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## Chronicle of the 39th Infantry Regiment from Normandy to the Elbe: June 1943 - May 1945

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**Chronicle**  
**of the**  
**39th Infantry Regiment**  
**from**  
**Normandy to the Elbe**  
**June 1943 – May 1945**



Edited by Richard B. Kann Jr.  
December 31, 2009

1<sup>st</sup> Edition  
CHRONICLE OF THE NINTH DIVISION'S 39<sup>TH</sup> INFANTRY REGIMENT  
FROM NORMANDY TO THE ELBE

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Chronicle  
of the  
39th Infantry Regiment  
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Normandy to the Elbe

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## FORWARD

*A **chronicle** is an account of facts and events in chronological order. Typically, equal weight is given for important events and less important events, the purpose being the recording of events that occurred . . . Chronicles are the predecessors of modern "time lines" rather than analytical histories. They represent accounts, in prose or verse, of national or worldwide events over a considerable period of time, the lifetime of the individual chronicler and often several subsequent continuators.<sup>1</sup>*

In May of 1992, I toured Normandy with the intent of identifying and following the route taken by the 39th Infantry Regiment during operation Overlord and the subsequent European Campaign. During that time I became convinced of the need to assemble a chronicle of the daily events and actions so that others who share the same interest could travel the same route in the future. Many authors have done a superb job of documenting the Ninth Division, but none have focused specifically on the daily progress of the 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment.

In this chronicle, I have attempted to assemble from all sources available, a diary of the daily operations of the 39th Infantry Regiment. These records were gleaned from the works that follow:

**Eight Stars to Victory**, Capt. Joseph B. Mittelman  
**The Normandy Campaign**, Stephan Patrick  
**Death of a Nazi Army**, William Breuer  
**Storming Hitler's Rhine**, William B Breuer  
**The Battle of the Hurtgen Forest**, Charles Whiting  
**First Across the Rhine**, Col. David Pergrin  
**Eisenhower**, David Eisenhower  
**Regimental History, Thirty Ninth Infantry Regiment  
Operations, 39th Infantry**, 11 June to 1 July  
**Paddy**, Robert A. Anderson  
**Report of Operations, Ninth Infantry Division**  
**The Pawns of War**, William M. Krey  
**Nudge Blue**, Donald E. Lavender  
**Crack! and Thump**, Captain Charles Scheffel

Through the use of action reports from both the Ninth Division and the 39th Infantry Regiment, I was able to establish the route of the 39th across Europe. I have drawn on the materials of these many authors to establish events, battles, and other interesting information related to the daily progress of the 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment.

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The purpose of this book is to provide a detailed record of those difficult days in 1944 and 1945, and to remember and honor the tremendous sacrifice these troops made for their country. Secondly, many of us whose fathers served in Normandy will be drawn to Normandy to appreciate and remember the accomplishments of the 39th Infantry Regiment. My story is portrayed from the vantage point of my father Richard B. Kann and his best friend Dale E. Smith, both Medics in the 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment.

Richard B. Kann was born on April 5, 1925 to John H. and Savilla Jane Kann. John and Savilla were farming in Conewago Township, York County, Pennsylvania a short walk south of Gross's school house when Richard was born. He was the fifth child, in the family of eight - Raymond, Robert, Esther, Mary, Earl, Richard, and Fairy. Two brothers, Horace and Johnny, had died at the ages of 1 and 3. Richard grew up farming and was six when John and Savilla bought the family farm on Canal Road about ¼ mile east of Gross's School. Richard completed 8 grades at this school before working full time on the farm.

Richard spent 10 years from 1933 through 1943 helping on the farm where the family grew corn, wheat, oats, and alfalfa; and raised chickens, pigs, and cattle. At a very early age he was driving horse teams and helping with the plowing, planting, and harvesting of the crops.

Richard's friends included Sam Wallick, Kerm Seavers, and his brother Earl. When the War broke out in 1941, Richard's brother Earl enlisted in the Army. Soon other friends were joining, and in 1943, Richard also enlisted in the Army. He was assigned to the 39th Infantry Regiment of the 9th Infantry Division and received medical training at Camp Grant.

Dale E. Smith was born in Henry County, Ohio on June 10, 1925. His father died six weeks later from diphtheria. After the death of Dale's father, his mother moved with Dale and his older brother, Charles, to Mt. Vernon, Ohio, where Dale grew up and went to school. In September 1943, Dale entered the U.S. Army and completed medical basic training at Camp Grant, Illinois.

What follows is an account of the route and events during 1944 and 1945 as the 39th Infantry Regiment methodically eliminated German opposition from Utah Beach through France, Belgium, and finally ending the campaign near Dessau, Germany.

## Chapter One

### THE 9TH INFANTRY DIVISION

The 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division was commanded by Maj. Gen. Manton Eddy under VII Corps which was commanded by Maj. Gen. Joseph L Collins. VII Corps was under the First Army, commanded by Lt. Gen. Omar N. Bradley.

The 9th Infantry Division was made up of the 47<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, the 39th Infantry Regiment, and the 60th Infantry Regiment. The 39<sup>th</sup> had 3 battalions and was known as the Falcons. Companies A, B, C, and D were in 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion. E, F, G, and H were in 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion. Companies I, J, K, and L were in 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion. Private Richard B. Kann was a Medic in 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Company G.

On the June 10<sup>th</sup> landing on Utah Beach, Normandy, the 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment was commanded by Col. Harry Flint. 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was commanded by Lt. Colonel Philip C. Tinley, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion was commanded by Major Frank L. Gunn, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion was commanded by Lt. Col. Robert H. Stumpf.

Col. Flint was a charismatic individual and a born leader of men. As we learn from a newspaper clipping at the time of his death:

*Harry Albert Flint was born in St. Johnsbury, Vermont on February 12, 1888, the son of the late Charles G. Flint and Mrs. Mabel Flint, now of Colonial Apartments. He attended St. Johnsbury Academy and Norwich University and during his first year, received his appointment to Annapolis. He attended Annapolis one year, resigning to take examinations for West Point. He received his appointment there in 1908 from the late Senator Dillingham. He was a class officer each year while attending West Point and graduated as Cadet Captain. He served on many boards there and took an active part in polo, football, horse shows, and did considerable writing for the various magazines and books edited at the school. His original article "Forward" was printed and sent to all . . . . and a bronze plaque inscribed with it hangs in the library at West Point.*

*Following his graduation from West Point in June of 1912 he was married on August 9 to Sally E. Emery, daughter of Colonel Emery of Newport. They went to the Hawaiian Islands afterwards for his first assignment.*

*Col. Flint rose to the temporary rank of Lieutenant Colonel in World War I serving in the Cavalry and the Field Artillery, and was later reverted back to Major. He served three years with the Army of occupation in Germany and afterwards attended the War College in France. His military record is both distinguished and outstanding.*



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*Col. Flint had gone through the North African and Sicilian campaigns with his regiment before moving with it to England last December to take part in the preparations for the invasion. During the African campaign he was for six months special liaison officer with General Giraud. For his services to the French cause, he was awarded the French Legion of Honor Medal. He received the Distinguished Service Cross and the Silver Star for gallantry in action in the Mediterranean campaign.*

*Troops in the midst of battle used to wave and cheer as Colonel Flint walked by, wearing the inevitable black silk battle scarf. 'By God it's the kid himself,' they would shout. 'Hit don't make no difference, Hit don't make no difference,' his favorite phrase, embraced his life philosophy.<sup>2</sup>*

**From the 10<sup>th</sup> Armored Newsletter:<sup>3</sup>**

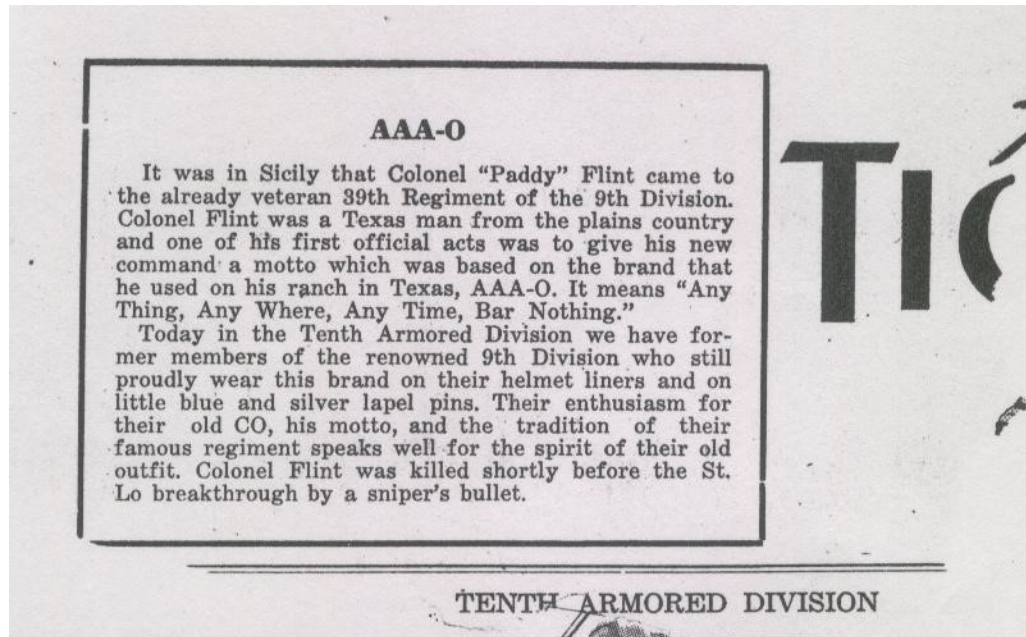


Figure 1 AAA-O

*His address to his regiment on leaving England was classic. He stressed the dangers and hardships ahead, and then said: 'Those who don't come back will be at peace in the arms of God. Those who come back will remember them.'<sup>4</sup>*

**Chapter 1 Illustration Credits:**

Figure 1 - Tenth Armored Division Newsletter

## Chapter Two

### THE BUILDUP

#### Indiantown Gap (June 28, 1943)

Richard went to Indiantown Gap near Harrisburg to enlist in the Army.

#### Fort Meade to Camp Grant (July 12, 1943)

Richard Kann was inducted on July 13<sup>th</sup>. He took a train from Harrisburg to Fort Meade, Maryland where there were skill tests, haircuts, uniforms, and chow. The next morning they took the train to Camp Grant in Rockford, Illinois for specialized medic training. It was here that Pvt. Richard Kann (G Co.) met Sal Trapani (E Co.) and Dale Smith (F Co.), men who would become friends for life. Medics were trained in first aid and hiking.

Earl Kann, Richard's brother, was with the 83<sup>rd</sup> Chemical Mortar Battalion in Italy. In the following letter to his recently wounded brother Earl, Richard talks about the Army and his new girlfriend:

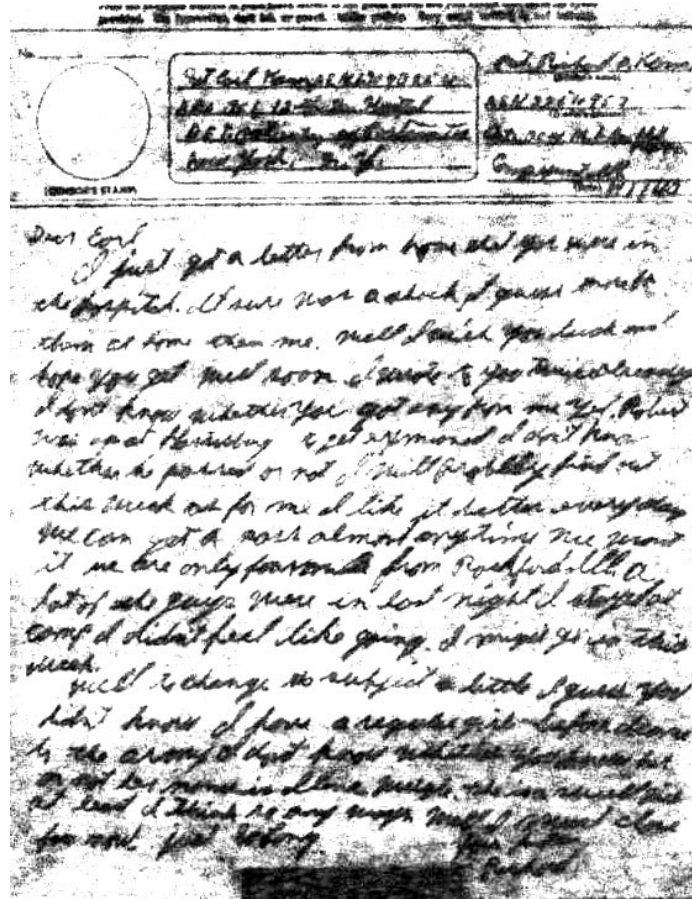


Figure 2 Letter to Brother Earl

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Dear Earl,

I just got a letter from home that you were in the hospital. It sure was a shock I guess more for them at home then me. Well I wish you luck and hope you get well soon. I wrote to you twice already I don't know whether you got any from me yet. Robert was up at Harrisburg to get examined. I don't know whether he passed or not. I will probably find out this week. As for me I like it better everyday. We can get a pass almost anytime we want it. We are only four miles from Rockford Ill. A lot of the guys were in last night. I stayed at Camp. I didn't feel like going. I might go in this week.

Well to change the subject a little I guess you didn't know I have a regular girl before I came to the Army. I don't know whether you know her or not her name is Ilene Weigel. She is a swell girl At least I think so any way. Well I must close for now. Just so long.

Your brother,

Richard

### **Camp Grant, PA (October 29, 1943)**

On October 29, 1943, with training complete Pvt. Kann was transferred to Camp Reynolds, a Replacement Depot, near Greenville, Pa. He then returned home for a few weeks before moving to Camp Shanks, known as "Last stop, USA!" near New York City.

### **Camp Shanks, NY (December 10, 1943)**

Pvt. Kann arrived at Camp Shanks near New York City to board a troop ship for transfer to the European Theatre. The Regiment boarded the Queen Elizabeth at Piermont, New York with about 15,000 other men and sailed for Glasgow, Scotland to join the invasion force. During the trip, a rogue wave hit the Queen Elizabeth and nearly capsized her.

### **Glasgow, Scotland (December 22, 1943)**

They made port at Glasgow on December 22, 1943 and went by train and were in London on December 23, 1943. From London, they moved on to Birmingham, where they lived in a house in a small town, from which all of the people had been relocated.

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**Belfast, Ireland (February 14, 1944)**

Then on February 14, 1944, Pvt. Kann was sent to the 317<sup>th</sup> Station Hospital in Belfast, Ireland for training. He remained in Belfast until April 21, 1944.

**Camp Barton Stacey (March 24, 1944)**



*Accelerated training schedule for the whole NINTH Infantry Division came to a halt for a day, however, on March 24, 1944. That was when General Eddy's Division was visited by none other than Britain's Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, Supreme Commander Eisenhower, First Army Commander, General Omar Bradley and VII Corps Commander, Lieutenant General J. Lawton Collins. The Division turned out in all its spit-and-polish form to welcome the visiting dignitaries. General Gunn remembers . . . Paddy knew them all personally and was very proud to show them his AAA-O Regiment.<sup>5</sup>*

Figure 3 Churchill inspects the 39th Infantry

**Chapter 2 Illustration Credits:**

Figure 2 from the author's collection

Figure 3 from Associated Press Wirephoto

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### Chapter Three

#### THE NORMANDY CAMPAIGN

##### Movement from England to France (June 7, 1944)

*Commencing 3 June 1944, the Division moved by motor and rail from garrisons in the vicinity of Winchester and the Barton Stacy Camp.<sup>6</sup>*



Figure 4 The Route through France

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*The 39<sup>th</sup> Regiment moved on 2 June to marshalling areas, and on 6 June the greater part of the Regiment embarked on various craft at Southhampton. [The division was split into small craft loads and the channel crossing was made in 47 liberty ships, 8 LST's, 12 LCT's]...and landed on the 10 and 11 June at Beach Utah.<sup>7</sup>*

*Utah Beach was practically flat, but the enemy had extended his Atlantic Wall to make up for this deficit of nature. Paralleling the sea was a wall of masonry, which ran for about 10,000 yards and was fortified by a system of revolving tank turrets set upon concrete bases. These fortifications were known as Tobruk Pits. Barbed wires, machine guns, uncountable numbers of mines and other defensive measures had been used by the Germans to halt an invasion..... and had failed. Behind the wall and running almost as parallel was the Beach Road - dusty, hot, and not too good in spots. But it did connect with Ste. Mere Eglise, Quineville, Montebourg, Valognes and the rest of France.*

*From Quineville south, and about fifty yards from the beach began an inundation caused by the Germans blocking of many small streams; this marshland widened out to two miles in some areas. Beyond the initially barren coastline sprawled the famous Bocage (hedgerow) country of France, a well-vegetated and rolling land, which was admirably suited for defense. Its streams, fields, and hedgerows were natural aids for the enemy.*

*Because of the obstacles of inundation, General Collins had to fight his VII Corps down a narrow corridor. Two main roads led over the Douve River and to the west coast. One went through Ste. Colombe and the other rolled through the road center town of St. Saveur-le-Vicomte. . . .<sup>8</sup>*

### **Utah Beach (June 12, 1944)**

On June 12th the Regiment was committed to combat and served during the entire European Theatre operation to liberate Europe from their Nazi oppressors.

Pvt. Richard Kann came ashore on June 12th 1944, when the front was about a mile from the beach. They debarked from landing craft and waded in to shore. He asked if there was any shooting. Someone said, "Only an 88 comes in once in a while."

Dale E. Smith, Pvt. Richard Kann 's fellow medic and lifelong friend, wrote the following regarding their arrival in Normandy:

*At the 39<sup>th</sup> CP, the group of medic replacements met Colonel Paddy Flint. His talk to the new men was sincere, short, and sharp. He said, "We are all in war here. Most of us won't last long, but we have a hell of a big job to do while we are here." How prophetic his words were . . . . As Col Flint finished his talk, the*

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*Sgt. from the Aid Station came in and said, "Is there a couple of you guys here that like to work together." My friend Dan Nugent, said, "Yes, Dale Smith and I work well together." The Sgt. took us a little way to the top of the hill where F Co. was dug in around the edge of the field. The Sgt. had me stay with a platoon at the corner of the field and took Dan to the other side of the field. After a few minutes, I decide to walk across the field to see Dan. When I got about half way, I heard a lot of screeching, and swishing. It sounded like all the rusty gates of hell opening up with all the demons escaping perdition. Then, the rockets screamed over head and began exploding in the next field. With all of this I gave up going over to see Dan, and walked back to where I had been. When I got back one of our men stepped up to me, and in a real Southern accent said, "Doc, when you hear those screaming memes, hit the dirt." I did not go back to Dan, and later I heard he had been killed by a sniper.<sup>9</sup>*

*It was not long after he had landed that Colonel Paddy Flint was called to the Division C.P. Major Generals Eddy and Raymond O. Barton greeted the Falcon commander, and immediately laid their cards upon the table. They just had returned from a conference with the Corps commander . . . the 39<sup>th</sup> had a special mission. General Barton's 4th Infantry Division was experiencing difficulty in advancing north against the strong fortifications before Quineville; and as a consequence, General Collins had attached the 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry to the 4<sup>th</sup> Division. The AAA-O men were to assist the 4<sup>th</sup> in destroying the line of forts from Taret de Ravenoville to Quineville. On June 12th - in the first action of a Ninth Division unit on the continent of Europe - the regiment launched a powerful attack, ably supported by the 34<sup>th</sup> and 60<sup>th</sup> Artillery Battalions.<sup>10</sup>*

At 9:15, the 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion was alerted to relieve a battalion of the 359<sup>th</sup> inf. in the vicinity of Maisons-des-Hant.

*Reconnaissance pushed by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn. to Grisbecq and Danguerville. Grisbecq occupied at 9:15 by "E" company.*

*1<sup>st</sup> Bn. moved to St. Marcouf and Ravenoville, assaulted and captured pillbox and made junction with patrol from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn. during night at junction of Grisbecq road to beach. Lt. Colonel Robert H. Stumpf's 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion overcame stubborn resistance to push the Germans out of Fontenay-sur-Mer.<sup>11</sup>*

### **Utah Beach (June 13, 1944)**

*1<sup>st</sup> Bn. resumed advance up the beach at 0930 supported by weapons of 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn. from vicinity Grisbecq and Plat. 899<sup>th</sup> TD Bn., held up by resistance from strong points at Fort St. Marcouf. Instructions were received from the Corps Commander at 1400 to withhold final assault and continue pressure pending development of situation at Quineville. 3<sup>rd</sup> Bn. attacked east from Fontenay-Sur-*



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*Mer at 0900 and thence to North at 1115 to clear balance of Regimental sector, held up by both friendly and enemy artillery fire falling on forward elements continuing through afternoon and evening and no advance was made.<sup>12</sup>*



Figure 5 Utah Beach -1990

**Crisbecq (June 13, 1944)**

*Veteran Falcons of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion soon swept through Crisbecq and Dangueville, and Lt. Colonel H Stumpf's 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion overcame stubborn resistance to push the Germans out of Frontenay-sur-Mer.<sup>13</sup>*

**Quineville (June 13, 1944)**

*At this point the 39<sup>th</sup> made invasion history; for Paddy Flint had obtained permission to send his 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion alone against Quineville. Followed by a devastating air attack made by A-20's, the 3<sup>rd</sup> jumped into the assault. It was 4 P.M. on the 13th and Company K was leading. At first the company moved rapidly, capturing prisoners enroute. Upon reaching the first street intersection in Quineville the unit split up, with its assaulting 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon going right, toward the beach and its 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon heading toward the northeast.*

*The 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon met fire from an anti-tank gun of a beach pillbox; at the same time a German came out waving a white surrender flag. In Africa and in Sicily, many Ninthmen had met death by such a ruse, so one veteran GI opened up on the German with automatic rifle fire and an*

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*important battle had begun. The enemy replied with everything he had, forcing the platoon to withdraw to the intersection. Crews of the Weapons Platoon rushed in to assist the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon with mortar and machine-gun fire; however, the fire from the fortifications was too great and the machine guns had to displace to safer positions.*

*A request for artillery support was granted, but this fire was falling too close to friendly troops. Higher headquarters stopped the concentrations and once again the assaulting infantry was in sore need of heavy weapons. Colonel Stumpf called for his supporting tanks and only one came up. That was meager aid which the Germans soon disposed of.*

*Undaunted by his first loss, the commander of the disabled tank came back with two more vehicles which acted as roving artillery, coordinating with the infantry to clean out machine-gun nests and other strongpoints. But once more the armored efforts were halted; this time when American artillery - for some reason - laid down smoke. The tankers could not see and were forced to leave.*

*The situation was desperate . . . until the day was saved by Staff Sergeant Bruce Perry, Jr., and his squad from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon. They had worked down along the beach, going through houses and around walls, peppering the enemy with constant fire as they advanced and forcing him to stay within his concrete protection. The brave infantrymen attacked the pillboxes with automatic weapons and bazookas . . . by themselves, everyone else having withdrawn!*

*Company K sent a patrol to contact Perry and order him back to safety. But the desired effect had been made: what had appeared momentarily to be an American defeat was turned into an overwhelming victory. The Germans, convinced of the 39<sup>th</sup>'s superiority by virtue of this vigorous attack, surrendered by 9:30 P.M. One hundred of the enemy gave up to Company K, which itself had suffered 5 killed and 28 wounded in capturing the town.*

*German General Hellmich had been ordered to hold the position at all costs, and now that it was lost, his superior - General Marcks - was convinced that the capture of Cherbourg was fated.*

*That evening the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was dispatched to complete the task of cleaning up the coastal defenses. It suffered many casualties while crossing a mine field to assault Fort St. Marcouf. But with this final capture the coast and Quineville were freed of the enemy; the 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry had advanced the farthest north of any Allied troops at that time, and it had silenced the last German guns on the beach. Allied supplies*

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*and troops for Utah were able to land at three times their previous speed, and the stage was set for a Corps drive to the west.*<sup>14</sup>

*...the infantry was scheduled to advance over the marshes two hours after a heavy air bombardment. As the hour approached, the army commander called to inquire if all were ready. He received this astounding reply: "Paddy Flint and two companies have been in the town two hours."*<sup>15</sup>

### **Danguville (June 14, 1944)**

*1<sup>st</sup> Bn. patrolled North on beach, entering defenses and taking PW. 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn. assembled in vicinity of Danguville at 1500 as reserve.*<sup>16</sup>

The Division was alerted by the Commanding General at 0625, 13 June 1944, to be prepared to pass through the 90<sup>th</sup> Inf. and drive westward across the Douve River in order to block off the Cotentin Peninsula west of the Prairies Marecageuses. The 90<sup>th</sup> would attack to the north and the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne to the south.

During the period from June 12 to June 14, the 39th with supporting artillery was opposed by the following identified German forces: 920<sup>th</sup>, 921<sup>st</sup>, 922<sup>nd</sup>, and 1058<sup>th</sup> Infantry regiments; 360th Engineer Battalion and 739th and 729th Infantry Regiments.

On June 13<sup>th</sup> the 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment was commanded by Col. Harry Flint. 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was commanded by Major Henry P. Tucker, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion was commanded by Major Frank L. Gunn, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion was commanded by Lt. Col. Robert H. Stumpf.

### **Orglandes (June 16, 1944)**

*2<sup>nd</sup> Bn. attacked to the north as directed in FO #2 Hq. 9th Inf. Div. to clear area and protect Division right flank; after clearing sector, turned west toward Orglandes. 1<sup>st</sup> Bn. moved up the road from south and a coordinated attack launched with 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn. swinging to north of town and 1<sup>st</sup> entering town in face of strong opposition.*<sup>17</sup>

Orglandes was occupied after strong artillery and mortar fire had reduced opposition.

*"At Orglandes the men were utterly fatigued. Paddy, in a jeep, passed a little man struggling under the weight of a mortar tube. Said Col. Flint: 'That's the way with this world. The littlest men carry the heaviest loads. He piled the man on the jeep, took him two miles ahead and told him to lie down and wait for the others.'*<sup>18</sup>

*The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion cleared the town and then moved to Ste. Colombe where it was attached to the 60<sup>th</sup> Infantry. The 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalions occupied positions at Hauteville Bocage, Biniville, and on the high ground northeast of St. Colombe astride the Valognes - St. Sauver le Vicomte road in order to protect the*

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*Division's right flank until relieved by the advance of the 90<sup>th</sup> Division to the northwest.<sup>19</sup>*

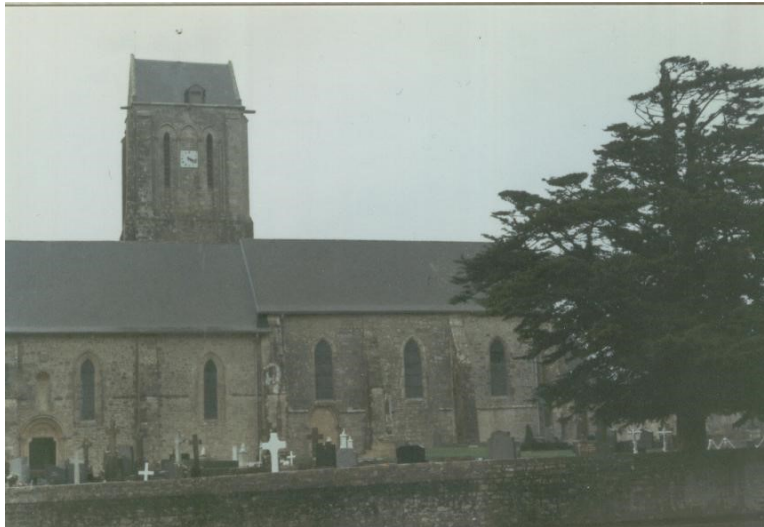


Figure 6 The Church at Orglandes - 1990

**St. Jacques-de-Nehou (June 17, 1944)**

*1<sup>st</sup> Battalion pulled back from Orglandes due to difficulty of clearing out machine gun nests in dark and reentered town at 0730. 3<sup>rd</sup> Bn. passed through "C" Co. on west of town at 0722 and proceeded to Hauteville-Bocage with patrols to Biniville. . . 1<sup>st</sup> Bn. attached to 60<sup>th</sup> Infantry at 1200 and moved by motor at 1430 to vicinity St. Jacques-de-Nehou.<sup>20</sup>*



Figure 7 Church yard at St. Jacques-de-Nehou

On the 17th, the Ninth Division reached the Atlantic and sealed off the peninsula. The German 77th Division mounted a counterattack on the Bricquebec-Barnville road and

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was repulsed by the 60<sup>th</sup> Division. Artillery annihilated the German advance and survivors regrouped for a later attempt to break out.

**Blandamour (June 18, 1944)**

*The 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry moved from the vicinity of Hauteville Bocage to a new position in the vicinity of Blandamour in order to close the road from the north and protect the right flank of the Division.<sup>21</sup>*

**Bricquebec (June 19, 1944)**

*Attacked north at 0500 . . . and advanced without opposition through Bricquebec at 0645, and continued to objectives . . .*



Figure 8 Château de Bricquebec – 1990

*Instructed to make further advances to the vicinity of St. Christophe Du Foc and Couville and patrol to the north.<sup>22</sup>*



Figure 9 St Christophe du Foc – 1990

## **The Fall of Cherbourg**

Until 23 June General von Schlieben had commanded only the remnants of the four divisions immediately confronting the advancing American forces. On that day he was appointed commander of the entire Cherbourg Fortress, relieving Generalmajor Robert Sattler, who became his subordinate. The new commander of all the German forces remaining in the Cotentin peninsula found himself in desperate straits. His desperation is reflected in the fight-to-the-death orders which he issued to his troops and his urgent request for air support and reinforcements by air or sea. The 15th Parachute Regiment was alerted to move from St. Malo to Cherbourg in answer to these requests, but no transport was available when the time for transfer came. Von Schlieben had to make the best of his miscellaneous personnel, his battered units, and his dwindling supply of ammunition.

Though the conglomerate German force continued to resist with determination and delayed the American advance, VII Corps progress was steady after the penetration of 22-23 June. In the final phase the three infantry divisions reduced the remaining strong points one by one, seized the last ground commanding the port, and closed in on the beleaguered city.

General Collins' verbal orders for 24 June made no fundamental changes in the plans outlined several days earlier. The flank regiments of the Corps, the 22<sup>nd</sup> and the 60<sup>th</sup>, were assigned the mission of containing the enemy in the northeast and northwest respectively. The 47<sup>th</sup> and 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiments were to make a coordinated attack toward Octeville, a suburb southwest of Cherbourg, and the 8th and 12th Infantry Regiments were to attack in the east. The 79<sup>th</sup> Division was to capture the strong point at la Mare a Canards by double envelopment, following a dive-bombing early in the morning. Air reparation was also planned on other major strong points.

On the west flank the 9<sup>th</sup> Division, advancing down the ridge which parallels the Divette River, also closed in on Cherbourg. Fairly heavy resistance was encountered on 23-24 June, but one by one the strong points fell and by noon of 25 June the 39<sup>th</sup> and 47<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiments were in the suburbs of the city.

### **Virandeville and Beaudenville (June 22-23, 1944)**

*Directed to move to the vicinity of Virandeville by 1400. . . . 1st Bn. alerted to move up to Hill 128, vicinity of Beaudenville, . . . 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn. alerted at 0700 to advance on hills 138 and 150 and occupied same by 1445. Received order of possible commitment of regiment on right flank of 47<sup>th</sup> Inf. on following day and instructions at 2040 for the attack in accordance with FO #8, Hq. 9<sup>th</sup> Inf. Div.<sup>23</sup>*

### **Attack on Cherbourg (June 22, 1944)**

*The attack on Cherbourg began with an 80 minute aerial bombardment of the Cherbourg defense area. Thirteen groups of medium and fighter bombers were used by the 9th Tactical Air Force. The enemy appeared demoralized and the infantry was able to fight through it with less opposition than had been anticipated.<sup>24</sup>*

### **Boguenville (June 23, 1944)**

*The 39<sup>th</sup> cleaned up two more strongpoints on either side of the road in the vicinity of Boguenville which had been by-passed on either side by the 47th Infantry. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn. attacked Hills 138 and 150 where they captured emplacements and took many prisoners.<sup>25</sup>*

### **RJ 128 (June 24, 1944)**

*2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Bn. advanced in conjunction with 47<sup>th</sup>, and proceeded with light resistance until 1146, then held up awaiting capture of Hill 151 on left. 3<sup>rd</sup> Bn. moving generally abreast. Received instructions at 1435 for both battalions to proceed without waiting for unit on left to come up, moved forward until held up by strong point at RJ 128. At 1700, pinned down by machine gun and mortar fire from Hill 128. After artillery concentration, 2nd Bn. advanced and captured this position and both battalions consolidated for the night.<sup>26</sup>*

By the morning of 24 June the 47<sup>th</sup> Infantry was ready to drive down the ridge against the last strong points overlooking Cherbourg. For this drive it was joined by the 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry, on the right. Along the ridge, in the path of the two regiments, lay three enemy positions. The regimental boundary ran generally through these positions, the 47<sup>th</sup> being responsible for everything north of the Cherbourg-Flottemanville-Hague road. The second strong point, target "C," a flak position, had been one of the five principal targets of previous air force bombings.

The 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry moved abreast of the 47<sup>th</sup> at 0800 on 24 June, but coordination between the two regiments was poor at first and they did not seem to be aware of their relative positions until late in the morning. The 47<sup>th</sup>'s attack was delayed, first by fire from the Flottemanville area and then from a hill south of Nouainville. General Eddy ordered the 60<sup>th</sup> to clean out the remaining positions south of Tonneville to eliminate the first source of fire. Before jumping off, the 47<sup>th</sup> Infantry decided to put artillery fire on the hill position, and warned the 39<sup>th</sup> to hold off its attack. But when it attempted to have the target marked with smoke the Germans also threw up smoke, misleading the American artillery. The 47<sup>th</sup> Infantry suspected that the enemy was intercepting its radio messages, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion finally moved out without artillery support about 1330. The division G-3 ordered the 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry to move also, sending two battalions straight down the ridge without waiting for the 47<sup>th</sup> Infantry.



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The first two strong points were taken with comparative ease, but in front of the last position outside of Octeville both the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalions, 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry, were held up for several hours. An artillery concentration arranged at 1845 was ineffective because the 26<sup>th</sup> Field artillery fired at maximum range and the dispersion was too great. A rolling barrage by the 34<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Battalion (155-mm.), arranged at 2100, was canceled, since by that time 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion men worked forward without support. As Company G moved in a few minutes later all resistance in the enemy position crumbled. Since the Corps commander had ordered that the division should not become further involved in the city that day, the 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry consolidated gains farther down the slope outside Octeville.

