

CLASSIFICATION
HEADQUARTERS 80TH INFANTRY DIVISION
Office of Information and Education Officer
APO 80, U. S. Army

CANCELLED
BY AUTHORITY OF THE ADJUTANT GENERAL

UNIT HISTORY REPORTS
COMBATTANT

10 March 1945.

GARVER, S
B-319
10 MARCH 86

TO : Commanding General, European Theatre of Operations, 1917-
APO 887, U.S. Army.

1. In compliance with letter received from Hq, ETOUSA, APO 887, U.S. Army dated 22 February 1945, Subject: Unit History Reports (AG 314.7 Oph), the following information is submitted:

a. Brief biographical sketches of:

- (1) Major General Horace L. McBride, Commanding General,
- (2) Brigadier General Jay W. MacKelvie, Commanding General Division Artillery and,
- (3) Colonel Samuel P. Walker, Chief of Staff.
(See enclosure 1.)

b. The information desired concerning the history of the 80th Division prior to this war is contained in the enclosed two brief accounts. More detailed data on the specific points requested is listed below. (See enclosure 2.)

(1) Names of Campaigns: As stated in the 80th Division Summary of Operations in the World War, prepared by the American Battle Monuments Commission, 1944, the major operations in which this division participated are Artois Sector, Somme Offensive, St. Mihiel Offensive, Bethincourt Sector and the Meuse-Argonne Offensive.

(2) Battle honors and (3) Citations: This material is not at present available. Letters have been written to the proper sources requesting this information but no reply has as yet been received. This data will be forwarded to you as soon as possible.

(4) Any service with British or French units: The only service with British units occurred in the period prior to the formation of the American First Army in World War I. It is summarized in the 80th Division Summary of Operations in the World War as follows:

"On July 22 the 80th Division completed the first phase of its training with the British Third Army and was ready for front-line training. Until August 7 elements of the division served with troops of the British Third Army in the line of the Artois Sector. At no time

380-01

JUN 23 1945
26145
master

did the division exercise tactical control of its regiments.

"On August 8 the service in the Artois Sector merged into the Somme Offensive. During the participation of the regiments of the 80th Division in this offensive, active patrolling was engaged in by the American units, but the front remained comparatively inactive. The line remained practically unchanged as the result of any front-line operations of American battalions, except in the zone of action of the 317th Infantry, where an advance to Puisieux-au-Mont was made on August 14 by the 2d Battalion, 317th Infantry, in conjunction with New Zealand troops.

"The 80th Division was relieved from this front on August 18."

c. A summary of the Division's participation in the present war, including the date and place of activation as well as the training completed in the United States, is described in the two enclosed short histories of the 80th Division. (See enclosure 3)

d. A copy of the insignia and description of its heraldic significance is attached. (See inclosure 4)

e. Captain Robert D. Hanson, Information and Education Officer, is the Division Historian.

For the Commanding General:

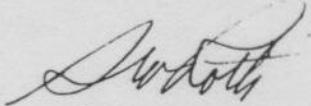
4 Incls:

Incl. #1 - Biographical Sketch,
Maj Gen McBride
Brig Gen MacKelvie
Col Walker

Incl. #2 - Brief History, World War I and II

Incl. #3 - Summary, Division History

Incl. #4 - Description, Coat of Arms


S. W. ROTH
Major, AGD
Asst. Ad.



Major General Horace L. McBride, 04430

Commanding General 80th Infantry Division.
Born Nebraska 28 June 1894.
B.S. U.S. M. A. 1916.

Army Schools:

Field Artillery School- Advance Course 1923.
Command and General Staff School 1928.
Army War College 1936.

Assignments:

G. S. C. - 1941- 1942.
G-3 Panama Canal Dept January 1, 1942.
CG Division Artillery, 80th Division
CG 80th Infantry Division 15 March 1943.

Service Overseas

Holland, Poland, Philippines, Canal Zone, France, Belgium,
Luxembourg and Germany.

Awards:

Bronze Star, Silver Star, Legion of Merit, Legion of Honor
(France)

Brigadier General Jay W. MacKelvie, 05476.

Commanding General, Division Artillery, 80th Infantry Division.
Born South Dakota 23 September 1890.

Army Schools.

Field Artillery School- Btry Officers Course 1923.
Command and General Staff School 1932.
Army War College 1936.

Assignments:

1941-1942- WPD War Department G.S.
1942-1943- C. G. Division Artillery, 85th Division.
✓ Jan.- June 1944 C. G. 90th Infantry Division.
July- October 1944- Field Coordinator Com Z ETOUSA.
September 1944 to date- C.G. Division Artillery, 80th Division.

Service

Mexican Border
World War I - France
World War II- France, Belgium, Luxembourg and Germany.

Awards

Bronze Star (Oak Leaf Cluster) Legion of Honor.

Colonel Samuel P. Walker-012179.

Chief of Staff, 80th Infantry Division.
Born Mississippi 12 December 1897.
B.S. U.S. M.A. 1918.

Enclosure 1.

Army Schools:

Air Service Pilots School 1921.
Cavalry School, Training Officers Course 1928.
Advanced Equitation Course 1930.
Command and General Staff School 1936.
Army War College 1939.

Assignments.

G. S. C. 1941.

February- August 1942- Asst G-4 II Army Corps.
August 1942- March 1943- AFHQ (Planning, G-4) London and Algiers)
March 1943- December 1943- SOS, NATOUSA (Algiers)
January- December 1944. Assistant Comdt Cav School, Ft. Riley, Kan.
January 2, 1945 to date- Chief of Staff, 80th Infantry Division.

