

# "Bravest OF THE Brave"





**T**HE story of the division is the sum of fifteen thousand personal experiences. The historian can gather the statistics that record the ground gained, the cities captured, the prisoners taken, and the Germans killed; and he can, if he is skillful enough, sketch in the terrible background against which we moved and lived and fought. But he can never tell the whole story as you have lived it.

Some of your personal experiences have come to my attention; there are many among you whose conspicuous gallantry has earned official recognition. But there are hundreds of others whose quiet heroism went unnoticed in the confusion of battle, whose stories must remain untold because no one came back to tell them.

This little book, produced while we are still fighting, cannot presume to record the battle history of the division. It can only hint at the heroism and horror you have known. Much of it will seem old and trite to you. The historian can only set down what he was told. You were there.

This book, then, is designed to be sent home, to tell others some of the things you have done. It is to those final recipients that I have really addressed this foreword. There are no words that express the feeling I have for all of you.

*Harry L. Twaddle*

Major General, Commanding



This is one of a series of *On the Ground, Air and Service* books in the European Theater of Operations, to be issued by our Stars Stripes, a publication of the Information and Education Division, Special and Information Service, ETOL SA. Major General Harry L. Twaddle, commanding the 92nd Infantry Division, lent his cooperation to the preparation of the pamphlet, and basic material was supplied to the editors by his staff.



THE STORY OF THE

*95<sup>th</sup> Infantry*  
DIVISION

*The American infantrymen of Maj. Gen. Harry L. Twaddle's 95th Division had to be the "bravest of the brave" to move as they did in the face of heavy enemy machine gun and mortar fire down into the exposed city (Saarlautern), which lies like a goldfish bowl between the high ridges on either side of the Saar. This battle-tried division had crossed the Moselle to help capture Metz and was now up against the principal river between the Moselle and the Rhine.*

— JOSEPH DRISCOLL, N.Y. HERALD TRIBUNE

THAT was written on the day before the Saar was crossed. On Dec. 3, 1944, Joe Driscoll had a bigger story, because the way the river was crossed without loss of a man was one of the war's slickest tricks.



At 0545, the first wave of the 1st Bn., 379th Inf., slipped across the river in boats manned by Co. C, 320th Engrs. Not a shot was fired. No one slipped or got hurt. Across the river, doughs turned south toward the approach to the main highway bridge across the Saar. Here they hit a German armored car in which a radio operator was frantically pounding out a message. He was bayoneted. A second Kraut sprinted for the demolition switch on the bridge. He missed—crumbling in his tracks, five feet short.

Star of the show was Battalion CO Lt. Col. Tobias R. Philbin, Clinton, Mass. He and Col. Robert L. Bacon, Harlingen, Tex., 379th CO, hatched the scheme which, on paper, didn't have the proverbial snowball's chance of succeeding—then Col. Philbin went along to make sure it did. Among other things, he took care of the German heading for the switch.

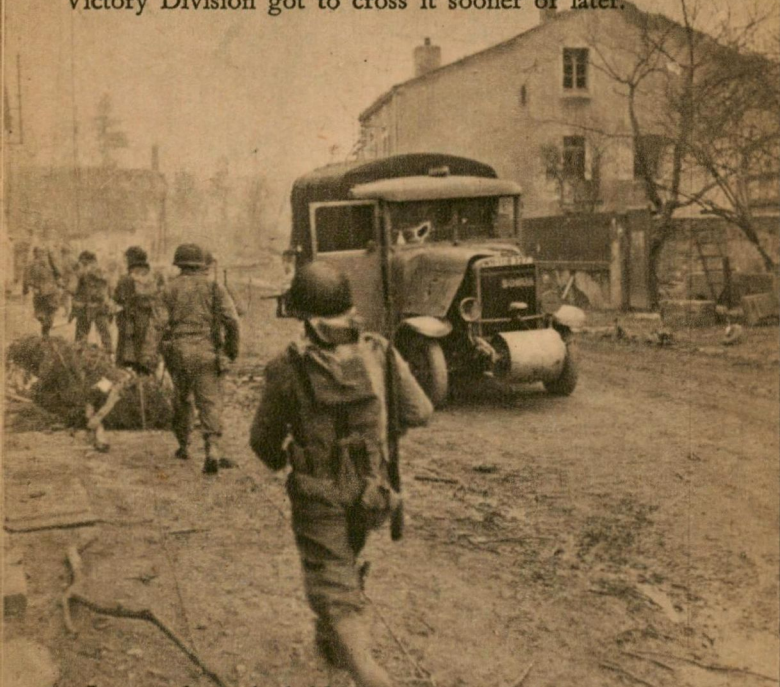
At 0721, Col. Philbin's men hit the bridge and began cutting all demolition wires. They were nine minutes to the good. German engineers were on their way to blow the bridge. The German schedule was set for 0730.

By the time 320th Engrs. had located 6000 pounds of explosives, the enemy realized what was happening to his prize bridge. All hell broke loose from every machine gun and pillbox within range. Germans splattered mortar shells after losing the initial counter-thrust. Heavy artillery cut loose to pulverize the bridge.

Meanwhile, 3rd Bn., 379th, had renewed its attacks at Saarlautern and reached the south side of the bridge.



Both ends of the crossing were secure, but nobody felt much like using it for a while. Although the bridge was a hot spot for more than a month, every Joe in the Victory Division got to cross it sooner or later.



