

After Action Reports of the 17th Tank Battalion (7th Armored Division)

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- Scott Mills, nephew of Monroe "Monty" Kretschmer of Company "B", 17th Tank Battalion, who died 5 November 1944 of wounds suffered 28 October 1944 for August-October 1944, December 1944-February 1945
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HEADQUARTERS 17TH TANK BATTALION
APO #257, U.S. ARMY

COMBAT HISTORY OF THE 17TH TANK BATTALION FOR THE PERIOD

11 AUGUST 1944 THROUGH 31 AUGUST 1944

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PERIOD.¹

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¹ Note that this part is not included in the National Archives folder that contains parts 1 and 2.

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HEADQUARTERS 17TH TANK BATTALION

APO 257, U. S. Army
22 August 1944

PART 1

Subject: Combat History of the 17th Tank Battalion for the period from 11 August, 1944 to 20 August, 1944,

The 17th Tank Battalion under the control of Combat Command Reserve landed on the Utah beach in France on 11 August, 1944. From the beach the Battalion marched to La Haye Du Puits, arriving there at 1245 on the eleventh of August, 1944 and leaving at 2020 on the same date and marching to Lundean, arriving there at 0545 12 August, 1944.

The Battalion remained in Lundean until 1130 and then marched on to St. Suzanne arriving there at 0730 on 13 August, 1944.

The Battalion went into an assembly position at St. Suzanne, refueled and performed first echelon maintenance. The Battalion moved out of St. Suzanne at 1930 13 August, 1944 as an element of Combat Command Reserve.

The Battalion went into an assembly position at Cherreau just east of La Ferte Bernard at 0530, 14 August, 1944 and remained there until 1430 on the same date at which time we moved forward as an element of Combat Command Reserve. The Corps objective on this date was the Seine River Line. The 7th Armored Division was to attack in three columns with Combat Command Reserve in the center attacking along the route shown on overlay accompanying Division Field Order #2, 14000 August, 1944. The Battalion moved out at 1430 to the north east along Highway N 23 toward Mantes the Combat Command Reserve objective. Company "D" of the 17th Tank Battalion was the advance Guard for Combat Command Reserve on this operation, and it was preceded by elements of the 87th Reconnaissance whose mission was to screen the advance of the Division.

Up to this date the 17th Tank Battalion had not had any contact whatever with the enemy. However, about 1730 on 14 August, 1944, the Battalion was halted behind elements of the 87th Reconnaissance Battalion at a point on Highway N 23 just south of La Loupe. The Reconnaissance element reported a mine field on our route south of La Loupe, some enemy infantry, number undetermined, and an enemy tank in the vicinity of La Loupe. One platoon of Company "D" of the 17th Tank Battalion was called forward by the Reconnaissance to assist in clearing our route of advance. The tanks from Company "D" located the enemy tank and fired on it. The light tanks then called a platoon of Medium tanks forward to assist them. However, by the time the medium tanks reached their position, it was so dark that they could not observe the enemy tank.

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Subject: Combat History of the 17th Tank Battalion for the period from 11 August, 1944 to 20 August, 1944 continued.

The Reconnaissance units and our advanced guard held the position south of La Loupe for the remainder of the night. The other elements of the 17th Tank Battalion and Combat Command Reserve took up local security and halted in place along the route of advance for the night. During the night the forward elements of the 17th Tank Battalion were fired upon by a few snipers, number undetermined, but the Battalion did not suffer any casualties. During the early morning of 15 August, 1944 the Reconnaissance unit and a detachment of Engineers removed the mines, and by this time all enemy resistance had been removed. The Battalion resumed the move to the north east at 1000, 15 August, 1944, and passed through La Loupe 1045 and continued moving north east on Highway N 828. At 1105 a medium tank platoon from Company "C" of the 17th Tank Battalion was ordered to move forward and take up the position of the point of the advance guard. The point reached the town of Belhomert at 1106 and continued mission. The tanks in the point sighted an enemy ammunition truck just short of Digny, fired on it and reported several direct hits. The truck was destroyed, and it is not known whether any personnel was killed as the truck was halted when fired upon. The column halted at Digny at 1215 and resumed march at 1535. Column passed through Chateaneuf at 2100 and bivouacked in assembly area in vicinity of Chene-Chenu.

The 17th Tank Battalion resumed the advance at 0645 16 August, 1944 and passed through Nogent at 1010. Six enemy aircraft strafed the column at 1030 at a point two miles north east of Coulombs, but no damage was reported. Combat Command Reserve went into an assembly position in the vicinity of Faverolles at 1100.

While in the assembly area at Faverolles, Combat Command Reserve received orders to take the town of Epernon and secure all approaches to the town to insure safe passage of Combat Command "A" through the town. For this mission Combat Command Reserve had the 17th Tank Battalion and Company "A" of the 33d Engineers. The 17th Tank Battalion moved out of the assembly area on this mission at 1610. The march to Epernon along G. C. 80 and G. C. 107 was uneventful except for the fact that as the 17th Tank Battalion passed through the 489th Field Artillery Assembly Area, both units thought that the enemy was in the vicinity and a few shots were exchanged, however, no damage was incurred. In formulating the plan for accomplishing this mission the Battalion Commander gave each tank company a specific objective within the town. The plan was for the Battalion to enter the city and then for each company to fan out and secure the different approaches to the city. We entered the Epernon at 1820, and the companies went to their assigned positions. We were confronted by scattered sniper fire upon entering the town, but our mission was accomplished with only one casualty. One sergeant from Company "D" was wounded in the knee by small arm fire, but after receiving medical aid, he remained in action. Six German soldiers surrendered almost immediately after our first element was in the town, and they were turned over to the Division Military Police. The mission was accomplished and Combat Command "A" moved through the town.

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Subject: Combat History of the 17th Tank Battalion for the period from 11 August, 1944 to 20 August, 1944(Continued).

Combat Command Reserve was composed of the 17th Tank Battalion and Company "A" of the 33d Engineers. These two units of Combat Command Reserve continued to hold the town of Epernon throughout the day of 17 August, 1944. During this period Company "B" of the 17th Tank Battalion and a platoon of Company "A", 33d Engineers, drew some sniper fire at the position that they were holding which was the approach to Epernon at Hanches, Highways N 10 and I C 328. They were unable to determine the strength of the enemy opposing them. Company "D" of the 17th Tank Battalion, who established a block in the vicinity of La Louorerex, reported sniper fire and opposition of undetermined strength. A medium tank platoon from Company "A" was sent to Houx to investigate a reported enemy action at that point, but did not contact the enemy in strength, only drawing a few rounds of sniper fire.

Several unidentified enemy planes were over our trains area at 1730 on 17 August, 1944, but they did not fire on the area.

An investigation revealed that an abandoned building just on the north edge of the trains assembly area had a large number of unexploded enemy aerial bombs in it. Apparently the building had been used in manufacturing the bombs. This building is located between Highways I C 122 and G C 28.

At 1000 18 August, 1944, Combat Command Reserve received an order from Combat Command "A" directing that a task force be taken to Rambouillet to determine the strength of the enemy there and if possible, the enemy holding that city. The Combat Command Reserve Commander took the 17th Tank Battalion minus Company "A" with other elements of his command and formed the task force to accomplish the mission. The plan was to attack the city with two forces, one force composed of Company "C" of the 17th Tank Battalion, one Reconnaissance Platoon from 814th Tank Destroyer and one Platoon of 814th Tank Destroyers and a Platoon of Engineers from Company "D" of the 33d Engineers, were to attack straight into town along Highway N 10, while a second force composed of Company "D" of the 17th Tank Battalion, one Reconnaissance Platoon from 814th Tank Destroyers, and one Platoon from Company "A" of the 33d Engineers, were to circle to the left or north around the Park and hit the town from the north. The attack was started as planned at 1100 and progressed satisfactorily until 1530 at which time Combat Command Reserve was ordered to abandon the attack and return to Epernon. During the operation at Rambouillet the force which was attacking along Highway N. 10 was fired on by anti tank guns and small arms. One gun was identified as an 88, but none of our tanks were hit. The tanks were withdrawn and the assault guns dropped 80 rounds of 105's on the gun positions. An observer from the Reconnaissance Unit stated that the target area was hit several times, but since we were directed to withdraw, we were unable to verify definitely that the guns were knocked out. This force also ran into a road block and some mines. It is known that Company "C" of the 17th Tank Battalion killed one German sniper, and it is thought that the 88MM gun and crew were destroyed by the assault gun platoon. The elements of the 17th Tank Battalion in this force did not have any casualties in men or equipment.

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Subject: Combat History of the 17th Tank Battalion for the period from 11 August, 1944 to 20 August, 1944 (Continued).

The force which flanked to the left encountered heavy enemy opposition after they had circled to the north and started back into town. They ran into a position where large trees had been felled across each other and ditches approximately three feet wide and four feet deep had been dug behind them. One anti-tank gun position was located and fired on. The Tank Destroyers knocked out one enemy tank, believed to be a tank of French manufacture. During this operation two platoon leaders and the tank commanders from the two forward platoons of Company "D", 17th Tank Battalion, went forward on a dismounted Reconnaissance, and Lieutenant Fairweather, one of the platoon leaders, was killed by machine gun fire. Lieutenant Fairweather's body was not recovered because it could not be brought in without endangering the lives of several other men. The Reconnaissance element from the 814th Tank Destroyer and the officers in Company "D" of the 17th Tank Battalion report that they saw 25 or 30 Germans go into a building which they later placed heavy 37 and 75MM fire on. It is believed that many of the Germans were killed, but this was not verified because of our withdrawal. No vehicles of the 17th Tank Battalion were lost as a result of this action.

The Battalion reached the original assembly area south of Epernon at 1730 and reorganized and moved out to the west at 2005. The Battalion marched on Highway N 10 through Hanches to Maintenon, to GC 26 and Le Paige to vicinity of Chene-Chenois closing in bivouac at 2130. The Battalion did not encounter any enemy opposition on this march. The Battalion remained in this bivouac area until 0840, 19 August, 1944. At 0820, while still in the bivouac area, an enemy ME 109 flew low over the area and was shot down by 17th Tank Battalion antiaircraft fire. The plane fell only a short distance from the area. At 0840 the Battalion started moving to an assembly area on IC 308 just west of Le Boullay-Mivoie and closed in this area at 1045. This march was uneventful with no enemy activity. The Battalion remained in this area until 0700, 21 August, 1944.

(signed)
JACK HOWISON
Captain, Infantry
Unit Historian

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HEADQUARTERS 17TH TANK BATTALION
APO 257, U. S. ARMY

3 September 1944.

PART 2

Subject: Combat History of the 17th Tank Battalion for the period from 20 August, 1944 through 31 August 1944.

On the 20th of August 1944 the 17th Tank Battalion, still under CCR, was in an assembly area on IC 308 just west of Le Boullay-Mivoye. The Battalion was inactive throughout the day and night of 20-21 August, with the exception that Co "A" of the 17th was sent to the North East along IC 380 at 1130, 20 August 44 to join a force commanded by Lt Col King which was to investigate reported enemy activity in that vicinity. Company "A" remained under Lt Col Kings command until late afternoon when it was released and returned to the Bn. Bivouac area at Le Boullay-Mivoye. Co "A" did not contact the enemy on this mission and did not have any vehicular or personnel casualties.

During the night of 20-21 August 1944, the 17th Tank Bn received an order from CCR to attach as an element of CCR in the direction of Melun with the mission of crossing the Seine River at Melun and establishing a bridgehead on the East side of the River at that point. For this mission CCR was composed of the 17th Tank Bn, 38th Inf. (one company), the 440th Field Artillery, and elements of the 814th Tank Destroyer Bn, and one company from the 33d Engineer Bn. Major T.W. DAILEY, EX Officer of the 17th was placed in command of the advance guard by the commanding officer of CCR. The advance guard was composed of one rcn platoon from the 814th T.D. Bn, Co C, 17th Tank Bn and one platoon of the 33d Engineer Bn the 17th Tank Bn I & R platoon, Co "B" of the 38th Inf Bn, one battery of 440th FA Bn, and one platoon from the 814th TD Bn.

The point of the advance Guard crossed the I.P. at 0715, 21 August 1944 and hit the town of Bougainval at 0745. CCR continued the advance along the route -- Maintenon, Hanches, Epernon Gas, Gallardon, arriving at this town at 0950. At 1005 the bn received report from the 87th Rcn unit that there were Germans of undetermined strength in Dourdan and at 1015 received report from French through Rcn element that there were mines and a road block in Ablis. A rcn of the town was made and a route or bypass around the town was located and the advance was continued. At 1155 the Bn received a report from the 87th Rcn who was in front of the CCR advance guard that there were about 40 Germans and an undetermined number of A.T. guns in Dourdan. At this time our column was halted on the road waiting for the Rcn elements in front to move on. The rcn also reported mine fields in edge of town covered by A.T. guns and we were warned to expect mines along shoulders of road. At 1350 the 87th Rcn reported that they were drawing small arms fire and that they were returning fire with small arms and 37mm's. At 1535 we received report that Rcn had taken some prisoners. By 1750 the resistance had been overcome by the Rcn and the advance was resumed. The 17th Tank Bn did not have any casualties as a result of the action at Dourdan. Our Rcn element ran into resistance of undetermined strength in the vicinity of Montfrix and the whole

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Subject: Combat History of the 17th Tank Battalion for the period 20 August 1944 through 31 August 1944. (Continued)

CCR pulled off the road into an assembly area at 2000 to take up defensive measures for the night. The 17th Tank Bn was closed in the assembly area in vicinity of Montflix at 2220.

There was some enemy activity in and around the assembly area at Montflix throughout the night of 21-22 August 44. The 440th FA, one of the elements of CCR, captured some prisoners during the night and it was reported that the Germans laid a mine field across the road to our rear or between our assembly area and the town of Dourdan, however, this was not confirmed. The 17th Tank Bn did not have any casualties during this period.

At 0600, 22 Aug 44, the advance guard, still under the command of Major Dailey, moved out of the assembly area to continue the mission to Melun. The advance continued rather slowly with our advance guard right behind the rcn element and being stopped continuously because the rcn element could not advance fast enough. At 0906 our unit was in Velleconin. At 0945 the rcn element reported that two AT. guns were holding up the advance. Prior to this time Major Dailey had attached one platoon of medium tanks to the 87th Rcn Company who was in front of the advance guard to support the rcn company. This support platoon was from Company "A" of the 17th Tank Bn and was commanded by Lt Carpenter. By 1030 the main body had reached Chaufffour-Les-Etrechy. At 1105 forward elements reported enemy tanks and Tank Destroyers were requested to come forward. At 1110 the Commanding General of the 7th Armd Div ordered CCR to push ahead vigorously and to use artillery if necessary. At 1125 the tanks who were supporting the rcn encountered some dismounted enemy infantry and fired on them. At 1125 the Commanding General ordered that the Command form multiple columns and push ahead. At 1135 Lt Carpenter's medium tank platoon reported that the dismounted resistance had been wiped out. From this point Lt Carpenter with his medium tank platoon preceded the 87th Rcn company in other words he continued the advance without any rcn in front of him. The main body passed through Villeneuve-sur-Auvers at 1210. At this time the point of the advance guard was past the town of Boissy-le-Cutte. Lt Carpenter's platoon, supported by one platoon from Company "C" of the 17th Tank Bn knocked out one A.T. gun in vicinity of La Ferte Alais. At 1235 the point composed of Lt Carpenter and the element from Company "C" knocked out one German car and at 1240 the point knocked out 3 A.T. guns, killing at least 15 Germans and also knocked out a truck. The advance through La Ferte Alais was continued rapidly and at² Lt Carpenter reported that he took the wrong route in La Ferte Alais and while on the wrong route knocked out 5 A.T. guns and at least 40 Germans. Lt Carpenter was back on the correct route by 1315 and reported that in addition to the A.T. guns, two German automobiles had been knocked out. The main body was in Cernay at 1322 and Montmirault at 1325 and passed through La Ferte Alais at 1400. The main body received machine gun fire and rifle fire from dismounted troops along Highway GC 83 just out of La Ferte Alais, however, no one was hurt.

Lt Carpenter and Captain George, who commands Company "C" of the 17th Tank Bn, as well as all of the men in Lt Carpenter's platoon and Captain George's Company, did a brilliant job in pushing through the resistance at La Ferte Alais and their work was recognized and appreciated by everyone who had knowledge of it. During this encounter with the enemy the 17th Tank Bn did not have any casualties.

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² A blank space after this word was probably intended to be filled in with a time.

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Subject: Combat History of the 17th Tank Battalion for the period 20 August 1944 through 31 August 1944. (Continued)

The point drew some fire in Soisy but they sprayed the position with machine gun fire and continued on the mission. The Infantry also drew fire and returned it in Soisy and estimated the enemy strength at 40 men.

The point of the advance guard knocked out a German motorcycle at 1515 and reported several Germans along the road who wanted to surrender, however, did not stop to pick them up because of the desire to advance rapidly. Main body passed through St Sauveur at 1540 and Orgenoy at 1555.

In entering town of Melun, Capt George reported knocking out two German motorcycles and one German peep. Capt George was in the outskirts of the town of Melun at 1550 where he was ordered by CCR Commander to stand by for further orders.

By 1630 we had learned from the French and by observation that the road into town was defended by mines, A.T. guns, small electrically controlled tanks, and small arms. We had established the fact that there was a strong point at an underpass about 500 yards to the front of Capt George's company, this point was defended by at least two A.T. guns, machine guns, at least two electrically controlled tanks or "beetle bombs", and mines. At 1710 Captain George took four prisoners.

At 1855 the Infantry was sent forward to try to clear out the resistance at the underpass but were pinned down by machine gun and rifle fire and the tanks were sent forward to help the Infantry get out.

Capt George reported one tank knocked out by enemy fire at 1915. Lt ShilkROUT and two of the tank crew escaped but the tank caught fire and the gunner and radio operator did not get out of the tank, Cpl Fraelich and Pvt Hubbard.³ Lt ShilkROUT was wounded but not critically.

Service Co of the 17th Tank Bn captured five prisoners, a maintenance vehicle and a passenger car late in the afternoon of the 22d of August.

Two German trucks approached our column on the left at 1700 just out of Melun and fired on us. The column was halted along the road in the outskirts of Melun and Company "A" was fired on by what was thought to be a German 88mm A.T. gun. Capt Pier, commanding Co "A", sent out a platoon to get the German gun but they failed to locate it.

The CCR Commander ordered that we would push on through the town even though darkness had come. He had artillery fire placed on the underpass and reorganized his assault force. The tanks were to advance with support of Inf. Company "B" of the 17th Tank Bn was to lead the assault. However the attack was stopped again at 2330 at the underpass.

The column remained in it's position along the road during the remainder of the night.

During the night terrific explosions occurred throught the town. These explosions, we learned later, were the Germans blowing the Highway bridges over the river at this point.

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³ Cpl. Parke W. Fraelich of Pennsylvania & Pvt. Walter L. Hubbard of Virginia

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Subject: Combat History of the 17th Tank Battalion for the period 20 August 1944 through 31 August 1944. (Continued)

The CCR commanding officer called a unit commanders meeting at 0800, 23 August 1944 where it was decided to make a two pronged attack on the city. The plan was for Company "D" of the 17th Tank Bn to circle to the left and come back along the river. This company was to support Co "B" of the 38th Inf, there was also a platoon of Engineers and some T.D.'s in this force. The main attack was to be made along the main road into the town by Company "B" of the 17th supported by a company of Inf, some Engineers and Tank Destroyers.

This attack was started at 1500 and one tank from Company "B", 17th Tank Bn was knocked out by a mine about 500 yards this side of the underpass. Engineers went forward and cleared mines and Capt Pilat and his Company "B" passed under the underpass at 1630. There was lots of firing on the part of Co "B" of the 17th and the Inf before the underpass was cleared but the tank company didn't have any casualties except those lost when the tank was knocked out by the mine.

At 1615 Company A of the 17th which was still on the outskirts of the town was fired on by enemy artillery or 88MM's. He returned the fire and it ceased.

The movement of force which went to the left was slow because the Inf was pinned down by machine gun and rifle fire from across the river. Capt Neil reported a possible A.T. gun location in a factory building on this side of the river. The Inf suffered some casualties in this operation but Company "D" of the 17th only had one man slightly wounded, this man was Tec 4 Pallant who got some shrapnel in his right arm. This force was under small arm fire and some A.T. gun fire continuously and the light tanks fired on A.T. gun positions and at machine gun and sniper positions.

Company B reached the river at 1700 and found that the bridge was blown. The tanks were deployed along the river to support the Inf and Engrs while they crossed the river.

All of the 17th Tank Bn was ordered to withdraw from the town at 2000 and to go into and assembly position on the outskirts of the town. The withdrawal was ordered because the town had not been cleared and the tanks were so vulnerable to an attack in the town at night. All of the elements of the 17th withdrew to an assembly position just outside of the town and remained there for the night. There was a terrific rainstorm during the night so the men got very little rest.

During the afternoon of the 23rd of Aug. Co A of the 17th Tank Bn had three casualties: Sgt Pedersen, slightly wounded, Sgt Nixon, seriously wounded and later died, S/Sgt Seymour, slightly wounded, Company B had Sgt. Polavich evacuated, battle fatigue.

At 0800 on the 24th Aug 1944 the 17th Tank Bn, less trains, moved back into the town of Melun with the mission of supporting the Inf and Engrs from the southwest side of the town river. ~~During the day~~ while they formed a bridgehead on the other side of the river. During the day the Battalion drew AT fire, machine gun fire, and mortar fire from the other side of the river, and the trains were fired on by mortars. In the afternoon a few rounds of artillery

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Subject: Combat History of the 17th Tank Battalion for the period 20 August 1944 through 31 August 1944. (Continued)

fell in the Battalion area. This was the first time that the Battalion had been under artillery fire so it was quite an experience. During the day and the following night tank companies held positions along the river line while the Light Tank Company patrolled the town on our side of the river. Considering the amount of fire that was placed on the Battalion during the day and night of the 24th and 25th of August, 1944, we were fortunate that we did not incur any more casualties than the following: "B" Company Sergeants Wuellner and Willoughby who were seriously wounded and evacuated.

The Battalion remained in the town during the night of the 24th and 25th of August, 1944, and departed at 1245 on the 25th of August, 1944 with the mission of relieving CCA at Tilly of holding the bridgehead at that point. The Battalion followed the route of Vasves, Penthierry, and Tilly and crossed the Seine River on the pontoon bridge just east of Tilly. The Battalion established a CP in the vicinity of Bois de St Assize. Company "C" was sent to Nandy to establish a block at that point, Company "B" blocked the roads at Cesson ad Vert-St Denis, Company "D" established a block between Cesson and Savigny le Temple, and Company "A" blocked the approaches along the river to the South in the vicinity of Boissise-la-Bertrand. The Battalion did not contact the enemy during this operation. However, prior to leaving Melun on this date, Tec 5 grade De Carlo, a member of the Medical Detachment, was wounded in the leg and evacuated. The Battalion also received the following replacements on 25 August, 1944: Company "B" Pvts. Hogan, Warm, and Hardin; Company "D" 2d Lt Canfield and Pvt. True.

In connection with the operations of the 17th Tank Battalion at Melun, we failed to mention the splendid work which was done by the medical detachment of the 17th Tank Battalion. Lt. Wheeler and his group of aid men did an excellent job in assisting in the evacuation of the wounded infantrymen at the bridge at Melun. This work was done under fire, and at this time Tec 5 grade De Carlo was wounded and Lt Wheeler received a slight wound of the hand.

During the night of the 25th and 26th of August, 1944, CCR under which the 17th Tank Battalion was operating, was ordered to go back across the Seine and proceed to Fontainbleau on the east side of the Seine River at that point. Lt. Colonel Wemple was commended very highly for the manner in which he moved his Battalion back across the Seine at Tilly. This crossing was very congested and Lt. Colonel Wemple showed excellent control and initiative in getting the Battalion back across the River. The Battalion started moving out of the area at Boise de St. Assize at 0715 on 26 August, 1944 moved into an assembly position at Villiers where the Battalion was reorganized. At 1625 the Battalion left the assembly area at Villiers for the advance to Fontainbleau. The Battalion crossed the Seine River at Fontainbleau about 1700 and closed in an assembly area near the village of Samoreau at 1815. The Battalion did not contact the enemy during this operation and remained in the assembly area during the night of th3 26th and 27th of August, 1944.

The Battalion departed from the assembly position at Samoreau at 0700, 27 August, 1944 and proceeded along the route of Vulaines, Hericy, Chartrettes, Melun, Chatillon, Chappelle, arriving in this vicinity at 1020 and going into an assembly position here.

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Subject: Combat History of the 17th Tank Battalion for the period 20 August 1944 through 31 August 1944 (Continued).

At 1420, 27 August, 1944, CCR issued an order breaking the command into three forces, each of which was to proceed to Verdun along different routes. This order was in compliance with Division Field Order #8. One force was to follow Route A, one Route E, and one Route F. The 17th Tank Battalion was broken down for this operation in the following manner: Task force A which was commanded by Lt. Colonel Wemple, was composed of Company "A", 17th Tank Battalion, Company "A" 38th Armored Infantry, Battery "C" of the 440th Field Artillery, one platoon of Engineers from the 33d Engineers, one platoon of 814th Tank Destroyer Battalion, and Headquarters and Headquarters Company of the 17th Tank Battalion. This force A was to follow route A. Company "D" of the 17th Tank Battalion was assigned to Task Force E which was commanded by Major Rankin, Company "C" of the 17th Tank Battalion was assigned to Task Force F which was commanded by Lt. Colonel Keeler. The 17th Tank Battalion, Service Company, was broken up equally between the Task Forces. Company "D" of the 17th Tank Battalion reverted to CCR control and was to follow CCR along Route E. The Battalion Headquarters was retained with Task Force A commanded by Lt. Colonel Wemple. We were not in contact with the other Forces during the operation so that at this time we only have the history of Task Force A. The mission of Task Force A was to follow a Task Force from CCB along Route A and to be ready to give them assistance if needed. Task Force A or Task Force Wemple left the assembly area in vicinity of Chappelle-Gauthier at 1835, 27 August, 1944 and proceeded along the route to Fountainelles, Nangis, Moison-Rouge, Vulaines, Marolles, Maptery, going into an assembly position near St. Genest at 0100, 28 August, 1944. The town of Provins was by passed because of strong enemy forces there.

At 0700 on 28 August, 1944, Task Force Wemple left from assembly position near St. Genest and traveled on Route Bouchy-le-Repos, les-Essarts, Barbonne, Saudoy, Sezanne, Allemant, Broussy-le-Grd, Bonnes, Aulnizeux, and Caligny. At this point we ran into light enemy resistance and captured some prisoners, the exact number of which is unknown because most of them were taken by the Infantry and were sent back before a record was made. The action occurred at 1215 on 28 August, 1944. Task Force Wemple advanced on to Vertus and went into assembly position at Le Mensil.

The Task Force from CCB which we were following pushed on to the Marne River and found that the bridge on Highway GCA at Mareuil was out. This force pushed their infantry on across the river as ordered and established a bridgehead. Company "A" of the 38th Armored Infantry which was under Lt. Colonel Wemple's command was sent up to assist in this operation. The two infantry companies pushed across the river, took the town and established the bridgehead. This was accomplished by 2200, on 28 August, 1944. The Wemple Force less Company A of the 38th Armored Infantry remained in the assembly area near Le Mesnil during the night of the 28th and 29th of August, 1944 and until 1245 on 29 August, 1944.

Task Force Wemple under orders from higher Headquarters pulled the Infantry back across the Marne River and at 1245 on 29 August, 1944, followed behind the Task Force from CCB to Epernay along highway GC 38 and 36 through Moussy, Pierry to Epernay. Then we continued to Ramponneau, La Chausser, Damery, Fleury, Nanteuil,-le-F, Serriers, Rilly, Mailly-Chaupagne, Verzy, Thuisy, to Pont-Faverger. Task Force Wemple reached this point at 2130 and the Force halted for re-fuelling. Since the force that preceded us was practically out of fuel, we gave part of our fuel to them.

S-E-C-R-E-T

S-E-C-R-E-T

Subject: Combat History of the 17th Tank Battalion for the period 20 August 1944 through 31 August 1944 (Continued).

During the halt for fuel a German column of a few trucks ran into our column and the 38th Inf. killed several Germans and took some prisoners. At 0130, 30 Aug. 44 the march was resumed.

At 0830, 30 Aug. 44 Task Force Wemple reached Perthes. One mile west of Tagnon on road to Avancon at 0900 our leading elements encountered one enemy tank and some dismounted troops. The tank was fired on and hit but it did not stop. Two German officers and 63 men were taken prisoners at this point. The men fired on our units but did not put up much of a fight. The prisoners all belonged to a German Police unit. An enemy column was fired on by our tanks near the town of Tagnon and several vehicles were knocked out the number was not verified for we had to keep moving.

The Task Force went into an assembly area in the vicinity of Avancon at 1100 on 30 Aug. 44. At this point the two task forces were ordered to pull back to an assembly area in the vicinity of Epaye and this move was started at 1715 by the route of Newflize, Alincourt, Juniville, La Newville, Pont-Faverger, Epaye and closed in assembly at 2030. During the preceding night the two Bn. Hq. tanks had dropped out of column and we feared that the crews had been captured but they were picked up and returned to the assembly area at Epaye. However one of the tanks was fired on and hit by an enemy tank and destroyed the gun on our tank. The crew escaped un-injured.

The Task Force remained in the assembly area at Epaye until 1415 on 31 Aug. 44 at which time the force moved out on the route - Epaye, Beine, Nauroy, Moronvilliers, St. Martin, St. Souplet, St. Marie - with the mission of going through Verdun and establishing bridgehead on other side of town. The Division was to advance on or attack in three forces along three routes, CCB along Z route on north, CCA along X route on south route, and CCR along Y or middle route.

Task Force Rankin was to precede Task Force Wemple along route indicated about and that is exactly how the march was made. After reaching St. Marie the Force continued on to Souain, Massiges, Ville Sur Tourbe, Thierville, and Verdun. Reached Verdun at 0800 after an all night move and went on to an assembly area at Etain closing there at 1000, 1 Sept. 44.

(signed)
JACK HOWISON
Captain, Infantry
Unit Historian

S-E-C-R-E-T

HEADQUARTERS 17TH TANK BATTALION
APO 257, U. S. ARMY

2 October 1944

Subject: Unit History

TO : Commanding General, 7th Armd Div, APO 257, U. S. Army,
(Attention Public Relations Officer)

Transmitted herewith Unit History of the 17th Tank Battalion for the month of
September 1944.

For the Commanding Officer:

R.E. Miller
1st Lt., 17th Tank Bn
Adjutant

HEADQUARTERS 17TH TANK BATTALION
APO 257, U. S. ARMY

U-N-I-T H-I-S-T-O-R-Y

of the 17th Tank Battalion

for the month of September 1944.

Task Force WEMPLE which was composed of Co "A" and Hq & Hq Co of the 17th Tank Bn, Co "A" of 38th Inf Bn, Btry "C" of the 440th F.A. Bn, one platoon of Engineers from the 33rd Engineer Bn and one platoon of T.D.'S from the 814th T.D. Bn went into an assembly position east of Verdun, France near the town of Etain at 1000 on 1 September 1944. C.C."R" Hq and the other two task forces under that command also assembled at that point however the task forces remained intact. That is the various elements of the task forces did not revert to their respective unit commanders. All of the forces of C.C."R" remained in this position until 1530 on 2 September 1944 at which time the command moved back to the west to an assembly area near the town of Dieppe-sous-Douaumont.

Task Force WEMPLE closed in the new area at Dieppe-sous-Douaumont at 1730 2 September 1944. All of the elements of the 17th Tank Bn reverted to the Bn control on 3 September 1944 while still in this same area. The Bn remained in this same area until 6 September 1944 because the Division could not get fuel to move with. During the period 3 September to 6 September the Bn performed some much needed maintenance. The light tank company Co "D", turned the tracks on all their tanks and the medium tank companies got replacements for the tracks which were worn out on their tanks. It was during this period that the Bn. received its first issue of Cognac which was received very favorably by most of the men. The Bn Commander controlled the issuing of the spirits in such a way that no one could abuse the privilege, in other words there was no excessive drinking.

The Bn strength for duty as of 5 September 1944 was 37 Officers, 2 Warrant Officers and 644 Enlisted men. On this date companies "A" and "B" were detached from the Bn and placed under the command of the commanding officers of the 87th Rcn Squadron. The history of these two companies of the 17th Tank Bn for the period during which they were attached to the 87th Rcn Squadron will be found in that Unit's history.

The 17th Tank Bn received information in regard to the next move or operation in the morning of 6 September 1944 from C.C. "R" Hq which in brief was to attack with the Division to the east and across the Moselle River in the vicinity of Metz then on to the Rhine River at Frankfurt. The 17th Tank Bn minus companies "A" and "B" was to attack under C.C."R" along the route Eix, Chatillon, Haudiomont,

Unit History of the 17th Tank Battalion for the Month of Sept 44, cont'd.

Pintheville, Maizeray, Moulotte, Hammonville-au-Passage, Mars-la-Tour, Vionville, Rezonville, Gravelotte, Ars-sur-Moselle at which point the Moselle River crossing was to be made. C. C."R" was to follow in column along the route indicated above and it was to be preceded by a task force from C. C. "B".

At 1330, 6 September 1944 Lt Col JOHN P. WEMPLE called a meeting of his officers and gave them all of the information available in regard to the coming operation. The order of march within the Bn was given as follows: I & R Platoon, Co "C" Mortar Platoon, Bn Hq, Hq Co, Co "D", Trains (which were ammunition trucks and Bn Maintenance Section). The remainder of the trains were to revert to C.C."R" control.

The Bn started moving out on the route listed above at 1500 on 6 September 1944. At this time the Bn strength was 28 officers, 2 W.O'S and 439 E. M. Co's "A" & "B" had moved out at 0115 6 Sept 44 in the 87th Rcn Task Force. At this time Co "C" had 9 medium tanks with 75mm guns, 2 medium tanks with 76mm guns, one 105 assault gun tank, 2 one quarter ton cars, one half track and one tank recovery vehicle. Co "D" had 18 M5A1 light tanks, 2 one quarter ton cars and on 2½ ton truck. Hq & Hq Co had 9 half tracks, 7 one quarter ton vehicles, three 105mm assault tanks and one medium tank. Service Co had 34 2½ ton trucks, 2 quarter ton vehicles, 2 three quarter ton trucks, 1 C & R vehicle, one half track and one wrecker.

The movement during the day of the 6th of Sept was rather slow because all roads were congested with troops, however, at 1900 the Bn pulled off the road with CC "R" into an assembly area just west of the town of Mars-la-Tour. At this time we found that the leading elements were stopped just beyond the town of Rezonville by enemy action. The enemy had A.T. guns, Infantry and mines. Strength of enemy was estimated at 5 companies of men who had been recently shifted from the Russian front to set up a defense at this point. At 2330 the Bn C.O. received an alert notice from C.C."R" with an order to be prepared to attack on call. The plan was for C.C."B" to attack in two columns with C.C."R" in the middle. The Bn C.O. issued his order to the Bn in case the plan was executed. Co "C" was to lead the attack followed by the assault guns then the Bn Commander. Co "D" minus the mortars, Bn Hq, Hq Co, Medics and two tanks from Co "D". The I & R Platoon was to be with the Bn Hq section and to be used for special missions.

The Bn stood by all night on the alert for further orders but they were not received. The weather was cold and cloudy all night with some rain and it was still cloudy and raining some at 0800 on the morning of the 7th.

At 1130, 7 Sept 1944 the Bn received orders from C. C."R" to move up to the town of Rezeonville and to start the movement in ten minutes. The Bn started the move at 1140 and moved into an assembly position north and east of the town of Rezonville at 1215. While in this position enemy artillery fire fell in our area but no casualties resulted.

At 1430 Co "C" of the 17th and the Mortar Platoon were attached to a force commanded by Col. KEELER which was to attack via Gravelotte to Ars-sur-Moselle to a point just north of Dornot on the Moselle River. Our tanks and mortars were to support the Infantry while they crossed the river and formed a bridgehead. The

Unit History of the 17th Tank Battalion for the Month of Sept 44, cont'd.

plan was for the two Artillery Bns in C.C."R" to deliver heavy fire for thirty minutes just prior to Col. KEELER's force moving out. A Bn of Infantry was to proceed in front of the tanks on foot. However the Division Commander came forward before the plan was executed and ordered the attack to be pushed on more rapidly. As a result the artillery concentration was not laid down.

At 1420 Co "C" and the Mortar Platoon moved forward behind the Infantry. Co "C" was ordered to move a platoon close to the woods to the left flank and deliver fire to protect Infantry. Enemy was firing on our tanks with small arms and mortars. At 1540 Co "C"'s commander requested our mortars to put fire on dug-in enemy positions to his left which they did immediately. Enemy strength at this point was estimated at 20 men in well dug-in positions with machine guns, rifles, mortars and bazookas. At 1510 Lt Col WEMPLE was ordered to come forward behind Col. Keeler's force to act as rear guard with his remaining force.

The original plan was for the tanks to move along each flank along a valley with woods on both sides and for the Infantry to advance down between the tanks and under their protection. However after getting into the fight it was found that this plan would not work for the terrain was not exactly like the commanders thought it was and the movement was not fast enough.

At 1615 one tank on the left flank was hit by a bazooka and four members of the crew left the tank. The last man couldn't get out because the tank was surrounded by Germans. The man left in the tank was Tec 4 BOOTH and he called Capt GEORGE on the radio and asked him what to do. Capt GEORGE told him to try and start the tank and try to back it out and that, Capt GEORGE would be down to help him. Sgt. BOOTH started the tank and Capt GEORGE moved his tank down and put fire on the enemy while Sgt BOOTH backed the tank up to a safe position. Four members of the tank crew were evacuated but they were not seriously wounded. One officer, Lt. FRANK B. ZINN, was evacuated with a hand wound. The tank was hit in the turret and damaged but can be repaired.

The assault guns were moved up and put direct fire on enemy positions and the mortars were moved up to a position so they could put fire on the left flank.

Two light tanks from Co "D" were called up to assist evacuate some wounded infantrymen. The tanks went over close to a wooded area hunting for the wounded men and one tank commander, Sgt. HAMMOND saw a German preparing to fire a bazooka at his tank, Sgt HAMMOND turned his tank sharply and the bazooka hit his tank at an angle on the side and did not penetrate. However the equipment on the back of the tank caught fire. As soon as the fire was put out Sgt HAMMOND took his section back to try to destroy the men that had fired on him. Sgt HAMMOND and his tank crew showed plenty of calmness and ability during this operation.

At 1715 Capt GEORGE was ordered to precede the infantry with one platoon of medium tanks. The route to be followed was a very narrow trail through dense woods. The tank platoon started along the route with the infantry dismounted and following the tanks and they proceeded in this formation until 1810 when the whole action was halted by higher headquarters. They did not meet any enemy resistance in the woods which was very fortunate for the trail was so narrow and the woods so dense that it would have been very easy for the enemy to have destroyed the tanks with bazookas. At this time an element of the 5th Inf. Div. was ordered to relieve this task force.

Unit History of the 17th Tank Battalion for the Month of Sept 44, cont'd.

and proceed with the mission. C.C."R" was ordered to withdraw as they were relieved to the original assembly area near Mars-la-Tour. The 17th Tank Bn minus Co's "A" and "B" were back in the assembly area by 2100.

The Bn was in the assembly area near Mars-la-Tour on 8 Sept 44 and the Bn Commander was informed that "A" and "B" companies had reverted to his control and that they would join the Bn in this assembly area. Orders were issued to all elements in the assembly area to perform all maintenance possible at this time. Companies "A" & "B" re-joined the Bn at 1600 and their tanks and vehicles were immediately refueled and their ammunition supply was replenished.

At 1630 on 8 September 1944 the Bn Commander was called to C.C."R" Hq and was informed that the 17th Tank Bn had been attached to the 90th Inf. Div. The 90th Inf. Div. was thought to be in danger of a heavy tank attack and 17th was to be used in repelling such an attack. Lt. Col. WEMPLE proceeded immediately to the 90th Inf. Div. Hq which was to the north near the town of Higny. The executive officer was ordered to alert the Bn and have it ready to move at the Bn Commander's orders. The Bn Commander carried part of the I & R Platoon forward with him to be used to send back and guide the Bn to the new location.

At 1800 the Bn. Commander ordered the Bn to move forward to an assembly area near the town of Mainville. At 1813 the head of the column moved on the road. The route was on the highway through the towns of Mars-la-Tour, Conflans, Abbeville, Ozerailles, Fleviler, Lixieres, Merry-la-see and Mainville. The march to the new area was very orderly and uneventful; we did not contact the enemy and did not lose any vehicles due to mechanical failure. The Bn closed in the assembly area just South of Mainville by 2015. The Bn. Commander and the I & R Platoon leaders had picked out the assembly area and the Bn was guided into the area by the I & R Platoon. This area was excellent for our purpose for it was wooded with excellent fields of fire from the north and east the direction from which the enemy was most likely to attack. The Bn remained in the area until 0700, 10 Sept 44.

The 17th Tank Bn was placed in reserve by the 90th Inf Div and the Bn Commander and the different staff sections made periodic visits to the Div Hq in order to keep up with the situation. During the night of the 9th and 10th of Sept the Bn received an order to displace forward on the following morning to an assembly position near the town of Sancy. The route to follow was Mainville to Mairy to Anderny to Sancy. The march was started at 0700 and the Bn closed in the assembly area near Sancy at 0805. The Bn Commander and staff officers went to Audon-le-Roman to contact the 90th Inf Div Task Force Commander and to find out how the Bn would be employed. The Bn was ordered to remain on the alert and to stand by for orders.

At 1345 the Bn received an order reverting the 17th Tank Bn back to the 7th Armd Div and under the command of C.C."R". There were no specific instructions as to where the Bn should go so the Bn Commander decided to return to our original C.C."R" assembly area near Mars-la-Tour. The order of march was I & R Platoon, Co "B". Co "A", Hq and Hq Co, Co "C", Co "D" and Serv Co. The Bn moved out at 1430 and the march progressed very satisfactorily along the route Sancy, Trieux, Briey, Jarney and along N 52 toward Mar-la-Tour until 1615 at which time the column was

Unit History of the 17th Tank Battalion for the Month of Sept 44, cont'd.

halted on the highway near Mars-la-Tour at 1630 at this point on highway N52 the Bn received the following message: "Proceed to Conflans then to Batilly, thence to St. Marie-aux-Cheves, then to assembly area, gas up and await orders."

At 1635 the Bn Commander contacted Executive Officer of C.C."R" and received orders to proceed to the assembly area near St. Marie along the route Mar-la-Tour, Brunville, Dancourt, Jouaville, Batilly, St. Ail and St Marie which the Bn did and closed in the assembly area at 1930. The Bn Commander went to a unit commander's meeting at 2130 and called for a company commander's meeting at his Bn Hq at 2330. The Bn Commander returned to Bn Hq at 2350 with his order from C.C."R". Again C.C."R" was to be divided into three task forces with the mission of clearing out the enemy resistance in the vicinity of Marange-Silvange, Semecourt, Bronvaux, Feres, and St. Privat. Lt Col WEMPLE was placed in command of Task Force WEMPLE which consisted of Co "C", Hq & Hq Co of the 17th Tank Bn, one company of the 38th Inf, one platoon of T.D.'s from the 814th T.D. Bn and one platoon of Engineers from the 33rd Eng. Bn. Lt. Col KEELER was to command Task Force KEELER which was composed of Co "A" of the 17th Tank Bn plus Inf., Eng. and T.D. elements. Major RANKIN was in command of Task Force Rankin composed of Co. "B" of the 17th Tank Bn plus Inf., Eng. and T.D. elements. The plan was for Task Force WEMPLE followed by Task Force KEELER to attack from assembly area at St. Marie along the route Roncourt, Pierre-villers and to the west and back through the valley between Feres and Marange-Silvange. Lt. Col WEMPLE assembled the officers commanding the elements of his task force at 2350 and issued his order. It was known that we would not meet enemy resistance until after we had passed through Pierrevillers and over the high ground to the north and west of that town, so his plan was as follows: The task force would move out mounted in their vehicles in the following order: one platoon of medium tanks leading with a platoon of infantry right with them mounted in half tracks; then a tank and a half-track and a tank and a half-track. The forward observer from the 440th F.A. Bn who was mounted in a medium tank was to march just behind the two lead tanks. The platoon of T.D.'s was placed behind this tank infantry point formation to be followed by a platoon of tanks, a platoon of infantry, a platoon of tanks and a platoon of engineers; then the Hq section followed by the assault gun platoon and the mortars. Lt Col WEMPLE ordered that the force proceed along the road in this formation until resistance was met at which time the infantry was to dismount and attack on foot. The leading element was to cross the I.P. just out of the assembly area at 0630. The attack was launched as planned at 0630 on the morning of 11 September 1944. All trains remained in the assembly area near St. Marie.

At the time the attack was launched it was known that the enemy occupied the old forts along the high ground south and west from Semecourt and Feres. Due to the nature of the terrain the vehicles were to remain on the road until resistance was met and it became necessary to deploy the force.

At 0730 on 11 September 1944 the point of the Task Force ran into a road block on the road about 1,000 yards beyond the abrupt right turn in our route of advance or at the point where the railroad passed over the road. The Germans had blown the

Unit History of the 17th Tank Battalion for the Month of Sept 44, cont'd.

railroad over-pass and the rails and ties blocked the road; they had placed a few mines and booby traps at this point. The block was on the crest of a hill and it was possible to by-pass it to the right so the tanks and infantry pulled up to the crest of the hill on the right and deployed along the crest and the engineers were called forward to clear the road block. As soon as our tanks and infantrymen exposed themselves on the crest of the hill the enemy fired on them with small arms, machine guns and artillery. The artillery was identified as 105mm. At this point there was a slight hill to our right, high ground to the left and a high ridge to our right front along which we knew the forts were located. This high ground which was held by the Germans was wooded and furnished excellent concealment for them for this reason; our troops could not locate the exact positions of the Germans. Our tanks and infantrymen from our position on the crest fired at all likely targets. The platoon of Tank Destroyers were brought forward and deployed along the crest of the hill and fired on all likely targets. The enemy had at least three artillery pieces and they fired intermittently on our force from 0730 on throughout the day. The infantry had several casualties from small arms fire and the artillery early in the morning. In fact they were forced to remain behind the crest of the hill to our right for the enemy placed very accurate fire all along our force even behind the crest of the hill.

