

# Recollections of World War

By  
**Ralph M. Scurry, Sr.**

Edited by Nicholas D. Ward, Esq.\*

A Publication of the  
Edgefield County Historical Society



**Ralph M. Scurry, Sr.**  
(1925-1990)

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# Edgefield County Historical Society

## History and Mission

Founded in 1939, the Edgefield County Historical Society is one of the oldest historical societies in South Carolina. The Mission of the Society, as set forth in its original charter, is “to Preserve the History of Edgefield County.”

In this era when so little of our rich American heritage is being taught to our youth, when so many of our Founding Fathers and other historic leaders are being disparaged and demonized, and when so many outlandish politicians and other protesters are attempting to tear down the statues and monuments to our past and our past leaders, the mission of the Edgefield County Historical Society has never been more important. We urge all those who appreciate the sacrifices of our ancestors and who love our American heritage to join with us in supporting our mission.

During its more than eight decades, the Society has done much to accomplish its mission: It has published many scholarly pamphlets, booklets and books on a vast variety of subjects related to the history of Edgefield County. It has sponsored many major events, including tours of historical homes and history conferences. It has promoted the preservation and restoration of historic structures and sites. It has welcomed all those who are interested in Edgefield history and provided information and guidance to authors, scholars and countless others about the county and its people.

For nearly twenty-five years, the Society has sponsored the Edgefield History Class which meets every Sunday afternoon at 3:00 p.m. It also owns and operates three museums: the Joanne T. Rainsford Discovery Center, the Magnolia Dale House Museum, and the Horn’s Creek Church Museum. The Society also produces live theatrical performances in its William Miller Bouknight Theatre which is located in the Discovery Center.

In addition to its role in preserving and promoting the rich history of the County, the Society has always been committed to using Edgefield’s history to make the County more interesting and attractive to tourists and prospective residents and businesses. Its goal is to enhance the future of Edgefield County by bringing recognition and economic vitality to the region.

For more information and for membership information and applications, visit our website: [www.historicedgefield.com](http://www.historicedgefield.com).

## INTRODUCTION BY THE EDGEFIELD COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

As the third decade of the twenty-first century unfolds, there are relatively few survivors left from that major conflagration known as World War II. Almost every significant country in the world was involved, on one side or the other, in that war which resulted in the death of an estimated 75 million persons. While most of the fighting was done in the European and Pacific theatres, military activities went on all across the globe. The War profoundly affected the history of the entire world for the balance of the twentieth century, and its impacts are still being felt up until the current time. It is hard for young people of today to appreciate the all-encompassing nature of this War in which almost all fighting-age men were drafted and sent off to fight, and in which almost all domestic economic activities were redirected to support the war effort. A whole generation of young men saw their lives turned on their ears as they joined the fight to save the world for democracy.

One such young man from Edgefield County was Ralph M. Scurry, Sr. Scurry's personal memoir, dictated to his mother after his discharge from the army in 1945, was shared with us by Scurry's son, Ralph, Jr. It is a compelling story and one which we believe needs to be shared with our members, friends and the public. Ralph has generously allowed us to publish this memoir. Edgefield History Class member, Nicholas D. Ward, Esq., volunteered to edit the memoir, providing a Preface, a Forward and footnotes to help the reader understand the context and details of the memoir. He has done an excellent job! The result is, we think, a significant contribution to our Edgefield County history, and we are pleased to publish Ralph's memoir.

We would also note that many other Edgefield County citizens played important roles in World War II. Just to name a few of the thousands<sup>1</sup> who served, Strom Thurmond, Fritz Huiet,

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<sup>1</sup> We have estimated that approximately 1,884 Edgefield County men served in the U. S. Armed services during World War II. This estimate is based upon the assumption that the percentage of those in the services from Edgefield County to the total 1940 county population was the same as the percentage of all those who served from throughout South Carolina to the total 1940 state population.

Amazingly, we have been unable to find a comprehensive list of all of those who served in World War II from Edgefield County. The *Edgefield Advertiser* printed several lists in 1942 and 1943 of those who had gone off to serve, but no such lists were found for the full years of 1943, 1944 and 1945. We inquired with the Edgefield County Veterans Affairs Office in hopes that they might have such a list. They did not, but they referred us to the South Carolina Veterans Affairs Office. This office did not have any such lists either. We then inquired of the personnel at the South Carolina Department of Archives and History who were able to refer us to the publication discussed below.

Indeed, there was no comprehensive list of those who served in World War II for the entire State of South Carolina until 1967 when, under a directive from the State legislature, the Governor, with the assistance of the Adjutant General, attempted to prepare a such comprehensive list. Their task was a difficult one, made more so by the fact that the United States Department of Defense and the National Headquarters, Selective Service System were not

Ernest O. Padgett and J. L. Doolittle all crossed the English Channel on D-Day and Nolan Herndon was one of the Doolittle Raiders who bombed Tokyo in April of 1942. Mr. J. L. Doolittle's memoirs, as told to and written by Rev. Dan White, were published a few years ago. The Society has a copy of the scrapbook of the most decorated soldier from Edgefield County, Robert Herlong, which provides a fascinating picture of his extensive service in the Normandy Invasion. We would like to continue to build our archives with documents related to the World War II experiences of Edgefield County citizens, and therefore will welcome any contributions of people who would like the stories of their family members preserved.

We hope that you enjoy this publication!

Bettis C. Rainsford  
Historian of the Society

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particularly helpful. Thus, the only available source of information from which the roster could be prepared was the copies of reports of separation which the Adjutant General had received from the State Headquarters of the Selective Service System during the late 1940s and early 1950s. The efforts of the Governor and the Attorney General resulted in the 1967 publication of *The Official Roster of South Carolina Servicemen and Servicewomen in World War II, 1941-46*, in five volumes, containing more than 4,000 pages. As noted in the Preface to that work, this list includes only 166,119 persons of the estimated 200,000 from South Carolina who served, because records of all service personnel were not available. However, the list does constitute approximately 83% of those who served. It would be nice to think that this list could be improved upon by getting new cooperation from the Department of Defense, but unfortunately a 1973 fire at the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis, Missouri destroyed 16 to 18 million military records, including 80% of the personnel discharges from the Army from 1912 to 1960.

The South Carolina list is not broken down by county and therefore a list of persons from Edgefield County is not readily available. However, in further discussions with Dr. Eric Emerson, Director of the South Carolina Department of Archives and History, we inquired as to whether the list contained in this five-volume work could be digitized and made searchable. If this were done, it would be fairly easy to do a search for Edgefield County and come up with a list. Dr. Emerson appreciated the potential value of this effort to South Carolinians, and has agreed to explore the feasibility of getting this done. We hope that he can get it done and that a fairly comprehensive list of Edgefield County citizens in the War will become available in the not-distant future.

## PREFACE

Shortly after his discharge from the Army of the United States in late 1945, Ralph M. Scurry, Sr. (1925-1990) related his service during World War II to his mother who typed his "Recollections of World War" on six and a half single-spaced pages. In recent years, his son, Ralph M. Scurry, Jr., presented these and other sources of his father's service to the Edgefield County Historical Society, some of whose members thought these exciting exploits should be edited and published for the benefit of the public. The result is herewith presented.

Ralph M. Scurry, Sr. was born in Edgefield on January 7, 1925, to an old and prominent family of Edgefield County. A number of his ancestors in this county had fought valiantly for our nation's independence during the American Revolution. He attended local Edgefield schools, graduated from Edgefield High School in 1942 and entered Presbyterian College in Clinton, South Carolina in the fall of 1942, majoring in general science. As World War II was in full force by 1943, he was drafted on July 27, 1943, and told to report to Fort Jackson, South Carolina on August 17, 1943.

After serving four months as a private, he was promoted to Corporal and trained to be a medium tank crewman<sup>2</sup> in Company "A" 9<sup>th</sup> Armored Replacement Battalion at Fort Knox, Kentucky in anticipation of being sent to join the war in Europe. He was married to Mary Bell (1923-2015) of the Callison community of Greenwood County on January 6, 1945 while on a brief leave. He departed the United States on February 8, 1944 and arrived in Scotland on February 29, 1944, according to his Enlistment Record. A few days later he was transferred to England where he was involved in intensive training. Ralph was not in the first wave of troops to invade Normandy on D-Day but was sent over some days later. On June 14<sup>th</sup> he was assigned to Company B of the 741<sup>st</sup> Tank Battalion, known as "Vitamin Baker." He served with that company until the close of the War.

After his service in the European theatre, he departed Europe on October 15, 1945 and arrived in the United States on October 25, 1945. He was honorably discharged at Fort Bragg, North Carolina on October 31, 1945. He returned to Edgefield where, for many years, he headed the public works department for the Town of Edgefield. He died on June 22, 1990.

Two pamphlets written at the close of the War describe in greater detail the exploits of the 741<sup>st</sup> Tank Battalion<sup>3</sup> and more particularly Vitamin B,<sup>4</sup> in which Cpl. Scurry is mentioned twice.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) # 2736.

<sup>3</sup> *741 D-Day to V-E Day*.

<sup>4</sup> *The Story of Vitamin Baker*.

<sup>5</sup> In *The Story of Vitamin Baker*, Sgt. Dickson related of an event on December 17, 1944. "Suddenly I saw the silhouette of a tank approaching at about a hundred yards. My gunner, Cpl Kroeger, was traversing right, and Cpl Scurry had a shell ready to load when a doughboy yelled 'don't fire! That's our TD's and Infantry withdrawing.' We

These pamphlets were written by three of Scurry's fellow soldiers, Sgt. Lewis H. Lanier, Sgt. Alvin W. Heintzleman and Pfc. Paul R. Cannon, and were initially published in Europe in late 1945. These pamphlets have provided the editor with considerable background and detail to help in interpreting Cpl. Scurry's memoir.

In the transcription of the "Recollection," changes were made only in spelling, punctuation and type font. Footnotes have been inserted by the editor to provide background and context. Thus Cpl. Scurry's "Recollections" may be read almost exactly as he wrote them. Maps and a chronology of Vitamin Baker's route across Europe with photographs are interspersed in the text.