It was the only bridge across the Saar in this area. That's why the 95th needed it—intact.

The operation won a nod from the War Dept. when Under-Secretary of War Robert P. Patterson told a press conference:

"The 95th Division performed with great distinction in taking, intact, the Saarlautern bridge."

On both flanks, the 377th and 378th were mopping up final pockets of resistance to the Saar. The river was the front line in the division zone. While 377th took Wallerfangen, 378th swept Lisdorf, a Saarlautern suburb.

THIS was the way it had been at Metz, where the 95th and the 5th Divs. shared the history-making reduction of the bristling fortress. This was the way it had been in the push to the Saar and subsequent fighting in the Siegfried Line. The 95th Joes were living up to their name—Victory Division.

The 95th jumped off for the Saar Nov. 25. Troops instinctively knew the goal. The German border was about 25 miles to the east, and the whole team was looking forward to the day when it could write "inside Germany" on letters home.

Beyond stretched the Siegfried Line, an obstacle which everyone knew would be tougher to crack than Metz forts. No one was disappointed.

The 377th Inf., under Col. Fred Gaillard, Greenville, Tex., spearheaded the division's main effort. The 378th held the right flank with the 379th in reserve. The going was mild but still no walkaway that first day. Dough-feet met nothing heavier than mortar fire, and the division moved its line forward four miles, chewing up 12 towns.



Resistance merely seemed light because of veterans like Pfc Willie Bishop, Jacksonville, Fla., Co.E, 377th Inf., runner. He was advancing with the lead platoon across an open field when the Krauts opened up with mortar and machine gun fire. With his CO and others wounded, Bishop took over. He crawled back to direct the com-



pany away from the zeroed-in area, then returned to give first aid to his CO. Next, Bishop reported the company's position and called for artillery and mortar support. He stuck around to observe shell bursts, called in corrections, then asked for a smoke screen.

When the smoke came over, he evacuated the seriously wounded, led others to safety behind a knoll. After reporting to the battalion commander, he rejoined his outfit. He now wears the Distinguished Service Cross.

NEXT day, the two regiments pushed ahead, bothered as much by mined roads and fields, blown bridges and culverts as by sporadic mortar fire and scattered machine gun nests. Withdrawing Germans used concrete emplacements of the Maginot Line as temporary shelter, but there was no sign of a stand in this once-powerful string of fortifications.

Although resistance stiffened, the division grabbed Valmunster, Velving, Eblange, Bettange, Remelfang, Bouzonville, Tromborn, Alzing, Chateau Rouge, Oberdorf, Coume, Falck and Varsberg during the third day of the fresh offensive.

The big day came Nov. 28. Shortly after midnight, 377th patrols crossed the German border. At 0945, Co. F blasted Krauts from Leidingen, a village squarely astride the French-German border. By day's end, the 377th had added six more German towns to its list—Bedersdorf, Ittersdorf, Guerstling, Ihn, Kerlingen and Rammelfangen.

Advancing troops looked for boundary markers along the road. Germany didn't look any different than France.

The people didn't look different either. They had been pushed back and forth between the two nations so long that both languages came naturally. The 95th merely muttered, "We're in Germany," and went on fighting.

The deeper the 95th penetrated into Germany, the harder Krauts fought. The Germans were going all out to cover their main withdrawal back across the Saar. On Nov. 29 the two regiments rocked under ten counter-attacks, six of them in the Falck area. One of the roughest was the tank-infantry scrap at St. Barbara. When the 377th's 1st Bn. finished, the town was levelled. The division now was near enough the Siegfried Line to retaste artillery—from 88s up.

As November faded, division elements could look down from the high ground near Oberlimberg, Duren and St. Barbara and see the Saar. Across its banks, in towns and villages, farmhouses, fields and woods, were the guts of the German West Wall.

GIs PLAY TUNE FOR NAZI

## Death Dance

NEW field orders arrived Dec. 1. The 379th Inf., in reserve since Metz, took over the 95th's major effort. These Joes had only to punch through the remaining two miles to the Saar, make the hazardous crossing,

then smack the Siegfried Line. A month earlier, that would have sounded like Section VIII chatter.

All three regiments cleared the division area to the river. It was an even start for all. For the first time in its combat history, the 95th was assigned direct air support. Preparatory to the crossing, eight groups of medium bombers pounded the east bank of the river in the Saarlautern area. The XIX TAC provided fighter support. The 377th and 378th ploughed ahead against bitter resistance while the 379th wheeled toward Saarlautern from its rear reserve position.

THE Air Corps returned Dec. 2 for another assist with 400 mediums giving the Saarlautern area a second pasting. Fighter-bombers rocked enemy barracks to the west of the city.

On the heights overlooking the river, the 377th's 1st Bn. pulled out of St. Barbara, let Div Arty pump in shells, then moved back to mop up. The town was left a shambles. In the Merten and Falck areas, the 378th experienced particularly rugged fighting. The 379th's 2nd Bn. struggled into Saarlautern, slugging it out through streets and parks, sniping and blasting from buildings.

Fighting maintained this sizzling pace once the Saarlautern bridge had been secured. Saarlouis-Roden, Saarlautern and Ensdorf, three suburbs across the river, were integral parts of the Siegfried Line. Massive pill-boxes and bunkers were sandwiched between houses, others cleverly camouflaged as private or commercial buildings.



