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with*

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DOWNGRADING COMMITTEE

*Lt. JACK SHEA  
2nd Info & Hist Sv.  
APO 230*

*GL 311 (3)*

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2nd INFORMATION AND HISTORICAL SERVICE  
Headquarters, First U.S. Army  
APO # 230

18 March 1945

GERMAN COUNTERATTACK

14th CAVALRY GROUP -

Group Interviews  
with

32nd CAVALRY RECONNAISSANCE SQUADRON (MSGZ.)

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DOWNGRADING COMMITTEE 22 Oct 1974

*W. H. Shea*  
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2d Info & Hist Sv  
APO # 230

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GERMAN COUNTERATTACK

(16 Dec 44 - 1 Jan 45)

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- Headquarters and Staff, 32nd Cav Ron Sqn (Mocz), 14th Cav Gp.

- Interview with - Maj John L. Kracke, CO - \*

Maj James L. Hayes, executive

Capt Joseph R. Oline, S-3

Capt Gilbert R. Reed, S-2

Capt James E. Kreisle, Sqn Surgeon

1/Lt Van B. Weber, Ass't. Surgeon

1/Lt Lenord B. Pydeski, Communication O

Capt Stanley S. Palmer, S-1

Capt Samuel E. Woods, S-4

WO1G Lyle F. Barnes, Motor O

Sgt. ~~Summy~~ Hobart, Asst. Ops. Sgt.

-Place - Kemexhe, Belgium

-Interviewer lived with the squadron. \* - Maj Kracke is mentioned as the squadron CO in this interview

In view of the fact that he commanded the squadron during most of the counterattack. On the first day of the attack during most day's attack resulted in an extremely fatigued and nervous condition in the Lt Col's health. Kracke, formerly the squadron executive, took over. While Maj Hayes, former S-3, took over the newly created executive position. Capt Oline had been assistant S-3, automatically took over as Hayes assumed executive duties. (Ref: See section titled, "Clarification" 14th Gp General Story. As requested for pamphlet material, 23 Jan 1945).

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- The 32nd Squadron fared better than did the 15th amongst the 14th Cav Gp troops that took part in the German counter-attack. At the time of the interviews it was fulfilling the mission of anti-paratroop attack in the vulnerable, flat terrain immediately north of Liege, Belgium. During this phase of anti-paratroop alertness the squadron was re-equipping, receiving reinforcements, and was engaged in training activities, that bubbled overhead. An average of forty to fifty of these V-1 weapons passed over the squadron's area daily, while an average of five or ten fell in the vicinity. The troops were billeted in civilian homes and were being given opportunities to rest, enjoy recreational facilities, and were fed well.

The main story of the 32nd developed as Maj Kracke took the squadron's operational journal and unit history, sat down with the interviewees and went over each phase of the operation in detail. Further inquiries into more particular phases of the operation were made during conversations in the squadron's mess. The fullest cooperation and attempts to secure accuracy were provided the interviewer at all times . . . J.T.S.

-Overlays and Sketches -

Marked Map - "Front-Line Positions" material.

Sketch - "Action at Obeau" Appended to Group pamphlet material in reference to TP Jones and TP Lindsay

Operational Overlays & Aerial Photos Appended to Group Material.

-Interviewer - Lt Jack Shea, 2d Info & Hist Sv, Hq First Army.

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BACKGROUND- The 32nd Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron is an old National Guard outfit. Activated from the <sup>original</sup> "Black Horse Regiment of Chicago", most of its personnel come from Chicago and vicinity, many had been with the outfit for as long as ten years. Many of the officers were former enlisted men in the unit, had worked their way to their present positions after five or six years of experience. All troops seemed to have an intense pride in their branch and unit.

Most of the squadron had had previous "overseas" experience while stationed in Panama, charged with a defensive role in the protection of the canal. One troop (C Troop) had had combat experience in the Alaskan sector.

On the continent, the squadron had been briefly operational under 14th Group control while engaged in patrolling activities along the French coast in the vicinity of Mont St Michel at the western limit of the Normandy sector.

First action on the Allied front came on 25 October 1945, when the 32nd was attached to the 83rd Inf Div, and performed scouting and reconnaissance missions in the development of the ~~sieged~~ <sup>near the Thessle</sup> ~~line positions in the vicinity of~~ <sup>near the Thessle</sup> ~~AT Clevevoy~~ <sup>near the Thessle</sup> ~~when the 83rd Div was reattached to each new division that entered that sector.~~

On 10 Dec 1944 the squadron was released from its attachment to the 38th Div, and became attached to the 14th Cav Gp. It was immediately placed in Group reserve in Rencheux, near Vleissalm, where a program of re-equipping, rest and maintenance was begun.

Moved N. to Clevevoy in Nov held from Oct 1944

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In this Vilsalm area was a rest center that had been formerly run for the benefit of VIII Corps troops. Extensive striping and maintenance repairs to the weapons of the squadron were completed here. All radio were stripped from the light tanks of the squadron, and the tanks ~~assembled~~ <sup>disassembled</sup> for full maintenance work. This, in time, proved to be a big handicap as the squadron swung into action. (See interview with F Co, 31st Sgdn. FTS)

During the six days of rest that preceded the enemy attack, the 32nd had made no extensive reconnaissance of the ground to their immediate front. The 14th Gp had informed the squadron that it was to replace the 18th Squadron, in the present positions that on ~~the~~ or about 20 Dec 1944. In accordance with these instructions, Lt Col Ridge had had his troop commanders go forward to the positions then occupied by the 18th Squadron's men. He planned to replace the squadron, troop-for-troop, so each troop commander in the 32nd, visited his opposite number in the 18th. During these visits to the forward positions, made on 15 Dec 44, a cursory road reconnaissance for the movement of the troops to the forward positions had been made.

E Troop, the assault gun element of the 32nd, ~~had~~ however, had had more specific reconnaissance groundwork. Fire positions had been chosen for the troop west of Handerfeld at Hasenvenn. There, wire communication with the group's artillery support battalion the 275th Arm'd PA Bn -- had been established. There, direct and indirect fire positions to its FDC at Medendorf, four kilometers west of Handerfeld. The troop officers had been forward to personally reconnoiter these positions. (See Map of "Front Line Positions")

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(From this point on, Maj Kracke guided his outline of the 32nd's story by continuous reference to the squadron's operations journal. The times noted there have been inserted in the following narrative at the beginning of each phases description. This has been for the sake of brevity and a more clear indication of the chronological sequence of events. - JTS)

0600 - Group Headquarters alerts the 32nd for immediate movement to the vicinity of Manderfeld, Germany. The crews of the cavalry squadron's vehicles immediately engaged in a wild scramble to secure combat gear, fall ammunition loads, supplies of fuel and rations.

0932 - The 32nd Squadron, minus the light tanks of its personnel and kitchens were left in the vicinity of Rencheux, as the rest of the squadron took the road. The light tank company, commanded by Capt. Horace N. Bair, ~~was~~ <sup>was</sup> without radio intercommunication. To re-install these radios would have summed much valuable time; therefore Bair did not bother with the inter-tank communication system. Instead, tracks were covered, fuel tanks filled, and the light tanks made ready for battle, hoping that visual communication would suffice.

1005 - Lt Col Ridge radioed to the light tank company, instructing Capt Bair to take his light tanks to Andler as soon as they could be moved. The main column of the squadron was, by this time, in the vicinity of the bridge at Schonberg - two kilometers southwest of Andler. There, where a bridge crosses the

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~~Our~~ <sup>Andler</sup> shells that the cavalrymen estimated to be about 210 mm's. In caliber were attempting to interdict the Andler - St. Vith highway. Despite near misses, none of the vehicles was hit nor was the bridge.

1100 - The 32nd Squadron's CP was established in the same building that housed the 14th Gp and 18th Squadron's CPs. Initial disposition of the squadron was predicated upon the Group commander's (Col Devine) decision to defend the Manderfeld ridge as the second stage of withdrawal for his group of cavalry.

A and B Troops of the 32nd were first positioned in the vicinity of Andler (see Marked Map), while the third reconnaissance troop was assigned the mission of covering the Group's north (left) flank, went into positions to defend the road running north towards Lanzerath from Hasenvenn (Hasenvenn) (001940) 1200 - Two platoons of A Troop were ordered to dismount and dismount just southwest of Manderfeld to cover the Group's south (right) flank. The remainder of the troop went to Holzheim with a mission of covering the Groups left (north) rear. 1430 - Acting under the orders of Gp, a ~~Mask~~ <sup>Mask</sup> force was formed from the cavalry elements in and near the Hasenvenn road junction (001940). It was commanded by the 32nd's S-3, Maj James L. Mayes, consisted of the 32nd's C Troop, E Troop and the 2nd platoon of A Co - 320th TD (towed) Bn, which had been attached to the 14th Group. Maj Mayes was directed to press north and northeast towards the crossroads (010951) thence to Merlscheid, and on clear out the enemy foot troops that had over-run the TD positions that had been held by the ~~3-5~~ <sup>3-5</sup> towed guns at the start of the counterattack. (see marked Map). Some armor had

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been reported in the area, but the cavalrymen were not sure that enemy tanks had been there in numbers. Quite early in the morning, as the attack started, the TD people stationed at these northernmost posts in the group's system of strong-points had requested permission to ~~be~~ withdraw. They complained that infiltrating enemy ~~were~~ pressing their positions. ~~This had been permitted around 0900 (see Group Headquarters Interview), and most of the TD Guns had been withdrawn to the crossroads (010951) Not all of the TD Guns had been successfully evacuated, and some were left behind, eventually falling into the hands of the enemy.~~

The task force was organized and started moving north. It had only reached the road junction 2600 yards north of Manderfeld when it met strong enemy resistance. Several of the abandoned ~~(3-in.)~~ Guns had been turned by the enemy, and were fired at the task force. The enemy had positioned them for direct fire. (See interview with Maj Hayes.)

The task force built up an attack firing line and tried to move into the enemy resistance. However, from the high ground it was possible to see many enemy foot troops working in towards the cavalry task force. In addition to the flat-trajectory fire from the towed TD Guns ~~(there were)~~ occasional rounds from enemy SP Guns or tanks. The extent of the opposition confined the cavalrymen. At one time the enemy was reported to be coming in from three directions, and it was added that a number of tanks were in support. It was never determined just how many ~~(troops)~~ tanks were involved in the enemy's thrust. The M-8 assault howitzers of the squadron's E Troop deployed on both sides of the road and fired rapidly at clusters of

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enemy infantry at ranges of 1000 yards and under. (See E Troop  
Interview - 32nd Sqn)

As in the case of the initial attacks of the 16th Squadron's  
forward strongpoints, the enemy came in on the small task force  
with a fanatical display of courage. General reaction of the  
C and E troopers who engaged in the action, was that it was  
"a regular slaughter" -- but they were reluctant to estimate  
the  number of enemy killed or wounded.   
1530 - The Group commander ordered a withdrawal to the gen-  
eral line Holzheim - Andler. With this order came instructions  
for TP Mayes to cover the withdrawal of the balance of the  
cavalry elements in Wackerfeld by continuing a "screening  
fight" along the Loshelm road. Gradually, in the early hours  
of the afternoon, the enemy pressure had pressed hard on  
the small task force and had pushed it back towards the road  
junction at (001940) . It was necessary for them to hold  
this road junction open in order to allow the withdrawal of  
the group.

This screening action was successful, and  at 1905   
 the 32nd Sqn found itself positioned as follows:

Sqdn Hq, E Troop and C Troop at Herresbach,

A Troop assembled in the vicinity of Holzheim,

B Troop defending the roads and road junctions in the  
vicinity of Andler.

F Company, which had  marched to the vicinity of  
Schonberg, was now in position as mobile reserve at Heum.

Just before the squadron had moved out of Wackerfeld  
(1532) the Gp CP had sent alerts on the enemy's extensive  
air activity. This came as a caution of anti-aircraft dis-

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d pline in the motor movement's that were to follow.  
The order to A Troop, instructing them to assemble in the vicinity of Holzhelm, was padded at 1620.

The Gp Hq and elements of the 18th Sqn withdrew first from Manderfeld. It was the responsibility of the 32nd CP personnel to leave the town last, after firing some of the buildings. In a flight of eagerness to destroy the building that had housed the Group and squadron CPs, Maj Kracke then commanding the 32nd -- narrowly escaped serious injury. In company with some other personnel from the squadron headquarters, Kracke engaged in thoroughly dousing the structure with gasoline. In the cellar of the house, the gas fumes were quite thick, and as the torch was applied a dull explosion thudded once, then the building was quickly enveloped in flames. Kracke was literally "blown out of the cellar" (Kracke) but escaped with nothing more than singed eyebrows and minor abrasions.

The 32nd's last elements pulled out of Manderfeld at about 1630, and 15 minutes later a radio message from TP Hayes informed the CP that only two guns remained from the two platoons of TD towed mounts that had gone into action at 1430. At 1905, the 32nd had closed to Herresbach, and found its units positioned as described in page eight, above.

Maj Kracke immediately asked 1/Lt Robert B. Reppa, CO of A Troop, ~~at~~ <sup>from</sup> Holzhelm, to contact the squadron headquarters. It was ~~in~~ <sup>in</sup> Kracke's ~~plan~~ <sup>desire</sup> to establish close and workable communication between the squadron CP and this troop in the northernmost position. Reppa replied that enemy resistance prevented them from sending a liaison officer to the Herresbach CP. He

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said something about this enemy resistance being between Holzheim and Andler, but jammed radio communication made it difficult for the squadron to grasp the situation clearly. Since the remnants of the 18th squadron were, at that time, in Holzheim, no orders were given to A Troop to move closer to Herresbach.

In view of the reported enemy resistance, Maj Kracke ordered B Troop to send patrols north towards Holzheim, 1930 - P Company gave a radio check on its CP as being two miles west of Schonberg near Heuem. 2000 - C Troop, which had accompanied <sup>32d Hq</sup> A Troop to move to the east. (See Marked Map), Most of the C Troop positions were located along the secondary road that runs northwest from Andler to Herresbach. 2000 - A radio transmission from A Troop mentioned a squadron mission from the 18th (18th Sqn was then in process of moving from HOLZHEIM), and asked if it was "all right through Amel."

Kracke was reluctant to move this troop which had been designated as his reserve without the sanction of 14th Group. 2115 - Another report from A Troop indicated that it had moved from Holzheim, north to Honsfeld. Basis for this move was that it had no flank protection to the north, now that the 18th Sqn had moved. (See 19th Sqn Hq Interview).

2165 - The 32nd requested information, either friendly or enemy, in the vicinity of Heppenbach, Valender and Mirfeld. Kracke pointed to the fact that he had no other outside information at this point. The request brought no reply.

spec. F Company.

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2205 - A radio message to A Troop instructed Lt. Roppa, "Remain in position. We do not have information on enemy situation on route to your destination."

2230 - The two ~~3-in~~ towed MD guns that had been remaining after TP Hayes fight north of Manderfeld were remaining to protect the Herresbach CP. Personnel from the 32nd's Headquarters Troop were placed around the guns for a security guard.

2330 - Permission was given to A Troop to move to Medell over best route possible. The 32nd command again cautioned the A troopers that no further information was available, and it was "suggested" that no movement be made during the hours of darkness.

As he surveyed his squadron's situation map shortly before midnight, Maj Kracke realized that his CP was in a "pocket" at Herresbach. The network of trails and third-class roads that led to the west from the village were impassable; at least that was a report from an artillery liaison officer who had spoken to the cavalrymen at their CP earlier that evening. ~~Kracke~~ <sup>Kracke</sup> knew that the 16th was being slide-slipped north, but was concerned over the lack of a reply on his last radio transmission to that squadron. The report that A Troop had mentioned about the ~~presence~~ <sup>presence of enemy</sup> between the squadron and Holzhelm, made the major distrust that route. His only routes of withdrawal from Herresbach were the road to the east, to Andler; or a secondary road of unknown qualities that led northwest towards Wereth.

Spears,  
F Company.

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Throughout the night of 16-17 December, the troops at Herresbach could hear shelling to the right flank. But there was no close-in contact with the enemy.

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0345 - A radio message from Group stated that friendly Infantry troops were at Wischeid. Meanwhile, both B and C troops in the vicinity of Andler reported many enemy flares and ~~negative~~ contact with enemy patrols. Reconnaissance teams from B Troop made their points of contact at the easternmost extension of motor patrols to the ~~west~~ east and northeast.

0354 - A Troop reported that it was with about two companies of Infantry in Honsfeld. The CO of the Infantry there, had requested patrols from the cavalry troop to probe south and southeast from Honsfeld with the coming of daylight. Other enemy activity at Honsfeld prompted only a negative report.

0445 - Group radioed that a daybreak patrol be sent towards Wischeid and Manderfeld. It was specified that this patrol make contact with the enemy. Since there was little time for planning, the 32nd immediately alerted B Troop, told it that it would be responsible for this patrol mission.

0505 - The above order had been forwarded to B Troop, and arrangements made for C Troop to cover the screen line that shielded Herresbach.

0510 - Group was informed of the above arrangements.

0527 - Group ordered "Hold and dig."

0530 - 32nd queried Gp, wanting to know whether to hold or carry out previous reconnaissance mission.

0645 - Group replied that dig-in and hold should be followed. Krecke immediately called off the B Troop reconnaissance mission.

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Special Officer, Capt. Woods)  
Company.

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1155 - B Troop was ordered to attack the west enemy small

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0730 - A radio message from B Troop at Andler excitedly told squadron that one reconnaissance team (1 armored car and two jeeps) had been surrounded. It requested permission to withdraw towards Schonberg.

0740 - Before any reply could be made B Troop announced that it was "being surrounded" (See B Troop Interview), and said that they were pulling towards Schonberg.

0745 - B Troops immediate estimation of the size of the force that attacked it came in a flash, ~~surrounding~~ "Battalion tanks in Andler". This was radioed to Group at 0746, and a "Roger" on the message received at 0747.

0758 - B Troop was instructed to move CP only to Schonberg and to "hold" with its teams. Squadron also advised the troop to request artillery.

0800 - The squadron, realizing that it was quite out-of-ff by this time, asked permission from Group, to move the 32nd CP through the 18th's area to the Gp CP. Kracke's object in making this request was to secure permission to attempt a withdrawal over the rough terrain to his west.

0833 - B Troop's next message read, "GP now at Schonberg. Two teams lost. Position held. North to west of Andler. North of Schonberg. They are flanking, one directly down road." (See B Troop story in that unit's interview).

0834 - The squadron CP started the move that eventually took them west to join the Group CP at Meyerode, Belgium. (For full details see special interview with motor officer, Capt. Woods) F Company.

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1150 - B Troop was ordered to attack the west enemy small  
as the motorcade started towards the west enemy small  
arms and artillery fire were heard several hundred yards to  
the south. The rough trail over which they traveled (See  
Marked Map) was slippery and frequently broke into miniature  
landslides as the tracked vehicles and jeeps tried to trav-  
erse it.

Meanwhile, the B Troop fight was still raging. At 0805  
a radio transmission from that troop reported that the enemy  
was attacking with machine guns, mortars and bazookas. It  
was also reported that the enemy were dressed in snow caps.  
0848 - B Troop's radio messages described the initial (0730)  
attack at Andler, said that it had been made by about 100  
infantry, and that now, the leading elements of the same  
enemy were pressing against Schonberg.

0850 - The above information was relayed to C Troop, which  
was still in position, to the east of Herreshbach. It  
0905 - B Troop reports heavy artillery and bazooka fire.  
Still holding.

0925 - The Gp ordered the 32nd's P Company (See interview  
with the light tankers) to block the main road against the  
enemy that was advancing from the north and northwest. The  
squadron CP was then enroute to the Gp CP at Meyerode.

0942 - B Troop reports that it had knocked out one enemy tank.  
1000 - Squadron Hq ordered C and E Troops to "put on chains  
and follow in the tracks of Hq which had blazed the trail  
west from Herreshbach to Meyerode.

1050 - Similar withdrawal orders, but ones that did not  
specify the route of withdrawal, were sent to B Troop and  
P Company.

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1158 - B Troop was ordered to assemble in the vicinity of Wallerode, and have the Troop CO or executive report to the Sqdn CP at Meyerode. This order was predicated by the selection of the next delaying position -- the line Wallerode - Meyerode - Medell - Born, and the high ground in the vicinity of this line.

1330 - F Company reports that it is in the ordered position.

~~1410 - C Troop in position west of Medell, reports that 30~~

men from A Troop have come into its CP. Seeks transportation. (These were the men who had escaped from A Troop's fight at Honsfeld. See A Troop interview. 775)

1548 - Gp radios, "If ordered to withdraw, retire on Vlelsalm."

1566 - Sqdn CP at Hunnange received small arms fire, hurriedly prepared to move to Vlelsalm. As the headquarters column neared Sart les St. With it passed elements of a 240 mm. howitzer battalion digging in. Roads in the vicinity of Sart les St.

With and Poteau were jammed with two and three columns of traffic. Movement was very slow and there seemed to be no one present to unsharpl the traffic jams.

1625 - C Troop reported that F-47's strafed at (795+910) and that small arms fire had been drawn by them in the vicinity of (870+923).

1630 - A squadron liaison officer, attempting to reach Born, returned with the information that he had been fired upon by a force that he estimated to consist of two Panther tanks and a company of infantry, southeast of Born.

1942 - The message journal of the squadron contains an entry of a message purportedly sent by B Troop telling of another

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enemy tank that ~~was~~ it had knocked out. (When this message was traced down at the time ~~of~~ of the interview, no basis could be found for it.) B Troop had no record of sending it and at that time had had no contacts with enemy armor.

2200 - The squadron reported in to Gp, told it that it had had no mission since Plan C was ordered to begin. Kracke reported that his column was immersed in a traffic jam, had been for four hours, and that there was little or no movement possible.

2230 - Gp called and requested Lt Col Paul Ridge to report to the 14th Gp CP (then at Poteau). Ridge was at Vielsalm at the time of the message's receipt, arrived at Poteau at 0030. 2300 - Most of the 32nd's column had passed through Poteau, unaware that the group CP was located there. A chance meeting in the dark by members of the Gp's CP with elements of C Troop, resulted in the reconnaissance's troop being turned around and organization begun for the mission of Task Force Hayes and its fight towards Born. (See General Story - "Action at Poteau", accompanying sketch, interviews with G-18, E-18 and F-18. JF S) <sup>WPC</sup> C Troop, at this time, formed the "tail" of the 32nd's column. 0630 - A liaison officer from the 14th Gp CP contacted Maj Kracke and directed him to make up a Task Force "Kracke". Available for the composition of this special force were remnants of the 18th Sqn then in Vielsalm — about one-half of the 18th's light tank company, one assault gun platoon, B Troop of the 32nd and P Company of the 32nd. The mission assigned to this TF was to retake and hold the high ground in the vicinity of Born. As Kracke began organizing this force, he did not realize

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that other elements of his command, attached to Task Force Hayes at Poteau, were at that moment under attack, as they attempted to fight their way towards the north.

(For full details of the fight at Poteau, see interviews with Capt Martin, Maj Hayes, and elements of the 18th that were in the fight there at that time.)

0819 - Message from Gp at Poteau stated, ~~we are attacking~~ "We have been attacked. Have repulsed the attack. We are attacking."

0830 - Maj Kracke sought the support fires of his B Troop, asked Poteau's Gp GP for the guns, but was told that they had already been committed at Poteau.

(The fragmentary messages entered during this phase of the operational journal, are significant in that they tie in with the time of different developments in the Poteau attack. Few people engaged in the brisk Poteau battle were checking their watches, and it is only with this message-center system of marking the incoming time on the messages that one is able to accurately place the developments of the Poteau action.)

0834 - Gp informs Kracke that TF Hayes is under attack. Requests medical assistance.

0843 - TF Hayes' GP under attack at Poteau.

0845 - "Enemy attacking Poteau, but we're holding" (Hayes)

~~0845~~ - 0900 - Lt Col Ridge arrived at the Vielsalm location. He was extremely fatigued and nervous after having left the Poteau GP on foot and under fire.

0910 - Group requested that Kracke ~~send~~ send General support north and east of Born. He was told to move TF Kracke to a point west of Poteau, where he was to report to Lt Col Damon. (Formerly commander of the 18th Sqn, then CO of Gp.)

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0915 - A second message from Gp advised Kracke to expedite the movement to the east, towards Poteau.

Kracke's attempts to get his task force out of Viesalm had been meeting stiff resistance from the solid wave of traffic that was sweeping towards the west along the Poteau - Viesalm road. He had not gone far before he saw the medical personnel that he had dispatched earlier upon the request from Poteau. Even with the 1/4-ton litter bantams, the aid men could not buck the steady stream of traffic that was sweeping in the opposite direction.

1000 - A radio message from Gp told TF Kracke to halt in place and await further orders. It was from this location that B Troop was sent to Grand Bois (near Ville du Bois) to establish ~~security~~<sup>heavy</sup> security to the north, protecting the artillery positions of GCR, 7th Armd Div. The B troopers were in position by 1255. <sup>They</sup> had established good positions with interlocking bands of fire that stretched to extreme ranges for all its weapons (See B Troop Interview). The operational journal of the 32nd carried one current message from B Troop. It reported, "Friendly troops report enemy at Petit Miller". This was received at 1307. Is treated more fully in the B Troop interview.

Maj Kracke said that it was shortly before noon on the 18th of December when Col Stanton, Chief of Staff at VIII Corps, attached the remnants of the 14th Cav Gp to the 7th Armd Div. He was under the impression that the 32nd was absorbed by the 18th, though Group later said that it was really a reorganization of the remnants of both squadrons into a new squadron that was tagged as the "14th Provisional Cavalry Squadron" and attached to the 87th Reconnaissance Sqdn of the 7th Armd Div.

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The remainder of the 32nd Sqdn's story is broken down into the separate, first-hand stories of the various separate units that were sent out on varied missions. All of them centered around the work of Task Force Jones and the other armored elements that screened the southern mouth of the Boviigny - Salmchateau corridor, during the withdrawal action of the "Fight of the Fortified Goose Egg." However, there were several enlightening comments that Maj Kracke made at this point that assisted in comprehending the significance of the various phases of the action, and pointed to those that possessed a more critical nature. (See Appended Statement - 175)

From the standpoint of the development of the tactical situation in the northern corner of the Ardennes Bulge, almost all of these separate troops from the reorganized, provisional squadrons played a critical part in shaping the termination of Vonhundstedt's attack. (See General Story on 14th Op - submitted for pamphlet material, 25 Jan 1945) The missions that were assigned to these task forces and sub-task forces were generally holding missions - designed to deprive the enemy use of vital road junctions and <sup>(Germans)</sup> arteries that would have facilitated the cutting off of the elements fighting in and around St Vith, would have enabled the Germans to make a more determined, and perhaps more effective stab at Liege and its many crossings of the Meuse.

Despite the provisional reorganization, the 32nd Squadron's Hq kept an accurate file of reports from its separate units. These may be found in the after-action report's file of messages, and so, will not be included here. The remainder of this transcript will be concerned with various singular reports and

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statements made by Maj. Kracke that provide a specific basis of information that supports other elements of this cavalry story.

(As with the beginning of the interview, there has been little effort to establish smooth continuity in this material. It is merely to serve as a source, for fuller historical writings at a later date - JTS)

-In the reorganized provisional cavalry squadron formed from the remnants of the 14th Cavalry Group were 607 men and 2nd officers from the 32nd Squadron.

-Maj Kracke pointed to B Troop's fight in the vicinity of Andler-Schonberg as a "phenomenal job". The light 37mm. guns with which the troopers' armored cars were equipped were out-gunned by far by the cannon carried by the German armor. (See B Troop's Interview )

-The withdrawal of the Headquarters, and later C and E Troops, from Herresbach was hailed by Kracke as excellent work by his motor officer, Capt Woods. Woods, in turn, was assisted by a terrain study made by the squadron's S-2, Capt. Reed. (See separate Interview - "Withdrawal from Herresbach.")

- 32nd casualties in the Action at Poteau were "four men killed, and four men wounded."

-Late 23 Dec 1944, and early on the 24th of December, when the remnants of the reorganized provisional squadron returned to Rahler, helped 82nd Airborne Division mop-up in that vicinity, then went to Khignesse. There the composite unit was split into its understrength component squadrons under the command of 14th Cav Gp Hq. All personnel were, by this time in an exhausted state, minor frictions arose that grated on

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the dispositions of the troopers. (For the most accurate description and statements concerning these difficulties, see transcripts of 32nd's unit history and a statement by the CO, Maj Kracke, appended to this interview. JTS)

[See casualty reports for period, appended to General Story of the 14th Cavalry Group. Submitted for pamphlet material, 23 Jan 1945.

-See Materiel Losses and Status of Equipment report, appended to General Story of 14th Cav Gp. Submitted for pamphlet material, 23 Jan 1945.] - JTS

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Inter:

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By SP4ARA Date 9/20/10

sqdn hist - 2

17 Dec - Negative rpt Tr A 0500. last contact with Tr A. Enemy close

TRANSCRIPT OF THE 32nd CAV RON SQDN UNIT HISTORY, 15Dec-30Dec 1944

15 Dec - Usual camp duties n. no changes.

16 Dec - Sq alerted at 0600. At 0932 Sq (- Co P and RHE) moved from

VIELSALM, BELG on MANDERFELD. To support 18th Sq which was being attacked by enemy tanks and inf supported by arty. Message to Co P to move to

ANDLER at 1005. Sq CP ordered set-up at MANDERFELD at 1100. (14th Gp

and 18th Sq CP's also at MANDERFELD) Tr A at ANDLER, Tr B vic A, Tr C at MANDERFELD, covering North flanks, and Tr E in support from posn.

NW of MANDERFELD. At 1205 Tr A ordered to move 2 plats dismntd to high ground SW of MANDERFELD to cover right flank. Tr A CR and one platoon moved to HOLZHEIM. Tr B moved to ANDLER. Lt. Col. Rldge, Sq CO departed

for Sq rear each at VIELSALM to pick up ammo trucks at 1230, leaving sq in command Maj KRACKER, Sq exec Offr at 1430 Maj Mayes, Sq S-3 with

Tr C, Tr E and 2 plats Co A TD Bn ordered by Gp CO to retake towns of LOSHEIM and KREWINKEL which had been over-run by enemy. Force reached Rd 2640 yards yds N of MANDERFELD. At 1530 sq ordered to withdraw to

hold line N-S from HOLZHEIM to ANDLER with TRIMAYES covering withdrawal of Sq, Sq Hq, Tr C and Tr E to HERRSSACH, Tr B to ANDLER, Tr A to assemble at HOLZHEIM. Co F assembled vicinity of HEUDEM at 1900. Trs C and B outposted and patrolled line HOLZHEIM-ANDLER as ordered. At 2115 Tr A

reports that they have no flank protection and that they are moving to next town to the North (HONSFELD). At 2150 message from Tr A requesting info of withdrawal to MEDILL. At 2205 Tr A advised to remain in present position until enemy situation could be determined. At 2337 Tr A advised move to MEDILL if enemy situation necessitates. Enemy losses unknown. Our forces - one EW wounded.

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By SCARRA Date 9/20/10

sqdn hist - 2

17 Dec - Negative rpt Tr A 0500. Last contact with Tr A. Enemy close in. Flare activity reported during early morning hours. Tr B unable to contact units of the 106th Inf Div on South flank. At 0730 Enemy tks and Inf advanced on Tr B positions at ANDLER from East and South, two teams surrounded and captured. At 1000 Tr B still holding positions at ANDLER. One enemy tank destroyed. Sq ordered to withdraw to NEVERODE at approx 1000. Sq Hq, Tr C and Tr E closed NEVERODE at approx 1130. Tr B fights delaying action and withdraws to SCHONBERG. At 1300 Sq ord to withdraw and hold line WALLERODE - NW to hl Strnd of BORN. Sq CP at HUNTWANG. Sq CO returned to CP at 1700. Sq did not make contact at this position but again ord it withdraw at approx 1700 according to 14th Cav Plan "G". Sq withdrew to VIELSALM over route so congested with traffic that it did not arrive VIELSALM until 0630, 18 Dec 44. Tr C ordered by Gp CO to stop at POTEAUX. Enemy losses unknown. Own forces - 2 EM wounded, 3 officers and 93 men MIA. 18 Dec - Gp CO and EKO and Sq CO relieved of command. Sq received several conflicting and indecisive orders to move to and hold high ground vicinity BORN. Task Forces MAYES with Tr C and attached units moved on route POTEAUX-RECHT and were stopped by enemy tanks. Infantry and mortar fire just NE of POTEAUX. Enemy attacks POTEAUX. Tr E with Gp P attacked moved to high ground east of VIELSALM. Tr E with Gp P skirmish with enemy at POTEAUX withdrew to VIELSALM. TFWayes after brisk DON OGS VIII Corps by VO attached 14th Cav Gp to 7th Armd Div. OG 7th Armd directed that 18th CAV absorb 32nd CAV and 14th Gp for purpose of creating Cav Ron Sqdn capable of operating as a unit, Lt Col. DAMON in command. 32nd Cav strength 607 off and EM at time of receipt of orders for joint Sqdn RRE moved to ERESSE. All troops recalled to VIELSALM at 1000. Enemy losses unknown. Our own forces - 2 EM wounded.

