

# US 1st INFANTRY DIVISION 1939-45



Philip Katcher



VANGUARD SERIES

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# US 1st INFANTRY DIVISION 1939-45

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**Librería GAUDI, S.L.**

Argensola, 13

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28004 MADRID

OSPREY PUBLISHING LONDON

Published in 1978 by  
Osprey Publishing Ltd  
Member company of the George Philip Group  
12-14 Long Acre, London WC2E 9LP  
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ISBN 0 85045 280 5

*Cover painting* by Mike Chappell shows divisional infantry, supported by M4A4 Sherman tank, in the Normandy *bocage*, June 1944. The tank is a vehicle of the division's attached 745th Tank Bn., finished in Olive Drab and Earth Brown camouflage. Turret and glacis national stars are painted out. The name 'Angel of Freedom' appears on the hull side, and the bridge plate bears the number '30'. The private on the rear jacket carries the .30 cal. BAR and wears a belt of magazine pouches for this light automatic; the lieutenant on the front cover carries the .30 cal. M1 carbine.

Filmset by BAS Printers Limited,  
Over Wallop, Hampshire  
Printed in Hong Kong

A corporal of the division refuels his Harley Davidson motorcycle during manoeuvres, 1941.



## The Beginnings

'The United States Army', goes a saying popular among 1st Infantry Division veterans, 'consists of the 1st Division and ten million replacements.' It is difficult to tell which is being more complimented, the division or the army; for the record of the division is certainly one of the finest in the army. This has been so since the division was originally created in May 1917 as the 1st Division of the American Expeditionary Force. Because it accompanied Force Commanding General John Pershing, the division was originally nicknamed 'Pershing's Own'. In the last days of World War I, however, the division adopted a shoulder patch consisting of a large red number '1' on a dark green shield, from which it took its better-known nickname, 'The Big Red One'.

In 1939, facing the real possibility of war, the division was organized as a 'triangular division', made up of three infantry regiments: the 16th, 18th and 26th. The 16th and 18th had been formed in the spring of 1861 and served in most major battles on the eastern seaboard during the American Civil War, in the Spanish American War, the Philippine Insurrection and World War I; the 26th had been formed in 1901 and served in the Philippine Insurrection and World War I. Under the triangular division system each regiment became a 'combat team' made up of some 3,300 infantrymen with supporting artillery, engineer, medical, ordnance, reconnaissance, signal and quartermaster

troops. Besides the infantry, the division had four artillery battalions: the 5th, 7th, 32nd and 33rd Field Artillery. Each battalion was made up of some 550 men. The 32nd and 33rd were formed from the old 6th Artillery Regiment, which dated back to an artillery company first organized in 1794. The 5th Field Artillery traced itself to Alexander Hamilton's War of American Independence artillery company. Under the new system the four battalions were organized as 1st Division Artillery, or '1st Divarty'.

While the Division was headquartered in Fort Hamilton, New York, in 1939, its units did not get a chance to work together as one organization until the large Louisiana Manoeuvres of 1940. Even at this early stage the division was earmarked for invasion work, and the 18th Infantry Regiment's 3rd Battalion (hereafter written as the '3/18th') was sent for special amphibious manoeuvres training in Culebra, Puerto Rico in 1940. This was followed by amphibious training with the 1st US Marine Corps Division at New River, North Carolina, the next year. On 7 December 1941, the day the Japanese struck Pearl Harbor and thrust an only partially ready US Army into war, the division was headquartered at Fort Devens, Massachusetts. Rather than break up its training schedule, the division hurried through more amphibious training in January 1942 on the cold shores of Virginia Beach, Virginia; infantry training followed in

Florida; some 'Air-Ground Tests and Demonstrations' were carried out at Fort Benning, Georgia, and then the division moved to Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania for final overseas staging. An advance detachment headquarters, along with the 2/16th Infantry, sailed for England from Brooklyn, New York, on 1 July 1942. The rest of the division followed on the *Queen Mary*, leaving New York on 2 August 1942 and arriving at Gourock, Scotland on the 8th.

The division went into quarters at a British army cavalry post, Tidworth Barracks, near Salisbury, Wiltshire. The men were a bit surprised by the reality of war—blackouts, petrol rationing and the blitz—after the comparative calm of the States. When they arrived there were few Americans in Great Britain save for a few staff and Army Air Corps men, and Limey and Yank found each other equally interesting. Most of the men were pleased by their reception, feeling that the British 'were friendly and courteous, better hosts than we'd have been if British troops had been in our country'.

Amphibious training was resumed at Tidworth; and the division took its first casualties when a lone Luftwaffe fighter-bomber strafed one of its platoons during a daytime practice march. Rumours

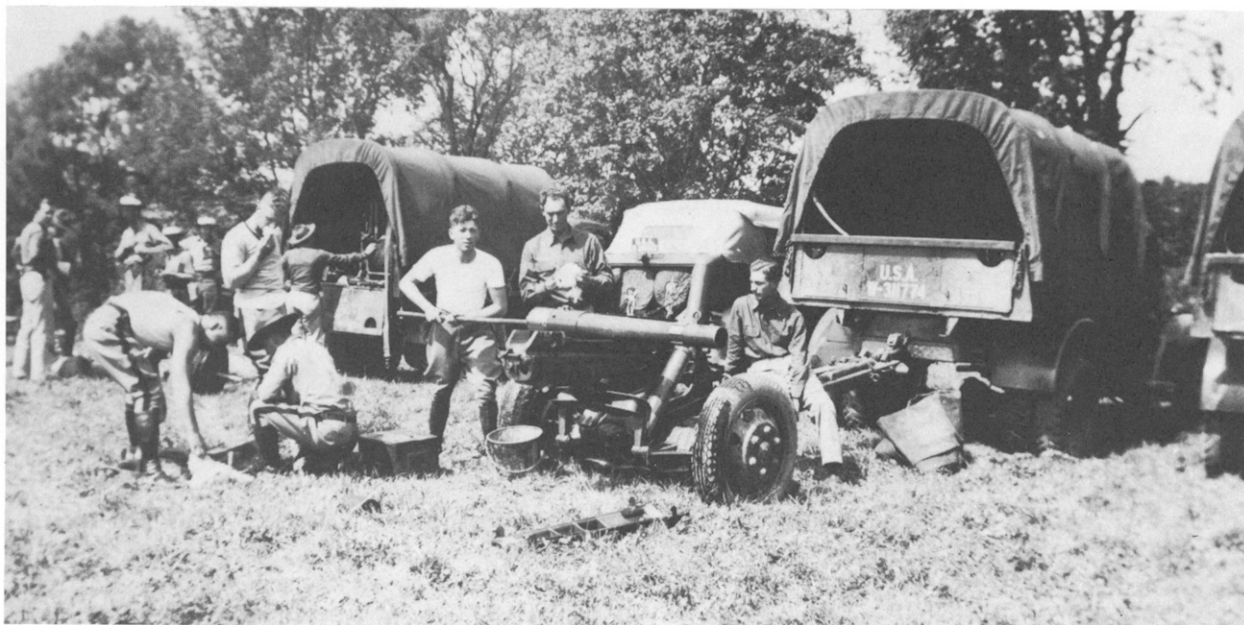
Artillerymen clean their disassembled 105mm howitzer during the 1941 manoeuvres. The gun is still attached to its prime mover, a 1½-ton lorry; beside it is parked a Dodge Command Car. Note breeches and campaign hats.

spread about possible invasion sites: Dakar, Norway, even Brittany. On 3 September 1942 the truth was revealed when Major General Terry de la M. Allen, the divisional commander, was in London on a routine visit to headquarters. From there he excitedly telephoned the divisional chief of staff, telling him and his top staff officers to report immediately for a conference first thing next morning. The next morning at Norfolk House, London planning headquarters, they learned their real destination—Algeria!

## North Africa

The American landings in North Africa were to be at three points: Casablanca, Algiers and Oran. The invasion's general purpose was to enlist French forces on the Allied side, to aid the British in the Libyan Desert, and to open the Mediterranean. In addition, the landings would give the Americans much-needed combat experience, and provide some positive news for 'the folks back home'.

The 1st Division was assigned Oran as its target, the second largest city in French North Africa at that time. Correspondent Ernie Pyle wrote: 'It reminded me very much of Lisbon. There are modern office buildings and beautiful apartment buildings of six or eight stories. The Renault automobile showroom was full of brand-new cars



when we arrived.’ The division sent half the 1st Ranger Battalion to Arzew, and the other half to the narrow beaches north of the town to seize the docks, sweep through the upper part of the city and capture and neutralize the seacoast defences. The 3/18th Infantry was to help the Rangers, while the 1/18th was to take St. Cloud and Djebel Khar. The 2/18th was held in reserve. The landing’s left flank was to be secured by the 16th Infantry.

When the dim hands of the ship’s clocks on the bridge of the *SS Reina del Pacifico* pointed to 12.55 on 7 November 1942, landing craft were launched towards the beaches of the sleeping town. ‘It was moonlight’, reported Pyle, ‘and the beach was deathly quiet.’ Among the first wave went French-speaking soldiers with loudspeakers yelling ‘Ne tirez pas! Ne tirez pas!’ to the French defenders—which, said one participant, ‘must have been the first time in military history that a victorious attacking force cried “Don’t shoot!” and it struck the First Division as the funniest thing so far in this campaign.’

A white flare went up from the beach fifteen minutes after the first wave was launched—the signal that the landing was ashore unopposed. A red flare soon afterwards indicated that the second wave was safely ashore, while a green and amber flare at 2am indicated that the Rangers had taken the coastal guns.

‘French resistance ran the whole scale from eager co-operation to bitter fighting to the death’, reported Pyle. ‘In most sectors the French seemed to fire only when fired on. Later we learned that many French troops had only three bullets for each rifle, but in other places the 75mm guns did devastating work.’ The French positions at Aïn-el-Turck, Llangibby Castle and Cap Falcon held out all the next day, while other outposts were fairly quickly overrun. The division had a fair number of problems besides French resistance, however. According to the division’s history, ‘by 9am practically all personnel of the division were ashore and functioning. Heavy equipment was not coming in so well. Very little artillery had ferried ashore. Vehicle ferrying was even worse. Communications were not functioning satisfactorily. During the remainder of the day every effort was made to speed up the shore delivery of heavy equipment but without too much success.’



The controversial Maj. Gen. Terry de la M. Allen, commander of the 1st Division from 2 August 1942 to 6 August 1943. (US Army)

The division pushed ahead slowly, held up by French troops dug in at St. Cloud, a town of stone and brick houses. On the morning of the 9th a 15-minute artillery barrage hit the town, followed by an assault by the 18th Infantry. The French fought doggedly. Machine guns, expertly sited, cut down the attackers and the attack slowed to a crawl. The 3/16th took a position at Djebel Khar, cutting the St. Cloud garrison’s line of retreat, but the French refused to surrender. After considering, and rejecting, a full-scale artillery barrage, which might have killed many civilians, the division left a battalion to cover the town and pushed on. The town itself did not surrender until so ordered by the Oran High Command. By midnight on the 9th Oran itself was surrounded, with the leading elements of the 3/16th in the outskirts of the city. Confusion, however, had led to delay, and delay was intolerable. The commander of the II Corps, under which the



Master Sergeant Thomas O. Beachamp, the division's oldest member, on a North African beach. Beachamp served in all the division's World War I battles. Note bulldozer in background. (US Army)

division fell, passed on the word that the division was moving too slowly and that the city had to be taken the next day. The whole division prepared to attack at 7.15am on 10 November, with orders from the division's flamboyant commander General Allen that 'Nothing in Hell must delay or stop the 1st Division'. Under this kind of pressure the enemy resistance died rapidly. By 8am the division met little more than sniper fire, and by 10am all fighting was over.

'In spite of incomplete training', wrote overall commander Lieutenant General Dwight D. Eisenhower, 'the 1st Division, supported by elements of the 1st Armored Division, made progress and on November 9 we knew we would soon be able to report victory in that area. On the 10th all fighting had ceased at Oran. Generals Fredendall [II Corps Commander] and Terry de la M. Allen met their initial battle tests in good fashion.'

'At first our troops were rather lost in Oran, officers and men alike', wrote Pyle. 'There weren't the usual entertainments to be had at home and in England. Nothing much was left to drink but wine, and most Americans hadn't learned to drink wine with relish. The movies were few and pretty poor.

There were no dances. There was a professional "line" but the parents of nice girls in Oran were very fussy and wouldn't let the girls out.' As a result the men probably were not too unhappy when the first of the division's units moved out in November, followed by the 18th Infantry in December. Certainly Allen, a real 'fighting general', was not displeased. Rumour had it that he was so unhappy about the 1st being stuck in Oran that he went to headquarters and asked: 'Is this a private war, or can anybody get in?'

The division's troops were part of an effort described by Eisenhower as '... the piecemeal process of reinforcing our eastern lines ...' There simply was not enough transportation available to make it anything but piecemeal, but the men had to get to the front if Tunis was to be taken. 'Courage, resourcefulness, and endurance, though daily displayed in overwhelming measure, could not completely overcome the combination of enemy, weather, and terrain', Eisenhower wrote. 'In early December the enemy was strong enough in mechanized units to begin local but sharp counter-attacks and we were forced back from our most forward positions in Tunis.'

