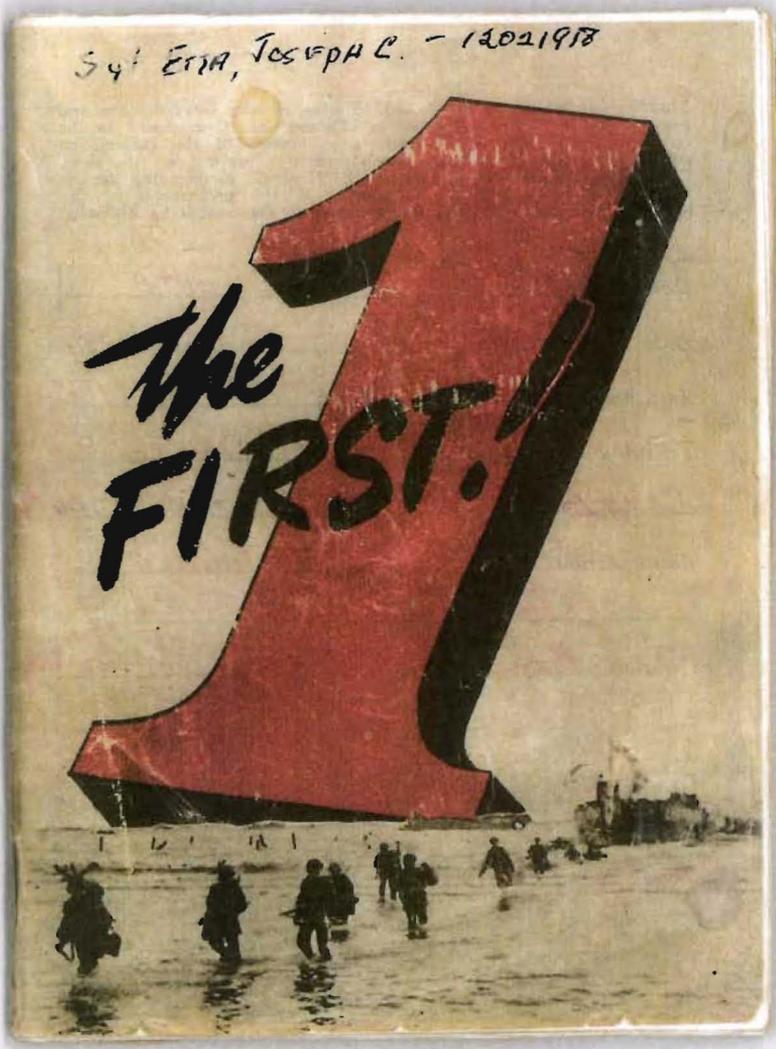


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This is one of a series of G.I. Stories of the Ground, Air and Service Forces in the European Theater of Operations, to be issued by the Stars and Stripes, a publication of the Information and Education Division, Special and Information Services, ETOUSA... Major General Clarence R. Huebner, commanding the 1st Infantry Division, lent his cooperation to the preparation of the pamphlet, and basic material was supplied to the editors by his staff.

SGT JOSEPH CHARLES ETTR
Name

Date Enlisted JAN 2 1941 - JUNE 24 1945

Assigned to 1st CO D 26th INF 1st INF DIV

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Citations Bronze Star America's Defense European Army
Europe Campaign leaves medals (Bronze Star)



THE story of the Division and its units is printed herein in factual writing.

Our record lives up to our motto: "No mission too difficult, no sacrifice too great." The press and the historians have, and will always pay tribute to the "Fighting First" as a great division; but I want to take this opportunity to recognize you as individual soldiers. Your courage, your caginess, your teamwork, and your spirit are ever present. The German has learned to fear the wearer of the "Red One." The unmerciful beating you have given him in many engagements; your desire to close with him and kill have made it so. As long as we continue to have men like you, we will go forward - always forward - forward to the next objective.



Clarence R. Huebner
Major General, Commanding

The Story Of The 1st Infantry Division

D-DAY WAS "PURE MIRACLE"

ON April 22, 1944, General Field Marshal Erwin Rommel issued an order to all troops defending Western Europe: "We must succeed in the short time left until the offensive starts, in bringing all defenses to such a standard that they



will hold up against the strongest attack. Never in history was there a defense of such an extent with such an obstacle as the sea. The enemy must be annihilated before he reaches our main battle field!"

Along the strip of coast near Colleville-sur-Mer, Normandy, France, Der Fuehrer's chain gang boys, the Todt workers, must have smiled confidently when they read the order. If the Allies struck here, they also would strike sharpened stakes, ramp obstacles, steel "Element C" obstacles, "hedge-hogs," tetrahedra and curved rails. They would be blown to bits by floating mines, wired mines, mines buried in light sand and gravel. If infantry managed to smash through, it would find itself on a beach flat as a billiard table except for a two-foot embankment on the land side where the pebbly

shale met the turf. In front would be a double-apron wire, concertinas and knife-rests criss-crossing carefully laid mine fields. It also would find itself facing a 100-foot cliff harboring sunken concrete pillboxes. From them, 57mm and 75mm anti-tank guns and 20mm machine guns would pour enfilading fire up and down the beach area. Defiladed behind the ridge were mortars. Manning the defenses at all times was at least a battalion and a half of seasoned infantrymen. In reserve were three full regiments, a mobile brigade and three mobile battalions.

The commander of the 1st Inf. Div., the unit selected to land here, knew all this. He also knew that in the Cerisy Forest, 15 miles to the rear, the 352nd Inf. Div. was on the alert as a reserve.

What he didn't know was that two days before June 6, 1944, the greater part of this enemy division had bivouacked in the Colleville beach area for anti-invasion maneuvers.

MANY accounts have been written of the June 6 assault on the West Wall, and stories will continue to flow long after the D-Day tumult has died away. But it was of the 1st Div. landings that Ernie Pyle spoke when he said, "Now that it is over it seems to me a pure miracle that we ever took the beach at all."



