Arthur C. Brown

Headquarters Battery
589th Field Artillery Battalion
106th Division
Stalag 12-A

MY LONGEST WEEK

PREFACE

This epistle Is not intended to be a historical journal. I do not propose the geographical and chronological presentation of events to be precisely accurate. However it is a true story.

I am compelled to Set down my recbllect1onif~r my own gratification. Although my experiences were not unusual for war time, the mobility and opportunity for observation afforded me as a unit commander, leant me considerable perspective. I feel that my account will invoke the curiosity of those interested in history and war

In 1983 the Ardennes part of Belgium where this action took place is not greatly different than it was 39 years ago when I was last there. The rugged terrain dropping steeply from hills to stream filled valleys is sparsely settled; small villages cling to the side of slopes. The Impression is that it will always be so. Much of what I see today along with memories shared between old buddies sheds light on the events of 1944. PARKERS CROSSROADS, or Baraque-de-Fraiture as it is officially named in Belgium was the site of a unique action within The Battle of the Bulge. I was the senior able-bodied officer at the crossroads on December 23, 1944, when we fell to overwhelming odds.

I was in command of B Battery, 589th Field Artillery.

PREPARATION FOR BATTLE

In 1941, I was finishing my second year after college with the B.F. Goodrich Company, when the winds of war were getting stronger. There was less talk about the war in Europe in Akron, Ohio, where I worked than I presume was heard on the east coast I was getting bored with the depression and the big company life on poverty wages.

The draft was coming anyway and the change sounded exciting; so like many an unmarried man of 23, I signed up for the army.

I entered the service from Bethel, Conn. where my parents had a county place. From there I went to Fort Devins, Mass. for assignment to a training post Several things happened to me immediately that gave a taste of things to come.

In the fall of 1941 when I entered the army service, Pearl Harbor had not yet been attacked. The peace time soldiers were still in control. Duke University and my white collar associates at the B.F. Goodrich Company had not exactly prepared me to live in an environment where the normal mode of expression was with four letter or one syllable words. The knife fights at the local Pub on Saturday night were also not in keeping with my previous experiences. The other novelty to which I must rapidly accustom myself was the caste system between officers and men.

At my first post of duty I encountered two officers with whom my acquaintance was more than passing. These encounters helped me realize that things had not changed as much as I was thinking. First Lt Ed Coon, a high school fraternity brother spotted me and came over with a warm renewal of our friendship.

This made me feel better about myself and that the world of yesterday had not completely ended. Ed was one and the same as the famous All Southern Conference tackle from North Carolina State, "Ty-Coon". The other incident occurred when I found out that my first cousin Courtney Brown was at Fort Devins with his regiment, of which he was the Colonel commanding. He sent for me to come over and partake of the First Division officers mess. These two incidents of crossing the class boundary were not to be repeated again until I myself became an officer, but they helped me over a rough spot

At Fort Bragg, North Carolina where 'they sent me for 13 weeks of basic training, the making of a soldier such as I was began. We trained for duty In the artillery on obsolete French 75's and equally obsolete British Enfield rifles. But the basics were there to use when we were put on 105 mm howitzers and issued modem Garand M-1 rifles and carbines.

While in basic training two things happened of some significance. They made me a "jawbone" sergeant, which Is to say that I was given a temporary non-commission rank. The other was that I applied for and was accepted for Officer Candidates School. Now the latter was not all that great an accomplishment as there was a pressing need for officers and a college degree made one an automatic candidate.

After the 13 week training cycle at Fort Bragg, it was necessary for me to wait for

several months before the next class for officer candidates was to start at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. To fill in the time I applied for and got the job as a battery carpenter at Fort Bragg. The main thing that was needed was more space to sleep trainees; so my mornings were occupied with double decking bunks in the barracks. The afternoons were mainly occupied with catching up on sack' time in an empty barracks while the new trainees were out on the drill field. This luxury was afforded me, as I did not have a regular schedule and I found out that no one was checking up on me. I have often wondered how the war was won given such dedication and industry!

Officer Candidate School (OCS) at Fort Sill was where the real action. began The training schedule was very rigorous to say the least; surely this is where the expression 'bone tired was created. The mathematics of artillery fire direction was fun for me, while field stripping a howitzer was easier for some guy that had more experience in mechanics than myself. At any rate, those of us who succeeded in graduating learned a lot in a short time but Pearl Harbor was behind us at this time and there was a real incentive to "move it".

Unlike the unpopular wars to come such as Vietnam and Korea, there was a great ground swell of patriotism felt in World War II. There were a few conscientious objectors, but by and large the whole country tried hard to do their part.

My first post of duty as a new Second Lieutenant was Camp Forrest, Tenn. The first two incidents that come to mind at this assignment taught me valuable lessons that would later stand me in good stead. One day my commanding officer directed me to go to the battery garage and see that the trucks were cleaned up.. I dutifully went and told the Sergeant to have the men dean the vehicles, and my job being completed left. Sometime later the Colonel who had checked up on the job and found it still undone asked me if I had followed his order. I said 'yes sir' thinking incorrectly that giving an order was all that was necessary to accomplish any given task. After a proper 'lecture' by this West Pointer, in which he accepted my error as an honest mistake instead of a lie, I learned the importance of inspection of results. The other incident had to do with 'observed' gunfire. A target was assigned to me upon which I was to direct the fire of a battery. When you are sweeping barren terrain at distance of several miles with field glasses, everything begins to look alike At this time I had not had sufficient practice to recognize this danger My fire was quickly and jubilantly paced on the target My joy was soon squashed when my Colonel again had an opportunity to increase my knowledge of target identification in no uncertain terms.

Later on it turned out that I became a 'good shot'. My battery was selected, with myself directing fire, to give a demonstration of American Artillery proficiency for Assistant Secretary of War Patterson at Camp Atterbury, Indiana.

Orders and change orders characterized the making of an armed force In wartime. An interesting example occurred at Camp Forest in which I became heavily involved. The powers that were in Washington in 1942 decided to 'motorize' the Eightieth Division. The tables of organization called for a Calvary squadron as part of such a divisional arrangement.

There were no Calvary officers trained and available to us, so artillery and other officers were selected to become instant Calvary officers. It fell my lot to not only be so selected, but assigned to become the commanding officer of the Light Tank Company

this Squadron. At 0600 hours the next day I found myself on the other side of the post with approximately 100 men lined up in front of me, my first command.

First there was the task of providing lunch at noon that day. On call several men stepped forward who were Interested In or experienced in cooking. Fortunately one was a sergeant.. .Would you believe that they put out a noon day meal of some consequence. Yankee ingenuity prevailed again as it would many times in winning the war.

The next task after the rest of the necessary housekeeping details had been tended Io, was the drawing of light tanks from the ordnance. Here again, on call some mechanically minded men were found and I was soon enjoying my first ride in a track laying vehicle. After learning the art of starting one of these monsters with a blank shotgun shell; I decided to vislt my fellow officers of the previous week in the artillery area. In those days we dressed in our pink dress uniforms on Sundays, which day it was. It wasn't long before we were off through the woods running over small trees and having a thrilling ride. All at once a swampy pond appeared in my path and without much thought I decided to go through this small pond. I hit the throttle and we ploughed into the muddy water which cascaded down through the open turret of the tank covering our dress uniforms with the dirty substance. This was the last time any one agreed to joy ride with me in a tank. Anyway, in six weeks the order to motorize was rescinded and the tanks were returned to ordinance and I went back to learning the art of an artilleryman.

At Fort Jackson, South Carolina, I was given command of Headquarters Battery, 589th Field Artillery Battalion, 106th Division. In this capacity you doubled as Communications Officer of the battalion. The latter was not a job to my liking, as you were on the Colonel's staff and too dose for much independent action. Some wise superior detected this misfit, and had me transferred as commander of the center firing battery. This assignment was a lucky break for me, as the action was much to my wishes and aptitude.

Here on the scorched sands of Columbia, S.C. I found my true love. Vallie Vance Anderson and I were married on August 7, 1943. After only a short time together she was transferred to Fort Storey, Virginia, as a First Lieutenant in the Medical Dept., Physical Therapist. Shortly after that my outfit was ordered on the Tennessee maneuvers in the dead of winter where a candle inside a pup tent was a luxury. From Tenn., we were sent to Camp Atterbury, Indiana, for final training for battle.

In the fall of 1944, when the weather was suitably foul outdoors, orders came to leave Camp Atterbury, Indiana, and embark for England, destination the European Theater of Action. The discomfort of the journey by boat to Europe across the icy Atlantic Ocean, complete with German submarine escort, did not lessen upon disembarkation at Glouster, England. Here during the final flthng out for action the only ironic delusion of warmth to combat the icy stone barracks was three wool blankets and an open fireplace (the latter of lithe real value for heat).

With new and unfamiliar ordinance, and over half the men untrained, and none with any battle experience, we headed into the English Channel. Our commanders proceeded to leave us at anchor (on the hook as they say in the navy) for three days in a typical channel storm. The LST that carried us will capsize at more than 35 degrees roll, but no need to worry as we were only doing 34. To alleviate the boredom while at sea, I

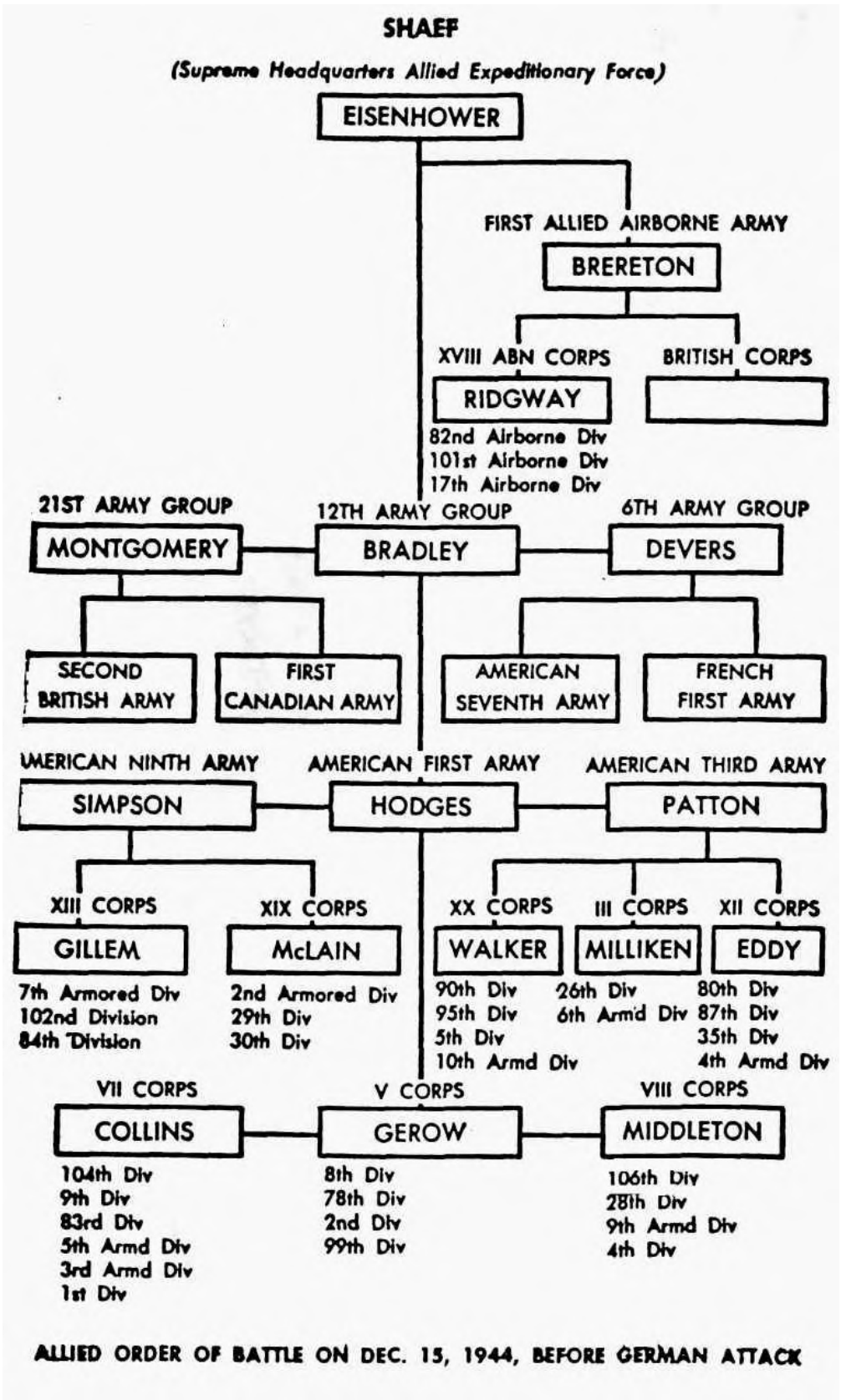
got out the newly issued barber kit. The situation afforded some merriment trying to learn to cut each others' hair on a rocking boat. At Rouen we finally disembarked to accept our first accommodation on the continent. We were left standing all night in the cold rain. To make matters worse, our rubber boots had not yet caught up with us.

My commander gave me and the other battery commanders a strip map with which to lead our truck convoys across France. However at one point I missed a turn and ended up several miles off the track. At this time we had also run out of MP's to ask directions, and I had the feeling that we might miss the war. After retracing our route with some difficulty, the trucks got back on course.

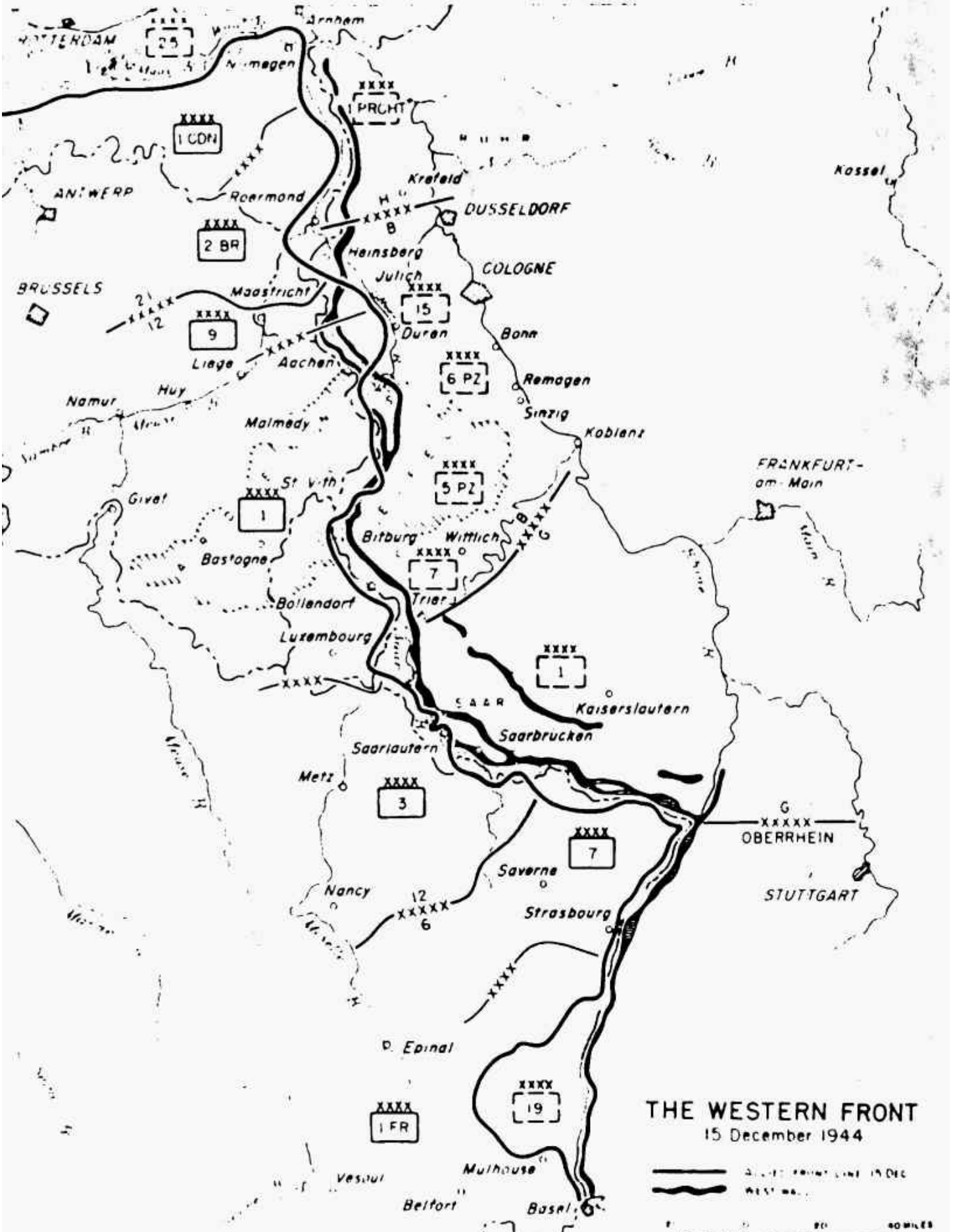
Our mission was to replace the Second Division 'gun for gun in the line of battle. This sector in the Ardennes of Belgium was supposed to be a quiet sector, ideal for training green troops. Little did we know that we had been placed dead center in what was to be one of the greatest pitched battles of all times.