OUR MOTTO - "THE 80TH ONLY MOVES FORWARD"



Major General Horace L. McBride, Commanding

WORLD WAR I

Made up largely of men from the "Blue Ridge" states of Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia, the 80th Infantry Division was organized in September 1917.

Landing in France on May 9, 1918, it was destined to play a vital role in the overthrow of the German Imperial Army.

Side by side with the British Tommies, the Blue Ridge Doughboys fought in the Artois Sector and also participated with them in the great Somme Offensive.

The 80th Division was assigned to the newly created American First Army and took part in the reduction of the St. Mihiel Salient late in August 1918.

The outstanding accomplishment of the 80th in World War I was to come in the decisive German defeat during the Battle of the Meuse-Argonne, in October-November 1918. Three times the spearheading 80th Division was called upon and three times it responded by seizing its objective. Smashing day attacks were followed by night assaults, as the Blue Ridge men surged forward. The German line buckled, then collapsed.

Due in a large part to the success of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive in reaching vital German communication centers, the Imperial Army was forced to capitulate. The Armistice was signed on November 11, 1918.

The Division is justly proud of its record of having captured two Germans and one machine gun for each man wounded. Thorough training and excellent leadership had paid off.

Numbered among the many distinguished veterans of the 80th from the First World War are General Joseph "Vinegar Joe" Stilwell, whose historic retreat through Burma is one of the epics of this war; Major General Patrick Hurley, former Secretary of War; and Presidential Secretary Steve Early.

Little wonder that the 80th was rated the best National Army Division of World War I!

Enclosure 2.

WORLD WAR II

The Blue Ridge Division was reactivated at Camp Forrest, Tennessee, on July 15, 1942. Vigorous basic and advanced training were completed by the following spring.

Led by its Commander, Major General Horace L. McBride, the 80th participated in Tennessee Maneuvers in the summer of 1943. Then after three months training at Camp Phillips, Kansas, the Division was given its final hardening during the strenuous California-Arizona Desert Maneuvers.

After a short stay at Fort Dix, New Jersey, and later Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, the Division sailed for England July 1, 1944.

On August 3, 1944, less than one month after landing on the British Isles, the Blue Ridge Infantrymen found themselves on the soil of France ready to combat the enemies of the United Nations.

After liberating Evron, Sille le Guillaume, Alencon, La Lacle and scores of other towns during General Patton's Third Army break-through at Avranches, the 80th Division attacked north, seized Argentan and helped liquidate the German Seventh Army trapped in the Falaise Gap.

The Blue Ridgers next moved south of Paris and spearheaded the Allied drive across France. The Seine, Aube, Marne and Meuse Rivers were crossed and hundreds of towns, including Chalons sur Marne, St. Mihiel and Commercy, were freed in our triumphal pursuit of the fleeing Nazis.

On September 4th, our Division established the first bridgehead across the Moselle River at Toul. Continuing our push, the 80th paced the Allied advance through the important Saar Basin and seized St. Avold, a key mining and communication center.

When General von Rundstedt crashed through the Luxembourg defenses, our troops, within 36 hours, made a 150 mile motorized dash, formed a defense line and saved the City of Luxembourg.

Going over to an offensive, the 80th continued north and caught the surprised German convoys pouring west to reinforce the German salient. The resulting slaughter of Nazis seriously disrupted the enemy plans.

Next a force of the 80th joined the 4th Armored Division in rescuing the American force at Bastogne.

This last feat was well described in the New York Times newspaper of December 30:

"Lieutenant Colonel Harry E. Brown, a Fourth Armored staff officer, highly praised the seasoned Eightieth Infantry, which fought into the Bastogne garrison's relief".

"Eightieth's doughboys really did themselves proud", he declared, "you can't say too much for them".

Having captured almost 12,000 prisoners and destroyed over 125 tanks since our arrival in France a few months ago, the 80th Blue Ridge Infantrymen are proud of their record of never having failed to take an objective, never retreating from a position once taken and of having become a pile-driving spearhead for General Patton's Third Army.

WE BLUE RIDGERS ARE PROUD TO WELCOME YOU AS A REINFORCEMENT INTO OUR RANKS. WITH THAT SHOULDER PATCH ON YOUR UNIFORM YOU ARE NOW ONE OF US. REMEMBER OUR MOTTO - "THE 80TH ONLY MOVES FORWARD!"

"PASSED BY ETO CENSOR FOR MAILING HOME"

THE BLUE RIDGE DOUGHBOY OF WORLD WAR I

Largely composed of men from the "Blue Ridge States" of Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia, the 80th Division was originally activated at Camp Lee, Virginia in September of 1917.

After training at Camp Lee for nine months, the leading elements sailed from Newport News and landed in France on May 9, 1918. The rest of the Division disembarked at the ports of Brest, Bordeaux and St. Nazaire May 30-31 and June 8-9, 1918.

The Division moved to the Samer training area where British experts trained the recently arrived Blue Ridge Doughboys in the latest developments of trench warfare.

On August 8, 1918, the British began their Somme Offensive. Side by side with the British Tommies, the Blue Ridgers struck their first blow against the Hun.

The Division joined the newly created American First Army on August 25, 1918 and participated as Army reserve in the reduction of the St. Mihiel Salient.

ENCLOSURE 3.

