

CHAPTER 5

BATTLE OF BRUYERES

AS THE 442d Combat Team landed in France the Seventh Army had reached the end of its rope. The advance which had swept up the 500-mile Rhone Valley in a matter of weeks was grinding to a halt. German resistance had stiffened and the assault divisions had run into the incredibly bad terrain in the Vosges Mountains. Added to that, supply lines were stretched to the breaking point. Fifty per cent of the cargo that was put ashore in Marseille never touched the ground. It went from the ships into trucks, and the trucks took off for the front. The railroad system was operating, but there were not enough cars, locomotives, or track to operate it efficiently.

The troops went ashore on September 30. By the following morning most of the unit had moved about ten miles by train to a staging area in the vicinity of Septemes, just outside Marseille. At this time the staging area consisted of several open fields on top of a hill. Living conditions for the first two or three days weren't especially bad, although the wind blew constantly. All companies drew new machine guns, mortars, and bazookas and proceeded to test them on whatever suitable ground could be found.

Then the rains came. Whoever was arranging the weather in Marseille at the time managed it very nicely. First the wind rose to gale proportions and blew down all the tents. As soon as the camp area was completely wrecked it began to rain. Most of the men's equipment and clothing was completely soaked; some of it didn't have a chance to dry thoroughly for three months.

Meanwhile Seventh Army Headquarters was moving heaven and earth to get the Combat Team into the lines. Delta Base Section had no transportation it could spare. Matters stood there for a day or so, until Colonel Pence was notified that a QM Truck Company was on its way from Epinal, five hundred miles away, to pick up the unit and take it to the front. The trucks drifted in by twos and threes all through October 8. When all transportation arrived that was coming in and the officer in charge had counted noses, he found that about twenty-five per cent of the trucks had broken down en route.

The final decision was that the bulk of the Combat Team would move by truck, while the 3d Battalion

moved by rail. After three days of traveling in the rain and bivouacking in pastures, all elements except the 3d Battalion closed into an assembly area at Charmois-devant-Bruyeres at 1230, October 11. The 3d Battalion which had left by train on the 10th rattled up the Rhone Valley in a weird assortment of "40 and 8" boxcars. The accommodations were not exactly first class, but the men were probably more comfortable than their unfortunate brethren who traveled in trucks. The 3d Battalion closed in the assembly area at midnight, October 13.

Effective on arrival in the area the Combat Team was attached to VI Corps for operations and further attached to the 36th Division, Major General John E. Dahlquist commanding.

Beginning at 1400 October 14 the 442d Infantry began moving into position for an attack the following morning. The objective was the important road center of Bruyeres, four kilometers to the east. The attack was planned with two battalions abreast, the 100th on the left, the 2d on the right.

The valley in which the town lay was surrounded on three sides by hills. For the sake of simplicity these were designated Hills A, B, C, and D. Hill A was the immediate objective of the 100th Battalion; Hill B, directly north of Bruyeres itself, was the 2d Battalion's objective. The terrain was incredibly broken. The mountains rose several hundred meters from the valley floor and were covered by tall pines and thick underbrush. These conditions combined with an overcast sky and cold, penetrating rain, lowered the men's morale more than anything the Germans could do. Sometimes a low-hanging fog rolled in to lend the whole picture an atmosphere of unreality, as if the men were fighting in a cold, alien dream world. Almost every shell the Germans lobbed over burst in the tall pines, showering the men below with hundreds of jagged steel fragments and wood splinters. A slit trench was completely useless unless it was roofed with heavy logs.

The 232d Engineers were to face their most severe test on this ground. Extensive use of roadblocks by the Germans, roads which turned into swamps on the slightest provocation, and heavily mined areas, taxed the ingenuity and stamina of the men. That the engineers accomplished their mission was at-



Faces of men on their way to battle

tested by the fact that the attack kept going day after day. Never did it bog down for lack of supplies. Had it not been for their work, the task of the artillery and infantry would have been doubly difficult.

Both leading battalions, the 100th and the 2d, jumped off at 0800 October 15, moving out in columns of companies. The battalion commanders adopted this formation principally because no one was very sure where the Germans were or in what strength. Moving cautiously in the dense underbrush, the leading elements had covered about 300 yards when the first resistance developed at 0915. By 1000 Company B of the 100th Battalion and Company F of the 2d Battalion were both involved in firefights with strong enemy forces. Companies C and E were then committed, but the opposition was too well dug-in to be knocked out quickly. The Regiment was able to gain about 500 yards and take twenty prisoners in a day-long battle.

Early in the fight the 100th Battalion had passed and supposedly cleared an enemy roadblock of felled trees which extended for 400 yards on the only road in the Combat Team sector. A platoon of the 232d Engineer Company was called up to neutralize the mines and clear away the trees so that tanks and supply vehicles could get to the forward battalions.

As the engineer party went to work four machine guns opened up, wounding several men. The engineers pulled back, got some help from the nearest rifle company and went to work on the machine guns, knocking them out after a stiff fight. The road block, which had promised to be just another routine job, was finally cleared at 0800 the following morning.

The 100th Battalion's reserve unit, Company A, took the worst pounding of the day, although it was never committed to action. As the men were digging in an enemy mortar barrage burst in the trees overhead, killing 1 man and wounding 19 others. There was no way the men could get away from the deadly tree-bursts.

Prisoners were from the 19th SS Police Regiment and the 223d *Grenadier* Regiment. They talked freely about what they knew, mostly information on their company installations. They had very little knowledge of the German strength or defenses as a whole, however. This tendency continued to show up all through the campaign. The average German soldier was very poorly informed. The Germans were quite certain of only one thing. Every unit had been ordered to hold to the last man.

It was very evident that the Combat Team was going to need all the fire-power it could muster. In

addition to the 522d Field Artillery and the Engineers, there were several other attachments: Company B of the 752d Tank Battalion; Company C of the 636th Tank Destroyer Battalion; Company D of the 83d Chemical Mortar Battalion (4.2-inch mortars); the 36th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop; and the 886th Medical Collecting Company.

Both battalions jumped off at the same time the morning of October 16 and again met heavy resistance. On the right of the Regimental sector Companies E and F occupied Hill 555, northwest of Bruyeres, by 1100. As the troops came down off the hill and attempted to cross the open valley to attack Hill "B," they were pinned to the ground by a tremendous volley of fire from their objective. On the left the 100th Battalion found itself in the same predicament. Companies A and C had cleared their sector of Hill 555, but they were unable to cross the narrow, open valley to get at Hill "A."

To make matters worse, the enemy mounted a counterattack in battalion strength just as dusk and an evening mist began to cloak the little valley. The full force of the attack fell on the 2d Battalion, although enough fire was directed at the 100th to keep it from being of much assistance. The enemy infantry had fire support from artillery, mortars, self-propelled guns, and a platoon of tanks. Forward observers with the 2d Battalion called down hundreds of rounds of fire from the 522d Field Artillery and the 4.2 mortars. Undoubtedly this broke the

back of the enemy assault, but the GIs in the slit trenches still had to fight for an hour in the eerie half-light before the last of the enemy infantry had been driven off. In fact Companies E and F dug several Germans out of their defense perimeters the following morning after it was light enough to see.

