

Call  
me *Spearhead*



**SAGA  
OF THE  
THIRD ARMORED  
*"Spearhead"*  
DIVISION**



*It is with a feeling of tremendous pride that I greet you, and with reverent solemnity that I salute those of our comrades who made the supreme sacrifice to assist us to arrive here.*

*The achievements of this Division have been equalled by only a very few, and surpassed by none. Our standards are high and our determination to meet those standards is firm.*

*With Divine assistance, little can delay, and nothing can stop us.*

*Maurice Rose*

Major General, Commanding

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date enlisted \_\_\_\_\_

Attached to 3rd Armd \_\_\_\_\_

Battle Actions \_\_\_\_\_

Citations \_\_\_\_\_

Passed by Censor For Mailing Home.

This is one of a series of G.I. Stories of the Ground, Air and Service Forces in the European Theater of Operations, to be issued by the Stars and Stripes, a publication of the Information and Education Division, Special Information Services, ETOUSA... Maj. Gen. Maurice Rose, commanding the 3rd Armored Division, lent his cooperation to the preparation of the pamphlet, and basic material was supplied to the editors by personnel from his staff.

## SPEARHEAD FIRSTS

FIRST Division unit to cross German border: Task force under Lt. Col. William Lovelady, of Soddy, Tenn., east of Eupen, at 1451 hours, September 12, 1944.

FIRST To take a German town in this war: Roetgen, occupied by elements of the 83rd Armored Reconnaissance Bn., on September 13, 1944.

FIRST Breach of the Siegfried Line: By Task Force "X," commanded by Lt. Col. Leander L. Doan, of Combat Command "A," in the vicinity of Scheidmühle, Germany, on September 13, 1944.

FIRST To shoot down an enemy plane from German soil: By the 486th Automatic Anti-Aircraft (AW) Bn., on September 18, 1944.

FIRST To fire an artillery shell at German soil: By the 991st Field Artillery Bn. (155 mm. SP guns), on September 10, 1944.

FIRST American division to completely pierce the Siegfried Line: Combat Command "A," on September 15, 1944.

FIRST Invasion of Germany in force since Napoleon: The Third Armored "Spearhead" Division.

# The 3rd Armored Division Story

## "CALL ME SPEARHEAD!"

**S**EPTEMBER 12, 1944. A thinning blanket of ground mist lay over the long hills of Aachen Province, borderline country between Belgium and Germany.

There was a clatter of tracks and motors in the air that day, a clamor of guns. Through the yellow, acrid dust tanks and mobile artillery of the cutting edge of First Army power, Maj. Gen. J. Lawton Collins' VII Corps battering ram, the 3rd Armored "Spearhead" Division, crashed into and subsequently through the Siegfried Line.

For the "Spearhead" Division it was the end of a phase. The first signs of autumn were beginning to show; nights were becoming cold, too frequent rain turned secondary roads into impossible mire. Men and machines were weary. It had been a long campaign for the armor.

### FIRST SINCE NAPOLEON

Although they were first to invade the "sacred soil" of Germany in force since Napoleon, first to take a Nazi town—Roetgen, on Sept. 13—the men of the 3rd

2

Armd. Div. had finished on nerve alone. They needed a rest and their vehicles screamed for maintenance.

The division had entered the arena of war untried. In less than two months of powerful all-out attack, it had hurled back the blitzkrieg to the land of its origin. The bitter, dusty road from Normandy to the Siegfried Line was cluttered with the flame-gutted wrecks of a once proud German army. The supermen of Hitler's Third Reich fought well, but the Spearhead pounded them into the very ground they had stolen. Five German general officers and 20,000 men were captured and the 3rd Armd. Div. drove from the Seine to the Siegfried Line in 18 days!

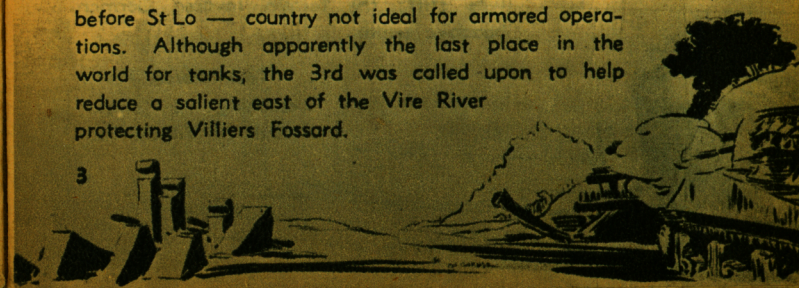
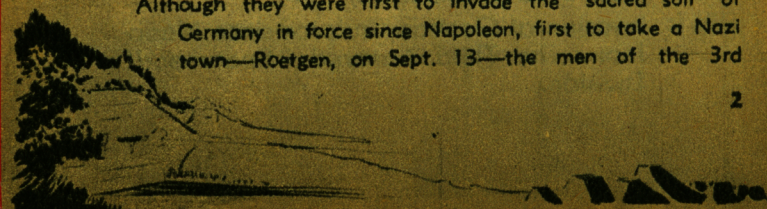
No wonder it earned the name of "Spearhead"!

### WEARING OFF THE GREEN

**A**LTHOUGH the 3rd Armd. Div. had undergone training in almost every type of climate, nowhere had it been in terrain resembling the hedgerow country of Normandy.

Its initial action was in that hedge-bound jungle before St Lo — country not ideal for armored operations. Although apparently the last place in the world for tanks, the 3rd was called upon to help reduce a salient east of the Vire River protecting Villiers Fossard.

