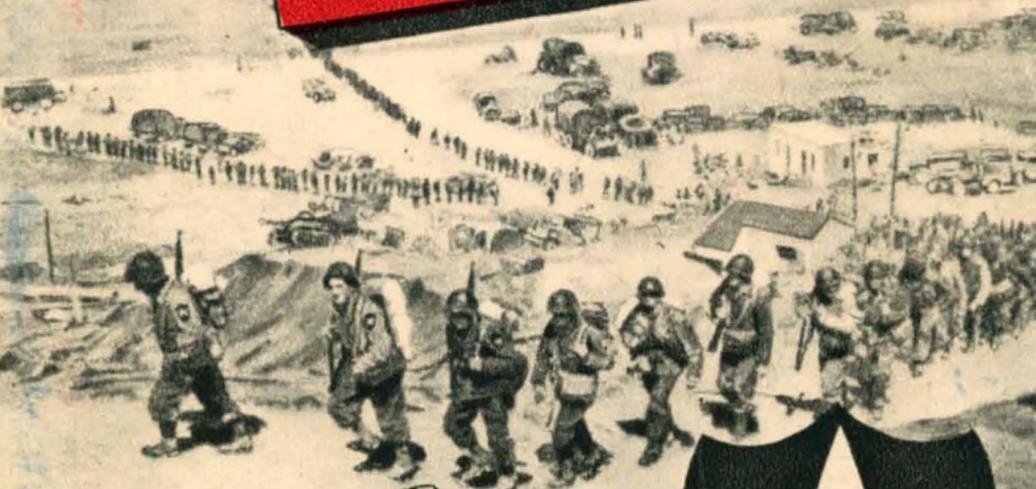


From **D+1** *to* **105**



The **STORY OF THE** **2ND** **INFANTRY DIVISION**



This is one of a series of G.I. Stories of the Ground, Air and Service Forces in the European Theater of Operations, to be issued by the Stars and Stripes, a publication of the Information and Education Division, Special and Information Services, ETOUSA... Major General Walter M. Robertson, commanding the 2nd Infantry Division, lent his cooperation to the preparation of the pamphlet, and basic material was supplied to the editors by his staff.

Name

Date Enlisted

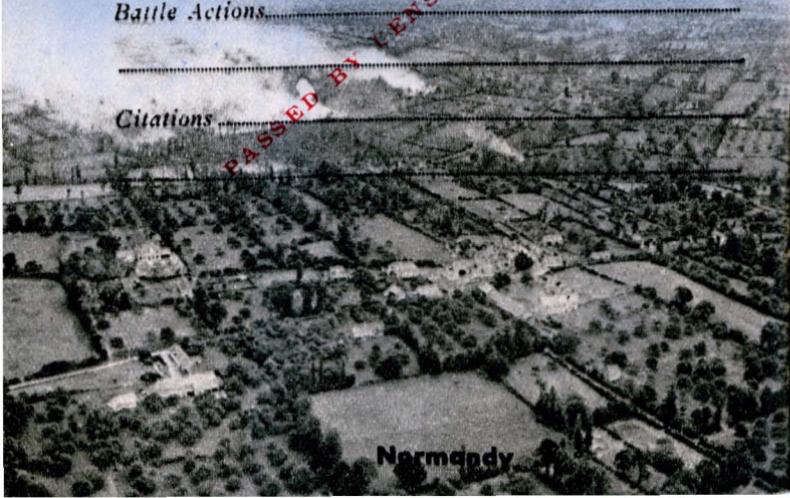
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Training

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PASSED BY CENSOR FOR MAILING HOME



THIS booklet contains a sketch of our 2nd Infantry Division during its first five months of active operation in World War II.

Your division entered upon these operations backed by traditions and military achievements "Second to None" in our Army. Your division has fully lived up to these traditions and has added new victories and valorous acts as standards for the future. You have maintained unblemished your record of never having failed to take and hold your objective. Your outstanding loyalty and devotion to duty is attested by innumerable acts of gallantry and sacrifice throughout our entire campaign. Your esprit and morale under adverse conditions have been an unswerving inspiration to me. I deem it a high privilege to have served as your commander.

With deep humility I dedicate this brief story as a tribute to our brave comrades who have fallen in action in its making. We must justify their sacrifice by our unswerving determination to carry through to new victories, to new traditions, to complete victory.

W. M. Robertson

Major General, Commanding

The 2nd Infantry Division's Story

"SECOND TO NONE"

MAY, 1918: the 2nd Div. fought at Chateau Thierry.
May, 1944: the 2nd Div. fretted for action at a marshalling area in southern England. July, 1918—Soissons, July, 1944—St. Jean des Baisants. September, 1918—St. Mihiel, September, 1944—Brest.



Dates, soldiers and places change, but the fighting tradition that won the fourragere of the Croix de Guerre at Blanc Mont in 1918 remains the same.

Fighting in France is not new to the 2nd Div. It fought in every major engagement of the first World War where American troops participated. It left its mark at Belleau Wood. It left its dead, too. The 2nd Div. captured one-fourth of the entire number of prisoners taken by American Expeditionary Forces, one-fourth of the total guns. It suffered one-tenth of all casualties in American armies. It won more decorations than any other American division. It fought 56 consecutive days without rest—the longest period for any American unit.

For 23 years between the two wars, the 2nd Div. was garrisoned at Ft. Sam Houston, Tex. Many of its officers and men are Texans. During the years of peace, it was transformed into the first "streamlined" division. Gone now are the 5th and 6th Marines, the victors of Belleau Wood. In their place is the 38th Inf. Regt., the "Rock of the Marne." The 9th and 23rd Inf. Regts.

remain, as do the 12th and 15th F.A., now reconstituted as the 12th, 15th, 27th and 38th F.A. Bns.

