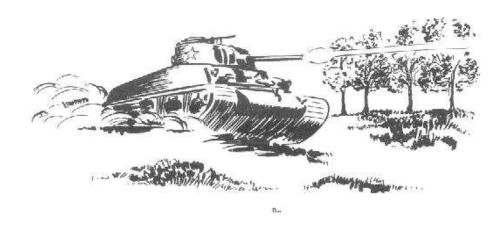
XII CORPS

SPEARHEAD OF PATTON'S THIRD ARMY



[14 March 1945 to 9 May 1945]

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XII U S ARMY CORPS

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Introduction

1. Background: the XII Corps History Association

During the summer of 1945 headquarters of XII U.S. Army Corps was situated at Regensburg, on the Danube River, in the southeastern most territories of Germany. Still a part of the Third US Army, as it had been all through combat in Europe, the corps was then dispersed over a large area in occupation of two provinces of the "land" of Bavaria. The corps headquarters and its other component units were resting on the considerable laurels won during the recent fighting on the Continent, and sentiment became widespread that a history of the XII Corps should be undertaken to record its accomplishments in permanent form.

To this end there was established, in accordance with Army regulations and the common custom for such undertakings, the XII Corps History Association. This was the designed as a non-profit organization, under a set of by-laws drawn up by the XII Corps Judge Advocate General, with consultation of the Corps Inspector General and Finance officer. The by-laws provided for active control by an Executive Committee with the dual duty of supervising the work of preparing the history, and making sure that funds contributed by subscribers should be properly expended to produce and distribute the best possible volume as a memorial to the exploits of the corps and its members, both unit and individual. The association was designed solely for the accomplishment of this end, and for that reason was made a temporary agency. It was to go out of existence automatically on 7 August 1947, by which time it was assumed the history, however elaborate it might prove, could be produced and distributed to the subscribers. The interest in the project was such that while the volume was in preparation over 7,000 former members of the corps and a number of other persons subscribed for one or more copies.

At an organization meeting in the Command Post War Room on 10 August 45, the association came into existence, and the following XII Corps officers agreed to serve on the Executive Committee and otherwise as indicated:

Brig. Gen. Ralph J. Canine, Chairman

Col. Paul M. Martin, Deputy Chairman

Col. Frank R. Veale

Col. John H. Claybrook

Col. Jack H. Griffith

Col. Ernest C. Norman

Col. Asa W. K. Billings

Col. Clyde E. Dougherty

Col. Alfred H. Anderson

Col. A. J. DeLorimier

Col. Rodney C. Gott

Maj. George Dyer, Historian

Capt. C. L. Dyer, Treasure

Lt. L. D. Gilbertson, Secretary

Major General S. LeRoy Irwin, then Commanding General of the corps, was present at the initial meetings and continued his interest and support to the very end of the project. Others who served as subsequently on the Executive Committee were Major General Manton S. Eddy, Brigadier General John M. Lentz, and Colonel Albert C. Lieber, Jr.

2. General Policy and Form of the Writing

It was decided from the earliest gatherings of the Executive Committee that an attempt must be made to have the volume when completed a definitive history of XII Corps as a whole in World War II. Although production had to be centralized and administered in the XII Corps Headquarters, the final product should not be solely a "headquarters book." The historian was to make clear the indispensable parts played by the great Corps divisions, the cavalry group, the artillery and engineer groups and battalions, and all those other specialized organizations which joined forces to make up the overwhelming might of a modern American Army Corps. If the headquarters is mentioned more often throughout the narrative than other Corps units this is for two principal reasons. As the command group for the corps it links all of the Corps units and often is used to represent the others in matters of general And since the narrative follows the simplest chronological plan, running without interruption or reversal of flow from the activation of the corps on 29 August 42 to its in activation on 15 December 45, there were times, as on the trip across the Atlantic, when the headquarters was all the XII Corps there was. Thus it happens that the only units for which a relatively complete story is told of those "organic" to the XII Corps Headquarters. Nevertheless, though it has been impossible within the scope of a single volume like this, to tell all the story of other units in a fighting force of such size and complexity, it is hoped that the reader who was not in the XII Corps Headquarters and Headquarters Company, or XII Corps Artillery Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, the signal battalion, or other organic unit, will still not consider this an "headquarters book." He should find his unit, if it was a large one, well represented in these pages. And if his was a smaller outfit, it should still be mentioned more than once, and certainly be found in the station lists and unit rosters at the end of the volume. Such references, together with the connecting thread of the headquarters experience, the photographs, and illustrations like the end paper Battle Route and fold-out Zone or Advance maps, should give the reader who served with any XII Corps unit at the very least, an approximation of his own experience during the War in Europe.

It was also decided early to rewrite or otherwise change as little as possible material taken from the sources on which the history is based. Whatever may be gained in uniformity by such rewriting, there is almost sure to be a final loss in color and vigor, and in the sense of authenticity conveyed by the words of the original document or interview. The question of annotation was discussed at length in meetings by the Executive Committee, and it was decided not to clutter up the narrative with complete references to sources. This was chiefly because the supporting documents for a work of this character are so extremely limited in type that they may be usually cited in text preceding the quotation without undue clumsiness and yet with sufficient fullness to enable any researcher to trace back a desired quotation without difficulty. In nine cases out of ten they are derived from official documents to be found on file in the Historical Records Division of The Adjutant General's Office of the War Department; in all but a negligible remainder they are from published material available in public libraries. For this reason it seemed almost unnecessary to use up space needed for matters of more general interest on an elaborate bibliography. Complete annotation and a bibliography were conscientiously kept as a matter of discipline to the stage of final review of the draft typescript. But in the copy sent to the publisher footnotes were held to a minimum in the interest of smooth-flowing story.

They appear principally when they often could not resist including some matter of peculiar but limited interest.

It was decided that, since the book is scarcely intended for readers with no military associations, a very appreciable saving in space could be accomplished by using throughout abbreviations well-known to persons in the Army. If the style called for spelling out Lieutenant General Doe's title, then certainly the same treatment should be accorded Technician Fifth Class Roe. Equally, the Umpteenth Fumigation and Bath Company would take up more room in a line than the 5th Infantry Division, and to what purpose? The more informal usage has been employed, therefore, (save in rare cases where a distinguished personage is being brought into the narrative for the first time); a list of common military abbreviations as applied in Appendix "D" to assist memories grown a little rusty with the passing years.

All photographs, except where otherwise noted on the same page, were taken by US Army Signal Corps photographers, most of them by personnel of that fine company of combat photographers which accompanied Third Army and the XII Corps all the way through the fighting, "from the Beach to Bavaria." In almost all cases the captions have been taken directly from the back of the prints used. It proved only rarely possible to cross-check these captions -- on the spelling of names, for example. Therefore, if a reader objects to being "slugged" as T/5 Isam Etheridge of Centralia, Washington, or as Jaypnaip Thackart of Fishtrap, Kentucky there is not much use blaming the XII Corps History That's the way the name is spelled on the back of the appropriate Signal Corps Association. photographs; and the Signal Corps photographs, as is well known, were often taken under fire under other circumstances which made the securing of full accurate captions extremely difficult. With almost as many pages of photographs as of text, and with these photographs and captions designed to tell XII Corps' story almost as fully as the text, it was considered desirable to place them in order and in such arrangement that the reader not interested in details could go smoothly through them and get the general outlines of the whole story without reference to the text. Accordingly, with few exceptions they appear on right hand pages in logical sequence. This makes the relationship of any given picture page with any given facing page of text likely to be disappointing. An attempt to overcome this deficiency has been made by liberally citing photographs at appropriate points in the narrative.

Maps used in this history came from a variety of sources, and were probably the most vexing single element to find, prepare, check, and reproduce by the numerous technical processes available. Although the map produced in Germany by XII Corps' "own" company of topographic engineers, as credited to them in detail elsewhere, has been supplemented by some fifty others in color or black-and-white, it is believed that the majority of readers for the majority of purposes will find the "topo" company's Battle Route map, in the end papers of this volume, most satisfying. This is not to discount the hours of patient and painstaking work which many men, as indicated below, put into the other maps. For special and more detailed reference purposes these "close-ups" will be found indispensable.

3. Credits

No such labor as this history could possibly have been done by one person alone. It was bound to be, and is, the end product of the work of many hands. Too many of these invaluable helpers could not be identified; wherever practicable they are fully credited at appropriate points in the course of the narrative. It would be an unforgivable omission, however, to fail to accord here additional recognition to the certain persons whose contributions were outstanding.

Members of the Executive Committee listed above were active and unfailing in their support of the venture. The Chairman, Brigadier General Ralph J Canine, true to his character all through combat,

inspired and aggressively backed to the limit the work of those assigned to assemble vast scattered masses of material and shape them into a history of XII Corps. His decisive influence was felt at many a critical moment while the project was still in operation in Germany, and continuep to be an important factor after transfer of the work to America. Major General Manton S. Eddy, while not in Europe at the time the history was initiated, showed the keenest interest in the project from the start and when it returned to the United States, he willingly assumet the responsibility of an active place on the Executive Committee, and forwarded the work of preparation in many essential respects. It is no exaggeration to say that the thousands of former GI's and officers who enjoy this record of their joint exploits in Europe will owe their enjoyment in large measure to these two generals, without whose inspiration and backing the project would not have been completed along the ambitious lines originally planned, if indeed it could have been started at all.

Major General S LeRoy Irwin, as noted above, while at no time on paper a member of the Executive Committee, was often asked for help and never failed in either active interest or support, throughout the almost two years required to complete the work. Among a great many other acts of assistance, he freely gave access and permission to quote from his private diary, as will be observed in later stages of the narrative. Both Major General Gilbert R Cook and Lieutenant General William H Simpson, early commanders of XII Corps, accorded the project complete cooperation. Brigadier General John M Lance, last of the XII Corps' combat general officers to leave the Corps headquarters before it was officially disbanded in Germany, was several times in a unique position to advance the project, and did so in the same way he had fought the war, generously and up to the hilt. Colonel Paul M Martin, first Deputy Chairman of the Executive Committee, also remained long in XII Corps Headquarters, and later from his office in Headquarters Third Army was able to facilitate greatly the actual transfer of the work to the United States.

The member of the Executive Committee whose task was undoubtedly the most trying was Colonel Albert C Lieber, Jr. As former Deputy Chief of Staff of XII Corps Headquarters during almost its whole period of active existence he was a "natural" for the job of final review of the work. He cheerfully and meticulously threaded his way through some 250,000 words of beaten-up draft typescript, catching countless mistakes of fact, fancy and grammar, and adding hundreds of words of original material. The improvement resulting from his devoted labors will be evident from one end of the book to the other. Responsibility for any errors of omission or commission which may have slipped by his alert attention will confidently be assumed entirely by the author.

A word of special appreciation should go to the Treasurer of the XII Corps History Association, (then) Captain Charlotte L Dyer. One of the two WAC officers who originally came down from Frankfurt shortly after the end of the fighting in Germany to assist with organization and preparation of XII Corps History, she stayed on the job and on active duty for months after her "point" score entitled her to return to the United States and be separated. Then for months after her release from active duty she remained in close touch with the project as a volunteer, giving freely of her time to keep the financial records straight until publication had been accomplished.

The extensive promotional activity necessary to lay a firm foundation of subscription money for the enterprise was largely the effort of (then) 1st Lieutenants L D Gilbertson and Donald G MacLeod. The former acted as the original secretary of the Executive Committee; the latter took over in this capacity after Gilbertson went home, and carried out a most energetic campaign of publicity and promotion. Lt William C blamer and Horace E Curran carried out essential administrative functions in connection with the operation and in addition collected quantities of medical and engineer source material, respectively.

Other individuals who put in extensive full-time on the groundwork of this volume, with resulting conspicuous improvement in the final product, were Francis H. Ghur, Anthony C. Marchant, Edward Kaplan and John C. Johnson. Everyone of these former XII Corps Headquarters sergeants has left his mark with for the better on the history. Guhr's biggest single task was the compiling of the consolidated list of units in Appendix B, but his knowledge of the headquarters Adjutant General files and his careful research in them benefited the project at innumerable other points besides. Marchant's work speaks for itself; he is responsible for all the photographic layout and all the decorative drawings in the volume, except in those few instances specifically credited to some other hand. Both Guhr and Marchant loyally remained on duty in Germany and Washington, in order to wind up their particular assignments for several weeks after their Adjusted Service Rating scores would have permitted them to return to civilian life. Johnson and Kaplan, during combat with the XII Corps Headquarters War Room, put their special experience to valuable postwar use. The former's most tedious mission no doubt, was the translation of the grid readings in the station lists (Appendix A into geographic equivalents, so that members of units might tell at a glance, without reference to special maps, where their own headquarters were located on the given date. Kaplan was draftsman for the series of 17 operational and three doublespread occupational maps herein, in addition to many other duties in connection with the preparation of the volume.

A large number of other individuals helped to advance the work while it was still being carried out in Bavaria, doing special jobs in addition to their regular assignments, or working for shorter periods full-time. William N Thomas, Jr and Rudolph C Lange, then both captains with the G-3 and G-2 sections respectively, collaborated to layout the operational maps referred to in the preceding paragraph. Captain Janet P Coleman, WAC, conscientiously employed a month's Temporary Duty from SHAEF to collaborate with Captain Dyre in obtaining many of the first-hand accounts of personal experience which have been used so liberally throughout the book. Captain Clifford A Raser, working closely with MacLeod, secured most of the outlying artillery and cavalry interviews. Captain Thomas H Whalen, a former XII Corps Headquarters officer then with the 90th Infantry Division, was a shining example of assistance in the promotional field, being largely responsible for arousing a higher degree of interest in the project among members of his new outfit than was expressed in the concrete form of subscriptions by any other XII Corps division. M/S gts Rolf C Chambers and Quentin McKillop were unusually cooperative in their contributions of photographs and other useful material.

With transfer of the project to the United States a whole new field of indebtedness was opened. The work required two months of Temporary Duty in the Pentagon Building while sources relating to XII Corps' Pre-ETO experience was examined. Here the Historical Division of the War Department Special Staff acted as host; especially encouraging in that division was the Director, Major General Edwin Harding, together with his assistants, Colonels Alan F Clark, Jr and John M Kemper, and a Dr Walter L Wright, Jr. Much specialized help in their respective fields was rendered by Mr Israel Weiss, Miss Louise Haanes, Miss Katherine Lambert, and others in the division. Captain Thurman Wilkins and his assistant, Miss Clyde Hillyer, gave invaluable assistance in the Adjutant General Historical Records; as did Captain George R Wagoner in the map section of G-2, War Department General Staff.

In Headquarters Third Service Command (later Headquarters Second Army) the list is also long. Outstanding for months of devoted attention to exacting detailed work is Mrs Hazel Gordon Maguire, who is responsible for the entire stenographic and clerical work during the latter stages of the project. Most impressive of her many achievements was the typing of an estimated million words of preliminary drafts, final draft and final typescript. In addition she indexed the whole text, a most lengthy labor. In the Engineer Section, Captain Paul E Mullins assisted with map work; and Jack E Carr was the soldier-

draftsman for all these maps taken with a few additions from the Third Army After Action Report, which show the advance of the Army's front. In the Adjutant General's Reproduction plant, great technical assistance and personal interest was given the project by M/S gt C E Galton and Mr Raymond G Goldsmith, the latter with the 90th Infantry Division when it was a part of XII Corps. Several girls in the Adjutant General Editorial Section under Lieutenant Colonel J B Williams worked hard to proofread the whole typescript before it went to the publisher.

Unquestionably, the names of many persons who made important contributions to this volume have been left out for reasons of limitation of space or because they could not be obtained. Like the faithful proofreaders in Colonel William's office, or the unsung hero who wrote the much-used historical narrative of the Corps' first year, they must remain anonymous here. They will have to satisfy themselves with the knowledge that several thousand ex-members of XII Corps have benefited from their efforts, and with the certainty that the author, at least, as he completes the work of writing and returns contentedly to civilian life at long last, is well aware that XII Corps, Spearhead of Patton's Third Army is anything but a one-man book.

4. Character of XII Corps

The military entity known as the "Corps" or "US Army Corps" is not familiar to many Americans. The "Army" or "Field Army," of which a corps is the largest single element, is far better known. So is the Division, which is the largest single unit in a Corps. Even among men who were members of XII Corps in combat it was often true that they thought of themselves as "belonging" to the much more widely publicized Third Army, or to an equally famous infantry or armored division. It is therefore perhaps worthwhile to give the reader a brief definition of what constitutes an American Army Corps, and to indicate in what way it is the indispensable, adaptable but direct, link between the Field Army and the Division.

"The (Field) Army," says Field Manual 101-10, "is a flexible combat force capable of independent operations, consisting of two or more Corps and reinforcing combat and service troops." Of the Corps the manual says: "The functions of the Corps in an army will be primarily tactical.... Other units will be assigned to a Corps in accordance with its combat mission. These will be divisions, groups or battalions of Field artillery, antiaircraft artillery, tank, tank destroyer, engineer, and cavalry reconnaissance elements.... The organic elements of the Corps will consist of a headquarters and headquarters company; and military police platoon; signal battalion; headquarters and headquarters battery, corps artillery; and a field artillery observation battalion...."

Translated into specific terms, this means that throughout combat and occupation on the Continent of Europe, XII U S Army Corps was always a part -- and a very considerable part -- of Third US Army. Similarly, Third Army was always a very considerable fraction of 12th Army Group during the fighting, and 12th Army Group in turn was at times the largest single subdivision of the Allied Expeditionary Forces in the ETO. Turning from a higher chain of command to look in the other direction, the reader will see that XII Corps' average total of about 90,000 men was made up in large measure of the various divisions which were parts of the Corps, -- on occasion as many as six. The rest were the "Corps Troops," -- combat and service units fighting shoulder to shoulder with the divisions.

Just where of the modern American Army in the field gets most of the flexibility credited to it in the Field Manual may be inferred from the fact that while XII Corps was at all times on the Continent assigned to Third Army, as Third Army was at all times a part of 12th Army Group, not one of the divisions assigned to XII Corps remained in that organization for the entire period of combat. Divisions

to a total of 15 served as parts of XII Corps in various stages of the fighting, being freely pulled in or out in accordance with the changing needs of the tactical or strategic situation. Colonel Frank R. Veale the Corps G-1 has estimated that approximately a quarter million men served in XII Corps at one time or another in Europe. A division's component parts remain relatively constant; for Corps, internal change is the rule rather than the exception. This circumstance, which renders difficult compiling of a Corps history (and impossible the inclusion in such a history of the usual complete rosters, lists of commendations and awards, and so forth, that will be found at the back of most unit histories) has useful application in battle. As said elsewhere, the army-corps-division team together make up a weapon analogous to the old-fashioned flail; or perhaps it might be better likened to one of those "morning stars" of medieval warfare, in which the Army is represented by the iron handle, the Division by the spiky steel knob, and the Corps by the chain which, connecting the two loosely but firmly, multiplies the blow of the knob and prevents the enemy from knowing exactly how hard, or from exactly what quarter, the next stroke is going to fall on him.

Only the Corps headquarters and its "organic elements" remain in general without change, and it is these parts of the organization which give the Corps most of its individual character. And individual character was what XII Corps had in full measure.

The reader may well be warned at this juncture that if he is not prepared to approach this chronicle with acceptance of its major premise, i.e. that XII US Army Corps was an exceptionally fine and successful outfit, he should proceed no further. This premise is not quite the customary vehement and unsupported asseveration to the effect that the organization dealt with is the "best damn unit in the best damned Army in the world," etc. there will be found occasional hints of the spirit scattered throughout this volume, as well as some good-natured kidding of XII Corps' closest "rival" among "competing" corps in Third Army, -- both attitudes of the sort freely indulged in by members of any proud outfit in war. But jesting aside, it is honestly believed that the record spread across the following pages speaks more eloquently than such normal oratory for the conclusion that XII Corps was exceptional, if not actually unique, in its performance during World War II. To mention only two items in the bill of argument, the reader is referred to the comparative table of towns liberated or captured on page 450, and is urged to glance through the ten maps showing the Advance of Third Army's front and note the position of XII Corps' share of that front in each instance. The fame of the Corps was by no means limited to Third Army. It was not uncommon for personnel in divisions which had never served in either the Corps or the army to say: "Put us in Third Army and XII Corps and we'll show you!" Of course, since "a good Corps attracts good divisions," XII Corps was fortunate in the great infantry and armored divisions attracted to it. The exploits of these divisions, and of the other magnificent units that joined with the divisions to make up XII Corps, reflected glory not only upon themselves but also upon the Corps of which they were parts. Without their efforts, as will be clearly demonstrated in the pages to follow, the Corps headquarters would have been operating in a vacuum. Nevertheless, the rest of 80 y headquarters organization itself had something especially its own to contribute to the combination.

What was this special character? An attempt has been made, it is feared with indifferent success, to sketch that quality in the course of the following narrative. It lay, naturally, partly in the policies and personalities in command of the Corps; but the personalities of the staff also contributed a great deal. Shortly after VE-Day the Chief of Staff required the various staff sections to submit an extensive study of their operations in combat; it is an interesting and useful document, but the basic elements which made the headquarters so successful have eluded even this careful analysis. "The policies of the XII Corps Staff," comments Colonel P M Martin in the Chief of Staff section of the study, "were in all probability not greatly different in theory from those of any other, but constant vigorous effort was made to adhere to those policies and translate them into action. The policy that had the greatest effect on

operations was undoubtedly that which forbade the delegation of any mission to a subordinate unit, especially tactical units such as divisions, if it could be performed by Corps Headquarters or Corps Troops.... 'Can do' was the standing order, and the bold solution, if not rash, was invariably preferred to the cautious solution. Informality was the keynote of all staff relations, and practicality the touchstone of all decisions...." When XII Corps entered combat the headquarters personnel had trained together, with far less than average turnover, for 17 days less than two years. They performed their jobs in an atmosphere of energy and aggressiveness, and not without a certain grim humor, which could be remarked by the most casual observer. Units of all types coming into the Corps have left evidence that they could sense the difference in the quality of the support and direction they received while in the Corps.

The success of XII Corps, then, may perhaps be attributed in large measure to a threefold good fortune. The organization was forged and welded by a group of general officers among whom each one was an outstanding expert in the particular service he was called upon to give the Corps. It had an able and exceptionally well-trained staff. And its efforts were founded solidly on the superlative fighting and technological capacities of the American Ground Force soldier, unquestionably the greatest all-round warrior of the modern world. It is not surprising that with teamplay between such elements the corps made a record for itself on which every former member can well be extremely proud.

Two men who fought with XII Corps have summed up the matter in the own individual ways, as compactly and exactly as it is any work stated in the Chronicle to follow. Major Pierre L. Vivet, French liaison officer with the headquarters throughout combat, road as he prepared to return to civilian life after the war was over:

"To all my friends in Paris who eagerly keep on asking: 'What do you think of the American Army?' ... I simply answer: 'The US people are *soldat qui s'ignore*.'"

And Pfc Walter C Reed, with the XII Corps Headquarters MP Platoon during the fighting, put it this way in September of 1945: "Well, one thing you can say, we all got along together pretty good in Corps -- the officers and men. We didn't have much trouble between them. We got along pretty good together, I think."

The account which follows is primarily a record of teamplay by many fine American organizations composed of citizen-soldiers who could impress a French officer with their expertness in the art of war, and even more with the easy, and unselfconscious quality of their soldiering. It is as a record of these units, made up of such individuals, "getting along pretty good together" in successful prosecution of the greatest enterprise of our times -- that this chronicle of the XII Corps, Spearhead of Patton's Third Army, is presented.

G.D. New Hope Pennsylvania December, 1946

ABBREVIATIONS

AA	antiaircraft	BSM	Bronze Star Medal
AAA		btry	battery
AAF		c	
Abn (also ABN and A/B)		cal	
AC		cam	
AC of S			command and reconnaissance (vehicle)
act g		Capt	
adm o	Advance Section, Communications	c/at k	
Zone	Advance section, Communications	cavcav gp	_ *
adv	advance	cb	
adv msg cen		CC	
	American Expeditionary Force (or	cem	
Allied)	1 (chap	•
AESP	Army Engineers Supply Point	CHQ	
AF		CG	Commanding General
AFA	Armored Field Artillery	CIC	Counterintelligence Corps
adj	· ·		Criminal Investigation Detachment
ADC		cir	
AFN		civ	
AG		Class I Sp or Cl I Sup	
AGF			Class II Supply (Supplies and
AHQ		Equipment)	Class III Supply (Gasoline and Oil)
am			Class IV Supply (Miscellaneous)
AM			Class V Supply (Ammunition)
amb			Class 40-ton, 70-ton (maximum
ammo		carrying capacity bridge)	menas to ton, to ton (mannan
ANC		clr sta	clearing station
AP			Congressional Medal of Honor
APC		cml	
APO		Cml Co (SG)	Chemical Company (Smoke
APS	•	Generating)	
apt		4.2 Cml Mort	
APU		CO	
AR	Army Regulations	co	
ARC		C/S or C of S	
armd		coll pt	
armd div	Armored divisionArmored Field Artillery Battalion	Col	
arty		comdg	
ASF		comdr	
asgd		comdt	
ASN		comm	
ASP	Ammunition Supply Point	com z (also Com Z)	communications zone
	Adjusted Service Rating ("points" to	cont1	control
go home)		CP	
asst		CPX	
AT		Cpl	Corporal
atchd		CQ	
AT Fatk		C/S	
		CT	
atzd AU		CwW	
AUS		DAO	Division Ammunition Officer
AW		DBS	
AWOL	1	DC	
	Axis Signal Communications	DC/S	
BAR		defv	
BB	Bailey Bridge	dep	depot
BC		det	
bdry	•	DHQ	
bet		Div	
BFM		divarty	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·
bkry		DOW	
BPO		DP	
bn		DS	
brig Brig (Gen)		DSC	
br		DSM	
		_ 52.2	

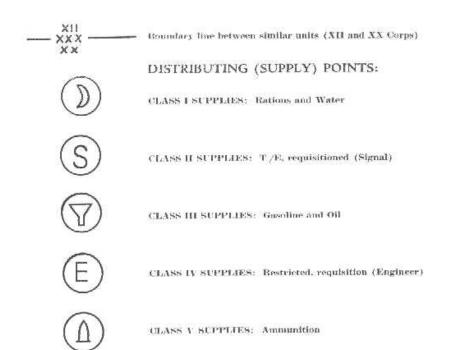
FeA Fast Control Affairs Decision FCAD European Civil Elements of Information Elements Elements of Information Elements	dy	dut y	IC	Information Center
ECA. European Civil Affairs Poission et. European Civil Affairs Poission et. European Civil Affairs Poission et. El. Escential Elements of Information in an art of the Element of Information in a civil in the Element of Information in the Element of Information in a civil in the Element of Information in Information in Element of Information in Element of Information in Information in Element of Information in Information Information in Information I				
ECAD. European Civil Affairs Devision IG. Inspector Ceneral EEL. Essential Elements of Information If. Infants EEL. Essential Elements of Information If. Infants EEL. Infants If. Infants EM. Califed man or mea If. Infants EM. Engineer Convert Service Regiment Engr CB Reg Figureer Convert Service Regiment EI JUlpu D. Egineer Ikeo y Equipment Oo EI JUlpu D. Egineer Ikeo y				4 2 ,
ech	ECAD	European Civil Affairs Division		Inspector General
EEL				
elms			inf	infantry
emb .embetade on or men P. initial point EM .engineer JAG Judge Advocate General Eng C Sn .Engineer Constal Battalion JAN Joint Amy-Navy (operation, etc.) Eng C SR Ceg .Engineer Exercise Regiment F. Joint Amy-Navy (operation, etc.) Eng C SR Ceg .Engineer Exercise Regiment F. Juncion Eng C SR Ceg				
EM				
engr — engineer — HAG — Judge Advocace General Flory CR Reg — Engreer Central Service Regiment — JAN — Join Amny-Nay (operation, etc.) For CR Reg — Engineer Central Service Regiment — JAN — Join Amny-Nay (operation, etc.) For CR Reg — Engineer Central Service Regiment — JAN — Join Amny-Nay (operation, etc.) For CR Per Levy Engineer Control of CR Pe			IDW/	Interrogation of Prisoners of War
Enger CR Bage Egineer Combat Statiation JAN			IF W	Index Advagate Concret
Engr GR Reg Egincer Ceneral Service Regiment p			JAG	Judge Advocate General
F. H. Equip Ch.	Engr C Bn	Engineer Combat Battalion		
ETOUSA — Furopean Thear of Operations KIA killed in action kinding kindiso Km) kilometers kindiso Km) kindiso K	Engr GS Regt	Egineer General Service Regiment		
United States Army evacutation 1	E H Equip Co	Egineer Heavy Equipment Co		
		European Theater of Operations	KIA	killed in action
FA			km(also Km)	kilometers
FA	evac	evacuation	1	light
FA Qp.			lat	latitude
FA Qp.	FA	Field Artillery	LC	line of communication
FAO Na Ba. Field Artilley Observation Batation F&B. Pumigation and Batah FDC. Fire Direction Center FD. Fire Department I.CV. landing craft, the vehicle FDD. Fire Department I.CV. landing craft, the vehicle Fin Dire Spect. Finance Disbursing Section FI LS. low explosive FHOSP. Field Hopktal I.D. line of departure Fire Perench—farm) FPO. Field Order Fire Perench—farm) FPO. Field Order Fire Perench—farm) FPO. Field Order FI LM. landy FPO. Field Order FI LM. leader FPF. Final Protective Line I.M. Legon of Merit FPF. Final Protective Line I.M. Legon of Merit FISA. First U S Army FISA. First U S				
F&B.	FA Oben Bn	Field Artillery Observation Battalion		
FDC	F&R	Fumigation and Rath	I CT	landing craft tank
FD				
Fin Disp Sec.			LCVD	
FIOSP			LCVP	landing craft, the venicle-personnel
fild.	Fin Disp Sec	Finance Disbursing Section	LE	low explosive
Ferric Ferrich - farm Idry Id				
Filed Order Info			LD	line of departure
FPL	Fme	Ferme (French—farm)	ldry	laundry
FIST SArmy	FO	Field Order	ldr	leader
FUSA	FPL	Final Protective Line	LM	Legion of Merit
FUSA	ft	fort		
FUSAG			LnO	liaison officer
f.wd forward L. lieutenant Fwd Ech Forward Command Post LWB long tube g (also G) gun LWA lightly wounded in action G-1 Personnel L-1, L-4, L-5 three different types of light liaison G-2 Intelligence and observation airplanes G-3 Operations maint maintenance G-4 Supply Maj major G-5 Civil Affairs mbl mobile Gen General MC Medical Corps GFRC Ground Forces replacement center mee. mechanized gen hosp general hospital med medical gov government Med GB Medical Corps GFRC Ground Forces replacement center med medical gen hosp general dreft Med Bn Medical Corps GFRC Ground Forces replacement center med medical gov government Med Bn Medal Cas Treatment Battalion	FUSAG	First U.S. Army Group	I.ST	landing shin tank
Fwd CP				
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G-2 Intelligence G-3 Operations maint maintenance G-4 Supply Maj major G-5 Civil Affairs mbl mobile Gen General MC Medical Corps GFRC Ground Forces replacement center gen hosp general hospital med medical GO general order govt government Med GT Bn Medical Batation gp group MG machine gun (also Military grd group MG machine gun (also Military grd group MG machine gun (also Military grd group MG military legice GRO Graves Registration Officer MI Military Intelligence GREQ Co (Bn) Graves Registration Company mil GR General Service MIA missing in action GS General Staff MLR Main line of resistance GSC General Staff Corps mm mill GS General Staff Corps mm millimeter GSCS General Staff MLR Main line of resistance GSCS General Staff Corps mm millimeter GSCS General Staff Corps millimeter GSCS Gener				
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Gr Reg Co (Bn)	govtgp	general order government group	Med GF Bn MG	Medical BattalionMedical Gas Treatment Battalion
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O or off	officer or officers	reinf	reinforced, -ment
0		regt	
OB	Observation Battalion	Regt S-1	•
OB	Order of Battle	Regt S-2	regimental intelligence officer
OBS	Oise Base Section	Regt S-3	regimental operations
obsn		Regt S-4	
O/C		repl	
OCS		res (also RES)	
OD		rhd (also RHD)	
od		RHQ	
OLC		RI Co	
OP		RJ	
Op Diropns		rptrept 1	*
ORC		RR	*
Ord or O		TT	
	Ordnance Ammunition Company	Rr Ech	
Ord Dep Co	ž •	RTO	
	Ordnance captivity Automotive	S	
Maintenance Company			Personnel (Staff Section, units below
	Ordnance captivity Maintenance	division in size)	(
Company	1		Intelligence (Staff Section, units below
Ord MAM Co	Ordnance Medical Automotive	division in size)	
Company		S-3	Operations (Staff Section, units below
Ord MM Co	Ordnance Medical Maintenance	division in size)	
Company		S-4	Supply (Staff Section, units below
org		division in size)	
OWI		SA	
PA	public address (voice amplifying	salv	
system)		SB S	
PCS		sec	
PE (or POE)		serv	
Pfc			sound than flash (artillery ranging
PH		system)	amala amartina
PL		SG	
		Sgt	
plat PM	1	S/Sgt T/Sgt	
POE	1	M/Sgt	
	Preparation for Oversees Movement	SHAEF	
pon	•	Expeditionary Forces	supreme Headquarters 7 timed
pos		sig	sional
PRO			Signal Construction Company (Heavy)
prov		Sig Serv Co	Signal Service Company
pt	•	Sitrep	situation report
PT	primary target	SL	
PTO		SM	Soldier's space Medal
Pvt	Private	SO	special order
PW (also POW)		SOI	
PWE		SOP	st andard operating procedure
PX	Army Post Exchange	SP	
QM		SP	
QM Car Co		Sp Sv Co	
	Quartermaster Gasoline Supply	Spec Serv Co	
Company	O	sp trs	specialtroops
	Quartermaster Group Headquarters Quartermaster Railhead Company	sq	squadron Silver Star, Special Service, Selective
QMSO		Service, or (German units)Schut	
OM Trk Co	Quartermaster Truck Company	SSO	
	Quartermaster Troop Transport		Short Sea Voyage (used as Codeto
Company	Quartermuster 1100p 1 tansport	conceal channel crossing	siron sea voyage (asea as code to
r	river	ST	secondary target
RA		sta	
rad		str	
	Recovered Allied Military Personnel	sup	
(ex-POWs)	. ,	sup pt	***
rat	rations	surg hosp	
rcn		SV	
RCT	regiment al combat team	sv cen	
R Co		SW A	seriously wounded in action
RD (RBn)	reinforcement depot (reinforcement	t or trans	transport, transportation
Battalion)		T/A	
rd		tac	
recce, or recco	reconnaissance	1 ac/K	tactical reconnaissance (airplane)

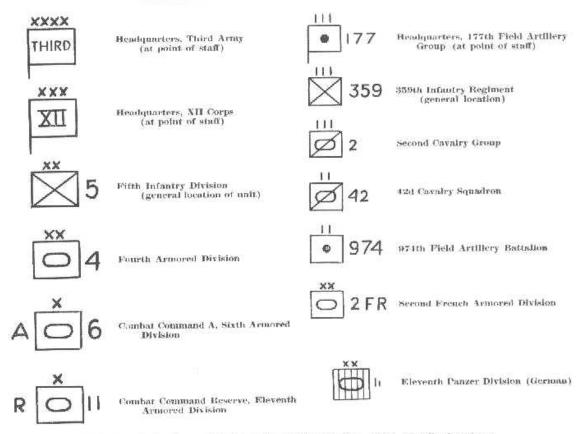
TACTactical Air Command USFET United States Forces Europe T/BATables of Basic Allowance vic TBCTactical Bomber Command VOCG verbal order commanding	
Verbar order commanding vocat verbar order commanding	general
TCTransportation Corps VOCO verbal order commanding	
T Cotransportation company W West	0111001
TCStraffic control station WAC (Wac) Women's Army Corps (me	ember of
TDtank destroyer Women's Army Corps)	
trdytreadway WD War Department	
TDy (also TDY)temporary duty WIA wounded in action	
T/Etable of the equipment w/o without	
techtechnical WO warrant officer	
	la
	e
THQTheater Headquarters wpn weapon	
tktank wpn carr weapons carrier	
Tm	• `
TMATennessee Maneuver Area w/w With Winch (on front off to	ruck)
Tng DirTraining Director z zone	
Tr Cotrain commander Z/A zone of action, or of advan	ice
Trdy Br CoTreadway Bridge Company ZI zone of Interior	
TOtransportation Officer ZTO zone transportation Officer	
T/Otable of organization "4x4" jeep, ambulance or other vo	ehicle with
topotopographic four wheels and four-wheel-drive	
TOTTime on target "6x6" 2 1/2-ton truck or other vel	hicle with
tractractor six wheels and six-wheel-drive	
tr-drtractor-drawn	
trdwytreadway COMMON GERMAN TERMS	
trktruck	
trkhdtruck had	
trs	
T/S BR Triple Single Boiley neadquarters)	
Tr TBTriple Triple Bailey FW Focke-Wolfe (airplane)	
TTR Triple Triple Besiley	
TUSA Third United States Army KK Kreis Kommandaniur (Co	ounty
TWY teletynewriter headquarters)	
T/5 Technician Fifth Class (equiv of ME Messerschmitt (airplane)	
Compresit Of Organization Foot (labority	roops)
T/A Took picion Fourth Class (aguiy of Por Pc Panzer (armored)	
Sergeant) Po Palizer Grenadier (i.e. anno	ored
T/3 Technician Third Class (equiv of Staff infantry)	
Cort POR Painzer Grenadier Regimen	nt
LIK United Kingdom (of Great Britain and SS Schutzstaffel	
Iroland) VO VOIKSgieliadiei (also Voik	sturm:
USAT United States Army Transport "people's" militia)	
One of State of Parity Liansport	

BASIC MAP SYMBOLS

Size of Unit		Type of Unit	
XXXXX	Army Group	\boxtimes	Infantry
XXXX	Army	0	Armored
жхх	Corps	•	Artillery
XX	Division	Ø	Cavalry (Mecz)
×	Brigade, Armored Division Combat Com- mand or Task Force		Armored Artillery
	Regiment, Group, or Combat Team		Anti-Aircraft
	Battalion or Squadron	TD	Tank Destroyers (E—Engineers, etc.)
	Company, Troop, Battery or Flight (AAF)		Parachute (enemy)



ILLUSTRATIVE COMBINATIONS



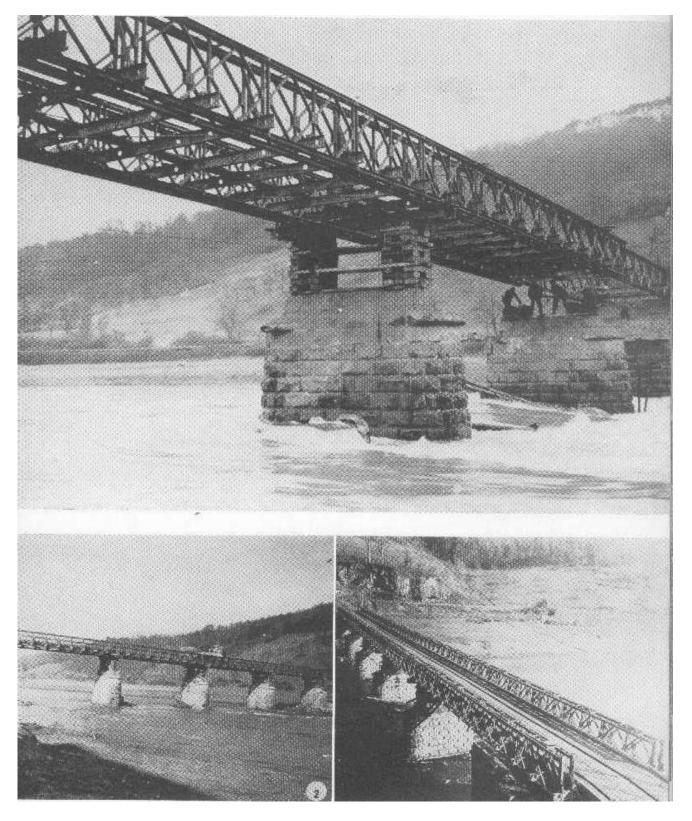
PICTURE ALBUM

GERMAN SOLDIERS DIED AND WERE CAPTURED BY THE THOUSANDS



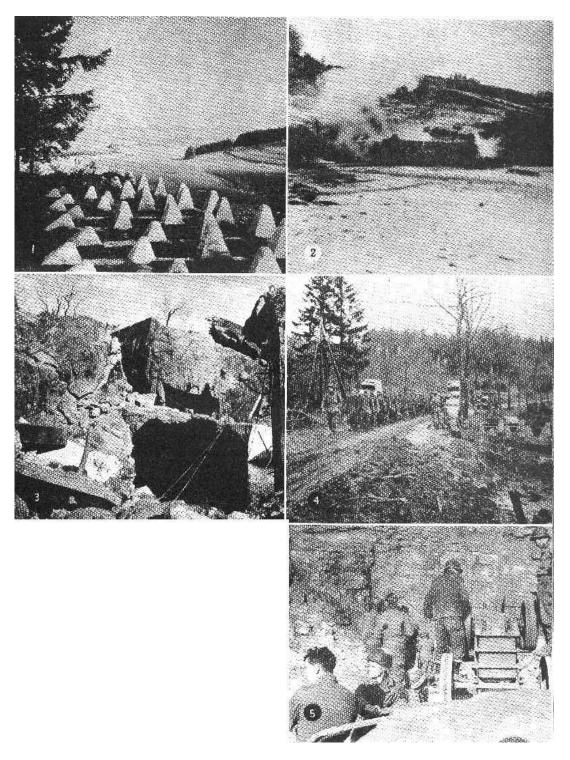
(1) One last Kraut, beside a road near Goesdorf, Luxembourg. 7 January 45. (2) XII Corps divisions hauled them in in droves: MP's of the 358th Regiment, 90th Infantry Division examine German prisoners before passing them back to Corps. 13 January. (3) The same for the 3rd Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Division. 18 January. (4) And back they go into the Third Army cage. 13 January.