No sooner had that been done than the enemy was at it again. At 0730, just after dawn, two companies of German infantry made another attack against Companies E and F on Hill 555. At the same time two more companies hit the 100th Battalion on the left. After an hour of bitter close-in fighting the Germans pulled back to the forward slopes of Hill "A" and Hill "B." At 0930 the Krauts re-formed and tried it again, supported by artillery and a platoon of tanks which hit the 2d Battalion's positions. Unable to maneuver antitank guns through the heavy forest, the battalion formed six bazooka teams and finally succeeded in beating off the armor.

The second counterattack hit the forward platoons of the 100th just as they were jumping off on an attack of their own. Some of the enemy troops managed to break into the positions, and for some time there was a strong possibility that the counterattack might succeed. Germans and Nisei were fighting individual actions at point-blank range. Gradually the situation came under control; squads re-formed and the assaulting troops were beaten back with heavy losses.



Elements of 3d Battalion moving up in regimental reserve

Immediately the 100th and 2d Battalions resumed the offensive, hoping that the enemy was sufficiently disorganized to permit a breakthrough. As soon as the leading troops of the assault companies appeared in the valley, however, they again came under heavy fire from Hills "A" and "B." In addition the Germans had now fortified the houses at the foot of both hills and emplaced machine guns in them. The first problem was to reduce these houses. They were strongly built and resisted artillery fire, so the only thing left to do was to go in and dig the machine gunners out.

Company G was committed around the regimental right flank late in the afternoon. It succeeded in clearing out some of the buildings at the base of Hill 555, but was unable to advance on Hill "B" because of the heavy fire. On the 100th Battalion front Companies B and C also ran into fire from an estimated fifteen machine guns and two light anti-tank guns. The C Company commander then sent Lieutenant Masanao Otake with a patrol to try to cross the valley and determine the enemy strength in the houses at the foot of Hill "A." The patrol crossed safely under cover of a low-hanging fog and entered the first house without opposition. Lieutenant Otake left his patrol and checked the next farm alone. While he was inside, the enemy discovered him and attacked the house. Lieutenant Otake fought gallantly, aided by fire from the other members of his patrol. He was able to take a heavy toll of the enemy force before he was killed by a burst of machine-pistol fire. His gallant stand enabled the rest of the patrol to return with information that was vital to the success of the attack the following day. Lieutenant Otake was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

Prisoners taken during the last two days indicated that additional German units were being thrown into the battle. Interrogation established that the 736th *Grenadier* Regiment was holding Bruyeres. Several of the prisoners taken were from Fortress Machine Gun Battalion 49. These machine-gun battalions were not ordinarily used by the Germans except on what they intended to be permanent defensive positions.

Just before dawn on October 18 the 3d Battalion moved into position on the right of the 2d, poised for a drive straight at Bruyeres. Companies I and L reached the line of departure without being observed, which was extremely fortunate. Otherwise the men would have had to cross hundreds of yards

of open ground which the enemy could have raked with fire. The attack was preceded by a thirty-minute artillery barrage on Hills A and B as well as Bruyeres itself. Five battalions of artillery, sixty guns firing as fast as the pieces could be loaded, literally blanketed the objective with shell fragments. On the heels of the barrage eight companies of the 442d Infantry attacked. At the same time one battalion of the 143d Infantry on the right attacked Bruyeres from the south.

The attack went off at 1000, but the Germans were ready. In spite of the fact that the barrage must have taken a tremendous toll in dead and wounded, the resistance was fierce. By 1100 Company B had reduced the machine-gun nests in the houses at the foot of Hill A and was starting into the forest. Company A had initially swung to the left and covered Company B's left flank. As soon as the valley had been safely passed, it swung back into reserve and followed Company B up the hill, mopping up enemy stragglers. Company C attacked on the battalion right. After four and a half hours of violent fighting, Hill "A" was taken and all three rifle companies of the 100th dug in against a possible counterattack.

Two hours after the initial attack Companies F and G were still fighting in the open area between their line of departure and Hill "B." The key machine gun in the enemy defensive line was finally knocked out by 60mm mortar fire and both companies were able to get a toehold on Hill "B." On the right of Company G elements of Company I had gone around the base of the hill and were fighting their way up the southern slopes. Faced with the threat to their flank the Germans were unable to give all their attention to the 2d Battalion's frontal attack and their defenses finally cracked after six and a half hours of fighting. As soon as the hill was taken Company L pushed into Bruyeres from the north end and began to comb the town house by house. An advance patrol from Company L made contact with Company C of the 143d Infantry at 1830. When the contact was made the town had fallen, to all intents and purposes, although a group of Germans barricaded themselves in the city square and held out for several hours.

The enemy had thrown all he had into the defense of Bruyeres and lost. The regiment had captured 134 prisoners during the day's fighting, and German losses in killed and wounded had been at least that great. In addition to the units the Combat Team



522d Field Artillery gun crew firing in support of the attack on Bruyeres

had already been facing, prisoners also came from the 736th *Grenadier* Regiment, the 198th *Fusilier* Battalion, and the 192d *Panzer Grenadier* Regiment. There were also a few men from various "Battle Groups," hastily formed from remnants of other units and named for the officers who commanded them.

The enemy had constructed two massive concrete road blocks inside Bruyeres. The 232d Engineers blew one of these the same night the city fell and reduced the other the following morning. The blasts very efficiently took care of any windows in the city that the artillery barrage had left unbroken.

The next objective for the regiment was Hill "D," east of Bruyeres. While the 100th Battalion remained in reserve on Hill "A," the 2d and 3d Battalions attacked to the east at 1000, October 19. Hill "D" was taken by noon, and the leading companies quickly reorganized for an attack on the railroad embankment east of Bruyeres on the edge of the Forêt de Belmont. By 1800 the leading companies were dug in on the west side of embankment,

about a hundred yards from a strong German force dug in on the opposite side. Companies I and K found that their positions were in the middle of an enemy minefield, but they had no choice but to stay where they were. Inasmuch as the regiments on the flanks had not advanced, the 2d and 3d Battalions formed a salient of 2,000 yards into enemy territory. To the left rear of the regiment Hill "C" remained strongly held by an enemy force. Although this group was cut off it showed no disposition to surrender.

Consequently the Division Commander ordered the 100th Battalion to assault and seize the positions by 1200 October 20. Colonel Singles launched his attack with his full strength, three companies abreast. The troops were on the objective by noon, but the speed of the advance left a number of enemy pockets in the battalion's rear which required about three more hours of sharp fighting to clean out.

The situation was further confused by the fact that a strong German force had infiltrated back to Hill "D" during the night. Estimated at almost a

hundred men, these troops were raising merry hell with the rear elements of the 2d and 3d Battalions, as well as engineers who were trying to sweep the road east from Bruyeres. Company F, the 2d Battalion's reserve, was ordered to attack the positions. One platoon of Company H and a platoon of Company L from the 3d Battalion supported the attack from the right flank.