At 1000 the Force Commander ordered the mortars to place smoke on the hill to our right which they did. However this smoke on the enemy probable O.P. did not stop the artillery fire.

At 1115 the Force was ordered to continue the attack regardless of artillery fire. The tanks led out and the attack proceeded over the crest and down into the valley. The tanks placed heavy fire on a dug-in position on our left flank and it was estimated that about 20 Germans were killed. The one medium tank company (Co. "C", 17th) and the infantry company (Co. "B", 38th) which were leading the attack were stopped in the valley by heavy artillery fire and small arms fire. However the enemy had such excellent natural concealment and cover that the actual enemy positions could not be located. The assault gun platoon had been moved to a position where it could place fire in front of the attacking elements but since we could not locate the enemy gun positions it was not known whether their fire was effective.

The tanks pushed out in front of the infantry and when the artillery fire and small arms fire became so intense the infantry became separated from the tanks. This whole attack force was in a very bad spot for they were exposed to fire from the forts to their front and to fire from the high ground to their left flank.

At approximately 1200 Colonel Molony, the C.C."R" Commander, Major LAUER, the S-3 and Lt. Col. KEELER who commanded Task Force KEELER were wounded by artillery fire. Col. MOLONY and Lt. Col. KEELER were evacuated, however Col. MOLONY gave Lt. Col. WEMPLE his place and orders before he was evacuated. The plan was to push Task Force KEELER over the crest of the hill and to the right of Task Force WEMPLE and bring Task Force RANKIN up to protect the rear of both forces. At this time Lt. Col. WEMPLE took command of C.C."R", Major DAILEY took Task Force WEMPLE.

Unit History of the 17th Tank Battalion for the Month of Sept 44, cont'd.

and Captain NEIL took Task Force KEELER. Task Force KEELER and Task Force RANKIN started moving into their position according to the plan. However the artillery fire continued and it was becoming even more obvious all the time that this force could not go down the valley in front of the forts along the Feres ridge as planned.

Lt. Col. HART was placed in command of C.C."R" and Lt. Col WEMPLE assumed command of his force again. At 1515 it was decided that C.C."R" could not accomplish the mission as planned and the forces were ordered to withdraw to a position behind the ridge from which the original attack was launched. The casualties in this operation were: Co "C" of the 17th Tank Bn had one officer killed by artillery fire, Lt STETS, and one tank commander, Sgt. WARE injured and evacuated. They evacuated two medium tanks because of the damage done by the artillery one of which was Captain GEORGE's tank, the company commander. Co "B" of the 38th Inf. Bn. had fifteen (15) casualties including one officer and two enlisted men killed⁴. Lt. GEIGER who commanded Company "B" of the 38th Inf Bn was wounded by artillery fire and evacuated.

Co "A" of the 17th Tank Bn, Capt PIER's company was pulled back to the ridge and left to repel any counter-attack which the enemy might make. Co "C" of the 17th Tank Bn was moved with Bn. Hq of the 17th to an assembly position along the road between Pierrevillers and Silvange. The assault Gun Platoon and the Mortar Platoon were sent back to St. Marie to furnish protection for the trains. Co "D" of the 17th minus one platoon which was attached to C.C."R" Hq and one platoon which was attached to an Artillery Bn was sent to the trains area. Co "B" of the 17th was held in the vicinity of Pierrevillers to be used in a night operation.

Major RANKIN with one platoon from Co "B" of the 17th, some elements of the 38th Inf and a squad of Engineers was given the mission of crossing the hill from the north and securing an O.P. position near the town of Marange-Silvange. This mission was accomplished during the night of 11-12 Sept 44 and the tank platoon had no casualties.

Lt. Col. WEMPLE was ordered to take a force composed of one tank platoon and elements of the 38th Inf and a squad of Engineers over the high ground to the south-east and secure an O.P. position in the vicinity of Bronvaux. This mission was accomplished during the night of 11-12-Sept. 44. However, the tanks were not used as the timber was so dense that the tanks could not get through.

During the day of 12 Sept 44 the 17th Tank Bn simply held its position while the artillery and the air corps worked on the enemy positions. Lt. Col ADAMS assumed command of C.C."R" on this date. At 1900, Co "B" of the 17th Tank Bn was given the mission of securing the town of St. Privat. This company was ordered by higher Hq. to dismount some of its tank crews and take them into the town to secure it. The tanks could not be taken into the town because it was not clear of mines and booby traps. Co. "B" of the 17th, commanded by Captain PILAT held this town until after dark on the night of the 14th September 1944, at which time it was relieved by elements of the 90th Inf. Div.

The 17th Tank Bn was inactive during the day of 13 Sept 44. Bn Hq, Hq Co.

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⁴ B/38 AIB's 2nd Lt. Warren B. Sewell, Pvt. George B. Moore, Pfc. Willie J. Tingle, Pvt. Maurice A. Venne were killed 11 September 1944.

Unit History of the 17th Tank Battalion for the Month of Sept 44, cont'd.

followed by the rest of the Bn moved to a new assembly area near Puxieux after it was ordered to do so by C.C."R" at 1000 on 14 Sept 44; moving with C.C."R".

At 1055 on 14 Sept 44, Bn Hq, Hq. Co., Co "A" and Co "C" started moving from the area of Pierreville to the assembly area near St. Marie. At this time one platoon of Co "D" was attached to the 558th Field Arty Bn for their protection, one platoon was attached to C.C."R" Hq and the remainder of the company was attached to the C.C."R" trains.

The trains were all brought under C.C."R" control and the 17th Tank Bn Service Co. Commander, Capt GEHRLING was placed in command of the trains.

At 1500 on the 14th the Battalion started the march to Puxieux by the route of St. Marie, Batilly, Jouaville, Doncourt, Bruville, Mars-la-Tour and Puxieux. The march was very orderly and uneventful and the Bn was closed in bivouac by 1730. The Bn remained in this assembly area near Puxieux the night of 14-15 September 44 and until about 1400 of the 15th.

During the morning of the 15th the Bn Commander, Lt. Col. WEMPLE received his orders and the plans for the next operation. Briefly the plan was for the 7th A.D., to cross the Moselle River in the vicinity of Arnville, pass through the 5th Inf., Div. and circle around Metz and seize the high ground on the east side of the river in the vicinity of Thionville to form a bridgehead for the 90th Inf. Div., to cross the river. The division was to attack in two columns or two forces after the river was crossed. C.C. "R" and C.C. "A" were to take the north route through the towns of Arry, Lorry, Sillegny, Pommerieux, Verny, Pontoy and on around to the high ground to the north and east of Metz in the vicinity of Thionville. C.C. "B" was to attack along a route more or less parallel to this route but to the south and east of it. C.C. "A" was to lead the attack followed by C.C. "R" but C.C. "A" was not relieved by the 90th Div as quick as had been expected so C.C. "R" attacked first.

Lt. Col. WEMPLE was placed in command of the advance guard which was composed of one platoon from the 87th Rcn Squadron, Co "A", Hq & Hq Co of the 17th, Co "A" of the 38th Inf., one platoon of the 814th T.D. Bn., one platoon of the 33rd Arm Eng. Bn., and one battery of the 440th F.A. Bn Co "B" of the 17th was to be used as a right flank guard and Co "C" was to be with the main body of C. C. "R". Co "D" of the 17th was still split up between the 558th F. A. Bn., C. C. "R" Hq and C. C "R" trains.

During the morning of 15 Sept 44 Col. HEFNER assumed command of C.C."R".

At 1115 on the morning of 15 Sept 44 Lt Col WEMPLE assembled his officers and issued his order for the attack. Since the river crossing had been secured by C.C. "B", of the 7th A.D., and the 5th Inf. Div., we did not expect to meet the enemy until we were across the river so the following march order was given: One platoon from the 87th Rcn Sq., Co "A" of the 17th, Co "A" of the 38th Inf. Bn, the T. D. platoon, the Engineer platoon, the F.A. Battery, Bn. Hq., of the 17th, the Mortar Platoon and the Assault Gun Platoon. Co "B" of the 17th Tank Bn plus one platoon from the 87th Rcn Sq which was to be the right flank guard was to march behind the advance guard until after we had crossed the river. This of course was followed by the main body of C. C. "R" a part of which was Co. "C" of the 17th Tank Bn.

At 1430 on the 15th of Sept 44 the leading elements of the Advance Guard passed the I.P. which was near the town of Puxieux. The route to the river was on a high

Unit History of the 17th Tank Battalion for the Month of Sept 44, cont'd.

way to Chambley, Waville, Onville, Bayonville, Aranville and then to the river crossing. The march to the river and the crossing itself was uneventful except that the crossing was slow. Two pontoon bridges were across the river but the traffic on the other side was congested, therefore the crossing was slow. The 5th Inf. Div. and C.C."B" had had much trouble in making the crossing for the enemy had placed heavy artillery fire on them all the time. In fact, the crossing was still under artillery fire on the day that we crossed but it happened that the enemy was not firing right at the time that we crossed, however the bridges were protected by a heavy smoke screen as we crossed.

At 1845 we passed through the town of Arry and by 1935 we were through the town of Lorry which had just been captured by the 5th Inf. Div.

At 2020 the Rcn Platoon from the 87th Rcn was sent forward to try to determine what was in front of us. They moved on past the road to the south⁵ of Marieulles and to the edge of the woods. This platoon reported that they could hear motors running in the woods and a road block in the edge of the woods. By this time the advance guard had drawn enemy machine gun fire from the left flank. The advance guard pulled off the road at this position and deployed to the right of the road. This was near the junction of the road to Marieulles and the road to the east of Sillegny. Co's "A" & "B" of the 17th were deployed to the right of the road to advance to the east and Co. "C" of the 17th was brought up and deployed to the left of the road as a left flank guard. The whole C.C."R" remained in this position throughout the night. Lt. Col. WEMPLE formulated his plans for pushing his advance guard forward early the next morning and issued his order. The medium tanks were to attack along the road followed closely by the infantry, the T.D.'s and the Assault Guns.

At 0730 on 16 Sept 44 Capt PIER with his Co "A" of the 17th moved out. They drew some small arms fire from the left flank and from the woods to the front as soon as they reached them. At 0830 the advance guard was stopped by the road block in the woods. The engineers were sent forward to remove the block but prior to this the infantry commanded by Capt DAN JENNINGS was brought up to cover the block while the engineers removed it. From this point the infantry preceded the tanks for the woods were very thick and the tanks could not leave the road. The enemy withdrew as we pushed forward but they left three roadblocks. These blocks were formed by falling large trees across the road. By 1100 the infantry and engineer team had cleared the road for a distance of about 400 yards or to the first clearing in the woods and the tanks moved up to this point. This clearing in the woods was about 200 yards wide and the forward elements reported enemy activity in the woods to the front; they could also see that more timber had been fallen across the road ahead. During this time our artillery had gone into position and was putting fire on the road to our front. The enemy started putting artillery and mortar fire on the area occupied by the 17th Tank Bn C.P. and the C.C."R" C.P. early in the morning of the 16th of Sept and continued to do so throughout the day. The artillery fire was coming from the north and east but we could not definitely locate their guns. The enemy had their artillery zeroed in on the roads in this vicinity and the firing placed on the the roads did not seem to be observed however, some of the fire was observed for it was too accurate fro unobserved fire. The enemy counter battery fire was amazingly accurate. The battery of artillery which was a part of the advance guard was compelled by enemy fire to move several times during the day of the 16th of Sept 44.

⁵ The typed word "north" is scratched out and "south" written in.

Unit History of the 17th Tank Battalion for the Month of Sept 44, cont'd.

It was amazing how few casualties the 17th Tank Bn had during the day and night of the 16th and 17th of Sept for we were under artillery fire almost constantly during this period. Hq Co. had one non-battle casualty evacuated and two enlisted men wounded and evacuated with shrapnel wounds. Hq. Co had one half-track knocked out by artillery fire. Co "A" of the 17th had one man killed⁶ by artillery fire and three other enlisted men wounded and evacuated. These men were all outside of their tank when they were wounded. None of the other companies had any vehicular or personnel casualties. Co "A" of the 17th with Co "A" of the 38th Inf Bn and the platoon of engineers tried throughout the day of the 16th to push on through the woods toward the town of Sillegny but the enemy artillery fire and automatic weapon fire from the woods held up the attack. At 1630 our artillery laid down a heavy concentration on the woods to our front and at 1640 the attack moved forward. By 1830 the infantry had pushed through the woods and set up outposts on the edge of the woods. The enemy had withdrawn from the woods to the town of Sillegny when our artillery shelled the woods. The Bn C.P. was moved up to the first clearing in the woods and all the Hq Co vehicles were dispersed in this area. It rained hard during the night of the 16th and 17th and the enemy continued to put artillery all over our positions. The infantry was pushed back in the woods by enemy artillery fire at 1900 and the Combat Commander ordered that we all just try to hold our position during the night. Lt. Col. WEMPLE was ordered to push on through the woods and to the town of Sillegny. The attack was to be launched at 0730 on the 17th of Sept. During the night of the 17th the engineers and infantry had cleared the road through the woods except one which was left for our protection.

Lt. Col. WEMPLE assembled his officers at 2200, 16 Sept 44 and issued the following order. The artillery was to lay down a 10 minute concentration on the area just outside the woods at 0720, 17 Sept 44 and Co "A" of the 17th supported by Co "A" of the 38th was to push off on the attack at 0730. Co "A" of the 38th Inf Bn was supposed to hold their position at the end of the woods during the night of 16 and 17 but the artillery drove them back. They had many casualties and the company was pretty well demoralized. The 38th brought up another company of infantry to support the attack. The artillery laid down their fire at 0720 and Co "A" of the 17th moved out at 0730 and the infantry was with the tanks. As the attack moved up through the woods and into the clearing the enemy artillery fire increased, in fact the fire was so heavy that the infantry could not proceed so our tanks deployed to the right and left the road just beyond the woods and held their position. The 17th Bn tanks remained in this holding position throughout the day while the 38th Inf Bn re-organized their forces. It rained some during the day and it was really a miserable day with the enemy artillery and the bad weather. Our artillery fired all day but the observation was so poor we do not know how effective their firing was. Hq Co C. O., Capt AHEARN was evacuated due to battle fatigue⁷ and one officer and three enlisted men were evacuated from Co "A". The Bn strength at the end of the day was 38 officers, 2 warrant officers and 661 Enlisted Men.

CC"R" planned to try to take the town of Sillegny again on 18 Sept 44. It was to be a coordinated infantry and tank attack and the attack was to be at 1200, however the attack did not actually start until 1515 on the 18th of Sept. The plan was for the tanks to move down close to the town and put fire on it while the infantry went into the town. Lt. Col. WEMPLE used his tanks by having Co "A" deploy to the left, Co "B" to the right and Co "C" was to move straight up to the town along the road. As Co "A" of the 17th moved into position on the left they were taken under fire by direct fire AT guns from the left flank and from the town.

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⁶ The American Battle Monuments Commission shows 2d Lt. John R. Ganfield died 17 Sep 1944. His company has yet to be definitely established.

⁷ The evacuation of Capt. Ahearn was not reflected in the HQ Company Morning Reports, which continued to show a Captain present and on duty for the entire month of September 1944 in the daily strength counts. In fact, the Morning Reports make no mention of Capt. Ahearn's evacuation until the Morning Report of 27 October 1944, which shows him lost 17 September to an unknown hospital and then (same 27 Oct 44 MR) shows him having returned to duty 22 Sep 44 via the 53rd Replacement Battalion.

Unit History of the 17th Tank Battalion for the Month of Sept 44, cont'd. Three Co "A" tanks and one recovery vehicle was knocked out by enemy AT guns and their exact positions could not be located, however, our tanks put fire on all likely positions. Co "B" on the right flank received heavy artillery fire and mortar fire. By 1600 on the afternoon of the 18th of Sept both Co "A" and Co "B" of the 17th were running low on ammunition and fuel so Co "C" was brought up and pushed through to take up the assault position. Co's "A" and "B" fanned out to the left and right flanks to protect the flanks and deliver what fire they could. Ammunition was brought up to the edge of the woods under artillery fire and Co "A" started pulling tanks back a section at a time to get ammunition. This process of re-supply of ammunition was slow but it was the only way it could be accomplished because we could not weaken our line by pulling the whole company back and the ammunition could not be carried up to the tanks because of the intensive artillery fire. As soon as it started getting dark on the 18th of Sept Lt. Col. WEMPLE pulled all three companies of tanks back slightly but not all the way back to the woods to form a defensive line for the night. Co "C" held the area to the front or East, Co "A" joined them on the left flank and Co "B" on the "right". The assault guns and the one gun which was left out of the T.D. platoon were used as flank protection. During the day of the 18th, Co "A" of the 17th had two men killed⁸ and 5 men missing in action. The other companies had no casualties even though they were under artillery fire practically all day and night.

On the morning of 19 Sept 44 our tanks were still in their holding positions waiting for the infantry to get reorganized so we could attack the town of Sillegny again. At 0400 the platoon from the 87th Rcn Sq., which had been attached to our organization was ordered by higher headquarters to report back to their organization. This platoon had been a great help to Lt. Col. WEMPLE for he had used them on several occasions to reconnaissance to the flanks for routes and the platoon had always accomplished their mission excellently.

At 0800 19 Sept 44, Capt GEORGE, the company commander of Co "C" of the 17th was killed by enemy small arms fire. He was standing up in his tank turret throwing a hand grenade at some dug-in enemy infantrymen to his front at the time he was killed. Capt GEORGE had done an excellent job and his loss was a great blow to his company. Lt. MAHONEY took command of the company and carried on efficiently.

During the morning of the 19th of Sept, Capt BILES the Bn S-4 was up forward at the forward ammunition dump and was wounded by shrapnel. Soon after this the ammunition dump was moved further to the rear because of the intensive artillery fire. During the day and night of the 19th tanks were pulled back by sections to the fuel and ammunition dump for re-supply. At this time the tanks were also supplied with water and food for the crews.

On the 19th one man from Hq Co., Private JAMES PAYNE was killed by shrapnel about 75 yards from the Bn C.P., and at the same time Pvt GORTON was seriously wounded.⁹ Lt BUCEK, the assault gun platoon leader and acting commander of Hq Co at the same time was wounded and evacuated; he was with his platoon on the front line when wounded. Co "A" had six men evacuated on this date with battle wounds. Co "C" had two casualties in addition to the company commander. Hq Co had two men evacuated with battle fatigue.

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⁸ 1st Lt. Joe A. Cotten, Pvt. Rodger E. Johnson, T/4 Hubert L. Rausch, T/4 Euan J. Slankard (all of unknown company) and S/Sgt Robert D. West (A/17) are all known to have died 18 September 1944.

⁹ T/4 Ernest Gorton died of wounds on 8 December 1944. It is not yet established whether he died of the wounds suffered 19 September 1944.

Unit History of the 17th Tank Battalion for the Month of Sept 44, cont'd.

During the morning of the 19th of Sept the tanks simply held their position waiting for the infantry to get ready to enter the town again. Since this operation at Sillegny had begun the 38th Inf Bn had had four different commanders due to the respective commanders being wounded or killed by enemy artillery fire. Three Bn Commanders were killed and one wounded.

At 1340 on the 19th two tanks from Company "A" of the 17th supported by what remained of the 38th Inf Bn entered the town of Sillegny and just inside the town they ran into a roadblock and mines. The infantry started removing the road block and called the engineers forward. As our troops entered the town the enemy started laying heavy artillery fire on it and there was very little enemy resistance in the town other than the artillery fire. Apparently the enemy had withdrawn so they could place artillery fire on our troops. The artillery fire became so dense and heavy that the infantry had gone forward behind our tanks had withdrawn or took refuge in building basements and our tanks were left in the town without protection. At 1644 a P.W. reported that about 20 enemy tanks were coming into Sillegny from the northeast. About this time the Division notified us that their air corps had destroyed a column of enemy tanks and armored vehicles on the road to Sillegny northeast of the town. At 1715 the assault gun platoon leader reported two enemy tanks approaching the town of Sillegny from the north and he fired on them as they came into range but did not stop them. However our Co "C" tanks knocked out one of the tanks and other one went into town. By 1830 the two Co "A" tanks had been pulled back out of the town because the enemy infantry was coming back into the town with Bazookas and there were no infantry around to protect the tanks. Approximately a platoon of infantry from the 38th Inf Bn remained in the town and barricaded themselves in a stone building in the southern part of the town. They had a radio and were in contact with C.C."R". Hq until about midnight when they called for artillery fire and reported that they were surrounded by enemy infantrymen. We tried to send a section of tanks into town from Co "B" but they could not get in because of anti-tank gun fire and artillery fire. One tank was knocked out.

By 1900 on the 19th the tanks of the 17th had been pulled back out of the town of Sillegny again to hold a defensive line just west of the town. Again Co "A" held the left flank, Co "C" the center sector and Co "B" the right flank. During the night of the 19th and 20th we received word that C. C. "A" would pass through our line on the following day and we would assume the role of supporting their actions.

The C.C. "A" plan was to attack from the east through our line and to by-pass the town of Sillegny to the south and take a piece of high ground to the south-east of the town. Co "A" and Co "C" of the 17th were to hold a position on the left flank so they could place fire on the roads to the north and east of the town of Sillegny and thus protect the left flank of the C.C. "A" effort. Co "B" of the 17th was to take up a position to the south to protect the right flank of C.C."A".

From 1900 on the 19th of Sept until 1600 on the 20th of Sept we simply held our position moving the tanks around very short distances to try to keep the enemy artillery from getting direct hits. At 1600 C.C."A" launched their attack and we assumed our role as support and flank protection which required very little change in our position. One company of C.C."A" tanks plus one company of infantry moved down to the north south road approaching Sillegny and here the infantry was pinned down by enemy artillery fire. Their tanks were not being knocked out by the artillery but due to the fact that there was an impassible stream to their front they could not advance. On the 20th Hq Co evacuated one battle fatigue case. Co "B" evacuated one officer (Lt THOMPSON) and one EM with battle wounds.

Unit History of the 17th Tank Battalion for the Month of Sept 44, cont'd.

The 17th Tank Bn remained in the supporting position throughout the day and night of the 21 Sept 44 and up until the afternoon of 22 Sept 44. We were under artillery fire most of the time but had no vehicular or personnel casualties during this period. The 22nd of Sept was the seventh day that we had been in the Sillegny area under the heavy enemy artillery fire and many of our men were almost exhausted. C.C."A"'s attack had not been any more successful than ours and we were all setting there baking beating from the enemy artillery fire.

At 1815 on 22 Sept 44 we were ordered to move back to an assembly area right on the Moselle river just across from the town of Pagny and we closed in the area by 1900. It rained during the night but there was no enemy artillery fire on so so the troops enjoyed their first nights rest in about eight days.

Major WHITE was assigned to and joined the 17th Tank Bn and during the afternoon on the 22nd was assigned to the job of Bn S-3.

The Bn had 32 medium tanks, 17 light tanks, 4-105mm assault guns which were available for duty on the 22nd of Sept 44.

The day of the 23rd of Sept was spent in the assembly area near Pagny. It rained most of the day but all crews did what maintenance work they could under the circumstances. There was not artillery fire or enemy activity in our assembly area.

Late in the afternoon of the 23rd we received an order from C.C."R" that we would move back across the river and into an assembly area at Puxieux which we had occupied once before. The route of march was to be - cross river on the Pagny bridge then to Pagny Arnaville, Waville and Chambley and assembly area near Puxieux. The Bn moved out on the march at 0305 on 24 Sept 44 and closed in the bivouac area at Puxieux at 0545. It was very dark and rained most of the time during the march but we made it without any casualties. The members of the Bn were allowed to sleep until about 1200.

The 17th Tank Bn remained in this assembly area at Puxieux until 1225 on the 25th of Sept 44 at which time we were alerted for a move to an assembly area near Stockheim. We knew that a big change in plans was underfoot for we were ordered to get our duffle bags out of storage and because of the long contemplated move but we did not know the details of the plan. The route of march was to be; Puxieux, Mars-la-Tour, Conflans, Longuyon, Arlon, Martange, Bastogne, Marche, Huy, St. Trond, Hasselt and Stockheim. The advance guard company of Co "A" of the 17th plus other elements moved out at 1811. The march was rather difficult because it rained and was very dark. One 1/4 ton car from Hq Co ran off the road and two men were slightly injured and evacuated. The Bn was closed in the assembly area near Stockheim, Belgium, at 1900 on 26 Sept 44.

During the day of 27 Sept 44 we learned that we were in the 1st U.S. Army and in the XIX Corps with the 2nd Armd Div and the 29th and 30th Inf. Divisions.

Unit History of the 17th Tank Battalion for the Month of Sept 44, cont'd.

We remained in the assembly area at Stockheim until 1840 on the 29th of Sept. During this period the time was devoted to much needed first and second echelon maintenance on vehicles. Members of the command received showers which were very welcome by everyone.

On the 27th of Sept 44 we learned that the plan was for the 7th A.D., to move to an attack position in the vicinity of St. Anthonis, Holland, and to attack south and southwest along the west side of the Maas River and to seize objectives in the vicinity of Grathem and Millert. The plan was for the Div to attack in two columns with C.C."A" and C.C."B" abreast with C.C."A" on the right and C.C."B" on the left with C.C."R" initially following C.C."B" in reserve. The 17th Tank Bn was still an element of C.C."R".

On the 29th of Sept Co "D" of the 17th Tank Bn was detached and placed under the command of Lt. Col. JONES whose force was to furnish flank protection for the Division for the forthcoming operation.

On the 29th the Bn was alerted for the move to the assault position. The order of march for C.C."R" was to be: The advance guard composed of one platoon from Co "B", 17th Tank Bn plus other elements, Hq, C.C."R" 38th Inf Bn, 774th F.A.Bn, 17th Tank Bn (minus), 440th F.A.Bn and Com "B" of the 17th minus one platoon. The march order within the Bn was to be Co "C", Hq and Hq Co, Co "A" and the trains. The leading elements moved out at 1840 on 29 Sept 44 and followed the following route: Neeroeteren, Heikart, Neerhoven, Rinroy, Weert, Asten and into an assembly area east of Asten near Voordeldonk. The Bn closed in this area at 0010, 30 Sept 44 and remained there until 1315 on 30 Sept 44.

At 1315 on 30 Sept 44 the 17th Tank Bn was an element of C.C."R" moved into an assembly area north of St. Anthonis, near De Park. The route followed was Asten, Deurne, Bakel, Gemert, Heide, St. Anthonis, Ledecker and the assembly area which was closed in at 1514.

C.C. "A" and C.C."B" launched their attack as planned at 1315 on 30 Sept 44 and C.C. "R" was waiting in the initial attack position at 2400, 30 Sept 44 for orders to perform their mission in the attack. At this time Co "D" was still detached and each of the medium tank companies had only 12 tanks.

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S-E-C-R-E-T

AFTER ACTION REPORT

of the

17TH TANK BATTALION

for the

Month of October 1944

1 October 1944

On 1 October 1944 the 17th Tank Battalion minus Company "D" was in an assembly area about one kilometer northwest of the village of Ledeaeker or in the vicinity of Coordinate 700402. The battalion was an element of C.C. "R" and was standing by to carry out the mission of following up C.C. "B". in the attack to the southeast along the Maas River. The day was used in performing much needed maintenance of vehicles.

2 October 1944

The battalion remained in the same assembly area. The Bn Staff and the Bn Commander made visits to higher headquarters and to the headquarters of the units in contact in order to keep up with the situation. Late in the afternoon the Bn Commander went to a meeting at C.C. "R" Hq and received the plan and his orders for the attack which was to begin on 3 Oct 44. C.C. "R" had been ordered to relieve C.C. "B" who was in contact with the enemy in the vicinity of the towns of Mullen and Vortum. C.C. "A" was attacking the town of Overloon from the west and they had been stopped by heavy enemy resistance before they were in the town. C.C. "R"'s plan briefly was to the south and east remaining on the west side of the Railroad and to seize positions directly east of the town of Overloon. The C.C. "R" commanding Officer divided his command into two forces, one commanded by Lt. Col. FULLER to be known as Task Force FULLER and one commanded by Lt. Col. WEMPLE to be known as Task Force WEMPLE. Task Force WEMPLE consisted of the 17th Tank Battalion minus Company "D" and Company "C"; Company "C" of the 38th Inf. Bn., and one platoon from Company "A" of the 82nd Engineer Bn. Company "D" of the 17th Tank Bn was still with Task Force JONES and Company "C" of the 17th was to be with Task Force FULLER. Task Force WEMPLE was to move from the assembly area through St. Antonis and southeast along a route which had been picked by the 87th Rcn. Sqd. to the line of departure which was the road going southwest out of the small town of Hof. The left or east boundry of this force was the railroad running northwest and southeast. The Rcn. Squadron was to furnish a guide to lead the force to the line of departure and the force was to be in position on the line of departure ready to start the attack at 0800, 3 October 1944.

At 2230, 2 October 1944 Lt. Col. WEMPLE called all of the officers of his force together and gave them the plan and their orders. Since the force did not expect to encounter any strong enemy resistance until after L.D. had been crossed the force was ordered to stay on the road until that point had been reached and the following march order was given: 1 Platoon of Medium Tanks from Co "B", 1 Platoon of Infantry from Co "C" of the 38th Inf Bn followed by the remainder of the

After Action Report of the 17th Tank Bn for the Month of Oct 44, cont'd.

tanks in Co "B", then the platoon of Engineers followed by the Force Commanders Tank and his S-3 in a half track and the air support tank, then the remainder of Co "C" of the 38th Inf Bn followed by Co "A" of the 17th, then the assault Gun Platoon, the Mortar Platoon and the rear command group. Elements of the 87th Rcn Sqd were to act as left flank guard for Force WEMPLE and were to advance on the east side of the railroad.

All elements of Task Force WEMPLE were ordered to stay on the road until contact was made then the force was to leave the road and to deploy as much as the terrain would permit. The force had been ordered to be in position on the line of departure by 0800 and to wait there until C.C."R" ordered the force to attack.

3 October 1944

At 0630 on 3 Oct 44, the leading elements of Task Force WEMPLE moved out of the assembly area. The guide from 87th Rcn Sqd joined the force at St. Anthonis and guided us down to the line of departure. We failed to mention that the leading tank company had a forward observer with them mounted in a tank and the Infantry Company had a R.O. with them who had a half track and a quarter ton vehicle with radios. The 440th Field Arty. Bn. was in a position so they could support our advance and we could call for fire at any time through the F.O.

At 0800 Task Force WEMPLE was in place on the line of departure awaiting orders from C.C. "R" to continue the attack. At 0950, we received the order to attack and at 1012 Co "B" of the 17th followed by one company of Infantry on foot moved out. Co "A" of the 17th and the platoon of Engineers had been deployed along the line of departure to support the attack. At 1030 the leading tanks started receiving small arms fire and mortar fire from the woods to their direct front which was the woods in the vicinity of 785347. The attack continued to push forward until 1100 at which time the Infantry was pinned down by mortar and small arms fire in the vicinity of 783351 and at 1105 the leading tank from company "B" was knocked out by a mine at 783350. At 1110 another tank was hit by fire from an AT gun which fired from the woods to the south but the tanks could not determine the exact location. The infantry was pinned down and the tanks were maneuvering to the east and west firing into the woods and trying to locate the enemy AT gun positions. At 1145 another Co "B" tank was knocked out by AT fire by AT fire but the enemy gun position could not be located. By this time the enemy had started laying heavy arty fire on our leading elements and they were also dropping Nebelwefers or rockets on them. The Nebelwefers and the arty was coming directly from the south from the woods in the vicinity of 789335. The infantry was pinned down by mortar, small arms, rocket and arty fire; the tanks had run into mines and AT fire therefore the attack was stopped in the vicinity of 783350. Co "B" tanks were deployed to hold what ground had been gained. The force commander brought the Co "A" tanks up to try to maneuver to the east of the woods where the heaviest enemy resistance seemed to be. The plan was for Co "A" to try to envelope the enemy position while Co "B" and the infantry fired on the enemy positions.

At 1600 Co "A" moved out on their attack and at 1625 one tank was knocked out by AT fire at 786355. The enemy AT fire came from the east but the exact positions of the enemy guns could not be located. The Co "A" attack was stopped by heavy AT

After Action Report of the 17th Tank Bn for the month of Oct 44, Cont'd.

gun fire and arty fire. Everytime the Co "A" tanks moved out on their attempt to circle around to the east they were simply covered with heavy arty fire and direct AT gun fire, therefore their tanks were pulled back to a position in the vicinity of their original line of departure. The assault guns were pulled up to a position on the line of departure and they placed fire on the enemy positions.

At 1730 the force commander Lt Col WEMPLE went to a meeting at C.C. "R" Hq and received orders for a night attack. At 2130 Lt Col WEMPLE called a meeting of his Cmdg officers at his rear C.P. in vicinity of 757351 to give orders for the night attack. The plan was for the Infantry to advance along the original axis of advance to a point beyond the minefield and to hold that position while the engineers removed the mines so the tanks could move up. At 0030 the Infantry moved out on the attack and they advanced to the edge of the first woods where they were pinned down by fire from the woods and from both flanks. However the Engineers got up to the mines and removed them. The tanks started to move into the woods but small arms fire and the mortar fire was so intense that the Infantry could not follow them so the attack progressed no further. The tanks drew Bazookas and AT rifle grenade fire from the woods so it was impossible for the tanks to enter the woods without Infantry to support them. By 0300 all except one platoon of the Infantry had moved back to about the line of departure. The platoon which did not move back had been pinned down by cross M.G. and mortar fire. Before dawn the force was pulled back to their original positions just south of the line of departure.

Task Force losses for the 3rd Oct 44 were 4 medium tanks, one was knocked out by mines and three by AT guns. There were only three men wounded in the 17th Tank Bn and the seriousness of their wounds is not known. The Infantry had 15 casualties.

4 October 1944

At 0845 Capt Pilat, Co "B" Commander reported a German patrol of 12 men approaching our front line elements from the east. The patrol was taken under fire and at least 5 were killed or wounded and the remainder went into dug in positions on the east side of the railroad track. The enemy continued to place arty and Nebelwefer fire on our front line units but all tanks crews were in the tanks and the Infantry was dug in so we suffered no casualties. By this time the enemy strength to our immediate front in the woods was estimated as two companies of Infantry in well dug in positions armed with mortars, M.G.'s, rifles and Bazookas. Several probable AT gun positions had been reported and fired on by our arty but we could not determine whether the arty fire was doing any good. The forward observer who was up with our front line tanks placed fire on enemy positions continuously and caused some casualties to the enemy but their positions were so well dug in that it was impossible to clean them out with arty.

At 1005 on the 4th of Oct we received word that the Company Commander of Co "C" of the 17th which was attached to Task Force FULLER had been wounded and that company had also lost two other tanks from German AT fire.

Lt Col WEMPLE had received orders early in the morning of the 4th of Oct 44 to attack again however we were supposed to receive some air support and the force commander had been ordered to hold up his attack until 1100. The air support did not come so the attack was started at 1100. We did not have enough Infantry to support

After Action Report of the 17th Tank Bn for the month of Oct 44, cont'd.

the attack but the plans were made and the attack was started regardless. Our mission was to over run the enemy position in the woods and to take the woods with the tanks. The plan was for Co "A" to move down to the woods from the north and west and to move between the two groups of woods in the vicinity of 785346. The tanks were to rush into the woods and the infantry was to follow the tanks and dig in around them to keep the enemy Bazooka men from getting the tanks. Co "B" was to support the action by firing on the enemy positions. At 1100 the attack was started. One platoon of Co "A" tanks moved around to the west of the woods then cut back to the east and got up between the two wooded areas then the German AT Guns cut loose. The German guns were so well camouflaged that our crews could not see them, the tanks fired continuously at all probable positions but they could not silence the German guns. By 1253 Co "A" had 5 tanks knocked out by German AT gun fire, including the company commanders tanks. Three more tanks had been hit but were able to pull back to the original starting point. In addition to the AT fire the enemy was placing heavy arty fire on our tanks and infantry. Since it was impossible to get the tanks into the woods, the force commander pulled his force back to the original position. In this action Co "A" lost 5 tanks completely, three were damaged and had to be carried back for repairs and three more had developed mechanical trouble which required maintenance work. Actually Co "A" had only one tank left that was ready for action. Capt. PIER, the company commander of Co "A", was wounded and evacuated, one enlisted man was killed, one enlisted man was wounded and one officer and 20 enlisted men were missing in action. The Infantry had one officer M.I.A. and 31 EM either K.I.A. or M.I.A.

At 1210 on the 4th of Oct 44, we received word that some P-38's would be over our area and ready to perform a mission in about twenty minutes. The air support officer who was with us and who was equipped with radio to communicate with planes was alerted. The planes were over our area at 1235 and the air support officer gave them the instructions. The target was designated by the arty firing red smoke on it. The planes dropped 8 fire bombs on the target and reported that they set the woods on fire. The area which was bombed was thought to be the location of some enemy arty.

At 1330 our troops reported that enemy aid men were seen picking up some of our wounded but they would not let our aid men into the position to pick up the men.

At 1430 the P-38's came back (4 planes) and dropped 5 bombs on another target for us. Again the target was designated by use of red smoke fired by our arty. They also strafed the position. The four P-38's were back again at 1645 and fired another mission for us.

The force WEMPLE set up a defensive position in vicinity of original line of departure and stood by for further orders. The remainder of the infantry company was used to outpost the remaining tanks for security at right.

Late in the afternoon of the 4th of Oct 44, Lt. Col. WEMPLE pulled his remaining force back to a point in the vicinity of 779351 and set up a defensive position. The tanks were deployed in a semi-circle with fields of fire to the east and south and the infantry was dug in around the tanks to protect them from enemy bazookas. The force remained in this position throughout the day, the only activity being dismounted patrols. Three infantry patrols were sent out trying to determine the strength

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of the enemy in the woods in the vicinity of 784347 and 786350 but the patrols obtained very little information because the enemy were so well dug in and camouflaged. The enemy would pin the patrols down with small arms and mortar fire every time they would get within 300 yards of their positions. The enemy placed Nebelwefer and arty fire on our position forward throughout the day and night of 5 Oct 44 but we did not have any casualties.

The R & I Platoon of the 17th Tank Bn was given the mission of patrolling down to the houses in the vicinity of 779339. They worked down to a point in the vicinity of 781341 where they were pinned down by small arms and mortar fire. The fire came from the houses to their south and from the east and west. They located the enemy dug in along the canal in the vicinity of 784341 and in a field in the vicinity of 777342. We brought three tanks up to 779349 and placed fire on the enemy positions while the I & R Platoon pulled back. There was no enemy activity during the night except arty and nebelwefer fire. We did not lose any tanks or personnel during the day or night.

6 October 1944

Task Force WEMPLE continued to hold their position throughout this date. The 17th Tank Bn mortar platoon moved down to a position in the vicinity of 773344 at 0700 to fire on the houses at 779339 and the other positions that the I & R Platoon had located on the previous day. The I & R Platoon moved down with the mortars to designate targets and to observe results of the mortar fire. The mortars set several houses on fire and thought that they inflicted some enemy casualties. The enemy placed mortar and arty fire on our mortar positions but we did not have any casualties. The I & R Platoon maintained an O.P. in the vicinity of 773344 throughout the day but did not observe any enemy activity.

We received an air mission at 1445. Six P-38's bombed and strafed the enemy positions in the vicinity of 786347. The extent of damage done by the air was not determined but some casualties were inflicted for our Infantry O.P. at 782348 observed the enemy evacuating some men.

Our arty was active throughout the day and night and our front line elements received some enemy arty during the day and early part of the night. We had no vehicular or personnel casualties during the day or night.

7 October 1944

At 0125 we received an order from C.C. "R" to have an officer in their Hq. at 0745 who was familiar with our situation and who would be sent to Div. Hq. Our front line elements remained in the same position throughout the day and night. The 17th Tank Bn. I & R Platoon was given the mission again of moving down into the vicinity of 777337 to determine the enemy strength and disposition in that area. The mortars were moved back up to a position in the vicinity of 772343. The mortars moved into position before daybreak and the I & R Platoon moved out at 0615. At 0855 several rounds of enemy arty were dropped on our mortar position and one half track was damaged and two enlisted men were slightly wounded. The I & R Platoon leader got down to 777337 and found that the houses had been vacated but he found enemy M.G. position at 775335 and enemy dug-in in an east west line in the vicinity of 776336. The I & R Platoon had accomplished their mission and was back to the Bn C.P. by 1220. Our arty

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continued to lay down heavy fire on the enemy positions throughout the day and night. Our front line elements continued to receive some enemy arty and nebelwefer fire.

We received word during the day of 7 Oct 44 that we were being relieved by the British and that we would move out sometime after 2400. The British started taking over our positions about 1600 and they had taken over by 2000, however we did not move out until 0115 because of congested roads. Co "C" of the 17th reverted to the battalion control at 2000 and the battalion commander moved them back to an assembly area in the vicinity of 744349 and instructed them to wait there until the battalion passed them, then fall in and march to the new area with the battalion.

8 October 1944

Bn Hq moved out of the position at 757392 at 0115 and the Bn marched to the new area as a unit in the following order; Bn Hq & Hq Co, Co "A", Co "B", Co "C"; Service Company moved to the new area earlier with C.C. "R" trains. The route followed was trails from 757352 to 764360 then southwest to 743349 then the improved road northwest through Lactaria to St. Anthonis to Gemert to De Martel to Bakel to Helmond to Mierloo to Galdrop to Heeze and then to the assembly area just east of Zomeren. The march was very orderly with no enemy action or casualties and we closed in the new area at 0740 and all stragglers were in by 1230. After all vehicles were fueled and supplied the men were allowed to get some much needed rest and sleep. All kitchens were sent to their companies and hot noon and supper meals were served by the kitchens.

9 October 1944

The battalion remained in the Zomeren area and the entire day was devoted to maintenance, care and cleaning of personal weapons and equipment. About one fourth of the battalion was carried to Helmond for showers. "B" rations were drawn by the kitchens and the men all enjoyed hot meals. A film was obtained from the Div. Special Service Section and it was shown with our Bn projector on the night of the ninth. Everyone seemed to enjoy the entertainment very much. However the film was shown outside and the cold damp weather prevented maximum enjoyment of the film.

10 October 1944

Bn still in Zomeren area. In compliance with Division orders an eight hour training schedule was initiated on this date. Two hours was allowed for maintenance and care and cleaning of vehicles, and weapons and the remainder of the time was devoted to training in dismounted scouting and patrolling, target designation, crew drill and map reading. Another film was presented at night but this time a barn in the assembly area was used and the film was enjoyed much more.

11 October 1944

The Bn remained in the Zomeren area and the eight hour training schedule remained in effect. Training in basic subject was stressed and a short period, one hour, was devoted to discussing actual battle experiences. The training was given by platoons and the platoon leaders and sergeants did the instructing. We had another picture show at night. By this time the men were rested up and the morale

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was exceptionally good.

The Battalion Commander was called to the Division Headquarters to a unit commanders meeting and he called for a company commanders meeting at his headquarters at 2230. The Bn Commander gave the company commanders the plans for future operations at this meeting and stressed the fact that he wanted the Bn. to derive maximum amount of benefits from the training that we were having an opportunity to get. He explained that we had been ordered to outpost and hold the town of Liesel with company "D" plus the assault gun platoon and R & I Platoon and to patrol the road from Liesel to Deurne and from Asten to Meigel. Capt NEIL was to be in command of this operation and he was to move out of the assembly area to take over the position at Liesel at 0530, 12 Oct 44.

12 October 1944

Captain NEIL and his force moved out at 0530 to outpost and hold town of Meigel and to patrol the road between Liesel and Deurne and the road between Asten and Meigel. Capt NEIL was to take over this position from a force of the 31st Tank Bn. Capt NEIL had taken over the position by 0800 and had started his patrol activity.

Patrol #2 which was the patrol from Liesel to Deurne was to be performed by the R & I Platoon. They were to make the run between Liesel and Deurne at least once every two hours during the day and continually at night. This patrol was to use two one quarter ton vehicles to perform their mission. This patrol was to contact our friendly forces at Deurne and they were to maintain that contact on each run.

Patrol #1 which was the patrol from Asten to Meigel was to accomplish their mission by using four light tanks from Capt NEIL's company. This job was given to Sgt. Hammond. He was instructed to take his four tanks to Meigel and to set up a platoon Hq. with our friendly troops at that point and to use two tanks at a time on the patrol. The road trip from Asten to Meigel was to be made at least once every three hours during the day and it was to run continuously at night.

At the time Capt. NEIL moved his force to Liesel he had only 13 light tanks in his company for one platoon was on special duty with the C.C. "R" Hq. to outpost and guard the Hq. After taking the four tanks from his force to patrol duty he felt that his force was as not strong as it should be for holding the town of Liesel and requested the Bn. Commander give him some help. At 1330 Lt. Col. WEMPLE sent the mortar platoon plus five men from each of companies "B", "C" and Service to Capt. NEIL to be used in setting up dismounted outposts around the town of Liesel. These men reported to Capt. NEIL at 1400 and by 1600 Capt NEIL had his force organized and the town outposted. The outposts set up booby traps around their positions and planned their fields of fire so they could repel any night activity. The places for the booby traps were prepared but they were not actually set up until night.

At 1700 the Bn Commander received an order from C.C. "R" Hq to change the Asten Meigel patrol to patrol from Liesel to Meigel. There had been some enemy patrol activity between Liesel and Meigel and Capt. NEIL suggested that the tanks should not be used for the night patrol for they were to vulnerable to enemy bazooka and AT action at night. He suggested that this was a job for a dismounted patrol. However the infantry was not available so he was ordered to use the tanks for the patrol. Sgt. Hammond moved his platoon Hq. to Liesel and ran his two tank patrol out of Liesel.

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During the day and night of 12 Oct 44 there was no enemy activity at Liesel and none reported by the two patrols. Capt. NEIL had made contact with the Dutch Underground at Liesel and obtained excellent cooperation from them. They were a great help in handling the civilian problem.

