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THE STORY OF THE BULGE



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THE 82^d AIRBORNE DIVISION

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THE STORY OF THE
82D AIRBORNE DIVISION
IN THE
BATTLE OF THE BELGIAN BULGE
IN THE STEEPED LINE AND
ON THE ROER RIVER

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General 82d Airborne Division.~~

R. H. WIENECKE,
Colonel, G.S.C.
Chief of Staff

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SECTION I - PREFACE

Presented herewith is a written and graphic report of operations carried out by the 82d Airborne Division in the celebrated battles of "The Belgian Bulge" in BELGIUM and GERMANY during December, 1944, and January and February, 1945.

This record, written as it is in the terse, military language employed in such reports, can merely hint at the almost indescribable difficulties faced - and mastered - by both the combat and service echelons of the Division.

In brief, the 82nd Airborne Division, still awaiting reinforcements and much re-supply at its base camps in the general area of RHEIMS, FRANCE, moved 150 miles with its first combat elements going into position in less than 24 hours and the entire Division closing in a new combat area in less than 40 hours from the time of the initial alert. It fought, stopped, and held against the best Divisions the German leader, Field Marshal VON RUNSTEDT, could pit against it, protecting the North shoulder of the Allied line, preventing the GERMAN break-through from turning North to LIEGE, BELGIUM, and providing a safe area through which trapped Allied units could withdraw from the break-through area. This it did despite the fact that its lines at times stretched more than 25,000 yards. Then, turning to the offense, the Division set the pace for other units, forcing the enemy back through his famed SIEGFREID LINE.

Men fought, at times, with only rifles, grenades and knives against GERMAN armor. They fought with only light weapons in waist-deep snow, in blizzards, in near zero temperatures and in areas where heavy forestation and the almost total lack of roads presented problems that only men of stout hearts and iron determination could overcome.

The battles of "THE BULGE", ranking on a par with the brightest victories in the Division's history, also proved again that plans and material are important but the most important essential of all is a fighting heart, a will-to-win. To the officers and men of the line goes full credit for the brilliant record they made in the name of the 82d Airborne Division.

JAMES M. GAVIN
Major General, USA,
Commanding

The 82d Airborne Division was located at Camp Suippes and Sissonne, France undertaking normal ground divisional training when, on December 17, 1944, first orders were received to move to the east. At about 1930 hours, while at dinner with the Staff, I received a ~~phone~~ call from Colonel Eaton, Chief of Staff, XVIII Corps (Airborne). He stated that he had just received a call from SHAEF to the effect that the situation on the front to the east appeared to be critical; that the airborne divisions were to be prepared to move 24 hours after daylight the following day; that the Corps Commander, General Ridgway, was in England and could not be contacted immediately. I instructed Colonel Eaton to issue orders to the Commanding General of the 101st Airborne Division, Brigadier General McAuliffe, to prepare immediately for movement in accordance with the SHAEF estimate, 24 hours after daylight. I assembled my Staff in the Division War Room at 2000 hours. I had listened to a radio news broadcast at 1800 hours and was aware of the fact that a German penetration was being made in the direction of St. Vith.

The division was ready for a quick move, since, because of our past and usual quick commitments, we have maintained a high degree of readiness as a standard operating procedure. A basic load of ammunition was in the hands of each regiment complete in all respects. Two "K" and two "D" rations for the Division were at hand and could be distributed in a matter of hours. All weapons, uniform and equipment were up to an operating standard. The Staff assembled at 2000 hours when the initial directive was issued that started their planning.

I called General March at Camp Suippes at about 1945 hours, giving him the situation and alerting him for the move. Unit Commanders at Camp Sissonne were assembled with the Staff in the War Room at 2100 hours when the situation was outlined to them and a tentative plan for the movement to Bastogne issued. At about 2130 hours I received a call from the Chief of Staff, XVIII Corps (Airborne) who said that Corps had orders to move without delay in the direction of Bastogne where further orders would be received. He also said that Corps was to be attached to the First United States Army. After further discussion I decided that the 82d Airborne Division would move approximately one hour after daylight and move in the direction of Bastogne. The 101st Airborne Division was to move at 1400 hours, 18 December, also in the direction of Bastogne. At that time Cise Base Section was devoting all its efforts to pulling in all transportation off the roads to provide the necessary lift for both divisions.

At 2330 I left with my G-1, Lt. Col. Alfred W. Ireland, and my Aide, Captain Hugo V. Olson, for the command post of the First United States Army at Spa. The drive was very difficult due to the general condition of the roads, rain and fog, and the absence of bridges on a number of important highways. I reported to General Hodges in person at about 0900 hours 18 December. At that time the situation appeared rather vague. The first reports of enemy contact at Stavelot were just coming in. It was reported that an enemy force at Stavelot had driven our troops across the river and had succeeded in capturing and destroying a large map supply. They apparently blew the bridge upon driving out our forces. The situation south and west of Stavelot was unknown except that the enemy had evidently overrun our front positions. There appeared to be a large force of U. S. troops centered on St. Vith. There also appeared to be a large pocket on the 106th Division surrounded in the Eifel.

After some staff discussion, the Commanding General, First U. S. Army decided to attach the 82d Airborne Division to V Corps. It was to close in an area in the vicinity of Werbomont. The 101st Airborne Division was to be attached to VIII Corps and would assemble in the vicinity of Bastogne. I placed a request with the First U. S. Army for tanks, TD's, 4.2's and medium artillery, and left the CP for Werbomont. At this time there was considerable movement west of service and command installations in and around Spa. It was apparently being evacuated.

I arrived at Werbomont at approximately mid-afternoon and immediately made a reconnaissance of the entire area. It offered excellent defensive possibilities, being the dominant terrain for many miles from the crossroads at Werbomont. At about 1600 hours I contacted an engineer platoon at the bridge at Hablemont. The bridge was prepared for demolition and they reported the Germans were in the immediate vicinity, coming over the main highway from Trois-Ponts. At that time a number of civilians were very excitedly moving west on the Trois-Ponts-Werbomont road. They all stated that the Germans had passed Trois-Ponts and were "coming this way". I made a reconnaissance down the valley from Hablemont to the Ambleve River but encountered no enemy or any indication of his whereabouts. One bridge

was still intact at Forge and was not prepared for demolition. Upon returning to Hablemont I asked the Lieutenant at that bridge about it, and he appeared to be fully occupied with the means at his disposal of blowing the bridge at Hablemont. At about 1630 hours I left for Bastogne to meet General McMuliffe.

I reported to the VIII Corps CP in Bastogne and had a short conversation with General Middleton and talked to his G-2 and G-3. At that time the Corps CP was preparing to move. The situation was very vague. The 28th Division officers present seemed to feel that their division had been overrun, although they were uncertain of its whereabouts. I met General McMuliffe, gave him his orders that he was to assemble in Bastogne, reporting to the Corps Commander of the VIII Corps, and I left, moving north and passing through Houffalize shortly after dark. I arrived in Werbomont at approximately 2000 hours and about that time the first large group of 82d vehicles started arriving.

A command post was established and troops disposed as rapidly as they arrived. Drivers and troops were very tired, having by this time been up for two nights. All during the night the staff worked on closing the vehicles into the Werbomont area. About two hours after daylight December 19th the division closed in that area.

In the meantime the first enemy contact was made at Hablemont. A road block of the 30th Division was contacted by a German armored reconnaissance party at about 1900 hours the 18th. I visited the locality at daylight December 19th and found about five armored vehicles, armored cars and Sp's, knocked out, with several German dead lying about the road. About a platoon of 2nd Bn, 119th Infantry was present. They reported that all of their road block party proper, despite having knocked out the German reconnaissance party, had either been killed or captured or had moved east. It appeared quite clear that this was a reconnaissance party of a German armored column that had been endeavoring to move from Trois-Ponts to Werbomont and had succeeded in crossing the river at Forge. The Hablemont bridge was blown. At daylight, December 19, it was learned that the north-south road from Bastogne to Werbomont had been cut by the Germans in the vicinity of Houffalize. The depth of this penetration was unknown, but there were rumors from truck drivers that the Germans were on the road in the vicinity of Hotton.

At 1100 hours, December 19 orders were received to dispatch one infantry battalion and one platoon of TD's to the area north of Hotton to block and clear all approaches from Hotton to the north, northwest and northeast. Permission was later obtained from the Corps Commander to send this battalion to Barvaux.

During the afternoon of December 19 information and orders were received from Headquarters XVIII Corps (Airborne), which had been established about one mile north of Werbomont, that First Army was to hold along the general line Stoumont-Stavelot-Halmédy and counterattack in the direction of Trois-Ponts to halt the enemy's advance to the northwest. The XVIII Corps (Airborne) assumed command of the sector generally south of the Ambleve River to include Houffalize.

In compliance with instructions received from Corps Headquarters, the 504th Parachute Infantry advanced and seized the high ground northwest of Rahier and the 505th Parachute Infantry advanced and seized the high ground in the vicinity of Haut-Bodeux. The 508th Parachute Infantry sent one company to the crossroads one mile east of Bra. The regiment, less one company, occupied the high ground in the vicinity of Chevron. The 325th Glider Infantry remained at Werbomont, having sent the third battalion to the vicinity of Barvaux and one company to the crossroads at Manhay. These dispositions were consolidated during the night of December 19-20 and patrols pushed to the front to gain contact with the enemy.