Metz was tough. This was double tough. Fighting was severe, painfully slow. A battalion objective for a whole day might be a single block or part of a block. It was house-by-house, bunker-by-bunker. "Mouseholing" through buildings was the only workable solution.

There were mines and booby traps, terrific mortar barrages, 88s firing point-blank and heavy stuff pouring in with the roar of a subway. The 95th used tanks and TDs, flame-throwers and Bangalore torpedoes, beehive explosive charges and self-propelled 155s that looked like monstrous grasshoppers; bazookas and rifle grenades, bayonets, knives. Welding torches sealed pillbox doors to prevent Germans from reentering.

Daily gains were measured by houses. Germans counter-attacked monotonously, using tanks and self-propelled guns in support of their infantry.



The way it shaped up, the 379th made Saarlouis-Roden its personal project; 377th rolled up its sleeves before Fraulautern; 378th battered its way into Ensdorf.

This last operation was roughest in one respect. Engineers played a grim game of building-and-rebuilding bridges with German artillery the top competitor. The river flooded Dec. 8, making even boat crossings extremely difficult.

THERE was a dance macabre in the main ballroom of Fraulautern's biggest hotel Dec. 10. Bloody hand-to-hand fighting raged when 1st Bn., 377th Inf., lunged into the building. S/Sgt. Andy Skrele, Springfield, Ill., now a Co. B lieutenant said, "There was plenty of dancing there, but it wasn't a slow fox-trot."

With only a few blocks cleared in each suburb, Germans pulled out their 21st Panzer Div. and replaced it with less skilled troops. The group included inductees of the Volksturm, or People's Army. Some were over 50 years old. Although the 95th could notice the personnel switch, even old men could do a good job of holding 10-foot-thick concrete bunkers.

The division was tired. It had been in the line for 58 days, whipping along with incredible speed for the past month.

There were no timeouts. Regiments were rotated, allowing outfits to be shifted for short rest periods, rehabilitation, training. A week earlier, Germans had initiated their northern offensive. The Saar sector entered a holding phase.

The 95th was proud of its two-month combat record. It had inflicted an estimated 21,000 casualties, including more than 10,000 prisoners. In the bitter fighting across the Saar, it demolished 1242 fortified houses and buildings, cleaned out 146 pillboxes and bunkers. One hundred sixty cities, towns and villages were liberated, 225 square miles engulfed, 31 major Metz and Maginot fortifications captured.

Recalling the months before combat, Joes could see how their rigorous training had paid off.

## Training PAYS BIG DIVIDENDS

THE regulars remembered when the 7th Inf. Div. formed the cadre. They remembered the activation ceremony at Camp Swift under a hot Texas sun, July 15, 1942. The division's brand-new GIs, most of them just a few days out of Midwestern reception centers, paraded for the first time at that ceremony.

Basic training completed, the 95th made its first move, traveling to Fort Sam Houston, mammoth San Antonio post which at first glance looked like a college campus. Next door to Fort Sam was Leon Springs Military Reservation, which included Camps Bullis, Cibolo, Stahl and others. It was at these tick and chigger-infested camps



that the Victory Division underwent its first appreciable field rehearsal for Metz and the Siegfried Line.

The division moved to Louisiana for its first large-scale maneuvers June, 1943. Here Joes of the 95th took advanced courses in how to beat Germans to their knees. These maneuvers were wet, dirty and cold, but the division was taking shape.

Camp Polk, La., was just a stopover before the move to California. Desert training was to pay big dividends in France and Germany. But the desert wasn't all work. Once or twice a month, the men breezed into Los Angeles and Palm Springs.

**A**FTER four months, one-to-two odds found no takers that the 95th was headed for the boat. But next stop was Indiantown Gap Military Reservation, Pa. Six months at the Gap rolled by with rugged training—mountain training in the West Virginia Maneuver Area as the principal dish.

"If nothing else," one officer pointed out, "we learned in the West Virginia mountains how we would fight without communications."

There was plenty else, and Metz, Saarlautern and the Siegfried Line served as proof.

Although the 5th and 90th Inf. Divs. played highly important roles in the reduction of Fortress Metz, the 95th certainly wasn't reading its lines from the wings. Metz was the division's first offensive action. Metz produced the 95th's first heroes like Lt. Bill Kreuger of

Co. I, 377th Inf., and Pfc Joe Lerma, Co. E, 378th, who won Silver Stars.

Lt. Kreuger, Pitman, N.J., was leading a section in an attack on a German-held chateau. Paralyzed from the waist down because of a shrapnel wound in the head, he still didn't quit. He directed reorganization of the squads and led them back to the CP.

All that Lerma, San Diego, Calif., did was capture a German pillbox and 20 of its occupants with no more firepower than a jammed rifle. On Armistice Day, 3rd platoon, Co. E, 378th Inf., was held up, so he took off for the hotbox. As he climbed the pillbox, his rifle jammed—but he didn't. The Germans were so surprised by his determination that they surrendered. Lerma escorted the entire group back with a weapon borrowed from one of his prisoners.

