

**Spearheading with the
Third Armored Division**



In saluting the victorious men of Our Third Armored "Spearhead" Division I repeat the last sentence of General Rose's greetings in the first edition of our history "Call Me Spearhead", "With Divine assistance, little can delay and nothing can stop us"

In exemplifying this belief he paid the supreme sacrifice while leading us on to another objective. In tribute to his memory, his great leadership, his high ideals as a soldier and as a man; and to our other brave dead I dedicate this, our second "Spearhead" booklet.

Those of you who are "oldtimers" and remember Omaha Beach, Isigny, Villers Fossard, Monpichon, Fromental and on; and those of you who later became "Spearheaders" at Stolberg, "The Bulge", Cologne or Paderborn, all have tirelessly and bravely carried on in the traditions of our great division. Your rewards are the thanks of a grateful people and the knowledge of a job well done.

Abner M. Kieckhefer

Brigadier General, Commanding

Name _____
Date enlisted _____
Attached to 3rd Armd _____
Battle Actions _____
Citations _____

Passed by Censor For Mailing Home.

FOREWORD

This booklet, along with its preceding volume, CALL ME SPEARHEAD, is in no sense a complete history of the 3rd Armored Division. Rather, it is a brief narrative touching the high points of this organization's campaigning in Europe. For that reason, few individual soldiers are mentioned. For the purposes of identification, combat command and task force leaders names are used throughout.

Neither is there sufficient room in this booklet to pay proper homage to the integral units and attached battalions which have, by their actions, made the 3rd Armored „Spearhead“ Division a famous American fighting force.

This copy of SPEARHEADING is printed and distributed for the men of the command, the plain, everyday GI-Joes who met Jerry face to face, challenged him, and then beat him into complete defeat! It's written for the men who won the war in the west, and it is designed to tell partially the immense and wonderful story of how the job was done.

Table of Contents

Chapter I

Stolberg to the Roer page 3

Chapter II

Ardennes Winter Campaign page 9

Chapter III

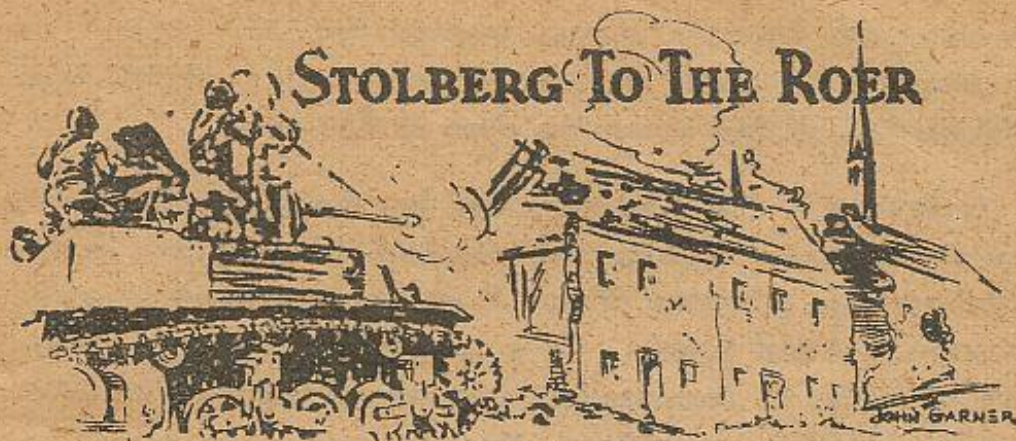
Drive to the Rhine page 20

Chapter IV

The Ruhr — Rose Pocket page 29

Chapter V

Drive to the Elbe page 43



CHAPTER I

— Pause On The Western Front —

When the 3rd Armored „Spearhead“ Division ground to a halt in the Stolberg-Mausbach area in mid-September of 1944, it was in a last burst of effort. The big steel machine was running on nerve and mechanical miracles. Vehicles needed maintenance. Men were haggard with fatigue. But the 3rd went on through the Siegfried line and hit Stolberg, took half of it — and paused. That pause lasted for nearly four months of heavy attrition and was climaxed by the sudden breakthrough of von Rundstedt's Christmas offensive in Belgium.

In September the world, and evidently Germany too, gasped as General Courtney Hodges' First United States Army, paced by the free wheeling „Spearhead“ smashed completely through the Westwall. Later, when the division blasted

its way into Cologne, it was learned that city fathers had prepared to surrender the town in September, and that Nazi officials had all fled across the river at that time.

However true this statement may be, the fact remains that the 3rd Armored Division had reached its utter limit in the great summer offensive drive. It was in sore need of maintenance, rest and supply. Of a near total 400 tanks authorized by tables of organization, only about 100 were in satisfactory operating condition. This was not at all surprising since the armor had traveled nearly 700 miles from Normandy without proper care or maintenance.

So, although division morale was high, the 3rd was forced to halt and lick the wounds of battle. One factor in this decision was the meeting with the 12th German Infantry Division, a unit which had been re-equipped in West Prussia and rushed to the battle zone in Stolberg. Actually, officers and men of the „Spearhead“ expected this halt to be of short duration. That hope was unfounded. Long and bitter fighting lay ahead before the 3rd was destined to reach Germany's storied Rhine.

— The Divided City —

Stolberg was a divided city, half in German hands, and half occupied by American troops. While the stalemate continued, VII Corps prepared for its assault on Aachen. The 3rd Armored Division held a narrow sector, Stolberg to

Mausbach, excepting for the period from October 25 to November 10, when the 47th Regimental Combat Team of the 9th Division, and the 294th Engineer Combat Battalion were attached, during which time the zone extended through Hurtgen Forest to the V Corps boundary.

During this build-up period, troops holding the line were rotated so that replacements could be trained. German buildings were used as billets, for late fall brought miserable weather conditions. The division CP was established in the Prym house at Stolberg, with Combat Command Hickey at Breinig, Combat Command Boudinot between Breinig and Kornelimunster, and rear echelon at Raaren. CC Howze was near the division CP.

Apart from nocturnal air raids and artillery fire, the front was quiet. Military Government, formerly Civil Affairs, had a busy period, though. Being the first to operate in Germany, there were no precedents upon which to base decisions. Probably the actions of the 3rd Armored Division military government forces in the Stolberg-Breinig-Kornelimunster area set the pattern for future dealings with German civilians in the soon to be occupied Reich. It was a good example. German civilians were tired of the war and, in the main, peaceful and cooperative, albeit a little astonished at the non-fraternization policy.

The fall of Aachen was of general interest in October, and the 3rd played a small part in this operation. Task Force Hogan was committed in the western reaches of the city, attached to the 1st Infantry Division. Hogan seized

strategic Louisberg Hill on October 19, working with the 26th Infantry. His men took over 700 prisoners.

— Yard By Yard —

By November 15, the „Spearhead“ was ready to attack on Corps order. Intelligence had learned, through prisoners of war, that the 47th German Infantry Division was preparing to relieve the wearied and much shelled 12th. It was an opportune time for American action.

On November 16, Combat Command Boudinot jumped off toward the Hamich-Hastenrath ridge. Supporting the attack, in clear weather, Eighth Air Force bombers hit the Eschweiler-Lagerwehe area as the drive was launched. Combat Command Hickey supported the 104th Infantry Division on the left.

Within 24 minutes of his H-Hour, Colonel Lovelady's forces were on their objective in Kottenich. Task Force Mills was held up by a cleverly concealed mine field, but was on its objective in Scherpenseel and, excepting for the Hastenrath area, had completely mopped up his sector by noon of the 18th. On that day, Lt. Colonel Mills was killed and Colonel John Welborn took command of the force. By November 21st, the division was „pinched out“ by the 104th and 1st Infantry Divisions. It had been a slow, bloody, but extensive fight.

During the period from November 24 to 26, elements of Combat Command Hickey attacked the enemy from positions east of Eschweiler to secure high ground between Langer-

wehe and Frenz. Mud and antitank fire slowed the armor, but Task Force Richardson, with the 2nd Battalion of the 47th Infantry attached, plus air support, struggled to its objective.

Mines were a constant threat in the mud and near-static fighting of this front. One engineer platoon under Lt. Edmund J. Socha, cleared more than 1,000 of the explosives in three days without sustaining casualties among his own men even though they were under constant mortar and artillery fire.

In the last stages of the push to the Roer, a little stream which was vexing because its levels could be controlled so efficiently, Combat Command Howze jumped off on December 10, with Task Force Kane going to Echtz, and Task Force Hogan taking Geich and Obergeich. The two task forces, with the 1st Battalion of the 60th Infantry, then cleared Hoven on the banks of the Roer, slugging out a decision over tanks, AT guns and artillery opposition.

During the period of slow inching forward, VII Corps had set up a rest camp in Verviers which was visited by many of the division personnel. Although the entire „Spearhead“ area was under constant enemy artillery fire, periodic air raids, and seemed to be a V-1 robot alley, the men attended to laundry, repaired their vehicles and constructed more comfortable log-covered dugouts. Division engineers repaired and kept operating the Stolberg water system. The local citizenry became accustomed to the sight of olive drab uniforms, and the days of blitzkrieg warfare seemed

to have come to a complete halt. The scenery began to be reminiscent of the western front of 1918!

The calm was deceptive. Suddenly, one evening, electrifying news came clamoring over the lines of communication. One week before Christmas, 1944, total war enveloped the „Spearhead“ as never before in its flamboyant career!

ARDENNES WINTER CAMPAIGN



CHAPTER II

— The „Bulge!“ —

The front suddenly erupted in an action that shocked the allied world. German General Field Marshal von Rundstedt, generally accepted as the Reich's most able military leader, had gambled most of his remaining western reserves in a bold stroke to smash completely through allied lines of communication and supply feeding the Anglo-American armies. The great counter-offensive swept into the Ardennes on December 16, broke through a thin American line and began to swiftly exploit initial gains. That Jerry was capable of such a counter-offensive was quite generally conceded. Intelligence knew that the Sixth SS and Fifth Panzer Armies had been out of the line. The question remaining was this: how much power can the enemy muster, and where will the blow fall? Now, the 3rd Armored Division, and other units of the First and Third Armies, were to have the answers delivered in hot steel and were to experience the full

fury of a Nazi force which held, for a horribly swaying moment in history, the initiative of battle.

— Hold That Tiger —

The „Spearhead“ Division picked up its tracks in a hurry, and roared out of the Stolberg salient. First to go to the threatened area was Combat Command Hickey, which was detached to the V Corps, on December 18, to defend the Eupen area. There, the command rounded up parachutists and remained in Corps reserve until attached to division on December 21 in the Grandmenil area.

To Combat Command Boudinot went a grim task. Attached initially to V Corps for the defence of Verviers, it was immediately switched to the XVIII Airborne Corps upon arriving at its assembly area and, working with the 30th Infantry Division, helped create and eliminate the famed „La Gleize Pocket“ which resulted in so much destruction to the 1st SS LEIBSTANDARTE ADOLF HITLER Panzer Division, one of Germany's elite of the elite.

On December 20, Task Force Lovelady, moving south from Pont de Lorraine, encountered and destroyed an enemy column, set up a road block, met opposition at a junction near Trois Ponts, established another road block, and a third at Grand Coo. At this point, Lovelady was ordered to move east from Petit Coo to Parfondry, an operation bent on the retaking of Stavelot.

At Parfondry, Task Force Lovelady found evidence of German atrocities in the bodies of murdered Belgians, women, children and the aged. And, in this town, the

enemy cut off the route of Lovelady's entrance plus his route to the road block near Trois Ponts, where Major George Stallings was in command. It was not until the 24th that the junction of these two forces was made.

Meanwhile, Task Force McGeorge had attacked south from LaReid on December 20, using two columns, with Battle Group Jordan given the mission of taking Stoumont and joining McGeorge at LaGleize. After attachment to the 119th Infantry, Jordan's force aided in the taking of the town. The two groups attacked LaGleize on the 24th, and entered after destroying 26 tanks, four self propelled guns, and taking 150 prisoners.