**Octeville (June 25, 1944)**

*Patrols pushed forward during the night and located no enemy in strength. Attack continued at 10:00 with 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn. jumping off and 3rd holding in place because of small arms fire from right rear, which was cleared up and battalion moved forward at 1427, and both battalions worked forward to the suburbs of Cherbourg . . . . It was decided not to attempt to enter the city late in the day.<sup>27</sup>*



Figure 10 Octeville – 1990

*The 39<sup>th</sup> made slight advances on Cherbourg, being held up by 20mm AA guns, artillery and small arms fire in street fighting in Octeville. 3-inch guns of the attached 899<sup>th</sup> Tank Destroyer Battalion destroyed two 88mm guns with direct fire.<sup>28</sup>*



### **Cherbourg (June 26, 1944)**

The 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry on that flank lagged behind, but reached the beach by mid-afternoon. There was some street fighting and firing from concrete bunkers. Enemy positions were finally neutralized by small-arms and mortar fire and then battered into submission by antitank gun fire. Fighting became doubly difficult for the Americans in the city when the guns in the lower levels of Fort du Roule began firing on them in the afternoon.

The 47<sup>th</sup> and 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiments of the 9<sup>th</sup> Division fought their way through the western half of Cherbourg, which was the most strongly defended portion of the city. In the 47<sup>th</sup>'s action both the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, in the extreme northwest of the city, and the 1st Battalion were stopped by fire from the thick-walled arsenal. The 2<sup>nd</sup> was unable to get beyond the railway, which runs diagonally across the front of the Naval Hospital and along the southwest edge of the arsenal area.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion captured the hospital, where 150 American wounded were found, but was halted by the arsenal guns directly to the front. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion's advance on the right was hotly contested by defenses behind the stadium and in the mined cemetery. The battalion's attack was supported initially by a battalion of artillery and mortars, but supporting fires were made more difficult during the day by the poor visibility caused by smoke, the dust of demolitions, and bad weather.

Both the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalions used tanks and tank destroyers without much success against heavy concrete pillboxes, but the armor gave effective support in knocking out roof-top positions where the enemy had emplaced 20-mm. antiaircraft guns. French civilians aided considerably by pointing out gun positions and mined areas.

The most dramatic incident of the day occurred in the 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry zone. Both the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalions moved down the ridge in the morning. Their objectives were Octeville and the Cherbourg area lying between the 47<sup>th</sup> Infantry and the Divette. A captured German reported that General von Schlieben, the commander of the Cherbourg Fortress, was in an underground shelter in St. Sauveur, just beyond Octeville.

Moved forward at 08:00 on 26th and entered town with opposition from machine gun and sniper fire, and also 20mm AA guns. For several hours the two battalions were slowed by Nebelwerfer fire and direct fire from antiaircraft and 88-mm guns in the Octeville area, but by mid-afternoon Company E and Company F had reached von Schlieben's shelter. After covering the tunnel entrances with machine-gun fire, a prisoner was sent down to ask for the fort's surrender. When surrender was refused, tank destroyers began to fire directly into two of the tunnel's three entrances and preparations were begun to demolish the stronghold with TNT. After a few rounds the enemy began to pour out.

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From Dale Smith's letter:

*I was there when Lt. Col. Frank Gunn had a tank blow the heavy steel doors off the back of the fortress that was built into the side of the hill. At that time, German Gen. Von Schlieben and Admiral Hennecke surrendered the fortress to our Lt. Col. Frank Gunn.<sup>29</sup>*

The 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Bn. took the subterranean naval fortification at San Sauveur where General Von Schlieben and Commander Hennecke and their staffs surrendered. Among the 800 who surrendered were General von Schlieben, Admiral Walter Hennecke, of the Port of Cherbourg, and their staffs. The surrender was made to General Eddy, who demanded that von Schlieben surrender the whole Cherbourg garrison. The fortress commander refused, however, adding that communications were so bad that he could not ask the others to surrender even if he wanted to. When General Collins offered to provide the means of communication von Schlieben still declined.

After reorganization, the 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry pushed on to the coast. At the City Hall, which the Germans had fortified and defended all day, a German colonel appeared to negotiate the surrender of his command. Convinced of von Schlieben's capture and promised protection from French snipers, he surrendered with 400 troops to Lt. Col. Frank L. Gunn, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion commander.

The 39<sup>th</sup> infantry continued mopping up operations and cleared their sector to the harbor.

*. . . . on the heights over Cherbourg in a cemetery in a driving rain, I brought him a cup of hot coffee. He called a bedraggled private, insisting that he drink half. 'Tomorrow,' said Col. Flint. 'Tomorrow,' said the private as they raised the cups to their lips.<sup>30</sup>*

### **Cap De La Hague (June 27, 1944)**

The 9<sup>th</sup> Division used 27-28 June to regroup for the last peninsula operation. Reconnaissance along the northern coast began immediately. The 47<sup>th</sup> Infantry was ordered to assemble in the Henneville area on 27 June, preparatory to an attack on 29 June. Combat patrols of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion pushed as far as Querqueville on 27 June and captured three hundred prisoners around Henneville and the Querqueville airport. The Regiment did not go into the assembly area until 28 June, when it was relieved in Cherbourg by the 8<sup>th</sup> Infantry. The 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry assembled west of Octeville on the evening of 27 June.

Meanwhile, enemy field batteries and long-range coastal guns in the northwest continued to shell the division's installations, and the 9<sup>th</sup> Division attempted to knock them out with combined counter battery fire from its organic and attached Corps artillery and by air attacks.

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On 27 June P-47's bombed Querqueville, Gruchy, Nacqueville, and Jobourg with undetermined results, and on 28 June fighter-bombers dive-bombed the heavy batteries at Laye and Goury on the northwest tip of the peninsula and also strong points at la Rue de Beaumont and Beaumont-Hague, inflicting some damage. But still the heavy fire continued from the peninsula.



Figure 11 Beaumont Hague - 1990

The Regiment was relieved in its sector of Cherbourg by elements of the 4<sup>th</sup> Div. at 1600 and entire Regiment moved to assembly area in vicinity of Regimental C.P. Regiment placed in Division reserve for movement up Cap De La Hague.

**Flottenmanville-Hague (June 29, 1944)**

*Began movement at 09:15 to position west of Flottemanville-Hague. Closed into area at 13:00.<sup>31</sup>*



Figure 12 Flottemanville Hague - 1990

### **St. Croix Hague - Branville (June 30, 1944)**

*Instructed to move forward to area vicinity St. Croix Hague - Branville; began movement at 14:15 and closed in at 17:40. 1st and 2nd Bns. move to vicinity Beaumont-Hague at 2300, and awaited instructions to move forward . . . .<sup>32</sup>*

The 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry, which had moved up to an assembly area near Ste. Croix-Hague the previous afternoon, meanwhile prepared to clear the tip of the peninsula and bring the operation to a close. At 2000 the 3rd Battalion, reinforced by Company A, 899<sup>th</sup> Tank Destroyer Battalion, and Troop C, 4<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Squadron, was motorized. By midnight it was 2,000 yards beyond Jobourg on the road to Auderville, ready to attack the town before morning. Colonel Stumpf moved the battalion out at once, preceded by the 9<sup>th</sup> Reconnaissance Troop. The first 100 prisoners were taken so easily that he decided to continue to the objective. The town was secured by 0500.

In all, nearly 3,000 prisoners were gathered up in the early morning hours of 1 July, bringing the total captured in the peninsula to over 6,000, double the original estimate. Armament taken included two 10-inch railway guns, four 155-mm. howitzers, five 88-mm. self-propelled guns, two 47-mm., and ten 20-mm. guns. As patrols finished their work, areas were reported clear by the 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry at 1310, the 60<sup>th</sup> Infantry at 1400, and the 47<sup>th</sup> Infantry at 1430. At 1500, 1 July, the 9<sup>th</sup> Division reported to VII Corps that all organized resistance on Cap de la Hague had ceased and that the division was assembling preparatory to the move south for further operations.

The Cotentin Peninsula campaign ended on July 1st and all resistance ceased in Cap De La Hague area. Casualties to date were -- Killed in Action: 5 officers, 65 enlisted men. Died of wounds 1 off. and 8 enlisted. Wounded in action: 21 officers and 308 enlisted. Missing in action: 4 enlisted. These accounts were prepared by H.A. Flint, Col. 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry and submitted on July 7, 1944.

In freeing the Cotentin Peninsula, individual actions occurred at Orglandes, St. Jacques de Nehou, Bricquebec, St. Christophe-du-Foc, Couville, Vasteville, Octeville, Cherbourg, and Cap de la Hague. During this period, the 39<sup>th</sup> engaged 77<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division; elements of the 243<sup>rd</sup> Division; elements of the 709<sup>th</sup> and 91<sup>st</sup> Divisions, including the 252<sup>nd</sup> Flak Battalion, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Marine Border Flak Battalion, 17<sup>th</sup> Machine Gun Battalion, 795<sup>th</sup> Georgian Battalion, 653<sup>rd</sup> Flak Battalion and the 561 Austrian Battalion.

### **Allied Chain of Command and Order of Battle**

Supreme Allied Commander, Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower  
21<sup>st</sup> Army Group, Gen. Sir Bernard L. Montgomery  
First Army, Lt. Gen. Omar N. Bradley  
VII Corps Maj. Gen. J. Lawton Collins

## **Enemy Chain of Command and Order of Battle**

Supreme Command West, Generalfeldmarschall Gerd von Rundstedt  
Army Group B, Generalfeldmarschall Erwin Rommel  
Seventh Army, Generaloberst Friedrich Dollman (died 28 June)  
LXXXIV Corps, General der Artillerie Erich Marcks (KIA 12 June)  
General der Artillerie Wilhelm Fahrmbacher (to 17 June)  
General der Infanterie Dietrich von Choltitz

## **Les Pieux (July 2, 1944)**

*On July 2<sup>nd</sup> 1944, following completion of mopping-up operations on the remainder of the peninsula northwest of Cherbourg, the entire regiment moved via motor to a semi-rest area 2 ½ miles southwest of Les Pieux, France. Distance of this move was approximately 20 miles and the march time for various elements was from 1 ½ to 2 hours. The march was made over good hard surfaced roads in cool, rainy weather.<sup>33</sup>*

### **Chapter 3 Illustration Credits:**

Figure 4 from The 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment Commemorative Map  
Figures 5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12 from the author's collection

## Chapter Four

### BREAKOUT

#### Carentan (July 9, 1944)

*On 9 July 1944, the regiment moved from the rest area in Les Pieux to an area two miles southwest of Carentan by motor. Distance of the move was forty-five miles, and was completed over good, heavily traveled main thorough-fares through the towns of Bricquebec, Valognes, and Montebourg. The movement took place at night during cool, damp weather and required 5 hours.<sup>34</sup>*



Figure 13 World War I Memorial St Jean de Daye - 1990

#### St. Jean-de-Daye (July 10, 1944)

From Dale Smith's letter of March 11, 2007:

*After Cherbourg, we had a 7 day rest. After the rest we were back on the line. The second day on the line, July 11<sup>th</sup>, the Germans launched a large counter attack at Le Desert.<sup>35</sup>*

*The Regiment went into action in the vicinity of St. Jean-de-Daye. with the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion taking up a position 5 miles SE of Carentan; the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion just outside the town of St. Jean-de-Daye, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion going into reserve. Only short approach marches and flanking marches were made during the period of 11 July to 17 July 1944 while the entire Regiment was engaged in bitter fighting. 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalions alternated in attacking the enemy's strong points between St. Jean-de-Daye and Le Desert, France. Movements were very few, since progress was from hedgerow to hedgerow over flat, easily observed terrain.<sup>36</sup>*

### Le Desert (July 11-12, 1944)

*Germany's finest armored division, the Panzer Lehr had been chosen to lead a breakthrough to Isigny which would cut the Allied beachhead in two, if successful. Throughout the preceding day the 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry had met such great resistance as to preclude its advance beyond Le Desert, and a wide gap of almost 1, 000 yards developed between the Falcons and the 47<sup>th</sup> on their right . . . where the Raiders were driving on Bois Du Hommet as the 39<sup>th</sup> turned southwest.*



Figure 14 Le Desert

*Meanwhile, the enemy mounted his first real counter-offensive of the hedgerow campaign. According to prisoners, the Germans sought to capture St. Jean-de-Daye first, and several tank scares bore out this fact. Some armor did get into the Division area, and reports have placed their advance inside American lines as "up to 2,000 yards." This entry spelled death and defeat for those Panzers which were able to break through, however, as a thoroughly devastating counterattack made military hash of Panzer Lehr.<sup>37</sup>*

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From **Eight Stars to Victory**, the following map illustrates the units involved in the attempted German counterattack, with 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry in the center of the battle:

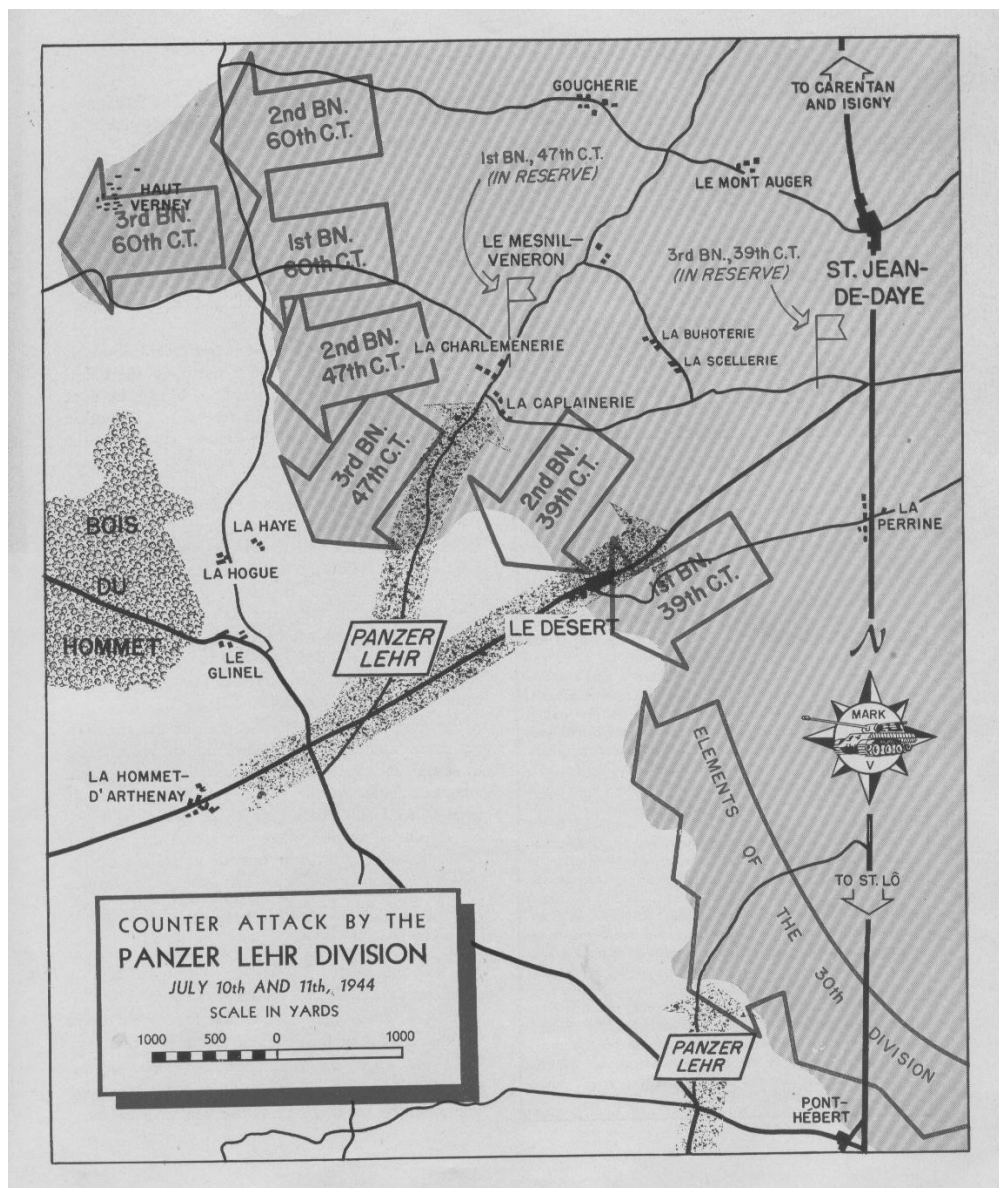


Figure 15 Counter Attack by Panzer Lehr Division

*... the Second Battalion, 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry, is cited for extraordinary heroism and outstanding performance of duty in action during the period 11 July 1944 to 12 July 1944 in France. The citation reads as follows:<sup>38</sup>*



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*The 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry, is cited for extraordinary heroism in action on 11 -12 July 1944 at Le Desert, France, when the battalion fought off and crushed an enemy armored threat to break through to Isigny and separate the Allied forces. The battalion was in position on 11 July 1944 prepared to attack when an enemy battalion, supported by sixteen Panther tanks, launched a fierce attack at 0330 hours. Part of the enemy tanks by-passed the front lines entered the rear areas and threatened the battalion command post. Fighting desperately, the battalion blocked the road leading to the command post as bazooka teams, men armed with grenade launchers and the 57mm antitank gun crews courageously engaged the heavily armored tanks at close range while the tank destroyers were being moved into position. By 0600 hours several direct assaults had been beaten off and the battalion was employing every man and every weapon available to repulse the attack. After all the wire lines were cut, the radios kept constant communication, giving the battalion commander tactical control over his companies. The battalion command post came under intense tank and heavy machine gun fire, but was quickly moved about 500 yards and continued operations. With violent fighting raging throughout the area, the men built up crude roadblocks and by repeated individual feats of self-sacrificing heroism, boldly rushed the tanks, killing the German infantry riding on them and closely following the armor. By sheer courage the battalion held the enemy at bay until an air mission and the tank destroyers arrived at about 1000 hours. Despite the shock of the fanatical enemy attack, the men held their ground while the planes bombed and strafed dangerously close to their positions, and killed the tank crews as they tried to escape from some of the tanks. Six tanks trying to escape were destroyed by the tank destroyers and bazooka teams. With the road now open more tank destroyers and tanks were employed and the battalion quickly regrouped and counter attacked, destroying or driving back all the enemy in the area. Following an artillery preparation on 12 July 1944 the battalion attacked and made rapid progress until stiff resistance was met from enemy doggedly defending the high ground. With gallant determination the men engaged the enemy in bitter hand-to-hand fighting and made progress until the Germans laid down an intense long range artillery barrage and counterattacked with the support of ten Panther tanks. Again the troops engaged the tanks with the same relentless determination, unwavering when their weapons failed to penetrate the heavy armor of the Panther tanks, and fought without fear, methodically destroying the enemy. One company suffered heavy casualties from tanks that broke into the area. However, the men quickly regrouped and held the enemy off until relieved by another company. Confronted with the second tank attack in two days the dogged determination of the men of the battalion, combined with tremendous and effective firepower of the supporting tank destroyers and tanks, repulsed the enemy with heavy losses. The valiant*

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*fighting of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion defeated some of Germany's finest troops and destroyed their final attempt to break through to Isigny and separate the allied forces. The enemy lost at least sixteen tanks, over 130 men as prisoners and approximately 200 killed, compared to approximately 84 casualties suffered by the battalion. The bold and intrepid stand of this battalion exemplified the highest type of courage and determination. The heroic actions of the men were an outstanding example of esprit de corps and are worthy of the highest ideals of the military service.*

*GO #34, Hq. 9th Inf. Div., APO #9, dtd 3 March 1945 Cont'd.*

*By command of Major General CRAIG:*

*WILLIAM O. WESTMORELAND,  
Colonel, G.S.C.,  
Chief of Staff.*

*Closer examination of the breakthrough area revealed the complete destruction of the Panzer Lehr. Enemy tanks clogged the roads and highway hedgerows showed signs of action. From battered St. Jean-de Daye forward, the French countryside was snipped and churned . . . marred as only war can disfigure. But soldiers have little time to evaluate and explore the events of yesterday . . . especially under fire. More combat was promised on July 12th and that was the problem - not what had happened.<sup>39</sup>*

### **Le Desert (July 12, 1944)**

*Colonel Flint's 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry pushed off against light opposition and passed through the war-torn village of Le Desert, enroute southeast along the main road. Opposition became pronounced and soon the leading elements were under machine-gun and small-arms fire, which sprayed forth from emplaced positions. At 7:30 PM a very strong but local counterattack was launched against Company E, and heavy losses included all the company officers. German infantry - reinforced with a self-propelled gun - had flanked the company. But a lieutenant of the tank destroyer attachment reorganized Company E, and the unit held out against all assaults. Meanwhile, another company of the 39<sup>th</sup> struck at the foe, and regained the 100 yards which had been lost.*

*. . . The battle against Eslandes continued on July 17th, and by now it was realized that the main threat which the Germans possessed was their use of tanks. These were unable to halt patrols of the 39<sup>th</sup> from going over the St. Lo-Periers Road during the night of July 17-18, however, and thus that road was cut for the first time . . . by the Ninth Division.<sup>40</sup>*

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**Esglandes (July 18, 1944)**



Figure 16 Esglandes -1990

*The regiment swung over to the vicinity of Esglandes. Movement was mostly by foot and under heavy enemy artillery, mortar and small arms fire over secondary roads.*

*From July 18 to July 24, the regiment attacked and held positions generally in the vicinity of St. Lo. Combat marches were undistinguishable at this time since the regiment was continuously in contact with the enemy, attacking, flanking, counterattacking and moving forward by yards in very unsettled weather. All marches were short, approximately 3 to 5 miles on foot.<sup>41</sup>*

From Dale Smith's letter while serving with F Company:

*... as the 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry advanced toward St. Lo, [Dale] was with the battalion aid station located in a farm house in the village of Le Desert. Very early in the morning before daylight, a huge force of German armor and infantry broke through the American lines. In the midst of battle, [Dale] was blown out of a stone-built barn by an 88 mm round from the gun of a Tiger tank. He suffered wounds on his left thigh as well as back and leg. After about three weeks, [Dale] rejoined the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion near Mortain.<sup>42</sup>*

### **Periers-St.Lo-Marigny Crossroads (July 24, 1944)**

Colonel Harry A. "Paddy" Flint was mortally wounded by a sniper on July 24, 1944.<sup>43</sup> The following information was taken from a news article, sent to the Washington Star from their war correspondent, Thomas R. Henry, who was with the American troops in France:

*Paddy Flint is at 'peace in the arms of God.' One of the most beloved and colorful American officers in France was killed, covering with his carbine the rescue of a wounded soldier, in a bullet swept field after an episode of lone valor rivaling any act in the nation's history. Thousands have died in Normandy, but I believe the most genuine tears were shed for the strange Yankee Irishman, old cavalry yellowleg, philosopher, poet, scholar, Col. Harry A. Flint, Ninth Division Regimental Commander, whose deeds long since have been legends wherever fighting men gather. It is hard to believe that Paddy is gone. He died speechless from a sniper's bullet through his brain, a happy smile on his face.*

*This is how he fell:*

*A few miles north of Marigny was a clump of farm buildings full of enemy machine gunners, 250 yards ahead of the American front lines. The hedges between were full of snipers. There a battalion, filled with replacements under fire for the first time, bogged down for three days. Col. Flint had decided that the enemy strength was much less than the new men feared and a little 'Indian Fighting' was all that was needed to push the advance. With four volunteers he walked over the field to the next hedgerow. They stopped by foxholes, telling the men they had nothing to fear, in several cases taking them by the arm and pulling them from shelter. Thus he got eight recruits inspired by his valor..*

*All the while, bullets were raining around Paddy. He came to a tank stalled in the field. The tank driver refused to go ahead, saying he had no infantry escort. 'Then this time you'll have a General Flint escort,' brandishing his carbine.*

*He came to a lane leading to a house. There was no fire from the windows but bullets were clipping the hedge bushes. The driver was hit. With the Germans 250 yards away Paddy threw a grenade into the house to clear the way for others carrying a wounded man to shelter, covering them constantly with fire from his carbine. He stood alone by the hedge. The Jerries lobbed over hand grenades and blew the leaves off bushes around him..*

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*Still he stood erect to get a better target for his grenades. Suddenly he pitched forward on his head. New soldiers afraid to move moments before rushed into the heavy fire to drag him to shelter. The wounded driver, already weak from loss of blood, leaped from the floor and ran back through fire 250 yards for litter bearers. The Colonel tried to talk, but his speech was paralyzed.<sup>44</sup>*

From an unidentified newspaper clipping:

*There was a strange reaction as word spread back through the battalion. 'The old man is hit.' Soldiers rose out of foxholes to a man and surged forward carrying the objective in a few minutes which had held them up three days. For they loved Paddy Flint and were inspired with vengeful anger.<sup>45</sup>*

Aid men soon came up, loaded the Colonel on a stretcher. Said a sergeant as they started to the rear: "Remember, Paddy, you can't kill an Irishman—you can only make him mad." Colonel Flint smiled.



Figure 17 Medic Richard Kann near the Aid Station

From Dale Smith's letter:

*"Private Richard Kann, another medic there, was the first to help Paddy Flint when he received a mortal wound near St. Lo. For this courageous service Private Kann received the Award of Bronze Star."<sup>46</sup>*

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**Colonel Harry A. Flint Succumbs (July 25, 1944)**

Colonel Harry A. Flint, Commanding Officer of the 39th Infantry Regiment, died of his combat wounds on 25 July 1944.

The people of Le Desert, France honor Colonel Flint with the following memorial on the wall of the Town Center:



Figure 18 Le Desert Memorial to Col. Flint

The Town Hall also maintains a display in Colonel Flint's Honor which includes the United States flag, a commemorative 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment helmet, and other memorabilia.



Figure 19 Col. Flint Memorial at Le Desert

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CONFIDENTIAL  
HEADQUARTERS NINTH INFANTRY DIVISION  
A. P. O. #9

201 - GKMEQ

13 October 1944

SUBJECT: Award of Bronze Star  
TO : Commanding Officer, 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry  
9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, APO 9, US Army

Under the provisions of Army Regulations 600-45, as amended, the Bronze Star is awarded to:

RICHARD B. KANN, Private, 33511953, Medical Detachment, 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry, who distinguished himself by heroic achievement in action against the enemy on 24 July 1944 in the vicinity of La Cour des Landes, France. Learning that a man lay seriously wounded in the forward area, Pvt Kann voluntarily exposed himself to the intense enemy artillery, mortar, machine gun, and small arms fire to go to the aid of the wounded man. As he was coming across the open clearing, he was ordered back to bring up a litter team, the wounded man having already been treated. This necessitated his movement to the rear, again under heavy enemy fire. As he started his return trip, he learned that the Regimental Commander had been seriously wounded. Without hesitation, Pvt Kann retraced his steps for the third time, across the open area and administered first aid to the wounded officer. Pvt Kann's complete disregard for personal safety and courageous actions were a credit to himself and to the Armed Forces of the United States. Entered military service from Pennsylvania.

By command of Major General CRAIG:

W. R. Hutchison,  
Major, A. G. D.  
Adjutant General

Distribution:  
2 - 39 Inf  
1 - Pvt Kann  
1 - AG file



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The Losses in Action Report for 24 July 1944 lists:

*Killed:*

1. \* *Col. Harry A. Flint, 03377, Hsq-39th-Inf.*  
*\*died of wounds*

**Ste. Marie Eglise (July 26, 1944)**



Figure 20 Col. Flint burial at Ste. Marie Eglise Military Cemetery

From the Stars and Stripes newspaper account:

***OLD FRIEND OF GEN. PATTON DIES IN NORMANDY***

*Harry A. Flint, a Vermont cavalry officer, and an old friend of Gen. George S. Patton, under whom he served in North Africa and Sicily, has been killed in action in Normandy. The official announcement of his death said a headquarter general, three major generals, and four brigadier generals and officers of the cavalry were honorary pallbearers when Flint was buried in a military cemetery at St. Marie Eglise. Col. Flint was survived by his widow, Mrs. H.A. Flint, his daughter, Mrs. Clifton Von Kann, and his grandson, Curtis von Kann, all of Daytona Beach, Florida; his mother, Mrs. Charles W. Flint, of Oklahoma; Sheriff Fred Flint and Major Raymond W. Flint U.S. Army; and two sisters, Mrs. Ernest Clark, East Orange, New Jersey, and Mrs. Kirk McKay, Lakeland Florida.<sup>47</sup>*



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Col. Flint's remains were moved to Arlington Cemetery in 1948, and his wife Sallie was buried next to him in 1968. The location and details from their final resting place follow:

*FLINT, HARRY ALBERT*  
*COL AGF 39TH INF REGT 9TH INF DIV USA*  
*DATE OF DEATH: 7/25/1944*  
*BURIED AT: SECTION 2 SITE 310*  
*ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY*

*FLINT, SALLIE M WIDOW OF HARRY A*  
*DATE OF BIRTH: 08/16/1886*  
*DATE OF DEATH: 12/05/1968*  
*BURIED AT: SECTION 2 SITE E-310 WH*  
*ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY*

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CAMPAIGNS

- \* ALGERIA-FRENCH MOROCCO
- \* TUNISIA
- \* SICILY
- \* NORMANDY

CAMPAIGNS

- \* NORTHERN FRANCE
- \* ARDENNES
- \* RHINELAND
- \* CENTRAL EUROPE

### 39th Infantry Regiment

#### The Man Called *Paddy* Flint

Probably no story of the 39th Combat Team—or, for that matter, of the Ninth Division—could be written properly without including the saga of Colonel Harry A. *Paddy* Flint. Legends and facts often become entangled regarding this famous soldier. Facts alone present as interesting a picture as ever recorded about any fighting soldier.

Colonel Flint was an old-time cavalryman who turned infantrymen to take command of the 39th Infantry. Although past the age when most officers lead fighting outfits, *Paddy* was as good and as brave as any man who ever stood on two feet. He was short, had the wit of an Irishman, could swear like nobody's business—when he wanted to—and was seldom seen without his famous black scarf.

When he became commanding officer of the 39th, it was an ordinary regiment—sometimes good, sometimes not so good. Soon a change came over the organization, from the top ranking officer down to the lowliest private. *Paddy* had said, "From now on, we're all one gang. We're going to work and stick together as a gang and help each other."

That is just what happened. It was this little colonel who thought up the idea of the regiment's famed motto—AAA-O (*Anything, Anywhere, Anytime, Bar Nothing*). He painted it on the side of his helmet, and so many soldiers followed suit that it became part of the 39th's official uniform.

Confidant of his West Point schoolmate, General Patton, and liked by all, this Vermonter showed that he was *action* and not *words*. A portion of his D.S.C. citation tells this well:

*... Going forward with the attacking battalions, Colonel Flint spent his entire days moving about the squad and platoon installations to cheer and encourage all ranks. During the attack on 4 August 1943 he personally led the advance through enemy fire, waving to his men to follow him forward. He was often covered and obscured from view by dust and smoke from bursting shells, later to be revealed as standing upright and urging the men forward.*



*Paddy* Flint used to say, "H'it don't make no difference," when things got rough. Upon being awarded the D.S.C., his reaction was, "Why, when I stood up there and heard the citations being read, I didn't know who they were talking about. It was a great deal like Mrs. Murphy at the funeral of her husband, when she said, 'Why, the priest isn't talking about Pat at all.'"

But that was *Paddy* the General was talking about. That was Colonel H. A. *Paddy* Flint, the man whom the 39th would follow through Hell without a canteen of water!

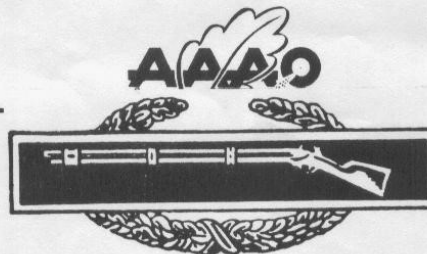


Figure 21 The Man Called *Paddy* Flint

### Breakout - St. Lo Perrier Road (July 25, 1944)

*Lt. Colonel Van H. Bond assumed command of the 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was commanded by Lt. Col. Henry P. Tucker, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion was commanded by Lt. Col. Frank L. Gunn, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion was commanded by Lt. Col. Robert H. Stumpf.<sup>48</sup>*

In preparing for the breakout, the 39<sup>th</sup> fought battles at St. Jean de Daye, Le Desert, Esglandes, la Cour des Landes, and Amigny. They engaged the 17<sup>th</sup> SS Division (37<sup>th</sup> and 38<sup>th</sup> SS Panzer Regiments); 2<sup>nd</sup> SS Division Das Reich (Deutschland and Der Fuehrer's Regiments); Panzer Lehr Division (901st-902nd Panzer Regiments) and the 5<sup>th</sup> Parachute Division (13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Parachute Regiments).

*Two thousand bombers of the U.S Eighth and Ninth Air Force would punch the hole...The 9<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> U.S. infantry divisions had drawn the assignment to rush in and guard the shoulders, backed by the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry. Then "the Big Red One," 1<sup>st</sup> U.S. Infantry Division would barrel through followed by the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> armored divisions.<sup>49</sup>*

The 9<sup>th</sup> Division pulled back as a 1 mile by 3 mile area was saturation bombed to allow breakout of Patton's 3<sup>rd</sup> Army. Many US troops were hit due to shifting smoke marking the target area for the bomber strike.