All of the Bn. except Capt. NEIL's force followed the regular eight hour training schedule in the Zomeren assembly area. One hour was devoted to calisthenics which we found that they needed very much for the tank crews get very little physical exercise when they are in combat.

13 October 1944

The Bn minus Capt. Neil's force remained in the Zomeren area and followed the regular eight hour training schedule. Capt NEIL's force continued their mission at Liesel and the patrol missions. At 0450 ten rounds of enemy arty were dropped on the town of Liesel. At 1520 enemy dropped several rounds of air burst arty on the two tanks making the patrol from Liesel to Meijel in vicinity of Neerkant, however, we had no casualties. No other enemy activity was reported.

14 October 1944

The 17th Tank Bn minus Capt. NEILS force remained in the Bivouac near Zomeren and carried on the scheduled training. There was no enemy activity in the town of Liesel and none was reported by the patrol making the run from Liesel to Deurne. However, the Liesel-Meijel patrol did have some enemy activity. At 0345 several rounds of enemy arty fell on the road near our patrol at a point about one mile north of Meijel and several more rounds fell near the road as our patrol moved on to Meijel. Just as our patrol reached the main road junction in the town of Meijel about 30 rounds of mortar and arty fell in the town and five star cluster flares were fired from ground projectors by the enemy on the west, south and south-east edges of the town and at the same time an enemy foot patrol of an estimated strength of 15 men opened fire on our friendly outposts to the north of the town at very close range. Just as the flares went up three rounds from some type of direct fire weapon was fired at our tank. One round of HE hit about 15 feet from one tank and two of the crew members were injured by shrapnel. It is believed that the fifteen man patrol which attacked our friendly outposts on the Liesel-Meijel road took advantage of the noise made by our tank patrol in closing on the outpost positions. It is believed that the patrol moved up to a position about 250 yards from our outposts; then as the tanks passed the patrol it moved in rapidly on our outposts. After this action the Bn. Commander and Capt. NEIL were of even a stronger opinion that tanks should not be used for patrolling at night. There the Bn. Commander again requested that the night patrol be discontinued and Higher Hq. allowed us to discontinue the patrol. We were ordered to patrol the Liesel-Meijel road during light hours but to discontinue it at night.

At 0730 on the 14th of Oct 44, the 17th Tank Bn Assault Gun Platoon plus each of the assault guns from the three medium tank companies were attached to the 434th F.A. Bn to assist in supporting the C.C. "B" action which was taking place to the east of Deurne. The assault guns were moved up to a position northeast of Deurne. One platoon of tanks from Co "B" of the 17th were sent to Capt. NEIL at Liesel to be used by him in place of the assault guns. The platoon reported to Capt. Neil at 0800.

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15 October 1944

That part of the 17th Tank Bn which was still at Zomeren bivouac area which was Co "A", Co "B" less one platoon, Co "C" and Service Company and the Bn. Hq. continued the training in basic subjects.

Between 0930 and 1000 the enemy fired 15 rounds of arty on the town of Liesel but our troops at that point did not suffer any casualties. The enemy fired three more rounds of arty on the town of Liesel at 1244 but caused no damage to our force. Capt Neil received a report from civilians through the Dutch underground that German patrols were in the town of Neerkant during the previous day and that three Germans had stayed in a farm house near Neerkant from 0830 to 1830; had observed and made notes on the traffic on the road from Liesel to Meijel. The civilians reported that three Germans had been coming from across the Canal to a haystack in Heitrak every day for the last several days. At 1500 Capt Neil sent his second platoon under the command of Lt. Files to investigate the civilian reports and at 1535 Lt. Files captured three prisoners at the haystack and Keitrak which had been reported by the civilians. Two of the prisoners were six year Corporals and one Pvt. and they were all from the Four Flg. Ausb. Rgt. 72; two were armed with rifles and one with a machine gun pistol and a very pistol. They stated that they had moved into the haystack at 0600 that morning and that their mission was to observe and report the amount and type of traffic on the Liesel to Meijel road. The prisoners were sent to the C.C. "R" P.W. enclosure immediately. No other enemy activity was reported by the Liesel force or patrols.

The Bn Commander and the Executive Officer went to a meeting at C.C. "R" Hq at 1000 to get details of a plan which was to be executed during the afternoon, and at 1130 they sent a message back to alert companies "A" and "C" for movement at 1245. At 1145 the Bn Commander and the Executive Officer returned with the plan and orders and they were given to the company commanders. C.C. "R" had been given the mission of clearing the area south of the Asten-Liesel line down to the big canal running northeast and southwest. The C.C. "R" Infantry had been working south in this area and had picked out certain targets that they wanted the tanks to fire on. Companies "A" and "C" of the 17th were to be guided down into the area by the infantry and were to fire on the targets designated by the infantry. Co "A" was to follow the route of Zomeren to Asten to Meijel then southwest of Meijel on trails to points where the targets could be fired on. Company "C" was to go to Zomeren then east to the canal then follow the road to the south along the west bank of the canal to a point in the vicinity of 614044 and cross the canal to the east on a bridge which had been prepared by our engineers. The infantry was to send guides to our bivouac area to lead the tank companies to their firing positions. The guides arrived at our area at about 1300 and the companies moved out shortly thereafter. Co "C" was guided to position and they fired at all designated targets and at some targets that they picked up themselves. Co "A" was guided to the vicinity southeast of Meijel and were told by the infantry to wait there until they called upon them for fire. The Infantry never called for fire from Co "A" so they did not fire. They could not pick out targets on their own volition for they did not know the exact location of our friendly infantry. Both companies were released at 1800 and were back in our Zomeren bivouac area by 1930. Neither company suffered any casualties and company "C" was unable to say whether they inflicted any casualties on the enemy.

At about 2000 on the 15th we received an order from C.C. "R" to outpost and hold the town of Neerkant with our Co "B" with one platoon mounted in tanks and two

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platoons dismounted. We were ordered to relieve Capt Neil's force at Liesel with our Company "A" minus one platoon and Co "A" was given the mission of outpostting and holding the town with one platoon mounted in tanks and one platoon dismounted. One platoon of Co "D" was to be sent to Meijel to be under Capt. EMMON's command and to be used with other forces in outpostting and holding that town. Our patrols between Liesel and Deurne and Liesel and Meijel were to be discontinued at 0630, 16 Oct 44. Our R & I Platoon was to set up an O.P. in the vicinity of Neerkant to keep 24 hour per day patrol trying to pick up any enemy activity in the area. The force at Liesel was to be called Block "A", the force at Neerkant, Block "B" and the force at Meijel, Block "C". Our forces were to take over their positions by 0830. At 1000 Co "D" minus two platoons and the mortar platoon returned to the Zomereren area. These orders and instructions were given to the officers by the Bn Commander at 2030.

16 October 1944

At 0700 Companies "A" minus one platoon, and Co "B" moved out of Zomereren bivouac area to take up their outpost positions and we received reports from each company that they were in position by 0830. At 1000 Co "D" minus two platoons and the mortar platoon returned to the Zomereren bivouac area.

In order to insure good FM radio communication with our Co "A" and "B", we placed a relay station on the eastern edge of the town of Asten. This station consisted of the Executive officers tank with a 508 radio and one half track from the mortar platoon with 8 men in it. The outposts at Liesel and Neerkant were instructed to maintain 24 hour radio contact with our Bn Hq and to report all positive enemy information immediately and to make one report every three hours beginning at 160900 Oct 44 regardless of information available. The R & I Platoon established an O.P. in the church steeple at Neerkant and had excellent observation of the enemy held territory across the canal to the east and southeast. Both companies "A" and "B" blocked all roads approaching the towns they were outpostting and set up all around defensive measures. Dismounted dug in outposts with booby traps were used as extensively as available personnel would permit. Here again had some men complain about having to leave their tanks and man the dismounted dug in positions. We have found that in most instances men who have had some training in tanks and especially after they have had some actual combat experience in tanks just don't like to leave the tanks and fight on the ground.

The elements which remained in the Zomereren bivouac area carried on their regular training. Neither Co "A" or "B" reported any enemy activity during this day.

17 October 1944

No enemy activity was reported from our outpost positions during the night. The forces remaining in the Zomereren area continued their training throughout the day.

At 0900 one platoon from Co "D" and one platoon from Co "C" were alerted to be ready to move by 1100. The Platoon leaders were instructed to report to Lt. Col. FULLER which force was to establish a bridgehead at the canal crossing of the Duerne Amerika road at coordinate 707180. The tanks were to be used to support the infantry by direct fire on enemy positions. The tanks were to assemble with the task force in the vicinity of Urekwijk at 1300. The first platoon of Co "C" commanded by Lt. OLSON and the third platoon of Co "D" commanded by Sgt. Hammond moved out of our

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Zomerens bivouac area at 1130 to join the task force at the designated point. Later reports revealed that the platoons from Co "C" and Co "D" had supported the infantry action by placing direct fire on the houses which were thought to be occupied by enemy however the tanks could not be used to the fullest extent because of the nature of the terrain. The ground up close to the canal was so soft that the tanks could not follow up the infantry attack. Several of the tanks were bogged down in attempting to get closer to the enemy positions. One tank from Co "C" caught fire due to mechanical failure and was destroyed, however, the crew was not injured.

18 October 1944

At 0630 we received a radio message from our Co "B" at Neerkant in which it was stated that their radio had been out of order and that a two or three men patrol had gotten in close to the company C.P. at about 0445 and that one of their tanks had been hit by a bazooka. The Bn S-2 left for Neerkant immediately to find out the complete story. Investigation revealed that a Co "B" tank had been backed up very close to a building almost directly across the street from the building in which the Co Hq had been set up. All of the crew had been dismounted from this tank and were being used as one of the dismounted outposts. There was a dismounted outpost almost directly across the street from the tank and at this spot there was one man well dug in with a light 30 cal. M.G. There was another post on the same side of the street with the tank and about 25 feet to the north of the tank this post consisted of one man in a well dug in position armed with an M1 rifle. The man in position on the same side of the street with the tank thought that he heard some movement around the tank at about 0430 but it was so dark that he could not see anything and he was not sure of just where the movement was so he did not shoot. At about 0445 two blasts almost simultaneously which were bazooka fired from a position about 15 yards south of the tank. The two shots were fired at the tank broad side, one well up toward the front of the tank and one to the rear. The round which was fired towards the front hit a tree which deflected the round and it did not damage the tank but the one to the rear penetrated the side of the tank just above the track and damaged the fan. The tank could be repaired but had to be evacuated. After the bazookas were fired at least two hand grenades were thrown toward the tank and the house to its rear; then the enemy vanished. As soon as daylight came the two discharged German bazooka cases and a very pistol with one round in the chamber were found at the position from which the bazookas were fired. An empty German gasoline can was found just in front of the tank so evidently the Germans had poured gas on the tank before firing the bazooka, however the tank did not catch fire. Since the night was so dark and since the Germans moved up to the tank so quietly and so deliberately we were of the opinion that civilians had told the Germans of the location of the tank or that the Germans had been in town when we moved in and watched us place the tanks or that the job had been done by civilians. Therefore Capt. Pilat, the Co "B" Commander formed two searching groups and every house in the town was searched for Germans and arms but nothing was found. The Dutch underground picked up one civilian they had suspected for some time and he was carried to Deurne but it was not known whether he had anything to do with the night activities. It was decided that it would be better to get the tanks out of the town of Neerkant and Liesel which were not manned 24 hours a day and which were not being used in the defense plan. Therefore all but one platoon of tanks in each town were returned to the Zomerens bivouac area and all of the crew members from these tanks except the drivers remained in the towns to man the dismounted outpost positions. Of course it is a known fact to tankers that this enemy action spotlights the extreme vulnerability of tanks to dismounted enemy action under cover of darkness.

Several days after the tank was knocked out at Neerkant by the bazookas a civilian woman came to Capt. Pilat, the company commander of Co "B" and told him that two

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German soldiers who fired the bazookas had come up to the rear of her house and had slipped through the house and out into the street to the point from which the bazooka had been fired then had made their exit by the same route. We asked the woman why she had not reported this earlier and she said that she was scared. Of course we do not know and will never know whether the woman was telling the truth or whether the soldiers came up to the rear of her house and she directed them to the tank. This case makes us believe even more strongly that all of the civilians should be evacuated from such towns if there is any possibility of them aiding the Germans.

The Dutch underground reported to our Co "A" commander, Lt. Oswald, at Liesel that the Germans had foot bridges across the canal at the following coordinates: 700168, 704140 and 706134 and mortar positions and a small force of Germans at 708123. Lt. Oswald requested permission to fire indirectly with his tanks at these enemy positions. Permission was granted provided Lt. Oswald could find an O.P. from which he could observe and direct the fire. It was very cloudy and the visibility was extremely poor so he did not fire. At 1500 and again at 1730 the enemy dropped several rounds of arty in and near the town of Liesel.

19 October 1944

Our Co "B" reported that a small enemy patrol had tried to enter the town of Neerkant from the east at 0300 but that their outposts had fired on them and that they did not get in. It is not known whether our fire caused any casualties. They also reported some enemy and friendly machine gun fire to the south of Neerkant at 2100. The C & D Co. platoons which were attached to Task Force FULLER were released by C.C. "R" and returned to our Zomeren bivouac area at 2130. Our Co "A" did not report any enemy action during the day or night at Liesel. The forces in the Zomeren area followed the training schedule during the day.

An observation tower had been spotted in the vicinity of 737122 which was northeast of the town of Neerkant. C.C. "R" ordered us to destroy or try to destroy the tower by direct fire with our tanks. Then they decided to use Tank Destroyers. So C.C. "R" placed two destroyers under our control for the mission of trying to destroy the tower. At 1330 the Bn S-2 guided the two destroyers to a position about 400 yards east of Neerkant from which the tower could be observed. It was raining on this day and the visibility was poor and the range was about 4600 yards which was very long range for such a small target and in addition to these facts there was a tree line between the guns and the targets which made it impossible to sense the fire. However the guns were put into position under the direction of the platoon leader from the 814th and Capt. Reed, the company commander and 12 rounds per gun were fired at the tower but it was not hit. It began to rain so hard we could not even see the tower so the guns were returned to the company. Just after we stopped firing the enemy dropped about 12 rounds of arty in and near the town of Neerkant. British planes knocked the tower down the next day.

20 October 1944

Our force at Liesel reported no enemy activity during the night but they received several rounds of arty at 0830. Co "B" at Neerkant reported that a two or three man enemy patrol had gotten into the town at 0300 and that the inner circle of outposts had fired on them but it was not known whether they had wounded or killed any of the patrol. The forces at the Zomeren bivouac area continued their training.

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21 October 1944

The Bn received orders to move to a new assembly area to the south and west of the town of Vrekwijk in the vicinity of coordinates 653176. Bn Hq and that part of the Bn which was still in the Zomeren area were to move out of the old area at 1015. Co's "A" & "B" were to be relieved by the 87th Rcn Sqd at 1200 and the orders were that if they were not relieved by 1300 they would start the move to the new area at that time regardless. The Bn Hq and the group that moved from Zomeren closed in the new area at 1145. Co's "A" and "B" were in the new area by 1400. The remainder of the day was used for getting set up in the new area and the companies which were on outpost duty were given a chance to re-organize their platoons and get their equipment in order. The Bn. was ordered to set up three outposts. One outpost consisting of one medium tank, one light tank and ten dismounted men was to be set up at each of the following points: 680154, 681166 and 683172. The medium tanks were taken from Co "C", the light tanks from Co "D" and the dismounted men were obtained from the mortar platoon and the R & I Platoon. Lt. Lavett was in charge of the three posts with his position at the center post. Radio contact was to be maintained with Bn Hq and hourly reports were to be given. The outposts were set up by 1800. All reports from the outposts during the night were negative.

22 October 1944

At 0800 the three medium tanks from Co "C" which were on outpost were replaced by two tanks from Co "B" and one from Co "A" so the Co "C" tanks could go with their Co. to do some indirect firing. At 0800 Co "C" was attached to the 434th F.A. Bn and moved to a position just south and east of Deurne to do some indirect firing. Our outposts reported some enemy machine gun fire to their south, also several flares to southeast at 1905.

We located some showers in a Dutch barracks near our assembly area and made arrangements for our men to get hot showers which they enjoyed very much. We had a picture show in an old barn in the assembly area. We showed two shows, one at 1800 and one at 2000 and 15 men per company could see each show.

23 October 1944

At 0100 and at 0305 our outposts reported that several rounds of enemy arty fell in what they judged to be the vicinity of Liesel. They also reported some enemy small arms fire to the south and east of their position. At 1545 we received orders from C.C."R" to discontinue our three outposts and to establish outposts one, two, three and four at the following coordinates: 680154, 684154, 688155 and 692155. Outposts one and two were to consist of one medium tank, one light tank and ten dismounted men at each point. Outposts three and four were to consist of ten dismounted men at each post and post number four was to establish contact with an outpost from the 48th Armd Inf Bn. which was located on the canal just a short distance to the north and east of our post. By 1830 the new outposts had been established under the command of Lt. Lavett. Our post number four had to be moved back a short distance from the position which was given because the ground was so low and wet that the men could not dig in. The holes would fill up with water as fast as the men would dig them. However the men could cover the area with machine gun fire from the position which they finally took. All reports from outposts during the night were negative.

After Action Report of the 17th Tank Bn for the month of Oct 44, cont'd.

On 16 Oct 44, we received a directive from the Commanding General of the 7th Armd Div in which it was ordered that the Bn would form a patrol section of not less than 18 enlisted men and two officers. The patrol section was to be composed of two or three well organized patrols and the men were to receive special instructions in basic principles of day and night scouting and patrolling. The men and officers in the patrol section were to be volunteers from the Bn. The directive stated that a competitive spirit was to be instilled within the patrol section and that the highest esprit de corps must be developed. To accomplish this it was stated that all members of the patrol section would be given special privileges such as a day off rest after night patrol duty and that each member would be given the best and most complete clothing and equipment available and that members of the patrol section would not normally be included in assault forces in an attack and would be given first consideration for a promotion within a command. The Bn Commander after discussing the patrol section problem with the Bn Staff and other officers in the Bn decided that in order to accomplish the best results that it would be best to form the patrol section and attach the section to Bn Hq and in order to transport the section, one three-quarter ton vehicle was called in from Hq Co and Co', "A", "B" "C" and one half track was obtained from the Hq Co. The Bn Executive Off, the S-3 and the S-2 went around to the companies and explained the plan for forming the patrol section and asked for volunteers. Every man in the Bn was given a chance to volunteer for the duty. To begin with, 30 EM volunteered for the job and two officers. It was decided to take all 30 men originally and to let the officers pick out the best 18 after several days of training. The men who volunteered were principally from all companies equally distributed throughout the Bn. Every company including Service Co had volunteers. The two officers who volunteered and who were accepted by the Bn Commander to take charge of the patrol section were 1st Lt. James W. Bartholomew from Co "D" and 2nd Lt. Henry B Felton, Jr., from Co "C". Sixteen of the enlisted men who volunteered were non-commissioned officers and 14 were privates. On the morning of 22 Oct 44, the men and officers who had volunteered for the patrol section were instructed to report to the Bn C.P. with all their personal equipment and the two officers with the Bn S-2 worked out a training schedule for the section. The training schedule in addition to training in such basic subjects as use of compass, day and night map reading, message writing, etc included practical scouting and patrolling exercises or problems. The majority of the first day was devoted to checking individual equipment and finding out just what equipment the men needed. The Bn S-4 did everything possible to obtain every item that the men needed. Each man was issued one of the new type sleeping bags. Some of the men wanted different types of weapons than that which they were armed and these weapons were obtained. Major DAILEY, the Bn Executive Off and the other staff officers and the patrol section officers were very optimistic about the future operations of the patrol section for the men who had volunteered were good men and seemed to be suited for the work and their morale and spirit was excellent. Of course there were lots of little problems to be worked out in setting up the section but everyone worked hard to get things organized. The men fixed up an insignia or emblem that they placed on their vehicles and helmets and named themselves "Dailey's Raiders". During the next few days they trained hard and were very enthusiastic about the practical scouting and patrolling problems.

24 October 1944

At 1520 our outposts reported that two enemy planes had passed over our outposts at very low altitude and were headed in northwest direction. They also reported some enemy arty fire to their right front. At 1558 the outposts reported enemy machine gun fire across the canal to their east. All other reports from outposts were negative.

After Action Report of the 17th Tank Bn for the month of Oct 44, Cont'd.

That part of the Bn which was in the Bn bivouac area devoted the day to training and vehicular maintenance. In the afternoon we received word that the 17th Tank Bn less Co "C" and the AG Platoon would move at 251300 Oct 44 to the town of Vlierden and that the houses were available and could be used to billet the troops in. Higher Hq that the period 26 through 30 Oct 44 would be used for rehabilitation and training. Of course the whole command was excited about this move for we had not been billeted in houses since leaving England.

25 October 1944

At 0930 Company C returned to the Bn. area for their indirect fire mission. At 1230 the Assault Gun Platoon plus the company assault guns returned to the Bn. area and reverted to Bn control. At 0945 a billeting officer from the 17th was sent to Vlierden to arrange for billeting our troops. He found that all available houses in the town were occupied by British troops and gave this information to CCR Hq. which had moved to the town of Asten. CCR ordered the 17th Tank Bn. to remain in their present location until further arrangements for billeting could be made. No enemy activity was reported from our outposts except one low flying plane headed east over their position at 0600. The patrol section continued their training in scouting and patrolling. By this time five of the enlisted men had decided that they were not suited for the patrol work and had asked to be relieved. They were sent back to their companies. Our four outposts were relieved by CCR and returned to the Bn. area at 1300. At 1700 we received word that we would remain in the same bivouac area for the night. The Bn. was all together in the same bivouac area at this time for the first time in many days.

26 October 1944

At 0830 the Bn C.O. and the company commanders went to CCR Hq. at Asten to a meeting. The Div. Commander and his staff was at the meeting and our officers were invited to bring up any problems or questions which needed attention at that time. The Bn. staff officers were called up to the meeting and were instructed to get with their corresponding Div. staff officers and discuss any problems they desired. The meeting was beneficial to everyone for it was the first time that we had a chance to attend a meeting of this nature for some time. At 0845 we received a warning from CCR Hq to be on alert for German soldiers in civilian uniforms behind our lines. One such patrol of three men had been apprehended in vicinity of 714079. We remained in the same bivouac area throughout the day and night for there was no available place for us to move to.

27 October 1944

At 0805 companies D, B and the Assault Gun Platoon were alerted for immediate movement. We received notice from CCR Hq. that there was a strong threat of a heavy counter attack from the east toward the town of Liesel and that the 17th was to take Companies D, B and the Assault Gun Platoon to an assembly area in the vicinity of 682127 to repel the attack. At 0845 this force moved out with Lt. Col. Wemple and Major White the Bn S-3. At 0925 we were informed by CCR that 250 Germans were reported crossing the canal in the vicinity of 710115. Lt. Col. Wemple was ordered by CCR to move his force over to the east and to place direct tank fire and assault gun fire on the enemy position; he was to use the light tanks for screening and patrolling. At 0926 received a message from CCR that civilians reported that Germans were bridging canal in vicinity of 720089 and that our arty. was firing on that position. At 0950 message from CCR directed us to move one medium Tank Co. via Asten to an assembly position in vicinity of 645100 and to move the remaining Medium Co. to a reserve position just south of Asten on the Asten Meijel road. We were to have a liaison officer report to Col. Ryan, the CCR

After action Report of the 17th Tank Bn for the month of Oct 44, Cont'd,

commander, at the 48th Inf. C.P. which was in the vicinity of 637103. First Lt. Bartholomew was sent immediately as the liaison officer. At 1030 Companies A and C moved out of the Bn bivouac area. Company A was to move to the position in the vicinity of 645100 and Company C was to take up the Reserve position south of Asten.

Under the guidance of men from Troop D of the 87th Recon. Squadron who were outposting the line from north of Liesel to the town of Nierkant, Lt. Col. Wemple moved B company into position to place direct fire on the point where the Germans were crossing the canal. At 1045 two platoons of B company were in position. This company received rather heavy enemy artillery and mortar fire from their front as they were moving into position and delivering fire on the enemy positions. At 1112 Lt. Col. Wemple reported that there were three enemy tanks and some other enemy vehicles on the west side of the canal in the vicinity of Hoogeburg at coordinates 708122. Our artillery and assault guns fired on this position but could not determine whether this fire got any of the enemy vehicles. By this time the enemy was laying heavy artillery concentrations on the road junction in vicinity of 682128.

At 1130 our force reported one enemy tank moving east along the road from Hoogeburg toward the road junction at 682128. At 1130 one company of Tank Destroyers from the 814th T.D. Bn. reported to Lt. Col. Wemple and he deployed the guns in the vicinity of 685127 so that they could cover the Hoogeburg road and the area to the east in which the enemy tank activity had been observed. Our liaison officer from CCR was sent to Lt. Col. Wemple to instruct him to move our light tanks into a position in the vicinity of 694097 to screen and protect a part of our field artillery which was firing from a position just to the west of that point. Lt. Col. Wemple immediately complied with that order and company D was moved into position. Company D received rather steady artillery fire after they were in position. Just as they were moving, Capt. Neil the company commander was dismounted from his tank making a reconnaissance when he was wounded by artillery fire and evacuated. Lt. Scharschmidt took command of Company D and carried on the operation. At 1215 one enemy tank was knocked out by the tank destroyers in the vicinity of 695125. The Bn. forward C.P. was set up in the vicinity of coordinates 693113 at which point Lt. Col. Wemple with Major White the S-3 directed the operation. The tanks from company B were deployed to the east of Liesel Meerkant road from the vicinity of 695115. The Assault Gun Platoon was in vicinity of 679128 and was placing fire on every position to their front.

At 1215 our forces reported that ten enemy vehicles were moving south in vicinity of 704124 two of the vehicles were identified as tanks but the other vehicles could not be identified. All of the vehicles were ingeniously camouflaged as hay stacks.

At 1258 Lt. Col. Wemple reported that the enemy undoubtedly had a bridge over canal in vicinity of Hoogeburg and requested air support to try to knock out the bridge. This message was passed on to CCR Hq immediately.

Companies A and C were placed directly under CCR command and control therefore their activities were not handled through 17th Hq. However we did receive messages from Company A that they were moving forward at 1353 to support the Infantry in an attack.

At 1354 we received a message from Capt. Pilat, the B company commander, that he had one tank knocked out by some type of enemy direct fire weapon however that the crew escaped. This tank was knocked out by a weapon fired from the vicinity

After Action Report of the 17th Tank Bn for the month of Oct 44, Cont'd.

of 700120 and it was probably an enemy tank. Our tanks massed their fire on this point and the enemy weapon ceased firing.

At 1440 we received a message from friendly troops to our south that there were enemy machine guns and mortars in the vicinity of 719090 to 729065 and that there were enemy machine gun positions at either side of the bridge at 729065. We also received word that there were several enemy machine gun positions and also about 70 GAF troops scattered in a north south line between the canal and coordinates 719090 and 729065. We received a civilian report that there were thirty enemy tanks in the vicinity of 700080.

At 1400 Lt. Scharschmidt reported that his position did not afford much concealment and that he was receiving extremely heavy artillery and mortar fire and he requested permission to move a short distance to the west. Lt. Col. Wemple told the D company commander that he could move if the move would prevent his performing his mission which was to screen and protect the Field artillery position. D company moved about 300 yards to the south and west where they had better concealment and where they could perform their mission just as effectively.

At 1507 B companies maintenance crew with their T/2 was ordered to come forward to try to recover the tank which had been knocked out. The I & R platoon was ordered to move up to our assault gun platoon position to outpost the guns during the night.

At 1555 Capt. Pilat reported that the enemy tank which our tanks had been firing at laid down a smoke screen and pulled back to the east toward the canal. Our tanks continued to fire at it but due to poor vision did not hit it. This enemy tank had knocked out one B company tank at coordinate 695118. The enemy tank moved toward the vicinity of 710120.

At 1605 we received message from Lt. Col. Wemple to have our patrol section which was composed of one officer and 24 enlisted men at this time report to his forward C.P. They were to be used for security for the tanks for the night. This patrol section under command of Lt. Felton moved out immediately.

At 1612 CCR informed us that one platoon from company C of the 48th Infantry would be attached to our D company and that they were to be used with D company to protect the artillery for the night.

Lt. Col. Wemple reported that the Battery of artillery which was firing for him certainly was doing an excellent job. Both Lt. Col. Wemple and Capt. Pilat were calling for fire missions and the artillery was putting it right in there.

At 1620 Major White requested Infantry to help secure our position for the night. This request was made to CCR and we were informed that no Infantry was available and that the tanks would have to hold without the Infantry.

At 1730 Capt. Pilat reported that he was receiving an attack from the east and south. Dismounted enemy troops were firing on his positions from close range about 200 yards. The B company tanks returned the enemy fire everything they had and in addition Capt. Pilat and Lt. Col. Wemple called for artillery fire on the position from which the enemy fire was coming. The artillery laid the fire right in there and we are sure that we inflicted very heavy enemy casualties with the artillery and tank fire. The attack was stopped but the enemy continued to put scattered small arm fire on our positions they also laid some heavy artillery

After Action Report of the 17th Tank Bn for the month of Oct 44, Cont'd.

concentrations on us. At 1900 Capt. Pilat reported that he had heard four German tanks pass within 300 yards to his front. His tank crews could not see the tanks to fire on them but he put heavy artillery concentration in the area where the enemy tanks were. The enemy tanks were moving to the north. Prior to this attack the B company tanks were pulled up into a defensive position in the vicinity of 695114 and were prepared to hold that position for the night.

At 1908 CCR ordered Lt. Col. Wemple to send officer to Liesel to meet an officer from a company of the 23rd Infantry which was being attached to Lt. Col. Wemple's force. Major White the Bn S-3 went on this mission.

At 1910 Lt. Urbom, the company commander of C company, reported that his company was still in the reserve position south of Asten.

At 1945 received message from our A company that they had lost two tanks with no personnel casualties and that they were setting up a defensive position with the Infantry for the night.

At 1945 received message from B company commander that he thought that one of the enemy tanks had moved back to the south but that he believed that the other three had taken up a position to his front.

At 2030 received message from CCR to have Major White report to the church at Liesel at 2100 to meet planning officer from CCB who was taking over command of Wemple's force and the operations in this area. This was complied with and Major White received plans and orders for the following days action. Briefly the plan was for Task Force Wemple to try and hold its present position and CCB was to attack south from Liesel at 0600 along the Liesel Meijel road with two companies abreast and astride the road and one company in reserve to be supported by two companies of tanks from 31st Tank Bn. After this attack had moved down past the road junction at 682128 Task Force Olmstead which was composed of the reserve Infantry company plus company C of the 31st Tank Bn was to branch off to the left and attack south east along the Hoogeburg road with the mission of cleaning up that area down to the canal and destroying any bridge which might be found across the canal in that vicinity.

28 October 1944

At 0120 we received order from CCB Hq to have a staff officer from 17th Tank Bn. report to their Hq which was located in vicinity of 658143 at 0630 with latest information regarding Wemple's situation and an overlay showing exact disposition of his force. The Bn S-2, Capt. Jack Howison, was designated to take case of this mission.

At 0145 received a message from CCB which stated that a Corporal who had been captured by the Germans and who later escaped had reported 8 Tiger tanks extending north-east and northwest along a line center of which was 50 yards east of the road junction at 690073. The tanks were 100 yards apart on a line and 60 yards east of the line of tanks are 5 88-MM guns. Infantry was dug in around the tanks

The enemy continued to fire some small arm fire at our B company position throughout night but not as heavily as early in the night. We placed artillery fire on every position throughout the night.

The Bn S-2 contacted CCB Hq at 0630 as directed and learned that the CCB attack had been launched as planned at 0600. The attack moved very slowly for the enemy placed heavy artillery fire on our attacking infantry and tanks. The task force

After Action Report of the 17th Tank Bn for the month of Oct 44, Cont'd.

that was to branch off on the Hoogeburg road did not get far for they were stopped by heavy artillery fire and AT gun fire, they suffered heavy vehicular and personnel casualties.

At 0740 CCB directed Wemple to complete the destruction of the church steeple at Neerkant by firing on it with tanks. At 0820 Lt. Col. Wemple reported that the steeple had been knocked down.

At 0820 our forces reported that they had knocked out one Tiger tank to their front and that three more enemy tanks were moving to north-west over close to the canal.

At 0840 CCB directed Lt. Col. Wemple to use Assault Guns and Tank Destroyers to take a reported 88 gun position under fire which had been reported in vicinity of 690140.

At 0910 Capt. Pilat reported two more enemy tanks traveling north-west in the vicinity of 697117 and requested air support to help knock out tanks. At 0935 received word from CCB that air mission had been accepted and that would let us know when planes would be over. At 0915 Capt. Pilat requested artillery on enemy tank positions.

At 0945, Lt Col Wemple reported that our tanks had knocked out another German tank making a total of two for the morning.

Received word at 0955 that planes would fly our mission at 1015 and that CCB would mark the air targets with smoke. The planes flew the mission and fired on some targets but our force was unable to determine whether they got an tanks.

Our Company D which had been released because the artillery was moved out and returned to the Battalion bivouac area at 1000.

At 1140 CCB reported 60 enemy infantry in woods to west of Meerkant and said that they were going to use air on them. They also reported that the enemy O.P. in the church steeple at Meerkant was still in operation and wanted Wemple to complete his mission of knocking it down. Lt. Wemple reported that he had knocked the top off the steeple and that he couldn't do any more damage to it from his present position.

At 1200 we received report from CCB that 40 enemy infantry were located in vicinity of 676119 and that they were moving South-East.

At 1212 we received message from CCB that their force would push through task force Wemple and that Wemple's mission would be to furnish security to their rear or North end and to try to push part of his force to the east to the canal to prevent the Germans from hitting them from that side.

CCB reported 60 enemy infantry in vicinity of 677110 at 1316.

At 1402 received word that the force to our South and West which was attacking Meijel was disposed as follows: B of the 48th Inf on line 690076 to 682072 and the remainder of the 48th Inf with the Tanks and T.D.'s on line in vicinity of 695075. "C" troops of the 87th Rcn Squadron was at 684097 and was in contact with 120 enemy

After Action Record of the 17th Tank Bn for the month of Oct 44, Cont'd.

infantry.

At 1412 received report from A Company that they had lost a large number of tanks most of which were mired down in soft ground and could not be recovered because they were under enemy fire.

At 1414 "D" Company was alerted for immediate movement. They were to report to CCB Commander at Liesel who was to give them their orders. They were to be used to the East and North-east of Liesel to protect CCB's rear and east flank.

Received report at 1430 from CCB that 25 prisoners had been taken at 680125.

At 1430 Company D moved out of the Bn bivouac area on their mission to Liesel.

At 1604, CCB Hq ordered Lt Col Wemple to report to their rear C.P. to get future plans and he was again called to their rear C.P. for Unit Commanders meeting at 1930.

The CCB Commander gave Company "D" the mission of establishing an outpost line from a point in the vicinity of 682148 to a point about 1 and three-quarters miles to the North. Their mission was to report any enemy activity during the night and to repel if possible any enemy movement from the East and North. The Company was instructed to report positive information immediately and to make hourly reports regardless of circumstances. The reports were to be made to CCB Hq through the 17th Tank Battalion headquarters because we could not establish direct radio contact between Company "D" and CC"B" headquarters. At 2050 Company "D" reported enemy machine gun fire directly to the East of their outpost which was in the vicinity of 682148; however, the fire was over close to the canal and was not directed at their outpost.

The enemy activity was relatively quiet in our "B" Company area up until 2400. There was some enemy small arms fire and artillery fire but there was no large scale attack on the position.

After action Report of the 17th Tank Bn for the month of Oct 44, Cont'd.

29 October 1944

At 0130 we received a message from C.C.B. Hq in which they stated that the following information had been obtained from a P.W. who was a member of the Third Company of the 115 PZ. Gr. Regt., 9th Panzer Division. Companies one, two, three, seven and nine were in the vicinity of 693091 and 692095. He stated that Companies one, two and three were to make a frontal attack to the west at dawn and that Companies seven and nine were to make a northern flanking attack and that unidentified Companies were to make a southern flanking attack. He stated further that there was a heavy weapons platoon in each Company plus heavy machine guns, light machine guns and Panzer fausts and that there was a possibility of reinforcements during the night. Another P.W. stated that he saw three Tiger tanks in Neerkant and ten or twelve rocket guns in the eastern edge of the woods. The P.W. stated that the Regimental C.P. was in a small straw covered house about 250 yards north of the Church in the town of Neerkant. This information was given to all of WEMPLE's forces immediately.

At 0315 C.C.B. reported heavy enemy artillery fire at 690111 and enemy vehicles moving south along the road in the vicinity of 694117.

At 0320 Lt. CARTER of our Company "A" reported that four of their tanks which had been mired down during the day had been recovered.

At 0600 Company "D" reported heavy enemy Artillery fire falling in their vicinity and lots of machine gun fire to the south of their position.

At 0635 Capt. Pilat that that his position was being attack by enemy Infantry. Strength undetermined. The small arms fire was coming from the south, the east, and northeast and the enemy Infantry was close in to his position at that time. This attack was preceded by an enemy Artillery concentration in the "B" Company vicinity.

At 0655 "D" Company reported that they were receiving heavy enemy Artillery fire in their vicinity.

At 0708 Capt PILAT reported that the attack on his position had been repelled and that there was very little activity in his area at that time.

At 0715 we received word that the Tank Destroyers that were holding a position to the north and east of our "B" Company were being attacked by enemy Infantry.

At 0715 "D" Company reported unidentified force of 150 to 200 dismounted troops approaching from the east in the vicinity of 685145 and a few minutes later this force was identified as German Infantry.

At 0740 our forces reported strong enemy Infantry force with bazookas attacking our assault gun platoon position.

At 0720 "D" Company reported that four German tanks were advancing with the German Infantry and that three of his tanks had been knocked out in the vicinity of 683147 and that he was compelled to pull his company back to the north for he could not engage in fire fighting with the German tanks with his 37MM guns. It was thought that all his tanks crews had escaped with only slight injuries. Lt. FILES one of the "D" Company platoon leaders had been wounded and was being sent back to the Bn. Bivouac area.

The C.C.B. CP which had been located in the vicinity of 658143 and at which point Lt. Col. WEMPLE had set up his C.P. on order of the C.C.B. Commander was moved to a new location in the vicinity of 637134.

By 0840 part of the German Infantry had reached the eastern edge of the town of Liesel. Our "B" Company tanks continued to fire on the enemy to their east and to direct Artillery fire on enemy positions. It is not known how many German they killed but we know that they inflicted heavy losses on the Germans.

At 0900 we received orders to move the rear C.P. and that part of the Bn. which was in the original Bn. bivouac area to the town of Vleirden and the group was closed in the new area by 0950.

Capt. PILAT was ordered to move his Company "B" back to the north to a position in the vicinity of 687119 and to take up a position in that area taking advantage of all the cover and concealment. However, the Infantry which had joined him in his original position was ordered by higher Hq. to remain there and hold that position.

After Action Report of the 17th Tank Bn for the month of Oct 44, cont'd.

were to move out any time after 2000. "D" Company was to be released at 1815 and was to move to Vlierdon and march to the new area with the force at that point. Capt PILAT'S force was to move back to an area in the vicinity of Voordeldank upon order from Lt. Col. WEMPLE and then on to the new area. The rear CP. group moved out of Vlierdon at 2045 and marched to the new area about 1.8 miles south of Maarheeze via the route of Asten, Zomeren, Heeze, Leende and Maarheeze, This group fell in behind Lt. Col. WEMPLE and Capt. PILAT'S force just out of Asten and the whole group closed in the new Bn. Area by 2330. Company "C" and Company "A" were not released by C.C.R. until the next morning so they did not arrive in the Bn. area until about 0900 on the 30th of Oct 44.

30 October 1944

The day was devoted to re-organizing the Companies and vehicular and weapons maintenance.

The Battalion Commander had a meeting of all Officers at the Bn. C.P. at 1330 and all phases of the last few days operations were discussed. The Bn. Commander instructed all Officers to point out to the men the instances in which our weapons and equipment has proven to be as good and even better than anything the German Army has. Considering what the Germans threw at us we feel that we did a pretty good job in the last operation and the Bn. Commander encouraged the Officers to get the men to look at it in that light. There is a tendency for the men to believe that our tank guns will not knock out a German Tiger Tank. Lt. HUMMEL, a platoon leader in Company "B", knocked out a Tiger at 1400 yards with his 76MM tank gun. There is no doubt but what our 75MM tank gun and 76MM tank guns will knock out the Tiger Tanks. Of course we should try to hit the German tanks on the flanks or in the tracks, but they definitely can be knocked out. Lt. Col. WEMPLE pointed out one case where a German Mark IV or V Tank was knocked out by a 37MM gun from an armored car from troop "D" of the 87th Rcn, Squadron. Lt. Col. WEMPLE praised the work of Capt Rau and his troop "D" of the 87th Rcn, Squadron very highly. This one troop was screening about a six mile front when this action started and they worked with WEMPLE'S force throughout the action. They suffered lots of casualties but Lt. Col. WEMPLE believes that they accounted for at least 5 Germans to one of their losses. During the action from 27th October 1944 through the 29th of October 1944, Company "A" knocked out one German Tank; Company "B" got five German Tanks and Company "C" got five German Tanks making a total of eleven for the Bn. We lost a total of seventeen medium tanks, three light tanks, one assault gun and two peeps. Our personnel losses for the action were: Officers Wounded 7, Missing in Action: 2; Enlisted Men: Killed 3, wounded 37, Missing in Action 28.

This action proved that the men and Officer's in our newly formed Patrol Section are good. Capt. PILAT praised their work very highly and stated that Lt. FELTON'S actions were particularly praiseworthy. We do not intend to use those men for the type of work that they did during this action, that is, as dismounted protection for the tanks, but this was an emergency and the men came through with flying colors. We feel confident that they will prove very valuable to the Battalion in Patrol work in the future.

As we have previously stated Companies "A" and "C" worked directly under CCR during this action from 27 October, 1944 to 29 October, 1944. They were employed in the push toward Meyel along the Asten Meyel road. The terrain over which they were working was unsuited for tanks and several tanks were lost because they became mired down in the soft swampy ground while they were trying to maneuver. Company "A" lost Lt. CUNNINGHAM, who was wounded in action. Lt. OSWALD who was commanding the Company was evacuated during the afternoon of the 28th October 1944 because of heart trouble and Lt. CARPENTER was relieved of Command on the 29 October, 1944 and Lt. Nizenski took command and later in the afternoon Lt. CARTER was placed in command of the Company.

Company "C" under command of Lt. URBOM was held in reserve until 29 October, 1944 on which date it moved through our "A" Company and supported the Infantry action

After Action Report of the 17th Tank Bn for the month of Oct 44, Cont'd.

At 1125 Capt. PILAT was ordered to send four tanks back to his original position to support and aid the Infantry at that point.

At 1015 Lt. FOGG the I and R. platoon leader who was Outposting the Assault guns with his platoon reported that his position was being fired on by enemy tanks, Artillery, and small arms and that he must move out. One of the assault guns was knocked out by the enemy tank fire. Lt. FOGG was the only Officer at this point for Lt. Bucek the assault gun platoon leader had been wounded by Artillery fire on the previous day and evacuated. Lt. FOGG was instructed to take his group and join Capt. PILAT's forces who were around the vicinity of 687119. Lt. FOGG did this immediately and by 1045 he was closed into Capt. PILAT'S force.

At 1100 Company "D" was being reorganized and was preparing to move back to the south and east to maintain contact with the enemy.

At 1150 we received a report from C.C.B. that a P.W. from the 11 Para Regt., who was captured in the vicinity of Liesel reported that he saw four Panzer and six Tiger tanks in the vicinity of Heittrak earlier in the morning and that they were possibly around with flame throwers.

At 1130 "B" Company reported that they were receiving some enemy artillery fire on their position.

At 1315 Lt. Col. WEMPLE ordered our "D" Company to form a screen along the north south line between the Co-Ordinates 681152 and 677166. The "D" Company mission was to prevent and movement across that area from the East. In other words, they were to hold that designated line. Company "D" immediately moved into the new position in compliance with the order.

About 1300 the Infantry, which had held the position where our "B" Company was originally located in vicinity of 694113, moved to our "B" Company position in vicinity of 687119 and dig in about two hundred yards to the east and south of our tank position. The four "B" Company tanks which had been with the Infantry force took up a position with the rest of Capt. PILAT'S force.

Lt. Col. WEMPLE ordered Capt. PILAT to have Lt. FELTON, our Patrol Section leader to clear a route to the west by which Capt. PILAT could remove his force if he were ordered to do so later. Lt. FELTON, performed this mission and found a route over which the force could be moved west to the town of Voordeldank. There was a bridge over a canal at 684116 that needed some repairs so Lt. FELTON took a detail down and repaired the bridge.

At 1520 we received a report from our "D" Company that they were receiving some Artillery fire.

At 1525 Capt. PILAT reported that they were receiving some small arms fire from their front or from the east.

At 1600 Lt. HARDIN'S platoon in Company "B" took an enemy tank under fire in the vicinity of 691115 but they did not knock it out, it turned and went back to the south. Capt. PILAT reported four German tanks at 1615 in the vicinity of 694118. They were fired upon, but it is not known whether we got any of them. We requested our Air Mission to fire on these tanks but it was denied because they were too close to our troops.

At 1700 Capt. PILAT reported that the enemy was giving them hell with direct fire weapons, probably tanks, and artillery. They set fire to a haystack near which his tanks were located. They had lots of trouble putting it out. Lt. FELTON'S action in this case was outstanding for he climbed up on top of the hay-stack in the face of enemy small arms and artillery fire and pulled the burning straw off and helped put the fire out. It was getting dark and if the fire had not been put out, it would have been fatal for it would have illuminated our whole position.

At 1730 "B" Company captured four prisoners who were from the 115 PZ Gr. Gren. Regt. The prisoners were turned over to our Infantry.

At about 1745 we received word that our units were to be relieved and that we were to move to an assembly area in the vicinity of Maarheeze. The units which were at Vlierdon were to move under the command of the EX-Officer and¹⁰

¹⁰ The text really does end here in an incomplete sentence and resume on the next page with a new paragraph.