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then held our fire. A few seconds later a tank reached the intersection. When we saw for sure it was a kraut tank, it was too late to fire. We didn't want to give our position away as we were outnumbered about nine to one. The kraut tank continued down the road into town on our right flank. The tank was supported by infantry and had good cover behind some buildings. We knew then that we were in a helluva position." *The Story of Vitamin Baker* p. 63. Also, Lt. Sheppard tells of a near mishap on April 13, 1945. "I radioed back to Lt Reynolds, whose tank was leading the next platoon in the column and requested fire support. I described the house I thought the fire was coming from and dismounted to look for the infantry Lieutenant that had been working with us, as getting that gun looked like an Infantry job. There was a lot of fire coming in while I was out of the tank. Lt Reynolds called my tank and asked if his fire was doing any good. Cpl Scurry, my gunner, told him he didn't know, but we had received an awful barrage all of a sudden. We learned later that the red house I had described wasn't in sight of Lt Reynolds' tank, and his gunner Cpl Boardman, was firing at a red house next to the one our tank was hidden behind. In a confused action of this kind, it's hard to avoid these mistakes." *The Story of Vitamin Baker* p. 98.

# FORWARD

## Background and Scope

To fully appreciate the war-time memoir of Ralph Scurry one needs to appreciate the background and scope of the undertaking of which he was a part. The Normandy Invasion was the largest amphibious military invasion in history and the subsequent campaign to defeat the formidable Germany army was the most enormous military campaign in human history.

World War II had started in 1939 when Germany, under its “Führer,” Adolph Hitler, had invaded Poland after repeated commitments to the other European powers to cease his aggression. He quickly conquered Poland and then invaded Denmark, Norway, Belgium, the Netherlands and France. By the middle of 1940, Germany controlled most of Western Europe and had begun the Battle of Britain, an unrelenting air assault which continued for nearly a year. At the same time, Germany’s ally, Italy, under its Prime Minister, Benito Mussolini, “Il Duce,” was also aggressively expanding Italy’s sphere of influence in Africa. And in the Pacific, Japan had been aggressively attacking its neighbors, particularly in its brutal conquest of parts of China. At the end of September 1940, these three countries, Germany, Italy and Japan, signed the Tripartite Pact, formally uniting them as “the Axis Powers,” and pledging to support each other in the event any one of them was attacked.

Because of the substantial amount of isolationist feeling in America – not wanting to get drawn into another European war – the United States remained neutral. However, the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 precipitated a Declaration of War by the United States against Japan on December 8, 1941. On December 11, 1941, Hitler declared war against the United States. Having already invaded The U.S.S.R. in June of that year, he anticipated that the Japanese would welcome his declaration of war against the United States, thereby forcing the United States to wage a two-front war. In return, he hoped the Japanese would reciprocate by again attacking the Russians in Siberia. But the Japanese were not interested in attacking the Russians, preferring to attack to the South. The Japanese no doubt remembered how Marshall Zhukov had severely beaten the Japanese in Siberia in 1939. Although the Japanese did not do as Hitler had hoped, the United States declared war against Germany and Italy later on the same day that Hitler had declared war on the United States, December 11.

Notwithstanding President Roosevelt’s striving to get America ready for war and the agreed upon determination to make Germany the principal enemy against whom to render the strongest push, as of June 1942, the only military units of the United States in Europe consisted of the 34<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, the 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division and small detachments of army air corps in Northern Ireland. In the first American offensive in Europe on July 4, 1942, six bombers were sent out to attack air drones in The Netherlands, but only four came back.

At the Casablanca Conference in January 1943, the Allied leaders, led by American President, Franklin Roosevelt, and the Russian Dictator, Joseph Stalin, insisted on a substantial offensive in Western Europe. The next month, General Dwight D. Eisenhower was appointed Supreme Allied Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force which was established for the purpose of preparing for the invasion of Europe across the English Channel. But it was impossible for such an undertaking to have taken place in 1943 because neither the British nor the Americans had the forces and materials necessary for such an undertaking. While the landing in North Africa in November 1942, the capture of Sicily in August 1943 and the landing at Salerno, Italy in September 1943 were successes, they were all subsidiary to the cross-channel invasion.<sup>6</sup>

British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and senior British General Alan Brooke, possibly with the humiliating Dunkirk evacuation of 1940 in mind, tended to favor the maximum exploitation of the war in Italy up through the Po River valley with a mind of capturing the Dodecanese Islands, Leros and Rhodes, and possibly getting Turkey, a neutral, to enter the war with the Allies. However, remembering how the British and French had stolen the Middle East from it in the first World War, Turkey remained neutral. Churchill thought the Allies could either go into Southern France from Italy or even better into Austria and Yugoslavia through Trieste and the Ljubljana Gap.<sup>7</sup> “The British felt that maximum concentration on the Italian effort might lead to an unexpected break that would make the Channel operation either unnecessary or nothing more than a mopping-up affair.”<sup>8</sup>

At the Teheran Conference in February 1944, Roosevelt and Churchill promised Stalin that an over-the-channel crossing would be made in May 1944. For more than a year, Eisenhower had been planning the assault across the Channel for the liberation of Western Europe and the invasion of Germany. It had been ultimately decided that the invasion should be on the Normandy coast under the code name “Operation Overlord,” rather than at Pas-de-Calais where the distance across the Channel was substantially shorter and where the Germans expected it.

In order to defeat the formidable German army, this was necessarily going to have to be the largest amphibious military invasion in history. By the time the Allies were ready to launch the Normandy Invasion on June 6, 1944 (“D-Day”), they had amassed 17 British and Canadian divisions, 20 American divisions, one French division and one Polish division; 5,049 fighter aircraft 3,467 heavy bombers and naval vessels numbering more than 6,000. The total Allied strength in land, sea and air was 2,876,439 officers and men assigned to the Expeditionary Forces.

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<sup>6</sup> “General Marshall and I shared the belief that everything done in the Mediterranean should continue to be subsidiary to and in support of the main purpose of attacking across the Channel in early 1944.” Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, p. 160.

<sup>7</sup> Churchill “. . . seemed always to see great and decisive possibilities in the Mediterranean, while the project of invasion across the English Channel left him cold.” Eisenhower, p. 194.

<sup>8</sup> Eisenhower, p. 198.



The actual landings for D-Day took place on five non-contiguous beaches for a front of fifty miles along the Normandy coast. British General Bernard Montgomery was in overall command of the landings. On that single day, 156,000 troops landed in Normandy. In the days and weeks that followed, the number of men, equipment and supplies crossing the Channel into Normandy increased dramatically: by the end of June 11, 326,547 troops, 54,186 vehicles and 104,428 tons of supplies had been brought over; by June 30, over 850,000 men, 148,000 vehicles, and 570,000 tons of supplies were there; by July 4, one million men had been landed; and by July 20, more than 1.3 million Allied soldiers were in Normandy, constituting 33 divisions on an eighty mile front. Later in the summer, some ten French and other Divisions attacked Southern France from the Mediterranean.

By October Eisenhower had 54 divisions on the Western front. At the beginning of March, 1945 as the Allies approached the Rhine from North to South the force contained 24 divisions of British, Canadian and American forces under the 21<sup>st</sup> Army Group (Montgomery), 13 divisions in three corps abreast in First Army (Courtney Hodges), 12 divisions in Third Army (Patton), under 12<sup>th</sup> Army Group (Bradley) and 14 divisions in Seventh Army (Patch) and the First French Army (DeLattre) under 6<sup>th</sup> Army Group (Devers). These covered a front of 250 miles. Truly this was an undertaking of historic proportions in which Cpl. Ralph Scurry and hundreds, if not thousands of, other Edgefield County men participated.

## **Tank Warfare**

Ralph Scurry served as a gunner on a medium tank, the M-4 Sherman first designed in 1940. The Sherman, depending on variant, was approximately 19 to 20 feet long, 8 to 10 feet wide and 9 feet high with a crew of five, consisting of a commander, gunner, loader, driver and assistant driver/bow gunner. The main armament was the 75 mm gun, later a 76 mm gun; and secondary armament, a .50 caliber Browning machine gun and two .30 caliber machine guns. The gun could fire ordinary rounds, high explosive rounds, armor piercing rounds or phosphorus. It was powered by a 9-cylinder radial gasoline engine of 350 to 400 horse power. The tank could carry 90 rounds of 75 mm ammo or 71 rounds of 76 mm ammo; and 300 to 600 rounds of .50 caliber ammo and 6,000 to 6,750 rounds of .30 caliber ammo. It was protected by 5 inches of armor, weighting 30 to 38 tons depending on variant, and could move at 22 to 30 miles per hour.

Separate Tank Battalions could be assigned infantry, armored or airborne divisions as needed. Most were assigned to infantry divisions. A separate tank battalion consisted of three companies, (A, B, and C), of medium tanks (Shermans) and one company (D) of light tanks, M5 Stuarts, with a four-man crew. Each company consisted of three platoons of five tanks, plus two more for the company commander and second in command and one 105 mm assault gun, along with a maintenance, administration and supply section (80 personnel). The battalion headquarters

company had three or more 105 mm assault guns, three mortar-equipped halftracks, a reconnaissance platoon and other support services. Altogether the battalion could muster 74 tanks and assault guns. The companies would be assigned to regiments in the division. Divisions consisted of three regiments containing three battalions<sup>9</sup> and various supporting units, including division artillery, engineers, military police, medical units and maintenance. Eisenhower stated that "...each of our divisions, with its reinforcing battalions, was maintained at a strength of 17,000."<sup>10</sup> Often one tank served with one infantry squad, (9 men). The tank infantry combination became an essential element of small unit tactics. Since the infantry had been organized before the advent of tanks, infantry formations did not feature tanks as an organic unit.

Thus, separate tank battalions became to be attached to infantry divisions. These separate tank battalions were identical to the tank battalions that made up the armored divisions. "The tanks proved a great asset to the doughboys as the enemy was strongest in automatic and semi-automatic fire, so dangerous to the Infantry."<sup>11</sup> The Infantry, on the other hand, protected the tanks from the ever-present Panzerfaust and 88 fire, deadly against armor. The tanks also proved valuable in blowing up roadblocks and mounting up the infantry to exploit the rout of the fast-crumbling remnants of the German Army."<sup>12</sup> About 34 separate tank battalions served in the European theater.

## **The Journey from America to Europe and Back**

The 741<sup>st</sup> Tank Battalion (Tk. Bn.) was activated at Fort Meade, Maryland on March 15, 1942. Thereafter it traveled around the country until departing New York on the *Capetown Castle* on October 20, 1943 and arriving at Liverpool, England on November 2, 1943. It trained in England at first on British tanks before receiving the Sherman tanks. At one point the Battalion may have gone on a training exercise (Exercise Tiger) at Slapton Sands, Devon, where the soldiers and sailors were attacked by nine Nazi E-boats (Schnellboote/fast boat) which had escaped detection. The unit histories omit this information because the Slapton Sands ambush remained a classified secret for many years. The exercise was for those who were scheduled to land on Utah Beach in the VII<sup>th</sup> Corps. with the 4<sup>th</sup> Inf. Div., among others. Cpl. Scurry mentions the tank battalions he trained with in England, but they were not a part of VII Corps.