3



To Brig. Gen. Doyle O. Hickey's Combat Command "A" was given the assignment of clearing the pocket held largely by the Fusilier Bn., 353rd Inf. Div. To accomplish this mission, the Combat Command was given the 32nd Armd. Regt., the 36th Armd. Inf. Regt., the 54th Armd. F.A. Bn., supporting engineers, medics and maintenance elements.

Three task forces were formed—"X" under Col. (now Brig. Gen.) Truman E. Boudinot, "Y" commanded by Col. Graeme G. Parks, and "Z" commanded by Lt. Col. Walter Abney. In this and subsequent actions, two task forces mounted the attack and a third, in this case that of Lt. Col. Abney, remained principally in reserve. Later, when the division began to shake down to a more perfectly coordinated fighting machine, multiple spearheads of task forces were used in the assault.

Although the division was green in that first engagement, no man faltered or failed to advance toward the objective.

The attack jumped off at 0900 on June 29, and by 1130, Task Force Boudinot reached LaForge-Bois de Bretel where it was ordered to remain. Enemy resistance was stiff; the terrain favored German bazooka teams.

Task Force Parks, reaching a stream north of Villiers Fos-

sard and the right flank of the force, was held up by difficult terrain and frantic enemy resistance.

On the following day both task forces pressed on, stabilized the line and turned it over to the 29th Inf. Div. The Villiers Fossard bulge was denied, but the 3rd Armd. Div. suffered relatively heavy casualties.

### KRAUTS ARE TOUGH

Lt. Col. Nathaniel O. Whitlaw wrote of the action: "We seemed to be stunned by the ferocity of the German small arms and mortar fire, but we collected our wits and advanced in the face of this fire just as we thought that we would do, and showed little self-concern during the remainder of the battle. We pushed on to our objective like veterans. I am sure that these men will give great accounts of themselves in future battles."

Bocage country fighting was bitter; each hedge had to be breached before armor could pass. Because it was impossible to requisition enough versatile tank-dozers, 3rd Armd. Div. engineers designed their own. The Maintenance Bn. constructed a "Rhino" arrangement which could be fitted on light or medium tanks. Battle experience and Yankee ingenuity began to weld the division into a crack fighting unit.

Although the 3rd had been attached to the XIX Corps during its initial action and was soon to revert, Combat Com-



mand Hickey was ordered to an area north of the famous Foret de Cerisy, prepared to counter any penetration on the V Corps front: It was never committed, and on July 7, the 3rd reverted to the XIX Corps, which ordered it to move across the Vire River at Airel to occupy a bridgehead secured by the 30th Inf. Div., then to advance southward toward St. Giles. That night troops of Combat Command "B" (Brig. Gen. John J. Bohn) raced across the Airel bridge under a hell of German artillery fire. Division MP's, disregarding the vicious barrage, clung to their posts directing traffic over the hastily re-constructed bridge.

### FANNING OUT ACROSS THE VIRE

Fanning out across the Vire, Combat Command Bohn was attached to the 30th Inf. Div. Combat Command Hickey received the mission of protecting the corps right flank, and was to attack in the direction of Les Lendes and Le Perrey. At midnight of the 8th, the combat command was attached to the 9th Inf. Div. The cooperation with this division was happily continued throughout much of the campaign in the west.

In the area of St. Jean de Daye, Combat Command Hickey battled a defensive action chiefly against parachutists and other elite units of the Wehrmacht.

On July 15, Col. Truman E. Boudinot assumed command of Combat Command "B," Lt. Col. L. L. Doan became CO of the 32nd Armd. Regt.

To the men of Combat Command Boudinot, a hill called Haute Vents always will remain a bitter memory. Col. Dorance Roysdon, commander of the 33rd Armd. Regt., ordered to take the high ground, delegated the mission to Lt. Col. Rosewell H. King. Because of heavy losses in the previous action, he was able to muster only two light and six medium tanks.

### THEN THE RADIO QUIT

Col. King's radio was shot out and his infantrymen were unable to maintain the rapid advance. Nevertheless, he proceeded to Hill 91, or Haute Vents, and returned to his lines for infantry support the next morning. Under heavy enemy shelling Combat Command "B" held out for three days until finally contacted by advance elements of the 30th Inf. Div. But Col. Roysdon and his small band held Haute Vents, where they defeated the abortive attempt of the 130th Panzer Lehr Div.'s powerful drive toward Isigny to cut off Allied forces on the new beachhead.

The Lehr Div. in spite of its reputedly magnificent equipment took a terrible beating in the Haute Vents, Pont Hebert, and Belle Lande sectors.

The division was beginning to click: the greenness was beginning to wear off.

### WE'RE COMING THROUGH!

ON July 16, both Combat Commands reverted to division control and moved into assembly areas west of St. Jean de Daye. The stage was set under the direction of the VII Corps. Maintenance crews worked furiously. Supplies and troops rolled in from the floating docks below Isigny. Reconnaissance airplanes buzzed overhead. The Kraut was nervous! he had reason to be!

The great armored breakthrough from Normandy into France was the first true showing of American ground power in battle. In the morning hours of July 26, wave after wave of Fortresses and Liberators made the initial assault.

There were probably more planes in the air at one time than ever before in the history of air-ground operations. They came endlessly over the horizon, dropped their bombs, wheeled away. It seemed impossible for any living thing to survive that raging torrent of explosives. No one could



guess the extent of the proposed breakthrough, but orders were given and teams moved out, multiple columns of armor leading.

In the initial stages of the breakthrough west of St. Lo, Combat Command Boudinot spearheaded the attack of the famed 1st Inf. Div. at Marigny, then made a right turn and drove for the high ground around Montuchon, northeast of Coutances and behind enemy lines. After taking its initial objective, it clattered to within sight of Coutances. While tankers of the command pleaded to go forward and seize the city, an order was received to turn back and aid the 1st Inf. Div. to reduce a strongpoint.

