



## **"The 45<sup>th</sup>: The Story of the 45th Infantry Division"**

From the collection of Felix A. Cizewski

Felix served in the 45<sup>th</sup> Signal Company, 45<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division from as early as January, 1945 until his discharge in November, 1945.

THE 45<sup>TH</sup>



This is one of a series of G. I. Stories of the Ground, Air and Service Forces in the European Theater of Operations, issued by the Stars and Stripes, a publication of the Information and Education Division, Special and Information Services ETOUSA... Major General Robert T. Frederick, commanding the 45th Infantry, Division, lent his cooperation to the preparation of the pamphlet, and basic material was supplied to the editors by his staff.

Name .....

Date Enlisted .....

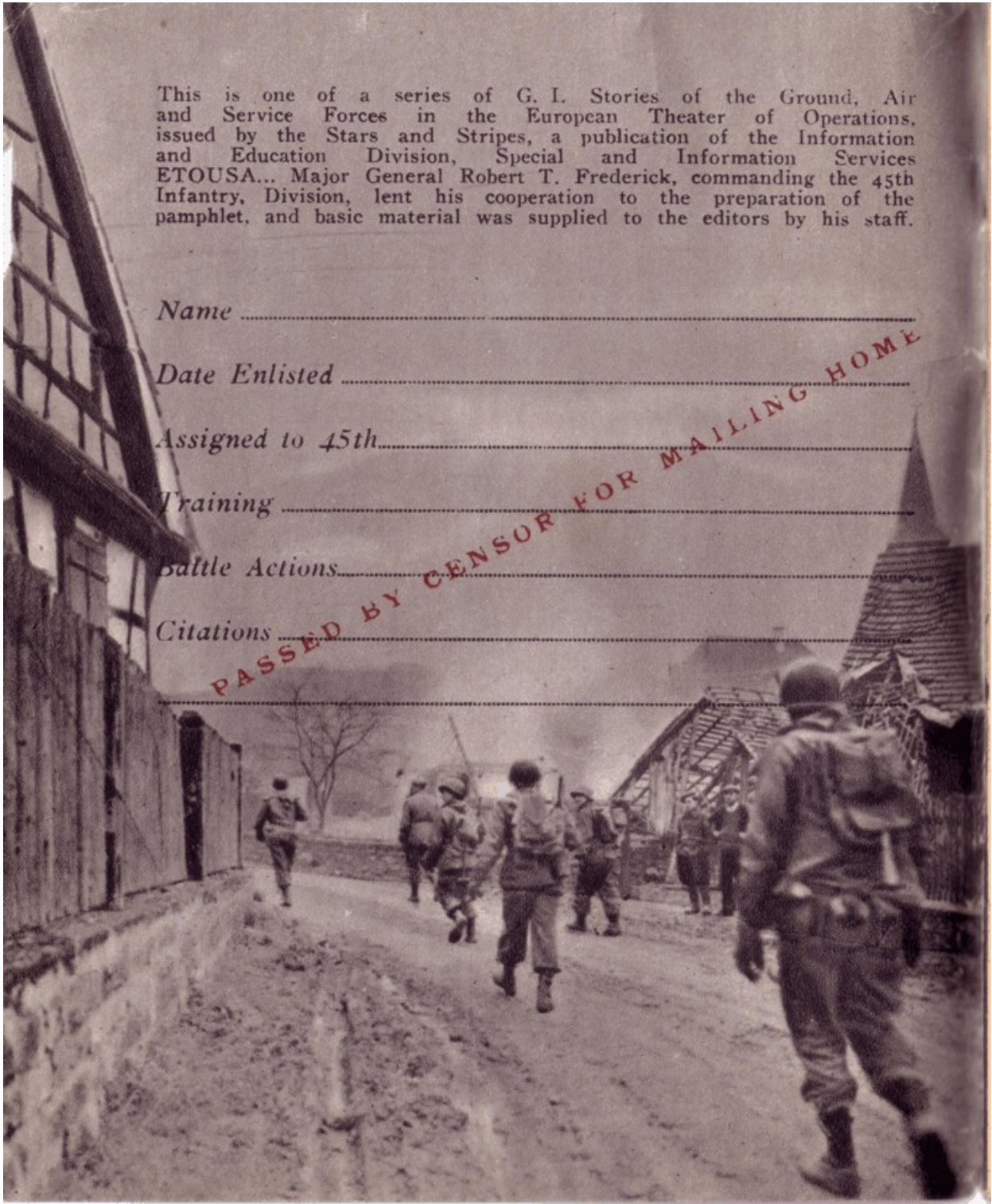
Assigned to 45th.....

Training .....

Battle Actions.....

Citations .....

PASSED BY CENSOR FOR MAILING HOME





★ THE battle record of the 45th Division under my predecessors, Major General W.W. Eagles and Major General Troy H. Middleton, is well known and has brought honor and credit to the division. Although my association with the division is but recent, I was close to the 45th and saw it in action during the long months in the mountains of Italy and on the beachhead at Anzio. I know its achievements and its capabilities. ★

★ We stand, today, ready to go on with the task of destroying the German defense. That task has demanded, and will continue to demand, the utmost effort by all of us. Your record of achievement under great hardships promises successful accomplishment of the task before us. It will not be easy, but I am confident that the division will continue to meet the demands placed upon it. ★

★ I wish to congratulate the men of the 45th Division and attached units. Without the wholehearted cooperation and effort you have given to the long hard fight, the division's successes would not have been possible. ★

