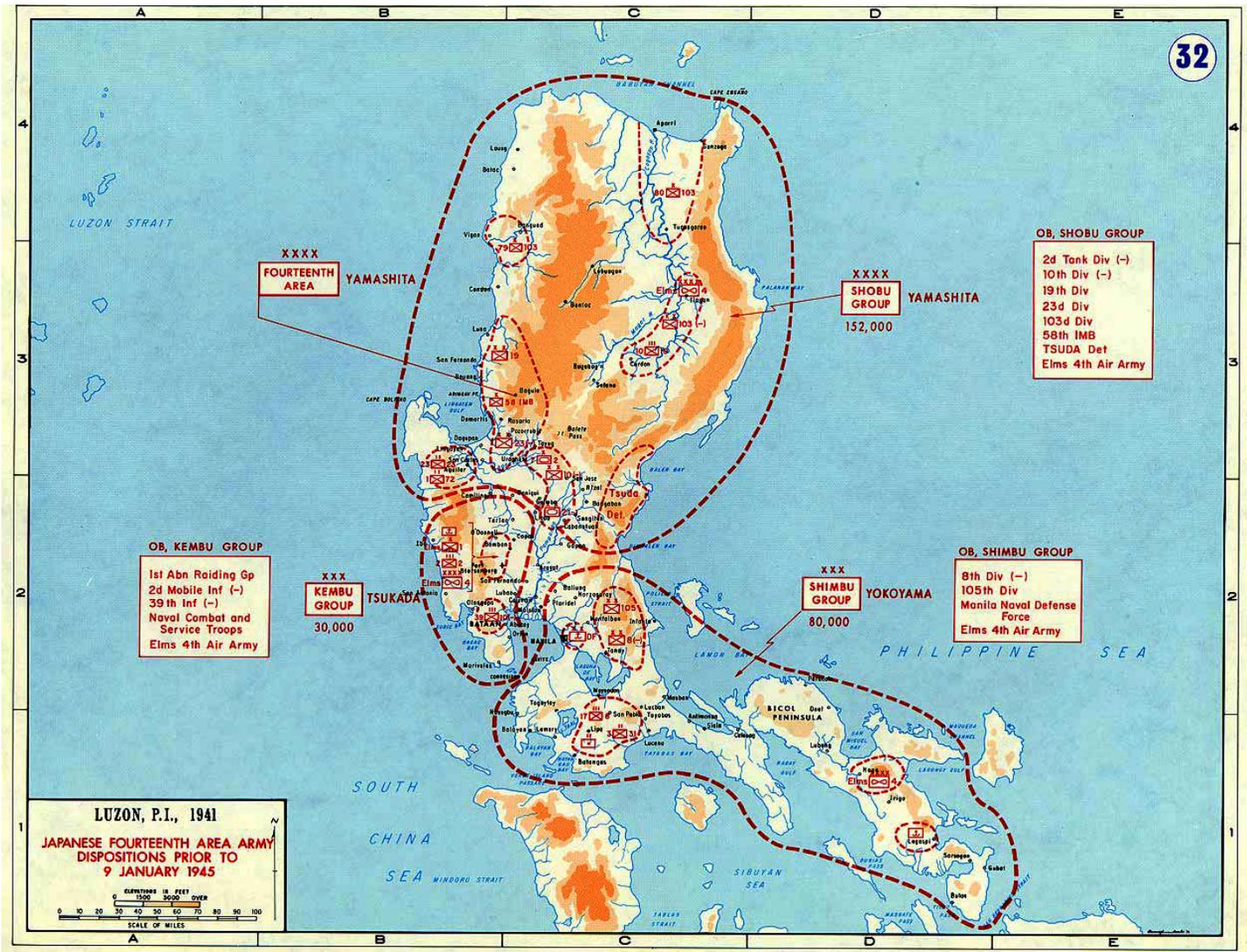


35th Infantry Regiment – LUZON, PHILIPPINES

The Campaign in the Plains

Landing and Preliminary Movements



The assault echelon of the 25th Division, initially in Sixth Army Floating Reserve, sailed into Lingayen Gulf on 11 January 1945. In accordance with Field Order #1, 25th Infantry Division, 8 December 1944, the 35th Infantry was prepared upon arrival to carry out any of three alternative plans:

Plan A: Land in I Corps zone of action when ordered by CG 25 Division. Prepared to move to a Division assembly area in the vicinity of Binalon.

Plan B: Remain initially in 25th Division Reserve afloat, land in zone action of either I Corps or XIV Corps when ordered by CG 25 Division at any time between S+2 and S+4.

Plan C: Reinforce 158 RCT in objective area on S+2. (Note: S day was the scheduled US invasion date of the island of Luzon)

It was the second day after the initial landing, so we knew we were to disembark on a friendly beach. The Gulf seemed more like a peaceful busy harbor than a military beachhead. The only warlike element was provided by a single destroyer, lofting leisurely broadsides over the beachhead perimeter.

The Laurens dropped anchor in Lingayen Gulf at 0830. At 0832, the first assault boat hit the water, and at 0930, the Regimental Commander and his staff debarked, landing on White Beach Three at 1025. By 1045, the initial Regimental CP was in operation. Communications were established with Battalion CP's, and Battalion assembly areas on the beach were assigned.

The 3rd battalion began debarkation at 0900. By 1100, all elements had completed landing, work details were organized, and the Battalion began unloading ship's cargo.