When the Combat Command had turned west at Marigny, "B" Battery of the 391st Armd. F.A. Bn. was firing support. The 4th Cav. Sq. was having trouble with the enemy a few hundred yards away. Command of the battery was turned over to a single non-com, and all available personnel was used as infantry against the Germans. Five of the battery's six guns were used for support while the sixth was fired point-blank at the hemmed-in Germans.

Activity encountered by units normally in rear areas is described in the annals of the 486th AA Bn., an attached unit: "From 0030 to 0105 hours the area around the division CP was heavily attacked by enemy aircraft. Flares were dropped directly over the CP and bombs fell throughout the area. No



damage or casualties. During this night the battery commander, Capt. Phillip Shaw, with four or five enlisted men destroyed an enemy tank, several half-tracks, volkwagons, and numerous ammunition and gasoline trucks, killed two enemy soldiers and captured nine. One of the enemy, attacked by an American soldier wielding a hatchet, shouted 'Heil Hitler' and shot himself to death."

In the meantime, Combat Command Hickey had been given the mission of taking Cerisy la Salle, Montpinchon, and the high ground to the east and southeast of Coutances.

Because the enemy had expected such an attack, Combat Command Hickey encountered more opposition than had Boudinot, but with the help of other armored columns to the east and west forced German armor below Roncey. At this point the 2nd Armd. Div. cut the escape gap at St. Denis le Gast while the air forces pummelled the road-bound Nazi vehicles.

From an operational standpoint, it was a combat command "show." This was illustrated by the action of Combat Command Hickey, which, on July 29, was ordered to turn south and seize a crossing of the Seine River at Gavray. Lt. Col. L. L. Doan led his troops across the stream on foot under fire to secure a bridgehead. So fast was the advance that, at Brecey, the speeding Combat Command caught German troops lolling under the trees, drinking wine!

Combat Command

10



Boudinot, attached to the 4th Inf. Div. attacked on Aug. 1 to take the high ground east of Villedieu les Poeles. It received strong opposition and was ordered to cross the See River, move south and east to hold a crossroad at Le Mesnil Adelee. The objective was reached on Aug. 4 after encounters with the 116th Panzer Div., the 363rd Inf. Div. and other forces.

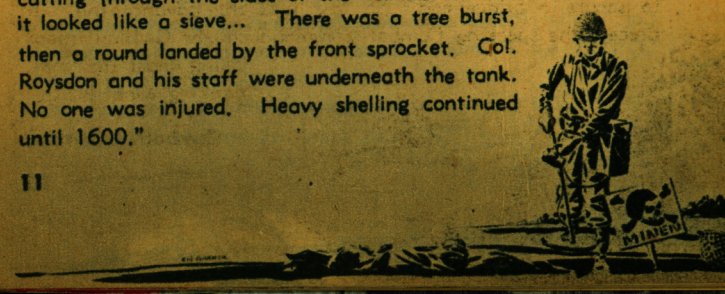
On the 6th, weary of combat and in need of rest, maintenance and rehabilitation, Combat Command Boudinot was ordered to a rest area. Dirty men prepared to wash their bodies and clothing.

Baths never were taken.

On the 7th, the Combat Command was attached to the 30th Div. to repel the German breakthrough attempt to Avranches. Heavy fighting took place around Le Mesnil Adelee and Le Mesnil Tove. The Command was shelled, bombed and attacked by infantry and tanks for five consecutive days.

Official report for Aug. 9 described this fury: "At 1145 Task Force 1 (Col. Roysdon) was bracketed ... expected enemy fire began falling around noon...Lt. Col. King's command half-track exploded. Attempt was made to move Col. Roysdon's CP. A shell struck the half-track, wounding an officer and cutting through the sides of the vehicle so that it looked like a sieve... There was a tree burst, then a round landed by the front sprocket. Col. Roysdon and his staff were underneath the tank. No one was injured. Heavy shelling continued until 1600."

11



Meanwhile, Combat Command Hickey had cut even deeper into German positions and had received its full share of the attack toward Avranches. On Aug. 1, Lt. Col. L. L. Doan's task force was ordered to advance and to seize the high ground in the vicinity of Belle Fontaine, northwest of Mortain. Task Force "Z," commanded by Lt. Col. John Daniels of the 1st Inf. Div., was to advance via Reffuevillie to seize the high ground near Romagny, to the southwest. The command was given the 3rd Bn., 18th Inf. for further support.

During the night of Aug. 2, the advance was held up by a road block, but at dawn Juvigny le Tertre was taken after a severe fight.

Further advance was made on Aug. 5 when Task Force "X" under Col. Doan set out for Le Teilleul. A smaller force was sent to hold Barenton and did not rejoin the command until Aug. 12-13, being for the most part attached to the 2nd Armd. Div.

On Aug. 6, Task Force Doan set out for Ambriers le Grand on the Mayenne River, arriving at 0830 hours. Considerable fighting was necessary but the bridge was seized quickly, and the 1st Inf. Div. pushed across to establish a bridgehead on the east side of the Varenne River. The following day, Col. Walter Richardson's task force moved to positions around ~~St. Mars sur Calmont~~. Except for an outposting operation at Gorrion, this maneuver practically completed Combat Command Hickey activities west of the Mayenne.

## The Forging of a Mighty Weapon

### THE NEW SPEARHEAD EMERGES

**T**HE 3rd rested and licked its wounds. Maj. Gen. Maurice Rose (then Brig. Gen.) had assumed command, and now he reviewed the elements which were to go with him into further battle. What he saw was impressive.