On the 25th, Christmas day, Combat Command Boudinot assembled near Spa, and reverted to division control.

Meanwhile, after Combat Command Hickey and Combat Command Boudinot had been detached, the remainder of the division began a „hell for leather“ march to the Hotton-Manhay area on December 19, with only Combat Command Howze and the 83rd Armored Reconnaissance Battalion left under division control.

By noon of the 20th, these units had arrived, and were given the mission of securing the road from Manhay to Houffalize. Task Force Kane was given the highway as a route of advance. Task Force Orr: Erezee, Amonines, Dochamps and Samree, and Task Force Hogan a secondary road parallel and east of the Ourthe River. This small force, actually one third of the division, was attempting to cover an arc of 15 miles cut by more than 30 roads and trails!

Heavy fighting broke out around Samree and Dochamps.

The road junction south of Manhay on the Houffalize road was also a hot corner. Task Force Hogan, ordered to seize the crossings of the Ourthe between Gouvy and Houffalize, met heavy defences and was forced to pull back to Bette. Short of gasoline, Hogan holed up in Marcouray where he organized a strong perimeter of defence based on high ground. He was shortly surrounded and faced with the threat of complete annihilation.

Combat Command Hickey was re-attached to the division on December 21, and began moving into the Grandmenil area. The 83rd Armored Field Artillery Battalion had been attached the previous day. On December 22, the 1st Battalion of the 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment and the 643rd Tank Destroyer Battalion were attached.

Task Force Doan was ordered to cut the Marche-Bastogne road, and Combat Command Howze, which had established a road block in the Soy area, was reinforced. On this day, Task Force Kane, holding a position 1,000 yards north of Dochamps, and Task Force Orr, reinforced, ground forward to take Amonines.

On December 23, the Division was further strengthened by the 290th Regimental Combat Team of the 75th Infantry Division, the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion, and the 188th Field Artillery Battalion. Task Force Doan was attached to the 84th Infantry Division, and the 3rd reverted to VII Corps after being with the XVIII Airborne Corps for several days.

Task Force Richardson took over Kane's road block, which had been cut by the Germans. Hogan remained surrounded in Marcouray.

With the attachment of the 289th Regimental Combat Team of the 75th Division, the 730th Field Artillery Battalion, two companies of the 87th Chemical Battalion (4.2 mortars) and the return of Combat Command Boudinot on the following day, General Rose had under his command a force approaching corps strength. In addition to the organic elements of the division there were two complete regimental combat teams, two battalions of parachutists, two companies of 4.2 mortars, four battalions of artillery and two TD battalions.

— The Battered Spearhead Holds —

On December 24, knowing that the German was to continue his attack, it was ordered to stabilize the line. To straighten the defensive position, Combat Command Howze was ordered to advance. It was also necessary to withdraw Richardson's road block to narrow the Manhay-Grandmenil sector. As Combat Command „B“ of the 7th Armored Division was going through Manhay, eight enemy tanks and some infantry managed to get behind Richardson's road block and into the town. Richardson withdrew, having only light tanks, and ordered Major Brewster at the road block, to fall back to Malempre. Caught on the move by fire from both sides, Brewster quickly lost two of his four tanks. He destroyed the remaining vehicles and came out on foot.

Task Force Hogan, still surrounded hopelessly, was running out of ammunition and medical supplies as well as gasoline. Several attempts at supply by air had failed, the parachuted materiel falling into enemy hands. The 54th Armored Field Artillery Battalion had attempted to fire shells

packed with medical supplies in on the beleaguered forces, but were unable to do so.

After refusing an ultimatum to surrender, Hogan ordered all vehicles destroyed. He and his men, the famed „400“, infiltrated through enemy lines on Christmas night, to reach American positions after a 14 hour march through German territory.

On December 26, Kane's force was withdrawn. The line was secure. Combat Command Boudinot relieved Combat Command Howze in the Soy area on December 27, and defences were further improved. In front of the „Spearhead“ Division at this time were miles of wire and hundreds of anti-tank mines. Our armor was dug-in, ready to defend.

— Rundstedt Loses The Gamble —

There was a short breathing space in which to take stock of the situation. Certainly von Rundstedt's great gamble had failed, but by a margin too close for comfort. Committed here against the 3rd Armored Division had been: the 2nd SS DAS REICH Panzer Division, in the Manhay-Grandmenil sector and, on the night of December 27, the 12th SS HITLER JUGEND Panzer Division in the Samree-Dochamps area. The Manhay north-south road was the boundary between the Sixth SS Panzer Army on the east, and the Fifth Panzer Army on the west. Their avowed intentions were a powerful drive to Liege and then a sweep to Antwerp coordinated with a curving thrust to take Aachen. Because divisions like the 3rd Armored fought to the last cartridge and the last drop of gasoline, Jerry ground to a halt in flame and death and destruction.

There were the usual heroic small actions. One of these, an event which played no small part in halting von Rundstedt's drive, was the engagement at Holton, beginning on December 21. Here, the division had left a small force of headquarters and 143rd Armored Signal Company personnel, a few MP's of Major Charles Kapes' detachment, some infantry of the 36th Armored Infantry Regiment, and a few men of the 23rd Armored Engineer Battalion.

The force was later joined by a platoon each of tanks from G Company of the 32nd Armored Regiment, C Company of the 33rd Armored Regiment, and B Company of the 36th Armored Infantry Regiment, all elements of Combat Command Howze.

However, no such strength was represented when the enemy began his all-out attack on December 21. The piecemeal task force held, and on the 22nd, was reinforced by parachutists of the 517th Parachute Infantry.

Still outgunned and outnumbered, the defensive line held and beat off several German attacks which penetrated into the outskirts of the town. When the besieged group was relieved on Christmas day it had already accounted for nine German tanks, and had held its position doggedly in the face of superior forces, heavy shelling, mortar and small arms fire.

On December 28, the enemy bolstered his waning drive with an attack by the 12th SS HITLER JUGEND Panzer Division. This drive penetrated to the Briscol-Sadzot area, where it was sealed off and repelled. An attack above Magoster, on the same day, was broken up by artillery. After less than two weeks of heavy fighting, the offensive was sma-

shed. Now Jerry dug in and knew that the pendulum must swing back.

By the end of December, the 3rd Armored Division was out of the line and preparing for a new offensive.

— The Bitter Battles —

Hilly terrain, the worst weather a Belgian winter had to offer — and the best of remaining German troops faced the division when it jumped off on January 3 from a line of departure, roughly Manhay-Snamont.

With Combat Command Hickey on the left, Combat Command Boudinot on the right, and the 83rd Armored Reconnaissance battalion echeloned to the rear, the „Spearhead“ advanced 11 hard-won kilometers in six days, reducing village after village.

Colonel Hogan's force, re-equipped, operated down the Manhay road, under Combat Command Howze.

Towns with the names of Malempre, Floret, Jevigne, Baneux, Lansival, Xhout-si-Ploux, LaVaux and Lierneaux, fell in swift succession.

Major George Stallings, subbing for Colonel Lovelady, took Fraiture on January 6, surprising a German battalion in an assembly area and taking 250 prisoners. Hogan's force cut the crossroads formed by the junction of the Manhay-Houffalize and LaRoche-Salmchateau roads, a crossing which now bears his name in countless yellowing newspaper files.

In bitter, crusting cold, the combat commands drove forward. There seemed to be a paralyzing icy mist over the entire battle front, a cloud of fine, driving snow that left every tree silvered and weighted with the clinging

stuff. All of the roads were glazed to slippery ribbons, and tank tracks skidded alarmingly on the shoulders. Snowdrifts covered extensive fields of anti-tank mines, and hard ground made foxhole construction a nightmare when shells were falling. Men came out of the line with frozen feet, were treated at aid stations, and trudged back up to fight again. The Ardennes looked like a Christmas card, but appearances were again deceptive: it was agony all the way.

Task Force Doan, back with the division, took Sart, Grand Sart, and Provedreux on January 7, while Richardson seized Verleumont and Joubieval and Welborn took Regne, Hebronval and Ottre.

Lierneux was the site of a famed Belgian institution for the mentally ill. German forces carefully booby-trapped the place, even though a number of the afflicted inmates were at large. Here, in an abandoned building, division headquarters was established for several days. Nearby the 45th Armored Medical Battalion established a rest center which catered to lightly wounded and near frozen men.

During the period of time from January 10 to 20, the „Spearhead“ advanced another fiercely contested 10 kilometers.

In the first stages of this drive, the 12th Volksgrenadier Division, recalled from Stolberg campaigning, was encountered and thoroughly chewed up. As this unit faded, the 326th Volksgrenadier Division was put into the line and the 9th Panzer Division was reported to be on the front. Later, the 15th Panzer Grenadier Division came from the south to help hold 3rd Armored Division advances.

On January 13, Colonel Yeoman's 83rd Armored Recon-

naissance Battalion accomplished a spectacular drive in this so-far battle of attrition. His forces cut deep into enemy positions and established road blocks astride the Houffalize-St. Vith road, a key highway. Meanwhile, Task Forces Kane and Hogan battled into Mont le Ban. The same day, Lovelady took Lomre in a coordinated tank attack. The following day, Task Force Welborn's men entered Baclain.

The towns of Sterpigny and Cherain are engraved on the memories of 3rd Armored Division tankers. Here, part of Task Force Welborn was cut off on the 15th, and its light tanks destroyed by a marauding Panther. A single Sherman bounced three rounds off the frontal armor of the Nazi, only to be destroyed by this potent enemy. Richardson's forces strengthened the group on the following day, and later pushed eastward.

Cherain was initially attacked by Task Force Lovelady, which lost heavily in tanks to the German defenders and their carefully emplaced anti-tank guns. The town finally fell to Hogan's infantry — I Co. of the 36th.

As the „Spearhead“ fought south of Cherain on January 16, German vehicles, attempting to pull out of the rapidly closing bulge pocket, streamed across the 3rd Armored Division's direct front. Slipping and sliding on the icy pavements, these columns were taken under fire by artillery of the 67th Armored Field, the 83rd Armored Field, and the 183rd Field Artillery Battalion. Thirteen of a total 25 enemy tanks observed were destroyed by the concentrations of shellfire. It was a highly satisfactory sight to the tired and half-frozen Yanks on this line of battle.

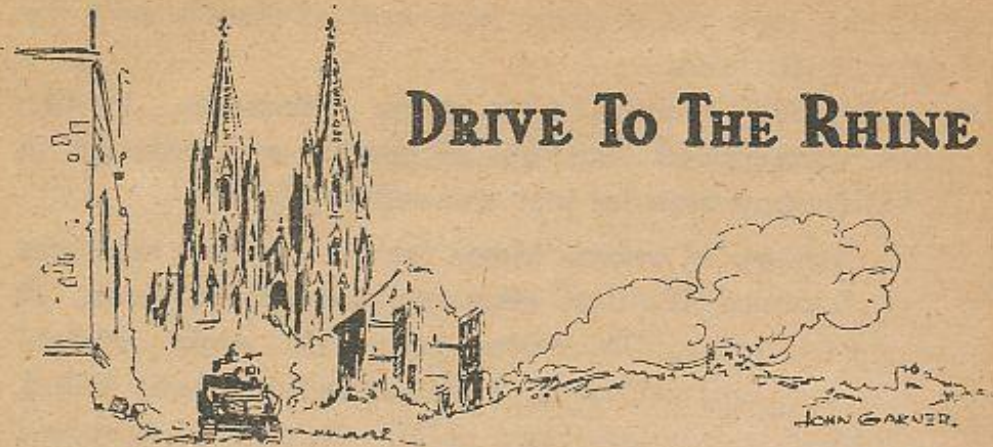
During this time the division had worked closely with the 83rd Infantry Division.

Gradually, the division units were withdrawn. Finally, the entire „Spearhead“ was out of contact and billeted in the Ouffet-Durbuy area for rest and refitting.

A final chalk-up of enemy losses for the „bulge“ meetings with 3rd Armored Division elements totaled: 98 tanks, 20 self propelled guns, 76 motor transports, eight artillery pieces, 23 AA and AT guns, 1,705 estimated Nazis killed, 545 estimated wounded, and 2,705 hard-won prisoners of war.