The 1st and 2nd Battalions (less Co A, which was assigned to the 3rd Battalion and remained on the beach) were in their assembly areas on the beach by 1330, ready to move out. A billeting party had left the beach at 1230, and at 1400 the 2nd Battalion headed the march to the Regimental bivouac area at Baloling, eight miles inland. It was long after dark before all elements had arrived at the bivouac. An all-around Regimental perimeter was set up and the regiment settled down for the night. To the Regiment's veterans, whose previous combat experience had taught them to assume that all planes heard were enemy, and to act accordingly, it was unusual and pleasant to know that those they heard this night were friendly. On 12 January, all units patrolled to the front and flanks. Information on road conditions and bridges or fords across the Agno and other rivers were first priority. The regimental perimeter was tied in with other units of the 25th Division, and with the Sixth Division's 1st and 103rd regiment(s) of the 43rd Division.



On 13 January, patrols were again dispatched to the front and flanks. The road through Manaoag was patrolled as far as Santa Inex. Co A was released from the beach and joined the 1st Battalion. The tentative Division mission was announced: to take San Jose, with the 13th Armored Group as spearhead.



On the 11th of January, 1945, we headed for shore,



and landed at Lingayen Beach on the island of Luzon.



We worked day and night, stopping only for air raids,



which prompted the feverish digging of fox holes.

The Regimental Commander, Stanley R. "Swede" Larsen, and his subordinate commanders, meanwhile, were orienting themselves on the general situation and, with the first-hand

knowledge of the terrain and the problems before them, determining policies of supply, evacuation, and administration, as well as tactics.

Patrolling continued on the 14th, probing through Santa Barbara as far as Urdanetta. It was learned that the 1st and 3rd Battalions would be employed initially as cargadores and supply troops, with the 2nd Battalion as Division Reserve prepared to move out on one day's notice. Anti-Tank Company, the Engineer Battalion, and the 64th artillery Battalion passed to the direct control of the Division Commander.

The next day (15th) C and E Companies joined the 3rd Battalion on the beach at San Fabian, to expedite unloading of the Division cargo. The remaining elements of the 1st and 2nd Battalions continued active patrolling, as well as providing details for the various Division supply dumps.

It had become evident, meanwhile that the Japanese intended to yield the Central Plains of Luzon, leaving only suicidal forces and retreating with their main strength to the mountains to the north, from which they could threaten American Supply Lines and rear installations. As early as November, the enemy had moved into the Baguio area, and established heavy defenses at Balete Pass and along its upper approaches.

Upon landing, the 25th Infantry division had been in Sixth Army Reserve. On 16 January, the division was released to I Corps, while the 35th Infantry was retained in (Sixth) Army Reserve. Company E was called back to the beach, and the 2nd Battalion was again alerted. The 3rd Battalion with Company C attached unloaded cargo on the beach, while the remaining companies of the 1st Battalion provided work details for Division supply dumps. It was then that the long and weary months spent unloading boats on Guadalcanal during March-July 1943 paid off, for the Division cargoes were unloaded off the beach in record time.

The remainder of the Division, meanwhile, advancing toward Highway 5 and San Jose, found their progress hampered by the harassing activity of a by-passed group of Japs near Pao, 6 miles east of Baloling. On the 18th, the 2nd Battalion was ordered to flush out and destroy or disperse the Japs in that area. Companies F, G, and H moved out of Baloling at 0400 on the 19th. By 1350 their mission was completed. G Company captured three Japs (a Lt. Colonel and two enlisted men), while H Company killed six of the enemy. In this small action, the 35th Infantry suffered its first casualty of the Luzon campaign: S/Sgt. Shelby E. Smith of Company H was wounded.

On 19 January, the regiment received orders to move, less the 3rd Battalion, to Manaoag, approximately 3 miles east of Baloling, set up a perimeter defense of the town, and initiate security and intelligence patrols of the surrounding area. The Regimental Commander called a meeting of Battalion and Company Commanders to outline moving plans for the 20th.

The move to Manaoag was completed by 1100 on the 20th: a regimental perimeter was established and patrols initiated. Until the 28th of January, the regiment engaged in no tactical operations save intense patrolling, in the course of which, several Japs were killed, and two enlisted men of Company A were wounded. Patrols penetrated to Panago, Natangalan, Cuting, Possarubic, Binalonan, Tabac, and up the Panago River.

On 23 January, The Regimental Command post was visited by Lieutenant General Krueger, Sixth Army Commander. The General questioned staff personnel as to the disposition on units within the area, defense perimeter arrangements, patrols, strength figures, etc., and inspected the kitchen. Since thunder did not rumble, nor lightning strike, it was assumed that the general was satisfied. On the 25th, Company C and the 3rd Battalion, less Company L, were

released from cargo duty and joined the regiment at Manaoag. L Company was not released until the 28th, and joined the 3rd Battalion at San Leon on that date.

THE FIRST DRIVE: MANAOAG TO UMINGAN

On the 28th, the regiment reverted to 25th Division control. The division's immediate mission was to secure the line from Munoz to Lupao.

The first objective in the Division (was the Japanese, which controlled the secondary road leading to San Jose, the principal escape route from southern Luzon. Pending the move of the 161st from San Manuel, the 2nd battalion of the 35th Infantry was designated as Division reserve, and ordered to move to Santa Maria to serve as guard for the new Division Command Post. For the advance upon Umingan, the 1st Battalion was assigned the left of the San Leon-Umingan road, with the 3rd Battalion on the right, and the 27th Infantry on the left. The 3rd Battalion was assigned the road and the right of the road inclusive.

On the 28th, the 3rd Battalion moved by motor from Manaoag. From Rosales, a motorized patrol was sent to San Leon and found it unoccupied by the enemy. The Battalion thereupon continued by truck to a point 1000 yards short of the town, where the road became impassable due to wrecked bridges and an un-fordable stream. The town was occupied and a perimeter set up northeast of town.

The 1st Battalion, meanwhile, moved to Asingan by motor, detracked and marched to Santa Maria, and thence to San Matias, where they bivouacked for the night.