BAILEYS WERE CLOSE BEHIND THE PONTONS



(1,2,3) Three photographs supplied by the 166th Engineer Combat Battalion show the 270 foot double-single Bailey Bridge constructed by the XII Corps unit across the Sauer River, Luxembourg. 16 February 45. Picture 1 gives an excellent idea of the swift current of the flooded river that cost XII Corps units many casualties during the assault crossing.

WE SMASHED THE SIEGFRIED LINE, THE VAUNTED GERMAN "WEST WALL"



(1,2,3,4) This was the sort of experience with the Siegfried Line common to all XII Corps units during the breakthrough-concrete "Dragon's Teeth" running across the fields along the edges of the wood; white phosphorus shells bursting against a dark pillbox; smashed reinforced concrete ruins of the demolition strong point; and lines of prisoners marching back through the broken defenses. (Source: 1, 2, & 4) photos by T/5 Millard McKee, 315th Engineer Combat Battalion, 90th Infantry Division; (3) 80th Infantry Division; (5) The 166th Engineers find good use for materials from a wrecked Siegfried Line pillbox near Beistorf, Germany, 19 February 45. It is being turned into crushed rock for road and bridge repairs.

Pin Ups-





SECOND MOSELLE. 14 MARCH 45-22 MARCH 45

1. The Real "Operation Grab"

The krauts had called the Ardennes offensive "Operation Grab" (*Greif*), but their operation had ended by "grabbing"-nothing. "Operation Grab" could far better be applied to XII Corps' next move. That ended by grabbing off the better part of two German armies. ...

To understand how this worked, it will be necessary to take a look at the Big Picture. Just northwest of the point where XII Corps columns at first struck the banks of the Rhine lay the little town of Remagen. There, as the whole world knows, on 7 March 45, the 9th Armored and 9th Infantry Divisions, with other troops of First Army's III Corps, had had the audacity and incredible good fortune to capture still standing a bridge across the great river. This span, the Ludendorf Railway Bridge, had been seized, with superb courage and presence of mind, by the first American troops to reach it. The US Army had immediately thrown its heart, and everything else it had to risk, across into the lucky bridgehead. For 10 days of irreplaceable activity that damaged span held. Then without warning it fell into the river with two hundred odd Americans who happened to be on it at the instant. But by then American engineers had backed up the crossing with floating bridges and the great steel structure was no longer indispensable.

As XII Corps stood poised in the angle of the Rhine and Moselle, troops had been pouring across the Ludendorf Bridge for a week. It must've seemed to the German High Command that XII Corps' armor and infantry would inevitably be sucked into that sluiceway – so near at hand, so nearly in a direct continuation of the arrow-flight of the corps all the way from Luxembourg. But if this was their exact line of reasoning, they counted without two important factors: (1) it was apparent that the armies to the North had the Remagen situation well in hand and (2) in another direction lay even more gleaming prizes for XII Corps to take for the grabbing.

Just southeast of the Moselle lay two German provinces, the Palatinate and the Saarland. Against the fortifications and the estimated 80,000 soldiers of the German First and Seventh Armies, protecting these rich territories along their southern boundary, the Seventh U.S. Army had been battering for small advantage since December 1944. Between Seventh Army and XII Corps, XX Corps of the Third Army had been stalled to the south of the hinge city of Trier since before the beginning of the Battle of the Bulge. What the situation obviously called for was some decisive force applied in an unexpected direction to bring the whole regrettable impasse to a solution. That force was applied, and the whole affair brought to a brilliant outcome, by XII Corps. The operation took exactly 1 week. The key was supplied by the Corps' second great surprise crossing of the Moselle.*

XII Corps did not even pause to occupy the city of Koblenz, well known to Americans from days after World War I, which it had cut off at the juncture of the Moselle and Rhine. This chore was left to VIII Corps. XII Corps spun on its collective heel, and went off on a run, almost at right angles to its previous axis of advance.

The "scope" section of the Corps After Action Report summarizes the operation as follows:

"While the Eifel area was being cleared down to the Rhine and Moselle Rivers, and the city of Koblenz at the confluence was pocketed, the Corps regrouped for a change of direction to the southeast to make a surprise crossing of the Moselle. On the early morning of 14 March, with the 90th Infantry Division on the left and the 5th Infantry Division on the right, assault crossings were made in the Hatzenport-Treis area. Surprise was achieved over the enemy, who was engaged with moving in troops to establish a defensive line along the right bank. By noon of 15 March, the 4th Armored Division had crossed the river with one combat command in each infantry division bridgehead, and was making good progress into the high undulating ridge of the Hunsruk. The favorable weather, the improved road net, and a large expanse of rolling high plateau permitted full exploitation of the power of the armor-infantry team over an enemy who sought to disengage itself from the XX Corps and the Seventh Army troops farther south and flee over the Rhine. On 16 March, while the 5th and the 90th Infantry Divisions swept Southwest, the 4th Armored Division broke out and reached Bad Kreuznach, 35 miles southeast of the Moselle. On the same day the 89th Infantry Division crossed the Moselle near Bullay, and the 11th Armored Division, which had just been transferred from the VIII Corps, moved to cross in the 89th Infantry Division bridgehead."

Again the operations of a particular day are so interesting is to justify excerpting a whole 24-hour period verbatim from the daily narrative of the same report:

14 March 1945

"Good weather permitted to 362nd Group to fly 20 missions on the XII Corps front. ... the Corps attacked to the southeast across the Moselle River.

"The 90th Infantry Division, on the Corps left flank, jumped off at 0200A and at 0300A the 1st Battalion and two companies of the 3rd Battalions of both the 357th and 359th Infantries were across against light resistance. Assault boats were used in the crossing. The 357th Infantry crossed north of Kattenes and the 359th Infantry crossed at Sterneberg. At 0430A both the 1st and 3rd Battalions of the 357th Infantry were across and Alken was being cleared. By 0630A the whole 357th Infantry was across and resistance began to stiffen. The 3rd Battalion, 357th Infantry, moved along the river, cleared Alken by 1000A, and occupied the ground southeast of Alken. At the close of the day it was protecting the north flank of the bridgehead in the vicinity of Oberfeld. The 1st Battalion, which crossed at Lof, by nightfall had advanced southeast through Oppenhausen and at 1930A cleared Herschwiesen. The 2nd Battalion, 357th Infantry, began crossing at 0500A and advanced east, taking Norteshausen and reaching Pfaffenheck by noon as progress continued. At 1630A a footbridge which had washed away in the 5th Infantry zone, came downstream into the 90th Infantry Division zone and collided with the Treadway being built by the 1135th Engineer Combat Group at Hatzenport. This caused a delay; however, the bridge was completed by dark. The 88th Heavy Ponton Battalion of the 1135th Engineer Combat Group completed by evening a Class 70 bridge at Moselkern. During the night three tank companies, three TD companies, and trains of all three regiments, as well as three artillery battalions, had moved across the river.

"The 5th Infantry Division made its crossing against light resistance. The 11th Infantry did not receive its assault boats until 0255A. As a result, the crossing did not begin until 0430A. the regiment advanced slowly. By nightfall the 3rd Battalion cleared Lutz and the regiment assembled in that vicinity. The 2nd Infantry jumped off on time and by 0240A had two companies across. Enemy in the vicinity of Treis began giving the 1st Battalion trouble with small arms fire during the morning. A company of tanks and TDs was sent across the river and in the evening Treis was cleared. The 3rd Battalion cleared the high ground in its sector in the bridgehead area. The 10th Infantry continued to harass the south shore in its zone. At 2100A a Treadway Bridge was completed at Muden by the 1135th

Engineer Combat Group. One company of TDs crossed during the day. Foot bridges in the 2nd and 11th Infantry zones were out at 1525A, one by artillery, the other washed away.

"The 89th Infantry Division had only slight changes in its zone. The 3rd Battalion, 355th Infantry, took Ernst during the morning. Constant enemy fire was received in the vicinity during the day and night. Patrols were sent out to reconnoiter Ellerz. The 2nd Battalion took Edinger during the day. Bridging equipment and assault boats began to arrive in the area during the day.

"In a zone of the 76th Infantry Division enemy opposition was practically nonexistent. All the enemy was cleared in its zone except in the river bands at Traben and Trittenheim.

"At 1045A the 2nd Cavalry Group (less 2nd Cavalry Squadron) was relieved from attachment to the 76th Infantry Division. The 42nd Cavalry Squadron closed in the vicinity of Kollig at 2250A. At 1700A CCA, 4th Armored Division, closed around Kerben. At 2030A CCR closed in an assembly area at Gamlen.

"Enemy artillery activity increased during the morning but dropped off again towards evening. The majority of the fire was 75 mm.

"Operational Directive No 87 was issued, setting H-Hour as 1420A for the 5th and 90th Infantry Divisions to attack as ordered in Field Order 16. ..."

An element not thoroughly covered in the foregoing quotation is the part played by XII Corps artillery in the Moselle Crossing. Here the XII Corps daily artillery report to the Third Army proves of assistance. This excellent report, customarily in far greater detail with regards to the subjects of its special interest than could be in the daily narrative of the after action report for the Corps as a whole, provides a wealth of material revealing just what every group and battalion on any given day was doing for the good of the service and the progress of the war. Most important for purposes of a chronicle such as this, it supplies information which cannot be secured from any series of station lists, or given in any form, compact enough to include completely in an appendix, i.e., the data as to which groups and battalions were supporting which other Corps units, day by day. For the Moselle Crossing a typical Organization for Combat is outlined in the XII Corps "Daily Army Artillery Reports" for 12-14 March 44:

177th FA Gp:

Atchd: 255th FA Bn 276th FA Bn 179th FA Bn 974th FA Bn

G/S Corps

Reinf. 4th Armd Div w/ 1 Lt & 2 Med Bns; later reinf 90th Inf Div

182nd FA Gp;

Atchd: 512th FA Bn 191st FA Bn 771st FA Bn 740th FA Bn

G/S Corps

Reinf 5th Inf Div w/ 1 lt & 2 med Bns

183rd FA Gp;

Atchd: 244th FA Bn 738th FA Bn 731st FA Bn

G/S Corps

33rd FA Gp;

Atchd: 945th FA Bn 775th FA Bn 273rd FA Bn

G/S Corps

Reinf 76th Inf Div w/1 med Bn Reinf 89th inf Div w/1 med Bn

Hq & Hq Btry, XII Corps Arty (Fire Direction Center)
Atchd: 286th FA Obsn Bn (-"B" Btry)

734th FA Bn

G/S Corps

Direct fire Z/A (Zone of Action)90th & 5th Inf Divs

410th FA Gp (FDC):

Atchd: Hq & Hq Btry 288th FA Obsn Bn (+"B" Btry 286th FA Obsn Bn)

G/S Corps

Direct fire Z/A 90th & 5th Inf Divs.

Unlike the Rhine Crossing a week later, the Moselle Crossing featured thourough artillery preparation. As will be seen immediately above, the 182nd Field Artillery Group was assigned to fire, under direction of the 410th Field Artillery Group Fire Direction Center, not only in general support of the Corps but also in the zone of action of the 5th Infantry Division, to support its Crossing, with one light and two medium battalions in addition to the 5th Infantry Division's regular "Divarty." A first lieutenant and one of the XII Corps 155 mm howitzer battalions – Lt Clayton C. Uran, a battery executive with the 771st Field Artillery Battalion – has left a record of a representative experience in this operation:

"March 12, 1945, at Moselkern, Germany, we were in an area jammed and packed with artillery battalions; we were told that we were in position to help support the 5th Division's crossing of the Moselle. We were in position two days and hadn't accomplished any firing at all. Engineers were constantly bringing up equipment to aid in the river crossing. A patch of woods across the road to our right was used as a bivouac for the engineers. In moving into this position we were carrying so much ammunition as a basic load that it had to be shuttled. We would leave approximately 200 rounds behind, which we could not possibly carry, with guards and markers on it, and upon arriving at the new position, send back for the 200 rounds. The ammo trucks at the battery position were unloaded and sent back for the 200 rounds. In the early hours of the 14th ... we were notified that we would be firing a 30 minute preparation for the Moselle Crossing. The gun sections were alerted, ammunition brought up, and other necessary preparations were made for accomplishing the mission. Firing data was sent down from Fire Direction about 30 minutes in advance of the missions. The data was entered on Recorder's Sheets for 10 missions, to be fired at three-minute intervals. This would call for fast and faultless work at both the exec post and gun sections. The exec post was in a pyramidal tent, straw floored, with a looted German

stove throwing out heat. Phones and wires were leading every of which way. With the recorder's sheets in front of me, I was sending the missions to the guns; the assistant exec was handling the Fire Direction phone. As I remember, firing started at 0100 – and at this time all hell broke loose. All the watches in the area were synchronized, and the rounds from many battalions went off together. I understand we were firing on enemy's strong points across the Moselle. All of our 10 missions were accomplished smoothly and without delay. At two o'clock on the afternoon of the 14th, we moved to a position only 10 yards from the banks of the Moselle. (We were still on the North Side.) Our Battalion CP was near Karden and Meden. During the march to this position over a winding and narrow road along the river, the battery was halted while an engineer crew was emplacing a ferry across the Moselle. During the halt, the battery received enemy artillery fire. Due to the dispersion of the vehicles, and the scattering of the men, no damage was done. After about 15 minutes, the battery was able to proceed to its position. It was at this position that the men had their first taste of the famous Moselle wine. We remained in this position until midnight of the 16th. We crossed the 5th Division's bridgehead at about 0400 hours. The men were groggy from lack of sleep."

In the zone of the 90th Infantry Division Crossing, artillery was also hard at work. A candidate for the title of neatest trick of the week is reported by Major Frank E. Willard, of the 738th Field Artillery Battalion:

"About the 15th of March 1945, the 738th Field Artillery was assigned to the 183rd Group reinforcing the fires of the 90th Infantry Division in the Moselle River crossing. We crossed the river and went into position in the vicinity of the town of Ganshof. We lost all communication with any higher headquarters because we got ahead of them and no communication had been established yet across the river. The Germans were shelling the town when the Command Post was established. The 4th Armored Division was passing through the 90th but was being held up about 2 miles up the road by antitank fire. There was an artillery liaison plane of the 177th Field Artillery Group flying in the vicinity of our Command Post. He got in communication with us and told us that he could see where the fire was coming from which was holding up the 4th Armored advance. Our own club plane also identified these guns but he warned us that our own troops were within 200 yards of them. He said he could see the panels our troops were displaying. The 177th Group plane broke in and said that he thought it would be okay to shoot if we didn't shoot short. We put a round out from one gun and the 177th Group pilot adjusted our fire. We fired a total of seven rounds including the adjustment and knocked out three towed 88 mm German guns. I went up the next afternoon after our troops had taken that ground and saw the knocked out German guns myself.

"From this same position, later the same afternoon, we fired another interesting mission. Our pilot saw German vehicles assembling in a clump of woods along a prominent highway. He called for fire on his target. We couldn't get clearance because of the difficulties in communication but we shot it anyway. We fired 40 rounds of 200 pound shells into the woods. The next day the Battalion Commanding Officer and myself went up to look at the results of this concentration. We counted the chassis of 15 burned out vehicles plus much horse-drawn and miscellaneous equipment. The Polish Displaced Persons in that vicinity told us that our concentration had killed 50 Germans who had been evacuated."

During the operations along the Moselle the 273rd Field Artillery Battalion broke into print by firing, on 16 March 45, XII Corps Artillery's 2,000,000th artillery round. This outfit, commanded by Lt Col Milton L. Acuff, of Algood, Tenn, was a 155 mm gun battalion. The gun, a Long Tom of Baker Battery, was emplaced northwest of Buren, and it dropped the corps' 2,000,000 round on some deserving Krauts near Tellig.**

Other nominees for a little morale-lifting publicity, from among XII Corps troops involved in the Moselle Crossing, are suggested in a letter dated 16 March 45, sent to the Nancy edition of the *Stars & Stripes*:

"DEAR MAIL CALL:

"You have printed several letters from Artillery outfits telling of their firing records, so why not a line for the Combat Engineers?

"Members of the 1135th Engineer Combat Group built three Class 40 bridges on D-Day of the Crossing of the Moselle, 14 March. As far as we know that is a record for any one Group.

"One of these, a heavy ponton, was built in the remarkable time of four hours and 10 minutes by the 88th Heavy Ponton Battalion. That ought to be another record.

"The other two were treadways, one built in $8\,1/2$ hours and the other in 11 hours, by the 150th Engineer Combat Battalion.

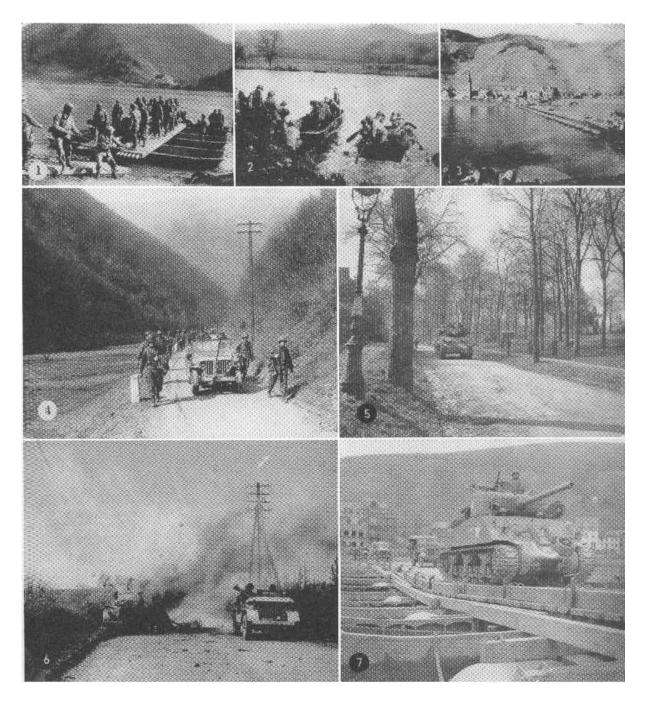
"Remember, this was across a 400-foot-wide river and that the enemy had observation of bridge sites.

Sincerely yours, etc."

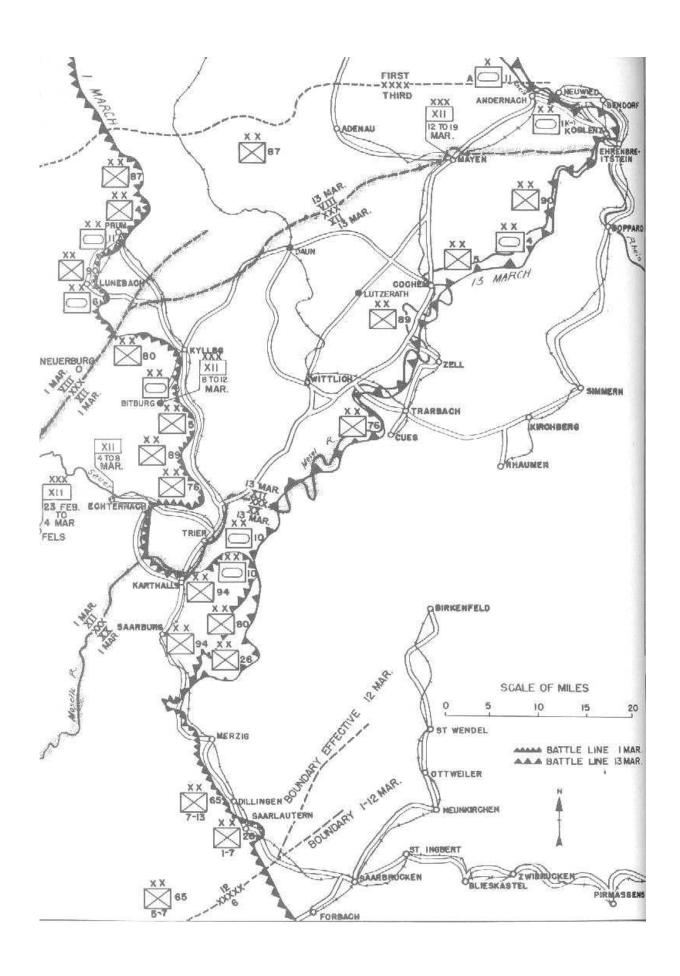
History faileth to reveal whether this well-deserved "plug" got into the public prints, or not.

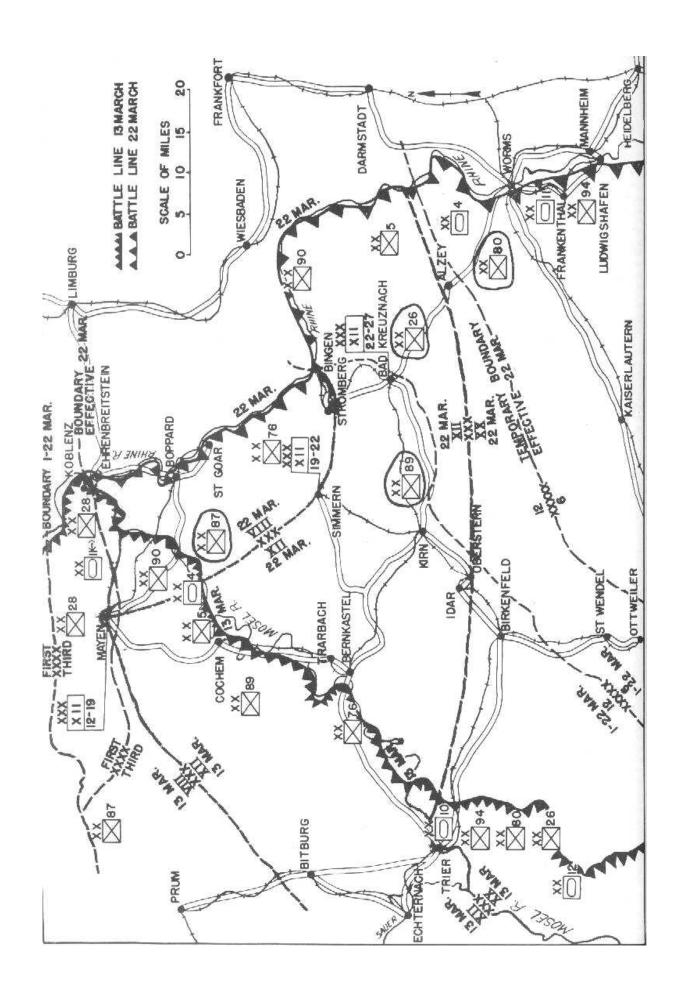
- * The Kraut spelling of this by the way, is Mosel, as will be noted on various maps.
- ** Mr. Julian W Moody, formerly with 273rd Field Artillery Battalion, and compiler of Mission Accomplished, the Pictorial Memoirs of the 273rd Field Artillery Battalion in Combat, World War II, contributes the exact data on XII Corps' 2,000,000th round: "Fired by S/Sgt Adam's gun crew of B Battery, at 1520 hours on 16 March 45. Powder charge 'super', fuse 'quick'. Fired in registration on a crossroads about 600 m north of village of Teilig. B Battery was located along a road running NW out of town of Beuren (500 m out of town) near the Moselle River. The actual map coordinates on this position are 552.538-367.022."

SIX DIVISIONS ABREAST, XII CORPS POURED ACROSS THE MOSELLE, 14 MAR-18 MAR 45



(1, 2, & 3) Starting with assault crossings during the night of 13-14 March 45, by the 5th and a 90th Infantry Divisions on XII corps' east flank, the surprise attack across the Moselle kept river progress in the following days by crossings affected by the 4th Armored Division, 89th Infantry Division, 11th Armored Division, and 76th Infantry Division the last passing over the river on a team march at the extreme southwest flank in the XII Corps' line. Armor and infantry drove irresistably for Bingen, Mainz and Worms - and the Rhine. (Pictures (2) and (3) taken by T/Sgt Millard McKee, 315th Engineer Combat Battalion, 90th Infantry Division; (4) The 5th Infantry Division advances: Headquarters Company 2nd Battalion, 11th Infantry Regiment moving on Lutz, Germany, 15 March. (5) The 90th Infantry Division advances: 1st Battalion, 359th Infantry Regiment and 773rd Tank Battalion in Mainz, 22 March. (6) The 4th Armored Division advances: vehicles of the 66th Armored Field Artillery Battalion scooted by a burning German truck on its way to Worms, 20 March. (7) The 4th Armored Division advances: tanks and trucks of the division weigh down a ponton bridge in the 89th Infantry Division zone, with Alf, Germany, in the background, 17 March.





2. Six Divisions

General Eddie has spoken feelingly, since the war, on the subject of a corps commander's job when his corps contains six divisions. "Five divisions," he observes, "keep the corps commander busy and under continuous strain. His telephone is ringing all the time, day and night. But directing a corps, which has six divisions in it is, for him, like driving six horses abreast while standing astraddle on the center pair – and never able to stop or get off. ..." the period between the Moselle and the Rhine was one of those in which XII Corps had, in addition to all of the artillery, engineers, and every other sort of Corps units, – 6 divisions. Station List number 68, 20 March 45 contains the following formidable list of divisional assignments (with the 2nd Cavalry Group slipping in as a temporary addition to a division):

4th Armd Div 489th AAA AW (SP) 495th Eng Trdw Br Co 704th TD Bn (SP) 444th QM Trk Co 3804th QM Trk Co 1st Plat 16th F Hosp	Olympic Lubricate Harpoon	Maj Gen Gaffey Lt Col Murphy Capt Teagle Lt Col Bidwell Maj Petinga
11th Armd Div 575th AAA AW Bn 705th TD Bn 3rd Plat 16th F Hosp 381st QM Trk Co 659th QM Trk Co	Batman Halfsword Highseed	Brig Gen Dager Lt Col Baker Maj Dibble Maj Wilkins
5th Inf Div 449th AAA AW Bn (Mbl) Co B 91st Cml Mortar Bn 803rd TD Bn (SP) 737th Tk Bn 1st Plat 30th F Hosp	Dynamite Atone Victim Hermit	Maj Gen Irwin Lt Col Kenison Capt Grove Lt Col Goodwin Lt Col Kroschel Maj Mulligan
76th Inf Div 778th AAA AW Bn (SP) 808th TD Bn 1st Plat 60th F Hosp	Triangle Chowder Hight	Maj Gen Schmidt Lt Col Arthur Lt Col McDonald Maj Troxler
89th Inf Div 550th AAA AW Bn (Mbl) Co A 91st Cml Mortar Bn 602nd TD Bn 2nd Plat 16th F Hosp	Tuxedo High Pocket Corsair	Maj Gen Finley Lt Col Kimm Lt Higgins Maj Conlin Maj Tulsky
90th Inf Div 2nd Cav Gp 2nd Cav Sq (Mcz) 42nd Cav SQ (Mcz)	Unicorn Thoroughbred Hideout Hidden	Brig Gen Earnest ol Reed Lt Col Easton Lt Col Hargis

Co A 808th TD Bn

537 AAA AW Bn Mayfair Lt Col Recer
Co C 91st Chm Mortar Bn Capt Horton
773rd TD Bn Hellfire Lt Col Speiss
712th Tk Bn Motor Lt Col Kadrovsky
1st Plat 59th F Hosp Maj Forman

Among these will be seen such veteran battlefield attachments of the corps as the 4th Armored and 5th Infantry Divisions, the latter now on the very brink of its most spectacular operation of World War II. But besides these may be noted some newcomers soon to be also of the very bone and sinew of XII Corps.

Assigned to XII Corps on the day of the second Moselle Crossing, and destined to be a part of the corps without interruption from then on until long after the end of the war, was one of the greatest fighting units of the War in Europe, – the 90th Infantry Division.*

The 90th Infantry Division might at this juncture be receiving its introduction to XII Corps, but it was no stranger to war. It had beaten the senior organization into battle, when the "Tough 'Ombres" (wearing on the left shoulder the red T-O which originally stood for Texas-Oklahoma) hit the Normandy beaches on D-Day, and were in battle for 53 unbroken days thereafter. Indeed, since the 90th Infantry Division of World War I had fought at St. Mihiel and in the Meuse-Argonne, the outfit might be said to have beaten XII Corps into combat by one whole war. Since D-Day it had taken part in the race across France, the siege of Metz, the smashing of the Seigfried Line and other distinguished operations to carry the war into Germany. It was to accomplish some of its most noted feats while a part of XII Corps, as will be found recorded in words and pictures further along in this chronicle.

The 11th Armored Division joined the corps a few days later (20 March 45) than the 90th Infantry Division, but, with one brief period away, it was also to be with the corps until after the end of the war. It had not been introduced to battle as early as either the division it served beside or the corps of which it was to be a thundering part. But it had had a rude introduction to warfare:

"The 11th was assigned to the Lorient pocket," says the I & E historical pamphlet for the division, "on the day first elements of the division landed at Cherbourg. But that day was 16 December, when Field Marshall Gred von Rundstedt unleashed his massive counteroffensive in the Ardennes. That scrapped the original plans. Tanks, halftracks, armored cars, peeps and trucks took off in a dash through the rubbled towns of Normandy, the Seine Valley, northeast through the Argonne to the banks of the Meuse River. Bitter cold, rain and snow made the march a rugged test of armored skill.

"On the Meuse, elements of the division were tactically deployed for the first time. Assigned to guard the river from Givet to Verdun, CCA, commanded by Brig Gen Willard A. Holbrook Jr. was divided into two task forces for patrol activity. All bridges across the river were prepared for demolition in the event Germans broke through.

"In the meantime, the sole supply corridor to the embattled Americans in Bastogne was being threatened by German counterattacks. Again the 11th changed its plans, turned the Meuse River defense over to the 17th Airborne Division, and on 29 December roared 85 miles to an assembly area near Neufchateau. Without a pause, the division launched into its first action. Attacking abreast, CCA and Col Wesley W Yale's CCB jumped off at 0730 next day with the 51st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron. Within an hour, the drive ran smack into an enemy attack headed for the highway. The

fighting was fierce and bitter. One CCB tank force punched its way into Lavaselle and seized the high ground near Brul and Haumont. Despite a heavy artillery barrage that night, all gains were held.

"Reserve Command, under Col Virgil Bell, struck next day, grabbed key terrain southwest of Pinsamount. Pressing on to Acul, CCR doughs were pinned down by heavy enemy artillery and mortar fire.

"Twice, in the slugging battle, CCB armored doughs tried to seize the town of Chenogne but each time superior forces drove them off. The third and final assault was launched on New Year's morning. Tanks and artillery laid down massed fire while the infantry followed up. The town was completely secured by noon. While CCB regrouped, 13 artillery battalions hurled a paralyzing barrage of fire on the heavily defended Bois des Valets. Armored doughs penetrated the thick woods and cleaned it out. Seizure of this key point doomed the German effort to cut the supply route. CCB next caught Mande St Etienne in a pincers move 2 January 45, and held it against a powerful counterattack.

"Screened by harassing artillery fire, the division was relieved the next day by the 17th Airborne Division. The Thunderbolt Division – 11th Armored – had tackled two ace Nazi divisions, punched them back 6 miles in five freezing days, cleared 30 square miles of rugged terrain, liberated more than a dozen towns and ended the threat to the supply route. The division suffered heavy casualties in its combat baptism but it had inflicted greater losses on the enemy. After nearly 2 1/2 years of training, the 11th had earned its Spurs. ...

After this "rugged" baptism of fire, the 11th Armored Division had proceeded via the key town of Houffalize (where early on 18 January 45 elements of the division represented Third Army in its juncture with First Army to seal off the remains of the Bulge), thence through the Seigfried Line, and onward, as teammate of the 90th Infantry Division, to the Rhine river bank and its first contact with XII Corps at Mayen, as mentioned before.

Earliest of the three "new" divisions to be assigned to XII Corps during the phases dealt with in this part of the narrative, the 89th Infantry Division was also to be most briefly with the corps. It was picked up on 3 March, and lost again 19 days later to VIII Corps. But that short association was an historic one, a period packed with headline – and front line – events. The 89th Infantry Division, like the 90th, had fought in the St. Mihiel and Meuse-Argonne battles of World War I. Like the 11th Armored Division's introduction to combat, that of the 89th Infantry Division's was also "rugged," but in its case mostly because of the difficult terrain of the Moselle Valley, where it was first committed to action under guidance of XII Corps Headquarters and units. The men of the 89th Infantry Division reached battle positions along the Sauer on 11 March 45, and were fighting among ravines and precipices of the northwestern bank of the Moselle the following day. The "Rolling W" shoulder patch became familiar to many members of XII Corps along the Moselle and in the Palatinate; – they were to encounter it again under very different circumstances around Rheims, France, after the war, when personnel of the corps were streaming back through the great Assembly Area Camps of Lucky Strike, Old Gold and Twenty Grande, which the men of the 89th Infantry Division would be called upon to operate.

Branch Unit
DIVISION 90TH Inf
Asst Div Cmdr
GENERAL STAFF Chief of Staff

Code Name Unicorn 6 Unicorn 5 Commanding Officer Brig Gen Earnest Col Tully Col Whitchomb

^{*} And on this same date G3 section of XII corps Headquarters published the mimeo graphed "breakdown" of the division, which fortunately has been preserved in the Corps records. It is reproduced here because it will serve as a sample of all such breakdowns, and could be of no better XII Corps comrade in arms:

	G1	Unicorn 1	Maj Lynch
	G2	Unicorn 2	Lt Col Boswell
	G3	Unicorn 3	Lt Col Booth
	G4	Unicorn 4	Lt Col Andrews
SPECIAL STAFF	Adj Gen	Unicorn (Rear 7)	Lt Col Dix
Si EciriE Siziri	Chaplain	Unicorn (Rear 7)	Lt Col Wilson
	Chem Warfare Serv	Unicorn 24	Lt Col Schepps
	Div QM	Unicorn (QDUM)	Lt Col Thompson
	Fin O	Unicorn (Rear 7)	Lt Col Cooper
	Ord O	Utensil	Lt Col Sinclair
	Inspec Gen	Unicorn (Rear 7)	Maj Babbin
	Judg Adv	Unicorn (Rear 7)	Maj Brick Jr
	Div Sig O	Unicorn 10	Lt Col Hornung
	Div Surg	Unicorn 16	Lt Col Andre
	Spec Serv O	Unicorn (Rear 36)	Maj Smith
	CAO	Unicorn (Mil Gov)	Lt Col Russell
	Div Engr O	Unicorn 15	Lt Col Gilchrist
CAVALRY	90th Ren Tr	Underwood	Capt Dye
INFANTRY	357th Inf Regt	Union	Lt Col Mason
	1st Bn	Union Red	Lt Col De Puy
	2nd Bn	Union White	Lt Col Rossow
	3rd Bn	Union Blue	Maj Warden
	358th Inf Regt	Utopia	Col Bealke
	1st Bn	Utopia Red	Lt Col Nichols Jr.
	2nd Bn	Utopia White	Lt Col Lytle
	3rd Bn	Utopia Blue	Maj Bryan
	359th Inf Regt	Unique	Col Bell
	1st Bn	Unique Red	Maj Fisk
	2nd Bn	Unique White	Maj Miller
	3rd Bn	Unique Blue	Lt Col Godding
FIELD ARTILLERY	90th Inf Div Arty	Universe	Brig Gen Bixby
	343rd FA Bn	Urban	Lt Col Reimers
	344th FA Bn	United	Maj Conn
	345th FA Bn	Umber	Lt Col Norris
	915th FA Bn	Upstart	Lt Col Hughes
ENGINEER	315th Engr Bn	Utiity	Lt Col Gilchrist
MEDICAL	315th Med Bn	Undercut	Lt Col Gower
ORDNANCE	790th Ord Co	Utensil	Capt Connor
SIGNAL	90th Sig Co	Uncanny	Capt Montgomery
QUARTERM ASTER	90th QM Co	Uranium	Capt Floyd
SPECIAL TROOPS	Hq Spes Tr	Unicorn 34	Lt Col O'Bryant
MILITARY POLICE	MP Plat	Unicorn 37	1st Lt Peterson

In the original there follows a list of attachments to the division already reproduced above.

3. The Nahe

Next river for the XII Corps to cross was the Nahe. During the week following the successful assault on a disorganized and surprised Moselle Line, the corps, "with the 4th and 11th Armored Divisions preceding, the 90th and the 5th Infantry Divisions following, the 89th Infantry Division echeloned to the right rear, and the 2nd Cavalry Group on the left rear along the Rhine, swept southeast through the Hunsruck, across the Nahe River, and turned eastward into the open Rheinpfalz plateau."

