ahead lay more river lines and more Germans to defend them, but fortifications there were none. Victory was the only smell that filled the air.

Once again the men were given a chance to get some rest, hot food, and little peace and quiet. No appreciable numbers of reinforcements were received, but the fact remained that the men present for duty now were all combat experienced and confident. Although the Regiment averaged only about 100 men per Company in the line, it was ready to get on with the job.

On the 3rd of March, the Regiment moved 10 miles to the northeast and relieved elements of the 6th Armored Division on the east side of the Prum River near Oberlauch. The mission was now to attack to the east and secure a bridgehead across the Kyll River, 6 miles to the east. Available information indicated that the enemy's chief intention was to get his forces across this river and make defense there. That a general withdrawal in this sector was considered necessary by the enemy was shown by his extensive use of mines. If the enemy intended that he was, in a degree, successful. Vehicles were being blown up on the roads which had previously been swept and traveled over.

The 1st and 2nd battalions jumped off on the 4th, and in spite of the numerous roadblocks and minded areas, moved forward rapidly. Only scattered resistance was encountered until the town of Kopp, three miles west of the Kyll River, was reached. After a brief but sharp exchange, the 2nd battalion occupied the town. Prior to daylight on the 5th, the west bank of the river was reached and the towns of Mineralbrunnen and Birresborn cleared and occupied. With the dawn, enemy east of the river became aware of the occupation and began using all available fire, particularly small arms and Nebelwerfer. All this was evidence that the Germans intended to delay the crossing with every means at hand, which at the most could not begin to be enough.

By daylight of the 6th, the crossing was completed and all but two of the line companies were across. Up to this time, the attacking units had met only small arms resistance, the highly confused defenders being unable to direct fire with any degree of effectiveness. Although some fire from the self-propelled guns was encountered later in the morning, the veteran assault infantryman moved in rapidly and by mid-afternoon all objectives had been reached. During this three-day operation, over 400 prisoners were captured by the Regiment.

The last enemy defense line in this sector west of the Rhine River had now been broken. General resistance was on the verge of complete collapse, and nowhere was there evidence of the type of organized defense which the Germans had conducted previously.

During the afternoon of the 6th the 359th passed through the 357th positions and moved on to the east. The plan now called for the 11th Armored Division to spearhead straight through to the Rhine. The general mission of the 357th was to follow and support the armored advance.

On the morning of the 9th the motorized movement began and by mid-afternoon an advance of 40 miles to Mayen had been made without meeting opposition. The route was littered with abandoned enemy vehicles, in fact, entire motor pools were seen still parked in the woods on either side of the road. There had either been a shortage of gasoline, or more likely a shortage of time.

By the 11th, the spearheading armor had reached the Rhine. On the same day, orders came for the 357th to relieve elements of the 11th Armored from their positions along the river. Before this movement was initiated, however, the entire plan of action was changed and new orders were issued. One good river crossing deserved another, so the Regiment was assigned the mission of crossing the Moselle River for the second time.

