

THE VALLEY OF DEATH FALAISE GAP

773<sup>rd</sup> Note by  
HARRY MORGAN

Our unit landed in Normandy two months after the invasion. When we left England, we were slated to join the 90th Inf upon arrival - which we did. This was about the time of StLo break-through. We went right into action with the 90th and French 2nd Armored Div. This was fast moving country and we took town after town until we ran into hedge-rows and then Jerry said - you go no further. Ha. Frank Oddo was first man hit in our unit (see picture of him sitting atop of TD on page 101. Was a minor wound and he was back with us in two weeks. My first experience with wounds came a few day's later. One section of TD's with my jeep and two armored cars were in this field dug in waiting for orders. This was two day's before the slaughter of Falaise Gap. A shell came in, we hit the ground. A TD man was next to me but he was slow, a metal sliver went into his arm at his elbow, scrapped along his arm bone and came out at the wrist. I slapped sulspur on the wound, put on a bandage and alone with another man carried him to a medic jeep. When medics returned from aid station, they told me he almost bled to death before they got there. (My bandage wasn't too swift.) Shelling continued for hours - I must have cracked under the strain because I got the shakes. Medic took me to aid station where Doc gave me some ammonia and made me lay down. After one hour I was okey and returned to my unit. Unknown to us at the time, the German 7th Army was trying to escape through the gap which their troops held. This gap was about a mile wide, leading out of a valley about five miles across. High cliffs were held by the allies on both sides of the valley. One side held by the Ausi & British troops and the other by the French and American troops. It was a field day for our artillery and planes. Our TD's set at top of cliff and fired point-blank at anything that moved. SSG Land from New Orleans and his commander Lt Reck. Their platoon went into the valley at the gap to bottle up some german units. Their platoon, (4) TD's, one armored car and two jeeps knocked out about twelve enemy tanks (heavy) some assorted vehicles and ~~captured~~ captured many german soldiers. They recieved the DSC for this action. The engagement was a slaughter, the germans were helpless. They lost untold hundreds of tanks, artillery pieces, vehicles and thousands of dead. Later, we went into the field to clean up. Right in the middle of the valley where no American soldier could have set foot (except mabey prisnors of the Germans), I found one dead American in uniform, in a sitting position leaning against a tree stump without legs. He had a M1 beside him (could be that he was a German in American uniform). One TD crew found two suitcases with French Frans (50 - 100 notes) in a german armored car. (A later count disclosed that there was \$65,000 in there suit cases). The crew kept this money. One week later we were pulled back for a rest just outside of Paris. This money found it's way into everyones pocket through dice games. No one thought it was good money because the German's printed it. We went into Paris for a two day stay and had a ball (money was good). Weeks later, two agents from the Treasury Department showed up (so the story goes) and claimed money which was left. They got \$45,000. The government had to pay the French government \$15,000. My first night in Paris was spent drinking Champagne and yelling out to the few remaining snipers ( HA HA , you missed me.) There were a few die-hard Germans left and they would fire from the roof-tops at any thing moving. But we were drunk and could give a dam less. HA HA, you missed me.

DILLINGEN

This place was a heart-breaker. It took time and many lives to enter this city and after we felt that we had cracked the nut -- we pulled out to head north for what was to become known as The Battle Of The Bulge.