The next few days were used in shaking down in snow up to our behinds. The Second Division whom we had now replaced took their homemade stoves out of the dugouts, and carried them off to their new positions. C'est Ia guerre. Our 106th boys were indebted to the men of the Second for some tips that they gave us on how to run a war. As an example, these veterans told us that you had to split your eight man gun crew into two parts. This maneuver allowed half of the men to rest while the other half manned the guns, thus permitting continuous service of the 'pieces' 24 hours a day. In training the situation of continuous action never occurred, and the training manuals did not bring up the technique. The manuals were probably written by people who also had had no combat experience.

From December 1 to 15, we proceeded to dig and settle in to fixed positions. Our infantry occupied the German Siegfried Line. As this fortification naturally faced away from Germany our troops had to face the wrong way for proper protection. As the 589th Field Artillery was on the extreme left of two Infantry Divisions with only a cavalry screen protecting our left flank, our outfit was extremely vulnerable. Our front was Hitler's choice and Eisenhower's Calculated Risk. We were untried troops, poorly trained, and with an impossible defensive position.



ALLIED ORDER OF BATTLE ON DEC. 15, 1944, BEFORE GERMAN ATTACK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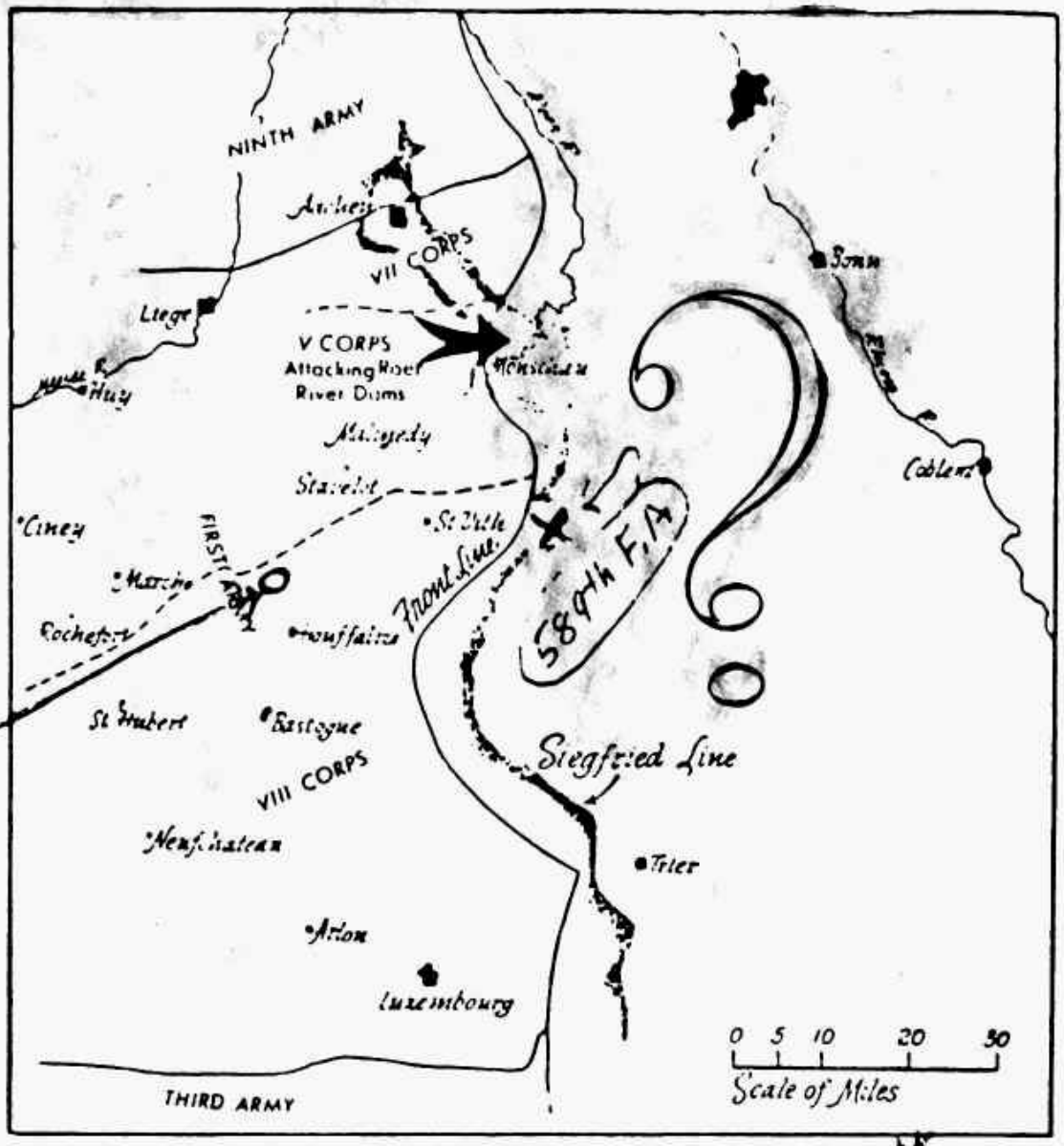
THE WESTERN FRONT
15 December 1944



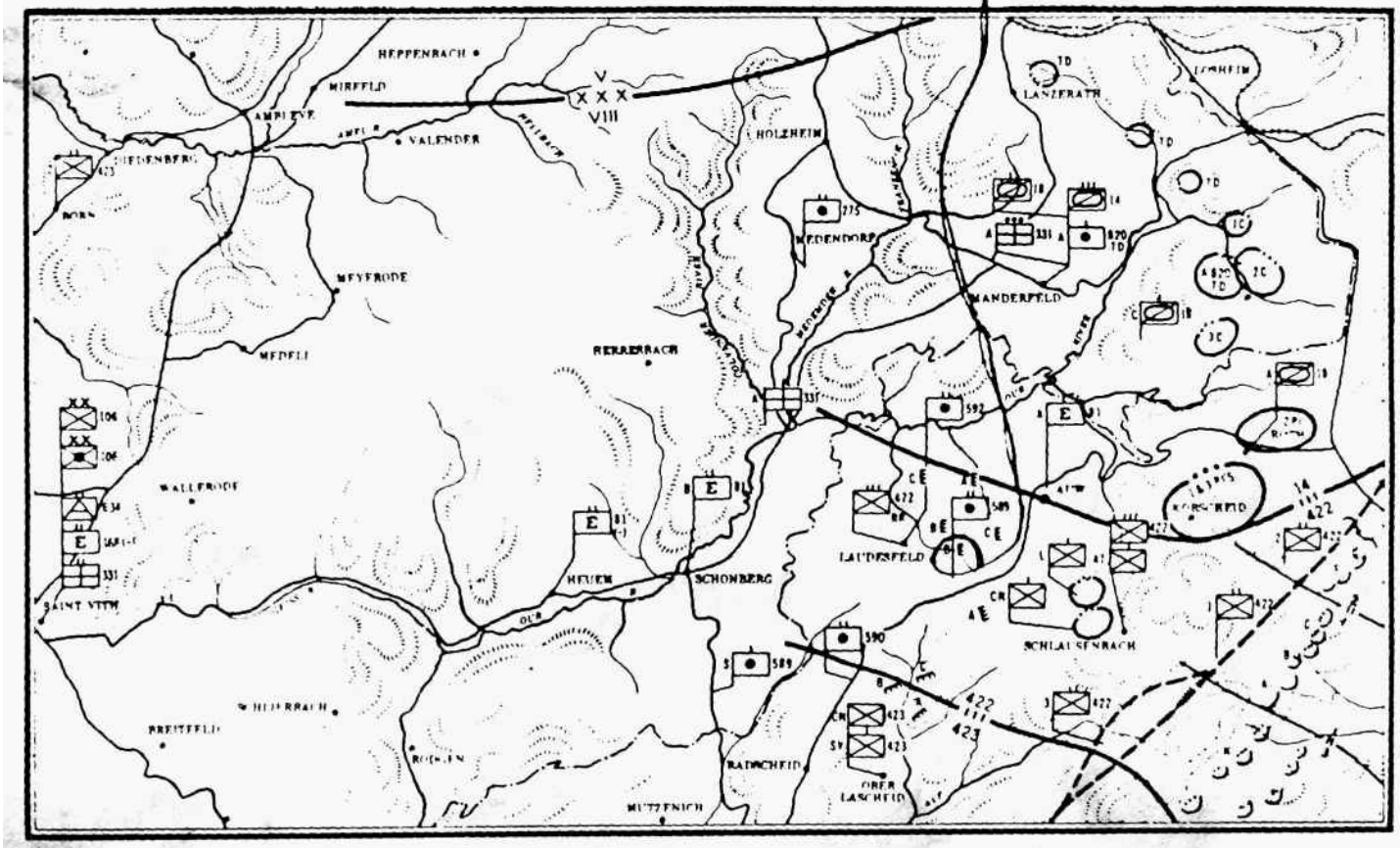
Parkers Crossroads

30 Miles Back From Original LINE

FIRST ARMY FRONT IN DECEMBER 16th before the attack

Middleton's defense line lay deep in the heart of the rolling wooded hills of eastern Belgium and Luxembourg, commonly called the Ardennes forests. Long known for its quaint charm, this famed vacation area, with alternate gorges and ridges interspersed by areas of gently rolling hills, is covered with large forests, and criss-crossed by a sparse network of roads generally following the valleys. Bordered on the east by the Our River and on the west by the majestic Meuse River, winding its way through a beautiful valley across half of western Europe, the Ardennes region has been visited by thousands upon thousands of pleasure-seeking vacationists. Its famed chateaus have

B Battery, 589th Field Artillery
Capt. A. C. Brown, commanding



Map 3: *The Losheim Gap. (Positions of the 14th Cavalry Group and 422d Infantry, 16 December 1944)*

First gun position of B battery, 589th F A On the road from Radsheid to Auw In 1944 snow covered the ground On May 28, 1983, I saw a patch of snow still remaining on this windswept ridge

German artillery was emplaced on a ridge behind Bleialf with observation into this spot. They shot at us as we supplied our batteries by this only route in, aptly named "Purple Heart Corner". Eventually an engineer "cut off" was constructed out of logs to avoid the danger.

In the Schnee Eifel. The command post of the 489th FA Battalion near Schlausenbach, 12 December 1944. Private Rudy Hirsch, Headquarters Battery, beside the gun.

DECEMBER 16. 1944. THE FIRST DAY

On December 16, before dawn, we were rudely awakened by an intensive enemy artillery and mortar preparation falling In and about our positions. THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE WAS ON.....Buzz bombs overhead on their way west added to the din of battle. Little did we know that we were directly in the center of hundreds of thousands of enemy troops, outnumbered six to one at concentration points.

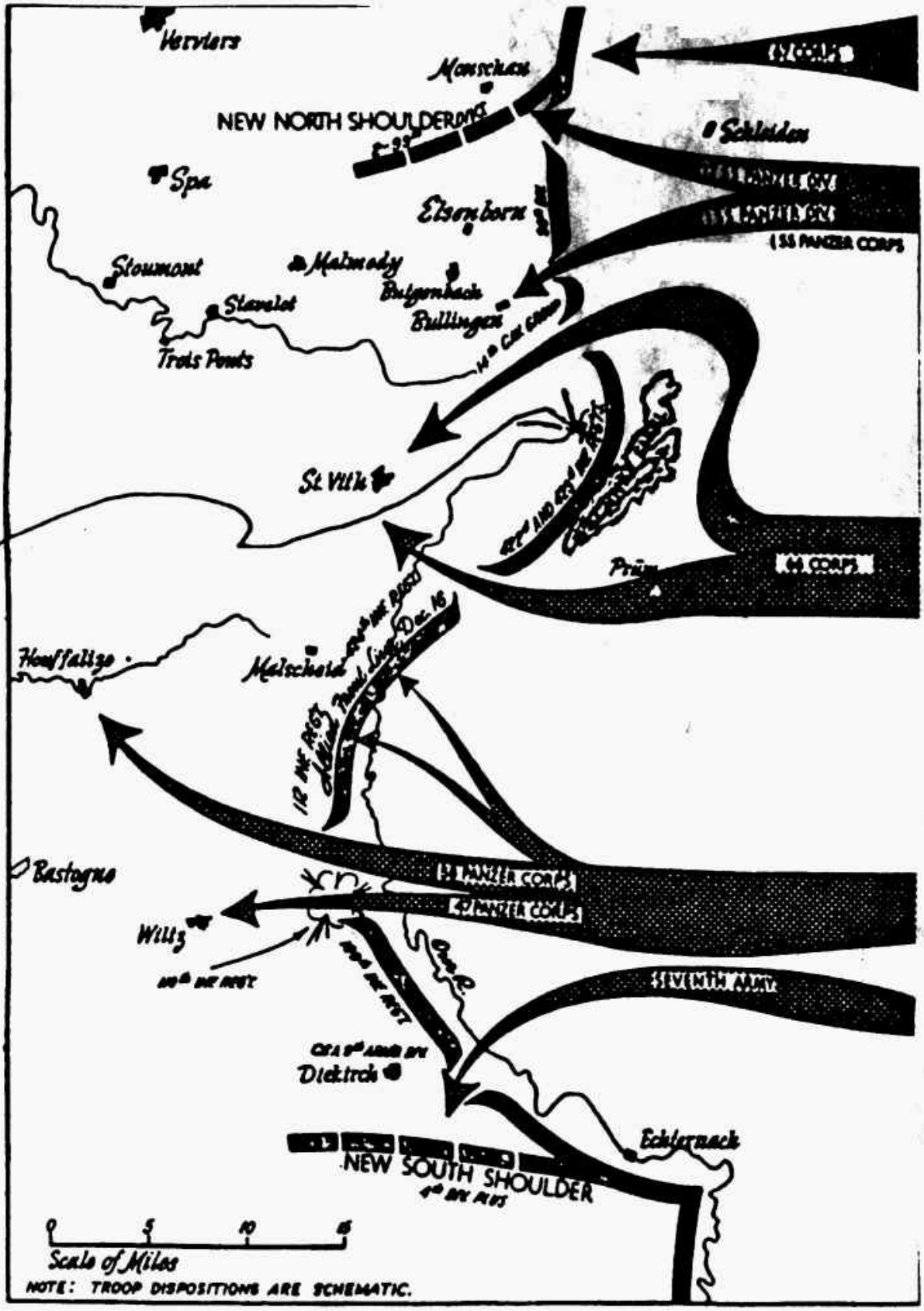
All day long we fired salvo after salvo until our guns boiled. Our Executive Officer, Ted Kiendl went out front of the battery to survey the situation. He was assisting In bring in our wounded. A German assault gun had the area in it's sights and was chopping up the wounded and dead with solid shot for the shock effect As Ted brought in a wounded soldier to a log lookout post, a round of German 88 hit the shelter, spraying his face and shoulder with pieces of log. I remember him coming back to the battery dugout shouting that Nothing could live out there. He was bleeding profusely, and the blood got all over some of the letters that we had been censoring. Ted was badly wounded and had to be evacuated, fortunately before the Germans got behind us and cut off the escape routes.

Having confiscated a German burp gun from my forward observer, Lt Casabry. I went forward to reconnoiter. The situation was very serious. Enemy tanks followed by infantry were coming straight at our gun position down the road from Auw. The Germans were in behind our infantry, having infiltrated from the exposed left flank. Lt Eric Wood had succeeded to command of A Battery as Capt Menke was captured In the first German assault...Wood and his men saved the day by knocking out and driving back the initial assault of enemy armor upon which they could "direct lay" their guns.

As I remember, B Battery guns were defiladed and could not bear directly on the targets, although one history book had us sighting tanks down our barrels. At any rate the enemy did withdraw from the initial assault giving me a chance to go forward. I remember seeing the body of one of our men severed from his head.’ This was my first exposure to the stark reality of war. My feelings were strangely detached as if in unbelief.

