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HEADQUARTERS  
FORTY FIFTH INFANTRY DIVISION  
APO 45 U S ARMY

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12 February 1945 ✓

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SUBJECT: Transmittal of Unit History.

TO : Commanding General, Seventh Army, APO 758, U S Army.

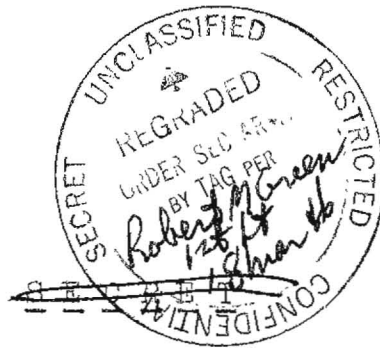
Transmitted herewith Historical Record of the 157th Infantry, this command, for the period 1 January 1945 to 31 January 1945.

For the Commanding General:

*Emil Phavta*  
EMIL P NAVTA  
WOJG USA  
Asst Adj Gen

1 Incl:  
Hist Rcd, 157th Inf (Trip)  
w/Supporting Documents.

*L-1027*



*345-Inf (157) 0.3  
Hist Rpt - Please - Seventh Army Campaign - 157th Inf Regt - 45-799 Inf Div - 1-31 Jan 45  
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HISTORY - NARRATIVE FORM  
157TH INF REGT  
JANUARY - 1945

L-1027

January First, 1945 was a clear, cold day; the type of day American's are apt to call "Perfect football weather." An elusive sun peered through the clouds occasionally and warmed the men of the 157th Infantry huddled in their foxholes in the outer defenses of the Siegfried Line. To the men themselves, it was more than just another day, it was separate and important, it was a time for taking stock, a time for remembering. The memories were as varied as the men themselves; they were the personal memories of clerks, truck drivers, farmers, school-boys, they were the memories of American soldiers far from home who have seen and done much in twelve months. Some thought of home and the hangovers of previous years, the family dinners and the gatherings of friends that are such a part of the tradition of the holiday in America. They remembered the men who fought beside them and the cold miserable weather of Venafro. They remembered the bloody days at the Volturno, the hell that was Anzio and the capture of Rome. They remembered too the "Purple Death" wine of Italy and the "White Lightning" of France. A lighter note was struck when one doughboy suggested as a replacement for the by now out worn motto "Win The War In '44" a simpler, more realistic "Stay Alive In '45."

It was a cold clear day this New Years Day 1945 and inside every man was the knowledge and the satisfaction of a difficult job well done that warmed them more than the intermittent sun overhead. They had gotten up out of their holes on Anzio and walked to Rome, against every conceivable weapon of war, against a stubborn well-dug in foe looking down their throats. Two successful amphibious landings had been made on Hitler's so-called impregnable "Fortress Europe", a nation had been liberated and G. I. brogans were planted firmly on the sacred soil of Adolf Hitler's Third Reich. In the mind of each man was the knowledge that "This was it" "This was the payoff", that the long fight that had started on the beaches of Sicily was nearing it's climax. Mostly it was a time of gratitude, it was "perfect football weather" inside the German border, the foe had been driven back and they were still alive. No Infantryman could ask for more than that.

On January First 1945, the comparative lull on our sector of the Seventh Army front was broken when the Germans launched a heavy counter-attack, supported by artillery fire on the left of the Regimental sector. The 275th Infantry of the 70th Division was driven back and heavy fighting was reported in the streets of Phillipsburgh. After committing the 1st Bn of the 274th Infantry the Americans had almost succeeded in reaching their original positions, but the Bitche salient continued to widen. On our sector we had the 1st Battalion of the 315th Infantry attached to us on the right. The 36th Engineers was on their right. Our First Bn remained in its position during the day, improving it.