After artillery support, we crossed the Saar at night only to be faced by the pill-boxes in the morning. Our Tank Destroyers fired point-blank at the boxes to no avail. We would play hide and seek with the Jerry gunners by running out into the open to draw their fire while another TD would wait in ambush to lob a shell into or near the slit. Their gun tube protruded out from the box several feet but their aiming slit was several feet above this tube. To fire a shell into this slit was next to impossible as we could get no more than say a thousand feet away. With luck we could hit the tube and put it out of commission or spray the insides with steel. This proved to be costly so after day's, Long Tom's were called up (155MM with tubes of about thirty feet). These would fire point-blank about a thousand yards away. These shells would blow the boxes apart and at the same time, the boxes guns could not reach the Long Toms with any degree of accuracy. Next came the one road leading into the city which was long ago zeroed in by Jerry Mortar and Artillery. At the time of my crossing this intersection, shells were bursting about every eight seconds. I was the Company Commander's (Cpt Williams) driver at the time. Lt Moss was with us also. I timed the fire and dashed head on after the third shell burst (burst of three's) but Jerry forgot to use his clock this time and one burst on the intersection when I was about twenty feet away. I yelled (hit the dirt), slammed on my brakes and emergency and with Jeep still moving, we jumped into the right hand side ditch. Two more shells burst, we jumped back into the Jeep and took off, crossing the intersection moments before another shell hit. None of us were hurt but many bodies and vehicles never moved from that area. This went on for a great deal of time until our artillery counter fire destroyed their guns. Then it was a matter of house to house, room to room. We gave the infantry cover from house to house but it was up to them from then on. A dog-face would lean out a window and point to us another window - we would fire an HE into room or wall and the dog-face would then go in. We stayed there for about a week, moving slowly but surely when the word came, withdraw and regroup across the Sarr. It didn't take long for the word of a break-through up North. All of us felt bad about leaving as many of our friends were killed there and we knew it would only take a few more day's before we could clean the city. I for one and many more thousands set booby traps for we wanted them to pay for our withdrawal. We set hand grenades under toilet sets, chairs, beds, doors and even in potato bins. (I wonder how many krauts I alone killed?) One funny thing which happened I took part in on that last day, (we had K-Rations) so the house which we were in that day was a rich house, fine linens, table wear, silver, etc, etc. We set this table with the best of linen, silver, wine glasses (filled with water) and had our meal in style. After it was over, two men took ends of linen, counted three and ~~threw~~<sup>threw</sup> it and contents through a beautiful window into court-yard. For two or three day's we withdrew, small units across the ferry and bridge at a time. The last night, five TD's and my jeep were left on the Jerry side. The TD's gave cover for ferry (bridge was hit). At this time, the ferry was hit, Jerry just found us out. The Eng's rigged up another ferry and we got out. It was no more than minutes after we crossed that Jerry layed in a barrage which if we were still there would have gotten us for sure.

Our long forced march started for the North and the BULGE

A LITTLE TOWN, NAME UNKNOWN

This little French Village looked very peaceful. One Bn of the 90th Inf were crossing this large field. Just to their rear was this small dirt cross-road where all of CO "A" TD's were parked, some on both sides of main road. We were slightly higher than the Inf so we could look on and not only see them advance but could see this villiage. Then all hell broke loose. Mortor fell on to the Inf. They dug in the best they could but the German field of fire was good - many Inf troons never got up to advance another foot. Machine Gun fire swept the field. Our artillery and our TD guns opened up on the town and tried to level it. Mortor fire started to fall on us at the cross roads. The German's knew that they had to knock us out first so that they could stop the Inf. I was the CO's driver and the jeep ~~h/t/t/t/t~~ offered very little protection so I with a few others jumped into some TD's. A TD top is open unlike tanks which are sealed. Fire was heavy and I expected at any moment for a shell to drop down our necks. I stuck my head out to see what damage had been done when I saw the Company's motorcyle driver calmly seated in my jeep. I jumped out of the TD and ran to my jeep to get him the hell out of there when a shell hit directly in front sending a large piece of steel into his chest. Two medic and I pulled him out, put him onto a strecher on top of the medic jeep and sent him on his way. Another shell hit, the concussion knocking me down. The next thing I knew, I was laying in a deep ditch with shallow water about  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile away. I was fully aware of my ~~of/my/~~ senses after having fallen into the water. I sat there for a few minutes and tried to figure it our. I must have ran down this ditch in terror or shock and fallen, the water must have revived me. I was back to my unit in minutes and found that they had moved across the road. My skipper (Cpt Williams) when he first saw me told me that he thought I had been killed. No need to say that the village was taken - but with heavy loss. Our mess Sgt (Sgt St Pierre) and the cycle driver were best of friends. It was difficult for me to tell him of his friends death.