Shortly after daylight, December 20, I met Colonel Reuben Tucker, 504th Commanding officer, in the town of Rahier at which time he had just received intelligence from civilians to the effect that approximately 125 vehicles, including approximately 30 tanks, had moved through the town the afternoon before, moving in the direction of Cheneux.

The information appeared to be reliable. It posed some interesting problems. It appeared that the Germans had given up hope of crossing the creek obstacle at Hablemont with their heavy armor and had turned to the main road through Stoumont-LaGlicze. If this were the case, the seizure of the bridge over the Ambleve River at Cheneux was imperative if their further movement was to be blocked.

I ordered Colonel Tucker to move into the town of Cheneux without delay and, conditions permitting, to seize the bridge. It was imperative that the bridge be seized. If 125 armored vehicles engaged the 504th in the entry around Rahier we were in for some anxious moments, but we had come a long way to find the German

and we had beaten in the past better units than these appeared to be, even with our limited means, so there was but one thing to do and that was to close with the enemy as rapidly as possible and destroy him by any means possible. But the seizure of the bridge was imperative.

Initial contact was made at the western exit of Cheneux by a patrol which had been sent from Rahier by the first battalion of the 504th. They fired on a German motorcyclist who was accompanied by a small patrol. Contact was first made on the ridge one-half mile west of Cheneux. This small patrol was followed by approximately a company of Germans moving along the ridge. They were engaged at once and a heavy fight took place, lasting all day long. This German force, we know now, was the advance guard of a reinforcement battalion of the first SS Panzer Division. The 1st battalion of the 504th drove them back into Cheneux, the battalion commander setting up his command post in a building in the western limits of Cheneux on the main road during the hours of darkness of the first night. During the day firing could be heard and some vehicular movement could be observed in the direction of LaGleize.

I went to the 505th Parachute Infantry where I found that they had contacted some engineers who remained in Trois-Ponts. They had occasionally been under fire but no German force had moved through the town. All civilians in those northern regimental areas reported that many Germans and much armor had passed through. The situation south of the 505th in the direction of Vielsalm was vague. Reconnaissance was pushed in that direction.

On the afternoon of December 20 at about 1600 hours I was called to Headquarters VXIII Corps (Airborne) to receive orders for advance to the Vielsalm-Hebronval line. In the meantime contact had been established with a German SS force later identified as the 1st SS Panzer Division at Cheneux. First contacts indicated that they were well equipped and reasonably trained troops who would give us a good fight. It was with some difficulty that our first prisoners were taken. At about 1630, prior to leaving the division advance CP, which was now established at Hablemont, I had all unit commanders assembled, including the battalion commanders of the 508th. It was felt that speed was vital and if we were to move to Vielsalm with the mission to be assigned us by XVIII Corps (Airborne), we had to move without delay, regardless of conditions of light or darkness.

At Corps Headquarters I received information that they were advancing to the southeast and establishing an active defense along the line Vielsalm-Hebronval-Laroche: that this division, 82d Airborne, would establish a defensive line from contact with the 30th Division, in the vicinity of LaGleize, to Cheneux-Trois-Ponts-Grand Halleux-Vielsalm-Salmchateau-Hebronval. Contact was to be immediately established with units reportedly cut off in the area of Vielsalm-St. Vith. The Third Armored Division was on our right and was to hold the sector from Hebronval west.

Orders to accomplish this were issued at the divisional CP at Hablemont shortly before dark, December 20. Units moved promptly and by daylight were on their objectives, well organized and prepared to defend. Regiments were in the line in the order, left to right: 504, 505, 508, 325. One battalion of the 325 was held in division reserve in the vicinity of LaVaux. The division forward CP was established in the town of Liernoux at the railroad crossing on the northern edge of the town.

In Vielsalm contact was made with General Hasbrouck who had established the CP of the 7th Armored Division in the town. The Division was then fighting around St. Vith. West of Vielsalm, General Jones had established the CP of the 106th Division at Rencoveaux. From a visit to both of these officers I learned that the 7th Armored Division, except for battle losses, was intact and fighting with unit integrity. The 106th Division appeared to be rather badly chewed up and had but one regiment, the 424th Infantry, remaining, with some division artillery and divisional units. There were also present a regiment of the 28th Division, the 112th Infantry, in addition to a number of Corps and larger units such as medium artillery.

On the left of the division very heavy fighting was taking place in the vicinity of Cheneux where the German 1st SS Panzer Division was making a desperate and all-out effort to drive out the first battalion of the 504th. Further south at Trois-Ponts, and extending down to Grand Halleux, determined, apparently well planned and executed attacks were being made with increasing strength against the very thinly held front of the 505th. On the south, the 508th and the 325 had no contact with the enemy. The Division Reconnaissance Platoon was pushed south.

Information available indicated that the Germans were moving in great strength to the west, having passed Houffalize, and were moving towards the Moselle River. The Third Armored Division, which was supposed to be on the division's right, could not be contacted. I believe that on this date a reconnaissance party may have established contact.

On December 21 I visited the CP's of the 7th Armored and 106th Divisions with the Corps Commander of XVIII Corps (Airborne), General Ridgway. The situation on the west front of St. Vith appeared to be critical. The town was being overwhelmingly attacked in several directions and there appeared to be little prospect of preventing its being cut off. The Corps Commander informed me that his original plan was for the 30th Division to attack south from Stavelot to relieve the situation at St. Vith and for the Third Armored to attack on the right on the 82d so as to drive in the Germans moving to the west. On this date, December 21, however, only the narrow neck of land from Vielsalm to Salmchateau, held by the 82d Airborne Division, connected the St. Vith forces with remaining forces of the First Army. Its retention would be decisive.

The fighting at Cheneux was increasing in bitterness. On this date the first battalion of the 504th, assisted by a company of the third battalion of that regiment, made a final, all-out assault on the Germans in that town and in close hand-to-hand fighting, many of the parachute troops jumping aboard the German half-tracks and knifing the Germans at their posts, the Germans were driven back across the Ambleve River and our troops seized the bridge. In this attack we destroyed a considerable amount of armor and killed and captured many Germans from the 1st SS Panzer Division.

Farther to the south and east, the 505th Parachute Infantry was having very hard fighting with the remainder of the 1st SS Panzer Division. The 505th had initially sent a covering force east of the Salm River in the vicinity of Trois-Ponts. Through sheer weight of numbers this small force was finally driven to the river line where it held. Being very much overextended, the regiment managed to hold by diagnosing or estimating the point of German main effort from time to time and then marshalling all available infantry as quickly as possible and beating off the attack at that point. This process was repeated, where necessary, day and night until finally the German attacks waned in their intensity about December 23.

The 508th Parachute Infantry on the Vielsalm-Salmchateau front was without enemy contact except for patrols. The 325th Glider Infantry, aided by the Division Reconnaissance Platoon, had established contact with enemy forces several miles south of their front lines.

On December 21 I was instructed by the Corps Commander to make a reconnaissance of the divisional area with a view to withdrawing after the extrication of the St. Vith forces to a suitable defensive position that would tie in with the divisions on my right and left. To date no firm contact had been established with the Third Armored Division. The merits of the present defensive position were discussed and it was agreed that the Thier-duMont line offered splendid defensive possibilities provided it could be continued on our right. As well as I could determine, however, there were no friendly troops except light reconnaissance elements west of Hebronval.

I objected to the withdrawal but the Corps Commander explained that regardless of my wishes in the matter it might be necessary to require the division to withdraw. It was quite evident at this time that if a major German attack developed from the south, threatening the right of the division, its continued occupation of the salient extending out to Vielsalm would be costly in life and to no advantage after the extrication of the St. Vith forces. It was emphasized by the Corps Commander that it was absolutely necessary to secure properly the withdrawal of the St. Vith forces by holding and defending our present positions.

A reconnaissance was undertaken and at its completion it was quite clear that there was but one reasonably good defensive position and that there was but one reasonably good defensive position and that was the Trois-Ponts--Basso-Bodoux--Bra-Manhay line. At the direction of the Corps Commander a reconnaissance was also made of a position farther to the rear, generally along the Cheneux-Rahier-Chevron-Werbement line. On December 22 I went to Manhay where I met General Rose, commanding the Third Armored Division. He stated that he was covering a concentration of other forces and that his front was so extended that he could not occupy and hold in strength the town in west of Hebronval.

From my viewpoint, it was obvious that the loss of Regne-Lierneux ridge would result in the complete neutralization of the defensive capabilities of the right portion of the division sector. This ridge dominated the entire road not from Vielsalm to Bra. This was the only road not south of the Trois-ports--Werbomont road. In addition, all of the division's installations and division artillery were located in the Lierneux-Garonne-Vielsalm valley. Accordingly, orders were issued to the 325th Glider Infantry to extend its right flank and seize and hold Regne and the ridge extending north therefrom. This ridge had to be held at any cost.

On the afternoon of December 22 an enemy force of approximately 100 vehicles of all types preceded by about 25 tanks advanced north through Otter. The tanks entered Joubieval. They were permitted to close up, then brought under devastating artillery fire. Artillery observers who remained on the outpost line on the ridge immediately north of Otter kept the column under close observation and kept up effective artillery fire on it. This unit was later identified as a portion of the 2d SS Panzer Division. At 1700, December 22, the outpost of the 325 was forced to withdraw. The enemy build-up was increasing in intensity on our southern front.

