

Wallendorf, Germany. September 14, 1944.

When we had moved across Luxembourg and were looking at Germany. The Corps Commander wanted to see just how strong the Siegfried Line really was and issued an order that would test its strength. The order simply said "Take Bitburg", a strategic road juncture about thirteen or fourteen miles inside the German border. It was learned later that he had not expected our troops to breach the Siegfried Line. CC-R, 5th. Armored Division, with 112th. Infantry Regiment of the 28th. Division attached made their main effort at Wallendorf, a usually peaceful little German town on the east bank of the Our River just north of where the Sure River that flowed through Luxembourg past Diekirch to the east. It is here that the Our River flows into the Sure River as it makes its right turn to the south and forms the eastern boundary, separating Luxembourg from Germany. The Our River serves as the boundary for Luxembourg north of that point. Although the Germans had been in undergoing a rather hasty retreat across France, Belgium and Luxembourg they were still able to man their West Wall ~~in~~ Siegfried Line, though not as adequately as they would have liked. Consequently, when our troops crossed the Our and made their attack ~~in~~ against the bunkers and pill boxes ~~in~~ using the methods previously used in training, much to the surprise of our Corps Commander, the line did not hold. The Siegfried line was on the high ground and slopes back of Wallendorf. After our combat troops had moved on through Wallendorf, trouble developed there. Many of the German soldiers had changed from their uniforms to civilian clothing and started sniping on our service troops as they passed through the town. Clearing these snipers became a rather difficult problem which led to the Colonel commanding CC-R to order the town burned down. I sat with him and a number of other officers on a hill in the elbow of the Sure River overlooking Wallendorf. Our artillery dropped phosphorus shells into the town that started many fires. Others were started by the use of flame throwers. A big portion of the town was destroyed by these fires and the sniper problem was ended. One of the officers in this group was

Captain James Bagwell, Commandant of the 5th. Armored Division Trains Headquarters Company. He had come forward to have a first hand look at what was going on up where the action was. Captain Bagwell happened to be the husband of one of my wife's first cousins. Captain Bagwell's C. O., 5th. Armored Division Trains Commander, Col. Gustin M. Nelson, was later to be assigned as Regimental Commander of the 112th. Inf. Regiment of the 28th. Division, which was attached to CC-R for this operation, and was to be known by code name "Horseshoe - 6". I was later to command the 1st. Battalion of that regiment and was to be known by code name as "Horseshoe Red - 6". It was during this operation that I first learned of the code name "Horseshoe" as referring to the 112th. Infantry Regiment.

Although the burning of Wallendorf solved the sniper problem, it almost brought on a Congressional investigation. It became bad news throughout Germany and the rest of the World. Hitler used the fact that the Americans had burned the first German town captured as a rallying cry for the German people. Funds were raised throughout Germany and from German troops wherever they were located for the relief of the survivors of Wallendorf. It also served to stiffen the resistance to the invasion of the "Fatherland". An investigation was made by our Army and it was determined that Wallendorf was burned as the result of normal military operations. Not only did it stop the sniper situation at Wallendorf, it also kept similar situations from occurring in other villages near there when word was passed on to them that their towns would not be burned if they did not permit sniping from their houses.

On the next day, September 15th., Col. Anderson and his command group crossed the Our River and moved through Wallendorf. ~~XIX~~ Although the fires were mostly burned out, the town was still quite warm and we could feel the heat radiating from the hot brick walls of burned buildings. We stopped at the top of the hill and inspected one of the Siegfried Line bunkers that occupied a commanding defensive position. While we were here,