After Action Report of the 17th Tank Bn., for the month of October 1944, Cont'd.

This Company did an excellent job but they lost Lt. DENNY who had just recently been Commissioned from the ranks, he had previously been a Platoon Sergeant in the same Company, Lt. DENNY was an excellent leader and his loss is a great loss to the Company. "C" Company lost four tanks in this action and they definitely knocked out five German Tanks.

During the night of the 30th October, 1944 we received an order from CCR Hq that effective at 0630 31 October 1944 we were to have one medium tank Company alerted and ready for movement on order of CCR. Company "C" designated as the alert Company and notified of the fact.

31 October 1944

One light tank from Company "D" was sent to CCR Hq. to be used as transportation for the Combat Command Commander. Company "C" went on the alert status at 0630 but was not called out during the day.

All men in the Bn. who desired showers were carried to Weert during the day.

The day was devoted to maintenance of vehicles and weapons and the men were given an opportunity to get some rest. Everyone seemed very well pleased to end up the month with a not too busy day.

NOTE: The 17th Tank Battalion Personnel losses and gains during the month of October, 1944 were as follows:

Killed - 3 EM.
Wounded - 7 Officers and 37 EM.
Sick (Non-Battle) - 1 Officer and 24 EM.
MIA - 2 Officers and 28 EM.
Replacements - 5 Officers and 48 EM.
Returned to duty - 14 EM.

(signed)
JACK HOWISON
Capt., Infantry
Unit Historian

S E C R E T

HEADQUARTERS 17TH TANK BATTALION
APO 257, U.S. ARMY

30 November 1944.

Subject: After Action Report, Month of November 1944.

To: The Adjutant General, Washington 25, D.C. (Through Channels)

1 November 1944

The 17th Tank Bn was in a bivouac area about one and three-quarters of a mile South of the town of Maarheeze in the vicinity of coordinate 530011. The Battalion was under CC"R" Control and at 0915 the battalion was alerted for a move to another bivouac area about two miles to the South-East in the vicinity of 545007. The battalion moved out at 1055 and closed in the new bivouac area at 1145. The new area afforded good concealment and all vehicles were dispersed as much as possible and camouflaged. The move was made so that the battalion would be closer to the line which the division was holding. The battalion was in reserve but CC"R" wanted the battalion up close enough to the line so we could be moved up quickly if we were needed.

At 1440, Company "C" of the 17th Tank Bn was alerted by CC"R" for a move to an assembly area in the vicinity of 590000. The company was to remain in this area under CC"R" control as a mobile reserve to be used anywhere along CC"R"'s line in case they were needed. The enemy was not active on the CC"R" line and they did not think that "C" company would be used, however they were instructed to remain on an alert status. At 1605 Company "C" moved out from the battalion assembly area and the company closed in the new area at 1645. They were not in contact with the enemy and were not committed during the period. The Battalion Headquarters remained in contact with Company "C" by F.M. radio throughout the period that the company was detached from the battalion.

That part of the battalion remaining in the bivouac area devoted the remainder of the day to vehicle and personal equipment maintenance.

2 November 1944

The battalion remained in the bivouac area throughout the day. The battalion commander and staff inspected vehicles and personnel and the battalion supply officer made a check of the battalion to determine what equipment and supplies were needed. Some of the men were carried to the town of Weert for showers.

3 November 1944

At 0730 the battalion CO received a message from CC"R" to alert the battalion I and R Platoon for patrol duty and the report to CC"R" Hq for instructions. The battalion commander was informed that he would be in command of a force composed of the I & R platoon from the 17th Tank Bn and Company "B" of the 33d Armd Eng Bn which force would take over the outposts along the canal between coordinate 614992 and 618005 and would establish a patrol along the West side of the canal between coordinates 618002 and 617002 and another patrol between coordinates 614992 and 591979. Lt. Col Wemple's Force was to take over the outposts and the patrols from the 23d Armd Inf Bn at 1500.

The battalion commander, his S-2 and the I & R Platoon Leader went to the Inf Bn CP prior to 1200 to complete the plans for taking over from the Inf. Between 1300 and 1400, Lt Col Wemple met the company commander of Company "B" of the 33d Armd Eng Bn and pointed out the positions that he wanted him to occupy and watched him move his troops in. Lt. Col Wemple instructed the Engineers to lay a wire to his advance CP which was at 604007, which they did. The Engineer company commander had contact with each of his three platoon leaders who were in the defensive positions along the line by telephone and Lt. Col Wemple had contact with him (the Engineer CO) by telephone and there was a telephone line from Lt Col Wemple's CP to CC"R" Hq.

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Ltr, Hq 17th Tk Bn, 30 Nov 44, Sub: After Action Report, Mo of Nov 44.

3 November 1944 (Cont'd)

The battalion S-2 with the I & R Platoon leader contacted the patrols which they were to relieve and made a reconnaissance of the routes. The I & R Platoon Leader was instructed to establish his CP at 590979 and to use two 1/4-Ton vehicles in patrolling the east-West road along the canal between that point and coordinate 614991 at which point the patrol was to contact the Engineer outpost. He was instructed to use another section of his platoon composed 1/34-ton vehicles in patrolling the North-South road along the canal between coordinate 618002 and 617022. This patrol was to contact elements of the 33d Armd Eng Bn at each of the coordinates mentioned. The patrols were to make at least one run over their assigned sectors each hour, they were to contact the engineer outposts on each run and make positive enemy action reports over their telephones to Lt Col Wemple. The patrols were instructed to use their 510 radios in making reports only in case of emergency. The I & R Platoon leader moved his platoon into position and took over the patrols prior to 1500.

Company "B" of the 33d Armd Eng Bn took over the positions as ordered. Lt Col Wemple moved his forward CP, which consisted of himself, his S-3, his command tank and crew, 12 men from the battalion medical detachment minus elements which were with other parts of the battalion, up to a position in the vicinity of 604007. In addition to the telephone contact with CC"R" Hq, Lt Col Wemple maintained radio contact with his rear CP which was back in the battalion bivouac area in the vicinity of 544007. There was no enemy action along the line throughout the night.

On this date the battalion maintenance received a sufficient supply of track extensions to put them on our medium tanks on a 50% basis that is one extension on every other block on each track and battalion maintenance, with the aid of the company maintenance crews and tank crews started this operation. As soon as one of the tanks was completed it was given a test run in the mud and it was found that the flotation was much better and that the tank could cross ground that a tank without the extensions would mire down and get stuck.

4 November 1944

At 1345 the battalion was alerted and informed that the 17th Tank Bn, minus Company "D", the assault gun platoon and the assault guns from each of the companies, was being attached to CC"B" for a period of intensive training and that the battalion would move to an area in the vicinity of Heugten. Company "D" and the assault guns were to be attached to CC"R" Hq and Lt Col Wemple was to be relieved of his duties in connection with his holding force at 1500, the I & R Platoon was to be relieved of the patrol duty at the same time.

An area East of Heugten in the vicinity of coordinates 564043 was designated by higher headquarters as the battalion area. A billeting detail was sent out immediately to pick out positions for the battalion and to post guides. The billeting detail found that the area which had been designated was not tenable because the ground would not hold tanks. The billeting detail under command of Lt John S. Black, started trying to find another area.

At 1445 the battalion minus Co "D" and the assault guns moved out of the area and closed in the new area in the vicinity of coordinates 544047 at 1650. No houses were available for billeting the battalion but straw was available and men pitched their tents and made themselves as comfortable as possible under the conditions. It rained during the afternoon and night but we had prepared for it so we were not too uncomfortable.

The battalion CO and staff contacted CC"B" Hq to obtain information in regard to the training which was to be given during the period.

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5 November 1944

The battalion remained in the area in the vicinity of Heugten throughout the day. Training was devoted to crew drill and fire orders.

The combat commander, Colonel Clark¹¹, assembled all officers at 1400 to explain what would be stressed during the training period and to explain how his command would operate as coordinated combat teams when the break through had been made.

We had Catholic Services and Protestant Services in the battalion bivouac area at 1030 and 1600 respectively.

The battalion was given a quota of 2 officers and 27 EM to go to Paris on a 48 hour pass. The battalion was to furnish two trucks to transport the men and the group was to leave the battalion bivouac area at 2500 on 5 Oct. The battalion CO allocated the passes to the companies on a strength basis and the companies determined who would get the passes by drawing.

A PX was moved into the battalion bivouac area on this date and the men enjoyed getting what supplies were available.

During the day we received a copy of the problem or exercise which would be conducted by CC"B" Hq on 6 and 7 Oct¹² 44. Our company "A" was to be used dismounted as a part of the enemy for the problem for 6 Oct 44, but the remainder of the battalion would not participate in the problem until 7 Oct 44.

The battalion commander had a meeting of all officers at 2000 and explained the CC"B" exercise on the 6 Oct 44 which was to be performed by the 31st Tank Bn.

6 November 1944

The companies received training under the supervision of the platoon leaders and the con-coms in radio procedure, fire orders, and the detection and removal of mines and booby traps.

The battalion commander, the staff and the mortar platoon leader moved out of the bivouac area at 0800 to observe the exercise which the 31st Tank Bn was indulging in under the supervision of CC"B" headquarters.

At 1400 we received orders to have a billeting detail report to CC"R" Hq to go with the CC"R" billeting detail to arrange for billeting the battalion in a new area. The I & R Platoon, under the command of Lt Bartholemew, moved out of the bivouac area at 1630 to perform this mission.

At 1400 all officers were assembled in the 31st Tank Bn area for a critique of the exercise which had been conducted during the morning. Col Clark again pointed out the necessity for the maximum use of all supporting weapons.

At 2000 the battalion commander assembled all officers to brief them on the exercise which he was to conduct on the following morning. The troops to be used in the exercise were the Scout Section, the Mortar Platoon, C Company, Company "D" of the 31st Tank Bn and the assault gun platoon of the 31st Tank Bn. The remainder of the troops were to be simulated. The purpose of the exercise was to demonstrate the combat commanders plan of having his command march in a formation so that when opposition was encountered the command could go into an assault without regrouping the troops. A copy of the problem is submitted with this report and details in regard to the formation may be obtained from it

7 November 1944

Lt Col Wemple's force for the exercise crossed the IP at the designated time of 0800 and the problem was terminated at 1235. The critique was held in the 31st Tank Battalion area at 1430.

The battalion commander, the staff and all officers and troops who were used in the exercise derived excellent training from this exercise for it emphasized the necessity for coordinated staff operations, maximum use of all fire power and that every element in the command had a specific function which must be performed promptly and thoroughly.

S E C R E T

- 3 -

¹¹ Bruce Clarke

¹² The text does repeatedly say October but clearly should read November.

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Ltr, Hq 17th Tk Bn, 30 Nov 44, Sub: After Action Report, Mo of Nov 44.

7 November 1944 (Cont'd)

During the afternoon the battalion commander received the information that the battalion would revert to CC"R" control and move to an area South-East of Maastricht in the vicinity of the town of Mheer. The move was to start at 0710 on 8 Oct 44 and our billeting detail was to join the column in route and guide the battalion onto the assigned area. While in the new area the time was to be devoted to training and rehabilitation.

Company "D" of the 17th Tank Bn and the Assault Gun Platoon moved into the battalion bivouac area during the afternoon and were to march with the battalion to the new area.

At 1930 the battalion commander assembled the company commanders and issued the orders for the march. The order of march was to be battalion Hq, Hq Co, Co "A", Co "C", Co "B", Co "D", and Service Co. The companies were instructed to keep a strict air alert during the march and to maintain intervals at halts. The battalion was to move out by liason with the company preceeding it. The route of march was to be West to Maarheeze, South-East to Weert, South to Stamproij, Kinroy, Maeseck, Eelen, Dilsen, Lanklear, Eysden, Maastricht, East to Margraten, South to Hoogeruts, West to Noorbeek, and North-East to Bergenhuizen. The battalion commander designated the battalion executive officer and the battalion S-2, who were to ride in quarter-ton vehicles, to assist him in checking the battalion column while in route. Each company commander was instructed to "ride" his column to see that the division and battalion S.O.P.'s for marches were strictly complied with during the march.

8 November 1944

The head of the column moved out of the bivouac area at 0710 and finally cleared the town of Maarheeze at 0750. The march was very orderly and uneventful and the lead of the column reached the destination at Bergenhuizen at 1200. Due to the exceedingly heavy traffic in Maastricht the battalion column became split up in that town and the battalion did not close in the new area until 1500 but our billeting detail had posted guides in addition to those provided by higher hq so all stragglers found the area without any trouble. The area which had been designated for the battalion only had housing facilities for a battalion CP and a part of Hq Co. The ground was so soft in the area that many of our tanks and wheel vehicles were stuck in moving into the area. However, the battalion commander instructed the companies to make the best of the situation until he could find better locations for them.

9 November 1944

The day was devoted to maintenance and shifting and adjusting the companies in the battalion in order to obtain maximum benefit of the available housing facilities in the vicinity. The weather was very bad, it was cold and raining and the mud was just about ankle deep almost everywhere. Since the purpose of this period was to rehabilitate and train the battalion, the battalion commander with the assistance of higher headquarters did every possible thing in trying to make the men comfortable, however, it was not until several days later that housing facilities were obtained for all of the men.

10 November 1944

The weather was extremely bad with rain practically all day. Company "B" was moved over to the town of Wheer where places were found for all of the men in that company to have a dry place to sleep. Use was made of all available barns, sheds, and vacant rooms and in so doing the men were made much more comfortable.

Company "C" was moved into the East edge of the town of Noorbeek and all the men were billeted under some type of shelter. This company made arrangements with the local school authorities to use a room in the school house for a class room, this room was also to be used by battalion headquarters for the officers school which was to be conducted each day by the battalion commander for all officers in the bn.

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Ltr, Hq 17th Tk Bn, 30 Nov 44, Sub: After Action Report, Month of Nov 44.

10 November 1944 (Cont'd)

Received training directive from CC"R" Hq where it was provided that the hours from 0800 to 1200 and from 1300 to 1600 would be devoted to training and that there would be an officers and NCO school of at least one hour duration each day. The period from 1400 to 1600 each day was to be devoted to the care and maintenance of vehicles and weapons. Military courtesy was to be stressed and the men were to be kept oriented as to the situation to our front and on all fronts as much as possible. Immediate steps were taken to comply with this directive.

11 November 1944

The CC"R training directive was followed throughout the day. The battalion was directed by CCR Hq to relieve the 38th Inf Bn (Armd), of outpost and patrol duty on the North South Road through Hoogaruts and Terlinden. We were to place outposts consisting of one tank at each of the following points: 665435, 660444, and 659457. We were to establish a patrol consisting of one 1/4-ton vehicle which was to patrol the road between the outposts, making contact with the outpost at 659457 and outpost from the 33d Armd Eng Bn at 667424 at least once each hour. The outpost at 659457 was to be contacted on the hour and the outpost at 667424 was to be contacted on the half-hour. We were to effect this relief by 1500. Contact was maintained with the patrol and the outposts by radio but we did not receive any positive reports. This operation was discontinued by CC"R" Hq during the following day.

12 November 1944

The battalion followed the training schedule throughout the day. All officers and men of the first three grades attended a meeting at CC"R" Hq where Col Thompson gave a talk on "Military Government after we reach Germany. The talk explained many points in regard to the subject which will be very helpful after we are in Germany. This was followed by a talk by the division commander.

During the period 1300 to 1400 the Battalion Medical Detachment Personnel received instructions from the 33d Engineer Battalion in how to enter anti-Personnel minefields to evacuate wounded.

13 November, 1944

All elements of the Battalion with the exception of one platoon from Company "A" followed the concurrent training schedule during the day. The training schedule included instruction and practice in target designation and fire orders with the purpose of training the crews to get in the first shot accurately. The Battalion Commander insisted that the crews be trained to give fire orders as prescribed by the training manuals, all crews were to be drilled on this until the orders were automatic. Even the crews that have been with the Battalion since the beginning were required to take this training for some of them have the tendency to develop their own technique of giving commands instead of following the prescribed procedure.

One platoon from Company "A" was used in Tank-Infantry problem. The platoon was used with one company of Infantry from the 38th Infantry Battalion, and the purpose of the problem was to perfect the technique of Tank-Infantry coordination. This exercise again emphasized the difficulty of communication and control as between the tanks and Infantry. The tanks were equipped with telephones on the outside of the tank so the Infantry could stand or lay on the ground and talk to the tank commanders. The tank platoon leaders radio was on the Infantry Company Commanders channel so the Infantry Company Command could control the tanks by radio. The problem demonstrated how effectively tanks could be called up to over-run machine gun positions and thus protect the Infantry and how effectively the Infantry could be used to envelop AT gun positions and thus protect the tanks. This exercise was excellent training and it is believed that all troops involved will greatly benefit by it.

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13 November, 1944 (Cont'd)

The weather was bad with rain at intervals during the day which made training difficult.

The Battalion I and R Platoon was given special instruction in terrain appreciation, observation and field sanitation by the Platoon leader.

All troops received an S-2 orientation in which they were given all available information in regard to the news on various fronts.

The Battalion Scout or Patrol section was given practical exercises during the day in which the basic principles of scouting and patrolling were stressed.

14 and 15 November, 1944

All elements were engaged in concurrent training covering the subjects of crew drill, fire orders, camouflage, military courtesy, range estimation, and terrain appreciation.

During the period that the Battalion was in this area we were allowed to send 15% of the men and officers to Maastricht on passes. Arrangements were made for showers in the town of Maastricht and the men were carried in at the rate of thirty men per hour until all the men had been accommodated. Quartermaster laundry facilities were available so the men were able to get their personal clothing cleaned and in good condition.

The Battalion Commander received Top Secret information in regard to possible future actions for the Battalion, and he gave all officers in the Battalion all available information in regard to the terrain on which the Battalion might be committed at a later date. All officers were instructed to make a careful map study of all the area to our front and all available enemy information was passed on to the officers and men. A careful study was made of all uncontrolled mosaics and photos which had been made available by CCR Hq. The Battalion Commander kept all officers and men informed as to future plans to such an extent as was possible without violating security regulations.

Officers School on the 15th was devoted to discussing plans for the CCR Tank-Infantry exercises for the 16th and 17th of November. The exercises were to consist of three problems the first of which was to start at 0800 on the 16th. The troops involved were Company "A" of the 17th Tank Battalion, Company "A" of the 38th Infantry Battalion, and Hq 38th Infantry Battalion plus supporting weapons mortars and assault guns. The second problem was to begin at 1400 and the troops involved were Company "B" of the 17th Tank Battalion, Company "B" of the 38th Infantry Battalion, and Bn Hq 17th Tank Battalion plus supporting weapons namely the assault gun platoon and the mortar platoon. The third problem was to begin at 0800 on the 17th with Company "C" of the 38th Infantry, Company "C" of the 17th Tank Battalion. And the force was to be commanded by the 17th Tank Battalion Executive Officer with 38th Infantry Battalion executive Officer as second in command. The purpose of the problem was to demonstrate and emphasize the principles set out in annex #1 to Training Directives, 9 Nov 44, Hq 7th Armored Division.

The problems were to be conducted to the last of the North-South highway and between the towns of Hoogruts and Reijmerstok. The force participating in the exercise was to assemble in the vicinity of coordinates 674426 and the troops were to be briefed at that point and the orders issued. For the purposes of the problem it was assumed that the advance guard of the force which was proceeding north with the highway as the left boundary had received small arms fire in the vicinity of Hoogruts and the enemy was known to be in the town of Reijmerstok. The force commander had decided to proceed with the mission of taking the town of Reijmerstok by attacking with the tanks leading and the infantry following mounted in their half tracks. The attack was to be made with two platoons of tanks abreast each of which was to be followed by a platoon of infantry and one platoon of tanks and Infantry was to follow the left assault platoon as a reserve. When the objective was reached, the right assault platoons were to envelop the town to the east and north-east, the left assault platoon was to envelop the town to the west and secure approaches to the west and north. The reserve platoon of tanks and Infantry were to enter the town and clear it of the enemy. The force commander was to

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14 and 15 November, 1944 (Cont'd)

use his supporting weapons when and how he needed them.

The personnel of the patrol section of the 17th Tank Battalion were to be used as the enemy. An orange flag was to designate an enemy AT weapon and the red flag enemy small arms fire.

The infantry was to remain mounted in vehicles until enemy AT weapons were encountered at which time they were to dismount and attack the gun establishing a base of fire and enveloping it. After the AT guns were knocked out, the infantry was to get back in their vehicles and follow the tanks in the assault. This was to demonstrate the mutual support than can be attained by perfect coordination, and cooperation between the tanks and infantry. The problems and the plans were simple and designed to emphasize the basic fundamental principals involved in combined Tank-Infantry operations, and they accomplished just that.

16 November, 1944

The troops not engaged in the CCR exercises received concurrent training in their respective areas. Camouflaging of all combat vehicles was emphasized and all crews worked diligently tying wire on their vehicles so that shrubbery could be fastened securely to the vehicles. The men really did an excellent job of camouflaging the vehicles, and it is believed that it will pay dividends when the Battalion is committed again. Once the wire has been placed on the vehicles, the job of keeping them camouflaged is relatively easy. For the shrubbery or natural material used in camouflaging can be added or changed with very little trouble.

The Battalion Staff, Company "A", Company "B", the assault gun platoon and the Mortar platoon participated in the CCR problem and all the troops and officers received valuable training in Tank-Infantry tactics and operations. The problem of communication and control and the necessity for detailed planning was again impressed on everyone. As long as the Infantry was mounted in their vehicles, the problem of communication was not so difficult for all the radios were operating on mutual channels but when the Infantry dismounted, the problem became more difficult. However control was maintained by the Infantry platoon leaders remaining close to the tank platoon leader's tank who he was working with or by leaving a runner with tank. Of course the force commander could stay in contact with both of the company commanders at all times by radio. SCR 300 radios had been installed in all of our command tanks and contact was maintained very well by that means in the in the cases where both the Infantry platoon leader and the tank platoon leader had that type of communication available. All of the Infantry leaders did not have the SCR 300 radios. These problems pointed out very vividly the benefits that can be gained by the Infantry pointing out targets to the tanks, and the tank crews were again impressed with the value of and necessity for Infantry support in knocking out AT weapons.

17 November, 1944

Company "C" of the 17th Tank Battalion and Company "C" of the 38th Infantry under the command of the Major Dailey and the 38th Armored Infantry Battalion Executive Officer went through the CCR problem. The SCR 300 radios were used in this problem and the force commander reported that they worked very satisfactorily. The platoon leaders of the tanks and Infantry were able to maintain contact by this means and thereby maintain control.

The remainder of the battalion trained in their respective areas. During the period that the Battalion was in this area a number of men developed trench foot, and the preventive measures that were taken were: each company set up what we called a drying room which was a place where all the men in the company were required to pull off their shoes and socks and thoroughly dry both them and their feet at least once each day. Frequently foot inspections were made by the Battalion Medical Officer

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17 November, 1944 (Cont'd)

and the Company Officers to see that the men washed their feet and put on clean socks. frequently. If the foot inspection revealed any sign of trench foot, the man was sent to the medical detachment where usually the trouble was cleared up by having the man keep his shoes off his feet for a period of from 24 to 36 hours.

On this date we received notice that the following day would be a day of rest with no duty or training except for necessary details.

18 November, 1944

There was no training or duty on this day, and most of the men in the Battalion enjoyed it by simply doing nothing. The Chaplains arranged for both Protestant and Catholic services which were attended by many of the men.

The Battalion Commander called a meeting of the Company Commanders to discuss current problems and possible future action for the Battalion. The Battalion was to be attached to the 102nd Infantry Division to be used as a mobile reserve or to be used to support that division in making an attack in the vicinity of Linnich. More time was devoted to a study of terrain and the enemy situation on the 102nd Infantry Division front.

19 November, 1944

The companies followed the training schedule in their respective areas. One hour was devoted to a refresher lecture and exercise on map reading, one hour was devoted to the repairing of camouflage on combat vehicles, thirty minutes was devoted to physical exercises, and the usual thirty minutes for S-2 orientation and current news talk. The period from 1300 to 1400 was used for inspection and cleaning of gas masks. The period from 1400 to 1600 was devoted to the maintenance of vehicles and weapons with special emphasis being placed on the cleaning of the riding compartments and stowage of the equipment. There was a non-Commissioned Officers' school from 1400 to 1500 on the subject of control and an officers' school from 1500 to 1600 on the subject of Tank-Infantry coordination.

20 November, 1944

The day was devoted to concurrent training within the Battalion area. One hour was given on the necessity for Tank-Infantry coordination and a refresher discussion of the principles set out in Annex #1 to Training Directive of Nov 44, Hq, 7th Armored Division. Two hours were devoted to instruction in terrain appreciation and range estimation. Each company had the 30 minute exercise period and the 30 minute S-2 orientation. The period from 1300 to 1400 was devoted to radio repair and procedures. The period from 1400 to 1600 was devoted to the usual vehicular and weapons maintenance.

21 November, 1944

Company "A" of the 17th Tank Battalion with Company "A" of the 38th Infantry Battalion, and Hq 38th Infantry Battalion plus supporting weapons went through another combined training exercise as problem under the supervision of CCR Hq. This problem was practically the same as the previous problem with the exception that it was performed over different terrain. This time the attack was made on the west side of of the north-south road with the line of departure being the Noorbeck Hoogruts road and the objective being just south of the town of La Planck. Again the tanks were to attack with the Infantry following up mounted in their half-tracks. The assembly area was just south of the town of Terlinden on the west side of the Highway and most of the infantry half-tracks got stuck in moving cross country to the line of departure so the problem was executed with the Infantry following the tanks dismounted. However, for the purpose of training, this did not lessen the benefits which were to be obtained from the exercise for the principles of mutual support practiced just the same.

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The force which went through this problem was again commanded by the Commanding Officer of the 38th Armored Infantry Battalion, and the problem was completed by 1230.

The Commanding Officer of the 17th Tank Battalion moved his force which was composed of Company "B" of the 17th Tank Battalion, Company "C" of the 38th Infantry, and Hq plus the mortars and assault guns of the 17th Tank Battalion, to the assembly area at 1200. The force commander briefed his troops for the problem and issued the orders and was prepared to cross the line of departure at 1200. However, the problem was called off by CCR Hq and all troops returned to their bivouac areas. The 17th Tank Battalion was alerted for movement the following day with detailed plans and instructions to come down later.

At 1500 the Battalion Executive Officer went to a meeting at CCR Hq where he received orders attaching the Battalion to the 84th Infantry Division. He went immediately to contact the 84th Infantry Division Headquarters to obtain instructions and orders as to our future operations. He had some difficulty in locating the Hq at Palenberg, Germany and received instructions to start moving the Battalion at daylight on the following day to an assembly area in the vicinity of the village of Breil which is about one mile and a half south of the town of Geilenkirchen.

The Battalion was to follow the route of: Noorbeek, Hoogeruts, Reijmerstok, Margraten, Valkenburg, Klimmen, Heerlen, Waubach, Palenberg, Ubach, and to the assembly area at Breil. The 7th Armored Division was to furnish guides for the Battalion to Heerlen at which point a guide from the 84th Infantry Division was to join the column and lead the Battalion into the assembly area. The Battalion Commander was to report to the 84th Infantry Division Headquarters as soon as his Battalion had closed in the assembly area for further orders and instructions.

Even though the guides were to be furnished, the Battalion Commander instructed his I and R. Platoon and the Battalion Patrol Section to move out at 0700 on the following morning and to make sure that the route was well marked and to locate the assembly area and have guides ready to move the Battalion right in.

The Battalion Commander called a meeting of the Company Commanders at 2200 at which time he gave all of them available information in regard to the move. The route and the following march order was given: Hq and Hq Company, Company "D", Company "B", Company "C", Company "A" and Service Company. All vehicles were to keep a strict air alert, the rate of march was to be 15 miles per hour and the leading element was to cross the I.P. at Hoogerets at 0500 all other companies were to follow the preceding company by liaison.

22 November, 1944

Battalion Headquarters and Headquarters Company moved out of the area at 0740 and crossed the I.P. at Hoogerets at 0805. The weather was extremely bad, very cold and rainy but the march was made without any trouble to speak of. The 84th Division guide did not meet the head of our column at Heerlen as planned, which caused about a 15 minute delay, however, the head of our column reached the assembly area at Breil at 1055. Our I and R. Platoon had reached the assembly area about two hours prior to our arrival and the platoon leader realized that the area which had been designated was not large enough so he made a Rcn. of another area to the West of the one originally designated and the Battalion Commander moved the Battalion into that area. The original area which had been designated had not been cleared of mines by the Engineers, in fact, they were still blowing German mines in the area when we arrived. The assembly area which was used was the best available but the vehicles were crowded and the ground was soft, some of the vehicles were stuck in maneuvering in position in the area. The Battalion C.P. was set up temporarily in a concrete pill box at coordinates 866617 and the Battalion was assembled around that point.

At 1130 all elements of the Battalion were instructed to remain on a strict alert status and the Battalion Commander went to Palenberg to contact the 84th Division

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for orders.

At 1400 the Battalion Commander returned to the Battalion C.P. with the information that the Battalion was to be moved to another assembly area in the vicinity of Toherhof at Coordinates 882637. The Battalion Commander was to meet with the Regimental Commander of the 334th Infantry Regiment, whose C.P. was at this point and the Commander of the 638th, Tank Destroyer Battalion to discuss plans for using the 17th Tank Battalion and the Tank Destroyer Battalion in repelling a possible enemy counter-attack. The Battalion was in Division Reserve and was to remain on an alert status to be used as the Division desired.

A meeting of Company Commanders was called and all available information was given to them. The Company Commanders were ordered to leave their Companies in Command of a junior officer and the Company Commanders of the line companies were ordered to accompany the Battalion Commander on a Rcn. to the front lines in the vicinity of Immerdorf, Prummern and Suggesterath. The Commander of Company "B" was to familiarize himself with the route to Prummern and to pick out a position in the vicinity of coordinates 891649 to which he could move his company at night to repel an enemy attack if it were necessary to do so. The Company commander of Company "A" was to select a route to Prummern and locate a position in the vicinity of coordinates 904642 to 904649 to which he could move his company if it became necessary to do so. The Company Commander of Company "C" was to pick out a position for his Company in the vicinity of coordinates 890641. The Company Commander of Company "D" was to look over the terrain in the vicinity of Prummern so that he would be familiar with the general area. The assault gun platoon leader was to locate a position for his guns somewhere in the vicinity of coordinates 892638 so that he could move his guns to that position and lay fire on enemy positions in the vicinity of Beeck and Lindarn if it became necessary to do so. The mortar platoon leader was to make a Rcn. of the area in the vicinity of Prummern.

The Company Commanders were ordered to send one officer from each Company with the I and R Platoon leader and the Scout Section leader to the vicinity of the new assembly area to pick out a position for each Company. The Scout Section leader was to return to the present assembly area as soon as this mission had been accomplished and the Battalion was to be moved up to the new assembly position by the Battalion Executive Officer. Service Company was to remain in its present location for the night and until a more suitable area could be located for it.

The Battalion Commander, the S-3, S-2, Company Commanders and Billeting Officers moved out at 1500. The Battalion Commander stopped by the C.P. of the 638th Tank Destroyer Battalion to contact the Commander and make arrangements for meeting him later in the evening to make plans for the coordination of the operation of the new units.

While the Battalion was still in this assembly area our Division Commander visited the Battalion. The Battalion Executive Officer accompanied him around to each of the Companies.

The Scout Section leader returned at 1545 and the Battalion Executive Officer alerted the Battalion for immediate movement and issued the march order as Hq and Hq Co., Company "D", Company "D", Company "A" and Company "C". The Battalion moved out at 1600 and closed in the new assembly area in the vicinity of coordinates 882637 at 1750. The Company officers guided their respective Companies into position in the assembly area and a Battalion C.P. was set up in a large school building which was in the center of the area. The building had been hit rather heavily by artillery but the basement and part of the upper stories were in good condition, however, most of the available room was occupied by the Regimental Hq of the 334th Infantry and the 628 Field Artillery Battalion C.P. There was no available shelter for the companies so they put up their tank tarps and protected themselves from the

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rain and cold as much as possible, however, they were not able to make themselves very comfortable.

At 1930 the Commander and the Staff contacted the Regimental Commander of the 334th and obtained all the information in regard to location of friendly troops and enemy information on our front. The Battalion Communication officer arranged a telephone line to be run to our C.P. from the 334th Infantry Regt., C.P. and in this way we established a telephone contact with the 84th Division Hq. The Battalion was to remain in the present area in reserve until such time as it was needed to repel an enemy counter attack. The 334th Inf. Regimental Headquarters did not believe that a counter-attack was imminent, however, they made detailed plans to repel an attack and ordered our Battalion Commander to work out a defensive plan in conjunction with the Commander of the 638th Tank Destroyer Battalion. Elements of the 10th PZ SS had been identified in this area and it was thought that they were in a position to attack from the town of Lindern with tanks. It was known that there were about 7 tanks, in the town of Beeck. The enemy continued to defend the pillboxes in the Suggester sector very stubbornly. The enemy defended the Suggester Beeck sector with an estimated 6 Battalions of Infantry or troops acting as infantry, supported by at least two companies of anti-tank guns. During the previous day the enemy had counter-attacked with 7 tanks supported by 30 Infantrymen in the sector south of Beeck. Five enemy tanks were destroyed by Division forces. The 115 PZ Rcn. Bn. was thought to be the strongest Battalion on the Division front with an effective strength of 200 troops.

By 2035 all Company Commanders had completed their Rcn. and were assembled at the Battalion C.P. for further orders. At 2100 Lt. Col. DAVIS who commands the 638th Tank Destroyer Battalion came to our C.P. to work out a defensive fire plan with the Battalion Commander. A copy of the overlay showing this plan is enclosed.

The Battalion Commander ordered the Company Commanders to return to their Companies and to remain on a semi-alert basis throughout the night and to be prepared to move out immediately on call by 0600 on the following day. All officers had made a thorough Rcn of their proposed position to repel any counter-attacks on order. In addition the Battalion Commander ordered the Company Commanders to take their platoon leaders and platoon Sergeant's on a personal Rcn. of the proposed position on the following morning. The Company Commanders were ordered to make a personal Rcn. of the area north and east of Immedorf with the thought in mind of picking approach routes in that direction in the event that an attack should come from the vicinity of Geronweiler.

23 November, 1944

The Battalion Hq. remained in close contact with the 334th Infantry Regt., Hq, through out the night but nothing developed. The enemy was inactive all along the front. Therefore, the Company Commanders, took their officers on the Rcn. soon after daybreak as ordered by the Battalion Commander. This Rcn was completed by 1030 and all officers and platoon Sergeants were familiar with the terrain over which we might have to operate. The terrain in this area was found to be very undesirable for use by tanks, in fact much of the terrain was so soft that tanks would be stuck if they attempted to move cross country. The trails in the vicinity were extremely muddy but they were thought to be passable for tanks.

The 334th Infantry Battalion had received reports that four enemy tanks were dug in just south of Beeck in the vicinity of coordinates 976659 but other than that there were no reports of enemy armor activity in the Suggester, Beeck sectors and this information was passed on to the Company Commanders.

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At 1030 the Battalion received an order from the 84th Division Hq, to alert all medium Companies to repel an attack coming from the vicinity of coordinates 922665 to 930651. The Battalion Commander ordered the Rcn. Platoon to make a Rcn. of an approach route to this area immediately. The approach was to be made by the route of Immendorf, Apwerter, and Gereonswerter. The Companies were alerted and warned to be prepared to be moved on notice. A few minutes later the Battalion Commanding Officer received notice that the attack from the position previously indicated was not as imminent as thought but that one medium tank Company would be alerted and that the Battalion Commander with the Company Commander of that Company would report to Cellophone C.P. at Waurichen for further orders. The Battalion Commanding Officer alerted Company "A" and instructed the Company Commander to report to Cellophone C.P. immediately. The Battalion Commander also carried the Company Commander of Company "B" to Cellophone C.P. with him. Cellophone is the 405th Infantry Regiment of the 102nd Infantry Division. Company "A" of the 17th Tank Battalion was chosen, by the Battalion Commanding Officer, for this action because the Company was to be moved to an assembly area south-east of Prummern and that the Company Commander had made a Rcn. of this area and was familiar with it. At Cellophone C.P. the Division Commanding Officer of the 84th Infantry Division ordered Company "A" of the 17th Tank Battalion to make a coordinated attack on the town of Beeck with the 405th Infantry Regiment 2nd Bn., in position along the line 908659 to 911657. The plan was for Company "A" of the 17th Tank Battalion to move up through the 405th Infantry and attack the town of Beeck. The Tanks were to envelope or skirt the town to the west and to secure the ground in the vicinity of coordinates 910667. As soon as the Tanks passed through the Infantry, they were to follow up and enter and secure the town. At the same time other elements of the 405th Infantry Regiment was to attack Beeck from their position in the vicinity of 920656. Company "A" was to move out of an assembly area in the vicinity of 903638 into the attack at 1430 at which time the element on the right was to launch their attack.

The Battalion commander of the 2nd Battalion of the 405th was of the opinion that the enemy in Beeck could be easily overcome. He believed that there were not more than four enemy tanks in the town of Beeck. Lt. Carter, who commanded Company "A" of the 17th Tank Battalion contacted the Infantry Battalion Commander at Cellophone C.P. and explained that he had eleven medium tanks and one 105 assault gun which he would use in the attack. His plan was to attack with two platoons abreast and in line with the third platoon consisting of three tanks following in line in reserve. The assault gun and the company commander tank were to follow close behind the assault wave with the assault gun directly under the Battalion Commanders control. Lt. Carter planned to move his Company in column from the assembly area up through the orchard on the east side of Prummern to coordinate 902647 at which point the Company was to move over to the east and form a line along the high ground running east and west in this vicinity then they were to move out in line on their attack to the north and to the town of Beeck and the objective. The Battalion Commander of the Infantry was to meet Lt. Carter in the tank assembly area just south of Prummern in sufficient time prior to the time for the attack to complete arrangements for communications between the Infantry and Tanks.

Lt. Carter joined his company in the tank assembly area at 1245 and issued his orders to his platoon leaders and explained the plan of attack. He tried to find the Infantry Battalion Commander, as planned, but was unable to locate him. He started moving his company up to the line of departure which was the east-west line behind the high ground in the vicinity of coordinates 805648 to 908648 at 1345 so that he would be in position to jump off at 1430. He moved up to the orchard in order to keep his vehicles concealed until time for the attack. The ground in this area was very soft and one tank got stuck in the vicinity of coordinate 903652 and three more were stuck in the approach north in the vicinity of 903645 and finally the Company Commander's tank ran in a ditch in the vicinity of 906648 and overturned. He immediately got out of his tank which was out of action and in the assault gun tank and resumed command. Lt. Williams who was in command of the reserve platoon finally got his tank stuck in the vicinity of coordinate 908648 and the other two tanks over which he had command were mired down in the orchard, therefore, at 1430 the Company Commander had five tanks

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deployed on the line of departure ready for the attack in addition to the assault gun Tank in which he was riding, however, he jumped off in the attack at 1430 regardless. Lt. Wilson had command of what was left of the left platoon which was his tank and another one and Lt. Nizenski had command of the right platoon of three tanks. Lt. Carter proceeded with this assault wave in a position on the left flank. They moved up rather fast and as soon as they passed over the high ground along the line of departure, they started receiving heavy Anti-Tank fire, artillery fire and small arms fire from the town of Beeck to their front and from the high ground to the northeast of Beeck to their right front. The enemy positions were smoked by the tanks and supporting elements but Lt. Carter's tank received a direct hit on the turret at about 1500 and Lt. Nizenski's tank was knocked out a few minutes later. The tanks passed through the Infantry as planned but they did not follow the tanks as planned so the four remaining tanks were pulled back to a covered position behind the Infantry at 1535. Lt. Carter's tank was knocked out at 912658 and Lt. Nizenski's tank was knocked out at 915657.

The Battalion Commander mounted in his Command Tank, moved to a position at 903640 at 1235 at which point he planned to contact the Infantry Battalion Commander and in that way coordinate the attack as much as possible. Right after he moved into this position an artillery shell hit about one foot from his tank track and he received a slight shrapnel scratch and his tank crew was shaken up some, but no one was hurt seriously and the tank was not disabled. Battalion Commander finally established contact with the Infantry Commanders, but not until the attack was launched.

The Battalion maintenance sections of both "A" and "B" Companies were sent up to try to recover the "A" Company tanks that were mired down and out of action. The Company recovery vehicles did not have the track extensions on them so they could not recover the tanks without getting stuck themselves.

At 1710 it was getting dark and higher Headquarters ordered that all "A" Companies tanks which could move, would return to the Battalion assembly area and the Company would revert to the Battalion control. The Battalion Commander ordered that no further attempt be made to recover the tanks that were stuck until morning at which time Battalion maintenance section would assist in recovering them.

At 1700// Lt. Nizenski and all of his crew returned to the Battalion C.P. They had escaped from the tank after it had been hit, just after they had bailed out of the tank, it caught fire. The crew were shaken up considerably but no one was seriously hurt. Lt. Nizenski had very little hope for Lt. Carter having gotten out of his tank for he was sure that he was hit in the turret and that the tank had burned. He thought that possibly Lt. Carter's tank driver or assistant driver might have escaped.

Capt. Pilat remained at the Cellephone C.P. throughout the day so he would be available for instructions in case it was decided to commit his Company.

AT 1745 we received a message from checkmate 5 that an enemy breakthrough had been reported in the vicinity of Wurm but a short time later we were informed that the report was not correct and that there had been no breakthrough.

At 2045 Battalion Commander and the Executive went to the 334th Infantry Regiment C.P. to receive orders in regard to supporting that regiment in setting up a defense plant and they returned to the Battalion C.P. at 2250 with the plan at which time it was given to the companies. The 84th Division was to support this defensive setup. Company "B" of the 17th Tank Battalion minus one platoon was attached to the 334th Infantry Regiment one platoon was to be attached to the 3rd Battalion of the 334th Infantry and was to move into a position in the vicinity of 898643 by 0500 on the following morning. One platoon was to be attached to the first Battalion of the 334th Infantry and was to move into a position in the vicinity of 904628 by 0300 and the Platoon leader Lt. Oberdan was to establish contact with the Battalion with the

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Battalion Commander. Captain Pilat, the "B" Company Commander, was to establish his Company C.P. in the town of Prummern with the third Battalion of the 334th Infantry C.P. The second Platoon of Company "B", which was commanded by Lt. Hummel, was to remain in the present assembly areas a part of the Division Reserve.

"C" company of the 17th Tank Battalion minus one platoon was attached to the 333rd Infantry Regiment which was committed in the Suggesterath sector on the left of the 334th Infantry Regiment. The Company Commander and his Company was to remain in the present area but he was to maintain liaison with the 333rd Infantry Regiment Headquarters and he was to Rcn routes of approach to the 333rd lines, so that he could move his tanks up quickly if they were needed. One platoon from Company "C" was detailed from the Company and was to remain in the present area as a part of the Division Reserve.

The one platoon from Company "B", one from Company "C" and the four effective tanks in Company "A" were placed under Lt. Hummels command and constituted the mobile reserve. "D" Company of the 17th and the assault gun platoon and mortar platoon were also held in the original Battalion area in Division Reserve. The Battalion Commander and all officers in the Reserve force were to make a Rcn. of routes to points where the reserve might be needed in the Division sector.

All men in the Battalion had Thanksgiving turkey on this date. It was cooked in the Service Company area and carried up to the men in the tanks.

24 November, 1944

The "B" Company platoons moved into position during the night as ordered. The Commanding Officer of Company "B" established his C.P. with the 3rd Battalion of the 334th C.P. as directed. Captain Urbom, the Commanding Officer of Company "C", established liaison with the 333rd Infantry Regiment and made Rcn. of the routes as directed, and had his company ready to comply with any orders he might receive from that headquarters. All officers in the Division Reserve made Rcn. of the routes to Suggesterath, Prummern, Immendorf and Gereonsweiler, so that they would be familiar with the routes in the event that the Reserve had to be committed.

All elements of the Battalion were in Reserve positions and there as no action with the exception that at 0830 one tank in Lt. Oberdan's platoon of Company "B" fired two rounds at a German tank which was seen in the vicinity of 908658- the enemy tank withdrew to the town of Beeck.

The Battalion maintenance section under the command of Captain Simon moved out before daylight to recover the six "A" Company tanks that were mired down in the vicinity of Prummern. They did an excellent job and all tanks were recovered during the day.

The 7th Armored Division, G-3 and G-4 visited the Battalion C.P. at 1010 and the CCR Commander was in the Battalion C.P. at 1230.

Several rounds of heavy enemy artillery fell near the Battalion assembly area during the period.

The two platoons from Company "B" which were attached to the 334th Infantry Regiment were returned to the Battalion assembly area soon after dark with instructions to return to their support positions by 0600 on the following day.

25 November, 1944

Battalion Headquarters maintained close contact with the 334th Headquarters throughout the day and night but there was very little activity. AT 0955 there was reported two enemy tanks just south of Beeck, but they were not seen again.

The S-3 of CCR visited the Battalion C.P. at 1200.

All elements remained on the alert throughout the period with the Battalion assignments unchanged.

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26 November, 1944

There was no change in the Battalion mission and the enemy situation remained the same. All elements remained on their reserve support status with no elements committed during the period.

The CCR, S-3 visited the Battalion Headquarters at 1100.

The following message from the 7th Armored Division Headquarters was received: Your command relieved attachment 84th Infantry Division and attached to CCR 1200 27 Nov 44 for supporting fires for Division Artillery. Division Artillery Representative will guide your Battalion to previously reconnoitered position. Your Battalion will close in new position by 1630 27 Nov 44.

27 November, 1944

At 0800 Major Rollins of the 7th Armored Division Artillery reported to the Battalion Commander with instructions for the move to the indirect fire position east of Ubach. At 0830 the Battalion was alerted to be ready to move at 1200 and the Battalion Commanding Officer, Staff and Company Commanders moved out to locate firing positions for the tanks and to try to locate some billets for the men.