The pattern of this grandiose enterprise was now clear for anyone, particularly the Germans, to see. For once Third Army's After Action Report is more enthusiastic and extensive in its recital of the XII Corps operations during this period than the corps' own report quoted in the preceding paragraph:

"XII Corps' drive across the enemy's rear ... threw the enemy into a panic, but despite hurried reinforcements he was unable to halt the penetration. By 16 March, XII Corps had seized the key cities of Kirn, Bad Kreuznach and Bingen and had linked up with XX Corps, thus pocketing remnants of ten enemy divisions in the central Hunsruck Mountains. ..." Here are typical extracts given the story of XX Corps' next few days from the Third Army point of view:

16 March 44. "Continuing its whirlwind drive to the south, the 4th Armored Division (XII Corps) gained up to 18 miles, with CCA closing to the Nahe River in the vicinity of Bretzenheim while CCB crossed the Nahe River near Bad Mnnster, then continued south through Hallgarten. The attached 10th and 359th Infantry Regiments were well in advance of other infantry units, with the 359th Infantry in Simmern at the close of the period, while the 10th Infantry captured Blankenrath and Panzweiler. The 90th Infantry Division(less the 359th Infantry) reduced the enemy and the far eastern section of the corps zone, clearing Bad Salzig and Boppard. To the west, the 5th Infantry Division (less the 10th Infantry) gained 7 miles, taking Buch, Kastellaun and Hundheim in its mopping up drive to the rear of the 4th Armored Division. By this time the 4th Armored Division was cutting up enemy units on a large-scale, while the 5th and 90th Infantry Divisions were mopping up and taking large numbers of prisoners. The 89th Infantry Division enlarged its bridgehead over the Moselle River, gaining 4 1/2 miles and taking Burg, Briedel and Ellenz, while the 76th Infantry Division maintained its positions on the north bank of the Moselle River in the western section of the XII Corps zone. The 2nd Cavalry Group screened the corps north flank, while maintaining contact with VIII Corps. ..."

17 March 44. "XII Corps' spearhead continued to be its 4th Armored Division, followed up by the 5th and 90th Infantry Divisions. Gains of six miles were made by the 4th Armored Division after it passed through Bad Kreuznach. Three minor counterattacks were easily repulsed by the division. The 5th Infantry Division gained five miles with the 2nd and 11th Infantry Regiments while the 10th Infantry was relieved from 4th Armored Division and reverted to the 5th Infantry Division. The 359th (90th Infantry Division) continued to support the 4th Armored Division, while the remainder of the 90th Infantry Division gained two miles, mopping up and clearing the enemy to the Rhine River. After closing in corps zone, the 11th Armored Division passed through the 89th Infantry Division, gaining more than 15 miles. At the end of the period, forward elements of the 11th Armored Division were about 10 miles northwest of the 4th Armored Division. After being motorized, the 355th Infantry (89th Infantry Division) followed closely behind the 11th Armored Division, while the remainder of the 89th Infantry Division pushed forward 3 miles. To the west, the 76th Infantry Division maintained its position north of the Moselle River, while in the eastern extremity of the corps zone the 2nd Cavalry Group continued to screen the flank along the Rhine River. ..."

18 March 44. "Along the Rhine River in the northern part of the XII Corps zone, the 2nd Cavalry Group patrolled aggressively while the 90th Infantry Division cleared ground south along the river beyond Bingen which was under attack by the end of the period. The 4th Armored Division made gains south of the Nahe River while fanning out to the east and west in order to reduce bypassed concentrations of the enemy. Soberheim and Reckerhausen were captured while the important town of Bad Kreuznach was cleared. Gaining 8 miles, the 11th Armored Division continued to advance rapidly. CCA forded the Nahe River, capturing Meddersheim, while CCB crossed the same River 5 miles to the west and captured Becherbach. The 355th Infantry (89th Infantry Division) was attached to 11th Armored Division and followed it closely, while the remainder of the 89th Infantry Division reduced enemy troops bypassed by the armored column. Crossing the Moselle River, the 304th Infantry (76th Infantry Division) gained 1 mile while the remainder of the division patrolled north of the River."

Some color for these operations may be gleaned from an account of the Nahe Crossing by the 1st Lt Max A. Stricker, of the 166th Engineer Combat Battalion:

"The 4th Armored Division had crossed the Nahe River with a few tanks and TDs by means of a railroad bridge at a little town south of Bad Kreuznach called Bad Mnnster, on 16 March 45. Our mission was to plank the rails so that vehicles could cross.

"The 3rd platoon of Company C of the 166th Engineer Combat Battalion was to do the job. We moved up two or three miles through a huge woods, escorted by a convoy of 12 light tanks, as we weren't sure where the enemy was. We had six trucks, with men and lumber to do the job. I was in a jeep. We met no resistance. We arrived around 1000 and finished the job by 1600. The bridge was 960 feet long, one way. This was just an expediency until a proper bridge could be built at Bad Kreuznach. While we were working a few Jerry planes came over and strafed, but we had no casualties.

"On 19 March we built a Bailey bridge at Bad Kreuznach. The town had offered little resistance, and we pulled in right behind the 359th Infantry Regiment of the 90th Infantry Division which had cleared it. A few of the infantry foot troops had crossed on the wreckage of the old bridge, while the rest of the 359th waited for us to complete the bridge. We started around 1000. It was a triple single, because of the distance, which was 110 feet. All Bailies are built for Class 40's. Up to 90 feet, you can use a double single. From 90 to 120, you must use a triple single. Platoons 1 and 3 of C Company did the job, and finished it around 1600, which was very good time, though the job was fairly simple. The only thing which was noteworthy about this incident was that we followed the 359th into town so closely."

4. Simmern and Bad Kreuznach

On the day last mentioned above, by Lt Striker, XII Corps CP moved forward to the little town of Simmern, in the midst of the rolling wooded mountains of the Hunsruk. A few days before, Mayen had seemed close enough to the war. Now, as usual, XII Corps command began to fret at finding itself left so far behind the fighting, Mayen seemed untenable for purposes of directing the corps' second approach to the Rhine.

Simmern had not suffered too badly from passage of XII Corps troops, as Col Murray recalls it: "a pretty fair town – shot up a little. It was a pretty big town as far as I can remember, about 20,000 population. CP was set up in Landrat building (equivalent to American County Court House) on the eastern edge of town. Officers and EM lived in private residences. Landrat office looked like an ordinary two-story stucco building – had two wings coming out on either side forming three sides of a square – it was in pretty good shape and had water, heat and lights."

Simmern, in those fast-moving times, was good for only three days. On 22 March 45 – a most historic date, as will be seen presently – the CP packed up and moved to what was probably its most luxurious accommodations of the entire combat period, – the Palast Kurhaus at Bad Kreuznach. "Bad Kreuznach was larger than Simmern – 40 to 50,000 population – but shot up very badly and bombed. The building we were in was a large resort hotel scarcely damaged, large enough to accommodate the Corps CP and billet all officers and most of the enlisted men. Hotel had its own water and light system; there was a 65,000 watt generator built underground. Baths were *kaput*. General Eddie was billeted in the home of Herr Schneider, who made lenses. The CP Hotel was on an island in the Nahe River and

had a canal or a creek nearby (the Muhlenteich). There was one bridge. It was a very large hotel and it was in the better residential district of town. Prominent doctors had lived there. There was one interesting thing about it and that was that the room where the War Room set up was once the office of Kaiser Wilhelm during the first World War. There was a brass plaque on the door to that effect. ..."

When Col Murray uses the past tense in referring to that plaque, he does so advisedly. There was one there; there isn't one now. Where it isn't now is probably known possibly to only one former member of the Corps headquarters. Upon its mysterious disappearance hangs one of the noisiest *causes celebres* of Headquarters, XII U.S. Army Corps. Let Col Lieber testify to such facts as are generally known: "Room 115 (the one assigned to the War Room) had a sign on it saying that during the campaign of 1918 Kaiser Wilhelm II had occupied this space with his field headquarters. When Gen Patton came (to the XII Corps CP) he wanted some pictures taken on the occasion. Gen Eddy suggested that perhaps he would like to have them taken in the room the Kaiser used in the last war. They went down there and all was rather dark. My door was open, and I heard Gen Eddy say, 'General there is a brass plate on the door right here.' they stopped and the next thing Gen Eddy yelled, What the hell has become of that plate?' The plate had been there between five and six the previous evening, and somewhere around nine, Gilbertson (Lt "Gil" Gilbertson of the War Room) took someone out to show the plate. At 8:30 the next morning it was gone. "Gen Canine announced an immediate shakedown inspection of the baggage of every officer and soldier in the headquarters, but this unequaled souvenir of the War in Europe never came to light.*

But although the Forward Echelon of XII Corps Headquarters was kept up as close to the actual fighting as any Corps headquarters, and closer than most, it was still not close enough to satisfy the corps commander when great things were impending. The previously worked out concept of a "Command Group" which could be thrown forward into the divisional areas was again put into effect. For the first time since St. Max, back in France, Gen Eddy took his key staff members up front with him, first from Mayen to Treis, 17 March, then the following day to Kastellaun. On this latter date the situation was formalized in a memorandum issued over Col Lieber's signature, "Command Group Displacement":

"1. Command Group. a. The following staff officers and assistants will be prepared at all times to displace on two hours' notice to an advance command post.

CG Section complete, including mess

C/S and 2 EM

G2. one assistant, and 2 EM

G3, two assistants, and 4 EM

G4 and 1 EM

Arty O, one assistant, and 3 EM

Sig O and 1 EM

- b. Each section will carry the minimum equipment, including mapboards and typewriters, required for essential operations (orders, situation reports, and periodic reports). G2 will carry a mimeograph for joint use with G3, and G3 will carry reproduction equipment for overlays.
- c. In addition, each section named will furnish a guide, who will report to the Headquarters Commandant with personal equipment, 30 minutes after call.
- d. Truck transportation will be pooled. Section chiefs will send a representative to the motor officer when section equipment is loaded.
- "2. Services. a. The Signal Officer will provide the necessary message center and signal center personnel.

- b. Headquarters Commandant will provide an officer and personnel to operate CP services, including joint mess, MP guards, motors, lights and latrines.
 - c. PM will mark route and patrol traffic.
- "3. The minimum staff group named above will be augmented for special situations. Sections not listed in the above group will be prepared to furnish a minimum operating team and equipment on two hours' notice. Liaison officers will continue operating from the Forward Echelon until called to Advance CP."

The paragraph in the above which caused the major griping and groaning was "2". It was all very well for the DC/S to write the "Signal Officer will provide the necessary message center and signal center personnel," but on the ground this had to be carried out by the sweat and ingenuity of the special staff personnel and that of the 93rd Signal Battalion and the 3255th Signal Service Company. Even when the situation was eased by bringing up the Rear Echelon to the same town as the Forward Echelon (as was affected at Bad Kreuznach on 23 March 45), the strain on the various headquarters services occasioned by splitting the headquarters into three parts instead of two, was considerable. As a matter of fact, at Kastellaun, Gen Eddy was only to require this organization twice more, once that Undenheim, when he had to be within sight of the Rhine Crossing; and for a final time, unintentionally, at Lauterbach, as a result of the unfriendly activities of the 6th SS Mountains Division (German). But these occasions belong in later parts of this narrative.

* Best circumstantial evidence is that of a sergeant in the War Room, who clearly recalls handing a screwdriver to a certain officer -- whose name, though surprising, for obvious reasons shall not be mentioned here -- at an appropriate hour to fit into Col Lieber's time schedule, and for just about long enough to unscrew that famous plate from the door of room 115. GD.

5. Wind-up of the Palatinate Campaign

Sweeping eastward from the Nahe, XII Corps' forward units burst out onto the plain of the Rhine and headed for two important German cities on the West Bank of the river, – Mainz and Worms. It also headed for a certain little village, Oppenheim, fated to be more important to the Muse of History than either of these.

"Although the enemy attempted to throw up a line of defense west of Mainz," says the Third Army After Action Report "to form a bridgehead for the withdrawal of his troops across the Rhine, he never succeeded. What was intended to be an organized withdrawal quickly became a rout, the enemy's fleeing columns being attacked constantly from the air and cut to ribbons by the Third U.S. Army's armor. Infantry mopping-up teams of followed closely behind the tanks, taking thousands of prisoners in the wake of the charging armor. The German First and Seventh Armies were decimated, with a loss of 81,692 prisoners of war, and all territory to the Rhine River as far south as Speyer was cleared."

The two critical days which saw the end of this campaign were 20-21 March 45, and from the Corps After Action Report comes details of who captured what, when and with which:

- "20 March 1945. a. The 362nd Group, XIX TAC, flew 16 missions with excellent results reported. The XII Corps continued the advance to the east with infantry clearing the enemy from the zone, following the advancing armor.
- b. CCB, 4th Armored Division, attacked at 0600A. It cleared Offenheim, but ran into an enemy force of 4 SPs, one tank, and 100 infantry at Waldheim. The resistance collapsed quickly and at 1200A CCB had cleared Freimersheim and was passing through Alzey. At 1720A it entered Worms and spent

the rest of the day mopping up. At 1730A contact was made with the 11th Armored Division. CCA also moved out at 0600A, cleared Flonheim, Albig, Monsheim, moving through Alzey. Resistance was light. The 10th Infantry, moving in rear of these two columns, opened its regimental CP at Alzey and assembled in that vicinity. CCR move to Wendelsheim. The 4th Armored Division CP opened in Frei-Laubersheim. The 90th Infantry Division jumped off towards Mainz at 0700A. No opposition was received until troops reached the high ground overlooking the city. The 3rd Battalion, 358th Infantry, at 1700A was in the Oberulmer woods and moved off from the high ground northeast of Mainz. The 2nd Battalion took Schwabenheim and Gros Winterheim. The 359th Infantry moved without opposition until the 3rd Battalion entered Nieder Oln where it was subjected to small arms fire and 88 mm fire. At 1215A an artillery concentration was placed on the town and at 1600A the town was secured. The 2nd Battalion met and overcame opposition in Zarnheim, and at 1700A was in Ebersheim. The 357th Infantry moved up and assembled the 1st Battalion in Vendersheim, the 2nd Battalion at Wolfsheim, 3rd Battalion at Parenheim. At 1300A the division CP opened at Spendlingen. Enemy in the 5th Infantry zone still consisted of small disorganized groups. The 3rd Battalion, 11th Infantry, marched from Bad The 1st Battalion was in Rommersheim. Kreuznach to Worrstadt. The 2nd Battalion occupied Spiesheim and Enscheim. The 2nd Battalion and three Battalions of the 2nd Infantry moved out north of the Nahe River from Sobernheim and cleared their zone from Rehborn south and east to Oberhausen. The 2nd Battalion was assembled near Hallgarten. At 0900A, CCB, 11th Armored Division moved out from the high ground east of Rockenhausen and by 1200A had entered Dreisen. The column there turned south, clearing Collheim and several small towns, reaching Offsteind by 1750A against light resistance. By dark the column was near Klein Niedesheim. CCA cleared Marienthal and Dennenfels where it received some AT fire and mortar fire. It reached Driesen at 1500A. Here CCA turned north and took Albisheim, Marxheim, and at 1730A advanced through Monsheim. There was considerable enemy air activity over the zone of the 11th Armored Division; three planes were knocked down by the AA units. The division CP opened at Winnweiler at 1545A. CCR assembled at Rockenhausen. At 0915A the 89th Infantry Division CP opened at Rhannen. The 353rd Infantry and the 354th Infantry continued following up the 11th Armored Division. The 2nd Battalion, 353rd Infantry, reached Barnsweiler. The 3rd Battalion occupied Meddersheim, the 2nd Battalion reached Barmweiler. Little opposition was encountered. The 354th Infantry was in the vicinity of Becherbach at the close of the day. At 2000A the 417th RCT of the 76th Infantry Division had completed the relief of the 2nd Cavalry Squadron, at which time the division passed to VIII Corps control. By 1730A the 304th Infantry had cleared the road from Mulheim to Buchendeuren against no resistance. The 2nd Cavalry Squadron, 2nd Cavalry Group, after being relieved by the 417th Infantry, assemble that Warmsroth. The 42nd Cavalry Squadron crossed the Nahe River and screened the left flank of the 90th Infantry Division from Bingen to Gaulzesheim, where contact was made with a 354th Infantry, 89th Infantry Division, during the night.

"There was a slight increase in enemy artillery activity in the 4th Armored, 5th Infantry, and 90th Infantry Division zones, especially in the bridge site area at Bretzenheim. The rest of the Corps front was quiet. ..."

- "21 March 1945. a. The Corps continued clearing the enemy in its zone to the Rhine River. Excellent weather prevailed with good air support by the 262nd Group, XIX TAC.
- b. The 2nd Cavalry Group cleared its area along the west bank of the Rhine River from Bingen to Rudenheim. Bingen was cleared by 1100A. At 0100A CCA, 4th Armored Division, joined CCB in Worms. After being relieved by the 3rd Battalion, 10th Infantry, both commands pushed to the north to clear their respective zones. At 1700A CCA reported its zone clear. Little opposition was received in mopping up. At 1200A the 3rd Battalion, 10th Infantry, was in Worms, 1st Battalion in Bermesheim and a 2nd Battalion in Weinheim and Mauchenheim. The 90th Infantry Division received a counter attack during the night of 20-21 March in the vicinity of the woods near Hohnheim vicinity of (M3151).

At 0400A the attacks were repulsed and the offensive was resumed. Both the 359th Infantry and 358th Infantry had heavy fighting throughout the day in a coordinated attack on Mainz. By dark they held the high ground immediately around the town and were fighting their way nearer. At 1100A the division CP opened at Nieder Saulheim. The 5th Infantry Division spent a quiet day. In the 11th Infantry the 1st Battalion moved to Offenheim and the 3rd Battalion to Nierstein. The division CP moved to Wendesheim. The 11th Armored Division continued to clear to the Rhine River in its zone, mopping up scattered strong points. Early in the day CCB attacked the airfield southwest of Worms and by 0910A had taken it against light opposition. Other elements of CCB worked towards the Rhine River between Worms and Petersau and at 1045A were 1 km from the river. After clearing the airfield, CCB moved into Worms and relieved the elements of the 4th Armored Division remaining there. CCA remained in its position. At 1555A CCR had cleared Reudolfskirchen and Ratskirchen. During the day CCR cleared 22 towns west of the Glan River, taking 2,210 PWs. By night the division had cleared to the Rhine in its zone and had contact with a 4th Armored Division on its left and the 12th Armored Division of XX Corps on the right. Little activity took place in the 89th Infantry Division zone. The pocket southwest of Sobernheim was cleared. The dispositions at the close of the day were: 553rd Infantry, 1st Battalion at Kirschoth, 3rd Battalion at Meddersheim; the 354th Infantry at Jechenbach, Hoppstadten, and Schweinscheid. During the day the VIII-XII Corps boundary was changed to give Bingen to XII Corps and Simmern and Treis to VIII Corps.

- c. Enemy artillery activity was light over the Corps front. Only five counterbattery missions were fired.
- d. Operational Directive No 92 was issued. The 5th Infantry Division was directed to move all elements into new zone, relieve elements of the 90th Infantry Division and 4th Armored Division in zone without delay, and be prepared to cross the Rhine. The 90th Infantry Division, with the 2nd Cavalry Group attached, was directed to simulate a crossing northwest of Mainz on Corps order, protect the left flank, and maintain contact with VIII Corps. The 4th Armored Division, after clearing the area assigned in Operation Directive No 91, was to hold the West Bank of the Rhine until relieved by the 5th Infantry Division and XX Corps, at which time it would assemble in Corps reserve. The 11th Armored Division was to clear its area, hold the West Bank of the Rhine, and, upon relief by XX Corps, assemble in Corps reserve. The 89th Infantry Division was directed to assemble, prepare either to relieve the 4th Armored Division West of Gernsheim to cross the Rhine River, or to follow the 5th Infantry Division across. The TDs, chemical units, and field artillery units were regrouped. ...

"The Corps now controlled the West Bank of the Rhine River from Bingen to Worms. ..."

Conditions along the roads of the Palantinate as the helter-skelter race for the Rhine went on are suggested by two press releases preserved in Lt Henry Murray's PRO file, and one interview with an artilleryman secured by the corps history team after the war. The first press release is the final word on a condition of "fluid" warfare:

"WITH THE XII CORPS IN GERMANY – during the dash to the Rhine XII Corps Artillery Wire Officer Capt Roland Jensen of Portland, Oregon, jeeped up to contact front-line units.

"After passing several spots still warm from enemy actions, Capt Jensen dismounted to proceed on foot. Turning off the road, he saw a bare headed, barefooted soldier in a pond, fishing nonchalantly.

"Hey!' Yelled the Captain, don't you know there's enemy around here?"

"No, it's safe enough; we're way behind the Kraut lines.' ...

The interview cited was with Sgt Nicholas Vergadamo, of the 731st Field Artillery Battalion:

On 20 March 45, Able Battery was with the forward elements of the combat command of the 4th Armored Division. We had a couple of men from fire direction center working with the battery to

compute firing data. the remainder of the Battalion was waiting behind in Volxheim. We went into Heimersheim, preceded by a company of armored infantry. The armored elements stayed in the main road and went right through the town without stopping. We were the first American troops to stop in the town, a community of 1500 or 2000 inhabitants. We didn't see many people walking in the streets few white flags. The BC (Battery Commander), Capt Connor, went after the burgomeister, and told him he would give him half an hour to get all the firearms turned in. Within about 15 minutes they were all in. The Town Crier, some big guy, gave the call. The town bell was wrong to alert people. The people were told not to congregate in the streets and they didn't. They were told to tear down the road blocks at the entrances to town. ... in this position we picked up a 15-year-old Wehrmacht member, of the 15th Panzer Division. He was scared and crying, and stayed with us that night. This boy told us, as most enemy soldiers, that they didn't fear our infantry, but they will they were terribly afraid of our artillery and airplanes. We were told by the BC that we faced a long trip – we were going into Pffedersheim to shoot into Worms as direct support of the fourth Armored. We took off for Pffedersheim about 11 o'clock at night, and arrived there at Don. The move was about 90 miles. Hundreds of prisoners were clogging roads, waving white handkerchiefs, asking to be picked up. The 4th Armored, nobody, would take them – and they were told to keep on the main road, and keep walking back until somebody did take them. Later on we found out that someone came up behind the armored and established cages, huge fields for the Heinies. ..."

The "someone" Sgt Birgadamo referred to was, of course, XX Corps. How this worked, at least on one occasion in the Palantinate, is revealed in the other press release cited above, which appeared in the *Stars & Stripes*, 31 March 45:

"WITH THE XX CORPS IN GERMANY – Lt Col unique J. Scanlan, of Edwardsville, Illinois, is the XX Corps Provost Marshall. On 20 March Lt Col Scanlan received an urgent call to come and get 5000 Germans who had decided war was not for them. The PWs were 25 miles ahead. Only 12 men and two trucks were available for the job. It didn't add up, so Lt Col Scanlon gave an order:

"25 miles ahead we have 5000 PWs waiting. Go up and build a cage around them!"

Men in XII Corps, and the rest of the American Army so cruelly disappointed in the previous fall and winter, began to dare to take hope again that the end of the war was in sight. This certainly looked like the beginning of the end, anyway. It certainly looked like that "Destruction of the German Armies in Western Europe" which the High Brass had been saying all along was necessary before the war would be won and we could all go home. And once again, the voices of those who should know were raised in the optimistic statements, though perhaps somewhat more cautiously than had been the case during the previous September, when even the most famous statesmen had been predicting the eminent conclusion of the Battle of Europe.

Gen Patton in a special order to officers and men of Third Army and XIX TAC, dated 23 March 45, summed up the results of the recent operations:

"In the period from 29 January to 22 March 45, you have wrested 6,484 miles of territory from the enemy. You have taken 3,072 cities, towns and villages, including among the former: Trier, Koblenz, Bingen, Worms, Mainz, Kaiserslautern and Ludwigshafen.

"You have captured 140,112 enemy soldiers, and have killed or wounded an additional 99,000, thereby eliminating practically all of the German 7th and 1st Armies. History records no greater achievement in so limited time.

"This great campaign was only made possible by your disciplined valor, unswerving devotion to duty, coupled with the unparalleled audacity and speed of your advance on the ground; while from the air, the peerless fighter-bombers kept up a relentless round-the-clock attack upon the disorganized enemy.

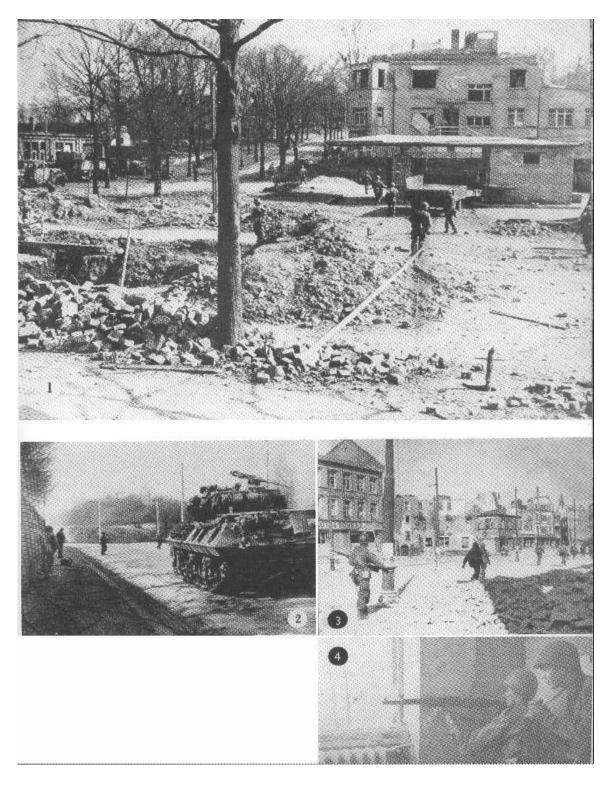
"The world rings with your praises; better still, Gen Montgomery, Gen Eisenhower, Gen Bradley have all personally commended you. The highest honor I have ever attained is that of having my name coupled with yours in these great events.

"Please accept my heartfelt admiration and thanks for what you have done. ..."

And Gen Eisenhower, in the unshakable confidence of hindsight, was to put it with maximum brevity and impact in his postwar report in the Combined Chiefs of Staff, 13 July 45, when he classed this campaign as one of the three crucial operations of the war:

"The third decisive phase of the campaign (for Europe) consisted of the battles west of the Rhine during February and March. Once again the enemy played into our hands by his insistence upon fighting the battle where he stood. In the lowland country between the Rhine and the Meuse, in the Eifel, and in the Saar, the armies which had been intended to defend Germany were shattered beyond recovery. The potential barrier of the Rhine lay practically undefended before us, and from that time onward there was no German force in existence capable of halting our forward march. The war was won before the Rhine was crossed."

THE NINETIETH TOOK THE LARGEST CITY IN THE PALATINATE - MAINZ



(1) After stiff resistance on 21 March, the "Tough 'Ombres" of the 90th Infantry Division cleared Mainz, Germany, on the day that the pictures on this page were taken, 22 March 45. These are men of a 2nd Battalion, 358th Infantry Regiment reconnoitering the rubble-filled streets of the city for remaining snipers. (2) Infantry and armor, 1st Battalion 359th Infantry Regiment and 773rd Tank Battalion advance within the city. (3) More of the 359th at work, in another part of the town. (4) Company B of the 359th, is here represented by Pfc. William Parker who is firing from a window in Mainz while Captain John R. Angell calls the shots.

Chapter 14

FIRST ASSAULT CROSSING OF THE RHINE. 22 MARCH 45-26 MARCH 45

1. Preliminary

Crossing the Rhine by assault had all along been considered a tremendous undertaking. Says Gen Eisenhower, in his report to the Combined Chiefs of Staff:

... "Whatever the opposition might be, the fact remained that in any case the crossing of the Rhine, on the narrow frontages available, would be a tactical and engineering feat of the greatest magnitude. Use of airborne forces, air support, and amphibious equipment on the maximum scale would be required if the successful passage of the main Allied armies was to be assured. ... " to the northward, what was supposed to be the primary Allied effort to breach the line of the River Rhine had been in preparation for months. The bulk of men, mat, riel and supplies had been lavished on this northernmost assault, to be conducted under the over-all direction of Field Marshall Bernard Montgomery. The operations in the zone of Gen Omar Bradley's 12th Army Group, of which XII Corps was a part, were supposed to be strictly secondary and diversionary. The High Command evidently didn't expect them to get very far. Certainly no one outside of 12th Army Group expected XII Corps to steal the whole show for Third Army. Yet that is exactly what happened.

And not only were a good many Allied personnel "both surprised and pleased" – the Krauts were, too – "but more surprised than pleased."

"Because of the tactical surprise achieved" says a brief summary of its campaigns issued by Third Army "the initial crossing deserves to be considered one of the most important tactical river crossings during Third U.S. Army operations. The ease with which the crossing was made and the rapid expansion of the bridgehead came as a surprise to the world. The crossing was made even before all territory west of the Rhine had been completely mopped up – and within two days large forces of XII Corps were well east of the River."

The assault crossing of the Rhine by XII Corps divisions and corps troops, with the help of a few Third Army units and even a little detachment from the Navy, had been in the general planning stages, of course, since the previous summer. But the time actually given the corps to stage the attack, in comparison with the weeks which had been devoted directly to the problem in the north, was – three days!

In one of the excellent interviews taken by Lt "Sam" Tobin of the Third Army History Team, Col Clyde Dougherty has stated briefly how the situation arose for one of the XII Corps agencies that had the most planning to do, namely, the engineers:

"The XII Corps Engineers began studying the Rhine River almost as soon as they arrived in France. At Nancy, after pushing across France, they began to concentrate on that section of the Rhine between Worms and Mainz. All sources of information, air photos, geographical, geological, and hydrographic data, were exploited to select a favorable crossing site. It was determined that the area in the vicinity of Oppenheim was the most favorable location for an assault crossing and bridge site.

"Plans and preparation for the crossing were interrupted by the Ardennes break-through and the Corps moved north to Luxembourg. After the German break-through had been repulsed, the Corps

moved east to the Rhine and in turn south across the Moselle. It became apparent then that a crossing of the Rhine would be made at an undetermined point. The 4th Armored Division was pushing down through the Palantinate Triangle and the decision remained with Army to decide on where the crossing would be made.

"On 19 March, orders from Army gave the Corps the mission of crossing the Rhine within 3 days. The sector allotted to them by Army was that between Oppenheim and Mainz. This gave Corps the opportunity of capitalizing on its previous study of the Rhine in that area. Oppenheim was chosen as the place the 5th Division would cross. The road net was very favorable. A main road to Frankfurt runs through Oppenheim. The terrain is favorable, the high ground is on the west side of the river and the ground on the east side is generally flat. The only drawback is that in wet weather the ground on the east side of the river becomes somewhat boggy. The stream is relatively narrow (800-1000 feet) and the current fairly slow even though the Rhine is more constricted at Oppenheim and Nierstein than at many other places. The depth of the river is approximately 10 to 20 feet which is favorable for the building of a permanent bridge. On the Oppenheim side, the banks are built up in several approaches for ferry sites are paved with stone. The banks on both sides are firm and Sandy which is an aid to crossing amphibious vehicles. Another site considered favorable by the Corps is located about 5 miles upstream, however, as this was in the XV Corps sector, Army denied the XII Corps its use."

Once the decision had been reached, however, enormous activity began, from XII Corps headquarters far back into Third Army zone, and even into "Com Z," the communications zone; and, equally, forward into the divisional and regimental areas. Third Army Engineers' study of the operation, crossing of the Rhine River, gives a glimpse of the complicated maneuvers that started to roll to the rearward of the Corps zone:

"One of the greatest fleets of trucks ever assembled for an operation was sent to the dumps at Toul, Esch and Arlon where they were loaded on carefully arranged priorities with assault boats, storm boats, outboard motors, life preservers and bridging equipment. However, even then the task of getting equipment to the river was far from solved, for the enemy held the direct routes through the Saar to the Rhine until 20 March, so that the first convoys had to pass on a 'great circle' route along the north bank of the Moselle to get to the advanced dump at Alzey. While the subsequent routes were shorter, they nevertheless required a 300-mile round-trip from the rear depots to the forward depot at Alzey through a hitherto forbidden area over roads that had to be cleared and streams bridged as they came. The hauling was further complicated by the delays occasioned by the heavy combat traffic moving over these roads at the same time. To assist in expediting the movement of the stream crossing equipment, liaison planes were employed to traverse the highways to report the location of stranded or wandering convoys so that patrols in vehicles could be sent out to guide them in.

"Despite these difficulties, by the time troops were ready to make the crossing, sufficient equipment was on hand to adequately back the operation, particularly in as much as though both XII and XX Corps were scheduled initially to make the crossing, only XII Corps was finally committed to the task. The crossing by XII Corps was one of superior merit and it could well serve as a model for future crossings. ..."

Lights burned in the corps headquarters all night behind the blackout curtains as each staff section prepared to handle its part of the extraordinary operation. No section was busier than the engineers, but most others had some special arrangements to make for the crossing. For example, the officers and men of the Signal Section and operating units were faced with peculiar problems. Col Scanlon of the 93rd Signal Battalion contributes a picture of the solution of the major one of these:

"On 21 March 45, the Corps Signal Officer: Col Alfred H Anderson, notified the Battalion Commander, Maj John M. Scanlon, that he should be prepared to provide communications circuits across the Rhine River on short notice, that in all probability the assault crossing would be made within the next few days. Capt Worner, Company Commander of C Company, was instructed to make a reconnaissance of the river crossing site, if possible, and to recommend either an aerial or an underwater crossing. Lt Roy Riggs of C Company made the reconnaissance on the 22nd and talked to officers of the 1135th Engineer Combat Group who were in charge of bridging and ferrying preparations and made arrangements for the use of a ferry at the earliest opportune moment. On his return to the Company from a reconnaissance Lt Riggs supervised the preparation of two Spiral-Four Cables for an underwater crossing. The two Spiral-Four cables were lashed to a heavy iron wire and, after a search of the surrounding territory, some pieces of scrap iron to be used as waits for the cable were secured. The specially prepared cable was wrapped on a huge reel placed on a cable-carrying trailer. The preparation of a half-mile-length of the two Spiral-Foru cables was completed on the night of the 22nd. ..."

One of the most interesting details of preparation by the Corps headquarters was the unprecedented organization of a proposed reinforcement of the assault waves by transportation of a battalion of infantry over the Rhine in "cub" airplanes. This airborne "Operation Grasshopper" by what the GIs called affectionately "puddle jumpers," "flying jeeps," or "Maytag Messerschmitts," was coordinated and planned out on the ground by personnel of the XII Artillery Headquarters, principally Col "Broad" Gott and Maj "Tommy" Haynes. These energetic gentlemen actually succeeded by book or crook in assembling 90 of the little "coffee percolators," and having them present and ready to take off, on the morning of the attack. In spite of the dubious reception accorded it in some quarters, the venture was no quixotic one: it had been successfully tested behind our lines the day before with an infantry company, including its heavy weapons. The proponents of the idea were convinced they could have landed a full battalion in less than three hours, and were sadly disappointed when the waterborne attack went so well that these extraordinary measures were considered unnecessary. The project was canceled at the last minute. ...

Out in front of the Corps headquarters the decision as to when and where there River Rhine was to be crossed was also striking those most concerned – the infantry themselves.

The 5th Infantry Division had been selected to undertake the assault, and no more authoritative source for an account of the impact of that outfit could be found the entries in the personal diary loaned the Corps historian Association by space to Gen S LeRoy Irwin, then Commanding General of the division:

"21 March 45. Clear and warm. ... Gen Eddy called to meet him just south of Bad Kreuznach at 1030. CP moved to Wendelsheim during morning, opening at 1400. At meeting Gen Eddy directed that we relieve 4th Armored in Oppenheim, and cross Rhine as soon as the operation can be set up. Went to 11th Infantry Regiment CP and ordered relief of CCA in Oppenheim, which Col Black started movement to accomplish at 1300. Visited Gen Gaffey at his CP, and arranged relief of armor, as far as could be done. ... Returned to CP about 1530 and met Gen Canine who gave me general plan for Third Army. We lead the crossing and establish the initial bridgehead to be followed by 89th Division... 90th Division cleans up Mainz. 4th Armored is pulled back in reserve. Gen Eddy called about 1600 to say he wanted patrolling before we attempt a crossing unless I consider it feasible without such reconnaissance. Held meeting of COs and staff to brief them on operation at 1600, and settled most details. Plan is to cross column of regiments in order 11th, 10th, 2nd (Infantry Regiments). The earliest possible date is tomorrow night, but think this 24 hours to soon. Gen Eddy had said he had not considered a crossing

before tomorrow night. All of the 10th CT was released to us, and directed to assemble in vicinity of Alzey. Last battalion should be in by noon tomorrow.

"22 March 45. Clear. Night quiet. 11th Infantry (Regiment) is in Oppenheim. 3rd Battalion of 10th (Infantry Regiment) being relieved in Worms, and moving to assembly area near Alzey. 748th Tank Italian attached and 737th Tank Battalion relieved. Received Corps order about 0700 which extends our left considerably. Also got order (tentative) for operations east of the Rhine, giving Corps bridgehead. Gen Eddy visited CP about 1000 and said Army Commander was insistent that we cross tonight. Informed him that it would not be possible to make it well-planned and ordered crossing, but that we could definitely get some sort of bridgehead. Moved CP to Undenheim, opening about 1300. I went to CP of 11th Infantry (Regiment) at Nierstein, about 300 yards from Rhine River. Everything was quiet there, and no evidence of enemy action. Col Black reported lack of proper reconnaissance of the river's edge, but seemed confident of making a crossing. A great deal of special equipment is slow arriving, particularly amphibious tanks and extra weasels, which latter have to be brought from Metz. 10th and 2nd (Infantry Regiments) have considerable moves to river, and traffic is heavy near the crossing site, which may cause conflicts and delays. ... Ample artillery is in position, and so far we have evidence of few enemy personnel or weapons on far shore on our front. It is a big and difficult operation, however, and it is hard to predict the outcome at this time."

But by the evening of 22 March 45, Gen "Red" Irwin had done all he could to make the attack of his division a success. The assault was scheduled for 2200. An hour before that, at 9:00 o'clock, he went wearily to bed. He could not sleep and, as was his habit in such moments of tension, he took up a mystery novel. He was reading it when, at 10:23, the telephone beside his bed rang and the thrilling assurance of a good beginning to the great enterprise came to him: "The first two companies are across the river."

2. The Fifth Infantry Division's Great Day

Spearpoint of XII Corps for the Rhine Crossing was the 5th Infantry Division. Just as the Third Army Summary makes it clear who was doing the actual running with the ball, so the Corps After Action Report leaves no doubt which division had the stellar role in the crossing.

"At 2200A on 22 March the 5th Infantry Division, crossing in assault boats with the support of the 1135th Engineer Combat Group at Oppenheim, made the historic assault crossing of the Rhine... the first assault crossing of the Rhine River in military history. Despite the swiftness of the move, the heavy forward traffic on all roads, and the brief time for ground reconnaissance, the careful planning and long experience in river crossings bore fruit. The crossing was made so swiftly and smoothly that only a scattering of small arms and machine-gun fire was brought on the crossing troops. As the infantry crossed, bridging and ferrying equipment was assembled, and landing craft operated by attached Naval personnel were launched and ferried personnel and vehicles. Shortly after midnight of 23-24 March the 5th Infantry Division had a secure bridgehead, two bridges had been completed by the 1135th Engineer Combat Group, and the 4th Armored Division was moving to the crossing points. ..."