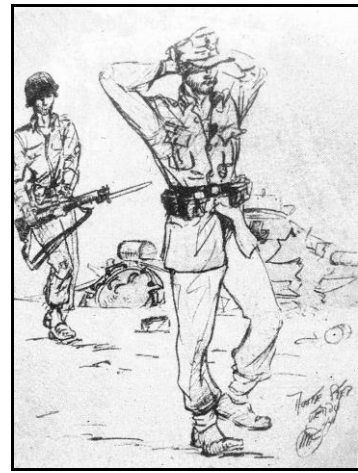
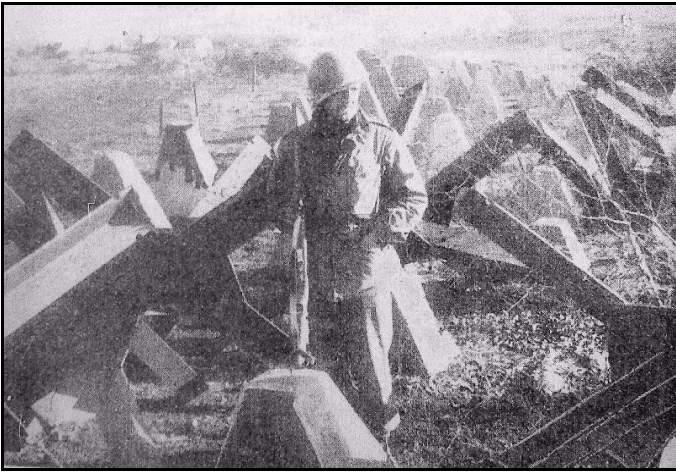
Movement of troops and equipment to the crossing sites was accomplished with a minimum of disturbance, and up to the time of crossing, only scattered small arms fire came from the east bank. At 0230 of the 14th, the 1st and 3rd battalions rowed their way across the wide Moselle at Lof, and succeeded in establishing the bridgehead against comparatively moderate initial resistance. The enemy's lack of equipment, which was fast leading to his undoing, was readily apparent. Although the defenders, elements of the 6th SS Mountain Division, were without artillery support, their determination to resist was not lacking. Consequently, when daylight came, resistance stiffened as the advance continued to the east. On the following day, the 3rd battalion, protecting the left flank of the Division, was subjected to a particularly savage counterattack. Artillery and mortar fire was poured into the ranks of the fanatical SS men, it was ultimately M-1 rifle fire that stopped them. Some of the Germans were dropped in their tracks only a dozen feet from the American positions. Bodies of friend and foe were found literally in the same foxholes, so vicious and active was the fighting. The Germans were using with extravagance their only remaining source of defense – the bodies of their soldiers.

By the 16th, the 1st and 2nd battalions had hacked their way through a nest of anti-aircraft weapons which had been leveled for use against ground forces. On this day, as the 1st battalion moved toward Boppard, it eliminated the wicked emplacements one by one, and by nightfall had destroyed 14 quadruple 20mm mounts and 6 dual purpose 88mm guns. On the following day, this battalion moved into Boppard, thus marking the arrival of the 90th Division at the Rhine River.

Instead of crossing the Rhine, as many supposed, the Division was given the mission of capturing Mainz to the south, the largest city to come before the Third Army in its advance into Germany. In this operation the 357th was to be in reserve closely following the two assault regiments. As such, the Regiment moved to its assembly area in the vicinity of Bingen on the 19th, and on the 20th began its forward movement.

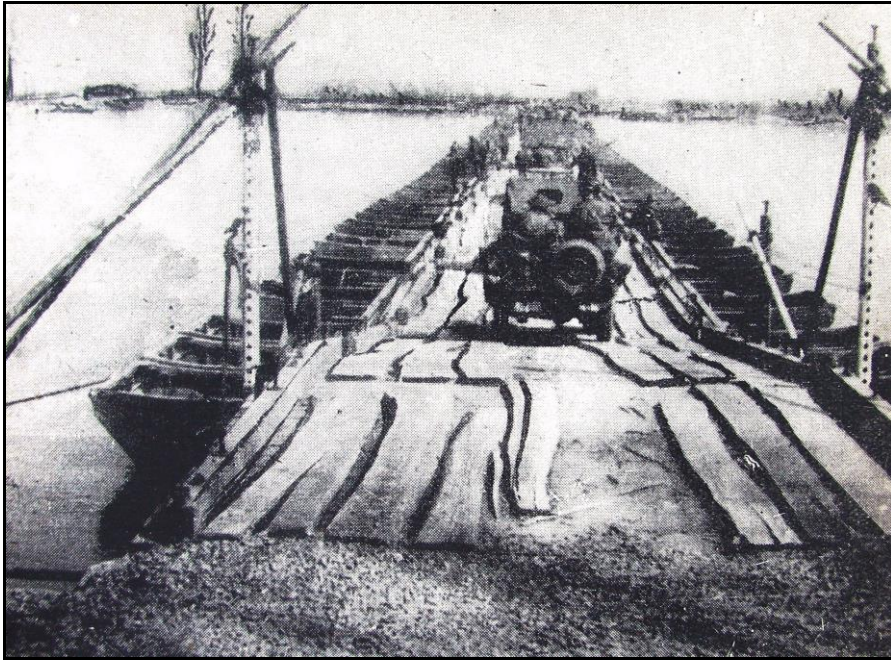
As the advance toward Mainz continued, the threat to the Division right flank increased as heavy fire from Flak guns was received on an increasing scale. To clear this situation, the 2nd battalion was assigned the mission of clearing the towns of Hahnheim and Selzen, chief sources of the hostile fire. This mission was completed on the 21st, and the towns yielded a total of eight 88mm guns, twenty 20mm Flak guns, over 30 half-tracks and trucks, and approximately 100 prisoners.