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<sup>9</sup> A battalion (300 to 800 men) consisted of up to five companies, which, in turn, consisted of two to four platoons of two to four squads.

<sup>10</sup> Eisenhower, p. 467.

<sup>11</sup> "... Germany designated some of their infantry formations as *Volksgrenadier* divisions, which were slightly smaller than the regular divisions, with wider issue of sub-machine guns, automatic and anti-tank weapons to reflect the reality that they were to be used in defensive warfare." Wikipedia, *Division (military)*.

<sup>12</sup> *Separate tank battalion*, Wikipedia.

The 741<sup>st</sup> Tank Battalion (Tk. Bn.) landed at Omaha Beach on D-Day<sup>13</sup> with the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division from which it was detached and subsequently attached to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division on June 15, 1944. It was at this point that Cpl. Scurry joined Company B, code named “Vitamin Baker.” All we know about how Cpl. Scurry left the United States, arrived in the United Kingdom and got to France is found in the first several paragraphs of his narrative. This section of the narrative states that he was sent to France, where, on the night of June 14<sup>th</sup>, he and sixty-one others were assigned to Company B. We assume that he was sent over several days after D-Day.

The Battalion practiced with infantry and engineers at the squad level to learn how to work together. On July 11-12 the Battalion led the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division’s assault on Hill 192 east of St. Lô preliminary to Operation Cobra, the breakout where the Battalion was on the left of the American advance west of St. Lô in the breakout on July 26. The Battalion crossed the Soulevire River on August 2, 3, and 4 and engaged the enemy on August 4. From August 6 to 10 the Battalion was placed in reserve. The Battalion advanced to Tinchebray when the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division was sent to Brest and the Battalion was assigned to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Armored Group as it advanced to the outskirts of Paris at Sceaux.

General De Gaulle, as relates Rick Atkinson, “had pleaded for two U.S. Divisions [to parade in Paris] as a ‘show of force’ against the communists and other trouble makers. A bemused Eisenhower agreed to a half measure, diverting the 28<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division through the capital in route to the front.”<sup>14</sup> The Battalion was then attached to the 28<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division on August 27 to join the 28<sup>th</sup> in a Liberation Day parade on August 29 around the Arc de Triomphe and down the Champs-Élysées.

The Battalion then went through Compiègne, the Aisne valley, Belgian Luxembourg, the Duchy of Luxembourg, and on September 9 near Sevenig and reached the Our River and prepared for an assault September 13 against the West Roscheid in Germany. The Battalion in attacking encountered the ‘dragon teeth’ of the Siegfried Line.<sup>15</sup> After several days of intense fighting the

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<sup>13</sup> Lt. Col. Robert K. Skaggs, commanding officer of the 741<sup>st</sup> Tk. Bn. in encouraging his tankers before they embarked for the beach stated, “The government paid \$ 5 billion for this hour. Get to hell in there and start fighting.” He was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his role in the operations of the 741<sup>st</sup> Tk. Bn. on D-Day. The Battalion was awarded The Presidential Unit Citation for its actions on June 6 and 7, 1944. Rick Atkinson, *The Guns At Last Light*, p. 38.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 184-5.

<sup>15</sup> The Siegfried Line, known in German as the Westwall, was a German defensive line built during the 1930s opposite the French Maginot Line. It stretched more than 390 miles from Kleve on the border with the Netherlands, along the western border of the old German Empire, to the town of Weil am Rhein on the border to Switzerland – and featured more than 18,000 bunkers, tunnels and tank traps. “Built with walls and ceilings up to eight feet thick, some included fireplaces, tin chimneys, and connecting tunnels. Others were disguised as electrical substations, with dummy power lines, or as barns, with hay bales stacked in the windows. Planned with a shrewd eye for terrain and interlocking fields of fire, the pillboxes were most numerous where approach avenues seemed especially vulnerable; as many as fifteen big bunkers might be found in a single square kilometer.” Rick Atkinson, *The Guns At Last Light*, p. 250. The “dragon teeth . . . were strong pillars of concrete extending about four feet from the ground. These were in great

Battalion moved to bivouac on the edge of the Schee-Eifel Forest for three weeks. On October 2 the Battalion was detached from the 28<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division and reattached to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division<sup>16</sup> of the VIII Corps, 9<sup>th</sup> Army.

Then on October 5 the Battalion moved back into Schönberg, Belgium. On October 22 it was detached from the 9<sup>th</sup> Army and reverted to the 1st Army. The stay in Schönberg was relatively quiet save for some buzz bombs. On December 11 Companies A, B, and C moved through St. Vith and Walmes to Robertville, and then to Rocherath, Belgium where they lay at the commencement of Field Marshall Gerd von Runstedt's assault that came to be known as the "Battle of the Bulge," a result of an enormous intelligence failure.<sup>17</sup>

General Eisenhower's first plan for the campaign never changed. It was to attack all across the Allied front to destroy the German forces. He wrote "This purpose of destroying enemy forces was always our guiding principle; geographic points were considered only in relation to their importance to the enemy in the conduct of his operations or to us as centers of supply and communications in proceeding to the destruction of enemy armies and air forces."<sup>18</sup>

But to supply these forces, as they moved East from France into Germany, was a major problem and caused many units to stop dead, as Cpl. Scurry relates. As Cpl. Scurry noted and General Eisenhower concurred "When action is proceeding as rapidly as it did across France during the hectic days of late August and early September every commander from division upward becomes obsessed with the idea that with only a few more tons of supply he could rush right on and win the war."<sup>19</sup> Eisenhower related how Montgomery "...presented the proposition that, if we would support his Twenty-first Army Group with all supply facilities available, he could rush right on into Berlin and, he said end the war."<sup>20</sup>

But Eisenhower's position was against this proposal as he stated "Even had such a force been able to start with a total of ten or a dozen divisions – and it is certain no more could have

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number, symmetrically located to form a pillar field some 10 yards in depth, and in length, miles parallel to Germany's border line. Each tooth was shaped like a truncated pyramid." They could be shot away with a 75 mm blast. *741 D-Day to V-E Day*, pp 24-25.

<sup>16</sup> "Then good news came to the Battalion on October 2, when an order came through attaching us to the 9<sup>th</sup> Army, VIII Corps, 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division. The reattachment to the crack 2<sup>nd</sup> Division came as a happy surprise to the men of the 741<sup>st</sup>. In the early days since D-Day, our tanks and these doughboys formed a powerful unit. Cooperation was always the best; the tanks knew how to operate with the infantry, the infantry knew how to operate with the tanks, and each had great respect for the other." *741 D-Day to V-E Day*, p. 25.

<sup>17</sup> "We suffered tactical surprise in the strength and timing of the German attack in the Battle of the Bulge in December 1944. In this instance, however, the probability and general location were foreseen to the extent that reaction had been planned and could be effectively executed. Nevertheless, the early effect on morale of front-line troops was noticeable." Eisenhower, p. 468.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 225.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 292.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 305.

been supported even temporarily – the attacking column would have gradually grown smaller as it dropped off units to protect its flanks and would have ended up facing inescapable defeat. Such an attempt would have played into the hands of the enemy.”<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, the broad approach in the Ardennes in October had, as Eisenhower remarked, on the average less than one division to each ten miles of front and by December only three divisions on a front of seventy-five miles between Trier and Monchau, a situation duly noted by Cpl. Scurry.

The Allies were able to stop the German advance by moving forces from both the North and South of the German advance to halt it, and then resume the offensive. The 741<sup>st</sup> was on the Northern end of the American line against which the German attack was delivered. His unit fell back December 19 but was not defeated.<sup>22</sup> The Battalion was in Berg, Belgium on January 1, 1945 and spent time refitting. New tanks contained the 76 mm gun with hyper-velocity shells which proved highly successful.

On January 27 the Battalion headed back to Rocherath and Krinkelt. On February 2 the Battalion moved back into Germany in the vicinity of Harpenschlu (Harpersheid), Schoneseiffen and Dreibern, still with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Inf. Div. By March 3 the Battalion on the way to the Rhine River and Vitamin Baker attacked at Gemund Forest and moved into Konigsfeld with the 23<sup>rd</sup> Inf. Regt. of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Inf. Div. From there the Battalion moved in reserve to Sinzig, south of Remagen. It crossed the Rhine on March 21, and on March 27 rolled down superhighways to Limburg. In early April the Battalion crossed the Weser River and had a night fight at Hofgeismar. On April 13 Vitamin Baker lost four tanks to flak fire at an airport near Merseberg. By April 19 the Battalion was in Leipzig.

At the end of April, the Battalion was released from the V Corps and assigned to VIII Corps in Patton’s 3rd Army. On May 1 it set out for Czechoslovakia and reached Pilsen (Plzeň) on May 6. The Battalion left Pilsen and took up occupation duties in Germany until departing for the United States. On October 15 the Battalion left Germany and arrived in New York on October 25. The Battalion was inactivated at Camp Kilmer, New Jersey on October 27 and Cpl. Scurry reported to Fort Bragg in Fayetteville, North Carolina where he was honorably discharged on October 31, 1945.

It was upon his return to his hometown of Edgefield that Ralph Scurry dictated to his mother, a stenographer, the following memoir.

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 292-3.

<sup>22</sup> Companies A, B, and C were awarded The Presidential Unit Citation for their roles at Rocherath on December 17 to 19, 1944.



## Honorable Discharge

*This is to certify that*

RALPH M SCURRY 34 841 900 CORPORAL  
COMPANY B 741ST TAND BATALLION

### 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  
FORT BRAGG NORTH CAROLINA

*Date*

31 OCTOBER 1945

Recorded Nov. 6th, 1945 at 10:30 A.M.  
In Discharges World War 2, Book 2 at  
Page 24.

*L. T. May*  
L.T. May, Clerk of Court, C.P.E.C.S.C.

*Ben B Mabson*

BEN B MABSON JR  
LT COL CE

# RECOLLECTIONS OF WORLD WAR

## The Personal Memoir of Corporal Ralph M. Scurry, Sr.

I've often thought about and wished that I could have kept a few notes on my experiences since I left the States, but that would have been impossible because I lost everything I had, except my hyde several times.