The 3rd Armd. Div. had been activated on April 15, 1941, at Camp Beauregard, La., with a cadre from the 2nd Armd. Div. The first division commander was Brig. Gen. (later Maj. Gen.) Alvan C. Gillem, Jr. Camp Polk, La., was the semi-permanent home of the division from June, 1941 to July, 1942. Then it was the first armored division to move to the Desert Training Center. At the Center, the division was commanded by Maj. Gen. Walton H. Walker, now commander of the XX Corps. Brig. Gen. (later Maj. Gen.) Leroy H. Watson, assumed command of the division on Aug. 22, 1942.

It was also in the southern California desert that the division first operated under the VII Corps, an association that paid off in smashed German armor and complete victory on the Western front of Europe.



In October, 1942, the division moved to Camp Pickett, Va.—ostensibly for overseas departure. However, despite conflicting rumors, the 3rd moved to Indiantown Gap Military Reservation, Pa., in January, 1943, for further and more extensive training. In the latter part of August, the division moved to a staging area at Camp Kilmer, N. J., and embarked for Europe on Sept. 5, 1943. While in England the division used many of the better known ranges, both artillery and tank. It maneuvered widely on Salisbury Plain, and played host to such personages as Lt. Gen. Jacob Devers, Lt. Gen. Omar N. Bradley and, on Jan. 17, Gen. Sir Bernard Montgomery, who announced that he would command American troops in the early stages of the invasion. The division also entertained the Duke of Gloucester, brother of His Majesty, King George VI.

Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, Gen. Montgomery, Air Chief Marshal Tedder and others visited the division, accompanied by approximately 60 newspapermen and cameramen, to watch pre-invasion exercises.

Gen. Bradley paid the division another visit in May, speaking to all officers and men. Shortly thereafter, troops moved out of barracks and hutments into the field.

On D plus 18, after more than three years rigid training, the division landed in Normandy on Omaha Beach and immediately moved to Les Obeaux, below Isigny, where it coiled in readiness for the fight.

Now the men of the 3rd Armored Division were quiet soldiers, weathered and squint-eyed. They had been introduced to war.

They had plunged into action green but confident. They had tasted the bitterness of death, and fear, and near defeat.

Yet these men who were once, in the words of Col. Whitlaw, "stunned by the ferocity" of German defense, came back slugging; to snatch a full measure of victory from the hesitant brink of disaster.

They had gone to war with the good natured confidence of American sportsmen, and had learned to play for keeps—to hate the enemy. These men had arrived in the arena of war, hard and ready. By that token they had survived.

Now the tankers and tank destroyers, the artillerymen and infantrymen of the 3rd Armd. Div. had something more to back up the promise of their arms: they were schooled in the subtleties of war.

### SPEARHEAD IS A TEAM!

**N**OW it was their turn to crack the whip. The division was no longer a collection of separate elements: the "Spearhead" was a team!

Proof was soon forthcoming. The British Army, driving south from Caen, and the US First, smashing east, had trapped a sizeable part of Field Marshal von Kluge's Seventh Army in the Falaise-Argentan pocket. 3rd Armd. was ordered to close the escape gap.

On Aug. 13, Combat Command Hickey moved out in two columns leading the division attack. The axis of advance was Mayenne—Pré en Pail—Carrouges—Ranes—Fromental.

With Task Force Doan on the south, and Task Force Richardson to the north, Combat Command Hickey moved through Couptrain and Javron, clearing these towns of the 728th German Inf. Regt. The command halted its first day's drive with more than fifty miles of ground covered!

The 3rd Armd. Div. had become a perfectly oiled striking machine. In comparison with this day's action the German blitzkrieg of 1941 looked like a midget auto race in slow motion!

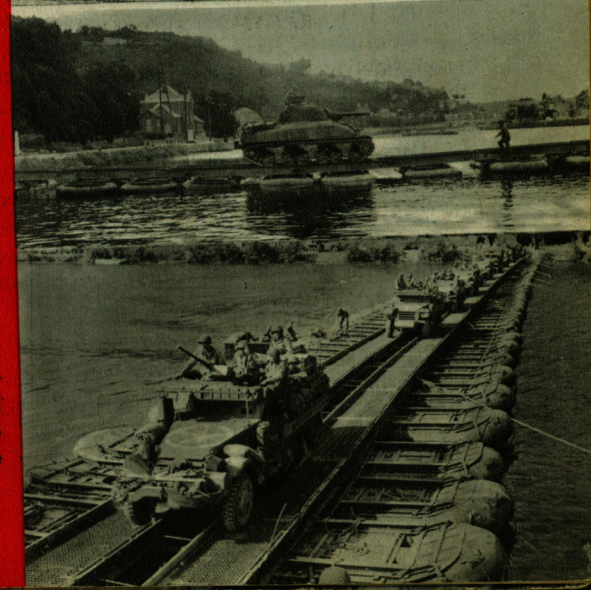
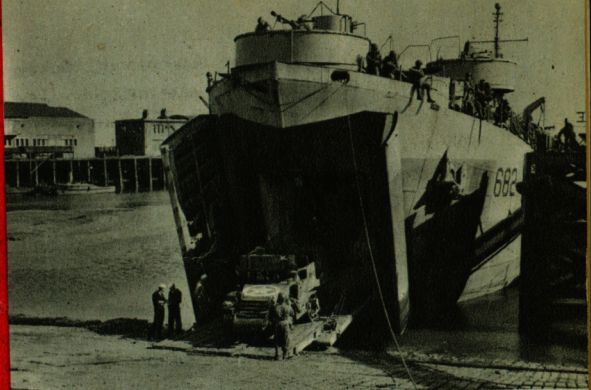
#### RANES — FROMENTAL

Heavy fighting broke out beyond Pré en Pail. Carrouges, in the late afternoon of Aug. 14, was a picture of war at its grim height. German vehicles by the score testified to the effectiveness of the Spearhead.