Major Rollins pointed out the general area from which the tanks were to fire which was in the vicinity of 883587 and instructed the Company Commanders to pick out specific locations for their tanks. All of the tanks with 76 MM guns were placed under the command of Captain Pilat set up together with the 105 assault guns and were to be fired under the direction of the 434th Field Artillery Battalion. The tanks were to be fired under the direction of the 440th Field Artillery Battalion. Officers from the 440th and 434th met the Company Officers at the firing positions to survey in the position. Company "D" and Headquarters Company Commanders located billets in the vicinity of 8805823 for their Companies.

The officers returned to the Battalion area at 1100 to guide the Battalion to the new position. The tanks with the 76MM guns under the command of Captain Pilat moved out of the area at 1200, followed by the tanks with the 75MM guns, followed by Battalion Headquarters and Headquarters Company and Company "D". The Battalion closed in the new area at 1300. The Battalion C.P. was set up in a house at 880583.

The remainder of the afternoon was devoted to getting the guns into position to start firing by 0630 the following morning. The tanks were divided into batteries of 8 guns each and each battery was placed under command of the best qualified Officers. There were two batteries of tanks with 76MM guns with 8 tanks to the battery under the command of the "B" Company Commander, Captain Pilat. There were three batteries of tanks with 75MM guns, two batteries had 7 tanks each and one battery had 8 guns and all three batteries were under command of Captain Urbom, the "C" Company Commander. The one battery of 105 MM assault guns were under command of Captain Ahearn. The Field Artillery Officers supervised the laying of all guns. The fire direction centers were set up. A telephone wire was run from 434th Field Artillery Battalion to Captain Pilat and he in turn placed wires to each of the 76MM batteries and the assault gun battery. The fire directions within the batteries was passed on by F.M. radio. The 440th Field Artillery Battalion ran a wire to Captain Urbom and he in turn ran wire to each of his three batteries and the batteries ran wires to each tank so all fire orders in Captain Urbom's batteries were to be transmitted by telephone.

During the afternoon of and night our Service Company transported 150 rounds of ammunition per tank and placed it on the ground by each tank, this involved transporting 6450 rounds of ammunition.

The weather was so bad and visibility was so poor, that the guns could not be registered in, so all firing was to be strictly map firing.

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28 November, 1944

The day was devoted to improving the gun positions and getting ready to fire. At 1000 the Division G-3 visited the C.P. at 1330 the Commanding General was in the C.P. and at 1615 the Commanding Officer of CCR was in the C.P.

At 1200 the I and R platoon was ordered to make a Rcn of the routes between the following points: Beggendorf, Setterich, Puffendorf, Gereonswerter, Ederen, Floverich and Loverich, The purpose of this Rcn was to determine the location of the roads and to have guides familiar with the rout as leading to the north and east so they could be used in moving the Battalion in the event we were used to repel a counter-attack.

The platoon was caught in enemy fire on the road between Puffendorf and gereonsweiler and one 1/4 ton vehicle was hit at 930611. The personnel in the vehicle were not hurt but the vehicle was put out of action.

The Battalion Scout Section was given the routes between the following towns to Rcn: Ubach, Wauricken, Geilenkirchen, Suggesterath, Immerdorf, Apwerter and Gereonsweiler.

29 November, 1944

The tanks started firing at 0730 and during the day an average of 80 rounds per tank were fired. The targets fired on were at ranges of between 9000 and 12500 yards. The 105 MM guns were not fired because the range was too great. The ammunition which was fired was replaced by our Service Company.

The Artillery reported that our firing was having very devastating effects on the enemy. Most of the targets were in the vicinity of the town of Lindern.

At 2130 CCR Headquarters ordered us to have one medium tank company alerted for immediate movement at 0800 on the following morning. Company "B" was ordered to be ready to move at 0800 and to stand by for further orders.

30 November, 1944

The tanks fired 2025 rounds of 75 MM ammunition and 1057 rounds of 76 ammunition on this date/ The fire was directed at targets beyond the town of Lindern, which was a range of about 12000 yards which was too great for the 105 assault guns. The artillery reported satisfactory results of the firing.

Company "B" remained on alert status throughout the day but was not moved out of the area.

The Battalion Commanding Officer and the Company Commander of Company "B" were called to CCR Headquarters at 1800. Company "B" was informed that it would relieve Company "A" of the 40th Tank Battalion during the night of the 1st and 2nd of December, 1944, further details in regard to the relief will be obtained later. One tank-dozer from Company "C" was to be attached to the 102nd Infantry Division to be used in making an attack tomorrow in the vicinity of Welz. The tank was dispatched to the unit to which it was attached at 2100.

At 2120 we received notice that the Battalion had been attached to the 102nd Infantry Division and the Battalion Commanding Officer and Executive Officer went to the 102nd Division Headquarters immediately to get further orders. Company Commanders were called to Battalion Headquarters.

(signed)
JOHN P. WEMPLE
Lt. Colonel Infantry
Commanding

2-Incls.
Periodical Reports, Maps and Overlays
Logs.

S E C R E T

S E C R E T

HEADQUARTERS 17TH TANK BATTALION
APO 257 U. S. ARMY

31 December 1944.

Subject: After Action Report, Month of December 1944.

To: The Adjutant General, Washington 25, D. C. (Through Channels)

At 2115 on 30 November 1944, the battalion received notice by telephone that the 17th Tank Battalion had been attached to the 102nd Infantry Division. The Battalion CO and bn Executive Officer went immediately to the HQ of the 102nd Inf Div to get further orders and instructions. Here they found that the 17th Tank Bn was attached to the 406th Inf Regt and this infantry regiment would use at least two companies of medium tanks from the 17th in making an attack on the town of Linnich the following day, 1 Dec 44. Briefly the 102nd Inf Div plan for 1 Dec 44 was for the 405 and 407 Inf Regts to make an early morning attack on the towns of Flaobdorf and Rurdorf and depending upon the success of this operation, the 406th Inf Regt plus elements of the 17th Tank Bn was to move up through the town of Welz and attack and secure the town of Linnich. H-Hour for this operation was to be determined during the following morning and the attack was to be supported by 18 battalions of artillery on the objective from H to H plus 20. It was thought that the tanks and infantry could reach the edge of the Town of Linnich by the time the 20 minute artillery concentration had been delivered.

The battalion Executive Officer returned to the Bn CP at 2200 and briefed the Company commanders on proposed plans for the following day while the bn CO went to Beffendorf to contact the CO of the 406th Inf Regt to get detailed orders. At this time another study was made of aerial photos, uncontrolled mosaics and 1/25000 maps of The area over which the attack was to be made and the latest enemy information was considered.

At 2310 the bn CO returned to the bn Cp and issued the following orders: The 406th Inf Regt would attack with two battalions abreast, the 2n Bn on the left and the 1st Bn on the right. Co "B" of the 17th Tank Bn would support the 2d Bn of the 406th and Co "C" of the 17th would support the 1st Bn of the 406th. The tanks and infantry were to advance together and at least 6 or 8 infantrymen were to be assigned to each tank and these men were to remain right with the tanks and support them at all times. Upon reaching the town, the infantry was to go on in, then lead the tanks into positions where they were needed and direct the tanks in mopping up operations.

Captain Pilat who commanded "B" Co of the 17th was to meet a guide near Puffendorf at coordinate 930609 at 0630 who would lead him to the 2nd Bn CP. He would coordinate with the infantry bn CO the plan for mutual support of the tanks and infantry in the operation. Captain Urbom who commands Co "C" of the 17th Tank Bn was to meet a guide at Ederen at coordinate 953617 at 0730 who would lead him to the CP of the 1st Bn of the 406th where plans for mutual support would be coordinated. The company commanders were ordered to carry at least two junior officers with them to make personal reconnaissance of the approach route to Welz and to make what study they could of the terrain over which they were to attack. The company commanders were ordered to meet the respective Inf Bn Commanders, then make reconnaissance of the area around Welz and to pick out assembly area for their companies. One officer was to remain back with the companies and have them ready to move out by 0800.

1st Lt JOHN S. LAVETT who commands the mortar platoon was ordered to make a reconnaissance of the town of Welz and find a firing position for his platoon so he could move it into position to support the attack.

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Hq, 17th Tank Battalion, After Action Report, Month of December 1944, Cont'd.

Lt Johnson who commands the assault gun platoon was ordered to make a reconnaissance for a position for his guns in the vicinity of Ederen.

Lt Nizenski who commands Co "A" of the 17th was to make a reconnaissance for a reserve position for his company in the vicinity of Puffendorf.

The "D" Co commander, Lt Scharsschmidt was to make a reconnaissance of the route to Welz and he was instructed to have his company alerted by 0930. The bn commander thought that it might be necessary to use the light tanks to get ammunition, fuel and supplies to the medium companies after they had reached the objective at Linnich.

All company officers were instructed to brief their junior officers, platoon sergeants and tank commanders that night and to get all available terrain and enemy information to them at that time. The remainder of the men were to be briefed on the following morning.

The Bn CO stipulated that his forward CP would be established at Ederen with the CP of the 406th Regt and that he would move to that position at 0645. The forward CP was to consist of the Bn CO, his S-3 and S-2 and the I & R platoon. During the night the Bn Communications Officer, Lt Harrison obtained all of the communication data such as call signs, frequencies, etc, for the 406th Regt and got this information to the battalion.

After the company commanders and the separate platoon commanders had contacted the different elements of the Inf Regt and had completed their reconnaissance they were to report to the bn CO at the forward CP at 0900 at which time he hoped to have additional information in regard to the plan.

At 0645 on 1 Dec 44 the Bn CO and the advance CP group moved out for Ederen. The company commanders and other officers moved out at the designated times to perform their missions. The company commanders of B and C Cos found their respective Inf Bns without difficulty.

At 0945 the artillery FO's who were to accompany the two assault companies reported the the Bn rear CP and were guided to the companies with which they were to work.

By 1100 the 406th Regt Commander had designated H-Hour as 1400 so a message was sent to the bn rear CP to have companies B and C and the assault gun and Mortar Platoon to move out and that they would be picked up in route by guides who would take them to the proper positions.

A foot reconnaissance of the area to the northwest of Welz over which the right force was to attack revealed that it was not practical to use more than one platoon of tanks immediately. Therefore all of Company C with the exception of the platoon which was to be used in the assault was assembled just north of Ederen in the vicinity of coordinates 955623. The platoon was to be used in the assault was moved into position in the northeast edge of the town of Welz.

Originally it was planned for Co "B" to go into a forward assembly area just West of Welz in the vicinity of coordinates 957634 but a reconnaissance made on the morning of 1 Dec 44 revealed that this was not practical for the terrain was not suitable for tanks and mines were located in that vicinity. Therefore Co B was moved up through Puffendorf to an assembly position East of Gereonsweiler in the vicinity of coordinates 944635. The company was to attack Northeast to Linnich keeping 3 or 4 hundred yards to the East of the main road between Gereonsweiler to Linnich.

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Hq 17th Tank Bn, After Action Report, Month of December 1944 (Cont'd)

At 1230 Co "A" moved into an assembly position just ___st¹³ of Puffendorf in the vicinity of coordinates 936614. This company was in reserve and the Bn CO did not plan to commit it however, he wanted the company up close enough so that it could be committed quickly in case of an emergency.

The assault gun platoon was moved into position near Ederen where it was tied in with the Infantry Cannon Company to be used to support the attack.

The mortar platoon was moved into position in Welz which had been picked out by the platoon leader.

The following information in regard to this operation was obtained from 1st Lt Lavett, the mortar platoon leader:

"During the morning of 1 Dec 44, after receiving my orders and missions, I made a reconnaissance from Ederen North to and into Welz; chose my positions for firing, then called for my platoon to move up from Boschelen; moved into position in Welz at 1245, and having previously arranged with other mortar platoons leaders how to lay our fire on separate targets, all to fire at H-hour (1400), commenced firing North of Welz beginning at 1000 yard range, increasing 100 yards range every two rounds of WP until I reached the range of 2200 (the town of Linnich) and then I had each of my three mortars search ad traverse separate sections of the town, firing alternately WP and HE heavy. I ceased fire at 1445. During the morning of 2 Dec, I received orders from my Bn CO to lay WP on high ground about 600 yards north of Rurdorf so at approximately 1030 I had my mortars lay a 30 minute concentration. At 1310 I received orders from the Bn CO to return my platoon to bivouac area in Boschelen. I complied"

The following statement was obtained from 1st Lt HENRY P. JOHNSON, who commands the assault gun platoon:

"The assault guns of Hq Co, 17th Tank Bn moved into position at (95.40-61.50) about 400 yards South of Ederen at 1400, 1 Dec 44. They were attached to the Cannon Company of the 407th Inf. The guns were surveyed and laid by the 407th and fire orders were received thru the FDC of the 407th. The Assault Guns took part in a rolling barrage preceding the advance of the infantry assault West and North of Welz on to Linnich. Some harassing fire delivered on Purdaef and Flafdorf in the evening of 1 Dec 44. During the night and the following morning, 2 Dec 44, fire was delivered on installations on the far bank of the Roer River. A total of 204 rounds were expended, all HE. At 1400, 2 Dec 44, the platoon returned to present position".

Captain ROBERT F. URBOM, who commands Co "C" of the 17th Tank Bn has the following to say in regard to this action:

"Company "C", 17th Tank Bn was assigned to initially support the first Bn of the 406th Inf Regt with the mission of proceeding North from Welz to seize the town of Linnich. This force was to be the right assault force. It was decided that, due to the terrain, only one platoon of tanks should be used initially. The company bulldozer was attached to this platoon. To this force, a platoon of Infantry was attached and this force was to precede the rest of the infantry bn which was to move in a column of companies in the order of C, B, and A Companies. At 1400 hours the tank and infantry platoons crossed the line of departure heading in a North Easterly direction and advanced about 400 yards; at this time they were in a column format on. They were in a fairly large draw with high banks on both sides. The tank platoon leader contacted the infantry platoon leader and requested him to send a man forward to the end of the draw to observe. This was done and as the man was forward observing, he was fired upon by rifle, and machine gun and was pinned down. The tanks opened fire and covered this man enabling him to return safely.

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¹³ The first two letters of this word are obliterated by a hole punched in the page.

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Hq 17th Tank Bn, After Action Report, Month of December 1944, (Cont'd)

Immediately upon his return a heavy barrage of arty and mortar fire was placed upon the platoons. The platoon of infantry withdrew to the town leaving the tanks. The tank platoon leader requested permission to withdraw back to where the infantry were and this permission was given. Shortly afterwards the Bn CO decided to proceed forward with his infantry and to leave the tanks in their position as it was thought that the movement would draw less arty and mortar fire without the tanks. The infantry moved forward this time and proceeded on to their objective leaving the tank platoon in Welz".

The plan of attack for Company B, of the 17th Tank Bn which company was to support the 2nd Bn of the 406th Inf Regt on the left flank thrust on Linnich was for the tanks to move out from a position East of Puffendorf in the vicinity of coordinates 934614 and to attack to the Northeast keeping generally parallel with the main road from Puffendorf to Gereonsweiler to Linnich and keeping three or four hundred yards to the East of the road. The infantry was to move out from the town of Welz and join the tanks along the line from coordinates 956637 to 949644 and to move along with the tanks to the objective. The tanks were to attack in the formation of two platoons abreast and in line with one platoon in line following closely in reserve. The left assault platoon was to move around to the left of the objective, the town of Linnich and take up a position in the vicinity of coordinates 963655 to 967657 and the right assault platoon was to take up a position to the right in the vicinity of 868653 to 971654. The reserve platoon was to move straight into the town with the infantry and help clean out the town. A tank dozer which had been attached to the company was to fill in the canal which was in the line of attack so the tanks could pass. The 105mm assault gun was to support the attack as the company commander saw fit to use it.

Company "B" moved out of the assembly area near Puffendorf at 1330 and made contact with the infantry on the line of departure in the vicinity of 957644 at 1408, as planned, and the tanks and infantry continued the attack. At 1400 our arty started the heavy concentration on the town of Linnich and placed smoke on the high ground to the right. The tanks moved right with the infantry until they reached a point in the vicinity of coordinates 963652 to 966653 where they were stopped by heavy AT fire from the East, North and Northwest. At this point the tanks moved into a position which gave them some protection from the areas from which the enemy AT fire was coming and they moved back and forth placing fire on the enemy positions. Lt. Hardin who commanded the right assault platoon reported an enemy AT gun at 970653. He fired on it and the company commander called for arty on it through the FO that was in one of his tanks. Later it was found that the gun was knocked out by our tank and arty fire.

At 1442, Lt Hummel who commanded the left assault platoon reported an enemy tank in the vicinity of 964655. He fired on the tank and it withdrew. At the same time Lt Hummel reported an AT gun in the vicinity of 968655. The tanks fired on it and the FO placed artillery on it but in the meantime the AT gun got a hit in the turret of Lt Hummel's tank and another tank in his platoon which was commanded by Sgt Baldwin. The two tanks were not immobilized but Lt Hummel was critically wounded and his gunner and loader were wounded. Sgt Baldwin, his gunner and loader were wounded so the tanks and crews were evacuated to the rear. Tec 4 Brai who was the driver in Sgt Baldwin's tank demonstrated extreme courage and coolness in getting his tank and wounded crew back to the rear. Details of Tec 4 Brai's actions may be found in the recommendation for a citation which has been submitted.

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Hq 17th Tank Bn, After Action Report, Month of December 1944 (Cont'd)

After the tanks had been stopped, the infantry continued their attack on into town. By this time it was getting dark and the infantry was to send back guides to lead the tanks into the town into the positions where they were needed. The tanks were in a position which was fairly well protected from AT fire but they were receiving heavy arty and mortar fire as well as small arms fire from the East, North and West. The infantry had reported mines on the roads in the vicinity of 964656 and we had been drawing AT fire from that direction so it was obvious that it would be necessary to cross the canal and enter the town from the Southeast. The tanks fired on the town and furnished cover by fire as the infantry moved into the town.

During the early part of the night Capt Pilat got his hand caught in the turret hatch of his tank and was painfully injured and evacuated. Lt Oberdan assumed command of the company and proceeded with the task of getting the tanks into the town. Lt Oberdan and Sgt Parker dismounted from their tanks and went into the town to contact the infantry and make plans for getting infantry guides back to the tanks to lead them into position. He also made a dismounted reconnaissance of the canal and personally supervised the work of the tank dozer in preparing a crossing on the canal for the tanks. The tanks were moved across the canal into an assembly area in the vicinity of 968653 where the infantry guides came down to pick up the tanks and lead them into position. The tanks got into their new assembly position by 0730 on 2 December 1944.

When the guides came down to pick up the tanks they reported that most of the street streets in town were mined so it was necessary to lead the tanks in without using the roads. Lt Oberdan dismounted from his tank and assigned the tanks to the infantry guides. At about 1000 while performing his job, Lt Oberdan was wounded by arty fire and evacuated. Lt Hardin the only remaining officer in the company assumed command.

Lt Hardin personally contacted the Inf Bn CO and supervised the moving of the tanks around in the town to the points where the infantry wanted them. Lt Hardin did a superior job in handling the company after he took it over.

At 1330 on 2 Dec 44 we received notice from the higher Hq that companies A, C, the assault gun platoon and the mortar platoon would not be needed any longer and that Company "B" would be relieved by Company "A" of the 771st Tank Bn. sometime during the night. The assault and mortar platoons and companies A and C were returned to the assembly area in the vicinity of coordinates 880583.

Lt Hardin met the company commander of Co "A" of the 771st Tank Bn in the vicinity of 963656 at 1715 and made detailed plans for the relief of his company. Lt Hardin explained how his tanks were located in the town and arranged to lead the 771st tanks into position. This relief was not to take place until 2400 because the infantry did not want the tanks to move in the town until that time. The 771st finally started moving in at 0030 on the 3d of Dec 44 and the relief was completed by 0100. Co "B" and the advance CP group closed in the original bivouac area at 0200 on 3 Dec 44.

Casualty for this action were: Three (3) officers and seven (7) EM from Co "B" wounded and evacuated. Three (3) men from Co "B" were wounded but not evacuated. Two (2) tanks from Co "B" were disabled but were recovered and sent to Division maintenance for repairs.

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Hq 17th Tank Bn, After Action Report, Month of December 1944 (Cont'd)

3 December 1944

By 0200 all elements of the 17th Tank Battalion had returned to the original bivouac area just east of Ubach in the vicinity of coordinates 877586. The Battalion was officially relieved from attachment to the 102nd Infantry and reverted to the 7th Armored Division control as of 1200 3 December, 1944 and the unit was again placed in CCR.

4 December 1944 through 9 December 1944

The Battalion remained in the bivouac area east of Ubach throughout this period. All personnel was billeted in what remained of the houses in this area. The billets were such that the men were reasonably comfortable even though the weather was very disagreeable. The weather was cold with some rain and snow every day. The Battalion S-4 arranged for showers for the men in a nearby mine and the men were transported to the showers in Service Company trucks. All of the mens feet were inspected daily and the men were compelled to take care of their feet, thus eliminating the Trenchfoot problem.

The period was devoted to training and rehabilitation. Subject covered in the training schedule was: Radio Procedure, gyro-stabilizer, orientation, platoon control, map reading, fire orders, crew drill, platoon problems and indirect fire.

On 8 December, 1944 Company "B" received indirect fire training under the supervision and control of "Woven". Companies "C" and "D" conducted platoon problems on this date.

During this period the I and R Platoons and the Battalion Scout Section were given special training in dismounted scouting and patrolling and mounted Rcn work.

On 9 December 1944 the Battalion was attached to the 84th Infantry Division for the purpose of supporting that Division in an attack to the north. This proposed attack or operation was to be a coordinated move by the British, the 7th Armored Division and the 84th Infantry Division. The plan was briefly for the British, on "D" Day, to attack to the east and take the towns of Ronderath, Horst and Porselen. On this same day, combat command B of the 7th Armored Division was to take the town of Brachelen and at the same time, the 334th Infantry Regiment of the 84th Infantry Division was to clear out the Wurm, Flahstrap AND Honsdorf triangle. On "D" plus one, the 84th Infantry Division with the 17th Tank Battalion attached, was to clear the area in the Randerath Brachelen, Lindern triangle and after consolidating this position, they were to move on and take the town of Himmerich to the north. "D" Day for this operation was to be announced by the British and they stated that they would not attack until weather conditions were favorable and the terrain in such condition that they could use their armor effectively which meant that it would be several days at least before the attack.

The Battalion Commander and staff contacted the 84th Infantry Division Headquarters immediately to begin working on plans for the attack. The 84th Division plans was to attack with two regiments abreast, the 333rd on the right and the 335th Infantry Regiment on the left. The 333rd Infantry Regiment was to jump off from our line just north of Lindern on "D" Day plus one. This Regiment planned to attack in one column of Battalions and column of Company's AND Company "A" of the 17th Tank Battalion was attached to the regiment to support their attack. The Regimental objective was the high ground in the vicinity of 937683. Company "C" of the 17th Tank Battalion, was attached to the 335th Infantry Regiment which regiment was to attack on "D" Day plus one from the vicinity of Flahstraf and Honsdorf to the north and east and secure the high ground in the vicinity of 920684.

The remainder of the 17th Tank Battalion, which was Company "B", Company "C", the assault gun platoon and the mortar platoon were to be held in Division Reserve, to be committed when and as the Division saw fit.

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Hq 17th Tank Bn, After Action Report, Month of December 1944 (Cont(d))

The Battalion Commander and staff contacted each of the infantry Regiments, to which our Tank Companies were attached and made arrangements for the Company Officers to get in contact with the Battalions with which they would work. There were many enemy concrete pill boxes in each of the Regimental Zones of attack and detailed plans were made as to just how each pill box would be attacked. The Infantry Regiments planned to use the fire power of the tanks in the attack more than the assault power for it was feared that A.T. mine fields might be encountered in the zones of action. The terrain over which the attack was to be made, was flat with practically no cover or firing positions for tanks and at this time, much of the terrain was too soft and muddy for tanks to use. It was finally decided that the tanks would take good defilade firing positions and fire on certain designated pill boxes to keep them buttoned up while the infantry moved up to other pill boxes and enemy positions.

The 84th Infantry Division ordered the 17th Tank Battalion to remain in its present position as a Division Reserve for the time being, with one medium tank Company on a strict alert at all times.

10 December 1944 through 16 December 1944

During the period of 10 December 1944 through 16 December 1944, everyone in the Battalion devoted every minute to getting ready for the contemplated attack. The Battalion Commander and staff stayed in very close contact with 84th Infantry Division Headquarters and the Regimental Headquarters and the Company Commanders and Company Officers were in contact with and made plans with the Battalions and Companies with which they were to work. All Officers made extensive Rcn of routes to the front line assembly positions. Careful map and aerial photo studies were made of the area which we were to attack and all of the Officers in the two assault Companies, Company "C" and Company "A" were carried on Rcn in our Division Artillery Cub Planes over the area. The Battalion Communication Officer borrowed some 300 SCR radios from the 84th Division and installed them in our Company Commanders tanks so that we could maintain radio contact with the infantry.

During this period, each tank platoon in each of the three medium tank companies worked a problem or exercise with some Company in the Infantry Division, which was designated to perfect tank Infantry coordination in attacking pill boxes.

In addition to the ground Rcn, Aerial Rcn, and map and aerial photo studies, all Officers and Tank Commanders were given sand table instructions in regard to the planned attack. And in so far as was possible, details of the plan were handed down to each and every man in the Battalion.

At 2000 on 16 December, 1944, we were informed that the Rcn had been relieved from attached to the 84th Infantry Division and that we had reverted back to the 7th Armored control and were again in CCR. After some time we were informed that the Battalion was on a 30 minute alert and that we would move out either that night or early the next morning. At 2200 we received notice from CCR that the 17th Tank Battalion would cross the I.P. at 0853 on 17 December 1944 and move south along highway N 26 through Herzogenrath, Aachen, Eupen, Malmedy, Ligneville and into an assembly area just south of Recht. We were informed that there had been a break through somewhere to the south but the extent of the break-through and our exact mission was not known to us at that time. A meeting of Company Commanders was called immediately and the routes of march and march order was issued. The march order was Battalion Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Company "C", Company "A", Company "B", Company "D" and Service Company and the kitchens were to march with the companies. We were informed that the route would be marked, however, the Battalion Commander ordered the I and R platoon to precede the column by one hour to place any additional guides on the road that might be necessary.

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Hq 17th Tank Battalion, After Action Report, Month of December 1944 (Cont'd)

17 December 1944

The Battalion crossed the IP at Boschelen at 0853 and closed in the assembly area just south of Recht at 1430. Our billeting Officer and detail who had joined the CCR billeting detail on the previous day guided the Battalion into this area.

The Battalion Commander did not know what the enemy or friendly situation was so he deployed the Battalion in an all-around defensive position. CCR Headquarters was in the town of Recht and Battalion Staff Officers went there for orders and information, but this Headquarters had not received information or orders from higher Headquarters. By 1500 we had contacted Artillery elements of the 106th Infantry Division and learned that the enemy was in the town of Lignerville and that the enemy had broken through to our south and that CCB of the 7th Armored Division was setting up a defensive position to the east of St. Vith to try to hold that town. We also heard that the enemy was in the town of Born. Since the Battalion Commander did not know the disposition of friendly troops and had very little knowledge of the enemy situation he decided to deploy his troops as best he could to defend and hold his present position. The Battalion CP was set up in the vicinity of 810931; Company "C" was deployed generally along a line from 808934 to 811940. Company "A" was deployed along line 807933 to 801929.

Service Company was just to the rear of Company "A" and Company "D" was assembled in the vicinity of 810931 to protect to the rear and act as a reserve to fill in anywhere needed. Company "B" was moved to the vicinity of 820935 to protect our right flank. Company "B" established a road block at 826936 with one platoon of tanks and another block at 829916 with another platoon. A section of tanks from Company "D" was placed in the vicinity of 820921 to block the trail from the east. The terrain on which we were set up was higher than the town of Recht and was a fairly good position to defend from an attack from the north and northwest, but our flanks and rear were very vulnerable to a dismounted infantry attack for the area was wooded. The railroad track to our front was a tank barrier for it was on a high grade and the road to Recht passed under the railroad to our immediate front, this was the logical avenue of approach to our position from the town of Recht and we had this point adequately covered by fire.

18 December 1944

At 0100 we received reports that the enemy was approaching the town of Recht from the east and Company "C" was ordered to enter the town and block the road from the east in the vicinity of 800945. A section of tanks from Company "A" was moved to a position in the vicinity of 817942 to block the trail coming in from the north. Company "D" was moved down closer to the railroad to stop any attempted infiltration from the town of Recht. Service Company and the Battalion Maintenance Section were ordered to move back to Sart Lez St. Vith and to try to tie in with some of the other Division Trains and they finally ended up during the night in the vicinity of Cromback with elements of CCB of the 7th Armored Division and later they moved on west to the vicinity of Laroche.

The Mortar Platoon and the assault gun Platoon were put into position in the vicinity of 809931 so that they could place fire on the underpass or any area to our front.

As Company "C" of the 17th Tank Battalion was moving into position east of Recht, they contacted dismounted enemy Infantry with automatic weapons, and bazookas, and this force was supported by at least one or two enemy tanks. While Company "C" was engaging the enemy force, CCR Headquarters moved southwest to the vicinity of Poteau. Since it

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Hq 17th Tank Battalion, After Action Report, Month of December 1944 (Cont'd)

18 December 1944 (Cont'd)

was very dark and the terrain on which Company "C" was trying to fight was muddy and the tanks were having trouble maneuvering and since we had no infantry to keep the enemy bazooka men away from the tanks, and we had no knowledge of the size of the force that was attacking, Company "C" was pulled back to their original position south of the railroad tracks to strengthen the Battalion position. Company "C" was back in position by 0430 and the front line elements reported hearing heavy vehicular movement going into the town of Recht. Some vehicles were identified as enemy tanks, but we could not determine how many tanks had moved into the town. By this time a few dismounted enemy troops had crossed the railroad and were firing S.A. into our Company "C" and "D" positions, but they were repelled by our own S.A. fire.

At 0530 the Battalion CP and the Headquarters group were displaced a short distance to the south to the wooded area in order to conceal the vehicles in the woods in the vicinity of 812928.

Before daylight an enemy tank supported by an undetermined number of enemy infantry tried to pass through the underpass and into our position, but when our Company "C" fired upon it, the tank withdrew. It is thought that our tanks got at least one hit on the enemy tank, but it was recovered by the enemy before daylight.

The Battalion Commander ordered the Companies to take advantage of all the cover and concealment which was available such as buildings and a few trees and to hold their positions at all cost. During the night Company "D" had broken the track on one tank and had had two others bogged down or stuck so that they could not be recovered and Company "C" had their tanks stuck.

During the day of the eighteenth the enemy did not attempt to attack our position, but any exposed movement in our area drew small arms fire from the direction of the railroad track, and we drew some tank or AT fire from the town of Recht.

During the afternoon Company "C" of the 38th Armored Infantry Battalion commanded by Captain East was attached to the Battalion and reported to the Battalion Commander. The Infantry, although it was not sufficient, was assigned to Companies "A", "C" and "D" to outpost the tanks, but they were not moved into position until after dark for they could not get into position without exposing themselves to enemy small arms fire and mortar fire.

The Battalion did not have an artillery forward observer with it, but during the day we did get our artillery on observed targets by relaying requests by radio through CCR Headquarters. We requested artillery on the enemy dug in positions along the railroad track and on the road junctions in the vicinity of 819949, 799945, 801931, and 805934 and received it. The artillery was adjusted by our front line platoon leaders and Company Commanders and the concentrations were numbered and called for at various times during the night of 18 and 19th of December. It is felt that our Artillery plus our Battalion Mortar Platoon and Battalion assault gun platoon contributed largely to the enemy to launch a large scale attack against our position. During the day seven enemy tanks were observed in the vicinity of 792941 and were fired on by our artillery and our tanks, but it is not known how much damage we did to them. We brought mortar, artillery and direct tank fire on the depot in the vicinity of 801931 for the enemy was observed digging in around that point, and we thought that they were using the building as an OP. What we estimated to be five enemy tanks were observed moving around in the town of Recht during the day, and there was considerable movement on the roads leading into Recht from the east and north. Several ambulances and halftracks were moving south on the Poteau road. During the morning our "B" Company Platoon in the vicinity of 826936 knocked out an enemy scout car and reported hearing heavy vehicles moving to their east.

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Hq 17th Tank Bn, After Action Report, Month of December 1944 (Cont'd)

Several dismounted patrols moved up close to this block from the east and north, but they were turned back by machine gun fire from our tanks.

Due to the lack of Infantry the Battalion I and R platoon was attached to the "B" Company platoon which was located at 826936 with the mission of outposting the tanks. Lt. Colman, the Platoon leader was wounded by enemy machine gun fire in the afternoon while attempting to get his platoon into position around the tanks.

During the afternoon the road block in the vicinity of 829915 was strengthened by the AT platoon of Company "C" of the 38th Armored Infantry Battalion. The two towed 57MM AT guns which were put into position at this point, and they coordinated their local security and fields of fire with the "B" Company tank platoon.

Throughout the night of 18th and 19th December 1944 small patrols moved into our positions from the vicinity of Recht. Several times flares were fired by the enemy and bazookas were fired at our tanks, but no large scale attack was attempted. Every time vehicle movement was heard in the vicinity of the underpass, artillery, mortar and assault gun fire was placed on that point. We also placed artillery fire on the road junctions which had been registered in during the afternoon. The Infantry which was outposting our tanks laid down heavy small arms fire and automatic weapons fire on the enemy patrols and thus prevented any large scale infiltration, however two or three snipers did get through the line and took up positions in buildings in our area.

Heavy vehicular movement was heard in the town of Recht throughout the night and Company "B" reported dismounted patrol activity in their areas and vehicular movement on their east flank.

19 December 1944

Throughout the day we continued to direct artillery, mortar, assault gun and tank fire on any observed movement in the town of Recht. At 1540 the CCR Commander visited our CP and informed us that two artillery forward observers from the 440th Field Artillery Battalion were on the way to us and the observers reached our position shortly after that. Lt. Collins, one of the Field Artillery observers was assigned to Company "A", and he immediately took his position with that company and started putting artillery on enemy positions. Lt. Schwartz was attached to the "B" Company platoon in the vicinity of 829915 so that he could protect our right flank and rear with artillery.

At 1545 we received notice that we were transferred to CCB and for the present our mission was to remain the same, that is we were to hold our present position, and we were to send a Battalion officer and an Officer who was familiar with our situation, to CCB Headquarters in Cromback. Lt. Felton was sent to CCB Headquarters immediately with our situation and Lt. Col. Warren who was returning to his Headquarters was to send our regular Battalion Officer who was at CCR Headquarters to CCB Headquarters.

At 1730 several rounds of heavy mortar shells fell in our area, one shell hitting near the Battalion CP. half-track and wounded the Battalion Intelligence Sergeant, a radio operator who was in the track and another enlisted man. Another shell hit close to one of the assault gun platoon tanks and wounded two men. The Company "D" Commander was also slightly wounded and evacuated.

Throughout the night of the 19th and 20th December 1944 we used our artillery extensively to our front and on the right or east flank. Strong dismounted patrols were active to our front and on the east flank. The "B" Company platoon which was in the vicinity of 826936 reported enemy tank motors and half-tracks to their east throughout the night, and they felt sure that the enemy was assembling for an attack. One group of dismounted enemy estimated to be at least a company moved up close to the platoon somewhere in the vicinity of 827936, and the Field Artillery observer placed several concentrations of artillery in that area and the enemy did not advance any closer to our position. Of course the forward observer could not observe

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Hq 17th Tank Bn, After Action Report, Month of December 1944 (Cont'd)

the fire on the right flank, but it was adjusted by Lt Hoffman the tank platoon leader. The artillery was used extensively throughout the night and we feel that it kept the enemy from closing on our position. We cannot praise to highly the work of our artillery, for we were definately in a tough spot, with the enemy on our North West, North, East and with a strong possibility of an attack from the South or our rear, and we are of the opinion that our artillery discouraged the enemy from closing in on our position. This action also reemphasized that every tanker is a potential forward observer for our artillery can deliver the goods if they get the requests and instructions. In an armored Division, we have always found it possible to get the requests back by radio even though they might have to be relayed through several stations.

20 December 1944

Prior to 0800 on this date we received orders from CCB to move the Battalion and the attacked Infantry to the town of Sart Lez, St Vith, at coordinates 816899.

The Battalion Commander called a meeting of all the Company Commanders and issued the following orders for withdrawal. The forward observer was to call for smoke along the railroad at 0920, to screen our withdrawal and the leading element was to start moving at 0925, or as soon thereafter as the smoke became effective. The units were to move out in the following order: Company A, the Infantry Company, Battalion Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Company B, Company D and Company C. Company C was to hold their position and fight a rear guard action, if it became necessary, until all elements had withdrawn. At the time Company A started moving, and on order of Battalion the forward observer who was located in the vicinity of 827917 was to place smoke to the South and South East to screen our movement from the enemy who was located at Neider Emmels and to the East. At the same time the tank platoon, which was located at this point was to move out and form a protective screen, generally along the North-South road, to protect the column as it passed. The smoke was laid at 0920 and Company A of the 17th moved out. Prior to this, time, the Infantry had been moved to the rear and mounted in their halftracks. At 0930 the B Company platoon, which was to protect the East flank of the column knocked out an enemy light tank, in the vicinity of 830918 and captured an enemy halftrack with four prisoners. The withdrawal proceeded very successfully and the enemy did not pursue us, or attempt to stop the withdrawal. At the time we received orders to withdraw we were instructed to put one medium tank Company and one platoon of infantry in a definite position just East of Sart Lez, St. Vith to block the roads from the East. This force was to tie in with elements of the Rcn Bn. and the 31st Tank Bn. and was to be under the command of Lt Col BOYLAN. Company A of the 17th was designated by the battalion commander for this job and the Battalion Commander pulled the Company off the road just East of the town as directed and supervised their going into position and the company was tied in with the other units. Company A was in position by 1015 and the remainder of the force was closed in the town of Sart Lez, St. Vith by 1200.

The Battalion Executive Officer went to Lt Col BOYLAN'S C.P. for further orders. At 1230 the Battalion received orders to move the force to an assembly area near the town of Bovigny and to report to Lt Col JONES at that point for further orders. The route was to be through Henderhauser, Crombach, Braunlauf, Maldinger, Beho and Bovigny. The Battalion minus Company A remained with the task force BOYLAN and it's actions while in that task force will be found in their report.

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Hq 17th Tank Bn, After Action Report, Month of December 1944 (Cont'd)

At Bovigny the Battalion Commander found that his force was under the command of Lt Col Jones, who commanded a force known as task force JONES-HERALD, he also learned that the 17th Tank Battalion minus Company A and plus what remained of the Infantry Company was actually the Division mobile reserve and that Lt Col JONES was not to commit the Battalion without permission from the Division Commander. So the Battalion was pulled into an assembly position in Bovigny, with orders to remain on a strict alert, and to await orders. The Battalion was used for the local security but was not given any other mission. The Battalion remained in position at Bovigny throughout the night of 20th and the 21st of December.

During the action at Recht the Battalion sustained the following vehicular losses: Company A lost two tanks, which were disabled by AT fire, Company C lost six tanks and one assault gun, three of the tanks and the assault gun were disabled by enemy bazooka and AT fire and three tanks were mired down in the mud and could not be recovered at the time we withdrew, Company D lost five light tanks, two of which were disabled by enemy fire and one with a broken track, and two were mired down in the mud and could not be recovered. One Service Company two and one half ton truck was stuck in an area that was under heavy enemy fire and was destroyed. Personnel losses for the period were two officers and six Enlisted Men, all of which were evacuated.

21 December 1944

The Battalion remained on strict alert in the Bovigny area throughout the day. The Battalion Commanding Officer and Staff stayed close contact with the JONES-HERALD Headquarters, to stay as well up with the situation as possible. The Battalion was refueled and resupplied with ammunition and rations. Since Lt Col WEMPLE'S force of the 17th Tank Bn (minus Co "A") and what remained of Co "C" of the 38th Inf Bn was the Division Reserve, we knew that we might be committed at any point on the Division front, so at 1730 the Battalion Commander called a meeting of Company Commanders, and gave them all of the friendly and enemy situation which was available, and announced a tentative march order of Bn I & R Plat., Company "B" 17th, Company "C" 38th, Bn assault gun Plat., Bn Mortar Plat., Bn Hq & Hq Co, and Company "D". All elements were instructed to remain on the strictest alert.

At 2050 the Bn Commander, the Bn S-2, and Lt Col JONES went to Division Headquarters at Vielsalm to get orders and make plans for the next days operations. Lt Col WEMPLE was ordered to move the 17th Tank Bn (minus Co "A") early the following morning to the vicinity of Crombach and to report to the CCB Commander for further orders. Company "C" of the 38th Inf. was detached from the 17th control.

During the day of the 21st. our Service Company moved from the vicinity of Laroche to an area in the vicinity of Jouhieval and joined up with the CCB trains. In making this move the Company ran into some enemy activity, but managed to get through by a route to the north without losses. Some fuel and ammunition trucks had been sent to us by the Service Company just before we moved out of Recht and we had practically, re-supplied there. Re-supply was completed while in Bovigny on the 21st. Our ration supply was supplemented by some rations which our S-4 picked up at a ration dump at Gouvy.

The time of departure for the move to Crombach was announced as 0515 on the following morning and the march order was to remain the same with the exception that Company "C" of the 38th was not to make the trip.

22 December 1944

The leading elements crossed the I P at 0515 on the march to Crombach. It was very dark at this time, and it was raining and snowing so the march was very slow. In addition to this, the traffic to the west from Crombach was heavy and the road was very congested. However, we managed to keep the column moving and arrived in the vicinity of Crombach at 0755.

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Hq 17th Tank Bn, After Action Report, Month of December 1944 (Cont'd)

The Bn Commander and the Company Commanders reported to the CCB Commander at Crombach for further orders. Company "C" was ordered to move through Crombach to the east and take up a position on the high ground in the vicinity of 837866, and Company "B" was given a mission of securing a position to the north of the town of Noundorf, but their orders were changed before they got into position. Company "C" moved on into and drew heavy AT fire from their right front. Two tanks were hit and damaged by the AT fire.

Company "D" was sent to Hinderhausen to join up with Lt Col BOYLAN'S force and help hold that position.

At 0830 the Bn EX and Command half-track moved back to the vicinity of Commanster where CCB Hq was now located. This was done to insure communications with CCB Hq. The Bn Commander and S-2 set up an advance C.P. in the town of Crombach in conjunction with the "Wyoming" (31st Tank Bn) C.P. The I & R Platoon and the Bn Med. Det. remained in Crombach.

At 1250 the CCB Commander ordered Lt Col WEMPLE to take command of a force consisting of B and C of the 17th, the mortar platoon, and the assault gun platoon, and Companies A & B of the 38th Inf Bn. Company A of the 38th had about 110 men and three AT guns, and Company B had about 45 men. Lt Col WEMPLE was to use this force in setting up a defensive line along the high ground to the east of Crombach, generally along the line from coordinates 819866 to 825855. In setting up this position, Company B of the 17th was deployed along the line from 819864 to 825855. Company B of the 38th Inf was attached to this company and it's 45 men were dug-in in a position to the front of the Company B tanks in the vicinity of 824857 to screen the tanks as much as possible. The Company A men of the 38th were dug-in in a position in the vicinity of 819864 to 816866. The three AT guns of Company A were set up in the vicinity of 819864 to cover the road to the north and the area to the east, this position offered excellent fields of fire in both directions. Company C was assembled in the vicinity of 815862 with the mission of holding itself on a strict alert as a mobile reserve and to cover the area to the north and south with fire. The mortar platoon was moved into position in the vicinity of 819862 with the mission of being ready to fire on targets to the east and north. The assault gun platoon was put in position in the vicinity of 808863 as a roadblock and to place fire down the RR track to the east. The railroad running generally east & west between Crombach and Noundorf was Lt Col WEMPLE'S left or north boundry. The RR is in a deep cut, practically all of the distance between the two towns and it offered a possible avenue of approach to Crombach from the east, particularly for dismounted troops. There was an overpass over the RR at 819867 and we had this point covered by Inf AT guns, two tanks from Company B of the 17th, and the mortars were in a position to lay fire on it. During the afternoon we observed enemy vehicular movement in the town of Noundorf and enemy tanks were reported in the vicinity of 830870.

At 1630 a F.O. from our Div. Arty. reported to Lt Col WEMPLE and he was assigned to Company B. The F.O. did not have a tank so he was placed in one of the Company B tanks, and he immediately began firing on enemy positions to the east.

At coordinates 828848 the patrol did not contact the 9th Armd Div. at the appointed spot, but they found them about 3/4 of a mile further east from that point. The patrol asked the 9th to send elements to tie in with us but the 9th said that they could not do it.

Just about dark an undetermined number of enemy Inf supported by at least one tank was reported advancing from the east to west along the RR track. Our F.O. attempted to place Artillery fire on them and Company C was ordered to move a platoon of tanks closer to the RR Track and to place fire on the route. Our two assault guns were moved

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Hq 17thTank Bn, After Action Report, Month of December 1944 (Cont'd)

to a position in the vicinity of 813858 to block the Noundorf road. The TD's and some Inf elements which were blocking the RR and road in the vicinity of 808863 and protecting our left flank withdrew to the south-west part of town to the vicinity of coordination 812857, and the Wyoming C.P. moved back to the CCB C.P. at Commanster. At this time Lt Col WEMPLE ordered the Med Det. to move back to a position south and west of Crombach. and he moved his Command Tank to a position in the south-west edge of town at coordinates 812857. By 1830 at least one enemy tank and an undetermined number of enemy Inf were in the northwest part of the town of Crombach. An enemy tank moved up to the vicinity of 819867 and fired on our Inf. positions in the vicinity of 819864 and knocked out one AT gun. Enemy Inf. also attacked this position. Our B Company left flank tanks located in the vicinity of 821864 fired on the enemy tank and Inf. and held their position.

By 1950 most of Company A of the 38th Inf had withdrawn and our Company C was receiving heavy AT fire and small arms fire from the RR track to their north and east, and AT fire from a position somewhere in the vicinity of 809863 which was to their rear. Enemy Inf. had infiltrated into their tank positions and were firing on the tanks with small arms & bazookas, and the tanks had no friendly Inf to protect them from the enemy bazooka men. By 2015 things were really getting hot in the Company C section and on the left flank of Company B. The enemy was using flares and bazookas and Company C was drawing AT fire from three sides, north, east, and west. At about 2125 Capt URBOM, who commanded Company C of the 17th, lost control of his Company and ordered his men to abandon their vehicles, for he thought he was completely surrounded. The Bn Commander did not know about this action until about 2145, and by 2210 he had the men back in their tanks, and the Company Commander had the situation under control again.