Thus, immediately before the advance of the 29th, the 1st Battalion was some 6000 yards northeast of the 3rd Battalion at San Leon. The terrain was flat, but cut by many small streams. As the Battalion advanced, probing patrols had to be dispatched to the right flank, in cooperation with the 27th Infantry, to flush Jap patrols between the two units. But the main 1st Battalion effort for the 29th was to catch up with the 3d Battalion.

On the 29th, the 3rd Battalion dispatched a Company forward along the San Leon-Umingan road, with the mission of securing Gonzales, 5500 yards from San Leon. K Company patrolled to the left, along the RR line from San Leon to San Quinton, across the 1st Battalion zone of advance, to verify the unoccupied state of 1st Battalion objectives. L Company patrolled southeast of San Leon to the Casilan River, and found the area clear of the enemy.

At 1830, I Company, advancing along the road, ran into a small enemy delaying force just west of San Isidro, about 300 yards west of San Leon. The enemy force employed small arms, machine guns and mortars. After a short fire fight, the enemy withdrew, and the Company continued its advance. By 1545, advance elements of I Company had reached Gonzales and were receiving machine gun and mortar fire from east of the village. Here we suffered our first fatal casualty of the campaign: Pfc. Maurice Hewitt of Company I, 35th Infantry. The enemy force, proved to consist of about twenty-five men, and one tank, withdrew during the night. By nightfall, the remaining Companies of the Battalion were in position near Gonzales.

Supply was a difficult problem: The Bahila River, running crookedly across the 1st Battalion zone, was unfordable. On the morning of the 29th, Company C of the 65th Engineer Battalion began a bulldozer road cross-country along the 1st Battalion's line of march. At times the lead bulldozer was almost in the front lines.

The 1st Battalion advanced southeast, angling toward the San Leon-Umingan road, approximately 10,000 yards without enemy opposition. At nightfall, the 1st Battalion line, anchored on the right at La Paz on the San Leon-Umingan road, ran northwest about 3000 yards to Salvador, with Company C on the right flank at La Paz, Headquarters company at San Alfonso, A and B Companies at Papaiason, and D Company at Salvador.

On the 30th, the 3rd Battalion moved out at 0930, with Company L leading and Company E following in support. Their mission, which was to secure the high ground 1500 yards southeast of Caridad (about two miles south of Umingan) was completed by 1400, and strong patrols went out to the front. No enemy was encountered.

The 1st Battalion moved forward, working toward the road, meeting no enemy save a 3-man patrol which scurried to safety. At night fall, A and B Companies were at Santa Maria, 4 miles from Umingan, and C and D Companies and Battalion Headquarters were at Caridad, Anti-Tank Company moved to La Paz.

Division Field Order #6 was issued on the 30th, with the Thirty-Fifth Infantry mission to "continue advance, cut Umingan-Lupao road, and block hostile forces from southeast and northwest." All troop movements were to be at night.

At 1900, on 31 January, therefore, the 1st Battalion made a sixteen mile cross-country march around the enemy positions at Umingan, and on the morning of 1 February (by 1100) set up a road block at Masiil-Siil and at San Rogue, thereby cutting off the Japanese garrison at Umingan, against which the 27th Infantry was launching an attack. At 1300, the enemy was contacted; a tank was knocked out, and nine Japs killed. The 3rd Battalion followed, maintaining contact by patrols, and 1500 yards southeast of Umingan assembled with one company blocking the secondary road to Umingan.

The 2nd Battalion, still under Division control, had advanced on 31 January to Gonzales. On the 31st, they marched cross-country to Masiil-Siil. Their road block there bagged twenty Japs with two rounds of 37mm canister. The Japs were marching down the road, preceded by carabao carts, and headed directly into the ambush. The next night, making their 3rd night march in as many nights, the Battalion moved back to a jump off point 1500 yards southeast of Umingan. During the move, they were attacked by a company of Japanese; this opposition was repulsed or by-passed, and at 0800, 2 February, the jump off was made on schedule.

The 3rd Battalion, on the same night, cut around to the left of the 2nd Battalion, to make the main attack on the western half of Umingan, jumping off at 0730. The 1st Battalion, meanwhile, maintained their block of the road, poised for an attack on Lupao, and waiting only for the release of the 2nd and 3rd Battalions from Umingan.

For the 35th, Umingan proved to be no more than a light morning snack; the Japs, who had stopped the 27th Infantry at the north end of town, were holed up on the north of town. Against light opposition, the two Battalions drove through the town, so that by 0930, we had the whole of the town, with the Japs squeezed into a narrow strip at the north edge of town. Though we were receiving sniper and mortar fire, the main problem was coordination of fire between the 27th and 35th. Now it was simply a matter of effecting the relief of our 2nd and 3rd Battalions by 27th Infantry Units, so that the 1st Battalion could advance upon Lupao with assurance of quick support if necessary.

LUPAO

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The 35th's march to Lupao was a long, hot one, and the road was mined as it approached the barrio.

The town of Lupao and its surrounding bamboo groves and thickets forms a rough crescent where the road from Munoz joins the main highway. The surrounding country is largely rice paddies, graduated down on all sides from the town so that there is no clear route of approach or point of observation.

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The tanks followed along.

A word about rice paddies: They are Normandy hedgerows in miniature. About fifty feet to a side, they are all at different levels to facilitate flooding. Between are dikes a foot thick, sun-baked to the hardness of brick, and covered by grass. They offer excellent cover - for fifty feet. When you try to go from one paddy to another, there is nothing to do but climb over the dike. Of course the Jap snipers know this, and never hesitate to pay their respects as you pass over. The whole area is as flat as the proverbial pool table, and graduated down from the towns, so there is no place from attackers may observe. More than ever, the

advantages are with the defenders. Before coming under attack by the 35th Infantry, Lupao was considered of minor importance in the Japanese network of defenses protection. Highway #5, their main escape route from Manila to the Baguio area. The Japanese strength was thought to be concentrated at Umingan, San Isidro, and San Jose. Advanced reports from Guerrillas and Civilians had indicated that Lupao was garrisoned by about a Company of Infantry, from a group especially trained as raiders, plus fifteen or twenty tanks. Air reconnaissance failed to disclose anything of importance, so no air strike was thought necessary. One Battalion was considered sufficient to secure the town in one day.