Along the Carrouges-Ranes road, armor of both sides had suffered. Panther-tank and Sherman alike were left on that bitter boulevard, wrecked and burning. Stench of death and flames filled the air. French houses burned sullenly and aircraft dropped flares above the column.

That night, Task Force Richardson reached the outskirts of Ranes. There was a minimum of shell fire. Men of the command little suspected that dawn would bring some of the most vicious fighting they had yet experienced.

#### Payoff on long training — departure from Southampton



The Rhine as our goal, we crossed many rivers, the Meuse, the Seine

SOUTHAMPTON

AACHEN STOLBERG

BERLIN

LIEGE

EUPEN ROTGEN

VERVIERS

MONS

NAMUR

CHARLEROI

MAUBEUGE

OLA CAPELLE

PARLE

LAON

SOISSONS

CHATEAU THIERRY

MEAUX

PARIS

OFF LIMITS

CHARTRES

CORBEIL

COURVILLE

FROMENTEL

RANES

MORTAIN

PRE-EN-PAIL

AMBRIERES

MAYENNE

SIGNY

VILLIERS FOSSARD

COUTANCES

VILLEDIEU

LES POELLES

CHERBOURG

MEMORIES OF MORE THAN 700 MILES

of Spearheading





Enthusiastic crowds welcomed us to France and Belgium



Mark IVs like this, and Vs and Tigers were our souvenirs

On the left flank, Task Force Doan, coiling at Joue du Bois, engaged dismounted German troops throughout the night and in the morning moved up to seize Ranès.

The balance of Combat Command Hickey with a battalion from the 60th Inf. Regt., engaged in mopping up activities. Counter-attacks of the 1st and 9th SS Panzer Divs. were repulsed with severe losses to the enemy.

The advance northward was resumed. AT guns and artillery impeded progress. The German soldier at Ranès-Fromental was the best that Hitler could put into the field. He fought well, but we fought better.

#### SPEARHEAD PUNCHES VON KLUGE

The Spearhead Division ground forward and took Fromental on Aug. 17, lost it the same day, smashed back in a third burst of fury. That day, an estimated 1200 enemy vehicles passed across the front of the division, receiving deadly artillery fire and direct attack from the air. The Battle of the Argentan-Falaise gap was nearly over, but it had not yet entirely spent its fury. Many military observers agreed that this action was the true "Battle for France." After Field Marshal von Kluge's elite elements were crushed to bits here, the Wehrmacht never again attempted to slug it out with allied forces in this country.

Individual performances were faultless. Tank commanders drew straws—the winner leading the attack.

Fighting was often at 70 to 100 yards. One TD neutralized two Panther tanks at the negligible range of 25 yards. Two shots pierced the thick frontal armor of the vaunted Mark Vs. The TD commander himself was killed when he dismounted from his vehicle to aid the enemy wounded.

Tank Destroyers of the 703rd TD Bn. proved extremely valuable on road block positions where they helped smash German armored counterattacks.

On the afternoon of Aug. 18, the Spearhead Division, represented by tanker Sgt. Donald Ekdahl of the 33rd Armd. Regt. met advance elements of British armor on the road near Putanges. The trap at last was closed.

For the 3rd Armd. Div., however, the heaviest fighting was over. A great armored division had found itself in battle. Weary and combat-battered, the 3rd might still proudly recollect that it had blitzed through enemy lines at exceptional speed, that it had slugged gun to gun with the finest elements of a German army—and that after it was all over, the German army in question no longer existed.

The division moved overland to the vicinity of Courville and Chateauneuf, between Dreux and Chartres and on Aug. 24 rolled again, this time to Corbeil and Melun. Preparations were made for the Seine crossing.

From this point on it was a mad dash.



## The Battle is For Land and Water

### FROM THE SEINE ONWARD

**T**HE march through northern France was a nightmare without benefit of sleep. The entire pursuit of disorganized remnants of a Nazi army was a test to determine which had more stamina—men or machines. Spearhead men, trained to care for their machines first, served the iron monsters with the deference due to pagan gods.

In the headlong dash, supply trains accomplished marvels of movement. Often these "rear echelon" troops were forced to fight a path through enemy-held territory to deliver their important cargoes of gas, ammo and rations. At one time, the trucks were hauling gas 200 miles overland.

The 143rd Armd. Sig. Co. strung 1200 miles of wire by the closing of the Argentan-Falaise gap alone! In the sweep across France an average of 1000 radio and personal dispatches per day were handled. The mileage of the signal men was eight and ten times the total distance covered by the division in attack.

Throughout the entire operation north of the Seine, the



division was inspired by the thought that it was the spearhead of the First United States Army, and the phrase: "Call me Spearhead" became popular.

Crossing of the Seine was begun on the evening of Aug. 25 by leading elements of Combat Command Boudinot and was completed before darkness of the following day. One of the bridges had been constructed by XX Corps troops but our 23rd Armd. Eng. Bn. constructed a 540 foot steel trestle south of Corbeil ready for use at daybreak on the 26th.

### CONFIDENCE PACKS POWER

Combat Command Hickey led the advance with Boudinot on the left. After crossing the river, the command moved to Chasse en Brie, in two columns, driving through the 48th German Inf. Div. On the following day, closely pursuing the retreating enemy and overrunning several rearguards, the command passed through Coulommiers and crossed the Marne, halting for the night just north of that historic river.