For the invasion of France, the 2nd Div. brought with it a great tradition. Later, the record was to speak for itself that such heritage was upheld.

Fanning Inland from the Beach

TREVIERES LIBERATED

Plus 1, June 7, 1944: in the teeth of vicious, accurate enemy shellfire which blanketed the shoreline, the Indian Head boys hit the beach at St. Laurent-sur-Mer. Preassigned assembly areas, when eventually located in the confusion of battle, were packed with snipers. Before moving in, one regiment was forced to blast out a company of Germans.

Vehicles, infantry supporting weapons and communications equipment remained aboard craft off the beach. Three days were to pass before these vital supplies began rolling inland. Communications were established with salvaged wire found on the beach and abandoned enemy equipment. The only vehicle in the division was a jeep

loaned by another unit to Division Commander Maj. Gen. Walter M. Robertson.

By midnight, the CP had been established and assembly areas largely cleared of enemy. The silence of darkness was shattered by heavy anti-aircraft fire when German planes zoomed overhead. The division staff already had planned the attack on the first objective, Trevieres, a communications center 16 kilometers inland. Field orders were scrawled in longhand on German stationery.

Snipers remaining in the area were killed the next day and, at one time, a fusillade of sniper bullets spattered into the division CP. One sniper was shot down from a tree some 50 yards away from division headquarters.

Near midnight, June 8, the last infantry regiment began to unload and a staff officer reported to headquarters that the unit was ready to move to an area previously selected. He was told that the area, far in advance, had not been cleared according to plan—that it now was occupied.

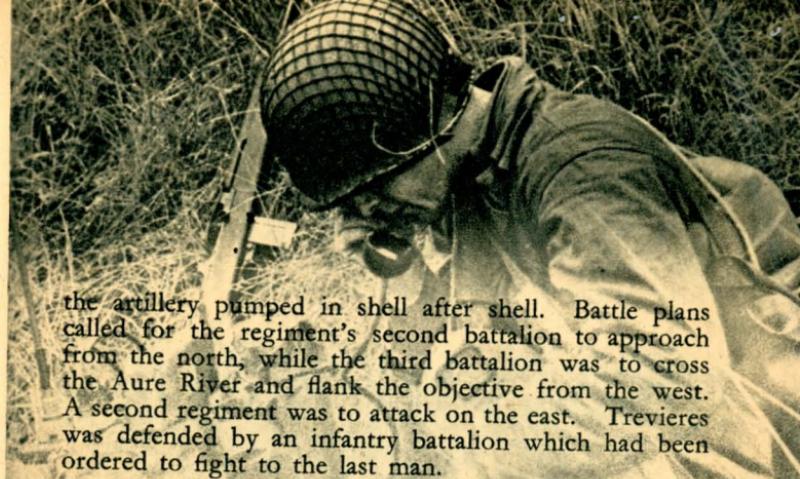
"By whom?" he asked.

"By the 353rd Inf. Div.," was the reply.

"Never heard of them, sir. Who are they?"

"Germans."

Although lacking supporting weapons and communications, one regiment attacked the strongly defended town of Trevieres June 9. Knowing that the infantry possessed only the minimum of necessary transportation,



the artillery pumped in shell after shell. Battle plans called for the regiment's second battalion to approach from the north, while the third battalion was to cross the Aure River and flank the objective from the west. A second regiment was to attack on the east. Trevieres was defended by an infantry battalion which had been ordered to fight to the last man.

After the jump-off, one platoon got inside the city. Heavy sniper and automatic weapons fire held up the other attackers. The third battalion waded the waist-deep river, stormed the defenses to the south, then smacked the enemy from the west flank of the town. So tenacious was the German grip that the objective was not entirely outflanked and secured until the next day.

Only a limited number of hand grenades was available. Not until the closing stages of the battle were machine guns brought up from the beach area. To replenish the meager supply of ammunition, a French two-wheel cart was commandeered. But the ammunition still had to be hand-carried across the river. Wounded were hand-carried on the return trip across the stream.

One officer and six men were pinned inside a house four hours during the first day of the fierce assault. They were armed only with pistols and carbines while Germans were within grenade-throwing range on three sides.

Liberation of Trevieres marked the fall of the first major obstacle as the expansion of the V Corps bridgehead struggled forward.

The Battle of the Hedgerows

HEROES STEP FORWARD

THE push neither stopped nor hesitated at Trevieres. Spearheaded by the 9th and 38th Inf. Regts., the division ploughed through Le Molay and the Forêt de Cerisy until it struck the first definite enemy defense line running west from Brigny through St. Georges d'Elle. In two days, the division ripped overland 16 miles but had advanced 10 miles as the crow flies.

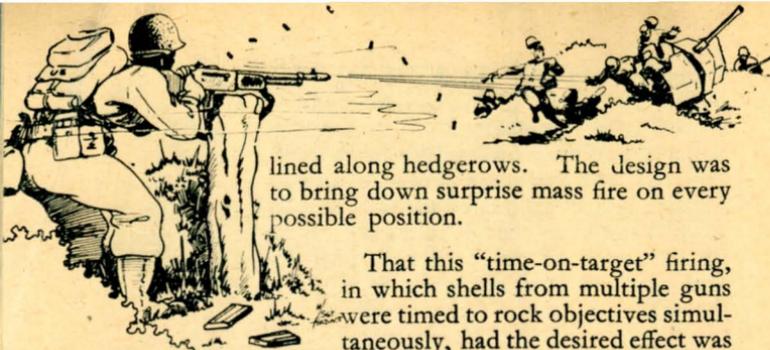
A well-defined German defense line was struck June 11 in the Brigny-St. Georges d'Elle-Ivon sector. Here, the "Second to None" had its first encounter with the 3rd Parachute Div. of the Wehrmacht, took its first

prisoners. It was the beginning of a grudge-fight which was to be renewed many times—much to the sorrow of the paratroopers. Between then and June 16 when a halt was ordered to prepare for the attack on Hill 192, the division's tentacles wound around nearby villages and consolidated gains. St. Georges d'Elle, the town that was to change hands several times, was entered by battalions of the 23rd and 38th Regts. The 23rd also captured Berigny, while St. Germain d'Elle fell to the 9th.