Robert T. Frederick

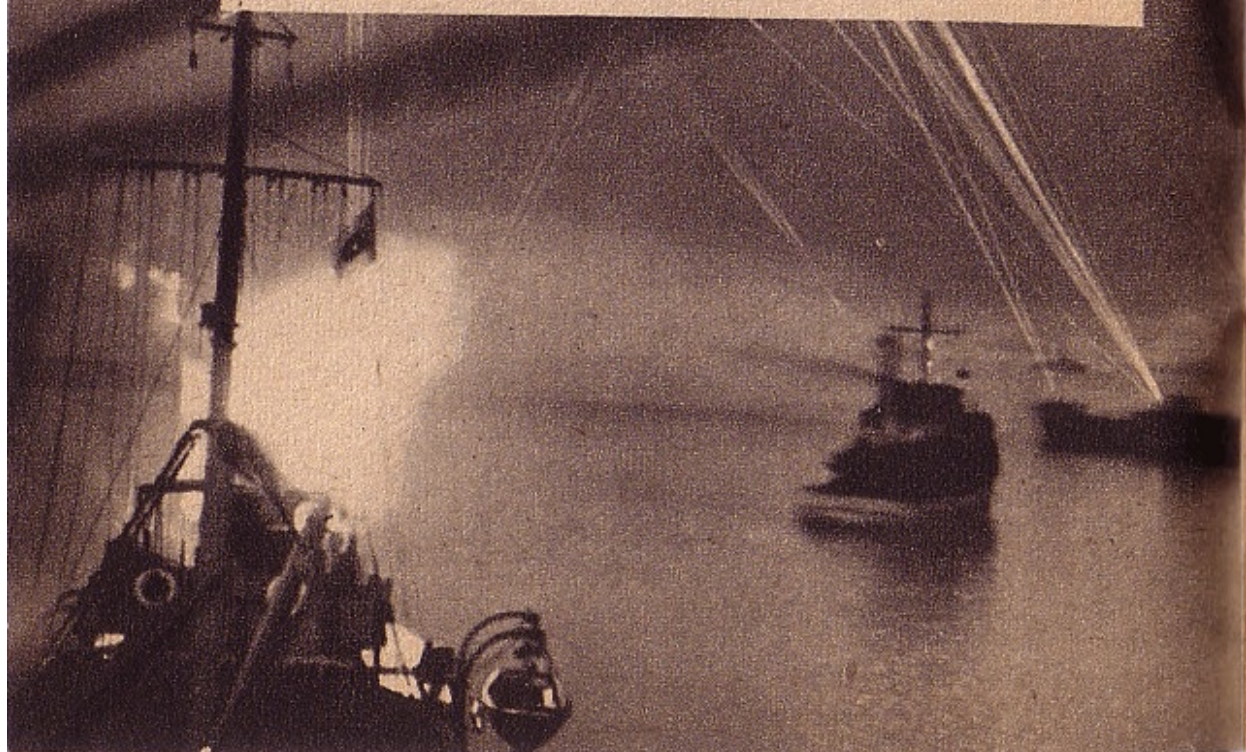
Major General, Commanding

**THE STORY OF THE**  
**45<sup>th</sup> INFANTRY DIVISION**

**F**OUR D-Days: *Sicily ... Salerno ... Anzio ...  
Southern France.*

*Milestones: The Winter Line below Cassino ...  
Rome ... the Vosges mountains ... Alsace ... Germany.*

*Over a thousand miles and through more than 420  
combat days, the 45th Infantry Division has taken  
every one of its objectives.*



DEC. 15, 1944: Exactly four months after the veteran 45th Div. splashed onto the beaches of Southern France to make its fourth D-Day landing—a weary, mud-stained infantryman hit the dirt behind a stone marker designating the borderline between France and Germany. The marker was dated 1826, but the GI, using it for a shield as enemy machine gun fire raked the area, didn't pay much attention to that. When the fire lifted momentarily, he rolled off to one side, picked himself up and plodded forward—into Germany.

*"You are going to make an amphibious landing in Europe. Your job and that of the few divisions who will land with you is to keep the enemy busy and occupied while we prepare a huge American Army."*

The Thunderbird veteran wasn't pounding an iron fist against Der Fuehrer's door by accident. This marked the beginning of the showdown campaign. To reach the German border, the 45th Div. had gained one objective after another—punched through the Vosges mountains, spearheaded the first army ever to penetrate the thickly wooded Alsatian terrain. It had plunged, shoved up the 600-mile Rhone valley and captured cities like Epinal, Grenoble, Bourg.

Before this came the sweating out of another—the fourth—amphibious operation. In the background hovered a series of daring plans and an equal number of successful operations.

Italy was the jumping-off point for the landing on the Riviera. When the first landing craft scraped the beach near Ste. Maxime, men who had learned the hard way



charged ashore. These were the same veterans who had slashed into the defensive breastworks guarding the Sicilian coast, July 10, 1943. These were the same veterans who made it possible for the 45th Div. to write the glorious record of 420 days in the front lines.

The 45th team brought the experiences of Sicilian operations to Salerno's beaches. It had learned to match new problems with new tactics. During mountain fighting of the Winter Line below Cassino, the 45th added new chapters to its book of tricks.

Thunderbird troops were on the last lap of the long road to Rome, when the 45th landed on the tiny strip of beach that was to become the hell of Anzio. Four months later, after incessant shelling, constant air raids and unflagging tension, 45th Div. doughs stormed from

their foxholes to smash the iron ring which crack German troops had clamped on them from January to May, 1944. They moved forward in daylight for the first time since the initial landing.

Capture of Rome, the liberation of the first great European capital, marked the beginning of the payoff in Fortress Europe. During the twelve months the 45th had carried out its mission of "keeping the Germans occupied," the invasion of western Europe was being planned. Normandy landings came on the heels of the fall of Rome. For the 45th Div., which knew what ship-to-shore landings were like, the Normandy operation represented lessons learned in the bloody laboratories that were Sicily, Salerno, Anzio.

Immediately after Allied forces smashed into Normandy, the veteran 45th resumed an old routine. It rehearsed amphibious landings.

The fourth D-Day broke at 0800 Aug. 15, 1944. Thunderbird troops, now part of the Seventh Army, struck along Riviera beaches. Once again, the 45th Div. faced north—faced towards Berlin.

#### BULLETIN

*Pearl Harbor, Dec. 7—(AP)—Huge Japanese naval and air armada attacked here two hours ago.*

**B**ACK in the days before Pearl Harbor, the newspapers told of Russian advances in Finland. The hit tune then was "Tangerine." Cincinnati had just taken the World Series with a 2 to 1 win over Detroit. In Europe,