## Veterans ARE BORN OVERNIGHT

THE Metz drive began rolling with a couple of separate pushes, Nov. 8. The 2nd and 3rd Bns., 377th Inf., attacking at night, wiped out the enemy pocket east of Maizieres to the Moselle. The going was rough. It was trial by fire. Men who proved themselves that night did a lot of the ball-carrying on the power drive down to Metz the following week.

The division had seen many slag piles before, but it had never attempted to fight one. Co. K. tried it the same night and ran into concentrated hell from mortars, machine guns and mines of deeply dug-in Germans. It was hell in the woods at Fereau Farm too where the untried Co. F waded through mine fields and booby-trapped brush to blast Germans from thick-walled farm buildings. Mortar fire rained unceasingly. Co. I found a similar reception on its assignment.

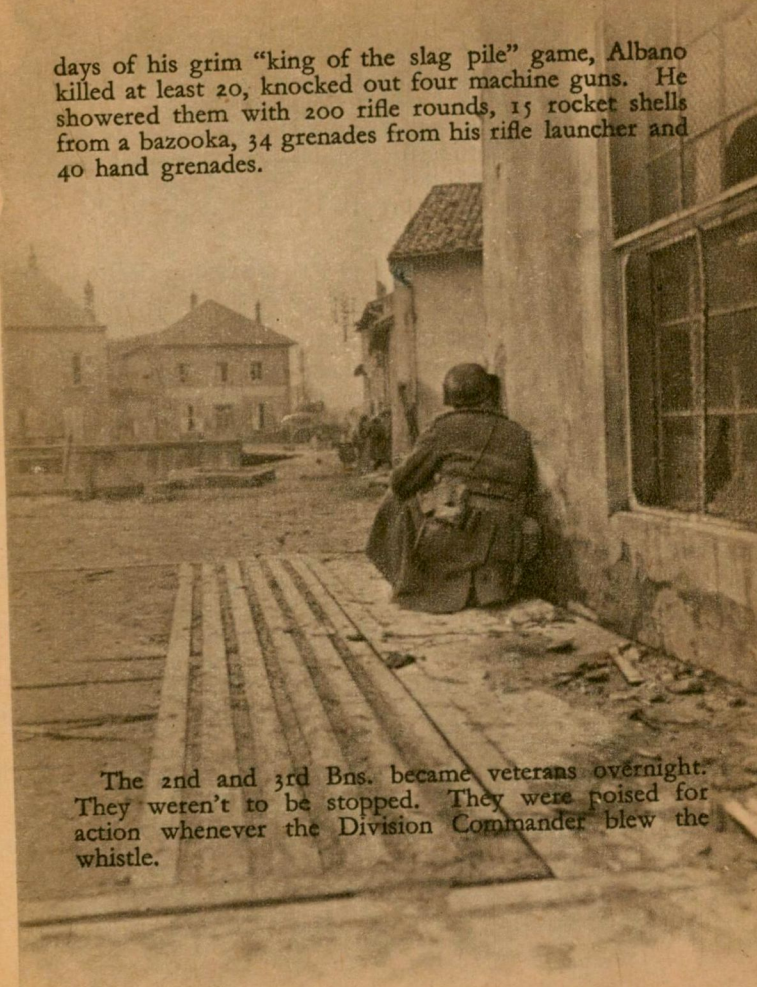
ONLY momentarily stopped and bitter now, these outfits jumped off again the next day. It wasn't any pushover, but the job was completed. Again the regimental commander learned the caliber of his men. Lt. Col. Robert L. Walton, 2nd Bn. CO, was an example—during that murderous night attack he rallied platoons that had been chopped up by mines and machine guns. That was just a warm-up. Next morning he was at the point of the attack into the woods above the farm. When a machine gun killed a sergeant next to him, the colonel tore into the position, his own submachine gun blazing. Although hit three times, he kept running the show. It wasn't until late afternoon that he slowed down long enough for the medics to examine him.

Lt. Raymond J. Albano, (then a T/Sgt.) Small, Idaho, was another standout. Slugging his way to the top of a slag pile, Albano dug in, laid out an array of weapons, got ready for business.

Germans were most obliging. They even sent a 15-man patrol up the pile after him. Few returned to tell about the one-man army and his arsenal. In four



days of his grim "king of the slag pile" game, Albano killed at least 20, knocked out four machine guns. He showered them with 200 rifle rounds, 15 rocket shells from a bazooka, 34 grenades from his rifle launcher and 40 hand grenades.

A sepia-toned photograph showing a soldier from behind, crouching in a trench or behind a wall. The soldier is wearing a helmet and a dark uniform with a satchel. In the foreground, several wooden planks are laid out on the ground. To the right, there is a building with a large window. In the background, other buildings and a street are visible under a hazy sky.

The 2nd and 3rd Bns. became veterans overnight. They weren't to be stopped. They were poised for action whenever the Division Commander blew the whistle.

Another preliminary bout to the main event took place when 1st Bn., 377th, Joes crossed the flooded Moselle at Uckange, Nov. 8. A neat assist came from the 320th Engr. Bn., which put them across in the face of heavy fire. The Germans threw the book at the battalion—mortars, artillery, 88s, rifles. After Cos. B and C and part of D reached the opposite shore, business picked up.

The troops pushed to the high ground east of the Moselle, dug in and began defending their newly-won bridgehead. But the Moselle began to rise and reached its highest level in 29 years. First Bn. doughs were getting hungry; they needed more ammunition. Mother Nature and Germans, both on the loose, provided a rugged combination. Normal supply means were impossible, but the 95th found the answer. The division's Air Corps—artillery liaison planes—were used to supply the isolated troops.