The tale of those dark initial hours which established the XII Corps bridgehead could not be better told then by reproducing the detailed account given in the 5th Infantry Division's own unit history, which also can serve to outline a model for all such infantry operations:

"At precisely 2145 hours 22 March 45, the 3rd Battalion's spearheading companies, I and K, moved down to the riverbank were 204th Engineer Battalion personnel awaited in readiness. Preparations functioned quickly, smoothly, and above all, quietly, as the assault teams were formed and loaded into the boat. K Company shoved off at 2230 and paddled across the 800 feet (at that point) river without a shot being fired from the enemy shore. In the first boat to reach the far bank were: K Company CO, 1st LT Irven Jacobs, Lt John A Mannow, Pfc William Hewitt, Pfc Vergil Miller, Pvt Theodore Strategos, Pvt Richard J Huiller, Pfc Arthur Juengel, Pvt John Surace, T/5 Richard E Rose and Pvt John L Paquitt. They were the first of the Division to cross the Rhine, and when the balance of K Company arrived on the East Bank, it marked the first time in history that a crossing of the Rhine River had been forced by troops in assault boats. As K Company hit the shore, a group of seven surprised Germans promptly surrendered and paddled themselves across the river without escort.

"Meanwhile, just as I Company, commanded by Capt Link, prepared to follow up K in crossing, heavy firing opened from the right flank where the 1st Battalion troops were simultaneously crossing approximately 700 yards down-stream at Oppenheim. It developed that B Company's 1st Platoon had been spotted by enemy machine gunners, who commenced firing while assault boats were yet in midstream. Regiment then advised 3rd Battalion that 1st Battalion would delay its crossing for 10 minutes, but Lt Col Birdsong, 3rd Battalion CO, decided to get I Company across anyway while all of K Company organized on the far shore. Along with I Company's first wave were Maj Stiller aide to Gen Patton, and Lt Cocke of the Air Force who went as observer with the infantry. A flurry of shellfire managed to partially silence enemy automatic weapons in the 1st Battalion sector, but this heavy firing also alerted the enemy along the entire regimental front, and as I Company neared the far shore it also received some heavy machine-gun fire. No casualties were incurred, but when L Company crossed in 3rd Battalion reserve 10 minutes later, personnel paddled under increasingly heavy small arms fire. Some infantrymen were wounded.

"During this time, 1st Battalion assault troops of A and B Companies were meeting with very heavy resistance in crossing approximately 700 yards South of the 3rd Battalion at Oppenheim. The Rhine Crossing itself was a tribute to the courage of riflemen, for whom it was necessary to paddle 800 feet into the very teeth of the enemy fire. B Company under 1st Lt Bryant pulled abreast. When assault boats were eagerly beached on the hostile shore, enemy fire increased and included that of Panzerfausts. An example of what was required in order to establish and extend the 1st Battalion bridgehead is the action of B Company's 2nd Platoon which was reorganized and led by S/Sgt Foster Ferguson, who took over platoon leadership when the platoon sergeant became a casualty. Concentric rifle and rifle grenade fire alone punched a hole in the enemy's perimeter defense system which consisted of a strong line of machine-gun nests, but no pillboxes. Fierce small arms skirmishes raged for a half and hour. Temporarily, at least, enemy resistance reached fanatical proportions, with infantrymen of Ferguson's platoon firing directly into large rectangular foxholes to eliminate strongpoints. Deadly marching fire extended the bridgehead, and shortly thereafter the 1st Battalion struck inland. Pfc Paul Conn, Jr., B Company rifleman, remained behind to hold down an enemy machine gun nest that was bypassed. It was an all-night affair for Conn who was forced to dig in with his bare hands, for less than 30 yards away the enemy machine gun intermittently opened at anything that moved. 'I was tempted to swim back across the Rhine,' said Conn afterwards. Conn remained in a cramped position through the entire night, and when daybreak came he saw 10 Germans who comprised the machine-gun nest. Conn then attempted to work his M1, but it jammed. Finally in desperation he flung all caution to the winds, pulled out a hand grenade and rose before the enemy. Transfixed at the sight of a lone American menacingly coming toward them, the 10 Germans threw up their arms and surrendered. Thus ended Conn's ordeal in the last vestige of enemy resistance on the river's edge.

"Lt Col Birdsong, 3rd Battalion CO and Headquarters crossed the river at 2330 hours in the midst of a small arms engagement near the far shore, but at this time the bulk of enemy resistance was being concentrated against the 1st Battalion. All assault troops were across the river by now clearing last bits of enemy resistance from beyond the East riverbank, and the 11th CT's attack was beginning to take form as artillery liaison officers and forward observers were also across. Armor of Company A, 737th Tank Battalion and the 803rd TD Battalion were preparing to cross on motor barges and render direct support, along with amphibious tanks of the 748th Tank Battalion. Despite the intense small arms fire encountered by the 1st Battalion and some by the 3rd, it was evident that surprise had been achieved in the operation for the German artillery reaction did not come until 0030 hours on the following day – or two hours after the crossing had begun. Assault companies prepared to strike inland at the time enemy artillery commenced falling into the river and hitting both banks ineffectually. Approximately 50 rounds of shellfire, including that of self-propelled weapons, fell in the Oppenheim area, but crossing of supplies and additional troops continued. In Regimental reserve, 2nd Battalion was alerted and prepared to cross near Nierstein, follow-up and consolidate ground taken by the 3rd Battalion. The 10th Infantry Regiment prepared to follow into the 1st Battalion's bridgehead opposite Oppenheim to take up the Division's right sector.

"A Company of the 11th met with violent small arms fire as it sought to clear a group of buildings along the bridgehead's right flank. Some 20 prisoners were taken and 14 of the enemy were killed. In seizing the area 1st Lt Harry Kaylor, Executive Officer of D Company, evacuated wounded back across the river under fire.

"At midnight troops of the 10th moved in columns down to the river and at 0155 hours, 23 March, the crossing of the Regiment began with the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Battalions following after the 1st Battalion of the 11th at Oppenheim. The 7th Engineer Battalion handled the assault boats.

Across the river the 10th Regiment moved immediately to this southern flank eastward toward Leeshseim. Companies A and C of the 1st Battalion made contact by 0245 hours and moved out to breast toward Erfelden. (1 2/3 miles SE Leesheim) Company C encountered some resistance from small arms upon approaching the objective, but the enemy force was incapable of halting to the advance, and the majority was soon taken prisoner.

"The last Battalion of the 10th Infantry was completely across by 0655 hours, and as the two regimens fanned out along the eastern bank, the U.S. Navy brought up landing craft to the West Bank can put them into the water. Combat engineer battalions of the 1135th Engineer Group constructed for ferries and began building the Treadway Bridge. By 0700 hrs, the two regiments at all six battalions across, one ferry was working in the Landing Crafts, Vehicle-Personnel were scuttling back and forth carrying supplies.

"With all but sniper and some bypassed resistance broken in its bridgehead sector, the 1st Battalion continued the attack inland and struck northeast toward Geinsheim, Division objective No. 1. The axis of advance was the main road leading to Geinsheim, and all assaulting platoons with B Company on the left and A on the right, moved forward abreast deployed as skirmishers. A Company left its reserve platoon and Company CP in position at the farmhouse which it had previously cleared while a similar contingent of B Company was yet engaged in rounding up outflanked resistance. Company C in Battalion reserve also crossed the river. The going became very rough as the assault troops neared the road junction at about 1000 yards inland. Heavy small arms engagements took place and as units attained the road junction they emerged into a broad expanse of open terrain which afforded no cover or concealment. The advance continued along the main road for several yards when suddenly

large concentrations of mortar fire showered the area. The enemy enjoyed unobstructed observation and illuminating 1st Battalion positions with flares. Shelling grew in intensity, and artillery and selfpropelled weapons joined mortar fire in forcing both units from their course. Forward elements of both companies were by now pinned down and reluctant to go forward in the face of severe fire. Eight casualties were incurred as platoons milled about and herded together until T/Sgt Troy B Key, an 11th Infantry veteran and acting platoon leader of B Company, together with T/Sgt Brown, a platoon sergeant of A Company, rallied the men forward and out of bursting radius. Sgts Key and Brown moved about in the fragment infested area to direct the positioning of flank-covering machine-gun fire, then went forward to lead their respective units with shouts of 'Let's get them - keep going.' This resulted in a marching fire attack against violently resisting German infantry that employed very heavy Panzerfaust fire. The Battalion Aid Station, under Capt Scott, by now also had crossed the river and set up in a farmhouse along the riverbank. Although outnumbered, B and A Companies continued to advance towards Geinsheim and suffered no casualties in gaining several hundred yards. It was the opinion of all, that had the units not moved forward as they did, annihilation by terrific and accurate concentrations of enemy shellfire which followed would have been likely. B Company on the left flank, bore the brunt of an infantry attack which enemy launched from Geinsheim shortly thereafter. Fierce small arms (rifle fire, rifle grenades, hand grenades, and bazookas) engagements ensued at close range, and the line was defended through close coordination of A and B Companies. Lt Bryant of A Company and Lt Randle agreed that Geinsheim could be taken without further help. Despite the fact that 81 mm mortars, under artillery fire in rear positions could not render full support, the 1st Battalion inflicted severe losses on the enemy, while suffering miraculously light casualties (two wounded) itself in so fierce and engagement. The 19th Field Artillery fired heavily too, in supporting the defense and by 0400 hrs the enemy withdrew - presumably to Geinsheim where a 25 foot wide canal provided a defense to its eastern approaches. It was believed that enemy artillery was emplaced in the vicinity of Leeheim and Erfelden and these areas now became the targets for heavy counter-battery fire as laid down by Corps Artillery. Actually a 10th Infantry attack was now developing in that direction.

"Meanwhile, during the time of the 1st Battalion's bridgehead fight, the 11th Infantry's 3rd Battalion was involved in extending its bridgehead some 1000 yards to the north. By midnight the entire 3rd Battalion, less the rear CP Group, had crossed over into the bridgehead, with L Company receiving very heavy small arms fire as it crossed in Battalion reserve during the latter period. K Company began clearing the left half of the 3rd Battalion River area while I Company moved south to come near 1st Battalion troops on the right flank. K and I Companies quickly moved inland to secure 500 yards of depth on the left, and 300 yards on the right. T/Sgt Heber Braley, K Company platoon sergeant, stumbled into a large foxhole were four Germans mapped. The Germans immediately gave up, inquiring if these were American paratroopers. Meanwhile, L Company in reserve mopped up all remaining resistance between K and I Companies along and beyond the shoreline.

"K Company sent two platoons North to secure the Southern tip of a small airfield by 0400 hours, resistance was at first moderate, consisting mainly of strong small arms fire including that of Panzerfausts. A short while later some very close action developed at the edge of the airstrip in darkness, and in local engagements which resulted in the capture of T/Sgt Heber Braley, 1st Platoon Sergeant, and Lt Alexander G Booras, platoon leader. Realizing that disorganization at this time threatened the bridgehead's entire left flank, Lt William B Belchee, platoon leader, regained control of the situation by personally contacting remnants of both platoons. He moved beyond the enemy lines under heavy fire and reorganized the leaderless platoon. Meanwhile, a good number of men of this platoon taken cover in an air raid bunker, and were now surrounded. This information came from Sgt Clarence A Ritchie who was captured but later escaped. Sgt Ritchie also informed Lt Belchee that the enemy was preparing to launch a counterattack. Lt Belchee called to the rear for artillery fire which

soon commenced to fall – just in time; for the enemy had attacked his positions. I Company meanwhile was ordered from its phase line on the extreme right flank – some 1500 yards distant – to move up to K Company's flank while L in reserve occupied I's former position. The switch occurred at the right moment for I Company, as it neared the designated flank, run flush into a German company seeking to encircle K Company. Back at the airstrip, Lt Belchee built up a defensive line and together with his depleted unit fought off an attack by 60 enemy infantryman who filled the airstrip with wild shrieks as they attacked. In this fierce small arms fight, K Company killed 20 and took 40 of the enemy breaking the attack. It must be remembered that this engagement actually took place behind enemy lines, for Lt Jacobs, K Company CO, simultaneously directed a minor action from his CP in the small town, but I Company by now went to work on the main enemy force along the right flank. An outline of the bridgehead operation at this time showed continuous action along the entire regiment front. With the 1st Battalion attacking Geinsheim at daybreak, and a 3rd Battalion reducing enemy resistance on the left half. K Company losses were four EM killed and seven EM wounded – evacuated. Others who at first were listed missing returned.

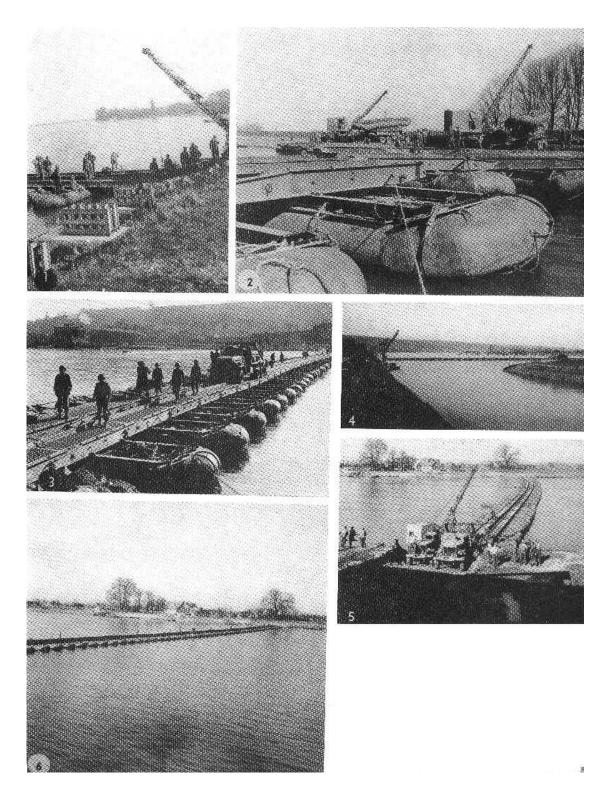
"When I Company encountered the German force which aspired to cut and encircle K Company, CO Capt Link directed that his 60 mm mortars and machine guns immediately be set up at forward points. Although positions were unorthodox, these tactics later proved invaluable because the enemy force immediately became pinned down by the sudden and accurate shelling. Sgt Joseph A Hartke, weapons section leader, zeroed in on the enemy while gunners Pfc John B Knight and Sgt Stanley A Valancius maintained a continuous barrage. All came under direct small arms fire with which the No less than three enemy machine guns and 10 automatic rifle positions were accounted for by this devastating fire. I Company's machine guns were strategically set up to give the maximum of overhead fire, and this too, kept the enemy pinned down. Not long afterwards Germans were giving up in large numbers and by 0730 hours the entire enemy force had either been killed or captured. Seventy-six Germans and two officers were rounded up while at least 15 dead were counted on the field of battle. I Company suffered two killed in this engagement. Three I Company runners, Pfc Conn Connewalt, T/4 Frank McArdle and Pvt Paul Bonwits, were in the midst of marching 41 prisoners back to the enclosure when they suddenly collided with a bypassed enemy platoon. The uncaptured Germans were apparently full of fight for they quickly deployed and set up a machine gun. The runners hurriedly informed the prisoners of war of their plight and tactfully added 'Alles Kaput.' The prisoners shouted emotional pleas to their erstwhile comrades upshot of which was the 30 fully armed Germans boarded the bandwagon to increase the particular prisoner tally to upwards of 70. By 0900 hours of 23 March 45, the 2nd Platoon of Company C, 803rd TD had been ferried across the Rhine, the first of the Third Army armor to cross, and were committed almost at once to help clear the 3rd Battalion front. I Company jumped off, attacking west of the canal between K and I Companies. Heavy support fire by artillery and tank destroyers enabled the company to move rapidly forward and dissect the main Trebur-Geinsheim route at phase line where 40 enemy shaken by violent shellings, neatly stacked arms and surrendered. Two K Company personnel who were missing as a result of the airstrip action earlier in the morning, T/Sgt Heber Braley and Medic William B Rea, were liberated when the contingent surrendered. I and L Company patrols probed into Trebur itself at 1053 hours that morning encountering but slight resistance in the form of rifle fire.

"It was dawn 0530 hours on 23 March when B and A Companies resumed the attack on Geinsheim, following up the enemy who had partially blown one of the canal bridges while effecting withdrawal. At this time 3rd Battalion troops had fought deeply on the left, but resistance was lighter there. The opening of this period also marked the beginning of 24 hours of the greatest Luftwaffe activity ever experienced by the Regiment in its sector, including the Caumont strafing and Verdun bombings in earlier French campaigns. For the most part of these attacks were directed at bridging sites

in Oppenheim and Nierstein. The first of these attacks occurred at 0600 hours when 12 German fighters appeared to climax an hour-long enemy SP shelling of Oppenheim Crossing site, while troops on the 3rd Battalion, 10th Infantry Regiment, were attempting to load into assault boats and paddle across the river. Enemy aircrafts dropped bombs along the river and attempted to machine gun troops and installations, while they themselves were under constant automatic weapons and anti-aircraft fire. One bomb struck the 3rd Battalion rear CP in Nierstein wounding Lt Bishop, Battalion Commanding Officer, and wireman Pfc Burrell, both of whom were laying wire."

"Across the river and inland B Company was meeting with intense small arms and bazooka fire as it drew to within 300 yards of Geinsheim. A Company, committed to take the right flank of the town, met with lighter resistance. The German arm-band Volksturm joined the Wehrmacht troops in defending the town, but these only afforded token resistance and either slipped away or gave up as prisoners or hid in cellars until captured. S/Sgt Charlie L Houston, acting 3rd Platoon sergeant of B Company together with Lt Laurel Venters, coordinated a successful attack on the enemy who was in position on the Geinsheim canal. Aptly termed "Walking Death," marching assault fire was vigorously employed by riflemen of the platoon and enemy troops along the canal were split into disorganization by the relentless advance. S/Sgt Thomas C McCrystal, D Company section leader, repaired a jammed machine gun while under heavy fire. He then moved up to where the riflemen of B Company were dug in, and personally opened with continuing and devastating fire, which eventually provided assault troops with an opening through which one entry into Geinsheim was affected. S/Sgt Dexter Cunningham, whose D Company heavy machine-gun section was attached to A Company, also performed nobly. He previously had suffered three separate wounds from an exploding Panzerfaust. He refused evacuation and insisted on participating in the Geinsheim attack, during which he personally positioned and directed invaluable covering machine-gun fire, immeasurably contributing to the attack. He was evacuated only when the town was completely clear. Lt Venters cut down a German with tommy-gun fire while dodging a potato-masher. Pfc Frank Benedict, a BAR man, killed an enemy machine gunner with a burst and took the balance of the crew prisoners with another burst. The entry into town was gradual, but by 0900 hours all enemy resistance collapsed. A and B Companies outposted forward and ferreted prisoners from houses, basements and public buildings. By 0945 23rd March 45 the Battalion had taken Division Objective No 1, Geinsheim, together with more than 150 prisoners, B Company taking approximately 100, and A Company capturing 50. At this moment, supporting armor of Company A, 737th Tank Battalion, was being ferried across the river – on their way to Geinsheim to assist the 1st Battalion in an attack on Wallerstadten. ..."

FIRST RHINE BRIDGE



(1) Men of the 150th Combat Engineer Battalion placing final treadways on XII Corps' first bridge across the Rhine at Oppenheim. This bridge was completed on March 23d at 1730 hours. (2) Unloading the pontons. (3) The final inspection of the bridge before traffic is allowed to pass over to the east shore. (4) Looking upstream from the western shore. Note destroyed bridge in the background. (5) Placing the approach ramps. Note the quickway and brockway to the bridge. (6) Looking downstream to the West Bank of the river. Other engineer troops involved were the 995th, 996th and 997th Engineer Treadway Bridge Companies.

3. US Army Engineers – and the U.S. Navy

No crossing the river the size of the Rhine could be accomplished without extraordinary effort on the part of the XII Corps engineers. So special was this effort, and so successful, that the Third Army Engineer published the confidential study of the whole Rhine operation. Which was quoted in part and the first section of this chapter. The character of the crossing was like any one of the river crossings made by XII Corps, and elsewhere described, only more so. The magnitude of the task is outlined in a single paragraph the Third Army study:

"the staging of the operation by the Corps was directed by the 1135th Engineer Combat Group, and in accordance with the Corps Engineer's plan – approximately 100 storm boats and motors, 300 assault boats and motors, life belts and other pertinent items were assembled by the Corps in addition to the T/E equipment of approximately 500 boats in 100 motors. To back the operation with troops, one heavy pontoon Battalion (minus one company) was initially attached to the Corps for use in rafting operations, the remainder of the bit tie in and one other Battalion were subsequently attached. To a specially trained Engineer combat Battalion's having approximately 400 outboard motor operators, three Treadway Bridge companies, to light pontoon companies plus a light equipment platoon and seven battalions were attached as well. Still another unit, one half of Naval Unit No 2, consisting of 12 LCVP's and their crews were attached and pioneered the use of Naval craft in a salt River crossing operations."

Unique element of XII Corps' Rhine Operation was participation of the U.S. Navy. The Third Army History Team secured excellent combat interviews of the naval personnel involved, but perhaps the most entertaining version of the affair as seen by our seagoing brothers-in-arms is to be found in the "Atlantic War" volume of Commander Walter Karig's remarkable series of books on the Navy's Two-Ocean War, Battle Report, Volume 2. He tells the whole "yarn" of the inland operations of Naval Unit No 2 in the words of its "Skipper," Lt Commander William Leide, USNR, from which the part about XII Corps is excerpted:

"In early March Lt Gen Patton's forces broke through northwest of Koblenz and we were alerted. Someone decided that Lt General Patton was not to cross the Rhine at this time, so the alert was off. This was not particularly good for our morale. After five months with the Army we were ready for some naval activity. The men had done everything from loading barbed wire on railroad trains to painting over 15,000 directional signs.

"A couple of weeks later, at Third Army headquarters at Luxembourg, I was informed by Brigadier General Conklin, head of the Engineers, that we were alerted. He told me that the unit was to be loaded and leave the following afternoon through a blazing Germany which had not yet been mopped up. I was informed that the road through which we were to pass was still in German hands but would be captured by the following morning.

"On the 21st of March we were under way for Worrstadt, which was some 20 miles from Oppenheim, Germany, where the Third US Army was all set for the assault. My executive officer and I reached the offices of XII Corps and were informed that a reconnaissance of the Rhine River had yet to be made. Lt (JG) D L Spalding, USNR, and I then played cops and robbers on the riverfront selecting embarkation and debarkation points. We were then briefed and introduced to the Commanding General of the 5th US infantry division. This famous division was charged with a mission of establishing and

securing a bridgehead. Imagine our consternation when we were told that the jump off time was 2200 the same night. Our boats were still enroute.

"Far Shore' was established at 0305 with Lt (JG) H S Szalach, USNR, as the far shore control officer. Ensign O Miller, USNR, was the near shore control officer and farther downstream Ensign R D Carter, USNR, took his post. Lt (jg) Spalding, my executive officer, crossed the river and directed these operations. As soon as the preponderance of the boats were launched and dawn was breaking we were heavily shelled by enemy artillery. The shelling was the inaccurate and did no damage.

"The launching of the boats was not a signal for intense activity. In fact my executive officer and I had to solicit business from the infantry Joes who were still paddling across the river. By 0700 a full-scale business was underway, contacts had been made with a traffic control officers and an endless stream of infantryman and light combat division vehicles was crossing the river.

"The turn-around was speedier than anticipated. Crews were reduced by one half and a German Hotel requisitioned so the man could be housed. A six-hour on, six-hour off watch was instituted, but the officers stayed on continuously.

"With the advent of daylight we were subjected to more artillery fire which again was very inaccurate. The vaunted German accuracy with the 88 mm was not in evidence. We were strafed four times during the day and casualties were light. The Germans were merely indulging in nuisance raids and accomplishing nothing as far as slowing down of traffic was concerned.

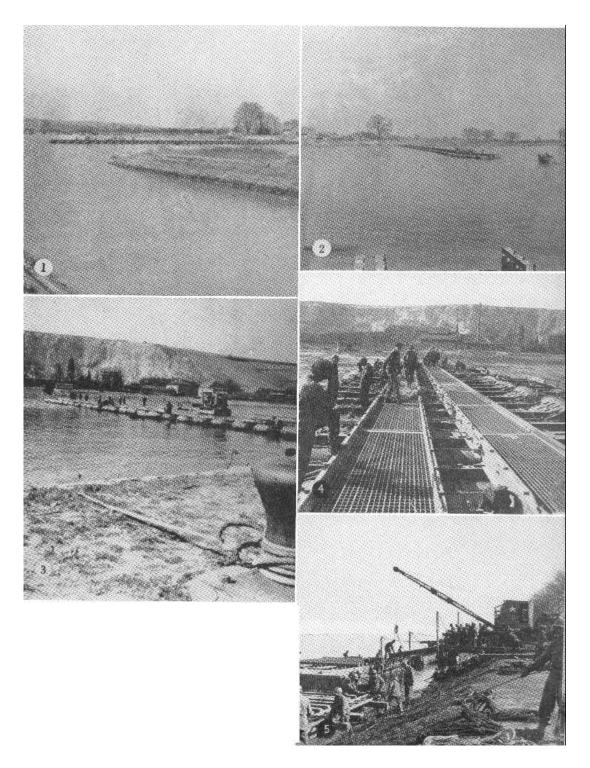
"Three of the LCVPs were employed in the building of bridges, laying nets and booms, and one of them pushed what is known as a heavy pontoon ferry bringing across 70 tank destroyers and tanks in less than 30 hours. The number of infantry crossed in 48 hours was in excess of 15,000 men. This does not take cognizance of the tremendous loads of prisoners and wounded which the craft were bringing from the far shore."

The Navy's part in XII Corps' crossing of the Rhine was highly thought of by XII Corps personnel, and many in the Corps headquarters who were present at the crossing during all phases of the operation were amazed to see how these capacious craft with their skilled crews expedited the build up of an unassailable bridgehead. General Patton, in addressing a letter of commendation to Commander Leide, spoke also for the men of XII Corps headquarters and units when he wrote: "Please except for yourself and pass on to the officers and men of your command the sincere appreciation and admiration of all elements of the Third U.S. Army for this superior work accomplished by your units. ..."

From the foregoing recital it will be seen that until the completion of the bridges the XII Corps Rhine Crossing had all the aspects of the true amphibious assault on a hostile shore. As summed up by the the 5th Infantry Division history: "By this time (afternoon of 23 March 45) the Rhine bridgehead had taken on the appearance of Normandy transplanted into Germany with beachmaster, beachhead dumps of ammunition and supplies, DUKW's, Weasels, and LCVP's, pushing back and forth transporting ammunition and supplies to the assault troops pushing inland. ..."

The parallel in the early phases of the attack was so close that it was seriously recommended at one time that the assault waves in the operation should be authorized a bronze arrowhead to be worn with their battle stars on the ETO Campaign ribbon. ...

BRIDGING THE RHINE WAS RUGGED WORK FOR XII CORPS ENGINEERS



(1 & 2) Working backwards, from east to west bank, in order to take the advantage of sheltered water, the 150th Engineer Combat Battalion are throwing this Treadway ponton bridge across the Rhine, 23 March 45. (3 & 4) Views of the nearly completed bridge as it appeared from the West Bank, the same day. (5) Beside the Treadway, work was being pushed at the same time on other bridges; this is a heavy ponton being built by the 87th and 88th Engineer Heavy Ponton Battalions, and a 249th Engineer Combat Battalion. Engineer support of the assault crossing and resulting bridgehead was charged to units of the 1134th 1135th Engineer Combat Groups, under XII Corps direction.

4. All-out Support for the Bridgehead

Artillery played a minor role in the early hours of the XII Corps bridgehead across the Rhine, but made up for it later, as will have been noted in the quotation from the 5th Infantry Division unit history in section 2 of this chapter. The same source has the following to record for the Corps artillery which was designated to operate in direct support of the division, in addition to the 19th, 21st, and 46th Field Artillery Battalions ("divarty"):

"The Division Artillery had been assigned two groups of reinforcing artillery which were in turn assigned to the 19th (Field Artillery Battalion) with instructions that when the 11th (Infantry Regiment) crossed, the 182nd Field Artillery Group was then to reinforce the 46th Field Artillery Battalion. Thus the lineup of artillery for the 11th Infantry's crossing was the 19th, reinforced by the 21st Field Artillery Battalion, 177th and 182nd Groups. The composition of the groups is listed below:

182nd Field Artillery Group

512th Field Artillery Battalion (105 Howitzer)

771st Field Artillery Battalion (155 Howitzer)

945th Field Artillery Battalion (155 Howitzer)

740th Field Artillery Battalion (8 inch Howitzer)

177th Field Artillery Group

276th Field Artillery Battalion (Armored 18 105s)

758th Field Artillery Battalion (8 inch Howitzer)

179th Field Artillery Battalion (155 Howitzer)

191st Field Artillery Battalion (155 Howitzer)

AAA guns and automatic weapons were slow to find employment around the crossing, because of the Luftwaffe's "double-take" on XII Corps' attack. But beginning with daybreak of the first morning scattered nuisance raiders, including jet planes, bore down on the bridge sites. This, culminated in a determined night attack with flares on 26-27 March 45. Between dusk and dawn the enemy made 114 sorties against the crossing installations. Everything in XII Corps which could be pointed at the sky opened up, furnishing thousands of innocent bystanders with the most spectacular display of tracers and air bursts and exploding Jerry aircraft since the days of Utah Beach. The busy batteries of the battalions in the Corps' 27th AAA group were credited with 23 planes shot down during the night.

Equally calculated to thwart the Kraut pilots in their earnest efforts to smash the crossing were the activities of the smoke generator men, with their sizzling smokepots fuming away in Oppenheim and Nierstein and vicinity. They kept a persistent haze over the bridges, for which the corps headquarters, displacing forward across the Rhine from Bad Kreuznach to Gross Gerau in the early morning hours immediately after the big night raid, was duly grateful.

Perhaps the most continuously overworked personnel during those days and nights were the Corps MPs, and all others who had a share in the responsibility for seeing that the fantastic amounts of traffic funneling down into the bridges were kept in some semblance of order and regularity of flow.

Capt Maurice ("Smitty") Smith, Corps Assistant PM, furnishes a good example of a traffic regulator who had to be constantly on the move. Colonel Ragnar ("Smokey") Johnson, Corps CWS

officer, represented the Corps commander in the vast operation, and was one of those XII Corps personnel constantly at the water's edge by the bridge sites. Day and night these officers and men regulated the flow, hurrying up the lines of vehicles as the bridges looked capable of handling more, diverting threatened jams away from the "hotspots" along the river as Nazi planes came in to strafe and bomb, or artillery fire started to fall. A careful estimate indicated that between 24 March 45, when the first bridge opened, and 31 March 45, about 60,000 vehicles had crossed crossed over XII Corps bridges. These included approximately 10,000 vehicles of XX Corps. The principal tactical units checked across the bridges included:

5th Infantry division (less assault troops)
90th Infantry Division (less assault troops)
4th Armored Division
6th Armored Division
26th Infantry Division
Corps Artillery Troops
11th Armored Division
71st Infantry Division
2nd Cavalry Group
3rd Cavalry Group
80th Infantry Division (1 CT)
65th Infantry Division (1 CT)

"It was my most interesting assignment during the war," says Colonel Johnson, adding, in his official report, that an "efficient communication system and the work of the MP's assisted greatly in accomplishing the rapid crossing of the troops." The former DC/S of the Corps, paying high tribute to Colonel Johnson, comments: "The system of waiting assembly areas, information posts, control posts, guides, MPs, wire radio, airplane observation, etc., operated like a huge block system on a densely trafficked railroad. Additional dispersal and waiting areas were established on the east bank."

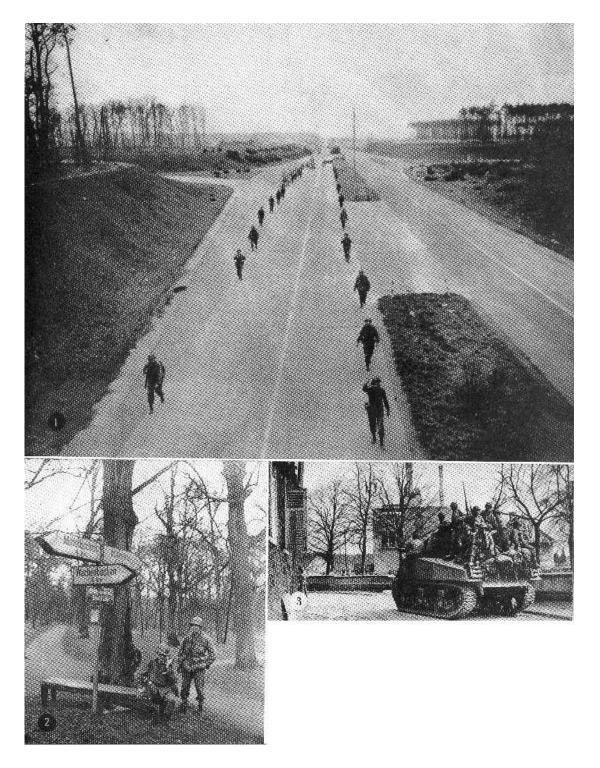
One of the six teaming assembly areas in the gentle hills bordering the Rhine on the west was in the vicinity of General Eddy's advance command post, set up ads Undenheim from noon of 24 March until the Forward Echelon absorbed it again on its way through to Gross Gerau three days later.

Traffic control, crossing control, and control of the fighting on the far bank called as always for communications, and the 93rd Signal Battalion and other XII Corps communications agencies were also continuously in the thick of the activities. As an instance of this work, the Signal Battalion's special underwater telephone cable, described in the first section of this chapter, was started across the river at 1500 23 March 45. The line truck and cable trailer were run on an engineer ferry and the cable cautiously paid out and weighted as the ferry made its way, under German artillery fire, to the east bank, where the cable was secured and opened for traffic. This touchy operation was conducted by a wire team headed by S/S gt Ross Gerber, under supervision of Lt Roy Riggs and Lt Col (then Major) Scanlan. A second cable was prepared during that night and laid in place on the following day by Sgt Gerber's crew. Just to make assurance doubly sure, more cables, to a total number of eight, were run across the engineer bridges as they were finished, until Col "Andy" Anderson and Maj John Myers, and the others in the Corps headquarters Signal Section, could feel that the system was absolute leak proof against any shelling or bombing that the enemy might be able to bring down upon it.

Thus XII Corps services and supporting troops poured into the swelling bridgehead by night and day, in all the multiplicity of types of units which compose a modern mechanized army. There even developed a certain truck-meet spirit as each outfit hastened to be the first of its kind across the once

dreaded barrier, now proved so vulnerable. Unit histories for the period reveal no lack of such statements as: "... to Battery C (of the 457th AAA AW Battalion) went the distinction of being the first AA Battery in the Third Army to cross to the east bank. ..."; "This hospital unit (the 16th Field Hospital) was the first Third Army Hospital across the Rhine River. ..."; and so forth. Whatever discussion might arise among rival units between XII Corps, there was little doubt that XII Corps itself was again first among Third Army units of its type to roll across the Rhine. VIII Corps, northernmost of Third Army's three Corps, launched its assault two days after that of XII Corps. And XX Corps' initial attack in the center of the Army line had not even started by the time XII Corps headquarters itself was rolling into the by-then secure and massive XII Corps bridgehead, – and aiming for Darmstadt, Frankfurt, and the very heart of Hitler's Reich.

"DRAG NACH OSTEN" -- BUT NOT AS THE GERMANS PLANNED IT



(1) Greatly assisted by Adolf Hitler's fine system of dual highways, men of the 5th Infantry Division give an American twist to the "drive towards the East" as they close in on Frankfurt-au-Main by way of an "autobahn," 27 March 45. "Well, the Krauts put these dual highways in for military use, didn't they? And that's how we're using them aren't we?..." (2) Yank tourists east of the Rhine: Sgt Robert Gore and Pvt Harry M. Curry both of Company A, 358th Infantry Regiment, 90th Infantry Division report their exact whereabouts east of Frankfurt with the help of the excellent system of road signs. 28 March. (3) Approaching Frankfurt over the well-paved streets of German towns (in this case Konigstadton) 5th Infantry Division foot and armor role eastward. 25 March.

5. Darmstadt, Frankfurt, and the Main

Oppenheim on the Rhine was only a springboard, a good spot to which to go places and see things. From here on, the XII Corps conducted to the scenic Germany moved even faster. Crowded events of the next few days may be quickly summarized in passages from the Third Army After Action Report:

- 23 March 45. "Attacking from Oppenheim the (XII Corps) infantrymen encountered little resistance, and had cleared Trebur, Zballersteim, Leeheim, Erfelden, Dornheim and Asteheim within 24 hours. A heavy pontoon bridge and a Treadway Bridge were completed within 36 hours of the initial crossing. Driving into the (5th Infantry Division) bridgehead, the 357th and 359th Infantry Regiments (90th Infantry Division) assumed control of the southern half of the bridgehead, while the 358th Infantry assembled preparatory to crossing, after having completely cleared Mainz. CCA (numeral forth Armored Division) crossed into the bridgehead in attack through the infantry at the close of the period, while CCB assembled preparatory to crossing. Relieving elements of the numeral forth Armored Division along the Rhine River north of Worms, the numeral the 11th Armored Division patrolled aggressively. The 26th Infantry Division in 6th Armored Division passed to Corps control during the period. Moving north, the 6th Armored Division went into an assembly area, while the 26th Infantry Division utilized the 328th Infantry and patrolling around Mainz. ..."
- 24 March 45. "Breaking out of XII Corps bridgehead, CCA and CCB (4th Armored Division) passed through the 5th and 90th Infantry Divisions and gained up to 20 miles. CCA passed through numerous towns, reaching Graf Zimmerm while CCB drove to Kiestadt. Meanwhile, the 5th Infantry Division continued its attack to enlarge the bridgehead in the north and east against limited resistance, clearing Baucheim, Russelsheim, Koningstaden and Gross-Gerau. Just to the south, the 90th Infantry Division continued its attack to the east, gaining more than 5 miles and taking Buttelborn, Worfelden, Goddelau, Schneppenhausen, Grafenhausen and Griesheim, while some elements were attacking the large industrial city of Darmstadt at the end of the period. The combined 5th and 90th Infantry Division's bridgehead was enlarged to a depth of 9 miles and a width of 10 miles. The 104th Infantry (26th Infantry Division), attached to the 4th Armored Division, crossed into the bridgehead and prepared to pass through the 90th Infantry Division in mopping up operations behind the armor. Other elements of the 26th Infantry Division pulled up to the Rhine River, with the 101st Infantry crossing into the bridgehead late in the period. After coming from Seventh U.S. Army to XX Corps, 6th Armored Division passed to control of XII Corps. Crossing into the bridgehead area, CCB (6th Armored Division) advanced through infantry elements at the end of the period. The floating Treadway Bridge across the Rhine River was completed in the lower part of the Corps zone. The northern part of the zone was being patrolled throughout the period by the 2nd Cavalry Group and a 328th Infantry (26th Infantry Division). ... "
- 25 March 45. 'The rapid advance of the 4th Armored Division in the XII Corps zone continued for 35 miles. Both CCA and CCB bypassed Darmstadt and CCA captured a bridge intact over the Main River near Grossauheim, repulsing several small enemy air attacks aimed at the bridgehead. CCB captured a railroad bridge intact over the same River at Aschaffenburg. Enemy aircraft were very active over these bridgeheads. The 104th Infantry (26th Infantry Division) was attached to the 4th Armored Division. Upon relief, the 104th Infantry assumed blocking positions to the south along the general line Stockstadt-Eberstadt. Meanwhile, the 101st Infantry (26th Infantry Division) crossed into the bridgehead near Darmstadt. Capturing Gastavsburg and Bischofsheim, the 5th Infantry Division continued its attack to the north, while clearing territory up to the Main River. In a zone to the west, the

90th Infantry Division drove northeast 6 miles with the 358th and 359th Infantry Regiments clearing the important city of Darmstadt, capturing Griesheim, Grafenhausen, Worfelden and Langen. Continuing its advance to the northeast, the 6th Armored Division captured Raunheim and Kelsterbach. The 16th Cavalry Group (XX Corps) relieved the 2nd Cavalry Group in its positions along the west bank of the Rhine River. By the end of the period the 2nd Cavalry Group had also been relieved of attachment to the 26th Infantry Division, and was crossing into the bridgehead area. ..."