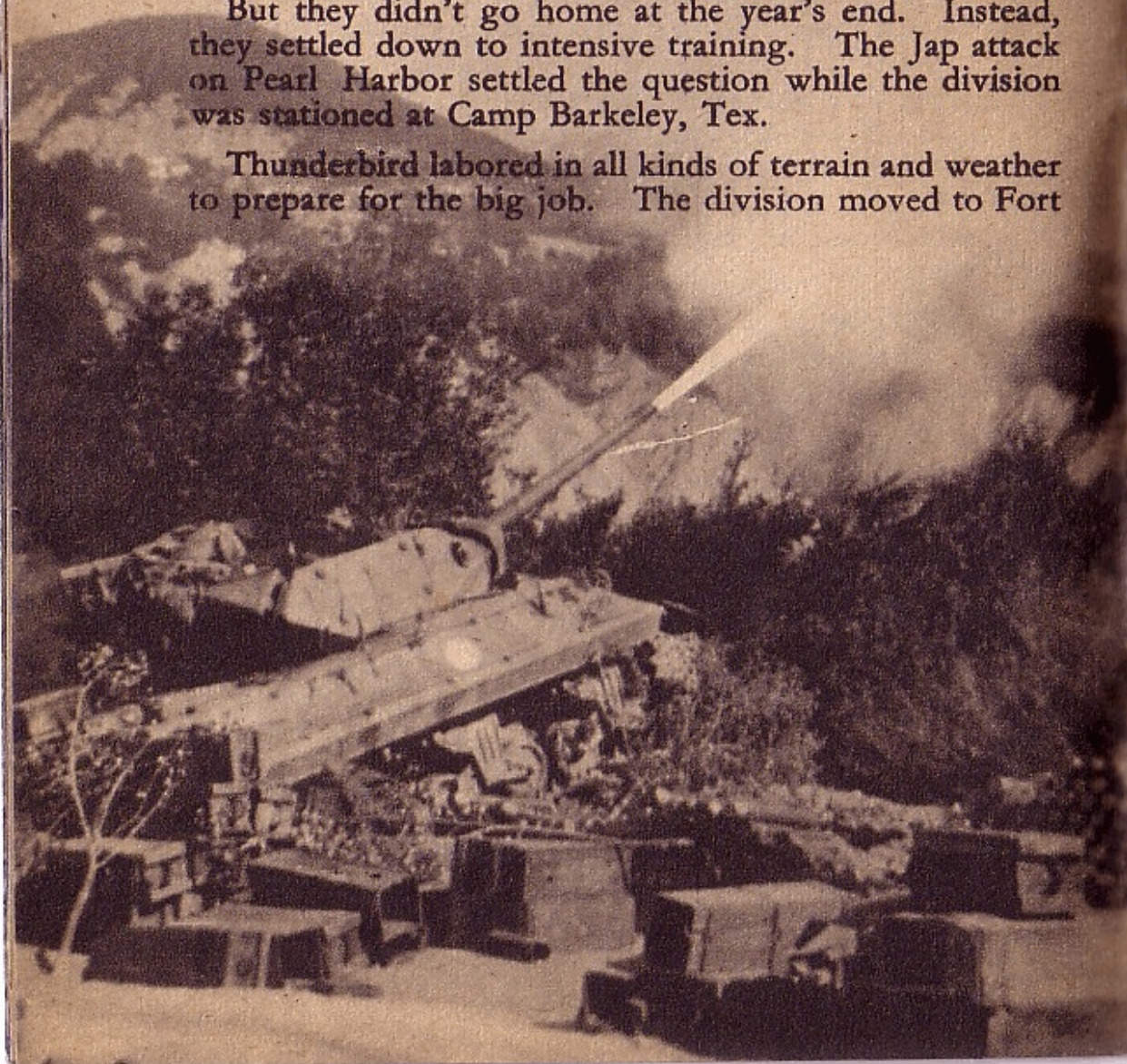


gathering clouds of war darkened. But many Americans still said it couldn't happen.

On Sept. 16, 1941, the 45th Div. was reactivated, and the boys at Fort Sill, Okla., during ten minute breaks said, "We'll be back in a year."

But they didn't go home at the year's end. Instead, they settled down to intensive training. The Jap attack on Pearl Harbor settled the question while the division was stationed at Camp Barkeley, Tex.

Thunderbird labored in all kinds of terrain and weather to prepare for the big job. The division moved to Fort





Devens, Mass., then to Pine Camp, N.Y., and to Camp Pickett, Va. Special mountain training was conducted in Virginia's Blue Ridge range, and amphibious training at Cape Cod, Mass., and Norfolk, Va.

This was the shake-down period when tactics were learned, physical endurance built up.

Thunderbird finally was ready for flight. The formidable convoy of 45th Div. troops and equipment sailed June 8, 1943, from Norfolk for Oran, North Africa.

In the Arzew area of French Morocco, the first Arabs and their overloaded burros were encountered. Here, the final polish was rubbed into amphibious operations. While doughs attempted to figure the Moroccan monetary system, final plans were made for the assault landing on Sicily.

# SICILY



## "BATTLE ON THEIR HANDS, BLISTERS ON THEIR FEET"

*The sergeant looked at his watch. "Ten minutes to go." He wiped his forehead, then gripped the gunwales of the landing craft.*

**D**-DAY, June 10, the Thunderbird Division swarmed the beach near Scoglitti, Sicily. It was the first major amphibious landing on the European continent.

Sicily was the scene of sharp and stubborn fighting, of long marches. Doughs had a battle on their hands, blisters on their feet.

From Scoglitti, the division moved inland, grabbing off Vittoria and Ragusa. Directly to the north lay the strongly defended Comiso airport. It housed 120 aircraft of which at least 25 were operational. Huge ammunition dumps ringed the field for several miles. Striking hard from the flank, Thunderbird troops took the airport, all the planes and valuable ammunition and materiel. The Germans fell back, reorganized and launched a desperate counter-attack. But the thrust was repelled, and attackers were battered even harder.

With Comiso taken, the division moved to its next objective. After a bitter fight, during which elements of the Hermann Goering Div. were defeated, Biscari was occupied. Again the division plunged ahead, along with the British. Vizzini, headquarters for the Goering troops, fell.



*"Man! I don't mind fightin' these Krauts, but it shore is rough tryin' to catch up with 'em!"*

THE throttle was pulled back as the 45th rolled ahead. Caltanissetta, Sicily's largest inland city and a Fascist stronghold, fell before the sweep of Thunderbird troops. A large arsenal and considerable rolling stock were captured. North of San Caterina, a hard fight developed, but the 45th slashed along to reach the Palermo-Messina highway. Large enemy equipment stores were seized, including Sicily's largest oil and gasoline depots.

Now, the division swung east on the coast road, clearing and mopping up resistance until it reached the Motta Hill mass. This was the sector, near San Stefano, which the world was to know as "Bloody Ridge."

"Bloody Ridge" was the toughest fight of the Sicilian campaign. It was a series of five peaks with slopes so steep that equipment and supplies had to be manhandled. The enemy was dug-in with artillery and mortars on each peak. Infantry inched up the first slope, only to come under artillery fire from the next peak. The story was the same for each succeeding peak.

After four days of fighting up steep ridges under complete enemy observation, "Bloody Ridge" finally was taken. The 45th Div. had proved itself. Thunderbird pulled back to rest near Trabia—a well deserved rest after 22 days of sustained combat.

Sicily had been occupied. The first major step on the long rough road to Rome had been achieved. The next station change was Salerno.