In accordance with a 25th Division order of the 1st of February, Field Order #2, CP/35, 2 February 1945, directed the First Battalion not only to advance immediately to seize and secure Lupao by 1800, 2 February 1945, but to send patrols to the south, reconnoiter for a road to the east, and establishing a block on this road. The Second Battalion was to follow the First Battalion to reach San Rogue by dark, and the Third Battalion was ordered to move to Masiil-Siil as Regimental Reserve.



The 1st Battalion of the 35th attacked Lupao through the rice paddies from the front,

The afternoon of 2 February, the First Battalion started the drive on Lupao. B Company led off and made excellent progress until it ran into heavy fire from machine guns, mortars, and light artillery. These came from a small barrio just north of Lupao, bordered by a copse of woods vertical to the highway. Later investigation disclosed that the strong point of this area was a 15 foot erosion ditch, really exploited for both cover and concealment. A 75mm Anti-Tank rifle was in the center. This gun commanded the road from San Rogue for at least 500 yards. Reinforcing this was a 75mm mountain gun and a 47mm Anti-Tank

gun. Supporting riflemen and machine guns were dug in for 500 yards to the left. The right flank was secured by two dug in tanks across the road. B Company withdrew at dark, and artillery and mortar fire was laid on the enemy positions. The 75mm Anti-Tank gun was knocked out with its first round still in the chamber

The next day, B Company resumed the offensive on the east of the road, with A Company on the west and C Company in support. Again, no progress could be made.

Now the Third Battalion was sent around to the south of the town. Their mission was to cut the road between Lupao and San Isidro, and to attack the town from the south. To get there, a road had to be built, and Company C of the 65th Engineers did just that. This road cut behind the First Battalion, then came into the open below Lupao. The road was built as the troops advanced, with the bulldozers sometimes a part of the point. At 1450 on the 3rd, the road block was established as ordered.

Again, the First Battalion was drawn back 400 yards, this time to enable two platoons of 4.2 mortars to work over the enemy positions. The north end of town was obviously where the Jap strength lay; hence, on the morning of the 4th, the 3rd Battalion was to attack from the south, attempting to draw the Jap strength down there. Then, three hours later, the 1st Battalion would assault the supposedly weakening northern positions. A platoon of tanks was to cover the left flank of the advance by patrolling the gully paralleling the road.



went around a bull dozer road to attack the town from the rear.

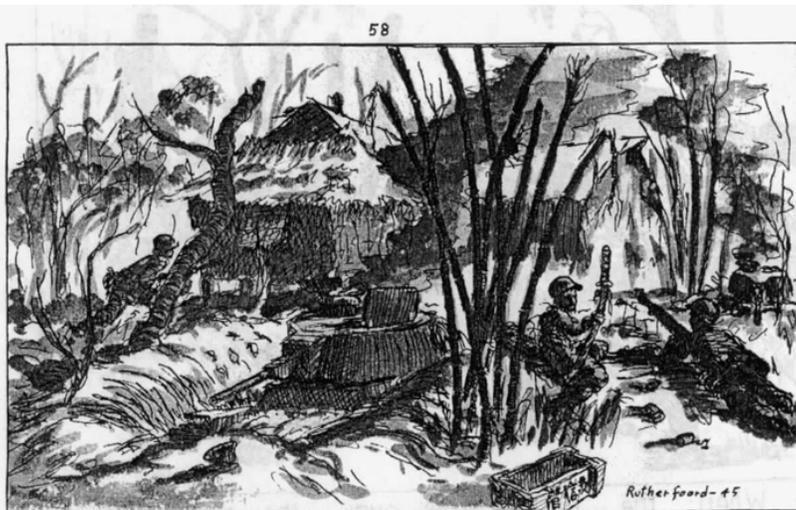
The 3rd Battalion jumped off at 0730 on the 4th, closely following an artillery barrage. I Company was the base of fire. The First Platoon was pinned down a hundred yards from the town by fire from tanks, which, though not dug in, were so well camouflaged that our men were almost on them before seeing them. Almost every clump of bamboo and every hut concealed a tank. It was noon before casualties could be evacuated by their platoon; then the remaining men withdrew to allow artillery to be employed. M-7's also were sent up to deal with the tanks.



With the battalions squeezing in from both sides of town, it was necessary for the artillery to fire dangerously close to our own men.

On the other side of the road, Company K advanced. Their 3rd Platoon, with a section of heavy machine guns for flank protection, moved two hundred yards into town. There they lost contact with I Company. Here too were tanks. The point actually came within ten yards of three; they were so close that the tanks could not depress their guns enough to fire on them. All available anti-tank weapons were brought to bear, and eight hits with bazookas and rifle grenades were scored on one tank. Before more ammunition could be brought up, one tank charged down the road, splitting the left squad from the rest of the platoon. The remainder of

the platoon withdrew, only to come under fire from another concealed tank on their right. 4.2 mortar fires finally covered their retreat to the original line of departure, where contact with I Company was reestablished.



The doughboys found a regiment of enemy tanks concentrated within about four blocks. They also found an abundance of souvenirs.

Meanwhile the 1st platoon advanced into the bamboo grove to their front. They encountered severe fire from well dug in and concealed positions and, under cover of their own fire, withdrew into a slight ditch bordering the bamboo grove. Their position became untenable when they began to receive sniper fire from their rear and 50 caliber fire from our M-7's who were firing at the enemy in the bamboo grove as they came down the road. With some difficulty, the 1st platoon withdrew and once more contacted the 3rd platoon.