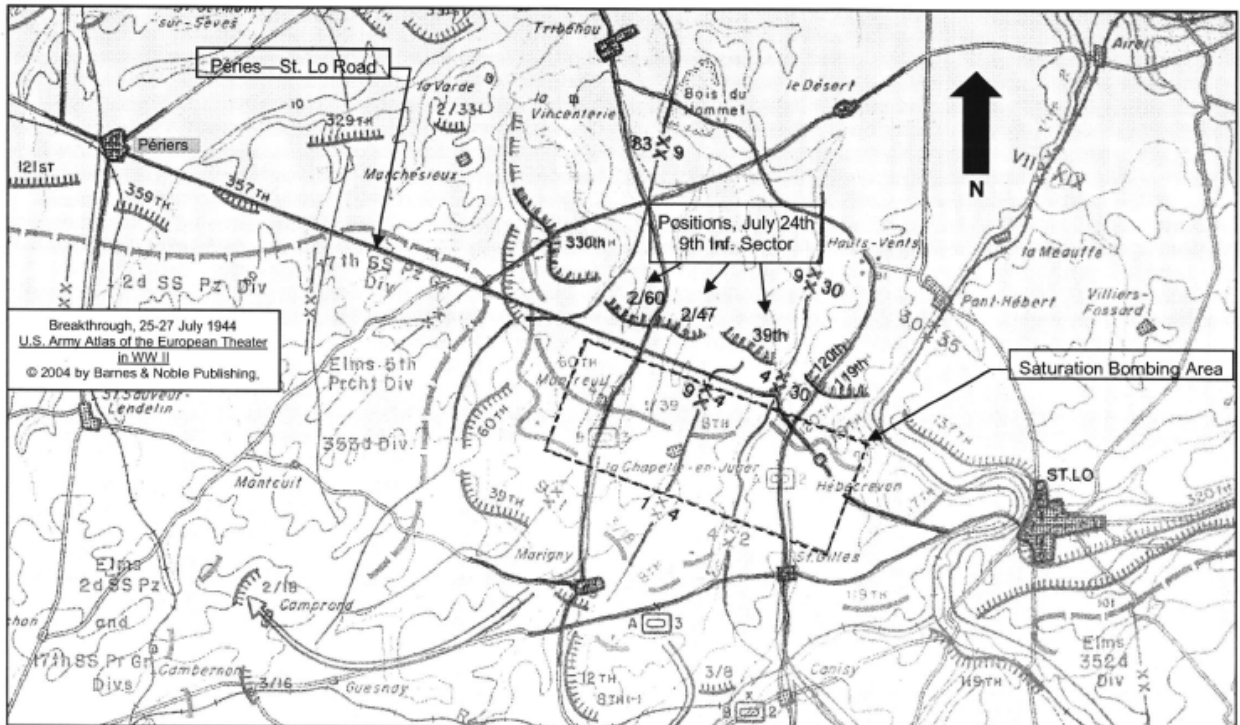


Figure 22 Breakthrough Map

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The following account is from the Octofoil, January 8, 2008, told by Michael Habermann:

*. . . . General Bradley decided to throw five thousand tons of bombs into a small area, only four miles deep and a mile and a half wide. The 9<sup>th</sup> Division, of which the 39<sup>th</sup> was part, was on the right flank, the 4<sup>th</sup> Division was in the center, and the 30<sup>th</sup> was on the left flank. These were the spearhead divisions, to be followed afterwards by armored divisions of the Third Army once the bombing had been completed.*

*The morning of July 25<sup>th</sup> we pulled into a big field. In that portion of Normandy, the fields were larger and wider and the trees on the hedgerows taller. In fact, I remember looking down and seeing a wide sweep of hedgerow fields bigger than I had seen before. I parked my truck along side a hedgerow. There were five or six fellows with me on the truck, and I placed us in a spot facing the German lines about 500 yards in front of the target zone. When we pulled into this particular field that morning none of the men I was with bothered to dig foxholes.*

*Soon the bombers began to come over. They started with B-25's and B-26's and other aircraft that dropped their bombs onto the German positions. The planes marking the drops were P-38 Lightning's. They had a two tail fuselage and we watched them as they dropped their flares.*

*When the big bombers, the B-17's came over at about 7,500 to 10,000 feet, they began to bomb the small target area in front of us. The bombing was so intense the earth shook and we bounced up and down. The sound was absolutely tremendous. The dust that came up from the bombing began to drift towards us. I said to the fellows, "Something is going to happen." I looked up and saw P-38's dropping their flares closer and closer to us.*

*At that moment, I turned around and saw hundreds of bombs, literally hundreds, coming up the field. Huge red flashes on the ground were racing right across the fields. Bradley originally had planned for the bombers to bomb parallel to the St. Lo-Periers road which was in front of us. Somehow the Air Force decided otherwise and the B-17's flew right over us. As I looked around, I saw hundreds of bombs coming at me like giant footsteps, all fire and flame. I took one step and said, "I'm dead. There is no way I'm going to live through this." I took another step or two and suddenly I was thrown violently to the ground. It was as though a horse had kicked me on the head, in the chest, and in the face. I lost my breath and was half burried in the ground.*

*When the closest bomb exploded it was twenty yards away at the very most. The shrapnel went over my head and slammed into the truck. One of my friends had his hands up and his hand was cut off by shrapnel. I was smothered in dirt and*

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*dust and my whole uniform was burnt. I really didn't know where I was; I was completely dazed. I had suffered a concussion without even realizing it. I remember looking up and seeing one of the fellows nearby. His neck was red. In the moment of confusion I said to myself, "What a silly thing to do, to be wearing a red scarf in the middle of a bombing raid." Of course, he had been hit and I didn't realize that until much later.*

*I was extremely lucky because instead of turning and running toward the front of my truck, I ran towards the back. I took one step as I said and then was knocked down. But later on, after I came to, I was pulled out and recovered. I walked towards the front of the truck and there was an unexploded bomb maybe ten feet in front of the truck. It had made a big hole. I believe the bombs were 250 pounds because if they had been 500 pounds they undoubtedly would have killed me.*

*Eventually the medics came and I was taken away. I do remember looking across the field and there was a great rush of soldiers. On that side, the trees were taller and the bombs hit in the trees and the shrapnel came straight down and struck the men beneath the trees. I believe sixteen of our men were killed at that particular time. I really don't know exactly, but I heard it was between twelve and sixteen.*

*In any case, these men had been in the invasion in Africa, they had fought in Tunis and Sicily and then they had invaded Normandy at Utah Beach. And here, they were killed in this very unfortunate incident. I remember one young fellow running around the field not only dazed but practically crazy. He was shouting, "They were my best friends. We all went through Africa, we lived through Sicily and come here to be killed by our own bombers."*

*In any case, when the medics revived me and I began to look around, I saw the truck was pretty much intact except for some holes on the sides. A Sergeant came up to me and said "Move that truck." I replied, "I'm not going to move that truck! Not with the unexploded bomb eight to ten feet away." He tried to order me. I said, "You can do it yourself, but I'm not going to do it," and I never did.*

*The Germans had been tremendously bombed in that target area but as the 39<sup>th</sup> was on the right flank, after the bombardment, German artillery began to fire at us again. That particular German area had not been bombed because it was just outside the target zone. One of the men said, "Gosh, we won't be able to make a breakthrough after all." But of course, we did. It took maybe a day or two to get things organized. . . . There were German bodies all over the place, German horses killed, German carts overturned and many bodies on the road. I ran over some since it was impossible to avoid them. Behind us Patton's Third Army then attacked and swept into Brittany.*

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From **Eight Stars to Victory**, page 201:

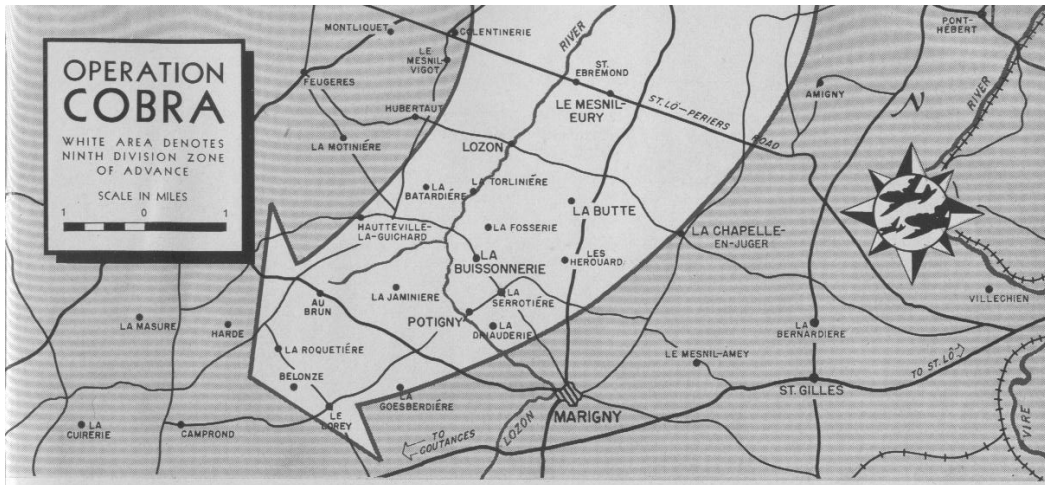


Figure 23 Operation Cobra Map

**Chapter 4 Illustration Credits:**

Figures 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19 from the author's collection  
Figures 15, 20, 21 from Eight Stars to Victory, Mittelman

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## Chapter Five

### PURSUIT

#### La Butte, La Buissonerie, Le Lorey (July 24, 1944)

*... the 39<sup>th</sup>'s 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion eliminated a German pocket in the vicinity of Le Mesnil-Eury then pointed toward La Butte, where it joined forces with the Falcon 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion. Together they launched an attack against the roadnet one kilometer southeast of La Buissonerie, capturing it by 3:45 the following morning. From here, the 39<sup>th</sup> pushed on Potigny, encountering and defeating a belligerent enemy enroute.<sup>50</sup>*

#### Le Mesnil-Eury (July 26, 1944)



Figure 24 Le Mesnil-Eury –1990

*The Regiment moved to new position via motor convoy. The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion taking up positions near La Chapelle; the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion pushed through the towns of La Butte, La Buissonerie, Le Lorey, and through Marigny to bivouac at La Grimbert, a total of 10 miles. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion was engaged in cleaning up the area northwest of Marigny and then preceded to an assembly area near Calagne on 29 July 1944.<sup>51</sup>*

#### Marigny/Canisy (July 26, 1944)

During the night the German Panzer Lehr tank battalion moved in. GIs hid in the hedge rows. Next morning dive bombers came in and destroyed the German tanks. Private Kann remembered being lost in the hedgerows, hearing German's and tanks in the next field, and dive bombers knocking out the tanks the next morning.



Figure 25 Marigny - 1990



He was wounded on July 26<sup>th</sup>, 1944 near St. Lo, hit in the leg, and said "I thought I had my shoe shot off." He stayed in action.

28 August 17, 1944 The Gazette and Dai

## One Killed Among 4 Casualties



**CPL. GEORGE A. HANDSHAW**  
(Wounded)

**PVT. RICHARD KANN**  
(Wounded)

One countian has been killed, one Navy man is missing, and two soldiers of this vicinity have been wounded in France.

Pvt. William L. Morrison, 29, Hanover, was killed in action in France July 30, Robert Reichelt, M. 1/c, is missing, Pvt. Richard Kann, York R. D. 4, and Cpl. George A. Handshaw, 613 North Pershing avenue, were wounded.

Pvt. Morrison, is survived by his wife, Mrs. Thelma Morrison, 340 North Franklin street, Hanover; a 16 months old son, William James Morrison, his parents, Mr. and Mrs. George Morrison, Newville, R. D. 1, and two brothers, Glenn Morrison, Port Royal, and Paul Morrison, Carlisle.

Prior to entering the service Pvt. Morrison was employed by the Hanover Wire Cloth factory. He was inducted Nov. 1, 1943, and received his basic training at Ft. McClellan, Ala. He was sent to England early in June. It is not known when he arrived in France.

Machinist Reichelt, husband of Doris Sweitzer Reichelt, 40 South Penn street, who is missing, was on submarine duty. He had been overseas three times, having en-

listed before Dec. 7, 1941. He left this country in December, 1943. He married Doris Sweitzer, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. H. M. Sweitzer, Sept. 15, 1943. He was a Navy student at the York corporation for a period of three months before his active duty.

Pvt. Kann, son of Mr. and Mrs. John Kann, has been awarded the Purple Heart. His wounds were received while serving with the 39th infantry division in the medical corps.

He was inducted July 12, 1943, received his basic training at Camp Grant, Ill., and Camp Reynolds, Pa. Sent overseas in December, 1943, he was in Ireland and England before reaching France. Pvt. Kann was employed by Cochrane's Brass Foundry, this city.

His brother, Pfc. Earl Kann, recently returned from overseas where he served in North Africa, Sicily and Italy. He has also been awarded the Purple Heart and Oak Leaf cluster for outstanding service in the Army.

Cpl. Handshaw, son of Mr. and Mrs. John W. Handshaw, was wounded in France July 28, ac-

Figure 26 Pvt Kann receives Purple Heart

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**Canisy (July 30, 1944)**

The regiment spent 30th and 31st July in an assembly area near Canisy with no marches.



Figure 27 Ramparts at St. Lo

**Hambye (August 1, 1944)**

*The Regimental Command Post moved approximately 12 miles to a position 1 1/4 miles south of Hambye. 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion moved 1/2 mile south of Hambye; the 2<sup>nd</sup> near Le Bourg, travelling through the towns of Dangy, Notre-Dame-le-Cenilly, and Le Bourg. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion did not follow until 3 August 1944, when they moved to the vicinity of La Huberdiere. The weather during these moves was fair and warm with the ground beginning to dry out. The roads were in excellent condition and travel was comparatively easy.<sup>52</sup>*

**Juvigny Le Tertre (August 4, 1944)**

*In the dark, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalions moved 23 miles to an area 1 mile southwest of Juvigny Le Tertre. 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion remained at La Huberdiere.*

**Avranches (August 5, 1944)**

*The Regiment moved over to the vicinity of Avranches, taking up positions 1/2 mile south of Le Bulloyer. 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalions took up positions in the vicinity of Le Mesnil Tove while the 3<sup>rd</sup> began attacking the enemy in the vicinity of the town of Charence Le Roussel, France.*

### **Baronnerie (August 6, 1944)**

*The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, continued to attack enemy positions in and around Cherence le Roussel while the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion moved on to within 1 mile of Baronnerie.*

### **La Brousse (August 6, 1944)**

*The 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion moved approximately 1000 yards on 6 August towards La Brousse.<sup>53</sup>*

### **Cherence le Roussel and Le Mesnil Tove (August 7 – 9, 1944)**

*An enemy force of 70 Panzers counter attacked with the intent of moving through Mortain to Avranches to cut off the advancing US Third Army resulted in the capture of Le Mesnil Tove in the 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry area. The 39<sup>th</sup> held the enemy at roadblocks south of Le Mesnil Tove. 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion received a Distinguished Unit Citation for for repelling the mechanized forces with infantry armed with bazooka, mortar, and artillery.<sup>54</sup>*

### **La Gallerie (August 12, 1944)**

*On August 12, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion moved 2 miles to La Gallerie, France. 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalions joined them on August 14.*

### **La Pallu (August 14, 1944)**

*The entire regiment moved via motor convoy and foot (marching approximately 5 miles on foot) to the vicinity of La Pallu and Ham, a distance of approximately 70 to 75 miles. The movement began at 0859 and the last elements reached their destination at 1800 hours. The weather was warm and clear, but cool later in the day. Later that day, the 39<sup>th</sup> drove ahead through Motte Forest to advance to a wooded ridgeline south of St. Patrice-du-Desert.*

### **Magny Le Desert (August 15, 1944)**

*Took up positions: 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 1/2 mile north of Magny Le Desert; 2<sup>nd</sup> jumped off in attack near La Ferte-Mace; and 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion near La Tourelle.<sup>55</sup>*

### **Falaise/Argentan (August 12 - 17, 1944)**

*In the next several days, as the weather continued hot and dry, Allied bombers flew continous sorties over the Falaise-Argentan cauldron. A haze of dust formed over the lattice-like roads but provided scant protection for the Germans by day. The aerial pounding prevented any movement of traffic, forcing the Germans to*

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*dismount their vehicles and flee on foot. Air observers returned with reports of panic and slaughter: German columns abandoned thousands of trucks, half-tracks, self-propelled guns and tanks on the roads between Falaise and Chambois. The haul of captured and destroyed equipment was tremendous: 220 tanks, 160 assault guns, 130 anti-aircraft guns, 130 half-tracks, and 2,000 horse-drawn trucks, leaving thousands stranded in a footrace for the Seine against the motorized American infantry. In seven days, 10,000 Germans would die in the Falaise pocket,.... and 50,000 prisoners taken. Private Kann recalled that they came to an area where for miles there were destroyed vehicles, dead animals, and fallen Germans.*



Figure 28 Wreckage at Falaise

**Lonley (August 16, 1944)**

*On 16 August, the regiment became motorized and began the pursuit of the enemy across France and into Belgium. 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was 1 mile north of the town, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> moving forward in the direction of Lignou.<sup>56</sup>*

**Scolassesur-Sarthe (August 20, 1944)**

*Rain began to fall as the Regimental Command Post moved 35 miles to Scolassesur-Sarthe. Roads were heavy with mud and hard to traverse. Battalions remained in bivouac until 22 August when they began a movement toward the Falaise Gap.*

**Morvilliers (August 22, 1944)**

*1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalions moved approximately 45 miles to Morvilliers. 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion moved to Le Chalane. The weather was unsettled with occasional*

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*showers, roads were badly gutted by shells and bomb craters. The movement began at 0848 and ended at 0940.*

**La Ferte Vidame (August 23, 1944)**

*1<sup>st</sup> Battalion moved 30 miles by truck to a position 2 miles southeast of La Ferte Vidame. 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion moved 45 miles via truck to Floudiere. 3<sup>rd</sup> remained at Chalange.*

**Les Ressinntes (August 24, 1944)**

*3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion moved up to new positions ½ mile S of Les Ressinntes, France. Movement was made at night during a heavy rain over muddy roads.*

**Melun (August 26, 1944)**

*Moved through Epernon, Maintenon, Etampes, Milly and on to a position 1 mile south of Melun on the banks of the Seine River, making a total distance of 121 miles.*

**Ecouglay (August 27, 1944)**

*1<sup>st</sup> moved 4 miles on foot and traveled by motor 11 miles to bivouac at Tournan-en-Brie. 2<sup>nd</sup> traveled 20 miles to bivouac at Ecouglay, and 3<sup>rd</sup> moved on across the Seine to Fontenay. Travel was fast and under ideal conditions, the roads were in good condition and the weather was warm and clear.*

**Speuse (August 28, 1944)**

*A new command post was established within 1 mile of Coulommiers. 1<sup>st</sup> was at Coulommiers, 2<sup>nd</sup> moved to the vicinity of Speuse, and 3<sup>rd</sup> moved to Boissey Le Chatel.*

**Belleau and the Marne River (August 29, 1944)**

*All battalions moved on across the historic Marne River and on through the World War I battle grounds at the Chateau Thierry sector. 1<sup>st</sup> bivouaced 2 miles south of Oeuilly; 2<sup>nd</sup> stopped at Belleau, and 3<sup>rd</sup> on the outskirts of Chateau Thierry.*

**Logny-Les-Chaumont (August 30, 1944)**

*All Battalions crossed the Aisne River during the day with 1<sup>st</sup> bivouacing at Fraillicourt, 2<sup>nd</sup> at Logny-les-Chaumont, and 3<sup>rd</sup> at Glennes.*

### Landouzy (August 31, 1944)

*1<sup>st</sup> moved 15 miles to Landouzy, 2<sup>nd</sup> moved 22 miles to the vicinity of Landouzy-le-Ville, and 3<sup>rd</sup> to Seraincourt.*

### Landouzy (September 1, 1944)

*The rapid advance across Northern France continued with the Regimental Command Post moving on 15 miles to Landouzy-la-Cour, France. The move was begun at 1015 and was not completed until 1820 hours. The 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalions bivouacked in the vicinity of the Regimental Command Post with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion stopping for the night at Le Chaudron, France.<sup>57</sup>*

### Belgium Border (September 2, 1944)

*The entire regiment crossed the Belgium border and then recrossed back into France and bivouaced near Eppe-Sauvage, France.*

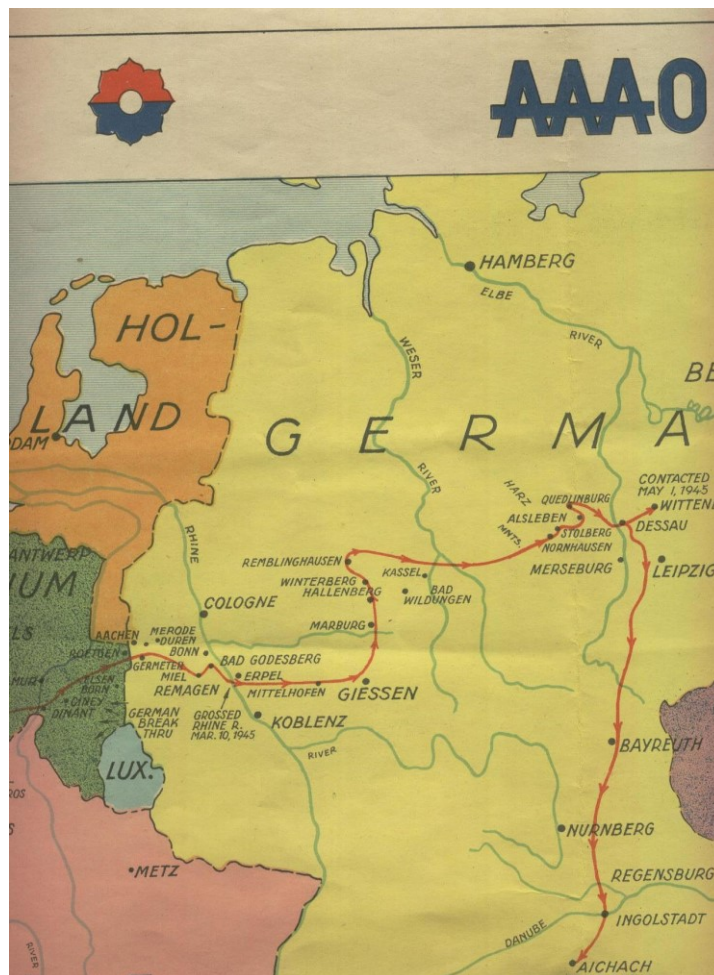


Figure 29 From Belgium and into Germany <sup>58</sup>



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**Philippeville, Belgium (September 3, 1944)**

*The regiment crossed over into Belgium and established its command post in Belgium. The Regimental Command Post was moved to Villers-deux-Eglises, Belgium, and the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion at Marencheneux, Belgium. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion moved to Philippeville, Belgium, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion remained in the vicinity of Villers-deux-Eglises. Roads were in excellent condition and the weather continued to be very favorable. Moving on towards the Meuse River, the regimental command post was next established at Weillen, Belgium. The battalions moved into an assembly area in the general vicinity of Dinant, Belgium in preparation of the crossing of the Meuse River.<sup>59</sup>*

**Belgium Army Citation<sup>60</sup>**

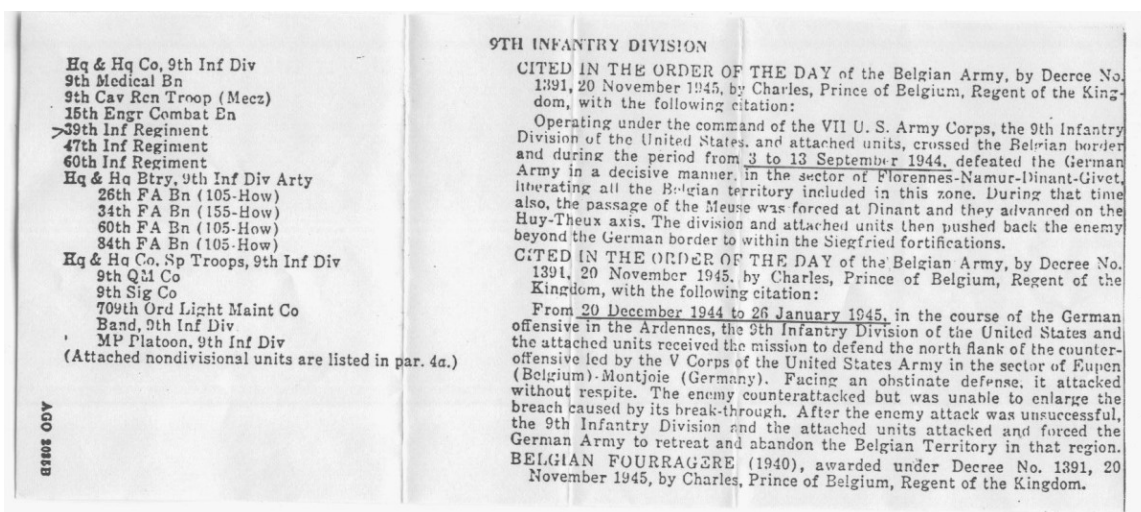


Figure 30 Belgium Order of the Day Cites 9th Division

**Anhee/Yvoir - Western shore of the Meuse**

The Ninth Division was the first army to successfully cross the Meuse since Napoleon. Pvt. Richard Kann saw the Citadel along the Meuse River and crossed on the catwalk.

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From **Eight Stars to Victory**, page 226:



Figure 31 The Citadel on the Meuse







Figure 33 The 39th Infantry crosses the Meuse

*...The 39th Infantry which has crossed the Meuse, one of the places that General [Hodges] expected the Germans to stand if indeed they could stand anywhere, reported tonight encountering small armor, tank, mortar and flame-thrower fire...<sup>62</sup>*

**Dorinne (September 7, 1944)**

*The entire regiment moved to an assembly area in the vicinity of Dorinne, Belgium. The 3<sup>rd</sup> moved on to Purnode later in the day.*

**Sert, Soheit-Tinlot (September 8, 1944)**

*The regiment soon began another dash - this time across Belgium. Moving toward Liege, Belgium, traveling 25 miles, the regimental command post was established for the night in an area 4 miles SE of Huy, Belgium. The movement began at 0945 and lasted until about 1400 hours. The 1st Battalion bivouacked near Sert, Belgium; the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> near Soheit-Tinlot. Movement was delayed by scattered enemy resistance, changing weather that caused the roads to become hard to traverse.*

### **Ognee, Noidre (September 9, 1944)**

*Swinging around Liege, Belgium, the movement continued, slower than in the past, to the general vicinity of Ognee, Belgium with the 1st at Stinval and the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> in the vicinity of Noidre. Movement was approximately 15 miles and began at 0830 hours, ending at 2000 hours.*

### **Villiers Le Temple, Theux, and Oneux (September 10, 1944)**

*The 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion was the only battalion to move on the 10th, moving approximately 10 miles to the vicinity of Theux, where they found a footbridge, crossed the stream and advanced to the high ground at Oneux. They were now only four miles southwest of Verviers. A short distance beyond and through the woods lay Germany—and the Siegfried.<sup>63</sup>*

### **Pepinster, La Geize (September 11, 1944)**

*Regimental command post made a short move of 8 miles to Pepinster, Belgium, where it remained until 13 September 1944. The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion remained in the general vicinity of Pepinster while the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion advanced 12 miles to La Gleize and returned to bivouac at Oneux. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion engaged in mopping up in a 45 mile circle around Oneux and returned to bivouac there.<sup>64</sup>*

*On September 9, 1944 the 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment was commanded by Col. Van H. Bond. 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was commanded by Lt. Col. Oscar H. Thompson, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion was commanded by Lt. Col. Frank L. Gunn, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion was commanded by Lt. Col. Robert H. Stumpf.<sup>65</sup>*

#### **Chapter 5 Illustration Credits:**

Figure 29 from The 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment Commemorative Map

Figures 22, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 30, from the author's collection

Figures 23, 31, 32, 33, from Eight Stars to Victory, Mittelman



## Chapter Six

### SEIGFRIED LINE

#### Eupen (September 13, 1944)

*As the 13<sup>th</sup> yawned awake, grizzled fighting men of the AAA-O 39<sup>th</sup> infantry swept forward to clear the Eupen-Monshau road, thus opening the long and costly drive through the treacherous Hurtgen Forest. Through the Dragon's Teeth and past the barriers pushed the Falcons. Although slowed by felled trees, craters, booby traps and mines, the doughs of the 39<sup>th</sup> continued their steady advance. Some footsloggers were aboard tanks and others strode ahead. Germany was under foot and a town beckoned in the distance. The dismal grayish line of teeth stretched seemingly harmless and endless over the rolling countryside as the Falcons took up positions south of Roetgen. When night blacked-out the eerie, forested frontier, the results of the day revealed history in the making. For in their drive with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Armored, men of the 39<sup>th</sup> had descended upon drab, dreary, damp Roetgen, first German town of the war to be captured !<sup>66</sup>*



Figure 34 Crossing the Siegfried Line

*The Regimental command post was moved to an area 6 miles from Eupen, Belgium, a distance of 28 miles from the previous location. The weather was wet and cool, roads were mined and gutted in places by bombs. The move was begun at 1030 hours and complete at 2200 hours. The 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalions moved on through Verviers and Eupen (pronounced Oy pen) to cross the German border; the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion bivouacking 1 mile west of Rotgen, Germany; and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion bivouacking in the Eupen Forest on the road to Reinartzhof, Germany.*

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*Movement started at 0800 hours and lasted until 2300 in a steady rain and over muddy roads. Enemy road blocks and other military obstacles hampered the movement of the company.<sup>67</sup>*

The 39<sup>th</sup> Regiment was the only American outfit to cross the Siegfried Line and to enter Germany that day.

**Reinartzhof (September 14, 1944)**

*The Regimental Command Post moved on over the border to establish a new command post virtually in the Siegfried Line defenses, ½ mile from Rotgen, Germany, where they remained until 4 October 1944. Movement was accomplished by truck over very difficult roads with very heavy enemy artillery fire covering the roads. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion moved to Reinartzhof and on to Roetgen. [On the 13<sup>th</sup>,] 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion stopped in the vicinity of the regimental command post at Eupen, Belgium, and the next morning crossed the German border and moved into position on the outskirts of the Eupen Forest at Lammersdorf, Germany.*

**Lammersdorf, Roetgen, Siegfied Line (September 15 - October 4, 1944)**

*From 15 September 1944 to 3 October 1944, the battalions were engaged in cleaning up pillbox emplacements and other obstacles on the outer fringe of the Siegfried Line in the heavily forested sector east of Aachen, Germany. During this period only short approach marches and combat marches and patrols were made, averaging from 1 to 5 miles. The terrain was exceedingly muddy and difficult to traverse on foot. Rain continued and the weather got cooler, turning into bitter cold at night.<sup>68</sup>*

**Lammersdorf (September 15, 1944)**

The 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry battled strong Scharnhorst line positions near Lammersdorf without making much headway. Along the Siegfried the enemy withdrew his patrols as he manned the pillboxes and other permanent installations of the line. Given the mission of penetrating these defenses on September 15<sup>th</sup>, the 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry executed a wide flanking movement into the vicinity of Lammersdorf, which was met by machine-gun, mortar and high-velocity artillery fire. The purpose of this flanking by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion had been to cut out a pocket of German troops in front of the 1st Battalion and although this pocket was not eliminated completely, a pillbox plus three 20mm guns were destroyed.

### **Lammersdorf (September 16, 1944)**

The 39th Infantry continued to batter at the west wall near Lammersdorf and reduced a strongpoint that had been delaying it for two days. “. . . the 39<sup>th</sup>'s Company I, supported by 155mm self-propelled guns, broke through the Dragon's Teeth obstacles and reduced twelve pillbox fortifications by infantry and assault gun action. It was tedious, slow, steady advance which found Company I around the road center northwest of Lammersdorf at dusk.”<sup>69</sup>

### **Lammersdorf and Rolesbroich (September 18, 1944)**

The 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry attempted to expand its positions in Monschau corridor, spending the rest of month in efforts to take hill 554, SE of Lammersdorf and a plateau between Lammersdorf and Rollesibroich.

### **Lammersdorf (September 19, 1944)**

The 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry, in Lammersdorf corridor, pushed more than 2 miles toward Rollesbroich, where it is contained by enemy, but continues to fight for Hill 554.

### **Lammersdorf (September 20, 1944)**

The 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion attached to 60 INF, drives east from Zweifall to Weisser Weh creek, near village of Hurtgen. Anti-tank obstacles and mine fields held up the advance, but the 39<sup>th</sup> smashed forward relentlessly, destroying 11 more pillboxes and capturing many prisoners in a day of bitter fighting.

### **Hohenschneise Crossing, Pilgerweg (September 21, 1944)**

From Octofoil Jan 2008, page 10: R. D. McArthur with the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry left the following carving on a tree in the Hurtgenwald.

### **Lammersdorf (September 24-29, 1944)**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalions held defensive positions within the west wall east of Lammersdorf.

### **Lammersdorf (September 26, 1944)**

The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, attached to the 60th Infantry Regiment and moved southward from the contested ridge to cut Lammersdorf -Hurtgen highway at its junction with the Zweifall road.



Inscription reads:  
R D McArthur  
9/21/44  
TEXAS  
USA

Figure 35 McArthur Tree

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From Eight Stars to Victory, page 241:

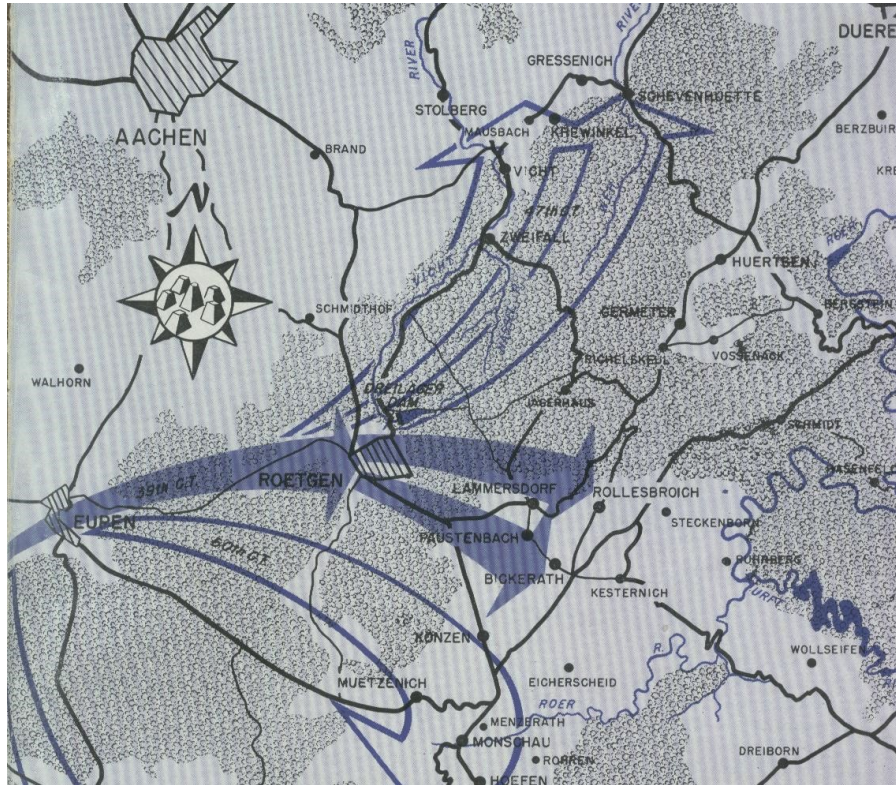


Figure 36 Lammersdorf Map

### Lammersdorf (September 29, 1944)

The 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry after several days of indecisive fighting, took hill 554, within west wall east of Lammersdorf.

Sal Trapani later recalled, at a mini reunion in 1990, “*the time G Company was kicked off the hill near that dam on September 30<sup>th</sup> of 1944 and where Bob Smith of G Company lost his whole squad and has met few men who lived through it.*”<sup>70</sup> Bob Smith was captured and taken to the Stalag 3-C POW camp near Kuestrin, Poland in the Oder River area, 90 miles East of Berlin.

#### Chapter 6 Illustration Credits:

Figures 34, 35, from Eight Stars to Victory, Mittelman

## Chapter Seven

### THE HURTGEN FOREST

#### **Hurtgen Forest (October 2-4, 1944)**

The 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry established a regimental assembly area and prepared for an attack east thru Germeter toward Schmidt.

#### **Zweifall, Hurtgen Forest (October 4, 1944)**

*On October 4, the entire regiment moved over to the Hurtgen Forest sector and took up positions in and around Zweifall, Germany. This movement was about 7 miles and was made over difficult roads. It rained continuously and the enemy harassed movements with the artillery fire. From October 4 to October 26, the regiment was engaged in fighting in the Hurtgen Forest sector and succeeded in penetrating to the outer fringe of the forest before being finally relieved on October 26, 1944 by the 28<sup>th</sup> Division. During the entire period it was cold, wet and continuously raining, making movements of any kind very difficult.<sup>71</sup>*

#### **Hurtgen Forest (October 5, 1944)**

Adverse weather conditions prevented the 39<sup>th</sup> from launching an attack toward Schmidt.

#### **Hurtgen Forest (October 6, 1944)**

The 39<sup>th</sup> attacked at 1130, after preparatory bombardment, in the Hurtgen Forest toward Schmidt against tenacious opposition.