There was confusion, yes. Many units had 30 per cent casualties in the first hour of fighting. Assault boats, mined and shelled, piled upon obstacles and formed additional obstructions. Men were cut down as their landing craft



dropped the ramp or died wading through the surf. A few of the early assault waves, having gained the dubious shelter of the shale ledge, were riddled by artillery bursts. Most supporting weapons were swamped or destroyed on the beach. It would be futile to minimize the destruction or deny the disorganization. It was hell!

But what is significant is that the division came through the interlaced system of obstacles to destroy the entire German 352nd Inf. Div. and it pushed ahead until ordered to stop. The 1st came through on knowledge based on experience, on planning and guts.

The sea-borne invasion of the continent started June 6. When the 2nd and 3rd Bns. of the 18th Combat Team debarked from transports to landing craft at 0630 they assaulted Omaha Beach north of Colleville-sur-Mer. The men knew it wasn't going to be easy when they saw the pattern of flying metal at the water's edge, heard the whomp! whomp!

of 88s, and the crack of automatic guns. The haze of drifting cordite smoke already partly obscured the beach.

Leading the assault, the 2nd Bn. was pinned down on the beach by furious fire from those fortifications which had withstood severe naval and air bombardment. The 3rd Bn. landed on the left of the beach and, disregarding mortars and machine guns, fought inland up a deep draw, destroying strongpoints as it went along. The 1st Bn. landed behind the immobilized 2nd. Reorganization of the scattered and riddled units was accomplished under continued heavy fire. Meanwhile, casualties continued to mount. It was at this critical moment that Brig. Gen. George A. Taylor, assistant division commander, then Colonel in command of the 16th Inf. Regt., expressed the too-dogged-to-quit spirit saying, "Hell, we're dying here on the beach. Let's move inland and die."

ONE group of the 1st Bn. blasted a gap in the wire; what was left of the unit crawled through minefields to capture the ridgeline overlooking the beach. The 1st and 2nd Bns. cleared Colleville-sur-Mer. Behind this driving point the division picked itself up from the sand and surged inland, still meeting stubborn resistance from the outnumbering Germans.

When elements of the 7th FA Bn. landed at H-Hour, half of its guns had been destroyed. Eight hours later it fired its first mission. In the meantime, men grabbed their rifles and fought with the infantry.

At 1300 the 18th Combat Team landed. By mid-afternoon the 2nd Bn. of the 18th was in Colleville-sur-Mer. Firing batteries of the 32nd FA Bn. went into position at 2045, al-

though 25 vehicles and two guns had been lost in the surf. The 28th Combat Team came in at 1700 through mortar and artillery shells still showering the beach. The 1st and 2nd Bns. were abreast with the 3rd in reserve. Despite heavy losses, the 3rd Bn. was the first unit of the division to take its Army objective.

During the next week the 1st Div. slashed inland 23 miles to Caumont, making the farthest southern penetration of the beachhead, and halting only to allow friendly units to draw abreast and cover its dangerously exposed flanks. Other units never did pull onto line; for one month the division held its narrow salient. On June 21 Field Marshal Bernard L. Montgomery complimented Maj. Gen. C. R. Huebner, stating that the action of the division in seizing and holding Caumont so upset the Germans' plans that it was necessary for them to alter their prepared plans and commit their hoarded counter-attack forces. The first phase of the offensive had ended with the destruction of one German division and disruption of all elements initially opposing the assault.

On July 2, when Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower presented decorations to men who made the initial assault, he said, "I know your record from the day you landed in Africa, then Sicily. I am beginning to think that the 1st Div. is a sort of Praetorian Guard..."



The Red One: Oldest Division

THE 1ST MAKES A HABIT OF FIRSTS

THEY were not new to combat, these men who drove through the West Wall and chewed up the "supermen" defending it. They were members of an infantry division only too well known in the archives of the German Army, a division which had never failed to take an objective or accomplish a mission, a division which had been last in nothing except its departure from the field of battle and whose record is appropriate to its name.

The oldest in the Army today, constituted during World War I, the 1st Div. was first to arrive in France. In the last war it was the first to fire a shell against the foe, first to suffer casualties, first to capture prisoners, first to repel a German raid, first to stage a major American offensive, first to enter Germany and cross the Rhine. It was the first division to be cited in General Orders. It was the last division to return to America after Germany's occupation had been completed.

During World War II it was the first infantry division to arrive in England, first to invade North Africa, Sicily and France, and first to smash through the supposedly impregnable fortifications of the Siegfried Line. Maj. Gen. Terry



Allen, its fighting commander through three decisive campaigns, once said, "Nothing in hell must stop the 1st Division." Nothing has.

The insignia carries a past which symbolizes the spirit of these fighting doughboys. At the battle of Soissons in World War I, a 1st Div. man cut a piece of red cloth from the cap of an enemy he had killed, pinned it to his sleeve. A comment that it looked like red flannels showing through a torn coat brought the present more compact design.

REGIMENTS which stormed into France that June day had previously taken many bitterly-held objectives. The 18th Inf., organized in 1798, fought its way through the War of 1812, Mexican War, Civil War, Indian insurrection, Philippine uprising, Mexican border incidents, World War I and, since Nov. 8, 1942, World War II.

The 18th Inf. Regt. first appeared in the War of 1812. On

May 4, 1861, by direction of Pres. Lincoln, it was reorganized to participate in the Civil War. Afterwards it was identified in numerous Indian skirmishes leading to the conquest and settlement of the American frontier. In the Philippines it marched against Insurrectionists and Moro headhunters, and, following the Spanish-American War, served tours of duty there.

The 26th Inf. Regt. arrived in Manila, March 18, 1901, and fought Philippine Insurgents until order was restored. The regiment was recalled to the U.S., July 15, 1903, for duty along the Mexican border. Again, on May 28, 1907, it sailed for the Philippines, serving a tour of duty there until its return to the States on June 15, 1909. Stationed in Michigan until 1913, it was afterward posted to Texas, where it patrolled the Mexican border until war was declared against Germany.