The division finally reached the lines as one whole unit, holding the area where II Corps and the French XIX Corps met. On the morning of 14 February 1943 Rommel launched an attack against

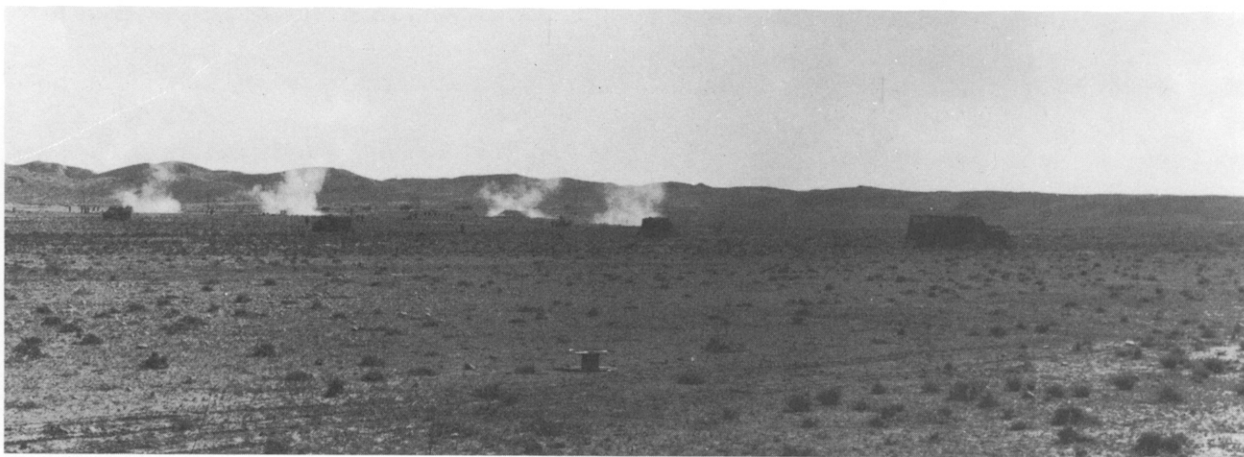
II Corps, designed to smash through Kasserine Pass, turn north-west through the Tébessa supply base, reach the coast and cut off Allied units. The 1st US Armored Division was pushed aside, falling back into the mountains east of Tébessa. XIX Corps flank was exposed, and the 1st Division fell back fifteen miles on 16 February to plug the gap. Here the division fought what Eisenhower called a series of gallant but ineffective actions. What finally stopped the Germans was a combination of their own command problems, a handful of British tanks, and four battalions of the 9th US Division's artillery. Fearing a counter-attack on the Mareth Line from the British 8th Army, Rommel fell back to his original positions. One casualty of Rommel's attack at Kasserine was General Fredendall. His divisional commanders had lost faith in him, and on 7 March, with a blare of sirens and a plume of dust from a cavalcade of armoured scout cars and half-tracks, Major General George Patton arrived to assume command of II Corps.

Kasserine had been a German victory, although not the total success Rommel wanted and needed; it had been a victory which cost the Germans heavily in terms of men and material. Thereafter they were capable of only small, localized counter-attacks, and in March the Allies were ready to return to the offensive. On the evening of 16 March the 1st Combat Engineers moved out towards Gafsa, digging up over 2,000 Teller mines from roads leading towards that town. On the morning of the 17th the rest of the division was ready to take the town from its Italian garrison—which might have been more difficult had the Italians not abandoned the town some time before! The division then moved east through the El Guettar corridor towards Gabès. Patrols found the Italian '*Centauro*' Armoured Division across that road, east of El Guettar, with more enemy troops occupying the Maknassy Gap and threatening Gafsa. On the evening of 20 March a flanking unit made up of the 1st Rangers, Co. D of the 1st Engineers, and some 'divarty' support was sent to capture Djebel El Ank, while the 18th Infantry moved parallel to the highway to the south, and the 26th to the north.

An officer with the flanking party described the night-time march as '... marching on a hard surface so littered with small and medium pebbles and rocks the size of two or three fists held together

that there was nowhere a space between them to set a foot firmly on the solid ground. Moreover, the ground beneath these rocks was not level but rising. As it rose, it seemed to weave and tilt from side to side, so that sometimes we walked up a slope and sometimes along one side of a slope and sometimes along the other. The only thing that was constant at the beginning of the march was at the end of any given ten steps we were several feet higher than we have been at the beginning'. When dawn broke the men were in position. 'All along the side of the plateau towards the enemy, there were big rocks quite close together like a roughly made stone fence. Behind each crouched a doughboy. It was the firing line, and as we walked across the plateau first one man and then another would raise his rifle and steady it on the rock, or lying down place his rifle alongside a boulder and fire a shot.' A half-hour later the men charged the Italian positions. 'You could not pick the sounds apart. It was like a continuous, rippling explosion. It was the fire of tommy guns and rifles and the explosions of the grenades the men were throwing ahead of them.' And then, 'The only movement beyond the road was the waving of the little white symbol of surrender. And then running, scrambling, trying to keep its footing and its balance with its little hands in the air, a tiny gray figure coming down towards where the doughboys waited. And then another and another.' The road fork east of El Guettar had been secured.

Elsewhere along the road enemy resistance stiffened, reinforced by a battle-group of the German 10th Panzer Division. An enemy counter-attack on 23 March penetrated Allied forward positions, but faltered by gam. Another was scheduled for 4pm, but the Allies were waiting. Patton, on a vantage point with the 1st Division, watched the thin enemy skirmish lines approach, only to be swept away by a mass artillery and small arms fire concentration. 'They're murdering good infantry' he said, shaking his head. 'What a helluva way to waste good infantry troops.' The Germans left behind them the burned-out hulks of thirty-two of their precious tanks, and the Americans resumed their forward pace, slowly and against steady enemy opposition. The ground they stumbled over was as tough an enemy as the Germans, and that was saying something: divisional intelligence



Battery of 155mm howitzers in action against German positions south of El Guettar, Tunisia, in typical North African terrain. (US Army)

spotted units of not only the 10th Panzers and 'Centauro', but also *Fallschirmjäger* of the Ramcke Brigade, the Panzer Grenadier Regiment 'Afrika', and a battle-group of the 21st Panzers. With them were the deadly '88s', an enemy artillery piece which was admired and hated in equal measure.

With the Battle of El Guettar won, the high command made its plans for Tunis's final capture. These called for transferring the whole II Corps some 150 miles, through British lines of communication, to a new spot on the north flank of the British 1st Army. Once in position the Corps, along with the British 1st and 8th Armies, would begin a series of co-ordinated attacks, with the bulk of the fighting and the city's final capture falling on British shoulders. 'Neither the Americans nor the French', says the division's history, 'were considered capable of major accomplishments, due to the mountainous terrain of their respective sectors.' The move took more than 30,000 vehicles and 110,000 men to their new position. It called for the most difficult and expert kind of staff work, both in moving the Americans and in keeping the British in supply. It was a success; the enemy was taken completely by surprise.

On the night of 22-23 April the 1st Division launched its first attack in the new sector. Facing it were Germans of the 334th Infantry Division, the Luftwaffe's Barenthin Paratroop Regiment, the 47th (Autonomous) Infantry Regiment, an anti-tank battalion from the division's old friend the 10th Panzers, and various smaller units. The

ground was treeless and characterized by numerous small hills.

'The Germans', wrote correspondent Pyle, then with the 1st Division, 'lay on the back slope of every ridge, deeply dug into foxholes. In front of them the fields and pastures were hideous with thousands of hidden mines. The forward slopes were left open, untenanted, and if the Americans had tried to scale those slopes they would have been murdered wholesale in an inferno of machine-gun crossfire, plus mortars and grenades. Consequently, we didn't do it that way. We fell back to the old warfare of first pulverizing the enemy with artillery, then sweeping around the ends of the hill with infantry and taking them from the sides and rear.' It was tough fighting, and it was slow fighting; but the 1st handled it well.

General Omar Bradley, then commanding II Corps, noticed that 'The initiative of the 1st Division was apparent even in Allen's mess, where his rough table boasted rare roast beef while the other division COs made do with conventional tinned rations. The meat, Terry explained, was 'casualty' beef, from cattle accidentally killed by enemy fire. Despite the warnings from vets about sick cattle, those casualties happened with suspicious frequency. Terry sat with his black hair dishevelled, a squinty grin on his face. He wore the same green shirt and trousers he had worn through the Gafsa campaign. His orderly had sewn creases into his pants but they had long since bagged out. The aluminium stars he wore had been taken from an Italian private.

'Although Terry had become a hero to his troops, he was known as a maverick among the senior

commanders. Always fighting to keep his 1st from "being dumped on by the high command", Terry was fiercely antagonistic to any echelon above that of division. As a result he was inclined to be stubborn and independent. Skilful, adept, and aggressive, he frequently ignored orders and fought in his own way. I found it difficult to persuade Terry to put his pressure where I thought it should go. He would half-way agree on a plan, but somehow once the battle started this agreement seemed to be forgotten.'

By 13 May the division had made a ten-mile advance, winning full control of the hills north of Tine Valley. On that day the enemy surrendered in Tunisia, leaving the 1st worn out and exhausted. Fighting for seventeen days in northern Tunisia had cost it 103 men killed, 1,245 wounded and 682 missing. Each rifle company was now little more than a reinforced platoon. Moreover, there was a feeling among the men of the Big Red One that their hard work and losses had not been fully appreciated. 'Apparently there were some intimations in print back home that the 1st Division did not fight well in its earlier battles', wrote Pyle. 'The men of that division were wrathful and bitter about that. They went through four big battles in North Africa, made a good name for themselves in every one, and paid dearly for their victories. If such a criticism was printed, it was somebody's unfortunate mistake.'

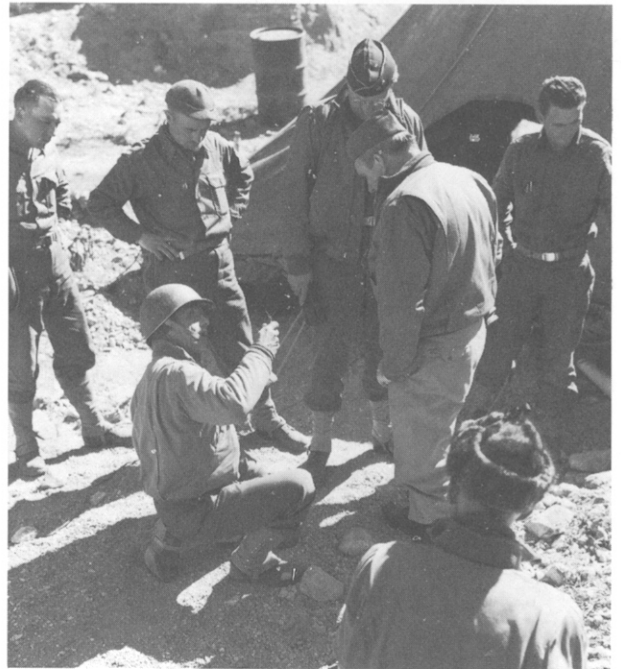
The division made its ire known quickly. While Allied troops were holding a victory parade through Tunis, the division returned to a rest camp near Oran, leaving behind it what General Bradley called '... a trail of looted wineshops and outraged mayors'. Serious trouble began when the troops reached Oran. According to General Bradley: 'The trouble began when SOS (Services of Supply) troops, long stationed in Oran, closed their clubs and installations to our combat troops from the front. Irritated by this exclusion the 1st Division swarmed into the town to "liberate" it a second time.

'Because of the brief layover between the Tunisian and Sicilian campaigns, we had previously turned down a suggestion that II Corps troops be issued the summer khaki worn by service units. Not only are khakis impractical for field wear, but the change-over would have un-

necessarily burdened supply. Furthermore, the change back again into woollens would have given away the timing of our invasion. Thus the woollen uniform in Oran became the unmistakable badge of troops from the Tunisian front. As long as bands of the 1st Division hunted khaki-clad service troops in Oran, those sweaty woollens were the only assurance of safe-conduct in the city's streets. When the rioting had gotten out of hand, Theater sternly directed me to order Allen to get his troops promptly out of town. While the episode resulted partly from our failure to prepare a rest area for troops back from the front, it also indicated a serious breakdown in discipline within the division.'

The division, having vented its collective spleen, went back to training. An amphibious training school was set up for yet another landing—with mixed results at first. One practice landing was watched critically by the US Chief of Staff, General George C. Marshall, and Generals Eisenhower, Patton and Bradley. The division landed half a mile from its target, blinded, they said, by British spotlights. These, they hopefully noted, would be knocked out in a real landing.

16th Infantry command conference at Kasserine Pass. Note mixture of 'tanker's jackets', wool shirts, M1941 field jackets, and headgear. (US Army)





1st Division infantry practise amphibious landing techniques at Port Aux Poules, Algeria, shortly before the invasion of Sicily. (US Army)

## Sicily

As the Tunisian campaign was obviously drawing to a close, planning was going ahead for the next invasion target: Sicily. 'At Casablanca the Sicily operation was decided upon for two reasons,' wrote Eisenhower, 'the first of which was its great immediate advantage in opening up the Mediterranean sea routes. The second was that because of the relatively small size of the island its occupation after the capture would not absorb unforeseen amounts of allied strength in the event that the enemy should undertake any large-scale counter-action.'

The 1st Division was to take part in this invasion as the left flank of the II Corps, still under General Bradley, with the 45th Infantry Division on the right. The 1st, reinforced with two Ranger Battalions, would land at Gela. Following a large-scale practice landing on 24 June 1943, the division embarked in a fleet of landing craft and was off on its next campaign. On 10 July, at 2.34am, the first Rangers set foot on the soil of Sicily, followed within ten minutes by assault waves of the 16th and

26th Infantry. Defending were elements of the Italian 'Assietta,' 'Aosta' and 'Livorno' Divisions, Autonomous Coastal Defence Regiments and *Bersaglieri*. Despite their impressive titles, their defence was at best spotty and slight. The Division's advance command post was ashore and in operation before noon.