# SALERNO

## A TOE HOLD ON THE CONTINENT

*"Hell, no," the doughface laughed. "Nothing's going to happen to me. My wife's too young to be a widow."*

SEPT. 10, 1943: The 45th Div. sprang ashore at Paestum near Salerno, Italy. The initial operation lasted five days. Germans retaliated with an all-out effort to drive the division from the bitterly-contested beach. They nearly succeeded in pounding a wedge through the Allied forces—a wedge that might have reached the sea. But doughs of the 45th took their objective, held it.

The Calore-Sele Rivers salient became the pivot on which the Salerno operation revolved. Here, Thunderbird troops smacked the line harder than ever before. Forces were consolidated, the beachhead made secure.



Although casualties were high, the enemy began referring to The Team as the "Falcon Division." Death stalked the Nazis wherever the Thunderbird was seen.

The division pitted its major strength against the cracking German defense, then turned inland. Stiff resistance was encountered near Olivetto and Quaglietta where, months before, Germans had constructed strong defenses. But the 45th breached this line and rolled over Eboli and S. Angelo di Lombardi. Again the direction of the advance swerved as the Thunderbird moved on Benevento, to the northeast.

It is 209 miles by air from the beaches of Salerno to Venafro, but much longer as the infantry moves—most of these miles were up and down.

As in Sicily, the Germans exercised great skill in mine-laying and demolition. Nearly every bridge in this



rugged, mountainous country was blown and every possible by-pass heavily mined. Division engineer units worked heroically to expedite the forward movement.

The fight the Germans put up at Guardia was their strongest bid after Salerno. Here, a steep hill separated the division from the town proper and the drive up the hill's slope had to be made in the face of devastating fire. During this action, Germans first used their multi-barreled mortar. Someone labeled it "Screaming Mee-mie." Men dug deeper. The battle for Guardia lasted most of the day and that night. The following morning the town had been taken and the penetrating troops shoved ahead, adding Telesse and Piedimonte d'Alife to the captured list.



Suddenly, the terrain flattened out and veteran doughs saw the broad, flat "pool table" that was the valley of the Volturno River. The swift-moving stream, swollen by continuous rains, snaked diagonally across their path. To reach the enemy staring down at Thunderbird from dug-in positions in the hills ahead, it was necessary to cross the three-mile stretch of valley and to throw a bridgehead across the river.

### **BATTLE OF MEN, MUD AND MULES**

**A**FTER 46 days of fighting following the Salerno landing, leading elements crossed the Volturno, Nov. 3, 1943, and swung north. There was another range ahead and these mountains were among the most rugged in Italy. The cold, penetrating rain splattered unceasingly. There began the battle of "Men, Mud and Mules."

Immediate objective after bridging the Volturno was Venafro. Here again, extremely bitter fighting preceded the taking of the town. With the tortuous mountain trails too steep and winding for jeeps to pass, supply problems became acute.

Mule teams were formed. Supply personnel became "mule skimmers." Food, ammunition—everything the troops needed for living and fighting—were hauled up the mountainside on the backs of these mules. Where mules couldn't go, men struggled with pack-boards to "get the stuff up there." Mule skimmers operated at night because nearly all the treacherous and steep trails were under observation by day.



To reach Venafro, division elements pulled an end run. A week later, the "pool table" became an impact area and the mountains echoed the screech of "Meemies" and the wail of artillery.

On the town's far side, Germans had established a well-defended, prepared line. It was their intention to hold off the Allied advance at this line for the winter. Continuous snow and rain, extremely difficult terrain and constant enemy observation made the fighting exceptionally severe. To the dough, it seemed that every hill he took led to a still higher hill. And the Germans always were there—waiting. Despite these conditions, the division pushed ahead to capture Pozzilli, Concasale, Lagone and other mountain towns, each of which bristled with enemy defenses.

Germans had been using Acquafondale, Viticuso and Lagone for supply points. Bitter fighting occurred daily in the exchange of ridges, hills and mountains surrounding these towns. These were days when Thunderbird troops built "foxholes" from mountain boulders because the ground was too rocky and solid for digging. These were the days when the wounded were evacuated by mule-back. The area was tagged, "Purple Heart Alley."

Division Artillery came into its own and hammered the enemy without letup. Combat patrols and raiding parties added to the enemy's punishment. Slowly, but steadily, the Nazis were being shoved back. Thunderbird GIs fought their way up Mt. Molino, took Hills 960, 1040, 1115, all along the road to S. Elia, which lies north of Cassino.

Early November sped along to Thanksgiving Day. Thanksgiving gave way to Christmas. Gifts got up to mountain foxholes by muleback. The low, occasional humming of "Silent Night" often was shattered by the rushing "whoosh" of the Purple Heart Blues.

After 119 combat days, the 45th was relieved Jan. 9, 1944. There was another job to do.

*Routine: the sergeant gripped his hand grenade and crawled toward the German machine gun nest. He pulled the pin, lobbed the grenade and crawled away as his buddy sprayed the nest with his Tommygun. The "day's work" had started at nightfall for the patrols.*