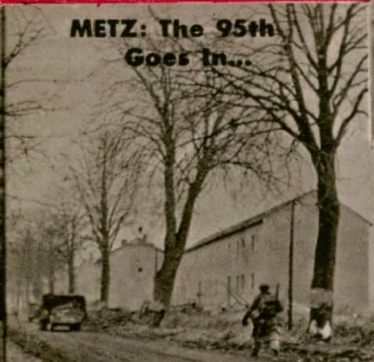
Division infantrymen naturally are fond of their artillery, but the 1st Bn. was even more devoted after this extremely tricky operation. Planes made better targets than clay pigeons because they had to drop down to 25 feet to release supplies, then pull up swiftly to miss trees. Pilots appropriately dubbed their run the "Red Ball Airway Express." They made 104 trips the first day alone, dropping food, ammunition, medical supplies.

By Nov. 12, the Moselle had subsided enough for supplies to be transported by assault boats. Next day, the remainder of 1st Bn. crossed to the east bank and began pushing to Bertrange and Imeldange, the final objectives. Cos. A and D overran both towns during

**SAARLOUIS: General  
and GIs Did The Job**



**METZ: The 95th  
Goes In...**



Metz



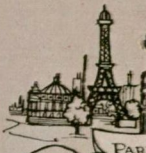
**...German  
Prisoners  
Pile Out**



# ROUTE OF THE 95th



U.S. NORMANDY



PARIS



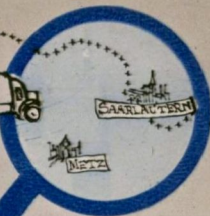
UCKANGE

MOYENNE GUARDIE

FORTIFIED GROUP  
JEANNE D'ARC

FT PLAYE

# INFANTRY DIVISION





**"Victory" Rolls  
Through Metz**



**Former Kraut OP:  
Fraulautern**

**155 mm Howitzer**



the day, and Co. C charged into Bertrange to make certain Germans didn't regain it.

But the "13" jinx cursed the battalion, because Nazis brought up infantry and armor the next day to cut off forces in the two towns. Enough heroism was displayed by 1st Bn. the next two days to fill a book. Lt. Fred Brandenburg, 377th Med. Det., Denver, was a sample. He set up an aid station at Bertrange, worked tirelessly taking care of wounded.

Then a report came from Imeldange, a mile away, that Kraut artillery had hit six men. The enemy also was zeroed in on the road between the two towns, particularly a 1000-yard open stretch.

Lt. Brandenburg started out although warned that the trip was too hazardous to attempt. He started out, but the road was so churned up it would have been like going over Niagara Falls in a Lister bag. So he came back and resumed work.

Next morning before dawn, the lieutenant started out again. The Krauts still poured it in. He dove into a shallow ditch along the roadside and crawled. The stuff crump-crumped all around; some of the big hunks of shrapnel sang a dirty song as they flew overhead. Down in the ditch the lieutenant crawled all the way to Imeldange. Grimy and exhausted, he went to work on the six injured men. Lt. Brandenburg was awarded the Silver Star.

The battalion fought savagely until Nov. 15 when the newly-organized Task Force Bacon drove down from the north to relieve the pressure.

# Victory

## DIVISION GOES ON OFFENSIVE

ANOTHER of the Metz chapters was the Thionville bridgehead operation, an expert accomplishment by Lt. Col. Aubrey J. Maroun's 2nd Bn., 378th Inf.

This battalion was in division reserve until Nov. 10. Although the Moselle and the enemy worked hand in glove to prevent bridging the swollen river, the 2nd swung over to Thionville, forcing a bridgehead.

The enemy not only held the east bank of the river but depended on Fort Yutz, the moat-surrounded stronghold, to choke off attempted crossings. The battalion initiated the operation Nov. 11; almost all of the troops were on the opposite bank and driving on the fort by day's end. Cos. F and G were fighting inside the fort by noon the next day as Germans resisted with flame-throwers and every weapon they could man.

The fort fell at noon, Nov. 13. Without delay, troops pushed on to swarm Basse-Yutz. With the capture of Haute-Yutz, the battalion was poised to tackle the prize objective—Fort d'Illange.

Fort Yutz was tough enough, but by comparison with d'Illange, Yutz was a tea party. Perched on high ground

between Thionville and Bertrange, d'Illange was about a third of a mile long, almost as wide and completely surrounded by barbed wire. Doughs of the 2nd Bn. figured



that taking d'Illange would be a nice trick if they could do it—and they knew they could.

First, they tried the easy way. A battalion committee went forward under a white flag to meet a German party.



The fort commander was told he could cash in on the spot with no loss of life. Otherwise, the battalion would be obliged to assist his men in meeting Hitler in hell. The German CO refused; 2nd Bn. went about the task of fulfilling its obligation.