The call to arms came to the newly-formed 1st Inf. Div. on June 3, 1917. Among the original members were men from every state of the Union, and others from Alaska, Hawaii, Guam, the Philippines, Panama Canal Zone and Puerto Rico.

Landing at St. Nazaire, France, June 26, the division began intensive training for battle. On Oct. 21, it entered a quiet sector of the lines on the Lorraine front between Luneville and Nancy for its first experience in actual warfare. After 30 days of typical trench fighting, it was relieved for an additional period of training.

On Jan. 18, 1918, it entered the lines again, this time relieving the French Army's 1st Moroccan Div. and occupying a sector from Bouconville to Seichprey during three terrible winter months.

The division took and held Cantigny against repeated savage counter-attacks. This was a hard-won victory and important in that it marked a turning point in the conduct of the war, from defense to attack.

Relief of the division was completed July 8, after 72 days in the line. Five days later the men were again in the front lines, this time in the Marne salient. From July 18 to 23, they overcame the strongest resistance the enemy could offer and succeeded in cutting the main supply route of the salient. At Soissons, the division took its objective only after casualties had reached a desperate total. Two companies were wiped out, and the 2nd Bn. came out of action commanded by a sergeant.

The next offensive began on the heels of the previous one: reduction of the St. Mihiel salient.

On Oct. 4, the Meuse-Argonne offensive got under way. During one phase, the division marched and fought for 55 hours without rest or sleep, and the 18th Inf. covered a distance of 71 kilometers. At the Armistice the division was at Sedan, farthest American penetration of the war. Gen. John J. Pershing cited the 1st as "never broken by hardship or battle." Marshal Foch conferred upon many of its units the Fourragere. Today men still wear the red and green shoulder piping of the award.

LATE Nov. 7, 1942, 22 ships, part of the Center Task Force, Operation "Torch," swung into position near Oran to disembark troops. Operation "Torch" was the joint invasion of North Africa by British and American troops. For 1st Div. men, it was a baptism of fire. For them it was more than a trial; they were the vanguard of a new American Army.

Volunteers and regular army men, they were eager for the job ahead. Combat was a new experience but they had been prepared by two years of intensive maneuvers at home, in England and Scotland.

Training of the division had begun with its consolidation at Ft. Devens, Mass., early in 1941. It had the same pride and long traditions as the old outfit, but it had been shaken down for speed and stamina. The 28th Inf. had been cut away and supporting units had been trimmed to a close-knit, hard-hitting organization. Division artillery was reduced to four battalions, the 5th, 7th, 32nd and 33rd.

The 5th FA Bn. was the oldest outfit in the division, tracing its history back to 1776, when Capt. Alexander Hamilton formed what is known today as Btry. "D," 5th FA Bn. The battery was then called "The Provincial Company of



the Artillery of the Colony of New York." The first round ever fired in defense of the United States blazed from Hamilton's guns July 12, 1776, at Ft. George, N. Y. The last round of the Revolution also was fired by this battery. One of the most memorable occasions of the war was the battery's crossing of the Delaware with Gen. George Washington, Dec. 25, 1776. At the close of the war, it was stationed at West Point. Its complement of 40 comprised the entire American Army.

In 1861, the battalion was reorganized under the name of the 5th U.S. Artillery Regt. and during the ensuing years, it participated in the Indian, Mexican, Civil, and Spanish-American Wars, and the Philippine Insurrection. In 1916, it was selected as part of the 1st FA Brigade to serve with the newly-activated 1st Div.

The first American shells to land on German positions in World War I were fired from its guns on Oct. 25, 1917.

THE division spent the winter of 1941 loading and landing on beaches near Buzzards Bay, Mass., New River, N.C., and in Puerto Rico. Units of the 16th and 18th made landings near Martinique. The following summer, landing operations were practiced at Onslow Beach, N.C., and in the autumn all units participated in First Army North Carolina maneuvers. After Pearl Harbor, training was intensified. In February the division moved to Camp Blanding, Fla., and later to Ft. Benning, Ga. On June 21, at Indiantown Gap Military Reservation, Pa., came the order, "Prepare for overseas movement."

The division sailed from New York, Aug. 2, 1942, crossed the Atlantic unescorted, landed in Scotland on Aug. 7, and entrained immediately for Tidworth Barracks, England.

There ensued a concentrated period of maneuvers, including more amphibious training near Glasgow. By Oct. 16, all personnel had been loaded on ships to be used in the projected invasion. There was one more landing operation, on Oct. 18 and 19. By the 26th the convoy was headed out to sea. Operation "Torch" had begun.

INDIANTOWN Gap, Tidworth and Glasgow were far away at 0100 Nov. 8. This was the real thing and as the boys came in low under artillery shells, machine gun tracers, and small arms fire, their motions became automatic reflexes: organize—spread out—stay down—move ahead..... By morning the African beach had been taken, and the baptism was over.

Combat Teams 16 and 18, commanded by Maj. Gen. Terry Allen, landed near Arzew, east of Oran, at 0057 and 0105, Nov. 8. La Macta and Port-aux-Poules fell, St. Cloud was invested and contained; the teams advanced west to Oran.

Simultaneously, Combat Team 26, commanded by Brig. Gen. Theodore Roosevelt, came ashore at Les Andalouses, captured Bon Sfer and Ferme Combier, and pushed east to take the heights of Djebel Murdjadjo, dominating Oran. The city fell Nov. 10 and the campaign was over the next day.

The initial landing operations successful, the division underwent intensive training near Oran, and from Nov. 19 to Jan. 15, Combat Teams 18 and 26 operated under various French

and British commands in Algeria and Tunisia. While on detached service near Medjez El Bab, the 1st Bn. of the 18th Inf. made its famous assault on Long Stop Hill, Christmas Day. Combat Team 18 remained in the lines 48 days, then shifted immediately to Sbiba to stem a German breakthrough. Combat Team 26 was broken into groups, fighting in Central Tunisia near the Kairovan and Faid passes and in Ousseltia Valley. Combat Team 16 went into training and garrison duties until Jan. 24, when it went into action around Siliana. Units remaining under division command were chiefly occupied with holding operations in the Ousseltia Valley from Jan. 16 to Feb. 19. A withdrawal and move to Kasserine Pass was ordered Feb. 19.