At the direction of the Division Commander, the Division Engineer conducted a thorough study and reconnaissance of the southern portion of the division sector. It became clearly evident that the German could not bring armor to bear against the sector anywhere between Salmchateau and the Fraiture crossroads except by bringing it up the Petite-Langlir road, and if the Petite-Langlir bridge could be blown he would be incapable of bringing armor to bear anywhere within this 10,000 yard gap without approaching up the main road towards Salmchateau, which was well covered.

The possibility of canalizing his armored attack was obvious and steps were taken to take advantage of this. Early on December 22 orders were issued to the Engineer Battalion to move without delay and prepare the Petite-Langlir bridge for demolition and to destroy it upon hostile threat. Thorough and detailed preparations were made, possibly too thorough, because as the demolition party moved south from Otter it encountered a large group of German vehicles coming northward. The Germans had the bridge. This was at about 1400 hours. Evidently thoroughness in preparation had cost us the bridge.

During the night of December 22-23 an engineer patrol, lead by Major J. C. H. Lee, Jr., made its way behind the enemy lines to the bridge over the creek south of Petite-Langlir and destroyed the bridge while it was actually being used by German vehicles. They displayed unusual gallantry and perseverance in the performance of their task.

In the following 24 hours enemy pressure built up in intensity all along the southern front. It was easily handled south of Thier-du-Mont. The enemy, however, showed promise of getting entirely out of hand on the right, apparently wide open beyond Regne. Returning to the left flank, the German forces appeared to be cut off in the vicinity of Lagleize but were fighting a very intense engagement with the 30th Division on our left. Their occasional isolated efforts to cross the Ambleve River were easily dealt with by small patrols from the 504th Precht Inf.

I therefore ordered the release of the Division reserve battalion of the 325 to the Regimental Commander of that regiment and ordered one battalion of the 504, the 2d Battalion, to move at once to the ridge 5,000 yards southwest of Lierneux. These troops went into position during daylight of December 23. On this date the enemy attacked in considerable strength and overran the town of Regne. The 325 was ordered to counterattack and retake the town. The retention of this ridge was most vital if the Division was to accomplish its mission of extricating the St. Vith forces. Supported by attached armor and with unusual gallantry and elan, the 325 attacked and retook the town and held it until later ordered to withdraw.

It was on this occasion that the Regimental Adjutant of a regiment of the 2d SS Panzer Division was captured with the orders for the advance of the following day. In the confusion incident to the retaking of the town by the 325, he had been sent forward by his Regimental Commander to learn the true situation. During this reconnaissance he found himself aboard a motorcycle side car in the outskirts of Regne when our troops were retaking the town. He was captured with the town and had the orders on his person. They proved to be of great value, since they gave us definite information of the enemy's intentions for the following several days.

It was becoming increasingly evident that the German armor was determined to attack; to reach Werbomont and move north towards Aywaille and Liege. Colonel Billingslea, Commanding Officer of the 325th Glider Infantry, was ordered to extend his right flank to include the Fraiture ridge. No firm contact with the 3d Armored Division on our right appeared possible.

The Fraiture crossroads began to assume increasing importance. Inquiry was made on several occasions of the Commanding General of XVIII Corps. (Airborne) as to what was being done to insure its retention. On December 22 I made a personal reconnaissance from Levigne to Fond de la Justice to Manhay. Quite a number of armored vehicles were in the vicinity of Manhay and some were on the ridge 1½ miles south thereof. The 3d Armored Division CP was in Manhay. A conversation with the Division Commander made it apparent that they were incapable of committing sufficient strength to the crossroads to guarantee its retention by our troops.

From my view point, its loss would mean that German armor which we had successfully turned back from Trois-Ponts to Regne, with the aid of both terrain and a very active defense, would bypass the Division and occupy the Liernieux-Regne ridge mass, thus preventing us from accomplishing our present mission of covering the withdrawal of the St. Vith troops. I accordingly ordered Colonel Billingslea to again extend his right flank and to include in his defensive organization the cross-roads southwest of Fraiture. This he did by sending Company F, under the command of Captain Woodruff to the area. The situation all along the southern front was becoming critical when I visited the battalion commanders of the 325th several times during the period December 22-24. On the afternoon of December 23, at about 1700 hours, I checked the dispositions along the Fraiture ridge. At this time riflemen were scattered 100 to 200 yards apart. There was a little antitank defense, and the possibility of defending the ridge against a major German attack appeared nothing less than fantastic. On the other hand, nothing could be spared from the other fronts, since the situation was much the same in other sectors, although the threat was not as great. The attacks of the 1st SS Panzer Division on our left began to wane.

On the afternoon of December 23, at about 1730 hours, I arrived at the CP of Captain Gibson in the town of Fraiture. It was then under heavy mortar fire. A considerable volume of small arms fire could be heard to the south and west. SCR-300 contact was made with Captain Woodruff at the crossroads. He stated that he was under terrific attack which was completely engulfing his small unit. I moved on foot from Fraiture towards the crossroads and managed to reach the edge of the woods several hundred yards beyond the town.

It was clearly evident that the attack at the crossroads was an all-out affair of great magnitude. As it developed, it was the attack of a regiment of the 2d SS Panzer Division supported by attached armor, attacking with the mission of driving up the main highway to Werbomont. The one company was soon completely overrun. During the hours of darkness, in desperate, close-quarters fighting, Captain Woodruff managed to extricate about 40 men. They accounted for many Germans in fighting their way out, and rejoined their battalion commander in the vicinity of Fraiture.

At this point it was evident that there was nothing to prevent the German forces from entering the rear of the Division area, which was now closely engaged along its entire 25,000-yard front.

I moved to the CP of the reserve battalion in the region southwest of Liernieux, arriving there at about dark. I issued verbal orders to the battalion commander, Major Wellens, outlining the situation to him and directing him to secure the right flank as far west as Malmédy. I then moved without delay via Trarbach to Manhay, the CP of the 3d Armored Division. Here I found one MP on duty at the crossroads and the town completely abandoned. I then moved without delay to Corps Headquarters to explain the situation to them and obtain further assistance in holding the main highway which was out of my sector, but the retention of which was necessary to the accomplishment of my mission.

By telephone Colonel Tucker was told to be prepared to move the 504 Regimental Headquarters and one battalion to the vicinity of Lansival where he would take over the sector on the right of the Division. Two TD's were moved southwest of the Division CP at Bra to give it some protection from the direction of Manhay. I returned to the Division CP at Bra at approximately 2200. Upon my arrival there I learned by telephone from Corps that Manhay had fallen to the German attacking

forces. There seemed to be some doubt about this, however, and due to the darkness and confusion it was impossible to determine exactly where anyone was. All units were informed of the situation and efforts made to get units under control and have the situation in hand so as to be able to engage the German forces on reasonably favorable terms at daylight.

At about daylight XVIII Corps (Airborne) made available to me Combat Command B of the 9th Armored Division under the command of General Hoge, which had been withdrawn from the St. Vith area. General Hoge reported to my CP at about 0700. At about 0545, December 24, Colonel Tucker was ordered to leave the smallest possible force in the northern sector and to move south to Brittemmotor without delay. He had been given a warning order about 24 hours earlier. At 0645 the 505 was ordered to regroup one battalion, the 2d, and have it prepared to move in Division reserve without delay, warning orders having been given them to prepare for this prior to this time.

At 0820 verbal orders were issued to General Hoge to hold Malempre until further orders to contact the 504 on his left and the 7th Armored on his right. The 7th Armored had been recommitted by SVIII Corps (Airborne) down the main road towards Manhay. Combat Command B, 9th Armored Division, and the 7th Armored Division were practically exhausted from the past week's fighting. They were very short of infantry, and in the opinion of General Hoge Combat Command B was incapable of a sustained defense or offense. However, Malempre had to be held and appropriate orders were issued.

At 1315 hours General Hoge reported to me that he was holding Malempre. The situation in that sector, however, still appeared confused. This was further added to by the presence in the area of German troops wearing American uniforms and using American armor. It would appear certain that the Germans were fighting in Manhay, that they held the ridge south and east of Manhay, that we held Malempre and that we held Fraiture. Between Malempre and Fraiture the 2d Battalion of the 504th Parachute Infantry was fighting in the woods. This battalion a veteran, experienced outfit, had as clear a picture as could be expected of the situation. Numerous Germans were endeavoring to attack through the woods to the northeast between Malempre and Fraiture. There was much close, bitter fighting and the Germans were very roughly handled by Major Wellem's battalion. He finally succeeded in establishing his position and containing the Germans, although his frontage was very great, particularly for the wooded sector in which he was fighting. The Germans were well equipped and armed and were fighting with unusual spirit. They were from the 2d SS Panzer Division.

During the day of December 24 Colonel Tucker brought up his full regiment less one battalion which he had left at Cheneux to contain the forces north of the river. That battalion was charged with holding the Ambloive River line from immediately north of Trois-Ponts to where contact was established with the 30th Division in the vicinity of La Gloize, a frontage of approximately 12,000 - 15,000 yards, much of it closely wooded country and broken up terrain. However, since the situation was so critical on the right, and the German attack had apparently been beaten off on the left, no other course of action appeared practicable at the moment. The 505 appeared to have all it could do to continue to hold the Trois-Ponts - Grand Halleux line and the 508 was becoming heavily engaged on the Vielsalm-Salmchateau-Joubieval line.