There isn't much to write about my boat trip over—just saw plenty of water. We landed in Scotland Feb. 22<sup>nd</sup> 1944 (I think that's the right date). It was really cold. We stayed there about four days in an old barn and ate English food. It was something awful and when we got to England those powdered eggs were really good. In England we were located at Frome, a little town between Bristol and Bath. The whole time I spent in England, I never got more than a six-hour pass. Most of our time was spent in training. We trained with the 745<sup>23</sup> and 707 Tk. Bns., but I don't think any of the men with me were assigned to those outfits. Probably a good thing too, because the 707<sup>th</sup> was about completely wiped out during the "bulge" in December.<sup>24</sup>

My first night in France was a nightmare. It was cold as heck and the Jerries<sup>25</sup> were flying around all night bombing and machine-gunning everything. I learned how to take cover fast right there. By June 14 I was in "B" Co., 741<sup>st</sup> Tk. Bn. Sixty-one of us came to "B" Co. that night, so you can imagine what heavy losses the Bn. took on D-Day.<sup>26</sup> I was put in a tank right away – Dickson<sup>27</sup> commander, and we've been together ever since. Dickson is from Rock Hill. We spent about two days cleaning guns and ammo, and getting our tank ready for a little action. We moved from one place to another setting up road blocks, etc., but made no attacks right away. About this time, we were attached to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Inf. Division<sup>28</sup> and we just held our position. Our tanks were about eight hundred yards behind the front lines and most of us had it pretty easy, but ole' lucky Scurry was acting as liaison between the tanks and Inf. and I lived in a nice little foxhole on the front lines, me and my radio. If the Jerries attacked, I was to contact my platoon leader and tell him where to bring the tanks up so we could help repel any attacks. I stayed up there about fifteen days, but there were no attacks.

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<sup>23</sup> B Company landed on Omaha Beach on D Day.

<sup>24</sup> The 707<sup>th</sup> was virtually wiped out, along with the 110<sup>th</sup> Infantry. During the battle of Clervaux, losing 60 tanks in the Battle of the Bulge in December 1944.

<sup>25</sup> Colloquial term used by the Allied soldiers to refer to the German soldiers. Interchangeable with "krauts."

<sup>26</sup> 27 out of 32 tanks in B and C Companies sank on D-Day and only one platoon of B Company beached with the 16<sup>th</sup> Regiment of the 1<sup>st</sup> Division on Easy Red Sector of Omaha Beach.

<sup>27</sup> Sergeant Ray A. Dickson, from Rock Hill, South Carolina. The other men in his tank when their picture was taken were T-4 George K. Lucas, driver, from Salona, Pennsylvania, Pfc. Clarence H. Gallow, assistant driver, from New London, Wisconsin, and Cpl. Marion D. Hankins, loader, from Pittsfield, Illinois.

<sup>28</sup> The 741<sup>st</sup> Tank Battalion was attached to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Inf. Div. from June 15 until August 16, 1944, from whom it was given a Certificate of Commendation.



The Tank Crew (left to right):  
Cpl. Ralph M. Scurry, T-4 George K. Lucas, driver, from Salona, Pennsylvania,  
Sergeant Ray A. Dickson, from Rock Hill, South Carolina, (kneeling)  
Pfc. Clarence H. Gallow, assistant driver, from New London, Wisconsin,  
and Cpl. Marion D. Hankins, loader, from Pittsfield, Illinois.



We changed location once more and this time<sup>29</sup> it was the real thing. We were going to do the attacking—and across country through all those hedgerows. We carried several hundred pounds of T.N.T. on the tanks. The inf. used the T.N.T. to blow holes through the hedgerows so we could get through. We started out about 6:30 A.M. and about 10:30 P.M. we had reached our objective, the St. Lo. Road. We took some losses that day, but I won't go into detail about them. My tank was hit by a bazooka, but none of the crew hurt. We fired about 1200 rounds of 30 Cal. and over 100 rounds of 75 mm. on this attack. We had about a five-day break after this,<sup>30</sup> got good chow, but were always within a few hundred yards of the front lines and of course got a lot of shells thrown at us. I learned quick how to take cover.

On the next attack<sup>31</sup> we had steel prongs welded on the front of our tanks so we could “bust” through the hedgerows.<sup>32</sup> The T.N.T. was too dangerous.<sup>33</sup> The Jerries got smart and dropped mortars on the tanks which were carrying T.N.T. and you can imagine what hundreds of pounds of T.N.T. would do to a tank and the crew when it exploded. This attack was the breakout from the beachhead. The First Army punched a hole for Patton and his Third Army, and he rolled through getting all the glory.<sup>34</sup>

I'll have to admit, I was a little uneasy about the second attack across the St. Lo road. I saw in the first action I was in, what the Jerries could do to our tanks, but you get the feeling that if you're going to get it you will and that's all. We started about daylight this morning with plenty of artillery support and Inf. behind us. When we broke through the first hedgerow, my tank was hit square in the middle with a shell, but it was H.E.<sup>35</sup> and didn't penetrate – knocked the driver out for a second or two, and I think I lost a filling out of a tooth because I swallowed something

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<sup>29</sup> Early July assault on Hill 192.

<sup>30</sup> Withdrawn from action after July 12.

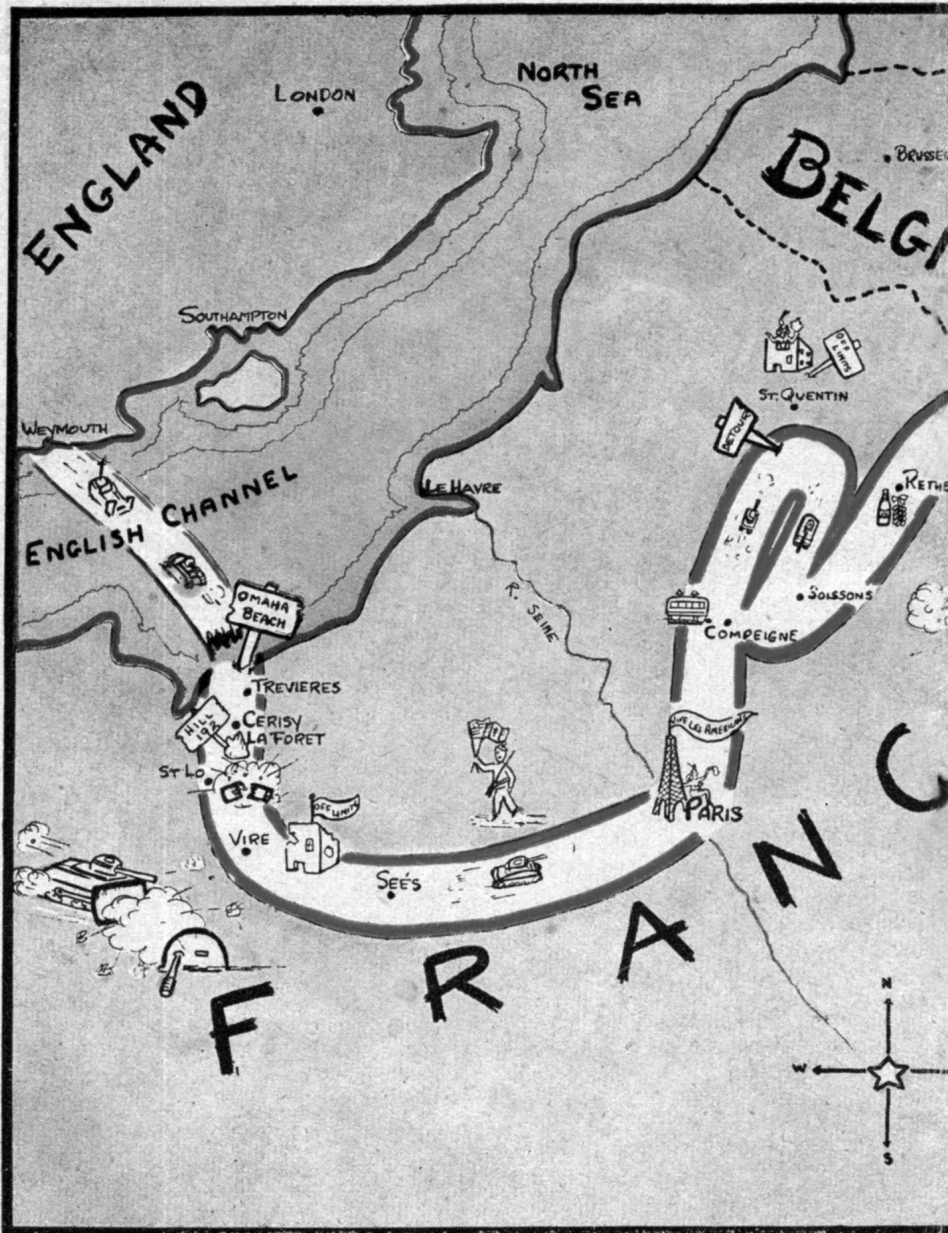
<sup>31</sup> July 26.