During the campaign, known facetiously as „the bitter battle for billets in the Belgian bulge“, the Germans had attempted to infiltrate sabotage teams, clad in American uniforms, through our lines. There were few U. S. soldiers who had not only been asked for the password, but forced to name the capitol of their state, give Sinatra's first name, or other similar, spontaneous proof of nationality.

The „Bulge“ campaign was finished. It had been one of the hardest — if not the hardest — fights in which the division had ever engaged. The „Spearhead“ emerged victorious, but badly mauled.



DRIVE TO THE RHINE

CHAPTER III

— Across The Roer —

Almost it seemed that a cloud of misery had been dissipated as the „Spearhead“ rolled out of the Ardennes conflict. The snow disappeared under a warm spring sun and the grass was green again. There was a short period of rest and refitting. New tanks, better guns and the latest equipment were issued. One day the inevitable order came down: the 3rd was moving up. It was Germany again.

The „Spearhead“ rumbled out of Belgium, back to familiar terrain, the pillbox dotted hills of Stolberg and Breinig, into the shattered towns of bitter memory. At full strength, rested and ready, the 3rd Armored Division tensed for the H-Hour of new combat. This time it was the Rhine.

In the misty half-light of dawn on February 26, the First Army's big steel cutting edge jumped off. In multiple columns, Combat Command Hickey on the right, and Combat Command Boudinot on the left, the „Spearhead“ Division crossed the Roer behind Major General Terry Allen's

famed „Timberwolves“, — shook loose, and began to drive!

Here was no Ardennes of ice and bitter snow, of impossible conditions and a bow to enemy initiative. This was it — the old, pounding, smashing, pursuit: the fortified towns, each with its main street barricaded, vehicles overturned and buildings smoldering in ruin. Before the early sunset on February 26, Task Force Doan had captured Blatzheim and penetrated Bergenhausen despite heavy anti-tank fire. Task Force Kane, and the 83rd Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, commanded by leather-lunged Lt. Colonel Prentice E. Yeomans, had cleared Manheim. Combat Command Boudinot was doing as well. General Truman Boudinot's Task Force Welborn reached the edge of Elsdorf while Task Force Lovelady followed swiftly, with Combat Command Howze in reserve.

— The Erft and the Scotch —

On February 27, Doan's dusty, victorious tankers blasted into Kerpen, on the Erft Canal, less than nine miles from Cologne. Task Force Kane had taken Heppendorf and then buttoned up in Sindorf, north of Colonel Doan's group.

Now it was time to use the reserve. Colonel Howze was ordered to rush fresh troops past Elsdorf, press on to the Erft Canal and secure a bridgehead. His chosen leaders were Lt. Colonel Sam Hogan, and Lt. Colonel Walter B. Richardson, a pair of commanders who had long maintained friendly rivalry. Each commanded the 3rd battalion of his armored regiment, the 33rd and 32nd, respectively. Both were Texans and long-time members of the „Spearhead“ Division. To speed them on their way, General Rose pro-

mised a case of Scotch to the first task force commander across the vital water barrier.

By 2130 that day, Task Force Hogan had pressed infantry over a partially destroyed foot bridge at Gletsch, while at Paffendorf, Richardson's men waded and climbed over a second twisted span. Although Hogan reached the east bank of the key canal first, Task Force Richardson was later to get the first bridge across and thus put the first American tanks on the plain before Cologne. History does not record the fate of the Scotch.

Within 24 hours after crossing the Erft, 3rd Armored Division shells were bursting in Cologne. The 991st Field Artillery Battalion, an attached unit and former New York national guard organization, registered on the city with giant 155mm guns. Cologne had been pricked by the point of the „Spearhead“!

Driving relentlessly, Task Force Lovelady met the Reich's much touted Volkssturm for the first time in Berrendorf. In a Roman Catholic church, 500 civilians had gathered to wait for the arrival of American troops. With them were 77 members of the German „people's army“. With invasion at their doorsteps, these reluctant warriors had chosen to wait in the place of worship rather than draw arms at local Nazi party headquarters and fight it out with the Yanks. The Volkssturm was not impressive. These last-ditch soldiers taken at Berrendorf were just tired old men with deadly fear in their eyes. Their attitude indicated the state of German morale. They knew that no defence could stop the drive to the Rhine. The extensive earthworks and trench systems which had been steadily constructed during

the past five months, had proved little or no obstacle to advancing tanks and infantrymen of the 3rd Armored Division — chiefly because the „Spearhead“ attack was swift and enemy troops had no opportunity to properly man their fortifications.

On February 28, Combat Command Howze expanded his bridgehead across the Erft and enough armor was thrown into the line to repel a German tank-infantry attack. Meanwhile, other elements of the division regrouped, preparatory to the assault on Cologne, which was to be from the northwest, instead of frontally. The 325th Regiment of the 99th Division, and the 4th Cavalry Group were attached. The 13th Infantry Regiment of the 8th Infantry Division had been attached to the „Spearhead“ throughout the operation. The stage was set. The bridgehead was adequate. Jerry found his nerves to be extremely jumpy.

— Luftwaffe Makes Good Try —

During the night of February 28, an estimated 75 German planes attempted to knock out artillery supporting the operation. It was a trying night. Over the „Spearhead“ positions there was a constant hum of aircraft, each individual machine sounding as though it was missing on two cylinders. Then there'd be the erie, rising whistle of the bombs and, if they were close, the unbelievably loud crash. Not one gun position was hit, although gunners of the 67th Armored Field Artillery Battalion suffered losses. Jerry lost a number of his precious planes to ack-ack, some of it fired by the 486th Automatic Anti-Aircraft „Anti-anything-Jerry“ Battalion. No appreciable slowing of the attack was noted.

Although the Kraut continued to pour artillery, mortar and rocket fire on the bridgehead area throughout March 1, Bergheim and Kenton fell to the attached 395th RCT. The enemy was also fast losing his grip on those hills, east of the Erft, from which he had been observing American operations.

— Objective — Cologne —

Again, on March 2, the division plunged into attack. Reconnaissance cleared an area north-west of Niederaussem and Task Force Richardson took the town. Task Force Hogan skirted an anti-tank ditch to clear the small villages of Wiedenfeld and Auenheim, and Combat Command Hickey, in a coordinated drive by Task Force Doan and Task Force Kane, took Oberaussem. The 395th Infantry proceeded to clean up the town of Fortuna and the factory area in that town. This attached infantry was the unit which took Hill 140, a slag pile which was the highest ground in the area.

The enemy was firing visibly as Doan jumped off at 0400 on the 3rd. Entering Fliesteden against a surprised garrison, his tankers took many prisoners, one of whom was a colonel. Task Force Kane pressed on to Mansteden, and Doan added Geyen and Sinthern, which brought his steel spearhead to four miles from the outskirts of Cologne.

At Busdorf, Task Force Kane had knocked several armored vehicles, including self propelled guns, out of its path. Richardson, Lovelady and Hogan together took Stommeln in the hardest fighting of the day. Here the tired but

determined tankers met enemy armor, mines and anti-tank fire. Colonel Welborn's force moved forward to secure the town of Sinnersdorf, approximately four miles from the Rhine and less than five miles from the limits of Cologne. On this day, Task Force Hogan had encountered enemy panzer units in a small place called Monchof. His armor destroyed the enemy, took the town of Rheidt and used Thunderbolt fighter-bombers to clear more Kraut tanks from the routes of advance before pushing on to Stommeln. Now, for the first time, the tankers and armored infantrymen of the 3rd Armored Division knew definitely that they were going to lunge for Cologne. They'd suspected as much!

Colonel Prentice E. Yeomans' 83rd Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, flushed with the opportunity to demonstrate its wares, jumped off during the night of March 3, 4, with the river as its destination. The reconnaissance troopers found the town of Roggendorf, protecting enemy ferry sites, strongly held, so these lightly armored but swift elements of the „Spearhead“ turned north toward Hackhausen. Here they captured a battery of 105 guns, still hitched to prime movers, and reached the Rhine at 0400 on March 4, north of Worringen, the first unit of the First Army to reach the great water barrier protecting Hitler's inner fortress. Task Force Lovelady then took Roggendorf and Worringen. Here the two forces repelled a determined counter-attack mounted with infantry and tanks.

The division was now on the Rhine in strength. The 4th Cavalry was engaged in clearing a wooded area north-west of Hackhausen, and the bulk of the „Spearhead“ was ready to direct its forces at the defences of Cologne.

— Fall Of The Big Town —

At 0710 on March 5, Colonel L. L. Doan's task force was in Cologne, the first Americans of the First Army to reach that long sought city. Major General Maurice Rose entered the metropolitan district soon afterward.

Doan's forward plunging tankers entered Cologne through the north-west suburbs and were soon in the Binkendorf area. Enemy resistance here was light. Mines were noticeably absent and underpasses had been feebly blocked with trolley cars, but not blown.

After taking the airport, where numbers of dual purpose 88's were knocked out or captured, Task Force Kane also advanced into the city.

Greater resistance was offered to elements of Combat Command Boudinot by German elements who strove to keep his Shermans and Pershings away from the river where ferries were busily engaged in removing whipped troops to the east bank of the Rhine. In spite of this resistance Task Force Welborn took eight outlying towns. Colonel Lovelady's force took three towns, and the 83rd cleared Langel, Rheinkassel and Kasselberg on the river. The recon men captured a Panther tank intact after destroying several others.

As „Spearhead“ units moved in for the kill, there was furious tank and anti-tank warfare. German forces using dual purpose anti-aircraft guns and panzerfausts put up a spotty but vicious series of defences. The ruins of the city were at first alive with snipers and machine-gun teams. Systematically the infantry hunted them out. Finally, nothing

but an occasional sniper, a few bazooka men and several prowling Panther tanks were reported in the city.

On March 6, as our elements probed closer to the river, Jerry blew the great Hohenzollern Bridge across the Rhine. The pillar of black smoke rose up almost between the twin spires of Cologne's famous Dom. An unnatural silence fell over the great metropolis then. Infantrymen of the 36th Armored Infantry Regiment mopped up in the ruins. Sporadic mortar fire and artillery crumped loud in the dead stillness, and a few snipers kept tumbling out of the high piled ruins. The great cathedral was cleared, and it seemed that Cologne was swiftly passing into limbo of „rear area“. There was, however, a final, convulsive struggle in the defence of the metropolis.

A pair of army photographers, T/3 Leon Rosenman, and T/4 James Bates, shooting motion pictures of a Panther they thought to be knocked out, were shocked when the big enemy vehicle suddenly turned to open fire on an American Sherman. The Sherman was hit and knocked out, but one of the „Spearhead“ Pershings accepted the challenge. After a swift exchange of armor piercing rounds, the Nazi panzerwagon burst into flame and burned fiercely in the very shadow of the cathedral. The cameramen got it all — a sequence of battle which ranks high among great war photographs.

Two hours and 15 minutes after the tank duel, Task Force Doan was on the Rhine. To the left, Colonel Kane's forces also reached the river, while further to the left, a pocket of resistance remained.

Task Force Welborn had taken the Ford Motor Plant,

north of the city, on the Rhine, as well as a factory area nearby, while Lovelady had cleared the town of Merkenich and pushed on. Fuhlingen also fell to his troops. Colonel Sam Hogan's men, working down the river bank, took Merheim and Miehle before moving into the city. The fighting was in its last stages.

By March 7, Cologne was completely cleared by the 3rd Armored Division and the 104th Infantry Division. It was a dead city, a place of rubble which represented five years of aerial bombardment and final invasion by ground forces. The 3rd had come to the end of another swift drive.

The „Spearhead“ had reached the Rhine, first of the heavy-weight First Army. Once, these veterans who had come from Omaha Beach, through Normandy and France and Belgium, to pierce the Siegfried line and take the first German town to fall to an invader since Napoleonic days, had believed that the war would end on the „sacred“ river. Now they all felt that the battle would go on. Would it be a frontal smash, straight across? An airborne landing to secure bridge heads? The men of the „Spearhead“ mopped up conquered Cologne and waited. There was always one more river to cross!