We were ordered to displace that night as the positions were obviously untenable for artillerymen.. .The move was to take all night.

B Battery 589th Field Artillery
commanded by Capt. A. C. Brown



THE PENETRATION

his command post mortally wounded Lt. Col. Kent, commanding.

The enemy appeared to be digging in. A prisoner was bagged, carrying on him a copy of his battalion combat order. Descheneaux by this time, about 11:30 A.M. (the message was received at 12:25) queried Division to find out if they wanted "to hold or get group out of Auw."

Enemy cross fire from the rear now complicated the situation in the artillery area. Lt. Thomas J. Wright, Jr., Executive Officer of C Battery, 589th Field Artillery, pushed forward to an observation post of the 634th AAA Battalion where he could see Auw and the gathering tanks, and began adjusting fire. Lt. Leo J. Fromenko, the forward observer with the 422d, was also able to see the activity about Auw and began to harry the enemy there, using radio communication to the guns. Unfortunately, C Battery could not clear the mask to fire effectively, but both other batteries did.

Two bazooka teams from the 592d Field Artillery having reported to the 589th, Major Elliott Goldstein, Battalion Executive, took them up to reinforce the outpost near the crossroad where the Wascheid–Schlausenbach road cut the highway, where there was also a section of D Battery, 634th AAA Battalion.

There was no doubt in the artillerymen's minds now as to the seriousness of the situation. A tank thrust one mile and a half behind the infantry regimental command post and its installations, two and a half miles behind the front line units, would threaten the entire sector. If those Krauts could smash down the road towards Radscheid with any weight behind them the entire Schnee Eifel position was gone.

About 2:00 P.M. the enemy tanks—remember we last noted them pushing up the hill out of Auw—nosed into sight. Capt. George F. Huxel, assistant S-3, who had set up an observation post in the attic of the artillery communications building, first spotted them, but could not adjust on the lead vehicle, which now began to blaze at the outpost, the tank commander leaning out of his open turret.

The outpost took him on with small-arms and 40mm fire; the bazooka smacked the tank to immobility, then Battery A threw two direct hits on it. Scratch one tank. Huxel managed to put fire down from a C Battery howitzer on the second tank, and it, with its remaining companion, scuttled to cover. Once hull-down, one of the tanks now began

DECEMBER 17th. THE SECOND DAY

All night we toiled to get our guns out of the snow and mud and onto the road for the retreat to our new gun positions. With the use of our four wheel drive vehicles and their winches some progress was being made. However it was not until the tracked cats of the 592nd's 155 howitzers came over to help, that we were able to get the show on the road. A jeep slid off the access road into the gun position, and after several attempts to get it up, we finally abandoned it.

There was no time to tarry with the enemy building up In force and about to overrun us. It fell my lot to lead the battalion to the second gun position several miles to the rear. As enemy patrols were active in the area, I kept my 45 cal. pistol drawn. We made our way slowly down the road with the headlights blacked out. The fog was dense further impeding our visibility. As the parade started across the engineer cutoff log road German white phosphorus shells started falling around us. All four guns of my B battery and three guns from A battery got through. We pulled into the new gun positions about daybreak.

As the guns were being positioned by the gun sergeants, I exercised my executive privilege and started to unload my gear in small shack behind the guns. No sooner had I started to clean up and relax a little than machine gun fire was heard from the direction from which we had just arrived. That was the last that was to be seen by me of my footlocker and the good Zeiss field glasses that my father had given me the year before. All that came away from that position with me was the clothing and gear on my back, including GI field glasses and pistol.

The history books now reveal to me that the Germans were advancing toward us from Bleiaf on a road running roughly parallel to our retreat. Our gun position was just up the road from a fork where the two routes mentioned before joined. This is why the Germans appeared so quickly at the new gun position. I ordered my first sergeant and driver to take my jeep back to the point where we had turned into the gun position, and hold off the advancing enemy until we could get the men out and on the road to St. Vith. The quick decision to displace turned to be right for if we had not moved then the entire battery would have been cut off by the enemy that was moving in behind us from yet another route. Although the book states that Battalion gave us the order to move, I do not remember receiving any word at all from them but moved on my own initiative for the safety of my men. Those not schooled in the military must understand that artillerymen are ill equipped with automatic weapons, armored vehicles and trained in infantry assault tactics. Dead or captured artillerymen are of no use in fighting a war! With much spinning of wheels on the off-the-road terrain, the men just barely got our with their lives, let alone bring the guns that were hopelessly stuck in the snow and mud.

The last vehicle out of the second gun position waited for me on the road while I checked to make sure that all personnel were dear of the position. It was now obvious that the enemy was behind our Infantry In force and moving fast, there being little to stop them. Our 589th Field Artillery battalion was In direct support of the 422nd Infantry Regiment. History now confirms that the 422nd was bypassed on both sides.

When we set out for the village of Schonberg several miles to our rear we did not

realize the gravity of the situation. Although most of the trucks from A and B batteries got through this little town on their way back to St. Vith, by the time my truck got there the enemy was in the town and decided that no one else should pass. St. Vith represented a chance to regroup and fight again, as it was the site of the 106th Division forward headquarters, and way behind the original lines.

There was one straggler vehicle directly in front of me which I believe belonged to A Battery. This truck and our's did not make it through Schonberg. Herein lies an unbelievable episode, but it did happen.

As our truck came roaring down the hill into Schonberg, shell fire was falling in and about the Our river bridge across which we must go to get to St. Vith. I assumed that this was friendly fire falling far short of the mark because at this time I did not know the enemy occupied the town. As we approached the bridge some black US artillery men were running towards us and waving wildly. I thought that they were just excited at the shell fire and decided in an instant to accelerate through the town and run the gauntlet. I fired my forty-five pistol in the air so that they would clear the road. We turned the corner into the village and as we passed the first house close to the road, a German tank was pulling out of the alley alongside the house. The tank was covered with hay, and could have slipped in under cover of darkness and been thus camouflaged as a hay stack. At any rate I still had my pistol drawn, and emptied the clip into the gun ports of this tank at this time only about 30 feet away. This no doubt startled the German gunner and delayed him from getting off a round from his tank gun until our vehicle was past him. His gun blast was so close that the canvas on the back of our truck bellied in.

As I looked up from this first scrape, I saw a truck on the road ahead of us that I believed was the last vehicle from A Battery containing Eric Wood. Just as we came in sight the vehicle was struck by a round from a German tank returning to Schoenberg on the road from St. Vith. I ordered the driver to stop the truck and we all jumped out into the roadside ditch. As we scattered, I ran up the hill behind a house with gunfire from small arms falling all around, and dove into a clump of bushes. After waiting for awhile, it was plain that no one was tracking me. Using some brush as camouflage, I slowly inched my way up the hilt to the cover of some woods. In the woods I found an abandoned American tent containing some dry clothing. At this point I put on two sets of long johns and other suitable gear for the occasion. My clothing had become drenched as I had been wallowing in the snow for some time.

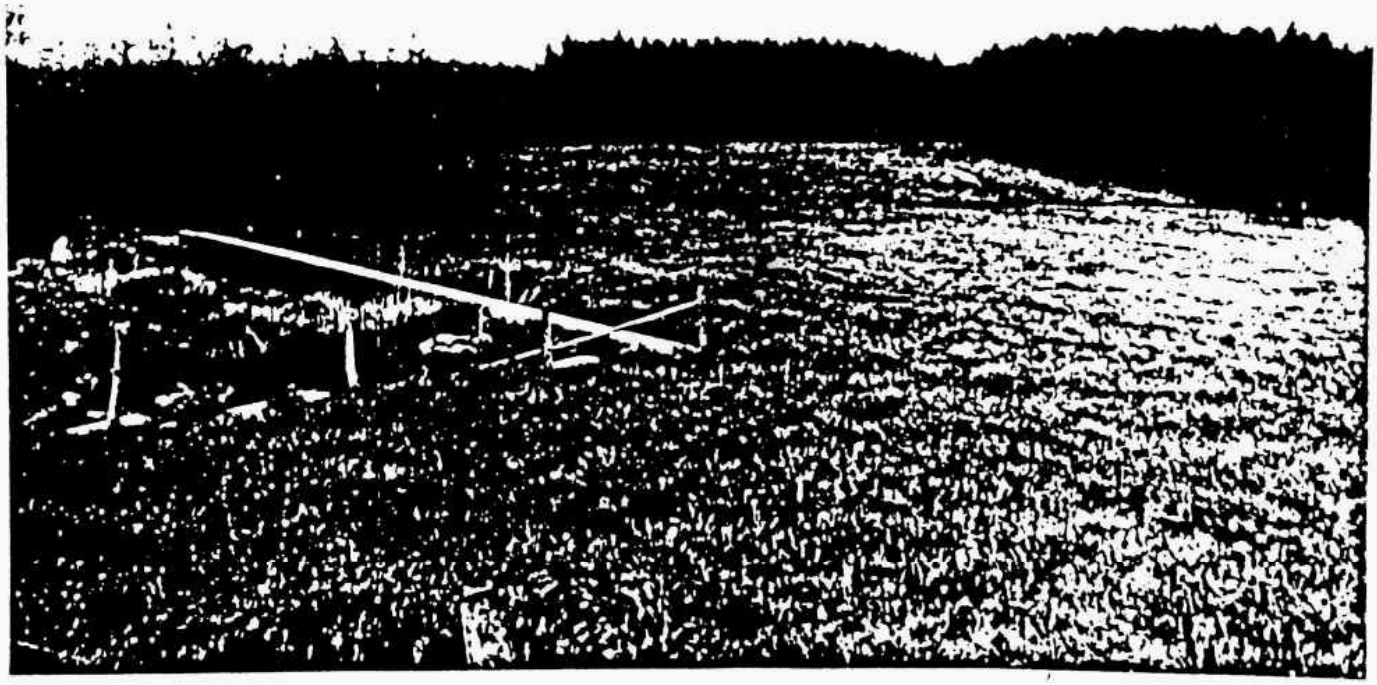
It was about mid morning on the December 17th when I headed away from Schoenberg and northwest towards what I hoped would be more friendly terrain. Shortly my path led me to a wooded lane in which a German soldier was standing with his back to me. He was at a distance of abut 50 feet, a chancy shot with forty-five automatic pistol. Besides I did not have the stomach for killing another human, one on one. As the soldier continued to wave down the lane to a distant companion, and was unaware of my presence, I took the lines of least resistance and backed off and around. Besides, I was ill equipped to take on the enemy that were obviously all around me, a lone soldier in

unknown territory.

Lt. Eric Wood from our A battery was apparently in this same area about the same time and was of a different mind than myself. According to accounts, Eric stayed and conducted a guerrilla war on the enemy, disrupting their supply lines and disposing of a number of enemy soldiers.

From the brush in the lane, I headed out in the dense woods and walked for about four hours. At the end of this time the surroundings looked strangely familiar. I had in fact circled and come right back to my starting point. Such a maneuver is fairly common in these circumstances, but when it happens to you it is a queer sensation. I set out again determined not to repeat such performance. That night was spent on a pile of brush to get off the cold wet ground. Artillery shells were falling around me all night long, not speaking very well for the marksmanship of whoever was doing the firing as there did not seem to be any targets in the area (unless you could so classify me). Being somewhat protected from the cold by a long coat, I slept fitfully until dawn.

Second gun position of B Battery. On the road south of Schoneberg just inside Belgium on the German border. This position was attacked by German armor almost immediately after going into place. The mud and snow was so bad that the prime movers could barely get traction for themselves, let alone pull the pieces out, which howitzers were abandoned.



The Germans attack up this road towards our second gun position. Service Battery, 589th F.A. was headquartered in this building and they engaged the enemy slowing his advance and thus allowing us to displace.

past him Lt. Wood swung himself into the back—the last man out.

As they rolled for Schönberg, Capt. Arthur C. Brown, commanding B Battery, with Lts. Thomas J. Wright (C Battery) and Euler and the B Battery party, swung in behind them. They had remained in their position to see that all personnel had gotten out (B Battery's pieces were abandoned).

Scannapico's keen eye caught the vision of an enemy tank ahead of them, bulking in the main street as they roared toward it down the steep hill into Schönberg. Wood shouted they would barge through and Kroll's foot pressed down. A hundred feet from the tank he slammed the brake at Wood's order. The officer and the section piled out, Pfc. Campagna with bazooka, the rest with carbines.

They blazed at the tank and it scuttled crab-like away, across the bridge and disappeared toward St. Vith. Wood and his men jumped in their vehicles again, and the truck and piece bumped over the cobbles, across the bridge behind the tank, swung west on the opposite side of the river, while enemy small-arms fire rippled on all sides. Brown's B Battery party followed.

The tank had seemingly disappeared. Scannapico, and Campagna with his bazooka, ran ahead as Wood slowed the vehicle up, to find where it was hiding. They found it, they reported, backed into an alleyway on the right side of the street, where they couldn't bring their bazookas to play.

Again the truck rolled. As it reached the alley mouth Scannapico once again jumped off, fired his carbine point-blank up the alley and as the truck rolled by Campagna let fly from it with his bazooka. The tank remained silent. But Scannapico, running to catch up, was wounded, staggered, was hit a second time by small-arms fire, and killed.

The section picked up speed, cleared the village, seemed to be in the open. It came over a little rise to find a Kraut medium tank barring the road, some seventy-five yards ahead, its cannon and machine guns trained at the truck.

On Wood's command the brakes went on and all jumped for cover.

if a man couldn't run a yard without being shot to pieces. They were through.

But Eric Wood wasn't through. He dared the fire-swept field, ran unscathed into the woods to the north. The rest surrendered, together with the 333d Field Artillery people, an officer and seven men.

The B Battery party behind all this was caught in the streets of Schönberg. Capt. Brown and his men sought cover, but enemy riflemen opened up on them, burp guns sprayed them. Behind B Battery were about a hundred men of Service Battery, those who had gotten out from their fight and had been picked up by Lt. Wright, executive of C Battery. Burp guns sprayed the column and it disintegrated as the men sought cover. Many were captured; some got free. Of those captured, some sixty, including Wright and Capt. Brown, got away from their captors next day and made their way across country back into CCB, 9th Armored Division, lines to rejoin the 589th a few days later.

Incidentally, Lt. Wright had not been originally captured with the rest of C Battery because as battery executive he had been sent ahead of the battery to the new position.

It was nearly 10:00 o'clock that morning when the bedraggled 589th, its fire power now reduced from twelve guns to three (all that was left of Battery A) had shaken itself free from Schönberg. They had picked up the four operators of the forward switching central, who had stuck to their posts until shelled out. The column got into St. Vith that afternoon, where Service Battery, 590th Field Artillery Battalion, cut off from its own outfit—it had been driven from its billet at Heuem—was joined to it. And the 589th rolled to establish a roadblock to the north. As darkness fell the exhausted artillerymen were pulled into St. Vith to bivouac. Miles to the east, Eric Wood roamed the woods alone in the enemy's midst.

The 589th would seem, by this time, to have pretty much shot its bolt. As it turned out, like John Paul Jones it had "just begun to fight." For it was alerted by midnight, and got on the road in march order, the men dozing as best they could in the icy night, bound for an amazing

Coming into Schonberg from the second gun position on the way to St. Vith. Note the woods on the hill on the upper right, into which I was to escape.

Our truck roared over the Our River (above) and into Schonberg where the German tanks were laying in wait for us.

A German tank disguised as a haystack was waiting in this alley (now between rebuilt buildings). I fired at the tank's gun port with my 45 automatic pistol at a range of less than 50 feet. This action delayed a shot from the tank gun long enough to let us by a litt further.

A little way up the street a larger German tank waited in the middle of the street. We jumped out of the truck and raced up the hill on foot, small arms fire falling all about.

DECEMBER 18th. THE THIRD DAY

Up and moving by daybreak, I followed a northwest course which was away from the sound of the fiercest firing, and hopefully back to Allied lines. About mid-morning I arrived at Born, several miles northwest of Schonberg. Encamped there behind a house in the village were the cooks for the 423rd Infantry. As they were not aware of the situation, it fell my lot to tell them the bad news: namely that their buddies were engaging the Germans on the hills before Auw, from whence the enemy was building up a head of steam to attack in force, and further that the 2nd battalion of their 423rd was surrounded.

Arming ourselves with Ml Garand rifles, we prepared to set out to regain our lines. As there were Germans on the road in front of the house, we made our way undetected to the west end of the village. There we entered a house to seek directions of the householders. Fortunately the people were friendly, and sent us on our way with some food and a bottle of wine.