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Several patrols were sent out and a C Company patrol sent out at dark reported hearing an enemy halftrack and enemy personnel. The patrol returned at 2230 and mortar fire was placed in that area. The Second Battalion reported enemy movement in the vicinity of Obersteinbach. Artillery was placed on road intermittently with good results. At 0148, F Company engaged the enemy in a small arms fight to the front. At 0245 much enemy activity was heard in Neunhoffen and artillery was placed there. E Company reported that an enemy patrol came in at 0250 but the men succeeded in driving it back, inflicting heavy losses. At 0800 the Battalion OP sighted approximately 300 enemy and 17 horse drawn artillery pieces in and around Neunhoffen. An air mission was requested on the woods east of Neunhoffen and the town itself. The first mission was unsuccessful but the second mission around 1200 was declared very successful. During the late morning 1st Bn., 179th Infantry moved around to rear of Second Battalion to give support if needed. During the afternoon the sector was relatively quiet but at 1700 G Company got into a fire fight with an estimated 30 enemy troops who came in between G and E Company positions. At 1710, B Company, 179th Inf went into position between E and G Companies. One platoon of A Company 179th Infantry was sent to Dambach to clear enemy out of there and to swing in between F and G Companies when that mission was accomplished. At 2100, 1st Bn, 179th Infantry, minus A Company reverted to control of the parent organization. During the day the 3rd Bn, remained in position. I Company relieved B Company of the 157th Infantry. B Company reverted to control of its own battalion. One platoon of the 45th Reconnaissance Troops, which was attached to 157th Infantry until 0900, reverted to control of the 45th Division. The remaining platoon, stayed in positions as regimental reserve.

On the second day of January the regiment started a retrograde movement to prepared positions in the Maginot Line. The first and Third battalion sectors were fairly quiet and made their withdrawal in an orderly fashion. B Company remained in position to cover the rest of the battalion while the Ranger Platoon of the Third Battalion did the same for that unit. Our artillery fired on enemy personnel moving in front of the Third Battalion position. Company A of the 179th Infantry placed one platoon in position between F and G Companies while the remaining two platoons cleared the town of Dambach, at 0300 hours. At 0715 a group of enemy determined at a strength of from 15 to 20 men, moved toward Company A, 179th but was dispersed by small arms fire. At 1035 hours Company F, via a patrol, contacted the 275th Infantry Regiment. That evening enemy patrols of some strength were reported probing the battalion front but all attempts to penetrate our defenses were broken up by small arms and artillery. E Company leading, followed by G Co and A Co of the 179th, the battalion started to withdraw to prepared positions. At the close of the period only F Company remained to be moved. E Company received some artillery fire enroute to the rear.

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January 3rd dawned bright and clear as the troops remained in their Maginot Line positions. The 1st Battalion took over regimental reserve positions. Because of the heavy enemy attack on Philippsbourg in the morning, C Company sent a platoon to a wooded ridge several thousand yards Southeast of the town as an outpost. Near the close of the period C Company sent a contact patrol to E Company. The forward observer with 2nd Battalion called for fire upon 35 enemy and 12 handcarts coming into Dambach, at about 2200 hours. At 2240 hours an enemy patrol probed the left flank of F Company, situated on the left flank of the battalion, and cut the communication wire. Patrols were sent out to determine the enemy strength, and had not returned at the close of the period. An I Company patrol contacted elements of 180th Infantry Regiment early in the morning at 0415 hours. At 1000 hours the A&P platoon of the 3rd Battalion relieved the elements of the 180th Infantry Regiment at Gunsthal. I Company lengthened its positions to the east. M Company fired its mortars on enemy personnel at 1130. At 1500 a four man enemy patrol contacted I Company. The veteran doughboys closed in on them and killed the entire group. The 1st Battalion of 315th Infantry was attached to the 157th Infantry Regiment at 0945 and relieved the positions of the 180th Infantry. It made contact with the 3rd Battalion on the left and the 36th Engrs. on the right. The day was quiet and most of the time was spent in improving positions.

On the 4th day of January, the 157th Infantry Regiment continued to man the Maginot Line defenses and improve the positions against any possible enemy counter-attack. The 1st Battalion remained in regimental reserve but was alerted at 1100 to a possible enemy counter-attack. A, B and C Companies dug in alternate positions during the day. At 0430 a C Company patrol contacted elements of the 2nd Battalion. The 2nd Battalion continued to defend its portion of the Maginot Line. Chemical mortars started several fires in Dambach. At 1100 hours the battalion was alerted to a possible enemy counterattack in its sector and engineers laid tactical wire in front of the E and G Company positions. At 1800 hours battalion guides moved A Company of the 275th Infantry into positions on the left flank of F Company. Considerable enemy activity was reported in the vicinity of Neunhoffen, during the daylight hours. The 3rd Battalion sector remained quiet throughout the day except for a few rounds of artillery which fell in the area during the morning hours. K Company sent a patrol to a high ridge overlooking the Windstein valley but made no contact. To the right of the regimental sector the 1st Battalion of the 315th Infantry Regiment continued to defend the Maginot Line. They sent a patrol to Disteldorf and found the town unoccupied.