The enemy launched a strong counterattack on the regimental front at 1030, supported by tanks and artillery fire. Two of these tanks, followed by infantry, hit the Company G sector. The platoon in which Staff Sergeant Yoshimi R. Fujiwara was a squad leader was already in a firefight and found itself further menaced by fire from the two tanks and their supporting riflemen. Sergeant Fujiwara climbed a slight knoll in the area and attempted to stop the tanks with antitank grenades. Finding that his fire was ineffective, he got a bazooka from one of his men and returned to the knoll. Even though he knew that the flash from the rocket would reveal his position, he fired and scored a partial hit on the lead tank. The tank was damaged but continued to advance, raking Fujiwara's position with machine-gun fire. He continued to expose himself until he finally succeeded in knocking out the vehicle with his fifth rocket. On seeing this the crew of the second tank withdrew, followed by the supporting infantry. Sergeant Fujiwara's gallantry at the risk of his life prevented a possible breakthrough of Company G's line by the enemy infantry and armor. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

Meanwhile progress on Hill "D" had been extremely slow. The enemy had gotten a firm hold on the terrain and had no intention of being driven off a second time. The battle was still deadlocked when a soldier from the 2d platoon of Company F was wounded. Technical Sergeant Abraham Ohama went to his aid, and he was also hit. This was within the rules of war since Sergeant Ohama was not an aidman and was not wearing the Geneva Cross. Litter bearers then came up to remove the wounded men. Sergeant Ohama had been put on the stretcher and was being carried away when the enemy opened fire again, killing him where he lay. That was the mistake that finished the Germans. Without a word or a command the entire unit came to its feet and charged the enemy positions, closing in to point-blank range. In the battle that followed fifty Germans were killed and seven saved themselves only by hiding until evening and then surrendering.

Early on the morning of October 20 the same enemy group on Hill "D" had attacked a carrying party. In the fight to extricate this group Staff Sergeant Robert H. Kuroda of Company H had led a squad in an attack on a machine-gun nest and some enemy riflemen. Spotting the gun Kuroda made his way to within ten yards of it and then killed the crew with hand grenades. With the gun out of the way he engaged in a pitched battle with enemy riflemen, killing three. He then noticed that an officer had been hit. Running to help him, Kuroda found that the lieutenant had been killed. He picked up the tommy gun the officer had been carrying, and knocked out another machine-gun emplacement. As he turned to fire on its supporting riflemen, he was instantly killed by a sniper. His gallantry was partly responsible for the rescue of the carrying party, and he was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

During the afternoon of the 20th observers spotted an enemy armored column moving down the road from Belmont toward the regimental left flank. Colonel Pence sent Task Force Felber out on the Bruyeres-Belmont road to meet this threat. Task Force Felber was a highly mobile unit made up of tanks, tank destroyers, engineers, and a platoon of Company A, 442d Infantry. Before the two armored units could clash four Thunderbolt fighters got into the air and bombed and strafed the column. They reported seven direct hits.

At 1710 the 2d and 3d Battalions attacked again behind a twenty-minute preparation by four battalions of artillery. They were able to cross the railroad embankment, but fields of S mines and dug-in enemy positions stopped the attack on the edge of the Bois de Belmont. In the fighting a BAR man from Company K killed a German *Oberleutnant*, adjutant to the commander of the sector. Later examination showed that the officer was carrying plans for the defense of the entire sector. These were immediately sent to G-2 at division headquarters.

Using the information contained in the captured papers, the Division Commander and the Combat Team Commander worked out a plan to crack the enemy defenses. During the night the reserve companies of the 2d and 3d Battalions, F and L, quietly pulled out of their positions and assembled near Bruyeres. Major Emmet L. O'Connor, 3d Battalion executive officer, took command of this task force, and added wire and radio crews and a mine-sweeping squad. The mission of the task force was to move



Squad of 3d Battalion Pioneer Platoon moves up to clear minefield beyond Bruyeres

to a point opposite the south end of Hill 505, the ridge which the Germans held, under cover of darkness. At dawn the unit was to move to the top of the ridge, and attack the enemy left flank at 0900. At the same time the 2d and 3d Battalions would resume their frontal attack on Hill 505.

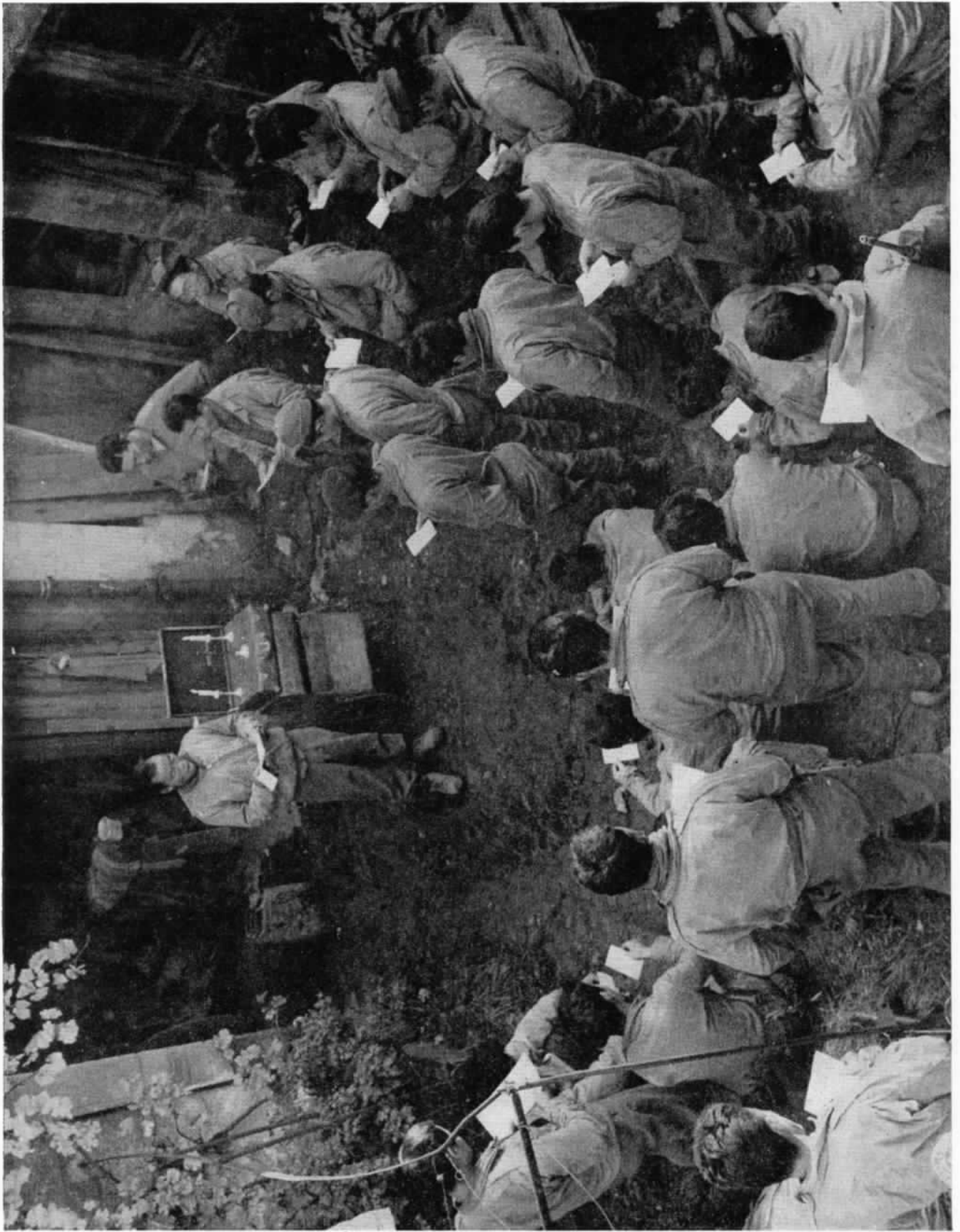
The plan worked perfectly. Twenty-five minutes after Task Force O'Connor jumped off it reported reaching open ground at the base of the hill, behind the enemy lines. Colonel Pence ordered the task force to turn left and strike the enemy rear. With the unit was an observer from the 522d Field Artillery, Lieutenant Binotti. As the unit swung left Lieutenant Binotti brought battalion concentrations of fire down on enemy groups he observed in the forest. His excellent work was very largely responsible for the eighty dead Germans found in the woods after the attack had passed on.