The assault gun platoon received several rounds of bazooka fire at 2135, but did not knock out any vehicles. At this time the assault guns were pulled back about 200 yards to tie in more closely with the defensive setup which Lt Col WEMPLE was organizing on the south-west edge of town. About half of Company A of the 38th Inf returned to the vicinity of the 17th C.P., but the men were in such condition that they could not be reorganized and put back in the line, so they were used in setting up the defensive position on the west side of town. Capt READ and three of his TD's from the 814th T.D. Bn assisted greatly in setting up this defensive position. By 2215 things had quieted down considerably with only small arms fire coming from the town, and very little activity in C and B Company sectors. Lt Col WEMPLE ordered all troops to remain on strict alert and that we would hold all positions until we were ordered to withdraw.

At 2150 we received word that a task force was being sent from the unit on our right to retake the town of Crombach and help us out of our trouble, this help was to arrive prior to 2400. Throughout the night there was enemy patrol activity along the Company B line, but the company held and repelled all attempts to get through their positions. Enemy tank movement was reported in the town of Noundorf and in the vicinity of 820870. One enemy tank attempted to come up the road from Noundorf through the Company B position, but was fired on and it withdrew. One enemy tank got around the left flank of Company B, and moved up behind their position to the vicinity of 817862 at which point it was fired on by Company C tanks and by the mortar platoon, and it withdrew back toward the RR. Company B of the 38th Inf which was with Company B of the 17th held it's position well throughout the night.

23 December 1944

At 0317 a 15 man friendly patrol which was lost from an engineer outfit on our right flank came into our mortar platoon position, and after they were identified they dug in around the mortar position to help hold that position until morning.

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Hq, 17th Tank Bn, After Action Report, Month of December 1944 (Cont'd)

23 December 1944 (Cont'd)

About 0400 we received word that we would not get the help from our friends on the right and that the plan had been changed.

At 0500 several rounds of mortar fell in the Battalion CP area, but no damage was done. All elements were again alerted and instructed to be prepared to repel anything that the enemy might throw at us.

At 0610 our "C" Company reported enemy patrol in his position. At 0512 our "B" Company reported enemy patrol in strength on their left flank which was fired on by our tanks, and it was thought that many of the enemy patrol were killed or wounded. The enemy patrol withdrew.

At 0630 Lt. Col. WEMPLE was ordered to withdraw his force to the west. The plan was for the assault guns to move to the road junction at 813858 and fire about 20 rounds of HE to the north east straight down the main street and in any buildings where Germans were known to be. While this was going on, the force which was assembled in the vicinity of coordinates 812857 were to move to the southwest toward Braunlauf, then the assault guns were to follow, then Company "C", then mortar platoon, and Company "B". All Infantry men and men who did not have rides were to be picked up on tanks and carried out by them. Smoke was to be placed on the north and east sides of the town of Cromback. All vehicles except the tanks were to continue to the west along the route of Braunlauf, Maldange, Beho, and Bovigny. The tanks were to assemble on the high ground north and east of Braunlauf in the vicinity of 806847 and await there until all tanks were assembled, then move on to the west. The tank companies were instructed to come out fast and to come out shooting at the town. If the main road was blocked, the tanks were to bypass the town to the south using any way available, trails or even cross country.

The assault guns moved into position at 0718 and started firing and the CP elements started moving west. The town was smoked and Company "C" started moving out. The first tank in Company "C" was knocked out by an enemy AT gun in the vicinity of 813858 and the road was blocked so the remainder of the force by passed the town to the south. There was a small stream crossing on this by-pass route and the three mortar platoon tracks became stuck. The tracks were abandoned and the crews rode out on "B" Company tanks. At 0735 as Company "B" was trying to get out, they knocked out one enemy tank in the south edge of town. Company "B" continued to fire on the town and to place smoke on it. By 0835 all of the vehicles which could be moved were assembled in the vicinity west of Braunlauf and the column started moving on to the west through that town. By this time the enemy had occupied the town of Braunlauf and they fired on our column with S.A., as we passed through. The I & R Platoon leader was wounded in this town and Capt URBOM the "C" Company Commander and Lt OLSON from Company "C" were wounded by snipers.

The action at Cromback and the withdrawal cost the Battalion the following vehicular losses: 4 tanks disabled by enemy fire, 4 tanks stuck and unable to be recovered, 3 half-tracks stuck which could not be recovered. Personnel losses were four officers and tow enlisted men.

The Battalion moved on to an assembly area in the vicinity of Les Baty, arriving there at 1830. Upon arrival at Les Baty the Battalion had the following number of effective combat vehicles left: 18 medium tanks, 4 #105 MM assault gun tanks, and 11 light tanks.

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Hq, 17th Tank Bn, After Action Report, Month of December 1944 (Cont'd)

24 December 1944 (Cont'd)

The Battalion remained in the assembly area at Les Baty until 1500 at which time it moved out to a new assembly area in the vicinity of Izier. The Service Company joined the Battalion at Les Baty and all vehicles were re-supplied with ammunition, fuel, and rations.

The Battalion Commander attended a unit Commander's meeting at CCB where he learned that the situation was still critical and that every available man was needed in the Infantry. The Battalion had 96 men who did not have jobs at the time in the Battalion for their tanks had been knocked out so these men were sent to the 23d Armored Infantry Battalion to fight with the Infantry until we received tank replacements. Seventy of these men were assigned temporarily to Company "A" of the 23d Armored Infantry Battalion and 26 to Company "B" of the 23d Armored Infantry Battalion.

The Battalion Mortar Platoon had lost its vehicles and equipment at Cromback so equipment was improvised for them. They obtained two mortars from tank recovery vehicles and one 2 ½ ton truck from Service Company and a captured German half-track were assigned to the platoon. With this equipment the platoon was ready for action again.

At 1400 the Battalion reverted to CCR control and was ordered to move to an assembly area in the vicinity of Iziers. The Battalion minus Service Company, which remained in Les Baty area, moved out of the assembly area at 1500 and closed in the new area at Iziers at 1610. Here Company "C" of the 33d Engineer Battalion and one platoon of Company "C" of the 38th Armored Infantry Battalion were attached to the Battalion. CCR ordered the Battalion to assign a medium tank company to each of the road blocks at 428998 and 468970 and Company "A" was assigned to the former and Company "C" to the latter. The remainder of the Battalion plus one platoon of Engineers were to remain in the town of Iziers as a mobile reserve. The I & R platoon was to patrol the road between the two blocks.

25 December 1944

At 0300 the Battalion and the attached Engineers and Infantry were alerted for movement to the vicinity of Werbomont at which point the Battalion Commander was to contact an officer from Division Headquarters and get further instructions. At 0415 the Battalion moved out of Iziers and preceded along the route of My, Ville, Malacord, Lantroul, and Werbomont. At Werbomont the attached Infantry was pulled out of the column and sent to the south to the vicinity of Manhay to help CCA which was in a fight at that point. The remainder of the Battalion was halted on the road and all crews stayed on their vehicles for it looked as if it might be necessary to send the whole force down to help CCA at Manhay. Finally at about 0930 the Battalion and the attached Engineers were ordered to pull off the road and take cover in the woods to the west of Werbomont, but everyone was to remain on the strictest alert. The Battalion Headquarters was set up in a building at the road junction at Werbomont and the Battalion Headquarters Company was pulled into an assembly area just north of the road junction. At about 1630 the tank Companies and the attached Engineer Company were moved to an assembly area in the vicinity of Champ-de-Harre. This force was the Division Reserve and was to remain on an alert to be committed where and when the Division needed it. The Executive half-track and the Battalion Headquarters section moved to the Division Tactical Headquarters at St. Antoine at 1800. This was done so that the Battalion Commander would be near at hand to receive orders in case the Division Commander had to commit the Battalion. The Battalion Headquarters maintained contact with the companies by radio throughout the night.

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Hq, 17th Tank Bn, After Action Report, Month of December 1944 (Cont'd)

26 December 1944

During the morning the Battalion S-3 and S-2 set up an advance CP with the Companies in the vicinity of Champ-de-Harre and the Battalion Commander and the Executive Officer maintained the rear near CP at St. Antoine. During the day the Company Commanders made a reconnaissance of the routes and terrain to the south to the vicinity of Manhay. There were many of our minefields in this area and each officer was given an overlay showing their position.

27 December 1944

At 0400 we received an order to send one tank platoon into the town of Manhay to support the 3d Battalion of the 517th Paratroop Battalion which had retaken the town during the preceding afternoon and night. This Para-troop Battalion was to send an officer guide to lead our tanks into position. Lt. Hoffmans platoon of Company "B" was ordered to perform this mission. The platoon moved out of our assembly area at 0730 and at 0830 we received a message from the platoon stating that it was in the town, but that they could not get the tanks into position in the south part of town because a German AT weapon was zeroed in on the road to the south and knocked out anything that tried to move into position in the south part of town, and they placed artillery, mortar, AT and S.A. on our positions in the town. The gunner¹⁴ on one of our tanks was killed by AT fire, but that was the only casualty.

At 1150 the Battalion Commander was in the vicinity of Mont-Derrieux and observed our P-38's bombing some of our own troops. He called by radio and reported this and is was relayed on to the Division Headquarters Where the Air Corps was informed, and the bombing was stopped.

By 1945 Lt. Hoffman reported that he had the situation under control, even though they were still receiving some S.A. and mortar fire.

At 2130 we received a report form higher intelligence that the enemy would attack Manhay during the night or early morning so our troops were warned as well as our reserve troops in the vicinity of Champ-de-Harre.

28 December 1944

The enemy did not attack at Manhay, but all troops remained on the alert throughout the day.

Late in the afternoon we received word that the 2d Battalion of the 517th Para-troop regiment was to move to a position in the vicinity of 532930 with the mission of counter attacking in the event the enemy attacked the town of Manhay. What remained of the 17th Tank Battalion was attached to this 2d Battalion of the 517th for the purpose of supporting any action which the Battalion might have. The Battalion Commander of the 17th Tank Battalion and his S-2 contacted the 517th Regimental Commander and the 2d Battalion Commander and discussed plans for a counter attack. The battalion S-2 with one of the Battalion Command Tanks for communications remained with the 2d Battalion CP as liason between that unit and the 17th Tank Battalion. The 17th Tank Battalion Tanks were to remain in the assembly position at Champ-de-Harre until they were needed. The enemy did not attack during the night so the 2d Battalion of the 517th did not counter-attack.

29 December 1944

There was not an attack during the day and all elements remained in the same places. One tank in the "B" Company platoon which was in Manhay had been disabled by artillery fire and Captain SIMON, the Battalion Ordnance Officer, went into the

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¹⁴ Cpl. Robert J. Kolter of Winona, Minnesota

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Hq, 17th Tank Bn, After Action Report, Month of December 1944 (Cont'd)

29 December 1944 (Cont'd)

town to see about recovering it and the vehicle was recovered by towing it from the town.

During the early evening we received word that the Battalion would be relieved sometime during the night and moved back to the vicinity of Ville with the whole Division for a rehabilitation period.

30 December 1944

At 0405 the Battalion was alerted for movement and at 0454 the Battalion moved to the west through Werbomont en route to Ville. The Battalion closed in the assembly area at Ville at 0630. The remainder of the day was devoted to maintenance and getting the men fixed up as comfortable as possible in billets.

The Battalion was placed under CCA control on this date.

31 December 1944

The Battalion remained in billets in Ville throughout the day and time was devoted to maintenance and rehabilitation. By this time the Battalion had received several vehicular replacements and the Battalion combat vehicular strength was: 2 tanks in Battalion Headquarters, 2 assault guns in Battalion assault gun platoon, 8 tanks and one assault gun in Company "B", 9 tanks in Company "C", 9 tanks and one assault gun in Company "A", and 11 tanks in Company "D". Ninety-two of the men who had been attached to the 23d Armored Infantry Battalion temporarily had returned to the Battalion and 4 of the men were still carried MIA.

(signed)

JOHN P. WEMPLE
Lt Colonel Infantry
Commanding

2-Incls.

Incl 1, log

Incl 2, Messages for period (1 Dec to 31 Dec44)

S-E-C-R-E-T

Headquarters 17th Tank Battalion
APO #257, U.S. Army,

31 January 1945.

Subject: After Action Report, Month of January 1945.

To : The Adjutant General, Washington, 25, D.C. (Through Channels)

On 1 January 1945, the 17th Tank Battalion was billeted in the town of Ville, and Les Baty, Belgium, under the command of Combat Command "A". Battalion Headquarters, and Headquarters Company, and Companies "A", "B", "C" and "D", were in the town of Ville, and Service Company was in the town of Les Baty. On this date the Battalion placed on a one (1) hour alert with the instructions that we might be used in the case of a strong enemy counter-attack anywhere along the general east-west line of Vaux Chavanne, Mahay, and Erezee, or we might be used further to the east.

The Battalion Intelligence and Reconnaissance platoon and Battalion Scout Section had previously made a reconnaissance of the road net as far south as the front lines, and between the north-south highways from Ville, Bomal, Baranx, Erezee and from Harze south through Werbomont to Manhay. The Company Commanders and Platoon leaders as well as the Battalion Commander and staff made a reconnaissance of approach routes from our position to the front lines. Therefore the Battalion was ready to move on one (1) hours notice to any point along the front lines.

2 January 1945

The Battalion was taken off the one (1) hour alert during the morning. Companies "B", "C", and "D", were alerted to move to billets in the town of Les Baty, at 0700 on the following morning; Battalion Headquarters, and Headquarters Company, and Company "A" were to remain in the town of Ville.

The day was devoted to maintenance of vehicles and equipment.

Although the Battalion was not on a strict alert we were instructed to be ready to move out on short notice in case of emergency.

3 January 1945

Companies "B", "C", and "D", moved to billets in the town of Les Baty.

All troops were oriented on the friendly and enemy situation in our sector, and adjacent sectors.

It snowed during the day, and the weather was extremely cold. However the troops were billeted indoors so the cold weather did not bother them.

At 1530 the Battalion Commander called a meeting of all officers in the battalion for a one (1) hour orientation school. Current problems and past battle experiences were discussed at the school, as well as plans for movement in case we were called upon to reinforce the line at any time at any point to our front.

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S-E-C-R-E-T

Hq 17th Tank Bn., After Action Report, Month of January 1945 (Cont'd)

4 January 1945

On this date we started a tank Infantry training program. Combat Command "A" Set up a problem to train small combat teams. The team was to be composed of one (1) company of infantry. One platoon of tanks, and one platoon of engineers. During the morning of this day, one platoon of tanks from company "C" of the 17th Tank Battalion went through the problem with one company of infantry from the 23d Armored Infantry Battalion, and a platoon of engineers from the 33d Armored Engineer Battalion, One platoon from Company "B" of the 17th Tank Battalion ran the same problem in the afternoon.

The units that were not involved in the Combat Command "A" problem devoted their time to maintenance of equipment and vehicles.

5 January 1945

One platoon of Company "A" went through the Combat Command "A" combat team problem with a company of the 23d Armored Infantry battalion, and a platoon of the 33d Armored Infantry Battalion.

At 1830 the battalion commander conducted an officers school at battalion headquarters for the purpose of orientating officers further.

Vehicular and equipment maintenance was stressed throughout the battalion.

6 January 1945

By this time we had five new officers in the battalion, and the battalion commander set up a platoon exercise or problem for the purpose of training the new officers. Company "C" ran this problem on this date.

A road block was set up on the main highway just Northeast of Ville, at 478044. The block was operated day and night by one tank and five men from Company "A". All traffic on the road was stopped and identified. Any suspicious individual was brought to the battalion S-2 for further investigation.

Throughout our stay in this area the battalion commander stressed local security. All guards were instructed in the proper way to challenge, and the guards were inspected regularly day and night to see that they were functioning properly. The 1800 to 0700 curfew for civilians was strictly enforced.

7 January 1945 through 10 January 1945

During this period the battalion continued training the small combat teams by running the Combat Command "A" problem. We also ran the platoon problems for the purpose of training new officers. On the 7th and 8th of January the platoon leaders, platoon sergeants and some tank commanders attended a one hour forward observers school at Hamoir, which was conducted by our division artillery.

At 1830 on the 8th of January 1945 the battalion commander conducted another officers school for all the officers for the purpose of orientating officers and discussing problems.

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Hq 17th Tank Bn., After Action Report, Month of January 1945 (Cont'd)

7 January 1945 through 10 January 1945

During this period, tanks and all combat vehicles were camouflaged by painting them white with a mixture of lime, salt, and water. We started welding net wire on the tanks under the supervision of a detachment which was attached to the division from a regular camouflaged unit.

At 1350 on 9 January 1945 the battalion was alerted to move on a two hour notice at any time after 1000 on 10 January 1945.

During the night of 9 January 1945 and the day of 10 January 1945 the Battalion maintenance welded vertical iron strips on the track extension of the medium tanks so the tanks could get more traction and move on the frozen ground.

For the purpose of the move and for the contemplated action the combat command was divided into the following task forces: (1) Task Force Wemple: commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Wemple composed of 17th Tank Battalion (minus companies B, C, and one platoon of D.) Company "B" 23rd Armored Infantry Battalion, 2nd platoon of Company "B" of the 33rd Engineers Battalion, and 2nd platoon of Company "A" of the 814th Tank Destroyers Battalion. (2) Task Force Rhea: commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Rhea, composed of 23rd Armored Infantry Battalion (minus company "B"), Company "C" of the 17th Tank Battalion, 1st platoon of Company "D" of the 17th Tank Battalion, 1st platoon of Company "B" of the 33rd Engineers Battalion, and 1st platoon of Company "A" of the 814th Tank Destroyer Battalion. (3) Task Force Seity: commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Seity, composed of 2nd Battalion of the 517th Paratroop Regiment, Company "B" 17th Tank Battalion, 3rd platoon of Company "B" of the 33rd Engineer Battalion, and 3rd platoon of Company "A" of the 814th Tank Destroyer Battalion.

10 January 1945

The Battalion did not move on this date however the Task Forces were organized and arrangements were made to move out of the area by Task Forces. The Battalion received notice about 1500 that there would be no notice on this date but that the Battalion would probably move by task force on the following day.

11 January 1945

Another billeting detail was sent to Combat Command "A" Headquarters at 0730. The Battalion Commander attended a meeting at Combat Command "A" Headquarters at 0900 where he obtained information regarding the move, and this information was passed on to the Company commanders at a meeting at Battalion Headquarters at 1020.

The Combat Command was to move by Task Force in the order of Task Force Rhea, Task Force Wemple, and Task Force Seitz. Task Force Wemple was to cross the Initial Point at Hamoir at 1530.

Task Force Wemple composed of 17th Tank Battalion Company "B", company "C", and one platoon of Company "d", Company "B" of the 23rd Armored Infantry Battalion, one platoon of Company "A" of the 814th Tank Destroyer Battalion, and the 3rd platoon of Company "B" of the 33rd Engineer Battalion crossed the Initial Point at Hamoir at 1530.

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Hq 17th Tank Bn., After Action Report, Month of January 1945 (Cont'd)

11 January 1945 (Cont'd)

The route which was followed was: Ville, Hamoir, Comblain, FAiron, Comblain-Air-Port, Esnerx, Tilff, Les Cours, Beaufays, Nessonvanx, Pepinster, Verviers, Heisy, Sart, and Cokenfagne.

The weather was extremely cold on this date and the roads were covered with snow and ice which made the march very slow, but the Task Force finally closed in the new area by 0130 on 12 January 1945. The Battalion Headquarters and Headquarters Company was billeted in the vicinity of Cockaifagne, Company "B" of the 23rd Armored Infantry Battalion was billeted at Hockai, Company "A" of the 17th Tank Battalion in the vicinity of the village of Halt at coordinates 739129, the 3rd platoon of Company "B" of the 33rd Engineer Battalion was in the same vicinity with Company "A", Company "D" of the 17th Tank Battalion minus one platoon, and the one platoon of Company "A" of the 814th Tank Destroyer Battalion were billeted further north in the vicinity of coordination 737138, Service Company of the 17th Tank Battalion was billeted in the town of Sart. Company "C" of the 17th Tank Battalion and one platoon of Company "D" which were a part of Task force Rhea were billeted in the village of Ster. Company "B" of the 17th Tank Battalion which was a part of Task Force Seitz was billeted in the same village of Halt with our "A" Company.

12 January 1945

On this date the Battalion Commander, the S-3, the S-2, and each of the Company Commanders and platoon leaders in Task Force Wemple made Reconnaissance of routes to the front lines in the vicinity of Malmady and Waimes. At this time it appeared that Task Force Wemple's first mission would be to take the towns of Elvange and Ebertange, therefore a careful reconnaissance of the approach routes to these towns was made. In addition to the ground reconnaissance which was made all officers and non-commissioned officers in the Task Force made careful map and aerial photo studies of the area in which it appeared that we would be committed.

13 January through 18 January 1945

During this period Task Force Wemple remained in the Cockaifagne assembly area and the time was devoted to maintenance of vehicles and equipment, and formulating plans for future operations, additional lime and calcimine was obtained and all tanks and combat vehicles were made white to blend with the snow. During this period the weather remained very cold, and there was from 12 to 14 inches of snow on the ground. The tanks which had lost the steel cleets on the tracks of the move to the area were repaired so the tanks could move over the frozen ground.

We performed experiments and found that concussion grenades aided the doughboys in digging-in in the frozen ground. By digging a small hole about 8 inches deep, then dropping a grenade in it, the grenade would blow out a hole large enough to give a man protection. Of course this method of digging in could only be used where the doughboys did not mind revealing their positions. Since in most instances, the doughboys did not want to reveal their positions this method was not used in combat. Another series of experiments revealed that our tanks which were well camouflaged with the white calcimine could move up to within 75 yards of a position on a fairly clear night without being seen. We found that the deep snow muffled the noise of the tank motors and that it was very difficult to locate a tank at night by sound. In two experiments we had a tank move up to within 100 yards of a group of men before the sound was detected.

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Hq 17th Tank Bn., After Action Report, Month of January 1945 (Cont'd)

13 January through 18 January 1945

During this period close contact was maintained with the 16th and 23rd Regimental Combat Teams who were attacking to the south through the towns of Steinbach, Faymonville, Odenval, and Schoppen, for we knew that when we were committed we would move through these units. Several detailed plans were made for the attacks on the towns of Ebertange, Ambleve, and Diedenbergen and copies of these plans were submitted with this report. We will not go into detail in regard to the plans that were made during this period other than to say that all elements of the Task Force were oriented frequently as to both the enemy and friendly situation in our probable zone of action. Many plans were made that were never executed, however the Task Force commander as well as Higher Headquarters are firm believers in extensive planning even though there is a possibility that the plans will be altered or changed at the last minute. Detailed planning is one effective way of keeping all elements of a Task Force oriented at all times.

19 January 1945

During the morning of 19 January 1945 we were informed that the 23rd R.C.T. was to capture Montenau, Iveldingen (Elvange), and Eibertingen (Ebertange); and that the 16th R.C.T. was to advance to the line stream 1500 meters north of Ebertingen, hill 534 at coordinate 897996 thence northeast, and that Combat Commands A, and B, were to pass through these units after they had reached their objective. Task Force Wemple followed by Task Force Rhea and Seitz were to move to a forward assembly area in the vicinity of Gdumont, Esperance, and Libomont on order.

At 1300 the Task Force was alerted for movement and at 1630 the Force started moving to the forward assembly area in the vicinity of Libomont. The weather was extremely cold snow and sleet was falling almost continuously and our route of march involved crossing a mountainous area on a narrow unimproved road. The Task Force moved out in the order of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, "A" Company 17th Tank Battalion, "D" Company 17th Tank Battalion, the platoon of Tank Destroyers, the platoon of engineers, and B/23. The route of march was set through the village of Hockai, thence east to the main north-south highway in vicinity of coordinate 808087, thence east to Longfaye, to Ovifat, thence south to R-J, in vicinity of coordinate 850076, thence south and west to village of Walk, then west to Gloumont, then south and east to Esperance and Libomont. A sufficient number of fuel trucks were sent with this force to re-fuel in the forward assembly area, the remainder of the trains reverted to our Service Company control and remained in Sart, as soon as all Task Forces had moved out all trains were to assemble in village of Ster under C.C.A. control.

The Battalion Scout section was used as guiders along the route and they were placed at all critical points along the route. One section of the I & R platoon was sent forward ahead of the Task Force to guide the various elements into the forward assembly area. The remainder of the I. & R. platoon went forward with the Battalion commander to reconnaissance jump off positions in the vicinity of coordinates 872978 and 852997.

The Battalion Headquarters section arrived at Libomont at 1830 and the C.P. was set up at that point. The remainder of the Task Force was pulled off the road at Gloumont and at various points between there and Libomont. All company commanders and separate Platoon leaders reported to Battalion, or Task Force C.P. by 1930.

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Hq 17th Tank Bn., After Action Report, Month of January 1945 (Cont'd)

19 January 1945 (Cont'd)

The Commanding Office of Combat Command "A" came to the Task Force C.P. at 2000 and informed us that the 16th and 23rd R.C.T.'s had reached their objectives and that our Task Force would be in a position to jump off in an attack on Deidenberg by 0730 on the following morning.

The fuel trucks were brought forward and all vehicles were re-fueled by 2100.

The Task Force commander and the I & R platoon returned to the C.P. at 2050 and the Force Commander started issuing his order at 2100. Task Force Commander Wemple divided his force into three groups the first of which was commanded by Captain Britton of "B" 23rd and was composed of the 3rd platoon of "B" 23rd and 3rd platoon of "A" 17th and his mission was to move into position in the vicinity of coordinates 872978 and be prepared to move down the nose of high ground toward Deidenberg at 0730 to determine the strength of the enemy resistance in Deidenberg. Captain Britton was to leave his half tracks in the vicinity of 872978 and make his attack or reconnaissance in force with the platoon of infantry mounted on the tanks. The second force was to be commanded by Lt. Wilson and it was composed of the 1st platoon of "B" 23rd, 2nd platoon of "A" 17th the engineer platoon, and the A.T. platoon from "B" 23rd, and his mission was to move to a position in the vicinity of coordinates 853975 and be prepared to establish a road block in the vicinity of 854958 and to attack and seize the high ground in the vicinity of 857955. The engineer platoon and the A.T. platoon were to be put in an assembly area in the vicinity of 852997 to be called forward by Lt. Wilson when he needed them. The remainder of Task Force Wemple was to be led into an assembly area by Lieutenant Colonel Wemple in the vicinity of 864984. A guide from the I & R platoon was given Captain Britton to lead him to his forward position and Lieutenant Colonel Wemple ordered the movement to begin at 2430 in order of Force Britton, Force Wilson, followed by the group that Lieutenant Colonel Wemple was leading into position.

By 2230 there was a blinding snow falling and the roads were so covered with snow that movement was almost impossible.

20 January 1945

Force Britton moved out at the designated time with almost every vehicle be led by a dismounted man.

Before all of our units in position Higher Headquarters ordered that our Task Force be assembled in the vicinity of Am Kreug with the idea of making our attack on Diedenisberg from the north instead of from the north and west. However Lt. Wilson was already in position in the vicinity of 853975 with two platoons of tanks and one platoon of infantry, so he was ordered to remain there and await further orders. Lieutenant Colonel Wemple assembled the 1st platoon of "A" 17th, "D" 17th (minus one platoon), the Battalion assault gun platoon, the Battalion Mortar platoon, the T.D. platoon and the Engineer platoon in the vicinity of Am Kreug and established his forward C.P. at that point. Captain Britton was ordered to make his attack as planned. Lt. Wilson was ordered to remain in place until he received further orders because the movement on his right had not advanced as fast as had been expected.

The battalion or Task Force Rear C.P. was moved down to Onderval, at 0410 and the aid station was set up at this point.

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Hq 17th Tank Bn., After Action Report, Month of January 1945 (Cont'd)

20 January 1945)Cont'd)

Force Britton started his attack to the south along the nose of high ground leading down to Diedenberg. However, the tanks ran into difficulty and could not travel the route originally planned because of deep snow. At 0850, Captain Britton pulled his force further to the East and managed to get the tanks across the terrain to the south from a point in the vicinity of 876974. Up to this time he had not met any enemy resistance.

At 0846, Lieutenant Wilson was ordered to move to the South and cross the Ennels River in the vicinity of 856964 and attack and secure the high ground in the vicinity of 857954. He was to move with the infantry mounted on the tanks until enemy resistance was encountered then the infantry was to dismount and fight through with the support of the tanks. This force moved out at 0930 after having our artillery give the buildings in the vicinity of AmStein a thorough shelling. At 0950, Wilson had advanced to vicinity of coordinate 857960 and Britton was in vicinity of 870964. Britton was receiving very light small arms fire from Diedenberg and a few rounds of AT fire from left flank. The tanks and infantry in both forces were making thorough reconnaissance by fire as they passed. By 1130, Task Force Britton was in the town of Diedenberg and had taken four prisoners and the infantry was continuing mission of cleaning out houses. This Force moved into their objective without suffering casualties.

At 1210 Wilson on the right flank was receiving A.T. and small arms fire from high ground in the vicinity of 857954 and village of Am-Stein. At 1300 Wilson moved out on assault of his objective after a preparatory artillery concentration on the objective. By 1400 Task Forces Britton and Wilson had captured 30 more prisoners; Britton occupied the town and Wilson was almost on his objective.

At 1500 Wilson was receiving A.T. from vicinity of Born and shifted his Force further to left to get on objective. By 1600 Wilson lacked only about two houses in village of Am-Stein having his objective cleared. By 1732 Wilson was on his objective and a total of 54 prisoners had been taken in the operation of the two Task Forces.

At 1630 the rear C.P. was moved to the town of Elvange (Iveldingen). Lt. Col Wemple had previously moved his forward C.P. into the town of Diedenberg. Three infantrymen were wounded in getting into the town and evacuated.

At 1740 F.F. Seitz contacted Lt. Col. Wemple to arrange for a patrol to pass through our lines to determine strength of resistance in Arf De Hardt woods to the south of Deidenberg. Task Force Seitz was to pass through our line at 0400 and on the morning of the 21st. and take the Arf De Hardt woods. During the night there was very little enemy mortar and artillery on the town of Deidenberg. One nine man patrol approached our outpost from the south west - four of the men were killed and remainder were captured.

21 January 1945

During the afternoon of the 20th the light tank company, the T.D. Plat., the mortar and asslt. Gun platoons and the A.T. platoon were moved into Deidenberg and were used in setting up the defense of the position which we held. The central and eastern part of the town was defended by the light tanks and one platoon of Infantry. A north-south defense line was set up generally along the line from coordinates

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Hq 17th Tank Bn, After Action Report, Month of January 1945 (Cont'd)

21 January 1945 (Cont'd)

863953 to 863940 and our line tied in with task force Seitz at 863940; this line was held by a platoon of medium tanks and a platoon of infantry. An East West line was set up from coordinates 864957 to 854954 and our line was tied in with elements on the right at the latter point. This line was held by A/17 (minus one platoon), the A.T. platoon, a platoon of infantry and about a platoon of infantry from the combat Command on our right which had attached itself to our unit during the night of the 20th-21st January. This platoon had been cut off from its own unit and remained with us until contact could be re-established. The Tank Destroyers were set up in a position in the vicinity of 864954 with an excellent field of fire to the Southwest. The Mortar and Assault Gun Platoons were prepared to deliver fire to the Southwest, South and East. Our defense was set up in this manner because Born was still in the hands of the enemy and it appeared that we might receive a counter-attack from that vicinity.

During the night of 20-21 January, Task Force Seitz attacked and secured the Auf de Hardt woods as planned and B/17, which was part of this task force took part in this action. This attack was very successful and the objective was gained with very light casualties. The tanks did not sustain any casualties.

During the afternoon of 21 Jan 45, Task Force Rhea attacked and secured the high ground to the Southeast of Diedenger along the general line 869951 to 875940. Co "C", 17th was part of this force.

During the day of 21 January 1945, the enemy placed several rather heavy concentrations of artillery and mortar on the town of Diedenberg however. Our casualties were light.

All the elements of Task Force Wemple were re-supplied during the night of 20-21 Jan 45. The Bn Aid Station was moved to Diedenberg during the early morning.

At 1210 we received word that Task Force Wemple would be relieved by the 508th Para Regt sometime during the afternoon or night. The time of relief was to be determined by the 508th and after being relieved the Task Force Wemple was to return to billets in the town of Iveldingen (Elvange). The movement to the new area was to be made after dark and by platoons in order to keep from revealing to the enemy that troops were being withdrawn from the town.

During the day some artillery was falling in the area that was thought to be friendly artillery falling short but a careful check by our Division Arty, revealed that it was not our artillery. It is believed that it was the enemy artillery, coming from the vicinity of Amblege to the East and the town of Born to the Southwest.

At 1525, we received a message from CCA stating that Task Force Wemple would be Assembled in the vicinity of 862954 and that the Task Force would prepare to attack The town of Born to the Southwest immediately. CCB was having difficulty taking their objective, the town of Born, and Task Force Wemple was to assist them in the operation. In addition to the elements of Task Force Wemple, one company of infantry and a platoon of medium tanks from Task Force Seitz was attached to Wemple for this operation. This Company of Infantry from TF Seitz and the platoon of tanks was to attack from a point in the vicinity of 863937 almost due West with the mission of seizing the southeast part of the town.

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Hq 17th Tank Bn, After Action Report, Month of January 1945 (Cont'd)

21 January 1945 (Cont'd)

At 1620, while the Task Force commander was still giving orders for the attack on Born, we received notice that CCB was making satisfactory progress and that Task Force Wemple would not attack.

During the morning of this date, Captain (Chaplain) Czubak, who had been attached to the 17th Tank Bn for some time, was killed in the town of Diedenberg by enemy artillery fire.

During the afternoon we contacted the Regimental Hq of the 508th Para Regt which had moved into the town to relieve Task Force Rhea, Task Force Seitz and Task Force Wemple. We learned that Task Force Wemple would be relieved by the 1st Bn of the 508th, and that it would probably be late that night before the relief would be completed.

Prior to the time that the 508th had relieved Task Force Wemple, we received Notice that the plan had been changed and that Task Force Wemple, Task Force Sietz And Task Force Rhea would make a coordinated attack on the towns of Hunnange and the High ground in the vicinity of 857907 on the following morning.

22 January 1945

At 0330 the Bn Ex came to the forward CP in Deidenberg to assist with the plans And coordinating for the following days operation.

The plan in general for the combat command operation was for Task Force Seitz to move to the south to a position in the vicinity of 851907. Task Force Seitz was to be followed by TF Wemple, which Force was to take up a forward assembly position in the vicinity of 853906. Then Task Force Rhea was to move into position in the vicinity of 859911. Upon combat orders Rask Force Seitz was to attack to the Southwest with the mission of capturing the area along the St. Vith road between coordinates 843903 and 844899. Task Force Wemple was to attack to the Southwest and capture that part of the town of Hunnange along the East-West road between coordinates 844899 to 850903. Task Force Rhea was to attack to the east and secure the high ground in the vicinity of 863907 for the purpose of protecting the left flank of the Hunnange operation.

Based on P.W. information and serial observation we were of the opinion that the enemy was withdrawing from the Hunnange area and we did not expect very heavy enemy resistance. However, plans were made so that the objective could be taken even though the resistance might be heavy. The remainder of the night was devoted to assembling the force, briefing all officers and troops and getting everything ready to move out at 0830. Task Force Wemple was divided into two groups with Captain Britton in command of the leading group composed of a platoon of medium tanks and a platoon of infantry and Lieutenant Wilson in command of a second group which was composed of the same elements. The assault guns and mortars and T.D.'s were to take up positions in the forward assembly area to support the operation by fire. The light tanks and a small force of infantry were to be held in reserve in the forward assembly position to be used as and when needed.

The route of march was to be south out of Deidenberg on the trail from coordinates 862952 to 859925 at which point the engineers were to prepare a crossing on the railroad and stream, thence South and West through the woods into the forward assembly positions in the vicinity of 853906.

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Hq 17th Tank Bn, After Action Report, Month of January 1945 (Cont'd)

22 January 1945 (Cont'd)

At 0830, Task Force Wemple moved out of the Deidenberg area with the infantry mounted on the tanks in the order of Britton's group, Wilson's group, the T.D.'s, the Task Force commander and staff, the assault guns, the light tanks, the mortars and engineers. Just as we were moving out we received an order that nothing but the tanks would take the march, all half tracks would remain in the Deidenberg area as well as the wheel vehicles because the road was impossible for such vehicles. Therefore, the mortar platoon, the A.T. Platoon, and the engineers remained in the Deidenberg area. When the head of our force reached a point in the vicinity of 860931 they received several heavy enemy artillery concentrations from the vicinity of Medell to the East. One "A" Co tank received a direct hit killing four of the tank crew¹⁵ and seriously wounding the other member, several infantry were critically wounded at this time. As soon as Lt Col. Wemple saw how accurate the arty fire was, he led the remainder of the force further to the West and kept them in defilade from the East and none of this part of the force was injured by arty fire.

When the leading tanks reached a point in the vicinity of 860914 they received A.T. fire from the vicinity of 859908. Our tanks and tank destroyers returned the fire and knocked out two enemy SP assault guns and one Mark IV tank.

By 1330 the leading elements were in position in the scheduled forward assembly area and Lt Col Wemple had made contact with Task Force Seitz who was in position on our right. As we moved into position on the vicinity of 853906 we found 7 towed German 88mm guns which had been abandoned by the enemy. With the guns was a good supply of ammo. The 88's with one exception were in good working order. They were not in firing position but had just been lined up along the edge of the woods and abandoned.

The assault guns and light tanks had difficulty in getting across the railroad and stream in the vicinity of 859925 and Captain Simon and his battalion maintenance section came forward and assisted them in getting across the obstacle. By 1408, Task Force Wemple was in position and was ready to attack as ordered. The field arty forward observers and their air support officer were in position with the forward elements and were ready to give support when needed. The Task Force was ordered to remain in position until ordered to attack. At 1558 we observed what was thought to be three enemy tanks and several dismounted men withdrawing from Hunnange toward St. Vity. Shortly after this we received a rather heavy enemy arty concentration on our assault position and approximately eight infantrymen and three tankers were injured. Lt Wilson who commanded company "A" received shrapnel wounds in the left arm but refused to be evacuated. The injured men were carried back on two light tanks for wheel vehicles could not get up to our position.

At 1715 the rear CP moved into the town of Born so that we could maintain FM communication with them.

At 1730, Task Force Wemple jumped off on the attack on the town of Hunnange and at the same time Task Force Seitz on our right moved out. Our attack was made in two forces, one composed of two platoons of infantry and a platoon of tanks commanded by Captain Britton and the other composed of a platoon of tanks and a platoon of infantry commanded by Lieutenant Hansard. Britton's force moved straight to the Southwest to the objective and Nabsard's force moved to the east remaining in the woods, then west to the objective. The tanks and infantry delivered marching fire as they moved on the objective and they received very light enemy resistance. One "A" Co tank was hit by an AT gun at a point in the vicinity of 853904, the enemy

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¹⁵ Pfc. Clifton A. Wills, Cpl. Carroll W. Grant, and Pfc. Louis E. Tiesling of 17th Tank Battalion are known to have died 22 January 1945. However, their company is not yet known, and there are other members of 17th Tank Battalion whose dates of death are not yet known. So it is not yet certain who these four men were.

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Hq 17th Tank Bn, After Action Report, Month of January 1945 (Cont'd)

22 January 1945 (Cont'd)

fire came from the East. By 1806, Brittons force was on the objective and was clearing out the houses in our area. By 1915 TF Wemple had completed cleaning out the houses in our assigned area and had secured and organized our position. A total of 47 prisoners were taken all of which were turned over to T.F. Seitz for they had better facilities for handling them. In organizing our positions we tied in with Task Force Seitz on our right in the vicinity of 845899. During the night two of our light tanks were used to evacuate wounded for T.F.Seitz Aid Station to the vicinity of 859924 at which point the wounded men picked up by ambulances. The wheel vehicles could not come further South than this point. Light tanks were also used to pick up rations for the attached infantry at the same point.

The night of 22-23 January was quiet in our sector with the exception of light enemy mortar and arty fire during the early part of the night, there was no attempted counter-attack. By the enemy.

23 January 1945

By 0845, on this date the supply route from the North to our position through the towns of Born and Nieden Emmels was clear and our supplies were brought in over this route. At 1035 that part of Task Force Wemple which was left at Diedenbergl because of road conditions, namely the mortar and A.T. Platoons were brought into Hunnange over the Born, Neider Emmels route. The Bn Aid Station was also moved to the town of Hunnange.

During the morning we received orders to move our force to the south of the R.J. in the vicinity of 844899 and clear and occupy the houses along the road to the South for a distance of about 350 yards. We were to set up a small road block on this road. A section of Medium tanks, the T.D. platoon and a Platoon of infantry were to be used for this mission and the force was to be under the command of Capt Britton. By 1135 the infantry had cleared most of the houses and the T.D.'s were in position but at this time we received another mission. This new mission was to set up a defense line generally along the line from coordinate 856904 to 855897 with the mission of repelling any possible counter-attack from the east or south. During the period from 1200 to 1630 the enemy placed several heavy concentrations of artillery on our positions in the town of Hunnange and several infantrymen were wounded. They also placed artillery concentrations on the woods in the vicinity of 855904 as our infantry and tanks were moving into position. Capt Britton was wounded in the foot at 1545 but he remained on the job until his company was in position and supervised their digging-in and preparation of their position. By 1945, all elements of the Task Force were in position. The infantry was dug in on the east edge of the woods in the vicinity of 857904, and they were supported by Co "A" of the 17th. The T.D.'s were in position along the road with field of fire to the east. The mortars and assault guns were in position to place fire either east or south. The light tanks were in position in the vicinity of 853902 as a mobile reserve prepared to support where they might be needed. The artillery F.O. was placed in a good position on the east edge of the woods so he could place artillery fire on any attempted attack from that direction.

In the late afternoon information received from P.W.'s and adjacent units indicated that the enemy might counter-attack our position from the east therefore, all elements of the Task Force was placed on a very strict alert.

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Hq 17th Tank Bn, After Action Report, Month of January 1945 (Cont'd)

23 January 1945 (Cont'd)

At 2030 we received a report that an enemy tank column of undetermined strength was moving in our direction from the vicinity of 871902 and at the same time the enemy was placing a very heavy arty concentration in the vicinity of our positions. The enemy continued to place artillery on our positions and we continued to receive reports of enemy tank movement up to 2400.

24 January 1945

Since a counter-attack seemed very probable one platoon of tanks, one platoon of T.D.'s and a platoon of infantry from T.F. Seitz was moved to a position in the vicinity of 849905 at 0100 to support a force in the event they were needed. All elements of the task force remained on a strict alert throughout the night but our position was not attacked.

Co "C" of the 17th which was part of T.F. Rhea was in position at this time in the vicinity of 854897 with the mission of supporting by fire Rhea's attack on St. Vith.

A ten man dismounted patrol from B/23 was sent out at 100 with the mission of proceeding to the R.J. at 865903 to determine the enemy's strength at that point. By 1040, the patrol had reached their objective but they were pinned down at that point by small arms fire from the Northeast, East and Southeast. The patrol had SCR 300 radio set with them and with their assistance we placed smoke on the enemy positions with our 81mm Mortars. In addition to the mortar smoke we sent a light MG squad to assist the patrol in getting back. Under the cover of the mortar smoke the patrol finally got back to our lines at 1500, one man was slightly wounded. The patrol reported that the overpass in the vicinity of 865903 had been blown and that the road was mined at the R.J., and a small enemy force was dug in, in this area. A small A?T? gun was reported about 100 yards south of the R.J. but at the time the patrol was there the gun was not manned.

Lieutenant Col Wemple attended a meeting at CC "A" CP at Born to receive instructions and orders. At 1630 Lt Col Wemple returned to the CP at Hunnange and issued the following orders: Lt Cagle who commanded Co "C" of the 17th was to leave the company in it's present position and report to Lt Col Rhea for further orders. Lt Hardin who commanded Co "B" of the 17th and who was attached to T.F. Seitz at the time, was to report to Lt Col Griffin's C.P. for further orders. Lt Col Griffin commanded the 38th Armd Inf. Bn and was to command a force known as Task Force Griffin for the following days operation. Lt Jones who commanded Co B of the 23d AIB was to report to Lt Col Rhea for further orders. T.F. Wemple which was now composed of A/17, D/17 (minus 1 platoon), the T.D. platoon, the Assault Gun and Mortar Platoon was to remain in the present position and hold that position throughout the night. On the following day, T.F. Rhea was to attack, seize, secure and defend the town of Wallerode. T/F Griffin was to attack, seize, and defend the high ground to the N.W. of Wallerode in the vicinity of coordinate 874903. T.F. Seitz was to move to an attack position in the vicinity of 866916 and attack down draw at H. hour to Seize and defend high ground North of Wallerode. T.F. Wemple in reserve was to support the action of the other forces by placing direct fire on the objectives as the other forces were attacking.

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Hq 17th Tank Battalion, After Action Report, Month of January 1945 (Cont'd)

24 January 1945 (Cont'd)

After assisting in organizing the positions for the night, Lt Col Wemple and the Bn S-2 went to the rear CP at Born for the night and the Bn Ex O assumed command of the Task Force at the forward CP

25 January 1945

On this date the Task Force attacked the various positions as planned. By 1800 on this date all Forces had taken their objectives. In this operation B/17, which was attached to T.F. Griffin, lost one tank by enemy mine but the tank was recovered. C/17 which was attached to Rhea had one tank hit by enemy anti-tank fire and the driver was killed¹⁶ and the tank badly damaged. Both C and A Companies had several tanks struck while getting into position and several tanks were out of action due to mechanical failure. Most of the day was devoted to maintenance of tanks and resupply of all units. Lt Col Wemple returned to the forward CP at 0740 and assumed command of the Task Force He directed the operation of the force in delivering supporting fire while the other Task Forces made the attacks. Task Force commanders attended a meeting at CC "A" forward CP at coordinate 875899 at 1900. Task Force remained in the same position during the night and there was no enemy activity in our area.