ORDER OF BATTLE

Beyond the „sacred river“ lay victory. There was no doubting the fact. There was no other alternative. Massed allied armies waited for the word which would send them in to finish the Nazi war machine. In Cologne, the steel spearhead of the VII Corps was poised like a javelin aimed at the enemy's heart.

At this point it may be well to pause for a moment and examine the order of battle — to meet the leaders of this triumphant armored division on the eve of its greatest victory. These men had to be good because their troops were veterans of total war. They were, from Major General Maurice Rose, the immaculate, ruthless killer of Germans, to each of the separate battalion commanders, men who had been toughened in the flame of armored action over half a continent.

Major General Rose, who was later killed in the magnificent drive to Paderborn, must have felt great pride in his organization during those early days in March when the 3rd paused and prepared to strike the final blow. His staff and forward echelon were smoothly efficient. His subordinate commanders had proven themselves time and again. The division was truly at a peak of greatness.

Colonel John A. Smith, Jr., Chief of Staff: Lt. Colonel Jack A. Boulger, G—1: Lt. Colonel Andrew Barr, G—2: Lt. Colonel Wesley A. Sweat, G—3: and Lt. Colonel Eugene C. Orth, Jr., G—4: were men whose reputations had been well established in that dashing advance across Normandy and France to Germany and the Rhine. These, together with other staff members of the forward CP, were not only well versed in special duties, but had often proven their worth as fighters too. Forward Echelon, dubbed „Combat Command Smith“, by General Rose, had been frequently cut off by enemy pockets of resistance in France and Belgium: just as frequently defended against, or attacked these hostile troops.

Captain William L. Rodman, commanding Headquarters Company, Forward Echelon, had been with his troops in that heroic action at Mons, Belgium, in September, 1944, which won a presidential citation for the unit. Also recipient of that high honor was Lt. Colonel George V. Bussey, and members of his 143rd Signal Company. Captain John E. Casey had commanded the Division Service Company throughout the entire drive.

There was no lack of ability in the combat commands. Brig. General Doyle O. Hickey, commanding CC „A“, and Brig. General Truman E. Boudinot, commanding CC „B“ (first into Germany), were famous for their frontline leadership in armored battle. Colonel Robert L. Howze, Jr., commanding CC „R“, had a long and impressive string of victories to his credit.

It was the same in the spearhead tank outfits. Colonel Leander L. Doan's 32nd Armored Regiment, the first into Cologne and the first on many a spectacular drive during the great summer offensive of 1944, stood ready to lead the attack again. His crack battalions, the 1st led by Lt. Colonel Matthew W. Kane, the 2nd by Lt. Colonel Clifford L. Miller, and the 3rd by Lt. Colonel Walter B. Richardson, felt that no German force could halt them for long after the Rhine had been crossed.

In the 33rd Armored Regiment, commanded by Colonel John C. Welborn, the feeling was the same. These troops were veterans who had beaten Jerry time and again: they knew that they could do it once more. The 33rd had been the first allied unit to enter Germany in this war — at Roetgen, in the Siegfried Line, on September 12, 1944. Welborn's three battle-wise battalions were commanded by Lt. Colonel Elwyn W. Blanchard, Lt. Colonel William B. Lovelady, and Lt. Colonel Samuel M. Hogan.

Another force to be reckoned with, and one which maintained a high reputation for valor among friend and foe alike, was Colonel Robert L. Howze, Jr.'s „Blitz Doughs“, the 36th Armored Infantry Regiment. These were the soldiers who made victory certain by holding the ground until it was secure. The 1st Battalion, which held a presidential citation for its part in

breaching the Siegfried line, was commanded by Lt. Colonel William R. Orr: the 2nd by Lt. Colonel Thomas J. Moran, and the 3rd Battalion by Major Gordon F. Thomas.

Among the highly maneuverable elements of this big steel striking force, division artillery had played, and was yet to play, a decisive role in each succeeding victory. Colonel Frederick J. Brown, division artillery officer, whose business was the coordination of all artillery under „Spearhead“ control, contributed much to the irresistible power of the 3rd. Under his command, the 67th Armored Field Artillery Battalion, ordinarily supporting CC „A“, and commanded by Lt. Colonel Edward S. Berry: the 391st Armored Field Artillery Battalion, usually supporting CC „B“, and commanded by Lt. Colonel George G. Garton: and the 54th Armored Field Artillery Battalion, ordinarily supporting CC „R“, and commanded by Lt. Colonel Mont Hubbard, were a part of every 3rd Armored Division operation. The 991st Armored Field Artillery Battalion, although not an integral unit of the 3rd, had been attached almost continuously. Therefore, Major William E. Whalen, and his men had reason to feel themselves part of the „Spearhead“. So also did the pilots of the „Spearhead's Stukas“, those artillery liaison men who rode Piper Cubs over the raging front line. They, along with ground observers, were the eyes of the division's big guns.

Those tanks which escaped the deadly accuracy of Colonel Brown's artillery were usually smashed to ruin by Lt. Colonel Wilbur E. Showalter's big M—36 tank destroyers. The 703rd Tank Destroyer Battalion had been a potent factor in reducing strong points and pill boxes as well as in the liquidation of Nazi armor.

Actually, the enemy faced a veteran unit in every category. The 486th Armored Anti-Aircraft Battalion, commanded by Lt. Colonel Raymond E. Dunnington, had long been nicknamed the „Anti-Anything“ battalion because of its propensity for taking on any kind of enemy materiel, from planes to trains!

Lt. Colonel Lawrence G. Foster's 23rd Armored Engineer Battalion was a veteran element of „Spearhead“ campaigning.

His men had fought as infantry, had removed thousands of German mines under direct fire, de-loused booby-trapped areas, built bridges, and otherwise made themselves extremely obnoxious — to the enemy.

Lt. Colonel Prentice E. Yeomans' 83rd Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, heroes of the „Bulge“ and, along with the 33rd Armored Regiment of CC „B“, the first invaders of Germany since Napoleonic times, strained at the leash. The 83rd had led General Courtney Hodges' heavyweight First Army to the Rhine. Later in the campaign they were to spearhead the most amazing armored dash in history, the drive to encircle the Ruhr. Colonel Yeomans himself was destined to be killed in action during the last hours of western combat. Men of the 83rd were no amateurs at the business of war.

Catering to these battle-hardened front-line troops of the „Spearhead“ were the division trains elements under Colonel Carl J. Rohsenberger. The Supply Battalion, commanded by Major Rodney J. Banta, had performed a series of miraculous drives to service front-fighting elements. They were to surpass an already glowing record in the new attack.

In the same class was the Maintenance Battalion, commanded by Lt. Colonel Rager J. McCarthy. These men who were supposed to be rear echelon troops more often than not found themselves defending their lives against fanatic German rear guards.

Another element which deserved unlimited praise was the 45th Armored Medical Battalion, commanded by Lt. Colonel Charles Steyaart. The „Spearhead“ medics had been in every battle, rendering first aid to the wounded and saving countless lives. Their presence in the most critical of situations had been a constant morale builder to the troops who were fighting.

On this eve of the last great push in Europe, the 3rd Armored „Spearhead“ Division was a perfectly oiled and balanced machine. Its power was soon to be demonstrated to a startled and admiring allied world.

— E n d —

MEET THE COMBAT LEADERS



← Brig. General Doyle O. Hickey led Combat Command "A" before assuming command of the Division near Paderborn, Germany



Brig. General Truman E. Boudinot led Combat Command "B" from Normandy to the Elbe. →



Colonel Robert Howze, Combat Command Reserve



Colonel L. L. Doan, task force X and Combat Command A



Colonel John Welborn, task force commander



Lt. Colonel Prentice E. Yeomans, C. O. 83rd Armd. Rcn. Bn.



Lt. Colonel Walter B. Richardson, task force commander



Lt. Colonel William P. Lovelady, task force commander



Lt. Colonel Samuel Hogan, task force commander



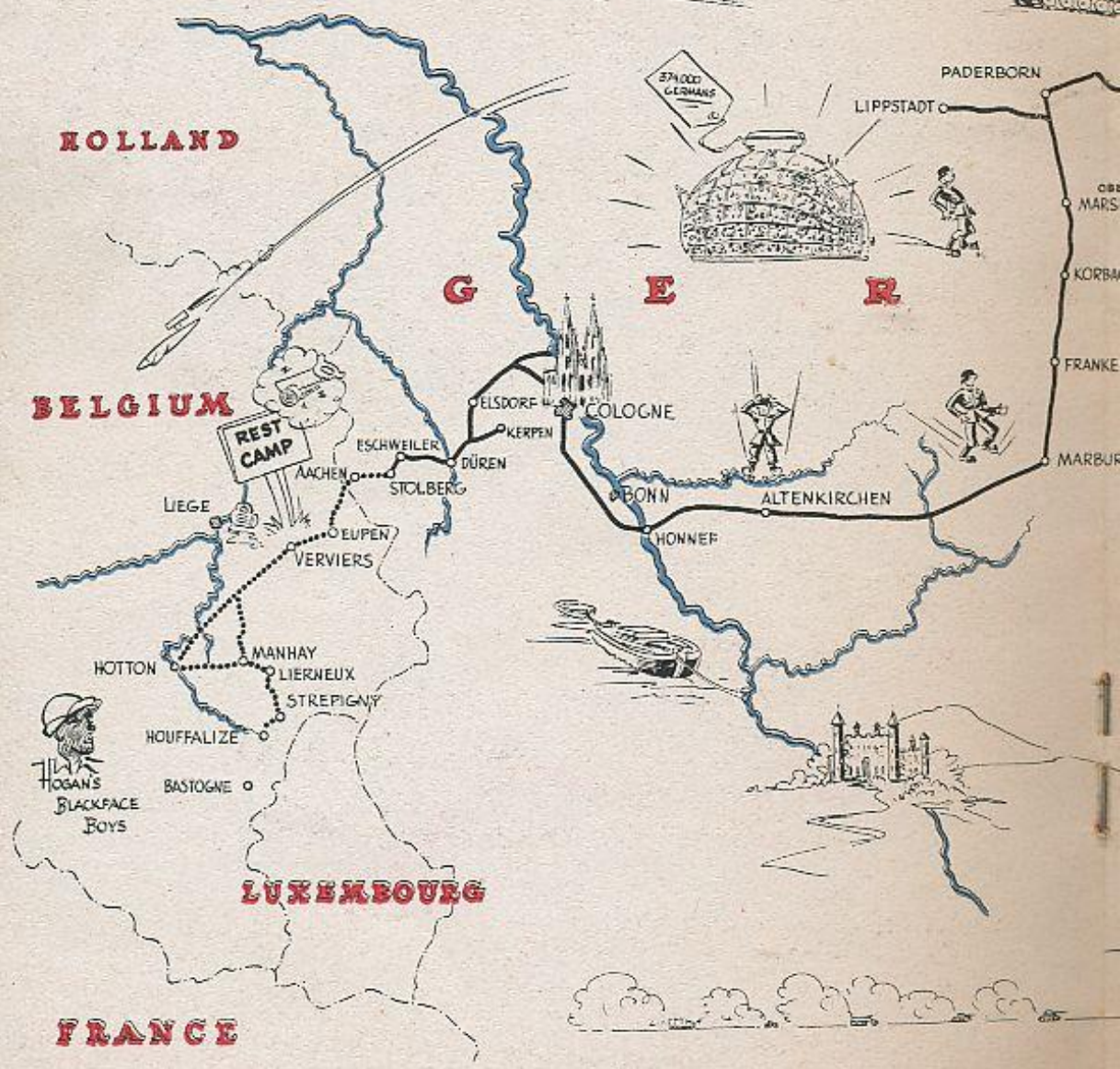
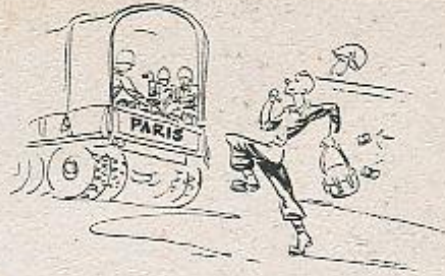
Lt. Colonel Matthew W. Kane, task force commander