BATTERING RAM IN THE ARGONNE

The outstanding accomplishment of the 80th in World War I occurred during the final overthrow of the German Imperial Army in the Battle of the Meuse-Argonne.

Marshal Foch, Commander in Chief of the Allied Armies, had ordered an American-French attack to cut the vital German line of supply, the Carignaw-Sedan-Mezeres Railroad. The severing of this supply artery would render the entire German sector to the west and northwest of Sedan untenable. So important was this railroad to the German High Command that four distinct systems of field fortifications had been built during the years of 1914-1918 to protect it.

This offensive, which was destined to break the back of the Kaiser's Armies, began on the morning of Sept. 26, 1918. The Germans resisted strongly from their thoroughly prepared positions.

Three times the spearheading 80th Division was called upon and three times it responded by taking its objective. Night attacks coupled with strong daylight assaults made the German lines to our front buckle, then collapse. Prior to the relief of the

80th Division by the 1st Division on November 8, 1918, the Blue Ridge Infantrymen along with other Allied divisions had shattered the whole German defense system.

The Division could rightfully boast of having captured two Germans and one machine gun for each man wounded. Excellent leadership and thorough training had paid off.

BEST NATIONAL ARMY DIVISION

Little wonder that the 80th was rated the best National Army Division of World War I!

Numbered among the many distinguished veterans from the 80th of the First World War are General Joseph W. Stilwell, Commander of the Army Ground Forces, and Major General Patrick S. Hurley, Ambassador to China.

In World War I, the Blue Ridge Infantrymen were formed into two regiments in each of the Division's brigades. Today's streamlined organization numbers three of the former regiments (317, 318 and 319) and no brigades. The 320th Infantry, the fourth of the World War I regiments, is now part of the 35th Division.

One thing remains unchanged. The courage and undaunted

spirit of the "Blue Ridge" doughboy is the same today as it was 27 years ago.

REBIRTH OF A DIVISION

The 80th Division was reactivated at Camp Forrest, Tennessee on July 15, 1942 under the command of Major General Joseph D. Patch. The present CG, Major General Horace L. McBride, was then Brigadier General, commanding the Division Artillery.

The first year was highlighted by the visit of the Commander-in-Chief, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, to Camp Forrest, Tennessee on April 18, 1943. It also marked the selection of the Division as the training center for the Army's first tough and realistic Ranger School by Lt Gen Ben Lear, then commanding the Second Army.

On June 23, 1943, the 80th Infantry Division departed Camp Forrest for the Tennessee Maneuver Area south of Murfreesboro. Long marches hardened the men for the days to come. The culmination of this training was the fast moving maneuvers conducted against the 83rd Infantry Division.

On August 25, 1943, the "Blue Ridge" men moved on to

wind-swept Camp Phillips, Kansas. Here range firing and again long grueling marches highlighted the three month's stay. On November 17, 1943, the Division once more pulled up stakes.

DESERT HARDENING

This time the Division proceeded to the California-Arizona Maneuver Area. After further preliminary training followed by strenuous combat problems, the Division carried on extensive maneuvers against the 104th Infantry Division in the vicinity of Palen Pass, California, February 13, 1944 to March 5, 1944. This rigorous desert conditioning amid the freezing nights and sweltering days, the sand dunes and precipitous mountains prepared the men of the Blue Ridge to storm through Hitler's Fortress Europe.

Following the maneuvers, our Division Artillery received the Army Ground Forces Artillery tests at Iron Mountain, California. A letter of commendation from the late Lt Gen Lesley J. McNair, then Commanding General of the Army Ground Forces, praised our Division Artillery for having made the highest score ever attained. Actual battle performances in

France, Luxembourg, Belgium and Germany have in every instance borne out the remarkable record achieved in these tests.

The Division arrived for a short stay at Fort Dix, New Jersey on April 5, 1944 and then moved to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey during the latter part of June. The advance party of the 80th sailed for England in June and the Division followed early in July.

Arriving in Glasgow, Scotland, the Division proceeded to its assigned training area near Northwich, Cheshire, England.

FRANCE AGAIN

On August 3, 1944 (D plus 58), less than one month after landing in the British Isles, the 80th Division found itself for the second time on the soil of France ready to assist in the destruction of the new German dream of world domination.

Landing at Utah Beach, Normandy, the 80th Division was destined to play an outstanding role in exploiting the historic Third Army breakthrough at Avranches, which meanwhile was beginning to assume the proportion of a major catastrophe for the German Wehrmacht.

Guided by the 80th MP platoon, the Blue Ridge organizations were directed from the beaches, through the transit area to the assembly area near St. Jores. During the night of August 7, all units were assembled and the Division was ready to strike its initial blow against the Nazis..

On August 8, 1944, the Division received its first combat mission. It was ordered to assist in stopping the powerful German armored counterattack by five Panzer Divisions which desperately sought to cut Lt Gen George S. Patton's tenuous supply line at Avranches. On this same day Lt. Lloyd C. Bloomer of the 314th FA captured the Division's first prisoner, a German aviator at St. Hilaire.

Arriving too late to participate in smashing the short-lived Nazi thrust, the Blue Ridge Division, under new orders, moved eastward to seize Evron and St. Suzanne from the rapidly retreating Germans on August 10. The 319th Combat Team was detached from the Division from August 10-28 while it did outpost duty at Le Mans, Angers and Orleans.