Fighting throughout this sector was fierce. The battle of the hedgerows was on—and with all stops out. Mounds of earth, sometimes as wide as three feet and almost as high as a man's head, divided the fields. Behind and between these the Germans dug in and waited to spray machine gun and automatic weapon fire on the first American to step into the field. Most fields were no larger than a house lot back home. Sunken roads wove in and out of the fields, providing excellent enemy cover.

In the battle for St. Germain d'Elle, fighting grew extremely severe. Casualty lists mounted steadily. One company lost 17 men one day, 15 the next. A company commander told of knocking out seven machine guns in one field and five in another only to have them replaced from a seemingly endless chain.

During the entire struggle which preceded the smashing of the forces defending Hill 192, artillery played an important role in holding the Nazis inside holes they had



lined along hedgerows. The design was to bring down surprise mass fire on every possible position.

That this "time-on-target" firing, in which shells from multiple guns were timed to rock objectives simultaneously, had the desired effect was attested to by patrols. At any minute, a barrage would batter a position. The Germans quickly learned to crouch in their holes.

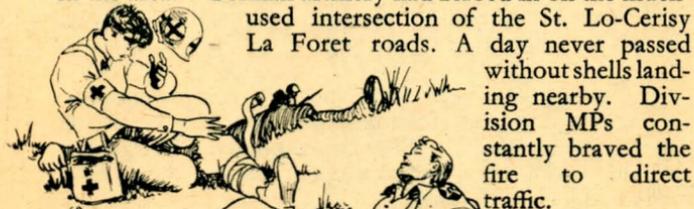
Once, when an infantry regiment was staving off a counter-attack, an artillery liaison officer hurriedly called back for fire. Asked the nature of the target, he replied: "Call it machine guns, call it tanks, call it anything. Just give me fire." He got it—from four battalions—and in time.

In the fight for St. Georges d'Elle, Pfc Ralston A. Shepherd, 23rd Inf., saved three companies from mass slaughter. Cornered in an area 30 by 100 yards, with hedgerows skirting both sides, the companies lay in direct line of fire from a flak gun. Shepherd placed his BAR over a gate post and fired more than 1000 rounds, dispersing the Nazis gun crew before it had the opportunity to go into action. The companies took advantage of the precious time, reorganized and fought their way out of the trap. For his action, Shepherd was awarded the Silver Star.

There were many such heroes. Pvt. Joe Marez, an aid man with the 9th Regt., disregarded a hail of machine gun and rifle fire during an attack when he ran forward to attend two wounded riflemen. As he applied a tourniquet to the first man's leg, a bullet struck his head. But Marez didn't quit. He started for the second man, then suddenly collapsed. He was evacuated just in time to save his life. For his heroism, Marez got the division's first Distinguished Service Cross.

There was one corporal of the 38th Inf. Regt. who was wounded and couldn't be evacuated. When German forces advanced near his position, the corporal, unable to stand, pulled a gas protective covering over his body for camouflage and began sniping at them. Although without food, he kept this up for two and a half days until relief finally came. The bodies of two Germans he had killed and the bloodstains of one he had wounded during this time were found.

It was during this fighting, in which green troops came to grips with seasoned German soldiers for the first time, that "88 Corner" became the best-known crossroad in the area. German artillery had zeroed in on the much-used intersection of the St. Lo-Cerisy



La Foret roads. A day never passed without shells landing nearby. Division MPs constantly braved the fire to direct traffic.

The Bloody Hill before St. Lo

TEAMWORK PERFECTED

THE battle for Hill 192, vital strongpoint on the way to St. Lo, was next. One rifle company succeeded in reaching the crest June 16 only to be driven back in the face of a withering counter-attack. The division's 2nd Engr. Combat Bn. hurriedly was rushed up to fight as infantrymen.

From then until July 11, when the Indian Head boys roared to success on the heels of a tremendous artillery and aerial bombardment, the division got ready for more of the same.

Thickly covered with heavy foliage, the hill commanded a six-mile area. When "Second to None" wrested the precious territory from the Nazis, the breakthrough at St. Lo, vital communications center just six miles away, was set to follow two weeks later.

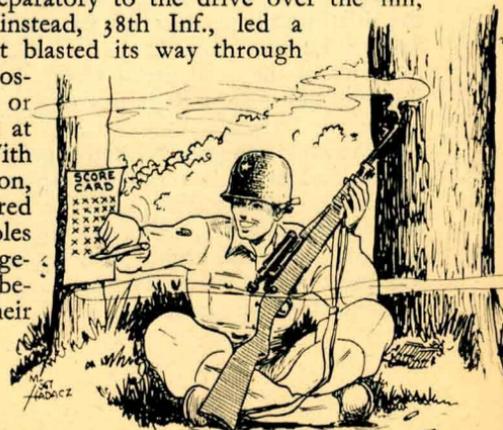
The enemy had been fortifying Hill 192 for months. It was studded with foxholes, machine gun nests and expertly camouflaged observation points. Hedgerows sprouted along its gradual slope. Behind these, Germans huddled in dugouts.

Every crossing and road in the vicinity had been zeroed in by enemy artillery emplaced on the rear slope. German camouflage suits blended softly with the foliage so well that one Nazi sniper remained in a tree only 150 yards from American lines an entire day before he was located and killed.