Lt. Colonel John Boles, task force commander



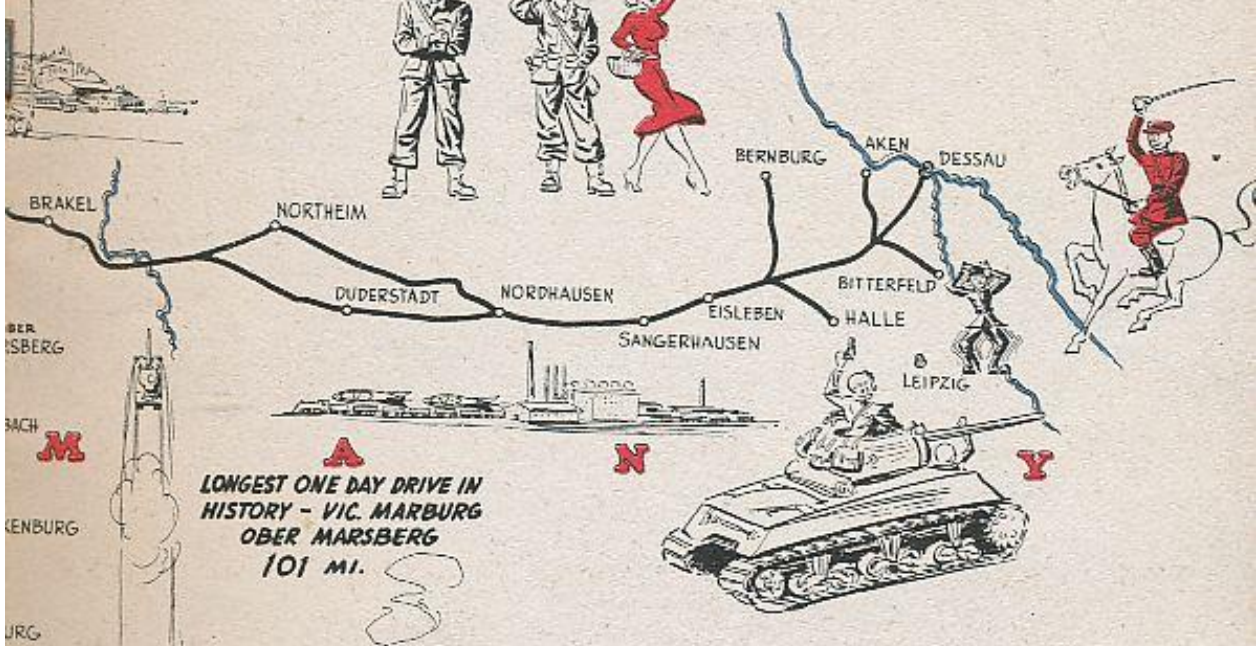
Lt. Colonel William R. Orr, task force commander



"FORT KNOX"
TURED

NONFRATERNIZATION
THE \$64 QUESTION

PARKING
BERLIN
LOTS FOR SALE



A
LONGEST ONE DAY DRIVE IN
HISTORY - VIC. MARBURG
OBER MARSBERG
101 MI.

BER
SBERG
SACH
M
ENBURG
URG



SEVEN
LONG MONTHS
Speacheading



JOHN GARNER



On an icy road in Belgium, engineers carefully search for mines. The Sherman in the background discovered one without trying!



A white painted Nazi panzerwagen salutes the victor, a „Spearhead“ TD of the 703rd.



In bitter cold and sweeping snow, 3rd Armored Division infantrymen were still able to smile as they went up into the line to attack.



The great Ardennes gamble is a failure. These were only a few of the beaten enemy troops captured as von Rundstedt's drive faltered and then crunched to a halt before retreat.

FOR THE RECORD

Letter written by Lt. General J. Lawton Collins, CG, VII Corps, to Brig. General Doyle O. Hickey, CG, 3rd Armored Division, on the occasion of the „Spearhead“ Division's release from the crack VII Corps.

HEADQUARTERS VII CORPS OFFICE OF THE COMMANDING GENERAL

21 May 1945

*Brigadier General Doyle O. Hickey
3rd Armored Division, APO 253,
United States Army.*

Dear General Hickey:

With the relief of the 3rd Armored Division from the VII Corps, I wish to express again, in writing, to you and to the officers and men of your splendid division, my appreciation for the great contribution made by the 3rd Armored Division to the success of the VII Corps in its operations in Germany, particularly during the closing phases of the war.

Following the severe fighting in the Ardennes, in which the 3rd Armored had played a great part first in checking and then expelling von Rundstedt's forces from the „Bulge“, the division was shifted back to its old battle ground Stolberg and prepared for the crossing of the Roer River. As soon as the 8th and 104th Infantry Divisions had established a bridgehead over the Roer, the 3rd Armored was placed in action on the morning of 26 February to spearhead the attack of the corps on Cologne. With characteristic dash and vigor, the divi-

sion broke through the initial resistance and raced eastward. In two days it had forced the difficult crossing of the Erft River and swung across the northern end of the formidable Vorgebirge, whose hill masses, pitted with a succession of open lignite mines and studded with slag heaps, made maneuver very difficult. The key road and communications center of Stommeln was seized to sever the enemy forces in the northern part of the Cologne plain between the Erft and the Rhine. Pressing the attack to the northeast, elements of the division reached the Rhine River in the vicinity of Worringen on 4 March, and in an irresistible drive were the first troops to enter Cologne on 5 March. Within two days all enemy resistance within the division sector, both in the city and on the plain to the north, had been eliminated.

After a brief interlude along the west bank of the Rhine, the division moved across the river into the expanding Remagen Bridgehead, prepared to launch the last great offensive in the west. On 25 March, the division attacked east again through the 1st and 104th Infantry Divisions, brushing aside the initial resistance and pressing forward through the hilly and wooded area of the watershed between the Sieg and Wied Rivers. Although enemy resistance was sharp and unrelenting and the terrain continued to be difficult, the division seized Altenkirchen and quickly forced a crossing of the Dill River in the vicinity of Herborn, and then captured Marburg, cutting enemy communications in the Lahn River valley.

Then began one of the most important and dramatic maneuvers of the entire campaign in Europe, the envelopment of the vital Ruhr industrial area. Commencing

on 29 March, the „Spearhead“ Division in an unprecedented drive advanced ninety road miles to the north in one 24-hour period, the greatest advance by any division against opposition in the entire war. As it neared its objective, Paderborn, the division became heavily engaged and fought its way through fanatic resistance of enemy troops from the SS Panzer Replacement Training Center. Continuing onward, while repelling counter-attacks from all sides, the division captured Paderborn on 1 April. On this same day, Task Force Kane advanced to the west and made contact with elements of the 2nd Armored Division at Lippstadt, thereby cutting off the enemy troops in the Ruhr. In eight days the division had made a spectacular advance of almost two hundred miles and had swung the hammer that forged more than half of the ring around the 300,000 enemy troops encircled in the Ruhr pocket. The speed, dash, and daring of the commanders and men of all ranks made this operation a model military classic.

Unfortunately, we had a terrible price to pay for this victory in the death of one of the greatest of all division commanders, your gallant leader, Major General Maurice Rose, who was killed in action 30 March at the head of one of his task forces near Paderborn.

The envelopment of the Ruhr spelled the doom of Germany, but some stiff fighting had to be done before a link-up could be made with the Russian forces advancing from the east. Crossing the Weser River in the vicinity of Odelsheim, on 5 April, the 3rd Armored Division resumed its relentless pursuit of the disintegrating German forces with another stirring enveloping maneuver, this time around the Harz Mountains. The key towns of Duderstadt, Nordhausen and Sangerhausen fell

in rapid succession as the division drove to the north-east on Dessau. Despite stiffening resistance and enemy counter-attacks with fresh troops, Kothen was captured, and on 23 April the city of Dessau on the Elbe was cleared of the last German resistance west of the Mulde River.

It is with great regret that the VII Corps bids adieu to its spearhead division. Since the days of the St. Lo—Marigny breakthrough, your division has led most of the great offensives of this corps — in the pursuit across France and Belgium; at Mons, Namur, Liege, and through the Siegfried Line and into Germany; in the Ardennes Counteroffensive; in the drive from the Roer to the Rhine; and in the last great envelopments of the Ruhr and the Harz Mountains. The division's splendid performance in each operation is a lasting tribute to the leadership and devotion to duty of the officers and men of your command. The wonderful fighting spirit, the dash and daring of the „Spearhead“ Division has carried all before it. The VII Corps is proud of the 3rd Armored Division and its great accomplishments. The entire staff and corps troops join me in wishing you all the very best of luck.

Sincerely yours,



*J. LAWTON COLLINS,
Lieutenant General, U. S. Army.*

— — End — —



CHAPTER IV

— Remagen Springboard —

There was a strange letdown after the excitement of action. Cologne was quiet. An occasional artillery piece lobbed shells over the river, but the „incoming mail“ was slight. There was a time to clean up and a period to perform proper maintenance on the vehicles: a few drinks to celebrate the occasion — and plenty of rumors. Someone speculated on the chances that the 3rd might be relieved from further combat. The story was either sworn accurate or laughed to scorn. Most of the tankers suspected that they would be going on across the Rhine, into Germany: a majority would have felt somehow left out of the party if, indeed, the „Spearhead“ were pulled out of action. These men had been the first team of the First Army since Normandy. They were the first through the Westwall, the first to take and hold a German town. There is an indescribable esprit de corps about such an outfit. The 3rd had a reputation. The tankers said to each other: „Call me spear-

head!" And they chuckled, and quipped: „Call me meat-head!" But they were proud, too.

When Major General J. Lawton Collins presented Division Headquarters Company and Forward Echelon a presidential citation for heroism in action, he said: „Since the St. Lo days I have commanded a great many divisions. All of them were fine, but a few were great, and this is one of the great divisions".

Earlier that week, the division Maintenance Battalion had also been honored by the presentation of a meritorious service plaque in recognition of day and night labors which had kept the „Spearhead" rolling forward in continuous battle. These things were warp and woof to the fabric of high morale.

The 3rd Armored Division expected to cross the Rhine. It was a foregone conclusion. Therefore, the tankers talked it over, repaired their battle wagons, and waited. Then, of course, the 9th Armored Division, through a stroke of luck and a dash of brilliance, secured the Ludendorf Bridge at Remagen. There was no need for the First Army to create a bridgehead — we had one ready made. The 3rd Armored Division moved out of Cologne shortly afterward and crossed the „sacred river" by way of a ponton bridge at Honnef. Combat Command Howze had already crossed on the 20th.

Up ahead, the BIG RED ONE, America's justly famous 1st Infantry Division, and the 104th Infantry, were engaged in widening the bridgehead. Close to the Rhine, the „Spearhead" coiled over acres of beautiful summer-vacation-lands.

On March 24 the orders came down through combat command channels: the 3rd was moving out at dawn in full scale attack! This was the beginning of the big push. There was victory in the air, and it was contagious. The American 1st, 3rd and 9th Armies were already across the Rhine. So were Field Marshal Montgomery's forces. Now General Courtney Hodges was preparing a haymaker to the heart of Germany, a drive to isolate the Ruhr! The battering ram he chose for this stupendous task was Major General J. Lawton Collins' VII Corps and again, as in the past, the 3rd Armored Division was scheduled to spearhead the attack.

At 0400 on March 25, the combat commands were rumbling out of bivouac. They went out along the dawn-dim roads in multiple columns of spearheads, 32nd and 33rd Armored Regiment tanks leading, squat and black in the gloom, with blue flame spitting from their exhausts. Tank destroyers of the 703rd TD Battalion followed, clacking rapidly over the cobbles, their long 90mm guns perfectly balanced in heavy steel turrets. Armored infantrymen of the 36th, the blitz doughs, rode in personnel half-tracks. There were the combat engineers of the 23rd, light reconnaissance units of the 83rd, mobile artillery, and all the other complex and highly maneuverable elements that make up a modern armored division. Upon this morning there was no waiting, no wondering, and no rumors. There was plenty of hard work, though.