Mid-February a strong German attack had developed near Faid Pass. Enemy forces, after overrunning American positions at Sidi Bou Zid, split into three columns and continued to snake to Sbeitla, Feriana and Kasserine. By Feb. 18, leading elements of the German force had overrun Sbeitla, arriving in the vicinity of Kasserine. Next day a savage attack developed from Kasserine toward Thala. Down the long valley came tanks of Rommel's 21st Panzer Div., overrunning forward positions of the 26th Inf. and forcing a withdrawal westward. Aided by rain and fog, Germans infiltrated through the Pass and continued northwest. But their sands were running out. Combat Team 16 and Combat Command "B" of the 1st Armored Div. counter-attacked and forced the enemy to retire through the Pass.



Africa: Battle without Letup

SECOND STRIKE AGAINST ROMMEL

THE first strike had been called on Rommel. The second followed March 17. For the first time since Oran, the units were brought together under division control. After a spectacular 40-mile night move, the 16th and 18th Combat Teams launched an attack which engulfed Gafsa and the territory around Feriana. The 26th pushed on toward El Guettar, in the face of full-scale counter-attacks and continuous aerial bombardment.

El Guettar was attacked March 21 after the 26th Inf. with the 1st Ranger Bn. and Co. "D" (Provisional), 1st Engr. Combat Bn. attached, marched 10 miles over rugged mountain terrain to occupy a covering position previous to the attack. At 0300, Combat Team 18 was in attack position with the 1st Bn., 26th Inf., alongside.

The assault was a complete success. Commanding high ground was taken, 700 prisoners were captured. The division sustained four attacks from German 10th Panzer Div. March 23. Although two battalions were cut off and German tanks were between the 18th Inf. CP and the 5th and 32nd FA Bns. positions, the infantry clung to its position. One battery of the 5th FA Bn. was cut off, six howitzers were put

out of action. All guns of Cos. B and C, 601st TD Bn. and seven M-10s of the 899th TD Bn. were lost. Thirty, possibly 40, enemy tanks were knocked out. From March 26 to April 14, advances continued over difficult mountainous terrain.

Strike two spoiled Rommel's hopes of cutting Allied supply lines, forced him to continue his retreat northwest. Marshal Montgomery's Army was cracking the Mareth Line, and the British near Tunis had a stranglehold on Gen. Von Arnim.

The time was ripe for a combined third strike by all Allied units. The 1st Div. shifted north to Beja and went into battle near Mateur, April 19. The attack was aimed at Mateur and launched over broken, rocky hills which tore shoes and clothing. Hill 523 was taken by the 18th Inf.'s direct assault in one of the dirtiest, bloodiest battles of the campaign. Hills 350 and 409 fell to the 18th Inf. The end came quickly. On May 7, the day the division was relieved, tattered remnants of Rommel's desert fighters filed down from Cap Bon Peninsula. The Afrika Korps was no more.

Of this final stage, Ernie Pyle wrote: "It was a war of such intensity as Americans on this side of the ocean had not known before. It was a battle without letup. It was a war of drenching artillery and hidden mines and walls of machine gun fire and even of the barbaric bayonet. It was an exhausting, cruel, last-ditch kind of war, and those who went through it would seriously doubt that war could be any worse..."

Yet, because of those who slugged it out on the dust-chipped plains of northern Africa, the division had passed through its novitiate and become a skilled, mature, battle-wise organization.