The unimpressive initial defence soon gave way to a major counter-attack by the crack German 'Hermann Göring' Panzer Division.\* Hearing far more gunfire than was expected, General Bradley made his way to the division's command post. 'A dog-tired Terry Allen waited for me in a makeshift CP near the beach. His eyes were red from loss of sleep and his hair was dishevelled. His division was still under serious attack.' Over twenty German Mark IV tanks were driving towards Gela and another forty had cut across the division's front, both forces coming together to break through and push almost to the water's edge. Artillery and anti-tank guns were still being dragged ashore. Not even regimental anti-tank guns were in action yet. What artillery was ashore was going into battery firing positions right on the beach, firing practically point-blank into the on-coming Germans. Naval gunfire was called in.

\*See *Vanguard 4*, Fallschirmpanzerdivision 'Hermann Göring'.

The division was not beaten yet. The 16th's regimental commander, seeing his regiment overrun everywhere, ordered 'Everybody stays put just where he is! . . . Under no circumstances will anyone be pulled back. Take cover from tanks! . . . Don't let anything else get through. The Cannon Company is on the way . . . Everyone to hold present positions.' This is exactly what happened. The men dug themselves into foxholes and let the tanks rumble by. Then they popped up to mow down the German grenadiers following the tanks. This task was relatively easy since the Germans did not have enough grenadiers available for the job. Tanks were hurled in, trying to catch the Americans before they could get enough artillery ashore; but the attack was launched before there was enough German infantry on hand, and what few were available were quickly checked. At the same time the American artillerymen's efforts and accurate naval gunfire tore the tanks apart. The Germans attacked with over sixty tanks of which less than half finally retreated.

The threat had been a real one, however, and the action close. The Germans were stopped only some 2,000 yards from the beach. General Bradley

wondered ' . . . whether any other US division could have repelled that charge in time to save the beach from tank penetration. Only the perverse Big Red One with its no less perverse commander was both hard and experienced enough to take that assault in stride. A greener division might easily have panicked and seriously embarrassed the landing.' A later, smaller attack was also driven off, finally convincing the enemy that ships could outshoot tanks.

Although the enemy reinforced their Panzer units with infantry during the night, the 1st, supported by elements of the 2nd Armored Division and the 82nd Airborne Division, was able to move forward on schedule. The paratroops were supposed to be dropped on the Farello landing field, but 'friendly' anti-aircraft fire, accounting for 23 out of 144 troop-carrier aircraft, had pretty well broken up the airborne assault. Some paratroops landed as far away as thirty-five miles from their

Landing an M7A1 105mm self-propelled howitzer—'Priest'—on a Sicilian beach; note typical stowage details. (US Signal Corps)





A 240mm howitzer towed by the turretless converted chassis of a Lee tank on an Italian road— this was the largest mobile gun employed on this front. Note chalked 5th Army tactical signs on trackguard. (US Signal Corps)

planned drop zones; but their isolated units went into action independently, often under local command of 1st Division elements. Jack Belden, with the 1st, ran across two 82nd men who had become separated from their company. 'After many varied adventures, one of which included hiding for several hours in a tree', Belden wrote, 'they escaped back to our lines, bringing forty prisoners with them. One of the lost men, a sergeant, was so proud of his prisoners that he had made the lieutenant to whom he delivered them on the beach sign a receipt for them.'

By the morning of 12 July, despite counter-attacks, it was clear to all that the division's beach-head was secure. On the 13th the 18th Infantry quickly took Mt. Ursitto, north of the Ponte-Olivo airport, while the 26th Infantry fought for Gibilscemi. In this fighting the 16th lost a great many men, including Lieutenant Colonel Joseph B. Crawford, 2/16th commander. Company G, 2/16th, took Niscemi before nightfall. The next

morning the 26th continued its forward move, taking Mt. Figure, Mt. Canolotti and Mt. Gibilscemi, and opening up the Ponte-Olivo airport for Allied use. As in Africa, fighting over the hilly Sicilian landscape was slow and tough. The enemy still had an active air force which harassed the division both on the beach and on the fighting line. Enemy artillery was heavy and accurate. Still the Allied advance continued: the 2/26th entered Mazarino on 14 July; the 1/18th took La Serra after a sharp fight on the same day and the Rangers captured Butera, an 'impregnable Italian stronghold', by 15 July.

Considering the tough enemy resistance and their well dug-in positions, II Corps 'beefed up' the division with a medium howitzer battalion, the 70th Light Tank Battalion and a battery of 155mm guns from the 36th Field Artillery. Thus reinforced, the 26th Infantry was sent to sieze Barrafranca. Just as the attack was ready to begin the unit was hit by concentrated *nebelwerfer* fire, temporarily disorganizing the 26th. The American 155s soon found the range and drove the Germans off, but a tank battle between the 70th and some German Mark IVs got under way while the US artillery was



dealing with the *nebelwerfers*. The 70th was forced back. By noon reinforcements from the 2nd Armored Division arrived, and the Germans were pushed back in their turn. By nightfall the 26th had secured Barrafranca.

On 17 July the 16th Infantry had pushed on, taking the high ground north-east of Pietraperzia, capturing an Italian infantry company and an assortment of Germans. Their reconnaissance discovered that the enemy was preparing a defensive line south of Enna and Caltanissetta, manned by the 15th Panzer Division, the 71st Nebelwerfer Battalion and elements of the 382nd Infantry Regiment. Enna was both Sicily's capital and headquarters for the island's defenders. Under fire the 1st Engineers built a bridge across the stream running by the town and the 70th Tanks moved across it. Opposition was very heavy, knocking out three medium and five light tanks. II Corps ordered the 1st to take Enna despite any opposition. The 16th Infantry then took the high ground south-east of the town while the 70th surged down the main road going into it. Suddenly the enemy seemed to fall apart, and by noon both regiments were in the town, the opposition dwind-

A squad of the division's 16th Infantry Regt. 'mops up' in Troina, Sicily, August 1943. (US Army)

ling to a few badly directed artillery shells.

'Not bad', said one high-ranking American officer on hearing of Enna's fall. 'Not bad at all. It took the Saracens twenty years in their siege of Enna. Our boys did it in five hours.'

The general strategy called for the British to move up the island's east side, taking Messina, while the Americans cleared the west. The enemy was expected to offer the British the most resistance, since Messina's loss would cut them off from the mainland. By 20 July it was clear that the British alone could not take Messina, so both armies were sent after that prize. By 23 July the US 45th Division reached the sea and cut the island in half. The Americans then turned east, towards the German positions which were blocking the British advance at Catania. The division fought its way slowly towards Nicosia, spending precious time and lives on objectives with unromantic names like Hills 1027 and 825; and by 10.15am on 26 July the division's 91st Reconnaissance Squadron was just south of Nicosia. The next day the division cut the



Maj. Gen. Clarence R. Huebner, who joined the 16th Infantry as a private in 1910, commanded 'Big Red One' from 7 August 1943 to 10 December 1944. (US Army)

road leading east from Nicosia. The enemy fought fiercely, on the ground and in the air, and the city, largely defended by the 'Aosta' Division, did not finally fall until 28 July.

The enemy, covered by the 1st Battalion, Panzer Grenadier Regiment 111, fell back to previously prepared positions around Troina. The division followed, and found that the enemy was not going to give up Troina easily. While the 26th Infantry cut the road running from Troina east to Ceasare and the 16th took the heights east of the town, the 39th Infantry moved directly towards Troina. The division found itself in its toughest fight yet. An attack on the town launched on 1 August was met by a counter-attack which forced the Big Red One back to its original lines. 'Troina's going to be tougher than we thought', telephoned General Allen to General Bradley. 'The Kraut's touchy as hell here.'

Not just one, but twenty-four German attacks left the division stalled in its tracks. Allied air support was sent in, along with ground reinforcements from the 9th Infantry Division. A total of eighteen artillery battalions hammered the enemy positions. The division inched forward, spending lives for every foot of ground. Enemy prisoners proved to be dazed by continuous bombing and shelling, but the Germans still fought stubbornly for every position. The 18th Infantry managed to take the high ground overlooking the town and eventually, after fighting for almost a week, the Germans had had enough. They began pulling out. By 8.40am on 6 August the commander of 3/16th was able to report that he had 'a patrol of seven men in town. Snipers in town. Enemy 11kms the other side of Troina, north-east. The 2nd Battalion patrol in the south of the town.' Troina had fallen.

After continuous combat from the initial landing up to the capture of Troina, and losing 267 killed, 1184 wounded and 337 missing, the 1st Division needed a rest. Held in Troina, the division was assigned to II Corps reserve, while attached units were reassigned to other divisions. The division was to lose two more men while in reserve, however.

'Early in the Sicilian campaign', Bradley wrote, 'I had made up my mind to relieve Terry Allen at its conclusion. This relief was not to be a reprimand for ineptness or ineffective command. For in Sicily as in Tunisia the 1st Division had set the pace for the ground campaign. Yet I was convinced . . . that Terry's relief had become essential to the long-term welfare of the division.'

'Under Allen the 1st Division had become increasingly temperamental, disdainful of both regulations and senior commands. It thought itself exempted from the need for discipline by virtue of its months on the line. And it believed itself to be the only division carrying its fair share of the war.'

'To save Allen both from himself and from his brilliant record and to save the division from the heady effects of too much success, I decided to separate them. Only in this way could I hope to preserve the extraordinary value of that division's experience in the Mediterranean war, an experience that would be of incalculable value in the Normandy attack.'

At the same time General Bradley decided that the division's second in command, Brigadier General Theodore Roosevelt, would also have to go. The division's new commander would find it hard to win the confidence of the Big Red One while the well-loved and independent-minded Roosevelt still served in it; besides, Allen would be very hurt if he went and Roosevelt stayed. Both men were surprised and hurt by the move, but they quickly overcame their feelings. Allen trained and took the 104th Infantry Division through Europe to the Elbe. Roosevelt earned the Medal of Honour on the beaches of Normandy. Sadly, he died of a heart attack in France before he could receive his own division to command.

Major General Clarence R. Huebner was named to command the 1st Division. General Huebner had been serving behind a Pentagon desk, but he had the advantage of having worn the Big Red One patch since his enlistment as a 16th Infantry private in 1910, while holding every rank from private to colonel. His first move was to get the division into a bivouac camp near Troina where he put them to work reorganizing and training. Part of this training included what is lovingly known as 'bull' to British soldiers and 'chicken shit' to GIs. The division's battle-hardened 'dog-faces' found themselves doing close-order drill again. The men were not happy, but General Huebner knew that the division had been earmarked for the final invasion of Hitler's 'Fortress Europe'. They had to be remoulded into one of the Army's typical divisions for what was to be their finest moment.

## 'Bloody Omaha'

Days on the drill field passed quickly enough, and by 8 November 1943 the division, after another sea voyage, found themselves in Liverpool. There would be time for more training before that day in June, picked for a combination of moonlight and low tides, when the division would be off for its last landing. The coast on which the division was to land was not one the Germans planned to give up easily. Field Marshal Rommel had been placed in command of French coastal defences, and achieved impressive results with indifferent resources. Along the beach, just beneath the waves at high tide, ran a

string of iron triangles, wooden stakes and concrete cones, all topped with mines. These were strung together by miles of barbed wire. Beyond this line of defences were mined beaches—mines of every type and size, ranging from anti-personnel to anti-tank. Over five million mines were strewn up and down the French coast. Yet further back was a wall of concrete, studded with pillboxes and covered by flame-throwers, artillery and rocket launchers. Behind this was a belt of country with open fields staked and mined against parachute drops.

The 1st Division, now numbering 34,142 men and 3,306 vehicles including reinforcements from attached units, was assigned to the V Corps. This corps had been given the job of securing a beach-head in the area between Port-en-Bessin and the Vire River. From here the corps would be aligned with the British 2nd Army and would push south toward Caumont and St. Lô. The landing would be made in four waves, and the 1st received the honour of being assigned to the first wave. The division would land on a beach called 'Omaha', which was divided into five sectors named, from left to right, 'Dog Red', 'Easy Green', 'Easy Red', 'Fox Green', and 'Fox Red'.

Sgt. N. T. Kimbell, Battery B, 5th Field Artillery, examines an abandoned German 37mm AT gun on the road near Muringen, Belgium. (US Army)



While heavy enemy resistance was expected, great hopes were pinned on a new secret weapon, the DD tank. These tanks were simply Shermans fitted with canvas 'water wings' and an auxiliary propeller. With their machinery sealed watertight, the tanks could 'swim' ashore and go into action immediately. The advantage these tanks would give was offset by the fact that the planners thought that 'static' training divisions would be manning the defences. This was not the case at Omaha. The combat-ready German 352nd Division just happened to be under training at repelling landings in that region. Allied firepower would be beefed up by the US Navy's covering force, which included four battleships, four cruisers and twenty-six destroyers. Some 8,000 rockets were to be fired at the beach for ten minutes just before the first wave went in.

On 23 March the division was alerted to be ready to move into marshalling areas at short notice. On 7 May the division received that alert, and by 11 May it was ready to go. The day was picked—5 June. Unfortunately the weather failed to co-operate with the conditions needed for a successful invasion. The men were loaded into landing craft, and there they waited while a constant rain fell from thick grey skies. At least one landing craft was washed by waves so high that they poured in over one end of the loaded craft and right on out over the other. The rations were cold, and often stayed down for too short a time for that to make any real difference. The chances of invasion looked so dim that Rommel left France to be home in time for his wife's birthday.

Nevertheless, the Allies knew that any substantial delay would be disastrous. It would be another month before perfect tide and light conditions would recur: an ebb tide at first light, exposing the carefully placed German anti-landing devices. Keeping the preparations secret until then, when so many soldiers now knew exactly what was due to happen, would be impossible; so the decision was made—one day's postponement, and invasion on the 6th.

'All around us the LCVs churned through the waves with their cargoes of seasick, miserable troops, disgorged from the ships spread as far as one could see in the misty gray dawn of 6 June. Amphibious 'ducks' and tanks wallowed through the waves like strange monsters of the deep', wrote

Don Whitehead, who landed on Easy Red. The invasion was under way. Throughout the night, the largest armada ever gathered chugged through the choppy seas towards German-held France. The first wave of infantrymen jumped into the water some distance from the beach and headed ashore just as dawn broke. From that first instant there were problems. The water-proofed DD tanks, in which so much hope had been placed, were floundering and sinking, usually taking their crews with them. Of thirty-three DD tanks sent towards Omaha, twenty-seven went down without firing a shot.