The dawn of March 25 was clamorous with motor-sound. On a wide front the steel fingers reached tentatively forward, two columns to the right, under General Hickey, two to the left, under General Boudinot. It was an almost

overpowering spectacle to see and, although you knew that there is no glamor in war, somehow the thunder of powerful engines, and the clatter of tracks, the wide grins and genial curses, the guns weaving gently on their balanced mounts, brought a decided thrill. You could loath war and its by-products, but you knew that, so long as you lived you'd always remember, with a little shiver of pride, the morning when the „Spearhead“ moved out to make history in a drive that isolated Germany's great, industrial Ruhr.

— The 3rd Is A Meat Grinder —

The initial attack was launched through the 1st and 104th Infantry Divisions. Combat Command Boudinot rolled to the left of the salient, and Combat Command Hickey to the right. Famed Colonel L. L. Doan again blasted through the German main line of resistance early in the action, to find deliberate mine fields and a well dug-in defence. Although the route was strewn with glass mines, which defied ordinary detection, Task Force Doan penetrated the defensive crust and pushed forward to seize the town of Asbach, meanwhile bypassing a German airfield which was littered with the hulks of destroyed aircraft and parts. Advancing east against sporadic shows of resistance, Doan took the town of Schonesberg and crossed the Mehr river.

The „Spearhead“ advanced in a series of armored hay-makers. Colonel Doan's tankers ground forward on the extreme right. To his left, Task Force Kane pushed through a curtain of small arms fire, artillery, and self-propelled guns to take Krumscheid and Puscheid. Further to the left, Com-

bat Command Boudinot met heaviest resistance. Consequently the progress here was less spectacular.

Task Force Lovelady, operating to the left of Kane's tankers, nevertheless went forward to take Wallroth, Oberscheid and Griesenbach in a grinding offensive. At the end of the day, Fiersbach had fallen and the armor was still moving ahead.

On the far left, Task Force Welborn immediately engaged heavy concentrations of tanks, self propelled guns, artillery and small arms fire. Advancing against heavy opposition, this force seized Kircheib and worked through a thickly wooded area to cross a small stream.

The first day of combat had been a war of attrition. The 3rd Armored Division had assumed the properties of a meat grinder in the process of chewing up Nazi General von Manteuffel's Fifth Panzer Army. The Nazi threw his best elements into the defence. Thoroughly identified during the first day of combat were: the 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division, the 9th and 11th Panzer Divisions, parts of the 130th Panzer LEHR Division, 340th and 363rd Volksgrenadier Divisions, and several GHQ units. The result of this day's fighting, according to one report, was that the enemy left behind „a zoo-full of Panthers and Tigers!“

— Day and Night Assault —

On March 26 the attack continued with round the clock regularity. Elements of Combat Command Hickey reported pronounced gains in spite of dug-in infantry and hasty mines. The nature of these defences was the first single indication that the German line was beginning to break —

because on the previous day the mine fields had been deliberately laid. Time was running out for Jerry. Doan fought continuously for 72 hours to reach the Dill River.

On the left flank, Combat Command Boudinot still inched ahead as the enemy fought viciously to repel any threat to his Sieg River line, which ran roughly parallel to the 3rd Armored Division flank. Self propelled guns, supported by infantry, defended the high, wooded ground, and artillery was expended as in Normandy days of 1944. Disregarding obvious enemy strength, Task Force Welborn and Task Force Lovelady pounded forward, close air support aiding their drives.

To the right, Task Force Doan had advanced well beyond and south of much bombed Altenkirchen. At noon, Task Force Richardson entered the town against light resistance. The prisoner toll had risen to 1,000 and the route of advance was a shambles of smashed German vehicles.

Task Force Welborn, receiving fire from high ground on both flanks, was still the most desperately beset of the 3rd Armored Division spearheads. Welborn accepted his losses and ground forward.

Aside from this force of Combat Command Boudinot, the entire division seemed now to have broken through the first hard crust of resistance. Tankers gazed at the lofty, rolling and wooded hills of the Hohe Venn and shook their heads in wonder. If this area had been made the scene of a defensive belt approaching the magnitude of the Siegfried line, it might have been impenetrable. Instead, the enemy seemed to be breaking. There was bright sunshine and warm, spring-like weather.

— Breakthrough! —

On March 27, electrifying news came back over the battle nets. Task Force Doan had broken into the clear and was smashing through town after town! Kane and his dusty, triumphant tankers were advancing as swiftly. Across the hills of Germany there was acrid dust in the air and the multiple sound of many motors. Along the churned, dirt roads of this fluid battle ground, the Wehrmacht's last reserves were strewn like a child's pile of jackstraws. Mobile 88's and their prime movers burned sullenly where the spearhead had passed. French, Belgian and Russian slave laborers, freed of bondage by this swift wave of allied power, trudged happily to the rear, shouting and holding aloft the two-fingered V-for-Victory salute to their Yankee liberators. For the first time in many months, this show began to look like the last rat race in Europe.

As usual in armored battle, there were no non-combatants. Major General Maurice Rose himself engaged the enemy with his pistol on a lonely stretch of road near Rehe, and aided in the capture of 12 prisoners.

All around, it was the sort of day for which the „Spearhead“ was designed. It was movement and fire, broken communications and pockets of resistance to be mopped up. It was the longed-for all out effort which left liaison men in a rough spot trying to maintain those vital lines of communication. There was expectancy in the air, and victory too. It was something like the breakthrough at Normandy, the same dust in the air — billowing clouds of it, pungent and stinging, laced with the stink of burning Nazi vehicles.

There was wreckage and there was death, but the men of this big steel striking force were riding a wave of enthusiasm. They blessed the so-far lenient weather. The acrid dust pleased them even as it inflamed already tired eyes.

Task Force Doan took Herborn on the Dill River, then secured a bridgehead on the far side, while Task Force Kane pressed forward on his left, also to the river. Kane then cleared the town of Burg, on the banks of the Dill.

Meanwhile, Combat Command Boudinot, which had encountered the principal resistance in the drive, went into reserve. Combat Command Howze took its place. At Weiefeld, anti-tank, small arms and artillery fire was encountered, but the town was taken and the advance continued by Task Force Hogan.

During the entire operation the 414th Infantry Regiment of the 104th Division, was attached to the „Spearhead“.

Somewhat rested, Combat Command Boudinot went through Howze's forces in the Herborn area on March 28. Task Force Lovelady, with Task Force Welborn echeloned to the rear, pushed on against lightening resistance to seize the important town of Marburg. As the course of the attack suddenly veered north-east, the 83rd Armored Reconnaissance Battalion was unleashed on the division's left flank. By nightfall, Yeoman's forces had secured Bottenhorn and Holyhausen. Combat Command Howze secured the town of Dillenberg, north of Burg on the Dill River, against light opposition.

By this time prisoners were beginning to pour in. Spot estimates for the day soared to the 3,000 mark, and many could not be processed through the division cage on the

day of capture due to the rapidity of the advance and the lack of transportation.

Meanwhile, air reports indicated that the enemy was withdrawing roughly parallel to the 3rd Armored Division columns, in an attempt to head off attacking units before the encirclement was complete, or to shun the inevitable pocket.

— The Magnificent Drive —

March 29 was a day for the historians to remember, and it all belonged to the 3rd Armored Division! It was a day comparable, but more gratifying than the occasion in France when the entire division moved from the Mayenne River to a point beyond Pre en Pail on the route to Ranes. It was even better than the day in northern France when the entire division, on the move toward Charleville, was given a 90 degree change in direction to attack toward Mons. For, on March 29, led by the free wheeling 83rd, the „Spearhead“ moved more than 90 miles, largely across country, from the Marburg area to Niedermarsburg — a point less than 20 miles from the famous tank training grounds at Paderborn, which was the division's objective. For all practical means, the startling all-out drive had sealed the doom of the entire industrial Ruhr, plus German Army Group B under Field Marshal Model.

In this rapid advance, the route lay almost entirely overland. Towns which were thought to contain road blocks were bypassed. The orders were to go through and around enemy resistance and get to the objective — fast.

The day was overcast with light rains and cool weather. There was no air support, but none was necessary. The

enemy flank had been turned and there was nothing he could do about this slashing attack. The towns of Mangeringhausen, Obermarsburg and Drilon were taken in rapid succession.

Few, if any of the small towns which had been passed, were damaged by the armored fist of total war. This, indeed, was a different circumstance from that of the initial bridgehead area where nearly every village had been either bombed or shelled, and often both.

Soldiers of the 3rd Armored Division had heard of the German prisoner of war camps and so-called „slave labor“. Now they saw a small part of that system. Thousands of slave laborers plodded the dusty road back to freedom. And, everywhere along the route, trudged the grey-green figures of the Wehrmacht, hands clasped behind their heads, marching to some distant prisoner of war camp. Resistance? One report stated that terrain obstacles and prisoners of war interfered with the advance of the columns!

— The Trap is Closed — A Leader Dies —

On March 30, though, resistance really stiffened as elements of the SS Panzer training regiment and the SS reconnaissance training regiment from the Sennelager training camp north of Paderborn, were committed. These picked school troops and students might be compared to the men of our own armored force center at Fort Knox, Kentucky.

Mainly the resistance consisted of bazooka teams which fired at 3rd Armored Division tanks as they rolled through roads and paths in wooded areas. Small arms were also used to advantage by the enemy, but there was a shortage

of mortars and artillery. Several SS tanks were encountered and swiftly smashed to smoking junk.

Task Force Welborn encountered a strongly dug-in infantry defence and some tanks in the area north of Etteln, barely more than three miles from Paderborn. At approximately six o'clock in the evening, his column was cut by marauding Panther and Tiger tanks. The maneuver was a costly one to men of the 3rd Armored Division, for their general was killed in the following action.

As was so often his custom, General Rose was following the forward elements of his command. With him was his driver, T/4 Glen Shaunce, and his aide, Major Robert Bellinger. Two other peep loads of officers and men, and one armored car, were also in the general's party.

Unfortunately, General Rose was caught in the center of the break caused by the enemy in Colonel Welborn's column. Attempting a dash for freedom, his vehicle was pinned between a tree and one of the Nazi Panthers.

Accounts vary as to exactly what happened then, but the General was shot down. Major Bellinger and T/4 Shaunce escaped by dashing into nearby cover and crawling, separately, from the scene. They were later rescued by friendly troops.

Bitterly, tankers of Lt. Colonel John Boles' task force, formerly Task Force Doan, cleared the road block which had cut Welborn's column, and went on to take Haxtergrund. Here, Task Force Lovelady also met strong opposition from dug-in infantry and panzerfaust teams.

Although Boles had cleared the offending road block, Panther and Tiger tanks still roamed in „rear“ areas. The

morning after General Rose's body was recovered, a section of guns from the 703rd Tank Destroyer Battalion destroyed two Tiger tanks close to the scene of the tragedy.

Within Combat Command Howze, Task Force Hogan seized Wewer after a sharp fight against tanks, infantry, and a defended mine field in the town. Task Force Richardson met tank and infantry opposition too, but the „Spearhead“ still ground forward. Richardson took Nordborchen. The 83rd Armored Reconnaissance Battalion added Dorenhagen and Eggeringhausen to the long list of places captured.

The enemy continued to commit his SS training units from the Paderborn area, plus a GHQ tank battalion and a tank destroyer unit which was reputed to have 128mm guns mounted on Tiger tank chassis. A number of Hungarian prisoners were taken here, a few with their wives trailing along behind!

— The „Spearhead“ Meets The „Hell on Wheels“ —

On April 1, the „Spearhead“ had practically accomplished one of the great drives of World War II, but the satisfaction of that victory was soured by the news of General Rose's death and the manner of his dying. There was no slacking off in the 3rd.