#### **Germeter/Richelskeul (October 6, 1944)**

*The course of the battle for Germeter swayed back and forth. Footsloggers of the 39<sup>th</sup> tried to cut the north-south road north of Germeter, but moved forward slowly against mounting opposition.*



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From **Eight Stars to Victory**, page 255:

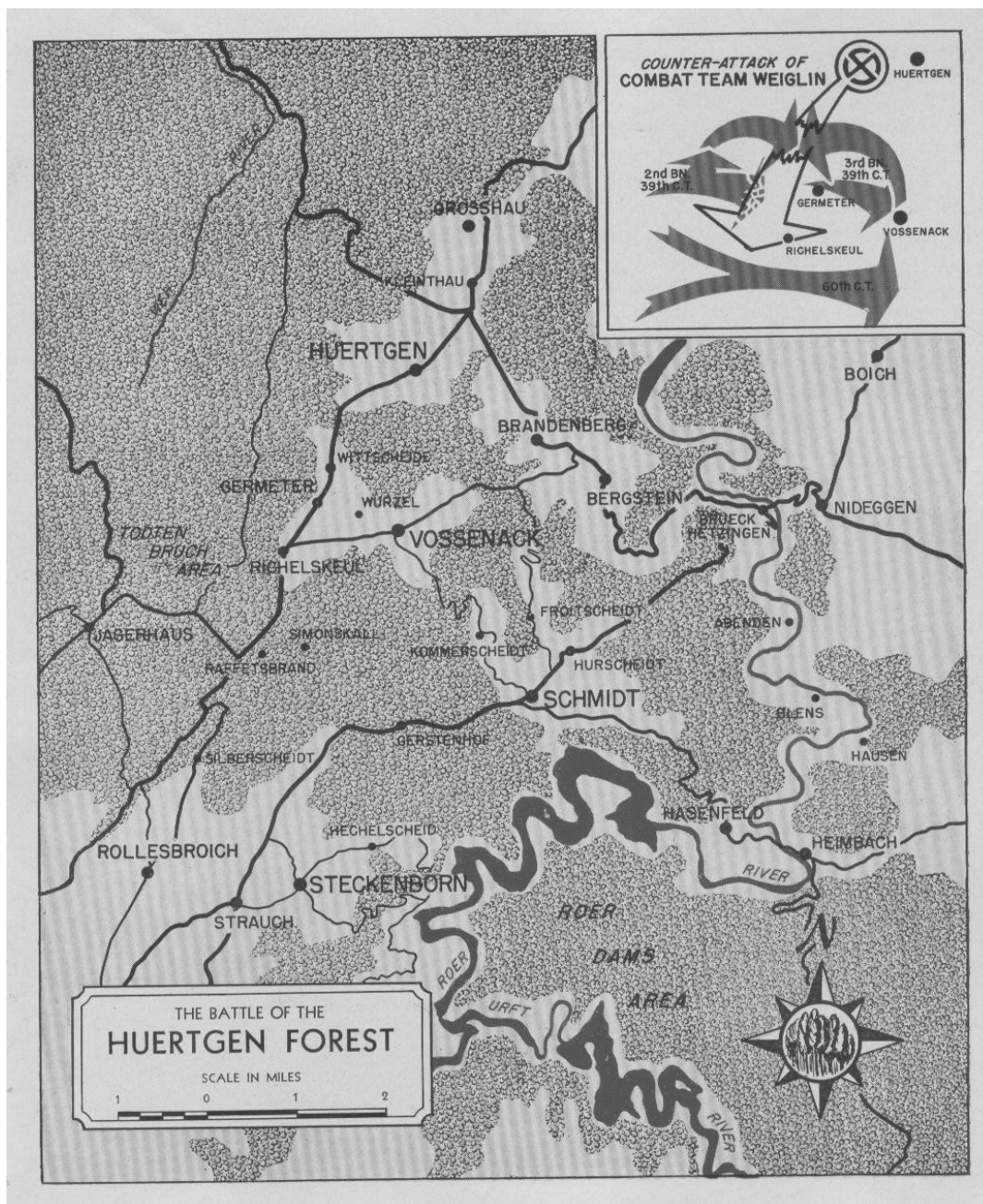


Figure 37 The Hurtgen Forest Map

Two separate accounts of the 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry battles in the Hurtgen during early October 1944 follow over the next 10 pages. First an article by Mark Reardon of the Center for Military History, followed by Joseph Mittelman's account from *Eight Stars to Victory*.

***Battle of Hurtgen Forest: The 9th Infantry Division Suffered in the Heavily Armed Woods***

*By Mark Reardon-Reprinted from the 2006 issue of World War II Magazine*

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*Hurtgen. If a single word can cause a U.S. Army veteran of the European theater to shudder, it would be that. The foreboding rage of dark forests, steep hills, voracious mud, pillboxes, constant rain and shells bursting in treetops immediately comes to mind. It was the sort of battlefield where soldiers walked a few feet from their foxholes and were never seen again.*

*It is not surprising, therefore, that the GIs who endured that hell on earth would prefer to push such awful memories out of their minds and may explain why, in the years since, the story of the Hurtgen Forest battles remains a historical stepchild of more glorious encounters such as D-Day and the Battle of the Bulge. What little has been done on Hurtgen has often focused on the November 1944 battles involving the 28th Infantry Division and has ignored the horrible prelude to the Bloody Bucket's mauling, which occurred over 10 days in October.*

*The struggle for the 50 square miles of heavily wooded and hilly terrain south of Aachen actually began in mid-September. With their supply line stretched to the breaking point, the Allies' rapid advance through France had finally slowed down at the Siegfried Line, the formidable defensive belt that blocked Germany's western border and guarded the entrance to the Ruhr Valley. Hoping to seize Aachen and establish a firm breach in the Siegfried Line before winter's onset, Maj. Gen. J. Lawton Collins, commanding VII Corps, ordered Maj. Gen. Louis A. Craig's 9th Infantry Division to seize the villages of Hurtgen and Kleinhau. After some initial progress, the American drive stalled when two of Craig's regiments were diverted north to assist the 3rd Armored Division, which was embroiled in a brutal battle at the Aachen suburb of Stolberg.*

*In early October, Craig was ordered to resume his attack in the Hurtgen Forest. Now, however, he would have to do so minus his 47th Infantry Regiment, which remained in support of the 3rd Armored, and with understrength units sent from the fighting around Aachen. To further complicate matters, Collins made it clear that the 9th Division's effort was regarded only as secondary - supporting the Allies' main attack at Aachen. That meant Craig would beat the bottom of the list for reinforcements, artillery or air support, though the general took some comfort knowing he was not expected to begin his assault until three days after VII Corps began its renewed push toward Aachen.*

*The villages of Germeter and Vossenack, as well as the crossroads settlement of Reichelskaul, were designated as the 9th Division's initial objectives. Lieutenant Colonel Van H. Bond's 39th Infantry Regiment would attack on the left. Once it had occupied Germeter, the 39th would seize Vossenack while guarding against an enemy counterattack from the north. Meanwhile, after capturing Reichelskaul, Colonel John G.*

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*Van Houten's 60th Infantry Regiment would reorient itself to the south to guard against a German counterthrust from the direction of Monschau. The division would then push on against the town of Schmidt. Jump-off time was originally set for October 5<sup>th</sup> but was later postponed for 24 hours.*

*The initial thrust would be conducted by four battalions. In addition to support from two regimental cannon companies. Craig had divisional howitzer battalions along with three battalions of reinforcing artillery, for a grand total of 96 pieces. A company of 4.2-inch mortars was attached to each regiment, along with a company each from supporting tank (746th) and tank destroyer (899th) battalions.*

*Against this small force were the Landsers of Maj. Gen. Hans Schmidt's 275th Infantry Division, which had briefly fought north of Aachen before being transferred to the Hurtgen in late September to fill a gap between the 12th Volkagrenadier Division and the 353rd Infantry Division. On October 1, LXXIV Army Corps directed Schmidt to take over the entire Hurtgen sector, including the area occupied by the 353rd. As the 353rd's headquarters and service units departed, its combat units were absorbed by the 275th. Schmidt also received the 353rd's artillery component, giving him a total of 25 pieces, as well as six assault guns from Sturmgeschutz Brigade 902.*

*Schmidt's division had originally consisted of a pair of grenadier (mechanized infantry) regiments: GR 953 led by a Colonel Schmitz and GR 984 commanded by Colonel Joachim Heintz. Schmidt deployed Schmidt's men in reserve while assigning the northern sector to Heintz. The center was allocated to one of the 353rd's former units, Lt. Col. Friedrich Troster's GR 942, while the southern sector was the responsibility of Colonel Feind's GR Replacement and Training Battalion 253. Feind commanded 1,000 men and was placed along the weakest portion of the line.*

*The Americans knew few of these details when they began their attack at 1000 hours on October 6. Craig opened with fighter-bombers striking at otherwise invisible targets that U.S. artillery units had marked with columns of red smoke. Once the planes departed, there was a five-minute preparatory artillery barrage, then the U.S. foot soldiers began surging forward.*

**[October 6, 1944]** *Assaulting the extreme northern end of the line held by GR 253, the 1st and 3rd battalions of Colonel Bond's 39th Infantry gained 1,000 yards while suffering 29 casualties. Lieutenant Colonel Oscar H. Thompson's 1st Battalion attacked with A and B companies, in the lead trailed by C Company. Captain Jack Dunlap's B Company drew first blood when it overran an outpost and killed or captured 30 men. Crossing a creek, Dunlap's men pushed on until they encountered several pillboxes, whereupon he decided to hold up for the night. Thompson then brought his other companies online and waited for daylight.*

**[October 7, 1944]** *On the 1st Battalions northern flank, Lt. Col. Richard H. Stumpf's 3rd Battalion of the 39th Infantry advanced with L Company on the left and K Company*

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*on the right, with I Company in reserve. For the first 1,000 yards, the lead companies met only sniper and small-arms fire, but by late afternoon, heavier resistance had began to build. Although L Company reduced an enemy strongpoint without too much delay, K Company was pinned down by accurate fire from a position southeast of the battalion sector. As evening approached, Stumpf decided to hold in place until darkness to allow K Company to safely disengage. General Schmidt was sufficiently alarmed by American progress in this sector to order Captain Rieders Fusilier Battalion 275 to launch a counterattack against the Americans the next morning.*

*Colonel Van Houten's 60th Infantry attacked enemy defenses southwest of Reichelskaul. On the left. Major Lawrence Decker's 2nd Battalion moved forward 500 yards before its lead platoons were pinned down. Every attempt to advance ended in failure and heavy losses. By the time the attack petered out, 130 of Decker's officers and men had become casualties.*

**[October 8, 1944]** *To the right, Van Houten's 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion of the 60th soon encountered difficulties of its own. After a short eastward advance, the battalion ran into a pillbox which, together with heavy mortar fire and a strong enemy response on the left flank, occupied the attention of two of Van Houten's companies for the remainder of the day. By nightfall, however, K Company was able to move about 1,000 yards to the southeast. At 1600 hours, the colonel directed that his 1st Battalion, commanded by Lt. Col. Lee Chatfield, move north until it linked with the 39th Infantry. At daybreak Chatfield would launch an attack to the east in order to outflank the Germans, barring Decker's advance. Both sides were prepared to launch their own attacks at almost same time. Fusilier Battalion 275 went forward only to encounter Americans who had been expecting some sort of reaction to their previous day's advance. Captain Riedel was wounded and the survivors of his unit pinned down. Captain Dunlap took advantage of the situation by infiltrating GIs into the woods just west of Germeter, but Colonel Thompson would not let him enter the village for fear it would expose his B Company to counter-attacking panzers.*

*By noon the 1st Battalion had succeeded in bypassing II/GR 942. Schmidt reacted by deploying Landeschutzen Battalion I/G to the rear of the II/GR 942. The American success also convinced him that the southernmost elements of GR 253 defending a line of West Wall bunkers were thus in danger of being enveloped from the rear. Schmidt ordered Colonel Feind to block off the threat of a further enemy penetration in that sector. In response, U.S. Engineer Battalions 16 and 275 occupied positions between Reichelskaul and Raffelsbrand while three companies of Engineer Battalion 73 dug in along the Hurtgen-Germeter road.*

*During the night of October 7-8, Colonel Schmitz sent reinforcements to the aid of GR 253. Fortress Infantry Battalion 1412 and Luftwaffe Fortress Battalion 5 were also dispatched by LXXIV Army Corps to reinforce the 275th. In addition Schmidt received two companies of civilian police from Duren, hurriedly issued with army uniforms and rifles. He combined the police into an ad hoc formation named Battalion Henneche (after*

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*its commander). Several howitzer batteries from the 89th Infantry Division, an anti-aircraft artillery regiment and elements of an artillery corps were ordered to occupy positions where they could augment the fire of Major Sturm's Artillery Regiment 275.*

**[October 9, 1944]** *The 39th Infantry planned to renew, its advance at 0500 hours, but a heavy barrage began falling on its lead battalions an hour before the attack was to begin. The 3rd Battalion suffered a serious setback when its L Company commander was killed and casualties disorganized his unit. Immediately following the barrage, a German force of 150 to 200 men counterattacked the 1st Battalion but was repelled by Captain Ralph Edgar's A Company. The Germans then shifted their efforts farther north, hitting L and I companies. Colonel Bond sent G Company from the 2nd Battalion, which quickly overran three enemy machine guns. The loss of the automatic weapons seemed to take the fight out of the Germans, who retired to the east. Thirty German soldiers were killed during the engagement, and 27 others, including a wounded company commander, were captured. With fresh troops and additional artillery, Feind planned to launch a coordinated counterthrust at dawn, using I/GR 983 and Engineer Battalion 275. His intended target was Colonel Chatfield's 1st Battalion, 60th Infantry, now located just west of Reichelskaul. Advancing northwest from Simonskaul, the German counterattack crumbled when it come under intense mortar, artillery, and small-arms fire.*

*After thwarting the enemy counterattack, Bond ordered his lead elements to resume their advance at 1100 hours. Bolstered by the arrival of supporting tanks, L and I companies moved forward. By 1215 hours, L Company had gained 200 yards and captured three pillboxes. The 3rd Battalion's progress slowed and finally came to a halt shortly before 1800 hours. Still lacking supporting tanks, Thompson's 1st Battalion did not attempt to advance across the open ground surrounding Germeter. The 1st Battalion, 60th Infantry, launched its own attack against the Reichelskaul road junction at 1100 hours and was met by intense artillery and mortar fire. B Company, accompanied by several tanks, was able to detour north into the 39th's zone of operations before veering back east again. This small force pushed to within sight of the crossroads before holding up for the night. The 2nd Battalion, however, was unsuccessful in overcoming the enemy to its front. Although the Germans had been pushed back, two days into the attack the Americans had yet to defeat the 275th, which continued to maintain an unbroken line of resistance. The bloodletting would continue. During the night, Van Houten made plans to push eastward now that supporting tanks and tank destroyers had linked with his leading elements. Led by a platoon of M4 Shermans from the 746th Tank Battalion. Van Houten's 1st Battalion pushed out into open ground south of Germeter at daybreak.*

*The 39th joined the attack at 0700 hours, but without artillery preparation. This time, supporting tanks were available and actively engaged. The 1st Battalion made a short advance to the edge of the clearing surrounding Germeter before being brought to a halt. C Company suffered particularly heavy casualties when it attempted to breach a barbed wire entanglement. Only the tanks attached to B Company were in position to place effective fire on the enemy defenders. By 1900 hours, a platoon from C Company finally succeeded in working several men close enough to the outskirts of Germeter to begin*

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*exchanging hand grenades with the Germans. Unable to support them however, at nightfall Thompson ordered them to pull back.*

*The 3rd Battalion moved out 45 minutes behind the 1st. As it advanced, the sound of tracked vehicles could be heard near Wittscheidt, and for the rest of the afternoon occasional high-velocity rounds exploded in treetops throughout the battalion's sector. Despite enemy sniper fire, I Company was able to occupy Wittscheidt by 1615 hours. With darkness approaching, Colonel Stumpf decided to halt his advance. To forestall the possibility of an armored counterattack from the direction of Hurtgen, he directed I Company to mine the road leading to Wittscheidt and to register artillery on all likely enemy routes of approach.*

**[October 10, 1944]** *Any plan to resume the advance the next day was forestalled by a dawn counterattack by Battalion Hennecke that overwhelmed two platoons from I Company, capturing 41 men. The German success meant that Bond would have to spend the rest of the day just trying to retake the ground he had lost. The 1st Battalion likewise did not attack as planned. Each time Thompson's men tried to move forward they received accurate small-arms fire as well as direct fire from German self-propelled guns.*

*Things went somewhat better for the 60th Infantry. The 1st Battalion pushed off at noon to seize the Raffelsbrand road junction south of Germeter. In what seemed to be a nightmarish repetition of the opening days of the attack, the thinned ranks of hungry and bone-weary GIs trudged forward while steadily losing men to incoming fire. The situation changed dramatically when one of the lead companies overcame a German pillbox covering the road between Reichelskaul and Raffelsbrand. Buoyed by success, the Americans pushed southward, collecting 100 prisoners and securing their objective by nightfall. With Raffelsbrand in American hands, Van Houten ordered the 3rd Battalion to redeploy to Reichelskaul to protect Chatfield's rear and maintain pressure on German units massing southeast of Germeter.*

*The loss of the road junction persuaded Schmidt that he needed additional troops. LXXIV Army Corps agreed to loan two rifle companies from the 89th Infantry Division, provided they were used only along the threatened southern flank. The reinforcements would not arrive until dawn on October 11, however, and in the meantime Schmidt sent a company each from GR 983 and GR 984 to strengthen Colonel Feind's GR 253. The Americans' position was also somewhat precarious. With no reserves available, Van Houten had nothing to send to Chatfield's aid. To the east, the 2nd Battalion, 60th Infantry, was still being held back by the stubborn defenders of II/GR 942. To the north, the 39th Infantry remained stalled outside Wittscheidt and Germeter.*

**[October 11, 1944]** *October 11 brought success and failure for both sides. American attempts to exploit success at Raffelsbrand produced nothing but longer casualty lists. A German counterattack struck Chatfield's men before daylight, and though beaten back, Chatfield reported that 'the enemy maintained pressure here for the rest of the day and crowned it before dark with a bayonet charge.' When the Americans tried to bring up*

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*reinforcements, they were pinned down by several pillboxes along the Reichelskaul-Raffelsbrand road that they had bypassed the previous day.*

*The 1st Battalion, 39th Infantry, was finally able to enter Germeter but found that its defenders had abandoned their positions during the night. Hoping to seize more ground, Thompson ordered Captain Edgar's A Company, supported by Lieutenant Robert Sherwood's 1st Platoon of C/745th Tank Battalion, to probe eastward toward Vossenack. The column had only covered 500 or so yards when a Panzerschreck knocked out the lead tank, and the remaining American armor and infantry withdrew. A subsequent advance by A Company under cover of smoke ended with the destruction of two more Shermans.*

*The Americans had some success to the north and west of Germeter. Leaving I Company behind to protect the northern approaches to the town, K and L companies encountered little resistance as they moved eastward from Wittscheidt. By late afternoon, Stumpf's battalion had advanced nearly a mile and was preparing to attack Vossenack from a ridge northeast of the village. The 2nd Battalion was also able to advance.*

*Craig's men had at least been gradually moving forward, but ominous events had occurred during the night that would soon threaten what little progress they had made. Accompanied by the LXXIV Corps commander, Lt. Gen. Erich Straube, Seventh Army commander Lt. Gen. Erich Brandenburger visited Schmidt's command post. After hearing a candid assessment of the situation, Brandenburger promised to send Regiment Wegelein, a unit composed of well-trained and well-equipped troops to the front. Numbering 161 officers and 1,639 enlisted/officer cadets, the force was organized with three battalions of three companies each and a regimental heavy-weapons company. Its commander, Colonel Helmuth Wegelein, was an experienced leader.*

*Schmidt and Wegelein quickly agreed that a counterattack against the northern flank of the Americans had the best chance of producing favorable results. Wegelein would launch his assault from an assembly area near Hurtgen, advancing southwest until he isolated the American battalions near Germeter.*

**[October 12, 1944]** *Following a brief but concentrated artillery preparation, Wegelein's men advanced from their positions just before dawn, moving purposefully along the wooded plateau paralleling the Germeter-Hurtgen road. A platoon of dismounted armor crewmen from 746th Tank Battalion, securing a roadblock along the left flank of 2nd Battalion, 39th Infantry, was the first to encounter this new, threat and was quickly scattered. By 0700 hours, Wegelein had succeeded in isolating several of Lt. Col. Gunn's rifle companies. As testament to the isolation caused by the densely wooded terrain, the 39th's 3rd Battalion was completely unaware that the nearby 1st Battalion was being cut to pieces.*

*Lacking reserves to blunt the enemy thrust, Colonel Bond requested help from General Craig, who directed elements of the divisional reconnaissance troop - augmented by a*

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*platoon of light tanks - to assist the embattled 39th Infantry. As the situation grew more serious, Craig ordered the 47th Infantry at Schevenhutte to dispatch two rifle companies and a company of medium tanks from the 3rd Armored Division to reinforce Bond. Rushed to the point of greatest crisis, these reinforcements were finally able to halt the German advance when it reached the road leading west out of Germeter.*

*The abortive counterattack cost the Germans nearly 500 casualties, with little to show in return. The failed operation, however, produced at least one positive result for the Germans: Surprised by the strength and intensity of their assault, Bond ordered Stumpf's battalion to abandon its plans to attack Vossenack in order to reduce the salient Wegelein had created.*

**[October 13, 1944]** *Schmidt planned on renewing the counterattack on October 13, but orders from LXXIV Army Corps directed the immediate removal of all officer candidates from the combat zone, which cut in half what remained of Wegelein's unit and forced him to spend badly needed time reorganizing his remaining personnel. While he was doing so, the 3rd Battalion, 39th Infantry, launched an attack of its own against Wegelein's troops. K Company led the effort, trailed by L Company. As the latter moved up on line, both of its leading platoons were ambushed and wiped out. K Company maneuvered to attack the enemy facing L Company while the 1st Battalion sent B and C companies into the fight. Another counterattack inflicted heavy losses on the right platoon of Dunlap's company, but the American advance continued.*

*At 1730 hours, a German bearing a white flag approached B Company and requested a brief cease-fire while his unit prepared to surrender. Dunlap sent the man back with a message that he would hold his fire for five minutes. When the German emissary did not reappear within the stated time, B Company resumed its advance. only to run into a torrent of small-arms fire. It was now almost dark, and the enemy seemed to be on all sides. Fearing that his exhausted company was losing its cohesion, Dunlap ordered his men to fall back a short distance and dig in.*

*Facing four enemy battalions at Raffelsbrand, the 1st Battalion, 60th Infantry, was experiencing its own difficulties. Just before dawn, a surprise German attack seized a pillbox occupied by C Company. Although the seven GIs inside were able to escape, a counterattack by 30 men was unable to regain the position. Three Sherman tanks and two infantry companies eventually arrived to lend a hand, but even with those reinforcements, a heavy crossfire from several machine guns prevented the Americans from making any progress. One of the tanks was hit by an anti-tank rocket that wounded several men and forced the crew to evacuate the vehicle. A daring German soldier then ran out to the tank and drove it behind a nearby pillbox before the Americans could react. With this, the Americans lost all momentum, and at 1730 hours they began to fall back, suffering heavy casualties from enemy artillery and mortar fire.*

*That evening Wegelein went to Schmith's headquarters to protest orders for a renewed advance on the morning of October 14, stating that communications to his battalions and*



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*companies were so poor there was a risk that all units might not receive a regimental order. Schmidt replied that he would accuse Wegelein of cowardice if he did not resume his attacks.*

**[October 14, 1944]** *Determined to show that he was no coward. Wegelein spent a busy night personally delivering the orders to his units. He still had more visits to make as the sun rose on the 14<sup>th</sup>. At 0800 hours, however, the colonel was shot and killed by a sergeant from the U.S. 39th Infantry, and his regimental adjutant was captured moments later.*

*The fighting sputtered on and off for two more days. but it was clear that both sides were too exhausted to achieve significant results. At a cost of 4,410 casualties, the Americans succeeded in pushing the front line an average of 3,500 yards to the east, Nonbattle losses (sickness, injury. etc.) for American units totaled nearly 1,000. The toll for the defenders was also high - approximately 2,000 killed or wounded and 1,308 prisoners. After breaking off the offensive, Collins made the questionable claim that the sacrifices of Craig's men had drawn off German units that could have been thrown into the battle for Aachen. Although it is true that 19 German infantry and engineer battalions opposed six American infantry battalions, many of the defending units were much smaller than their counterparts. In any case, though the Hurtgen fighting might have prevented some German units from being sent to Aachen, their redeployment would not have altered that city's eventual fate.*

*More important, given the experience of the 9th Division during the opening phase of the battle, the larger question is why senior American leaders such as Generals Courtney Hodges, Omar Bradley and Dwight D. Eisenhower chose in November 1944 to send division after division into the dark and foreboding woods right until the start of the German Ardennes offensive that December. By the time major combat operations in the area finally ceased, six U.S. divisions had been fed into the meat grinder and some 33,000 soldiers had become casualties without achieving a breach in the Siegfried Line. According to the U.S. Army's official history, 'the real winner appeared to be the vast, undulating blackish-green sea that virtually negated American superiority in air, artillery, and armor to reduce warfare to its lowest common denominator.' Given the terrible cost, it seems clear that Maj. Gen. James Gavin might have been more correct when he said, 'For us the Hurtgen was one of the most costly, most unproductive, and most ill-advised battles that our army has ever fought.'<sup>72</sup>*

### Hurtgen Forest (October 9, 1944)



PVT. RICHARD KANN

Mr. and Mrs. John Kann, York R. D. 4, were notified by the War Department that their son, Pvt. Richard Kann, was slightly wounded in action somewhere in Germany Oct. 9. He already holds the Purple Heart for wounds received in France in June while serving with the 39th Infantry division in the medical corps.

Pvt. Kann was inducted July 12, 1943, and received basic training at Camp Grant, Ill., and at Camp Reynolds, Pa. He has been overseas since December, 1943, and has served in England, Ireland, France, Belgium and Germany. Before going into the Army he was employed at Cochrane's Brass foundry. His brother, Pfc. Earl Kann, who returned from duty overseas in May of this year, has also been wounded twice in action and wears the Purple Heart award.

*"During the night of October 9<sup>th</sup>, the enemy infiltrated between the two left platoons of Company I and the remainder of the 39<sup>th</sup> 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion. This cut off one platoon and the Germans succeeded in killing, wounding, or capturing all but a few men. To re-establish the push it was necessary to clear out the Nazis in house to house fighting. The battle was going on in the morning and ended with the capture of 58 enemy troops . . . and the foe had excellent artillery support. German shells ended in horrible tree-burst ricochets flaming into foxholes and unbuttoned turrets of the Ninth's supporting artillery."*<sup>73</sup>

Pvt. Richard Kann was wounded in the Hurtgen Forest on October 9, 1944. He was hit by schrapnel from a shell hitting a tree above and was sent back to a hospital in Paris. In a later graduation card from cousin Thelma, she wrote that he had been in Paris in October of 1944. After recovery, he served in Officer's mess in Paris. On November 23, he was on his way back to the 39<sup>th</sup> rejoining probably at Elsenborn.

Figure 38 Pvt Kann Wounded

### Hurtgen Forest (October 10, 1944)

The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the 39<sup>th</sup> entered Germeter and attacked toward Vosenack. 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion tried in vain to cross the open ground between Germeter and Vossenack; moving along the draw from Wittscheidt. Germans overrun the 2 forward platoons of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion and approximately 48 men are lost.

### Hurtgen Forest (October 11, 1944)

. . . the 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry ran into a mountain of trouble while moving toward Vossenack. Heavy fire from the enemy positions cost the regiment several of its supporting tanks and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion was sent on a flanking attack through the draw north of Vossenack after the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion had reached an impasse.

### **Hurtgen Forest (October 12, 1944)**

*“Early on October 12th the 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry received a powerful counterattack from Combat Team Weiglin, a first line outfit composed of highly-decorated combat veterans which had been rushed to the line with the mission of halting the Ninth’s drive on the Roer dams.”<sup>74</sup>*

A German counterattack severed the 39<sup>th</sup>’s main supply route on the east-west trail leading into Germeter. Forward elements north of Vossenack, although not under attack, were recalled to help restore the situation.

On October 12th contact was made with German Combat Group Weiglin whose task was to halt the Ninth intent to capture the Roer dams. It hit the 2<sup>nd</sup> battalion on left flank. 3<sup>rd</sup> battalion was ahead and completely turned around to inflict heavy losses.

C.T. Weiglin’s thrust touched off one of the most important battles fought in the Hurtgen Forest, an engagement which except for the amazing and gallant maneuvering of the 39<sup>th</sup> might have culminated in the almost total destruction of that regiment, the 60<sup>th</sup> Infantry, and Division Headquarters.

At first the Germans came down a draw which runs parallel to the Germeter-Hurtgen road, and with heavy mortar and artillery fire were able to push back Company G to a secondary road some distance to the rear. Leading enemy elements infiltrated around the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion’s western (left) flank, but Company G regrouped and stopped the enemy while Company F held against attacks at an important roadblock.

*Dale Smith was with E Company. On October 13 the E Company C.P. was facing the town of Vossenack and cutting the Hurtgen road. As total darkness set in a strong explosion erupted from a road block of fallen trees. Sgt. McKenna called out, “Doc, I’m hurt bad.” The platoon sergeant (Junior) moaned a few times. Smith then knew that the area was mined, and that a trip wire had been triggered. He had to move in the darkness around the trees through the mined area to reach the wounded men and move them to an open area. In the total darkness he tried to bind their wounds. One sergeant had a hand blown off and a badly mangled leg. The other had severe chest wounds. As Dale tried to help them, their lives just ebbed away. For his gallantry to save these men, Smith was awarded the Silver Star Medal.<sup>75</sup>*

Although the main force of this drive initially struck at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion it was, to quote 39<sup>th</sup> Regimental Commander Colonel Bond, “. . . aimed on the left rear exposed flank and designed to cut off the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion who had crossed the Germeter-Hurtgen road and had patrols in the far edge of Vossenack.”<sup>76</sup>

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By now, a desperate fight had developed on the left flank and sensing the importance and imminent danger of this attack, the 39<sup>th</sup> commander ordered a most difficult but highly successful maneuver. Again his words tell the story best:

*The unique part of this battle was that when the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion was first attacked, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion of the 39<sup>th</sup> infantry which had patrols in Vossenack had to turn completely around and attack toward their rear. Also, one company of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, which was on the right south flank, had to change direction from the east to the north.<sup>77</sup>*

As the fighting AAA-O halted the counterattack by hitting it on the flank in its turn, the enemy found itself in a most unhealthy situation. Colonel Weiglin, German combat team commander was killed, the sector commander was wounded severely and C.T Weiglin itself suffered heavy losses.

The 39<sup>th</sup> stopped enemy penetration and began to recover the lost ground.

Capt. Ken Hill of E Company reported in the Octofoil January 1993, page 6 that “Alfred Knight, Okla. City, is the one who "took care" of Col Weiglin of the Weiglin combat team in the Huertgen Forest near Germeter.”

From an account by Carl Heintze, Co. L, 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment:

*I arrived in the Hurtgen Forest Oct. 13, 1944 as a replacement. Two days before L Company had been ambushed and had lost all of its officers and two of its platoons. Fifteen minutes after I was inserted into a front line position two of the five other men who had come with me were wounded. We were in The Forest for two weeks and then were withdrawn to reorganize and rest. Thereafter I joined an 18 man volunteer patrol attached to battalion headquarters and served with it until it was disbanded near the end of December. I was sent back to L Company and was back two days when I was wounded in an all-day company strength combat patrol Jan. 1, 1945.<sup>78</sup>*

### **Hurtgen Forest (October 15, 1944)**

The 39<sup>th</sup> recovered all ground lost and was now in control of Wittscheidt and Germeter. The Ninth Division sustained 30% losses in wounded and killed during battles in the Hurtgen Forest.

### **Germeter (October 25, 1944)**

The entire regiment moved via motor convoy from the vicinity of Germeter to a reorganization area in the vicinity of Elsenborn, Belgium This move was approximately 40 miles in a down pour of rain. Movement began at 1315 hours and was completed at 1645.

### **Elsenborn (October 26 - November 4, 1944)**

After over four months of continuous combat since the invasion, plans were formulated and order issued for relief of the Division and for movement to an assembly area in the vicinity of Camp Elsenborn, Belgium.

*“ . . . afternoons for bathing, recreation, Red Cross Club-mobiles and nights of movies – mornings of training, rehabilitation and maintenance . . . Ceremonies for presentation of awards and decorations were held by the 39<sup>th</sup> . . . Generals Eisenhower and Bradley paid General Craig a visit at the Division command post (Buetgenbach) on November 5<sup>th</sup>. ”<sup>79</sup>*

### **Krinkelt (November 4 - November 11, 1944)**

*After holding the defensive positions at Krinkelt, Belgium, for about a week, the Regiment was relieved and returned to their reorganization area in the vicinity of Elsenborn, Belgium.<sup>80</sup>*

### **Elsenborn (November 11 - December 5, 1944)**

During this period the weather was extremely bad with rain turning everything into a quagmire of mud. Pvt. Kann remembers digging holes to sleep in during the winter nights. By morning he said they would be half full of water.

### **Elsenborn (Thanksgiving, 1944)**



Figure 39 Village of Elsenborn

*From Octofoil August, 1987, page 6, C.F. Blankenship of Company K wrote, “We had just been pulled out of The Huertgen Forest and we were in a so-called rest area up in the Elsenborn area. We were dug in around the woods up there. That's when we got my first pair of the new combat boots. Anyhow we got word that the Col. (either Bond or Stumpf, can't remember which) said that his boys in the 39<sup>th</sup> were going to get Thanksgiving dinner as close to what we used to have at home. The Sgt. brought around one of these "Menus" to our holes and we laughed and thought it was a big joke. I really can't remember how much of this stuff we got. I do remember the dinner, and we got most of that. I can vaguely remember taking my mess kit and walking in the snow about a half-block to where they had the field kitchen set up and walking back to my hole, and thinking about home.”*

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**Duren (December 5, 1944)**

*The entire Regiment moved to positions facing Duren, Germany and the Roer River. Traveling approximately 40 miles by truck convoy, the Regimental Command Post was established 1 mile West of Merode, Germany. The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion took up positions at Schevenhulte, Germany; the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion near Wenau, Germany, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion near Heistern, Germany. Movement at this time began at 0845 hours and was completed at 1615 hours.<sup>81</sup>*

*The mission of the Division was to attack to the east in conjunction with the 3rd Armored Division, to seize and hold initially the towns of Konzendorf, Echtz, Schlich, and Merode. It was estimated that the enemy's resistance to our advance would be strong. His defense consisted of centers of resistance formed by built-up communities in the sector and dug-in positions between these communities. The enemy line, which at some points was only 75 yards from our own, was held by the Fifth Parachute Regiment in the southern sector, . . . and the 8<sup>th</sup> Parachute Regiment in the northern sector . . .<sup>82</sup>*

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### **Merode Castle (September 13<sup>th</sup> to December 16<sup>th</sup>, 1944)**

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The following is Johann Trostorf's account of events leading up to the 39th Regiment's battle at Merode and the capture of the Merode Castle. The Merode Castle area lies just west of Duren and east of Aachen. The account from September 13<sup>th</sup> through December 16<sup>th</sup> 1944 is provided through the generous permission of Johann Trostorf's son, Albert Trostorf:<sup>83</sup>

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Figure 40 Merode with Castle in the background

*September 13, 1944* The political leaders leave the county by bike while American tank units have advanced all the way to the south of Schevenhütte and have reached the Krichelsmühle to the north. The population ignores an order to evacuate Merode, Schlich, and D'horn. The order is later revoked. Only very few people leave their home. The American advance stops because of a lack of supplies.