a group of about forty prisoners were marched by on their way to our rear. To us they didn't look at all like "Super Men". I'm sure they were somewhat glad that the war was over for them, but wondering just what was in store for them as prisoners. At least, they were still alive. I snapped some pictures of them, which I later lost, along with my camera, during the "Battle of the Bulge". The VEF Radio crew that I was with, along with the rest of the CC-R Headquarters group operated as closely as possible behind the infantry and tanks in order to give the combat units all the best air support possible. If they ran into too much resistance, they would get word back to us and tell us what was holding them up and give its location. We would then call for fighter bomber support and we would soon have ^{P-47s} ~~XXXXX~~ or P-38s working the ~~XXX~~ target over. In our mad flight across France, Belgium and Luxembourg our advance was rather rapid. Now that we were inside Germany their resistance was much stronger and increasing ~~lx~~ with each day. The Air Force sent one of their P-38 pilots to talk to the pilots overhead on our radio to help guide them in on the targets. He talked their language better than we did. Our artillery also had a liason pilot flying overhead calling and correcting their strikes on the enemy positions. The Germans brought up anti-aircraft weapons to deal with our fighters and our artillery observer flying overhead. On numerous occasions I saw our Liason Pilot dive to a lower altitude when the German anti-aircraft shells began exploding around him. Luck was with him and he never got hit. One of our P-47 pilots was not as lucky. ~~XXXXXXXX~~ His plane was hit and he had to make a belly landing. His buddies flying the other planes with him watched him down and reported that he had survived and walked away from his plane. They thought he had been picked up by some of our troops. I hope so, but we didn't get any word that he was. We had had one other P-47 shot down near Sees, France back in August. I had seen one other P-47 that had belly-landed further south in Luxembourg. He was not flying support for our unit. These were certainly good fighter planes and safer for the pilot on forced landings.

It is not at all unusual to see dead enemy soldiers lying alongside the road where combat action has occurred. It is unusual to see one that has been run over by the tread of a number of tanks. The one I saw was on the side of the road a few miles from Wallendorf. The tanks may have been getting off of the road to avoid an area they thought may have been mined, but it looked as though they had left the road ~~to~~ deliberately to run over the German who was probably already dead.

At one place on the side of a hill where our convoy was halted for a number of minutes a string of bullets went by us ~~xxx~~ making that snapping sound that reminded one of the breaking of dry sticks. No one was hit and we couldn't see where ~~xxx~~ they were fired from, but they didn't make that spent whistling sound~~x~~ of bullets that had travelled a long distance from the weapon that had fired them.

Our Supply Officer had found a flock of chickens that he thought might be used to put some variety into our eating habits. Most of our small sections had some method of cooking things that were not in our regular ration issue. The group in our halftrack decided to fry the one we got. As a result, we had some of the toughest fried chicken we had ever seen or eaten, but we did eat it. These chickens were well past the age for fryers. But, as the French would say, ^{"C'est} ~~XXXX~~ la Guerre".

The further we drove into Germany the greater the resistance became. By the time we had penetrated to a depth of about nine miles, our forward movement had just about come to a halt. The Germans were bringing in reinforcements from all directions. They were especially trying to close in on our flanks well to our rear. Our artillery was being attacked from their right by German tanks and had to turn and fire direct on these tanks for their own protection. Our last bivouac was about one hundred yards behind some small village. The night had passed rather uneventfully for our headquarters group. The next morning, Sept. 18th., without even firing a single registration shot, the German artillery ~~XXX~~ dropped a heavy barrage right on top of us, wounding a number of our group,

some seriously. The Colonel's command vehicle (a captured German panel truck, converted into a portable Command Post) was hit and set on fire. Our Air Force Captain Pilot was in our Radio Halftrack talking by radio to the P-47 Pilots flying close support for our troops up ahead of us. A large piece of shrapnel hit the radio antenna/with enough force to break about six inches above his head porcelain its ~~XXXXXXXX~~ base. I hurriedly lay in the slit trench I had dug the night before and pulled my bedroll in on top of me, wishing I could go down ten feet deeper. When the barrage lifted, we quickly loaded our equipment and ourselves on our vehicle and moved out in the direction away from the village. I'd say that the Germans had a real good artillery observer in that village and that he did an excellent job. We stopped and started digging-in twice more ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ and they started registering in on us at both of those locations, observable from other villages. That must have been part of the Siegfried Line telephone network, and they were putting it to good use. The next place where we stopped and dug in was on ~~ex~~ the reverse slope of a hill away from any villages. Our P-38 Pilot said he had learned a lot about what we people on the ground went through and that when he got back up there in his P-38 he would never fly to his home base from a flight over Germany with any ammunition he had not fired.