The frontal attack had met stiff resistance initially. When the enemy found his positions attacked from both sides, however, he started to pull out. At 1030 October 21 the resistance began to crack. By noon Companies I and K had occupied Hill 505 and were pressing on to contact the task force. The 2d Battalion was held up by tanks until around noon, but artillery fire from the 522d dispersed the armor, and the battalion was soon able to advance.

Task Force O'Connor made contact with the attacking battalions in the middle of the afternoon at La Broquaime, a small group of houses on the Bruyeres-Belmont road. It was here that the task force had broken the last enemy resistance, dislodging a tank from cover and driving the scattered enemy infantry up the valley toward Belmont. As soon as the two groups met, Companies F and L reverted to control of their battalions. In addition to the 80 enemy dead, the operation had yielded 54 prisoners, 3 ammunition carriers, 1 antitank gun, and large quantities of small arms. All units which had made up Task Force O'Connor were later awarded a Distinguished Unit Citation.

The 100th Battalion had come up from reserve, following the same route the task force had taken. Where the task force had turned north, the 100th continued northeast, following the ridge line. The battalion objective was the high ground around Biffontaine. The seizure of these hills would effectively cut the Belmont-Biffontaine road. With the road cut the remaining enemy forces in Belmont would either be forced to surrender or retreat to the north into the waiting arms of the 3d Division's 7th Infantry, advancing on the left of the 442d Combat Team.

The 100th was moving in column of companies,



Chaplain Higuchi conducting services for men of 2d Battalion

Company B furnishing rear security. Twice strong German combat patrols engaged in skirmishes with the rearguard, but there was no organized enemy resistance to the battalion's forward movement. The enemy had been hit hard and he was dazed momentarily. By 1500 the companies had reached their immediate objective and were digging in.

The general direction of attack for the Combat Team was now northeast. The 100th Battalion was defending to the east and the 2d Battalion pulled back into regimental reserve during the night of October 21. The 3d Battalion had the mission of continuing the attack to the northeast to clear out the enemy pocket between Belmont and the 100th Battalion.

At 0830 October 22 the 3d Battalion moved out with all three rifle companies abreast, slowly flushing the remaining Germans from cover. The terrain was extremely rough and the troops were under artillery fire from the front, left front, and right flank. Meanwhile the 100th Battalion had disposed its companies so that they held a semicircular defensive position overlooking Biffontaine from three sides. The enemy, seeing the move, launched a counterattack supported by artillery, "screaming meemies," and flak gunfire. Firefights were soon raging on three sides of the battalion, but the enemy had not sufficient strength to make good his attack. The 100th was still in a critical position, however. The troops had almost exhausted their ammunition supply in beating off the attack; there was a critical shortage of water, and evacuation facilities for the wounded were very inadequate.

To combat the supply problem five light tanks from Task Force Felber took off from Belmont with a platoon of Company A riding outside. They carried ammunition and water and were attempting to break through to the 100th by way of the Belmont-Biffontaine road. No sooner had the tanks gotten into the hills when they were ambushed by an enemy force of fifty men defending the road. The infantry platoon was practically defenseless. The first burst of fire killed three men and wounded several others. The heroism of one of the wounded, Staff Sergeant Isumu Sasaoka, was the only thing that saved the others. Manning a machine gun on the rear tank Sasaoka was badly hit in the first burst of enemy fire. In spite of his wound he clung to his gun and kept a steady stream of fire on the enemy positions alongside the road, until all of the tanks had passed the enemy positions. Then weakened by his wound

and unable to hang on any longer, he fell from the lurching tank. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, although missing in action. The tanks did not complete their mission, being unable to negotiate the steep terrain. The infantry and some of the tank crews tried to make contact on foot, but they were unable to locate the battalion.

In the meantime another bitter fight was in progress in the right rear of the 100th. The 2d Battalion had been pulled from reserve to protect that flank, and none too soon. An enemy force of a hundred men attacked Companies E and F on Hill 703, Col de Arnelle. After considerable fighting at close quarters, the two companies beat off the attack and took six prisoners. The prisoners were bicycle troops who had moved down the Biffontaine valley during the night and had been sent to Hill 703 to cut off the 100th Battalion.

It was still vital to get ammunition to the 100th. Lieutenant Milton Brenner took a platoon of Company L and set off over a narrow mountain trail which had possibilities of leading in the right direction. Maps were of very little use for this sort of work. The trails shown on the maps no longer existed in nine cases out of ten. When the maps were accurate, the Germans had worn so many new trails during their occupation of the area that it was impossible to tell which one of five or six was the one shown on the map. Lieutenant Brenner was finally successful in reaching rear elements of the 100th. He and his men had not been attacked on the way, so Colonel Pence decided to try getting supplies over the same route. At 1530 a carrying party started out, protected by G Company. Some two hours later they reached the 100th, making the situation slightly less critical.

The Division commander ordered that Biffontaine be taken on October 23. At 1000 Company G descended on the town supported by fire from Company A. The speed of the attack caught the enemy off guard, and Company C riflemen were able to capture a number of houses before the enemy could collect himself. One of the prizes was a major of the German Signal Corps who later proved extremely valuable to Division Intelligence. As Company B hit Biffontaine from the opposite flank, the enemy hit back. Three hours later, after a house-to-house, room-to-room fight, Company C was in control of most of the village. Twenty-three prisoners had been taken, and a large number of Germans were shot up by Company D's machine gunners as they tried

to escape down the road. The 100th also captured a plentiful supply of German small arms and ammunition which was immediately distributed to the men as their own supply was running dangerously low again.

The enemy re-formed outside of Biffontaine and tried to recoup his losses. Tanks approached to within fifty yards of Company C's houses and began shelling at point-blank range. The defenders took to the cellars as the buildings caved in, but they managed to come up in time to throw back the infantry assault that followed the barrage. In one of the houses the captured German major was busily advising the defenders to surrender to his troops. The advice was very poorly taken.

Before the counterattack the 100th had attempted to evacuate some of the wounded who needed immediate care. The litter train was made up of 100th and 3d Battalion medics, plus some prisoners of war on the way to the rear. Lieutenant James Kanaye was in command. The litter bearers had gone only a short distance when the entire party was surrounded by an enemy combat patrol prowling along the 100th Battalion's supply route. One patient, Captain Young O. Kim, winner of the Distinguished Service Cross and Silver Star, managed to get off his litter and escape into the woods in spite of painful arm and head wounds. Technician Fourth Grade Richard Chinen, a medic, made the break with him. The rest of the party was captured. Most of these men were freed from Prisoner of War camps after the fall of Germany.