26 January 1945

Task Force Wemple remained in the same location and still had mission of being mobile reserve. Companies A and C in Wallerode with their Task Forces. All Maintenance sections working day and night to get as many vehicles as possible back in action.

At 2230 received message to have billeting detail report to CC "A" Hq on following morning.

27 January 1945

Task Force commander moved his forward CP to the town of Wallerode while task force remained in same position. Enemy placed several concentrations of artillery on town of Wallerode during the afternoon and night but none of our troops were injured.

28 January 1945

All tanks and T.D.'s reverted to Lt Col Wemple's control during the morning and he was ordered to move all of them to vicinity of Hunnange. Companies A, B, C and D of the 17th and A/814 were in an assembly area in vicinity of Hunnange by 1100. All elements of the command were informed that we were being relieved and that we would move to a rehabilitation area in the vicinity of Eupen. At 1130 we received word that we would not move on this date and that we would remain in our present location for the night. However, Company B was moved to billets in Montenau at 1800. At 1831 we received word that the Combat Command Would start movement to the new area at 0730 on the following morning. The march order would be Hq & Hq Co, CC "A", 23d AIB, B/33d Engrs and A/814 T.D. and 17th Tank Battalion. The route of march was to be North on the main highway through Niever Emmels, Lignewille, Malmedy, Burnenville, Frankcorchamps, SArt, Verviers, Limbourg, Houtem, Hoggen, Manschemen and into an assembly area in the vicinity of Hoof. The order of march was to be Bn Hq, & Hq Co, Co "A", Co C, D, B, and that part of train that was with us

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¹⁶ The identity of the killed driver has not yet been established.

S E C R E T

Hq 17th Tank Bn, After Action Report, Month of January 1945 (Cont'd)

28 January 1945 (Cont'd)

The Service Co and the trains that were under CC"A" Control at Ster were to march with the CC "A" Trains.

29 January 1945

The Battalion left the assembly area at Hunnange at 0830. The weather was very cold, the roads were covered with snow and ice and the traffic was very congested in the towns along the route. Some of the tanks had difficulty in getting up the steep hills due to slick frozen roads, but the battalion finally closed in the new area at 1412 and all stragglers were in by 1805. At 1845 we received word from CC "A" Hq that 30 January 1945 would be a day of rest for the whole Div.

30 January 1945

This was a day of rest, except for necessary details, however, most of the maintenance crews worked throughout the day.

31 January 1945

This day was devoted to maintenance of vehicles and weapons and inspection of stowage of vehicles. Bn S-3 attended meeting at CC "A" Hq at which training schedule for the next six days period was discussed.

During the month of January 1945, the 17th Tank Battalion received 50 enlisted reinforcements and had 2 officers and 32 enlisted men returned to duty. The personnel losses during the month were two officers and 20 enlisted men evacuated as non-battle casualties, five enlisted men were killed in action and Chaplain Czubak, who was attached to the battalion, was killed. We had three enlisted men seriously wounded in action, two officers and 25 enlisted men slightly wounded in action and 21 enlisted men evacuated because of frost bite.

(signed)
JOHN P. WEMPLE
Lt Colonel, Infantry,
Commanding

3-Incls.

Incl 1, log

Incl 2, Messages for period (1 Jan to 31 Jan 45)

Incl 3, Overlays.

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S-E-C-R-E-T

HEADQUARTERS 17TH TANK BATTALION
APO 257, c/o Postmaster New York

1 March 1945.

Subject: After Action Report - Month of February 1945.

To: The Adjutant General, Washington, D.C.

1. During the period 1 February 1945 through 28 February 1945, the 17th Tank Battalion was billeted in the vicinity of Welkenraedt, Belgium. The battalion was not committed during this period and the time was devoted to rehabilitation, training, and road repair work.

2. The Bn Hq and Hq Co was billeted in the village of Hoof, Belgium (723298), Co C was billeted in farm houses in the vicinity of 734300, Co B at 727317, Co D at 737310 and Sv Co and A Co were located just North of Welkenraedt in the vicinity of 756311.

3. The first few days that we were in this area was devoted almost entirely to maintenance of vehicles, weapons and equipment and during the entire month, the battalion maintenance section and the company maintenance sections were busy making modifications on vehicles and performing all types of repair work. Wire base for camouflaging was welded on all tanks, all tanks were equipped with track extensions or "duck feet" and railings were welded on all tanks to be used to aid the infantry in getting on and off the tanks. It is thought that in some of our future operations it will be to our advantage to attack with 6 or 8 infantrymen mounted on each tank and if this is the case we feel sure that time, labor, and material used in putting the railings and steps on the tanks will have been well spent.

4. On 3 February 1945 all officers and EM of the battalion attended a showing of the film "Germany" at the theater in the town of Welkenraedt.

5. On the 4th and 5th of February the battalion fired on the Leopold Tank Range located at F772224. All types of weapons were fired including 20 rounds of 75mm or 76mm per tank. At this time we had an opportunity to test the comparative merits of the muzzle break on the 76mm tank gun. We placed a tank armed with a 76mm gun without a muzzle break by the side of a tank with the 76mm gun equipped with the muzzle break and fired them alternately at a German Tank target at a range of 100 yards. The gunner firing the gun with the muzzle break was able to sense every round that he fired whereas the gunner using the gun without the muzzle break could only sense about one third of the rounds that he fired due to the smoke and flash that covered his sight. All of our gunners are really sold on the muzzle break and we are anxious to get them on all the tank guns.

6. On the 6th and 7th we ran several platoon problems during which the new officers and men received some excellent training. The problems were just simple platoon problems stressing basic principles of fire and movement, taking advantage of the terrain, and giving the platoon leaders practice in control. We had planned to run many such problems and even company and task force problems but the weather prevented us from moving the tanks during the remainder of the period.

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S-E-C-R-E-T

Hq 17th Tk Bn, After Action Report - Month of Feb 45, March 1945 (Cont'd)

7. Our assault gun platoon leader, Lieutenant Johnson, conducted an artillery observation school on the 8th and 9th of February for the purpose of training men and officers in the proper technique and procedure in observing and sensing artillery fire. This school was attended by the officers and men in Combat Command "A" whose duties are such that they might at anytime while in combat be in a position to act as an artillery forward observer.

8. Due to the melting of the snow and frequent rains during the early part of the month the roads in the area had almost become impassible by the 11th of February, so on that date a detail of 56 men from the Hq Co and each of the medium tank companies and 42 men from the light tank company was sent to the area South of Aachen in the vicinity of Walheim and Rotgen to work on the roads. The work was supervised by officers and non-commissioned officers from the 300th Engineer Bn. The men were transported to and from the work each day by trucks from our Service Co. The men worked on this detail were rotated so that each man would have an opportunity to receive some of the training which was being conducted in the bn area. In addition to the men used on the road detail which was supervised by the 300th Engineers, we were compelled to use approximately 15 men from each company to work on the roads in their respective company areas in order to keep the roads open. Therefore, we had only a very small number of men available for training each day. However, a training program was conducted for those men who were not engaged in the road repair work.

9. During the period from 11 Feb through 22 Feb, the men who were working on the roads remained billeted in the bn area and were transported to and from the work each day. However, on the 23rd of February, these men were moved to billets in the town of Rotgen and remained there until the 28th of February, the date on which the road work was terminated. Two of the company kitchens were moved to this area to take care of the mess and two officers from each company were billeted with the men to supervise their work.

10. At the beginning our "tankers" didn't like the idea of being converted into Engineers but when they realized how vitally important it was to keep these roads to the front open they performed their duties cheerfully.

11. During the month of February a large number of men were given 48 hour passes into Eupen and a limited number of men and officers were given 72 hour passes in Paris. This of course was a great morale building factor. One officer and 3 enlisted men from the battalion were given 7 day furloughs in England.

12. A division CPX and two CPX's which were conducted by Combat Command A Hq during this period were excellent training for the battalion commander and staff.

13. The officers and men of the bn are of the opinion that the month of Feb was a very constructive period. We were afforded an opportunity to get our vehicles and equipment in good condition, we received some training, we received some recreation, and we feel that we contributed materially to winning this war by our road repair work.

(signed)

JOHN P. WEMPLE,
Lt Colonel, Infantry,
Commanding.

S-E-C-R-E-T

S E C R E T

HEADQUARTERS 17TH TANK BATTALLION
APO 257, c/o Postmaster New York

31 March, 1945

Subject: After Action Report, Month of March 1945.

To : The Adjutant General, U. S. Army,
Washington 25, D. C.

1 March 1945: 17th Tank Battallion remained in bivouac in vicinity of Hoof, Belgium. Battallion placed on four (4) hour alert as of 010800. Preparation made for showdown inspection.

2 March 1945: Bakooka demonstration conducted by Captain BRUCE HARRISON on the company areas. Showdown inspection of vehicles and equipment was conducted throughout the day.

3 March 1945: "B" Company joined Task Force Griffin, "C" Company joined task force Rhea, "D" Company - 2 platoons joined Task Force King. One (1) platoon of D/17 attached to Task Force Rhea and one (1) platoon attached to Task Force Wemple. Task Force Wemple is composed of Hq/17, A/17, B/23, 1/B/33 and 1/A/814. Task Force Wemple left the vicinity of Hoof, Belgium at 0800, crossing IP at Welkenraedt, Belgium at 0905 hours. Unit arrived at Konzen, Germany at 1335 hours. The Task Force Commander, Lt Colonel JOHN P. WEMPLE, and Company and Platoon Commanders reconnoitered the road network in the vicinity of Schmidt and Heimbach.

4 March 1945: B/17 reverts to battalion control. Reconnaissance platoon leader made reconnaissance for firing ranges.

5 March 1945: Training schedule is in effect. Tank gunnery and tactics are to be stressed. Plans are made for firing of tank weapons. Reconnaissance of training and range areas is completed by battalion S-3.

6 March 1945: Billeting details, (Reconnaissance Platoon) leaves at 0700 hours. Plans on tentative training schedule are put out to company and platoon headquarters at meeting in CP at 0900. The task force commander is called to CC"A" headquarters at 1930 and Company and Platoon Commanders meet with C.O. at 2100. Plans are made for moving to Geich, Germany at 0700 hours in the morning.

7 March 1945: Battallion left bivouac in vicinity of Konzen at 0730 hours. Task Force Wemple followed T.F. Rhea in march column. Crossed IP at Lammersdorf at 0845. After traveling via Lammersdorf, Germeter, Hurtgen, Kleinhaus, Brandenburg, Bergstein, Bruck, Nideggen, Gerg, Thum, Froitzheim, Fussenich and arrived at the regulating point near Geich at 1115 hours. Closed in bivouac in vicinity of Geich at 1230. Unit Commanders attends meeting at CC"A" Hq at 1900. Plans for immediate movement are anticipated. Company and platoon commanders report to CP at 2015 and await return of C.O. from meeting at CC"A" Hq. All units are alerted for immediate movement upon return of C.O. from CC"A" Headquarters.

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Hq 7th Tk Bn, APO 257, After Action Report, Month of March, 1945 (Cont'd)

8 March 1945: Operations Instructions arrive at 0010 - time set for movement 0100. Unit left vicinity of Geich at 0130. March order: A/17, B/23, 1/A/814, Hq/17, 1/B/33, Trains (Gas), 3/D/17. Task Force Wemple arrived at forward assembly area near Miel at crossroads (438314). Travelled via Zulpich, Euskirchen, Essez, Ludiudorf and Miel. The leading element of T.F. Wemple leaves the assembly area at 1115. March order: Advance Guard - platoons of A/17, A/814 and B/23 followed by remainder of B/23. A/17, then Hq Co, A/38, Bn Hq 17, Med Det 17, Gas trains, 1/D/17. During period 1115 to 1531 hours our force moves to vicinity of Odingen.

9 March 1945: Unit alerted at 0900 for movement. Liaison Officer arrives with orders for T.F. Wemple to move to the vicinity of Gimmersdorf. The 23rd Armd Inf Bn is alerted to take over the area we are in at present. The move of T.F. Wemple is effected at 1125, arriving at Gimmersdorf at 1220 hours. (Travelled via Zillingshoven and Berkum) Five German soldiers in civilian clothes are picked up and sent to P.W.E. Elements of the task force are delayed enroute. At 1300 these units report that they are moving as ordered. Task force commanders meet at CC"A" Hq at 1530. Meeting results in unit moving to Bad Godesburg via Gimmersdorf, Berkum, Villip and Pech. The advance elements of the task force arrive in Bad Godesburg at 1655 hours. All units of T. F. Wemple are closed in at new area at 1800. Relief of unit previously holding area completed at 1900. Outposts and patrols are established and contact with elements on both flanks effected. Report received says "Vehicle moving going South along east bank of Rhine, vicinity 6032 at 2100 hours, fire at targets of opportunity" A check with friendly troops across from area indicated brings denial of such activity in area under their observation. The task force commander, Lt Colonel Wemple, is in command of town and area surrounding Bad Godesburg. Operations overlay sent to CC"A". Reconnaissance party to report to CP 489 Armd F. A. Bn at 100815 for purpose of selecting firing positions for tanks under Div Arty for operational control. Engineer platoon relieved from attached to T.F. Wempl and returns to parent unit at Gimmersdorf, 1044. O.P.'s are established at 599563347 and 60453189. Reports are sent in to T.F. Wemple CP throughout the day and night. Seven enemy soldiers observed at 1200 hours in vicinity of 606327. Other enemy soldiers observed at Red Cross building on other side of river, Jerries seen moving in and out of emplacement. Nine (9) medium sized boats and five (5) small boats, four (4) rowboats are spotted on east side of river. We are calling artillery on all observed enemy movements. OP reports that barge on east side of river was fired into. Three (3) soldiers left it and ran into a building at 617306 marked with a red cross. Possible enemy tank observed in vicinity of these coordinates was fired on by our artillery and set afire when it withdrew into a woods. An additional OP is located at 612305. Some small arms fire received from east side of river. Occasional enemy soldiers observed entering and leaving buildings on east side of river. Troops are warned of the advance of friendly troops from the south to the north on east side of the river, and instructed to be doubly cautious in the observation of movement. At 1405 B and C Co's are ordered to be relieved from attachment to TF Rhea and TF Griffin and revert to Bn control. Previously reconnoitered positions are to be occupied without delay. Co B and C are moving to vicinity of 590317. 87th Cav Rcn Sq is to relieve our unit and to take up positions at out present location. Co's B and C are closed in bivouac in vicinity of 590317 at 1908. White flares are observed at 2000 and 2025 hours. Tank engines are also reported heard at 2130 hours.

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S E C R E T

Hq 7th Tk Bn, APO 257, After Action Report, Month of March, 1945 (Cont'd)

11 March 1945:¹⁷ Occasional small arms fire reported throughout the day. Tank motors are heard. Report received ay 0940 said that 60 ft power driven boat which was tied on east side of river in vicinity of 608322 yesterday has disappeared. The boat might have been sunk during the night for it was hit by artillery yesterday. TF Wemple relieved by 87th Cav Rcn Sqdn at 1130. OP's and patrols discontinued at 1205. Tanks move into indirect firing positions at 587299 to 592295. Co D is attached to CC"A" for operational control. One platoon is attached to 23 AIB and the balance of the Co is placed in combat command "A" Reserve, and are located at Kurrihoven(590260).

12 March 1945: Tanks started firing indirect. Lt. Felton. Co A is in charge of 75mm; Lt Hardin, Co B is in charge of 75mm, and Lt Cagle, Co C is in charge of 76mm. 130 rounds of 75 and 52 rounds of 76mm fired.

13, 14, 15, 16 March 1945: Tank companies continue firing indirect from positions West of Rhine.

17-18 March 1945: Lt Johnson, Assauly Gun platoon leader and selected NCO's attend tank gunnery school at Div Arty. A tank gunnery school will be set up in the battalion training schedule and instructions will be based on progress of the Div Arty School.

20 March 1945: Tank-Infantry problem staged by B/17 and other elements of the command. The CO is called to Wretch at 1500 and company and platoon commanders report to the Bn CP. In view of the impending threat to Rhine bridges and Remagen bridgehead, the 7th Armd Div takes over a sector of defense. The CP group leaves Bad Godesburg at 1820 hours and is to be followed by the tank companies. A change in plans results in the tank companies turning around and returning to their original bivouac area. B/23 closed in at 1950 hours at out new CP location at Gimmersdorf. Patrols and road blocks are set up to secure road network in TF Wemple sector. Five patrols and one strong road block were established.

21 March 1945: Infantry (B/23) remains in bivouac at Gimmersdorf and has equipment that was left at Bad Godesburg brought over by trucks. At 0840 hrs A(1 Plat)814 is attached to TF Wemple. Gunnery training continues. Only enemy activity noted during hours of darkness is an occasional plane flying over.

22 March 1945: Plans for movement on 23 March 1945 are made. CC"A" visits our CP to discuss pending movement.

23 March 1945: Unit discontinues defensive operation in sector. A,B,C,D and Sv Co leave Bad Godesburg to join up with other elements of force located at Gimmersdorf. A,B,C and D. Co close in at 0920. Sc Co closes in at 1005. Meeting of staff and co commanders at CP at 1300. Plan is discussed and orders issued by CO regarding march and crossing of Rhine river. March order will be Co D, Bn Hq, Hq Co, A, B, C and Sv Co, Route of March will be via Gimmersorf, Niederbachem, Roalndswerth, Rolandsech, Oberivinter, Remagen (cross Rhine river using floating Bailey bridge N. of Remagen Bridge) Linz, Ginsterhahn, Reidenbruch. The leading element left Gimmersdorf at 1950 hours. The Hq group crossed the river at 2110 hours. Unit closed in bivouac vicinity of Reidenbruch at 2330 hours.

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¹⁷ There is no entry dated 10 March 1945.

S E C R E T

Hq 7th Tk Bn, APO 257, After Action Report, Month of March, 1945 (Cont'd)

24 March 1945: Remained in assembly position in vicinity of Reidenbruch performing maintenance and preparing to push on to the East. Bn CO, Co comdrs, and S-2 made rcn of route to Weid River crossing near Hausen, coordinates 772160.

25 March 1945: About 0715 we received notice that the combat command would move out of the Reidenbruch area by task forces. TF WEMPLE was to be composed of Bn Hq and Hq Co, 17th Tk Bn, A/17; 1 plt D/17, B/23, A/814. Trains were to move with the units until we reached the final forward assembly area. TF Wemple was to assembly in the vicinity of Ehlscheid coordinate 809129.

Company A of the 17th plus one platoon of Co D was assigned to TF RHEA. B/17, D/17, Hq/17 and one platoon was assigned to TF KING.

At 1100 we received notice that TF Rhea would move out at 1400 and that TF Wemple would follow ten minutes after that task force.

TF Wemple moved out of the Reidenbruch area at 1610 and the head of the column crossed the Weid River at 1750 and reached the forward assembly area at Ehlscheid at 1815.

Briefly the plan was for the 7th Armd Div to attack to the east along the Autobahn with Limbourg as the final objective. CC"A" was to march or attack on the Autobahn and CC"R" was to attack along a parallel route to the line of the Autobahn TF Rhea in CC"A" was to be the leading force followed by TF Wemple then TF King with each Task force prepared to by pass any resistance and continue the drive. The infantry was to ride mounted on the tanks from the Ehlscheid assembly area on to the final objective. The infantry tracks were to revert to the CC"A" trains and were to be brought forward as soon as tactical conditions permitted. Intelligence reports indicated that we would not meet strong resistance and that the objective would be reached very quick.

During the night we received notice that TF Rhea would cross the IP at coordinate 825145 at 0330 on 26 March 45, and that TF Wemple would follow by 1 hr.

26 March 1945: TF Wemple moved out of the Ehlscheid assembly area at 0400 and the head of the column crossed the IP at coordinates 825145 at 0455. The order of march was tanks with inf. Mounted, Inf, AT Plat, command section, Mortar Plat, TD Platoon, Eng Plat, Assault Gun Plat, Bn Hq and Hq Co, Trains and light tanks.

By 0940 the head of TF Wemple column had reached coordinates 937138 and had not contacted the enemy. The overpasses on the Autobahn had been destroyed which caused the advance to be slowed up somewhat. At 1132 the Mortar Plat fired on eight horse drawn enemy artillery pieces in the vicinity of 985100. At 1151 a Liaison plane dropped a note saying that he had spotted some enemy arty peices in woods and that he would mark the point with yellow smoke. However, we were unable to locate the area that he was trying to point out. By 1240 the head of the column had reached coordinate 005102. By 1318 head of column had reached coordinate 018082 and at this point we contacted elements of the 9th Armd Div which was supposed to be on a parallel route further to out right. At 1332 the task force comdr was called to a meeting at coordinate 033057. At 1425 we received notice that all vehicles would be refueled and that there had been a change in plans. All commanding officers in the task force were assembled to receive new orders.

The new plan was for the 7th Armd Div to attack to the north and east and seize objectives in the vicinity of Werdord and Asslar-kl altenstadten on the Dill river. The division was to attack in two columns with CC"R" on the left and CC"A" on the right and CC"A" was to attack along two general parallel routes with TF Wemple leading initially then TF Rhea taking a route parallel and to the left of TF Wemple

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S E C R E T

Hq 7th Tk Bn, APO 257, After Action Report, Month of March, 1945 (Cont'd)

The TF Wemple route was north off Autobahn at coordinate 077053 to Boden, Meudt, Berod, Wallmerod, Molsberg, Thalheim, Heuchelheim, Oberzeuzheim Steinbach, Heckholzhausen, Allendorf, Waldhausen, Lohnberg, Biskirchen, Stockhausen, Leun, Niederbieber, Oberbeil, Biskirchen, Altenberg, then North on mountain trail to Asslar-Altenstadten at coordinate 515215.

By the time our vehicles had been refueled and the personnel of the task force had been briefed on the new plan and route. It was 1630 and we moved out at that time. The weather had been very unfavorable throughout the day with intermittent rain and the bad weather continued throughout the night which was extremely disagreeable for the infantrymen who were riding on the outside of the tanks.

As soon as the head of our column reached the first town on the new route which was Boden the Germans began surrendering in mass and this continued throughout the night. An estimated six to eight hundred prisoners surrendered without any resistance to our task force as we passed through the towns of Boden, Meudt, Berod, and Wallmerod. Since our orders were to continue the advance regardless of what circumstances might develop, we could not stop to handle prisoners properly. We set up temporary P.W. collecting points along the route with a few men from our Rcn platoon to guard the prisoners until the elements who were following us could take charge of them. As the head of the task force column approached the towns which have been mentioned the enemy troops walked out to meet us with white flags. Our advance guard simply waved the PW's back down the column without stopping the advance.

The advance progressed excellently until we reached the strip of road between Thelheim and Heuchelheim. Upon reaching this point we found that the route that had been designated was a very narrow unimproved road. The tanks were able to get through with very little difficulty but many of the wheel vehicles and half-tracks had to be pulled through the bad places in the road by tanks. This bad road slowed up our march considerably. However all of TF Wemple had cleared the bad roads by 0115, 27 March 1945.

27 March 1945: When TF Wemple reached Steinbach the route Heckholzhausen which had been designated was another unimproved country road so the task force commander requested permission to use an alternate route through Obertiefenbach and the request was granted. Upon reaching Obertiefenbach we found elements of TF Brown which was a part of CC"R", however, we passed on through that task force. Upon reaching Heckholzhausen we contacted elements of the 9th Armd Div which was in a task force that was supposed to be further to our right. We found that this task force had met some resistance upon trying to pass through Allendorf. Since we did not know the disposition of the friendly troops and since they did not seem to need help in overcoming the resistance, we halted at Heckholzhausen from about 0200 to 0630 at which time we passed through the other task force. By 0800 the head of the column had passed through the town of Waldhausen and at that point one enemy fuel truck and trailer was knocked out, however, we did not meet resistance here.

Upon approaching the Lahn River railroad bridge at 422176 we received a few rounds of small arms fire but this was quickly overcome and 12 prisoners were taken. The RR bridge was in good condition and we left out engineer platoon there to guard the bridge and to check it for demolitions. Upon approaching Leun about 30 Germans surrendered without a fight and the column continued on taking a few more PW's at Niederbieber. The head of the column had reached Oberbieber by 0955 at which point we received rather heavy enemy mortar fire and one tank was knocked out by an enemy bazooka, killing the tank driver¹⁸ and injuring several of the infantrymen who were riding the tank. The resistance was wiped out by 1100 and 27 more prisoners were taken.

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¹⁸ This may have been Tec 5 Titus S. Webb, company not yet known. The only other 17 Tank KIA known on 27 March was Sgt. Edward F. Gray of Headquarters Company.

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Hq 7th Tk Bn, APO 257, After Action Report, Month of March, 1945 (Cont'd)

At this time the task force was deployed in the vicinity of 498188 and plans were made and orders issued for the final assault on the objective Asslarkl-Altenstaden. A foot rcn of the approach to the final objective was made by all officers and platoon sgts. After studying the situation the task force commanders decided that the terrain favored a fast assault on the objective with the infantry mounted on the tanks with maximum use of all supporting weapons. The supporting battery of field arty was put in position at 500190, the mortars and assault guns were put in position at 501200 and the TD's were to take up position at 508195 to deliver over-watching fire the assault was made. The assault was to be made by two platoons abreast with one in reserve. The AT platoon was to follow with the support platoon to set up road blocks and help in holding the position after it had been taken. The mortars were to make that part of the town or the other side of the river as the attack was made after a period of ten minutes preparatory fire by the arty the attack was made at 1400 and by 1500 the objective had been secured. The bridge over the Dill river was taken intact and our only resistance was a few rounds of small arms fire. Seventeen prisoners were taken and we had no casualties. Road blocks were established immediately and steps were taken to defend the bridge if necessary.

During the afternoon the Engineer plat leader, in bringing his platoon up to the assembly area, failed to turn north where he should have and ran into an ambush in the vicinity of 515189. One track was knocked out by an AT gun and one officer and 10 EM were missing. During the afternoon and night Lt Miller the platoon leader and all of the EM except one escaped and returned to our CP.

The Bn CP was established at Oberbiel and the trains the arty, the mortar and assault guns were assembled in the vicinity of 500188. The mortars, the arty and the assault guns were to be prepared to help defend Oberbiel.

The CC"A" trains and the Inf half-tracks were brought up to this point during the early evening. The doughboys were glad to get their vehicles back for they had had a long rough ride on the tanks. This experience has convinced the task force commander that the infantry should not be taken out of their half-tracks and mounted on tanks except for short assault missions for long continuous riding on the tanks is too hard on the men, especially when the weather is bad. At 2030 we received orders that the drive to the North would be continued that night. TF Wemple was to jump off at 2400 with the mission of seizing and establishing strong road blocks at the following points: Niedergirmes, Nauheim, Dorlor, Atzback, and Heuchelheim. TF Rhea was to follow TF Wemple and seize the town of Giesson and TF King had the mission of establishing a series of blocks further to the north. The task force was prepared to move and had just started to push off when we received a message from higher hq ordering us to wait for further orders and we remained in position until 0430 at which time we moved out.

28 March 1945: By 0645 the first objective had been secured and a platoon of tanks, platoon of infantry and a section of TD's was left to hold the road block. Here we met with small arms fire and one tank was knocked out by bazooka. Eight prisoners were taken at that time. By 0730 we had secured the second road block the one at Nauheim without resistance. A Section of tanks and a squad of infantry was left to hold the block. By 0800 the block at Dorlor had been secured and a section of tanks and two squads of infantry was left to hold the block. Four prisoners were taken here but they did not resist. The approach at Atzbach was established by 0820 without resistance. Upon approaching the last objective at Heuchelheim, leading elements received small arms fire from vicinity of 622210 also some At and arty fire. One tank was knocked out by AT fire and we knocked out the enemy gun. By 1055 our tanks were in the town and by 1140 the position had been consolidated and blocks established. About 75 PW's were taken at this point.

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Hq 7th Tk Bn, APO 257, After Action Report, Month of March, 1945 (Cont'd)

The Hq was established at Heuchelhiem and we held all of the positions during the afternoon and night. At 1500 we received notice that we would be relieved by an RCT from the 99th Inf Div during the morning of the 29th.

29 March 1945: Assembled task force at Heuchelheim preparatory to following TF Rhea on new mission. The division mission was to attack and secure the dam on the Eder River in vicinity of 925880 and the area bounded by the north edge of the lake from 804880 west to the dam. The attack was to be made by two combat commands abreast with one following in reserve. CC"R" was to attack on left and CC"B" on right with CC"A" following. TF Wemple moved out behind TF Rhea at 1215 on 29 March 45 and moved into forward assembly position at Allendorf. The task force outposted the town during the night and remained on alert to follow the attacking elements.

30 March 1945: The leading elements of task force Wemple moved out at 0620 following route "B" of the original attack plan. By 1115 the head of the column had reached phase line Bronze in the vicinity of Rosenthal at which time we were ordered to move on to phase line Skeet. By 1242 we had reached phase line Skeet in the vicinity of Willersdorf at which time eight Germans surrendered to our advance elements. We did not do any fighting during the day for we were following the other two combat commands, however, we did pick up about 25 prisoners without fighting for them. The task force was assembled in the vicinity of Willersdorf until 1420. The task force closed at Dainrode at 1645 where we remained for the night. The task force was on constant alert to repel any counterattack that might develop in or near the division zone.

31 March 1945: On 31 Mar 45 at 0630 the task force was alerted to move to an assembly area at Geismar. The task force moved out at 0830 and closed in the Geismar area at which point we took up a tactical position to defend that point and to be able to move to the west or north to repel counterattacks.

At this time a new task force was formed which was composed of B/17, C/23, 1 plat TD's and 2 plats Engineers and was placed under command of Maj T. W. DAILEY the Ex Officer of the 17th Tk Bn. This force assembled at Lousendorf with the mission of holding itself in readiness to move out to repel counterattacks.

During the month of March the 17th Tank Battallion had three men killed in action and received three reinforcements.

3 Incls
1. Log
2. Messages (Month of Mar 45)
3. Overlays

(signed)
JOHN P. WEMPLE
Lt Col Inf
Commanding

S E C R E T

HEADQUARTERS 17TH TANK BATTALLION
APO 257, U. S. ARMY

30 April 1945

SUBJECT: After Action Report, Month of April 1945.

TO : The Adjutant General, U. S. Army, Washington 25, D. C.

1 April 1945: On this date Task Force Wemple which was composed of Bn Hq, 17th, A/17, Mortar/17, Rcn/17, and Assaully¹⁹ Gun/17, 1 plat D/17, Med Det/17, 1 plat B/33, 1 plat A/814 and B/23 was billeted at Geismar. Task Force Dailey which was commanded by Maj THOMAS W. DAILEY, 17th Tk Bn, Ex Officer, and which was composed of B/17, C/23, 1 plat B/33, 1 plat A/814, Ren/814, 1 plat D/17, Co Hq D/17 as well as Co Hq A/814 was also billeted at Geismar. Co C of the 17th and 1 plat of D/17 was attached to Task Force Rhea and billeted in the village of Louisendorf.

The tanks and infantry were deployed to the north, east and west of the town so as to be able to defend the town in case of a counterattack from any direction. We had a road block consisting of a section of tanks and a squad of infantry at the main road junction due west of Geismar at coordinates 760760 and we had a mounted patrol consisting of two 1/4 ton vehicles patrolling the main north south highway along the east bank of the Eder River from Messenstein to Frankenberg. However, there was no enemy activity in our area but some enemy armor was reported in Medebach to the north and west of our position.

During the day combat Command A was alerted to move to the west possibly to the vicinity of Medebach to work with the 415th Infantry Regiment.

2 April 1945: At 1745 Task Force Wemple received orders from CCA to alert the unit for immediate movement and the task force commander reported to CCA hq for further instructions. Task Force Wemple was to move out at 1930 and was to follow B troop of the 87th Rcn Squadron. TF Wemple was to be followed by TF Rhea TF Dailey and the 489th FA En. The route to be followed was west to the main road junction then south to Frankenberg, north to Schrenfs, Sachsenberg, Dalwigkthal, east to Munden then north to Medebach. The task force moved out at 1930 and at that time the sky was overcast and it was raining some. By 2030 the head of the task force column had reached the road intersection about three-quarters of a mile south of Sachsenberg. By this time it was extremely dark and raining intermittently. At 2027 we received a message from CCA Hq stating that rather heavy enemy artillery was falling in Medebach. The column moved on very slowly due to the extreme darkness, the rain, and the slow progress of the Rcn troop which we were following. The head of the TF Wemple column had reached Munder at 2115 and at this point the task force commander, and the S-2 went forward with the combat command commander to contact the 415 Inf Regt at Medebach to find out just what our mission would be. The Regimental CP had moved on but we did contact one of the Inf Bn CP's and higher hq contacted the Regimental commander. We found that CCA was to relieve the inf bn which was in Medebach. TF Wemple was to be responsible for the defense of the town to the north and east. We were to establish road blocks on four roads, three coming into the town from the north and one from the east. We learned from the Inf Bn which we were relieving that the Germans had counter-attacked the town on the previous morning with a company of 50 infantrymen. The attack had come from the north-west and it had been successfully repelled. The Inf killed or captured all of the attacking force and they cleaned out the high ground and woods to the north and north-west. The only enemy activity which had been observed

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¹⁹ This spelling is as in the original.

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After Action Report, Apr 1945, Hq 17th Tk Bn, APO 257, US Army, (Cont'd)

during the day was artillery fire from the west and very little small arms fire from the high hill which we will call Hill 500 to the west and scattered small arms fire from the south west. Some enemy armor activity had been reported to the west in the town of Winterberg.

After receiving his orders, the task force commander called his company commanders and separate platoon leaders forward to Medebach and went with them on foot rcn of that part of the town which we were to defend. As has been stated before, the night was extremely dark with almost continuous rain which made the operation of moving the task force into position a very difficult one. In addition to this fact enemy artillery was falling in the town rather regularly. It is estimated that a three gun battery was shelling the town and the fire was coming from the northwest. After completing the foot rcn, the task force commander gave the infantry company commanders the responsibility of establishing road blocks on the two western most roads coming into town from the north. He was to use his AT platoon for the one block. The other to be held by a platoon of infantry. The tank company commander was given the mission of establishing a block on the Hillerhausen road and the road to the east. He was to use a platoon of tanks and a platoon of infantry for each block. The task force CP was set up near the center of the town and the mortar platoon and assault gun platoon were put into position on the northern edge of the town so that they could cover the area to the north, north-west, and north-east. The TD platoon was spotted in the north-west edge of town where they had a fair field of fire to the north-west and the platoon leader made a rcn to each of the road blocks so that he could be moved rapidly to any point where he might be needed. The light tanks were held with the trains near the center of the town as trains protection and a mobile reserve.

Prior to the time that the vehicles were brought into the town an officer who had actually made a foot rcn of the position was designated to lead each road block force and each element into position but even with this careful planning and rcn the process of moving into position was slow due to the extreme darkness. However, the Task force was finally in position by 0245 and all road blocks were well set up and tied in with each other and with B Troop of the 87th Cav Rcn Squad on the right and task force Rhea on the left.

3 April 1945: At 0300 on this date we received notice that CCA would attack in conjunction with the 415 Inf Regt of the 9th Inf Div at 030930 Apr 45 to seize and secure Glindfeld (649897) and RJ (654887) and established a security screen in that area. Task Force Wemple was to lay down maximum fire possible on hill 500 which was about 1 and 1/2 km west of Medebach and hill 594 which was about 2 and 1/2 km north west of Medebach from 0915 to 0930. Task Force Wemple was to attack at 0930 from Medebach, seize hill 500, and establish base of fire from which to fire on Glindfeld. Then we were to attack and secure Glindfeld, establish road block at 659905 and set up a security screen in that area. Task Force Rhea was to operate on our left with the mission of placing fire on hill 568 which was about 3 km south-west of Medebach and on south-east nose of hill 616 which was about 3 km west of Medebach from 0915 to 0930 and they were to attack at 0930 to secure RJ at 654887 and set up security screen in that area. Task Force Dailey was to move from vicinity of Munden to Medebach at 0930 and establish all around close in security.

The task force commander called a meeting of his company commanders and separate company commanders and separate platoon leaders and explained our mission for the following day. He ordered all officers and platoon sgts to make a dismounted rcn as far forward as the enemy situation would permit at daybreak on the following day. He designated Capt Dudley Britton, the Inf company commander as the commander of the assault force and ordered the attack to be made with the inf mounted on tanks.

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He ordered the assault gun platoon leader and the mortar platoon leader to find positions and set up their platoons in the north-west edge of the town of Medebach as they could place fire on hills 500 and 594 during the period of 0915 to 0930. The engineer platoon was given orders to clear out two friendly minefields just west of the town of Medebach prior to 0915, the mortar plat was to put smoke on hill 500 while the engineers were performing this mission. The TD plat was ordered to take up a firing position on north-west edge of town.

At first light on the morning of the third, the dismounted rcn was made by all officers and platoon sgts. We were able to get to the extreme western edge of the town and at that point we drew a few rounds of rifle fire from hill 500. However, from this point we were able to make a good estimate of the terrain. We found that we would have to attack over about 1 km of open, slightly rising terrain and that hill 500 was heavily wooded. The weather was favorable on this date with a rather heavy ground haze early but good prospects of favorable weather by 0930, the time for the attack.

By 0810 after the dismounted rcn had been completed the task force commander assembled the company commanders and issued the final orders.

The assault force commander was ordered to attack hill 500 at 0930 with two platoons of tanks abreast with inf mounted on the tanks. The left plat was to move straight west into the woods on hill 500 and the right plat was to flank hill 500 to the right. The inf was to ride the tanks to the edge of the woods then dismount and precede the tanks through the woods. The terrain would not permit hill 500 to be flanked to the left. The reserve plat was to follow the left assault plat at about 400 yards prepared to assist either the right or left plat. As soon as hill 500 was secured and a base of fire had been placed on Glindfeld the right plat was to assault the town of Glindfeld. The reserve plat was to move around to the right of hill 500, furnish overwatching fire on the right flank, and on hill 594. After the two objectives had been taken, the inf AT plat and the TD's were to be brought in to establish the road blocks and security screen. The mortar plat, the TD's and the assault gun plats were ordered to be in their respective positions prior to 0915. The attack was to be made with maximum speed. The light tanks were held back in the town of Medebach as a mobile reserve.

At 0915 the assault gun plat, the mortar plat and the 489th FA Bn began firing on hills 500 and 594 as ordered. At 0920 we received orders to cease all fire on these points which orders was complied with. The 9th Inf Div who was attacking on our right and left was too close to hill 594 for safe firing.

The attack was started at 0930 as planned. The assault platoons recieved a few rounds of small arms fire from hill 500 as they moved across the open terrain but the fire ceased as the tanks reached the edge of the woods and eight enemy riflemen surrendered. Hill 500 had been seized and secured by 1017 and the tanks were firing on enemy doughs in the town of Glindfeld. The right plat moved around to the right of hill 500 and entered the town of Glindfeld at 1040 and by 1100 the town had been cleared. One officer and 27 EM were taken prisoners in the town. The only casualties which we suffered in this action were one man injured by falling from a tank and one half track put out of action by hitting a friendly mine with no personnel injured by the mine. The defense of the town of Glindfeld was set up with the two platoons of tanks and two platoons of infantry. The TD's and the AT plat were used in setting up strong road blocks at the road junction at 651910 and one on the highway about half way between that point and the town of Medebach. One plat of tanks and one plat of inf was placed in the north edge of hill 500 to the north, north-west, or north-east. The mortars were placed just east of hill 500 and the remainder of task force Wemple remained in the town of Medebach to defend it and the task force remained in this position until 04 0600 April 1945.

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After Action Report, Apr 45, Hq 17th Tk Bn, APO 257, US Army (Cont'd)

Task Force Dailey attacked and secured the town of Kustelberg during the afternoon and night of 3 and 4 Apr 45. This task force encountered stubborn resistance from enemy SP guns and artillery fire in taking this objective, they lost one tank and sustained a few personnel casualties.

4 April 1945: At 0600 TF Wemple moved out of the position in the vicinity of Glindfeld and Medebach with the mission of moving to the town of Kustelberg to occupy and defend the north section of that town. During this move the enemy placed intermittent assault gun and artillery fire along the route but fortunately we did not sustain any casualties. As soon as we reached the town of Kustelberg we received orders from the CC"A" to attack and secure hill 693 which is due west of Kustelberg and the town of Gronebach which is about three km west of Kustelberg. TF Rhea was to pass through Kustelberg and seize and secure the town of Hildfeld about 3 1/2 km to the north-west. TF Dailey was to remain in Kustelberg prepared to assist either of the two task forces.

As soon as our leading tanks reached the west section of the town of Kustelberg the enemy began laying down rather heavy artillery and mortar fire on the town and in the area just west of the town. About seven of our infantrymen were injured by this enemy fire. The enemy fire was coming from the west and north-west, probably from the vicinity of Gronebach and Hildfeld.

The task force commander called the company commanders and the separate platoon leaders forward to make a foot rcn and receive orders. The weather was colder than on the previous day. The sky was overcast and it was raining some with even one or two short intervals of snow. The terrain over which we were to make the attack was favorable for cross country movement of track vehicles if the vehicles were careful not to track each other. In other works some of the terrain was soft but it could be crossed. The attack was to be made across open and slightly rising terrain for a distance of about 1 km then through the woods on hill 693 then over another hill which had no cover on it and on into the town of Gronebach. The distance from the wooded area on hill 693 to the town of Gronebach is about 2 km at this time we only had 11 medium tanks in our task force; two platoons of four tanks each and one platoon of three tanks.

The task force commander ordered the attack to be made with two platoons of tanks abreast with a platoon of infantry following each tank platoon in their half-tracks. One platoon was to enter the woods on hill 693 well to the left while the other platoon of tanks was to move to the right so that it could fire into the woods and to the north and north-west to protect our right flank. The reserve platoon of tanks and infantry were to take up a position just west of the town of Kustelberg prepared to be committed where needed. The TD's were ordered to take up an initial firing position on south side of road just west of Kustelberg the mortars and assault guns were to go into position just west of Kustelberg and to place fire on hill 693 and to the north if needed. A battery of FA went into position just south and west of Kustelberg and was prepared to fire missions as called for. The light tanks were assembled on the western edge of Kustelberg as a mobile reserve.

All during the time that the task force was going into position for the attack the enemy placed artillery fire and mortar fire in our area but other than the 7 infantry casualties previously mentioned no damage was done. The assault tanks platoon moved out at 0900 and at 0920 one of our tanks was knocked out in the vicinity of 59 5918 by an enemy SP gun which was knocked out a few seconds later by another of our tanks. The infantry platoon which was with this assault tank platoon became somewhat disorganized due to the heavy artillery, mortar and SP fire but the tanks went on through the woods killing several enemy infantrymen and capturing seven. As the tanks reached the open area in the vicinity of 589927 two more of our tanks were knocked out by enemy SP gun fire from vicinity of 587930 and this enemy SP gun was finally knocked out by our one remaining tank in that platoon.

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The platoon which had been furnishing right flank protection found that due to the steepness of hill 693 on the north side it could not flank the hill to the right or north so it was pulled back to the left and put into position in the vicinity of 590920 prepared to make the assault on the town of Gronebach.

It was decided to reorganize task force Wemple for the attack on Gronebach and one platoon of tanks with one platoon of infantry mounted was detached from TF Dailey and attached to TF Wemple for the attack. Two platoons of tanks with inf mounted on the tanks were assembled on the reverse slope of the hill in the vicinity of 588919 the other platoon of tanks with inf mounted was put in position at 590923 this platoon was to go around the north nose of the hill and attack along the east west road. The two platoons which were assembled further south were to go over the crest of the hill and hit the town from the south-east. The assault guns and mortars were in position and prepared to lay smoke in the woods to the south and west of the town. The artillery was prepared to shell the town on call. The enemy continued to lay mortar fire and artillery in our area during the re-organization.

By 1210 TF Rhea had taken the town of Hildfeld and they were ordered to assist TF Wemple in taking Gronebach by moving a task force down on the town from the north. This attack was to occur at the same time that TF Wemple moved in from the east and south.

At 1600 all plans had been completed and the coordinated attack on the town of Gronebach was made. By 1620 all forces were in the objective. The assault forces met some small arms fire in entering but the force that was holding the town gave up rather quickly. TF Wemple took 43 PW's in the town.

By 1700 the town was completely cleared and all task forces were preparing to move to other objectives.

TF Dailey moved through Gronebach at 1700 to the north through Hildfeld with the mission of seizing and securing the town Niedersfeld.

TF Rhea was to reorganize at Hildfeld prepared to move on through Niedersfeld to the north. During the attack on Hildfeld one platoon leader from C/17 was killed²⁰ and the company commander, Lt Cagle, was seriously wounded.

At 1733 TF Wemple received orders from CC"A" Hq to consolidate position, clear hill 675, and be prepared to move west to the main north-south highway then north to Niedersfeld on combat command orders.

At 1740 we received word from TF Dailey that his force had been stopped a short distance north-west of Hildfeld by AT fire and that one tank had been knocked out but that they were placing arty fire on AT positions and that the force would move on immediately.

We were first ordered to move to the west from Gronebach until the head of the column reached the road junction at 555930 and to await further orders there. The head of the column reached this point at 2020. At 2025 we were ordered to proceed north to Niedersfeld and contact TF Dailey at that point and to block all entrances to the town from the south and west and to await further orders there. In compliance with this order the task force moved out immediately. At 2100 the head of the column was halted by a road block consisting of fallen trees and debris but which was not covered by fire. The dozer and engineer platoon were brought forward and the block was cleared and the force on the way again by 2120. We were held up by a second similar road block just south of town at 2200 but this was cleared by the engineer platoon in about 25 minutes. The task force was completely closed in Niedersfeld at 2340.

During the night we received instructions from CC"A" Hq that CCA Reinforced by 1st Bn, 47th Inf Regt would continue to attack at 050800 Apr 45 to seize and secure Brunskappel, Wiemeringhausen, Assinghausen, and Bruch-Hausen. 1 plat of troop B/87 was attached to TF Wemple for the purpose of making a rcn of the route west from Niedersfeld to Brunskappel. If this route was found to be satisfactory, TF Wemple was to attack at 050800 Apr 45 and seize Brunskappel then go north and seize Wullmeringhausen.