On the following day, the 2nd and 3rd battalions closed up to the Rhine, while the 1st battalion attacked and cleared the town of Weisnau.



Typical dragons' teeth and barbed wire entanglements

CAMPAIGN OF CENTRAL EUROPE



One of the bridges across the Rhine near Oppenheim

With the clearance of Mainz and the surrounding area, the 90th Division was once again ready to cross the Rhine. No one doubted that this Division would make the assault crossing, so it came as a surprise to most when it became known on the 23rd that the 5th Division had crossed during the preceding night. On the same day, the Regiment made a rapid crossing in the 10th Infantry zone. The 1st and 2nd battalions crossed on foot via the pontoon bridge which had already been thrown across, while the 3rd battalion crossed on large pontoon rafts. During the crossing, the sites were attacked by 6 ME 109's one of which was shot down while the others left without doing any damage. The end was not far off, but the desperate enemy was still trying to parry off defeat with every weapon he had left, including the almost extinct Luftwaffe.

The 5th Division had advanced inland rapidly against a surprised, disorganized enemy, who needed at this time, but did not have, masses of artillery, tanks, and trained infantry to stop the American forces which were fanning out into his heartland. The enemy did have, however, some depressed 88mm and 20mm Flak guns in the area, and strangely enough, the will to resist was still somehow kept alive among the recently mustered units attempting to slow the advance. Consequently, when the 357th relieved the 10th in the vicinity of Leeheim during the night of the 23rd, it found itself in contact with an actively infiltrating enemy. Several casualties were caused by high velocity fire as the relief was being made.

As the 3rd battalion attempted to move toward Wolfskehlen, it became involved in a fierce small arms battle with the enemy dug-in in a small woods west of the town. After the woods were blasted with tank fire, in an effort to destroy the devastating Flak guns which were playing havoc with the exposed infantryman, the "I" and "L" Company rifleman rose, began firing, and moved into the woods, driving the frantic Germans before them. The amount of firepower delivered by the men as they moved

in may be understood by realizing that each man fired an average of ten to twelve clips of M-1 ammunition. As the companies moved through the woods and reached the eastern edge, the running Germans were picked off like ducks on a pond as they retreated across the open ground. Over 120 prisoners were taken and a score of enemy dead were later picked up in the woods. Thirteen Americans were also there.

While the battalion was reorganizing prior to moving on to Wolfskehlen, elements of the 4th Armored Division rumbled down the main highway into the town and cleared it in short order. The number of prisoners taken by the tank men brought realization of the amount of trouble infantry might have had clearing the town alone. The plight of the Germans at this time was shown by the fact that policemen from Frankfurt were now being used as infantry in this sector.

The 2nd battalion, meanwhile, was having trouble in its sector at Erfelden to the south. Infiltrating enemy, aided by civilians, were pinpointing the locations of the Company and battalion CP's, thus aiding materially the enemy Flak batteries still operating in this area. The town was cleared during the morning, however, and over 250 prisoners taken.

A coordinated attack by the 1st and 3rd battalions netted the town of Griesheim and 150 more prisoners, after a harrowing small arms fire fight. The brunt of this fight was born by "K" Company, when the Germans in the town were driven into their lines by the 1st battalion advancing from the south.