Photographer Robert Capa was with the first wave landing on Easy Red: 'The boatswain lowered the steel-covered barge front, and there, between the grotesque designs of steel obstacles sticking out of the water, was the thin line of land covered with smoke—our Europe, the 'Easy Red' beach.

'My beautiful France looked sordid and uninviting, and a German machine gun, spitting bullets around the barge, fully spoiled my return. The men from my barge waded in the water. Waist-deep, with rifles ready to shoot, with the invasion obstacles and the smoking beach in the background—this was good enough for the

Pfc. Clifford Kangas, 16th Infantry, radios from his uninviting observation post near Moderscheid, Belgium, January 1945. Note woollen 'beanie' worn under helmet, and snow-camouflage cover worn over it. (US Army)



photographer. I paused for a moment on the gangplank to take my first real picture of an invasion. The boatswain, who was in an understandable hurry to get the hell out of there, mistook my picture-taking attitude for explicable hesitation, and helped me make up my mind with a well-aimed kick in the rear. The water was cold, and the beach still more than a hundred yards away. The bullets tore holes in the water around me, and I made for the nearest steel obstacle. A soldier got there at the same time, and for a few minutes we shared its cover. He took the water-proofing off his rifle and began to shoot without much aiming at the smoke-hidden beach. The sound of his rifle gave him enough courage to move forward and he left the obstacle to me. It was a foot larger now, and I felt safe enough to take pictures of the other guys hiding just like I was.'

The Germans defending the beach assaulted by the 1st Division were from the 726th Infantry Regiment, 716th Infantry Division. Behind them was the previously unreported 352nd Infantry Division. The 352nd immediately took up positions in support of the 726th. The firepower they put down was tremendous. One American private, jumping into chest-deep water, saw the men before him cut down as they left the landing ramp. Once in the water himself, he watched with a sense of curiosity as German machine-gun fire tore through his clothing, knapsack and canteen. He later said he 'felt like a pigeon at a turkey shoot'. When he reached the beach he found he had been wounded twice, in the back and right leg.

Others, too many others, did not get away with such light wounds. Whole companies were disappearing. Others were landing in the wrong spots and going to ground, hiding anywhere to get out of that deadly fire. By 7am the second wave was landing on Omaha, only to find their way blocked by wrecked equipment, corpses, and living men frozen behind whatever cover they could find. The engineers responsible for demolishing German anti-invasion devices were also being picked off, while barges with their equipment were being sunk. The engineers did what they could—not nearly as much as they were supposed to be able to do—and joined the infantry behind the sea wall on the beach. Casualties in the Special Engineer Task Force, the group which was to demolish the devices,



Maj. Gen. Clift Andrus had been 'Divarty' commander before taking over the division on 11 December 1944; he commanded it until 1 July 1945. (US Army)

ran to 41 per cent, mostly suffered within the first half hour of landing. With the men tired and seasick after a rough night spent in the boats and a rocky ride across the Channel, and now under very heavy fire, the invasion, at least on Omaha Beach, seemed to be stalled. Correspondent Whitehead 'lay on the beach wanting to burrow into the gravel. And I thought: "This time we have failed! God, we have failed! Nothing has moved from this beach and soon, over that bluff, will come the Germans. They'll come swarming down on us."'

From the reports General Bradley was receiving, he was getting the same impression. Already he was planning to divert Omaha reinforcements to Utah and the British beaches. Several aides were sent in a small boat to look over the beachfront scene. 'They returned an hour later, soaked by the seas', wrote Bradley, 'with a discouraging report of conditions on the beach. The 1st Division lay pinned behind the sea wall while the enemy swept the beaches with small-arms fire. Artillery chased the landing

craft where they milled offshore. Much of the difficulty had been caused by the underwater obstructions. Not only had the demolition teams suffered paralyzing casualties, but much of their equipment had been swept away. Only six paths had been blown in that barricade before the rising tide halted their operations.

'Had a less experienced division than the 1st Infantry stumbled into this crack resistance, it might easily have been thrown back into the Channel. Unjust though it was, my choice of the 1st to spearhead the invasion probably saved us Omaha Beach and a catastrophe on the landing.'

For already, men on Omaha were getting their second wind and moving out of there—right towards the Germans. Brigadier General Willard G. Wyman, assistant divisional commander, studied the situation a few minutes. 'We've got to get

these men off the beach', he said, 'this is murder!'. He began moving from unit to unit, getting them into their correct positions and inspiring them. His aide, Lieutenant Robert Riekse, was also on the move, passing on the general's instructions until downed with a severe hip wound. On another part of the beach the 16th Infantry's commander, Colonel George A. Taylor, was also coining a phrase. 'Two kinds of people are staying on this beach, the dead and those who are going to die. Now let's get the hell out of here.'

The lower ranks, although employing less memorable language, were also up and on their ways. Sergeant Raymond Strojny, who had become, in his words, 'just a little mad', rallied his men, led them through a minefield and knocked out a pillbox with a bazooka. Sergeant Philip Streczyk virtually shoved and kicked men off the beach and through the minefields, where he cut his way through barbed wire. A captain saw him return and watched in horror as the sergeant stepped on a Teller mine. It did not go off; 'it didn't

Wounded riflemen of the 18th Infantry being brought in on a tracked 'Weasel' during the fighting at Hepscheid, Belgium, in January 1945. Note white camouflage applied over olive drab basic paint scheme, and interesting 'reversed' national markings. (US Army)



go off when I stepped on it going up, either, Captain', remarked the sergeant coolly.

By 1.30pm Bradley received the word: 'Troops formerly pinned down on beaches Easy Red, Easy Green, Fox Red advancing up heights behind beaches.' The division was beginning to drive towards the road which ran parallel to the beach some 1,500 to 2,000 yards beyond it. The men moved forward in small units, mostly in groups no larger than a company. Each one had the uncomfortable feeling of being in the only advancing unit, as contacts between them were irregular at best, and hedgerows and small enemy groups cut observation to left and right. The Germans were beginning to pull back from the beaches, towards a defensive line along the road. As a result no unified command or plan of attack was really in operation. Under Lieutenant Colonel Herbert C. Hicks Jr. of the 2/16th, that battalion's G Company and part of E Company reached the road about noon, pushing several hundred yards further inland by evening. By 1pm Companies B and C reached the road. By

evening the 3/16th was blocking the highway at Le Grand-Hameau. The 26th Infantry and the division's command post landed that evening.

'D-Day' was over. Some 3,000 men of the 1st Division were killed, wounded or missing. The 16th Infantry alone lost about 1,000 men. Staff Sergeant Alfred Eigenberg, a medic who had lost count of how many wounds he had patched up during the day, fell wearily into a shell hole behind the bluffs of 'Bloody Omaha'. He reached into his jacket pocket and pulled out a sheet of V-mail and a pencil. 'Somewhere in France', he started his note. 'Dear Mom and Dad, I know that by now you've heard of the invasion. Well, I'm all right.' He put his pencil up. There had been too much—he could think of nothing more to say.

Framed by the barrel of a wrecked enemy tank, men of the 1st Combat Engineers repair a road near Langendroich, Germany. Note lack of markings on jeep. (US Army)



# Into France

‘Despite the confusion that still existed in many of the smaller isolated units’, wrote General Bradley, ‘our situation had materially improved by the morning of June 7.’

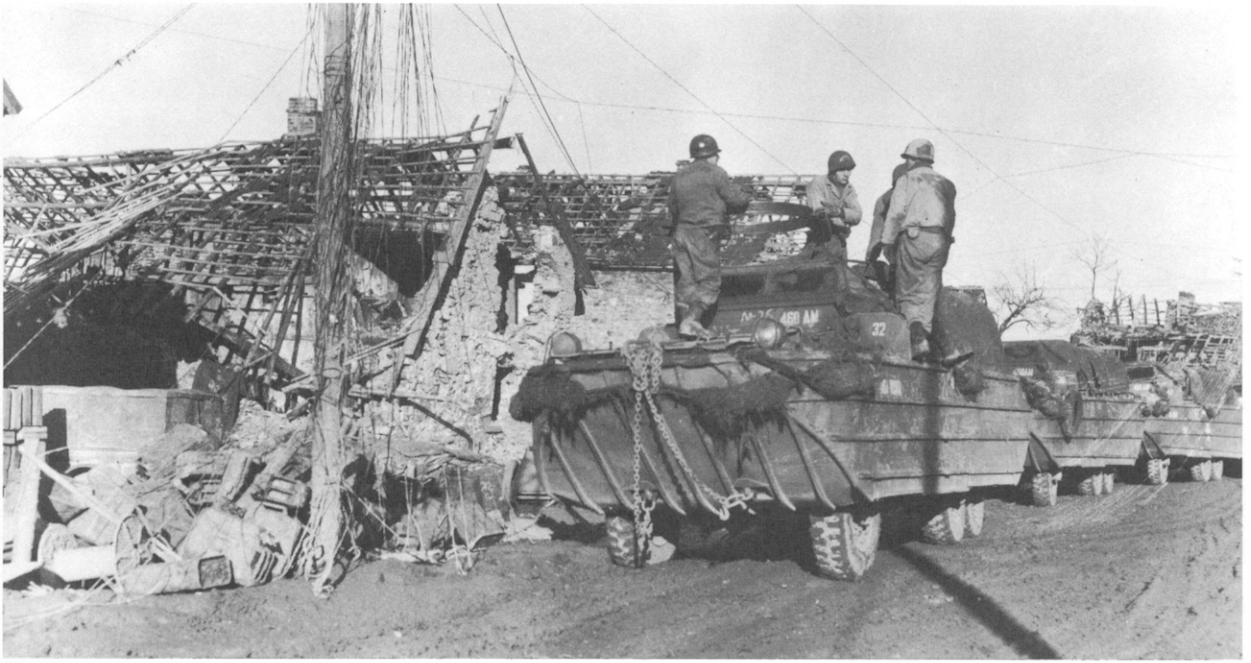
The 1st Division pushed ahead, while sending troops back to mop up isolated pockets of German resistance. The 2/16th Infantry moved against Germans still in Colleville, its Company G going through the town by 1am. A single group of fifty-two Germans from the 726th gave up without any fight at all—they were talked into surrendering by a patrol from Company L which had been captured the day before at Cabourg. Other Germans were not quite as eager to give up and many units on mopping up operations ran into stiff little fire fights. General Bradley came ashore to the division’s command post during the height of these oper-

ations. ‘These goddamn Boche just won’t stop fighting’, General Huebner complained to him. ‘It’ll take time and ammunition’, General Bradley replied. ‘Perhaps more than we reckon of both.’

A movement east towards Port-en-Bessin by the 3/16th and Company B, 745th Tank Battalion was not meeting much resistance. Huppain, on the coastal highway, was occupied by the evening of the 7th. The 1/18th crossed the Bayeux-Isgny highway just after noon, ambushing some German 352nd Division reconnaissance units. By evening the battalion took the high ground dominating the approaches to the Aure River near Engranville. The 3/26th moved steadily ahead: by 12.15pm they were through Surrain; they crossed the Bayeux highway by 5pm, and by midnight they were dug in south-east of Mandeville. The 2/18th, with a platoon from Company C, 745th Tank Battalion, reached Mosles by 5pm, losing only a few men and one tank in the process. By nightfall on 7 June the division’s objectives, except in the Formigny-Trévières area, had been reached. Infantry with tanks from Company B, 745th, cleared out the

The face of war: an ignored enemy corpse, spilled cartridges, wrecked buildings, and tired soldiers. A brief rest for Company G, 2nd Bn., 16th Infantry, in the streets of Vettweiss, Germany. Note markings on half-track towing AT gun. (US Army)





Formigny area by early morning on the 8th.

On the 8th action moved to the division's left flank at Tour-en-Bessin. The 26th Infantry, a company from the 745th and another from the 635th Tank Destroyer Battalion spent the day stalled by defences along the Aure River. By that evening only one company of the 1st Battalion had managed to cross the river. Pressing on, the regiment went through the town by midnight, putting the enemy north of Tour-en-Bessin in danger of being cut off. Inside this enemy pocket were the 1/726th and elements of the 517th Battalion, 30th Mobile Brigade. Resistance from these units was rugged. Company L, 3/26th, dug in north of Ste. Anne, was overrun by a sudden German attack. The Germans appeared equally surprised; many of them were riding bicycles and lorries, apparently not knowing the Americans were where they were. Vaucelles, a mile east of Ste. Anne, was retaken from the British at about the same time. With this wider door open, the Germans were able to withdraw their troops from the pocket.

The country the 1st Division now found themselves in was the *bocage*, a gently rolling terrain of small fields broken by dense hedgerows and thickets. It was magnificent country for defence. The hedgerows might have been made to hide machine gun nests, while the defenders could withdraw slowly, field by field, making the attack-

DUKWs of the division's amphibious truck company await the order to cross the Roer river, February 1945. (US Army)

ers pay dearly for every kilometre. 'Across the neck of the Normandy peninsula, the hedgerows formed a natural line of defence more formidable than any even Rommel could have contrived', wrote General Bradley. 'For centuries the broad, rich flatlands had been divided and subdivided into tiny pastures whose earthen walls had grown into ramparts. Often the height and thickness of a tank, these hedgerows were crowned with a thorny growth of trees and brambles. Their roots had bound the packed earth as steel mesh reinforces concrete. Many were backed up by deep drainage ditches and these the enemy utilized as a built-in system of communications trenches.'