Another carrying party reached the battalion late in the afternoon with food, water, ammunition and medical supplies. All of these were necessary as the Germans repeatedly counterattacked during the night. The last attack ended up in a fanatical infantry charge that broke against the 100th's first line of defense. When that failed the enemy gave way, beaten.

During the day the 232d and 111th Engineers had been trying to clear the Belmont-Biffontaine road for vehicles. The same enemy group which had shot up the Combat Team's tank-infantry force the previous day prevented the engineers from making any headway. Finally, a mortar observer from the 3d Battalion worked his way forward and bracketed the group with several rounds of 81mm fire. The enemy very meekly came out of the positions and surrendered to the astonished engineers without any further persuasion.

The 2d Battalion closed into regimental reserve in Belmont during the day. The following day, October 24, the 100th and 3d Battalions were relieved by the 141st and 143d Infantry Regiments and pulled back to Belmont. One platoon of Company L remained in position for security until the next morning.

Rest, dry clothes, hot food, and hot baths occupied the next two days, and the men desperately needed all of them. The fighting for the last eight days had been something most of the Combat Team had never seen before. In Italy, the enemy had held hard for a day or two and then pulled a planned withdrawal. During the day the fighting had been rough, but the weather had been pleasant and the nights were fairly quiet. Men had been able to take turns getting a little sleep now and then.

Here in this God-forsaken country there was no let-up. The enemy fought bitterly, fought until he was killed or driven back, fought with the terrible desperation of a man with his back to the wall. By our standards the German troops were poor specimens of "the master race," but any man can sit in a foxhole and shoot a gun so long as someone tells him where to sit. And there was the rub. The enemy officers were smart and well trained; they planned their defensive positions carefully and well, made our infantry come in and dig them out the hard way.

They had artillery—artillery and plenty of ammunition. Day or night the guns were never silent. Shells crashed in the tall pines by the hundreds and thousands. Our men had no houses to protect them from the fire and keep off the rain which poured down steadily night after night. Some of the GIs risked death in the open rather than spend a night in a hole half-filled with freezing water. The strain was beginning to tell. In the early days of the campaign casual observers would have sworn that the Nisei were men without nerves and without fear, but now a few were going back to the rear suffering from combat fatigue, the "shell shock" of the last war. This was no reflection on the courage of any man. Their nervous systems were simply not equipped to stand the terrible pounding and sudden shocks of this unceasing battle. That, coupled with the fact that many of them had not slept for eight days.

The rest areas in the town of Belmont were not immune to shellfire. The main road junction in the village was a natural target. To make matters worse a battery of 8-inch howitzers was doing business not



Riflemen moving through shelled area as attack to relieve "lost battalion" jumps off

far from the junction. Several men in the regiment were hit as they went about the routine jobs that took them out of the shelter of the houses.

Word came into the Regimental Command Post on October 25 that the 141st Infantry was being counterattacked and needed reinforcements. The 2d Battalion, which had had all of two days' rest, was alerted for battle the following morning. The battalion wearily moved out at 0300, October 26, stumbling through the pitch-black night to relieve the 3d Battalion of the 141st Infantry on the extreme left flank of the division. The relief had been completed and the troops had advanced two hundred yards at the most when they encountered violent opposition from the front and both flanks where the enemy had emplaced mortars and machine guns. Unable to advance, the battalion dug in for the night.

For the past two days the 1st Battalion, 141st

Infantry, had been driving southeast down a heavily-wooded ridge. The ridge began near Biffontaine and ended in a finger-like projection which poked into the valley between Gerardmer and the historic city of St. Die. Moving fast, the battalion had overreached its support. The enemy had stopped its forward drive and then filtered in behind it, trapping the unfortunate men three miles from the nearest friendly unit. The "lost battalion" was ordered to fight its way back, but could not do so. The 2d and 3d Battalions of the regiment had been ordered to break through to their comrades. They were thrown back each time they attacked. The 100th and 3d Battalions of the 442d Infantry had their rest abruptly ended during the afternoon of October 26, when they were ordered to go into the lines the following morning and fight through to the surrounded men.

Both battalions moved out at 0400. There was no light at all. The men were marching in column, and each man was forced to hold on to the pack of the man in front of him, because they could not see each other. Both battalions were given as much fire power as possible. The 3d Battalion had Company D of the 752d Tank Battalion and Company C of the 3d Chemical Weapons Battalion (4.2 mortars) attached. Company B of the 752d Tank Battalion, Company D of the 83d Chemical Weapons Battalion, and Company C of the 636th Tank Destroyer Battalion supported the 100th Battalion. The fire of the 522d Field Artillery was reinforced by that of the 133d Field Artillery.

By 1400 of October 27 all three battalions of the 442d Infantry were in line abreast, although there was a considerable gap between the 3d Battalion in the center and the 2d Battalion on the left. The attack moved very slowly, meeting heavy resistance from enemy infantry and incessant mortar concentrations. At 1530 Companies I and K, leading the 3d Battalion's advance, were counterattacked. The attack was led by a tank and a half-track, followed by enemy infantry. The bulk of the attack, including the armor, fell against Company K's positions on the left flank. The fighting was severe, and the enemy tank threatened to be the deciding factor as it rolled to within seventy-five yards of the company positions and began spraying the area with direct fire. At this point, Private First Class Matsuichi Yogi, disregarding the exploding shells and small-arms fire, took his bazooka and worked his way to within twenty-five yards of the tank. Deliberately exposing

himself, he fired, scoring a direct hit with his rocket and knocking out the tank. Spotting two German bazooka gunners, he killed one with a shot from his own rocket launcher and drove the other back with accurate rifle fire. Yogi was later killed in action. He was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

Deprived of their supporting fire, the enemy infantrymen pulled back and the attack was broken in the early twilight. The 3d Battalion made no attempt to follow up the withdrawal since it was impossible to maintain control in the pitch darkness.

All units resumed the attack the following morning. Resistance was as fierce as ever. In the 100th Battalion sector the enemy slowly began to fall back across a draw and on to the next hill to the east. He was pulling one of his "sucker" plays. As the riflemen of Companies B and C started through the draw to follow the Germans, it became a death trap. Several hundred rounds of artillery and mortar poured in, in an hour-long barrage, killing or wounding at least twenty men and breaking up the attack.

Meanwhile the 3d Battalion had run into the first of a series of manned German roadblocks. These blocks, primarily antitank barriers, were usually manned by a company of infantry with a plentiful supply of automatic weapons. Company K's advance was stopped by enemy fire from several machine guns, riflemen, and grenadiers. Staff Sergeant Gordon Yamashiro, commanding one of the leading squads, advanced alone to locate the enemy positions. When he had located the probable source of the enemy fire, he advanced another hundred yards, killed a sniper who had fired at him and missed, and then knocked out one machine gun by killing all three of the gunners with his automatic rifle. A second machine gun took him under fire, but he also killed the crew of this gun. As he was laying down a screen of fire to cover the advance of his squad, he was killed by a sniper. He had, however, succeeded in opening a gap in the enemy's defenses. After a barrage by the 522d Field Artillery and the regimental Cannon Company, Company K was able to widen the gap and destroy the enemy positions. Sergeant Yamashiro was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

The 100th and 3d Battalions had made perhaps five hundred yards and captured seventy prisoners before darkness forced them to abandon the advance until the following day.