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²⁰ The only lieutenant killed whose date of death is not yet known is 1st Lt. Benjamin F. Archer; thus this was presumably Lt. Archer, although no other sources have yet been found to confirm this.

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If the west route was found to be impassible, then we were to initially follow TF Rhea north to Wiemeringhausen then south-west to Brunskappel then north to Wullmeringhausen and be prepared to continue north and seize Olsberg.

TF Rhea was to seize Wiemeringhausen and Assinghausen and be prepared to move on to Elleringhausen.

TF Dailey was to make rcn of routes to north to Bruch-Hausen and be prepared to assist TF Rhea or attack Bruch-Hausen on Combat Orders.

The platoon of rcn from B/87 made the rcn as directed and reported to Lt Col Wemple that they had got into the woods 300 or 400 yards when they drew small arms fire and heard some motors back in the woods. The platoon leader stated that the road was very narrow, not surfaced, and slightly soft in several places but that he thought that it would carry our task force. Therefore, the task force commander decided to use the west route rather than follow TF Rhea.

5 April 1945: Prior to 0800 while the task force was preparing to move out the enemy shelled the town of Niedersfeld rather heavily with arty and mortars. Three men were injured and 1 - 2½ Ton truck knocked out.

The task force moved out as directed with a platoon of tanks leading followed by a platoon of inf mounted in half-tracks. We did not meet any resistance by small arms fire but 1/47 Inf Bn which was operating on our flanks took several prisoners out of the woods and we continued to receive arty and mortar fire. When we reached a point about 800 yards west of the town of Niedersfeld we found that the road was impassable and that we could not get our vehicles cross country. The ground was too soft for our use. At 1000 the task force commander asked permission of higher hq to follow TF Rhea on the north route through Wiemeringhausen and permission was granted to do this. That change necessitated TF Wemple waiting in Niedersfeld until TF Rhea had cleared.

TF Rhea met rather stubborn resistance in taking Wiemeringhausen and it was not until 1525 that TF Wemple started moving to that town.

At 1524 we received word that TF Dailey had been ordered to seize Bruch-Hausen.

By 1730 TF Wemple was in position on the high ground west of Wiemeringhausen to attack south and seize Brunskappel. The terrain was such that the tanks could attack due south cross country over the crest of the hill and into within about 600 yards of the town. Then it was necessary for the tanks to go to the west and enter the town on the main north-south road; the vehicles could not go down the steep grade and directly into the town. The road was the only approach. While forming for the attack we drew small arms fire from the wooded high ground to our left front in the vicinity of 534990 and eventually we took about 20 PW's from this area. The mortars and assault guns were put into position in the vicinity of 532993 to furnish supporting fire. The tanks were to attack two platoons abreast with the infantry advancing dismounted with the tanks. One platoon of tanks and inf were to bear to the right and hit the town from the north. The tanks were to go as far as the terrain would permit then furnish overwatching fire while the inf entered the town on foot. The TD's were put in position on the high ground in the vicinity of 529995 with the mission of furnishing overwatching fire and flank protection for both flanks.

The tanks moved out on the assault at 1800 and as soon as they reached the crest of the hill they drew heavy AT and tank fire from the town. One of our tanks on the right flank was knocked out. Our tanks pulled back in a defilade position and fired at possible gun positions in the town. At this time we were also receiving enemy arty fire in the area. By this time our infantry had been depleted to such an extent that higher hq attached a company of inf from the 47th Inf Regt to our task force to assist with the attack. Our infantry was re-organized and the attached infantry was in place by 2045 and at that time the final assault on the town was launched.

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At this time it was dark. The tanks moved down near the town and fired direct, the attached infantry moved cross country to the south then entered the town from the east while our inf attacked on the right flank and entered the town from the north. The tanks were led into the town by the inf. Some small arms and automatic weapons fire was received as the troops entered but the resistance was soon overcome and about 49 prisoners were taken. The tanks were in the town by 2220 and the position had been consolidated and blocks established. At this time the TD's, mortars, assault guns and remainder of the force moved into the town. It was extremely dark when we entered the town and of course it was impossible to completely clear the town. Early the next morning one tank and one infantryman was killed by snipers, however, the few remaining snipers were soon eliminated by the infantrymen. The tanks and SP which had given us so much trouble while entering the town had escaped to the south. The infantrymen which were attached to the force reverted to their parent organization. As soon as the town was secure and they were left to defend the town when we moved out the following morning. Prior to entering the town our artillery had shelled it thoroughly, and when we entered several buildings were burning.

6 April 1945: At 0134 we received the operations instructions for the 6th. Friendly troops were supposed to occupy Olsberg and Bigge and TF Dailey was supposed to move out at 060800 Apr 45 and pass through these towns and capture Antfeld. TF Rhea was to follow Dailey through Olsberg and Bigge and capture Helmsinghausen, establish road block at 506068 prior to attacking Helminhausen. TF Wemple was to move from Brunskappel at 060900 Apr 45 through Wullmeringhausen, which had been taken by TF Dailey, to Assinghausen and be prepared to assist TF Dailey or TF Rhea in seizing their objectives if needed and be prepared to repel counterattacks in Combat Command Zone on order. TF Wemple was to establish a road block at Wullmeringhausen with one plat of inf and 1 plat of TD's by 060990 Apr 45.

The road block was established at Wullmeringhausen by 0900 as ordered and the remainder of the force moved out of Brunskappel at 0900 for Assinghausen by way of Wullmeringhausen. The task force was closed in Assinghausen by 1030.

TF Dailey made the move as ordered but met enemy resistance in Olsberg but they did not clear it and at the time Dailey reached the town they simply had a road block south of the town. By 1410 TF Dailey had cleared Bigge and was moving on to Antfeld. TF Dailey met stubborn resistance in this operation and had considerable difficulty in clearing a road block in the vicinity of 502078.

TF Wemple remained in Assinghausen until the following day. During the night we received word that we would be relieved from attached to the 9th Inf. Div. during the next day and that the combat command would move to an assembly area in the vicinity of Winterbert.

7 April 1945: During the night we received orders that TF Wemple consisting of 17th Tk Bn, (-2 med cos and 1 plat D/17) B/23, 1/B/33, would remain in Assinghausen and be prepared to move on Combat Command orders by 070900 Apr 45. B/17 was to remain in Antfeld attached to 9th Inf Div. The 1/A/814 was to be sent to Olsberg to revert to Company control. All elements of TF Dailey with exception of B/17 were to revert to parent organizations and revert to their control. CC"A" minus those elements previously indicated were to revert to 7th Armd Div on this date and were to move to assembly area near Winterbert.

At 0700 received instructions that CC"A" minus B/17 and A/814 would march at 070900 from present position to an assembly area vicinity Winterberg. Order of March was to be B/87, TF Rhea, Hq & Hq Co, CC"A", TF Wemple, B/33, 489 FA Bn. Billeting parties were to report to CC"A" Hq at 070800 and route was given by overlay.

TF Wemple followed CC"A" Hq out of Assinghausen at 1020 and marched along the route of Wiemerlinghausen, Niedersfeld, Winterbert, and south-west to Langesviess

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at which time the combat command went into an assembly position. The task force closed in the La gewiese assembly area at 1245. The remainder of the day was devoted to maintenance of vehicles and weapons.

8 April 1945: Unit remained in La gerviese area throughout day devoting time to maintenance of vehicles, weapons and equipment. C/17 reverted to 17th control and moved to 17th Assembly area. B/23 reverted to 23d control and moved to their assembly area.

9 April 1945: At 1230 we received notice that we would be prepared to move immediately to an assembly position in vicinity of Gleidorf. The order of march would be Hq, CC"A", Hq & Hq Co CC"A", 17th Tk Bn (-B/17), B/33. Units were to be prepared to move anytime after 1500 and head of column was to cross IP on combat command orders. Route was to be south-west to RF vicinity of 483826 then north-west to Oberkirchen, west to Winkhausen, and north-west to Gleidorf. The head of our column moved out at 1535 and the Bn was closed in Gleidorf at 1655.

During the night we received orders that CC"A" would move to forward assembly area the following morning. The command was to be divided into three task forces. C/17 minus one plat was to go to TF Rhea, A/17 was to be in TF Dailey and 1/C/17 was to be in TF Wemple. Each task force was to have one co of inf, 1 plat of B/33 eng, and one plat A/814 TD. Task Force Wemple was to move into an assembly area in vicinity of Kukulheim, TF Dailey in vicinity of Schawrtmecke, and TF Rhea in vicinity of Kobbenrode. TF Rhea was to cross IP at Schmallenberg at 100700 followed by TF Dailey then TF Wemple.

10 April 1945: TF Wemple moved over the route south of Schmallenberg, north to Obringhausen, west to Wormbach, north to Berghausen, west to Obr. Berndord, to Arpe and south to Kukulheim closing in on that area at 0900. The remainder of the day was devoted to maintenance and rcn of routes to the north. The task force was placed on a 30 minute alert at 1730.

During the night we received notice that we would remain in present position but would be prepared to move on short notice. TF Dailey was to attack and secure the towns of Obervalbert and Schondelt and clear woods in vicinity of 277877.

11 April 1945: TF Wemple was still in Kukulheim assembly area on this date. Company B of the 17th rejoined TF Wemple at Kukulheim at 0800. The platoon of C/17 which had been in TF Wemple and which was commanded by Lt Sather was sent to join his company and TF Rhea at Robbenrode at 0950 and he reported that he had reached his destination at 1140.

At 1210 received notice to prepare to move immediately to assembly area vicinity of Sieporting. The task force moved out at 1330 and followed the route by Bracht, Odingen, Kobbenrode, Isingheim, Bremscheid, Kslohe, then north-west to NdrEslehe and south-west to Seiperting closing in that area at 1533. TF Dailey moved to an assembly area to our west at Ndr Salevey. At this time company B/17 was sent to TF Dailey and Company A/17 returned to TF Wemple.

During the night we received instructions that III Corps would continue the attack to the north and west with 5th Inf Div on right or north, 7th Armd Div attack in center, and 9th Inf Div on south or left. The 7th Armd Div attack was to be continued on the 12 Apr 45 with two combat commands abreast, CC"A" on the right or north, and CC"R" on the south of left, CC"B" in reserve. CC"A" was given a specific route of attack and this attack was to be made with task forces in column with TF Rhea with one company 395 Inf Regt attached leading followed by 489 FA Bn, TF Wemple and TF Dailey. Each task force being prepared at all times to bypass other forces and continue the attack. The infantry was to ride the tanks and each task force was to shorten their column as much as possible by taking only essential vehicles. The

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first division objective was to be the north-south line through Amecke and Allendorf those towns inclusive. CCA route was to be north on main highway through Wemholthausen, North to Berge, then west to Visbeck, to Altenhellefeld, to Hellefeld, to Bainghausen, to Schnellenhause, south to Selschede, to Rohre, south to Reckinghausen and West to Slidfeld, to Illingheim, and to Amecke, the first CC"A" objective. The CCR route was to be south of and generally parallel to the CCA route.

12 April 1945: The head of the TF Wemple column left the Sieperting assembly area at 0615 and crossed the IP at 316960 at 0750. The head of the column was at Wemholthausen at 0725. At 0820 head of column passed through Beige. At 0840 friendly air rcn reported 7 enemy tanks entering town of Sundern. By 1030 the head of our column had reached Westenfeld. At this point the enemy fired several rather heavy arty concentrations and rocket concentrations along the area of our column but we did not suffer any casualties. Up until this time TF Rhea had made excellent progress at the head of the combat command column and had met with very little enemy resistance although they had taken prisoners at almost every town. At 1300 the head of TF Wemple column passed thru Reckinghausen. At 1450 we were informed that there would be a meeting of task force commanders at Dickenbruch (110014) as soon as TF Rhea had reached that point. When TF Wemple reached Seidfeld we found that TF Rhea had met rather stubborn resistance at Amecke and that there were still some troops at Amecke and that there were still some troops in that area that had not been destroyed or captured. TF Wemple was given the mission of clearing the woods in the vicinity of 154003 and 147999. The company commanders were called forward and a platoon of tanks with a platoon of inf mounted on each were assigned to each of the missions. In clearing the area at 154003 we did not meet any resistance and in clearing the area at 147999 we met no resistance but took 35 PW's.

TF commanders attended meeting with combat command commander at Dickenbruch at 1500 and received orders to attack to the west from that point and seize Langenholthausen, then north to Balse, then north to Volkringhausen, and on to the RJ at 093079 and set up strong road blocks at that point. TF Rhea was to attack to the north and seize Mellen, Elbersloh, and Beckum. TF Dailey was to follow TF Wemple initially.

At 1541 Lt Col Wemple returned to the head of his column which was at Amecke and assembled his company and platoon commanders and explained the new mission. The formation was to be the same with tanks with infantry mounted leading followed by the TD platoon with infantry mounted followed by the mortar platoon, the AT platoon, the assault gun platoon, the engineers, the trains, and the light tanks. The FA was in position to support our actions on call and we had forward observers with mounted in one of the leading tanks and with the infantry. The column moved out at 1600 and the assault tanks were almost in Langenholthausen at 1720. The orders were for the tanks with infantry mounted to attack this town in column with the infantry mounted until they reached the houses then the infantry was to dismount and precede the tanks, clearing the houses and pointing out targets for the tanks. The terrain was such that the tanks could not deploy. There was a steep cliff on the right and a stream and soft ground on the left. As soon as the lead tank reached the edge of town the infantry dismounted and entered the town on foot. Upon reaching the stream crossing at 102013 we found that the enemy had destroyed the bridge but we immediately found a by-pass route to the left and proceeded with the attack. We drew a few rounds of small arms fire and took 36 prisoners but the town was ours by 1810 and the leading elements were pushing on to north toward Balve. The light tanks were left at RJ at 099015 to block road until elements of TF Dailey reached that point to take over block. As the column moved along the road to the north we received some 20mm fire from roads in vicinity of 089018 and 089023 as well as some arty coming in from left flank.

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As the lead tank rounded the curve in the road at 092028 it was knocked out by an enemy tank or assault gun which fired straight down the road from the north at a short range, none of the occupants of the tanks were seriously injured. The terrain was such that the tanks could not deploy and advance, the only avenue of approach for the vehicles was down the road. However, the infantry (1 plat) was dismounted and ordered to attack to the right flank to try to get the enemy tank with bazookas. The mortar platoon was pulled into position and fired WP and HE on the position that we thought the enemy tanks was in. We also placed arty fire on the possible enemy tank position. A second platoon of infantry was dismounted and ordered to work their way into the town to the left of the road. The infantry finally located the enemy tank in the vicinity of 093030 and fired three rounds of Bazooka WP at it. The tank was hit with two rounds but it turned around and withdrew very rapidly. At 2000 the infantry was still working into the town and the tanks had moved down to the edge of town. Of course by this time it was dark and we were again faced with the difficult problem of moving vehicles into position in the dark. However, by 2200 the town of Balve was ours. The infantry received only a few rounds of small arms fire after getting into the town and by 2200 we had taken one officer and 30 EM PW's. Before leaving the town on the following morning we had 3 officers and about 60 EM PW's, all of which were administrative or medical personnel. All of the fighting troops withdrew from the town earlier with the tanks. At 2030 we had received word from CCA that we would secure the town of Balve and remain there for the night prepared to push on at first light on the following morning of our mission.

13 April 1945: At 0515 our road block which was located in north edge of Balve in vicinity of 089038 reported that they heard enemy vehicles moving north on the main highway toward Volkringhausen. At 0600 received order from CCA to attack to north at day break and seize Volkringhausen and RJ in vicinity of 094079.

At 0700 the head of TF Wemple column moved out to north in compliance with orders. The weather was fair with no rain. As the column advanced unarmed enemy soldiers voluntarily walked out of the houses along the road side and gave themselves up. There were probably 75 in all who did this and they were marched back along the column to Balve where the other PW's were being held under guard. As we reached a large cave in the vicinity of 094046 which had once been used as a large machine shop and assembly plant for truck motors, a German medical officer advanced with a white flag and said that he had about 350 wounded German soldiers and some allied PW's in the cave which he wanted to surrender. We placed a guard on the cave and continued the advance.

At 0755 as the lead tank rounded the curve in the vicinity of 099051 it was knocked out by an enemy tank which was located in the vicinity of 099054. Here again we were road bound. The tanks could not deploy to the right because of a stream which paralleled the road on that side and could not deploy to left because of steep cliff. At this point the road passed under the railroad and the only way that we could cross the railroad was through the underpass. The task force commander ordered the infantry to advance on foot enveloping the enemy tank from the right and left. Prior to the time that the infantry moved up we placed mortar and arty fire on the possible enemy tank position. The enemy tank was well concealed behind a building and we did not know its exact location. The infantry finally got up close to the tank and discovered it's exact location, but they were unable to hit it with bazookas. As soon as the tank discovered our infantry it fired on them, killing one and wounding another then withdrew. In fact the infantry reported that there were two tanks at this point and that they withdrew along the road to the north. At this point the infantry took 8 more PW's out of the houses but they surrendered without a fight. Our tank which had been hit by the enemy tank was burning and the round which was in the chamber at the time the tank was hit exploded and injured 4 infantrymen as they were by passing the tank. This of course was a regrettable incident and should be a warning to all troops to never get in front of the gun on a burning tank.

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PW's taken at this point stated that two enemy tanks had just withdrawn to the north and that three other enemy tanks had passed that point earlier in the morning going north, this same report was given by civilians.

Since it was known that at least two enemy tanks were somewhere to our immediate front and since our vehicles were cannalized and could not deploy, the task force commander ordered the infantry to proceed the tanks on foot. 1 plat was to advance on the right of the road and another on the left. At 1040 the inf reported enemy tank in the vicinity of 098057 and we placed mortar and arty fire on this point, we also placed mortar and arty fire in vicinity of 099063 which seemed to be a likely position for the tanks. By this time the enemy was placing rather regular arty fire in the vicinity of 098053 and 098094. It was estimated that the fire was coming from a 3 gun battery from the direction of the north east. Apparently the fire was not observed for even though it was hitting close to our troops the enemy was not getting direct hits on our column.

By 1200 our infantry had reached the other underpass in the vicinity of 100064 and found that the enemy had prepared a very effective road block by blowing the railroad at this point. By this time TF Rhea had taken the town of Beckum and had sent a force to the west which contacted our troops at the underpass. We brought our tank-dozer and a retriever and engineers forward and they began clearing the road block. TF Rhea sent a tank dozer to help. A rcn was made for a by-pass route but we found that the block could be cleared quicker then we could by-pass the obstacle. The infantry was ordered to continue their advance to Volkringhausen on foot while the block was being cleared. By 1500 the infantry had taken the town of Volkringhausen with very little resistance, about 30 PW's were taken. By 1530 the road block had been cleared and the tanks had proceeded to Volkringhausen. The attack continued to the north and as the lead tank reached the vicinity of 096077 it drew several rounds of enemy tank fire but our tanks was not hit. We placed arty fire on the RJ in vicinity of 094079 where we thought the enemy tank was and also fired on it with our assault gun. Here again we were in another impassible cannalized position. There was a stream and railroad grade to our left and a very steep cliff on our right. We could not work our TD's into firing positions without exposing them to the enemy tanks. We could not see the enemy tank but we could tell its approximate location when it fired. The task force commander, the infantry company commander finally found an OP on the cliff on the right from which they could see the enemy tank and they observed and adjusted fire for the assault guns and mortars. The mortar platoon leader also came to the OP and adjusted fire. The tank finally withdrew to the north. In the mean time the infantry had been working around on the left flank to clear the houses in the vicinity of the RJ. They received some small arms and automatic weapons fire in the woods on the left and had two men injured and took 10 PW's.

At 1645 we received orders from CCA to find a route to the left or west and attack and secure the town of Brockhausen. Task Force Dailey had been given the mission earlier in the day of attacking cross-country from Balve to the north-west to seize and secure the town of Deilinghafen. The I&R plat, the TF commander, and the S-2 immediately made a rcn of the routes to the west and found that it was impossible to get our task force across the terrain at that point; the woods were dense in places and the hills steep and the terrain was so soft and muddy that it would not hold even our tanks and track vehicles. Since it was impossible to attack Brockhausen from this point, the task force commander requested permission to proceed on north to trail which branched out to the west from a point in the vicinity of 085089 and this request was granted by CCA Hq.

At 1800 we continued our attack to the north but when we attempted to move the tanks forward we were again pinned down by enemy tank fire.

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We continued to try to work the doughboys forward on foot and continued to place mortar and arty fire on possible tank positions. The infantry company commander took a squad of infantry around to the right flank and he finally worked down to one enemy tank which was in a firing position in the vicinity of 090080. The infantry company commander knocked out this M-V enemy tank with a bazooka and observed another tank withdraw to the north. The infantry then moved on and cleared the houses in the vicinity of 087081 and our tanks were moved up to this point at 2200. By this time it was extremely dark and our infantrymen were just about exhausted so the task force commander requested permission to spend the remainder of the night at this point and to continue the attack at first light on the following morning. This request was granted by the CCA Hq. During the night we placed arty fire all along the road to our front. During the night enemy tank motors were heard to the north several times.

14 April 1945: Since the terrain had us hopelessly cannalized with a stream and railroad grade on our left and high cliffs on the right, the task force commander ordered the infantry to precede the tanks, two platoons abreast, one taking advantage of all possible cover and concealment on the left of the road and the other in the right of the road. The infantry moved out of Binolen at 0600 to continue the attack to the north. The platoon on the left took 16 PW's from the woods in the vicinity of 084087 with only a few rounds of small arms fire as resistance.

The I&R platoon was ordered to make a rcn of the route to the west beginning at the stream crossing at 085089. However, the column continued to advance toward the town of Hannethal for it was known that the road to the west from that point was passable. By 1000 we were at the underpass at Hannethal and had drawn several rounds of direct fire from the west.

The I&R platoon reported that they had found a good route over which we could reach the town of Brockhausen. TF Rhea brought part of their force forward to take over our position at Hannethal and our column was turned around and instructed to move out for Brackhausen. The trail located by the I&R Plat was to be used for this move. When we reached Baingsen, the little settlement about half way between the highway and Brockhausen, we found that friendly doughboys had reached that point and they had taken over 200 PW's without a fight. We moved on into Brockhausen without firing a shot and found over 100 enemy soldiers ready to surrender. As we entered the town the enemy placed arty fire to our right and to the west of the town. The fire seemed to be coming from one or two guns from the west. They were also firing some air-bursts near our area. By 1200 all of our task force had cleared and closed in Brockhausen, our defense had been set up and some PW's were still coming in from the north and west of the town, by this time we had more than 200 PW's from all types of units, but most were anti-aircraft units who were supposed to defend the airfield just east of the town of Hemer.

At 1320 we received an order from Ex O of CCA to be prepared to move out cross-country to seize the high ground just east of Hemer in the vicinity of coordinates 035095. The task force commander alerted the troops and gave the order that the attack would be made with two platoons of tanks abreast and in line with infantry mounted on tanks and one platoon following the assault wave by about 400 yards.

At 1325 we received the order to attack and by 1330 we were moving our and at 1350 we were on the objective and consolidating. As we were moving out of Brackhausen and as we advanced across the airfield the enemy fired in our area with what was estimated to be at least three assault guns of about the 105mm type. They also fired air bursts with what was estimated to be 40mm and larger anti-aircraft guns. The fire was coming from the high ground to our front or west of Hemer. The AA guns on the airfield were not manned and we did not receive any fire from the woods which was our objective. As soon as our tanks reached the woods where they took about 50 more PW's with no resistance.

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This attack was the most picturesque we have ever participated in or observed. The terrain was excellent for the tanks and they moved in at about 15 MPH. The formation was perfect and the enemy artillery fire and air-bursts were sufficient to make it more than a dry run, in fact many of the rounds were very close misses and it is surprising that we suffered no casualties. It is our belief that even if the AA guns on the airfield had been manned the objective would have been gained with a minimum of losses. The position was consolidated and the tanks and TD's were deployed so that they could fire into the town of Hemer. The tank company commander and the Bn S-2 were with the assault wave and they walked down to the large PW enclosure, which was at the foot of the hill west of our objective, where they were met by a German officer bearing a note stating that there were 24000 allied Prisoners of War in the enclosure which the officials were ready to surrender to our forces. The tank CO and the S-2 entered the enclosure and were taken to the camp commandant, here they learned that Major T W Dailey who commanded TF Dailey had already been there and instructed the Germans to keep control of the PW's until some of our forces could take over. However, most of the German guards had disposed of their weapons and the prisoners were beginning to break out of the enclosure so TF Wemple sent two platoons of infantry and a platoon of light tanks down to keep the Russians in the cage. It would have been an impossible situation had all of the 24000 half starved prisoners been released.

Major Dailey entered the town of Hemer and was escorted to a German Hq to discuss surrender of the town. This negotiation continued until late in the afternoon when our division refused the terms of the German commanding general.

Late in the afternoon TF Wemple was ordered to maintain control of the prison camp and to support TF Danube by direct fire across their front if they needed it. TF Danube was to be prepared to attack and secure Hemer at 2030.

At 2315 we were informed that we would be relieved of the prison camp guard duties sometime during the night or early morning by 3/395 Inf Regt, but that we would remain in place awaiting further orders.

At 2325 the CP group was moved into a house on the eastern edge of Hemer and the tanks remained on the original objective in the vicinity of coordinates 035096. The entire infantry company, B/23, was engaged in guarding the prison camp.

15 April 1945: We were finally completely relieved of the prison camp guard duty at 1015.

During the morning the entire task force was moved into the eastern edge of the town and the day was devoted to maintenance of vehicles and weapons.

At 1200 CCA Hq placed us on a 1 hour alert status and informed us that we would probably move into an assembly area somewhere in the vicinity of Gottingen, Germany, a distance of about 140 miles.

16 April 1945: At 0545 we received notice that the 7th Armd Div would move to an assembly area in vicinity of Gottingen beginning at 160700 Apr. 45. CCA was to cross the IP at 0700 B in the following march order: C/87, TF D, CC Hq, TF R, TF W, CC tns, 489 FA, CC Tns. Each task force was to follow the preceding task force by lission. Billeting parties were to report to CCA Hq at Brockhausen at 0630.

The head of TF Wemple column moved out of Hemer at 0815 and fell in behind TF Rhea crossing IP at coordinates 080098 at 0852. The route of march was: Belve, Langenholthausen, Kantrop, Affein, Plettenberg, Lanhausen, Schmallenberg, Oberkirchen, Winterbert, Medebach, Korbach, Sachenhausen, Frienhausen, Kassel, Hann Munden, and Settmarshausen at which point the task force closed at 170210B Apr 45. This road march was not satisfactory to the task force commander or the combat commander. The march discipline was poor which resulted in vehicles to travel at excessive speeds at times resulting in too many Bogie wheels being ruined and other mechanical failures.

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17-18 April 1945: Maintenance of vehicles, weapons, and personal equipment was stressed during this period and an intensive training program for improvement of march discipline was planned. 1/A/814, 1/B/33, and 1/D/17 were returned to parent units for administration and control.

It was announced that all elements of the 17th Tk Bn would move to the town of Rosdorf. All of the elements would be under the Bn control beginning at 190800 Apr 45. B/23 was to revert to 23d AIB control at the same time.

19 April 1945: All elements of this bn were closed in Rosdorf by 0910 and the entire day was devoted to maintenance of vehicles and weapons. All companies were instructed to completely unload all vehicles and wash and re-stow them. A command inspection of vehicles and equipment was announced for 0900 on the following day.

20 April 1945: All vehicles and equipment was inspected by Bn CO and staff; defects were called to the attention of company commanders and they were ordered to devote the following day to correcting such defects and other needed maintenance on vehicles and equipment.

21 April 1945: Devoted to maintenance of vehicles, weapons and equipment.

22 April 1945: A day of rest for the entire command except for necessary details.

23-24 April 1945: Devoted to maintenance of vehicles, weapons, and equipment. Bn commander ordered all vehicles to be camouflaged with ever-green foliage. Had officers school on tank gunnery.

25 April 1945: Complied with the following training schedule:
0800 - 0930 - Tank Gunnery, fire controls and orders
0930 - 1030 - Mil Govt, responsibility of Div units (Annes 1, TM 9, 7th Armd Div)
1030 - 1130 - So This is Germany, by Chaplain Utter
1130 - 1200 - Current Orientation
1300 - 1400 - Supervised Athletics
1400 - 1600 - Maintenance of vehicles and weapons

26 thru 30 April 1945: On the 26th thru 28th of Apr 45 the bn remained in the Rosdorf area and devoted the time to training and maintenance work on vehicles. We obtained track extensions or "duck feet" for replacement of those which had been ruined and for those tanks which had never had them and these were placed on the tanks at this time.

On the 28th and 29th of Apr Lt Col Wemple and Lt Col Rhea conducted task force problems in the vicinity of Rosdorf. Vehicles were not used in these problems but the officers and non-coms participating walked over the ground and made the problem as realistic as possible without use of vehicles.

At 2305, 29 Apr 45 the bn started the move to a new assembly area in the town of Eschede. The bn plus A/814 closed in the new area at 1030, 30 Apr 45. At this time the 7th Armd Div was in the 18th Airborne Corps which was under the 21st Army Group. We anticipated working in the Elbe River Bridgehead with the British 6th Airborne Div, our 82nd Airborne Div, and 8th Inf Div.

The Bn march order for the march to Eschede was: 1/C/17 and 1/C/23, CCA Adv guard, C/17 (-1 plat), B/17, A/17, Hq & Hq Co/17, D/17. Sv/17 marched with CCA trains. The route of march was: Rosdorf, Gottingen, Northeim, Seesen, Salzgitter, Barum, Braunsch, Gifhorn, Hardisse, Celle, and Exchese. This march was extremely closely checked and supervised by platoon, company and battalion officers and the march discipline showed a great improvement over our last long road march. Division set the speed for the march at 13 MPH with maximum speed for tanks at 18 MPH, and this

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speed ruling was strictly complied with. However, we still ruined 22 bogie wheels on the march. One tank with propeller shaft trouble and one with sprocket trouble were repaired by ordnance but all vehicles were closed in the new area by 2100, 30 Apr 45. After closing in the Eschede area the remainder of the day was devoted to maintenance of vehicles and weapons. The bn remained in the Eschede area the night of 30 April 1945.

During the month of April as a whole the battalion had the following personnel casualties and replacements:

	<u>Missing in Action</u>	<u>Killed In Action</u>	<u>Wounded in Action</u>	<u>Evac, non- battle cas</u>	<u>Reinforcements</u>	<u>Returned to duty</u>
O	None	1	3	4	4	3
EM	None	7	30	33	66	41

[signed] *John P. Wemple*
JOHN P. WEMPLE *LES*²¹
Lt Col, Infantry
Commanding

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²¹ The written initials below the signature appear to be LES.

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HEADQUARTERS, 17TH TANK BATTALION
APO 257, U.S. ARMY

31 May 1945

SUBJECT: After Action Report, Month of May 1945

TO: The Adjutant General, Washington 25, D.C.

1 May through 2 May: The Bn. minus Service Co. which was attached to CCA trains was billeted in the town of Eschede. During this period all time was devoted to maintenance of vehicles and equipment. We made a Rcn of roads in our assigned area and ran a security patrol in the area. The patrol consisted of two one-quarter ton vehicles and six men. The patrol contacted the 203 AAA Bn. on our right every two hours. This area had been occupied by American and English troops prior to our arrival, so we had no trouble with German civilian or soldiers. On the 1st of May a German F.W. 88 (dive bomber) crash-landed in our area and the pilot and one passenger were evacuated to Div. Hq. immediately.

During the day of the 1 May 1945, we received warning that the combat command would probably move by Task Forces on the 2nd or 3rd of May to a forward assembly area in the vicinity of Vellahn.

At 020615 May, we received orders that Task Force Dailey would move out over Route A at 021000 May. The movement time was changed and it was not until 1300 that Task Force Dailey actually moved out. Task Force Wemple crossed the I P at 1410.

At 02950 we received the operations instructions from Combat Command A Hq. The Combat Command was to march over one route to an assembly area in the vicinity of Vellahn. The Combat Command was divided into four Task Forces, namely Task Force Wemple, Task Force Rhea, Task Force Dailey, and Task Force C. Task Force Wemple consisted of Hq 17th Tk Bn, Co A 17th, Co B 23rd Inf, one plat Co A 814th T. D. Bn, one plat Co B 33rd Eng Bn, minus one squad. Co C of the 17th minus one plat and Co D 17th minus two plats were attached to Task Force Dailey. One plat of Co C, one plat of Co B, and one plat Co D of the 17th Tank Bn were attached to Task Force C.

The billeting details for the Task Forces were sent out with the Combat Command billeting party at 020800 May 1945. At 021245 May we received orders from CCA that we would make a Rcn of proposed routes to the north of Vellahn. The Rcn instructions were sent to our I & R plat leader who had gone forward with the billeting party, and he made a Rcn. of the routes to the Baltic and into the town of Wismar. His Rcn revealed that the roads were in good condition and that there was no enemy resistance. However he reported that there were thousands of German soldiers moving south on the roads to surrender.

Task Force Wemple moved out of Eschede at 1400 and proceeded over the following route: Schelphah, Weyhmisen, Bratenhees, Holdenstadt, Uelzen, Riestedt, Stocken, Suttor, Riebrau, Gohrde, Pommorsel, New Darchau, Darchau, Haar, Neuhaus, Suckau, Brahlstorf, and Zuhr. The Task Force closed at Zuhr at 1943. At 2345 we received warning that the Command would probably move on to the north at day-break, on the following morning.

3 May 1945: At 0400 we received operation instructions from CCA Hq stating that T. F. Dailey would cross the I P at Karchou at 030630 May followed by one battery of the 489 F. A., then Task Force Wemple which Force was to cross the I P at 0715. Our mission was to destroy any enemy resistance encountered and to occupy an assigned sector on the Baltic Coast. Later the time of movement was cancelled and the Task Force was placed on a one hour alert status.

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After we crossed the Elbe River in the afternoon of 2 May, and as we were moving into the assembly area at Zuhr we passed hundreds of German soldiers moving south on the roads to American PW Enclosures. The movement was orderly and none of the enemy troops showed any indication of resistance. They had completely surrendered and were ready for the P. W. Cages.

Task Force Wemple moved out of the Zuhr Assembly Area at 1135 and crossed the I P at Korchow at 1145 and proceeded along the following routes: Perdah, Wittenberg, Bodden, Renzow, Pokrent, Gadebusch, Holdorf, Rehna, Wedendorf, Hanshagen, Sievershagen, Danshagen, and Klutz. The Task Force closed in the Klutz Area at 1700 and immediately began picking up prisoners of war and establishing civilian control. During the night and following morning 500 prisoners of war were evacuated from Klutz and the other towns in our assigned area to the Prisoner of War Enclosure at Grevesmuhlen. We made a house to house search of the town of Klutz immediately and collected about 300 rifles, 50 Panzerfausts, several hundred rounds of rifle ammo, and several hundred hand grenades. However, all of this equipment had been abandoned by the soldiers and none of the P. W.'s which we took were armed, and none offered resistance. There were 42 Allied (French) P.W.'s in the town of Klutz, but they were well organized and followed our instructions readily.

During the night of 03 May, the Task Force Commander issued orders for establishing road blocks, and for a systematic search of our area on the following day for Prisoners of War and enemy arms and equipment.

Task Force Dailey who occupied the town of Dassow²² set up a Prisoner of War enclosure at that point and by the following morning had over 4000 Prisoners under guard. Major Thomas W. Dailey who commanded that Task Force did an excellent job in organizing the P.W. Camp and in setting up the Military Government Office in the town of Dassou.

At 1745, Battery A of the 489 F. A. Bn was attached to Task Force Wemple. This unit was assigned the mission of searching the area to the north and west in the vicinity of Boltenhagen, Tarnewitz, and Christinfeld for German soldiers, weapons, equipment.

4 May 1945: At 0100 we received notice that Co B of the 23 Inf was released from Task Force Wemple and that the Company would join the 23rd Inf Bn at Grevesmuhlen immediately. The one plat of B Co 33rd Eng Bn reverted to its parent organization and Battery A of the 489th reverted to 489th Control.

During the day our entire area was combed for German soldiers and equipment. We took an additional 285 prisoners and about 100 more rifles. One hundred and twenty-five prisoners were evacuated from the airport at Tarnewitz, and our mortar platoon was placed in the airport to guard it.

Maj. T. W. Dailey organized the P W E at Dassow by placing the German officers and N C O's in charge of the German troops. The Germans were forced to maintain a high standard of sanitation. German surgeons and sanitary Corps enlisted men were organized and used to the maximum. Our men were compelled to sprinkle themselves with D D T powder, then that which remained was gathered up and given to the German P W's. The personnel in the P W E was organized into Companies and Battalions - all available German field stoves were obtained and the food was cooked and issued by companies.

The Burgeimeisters in the various towns were forced to furnish food and billets for all displaced personnel and German Refugees. Food for Prisoners in the camps was obtained through Div. G-A.

The German Military Hospital at Dassow was taken over and put under our medical officers supervision. However, the German personnel remained in the Hospital to do the work.

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²² All references to Dassow were typed as Dassou and then hand-corrected to Dassow, with a few exceptions that are left as Dassou in the text.

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5 May through 7 May 1945: Elements of the 814th T. D. Bn which were attached to Task Force Wemple reverted to 814th Bn Control on 5 May 1945.

Continued patrols, military Government, and civilian control activities throughout period. Only a few P. W.'s were apprehended and we had very little trouble with Civilians. We started removed all wrecked or abandoned German vehicles from the roads. On the 7th of May we started evacuating all German vehicles and equipment to Division Assembly Point at Grevesmuhlen. Practically all of the vehicles had to be towed and this was accomplished by using our Bn Main wrecker and tanks from Company A.

On the 5 May 45, we established additional road blocks at Christinenfeld, Oberhof and Grossendof, in order to block all movement into our area from the west.

Major T. W. Dailey continued his civilian and P. W. Control measures in the town of Dassow. The town was crowded with German Refugees, and required close supervision.

B Co of the 33rd Eng Bn established an Allied P. W. Camp at that Tarnewitz airport and all Allied Prisoners of War remaining in the area were evacuated to that Camp.

8 May 1945: Effective 090600 May 45 new sectors of responsibility were assigned (see overlay.) Task Force Dailey was dissolved. The 17th Tank Bn assumed responsibility for the Dassow P W's and the area that had been under 489 F. A. Bn Control. All elements of the 17th reverted to 17th Control. During the afternoon of 08 May 45, the following moves were made within the Bn: Bn Hq and Hq Co moved to Dassow, Company A moved to Rankendorf, Company B moved to Harkensee, Company C moved to Gr. Voigtshagen, and Service Company to Kalkhorst. Each Company assumed responsibility for civilian control and security within their assigned areas. Patrols and road blocks were established and a systematic plan of evacuating all German vehicles to Grevesmuhlen was started. A Div dump for collecting all enemy ammunition was opened at Dassow under our supervision. All roads leading into our area from the east and south were blocked and each Company was given a sector to patrol.

9 May through 11 May 1945: Bn remained in assigned sector with Bn Hq at Dassow. Continued operation of road blocks and patrols, evacuation of German vehicles to Grevesmuhlen and collection of arms and ammunition at Division dump at Dassow. The evacuation of the German vehicles entailed a great deal of work. The vehicles were evacuated by Company Maint sections and tanks to a Bn collecting point at Dassow and they were evacuated from that point to Grevesmuhlen under our Bn Maint Section supervision. Over 800 vehicles were evacuated during the period.

Each company set up a Military Government office in the town in which they were billeted and the Bn Military Government office was maintained at Dassow.

11 through 18 May 1945: On 11 May 45 received orders changing our sector of responsibility, this change to be effective 130730 May 45 (see overlay for new boundaries.)

During the period, the P W E was inspected by Div and Corps inspectors and was found to be in excellent condition. A high degree of sanitation was maintained at all times under the supervision of our medical officer. Our Company D maintained a strict guard on the P W E at all times. However, there were no riots or disturbances within the camps - the prisoners were very orderly and quiet at all times.

On 12 May 45, Company C was moved to the town of Selmsdorf and assumed control of the newly assigned western area. Major T. L. White moved to the town of Selmsdorf and established a Military Government office. During the remainder of the period, C Company made a search of the area for German soldiers, vehicles, ammunition and equipment. Approximately 75 rifles were picked up as well as four truck loads of small

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arms, 75mm, and 81mm mortar ammunition. There were 60 civilian police in the town who were used in establishing a block on our western boundry to prevent movement of displaced persons and refugees into our area from the west

On 12 May 45, Co A was moved to the town of Kl Voigtshagen and assumed control of the area which had been occupied by C Co.

The Bn assumed control of the sea-plane airport in the vicinity of Volkstorf and Potentiz at Coordinates 090990. The Bn I&R platoon was placed in the airport to guard it.

On 13 and 15 May 45 all personnel in the bn present for duty attended the movie, "Two down and One to Go" at Klutz.

On 18 May 45 we received a warning order that the Bn would move with the division to a security area in the vicinity of Kother, (D-9458) to relieve the 104th Inf Div.

During this period we evacuated 8 truck loads of 211 Russian displaced personnel to the Russian held sector. 110 Polish and Russian soldiers were evacuated to the Allied PW Camp at Boltenhage.

On 15 May 45 Co A moved to the Division Recreation Center at the Boltenhagen Airport. The company moved to the airport complete with all personnel and equipment and remained there until 19 May 45. During the period that this co was at the Recreation Center the mornings were devoted to training and maintenance and the afternoon and evenings to rehabilitation and recreation.

19 May 45: On this date we received orders that the Bn would move with CCA to vicinity of Kother (D-9458) beginning at 210354 May 45. The Bn was supposed to cross the Release Point at Halle at 221429 May 45. The Billeting party and 1 Staff Officer was to report at S-3 CCA at Dannshagen (T2598) at 200800 May 45, prepared to proceed to the new area. The British were to relieve us in the area which we occupied

20 through 22 May 45: Co A which had moved to the Airport in the vicinity of coordinates 090990 on 19 May was relieved of the Airport guard duty by the British at 201200 May. Co D was relieved by the British of the Guard duty at the PWE at 201200 May 45.

The bn moved out of the Dassow area as a unit and crossed the IP at (T135953) at 210350 May 45 and proceeded to the bn area in the vicinity of Wittmar. The rate of march was 10 miles per hour. (See overlay for route)

The Bn S-2 and the I&R Platoon met the CCA S-3 at Damshagen (T2598) at 200800 May 45 and moved to the new area arriving at Delitzsch at 201700 May 45. During the remainder of the day and the following day the S-2 contacted the 414 Inf Regt Hq and the 3d Bn of the 413 Regt and made arrangements for relief. It was found that the area had been cleared of enemy personnel, arms and equipment and that the people who we were to relieve had had very little trouble in this area. The area which was assigned to the 17th Tk Bn was a farming area (see overlay) and the food situation was good. It was decided that the area could best be controlled by placing Bn Hq and Hq Co, Sv Co, B and C Co in the town of Gleisien and A Co and D Co in the town of Krostitz. The buildings which were to be used for billeting troops were cleaned of all personnel and all arrangements for moving the units in were made. The billeting party met the Bn at the Halle Release point on 22 May and directed the units to their assigned billets. The battalion closed in the Gleisien area at 221530 May 45.

The Bn closed in the Wittmar bivouac area 211955 May and moved out at 220650 May 45.

After arriving in the Gleisien and Krostitz areas each company was assigned zones of responsibility and security patrols were started (see overlay). Military Government offices were opened at Gleisien, Krostitz, Werblin and Maschenwatz. A displaced persons camp at Rockwitz was examined for sanitation.

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23 through 24 May 45: Bn continued security patrols and administration of Military Government functions within the assigned area. Received some complaints from German Civilians of Poles coming into area from Leipzig and stealing hogs and cattle but investigation revealed that the Polish people had paid the farmers a good price for the live stock. However, the Polish were contacted and warned that they must buy the live-stock through out Military Government office. Our Military Government offices received the usual petty complaints and requests for passes but we had no serious trouble with them.

On 24 May 45 13 stationary road blocks were established along out south boundary in order to prevent movement into our area from the south (see overlay 24 May 45)

On 23 May 45 all personnel not engaged in security and control activities devoted their time to preparing vehicles and company property for a showdown inspection.

On 24 May 45 all companies conducted a showdown inspection of vehicles and company property. The purpose of the inspection was to ascertain shortages within the bn.

Received notice on 24 May 45 that the boundries of our area of responsibility would change (see overlay 25 May 45)

25 May 45: During afternoon of 25 May 45 the following changes in location were made: Bn Hq and Hq Co and Sv Co moved to town of Krostitz; B Co moved to town of Hohenroda, and C Co moved to town of Mutzschlena. New zones of responsibility were assigned to companies (see overlay 25 May 45). C Co was designated as the alert company in compliance with memo from CC"A" Hq dated 23 May 45. This company had no security and control duties but followed the training schedule with all available men.

During the morning of 25 May 45 all companies had a showdown inspection of clothing and personal equipment to determine shortages.

26 through 31 May 45: During this period 108 Polish and Russian Nationals were evacuated to the Russian held sector from our area. Security, civilian control and Military Government activities continued throughout the period.

On 31 May 45 all Italian Nationals who were located in the Displaced Persons camp at Sproda were evacuated to Delitzsch and all other Nationalities who were in the camp were moved to the Rockwitz D.P. camp. On this date the Rockwitz camp was placed under close supervision and all of the occupants were forced to get the camp in satisfactory sanitary condition.

Effective 310001 May 45, B Co became the alert company and C Co assumed responsibility for patrols, civilian control and Military Government activities in the north sector of our area (the red area, see overlay 251000 May 45)

The 30th of May 45, Memorial Day was declared a Holiday with the exception of a short memorial Service which was observed on the Drill Field at 0900 (see memo 28 May 45)

Throughout the period security patrols, civilian control, and Military Government activities were conducted and the personnel not engaged in this work were employed according to the training schedule dated 28 May 45.

- 3 Incls.
1. Log
2. Messages
3. Overlays

[signed]
JOHN P. WEMPLE
Lt Col, Infantry
Commanding

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