Continuing the advance which was hindered only by small isolated pockets of resistance, minefields and demolitions, the 80th seized the communication center of Sille Le Guillaume without opposition on August 11.

Two days later Villaines was liberated from an enemy that was rapidly withdrawing to avoid being entrapped by the swift Allied advances.

FIRST INTO ARGENTAN

While the 2nd French Armored Division continued northward in our former zone of advance pursuing the fleeing Nazis, the Division ((-CT 319) was assembled near Alencon preparatory to our participation in the now famous battle of the Argentan-Falaise Gap.

The Wehrmacht at this time was fighting a desperate rear guard action to save the Seventh German Army from annihilation in the slowly closing noose near Chambois, east of Argentan. The British from the north and the American First Army from the south were closing in for the kill.

Becoming a part of the V Corps of Lt Gen Courtney H. Hodges' First U.S. Army for this operation, the Blue Ridgers received orders on August 17 to seize Argentan and the high ground north of the city..

These German strong points were held by elements of a Panzer Division, a battalion of German Air Force personnel and a detachment of Storm Troopers which were supported by artillery and numerous self-propelled guns. The enemy had ample time to dig in and prepare minefields and booby traps. The Forest of Gouffern between Argentan and Chambois provided cover for the enemy supply and communication lines.

The 318th Infantry, despite determined resistance, stormed into the small town of Bordeaux just east of Argentan at 0905 on August 18. By 1533 the neighboring town of Sai was cleared.

Even in this first shock of battle, valor was the order of the day. Colonel Harry D. McHugh, the regimental commander, setting the standard for all, personally led his troops through their initial baptism of fire. For his inspiring leadership,

he was awarded the Division's first Silver Star by Major General McBride.

Imbued with a new self-confidence, the men of the 318th forged ahead the next morning against terrific enemy infantry and armored resistance. Later in the day, the 317th Infantry in column of battalions passed through the lines of the embattled 318th and rammed forward in the face of withering hostile fire toward the high ground north of Argentan. By nightfall, the 317th, supported by the fire of the 318th, had shattered the fury of the Nazi defenders and occupied the commanding terrain north of the city.

During this attack by the 317th, Pfc. Hoyt T. Rowell of the 305th Medics earned the Division's first Distinguished Service Cross. With complete disregard for his own safety, Pfc. Rowell under a hail of enemy shells and bullets rendered aid to the wounded men of two front line companies. When friendly artillery began to fall close to the position, he rushed across an open field to an artillery observer and had the

fire lifted. Returning across the same exposed terrain, he continued to aid the wounded men of the 317th.

Just before midnight August 19, seven battalions of 80th Division and attached artillery blasted the city with five volleys, setting it afire. Amid unbelievable carnage, the Krauts began the evacuation of the shell torn city. Meanwhile seven miles to the east the junction of the Allied pincer movement at Chambois sealed the doom of the retreating German forces now caught within a ring of steel.

On August 20, the 317th and 318th Regiments, sweeping aside light enemy holding forces, seized Argentan.

Surging north along roads glutted with battered enemy vehicles and equipment, the Blue Ridge Infantrymen had a field day mopping up the wreckage of the once proud, invincible 7th German Army.

Lt Gen L.T. Gerow, Commander of the V Corps, summarized this initial combat experience of the 80th in a letter of commendation to Major General McBride.

"Upon the relief of the 80th Infantry Division from attachment to the V Corps, I desire to express to you,

and through you to the officers and men of your command, my personal thanks and appreciation for the excellent manner in which they functioned under my command.

"The fight put up by the 80th Infantry Division in the Alencon- Argentan area was a most gratifying one, resulting as it did in the destruction of such a large portion of the enemy forces. Inasmuch as this was the 80th Division's initial entry into combat, the division is to be commended on the excellent manner in which it carried out its role..."

Following this stunning blow to the Wehrmacht, the Division moved to a concentration area south of the Argentan-Exmes Road and engaged in a series of training problems on the latest methods of armor-infantry coordination.

SPEARHEAD TO THE EAST

Once again a part of General Patton's Third Army, the Blue Ridge Division swung south of Paris and, side by side with the 4th Armored Division, spearheaded the Allied drive across France.

The German forces rapidly withdrew with the hope of establishing a defense line east of the Marne River. However,

after crossing the Seine and Aube Rivers, our forces, flashing messages over the radios of the 80th Signal Co. to control the rapid movement, hotly pursued the fleeing Nazis across the Marne River into Chalons on August 29 before they could consolidate a defensive position.

So swiftly did our forces move that the supply lines began to stretch thinner and thinner. For the last 25 days in August alone, the truck fleet of the 80th QM Company travelled over 165,000 miles in an effort to supply our tremendous needs. The Blue Ridgers could get by on "K" and "C" rations and the Jerries didn't tarry long enough to cause a heavy expenditure of ammunition but gasoline was another question. Either more gasoline had to be secured or the forward movement would grind to a halt.

In the vicinity of Chalons which was being used as a German supply center, we struck it lucky. Over 80,000 gallons of gasoline were seized just in the nick of time. This permitted our vehicles to continue the dash to the east. In all, more than 200 railway cars loaded with valuable supplies were captured.

Pressing hard on the heels of the still retreating Krauts,

the 317th and 318th Regiments, followed by the recently returned 319th, crossed the Meuse River and seized Commercy on the 1st of September. Again we netted great stores of enemy materiel including thirty carloads of signal equipment and five warehouses filled with supplies of all kinds. Gasoline was once more the prize package and its capture aided materially in carrying the Division to the Moselle River.