It was through this country that the 1st had to press the attack. Luckily for Allied troops, German reinforcement was badly hampered by constant air attack and the fall of certain vital roads and towns. By 9 June the enemy on the division's front were identified as a replacement battalion of the 915th Regiment, a reserve battalion of the 916th and the reconnaissance battalion of the 352nd Division. There were also elements of the 517th Mobile Battalion. Most of the best German troops in the area were in prisoner-of-war cages.



By 13 June the division was twenty miles inland at Caumont, an old Norman town on a hill which rises some 750 feet above sea level and commands the upper Drôme Valley. Unfortunately, while the division was where it was supposed to be, neither the US 2nd Division on its right flank, nor the British on its left, could keep up with the Big Red One's advance. The British made a serious attempt to straighten out the lines, but were stopped by tanks and fell back.

Around the pocket now filled by the 1st Division were elements of the German 5th Parachute Regiment from the 3rd Parachute Division, the 340th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, and the 38th Panzer Engineer Battalion from the 2nd Panzer Division. All were first class, combat-hardened troops. On 21 June the 38th Panzer Engineers were relieved by the 2nd Panzer Grenadier Regiment of the 2nd Panzer Division. The Big Red One dug in. German artillery rained on the town, and more grey-clad grenadiers were brought into the area as reserves; but rather than risk a full frontal attack on the division's position, the German used propaganda in the form of leaflets fired by their artillery. Some said that the Americans did not have proper medical care for their wounded; some, which were much more interesting, were pornographic. The American artillery also fired leaflets, which were said to work rather well among non-German troops. The awaited attack never came. The 1st was relieved on 14 July by the 5th Infantry Division and sent to join the break-out from the Cherbourg Peninsula after an all-too-short rest stay at Colombières. The division was assigned to VII Corps which had cleared the town of Cherbourg, turned, and was now ready to push east. The general plan called for a break-out through Coutances with the 9th, 4th, and 30th Infantry Division in the lead and the 1st in reserve. The USAAF and RAF would lead the attack by saturating German positions with bombs and rockets from 1,500 heavy bombers, 396 medium bombers and 350 fighter bombers.

'I watched the air bombardment that preceded the breakthrough from an upstairs window of the farmhouse [1st] Divarty was using then', wrote

Driving a bow-wave of liquid mud before it, a half-track APC of the 16th Infantry ploughs along a flooded road in the Hürtgen Forest, February 1945. (US Army)



A .30 cal. machine gun team photographed near the Roer river in February 1945. The No. 2's slung M1 Garand is clearly visible. (US Army)

correspondent A. J. Liebling. 'There were three ridges, the first two topped with poplars, the third with pines, between the farmhouse and the target area. One stream of bombers came in to the left of the farmhouse, turned behind the third ridge, dropped its bombs, and came away to my right; another stream came in over my right, turned, and went off to the left. For two hours the air was filled with the hum of the motors, and the concussions of the bombs, even though they were falling five miles away, kept my shirtsleeves fluttering.'

The 9th Division was to attack immediately after the bombing, opening a hole for the 1st to follow through. Before the last aircraft had turned for its British airbase, however, a message came through to 1st Division headquarters. In a disastrous blunder, the air strike had fallen on the Allied front line; both forward battalions of the 9th had been badly hit and were virtually destroyed. Lieutenant General Lesley J. McNair, observing the attack, had been killed in his foxhole. The 30th Division, also in place for the impending attack, had suffered as well; it lost as many men that day as it did on any other day of fighting.

Timing on this operation was vital—the attack must go on. The 1st rushed by the battered 9th, meeting only light German resistance. Some



Private Stockov, Co. D, 1st Bn., 16th Infantry loads a captured German mortar. (US Army)

bombs, by good fortune, had fallen on German positions, and there the enemy were stunned, their resistance shattered. By early on 27 July the little town of Marigny had been taken, while Combat Command A of 3rd Armored Division pushed by Marigny and reached the high ground north of Coutances. The next day the 16th Infantry, slipping by an enemy pocket overlooking Marigny, fought its way towards Coutances. Enemy resistance was tough; the defenders had tanks and '88s'. The division was taking more casualties than it had since 6 June, but it pushed on, street-fighting its way into Coutances from the east, while the 4th Armored Division fought its way in from the north. It was house-to-house, street-to-street fighting until the two columns finally met. Then Patton's 3rd Army took off, racing southward to cut off the Brittany Peninsula. The 1st Division and the 3rd Armored Division swept along to cover Patton's left flank.

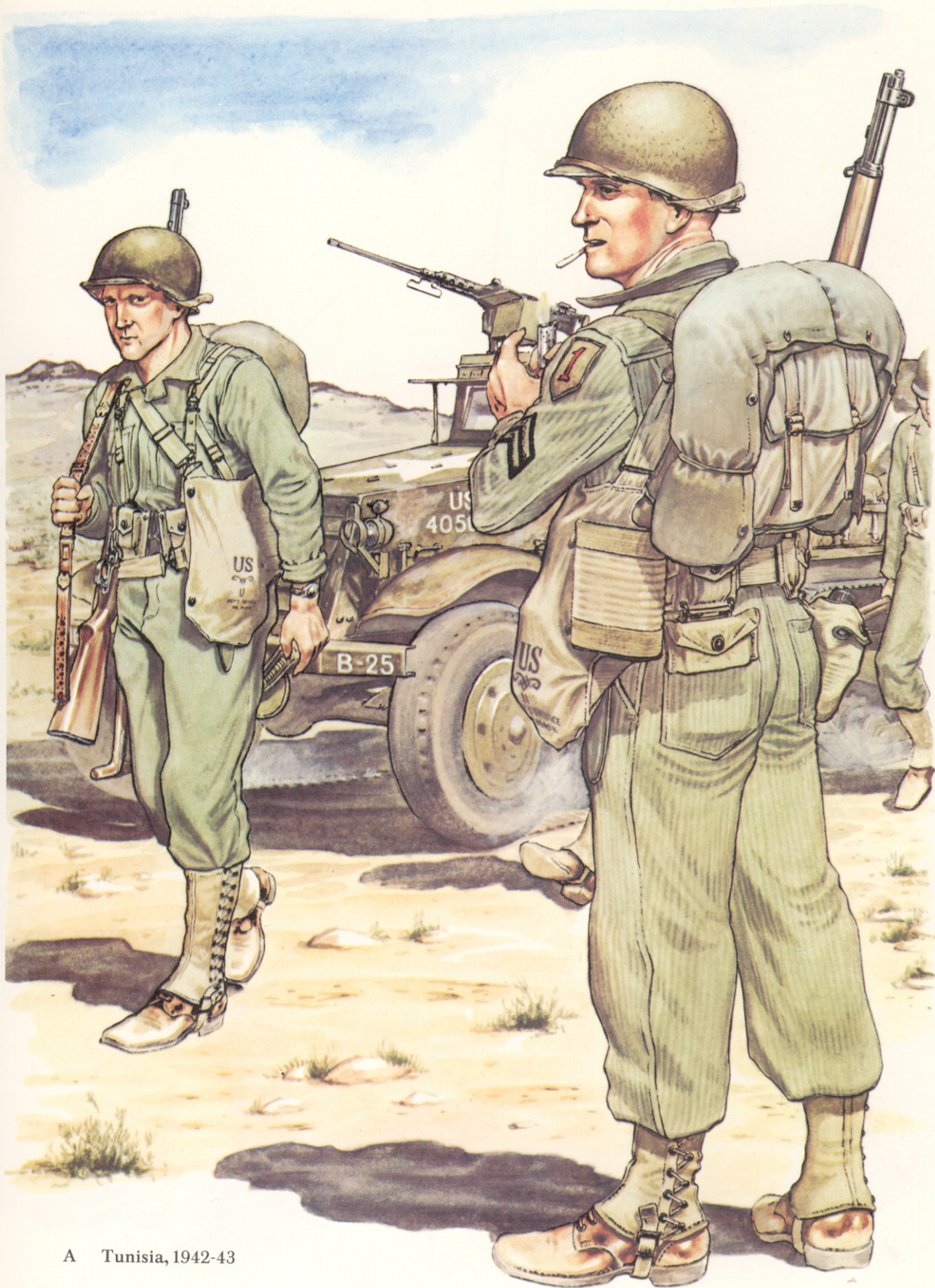
The two divisions ran into resistance along the Sienne River, near Gavray. On 31 July, as the 1st moved under cover of the darkness to cross the river,

a formation of Luftwaffe Ju88s began dropping bombs on the crossing sites. Hardly a unit failed to get its share of bombs, mostly anti-personnel types. Even the divisional headquarters was hit, with General Huebner's aide being wounded and an air support officer killed. The attack was pressed, and by noon on 1 August the 2/18th and a task force from the 3rd Armored had taken the town of Brécey and the high ground around it. The next target would be Mortain, a small city in Manche which overlooks a pass in the range of hills running from Avranches to Domfront. The division slowly pushed forward through heavy enemy small arms and artillery fire during the day, and Luftwaffe bombing at night. Orders were then received to leave Mortain to the 30th Division and to turn towards Mayenne, on the western bank of the Mayenne River which flows generally north and south. The town was thought to be lightly held and movement towards it could be accomplished quickly over good roads.

'Advanced units shot out their reconnaissance and the power followed closely behind', says the division's history, *Danger Forward*. 'Supply was working nicely. Gasoline was on hand. Rations were ample. Action was not severe. Casualties were almost nil. Sweat was taking the place of blood, and the undamaged countryside in its late summer greenness was little indicative of warfare.

'In these moves the individual found himself existing under bewildering conditions of physical comfort and discomfort as the case might be. One night he would find himself housed in an enormous château, the next in a foxhole under the stars. One day he would be in a severe fight. Perhaps the same day he would also roll through a peaceful French village at twenty-five miles per hour gazing into the smiling and cheering faces of the jubilant and friendly populace. An occasional bottle of wine generously given him by a Frenchman would help wash the dust from his parched throat and not infrequently, an apple tossed to him as he sped by would connect uncomfortably with his head. But Joe was happy; his morale was high and the world was a pleasant place to be.'

The division sped through a string of quickly seen towns, back towards Normandy and the town of la Ferté-Macé, near Argentan. The British 21st Army Group was pushing east towards Falaise and



A Tunisia, 1942-43



B Omaha Beach, 7 June 1944





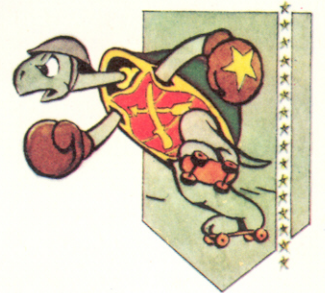
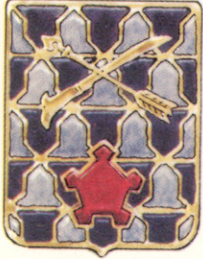
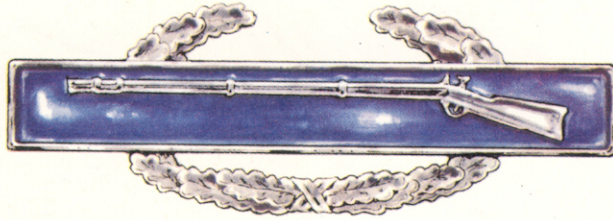
C Ardennes, January 1945



D Street fighting, Germany, March-April 1945







Chambois. On 19 August British and American troops came together and captured more than 70,000 Germans in the Falaise pocket. The bulk of the German 7th Army, however, managed to escape.

The division then headed south of Paris, turning north-east towards the Belgian border and reaching the Mons area on 2 September 1944. On the way it captured thousands of leaderless Germans, mostly in small, broken units. France was free.

## Into Germany

The 1st Division found itself on 11 September 1944 on the banks of the Meuse, with the 30th Division on its left. By that evening the 30th had established a bridgehead across the river. The 1st was ordered to assault the famous 'West Wall', Germany's concrete and steel border defence line. The attack began at 8am on 12 September, against resistance as stubborn as any seen by the men of the Big Red One. By nightfall the 1/16th had broken through the first parts of the wall, capturing a number of pillboxes. This was, however, the only real success among the division's battalions, which were mostly bogged down. The first complete breakthrough of the line was made on the afternoon of the 13th by the 3rd Armored Division, on the right of the 1st Division, around the heavily fortified city of Aachen. As the first city on the soil of the Fatherland to come under attack, it was important for enemy morale that it be defended to the utmost, whatever the effort cost. The original German commander recommended evacuating the city, an idea rejected by Hitler, and one which cost the commander his position. The garrison, made up of elements of the 246th Panzer Division\* and the 34th Fortress Machinegun Battalion, was ordered to stand and die where it was.

The original American decision was to bypass Aachen, driving directly north-east. On 15 September the 16th Infantry cut the roads leading south-east out of Aachen and moved north-east. VI Corps then ordered the whole division to aid the



November 1944—men of the division's 26th Infantry slog through the frozen mud of a forest track. (US Army)

3rd Armored in taking Stolberg and Munsterbusch, directly east of and behind Aachen. This would cut the city off entirely from the rest of Germany.

On 17 September two battalions of the German 12th Infantry Division's 27th Regiment, which had been hastily pulled off the Russian front, re-equipped and sent to the area only a short time before, attacked the 1/16th and 2/16th. The attack was beaten off by 11am and the 16th resumed its drive on Munsterbusch. Munsterbusch was defended by Battle Groups Bockoff and Schemm, made up of elements of the 9th Panzer Division. The Panzer soldiers had laid their defences skilfully, contesting each house and turn in the road. Despite this, the 1/16th reached its objective in Munsterbusch by late afternoon of 21 September.

\*This designation is quoted from US Army intelligence sources of the period in the Division's official history. We can locate no mention of such a unit in German works on the Panzer Divisions, but it may have been an ad hoc unit assembled briefly from scattered elements. Ed.