*September 14, 1944* American long-range artillery fires at main intersections west of the Rur, ReichsRoute 264 and the railroad tracks are targets. They also fire at the villages in the county because reconnaissance planes have reported movements.

*12th VolksGren Div under command of Colonel Engel fortifies the front-line near Schevenhütte and Stolberg.*

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*September 16, 1944 The schools are closed due to increasing barrages and fighter-bomber activity.*

*September 23, 1944 First pointed artillery assault on Merode. A shell explodes in the village (between Hamacher and Bartz) and several in the courtyard of the castle. Windows and walls are damaged. Beforehand, an aid station had been set up in the school in Schlichen and a tank unit had been billeted to the forester's house in Schlich, where they set up a repair shop.*

*September 27, 1944 Again artillery fire at Merode. The shells hit the meadow near the house of farmer Ignatz Hourtz. A wooden shack is destroyed and a window has burst.*

*September 28, 1944 The first civilians die. Six boys, age between 15 and 16 from Merode and Schlich die in a camp in Nörvenich where they had been sent to do earth-works. They are buried at the D'horn Cemetery under the roaring noise of low altitude planes.*

*October 6, 1944 The military situation comes to a head. Weary troops reach their supposed resting quarters in Schlich from the Hürtgen Forest. At Schwarzenbroich and in the curater's house in Schlich aid stations have been set up.*

*November 16, 1944 Operation "Queen," the American assault on the ground and in the air begins with the heavy bombardment of the villages in the county. Farmers, busy harvesting beets, are caught by surprise as is the rest of the civilian population. Bombs and artillery fire kill 52 civilians in Merode, Schlich, and D'horn. Large parts of Schlich and Merode have been destroyed or severely damaged. The church in D'horn has also been hit, as has the one in Schlich. People try to bury the dead in a mass grave at D'horn Cemetery. Fighter-bombers and artillery fire call for speed. Only a part of the dead can be buried in the grave that had been dug up after the return from the evacuation. A number of the dead had to be left unburied in the destroyed church in D'horn. Nobody knows what happened to them later. After these events most of the civilians flee to the more central parts of Germany via the train station in Buir. Only a few want to hold out until the front has overrun the area.*

*November 17, 1944 Tanks in Merode. Canadian fighter-bombers that attack them are being targeted by AAA and infantry guns. A German officer of a AAA unit downs two of the attacking planes with his MG 42. One of the planes crashes into the barn of the Schieren family at the Hahndorn; the barn burns down. The second plane crashes into Merode Forest, left of the Karlsweg in the direction of Schlichener Heide. The pilots are taken prisoner by the Wehrmacht. Other planes bombard Merode Castle. The tower and the chapel below are destroyed. The dead of the preceding day that had been put on the bier in there are buried under rubble. Heavy artillery fire. Electricity and water supply are cut. The GrenReg of 47th VolksGrenDiv is engaged in fighting in the woods. Gun nests are in the*



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*gardens at the western city limits of Merode. Regimental command post is the curater's house and the Schmitz-Schunken house is the new aid station.*

*November 19, 1944 Heavy air raids at Merode and Schlich in the morning. A German artillery spotter, in the big tower of the Laufenburg, destroys two American tanks with a grenade launcher. Subsequently, the tower is targeted by artillery and set afire. The Americans think they have silenced the enemy. At night, however, the soldier manages to escape in a spectacular action. He reaches German lines near the Erbsweg at dawn. There were still civilians in the Laufenburg. Artillery fire at Merode and Schlich.*

*November 21, 1944 Engagements in the forest. It is impossible to prepare hot meals because the smoke gives away one's location and leads to immediate artillery fire. Constant artillery fire.*

*November 22, 1944 Again artillery fire. Severe damages in Merode.*

*November 24, 1944 3rd ParaDiv, coming from Holland and actually penciled in for the Ardennes offensive, is led down the Inden-Gey line to relieve 47th VolksGrenDiv.*

*November 27, 1944 Langerwehe has been taken by the Americans. Jüngersdorf falls the same day.*

*November 28, 1944 III. Battalion, 5th ParaReg unsuccessfully tries to recover Jüngersdorf. Heavy casualties among the paratroopers. This evening the Americans also reach the edge of the forest near Merode. A forward artillery spotter of the Americans is already in house Gouwkens. The main-combat line now leads through Merode. The tank barrier at house Johnen has been taken. There are still civilians in the village.*

*November 29, 1944 Shortly after noon, two American companies of 26th Inf Reg, 1st US Division, attack Merode. The advance stops, however, when a tank that leads the assault falls over in the Hohlweg and blocks the route for the troops behind. Heavy casualties among the attacking force that had reached parts of the tracks. The units that penetrate Merode find civilians in the houses Lürken and Vitzer. A counterattack cuts off the Americans from their own lines. The paratroopers, supported by one tank, launch their counterattack in the evening. The houses held by the Americans are completely destroyed. More than 200 dead are counted. More than 120 are captured including 10 officers. The civilians are being ordered to evacuate now.*

*November 30, 1944 Continuation of the attack of the paratroopers in order to recover all of Merode.*

*December 1, 1944 Merode cleared. The attacking forces are pushed back behind the Tannenkopf.*

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*December 2 through December 5, 1944 - Every day attacks and counterattacks, combat for Merode and in the woods and Meadows behind it. On December 5, 1st US Inf Div is replaced by 9th Division.*

*December 10, 1944 Obergeich, Geich, Echtz, and D'horn fall to the Americans. Tank advance troops overrun Rothaus Farm and advance to the Palmshof.*

*December 11, 1944 39th US Regiment conquers Merode with support from tanks and air force. The fight is fierce, especially for Merode Castle. Only after bitter close-range combat the attacking force manages to occupy the castle. The paratroopers to the west of Merode in the woods retreat to Derichsweiler/Gürzenich and regroup at Monzenborn arm. Schlich also falls to the Americans that day.*

*December 13, 1944 Derichsweiler and Mariaweiler can no longer be defended. The day before there had been hard-fought combat at the Palmshof.*

*December 14, 1944 Americans take Gürzenich and Birgel. Combat in Düren.*

*December 15, 1944 47th VolksGrenDiv relieves 3rd ParaDiv in this sector.*

*December 16, 1944 Ardennes offensive begins. The Ruhr Plains are in American possession.*

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**Jungersdorf (December 9, 1944)**

General Craig had prescribed an unusual maneuver to capture the strongpoint of Merode Castle and wrote this to describe his plan:

*“ . . . the maneuver to push through the positions taken over from the 1<sup>st</sup> Division prior to December 10, 1944, was very complicated. . . . a flank attack by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry under Colonel Gunn, who first advanced abreast of the 60<sup>th</sup> and on their right as far as D’horn, and then with his rear covered by the 60<sup>th</sup>, he attacked at right angles in order to reduce Merode Castle and the town adjacent to it . . . ”<sup>84</sup>*

From **Eight Stars to Victory**, page 270:

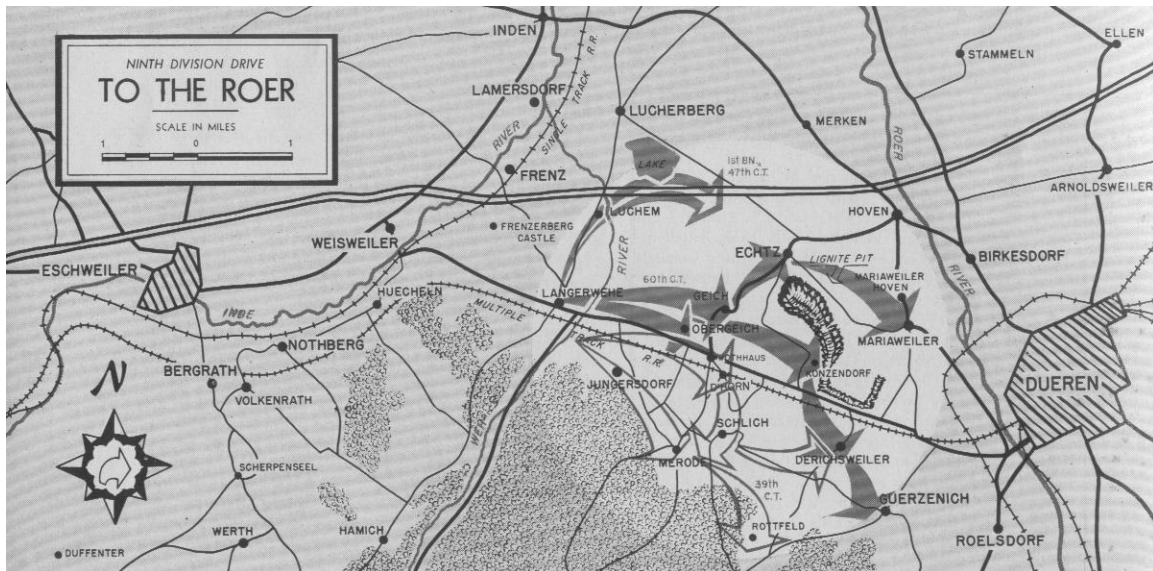


Figure 41 Drive to the Roer

The 39<sup>th</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> battalion under Colonel Gunn attacked east from Jungersdorf along the railroad parallel to the black top road to D'Horn.

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Figure 42 2nd Platoon, D Company, 39th IR -- Schlich, Germany

**D'Horn, Schlich, and Merode (December 10, 1944)**

The 39<sup>th</sup> crossed the Wer river and followed railroad lines to capture D'Horn where the Regiment remained for the night.

This historic battle around Merode and Schlich is described in **Eight Stars to Victory**:



*Merode had been a hard nut to crack; it was fortified strongly and had resisted all assaults to date. . . Dominating the town of Merode is its castle . . . a well located citadel having an excellent and commanding view of the surrounding countryside over Dueren, Langerwehe . . . and even across the Roer to the northeast. . . Merode Castle is surrounded by a moat which measure twenty feet in width and six or seven feet in depth. There is only one entrance – over a small bridge. To the northeast of the castle is the town of Schlich and the village of D'Horn . . . any travel over the area could be viewed by the enemy in the castle, and that is what made capture of Merode and its citadel so difficult. The men of the 39<sup>th</sup> had been resting several hours when General Craig ordered Colonel Van H.*

*Bond to take Merode Castle. Colonel Bond then made a prophetic statement that he would have his command post in the castle by nightfall and that General Craig could visit him there . . . the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion would attack south from D'Horn and head for Schlich. The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion would jump off to the southeast, leaving the woods to assault Merode . . . the enemy waged a most stubborn defensive from his bunkers and dug-in*

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*positions at Merode, which the men of Company A reached at 8:35 A.M. . . . By nightfall the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was consolidating positions in Merode. When 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion and the artillery had finished with the famed Merode Castle, it was only a shell of its former stateliness. Shattered relics of past glory lay beneath masses of stone, and the ancient towers bade farewell to finer days . . . While the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion pushed out to the Merode area, the 2<sup>nd</sup> had been attacking with its Companies E and G against fortified Schlich. Here, too, the Germans waged a stiff struggle. It was not until 4:30 P.M. that the town was cleaned out – and only after a severe house-to-house fight. With the joining of these two battalions, however, the fate of the much-fought over region was decided. In addition to many dead left by the enemy, 190 men were prisoners of the 39<sup>th</sup> C.T. Colonel Bond awaited visitors that night . . . his command post was Merode Castle, if anyone wanted to know!<sup>85</sup>*

**Derichsweiler/Rottfeld (December 12, 1944)**

Ready to cross the Roer on December 12th to advance on Duren.

*The 39<sup>th</sup> and the 60<sup>th</sup> Combat Teams were ordered to seize all ground west of the [Roer] River within their zones of action, and the ruins of the city of Duren loomed just across the river. By the following night, the [39<sup>th</sup>] was along the Roer, ready to cross that waterway and head into the Rhineland . . . But as the Ninth faced toward Duren and awaited its signal to advance . . . Germany was making its last great gamble . . . the Ardennes Counter-offensive!<sup>86</sup>*

In a card to cousin Thelma, Private Richard Kann indicates he was in Aachen and Holland on the 12<sup>th</sup>. Holland is within sight of the city of Aachen.

**Langerwehe (December 14, 1944),**

*Movement was made to the vicinity of Langerwehe, Germany, where the regiment took up new positions until 19 December. Roads in the vicinity of Merode and Langerwehe were in very bad condition due to heavy artillery and bombings which had blown bridges and gutted the roads. Travel was slow and very difficult.*

**Elsenborn (December 19, 1944)**

*[On the 19th of December] they again moved to Elsenborn in the Monschau-Malmedy sector. The regiment took up positions in the same general area [Camp Elsenborn] that they had held before and remained in their fixed positions until the end of the year.<sup>87</sup>*

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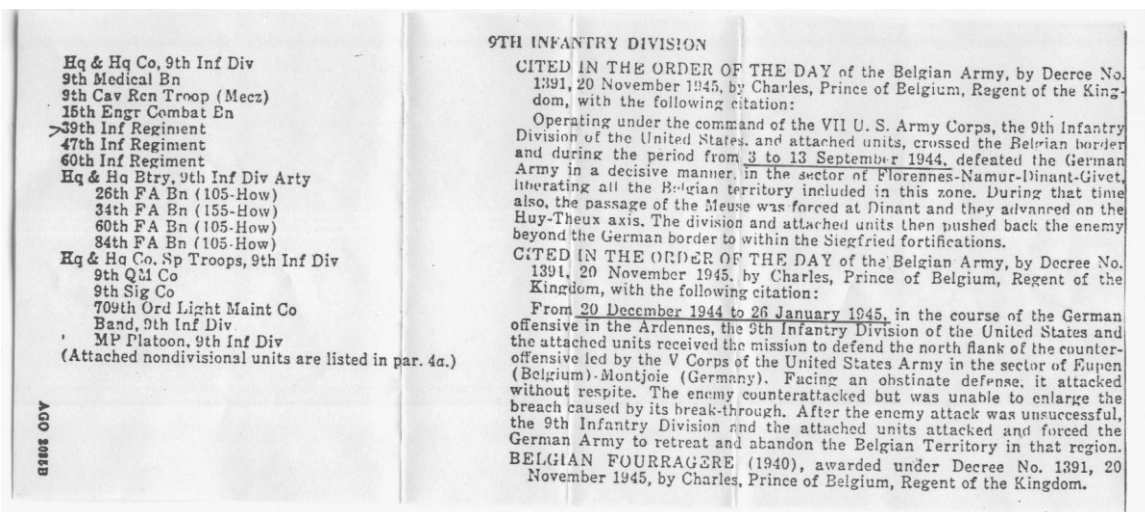


Figure 43 Citation in the Order of the Day of the Belgian Army

**Chapter 7 Illustration Credits:**

Figures 37,41, from the author's collection

Figures 36, 39, 40, from Eight Stars to Victory, Mittelman

Figures 38 with permission from Albert Trostorf







## Chapter Eight

### THE BULGE

*Just south of Monschau, an historic and full scale German counter-offensive was underway. The Nazis were staking everything on one last smashing blitz—a minutely planned drive backed by the almost forgotten Luftwaffe. In personal charge was Field Marshal von Rundstedt, resurrected from the deposed leaders of the Wehrmacht by Hitler. Von Rundstedt had termed Germany's effort "an all-out gamble", and few could have coined a more accurate description of the Battle of the Bulge, which began on the cold grey morning of December 16, 1944.<sup>88</sup>*

The Germans planned two routes. To the north, the enemy planned to move through Camp Elsenborn and to the south the second route ran through St. Vith. The campaign began with artillery barrages of Eupen, Roentgen, Malmedy, Verviers, and St. Vith.

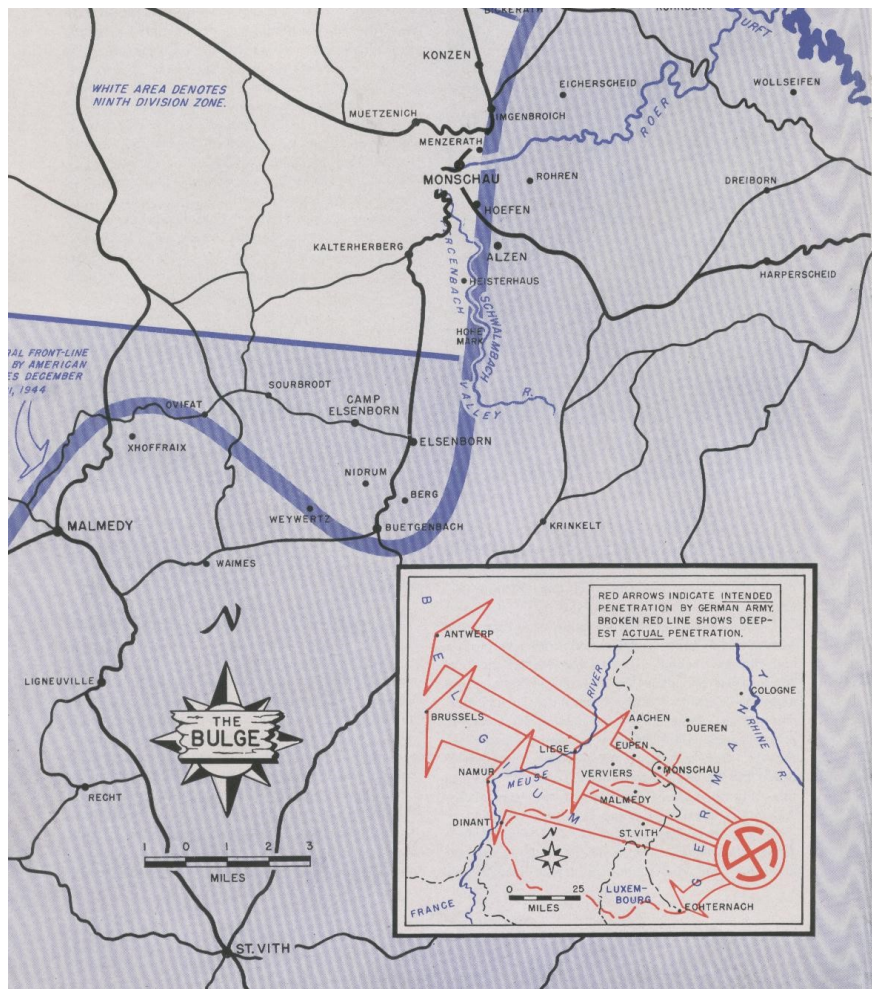


Figure 45 The Bulge Map



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On December 19th, the 39<sup>th</sup> Combat team moved out through Gressenich, Stolberg, Brand, Aachen, and halted at Eupen with the Kalterherberg, Elsenborn area as its destination. Here 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion was attached to 47th C.T. and committed to their right flank. 47<sup>th</sup> was attached to V Corps and all forces north of the Bulge were attached to Montgomery's 21<sup>st</sup> Army Group until communications returned to normal.

**Sourbrodt (December 19, 1944)**

*The 47<sup>th</sup> Infantry with its attachments (including the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry) had succeeded in halting an enemy attack which was mounting beyond Monschau during December 19<sup>th</sup>.*

*During the afternoon of the 21<sup>st</sup> an attack by two regiments of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Panzer Grenadier Division was met by the 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry's 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion and Company I, then filling the gap between the AAA-O 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalions. Despite their superior numbers, the Panzers were stopped in place by the massed fires of the Ninth, and 99<sup>th</sup> Division artilleries—and the slaughter inflicted upon the enemy was terrific.<sup>89</sup>*

**Rohren (December 22, 1944)**

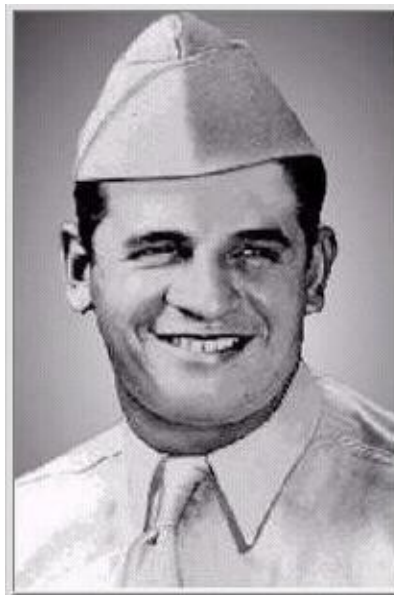
*Enemy Armor moved into the Rohren area. Under smoke cover they infiltrated and opened a 500 yard gap. Companies F and G closed the gap and wiped out the enemy. On the 23rd, the 39th attacked and regained the lost ground. The enemy activity in front of the 39th was the last attempt of the enemy to break through the Monschau-Elsenborn sector with the mission of reaching and capturing Liege. German drives had been halted by the accurate artillery fire of Ninth Divarty and the bravery of the AAA-O 2nd Battalion . . . Had these attacks by the 3rd Panzer Grenadier and 272nd Volksgrenadier divisions been successful, there would have been nothing to prevent the enemy from reaching Liege within a day, thus cutting off the forces to the north and south of the Ninth Infantry Division. Such an event would have given the German counter-offensive a smashing victory.<sup>90</sup>*

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## Kalterherberg (22 December 1944)

From the 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment website by Leon Baldwin<sup>91</sup>:

*Technical Sergeant, Peter J. Dalessandro of Company E, 39th Infantry . . . was with the 1st Platoon holding an important road junction on high ground near Kalterherberg, Germany, on 22 December 1944. In the early morning hours, the enemy after laying down an intense artillery and mortar barrage, followed through with an all-out attack that threatened to overwhelm the position. T/Sgt. Dalessandro, seeing that his men were becoming disorganized, braved the intense fire to move among them with words of encouragement. Advancing to a fully exposed observation post, he adjusted mortar fire upon the attackers, meanwhile firing upon them with his rifle and encouraging his men in halting and repulsing the attack. Later in the day the enemy launched a second determined attack. Once again, T/Sgt. Dalessandro, in the face of imminent death, rushed to his forward position and immediately called for mortar fire. After exhausting his rifle ammunition, he crawled 30 yards over exposed ground to secure a light machinegun, returned to his position, and fired upon the enemy at almost pointblank range until the gun jammed. He managed to get the gun to fire 1 more burst, which used up his last round, but with these bullets he killed 4 German soldiers who were on the verge of murdering an aid man and 2 wounded soldiers in a nearby foxhole. When the enemy had almost surrounded him, he remained alone, steadfastly facing almost certain death or capture, hurling grenades and calling for mortar fire closer and closer to his outpost as he covered the withdrawal of his platoon to a second line of defense. As the German hordes swarmed about him, he was last heard calling for a barrage, saying, "OK, mortars, let me have it--right in this position!" The gallantry and intrepidity shown by T/Sgt. Dalessandro against an overwhelming enemy attack saved his company from complete route.*



Technical Sergeant, Peter J. Dalessandro was captured and released at the end of the war and received the Congressional Medal of Honor from President Truman.

*Dale Smith served as "E" Company medic through the winter and Battle of the Bulge in the Ardennes. He was with the second platoon the evening that Sgt. Dalessandro distinguished himself during a German attack for which he was given the Congressional Medal of Honor. The sergeant tells in his story that he shot German soldiers as they were about to kill the second platoon medic.<sup>92</sup>*

*At this time the V Corps was stretched along a line which jutted south from Konzen and west to Krinkelt and Malmedy. The Ninth Division held the northern zone with its 47<sup>th</sup> C.T defending from Konzen to before Alzen and the 39<sup>th</sup> C. T. stretched south of Alzen for three miles.<sup>93</sup>*

## CHRISTMAS-NEW YEARS 1944



Figure 46 Christmas Card from 1944

*The 39<sup>th</sup> Regiment was at Schwalmbach and Hohe Mark against the 990th Volksgrenadier Regiment. There was little activity in the Ninth's sector on Christmas Day, but patrols were active and positions were improved. Spam, the G.I. steak instead of turkey was on the menu for many that day, although some lucky men had received gifts previously. But this white Christmas of 1944 was not the holiday season that the fighting men has seen pictured on pre-war German posters. . . . In miserable holes chopped out of the frozen ground the Ninth was spending its third Christmas overseas!<sup>94</sup>*

Letter to the Editor by Richard Kann in late December 1944<sup>95</sup>:

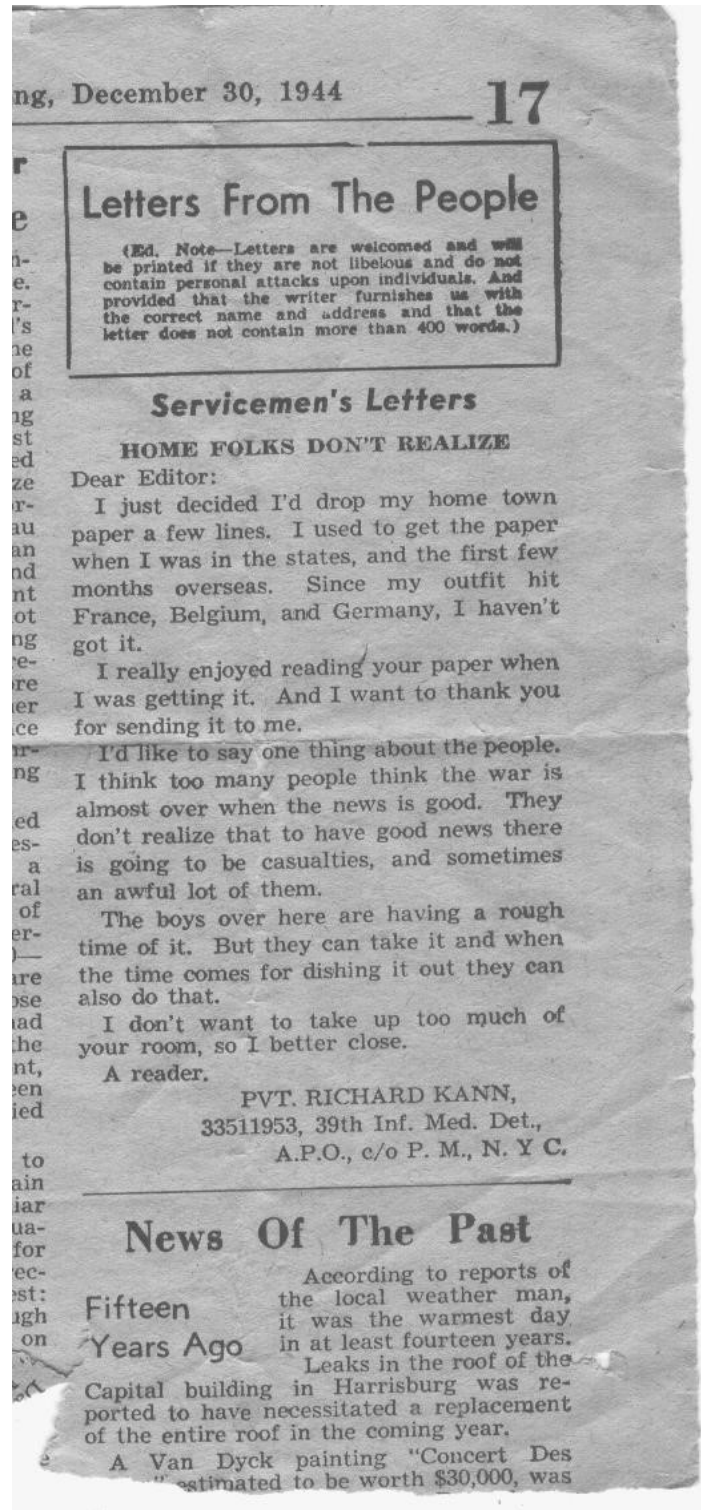


Figure 47 Letter to the Editor

### **Hohe Mark (January 6<sup>th</sup>, 1945)**

*Company L with three tanks in support jumped off in an attempt to push the enemy over the Schwalmbach. It by-passed a German strongpoint on the height of Hohe Mark and returned later in the day to flank this position. Although three machine guns and one mortar emplacement were knocked out by the Falcons, the enemy stubbornly held his top ground. One American tank (after it had become separated from the other two) was knocked out of action by German anti-tank rocket fire, and for the time being Hohe Mark remained in enemy hands. Throughout the following week, the cold haze covered the ground surrounding this tank was the scene of many skirmishes. The enemy was emplaced and dug in all around the vehicle and several attempts to knock him out failed. The Germans held on desperately, despite the destruction of their guns, mortars, and other weapons. Finally on January 6<sup>th</sup>, the 39<sup>th</sup>'s 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion took over the positions of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion and, after contacting the enemy on Hohe Mark, sent out a strong combat patrol which succeeded in kicking them off. The next day showed the reason for the Germans offering so much resistance on this ground – here was observation along the Percenbach Valley to Kalterherberg as well as a way of approaching the Kalterherberg -Elsenborn road.<sup>96</sup>*

#### **Chapter 8 Illustration Credits:**

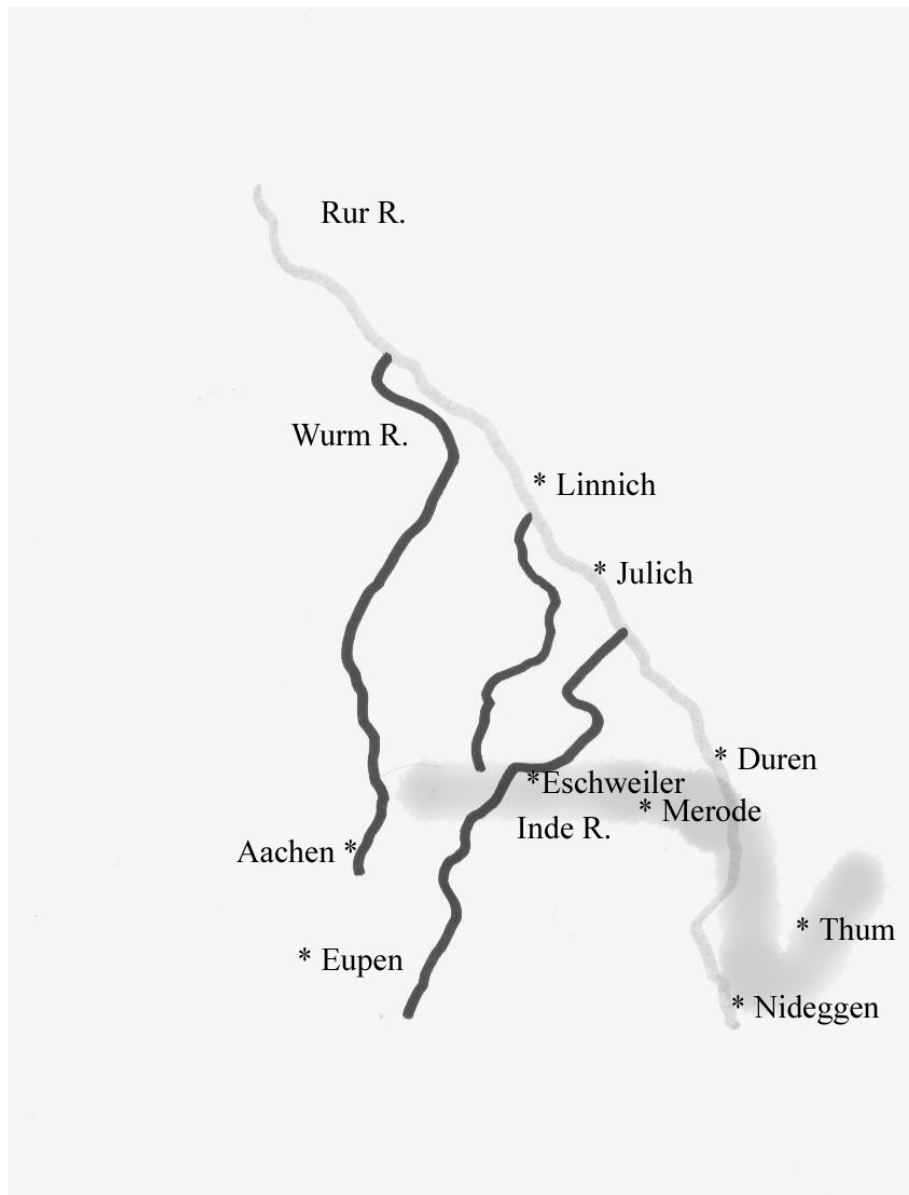
Figures 43, 44, from the author's collection

Figures 42, from Eight Stars to Victory, Mittelman

## Chapter Nine

### THE RIVERS

During the months January through early March 1945, the 39<sup>th</sup> Regiment fought their way into Germany and across a number of tributaries of the Roer River (*spelled Rur in German, Roer in Dutch and French*) before finally capturing a bridge on the Rhine River. The shaded area in following map provides perspective on the route of the 39<sup>th</sup> across eastern Germany.



**Figure 48 Tributaries of the Rur**



### Kalterherberg (January 29, 1945)

The 39<sup>th</sup> was Southeast of Alzen, and pushed the line to Wueste Brueck headwaters.

### Wahlerscheid (February 2, 1945)

*The 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion reduced 12 pillboxes and 20 log bunkers in the actions which followed, and on February 2<sup>nd</sup> the 39<sup>th</sup> was successful in capturing the strongpoint at Forsthaus Wahlerscheid consisting of pillboxes and concrete fortifications. The 39<sup>th</sup> captured a key road junction at Wahlerscheid and the rising ground to the east.<sup>97</sup>*

From **Eight Stars to Victory**, page 302:

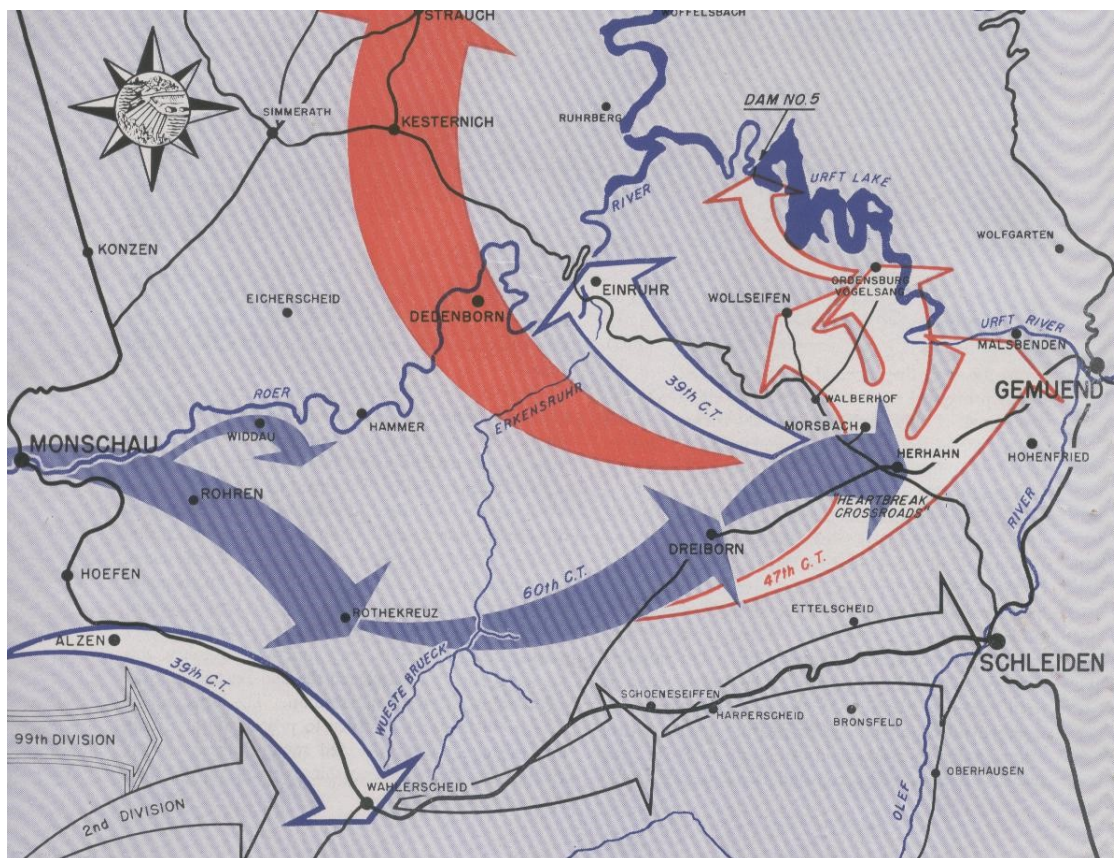


Figure 49 Monschau to Wahlerscheid map

### Dreiborn, Herhahn (February 4, 1945)

After the 60<sup>th</sup> took Dreibern Castle, east of Dreibern, the 39<sup>th</sup> passed through Dreibern and on to Herhahn.