A sweep of the woods to their right by the 2nd battalion brought in approximately 400 prisoners who were badly disorganized and surrendered without a fight.

The crust of enemy resistance was now a broken. In less than 24 hours after taking over its sector, the Regiment had taken nearly 1000 prisoners and punched a hole through the entire enemy defense line. The stage was now set for the armor to play a predominant role.

Following the 4th Armored Division, the 90th Division reached the Main River near Offenbach on the 26th. This river constituted the last major water barrier left for the tottering enemy to defend. The 357th now made plans and preparations for the assault crossing of the stream.

Reconnaissance indicated an enemy of unknown strength occupied the east bank but no formidable defenses were discernible. It was generally surmised, however, that this crossing would stir up and bring forth whatever the enemy had left to offer.

At 0300 of the 28th, infantrymen of the 3rd and 1st battalions rowed their way across from Rumpenheim and Mulheim, respectively. As the men reached the bank and began to move in, they were met by withering machine gun crossfire, as well as Panzerfaust and some high velocity time fire. With the veteran officers and infantry leading the way, the initial enemy defense line was crushed and the advance inland continued. By noon the crossing was secure, all objectives had been seized, and over 300 prisoners bagged. The 357th had thus completed its third assault river crossing in less than a month, including the Rhine River.

Enemy resistance in the west was crumbling and the Germans were finally retreating in a disorderly manner. Never before had the enemy seemed so incapable of keeping the door to his vitals closed. The 4th Armored Division was racing into the heart of Germany at the rate of speed for which this Division was famous. The mission of the 357th was to follow the armor, clear all woods and towns and mop up any bypassed enemy. These operations were highly successful. The months of grinding were now paying dividends. The Germans had, in fact, spent their army and equipment long before in the defense of other lands. Now that the time had come to defend their own country and ward off the defeat itself, there was nothing left with which to do the job. The soldiers themselves had grown tired of dying, and were now hiding in the small towns, obviously waiting to be captured. Only here and there did any semblance of resistance appear, as small groups, girded on by die-hard officers, attempted to defend some hastily constructed roadblock. In the main, however, the signs of defeat, prisoners and

white flags, were everywhere. Advances of from 20 to 30 miles were being made in a single day, and the daily number of prisoners seldom failed to reach the 300 mark.

By the 2nd of the April, the advance, which had begun on the 29th of March, had carried over 100 miles to the city of Hersfeld. At this point, orders were received which called for a change in direction. The advance was now to be straight to the east with the Werra River as the initial objective. This change in direction ended the mopping up operation behind the advance of the 4th Armored, the route now being through territory not previously covered. By mid-afternoon, the 10 kilometers to the Werra had been covered by the 1st battalion, and by 1800 the entire battalion had crossed the river, using a partially destroyed bridge. During the night, the 3rd battalion pushed across on the dam to the south, and by morning the Regiment was ready to push off to the east. Although some stiff small arms resistance was encountered, particularly in the 1st battalion zone, artillery fire soon dissolved it and the advance continued.

By the 5th, it became apparent that the enemy in the area had given up even the blocking attempts encountered previously. The battalions were moving ahead against negligible resistance when the order came to hold up the advance and assemble in the vicinity of Bad Salzungen. After being relieved by the advancing 89th and 87th Divisions, the battalions moved to their respective assembly areas. The 1st battalion was assigned a mission of guarding the salt mine at Merkers. As it later developed, this mine contained the major portion of the Reich's finances and gold reserves. Sufficient importance was attached to the treasure to warrant the assignment of the 3rd battalion to post guard at the entrances to the other mines in the surrounding area.

This amazing discovery gave the 357th the assignment of carrying out the biggest legitimate looting job in history. Investigation of the mine confirmed the contents to be as follow: 100 tons of gold bullion, 5 billion German marks, 2 million dollars in U. S. currency, and artworks of tremendous value. The desperate Germans, thinking that the western approaches to the fatherland were secure, had moved the bulk of their financial reserves here for safekeeping.