On the left flank the 2d Battalion was setting the



Cannon Company crew fires in support of attack

stage for the capture of Hill 617. Company G, attacking from the west on a wide front from its positions at the base of the hill, gave the enemy the impression that the entire battalion was deployed there. Companies E and F moved along the road from Grebefosse north through Halley, in the 7th Infantry's sector. They then swung east for a short distance and cut back to the south again, passing across Hill 585, occupied by the 7th Infantry. By nightfall, the two companies were deployed along the ridge running north from Hill 617. In their approach, the companies neutralized several isolated pockets at the base of the hill. Twenty prisoners were taken including the CO of the 202d Mountain Battalion, newly arrived in the sector.

The units opposing the 100th and 3d Battalions had been conclusively identified as the 933d Regiment, 338th Infantry Division, and the 198th *Fusilier* Battalion. Neither of these units had been encountered before and were apparently fresh troops.

The plight of the "lost battalion" was now becoming desperate. Planes had been able to drop some food and ammunition in, and Division Artillery had shot in emergency rations, but they were terribly short on water and medical supplies. Their wounded needed attention and there was no way they could be evacuated. General Dahlquist, the Division Commander, personally ordered the 442d Infantry to push through at any cost.

The 100th and 3d Battalions attacked at dawn, and had advanced some distance before they were stopped cold by an extremely strong defensive position, the approaches to which were heavily mined. The ridge down which the battalions were advancing was extremely narrow here, and the slopes on either flank were almost precipitous. There was room on the ridge for just about two companies to attack. The 100th Battalion, to the right and slightly to the rear of the 3d, elected to attempt to go around the minefield on the right and come back up the slope on the flank of the enemy positions. For the 3d Battalion there was no such alternative. Artillery fire was heavy and casualties were very high. Lieutenant Colonel Pursall, commanding the 3d Battalion, first decided to try to flank the defenders from the left. The terrain on the left flank was steep and well defended. The enemy threw back Company K's attack with heavy losses. Because of the tall trees and the conformation of the ground, it was impossible to adjust artillery properly; every round either sailed over the enemy positions or crashed

into our own lines. Colonel Pursall then called on the tanks for direct fire. With this support Companies I and K were able to advance slightly but the leading elements were pinned down again. Every German machine gun had interlocking fire with another machine gun. Mortars and grenadiers covered the gaps.

Just what set off the third and last attack, no one knew. Perhaps it simply started of its own accord. But by ones and twos, men in Companies I and K got to their feet and started for the enemy positions on top of the hill. Artillery and mortar shells fell in the ranks; machine-gun fire cut men down as they ran; riflemen took a heavy toll. Nothing the enemy could do was enough; the attack moved slowly on from tree to tree and from cover to cover. Men fired from the hip as they advanced, and then rushed to close quarters with hand grenades. Some of them died in the advance, but they had a lot of Germans for company. Something had to give, and the enemy finally broke. The remnants of the force of a hundred men which had so confidently held the position a short half hour before fled in disorder. A few fired parting shots as they withdrew, but these did no damage. The harm had already been done. Company I had lost 5 killed and 40 wounded. Company K's losses had been correspondingly heavy and included all of the company officers. For once the enemy did not counterattack, but the artillery still poured in.

Of all the men who had performed heroically in the attack, three stood out above the others. Private Barney F. Hajiro, a BAR man in Company I, may have been the man who started the assault. In any case he was one of the leaders. Carrying his BAR at the sling, Hajiro walked forward steadily, firing as he moved. Machine guns and riflemen were shooting at him as he moved, but he met fire with fire and destroyed two machine-gun nests single-handed, killing the gunners. Two snipers fired at him; he located both of them and killed them. Finally he led his men as they overran the enemy objective.

When Company K was stopped early in the action, Staff Sergeant Fujio Miyamoto worked his way forward to locate the machine gun that was firing on his men. As he moved up he was hit in the forearm by an enemy rifleman. He disregarded his wound and continued to advance until he located the machine gun. Then he deliberately exposed himself and destroyed the gun and its crew with a burst



3d Battalion litter squads wait in the aid station for the last attack that relieved the "lost battalion." Minutes later these men were moving up to evacuate casualties.

from his tommy gun. In the two hour battle that followed, Sergeant Miyamoto killed five more of the enemy and refused medical treatment until the objective had been overrun.

Private First Class Jim Y. Tazoi was a radioman with the Company K command group. As his company charged the enemy defensive positions he joined the attacking elements, although he was hampered and made an easy target by his heavy radio. Spotting an enemy machine-gun nest, he opened fire on it in spite of his own exposed position so that the men with him could close to grenade range and assault the position. Later, Tazoi saw that two of his men had been trapped by two German grenadiers. As he moved up to help them, he was hit by a sniper's bullet, but he continued to advance. He killed the two grenadiers but he was hit again by grenade fragments and had to be evacuated.

All three of these men were presented with the Distinguished Service Cross.

While the 100th and 3d Battalions were cracking these defenses, the 2d Battalion was handing the enemy a terrible defeat at Hill 617, on the regimental left flank. Two platoons of Company G, making a frontal attack, started up the hill, but were able to advance only a short distance. Caught in a mortar barrage, they pulled back to their original positions. Their attack had served its purpose, however. While the enemy's attention was centered on throwing back the thrust, Companies E and F had gained the crest of the hill from the north. Circling behind the German positions, both units stormed down on the panic-stricken defenders, killing an even hundred and capturing forty-one. At 1530, Company E moved down the eastern slopes to meet Company G coming up. Between them, they cleaned out the last pockets of resistance.

One of the leaders of Company E's attack was Staff Sergeant Tsuneo Takemoto. In the early phases of the action his platoon was temporarily stopped by an enemy group armed with machine pistols. Takemoto jumped to his feet and ran thirty yards into the enemy fire, raking the positions with his tommy gun and shouting as he ran. Inspired by his courage, his men charged after him and destroyed the strongpoint. Later, his platoon was counter-attacked by twelve Germans. He organized his men and checked the initial rush. He then sent out a small flank group whose fire temporarily confused the Germans. As the enemy's attention wavered, he led another charge, again running thirty yards into



Capt. Joseph Hill, Company F, planning the next attack with one of his platoon leaders

the hostile fire to give his men a chance to close with the enemy. His platoon completely routed the Germans and continued the advance, capturing thirty-four prisoners before the end of the action. Sergeant Takemoto was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

As nearly as anyone could calculate, the leading battalions were now no more than 700 yards from the "lost battalion" of the 141st Infantry. The process of making the actual relief would probably not be too difficult in spite of the fact that the 442d Infantry was now down to half its fighting strength. The Germans had suffered terrible losses on October 29; at least 350 men had been killed, wounded or captured.