Setting the pace for this new month of battle, Task Force Kane drove swiftly to a historic meeting with the 2nd Armored Division of the 9th Army, at Lippstadt. Artillery liaison planes from the two divisions had kept track of ground forces to prevent any chance shooting up of friendly forces. The 2nd „Hell on Wheels“, had come across the north German plain while the 3rd was making its two-way thrust, first

to Herborn and Marburg, from the Remagen bridgehead, then north, in a brilliant crossing of the „T“, to seal the industrial Ruhr.

Task Force Kane cleared Geseke in its advance to meet the 2nd Armored Division and in so doing destroyed much equipment and captured a serviceable airfield near the town.

Back at Paderborn, Welborn was first in the town, followed by Lovelady and Task Force Boles. Hogan and Richardson cleared Salzkotten and secured high ground north-west of Nordborchen to cover the attack made by Boles, who drove through tank and infantry fire to clear the factory area and enter the town. General Boudinot entered the town with the lead troops.

A final count of damage inflicted upon the enemy during this period, apart from the inspired sweep which cut off vital Ruhr areas, included the taking of more than 20,000 prisoners of war, including wounded enemy and enemy hospital personnel overrun but not evacuated.

The list of destroyed equipment for this drive included: 35 tanks, 31 self propelled guns, 48 artillery pieces, one railway gun, 49 heavy AA and AT guns, 146 light AA guns, 25 staff cars and sedans, 1,263 trucks, eight aircraft captured on the ground, six railway trains, and 15 assault boats. As the week-long period came to an end, additional ammunition dumps, chemical warfare dumps, warehouses and quartermaster depots were reported taken intact.

The drive was finished, but fanatic Nazi's continued to wage a desperate series of disjointed fights. Columns travelling to the rear were subject to attack by entrapped forces seeking to escape the Ruhr, and vehicles, particularly

those moving at night, were often harried by bazooka fire or sniper attempts in secluded places. The work of supply personnel, bringing up vital rations and gasoline, was an epic of devotion to duty and high courage during this period. Also commendable was the effort of the 45th Armored Medical Battalion which had maintained six separate treatment sections moving with the task forces.

In recognition of the brilliant drive, the FIRST UNITED STATES ARMY named the great trap, the Rose pocket. The „Spearhead“ general had been killed in his last and most important victory.

On March 31, Brigadier General Doyle O. Hickey, who had been with the division since its desert training in California, assumed command. General Hickey's Combat Command „A“ came under the leadership of Colonel L. L. Doan, and Lt. Colonel John Boles assumed command of Task Force X.

As this period ended, the 3rd Armored Division readied itself for the next move. Where, was not at all certain, but men of this big, powerful outfit were looking toward the east, and Berlin.



CHAPTER V

— One More River —

The swift drive from the Remagen bridgehead to Paderborn and thence to Lippstadt and a link-up with the 9th Army, was a high spot in 3rd Armored Division history. But there was more to come. After spending April 3 and 4 mopping up late gains, the 3rd was relieved from the defence of Lippstadt-Paderborn and prepared to jump off in a new offensive.

The goal was Germany's Weser River. On April 5, the two veteran combat commands, „A” under Colonel L. L. Doan, and „B” commanded by General Truman E. Boudinot, drove for the heart of Germany.

By dawn of the following day, Task Force Boles had taken Amelunken on the Weser, to find that enemy engineers had systematically blown all of the bridge spans. Task Force Kane's veterans ground ahead in the face of tank and infantry opposition to pocket a defending force at Tietelsen.

Kane bypassed this resistance with one force while he pushed another group further south.

Within Combat Command Boudinot, Task Force Welborn knifed south of Kane and took Heerbruck. The entire division was moving swiftly: Task Force Lovelady cracked through stubborn resistance to clear Manrode.

During this period of battle, the „Spearhead“ was encountering scattered elements of SS tank and reconnaissance training units which had been stationed in the Paderborn area, as well as several replacement battalions and parts of the 1066 and 661st Infantry Regiments of the 166th Infantry Division. Although the opposition was not of a caliber to be compared with Ardennes battle groups, a certain desperation and fanaticism produced bitterly contested local actions. In addition, the enemy still had a number of 128mm tank destroyers left in the area.

On April 7, all elements of the 3rd Armored Division had reached the Weser River. The enemy, still smarting from his costly blunder at Remagen, was now thoroughly blowing his bridges in this late stage of the campaign.

At the Weser's brink, Task Force Welborn's advance elements received direct fire from both sides of the stream. The town was Herstelle. Another of Welborn's probing spearheads reached Carlshafen, further east. Task Force Lovelady was slowed by soft terrain, but by the end of the day had succeeded in taking Helmarshausen.

Within Combat Command Doan, Lt. Colonel Clifford Miller, the self styled „Army brat“, and his task force, was slowed by a blown railway bridge at Godelheim. Task Force Orr found the river bridge at Wehrden blown and noted many

barricades in the town. Kane's column bagged an airplane assembly plant in the town of Blankenau.

Mopping up along the river consumed a day, and then on April 9 a crossing was made. Resistance varied from moderate to stubborn, but 22 towns were taken before sunset. Task Force Hogan cleared Hardezen and Northeim as Combat Command Howze relieved Doan on the right. Doan's force went into reserve.

On the far side of the river, Task Force Richardson encountered 12 Panther and Tiger tanks. Wily Richardson bypassed the armor and drove south.

— Liberation of The Death Camp Slaves —

Continued advances were made through April 10. Thrusting toward Nordhausen, Welborn took Epschenrode. Task Force Lovelady, hampered by muddy terrain, nevertheless advanced beyond Grossbodungen. Colonel Sam Hogan, the colorful Texan, battled armor and mine fields to reach the small town of Zwinge.

Within Combat Command Doan, Task Force Kane was hampered by debris in Northeim, but destroyed two Mark-IV tanks and a pair of grounded airplanes during the day.

On the 10th also, a platoon of the 83rd Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, led by Lt. Duane Doherty, cleared a V-2 assembly plant at Kleinbodungen. A number of the huge rockets, completed excepting for war heads, lay on jigs where they had been constructed. After taking a number of prisoners, one of Doherty's men discovered an underground shaft in the assembly plant. A later examination proved that he had uncovered one of the Nazis

infamous underground installations. The reconnaissance soldiers were amazed to find that the tunnels ran more than 640 meters beneath the surface, and radiated off through several kilometers of sandstone and clay formations. Although no machinery was set up in the tunnels, all available space was crammed with various types of high explosives.

During this period the 1st Infantry Division was coming up to the left rear of the 3rd. Attached to the „Spearhead“ were: the 1st Battalion of the 18th Infantry, 1st Division; the 3rd Battalion of the 47th Infantry, 9th Division; and the 2nd Battalion of the 414th Infantry, 104th Division. There was no lack of crack doughboy support.

Although the taking of Nordhausen did not constitute the heaviest fighting of April 11, that city will live forever in the memories of 3rd Armored Division soldiers as a place of horror. Much bombed Nordhausen was the center of a concentration camp — slave labor system which, in its utter disregard for human life and dignity must rank with the hell holes of Maidenek and Buchenwald. The inmates of the city concentration camp, the former Caserne Boelcke, were representative of all nations: they were the political prisoners of Europe, the men who, so long as Nazi Germany ruled — were doomed to worse than death.

At Nordhausen, called the Death Camp by prisoners, hundreds of corpses lay sprawled over the huge compound's ragged acres. They lay in contorted heaps, half-stripped, mouths gaping in the dirt and straw: or they were piled naked, like cordwood, in the corners of great steel and cement barracks. Most horrible was the sight of the living among the dead. Side by side with the bodies of their

comrades, sunken-eyed skeletons of men moaned weakly or babbled in delirium. In the filth of their own dysentery, systematically starved, abused, and finally abandoned to die unattended, those who still lived when Combat Command Boudinot sped through Nordhausen, were whisked off to emergency hospitals by American medical men. Many were without hope of recovery. Major Martin L. Sherman, a division medical officer, estimated that there was little chance of more than half of the pitiful starvation cases to survive.

From the concentration camp at Nordhausen, the political prisoners had worked in an efficient underground factory north of the city, called „Dora“, and at the V-2 assembly works at Kleinbodungen. Under brutal and unsanitary conditions, the emaciated men had labored in the labyrinths of underground shafts which had been dug into a hill for a distance of more than two miles. Here they constructed V-1 robots and V-2 weapons as well as parts for Junkers airplane motors. Although V-3, purportedly a secret anti-aircraft device, was undergoing experimentation at Dora, few of the political prisoners were assigned to its development. Those who were put on V-3 manufacture, according to the eyewitness accounts, were segregated and finally murdered to preserve the secret of that which they had seen.

Working hours for these unfortunates were as long as 16 hours a day, and lagging was discouraged by beatings administered by SS guards, and by periodic hangings of alleged slackers as an object lesson. The starving prisoners, who were fed four ounces of black bread and a liter of soup each day, dragged themselves desperately until at

last they collapsed, were allowed to die unattended, and then were shovelled into cremation furnaces on the premises. In the last week of its being, so many men had died at Nordhausen and Dora that the furnaces were unable to cope with all of the bodies. Thousands were therefore left in piles where they had been dropped.

Dora was efficient in a characteristic Nazi way, but to the shocked eyes of American fighting men, the camp was the most complete condemnation of Hitlerism yet exposed. The tankers of the 3rd would never again doubt the reason for their fighting.

While General Doyle O. Hickey, chewing savagely on his pipe, surveyed the gagging horror of Nordhausen, his old elite Combat Command „A“ took Herzburg, reducing a strong roadblock in the process. Task Force Kane cleared Osterode in bitter fighting, using Thunderbolt bombers to attack defending tanks. Between Nordhausen and Osterode, Combat Command Howze swept the defences of several fortified towns. The Yanks were mad and mean after what they had witnessed. German forces attempted to halt the avalanche: reeled and fell back instead.

On the following day, April 12, the attack was again pushed. Advance elements sped through Sangerhausen and, on April 13, continued to the Saale River. Here again all bridges were blown, but the ground flattened as the 3rd Armored Division left the Harz mountains behind its left flank.

— Britons Liberated —

The town of Eisleben was declared an open city. At nearby Polleben a British prisoner of war camp was overrun,

liberating many officers and men. Some of these Britons had been prisoners since Dunkirk, others had been taken in the Western Desert or in Crete. Several, who accompanied the „Spearhead“ columns for two days because of evacuation difficulties, wanted to continue with the division.

Task Force Lovelady encountered strong 88mm fire during the day and found the bridge blown at Laschwitz. Task Force Richardson advanced to Alsleben and was here taken under direct fire. The force was ordered back to use another bridge then in the process of building. Only Colonel Sam Hogan found a partially intact span, a damaged railway bridge at Netben, and was able to push infantry across.

On April 14, the division crossed the Saale on two bridges built during the preceding night by Lt. Colonel Lawrence Foster's 23rd Armored Engineer Battalion. Task Force Welborn lanced straight into the blue, reaching the Mulde River south of Dessau, on that day. This force met elements of the Scharnhorst Volksgrenadier Division which had been formed, about Easter-time, of officer candidates and veteran personnel: the Potsdam and the von Hutten Volksgrenadier Divisions, also made up of OCS material and veteran front-kampfers. The men of these three divisions were as near to being crack soldiers as any battle formations committed by the enemy since the Ardennes.

On the same day, Task Force Lovelady struck heavy resistance, but continued to advance. Hogan hacked through stiffening lines of resistance to clear an airport in the outskirts of Kothen.

— Bridgehead on the Mulde —

Sensitive on the subject of bridges, German engineers left a wrecked span across the Mulde where Task Force Welborn halted on April 15. Infantry of his force, however, crossed and secured a bridgehead. Meanwhile, Lovelady's veterans cleared the towns of Thurland and Kleinleipzig, (which later were the scenes of bitter fighting after German forces had infiltrated through the spearheading armor). Colonel Hogan cleared all of Kothen excepting a small patch of resistance in the north-east and Richardson secured the small town of Frenz and proceeded toward the larger place of Bernburg. He met fanatic resistance in Unterpeissen.