History repeated itself on the following day when the 319th Infantry rolled into St. Mihiel where 26 years before in the same month the Division had participated in the famous reduction of the St. Mihiel Salient.

FIRST ACROSS THE MOSELLE RIVER

The advance to the heavily fortified Moselle River began immediately after the liberation of Commercy and St. Mihiel. The 3rd Bn. of the 319th Infantry, commanded by Lt. Col. Elliott B. Cheston, reached the bank of the Moselle River north of Toul at 1130, September 4th. On the opposite side of the river preparing defenses were elite Nazi paratroopers.

During the next few hours, the Nazis were to get another

taste of Blue Ridge teamwork. Capt. Alferce E. Wrenn's "C"

Company of the 305th Engineers immediately went to work with floats and bridge building material. At the same time, Lt. Col. John W. Browning's 905th FA Bn. knocked out six enemy machine guns and blasted the way for the crossing by the infantry.

At 1345 all preparations were completed. The infantry loaded on the Engineer's rubber floats at a concealed location up a small stream that runs into the Moselle River. So swiftly and unexpectedly was this assembly completed that one entire company in the first wave had slipped down the stream, then across the river and hit the other side before the enemy was aware of impending disaster. The spearhead of the Third Army had hurdled the Moselle River without a shot being fired.

Within 30 minutes from the time the first boat of the first wave started across, the last fighting elements of Lt. Col. Cheston's Battalion were scrambling up the opposite bank. The operation was accomplished without a single casualty.

By the next day the battalion with its jeeps, ambulances, trucks, ammunition and rations had crossed by means of floats,

((

two power-driven ferries and a partially repaired bridge. The first bridgehead across the Moselle River was firmly established.

Driving forward, the 319th Inf. occupied the high ground east of Toul and prepared to advance through the densely wooded Foret de Haye that lies between Toul and Nancy. The terrain greatly favored the enemy who were well armed with an unusually large number of automatic weapons. In this sector were many old fortifications of World War I, well suited to their defensive tactics.

Fighting their way step by step under continual harassing fire of small arms, mortars and artillery, the 319th doughboys captured Fort Villey le Sec and Fort Gondreville, the two anchors of the enemy line. Later they cleared out the Foret de Haye and were advancing on Nancy as part of the newly formed task force commanded by Brig. Gen Seabree, the Assistant Division Commander of the 35 Infantry Division, when they were ordered to rejoin the 80th.

THE EMBATTLED DIEULOUARD BRIDGEHEAD

Meanwhile, stiff enemy resistance and unfavorable terrain

combined to defeat our efforts to make crossings north of Toul in the strongly held Dieulouard and Pont a Mousson sectors. The Germans were registered in on the area and from their observation posts on the high hills east of the Moselle River, they had a commanding view of the entire valley. Enemy artillery fire was quickly brought to bear on any movement along the river.

Finally just before dawn on September 12, the 317th Infantry crossed the river at Dieulouard in assault boats under heavy enemy fire. While the 317th Infantry was battering its way through to the high ground beyond, the 305th Engineers and the 1117th Engineer Group which was attached to the Division disregarding continuous hostile fire, spanned the Moselle with pontoon bridges.

The 318th Infantry, less the 1st Bn, which was attached to the 4th Armored Division, crossed on these newly constructed bridges, seized Loisy and prepared to strike north to Mousson Hill.

In the afternoon the 313th FA crossed to give close support to the infantry. The Germans were trying desperately to destroy

((

the bridges and the crossing was made under very heavy artillery fire. Once over, the battalion, despite a rain of enemy artillery and mortar shells, dug in and sent barrage after barrage, some at point blank range, on the fanatically resisting enemy troops.

On the morning of the 13th, the Germans massed their available armor and infantry, then launched a series of high-powered counterattacks beginning at 0555. Striking hard, they penetrated the perimeter defenses of both the 317th and 318th Infantry, recaptured Loisy, overran the Command Post of the 318th Infantry and nearly reached the bridges at Dieulouard.

Swiftly recovering from the initial blow, our troops by 0825 bloodily halted the Nazi advance and knocked out a large part of the rapidly dwindling hostile armor. Our forces regained all lost positions prior to nightfall.

On the morning of September 14, Major Carl B. Nuessner's 3rd Battalion of the 318th Infantry moved out of Loisy and attacked northward toward towering Mousson Hill. This high vantage point, crowned with a ruined castle, rises above the town of Pont-a-Mousson and was the key to the Moselle River in the 80th's zone of advance..

(C) .
The 3rd Battalion overcame heavy opposition, seized the town of Atton at the foot of the hill and by 1350 had stormed up the steep slope and reached its crest.

Brig Gen Edmund W. Searby, Division Artillery Commander, accompanied the attacking front line infantry. Driven by his desire to gain this high terrain feature which was vital for artillery observation, he was the first to reach the top of the hill. Personally acting as a forward observer, he directed fire missions which caught the German forces by surprise and resulted in the complete destruction of two enemy artillery batteries.

However, before the infantry could consolidate its position, the Germans counterattacked in force supported by heavy concentrations of artillery and mortar fire. An enemy tank, plunging forward, reached a point about 150 yards from the place where Gen Searby was urging on the hard pressed doughboys. After a timely shell stopped the tank, the crew emerged from the damaged vehicle and sprayed our troops with automatic fire.