A Sherman tank of one of the division's armoured battalions—converted into a 'tank retriever', according to the original caption—crashes a road-block of wagons in Kelz, Germany, early in March 1945. On the original print heavy applique turret armour can be seen beneath the scrim and foliage camouflage. (US Army)

The Americans drew the ring tighter around the besieged city. The Germans, for their part, attempted to relieve it. A German attack developed on the morning of 24 September, which was beaten off by the 3/18th. Another, led by elements of the 27th Division, hit the 2/16th and 3/16th. It was supported by a massive artillery barrage during which more than 3,500 rounds were fired into the division area. Again, the Germans were beaten off. Yet again, on 9 October, another vain attack was launched by the Germans in a vain attempt to keep the division from consolidating its position on the high ground overlooking Verlautenheide. By 10 October Company L of the 3/18th took Haaren and completed the chain around Aachen. The first city in the Thousand Year Reich to be surrounded by Allied troops now awaited its fate. An ultimatum was delivered to the city's commander: surrender, or have the city pounded into rubble. It was rejected, although on Aachen's outskirts 1st Division skirmishers noted white sheets hung out as flags of surrender on many houses. The ultimatum's rejection came not in words, but in the form of an attack on the 18th Infantry, easily beaten off. The Germans tried to relieve the city with a thrust by the 29th Panzer Grenadier Regiment aimed at two companies of the 16th and

18th Infantries on 12 October. The attack was a fierce one, led by eight tanks. By just after noon a part of the 16th had been overrun, but American small arms and artillery fire were taking their toll and by 3pm the Germans called their attack off. In front of one company position alone the bodies of 250 Germans were found.

While this kind of attack was being launched from outside the pocket, the 26th Infantry was fighting its way into Aachen in the worst kind of house-to-house fighting. By the morning of 13 October the 2/26th and 3/26th had managed to link up in the city. Late on 16 October a patrol of the 30th Division met men from the 18th Infantry. German attacks continued, with a major attempt by tanks and self-propelled guns being made on 19 October; at Ravelsberg the 18th Infantry fought it off.

Because of the size of the area under attack the 1st had to be reinforced and the 2/110th Infantry, from the 28th Division, was assigned to the division for this operation. The troops were to secure the ground taken by the 26th Infantry. The advance was slow and costly, but as inexorable as a grinding mill-wheel. German defences were being eliminated one by one, and the enemy were apparently unable to force their way through from the outside to relieve the city.

At 7.30am on 21 October the advance reached the city centre and at 12.05pm Colonel Wilck, commanding Aachen's defenders, wearily surrendered. In this fight the 1st Division took 5,637 prisoners. 'Germany is washed up', the colonel told his captors. 'The "V" weapons upon which the German propaganda leans so heavily can be no more than harassing weapons with no effect on the final outcome. Only America can save us, as I don't believe in miracles any longer.'

The struggle for Aachen was successful, but it meant very little in strategic terms. The Rhine was still many miles away. It was, at best, only a symbol: a symbol which had cost the Allies dearly in terms of men and supply.

Supply was now becoming the major problem. In early October American Army Group G-4, in charge of resupply, reported only two days' stores of petrol on hand. Ammunition was also in short supply. The problem was that Antwerp was still in German hands and there was no deep-water port in

Europe that the Allies could use. Bad weather limited the amount of equipment which could be unloaded onto the Normandy beaches—themselves an unpleasantly long distance from the actual front. The high command had to decide whether to halt and build up its forces for a spring offensive, or to keep going with what it had in November, hoping it could scrape by with what was on hand. They settled on the second alternative, taking account of the enemy's vital need for a respite to build up his own forces. While Montgomery would push north the American 12th Army Group would go for the Rhine, with the 9th Army aiming towards Düsseldorf and the 1st Army, including the 1st Division, towards Cologne. A corps would hold a thin line across the Ardennes, while south of them Patton's 3rd Army would tear through the Saar and cross the Rhine above Mannheim.

The jump-off date, which was only met by an enormous logistical effort, was to be 16 November, given good weather. The weatherman came through and, after a solid week of rain, a mighty air bombardment hit along the whole front. After Aachen the 1st Division moved to the Hürtgen Forest south of the city, where it was to make its attack. Eyewitness Ivan Peterman called the forest 'cold, gloomy and treacherous'.

'Unlike Longfellow's murmuring pines and hemlocks', Peterman wrote, 'the Hürtgen is not primeval. It was hand planted in modern times by the order of the German General Staff, and in that methodical process there was plenty of malice aforethought. Every natural advantage is screened; the thick spruce and balsams squat, limbs to the ground, like football linemen challenging advance.'

'Seven American infantry divisions and one armoured combat team tried to break the Hürtgen. All emerged, mauled, reduced and low in spirits. Only two got all the way through: the 1st Infantry along the northern edge, and the 78th Infantry, which eventually seized the dams as the Roer campaign closed. Statistics reveal that for every yard gained, the Hürtgen claimed more lives than any other objective the Americans took in Europe.'

The division's assignment was to cross the Roer River north of Düren, move on and secure Gressenich and the Hamrich-Nothberg ridge. At

12.45pm, following a bombardment which began at 11.15am, the 16th Infantry led the way from Schevenhutte towards Hamich, while the 26th Infantry started moving through the Gressenich Woods. The 47th Infantry, which had been attached to the Big Red One from the 9th Division, moved out directly for Gressenich. The going was slow; the Germans had excellent artillery observation posts and cannon and mortar fire rained down on the Americans. Tanks and lorries bogged down in the sloppy mud. It was not until the next day that the 16th took Hamich, and that success triggered heavy enemy counter-attacks, complete with tanks and self-propelled artillery. The attacks were beaten off, but not without the use of every weapon against enemy armour—air support, artillery and hand-held weapons. One private even put a German tank out of action with a lucky bazooka shot through its hatch from a first-floor window. By the evening of the 17th much of Hamich was firmly in American hands and the 1/47th was on the outskirts of Gressenich fighting it out house-to-house. Counter-attacks and slow US progress continued on the 18th. Beating back more counter-attacks on the 19th, the division went back onto the offensive on the 20th. The 18th Infantry,

A 1st Division radioman and rifleman photographed near Kelz. Note that the latter wears metal-snapped rubber overboots, and wears the divisional shoulder patch on his M1941 field jacket. (US Army)





1 March 1945, Gladbach, Germany: a Sherman tank of the 745th Tank Bn. attached to 'Big Red One'. This appears to be a late-model M4A2 with 76mm gun mounted in the T23 turret. (US Army)

reinforced by a platoon of 155mm self-propelled howitzers, took Wenau on the 20th, and the entire town of Hamich finally fell.

Casualties were heavy, and the division put all sorts of troops from the already thin rear echelon into the front line, from military policemen to veterinarians. Every small town, every bend in the road became an enemy stronghold. The 16th ran into the German 47th Volksgrenadier Division holding the castle of Schloss Laufenberg and, after another fierce fight, took the castle. Schonthal was overrun by the division on 24 November, and the Germans sent the 89th Infantry in to take back both Schonthal and the castle. The attack was beaten off but men of the Big Red One noticed that the Germans refused to quit. Next came attacks by 3. Fallschirmjäger Division, which also failed; and by the 25th the Langerwehe-Jungersdorf position was in US hands. Men of Companies E and F, 2/26th Infantry were not so lucky when they took Merode from the German paratroopers. The Germans counter-attacked and cut off communications between the companies and battalion. After two

days' fighting both companies, their ammunition exhausted, surrendered on 30 November.

German resistance to the division's advance was as tough as any the formation had encountered in Europe; casualties were far too high, yet the division pushed on towards the Roer, launching a surprise attack on Luchem on 4 December. The Germans were caught unawares in the absence of preparatory Allied artillery fire, and Divarty fire kept reinforcements from reaching the town. Luchem fell easily, and there was no serious enemy counter-attack. German high command was preparing a blow of which the Americans had no hint as yet. Despite this last success, the November offensive, designed to break through the West Wall, failed. The 1st was pulled out of the line for rest, reorganization and re-equipment near Henri Chapelle, Belgium, south-west of Aachen, on 9 December. The 16th Infantry were quartered in Monschau.

Weilerswist, 5 March 1945: Shermans of the 745th Tank Bn. move up to support infantry of 2nd Bn., 18th Infantry. The nearest appears to be an M4A3 with the T23 turret mounting a 76mm gun; in the background, a cast-hull M4A1 with a 75mm gun in the M34A1 mount. Note lack of any markings on these tanks. (US Army)



# The Ardennes

As the infantrymen who had been slogging through the Hürtgen Forest could tell anyone who asked, the Germans were certainly not ready to quit yet, despite the optimistic Press reports being filed in Paris and London. On 12 October the German high command issued orders for Operation 'Watch on the Rhine', a counter-attack which would capture Antwerp and drive the British off the continent.

The plan called for the 6th SS Panzer Army to attack through the Ardennes, cross the Meuse and take Antwerp. The 5th Panzer Army would push along a parallel route, protecting the left and rear of the 6th. The 7th Army would bridge the Sauer River. The 15th Army would head north and west of Aachen. Despite US and British pressure in the West and Russian pressure in the East, the Germans had put together an amazing total of thirty-six divisions for these four armies, four of

Infantrymen of Co. F, 2/18th Infantry, move up to the jump-off point in Weilerswist past the Sherman seen in the left foreground of the last photo. (US Army)

which were tough and recently equipped SS armoured divisions. The Allies were caught completely unawares, thinking the Germans incapable of this kind of offensive capability and too badly mauled to be thinking in such ambitious terms.

At 5am on 16 December the Germans opened up an artillery barrage on a front held by two untried and two veteran divisions with a new armoured division in reserve. The two veteran divisions had been badly clawed in the Hürtgen, and the whole front was considered a training and rest area. A special force of English-speaking Germans, wearing US uniforms and driving captured American vehicles, led the drive. As they passed American lines they called out 'The Germans are only 500 yards behind us'. At vital crossroads they turned signs about. At the same time, a parachute force was dropped near the town of Malmedy.

The attack found the 1st Division north of Eupen. They were alerted to the enemy attack and at 3am on 17 December the 26th Infantry was sent to Camp Elsenborn on the breakthrough's northern edge. The regiment raced through the camp and on to Butgenbach, neck and neck with the 12th SS



Panzer Division. 'Raced' is perhaps a relative word. Major Ralph Ingersoll remembers: 'The armour that came up slid badly on the icy roads and you would have thought an armoured column had gone mad to watch its vehicles careering off trees, crashing through the corners of houses on turns. The thirty-three-ton tanks spun crazily on the gentlest slopes, sometimes turning completely around two or three times before they came to rest. In a day's move, an armoured division might lose several hundred of its vehicles, wrecked, mired, overturned.'

By dark on the 17th the 2/16th was in position on the high ground south-west of Butgenbach. The 16th took positions north of Weismes and the 18th stayed south of Eupen, capturing German parachutists, including the parachute commander Colonel von der Heydte. The terrible roads and rough conditions which slowed down the Americans also slowed down the Germans. It was not until 20 December that they launched an attack on the 2/26th, which was beaten off with the loss of eight German tanks. The 25th Panzer Grenadier Regiment made another attack the next day,

following a heavy German artillery barrage. Five German tanks hit the spot where Companies E and F came together, and broke through the division's lines. The Americans stayed in place, killing the German infantry following the tanks. The tanks themselves drove on, overrunning Company E's command post and not stopping until within 75 yards of the 2/26th command post. Headquarters personnel, manning anti-tank guns, knocked out four tanks. The rest of the Panzers got out of 26th lines as fast as they could.

Taking the Butgenbach road was important for the Germans, and they maintained their pressure. The 26th Panzer Grenadier Regiment with tank support attacked on 22 December. Hitting the three points west of Dom Butgenbach, they managed to push US lines back, cutting off both Companies A and K. The 18th Infantry was sent in to hold them and, in a counter-attack, recaptured the old lines. One German tank, caught behind the

Crews of Co. A, 80th Chemical Mortar Bn. dig in on the outskirts of Weilerswist while, in the background, 'dog-faces' of Co. H, 2/16th Infantry, prepare for an attack on Metternich. (US Army)





Private Mike Redmond, 1st Combat Engineer Bn., uses a mine detector at a road-block in Bliesheim, Germany, March 1945. The vehicle in the background is the famous 'deuce-and-a-half'—the standard 2½-ton lorry. Note mixture of M1941 and M1943 combat clothing. (US Army)

restored American line, managed to sneak back to its own lines that night.

After the failure of this attack—with a loss of at least forty-four precious tanks—the Germans settled down to holding the 1st in position and keeping the doorway open for their drive to Antwerp. The weather worsened: at first the roads were mostly what the men called 'the old 1st Division brand of mud, composed of equal parts of chocolate tapioca pudding and soft tar', but it grew colder, and soon snow fell on frozen roads. By 30 December the snow had drifted as deep as four feet in places. Movement for both armies slowed to a walk, and for the Germans this spelt the end of their hopes. They had been stopped all along the line, and the Meuse was still in Allied hands.

Now came the inevitable orders for the Allies to return to the attack. If they could snip off the 'bulge' in their lines they would take many thousands of prisoners. The 1st Division was to attack on 15 January 1945. The weather continued

to make movement difficult and the Germans were obviously reluctant to give up their hard-won ground. In the attempt to keep supplies of petrol and ammunition moving to the front, winter clothing had received a low transport-space priority, and the men suffered from the cold more than they should have. Major Ingersoll wrote that he '... wore woollen underwear, a woollen uniform, armoured force combat overalls, a sweater, an armoured force field jacket with elastic cuffs, a muffler, a heavy lined trenchcoat, two pairs of heavy woollen socks and combat boots with galoshes over them—and I cannot remember ever being warm'. Captured Germans were amazed that the Americans would attack through such weather.