Dodging enemy fire, we made our way across country in the direction of Stavelot-Trois Point. Sometime before noon our path crossed a highway bordered by a river on our near side. I now believe the river to have been the Recht. The spot is approximately four miles due south of Malmedy, where at about the same time the German General Pieper was massacring a large group of our compatriots. After driving off a jeep load of German soldiers with rifle fire, our only course was to ford the icy river water chest high. The current was swift and we had to pull a shorter soldier across, cussing him to make him mad so he would not give up. As we made our way up the hill on the other side of the river, the enemy was back with mortars. We managed to escape without injury. However, as I looked back on the single file strung out in order to present a minimum target, it was evident that we had lost a few stragglers somewhere. We were faced with the prospect of spending the night outdoors in soaked clothing in freezing weather. I elected to head for a dense woods where we built fires to dry out and warm our bodies. The prospect of freezing seemed at the time far worse than the possibility of being captured by enemy attracted to the lights. That night a small plane circled over us for awhile... It would be interesting to know what that pilot thought about someone down there breaking blackout discipline with the battle raging all about.

DECEMBER 19th. THE FOURTH DAY

Again we were up and moving west at daylight. Breakfast consisted of a 0 ration made of concentrated chocolate. Looking down from a hilltop with my fleld glasses, I saw a German soldier standing in the road. By now that distinctive helmet worn by the enemy had become commonplace and easily identifiable. As he was blocking our way, we opened fire on him with the desired results. He rapidly departed. We moved quickly across the road, and recent map studies lead me to believe that this was one of Pieper’s men on the road between Stavelot and Trois Point.

As we skirted the village of Trois Point we come upon a Belgian farmhouse. When we had surrounded the building, a middle aged farmer emerged angrily brandishing a pitchfork. His action of course bordered on the comical, as he was surrounded by six or seven of us armed with rifles. My only guess for his actions was that he was fed up with battles raging back and forth across his ancestral farm. At any rate it was now easy for me to step forward and offer my hand in th universal symbol of friendship with the armament all on my side. It was to follow that this man and his family turned out to be real friends.

While we were inside the farmhouse having our first hot meal in several days, members of the family and neighbors were outside scouting out the enemy and determining where they were located. As we were in fact still behind enemy lines, our host advised us to spend the night in his hayloft. In the barn enjoying the warmth that only a hayloft can give, we spent a night of fitful sleep, listening to the Germans milling around in the barnyard outside. It now appears that we had been moving west parallel to Kampfruppe Peiper. He and his troops were moving into the Allied rear in an armored spearhead, and we were moving off the roads on foot. The Germans never did get much further west than this point where we spent that

last night behind their lines. However I had come approximately 25 miles to the rear from where our original position had been before the battle had started.

DECEMBER 20th. THE FIFTH DAY

Early in the morning our host farmer came for us at the barn. He agreed to lead us to the American lines. In gratitude I gave him my field glasses.

We set out single file, and abruptly came upon some German soldiers washing up at a nearby pond. They did not see us at first, as we hit the dirt in firing position. As soon as our presence was sensed by them, they ran off in the direction of their main force. Wishing to get back to our nearby lines without any further argument we quickly moved out without firing a shot.

After walking a mile or so across country, the Belgian farmer pointed to friendly lines, and carrying a white flag went in by himself to announce our arrival. The precaution of sending a single individual ahead was necessary as we were coming in from enemy territory and did not want to rely on our own soldiers mis-identifying us for Germans at that distance.

The American soldiers that received us back into our own lines immediately took us to Vielsalm at my request. This town was the rear headquarters of the 106th Division, and at this time was not in enemy hands. I quickly found the remnants of the 589th Field Artillery, refitted, and under orders from Major Parker headed out to Baraque-de-Fraiture. I declined the Major's offer to retire for Rest and Recuperation, as by this time I was mad at what was being done to our side and itching to get back in the fight, now having a few chips stacked on my side.

Being the only firing battery commander to make it out of the first gun position of December 17, my assignment was to take charge of the three A battery guns at what has now been named Parker's Crossroads. Our howitzers were trained down every road except to the northwest, which was then supposed to be the friendly rear. The unguarded road lead to Manhay, and it later turned out that this town was to be the scene of two battles. I took up position on the southwest corner with the road to the south leading to Houffalize, and the road to the southwest leading to Samree-Laroche. Now the words Baraque-de-Fraiture mean barracks in uncultivated countryside and believe me this countryside was bleak. Diagonally across from my station was located the Auberge-de-Carrefour (inn at the crossroads). Immediately before the action started M. & Mdme Lehaire were keeping the inn. They operated this public facility. A short distance down the road to Manhay was a ski slope that ran, down to the valley behind the inn. Although the snow was on the ground we did not have our skis with us and were otherwise engaged.

Majors Parker and Goldstein took up headquarters in some buildings along the road toward Regne-Vielsalm. The first attack came on December 20th, shortly after the guns had been emplaced, and this German attack came from the direction of Houffalize.

At this point I would like to give the reader an idea of the significance of Parker's Crossroads. The road from Houffalize-Bastogne going to Liege is an important highway. The Germans had assigned two divisions to attack along the axis of this road, with the

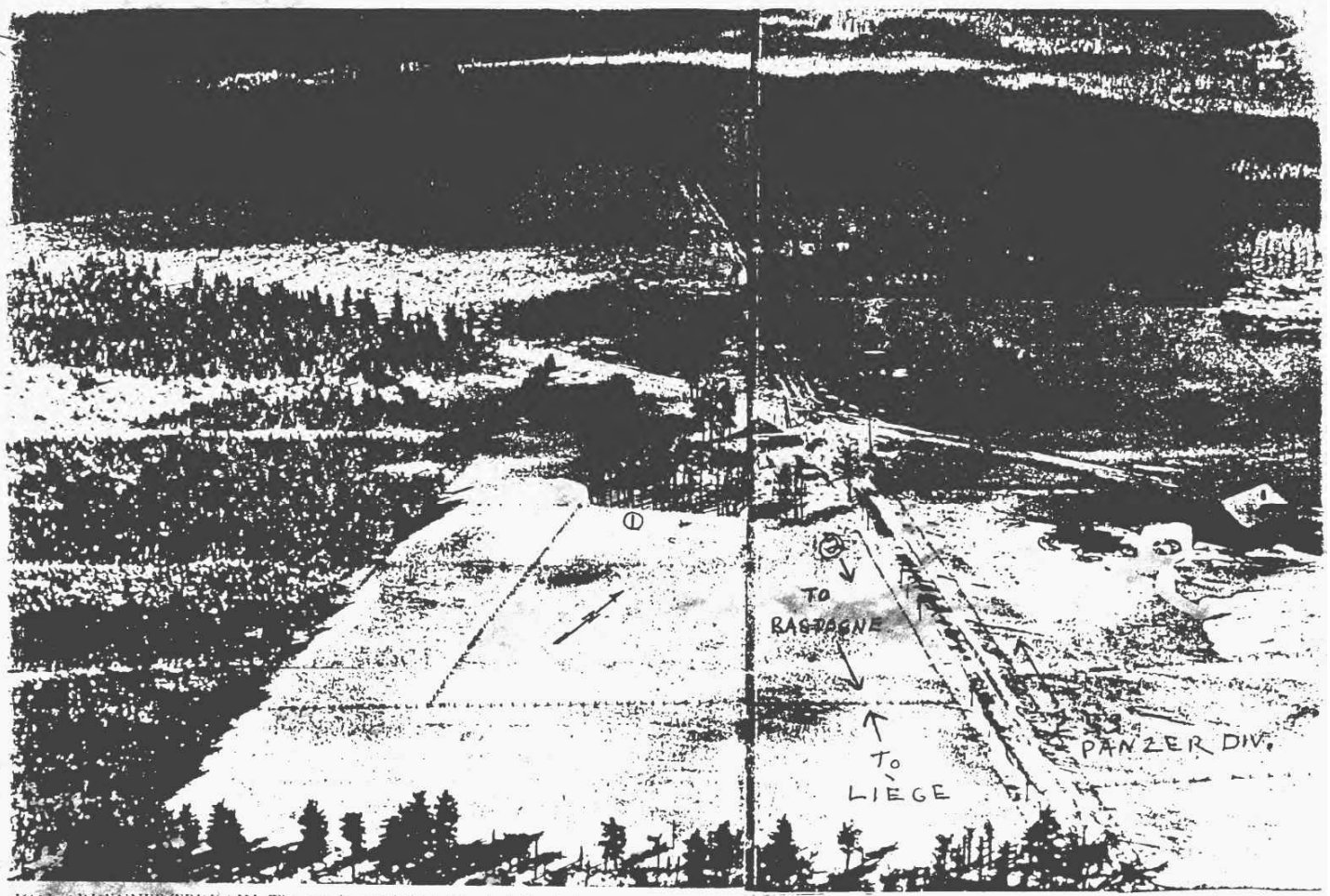
ultimate objective of joining up with their own troops to the north in a concerted effort to sweep behind the Allied rear all the way to Amsterdam. One of the German Divisions was the crack 2nd SS Panzer Division. Our several hundred men(110 from the 589th), were directly in the path of thousands Of Germans, and holding a road that they wanted very badly. With the mud and snow conditions off the highway, and the ruggedness of the country, the only way the enemy could move their armor (tanks etc.) was by road, and In particular the road that we were out In front defending.

The balance of the troops defending this-lonely piece of real estate came from remnants of other outfits that straggled by Fortuately some of the newcomers on our side had some fairly heavy armament such as half tracks with multiple fifty calibers, assault 105's, tanks, and the like. Eventually, Lt Woodruff arrived with a platoon from the 82nd Airborne, and had one or more 30 cal. machine guns on the comer with me.

The fog was dense, so much so that we were not able to get any air support for lack of visibility. But at the same time this lack of observation worked to our advantage as I am sure the enemy was having trouble seeing us in order to lay down accurate fire.

Major Parker was ordered to withdraw from this untenable position, but he delayed doing so because he probably Sensed the importance of holding up the enemy at this point. Further, he did not want to leave the people from other outfits there by themselves (he did not give me a vote!). It wasn't long before we reached the time of no return, as we became surrounded.

At this point I had had virtually no sleep for four nights, and I had three more of the same ahead of me. In addition, We had little food or ammunition, and the intense cold was enough to make the straightest soldier crumble in the night air. The inside of the unheated farmhouse where we were in residence (If you could call it that) was a luxury. In addition, after the first day, we were not able to evacuate our wounded However the medics did get Major Parker out when he was wouned[1] but Capt. Huxel who was with me lay Inside with a hole in his back

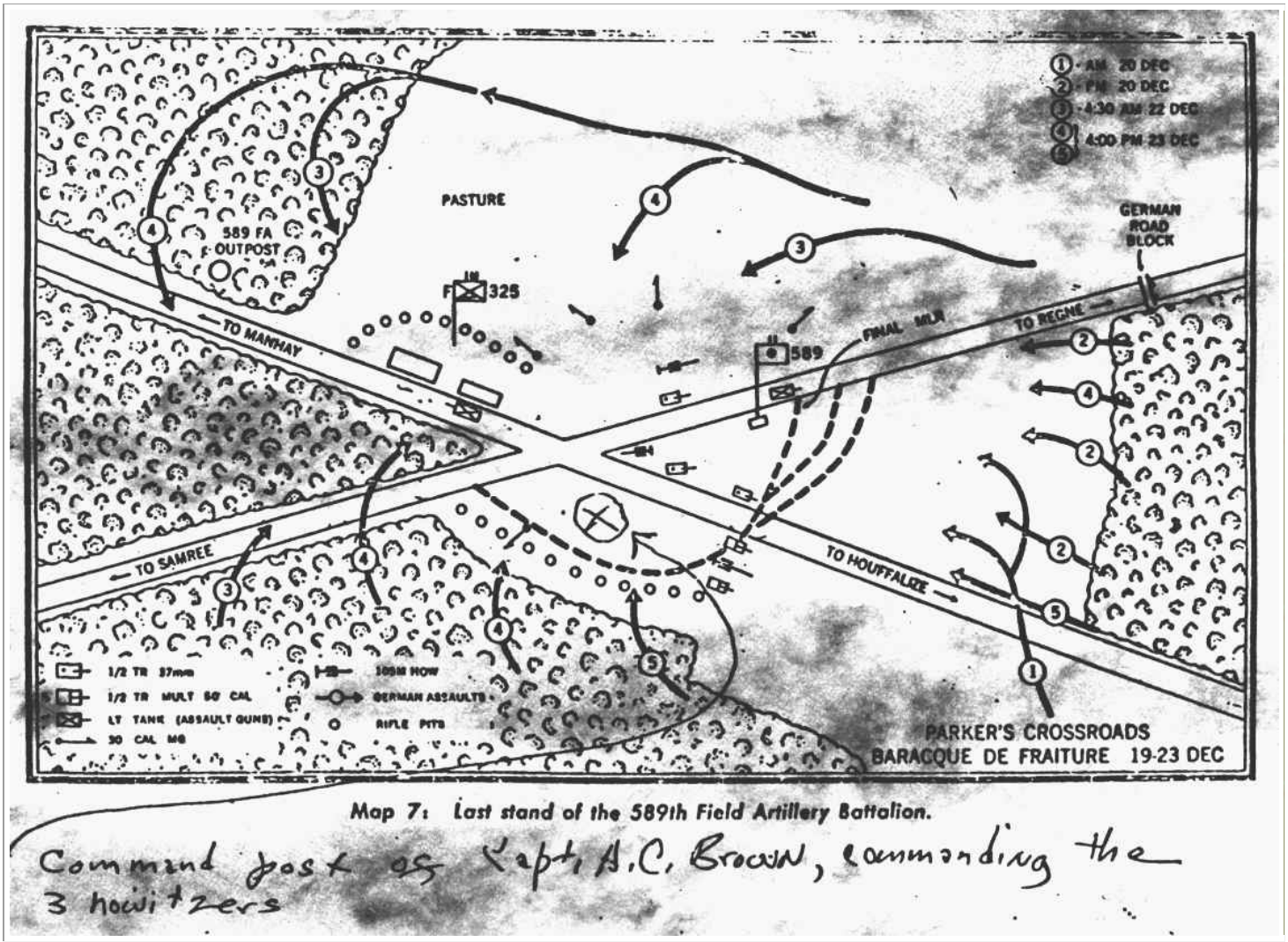


ICAL ARDENNES TERRAIN. The rough, wooded tableland of the Ardennes stern Belgium and northern Luxembourg is broken by many small streams which ne serious obstacles during periods of heavy rain or thaw. The Ardennes con- tains a fair primary but poor secondary road system. Because of the rough ... main centers of the road net assumed great importance during the Battle ... Heavy snow made infantry maneuver difficult and seriously limited tank ...

E ROCHE DE FRATTURE, BELGIUM " PARKER'S CROSSROADS"

AT RESORT IN 1983

① Captured here on "MY" corner,
② our 2 howitzers



Map 7: Last stand of the 589th Field Artillery Battalion.

Command post of Capt. A.C. Brown, commanding the 3 howitzers

DECEMBER 21-23. THE LAST DAYS

Following are some personal recollections of the last days at Baraque-de-Fraiture. These episodes are not necessarily in chronological order, nor will I attempt to document the disposition of troops and the various German attacks. Several history books recite in detail the facts of Parker's Crossroads as well as they were known at the time. My account is more the imagery and anecdotes describing the conditions.

At night out on the road that led to Bastogne we heard the enemy calling to each other as they approached our position. I ordered the men to hold their fire until the enemy was very close, as it was pitch black and we had no ammunition to waste. Finally I gave the order to fire, and our guns cut loose, led by the multiple 50 cals. on the half track in our perimeter. In the early dawn our medic went out and brought in those enemy fallen that were not able to escape the murderously close fire.

At one time, while I was moving around the position, a sergeant from another outfit and myself were standing in the road and looking north toward Manhay. From the woods that came right down to the crossroads at the northwest point came the terrifying sound of a German machine pistol (burp gun). These guns were called burp because of the high cyclical rate of fire, 1600 rounds per minute or so. The two of us dropped to the ground, and after the firing stopped only I got up. My companion was dead with

a bullet hole between the eyes. I ran over to the howitzer covering that sector and we swept the woods with tree top fire to clean out the snipers. As no more was heard from this area for awhile, the mission must have been successful.

One of the men at the defense perimeter was hit in the face with a mortar blast. He had no distinguishable facial features.. .The brave medic that tended him told me that he was breathing easily and would live. However I found out years later from this same medic that the man mercifully passed on that night.