In accordance with the warning order given me by the Corps Commander, similar warning orders were given to unit commanders to be prepared to withdraw if necessary to the Trois-Ponts - Erria-Manhay line. Early on December 24, therefore they were directed to make small unit reconnaissance of the defensive positions and sectors were allotted and missions assigned. A conference was held at Headquarters XVIII Corps (Airborne) at about 1330 hours, December 24th, at which time orders were issued for the voluntary withdrawal to the Corps defensive position. Division plans were completed and orders issued during the afternoon to effect the withdrawal starting after darkness.

I was greatly concerned with the attitude of the troops toward the withdrawal, the Division having never made a withdrawal in its combat history. The German was using every artifice conceivable to create doubt and confusion in the minds of American fighting units. He was using our arms, equipment and vehicles, frequently leaving their own abandoned and disabled at bottlenecks on the roads. False messages were being used and Germans in American officers' uniforms were known to be in the rear areas. One trooper, who later was recaptured, was captured by Germans in American uniforms in the vicinity of Tri le Chesling.

All of these factors make the prospects of a withdrawal most unpleasant. On the 21st I published a memorandum to be read to the troops, explaining the dangers in the operation with which we were confronted, and I spent from early morning until after midnight visiting the troops of all battalions.

In all of the operations in which we have participated in our two years of combat and they have been many of multitudinous types, I have never seen a better executed operation than the withdrawal on Christmas Eve. The troops willingly and promptly carried into execution all the withdrawal plans, although they openly and frankly criticized it and failed to understand the necessity for it. But everybody pitched in and the withdrawal went smoothly.

Christmas Eve was a very cold, bright moonlight night. The enemy was closely engaged with us on the entire front from Trois-Ponts to Malempre, but there was in no locality any feeling of unusual pressure being exerted against us. All unit Commanders, down to Platoon Leaders I believe, felt that they had the situation well under control. The rear area, except for some medium artillery which had been abandoned in fields off the main roads, was completely cleared of the St. Vith pocket forces.

The withdrawal started shortly after dark. Covering shells were to be withdrawn at four A.M. The 307 Abn Engr Bn supported the withdrawal by blowing bridges over the Salm River, laying minefields and the establishing roadblocks. This worked very well on the right with the 504 and the 325. The 508 was attacked in great force and had some close and intense fighting at the bridges over the Salm River before it finally withdrew. Its shell on Thier-du-Mont was apparently cut off, but finally made its way back under the command of Major Taylor without the loss of a single man. All the troops, except for the shell, were in the valley in the vicinity of Gorronne where I saw them about 2000 hours, and everything was going smoothly.

At about 2300 hours I passed through St. Jacques on the way to the 505th Pch Inf Command Post, which was at Dairoment. At St. Jacques I met a platoon in a deployed formation moving north. They said they believed that there was a large force of Germans in the area and that they were looking for them. I went to the regimental CP. Here an unusual situation was becoming apparent. Earlier in the night a report was received from vehicle drivers that while driving their jeeps on a road in the vicinity of Basse-Bodeux they observed troops wearing full field equipment walking in the woods towards the east. These troops hit the ground and took cover, generally acting very evasive. Later in the night a lineman, checking his lines, had his jeep shot up by what he guessed were German troops in the rear area. This accounted for the platoon that I had met at St. Jacques being on its mission of clearing Germans from the rear area.

I talked to the regimental commander about the situation and he believed that at this time a force of approximately 500 Germans were somewhere in the regimental rear area moving to the east. Their presence could hardly be accounted for unless they had escaped from the La Gleize-Stoumont pocket. At first we did not believe that they were German troops in the area, but piecing together all available intelligence seemed to establish the fact unmistakable. At this time the regiment was under some pressure along the river line and had left a company in three platoon positions at the most likely crossing sites as a shell to cover the withdrawal would continue as planned; that by daylight the 505 would be on its defensive position with the area to its front wired and mined, and that it would be prepared to defend that position at all costs in coordination with the units on its right and left. This made it impractical for the regimental commander to divert any of his forces to a task of searching for the Germans. Orders were issued to proceed to new positions as previously planned and to be on the alert for loose German forces.

Several hours before daylight one platoon positioned north of Grand Halleux was attacked by a German force of great strength. A heavy fight ensued. A number of Germans were killed and wounded, as well as troopers of the Division. Among those captured was an American major of the U.S. 30th Infantry Division. He had been captured in earlier fighting at La Gleize and the force that was accompanying him when captured was a force of approximately 500-800 Germans endeavoring to withdraw to their own lines east of the Salm River. During their withdrawal they were rather well chewed up but they nevertheless succeeded in reaching their lines except for several killed and captured. On December 25th we realized that we had

just succeeded in withdrawing through a hostile withdrawing force, which was a rather novel maneuver.

At daylight, December 25th, all regiments were on their positions, mining and wiring were under way and all troops were dug in. Communications were being laid under great difficulty because of the mountainous terrain, particularly in the 504 and 508 sectors. At daylight I joined Major Gerard, commanding a battalion of the 325, in the town of Trille Chesling on our right flank. Its occupation, in which contact was established with infantry of the 7th Armored Division on our right, finally buttoned up our defense. Contact was already established with the 30th Division on our left.

About two days after occupying this position an attack was made by the 62d Volksgrenadier Division on our left and the 9th SS Panzer Division on our center. The 62d V. G. division in all of its operations proved to be of very poor quality and not well trained. They consistently lost patrols by having them destroyed by our outposts and they appeared to be very vulnerable to our own patrols.

The 9th SS Panzer Division appeared to be much better equipped and better trained. They launched an attack up the main axis from Lierneux to Heblemont, hitting the 508 and 504 in a coordinated effort that was characterized by great dash and courage. The 3d Battalion of the 508 was completely overrun. The men remained, however, manning their positions in the houses and foxholes. The battalion commander, Lt Colonel Mendez, obtained the use of the reserve company of the 2d Battalion of the 508 on his left, counter-attacked with great gallantry and determination, and drove the 9th SS Panzer from his positions, restoring his MLR. The Storm Troopers' losses were extremely heavy. From one field alone 62 bodies were later removed.

On interrogation some of the Storm Troopers stated that they had been accustomed to attacking with such dash and elan, yelling and firing their weapons, and the usual reaction of the enemy was to break and run as the Storm Troopers closed with them. They were frankly surprised to find troops who would man their positions after being overrun. The unit of the 9th SS attacking the 504 after overrunning the outpost of the 2d Battalion of that regiment, were stopped and driven back. They told an identical story of their attack technique.

This ended all offensive efforts of the German forces in the Battle of the Bulge. About a week later the division attacked, completely overrunning the 62d V. G. Division and the 9th SS Panzer Division, and capturing 2,500 prisoners, including 5 battalion commanders. It regained its former position on the Thier-du-mont heights.

From here the Division withdrew to a rest area from which it was later committed to the attack east of St. Vith, attacking through deep snow over thickly wooded mountains and overrunning a considerable group of German defensive forces in a constant day and night attack lasting for six days. Ultimately they drove into the Siegfried Line to seize Udenbreth and the ridge extending south.

This attack was the most arduous in the Division's history and, at its end, probably the most betterly fought, but the Division once again entered Germany and the seizure of Udenbreth placed the First U. S. Army in a position to attack down ridge lines all the way to Bonn.

From here the Division moved to the Hurtgen sector where, as a member of XVIII Corps (Airborne) and later III Corps, it participated in the advance to the Roer River. Except for extensive minefields, extremely difficult road conditions and hostile artillery fire, the operation was not too difficult. The Division arrived on the Roer River and had completed detailed plans for a river crossing and the seizure of Mideggen east of the river when it was withdrawn on February 17th and returned to the Sissonne-Suippes, France, area.

SECTION III - CHRONOLOGY

1. AFTER-ACTION REPORT FOR DECEMBER 1944
2. AFTER-ACTION REPORT FOR JANUARY 1945
3. AFTER-ACTION REPORT FOR FEBRUARY 1945

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NARRATIVE

17 DECEMBER 1944

The Division engaged in normal training activities near RHEIMS, FRANCE, was alerted at 1900 hours to move into combat the following day. At 2100 hours a movement order was received directing the Division to move by motor at 180900 from base camps and to concentrate in the vicinity of BASTOGNE, BELGIUM, where further instructions would be forth-coming. From general information available then, there appeared to be a serious GERMAN penetration in the VIII Corps sector.

18 DECEMBER 1944

The Division's leading serials left the base camps at SISSONNE and SUIPPES, FRANCE, at 0900 hours. Combat team component march units met at SEDAN and proceeded toward BASTOGNE. At SPIREMONT, BELGIUM, the head of the Division column was directed to proceed to WERBOMONT. Higher Headquarters had then decided that the Division would hold the North flank of the penetration and the 101st Airborne Division, the South flank at BASTOGNE. Roads were clogged with vehicles and refugees. The location of the German advance break-through elements were uncertain. A screening force from the 119th Infantry was deployed in the vicinity of HABLEMONT to cover the assembly of the Division. The leading serial arrived at WERBOMONT at 1730 hours. Defensive positions were organized without delay by each unit upon its arrival. Security and reconnaissance measures were established at once.

19 DECEMBER 1944

The Division closed in the WERBOMONT area by 1000 hours. Defensive positions were improved progressively.