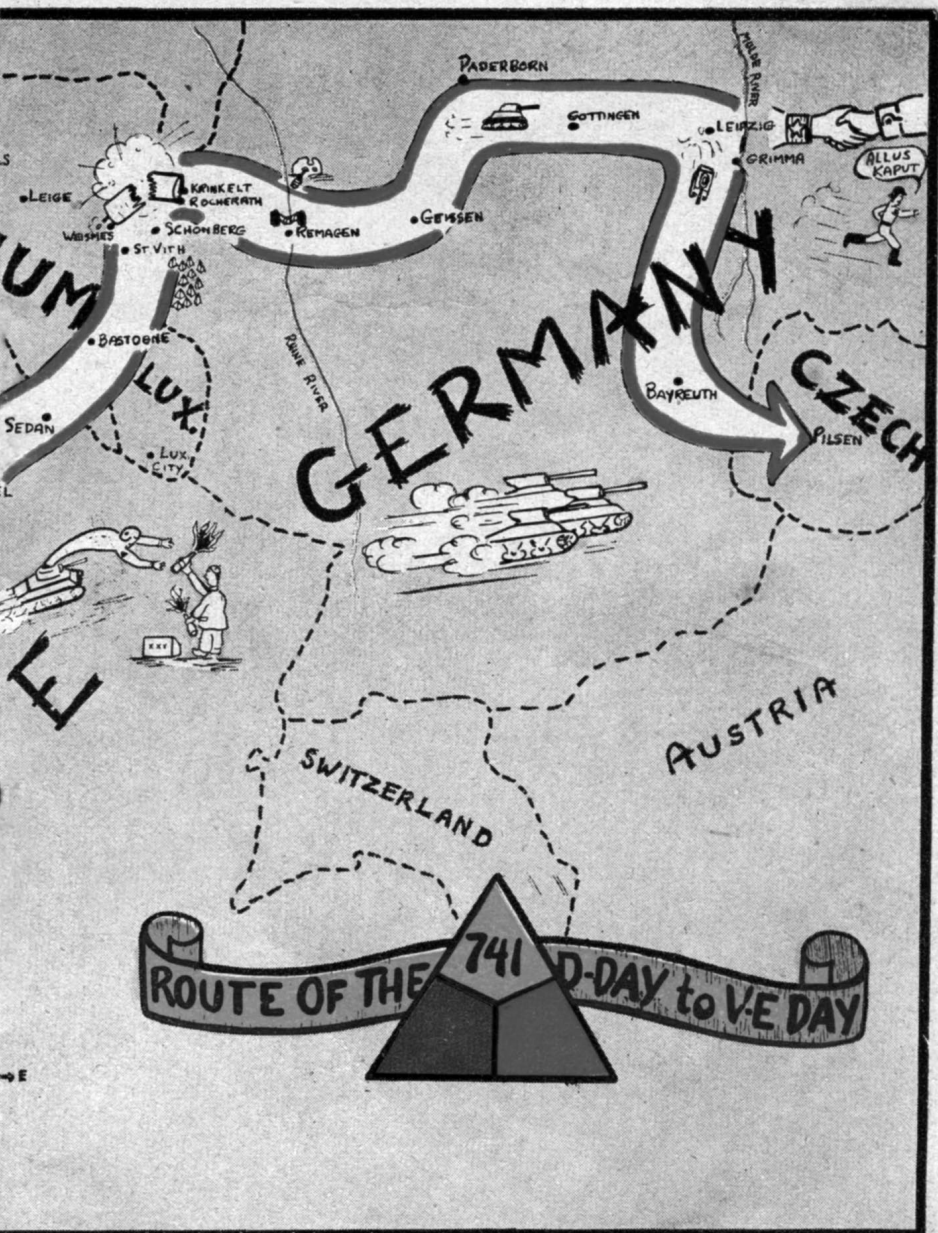
<sup>32</sup> “These consisted of five metal prongs welded onto the front of our tanks.” *The Story of Vitamin Baker*, p. 36. “...the unit was engaged in securing the new hedge-busting attachment for our tanks, and training the tank personnel in the use of them. It was found that the new device, a five-bladed projection extending about two feet from the front of the tank, facilitates the passage of the tank through the thickest of the hedgerows to such an extent that the hedge could be breached with very little reduction in the speed of the vehicle. The possibilities of this device in connection with future operations of our tanks in the hedgerow fighting of this campaign could not be over estimated. Plans were immediately made to utilize this device to the fullest extent.” *After Action Report for July* by 1<sup>st</sup> Lieut. William M. Park, Adjutant 741<sup>st</sup> Tk. Bn. The device was invented by Sgt. Curtis Grubb Culin, III of the 102 Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron 2nd Armored Division. Maj. Gen. Walter M. Robertson, commanding 2<sup>nd</sup> Inf. Div approved it., along with Lt. Gen Bradley. Eisenhower, p. 269. Tanks with this device were known as “Rhino” tanks.

<sup>33</sup> “Satchel charges on T.N.T. were placed on the rear deck, which in one way was a good idea in helping the Engineers carry it. In another way it was dangerous if an artillery shell would get a hit on the tank.” *The Story of Vitamin Baker*, p. 33.

<sup>34</sup> First Army, commanded by Lt. Gen. Courtney Hodges, and Third Army, commanded by Lt. Gen. George S. Patton, formed, along with many other divisions, 12<sup>th</sup> Army Group, commanded by Gen. Omar Bradley.

<sup>35</sup> H.E. = High Explosive.





hard. A few A.P.s<sup>36</sup> (that's what's hell on tanks) were fired at us, but they missed. I saw dust flying up from the side of a hill about 1,500 yards away. I figured the gun that fired on us was up there, so I put three rounds of 75 mm. on the spot and we weren't fired at anymore. We advanced another hedgerow and the Jerries sorta clipped us on the chin. They had pillboxes in a sunken road and we couldn't get through.<sup>37</sup> Late that evening the Air Corps bombed them<sup>38</sup> and we took off through their lines carrying our Infantry on the tanks. We had the Jerries pretty much confused running around and shooting everything behind their lines.

After we crossed the Vire river we ran up on about a hundred and thirty SS<sup>39</sup> boys who didn't want to give up. We had them surrounded so we worked them over with ten tanks. Sixteen SS came out alive. We lost one man – just wounded. We didn't meet much opposition after this, just every once in a while, but they didn't seem to have much heart for fighting. The French F.F.I. did a good job of rounding up snipers, etc. Saved us a lot of trouble. We had another little fight just outside of Paris – after that we pulled the parade in Paris. What a day! They loaded us down with everything to drink – wine, champagne, cognac, etc. They're making up for what they gave away now, though. After Paris we just rode every day and at night pulled out in some field and slept. Of course, everybody thought the war was over and I believe it would have been if our supplies could have kept up with us.<sup>40</sup> One day we ran out of gas and couldn't move for over two weeks. This gave the Jerries plenty of time to regroup and prepare their defenses. When our gas ran out, we were just a few miles from Germany.

I forgot to mention that after the breakthrough in France we were attached to the 28<sup>th</sup> Inf. Division while the 2<sup>nd</sup> went to Brest.<sup>41</sup> I hope I never have to fight with the 28<sup>th</sup> again.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> A.P. = Armored Piercing.

<sup>37</sup> "Our doughs had sought cover from the small arms fire in back of a hedgerow. The Germans held the field on the other side and tossed potato masher grenades over and into the doughboys. The Infantry was thus faced with the familiar choice between the frying pan and the fire. The solution in this case was to call Sgt. Dickson's tank, and drive back and forth through the hedgerow until it was flattened. The Germans who weren't buried by these tactics were forced into the next field." *The Story of Vitamin Baker*, p. 36.

<sup>38</sup> B-17s and B-24s were used for tactical bombing but most of their load never reached the right target and many bombs hit over 600 Americans, including killing Lt. Gen. Lesley J. McNair. Eisenhower vowed "... never again to use heavy bombers in a tactical attack." Atkinson, pp. 142-5.

<sup>39</sup> SS = Schutzstaffel. These units were not a part of the regular German Army, but was created under the direction of Himmler to serve as an elite force loyal to Hitler. The SS troops were poorly trained in comparison with the regular army, but they made up for this by their fanaticism, as Cpl. Scurry frequently mentions.

<sup>40</sup> "Battlefield exigencies disrupted and then demolished a supply plan two years in the making. The need for more combat troops to fight through the bocage [the hedgerow terrain of Normandy] had been met at the expense of service units – mechanics, fuelers, railroaders, sutlers [purveyors of provisions for the soldiers] of all sorts – and the subsequent breakout from Normandy caused Eisenhower in mid-August to pursue the fleeing enemy without pausing to shore up his logistics The thrill of the chase held sway." Atkinson, p. 239.

<sup>41</sup> The 2<sup>nd</sup> Inf. Div. went to Brest on August 16, 1944.

<sup>42</sup> The 741<sup>st</sup> Tank Battalion was attached to the 28<sup>th</sup> Inf. Div. from August 27 until October 5, 1944.



Paris Liberation Parade  
August 1944

All through the fighting in France, my tank crew remained intact – no man in the crew was hurt very bad. We had several close ones though.

Well, we finally got gas and prepared to go into Germany.<sup>43</sup> Of course we were given all the dope on what we would meet in the Siegfried Line. G-2<sup>44</sup> reports were “plenty of good defenses, pillboxes, etc., but not enough men to man them properly.” The same old “bull” – trying to make us think we’d have no trouble.<sup>45</sup> We started out at night and by daybreak we were going into the line. The country was very mountainous, and it was so foggy I could hardly see four hundred yards through my sights.<sup>46</sup>

The 28<sup>th</sup> Inf. Div. had slipped into the line at night and taken a little ground. When we went into action on the morning of Sept. 14<sup>th</sup>, the 28<sup>th</sup> was in pretty bad shape. The Jerries had plenty of stuff right there waiting on us and their artillery was cutting our Inf. to pieces. They had our Inf. stopped – some were pinned down and wouldn’t get back. We pulled up over a hill and about 600 yards down the other side and started firing. We fired at anything that looked like a pillbox or a house. We banged away for quite a while and believe it or not, we were not fired upon. Then we got orders to move ahead and take the next hill. We had to follow the road – cross country was either too swampy or hilly, and then, too, practically all the fields were mined.

We spotted a pillbox straight ahead and opened fire. Then all hell broke loose and the next thing I knew, Dick was pulling ammo. off me so I could get out. We had been hit in the front end in the driving compartment.<sup>47</sup> Dick yelled at me to get out, we were on fire. I didn’t take time to find out if I were all in one piece or not. I just got out as fast as I could. We were right out in the open and Jerry threw everything including the kitchen sink at us. I could hear machine gun bullets zipping past my head and kicking up the dirt around my feet. Dick got out of the tank before I did, but when we reached the top of the hill, I was leading him.

We got down in the cellar of a house that gave us pretty good protection. We had another strip of open ground to go over before we could get back of our lines, but we decided to wait until it got dark. Jerry had it zeroed in with his artillery. I didn’t notice my leg hurting until just then. It wasn’t bad, though – just scratched. I didn’t even go to the Medics (Wish I had now. It would have

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<sup>43</sup> Early September.

<sup>44</sup> G-2 = Division Intelligence.

<sup>45</sup> “We were briefed just before crossing the German border on this defense system; the briefing wasn’t entirely accurate. The guns didn’t have 360 degree revolving turrets as we had anticipated, but they did have concrete walls four to six feet thick and heavily reinforced with armor plate. Everywhere we looked there were pillboxes.” Sgt. Richard Maddock, *The Story of Vitamin Baker*, p. 51.

<sup>46</sup> “All a gunner can see is through his periscope sight and telescope sight. As these [sights] point only in the direction the gun is pointed, observation is rather limited.” Cpl. Jack Boardman in *The Story of Vitamin Baker*, p. 38.

<sup>47</sup> Sgt. Dickson’s tank hit a mine according to Sgt. Richard Maddock in *The Story of Vitamin Baker*, p. 52.

given me five more points).<sup>48</sup> Dick was O.K. Kroeger<sup>49</sup> had got out of the tank but we didn't know what happened to him. Afterwards we found that he had been hit in the leg, but was O.K. I don't think the driver and assistant driver ever knew what hit them. Dick and I finally got back to the Company. They gave us a day off, but after that we fought every day.