Up in the second story of the farmhouse where we were quartered I found an abandoned BAR rifle. The gun was so cold that the automatic parts would not function. While standing at a window for observation, a mortar shell came right through the slate roof about ten feet away from me. Miraculously, the fragments of the shell did not wound me, the roof having taken the brunt of the blow. The building around which we built our defense was a typical Belgian farmhouse.. .The livestock were quartered on the ground floor at one end, and some living quarters were on the other end. The building was made to stay, built out of field stone with a slate rood as mentioned before.

At one time a vehicle marked with the red cross of an ambulance came down the road from enemy territory. As this vehicle was out in front of the German assault troops and there were no wounded on that road at that time the scene did not make any sense to me. Suspecting a ruse, I ordered a light tank standing station there to fire. One direct hit demolished the vehicle, and I hope that this truck marked with a red cross was not on a legitimate mission. This incident illustrates well the fact that in the heat of battle there is little time to think, and you do what comes to mind on the spur of the moment.

After several days with our only source of nourishment, candy, even it began to burn as it went down. The unrelenting cold was intensified by the dampness on station at the

crossroads. Eventually, we became surrounded. There was no chance to evacuate our wounded. The situation was obviously terminal. However, nobody thought about surrender, as the enemy was enveloped In the winter snow-fog and presented no clear-cut front with which we could have dealt. Major Goldstein knew that it was imperative that the enemy be held up here as long as humanly possible, as we were protecting an exposed flank of the entire First Army, so an attempt was made to secure support. The Germans pre-empted an attempt at reinforcement by surrounding and overrunning the position.

At the end as evening drew nigh on the 23rd, I came In and told Capt. Huxel that we had to get out. The farmhouse where he lay wounded was being blown down over our heads. All roads were now held by the Germans, but the road north to Manhay would take us towards out lines, and It was this way that l pointed to the men, when telling them to leave.

As soon as l stepped out on the south side of the house, the enemy cut loose with a preparation of mortars and 88's that shook the earth. I took shelter for a time first under a truck and then in a concrete ditch...On the road to Houffalize only a few feet away from me one of our light tanks or assault guns was on fire. My only thought for a while was the hope that the thing would not blowup and take me with IL

After awhile it was dusk and alone I headed for the cover of a tree line. It happened that this was the direction from which the enemy was corning Into the position. ..They quickly surrounded me. Only by the intervention of a German noncom was I saved from being dubbed to death by an enraged soldier. This wild-eyed boy who was hitting me with his rifle butt managed two blows before he was stopped. The first lick hit me right in the middle of the helmet, putting a crease therein, and the second blow glanced off the inside of my knee, the latter remaining sore for some days to come...

Thus started my captivity.

Parker's Crossroads at Baraque de Fraiture in 1983. Looking west. The Auberge de Carrefour on the right where Madame Le Haire and her daughter Mde. Le Jeune gave me room and board (as the American Liberator) on May 28,1983

Looking down the road to Houffalize-Bastogne from the crossroads. In view was our approximate field of fire. We lobbed 105's down the road with direct laying, and swept the woods on either side with multiple 50 cal.

machine guns searching out the positions, while 88s kept up an almost incessant pounding. Through it all Parker was everywhere, observing at the outposts, moving from place to place along the perimeter as one attack succeeded another. Wounded by a mortar shell on the afternoon of 21 December, while adjusting fire, Parker refused to be evacuated until he lost consciousness. Major Elliott Goldstein succeeded in command.

Harassing enemy fire continued all that day and night. Under cover of this fire and the darkness, the Krauts infiltrated to the edge of the woods running along the east-west road. They attacked simultaneously from southeast, south and north at 4:30 A.M., 22 December, to be driven off again. This time two prisoners from an officer patrol disclosed that the 2d SS Panzer Division of II Panzer Corps was coming from the south. (Grom Hougg2/12e)

An uproar of firing outside the perimeter during that night was explained next day; the Germans had supplemented their artillery harassment by four American 3-inch TD guns, firing from the north. These guns had been captured from a platoon of the 643d TD Battalion which had moved up early in the evening outside the defense lager and had been bagged.

Our own assault guns that morning cleared the woods of Krauts to the north, with direct fire, knocking out two mortar crews and a rocket gun.

It was 10:00 o'clock on the morning of 23 December that F Company, 325th Glider Infantry, Capt. Woodruff commanding, hit and fought its way into the crossroads defense lines.

Captain Arthur C. Brown, of B Battery, commanding the three-piece battery, took personal charge of one of the howitzers during attacks, while Lt. Thomas J. Wright, who, it will be remembered, led the forty-five Service Battery people who had cut their way out from the Schönberg road 17 December, handled another. Sgt. Barney M. Alford was in charge of the third piece after Capt. George Huxel, battalion S-3, was wounded. (He lay in the farmhouse unable to mo

a wounded Kraut whose right arm had been shattered; amputating it on the spot, he saved the man's life. It was Vorpagel, too, who on 22 December, loaded twelve seriously wounded men on a truck, with the assistance of the driver, and ran the Kraut fire to the north to get his wounded safely back to Vielsalm. When he got in the truck was found to be studded with mortar-shell fragments and rifle bullet holes.

Even with the reinforcement of the infantry company it was apparent that morning of 23 December that a coordinated enemy attack could not be withstood. So Goldstein, taking with him as exhibits two Kraut prisoners, an SS captain and a sergeant, jeeped it over the Manhay road during a lull to contact there Col. Richardson, commanding a 3d Armored Division combat command.

Hard-pressed as the 3d Armored was—a part of the division was practically cut off over towards Marcourt—Richardson agreed to send in one company each of tanks and infantry to counterattack.[10] He sent a major back with Goldstein, on reconnaissance.

As they approached the crossroads all hell broke loose. Dismounting, they worked their way through the woods to the northeast corner to find the position being overrun.[11]

Tanks and infantry of the 2d SS Panzer Division smashed the line at 4:00 P.M. Sergeants Alford and Jordan got the first two tanks by direct fire from their howitzer, the former having to run back to get additional shells after the first vehicle had been destroyed. They missed a third tank with their last round as it swung its nose toward them; then they fell back, covering one another with their carbines as the Kraut infantrymen began to rush through their position.

The defense began to disintegrate. To Capt. Huxel at the CP, who, although wounded, had refused to be evacuated and was now commanding, Capt. Brown and Lt. Wright reported that the remnants of the 325th Glider Infantry were withdrawing. They decided to shoot their way out in three groups.

Wright led one detachment toward Manhay but they were driven back and captured. Brown got another group away but was himself captured.

Huxel and his group held on in the CP until the roof collapsed. Out of the adjoining barn three frightened cows dashed bellowing and Huxel and his detachment made their own rush in the confusion.

They dodged into a drainage ditch, where our medic, Pollow, stopped

Of the infantrymen themselves, Capt. Woodruff and some forty men got safely back. Some of the other artillerymen, seeking shelter in the damaged CP, hugged the cellar, until the house was surrounded by German infantrymen with burp guns. The building began to burn and this last group was forced out, several being shot, the remainder surrendering.

And that's the story of Parker's Crossroads and the three-piece 589th Field Artillery Battalion; the end of the trail for the three howitzers of Battery A which Eric Wood had gotten out of the Schnee Eifel. It is a story for American artillerymen to cherish along with the saga of O'Brien's guns at Buena Vista.

One cannot help wondering what would otherwise have happened to the thin-spread 82d Airborne Division's right flank as the 2d SS Panzer moved in for the kill.

Notes To Chapter 11

[1] Mechanical coding and decoding instrument.

[2] General Hoge to the author, 19 December 1946.

[3] Col. G. M. Nelson, 112th Infantry, in a letter to the author, 23 January 1947.

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] *Ibid.*

[6] Evidently Blair's F Company, 18th Provisional Squadron.

[7] Nelson, *op. cit.*

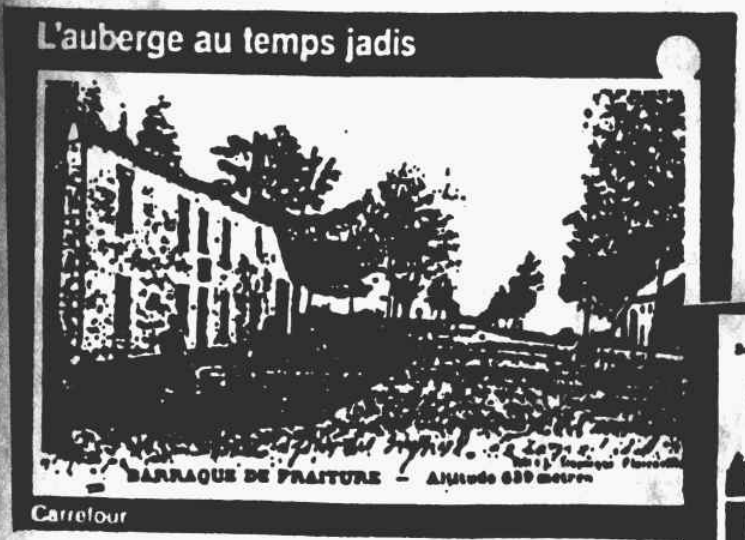
[8] *Ibid.*

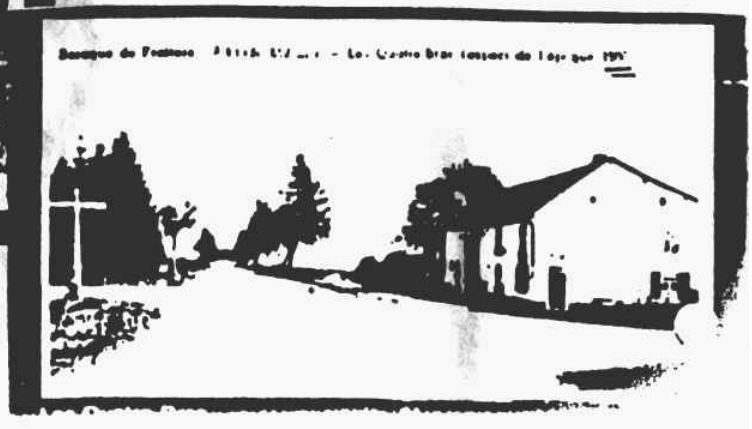
[9] Letter to the author, 22 February 1947.

[10] Letter, Major Elliott Goldstein to the author, 19 February 1947.

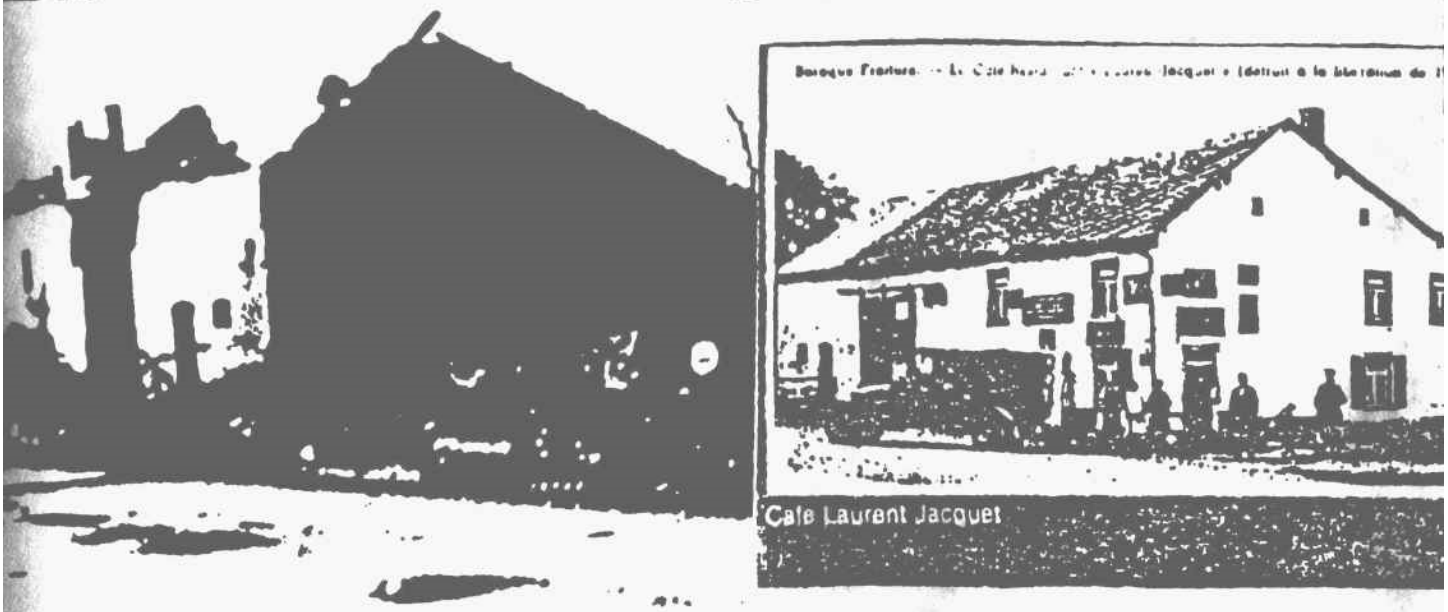
[11] *Ibid.* Goldstein was unable to get back to his outfit; he joined up with the 54th Armored Field Artillery, 3d Armored Division, that night, got back to Division next day. The counter-attack never materialized; General Gavin, commanding 82d Airborne Division, in his report notes that he found Manhay unoccupied that evening save for one MP.

THREE GENERATIONS OF INNS AT BARAQUE DE FRAITURE
(alias Parker's Crossroads)



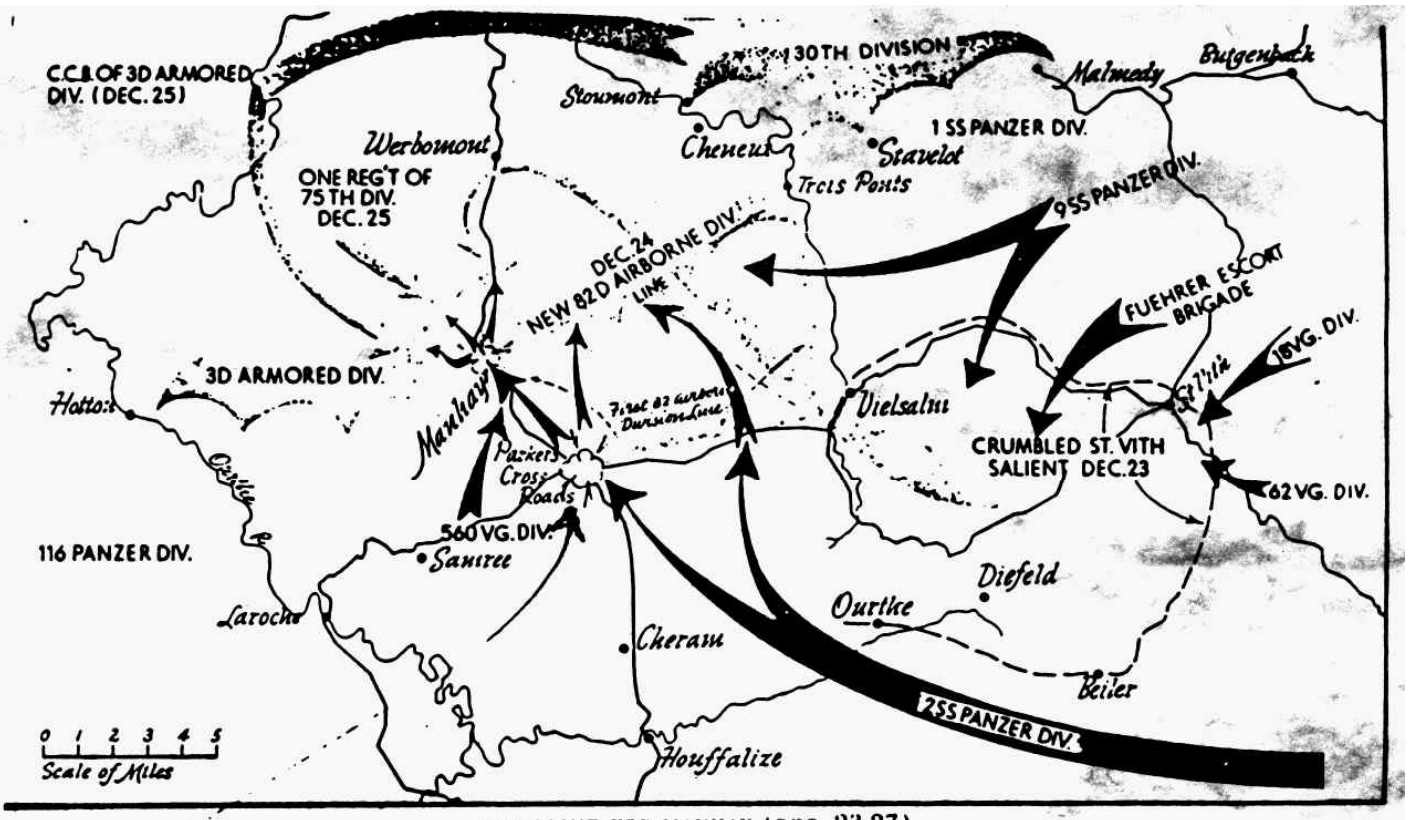


The Cafe Laurent, before and after, the battle of Parker"s Crossroads. (Pictures given to me by Madame LeHaire, who together with her husband ran this inn at the time).