A detachment was sent to Chateau Thierry, and the controversy as to who was first to enter the town began. The commander of the division's CIC detachment and the photo detachment commander believe the honor is theirs. They had entered the town about 1500 hours on Aug. 28, and obtained from the Mayor a statement reading, "Second taking of Chateau Thierry by the Americans; all our gratitude." On their way into town, the two officers passed the 4th Cav. Co., later met entering soldiers of the 87th Rcn. Sq.

## Spearhead Changed Signals to Win

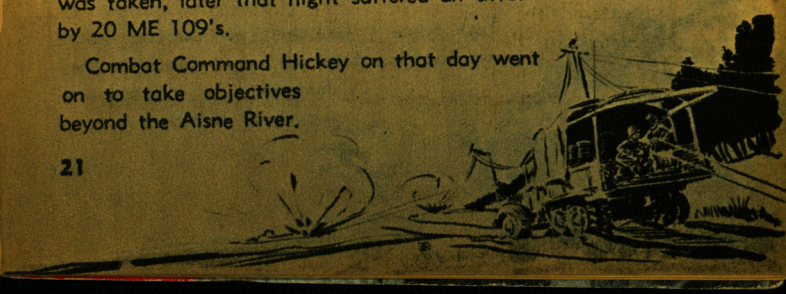
### AND THEN THE MARNE

**B**Y midafternoon of the 27th, Combat Command Boudinot had advanced across the Marne and, in an enveloping movement from the west, captured Meaux, furthest point of the German advance in World War I. The 9th Panzer Div., 48th Inf. Div., and security battalions were encountered and routed here.

On Aug. 28, one of the busiest days in the division's history, Combat Command Boudinot plunged on toward Soissons. So rapid was the advance that the enemy front line in many cases became only the width of the road.

Many German units closed in behind each advancing column, but they were doomed to destruction. Result, however, was that every element of the division, including even the trains, became a combat unit. Soissons was taken, later that night suffered an attack by 20 ME 109's.

Combat Command Hickey on that day went on to take objectives beyond the Aisne River.



Meanwhile all had not been peaceful at the division CP. On Aug. 26, after crossing the Seine, it reached Quincy, but not before withdrawing Germans were encountered.

The following day the CP caught up with a German supply column at Brie Compté Robert, took part in a fight, and moved to Mangy le Hongre. At dawn the CP awoke to the familiar rattle of German machine gun fire. An enemy convoy attempting to drive through the area was destroyed.

### HOW TO CATCH A TRAIN

The shooting-up of three trains in the vicinity of Braisne and Soissons on Aug. 28 was a division highlight. By coincidence both combat commands participated. "B" Battery of the 486th AA Bn., attached to the 67th F. A. Bn., fired on the engine of one 42-car train at Braisne, stopped it after putting a 37mm shell through the engine boiler and raking the cars with .50 caliber machine-gun fire.

Elements of the 32nd Armd. Regt. of Combat Command Hickey stopped another train at Braisne at about 2000 hours, and engaged Mark VI Tiger tanks loaded on flat cars.

Task Force 1 (Lovely) of Combat Command Boudinot took part in a third episode, destroying a freight just outside of Soissons.

22



Villiers Cottrets, which Combat Command Boudinot had passed, was reoccupied by the Germans on Aug. 29, impeding the division advance and resulting in the heaviest action on the corps front that day. By nightfall, however, the CP was located outside Soissons. A German ammunition dump estimated at 4000 truckloads, was taken at Villiers Cottrets.

On Aug. 29, the crossings of the Aisne River were secured. Both Combat Commands advanced to take high ground to the northeast of the river, Boudinot-liberated Laon as well. Chief enemy resistance on the 30th was reported in the vicinity of Montcornet and Rozoy, with the 4th Cav. Gp. active in reconnoitering these areas.

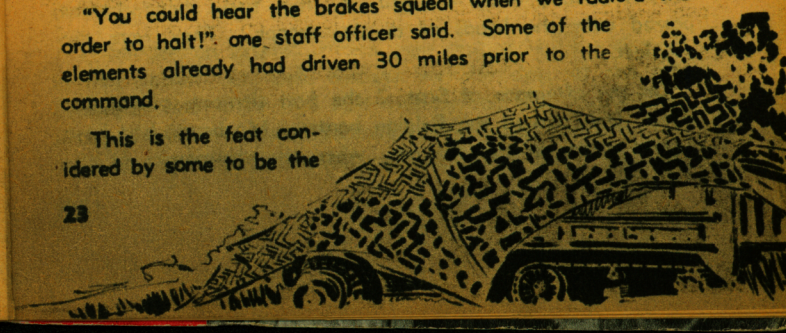
### NEW DIRECTION: EAST TO NORTH!

Given the mission of taking Sedan and Charleville on Aug. 31, the Combat Commands moved out, Hickey on the right, Boudinot on the left, division reserves in the center. At 1315 hours word came from the CG of the VII Corps. The direction of the advance had been completely changed, from due east to north!

"You could hear the brakes squeal when we radio'd the order to halt!" one staff officer said. Some of the elements already had driven 30 miles prior to the command.

This is the feat considered by some to be the

23



most spectacular ever performed by the division. At the time the change in direction of attack was given, two of the six columns already had engaged the enemy. The entire change in plan was accomplished by voice and radio without the writing of a word other than entries into journals.

Mons was the new objective. Combat Command Boudinot was to advance to Vervins, Hickey to Seraincourt and Rozy sur Serre. Combat Command Boudinot reached Marle that very day.