We took the largest losses September 14 that we ever had in one day – even during the “bulge” we didn't lose as many. Practically the whole Co.<sup>50</sup> had to be replaced with tanks. We had six left the 15<sup>th</sup> of September. We stayed in this one spot until about Oct. 2<sup>nd</sup>, attacking every day but never gaining any ground.<sup>51</sup> We'd take a few pillboxes, but the Jerries would take them back at night. Replacements were coming into the 28<sup>th</sup> Div. four and six hundred at a time. I saw some replacements go back to the hospital two hours after they had come to the Division. The 28<sup>th</sup><sup>52</sup> just couldn't handle the Jerries like the old 2<sup>nd</sup> could.

We lost Captain Jimmy, our C.O.<sup>53</sup> September 14<sup>th</sup>. His tank was hit too, and only one man got out. Capt. Jimmy was always right up there with us.<sup>54</sup>

I don't see how any of us lived through that month. I know God was with us all.

(October 8)<sup>55</sup> When it turned cold and began to snow, we moved into houses in the little town of Shonburg.<sup>56</sup> About half the people here were pro-German and they all spoke German. While we were there, we arrested several men using radios to direct German artillery on the town. Shonburg was completely destroyed during the breakthrough. We did a little indirect firing with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Div. artillery there; also, we held an open gap in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Div. line. The 2<sup>nd</sup> was holding

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<sup>48</sup> After the war was over and the soldiers were to be returned to the States, priority of leaving was given on the basis of points which were based on credits for length of service, length of time overseas, decorations, and parenthood. 85 points were needed to qualify for return.

<sup>49</sup> Cpl. Anthony B. Kroeger.

<sup>50</sup> Co.= Company.

<sup>51</sup> “Day after day the attacks continued with no gains realized. Truly, the Battalion had bumped into a steel wall, and it began to look as though we never would penetrate the Siegfried. A pillbox would be captured during the day only to have it recaptured that night. The process of retaking the box then would have to be repeated. It was bitter going for all.” *741 D-Day To V-E Day*, p. 24.

<sup>52</sup> “Three days’ brawling in the sinister German uplands known as the Schnee Eifel made little headway, though the Americans took seventeen pillboxes and fifty-eight prisoners in one firefight. Even this modest penetration of the Siegfried Line provoked a counterattack that cost the division fifteen hundred casualties.” Atkinson, p. 252-3.

<sup>53</sup> C.O.= Commanding Officer.

<sup>54</sup> Capt. Jimmy was James G. Thornton, Citadel Class of 1940. “Capy. Thornton had been directed to attack with four other tanks, over a hill to keep the enemy pinned down while the Infantry finished digging in their positions for the night. The tank was hit by AT (Anti-Tank) fire, Capt. Thornton and Pvt. Kettles [Warren E. Kettles] are still missing in action.” Capt. Vincent A. Cinquina succeeded in command of Vitamin Baker. *The Story of Vitamin Baker*, pp 52, 53.

<sup>55</sup> October 5 according to *The Story of Vitamin Baker*, p. 55; *741 D-Day to V-E Day*, p. 25.

<sup>56</sup> Schönberg, a small town in eastern Belgium near the German border. Here the battalion was attached again to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Inf. Div.

twenty miles on the line and the 106<sup>th</sup> Div. had the same deal when they relieved us in December,<sup>57</sup> so you can see why the Jerries had no trouble in breaking through the lines.<sup>58</sup>

We left Shonburg about two or three days before the Jerries started their drive on December 16.<sup>59</sup> We were supposed to capture some dams so the Germans couldn't flood General Patton's Third Army on our right. We never reached the dams – they woke us up about 5:00 A.M. December 17, and we took off for the twin towns of Rocherath & Krinkelt.<sup>60</sup> We were told that 30 enemy tanks had broken through and that we had to stop them. I didn't like this at all because our tanks are hardly a match for the German ones.<sup>61</sup> When we pulled into the towns about eight that morning everything looked good to me – the 2<sup>nd</sup> was pulling in too and the 99<sup>th</sup> Inf. Div. was holding our right flank. My platoon was sent on the outskirts of town to hold some road junctions. Everything was quiet except for the planes – German and American – which were having it out over us. Then late in the afternoon, the Jerries attacked the 99<sup>th</sup> with tanks and Inf. and gave us a good heavy dose of artillery fire and tried running a few patrols into town.

We kicked them back, but the 99<sup>th</sup> didn't hold and the Jerry tanks came in on us from our flank that night and at the same time hit us again from our front with Inf. and tanks. My section (two tanks) got cut off. From about five to seven Jerry tanks got between us and the rest of our forces. It was so dark you couldn't see twenty yards in front of you. We could hear those darn Jerries talking and we had to do something fast. From our position we couldn't fire because we'd be firing in the direction of our troops. Case<sup>62</sup> told Dick over the radio that he was going to fire on the enemy tanks and for us to get the hell out when he started firing. Case opened up on them and we took off. We drew plenty of fire and why they didn't hit us I don't know. We shot right past two German Tiger Royals,<sup>63</sup> got back with the platoon and held them off that night. Case had knocked out one of the tanks and came back with us.

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<sup>57</sup> Cpl. Scurry and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division were lucky to be relieved by the 106<sup>th</sup> Inf. Div. on December 11, 1944, because on December 16, the 422<sup>nd</sup> and 423<sup>rd</sup> Inf. Regts. of the 106<sup>th</sup> Inf. Div. had to surrender 6,000 men in the vicinity of Schönberg in one of the largest mass surrenders in American military history. After being relieved, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division set out to cover 26 miles of front.

<sup>58</sup> "Of the 341,000 soldiers in the U.S. First Army, 68,822 were in VIII Corps, anchoring the army's right flank with three divisions in the line. They held an eighty-five mile front – three times the length advised for a force of such strength under Army tactical doctrine – that snaked down the Belgium border through Luxembourg to Third Army's sector." Atkinson, p. 417.

<sup>59</sup> This was the beginning of the Battle of the Bulge, the last major German offensive on the Western Front which lasted from December 16, 1944 until January 25, 1945.

<sup>60</sup> Belgium towns about 15 miles north of Schönberg.

<sup>61</sup> See note 63 below.

<sup>62</sup> Staff Sgt. Millard I. Case

<sup>63</sup> The Königstiger (German for 'Bengal tiger') was the largest tank mass-produced by Germany (492 built) and with an 8.8 cm kwk 43 gun could knock out every American and British tank. Its sloped thick armor could defeat most guns, excluding hollow charge weapons.



The next morning Jerry Infantry was all over town – SS boys – and they wouldn't surrender so we had to kill them all. This took about two and half hours. While we were working the Inf. over, our other tanks got a few more Jerry tanks and by noon we had driven them back to the outside of town. I've never seen so many dead Jerries in one place before. They were really "stacked up." Late that afternoon they came at us with all they had. They knocked out five of our tanks and captured one which wouldn't run. They got the crew with it. We knocked out a bunch of their tanks – I don't know how many. A, B, & C Co.'s all got some.

That night the Jerries tried something different. They came in using spotlights on their tanks. That would blind us and we didn't know exactly where to fire, but it didn't work. Our Inf. would shoot the spotlights out. About every fifteen minutes they'd come at us and we'd kick them back. That kept up all night. The next morning some Captain came up to us and said that there was a Jerry tank behind a certain house and he wanted us to get them, so up we went and started our little game of hide and seek around the house.<sup>64</sup> After about twenty or thirty minutes we got into a position where we could fire and we put four rounds in the turret. They bounced off him, but he took off. We scared him away.

During the three days we fought here, we were completely cut off for two days and nights. We were running low on gas and ammo and our C.P.<sup>65</sup> started preparing things for a surrender, but the third day the First Inf. Div. broke through and opened a road up so we could get supplies and the third day we got gas and ammo, but no food. We'd had no sleep and nothing to eat while we were in the towns. We tried to fry some bacon one night, but were rudely interrupted. I saw men go crazy there. In fact, one fellow in my tank flew off his nut, and jumped out of the tank. He came back after a while; said he didn't know what happened to him – guess he'd had more than he could take. He was always very nervous after this and spent some time in the hospital.

The third night we got orders that we were going to pull back to prepared defenses. B Co. was going to stay behind for rear-guard action. In other words, we'd be the last to leave town. We were all certain that we'd have to do some real scrapping on this deal and I don't think any man expected to get out alive. Although the Jerries had lost around 78 tanks and Lord knows how many men – they had plenty left, but I don't guess ole Jerry caught on to what we were doing because he didn't seem very active that night and we had cleared the town by thirty minutes before he knew what was coming off. When they did find out we'd pulled back, they really gave us some artillery. The Inf. caught hell in that artillery – the 2<sup>nd</sup> got cut to pieces that night. We loaded our tanks with wounded and brought as many as we could back, but we had to leave some of them behind. I don't know what happened to them, but I don't think Jerry bothered to pick them up.

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<sup>64</sup> "Sgt. Dickson and crew really sweated it out for a while as they were on one side of a house and a kraut tank on the other side. One of them had to move and Dickson did, successfully." Lt. Dudley, platoon leader of the second platoon in *The Story of Vitamin Baker*, p. 62.

<sup>65</sup> C.P.=Command Post.

I don't know exactly how far we pulled back – about four or five miles, I think. The snow was over two feet deep and we lived in foxholes until sometime in January after the bulge was no longer a serious threat.<sup>66</sup> Then we moved into houses, painted our tanks white,<sup>67</sup> butchered a couple of hogs and lived pretty good for a while. We drew some new tanks from Ordnance with 76 mm. guns<sup>68</sup> on them and started preparing for another attack.

After we sorta recovered from the “bulge” and had drawn new tanks, we started on the offensive again. We fought back through Rocherath & Krinkelt and on through the Monchau Forest. It was cold as you know what. I wore summer underwear next to my skin, winter underwear over that, a pair of O.D.'s, a pair of overalls, and over all that my combat suit, plus a couple pairs of socks and a pair of boots, of course. I didn't take any of those clothes off for almost a month. I did find time to take my boots off and build a fire under my feet once in a while. The Germans never removed their dead from where we fought them during the “bulge.” We found all of our boys who were killed, some still in the tanks and some lying outside. I saw an American and a German, both dead, lying \_\_\_\_\_<sup>69</sup> in a field. The American had killed the Jerry with a trench knife – he had stabbed the Jerry in the chest and was still holding the knife.