24 Dec - At approx 1100 Sq moved to new position.

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sqdn hist - 3

19 Dec - Tr B with 2 plato Co P and 2 plato Tr E moved out at approx 0800 to hold line GRUPLANG-THOMMEN-ESPELER- Tr CP at BEHO. Practically all personnel and equipment from 32nd Sqdn. No casualties.

20 Dec - Tr G with one plat Co P and one plat Tr E moved at approx 1000 to BOVIGNY, attend to Tr JONES(7 Armd) Tr A with 83 EM moved in one 6x6 truck, 2 M-30 AG and 2 H/trks to outpost line N-S through VILLE-DU-BOIS, east of VIELSALM. Tr B received heavy arty fire. Tr C attacked by enemy tanks and infantry vicinity GOUVY. Captured 31 prisoners and many enemy killed and wounded. Own forces - 1 EM KIA, 4 EM WIA.

21 Dec - Rear Ech to GRAND MENIL. Tr C captured 6 PW's and destroyed one enemy command car. Enemy major and driver killed, enemy documents captured. Enemy attacks on Tr. C positions repulsed. Rear Ech to HAVVE. Own forces 1 EM wounded.

22 Dec - Tr C repulsed enemy attacks on positions. Ron made for routes for withdrawal for Tr B. Tentative orders issued for Tr B to withdraw and keep route 25 open to VIELSALM by covering route of fire from OIRREBAUX to VIELSALM. Plan not put into operation. Tr B continues to hold position. Tr G attacked and covered withdrawal of CGR (7th Armd Div) to new assembly area. Tr B pulled back due to enemy tanks, S/A and Arty fire at 2115. Enemy losses unknown. Own forces 2 EM wounded; 2 EM missing in action.

23 Dec - Sq (- Trs B & G plus atomts) moved to assembly area at Bahler on Corps order, closing at 1130. Tr B fought delaying action to SALMCHATEAU and joined 3q at RAHIER. At 1500 3q received orders to move to new assembly area vicinity WERBOMONT. 3q (- Tr C and atomts) arrived AYVAILE approx 2100 and billeted for the night. Enemy losses unknown. Own forces 1 EM killed; 7 EM wounded; 4 EM missing in action.

24 Dec - At approx 1100 3q moved to new assembly area at XIUGNESSE need of such items. Tr A ordered to report to 7th Armd Div Hq for

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Sqdn hist - 5

security of CP at 1900. Enemy losses unknown. Own forces 1 Officer

Sqdn hist - 4

Tr C plus accounts rejoined Sq at 1950. Tr B & Co P ordered to complete T/O troops on road to report to 87th. Ren Sq. Some vehicles were in no condition to perform properly due to lack of maintenance, however troops were told to move as ordered. Troops moved at approx. 1730. 18th Sq furnished no officers and very few vehicles and EM for these troops. 18th Sq was billeted first procuring all available spare space forcing some 32nd Cav personnel to sleep outdoors. No casualties.

25 Dec - Tr C ordered to furnish T/O Ren troop to report to 87th. Ren Sq. Even though experienced Ren Officers and men of 18th Sq were available to fill troop to T/O strength, inexperienced Officers and personnel were taken from 32nd Cav Hq H & S Troop. Some vehicles were in no shape to perform mission. Troops B and C atnd to 87th Ren Sq. Occupied line BOMAL - MANHAY. No casualties.

26 Dec - Tr B occupied positions North of GRANDMENIL and occupied positions at approx. 1730. Tr A returned from mission assigned on 20 Dec 44 and billeted in HANOIS at approx. 1700. Tr C occupied (Desntd) high ground North of MANHAY. Co P returned to Sq leaving 10 light tanks with two crews with 87th Ren Sq. No casualties. 27th Dec- Trs B & D attacked MANHAY and GRANDMENIL (desntd) proceeding by intensive Arty barrage. Both towns were occupied. Lt Col DAKHAN, at 1200 ordered all duffle bags of personnel attached to 87th Cav Ren Sq (all 32nd Cav men) emptied and ~~XXXX~~ items of individual equipment pooled for reissue to personnel not attached to 87th Cav Ren Sq (all such personnel being from 18th Cav Sq). Many personal items of enlisted men in combat and men killed in battle were pillared. Acting CO 32nd Cav protested and advised troops in field to put in request for equipment needed. Troops in field were badly in need of such items. Tr A ordered to report to 7th Armd Div Hq for

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By: SARVA Date: 9/24/10

34th hist - B  
SECURITY OF CP

security of CP at 1100. Enemy losses unknown. Own forces 1 officer

killed; 3 officers and 7 EM wounded.

28 Dec - Ron for billets at new assembly area at ONSAUX and HOYEMONT.

Verbal orders received for movement and reorganization of 32nd Cav

3q at 1000. Telephone message from 14th Cav Gp LNO at 7th Armd Div

directed indefinite suspension of move and reorganization. Provisional

grouping of squadrons disbanded per verbal order Lt Col DAVON. Enemy

losses unknown. Own forces 1 EM wounded.

29 Dec - 3q (- troops in contact) moved from XHIONASSE 1700 closed

at ONSAUX 1100. LNO reported to 14th Gp CP advised Gp 3q plans

for contacting and billeting troops. No casualties.

30 Dec - 3q officer guide contacted Lt Col at WERBOMONT 0700 and guided

Lt Col to and billeted Lt Col HOYEMONT at 0800. 3q officer guide contacted

Lt Col B at BOMAI and guided Lt Col to and billeted Troop at HOYEMONT at

1100. Lt Col A rejoined 3q at 1145 and billeted at ONSAUX. Troops im-

mediately commenced reorganization and maintenance of equipment for

redeployment. No casualties.

31 Dec - Cont'd reorganization and maintenance of equipment. 3q

received warning order at 2015 of possible move on one hour's notice.

On 29 Dec 44, Capt Martin was ordered by Lt Col DAWSON to lead  
Troop 3q for duty. Troop Martin's group was composed of 40 men from Troop  
3q, 13 EM 4 & 5 32nd Cav. The 4 & 5 CP were reorganized into  
Troop 3q and 3q. The Troop 3q was trained for combat with assault gun,  
mortars, and anti-aircraft weapons. The Troop 3q was also equipped with  
anti-aircraft weapons. One M4 Armd Car of the Troop was towed from motor park  
to destination.

The three troops committed were extremely fatigued, and suffering  
from cold, exposure. The collection of equipment made complete, and suffering  
combat efficiency extremely low. The collection of equipment made complete, and  
of men, including headquarters personnel, was extremely low. The collection  
of equipment was extremely low. The collection of equipment was extremely low.  
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of equipment was extremely low. The collection of equipment was extremely low.

All officers and all men of three provisional groups, excepting  
Lt Col, were sent to 3q and 3q at 1200. The collection of equipment was  
extremely low. The collection of equipment was extremely low. The collection  
of equipment was extremely low. The collection of equipment was extremely low.  
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HEADQUARTERS 32D CAV RON SQ (MSGZ)  
APO 230, U.S. ARMY

ONE L. PAGE  
DATE: 26 January 1945  
OPERATIONS

~~SECRET~~

On 24 Dec 44 at approximately 11<sup>00</sup>, this sq moved from AYNALLIE to KHIGNESSS, closing at about 16<sup>00</sup>. Tr C plus attachments joined sq at 1630.

Tr B had been committed since 16 Dec 44, and men and officers were exhausted from lack of sleep and food. Vehicles and weapons had received hard wear with no maintenance.

On 24 Dec Capt Lindsey was ordered by Lt Col DAMON (through Major DILL) to put a T/O Ron Tr (plus one platoon AG from Tr E 32nd sq) on the road to report to 87th Ron Sq. In approximately two hours some vehicles from Tr B 32nd sq, six vehicles from Gp Hq, one vehicle from Tr A 32nd sq, and one vehicle from H & S Tr 32nd sq were lumped together and moved off as a recon troop. Twenty-four EM from Hq Tr 14th Cav Gp were added to Tr B 32nd sq to form this T/O troop.

In the short time for preparation, vehicles could not be assembled, radio nets established, vehicles gassed, or loads transferred, to allow the troop to function properly in combat. Some 37 MM guns in M3 Armored Cars could not function, and some IMGs were strapped to a ton truck hoods in lieu of pedestal mounts. The 24 EM from Hq Tr 14th Cav Gp were not trained nor fit for a combat mission with a recon troop.

Capt Blair, CO of Co P was also ordered to take a T/O tank Co for the same mission and at the same time as B Tr. Capt Blair assembled 17 tanks with crews, one of which failed to run before arriving at destination. Of the 17 tanks, eleven only were combat serviceable. 18th Cav Ron Sq furnished 12 EM and 3 tanks for the provisional tank company.

On 25 Dec 44, Capt Martin was ordered by Lt Col DAMON (through Major DILL), to form a T/O recon troop in about four hours, and report to 87th Ron Sq for duty. Capt Martin's troop was composed of 90 men from Tr C 32nd sq, 15 EM H & S 32nd sq. The H & S Tr replaced specialists, not trained for combat with a recon troop. Also, about 12 EM were furnished by Tr E 32nd sq. The Tr E men were trained for combat with assault guns. The vehicles were from varied sources, and were not entirely combat serviceable. One M3 Armored Car of the T/O troop was towed from motor park to destination.

The three troops committed were uniformly fatigued, and suffering from cold, exposure. The collection of equipment made control, and suffering combat efficiency extremely difficult and hazardous. The collection of men, including headquarters personnel provided additional problems of efficient operations. The fighting ability of the provisional troops B, C, & P, in defense, and attack, after eight days of arduous, critical continuous employment was commended by Lt Col BOYLAN, CO 87th Ron Sq.

All officers and all men of three provisional troops, excepting 12 EM 18th Cav Ron Sq and 24 EM Hq Tr 14th Gp, were members of 32nd Cav Ron Sq.

*[Handwritten signature]*

*Interviewer*

GERMAN CODES 2204 2206

(16 Dec 44 - 1 Jan 46)

Headquarters, 2nd Cav Sqn (Belgian) (Belgian) (Belgian)

JOHN L. KRACKE

Interview with - Capt. Samuel R. Major JAWARY  
Commanding

Capt. Gilbert R. Reed, S-2

Capt. Joseph R. Osine, S-3

FOUO Type II, Barnes, Ass't Major

-Place - Kemmerke, Belgium, 6 Jan 1945.

{ NOTE: - This interview is concerned with a particular phase of the 32nd's operations as mentioned in the full report of the 32nd's operations. Conditions governing the writing of the interview are the same as those described in the report, attached interview. - JTS }

- Overlays and Sketches -

- Interviewer - Lt Jack Shea, 2d Inf, 1st Army

- Interviewer - Lt Jack Shea, 2d Inf, 1st Army

On the night 16 - 17 Dec 1944

Interviewer: - Lt Jack Shea captain,

Interviewee: - Sgt. [Name] 2nd I & H Sv. Hq First Army

of the 32nd's officers at Herresbach and said that the trails leading west from the town towards Kayserslautern were impassable. He was in a 4-ton jeep, and said that even that vehicle could not travel over the muddy, narrow trails that lead the hilly forest to the west.

Shortly before midnight on the 16th of December, the squadron CO, Maj Kracke, realized that the headquarters group and the assault group of B Troop and reconnaissance vehicles of C Troop were in danger. He was caught in a pocket. On

Interviewer

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GERMAN COUNTERATTACK

(16 Dec 44 - 1 Jan 45)

-Headquarters 32nd Cav Sqn ("Withdrawal from Herresbach")

-Interview with - Capt. Samuel B. Woods, Motor O

Capt. Gilbert R. Reed, S-2

Capt. Joseph R. Oline, S-3

WOJG Lyle T. Barnes, Ass't Motor O

-Place - Kemexhe, Belgium. 6 Jan 1945.

{ NOTE: - This interview is concerned with a particular phase of the 32nd's operations as mentioned in the full squadron headquarters interview. Conditions governing the writing of the interview are the same as those described in the larger, squadron interview. - JTS )

- Overlays and Sketches -

See Marked Map - "Front Line Positions" 1/25, 000

appended to Group material.

-Interviewer - Lt Jack Shea, 2d Info & Hist Sv (Hq First U.S. Army)

On the night 16 - 17 Dec 1944, an unidentified captain, liaison officer from Service Battery 333rd PA Gp (?), met some of the 32nd's officers at Herresbach and told them that the trails leading west from the town towards Meyerode were impassible. He was in a 1-ton jeep, and said that even that vehicle could not travel over the muddy, narrow trails that laced the hilly forest to the west.

Shortly before midnight on the 16th of December, the squadron CO, Maj Kracke, realized that his headquarters group and the assault guns of E Troop and reconnaissance vehicles of C Troop were in danger of being caught in a pocket. The

Interviewer

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enemy was pressing in from the east, and all roads except the one leading to the northwest towards Woreth were either reported to ~~be~~ be in enemy hands or to be impassible. Accordingy, Kraake directed that reconnaissance be made to find an effective exit from Herrsbach.

2/Lt Drexel, an IPW officer from the 14th Cp Hq who had been assigned to the 32nd Sqdn for operations, found from civilian sources that the secondary road leading north to Woreth was blocked by an abatis road block at (942934).

This information was relayed by personal reconnaissance, and it was found to be blocked with some trees that had been felled across the road and interlaced. The troopers remarked

that they were not sure that this block had been erected by enemy troops — it might have been friendly units that had not known the presence of the cavalry squadron in Herrsbach. But, in any case, the road had to be considered as a blind alley.

Capt Woods took a quarter-ton jeep and started out on a personal reconnaissance over the route that the artillery liaison officer had said was impassible. Woods traveled about two thirds of the distance on the six-kilometer trail, then turned to return to the CP. He was convinced that the trail was worthy of a try.

First elements of the escape column that was to attempt this passage to the west were the vehicles of the 32nd Sqdn's Hq. Rear-guard security was provided by the men and vehicles of the squadron's C Troop and B Troop. In all, there were "more than 200 vehicles" (Woods) that were in and around Herrsbach at the time of the withdrawal. Various TD, AAA and Medical

FROM D TROOP BATTAL

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BY

DATE

BY

DATE

Interviewer

Interviewee  
1st Lt. Wood  
1st Lt. Wood  
1st Lt. Wood



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By SP4NARA/Date 9/20/10

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units had filtered into the tiny village, joining the cavalry troops there during the night 16 - 17 Dec 1944.

Thus, the column was made up of half-tracks, litter bantams, tracked and wheeled ambulances, regular jeeps, 2 1/2-ton 6x6's, armored cars and self-propelled 75mm assault guns.

The column started out towards Meyerode at about 0830 on 17 Dec. There was little difficulty as the first vehicles lurched down the hill to the southwest and forded a small stream at (940917). All of the vehicles that had them, had had their chains buckled on.

At (839918) where the trail ascends a steep hill, and in the middle of the hill turns to the north, the first trouble developed. Several of the vehicles bogged down as the moist structure of the trail gave way beneath the weight of the vehicles. The whole bed of the trail had collapsed.

Woods grabbed a crew of men from the cars nearest the trouble spot, and started them to work felling trees, and preparing "bunchings" on the right and lowest side of the road.

This repair job had to constantly repeated as each successive vehicle tore up the work that had been done for the car preceding it. Woods and his crew worked feverishly, and at about 1200 - 1300 hours the last vehicle in the column had passed the 'bad' spot. There were other mirings in the column, but these were relieved with a series of towing arrangements, none of the vehicles that started out on the trail failed to reach Meyerode.

Last element to leave Herrosbach was the 3rd Platoon of C Troop commanded by 1/Lt Richard R. Herren. C's 1st and 2nd Platoon preceded him in that order. Two reconnaissance teams from B Troop were with C at the time of this withdrawal.

Interviewer

Interviewer:  
H. Jack Shea,  
2nd Inf Hq. Co.,  
1st Army

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By STNA/RA Date 9/20/10

GERMAN COUNTERATTACK

(16 Dec 44 - 1 Jan 45)

SECRET

- Provisional A Troop, Reorganized 14th Cav Squadron \*
- \*(- Remnants of the 18th and 32nd Squadrons were, on 18 Dec 44, reorganized to form a composite squadron called the 14th, which was attached to the 7th Armored Division for its operations in the vicinity of Bovigny, Crombach, St. Vith and Salmchateau.)
- Interview with - Capt Willard S. Wanke, CO  
Capt Garland Jones, Exec  
2/Lt Max L. Crawford, Platoon Leader  
2/Lt John V. Harmon, Platoon Leader  
2/Lt ~~Maple~~ Alexander, Platoon Leader  
2/Lt ~~JAMES~~ Mezga, Platoon Leader  
-Place, Kemoxhe, Belgium. 8 Jan 1945. The same conditions prevailed as when this interviewer worked with the 32nd Squadron . This provisional troop had been dissolved, and Capt Wanke was engaged in special service and orientation work for the squadron. In combat he is a liaison officer, and is being prepared to do all-around work within the squadron.
- Overlays and sketches -

Appended : Sketch P, Vielsalm Withdrawal, TP Navaho

Re: Vielsalm, France & Belgium 1/50,000 series

Sheet # 93

- Interviewer - Lt Jack Shea, 2d Info & Hist Sv(Hq First Army)

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Among the units that were provisionally organized when the remnants of the 14th Cav Gp became attached to the 7th Armored Div on 18 Dec 1944, was a reconnaissance troop designated as "Provisional" A Troop and commanded by Capt Willard S. Wanke. Wanke, newest officer to arrive at the 32nd Cav Sqdn, had previously been used as a liaison officer attached to the squadron's headquarters. In his troop, Wanke had five other officers, 87 men, four M-8 armored cars, an M-20 personnel carrier, three half-tracks and a 2 1/2-ton G6 truck.

With this personnel and equipment he reported to Lt Col Warren, an officer in CCR of 7th Arm'd Div, at Ville du Bois at 1520<sup>00</sup> 19 Dec 1944. He was assigned the mission of establishing a series of outposts and patrols to provide security for CCR's artillery which was positioned just south of Ville du Bois.

Three outposts were established at (716915 - 724915 - 734909) and patrol routes established before darkness on the night of 19-20 Dec 1944. The motorized patrols consisted of two M-8's shuttling between Vielsalm and Petit-Thier, and an M-8 and an M-20 shuttling between Petit Thier and the road block that had been established by a 7th Arm'd unit known as Task Force Navaho, west of Poteau. (see overlay-sketch "pm")

On the 20th of December the provisional troop improved its three outpost positions in the high, wooded terrain north of the CCR artillery positions. Capt. Wanke withdrew the M-8 armored cars from the shuttle patrols, replacing them with half-tracks. He thought it wiser to place the armored cars

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Interviewer

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with the outpost positions. There, the 37 mm cannon of the cars could be used to cover the roadblocks of mines that had been planted at the critical trail junctions among the net of trails that faced the crest of the wooded, high terrain.

The outpost screen on the high ground had no contact during 20 Dec 1944. Only reports of enemy activity were uninvestigated reports of distant tank activity and the noise of dismounted infantry. The cavalry had no way of knowing if these noises came from enemy sources, for the 82nd Airborne Division and friendly tanks were known to be in the area to the north and northwest.

Though no large enemy activity was present in the area, the outposts and patrols were strained to alertness at all times. There was an air of confusion that surrounded the situation at this phase of the counterattack and everyone was uneasy on pins-and-needles, alert lest they fall prey to enemy elements that had filtered into the interior of the loose American positions. The rough country and wooded terrain lent itself well to enemy infiltration attempts, but there were no large-scale raids or infiltrations. At least one enemy soldier was successful in slipping through the defense cordon. His 'burp' gun knocked out one of A Troop's patrolling M-8's on the 20th, and wounded one of the occupants. The other crew members were not injured, and the single enemy ambusher escaped.

In addition to the infiltration attempts, the cavalrymen were suspicious of the strange 'civilian' movement within the area. Capt Wante, whose CP was located near CGR's CP, (see

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overlay-sketch "G") reported that on 21 Dec three young, male civilians -- part of those who seemed to continually pass along the Vielsalm - Pötsau road in an easterly direction -- were apprehended near Feltt Thier, and taken into custody. This had been provoked by mortar fire which came on an American position near which the men had just passed. Subsequent inspection of the houses nearby disclosed an abandoned mortar from which the shells had come.

Accordingly, instructions were issued to search all suspicious civilians passing down the road during the hours of daylight, and to arrest all those moving in that vicinity after nightfall. Wankle said that he understood that many civilians, displaced by the counterattack, might have to move around the roads in the vicinity. But he could not understand why almost all of these characters were travelling towards the EAST -- in the direction of the enemy forces.

Late on 21 Dec, OP # 1 reported small arms fire, and shelling or bombing in the vicinity of Grand-Halleux - Ennals 2000 yards to the northwest. But no contact was made.

The members of the outpost positions were discomforted during this 'holding' period by having no blankets or hot food. The troop had been hurriedly organized, and no provisions were made to supply the men with blankets. During the day it was possible to heat some of the K and G rations that the cavalrymen had with them, but they found the nights cold and long without the sustaining warmth of hot coffee.

On the 22 Dec, the shuttle patrols were reorganized into three separate sectors. The first, consisting of two half-tracks, traveled between the road block north of Vielsalm (see overlay)

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to Ville du Bois. The second or middle patrol, also composed of two half-tracks, traveled between Ville du Bois and Petit Thier. And the third or eastern patrol, shuttled an M-8 and M-20 between Petit Thier and the road block that was west of Poteau.

The western motor patrol reported two rounds of artillery that fell near the north-of-Vielsalm road block at 0340.

At 220455 Dec 44, Wanke was told to withdraw all of his provisional troop elements, and prepare for a new mission.

This mission proved to be the outposting of the Salm-chateau - Bovigny highway from Salmchateau to a Rd just north of Bovigny. Purpose was to prevent any enemy crossing this highway in an east-west direction. However, the troop had hardly gotten into position to screen this sector when it was ordered to return to its original positions. The first establishments were reoccupied by 0915. Everything was the same as before except that the easternmost of the three motor patrols was discontinued. This allowed Wanke to keep an M-8 with each outpost, the M-20 at his CP, and maintain the motor patrols with the ~~two~~ half-tracks.

The night of 22-23 Dec brought reports of flares and unidentified flashes of light to the southwest of the CGR artillery positions. 7th Armd artillery CP immediately requested patrols to be sent to the area of the observed lights. Wanke found this assignment difficult, for his provisional troop was about one-half the normal strength of an ordinary reconnaissance troop, and he did not have sufficient vehicles. The light sources were investigated with foot patrols, however, but a negative report was brought back.

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Before daylight on 23 Dec 1944, P/5 George T. "finky" Woolcock from Hq & S Troop 32nd Sqdn, and T/4 J. H. Haskell, ~~armored car driver from 32nd's A Troop~~, came running into Wanke's CP. Woolcock was the first to arrive. He did not realize that Haskell was only a few minutes behind him, each hurrying to the provisional troop's CP with news of activity at outpost position # 1. Woolcock breathlessly explained that he had been off-duty at the outpost when, "My armored car and OP was captured. One man has been hit, and I don't know about the rest," he told the CP personnel.

Haskell added the information that he had been in the armored car at the time of the attack. It was near a trail junction and there were many trees around the outpost position. When the shooting started Haskell shifted from the radio operator's seat to the driver's seat (Wanke pointed to this as a difficult achievement to perform in a hurry). He tried to drive the car out, but the motor cut out just after he heard several rounds of enemy fire hit in the vicinity of the motor compartment. Haskell "balled out" of the car and made his get-away, but not before three rounds of 'burr' gun fire had wounded him in the ~~right~~ left shoulder.

As Haskell, wounded, was evacuated, Lt. Mezga loaded the half-track that had been held at the troop CP with 17 men and started off for OP # 1.

At the position Mezga found that the M-8 was burning, and tracers from the car's ammunition supply were providing minor fireworks in the outpost position near the verge of the woods. Under the cover of the half-track's .50 cal

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machine gun the "fire-brigade" reserve drove off an estimated 12 enemy foot troops, and restored the outpost position.

Mezga later explained that no effort was made to push the enemy back any further than beyond ~~the~~ the position.

"They knew where we were. And we knew where they were," he said. "Neither side did much. Just sat there potting at each other every once in awhile." Mezga saw to it that the mines were still in position, then covered the road block and waited. He anticipated a withdrawal at some time early in the morning of 25 December 1944.

This, indeed, was the plan. (See Overlay-Sketch "P") The sequence of withdrawal was to be first, the artillery of GOR. This would be followed by Task Force Navaho which held the easternmost positions. The plan required that each succeeding position to the west, pull out in turn, and follow TF Navaho and the artillery through a "Gate" that was being held open at Vielsalm and Rencheux by elements of the 82nd Airborne. The paratroopers had established a line of defense on the west bank of the Salm river, and were prepared to defend this screen as the GOR and cavalry troops slipped through it to the west.

However, Mezga was incorrect in <sup>his suggestion</sup> that the plan would be put into effect during the morning. It was about 1600 when the first parts of Task Force Navaho (Engineers, towed TD's and .90mm SP TD's commanded by a 1/Lt after the original commander, an engineer captain, had had his foot crushed, and was evacuated) started down towards Vielsalm in a westerly direction.

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"When it cracked, it cracked awfully fast," described Wanke. He also said that the retiring vehicles were well-spaced and traveling at a normal speed along the highway. Each, in turn, starting with Outpost # three, then two, then the troop and 7th Armored OP near Villie du Bois, the column melted into a single westward-bound shaft. Last element on the tail of this withdrawing column was Lt. Mezga's embattled outpost # 1. Mezga later reported that the enemy opposing his outpost reacted when they heard the half-track's motor started, but the personnel of the outpost "knocked down shop", hurried to the half-track and out-distanced the enemy ~~being~~ by hurrying down to the Vielsalm-Potesau highway.

At (717389), 250 yards north of the highway, is a small bridge which the secondary road crossed. This bridge had been prepared for demolition. The cavalrymen from OP # 1 crossed the bridge and waited for two engineers to blow the bridge, but the automatic blasting machine wouldn't work. There was a delay while the engineers attempted to fix a friction igniter to the demolition charge.

Back at Vielsalm, Capt Wanke glanced at his watch, noting that it was about 1645, and worried about the delayed appearance of OP # 1. The rest of the action had worked so smoothly that this one inconsistency was doubly evident. Wanke returned to the bridge found that the engineers had readied the friction igniter. The bridge was blown, engineers joined Mezga's Group in the half-track, and all set out for Vielsalm. At about 1700 these elements crossed the Salm River at Rencheux, and the Vielsalm withdrawal was completed.

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The provisional A troop withdrew via Gorrome - Hprefontaine - Odrlmont - Baese-Bedeux - Werbemont - Harzee - Havelange. The troop was billeted there, awaited its next mission. (The subsequent mission of this provisional troop was not of a critical nature, but may be of value as a historical record of units and their locations during this phase of the counterattack - JTS)

On 24 Dec 44, Capt Wanke received orders to report to Lt Col Warren at CCR's new CP at Pouthon. He had started to comply with this order when he received a radio transmission from 14th Op Hq to report to Lt Col Boylan of the 87th Recon Sqn for a mission, then at Xhignesse. To straighten out the misunderstanding, Wanke decided to stop in at the 87th Recon CP as it was on his way to CCR's command post. At the headquarters of the 87th Recon Sqn, Lt Col Boylan checked over the mission that had been assigned to Wanke by CCR. It was a reconnaissance screen mission in the vicinity of Bomal-Aisne. Boylan okayed it, and told Wanke that his provisional troop was now absorbed by the 87th, and that his new designation would be "B Troop - 87th Sqn".

Off on the same mission, but with a different unit designation, Wanke stopped in at CCR CP to tell Lt Col Warren of the recent change.

At the Bomal-Aisne sector Wanke coordinated his reconnaissance screen activities with elements of the 389th Inf and the 83rd Recon Sqn. Despite a continuous flow of erroneous reports on enemy that was SUSPECTED to be in the area, the provisional troop had no contact with the enemy. It was withdrawn from this sector at 261600 Dec, disbanded the following day when it retained to Xhignesse.

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(end)

Interviewer:  
Lt Staff Sgt  
Zand I of 71. So.  
14th First Army

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ELEM 28

CONTACT PT.  
WITH EL B2A/B  
GRAND HALLUEUX

230130

OP #1  
OP #2

TF  
NAVAHO

POTEAU

PETIT THIER

VILLE DU BOIS

CCR 74  
A 14 PROV

VIELSALM

LAST BRIDGE  
BLOWN 23M45  
DEC 44

SALMCHATEAU

SKETCH "F"

STVITH

VIELSALM  
WITHDRAWAL

TF "NAVAHO"

1/50,000 SHEET 93  
Vielsalm France &  
Belgium

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By: SP7MRA/Date: 9/20/10

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Authority **NAAD735017**  
By **SP4BAR/DAE** Date **9/29/10**

GERMAN COUNTERATTACK

(16 Dec 44 - 1 Jan 45)

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- A Troops, 32nd Cav non Sqn (Mezz)
- Interview with - ~~2/~~ Lt John V. Harmon, ~~1st~~ Pltn leader
- S/Sgt Edward P. O'Brien, Platoon Sgt.
- T/4 Earl Bachus, Armored Car driver.
- Pvt Robert Ford
- Pvt Workman
- Sgt George Creel, Arm'd Car Commander
- Sgt. Andrew J. Stout, Section Sgt and the
- Sgt. John S. Catanese, Section Sgt
- Sgt. Frank L. Pancher, Arm'd Car Commander
- T/5 Armline Schroeder, Radio Op
- Pvt Altis,
- Cpl Robert J. Irving, Gunner
- Sgt William Neumeyer, Platoon Sgt
- T/5 Herzog, Radio Op
- Place - Thys, Belgium. 8 Jan 1945, 1130 - 1600 hours. Orderly room of the combined A & B Troops, 32nd Squadron.
- A Troop of the 32nd had a total strength of approximately 131 officers and men at the start of the counterattack. At the time of the interview, this number had been whittled down by the loss of 71 MIA and about eight WIA's — all of the MIA reports resulting from the fight at Honsfeld in the early morning of 17 Dec 1944, the second day of Von Rundstedt's counterattack.
- All members of the old A Troop were gathered in the B Troop orderly room during the interview. The remarks in the Group Interview were guided by Lt Harmon, but all others present had an opportunity to concur <sup>with</sup> or challenge the content.

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In order to expedite the immediate combat effectiveness of the cavalry squadron, A and B Troops' remnants had been consolidated into a single reconnaissance troop, and the squadron made ready to function with a complement of only two such troops. The troopers were resting, re-equipping, performing maintenance tasks on their vehicles and engaging in some training to familiarize the recent reinforcements that had been received.

First Army command had assigned the squadron, and the group of which it was a member, the mission of anti-paratroop defense of the vulnerable, open terrain immediately north of Liege. At that time (early in January) it was feared that German airborne troops might be dropped in that zone to facilitate the establishment of a bridgehead across the Meuse in the vicinity of Liege.

Only enemy fire in the area were V-1 robot bombs that over-shot Liege and landed in the area, or passed on towards Brussels. An average of forty bombs a day were checked over or in this area. No casualties resulted.

-Overlays and Sketches -

See Marked Map - "Front Line Positions" 1/25,000

appended to Group material.

See Over-lay sketch "P", Vielsalm Withdrawal. 1/50,000  
appended to Provisional A Tr Interview.

-Interviewer - Lt Jack Shea, 2d Info & Hist Sv (Hq First Army)

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By: SNARA Date: 9/20/10

A Troop, alerted with the rest of the 32nd Squadron at 160300 Dec 44, arrived in the vicinity of Andler - Schonberg between ~~1000 - 1100~~ <sup>1000 - 1100</sup> hours. The first platoon, commanded by 2/Lt John V. Harmon, outposted the Andler - Aus road with its three reconnaissance teams (Each team, the equivalent of one squad, was made up of an armored car, a machine gun team and a mortar team). The balance of the troop was sent to Holzheim where they joined with a reconnaissance platoon from a TD unit.

Enemy shelling ~~was~~ interrupted the road that the cavalry troop traveled at Schonberg, and the 2nd and 3rd platoons found shells dropping into Holzheim when they arrived there.

Harmon lifted the motor patrols from the Andler-Aus road at about 1300, and went to Holzheim. He arrived there at about 1315 and in about half an hour returned, this time to post the reconnaissance teams along the Andler - Wenderfeld road. These posts were established by about 1400.

Next move was for the 2nd and 3rd platoons. Their personnel dismounted and swept cross-country in a southeasterly <sup>(searching the area for infiltrated teams)</sup> direction. Passing west of Hedendorf, these cavalrymen contacted Harmon's 1st Platoon in the vicinity of zu Wenderfeld at 1330. At dark, orders specified that Harmon move his platoon to Holzheim, carrying the personnel of the 2nd and 3rd Platoons with him on his vehicles. The heavily-laden vehicles went to Holzheim by way of Andler, deployed in a perimeter defense of the town upon arrival there.

At that time the 18th Cav Sgdn's CP was in Holzheim and the remnants of the troops that had been extricated from the front-line positions were with the command echelon, Wender-

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field had, by this time, been evacuated of the balance of the 14th Cavalry Group that had fought there.

At 1830 the 18th Sqn formed into a column and left Holzheim, going towards the north. Intended route for them was via Honsfeld to Medell. Before leaving, the squadron's executive, Maj Farris, spoke with 1/Lt Reppa, CO of A Troop, and advised him that he move his troop from Holzheim. Reppa was seriously concerned about the lack of flank protection that existed to his north upon the 18th's leaving. Nearest known troops were ~~in~~ Honsfeld, about four kilometers to the north, and he did not feel secure in the Holzheim position.