**One of the Joes  
Who Brings Victory**



**St. Tropez Bag:  
4781 Germans**



ENGLAND

BELGIUM

FRANCE

SWITZERLAND

ITALY

SICILY

Atlantic Ocean

Adriatic Sea

PALERMO

MESSINA

Etna

Termini

BLOODY RIDGE

Callanissetta

Biscari

Vitoria

RAGUSA

Scoglitti

END RUN

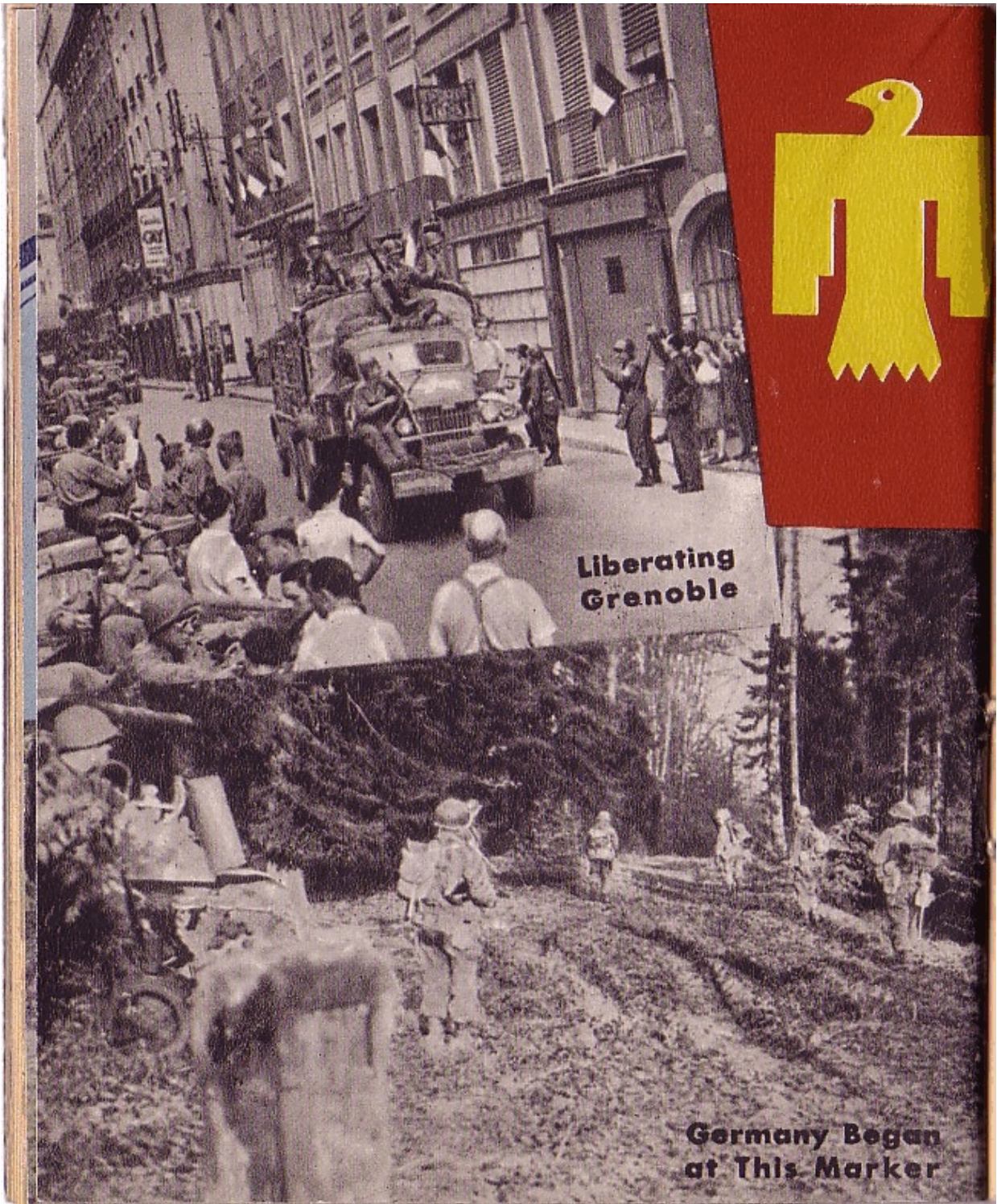
ROME

CASINO

NAPLES

SALERNO





**Liberating Grenoble**

**Germany Began at This Marker**





## **BACKS TO THE SEA, FACING ROME**

**T**HE silence of the mist-shrouded morning was misleading. It gave no warning of the hell that was to be Anzio. The lonely stretch of Italian coast looked gaunt and uninviting to first Thunderbirdmen who hit the beach on the heels of the 3rd—the Marne Division.

Elements of the 45th landed at Anzio Jan. 22. Nine days later, the entire division was committed.

Anzio was flat.

It was open to complete daytime observation because the German perimeter defense was built along the hills surrounding the beachhead. Nazis perched on these



hills, spitting shells from semi-circular vantage points. Thunderbird men dived for foxholes, stayed there.

Everyone moved underground at Anzio. All day, long-range artillery fire harassed the small strip containing Allied forces. German railroad guns, sited in the Alban Hills, pounded the area. Nicknamed the "Anzio Express," these high-caliber guns ran strictly "on time." Air raids by the Luftwaffe pestered port and front line positions. Germans bombed and strafed at will until Spitfires met their challenge.

"Photo Joe," the lone German reconnaissance plane, made its milk run with fidelity, while "Popcorn Pete" unloaded crackling anti-personnel bombs with a regularity that would have turned the conductor of the Orange Blossom Special green with envy.

By the first week in February, beachhead forces had pushed their lines as far out as their small numbers would permit. Hastily-summoned German reserves forged



a steel ring around the beachhead. This was to be the scene of four months of stubborn warfare.

Then, the Nazi worm turned.

Attempting to hurl Allied beachhead forces into the sea, the enemy unleashed three major counter-attacks. From Feb. 16 to 19, the 45th Div. sector was subjected to wave after wave of Germany infantry and tanks that poured down the Albano-Anzio road like steam through a whistle. Elements identified as six different divisions were thrown into the battle.

Much of this fighting was in the "Factory" (Carroceto) area. Casualties were heavy. Thunderbird artillery, armor and tankdestroyer units accomplished magnificent results in helping stave off the threat to the beachhead. Infantrymen clung tenaciously to each dip in the ground, each furrow, each rock.



When one small group of doughs was forced to withdraw, another group pushed forward in a different sector. It was during this period that the 2nd Battalion and Co. I, 157th Infantry, and Co. G, 180th Infantry, performed so gallantly that they were cited later by the President.