The 1st Battalion continued in regimental reserve on the 5th day of January. The Companies continued to improve their alternate positions. At 0040, an F Company patrol contacted A Company 275th Infantry Regiment and returned. Another F Company patrol to Dambach returned at 0630 and reported that it had heard enemy moving around in town. The men received some small arms

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fire from the town as they went and returned. B Company sent a patrol to observe the Nuenhoffen-Philippsbourg sector at 1045. The patrol returned at 1600 and reported that it had contacted 4 to 6 enemy about 1,500 yards east of the Nuenhoffen-Philippsbourg road. At 1620 the enemy smoked the town of Nuenhoffen and our artillery placed a time on target in the town. F Company sent a patrol to the town of Dambach where some enemy were reported. Artillery fire was placed at the northern end of the town. G Co received several rounds of medium artillery at the close of the period. L Company of the 3rd Battalion sent a patrol to a ridge overlooking the Windstein valley at 1040 hours. They returned at 1635 reporting 20-30 enemy in the area. A road intersection in the L Company area received an estimated 25 rounds of 105mm artillery at 2200 hours. Enemy artillery fell on this road intersection at the close of the period. The 1st Battalion 315th Infantry sent a patrol to Disteldorf where it got into a fire fight. A patrol sent to a high peak NE of Disteldorf made no contact with the enemy but saw four or five as it returned. The enemy were reported, by patrols, to be dug in on the eastern edge of Disteldorf. Four enemy were reported on a road east of Disteldorf.

The 6th of January dawned clear and cold. The 1st battalion continued in regimental reserve with B Company attached to the Second Battalion in the reserve position. E Company of the 2nd Battalion sent a patrol through the town of Dambach and to the hill just east of there. The men found nothing and returned. F Company sent a two-man patrol to the SE edge of Dambach where the men saw 10 enemy marching down the street, and entering the last house in the SE edge of town. After dark, 81mm and 4.2 mortars laid fire in that vicinity. I Company of the 3rd Battalion sent a patrol to a high hill at the northern edge of the Windstein valley. It made no contact with the enemy. 1st Battalion 315th Infantry, still attached to the 157th Inf Regt, sent a patrol to Disteldorf in the morning hours. It made no contact with the enemy nor did a patrol to a high hill 1,500 yards east of Disteldorf. Enemy were reported behind A Company and at 2200 hours a patrol sent to find them reported no contact after a search of an hour and a half.

There was considerable enemy activity reported in Dambach on the 7th day of January. B Company reverted to the control of the 1st battalion and relieved F Company at 1930 hours. A Company relieved E Company at 1930 hours. C Company relieved G Company at about 2020 hours. G Company was attached to the 1st Battalion and occupied the positions formerly occupied by B Company. I Company of the 3rd Battalion sent a patrol to the two high peaks at the northern edge of the Windstein valley. It made no contact with the enemy. An I Company patrol to a high peak 800 yards east of the Wineckerthal-Herrenhol road found communication wires there. The patrol contacted three enemy on the northern slopes of the hill which it tried to capture. 1st Battalion 315th Infantry reported enemy tank activity in Disteldorf during the early morning, but a daylight patrol found no tanks there. The battalion fired mortars at a point in the road 800 yards north of Lembach, at 1025 hours. 3 patrols were sent to forward areas to the north and NE of Disteldorf.