Accordingly, he requested permission to move, sending the message ~~through~~ the radio that netted him with his squadron CO. The squadron responded with a request that Reppa send a "liaison officer to 32nd GP". Reppa replied that this was impossible, for enemy elements had been reported on and around the road that connects Holzheim with Andler. During this particular interview, none of the group could say for sure that enemy had been on the road, but it was the general belief that one of the reconnaissance teams that had been patrolling that sector of highway had made that report.

Radio contact was still difficult due to German jamming. Reppa finally decided to cut through the confusing situation with a bold stroke; he alerted his troop at 2045 and moved soon after to Honsfeld.

As the cavalrymen entered Honsfeld shortly after 2100, they found that artillery was falling into the town at sporadic intervals. An infantry captain from the 93rd Inf Div seemed to have taken charge of the defense of the town. Most

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By: SP7MARA/DAE Date: 9/20/10

of the group interviewed said that this captain had been in charge of a 99th Div Rest Center that had been established in Honstfeld. In addition to the soldiers that had been in the rest camp, the captain had collected a company or so of stragglers, and had commandeered various TD units that flowed through the town, to establish a defensive position. Lt Reppa reported to the captain, and was told that almost every house contained soldiers. Then the captain showed Reppa the plans he had made for the defense of the town and incorporated the vehicles, weapons and men of the reconnaissance troop into his plans. Roughly, the plan was for an outer defense line (see Marked Map) held by the Infantry elements, and bolstered by the self-propelled TD's. This defense line was formed to the southeast and east of the town on the other side of a small stream that runs east - west to the south of the town. The cavalry elements were to be the interior security of the town, and their vehicles were parked along both sides of the roads that entered from the south and west. Lt Harmon's first platoon was in the western section of the town.

A regiment of the 99th Div was in position to the north-east, and the captain asked Reppa to provide a liaison officer to that regiment. Foot patrols to be sent to the south and east on combat missions <sup>at first light</sup> were requested by the captain. Reppa told the officer that he could not promise the patrols, for he was at that time awaiting orders from his squadron, and that he might have to move towards Hedell. The captain agreed that that was the thing to do, told Reppa to "Get your men down, and let me know one way or the other as soon as you hear from your squadron." (Harmon) -5-

*[Handwritten signature]*

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(The action from this point on is fast-moving and confusing. However, the group interviewed patiently attempted an accurate reconstruction of what happened, as clearly as they could remember. Generally their observations were limited to what took place in their immediate vicinity. This condition was intensified by the lack of communications and total lack of visibility — it was one of the darkest nights that the men had ever <sup>(experienced)</sup> ~~known~~.  
At about 0600 hours, 1/5 Herzog overheard the 2nd Platoon's radio report to the troop CP... "enemy within 200 yards of our position." Immediately small arms fire broke out to the southeast of town, and it was in this sector that the 2nd Platoon was guarding the entrance to the interior of the village.

That was the first indication that the cavalryman or infantry stationed inside the town had that the enemy was attacking. However, it developed a little differently in the experiences of 3gt George Orsel, armored car commander in the ~~2nd~~ Platoon.

Orsel reported that traffic had been moving through Honsfeld all during the hours of darkness. As far as he knew this traffic was composed of fleeing elements of different supply trains that had been struck and surprised by the first rush of the counterattack in their positions to the south and east. He noted that most of the vehicles were traveling with only their "cat's-eye" blackout lights lit, and that frequently a vehicle was slowly guided forward by a GI with a flashlight who walked along in front of the vehicle.

He is not sure whether the Germans mimicked this prac-

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For a ruse, or whether it was standard procedure for them as well as the Americans. But, in any case, it was in this manner that the first enemy armored vehicle got into the center of Honsfeld before it was detected.

Greel, seated in the turret of his armored car, heard a heavy vehicle approaching in the column that was intermittently streaming through the town. He did not take particular notice of it at first, for other heavy vehicles had preceded it and it was, like the others, being guided by a single soldier wielding a flashlight. As this heavy vehicle passed within three or four feet of the armored car in the narrow street, Greel saw the unmistakable small black mark of a swastika on it. He was momentarily frozen by the sight, for he had had no warning of approaching armor, and had heard no fire or commotion from the infantry troops and the TD's that he knew were stationed to the south and southeast of the town.

Behind the heavy "Tiger" (in Greel's estimation) came three other heavy armored vehicles, and things that resembled "half-tracks". The second heavy vehicle in the line seemed to have men piled upon it.

Greel alerted his team, watched as the <sup>second</sup> ~~first~~ tank stopped near the CP, slowly swung its long gun and started to fire into the building. It was firing at a range of about 20 or 30 yards. At that time, Greel heard small arms fire break out to his front, and as he tried to crank his 37 mm Gun around towards the tank, he saw the infantry and TD soldiers come streaming back from the front positions. As far as he knew, none of the TD vehicles had fired a shot, and their men were

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withdrawing dismounted.

Creel's armored car had a trailer attached to it. This did not hinder firing the 37 cannon to the front, but when he tried to turn it to the left rear, towards the enemy tanks and men, he found that the trailer blocked his field of fire.

Sensing that his elements had been over-run, and that little could be done in the present position, Creel and the men of his reconnaissance team started towards the west part of town, where they knew Lt Harmon and his platoon were. The men said that there was no opportunity to destroy the vehicles. After the surprise of the enemy entrance into the town, all troops in the town engaged in a wild scramble, trying to separate themselves from an enemy that seemed to be all around them, yet was not visible.

Men from the different positions finally converged on Lt Harmon's armored car. They had gotten there by ducking through back yards and alleys as they sought to keep out of sight from the Germans who were swarming into the town.

Harmon had heard vehicles rumbling around in the vicinity of his positions. But was unable to determine what they were or where they were. He felt that his elements had been, "surrounded by tanks, and that was the basis for my order to withdraw." (Harmon)

Harmon had a party of about 14 men with him as he started a withdrawal on foot towards the west. (see Marked Map) Later on 17 Dec 44, Harmon's Group finally contacted elements of 16th Sgdn's Hq Trp in the vicinity of Hepscheid, where the dismounted men joined the mounted troopers and were brought

-Interviewer-Dr. C. ...

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back to rejoin the balance of the cavalry group.

Sgt John Catanese's experiences closely paralleled those of Harmon as he led 19 men in an escape to the west. (See marked map) He had little to add to the description of the fight around Honsfeld except that he noticed what seemed to be tracks of enemy vehicles earlier in the evening as he was positioning his elements of the troop in the northeast sector of Honsfeld.

Catanese's group was not as fortunate in securing a ride, finally got back as far as Kodeli or Born (they weren't sure which town.) before they managed to contact other members of the 14th Cav Gp.

The balance of the remarks, descriptions and comments that Harmon and his men had to offer are consolidated in the other interviews in this squadron series. (See interview with Capt Wanke's  Provisional A Troop -JMS)

*Jack Shea*  
Interviewer:  
Lt. Jack Shea  
2nd Lt. H. So.  
HQ First Army

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Interviewer

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Authority: AMDP 735017  
By: SNARA Dine 9/20/10

GERMAN COUNTERATTACK

(16 Dec 44-1 Jan 45)

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-B Troop, 32nd Cav Recon Sqdn, 14th Cav Grp. (Mech)

-Interview with - Capt. Franklin F. Lindsey Jr, CO

1/Lt Ralph A. Bendinilli, Executive

2/Lt William Reilly, 1st Pltn Ldr

2/Lt Robert A. Blodgett, 2nd Pltn Ldr

1/Lt Marshall Alexander, 3rd Pltn Ldr.

Cpl John Unger, Demolition agent

-Place, Hognoul, Belgium. 7 Jan 1945 1600 - 1900 hours.

This troop, like the others in the 32nd Squadron, was engaged in refueling, training, resting and receiving reinforcements after having played its part in sustaining Von Rundstedt's Counterattack of 16 December 1944.

Members of the reconnaissance troop were billeted in private homes in the above named Belgian village and were charged with the anti-paratroop defense of the vulnerable, open ground that lies immediately north of Liege. At the time of these interviews, First U.S. Army thought that enemy airborne troops might be dropped in that vicinity to facilitate the securing of a bridgehead across the Meuse at Liege. Only enemy fire in the area was the constant stream of V-1 robot bombs that bumbled over on their way towards Brussels, or else landed after having over-shot Liege.

- Overlays and Sketches -

See Marked Map "Front-Line Positions" 1/25, 000  
appended to Group Material.  
Sketch - "Action at Heuvel" - appended.  
See Marked Map - Action at Grand Kéhill - Benhay  
1/50, 000 appended to Sqdn material.  
-Interviewer-Lt Jack Shea, 2d Info & Hist Sv (Hq First Army)

Interviewer

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Authority **MM1735017**  
By **SP MARA Dite** Date **5/22/10**

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When the 32nd Cav Squadron responded to the SECRET  
14th

Cavalry Group's movement order at 0600 16 Dec 1944, B

Troop of the squadron, commanded by Capt Franklin P.

Lindsey Jr, was designated as the squadron's reserve.

Lindsey was ordered to move to the vicinity of Aww by

Lt Col Paul Ridge, the squadron commander, and to await

further orders there.

The squadron, alerted at 0600, moved out at 0932

and started towards Manderfeld, Germany. There, the command  
posts of the 14th Group and the 18th Squadron were located.

~~It~~ It was from this point that the  cavalry

group wished to commit the 32nd Squadron in order to im-

plement the support of the 18th Squadron's troops who were

battling attacking forces of about a reinforced brigade

strength. (See General Story on 14th Group - submitted for

Pamphlet Material, 23 Jan 1945)

At approximately 1000, B Troop passed by A Troop in the  
vicinity of Andler, and turned down the Andler - Wischeid -

Aww road. Two-thirds of the way towards Wischeid, B Troop was  
ordered to halt and remain in present position. Squadron re-

quested the troop's location, but no further orders were

issued until about 1600 when the troop was advised to org-

anize a defense around Andler. (See Marked Map.) At about

that time, Capt Lindsey saw elements of Gp Headquarters moving  
west through Andler.

After darkness more specific orders came to the troop

OP. These orders specified that at least two reconnaissance

teams be posted on the Andler - Aww road, and requested over-  
lays of the troop's positions. (A reconnaissance team consists

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Interviewer

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of 10 men -- four in an armored car, three in a mortar jeep, and three in a machine gun jeep. There are three such teams to each reconnaissance platoon, and three platoons in each troop.) The supply train for the troop was sent to Schonberg with instructions to withdraw to ~~Sachsen~~ Vielsalm if Schonberg was not suitable. The sergeant in charge found Schonberg undesirable, went to Vielsalm, a move that drew commendation from Capt Lindsey later.

With the reconnaissance-team outposts established, Lindsey ordered the platoon leaders to set their schedules of watches and have "every man awake at 0500." Soon the troop's operational pattern had settled down to quiet watchfulness and listening. Night visibility was exceptionally poor, and many of the group interviewed mentioned that they had never recalled a darker night.

At 0830 on 17 Dec, Capt Lindsey received orders from troop squadron headquarters directing him to send combat patrols towards Manderfeld and Auw for the purpose of establishing contact with the enemy. He planned to send one patrol from each platoon, <sup>(each</sup> probably of about one reconnaissance <sup>team)</sup> strength. Having made his plans, he summoned his platoon leaders shortly before 0700. The three lieutenants reported having come down to the GP in their armored cars. Lindsey was about to explain to them that the patrols should be sent out in three directions -- one over the road from Andler to Auw, and two over the roads that led from Andler to Manderfeld. Before he could issue his orders, Sgt Earl L. Turner, radio operator for the third team of the 2nd Platoon, transmitted a hurried message, "Enemy has us surrounded." He immediately went off the air.

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The group at the troop CP knew that this team was <sup>the</sup> one positioned furthest to the east on the Andler - Auv road. It was commanded by Sgt Earl R. Ellingsen.

The news was immediately relayed to squadron headquarters, and a ~~trooper~~ reply secured by 0720. Minutes later the next armored car in the nearer team on the Andler-Auv road flashed a similar message, but in this case gave added warnings of tanks being used by the enemy.

"Enemy surrounding us - ~~tank~~ <sup>tank</sup> trained on armored car," came the message from the vehicle which was less than 500 yards from the troop CP. A more ~~detailed~~ <sup>detailed</sup> account of the second attack was later learned by Lindsey. This report came from four members of the team Cpl Royon, T/S Whiteside, PFC Battlori and Pvt G. Henderson. These four had been standing near the armored car when the attack suddenly burst in ~~upon~~ <sup>upon</sup> them. They were able to make their way back to the troop CP and tail of the tank and the enemy infantry, dressed in snow camouflage suits, that had suddenly swept in <sup>upon</sup> them.

It was 0750 by this time, and Lindsey sought permission from squadron to begin a withdrawal movement towards Schonberg. The static position ~~was~~ <sup>was</sup> deprived his troops of the organizational mobility that was one of their strongest weapons. He did not want his troop to be overpowered in the darkness, when they could fight a more telling battle in daylight - as was later proven. (See "Action at Heuem" below)

However, all vehicles and men had assigned fields of fire and they started to blaze back at any sign of enemy movement that they saw. It was only a few minutes before an enemy tank reached the intersection where the road from Auv joins

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the Eimersscheid - Schonberg road at Andler. The ~~attacking~~ enemy seemed to have the outpost positions well plotted and mortar and flat-trajectory fire struck near the troop CP. Pvt Henderson, one of the four men who had escaped being surrounded at the second reconnaissance team to be struck by the enemy, was wounded by shell fragments as he fought near the CP.

At the time of the break of the ~~enemy~~ enemy attack the platoon leaders from all platoons had been present at the CP. They had had their armored cars with them, and under cover of the weapons in these vehicles the troop slowly withdrew from the Andler position. Finally, the direct fire of the enemy tank at the Inberseteion described above forced the troop southwards towards Schonberg. By 0745 Lindsay had lost about 19 of his troop, decided that he must find another delay position, and one that would afford the cavalrymen an opportunity to use their fire power against an enemy that could be spotted in the light of day.

Not all of the troop was able to withdraw to the south. Reconnaissance teams from one of the platoons had been in position on the secondary road that connects Andler with Herrsbach, these personnel and vehicles, as well as two that were stationed to the north of Andler on the road towards Holzheim, eventually joined the 32nd Squadron's Headquarters Group at Herrsbach, and ~~withdrew~~ withdrew with them towards Meyerode. (See interview with Maj Kracke and Staff of 32nd Sqdn)

By 0800 the B troopers had reached Schonberg. It was daylight, but as they prepared to organize a defensive position there, nearby friendly troops warned that tanks were advancing

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on Schonberg from the southeast. This news came at 0615, according to Captain Lindsey, shortly after contact had been regained with the troops that were pressing down from the direction of Andler. The delay position was not suitable for meeting enemy forces from both southeast and northeast directions. So again, contact was broken as the troopers withdrew towards the west on the Schonberg-St. Vith road, searching for a section in the natural corridor down which the road ran, in which they could effectively delay the enemy armor and foot troops.

It was finally in the vicinity of Heuem (see Marked Map) that Capt Lindsey and his troop finally found a location that suited delay possibilities. As the cavalrymen hurriedly prepared trees alongside the road for demolition to form road blocks, other American troops streamed up the road from the east. Some of the vehicles that passed were identified by Lindsey and the group interviewed as being from the "353rd PA Gp".

The six armored cars and about ten machine gun and mortar jeeps that the depleted troop had with it at the time, were deployed as shown in the accompanying sketch, (appended to this interview). The troopers were reluctant to form a road block by blowing the charges that had been fastened to the trees, for fear of trapping additional American vehicles that might be coming down the road. It was this reluctance that eventually caught the troopers unaware as the first enemy tank -- a Mk IV -- poked its nose around the corner of a bend in the road, and started to traverse its guns to bear on the lightly armed armored cars.

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The first enemy tank that came around the turn in the road had its turret open. The troopers could clearly see the enemy tank commander perched in the open turret.

He was wearing a black beret, ~~characteristic~~ <sup>characteristic</sup> ~~of the enemy tankers.~~ <sup>of the enemy tankers.</sup> Two of the armored cars, the ~~westernmost~~ <sup>westernmost</sup> two in position, immediately opened up with AP rounds. Direct hits were scored, but they bounced off the tank's armor. In the excitement, T/S Russell made a fortunate mistake, slipped a HE round in just after having fired an AP shell. The lighter HE shot struck a few feet above the usual impact point of the heavier AP shot; ~~In fact it burst~~ near the rim of the open turret. The German tank commander slumped over and the tank withdrew. It did not show again as the cavalrymen began their delaying action in earnest.

They weren't frightened now, nor were they confused as they had been during the night attack that had first struck them at Andler. For four hours the light machine guns and mortars shattered every attempt of the enemy foot troops to maneuver in against the delay position. With IMG cross-fires, and carnival-like sharpshooting the troopers seemed to enjoy nipping at the enemy. (All members of the group seemed to recall the details of this fight with particular humor -- For instance )

the way in which Cpl Joseph Unger (the man who had, in his nervousness, neglected to blow the road block) took to snobbing Germans. His frequent cries of triumph to Lindsey: "Captain! ~~They're for myself today -- Been seeing the goat money until today.~~ I think I got another one." Every weapon that the troopers had was fired in this phase of fighting. Several good-natured joggings were still directed against Lt Benjamin, concerning the way he "hosed". 50 cal fire close overhead of the men

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on the left flank as he attempted to stop German Infantry from infiltrating through the wooded high ground to the north and northeast of the position that the troopers held.

Until 1200 the enemy Infantry seemed to try blind attempts at infiltrating towards the cavalrymen's positions. None of the group could sense any particular ~~move~~ maneuver that the enemy had tried until around 1230 or 1300 when a definite plan seemed to have put into action, and, in fact, seemed to be meeting with some success. Roughly, the enemy managed to infiltrate a few men forward to the southeast of the cavalry positions. This section of troops provided a base of fire for a flanking force that was sent up through the woods on the high ground that commanded the northern approaches to the cavalry positions.

However, the success of failure of this maneuver was never determined, for, at 1300, the 32nd Squadron ordered the B troopers to continue their withdrawal towards Meyerode. At Heum, B Troop had successfully held the enemy for at least four hours.

At Meyerode, which the troop reached by traveling through St. Vith, Capt. Lindsey reported on his four-hour fight that had cost him no casualties. He was instructed to take up positions in Wallerode, southwest of Meyerode. The troop was in position by 1400 hours, and settled down to ~~wait~~ watching the wooded terrain to its east.

It was at Wallerode that several of the troop's reconnaissance teams that had been cut off from the main body of the troop by the enemy's sudden advance at Andler, (see Marked Map) rejoined the troop. Sgt Donald E. "Bones" Thompson, in charge

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of the teams that were strung along the Adler Herresbach road, extricated his people by joining with the forces of C Troop and finally withdrawing from Herresbach over the cross-country trail that was blazed to Meyerode. (See Interview "Withdrawal from Herresbach") Sgt. Howard L. Hall, whose single reconnaissance team had been positioned north of the Adler-Aur road junction and was cut off by the appearance of a German tank at that intersection, took his team to the "north, and then we went southwest." He did not recall the exact route nor the names of the villages through which he passed. The amazing part of his statement concerning the escape, is that he passed through territory that had been over-run by the enemy two or three hours earlier! (See "A Troop Interview with Lt. Harmon" - re: Honsfeld) but did not run into any enemy elements.

The B Troopers' stay at Wallerode was uneventful save for the P-47's that strafed the woods to the east of their positions at about 1600. Evidently, the Germans had brought light flak guns well forward with them in their rapid advance, for a heavy blanket of light flak rose to meet the passes of the American fighter-bombers. When asked about other units in the area, Lindsey remarked that P Company of the 32nd was known to be in the vicinity of Wallerode, and that some of his men there had met the 1st Sgt of D Troop, 37th Cav Ron Sqdn, attached to the 7th Armored Division.

Shortly after 1600, B Troop was told to move towards Vielsalm. Traveling via Sart les St. With - Potou - (there at 1900 where they saw enemy flares to the north) - they inched through traffic jammed roads in the darkness and arrived at Vielsalm at 180530 Dec 44.

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In Vielsalm, on the morning of the 18th of December, Lindsey described a "reorganization of the 14th Group by Lt Col Damon, who formerly commanded the 18th Squadron.

The elements at Vielsalm stood by, listened to the radio transmissions describing the fight that was then taking place at Poteau. The road that led towards the east to Poteau from Vielsalm was still cluttered with traffic when, at 1000, B Troop was ordered to secure the ground north and east of Vielsalm. For this operation, one platoon of C Troop - 18th Squadron, was attached to B. The C platoon had filtered into Vielsalm after having become separated from the rest of its parent organization on the way back from Born - Medell.

Purpose of this employment of B Troop was to create some sort of a screen through which the elements withdrawing from Poteau could pass. Lindsey chose to organize the Poteau - Vielsalm road at Ville du Bois, where he took advantage of a deep-cut railroad horseshoe to use as an anti-tank trap. He placed the weapons of his armored cars and reconnaissance teams in an all-around defense at this point, and found that the continuously over-lapping bands of defensive fire had very good ranges at which to operate.

However, this defensive position was never used. The withdrawing troops from Poteau passed through a road block that had been prepared by Task Force Havaho (3rd 7th Arm'd Material) and at 1600 Lindsey joined the remnants of the whole group in the vicinity of Rencheux. There, the remnants were reorganized into a single cavalry reconnaissance squadron which was immediately attached to the 7th Armored Division.

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19 Dec 1944

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Under the reorganization plan implemented by Lt Col Damon, Capt Lindsey and the remnants of his B Troop received 27 men from 14th Cav Gp Headquarters Troop who were accompanied by that troop commander Capt. North. (See Interview with Headquarters Troop - 14th Gp) In addition, Lindsey received two M-20 armored personnel carriers to replace the two M-8 armored cars that he had lost. A three-quarter-ton truck and a banham were also added to the troop's depleted vehicle complement, and the unit was reorganized and "fit for combat" at 191300. Total strength of the troop at this time was about 125 - 130 officers and men.

At 1500 Lindsey was ordered to proceed south on the Salmchateau - Bovigny highway, and take up positions in the towns of Grunlange, Thommen and Gageler. His troop's normal strength (reorganized) was augmented by three platoons of 75 mm, ~~air~~ <sup>air</sup>-propelled howitzers from reorganized E Troop, and eleven light tanks ( five from the 32nd Sqdn, balance from 18th). For the purposes of simplification of control and message-writing, Lindsey's force was known as "Task Force Lindsey", and operated in the sector of Task Force Jones, part of the 7th Armored Division's troops in the area. General purpose of the armored and cavalry units in this area was to organize a defensive screen around the southern mouth of the Bovigny - Salmchateau corridor. It was down this corridor that the supplies for the fighting elements of the 7th Armored Div came, and up this same corridor that different Ordnance, QM and General service and supply elements were withdrawing in the face of Von Rundstedt's attack.

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Lindsey moved his task force to the Bahn crossroads. he had been told that neither friendly or enemy troops were in the three towns that he had been instructed to occupy and hold, with the specifications that he secure the towns by darkness on 19 Dec.

Lindsey split his reorganized reconnaissance troop into its component three platoons, sent the first platoon to Espeley, the second to Thommen and the third to Gnuflange. With each of these three reconnaissance platoons went one platoon of assault guns from the reorganized B Troop. The 11 light tanks were initially held near Baho in the position of a mobile reserve for the Task Force.

The sub-task forces held their assigned towns from darkness 19 Dec until 23 Dec 44, when they joined in the General withdrawal of all elements from this sector of the huge Fortified Goose Egg that was being held by 7th Armored elements and attachments.

(The following breakdown of stories at the various garrisons <sup>was</sup> secured from the platoon leaders who were present in the three towns. - JTS)

It Marshall Alexander's sub-task force had an uneventful two days at Gnuflange during the 20th and 21st of Dec. Sporadic artillery fire of medium caliber struck the town several times, but it did not hinder the emplacements or mined road blocks that the cavalrymen and assault gunners had established there.

On 22 Dec 44 a request from 7th Armcd specified that mopping-up patrols be sent through the Hohenbusch woods and through the wooded terrain that surrounds CR SIS at (947816)

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The patrolling mission took about four hours, and while the reconnaissance teams were engaged in the mopping-up (no contact with the enemy), some medium tanks from the 7th Armad's tank complement passed through the town to the south. The medium tankers said that they were to assist elements of the 14th Armad Inf in an effort to withdraw.

The cavalrymen were not sure of the position of the 14th Armored Inf, nor were they exactly sure that the 424th Inf of the 106th Div was in the vicinity of CR 515. Most of them had "heard" that the Infantry troops were there, but were uncertain as to the exact dispositions of any friendly troops in the area.

At 1200 hours on 22 Dec 44, the GrafLange Garrison was ordered to move north to Cronbach, where the CP of CCB 7th Armad Div was located. There, Alexander reported to Gen Clark, and received a mission to provide foot patrols to go northwest towards Hinderhausen.

The foot patrols were completed, but in doing so the members of the patrols found that their activity drew enemy artillery fire from the east and southeast whenever they moved across open terrain.

The patrols returned and the cavalry elements were billeted in the houses of Cronbach as darkness fell on the night of the 22nd. In the building that he had chosen for a CP, Alexander and some of his non-coms listened to the radio traffic that was going on between the tank and tank destroyer elements of the 7th Armad Div in the Cronbach area.

It was around midnight when the Intercom blipped out the news that "one or four or six" Tiger tanks were headed for

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GROUP 1

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Grombach from a northeasterly direction. The enemy tanks were reportedly coming along the rail line that passes near Grombach as it runs from St Vith, south towards Gouvy.

Alexander reported the gradual development of the morale of the tankers and TD men as they spoke of the intercom. At first, there was a studied eagerness to the voices that reported the tanks. Frequent assertions that "We're ready. Let the bastards come," crackled back and forth over the wirelens. However, each successive message held less confidence, and soon it was realized by the personnel in the CP that the mediums and TD's were not breaking up the tank threat, but rather were abandoning their tanks and withdrawing. They seemed to have little desire to match the armor and fire power of their vehicles against the vaunted TIGER.

An unidentified colonel grasped the situation quickly and set out on foot to rally the men who were breaking. He collared the crews of two M-10 TD's and three medium tanks, made them place their armored vehicles in positions for the close-in defense of the town.

Meanwhile there was a hurried scuffling to get the remnants of the infantry troops in the towns together for a defense of the town. In the confusion few of the squad leaders or platoon leaders knew exactly where <sup>the</sup> men had gone to sleep. Names were being called by many different voices, and there were altercations amongst the junior commanders as to who was responsible for that sector. Alexander deployed the cavalrymen in a firing line, gave them sectors of responsibility, but could get no cooperation

from other junior leaders as a means to protect his tanks

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and rear, finally, though from what source no one seemed to know, a rumor-order passed through the group in the town, announcing that the place was "untenable."

Troops and vehicles on all sides began to pack up shop and leave. Alexander's troops held for half an hour, but as small arms fire and what were thought to be bazookas started blazing at the other end of town, the cavalrymen, too, mounted vehicles, piled up the infantrymen that wanted to hide with them, and started back for Grufflange.

On the way out of Crombach, just prior to the first light of day, small arms fire sputtered against the cavalry column at (305843). Everyone immediately dismounted and re-turned the fire. Several long bursts of .50 cal fire in the direction of the enemy fire seemed to suffice in quieting it, and when it was not returned, the cavalrymen again mounted and continued towards the southwest. Arriving at the high ground that overlooks Grufflange, the troops found that Grufflange, in their absence, had been taken over by the enemy.

There was still a good deal of confusion around the road intersection at Mallange, but the superior ground there, and the necessity for keeping that intersection open, resolved a defense of that area. Under the directions of Capt Lindsay, Lt Alexander's troops were stationed there. The fire of the cavalry reconnaissance vehicles and assault guns was augmented by the arrival of the light tanks that had been in mobile reserve. (See interview of P Company - 32nd and 18th Squadrons.)

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matic weapons, light cannon

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GERMAN GUNTERPATRICK

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The defensive position at Kaldange was established at 23000 Dec 44. In addition to the troops of Task Force Lindsey, there were about 200 Infantry troops that had been straggling past. They were pressed into service to man this defense line.

At that time, the elements of Task Forces Jones, Lindsey and other 7th Armored elements within the fortified Goose BGE had started their withdrawal from the perimeter's shell. H - hour, designated by 7th Armored Command had been 0800, and at that time elements started to systematically withdraw out through the Bovigny - Seicheleau escape corridor. Task Force Lindsey had been instructed to fight a delaying action in the area near Kaldange - Baho. More specifically they had been instructed to hold at Baho until 1300 at all costs, then, at H + seven hours, they were to withdraw through the corridor. The cavalrymen automatically assumed the responsibility for the safe withdrawal that had attached themselves to the vehicles. Hardly had the defensive line been established than the enemy started to attack. Initial estimate of the attackers was somewhere in the vicinity of 500 foot troops, supported by artillery, mortars and self-propelled assault guns.

With a generally stubborn defensive stand, the elements of TF Lindsey stood their ground and smashed the infiltration attack of the enemy. There seemed to be little effort made on the part of the enemy to coordinate the use of its supporting fires to complement the advance of the foot troops. It was just a case of all the enemy spasmodically working forward, while the cavalry weapons sought remunerative targets for anti-aircraft weapons, light cannon and mortars.

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The defensive barrier eventually began to disintegrate at 1245 when the 1st platoon of the task force, accompanied by its assault guns, broke contact and withdrew to Beho. In turn, the second and then the third platoon climbed onto their vehicles, followed the first and passed through it at the Beho crossroads. (753306) Self-propelled TD's from the 7th Armored were at the crossroads when the elements of Task Force Lindsey passed through there at 1315.

Experiencing none of the difficulty that later caught elements of Task Force Jones in the Revoligny - Salnachateau road block (see interview with Capt Jones - also General Story 14th Cav Gp - submitted for Pamphlet material, 23 Jan 45)

With no other opposition from enemy sources, the B troopers went to Clereux, where they were released from the TF Lindsey assignment by Maj Dill, executive for Lt Col Damon in the re-organized cavalry squadron. At Rahier the cavalrymen tacked onto the group column that was headed for Aywaille, where they spent the night 23 - 24 Dec. Their task in the operations of Task Force Lindsey had come to a conclusion, a conclusion that prompted "Gen Clark of the 7th Arm'd to say of them, 'One damn good job of delaying action...a job well done.'" (quotes obtained from Capt Lindsey and the Group.)

From Aywaille the B troopers moved to Xhignesse where they arrived at 1200 on 24 Dec 1944. They had only managed to get about four or five hours of sleep the night before. By 1515, the original B troopers had been separated from the attachments with which they had been working in Task Force Lindsey. At 1700 Maj Dill instructed Capt Lindsey to

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Form a T/O troop for immediate attachment to the 87th Reconnaissance Squadron of the 7th Armored Division. To do this it was necessary for Lindsey to draw about 24 men from the Group's Headquarters Troop, and requisition about 14 vehicles from the newly-organized Headquarters Troop of the 14th Provisional Cavalry Squadron. Finally, Lindsey found that he had about 120 men, the necessary vehicles, and was more or less ready for combat. All of the men were very tired from the eight days of fighting that they had done, and this fatigued state was reflected in their sleep-sunglass eyes and wearied reactions. It was with no Christmas spirit that they set out on a new mission on Christmas Eve.

It was with difficulty that the B Troop of Capt Lindsey located the command post of Lt Col Boylan's 87th Recon Sqdn. Having first gone to Grand Bru, he finally made contact with Boyland at 1150 on Christmas Day. Boylan sent the troop to be billeted at Deux-Rys, where they had a Christmas dinner of hotdogs. "That, we will never forget," said Lindsey.

At 0200 on 26 Dec 1944, Lt Col Jones, the commander of "Task Force Jones" that had fought and then been trapped in the Bovigny-Salmchateau corridor, arrived at the CP of Lt Col Boylan's reconnaissance squadron. Jones was in an excited state. He reported that as his jeep passed through the central road net in the vicinity of Grandmoulin - Marhay, 6000 meters to the south, he had been fired upon by German tanks.

This road net nerve center was regarded as a critical communications point, and steps were immediately taken to retake it, and/or prevent the German armor from using it.

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Lindsey's troop was immediately alerted, and the men rolled out of their blankets and prepared to move. In the hodge-podge planning that was necessitated by the enemy's unexpected appearance in this sector, the command had difficulty in marshalling forces from the many units that were scattered through the area. Few units were cognizant of just who or where their neighboring units were.

Lindsey visited the CP of Gen Clark, GO of CGB 7th Armcd Div, where he was instructed to reform his reconnaissance troop into two infantry platoons. He hurried back to the billets of his troop, split the troop into two parts -- designating these separate platoons as the first and third -- the men from the second platoon were interspersed amongst the personnel of the other two platoons. Finally, the organization resolved itself into two platoons composed of two 12-man squads in each platoon. In addition to the M-1, carbine and TSMG's that the individuals were equipped with, Lindsey distributed two LMG's to each platoon.