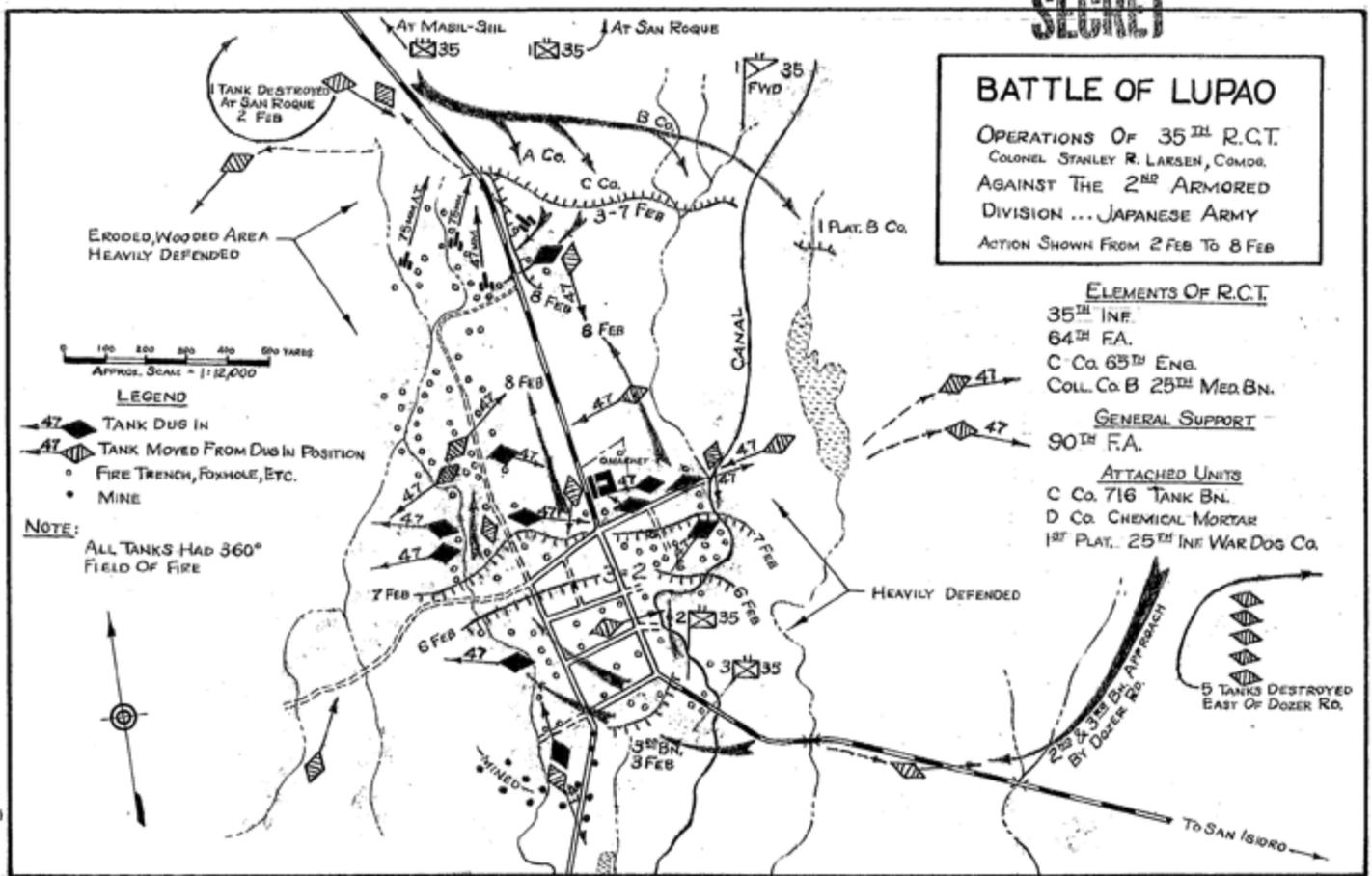
At 1800 the same attack plan was repeated and successfully executed. The only variation was that the company moved forward in the cover just to the right of the road, now designated as the company boundary, and echeloned to the right after the edge of the town had been gained.

I Company was initially in reserve, with the 1st platoon providing protection for the forward CP. At 0900 a tank broke through and, though hit by 37mm fire, overran one gun and was finally knocked out by Captain Fair, the L Company Commander, with a bazooka. The rest of the company provided flank and rear protection to the Battalion. With the reserve thus committed, it was necessary to bring up L Company to keep the bulldozer road open for supply and evacuation.

The 1st Battalion had not been able to jump off quite as early as had been panned. At 1055, the Nips launched a counterattack, spearheaded by three tanks. Two were knocked out and the third was repulsed. The attack jumped off at 1130, with A and C Companies abreast. B Company had relieved the Regimental I and R platoon in securing the left flank of the Battalion.

By noon, C Company was in the open field southwest of the barrio. A Company along the road, had made slower progress, and was at the northern edge of town. From then on they were able to make little progress. Jap tanks and machine guns interlocked fire all around the barrio. From 1700 to 1730, C Company knocked out three tanks by bazooka fire, two of which were loaded with troops. It was believed that these tanks were not counterattacking, but trying to escape from the town. By 1730, all of their bazooka ammunition was exhausted, so C Company withdrew to a position in line with Company A.

Obviously, the Japs were not going to be tricked and weaken their defense at the north of the town. The next step, then, was to hit them harder still in the south. To do this, the 2nd Battalion, with E Company leading, moved around the bulldozed road. They were in position to attack on the right of the 3rd Battalion at 1000 on the 6th.