Here, T/Sgt. Frank Kviatek gained fame for his skill at picking off snipers. A veteran of 27 years in the army, Kviatek used a bolt action Springfield with telescopic sight to account for 21 Germans, mostly snipers. His goal was 25 for each of two brothers killed in Italy. Later wounded, he returned to combat to boost his total to 36.

Opposing forces were so close together at this stage of the struggle that infantrymen propelled hand grenades with slingshots made from abandoned intertubes.

In one raid preparatory to the drive over the hill, 1st Lt. Ralph Winstead, 38th Inf., led a combat patrol that blasted its way through enemy hedgerow positions and killed or seriously wounded at least 11 Nazis. With clock-like precision, the patrol poured through three holes cut out of the hedgerow by engineers before returning to their



lines. Every member of the 16-man raiding party received either the Silver or Bronze Star. Only one man was seriously wounded.

The taking of Hill 192 finally was achieved through coordinated efforts of infantry, artillery, tanks and engineers. The Air Force also helped by softening up the heights with dive-bombings. Simultaneously with the main assault, the regiment on the left flank executed a diversionary attack to mask the action that was to take place on a division front.

Shortly before daybreak, July 11, eight battalions of division and corps artillery laid down a heavy concentration which shifted to a rolling barrage as the attack knifed forward. Artillery shells screamed and shook the earth until the objective was secured that afternoon. Many Germans who surrendered had been dazed by the intensity of the shell fire. They admitted it was worse than fighting on the Russian front.

Meanwhile, engineers blasted holes in the hedgerows through which tanks rumbled to spray the next hedgerow with cannon and machine gun fire. This kept the Nazis down until infantry, following behind the tanks, could pick off or capture them. Tank dozers, their mammoth scoops poised in front, filled in sunken roads or ploughed over machine gun nests.

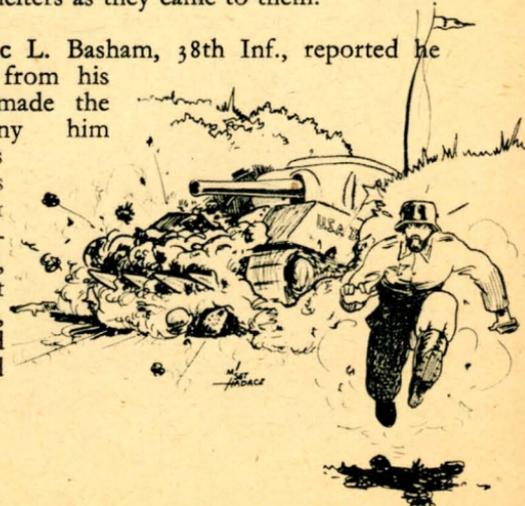


One dozer operator, Pvt. John R. Brewer, 741st Tank Bn., saw three Germans behind a hedgerow blazing away at the advancing troops with their burp guns. He smashed the hedge over the trio, burying them alive.

It was the engineers' job, once they had blown openings in the hedgerows, to guide the tanks to good firing positions. Telephones were attached to the rear of each tank but they often failed to operate. Pvt. Alton N. Jones, 2nd Engr. Bn., was one of many engineers who sought to remedy the situation. Exposing himself to enemy fire, Jones crawled atop one tank and gave directions by tapping on the hull.

Although tanks and artillery were of inestimable value, it was the doughboys who captured Hill 192—advancing yard by yard up the slopes, digging the Germans out of the shelters as they came to them.

Second Lt. Mac L. Basham, 38th Inf., reported he routed one Nazi from his hole and then made the Kraut accompany him to other shelters to order out his comrades. After taking seven prisoners this way, the Lieutenant turned them in, secured the aid of two enlisted



men and together they drove five more from dugouts.

By late afternoon, "The Hill" belonged to the men of the 2nd. The division, its immediate mission accomplished, faced south to await the great breakthrough.

Breakthrough: A Bubble Bursts

REST AFTER 70 DAYS

HILL 192, then St. Lo were the first symptoms. Like a volcano, the entire Normandy front had come alive—from Caen to Granville, from one coast of the Cherbourg peninsula to the other. The feverish flow of artillery, tanks and supply trucks, rumbling from the beach and from Cherbourg, had filled to bursting the tiny space occupied by men and materiel. Soon it erupted.

The 2nd now stood astride the St. Lo-Berigny highway, and, with the key city of St. Lo in American hands a few days later, the division attacked again on July 26 with regiments abreast. The objective was St. Jean des Baisants. In the lull since Hill 192, the Germans frantically had dug defenses three hedgerows deep.

Tank-infantry teams had evolved new methods of attacking the miniature fortresses. No longer did tanks carry dangerous satchel charges on their backs. New devices, invented by ingenious GIs overnight, ripped open the thick earth walls of the hedgerows while infantry-tank-artillery coordination stunned the enemy to make easier the task of the doughfoot.

Buttoned-up medium tanks charged into the attack under time-fire of artillery to search out openings and routes of approach. Their guns spat steel into enemy machine gun nests. When the time-fire lifted, tanks whirled around to their own lines behind a smokescreen to be joined by infantry, which came up with close support from the artillery—this time firing ground impact-bursts.

The Germans were making a last desperate stand and every hedgerow was bloodily defended between the St. Lo-Berigny road and St. Jean des Baisants.

Capt. George R. Michell, commanding Co. K, 23rd, went ahead of his two assault platoons, fired five shots into one machine gun nest to kill the crew, and then charged another emplacement under withering fire, emptying a clipful of Garand ammunition to silence it.