Lt Col Fuller of the 38th Inf gave Lindsey his first movement orders indicating that the troop should be formed on an ID at (305919). Leaving the radio operators behind, Lindsey moved his bastard platoons out mounted on eight jeeps. These jeeps were left on the main road that led to Grandmenil, where the drivers stayed to care for them.

The second of a series of contradictory and confusing orders came about 0500 on the 26th of December. Lt Col Fuller returned to tell Lindsey to move his troop to (513220), a few hundred yards south of a rustic crucifix, where they prepared to attack towards the south. The situation was continually

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GERMAN GOVERNMENTAL ARCHIVE

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confused by orders and counterorders during which the troopers did little but dig in to escape the sporadic shelling that the enemy infrequently threw into the area. Greatest danger was the possibility of tree bursts for the area was heavily wooded.

Finally, at 0730 Fuller informed Lindsey that the troopers would move south from their positions at 0915 for the purpose of securing Grandmehl. At the start of the attack B company of the 39th Inf was on the right of the B troopers, and A company of the same regiment was on their left. (See Marked Map - Attack on Grand Menil-Menhay - appended to this interview. Communications were poor because of the unorthodox system of assigning sectors to the remnants of all units that happened to be in the area. As the attack developed, the cavalrymen were to find that their flank units kept continually changing, and finally, in the last phase of the attack, completely new units would be situated on their left and right. Little enemy opposition was experienced as the troops left the LD and started sweeping towards the south. The same control that made the flow of information insufficient hindered slowly than it should have.

Shortly before noon, as the troops reached a section of the terrain where the woods thinned out into semi-open fields, the B troopers received the single heaviest casualty blow that they had taken in the counterattack. A single round of flat-trajectory fire slammed into a group of troopers who were working towards a suspected enemy machine gun position in a strawstack near a house. Seven were wounded, two of them mortally by the burst.

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Shortly after this occurrence, the B troops found that the narrowing of their sector of the advance had caused them to be "squeezed out" of the attack. (See Marked Map)

They were instructed to move to the west and were committed in a second sector that faced towards Zbrandmenli. Little advancing was done from this new commitment, when they were again shifted back to their old sector. There they worked forward to the line along the ~~new~~ secondary road at (524903), where their advance eventually ended. There they dug in, shivered in their fox holes during the 28 - 28 - 29th of December while the enemy continued to throw in occasional artillery fire.

At 1400 on 29 Dec 44, the troop was relieved by I Company of the 291st Inf (75th Div). Lindsey moved his men back about 1000 yards where they remained in regimental reserve for the 291st Infantry until 1400 on 29 Dec 44. From the 291st Inf, the cavalryman were released to the 87th Ren Sqn, who, in turn, released them to the 14th Group at 0700 on 30 Dec 44. The group was withdrawn from the front on 1 Jan 45, and went to the positions near Liege where these interviews were made.

(For fuller details on the activities at Thomen and Espeler see Interviews with P Companies of the 18th and 32nd Squadrons. Repetition of detail made it inadvisable to treat these actions fully in this interview. - JTS)

Complete casualty reports are appended to General Story, 14th Group, Material for Pamphlet - 25 Jan 45. - JTS

Lt. Jack Shea  
2nd Lt. N. Sw.  
HQ First Army

SECRET

# "Action at Heuem"

B Troop - 32nd Inf Sqn.  
 Delay from these positions - All weapons employed  
 0900 - 1300  
 17 Dec 44

⚡ infiltration  
 attack through wooded high ground  
 (approx. 1100 hrs.)

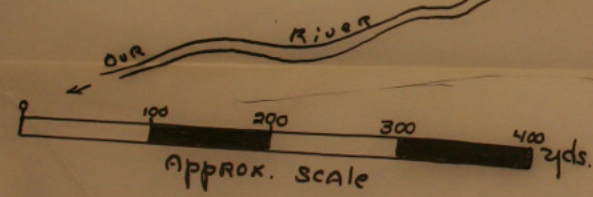
Trees prepared for demolition for road block - Never blown  
 (approx. 0915 hrs.)

⚡ Tnk CO - KOH by 47 mm HE - Withdraws  
 (approx. 1000 hrs.)

⚡ infantry establish firing line by infiltration  
 (approx. 1200 hrs.)

St. Vith  
 6.5 KM

Schönbeng  
 1 Km.



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 By: SP7AKA Date: 9/20/10

HTS  
 200947

50,000

Lt Col Jones TA  
Reports 5 TKs IN  
Grandmenil - Manhay  
260200 Dec 44

Attack On  
Grandmenil - Manhay  
26 Dec 44

CCB  
87

38  
14 LINDSEY

106 Div  
COOKS + CLERKS

38

LD 260915 Dec 44

Attack Starts

B Trap Squeezed out 261200 Dec 44

B Trap Shifted  
to New section  
261330 Dec 44

Shifted Back 261530 Dec 44

Line 261730 Dec 44 - Attack Ends

75th Div

389

TKs 0200  
21 DEC

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DURDUY

SECON

SHEET 92

Lt. Col Jones TA  
Reports & TKS IN  
Grandmenil-Manhay  
260200 Dec. 44

Attack On  
Grandmenil-Manhay  
26 Dec 44

CCB  
187  
14 LINDSEY

106 Div  
COOKS & CLERKS

LD 260915 Dec 44

Attack Starts

B Trap Squeezed out 261200 Dec 44

B Trap Shifted  
to New section  
261330  
Dec 44

Shifted Back 261530 Dec 44

Line 261730 Dec 44 - Attack Ends

75th Div

TKS 0200  
31 DEC

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By SP NARA Date 9/20/10

DURBUY

SECOND EDITION

SHEET 92

50,000

LT Col Jones TD  
Reports 4 TKs IN  
Grandmenil - Manhay  
260200 Dec. 44

Attack On  
Grandmenil - Manhay  
26 Dec 44

CCB  
BT  
38 14 LINDSEY

106 Div  
COOKS + CLERKS

LD 260915 Dec 44  
B Trp Squeezed out 261200 Dec 44

Attack Starts

Shifted Back 261830 Dec 44

B Trp Shifted  
to NEW SECTION  
261330  
Dec 44

LINE 261730 Dec 44 - ATTACK ENDS

75th Div

TKs 0200  
21 DEC

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By SNARA Date 9/20/10

GERMAN COUNTERATTACK

(16 Dec 44 - 1 Jan 45)

-C Troop, 32nd Squadron, 14th Cav Reconnaissance Group.

-Interviews with - Capt. Charles Martin, CO

1/Lt. Richard R. Herren, Platoon Leader

1st Sgt Ralph T. Handy

S/Sgt Mark E. Carl, platoon sergeant

T/S Anthony I. Testa, Troop clerk

-Place - ~~Germany~~, Belgium 7 Jan 1945 1030 - 1530 hours

The interview took place in a civilian billet where the troop had established its orderly room. At the time of the interview the troop was engaged in refitting, resting, receiving reinforcements and training. Some new training techniques were being adopted — such as teaching the use of the Gamlin Plastic Grenade.

The experiences of C Troop of the 32nd automatically resolved itself into three major phases — first, the fight with the first Task Force Hayes at Hasenvenn; second, the action at Poteau; third, the fighting of Task Force Jones south of Bovigny. Capt Martin made frequent reference to his troop operations journal which seemed well supplied with the information necessary to reconstruct the story of the fighting. The infrequent questions as to persons, times, or circumstances were completely settled by conversations with troop members in and around the orderly room.

Only enemy fire in the area at this time, was the constant threat of V-1 robot bombs that over-shot Liege. An average of 40 a day passed over the area during the first part of January. This troop, as was its squadron, was held responsible for certain sectors of the open terrain immediately north of Liege.

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-Overlay and Sketches -

See Marked Map, appended to Group Material  
"Front-Line Positions" 1/25, 000

See Sketch "Action at Poteau", appended to Group  
Material.

See Overlays concerning Task Force Jones, app-  
ended to General Story 14th Cav Gp  
submitted 23 Jan 45.

See Overlay - Sketch "Action at  
Grand Menil - Manhay  
appended.

-Interviewer - Lt Jack Shea, 2d Info & Hist Sv (Hq First Army)

Capt Charles L. Martin's C Troop, alerted at 0600 on  
16 Dec 44 while in a rest position in the vicinity of Viels-  
alm, Belgium, rolled his reconnaissance elements onto the road  
at 0932, and marched on Manderfeld, Germany to join the 14th  
Cav group. At that time the 14th, and its owner component  
cavalry squadron, the 18th, were engaged in resisting the  
first full fury of von Arnstede's counterattack that had  
blazed out over the scene - first at 0530 the same morning.

Following the route Poteau - St. Vrain - Schunberg -  
Aueler - Manderfeld, Martin's troopers experienced some  
enemy inter-dictation fire as they crossed the main highway  
bridge in Schonberg at 1100. It was 1130 when Capt Martin  
reported at the group CP in Manderfeld.

At that time, Col Mark Devine, the Gp CO, was concerned  
with the strong enemy pressure that had forced the evacuation  
of several strongpoints and road junctions that had previous-  
ly been held by members of the 820th (towed) TD Bn (A Co.)  
Lanzerath - Merlsheid - Berterath, about 2000 yards north  
of Manderfeld. Two platoons of these towed TD Guns had with-

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drawn as far as the critical road junction at Hasenvennu.  
(009948) (All others in the 14th Gp believed these towed TD  
guns to be 76 mm's — but Capt Martin indicated that they  
were three-inchers- JTS) <sup>(TD officer 1st Divng - says they were 3-in.)</sup> In the course of this withdrawal,  
the two platoons of tank destroyers had lost five of their  
eight guns (four per platoon), and the remaining three were  
at that time beginning to feel pressure from enemy foot-  
troops supported by the flat-trajectory fire of enemy self-  
propelled weapons.

It may be mentioned that at that same time, Col Devine  
was concerned with a General German breakthrough in the  
vicinity of Auw. He momentarily contemplated sending Martin's  
troop to that sector, but reconsidered and decided that the  
threat from the north was more dangerous to the effectiveness  
and combat efficiency of the cavalry group. Also, though  
Capt Martin was under the impression that the TD men to whom  
he lent assistance were from the 814th TD Bn, the members of  
the group command, and the after/action reports of the group  
indicate that the anti-tank fighters were from the 820th TD Bn.

Thus, at 1200 Martin dispatched ~~two~~ two reconnaissance  
platoons from his troop, sending them north to the embattled  
TD's at Hasenvennu crossroads. By 1215, the troopers reported  
to Martin that had become engaged in a small arms fire fight  
there.

E Troop of the 32nd had its 75mm self-propelled assault  
guns located near the RJ at (009939) (See B Troop interview  
and statements on this fight by 1/Lt Earle A. Lawton, CO)  
The reconnaissance elements who were with the TD's adjusted  
the fire of these 75's over radio channels, and some of the

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the northeast. The enemy attack was loose in its movement, had fire support provided by mortars, light artillery, and flat-trajectory fire that was coming from either self-propelled armored vehicles, or the three-inch guns that had been left by the TD's. Many of the E Troop personnel believed that the enemy had turned these TD guns around and were firing them at their former owners.

Many ~~profitable~~ <sup>profitable</sup> targets were presented to the reconnaissance and assault gun elements, but none of the men dared make a rough estimate of the number of enemy casualties they had caused. Their steady fire did, in two or three instances, achieve success in breaking up enemy concentrations that threatened them from close range.

By 1230 hours, the enemy infiltration, aided by a general thickening of mortar fire, had slipped ~~in~~ in closer to the positions held by the reconnaissance and TD troops. As they were forced back, the assault gunners found many targets that could be directly observed and fired upon by the crews <sup>(who were)</sup> actually firing the assault guns. Using direct sights, the gunners, in one instance, spotted a column of enemy infantry, passing along the reverse ~~side~~ side of a thin hedgerow. Through the sights on the gun, the helmets and field caps of the enemy could be clearly seen, several rounds of 75 mm. HE were sufficient to smother all movement in the vicinity of the hedgerow.

By 1430, the mortar fire had thickened on the assault gun positions, One man, Liaison Cpl Harry Carle, was wounded by mortar fragments as he stood beside the assault gun. Shortly after that, two of the D or Gms were withdrawn to indirect

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RET

Direct fire missions entailed range settings of 700 yards.

Greatest number of the attacking enemy foot troops were observed at ranges of 500 - 800 yards north and east of the Hasenvenn crossroads. These troops, despite the heavy fire of the assault guns and the reconnaissance troopers, continued to press in towards the crossroads. It was at this point that the TD guns located there took enemy troops under fire at point blank ranges of 200 - 300 yards. This, in turn, was answered with the same type of fire from a longer range. The Germans had turned some of the captured TD guns around and were using them to fire at their former operators and the cavalrymen.

The fighting in this sector gradually came into the realm of Maj Hayes' responsibility. (Hayes, S-3 of the 32nd, commander of this force that was unofficially titled "Task Force Hayes Number One") When Hayes took over the command of the TD's, troopers and assault gunners, Col Devine specified that he attack to retake Lanzerath - Merlescheid and Bertrath. (See interview with Maj Hayes on this fight.)

Between 1400 and 1500 the enemy pressure in this area became more intense. The loose, infiltration attack of the Germans was supported by the flat-trajectory fire of tanks or self-propelled guns. Slowly the members of the task force were forced back towards the south, inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy as they did so -- C Troop's estimate was 150 - 200 killed, an undetermined number wounded, and none of the enemy armored vehicles knocked out.

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With the permission of the task force commander two of the three TD guns were removed to the road junction at (000937). The guns at this time were still under the command of a Capt. Nash from the "814th" according to Capt Martin.

As the members of the task force withdrew towards the crossroads, the command and troops of the 14th Group that were in Manderfeld had begun an evacuation of the town. In accordance with the orders of Col Devine and the permission of the 106th Inf Div to which the Group was attached, the cavalrymen were in the process of withdrawing to the next delay position -- the high ground ~~between~~ in the vicinity of Holzheim - Herresbach - Heuen.

As the Task Force screened the withdrawal of the Manderfeld troops, so did the 1st and 2nd Platoons of C Troop screen the withdrawal of the balance of the task force from this engagement. It was about 1600 when the 1st and 2nd Platoons completed their slow-paced withdrawal to the road junction where they mounted vehicles, traveled west and then south, finally ending up with the 32nd Squadron Headquarters and assault guns at Herresbach.

In the five-hour action in the vicinity of Hasenvenn, C Troop had sustained no casualties.

While the 1st and 2nd Platoons fought in the action that is described above, the 3rd Platoon had an uneventful task of holding the high ground south of Manderfeld. From there they could command the approach to Manderfeld from Auw, protect the Manderfeld garrison from attack from that quarter. In the withdrawal from Manderfeld the 3rd Platoon attached itself to

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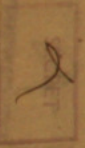
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the elements of Group headquarters, withdrew with them to the vicinity of Meyerode and Hedell.

The two platoons that were with the 32nd Headquarters Group at Herresbach, withdrew cross-country with those elements on the morning of 17 Dec 44. (See interview with Capt. Sam Woods, Motor O, "Withdrawal from Herresbach.") Capt Martin was with these two platoons and took up positions in Meyerode upon arrival there about 1300. Lt Herren's platoon was the last element of the column that bucked and plowed its way across the muddy, woodland trails from Herresbach. E Troop from the 32nd and the two remaining WD Guns of the attached TD Company were also in this column.

It was upon the orders of Maj Kraecke, then commanding the 32nd Squadron, that the C Troopers left Meyerode and started to move west towards Vielsalm. First leg of their withdrawal was to a position at (873924) (Vielsalm - Sheet 93 1/50,000) There they were told to block the highway while the others cavalry elements in the area started to withdraw. Capt Martin said that he believed the following dispositions to hold for this phase of the withdrawal: B Troop in Wallerode, F Company at the first major road junction north of St. Vith.

As they occupied positions on the highway, blocking it to the north, the troopers heard small arms fire rattling in the wooded terrain to the southeast, saw an American P-38 lunge in a strafing pass at a wooded draw in the same vicinity. A Group of F-51's also made strafing passes into the wooded terrain 1000 yards to the east of the troopers' position.



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The route of the 32nd's withdrawal from the high ground in the vicinity was as follows: Humange - Nieder Emmels - Ober Emmels - Sart-les-St-Vith - Poteau - Vielsalm. It was C Troop that occupied the "trail" position in this column as it withdrew towards the west.

Abandoned G.I. equipment, guns that had been destroyed and abandoned, were noticed in the area around Sart les St. Vith. There, where the secondary road joins the main St. Vith - Vielsalm highway, the cavalry column became ensnared in a traffic congestion that slowed their progress to a speed of about one m.p.h. The vehicles would go for a hundred yards or so, and then be forced to stop and wait. At least two westward-bound columns of traffic occupied the highway, and in some places the column had split itself into three parallel columns.

It was just about dark when the C troopers reached the main road at Sart les St Vith, but at 2000 they had only gone as far as Poteau -- a little over five kilometers in three hours of traveling.

Lt. Col. Duggan, the executive officer of the 14th Group, was the one who intercepted the C Troop vehicles in Poteau and instructed Capt Martin to turn them around. He explained that the group had been ordered to retake and reoccupy the high ground in the vicinity of Born, and that C Troop would be part of a Task Force that was then being made up. Maj Hayes, the officer who had commanded the group of C Troopers and the assault guns of B Troop in the fight to the north of Manderfeld, was to be in charge of this second Task Force, too.

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could find none of the ~~paragaphs~~ ~~referred to~~

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The congested traffic conditions in Poteau made it very difficult for Martin to turn the troop around.

It was necessary to go about one kilometer beyond Poteau where an open field, that provided fairly firm standing, was found. Into this field went the troop's vehicles. By backing and filling they were finally headed back towards the east, and then bucked traffic to regain position at Poteau.

It was about 0300 on the morning of the 18th when Martin finally got his troop (two platoons of it) back into Poteau, and contacted the Task Force commander, Maj Mayes, for instructions on the march to the northeast.

He found that Mayes had gathered together a force consisting of: (this composition, the order-of-march and some of the descriptions do not check with previous descriptions noted in the interview with Lt Max Crawford, C Troop -18th. For further substantiation of the details in this confused action, see interview with Maj Mayes. - JTS) Elements of C Troop - 18th Sqdn, four assault guns from the 18th commanded by Capt Meadows, four light tanks from the 18th commanded by Capt Fitzgerald. Martin believed that these elements had entered Poteau from the northeast, having come from Recht and Born before they were ordered to turn around and get into the task force's column.

In addition to these forces Capt Martin mentioned a light tank company from the 7th Armored Division (not mentioned specifically by others interviewed concerning this action - See 7th Armd story by Lt Merriam). Martin said that this company of light tanks had come into Poteau at about 0200, with the report that they had been "chased out of Recht and the town was in flames" (Martin). These tanks were on the could find none or was per-

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west side of the road, waiting there, undecided as to what step should be taken next.

Twenty-six men from A Troop, who were working with C Troop at that time, were sent by Captain Martin to the tail of the 7th Arm'd light tanks' column. Martin instructed the men to secure the end of the column, and guard it until it was moved or maneuvered into another position. He felt that the column of light tanks were extremely vulnerable since they were facing AWAY from the threatened direction of enemy attack.

Evidently, the column that was pointed towards Recht and was formed on the eastern side of the road started to move out just as this security party moved forward into the darkness. Martin was not sure of the time, but others in the troop figured it must have been about 0700 hours.

Martin indicated that the composition of the force on the eastern side of the road was as follows: elements of C Troop - 18th Sqdn, four light tanks, 1st Platoon of C Troop -- 32nd Sqdn, C Troop - 32nd Headquarters, 2nd Platoon C Troop - 32nd, one reconnaissance team from the 3rd Platoon, four assault guns and two towed TD's brought up the rear of the column.

The head of the above column had moved only 150 yards simultaneously with the advance of the A Troop security detachment when "All Hell broke loose!" (Martin)

One light tank and an armored car were immediately knocked out by enemy bazooka fire, and as the flames from these two burning vehicles lit the scene, concentrated small arms and heavy machine gun fire poured onto the cavalry elements.

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The precipitation of the enemy SECRET fire started the Armored Div's comp- any of light tanks on their way. They cleared past the Poteau road junction just before daylight, and continued on towards Vielsalm.

The personnel and vehicles in WPM immediately began to shuffle to the rear and off to the sides of the road to get in firing positions from which they could return the fire of the enemy attackers. As the vehicles filtered back towards the junction, Martin noticed six 240mm howitzers and one of the pylone movers used to tow the heavy guns abandoned off to the east of the Poteau - Recht road.

Martin asserted that the flames from the burning vehicles enabled him to see enemy self-propelled guns or tanks about 75 yards from the edge of the woods that were off to the east of the road that leads to Recht. He estimated that there must have been 75 - 100 enemy foot troops around these tanks. These men were moving forward taking advantage of the supporting fire provided by the armor's flat-trajectory fire and the heavy mortar fire that slammed down on the road and the vehicles that were on it.

Sensing that the threat of tanks necessitated some sort of anti-tank fire, S/Sgt Alfred W. Bellow, platoon sergeant of the 1st Platoon of C Troop, ~~Plt.~~ Plt. William J. Kolodziej, of the 2nd Platoon, and Sgt Daniel Ruse, 3rd Platoon Sgt, went to get the TD guns that had been abandoned by the side of the road when the column was dispersed by enemy fire. Bellow and Lt Herrrens finally managed to get one of the TD guns back near the edge of the buildings in Poteau. But there they found that there was no ammunition available for it, and they could find none of the perzoppel responsible for its operation.



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Failing to get an anti-tank gun into effective position, the cavalrymen hurriedly mustered bazookas to stop any enemy tank threat. But Dr. some person the enemy armor did not press the attack. Martin believes their fire was effective in knocking out the four assault guns that were originally in the column. (One of these was knocked out, the others being sent to the crest of the hill, northwest of Poteau. See E Troop - 18th Squadron interview).

The cavalrymen finally built up a firing line that was located about 300 yards from the group of houses at the Poteau road junction. From this position the cavalrymen countered the general infiltration attack with machine gun, mortar and rifle fire. Particularly effective in discouraging the aggressive attempts of the enemy was the fire from the .50 cal machine guns mounted on the armored cars. The mortars of the troopers were placed in the upper story of the houses near the road junction. Through holes in the roofs they were able to deliver rapid mortar fire, with the efficiency of the fire control benefiting from the observation that was available so close to the gun.

Martin mentioned the control and conduct of the fire fight at Poteau that was exercised by the group executive, Lt Col DUGGAN. He continually circulated amongst the men fighting there, a cigar in his mouth, offering words of encouragement and advice.

Gradually the enemy worked in on the cavalry troopers fighting at the road junction. The position of the men kept the road junction open, and the remnants of the traffic that had clogged the St. Vith-Vielsalm road the night before

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took the opportunity to scoot through the junction and make good their escape to the west. The re seemed to be little organization to the German attack in this sector. The one definite tactical gesture that materialized was an attempt that the enemy foot troops made to attain the high ground that overlooked Poteau from the north and northwest. This move was countered and temporarily postponed by the positioning of assault guns, light tanks, and cavalry foot troops in that sector. (For complete details on the other phases of the action at Poteau see interviews with G-13, R-13, P-13 and Group Headquarters, Capt North. Also note sketch appended to Group interview material - "Action at Poteau".)

About noon the effects of the German Ind Division attempts were more forcefully felt by the troopers. Individual riflemen and machine gunners had gotten within 100-75 yards of the houses from which some of the cavalry soldiers were fighting. The door of the house that had been selected as the combination group and task force CP was, in fact, made impassable by a steady stream of enemy machine gun slugs that hammered against and through ~~it~~ it. The personnel in this particular structure finally made their escape by prying a portion of the backwall of the house free, and slipping through the created exit to the outside.

Martin said that the vehicles in the small motorcade that eventually ran the gauntlet of small arms fire to make the escape towards the west consisted of three M-3 armored cars, two 1/2-ton jeeps, one light tank. These vehicles were loaded with the wounded. The dash to safety was successfully made.

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In this five-hour fight the C troopers had again been fortunate from the standpoint of casualties. Only two of their men were wounded — one seriously and one lightly. Few of the troop would venture an estimate of the number of enemy killed or wounded, such was the confusion of the battle. But they all felt that the many automatic weapons of their cavalry organizations were effective in taking heavy toll of the many enemy infantry that attempted to force the positions near this vital road junction.

At 1500 the C troopers and the tail of the 14th Cav Gp elements that had been engaged in the action at Poteau had reached Vielsalm. They returned to the resting places in Rencheux, from whence they had been summoned on the morning of the 16th of December when the attack first broke from the Schnee-Eifel. There, the reorganization of the remnants of the two squadrons begun. It had been directed that these remnants be melded into a single cavalry reconnaissance squadron that would be attached to the 7th Arm'd Div. (auth C/S VIII Corps, see interview 14th Gp Hq. - JTS)

A sidelight on the conditions in Poteau on 19 Dec 1944 is provided by the recounting of an attempt that was made by Lt Herren and Sgt Enlow to retrieve some of the vehicles that had been abandoned in the town. By the next day, a task force of the 7th Arm'd Div (TF Navaho) had established a road block at Petit Thier. Herrrens and Enlow, receiving permission to try to recover some of the lost vehicles, received ~~incorrect~~ incorrect information at the road block on the morning of the 19th. There, the armored engineers told them that it was quite safe to enter Poteau.

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Particular target for Herrern's and Enlow's search was the 1-ton jeep of C Troop that contained all the troop's records. It had been abandoned in the town when, for an undetermined reason, it could not be started. Shortly after 1000 hours Herrerns and Enlow led a convoy consisting of a light tank, three M-8 armored cars and five 1-ton jeeps to see what they could salvage from the wrecked houses around the road junction.

Entering the outskirts of the cluster of houses that surround the road junction, the column was fired at from both sides of the road when it had reached a point about 300 yards from the first building in the cluster. Signal for the general fusillade of shots to start was a single bazooka round that rocketed over the open hatchway of the leading light tank. The little motorcade sped into the midst of the cluster of buildings. Everyone dismounted and began to return enemy fire to every side with all weapons available. Sgt Enlow was successful in finding the troop's 1-ton that held the records, and had it attached to the rear of his armored car.

In a matter of minutes the column was ready to make a second break to escape back towards the west. <sup>(The troopers)</sup> ~~They~~ covered themselves on the way out by firing to both sides of the road. Afterwards, several of the men in the column insisted that the enemy who had been firing at them wore the short-legged smocks that are characteristic of the German paratrooper.

Two of the cavalrymen were lightly wounded by enemy machine gun fire, as they attempted to break back towards Velsalm. But the troop headquarter's jeep had been secured, and the records recovered. -14-

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TASK FORCE JONES

(In the reorganization of the remaining elements of the 14th Group, Capt Martin's G Troop was augmented by vehicles and a few men from the remnants of G Troop of the 18th Squadron. However, his troopers had not suffered undue casualties in their heavy fighting thus far, and his unit was one of the few that still maintained an aspect of Integrity. - JTS)

It was the G Troop of Capt Martin that was attached to Task Force Jones on 20 Dec 1944. In addition to the G troopers were three assault guns of E Troop - 18th Squadron, and a full company of light tanks commanded by Capt Blair of P Company, 32nd Squadron. Martin was designated as the commander of the force that was contributed by the 14th Gp, but his control was made negligible by the further breaking down of this force into sub task forces to hold various vital road junctions and maintain a defensive and counter-reconnaissance screen across the southern mouth of the Bovigny - Salmchateau corridor. In addition to these cavalry elements, Lt Col Jones -- designated by 7th Armored as the CO of the task force that was screening the mouth of this terrain corridor -- bolstered the fire power of the terrain with self-propelled TD's from the 7th Arm'd Div, and with medium tanks that carried PO's to adjust the defensive fires of 7th Armored organic and attached artillery elements.

With Capt Blair, Martin reported to Lt Col Jones at his OP at Bovigny. He found out there that Jones ~~was~~ was normally assigned to CCR of the 7th Arm'd Div.

Arriving at the Bovigny OP in the early afternoon of

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20 Dec 1944, Jones gave Martin a troop mission of establishing counter-reconnaissance and defensive screens in the towns of Cherain, Gouvy and Dieffelt. Martin dispatched one platoon to each of the three road junction points with instructions to "prevent enemy advances there at all costs". (Martin) The 1st platoon, led by <sup>Richard R./</sup> Lt. A. Herrem, entered Dieffelt with little difficulty, secured it and began organization of a defensive position there at dusk on 20 December. The 2nd platoon, commanded by 2/Lt J. Thomas Garraway, had it equally easy in entering Cherain at about the same time. But the 2nd platoon had a more difficult task in reaching its assigned positions in Gouvy at the same date and time.

At the TP Jones CP, Martin had been informed that a garrison made up of ordnance and quartermaster service troops were then holding Gouvy, and that it would be a simple matter to slip the cavalry elements into that town to bolster the defenses there. There was little indication that the troopers would have to "go in shooting". But that's exactly what they had to do.

The 2nd platoon, accompanied by <sup>two</sup> ~~two~~ light tanks and one medium PO tank (as were the other sub task forces), met first resistance in the vicinity of Falconreux (707738) as they approached a cluster of buildings there on ~~the~~ its way south from Bovigny - Courtill. A fusillade of small arms fire struck the column unexpectedly, died rapidly as all weapons in the column wildly returned the fire.

Assuming that friendly forces were really in Gouvy, and that this enemy fire was merely from some patrol that

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had eddled around the perimeter of the town, the sub-task force hurried towards the town -- approaching it from the northwest along the Gouvy - Sterpigny road. At (713781) where the column found itself bordered by a steep, overhang bank on the left of the road and a sharp cutting away of the ground to the right, more machine gun and small arms fire rattled against the sides of the light tanks that were preceding the column. Again the 37's, .50's and .30's of the small force blazed into action, and they bravely barged into the town.

The vehicles immediately slipped into the roadside cover presented by the spaces between buildings in the little town. Some of the men dismounted and began to use their M-1's and TSMG's to advantage, while others remained in vehicles, blasted at buildings with 37mm canister ammo and HE.

Things were hot for about 20 minutes, but the heavy and rapid fire of the cavalrymen was sufficient to drive some ~~mass~~ of the enemy from the town. The greater part of the opposition remained behind, dead, wounded or taken prisoner. Capt Martin said that about 100 enemy were killed in this brisk, brief fire fight, another 25 were wounded while 35 were taken prisoner. (See Capt Balpr's description of this fire fight - Interview with F Company - 32nd Squadron) One of the troopers, caught in a crossfire of small arms at the Gouvy crossroads, was killed in this fire fight while two others were wounded.

With the fire fight concluded, the troopers began to organize the position ~~and~~ procure firing sites for the armored cars; ~~at~~ at the same time began a search for the friend-

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ly troops that they had been told were in Gouvy. They finally found about 100 service troops and two or three M-10 tank destroyers, 1000 yards northeast of Gouvy at Gouvy station. The service troops were overjoyed to see the cavalry reinforcements, promptly broke out a supply of pork chops and prepared them. It was the first warm food the troopers had had in four days, and as they completed the organization of the town, everyone seemed to be walking around gnawing on a freshly broiled pork chop. [NOT IN ACCOUNT WITH F. Co.-579]

At 1730, as the troopers finally got into settled positions, an enemy half-track roared into Gouvy from the southwest. It evidently thought that the town was still in German hands. Several rounds of bazooka fire from the rocket launchers of the TD troopers, plus a heavy drenching of MG fire, halled onto the enemy vehicle as it slid to a stop, settled into a heap of blasted wreckage. The two men in it had been killed by the fire.

It was shortly after noon when Lt J. Thomas Carraway and Sgt Ruse led the third platoon into Cherain. Two M-10 tank destroyers and a couple of light tanks were with the reconnaissance platoon as it took over the town and began to organize its defenses. In addition to the troops and vehicles of this sub task force there was a squad of engineers in the town, and they were employed in the defenses of the road junctions there. (See interview and sketches with F Co - 32nd Sqdn)

Later in the day, about one hour before darkness, the defensive forces in Cherain were augmented by the arrival of G Company - 112th Infantry. These infantry were assigned a sector of defense, but were then ordered to leave as the company was contacted by a liaison agent from the 2nd Bn. -18-



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Enemy mortar fire began to crump down onto the Cherain road junctions at about 1600 and kept up pretty steadily until 1700 when enemy foot troops began to attack from the south-west. The enemy troops had to come over a slight rise in the ground at (551766) and as they did so, were struck with the full effectiveness of the Cherain defenders' automatic weapons at a range of 400 - 500 yards. (See P Co - 32nd Interview concerning the light tank that was nearest to this enemy pressure point. - JTS)

Strangely, the enemy risked their artillery support by moving it far forward. One of the M-10's positioned at (556772) knocked out an enemy self-propelled gun and a towed artillery piece. Even the support of the enemy mortars was jeopardized by moving them close to the top of the high ground over which they attacked, and was promptly knocked out by 37 mm HE fire from the light tank mentioned in the paragraph above.

Troops who fought at the Cherain road junction estimated that the strength of the attacking <sup>force</sup> ~~company~~ <sup>(that of</sup> ~~company~~ <sup>was about</sup> ~~one~~ of enemy casualties on the next morning when foot patrols went forward saw the battleground of the preceding late afternoon littered with about 100 dead Germans, a knocked-out mortar and its crew, and the two artillery weapons that had been struck by the fire of the TD.