26 March 45. "All major units of XII Corps were well beyond the Rhine River during the period. The leading spearheads continued to be furnished by CCA and CCB (4th Armored Division). CCB bypassed Aschaffenburg and enlarged its bridgehead over the Main River at that point to a depth of 6 miles, while CCA (supported by the attached 328th Infantry) and enlarged its bridgehead over the Main River near Grossauheim to a depth of 4 miles. Following closely behind the 4th Armored Division was the 26th Infantry Division (less than 328th Infantry). Elements of the 101st Infantry moved into Groassauheim bridgehead, after clearing Offenthal, Urberath, Oberroden, while elements of the 104th Infantry relieved CCB at Aschaffenburg. Continuing to attack to the northeast, the 358th to 359th Infantry Regiments (90th Infantry Division) captured Heusenstamm, Langen and Bieber and reached the Main River east of Frankfurt. To the west, the 6th Armored Division captured a damaged railroad bridge on the Main River and pushed foot elements across the river into the once great industrial city of Frankfurt. Other elements of the 6th Armored Division captured Schwanheim, Kelsterbach, Raunheim, Sachsenhausen, Offenbach and Niederrad. Early crossing operations were hampered by heavy enemy artillery fire, which soon abated. Then the 10th and 11th Infantry Regiments (5th Infantry Division) pushed north, crossed the Main River and entered Frankfurt. Enemy small arms and automatic weapons fire was heavy but enemy troops were almost entirely without artillery support. Artillery with XII Corps fired extensively in support of the action and fired upon the telephone exchange and the main power plant at the request of the 6th Armored Division. The 2nd Infantry assembled at the crossing site south of the city, after being relieved by the 2nd Cavalry Group of the zone along the Main River just east of the Rhine River. ..."

ALWAYS "ONE MORE RIVER TO CROSS" FOR XII CORPS: AFTER THE RHINE CAME THE MAIN



(1) Getting ready to make the night assault across the Main River at Muhlheim, between Frankfurt and Hanau, Captain Charles W Watson, commanding Company A, 358th Infantry Regiment, 90th Infantry Division checks his communications before shoving off. 28 March 45. (This is a Signal Company infrared photo). (2) XII Corps got a ponton across near Hanau, and here are vehicles of the 22nd Armored Field Artillery Battalion, 4 th Armored Division rolling ever eastward. 28 March. (3) the Krauts kept heavy interdictory artillery fire on a railroad bridge captured intact at Hanau: an 88 mm airburst appears over it in this picture. (4) This was part of our trouble at Hanau. MP Joseph Gricewich with the 4th Armored Division stands near a knocked out German railroad gun near Hanau. 28 March. (5)... and the next day, back on the Rhine, the 1303rd Engineer General Service Regiment was already starting work on this military fixed bridge on the site of the demolished highway bridge at Mainz, to relieve XII Corps overworked pontons.

In the execution of these plans, General Eisenhower's report to the Combined Chiefs of Staff sums up the operations dealt with in this chapter, "we were again greatly aided by the results of the dash and daring with which the operations west of the Rhine had been carried out... on the night of 22-23 March, as our main, carefully prepared crossing in the north was poised for its massive blow, the 5th Division of the XII Corps crossed the Rhine. ... The bridgehead grew swiftly, and by evening of 24 March it was 9 miles long and 6 miles deep, while 19,000 prisoners were taken in 24 hours. The remainder of XII Corps crossed the river, seized Darmstadt on the 25th, and swept on to capture intact the Main bridges at Aschaffenburg. ... Thus the Rhine barrier, the greatest natural obstacle with which the Allied armies had been faced since the landings in France, had been breached. ... "

General Marshall, in his Biennial Report for 1943-45, summarizes it even more compactly but no less to the satisfaction of a XII Corps historian:

"While pocketed German forces in the Saar were still in process of being mopped up... infantry of the Corps under Major General Manton S. Eddy, achieved a brilliant surprise by crossing the Rhine at Oppenheim South of Mainz late on 22 March with decidedly sketchy and improvised means. In two days this bridgehead was expanded to a width of 15 miles, and on the third day the 4th Armored Division broke through the enemy lines to a depth of 27 miles, seizing an undamaged bridge over the Main River. ..."

These outstanding operations were the climax and pay off to long years of training and long months of combat which had been used by the three units specifically cited above by General Marshall and General Eisenhower to full advantage to perfect themselves in a difficult and dangerous part of war. A natural consequence of their resulting effectiveness in battle, both as team-mates and individually, was that all three mentioned in the foregoing quotations from The Chief of Staff and a Supreme Commander, AEF, were awarded, or recommended for the award of, the Distinguished Unit ("Presidential") Citation.

The award of this coveted decoration actually went through for the entire 4th Armored Division, and 15 attached units, and was published in the WDGO Mo 54, 12 July 45. The period covered in the citation was from the Battle of the Bulge through the crossing of the Rhine and Main Rivers (22 December 44-27 March 45).

Recommendation by the same award to the 5th Infantry division was initiated by Headquarters XII Corps in September 1945. At first rejected by SHAEF, it was resubmitted in September, 1946, upon announcement of a modification of War Department policy at the time this volume was in preparation. The period covered was almost the same as that for the 4th Armored Division (21 December 44-24 March 45), and was particularly intended to include the division's superb assault crossings of the Sauer and Rhine rivers.

General Hobart ("Hap") Gay, former Chief of Staff of Third Army recommended XII Corps for the Distinguished Unit Badge (Citation) in a letter to Headquarters USFET, in August, 1946. This was construed by higher authority to mean the Corps headquarters only, and further construed to include the following "organic" compliments: Headquarters and Headquarters Company, XII Corps; Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, XII Corps Artillery; 93rd Signal Battalion; 673rd Engineer Topo Company; 820th Military Police Company; and 286th Field Artillery Observation Battalion. The period designated is, again, the same in part as for the two great divisions above which were among those in the Corps during those notable days (7 February 45-31 March 45). The citation was designed to highlight, in the

words of General Gay's letter, "Assault crossings of the Sauer River (Luxembourg); Rapid advance to the Rhine; Assault crossing of the Moselle River south of Koblenz, Germany; The Palantinate Campaign to include the historic assault crossing of the Rhine River, 22 March 45."

"The successful campaigns indicated above," General Gay's recommendation continues, "were the result of careful planning, thoroughly coordinated staff work, and experience available only to battle tried veterans. These campaigns were executed with daring – far beyond the normal call of duty. Only battle seasoned veterans could have been successful against a strong and deliberate enemy on a hazardous terrain and under the adverse weather conditions existing at the time." The final decision on this award is also under consideration by higher authority as XII Corps, Spearhead of Patton's Third Army goes to press.

Chapter 15

FROM THE RHINE TO CZECHOSLOVAKIA. 26 MARCH 45-22 APRIL 45

1. End of a Banner Month

The XII Corps' race across Germany, like the Corps' race across France, was a breath-taking affair. Only the French, – and the element of novelty – were missing. Few members of the Corps headquarters or its units had been able to sustain through the long hard winter that fresh enthusiastic spirit which had animated Americans during the operations from Normandy to the first Moselle. But if the men of the corps headquarters, its older divisions, and the corps troops, were beginning to be tired, the full effects of this were concealed by a new atmosphere of utterly confident professionalism. Command and staff at all levels, having been through much trying experience, worked together almost automatically.* The results, as the disintegrating German armies found to their ultimate disaster, were the same.

"The month of March was reminiscent of the Corps' first month of operations, from mid-August to mid-September 1944, during which the Corps pursued a disengaging enemy 280 miles from Le Mans to Nancy.... the distance advanced was 215 miles, and about 4, 300 square miles were taken from enemy control. Organized resistance had been shattered, and over 67,000 prisoners had been taken. Three great rivers, the Moselle, Rhine, and Main, were crossed in a space of half a month." Had the facts then been available, the Deputy Chief of Staff might have added to this After Action Report Summary the most spectacular figure of all – the number of towns wrested from the enemy during the month, as officially credited to XII Corps by Third Army in its After Action Report, distributed after the war. By whatever standards the Army employed decide when a "Populated Place" was big enough to list as a "town," XII Court during March, 1945, broke all records for all corps in Third Army during the entire War in Europe, with the staggering total of 243 important centers of population captured. This was 108 more than the best month of any other corps.**

The real clean-up of Germany began with the operations at the end of this great month, after the battered bridges captured "intact" over the River Main from Aschaffenburg to Frankfurt had been secured and reinforced. In some short but bitter fighting, the enemy, continues Col Lieber, "attempted to hold the line of the Main River, bringing inconsiderable artillery fire both at Frankfurt and Aschaffenburg. Attempts to form the Volkssturm resistance of police, firemen, and air raid wardens in Frankfurt showed his desperate need for troops. With the crossing of the Main, the last shreds of organization disappeared, and as the Corp pushed north toward the Thuringer Wald, the only remaining resistance was from roadblocks, demolitions, and unorganized despondent troops from replacement, training and administration centers, supported occasionally by a few tanks or AA guns, sporadically defending a strong point or making a local counterattack in the hope of breaking contact. There was no semblance of offensive action or organized the defenses....

"28 March the 4th Armored Division Broke through its Bridgehead (across the Main River South of Hanau) and by the close of the day had rolled over 35 miles north of the Main (to Gruenberg, in the vicinity of Giessen, on the high road to Marburg and Kassel.) On the same day, the 90th Infantry Division forced a crossing over the Main between Frankfurt and Hanau under heavy artillery fire, while the 5th and 26th Infantry Divisions cleared Frankfurt and Hanau. During the day the 5th Infantry and 6th Armored Divisions were relieved from the Corps, the 5th Infantry Division passing to Army control and the 6th Armored Division to the XX Corps, and the 11th Armored Division was assigned from the XX Corps.

"The Corps left Rhine-Main plain and struck north through the rolling forested hills and open farmlands in the saddle between the Westerwald on the west and the Vogelsberg on the east, the armor leading and the infantry clearing the zone. Under a change in plans from higher headquarters, the 4th Armored Division swung East into the Fulda, and then northeast through the Werra River gap to pass around the west end of the formidable hills of the Thuringer Wald, while the 11th Armored Division worked through the Hohe Rhon south and east of the 4th Armored Division. On 31 March the 4th Armored Division had advanced into the Werra gap to a point about 15 miles southeast of Eisenach, and the 11th Armored Division advanced into the Fulda gap. The 90th Infantry Division followed in the zone of the 4th Armored Division, and the 26th Infantry Division cleared the area behind the 11th Armored Division. The 71st Infantry Division, assigned to the Corps 29 March from the Seventh Army, closed in an area north of Hanau on 31 March in Corps reserve, and a 2nd Cavalry Group protected the right flank of the Corps and maintained contact with XV Corps, Seventh Army."

The generally triumphant operations during March were marred, near the end of the month, by one unfortunate incident. Perhaps inspired by the sensationalist success of the raid to liberate American prisoners at Cabanatuan, Philippines, which had startled the world a couple of months before, higher authority directed that an attempt be made to free some 1400 U.S. Officer prisoners reported to be held in a camp near Hammelburg. (About three quarters of the way from Aschaffenburg to Bad Kissingen) Accordingly a task force consisting of a company of infantry, or company of tanks, three assault guns, and other attached units with appropriate vehicles was organized from elements of CCB, 4th Armored Division. On the night of 26-27 march this force broke out of the division bridgehead at Aschaffenburg and headed due east. It smashed through 40 miles of hostile territory to the camp and released PW's, but on the way back was cut off by overwhelming German forces and all but a few the personnel killed or made prisoners. The task force commander, Capt A J Baum, S3 of the 10th Armored Infantry Battalion, was captured (while suffering from three wounds) and freed 6 April 45 when American forces overran the hospital in which he was being treated. He had nothing but praise for the behavior of his officers and men. "Their conduct was unparalleled," he told interviewers of the Third Army History Team. "The morale throughout the trip was superior even though the men knew they had hardly a chance. Everyman was a hero." The value of the expedition and is a diversionary operation was felt on the XII Corps front, and on that of other Corps. As the bulk of the Corps rolled forward it picked up sundry individuals from this camp who had made their way to freedom in the XII Corps' zone in advance. More and more as the Corps units went forward they overran such camps, notably one at Bad Orb, 2 April 45, where smart work on the part of 2nd Cavalry Group men liberated over 6, 500 Allied Prisoners, including a Russian Major General.

Much of this phase of the advance was served by the fine new dual highways of Western Germany. Americans had been told Hitler built these for military purposes – O. K., that was what we were using them for, wasn't it? Wherever they were going our way, they were particularly God's gift to the 2 1/2 ton supply trucks. Naturally, therefore, the most fervent appreciation of these "autobahnen" comes from the 514th QM Group booklet cited previously, Patton's Wheels:

"HITLER'S BACKFIRE. The Autobahns, the military super-highways of Germany, were not only the answer to a tactician's prayer but in addition, proved to be a major temptation for the QM truck driver. His first glimpse of those smoothly banked curves along straight stretches of four-lane thoroughfare was a 'sight for sore eyes' to the US bred speed merchants. A heavy foot on the accelerator became an occupational disease until some Third Army MP reminded them they were still in the service with a good-natured 'You're flying kind of low today ain't you Buddy?'

"In the early weeks after the crossing of the Rhine, traffic on the Autobahns was as dense as that on the main roads outside any hometown on a summer Sunday afternoon – and the traffic was just as American. Vehicles of every description from jeeps to the heaviest tanks roared and rumbled down these military express lanes and the only thing German to be observed were the PW convoys coming back.

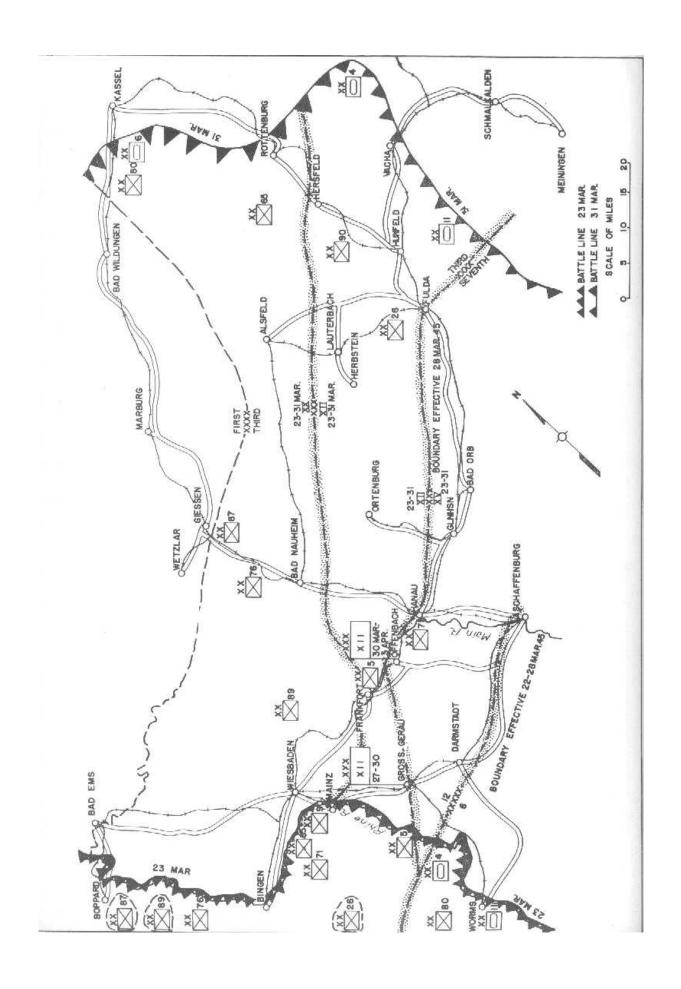
"Only at night were the Jerry's able to strafe the autobahns. It is an outstanding irony of the war that these high-powered military arteries, built for conquest and long the proudest boast of pre-war German military might, backfired on their creators and became one of the greatest assets of our own 'Blitz'."

** The towns credited to XII Corps during March follow:

Butzweiler	1	Salm	5	Landhern	10
Edingen	1	Usch	5	Luxem	10
Godendorf	1	Wallenborn	5	Plein	10
Heilenbach	1	Binsfeld	6	Wirfus	10
Kersch	1	Dolheim	6	Faid	11
M albergweich	1	Horforst	6	Gevenich	11
M ahlendorf	1	Spang	6	Immerath	11
Oberweiler	1	Sp angdah lem	6	Niederwinkel	11
Ralingen	1	Arrenrath	7	Oberwinkel	11
Rosport	1	Eisenschmitt	7	Strohn	11
Sefferweich	1	Gransdorf	7	Strotzbusch	11
Schlied	1	Rodt	7	Diefenbach	12
Steinheim	1	Schleidweiler	7	DrieSCh	12
Udelfan gen	1	Schwarzenborn	7	Kesten	12
Besslich	2	Zemmer	7	Kinderbeuern	12
Fusenich	2	Bassenheim	8	Lutzerath	12
Grevenich	2	Burg	8	M aring	12
Herresthalerhof	2	Grosslittgen	8	Osann	12
Heflanbach	2	Greverath	8	Plesport	12
Huttingen	2	Hegg-Gut	8	Lutz	14
Metterich	2	Karlich	8	Tries	13
Neiderweiler	2	Kettig	8	Macken	14
Seffern		Kobern	8	Morshausen	14
Sirzenich	2	Kruft	8	Udenhausen	14
Trierweiler	2	Landseheld	8	Beulich	15
Euren	3	Melsenheim	8	Buch	15
Hasten	3	M uhiheim	8	Bullay	15
Igel	3	Rubenach	8	Dommershausen	15
Langsur	3	Saffig	8	Dorweiler	15
Liersberg	3	Wolken	8	Ehr	15
Messenich	3	Bergweiler	9	Ellern	15
Zewen-Oberkirch	3	Bettenfeld	9	Gondershausen	15
Baden	4	Bruch	9	Kastellaun	15
Dudeldorf	4	Dunfus	9	Kouweiler	15
Erdorf	4	Hambuch	9	Kratzenburg	15
Gindorf	4	Hupperath	9	Lahr	15
Orenhofen	4	M anderscheid	9	Lanbach	15
Ordorf	4	M inderlittgen	9	Liesenfeld	15
Preist	4	M ontenich	9	M erimuth	15
Phi1ipp sheim	4	Musweinler	9	Morsdorf	15
Pickilessen	4	Roes	9	Neef	15
Speicher	4	Carden	10	Nehren	15
Steinborn	4	Gipperath	10	Ney	15
Malberg	5	Gondorf	10	Oppenhausen	15
Melsburg	5	Gremersburg	10	Poltersdorf	15
Orsfeld	5	Gu1s	10	Senhals .	15
OberstadtefeId	5	Illerich	10	Simmern	15

^{*} Said General Eisenhower to General Patton and a visit to Third Army units about this time: "please tell your officers and men of my great admiration for the skillful and veteran behavior of all units, both combat, supply and administrative. I was particularly impressed with the self-confidence and ease with which all the stats function." This quotation was conveyed to General Eddy in a letter from General Patton, 14 April 45.

Zilshausen	15	Worms	20	Gross-Gerau	24
Bad Salzig	15	Bechtheim	21	Konigstaden	24
Blankenrath	16	Bermersheim	21	Russelsheim	24
Boppard =	16	Dalheim	21	Schneppenhausen	24
Burg	16	Dexheim	21	Worfelben	24
Panzwzller	16	Dolgesheim	21	Biechofsheim	25
Bad Kreuznach	18	Dornduerkheim	21	Darmstadt	25
Becherbach	18	Elmsheim	21	Grafenhausen	25
Bingen	18	Freiweinheim	21	Griesheim	25
Harweiller	18	Frettensheim	21	Guslavsburg	25
Meddersheim	18	Gaulsheim	21	Kelsterbach	25
Sobernheim	18	Gimbsheim	21	Raunheim	25
Aspisheim	19	Hahnheim	21	Heusenthamm	26
Herweiler	19	Mettenheim	21	Bieber	26
Nussbaum	19	M ommernheim	21	Oberroden	26
Sponsheim	19	Osthofen	21	Offenthal	26
Waldpochelhelm	19	Rhein-Durkheim	21	Sachsenhausen	26
Abbisheim	20	Schornsheim	21	Schwanheim	26
Albig	20	Seizen	21	Uberath	27
Alzey	20	Weinheim	21	Hanau	27
Bornhelm	20	Wintersheim	21	Killanstaden	27
Dannenfels	20	Erhfelden	22	Mittelbuchen	27
Flonheim	20	Mainz	22	Niedertorfelden	27
Gollheim	20	Ashtheheim	23	Grosskalben	29
Hahnheim	20	Leeheim	23	Heldenber gen	29
Harxheim	20	Treiur	23	Rothenbergen	29
Hechtsheim	20	Wallerstein	23	Ruckingen	29
Marienborn	20	Bauscheim	24	Budingen	30
M arienthal	20	Buttelborn	24	Gelenhausen	30
Monsheim	20	Goddelau	24	Liesenwald	30
Niedesheim	20	Grafenhausen	24	Hersfeld	31
Offsteln	20	Griasheim	24	Starklos	31



2. The Strange Case of the 6th SS Mountain Division

Easter Sunday, 1945, fell on April Fool's Day, and as the first of the month donned, suddenly XII Corps began to wonder if it were the victim of a rough practical joke. The situation was this, as outlined in the After Action Report:*

"Easter Sunday, 1 April, found the Corps at maximum stretch, on a northeasterly course, with the rear boundary in the trough of the Rhine Valley, and the Forward Echelon of the headquarters still at Offenbach on the Main; while the Advance (Tactical) CP was already far forward at a Lauterbach. Beyond, the foremost armored elements were breaking out into the edge of the great central plane of Germany. The 4th Armored Division, on the left, had thrust between the difficult country of the Hessiches Bergland to the north and the Thuringer Wald to the south, and jumped over the saddle into the headwaters of the Unstrut River and the relatively better going of the Thuringer Bergland. The 90th Infantry Division was following in the zone of the 4th Armored Division. On the night of 1 April the 11th Armored Division was already bearing off at an acute angle to the direction of attack of the 4th Armored Division and initiating the long southeasterly coast along the ridges from the Thuringer Wald to the Bohmerwald, which characterized the movement of the whole Corps from the first week in April to the last day of that month. The 26th Infantry Division was clearing behind the 11th Armored Division. So rapid had been the advance of the Corps since the crossing of the Main, that almost the whole right flank lay open except for the security afforded by the 2nd Cavalry Group, which was assigned to screen and patrol this vulnerable line and reach back to maintain control with outdistanced forward elements of the XV Corps, Seventh Army. The 71st Infantry Division, but newly assigned, was in Corps reserve north of Hanau. The zone of action of the Corps included a wide variety of countryside, as might be expected from the long, narrow cross-section of Western Germany which it comprised. The rolling farmlands and isolated woodlots which had favored the advance on either side of the Rhine persisted for a short distance northeast of the Main. Then the terrain became increasingly rugged and forested. The line of advanced threaded between the frowning heights of the Vogelsberg and Hohe Rhon and forked upon the northwesterly point of the Thuringer Wald...."

XII Corps' right flank, then, was open and naked to the winds of Germany, as will be seen from the above, save only for the 2nd Cavalry Group in its accustomed role of screening the Allied Armies from attack until the forces on the South could catch up the XII Corps' advance. But on the left flank, the Corps had the refreshing experience of being, apparently, pretty well covered – by a corps the identity of which, for reasons of amity and delicacy, will not be revealed here. It was from this direction, on 1 April 45, that a blow fell, as the Corps After Action Report puts it, "unique in the experience of XII Corps." The report continues: "the ... Corps, on the left, had bypassed certain German SS units and groups of individuals which proved to be still full of fight (these were principally elements of the 6th SS Mountain Division). These broke away from the forces containing them, in numbers variously estimated as being between several hundred and '3,000-4,000,' attempted to cut their way across XII Corps rear areas to a junction with enemy forces on the Corps right flank. The impact of this situation on the Corps included a number of ambushes of supply vehicles, even on the M(ain)S(upply)R(oute) itself; and several small brisk actions before units of the 71st Infantry Division, 5th Infantry Division, 26th Infantry Division, and the 2nd Cavalry Group eliminated the disturbing elements. The Forward Echelon of the Corps headquarters moved in convoy instead of by infiltration, as normally, to overtake the Advance CP. And from then on throughout the month, the 17th Armored Group, reinforced by a battalion of infantry, was employed in protection of the command post and MSR."

Between the lines of this brief paragraph those who remember the incident will be able to read a multitude of hair-raising adventures for many members of various XII Corps units, including the

headquarters. As indicated in the quotation, General Eddy, General Canine and General Lentz were among those "cut off" from their usual connections. The Corps commander had gone forward on 1 April with personnel of his command group, to Lauterbach, expecting the Forward Echelon to follow forthwith. Instead, with all hell breaking loose along the MSR, and while rumors of an attack on the Forward Echelon in Offenbach (which subsequently developed to have originated in a carload of ammunition burning in the Frankfurt rail yards across the river), it was not until the morning of 3 April that the situation was considered sufficiently clarified to permit Col Lieber to bring his part of the headquarters up to where it belonged. Even so, the Forward Echelon convoy narrowly missed becoming involved in certain difficulties in the outskirts of Ortenberg, where it arrived while American dead still lay as they had fallen in the highway and along the roadsides.** During these eventful days, the headquarters proper lost one soldier, "KIA" – Pfc Alvin E Courter, driver for Maj "Johnny" Myers, of the Signal Section, on 1 April 45.*** T/5 Louis Fuld was wounded in action on the last day of March. Several members of the headquarters were captured by the Germans, but escaped. Representative cases with those of Capt George Gorry, of the Chemical Warfare Section, and Pfc space Joseph Kaczor of the Chief of Staff Section, both of whom were awarded the Silver Star in connection with the affair. Capt Gorry recounts there experienced thus:

"We were ambushed in Gen Canine's car. (The general had flown out by L-5). The armor had gone through and we were following. They opened up on us with a bazooka and we turned over. As the driver and I came up, we were bowing and scraping to anyone who happened to be around, and they were Germans. They took us 50 miles from there, where they were fighting the 2nd Cavalry group, and put us between the lines in a barn. It got pretty hot and we were put in a potato bin in a cellar. There were 27 of us. The guard went through a tunnel to another building, as there were some civilians in there. A German civilian came in and we asked where the Germans were. We didn't want to stay in a cellar, as we were afraid the American artillery would open up. The driver and I volunteered to go out and reconnoiter, so we did, and managed to get a couple of guns, as there had been a lot of fighting and there were many strewn around. Going across a field we ran into a German patrol of three. We waited until they stood up and were outlined between us and the fires in the town, so we captured them and took them back. We took the two guards at the door, and took them into the cellar. Later on we went out on patrol again and picked up 34 prisoners.

We put them in the yard of a hospital where there were four American wounded and 60 or 70 Germans. I asked one of the Americans where our troops were, and he told us, so the driver and I left and found our outposts...."

The men of the 93rd Signal Battalion, in their ceaseless travels to keep the XII Corps communications lines open, as might be expected had several brushes with these Kraut intruders, reflected in the Battalion history:

"On 1 April Sgt Ridlen, Pfc Petersohn and Pfc Heideman of A Company were taken prisoner by the enemy troops while they were on a mission to deliver a Weapons Carrier to the wire crew at the Corps Fire Direction Center. Ridlen was separated from the other two men by his captors and spent a very uncomfortable 48 hours as a prisoner before he was released by men of the 2nd Cavalry Group. Heideman returned to the Battalion within 24 hours after Ridlen, but it was many months before we learned that Petersohn had been returned to military control when his captors were overrun by our own troops of the 71st Division.

"On the same day Pfc Edward Malinoski and Pfc Myrl M Reynolds ran into an enemy ambush in the town of Selters while they were on a messenger run but were able, by quick thinking and fast action, to escape. However, fou and r other messengers, Pfc Gerald G O'Brien, Pfc Charlie L Owens, Pfc Wilson Chaney and Pfc Willard C McAllister were not so fortunate. O'Brien and Owens made the sad mistake of stopping to warn some 'American' troops in American vehicles that they had been shot at a few miles back on the road, only to have the unhappy experience of looking down the business end of a Luger. They remained prisoners for the about 16 hours, until they were liberated by members of the 11th Armored Division.

On 3 April, McAllister and Chaney ran into an enemy ambush, when they were on a run to the 2nd Cavalry Group, in the vicinity of Budingen, Germany. Displaying exceptionally cool heads and stout hearts they ran their peep through about a mile of enemy crossfire before being forced to abandon it. But they still managed to burn their peep and destroy their messages before they were taken captive. It was almost a month later before we learned that Chaney was safe in American hands and several weeks after that until we heard, through official channels, of the return of McAllister to military control."

Corps Artillery also tangled with the invading enemy, as this typical incident reported in the 182nd Field Artillery Group history attests:

"On 2 April, the 182nd Group Headquarters Battery kitchen truck, which was in the charge of M/S gt Floyd L Nugent, with Pfc Ed Ogletree as driver, met the Germans in the town of Hitzkirchen, about 35 miles behind the front. Pfc Ogletree escaped, but M/S gt Nugent was captured. He remained in the custody of the Germans most of one day, and was fortunately released by the 2nd Cavalry squadron, who destroyed or captured the German detachment." XII Corps Fire Direct Center B, the Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 410th Field Artillery Group, in support of the 11th Armored Division, was besieged in the town of Geisel, not far from Fulda, for two days during this period.

Even the medicos ran in trouble. Capt Burton ("Ollie") Olson of the Corps CP aid station only missed the unpleasantness at Selters by a scant half hour, buzzing through on his way to Lauterbach just before the SS men took back the former village, briefly, for Hitler. Maj Lloyd McCormick, CO of the 613th Clearing Company, 37th Medical Battalion, earned an Oak Leaf Cluster for heroism for his conduct while he and his driver, Harold K Gorton, were held prisoners for 24 hours. The two men were liberated, unhurt, by the 71st Infantry Division Personnel of the 16th Field Hospital, and another unit very closely associated with the Corps headquarters, were not so lucky. In the same rugged wooded area about 20 miles northwest of Frankfurt were Capt Olson and later the whole Forward Echelon had its narrowest squeaks, the convoy of doctors, nurses and corpsmen enroute from Dieburg to Lauterbach ran into an ambush, with fatal results. Let the story be told from the viewpoint of the other unit involved, one also "near and dear" to the XII Corps headquarters, – the 136QM Truck Company:

"On 1 April 45, 1st Lt Foster C Burns and 15 enlisted man of the 136th QM Truck Company experienced the most eventful Easter Sunday of their lives when they and their 12 trucks were ambushed and captured by the German Sixth Waffen SS Division (Mtn).

"Moving a platoon of the 16th Field Hospital to a forward sector along a supposedly safe and peaceful rear area highway near Altenstadt, Germany, the 136th suddenly found themselves ambushed. Although the convoy was traveling under the Red Cross, the Nazis opened up and drivers returned the fire until they realize there were several hundred of the SS troops surrounding them and further resistance was foolhardy. However, the service force unit accounted for ten of the SS men before the order to 'cease-fire' was given, according to personnel of the 16th Field Hospital who later were assigned the job of caring for the Heinie casualties resulting from the engagement.

"This is one war story that ends happily, for you can't keep a 'gas general' down. The Nazis found out it was one thing to take a truck driver prisoner but quite another to be able to hold him.

"The drivers of the 136th remained captive only 36 hours before the last made good his escape under cover of an American artillery barrage which scattered the SS man and provided the opportunity for slipping loose.

"Lt Burns, who had been separated from his men after capture, escaped during a heavy shelling Easter night and the following day he was able to salvage one of the organization's trucks that had been abandoned by the Germans. He returned to the 136th CP late that afternoon.

"The enlisted men went without food or water during their capture and were forced to push the horse-drawn wagons and artillery pieces of the SS men. It was Monday before the American artillery barrage gave the boys their chance to escape and in groups of twos and threes they made the most of it. Taking off in different directions, each group had its own experiences and close calls, several of them bringing in Jerries they had surprised and captured while seeking their own freedom. During the next couple of days all the men made it back to the outfit and there was a happy reunion in the 136th when the last man checked in.

"The enlisted men involved in the 'jailbreak' were – Sgt Earl K Rother; Cpls Glen C Mullin and John C.Rossofi, T/5s Al F Bervetski, Harold C Therrien, Francis W Cromley and Lawrence E Zimmer; Pfcs Vernard V Banks, Robert B Haire, Elwyn L Harloam, Aaron L Rollyson, Robert E Soll and Edward R Tucker; and Pvts William C Bauer and Henry C Schmidt."

While the end of the story was as happy for most of the personnel of the hospital as for the 136th QM Company truckers, the beginning was quite the reverse. The first burst of German machine-gun fire killed Maj Fonde, a medical officer of the 106th Evacuation Hospital, who was riding with the convoy, and wounded others of the party before they surrendered. As this is the only recorded incident where feminine personnel of XII Corps were taken prisoner by the Germans, it is interesting to note that the enemy treated with perfect respect the several 16th Field Hospital nurses captured with the column. The American men were "shaken down," but the women were not searched. Lieutenants of the Army Nurse Corps who were among those taken with the convoy included: Theo Allen; Mildred E Barnett; Lillian G Clark; Helen R Cosma; Lola M Dickinson; Rosalou Freeland; Lula G Harward; Marie C Janes. "During our stay in the woods," reports Lt Cosma, "a German officer came over, and... informed us that the Nurses need not worry as no harm would come to us. He further added that we were not prisoners of war, but merely under the protection of the Third Reich until the tactical situation changed."

Fortunately the "tactical situation changed" extremely fast. XX Corps liaison planes were over the scattered enemy forces even as the German officer was reassuring the nurses. Though the Krauts fired heavily on Capt Ancel Taflinger, with his passenger, Col Cecil Strong, and on two of Gen Lentz's best Corps artillery pilots, they could not drive the little gadfly's off, or hide from the devastating shellfire which they brought with them. Within a matter of hours the XII Corps infantry and cavalry were closing in on the desperate remnants; the personnel of the 16th Field Hospital were freed by men of the 5th Infantry Division; other captured personnel were liberated by other units as indicated before; and shortly finis had been written to the story of "the Strange Case of the 6th SS Mountain Division...."

^{*} Colonel Lieber cannot be held responsible for any lack of accuracy or quality in the XII Corps After Action Report for combat operations during April and May 1945. After seeing the Corps grow from infancy almost to the end of its battlefield experience he was ordered to become Chief of Staff of XXIII Corps, and he parted from XII Corps Headquarters officially on 19 April 45. The job of writing the

summary section of the report developed on the author of this book. Colonel Lieber's duties as Deputy Chief of Staff were assumed by Colonel Paul ("PM") Martin.

** Colonel Lieber suggests it should be made entirely clear that Lauterbach was "not one of the Podunks for which we intentionally used an advance CP. The situation developed this way, according to my recollection. The new CP wiring was completed 31 March. Early 1 April General Eddie took off by L-5 airplane. General Canine ditto, sending their vehicles separately.... the Provost Marshall had reconned two routes, and after check of current imbroglios (Tom Taber had complained earlier that his men at the Ammunition Supply Point (ASP) could get more work done if they didn't have to chase Germans out of the ASP) we posted the western route. The Forward Group of the Forward Echelon, Jake Claybrook, Jack Griffith, Artillery, etc., and representatives of most of the other Forward Echelon sections took off. Immediately after they took off a wild-eyed medico came in to report to capture of the Field Hospital, right in the vicinity of Taber's scrap report. The medico estimated 2,000 Germans said that he had not seen all of them, and that his CO had talked with a German Division commander, and at them Medical CO estimated 4,000. As the enemy were right on our posted route, I immediately got the Provost Marshal to chase our party, halt and turn it, scout the easterly route, and guide the Forward Group that way if the easterly route were clear. Gorry (in General Canine's Jeep) and others who had not waited for the main serial to form, were not overtaken by our MP's, and were captured. As General Eddy and General Canine had not yet arrived at the Lauterbach CP, I left word for an immediate callback on arrival., and called the CG, 71st Division to get him swinging up from Hanau to round up the Germans. About that time a second medico, a major, came in from the scrap. He confirmed the earlier reports of location and strength and said that the main movement seemed to be toward the E or NE. I then called General Irwin, 5th Division at Frankfurt (in Army Reserve) and asked if he could help us out. He could and did. I then called Third Army and reported what was on the fire, -- they approved the action taken. About that time R J Canine called up to check in at Lauterbach, and wanted to know why the urgent call. His first reaction was that it was a small group, say 400, that had gotten into our lines from XX Copps. As a matter of fact, all of us, except the medicos from the scene, held that view initially. But as more reports came in, it was clear that this was no minor show. Our Forward Group got safely up the eastern route, but the scrapping rolled over that route, leaving us perforce with an Advance CP until a couple days later. When first the westerly and later the easterly routes were cleared. Then the rest of the Forward Echelon joined.... the general German movement had been mainly by night, from concealment to concealment, seeking a way out to the east. And mousetrapping our supply vehicles as they came along. They were well supplied with our transport rations and gas, but had almost no ammunition for the little artillery they dragged with them." General Lentz, who had characteristically made his way forward in a jeep on the first day of the fighting, had the unusual experience sending XII Corps Artillery units back from the front to deal with this unpleasantness behind him.

*** Captain C A ("Mark") Anthony contributes the following details on how Pfc Courter's devotion to duty led him to his death: "Courter was the driver who took me from Offenbach to Lauterbach 1 April 45, and was killed on his return to Offenbach to pick up Major Myers. Courter was supposed to spend the night at Lauterbach, but according to one of the enlisted men he decided to return at night because he thought Major Myers might want to get an early start the next morning since the XII Corps CP was to move to Lauterbach 2 April 45."