### **"FLIES ATTACK THE FLYPAPER"**

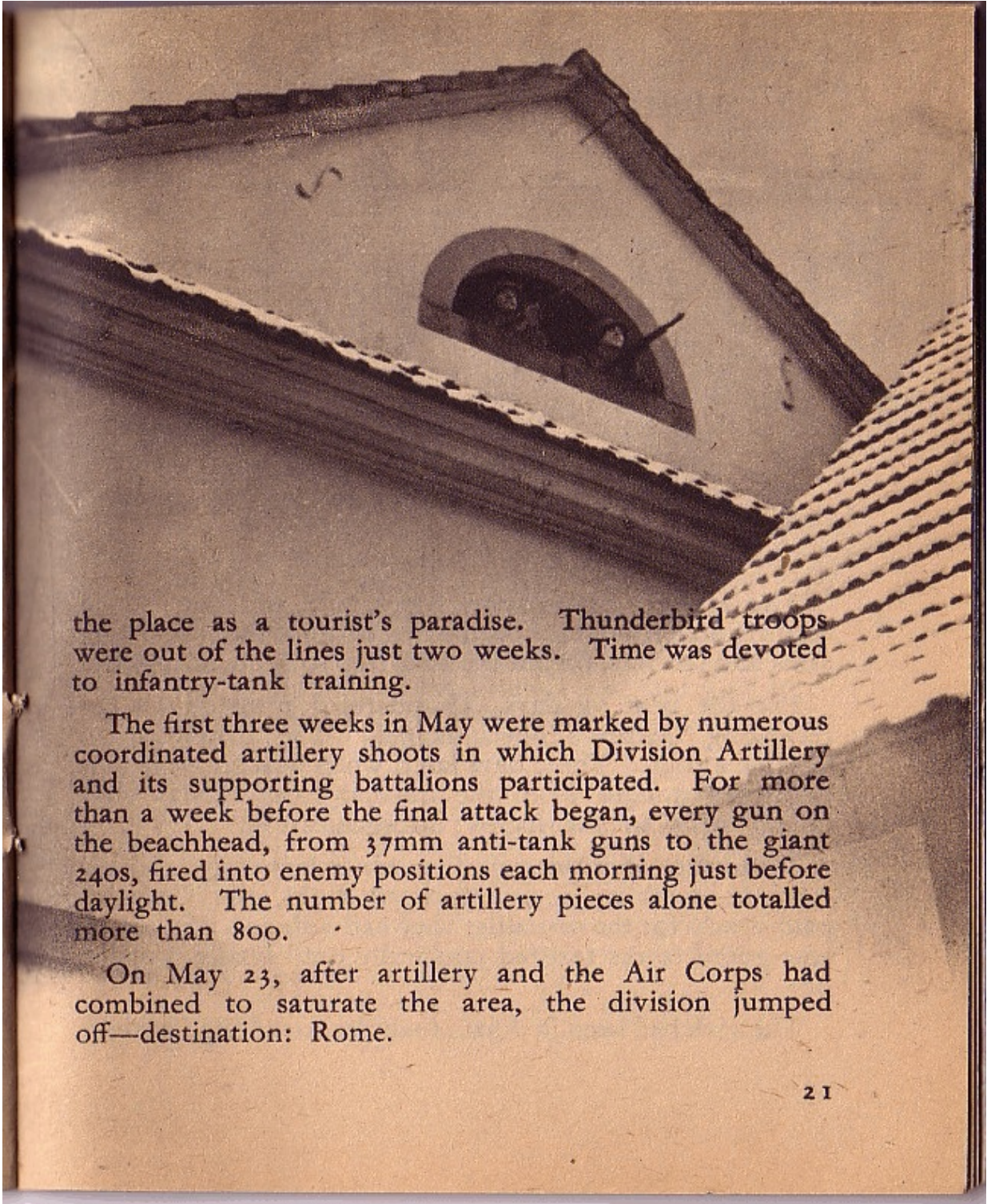
GERMAN field orders, it was discovered later, had called for complete annihilation of the division by Feb. 18. Although the 45th did suffer heavy losses, the enemy was forced to halt his attacks. Lines became stabilized again. At the point of their deepest penetration, crack German troops gained only three kilometers. They suffered extremely heavy losses both in men and materiel to get that far.

*The flies had attacked the flypaper.*

From that dramatic week until the final push that broke the German line, the condition was one of extreme tension for all. For the first time in its experience, the 45th was denied movement. Patrols were daily routines. Probing, searching for enemy weak points and raids by combat patrols became habitual. During March, enemy artillery and planes monotonously harassed forward and rear area installations.

In April, artillery ammunition dumps mushroomed as preparations were made for the Big Push.

After 76 days of continuous combat, Thunderbird was pulled back to what ironically was called a rest area. When GIs wrote home, they hardly recommended



the place as a tourist's paradise. Thunderbird troops were out of the lines just two weeks. Time was devoted to infantry-tank training.

The first three weeks in May were marked by numerous coordinated artillery shoots in which Division Artillery and its supporting battalions participated. For more than a week before the final attack began, every gun on the beachhead, from 37mm anti-tank guns to the giant 240s, fired into enemy positions each morning just before daylight. The number of artillery pieces alone totalled more than 800.

On May 23, after artillery and the Air Corps had combined to saturate the area, the division jumped off—destination: Rome.



The artillery preparation, aggressive and determined infantry action and the coordinated effort of the supporting arms and services, forced the steel trap to bend, snap open.

For the next 12 days, Thunderbird pressure on the retreating Germans never lagged. The breakthrough became a rout. Three days later, when beachhead troops contacted doughs from the Cassino front, Nazis were falling back in slap-happy disorganization.

With the division grinding on relentlessly and air support combing their rearward flight, the Germans paid dearly for the casualties they had inflicted. Stubborn rear-guard forces resisted fanatically until finally mopped up.

The 45th had been in Anzio foxholes for a long, frustrat-

ing period. Here, at last, was the chance to move. Infantrymen sighed relief at being able to stand up again during daylight hours. Artillery displaced time and again as it leap-frogged in support of attacking riflemen. Corioli, Campoleone fell before the advance; Hill K-9 was captured.