After a fierce firefight Faymonville was captured by the 16th Infantry, and by 19 January four more German-held towns fell to the Big Red One in bitter hand-to-hand fighting. The fighting went on from ridge to ridge and from town to town, until by 28 January the 'bulge' had been cleaned out and the division turned east. The last German-held towns, Hunningen, Murrigen and Honsfeld, fell on 30 January, and the division faced the German frontier once again.

# To The Last Day

By 5 February the division was again in Germany. It had taken nearly 2,000 prisoners in twenty-one days of continuous combat; and the last German offensive in the West was finished. Now Germany felt the weight of a great Russian offensive in the east. The quality of German resistance was becoming spotty, at best. Many seemed to think 'Better to be a prisoner of the Americans than the Russians.' On 25 February the 1st finally crossed the Roer River and rolled its way right up to the banks of the Rhine. There was still some resistance, but the division moved so quickly that it seldom faced a properly co-ordinated defence. The favourite divisional tactic was to attack during the day and then, at night, instead of digging in, to move around any enemy strongholds. Cut off, the Germans were mopped up and usually surrendered within a day or two.

As the division got closer to the Rhine, resistance stiffened. Its first real fight since the Bulge was for the town of Erp, on 1 March. Enemy anti-aircraft troops, some converted into infantry and others still manning their '88s', put up a stubborn fight for the town. It was not until 3 March that it was completely cleared. Flak troops also put up a determined defence of Dersdorf on 6 March, but that town fell in a day.

The Rhine was the next natural German defensive line. On 8 March elements of the 16th and 18th Infantry fought their way to the outskirts of Bonn, a town whose interest for Allied planners lay in its bridge crossing the Rhine. Although the division took 1,000 prisoners in its drive for this bridge, the real prize eluded them. A German 6th Engineer Regiment captain, who had not slept for three days for fear he would miss the chance to blow up the bridge exactly at the right moment, did a beautiful job for the *Wehrmacht*; as the pieces of the bridge settled into the river's waters, resistance in west Bonn ended. The division stopped on the Rhine until receiving the news that a bridge over the Rhine had been taken, at Remagen. Quickly the division was moved there and by 16 March was across the river and preparing to return to the attack.

The Germans fought ferociously to push the Americans back across the Rhine and the division



Co. C, 1st Combat Engineers repair shell damage to a road near Geyer, as a 2½-ton lorry passes. (US Army)

was sent in to defend and enlarge the bridgehead. By 18 March the towns of Quirrenbach, Rostingen, Orscheid, Gratzfeld, Wullescheid and Stockhausen were taken. The next day Nonnenberg and Eudenbach fell. A massive counter-attack was launched by the 363rd Infantry Division with elements of the 244th and 902nd Assault Gun Brigades. It failed, and by dawn on 21 March the line Bockeroth-Uthweiler-Pleiserholm-Rubhausen was secure. The Allied drive, against ever-more-desperate German counter-attacks, continued. By 25 March the entire bridgehead was secure. Adscid, Blankenberg and Suchlerscheid fell into US hands. The 1st Army was now free to pour over the Rhine and drive deep into the heart of Germany.

The 1st Division was given the job of cutting off the enemy troops in the west and south-west. On 1 April, the 412th day of combat for the division, it took the towns of Ruthen, Hammen, Geske and Steinhauser. The gap between the 1st and 9th US Armies had been closed. Rather than give the Big Red One any rest, however, the high command assigned it a new mission—crossing the Weser River and pushing east to Osterode on the western edge of the Harz Mountains.

By 11 April the division, with the 4th Cavalry Group attached, had reached the western slope of the mountains. The Weser could have formed a major defensive line, but the Germans were only to throw together scratch units, like the 6th Observation Battalion, to hold it. Against the Big Red One they had no chance. The Harz, too, could have been a major problem. The road system was more limited than that in the Hürtgen, and the woods were thicker and the ground more broken

A crew of the division's 7th Field Artillery load their 200,000th round into a 105mm howitzer; Barnheim, Germany, March 1945.

than in that bloody forest. The few roads which could have carried heavy vehicles, could have been blocked easily with trees and demolition charges. Once again, however, the lack of organized manpower hamstrung the defence.

Small-scale resistance was tough, but Osterode and Freiheit fell to the 3/18th by 12 April. There was still some heavy fighting to do, although not as much as had been feared, and it was not until 20 April that the entire Harz Mountains were cleared. More than a thousand prisoners, including two unhappy generals, were captured.



Within ten days there were virtually no major areas of resistance left in Germany itself, and the division was ordered to Blankenheim to maintain order and prevent sabotage. There was an enemy force to be fought there, a throw-together group called 'Division Benicke'. It was a surprisingly good unit as many of its men came from a local German Army officer cadet school. The 1st Division launched its last attack against this or any German force on 5 May 1945. The Germans fought well and stubbornly, but at 8.15am, with the division moving ahead smoothly the order came down: 'Cease firing.'

At 9am on 8 May General Osterkamp, commanding the German XII Corps, met with and surrendered his force to Brigadier General George A. Taylor, by then the division's assistant commanding officer. That day was the 443rd and final day of combat for the 1st Division as a unit in World War II.

'Where the 1st Division was', said one German General Staff officer later, 'there we would have trouble.' The troubles were finally over.

## The Division

### Basic Organization

*Artillery:* 7th Field Artillery Bn., 5th Field Artillery Bn., 32nd Field Artillery Bn., 33rd Field Artillery Bn.

*Infantry:* 16th Inf., 18th Inf., 26th Inf. (each with three battalions).

*Special Troops:* 1st Engineer Combat Bn., 1st Medical Bn., 1st Reconnaissance Troop, 1st Quartermaster Co., 1st Ordnance (LM) Co., 1st Signal Co., Military Police Platoon, Headquarters Co.

### Attached Units

*Oran, 8-10 November 1942*

105th Coast Artillery Bn. (less Batteries C and D); Batteries C and D, 431st CA Bn.; Batteries A and B, 105th CA Bn.; 531st Engineer Shore Regt.; 1st Armored Div.; 286th Amphibious Signal Co.; 162nd Signal Photo Co.; 12th Field Artillery (FA) Bn.; 1st Ranger Bn.

*Tunisia, 20 November 1942-30 May 1943*

105th CA Bn.; 1st Bn., 6th Armored Regt.; 1st Bn.; 13th Armored Regt.; 601st Tank Destroyer Bn.; 701st Tank Destroyer Bn.; 2624 Signal Service Bn.; 56th Reconnaissance Regt. (British—1 squadron); 1st Ranger Bn.

*Sicily, 10 July-16 August 1943*

2 platoons, 67th Armored Regt. (Medium Tank); 70th Tank Bn.; 105th CA Bn.; 113th CA Bn.; 690th CA Bn.; 691st CA Bn.; 692nd CA Bn.; 693rd CA Bn.; 17th FA Regt.; 107th CA Bn.; E Battery, 36th FA Bn.; 215th CA Bn.; 62nd FA Bn. detachment; headquarters batteries; 12th Chemical Co. (Maint); platoon, 21st Chemical Co. (Decon); 83rd Chemical Weapons Bn.; 531st Engr. Shore Regt.; 809th Engr. Bn. (Av); 39th Engr. Regt.; 2602 Engr. Co. (Pipeline); 401st Engr. Bn.; 437th Engr. Bn. (Dep Trk); 62nd Engr. Co. (Topo); detachments from the 2657th Engrs., 462nd Engr. Co., and 601st Engr. Bn.

15th Evacuation Hospital; 93rd Hospital; 2nd Aux. Surgical Gp; detachments, 261st Med. Bn. (Amphib.); 11th Field Hospital; 36th Ambulance Co.; 2nd Med. Supply Depot; 51st Med. Bn. (Collecting Co.); 8580 JJ Veterinary Det. T; Cos. A, B and C, 504th MP Bn.; 342nd MP Escort Guard Co.; one company, Naval Shore Bn. 4; 68th Ord. Co. (Amm.); 3407th Ord. Co.; 3406th Ord. Co.; 83rd Ord. Co.; 262nd Ord. Co.; detachments from the 43rd Ord. Bn., 63rd Ord. Bn. 330th Ord. Co., 79th Ord. Co., and 235th Ord. Co. (Bomb Disp.).

Cos. C and D, 382nd Port Bn.; 384th Port Bn.; 86th QM Co.; 2637th QM Bn. (DUKWS); 249th QM Bn. (Trk); 184th QM Co.; detachments from the 46th QM Co.; 249th QM Bn., (Trk), 205th QM Bn., and 47th Qm Regt. (Trk); 1st and 4th Ranger Bns.; 91st Recon. Squadron; detachments from the 286th Sig. Co., 72nd Sig. Bn., 163rd Sig. Photo Co., 206th Sig. Co., 177th Sig. Co. (Radio sections), censorship, civil affairs, CIC, 1st Observation Bn., public relations and PW proclamation teams.

*Europe, 6 June-8 May 1945*

103rd AA Bn.; 639th AA Bn.; batteries from the 461st and 460th AA Bns.; 741st Tank Bn.; 745th Tank Bn.; 747th Tank Bn.; 635th Tank Destroyer



Combat engineers pass a destroyed German gun and its half-track prime mover near Wienrode, April 1945. (US Army)

Bn. Combat Command A (August 1944): 32nd Armd. Regt.; 3/36th Armd. Regt.; 54th FA Bn.; 67th FA Bn.; 58th FA Bn., and detachments from the 23rd Armd. Engr. Bn.; 703rd Tank Destroyer Bn. (SP), and 413rd AA Bn. (Gun). Combat Command B (July 1944): 3rd Armd. Div.; 33rd Armd. Regt.; 391st Armd. FA Bn.; 83rd Armd. Rec. Bn.; 87th FA Bn. (Armd.), and detachments from the 36th Armd. Regt.; 23rd Armd. Engr. Bn.; 703rd Tank Destroyer Bn.; 486th Bn. (AA) (SP), and 413rd Bn. (AA) (Gun). Combat Command R (March (1945); 3/32nd Armd. Regt.; 2/33rd Armd. Regt.; 3/36th Armd. Inf.; 3/13th Armd. Regt.; Co. C, 703rd Tank Destroyer Bn.

102nd Cav. Rec. Squadron; 38th Cav. Rec. Squadron; 4th Cav. Gp.; 24th Cav. Rec. Squadron; 4th Cav. Rec. Squadron; 32nd Cav. Rec. Squadron; companies from the 81st Chemical Mortar Bn.; 87th Chemical Mortar Bn., 86th Chemical Mortar Bn., and 90th Chemical Mortar Bn.; 20th Engr. Combat Bn.; 1106th Engr. Combat Gp.; 238th Combat Engr. Bn.; 257th Combat Engineer Bn.; 299th Combat Engr. Bn., and platoons from the 2nd Engr. Combat Bn., 994th Engr. Treadway Bridge Co., 276th Engr. Combat Bn., and 72nd Engr. Light Pontoon Co.

## The Plates

### A Tunisia, 1942-43

These infantrymen wear the basic fatigue dress as it was intended to be worn in combat: a one-piece twill suit in light olive drab. In the front line this was replaced quite soon by the standard olive drab wool shirt and trousers of the service uniform. Divisional shoulder patches were not supposed to be worn on combat clothing, but photographs show many examples of this being ignored. The first piece of equipment to be dumped by most soldiers was the large gas mask sack, worn here under the left arm. The knapsack and blanket roll were often left in the transport when in the front line. The first aid pack was initially worn on the left rear hip, but later moved to the right front of the belt, where it was easier to reach. The rifle is the M1 Garand. Helmet straps were seldom worn in place beneath the chin. NCO's ranks chevrons were worn on both sleeves.

The vehicle is the M3 half-track in its initial configuration, without a 'pulpit' for the .50 cal. machine gun, which was mounted on a 'skate' fixed to a rail running all round the upper inside edge of the body. Markings were limited to national stars, serial numbers on the side of the bonnet (e.g. 'U.S.A. 4050385'), and unit codes on the fender, often painted over or left off. This vehicle belongs to the 16th Infantry's Company B, and carries white stencilled markings '16-I' on the left fender, and 'B-25' on the right. Half-tracks were used as APCs, command cars, artillery prime movers, ambulances, and general utility and liaison vehicles.

### B Omaha Beach, D + 1

Men and equipment of the 1st Division come ashore on D + 1, 7 June 1944, amid the debris of the previous day's fierce fighting. The ubiquitous jeep, fitted as a command vehicle, has its windscreen lowered and covered in canvas; its fenders bear the markings of HQ, 26th Infantry. Those of the 2½-ton lorry towing a 105mm howitzer indicate Battery B of the division's 5th Field Artillery. The 'deuce-and-a-half' was almost as familiar a sight on the roads of Europe as the jeep, and was produced in many versions including dumpers, flat-beds, command radio trucks, and even ordnance workshop vehicles. The right front fender, obscured here,

would have borne the marking 'V' followed by a small white circled star. These unit markings were repeated on the rear fenders of soft-skin vehicles, when worn at all. Serials on bonnet sides, such as the '20445476' on the jeep, had no unit significance.

The officers and men wear the 1941 field jacket, with divisional patches removed for security, and the woollen olive drab trousers of the service uniform. The US Navy beachmaster wears Army uniform and pistol belt with holster, clips and first aid pack; he is identified by his blue-grey Navy helmet with yellow stencilled titles front and rear.

He is conferring with an infantry lieutenant-colonel, who wears standard officers' rank insignia: a silver oakleaf on the right shirt collar and the crossed brass rifles of his 'corps' (infantry) on the left. Ranking was often painted, or attached in metal form, to the front of the helmet. In the right foreground a Catholic padre comforts a wounded man, attended by a corpsman.