All the artillery and 4.2 mortar fire the Combat Team could muster was laid down on the ridge separating the 100th and 3d Battalions from the "lost battalion." On the heels of the barrage the leading companies took off. Resistance was not heavy, although harassing artillery fire caused some casualties. After advancing a considerable distance Company I ran into a mined roadblock defended by some fifty Germans. After an artillery barrage, Company I, with some assistance from K, drove the defenders out and reduced the block. At about 1400, October 30, a Company I patrol, led by Technical Sergeant Takeo Senzaki, reached the outer defenses of the besieged unit. A few minutes later, a platoon of



Machine gunner mans defensive position

Company B broke through from the right flank and also made contact. By 1600, both battalions had dug in in a circular defensive position around the hilltop where the relief had been made. When the first elements of the 442d Infantry broke through, there were tears in a good many eyes, but there wasn't a great deal of cheering or jubilation. Everybody was too tired. The 100th and 3d Battalions later received the Distinguished Unit Citation for heroic achievement in effecting the relief.

The 3d Battalion was ordered to push on to the end of the long ridge which had been the objective of the "lost battalion." The 100th Battalion was ordered to shift to the south to protect the regimental right flank and line of supply. The 2d Battalion meanwhile garrisoned Hill 617, protecting the left flank of the 36th Division and the right flank of the 3d Division.

Both battalions attacked at 1100, October 31. Patrols from the 3d Battalion located a group of enemy building a roadblock in the route of advance. The patrol returned to the main body of the battalion and called down artillery fire on the block-builders. Following the barrage, Company I attacked and took eight prisoners in a short action. Because there were many enemy tanks and flak-wagons on the flanks, the block was left intact and garrisoned by a company of the 100th Battalion. This was the last organized resistance. Both battalions reached their objectives by dark, and Company I returned to take over the roadblock temporarily.

For the next three days, all units remained substantially where they were, holding defensive positions and patrolling to find out what the enemy's dispositions were. On November 3 the enemy attempted to break through the 3d Battalion's thinly-

held line, but Companies I and L caught the attackers in a crossfire and drove them off. However, the regimental commander decided to attach a platoon of Company E to the 3d Battalion as a reserve.

Lieutenant George R. Stairs was dispatched down the road to Company E to pick up the platoon and lead it back to the battalion sector. By the time he had gathered up his men and started to leave the company area the pitch darkness blanketed every landmark. After he and the platoon had stumbled through the woods for about fifteen minutes, Lieutenant Stairs began to think he would never find the road. Just then he tripped over what he thought was a sleeping soldier. Gently, he nudged the dark form with his toe: "Hey, soldier where's the road?" No answer. "Hey," shaking him a little, "wake up!" No answer. "What the hell's the matter, you deaf?" Complete silence. Finally, disdaining blackout discipline, Lieutenant Stairs whipped out his flashlight and discovered he had been trying to wake up a very dead German. Somewhat the worse for wear, the men staggered into the battalion CP area about three quarters of an hour later. Happily, the platoon was never used.

The Commanding General now decided that it was necessary for the 442d Infantry to clear the ridge down to the valley floor. Once that objective was achieved the Germans in St. Die would be cut off from the Germans in Gerardmer, for the Corcieux Valley was narrow at this point. However, the enemy had other ideas. While the 3d Battalion had remained on the defensive, German infantry had dug in on the slopes of the hill in a semicircular position. As the 3d Battalion attacked toward the valley, it met fire grazing up the hill.

The regiment attacked at 0800 November 5 to clear the zone of the enemy and secure positions along the railroad track running around the base of the hill. As the attack began the companies were formed in a semicircle, curving from northeast to southwest. Company F was the northern end of the arc with the 3d Battalion rifle companies, L, K, and I forming a bow facing east. Company G, attached to the 3d Battalion, faced south. The 100th Battalion was defending to the southwest to be sure that an enemy attack did not come up from the flank and cut the regiment's single slender supply line.

The attacking companies ran into heavy resistance as soon as the men came out of their holes. The defenders were well supported by artillery and mor-

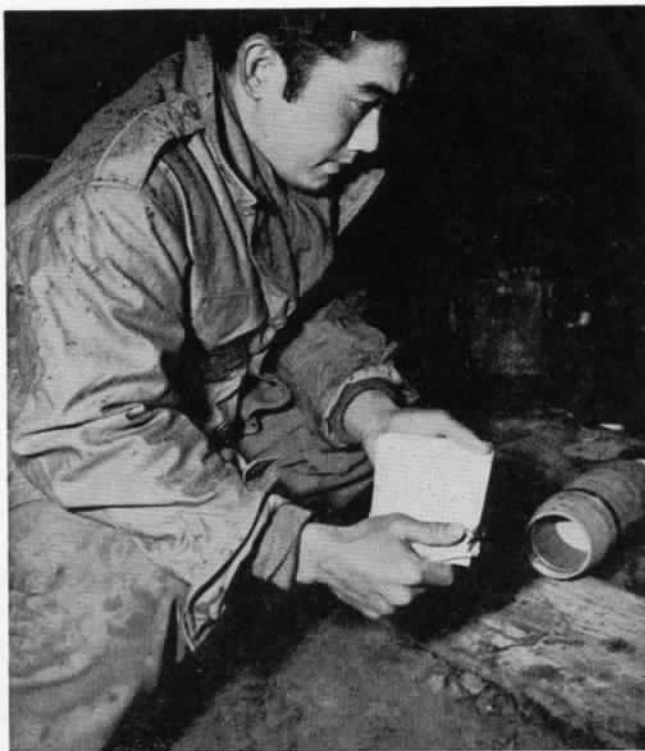
tars, a factor which had not made itself felt so greatly in the last four days. There had been harassing barrages every so often, just enough to keep the men from getting careless. Now that the regiment had mounted another attack, the stuff came pouring in, a barrage every few minutes from dawn to dark. Artillery and mortars were well mixed. An artillery shell comes in with a screech; the first round usually gives a man warning, like a rattlesnake about to strike. Mortar shells give off only a faint whispering sound just before they hit. When the artillery stopped and the Germans figured the men were out of cover and moving again, in came the mortars, heavy 120mm stuff.

All companies suffered heavy casualties and advanced two hundred yards at the most. As night fell and the objective was nowhere in sight, the company commanders pulled their men back to the cover of their former positions, preferring not to risk additional lives for such a small gain.

The following day, November 6, additional pressure fell on the Germans. Company E passed through Company L, which then swung to the right to close some of the gaps in the line. In spite of the additional force, the enemy held. Company G on the right was further hampered by a most unusual minefield. A thin wire ran from each mine to the hole of one of the enemy. As soon as one of the Nisei got close enough, the German pulled the wire, detonating the mine. One of the tanks supporting Company G was hit by an enemy bazooka shell and disabled. The enemy started to make a pillbox out of it, but before they could complete their work the tankers ran up another tank and set the first one blazing with three rounds from their 75.

These men of the 752d Tank Battalion were far and away the best the Nisei had ever worked with. The terrain was impossible for tanks, but if they were ordered to support an attack they never complained about the difficulties confronting them. Usually they asked one question: "Will the infantry be with us?" That was all they needed to be told. They'd climb into their tanks and tell you they'd take 'em as far as they'd go. And they always did; sometimes a little farther. The Nisei have a soft spot in their hearts for that tank battalion, wherever it is now.

All through the campaign to relieve the "lost battalion" the 232d Engineers had worked day after day to keep open the one trail that was usable for vehicles. As more and more vehicles ploughed over it



522d FA crewman prepares shell for firing propaganda leaflets

and more and more rain came down, the job became increasingly difficult. In some places even the sturdy jeeps became hopelessly mired. The 232d, together with the division's 111th Engineer Battalion, had laid over a mile of corduroy and plank road under harassing artillery and sniper fire to cover the worst mudholes.