In order to remove the money, it was necessary to load it on jeeps, which had been lowered into the mine, move it to the mine shaft, and then up 1200 feet to ground level. It was tedious work but the men completed the job in two days. The manner in which the job was accomplished brought the personal commendation of SHAEF officials who were in charge of the operation.

During the time the 1st and 3rd battalions were engaged at the mines, the 2nd battalion had continued to move east with the 90th Division, constituting the Division reserve.

The German defenses were completely broken down and other elements of the Division had moved rapidly during the last ten days. Consequently, a ride of approximately 120 miles was required to reach the other regiments, which had advanced to a point only a few miles short of the Czechoslovakian frontier. An order had been issued restraining any advance into Czechoslovakia, so current advances were being made along the border in a southeasterly direction.

After relieving the 328th Infantry of the 26th Division in the vicinity of Schwartzbach on the eighteenth, the Regiment continued the advance to the southeast. While vague, the available enemy information did not indicate the existence of any large enemy units in the area, but because of the existence of isolated defensive groups, the plan called for aggressive probing to locate the enemy. The mission was to sweep the entire countryside and clear it of enemy.

Aside from booby-trapped roadblocks consisting of felled trees, and occasional scattered Nebelwerfer fire, resistance was negligible. Prisoners were being taken by the thousands, and in many of the villages the German soldiers were already assembled waiting to surrender. It did not seem possible that this type of warfare could continue much longer. The entire German army was being taken prisoner.

As the advance continued, American prisoners of war – most of whom had been captured in December during the German counteroffensive – were picked up. These men had been herded ahead of the retreating Germans and were now in pitiable condition. They had been walking for days with only enough food to keep them from collapsing. At Fuchsmuhl, 33 Americans were found lying in straw bunks. To describe their condition would be to play upon the imagination of the reader. They had been forced to work long hours in salt mines on a ration that was a disgrace to humanity. At the time of rescue, most of these men had declined to the point where they were unable to move from their bunks. Many died before they were rescued.

Other evidence of German atrocities was found along the route. As they were forced to pull back, the Germans had taken the Russian war prisoners and laborers with them. The unburied bodies of the ones who were unfortunate enough not to be able to walk any farther were seen all along the roads. Many had been shot in a group and shared a single uncovered grave. Many thousands of British prisoners of war were also liberated. Some of the chaps had been taken at Dunkirk and had been with the Germans for five years. The site of these liberated prisoners of war and slave laborers from other nations wrung pity and pride from the hearts of all, and brought to everyone's mind the real reason why America was fighting this war. The deplorable condition of these unfortunate people brought stark realization of the true value of democracy and its worth to freedom-loving people.

On the 3rd of May, the 2nd and 3rd battalions crossed the border into Czechoslovakia without meeting opposition. The 1st enemy action was encountered by a platoon of "I" Company at Tremlovsky, where a group of SS troops, equipped with Panzerfaust, launched a surprise counterattack. This attack was swept aside with heavy losses to the enemy and resulted in the capture of 70 Germans and Hungarians. During this day, over 600 prisoners were taken by the Regiment.

On the following day, the 90th Division was relieved from its positions in Czechoslovakia by elements a 2nd Division, and moved to an assembly area to the southeast in Germany. The mission was not known, but it was highly probable that the Regiment would be committed to another sector to resume the advance. With the mass surrender of German armies in Italy, Austria, and northern Germany, the Germans in Czechoslovakia now constituted the last major pocket of enemy left in existence.