325th Glider Infantry - The 3d Battalion established road blocks in the vicinity of BARVAUX. "F" Company occupied GRAND MENIL and MANHAY.

504th Parachute Infantry - Occupied RAHIER and relieved elements of the 119th Infantry in its sector.

505th Parachute Infantry - Occupied BASSE BODEUX and relieved elements of the 119th Infantry in its sector.

508th Parachute Infantry - "H" Company occupied crossroad just North of FLORET.

20 DECEMBER 1944

325th Glider Infantry - The 1st Battalion occupied a defensive position in the vicinity of BRA. The 3rd Battalion was relieved in the BARVAUX area by elements of the 3rd Armored Division. The 2nd Battalion, less "F" Company, in Division Reserve. "F" Company continued to occupy GRAND MENIL and MANHAY.

504th Parachute Infantry - The 1st Battalion (less "A" Company) attacked CHENEUX at 1400. A heavy engagement ensued with a battalion of the 1st SS Panzer Division supported by tanks, flak wagons, and artillery. "A" Company took positions in the vicinity of BRUME.

505th Parachute Infantry - Pushed out to the Salm River along the line TROIS PONTS - COURMAYEUL. South of GRAND HAILLE and relieved elements of the 51st Combat Engineers at TROIS PONTS. One Company held the bridge at HOUT. One platoon crossed the river near TROIS PONTS. Another platoon crossed at LA TOUR.

508th Parachute Infantry - Began moving by foot and by motor to the vicinity of CORONNE.

21 DECEMBER 1944

Division completely occupied line TROIS PONTS - SALMCHATEAU - HEBRONVAL and made contact with 7th Armored Division, 106th Infantry Division, 28th Infantry Division (112th Infantry), and CCB, 9th Armored Division.

325th Glider Infantry - Closed in the area Southwest of LIERNEUX and occupied sector SART - HEBRONVAL. One platoon Company "F" occupied REGNE. Patrols advanced as far South as BIHAIN.

504th Parachute Infantry - 1st Battalion, (less "A" Company), had cleared CHENEUX by mid-morning capturing rifflak wagons, 6 half-tracks, 4 trucks, 4 105mm Howitzers, and one Mark VI. 3rd Battalion, less "C" Company, attacked and captured MONCEAU against strong enemy resistance and assisted 1st Battalion by swinging North of CHENEUX. The 1st Battalion, plus "C" Company, consolidated positions in CHENEUX and then with the 3rd Battalion attacked and drove the enemy across the LAMBELEVE River and established positions on the south bank of the River.

505th Parachute Infantry - Two Companies of the 2d Battalion crossed the SAIM River at TROIS PONTS and established a bridgehead.

508th Parachute Infantry - Closed in its area Southeast of GOROMME and occupied sector VIELSALME - GRAND SART.

22 DECEMBER 1944

Troops of the 7th Armored Division, the 106th Infantry Division, the 28th Infantry Division, and CCB of the 9th Armored Division began to withdraw through the Division's lines.

325th Glider Infantry - 2d Battalion occupied FRITURE. "F" Company occupied the main crossroad Southeast of MANHAY and contacted 3d Armored Division. Five enemy tanks and two enemy patrols were repelled in the vicinity of JOUBLEVAL by artillery. 125 enemy vehicles, including armor, were reported in OTTRE. Friendly artillery fired on town. Two enemy infantry attempts to form up for attack were both stopped by 155mm fire. OTTRE was a mass of smoldering ruins.

504th Parachute Infantry - The 2d Battalion relieved the 1st Battalion. Contact with 119th Infantry was established.

505th Parachute Infantry - 2nd Battalion bridgehead across the SAIM river at TROIS PONTS was attacked by a Battalion of the 1st SS Panzer Division, supported by armor and artillery. 2nd Battalion forces were withdrawn and the bridge was blown. Two enemy squads infiltrated into TROIS PONTS but were driven back across the SAIM River. 3rd Battalion repulsed an enemy platoon attempt to cross the SAIM River at LA TOUR and another two platoon effort in the "G" Company sector. 1st and 3rd Battalion bridgeheads at GRAND HALLEUX and LA NEUVILLE were established.

508th Parachute Infantry - Organized defensive positions from VIELSALME to SALMCHATEAU to GRAND SART. The 1st Battalion was placed in Division Reserve. Patrols reported German columns moving in a steady stream through PETITE LANGLIER towards OTTRE.

307th Airborne Engineer Battalion - Blew the bridge at ROCHELINVAL. An officer patrol dispatched to PETITE LANGLIER blew a vital bridge over the RONCE stream which was being used by the enemy.

23 DECEMBER 1944

Troops and vehicles of the 7th Armored Division, the 106th Infantry Division, the 28th Infantry Division, and CCB of the 9th Armored Division continued to withdraw through Division lines.

325th Glider Infantry - The 2d Battalion drove back several enemy probing attacks. A composite force consisting of "F" Company, 325th Glider Infantry, and tanks of the 3d Armored Division was attacked by a strong enemy force at the main crossroad Southeast of MANHAY. Two platoons of the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion joined the composite force. At 1630 hours, after a very effective mortar and artillery preparation, an estimated infantry battalion with tanks of the 2d SS Panzer Division attacked.

SS Panzer Division attached. Enemy tanks shelled the crossroad with deadly effect. Enemy infantry and armor overran the defenders. "F" Company was forced to withdraw. 1st Battalion lost and reestablished an outpost in JOUFLEVAL. 2d Battalion captured an enemy document in OFFRE that contained plans for the attack to LIEGE.

504th Parachute Infantry - The 2d Battalion, relieved by the 1st Battalion, moved into position as Division Reserve in the vicinity of LIERNIEUX and later moved Southwest of MALEMPRE to meet an enemy threat. The 1st Battalion took over the sectors of the 2d Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry and the 2d Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry.

505th Parachute Infantry - Regiment continued to defend SALM RIVER line against determined, well supported attacks of the German 1st SS Panzer Division. Except for patrols, all elements of the Regiment were located on the West bank of the river.

508th Parachute Infantry - Repulsed an enemy attack directed towards SAIMCHATEAU from the STE MAIRE - PROVEDROUX area. Enemy forces were estimated as a Battalion of infantry supported by Mark III tanks. The three bridges at SAIMCHATEAU and the railroad bridge at VIELSALM were blown. The 1st Battalion reverted to Regimental control. The 3rd Battalion, 112th Infantry was attached.

307th Airborne Engineer Battalion - Executed demolition of stone culvert 1 1/2 miles South of SAIMCHATEAU after the last vehicle of the 7th Armored Division had passed.

14th Tank Battalion of CCB, 3th Armored Division - Attached to Division. Company "C" established a road block at the MANHAY crossroads.

24 DECEMBER 1944

The last elements of the 7th Armored Division were withdrawn through Division lines. Division was ordered by XVIII Corps (A/B) to withdraw under cover of darkness to a defense line extending from TROIS PONTS - BASSE BODEAX - BERGIFAZ TRI - IE - CHESLIANG. Regiments were ordered to delay enemy until 0400 December 25 with a covering shell.

325th Glider Infantry - 2d Battalion with strong enemy pressure on both flanks withdraw from FRAITURE and took up a position in BOIS NOUBY after killing at least 50 enemy and routing the remainder. One platoon, holding REGNE, was overrun by enemy infantry and armor. "B" Company supported by a tank company of the 14th Tank Battalion, recaptured the town and ejected the enemy.

504th Parachute Infantry - The 3d Battalion, less "G" Company, moved into position Southwest of LIERNIEUX and there repulsed a strong enemy attack.

505th Parachute Infantry - The 2d Battalion moved North to intercept an enemy force estimated at 800 enemy reported to be attempting a crossing of the SALM RIVER toward the East. "I" Company was attached by an estimated enemy company who were trying to withdraw across the river. Most of the enemy was destroyed. Initiated withdrawal as per plan.

508th Parachute Infantry - The highway bridge at VIELSALM was blown. The covering shell was attacked by an enemy battalion, strongly supported by artillery and mortar fire.

307th Airborne Engineer Battalion - Upon receipt of the withdrawal order prepared extensive obstacles on the defense line, mined approaches, and prepared bridges and culverts on the withdrawal routes for demolitions.

14th Tank Battalion - "C" Company was relieved at the MANHAY road block by elements of 7th Armored Division. The enemy attacked in force and captures MANHAY.

25 DECEMBER 1944

All units successfully broke contact with the enemy and withdrew to the new defense line.

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325th Glider Infantry - The 1st Battalion filled the gap between the 504th Parachute Infantry and the 7th Armored Division by occupying TRIE-CHESLIANG and VAUX CHAVANNE. At 2200 hours an enemy infantry attack was repulsed. The 2d Battalion as Division Reserve and the 3d Battalion as Regimental Reserve occupied positions near AU HETRE.

504th Parachute Infantry - The 2d and 3d Battalions occupied new positions along the line BERGIFAZ-BRA-VAUX-CHAVANNE. The 1st Battalion, in Regimental Reserve, vicinity BRA.

505th Parachute Infantry - The 2d and 3d Battalions occupied new defensive positions between TROIS PONTS AND PASSE BODEUX. The 1st Battalion occupied a position 3000 yards North of PASSE BODEUX as Regimental Reserve.

508th Parachute Infantry - Occupied new defensive positions along line HAUTE BODEUX - BERGIFAZ with all battalions on MIR. The 3d Battalion, 112th Infantry was relieved of attachment to the 508th Parachute Infantry.