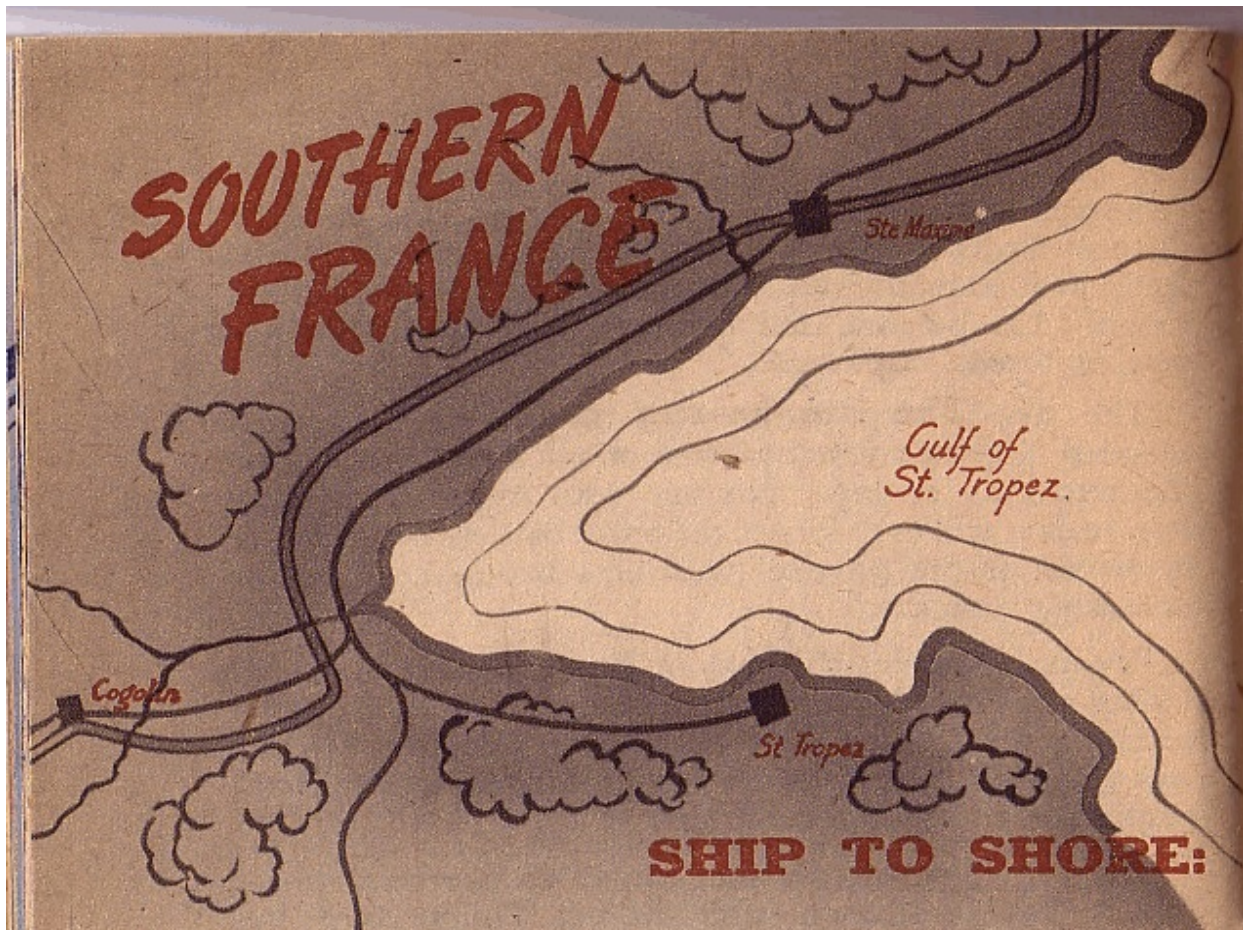
The step-by-step progress of the division gradually blended into the overall picture of relentless pressure on the retreating enemy. No one who experienced those twelve days will ever forget the bitter battles, the gallantry displayed or the physical weariness brought on by the unceasing attack.

For the 45th Div., the push on Rome climaxed the long Italian siege that began back in Sicily. On June 6, after reaching the historic hills on the far side, the division was placed in reserve and, a few days later, sent to Battipaglia for a well-deserved rest.

From the time the division landed at Salerno until the day it was withdrawn after Rome, Thunderbird had been in the line 249 days. Sicily boosted the total to 271 combat days.

At Battipaglia, after several days of sheer luxury, the division moved again, this time to southern Italy for additional training in amphibious landings. The hot, semi-tropical July sun beat down on assault craft, flame-throwers, barbed-wire obstacles and demolitions as Thunderbird troops prepared.

At H-Hour on D-Day (0800 Aug. 15, 1944), under ideal weather conditions, the 45th Div. landed near Ste. Maxime on the Riviera, Southern France.



## SHIP TO SHORE: THE FOURTH D-DAY

*"Hell," said the sergeant. "I've been on more boats than half the guys in the Navy."*

**B**EACH landings near Ste. Maxime were made precisely as scheduled. Initial objectives were taken against comparatively light opposition and, once again, (this time with VI Corps, Seventh Army) the Thunderbird Division pointed to Berlin.

With scattered enemy resistance pockets rocked by

the Naval Western Task Force's pre-invasion shelling and bombs dropped by XII TAC, 45th troops moved rapidly, consolidating and exploiting gains made by the surprise landing.

Riviera operations demonstrated the results of experience. Careful planning made the fourth Thunderbird amphibious landing a complete success. Men, supplies and equipment moved ashore with precision. Once ashore and inland, the 45th, for the first time in its year of combat experience, encountered friendly and cooperative civilians.

In 17 days, the division had branched out from the beachhead to Bourg. The going still was no walkaway. German troops fought fierce delaying actions, dispersing Thunderbird from the Rhone valley nearly to the Italian border.

As each resistance pocket was cleared, regiments spurted ahead until delayed by more strongpoints. Movement was so rapid and so far ahead of schedule it was difficult to provide advancing troops with maps and gasoline. Prodigious work by supply personnel, which used every available vehicle to haul materiel, kept troops supplied.

The division raced ahead to exert constant pressure on retreating Germans. Everyone strove to maintain this lightning pace. Drivers, who couldn't take time out for proper vehicle maintenance, somehow contrived to keep trucks loaded and rolling through dust, rain, mud, blackout.



Communications personnel laid hundreds of miles of wire daily so contact could be kept with various units. In rifle companies, kitchens moved three or four times a day. Supplies, ammunition and rations were delivered with the same success that front line troops experienced.

The confused enemy never was allowed to relax. Pressure applied by a determined Thunderbird the first 17 days resulted in the capture of 4781 prisoners, representing the battered remnants of eight German divisions, 12 Luftwaffe units and 20 miscellaneous battalions.

The rapid pace limited the use of artillery, but observation planes, launched from flight decks on converted LSTs, worked overtime. During the drive to Bourg, the artillery expended only 6648 rounds of ammunition, which would have represented only a fair day at Anzio.



Sharp battles, however, raged during this period. The 45th Div. long will remember the resistance met and heroism displayed by its troops at Frejus, Vidauban, Le Luc, Barjols, Cotignac, Le Puy, Grenoble, Briancon, Loyettes and Meximeux.

The Team lived in farmhouse cellars, haystacks, holes in the ground. Thunderbird learned that "de l'eau chaude" meant "hot water" and that it was customary to shake hands continually with the French. Men heard personal accounts of the treatment French civilians had received from the Gestapo. They saw concentration camps, memories of which never can be forgotten.

This was the race up the Rhone valley. After Bourg came Baume les Dames where the division crossed the Doubs River to attack the city.

By Sept. 21, 36 days after the landing, Thunderbird moved toward Epinal, the strongly-defended, strategically important city straddling the Moselle River. The river was approximately 80 feet wide. All bridges had been destroyed. Road blocks covered every entrance to the city.

Despite determined enemy resistance and the fast-flowing current, elements of the division crossed the river and assaulted the city. After three days of preliminary operations, during which strong enemy artillery concentrations pounded away incessantly, Thunderbird forced a crossing of the Moselle at three different points.