A six-pronged drive was launched toward Mons on Sept. 1 with Combat Commands on a broad front, from left to right, Boudinot, Hickey, and a separate command to the right, which centered around the 36th Armd. Inf. Regt.

Combat Command Hickey pushed on to Avesnes while Boudinot pounded through Vervins, passed LaCapelle, and by nightfall was due west of Avesnes. Several river crossings were made during the day, and air support had been called to bomb a number of enemy columns. Elements of the 36th Infantry's Combat Command had been delayed, but late in the day reached Hirson.

In the early hours of Sept. 2, the first flying bombs passed over the heads of division troops. They were not the last.

On the afternoon of Sept. 2 the first elements of the 3rd Armd. Div. crossed the Belgian border. Maubeuge had been passed earlier in the day and, when the commander of the

task force had been asked, via radio, whether the enemy was there, he replied that there were so many joyous civilians on the streets that there wasn't room for Germans!

### THREE GENERALS, 40,000 TROOPS

**T**HE second great battle for Mons was not anticipated by either the Wehrmacht or the American First Army, and yet it probably decided the outcome of future battles more profoundly than had any other action in which this division had engaged. The estimated 40,000 German troops cut off at Mons by this division and further mauled and rounded up by the ensuing 1st Inf. Div. were attempting to retreat to the Siegfried Line. Their organization shattered, and without communication, the vanguard of this huge force ran into road blocks of the 3rd Armd. Div. on Sept. 3. The debacle that followed was complete.

The Spearhead captured nearly 8000 troops at Mons, killed many more. The 1st Inf. Div., supporting the armor, captured 17,000 more. One platoon of the 703rd TD Bn., Co. "A," destroyed 20 enemy armored vehicles in six hours on a single road block!

Three German general officers were captured by the division in this battle! Lt. Gen. Rudiger von Heyking, of the 6th Luftwaffe Field Div., who said that he had been "completely surprised by our forces" because he had been advised that there was a "15 mile escape gap" south of Mons; Maj. Gen.



Hubertus von Aulock, ex-commander of a kampfgroupe which was supposed to defend Paris; Gen. Karl Wahle, once garrison commander of the city of Hamburg.

Prisoners constituted a vexing problem. Maj. Charles Kapes, Provost Marshal, set up a PW enclosure in an old sugar factory close to the fighting area. With prisoners pouring in by the hundreds, and nearly 4000 already confined, Maj. Kapes and a force of 16 division MP's and 27 infantrymen from the 1st Div. waged a pitched battle against attacking German soldiers, not only turning back the attack but capturing 300 more of the befuddled supermen!

### ON TO GERMANY!

**B**Y noon of Sept. 4 matters had become somewhat stabilized around Mons and the division pushed on to Namur: Combat Command Boudinot on the right, Hickey on the left.

Task Force Mills (Maj. Herbert Mills) of Combat Command Boudinot reached Namur that day. Combat Command Hickey bivouaced that night east of Charleroi, and Combat Command Boudinot, which had allotted 45 minutes for passage through the city, took two hours and 45 minutes. Advance had been delayed by the tumultuous welcome of the citizens.

Next day all elements of the division were in the vicinity of Namur and that night engineers pushed two bridges across the Sambre and Meuse Rivers. The first bridge measured

120 feet long; the second, constructed in seven hours and 20 minutes, was built under the cover of darkness. Combat Command Boudinot's Task Force (King) was detached to aid the 9th Div. at Dinant.

Terrain east of Mons was a far cry from the wide plains of northern France. In Belgium narrow valleys with swift running streams split precipitous wooded hills. Densely populated and highly industrial, the valleys were capable—if properly manned—of easy defense.

Liege was the new objective. By nightfall, Huy, with the Meuse bridges intact, was in our hands and Combat Command Hickey was within quick calling distance at Antheit, and Boudinot's leading elements were already beyond the town. Task Force Hogan encountered stiff resistance from by-passed troops.

It was apparent the Germans were preparing hasty defenses along the river route. Next day Combat Command Boudinot, on the south side of the river, turned to the right and the high ground, and by nightfall Lt. Col. Lovelady's task force was on its objective, the southeast side of Liege. So surprised was the enemy by the flanking move that their guns were pointed the wrong way.

The night of Sept. 7, Gen. Konrad Heinrich, commander of the 89th German Inf. Div., was killed as he attempted to drive through a roadblock near Liege in a sporty convertible cabriolet.

He was the fourth German general for whom the division had accounted.

On the 8th Lt. Col. Hogan's force with supporting infantry cleared Liege of the enemy while the engineers constructed 510 feet of treadway bridge across the river in darkness. Combat Command Hickey meanwhile mopped up on the north side of the river.

Gen. Bock von Wulffingen, a fifth German general, was captured on the 8th.

### VERVIERS ENDS LULL

With Verviers the objective, Combat Command Boudinot set out at 1100 hours on the 9th, met organized opposition for the first time in days. Meanwhile Combat Command Hickey crossed to the east of the Meuse, advancing to the high ground north of Dison also against opposition. Our air attacked German columns stretching from Louveigne to Limbourg, and by that night leading elements of the 33rd Armd. Regt. were in Pepinster.

The following day Combat Command Hickey reached Limbourg where it was temporarily stopped. Boudinot found many felled trees beyond Theux but advanced and took Verviers. At Theux was found a German military warehouse

filled with foodstuffs and tobacco, providing 3rd Div. men with cigars. That day the division CP moved to Verviers.