The 60 men left in his company after coming through the barrage, stormed fortifications manned by 300 Germans. They took 40 prisoners, killing or routing the remainder. Capt. Michell was awarded the DSC for his action.

THE rout was on. Doughfeet battered stubbornly through German rearguard actions—so relentlessly that at times they fell exhausted against hedgerows, only to rise and slog wearily forward again. But what they paid in sweat, they saved in blood. The enemy had no time in which to dig in deeply and catch his breath for another stand.

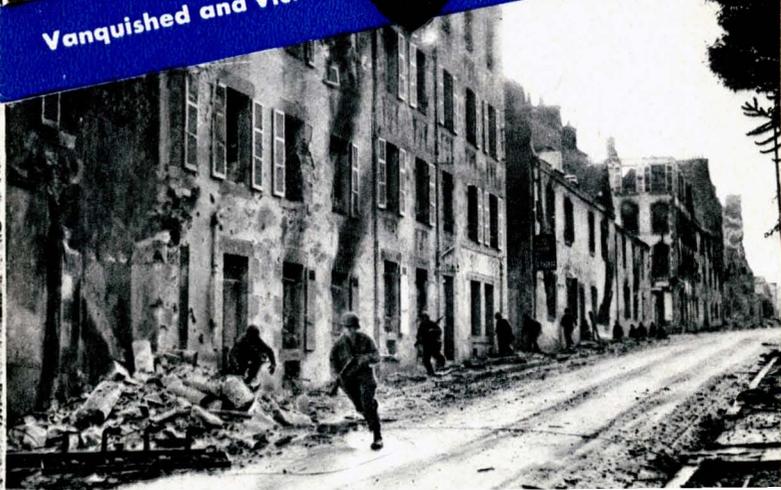
The Germans were tricky. Once 50 of them advanced, hands held high in surrender. Suddenly they dropped flat to the ground, while their machine guns opened up on unwary GIs taken in by this treachery. Minefields always were to be reckoned with. Heavy artillery occasionally lobbed in death and destruction.

But the disintegration of the enemy, became more apparent. By Aug. 2, the division had crossed the Vire River—still spearheading the attack of V Corps south to the ruins of Vire and on to Tinchebray.

Aug. 15 saw the infantry slam into Tinchebray and advance to the outskirts of the far side to guard against possible counter-attack. Next day, the division drew out of action and for the first time in the battle of the hedgerows, the 2nd no longer had the enemy to its front.



Street Fighting: Brest



THRU FRANCE WITH THE 2ND



- TRÉVIÈRES *
- CERISY-LA FORÊT
- HILL 198
- ST-GEORGES D'ELLE
- ST-JEAN des BAISSANTS
- TORIGNY
- VIRE
- TINCHEBRAY
- DAOULAS PENINSULA
- HILL 154
- FOURNEUF
- BOURG-NEUF
- HILLS 105-90
- HILL 100
- ST-MARC
- BREST
- NORMANDY
- BRITTANY
- GERMANY *



Brest

Cherbourg

*Trévières
Cerisy la Forêt*

St Georges d'Elle

St Jean des Baisants

Torigny

Vire

Tincchbray

**OFF
MIT**

Germany

*St Laurent
sur Mer*

**HILL
198**

BOURG-NEUF

HILLS 105-90

HILL 100

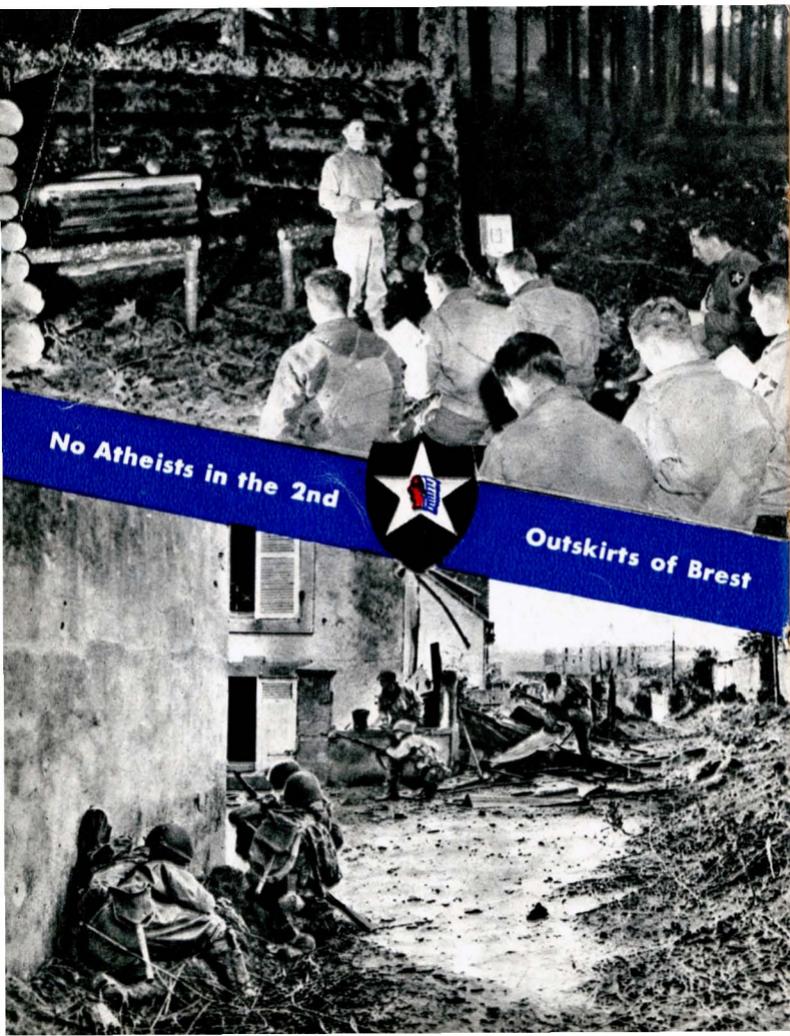
ST-MARC

BREST

NORMANDY

BRITTANY

GERMANY



It had come 40 kilometers in 20 days. The breathing spell came none too soon.