There were some who said that the landings at Gela,

SICILY: DSC AWARD

Gen. Huebner, Gen. Allen,
S/Sgt. Deland

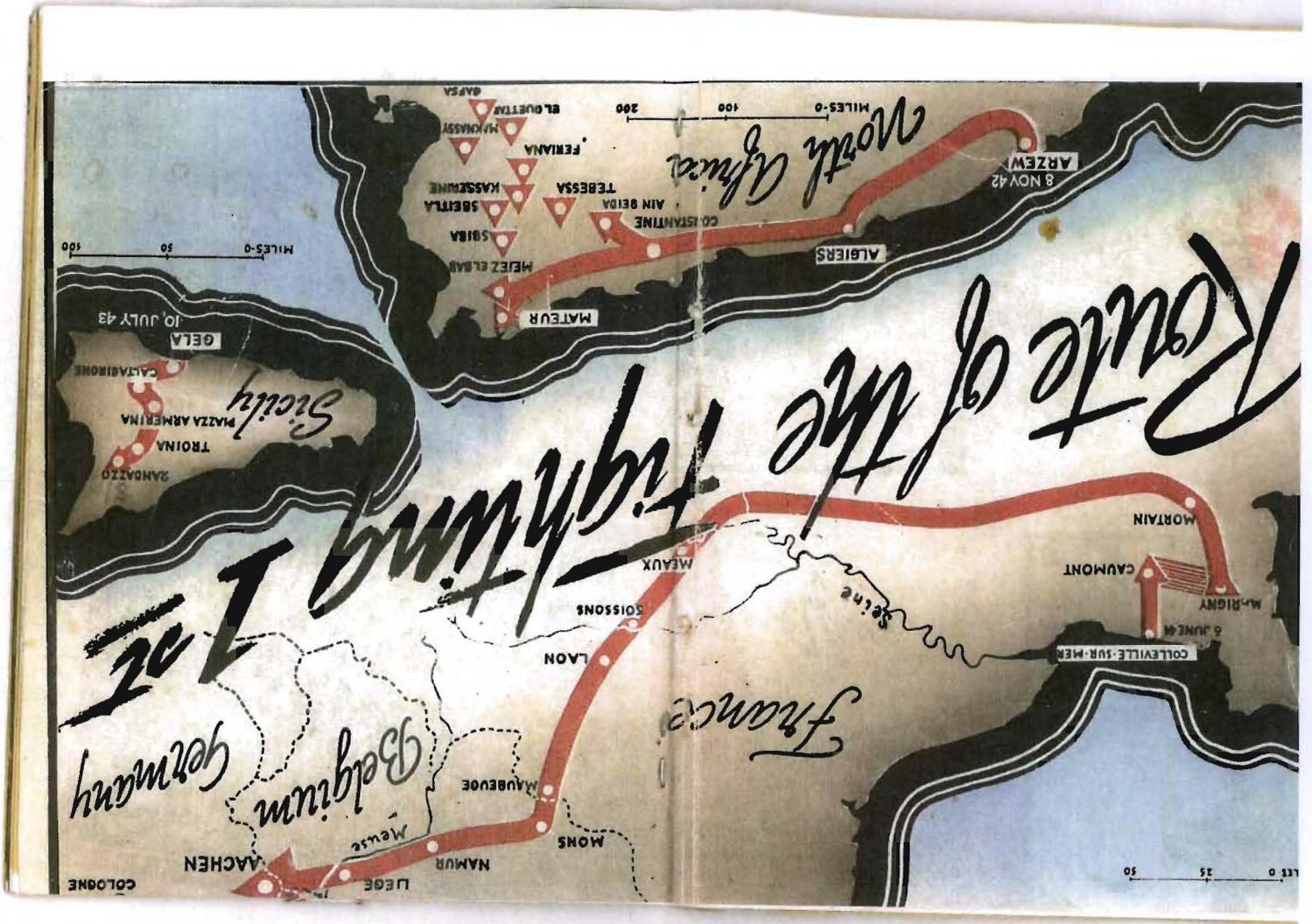


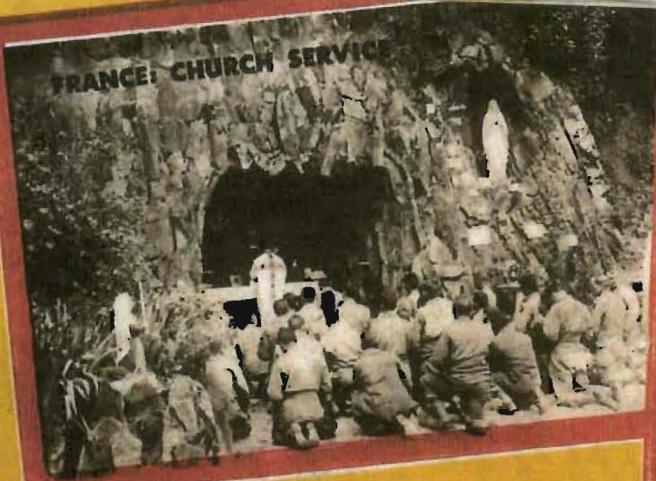
Africa



AACHEN:

The German commander and troops after surrender





Sicily, were easy, but for men who storm ashore in dawn, landings never are easy.

Assault boats were lowered into the water just after midnight July 10, hit the beach at 0245. Initial resistance was overcome; the town of Gela was taken much as was Arzew on the previous landing.

Operations proceeded smoothly until 1030 on July 11. Gela overlooks a coastal plain sloping toward the sea. Far to the north could be seen approaching the first formation of the Hermann Goering Panzer Regt.—50 heavy and medium tanks. They continued until they had pushed within 1000 yards of the beach itself. Doughboys held their ground, even with tanks to the rear of their positions. Supporting fire became stronger. By 1400 the assault was smashed, the Germans withdrew.

Then began a campaign remembered not only for the rapid succession of short, fierce battles which marked the division's progress north and east, but for the hills and cliffs up which men, like herculean ants, inched their way, sometimes climbing only by the aid of ropes and cleats. Passes were few, trails so narrow and tortuous that often only mules could negotiate them.

Despite these obstacles and bitter enemy resistance, the advance never stopped. Successively, Niscemi, Ponte Olivo Airport, Mazzarino, Barrafranca, Villa Rosa, Enna, Alimena, Boumpietro, Petralia, Gangi, Sperlinga, Nicosia, Mistreeta, Cerami and Gagliano fell.

Mazzarino was taken July 14. Two days later, capture of the heights around Barrafranca severed the main east-west road and railway lines of Sicily. From here to Gagliano,



resistance became lighter as the enemy attempted to extricate himself from the threatening trap in the west.

Troina was the hardest battle of the campaign. The Germans had dug in on excellent defensive terrain. They commanded the city from the north, west and south. The town itself was an excellent OP and artery for communication and supply. Using Troina as a shield to cover withdrawal of forces from the south and central sectors, the Germans staged one of their last ditch defenses. Division units attacked along ridge lines from east and west, storming sheer rocky hills and mountainsides against savage fire from all types of weapons, and took the town after six days of fighting. On Aug. 6, the 18th Inf. turned the flank of the enemy on Mount Pellegrino, overlooking Troina after a frontal assault by the 16th Inf. The 26th cut the Troina-Randazzo road and the enemy fled north. During the battle, the 7th FA Bn. alone fired 9565 rounds and the division withstood 21 counter-attacks.

This was the 1st's final action in Sicily, although it later advanced to Randazzo against light enemy resistance. The

campaign ended Aug. 16. In 37 days of continuous fighting, the division had taken 18 towns. Palma di Montechiaro served as the rest and training area while the division awaited further orders.

THE division sailed from Augusta for the British Isles, Oct. 23. Maj. Gen. Clarence R. Huebner, who had assumed command on Aug. 7, 1943, immediately inaugurated an intensive training program.

Rifle marksmanship, street fighting, river crossings, artillery practice, anti-aircraft and night fighting; long marches, close order drill, schools in chemical warfare, radio communication, identification of aircraft and armored vehicles, and waterproofing; CP exercises, amphibious warfare, hardening exercises—all were stressed. There was little time for play, less for passes to London.

Intelligence believed the West Wall of France would be hard to crack. Nothing was left to chance. Particular emphasis was placed on pillbox assault, and a new method for reduction of concrete emplacements was devised and practiced. Two landing exercises, complete in every detail, were staged.