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The regiment remained in position on January 8th manning the Maginot line defenses. The 1st Battalion reported 12 rounds of 105 mm artillery falling in the C Company sector. A patrol from C Company reached the stream west of the town of Wineckerthal and followed it to the outskirts of Dambach. They reported singing and talking in town. Another C Company patrol set up and outpost on the road to Dambach about 1000 yards from town and reported enemy movement on the hill to the north. The 2nd Battalion remained in regimental reserve with G Company still occupying the 1st Battalion reserve position. F Company sent a patrol to a point 500 yards south of the Philippsbourg-Neiderbronn road but found no trace of the enemy. A patrol from I Company, 3rd Battalion and K Company, 3rd Battalion sent patrols to the areas on the northern edge of the Windstein valley but found no evidence of the enemy. The 1st Battalion 315th Infantry, remained on the regimental right. A patrol sent to a position about 2,000 yards north of Disteldorf reported 2 enemy in that area. There was no traffic or movement reported on the Obersteinbach-Niedersteinbach road or in either of the towns. Another patrol to a high hill 800 yards northeast of Disteldorf reported no signs of the enemy. A patrol to a point just off the Lembach road observed a seven man enemy patrol moving southeast on the Lembach road.

On January 9th, 1945 the first Battalion remained in position. A few scattered rounds of artillery fell in the sector in the morning and again in the evening with some mortar fire coming from the west edge of Dambach. The Second Battalion remained in reserve with G Company in the area behind First Battalion reserve. The Third Battalion also remained in position during the day but sent out several patrols during the day. All patrols returned without contacting enemy. I Company put trip flares in front of it's positions and at 2020 an enemy patrol set off the flares. Machine guns fired at the patrol, dispersing it to the north. The 1st Bn of the 315th Infantry, attached to us remained in position. Several of their patrols encountered enemy troops and got into fire fights. All patrols returned without casualties.

The 1st and 3rd Battalions remained in position on the 10th of January 1945. The 2nd Battalion remained in position until 1415 hours when it moved to Rothbach by motor where it was placed under 45th Division control. In the afternoon, enemy artillery scored a direct hit on pillbox No. 5 but caused no damage. At 2237 hours, heavy enemy artillery fell about Pillbox No. 4 and scored several direct hits but no damage was reported. A patrol was sent to a stream just south of Herrenhof to set up an ambush. An enemy patrol appeared in front of the pillbox later on but our artillery fired upon it, causing the Germans to disperse. C Company observed enemy personnel digging in on a densely wooded ridge 2,500 yards northeast of Dambach. Our artillery fired upon them. The Third Battalion reported 88mm fire falling in Jaegerthal at 0415 hours. An L Company patrol covered the ridge line over-

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looking both the Windstein valley and the Wineckerthal road. The men reported nothing in the area. An I Company patrol reported enemy tracks in the snow on a ridge at the northern edge of the Windstein valley. They were going north. The 1st Battalion of the 315th Infantry received scattered rounds of artillery both at the opening and the closing of the day. A patrol to a ridge line about 1,000 yards above Disteldorf reported an estimated platoon of enemy dug in.

On the 11th of January, 1945, the 2nd Battalion remained under 45th Division control. The 1st Battalion remained in position. Pillbox No. 4 received some machine gun fire in the morning. That evening, the engineers placed trip flares between the pillboxes. The ambush patrol returned reporting that it had reached the stream but could not cross it. The men heard enemy talking and some movement on the road to Dambach. At 1900 hours a raiding party consisting of one officer and eight enlisted men were sent to Dambach with the task of capturing one prisoner. At the close of the period the Battalion was in the process of being relieved by 2nd Battalion 274th Infantry. Some enemy activity was reported in by 2nd Battalion to their front and B Company remained in the reserve position until all companies had been relieved. The 3rd Battalion received artillery fire of an estimated 105mm caliber. Patrols from both I and L Companies made no contact with the enemy. The 1st Battalion 315th Infantry reported it's sector as being quiet throughout the day.

On January 12th and 13th the 157th Infantry was relieved of it's positions in the Maginot Line defenses. The 1st Battalion was relieved by the Second Battalion, 274th Infantry. Relief was completed on January 13th by 0753 and the Battalion moved to the vicinity of Zinswiller relieving 3rd Battalion 276th Infantry at 1130. The Battalion was shelled while going into position. The Second Battalion relieved the positions of Second Battalion, 276th Infantry at 1045 on January 13th and reverted to Regimental control. The Battalion received considerable artillery fire on the forward positions during the day. E and F Companies received an estimated 250 rounds at 1400 hours. The 3rd Battalion was relieved by the First Battalion of the 276th Infantry. The relief was completed by 1203 January 13th and the Battalion moved by motor to an assembly area and made preparations to attack the following morning through the Second Battalion positions.