Cavalry casualties for this stand consisted of one man KIA, and the platoon sergeant wounded in action. A self-inflicted wound was the only other casualty of the 1st day's stand at the vital road junction.

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queried by the command of TF Jones as to his present situation, Lt Carraway radioed back, "We're doing alright. We're holding our own." Carraway's donation to the fire fight ~~was~~ that had ensued in the early part of the evening was a heavy and effective concentration of fire that came from a multiple-.50 cal anti-aircraft trailer that he had found abandoned but in operating condition when he arrived at the town.

No further attacks were pressed by the enemy for the remainder of the night 20 - 21 Dec, and the following morning was quiet, too. However, at about noon time on the 21st, an enemy C & R car sped towards the town from the southwest. The alert cavalrymen let the vehicles come almost to the center of their position, but its traveling was finally ended as T/S Edmund H. Rosenhahn, Gunner in an armored car, smashed a round of 37 mm HE into the middle of the car's hood at a range of about 100 yards. The driver was immediately killed, and the troopers went forward to find the car loaded with enemy signal equipment. This materiel was screened for its intelligence data, and a report submitted through radio channels to the CP of Task Force Jones.

As the men at Cherain sat and waited for additional enemy thrusts on the 21st of December, they realized that their task constituted holding a road junction and maintaining a defensive block on the main route from Houffalize to Liege. They knew that additional pressure could be expected.

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Second attack against the position came with the same attitude of surprised disorganization on the part of the enemy. It seemed as though the Germans expected to roll right through the town, that ~~they thought they~~ ~~were~~ no American troops within miles.

At about 1830 an enemy armored column approached the town from the southwest. It had about seven or eight vehicles in it, about half of which were armored, half-track personnel carriers, with headlights blazing, the column came in towards the town. The first vehicle was only 50 yards from the edge of the town when it was halted by a challenge from one of the troopers near the edge of the road. ~~The troopers~~ ~~remarked~~ remarked that they at first thought that it was a portion of the American 3rd Armored Div, They had heard that that unit was working towards them from the west. An officer, whose corpse was later identified as a colonel's, stood up in the first vehicle in the column and arrogantly started to shout at the sentry in German.

For a moment there was a pause of electric silence, an unidentified trooper's voice was heard. "That ain't the American language," he said.

This half-ironic statement of fact was the signal for a terrific drenching of fire to come down on the column at close range. ~~Carraway's~~ <sup>Recently</sup> recovered multiple-50 started blasting at the column; his fire was swelled by the 37 and canister rounds from three armored cars and a light tank. A 80 mm mortar started crumping shells at the end of the column and systematically raked the shell bursts towards the head of ~~the column~~ <sup>line of vehicles</sup>.

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In the light of several illuminating shells that the mortar team provided to light the scene, the troopers saw the desperate efforts of the enemy in the column to dismount and organize some sort of an attack. Accurate MG and rifle fire augmented the already heavy volume of automatic and light cannon fire. In a matter of minutes the few remaining enemy realized that the case was hopeless, and they attempted to turn some of the weight vehicles around. One or two of the large personnel carriers did manage to escape, but the wreckage of four or five of them lay scattered on the road in the same place they had been when the fire fight started.

The Cherain troopers later estimated that about 200 of the enemy troops could be considered casualties in this brief action, and almost all of this number remained where they fell in Cherain — dead. Net casualties to the defenders — None.

Next morning, as the troopers inspected the wreckage of the five half-tracks, they found that one of the German tracks had been knocked out as it attempted to turn around. In its backing and falling it had blundered into an American mine field. The rest had been knocked out by fire.

At about <sup>22</sup>0745 <sup>hrs</sup> the Cherain Garrison was ordered to withdraw to the high ground in the vicinity of Courtill. There a perimeter defense was established around the supply trains that were feeding ammunition, fuel and rations to the elements of Task Force Jones.

In summing up the activities at Cherain, one of the troopers remarked, belatedly, about one additional incident that had occurred there. At about 0300 on the morning of

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22 December, a single enemy motorcycleist approached the town from the southwest. The cavalrymen heard him and were ready, but it was a dark night and an IMG that had been alerted to fire at the single enemy held fire while the operator searched the blanket of darkness for a glimpse at the darker shadow that would indicate his target. The cycle was within 75 - 50 yards of the gun, and the gunner complained, "Damn it, I can't see him." Though the identity of the gunner and his advisor was prevented by the darkness and confusion of the night, a few of the troopers heard some one offer the advice, "Just point it in the direction you think and you got him." There was a sudden chatter of the IMG, a stifled cry and a crash as the enemy cyclist ran headlong into the resultant hail of lead.

As the cavalry troopers held this series of three strongpoints, it seemed as though the German were continually "barging into" the towns, unsuspecting that they were held by our troops. A similar occurrence was experienced by the men who were defending Diefelt under the command of Lt. Richard R. Herren.

Herren was speaking with Capt Martin on the radio ~~at~~ between ~~2000~~ 2200 and 2300 on 20 Dec, when he interrupted his conversation with the laconic message. "German staff car approaching our position from the south. Over." Martin's reply came almost immediately, "If you haven't

done so, knock the son of a bitch out. Over," he quipped. There was a moments silence, and then the final reply from Herren. It was simply, "Have ~~been~~ done. Out."

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Herren later described the incident in detail to Capt Martin. The staff car was hit simultaneously by a round of 37-mm HE and bazooka by the waiting cavalrymen. They held their fire until the car was only 50 yards away.

The driver was dead, both legs severed, as the car lurched to a sudden stop. Immediately the one man in front and three in the rear attempted to leave the car, firing bump guns as they did so. This was immediately answered by a torrent of fire from the TSMG's of the cavalrymen who lay in the ditches on the west side of the road.

The three men, though wounded, made an attempted getaway to the south. But their bullet-riddled bodies were found the next morning about 200 yards away. The man who had been in the front seat with the driver had been killed as he left the car. One of the three found in the underbrush the next morning was a German major, and it was evidently his brief case that the cavalrymen had found in the back of the car the night before and had immediately sent its contents to the CP of Task Force Jones. (See F. G. Story - JTS)

The material that the troopers found included unit identifications, plans and phase lines. Hurried to XVIII Airborne Corps headquarters shortly after midnight on the 20th, this information was disseminated by the G-2 Periodic Report of the XVIII Airborne Corps on 21 Dec 44. (Also in First Army's periodic report on 22 Dec 1944 - JTS)

Throughout the ~~morning~~ 22 Dec and the morning of the 23rd, Herren and his men remained in Dieffelt. But the garrisons at Cherein and Gouvy were withdrawn on the morning of the 22nd to the high ground in the vicinity of Courtill where a

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perimeter defense of the Task Force Jones supply elements was organized. The ordnance and quartermaster troops that were originally in Gouvy, remained there and withdrew when the cavalrymen did. (For further information on the Gouvy and Dieffelt engagements, see interview with Capt Blair and P Company, 32nd Squadron - JTS)

The two platoons that were at Courtliff withdrew from there directly towards Bovigny and Salmchateau on 23 Dec 1944, when Task Force Jones started its own withdrawal through the Salmchateau - Bovigny corridor.

However, Lt Herren was the last element to pass through the southern "gate" of the withdrawal corridor -- the TD road block at the Beho cross roads. It was Herren ~~who~~ who led his platoon through there at about 1430 - 1500 hours. He was in the vicinity of Capt Meadows and his ~~group~~ who

guns, as they tailed the Task Force Jones column north into the corridor that was soon to become a 'cul de sac'. (For Meadows description of the fight in the corridor, see interview with E Troop - 18th Squadron)

(In order to avoid duplication of detail, the interviewer has included only the fragmentary statements made by Herren's group concerning elements that were not included in the statements and description of Meadows and his group - JTS)

It was the belief of the ~~group~~ 1st Platoon cavalrymen who were engaged in this 'cul de sac' fight, that the enemy troops attacking them were SS troops. The group agreed that some SS men had been captured in the fighting along the road as the column was attacked from three sides by enemy fire.

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As the head of the column was stopped by the fire of a tank that knocked out two of the American light tanks a few hundred yards from the edge of Salmehateau, enemy riflemen, some of them armed with bazookas, worked in on the column.

The 1st Platoon finally infiltrated in a cross-country escape that took them west almost to Otre, thence north to Joubieval - Sart-Lieuneux to Villels where they joined the rest of the squadron.

Moving to Xhignesse on the 24th of December, the C troopers were again reorganized for a last mission by the command of the Provisional 14th Cavalry Squadron. Martin remarked on the extreme fatigue of the men after having completed this much fighting.

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and mortar fire started to rain down on the column. [REDACTED] and Bulow had the 1st Platoon troopers dismount and form a firing line. They returned the fire blindly, had no definite tar-

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(In addition to the above-described action at the Salmchateau corridor, a later conversation with the G troopers disclosed exactly what type of defensive action was taken when the column of American armored vehicles was taken under fire by the German forces who were closing in from three sides. Though it is slightly out of place here, it is added as an intrinsic portion of this interview. - JTS)

two US Lt  
tks KO'd by  
enemy tk

Only the four assault guns and the half-track of Capt Meadows and his E troopers were behind the column of 1st Platoon vehicles in the motorcade that was jammed in the corridor. The enemy tank, from a firing position on the eastern heights of Salmchateau, knocked out two light tanks at the head of the column. It rolled ahead a few yards and fired at the rear of the stalled, trapped column. The flat-trajectory fire knocked out an armored car and a jeep near the end of the column, as Meadows' assault guns hurried into position to block the railroad track

BOVIGNY

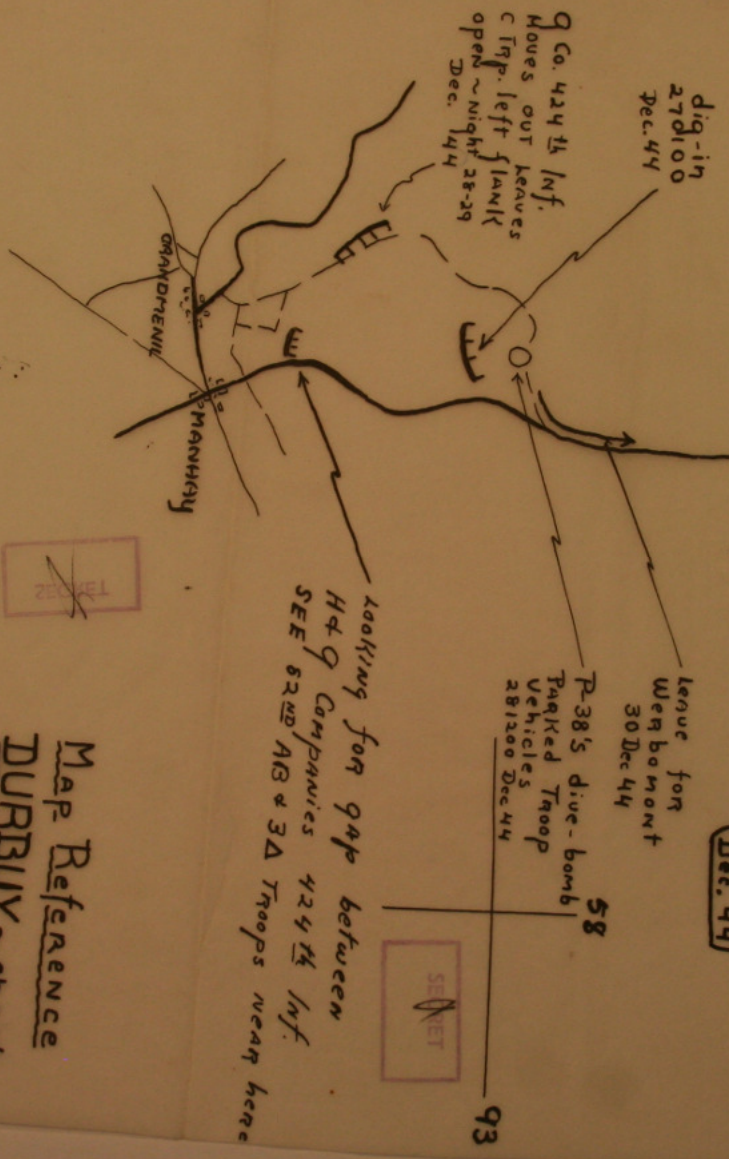
come. Sgt Ballow, platoon sgt for the 1st, immediately leveled the 37 mm gun of his armored car at the dim form of the tank to his northeast. He fired several rounds of HE and AP. The tank did not return fire immediately, but enemy small arms and mortar fire started to rain down on the column. Herrrens and Ballow had the 1st Platoon troopers dismount and form a firing line. They returned the fire blindly, had no definite tar-

Vehicles  
escape  
1st Pltn  
firing  
1st Pltn  
firing  
Sgt Ballow's AC  
returns fire of  
enemy tk to North  
RR X-ing vs. tks.

Enemy tk  
shoots at  
column

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Action at Grandmenil - Manhay  
C Troop - 32nd Cav Reg Sqn.



Note

PERSONNEL OF C TROOP WHO SUPERVISED THE DRAWING OF THIS OVERLAY WERE NOT DEFINITELY SURE OF THE DATES INDICATED. DISCREPANCIES MAY BE NOTED IN COMPARING THESE DATES WITH DATA FOUND IN 32ND SQDN JOURNAL. 3QDN SOURCE APPEARS MORE AUTHENTIC J.T.S.

Map Reference  
DURBUY - sheet  
France & Belgium  
 Sheet # 92  
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Gets save for the fact that they knew fire was coming from the high ground that rose to the east of the road.

In five or ten minutes it became apparent that their fire was having no effect upon the infiltration advances of the enemy. Flat-trajectory and mortar fire began to thicken along the road, and vehicles burst into flame at several different points along the column of trapped vehicles. Men from other sections were leaving the column and disappearing into the wooded hillside to the west of the corridor. Herrons kept his platoon firing for a half hour " or so"

( In the confusion, few could accurately remember the time or the time intervals in the fight), then gave the order to abandon and destroy vehicles, and form for an attempted escape through the wooded hills to the west and northwest. The vehicles were destroyed with thermite grenades that were customarily carried as part of each vehicle's equipment.

(For the route that the foot elements took in making their escape, see overlays appended to 'Oul de Sac' at Salmchateau section of 14th Gp General story - submitted for pamphlet material, 23 Jan 1945)

(The C troopers present during this interview also had some material to offer on the fight in the vicinity of Grand-mont-Mahay. A clearer picture of the operations in this sector will be found in the latter part of the B Troop - 33d Squadron interview. However, certain fragmentary observations made by the C troopers may, at some date, be valuable in establishing the developments and positions on units in the northern sector of this confused battle in which elements of the Second, 75th, 82nd Airborne and 106th Inf Div's took part.)

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(In reference to the following portion of this interview see sketch-overlay "Action at Grandmenil - Hanhay" appended to this interview. As indicated on this overlay, the troopers were not definitely sure of the dates in this action -- an indication of the extreme fatigue that suffused the troop at that time. Future researchers will be advised to be guided by the dates found in the 32nd Squadron's journal. They have been found to be an accurate source in general reference to the operations of the component units of the squadron, even when the smaller units were engaged in separate actions-JTS)

Capt Martin, upon the troop's return to Khignesse, was instructed to organize a full P/O reconnaissance unit and report to the CP of the 87th Reconnaissance Squadron of the 7th Armored Div. It was with difficulty that Martin managed to get such a troop together. To do so he had to draw on the clerical personnel of the squadron headquarters, start off with no pre-arranged radio channels and call signs, improvise mounts for automatic weapons. In order to take the road with the required number of armored cars it was necessary for Martin to tow one M-8 armored car behind another such vehicle. (Re: this order and the difficulties encountered, see Maj Kracke's statement as to the orders and the hindrances that confronted Martin and his troop. Appended to 32nd Squadron material. JTS)

Martin reported to the CP of the 87th Squadron. There, LtCol Boylan instructed him to take his troop to the vicinity of Mont-Derriex, 4000 yards north of Hanhay, Belgium.

The first of a series of many countermanded and confusing orders specified that Martin dismount his troop, and dig in south of Mont Derriex. The vehicles were left under the care

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of their assigned drivers ( see overlay-sketch), and the  
dismounted troopers went forward to dig in, completing the  
work by ~~XXXXXX~~ Dec 44. They had started the task at 0100 hours.  
270530

At 0600 that same morning the troopers were told to  
move from their dug in positions and close an existing  
gap between G and H companies of the 424th Inf Regiment. Mar-  
tin was further told that the 424th's mission was to push south,  
while the 3rd Armored Div pushed in on Grandmenill from the  
west, and the 82nd Airborne pushed towards Manhay from the  
northeast.

For the rest of the morning of 27 December, the cavalry-  
men shuttled around through the wooded terrain, occasionally  
hitting the dirt as spasmodic artillery and mortar fire fell  
in the area. By 1000 they still hadn't found the "existing  
gap" between the two companies of the 424th, and wandered around  
not knowing exactly where to go. Communications were snarled,  
and though Martin searched the area thoroughly, he found no  
one who could give him orders, advice or directions.

At about 1015, a group of the cavalrymen were in a house  
in the vicinity of Grandmenill -- about 700 yards north of the  
town -- when a single enemy "88" (Martin) slammed into the  
building, wounded three officers and killed one officer. Three  
men were wounded in action by the same shellburst.

The night of the 28th passed with the cavalrymen remaining  
"unemployed" in the same area north of Grandmenill. On the 28th  
at noon American P-38's strafed and dive-bombed the vehicles  
that the troop had left parked in the rear. Four bombs were  
dropped, two of which were duds. None of the vehicles or men  
caring for them were injured by the air attack.

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In the early afternoon of the 28th, 1/Lt <sup>/Jack</sup> Siphers found the 2nd Bn CO of the 424th. This officer specified that the cavalrymen assume the mission of the battalion's "mobile reserve", and indicated where they should dig in on the right of G Company. (See overlay-sketch)

The guide that conducted the cavalrymen to the position that the battalion commander had indicated, was not thoroughly oriented, and placed them with a "few hundred yard gap" between G company's right flank and the G Troop left flank. G Company moved further to the southeast, later on the 28th, and Martin was forced to spread his defense line thinly as he attempted to cover the resultant gap.

In this position the cavalrymen received intermittent shelling by enemy mortars, but there was no artillery fire. On the morning of 30 Dec 1944, the cavalry troops were relieved by elements of the 75th Inf Div, and withdrew to Werbomont, from whence they rejoined the 32nd Squadron. Two days passed, during which there was no further activity for the G troop men, and then they moved to Pays to start the program of training, resting and re-equipping in which they were engaged when this interview was made.

(In reviewing the remarks of the interview, Capt Martin indicated that the single M-8 that was "towed off to combat", had been immobilized by motor trouble. The puncture-proof gas tank had had its lining pulverized by an enemy bazooka. This powdered rubber got into the fuel line, and clogged the feed to the motor. A expedient method of correcting this trouble was finally devised as the troopers established a gravity feed from a Jerrycan on the vehicle's hood direct to the carburetor.)

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Interviewer  
Lt. Jack Shea  
2nd I & H. Sq.  
Hq. First U.S. Army

Jack Shea

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GERMAN COMINTREGATTAC

(16 Dec 44- 1 Jan 45)

-E Troop (assault guns) 32nd Cav Ron Sqn,  
-Interview with - 1/Lt Earle A. Lawton, CO

1/Lt Kenneth G. Kinsel, 1st Pltn Leader  
2/Lt William L. Madigan, 2nd Pltn Leader  
1/Lt Kingston Stempel, 3rd Pltn Leader  
1st Sgt Kenneth E. Johnson

-Place, Odeur, Belgium 8 Jan 1945

The interview took place in a civilian billet where the assault gun troop (75mm howitzers on a light tank chassis) was engaged in refitting, resting, receiving reinforcements and training. Some new training techniques were being stressed.

The troop has specific responsibilities predicated upon the squadron's and group's mission of defending the flat, vulnerable terrain north of Liege against the threat of an enemy airborne landing.

Only enemy fire evident in this sector at this time was a daily average of 40 V-1 robot-bombs that passed over or fell in the area each day. Some of these buzz bombs were on their way towards Brussels, while others over-shot Liege and fell in the area where the cavalrymen were billeted.  
-Overlays and Sketches -

See Marked Map - "Front-Line Positions" - SP material.  
See overlays & sketches - APPENDED to 1/44 Cav.  
Pamphlet material - 33 Jan 45 - "TF group VTF landing"

"Holding Gruflange" - Sketch, APPENDED.  
-Interviewer, 1/Lt Jack Shea (2nd Info & Hist Sv) Hq First Army

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When VonFundstedt's Counterattack began at 0530, 16 Dec 1944, E Troop, like the rest of the 32nd Squadron, was in a rest and rehabilitation center at Rencheux, near Vielsalm, Belgium. Alerted at 0600, it moved out at 0932 hours, headed for previously reconnoitered gun positions about 1000 yards west of Manderfeld; Germany. Route of this road march was Vielsalm - Poteau - St. With - Schonberg - Andler - Medendorf - Holzheim - <sup>(to)</sup> a point 1000 yards west of Manderfeld. (9969358) <sub>(see Marked Map - Front-Line Position, map)</sub>

There, a wire line had been layed that connected indirect and direct fire positions to the fire direction center of the 275th Armd PA Bn at Medendorf. This self-propelled PA Bn was attached to the 106th Div, and charged with providing the defensive fires for the troops of the 14th Cav Gp, then holding the front-line sector 7000 yards to the east.

The officers of the assault gun troop were familiar with these positions, had visited them, and made personal reconnaissance on the approaches to them on 15 Dec 1944.

The lead elements of the troop arrived at Medendorf shortly after 1000 hours. <sup>(A)</sup> Lawton and <sup>(A)</sup> Madigan reported to the S-3 of the field artillery battalion there, then went forward to see if the formerly-reconnoitered gun positions were still available. Light mortar and artillery fire struck in the vicinity as Madigan and Lawton made an inspection of the firing positions. But it was not too intense, and four of the troop's six guns were positioned.

"The enemy fire was of a harrassing nature," said Madigan. "It didn't bother us too much. But they were getting plenty in Manderfeld."

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The four guns were positioned in direct fire sites in the vicinity of the road junction at (000938) where the road leads north towards Hasenvenn, and Herlscheid. It was in this sector that the assault gunners made contact with the members of Company A - 830th TD (towed) Bn. The tank destroyers had lost seven of their ten guns (three-inch towed mount) as attacking enemy foot troops and self-propelled guns forced them back from the original positions that they had held in Lanzerath, Herlscheid and Berterath. It was about 1045, when the four assault guns went into position in this sector.

From the fire positions, the assault gunners could see enemy infantry troops engaged in an infiltration attack from the north. A few hundred yards north of the assault gun positions, the troopers of G Troop and the remnants of the TD men were fighting a delaying action, firing at every German that exposed himself in travelling through the wooded, rough terrain to the north. The members of the reconnaissance troop adjusted the fire of the assault guns by radio channels, specified remunerative targets at ranges of 900 - 1200 yards. From the radio descriptions that came from the reconnaissance personnel, the E Troop men were informed that enemy patrols, and larger forces were infiltrating forward. One target for the assault gun fire was ~~in~~ a house, in the vicinity of the Hasenvenn crossroads, which was hit and set on fire. Direct observations by E Troop men equipped with field glasses assisted in spotting some of the small German elements that had slipped to one flank and were coming in from

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Fire positions westward of the crest of the Manderfeld ridge.  
(993942)

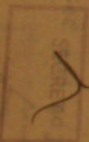
While the ~~the~~ 1st and 3rd Platoons <sup>had been</sup> engaged in direct fire activities, the two guns of the 2nd Platoon had remained in the indirect fire positions where they were tied in with phone communications to the FDC of the 275th PA Bn. However, no fire missions were requested of them while in these ~~positions~~ defiladed positions.

The two platoons in the direct fire positions were not, of course, tied into the FDC of the 275th PA Bn.

When the reserve platoon was joined by two of the four guns that had been fighting in the cross-roads battle, they were led into Manderfeld by Lt Lawton on the command of Maj Hayes. Hayes wanted them to be near the end of the withdrawing cavalry column as it left Manderfeld.

The troopers were not sure of the exact time, but said that it was "in the vicinity of 1600" when the troops started out of Manderfeld. The elements in the town passed by the road junction that was still being screened by the efforts of the two assault guns, the TD's and the combined reconnaissance men of C Troop. Then, under cover of the armored vehicles of C Troop, the rest of the screening force's elements withdrew. The 1st Platoon of C Troop was the last element to leave the scene of the road-junction battle, followed the 32nd's column to Herresbach.

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fire positions westward of the crest of the Manderfeld ridge.  
(993942)

While the ~~the~~ 1st and 3rd Platoons <sup>had been</sup> engaged in direct fire activities, the two guns of the 2nd Platoon had remained in the indirect fire positions where they were tied in with phone communications to the FDC of the 275th FA Bn. However, no fire missions were requested of them while in these ~~the~~ defiladed positions.

The two platoons in the direct fire positions were not, of course, tied into the FDC of the 275th FA Bn.

When the reserve platoon was joined by two of the four guns that had been fighting in the crossroads battle, they were led into Manderfeld by Lt Lawton on the command of Maj Hayes. Hayes wanted them to be near the end of the withdrawing cavalry column as it left Manderfeld.

The troopers were not sure of the exact time, but said that it was "in the vicinity of 1600" when the troops started out of Manderfeld. The elements in the town passed by the road junction that was still being screened by the efforts of the two assault guns, the TD's and the combined reconnaissance men of C Troop. Then, under cover of the armored vehicles of C Troop, the rest of the cavalry elements withdrew. The 1st Platoon of C Troop was the last element to leave the scene of the road-junction battle, followed the 32nd's column to Herrschbach.

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E Troop, too, trailed the 32nd Squadron's column to Herresbach, arriving there at about 1900 hours. There, the assault guns were put into defensive fire position to protect the approaches to the town with direct fire, and the additional personnel <sup>was</sup> used to establish a perimeter defense of local security.

It was Lt Kenneth Kinsel who first discovered the road block on the road from Herresbach to Wereth on the morning of 17 Dec 44. (See interview "Withdrawal from Herresbach" JTS) Kinsel was making a reconnaissance for the withdrawal movement of the troop's assault guns at 0900, when he discovered an abatis <sup>type</sup> block, made from felled trees, at (943935).

He returned to squadron headquarters with the news of his discovery, found that previous word had been received through information from the civilians in the little village. The column was quickly rerouted, and E Troop, trailed by Kinsel's 1st Platoon, left Herresbach at about 1030. Elements of C Troop - 32nd Squadron were the last in the column of withdrawing vehicles that struggled through the muddy, wooded back-country trails on the way to Meyerode.

Upon reaching Meyerode, the assault guns of E Troop were sent to Gut Eidt Farm (862906) (1/50,000 map of Vleishm, Belgium, Sheet No. 93) There, by 1500, the guns were ready to give indirect fire support to the elements of the 32nd which were then occupying positions on the high ground in the vicinity of Meyerode-Wallerode. The assault guns had no radio communication with the individual troops of the 32nd Squadron. And it was only through squadron channels that fire missions could have been directed and adjusted.

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At 171700, <sup>Dec</sup> E Troop received orders from 32nd Squadron Headquarters to move on Vielsalm. The move was made via Hunnange - Nieder Emmels - Ober Emmels - Sart les St. With-Poteau - Petit Thier - Vielsalm.

As the elements of E Troop passed a patch of woods to the west of the secondary road north of Sart les St. With at (820897), they saw artillery pieces, and a 'Cub 11st Inf Div. airplane that they believed to belong to the 106th Inf Div. The artillerymen there were firing unobserved, map-computed missions.

Traffic on the road that went west through Poteau to Vielsalm ~~was~~ jammed with traffic as the E Troop assault guns moved along them, but they had not yet been jammed completely as it was when the 1st elements of the 32nd Squadron tried to get through.

For this reason, the guns of E Troop passed through Poteau and reached Vielsalm before they were alerted about the brisk fire fight that was developing at Poteau. (See interview with Squadron Headquarters, E Troop and C Troop - 18th Squadron, JTS) It was about 0600 when the guns reached Vielsalm on 18 Dec 1944. At about the time of their arrival these orders came to Maj Kracke to form a task force that should move to Poteau to assist in re-taking the high ground in the vicinity of Born. Then, when the Poteau people were attacked before they could get completely under way on this mission, the E troopers were ~~ordered~~ <sup>ordered</sup> to go to their assistance. (See Journal) The steady stream of traffic that continued to pour down the Vielsalm road from the direction of Poteau prevented the guns from making any headway towards Poteau.

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The attempts that E Troop made to buck the stream of traffic were finally stopped at 0800 - 0900, as Lydol Ridge CO of the 32nd Sqn said, "It won't work." (Lawton *Goatling Ridge*)

Returning to Vielsalm, the troop waited there, was finally joined by the remnants of the 14th Gp that had fought at Poteau. In the reorganization of the remnants of the Gp into a single, provisional cavalry squadron that was to be attached to the 7th Arm'd Div (See interview with Gp Hq, 32nd Sqn Hq, and 18th Sqn Hq. - JTS) the three guns that remained in the 18th's E Troop were added to the six assault guns of the 32nd's normal troop. This overstrength troop was named the "provisional E Troop - 14th Cavalry Squadron". It had three platoons, two from the 32nd and one from the 18th squadrons, with THREE assault guns in each platoon.

At 1500 on 19 Dec 1944, this provisional assault gun troop was broken down into component parts that were assigned as support elements for some of the many task forces and sub-task forces that engaged in the flight south of the BOVIGNY - Salmchateau escape corridor. Mission for these groups was to hold a series of vital road junctions that blocked the enemy's advance north towards Liege.

(For a general background of the fighting in this sector, see "Fight of the Fortified Goose Egg" section of the 14th Cav Gp material submitted for pamphlet use, 23 Jan 1944. JTS) ~~The~~ The three guns from the 18th Squadron's E Troop were assigned to join TF Jones and its units in the vicinity of Cherain, Gouvy and Dieffelt. (See interview with E-18th. JTS)

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The six guns that came from E Troop of the 32nd Squadron, were returned to their original platoon divisions -- with the normal status of two assault guns in each platoon. The 1st Platoon, led by Lt Kinsel, was assigned to the sub-task force that occupied Espeler, It was teamed with the 1st Platoon of the Provisional B Troop. (See B Troop's Interview JTS) The 2nd Platoon of the 32nd assault guns paired with the 2nd Platoon of the Provisional B Troop in the occupation of Thommen. It was led by Lt William L. Madigan. The 3rd Platoon of the assault guns, commanded by 1/Lt Kingston Stembel, teamed with the 3rd Reconnaissance Platoon of B Troop in the occupation of Grunflange. (Map references of this action pertain to 1/50,000 series, Vielsalm # 33 and Houffalize # 107)

Thus, E Troop in entirety, was attached to Task Force Lindsey. And, in turn, its three component platoons were assigned to the sub-task forces of ~~T~~Lindsey as they covered the vital road junctions, screened the southern mouth of the Salmchateau-Bovigny corridor.

(In the following accounts of the operations of the sub task forces, <sup>(AR)</sup>only phases that are NOT covered by preceding or subsequent interviews. For instance, the Espeler and Thommen operations are covered more extensively in interviews with F Company - 18th Sqn, and B Troop of the 32nd. Therefore, most extensive of the three separate accounts to follow is Lt Stembel's account of the most critical of the three actions at Grunflange. - JTS)

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The 1st Platoon of assault guns arrived in Espeler on the night of 19 Dec 1944, held that position until nightfall on 22 Dec 1944. At that time, Lt Kinsel reported that small arms fire could be heard in the direction of Oudler, to the southeast.

Upon the orders of Task Force Lindsey, the troops in Espeler were withdrawn north to the high ground that lies southeast of Audrange late on the night of 22-23 Dec. The 2nd Platoon and troops from Thommen joined them in these positions ~~at~~<sup>after</sup> midnight on the same night. And it was these positions that were held during the fight in this vicinity on 23 Dec. (See interviews with B Troop, 32nd, and P Company same squadron, JTS) Prior to the main engagement in this position, the assault gun's local security was provided by the armored cars of the reconnaissance troops to which they were attached.

The 2nd Platoon occupied Thommen on the evening of 19 Dec 1944. With the other personnel in this sub-task force, they held the town during the 20, 21, and until the evening of the 22nd. Spofradic artillery crashed into the town, and its accurateness led the officer in charge at that time, Lt Blodgett (Lt. Madigan of the assault gun troop was not present) ~~to~~ to withdraw the forces of his task force to the high ground west of the town (vicinity of 798814). The Lieutenant informed Task Force Lindsey headquarters of his move, was immediately ordered to move back into the town.

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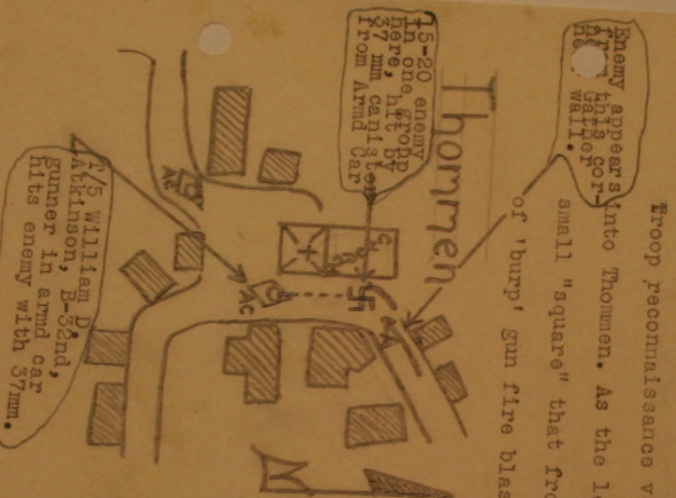
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Blodgett started the reconnaissance elements back into the town, told the non com in charge of the supporting tanks and assault guns, "Don't bring any of those tanks or assault guns."