At 0645 on the 5th, the 3rd Battalion had jumped off, following a five minute artillery barrage. I Company advanced about 200 yards before being pinned down by fire from camouflaged tanks. One was knocked out by a supporting Sherman, another by our own M-7. The first and second platoons of K Company attacked abreast, while the support platoon guarded the M-7's. This platoon was later used to maintain contact between K and I Companies. L Company, on the left, never did reach their line of departure. They ran into at least six dug-in tanks, together with supporting machine guns and riflemen. Astride the Munoz road, they finally reached the schoolhouse. They lost their company commander, but killed at least forty Japs.

Now the 2nd Battalion went into action. E Company held its position on the right flank of the 3rd Battalion. G Company passed through K Company and assumed their positions. The Munoz road formed the boundary between battalions. By dark, the two battalions held the southern half of the town. Half of the open space in the center of town also was occupied.

The 1st Battalion employed the morning of the 5th to reorganize. An afternoon attack showed that the Japs had not weakened their defense of the barrio to the north of Lupao in the least. For the rest of the battle, this drive of the 1st Battalion became a holding attack.

On the 6th, both the 2nd and 3rd battalions jumped off at 0730. By 0900, E Company had knocked out a tank and captured two Jap fuel trucks intact. With G Company, they pushed their lines halfway to the north edge of town. In the 3rd Battalion sector, I and L Companies, abreast, drove north of the schoolhouse. Bazookas and anti-tank guns accounted for four tanks; an M-7 bagged another.

By 1000, both Battalions had reached the last road before the north edge of town. There were still strong Jap positions in the woods fringing the town on the north, so the battalions pulled back to allow artillery to be employed. Following this, the work of ferreting out the surviving tanks was resumed. One tank, in a bamboo thicket, put up a hard fight for an hour before it burned under fire from our M-7's and supporting Sherman's.

The two battalions dug in for the night. The hours of darkness were relatively quiet, though tanks could occasionally be heard moving about. 4.2 mortars were used for harassing fire on the Japs.

The morning of the 7th was devoted to patrolling. Efforts were made to fix the positions of all the tanks, and to discover routes of approach to them. Three Sherman M-4 tanks and two M-7 self-propelled howitzers were attached to each battalion. Only two Jap tanks had been knocked out by noon while one of our M-7's had been knocked out of action. This M-7 was saved from destruction by the action of the only crew member not wounded, who although ordered to abandon the gun, continued to back it out of the line of fire.

F Company relieved M, and moved forward in a coordinated drive with the Sherman's, which knocked out two Jap tanks and damaged a third. On the other side of the road, one assault platoon and the support platoon of L Company were pinned down by intense machine gun crossfire, in addition to the ever-present direct fire from dug-in tanks. Two tanks were knocked out, but the Battalion lines remained echeloned to the left rear at a 45 degree angle.



Bazookas helped to keep Jap armour from breaking out of the 35th's ever tightening ring.

By evening, the 3rd Battalion had knocked out one tank and the 2nd Battalion two more. The lines were approximately those of the furthest advance of the previous day. The intensity of the day's action can be gathered from the fact that five platoon leaders became casualties.

The night of February 7-8 saw the death throes of the Japanese garrison. At 0100, A Company knocked out one tank with seven hits from a bazooka and damaged another. At the same time, eight tanks broke

through C Company's road block. Three were knocked out; the others ran into the foothills. During the night, they tried to shell our positions in Lupao, but apparently were unable to depress the muzzles sufficiently. The shells sailed harmlessly over the town. The tanks were cut off from any possible escape, and on the 8th the tanks were found abandoned by their crews.



Charles L McGaha

Rank and organization: Master Sergeant, U.S. Army, Company G, 35th Infantry, 25th Infantry Division. Place and date: Near Lupao, Luzon, Philippine Islands, 7 February 1945. Entered service at: Crosby, Tenn. Birth: Crosby, Tenn. G.O. No.: 30, 2 April 1946.

Citation: He displayed conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity. His platoon and 1 other from Company G were pinned down in a roadside ditch by heavy fire from 5 Japanese tanks supported by 10 machineguns and a platoon of riflemen. When 1 of his men fell wounded 40 yards away, he unhesitatingly crossed the road under a hail of bullets and moved the man 75 yards to safety. Although he had suffered a deep arm wound, he returned to his post. Finding the platoon leader seriously wounded, he assumed command and rallied his men. Once more he braved the enemy fire to go to the aid of a litter party removing another wounded soldier. A shell exploded in their midst, wounding him in the shoulder and killing 2 of the party. He picked up the remaining man, carried him to cover, and then moved out in front deliberately to draw the enemy fire while the American forces, thus protected, withdrew to safety. When the last man had gained the new position, he rejoined his command and there collapsed from loss of blood and exhaustion. M/Sgt. McGaha set an example of courage and leadership in keeping with the highest traditions of the service.

At 0450 on the 8th, another tank attempted to run through the G Company lines, but was shattered by combined 37mm and bazooka fire. Heavy mortar fire could not be employed as it had been on the other nights because of the tightening circle of our lines.

At 1000, the assault battalions attacked after careful reconnaissance, but the back of Japanese resistance was broken. One tank and five more vehicles were captured. At 1015, a man from G Company crossed the open ground to his front and reached B Company drawing only sniper fire.

Finally, at 1130, the Regimental Commander declared the town secure. A week long battle had cost the 35th Infantry ninety six killed and two hundred sixty eight wounded. The Japanese lost thirty three tanks and had nine hundred twenty one men killed, and two captured. And they had been driven from a deliberately fortified position, a position of their own choosing, and one nigh perfect for defense. They had been crushed, armor and all, by the Infantry man and his attached weapons. This battle, with its fellows at San Manuel, Munoz, and San Jose, wrote "finis" to the history of the Japanese 2d Armored Division.