IN World War I, the division had set a record of 56 consecutive days of fighting. That mark was now eclipsed. World War II saw the Indian Head combat soldiers in the front lines 70 straight days—from D plus 1 to D plus 71!

Contributing valuable support to the division in crushing the Wehrmacht during the Normandy campaign were the 462nd AAA (AW) Bn., 612th and 893rd TD Bns., 741st Tank Bn., 192nd Cavalry Recon. Sqdn. and 81st Chemical Bn.

Of the part the division played in the Battle of Normandy, Maj. Gen. L. T. Gerow, Commanding General, V Corps, said :

"The record of the 2nd Inf. Div. from its arrival on the beaches of Normandy until the capture of Tinchebray has been one of hard, relentless fighting against a stubborn enemy. It was largely through the persistent determination and unflinching courage of the officers and men of the 2nd Inf. Div. that the battle of the hedgerows was won.

"For more than two months of continuous fighting, they were to a great measure responsible for the success of V Corps."

Almost immediately after the fall of Tinchebray, the 2nd embarked on a 300-mile journey and the Battle of Brest.

Mighty Struggle for a Seaport

STAGE SET FOR FINAL BLOW

ONE writer has likened the Battle of Brest to the Siege of Sevastopol. Both once were prosperous commercial ports, later converted by the Nazis into key naval stations. Both were left as piles of rubble, torn walls and twisted steel when war's fury ceased.

Brest housed the submarine pens from which U-boats threaded their way into the Atlantic to attack Allied shipping. As a port it was needed by the Allies, who were hard-pressed for harbors through which to feed the growing armies in France.

Knowing this, the German High Command had ordered the Brest garrison to hold out for at least 90 days. Pillboxes and emplacements of steel reinforced concrete, plus the bitter defense of the paratroop garrison, testified that the Germans had determined to make the port another Stalingrad.

Hitler demanded three months. Brest fell in 39 days.

For generals and commanders, Brest was notable because it involved street fighting technique. The GI

remembers it best because, while it was a deadly, bloody business, he could at least sleep in a bed for the first time since D plus 1, enjoy fine wines and liquors and investigate German billets, storehouses and canteens filled with Nazi loot.

But he had to come a long, hard way before enjoying these luxuries—through hedgerows as thick and roads sunk as deep as those in Normandy, past heavily defended concrete emplacements, and against a vicious weapon, the flak gun fired at point blank range.

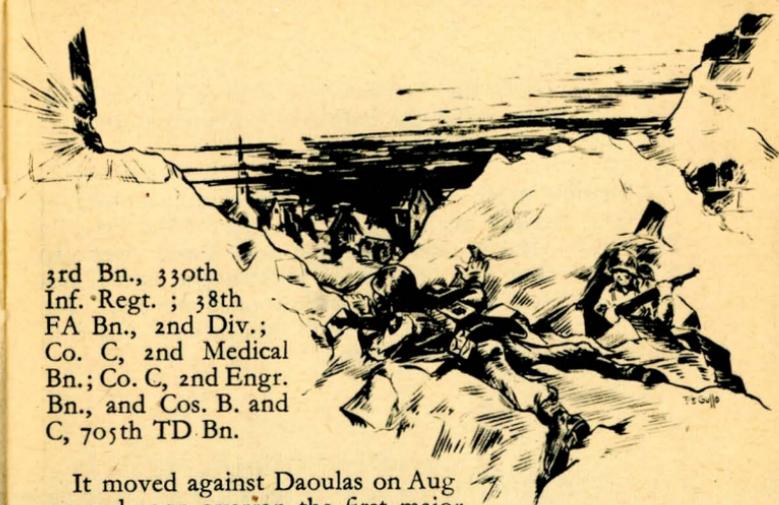
Brest proper lies on the northern side of the harbor, cut in half by the Penfield River, flowing south into the harbor. Across the harbor to the southeast of the port the Daoulas Peninsula juts out and to the southwest,



the Crozon Peninsula. Both the city proper and the two peninsulas were heavily defended.

Three divisions, with a large amount of supporting corps artillery, were assigned to reduce the garrison. The plan for the 2nd Div. was to drive south through the easternmost part of the city to the harbor. On the right (western flank), the 8th Inf. Div. was poised to whip south through the center of Brest. Farther to the west moved the 29th Inf. Div., heading south to clean out the western tip of the Brittany Peninsula. A task force, composed of the 38th Regimental Combat Team and other units, was scheduled to reduce the Daoulas Peninsula.

Commanding Task Force B was Maj. Gen. (then Brig. Gen.) James A. Van Fleet, Ass't CG of the 2nd, now commanding the 90th Inf. Div. This task force consisted of the 38th Inf. Combat Team; Bty. C, 323rd FA Bn.;



3rd Bn., 330th
Inf. Regt. ; 38th
FA Bn., 2nd Div. ;
Co. C, 2nd Medical
Bn. ; Co. C, 2nd Engr.
Bn., and Cos. B. and
C, 705th TD Bn.

It moved against Daoulas on Aug 22 and soon overran the first major objective, Hill 154, highest point on the peninsula. The tactic was to creep Indian-fashion through low-lying bushes which the enemy had failed to cut down around the hill, to encircle and surprise.

One PW taken from a concrete emplacement said: "I knew you were coming but I couldn't do anything. I could see no one to shoot. The first American soldier I saw was the one who captured me."