All along the division front resistance stiffened perceptibly. Towns which had been bypassed and thought clear, suddenly disgorged a complement of German troops who harried supply operations in rear areas. Infantry from Colonel Boles task force was used to clear Meilendorf and Kornetz, Quellendorf and Reupzig. These places were defended by fanatics wielding panzerfausts and small arms for the most part. Colonel Orr's forces occupied several small towns, and the 83rd Armored Reconnaissance Battalion sent patrols which took Rendin, Thalheim and Sandersdorf. The recon troopers discovered that the larger towns of Wolfen and Bitterfeld, near the Mulde River, were more strongly fortified.

At this time the „Spearhead“ Division was holding down a struggling 40 mile front with many uncleared, yet bypassed towns in the rear areas. The terrain, however, was favorable. It was flat farm country dotted by numerous small towns,

all connected by excellent road systems. To the south of Dessau was a large patch of woods through which Task Force Welborn had advanced on the autobahn. To the division's north was the Elbe, and to the east, the Mulde. On this front the armor was facing the greater part of three divisions, each averaging 4,000 of Germany's last, well trained reserves, plus a scattering of other miscellaneous units. It was a condition which, even in this stage of the war, demanded prompt action and close attention. Fortunately, the division had sufficient mobility to strike the enemy before he could become fixed in any one position.

The Mulde bridge operation, meanwhile, continued to confront Task Force Welborn on April 16. Short of infantry to begin with, he found German artillery extremely heavy and accurate on the bridging site. After having considerable engineer equipment destroyed by enemy fire, Welborn was ordered, by Army, to discontinue spanning operations and to withdraw his infantry from the east bank. This he did on April 17.

While Colonel Welborn was sweating out his bridgehead on the Mulde, Task Force Lovelady cleared enemy resistance from Raguhn, west of the stream which divided the town, while Richardson entered Bernburg. The significance of these moves was that the Harz mountain pocket had been effectively sealed and the capture of the more than 80,000 troops in that pocket made inevitable. It was the second such pocket that the 3rd Armored Division had helped to close in a month of combat, the first being the Ruhr — named the Rose Pocket, in memory of Major General Maurice Rose, where 374,000 prisoners of war were captured.

— Mop up Before Dessau —

Task Force Hogan continued to clear Kothen, while one battle group went to Klepzig, there to encounter a road block, artillery, mortar fire, small arms and bazooka defenses. The German defenders were making good use of their big, clumsy, but often deadly panzerfausts. However, Klepzig was cleared and later, Merzein, too.

On the following day, Task Force Boles took Libbesdorf and Kochstedt, west of Dessau, encountering a mine field in the course of operations. Colonel Orr's men swept the woods south of Dessau.

During the early morning hours of April 17, Task Force Lovelady's CP in Thurland was overrun by 150 enemy infantrymen in a well planned and coordinated infantry-commando attack. The town was not retaken until late in the afternoon when men of the 83rd Armored Reconnaissance Battalion slugged their way back in.

Meanwhile, Hogan's elements had entered the town of Aken, on the Elbe, and Orr's battle group maintained pressure on a road junction near the town of Torten, south of Dessau.

Task Force Richardson, ordered to attack toward Bobbau-Steinfurth, promptly nicknamed „Bobby-sox“ by the tankers, was counter-attacked from the direction of the town. Richardson parried the blow with artillery and fighter bombers, accounting for eight enemy tanks in so doing. By the end of the day his forces had reached Bobbau-Steinfurth.

Task Force Hogan took all of Aken on the 18th, and one

of his battle groups contacted the XIX Corps in Poszig, near Bernburg. The 83rd, with Lt. Colonel Miller's battle group attached, attacked toward Wolfen and Greppin. Miller's tankers took Rodgen and Thalheim against mortar and artillery fire, and the 83rd pushed through two towns to Renden. Here, the enemy counter-attacked with three tanks and about 50 infantrymen. The attack was thrown back and the town taken. In Bobbau-Steinfurth, meanwhile, Richardson was experiencing another counter-attack. He also held firm and, on the 19th, mopped up the area.

Colonel Miller's forces entered Wolfen on the 19th, and Task Force Hogan sent a group to clean up the area between Wolfen and Bobbau-Steinfurth. The next day Wolfen and Greppin were firmly in „Spearhead“ hands. The preliminaries were over. Commanders pored over maps and studied the blue phase lines and the routes into Dessau.

— Dessau and The Elbe —

To 3rd Armored Division Texans, April 21 was proper for the entry into Dessau: it was San Jacinto day! Task Force Welborn attacked from the south, and Boles spearheaded through Alten to enter the city. Hogan took Kleinkuhnau and Grosskuhnau, encountering road blocks, small arms, mortar and artillery fire. Richardson, another Texas tanker, drove into Jessnitz.

Resistance stiffened in Dessau on the 22nd of April, with shellfire and small arms the principal opposition, but on the following day all of the town was cleared. Sgt. Bill Wascom, of the 391st Armored Field Artillery Battalion, who had

fired his outfit's first shell in Normandy, sent the battalion's 170,100th 105mm projectile whistling into German lines. The campaign was over.

— Campaign Kaput —

Weary tankers, red eyed and grimy, tooled their big Shermans and Pershings back over the roads of conquest. The division, as usual, had been the cleaving edge of Major General J. Lawton Collins' crack VII Corps. As usual, the „Spearhead“ came out of battle with high honors — and vacancies. Lt. Colonel Prentice E. Yeomans, of the 83rd, had been killed in action at Zschepkau. Lt. Colonel Matthew Kane had been wounded. Since crossing the Rhine there had not been a single division general staff section which had not lost an officer. Some of the latter were lucky enough to return safely after being retaken by friendly troops. Among them were Lt. Colonel Wesley A. Sweat, G—3, and Lt. Colonel Jack A. Boulger, G—1.

By April 25, the 3rd Armored Division was out of the line and out of contact with the enemy: it was one of the few in more than ten months of almost continuous battle. The 23,879 prisoners taken in the drive to Dessau, plus a number captured in rear areas, boosted division totals over the 75,000 mark — more than five times „Spearhead“ strength! To the division's credit was another long drive, 145 miles from Paderborn to the Elbe. Here, to observe strategic coordination with advancing Russian armies, the American drive halted. At long last, Germany was breaking up. There could be no mistake: the war in Europe was very close to an end. Thirteen days later the end was officially announ-

ced. To the weathered veterans of battle, the news was almost anti-climax.

South of the Harz mountains in the Sangerhausen area, men of the 3rd Armored Division rested in comfortable billets, learned that reveille is still practiced in the American army, and tried to forget about K-rations and foxholes.

These men who had come up the long, dusty roads from Omaha Beach and St. Jean de Daye, through France and Belgium and Germany, through the flaming towns and the best defences of a fanatic enemy, felt the comfortable relief of a hard job, well done. Now they might relax for the moment. They did. And they wondered, too — they wondered where the trail led from these quiet towns in occupied Germany

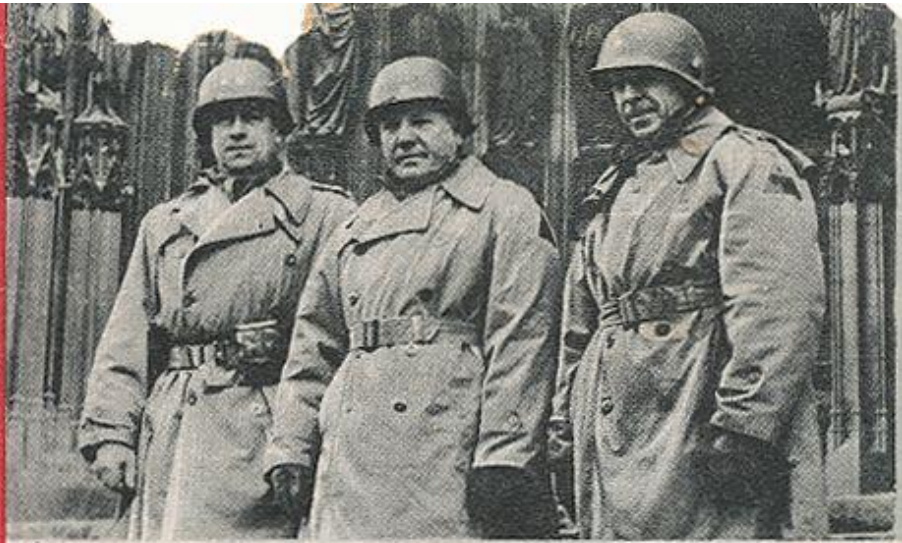
There was always the far east. So long as the United States remained at war there would be need of tanks in the American scheme of battle. 3rd Armored Division soldiers knew that no fighting force in the world could claim supremacy over the „Spearhead“. In view of that fact, whether the 3rd would again be called upon to lead the first Americans in total, irresistible combat, was a matter for God, and General Marshall to decide.

— End —

Printed by Hallische Nachrichten, Halle (Saale)

Photographs and color printing
done by Carl Warnecke, Halle (Saale)

First Americans
of the First
Army to reach
Cologne. Major
General Mau-
rose, Bri-
gade General
Doyle O'Hickey
and Truman E.
Boudinot, at
the Cologne
cathedral.

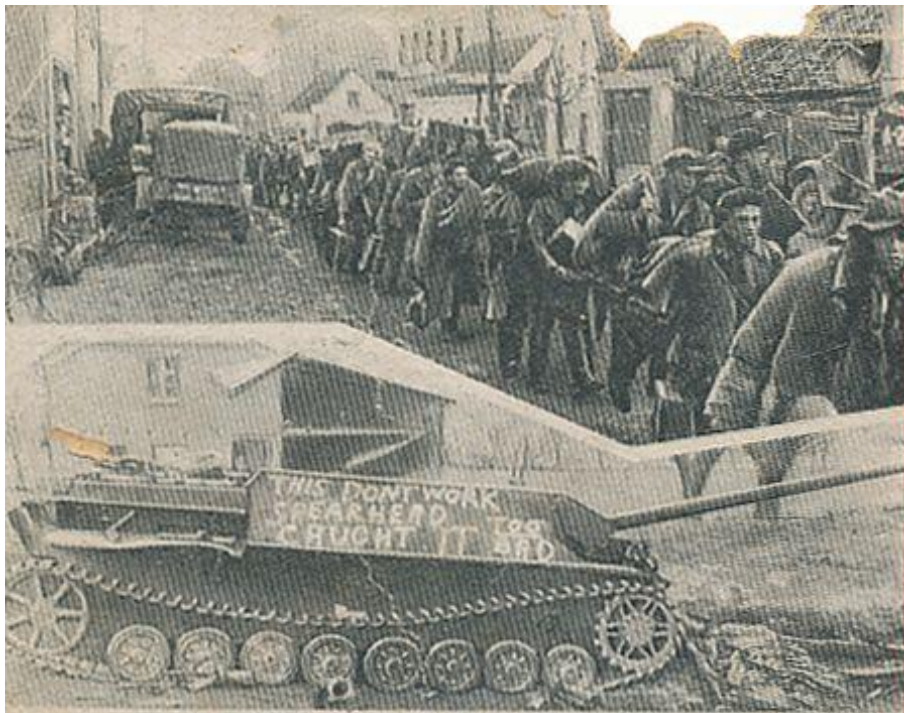


The last Pan-
ther in Cologne.
This one chal-
lenged a
„Spearhead“
Pershing—won
second prize.



The job was
done by air
and ground
cooperation.
Here's a 32nd
Armored Regi-
ment tank ap-
plying the coup
de grace.





It's
road b
the for
borers
many,
a lea
natic
again
cour
tes
of the 3rd
Armored
Division.

German tank
destroyer meets
"Spearhead"
tank. Alles
kaput for
Jerry!

Hostile ma-
chine gun fir
downed this
Yank. A med
administers
first aid wh
the enemy is
mopped up.

Hitler said:
"Give me five
years and you
will not recog-
nize Germany
again." Give
that man five
silverpfennigs
he told the
truth!