More and more attention was given to the big guns. German prisoners in previous campaigns had expressed fear of American "automatic" artillery and testified to the effectiveness of the 105s and 155s. The four FA battalions, under the command of Brig. Gen. Clift Andrus, had more than once proved their superiority to German weapons and their ability to smash a counter-attack, or soften and crumble stubborn strongpoints for assaulting doughs. Like the regiments they supported, they knew the score.

Triple Play in Normandy

RED ONE RETURNS TO SOISSONS

THE battle of Normandy was strategically divided into three parts—first, the assault; then the securing of the beachhead and the build-up of supporting forces; finally, the most spectacular operation of all—the breakthrough. Again the 1st led the parade.

Plans called for a breakthrough west of St. Lo to capture Marigny and then a swing west to Coutances. The object was to bottle up approximately 30,000 troops in the pocket formed, open the route south down the Cotentin Peninsula to Brittany. For a month and a half, personnel and supplies had been funneling into the beachhead, and by July 25 it was ready to burst.

An aerial bombardment of the immediate front preceded the jumpoff. At 1000, July 25, planes began to come over— heavy bombers, mediums, fighter-bombers and fighters. Three thousand planes, including escorts, dropped 6000 tons of bombs on a saturation area two miles wide. Artillery took over and maintained a heavy barrage in front of assaulting troops. The 4th and 9th Divs. forced a gap, and the 1st, with the 18th Inf. spearheading, passed through the 9th, captured Marigny and rolled west to Coutances, reaching



its objective within three days. The front line crust of defense was broken and Germans already showed signs of a disorganization which was to increase steadily in the next month as the Allied juggernaut crashed through France and Belgium.

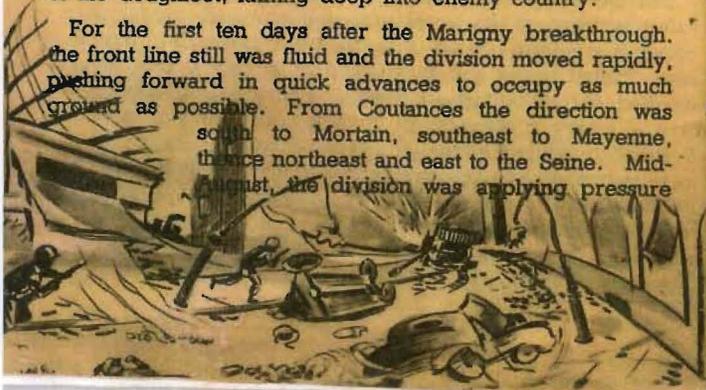
The story of the following month's fighting is one of blitzkrieg warfare at its most effective continual movement, constant pressure, rapid surprise by armored and motorized combat teams and by-passing of strong points, later cleaned out by follow-up troops. For the footsloggers it was a weary succession of foxholes all the way across France; removing mines and road-blocks, building and repairing roads and bridges, mopping up nasty little pockets of machine gun and mortar fire, destroying or capturing vehicles, ammunition and stores; and always sniper fire, ambushes, prisoners and forced marches with little sleep or rest. A recitation of localities exploited is a travelogue from

Brittany east across France to Belgium: Gavray, Brecy, Juvigny Le Tertre, Mortain, Mayenne, Lessay, La Ferte Mace, Etampes, Corbeil, Melun, Meaux and Soissons.

The Germans stumbled backward, commandeering every possible means of transportation, both civilian and military, laying mines and booby traps, blowing up bridges.

THESE delaying devices failed to stop the division for long. One reason was the efficient work of the 1st Engr. Bn. Like other members of the team, the engineers were not rookies in combat. They are, in fact, the oldest engineer outfit in the Army. The battalion saw its first service in Mexico during the Vera Cruz expedition, later participated in the Civil and Spanish-American Wars. As the First Regiment of Engineers, it joined the 1st Div. at Monaucourt, France, Sept. 2, 1917. Final reorganization was in October, 1939, when the 1st Bn. of the regiment became the 1st Engineer Battalion (Combat). Another reason for the speed of the cross-country hike was the 1st Recon. Trp., which scouted sometimes as much as 50 miles ahead of the doughfeet, knifing deep into enemy country.

For the first ten days after the Marigny breakthrough, the front line still was fluid and the division moved rapidly, pushing forward in quick advances to occupy as much ground as possible. From Coutances the direction was south to Mortain, southeast to Mayenne, thence northeast and east to the Seine. Mid-August, the division was applying pressure



from the south on the famed "Falaise Gap." On Aug. 24, all units moved 110 miles to the vicinity of Chartres, and in the next six days advanced to the Seine. The historic crossing of this river was made on the 27th at Corbeil and Melun. Two days later, the division crossed the Marne and on the 31st Soissons fell—Soissons, where the division had lost 9000 men in four days a quarter of a century before. For Gen. Huebner, it was the second campaign through the area. In the last war, he commanded a battalion in the 1st Div.; this time he commanded the division itself.

Average daily moves were 20 miles. The last week of August alone carried the division 300 miles across northern France. Only scattered resistance was made by the enemy, proof of the destruction and defeat suffered by the great German Army of the West. Mute evidence was seen along the route in the columns of smashed enemy vehicles and equipment.

The liberation continued in September from Soissons across the Aisne River, and included Laon in France, and Maubeuge, Bavai, Charleroi, Namur, Liege and Herve in Belgium.

On Sept. 1 an estimated 120,000 enemy troops still remained south of the Belgian border. The Germans, however, made only slight attempts to hold coordinated positions; their main objective



apparently was to reach the Reich border before American units. Many of the foe were left behind in the rapid withdrawal, and the 1st was kept busy mopping up as well as sorting out a vast amount of enemy materiel, including gasoline, tires and food. Several units lived on German rations for more than a week. During the first days of September, 390 prisoners of war, representing 24 different units, passed through the PW cage, an indication of the enemy's confusion. These men were picked up in small actions as the division progressed northward in the direction of Mons.