307th Engineer Battalion - Laid minefields, constructed abatis, and blew bridges to form a barrier along the Division front.

Company "B", 86th Chemical Battalion, Company "A", 703rd TD Battalion and 551st Parachute Infantry Battalion were attached to the Division. Company "C", 563rd AAA AW Battalion was relieved of attachment to the Division.

26 DECEMBER 1944

325th Glider Infantry - At 0630 hour one battalion of the 2d SS Panzer Division attacked and succeeded in over-running a portion of the sector. Company "B" and Company "C" promptly counterattacked and restored all positions inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy. The 1st Battalion was relieved by the 23rd Armored Infantry Battalion, 7th Armored division, and moved to an area Northeast of TRE-LE-CHESLIANG.

504th Parachute Infantry - The 2d Battalion broke up two enemy attacks launched by the 9th SS Panzer Division from the vicinity of FLORET.

505th Parachute Infantry - Patrolled aggressively. Sector was generally quiet.

508th Parachute Infantry - 2d Battalion repulsed attack near Road Junction West of REHARMONT by an estimated two companies of infantry supported by four half-tracks. 3d battalion outposts repulsed attack by enemy infantry.

27 DECEMBER 1944

325th Glider Infantry - The 2d Battalion, Division reserve, moved to a position approximately 1,000 yards South of MONCHENOUL.

504th Parachute Infantry - The 3d Battalion extended MIR slightly to the Southeast. The 2d Battalion knocked out an enemy flak wagon near BERGIFAZ.

505th Parachute Infantry - The 3d Battalion received heavy artillery fire throughout the day. Company "A" and Company "B" moved to new areas in the rear of the 3d Battalion.

508th Parachute Infantry - "F" Company and "G" Company attacked by an estimated two battalions of infantry of the 9th SS Panzer Division at 0120. "G" Company partially overrun. Enemy infiltrated to FERRIA. "I" Company (less) committed to aid "G" Company in destroying and ejecting the enemy. "F" Company (less one platoon) mopped up the town of FERRIA and the entire sector was cleared by 0430. Enemy casualties were heavy.

551st Parachute Battalion - Attacked at 2300 towards limited objectives ODRIMONT AND AMCOMONT.

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28 DECEMBER 1944

325th Glider Infantry - Improved defensive positions.

504th Parachute Infantry - The 3d Battalion broke up an attack by an estimated 60 enemy and inflicted heavy casualties. The 2d Battalion fired on by enemy tanks. 4.2 mortar fire and artillery fire forced tanks to withdraw.

505th Parachute Infantry - Improved defensive positions. 3d Battalion captured an entire five man enemy patrol.

508th Parachute Infantry - Improved defensive positions.

551st Parachute Infantry - Reached NIEUFONTAINE, killed an estimated 30 enemy and captured five. Battalion sustained very light losses.

29 DECEMBER 1944

There were no major attacks along any of the regimental fronts. All units improved their defensive positions and patrolled aggressively to the front. The 307th Airborne Engineer Battalion placed additional minefields. The 740th Tank Battalion was attached.

30 DECEMBER 1944

There was very little enemy activity along the Division front. All units maintained and strengthened their defensive positions and patrolled vigorously to the front.

The Division Artillery fired on enemy concentrations. The 2d Battalion, 325th Glider Infantry closed into new positions East of TROU-DE-BRA. The 307th Airborne Engineer Battalion continued to place minefields. The 1st Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry conducted combined infantry-tank-tank destroyer-engineer training in the vicinity of CHENNEFUX.

31 DECEMBER 1944

Enemy activity was again very light along the Division front. Two regiments patrolled vigorously to the front and contacted the enemy in the vicinity of FLORET and KHOUT-SI-POUX.

The 505th Parachute Infantry continued their combined infantry-tank-tank destroyer-engineer training. The 740th Tank Battalion sent two patrols, each consisting of three tanks and Division Reconnaissance platoon men, to reconnoiter South of TRI-IE-CHESLIANG, FERRIA, AND TROIS PONTS. Two enemy soldiers were killed and nine captured.

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Enemy material captured 19 December 1944 to 31 December 1944, inclusive x

- 1 armored car
- 3 half tracks (a)
- 5 other vehicles (b)
- 3 artillery pieces (c)
- 6 machine pistols
- 35 Panzorcausts
- 800 Jerricans
- 800 88mm Rounds
- 1 anti-tank rifle
- 1 German BC scope
- 2 bulldozers (U.S.)
- 1 8 Ton trailer (U.S.)

Enemy material knocked out or destroyed 19 December 1944 to 31 December 1944, inclusive xx

- 8 Tanks (1 MK IV, 1 MK III, 6 unidentified) (d)
- 4 armored cars
- 14 half tracks (a)
- 9 other vehicles
- 3 SP guns (c)
- 6 anti-tank guns (c)
- 2 artillery pieces (c)
- 15 machine pistols
- 15 machine guns
- 3 motorcycles (1 with sidecar)
- 1 radio

x The figures are necessarily incomplete because of the following factors:

- a. Rapidity of our movement over a large area in the attack which, coupled with our move from the area, left little time for thorough surveys.
- b. Snowstorms which covered much material before it could be salvaged.
- c. Inaccessibility to transportation of some of the area, making salvage and evacuation impracticable.

- xx (a) Includes flakwagons, at least 3 mounted 75mm guns.
- (b) Includes all other types, also U.S., British and German models.
- (c) Includes all calibers.
- (d) Includes only observed fire and only material known definitely to have been destroyed.

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CASUALTIES

(Inclusive 31 December 1944)

	<u>OFFICERS</u>	<u>EM</u>
<u>BATTLE CASUALTIES</u>		
Division Organic Units	53	946
Attached Units	<u>2</u>	<u>5</u>
TOTAL	55	951
 <u>NON-BATTLE CASUALTIES</u>		
Division Organic Units	21	659
Attached Units	<u>0</u>	<u>8</u>
TOTAL	21	667
 <u>TOTAL CASUALTIES</u>		
Division Organic Units	74	1605
Attached Units	<u>2</u>	<u>13</u>
GRAND TOTAL	76	1618

XXXXX

PRISONERS OF WAR

Total captured (inclusive 31 December 1944) 185

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REF Authority of.
CO. 82d Abn Div.
Initials: _____
.10 March 1945
.....

1 and 2 JANUARY 1945

The Division (517th Parachute Infantry attached) regrouped in preparation for an attack to protect left flank of VII Corps.

504th, 508th and 517th Parachute Infantry assumed responsibility for entire Division front. Patrolled aggressively to South and Southeast. Maintained contact with enemy.

325th Glider Infantry and 505th Parachute Infantry closed in forward assembly areas in preparation for attack.

628th Tank Destroyer Battalion attached to Division, relieved 703d Tank Destroyer Battalion which passed to Corps control.

75th Infantry Division assumed tactical control 504th Parachute Infantry.

3 JANUARY 1945

Division attacked at 0830 with 517th Parachute Infantry, 505th Parachute Infantry and 325th Glider Infantry abreast. Division Artillery, 80th Airborne Anti-aircraft Battalion and 307th Airborne Engineer Battalion supported the Division advance.

325th Glider Infantry - On the right attacked through the 508th Parachute Infantry, seized HIEU DE HEIRLOT and the town of AMCOMONT. Organized high ground East and West of AMCOMONT. Further advance limited to patrolling pending advance of VII Corps.

504th Parachute Infantry - Reverted to tactical control 82d Airborne Division and prepared to move to area DERRIERE LE THIER.

505th Parachute Infantry - In the center with Company "A", 740th Tank Battalion attached, captured REHARMONT and FOSSE and continued the attack to positions approximately 1100 yards South thereof.

508th Parachute Infantry - Maintained positions in the vicinity of the Division ID. At 1845 hours, the 2d Battalion was attached to the 505th Parachute Infantry and moved to vicinity FOSSE.

517th Parachute Infantry - On the left with 551st Parachute Battalion attached, gained the village TROIS PONTS and high ground vicinity HERISPECH and ST JACQUES.

4 JANUARY 1945

The Division consolidated its gains of 3 January, seized limited objectives, and prepared to continue the attack pending further advance of VII Corps.

325th Glider Infantry - Captured HIERLOT and CTRIMONT, established contact with adjacent units and consolidated positions.

504th Parachute Infantry - Assumed responsibility for a portion of 517th Parachute Infantry sector and attacked to take the high ground Southeast of FOSSE. The accomplishment of this mission would permit the Division to dominate all crossings of the SAIM River in vicinity of GRAND HAIN-FUX.

505th Parachute Infantry - Continued to attack, seized high ground and woods North and Northeast of ABREFONTAINE and consolidated positions.

508th Parachute Infantry - Assembled in Division Reserve area, vicinity HAUTE BODREUX. 2d Battalion reverted to Regimental control in REHARMONT area.

517th Parachute Infantry - Continued to attack, captured ST JACQUES, PERGEVAL and MONT DE FOSSE, and patrolled to SAIM River.

5 JANUARY 1945

325th Glider Infantry - Seized the high ground between ABREFONTAINE and LIBERNEUX and consolidated positions already taken.

504th Parachute Infantry - Succeeded in taking high ground overlooking GRAND HALLEUX and immediately organized for defense.