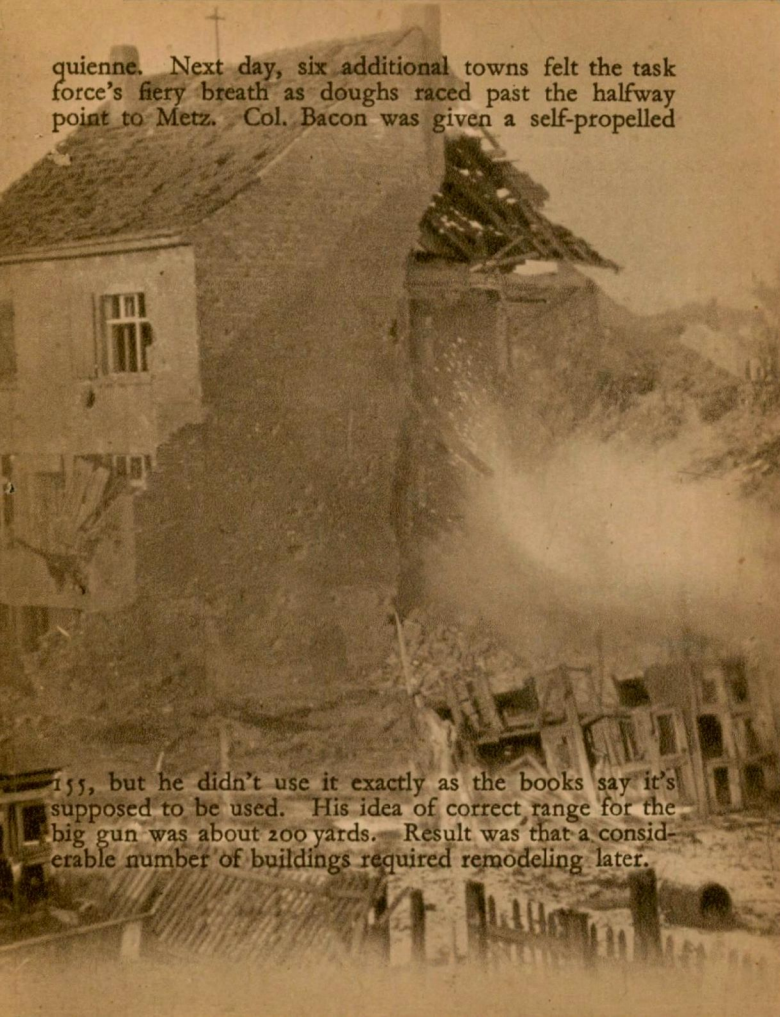
Co. F pointed the assault, closely followed by Co. G. By nightfall, these veterans had pried their way into a portion of the fort. Fighting raged all night. Early Nov. 15, the fort was captured. There still was work to be done. Subsequent capture of the town of Illange relieved pressure on the beleaguered 1st Bn., 377th Inf.

The battalion's first try at offensive action lasted three days—three days in which the Maroun Marauders had uncorked Fort Yutz and the more formidable Fort d'Il-lange, Thionville east of the Moselle and three more towns, all in the face of stiff German opposition. No sooner had the 378th's 2nd Bn. finished the Thionville bridgehead operation than the unit became part of Task Force Bacon, together with the 1st Bn., 377th Inf.; the 95th Recon. Troop and Co. D, 778th Tank Bn.

Task Force Bacon was commanded by a man who could never hope to win a German popularity contest. He was Col. Robert L. Bacon, who played so much hell with the Germans they undoubtedly had a bounty out for his scalp. He whipped his troops down the east bank of the Moselle into Metz like a lawn mower cutting grass.

The colonel moved fast, his itinerary read like this: jumping off Nov. 16, Task Force Bacon roared through Tremery, Ay sur Moselle, Bousse, Rurange and Montre-

quienne. Next day, six additional towns felt the task force's fiery breath as doughs raced past the halfway point to Metz. Col. Bacon was given a self-propelled



155, but he didn't use it exactly as the books say it's supposed to be used. His idea of correct range for the big gun was about 200 yards. Result was that a considerable number of buildings required remodeling later.

Second Bn., 378th, took Fort St. Julien Nov. 18 after a bitter fight, while the 1st Bn., 377th, overran St. Julien les Metz. As the 377th's 1st Bn. was preparing to assault Fort Bellecroix, Krauts came streaming forward, hands in the air. Battalion troops started into the fort as Co. C swooped around to the north of Bellecroix to enter Metz.

Two tremendous explosions shattered heavy masonry walls as the fort collapsed. First Bn. was hard hit. That's one of the reasons the 95th took so much pleasure in plastering the Germans. Bellecroix never will be forgotten.

Task Force Bacon blazed into the outskirts of Metz the same night, later spanning the Seille River, which streams through the city. A pitched battle in the heart of town followed.

**T**ASK Force Bacon had its share of heroes. One in particular was Sgt. Walter Low, Co. G, 378th, Smoky Junction, Tenn., the first 95th GI to receive the Distinguished Service Cross. The action which produced the award was a short, daring and life-saving combination of guts and bluff. Two unmapped pillboxes near Fort St. Julien popped up surprisingly in the path of Co. G's advance. While his platoon pressed forward, Low and two others pulled out of the formation to investigate the pillboxes.

When equally surprising machine gun fire blocked the platoon's front over an open field, the pillboxes completed a squeeze play by pumping lead to the rear of the platoon. The pillboxes had to be liquidated or the platoon was in for a chop-up.