The steamroller advance was so long and so rapid that Special Troops at times had great difficulty maintaining service for the front lines. Nevertheless, they succeeded. The 1st Medical Bn., despite tremendous problems incident to moving its installations every few days, kept all casualties moving through its clearing stations at high speed.

Through Belgium to Germany

SIEGFRIED BARRIER IS BREACHED

BY Sept. 3, an advance unit had crossed the Belgian border and reported contact with a large body of enemy streaming eastward in the direction of Charleroi. It was the opening gambit of one of the most costly single defeats suffered by the enemy in the Franco-Belgian campaign.



This was the situation: the 3rd Armd. Div., operating on the 1st's right on Sept. 2, had pushed a long finger north into Belgium east of Mons, cutting across the intended escape route of five German divisions. Three had been drawing back into the 1st Div. sector, the other two were retreating on the left. These units had been directed to make an orderly withdrawal and occupy the Siegfried Line before the Americans arrived.

THEY were well on their way when they collided with the flank of the 3rd Armd. Div. southeast of Mons. As they attempted to punch through, their southern flank was suddenly attacked by the 1st Div. combat teams in the vicinity of Bavai, Riez de Lereille and Maubeuge. Late Sept. 3, enemy casualties were estimated at 7000—5000 captured and 2000 killed and wounded. What resistance was set up centered around Bavai and Maubeuge; otherwise, enemy action was chaotic. Almost equally disastrous was the loss of materiel, including a Mark V tank, which, during the height of the confusion, obligingly followed a column of division transport into a motor pool at the signal of an American MP. Large groups of enemy were left wandering around the division area. Eighty anti-aircraft personnel led by a major mistakenly attempted to march through the division CP in an effort to get out. At Bavai, one company of the 1st Bn., 18th Inf., in five hours of fighting, killed or wounded 200 Germans, captured 460 prisoners and much equipment. During a night assault by a whooping, fanatical enemy, the 26th Inf. netted 700 PWs.

Throughout the ensuing three days, there were no front lines. Enemy units continued to fight their way out of the division area. Some finally arranged meticulous surrenders.

The 2nd Bn. of the 16th Inf. took more than 2000 prisoners in one negotiated surrender and felt itself repaid in some measure for D-Day. Other hostile groups made stray counter-attacks in an attempt to break out. On Sept. 7, the total number of PWs taken during the Mons operation was 17,149, of which more than 300 were officers. These last included General Wahle, 712th Inf. Div., his staff and Col. Hesse, former commandant of the Seine District and a close friend of Field Marshal Rommel.

THE division closed upon objectives in the vicinity of Namur Sept. 8 and found the path to Liege open. Although opposition was light, the Germans were beginning to organize a defense. Their problem, however, was to gain time to set up an effective line. Mines were reported for the first time near Verviers. As the division crossed the Meuse at Liege and moved on towards Herve, the enemy maintained a heavy reconnaissance screen. Hostile artillery appeared for the first time since the entry into Belgium. After the fall of Liege, and as the division pushed on toward Aachen and the Siegfried Line, more rehabilitated enemy units reappeared. The advance began to bog down. Resistance was ineffectual. Co. C, 16th Inf., pushed to the Siegfried Line Sept. 12 and at 1515 crossed the last frontier. Deployment of division forces on this day was international—a battalion in Germany, an outpost in Holland, the main body of the division in Belgium, a rear echelon in France. A reinforced battalion continued the drive forward, and the same day pierced the first belt of defenses six kilometers west of Aachen.

Some pillboxes were fully occupied, more were undermined, a few were unoccupied. Apparent, too, was that



some of the troops were not trained to fight in fixed fortifications. Some PWs were found digging hasty field fortifications alongside perfectly emplaced and serviceable pillboxes.

Progress was slow. The division cleared the dragon's teeth, part of the defenses of the second belt east of Aachen, Sept. 14. Next day the Siegfried Line was entirely breached. The break came at a fortuitous time. Enemy defenses were being built up, artillery was more active, new units were appearing, repeated counter-attacks were launched.

A new German division, the 12th Inf., appeared Sept. 17 and immediately attempted a powerful counter-attack. The objective was high ground east of Eilendorf. The attack was beaten off with heavy enemy losses. Next day another unsuccessful counter-attack was tried south of Verlautenheide.

Meanwhile, the 1st's own punch into Stolberg was being heavily opposed. The defense was well-coordinated and stubborn, the terrain well-suited to delaying tactics. Every house in Stolberg was contested. Enemy artillery was more and more in evidence. Division patrols were blocked as soon as they crossed the lines. Yet in one attack by the 18th Inf. in the Eilendorf sector, Sept. 19, a single company neutralized 19 pillboxes while seizing its objective, Crucifix Hill.

In spite of the enemy's tenacious defense, reports of PWs and deserters indicated morale was not sound. Defeatism was spreading among smaller, makeshift units, little groups were prepared to surrender at the proper opportunity. Even so, the Germans continued to launch local counter-attacks.

Aachen Was More Than a Battle

WITH THE 1ST IT'S ALWAYS "DUTY FIRST"

WHEN the battered city of Aachen surrendered under the grinding pressure of a direct assault by the 1st, Oct. 21, Germany lost more than a cultural and historical landmark, an armament and coal-producing center, a key point in Siegfried Line defenses. Aachen also was a symbol of heroic resistance for the Germans, as Stalingrad had been for the Russians. Its successful defense was to have been



a guarantee of the Reich's invulnerability. The German people had been positively assured that it could not be taken. Its defenders had been ordered by the commander of the Seventh Army to hold to the last man: "Your fight for the ancient imperial city is being followed with admiration and breathless expectancy. You are fighting for the honor of the National Socialistic German Army." But unlike Stalingrad, Aachen crumbled and Nazi honor received a shattering body blow.

From the beginning, the Germans, expecting the major attack to develop from the south, had massed their strongest

forces there. Even after Oct. 1, when the city had been contained on the west, south, and east and division patrols were probing the inner defenses, the Germans maintained strong positions in the south, counter-attacking mostly only to prevent complete encirclement. But the plan came apart at the seams.