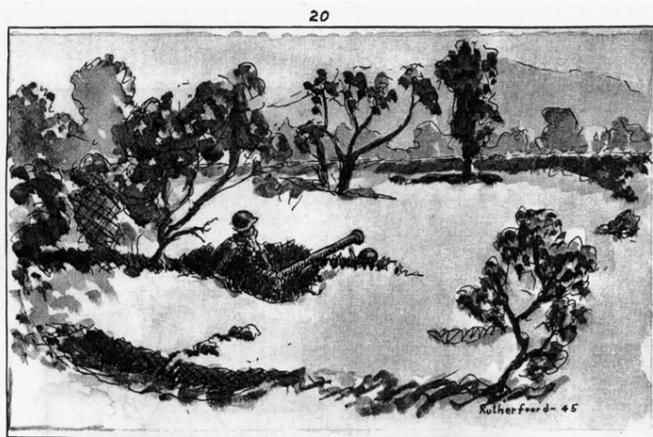
As a fitting climax, an American flag, which had been secreted in the Municipal Building of Lupao during the Japanese occupation, was hoisted, exactly at noon, over the battered town square.



When the battle was over, the officers bought a beer issue for the regiment, and the doughboys paraded through the wrecked town with Jap vehicles.

THE DRIVE TO CARRANGLAN

Even while mopping up of Lupao continued on 8 February, Company A, reinforced, began patrolling into the Caraballo Mountains to the north. On the 9th, the first battalion set up a bivouac near the foothills of north of Lupao, and all companies sent out patrols with the double mission of destroying Jap stragglers, and finding a practicable route over the mountains to Puncan. The Regimental I and R Platoon also patrolled into the mountains. Results were negative; it was found that no road could be driven through in the short time available and that the terrain was so difficult as to make it impracticable to send foot troops over this area of the mountains. They would have to be stripped so drastically of heavy equipment and carry so little food and ammunition that they could not fight effectively when they reached their objective.



It sometimes seems that an infantryman at the front does more waiting than anything else.

The eventual objective of the projected mountain campaign was Balete Pass, and the rich Cagayan Valley. To reach this objective, it was essential that Highway #5, the Jap escape route from the Manila area and the only effective supply and evacuation route into the mountains, be controlled by our forces. Drives over other routes might be made, but without Highway #5, they would have no considerable effect.

This mountain campaign would be, we knew, immeasurably more difficult than the headlong drive across terrain which was being made in other parts of Luzon. There might be occasional spurts over lightly defended territory, but

generally our daily gains would be measured in yards; every hill, every draw, would be defended desperately from positions three years in preparing, and well stocked with ammunition and food.

The Regiment's initial objective in the new campaign was to seize Puncan, a village on Highway #5 deep in the hills, from the flank, while other units of the Division drove up the highway itself. But our first move after finding that a short route over the mountains was impracticable was away from our objective. On 12 February, the regiment left its bivouacs in the vicinity of Lupao and moved to Rizal, in Nueva Ecija Province, some 25 miles to the southeast. From there, the plan was to advance northeast up the Pampanga River Valley, which contained a road, in terrific disrepair but usable, to Patabangan and thence northeast to Carranglan. From Carranglan, as a base, Puncan and other points on Highway #5 could be attacked, and also an attempt made to flank Balete Pass up the Old Spanish Trail, which cut toward Highway #5 on the other side of the mountains.

All battalions meanwhile, patrolled extensively in the areas of our future operations. The 3rd battalion established a base camp in the foothills and began to work patrols from there. The Regimental I and R Platoon set up a camp at Cabu, deep in the mountains. From the 12th to the 18th, the patrol work consisted mostly of reconnoitering the terrain leading up to and surrounding our objective, and gathering data on the difficulties of supply, so that plans could be made to surmount them. But on the 18th a motorized patrol consisting of four men were sent to investigate a civilian report of a group of Japs about one-half of the way up the Rizal-Patabangan road. The patrol debarked from their vehicle prior to reaching the crest of the hill. As they reached the top of the hill they saw one Jap coming up the other side of the hill. The

Jap turned and ran. Our patrol followed to a point where they observed a Jap bivouac at the foot of the hill containing about 200 Japs. The patrol engaged in a short fire-fight and withdrew for reinforcements. Two of our men were wounded and five of the enemy were killed. G Company was immediately sent out to establish road blocks to close any route of withdrawal. At 1030, F Company contacted forward elements of the Japs. Our troops deployed to attack after mortar and artillery registration. The Japs retreated to a wooded hill. F Company proceeded to flank the pocket, E and G Company patrols swung wide around the flanks, also providing blocks to the north. But by abandoning most of their equipment, the Japs managed to sneak through the jaws of the trap before they could close.

At 1400, F Company patrol located a hastily vacated bivouac area, and found many packs and a great quantity of rice there. Two Japs were killed in the deserted area, and nine pack horses, one carabao, and two monkeys were captured. On the same day, a three day patrol from 1st Battalion to Patabangan returned, reported that the town was free of enemy. Natives in the area maintained that there were "thousands of Japs" in the San Juan Naponpon-Norikit area, which agreed with consistent guerilla reports. The 1st and 2nd Battalions spent the 22nd moving into assembly areas and preparing to pump off for the drive to Patabangan. The 3rd Battalion remained at Rizal in regimental reserve.



The 1st Battalion route of advance was up the Pampangan River Valley. Since the speed of the 2nd Battalion, advancing up the Rizal-Patabangan Road, was unpredictable due to numerous road blocks, it was necessary to carry a full load of food and ammunitions. About thirty pack horses were procured for the march. B Company jumped off at 0615, an hour ahead of the rest of the battalion, as a screening force. As had been expected, the route proved almost unbelievable difficult. What there was of the trail crossed the river nineteen times between Rizal and Patabangan. Often it died out completely, and the battalion had to wade up the river, waist deep in

the water, struggling and floundering over the boulders of the river bottom, until the trail could be located again. The pack horses proved almost a liability. They had to be pushed and dragged and half carried much of the way.