XII CORPS MEN WILL LONG REMEMBER THE INCIDENT OF THE 6TH SS MOUNTAIN DIVISION





(1 & 2) At the beginning of April, while XII Corps units lay widely extended northeastward from the Main River, an estimated 3000-4000 tough SS troopers from a Nazi mountain division broke away from containing forces in the XX Corps zone on our left flank, and tried to fight their way southeastward across our rear areas to rejoin remnants of the Wehrmacht on our right flank. Running patrol fights developed, leading to

several small pitched battles. Here a typical patrol, in platoon strength, starts out from a Regimental Headquarters of the 90th Infantry Division near Oberstoppel. 2 April. Discussing the day's operations are S/Sgt Roy Shannon; T/Sgt Lester J. Morrison; 1st Lt Woodrow C. Payne and Cpl Loren Lindquist. (3) Beside an abandoned German self-propelled gun men of the 1st squad, 3rd platoon, 328th Infantry Regiment, 26th Infantry Division rush forward an antitank gun near Fulda. 4 April. By this time the disturbing elements had been liquidated by joint action of elements of the 5th, 26th, and 71st Infantry Divisions and the 2nd Cavalry Group. (4) They killed some of us, mostly in ambushes and raids, and we had to kill plenty of them. In this picture an 11th Armored Division halftrack passes a dead Nazi on the outskirts of Rheinhardt. 2 April. (5) They also captured some of us: Lt Col Edward W Bartley, S-4 of XII Corps Artillery on 3 April, at Lauterbach, congratulates Captain George A. Correy, Assistant Chemical Warfare Service Officer, Headquarters XII Corps and Pfc Joseph P. Kaczor of Headquarters Company XII Corps, on escaping from the SS and actually bringing in 34 German prisoners. Both men were awarded the Silver Star for this incident.

Somewhere, away up the line, a lot of basic planning was being revised, with the usual results that less exalted plans were being revised all down the line. XII Corps had obviously started for Kassel after it breached the lines of the Rhine and Main Rivers. Before the end of March it had been diverted eastward. Hush-hush G2 studies reported that here was a secret headquarters of the German government in the Thuringen Woods around Gotha and Ohrdruff. XII Corps armor and infantry went after it. Then, the orders from on high changing again, the Corps turned over its forces in that area to VIII Corps, and started off in the southeastly direction bound for the Czech border around Hof.

Gotha lies on a direct line from Frankfurt to Berlin. In breaking out of the Thuringer Bergland, XII Corps had passed the last important mountain barrier lying in front of the latter city, – Target No 1 in the Third Reich. The Corps was turned aside, – to go after bigger game, to be the first ETO troops in Czechoslovakia and Austria and to go further east than any other ETO troops, – well east of Berlin, for that matter. Why this was so became fully evident only long after the war was over. Lt Gen Walter B. Smith, Gen Eisenhower's Chief of Staff in Europe, explains in his Saturday Evening Post article dated 13 July 46, The Only Way It Could End:

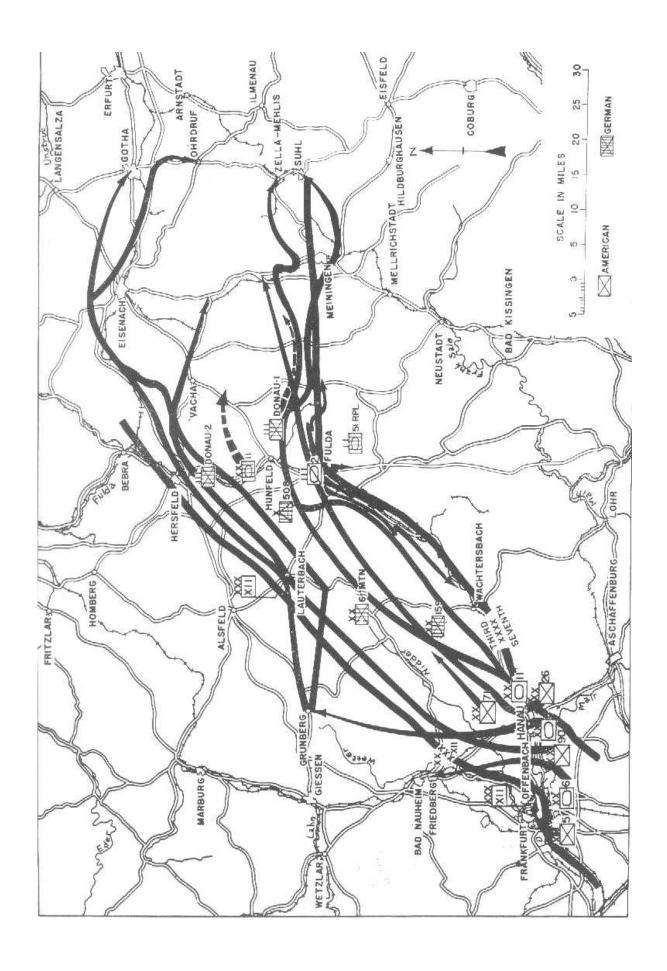
"From the day our invasion broke over the beaches of Normandy, the goal of every Allied soldier had been Berlin. The Supreme Commander, the staff at all the troop shared driving ambition to seal the defeat of not see Germany by seizing the capital of the Reich itself. During our planning days in England, there seemed every reason to believe that after the Ruhr was encircled and its troops destroyed, we could end the war by taking Germany's political heart – Berlin.

"By the end of January 1945, the German Government was evacuating the capital, fleeing to temporary safety in the Thuringian Forest and south to Hitler's own retreat in mountainous Berchtesgaden. Deserted by its Nazi masters, ruined by our air bombardments, the city was becoming a shell – an empty symbol of the Nazi's brutal grandeur. It was losing all meaning as a military objective.

"Our task was to end the war swiftly and conclusively. Berlin was no longer a major factor in reaching that end. Every plan, decision and purpose of the Allied command was determined always to be one inflexible rule – 'destroy the German forces, speedily and completely.' by 2 April, when the ring snapped shut around the Ruhr, we were convinced that there would be no general surrender as long as Hitler remained in command. The war would be finished now by only one means; we must root out and destroy every remnant of military strength until no organized force remained in Germany to carry on the fight.... In the south, Gen Devers' forces and... the Third Army, would drive through Nürnberg and Regensburg, following the Danube Valley into Austria. There we should meet the southern wing of the Red Army coming in from the Balkans. Besides destroying considerable German forces east of Munich, this drive would also cut off the alpine area containing the mysterious National Redoubt, where we had every reason to believe the Nazis intended to make their last stand among the crags. Around Berchtesgaden and Salzburg, we should run down the principal government departments fled from Berlin. Beating through the tortuous terrain of the Austrian Alps, our forces would destroy the safety of this promised Nazi refuge...."

XII Corps' destiny, then, was to be the force that cut Germany in two by entering Czechoslovakia along the whole southern face of the "Bohemian Bastion," and interpose itself between the German armies fighting the Russians on the east and block their last retreat toward the much advertised "National Redoubt."

"By 2 April," the Corps After Action Report puts it, "the double-pronged thrust of the 4th and 11th Armored Divisions was well-developed. The former established a bridgehead across the Werra River in the vicinity of Greuzburg; the latter gained approximately 16 km to capture Grimmenthal (with an intact bridge) and neared Wasungen. Fulda was cleared by the following infantry of the 26th Infantry Division.... The 4th Armored Division accomplished a partial envelopment of the key town of Gotha on 3 April and threatened another reported control center of German political and military operations at Ohrdruff.... the 11th Armored Division, plunging southeast between the Thuringer Wald and the Highlands surrounding the 950-meter peak of the Wasserkuppe, was having more difficult going than the 4th Armored Division. Nevertheless, on 3-5 April Vacha, Bad Salzungen, Meiningen and Suhl had been seized...."



4. Peculiar Treasures

How to tell scrounging from looting was sometimes difficult. The former, while usually illegal, was regarded as morally right. The latter, while frequently indulged in, always had a dubious flavor. But where to draw the line? The definitions were fairly easy. You were looting if you took property of private citizens of Germany, because that properly belong to them. You were looting if you took public property of the German State, because that belonged to the Allied powers, who were engaging in expensive military operations against the German and presumably would need all that stuff for reparations. "Scrounging," was a taking of enemy property, public or private, which you could use to make a little easier the always unpleasant conditions of life in the field during an active campaign. For instance, if you took from the German house in which you were billeted a sign down quilt or a well-made washbasin, which was just fitted into your bedding role, because the nights were so damn cold or because you were so sick of watching in a helmet – that was scrounging. Although the basin or quilt was obviously the private property of some German, well, what the hell? They asked for it, didn't they? They declared war on us, didn't pay. Why should any German the more comfortable than any American?

Picking up trophies, such as small military weapons or Nazi Party emblems and flags, was neither scrounging nor looting. You couldn't use them, but you could take possession of them without disapproval of the authorities. Except for pistols or machine guns, you could mail them home; and XII Corps personnel did, in tremendous volume, during the final days of the war. The trouble always was the borderline cases: what about the beautifull privately owned shotguns and field glasses the German citizens were required to turn in? What about the beautifully illustrated and printed books owned by a high Nazi Party official? Was taking these things, strictly speaking, looting? Hadn't we've been told that our mission was to disarm and de-Nazify Germany? The whole business worked out in the end as a fairly simple issue. If you took and used, or took and mailed home, something that you needed or something that the folks back home could use personally for their pride or comfort, that was not looting, whatever the official rules might say.

As XII Corps rolled into the rich provinces of south-central Germany, it began to overrun all kinds of fine opportunities for scrounging and the collection of legitimate war trophies. In the Zella-Mehlis-Suhl area, for instance, tankers of the 22nd Tank Battalion, of Corps' 11th Armored Division stumbled on the greatest single source of military trophies encountered, – the surrendering members of the Wehrmacht excepted, – the Walther small arms works. Herr Walther manufactured the world-famous double-action self-loading ("automatic") pistols in the two most popular calibers, 7.65 mm (our .32) and 9 mm (about .38). The latter, known as the "P-38," was one of the most sought-after trophies of World War II.

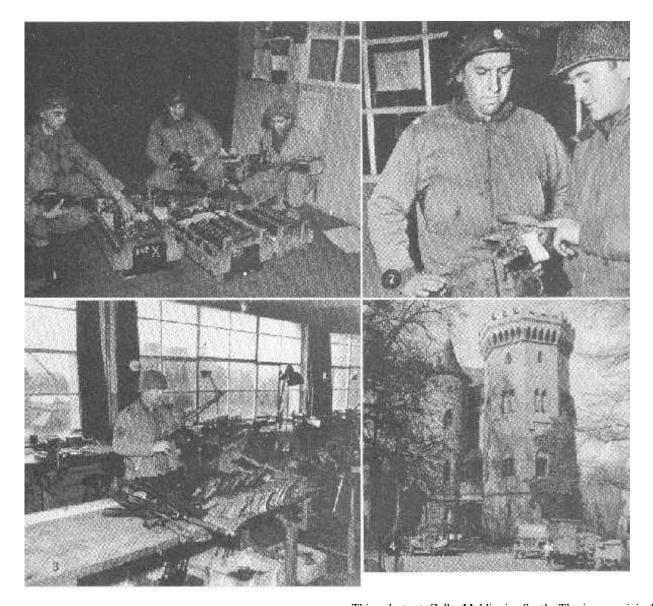
A paragraph, which happens to be from Able Ramblings, – the combat record of A Company, 101st Engineer Combat Battalion, with the 26th Infantry Division, – but which could be from any unit history, describes typical incidents at this time in this area:

"After a two-day uneventful stay at Tann we arrived in Viernau where most of the Company acquired pistols by the easy method. On one of their many trips Capt Hepheffer and Plage came across a Walther factory and Zella-Mehlis, and picked up as many as they could carry which they passed out to a few lucky fellas. Immediately small safaris were seen leaving the town. By noon the next day practically everyone had either a .22 or a .32 as a souvenir of Mr. Walther.... A short rest at Viernau and then the rat race was on again. This time we really moved, not stopping again until victory was assured. In rapid succession of one night stands we stayed in Dillstadt outside of Suhl; Schleusingen, where we lost two of the swellest guys in the Company. While reconning a bridge site outside of Waldau, the 'Rebel'

Pearce and 'Ole' Hanson were ambushed and killed. Here also we lost Crapa when a mine went off severely wounding him. Eisfeld, with its large hotel, beer on tap and comfortable sleeping quarters were enjoyed by some of us while others were busily clearing roadblocks and abatis and building bridges.... Sonnenberg with its big doll and clothing factories where we worked all day clearing roads, fell by the simplest means possible. Col Scott picked up the telephone, delivered an ultimatum to the burgomeister, sent a few shells in as a warning, and then excepted the keys to the city. As we rode in liberated Russian and Polish girls threw dolls to us and soon every vehicle had a teddy bear or doll of some sort on its radiator cap. Other liberated 'slaves' were going to the big flour mill and clothing factories and helping themselves. Quite a few of us also acquired some beautiful leather jackets that soon found their way home via the US mail."

T/S gt James C Carlson, of the 93rd Signal Battalion contributes a representative footnote to this subject, for file under the Foraging Section of the Scrounging Department. The American Army was not supposed to "live off the country" it passed through, but there were times when everyone got sick of Army rations, however varied and nourishing they might be. Says Sgt Carlson: "at Fulda our supplies were slow in coming up, so we were eating C-and K-rations. In foraging around we found all kinds of supplies of cheese, sausage, butter, sardines and wine in people's' attics and sellers. We picked up all we could in our trucks and sent some butter back to the company. At Fulda we found an entire warehouse full of butter, sardines, liquor and champagne. We were getting so fussy by that time that we would pass up all kinds of wine and only drink champagne. Sgt Braun and I had 362 bottles of champagne in our possession at one time...."

CENTRAL GERMANY - SOUVENIR HUNTER'S PARADISE





(1) The Reichsbank gold in the Merkers salt mine may be the XII Corps find that is best known to the world at large, but within the U S Army certainly the most famous discovery was the over-running of the Walther P-38 pistol and small arms factory.

This plant at Zella Mehlis in South Thuringen originally captured by the 11th Armored Division with the 90th Infantry Division not slow to arrive thereafter, provided thousands of US soldiers with factory new trophies. Here Sgt Walton H. Stucky, Lt Daniel H. Howell, and Pfc. Pete Martinez all with a 359th Infantry Regiment, AT Company, 90th Infantry Division illustrate a souvenir hunters dream with P-38's by the dozen before them. 9 April 45. (2) Lt Col A I Schepps and Lt Daniel H. Howell of 11th Armored Division examined 32 caliber Walther automatic specially fitted with goldplated sights for the SS troope chiefs. Zella Mehlis 9 April. (3) A new type of Volksturm rifle never actually issued because of XII Corps' unexpected arrival is inspected by 1st/Sgt George A. Band in the Walther factory. (4) Castle of Count Braunschweig maker of Rolliflex and Rollicord cameras at Waldorf. 13 April. It was a sleepy fellow in any of the combat units in Germany who didn't get himself at least one good camera and a pair of field glasses. (5) Men of Company A, 56th Engineer Battalion, 11th Armored Division, engage in a popular pastime of making boxes in which they mailed guns home, Hildburgajusen. 9 April.



 $\begin{array}{c} \text{(1) German '08-Lugar (9 mm). (2) German P-38 (9 mm). (3) German Walther .32 (7.65 mm).} \\ \text{(4) Russian Nagant M 1895 (7.62 mm) revolver. (5) German .22 (5.6 mm).} \end{array}$

5. Salted Gold

Biggest treasure of the war, of course, was discovered by XX Corps units between Vacha and Meiningen. The Corps' great 90th Infantry Division was the immediate agent, as we read in the "pony" addition of Time from 16 April 45:

"Into Merkers, an undistinguished village about 15 miles southwest of Eisenach in mid Germany, slogged the weary infantrymen of Maj Gen Herbert L. Earnest's 90th Division.* Their job last week was the usual one of follow-through after Lt Gen George S. Patton's advanced tank forces: unsnarling knots of resistance, sorting out prisoners and slave laborers. Of the latter there were many for Merkers' big salt mines.

"That night, after curfew, two of the 90th military police stopped two women in the village street. The women explained that they were going for a midwife. The MP's went along, just to be certain. They passed an entrance into a salt mine. Said one of the hausfrauen: 'That's were the bullion is hidden.' MP ears perked up: How's that again? The women repeated the gossip she had heard – Germany's gold had been salted away in that mine.

"The MP's took a look. The mine was held by eight German civilians. Two were polite, worldly men from Berlin: 1) Moon faced Werner Vieck, a Reichsbank official; 2) pale, gaunt Dr Paul Ortwin Rave, curator of the German state museums, assistant director of Berlin's National Gallery. They talked quite frankly about their secret, now that it was no longer secret. The mine, they said, held:

"About 100 tons of gold bars (worth approximately \$100,000,000); Banker Vieck said it was Germany's entire gold reserve.

"Three billion paper Reichsmarks; probably the greatest store of currency in Germany, perhaps the only reserve.

"Great stacks of foreign currency: \$2,000,000 US; 110,000 British pounds; 4,000,000 Norwegian crowns; 1,000,000 French francs; lesser amounts of Spanish, Portuguese, Turkish money.

"Hundreds of crates and boxes – a large cache of priceless works of art; Rembrandts, Raphaels, Renoirs, Durers, Van Dykes; tapestries and engravings; a Titian Venus; original Goethe manuscripts.

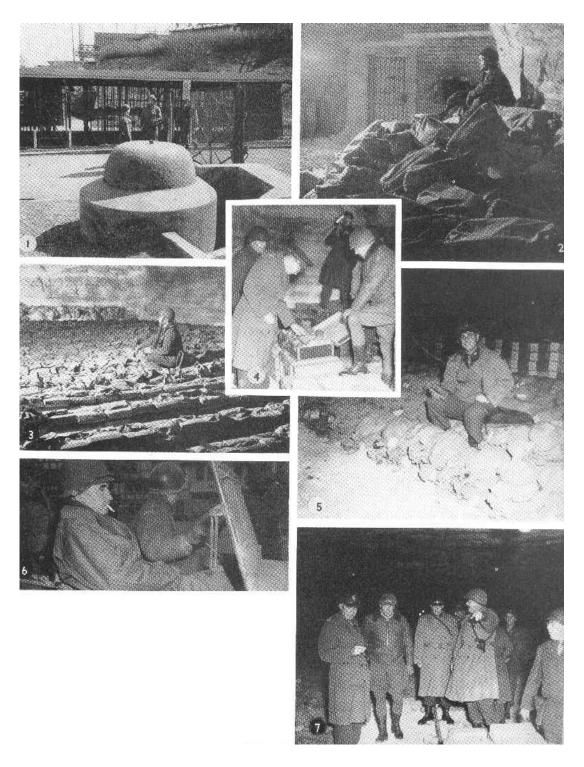
"All this, and more, was stored in chambers 2,100 feet deep. The Americans went down, opened a few bundles of currency, looked into wooden cases that covered paintings and statues. On many cases they noted significant stenciling, Paris, Brussels, Vienna. The Curator Rave insisted that these were not stolen treasures – this store of art belonged to the Reich, had been removed from Berlin, 'because the Russians were pushing too close.'

"Banker Vieck regretted that he could not show the cash of gold; somebody had lost the key to the chamber. The Americans obligingly blew out the wall. And there was gold, each 25-lb bar wrapped in a sack, each sack tagged: 'Reichsbank.' There were sacks of gold coin, some of them too heavy for a man to lift. There seemed to be even more gold stacked in the dim lit, salt-crusted chamber than Vieck had said.**

"Gold was something for reparations experts to worry about. Gen Earnest's intelligence officers were more interested in the 3 billion German marks. That currency might turn out to be a prize of golden military value.

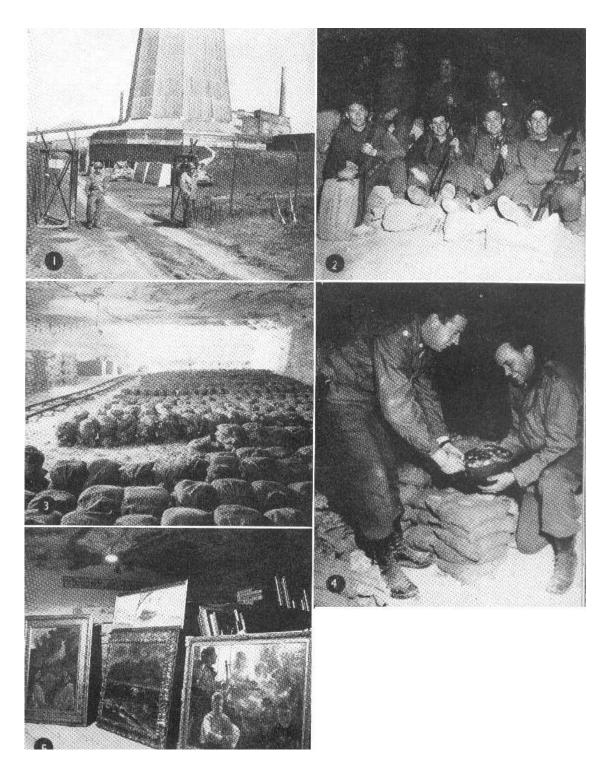
"Banker Vieck remarked that the German Army desperately needed it to irreplaceable: Germany's money-engraving plants had been bombed out."	meet its payrolls. It was

THE TREASURE IN THE SALT MINE



(1) Gate to the Merkers Salt Works where the Reichsbank gold and currency was captured on 4 April 45 by the 3rd Battalion of the 358th Infantry, 90th Infantry Division while part of the XII Corps. (2) Entrance to the side Gallery in which the treasure was hidden. Behind the guard, sitting on millions of paper reichsmarks, can be seen the hole blown through the wall to bypass the jammed steel door. (3) Gold bars make up part of the estimated 100 tons of bullion in the gallery. 8 April 45. (4) Generals Eisenhower and Patton examine one of the suitcase loads of jewelry. (5) Bags of gold coin furnished the visible means of support for Colonel Clyde V. Dougherty, XII corps Engineer. The object in his hand is a Goldbrick. (6) Elmer Davis, Chief of OWI, visits XII Corps CP at Vacha on 9 April 45 to be taken down into the Merkers Mine. General Eisenhower, General Patton, General Bradley and General Eddie inspect the great find. 8 April 45.

90TH INFANTRY DIVISION MEN GUARDED THE FABULOUS MERKERS TREASURE



(1) "Tough 'Ombres" of the 90th Infantry Division mount guard at the south gate of the Merkers plant, early in April 1945. (2) Hundreds of feet beneath the boots of the soldiers in the first picture, men of Company A, 357th Infantry Regiment with the 90th's red "TO" on their shoulders sit on sacks of reichsmarks as they watch outside the treasure gallery: (front row)T/Sgt Harry L. Hjelmstad, T/Sgt Lew Elkin, Pfc Carl P. Anderson, Pfc Ernest B. Bacca; (back row) Pvt William A. Green, Pvt John B Riles, Pfc John Mattingly. (3) Here's what they're guarding, inside the gallery; everything in the bags to the right of the track is gold, coins and bars. (4) A helmet full of golden coins takes two to lift. (5) Besides the treasure in money, a treasure in art works was found scattered through the drifts of the Merkers mine.

6. Germany Cut in Two

Meiningen contained the next important "treasure," greater in human terms than anything found in the Merkers Salt Mine. Here was captured, in full operation and with military and civilian staffs intact, the German central records system for all United Nations prisoners of war of Germany, and for all PW camps within the Reich. This invaluable source of information on the fate of untold hundreds of thousands of Russians, Britons, Americans and nationals of other Allied countries unfortunate enough to fall into the hands of the enemy, was turned over to enthusiastic higher authority, but it was personnel of the XII Corps Headquarters, itself, which first recognized the value of the discovery. Even generals Eisenhower, Bradley and Patton, visiting the CP here, were interested in this find.

After the spurt which saw the fall to the XII Corps units of Vacha, Bad Salzungen, Suhl and Meiningen, the Corps After Action Report goes on, "There ensued a period of reorganization and maintenance, on order from higher headquarters, and no conspicuous advances were made until 11 April. On this date Eisfeld was taken, after employment of heavy artillery fire on the town. The city of Coburg capitulated after a night of continuous shelling and under threat of attack by fighter-bombers and elements of the 11th Armored Division and the 71st Infantry Division. After regrouping, the XII Corps Drive to the southeast continued; with the 11th Armored Division leading on the right, along the Seventh Army boundary; the 71st Infantry Division following the armor; the 26th Infantry Division in the center, and the 90th Infantry Division on the left flank. Rapid progress was made against disintegrating resistance. Bayreuth fell on 14 April at the southern extremity of the line; Hof, at the northern end, on 15 April."

On 18 April 45, the 90th Infantry Division won for XII Corps and Third Army the distinction of being the first Allied unit to put troops in Czechoslovakia, thus cutting with Third Reich into halves. The division's After Action Report recounts this historic incident as follows: "358th Infantry – In preparation for advance on the 19th, the I & R Platoon struck out at 0600 to gain contact with the enemy and clear any enemy from the zone. Following them at 0800 were one Company from the 3rd Battalion and one from 2nd Battalion reinforced with armor. At 180915 the 3rd Battalion patrol crossed the border into Czechoslovakia near Prex against small arms resistance and captured some prisoners. 2nd Battalion patrol crossed the border at 181115 April 45."

Close behind the 90th Infantry Division was another favorite standby of XII Corps, and a senior one in point of acquaintance, – the 2nd Cavalry Group. Two days after the first penetration of Czechoslovakia, elements of this group took the Czech town of Asch, in the narrow projection of the border southeast of Hof, against a Company of Krauts who dug in vainly in an attempt to keep them out. The 2nd Cavalry Group thus established its claim to being "the first American unit to enter the country(in force), liberate a town, and remain on Czech soil."

With this successful penetration of Allied forces of that great horseshoe of mountains which surrounds the western end of Czechoslovakia, known as the Bohemian Bastion, the total disintegration of Germany entered its final stages. To realize this, it was only necessary to see the tens of thousands of prisoners pouring into the PW cages by the jam-packed truckload; to see the broken lines of German refugees straggling along the road; the joyous crowd of liberated "RAMPS" waiting in villages to be returned home; and last, but not least impressive, the staggering skeletons freed from the overrun "death camps" and interrupted "death marches" who shuffled along, or lay dead or dying, by the roadsides.

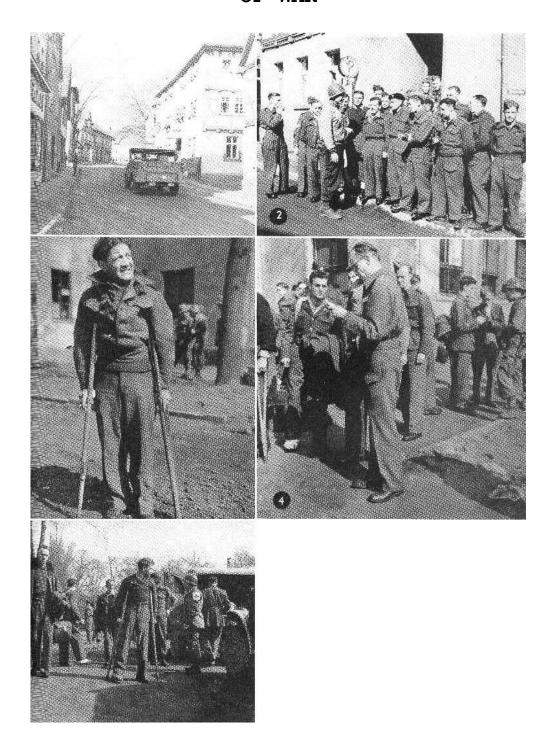
The bag of PW's began to swell during April beyond all previous experience. Many of these gave up eagerly. 1st Lt Leo R Dardas, of the XII Corps Headquarters CIC Detail, tells how it was: "Towards the end of the war we saw hundreds of Germans trying to give themselves up, and nobody would take them prisoners. I saw one man hold out his Soldbuch for half an hour to every GI who passed by, and nobody would bother with him. Everyone was taking so many PW's that they got sick of it, and when Germans came along, they would just point to the rear and tell them to march. I saw a whole battalion of Germans marching back with no guards, and a white sign on the front man saying, These are PW's. Please direct to nearest cage.' At Polch, the burgomeister came in to our office with a fine looking young man and said, "This is my son. I want him to give himself up.' It was about 1700 and we were tired, so we shouted at him, What's the idea of coming in to surrender at this time of day? Come back tomorrow morning at 0900 and at your son in full uniform.' So sure enough, the next day the burgomeister showed up with his son resplendent and full officer's uniform."

All kinds of queer fish began to show up in the tightening net. "At Tirschenreuth," according to the Corps After Action Report, "large numbers of dejected Hungarians surrendered with their horses and women; at another point White Russian mercenaries of the Germans came in, exhibiting an utter lack of enthusiasm for capture by the Soviet armies." "At Bayreuth," says Capt W F Gilfillan, who was assigned as PW officer in April from the 27th AAA Group, "we had 35 Japanese diplomats with their wives and kids. They had been captured by then 2nd Cavalry Group at Zwiesel. They spoke perfect English, and were very polite." As well they might be, under the circumstances.

^{*} Specifically, on 4 April 45, the town being first occupied by 3rd Battalion 358th Infantry Regiment. The job of guarding this fabulous board from a possible German counterattack was turned over to the 357th Infantry Regiment, 6 April, with elements of the 712th Tank Battalion in support. On 8 April, after the wealth had been roughly appraised, the regiment passed to direct Corp control and remained on guard at the mine until the last elements were restored to the 90th Infantry Division 10 days later. Other XII Corps units involved in the protection of the treasure included A company 773rd Tank Destroyer Battalion; Battery B, 547th AAA AW Battalion. Engineer work was done but personnel of the 282nd Engineer Combat Battalion.

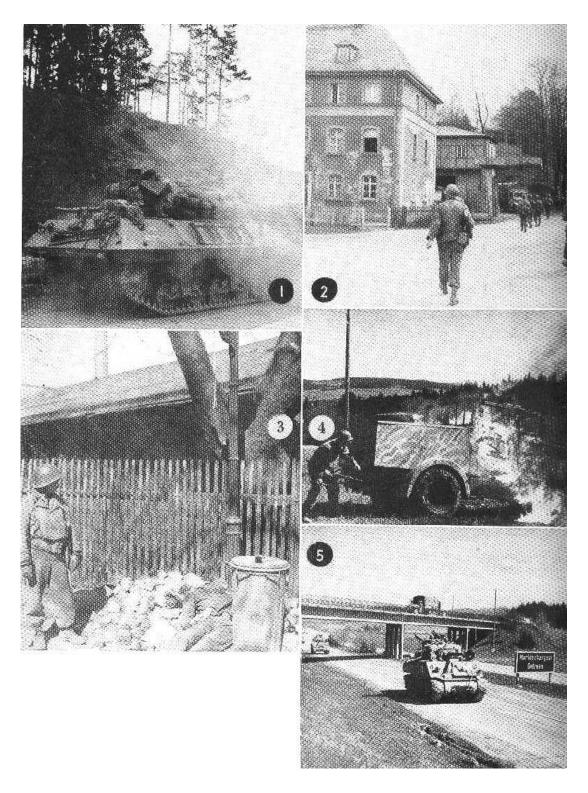
^{**} XII Corps men who actually got down to look at the treasure might quibble over certain details. This "salt-crusted chamber" was extremely well-lighted by a row of electric lights along the ceiling. The gold bars appeared to be loaded three to the sack, instead of one, and the total was reported to be not 100 tons by 200. No mention is made of the suitcases containing jewelry and even -- the horrified whisper ran -- gold teeth from the concentration camps. Rumor at least, had it that the original tip was given our troops not by the Krauts but by some British PW's in a camp near Merkers, who had been used as labor to get the treasure into place. Colonel Lieber, who was General Eddy's representative went to the mine as General Earnest reported the apparent importance of the discovery, remembers that a woman was said to have given the tipoff, but British PW's led him and his party to the entrance of the treasure room, which he ordered blown when the door could not be opened. But save for such minor matters the Time account reads well.

"RAMPS" - LIBERATED AMERICAN AND BRITISH PRISONERS OF WAR



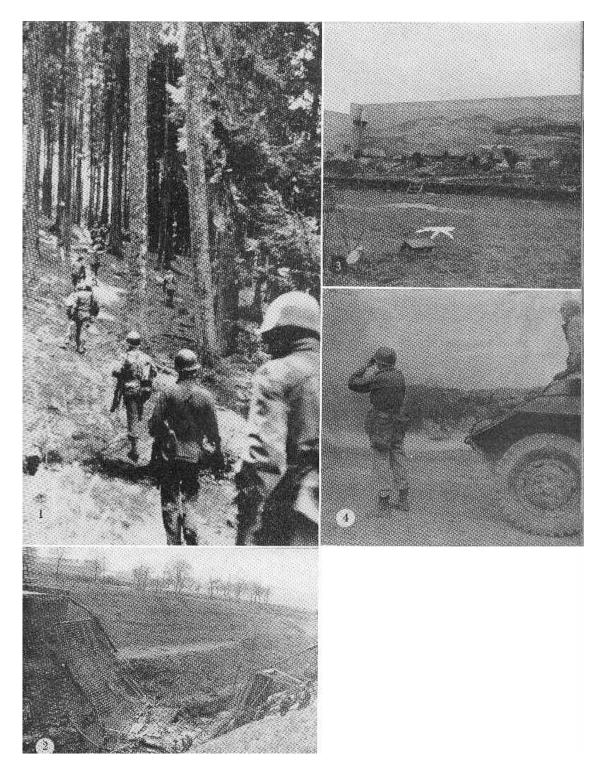
(1) "Recovered Allied Military Personnel," in this case British wave to a passing 90th Division truck loaded with rations. Late April 45. They were installed in this hotel in Vacha under XII Corps supervision, awaiting transportation home. Some had been prisoners five years, and many worked in the salt mines near Vacha. A tip from such men was credited with uncovering the gold hoard at Merkers. (2) Lt Col Enoch J. Scanlan, XII Corps Provost Marshall, with liberated British at Vacha. (3) Freed British PW at Meiningen. 12 April. (4) Hospital cases were numerous among the men recovered at Meiningen. A high percentage were Air Force personnel shot down over Germany. (5) American and British at Meiningen 12 April, enroute by ambulance to airstrips for air evacuation.

XII CORPS BROKE IN THE DOORS OF BAVARIA FROM COBURG TO HOF



(1) Tank destroyer of the 773rd Tank Destroyer Battalion shooting its way into Hof, Bavaria as part of the team with a 358th Infantry Regiment, 90th Infantry Division and the 712th Tank Battalion. 15 April 45. (2) Men of K Company, 358th Infantry Regiment move into the newly captured town. (3) Desperate straits of the Wehrmacht is indicated by this body of a German deserter who had been found hanged from an lamppost in Hof with a warning placard on his chest. 15 April. (4 & 5) In the meantime 26th Infantry Division men and 11th Armored Division tanks are pressing deep into Bavaria to the south of Hof. 19 April.

XII CORPS UNITS - FIRST AMERICAN FORCES INTO CZECHOSLOVAKIA



(1) "At 180955" says the 90th Infantry Division After Action report for April 1945, "the 358th Regiment, 3rd Battalion patrol crossed the border into Czechoslovakia near Prex." This cut Germany in two. A 358th Infantry Regiment detachment in the forests of the Czech border. (2) Infantrymen of the 387th Regiment, 97th Infantry Division in the only week the division was with XII Corps, approach the Czech town of Cheb (Eger) beside an overpass demolished by retreating Germans. 26 April. (3) Target range abandoned by the Germans in Cheb, overrun by the 97th Infantry Division. 30 April. (4) VE-Day found XII Corps units deep into Czechoslovakia. Men of the 803rd Tank Destroyer Battalion, 5th Infantry Division near Kunzvart. 6 May.

7. To Kronach and Bayreuth

Headquarters, XII US Army Corps, described the same semicircular sweep from Lauterbach to the south and east as the majority of its units. The Forward Echelon remained in one piece for the rest of the war, and kept up as close to the fighting as the movement of the division headquarters would permit. The Rear Echelon hitched along behind, periodically catching up to the Forward Echelon for a few days; the resulting movement of the whole body resembled that of an inchworm.

Lauterbach, Vacha, Meiningen and Eisfeld rolled away behind the jeeps and 2 1/2-tons. They all looked rather alike — "typical small German hilltowns" as the members of the headquarters were coming to regard them by this stage of the war. There was the small matter of a change from half timbering in many of the buildings of the provinces of Hesse and Thuringia to solid gray stone and stucco of the Bavarian structures, but by and large it was not until the headquarters hit Kronach and Bayreuth that there was anything special to see.

At Kronach the town was dominated by a huge medieval castle, said to have been once the headquarters of Gustavus Adolphus, but which obviously was something straight out of Graustark or Zenda. With Kronach, too, things of great and immediate interest to the headquarters were connected. Two losses were sustained which in oddly different ways, were deeply felt by many members of the headquarters. On 13 April the startling news had been received of the death of the President the previous evening, and great numbers of men in XII Corps, though they might never have met, or ever seen, their Commander-in-Chief, experienced this occurrence as a sharp personal loss. The news arrived while the headquarters was at Eisfeld, but it is always most strongly associated in the minds of most members of the outfit with the next station. Upon orders from higher headquarters, memorial services were held throughout the Corps; that for the headquarters took place in this small garden back of the CP at Kronach. None of the officers and men who attended the headquarters gathering will forget the deeply simple words and manner which characterized the commemorative address delivered by Gen Eddy.

Eight days later the Corps experienced its second loss, and one which struck even more directly at the headquarters and the death of the President. The eulogy delivered in the garden at Kronach turned out to the Gen Eddy's valedictory to the outfit he had commanded all the long hard way across the Continent of Europe. Months of strain in combat with the Corps, and with the 9th Infantry Division before that, had finally made their impression on the physique of a general officer who took that strain is much to heart as any GI in the forward foxholes. The story could not be told better than in the words of Gen Eddy's farewell letter to his staff:

"20 April 1945

"TO THE MEMBERS OF MY STAFF:

"I am relinquishing command of the XII Corps today. The doctors have made my decision simple – they have given me no choice but to return to America for rest. Believe me, it is one of the most inexpressibly difficult facts I have ever faced in my life.

"Before I leave, I want each of you, each officer and each soldier of my headquarters, to know how deeply grateful I am for what I consider to be a remarkable performance. You have left little for a commander to desire. You have adapted yourselves to new and difficult situations with extraordinary speed and resourcefulness. You have given the Corps, and me personally, unstintingly of your hours and of your energies. I commend to each section, to the Headquarters Company, and particularly to the Military Police, your high standards of efficiency and esprit. Perhaps more than any of these (qualities), I shall cherish your loyalty the longest.

"I wish I could say goodbye to each of you personally. I can tell you only in this manner of my pride in your superb accomplishment of every job I've given you, and of my affection for you in our common experiences. No commander, with you as his staff, can fail to complete the XX Corps' final mission. My warmest good wishes to you all.

/s/ M S Eddy

Supplementing this were communications to the elements of the Corps outside the headquarters, such as the following for the Corps artillery, which was addressed to Gen Lentz and given for distribution by him:

"Before I leave, I want you to know of my admiration for your magnificent troops and of my gratitude for their remarkable contribution to the successful operations of our Corps. I hope I am not too prejudiced when I tell you I honestly believe the XII Corps Artillery to be the finest on the Western Front. You have consistently set high new standards of teamplay between artillery and infantry which will surely be studied in years to come. The courage and skill and fidelity with which your battalions have fought during these last few crowded months will be to their undying credit.

"Please except for yourself, and convey to your command, this expression of appreciation. I wish I could be with you for the kill. Good luck – and Godspeed!"

Similar messages went out to all Corps troops and the divisions, and many answers came in to the headquarters. As he left, Gen Eddie received a letter from Gen Patton in which the latter wrote that he attributed much of his personal success in the war to Gen Eddy and his XII Corps. Earlier in the month, the communication had been given distribution throughout the headquarters which may be reproduced here for a reason that will shortly become apparent:

"MY DEAR GENERAL EDDY: -

"I wish to thank you in behalf of the 5th Division for your generous letter covering the service of the division with your Corps.