A steady stream of fire forced his mates to the dirt, but Low pell-melled squarely on the objective, hand-operating the sticky bolt of his M-1. Sixteen Germans occupying the strong point either were scared or bluffed. Nonchalantly, Low flushed them out, frisked them for arms. Advancing on the adjoining bunker, he bagged another 16. Adding the 32 Germans to a passing column, Low rejoined his outfit, which now was free to advance.

On the northern flank of the division zone, 379th's 1st and 2nd Bns. were jockeying into position for the final push on Metz. Both jumped off on limited objective attacks Nov 14. By noon, the 2nd had reached its final objective southeast of Fort Jeanne d'Arc and was digging in to repel expected counter-attacks.

First Bn. pried the German defenders out of Forts St. Hubert and Jussy Nord and took Fort Bois de la Dame, only to be bounced back by two severe counter-thrusts. Both groups took heavy shelling from big



Fort Driant in the early stages of their attacks. The first week of offensive combat ended Nov. 14.

The division launched its main effort at 1000 Nov. 15 when the 377th Inf. jumped off from the slag pile to inaugurate the drive down the west bank of the Moselle to the very gates of Metz. The road was straight, flanked by broad, open fields. Artillery and mortar fire raked the advance route, but the 2nd and 3rd Bns. continued their drive to the south.

By nightfall, the 3rd holed up in La Maxe. The 2nd slugged it out in the outskirts of Woippy, only three miles from Metz. Tough to crack, Woippy finally was cleared before dark, and the 2nd surged forward along the road to Metz.

Meanwhile, the 3rd was having its headaches near Fort Gambetta. A request for that "extra ten percent" was passed along the line Nov. 17. No urging was needed. With Metz in sight, the division felt sharp. Elements of the 377th poured into Sansonnet, a Metz suburb, that night. Early next morning, the 2nd and 3rd Bns., with tank support, pounded onward as swank homes and apartment buildings replaced fields and farms. When Co. G crossed the bridge over the Hafen Canal at 1000, the city of Metz was entered. Elements of both battalions had reached the island by noon and were mopping up the enemy.

Crossing into the central part of the city in assault boats manned by Co. A, 320th Engrs. followed. The 377th launched the battle of the snipers. Metz bubbled over with these sharpshooters.

## THE HIDDEN BALL PLAY

# Works

## IN WAR

CAPTURE of Metz was a rich achievement. The city successfully had weathered every assault since 1944. But the 95th had a plan, and grim-faced Joes made it work. Punching along "88 Boulevard," the division smacked up against the bristling forts ringing the city. Still, the ring was broken, and this is the way it was accomplished.

The 378th got off to a flying start with one of the most daringly conceived and brilliantly executed trick plays of the entire offensive. Col. Samuel L. Metcalfe, Regimental Commander, Pearsall, Tex., dreamed it up.

Fronting the 378th's zone was a series of fortifications including Fort Amanvillers, the three Canrobert forts and Fort de Feve. East of this line spread the extensive Lorraine fortifications. Taking such an area by an anticipated head-on drive would have been suicide. Col. Metcalfe's plan was to sweep around the northern tip of the fortifications and approach from the rear, leaving behind a small task force to deceive the enemy into thinking the entire regiment still fronted the forts.

The job of providing the phoney front was assigned to Task Force St. Jacques (Capt. William M. St. Jacques, Service CO, San Antonio, Tex.), composed of three rifle





platoons, one anti-tank platoon, a squad from an Intelligence and Reconnaissance platoon, cooks, clerks, and other Regimental Hq. and Service Co. personnel. This jumbled force was assigned to cover an eight and a half mile front. They did a bang-up job—with the aid of loudspeakers and other deceptive means.

The hidden ball play worked like a charm. The regiment jumped off at 0800 and within three hours had captured the town of Feves. Two hours later it swept on to take Somecourt. The surge continued, and Saulny, Vigneulles, Plesnois and Norroy le Veneur tumbled before the avalanche.

The 378th jumped off for the third day's operation at 0800, and the 1st Bn. had assaulted, captured and occupied the three Canrobert Forts the first five hours. A regimental patrol sent out to scout Fort Lorraine reported the once-mighty bastion had been deserted. That night Forts Kellerman and La Salle were found deserted, and troops moved in. Other elements of the battalion stormed into a portion of Fort Plappeville, were pushed out by defending Germans, then slugged their way back into that part of the fort above ground.

By this time, the 378th's 3rd Bn. had forced its way to the west bank of the Moselle. One platoon of Co. K was crossing a bridge into Metz when Germans touched off demolition charges. Casualties were heavy.

Next day, the battalion crossed to the city in boats operated by Co. B, 320th Engrs., and joined the 377th in ferreting out the snipers. First Bn. held Forts Plappeville and St. Quentin and the intervening area. The third arm of the main effort was powered by the 379th Inf., which also had drawn a battering-ram assignment against the forts flanking the road to Metz. At the very outset of the division jump-off, the 379th ran into stiff and bitter enemy resistance. The 1st and 3rd Bns. chipped away at one of the greatest and most impregnable of all Metz forts — Jeanne d'Arc, guardian of the western approach.

Chipping was the word for it. The heaviest demolition charges produced a lot of concrete dust and not much else. With various forts in the Jeanne d'Arc system linked by tunnels, the Germans employed a fire-



and-run defense, and the 379th found it impossible to block all the tunnels.