(Through conversation with B troopers later, the E troopers gathered the following account of the fight in Thommen during this phase of the operation. - JTS)



Troop reconnaissance vehicles slowly made their way back into Thommen. As the leading armored car approached the small "square" that fronts the church at (815813) a burst of "burp" gun fire blasted from behind the corner indicated as "A" in this sketch. In the dim moonlight, one of the troopers saw four figures about 30 yards away from the first armored car. The cavalryman challenged and for an answer received a burst of "burp" fire. 37 mm HE and fire from a TSMG were immediately fired, and the figures disappeared around the corner. Then, ~~the~~ groups of enemy — two or three in each group — came around the same corner. As the amazed cavalrymen watched, the enemy soldiers grouped together — 15 or 20 of them — near a wall that stood beside the church. Several started to approach the armored car, seemingly dumbfounded by its appearance.

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Gunner in the armored car was T/5 William D. Atkinson. Almost as amazed as the troops facing him, he fired the 37 MM cannon at the group. As rapidly as he could reloaded and fire he kept a steady rain of canister ammunition raining down on them. It was at a range of about 30 yards, and despite the dim light, he knew he "couldn't miss".

The troopers said that the enemy screamed as the canister shot poured into them. "It sounded like a whole bunch of dogs yelping," described one trooper. ~~The~~ Others agreed that the actions of the enemy soldiers indicated "they were all hopped-up."

Artillery continued to fall in the town, and by this time the troopers were half-convinced that it was fire from some of the "9th Armored Division's artillery".

Again on the high ground west of Thommen, the sub-task force notified TP Lindsey's CP at Beho, and some of the light tanks that had been kept in mobile reserve there were sent to the sub-task force's position to assist an attack on Thommen.

At about 0700 hours on the morning of 23 Dec 1944, this special force was just about to jump off in an attack on the town when its mission was changed by TP Lindsey on the large withdrawal movement through the Salmchateau - Bovigny escape corridor, and the cavalrymen were ordered to fight a delaying action back towards Audrange. There they were to hold the enemy until 1300, when it would be their turn to turn and scoot through the Salmchateau gate ~~back~~ behind a defense line that was at that time being established by the 82nd Air -

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borne Division, and remnants of the 28th and 106th Inf Divisions. (For details of the fight at Audrange, see interview with P Co - 32nd Squadron, and "Fight of the Fortified Goose Egg" section of the 14th Gp material submitted for pamphlet sources, 25 Jan 1945. JTS)

The 3rd Platoon of the assault gun troop, led by Lt Kingston Stempel, joined with the 3rd platoon of the Provisional B Troop in the occupation of Grutlange. At 191800 December 1944 ~~the~~ this sub-task force entered the town, a way-station on the Oudler-St. Vith highway, with the assigned mission of "talking and holding the town." (Orders from Capt Lindsey, CO of TP Lindsey.)

There, the cavalrymen found the rear Regimental CP of the 424th Inf, part of the 106th Inf Div. Elements of the 106th Divisional artillery were positioned 2000 yards northwest of the town, from whence they were supporting the foot troops that remained of that division.

Lt. Marshall Alexander, commander of the reconnaissance troopers in the sub-task force, made a personal reconnaissance of the town, accompanied by a personal reconnaissance that Regiment's I and R Platoon ~~was~~ in the town. Part of cavalrymen coordinated the defense plan of the town with them. In addition to the troops found in the town with them, also had a medium FO tank from the 7th Armored Division. It was assigned to the task force, with the mission of adjusting the supporting fires necessary for the defense of the town.

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At 2000 hours, the cavalrymen had placed their vehicles and weapons to cover the approaches to the town and had posted a perimeter guard around the outskirts of the settlement. Hardly had the troopers taken their positions than an American jeep came reeling up through the town from the direction of Oudler. This jeep had almost completed the northward turning of the S-turn by which the main road enters the town from the south, ~~where~~ it was flagged down and halted by the I and R Platoon Sgt of the 424th. He waved a white handkerchief in order to attract the attention of the hurrying car.

As soon as the occupants heard the brusque challenge of the guards at the southern entrance, the jeep started to hurriedly back away down the road. Lt Stembie was in this vicinity at the time of the incident. He stated that everyone there immediately sensed that there were "jerries" as the vehicle scuttled back down the road. Sgt Thomson, CO of the assault gun that had been positioned nearest this section of the road, shouted, "I'll get him, Lieutenant." Thomson fired with an .03 rifle, and the troopers saw this bundled shape teeter sideways from the vehicle for a moment and then fall out onto the pavement. A flurry of shots followed the retreating jeep, but failed to halt its flight to the south.

Gauntly, the troopers approached the figure that had fallen from the jeep. As they closed in, Lt Stembie warned that to be wary of a hand grenade, but they found a frightened enemy soldier who lay quivering by the side of the road without helmet or weapons.

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It was Lt Kinsel who first tried his make-shift German on the enemy soldier. "Common sie here," shouted Kinsel, but the man refused to move. Finally, the men gathered around him. He lay still on the ground, obviously alive, but refusing to move. In the end, it was necessary to roughly grasp the man by the ~~scuff~~ of the neck, and haul him to his feet. He did not seem to be seriously wounded and was immediately taken to the rear CP of the 424th Regiment.

At the CP efforts were made to interrogate the prisoner. This questioning was interrupted by a single, brief flurry of artillery that slammed down onto the buildings in the town. The troopers, by this time, had prepared positions in the basements of the buildings, and had sand-bagged them thoroughly. They had little fear of the enemy's artillery.

The frightened PW muttered some gibberish about two Panzer divisions that were to the south and "out of gas". Kinsel stated that the man was obviously lying, and that no efforts were successful in making him tell where he had gotten hold of the American vehicle. When the PW had been initially held at the CP, the information was sent to the forward elements of the regiment, and Sgt Pickwick was sent to the forward took the PW back to Eho, for further processing and questioning.

Pickwick returned at approximately 0200 with the information that the counterattack consisted of about "12 German divisions". He had picked up this <sup>information</sup> at the German Headquarters in Eho.

\* Might be One - 24 Panzer who made out with  
& had been in 2 gas. RED: d/dns

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\* Might be One - 24 Panzer who made and with  
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On 20 Dec 1944, Kinzel had "Breakfast" at about 0730, and then went out to check the positions of the sub-tank force. It was shortly after 0800 when a company of light tanks that the troopers believed to have come from the 826th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (9th Arm'd Div) came into the town, and turned out a secondary road to the east. Members of this light tank company said that they had the mission of ~~the~~ supporting the infantry elements who were positioned in the wooded high ground in the Bois de Thommen. (See sketch of "The Thommen Outpost".)

Throughout the daylight hours of the 20th, artillery fire mostly counterbattery attempts that were directed against the artillery elements of the 106th Div that were directed against the town, the northwest of town. Most of the cavalrymen stationed in their undug positions throughout the day, spent the time improving the positions, establishing range cards for the line of fire of the various weapons.

The 21st of December was much the same. However, mortar and nebelwerfer fire began to fall into the town during this day, and as darkness set in the tanks that had been in position on the morning of the 20th withdrew through the town. They were accompanied by the infantry elements, and had been ordered out. Shortly after those troops passed through the town, the cavalrymen noticed that the artillery that had been firing steadily from the positions near the town had stopped, and they found that those troops, too, had been ordered out.

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At 1000 hours on 22 Dec, the cavalry elements in Thommen were ordered to proceed to Grombach. The re the troops saw Lt Bendinlill of the 32nd Squadron, <sup>and</sup> entered the town at about 1330. At that time the town was garrisoned by tired remnants of the 28th Division, most of the men from that division's 112th Inf. An outpost defensive position had been established with the armored elements of Task Force Jones, 7th Armored Div, who had the responsibility of holding the town. At that time the greatest enemy threat loomed from an easterly direction, from whence reports had come that enemy armor and troops had been successful in seizing St. Vith.

The cavalrymen had established their men in houses in the town. In conversation with the commanders of the Garrison during the afternoon, a rough decision had been made that these cavalry and infantry troops were to be held as a mobile reserve, available for counterattack missions should the enemy threat develop in strength.

The cavalry units commanders listened to the radio traffic that was being monitored by one of the armored divisions CP sets in one of the houses. Kinzel estimated that it was about 2100 hours when the troops in the house with him "perked up their ears", as the radio picked up intercom traffic. 90 mm TD's had been stationed along the stretch of railroad track that ran southwest from St. Vith towards Grombach. Some of the 7th Armored Div's medium tanks had also been placed along this rail line. Some of the vehicles that had been posted furthest to the east were reporting that "11iger tanks were coming down the railroad from the vicinity

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of St Vich". Following this announcement a series of reassuring messages were shuttled between the tanks. Gist of the messages was described as. "Yep, there coming down into my sector, of boy. I'll take care of the second set, I'm letting the first bunch slip through to your guns, "O.K. boy, we're ready; let 'em slip through, I'm set."

But minute-by-minute the messages expressed less confidence. In the space of 15 or 20 minutes, the radio traffic had changed to a jumble of "...My position is untenable, am withdrawing to a better position...etc."

From the eastern section of the town, the cavalry troopers could here the rattle of small arms fire, mostly burp' guns, growing louder. The troops were hustled out of the house, and the men tried, in the darkness, to establish some sort of a perimeter defense of the town.

Lt Alexander's radio picked this particular time to fail to function, and the cavalry elements were left even more deeply in a fog of misunderstanding. The individual platoon leaders attempted to coordinate some sort of defense, but they found that most of the troops in the town were more interested in withdrawal. There was a feeling that the enemy was attacking in a cloud of confusion, that no definite defense had been set up in the town. Few people knew where to go or what steps to take to implement the defense of the town.

Some of the tank elements started moving back through the town from the east, at about 2300 hours. The group interviewed expressed the opinion that it was the 38th medium tank battalion, accompanied by some of the 112th's

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infantry. The cavalry platoon leaders alerted their men, informed them where the vehicles were, and briefed them on a plan for withdrawal.

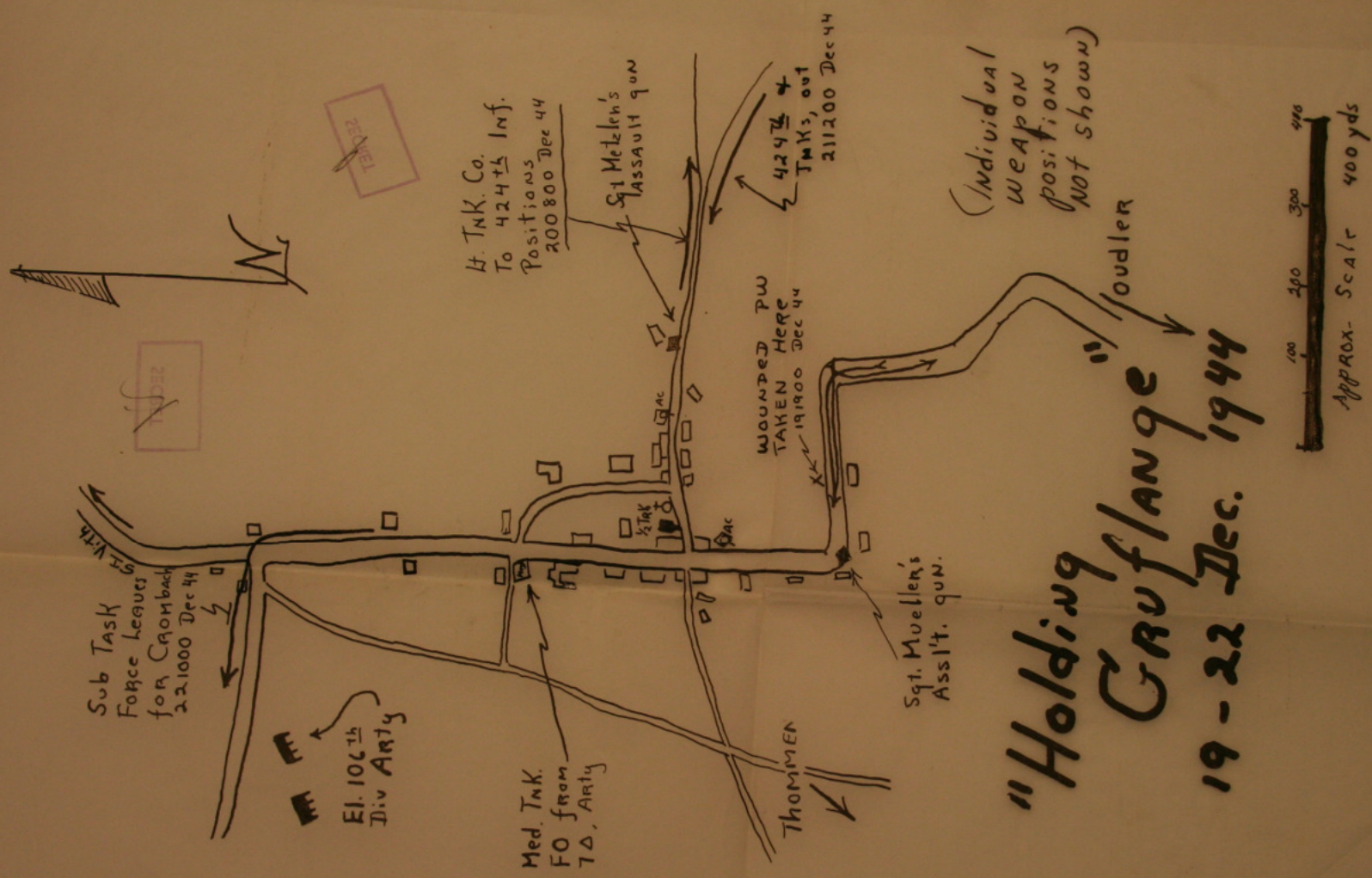
An officer whom the group identified as Lt Col Jones, commander of TP Jones, said "I'm sick and tired of getting chased out of towns. Let's stand here and fight." He, and a small group of officers whom he managed to contact, started plans were shattered quickly when a medium tank, about 100 yards from the western limits of Grombach, was hit by what was presumed to be an enemy bazooka shell. As soon as this tank was hit, heavy guns were heard being fired in the other end of town, and the general withdrawal movement started. Jones instructed everyone to stay on post, and sent a lieutenant from an infantry unit looking for additional men to strengthen a hasty firing line that had been organized. It was at this point that a group of dismounted tankers started to come through the main street of the little town. Jones intercepted them, and ordered them back to their vehicles. They moved off in the direction from whence they had come, but by this time, rapid firing of heavy, flat-trajectory guns was going on in the vicinity of the railroad. And someone shouted that the tanks had gotten into the town.

Lt Alexander reported that Lt Col Jones sensed the difficulties that were arising, and finally said that it looked as though it was necessary to "pull out."

Lt Kinzel's half-track led the cavalry motorcade out of Grombach, and as the cavalrymen's vehicles left the town, many of the scattered infantry elements were given rides

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**"Holding Grafslange" 19-22 Dec. 1944**

100 200 300 400  
 APPROX. SCALE 400 yds

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on the tops of the assault guns, armored cars and jeeps and half-tracks.

A few hundred yards north of Braunlauf (805840) as the assault guns traveled in column (three half-tracks, the two assault guns, and ammunition section following) the machine gun fire poured into the head of the column. All vehicles stopped and the personnel scrambled for ditches. All of the weapons mounted on the half-tracks were immediately pointed in the "General direction" of the enemy fire and for three or four minutes, .50 cal slugs poured into the darkness, seeking the heart of the enemy.

This return ~~of~~ fire seemed sufficient to discourage any more fire from the enemy. And in ten minutes the men remounted the vehicles and moved off to the south. The column met some 7th Arm tanks at the Waldange junction, where light artillery was already falling. The gas supply in the tracks and assault guns was noticed to be low at this point, so they left for Beho where the vehicles were refueled. At 230630 <sup>Dis</sup> they were headed back towards the Waldange junction, ready to take their part in any fight that might develop in that quarters.

There was a regular "jam" of 7th and 9th Arm Div vehicles at the junction. The traffic was coming through the junction in the direction of Beho, and the assault Div realized that this junction would become increasingly important as the enemy pressure grew heavier upon it. For that reason the assault guns were worked through the jammed traffic to take up direct fire positions that could protect the road junction.

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It was difficult to get the vehicles back through the traffic which now jammed the road with a bumper-to-bumper consistency. The enemy evidently had observation on the road junction. As the assault guns and half-tracks moved forward, single artillery rounds landed amidst the American vehicles there. One bantam received a direct hit, wounded Cpl Don E. Ueber and broke the arm of Sgt Mueller. At the time, these two men continued to tag along with the assault guns to take part in the fight.

The artillery continued to thicken as the tracks and guns struggled against the traffic by pulling off the tracks and see-sawing their way through hedges and fences. The constant running for cover slowed down this process. The constant noon before the guns could get near the road junction. Dismounted cavalrymen and light tanks had erected a hasty line of resistance which was screening the road junction, permitting the vehicles jammed there an opportunity to escape. It was at 1230 that Lt Stemble gave an order. That was gotten from some of the first evidence to the road, and specified that the road junction be held until 1300.

The half hour that remained was filled with the intense firing crashing of artillery. Instead of single rounds, the assault guns were now smashing at the traffic with TOF concentrations to one of the assault guns received a direct hit. The resulting explosions sent four body-shaped objects hurtling into the air. Later, Stemble found that the "bodies" were bedding rolls.

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Some of the single rounds that started to fall on the vehicles near the road junction now seemed to be 75 mm flat-trajectory, high-velocity fire. The observer figured that the German troops attacking them were supported by tanks or self-propelled guns.

The assault gun of Sgt Metzler threw a track and was out of the fight. ~~Sgt~~ Sgt William Mueller, commander of the other gun, had had his ammo trailer receive a direct hit. That was the one from which the bedding rolls were blasted into the air. Mueller, realizing that the ammunition in the trailer, which had been set on fire, might explode at any minute, dismounted from the assault gun, and unhooked the trailer from away from the trailer, the 75mm ammunition started to blow. In addition to the hit in the trailer, Mueller's gun had also been hit by a single round of enemy 75 mm fire. PFC Sam A. Smith, assistant driver, had been wounded by the strike and was evacuated by Cpl Utter. The ammunition supply of the gun had been hit by the fragments, and some of the WP shells had been damaged as they lay in the ammo rack. As the gun shells back onto the road and withdrew, the driver, T/S Chester Grant Jr, handed the damaged, dangerously sensitive shells up to Mueller who heaved them out through the hatch. Mueller's work in this action earned him an award of a Bronze Star.

The other assault gun, immobilized by a thrown track, was destroyed by Sgt Huston and Lt Blodgett of the B Troop Reconnaissance Platoon that were in the area of this action. The reconnaissance elements of the sub task force lost only one jeep in this action.

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The vehicles of the sub-task force that had not been knocked out in this fight had been withdrawn a few hundred yards to the west in anticipation of the General withdrawal that was scheduled to take place at 1300. Personnel, some of whom had entered into the fight while fighting on foot, made their way back to the vehicles a few minutes before 1300.

A march column was made up a few hundred yards west of the Kaldange junction. Led by the reconnaissance elements, the column moved quickly down the highway that had been cleared of the traffic. Half-tracks were in the middle of the column, while the tail end was made up of four light tanks. The column arrived in Beho at about 1320, and stayed there for about 30 minutes, while the last elements of Task Force Lindsey made ready to pass out through the defense line that had been established in the vicinity of the defense line that

traveled up the Bovigny - Salmchateau highway.

Little difficulty was experienced as the remnants of TPL salm - Liarnneux - Aywaille. Arriving in Aywaille at 1900, the troop was billeted there for the night.

On 24 Dec 1944 E Troop moved from Aywaille to Xhignesse, arriving there at 1500. Lt Madigan, with the 2nd Platoon, was sent with B Troop of the Provisional Cavalry Squadron to Durée. There the troops were attached to the 97th Reconnaissance Squadron of the 7th Arm'd Div, and during the 25 - 26 Dec reorganized the cavalry elements into two 35-man infantry platoons. Only five men were taken from the platoon of assault guns. They operated as infantry platoons with B Troop (see B Troop interview), returned on 30 Dec. Only casually amongst the troopers was Pvt William Walker who had been slightly scratched with shrapnel.

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The remainder of the assault gun troop had similar experiences and served as foot-troops with the Provisional C Troop commanded by Capt Martin (See C Troop Interview-JTS). However, it was not necessary for the assault gunners to use their self-propelled howitzers for combat missions during this phase of the fighting. All had been relieved of current attachments by 30 Dec 1944, ~~at~~ at which time they withdrew as a group and started resting, rehabilitation and re-equipping in the vicinity of Liege, at which time they were interviewed.

*Jack Shea*  
Interviewer  
Lt. Jack Shea.  
The 1st Div. H. Sq.  
Hq., First Army

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FORM NO. 1 (REV. 2-54) HQ FIRST ARMY



GERMAN COUNTERATTACK

(16 Dec 44 - 1 Jan 45)

- P Company (light tanks) 32nd Reconnaissance Sqdn, 14th Gp.  
- Interviews with - Capt Horace N. Blair, CO

1/Lt Frank Kelsby Jr, 2nd Pltn Ldr

2/Lt James E. Eskew, 1st Pltn Ldr

2/Lt Thomas E. Hawke, 3rd Pltn Ldr

- Place - Orbanee, Belgium, 9 Jan 1945  
1st Sgt Clifford V. Stewart

- Like the rest of the 32nd Squadron the light tank company was engaged in a period of training, rehabilitation and equipping when interviewed. Some reinforcements were received, and the company had drafted tentative plans that would be put into operation should an enemy airborne landing be attempted on the flat, vulnerable terrain north of Liege.

Troops of the company were billeted in the civilians' houses, their morale and esprit ~~was~~ apparently not cooled by the difficult stretch of fighting that they had completed less than a week previously.

Only enemy fire evident

of 40 V-1 robot bombs in the area was a daily average the area. The overs usually sputtered over or crashed into while the ones landing in the area seemed to be those that had 'over-shot' Liege. No casualties were caused by those that though one of them did hit an ammunition dump that was about a half mile distant from the P Company billets.  
-Overlays and sketches -  
See "Marked Map of Front Line Positions" 1/25, 000, appended to Group material.

-Interviewer - Lt Jack Shea (2nd Info & Hist Sv)

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ended to Group material.

The normal organization of a mechanized cavalry squadron includes one company of light tanks. These tanks are armed with a 37 mm cannon and 30 cal. MG, both coaxially mounted in the turret. In addition the light tanks has a .30 or .50 cal mounted on an anti-aircraft ring mount that stands above the turret hatch, and some have a 30 coax bow gun mounted in the fore part of the hull.

There are 17 tanks in a light tank company. Each platoon has a platoon leader's tank, and two sections of two tanks each. There are three platoons. The company headquarters consists of two tanks. One is the company commander's tank, and the other a medium tank recovery vehicle. In the 32nd the maintenance and recovery tank was a light instead of a medium. Capt Horace N. Blair, commander of J Company, 32nd Squadron, had his company engaged in extensive maintenance and repairs as the troops rested in the vicinity of Hencheux, near Vielsalm, Belgium, on 15 December 1944. He had taken the opportunity provided by the company's being withdrawn from contact to remove and dismantle the tanks power plants, remove tracks for the purposes of suspension repair, and had removed all radio intercommunication apparatus from inside the turrets of the tanks. This signal equipment was further broken down to permit full refurbishing of the tanks' communications system.

Thus, when the squadron was alerted for a combat move at 0800 on 16 Dec 1944, there was a wild scurry in the tank company to "paste the pieces back together again". The rest of the squadron was ready to move out by 0932, but the tankers were still hurriedly changing tracks, installing engines, etc.

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By 1200 all of the light tanks had been made combat operational with the exception of the ir signal equipment. The installation of that apparatus would have consumed extra hours, and there was then precious time consumed extra the tanks would have to risk operations without radio <sup>(facilities)</sup> ~~facilities~~. He ordered that they be fueled, armed and put on the road. The column of light tanks left Rendeux a few minutes after 1200 hours.

At the time that P company took the road it lacked 8 men from its regular P/O strength. Since the company had had no contact with its squadron or with 14th Group headquarters since the squadron left Rendeux at 0832, Capt Bair decided to stop at St Vith, where the 106th Inf Div (to which the 14th Cav Gp was then attached) had its GP. There the 106th staff told Bair that Mandersfeld was under heavy artillery fire. Bair decided to rendezvous his tanks at Schonberg, and then contact the cavalry GP to determine their disposition of his mobile reserve force. At Schonberg the tankers found artillery dropping ~~the~~ bridge that crosses the Our River there. In addition to this sporadic artillery fire, Bair found that ~~the~~ <sup>his</sup> ~~there~~ <sup>near the</sup> beginning to stream through the Schonberg junction, and decided that ~~the~~ <sup>his</sup> ~~there~~ <sup>near the</sup> tanks were becoming engaged in a traffic bottleneck. To clear this, he directed them to move down the road towards St. Vith, finally had them gathered in an assembly area a few hundred yards west of Heuem. (See Marked Map - "Front Line Positions")

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It was about 1530 when Capt Bair, on his way to the OP OP in Mandorfeld, intercepted the Group commander at Andler. Col Davine told him to "stay there and hold", when he had reported his position.

Bair returned, got the tanks "put oned up" for the night in a draw near Setz. An artillery Group headquarters was located near his area, and he tied in with the personnel of that command.

As darkness fell, the traffic that came along the road from the east increased. Bair was not sure exactly what units were represented by the stream of vehicles that came by his position, but he believes that most of them were elements of the 106th's divisional artillery elements. During his stay at this position, Capt Bair was visited

by the 32nd's CO, Lt Col Paul Ridge. Ridge seemed to be in a very fatigued and nervous state, and told Bair that he was supervising the ammunition supply from the squadron's twins at Vielsalm to the front.

Only means of communication that Bair had with his squadron headquarters was physical contact made possible by using the single jeep that he had with his company. However, he did manage to make radio contact through other command channels.

The road was still jammed the next morning (17 Dec 1944) and the traffic continued to pour in. Between 1200 - 1300 Bair received an order from squadron to withdraw to Meyerode. As he started to get his company on the road, B Troop of the 32nd came past him. They had been engaged in a fire-fight and delaying action only a few hundred yards from him, and he had

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not known that they were there. The company of light tanks fell in behind the B Troopers and moved off towards Meyerode to report to the squadron CP that was located there.

The squadron commander, Maj Krucke (formerly the executive, but now replacing Col Ridge) ordered Balr to proceed to Wall-crossed the railroad #865903). While at this position, Balr observed that artillery and heavy anti-aircraft guns were in the vicinity, and that a liaison plane airstrip lay a few hundred yards to the southwest of the bridge. A Lt from the light tank company of the 87th Reconnaissance Squadron (7th Arm'd Div) visited the position during the afternoon, and Balr that his tanks would be in to occupy the same locality that evening.

At 1700 P. Company was ordered by the squadron to withdraw to Vielsalm. B and C Troops of the 32nd followed by the tankers followed the same trail that had been traveled by B Troop. (See B Troop Interview) Balr said that he believed that it was elements of the 7th and 9th Armored Divisions that he saw in the vicinity of Sart las St Vith as dusk fell. These armored elements were having a difficult time bucking traffic as they made their way towards St. Vith. These

The traffic congestion that clogged the roads that led to the west through Pottau towards Vielsalm prompted Balr to remark that "All kinds of basic principles were violated as traffic churned its way into three columns, all tightly packed, on a road that normally should have carried only two-way traffic." He saw Capt Oline and Capt Woods of the 32nd Squadron Headquarters trying to ease the traffic situation,

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but their efforts were ineffective in helping to speed the progress of the units that were caught in the jam,

Only elements of G Troop, which were trailing the 32nd's column, were intercepted by the 14th Cav Gp Hq upon passing through Poteau. F Company and the rest of the squadron passed through without realizing the Gp Hq had been established there, and for that reason were out of the fight that was precipitated by MP Hayes' attempts to force its way north towards Reicht and retake the high ground in the vicinity of Born. (See G Troop Interview, also General Story of the 14th Gp - ref: "Action at Poteau" JTS)

It was 0600 on the 18th of December when elements of F Company tumbled into Vielsalm. First echelon maintenance was immediately begun on the tanks, for Blair thought that they would undoubtedly be recommitted at an early moment. Maj Kraecke was at that time attempting to ~~reorganize~~ reorganize the elements of the squadron that had gotten as far as Vielsalm. Many of the 32nd's officers were then engaged in the action that had begun at Poteau. Traffic still poured in the action east, and though attempts were started in from the north they had to be abandoned when it became evident that "Task Force Kraecke" could not buck the stream of traffic that "Task Force K" was pouring into Vielsalm from the east. (See Interview with Headquarters 32nd Squadron - Ref: Task Force Kraecke. JTS)

Late in the afternoon the remnants of the forces that had become engaged in the fight at Poteau came back into Vielsalm, and full reorganization of the forces that started in anticipation of its becoming attached to the 7th Armored Division as an extra cavalry reconnaissance squad-

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ron. (See interviews with both squadron headquarters, and with the 14th Cav Gp command - JTS)

About 82 men from the original 32nd's light tank company were in the reorganized P Company, and for this reason the new organization was commanded by Capt Blair. Capt Fitzgerald, commander of the 18th's light tank company, was designated as Blair's executive. Reorganization plans were completed during an officers' meeting that took place between 1900 - 2000 on the night of 18 - 19 Dec. Actual reorganization of the light tank elements began at first light the next day. All of the group's reorganization was done under the supervision of Maj Dill, ~~1st Lt~~ 3-3 of the 18th Squadron. Maj Kracke told Capt Blair that, "Maj Dill is in charge of the reorganization." (Blair) The reorganization did not effect the normal organization of the 32nd's light tanks. The platoons retained their normal personnel, and none of the designated leaders ~~were~~ shifted around. First mission for the reorganized tank company, and none the 18th of December when radio reports from an unknown source warned that enemy tanks were converging from an unknown source 2nd Platoon, led by Lt Halsby, was attached to the reorganized B Troop to outpost and patrol the Vielsalm - Salmchateau - BeVigny highway, while the balance of the reorganized deployed around the entrances to Vielsalm. Later on the 18th, the two light tank platoons that were composed of the 18th Squadron's personnel were assigned to Task Force Lindsay. This special force was made up of B Troop personnel, special assault gun elements, PO tanks that controlled artillery support that was provided by the 7th

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ARMED DIVISION'S ARTILLERY, and TD elements. (See interview with Capt Lindsey, CO of 7PL. Also interviews with B Troops (both squadrons) and H Company, 18th Squadron JTS) There were six light tanks in these two (18th) platoons that went with Capt Lindsey. One of the platoons was led by Lt. West and the other by Lt. Miller. Their mission was to protect the Beino - St. Vith main supply route that led ammunition, fuel and food to the 7th Armored elements fighting in that vicinity. (See General Story on 14th Cav Gp. Re: "Flight of the Fortified Goose Egg" submitted for pamphlet material, 23 Jan 1945. JTS) On the next morning five more light tanks were added to this force with TR Lindsey. There was little fighting in the initial phases of the task force's occupation of the towns of Grutlange, Thommen and Espeler, but ~~the~~ the tanks were without radio, and it was difficult to maintain control. Four dismounted men rode on each of the tanks that worked with 7PL as protection against bazooka-armed enemy tank snipers.

Supply trains for the light tank company were kept at Renshoux.

On the morning of the 20th of December, the remaining 11 light tanks were ordered to "Proceed without delay to BOVIGNY. There report to LtCol Jones". Source of this order was LtCol Damon, who had been designated as the CO of the reorganized cavalry squadron.  The order had been delivered at 1000 hours by Maj Dill.

Lights that were outstanding the Salmchateau-Bovigny highway as they rolled towards BOVIGNY.

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At the command post of Task Force Jones, ~~he~~<sup>he</sup> was instructed that his light tanks would be split amongst the sub-task forces within TF Jones that were to hold vital road junctions at Cherain-Gouvy - Dieffelt. Mission of these under-task forces was to protect the Violsalm-Salmhateanu - Bovigny corridor's southern mouth, mission that complemented the mission that had already been assigned to TF Lindsey in ~~its~~<sup>its</sup> positions further to the east. It was at that time expected that the main enemy thrusts were to come from the south, and that enemy armor thrusts to obtain the Bovigny - Salmhateanu corridor ~~was~~ for a drive that could lead ~~to~~<sup>to</sup> north to Liege.

Six of the light tanks were sent out with these three sub-task forces -- two each to Cherain, Gouvy and Dieffelt. Balr kept a reserve of Nive light tanks and four SP TD's as a centrally located mobile reserve near Bovigny.