Cafe Laurent Jacquet

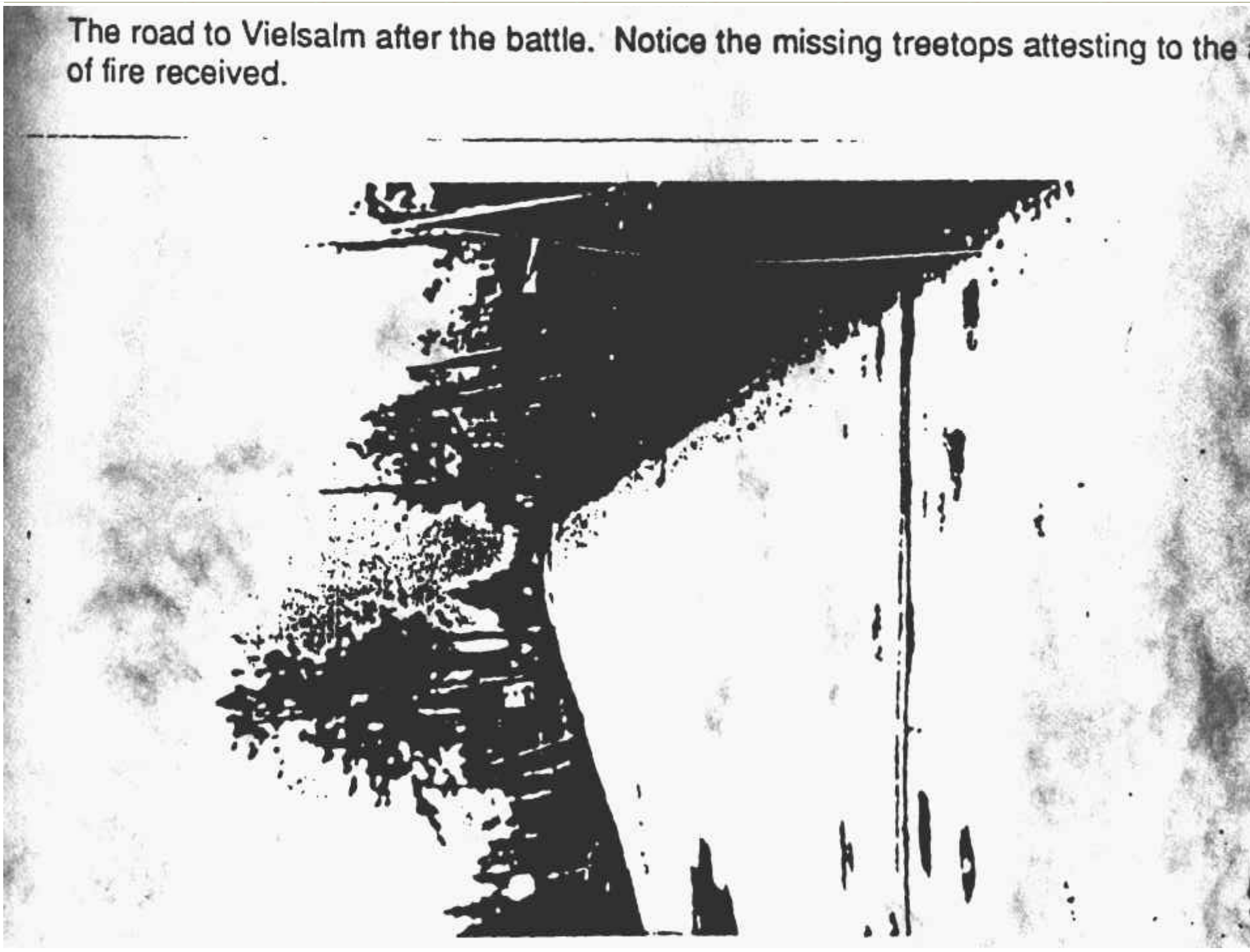
Maj. Parker's C.P. on the road to Vielsalm. Note the demolished American vehicle in the foreground.

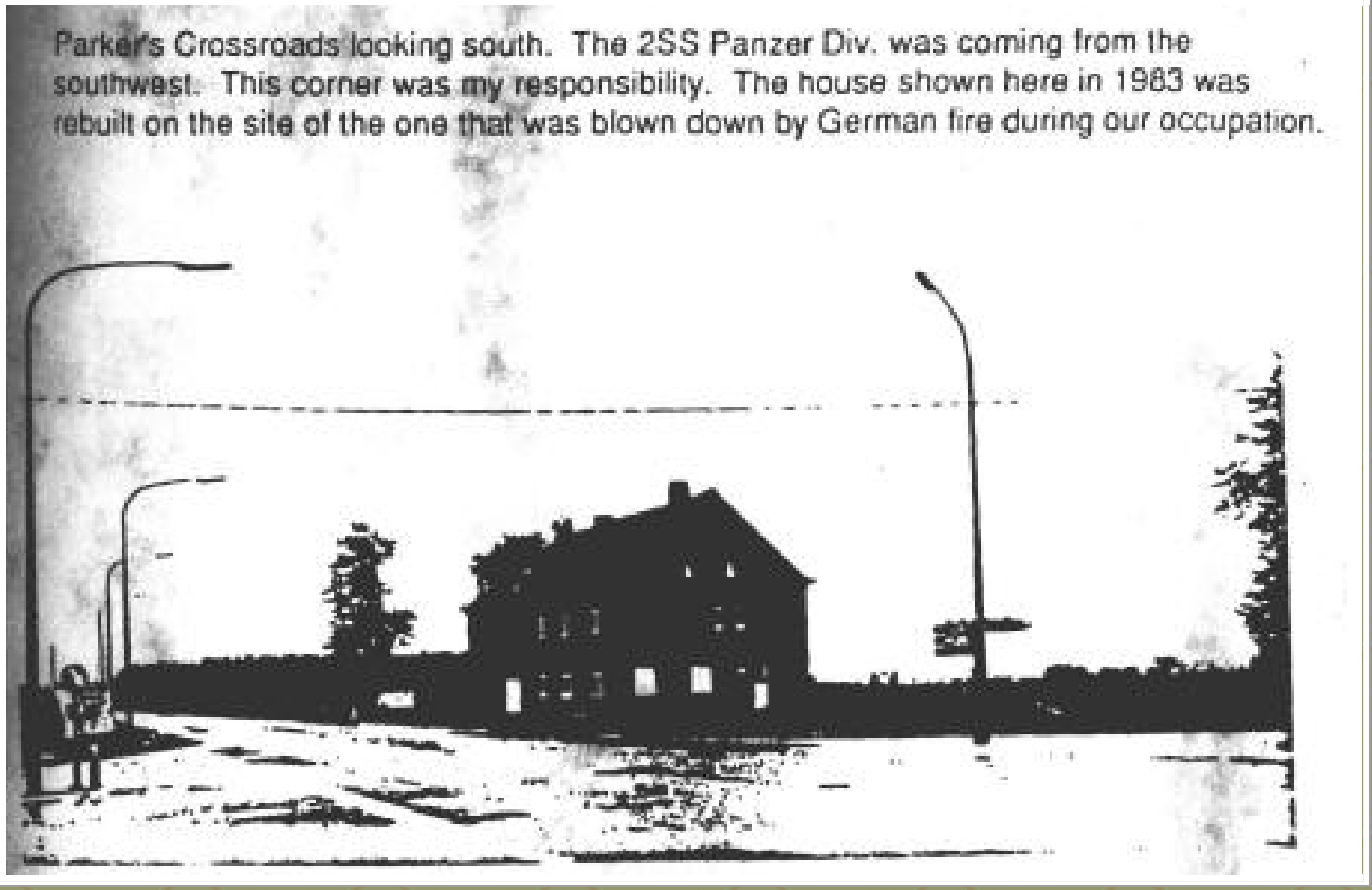


THE FIGHT FOR MANHAY (DEC. 23-27)

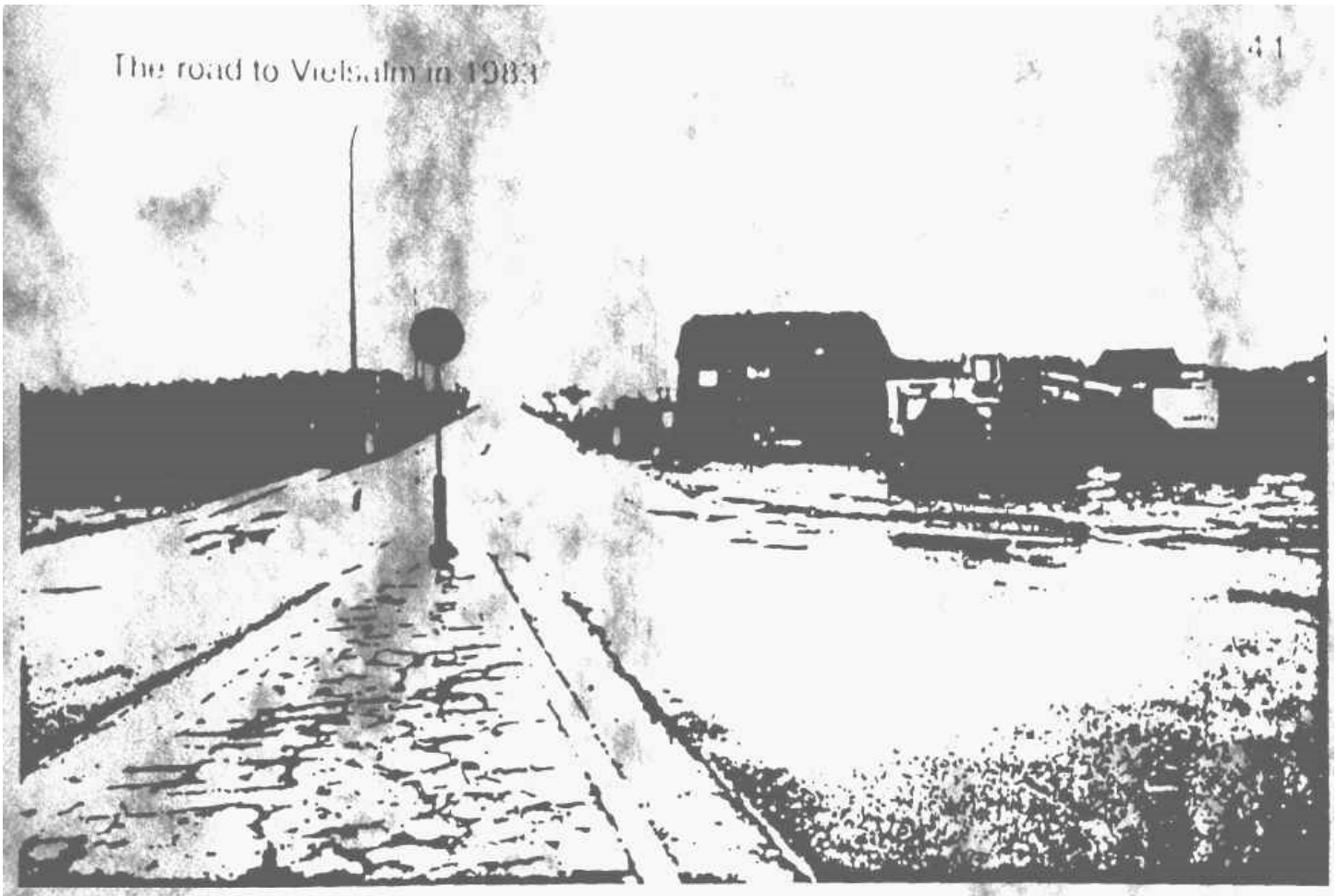
1 300 Men against 4 Divisions for 3 days - made possible by dense fog and snow advantageous to the defenders

The road to Vielsalm after the battle. Notice the missing treetops attesting to the
of fire received.

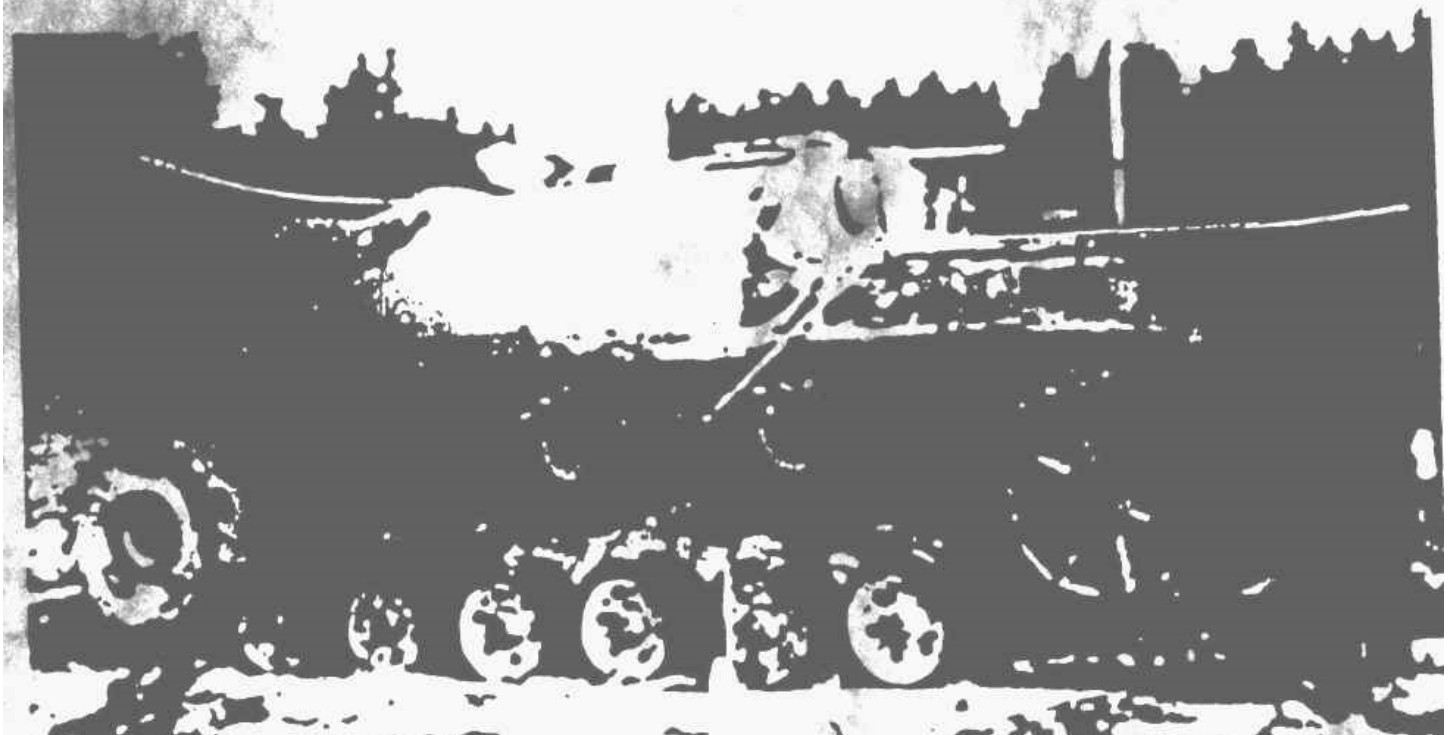




Parker's Crossroads looking south. The 2SS Panzer Div. was coming from the southwest. This corner was my responsibility. The house shown here in 1983 was rebuilt on the site of the one that was blown down by German fire during our occupation.



Disabled German tank mounting an 88 at Parker"s Crossroads.



PRISONER OF WAR IN GERMANY

Shortly after capture, I was escorted away from Baraque de Fraiture and walked down the road towards Shamree. The guard was armed only with a pistol which he kept n his holster. Although the thought of escape occurred to me, I was not in any shape to try anything rash. I was cold, wet, hungry, limping (from the clubbing) and very tired. Further the enemy was all about and the winter weather is not conductive to lying concealed outdoors. Again, if I could have gotten the upper hand, would have been necessary to kill my captor to make an effective getaway, and the thought of this one-on-one also deterred me.