General Searby with utter disregard for his own safety retrieved a rifle dropped by one of our wounded and opened fire on the enemy tank crew. In the ensuing fire fight, this gallant officer lost his life.

DEFENSE OF MOUSSON HILL

Early on the morning of September 15, another strong German counterattack was launched. This time the Nazis succeeded in cutting the extended supply line of the 3rd Bn. by recapturing Atton.

Though surrounded and outnumbered, Major Neussner's men stubbornly repelled all enemy attempts to dislodge them from the hill. 80th Division Artillery liaison planes, flying through intense flak, managed to drop urgently needed ammunition, food and blood plasma to the beleaguered men..

To relieve pressure on the encircled troops, two squadrons of P47s repeatedly strafed the German held town of Atton.

The 319th Infantry, which meanwhile as part of Task Force Seabree had swept through the Foret de Haye to within sight of Nancy, was recalled and rushed north to reinforce our embattled

bridgehead. The 1st Battalion of the 319th, attacking north from Loisy, retook Atton and shattered the encirclement of the 3rd Bn. of the 318th Infantry just before dark on September 16.

Aiding in the relief of the troops on Mousson Hill was the 1st Battalion of the 318th Infantry with a company of medium tanks of the 4th Armored Division. Having fought their way back from Arracourt where the 4th Armored Division with the 1st Battalion of the 318th attached had knifed its way far behind the German front lines, the reinforced 1st Battalion stormed up St. Genevieve Hill which overlooks the bridges at Dieulouard. The amazed Krauts, caught from the rear, were quickly overwhelmed. After clearing the Germans from this key terrain feature, the battalion attacked north through the Foret de Facq and cleared the Germans from the concealed supply and assembly area that was being used as a base for their attacks on Mousson Hill.

Assisting in this remarkable drive back through hostile territory was Lt. Philip H. Wagner's 1st Platoon of the 80th Rcn. Troop. Three days before, the platoon was ordered to

reconnoiter the area east of the Division's hard fought bridgehead, Lt. Wagner's men had forced their way through to the rear of the enemy lines, engaged the enemy on 15 separate occasions, radioed back valuable information that played a vital role in the advance of the Division and then assumed the point position for the 1st Battalion, 318th Infantry as it advanced toward St. Genevieve Hill. During this hit and run mission, the Rcn. platoon had only one man wounded.

During the critical days of the bridgehead, Major General McBride, ignoring personal danger as always, repeatedly visited the foremost units on the east bank of the river. His fearless courage gave renewed confidence to the troops who were fighting savagely to hold and expand the bridgehead despite fierce counterattacks and incessant enemy artillery and mortar fire.

After strengthening our positions on the high ground running from Mousson Hill, St. Genevieve Hill, Landremont Ridge and Falaise Ridge, the 317th and 318th Infantries forged ahead through the Bois De St. Clement but were unable initially to seize the German strongpoints on Mt. Toulon and Mt. St. Jean. In the

meantime, the 319th Infantry on the north flank expanded the bridgehead to include the small towns of Lesmenils, Morville-Sur-Seille and Port-Sur-Seille.

STORMING MT. TOULON

Preparations were then made for a coordinated attack, October 8, on Mt. Toulon, Mt. St. Jean and the high ground overlooking the Seille River in the vicinity of Benicourt, Clemery and Manoncourt.

A thunderous bombardment on hostile positions by heavy weapons, including nine battalions of artillery, three cannon companies, one company of 4.2 chemical mortars and three inch tank destroyer guns paved the way for the advance of the infantry. In addition, two batteries of four barreled .50 caliber machine guns from the 633rd AAA Bn. flashed 79,500 tracer bullets into enemy positions on Mt. Toulon and the surrounding areas. This successful experiment with these multi-barreled anti-aircraft guns firing on ground targets materially assisted the advancing doughboys.

This terrific concentration of fire power under the direction

of Brig Gen Jay W. McKelvie, commanding the Division Artillery, dazed the Nazi defenders and paved the way for the infantry, which jumped off at 0600, to win a complete victory.

The 319th Infantry raced forward and seized the commanding ground on Mt. Toulon in less than a hour. Benicourt, Clemery and Manoncourt fell to the 318th Infantry by 1135. Bitterly defended positions on Mt. St. Jean slowed up the advance for a time but were overrun by the 317th Infantry prior to 1530.

Over 1260 glum-faced Supermen, virtually the entire force occupying the objectives, were captured. For the most part the German forces were so completely stunned by this steam roller attack that their ineffective resistance caused the Blue Ridge men only light casualties.

Major General Manton S. Eddy, Commander of XII Corps, paid the following tribute to our rapid advance up to and across the Moselle River.

"Since the 19th of August, the 80th Infantry Division has smashed the enemy back and back in one successful operation

after another. It seized Chalons Sur Marne and Bar le Duc.

It routed the Boche from his stronghold west and north of the Moselle from Toul to Pont a Mousson, and then crossed and established a vital bridgehead over the Moselle which it has secured, defended, and enlarged against vigorous enemy counterattacks. All members of the division have conducted themselves in a manner of which they may well be proud."

FIRST INTO THE SAAR BASIN

From October 10 to November 7, the 80th Division held defensive positions west of the Seille River and prepared for the great Third Army sweep into the industrially vital Saar Basin. Supplies, including quantities of ammunition and gasoline, were massed for the mighty drive..