During the period from 14 January 1945 to 21 January 1945 the 157th Infantry faced one of the severest tests in it's history. It was more than a test of guns and tactics; it was also a test of an intangible something called "fighting heart" and plain downright American "guts".

After relieving the 276th Regiment of the 70th Division on the evening of January 13, 1945, the Regiment received a barrage of an estimated 200 rounds of artillery fire. The enemy was a worthy one. Identified later as the Sixth SS Mountain Division, the outfit had been transported to this sector from Finland. An organization

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of refreshed, well-trained fanatical Nazis, they were fighting over the type of terrain they had trained in with the type of weather best suited to their particular brand of warfare.

On January 14th the 1st Battalion of the 315th Infantry was on the left. In the early morning, it jumped off in an attack and after making a slight advance was counter-attacked. The men suffered several counter-attacks during the day and were forced back to their original positions. On the right flank of the 157th Infantry Regiment, the 36th Engineers improved their positions during the day and prepared to attack the following morning.

On the 157th Infantry front the First and Third Battalions began an attack on the right flank of the Regimental Sector at 0830 on the morning of January 14th. Initially, A Company was on the right and C Company on the left. The Third Battalion moved in a column of Companies, K, L and I. Second Battalion was in reserve, but received heavy German artillery fire throughout the day. At 1000, K Company contacted the enemy and was pinned down. Meanwhile, on the First Battalion front, a platoon of B Company passed through the A Company positions and contacted enemy troops. A fire fight ensued. Two hours later, at 1430, the platoon withdrew to the B Company positions and placed artillery fire on the enemy. At 1530, L Company had reached it's objective with K Company on the left of C Company 315th Infantry. Both Battalions set up defensive positions for the night. After dark, A Company sent patrols northeast down the slope of a ridge where they contacted German troops and got into a fire fight. The patrol returned without casualties.

On January 15th the 1st Battalion, 315th Infantry attacked on our left with B Company leading. Advancing two hundred yards the men met with heavy artillery and mortar fire and were forced back to their original positions. On the right flank the 36th Engineers sent two combat patrols to Rehbach, both of which were forced to withdraw under fire. They were scheduled to attack during the day but failed to do so.

On January 15th, our attack was continued against stiffening enemy resistance. During the early morning hours, ten rounds of 170mm fell in Zinswiller and the forward positions received heavy and constant artillery fire. At 0800, B Company, under cover of a ground haze, jumped off in the attack. Advancing against sporadic enemy resistance, the men reached their objective at 1124. Meanwhile, A and C Company's remained in position. After reaching it's objective, B Company received heavy artillery and small arms fire. At this point, A Company sent a patrol forward to contact B Company. The patrol ran into a stubborn, well dug in foe and was unable to make contact. B Company finding its position untenable, withdrew to it's former position, arriving there at 1230. At 1420 C Company started an attack but was driven back by a stubborn foe who refused to relinquish any ground. At 1950, B Company had made contact with



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the 36th Combat Engineers on the right and the Battalion set up defensive positions. During the day, the Third Battalion also continued its attack to the north. At 1200, L Company had reached its objective, followed by I Company. K Company engaged the enemy in a fire fight and succeeded in driving the Germans off and at 1330 made physical contact with L Company. K Company then moved to the west and reached its objective on a ridge, at 1530. The Germans immediately counter-attacked on the right flank. I Company on the right, aided K Company in an attempt to repulse the enemy thrust. The fight continued for an hour and a half and many enemy were killed and captured. The enemy failed to dent our line and a heavy mortar barrage fell into the Regimental Sector until well after dark. We suffered heavy casualties and after dark, the Battalion Anti-Tank Platoon was placed with I Company. Throughout the night, heavy shell fire harrassed our troops as they sat alert in their wet, cold fox-holes.