On the 5th, the Regiment moved back into Czechoslovakia in the 2nd Cavalry sector with a mission of clearing a path through the mountains for the 4th Armored Division. Although the end was near, the 357th was to engage the enemy in one of the fiercest fights of its long period of combat. The plan called for an attack upon the small town of Zhuri by the 3rd battalion. As "I" Company moved up the main road into the town, the assaulting squad spotted an American M-8 scout car coming down the road. For a split second, the men thought it was manned by Americans, but it wasn't long before the crudely painted cross was the discernable on the front of the vehicle. It was then too late. As the squad realized that the vehicle was manned by Germans, they took the only cover available, a shallow ditch on the side of the road. It was there that seven of the squad died when the Germans raked the ditch with machine gun fire until there was no more movement. The irony of fate was present. On the eve of total victory and wholesale surrender of Reich armies, it would always remain as an indelible charge against the German militarists that these brave boys, who had already seen so much, gave their lives, because a few treacherous Germans chose to fight for a cause which had already crumbled beneath them. The scout car had been captured from the Cavalry group the day before.

After a thorough artillery and mortar pasting, the town was taken by assault and the defending Germans liquidated. These fanatics proved to be young officer cadets from a nearby school who had voiced their preference for killing a few more Americans.

The bulk of enemy resistance was now eliminated and further advances brought only prisoners and sore feet. On the 7th, the order to cease fire and halt the advance found the battalions moving forward

rapidly against no opposition. The 1st battalion consolidated at the towns of Zavlekov, Tuzica and Stribrne Hory; the 2nd battalion at Hardsesice, Hilneny-Ujezdec and Vlkonice; and the 3rd battalion in the vicinity of Cerma. It was in these villages that the companies took up their last defensive positions of the war against Germany. The order to cease fire marked the capitulation of the last German army, the Seventh, which the 357th helped decimate at the "Falaise Gap " after the Normandy break through.

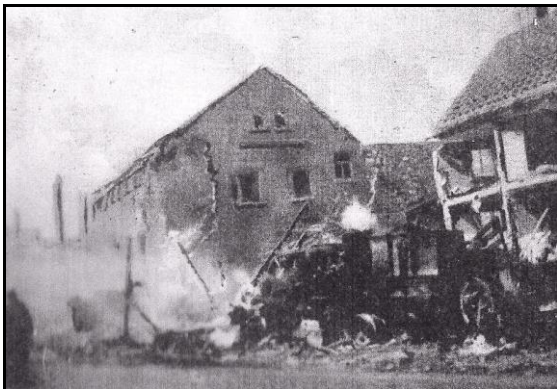
The news of the end of the war caused no shouting or open rejoicing. Although everyman's heart beat with pride and joy, only a few failed to realize that war for the United States did not end with the defeat of Germany. On this day of victory, thoughts went back to the days of Normandy, the Moselle and Saar River crossings, the Siegfried line, and other engagements when the German was still dangerous and full of fight; back to the days when the real heroes of this war, the ones who will never go back, were made.

Thus eleven months from the day of landing, combat against the ruthless German ended for the 357th. That of a total of 335 days of combat on the continent, the Regiment had been in contact with the enemy for 267 of those days. The 357th Infantry had figured predominantly in every major phase of the campaigns which led to the defeat of the German Reich: the trying Normandy operation; the breakout; the encirclement and destruction of the German Seventh Army at Falaise; the war of pursuit across France; the assault crossings of the major river barriers; the capture of Metz; the cracking of the vaunted Siegfried Line; and the ultimate race across Germany into Czechoslovakia. The Regiment never failed to take its objective or fulfill its mission.

Shortly after V-E Day, the Regiment moved back into Germany. The Regimental CP was located at Neustadt an der Waldnaab, Oberefalz, Bavaria, with the battalions located as follows 1st battalion in Waldsassen; 2nd battalion in Windischeschenbach; 3rd battalion in Flossenburg, site of a former Nazi Concentration Camp. Although the 90th Division was not designated as a permanent part of the army of occupation, it was engaged, at the time of publication, in police and administrative duties in the assigned area.

And at this writing it is not possible to say what the future holds in store for the 90th Division. Whatever, the task, the reader can be assured it will be accomplished with the same efficiency and dispatch which has made the Division one of the finest in existence.