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Figure 50 Dreibern Castle – 1990

### **Herhahn (February 4, 1945)**

*At 2 am, 4 or 5 German tanks appeared from the southeast and fired on the 39<sup>th</sup>. Soon afterward, two self propelled guns approached. Artillery and bazookas were used to repulse the attack. The enemy was forced to the Urft River where the 39<sup>th</sup>'s L company took up positions on the high ground fired "everything in the book" as the Germans attempted to withdraw over the river.<sup>98</sup>*

### **Hohenfried (February 5-8, 1945)**

*At this small village 1.5 miles east of Herhahn. . . . the regiment launched a dawn drive to eject enemy troops remaining on the high ground west of the Olef River and south of the Urft River overlooking Gemuend . . . . Civilians were given a reveille call at 5:30 A.M. when Company A decided to eliminate the resistance in building to their front at Hohenfried—a small village about one and a half miles east of Herhan. Many civilians were apprehended along with 43 military prisoners.<sup>99</sup>*

### **Urft Lake Region, Gemuend (February 7, 1945 )**

The Ninth's sector had been turned over to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division and the 39<sup>th</sup> C.T. stayed in place under control of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division while the Ninth pushed north toward the Schwammenauel Dam.

*" . . . the 9<sup>th</sup> Division-60<sup>th</sup> Regiment was able to take Schmidt as a result of the 78<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division's 309<sup>th</sup> Regiment taking the Schwammenauel dam intact. "<sup>100</sup>*



**Brueck Hetzingen-Nideggen (February 21, 1945)**

The 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry returned to the 9<sup>th</sup> Division and were sent north to cross over bridges previously constructed in the 1<sup>st</sup> Division sector.

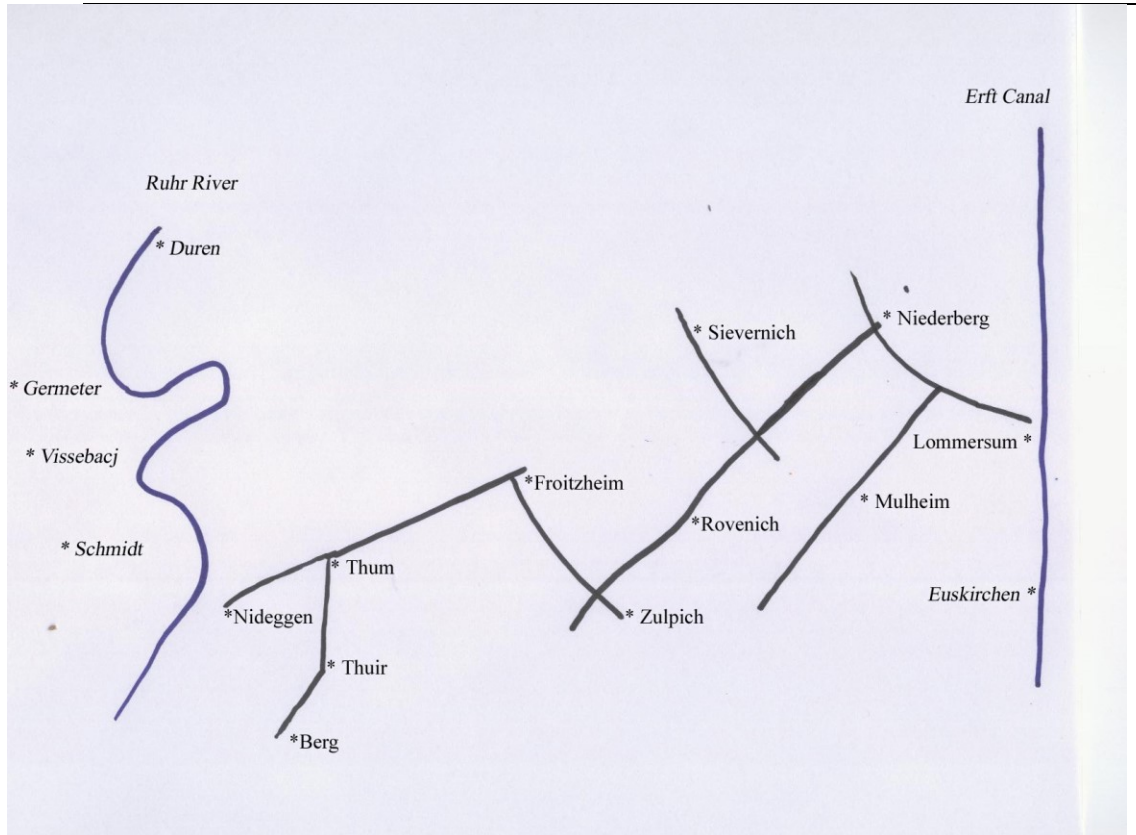


Figure 51 Map – Nideggen, Thum, Froitzheim, Zulpich, Rovenich, Niederberg, Mulheim

## Crossing the Roer (February 23, 1945)

Since December the U. S. First and Ninth Armies had been building up strength behind the swollen little Roer River. On Feb. 23 they let it go with a stunning night barrage. The Germans at the river were quickly overpowered. The following account of the Roer crossing is from an article/photographs which ran in "LIFE" magazine on March 12, 1945.<sup>101</sup>



Figure 52 Crossing the Roer

*Beyond the river the rigid framework of their Rhineland defense began to break down. A week after the first gun had been fired at the Roer, the Ninth had arrived at the Rhine opposite Dusseldorf. The men of the Ninth exchanged shots with the Germans on the other side. Lieut. General William H. Simpson, commander of the Ninth, had been waiting for this drive to the Rhine. If the river was to be crossed by his army, the smooth crossing of the Roer was a battle rehearsal. For weeks the muddy little stream had been an obsession with the men of the Ninth. They prepared and planned to cross it early in February, in coordination with drives by the Canadians and General Patton's Third Army. But on the eve of the crossing the Germans opened the gates in the big earth dams of the upper Roer, partly flooding the cabbage land of the lower valley. General Simpson was forced to postpone the crossing while his engineers calculated when it would be possible.*

*The engineers, watching the flood diminish, told the general the crossing could be made on Feb. 23. The Ninth began to get ready again. The men and tanks and portable sections of pontoon bridges moved up to the river. At 2:45 A.M. the barrage began and a smokescreen drifted over river to cover the crossing.*

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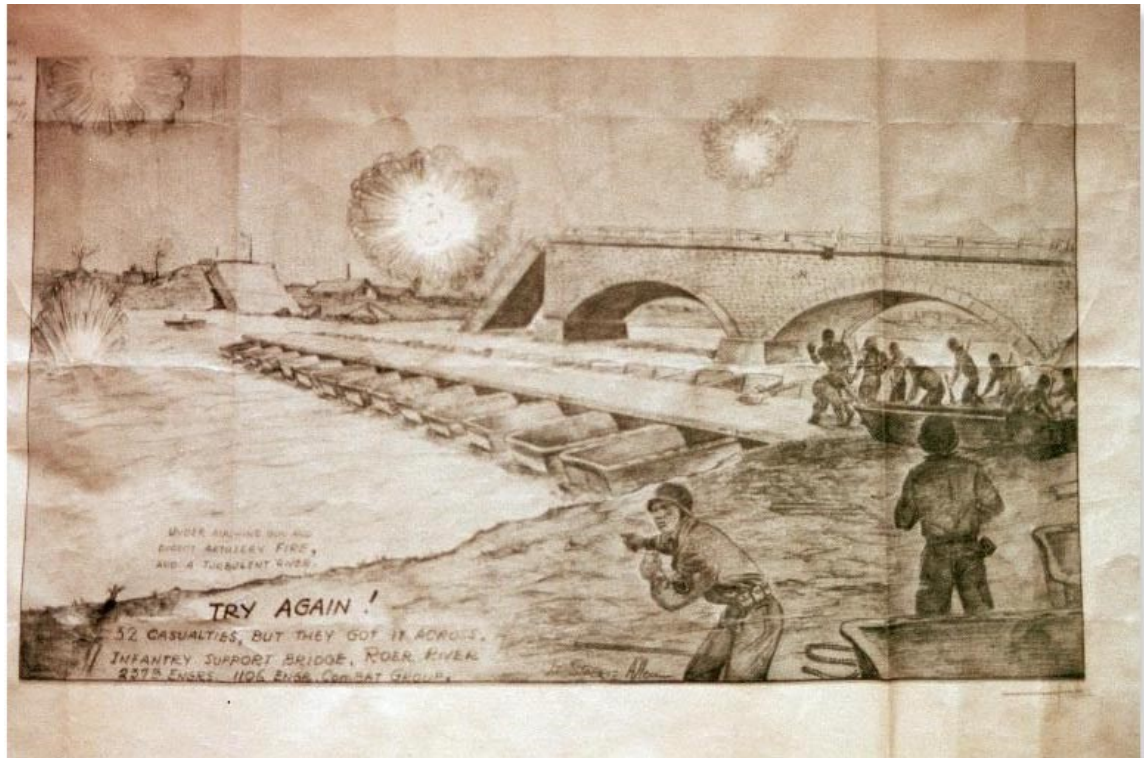


Figure 53 Roer Bridge at Julich

*As the morning sun shines through the open roof of a house in Julich, Ninth Army infantrymen dash across Roer under German mortar and machine-gun fire.*

*The U. S. Breakthrough begins with the Crossing of the Roer: The Ninth Army's crossing of the Roer was a short, violent struggle against the Germans and the river. Forty-five minutes after the night barrage had begun, assault boats and amphibious tractors started across in a great wave. In some of the boats were combat engineers, ferrying cables to moor their pontoon bridges in midstream. It was an excruciating few hours for the engineers. The flood had lessened but the current was still swift and strong. Runaway boats and pontoons careened downstream crashing into the bridges as they were being built. As the work went on the Germans kept up a blind but deadly machine-gun and mortar barrage through the smokescreen. But in spite of difficulties there were two footbridges across the Roer in the morning. Later the engineers put in bigger bridges for trucks and tanks.*

**Linnich (February 24, 1945)**

*On the chilly morning of February 24, weary Americans along the Roer peered into the bright sky at a curious phenomenon: black-painted Luftwaffe warplanes were heading for the foot and vehicular bridges that were lifelines of the assault*

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*troops on the east side of the Roer. Seeing German aircraft in the daytime had been a rarity since the Allies invaded Normandy the previous June. Now here were groups of four or six, instead of the occasional darting raids by a single Luftwaffe daylight intruder . . . . These German aircraft looked unlike other they had seen: they did not have propellers. . . . these were the new . . . Messerschmitt-262 jet fighter aircraft that were faster and more maneuverable than Allied propeller driven planes. . . . Early in the afternoon of February 14 . . . . two ME-262's came in to bomb and strafe bridge site north of Linnich. Gunners of Battery C of the 557<sup>th</sup> Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion threw up a curtain of fire, hitting the first jet as it was making its bombing run. It crashed with an enormous display of orange flame and black smoke. The GI gunners cheered their first conquest of the "unhittable" Wunderwaffe. Undaunted by the loss of his wingman, the pilot of the second jet dove on a Roer bridge and released his bomb. The marksmen of Battery C actually hit the bomb in midair, detonating it, then turned their weapons on the aircraft. The Luftwaffe pilot put his ME-262 into a nearly vertical climb, but the jet was struck by a shell and exploded in a fiery ball.<sup>102</sup>*

At an unknown location during this period, Private Kann took a picture of a crashed German ME-262 jet fighter.



Figure 54 Wreckage of ME-262



**Brueck Hetzingen (February 26, 1945)**

*The 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry crossed over bridges previously constructed in the 1<sup>st</sup> Division sector and pushed south on Boich. . . . Ninth Division tanks and T.D. 's poured lead into crumbling Nideggen from the west side of the Roer . . . . This capture of high ground permitted a Bailey bridge to be constructed in the Division sector by the engineers.*

**Nideggen (February 26, 1945)**

*The 39<sup>th</sup> Regiment was now positioned to cross the Roer at Brueck Hetzingen. Crossed and moved south to Nideggen under cover of fire from the west bank. Bailey Bridges were constructed.*



Figure 55 Nideggen - Within the Walls

**Thum (March 1, 1945)**



Figure 56 Thum Pasture – 1990

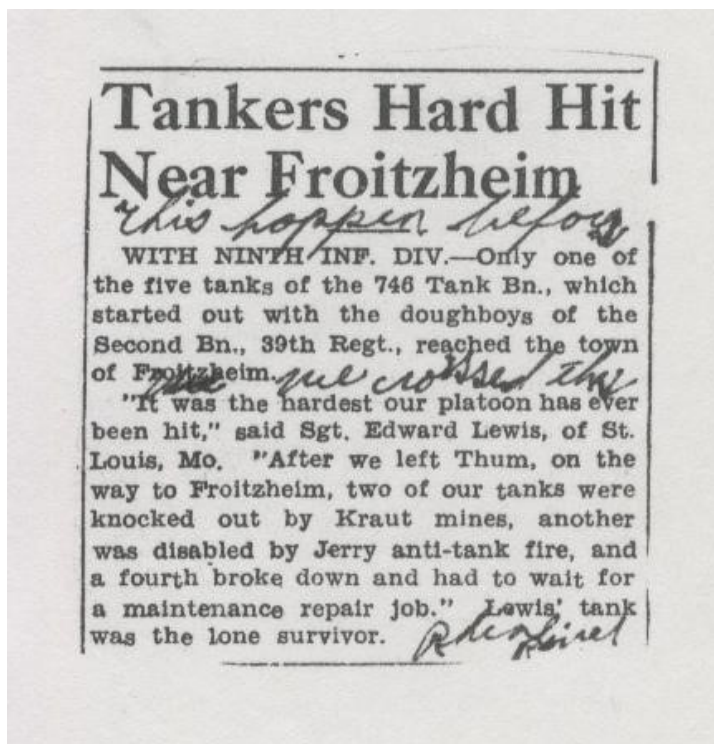
### ***Tankers Hard Hit Near Froitzheim***

**WITH THE NINTH INF. DIV.** - Only one of the five tanks of the 746 Tank Bn., which started out with the doughboys of the Second Bn., 39th Regt. reached the town of Froitzheim. "It was the hardest our platoon has ever been hit," said Sgt. Edward Lewis, of St. Louis, Mo. "After we left Thum, on the way to Froitzheim, two of our tanks were knocked out by Kraut mines, another was disabled by Jerry anti-tank fire, and a fourth broke down and had to wait for a maintenance repair job." Lewis' tank was the lone survivor.<sup>103</sup>

Pfc. Kann notes on this Stars and Strips article that the battle occurred on the way to the Rhine.



Figure 57 Pfc. Kann views destruction



### **Froitzheim (March 1, 1945)**

*... the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion had launched a 2 a.m. attack and after meeting heavy fire east of the wooded area between Thum and Froitzheim remained halted temporarily to engage in a fire fight with snipers, artillery, and mortars. By noon the battalion cautiously had worked its way forward and was in possession of Froitzheim. . . . the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion cleared Ginnick by 1:55 PM as the 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry struck against tanks, self-propelled guns and elements of the German Third Parachute Division . . . . In the afternoon 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion maneuvered north through the 1<sup>st</sup> Division sector and swung northeast to capture the towns of Mueddersheim, Disternich, and Sievernich.<sup>104</sup>*

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Figure 58 Pfc. Kann at unidentified monument

Pfc. Richard B. Kann was wounded for the third time on March 1, 1945. He was awarded the 2nd Oak Leaf for the Purple Heart.

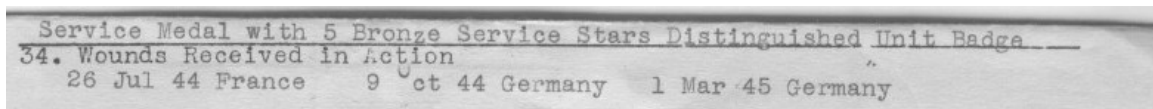


Figure 59 Pfc Kann Wounded, from Discharge Papers

**Friesheim (March 2, 1945)**

*On the 2<sup>nd</sup>, the 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry combined with CCB to overrun Friesheim and Mulheim.<sup>105</sup> Three pictures of Mulheim are from Pfc Richard Kann's collection:*



Figure 60 Entering Mulheim - 1990

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Figure 61 Convoy in Mulheim



Figure 62 Monument in Mulheim



**Zulpich (March 3, 1945)**

*Zulpich is an ancient walled city where Frankish King Clovis had laid seige to the Allemans in 506. It was famous for St. Peters Church which had been built in the 11th and 13th centuries and for the castle which dated back to the Middle ages.<sup>106</sup>*



Figure 63 Historic Zulpich

**Neiderberg (March 3, 1945)**

*Neiderberg fell to the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the 39<sup>th</sup> on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, and soon afterward the unit stabbed on to clear Lommersum – a town along the Erft River and several miles north of the city of Euskirchen. In the wake of the armored units, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion battled against grazing machine-gun fire to the banks of the river and there it halted by a determined enemy.<sup>107</sup>*



Figure 64 Neiderberg - 1990

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Figure 65 Treadway bridge over the Erft at Bliesheim

*Infantrymen of the 1st Infantry Division, U.S. First Army, cross over the Erft River on a treadway bridge built two hours earlier. Bliesheim, Germany. Company L, 3d Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division. 3/5/1945 (photograph from U.S. Army Center of Military History).*

**Kotten Forest (March 7, 1945)**

*Skirmishes developed, but they were from rear guard troops mostly; and such unpronounceables as Schneppenheim, Schwarzmaar, Gross Vernich, Mueggenhausen, Neukirchen, Duenstekoven, Buschoven, Ollheim (with its air strip) and Heimerzheim along the route east fell to the rapidly engulfing sweep of the Ninth Infantry Division.*

*The[39<sup>th</sup>] regiment cracked through the Kotten Forest and advanced six miles to the east to occupy the town of Pech, and AAA-O patrols pushed out to Gimmersdorf, and Berkum. By nightfall the Ninth was just three thousand yards from the Rhine and due west of Honnef.<sup>108</sup>*

**Bad Godesberg (March 8, 1945)**



Figure 66 Bad Godesberg Postcard Sent by PFC Kann

*. . . . On the second day of an attack on Bad Godesberg, a Rhineland peacetime resort, a 9<sup>th</sup> Division battalion commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Frank L. Gunn was just outside the city . . . .*

*Early morning of the 8th brought a two-battalion attack by the 39th upon Bad Godesberg, which was being defended by elements of the Third Parachute Division - the old opponents of the 39th Infantry Regiment. The 2nd and 3rd Falcon Battalions jumped off at 4:57 AM and 5:25 AM respectively, with the mission of converging upon the town. Extremely intense small-arms, artillery and Nebelwerfer fire met the attacking footsloggers.*

*The enemy waged a strong defense, but he was unable to halt the doughs, who began working toward the populated area. Soon all that held up the capture of the northern portion of the town was an 88mm Flak battery which was positioned in a well-constructed garrison along the river and near - of all things - a hot house . . .*

*In heavy fighting, Gunn's men had overcome all opposition except for a battery of 88-millimeter flak guns which was in position along a river and adjacent to a hothouse. Believing the enemy force might surrender, Colonel Gunn asked for a volunteer officer to accompany a German civilian to the enemy commander in the town. Lieutenant Mike Wolfson agreed to go.*

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*Gunn instructed the lieutenant, "Tell him that if he doesn't surrender by sixteen-twenty [4:20 P. M.] we're going to blow hell out of them with artillery and send our infantry in to wipe them out."*

*Climbing into a jeep with a driver, a runner, and a civilian interpreter, Wolfson headed for the German lines, where he was taken into Bad Godesberg to the captain in command of the defending force. Wolfson delivered the ultimatum, but the German officer was unimpressed.*

*"We have a strongly fortified garrison," he pointed out. "We are heavily armed and have four eighty-eights aimed at all of your possible approach routes."*

*"But your situation is hopeless," Wolfson said.*

*"It would be dishonorable for me to surrender."*

*The American lieutenant spoke of the "many innocent German civilians" who would likely be killed or wounded as a consequence of the German garrison's refusal to capitulate.*

*"In that case, tell your Colonel Gunn that we should be given time to disengage and regroup in another sector," the captain said.*

*The debate continued. Wolfson was growing increasingly nervous. The deadline of 4:20 was approaching, and the American artillery would start pounding Bad Godesberg and the German positions at that time, presuming the American delegation was "lost."*

*The clock ticked on . . . 4:04 P.M. . . . 4:12 . . . 4:16*

*Suddenly, without a word or change of expression, the German Captain unsnapped his holster and pulled out his Luger, Wolfson swallowed hard. This was the end. Holding the pistol in his hand for several minutes, the officer turned it over to the American Lieutenant. Wolfson sought to mask his enormous relief.*

*Formed into two columns with the captain in the lead, the German defenders, minus their weapons, filed out of Bad Godesberg just as the promised artillery barrage began pounding the town . . . .<sup>109</sup>*

*By 5:15, the northern half of the city was cleared and the battle for the remainder continued. After a stiff fight, Bad Godesberg was mopped up and the bag of prisoners included Lt. General Richard Schimpf, the tall long-coated commander of the Third Parachute Division.*

*Bad Godesberg was an excellent prize of war. It once had been a Roman resort and center of worship for Aesculapius, the god of health. The town was replete*



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*with many hotels...Beethoven and Mozart gave concerts...infantry men of the 2nd battalion set up observation posts on the balcony of the Hotel Dreesen, where Hitler had proposed the occupation of Czechoslovakia to Chamberlain.<sup>110</sup>*



Figure 67 General Schimpf with Captors Gunn and Bond



Figure 68 39th Men with surrendered Germans at Rhein-Hotel Dreesen

**Chapter 9 Illustration Credits:**

Figures 45, 47, 48, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 61, 63 from the author's collection

Figures 49, 50, from LIFE Magazine, March 12, 1945

Figures 60, 64, from Eight Stars to Victory, Mittelman

Figures 62, US Army Center for Military History Photo

## Chapter Ten

### THE BRIDGE

On March 8<sup>th</sup>, the 9<sup>th</sup> Armored Division had definitely secured the Ludendorff Bridge at Remagen.

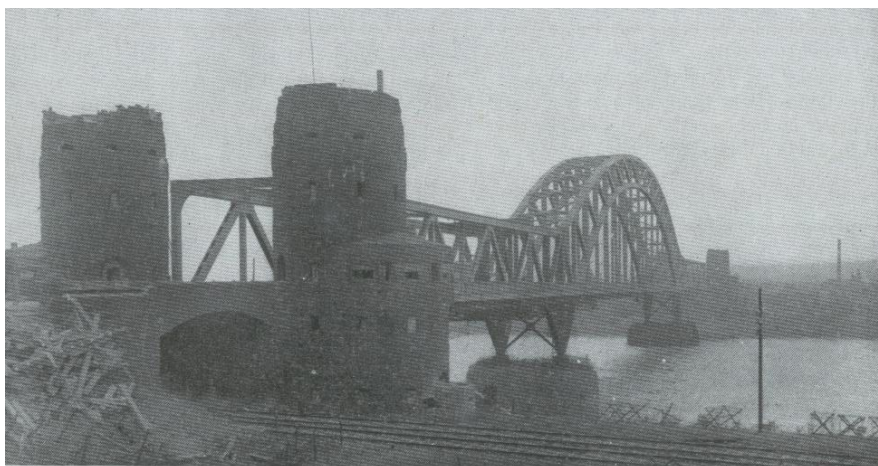


Figure 69 The Ludendorff Bridge at Remagen

*Somewhere behind the heights west of Remagen, the last of the 9th Infantry Division's three infantry regiments also was waiting to cross the river by any available means." The 291st Engineers Combat Battalion completed the construction of the treadway bridge at 17:10 on March 10, 1945. It was then and still is longest tactical bridge of its type built under enemy fire.<sup>111</sup>*

*From Octofoil, November 1968 page 1: General Gunn recalls the most memorable episode of his World War II service as the fighting at Bad Godesberg, Germany, just prior to the crossing of the Remagan Bridge on March 7, 1945. General Gunn's battalion, the 2<sup>nd</sup> 39<sup>th</sup> had just taken Bad Godesberg and had established headquarter in the Rhine-Dresden Hotel. General Gunn set up his command post in the same room of the hotel that Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain and Adolph Hitler had used for their meeting prior to the war. His battalion had just captured General von Schleiben and Admiral Hennick, the first two general officers taken in the war. "We just opened a bottle of Rhine wine when word came down that the Remagan Bridge had been taken and we had to cross it that night," recalled General Gunn. "Mine was about the fourth across, so the Germans really zeroed in on the bridge by the time we got there. During this first infantry crossing of the Rhine since the Napoleonic Wars, the 2<sup>nd</sup> 39<sup>th</sup> lost 33 men that night on the bridge. For some reason the Germans were using Armor-piercing ammunition instead of high explosive, or the casualties would have been higher.*

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Figure 70 Ludendorff Bridge from the heights above Remagen

Pfc. Richard Kann crossed the Rhine on the Ludendorff Bridge at Remagen on the 10th of March. He was attached to the 78th Infantry Division and assisted in the buildup after the 9th Armored Division seized the bridge.



Figure 71 9th Armored Division sign on the Ludendorff bridge  
March 11, 1945. U.S. Army Signal Corps photograph taken by W. Spangle.

Pfc. Kann crossed the bridge while shelling was coming from the top of the hill overlooking the east end of the bridge. As he neared the end, a German bombing raid dropped bombs and he ran to one of the larger round stone towers for shelter and waited until the bombing stopped. Then he moved off the bridge and around to the left side of the tunnel.



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Figure 72 Remagen view from the tunnel



Figure 73 Western Towers of the Bridge - 1990

From a newspaper article in 1945:

*"Pushing out from its positions on the Remagen bridgehead, the veteran Ninth Div. captured its 35,000th prisoner since D-Day. In previous campaigns in North Africa and Sicily, the Ninth took approximately 25,000 prisoners to bring the estimated total to 60,000." <sup>112</sup>*



**Erpel (March 10, 1945)**



Figure 74 The Command Post at Erpel

The 39<sup>th</sup> was still attached to the 78th Division. A command post was set up at Erpel.

**Rheinbreitenbach (March 11, 1945)**

Attacked eastward through the woods from the vicinity of Rheinbreitbach proceeded toward Kalenborn and captured a large ammunition dump.

*"... the 39th Infantry Regiment was holding the line east of Rheinbreitbach."<sup>113</sup>*

*To the north the 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry (as an 11 A.M. attachment of the 78<sup>th</sup> Division) attacked from the vicinity of Rheinbreitenbach to aid the strategy of the Ninth. For the next few days the regiment felt a powerhouse of self-propelled gun fire in its maneuver. Bad terrain and map inaccuracies threw off the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalions, and rough fighting ensued as the AAA-O slowly pounded ahead through the woods.<sup>114</sup>*

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From **Eight Stars to Victory**, page 327:

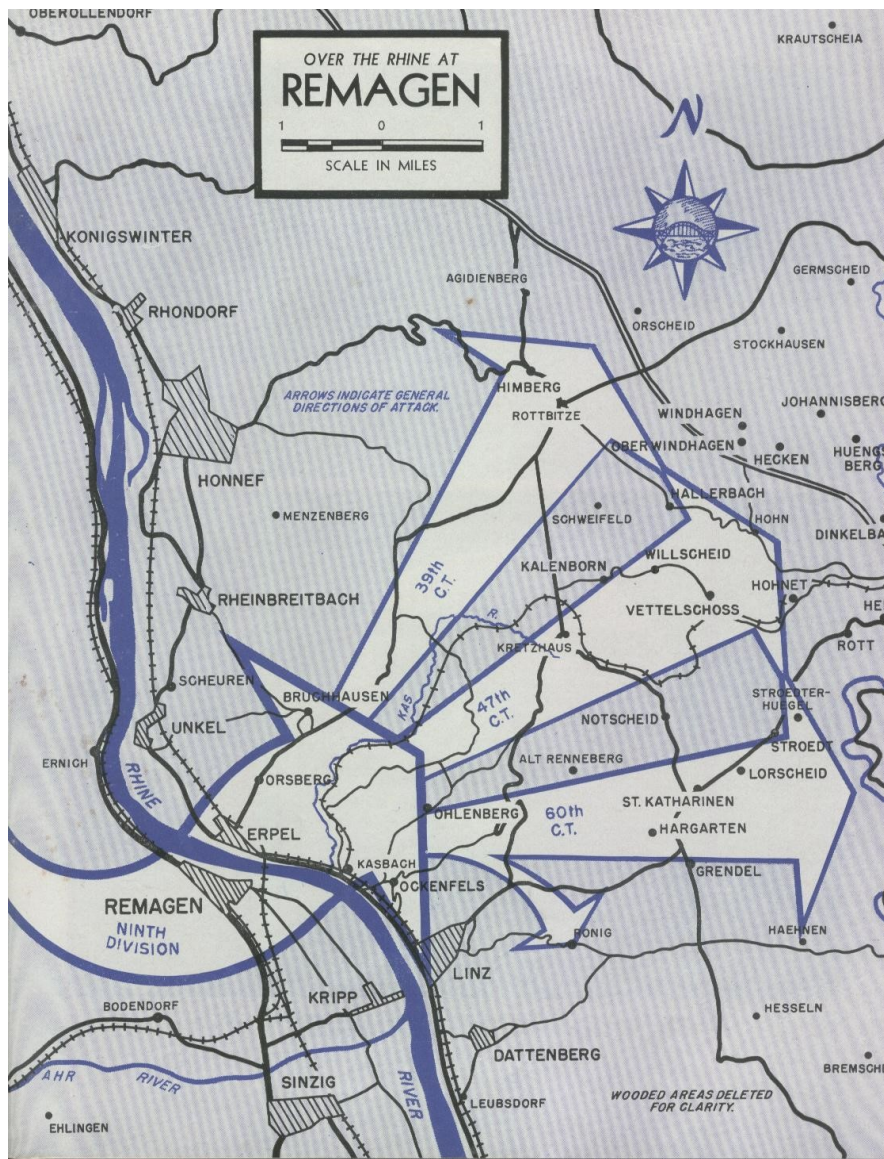


Figure 75 The Route East of Remagen

**Kalenborn (March 15, 1945)**

*... the 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry, which was attached to the 78<sup>th</sup> Division, captured a large ammunition dump and the Ninth's attached 310<sup>th</sup> Infantry and 52<sup>nd</sup> Armored Infantry Battalion battered through to the wooded area overlooking Kalenborn. This region was cleared against a stubborn enemy who used almost every weapon possessed by German ground force troops to stand his ground.<sup>115</sup>*

The Ninth continued on through Ober Windhagen, Rott, Heide, Hecken, Dinkelsbach, Johannisberg, Hungsberg, and to the River Weid.



### Ludendorff Bridge collapses (March 17, 1945)



Figure 76 The Bridge collapsed

The bridge suddenly collapses, after thousands of tanks and trucks have crossed. The flow of supplies was ensured though by two additional bridges which have been constructed downstream.

### Autobahn Crossed (March 18, 1945)



Figure 77 Cutting the Ruhr - Frankfurt Autobahn

*“ . . . under the cover of darkness, the 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry’s Company E cut the Ruhr-Frankfurt Autobahn in the Hallerbach-Frehan (Himburg) area, east of Honnef.”<sup>116</sup>*

#### Chapter 10 Illustration Credits:

Figure 69 from the author’s collection

Figures 65, 68, 70, 71, 72, 73 from Eight Stars to Victory, Mittelman

Figures 66, 67, US Army Signal Corp Photo

## Chapter Eleven

### ON TO THE ELBE

#### Prangenberg (March 25, 1945)

*The 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion continued its fight against the enemy who kept machine gun fire falling heavily from Prangenberg. It was still dark and the battalion pushed south to capture Nieder Etscheid, a village about 1,000 yards below Prangenberg. The 2<sup>nd</sup> received a strong counterthrust from German tanks and infantry near Nieder Etscheid . . . [and then] captured Ehrenberg, Bruechem, and Buehlingen . . . just north of Neustadt. . . . 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion seized six other populated regions, as the Germans attempted to halt their advance with a feeble display of small-arms, mortar, artillery and sporadic machine-gun fire.<sup>117</sup>*



This picture, taken in early 1945, by Pfc. Kann in Germany matches a tank on display at the Aberdeen Proving Grounds Tank Museum.



Figure 78 Hetzer Tanks

*An ingenious usage of an outdated chassis, the Hetzer was derived from the Czech Panzerkampfwagen 38. The Pzkw. 38 was a somewhat decent tank used by the Germans at the very beginning of the war. It was outclassed soon after by the Allied tanks. Later in the war, the Germans put these old tanks to use by converting them to tank destroyers. Armed with a 75mm gun, they were a highly efficient way to take out armor. They were small, quick, and adequately protected. Sloped armor was a great improvement. Many were bought by the Swiss government after the war and were put into service.<sup>118</sup>*

### **Krunkel and Raubach**

This important rail and road center was captured.

### **Puderbach (March 26, 1945)**

*Success piled upon success as the breakthrough expanded to the east during the 26th. Col. Ward's 47<sup>th</sup> Infantry moved smoothly and quickly ahead while opposition melted into the distance. Objectives continued to fall, and by 4:30 P.M. the regiment had advanced through the woods to the vicinity of the town of Puderbach, where it assembled shortly afterward. Then the 39<sup>th</sup> passed through the 47<sup>th</sup> and the AAA-O helmets bobbed to the east - their wearers giving the enemy no respite, no time for thinking . . . only the steady tempo of American forces closing in on him.<sup>119</sup>*

### **Sinn, River Dill (March 27, 1945)**

*The Ninth Division moved 27 miles forward, securing many crossings over the Dill River. . . . the 39<sup>th</sup> was eliminating pockets of resistance near Marienberg and the Nister River.<sup>120</sup>*

The Dill River is a tributary of the Lahn River, joining the Lahn from the right.