A few days after the advance from Epinal, a sign post was erected on the improvised main bridge. Arrows pointing in both directions read: "St. Tropez, 430 miles; Berlin, 430 miles."



The division then entered the heavily-wooded forests of the Vosges foothills. Movement was slower, resistance stronger and better organized. Increased enemy activity and heavily-mined fields hampered operations. Rambervillers, St. Gorgon, Grandvillers, Fremifontaine, Brouvelieures were scenes of house-to-house fighting.

In the Vosges woods, troops engaged in rugged fighting. It was November and winter had come again. Cold and rain retarded forward movement. Density of the forests made observation difficult and sharp hand-to-hand clashes became routine.

Still, the division pressed on, taking St. Benoît, crossing the Meurthe River and liberating Houseras, after clearing multiple road blocks challenging the advance.

After 86 days in which the entire division had been committed, the 45th moved to a rest area south of Epinal. Some units remained active, attached to other elements of Seventh Army. Many Thunderbird troops enjoyed Thanksgiving dinner in the rest area. After two weeks the 45th was ready for action once more.

Now it was pushing forward into the Vosges mountains, probing for a weak spot that would open Army's advance through the mountain passes. Following in the wake of an adjacent French unit, the 45th moved to Baccarat, Sarrebourg and through the Saverne Gap on to Gougenheim.

The 179th Infantry, temporarily attached to the French 2nd D.B. (Armored), cracked forts north of Mutzig, one of the heavily-defended anchors of the Maginot Line.

As they moved through Alsace, clearing the enemy from Obermodern, Utterwiller, Kindwiller and Bitschhoffe, 45th doughs found Alsatians speaking less French and more German. Attacking enemy strongpoints at Zinswiller, the Thunderbird forced Germans to pull out of Pfaffenoffen, Ueberach and La Walck.

Towns succumbing to the 45th's advance were many, but the story was fundamentally the same: stiff opposition, road blocks, mines, artillery, mud, cold. Always, the forward movement continued.

**E**ARLY December, the division crossed the Zintzel River and captured Niederbronn-les-bains after slugging it out with a stubborn enemy. Now the 45th was in Maginot country. Defenses that once were erected to



keep Germans out of France now were turned against the 45th. Reichshoffen and Langesouzbach fell before the advance.

By Dec. 13, the date which marked the division's 365th combat day, the Thunderbird was well through the Maginot defensive belt, meeting bitter opposition in the Lembach-Wingen valley.

### **THUNDERBIRD BITES INTO GERMANY**

**T**wo days later, exactly four months after they had landed in Southern France, doughs of the 45th crossed the international border between France and Germany.

There is no adequate measure of the individual gallantry and heroism of the men who made possible the long,

successful advances toward the fortress of Germany. The contribution of every man of the division was essential to the accomplishments.

There were those, however, who proudly wear the honors their government had bestowed—honors in which every man had a part.

By the close of 1944, men of the 45th had been awarded these decorations and citations:

Congressional Medal of Honor.....	5
Oak Leaf Cluster to Distinguished Service Cross..	1
Distinguished Service Cross.....	61
Distinguished Service Medal.....	2
Legion of Merit.....	51
2nd Oak Leaf Cluster to Silver Star.....	1
1st Oak Leaf Cluster to Silver Star.....	26
Silver Star.....	812
Distinguished Flying Cross.....	2
Soldier's Medal.....	28
Oak Leaf Cluster to Bronze Star.....	45
Bronze Star.....	1757
Oak Leaf Cluster to Air Medal.....	38
Air Medal.....	27

PRESIDENTIAL CITATIONS

- 2nd Battalion, 157th Infantry Regiment
- Company I, 157th Infantry Regiment
- Company G, 180th Infantry Regiment

FOREIGN AWARDS

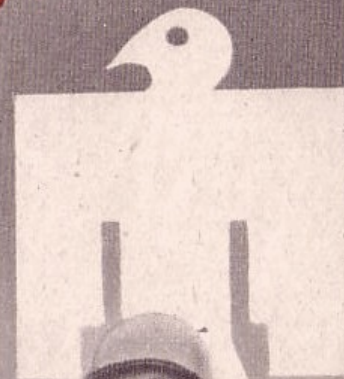
Great Britain.....	3
U.S.S.R.....	2
France.....	1
Italy.....	5

The story of the 45th is the story of a team. Every member of that team has earned the right to say, "We have taken every one of our objectives." For whatever indelible mark the 45th has made on the course of American history represents the joint achievement of many men and many units, organic and attached, all working toward the same end—Victory.

To those members of the team who have fallen, we promise that this great tradition will never change. *We will finish the fight!*



# The Team



**Anzio Actions  
Win Ribbons  
for 45th Unit**  
By Bill R.  
**Recommended for Terrific Job**

THE 45TH ARMY, Dec. 11—Lt. Gen. A. M. Patch, commanding general of the 12th Army, today commended the U. S. VI Corps and its units for outstanding achievements in their drive from Anzio to the Tiber, the Volturno and the Rapido.

**15th Div. 45th Army  
EVACUATED**

When the German counter-attack failed, the 15th Division was evacuated to the rear. The 45th Army is now in a position to move forward.

**Towns Within Day  
Prisoner of War**

**5th Division  
Troops Proceed**

# Scores Advance Into Siegfried

**Bundenthal Is  
Taken by 45th**

SIXTH CORPS troops broke through the Siegfried Line yesterday, capturing Bundenthal and taking 1,000 prisoners. The 45th Army is now in a position to move forward.

**Anzio Action  
Wins DSC for  
15th Officer**

**Airmen  
at 45th  
45th Squadron  
In Capturing  
Of Messina**

By HAROLD V. BOYLE  
WITH An American Column Entered Messina, 12:30 A. M.

# 180th Fights Way Into



**1. 3rd Bn, 157  
Spearheads Assault**

**g Draws Praise**

**5th Captures Six  
Pillboxes  
Drives Six Kms  
Into Germany**

Corps troops in contact with the Siegfried Line yesterday captured the positions and neutralized them by different methods. By dark numerous pillboxes had been taken. Despite heavy rain that made movement difficult, 45th Division captured...

**Action  
Unit Citation  
157th**

WITH THE 45TH DIVISION, Nov. 17—Veterans of Company I, 157th Infantry Regiment, were at attention as one morning stood on the footbridge at Ft. M. Patch, as Lt. M. Patch, commanding officer of the company, presented them with citations for their actions during the drive from Anzio to the Tiber, the Volturno and the Rapido.



[Felix A. Cizewski and World War 2](#)

Send questions and comments to [Leonard H. Cizewski](#)