"Throughout our assignment to the XII Corps we always knew what we were asked to do, and were aware that we were executing decisive missions that could not fail to have a great influence on the successful outcome of the war. Such knowledge was an inspiration to the division to do its utmost.

"The cooperation given us by the members of your staff, their sympathetic response to our requests, and their solicitude for our welfare represents an attitude too rarely encountered and reflects the greatest credit to themselves and to the spirit of the Corps. I wish you would express to them my sincere appreciation for all that they did for us, an appreciation which extends throughout the division.

"When I regretfully informed my personnel that we were leaving XII Corps, I found that all ranks and grades were bitterly disappointed, and eager to return to the Corps as soon as possible. I can think of no more sincere compliment to the XII Corps than that fact.

Sincerely,

/s/ S. LeRoy Irwin"

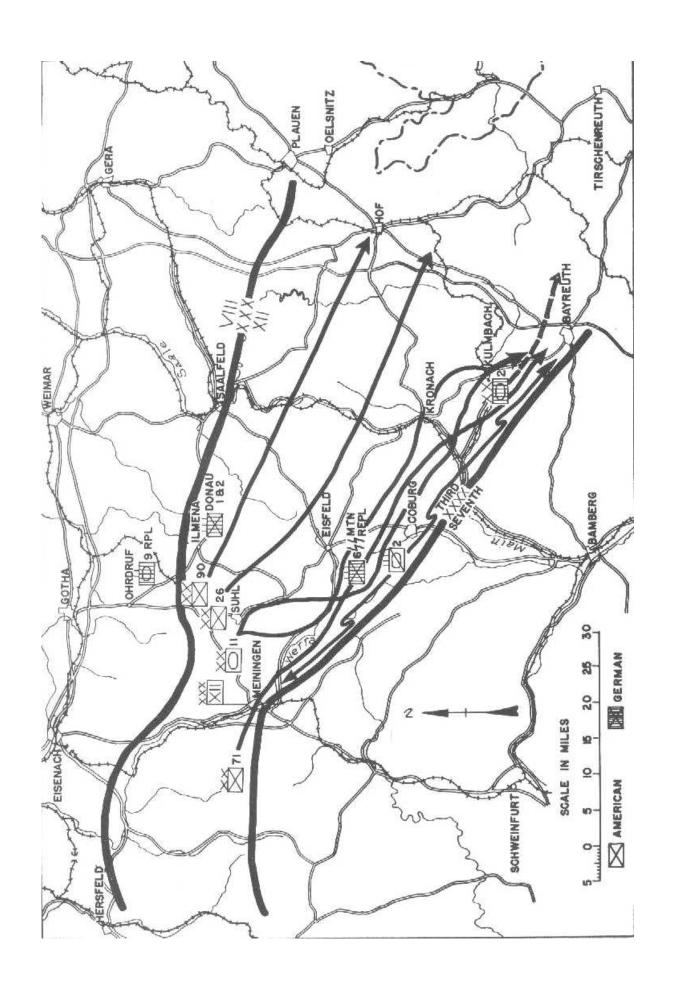
This letter had been written on the occasion of the 5th Infantry Division's brief absence under another Corps. The sentiment expressed is underscored by a notation in Gen Irwin's private diary for 4 April 45: "About 1530 XX Corps called to say we were relieved from Corps and are now in Army reserve. A call from Gen Eddy at 1645 during which he said we go back to XII Corps after a rest period, which is good news."

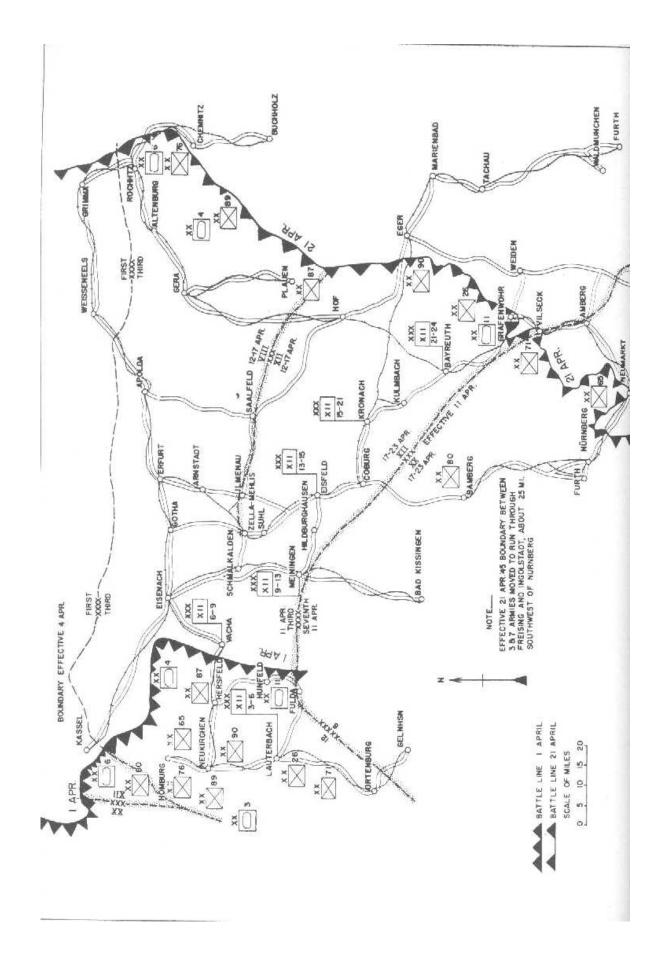
On 30 April 45, the 5th Infantry Division returned to XII Corps. But on 20 April that great division had already given up its great and long-time battlefield leader, Maj Gen S. LeRoy ("Red")

Irwin, once Gen Eddy's artillery commander in the 9th Infantry Division, to take Gen Eddy's place as Commanding General of the corps. Well-known to XII Corps during many months of campaigning, this ruddy-faced, sad-eyed West Pointer with a diffident manner had become its good friend, as will be seen from the above quotations. The feeling was strongly reciprocated; the general reaction in XII Corps was "We couldn't get a better man."

Thus, on 21 April, as the Corps headquarters rolled into the city of Bayreuth, where stood the bomb-blasted home of Richard Wagner, the XII US Army Corps had a new commander to preside over it during the last days of the Gotterdammerung of the Nazi Gods.

^{*} But not all, as the Corps Assistant PM, Captain Maurice ("Smitty") Smith, discovered on a back road between Kulmbach and Bayreuth, 19 April 45. When he undertook to "accept the surrender" of some Krauts they shot him through the right hand and back, and he had to be hospitalized for some time in the 101st Evacuation Hospital, which by this date was under command of XII Corps' former Assistant Surgeon, Lt. Col. Angell Cardona.





Chapter 16

AUSTRIA – AND VE-DAY. TO APRIL 45-9 MAY 45

1. Grafenwohr

Entry into Austria was forced by XII Corps units in the closing days of April, but much else happened before that event. One of the most interesting of these prior occurrences was the capture of the training area of the Grafenwohr. Around this vast installation the rolling upland country, scattered with stands of grub pine amid sandy pasture lands, had been taken over for a tank and artillery maneuver grounds, and also for a more sinister purpose. The locality had been overrun by the 11th Armored Division, and surrendered on 19 April 45 when bracketed by CCA and CCB. Prior to the arrival of ground force units on the scene the place had been liberally plastered by Allied bombers. By the time the Corps CP moved into the stricken Wehrmacht training Station on 24 April, says Col Murray: "We set up in a German Caserne that had been the equivalent of our Field Artillery School, which was about 80% destroyed. It was huge. It was as large as Fort Sill. Officers and men lived in the Caserne." – and a dismal wilderness the "Post" was, too.

The resemblance of the place to Fort Sill was no simple accident. The following September the US *Field Artillery Journal* would publish a revealing note on the incident:

"Col William H Bartlett, who was an instructor in gunnery and tactics at the Field Artillery School from 1938 to 1942, had the unique experience as Commanding Officer of the 183rd Field Artillery Group of capturing the Field Artillery School at Grafenworhr, Germany, during the closing days of the drive on the Elbe River. As a result, the Nazi flag which formally flew over that school is now a prized possession of the Field Artillery Museum.

"In forwarding the captured Nazi flag to Maj Gen Ralph McT Pennell, Commandant of the Field Artillery School, Col Bartlett wrote:

'In the rapid advance across Germany the 183rd Field Artillery Group, assigned to the US Third Army, attached to XII Corps, participated in the capture of the Artillery and Panzer School at Grafenwohr, Germany. The firing ranges and school organization were very similar to those of the Field Artillery School at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. Signal Mountain, however, was noticeably absent.

'The 183rd Field Artillery Group captured the School Flag and several maps of the Post Area. It is only proper that the flag of the school be placed with the Battle Trophies of the Field Artillery School of the U.S. Army, and it is being forwarded herewith.'

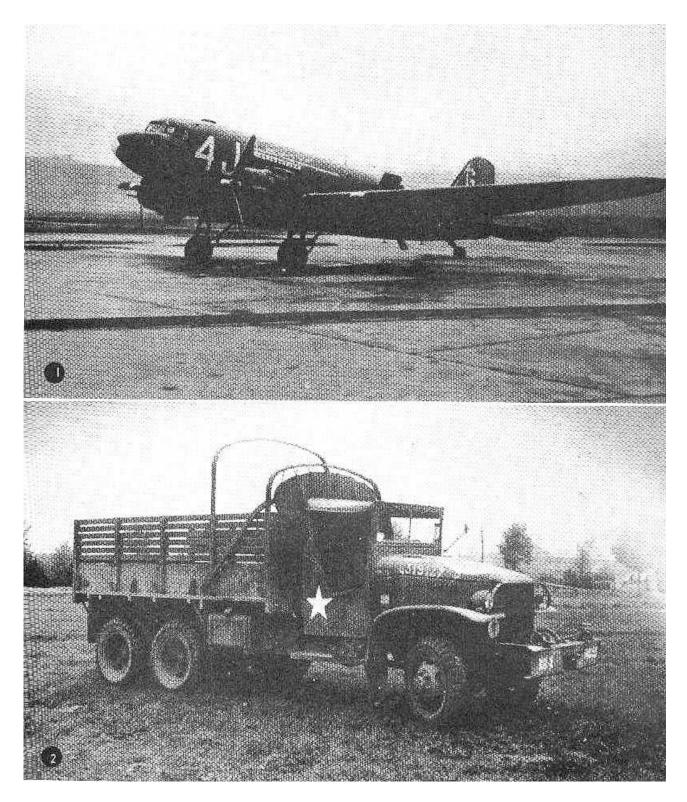
"Transmitting the flag from Germany to the Field Artillery School, Lt James H Wilson, adjutant of the XII Corps Artillery, said, 'The capture of this trophy is appropriately symbolic of the superiority of the doctrines and teachings of the Field Artillery School, Fort Sill, Oklahoma.' The captured Nazi flag is now on display in a new Field Artillery School Museum Annex."

Most sinister of all discoveries in the Grafenwohr area was the revelation that a section of it was devoted to a colossal Chemical Warfare Supply dump of approximately 3,000,000 poison gas projectiles and mines of all types.

Another capture of special interest was the lovely little Bavarian city of Cham, also taken by the 11th Armored Division on 23 April 45. More important to XII Corps than the town itself was the fine big airport 2 1/2 kilometers southwest of it. Here the long string so C-47's, which had previously been pouring gasoline into Beyreuth to fill the thirsty tanks of XII Corps armor, to discharge their loads closer to the fighting vehicles which needed them so badly. Half of the Corps' irresistible drive would have been lost had it not been for those faithful sturdy unbeatable C-47's.*

* General Eisenhower in his report to the Combined to Chiefs of Staff says: "As in the dash across France in 1944, it was possible now to maintain the momentum of the armored columns in their swift advances only by the expedient of airborne supply. In executing this task, the carrier planes accomplished remarkable feats, and, invaluable as they had proved throughout the campaign in northwest Europe, the 'flying boxcars' were never more essential than in these concluding stages of the war. Landing on improvised airfields close to the front line and sometimes within pockets temporarily surrounded by the enemy, 1,500 IX Troop Carrier Command C-47's, supplemented by heavy bombers stripped for the purpose, flew over 20,000 sorties during April to carry nearly 60,000 tons of freight (including 10,255,509 gallons of gasoline) to the forward elements of the ground forces. Making their outward flights from French bases in the mornings, the planes returned in the afternoons and bearing thousands of evacuated casualties and Allied prisoners of war who had been liberated during the advances. Without such assistance it would have been impossible for the armored divisions to achieve the sweeping successes which attended their operations." That is how we saw them going and returning in those days, and XII Corps can add to that of the Supreme Commander its two bits worth of tribute for the splendid work of these planes.

WORKHORSES OF THE ARMY

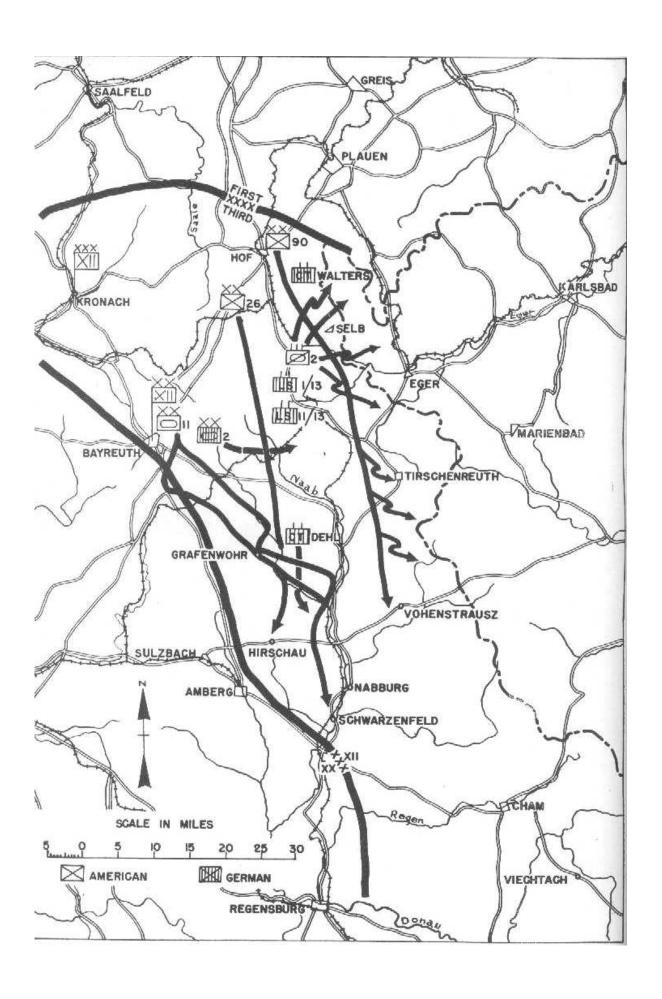


(1) C-47, the familiar DC-3 of American commercial Aviation. (2) Truck, cargo. L.W.B. W/W. 2 1/2 ton, 6x6, known as "2 1/2-ton" or "6-by-6."

COURIER PONIES OF THE ARMY



 $\label{eq:continuous} (1)~L5,~light~liaison~airplane.$ (2) Truck, 1/4 ton, 4X4, known as "jeep", "peep" or "weapons carrier", etc. etc.



2. Into Austria; and the Myth of the "National Redoubt"

Restraining lines had been set up on previous occasions by higher headquarters to hold back the impatient armor and infantry of XII Corps, in order that units on either side could catch up. Now there was a new reason, off there in the farther reaches of Czechoslovakia and Austria were the conquering hordes of the Red Army, sweeping westward to a junction with the forces of the West. In this instance the fear was that the Corps would run full tilt into the advancing Russians, creating the possibility of errors in judgment on either side which might have repercussions in international diplomacy. XII Corps was restrained from crossing the Czech border in any strength until the end of the month, and directed to proceed cautiously, behind full ground and air reconnaissance, to the southeastward. A restraining line was set up along a railroad in Austria and Czechoslovakia beyond which no eastward movement in force would be permitted. The Corps After Action Report summarized these operations as follows:

"The fourth week in April saw a continuation of the Corps progress to the southeast. Weiden was seized 22 April, and Cham, with its excellent airfield, entered by the armor on 23 April. Regen and Grafenau surrendered after a meager resistance of small arms and panzerfaust fire, on the 24th and 25th April, respectively. On 26 April, the Corps first reached the Danube at Straubing, where the 26th Infantry Division found the bridge blown. Extremely poor roads, stiffened resistance from SS troops in the area around Egg, and harassing artillery fire from the south side of the Danube, slowed the advance. During this period, higher headquarters anticipated first contact would be made with Soviet forces in Austria, rather than Czechoslovakia, and the Corps was directed to proceed southeast to accomplish such a meeting.

"At the end of April, XII Corps was disposed as follows: The 90th Infantry Division on the left faced Czechoslovakia through the gaps, and over the heavily wooded heights of the Ober Pfalzer Wald, and the even more forbidding Bohmerwald, linking up on the north flank with the 97th Infantry Division, which had been transferred to First Army on 30 April.* With the 2nd Cavalry Group, the 90th Infantry Division stood ready to enter Czechoslovakia in force from a point on the border north of Waldmunchen to another east of Grafenau. The 5th Infantry Division was next abreast, backing up the 11th Armored Division, for which primary orientation was still southeast in Austria. The 26th Infantry Division lay south of the 5th Infantry Division, clearing out the last knots of resistance north of the Danube. The 4th Armored Division assigned to XII Corps 30 April, was moving toward an assembly area near Deggendorf."

Gen Irwin's diary which had by now become the diary of the Corps commander, records another great milestone in XII Corps' progress in an entry for 26 April 45: "clear and cool. Act 0800 moved to CP to Schwartzenfeld, opening about 1100. (Hear the CP was in a housing development outside town.)... 1830 CCA of the 11th Armored crossed Austrian border, with CCB about 2 km short. Authorized armor to hold up 48 hours for maintenance with patrolling to front and flanks. ..." Thus the first Allied troops in the European Theater of Operations had broken into another satellite of Germany. A more particular account of this historic penetration may be found in the division's After Action Report:

26 April 45. "Resuming the advance at 0800, CCA's Task Force Wingard moved east through the Cavalry at Kreuzberg and turn south toward Freyung. A destroyed bridge 1 km north of Freyung halted the column. Tanks and tracked vehicles forded the River while wheeled vehicles used a bypass

discovered to the northeast. Engineers immediately began construction and maintenance work to keep the column moving. After Task Force Wingard and the 490th Armored Field Artillery Battalion had crossed the stream, utilizing the Ford and bypass, the bypass collapsed, and construction was renewed under sporadic small arms fire from the surrounding woods. Freyung, CCA's portion of the final objective, was entered and cleared by 1030 against minor resistance. Among those taken prisoner in the city was German Brig Gen Von Horst, an ordnance officer. In accordance with its prearranged plan Task Force Wingard swung east from Freyung and advanced to Unter Grainet by 1250. From this vicinity a full track armored patrol, made up from B Company 22nd Tank Battalion, and the 41st Cavalry Reconnaissance Platoon; was dispatched east toward the Austrian border. Mountain trails and blown bridges delayed the advance from time to time. Hitler Jugend resistance was brushed aside at Lackensajusen and at 1830 this patrol became the first Allied unit to enter Austria from the West. Although no meeting was effected with the Russian army, the patrol returned to the main body at 1900 is Mission accomplished."

While the 11th Armored Division was making the headlines to the southeast, the bulk of the Corps was facing northeast into Czechoslovakia, if not with concern at least with considerable interest. Large forces of Germans were known to be moving through that country, pushed inexorably toward our lines by the Red Armies. It was still far from clear whether they would attempt to break through XII Corps into the "National Redoubt," or not. Among other enemy units, the Corps' old adversary, the 11th Panzer Division was reported on 27 April to be moving toward the pass leading via Furth to Cham and right into the center of the Corps' extremely extended position. Its intentions and capabilities could not be accurately assessed, anymore than those of the other veteran German divisions milling about on the 90th and 97th Infantry Division fronts. The situation with respect to the "National Redoubt" is lucidly summed up in the report of Gen Eisenhower cited above:

"Prior to the Allied advance across central Germany, evidence had been received that the government was preparing to evacuate Berlin and move southward, ultimately perhaps to Berchtesgaden in the National Redoubt. Some of the departments had already left the city, but the main body now found that, with the Allied linkup on the Elbe, it was too late. An impassable barrier had been drawn across the country, and the way to the Redoubt was cut off. In consequence, Hitler and his intimate henchmen stayed on in Berlin.

"Although the Redoubt was not, therefore, to be the last seat of the Nazi government, the possibility remained that it would still be the scene of a desperate stand by the fanatical elements of the armies south of the dividing line, together with those which might retreat northward out of Italy. These armies, totaling about 100 nominal divisions, included the bulk of the remaining German armored and SS formations, and up to 30 Panzer divisions might conceivably be concentrated behind the mountain barriers. In addition, most of the surviving German jet fighter plane strength was located in the south. The conquest of the Redoubt area thus remained as an important objective of the Allies, despite the collapse of the rest of Germany. In the event of determined resistance, its reduction would constitute a formidable problem, and speed of movement was therefore essential to forestall the enemy's retiring into the area in time to fortify it against our attacks.

"Extending some 240 miles in length and 80 miles in depth, the Redoubt comprised the western half of Austria, with small portions of Germany to the north and Italy to the south. It was bounded on the north by the Bavarian Plains, on the south by the Dolomites and Carnic Alps, on the west by the Swiss frontier and the Rhine Valley, and on the east by the Lageneurt Basin and in the eastern extremity of Tiedere Tauern. Within it lay Berchtes gaden and Hitler's 'Eagle's Nest.'

"The whole area was extremely mountainous and thus unsuitable for large-scale airborne operations, while the roads into it followed narrow valleys which could easily be held by determined defenders. The snows and danger of avalanches limited the possibility of any military operations to the summer months between May and October. Although there was no evidence of any completed system of defenses along the natural ramparts, some progress appeared to have been made in this respect along the northern flank. Air reconnaissance also revealed underground constructional activity. It was believed that some subterranean factories had been established in the area, but if any considerable numbers of troops were to be maintained there they would have to rely for their supplies, both of food and ammunition, upon previously accumulated stocks. ...

"At the same time that the 21st Army Group concentrated on its principal thrust to Lubeck, a similar advance was to be made in the southern zone down the Danube Valley toward Linz with the object of effecting a further junction with the Russians. The static situation in the center now permitted the use of the Third Army for this purpose, while the 6th Army Group devoted the whole of its attention to the problem with the Redoubt farther south and west."

The other Corps in Third Army, and the forces in 6 Army Group, might have saved their breath rushing down into the "National Redoubt" area. There was going to be no last-ditch fight there. XII Corps, by sealing the southwestern and southern exits from the Bohemian Bastion, had bottled up the German armies which were intended to implement the plans of Hitler, Goebbels & Company for that fanatic defense. As Gen Marshall says of this operation in his relevant Biennial Report: "the swift advances into the mountains of Austria and Bohemia had prevented the establishment of an inner fortress."

It was XII Corps' special destiny, then, to establish the much-advertised "National Redoubt" as a myth.**

** TOWNS CAPTURED IN APRIL BY XII CORPS, as credited to the corps in Third Army After Action Report:

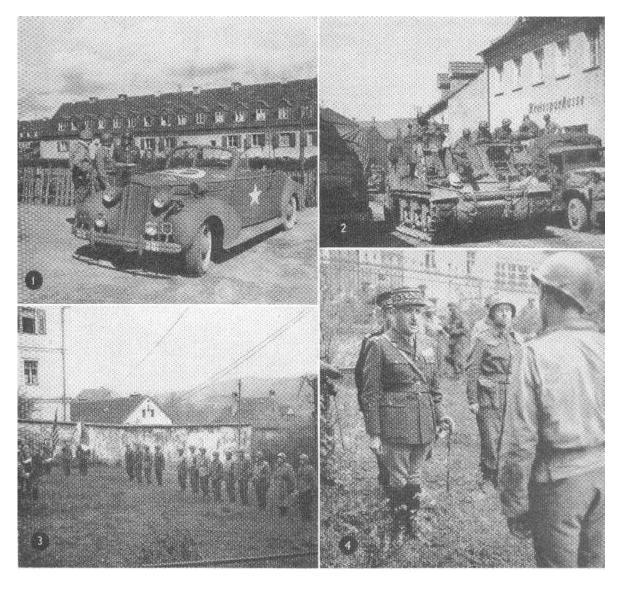
Town	Date	Wiedersbach	10
Berka	3	Breitenbach	11
Schenkfed	3	Gehren	11
Sitzelbach	3	Langwiesen	11
Suhl	3	Town	Date
Allendorf	4	Neustadt	11
Barchfeld	4	Ebertshausen	12
Eckartshausen	4	Ernstthal	12
M ohra	4	Lauscha	12
Oberhof	4	Sonneberg	12
Zella-Mehlis	4	Buebbach	13
Bonndorf	5	Golsberg	13
Breitenbach	5	Heberndorf	13
Ineierau	5	Kulmbach	13
Meiningen	5	Lothra	13
Metzels	5	Rottersdorf	13
Schwarza	5	Ruppersdorf	13
Drossenhausen	9	Stadtsteinach	13
Gehlberg	9	Bruck	14
Grattstadt	9	Bayreuth	14
Unterneubrunn	9	Gorlitz	14
Veilsdorf	9	Schelgel	14
Gressuebel	10	Hof	15
Ilmenau	10	Kirchenlamitz	15

^{*} The 97th Infantry Division whose men bore proudly the blue-and-quite trident shoulder patch for the three most 'Down East' states in the USA, was with XII Corps only eight days in combat. After participating in the reduction of the Ruhr Pocket, they had been rushed down into Bavaria, and held the left flank of XII Corps from 22-30 April 45. After the war they were the only division with a combat record under XII Corps which actually completed redeployment to Japan. In connection with this latter operation they made the headlines all over the US -- and we heard about it in the ETO.

Grafenwohr	19	Freyung	25
Rehau	19	Grafenau	25
As	20	Steinach	25
Brand	20	Bogen	26
Kemnath	20	Metten	26
Metzenhof	20	Buchhausen	28
Pressath	20	Greibing	28
Seussen	20	Straubing	28
Parkst in	21	Taimering	28
Schwarzenbach	21	Zenting	28
Weiden	21	Otterskirchen	29
Schnaittenbach	22	Ulrlchsreut	29
Regen	24	Wilhelmsreut	29
Schonberg	24	We gscheid	30
Fa1kenstein	25		

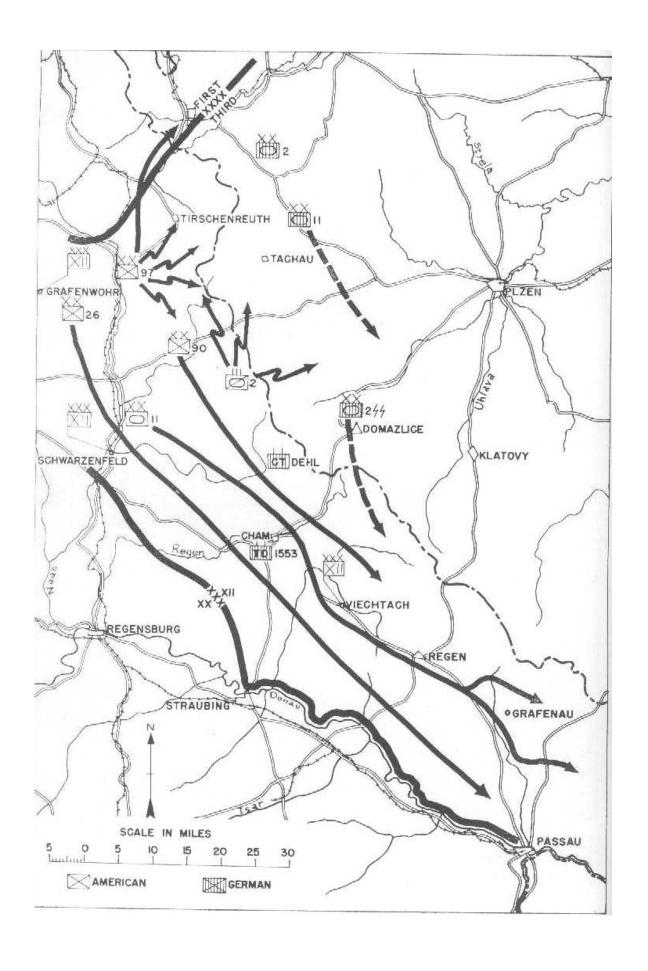
These 75 towns are far greater in number than those taken by the next closest corps in Third Army during April, and almost exactly double the number captured by XX Corps during the same period.

XII CORPS CP'S AT SCHWARZENFELD AND VIECHTACH: VISITS AND AWARDS





(1) In front of Corps Headquarters in a housing development on the edge of Schwartzenfeld, Germany, Maj Gen S LeRoy Irwin new commander of XII Corps, receives a visit from a Third Army Commanding General. The CP was located here from 26-29 April 45. (2) This is the main drag of Viechtach, Germany, as selfpropelled guns of the 490th Field Artillery Battalion, CCA, 11th Armored Division thundered through it on 25 April. XII Corps headquarters was just down the street from 29 April-3 May. (Photo from Sgt Chambers). (3) In the vacant lot between the two buildings occupied by the headquarters at Viechtach, 30 April, Lt Gen Koeltz of the French Army presents for Legion of Honor awards and a dozen Croixs de Guerre to officers and men of XII Corps units. (4) Gen Koeltz recites a citation to a XII Corps soldier. On his left is Maj Pierre L. Vivet, the greatly respected French Liaison officer with XII Corps throughout combat. (5) Gen Koeltz "taps" four XII Corps officers for the Legion of Honor: Brig Gen Herbert Ernest, CG 90th Infantry Division; Brig Gen Joseph A. Tully, Asst CG 90th Infantry Division; Col Frances M. Day, Asst Arty Officer XII Corps Arty; and Col Charles H. Reed, CO Cavalry Group, second April.



3. The Last Week of Battle

Even the XII Corps After Action Report does not give as clear and condensed a picture of the background of the Corps' last week of combat as a diary of the new Corps commander. Gen Irwin, with less than 10 days' experience in his larger responsibility, was taking hold with both hands in guiding XII Corps through its final days of war in Europe and with tact, firmness, and skill:

"28 April 45. Overcast. Night quiet. Study of yesterday's changes indicates 90th Division must hold present front; cavalry, when relieved, can screen mountain area on the left flank; Danube flank should be secured by XX Corps; 5th Division, if assigned, can go forward in left zone; 4th Armored should assemble in SHAEF reserve somewhere south of Cham. This setup will provide strength where needed, sufficient reserves, and will permit advance to Linz and somewhat beyond. Until new infantry division starts arriving, I do not feel justified in ordering armor to make a further advance, and therefore am directing they clear right portion of zone to Danube. About 1100 Gen Gay called to say we got 5th Division. Ask him to have advanced detail report promptly and suggested 4th Armored be moved to reserve position southwest of Cham to get them out of First Army zone. Gen Patton called at noon to say to take bridges at Passau under artillery fire as soon as possible – that he would notify us of bombing of those bridges (over Danube and Inn) - and that we continue on our Linz objective. Also he said to sideslip 97th Division as far as possible so that we can hold on to 90th Division. Col Franson, Chief of Staff 5th Division, called before noon to learn what I wanted. I told them to get representatives here as soon as possible, which he said he would do this afternoon by air. At about 1500 Gen Warnock and Lt Col Thackeray from 5th Division arrived, got situation and orders, and returned by air to Bamberg were division is assembled. We will furnish 100 trucks, which should get division up by Monday night.

"29 April 45. Bright with broken clouds. Moved CP at 0800 to Viechtach, opening about 1200. Gen Patton and Gen Brown (fifth Division) arrived about noon. Gen Patton said (1) there is some chance of a surrender on Tuesday, (2) we turn southwest at Linz to move on Salzburg and Berchtesgaden, (3) to start for Linz tomorrow morning, and (4) to exercise greatest economy in gas and rations. Gen Brown was briefed on operation, and is moving to Regen to set up his CP. The 11th CT (5th Infantry Division) should close this evening, and the rest of the division tomorrow night. General Patton said First Army will eventually take over our front as far as Regen, not quite enough in my opinion if we are to cross Danube as our rear will be vulnerable. Gen Koeltz, French Army, with staff (arrived at CP).

"30 April 45. Overcast and some snow. The 11th (CT 5th Infantry Division) and some of the 10th closed last night. Armor, 5th and 26th all jumped off this morning. 90th attacking to clear woods in it front. General Patton called about 1000 to get situation on Passau and Linz. Urged capture of Linz and to let him know progress. General Koeltz decorated several officers had 0930. Left at 1330 to visit 11th Armor. Met General Brown on road and talked over his situation. Finally found armor's CP at Sonner, about 6 km from Austrian border. Armor made a very limited advance yesterday due to (1) bad roads, (2) fairly well-organized resistance, and (3) starting from positions considerably further west of the border than we understood they had reached and consolidated. Their 48-hour rest permitted the enemy to close up on them and form a line. Returned to CP about 2200, having stopped ads 10th Infantry enroute. Roads in poor shape from rain and snow, and traffic congestion very bad, due to arrival of 5th Division which closed less one infantry battalion.

"I May 45. Overcast and snow. Last night 4th Armor was turned over to us, and was ordered to assemble south of Regen. We are ordered to cross Danube and move on Salzburg and Berchtesgaden.

Directed that 4th Armored and 26th Division do this operation, as logistics will not permit any other arrangement without too much delay. ..."

Later Third Army changed its mind and directed XII Corps to stay north of the Danube. But, anyway, Passau and Linz, Austria, both south of the river, were added to the beads strung on the Corps' long string of captured towns. Their seizure was credited to the 11th Armor and 26th Infantry Divisions, Linz falling to the 11th armored on 5 May without a struggle and with a highway and railroad bridge over the Danube in possession.

In the meantime, on 2 May General Irwin's diary records, "about 1400 we received word from Army that there is a radical change in plans; that we are not to cross the Danube; and to limit the number of troops we send to the east. Apparently we invade Czechoslovakia. ..." and that is what we did. The Corps After Action Report briefly narrates the closing operations of the war thus:

"During the last eight days of the war in Europe, from 1 May through 8 May, XII Corps effected a rapid penetration into two different countries in two directions – northeast on a broad front deeply into Czechoslovakia and southeast into Austria. Crowding up to the railroad designated by higher headquarters as that restraining line beyond which only patrol contact would be made with Soviet forces, the 11th Armored Division brought up generally north and east of Linz on the Corps' right. The 4th Armored Division broke out through the gaps in the Bohmerwald opened up by the 5th and 90th Infantry Divisions, passed through those divisions, and was well into Czechoslovakia with Prague as the objective, when stopped by orders from higher headquarters. ... The closing weeks of the war saw XII Corps operating at the zenith of its power against an enemy rapidly, and obviously, approaching the nadir of its strength and resources. Already knocking at the inner portals of Germany's central fortress at Gotha and Ohrdruf as the (month of April) opened, at (the war's) end the Corps had entered Austria and widely and deeply breached the 'Bohemian Bastion,' of which it has been said: 'Who holds this, controls Germany.' Resistance, when there was any, varied from 'light' to 'determined,' but it was always localized and uncoordinated, and at no time gave evidence of larger strategic planning or control. Sometimes with five, sometimes with only four divisions, the XII Corps rolled on. The distance advanced was 275 miles; the areas seized from enemy control, approximately 8400 square miles. Prisoners poured into the cages, to an estimated final total for the period of 135,013. This brought Corps bag from 12 August 44 until the end of hostilities to 244,339."

The fighting of the last few days was freakish, but it was still fighting. It still took skill, bravery, – and luck. It still took American lives every day. Several incidents are worth recording in illustration of these points.