Just the other side of the Monchau Forest, four roads ran together. We called this “Heartbreak Crossroad.” The Jerries didn't want to give it up and they had it very well defended with dug-in tanks, mines, ack-ack guns and artillery. It sorta had us stumped for a while, but we “threw away the book,” lined all our tanks up, put them in fifth gear and took off. I guess we surprised the Jerries because we took the crossroads and two towns besides. We were always glad to get to take a town for it meant that we'd be able to kick some German civilians out and have some shelter to sleep under.

We had a couple of days break here, did a lot of cooking and sleeping. We lost a man in our tank during the fighting and got a new replacement. The poor kid was scared to death. He'd

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<sup>66</sup> The Battle of the Bulge was considered to be over on January 25, 1945 when the Germans had been pushed back to their original positions before their advance.

<sup>67</sup> “Then came a short period of preparation. The tanks were whitewashed to blend with the snow and supplied with devices to give them better traction against the snow-packed, icy roads.” *741 D- Day To V-E Day*, p. 32. “The tanks had all been whitewashed and all personnel wore white cloth on their helmets in order to blend with the background of snow. The doughs wore complete snow suits.” *The Story of Vitamin Baker*, p. 74

<sup>68</sup> “The new 76 mm gun with the new hyper-velocity shells proved highly successful. The terrific muzzle blast at first astounded the tankers, but it gave them a pleased feeling that they were doing heavier damage.” *741 D-Day To V-E Day*, p. 33; “Some of the Second Platoon men made a long trip back to Ordnance, and drew five new tanks mounting 76 mm guns. We had seen too many 75 projectiles ricochet off Jerry tanks in Rockerath, and the new long barreled 76's looked good to us.” *The Story of Vitamin Baker*, p. 71; “Tanks mounting the 76 mm guns were used for the first time in the Battalion and were described as being very successful. The most notable disadvantage was the tremendous muzzle blast which, with the high velocity projectile, prevented proper observation of the strike of the projectile.” *After Action Report* for February by 1<sup>st</sup> Lieut. William E. Park, Adjutant 741<sup>st</sup> Tk. Bn.

<sup>69</sup> Word obscured in the original text.

really had a close call when a big shell landed near him and shrapnel<sup>70</sup> tore his jacket off. Our next objective was the town of Hellenthal.<sup>71</sup> This was supposed to be the last of the Siegfried Line. Hellenthal was a pretty tough nut to crack, took us about three days to do the job. The Jerries had sixty-five old men fighting here.<sup>72</sup> After we had taken the town, we had a pretty hard job of holding it. Every night the Jerries tried to kick us out, but we held.

Here is where I got my Purple Heart<sup>73</sup> and five points. The Jerries were trying to come into town one night about dark. We were using my tank as a roadblock in case any enemy tanks tried to come down the road. Whipple,<sup>74</sup> the new fellow in my tank, was loading the guns for me. We both had our heads stuck out of the turret trying to see something. I saw a flare go up and I knew it was Jerry calling for artillery. I told Whipple he'd better get his head down and he did, but me like a damn fool kept looking out. I figured I'd be able to hear the shells coming and then duck, but ole' Jerry fooled me with some silent mortars and the last thing I remember was a big flash. I came to a few minutes later in the aid station. I had a big hole in my steel helmet, but just a scratch on my head. I stayed in the aid station for a couple of hours and was OK.

We stayed in this town a few more days waiting for all of our forces to clear out the Siegfried Line. Most of the Germans in front of us pulled out and we had it easy for a while. There were open plains ahead of us and I think everybody wanted to get rolling and try to end this thing.

Hellenthal was the last of the Siegfried defenses. The 78<sup>th</sup> Inf. Div. was working on our right flank, and they had a fortified city to destroy before the whole U.S. Army could start for the Rhine. In this city, Schmit,<sup>75</sup> the Jerries had houses built over pillboxes and just to look at the place

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<sup>70</sup> A hollow projectile containing bullets or the like and a bursting charge, arranged to explode before reaching the object, and to set free a shower of missiles and shell fragments. So named for its inventor, Lt. Gen. Henry Shrapnel (1761-1842) of the British army. The proximity fuse, developed in 1944 and first used in ground combat in the Battle of the Bulge, was designed to explode in the air over its target when its radio wave sensed the target on the ground. It was one of the most innovative and effective inventions during the war.

<sup>71</sup> Hellenthal is a municipality in the in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany. It is located in the Eifel hills, near the border with Belgium, approximately 30 km south-west of Euskirchen and 40 km south-east of Aachen.

<sup>72</sup> "In October, a home guard dubbed the Volkssturm – Peoples's Storm – also was created under Himmler's SS; the joke went around that retirement homes now bore the sign 'Closed because of the call-up.'" Atkinson, p. 391.

<sup>73</sup> March 11, 1945

<sup>74</sup> T-5 Darrell R. Whipple

<sup>75</sup> Schmidt, North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany. A major battle had occurred at Schmidt, when the American forces first approached the town on November 2, 1944 before the Battle of the Bulge. The Americans fought until November 8 but were unable to dislodge the Germans and therefore withdrew. The Germans had stopped the U.S. First Army cold, inflicting more than 28,000 casualties on V and VII corps. It was one of the greatest defeats the U.S. Army ever suffered. The worst part of this battle was known as the Hürtgen Forest where "In less than three months, six army infantry divisions would be tossed into the Hürtgen, plus an armored brigade, a ranger battalion, and sundry other units. All told 120,000 soldiers sustained 33,000 casualties. . ." Atkinson, p. 325. As Cpl. Scurry relates, Schmidt finally fell in early February, 1945 when the 78<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division prevailed. "While going through this fertile farm country, we saw a model of annihilation in the town of Schmidt. This town, taken by the 78<sup>th</sup> Division, was completely leveled. There was not a house left standing." *The Story of Vitamin Baker*, p. 82.

it seemed like any ordinary town of its size, but it was the best fortified section of the German lines. The 78<sup>th</sup> had one tough fight here, but they finally won out after about eight days.<sup>76</sup>

The capture of Schmit opened up our whole front and we took off one night. We drove for about fifteen miles, swinging a little to the south and hit strong opposition at a crossroads. There were about a thousand Jerries here who had been cut off but they decided to fight instead of giving up. We took ground here in terms of yards and fought for two days and nights. We took a high hill one night and this gave us command of the ground for miles around. At daybreak the next morning, the remainder of the German forces began retreating. We spotted them on the sky line about 3,000 yards away, and used five tanks to keep them moving. We really had a nice shoot that morning.

I could see our shells landing right in the middle of the Jerries as they tried to get over the hill. We had our new tanks here with 76 Mm. guns and improved sights and we just couldn't miss. It wasn't a picture you'd enjoy seeing when we went over that hill about an hour later. We drove about five miles further and hit the plains. Here we swung sharp right again and drove all day without any opposition. We'd stop when night came and bed down. Sometimes we'd send a couple of tanks on ahead, maybe to the next town and if they came back, we'd know the road was clear for the next day.

We caught up with the Jerries again when we started into the Rhine River valley, but these boys – at least most of them – would surrender after a few shots to help them make up their minds. We drove on until we were about ten miles from the Rhine. All this time the 741<sup>st</sup> had been spearheading but here the 612 T.D. Bn.<sup>77</sup> took over for the final drive to the Rhine and we were told to take a break. We ran some civilians out of their homes and took over – had a good meal, cleaned our guns, etc. We all went to bed sorta early that night, sorry in a way that we wouldn't be the first to reach the Rhine on our front. Then about five A.M. Lt. Dudley<sup>78</sup> came in and said, "Boys, the Jerries have stopped the 612 T.D.'s, and we have to go help them out." We took five tanks out that morning (one platoon) to do something that the 612 couldn't do with the whole Bn.

When we reached the 612 boys, Dudley asked them what the trouble was and one of the guys said, "They almost hit one our T.D.'s with a panzerfaust."<sup>79</sup> We all got a laugh out of that one and I thought where would this American Army be if we all stopped just because we almost

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<sup>76</sup> The 78<sup>th</sup> Inf. Div. crossed from France on November 22, 1944 and in January was assigned the task of capturing the Urft and Schwammenauel dams to prevent the Germans from flooding the Roer River. The Division took the town of Schmidt on February 8 and captured the Schwammenauel dam intact on February 9. But the Germans had damaged the dam and it flooded the Roer for a fortnight.

<sup>77</sup> T.D. = Tank Destroyer. The 612<sup>th</sup> Tank Destroyer Battalion was equipped with three companies of M-18 "Hellcat" tank destroyers, a self-propelled vehicle on tracks with lighter armor than a tank and an open turret. It carried the 76 mm gun. While the M-18 was more mobile than the M-4 Sherman tank because it was lighter, it was more vulnerable to attack because only lightly armored with the open turret.

<sup>78</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Robert L. Dudley of the 741<sup>st</sup> Tank Battalion.

<sup>79</sup> A German bazooka

got hit. Anyway, we relieved the 612, got organized ourselves and started the attack. We split our platoon up – three tanks outflanking the Jerries on the left and my tank and Case's hitting them at the front. We started out first, driving down the road and firing as we moved along. Then when the Jerries returned our fire, Dudley and his section came in on their flank and rear. We drove them for about a mile and a half from the Rhine, then the Jerries broke and ran like a bunch of wild dogs. We gave them a pretty good working over and drove right on down through the town to the Rhine River. No Germans crossed over at this point but a lot of them tried. When all the P.W.'s<sup>80</sup> were counted up we had over 600.

We ran across some very nice loot in the town. Plenty of drinks – some of the best wine I've ever had and when we got back to the Co., we had three cars and two motorcycles. We took the back seat out of the cars and loaded them down with wine, champagne, cognac, etc. That night back at the Co. we had news that our bridgehead across the Rhine was holding.<sup>81</sup> It seemed about the right time to pitch a little party so we did with steaks, french fries, and everything else that goes with a good meal. You might ask where we got steaks. Well, we confiscated them, ha. We got about ten days rest here and that ends up a little bit of what happened between the Siegfried and the Rhine.