Too late the Germans attempted to reinforce the concrete pillboxes, barbed wire entanglements and trenches encircling the hill's peak. One infantry company held off reinforcements while another bagged the position. Entirely the doughboys' show without benefit of artillery



or air support, the maneuver was highly successful. Hill 154 commanded the entire harbor area and was a valuable observation post.

Although much hard fighting lay ahead, capture of Hill 154 was the beginning of the end for the Daoulas Peninsula. Seven days later the task force swept to the tip to clean out pockets of resistance around Plougastel, and reap a harvest of over 3000 prisoners. The 38th Inf. returned to the division, which now closed in on the main defenses of Brest.



FALL of the Daoulas Peninsula produced an immediate advantage. TD artillery and heavy machine guns now could be set up along the shore, pouring direct, harassing fire across the harbor into the city. Observers on Hill 154 and liaison planes made it increasingly difficult for the enemy to use artillery without revealing his position. While the battle for Daoulas raged, the division crashed Brest's outer defenses. A key objective was Hill 105, which was to the outer defenses what Hill 154 was to Daoulas. There the similarity ended, for 105 was taken only after slow, painful fighting. Hill 105 was larger, more heavily manned, more bitterly defended both in the approaches and on the slopes. Buttressed by concrete dugouts and positions, the Krauts defended it foot by foot.

Attacking the hill's approaches, one company inched its way toward a group of six bunkers. A platoon crossed the Guipavas-Brest road, and one squad reached the first bunker when a loud explosion, followed by three successive blasts, rocked the terrain. Huge boulders, sharp chunks of concrete and debris burst in all directions. One man said later he "just kept climbing" even though he was buried to the waist. Others were not so lucky.

Force of the explosion left craters 100 feet wide and 50 feet deep. One man-sized piece of concrete smashed a trucksize hole in a thick hedgerow 100 yards away.

The squad which reached the first bunker was completely wiped out. Only two members of the platoon's

remaining squads were battle fit. Although few were killed, many were stunned and hurt. The company commander gathered 22 men together and pressed on for 400 yards more before being stopped.

Two days later another company met its day of trial with sacrifice and courage. Enemy paratroopers at Fourneuf held a ridge threaded with tunnels, pillboxes, foxholes and camouflaged gun emplacements. Because little protection was offered by this terrain, a smoke screen was thrown up to cover the advancing infantry. One platoon struck out blindly through the smoke, each man aware of the danger of the mission. They were found later, lying in a field along a sunken road, still in perfect platoon formation. All but three were dead, but bloodied bayonets, and 28 German bodies in one field grimly told the full story of the battle.

That night the enemy withdrew 500 yards.

The fortunes of war were kinder to Co. E, 23rd Inf., as it attacked a similar stronghold on Hill 105. Boldness, luck and surprise were accompanying features. GIs blasted a flak gun with mortar fire and charged into a pitted road with fixed bayonets, kaying machine guns on both flanks, and forcing the Nazis to surrender.

Artillery and air bombardment softened up Hill 195, but it was the hard-hacking hedge-to-hedge infantry slugging which finally took it. Hill 105 commanded the outer defenses of Brest and the city itself. Hills 90 and 100 still had to be taken, but after the highest—105—had fallen, the others were doomed.



WHEN he first came to Brest, Gen. Robertson was told that the German paratroopers the division had fought from the beachhead, through Trevieres, to the breakthrough at St. Lo and Vire, were again on his front. As each battle for the fortress city developed—Hill 154, Forneuf, Hills 105, 100 and 90—the truth of his oft-repeated statement became more apparent:

“We’ve fought them again and again and beat them. We’ll do it again.”



As soon as riflemen had secured both slopes of the hill, tank destroyers again went into action, stabbing into the hills on the same ridge and into the city's outlying suburbs. Division and corps artillery also wheeled into position, constantly lobbing accurate high explosives, interspersed with smoke shells, to mark targets for sweep fighter bombers.

Brest Airfield was the scene of another bitter struggle. South of the field the infantry was pinned down by concrete emplacements which had resisted three days of heavy shelling. To start the attack rolling on one company sector, flame-throwers were brought up to fire into embrasures of an enemy machine gun emplacement. Heavy losses in the company demonstrated that no man experienced in using the weapon was available. Company commander Capt. Cameron A. Clough strapped the equipment to his back, crossed the open field under heavy fire and destroyed the emplacement. His action enabled the company to breach the main line of resistance and outflank positions menacing companies on either side. Capt. Clough was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

In Brest itself, pillars of smoke billowed constantly from fires set by artillery and aerial bombardment. Traces of gunpowder and burnt wood lingered in the air. Only skeletons of buildings remained—some blackened by fire, others hollowed by concussion blasts. Here and there blocks of apartments or stores stood untouched. Piles of debris spilled, slopped into deserted streets.

The silence was oddly accentuated by the random chatter of machine guns and the sharp crack of rifles. Shells whispering overhead to crash in the distance added to the ghostliness. When a French civilian ventured among the wreckage, his footsteps echoed blocks away. At night the silence mounted until an occasional shell descended and burst. Pale lights from flares quickly disappeared in the surrounding darkness.



This was the scene as the 2nd Div. entered Brest for the final battle. The original tactical plan had been altered so that the division sector now included all of the city east of the Penfield, while the 29th Div. advanced to capture the area west of the river. The 8th Div. had moved around to the south to assault the Crozon Peninsula. The stage was set for the final blow.