### **900 Slave Laborers Found in Nazi Mortar Factory**

**WITH NINTH INF. DIV., Germany** - Hitler had one less mortar factory and 900 less slave laborers after the Second Bn., of the 39th Inf. Regt. swept through Sinn, a town on the River Dill. One of the largest and most efficiently-run factories had been turning out mortars and other German war products until two days before the Yanks arrived. Then 900 slave workers went on strike, refusing to work because they heard the Americans were close by . . . " of the 1,600 plant employees, 900 were foreigners, including 350 prisoners of war from Russia, Poland, France, Italy, and Belgium," the civilian boss said. "The rest were forced civilian laborers. There were 200 women in the group." Except for the POWs, all the workers were crammed together in a single barrack. They were under constant guard and were not allowed on the streets. The superintendent

*said the women were the best workers but that most of the labor was too heavy for them. He said he had most trouble with the Russians who "were stubborn and refused to cooperate, committing sabotage whenever they got the chance." The boss said it was possible for the slaves to earn "as high as 300 marks a week."<sup>121</sup>*

### **Marienberg, Nister River (March 28, 1945)**

*The evening of March 28<sup>th</sup> found the Ninth Division as far forward as Hill 280 which is about three miles to the southeast of the ancient Lahn River City of Marburg . . . . At midnight on March 30<sup>th</sup>, the Ninth bade farewell to the III Corps and once again was attached to the VII Corps.<sup>122</sup>*

### **Marberg (March 28, 1945)**

The 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division made an interesting discovery of a 400 ton archive of Nazi files, including documents signed by the Kaiser, Bismarck, Ribbentrop, and Hitler. Most dramatic was written communication between ex-king Duke of Windsor Edward VIII, Wallis Simpson, and Hitler. Edward VIII was clearly being groomed by Hitler during the mid-1930's. The records were controversial at the time, and taken to London for review and safekeeping. In the popular TV series, "The Crown", season 2, episode 6 "Vergangenheit," the Octofoil can be seen on the soldiers shoulders. An excellent review of the Marberg files is provided by Yuri Beckers on his 9<sup>th</sup> Division website: <https://9thininfantrydivision.net/the-marburg-files/>.

From **Eight Stars to Victory**, page 349:

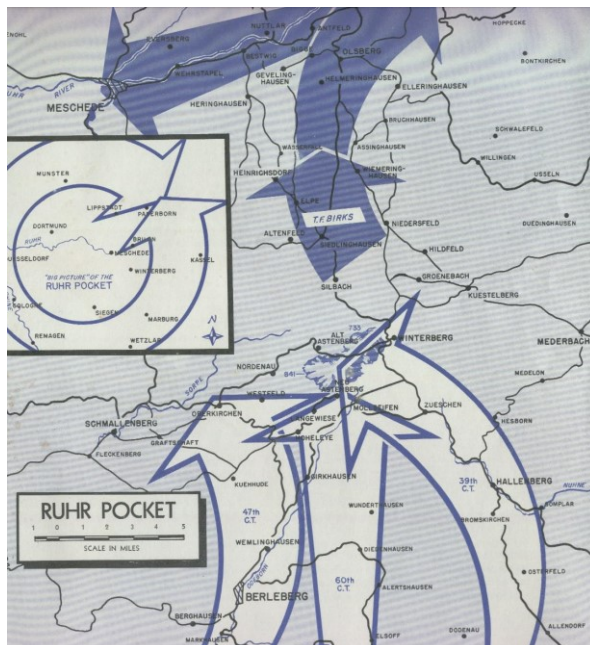


Figure 79 The Ruhr Pocket Map

### **Hallenberg (April 1, 1945)**

*At one-fifteen that crisp morning the AAA-O infantrymen jumped off from the vicinity of Hallenberg with their 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion on the left and the 1<sup>st</sup> on the right. Up the winding draw which leads to Zueschen and Winterberg plodded the infantry. Paralleling the roadway was the Nuhne stream line, and in places one could see the railroad track winding through the natural gorge. Little resistance was met by the advancing regiment until daylight; then small-arms fire, Riegel mines and roadblocks got in its way. The push slowed down somewhat, not only because of this hostile obstacle course of war, but for the reason that poor visibility was increasing hourly. At 9:45 PM the leading elements were ordered to halt because of this bad weather.<sup>123</sup>*

### **Zueschen-Wintersberg Road (April 3-April 4, 1945)**

*The 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion had been sweeping since morning to clear the hilly region west of the Zueschen-Wintersberg road. By late afternoon their mission was accomplished, but Company F had pushed too far forward until it was without any flanking protection. As a consequence, an enemy tank-infantry group of much greater strength popped the Falcon platoon off its hill.*

*The 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion marched up to relieve the 1st in the key town of Winterberg. As the 3<sup>rd</sup> was positioning itself in the area, it became the recipient of heavy and determined enemy tank and mortar fire; and German infantry troops tried to make things uncomfortable for the newly-arrived battalion. Much of the foe's strength lay in his commanding position a top Hill 841. Here, in the tower of the Astenberg, he had an unsurpassed view of what the Americans were doing, and here he held sway during the early part of the action.*

*That was to change, however, for Company L moved out of the Winterberg area, up the hills to the west and in a most important engagement defeated the defenders of the Astenberg. The dominating hill was secured by nine-twenty that evening and its capture increased the hold which the Ninth Division had on the enemy's highly prized breakout area.<sup>124</sup>*

### **Silbach (April 5, 1945)**

*The 39<sup>th</sup> pushed out with all three battalions against enemy defenses of small arms, tanks, S.P. guns, mortars, and artillery. Men of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion captured Silbach, up the road from Winterberg, and as the day ended the 1st Battalion was launching an evening drive on Siedlinghausen, 2,500 yards north of Silbach.<sup>125</sup>*

### **Siedlinghausen (April 6, 1945)**



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*The 39<sup>th</sup>'s 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion carried on its bitter fight for Siedlinghausen early in the morning, and that town was pocketed by the battalion by 1:35 P.M., following a rough and tumble engagement with a group of stubborn enemy infantry backed by tanks.<sup>126</sup>*

**Heinrichsdorf, Altenfeld, and Elpe (April 7, 1945)**

*In the zone of the 39<sup>th</sup>, the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalions launched with great speed their contribution to the Division's 8 A.M. attack. The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion hiked forward against mounting resistance to capture Elpe by nightfall. From the very moment the 2<sup>nd</sup> began to move to the line of departure it was engaged in fighting. Nevertheless, that evening both Heinrichsdorf and Altenfeld, to the north and south respectively of Elpe, were secured by the 2<sup>nd</sup>.<sup>127</sup>*

**Elpe (April 7, 1945)**

*. . . the 39<sup>th</sup> sent forward its 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalions against roadblocks, mines, booby traps, and smallarms fire, as the strangling noose drew even tighter around the Ruhr Pocket.<sup>128</sup>*

**Franklin Roosevelt Dies (April 12, 1945)**

**Nordhausen (April 14, 1945)**

*Arriving at the city of Nordhausen on April 14<sup>th</sup>, the Ninth beheld a sight long to be remembered, for the Division had come face-to-face with one of Germany's most notorious concentration camps. The carnage and horror had been uncovered by tankers of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Armored and infantrymen of the 104<sup>th</sup> Division, and scenes beyond belief met the eye. The living were too emaciated to move their limbs, the dead were half-buried. Germany's S.S. troops had stacked bodies in ditches . . . to make burial easier after the inmates had died!<sup>129</sup>*

**Stolberg, Schwenda, Wolfsberg, Rotha (April 11-24, 1945)**

*The Division had received orders from VII Corps to attack on 13 April to . . . continue to the East. . . the 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry to advance initially on Stolberg, Schwenda, and Wolfsberg then to attack East toward Rotha and clear the southern portion of the division zone. . . Advancing rapidly to capture Stolberg in its sector, the 39<sup>th</sup> infantry seized as well, the little towns of Rotha, Dankerode, Breitenbach, and Horla on the edge of the Wippra Forest.<sup>130</sup>*

**Wippra (April 15, 1945)**

*. . . the 39<sup>th</sup> flushed out and secured Wippra, Friesdorf, Hainrode, and Morungen. Then at 1:10 P.M. the AAA-O 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion was directed to proceed east by means of a forced march and head for Gerbstedt, which was out of the woods and in the gently-sloping hills on the rim of the Harz fortress. From Gerbstedt, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion was directed to fan out and occupy the towns of Sandersleben, Belleben and Alsleben—the hamlets which form an axis to the north of Gerbstedt. . . . the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion shot toward its objectives and both Sandersleben and Belleben were taken by midnight. . . . it was noted in the Ninth Division Report of Operations that: The move of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry marked the first maneuver necessary to the execution of the new plan of attack for the Division which involved moving North and Northwest to contact the Ninth Army and to cut off the enemy units still holding out in the Harz mountains. 808 prisoners were taken.<sup>131</sup>*

#### **Alsleben (April 16, 1945)**

*Earlier that morning, at 4 A.M. to be exact, the 39<sup>th</sup> 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion began its fight against Alsleben. Three and a half hours later, The 2nd Battalion swept forward to clean the area from Friesdorf and Wippra to the slopes of the Vatterova and the road junction 2000 yards to the southeast of the latter town. Alsleben was taken in spite of opposition from small arms and mortars and Schielo, a forest clearing town approximately 5,000 yards southeast of Harzgerode fell on this day.<sup>132</sup>*

#### **Ashersleben (April 17, 1945)**

*The 39<sup>th</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion punched toward Ashersleben - the major small city of the area and a key center of rail and motor transportation. Ashersleben controlled the major routes from the Harz Mountains to the Elbe . . . Mortars, bazookas, and small-arms fire blasted their reply to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion; and as evening approached, the 2<sup>nd</sup> was having a “whale of a fight” inside the city of Aschersleben, the hometown of field Marshal von Rundstedt . . . by midnight the regiment had kicked the enemy out of seven more towns and villages along the Wippra-Aschersleben axis.<sup>133</sup>*

#### **Quedlinburg (April 18, 1945)**

*The 39<sup>th</sup> barreled through town after town as though they were on a railroad schedule. By nightfall this combination was fighting for possession of Quedlinburg, the nearest point to the Ninth Army troops that the Ninth Division had reached.*

*The collapse of the enemy resisting within the Ruhr pocket came on April 18<sup>th</sup>, and with that strongpoint lost the Wehrmacht began to focus its attention on the*

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*last remaining regions it held in the west. These were the Harz pocket and the Leipzig sector, plus some pocket of resistance along the Mulde River. German attempts to relieve the beleaguered garrison in the Harz Mountains proved very unsuccessful, however, and the reduction of that salient continued.*

*One of the biggest single factors in eliminating the final resistance in this fortress region was Task Force X. The cavalry under command of a Colonel McDonald, and the 39<sup>th</sup> C.T. under the temporary command of 24-year-old Lt. Colonel Frank Gunn ("probably the youngest man to command a regiment in combat") combined all their resources and worked together as a team. Because of this cooperation between the infantry and the cavalry, and because of their interchanging of commanders and common use of facilities, a new high in efficiency for joint operations was reached. In its brief period of activation from April 18-24, the task force literally "took out the rear" of the Eleventh S. S. Panzer Army and helped seal the Harz Pocket.<sup>134</sup>*

From **Eight Stars to Victory**, page 361:



Figure 80 Map of the Magdeburg Area

**Drohndorf (April 21, 1945)**

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*The 39<sup>th</sup> Regiment, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Company G met an enemy force consisting of a company of well-armed Germans with a 40mm gun in their support at Drohndorf. These Krouts did not want to give up their town, and evening found the enemy still holding out. Evidently this group was fighting to the death.*

*Drohndorf was 4000 yards northwest up the highway and railroad line from Sandersleben, and now it was the last objective of the Ninth Division's infantry. At 1:15 AM April 21, 1945, Drohndorf was captured by the 39th Infantry.<sup>135</sup>*



Figure 81 Cpl. Richard Kann with the Litter Jeep

The following story by Dale E. Smith describes the capture of 40 German prisoners by his Medic team near the close of the war:

*Somewhere along the way Richard [Kann] was given the job of driving the litter jeep. That was thought to be a good job, but nothing in combat is perfect. The war went on and on. We were forever moving further east. By April, we were getting close to where we could go (meaning the boundary of the American zone). Col. Frank Gunn called me into his CP. He gave me instructions to go to the E Co area with the litter jeep and pick up some wounded there. I took the litter squad with Richard driving. When we arrived at the site of a very small German country village, there was no one in sight. I said lets go to the first big house. That is where they will be. We drove to the house, and went inside. When we got inside, Richard and I got the shock of our life. There were about 12 German soldiers in there staring at us. They had all their rifles stacked in a circle so all of them leaned against each other. After a few tense moments, one of the Germans said "comrade," and held his hands up above his shoulders. Since there was more rifles than soldiers, I knew there were more there. I said to the*

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*German, get the ones upstairs and the ones in the cellar and the ones in the barn and other houses. They kept coming, and I had them line up outside. When they were all there I walked in front with one litter bearer on each side and Richard drove the jeep behind. There was about 40 of the prisoners. We marched them about a ¼ mile out of the village. We came to a deep ravine on our right side. I heard someone in the ravine shouting. When I looked good, it was E Co. who I knew well. We took the prisoners right down to E Co. and turned them over to Capt. Hill. The Capt. said when we went past them into the village, he called Col. Gunn and told him the medics went past E Company and drove right into the German hands. Capt. Hill said the Col. told him to capture that village and take it at all cost and get those medics out of there. Now everyone could say all is well that ends well! It was only a few more weeks that we were at Dessau on the Elbe River, where the war was over."*<sup>136</sup>

*Thus closed the last big battle in which the Ninth Infantry Division engaged. Thus, too, did Company G of the 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry become the last company in the last battle to capture a town for the Ninth Division.*<sup>137</sup>

*From Carl Heintze, Army, Co. L., 39<sup>th</sup> Regt., 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. Pfc., Bronze Star Medal, "We ended the war in Dessau, Germany, at the confluence of the Elbe and Mulde River!"*<sup>138</sup>

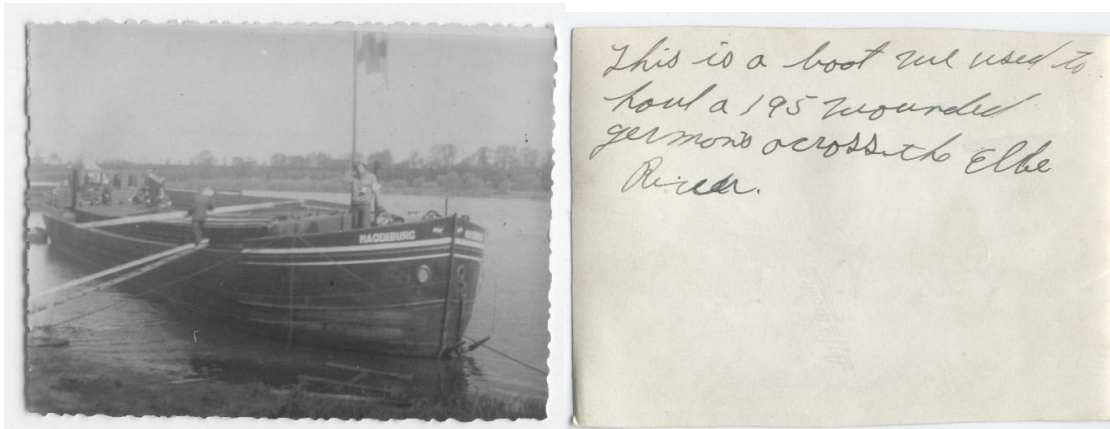


Figure 82 Transporting wounded Germans across the Elbe

### Dessau (April 25, 1945)

*In a last great move of the war against Germany, the Division journeyed east and began relieving the 3<sup>rd</sup> Armored Division of its zone along the Mulde River in the*



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*vicinity of Dessau. Patrols were sent over the Mulde River and returned with unbelievably large amounts of prisoners. And for safety's sake, a no man's land was established so that Russians and Americans would not be firing into one another. As the hours wore by, immense numbers of German civilians and enemy troops were swept in front of the Russians advancing toward the Elbe River. The river bank was crowded with persons trying to cross into American lines. Wehrmacht detachments surrendered by the thousands. But only liberated Allied prisoners and German soldiers who wished to surrender were allowed to cross . . . although many civilians tried every method possible to gain entry to the West Bank. . . . At 6:30 on the following evening, a patrol of the 60<sup>th</sup> Infantry's 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion contacted elements of the Russian Forces . . . the Eastern and Western fronts were linked at last!* <sup>139</sup>



Figure 83 Dessau

## Junkers JU 390 Abandoned



Figure 84 Burned German Junkers JU 390 at Dessau

While at Dessau, Cpl. Kann photographed a “burned German 6 motor job”, as described near the end of his May 29, 1945 letter. This was most likely the experimental Junkers JU 390 that the Germans were developing for long distance flights and possible delivery of an atomic bomb. The following description from Wikipedi link ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Junkers\\_Ju\\_390](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Junkers_Ju_390)) describes the plane and places it at Dessau in May of 1945:

*The Junkers Ju 390 V1 was constructed and largely assembled at Junkers' plant at [Dessau](#) in Germany and the first test flight took place on 20 October 1943.<sup>[3]</sup> This was done by adding an additional wing section and powerplants and adding a fuselage section immediately aft of the wings to increase the length to 31 m (102 ft). Its performance was satisfactory enough that the Air Ministry ordered 26 in addition to the two prototypes. On 29 June 1944, the Luftwaffe Quartermaster General noted that the [RLM](#) paid Junkers to complete seven Ju-390 aircraft.<sup>[4]</sup> The contracts for 26 Ju 390s were cancelled on 20 June 1944 and all work ceased in September 1944. On 26 November 1943, the Ju 390 V1—with many other new aircraft and prototypes—was shown to Adolf Hitler at [Insterburg, East Prussia](#).<sup>[5]</sup> According to the logbook of former Junkers [test pilot Hans-Joachim Pancherz](#), the Ju 390 V1 was brought to Prague immediately after it had been displayed at Insterburg and took part in a number of test flights, which continued until March 1944, including tests of [inflight refueling](#).<sup>[6]</sup> The Ju 390 V1 was returned to Dessau in November 1944,*



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where it was stripped of parts and finally destroyed in late April 1945 as the US Army approached.

Different sources present different accounts of the history of the Ju 390 V2. Kössler and Ott (1993) stated that the Ju 390 V2 was completed during June 1944, with flight tests beginning in late September 1944.<sup>[6]</sup> The second prototype (Ju 390 V2) was configured for a maritime reconnaissance role, and its fuselage had been extended by 2.5 m (8.2 ft) for a total of length of 33.5 m (110 ft) and it was said to be equipped with FuG 200 Hohentwiel ASV (Air to Surface Vessel) radar and defensive armament consisting of five 20 mm [MG 151/20 cannon](#).<sup>[7]</sup> Green (1970) wrote that the armament was four 20 mm MG 151/20s and three 13 mm (.51 in) [MG 131 machine guns](#). At a hearing before British authorities on 26 September 1945, Professor [Heinrich Hertel](#), chief designer and technical director of Junkers Aircraft & Motor Works, asserted the Ju-390 V2 had never been completed.<sup>[8]</sup> German author Friedrich Georg claimed in his book that [test pilot](#) Oberleutnant Joachim Eisermann recorded in his logbook that he flew the V2 prototype (RC+DA) on 9 February 1945 at [Rechlin air base](#). The log is said to have recorded a handling flight lasting 50 minutes and composed of circuits around Rechlin, while a second 20-minute flight was used to ferry the prototype to Lärz.<sup>[9]</sup> Kay (2004) stated that the second Ju 390 prototype was discarded without being flown because of a July 1944 RLM decree sanctioning an end to all large combat plane programs in Nazi Germany in favor of the Emergency Fighter Program.<sup>[10]</sup> Pancherz himself stated in 1980 that only the first Ju 390 flew and cast doubt on all claims of the Ju 390 making a test flight to New York.

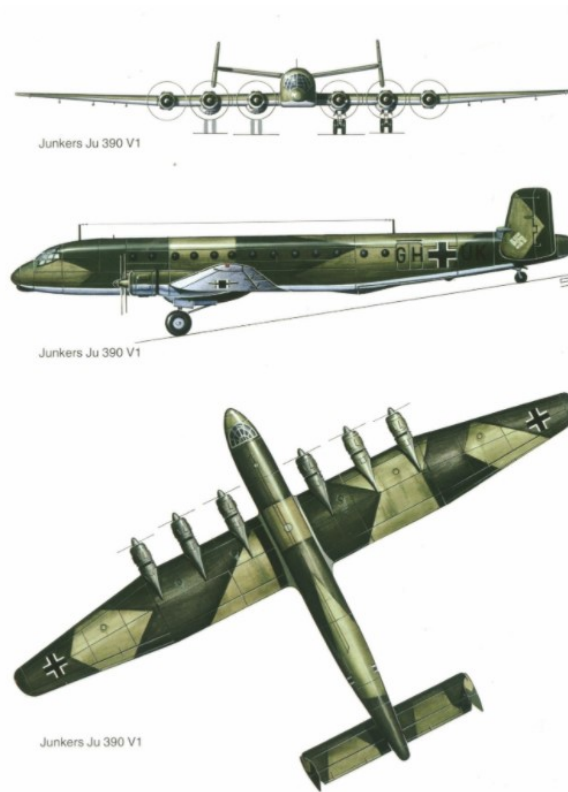


Figure 85 Junkers JU 390 drawings from pinterest.com

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**Pratau (April 30, 1945)**

Major General Craig greeted the Russian Major General Sohonov and other Russian military leaders at Pratau on the west bank of the Elbe River.

**Pratau (May 4, 1945)**

*It was on May 4<sup>th</sup>, as well, that the last man of the war to be a casualty in the Ninth Division was evacuated. He was Private First Class Richard T. Seace of Company E, 39<sup>th</sup> infantry. Moreover, according to official records, Pfc. Seace was the only casualty in the Ninth for the first nine days of May. <sup>140</sup>*

**Chapter 11 Illustration Credits:**

Figures 74, 77, 78, 79, from the author's collection

Figures 75, 76, from Eight Stars to Victory, Mittelman

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Chapter Twelve

UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER MAY 9, 1945

Commendation from General Bradley (May 15, 1945)

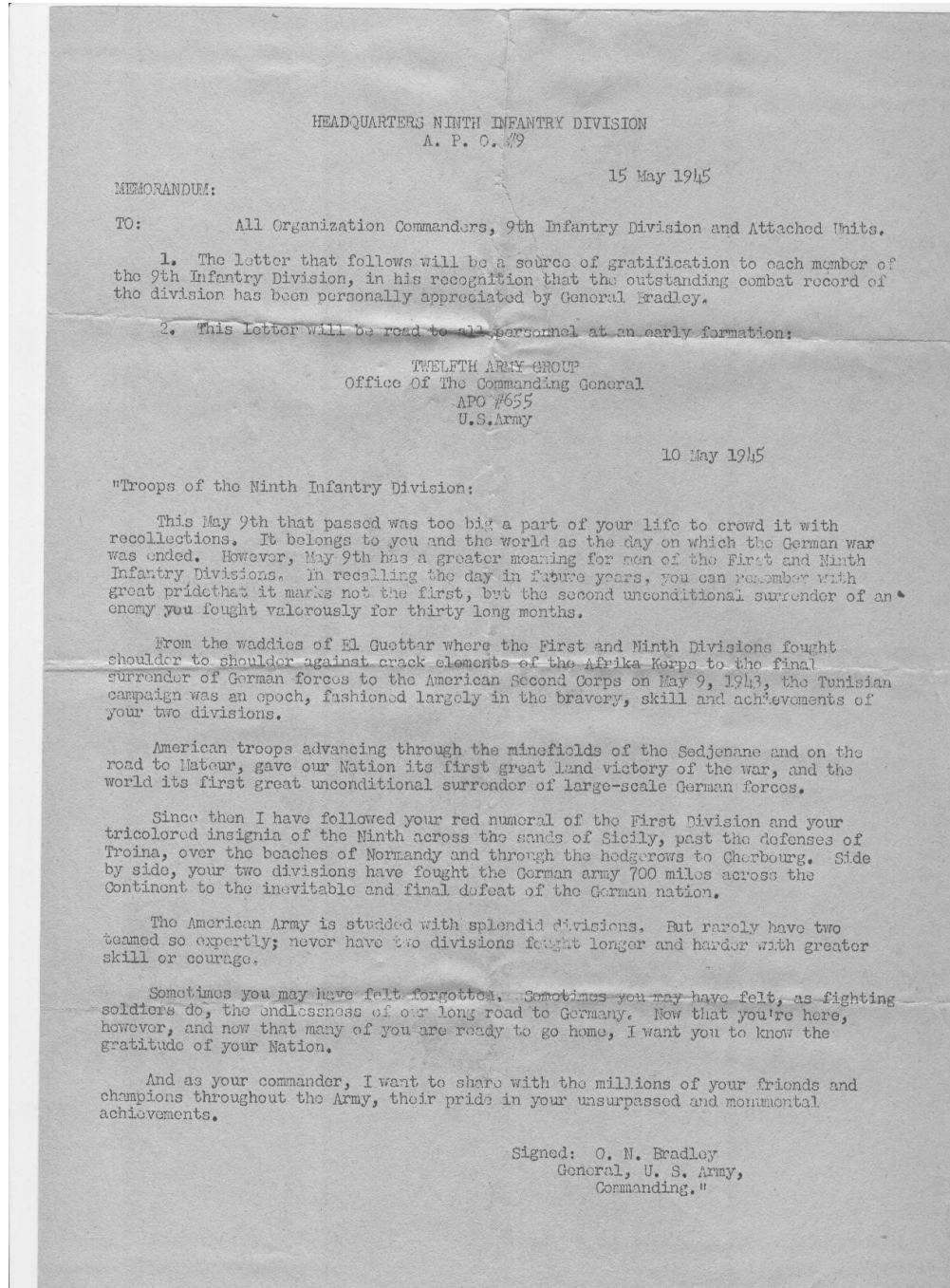


Figure 86 Commendation from General Bradley

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Figure 87 Nazis Quit

Medics Dale Smith and Richard Kann at the end of the war. In the following poem, Dale Smith reveals his thoughts about the war and his service<sup>141</sup>



Figure 88 Dale Smith and Richard Kann

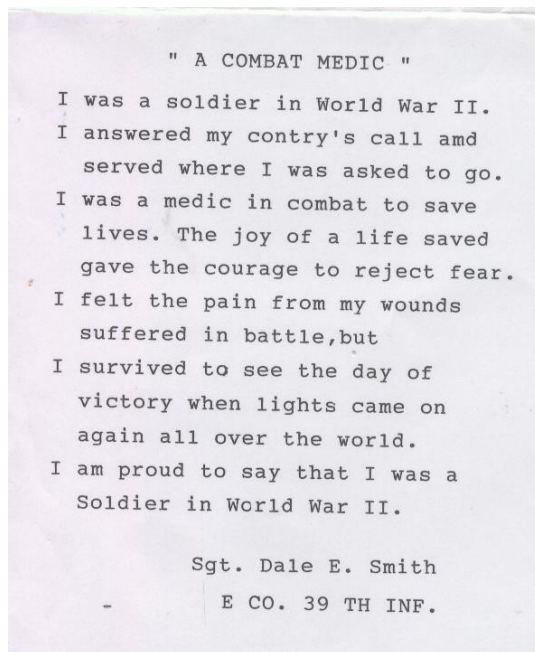


Figure 89 Poem - A Combat Medic

### **Ingolstadt, Pottmes, Gaulzhofen (May 22, 1945)**

Men of the 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry moved by truck down the excellent stretches of the Autobahn and its alternate routes, to make good time from the highways of Dessau to the area southwest of Ingolstadt . . . the weather was cool and overcast. Regimental headquarters was set up in the vicinity of Aichach, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion bivouacked around Zerst and the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalions hung their helmets in the Gaulzhafen and Pottmes areas.



Figure 90 Crossing the Danube at Ingolstadt

### **Schrobenhausen (May through October 1945)**

After the war ended at the Elbe River, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion served with the occupation force at an aid station in Schrobenhausen, a small town between Ingolstadt and Munich. During this period that Richard wrote that he made two sightseeing trips into Munich where he saw Hitler's Beer Garden, the Royal Palace, and the Zoo.

### **Metz**



Metz is located on the Moselle River. Cpl. Kann drove several officers to Luxembourg on a three day pass, traveling through Manheim and Metz. He commented that "Manheim was leveled, but Luxembourg is good."

Figure 91 American Red Cross in Metz



### **General Patton Reviews Ninth Division on 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary (August 1, 1945)**

Cecil Jenkins, 39<sup>th</sup> Co I, later remembers, the “massive parade in July 1945 when the entire 9<sup>th</sup> Division gathered on an airfield in Germany to pass in review for Gen. George Patton. Patton had not been in command of the 9<sup>th</sup> since the early battles of the war in Africa, but in his gravelly profane voice, he remembered those early days as he spoke to them. In his usual grandiose manner, Patton had landed in a C-47 after all the troops were lined up and he had a seven vehicle procession to take him from the plane to the reviewing stand.” (From the 9<sup>th</sup> Division Association Octofoil newsletter, August 1990, page 3)

*From the AAA-O News, August 3, 1945: General George S. Patton, Commanding General of the Third Army, reviewed and addressed units of the Ninth Division on its Fifth Anniversary last Wednesday August 1<sup>st</sup> at the Manching Airport near Ingolstadt. Arriving at the airport in a C-47, General Patton received the four flourishes of a four star general from trumpeters of the Division band, then swept up to the reviewing stand in his car, escorted by eight “blitz buggies” and several motorcycles. As he approached the reviewing stand, the General, flanked by his aides, again received his four flourishes, this time from the Division band, a seventeen gun salute from howitzers of the Division Artillery, and then inspected the Division from an open scout car. With the massed colors of the Division for a background, General Patton presented a third Oak Leaf Cluster to Colonel Van H. Bond for his Silver Star, a DSC to Lt. Malcolm B. Gott, formerly of Company H, a Legion of Merit to Brigadier General Reese M. Howell of Division Artillery, and 5 Silver Star Medals to other members of the Division. He next presented five Presidential Citations to units of the Division, one to the 39<sup>th</sup>'s Second Battalion for action near Le Desert, France, last July when it “fought off and crushed an enemy armored threat to break through to Isigny and separate the Allied forces.” General Patton, in his address to the members of the Division, mentioned the last time he spoke to the Ninth in Sicily. Expressing sorrow that so many members of the Division who fought in Africa and Sicily are no longer here. General Patton said, “We should not be sorry that these men died so much as we should be glad that they were born and lived. There are probably few Divisions in the world in your class,” said General Patton. The General went on to say that it is up to the men who fought to prevent another war, but “we cannot prevent wars by being weak any more than we can prevent fires by abolishing the fire department.” Wishing the Division “many happy returns of the day” on the Fifth Anniversary, General Patton remarked the he “can hardly think of another Division that has written its name so large upon the scroll of history.”*

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**Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Bavaria (July 15, 1945)**

While attached briefly to the 10<sup>th</sup> Armored Division preparing to return home, Cpl. Kann participated in the 10<sup>th</sup> Armored's 3<sup>rd</sup> anniversary celebration and another General Patton review. The program follows:

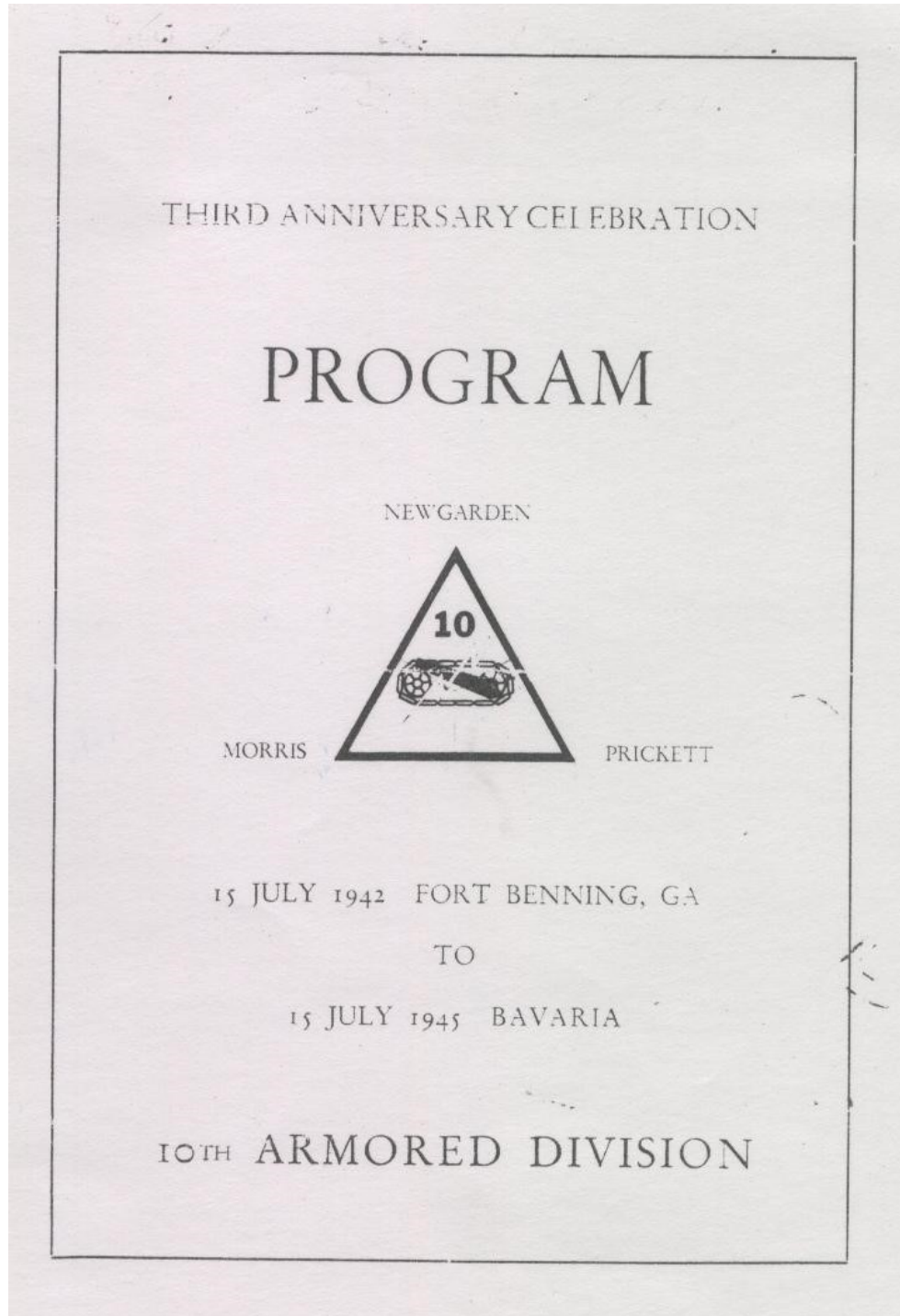


Figure 92 Anniversary celebration in Bavaria

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## SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