On November 6 the engineers had relieved the 100th Battalion in defensive positions, inasmuch as the threat from the right flank was no longer so dangerous. They sent patrols out to keep contact with the 3d Battalion.

The following morning the 3d Battalion, with Company G still attached, made a final effort to drive the enemy off the hill. The attack came off at 0930. It was preceded by a barrage from the Company M mortar platoon that had begun the previous afternoon, lasted until dark, and started again at dawn. During the period, the gunners pumped over a thousand rounds into the enemy positions in a steady stream. A prisoner later testified that the fire was effective. He said that casualties in the German positions had been heavy and that the men not hit had been driven almost crazy by the steady pounding.



Lt. Col. James M. Hanley, CO, 2d Battalion, and Lt. Col. V. R. Miller, Acting CT Commander, at 2d Battalion Armistice Day memorial ceremony

Company G was able to gain over eight hundred yards and seize some houses in the valley at the base of the hill. By dark, the companies were in echelon formation from the bottom of the hill to the top, G, I, K, L. The next step would be to sweep around the hill much as a gate swings, with Company L on the hilltop being the hinge.

One of the leaders of Company G's attack was Private First Class Joe M. Nishimoto, an acting squad leader. Leading his men, he crawled through a heavily mined and booby-trapped area to reach a machine gun that was holding up the advance. Spotting it, he threw a hand grenade which destroyed the emplacement. Then he circled to the rear of another gun which had been supporting the fire of the first and killed the crew with a burst from his tommy gun. He then began stalking two riflemen; he was able to kill one, but the other fled. Seeing that he had the enemy on the run, Nishimoto continued his assault and drove another machine-gun crew from its emplacement. With this gap torn in their defenses, the Germans were forced to withdraw. Nishimoto was later killed in action, but his heroic action in breaking a three-day stalemate earned him the Distinguished Service Cross.

It is a tribute to the courage of the men that they were able to move at all. Most of the companies had been whittled down to less than thirty men on the line, and the men who stayed and took it were sick. Some had trench foot so badly they could hardly walk, and most of the others were beginning to come down with flu from the constant exposure to rain and cold. As the attack progressed enemy artillery and mortar fire became heavier and heavier. On the 7th and 8th of November, some two thousand rounds of heavy shells poured into the 2d and 3d Battalion sectors in a steady stream.

Having driven a wedge into the German positions, the companies spent most of November 8 cleaning off the hillside. Company F and two platoons of AT Company, which had been protecting the left flank, also attacked northeast to meet the 142d Infantry driving southwest down the Rouges Eaux River valley. They met very little infantry resistance, but artillery fire was heavy.

The 232d Engineers were still desperately needed to keep the road net open. They were relieved by elements of Company H and returned to control of the 111th Engineers. For the next three days the men worked under fire laying corduroy road and repairing fills that had been laid once and then torn

up by tanks grinding through. The 111th Engineer Battalion and the 232d Engineer Company were later awarded the Distinguished Unit Citation for heroic achievement in keeping open the supply lines of the 36th Division in spite of tremendous natural obstacles and heavy enemy fire.

By the night of November 9 almost all elements of the 442d Infantry Regiment had been relieved and pulled back to rest areas. The enemy line was completely shattered and the attacking elements of the 36th Division had begun a push that eventually took them into the promised land, the Valley of the Rhine. As a fighting unit, the 442d was temporarily impotent. In the 3d Battalion, where casualties had been heaviest, company strengths were fantastically low: Company I had four riflemen and a light machine-gun section left on the line. Company K had seventeen riflemen and part of a weapons platoon. It was commanded by a buck sergeant, Sergeant Tsutomu Yoshida, who was later commissioned. The strength of the other battalions was correspondingly low.

The 522d Field Artillery remained in position, supporting the Division's attack, but the regiment was billeted in rest areas wherever there were towns and buildings. The 100th Battalion had been detached from the regiment and was now in the Army rest center at Bains-les-Bains. The 2d Battalion was assembled at Faye, and the 3d Battalion was resting at Lepanges. All the men got hot showers, clean clothes, and a chance to catch up on a good many days of lost sleep. In every battalion, the chaplains held services in memory of the 140 men who had died in the last 25 days in action. The string had run out for them, but there were 1800 others mending in hospitals all over France. Some of them would never be entirely well. Others would return to fight again.

The 2d Battalion moved back into the lines on the morning of November 13, relieving the 2d Battalion, 142d Infantry in defensive positions. The 3d Battalion followed during the afternoon and took up positions behind the 2d in regimental reserve. The mission of the regiment was to maintain a defensive line in the forest it had cleared in the previous fighting, the Forest Dominiale du Champ. The 36th Division would attack on the right and the 103d Division, which had recently joined the Seventh Army, would attack on the left. The 442d was there as insurance that the enemy would not counterattack between the two divisions and split the Corps front.



Regimental colors at decoration ceremony, November 12, 1944

The regiment remained in the lines until November 17, both the 2d and 3d Battalions patrolling constantly to the front and flanks. Cannon Company gave the 2d Battalion direct support, firing several thousand rounds at suspected enemy locations reported by patrols.

The tip-off that the Germans were making a long withdrawal came during the night of the 15th. Observers reported tremendous fires in St. Die and Corcieux, about a mile from the front lines. The Germans were putting the torch to everything that could possibly be of any use to the advancing American armies. In St. Die, one of the oldest cities in France, this was especially tragic as many historical monuments crumbled in the flames. When the advancing troops reached both towns, only smoking heaps of rubble remained.

On November 17, the 442d Combat Team was relieved from attachment to the 36th Division and

ordered to proceed without delay to Nice, on the French Riviera, reporting to the commanding general of the 44th Antiaircraft Artillery Brigade on arrival.

Before the unit pulled out, the CO received the following letter from Major General John E. Dahlquist, the 36th Division commander:

(1) The 36th Division regrets that the 442d Combat Team must be detached and sent on other duties. The period during which you have served, October 14 to November 18, 1944, was one of hard, intense fighting through terrain as difficult as any army has ever encountered.

(2) The courage, steadfastness, and willingness of your officers and men were equal to any ever displayed by United States Troops.

(3) Every officer and man of the Division joins me in sending our best personal regards and good wishes to every member of your command, and we hope that we may be honored again by having you as a member of our Division.

The men were pleased by the tribute, but most of



Time for a break on the long road south to the Maritime Alps

them, remembering twenty-five days of suffering, were glad to get away from the cold, forbidding mountains.

The Combat Team loaded on trucks again on November 19 and headed back over the long, weary miles they had traveled a little over a month ago. This time there was no truck shortage in spite of the fact that 382 replacements had come in on the 18th. With almost two thousand men in hospitals, the unit was at about half strength.

The itinerary of the trip south reads like a Baedeker guide book: Dijon, Valence, Montelimar, Avignon, Aix-en-Provence, Cannes, and finally Nice. The battalions settled themselves in their bivouac areas at St. Jeannet, a few miles from Nice, and began to think happily of Thanksgiving with turkey and all the trimmings. The weather was cool but not unpleasant and everybody had been progressively shedding more clothes as the convoy rolled south.