Infantrymen of the division shelter behind a Sherman of the 745th Bn. in the streets of St. Andreasburg as they come under sniper fire, 14 April 1945. The tanks appear to be M4A3s; that on the left has HVSS. (US Army)





The snipers silenced, the GIs of Co. C, 2/16th Infantry march on and the 'tankers' take a break. Note the leather tank crash-helmet, and the litter of personal items slung round the turret, including a suitcase! (US Army)

### **C Ardennes, January 1945**

Men of the 16th Infantry move forward to counter-attack the German thrust into the Ardennes, mid-January 1945. On the slick winter roads an M4A2 Sherman of the 745th Tank Battalion has skidded into a ditch and broken a track, and the crew have dismounted to discuss the situation in a calm and rational manner . . . This is the version with a 75mm gun in the M34A1 mounting; models differing in details of suspension and armament served side by side within the battalions attached to the 1st Division. All markings, including the national star, have been over-painted in olive drab, and a rough whitewash snow camouflage has been applied by the crew. The crew wear tank overalls, leather tank helmets, and the popular windcheater 'tanker's jacket'.

In the background the infantrymen are illustrated wearing the M1943 proofed field jacket and trousers which gradually replaced the unpopular M1941 issue in the last year of the war; again, both issues can be seen worn side by side by men of the same platoons in photographs of the period. Over the field dress, the 'dog-faces' have improvised snow camouflage capes and helmet covers from sheets; rubber over-boots with metal snap fasteners

are worn over the leather boots, and weapons are camouflaged with white tape. Among the weapons are Garands, an M3 'grease-gun' sub-machine gun of .45 calibre, and a bazooka. Passing along the road are an M3 half-track towing an anti-tank gun, and an M7 'Priest' 105mm self-propelled howitzer. The half-track bears the markings of the 16th's AT company, Co. G; its front fender markings would be '1A-16-I' on the left, and 'G-9' on the right as seen from in front of the vehicle. This half-track, nicknamed 'Public Zoo', is illustrated in one of the accompanying photographs.

### **D Street fighting, Germany, March–April 1945**

Divisional infantry and tanks in action against German flak troops in one of the small towns just west of the Rhine. By now many troops had received the M1943 proofed field dress, but some old M1941 jackets are still to be seen; and the proofed trousers and woollen service dress trousers are worn indiscriminately. The long webbing gaiters have been replaced by russet leather combat boots lacing high on the ankle, with built-in buckled gaiter-flaps at the top. The issue rifle belt was often exchanged for a pistol belt, whose many eyelets allowed more flexible stowage of kit; the ammunition clip pouches of the rifle belt were inconvenient, and cloth bandoliers were more popular. The corporal in the M1941 jacket mans a .30 cal. Browning air-cooled machine gun; other weapons are the Garand rifle, the M1 carbine, and the 'grease-gun'. The tank is an M4A3E8 with HVSS (horizontal volute suspension) and a long 76mm gun mounted in the late T23 turret. It is taken from photographs of a vehicle of the 745th Tank Bn. at this period; note that all national and unit markings have been painted over, leaving only faded shipping data stencilled on the hull side, and the chalked or painted name 'Rudy'. The stowage around the turret rail includes a suitcase.

### **E Insignia (approx. actual size)**

*Centre top* is the Combat Infantryman badge, awarded to any officer, warrant officer or enlisted man assigned permanently to an infantry regiment or battalion, or attached Ranger company, during a period when the unit was engaged in active ground combat. Battle participation was not

enough—the unit had to be actually in contact with the enemy. The silver and blue enamel badge was worn over the left breast pocket. No medical corps personnel were allowed the badge, even though they may have fulfilled all necessary conditions for its issue. This was felt to be highly unjust, both by medics and by the infantrymen whose lives they often saved under fire; and subsequently a medical badge was authorized for members of the corps who met all the qualifications of the Combat Infantry badge. This is illustrated *centre bottom*.

The enamelled regimental crests were worn on the lapels of the Class A uniform blouse by enlisted men and on the shoulder-straps by officers. *Top left* is that of the 16th Infantry; *lower left* is that of the 26th Infantry; and *top right* is that of the 18th Infantry.

The divisional shoulder patch of 'Big Red One' (*centre*) was worn on the left shoulder by soldiers

assigned to the division. If they had been assigned during a period when the division was in combat, then on transferring to a new outfit they were allowed to retain their old patch on the right shoulder, with the new patch on the left.

Many units adopted unofficial badges. Walt Disney Studios designed many of these, such as that illustrated (*lower right*): the fighting turtle of the 16th Infantry's Anti-Tank Company. Badges such as this were sometimes painted on equipment, but once in combat for any length of time the troops tended to ignore 'cute' affectations of this sort.

A matter of days to final victory: an M10 tank destroyer of the 745th Bn. grinds through the rubble of St. Andreasburg, 15 April 1945. (US Army)



## Select Bibliography

- Omar Bradley, *A Soldier's Story*, New York, 1951  
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Various, *Danger Forward*, Washington, D.C., 1947

## Notes sur les planches en couleur

**A La Tunisie 1942-3** Fantassins mis en les salopettes de corvée en une pièce utilisée comme tenue de combat pour une courte période en la Tunisie. Chevrons de grade portés sur des deux bras; l'écusson divisionnaire porté seulement sur l'épaule gauche, contre des consignes. Poche à premiers secours portée au commencement sur hanche gauche, plus devant droit de ceinture. Le fusil est le Garand M1. Le véhicule est un autochenille M3 de Company B, 16th Infantry Rgt. Les pare-chocs de devant portent les codes du régiment et de compagnie et le numéro de véhicule individuel—'16-1' et 'B-25'. Le numéro de véhicule se montre sur les côtés du capot.

**B Omaha Beach, le 7 juin 1944** Véhicules et grand équipement de la 1st Division vont à terre à la Normandie au milieu de les morts de combat intense de la veille. Le jeep porte les marquages d'un véhicule commandant de la 26th Infantry: '26-1' et 'HQ-?'. Le camion 2½ ton porte les marquages de Battery B, 5th Field Artillery: '5FA-B-10' et sur la portion cachée, 'V' et une étoile blanche entourée. La pièce de campagne est un obusier 105mm. A gauche, un officier de marine sert comme 'Beachmaster', identifié par son casque gris avec lettres jaunes, parle avec un lieutenant-colonel de l'Infanterie. A droite un aumônier catholique et un infirmier consolent les blessés. Tous personnel portent le dolman de campagne M1941 et le pantalon de laines brun olive de tenue.

**C Ardennes, janvier 1945** Un char d'assaut Sherman M4A2 avec fusil 75mm de la 745th Tank Bn est glissé de les routes verglacées; il porte pas de marquages d'aucun type. Les servants portent tenues de char d'assaut typiques avec casques de cuir. L'infanterie du 16th Regt. porte les tenues de campagne vertes imperméables M1943 et bottes à revers de caoutchouc avec capes à camouflage et couvertures de casques improvisées de vieux draps. En arrière d'eux est un autochenille de la compagnie contre-char d'assaut Co. G du régiment et un obusier autopropulsé M7 'Priest'. L'autochenille est appelé 'Public Zoo' (voyez planche autre part du livre); ses marquages sur pare-choc seraient '1A-16-1' et 'G-?'.  
**D Combat dans la rue, Allemagne, mars-avril 1945** Infanterie de la division soutenue par un Sherman M4A3E8 avec HVSS et un fusil 76mm dans la tourelle T23 combat avec les troupes flak de Luftwaffe dans une petite ville auprès du Rhin. La plupart du personnel de US porte maintenant la tenue de combat M1943 mais quelques vieux dolmans sont encore vus. Les nouvelles bottes de cuir avec une oreille bouclée autour de la jambe remplacent les vieilles guêtres de toile. Armes comprennent le fusil Garand, la carabine M1 .30 cal, la mitrailleuse légère Browning .30 cal, et la mitrailleuse M3. Le char d'assaut du 745th Tank Bn. tient les plus marquages couvert avec peinture verte olive mais tient un nom tracé 'Rudy'.

**E Insignes** (Centre en haut) Ecusson de Combat Infantryman porté sur le sein gauche; décerné à tous officiers d'infanterie et hommes de fractions réellement entrés en combat de sol. (Centre en bas) Ecusson de Medical Corpsman décerné à personnel sanitaire qui servit à côté de l'infanterie dans les mêmes conditions. (Centre) est l'insigne à l'épaule de la 1st Division portés sur le bras gauche. Ceux-ci furent censés être ôtés dans les premières lignes mais souvent on ne tint aucun compte de cette consigne. Les écussons peindus en émail du régiment furent portés seulement sur la grande tenue, sur les revers par les troupes et sur les pattes d'épaule par les officiers. (En haut gauche) 16th Infantry. (En haut droite) 18th Infantry. (En bas gauche) 26th Infantry. (En bas droite) l'écusson non officiel de la compagnie contre-char d'assaut du 16th Infantry Rgt., dessiné—comme furent beaucoup de ces emblèmes non officiels—par les Walt Disney Studios. Quelques fois on les peignit sur équipement mais en combat telles blagues furent ordinairement abandonnées.

## Farbtafeln

**A Tunis 1942-3** Infanteristen auf den einteiligen Drillhansungen bekleidet, dens als Kampsuniform für eine kleine Zeit in Tunis benutzt wurden. Dienstgrad-unteroffiziertressen auf beiden Armen getragen; das Divisionssabzeichen nur auf der linken Achsel gegen Befehle getragen. Sanitäts tasche anfänglich auf linker Hüfte getragen, später auf rechtem vorderem Teil Gürtels getragen. Das Gewehr ist das M1 Garand. Das Fahrzeug ist ein M3 Zwitterfahrzeug Company B, 16th Infantry Rgt. Die Vorderstossfänger tragen die Schlüsselschriften Regiments und Kompagnie und die Einzelfahrzeugnummer—'16-1' und 'B-25'. Die Eintragungnummer Fahrzeugs wird sichtbar auf den Seiten der Haube.

**B Omaha Beach, 7 Juni 1944** Fahrzeuge und schwere Ausrüstung der 1st Division kommen inmitten der Leichname des Kampfs des vorhergehenden Tages auf Strand in Normandie. Der Jeep trägt die Hoheitsabzeichen eines Kommandofahrzeugs der 26th Infantry: '26-1' und 'HQ-?'. Das Lastauto 2½ ton trägt die Hoheitsabzeichen Battery B, 5th Field Artillery: '5FA-B-10' und auf dem versteckten Teil 'V' und einen weissen umgekreisten Stern. Das Feldgeschütz ist eine Haubitze 105mm. Links, ein Seeoffizier in Dienst als 'Beachmaster' von seinem grauen Helm mit gelber Aufschrift identifiziert, spricht mit einem Oberleutnant der Infanterie. Rechts, ein katholischer Militärgestlicher und ein Sanitäter trösten die Kriegsbeschädigte. Alle Mannschaften tragen die M1941 Feldjacke und die olivenbraunfarbigen Wolluniformhosen.

**C Die Ardennen, Januar 1945** Eine Sherman-Panzer des 745th Tank Bn. ist von den eisigen Strassen hinangeglitten; er trägt keine Hoheitsabzeichen jeder Art. Die Bedienung trägt typische Panzeruniform mit Helmen aus Leder. Der Infanterie des 16th Rgt. trägt die grüne wasserdichte M1943 Felduniformen und Stulpenstiefel aus Gummi mit Tarnungsmantelkragen und Helmdecken aus alten Bettuchen improvisiert. Hinter ihnen sind ein Zwitterfahrzeug der Panzerabwehrkompagnie Co. G des Regiments und eine M7 'Priest' Selbstfahraubitze. Das Zwitterfahrzeug ist 'Public Zoo' genannt (sehen Sie Tafel anderswo in diesem Buch); seine Stossfänger-hoheitsabzeichen wurden '1A-16-1' und 'G-?' sein.

**D Strassenkampf, Deutschland, März-April 1945** Infanterie de Division mit einem Sherman M4A3E8 mit HVSS von einem 76mm Gewehr in dem T23 Panzerturm untergehalten kämpfen mit Luftwaffeflaktruppen in einer kleinen Stadt in der Nähe von de Rhein. Jetzt tragen meiste der US Mannschaft die M1943 Kamp-uniform aber man kann noch ein paar alte Jacken sehen. Die neue Stiefel aus Leder mit einer angeschnallten Lasche um das Bein ersetzen die alte Gamaschen aus Drilllich. Waffen schliessen das Garand Gewehr, der Karabiner M1 .30 cal. das Browning Leichtmaschinenpistole .30 cal und die M3 Maschinenpistole ein. Der Panzer des 745th Tank Bn. hat meiste Hoheitsabzeichen mit olivengrüne Farbe übergemalt aber er hat einen Namen in Kreide 'Rudy'.

**E Abzeichen** (Mitte oben) Dienstabzeichen Combat Infantryman auf der linken Brust getragen; alle Infanteristen und Männer Verbände wirklich zum Erdkampf gebracht zuerkannt. (Mitte unten) Dienstabzeichen Medical Corpsman Sanitätsmannschaft zuerkannt, die beiden gleichen Umständen neben der Infanterie diente. (Mitte) ist die Achselabzeichen 1st Division auf dem linken Arm getragen. Man sollte diese in den Kampffronten weggeschaffen aber dieser Befehl wurde oftmals nicht beachtet. Die emaillierte Regiment-abzeichen wurden nur auf der Galauniform getragen, auf den Aufschlägen von den Truppen und auf den Achselstücken von den Offizieren. (Oben links) 16th Infantry. (Oben rechts) 26th Infantry (Unten links) 18th Infantry. (Unten rechts) Die inoffizielle Abzeichen der Panzerabwehrkompagnie des 16th Infantry Rgt., von den Walt Disney Studios entworfen, wie viele dieser unoffiziellen Sinnbilder wurden. Manchmal wurden sie auf Ausrüstung gemalt aber in Kampf wurde solche Witze gewöhnlich verlassen.

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Avec annotations en français sur les planches en couleur

Mit Aufzeichnungen auf deutsch über die Farbtafeln