Our Division Chief of Staff came up to see ^{what} the situation was, ~~XXXX~~ When he saw what was happening, we were ordered ^{XXXX} to withdraw back into Luxembourg as soon as night came. Seeing how the Germans were trying to ^{off} pinch us ~~the~~ from the north flank to our rear, Division ordered Lt. Col. Kenneth P. Gilson of CC-9 to move his battalion of Armored Infantry into that position to cover our withdrawal. (Gilson and I had served together for almost two years in the old Army 5th. Infantry Regiment. We had been transferred from the 5th. Infantry Regiment of the 71st. Inf. Division to the 5th. Armored Division in July, joining the division on or about July 4th. in England.).

As it became dark enough to cover ~~our~~ our movement, withdrawal began. Our radio halftrack was about the third in our column of vehicles. We

moved slowly down this long sloping hill to the bottom where we reached a road at the base of the hill. The driver of the lead vehicle turned to the right and kept on this road. A few minutes later I noticed that we were heading directly up the hill toward the Colonels abandoned Command Post panel truck that was still burning. I knew then that the driver of the lead vehicle had turned the wrong way at the foot of the hill, that instead, he should have turned left. I sent word to stop the column, which was moving very ~~slowly~~ slowly because of the extreme darkness. Having exceptionally good night vision, I then placed myself in front of the lead vehicle and with a white handkerchief in my hand, which I waved behind me, I led the column back down the hill to the road where we turned left. We stayed on this road until we came to a larger road that was covered with tanks and trucks that were moving to our right. As soon as there was a break in this movement of traffic, we forced our way into the break and moved along with it. In due time, we found ourselves crossing the Engineer's bridge over the Our River into Luxembourg. A few miles on the road toward Diekirch our Radio Halftrack pulled ~~pulling~~ us off of the highway to the left to a level spot between the highway and the Sure River. It didn't take us long to bed down and drop off to sleep for the few hours that were left of ~~xxxx~~ what had been a very busy night.

When morning came, we had our C-Ration breakfast ~~xxx~~ and then set out to find the rest of our CC-R Headquarters Group. We found them settled down on a hill not far from and south of the Sure River. It was here that I learned that my friend Ken. Gilson had been wounded and evacuated. I had a letter from him later while he was recuperating in a hospital in England. I saw him in Reims, France after the war was over and he told me how it all happened. He said that after being told that all other troops had withdrawn He began pulling his troops out, and in traditional order of withdrawal, he was following the last of his troops out. There was a medical jeep with his Battalion Surgeon ~~pulling~~ following him very closely. He had given instructions that they would keep moving regardless of what might happen. They were being

fired on by the closely following Germans. Gilson was firing back at them with his pistol from his jeep. An enemy bullet struck him in his left rib area, glancing around his ribs, tearing his left nipple off and knocking him out of his jeep. He said that ~~he~~ when he looked down and saw all that blood, he thought, "My God, I'm killed". He said that when the Medical Jeep stopped to pick him up, he told them to leave him and keep on going. They picked him up and threw him on the hood of the jeep and then moved out. He said that in spite of the fact that the medics were supposed to be unarmed, he remembered seeing his doctor firing a pistol at the Germans as they drove off. After being dismissed from the hospital and returned to duty, he was not returned to combat but served as an Inspector General for the duration of the War.

After going into a defensive position back in Luxembourg, Col. Anderson called a meeting of his battalion and company commanders to discuss the operations we had just been through in Germany. After a full discussion about the attack on the Siegfried Line Bunkers, it was decided that the method taught and practiced ~~in~~ our previous training and used by our troops ~~in~~ in our attack on the Line was good and should be used ~~in~~ any future attacks made on the Line. It was also brought out that the Corps Commander had not expected a penetration of the Line, and, that he did not have the troops and supplies necessary to exploit and follow up a successful penetration. If he had had, it is believed that we could have pushed on to the Rhine River in a little more than two weeks time and the war could have been brought to a successful end at a much earlier date.

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