On the ~~evening~~<sup>afternoon</sup> of 20 Dec, the task force that had been assigned to join forces with some QM and Ordnance supply troops who were then defending Gouvy ran into trouble. It Halsby was leading the sub-task force's column into the town, when the column encountered a sudden fire to stop the enemy's countermeasures. The fire was returned and was sufficient this ambush burst of fire, and the column rolled on towards Gouvy. One man was killed by

Halsby's tank was shot at ~~by~~<sup>by</sup> a German bazooka as he entered the outskirts of Gouvy a few minutes later. He withdrew for a moment, alerted the cavalry reconnaissance elements that were following him, then stormed into the town with all weap-

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ons blazing. In the ensuing fight 10 - 12 prisoners were taken, and many times that number killed or wounded. (The Group was reluctant to make an estimate of the figures.)

When the town had been cleared the members of the under task force found no evidence of the service troops that they had expected to find there. Further, they had found that the fire that they had encountered at Halcoureaux came from a German OP that had been established there.

As darkness was setting in, the cavalry units withdrew to the vicinity of Halcoureaux, where they "buttoned up" for the night. Some TD elements of 7th Armored Div, led by 2/Lt Will Rogers Jr., were with them in this position.

At about 1800 on 21 Dec, an order from Lt Col Jones directed the group to "occupy" Gouvy, and to make contact with a Col ~~Stone~~ <sup>Stone</sup>, ~~of~~ <sup>of</sup> an AA unit who was in contact area near Gouvy station, it was now found, had been defending the station. Contact was made and about 20 truckloads of rations were evacuated from a ration dump that had been at the Gouvy station.

Additional elements from FP Jones went to Gouvy to assist Col. Stone in the defense of Gouvy station. Reconnaissance element, led by Lt Hawke, while the over the defense of Gouvy itself. One of the units remembered by the cavalrymen as having participated in the holding action commanded by a Capt. Hughes.

On the afternoon of the 21st three more PW's were flushed from one of the houses in Gouvy after a civilian had informed on them.

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after a civilian had informed.

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Though the enemy had been cleared from Gouvy, some enemy elements evidently did not realize that such had occurred. At about 1800 a brief flurry of excitement whipped through the town as a single enemy half-track barreled into the town from the southwest. It was in the town so rapidly that the troopers did not have time to react. As soon as they started to fire at it, it increased its speed, and a single soldier in the rear of the track started to spray with a light machine gun. American weapons returned this fire, but they were unsuccessful in stopping the track as it sped out towards the east, slammed to a halt, backed around and clanked off in a northerly direction. Nothing more was heard of this track. It's whirlwind visit had resulted in no casualties -- on either side.

An hour later when a German staff car carrying six men tried to duplicate this feat, the enemy had less success. Six troopers were ready, hit the car with 37 mm. HE shells, MG and bazooka fire. Three of the six were killed, two wounded, and one taken prisoner unharmed. They were sent back to Bovigny for questioning.

At 212100 an enemy column, using blackout lights was reported in Ikerle, bound for Gouvy. The cavalrymen took their battle stations, but the threat vanished as the column veered off towards the west.

Towards midnight on 21 Dec, a nearby civilian reported that there were enemy horse-drawn artillery units in Houfalize. This report was forwarded to the CP of TP Jones, and the men later learned that artillery interdiction missions had been fired on that town in response to the report.

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At 0400 on 22 Dec 1944, Capt Balp was called to Lt Col Jones' CP at Gruflange (? troops stationed in Gruflange at this time made no mention of Jones' CP being there. See interview with E Troop - 32nd Squadron. JTSF) There, Balp was told that he had been assigned a new mission. He was directed to pull the outposts from Chervain and Gouvy, to reorganize them in a perimeter defense around Courtill. Accordingly, the sub-task forces around Courtill, the more southern outposts. A defense around the 9th and 7th Armored Divisions' trains at Courtill was established under the supervision of a Capt Reed, a TD officer from Task Force Jones.

No contact was made while in defensive positions at this point. The troops that had withdrawn from Gouvy, planted mine fields on the Gouvy - Chervain road and in the vicinity of Helcourvaux.

Flight on 22 - 23 Dec brought only flares to the southeast in the vicinity of Hafe D'Autriment, and rumors of an expected withdrawal through Selmehatzen on the 23rd. (A more detailed description of the action at Chervain follows. Particular stress is placed on this action because of the critical nature of the road junction there, and the many in which the sub-task force countered enemy thrusts. The

Lt J. Thomas Garraway took a sub-task force composed of one reconnaissance platoon (Reorganized C Troop), four K-10 TD's ~~planted~~ <sup>in position there</sup> at 30/800 sec 44 Augmenting his fire power was a multiple .50 cal anti-aircraft machine gun mount that he had found abandoned in Chervain.

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Garraway positioned his armored vehicles and automatic weapons, checked the communication facilities of the medium PO tank that had accompanied his force to adjust the medium enemy support of the 7th Armored Division.

At 201730 Light German artillery fell on the town, but it was not in great concentration. This fire kept up for about half an hour when enemy rifle troops began to come over the crest of a gentle rise at (851765). The troopers put about one mortar and automatic weapons fire down on this enemy attack, but it continued to push into the position. Fifteen or 20 minutes after the attack had started, the enemy rifle troops began to get support from mortars and artillery. One mortar team was stupid enough to expose itself on the crest of the ridge ~~mentioned~~ mentioned above, ( See Sketch "Action at Cherdin" appended. JTS) ( See Sketch by 37 mm. cannon fire from the <sup>TANK of</sup> ~~Sgt Neil B.~~ ~~Baxter.~~ Gunner in this tank was P/S Ray L. Tupper, 43-year-old armorer, who had insisted upon filling the gunner's place in this tank in P Company had received a fighting mission with this tank when

This tank, driven by Sgt John Anderson, bore the brunt of the responsibility in repelling <sup>this first</sup> ~~the~~ enemy attack by direct fire. Anderson kept the tank moving forward and backward to escape additional enemy mortar fire, watched while TD and artillery fire knocked out an enemy self-propelled gun and enough to expose on the top of the rise. ( See sketch) Despite the fire, the enemy continued to press forward. They knew that the coming of darkness aided their chances of making a success of the attack, and pressed in despite the

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troopers' fire.

There were no flares fired by the enemy, and after an hour's brisk battle they had gotten to a point in an orchard, about 150 yards from Baxter's tank.

It was at this point that a ruptured cartridge case jammed in the breech of the 50 cal LMG that is mounted coaxially with the light tanks' 37 mm turret cannon. Tupper was operating the gun, realized that he had no ruptured cartridge extraction tool with him. He had been keeping the turret open despite the enemy's mortar fire, "that was the only way I could watch 'em. I didn't want them to sneak up on me." (Tupper)

Tupper told Baxter of the jam, asked him to run to the armored car that was nearby and borrow a spare barrel for the LMG. Meanwhile, Tupper unbolted the gun from the coaxial mount, stepped out onto the stern of the tank and started to strip the weapon in order to replace the barrel.

Sgt Anderson, the tank driver, kept the tank maneuvering along the road all this time. In order to nullify the threat of the enemy's mortar fire, Tupper, as he stripped the jammed weapon on the hatch cover, occasionally fired the anti-aircraft LMG at the enemy when he could locate them by the flash of weapons.

Before Sgt Baxter could return with the spare barrel, Anderson ~~found~~ that there was a spare hung in a fixture near the driver's seat. He passed it up to Tupper, who inserted it in the barrel extension; adjusted headspace, and reassembled the gun. All this was done in the darkness, under fire, and on the unsteady footing provided by the hull of the constantly moving tank.

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Tupper then clambered back inside the turret and started to reinsert the IMG into the coaxial mount. He interrupted this task by peering outside the turret from time to time, to "keep an eye out for the enemy".

He was almost finished his task when

~~one of these glances~~ disclosed a single enemy soldier who had gotten within five feet of the tank. For a moment Tupper was in a quandary. He could not fire the anti-aircraft IMG at the man without getting outside the tank. The coaxial MG was not yet ready to fire. For a moment he hesitated, then dropped for his M-1 that lay in a bracket on the inside of the turret. He jumped four shots toward the vague shape of the turret. He jumped turned back towards completing the installation of the IMG.

One ~~new~~ dead German soldier was found near the tank the next morning. He had been killed by the four shots from Tupper's M-1.

When the 37 cannon and IMG of Tupper's tank again began their jamming, the enemy's attack lost some of its impetus. The threatening situation was further eased a half hour later with the arrival of about one platoon of infantry (the men thought they were G Co - 112th Inf) who had been pressed into service by Lt Garryway. These rifle troops dug in near the men while the other platoon of the ~~understrength~~ company took up similar positions to the north of the Cheyain - Hour-  
Falize road.

The platoon leader of the rifle platoon that came into position near Tupper's tank was killed later the same night. (No one knew the Lt's name, said that the Co CO was Capt Martin)

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The lieutenant and his platoon sergeant were checking positions, passed in front of the BAR that had been dug into a field nearby. This gunner died, killed both the officer and the sergeant. Tupper thought that he heard one of the "doughs" refer to the platoon leader as Lt Dolan.

Tupper's tank had a quiet day during 21 Dec 1944, fired for about a half hour at dusk as a second enemy attack started to form in a draw that approached the town from the south. (See sketch) Fire from the tanks and TD's, mortar fire and an artillery mission was sufficient to crush the enemy attack before it could get properly under way. (For other details on the Cherain battle - See Inter-

view with C Troop, 3rd Squadron, JTS)  
at 0700 on 22 Dec, the Cherain Garrison was ordered to

withdraw to Courtill. Here a perimeter defense was organized around the supply trains of the 7th and 9th Armored Divisions. (See description in Capt Blair's story, noted previously. JTS)

The stand at Courtill was uneventful save for flare activity that was observed to the southeast. The withdrawal from Courtill, last one in this particular phase of the fighting, started at 1000 on 23 Dec 1944, and went "by the numbers",

The light tanks that had been operational at Cherain and at Gouvy were dealt into a mixed column at Cherain speed through out the column "to retain equal" through Bovigny to Salmchateau. He observed that medium tanks were placed near the end of the column, and Capt Reed's TD reconnaissance elements covered the withdrawal in the vicinity of Bovigny.

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As Balr led the column north he observed ~~that~~ the TP Jones CP no longer appeared to be at Bovigny. Two mediums overwatched the road junction there, and an ammunition truck blazed nearby. This truck had evidently been hit by enemy artillery. A few air bursts blossomed above Giaroux, 2000 yards northeast of Bovigny, as Balr's column filed up through the draw.

It was about 1430 - 1500 on the 25rd when Balr's column cleared the Bovigny road junction. There were still elements of Task Force Jones remaining behind him. He knew that Lt Herren was still in Dieffelt, that Capt Reed's TD reconnaissance elements were holding near Gourtil, while Lt Will Rogers supervised the mining and booby-trapping of the roads and buildings ~~from~~ from whence they had withdrawn. Balr's column passed through Salmchateau, thence west to Villats where the troops halted for the night. There they were joined by the members of the Provisional C Troop, remnants of the 28th Division, elements of the 7th and 9th Arm Div's, and the commander of the recent task force, Lt Col Jones. Before continuing with the further operations of Balr's company, it is advisable that the tankers' accounts of the action at Dieffelt be related. (TS)

Lt Herren and the sub-task force assigned to Dieffelt arrived there in the early afternoon of the 20th, erected a road block made of a 'necklace' of mines across the southern entrance to the town. At the TP Jones CP this force had been told that the 112th Inf was in position south of them, but they understood that the infantry elements had left by the time that the cavalry covering force arrived in the town.

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This impression was given a firmer basis when, between 2200 - 2300, an unidentified TD Captain passed through the town, headed for the south. He told the cavalrymen that he was trying to contact the 112th, and the troopers told him that they understood that no infantry troops were down there. No one could recall the exact source of this information.

Half an hour later the captain returned through the town. "You were right," he told the troopers. "The infantry isn't down there." He left, leaving the Dieffelt Garrison to experience a quiet night, with no further traffic passing through the road junction there.

In fact, the situation at Dieffelt remained quiet throughout the 21st of Dec. First excitement came at 0200 hours on the 22nd, when an enemy staff car barreled up into the town from the south.

So sudden was the approach of the enemy vehicle that the men charged with the responsibility of pulling the "daisy chain" of mines in front of approaching vehicles ~~fluffed~~ his assignment, merely stared as the car rolled past. One of the bazooka men stationed near the barrier leveled his weapon at the car, but it misfired. Tank gunner PFC George W. Hyde eventually was credited with stopping the German staff car. Finding it difficult to locate the target in his gunsight, he fired his tracer-loaded .30 cal LMG, (mounted coaxially with the 37 mm. cannon), shot the cannon when he saw the stream of tracers ricochet off the car. The first HE round hit the car above the right rear door, and as the car silttered to a stop, the five occupants bailed out and started firing machine pistols wildly.

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This confused firing was intensified as the troopers returned it with ISMC's rifles and pistols. In addition, the horn in the enemy vehicle had been short-circuited by the fire, was "beeping" wildly.

When the fire finally died down, two of the enemy lay in the ditch -- dead. The other three had made a getaway. One of the dead was a Major of Field Artillery, the other a lance corporal. Papers that obviously belonged to the other were immediately sent to the S-2 of IV Jones, and in turn went to the XVIII Airborne Corps. (See Periodic Report, Q-2, XVIII Airborne Corps - 23 Dec 1944)  
The rest of the 2nd was quiet, and on the morning of the 23rd, the sub-task force was alerted to withdraw upon order.

Last element of ~~the~~ Task Force Jones' screening force to leave positions in this area, Lt Herron lead the remaining elements out of Dieffolt at about 1230 - 1300 on the 23rd. He reached the Baho crossroads, which had been designated as "Pt. A" of the delaying action north through the BoviGuy-Salmohatou corridor, at about 1330. TD M-10's were covering Pt. A, and the men believed they were from the 7th Armd Div.

Herron was instructed to establish a road block at Pt B and permit the TD's and Capt Heador's assault guns (See interview with E Troop - 18th Squadron) to withdraw through him. There was a mix-up in the orders and Herron was not quite clear on the intended plans of the withdrawal. He stayed at B until 1530, when the TD's came through with the information that "MIGs are right behind us."

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The men in the cavalry section were not sure of the presence of Tigers, but did see an American half-track and assault gun knocked out by  flat-trajectory fire a few minutes after the tank destroyermen had mentioned the presence of enemy armor.

The men who were with Herren's group described the setting at the southern end of the Salmchateau "cul de sac" as darkness closed in on the evening of 25 Dec 1944.

The end of ~~the~~ <sup>retiring</sup> Task Force Jones  column was receiving artillery as it neared the place where the railroad crosses the Salmchateau - Bovyigny highway. As the light reconnaissance vehicles threaded their way through some of the heavier armor in column on the road, a single enemy artillery shell landed near three light tanks that were huddled together. The shell burst did no harm to the armored vehicles, but killed or wounded 10 - 12 infantrymen who were moving northward with the column.

Finally the column stalled firmly, just prior to its stalling the tankers had seen one unidentified soldier "needing" the progress of the column by dropping fragmentation grenades from his M-G assault gun. He would see that there were no foot troops near his vehicles, then pull the pin on a grenade and drop it out onto the road. The resultant explosion would make all of the vehicles scurry forward for a hundred yards or so. He repeated this several times, then realized that things were really jammed, and his "method" was to no more avail.

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Vehicles had been struck by artillery fire and were burning at several points along the column. Fire could be heard to the rear, and enemy flat-trajectory fire was whining in on the column from the southeast. Some of the men dismounted, milled around, asking "What to do?" In the weak of confused fighting that had preceded this particular situation, none had been so ~~successful~~ <sup>successful</sup>.

It was still not clear in the cavalrymen's minds as to just whom gave the order to withdraw. They saw troops from the column abandon vehicles, and start to filter up through the wooded, hilly terrain to the west of the road. They returned, destroyed their vehicles and joined the other troops moving through the woods.

The balance of the work done by the light tanks in the Ardennes Counteroffensive was comparatively insignificant. Capt Balr assembled 17 tanks that remained, 11 of them from the 32nd Squadron, at Juxtanze. Next mission came on orders of Maj Dill, who instructed Balr to take 17 tanks from Squadron that he had and report to the 97th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron for a further assignment. There was some trouble as one of the tanks broke down just as it left the assembly area and Capt Balr was reprimanded by Maj Dill. "I gave you a direct order to take 17 tanks," said Dill (Balr). "But, in any case, the number of tanks were sufficient for the needs of the 97th Squadron."

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By SNARA Date 9/20/10

-23-

~~SECRET~~

Bair reported to the 87th command at 2330 on 26 Dec 1944, was informed that he had a mission of mobile reserve. In this location at Denuise, Belgium, he eventually was ordered to send 10 light tanks and three M11 crews to be attached to the 87th's light tank company. Later, on the 28th, seven men were sent to do dismounted work with C Troop, (See C Troop Interview) Having provided this support, Bair returned with the rest of his tanks to the GP of the 14th Cavalry Group at Xhignesse on 27 Dec. There he formed the seven tanks that remained into some sort of a reserve tank outfit for the group, but had no further contact with the enemy, or operational missions, until the group was relieved on 30 Dec, and sent to the area north of Liege, where this interview was made.

*Interviewed by*

*Mr. Jack Shea  
2nd Lt I & H. So.  
HQ. First U.S. Army*

~~SECRET~~

-22-

SECRET

Marked Map:

FRONT-LINE POSITIONS

DECLASSIFIED  
Authority: AMP 735017  
By: SNARA Date 9/20/10

This 1/25000 map illustrates the initial phase of fighting by the

14<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Group

NEAR

Manderfeld, GERMANY.

16-17 December, 1944

CLASSIFICATION  
**CANCELLED**  
ACTIVITY OF THE ADJUTANT GENERAL  
DOWNGRADING COMMITTEE  
*[Signature]*

Lt Jack Shea  
2nd I & H Sq  
Hq, First Army

SECRET

*64-311*

*(5)*

16-28

*Orders Countercheck*

# Marked Map "Front-Line Positions" 1/25000 Sheets 5603, 5604 GERMANY 5703 6704

DECLASSIFIED  
Authority: NND 735017  
By: SP7ARA Date: 9/20/01

ARMORED  
PATROL  
17 DEC  
H-18

17 DEC 44  
1300-1540  
ARMED COL.  
SEE E-18  
STORY

10th Bn leaves for Heppenbach from here 161800 Dec 14. A 7th, 52nd stays

1st TP Mayas fights enemy here, 1300 - 1000 16 Dec

1st TP fire positions for E 1st previously reconnoitered. Com. at 1200 16 Dec 1944

2nd and 3rd Pltms of 1st TP join 1st Pltn here and up area to Hs. 1445 16 Dec

4th Bn withdraws to Heppenbach over this route, 1600 16 Dec 44

3 Troop, 1st TP fire: from direct and indirect fire positions here 16 Dec 1944

32nd Hq and other troops cross-country withdrawal to this route 1000 - 1200 16 Dec

3 Troop Delays Enemy Here 1800 - 1300 17 Dec 1944

Spread of Fire Fight - 170700

NIGHT 16-17 DEC

3rd Pltn moves to 161100

1592







TANK 95  
Flieger  
Flieger  
170745  
170600

18th sqdn leaves for Harnsbach from here 161850 Dec 44. 32nd stays here until 1650 17 Dec

daylight 17 Dec 44

1st TP Mays fights enemy here, 1500 - 1600 16 Dec

Indirect fire positions for E Troop reconnoitered at 1800 16 Dec 1944

2nd and 3rd Flats of E Troop join 1st Pltn here after mopping up area to NW, 1445 17 Dec

1st sqdn withdraws to Harnsbach over this route, 1600 16 Dec 1944  
3 Troop, 1st Fltn, from direct and indirect fire positions here 16 Dec 1944.

170600  
170730  
170700

Sounds of fire  
Fight - 170700

17R  
374

170100  
170200

F Co  
TARGETS  
0450-1200

170600  
170700  
170800

160600

592

14



in leaves for Manderbach from  
1650 Dec 44. A Troop, 32nd stays

1st TP Mayes fights enemy  
sks here, 1300 - 1600 16 Dec  
1st set fire positions for 2nd TP  
previously reconiterred.  
led at 1200 16 Dec 1944

2nd and 3rd Fltns of  
1st TP, 32nd  
join 1st Pltn here after moving  
up area to NW. 1345 1  
Dec 1944

1st Pltn withdraws to Manderbach  
over this route, 1600 16 Dec 1944

Troop, 1st Pltn fire from direct  
and indirec fire positions here  
16 Dec 1944.

1st and 2nd pltn hills  
survive - 171700 Dec

I+R  
394

2 TDA 820  
2 TDA 810

1 TDA 820

161300

14  
18  
17

Manderfeld

F CO  
TARGETS  
0930-1200

C18  
820

3 C18

2 A18  
A18

170730

B  
1  
382  
16-17  
Dec

170700

592

589

A E 81

A T 422

422

14  
422

2 422

Olzheimere

97

96

95

94

93

92

91

90

CLASSIFIED  
REF ID: A66307  
MAID 735017  
US ARMY  
Dec 1944

17 DEC 44  
1300-1540  
ARMY COL.  
SEE E-18  
STORY

1st and 2nd leaves for ... from here 161800 Dec 44. 3rd stays

1st Troop ... fights enemy ... here, 1300 - 1500 16 Dec 44  
... fire positions for 3 Troop ... previously reconnoitered. ... at 1800 16 Dec 1944

161300  
[Handwritten notes and arrows]

32nd Hq and Other Troops cross-country withdraws this route 1200 - 1300

2nd and 3rd Plns of ... join 1st Pln here at ... up area no. 1445 16 Dec 44

4 Troop withdraws to ... over this route, 1600 16 Dec 44

3 Troop, 1st fire: from direct and indirect fire positions here 16 Dec 1944.

3 Troop Delays Enemy Here 1000 - 1300 17 Dec 1944

Speeds of Fire Fight - 170700

2nd pln ... move to ... 16 1100

ARMOR TRAFFIC OBSERVED BY B-18 172100

3 Troop turns, withdraws as 3rd pln hits ... convoy - 171720 Dec 44

3rd pln ... shoots ... German convoy ... 1715 Dec 44



17 DEC 44  
1200-1540  
ARMY COL.  
SEE E-18  
STORY



32nd Hq and Other Troops  
cross-country withdrawal  
this area 1200 - 1200

Group Delays Enemy Here  
1200 - 1300, 17 Dec 1944

Swords  
of Fire  
Fight - 170700

Co, 32nd Assembled here  
during night 16 - 17 Dec.  
Move to Meyerode, 131300.

ARMOR TRAFFIC OBSERVED  
By B-18  
172100

172100  
DEC 44

Group Delays, withdraws  
as 2nd pltn hits  
convoy - 171720 Dec

2nd pltn, 3-10 shoots  
at German convoy  
171715 Dec 44

2nd and 3rd Pltns of  
join 1st Pltn here at  
up area to N. 1445 1

1st Pltn  
here.

out fire position  
previously re-  
lated at 1200 1

1st Pltn withdraws  
over this route

3 Troop, 1st  
and indire  
16 Dec 1944

3rd Pltn  
move to  
18 1100

Launestadt

275

B

WIGHT  
16-17  
DEC

170730

170800

32

32

32

WIGHT  
16-17  
DEC

32

32

32

32

32

32

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32

32

32nd Hq and Other Troops  
cross-country withdrawn  
this route 1000 - 1200

3rd Troop Delays Enemy Here  
1000 - 1300 17 Dec 1944

Succeeds  
by Fire  
Fight - 170700

F Co, 32nd Assembled here  
during night 16 - 17 Dec.  
Move to Meyerode, 131300.

ARMOR TRAFFIC OBSERVED  
BY B-18  
172100

171600 Dec 44  
OBKAS TRAFK  
BTRP-184

B-18 Abandons, Destroys  
Vehicles, 172300 Dec 44

Leaving with 106th Reg. Troop  
171500 Dec 44

Troop Turns, Withdraws  
as 2nd Pltn hits  
convoy - 171700 Dec

2nd Pltn, B-18 attacks  
German convoy  
171700 Dec 44

Jeep Party  
Savary, Convoy  
171500 Dec

Men Patrol  
Mortar  
171300 Dec 44



32nd Hq and other troops  
cross-country withdrawal  
this route 1200 - 1300

at Sand with tanks to Harnsbach  
over this route, 1600 16 Dec

B Troop, 1st fire from direct  
and indirect fire positions here  
16 Dec 1944

A Troop Delays Enemy Here  
1000 - 1300, 17 Dec 1944

Swords  
of Fire  
Fight - 170700

2nd Pltn  
Move to  
15 1300

ARMOR TRAFFIC OBSERVED  
By B-18  
172100

Troop turns, withdraws  
as 2nd pltn hits  
convoy - 171720 Dec

171600 Dec 44  
ARMOR TRAFFIC  
B-18 - 1800

Jeep Party  
saw Convoy  
17 1800 Dec

Major Troopers  
stay with rest of train  
1st Div night of 16  
Dec 17 1800

Gen Passol  
by  
17 30 Dec 44

B-18 Abandon, see  
Vehicle, 1723 00

Leaving  
17 15

Det Ron Troop  
17 Dec 44





at 02nd withdraws to Hurrenbach  
over this route, 1600 1st Dec  
Troop, 1st fire from direct  
and indirect fire positions here  
Dec 1944.

B  
NIGHT  
18-17  
Dec

170730

1st pln  
move to  
18 1130

F Co  
TARGETS  
0430-1200

C18

3

C18

1st pln  
move to  
18 1130

2

A18

A18

1st pln  
move to  
18 1130

14

422

Launfeld 592

589

A E 11

A T

422

422

2

422

-171600 Dec 44  
00335-150  
81mp-100

Jeep  
Cavalry  
17 1  
18 1  
19 1  
20 1  
21 1  
22 1  
23 1  
24 1  
25 1  
26 1  
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97 1  
98 1  
99 1  
100 1

1st pln  
move to  
18 1130

1st pln  
move to  
18 1130

P Co, 32nd Assembled here during night 16 - 17 Dec. Move to Meyeroda, 131300.

17000 hours, 1st  
2nd pltn hits  
convoy - 171720 Dec

171600 Dec 44  
2nd pltn hits  
convoy  
171715 Dec 44

Jeep Party  
Convoy  
17 1800 D

Ren Patrol  
1730 Dec 44

M's Su  
17120

ARMOR TRAFFIC OBSERVED  
By B-18  
172100

171600 Dec 44  
ARMOR TRAFFIC  
B-18

B-18 Abandons, Destroys  
Vehicle  
1720 Dec 44

Leaving with both Rear Trn  
17 1530 Dec 44

Route of last vehicle  
1715

General Route of B-18's  
Withdrawal  
1715 Dec 44

B-18

PARTY  
NIGHT  
16-17 Dec

171030

88

87

86

85

84

83

82

81

Ather Waldstr.

Mac Hardt

Schlierbach

Micheling

Weppeler

Stuehricht

Brüsse B.

Elaberath

Selz

Hilfma

Groß-Bollscheid

Kesler

Wuppeler

Bochse

Mutzench

Schweiler

Winterscheid

Bleialf

Mühlenberg

Amolscheid

Muhentich

Mutzench

Schweiler

Winterscheid

Winterscheid

Winterscheid

Schwarzbach

Schwarzbach

Schwarzbach

Schwarzbach

Schwarzbach

Schwarzbach

Schwarzbach

Schwarzbach

Schwarzbach

Schwarzbach

Schwarzbach

Radscheid

Michel

Puppelsbach

Milberberg

Milberberg

Milberberg

Milberberg

Milberberg

Milberberg





Convoy - 171720 Dec

Plan, B-18 shoots  
up German convoy  
171715 Dec 44

Escaping Troopers  
stay with rest of train  
1718th Div night of 16-  
17 Dec. 44 LV. 0800

Jeep Party joins  
Cavalry Convoy, 171800  
17 1800 Dec 44

Rein Patrol  
1730 Dec 44

ARMOR TRAFFIC OBSERVED  
BY B-18  
172100

171600 Dec 44  
ARMOR TRAFFIC  
BY B-18

B-18 abandons Destroyer  
Vehicle, escapes to foot  
171720 Dec 44

Leaving with 10th Rein Trn  
171530 Dec 44

EM's Surrender Proposal  
accepted by Johnston -  
171400 Dec. 44

Route of withdrawal  
171515

B-18's

B-18

413

40TH  
NIGHT  
16-17 Dec

413

170000

170000



Troop turns, withdraw  
as 3rd pltn hits  
convoy - 171720 Dec 44

pltn 13-18 shoots  
up German convoy -  
1715 Dec 44

Dec 44  
TRAFK  
- 184

Jeep Party  
Cavairy Convoy  
17 1600 Dec 44

Escaping Troopers  
Stay with rest of train  
16th Div night of 16-  
17 Dec. 44 17.0300

Recon Patrol  
1730 Dec 44

EM's Surrender Proposal  
rec'd by Lt. Johnston -  
171200 Dec. 44

592

589

AE 81

AT 422

14  
III  
422

422

2 422

423

Lt Jack Shen

17 1800 Dec. 44  
Dec. 14 1900  
17 0800

Com Patrol  
130 Dec 44

EM's Surrender Proposal  
171300 Dec. 44  
Johnston



Lt Jack Shen  
2nd I & H Sv  
Hq First Army

98  
99  
Brandscheid

Herscheid

Obermellen

Sellerich

Hontheim

Gappenfeld

413

Haldenscheid

Wald

Schwarzer Mann

Haldenscheid

Haldenscheid

Oberascheid

88  
87  
86  
85  
84  
83  
82

98

99

00



OBERS TRAFIK  
BIRP-184

Cavalry Convoy  
17 1600 Dec 44

1st night of 16  
17 Dec 44 17.0800

Ren Patrol  
17 1630 Dec 44

B-18 Abandons, Destroys  
Vehicles, Escapes  
17 1720 Dec 44

Leaving with  
17 1550 Dec 44

Route of  
last vehicles  
17 1115

of B-18's  
aval

EM's Surrender Proposal  
17 1400 Dec 44

18

423

PARTY  
NIGHT  
16 1100

RCN 106

Platoons via  
this route  
16 1500 Dec 44

Brandscheid

98

98

98

97

98

99

00



B-18 Abandons, Destroys  
Vehicles, Escapes 9 Foot  
171700 Dec 44

Leaving with 106th Rgt. Troop  
171550 Dec 44

Route of last vehicle withdrawal  
171150 Dec 44

General route of B-18's  
B-18 withdrawal  
171130 Dec 44

Relief Party  
0700 + 0830

Platoons in  
this route at  
161300 Dec 44

ARTY NIGHT  
161100

BTRP-18

171330

171400

171330

170500

161030

RCN 106

IAR 423

99

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# MARKED MAP "Front-Line Positions"

1:25000 Sheets 5603, 5604  
GERMANY 5703, 6704

DECLASSIFIED  
Authority NND 735017  
By SP NARA Date 9/20/10

ARMORED  
PATROLS  
17 DEC  
Hq-18

17 DEC 44  
1300-1540  
ARMY COL.  
SEE E-18  
STORY

18th Sqdn leaves for Heppenbach from  
here 161830 Dec 44. A Trk, 32nd stays

\* 170800  
32  
32  
32  
32  
NIGHT  
16-17  
Dec

2nd and 3rd Pltns of  
join 1st Pltn here as  
up area to NW, 1445

TRACK 95

Flora

Flora  
17 DEC 45

daylight  
17 Dec 44

275

Medendorf

Eimersheid

ROAD  
IN

# Map of Positions

5603, 5604  
NY 5703, 6704

44 TAKEK95  
96  
Finger 170345  
Finger 170345  
1st Lt. Johnson, A-32nd, leads escape group  
after enemy takes Honsfeld 0600 17 Dec

18th Sqn leaves for Leppanbach from here 161830 Dec 44. A Trp, 32nd stays

1st Trp Mayas fights enemy here, 1300 - 1600 16 Dec

Indirect fire positions for E Trp previously reconnoitered. Occupied at 1200 16 Dec 1944

2nd and 3rd Plt of A Trp, 32nd join 1st Plt here after mopping up area to NW, 1445 1 Dec 44

1st Sqn withdraws to Harnesbach over this route, 1600 16 Dec

\* 170600  
32  
32  
32  
NIGHT 16-17 Dec

IR 394

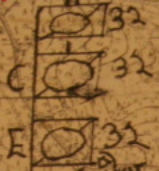
275

161600





170800



2nd and 3rd Pltns of 1st Trp, 32nd Inf join 1st Pltn here after mopping up area to NW, 1445 16 Dec 44.

1st Sqd withdraws to Herresbach over this route, 1600 16 Dec 44.

E Troop, 1st fire from all and indirect fire positions 16 Dec 1944.