Over, Under, Through the Walls

THEN ON TO GERMANY

THE swath cut by the GIs veered north into St. Marc, moving so swiftly that lighted cigars and hot dinners left by the Krauts were found in hastily abandoned German CPs. Final victory, however, lay beyond a maze of streets and buildings—fighting far removed from hedgerow warfare. Traditional methods of street fighting were useless. These streets were death traps swept by machine and flak guns set up at intersections. Positions were gained by the “ladder route,” through back doors, gardens, up and down ladders, and over walls and hastily improvised catwalks. Another expedient was to chop a path through the middle of the block by blasting interior walls.

First Lt. Pichegru Woolfolk, 23rd Inf., told how a squad in his platoon had to bore through seven buildings before reaching an enemy stronghold. But the trick saved lives. Favorite approach to a building was from above, because lower floor entrances invited showers of hand grenades and rifle fire from the upper floors.

Direct fire from the 705th TDs, emplaced on the front lines knocked out many strong points. Men of the 2nd Engrs. punched holes through walls or pushed paths through rubble as much as 15 feet deep in some places.

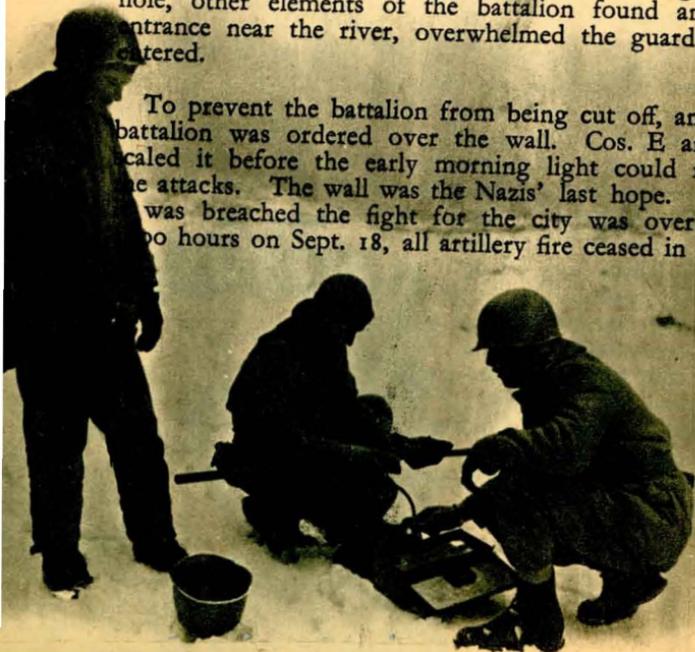
Surrounding, flanking, working their way from block to block, sometimes knocking out a machine gun from an upper story window, or engaging in grenade and fire fights within buildings, the infantry inched forward. One of the sharpest fights occurred in the cemetery on the southern edge of town, where the Germans had set up machine guns for cross-fire, protected by ornate French tombstones. One platoon wormed its way into this macabre battlefield, but had to withdraw until holes could be blasted in the cemetery walls. Buildings on both sides were in American hands before the cemetery finally could be taken.



The division eventually reached the old wall of the inner city. Patrols probed the ancient moat, searching for an opening. The wall measured 60 feet across in some places—too wide for demolitions. Two plans were considered—a crossing of the Penfield west of the wall through the 29th Div. sector, or a penetration of the wall itself.

To Lt. Col. William F. Kernan's 2nd Bn. went the credit for finding a way through. Co. I, which had distinguished itself at Forneuf, discovered the unguarded weak spot. While the company trickled through this hole, other elements of the battalion found another entrance near the river, overwhelmed the guards and entered.

To prevent the battalion from being cut off, another battalion was ordered over the wall. Cos. E and H scaled it before the early morning light could reveal the attacks. The wall was the Nazis' last hope. Once it was breached the fight for the city was over. At 10:00 hours on Sept. 18, all artillery fire ceased in order



to permit surrender of the garrison. By that time, the 29th Div. had swept past the submarine pens to the Penfield to end all resistance in the western sector.

Now it was nearly 1500. From holes, caves and underground dugouts Germans straggled into the Place du President Wilson. Some wore well-tailored, fancy uniforms, in sharp contrast to the more practical battle dress of the Americans. Dirty, ragged clothes hung on others. Collected in little groups in the enormous square were the grey-haired labor troops, the conglomeration of naval personnel who had been fighting as infantrymen, the scrawny youths and the stiff, well-dressed officers.

Groups were led off as new ones appeared. At one time nearly 1000 troops packed the square, over which an American flag danced lazily in the breeze.

At 1500 the German commander formally surrendered the garrison in the presence of Gen. Robertson. Fortress Brest had fallen.

IN six weeks of fighting, the 2nd Div. had captured 13,000 prisoners, including 3000 taken by Task Force B on the Daoulas Peninsula.

But all of this would not have been possible without the invaluable assistance rendered by units attached to the division during the Battle of Brest. Units which blended their efforts to make the 2nd Div. so effective

were the 612th TD Bn.; Co. B, 705th TD Bn.; Co. D, 709th Tank Bn.; Co. C, 86th Chemical Bn.; 687th FA Bn.; Cos. A, C, E, 5th Ranger Bn.

Now, the 2nd Div. is poised for the all-time showdown. Hundreds of miles to the east of Brest, where the thunder of war reverberates, men of the 2nd, inside the blood-stained, snow-swept Siegfried Line still slug their way forward.

When there is time to reflect, memories revert to the other weary hours of the past and especially to those men who helped put the 2nd in Germany—those who now remain behind in Normandy and Brittany. Recent deeds only have enriched the heritage created by the forefathers of the 2nd Div. who cut the pattern of courage in World War I.

In achieving its successes during the current campaign, the going has been tortuous, back-breaking. But this story is only a larger replica of the saga of 25 years ago. Whenever obstacles loom on the road to ultimate victory, Gen. Robertson's reminder answers the challenge: "We've fought them again and again and beat them. WE'LL DO IT AGAIN!"