#### Paderborn-Leipzig

We drove pretty hard up to Paderborn-Leipzig. Here my tank broke down and had to be sent to Ord. for repairs. Usually the crew would go back to Ord. with the tank, but at this time we had no replacements so we had to stay with the Co. Lt. Sheppard's<sup>82</sup> gunner had been wounded and he asked for me as his gunner, so I went in his tank. The whole 2<sup>nd</sup> Div. and the 741<sup>st</sup> was attached to the 9<sup>th</sup> Armd. Div.<sup>83</sup> We were used as a spearhead element on the 9<sup>th</sup> A.D.'s right flank carrying Inf. on our tanks. We drove about 25 miles from Paderborn<sup>84</sup> in one day, then the second day we hit some S.S. boys in dug-in positions around a small town. We fought all day and night in this town and finally cleaned it out. We lost two tanks on this deal; a couple of men hit but not killed.

We drove on through the town and about three miles the other side twelve Jerry tanks engaged us from about 2,300 yards on our left flank. We really had a hot time then. I fired twenty A.P.'s and got hits on three Jerry tanks. The fight lasted about one hour, during which time we lost one tank which is remarkable considering that the Jerries had us outgunned. I can't say for

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<sup>80</sup> P.W. = Prisoner of War

<sup>81</sup> The General Erich Ludendorff railroad bridge, constructed in 1918, had been seized by Lt. Karl H. Timmermann of Co. A of the 27<sup>th</sup> Armored Infantry Battalion of the 9<sup>th</sup> Armored Division on March 7, 1945. Atkinson, p. 549.

<sup>82</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Turner G. Sheppard

<sup>83</sup> Commanded by Maj. Gen. John W. Leonard. Combat Command B was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation for its actions in taking and securing the Remagen bridge.

<sup>84</sup> Paderborn had been seized by the U.S. 3<sup>rd</sup> Armored Division after a pitched battle on March 31-April 1.

certain how many of their tanks we got, but I could see black smoke from four or five places over the hill and they didn't bother us again. We drove on down until we hit a small river and spent the night in a little town here. We'd run across a bunch of Jerries that would fight, and then a bunch that would all surrender.

After a night's sleep and a couple of good meals we took off again, heading for Gottingen,<sup>85</sup> a right large city. Just a few miles from the city, we surprised a column of German artillery pieces, tanks, anti-tank guns, etc. We destroyed this whole column<sup>86</sup> while chasing it into the city – running over German soldiers and everything. We also killed a few civilians who were on the streets. It couldn't be helped; they would run from one house to another while we were firing.

There was a prison camp here<sup>87</sup> and after we had cleaned the city of Jerries, I went through it. I've never seen anything like it before and I hope I never will again. The Germans had all kinds of prisoners here – American, English, French, Polish, etc. They all were better cared for than the Americans who were so skinny and weak they couldn't get off their beds. The G.I.'s here were captured during the breakthrough in December. Several of them died while we were there.

We stayed in Gottingen a couple of days waiting for our flanks to even up. We were way out on a spearhead. When we left here, the tank I was in, Lt. Sheppard's, was placed in the lead position – a position that is very unhealthy and no tanker likes. We took off again, down into what we called "flak valley" and the city of Mersburg,<sup>88</sup> about twenty-five miles from Leipzig. The Jerries had scores of guns all around this sector. They'd be in bunches of eight to twelve and of course we ran smack into them. We were going up one road – moving slow because we had been fired on – and all of a sudden, I saw three balls of fire go past the tank, missed us but hit the tank

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<sup>85</sup> The American army first arrived at Gottingen, a university city in Lower Saxony, Germany on April 8, 1945. Since it was not a militarily strategic target, and since most of the German army had withdrawn before the American army arrived, Gottingen experienced relatively little damage in the war, despite the action Cpl. Scurry describes here. *Wikipedia* article.

<sup>86</sup> "We had been misled by our maps, and we wound up on a high hill overlooking a long valley. There was no way down. The German convoy was slowly moving along a road in the floor of the valley and extended in either direction as far as the eye could see. We had a perfect field of fire, and the moving vehicles were like mechanical ducks in a shooting gallery." *The Story of Vitamin Baker*, p. 96.

<sup>87</sup> Corporal Scurry must have been confused as to when he visited this camp and where it was. There was no camp near Gottingen; however, Company B did visit the concentration camp of the German munitions manufacturer, Hasag, near Floßberg, southeast of Leipzig, some days later "where full evidence of these inhumanities [of the brutal results of Nazi domination] was found all about the camp. The sights were horrible and unbelievable." 741: D-Day to V-E-Day, p. 38. This is not to be confused with Flossenbürg, on the Czechoslovakian border which had one of the largest German concentration camps.

<sup>88</sup> Merseburg, Germany was the location of one of Germany's principal oil refineries, the Leuna refinery. As such it was a principal target of Allied bombing raids which had sought to destroy Hitler's oil supply. It was heavily defended by German anti-aircraft guns which wreaked havoc on the Allied bombers. It is not surprising, therefore, that Scurry's Company encountered substantial resistance here. "Merseburg...Dreaded Merseburg," by Allen Ostrom, *398 Bomb Group Memorial Association*. By the end of the war, Merseburg was badly damaged. The historic town center was almost completely destroyed.

behind us. I saw where the fire came from – a house on the right of the road. The Jerries had an anti-tank sticking through the window. I knocked it out with two rounds of H.E. and put 5 or 6 more rounds in some other houses and set them on fire. It was almost dark by this time so we pulled into the little town on our left and took in some gas and ammo.

According to the law of averages, my tank should have been knocked out a couple of days ago because they don't last long when you're in the lead.<sup>89</sup> And I found out something that didn't make me feel very good about having to be in the lead the next day. We captured a map showing that there were about sixty guns around an airfield and the road that we had to take going into Mersburg. "Shep" and I didn't sleep that night, instead we discussed the best tactics to use the next day over a bottle of cognac. We saw by the map that we would have to run through about twenty guns which could fire at us at point blank range. We had the guns pinpointed and knew exactly where they were. The first guns we'd run across were right on a curve so we decided to drive as fast as possible to this curve, then cut across a field and open fire on the guns first. Then drive straight across the airfield, firing as we moved and try to get on into Mersburg. That seemed about the best thing to do and we might have made it because the Jerries would be expecting us to come down the road instead of cross country. Lt. Dudley's platoon was supposed to follow us, and we were to start the attack at 4:30 A.M.

Then about 4:15, Lt. Dudley called "Shep" over the radio and said that he was pulling out – for us to follow him. Why he did this, I don't know because he didn't know where the guns were. Lt. Sheppard tried to stop him but he was already pulling out. Dudley led his platoon down the road and right into the Jerry guns. The Germans got every one of his tanks.<sup>90</sup> When Dudley's platoon started drawing fire we pulled out across the field and started firing on the German guns. I knocked out two of them, but by this time they had us spotted and we were caught in a crossfire from the guns that knocked Dudley's platoon out and the guns from the airfield on our right. They shot the air vent and part of the turret-hatch off our tank and we had to take cover behind some houses.

When it got good daylight, I took a pair of field glasses and looked the Jerry guns over and our tanks which were burning on the road. I couldn't see any of our fellows from the tanks, but about 15 or 20 Jerries left their guns and started toward our tanks. We moved around in a position

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<sup>89</sup> "Due to the speed of our advances, and the resulting confusion of the enemy forces, it was difficult for our S2 [Brigade or Battalion Intelligence] to keep us informed of what we were running into. This meant that we had to find out the hard way – by running into it. The lead tank in a blitzkrieging tank column is usually the one that draws the first fire, and when this occurred, the Germans had the additional advantages of a prepared position, and surprise." *The Story of Vitamin Baker*, p. 97.

<sup>90</sup> "Patrols had reported there were no gun positions on this particular approach to the city. Consequently, a platoon of tanks, commanded by Lt. Dudley, was instructed to move into town and the Infantry at first light on 14 April. This movement was begun, but the entire platoon was ambushed by a battery of 88 mm AAA guns as they neared the city. Four of the tanks were knocked out, three being completely destroyed." *After Action Report for April by 1<sup>st</sup> Lieut. William E. Park, Adjutant 741<sup>st</sup> Tk. Bn.*

to fire and let the Jerries get almost to the road then cut loose at them with all four of our tanks. Only three of them got back to their guns. Things got quiet and I saw some guys crawling toward us from our tanks. I recognized them as our fellows. Six of them got back to us, but four were captured by the Jerries.<sup>91</sup> While I was looking at the guys the Jerries captured, I saw one German shoot one of our boys while he had his hands up.<sup>92</sup> We couldn't fire at the Jerries then because of the danger of hitting our fellows.

Later on in the day, we got some artillery on the Germans and they all surrendered – about 300 of them. The German that shot our fellow with hands up was taken out and permitted to dig his own grave. After surrender here, the road into Leipzig was practically clear, but in the city of Leipzig we had a pretty stiff fight. Our prize bit of captured stuff here was a wine cellar, a real big one, with cases and cases of wine, cognac, and champagne. There in Leipzig was the last of our real tough fighting. The Jerries began surrendering by the hundreds and thousands. We wouldn't let them cross the Elbe river to us<sup>93</sup> and they would stand on the other side breaking up their guns, crying and pleading with us to take them as P.W.'s They said the "Rousskies" would kill them. We told them that was too bad and that we were very sorry.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> T-4 Ivan E. Schmidt, Sgt. Harrell Gullatt, Sgt. Albert H. Kammeyer, and Cpl. Gross ("Sad Sack") Gross.

<sup>92</sup> T-4 Ivan E. Schmidt. "Those dirty krauts had shot him when he gave up to them during the action on April 14<sup>th</sup>. Due to his knowledge of the German language, Cpl. Gross (Sad Sack) and the others were safe. Old Sad had persuaded the krauts to become his prisoners, one hundred and fifty to be exact." *The Story of Vitamin Baker*, p. 100.

<sup>93</sup> The Germans wished to surrender separately to the English and Americans so that their army could thereby avoid delivering POWs to the Soviets, but Eisenhower and Montgomery refused and closed their lines on May 7, 1945, at the Elbe River "... so no more Germans can get through..." Atkinson, p. 624.

<sup>94</sup> Thus ends Cpl. Scurry's memoir. He does not recount the movement of the battalion down into Czechoslovakia or when and how he returned home. As noted in the Forward, however, at the end of April, the Battalion was released from the V Corps and assigned to VIII Corps in Patton's 3rd Army. On May 1 it set out for Czechoslovakia and reached Pilsen (Plzeň) on May 6. The Battalion left Pilsen and took up occupation duties in Germany until departing for the United States. On October 15 the Battalion left Germany and arrived in New York on October 25. The Battalion was inactivated at Camp Kilmer, New Jersey on October 27 and Cpl. Scurry reported to Fort Bragg in Fayetteville, North Carolina where he was honorably discharged on October 31, 1945.



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9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division (United States)  
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