After walking a mile or two, we came to a field command post. They had me empty my pockets in which my captain's bars had been placed. They allowed me to keep both my insignia of rank and my I.D. card. My apprehensions of what they might do to me began to fade, as the treatment afforded me as an officer captive was always good from here on.

After proceeding further on the road to the German rear, we finally came to a chateau that had been commandeered, probably as a division forward headquarters. We were probably at the medieval chateau at La Roche, although the Germans were not exactly orienting me as to the route of march. 'To the contrary, they blindfolded me for a time. My captors took me up to their officers' quarters where dinner was in progress, and allowed me to' help myself. Nobody seemed to notice me and no one appeared to be standing guard. This treatment was a subtle method softening me up, and also an illustration of the respect in which the Germans held an officer. I wonder what treatment the allied army was giving the German officers under similar circumstances. My guess is that the German prisoners were not being mistreated, but neither were they being given this old world treatment.

After a leisurely meal (and the fare was good), an SS officer approached me and asked me to follow him. He not only spoke English, but with an unmistakable Brooklyn accent. He later admitted to having been brought up on Long Island. The questioning by this intelligence officer was non-military; mostly political. He seemed particularly interested in President Roosevelt. The fellow had a sense of humor, as at a point he told me that I was not supposed to tell him something. It was difficult to stick to name, rank, and serial number replies as the interrogator was very disarming. The thrust of my replies to his questions was that our side had a strong will to defeat the Germans. At any rate, I was very ill informed as to what was going on around me and would not have been able to tell him anything valuable if he had tortured me. When the interview was ended, I was returned to the basement of the chateau where there was a large group of American prisoners spending the night.

The next day we marched some distance and our captors put us inside a building. My hands were very cold, and a guard helped open a tin of food they had furnished us. I remember cursing the can opener that came with the can as I could not figure out how such a small pied of metal could do the job. It was Christmas Eve and one of the guards with a soulful look on his face put up a tree in the house. It did not have any ornamentation of course, but we all had a better feeling about the Germans at this point. Our guards were a bunch of guys just like us doing their job, and obviously would have rather been home with their loved ones.

The next day was Christmas, 1944, and after the days march we were herded into a schoolhouse for the night. The building where we were staying was dose to the Luxembourg border as the textbooks were written in French. I was able to read a bit of that language, and I learned for the first time that the climate of the region was moderated by the Gulf Stream. It is hard for me to realize that the latitude in the area of Europe where the fighting was going on as about equal to the lower end of Hudson Bay, Canada, and If it were not for the Gulf Stream the life style of the inhabitants might be somewhat different.

Moving on the next day we arrived a Gerolstein. At this place the Germans were collecting prisoners and forming marching transports headed inland to the prison of war camps.. .There were many American wounded at this point that were not receiving treatment, some in pretty bad shape. As I was utterly helpless to do anything about the situation, this was one of the most depressing scenes of the war to me.

My recollections of the trip to the prison camp at Limburg are hazy. We must have traveled about 125 miles, mostly on foot. The walking was much preferable to riding in a truck however. The one night that we were transported by truck I froze my feet. The prisoners were riding in the back of the truck which had a steel bed, and we did not have room to move around and stimulate circulation.. .1 spent the rest of the night at our destination with my shoes off trying to rub some circulation back in my feet. To this day, I can't sit around even In the summer time without something on my feet to keep them from feeling numb.

I never once felt heat from that December to May. One night I remember that we prisoners were in an unheated building and a small aircraft flew over and bombed the windows out of the house. I can remember being very angry about the cold wind that the explosion let in, and seemingly not at all upset about the attempted murder. We slept on the floor like curled up Alaskan huskies, no man daring to move lest he should lose the body warmth of the two next to him. Our hips were so sore and legs so stiff that we could hardly stand by the next morning.

I remember walking along a hilly country road and approaching a small village below us. Fire lanes were neatly cut at intervals through the majestic forests. The ancient trees spired toward the sky. I later was to discover that the Germans worship trees like people in India revere their cows. A German would rather freeze before cutting a tree for firewood.

As the sun was finally shining, the Allies had started up their bombing again. This activity had been suspended for several weeks during bad weather when the brunt of the Bulge attack was launched by the enemy. We stood by the roadside and watched stick after stick of large bombs from high flying Allied aircraft being dropped on the village. I do not know why this target was selected, because we later went through the village and I do not remember seeing anything of an industrial nature that would have attracted an attack. It could have been a railroad track or motor transport or something of that nature.

In the village the ambulances were just gathering up some wounded from the ground, and we helped load these civilians in the truck. Otherwise the streets were deserted as the rest of the populace had sought refuge from the bombing in the hills nearby. The houses in the village were very dose to the street. I was so hungry that I darted out of line, risking the wrath of our guards to steal a handful of those excellent German Christmas cookies by reaching through the open window of a house on the street.

But for the kindness of the German villagers in the country side through which we passed on the way to the Rhine river, we prisoners may not have survived the long march to Stalag 12A. In a small village near Mayen we were fed a very nutritious meal one night. I have since learned that the people in this area were in dire straits themselves at the time. The villagers place a huge iron kettle on the fire to prepare the best stew I can ever remember eating (no disrespect, Mom). Not having had any hot food for two weeks or so, indeed very little food at all, we all ate until we could eat no more. A remarkable thing happened to me while waiting for this repast. I walked into the village pub next door to where we were billeted, sat down and asked for a glass of wine. My request was honored and the villagers treated me as though I was a regular customer except of course I had no money with which to pay.

It was near the end of December that we arrived at the confluence of the Rhine and Moselle rivers at Coblenz. This German city with an estimated prewar population of 300,000 had been devastated by the allied bombing... I did not see a building standing! Dead bodies lay In the streets. Only a few survivors

peered out of cellar windows. We hurried through the town on foot fearing the next wave of bombers, which mercifully did not arrive while we were there.

The bridge over the Rhine at Coblenz was still standing. We proceeded across on our way Limburg's Stalag 12A prison camp where we had reservations for the winter. The last 20 odd miles to Limburg was getting rough on some of the Air corps pilots in our group of prisoners, as they had not had much conditioning for this type of march. One pilot developed cramps, and the guards were going to leave him by the roadside in the snow. I got him up piggyback and carried him the last several miles to the camp. (Later this man was to ignore me in prison camp, for what quirk of human nature I do not know).

I had foolishly abandoned my overcoat that had been given me by my German captors near the front. One day the sun shone brightly, and the extra weight while hiking seemed to be an unnecessary burden not demanded at this instant by the temperature. But the prison camp issued me another from their plentiful stock of American GI (General Issue).

After the initial assault I received upon my capture, at no time while I was a prisoner of war was I mistreated. We all, prisoners and guards alike, suffered from insufficient food.

In prison camp the officers were separated from the enlisted men. The compound next to us contained Russian soldiers. The Russians always seemed to have plenty of potatoes which they would trade for cigarettes. Among ourselves one time I saw a gold Parker pen traded for a few cigarettes.

Life in prison camp was boring for the most part. The officers were not sent out on work details Into town and thus did not have the opportunity to steal food as did some of the enlisted men.

The food situation gradually deteriorated over the next four months. One meal a day was always the rule, and this did not come until about 5 PM. At first the soup was made of potatoes and greens and laced with meat (I hesitate to venture a guess as to what kind of meat) In addition, each man had a half loaf of bread at the first. Gradually the meat disappeared from the soup and at the last we were down to one-tenth of a loaf of bread per day. Incidentally, the bread was not exactly fresh baked, as one loaf that I was eating in 1945 was date stamped 1939. The bread was extremely dry, about the consistently of sawdust, but therefore did not mold. From our barracks window we could see a dirt mound of potatoes, extremely large, which the prison authorities never-the-less invaded sparingly The thinking on their part was probably that wlth the deteriorating situation on the German side, there would not be much chance to replace the food supply, once it was exhausted.

The sanitation was probably the worst physical aspect of prison camp The stench of the out building designed for the purpose of receiving body waste was so overwhelming that it took a strong stomach to even go in. There was fortunately an option, which while being more primitive in concept, was less nauseating.

Everyone had body lice. There was a washroom with cold running water, which like everything was unheated. However I never actually saw anyone taking a bath under these conditions. Shaving was accomplished by holding a razor blade in your hand without a holder, soap, or mirror.

Frequently at night the air raid sirens would sound. They started down the valley (of the Lahn River) from the Rhine in the vicinity of Coblenz. I can hear them now getting nearer and nearer as one little village after the other took up he cry. Then pretty soon we would hear the drone of the bombers and the clatter of anti-aircraft guns as the planes came towards us. Limburg was a prime target, and the rail yards in the bulls eye were just below the prison camp to the east.

One night a stray bomb or two came into the prison camp grounds. We all hit the deck and got under the cots Some were wounded and killed the the barracks next to us We do not know if the friendly bombers were aware of our proximity to the rail yards, but I'm sure that this would not have stopped them. If you don't want to get shot at by your own men, do not get captured. C'est La Guerre'.

It is true that I can steep under almost any conditions. To keep the pangs of hunger from being so painful I took to napping late in the afternoon while we were waiting for the guards to bring the day's chow. When I heard a stir in the crowd it would be time to wake up and get my share.

As the winter wore off and the sun shone bright enough to take off our clothing outdoors, we engaged in the sport of squashing lice. These unwelcome guests did not really depart until we were repatriated and went through the delousing baths and had a fresh change of clothes.

When the Allied armies had first crossed the bridge at Remagen, the authorities at Stalag 12-A prepared to move us deeper into Germany. It was bitter cold, and they gave us some straw to load in the open slatted cattle cars of the railroad. This enhancement was supposed to keep us from freezing. As we were putting the straw in the cars an air raid started. Most of the men and the guards took to the surrounding hillsides. For some reason *I* decided that I would take my chances with the bombs rather than freeze and continued to load the hay in the car to which I was assigned. At the last moment, I had a change of heart and took off running toward the nearest hill. The blast of a 500 pound bomb impeded my progress blowing me into the air about ten feet. I jumped up and continued to run until I caught up with another prisoner. He locked at me and his eyes opened wide in horror. Only then did I realize that there was a hole in my jacket and the blood was oozing out of my chest A bomb fragment had struck me in the right lung.

The guards took me back to the prlson camp. A German doctor looked at me and shock his head. He gave me the only treatment that I assume was available The treatment consisted of a band-aid over the opening and one shot each of penicillin and morphine. They told me that these medicines were the last in camp. That night the pain was excruciating. However I was still better off than the man in the bed next to me. He did not survive the night .

My lung was collapsed and an American doctor prisoner advised me to lie as still as possible for a week or so until the lung re-inflated. The only thing that saved me from infection was the continuous cold in which 1 am convinced no germs could live. The fragment was to stay in my chest until 1958. At that later date about of pneumonia required removal of this foreign object in my bronchial tube to stop the hemorrhaging and allow drainage. The army has me classified as 20% disabled, but except for occasional discomfort, I have always been able to do pretty much as I wanted physically. At any rate this incident may have shortened the war for me as the Germans were not able to move me further into the fatherland.

Finally the prison camp at Limburg became no longer tenable. The Allied armies were across the Rhine River in force at Remagen, and moving swiftly towards Limburg and points east.

The order came down for everybody capable of moving or being moved to evacuate. There were some that were too weak or sick to leave. A marching transport of about 1,000 prisoners was assembled. We were loaded on trains, again with the officers in a separate box car. It was getting up towards the end of April and mercifully the weather was moderating.

After a day or so of backing and filling, mostly at night to avoid the bombers, we were left standing in daylight on an elevated ridge. This was a perfect target for strafing, as the planes could come in level. It was not long until some American P-39's and P-41's took advantage of this sitting duck. The air force

obviously did not know that the train contained only American prisoners (a few English). We were locked in the cars, and on the first pass by the aircraft, our guards took to the ditches alongside the tracks.

A Captain, Medical Corps, and myself watched with fascination the incoming planes through cracks in the boxcar, while our comrades hit the floor. I did not see how the floor on an elevated car would serve as much protection against strafing or bombing. As it turned out, the car next to us was strafed with multiple 50 calibers of Which the American Mustangs mounted four in the wings. The car looked like a sieve on later examination. The carnage In this car was terrible. At this point a brave guard came back and opened up the officers' car and we spread down the tracks opening car doors and releasing our men.

As the planes came over again. I dove in the furrow of a nearby ploughed field with bullets splattering in the freshly tilled soil all around me. At this point I suggested that we form the letters P 0 W with the prisoners. This came fairly naturally to me, being a former Drum Major of the Duke University band. The tactics of spelling out our identity with human backs was successful. The planes wiggled their wings in recognition and left us to deal with our wounded. We had absolutely no medical facilities and the doctor did what he could under the circumstances.

After the strafing experience, th. guards decided to park the train in a tunnel. We were in there for over three days without water; that was better than the alternative of being bombed. Finally movement by train was abandoned. As the senior American officer, I was instructed by the German officer in charge of the prisoners to form my men up into 100 man units with an American officer in charge of each contingent, and move out.

I called all of the officers forward (mostly second lieutenants) and told them to each take 100 men and line out. When the group was ready we paused and sang "Onward Christian Soldiers". On the road one man was too weak to go on. I ordered four men to carry him on a blanket stretcher and exhorted them not to abandon him or he would perish. We took off and marched some time before coming to a halt for a rest. I overheard a German guard saying that Allied armor was bypassing us the the north. The guards acting like they had been drinking. Apparently they knew that the end was not far for them selves. After we had started to move again I got to thinking about the opportunity to escape now Before thinking any further, I boldly stepped out to the side of the column to call all the American officers forward to the head of the line to meet me. As I guessed, the guards watched without interfering. None of them spoke enough English to understand what I was saying. I informed the officers of the situation and for them to pass the word to the men to slip quietly into the surrounding woods as the opportunity presented itself.

That evening we marched into a small village An English chaplain who been a prisoner for four years and myself went into the adjoining house and the villager fixed us a huge platter of bacon and eggs. This was the first hen fruit to reach my stomach in nearly six months My degistive tract was so shrunken and out of order that the solid rich food made me violently ill.

Several of us hid in a barn loft, and as the prisoner transport was slowly breaking up, apparently we were not missed. I went down into a nearby public building which to my surprise was occupied by regular German soldiers. As I burst in on them, I was so startled that I offered one of them an American cigarette. This action disarmed him so that he allowed me to beat a hasty retreat. The next day I set out by myself walking and remember seeing one of our former guards with a very depressed look on his face, bicycling his way home.

Soon the point vehicle of an American outfit came along. It was a jeep load of three men, armed to the teeth with automatic weapons. They were way out in front of their main force scouting. They picked me up and we went into the village. There were some German soldiers milling about in what had now become no-mans-land, but they did not make any aggressive move towards us, even though they were also

armed. We parked our vehicle and entered a tavern where some villagers were having their morning drinks. We lined the locals up against a wall at the point of a gun and proceeded to order beir (beer).

My liberators took me to a front field hospital where other prisoners were being processed. They had delousing baths and new clothes on a mass production basis. From there I was flown to a permanent hospital at Riems to recuperate. My diagnosis was malnutrition, with a weight loss down to approximately 115 pounds from my pre-prisoner weight of about 165. One of the few things I remember about the hospital was the amazement and behind back whispers of the others at the place watching me heap food on my plate.

It would be some time before my digestive system would come back to some semblance of normal. After several weeks orders came down for me to proceed to the port of embarkation via Paris. The mode of transportation was an all night train to Paris. In the car there was one "closet" for "Femmes & Hommes". I kept this tied up for most of the night while food passed rapidly through what had once been my digestive tract. The locals were not too pleased with my performance as they were frequently lined up outside the door when I emerged.

In Paris I discovered that my orders were inadvertently undated. This meant that I could have stayed in Paris indefinitely as the guest of the United States government, lost so to speak. But after a quick go at the cathedral of Notre Damus and a night at the Follies Bergere (the latter tame by modern standards), I longed to get back to my bride and the civilization of the USA.

So I proceeded on to camp Lucky Strike, the staging area for ships headed west. We were quartered in a tent city. There I purchased a new dress uniform complete with the insignia to which I was now entitled having been in three battles and wounded. At this time I did not know that the government had also awarded me the Silver Star. But at any rate all this began to make me feel more like an officer and soldier of some experience.

After a short wait, my turn came up to board ship for home. Again there was to be a strange twist to my departure Another thousand man transport was formed of which I was again the senior American officer (still only 28 years old). Aboard ship of course the navy was in charge. There were approximately thirty officers junior to and reporting to me from the land forces being shipped home (mostly prisoners). I set up a roster for officer-of-the-watch to cover the whole trip to New York, careful to leave myself off the list. Therefore except for one incident I had nothing to do except enjoy the sea trip on the way home.