### Saturday 14 July 1945

- 1020 Division Dismounted Review  
Reviewing Officers —  
General George S. Patton, Jr.  
Major General Fay B. Prickett  
Commander of Troops —  
Colonel Basil G. Thayer
- 1100 Mounted March to Garmisch
- 1300 USO Show — "Flying High"  
Ice Stadium  
Midway  
Unit Messes, Short orders  
Scenic Trips —  
Busses leave vicinity of Ice Stadium  
Swimming — Kainzen See
- 1500 Softball Game —  
14th Armd Div vs 10th Armd Div  
MP Diamond  
Moving Pictures —  
Theaters 1 and 2, Garmisch  
Midway  
Unit Messes, Short orders  
Swimming — Kainzen See  
Scenic Trips
- 1730 USO Show — "Flying High"  
Ice Stadium  
Moving Pictures  
Midway  
Unit Messes, Short orders  
Scenic Trips  
Swimming — Kainzen See
- 1930 Jam Band Contest on Midway
- 2030 Lights Out

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SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Sunday 15 July 1945

- 0900 Religious services in unit areas.  
to Special Remembrances for all past  
1200 and present members of the 10th  
Armored Division
- 1300 USO Show — "Diamond Horseshoe"  
Ice Stadium  
Midway  
Unit Messes, Short orders  
Scenic Trips —  
Busses leave vicinity of Ice Stadium  
Swimming — Kainzen See
- 1500 Softball Game —  
13th FA Brigade vs 10th Armd Div  
MP Diamond  
Moving Pictures —  
Theaters 1 and 2, Garmisch  
Midway  
Unit Messes, Short orders  
Swimming — Kainzen See  
Scenic Trips
- 1730 USO Show — "Diamond Horseshoe"  
Ice Stadium  
Moving Pictures  
Midway  
Unit Messes, Short orders  
Scenic Trips  
Swimming — Kainzen See
- 1930 Jam Band Contest on Midway
- 2030 Lights Out



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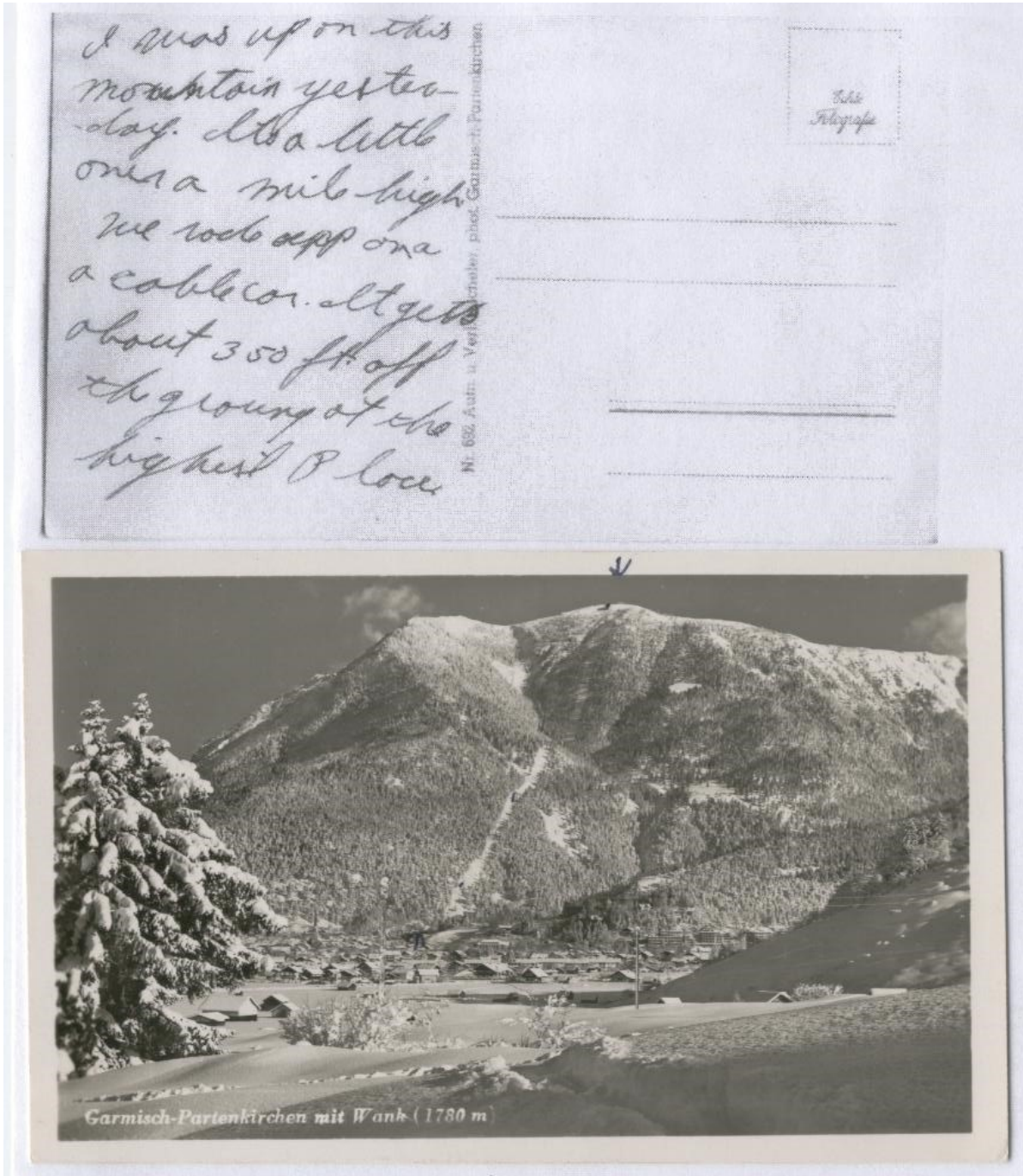


Figure 93 Ski Lift Garmisch-Patenkirchen

In a postcard to his parents, Cpl. Richard Kann wrote, "I went up here."

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**Oberau, Austria (August 1945)**



Figure 94 Hotel in Oberau by Estergebirge Mountains

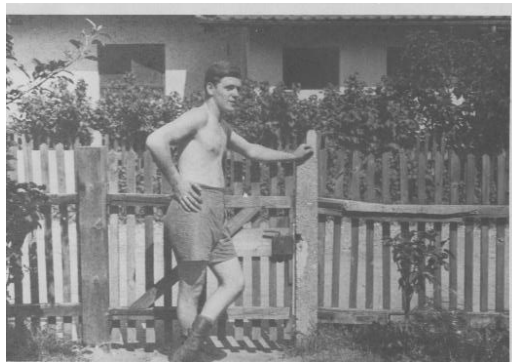


Figure 95 Cpl. Kann in Bavaria

**Chapter 12 Illustration Credits:**

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## Chapter Thirteen

### DISCHARGE

Cpl. Richard Kann was attached to the 14th Armored Division, 62nd Armored Infantry for return home. They left from Munich by train (box cars) for Le Havre.

Donald Lavender describes the trip by train to Le Havre:

*We had a new box car with a stove and straw on the floor. Stop over points had been established and about once a day, we came to sidings where hot chow was available and a place to wash up. Once during the trip, we passed a small cemetery in the middle of a large field. The American flag floated over it in majestic silence. The usual hum that prevailed in our train car ceased and everyone just looked. We were thinking of those resting there who would never see their homeland again—those who had not been so fortunate as we.*<sup>142</sup>

At Le Havre they boarded Liberty Ships and sailed to Boston. From Boston, Richard took the train to Indiantown Gap in Pennsylvania.

Technician 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Richard B. Kann was discharged from the Army on October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1945 at Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania after serving for 21 months. He had earned the Combat Medical Badge, Purple Heart with two clusters, Distinguished Unit Badge, EAME Service Medal with five Battle Stars, and the Bronze Star.

Technician 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Dale E. Smith was discharged from the Army on October 27, 1945 . . . . [and] *had earned the Combat Medical Badge, Purple Heart with cluster, Distinguished Unit Badge, EAME Service Medal with five Battle stars, Victory and Occupation Medals, and the Silver Star.*<sup>143</sup>

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ARMY OF THE UNITED STATES

HONORABLE DISCHARGE

This is to Certify That

RICHARD B KANN 33 511 953 Technician Fifth Grade

Medical Detachment 62nd Armored Infantry Battalion

ARMY OF THE UNITED STATES

is hereby Honorably Discharged from the military  
service of the United States of America.

This certificate is awarded as a testimonial of  
Honest and Faithful Service to this country.

Given at SEPARATION CENTER  
Indiantown Gap Mil Res Penna

Date 2 October 1945

/s/ BJ Ambrose

B J AMBROSE  
Major AC

I hereby certify that this  
is a true, literal and exact  
copy of the original discharge  
certificate of Richard B Kann

*Elizabeth Constantine*

NOTARY PUBLIC  
My Commission Expires at the end  
of the next Session of Senate

Figure 96 Discharge Papers

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 FROM NORMANDY TO THE ELBE

2 24

ENLISTED RECORD AND REPORT OF SEPARATION  
 HONORABLE DISCHARGE

1. Last name-first-middle Kann Richard B		2. Army Serial No. 33 511 953	3. Grade T/5	4. Arm or Service MD
5. Component AUS	6. Organization MD 62nd Armd Inf Bn	7. Date Sep. 2 Oct 45	8. Place of Separation Sep Ctr IGMR Penna	
9. Perm. ADR. for Mailing Purposes Route #4 York Penna		10. Date Birth 5 Apr 25	11. Place of Birth Conewago TWP Penna	
12. Address from which applicant will be sought See 9		13. Color Eyes Hazel	14. Color Hair Brown	15. Height 5'7 $\frac{1}{2}$ "
				16. Weight 165
				17. No. Open. 0
18. RACE White Negro Other X		19. MARITAL STATUS Single Married Other X	20. No. Children Yes No X	21. Occupation and No. Core Cleaner 8-82-10
MILITARY HISTORY				
22. Date Induct. 28 Jun 43	23. Date Enlist. 28 Jun 43	24. Date Entry Active Service	25. Place Entry Serv Harrisburg Penna	
26. Registered Yes No X	27. Local U.S. AD 3	28. Co & State York Penna	29. Home Address Time Entry See 9	
30. Milit. Occupational Specialty & No. Litter Bearer 657		31. MILITARY QUAL. Badges Com Med Badge 45		
32. Battles and Campaigns GO 33 40 WD 45 Normandy Northern France Rhineland Ardennes Central Europe				
33. Decorations and Citations Bronze Star Medal Purple Heart Medal with 2 Oak Leaf Clusters Good Conduct Medal European African Middle Eastern				

Note: Organization indicates the attached infantry battalion attachment for transfer home, not the organization served under in combat.

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Service Medal with 5 Bronze Service Stars Distinguished Unit Badge									
34. Wounds Received in Action									
26 Jul 44 France		9 Oct 44 Germany			1 Mar 45 Germany				
35. LATEST IMMUNIZATION DATES					36. SERVICE OUTSIDE CONT. U.S. & RETURN				
Smallpox	Typhoid	Tetanus	Other		Date Depart.	Destinatn	Date Arriv.		
28 Jul 43	5 Sep 45	25 Feb 44	Typhus		14 Dec 43	England	20 Dec 43		
37. TOTAL LENGTH OF SERVICE					9 Sep 45	U S	18 Sep 45		
Continental Serv. Foreign Service					38. Highest Grade Held				
Yrs.	Mos.	Days	Yrs.	Mos.	T/5				
0	6	0	1	9					
39. Prior Service					40. Reason and Authority for Separation				
None					AR 615-365 15 Dec 44 Convenience of the Government RR1-1 Demobilization				
41. Service Schools Attended					42. EDUCATION				
None					Grammar	High	Col.		
					8	6	0		
PAY DATA									
43. Longevity		44. M. O. P.		45. Deposits		46. Travel		47. Total Amt. Name	
Yrs.	Mos.	Days	Total	This Pmt				Disburs.	Officer
2	3	5	\$300.	\$100.	None	\$2.35		\$162.49	MAJ MAHER JR
INSURANCE NOTICE									
48. Kind of Insurance			49. How Paid		50. Effective Date		51. Date next		
NAT'L SVC. U.S. GOVT NONE			ALLOT. DIR. V. A.		Discontinuance		Premium		
X			X		30 Sep 45		31 Oct 45		
52. Premium Due Each Month					53. Intention of Veteran To				
\$6.40					Continue Cont. Only Discontinue				
					X				
54. Right		55. Remarks							
Thumb Print		Lapel Button Issued							
Print		ASR Score (12 May 45) 85							
56. Signature of Person Being Separated					57. Personnel Officer				
/s/ Richard B Kann					MILTON GOTTESMAN /s/ Milton Gottesman 1st Lt INF				

Note: Line 34, Wounds Received in Action, are taken as the only source accurate dates of wounds available.

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2-24

### SEPARATION                      ARMY                      RECORD

### QUALIFICATION

LAST NAME—FIRST NAME—MIDDLE INITIAL <b>KANN RICHARD B</b>		ARMY SERIAL NO. <b>33 511 953</b>	GRADE <b>Tec5</b>	DATE OF ENTRY INTO ACTIVE SERVICE <b>28 Jun 43</b>	SEX <b>M</b>	DATE OF BIRTH <b>5 Apr 25</b>
PERMANENT ADDRESS FOR MAILING PURPOSES (Street and No.—City—County—State) <b>RT 4 York, York County, Pennsylvania</b>						

#### CIVILIAN EDUCATION

HIGHEST GRADE COMPLETED <b>8</b>	LAST YEAR OF ATTENDANCE <b>1938</b>	HIGHEST DEGREE RECEIVED <b>Diploma</b>	MAJOR COURSE OF STUDY <b>Academic</b>	NAME AND ADDRESS OF LAST SCHOOL ATTENDED <b>York County, Pa.</b>
-------------------------------------	--	---	--	---

#### OTHER TRAINING OR SCHOOLING

COURSE	NO. HRS.	COURSE	NO. HRS.	COURSE	NO. HRS.	COURSE	NO. HRS.

#### SERVICE EDUCATION

SERVICE SCHOOL	COURSE	WKS. OR HRS.	RATING	ARMY SPECIALIZED TRAINING PROGRAM			
				INSTITUTION WHERE ENROLLED	CURRICULUM AND TERM (COURSE OF TRAINING PURSUED)	NO. OF WEEKS	GRADUATED YES NO

#### CIVILIAN OCCUPATIONS

MAIN OCCUPATION (Title) <b>CORE CLEANER 8-82.10</b>	SECONDARY OCCUPATION (Title)
JOB SUMMARY <b>Cleaned cores, by grinding and filing rough spots from baked cores, used files abrasive wheels, power and hand tools.</b>	JOB SUMMARY

NO. OF YEARS	LAST DATE OF EMPLOYMENT	NAME AND ADDRESS OF EMPLOYER	NO. OF YEARS	LAST DATE OF EMPLOYMENT	NAME AND ADDRESS OF EMPLOYER
<b>1 1/2</b>	<b>Jun 43</b>	<b>Cochran Brass Co. York, Pa.</b>			

#### MILITARY SPECIALTIES

YEARS	MONTHS	GRADE	PRINCIPAL DUTY	ASSIGNMENTS					PRINCIPAL DUTY	ARMY CODE NO.
				YEARS	MONTHS	GRADE				
	<b>3</b>	<b>Pvt</b>	<b>Basic Tng. Med</b>	<b>521</b>						
	<b>2</b>	<b>Tec5</b>	<b>Litter Bearer</b>	<b>657</b>						

SUMMARY OF MILITARY OCCUPATION AND CIVILIAN CONVERSIONS (Shown by title)

**LITTER BEARER:** Evacuated wounded from battlefield, used vehicles and in some cases carried litters for short distance, first aid man to casualties, fixed wounds, gave morphine and plasma.

RELATED CIVILIAN JOB: **ORDERLY HOSPITAL**

SUMMARY OF MILITARY OCCUPATION AND CIVILIAN CONVERSIONS (Shown by title)

\* THIS INFORMATION BASED ON SOLDIER'S STATEMENT. (Indicate by \* any items not supported by military records)

DATE OF SEPARATION <b>2 Oct 45</b>	SIGNATURE OF SOLDIER <i>Richard B. Kann</i>	SIGNATURE OF SEPARATION CLASSIFICATION OFFICER <i>M. E. Goldberg</i> <b>M. E. GOLDBERG Capt., AGD</b>
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WD AGO FORM 100 15 JUL 1944                      16-44046-1 ☆ U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

Figure 97 Army Separation and Qualification Record

**Chapter 13 Illustration Credits:**

All Figures are from the author's collection



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Figure 98 Richard Kann's Purple Heart with 2 Oak Clusters and the Bronze Star



Figure 99 Richard Kann's Uniform Patches

Richard Kann's shoulder sleeve insignia patches – (top row): 14<sup>th</sup> Armored Division to which he was attached briefly for return home. Meritorius Unit Citation awarded for battle on July 11, 1944. The 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division Octofoil under which he served from July 1943 to July of 1945. (bottom row): an unknown patch, Richard's dog tags with plastic heart engraved with Ilene, and Technician Fifth Grade patches.

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## EPILOGUE



Medics Richard B. Kann and Dale E. Smith remained friends for life. Dale was married with a son and two daughters. Dale's son Roy was a medic with the 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division's 60<sup>th</sup> Brigade in Vietnam. Upon hearing that Dale's son was in his command, Brigadier General Frank Gunn made a trip to the field for a visit with Roy at his command post at Thu Thua. After greeting Roy, *General Gunn recalled, "I'll never forget the look on your father's face when he came back with that platoon [and 40 German prisoners]. If you're going to do something like that, be sure you get some help."*<sup>144</sup>



Although Richard Kann and Dale Smith lived far apart, Dale first in Mt. Vernon, Ohio, and later in Junction City, Kansas – they visited each other and communicated regularly. Dale said, "Veterans in combat have a common bond unlike any other anywhere." They last communicated around Christmas in 2007. Dale relates, *"I received a Christmas card from Richard this past Christmas. He had written a very short message on the card. It said with a shaky hand, "I am not doing so good." Richard was always short on words but I was sure that he had a bigger problem. I called him on the phone, and said I was worried about how he was feeling. He told me about his aortic aneurysm and it could not be operated on. I told him that I was very troubled about his problem, but we remembered almost a year of our lives when there was no guarantee of any tomorrow, but here we are 61 years later . . . . I am so glad I called him after Christmas to let him know that our bond was still there no matter what."*<sup>145</sup>



**Richard B. Kann, Sr.** YORK Richard B. Kann, Sr., 81, died at 1 a.m. Thursday, January 11, 2007, at York Hospital. He was the husband of Ilene A. (Weigel) Kann. The couple celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on February 1, 2006. He was born April 5, 1925, in Conewago Township, a son of the late John H. and Savilla (Eisenhower) Kann. Richard was a U.S. Army Veteran of World War II, serving as a medic with the 39th Infantry Regiment of the 9th Division during the battles from Normandy, France, to Inglestadt, Germany. He was awarded the Purple Heart with two Oak Leaf Clusters, a Unit Citation, and the Bronze Star. He received the latter for his heroic action in the recovery of his wounded Regimental Commander, Col. Harry Flint, under artillery and small arms fire. Richard worked as a foundryman at Cochran's and Kopper's Foundries in York before retiring in 1980. He was a member of Dover Bethany U.M. Church. He was a former Conewago Township Supervisor, serving for 12 years. Richard was active in the Cub Scouts as Cub Master for Pack 48. He enjoyed hunting, snowmobiling, and visits to the Atlantic City Casinos. In addition to his wife, Richard is survived by two sons, Richard B. Kann, Jr. and wife Connie (Hallock) of Shady Side, Md., and Barry E. Kann and wife Cynthia (Rath) of Hummelstown, Pa.; two granddaughters, Kimberly (Kann) and husband Major Mark Podrazik, and Lisa Farber; a great-grandson, Cody Farber; and two sisters, Mary E. Baker of Manchester and Fairy J. Stare of York. Relatives and friends are respectfully invited to attend the funeral at 11 a.m., and the viewing from 10 to 11 a.m., Saturday January 13, 2007 at Emig Funeral Home, 47 N. Queen St., Dover. Burial will follow in Dover Union Cemetery. Officiating will be his pastor, the Rev. William Myers. Pallbearers are Elwood Repman, Philip Baker, Michael Kann, Clifford Farber, and Mark Podrazik. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the American Heart Association, 2997 Cape Horn Road, Red Lion, PA 17356.

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## NOTES

### Forward

<sup>1</sup> Definition of chronicle from the Wikipedia web site at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chronicle>

### Chapter One

<sup>2</sup> From a newspaper clipping at the time of Col. Flint's death.

<sup>3</sup> From a 10<sup>th</sup> Armored Division Newsletter

<sup>4</sup> From a newspaper clipping of unknown origin

### Chapter Two

<sup>5</sup> Anderson, Robert A. PADDY, The Colorful Story of Colonel Harry A. "Paddy" Flint. Westminster: Heritage Books, 2006, p.111

### Chapter Three

<sup>6</sup> Commanding General VII Corps. Report of Operation Conducted by Ninth Infantry Division, Cotantin Peninsula, France. Headquarters Ninth Infantry Division APO No 9, 14-Jul-1944, p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> Bond, Lt. Col. Van H. Operation, 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry, 11 June to 1 July 1944: A.P.O.#9, 1944, p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> Mittelman, Joseph B. Eight Stars to Victory. Columbus: F.J.Heer printing Co, 1948, p. 164.

<sup>9</sup> From a letter to the author from Dale Smith dated March 11, 2007

<sup>10</sup> Mittelman, Eight Stars to Victory, p 165.

<sup>11</sup> Bond, Operation, 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry, 11 June to 1 July 1944, p. 1.

<sup>12</sup> Bond, Operation, 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry, 11 June to 1 July 1944, p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> Mittelman, Eight Stars to Victory, p 166.

<sup>14</sup> Mittelman, Eight Stars to Victory, p 166.

<sup>15</sup> From a newspaper article by Thomas R. Henry, of the Washington Star

<sup>16</sup> Bond, Operation, 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry, 11 June to 1 July 1944, p. 1.

<sup>17</sup> Bond, Operation, 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry, 11 June to 1 July 1944, p. 2.

<sup>18</sup> From a newspaper article Col. Harry Flint Laid To Rest at St. Mere Eglise With Full Military Honors.

<sup>19</sup> Commanding General VII Corps. Report of Operation Conducted by Ninth Infantry Division, Cotantin Peninsula, France. Headquarters Ninth Infantry Division APO No 9, 14-Jul-1944, p. 6.

<sup>20</sup> Bond, Operation, 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry, 11 June to 1 July 1944, p. 2.

<sup>21</sup> Commanding General VII Corps. Report of Operation Conducted by Ninth Infantry Division, Cotantin Peninsula, France. Headquarters Ninth Infantry Division APO No 9, 14-Jul-1944, p. 9.

<sup>22</sup> Bond, Operation, 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry, 11 June to 1 July 1944, p. 2.

<sup>23</sup> Bond, Operation, 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry, 11 June to 1 July 1944, p. 2.

<sup>24</sup> Commanding General VII Corps. Report of Operation Conducted by Ninth Infantry Division, Cotantin Peninsula, France. Headquarters Ninth Infantry Division APO No 9, 14-Jul-1944, p. 12.

<sup>25</sup> Commanding General VII Corps. Report of Operation Conducted by Ninth Infantry Division, Cotantin Peninsula, France. Headquarters Ninth Infantry Division APO No 9, 14-Jul-1944, p. 12.

<sup>26</sup> Bond, Operation, 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry, 11 June to 1 July 1944, p. 3.

<sup>27</sup> Bond, Operation, 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry, 11 June to 1 July 1944, p. 3.

<sup>28</sup> Commanding General VII Corps. Report of Operation Conducted by Ninth Infantry Division, Cotantin Peninsula, France. Headquarters Ninth Infantry Division APO No 9, 14-Jul-1944, p. 14.

<sup>29</sup> From a letter to the author from Dale Smith dated March 11, 2007

<sup>30</sup> From a Washington Star newspaper clipping

<sup>31</sup> Bond, Operation, 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry, 11 June to 1 July 1944, p. 3.

<sup>32</sup> Bond, Operation, 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry, 11 June to 1 July 1944, p. 3.



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<sup>33</sup> Commanding General VII Corps. Regimental History, Thirty Ninth Infantry Regiment, 1944. p. 6.

#### Chapter Four

- <sup>34</sup> Commanding General VII Corps. Regimental History, Thirty Ninth Infantry Regiment, 1944. p. 7.  
<sup>35</sup> From a letter to the author from Dale Smith dated March 11, 2007  
<sup>36</sup> Commanding General VII Corps. Regimental History, Thirty Ninth Infantry Regiment, 1944. p. 7.  
<sup>37</sup> Mittelman, Eight Stars to Victory, p 192.  
<sup>38</sup> Ibid, p. 193.  
<sup>39</sup> Ibid, pp. 193-194.  
<sup>40</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>41</sup> Commanding General VII Corps. Regimental History, Thirty Ninth Infantry Regiment, 1944. p. 7.  
<sup>42</sup> From a letter to the author from Dale Smith dated March 11, 2007  
<sup>43</sup> The reader is referred to "Paddy", "Pawns of War", "Death of a Nazi Army, The Falaise Pocket," and "Overlord" for detailed accounts of the sniper incident.  
<sup>44</sup> from Washington Star newsclip by Thomas R. Henry, with the American troops in France.  
<sup>45</sup> From an unidentified newspaper clipping  
<sup>46</sup> From a letter to the author from Dale Smith dated March 11, 2007  
<sup>47</sup> From the Stars and Stripes newspaper  
<sup>48</sup> Commanding General VII Corps. Regimental History, Thirty Ninth Infantry Regiment, 1944. p. 19.  
<sup>49</sup> Eisenhower, David. Eisenhower: At War. New York: Random House, 1986 p.

#### Chapter Five

- <sup>50</sup> Mittelman, Eight Stars to Victory, pp, 193-194.  
<sup>51</sup> Commanding General VII Corps. Regimental History, Thirty Ninth Infantry Regiment, 1944. p. 7.  
<sup>52</sup> Commanding General VII Corps. Regimental History, Thirty Ninth Infantry Regiment, 1944. p. 7.  
<sup>53</sup> Commanding General VII Corps. Regimental History, Thirty Ninth Infantry Regiment, 1944. p. 8,  
<sup>54</sup> Mittelman, Eight Stars to Victory, p, 210.  
<sup>55</sup> Commanding General VII Corps. Regimental History, Thirty Ninth Infantry Regiment, 1944. p. 8,  
<sup>56</sup> Commanding General VII Corps. Regimental History, Thirty Ninth Infantry Regiment, 1944. p. 8,  
<sup>57</sup> Commanding General VII Corps. Regimental History, Thirty Ninth Infantry Regiment, 1944. p. 9,  
<sup>58</sup> Mittelman, Eight Stars to Victory, p. 230.  
<sup>59</sup> Mittelman, Eight Stars to Victory, p. 224.  
<sup>60</sup> Citation from the Belgian Army Order of the Day by decree No. 1391, 20 November 1945,  
by Charles Prince of Belgium.  
<sup>61</sup> Commanding General VII Corps. Regimental History, Thirty Ninth Infantry Regiment, 1944. p. 10,  
<sup>62</sup> Eisenhower, David. Eisenhower: At War. New York: Random House, 1986 p. 450.  
<sup>63</sup> Commanding General VII Corps. Regimental History, Thirty Ninth Infantry Regiment, 1944. p. 10.

#### Chapter Six

- <sup>64</sup> Commanding General VII Corps. Regimental History, Thirty Ninth Infantry Regiment, 1944. p. 10.  
<sup>65</sup> Commanding General VII Corps. Regimental History, Thirty Ninth Infantry Regiment, 1944. p. 19.  
<sup>66</sup> Mittelman, Eight Stars to Victory, p, 239.  
<sup>67</sup> Commanding General VII Corps. Regimental History, Thirty Ninth Infantry Regiment, 1944. p. 11.  
<sup>68</sup> Commanding General VII Corps. Regimental History, Thirty Ninth Infantry Regiment, 1944. p. 11.  
<sup>69</sup> Mittelman, Eight Stars to Victory, p, 245.  
<sup>70</sup> Bob Smith's letter to author's father dated 7/17/90 - Company G kicked off the hill near the dam on 9/30/44.

### Chapter Seven

- <sup>71</sup> Commanding General VII Corps. Regimental History, Thirty Ninth Infantry Regiment, 1944. p. 12.  
<sup>72</sup> Reardon. The Octofoil, April 2018. pp. 6-9.  
<sup>73</sup> Mittelman, Eight Stars to Victory, p, 257.  
<sup>74</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>75</sup> From a letter to the author from Dale Smith dated March 11, 2007  
<sup>76</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>77</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>78</sup> Heintze, Carl. World War II Stories In Their Own Words. 14 Feb. 2005. 14 Aug. 2007  
<[http://carol\\_fus.tripod.com/army\\_hero\\_carl\\_heintze.html](http://carol_fus.tripod.com/army_hero_carl_heintze.html)>.  
<sup>79</sup> Mittelman, Eight Stars to Victory, p, 259.  
<sup>80</sup> Commanding General VII Corps. Regimental History, Thirty Ninth Infantry Regiment, 1944. p. 12.  
<sup>81</sup> Commanding General VII Corps. Regimental History, Thirty Ninth Infantry Regiment, 1944. p. 12.  
<sup>82</sup> Commanding General VII Corps. Report of Operation Conducted by Ninth Infantry Division, Cotantin Peninsula, France. Headquarters Ninth Infantry Division APO No 9.  
<sup>83</sup> Trostorf, Johann. Chronicle. Reprinted with permission letter from Albert Trostorf. 24 Aug. 2008.  
<sup>84</sup> Mittelman, Eight Stars to Victory, p, 271.  
<sup>85</sup> Ibid, pp, 273-274.  
<sup>86</sup> Ibid, p, 277.  
<sup>87</sup> Commanding General VII Corps. Regimental History, Thirty Ninth Infantry Regiment, 1944. p. 12.

### Chapter Eight

- <sup>88</sup> Mittelman, Eight Stars to Victory, p. 279.  
<sup>89</sup> Mittelman, Eight Stars to Victory, p. 287.  
<sup>90</sup> Mittelman, Eight Stars to Victory, p. 288.  
<sup>91</sup> Baldwin, Leon. 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment. 24 Aug. 2008.  
[http://www.oldreliable.org/39th\\_infantry/39th\\_inf.html](http://www.oldreliable.org/39th_infantry/39th_inf.html)  
<sup>92</sup> From a letter to the author from Dale Smith dated March 11, 2007  
<sup>93</sup> Mittelman, Eight Stars to Victory, p. 289.  
<sup>94</sup> Mittelman, Eight Stars to Victory, pp. 290-291.  
<sup>95</sup> Letter to the Editor from Richard Kann published in the York Gazette on December 30, 1944.  
<sup>96</sup> Mittelman, Eight Stars to Victory, pp. 292-293.  
<sup>97</sup> Mittelman, Eight Stars to Victory, p. 303.

### Chapter Nine

- <sup>98</sup> Mittelman, Eight Stars to Victory, p. 307.  
<sup>99</sup> Mittelman, Eight Stars to Victory, p. 309.  
<sup>100</sup> Pergrin, David E. First Across the Rhine. New York: Ivy Books, 1989, p. 211.  
<sup>101</sup> Material from LIFE" magazine on March 12, 1945 Vol. 18 No. 11., pp. 25-29.  
The photographer was George Silk who recorded this small portion of the overall battle. Edward Souder has kindly supplied **World War II Stories - In Their Own Words**, the materials depicted on this page are from the web site ([http://carol\\_fus.tripod.com/army\\_roer\\_crossing.html](http://carol_fus.tripod.com/army_roer_crossing.html))  
<sup>102</sup> Breuer, William B. Storming Hitler's Rhine. New York: St. Martin's P, 1985, pp. 60-61.  
<sup>103</sup> A York Gazette newspaper clipping from Richard Kann's collection.  
<sup>104</sup> Mittelman, Eight Stars to Victory, p. 317.  
<sup>105</sup> Mittelman, Eight Stars to Victory, p. 317.

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- <sup>106</sup> Mittelman, Eight Stars to Victory, p. 318.  
<sup>107</sup> Mittelman, Eight Stars to Victory, p. 317.  
<sup>108</sup> Mittelman, Eight Stars to Victory, p. 319.  
<sup>109</sup> Breuer, William B. Storming Hitler's Rhine. pp. 151-152.  
<sup>110</sup> Mittelman, Eight Stars to Victory, p. 321.

### Chapter Ten

- <sup>111</sup> Pergrin, First Across the Rhine, p. 223.  
<sup>112</sup> A York Gazette newspaper clipping from Richard Kann's collection.  
<sup>113</sup> Pergrin, First Across the Rhine, p. 270.  
<sup>114</sup> Mittelman, Eight Stars to Victory, p. 335.  
<sup>115</sup> Mittelman, Eight Stars to Victory, p. 340.  
<sup>116</sup> *Ibid*, p. 340.

### Chapter Eleven

- <sup>117</sup> Mittelman, Eight Stars to Victory, p. 346.  
<sup>118</sup> Hetzer Tank  
<sup>119</sup> Mittelman, Eight Stars to Victory, p. 347.  
<sup>120</sup> Mittelman, Eight Stars to Victory, p. 348.  
<sup>121</sup> From the Stars and Strips Newspaper.  
<sup>122</sup> Mittelman, Eight Stars to Victory, p. 350.  
<sup>123</sup> Mittelman, Eight Stars to Victory, p. 351.  
<sup>124</sup> *Ibid*, p. 355.  
<sup>125</sup> *Ibid*, p. 357.  
<sup>126</sup> *Ibid*, p. 358.  
<sup>127</sup> *Ibid*, p. 359.  
<sup>128</sup> Mittelman, Eight Stars to Victory, p. 359.  
<sup>129</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 363-364.  
<sup>130</sup> *Ibid*.  
<sup>131</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 365-366.  
<sup>132</sup> *Ibid*.  
<sup>133</sup> *Ibid*, p. 367.  
<sup>134</sup> *Ibid*, p. 368.  
<sup>135</sup> *Ibid*, p. 370.  
<sup>136</sup> From a letter to the author from Dale Smith dated March 11, 2007  
<sup>137</sup> Mittelman, Eight Stars to Victory, p. 370.  
<sup>138</sup> Heintze, Carl. World War II Stories In Their Own Words.  
<sup>139</sup> Mittelman, Eight Stars to Victory, p. 371.  
<sup>140</sup> Mittelman, Eight Stars to Victory, p. 376.

### Chapter Twelve

- <sup>141</sup> From a letter to the author from Dale Smith dated January 13, 1995

### Chapter Thirteen

- <sup>142</sup> Lavender, Donald E. Nudge Blue, A 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division Rifleman's Memoir of World War II.  
Bennington: Merriam Press, 2008, pp. 87-88.  
<sup>143</sup> From a letter to the author from Dale Smith dated March 11, 2007  
<sup>144</sup> "Roy Smith Serves in Father's Outfit." Mount Vernon News 5 Mar. 1969.  
<sup>145</sup> From a letter to the author from Dale Smith dated March 11, 2007

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Richard and Ilene Kann return to Utah Beach in October of 1990.

**The End**