A counter-assault preceded by 3500 rounds of heavy artillery hit the 16th Inf. from the east Oct. 3. When the bitter close-in fighting was over, half the attacking force were casualties and half the big guns were knocked out. Five days later the 18th Inf. retaliated with a ferocious assault on Crucifix Hill, commanding ground northeast of the city. Each pillbox was taken separately after its defenders had been flushed with flame or by direct artillery fire. At the same time, the 26th Inf. moved into Forst and Beverau Wood. With these and the Verlautenheide ridge securely held, the last escape road to the north was brought under fire.



Again a savage counter-attack was launched from the east. The ferocity of the fighting can be judged from the fact that after Co. 'I, 16th Inf., had beaten off an assault with bayonets, more than 250 dead

Germans lay in front of the company positions.

The city surrounded, even more bitter fighting for its rubble-strewn streets was in prospect. An ultimatum for its surrender was carried into Aachen by the S-2, 26th Inf.,

Oct. 10. No answer signaled the beginning of the main attack. Fighter-bombers hammered defense positions and artillery pumped 5000 rounds into the eastern end of the city. For the next three days the men ground slowly forward, house by house, street by street.

Meanwhile, counter-attacks continued. Another bitter struggle centered against the 18th Inf. around Crucifix Hill.

An even stronger attack was launched, Oct. 15, by the 3rd Panzer Grenadier Div. against the 16th Inf. For two days Germans threw tanks and infantry against the dominating ridge of Observatory Hill on the northern edge of the city. Miserable weather prevented use of air support and limited artillery shoots, but close-in fighting with bayonet and hand grenade finally beat the attackers to their knees.

While the division parried with one fist it socked hard with the other. From Oct. 16 on, the enemy was reduced to parachuting supplies to its garrison defenders. By Oct. 20, remaining resistance centered around Technical High School on the western edge of town. Next day Col. Gerhard M. Wilck, commanding officer, surrendered unconditionally.

Big guns were silent over a dead city—a devastation of burst sewers, broken gas mains, bloated animals, of shattered glass and dangling power lines, of masses of shapeless rubble. Not one building remained intact.



SUCH is the story of the 1st Div. Its continued battle success is based on training, capable leadership and courage. But men of the 1st, always fighting for their country's ideals, sometimes fighting merely as an aggressive reaction, or simply to stay alive, have another motivation: that mysterious mixture of pride and ambition called esprit de corps. In moments of grave crisis when all other motives have broken down, as during the bloody five days of Soissons a quarter of a century ago, and on D-Day beach of Omaha this time, it has been a cohesive esprit de corps that carried the 1st through. First Div. men are proud of their slogan, "Duty First," prouder still of "The Red One," symbol of comradeship never broken "by hardship or battle."

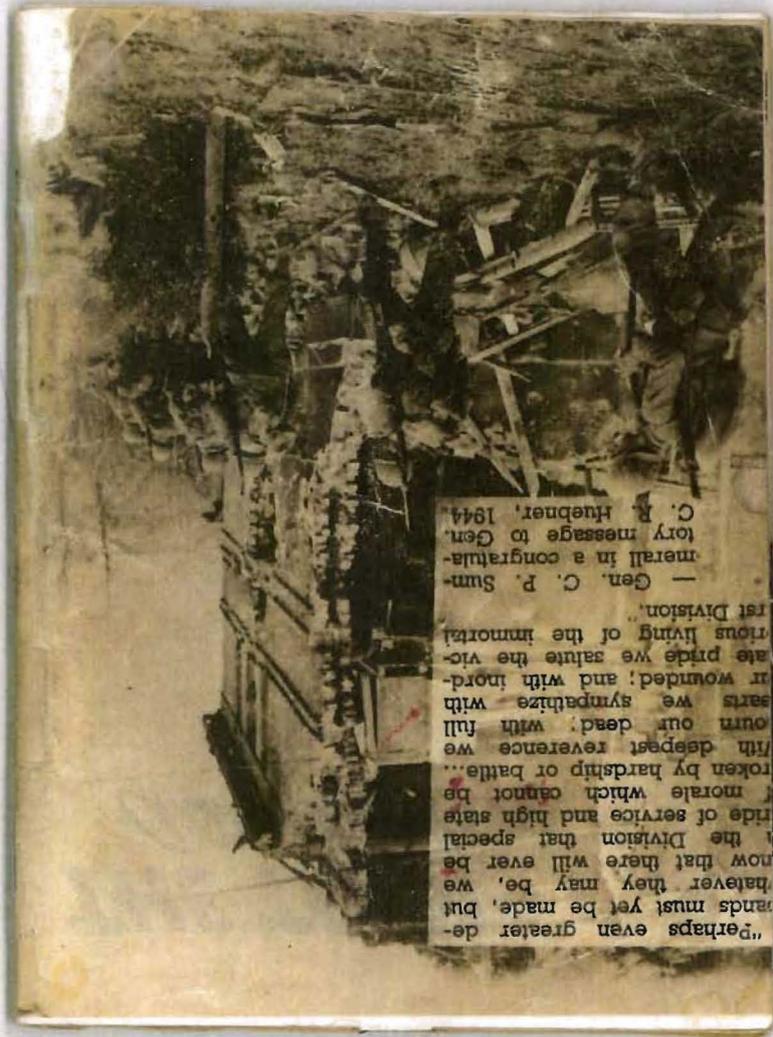


THE TEAM *Autographs*



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"Perhaps even greater de-
hands must yet be made, but
whatever they may be, we
now that there will ever be
the Division that special
ride of service and high state
morale which cannot be
broken by hardship or battle...
with deepest reverence we
ourn our dead with full
parts we sympathize with
in wounded; and with inord-
ate pride we salute the vic-
rious living of the immortal
1st Division."
— Gen. C. P. Sum-
merall in a congratula-
tory message to Gen.
C. R. Huebner, 1944.