We sailed across the English channel to South Hampton and put in for supplies and more men. As we were tied up there the war in Europe came to an end (V. E. or Victory in Europe Day). We were not allowed to go ashore and celebrate but the attitude of the soldiers was one of war weariness and this did not seem to be a great hardship.

After several days at sea the rolling crap game in the hold got out of hand and fights broke out. I needed a side arm and descended into the hold where the bunks were stacked five high. The smell of seasickness was persuasive. The trouble was quickly allayed by a combination of volume, bluff and profanity.

Back in the states Vallie and I were quickly reunited and have lived happily on, even to our fortieth wedding anniversary with at present count of eleven in our immediate family, to the third generation.

My memories of the army and the war, relived in 1983 on my return to the battle fields and prison camp site are a part of my life. They were experiences that were not all pleasant, but have added to the fullness

of life for me. To some extent my emotions are similar to the thoughts evoked by the old song it is better to have loved and lost than to have never loved at aIr.

I now know what the word hunger means, the numbing terror of being shot at has been mine, and the Importance of HAVING THE WILL TO LIVE is not a bunch or words. thank GOD that I did survive and was allowed to come back to lead a full, joyful (and times tearful) life.

Coming into Limburg, Germany, from the North. Notice the famous Dom (church) dead center and the new hospital on the hill at the right.

Looking west up the hill from the point where I was wounded, towards the location of the prison camp in the center background.

The Rhine river in flood stage from the west bank at Coblenz. The basements and part of the first floors of the houses left center were under water in this the worst flood in 35 years. (June,1983)

The remnants of the bridge across the Rhine at Remagen. Notice the bastion on the far side of the river as it appears between the two bastions on the near side. In 1983 this is the site of a German-American museum (which was closed due to the "Hochwasser").

RETURN TRIP TO THE BATTLEFIELD IN 1983

In 1983 the Belgian Ardennes are not greatly different than they were in 1944. There are a few new houses and barns along the road from which one accesses our first gun position. The roads are generally well maintained, considering the few inhabitants that use them. It now becomes more obvious to me why the Germans had to have these roads, not even tanks could move through this country off the roads. This was especially true in December when the snow was heavy upon the ground, and tracked vehicles quickly churned the ground to mud and slush.

This area has a unique character which cam~ the fore in my mind as I traveled around the countryside and spoke to the people At St. Vith and east to the German border (of Belgium) the people speak German. Only a short distance away at Vielsalm and Baraque-de-Fraiture the people speak French. Whether sympathies of the people are governed by the language they speak or the language is governed by the sympathies, I do not know. However I did note even the short time time I was there, that there is very little commerce between the two sections. Remarks such as "you mean those people over there that speak German", or I'm not sure just where that is (when speaking of a place only a few miles away). Generally, the country ears to be largely rural with neatly manicured landscape and buildings.

Our gun position was actually in Germany and it was interesting to see that here was a customs gate even on the lightly traveled road leading back to St. Vith from Bielalf.

The second gun position just west of the German border had not changed much. Upon a toot of the car horn the guard (German) came out of his house and raised the gate to let me back into Belgium. Immediately, I came upon the roadside sign that reads Ihrenbruck. The little stream running along the road and in behind the gun position to the northeast in the Ihen River.

Opposite the gun positions, now grown up to some extent with trees, an English speaking farmer told me that there is still some unexploded ammunition back there in the trees. (As you remember, we barely got out of there with our lives, let alone carefully reloading all the ammo on the trucks). In Schonberg the buildings between which that German tank had stood in 1944, appeared to be not forty years old. So I assume that the original building had been demolished after my passage, as there was much action in this little town.

The road from here back to St Vith is very tortuous, and the countryside very rugged. Again it is obvious that the the enemy had to attack with armor was via the roads. This fact allowed American troops to hold up large forces of enemy attackers. (I sometimes wonder if they thought we would lay down and let them run over us without a fight, as we were greatly outnumbered at this point.)

Being short of time upon my return to this scene in 1983, I was not able to literally retrace my footsteps (if indeed that would have been possible). However, I did come into the region through SPA, Stavelot, Trois-Point and Vielsalm.

The highway through SPA led right through the famous cross country speedway for formula cars There must have been a race shortly before I arrived, as the whole countryside was littered with refuse left by the spectators For those interested in auto racing, the course was not only twisting, but very hilly.

In Stavelot, I did not see any signs of the bulge, which had been the scene of fierce fighting in 1944-45, and five miles short of the point of the furthest penetration by the Sixth Panzer Army under General Dietrich. On the contrary, Stavelot now appears as a typical Belgian village, twenty odd miles beyond Liege, and out of this big city’s sphere of influence.

Trois-Point and Vielsalm are small country villages with winding streets and the houses built close to the road European style. Vielsalm did bring some old memories, as it was here that I finally regained touch with the 589th Field Artillery remnants on that cold winter day of December 20,1944, after my excursion behind enemy lines.

On my trip to Parker's Crossroads in May, 1983, I found that this countryside is still rather desolate, mostly agricultural and a popular crossroads country summer and winter (ski) resort. The Auberge de Carrefour (Inn at the Crossroads) is well known by travelers, and a good place to stop for a beer.

Mádäme LèfläiYe, together with her daughter and son-in-law Bernadette and Claude Lejeune, now operate the inn year around. Bernadette's baby is the sixth generation of the same family to inhabit this location, and the Lejeune's the fifth to operate an inn here.

The locals and I exchanged pictures and stories, with the help of a kind interpreter from Antwerp that had happened by. (My poor French and Bernadette's poor English otherwise somewhat limiting our exchanges).

It was a typical Belgian weekend in May, raining most of the time. But this reminded me of the same conditions (substitute snow) of that December in 1944. The poor visibility was one of the reasons why several hundred men were able to hold up the German 2nd SS Panzer Division for three days. Observation was right at ground zero for the most part. I am satisfied that we would have been blown out of there in one day had the German observers been able to see us.

As in all of Belgium (except the German speaking bunch around St. Vith) the locals treated me like a liberator. Madame Lehaire would not let me pay one franc for my room and very excellent board.

Upon my returning to the US, I had a silver baby cup engraved for i'enfant Lejeune and sent this back to my new friends.

In 1983 while traveling away from Baraque de Fraiture towards Germany, I was impressed with several things. Although high in the relatively remote Ardennes (rugged hills and forests), the countryside is well kept. Constant evidence of forestry appears in the form of neat piles of trees that have been thinned, sorted by sizes, apparently waiting transport for utilization in the economy.

At Houffalize, to the SE of Parker's Crossroads, while coming down the hill into town about 9 AM in the morning, I heard shouting below me. I stopped the car and got out in the cold May rain, and looked down upon a scene that displayed the character of the people There in a soccer field covered with water were two teams going at it like there was no tomorrow.

Another sight that impressed this traveler, was the amount of road construction. Super highways cutting through this relative wilderness, and bridges going from hilltop to hilltop, some very high. The Germans apparently didn't want to be bothered with descending and climbing hills in their powerful little automobiles.

At Gerolstein, my first meal in a German village, I had a delightful luncheon of sliced ham, cheeses, and that good German black bread, all washed down with Pils (light) "beir". This selection made with the help of my pocket dictionary. I shared a table with a family from St. Vith, where the father spoke French. Our conversation bore out the fact that these people from Belgium being German speaking and right on the German border, are not quite as enthusiastic about Americans as the French speaking Belgians.

In 1983 there was little evidence of the war in the countryside and small villages through which I passed

on my way to the Rhine River. As in Belgium, the Germans manicure the landscape, and utilize the ground and forest very well. After several hours on the byways, I took to the Autobahn, and arriving over Coblénz early in the afternoon, I zoomed across the river at the slow (for Europeans) speed of seventy miles an hour (120 K). On the east bank I noticed a great crowd had stopped at an overlook, and only then became aware of a situation that was to somewhat alter my plans for the next several days.

The Rhine was "hochwasser", and the river was at a thirty-five year record high. Many of the buildings near the water had their basements and first floors under water. And what was more unusual, no barges were moving up or down stream. As the very economic heart of the Rhine River Valley depends on the river barge traffic, this event was big to the locals. Further, there were no cruise boats moving either because of the danger from the swiftness of the current. Thus my plans to take an excursion from St. Goar past the famous Lorelei, etc. had to be canceled. Also, the river roads were closed, being under water in places, and I had to drive along the heights and run down the steep hills to get close to the river.

Avoiding the large cities, except for Bonn later in the trip, I really can't say how much war damage is still visible in Coblenz. Limburg showed no evidence of the terrific bombing that the rail yards took when I was there in 1945.

On returning to Limburg on my 1983 trip, I was struck by the new hospital on a promontory overlooking the town. I could not help thinking how much I needed a facility like this in 1945 when I was hit. To my knowledge there was none such available to me then.

Limburg today is a pleasant little town, with the River Lahn running through its center. The old Romanesque cathedral was unscratched by the war, and is one of the most outstanding of its kind in Europe. As in many German towns, the railroad restaurant was excellent and the goose thigh and dark beer tasted good.

After many inquiries, I finally found a man who knew for certain the location of my former prison camp. In 1957, all the buildings had been demolished and the German army had built a post on the identical spot. The private on the gate, as with many young Europeans, spoke English, but would not let me on the post as I had no business there. I finally talked my way up to the post commander, who not only let me on the post, but furnished me with as sergeant escort.

The next order of business was to find the spot where I had been wounded just outside of the prison camp in the railroad marshalling yards. I did find the yards with many old trains rusting away there. The exact spot where the bomb and I had met was now under water. It seems that chalk had been found there, and the quarry had filled with water. So much for reminiscing.

One evening on the campus of the University of Bonn during the trip I talked for over an hour with a fourth year student who came from Mayen, Germany (in the area where we were so kindly treated). This young man was mature for his age, a historian, and a bit of a philosopher. He told that the Nazis requisitioned (took) from his grandfather in Mayen all of his livestock and reduced the local country populace to eating potatoes to exist. On one occasion, his grandfather hid a calf in a pit covered with straw to keep the inspector from Berling from taking it. A local priest who spoke out against the Nazi party in 1944 was taken to the prison camp at Daschau.

This young man went on to remind me of the events which allowed Hitler to come to power. After World War One, the Kaiser who got Germany into that conflagration, abandoned the people and would do nothing for them. The German people were in desperate straits, having no Marshall plan after that war.

The country had been ravaged by war, and the people were starving and destitute. The scene was ripe for a demagogue, and Hitler seized the opportunity. The rabble in the cities jumped on the bandwagon.

The Junkers also backed Hitler in the hopes of maintaining their position. But these original backers of Hitler lost control to the madman, and the country was hell bent on a path to conquer the world and exterminate the Jewish race.

Only in the last year or two have the new generation of German youth begun to shed the stigma and guilt of their forbears.

25 Acorn Park
Cambridge, MA 02140
July 2, 1980

Major Arthur C. Parker
Rt. 1 - Box 600
Leeds, Alabama 35904

Dear Major Parker:

Through correspondence with Henry D. Healan, who was with the 106th Infantry Division in the Battle of the Bulge, I have learned of your whereabouts. It is a little late for me to be writing you about the Battle of the Bulge, but I have been totally unaware of your whereabouts through the years.

In the Battle of the Bulge, I was commanding the 82nd Airborne Division and we were originally given the front from Trois Ponts to Vielsalm, including Thier Dumont. We got into very heavy fighting when the 1st Regiment of the First SS Panzer Division broke through the Engineers' front and occupied Stoumont. We then had the remainder of the Division at Trois Ponts. At the same time, in twenty-four hours it became clear that the Germans were bypassing us, moving to the west, turning north when the opportunity presented itself. The 7th Armored and part of the 28th Infantry Division and a few of the 106th came through our lines. I was in the town of Fraiture the afternoon when you made your great stand at the crossroads. I had sent a Company from the 325th under Captain Woodruff, to the crossroads to help hold it, so I started over in that direction myself. The fire was so intense, however, that there was no way of getting there without crawling through the woods, and it was still some distance away. I decided that I had better get some more help, so I sent to the extreme left flank of the division for the 2nd Battalion of the 504th, where it had the 1st SS Regiment of the First Panzer Division bottled. In doing so, we uncovered the Germans and during the night of Christmas Eve they slipped through the 505th Parachute Infantry. Nevertheless, I got the 2nd Battalion of the 504th to back up the crossroads, come what may. The stand that your defenders made at the crossroads was one of the great actions of the war. It gave us at least a twenty-four hour respite, so I thank you for that, and all the brave soldiers who were under your command.

With best regards,

James M. Gavin

RALPH G. HILL JR
1232 Van Steffy Ave.
Wyomissing, Penna. 19610

July 27, 1984

Mr. Roy Clay
1304 Kuhn Road
Boiling Springs, PA 17007

Dear Sir,

Under the command of the 106th Division Artillery you had been placed in support of the 14th Cavalry Group. On December 16th you provided marvelous support for the two troops occupying six strong points in the Losheim Gap. Your observers in the strong points brought down your fire with great accuracy upon the Germans about them. In the 14th Cavalry Group reports of January 1945 repeatedly mention is made of your splendid action. They estimate based on multiple reports that 2000 Germans fell before their eyes of the 18th VG Division from their automatic weapons, your fire, their assault Gun fire, and the fire of the 589th FA Battalion. This is a key reason the Germans were unable to launch effective attacks against St. Vith, December 17th, 18th, 19th and 20th.

HEADQUARTERS
106TH INFANTRY DIVISION

GENERAL ORDERS)
NUMBER 11)

26 January 1945

AWARD OF SILVER STAR (MISSING IN ACTION) . . . . . SECTION I

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I. -- AWARD OF SILVER STAR (MISSING IN ACTION). . . . . Under the provisions of AR 600-45, 22 September 1943, as amended, and pursuant to authority contained in Circular 2, First United States Army, 4 January 1945, the Silver Star is awarded to the following officers and enlisted men who are now missing in action:

Captain Arthur S. Brown, 01165477, 589th Field Artillery Battalion, United States Army, for gallantry in action form 20 December 1944 to 23 December 1944, in Belgium. As a result of a German tank attack that demolished his vehicle, which was last in a column, and separated them from the rest of the battery, Captain Brown successfully led the men back through enemy lines. Captain Brown, declining to remain in a rest area, voluntarily rejoined his battalion on 20 December 1944, and was given command of the three 105 mm howitzers which were to be used in establishing a strategic road block. Captain Brown, competently carried out orders to emplace the howitzers, machine guns and rifle-men to cover the roads from the south and west, and when the enemy attacked, took personal charge directing the fire of one of the howitzers and the machine guns protecting it. Repeatedly exposing himself to enemy fire, Captain Brown displayed great personal courage, and his example inspired his men to greater achievement. When the position was finally overrun by enemy tanks, Captain Brown directed his men who had heroically held their position for three days to safety through a woods, and remained until the last man had departed, and as a result was unable to follow. The unflinching devotion to duty and heroic example set by Captain Brown reflect great credit upon himself and the military service. Entered military service from New York.

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By command of Brigadier General PERRIN:

WILLIAM C. BAKER JR.,
Colonel, G. S. C.,
Chief of Staff.

Ambassade de France
aux Etats-Unis

L'Attaché de Défense
Attaché de l'Air
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1759 R STREET, N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20009

TELEPHONE (202) 328-4700

July 19, 1982

Mr. Arthur C. BROWN
1235 Lynbrook Dr.
CHARLOTTE, North Carolina 28211

Dear Sir :

Our Embassy fowarded your letter by which you requested the **"Croix de Guerre 39/45 avec Etoile de Vermeil"** bestowed upon the 589 th Field Artillery Battalion, for brilliant feats of arms during the Second World War.

You also sent a copy of the Citation which reads: "A remarkable Battalion whose brilliant conduct.." and as such it is a Collective Citation and the members who belonged to that Unit cannot wear the medal unless they were cited personally and individually.

I am sorry to be unable to comply with your request, the rules and regulations pertaining to any "Croix de Guerre" are very strict and cannot be transgressed.

Nevertheless, you are entitled to the **"FOURRAGERE 39/45"** which I am glad to send to you.

Also I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you for having served with the 589th Field Artillery Battalion, a prestigious Unit whose heroic actions were paramount in the liberation of our Country, and so rightly recognized and rewarded by our Governement.

Wishing you, Mr. Brown, all the best in life, I shall remain,

Sincerely yours.

Bernard W. EHRHARD O.R.
Executive Officer