During the all-out drive to clean out fortified areas between the mighty masonry bastions, 1st and 2nd Bns. smashed into the Germans' main line of resistance, were cut off following a bloody battle. Again tiny artillery liaison planes were called upon to furnish supplies.

Third Bn. reorganized Nov. 17, resumed the attack in the morning, hooking up with the 1st. The two battalions took off for Metz again, knocking off the towns of Vaux, Rozerieulles, Chatel St. Germain, Mouline, Jussy, St. Ruffine and Sey-Chezelle against comparatively light opposition. A single Co. G platoon took the Fort de Guise group unopposed.



95th MEANS

# "Bravest OF THE BRAVE"

As the Metz campaign drew to a close, with the city rapidly being drained of stragglers and snipers, the 379th continued cleaning up the area east of Forts Driant, Jeanne d'Arc, St. Quentin and Plappeville. By Nov. 21, the fall of Metz was something to write home about. The 95th Recon. Troop had made contact with elements of the 5th Div., which had driven up from the south to complete the squeeze play on the fortress city.

Only two small pockets of resistance remained, and these were being mopped up by the 377th. Garrisons in the four big forts across the river were completely cut off. The task of maintaining a death watch on these diehards was transferred to units of the 5th Div.

The frosting on the Metz cake was the capture of Generalleutnant Heinrich Kittel, CO of the 462nd Volksgrenadier Div. and of the Metz fortress. He was captured by Co. K, 377th, which had fought its way up to the southern part of the Ile Chambiere. When taken, Kittel was a patient in the hospital, being treated for a leg wound.

Resistance in the city ended officially at 1435, Nov. 22. The 95th Div. Joes had reason to be proud of their achievement. They refuted historians who said it couldn't be done, and they did it in 14 days. Enemy casualties



totaled 11,205, including an estimated 1577 killed, 3546 wounded and 6082 definitely captured.

With the successful reduction of Metz the 95th marked another milestone. Landing in England Aug. 17, the division trained for almost a month, then crossed the Channel and began a four-week bivouac in the Normandy apple orchards.

Many of the division's troops "Red Balled" supplies to the front, while the remainder marked time in the hedge-rows. The 95th's first combat nod finally came Oct. 20 when it defended the Moselle bridgehead.

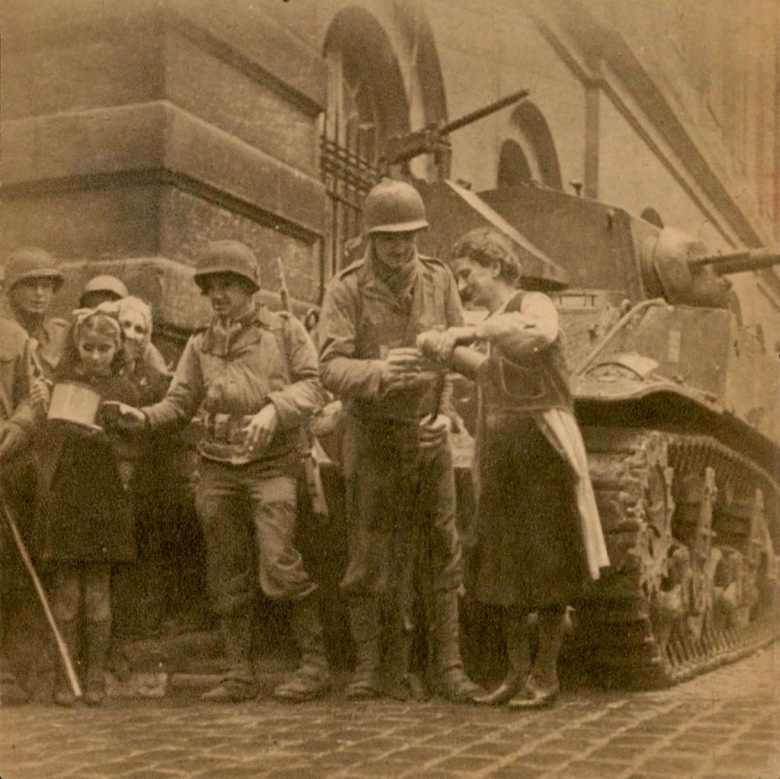
**M**ETZ and Saarlautern were battle successes. That's the way it was all along for the men of the 95th. But everything that happened had a reason, and this reason is esprit de corps. Here's the way one 95th Joe felt about his first Christmas in combat. He was writing his wife:

*This is our first Christmas away from home. I say home, because we all feel now that anywhere in the States is home. The propaganda broadcasts have been making fun of our not being home for Christmas. But that's fair enough. If we weren't over here fighting we might be doing it back there.*

*A lot of us have kids back home, or hope to have later on, and those kids are going to know about the 95th and the part it played in cleaning up this mess. They'll know what the 95th has done for them and be just as proud of the outfit as I am. And that's tops.*



*We aren't joking any more about that nickname, "Victory Division." We think we're proving it. The next job? I don't know what it will be, but I'll bet a million to one that the 95th does it wholehog. That's the kind of division we have, that's the kind of leaders we have, that's the kind of fighters this outfit has — "Bravest of the brave."*





# The Team



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date Enlisted \_\_\_\_\_

Assigned to 95th \_\_\_\_\_

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

Citations \_\_\_\_\_

PASSED BY CENSOR FOR MAILING HOME