Eupen, falling to Combat Command Boudinot on the 11th, was occupied by the infantry. Combat Command Hickey knifed through Lohirville and Welkenraedt against constant pressure to an objective northwest of Eupen. The 83rd Armd. Rcn. Bn. screened the division's movement, and air cover was provided.

## American Armor Crashes West Wall

### THERE WERE BITTER GLANCES

**V**FOR-VICTORY signs, flowers and "vive l'Amerique" declarations disappeared. Eupen was a sullen, paradoxical town. A few Belgian flags hung from the windows; the white banner of surrender trailed in others. This was border country, a place of conflicting emotions, bitter hatred—and suspense. Last stop in Belgium. The somber-eyed German civilians of Eupen glanced furtively at the triumphant armor of America and wondered whether the vaunted West Wall could possibly halt the avalanche.

Immediately, Gen. Rose ordered reconnaissance to patrol the routes toward the Siegfried Line, to reconnoiter for crossing points and to determine the strength of the enemy.

Recon elements of Combat Command Boudinot set out at 0800 on Sept. 12. Several routes were surveyed, and one finally chosen. The advance was barred by road blocks of imbedded steel rails and gates of heavy cables strung across the road. The obstacles were covered by fire from heavy pillboxes on the flanks.

Excellent coordination between tanks, infantry, engineers and artillery, quickly reduced these strongpoints. While artillery and tanks maintained heavy fire, engineers attached to the task force moved forward to remove the blocks. Tanks rumbled through the gap and at 1451 hours leading elements of Col. Lovelady's task force were on German soil. It was the first invasion of Germany in force since Napoleon. Resistance in Raetgen was light. The 83rd Rcn. Bn. occupied the town, outposted it immediately.

### INSIDE HITLER'S REICH

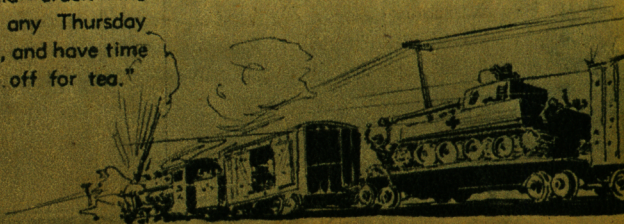
Meanwhile, Combat Command Hickey also had plunged into Germany proper, and on the night of Sept. 12-13 had assembled in the concealment of the Aachen-Eynatten Wald. Patrols reconnoitered the dragon's teeth of the line during the night, and the attack jumped off at 1000 hours under the direct supervision of Col. Doan. Infantry lunged for-

ward through the dragon's teeth, followed by engineers and tanks. Their combined efforts breached the first line and led to a heavy exchange of fire. A number of 3rd Armd. Div. tanks were knocked out and, for a time, the attack faltered. But under the inspired leadership of Col. Doan, the task force rallied and stabilized its gains. Sept. 14 was spent in mopping up the area and in reconnoitering the second line of defenses.

### SEINE TO SIEGFRIED—18 DAYS

On Sept. 15 the second line of the Siegfried was breached and the town of Busbach cleared. Opposition was extremely heavy. Artillery and mortar fire became intense, but the command moved forward. Fresh enemy troops were encountered for the first time. Fortunately, the rapid advance, plus the destruction of the large German force at Mons, combined to prevent the enemy from properly manning the West Wall.

Combat Command Boudinot also had attacked the outer defenses of the line on Sept. 13 with similar success. Division engineers, invaluable in the breaching of the line said that the Siegfried defenses were not a particularly intricate engineering problem. "With proper covering fire," said Col. L. G. Foster, "we could crack the Siegfried any Thursday afternoon, and have time to knock off for tea."



The 3rd Armd. Spearhead Div. had wound up one of the most amazing armored force operations in the history of warfare. Eighteen days from the Seine to the Siegfried! And now, in a final, powerful burst of effort the division had smashed completely through that storied West Wall into the confines of greater Germany. With the 1st, the 4th, and the 9th Inf. Divs., all elite units of American power, these men who had first grappled with the enemy only two months before, had now become part of the "First Team of the First Army." They were a power in the world. They were the steel nearest to Germany's heart.

Behind the 3rd lay the long, bitterly-contested trail from Normandy and the never to be forgotten dead of the division. Before the 3rd lay the Third Reich of Adolf Hitler. The Spearhead paused, with its steel point unerringly aimed at Berlin.

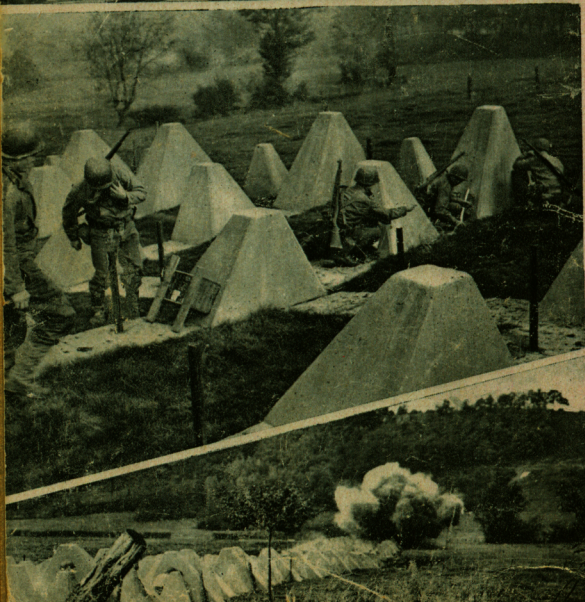
## AUTOGRAPHS...

The deeds of  
brave men were  
well honored  
by Gen. Rose





Highways, by-ways and even streets were our battlegrounds



Our magic turned Siegfried dragon's teeth into Nazi tombstones