505th Parachute Infantry - Took ABREFONTAINE and occupied the high ground 1000 yards to the Southeast.

508th Parachute Infantry - Remained in Division Reserve.

517th Parachute Infantry - Cleared all remaining enemy from sector, repulsed strong enemy counterattacks vicinity BERGEVAL, and liberated DAIFES and DAIROMONT.

6 JANUARY 1945

Division and attached units consolidated an improved positions, patrolled aggressively to front, maintained contact with adjacent units, prepared plans to continue advance in conjunction with VII Corps. 551st Parachute Battalion detached from 517th Parachute Infantry and attached 504th Parachute Infantry in place.

7 JANUARY 1945

The Division resumed the offensive with a vigorous attack at 0630 hours with the mission of advancing to the line GRAND SART-BALM CHATEAU-VIELSAIM-GRAND HALLEUX-TROIS PONTS.

325th Glider Infantry - Occupied GRAND SART and seized the high ground THIER DEL PRUFUX. Consolidated positions and repulsed strong counterattacks. Contact was established with VII Corps on the right.

504th Parachute Infantry, 551st Parachute Infantry Battalion attached - Seized PARNIERES, MONT and ROCHELINVAL, established and consolidated positions on West bank of SAIM River.

505th Parachute Infantry - Captured the town of GORONNE, established front line along West bank of SAIM River North of RENCHEUX, and West of Town in Southern portion of their sector.

508th Parachute Infantry - Attacked through the 325th Glider Infantry, gained and consolidated positions on THIER DU MONT against severe resistance.

517th Parachute Infantry, less 3d Battalion - Was placed in Division Reserve in assembly area Northeast of ABREFONTAINE. 3d Battalion assumed responsibility of SAIM River line from TROIS PONTS to a point Northeast of LA NEUVILLE.

Company "B", 643d Tank Destroyer Battalion was attached to the Division. Company "C", 643d Tank Destroyer Battalion was placed in support of Division.

Division Artillery, 307th Airborne Engineer Battalion, 80th Airborne Anti-aircraft Battalion, 628th Tank Destroyer Battalion, and Company "B", 86th Chemical Battalion continued in support of the Division.

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8 & 9 JANUARY 1945

The Division consolidated positions along SAIM River from TROIS PONTS to SAIMCHATEAU, thence West to GRAND SART and eliminated enemy pockets at PETIT HALLEUX and RENCHEUS. Town of COMTE was taken. Occupied STEMAIRE to contact 3d Armored Division. Road blocks were established vicinity of VIELSAIM bridges. Units patrolled East of SAIM River to GRAND HALLEUX and SAIMCHATEAU.

10 JANUARY 1945

The Division maintained defensive positions. 3d Battalion 517th Parachute Infantry established bridgehead across SAIM River, vicinity GRAND HALLEUX. Relief of Division by 75th Infantry Division commenced.

11 JANUARY 1945

Relief of the Division by 75th Infantry Division completed and Division moved to Corps Reserve area bounded by WAIMES, SHROFAIX, MALMEDY, and BOUCHEZ.

517th Parachute Infantry - Was detached from Division and attached to 75th Infantry Division in place.

During the period January 3 - 11, the Division captured 2,571 prisoners and killed an estimated 2,250 enemy.

12 to 20 JANUARY 1945

The Division, in Corps Reserve, reorganized, re-equipped and conducted intensive training. Special emphasis was placed on combined infantry-tank training, the use of the German Panzerfaust, and zeroing of weapons.

21 and 22 JANUARY 1945

The Division, less 508th Parachute Infantry, remained in Corps Reserve and continued training.

508th Parachute Infantry (319th Glider Field Artillery Battalion, Company "D", 307th Airborne Engineer Battalion and Company "E", 80th Airborne Anti-aircraft Battalion attached), was attached to 7th Armored Division, moved to DIEDENBURG area, relieved 2d Battalion, 23d Infantry and elements of Combat Command "A" of the 7th Armored Division.

23 and 24 JANUARY 1945

The Division, less 503th Parachute Infantry; No change.

517th Parachute Infantry, less 2d Battalion, was attached to the Division.

508th Parachute Infantry reinforced - was relieved by 7th Armored Division, reverted to control of the Division, and moved to the TROIS PONTS BASSE BODEUX area.

25 JANUARY 1945

643d Tank Destroyer Battalion, Company "A", 87th Chemical Battalion, 400 Armored Field Artillery Battalion (105 How) and 254th Field Artillery Battalion (155 How) were attached to the Division.

517th Parachute Infantry less 2d Battalion - Was detached from the Division and reverted to control XVII Corps (Airborne).

26 and 27 JANUARY 1945

Orders were received for the Division to attack through the 7th Armored Division to the Northeast with the mission of piercing the SIEGFRIED LINE. All elements of the Division moved to forward assembly areas vicinity BORN, WALLERODE, MONTENAU, and ST VITH.

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28 JANUARY 1945

The Division attacked through the 7th Armored Division at 0600 hours with the 325th Glider Infantry on the left (North), the 504th Parachute Infantry on the right (South) and the 505th Parachute Infantry and the 508th Parachute Infantry in reserve. 32d Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron was attached to the Division at 0850 hours. Progress of the attack was hindered by waist deep snow, intense cold and well organized enemy strong points.

325th Glider Infantry - Attached to the South from the line of BORN - AMBLEVE road, passed South of MEDELL, pivoted to the East and North of MEYERODE, and by 2030 hours were on the high ground West of, and overlooking WERETH. Gains were consolidated and contact established with flank units.

504th Parachute Infantry - Advanced 7000 yards, captured HERRESBACH and in this engagement killed 65 and captured 201 of the enemy without suffering any casualties. Consolidated gains and repelled 3 counterattacks.

505th Parachute Infantry - Moved to an assembly area vicinity of MEYERODE, prepared to attack through the 325th Glider Infantry.

508th Parachute Infantry - Moved to an assembly area vicinity ALLERODE prepared to attack through 504th Parachute Infantry.

307th Airborne Engineer Battalion - Constructed and opened paths and roads to assist the Division's advance.

740th Tank Battalion, 643d Tank Destroyer Battalion and Division Artillery actively supported the advance.

Division Reconnaissance Platoon protected Division's South flank between WALLERODE and HERRESBACH.

29 JANUARY 1945

The Division continued its attack to the Northeast. Advance more than 2000 yards and maintained contact with the 1st Division on the North flank.

325th Glider Infantry - Continued its advance by attacking to the North at 0330 hours. Seized WERETH, pushed on to the high ground East of the town and patrolled to the North. Regiment assembled in area 2000 yards Southeast of VALENDER at 1800 hours.

504th Parachute Infantry - Maintained defensive positions and assisted in the protection of the South flank of Division.

505th Parachute Infantry - Attached through the 325th Glider Infantry at 0500 hours, advanced more than 2000 yards to the high ground 1500 yards Southwest of HONSFIELD. Established defensive positions and patrolled vigorously to the North and East. Maintained contact with 1st Division on the North.

508th Parachute Infantry - Attached through the 504th Parachute Infantry at 0400 hours. By the end of the day they had taken HOLZHEIM and MEDENDORF, and had occupied the high ground Southwest of EIMERSHEID.

307th Airborne Engineer Battalion - Continued to maintain improve and clear roads for use of attacking elements of the Division.

32d Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron relieved Division Reconnaissance Platoon, established outposts and maintained patrols along the Southern flank of the Division.

~~SECRET~~

30 JANUARY 1945

325 Glider Infantry - Attacked to the Northeast at 0500 hours. By 1500 hours had occupied the line of the HONSFELD-LOSHEIM railway for a distance of 200 yards East and West of BUCHHOLTZ. Sent patrols Northeast into GERMANY.

504th Parachute Infantry - Attacked at 0500 hours, seized the high ground 1300 yards Southeast of HOLZHEIM, captured EIMERSCHEID, relieved elements of the 508th Parachute Infantry in MEDENDORF and were relieved by 32d Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron in HERRESBACH.

505th Parachute Infantry - Maintained and strengthened their positions. Made preparations to continue the attack to the Northeast by passing through the 325th Glider Infantry.

508th Parachute Infantry - Continued the attack to the East, captured LANZERATH and the high ground North of the town. The Regiment consolidated positions and sent patrols Northeast into GERMANY.

32d Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron relieved elements of the 504th Parachute Infantry in HERRESBACH. Maintained screening position along Southern flank of the Division.

31 JANUARY 1945

325th Glider Infantry - Remained in Battalion assembly areas as Division Reserve. Sent contact patrols to screen left flank of 505th Parachute Infantry and to contact 1st Division on the North.

504th Parachute Infantry - Maintained and improved defensive positions. Relieved elements of 508th Parachute Infantry in LANZERATH. Established road-blocks within area.

505th Parachute Infantry - Attacked through the 325th Glider Infantry at 0430 hours, captured L SHEIMERGRABEN against moderate resistance and occupied a line extending 4,000 yards North of that town East of the HOLLERATH-LANZERATH highway. Established contact with 1st Infantry Division on the North and the 508th Parachute Infantry on the South. Patrolled vigorously to the Northeast.

508th Parachute Infantry - Repulsed enemy attack in vicinity LANZERATH, attacked to the Northeast at 0500 hours, seized, organized and maintained defensive positions on high ground overlooking LOSHEIM and MANDERFELD. Patrolled aggressively to the front.