Other Troops withdraw 1000 - 1200

B Troop delays enemy here 1000 - 1300, 17 Dec 1944

Seconds of FIRE Fight - 170700

3rd Pltn Move to support 15 1100

1st Trp (Lt 225) support C Troop 16 Dec 44

170730



592

172100



17 DEC 44  
1300-1540  
ARMY COL.  
SEE E-18  
STORY

94



32nd Inf and other troops  
cross-country withdraws  
this night 1200 - 1200

B Troop Delays Enemy  
1000 - 1300, 17 Dec

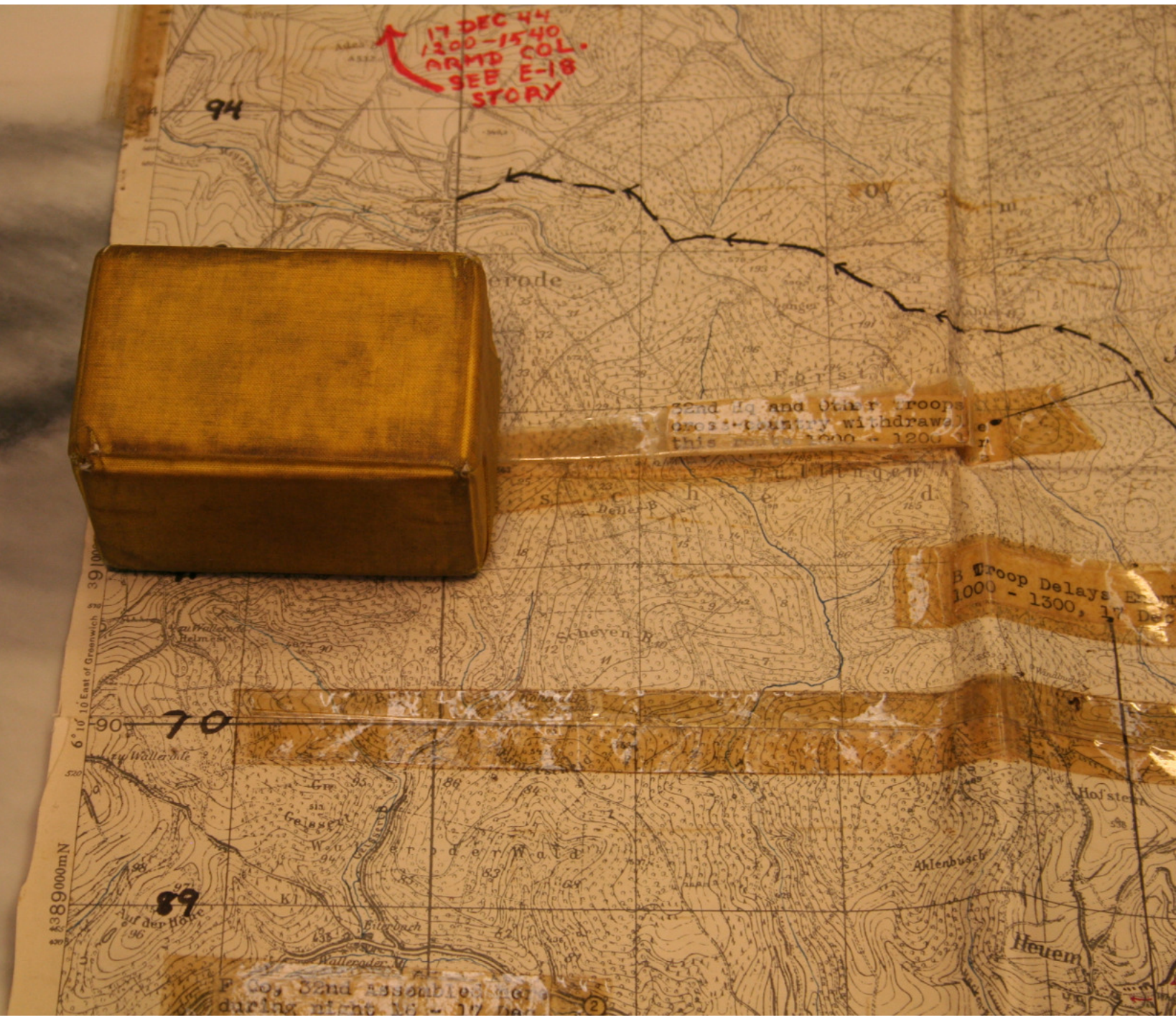
70

89

3890000mN

6° 10' 10" East of Greenwich

F Coy, 32nd Assn Bn, 1st Div  
during night 16 - 17 Dec



# Marked Map "Front-Line Positions"

1/25000 Sheets 5603, 5604  
GERMANY 5703, 6704

ARMORED  
PARADISE  
1200  
HQ-18

DECLASSIFIED  
Authority: NND 735017  
By: SP NARA Date: 9/20/10

17 DEC 44  
1200-1540  
ARMED COL.  
SEE E-18  
STORY

100m Bdn leaves for HQ  
here 161330 Dec 44 A

\* 170500



ROAD LIVES IN

Harnesb

# Marked Map "Front-Line Positions"

1/25000 Sheets 5603, 5604  
GERMANY 5703, 6104

ARMORED  
PATROL  
17 DEC 44  
HQ-18

DECLASSIFIED  
Authority NND 735017  
By SPNARA Date 9/20/10

17 DEC 44  
1200-1540  
ARMED COL.  
SEE E-18  
STORY

TRACKS 95

HERN

18th Sqn leaves for Her  
here 161330 Dec 44. A T

\* 170500





B Troop Delays Enemy  
1000 - 1300, 17 Dec

6° 10' East of Greenwich

3890000mN

P Co, 32nd Assombld moved  
during night 16 - 17 Dec.  
Move to Neversode, 17,300

ARMOR, TRAFFIC OBSERVED  
BY B-18  
172100

70

86

87

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87

87

86

86

85

85

84

84

5-18 abandons, Destroys  
 Vehicle, Escapes on foot  
 1720 Dec 4

Leaving with 106th Recon Troop  
 17 1500 Dec 4

Route of withdrawal  
 last vehicles leaves  
 Wttrshd 171115 12-41

General Route of B-18's  
 Foot Withdrawal  
 17-13 Dec

ARMOR, TRAP

172100

Bae Hardt

Schlierbach

Micheling

Kerstey

Groß-Bollscheid

Weppelen B.

Weppelen

Steinebrück

Steinebrück

Kochimmersweiler

Setz

Hedgen

Holken

Böcher

Urb

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520

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460

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360

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100

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Route of  
last ve  
withrshd  
171115

General Route of P-18's  
Foot Withdrawal  
17-18 Dec 54

General Route of P-18's  
Foot Withdrawal  
17-18 Dec 54

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3



TRAFFIC OBSERVED  
BY B-18  
172100

up German convoy  
171715 Dec 44

Es going  
Stay with re  
10th Div ni  
17 Dec. 44

Jeep Party  
valry Convoy  
17 1600 Dec 44

Men Patrol  
Mortar  
30 Dec 44  
draws  
fire.

171600 Dec 44  
DEMOS TRAFFIC  
BY B-18

Destroys  
scars of  
0 Dec 44

106th  
17 1530 Dec 44

M's Surrender Proposal  
by Lt. Johnston -  
171400 Dec. 44

rawal  
leaves  
1115 10-4





B Troop Delays Enemy Here  
1000 - 1300, 17 Dec 1944

NIGHT  
16-17  
Dec.

Ord ptn  
Move to Sup  
16 1100

Swords  
of Fire  
Fight - 170700

Laudefeld 592

ARMOR TRAFFIC OBSERVED  
By B-18  
172100

172100  
DEC 44

Troop turns, withdraw  
as Ord ptn hits  
convoy - 171720 Dec 44

Ord ptn, B-18 shoots  
up German convoy  
171720 Dec 44

171600 Dec 44  
ARMOR TRAFFIC  
By B-18

Jeep Party joins  
valry Convoy, K.O'd.  
17 1600 Dec 44

Ren Patrol draws  
Mortar fire.  
17 1630 Dec 44

Es going A  
St with r  
10 th Div  
17 Dec.





\* 170800

C 32  
C 32  
E 32  
NIGHT 16-17 DEC.

2nd and 3rd Pltns of Troop, 32nd join 1st Pltn here after moving up area to NW, 1445 1 Dec 44.

3rd Pltn withdraws to Herresbach over this route, 1445 1 Dec 44.

E Troop, with direct and indirect fire pos 16 Dec 1944.

Hq and Other Troops in this country withdrawal route 1000 - 1200 17 Dec 44

B Troop Delays Enemy Here 1000 - 1300, 17 Dec 1944

Swords of Fire Fight - 170700

3rd pltn Move to support 16 1100

1st Pltn Troop

592

Troop turns, withdraws as 3rd pltn hits convoy - 171720 Dec 44

SPEC OBSERVED BY B-18

17  
10

17  
394

Heppenbach

18th Sqdn leaves for Heppenbach from here 161830 Dec 44; A Troop, 32nd stays

Halenfeld

Valender

1st TP Mayes fights enemy here, 1300 - 1300 16

Direct fire positions for E Troop previously reconnoitered. 1200 16 Dec 1944

16300  
Dec 44

275

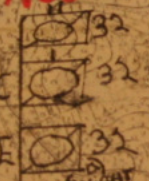
Medendorf

Bullingen

2nd and 3rd Pltns of 1st TP, 32nd join 1st Pltn here after mopping up area to NW, 1445 1 Dec 44.

161600

\* 170500



Emerscheid

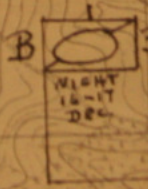
Hernesbach

32nd withdraws to Herresbach over this route, 1400 16

E Troop, with direct and indirect fire positions 16 Dec 1944.

and Hq and Other Troops... country withdrawal... 1000 - 1200 16

ROAD CAVES-IN



170730

E Troop Delays Enemy Here 1000 - 1300, 17 Dec 1944

SHEDS OF FIRE FIGHT - 170700

3rd Pltn move to... 16 1100

1st Troop

Bischel

**ked Map**  
**Line Positions**  
 Sheets 5603, 5604  
**MANY** 5703 6704

**RED**  
 5017  
 120/10

**TACKS 95**  
**FINES**  
**HOSES**

**FINES**  
**17045**  
**Dec**

1st TF Mayes leads A Trp - 32nd escape to west after Honsfeld falls, 17 Dec  
 Lt Harmon's A-32nd, leads escape group after enemy takes Honsfeld 0500 17 Dec

daylight  
 17 Dec 44

18th Sqdn leaves for Heppenbach from here 161830 Dec 44, A Trp, 32nd stays

1st TF Mayes fights ene tks here, 1300 - 1300 16

act fire positions for E Trp previously reconnoitered, 1200 16 Dec 1944

14300  
 Dec 44

**275**

2nd and 3rd Btlns of Trp, 32nd join 1st Pltr here after mopping up area to NW, 1445 1 Dec 44.

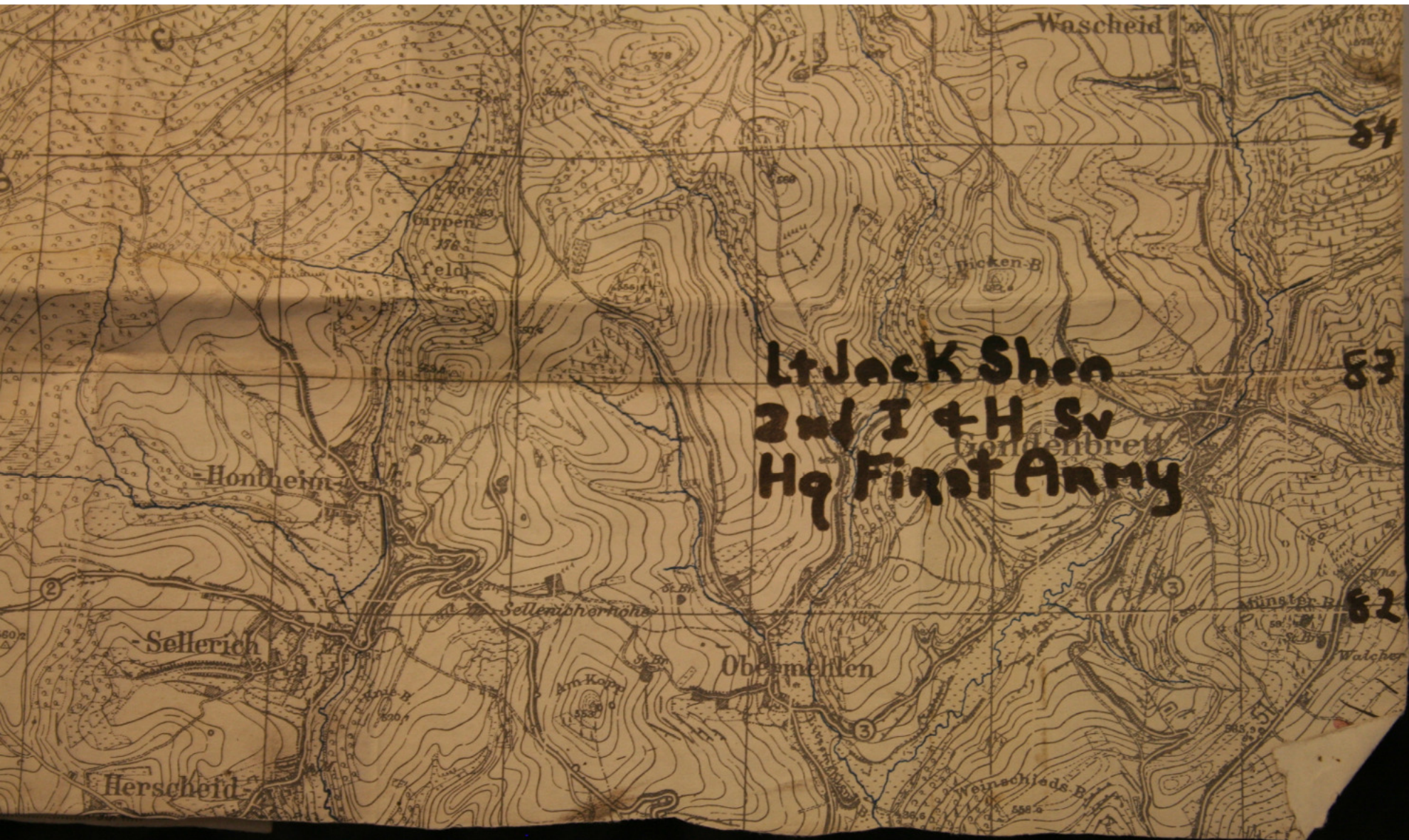
**170800**



32nd withdraws to Hepp over this route, 1445 1 Dec 44  
 E Troop, with fire

**I-R**  
**394**





Lt Jack Shen  
2nd I & H Sv  
Hq First Army



87

86

85

84

Black Shop



1st & 3rd Pltns, A-18, Abandons  
Destroys, Vehicles. Escape on foot.  
Leave Koberscheid - 161630 Dec. 44

14  
1000  
422

422

2 422

90

89

88

87

86

03 & 14  
served  
1944

bach  
144  
direct  
tions here

A E S I  
AT



FBI-designated rendezvous  
for Lt. Crawford's patrol  
night 15-16 Dec. 44

18th supply  
from post at  
Weckerath  
16 Dec 1944

F Co  
TARGETS  
0930-1300

14  
III  
422

ROTH Garrison surround-  
ed, cut-off enemy tks.  
160900 Dec. 44

Pltn withdraws through  
Schnee Weckerath Arps  
16 1300 Dec. 44

Garrison withdraws  
to Manderfeld.  
16 1100 Dec. 44

1st & 3rd Pltns, A-18, Abandon  
Destroyers, Vehicles. Escape on foot.  
near Kobscheid - 161630 Dec. 44

95

94

93

92

91

90

89





I+R  
374

2 TD A 810  
2 TD A 810

1 TD A 820

3 TD A 820

A 18  
A 18

Lt. Crawford's Patrol  
clashes with 30 enemy.  
15 2300 Dec. 44

Garrison follows withdrawal  
of Krewinkel Troops ...  
16 1105 Dec. 44

Pre-designated rendezvous  
for Lt. Crawford's Patrol  
night 15-16 Dec. 44

18th support  
from position  
16 Dec 1400

F CO  
TARGETS  
0930-1300

Garrison withdraws  
to Manderfeld...  
16 1100 Dec. 44

Pltn withdraws through  
to Weckerath Trps  
16 1300 Dec. 44

ROTH Garrison surround-  
ed by enemy cka.  
160900 Dec. 44

97

96

95

94

93

92

91



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Authority NND735017  
By STARA Date 9/20/10

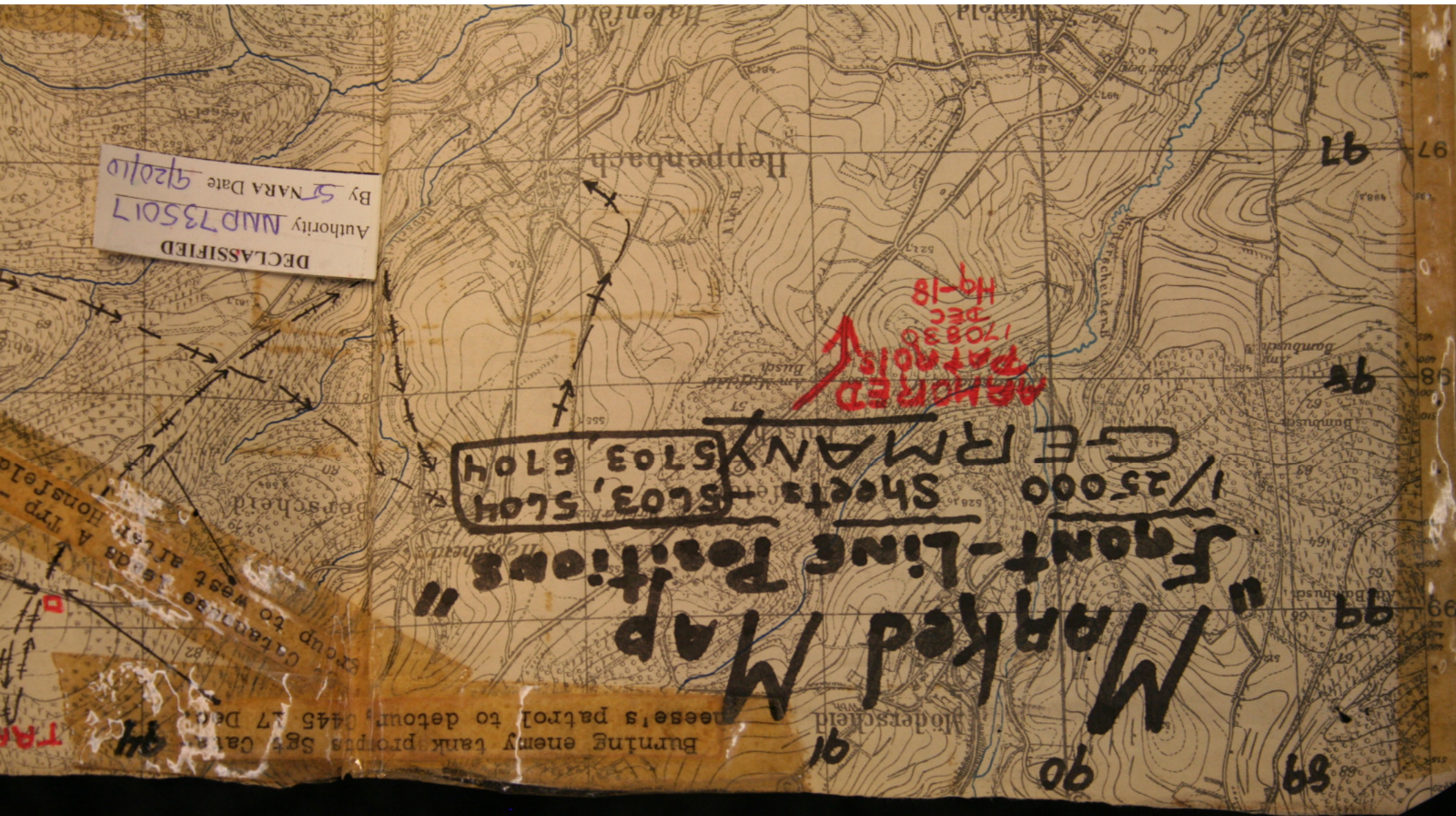
GERMANY 5103, 6104  
1/25000 Sheets - 5103, 5104

Marked Map  
"Front-Line Positions"

ANCHORED  
PATROLS  
170830  
DEC  
HQ-18

Group to west at Herr  
Cataunse leads A TP  
Honsfeld

Burning enemy tank props Sgt Carr  
ness's patrol to detour, 0445 17 Dec





DECLASSIFIED  
Authority NND735017  
By SPNARA Date 9/20/10

17 DEC 44  
1200-1540  
ARMY COL.  
SEE E-18  
STORY

\* 1705

18th here





MOVE to Meyerode, 121300 during night 16 - 17 Dec. 32nd assembled here.

B Troop Delays Enemy Here 1000 - 1300, 17 Dec 1944

32nd Hq and other Troops cross-country withdrawal this route 1000 - 1200

113100

Fight - 17070

170500

89

90

91

92

93

94

1389000mN

6 1/2

39 10000mN

92

93

94





1500  
1505  
1510  
1515  
1520  
1525  
1530  
1535  
1540  
1545  
1550  
1555  
1560  
1565  
1570  
1575  
1580  
1585  
1590  
1595  
1600

Bliesbrunn

Winterscheid

B 18

Schlepbach

Mittelsch

De 16 3  
CI B-18's

LOUAIN WITH  
100th REGT

LOUAIN WITH  
100th REGT

B-18 ADV  
CONTOUR

Stöckelberg

Stöckelberg

Schlepbach

St. Mari

84

86

86

87

88

-171600 D  
08R8E 1  
814E - 11

AMMOR, TRAFFIC  
BY 171000

0700 + 0830  
KATOLIC PARISH







and withdraws to Herresbach  
for this route, 1600 16 Dec 44  
E Troop, 18th Fires from direct  
and indirect fire positions here  
16 Dec 1944.

Swedish Fire Fight - 170700

171600 Dec 14  
88888, TRAFK  
88888-188

171200  
TRAFK

Move to support  
16 1100  
Troop (PKs)

171715 180 44  
up plan  
B-18 800003  
171720 Dec  
plan hits  
171720 Dec

Be capturing Troop  
170800 Dec  
170800 Dec  
170800 Dec

592

589

B  
15-17  
384

384

384

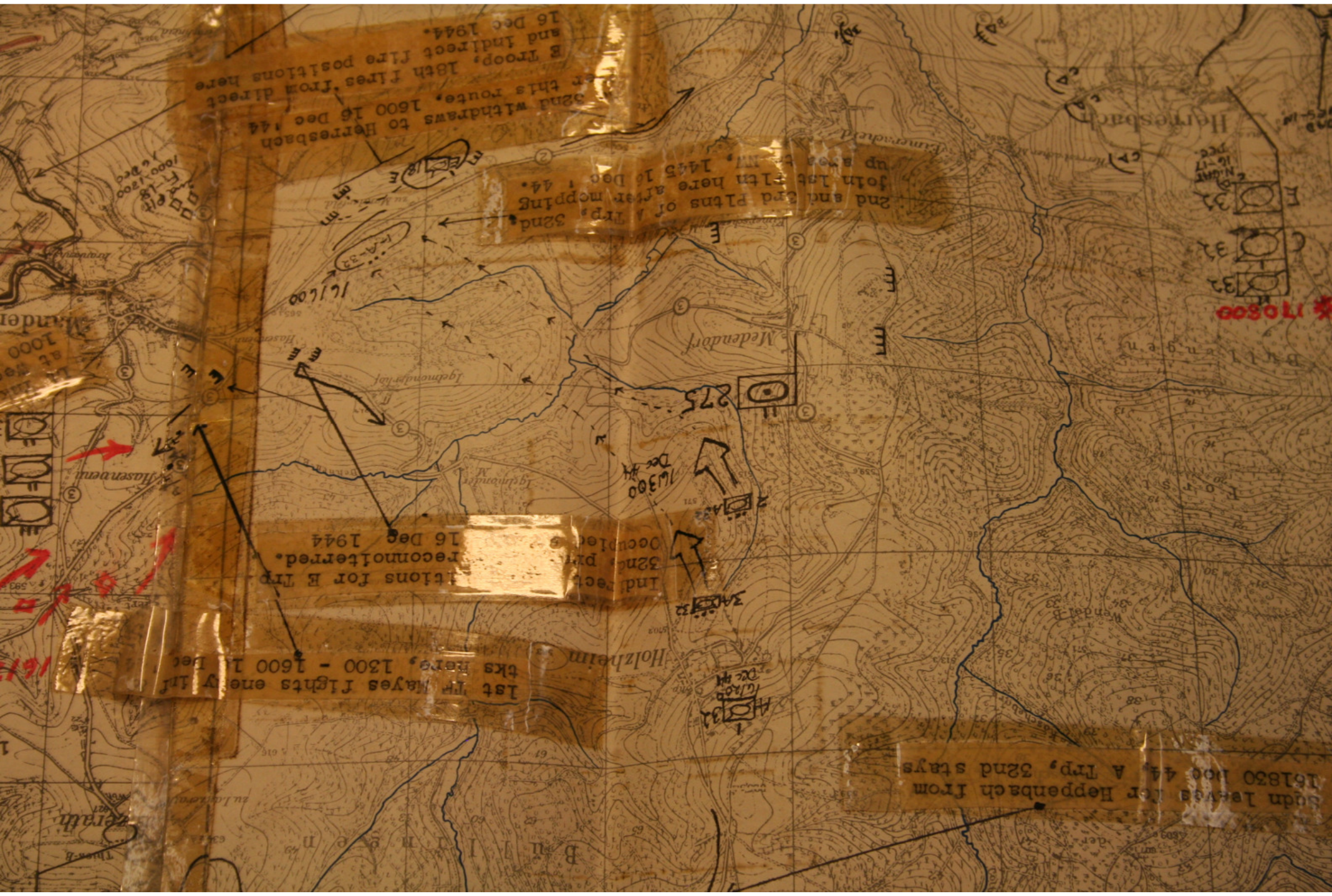
Schausenbach

Laustfeld

Benndorf

Herresbach

Here  
1944



32nd withdraws to Heppelbach  
at this route, 1600 16 Dec 44  
E Troop, 18th Fires, from direct  
and indirect fire positions here  
16 Dec 1944.

2nd and 3rd Plns of 1 Trp, 32nd  
Join 1st Pln here after mopping  
up area here, 1445 16 Dec 44.

Indirect fire positions for E Trp  
32nd, not reconnoitered.  
16 Dec 1944

1st Lt Hayes lights enemy  
trks here, 1300 - 1600 16 Dec  
1944

2nd leaves for Heppelbach from  
161850 1600 44, A Trp, 32nd stays

170800  
E 31  
E 32  
E 33

275

16300  
Dec 44

34000

161850  
Dec 44

1000  
18 Dec

1000  
16 Dec

1617  
16 Dec

1617  
16 Dec

1st Lt. Mayes lights ene V Lp  
tks care, 1300 - 1600 17 Dec

1st Lt. Mayes takes Hoppbach from  
V Lp, 32nd stays

32nd escape  
17 Dec  
Lt. Harmon takes Honsfeld  
A-32nd, leads escape  
0500 17 Dec

Flies  
170545  
17 Dec

Flies  
170545  
17 Dec

IR  
394

39  
3  
39

98

170600  
17 Dec



IR 394

00

39  
3  
99

98

ST  
Honsfeld

A 32

H 32

96

FIRES  
170545

FIRES  
170545  
DEC

2 COS  
172000  
DEC

At Harmon, A-32nd, Leads escape group 0500 17 Dec  
Enemy takes Honsfeld 0500 17 Dec  
32nd escape group 17 Dec  
daylight 17 Dec 44

170600  
DEC 44

TANKS 95





**MAP**  
**Positions**  
Positions - 5603, 5604  
5703, 6704

Burning enemy tank traps Sgt [unclear] ta-  
nese's patrol to detour, 0445 17 Dec.

**TRACKS 95**

**FLARES 170545**

**FLARES 170545**  
**Dec**

32nd escape area Hc field 17 Dec  
Lt Harmon, A [unclear] enemy  
after [unclear]

CO  
173000  
173000  
173000

96

91

**ED**



17th Sdn leaves for Heppenbach from here 161830 Dec 44. A Ltp, 32nd esc

daylight  
17 Dec 44

Lt Hartman, A Ltp - 32nd escape  
after enemy, Heppenfeld falls. 17 Dec  
FIRES 17054  
17054  
200

SHEETS - 5603, 5604  
PMANY 5703, 6704

Line Positions II

Red MAP

TRACKS 95

44

91

96

Burning enemy tank props Sgt  
ese's patrol to detour, 0445 1 Dec.

FORCED  
PROPS  
DEC  
9-18



Lt. Crawford's Patrol  
Crosses with 60 enemy.  
Dec. 44

LTD 4820

96

97

98

06

05

04

03

02

01

A 830

D A 820

A

B

C

D

E

A

B

C

D

E

A

B

C

D

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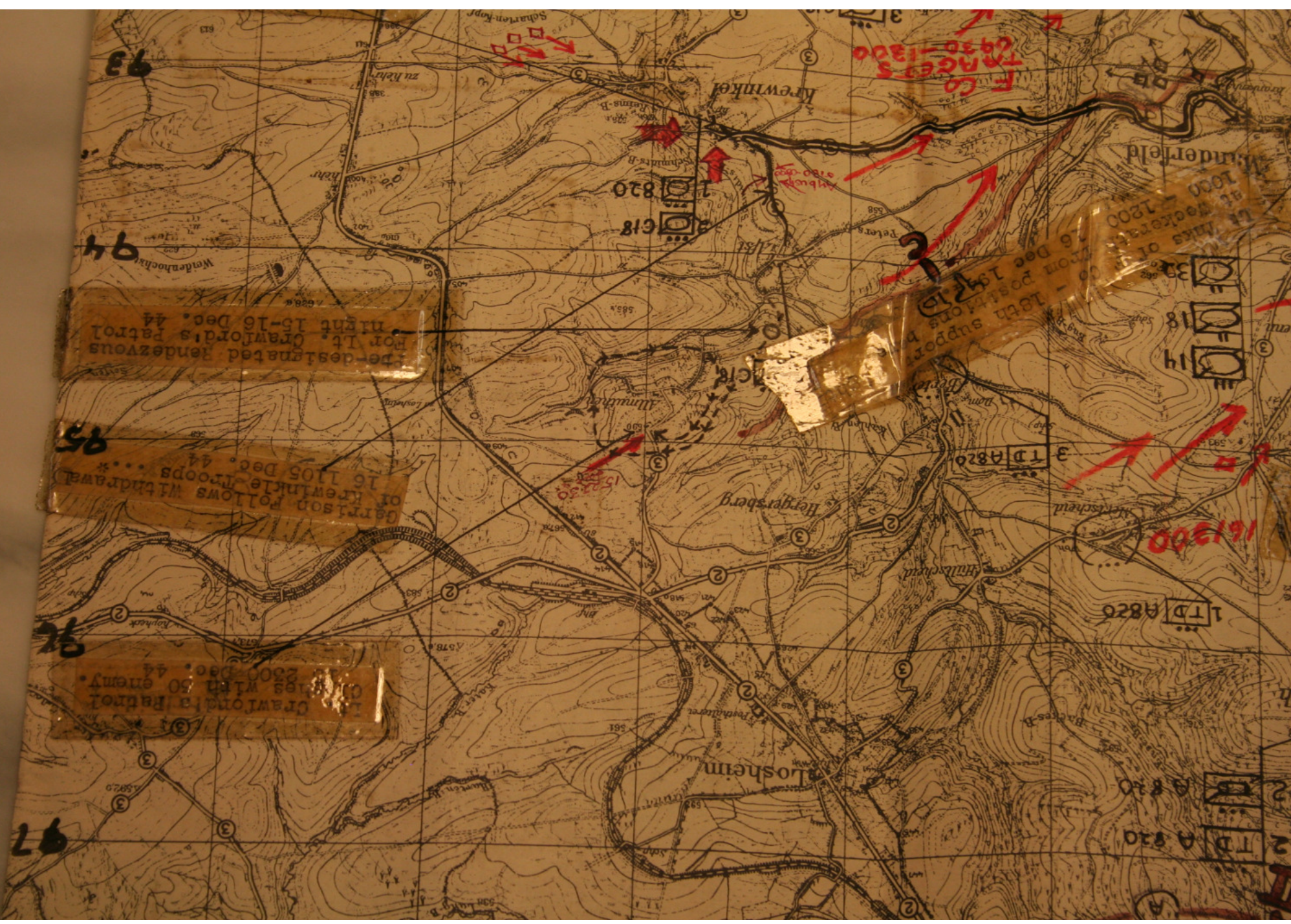
D

E

A

B

C</



The designated rendezvous for Lt. Crawford's Patrol might be 15-16 Dec. 44

Crawford follows withdrawal of Krewinkel Troops... 16 1105 Dec. 44

Lt. Crawford's Patrol changes with 80 enemy

F. CO TROOPS 2930-1300

161300

1 TD A 820

1 TD A 820

14  
18  
33

2 TD A 820  
2 TD A 820

820  
618

93

94

95

96

97





The designated rendezvous for Lt. Crawford's patrol night 15-16 Dec. 44

Garrison Minderfeld to Manderfeld 16 1100 Dec. 44

ROTH GARRISON SURROUND - ed. 160830 Dec. 44

14th support  
6 Dec 1944  
at Manderfeld 1800

90  
91  
92  
93  
94

14

03

A18  
A18

C18  
3

C18  
820

F CO TRAGERS 6930-1300

14

14  
18  
18  
18







2nd I + H Sv  
Hq First Army

413

422

only used of 1st  
Troopers  
A. 0800

52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59

00

00