On the 8th of November at 0600, a bombardment of intense ferocity by all available weapons, including captured German 81mm and 120mm mortars which had been repaired by the 780th Ordnance Company, heralded the jump off of the Blue Ridge Infantrymen. The Germans were caught off balance again. They did not believe we would attack in such unfavorable weather

and attempt a crossing of the rain swollen Seille River.

In the face of light enemy resistance, the hurdling of the river was accomplished by fords, engineer boats, foot and pontoon bridges. By nightfall, the high ground across the Seille River was firmly in our hands.

The 9th of November saw the 80th pushing forward and overrunning all opposition. By that afternoon, the Division's front faced Delme Ridge, which is a bald top plateau 1380 feet above sea level and approximately four miles long, located squarely across our pathway to the Saar Basin. From its crest German troops could command the entire valley to the west including the Seille River. Its importance can best be summarized by the news comment of the New York Times, "The ridge was one of the most important objectives in Lt. Gen George S. Patton's attack and just had to be taken if the Metz-Nancy line were to be straightened."

By 1600 the same day, the 319th Infantry, supported by tanks and a devastating artillery barrage, had swept over the bitterly resisting Germans entrenched on the forward slopes

and were storming up the critical heights of Delme Ridge.

Going up the breath-taking slope, the 80th's sturdy infantrymen relentlessly plodded on. By evening, our troops held all but the northernmost tip of the ridge.

Despite the arrival of German SS troops to stem our advance, the 318th Infantry, the following morning, cleared the northern tip of the ridge. The 80th continued the drive to the northeast and the German rout shifted into high gear.

So confused were the Krauts by the rapidity of the move that our onrushing men overran the rear installations of the 48th German Division, capturing headquarters and supply personnel as well as replacements who had arrived on the scene less than an hour before they were taken prisoner.

On November 11, the 1st Battalion of the 317th Infantry reached a point approximately one kilometer from the bridge across the Nied River in the vicinity of Han-Sur-Nied. By 1300, Major (then Captain) James A. Craig, in command of Co A, had led the 1st Battalion's advance elements to the last covered position before the river. The approach to the river was a long

open gentle slope and enemy observation from the high ground beyond the town of Han-Sur-Nied was excellent. Accompanying the infantry troops in the advance was a group of reconnaissance tanks of the 6th Armored Division.

Paced by Major Craig, Company A rushed the bridge and seized it intact. Although encountering raking enemy fire of all types including ack-ack, Major Craig and eighteen of his men entered the town of Han-Sur-Nied. For approximately 4 hours, until reinforcements could be brought up, this small group valiantly withstood all enemy efforts to destroy the vital bridge. As a result of this action, the continued rapid advance of the 317th Infantry and the 6th Armored Division was made possible.

Our relentless drive across the Seille and Nied Francaise Rivers had thrown a lethal monkey wrench into the German plan of orderly withdrawal. This deep penetration had outflanked the great Fortress of Metz and opened the way for its capture by the 5th and 95th Infantry Divisions.

Continuing the attack, the towns of Arriance, Chemery,

Adelange, Boustroff, Viller and Eincheville fell before the surging advance of our force. In the face of heavy artillery and mortar fire as well as the usual mines, demolitions and road blocks, the 80th plunged across the Nied Allemande River to roll back a badly shaken enemy from the important mining town of Falquemont.

PIERCING THE MAGINOT LINE

Before the Blue Ridge men lay the Maginot Line once reported to be the World's strongest system of fortifications. Now the old forts were being used as command posts, supply centers and troop shelters by the defending Germans. Field fortifications, from which the actual fighting was to be done, were prepared around these strong points. Manning the hastily about-faced line were recently arrived German units.

On the morning of November 25, the men of the 80th under cover of a barrage of artillery moved into the attack. Later a German battalion commander, whose organization was ground to pieces in a matter of minutes after the assault got under way, described our attack as remarkable.

He expressed amazement at the skillful utilization of tactical advantages and the cooperation of our infantry and armor with all supporting heavy weapons. He concluded by lamenting, "My battalion is no more".

Forts Lauderfang, Teting Woods, Bambiderstroff, Ker Fent, Bambesh, Kinseling, Einseling and Quatre Vents fell before the onrushing might of the 317th, 318th and 319th Infantry on the same day.

Paced by the 90mm self-propelled guns of the 610 TDs which shattered over 13 reinforced pillboxes, the Blue Riders on November 26 smashed their way out of the Maginot Line and stood before the industrial heart of the Saar Basin.

CAPTURE OF ST. AVOLD

Overwhelming strongly held German positions, the 80th moved forward and on November 27 captured the key city of St. Avold, formerly a German Army Headquarters and one of the coal centers for the Nazi War Machine.

This seizure of St. Avold was described by Donald Mackenzie, noted war correspondent, commenting on the Third

Army dash through the Saar, as the place where "Gen Karl von Rundstedt suffered perhaps his greatest defeat of the present campaign."

When the Blue Ridge Division occupied St. Avold, information was secured that time bombs had been placed in buildings likely to be occupied by our troops and that a radio had been hidden to enable secret agents to report on the damage done. Search revealed the radio and two time bombs.

Immediately extensive searches of all quarters occupied by our troops was ordered and several more time bombs set to explode in 6 days were found.

During the period, the Division remained in St. Avold a total of four time bombs detonated and destroyed four buildings.

On the 4th of December, the Division continued the attack and hammered its way through the towns of Pfarrebersweiler, Tentelingen and Kochern. The important town of Merlebach was liberated December 6.