629th Tank Destroyer Battalion (SP) attached to Division, to move into area 1 February 1945.

- 5 -

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ENEMY MATERIAL CAPTURED 1 JANUARY 1945 TO 31 JANUARY 1945

1 Mark IV Tank
3 Half tracks
29 Other vehicles
1 SP gun
1 AT gun
9 Pieces, other artillery
7 81mm Mortars
90 Machine guns
161 Machine Pistols
333 Panzerfausts
5 Motorcycles
7 Radios
3 Binoculars
6 Bicycles
370 Rifles
40 Automatic Weapons
24 Flame throwers
1,830 Hand grenades
1,000 Rifle grenades
5 Ammunition dumps

ENEMY MATERIAL KNOCKED OUT OR DESTROYED 1 JANUARY 1945 TO 31 JANUARY INCLUSIVE

2 King Tiger Tanks
3 Mark VI Tanks
6 Mark IV Tanks
2 Mark III Tanks
8 Half Tracks
93 Other vehicles
6 SP guns
27 AT guns
20 Pieces, other artillery
1 35mm gun
24 81mm Mortar
71 Machine guns
102 Machine pistols

- (1) Figures include only material definitely known to have been destroyed.
- (2) The following factors make these figures necessarily incomplete:
 - (a) While attached, 517th Parachute Infantry did not maintain records of captured or destroyed small arms and automatic weapons.
 - (b) Rapidity of our movement over a large area.
 - (c) Snowstorms.
 - (d) Inaccessibility of transportation to the area, making salvage and evacuation impractical.

CASUALTIES

(Inclusive 1 January to 31 January 1945)

<u>Division Battle Casualties</u>	<u>Officers</u>	<u>EM's</u>
Division Organic Units	110	1648
Attached Units	<u>97</u>	<u>1169</u>
Total	207	2817

Division Non-Battle Casualties

Division Organic Units	79	867
Attached Units	<u>44</u>	<u>501</u>
Total	123	1368

Total Casualties

Division Organic Units	189	2515
Attached Units	<u>141</u>	<u>1670</u>
Grand Total	330	4185

Known Enemy Casualties

Total Captured	2445
Total Killed (est)	<u>3635</u>

Grand Total 6080

By Authority of
CG, 82d Abn Div
Initials
Date: 29 Mar 45

NARRATIVE

1 FEBRUARY 1945

The Division maintained and improved positions, reconnoitered and patrolled to the SIEGFRIED LINE, maintained contact with adjacent units and prepared to continue the attack to penetrate the SIEGFRIED LINE.

2d Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry was relieved by elements 32d Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron and moved to an assembly area in rear of 505th Parachute Infantry positions.

517th Parachute Infantry was attached to the Division and prepared to move into the Division Zone.

2 FEBRUARY 1945

Against intense opposition the Division advanced and breached the SIEGFRIED LINE from UDENBRETH to NEUHOF to HERTESROTT HEIGHTS. Positions were consolidated and numerous counterattacks repulsed.

325th Glider Infantry attacked through the 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment and after severe fighting, seized NEUHOF and UDENBRETH: organized for defense and repelled strong counterattacks of infantry supported by tanks.

504th Parachute Infantry; 1st and 3d Battalions relieved by elements 32d Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron and 1st Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry respectively. All battalions assembled in area in rear of 505th Parachute Infantry and immediately passed through the 505th Parachute Infantry, attacking to the East. Regiment advanced 6000 yards and seized HERTESROTT HEIGHTS, organized positions and repulsed extremely heavy enemy counterattacks.

505th Parachute Infantry attacked to the Southeast, made advances up to 4000 yards and established defense positions.

508th Parachute Infantry patrolled actively to the Southeast and maintained and improved defensive positions. 1st Battalion relieved 3d Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry.

517th Parachute Infantry closed in Division area and moved the 3d Battalion forward to support the 325th Glider Infantry. 1st Battalion established road block on main road running North out of Division area. 2d Battalion remained in Division reserve.

3 FEBRUARY 1945

The Division strengthened and consolidated defensive positions; eliminated scattered groups of enemy remaining in rear areas; repulsed strong counterattacks and inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy.

505th Parachute Infantry was relieved in place by the 508th Parachute Infantry and moved to Division reserve area.

508th Parachute Infantry was relieved by 32d Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron in area Northeast of HASENVEHN and in turn relieved 505th Parachute Infantry in area Northeast of LOSHEIM.

4 FEBRUARY 1945

The Division maintained defensive positions and patrolled aggressively to the East. 99th Infantry Division commenced relief of front line units of the Division.

505th Parachute Infantry moved by truck to assembly area vicinity VIELSALM.

SECRET

517th Parachute Infantry moved by truck to vicinity RAEREN. Passed to command V Corps.

5 & 6 FEBRUARY 1945

The Division was relieved by the 99th Infantry Division and moved to the VIELSALM area; reorganized, refitted, and prepared to move to vicinity of ROTT, GERMANY.

Task Force "A", composed of 505th Regimental Combat Team was organized under command of the Assistant Division Commander with the mission of moving to vicinity of BERGSTEIN, GERMANY to relieve elements of the 8th Infantry Division.

7 FEBRUARY 1945

The Division, less Task Force "A" - No Change.

Task Force "A" reached BERGSTEIN area, passed to operational control of V Corps. 517th Regimental Combat Team was attached in place.

505th Regimental Combat Team less 1st Battalion, commenced relief of elements of 8th Infantry Division vicinity VOSSFNACK. 1st Battalion, 505th Regimental Combat Team in Task Force "A" reserve 2000 yards Northwest of BRANDENBERG.

517th Regimental Combat Team made reconnaissance in force to a point 1500 yards Southeast of BERGSTEIN, encountered intense resistance from enemy strong points, found dense enemy minefields and returned to BERGSTEIN area.

8 FEBRUARY 1945

The Division, less Task Force "A", moved from area VIELSALM, closed in assembly area vicinity SCHMIDTHOF, GERMANY. Established Division Commander Post at ROTT and assumed command of sector held by Task Force "A".

505th Parachute Infantry advanced 2500 yards to the Southeast against light opposition to vicinity KOMMERSCHIEDT and there contacted elements of 78th Infantry Division.

508th Parachute Infantry moved to vicinity KLEINHAU with mission of relieving 517th Regimental Combat Team and elements of the 505th Parachute Infantry during the night 8-9 February.

9 FEBRUARY 1945

The remainder of the Division closed in the SCHMIDTHOF area. Committed units of the Division advanced approximately 1600 yards through extremely dense minefield, organized and consolidated defensive positions.

505th Parachute Infantry advanced to the high ground 1500 yards East of ZU HARSCHIEDT, established contact with adjacent units, patrolled aggressively to the East and made preparations to continue the attack.

517th Parachute Infantry was completely relieved by the 508th Parachute Infantry and moved to assembly area vicinity HURTGEN.

10 FEBRUARY 1945

The Division attacked to the East and gained the high ground dominating the West bank of the ROER River, consolidated gains and improved defensive positions. Opposition to the advance was light but extensive minefields prohibited rapid progress.

~~SECRET~~

505th Parachute Infantry gained the high ground overlooking ABENDEN and the ROER RIVER, consolidated positions, established contact with adjacent units, and patrolled the West bank of the ROER RIVER.

508th Parachute Infantry advanced to the high ground overlooking ZERKALL, HETZINGERHOF, and the ROER RIVER, established roadblocks on roads West from the ROER RIVER, consolidated positions and patrolled the West bank of the river.

517th Parachute Infantry relieved from attachment and left Division area.

11 & 12 FEBRUARY 1945

505th Parachute Infantry and 508th Parachute Infantry maintained and strengthened positions dominating West bank of the ROER RIVER, patrolled actively and maintained contact with adjacent Divisions. Remainder of the Division remained in the ACHMIDTHOF area, refitted, reorganized and prepared for future operations.

13 & 14 FEBRUARY 1945

The Division conducted assault boat training and continued preparations to force a crossing of the ROER RIVER.

504th Parachute Infantry - 1st Battalion relieved 1st Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry in the area 1800 yards Southeast of BERGSTEIN, 3d Battalion closed in assembly area West of BERGSTEIN, 2d Battalion remained in SCHMIDTHOF area.

508th Parachute Infantry - 1st Battalion was relieved by 1st Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry and moved to assembly area vicinity BRANDENBERG. Remainder of Regiment - No change.

15, 16, 17 FEBRUARY 1945

The Division maintained positions commanding the ROER RIVER, continued preparations to attack across the river and actively patrolled the West bank of the river. One patrol succeeded in crossing the river the night of 17 February 1945 and returned without meeting enemy opposition.

325th Glider Infantry closed in forward assembly area vicinity HARSCHHEIDT.

2d Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry closed in forward assembly area vicinity BRANDENBERG.

18 FEBRUARY 1945

9th Infantry Division relieved the Division of its sector of responsibility. The Division, less artillery elements, started movement to rear assembly areas vicinity WALHEIM and prepared for further movement to base camps in the REIMS, FRANCE area.

19, 20, 21 FEBRUARY 1945

All elements of the Division were relieved by the 9th Infantry Division, assembled in the WALHEIM area and from there commenced move to base camps, vicinity REIMS, FRANCE. All units, less organic transportation, moved to base camps by rail. Organic transportation moved by road. All elements closed in REIMS area by 25 February 1945.

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