On January 16th the Second Battalion of the 157th Infantry relieved the First Battalion of the 315th Infantry. We then had the 180th Infantry on our left flank and it remained in position during the day and held its line. On our right flank, the 36th Engineers also held. Only organization in the sector attacking, the 157th Infantry positions was 1,500 yards in advance of the units to its right and left and as a consequence its flanks were exposed. To repulse the thrust the Germans massed their guns and zeroed in on our positions, placing tremendous artillery fire on the regimental troops and particularly upon Third Battalion. At 0900 C Company moved forward toward the right flank of L Company. By 1200 the men had reached their objective and established contact with L Company. At this time, B Company started moving around the left flank of F Company. It then ran into a strong enemy force and because of the enemy's numerical superiority was forced to disengage itself and move to the west and the north. The men set up positions there and gave support to the Third Battalion during an enemy attack.

At 1330 hours, a First Battalion ration train comprised by three quarter ton trucks was ambushed by German riflemen, supported by two machine guns firing cross-fire along the road. Corporal Alfred Miller of Westernport, Maryland, one of four survivors said, "I'd just returned from the hospital and I was riding up with the ration truck to rejoin my outfit. We rounded a bend in the road and all hell broke loose! We were fired on by riflemen and machine guns placed strategically so that they commanded the road. We all hit the ditch on the side of the road. I rolled down the embankment until I found myself in a semi-covered position. After covering the road with small arms and machine gun fire, the Germans began firing rifle grenades at the men on the ground. I saw one man take a direct hit in the face and fall over dead. Grenades fell around my position and I crawled to another position without getting hit. By crawling and running from one covered position to another, I succeeded in getting back to our lines."

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During the day, E and G Companies relieved the positions of 1st Bn, 315th Infantry. At 1345, G Company with two light tanks attached, attacked the enemy dug in on a hill to the front and succeeded in clearing the position by 1645. The men then moved northeast to make physical contact with K Company's left flank. At 1722, a patrol from G Company reported enemy troops between the G and K Company positions. A strong force was sent to clear up the situation and by 1750, physical contact between the two Companies had been reestablished. E Company moved forward and at 1830 made contact with C Company on the right. At 2355, enemy troops were reported between the right platoon and the remainder of the Company. On the Third Battalion Front, it was also a day of hard, bitter fighting. At 0300 on the morning of January 16th, an enemy patrol attempted to get around the right flank of L Company but was driven off. The Germans continued to shell the front line troops during the early morning hours. At 1130 machine gun fire was reported to the right rear of L Company. At 1235 the Battalion CP received a direct hit from a rocket. No casualties. At 1330 the Germans launched a large-scale attack against K and L Companies. K Company also reported enemy behind it. By 1540 the enemy was attacking along the entire front. At 1600, enemy had succeeded in infiltrating behind I Company. At 1607, K and I Companies reported that they were completely surrounded. At 1632 the Battalion Anti-Tank Company and two light tanks were sent forward in an attempt to contact I Company. This was accomplished at 1713. The Companies were supplied with rations and ammunition by 1940. At 1835, the enemy attack had ceased and the Third Battalion, with the aid of B Company and a composite Company composed of all available personnel in Headquarters, started mopping up the enemy behind its position. At the end of the day, Germans remained behind the American Lines.

On January 17th, the 180th Infantry tried three times to close the exposed left flank but could make little progress against heavy fire. However, patrols succeeded in contacting our E Company. On the right flank the 36th Engineers again remained in position holding their line.

In the 157th Infantry sector, enemy artillery pounded our positions in hours long concentrations. At 0830, B Company began an attack toward the northeast, but because of enemy artillery and small arms fire was unable to move after repeated attempts. At 1400 A and F Companies jumped off in the attack and failed to gain ground. For the rest of the Regiment the day was spent trying to clear up the pockets of enemy resistance behind the lines. Enemy troops continued to infiltrate to build up a line in the rear with five machine guns covering the strategic draw that controlled the avenue of withdrawal open to the American troops. Repeated attempts to supply C Company failed. In the Third Battalion sector, Second Lieutenant Willis Talkington of Craig, Colorado, A&P Platoon Leader, attempted to reach the Companies in a light tank. Fighting his way through the German line behind his Battalion, he succeeded in reaching I Company with food, ammunition, radio batteries and stretchers for