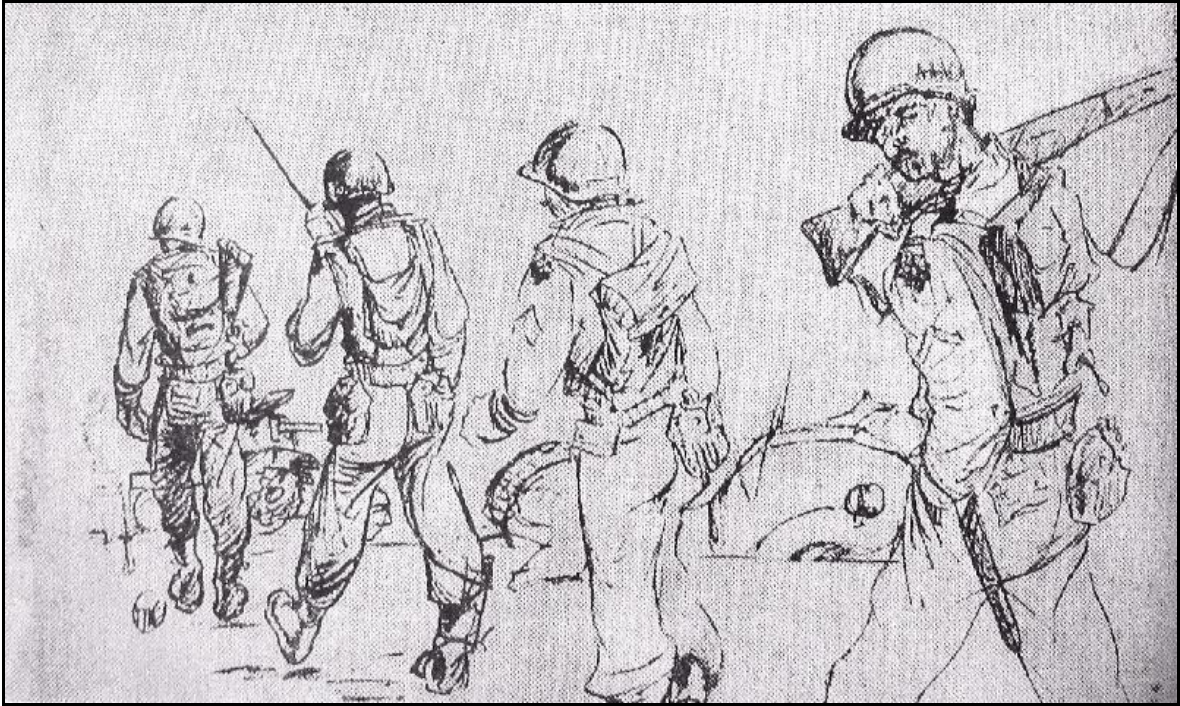
The end



The town of Leehelm suffered severe damage as the enemy reacted to the Rhine Crossing with heavy 88mm fire



As the rout continued, abandoned enemy equipment lined the roads



Regimental Statistics

Killed in Action	953
Wounded in Action	5078
Injured non-battle	701
Missing in Action	584
(After V-E Day it was found that 570 of these were prisoners of war)	
Captured 4	
Total above casualties	7320

(Of those wounded in action, 143 died; of those non-battle wounded, 4 died. Five men died of illness during the campaign.)

Total Reinforcements received to V-E Day	8385
Number of enemy prisoners of war taken	18,117

Names and locations of cemeteries in which 357th men are buried:

St. Mere Eglise No.2, France
Andilly, France
Marigny, France
Grand Feilly, France
Limey, France
St. Andre, France
St. Martin, France
Foy, Belgium
Hamm, Luxembourg
Nurnberg, Germany
Butzbach, Germany
Stromberg, Germany
St. Mere Eglise No.1, France

Acknowledgment is made to the following for their valuable assistance in “expediting” the preparation, proofing, and assembly of this abbreviated history of the Regiment, a job which was more than normally complicated because of working with printers who had no knowledge of the English language.

Sgt. Francis I. Thomas, Pfc. Edward G. Hartmann, Harvey A. Goldreyer, John De Palma, J. W. Rodger, Jr.
Regimental Statistics