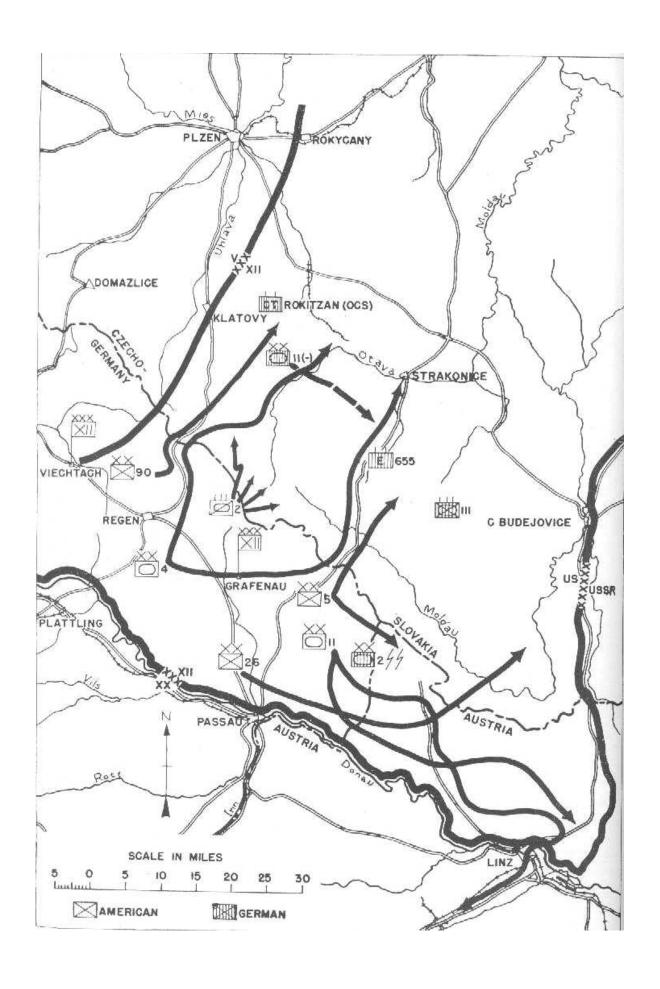
There were a number of daring individual penetrations and forays into the disintegrating enemy front. A good example was the expedition that won a Silver Star for Captain Ferdinand P Sperl, of Interrogation of PW's Team No 10, attached to the XII Corps Headquarters. On 26 April 45, "Captain Sperl," says the citation, "having received information of a German Staff Group with highly valuable documents located within the enemy lines, volunteered to secure the capture of the Staff and documents. ... Captain sperl, under the gravest personal danger, passed through the outpost lines of fanatic SS troops, contacted the German Staff commander and convinced him of the advisability of surrendering the documents and undamaged to a task force. Captain sperl then returned to his own lines again subjecting himself to the danger of capture or death and led a task force through the German lines and successfully captured the desire staff and documents."*

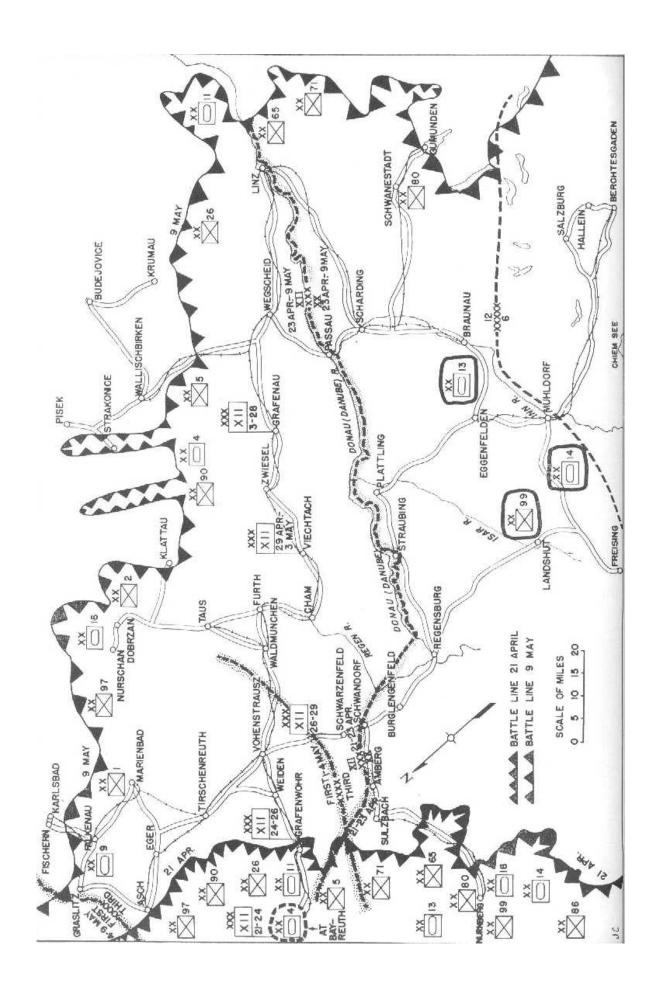
Another notable example was the extraordinary operation conducted principally by Captain Thomas M Stewart of the 42nd Reconnaissance Squadron, 2nd Cavalry Group, which led, at long last, to shipment of what was undoubtedly the greatest single group of blooded horses to reach the US as a result of World War II. Preliminaries to the expedition may be well told and Captain Stuart's own words:

"Through Top Secret information obtained at Karlbach (just outside of Eslarn) we learned of the presence of about 200 allied PW's – both American and British – and a stable of Lippizaner and Arabian horses about 10 miles from us across the Czech border. Colonel Reed, Group CO, called me in to attempt to bargain with the Germans, to try and effect the release of the PW's and secondarily, the horses, to the American lines. Through prearrangement, a German Veterinarian Captain came through our lines, ready to give us the information necessary to make the trip to Hostoun, location of the camp and stables. The stables comprised the German remount depot for that area. The Lippizaner horses were originally from the Spanish Riding School of Vienna. Numbered among the horses was one previously owned by Von Ribbentrop and another used by King Peter of Yugoslavia. The Germans preferred to turn the mounts over to the Americans rather than to the Russians. ... I can't speak German, but I can understand it. Arrangements were made for me to accompany the German Captain through the lines, avoiding all enemy troops, roadblocks, mines – and to attempt the release of the PW's and horses. I was to try to bargain with German Brass for the withdrawal of German troops from the area, so that our men could go in and do the business. The German Captain and I rode up to one of our Cavalry outposts in a peep, and from here we mounted horses brought for this purpose by the German Captain. My mount was King Peter's private stallion. The horse belonged to the royal Yugoslavian stud. As a matter of fact, I jumped him for his first time. ..." After this romantic story-book beginning, the operation proceeded on an extremely practical plane. Captain Stuart succeeded in making his way deep into the German lines and then talked sundry Krauts into agreeing to surrender their installation without harm to the PW's 4 horses. – if the 2nd Cavalry Group could get into them through a variety of German forces which knew nothing about the undertaking. Captain Stewart then returned to his headquarters and the group, after a sharp firefight, reached the stables on 29 April 45. Even then the action was not at an end; the Germans threw a roadblock across the only road leading back to the 97th Division's lines, and Troop A of the 42nd Squadron, which had been left to protect the installation, had a five-hour battle on 30 April in which they took 100 prisoners and lost one man killed and one wounded. Exactly 1 year later a photograph of one of these horses was to appear in the Stars and Stripes with the triumphant caption: "European Thoroughbreds in US – Saffa, a Lippizaner mare, and her 10-day old colt by Maestoso XVII, Lippizaner stallion, pose for the cameraman at the Aleshire QM Depot, Remount, at Front Royal, Virginia. ... "Few reading this, and the many other articles in US papers and magazines hailing the arrival of this famous group of horses, realize the vital influence on all future generations of American horseflesh exercised by the men of XII Corps' "own" 2nd Cavalry Group.

This influence, like that of the and s on the outcome of the War in Europe, was not exercised, as has been suggested above, without cost. In one of the last serious actions of the war for XII Corps, a band of crazy young German OCS students, who should've known better so close to VE-Day, on 4 May ambushed a platoon of the and corps' cavalry group, and showered them with small arms and panzerfaust fire in an action which caused unnecessary casualties to both sides.

^{*} A similar personal reconnaissance of Bad Steuben on 14 April had resulted in award of the same decoration to Major Paul R Screvane, of the Headquarters XII Corps Artillery. He thus became the second officer in that headquarters within a month to win a Silver Star. Captain Horace W Ziglar, of Headquarters Battery XII Corps Artillery received one for heroic action during the fight for Frankfurt, 27-28 March 45.





Von Wietersheim's 11th Panzer Division has been considered throughout this chronicle as the symbol of the organized professional military resistance encountered by XII Corps. Almost to the last day of the war it had maintain continuity of command. Almost to the last day of the war it retained its integrity as a unit and fought throughout as a unit. Its combat was frequently characterized by a savage effectiveness, as members of the 2nd Cavalry Group and other XII Corps units could testify. Now, thanks to the excellent sense of timing of its commander, it was to surrender as a unit just before the Russian and American front came together, and move as a unit with much of its organic transportation into a state of captivity in which certain preferential advantages accrued to it by reason of this particular action.

At least three of XII Corps' major units were involved in the surrender. The 2nd Cavalry Group was in contact with the enemy division during the proceedings, and nothing could have been more appropriate, in view of that group's perhaps longest and most unpleasant association of any XII Corps outfit with the 11th Panzer Division. In the actual surrender negotiations the 90th Infantry Division represented the Corps and all those of its components which had suffered at the hands of this crack German unit. Some confusion resulted from the fact that while Von Wietersheim and the bulk of the division had reached Klattau on a move to the Passau area, and was therefore in the 90th Infantry Division zone of advance, the rest had gotten as far as Wellern, in this zone of the 26th Infantry Division. Due to some very complicated monkey business concerning command of the enemy division, which occurred during the last four weeks of the war, the nominal commanding general on 1 May 45 was one General Major Von Butlar, formerly of the OKW, and he was with the part of the division facing our 26th Infantry Division. Nevertheless, on 2 May 45, Von Wietersheim decided to surrender the whole division, as he had considered doing for over a month. "He called a meeting of his ranking officers," says the Third Army interrogation report, previously cited, "and informed them of his intention. When all present agreed with these plans, he again took charge of the division. The G4, Major Vogtmann, was dispatched to the 90th US Infantry Division in order to negotiate. Firing ceased on 3 May 45 at 1400 hrs, and the first units of the division marched into the assembly area by 1700 hrs. Butlar had been informed by messenger of the decision to surrender and his group had been included in the terms. He and the 111th Panzer Grenadier Regiment surrendered two days later and joined the bulk of the division in the assembly area around Koetzing" (in 2nd Cavalry Group area of occupation). Thus the story of XII Corps' "war with the 11th Panzer Division," which began with bloody fighting at Luneville by the 2nd Cavalry group away back there in France in September 1944, had come to an end. The 2nd Cavalry Group "remained in possession of the field," with all these survivors of the enemy division as their prisoners.

Von Wietersheim and von Butlar were only two in a growing parade of German High Brass. Says a XII Corps press release of the period, with a certain smugness:

"In 24 hours one Field Marshall and seven Generals paid unauthorized visits to the headquarters of the famous XII Corps, commanded by Major General S LeRoy Irwin. Six were prisoners, and the other two, who were White (Fascist) Russians, sought terms of surrender. Included in the XII Corps prisoner bag were: Field Marshall Ewald von Kleist, former commander of Army Group A in the Northern Caucuses and Crimea; Lieutenant General Francis Farkas de Kisbarnack, former Commanding Officer of the VIII Hungarian Corps; Major General Ritter von d'Aubigny von Engelbrunner-Horstig,

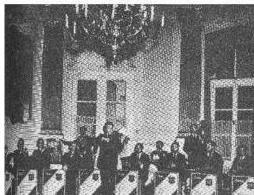
Branch Engineer; Major General Russwurm, Chief of Signal Troops, Replacement Army; Brigadier General Doctor Deyrer, G4 and Judge Advocate for Wehrkreis XIII.

"When photographers tried to take pictures of Von Kleist, the Field Marshall refused to pose, but Brigadier General Ralph J. Canine, Terre Haute, Indiana, veteran Chief of Staff of the XII Corps, gave photographers the 'go' sign and 11 pictures were taken. All of the PW Generals and the adjutants were interviewed by Sgt Kurt Diamant of 54 Fayette St, Cambridge, Massachusetts."

In a similar manner other Orthodox German units, or what was left to them, and their commanders, rolled into the XII Corps cages. But behind them they left a ghost to haunt the future American occupation. This was the organization loudly proclaimed by the German radio as the one designed to make life hell for US troops after the conventional fighting was over, – the "Werewolves." To this day it is difficult to know whether the "Werewolves" were as much of the myth as the "National Redoubt," or only as much of the myth as the Volksturm proved to be when it came to effective lastditch defense of the Vaterland. True, S/Sgt Ib J Melchoir, of the MII Team 425-G, XII Corps, and Spec Agt William G Hock and Agents Seaton and Schroepfer, of the 97th CIC Detachment, XII Corps, on 28 April 45 effected the capture of six German officers and 25 EM, hiding in the woods north of Schonsee along the check frontier due north of Cham in 2nd Cavalry Group zone. These individuals, upon interrogation by XII Corps Headquarters personnel, claim to be "Werewolves." They were in civilian clothes, and appeared to have the means to operate along the announced "Werewolf" lines. But if so, it was impossible to suppose this to be the only such group. Others must have existed, if this one was actually a "Werewolf" unit, and if so, not all could have been caught. And evidence of bona fide "Werewolf" activities were conspicuously absent during XII Corps' period of occupation of this section of Bavaria, which was shortly to begin.

THE "GHOST DIVISION" GIVES UP THE GHOST







(1 & 2) Preceded by his request for negotiations, Lt Gen Wend von Wietersheim, Commanding General of the 11th Panzer Division comes into the town of Vseruby, Czechoslovakia, 4 May 45, and surrenders the "Ghost Division." Having asked to give up to XII Corps, before units of which his outfit had been retreating so long, von Wietersheim receives terms of surrender from Brig Gen Herbert L. Ernest, Commanding General 90th Infantry Division then under XII Corps direction. (3) The German general, with 11th Panzer division surrender party, arrives under flag of truce at the entrance to Vseruby, 4 May. (4) Having achieved the desired end of becoming prisoners of XX US Army Corps, instead of prisoners of the Russians, the personnel of the division was distributed about the Corps area of occupation and put to various useful activities. Best remembered perhaps of these groups was the 11th Panzer Division Band, which was brought down to Regensburg, promptly changed its colors and its clothes, and became (relatively) respectable as "Philips (XX Corps' Own) Band" in the ballroom of the Park Maximilian Hotel.

ELEVENTH PANZER DIVISION SURRENDERS ITS T/O & E



(1 & 2) Some German tanks, trucks and an amphibious volkswagen we failed to destroy come rumbling down in as XII Corps' old enemy, the 11th Panzer Division turns over its personnel and materiel to the 359th Infantry Regiment of the 90th Infantry Division and the 2nd Cavalry Group. (Photo 1 by T/5 Millard McKee, 315th Engineer Combat Battalion. (3) Capt Clifford A. Raser of Chief of Staff Section, Headquarters XII Corps, inspects an 11th Panzer Division tank. (4) The personnel surrendering included these women auxiliaries of the division.

Early in March, 1945, there had reached XII Corps headquarters copies of the super-hush-hush super-duper Plan, called "Second Draft Outline of 12th Army Group Plan for Operation 'Eclipse'." This massive piece of lofty thinking provided "for the occupation of Germany after the German surrender or collapse." In addition to the "basic document" there were 12 Appendices, 19 "Eclipse Memoranda" and uncounted references to directives and manuals. The whole pile of mimeographed "poop" which was originally dumped into this fighting headquarters was perhaps 4 inches thick and ran to a weight of 10 pounds. Now it was clear what all those people had been doing back there at 12th Army Group Headquarters during the war. The thing looked pretty tedious and irrelevant with the main fighting still on the west side of the Rhine, but something had to be done about it. Third Army had been told to make up their plan to occupy initially "the Provinces of Hessen, Kurhessen, and Nassau" and to be prepared to take over later from 6th Army Group forces, Wurtemberg and the "entire U. S. Western Military District."

Third Army had naturally lost no time in delegating most of the work on this plan to its component corps. Corps, in the ordinary course of such matters, would have immediately passed the bulk of the job on down to Division. But The Thing looked like a pretty high level stuff at this stage of the game; it was "classified" so secret as to make it an accursed nuisance to handle; and in XII Corps there was always a slight impediment to such delegation of work to be found in the principal handed down from the days of "Doc" Cook: "Personnel of the headquarters will never put off on lower headquarters any job that they can do themselves." It looked as though XII Corps Headquarters were stuck with doing some of the work on it, and in the middle of a war, too. Fortunately there had recently arrived in headquarters an officer fresh from the Zone of Interior, who was consequently, to borrow an idea from Sgt Mauldin, full of vitamins and enthusiasm. The Chief of Staff immediately dumped the pile of "poop" on him, gave him some sage counsel on the necessity for care and handling "Top Secret" documents, and directed him to see that XII Corps did not "miss the boat on 'Operation Eclipse'."

The matter turned out to be more interesting than it appeared on the surface, for it was in general "The Shape of Things to Come" for XII Corps. "Eclipse" was to be successor and heir to "Overlord," the underlying plan which had brought American armies across the channel on D-Day, and all the way across France and Germany since. It was to cover "an advance by the Allied Forces, conducted at maximum speed consistent with security, to secure important strategic areas deep inside Germany, to gain contact with the Russian Forces, and to extend the Allied air threat." Thereafter it was to provide for deployment to "secure additional strategic areas; to establish firm control throughout the Supreme Commander's sphere of occupation in Germany; to carry out the disarmament and disposal of enemy forces in Germany ... and the redisposition of national forces to coincide ultimately with the National Zone of Occupation." It informed the personnel of the headquarters for the first time that partition of Germany into national zones had been agreed upon by the Big Three, and by means of maps and description it defined those zones much as they stand today. Third Army, originally assigned to occupy the Western Military District, in the event so completely out ran the forces scheduled to occupy the Eastern District, that a "Third Draft" of the plan had to be issued exactly reversing the areas of responsibility. By the end of the war, XII Corps had driven far beyond the easternmost limits of the Eastern Military District. It had to be called back to occupy the sub-district ultimately assigned to it as a part of the Third Army's forces in occupation of the "US Eastern Military District, comprising of the state of Bavaria."

XII Corps did not "miss the boat on 'Operation Eclipse'." The corps plan, considerably less encyclopedic than 12th Army Group's, went out to its divisions comfortably before the end of the war,

when they would need it for guidance, and was reported into Third Army Headquarters eight days before that of any other corps in the Army at that time. This included, of course, XX Corps.

6. "Death Marches" and "Death Camps"

Uttermost horror of the closing days of the war were the stark evidences of inhuman German brutality encountered in Bavaria and Austria. At once nauseating and terribly fascinating, these vestiges of the Nazi terror made the average American almost doubt what he saw with his own eyes. Harder to doubt was what he smelled with his own nose.

The first things encountered were the survivors, and those who had not survived, from "death marches", – the fleshless bags of bones, living and dead; clad, if at all, in the ragged striped uniforms marked with the "KL" of the Koncentrationlager; scattered along the roadsides where they had fallen. Of all these marches overrun by XII Corps the one which might stand representative of the rest was that from the Flossenburg Camp, 10 miles northwest of Weiden, which was terminated by the arrival on the scene of elements of the 11th Armored Division. The story is briefed dispassionately in the XII Corps G5 Summary for 26 April 45, over the signature of Colonel "Josh" Billings, G5 who had just become a full colonel as of that date:

"On 16 April, 2,800 political prisoners were started on a march from Flossenburg by SS; on 18 and 20 April more were put on the road so that by 20 April, an estimated 15,000 German-held political prisoners and forced laborers were conducted on an SS 'March of Death'. They were driven for three days and three nights; as the weak fell by the wayside, they were either murdered or left to die. No food was provided during the period and, in their weakened condition after years of concentration camp inhumanities, many had insufficient energy to withstand the torturous journey. Survivors report the cruelest treatment throughout the March; shootings by SS guards were reported to be continuous. The slaughter continued right up to the arrival of our armor; then the SS guards departed leaving the human wreckage to stagger away; the strongest, taking to the highways; the weak crawling into the woods and barns or other shelter. About 3,000 died on the March; about 3,000 were able to get out of the immediate area where turned loose; the balance of 9,000 were holed up in the general area Cham, Roding, Posing, and Neunberg."

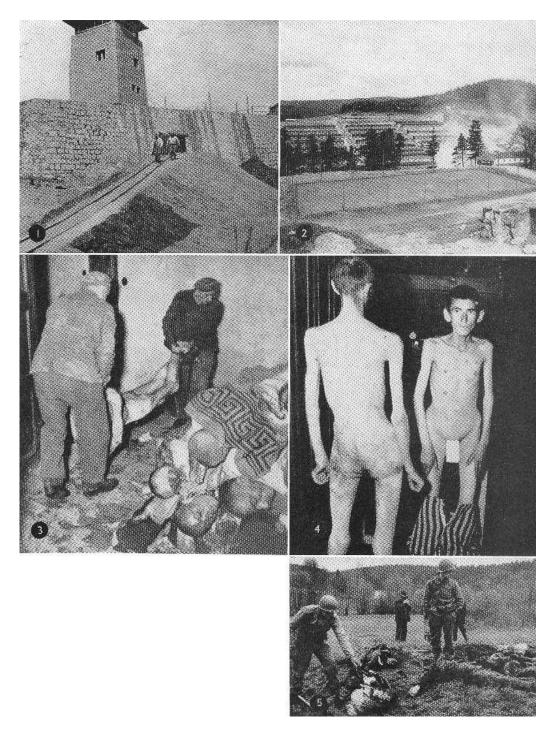
Near the town of Neunberg (16 miles northwest of Cham) the SS guards had one final orgy of butchery. Colonel Frank Weaver, Assistant G5 and Captain Merle Potter, found such aftermath of this activity that the latter returned to the village and supervised a mass burial for 204 victims of the "march." Colonel Hayden Sears, formally CO of the 17th Armored Group and more recently of the 4th Armored Division is credited with organization of a custom by this time widely popular throughout XII Corps. In accordance with it, the people of Neunberg were required to supply coffins for the poor wretches slaughtered within their township, dig the graves, and attend the burial services. At conclusion of the ceremony, in the name of the Corps Commanding General, a message was read in German over the public address system of a sound truck to the assembled men, women and children of the village. "Only God Himself," the message ended, "has the terrible might and infinite wisdom to visit upon you and your leaders the total punishment you deserve. ... May the memory of this day and of these tragic dead rest heavily upon the conscience of every German so long as each of you shall live."

The worst discovery of this nature was reserved almost for the last. On 5 May 45, a reconnaissance party from Troop D, 41st Cavalry Squadron, 11th Armored Division, advancing down the beautiful valley of the Danube, uncovered near Linz two concentration camps, Mauthausen and Gusen. The former was such a spectacle of horror as subsequently to compete in the opinion of the

world with Dachau and Buchenwald for the title of worst example of its kind. It was certainly the most hideous thing that many members of XII Corps had ever seen. "Here were 16,000 political prisoners, representing every country in Europe, all reduced to living skeletons and ridden with disease," the I & E pamphlet history of the 11th Armored Division reports. "The bodies of more than 500 were stacked in an area between two barracks. The few long term prisoners still alive said that at least 45,000 bodies had been burned in the huge crematorium in four years. Other thousands were killed in the gas chambers, injected with poison, or beaten to death."

Details of such camps have since received so much public notice in connection with post-war trials of guards and superintendents of these hell-holes, that this volume need not repeat the stories of the torture chambers, killing pens, the walking dead, the emaciated bodies stacked like cordwood. Suffice it that a visit to Mauthausen was an unforgettable experience, – unfortunately. As one XII Corps Headquarters officer wrote home: "It is really the smell that makes a visit to a Death Camp stark reality. The smell and the stink of the dead and the dying. The smell and stink of the starving. Yes, it is the smell, the stink, the odor of a Death Camp that makes it burn in the nostrils and memory. I will always smell Mauthausen, just as I can still smell the bodies we found from the Flossenburg death march. ..."

MEN OF XII CORPS UNITS THAT OVERRAN SUCH CAMPS AS FLOSSENBURG WILL SEE THEM IN DREAMS FOR YEARS



(1) Tunnel entrance to the Flossenburg concentration camp near Weiden, Germany, where slave laborers by the thousand were worked and starved to death, beaten, machinegunned and hanged. This gateway into Hell might well have borne the inscription from Dante's Inferno: "All hope abandon, you who enter here." (2) General view of Flossenburg, 30 April 45, shortly after the camp had been overrun by the 97th Infantry Division. Workers were herded to labor and the nearby Messerschmitt factory and quarry. (3) Prison laborers prepared to carry more victims to the Flossenburg crematory furnaces. 30 April. (4) Those that we found alive were walking skeletons. (5) The notorious "Flossenburg Death March" started from this camp: SS guards attempted to march the workers beyond the reach of advancing American columns, and shot down all those unable to keep up the pace, like those under examination by infantrymen of the 97th Infantry Division. 1 May.

7. The Russians, and VE-Day

Contact with the Red Army and the end of the fighting – these were two occurrences so long anticipated, so much discussed, that when they finally happened practically together even their cumulative effect was anti-climactic.

XII Corps Headquarters and divisional liaison planes had been scouting boldly ahead of the ground forces for some time, hoping to sight some Russian activity. Rumors of Russian tactical aircraft deep within our lines had been running around with the usual cheerful irresponsibility of such reports; the Patton Legend picked up a new angle when it was said that the general himself had been shot at in error by a Russian plane while flying over Nurnberg in an L-5. But few if any XII Corps personnel could be found to swear to firsthand observation of a red star on the wing of a plane.

The conscious race of various XII Corps units to be first to meet the Russians had been going on for a couple of weeks, hampered only by restraining lines and stop-movement orders from higher authority. At one time, with the 11th Armored Division jammed up against its restraining line in Austria, it looked as though the Corps forces advancing freely into Czechoslovakia would make the first contact. But these too, ran into a Third Army restraining line on 6 May,* and it was a patrol from the 11th Armored Division that represented XII Corps and Third Army in their first meeting with Marshall Stalin's legions.

Details of the contact with Red Army units probing westward from Vienna are quoted from 11th Armored Division's I & E pamphlet history:

"At 1550, 8 May, Troop A, 41st (Cavalry Squadron) commanded by Lt Kedar B Collins, Albany, Georgia, met a patrol of the Soviet Seventh Guards Division first unit of the Third Army to link up with the Red Army.

"The meeting took place in the midst of battle. The Soviet patrol of seven tanks was following the trail of its planes to strafing and bombing a German column of SS Panzer troops. In the face of the Soviet advance, the American patrol, consisting of an armored car and three peeps, was almost taken under fire.

"Sgt John L. Brady, riding in the lead jeep, leaped up and shouted: 'We are Americans!' Lt Gene Allenson, Coral Gables, Florida, and Lt Richard L Lucas, Mount Carmel, Illinois, shot up flares to identify their nationality. The Red Army troops replied with their flares and jumped out to join the Americans. First Yank to meet the Soviet patrol was T/4 Frank H Johnson, Reno, Nevada, who was greeted by Lt Fyedor A Kiseyev. T/Sgt Clarence L Barts, Chicago, at the time of the meeting, was mistaken for a German. The Red Army soldiers demanded his pistol. When they learned he was an American, they hugged and kissed them.

"Others who took part in the historic junction of the victorious armies were Cpl Theodore Barton, Brisbane Australia, a released PW who acted as interpreter; Pfc Robert P Venderhagen, East Detroit, Michigan, T/Sgt Joseph P McTighe, Louisville, Kentucky, Cpl Will Richmond, Trenton, New Jersey, Pfc Michael Tancrati, Springfield, Massachusetts, Sgt Marvin H Estes, Montrose, Colorado, T/5 Andrew Florey, Medford, Oregon.

"Later that day, commanders of three German military units offered to surrender unconditionally to the division. These were the 2nd SS Panzer Corps, with 50,000 troops, the 8th German Army, strength 100,000, the Russian Forces of Liberation, a a Nazi-sponsored Army, 100,000 strong. All were told to remain in place."

Shortly after the 11th Armored Division met the Russians all of the XII Corps front-line units make contact, "across roads choked with German personnel enroute to make a preferential surrender to US forces," as a Corps After Action Summary put it.

"For the first time in the 4th Armored's history," characteristically says that division's draft sequel to the ETOUSA I & E pamphlet, to be called *From Bastogne to Bavaria*, "German troops ran toward the division instead of from it. At least 80,000 German troops attempted to surrender to the 4th or filter through into Germany.

"The staff of the 17th German Army, which surrendered to CCA, was given the job of organizing the mob of German soldiers. German generals, colonels and lieutenants walked the streets with white armbands marked 'Liaison Officer With U.S. Army.' Field orders were issued in English and German and signed by American and German commanding officers. German staff cars, trucks and volkswagons mixed up in the traffic with American halftracks and peeps.

"Gathered into four huge bivouac areas the Germans were held with their vehicles until those designated as Soviet prisoners could be turned over to the Russians. Our column of fleeing German vehicles extended 35 miles, with the tail of the column in Prague and the head butting into the 4th Armored. The German, with some distress, said that their rear end was being shot up.

"Then the Russians arrived. Columns of the Second Ukrainian Army came from the east, cutting below the Germans from Prague. American six-by-six trucks and peeps sped into the 4th Armored's area with Red flags snapping. GI's and Russians eyed each other with curiosity and examined each other's arms and uniforms. Medals and parties were exchanged and Americans found the Russian representation for stiff drinking no myth. ..."

The XII Corps Headquarters and personnel of the corps infantry divisions and cavalry group were soon making the same discovery. ...

There was double reason to celebrate by 9 May 45. Two days previously all major units had received a famous message from the Supreme Commander, AEF:

"A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE GERMAN HIGH COMMAND SIGNED THE UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER OF ALL GERMAN LAND, SEA, AND AIR FORCES IN EUROPE TO THE ALLIED EXPEDITIONARY FORCE AND SIMULTANEOUSLY TO THE SOVIET HIGH COMMAND AT 0141 HOURS CENTRAL EUROPEAN TIME, 7 MAY UNDER WHICH ALL FORCES WILL CEASE ACTIVE OPERATIONS AT 0001 B HOURS 9 MAY.

"EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY ALL OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS BY ALLIED EXPEDITIONARY FORCE WILL CEASE AND TROOPS WILL REMAIN IN PRESENT POSITIONS. MOVES INVOLVED IN OCCUPATIONAL DUTIES WILL CONTINUE. DUE TO DIFFICULTIES OF COMMUNICATION THERE MAY BE SOME DELAY IN SIMILAR ORDERS REACHING ENEMY TROOPS SO FULL DEFENSIVE PRECAUTIONS WILL BE TAKEN. ..."

That would make 9 May 45 the longed for VE-Day – Victory-in Europe Day. Between 1100 and 1130 on 7 May, a BAR man in Company K, 358th Infantry Regiment, let go 40 rounds at some enemy infantry, "in the woods at Q2779," thereby firing the 90th Infantry Division's last shot of World War II. Other XII Corps units fired their last shots.**

The European front, for the first time since 1 September 39, was still. "Of the German war machine," General Eisenhower would report to the Combined Chiefs of Staff, "which had sought to dominate the world lay overwhelmed and crushed to a degree never before experienced in the history of modern armies."

ROUTINE

UNCLASSIFIED

XII CORPS NEWS SUMMARY

072200 to 082200

The war in Europe officially ended 090001. At 3 PM, May 8, Prime Minister CHURCHILL and President TRUMAN made simultaneous announcements that hostilities would cease at one minute past midnight. Marshall STALIN made no announcement, explained by continued fighting on the Eastern front.

Mr. CHURCHILL, after giving a brief factual account of the surrender, and a résumé of the history of the war, said: "We may allow ourselves a brief period of rejoicing. But let us not forget for a moment the toils and efforts that lie ahead. JAPAN, with all their treachery and greed, remains unsubdued."

Mr. TRUMAN struck the same note. "Our victory is but half won," he said. In proclaiming victory in Europe, he said: "I only wish that FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT had lived to witness it."

King GEORGE spoke at 9 o'clock: "Today we give thanks to Almighty God for a great deliverance. I ask you to join with me in the act of Thanksgiving."

EASTERN BASED ARMIES:

Marshall KONEV'S forces captured Dresden, last large German city remaining in German hands after a two-day battle. DRESDEN, a city of half a million, has for two centuries been noted as the center of art and culture. It was formally the capital of the kingdom of SAXONY.

An order of the day to YEREMENKO announced the capture of the important rail and road junction of OLOMOUC. It was the largest remaining German stronghold in MORAVIA.

Another order of the day to MALINOVSKY announced the capture of the Austrian cities of HOLLAPRUNN and STACKERNEU and of two large towns in CZECHOSLOVAKIA NW of BRNO.

Marshall TITO'S forces have liberated ZAGREB, capital of CROATIA.

FAR EASTERN FRONT:

36,000 Japanese have been killed on OKINAWA since April 1. In the same period 2000 Americans have been killed and 11,000 wounded. Many Japanese batteries and other installations were knocked out in the naval bombardment of yesterday and American troops have since captured a village overlooking NAHE, the capital of the island.

Australian and Dutch troops on TARAKAN just off BORNEO have advanced to within a mile and a half of the island's E coast.

Bitter fighting is still in progress in LUZON and MINDANAO.

In BURMA Fourteenth Army troops have linked up 27 miles N of RANGOON and are closing in on the remnants of the Japanese 16th and 33rd Armies.

In HUNAU province of CHINA the Japanese are still on the offensive and have pushed to within 55 miles of an important American airbase.

Super fortresses made their $18\,\mathrm{th}$ attack on the Japanese home island of KYUSHU.

MISCELLANEOUS:

At last reports CZECH Patriots controlled most of PRAGUE, but, as the CZECH radio put it, the German troops were having "their last wild fling" and were "behaving like devils." Some units had surrendered, but others fired on a hospital housing their own wounded and used women and children as screens for their tanks.

Representatives of the Scottish Command arrived in NORWAY to receive the surrender of the German forces there.

In his broadcast to the German people announcing the unconditional surrender, DOENITZ said: "We must face the facts squarely. The foundations on which the German Reich was built have collapsed. The connection between state and party no longer exists."

The German High Command, noting that in some sectors the British had banned the use of the Nazi salute by PWs, ordered all German forces to use the military salute, and broadcast instructions as to how it should be done.

King LEOPOLD of BELGIUM and his family have been rescued.

Dr. SCHAGHT, Hitler's finance minister in the early days of the Nazi regime but later imprisoned by him, was liberated from a camp in ITALY. He told reporters that the Germans will follow any lead which gives them food and order."

A late bulletin announced that the Germans in PRAGUE had surrendered. DEGRELLE, Belgium Fascist leader has been arrested in SPAIN.

HENRY M. MURRAY, 1st Lt. Infantry, Public Relations, XII Corps.

It was hard to believe. And to most Americans there was a strange quality to the feeling they experienced. It was so lacking in the exultant thrill of victory we had all been led to expect. In the little Bavarian hill town of Grafenau, where the Corps CP had moved on 3 May, the news was received with the same somewhat numb reaction. Perhaps the quality can best be conveyed by two eloquent passages from the history of the 101st Evacuation Hospital. It was, after all, in such hospitals that the ultimate payoff of the fighting was most clearly understood. The first quotation had been written many months before the conclusion of the war, by an anonymous nurse of the "101st Evac":

"Nights in the hospital were long and grim. ... For the most part you don't think or wonder or try to reason beyond the moment. ... But sometimes at night there is a lull when you sink onto a blanket-covered box beside a hissing gasoline LA lantern and just listen, and it all comes over you with a rush. ... Strange thoughts in an unnatural setting as you hear the breathing of wounded men, like a weird symphony in the darkness. ... Noises, great and small ... rain hurling against canvas ... moaning winds and the splash of muddy boots ... a sudden cry, breaking the stillness like a trumpet ... distant, thunderous drums that shake the earth, reverberating The patients are restless – you quiet them with words. They answer in low-pitched voices; whispers tense with pain and anxiety that wander, sometimes clear, sometimes faint; but you listen, nor try to check their course

"A few precious moments come with midnight chow, when tense, weary doctors, nurses, technicians, ward men gather. The strain is eased; perhaps talking and is laughter is immoderate – it braces them from the 'graveyard shift'. ... The tent is brightly lit, warm and pleasant with the smell of strong coffee and hot food. You wipe the rain off the top of your steel helmet and perch on it, balancing the mess kit in the way that has become second nature; or perhaps you gather around a table. There is a rustling of tent flaps as another figure laboriously crawls through, glistening from the wet, fixing the 'blackout' behind him. Perhaps it's a surgeon who has just left a shattered brain case in 'OR' or maybe the guard just relieved from his post (if so, he will beat his hands together and exclaim, 'That was the longest two hours I ever spent!') Or it may be a driver in from a long convoy moving another hospital. ... it is occasions like these, when things seem clearly and easily defined – when everyone, great or small, is working toward the same end, and those guys on litters become more personal and more

individual, and how wonderful and how hoped-for is the time when this damn war comes to its inevitable ended. ..."

The second passage tells how the news of VE-Day was received in the same hospital:

"No one seemed very much surprised, but there was a happy feeling inside, and a relief that you couldn't describe. It had been stored up over those days of basic training and maneuvers in those tense days in England while the whole world waited for D-Day, and the long hard-font campaigns. ... Yes, the big job in Europe was done. There would be no more battle casualties, no more darkened ambulances grinding to a stop at Admission with their silent broken men on litters. Hostilities had ceased."

* The exact location of these restraining lines may be of interest to somebody's grandchildren. Says Third Army After Action Report for 6 May 45: "XII Corps (5th, 26th and 90th Infantry Divisions, 4th and 11th Armored Divisions and supporting troops) was to advance northeast to the general line of Pilsen -- Ceske Budejovice (Budweis), clear all enemy in its zone and be prepared to continue the advance to the east. The Corps was to continue the advance east in the Danube Valley to the railroad running from (W038827) to Ceske Budejovice (Budweis), sending only reconnaissance east of this line."

** "At the hour designated for execution of the cease-fire order," according to the Corps After Action Report for 9 May 45, "XII Corps units were disposed from left to right on the Corps front as follows: The 2nd Cavalry Squadron was screening to the east of Klatozy from Stibrin through Ujezd to Planice. The 359th Infantry, 90th Infantry Division occupied positions along the road running southeast from Klatovy, the 1st Battalion between Mochtin to Bystre; the 2nd Battalion from Cihan to Planicka; the 3rd Battalion to the rear was in position between Kneziceto and Besny. In the 357th Infantry, the 1st Battalion Zapiekov to Stribrne Hory; the 2nd Battalion from Hradesice Southeast to Rabi. The 358th Infantry, 2nd Battalion from Otava River, east to wiska. In the 4th Armored Division CCB was assembled between Kasejovice-Lnare and Kodov. CCA was between Katovice and Strakonice. The 25th Cavalry Squadron screened between Drakonice to Dub. In 5th Infantry Division, 10th Infantry, the 2nd and 3rd Battalions were in Vimperk, the 1st Battalion between Sklare and Stadtagger. The 2nd Infantry, 2nd Battalion was in Milesice, 3rd Battalion and 1st Battalion in Volary. In the 11th Infantry, the 3rd Battalion was in Ferchanhaid; the 1st Battalion, Knizeci Plane; the 2nd Battalion, Horsvette Hory. The 42nd Cavalry Squadron extended from Haslach to Finsterneu to Vierhauser. In the 26th Infantry Division: the 101st Infantry, 2nd Battalion was in Grafenau as Corps security guard; the 1st Battalion was between Cerna Hurka and Radslav; the 3rd Battalion was from Senava to Nom Manava. In the 104th Infantry, the 2nd Battalion was in Kramolin; the 3rd Battalion in Bohdalovice; the 1st Battalion from Ostrov to Kozinec. The 328th Infantry was disposed with the 3rd Battalion from Nahoran to Velence; the 2nd Battalion from Suttanc to Seify; the 1st Battalion at Hor Dvorist. The 11th Armored Division was located with CCA in the vicinity of Ottenshlag, CCR at Zwettl, and CCB at Gallneukirchen." This is the last entry for the European War in the daily narrative of the report.

VE-DAY: THE MEN WHO BROKE THE WEHRMACHT



Men of the XII Corps units got the news of VE-day scattered all over southeastern Germany, in Czechoslovakia, and Austria, and by all types of communication. Here T/5 John H. Kuclra with Supply Service Company Headquarters 90th Infantry Division listens to a Signal Corps radio receiver in Susice Czechoslovakia. (1) The story told on 8 May 45 was that the Americans shown on the page, and thousands like them in the armies of the United Nations had broken the criminal pride of the Nazi government of Germany, once and for all: (1) T/5 Ernest Clayton. (2) Lt Paul F. Trader. (4) Pvt William L. Siler. (5) Pvt Frank D. Washington. (After being freed by his own unit, 358th Infantry Regiment, 90th Infantry Division from a German slave labor camp). (6) T/4 Arthur Brown of L Company, 101st Infantry Regiment, 26th Infantry Division. (7)Cpl Mike Ranicin driver for Commanding General 4th Armored Division. (8) Pfc Leroy R. Briggs with 820th Military Police Company at Passau. (9) Pvt Wallace F. Burket, bazooka man with Company C, 318th Infantry Regiment, 80th Infantry Division is reunited with his brother, who had long been a prisoner of the Germans, in Branau, Austria. 9 May. (10) T/5 Willie E. Sillmore of the 1367th Dump Truck Battalion, 1134th Engineer Group at Passau.

XII CORPS RECREATIONAL COMMAND: SET UP TO BE HOST TO REGENSBURG VISITORS



(1) Walking by the sign design ating their headquarters as host for XII Copps' visitors, are Lt Col Norman K. Williams, Comma nding Officer and Capt William F. Bolen, executive of the command, Summer 1945, at Regensburg, Bavaria. (2) Three members of XII Corps who operate the enlisted men's club at the Corps Recreational Command are: Pfc Ray J. Smith; T/4 Julius C. Allbritton; Pfc Willie C. Ellis; the first and last are with the 456th Anti Aircraft Artillery (Automatic Weapons) Battalion: Allbritton is with the 90th Infantry Division. (3) GI's crowd around entrance to XII Corps Transient Billets in Regensburg, at which personnel from all commands may stay. (4) Transient mess serves as many as 1000 troops a day, and does it to music: Cpl William C. West of 456th AAA Battalion; Pfc Hugo Trinciente with Headquarters Company, XII Corps; and Cpl William Waddell of 456th AAA Battalion. (5) "Jockey Club" serves coffee, doughnuts, and beer to drivers awaiting assignment: men who maintain the club are: T/4 William P. Hyde, T/5 Herbert Proctor, and Pvt Joseph Bivona, all members of the 154th Anti Aircraft Artillery Battalion.