This drive of over 40 miles from the Seille River was

carried out in the face of swollen rivers, flooded fields and constantly adverse weather conditions. Air and mechanized support was severely hampered and much of the time entirely lacking. In spite of these difficulties over 4000 prisoners were taken in less than a month.

Prior to being relieved by the Sixth Armored Division, the leading elements of the 80th Infantry Division had penetrated the German frontier to a point less than five miles from Saarbrücken.

On December 7, the Division passed into a rest period after being in continuous contact with the enemy for 102 days. During the following ten days, training and rehabilitation of equipment were carried on. Our artillery continued to fire missions in support of the 6th Armored Division.

Leaving the rest area on December 18, the Division moved southeast to the vicinity of Rohrbach in preparation for their attack to breach the Siegfried Line. The Division had hardly time to move into this new position when the German counterattack and breakthrough in the Ardennes assumed the proportions of a

major offensive.

DASH TO LUXEMBOURG

The spearheads of the German armor on the 19th of December were heading in the direction of Liege and the vital port of Antwerp. It was at this critical moment that the 80th Division was given the mission of protecting the city of Luxembourg, Capital of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, from the rapidly advancing German columns.

A tribute to the stamina shown by the 80th was expressed by the New York Journal: "The 80th Division performed a feat as remarkable as any of Stonewall Jackson's foot cavalry. It was ready to go into the fighting line south of Saarbrucken when orders came to go northward, and it went 150 miles swiftly to get into action".

War correspondent Robert Richards of the New York Daily News, speaking of the movement, said: "One regiment was loaded into trucks there (Bitche) at 1 A.M. December 19 with orders to form a defensive line north of Luxembourg and hold it to the last man. Luxembourg was a vital communication point and

sheltered at least 50,000 men, women and children. The regiment was in line the morning of Dec. 20, registered its guns and opened fire. By afternoon the whole Division was in position..."

Upon their arrival north of the City of Luxembourg, the Division took up positions preparatory to launching an attack in the early hours of the 22nd of December. This assault on the German flank caught the Supermen unprepared. In Ettelbruck nearly a battalion of enemy artillery was trapped and slaughtered. Many other targets presented themselves and were promptly disposed of by the quick acting infantry and artillery of the Division. There was no further advance by German forces toward Luxembourg City. They had met the "Stonewall" of the 80th Division.

Continuing the drive into the southern flank of Rundstedt's salient, the 80th the following day pressed onward further disorganizing the westbound Nazi troops. Among the 390 Germans seized in this attack was the 10,000 prisoner taken by the Division in World War II.

RELIEF OF BASTOGNE

Essential for the success of the German penetration was the

seizure of Bastogne. With the capture of this vital communication center, the Nazi forces could fan out along an excellent road net-work. Failure to take Bastogne would force the Krauts to continue their offensive with extremely tenuous and vulnerable supply arteries or make a complete withdrawal from the exposed salient.

The onrushing German armor and infantry crashed by on both sides of the city but the stalwart 101st Airborne Division along with other American troops held firm as the Nazis circled the stronghold.

The elite troops of the German Army struck with all the fury of desperation to crack this key point that was endangering the entire offensive which the German soldiers were told would reach Antwerp and even Paris. The success of General von Rundstedt's plan was wavering in the balance.

Meanwhile further to the east, the 80th was penetrating deeper into the left flank of the German salient. The 318th Infantry, minus the 3rd Bn. which was engaged at Ettelbruck, was motorized and rushed 22 miles to join with the 4th Armored

Division in the relief of Bastogne.

On Christmas Day, side by side with the tanks of the 4th Armored, the men of the 318th began to batter their way through murderous opposition. Over frozen, snow-covered terrain, the attack gained nine hard fought miles in the face of constant fire from machine guns and mortars manned by Panzer Grenadiers.

By the following day the gap between the rescuers and the besieged had been reduced to 4000 yards. A coordinated plan of action for both was now necessary and means of communication had to be established.

Early in the evening of the 26th, tank elements of the 4th Armored Division managed to get into the besieged city of Bastogne but were unable to get back out again.

1st Lt Walter P. Carr of the 2nd Bn, 318th Inf, leading a four man patrol, undertook the hazardous night mission of slipping through the ring of steel into Bastogne. Success was dependent in no small part on the use of the German red and green light signals which had been learned from the enemy during the previous two days.

The patrol reached an Engineer outpost of the besieged city at 0430 on December 27.

"They did everything but kiss, they were so damn glad," Lt Carr commented later. "I told them how the relieving forces were progressing and felt like a GI Santa Claus."

After an exchange of valuable information at the 101st Airborne Command Post, Lt Carr and his small patrol returned to their own lines with an overlay of the defense positions within the city and the situation report of the 101st. Lt Carr delivered these vital documents and then rejoined his outfit in time to attack with his unit at 0800.

Aided by the detailed information of the front line situation at Bastogne, the Blue Ridge doughboys and the 4th Armored tankers rammed slowly forward through withering hostile artillery, nebelwerfer and small arms fire. Driving the Krauts from one position after another, the 2nd Bn., 318th Infantry finally knifed through to the lines of the 101st Airborne Division on December 28 at 1000. The relief of Bastogne was completed and von Rundstedt's hope for a major breakthrough had

collapsed.

Lt Col Harry E. Brown, 4th Armored Division Staff Officer,
paid this tribute to the men of the Blue Ridge: "The Eightieth's
doughboys did themselves proud. You can't say too much for them."