Despite the difficulties of the march, however, B Company advanced into Patabangan at 1700, and by the time the 2nd battalion arrived, had set up blocks on all approaches to town. The remainder of the battalion bivouacked for the night 4 miles short of the town.

The 2nd Battalion jumped off at 0715, with E Company on the left and F Company on the right of the Rizal-Patabangan road. G Company, in reserve, followed the lead companies closely on the road. On this drive we encountered for the first time a new type of improvised land mine, consisting of a 105mm shell, with picric acid block as a booster, and a light brown silken cord stretched across the road as a trip cord. One was exploded; the engineers found ten more between Rizal Patabangan. Both E and F Companies received harassing fire from the high hills on both sides of the road. Reserve squads were sent out to neutralize those elements,

while the column pushed on. On the evening of the 23rd, the battalion entered Patabangan. During the night Company F repulsed a small infiltration group.



Rizal north to Patabangan

The next day, while the 1st Battalion moved into Patabangan, the 2d Battalion continued onward and Conversion was occupied. Here two 150mm mortars were captured intact; first of those weapons encountered by the regiment, though not the last. On the 25th, the 2d Battalion moved on through Mankitkit to General Luna, which was also occupied without opposition. The 3d Battalion moved by motor from Rizal to Conversion, where they detrucked and marched to Mankitkit. The 1st Battalion remained based at Patabangan patrolling extensively in all directions.

At 1800 on the 25th, the Rizal-Patabangan road was cut by what was thought to be about a platoon of Japs. The Regimental I and R Platoon was sent to clear the road but, unable to do so, remained at the block during the night, to protect a tractor which had been immobilized by Jap mines dropped from the bank above. At 0900 26 February, the I and R Platoon secured the area around the bulldozer, engaging in a sharp firefight with the Jap force, which proved to be a reinforced company. Company C was sent back to clear the block. B Company was sent to General Luna to protect supply routes to the 2d and 3d Battalions.

While the 3d Battalion occupied Mankitkit, the 2d Battalion pushed on to a point just east of Carranglan, which was to be our base of

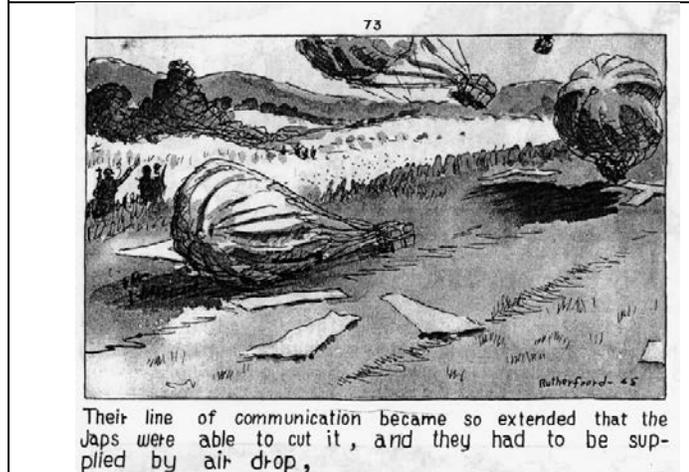
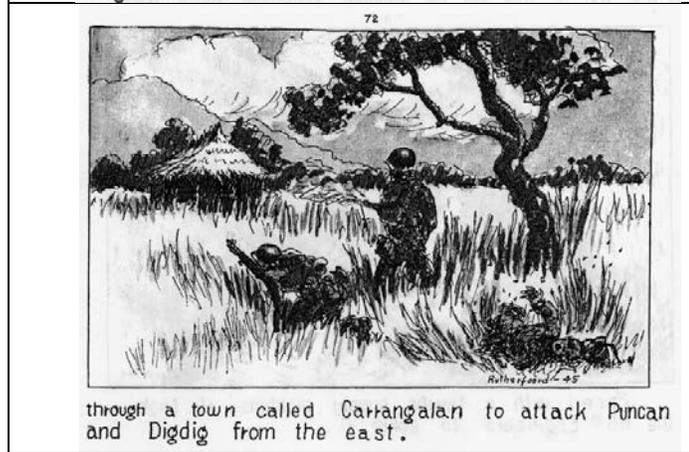
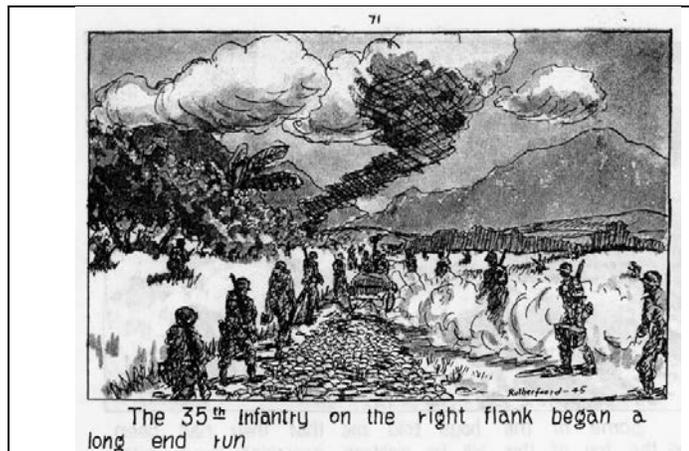
operations for the attacks on Puncan and Digdig, on Highway #5. During the initial stages of establishing the perimeter the enemy attacked. Having been repulsed in their initial attempt, the Japs, supported by knee mortars, machine guns, and rifle grenades, harassed all points of the perimeter throughout the night. We lost one killed and five wounded, but killed forty of the enemy and captured two machine guns. By 1230 on the 26th, the 2d Battalion had occupied Carranglan. At 2300 a small group of Japs attacked the perimeter, but were repulsed. On 27 February, the 3d battalion of the 27th Infantry was attached to the Regiment and advanced up

the Rizal-Patabangan road, with Company K in the lead, to help Company C of the 35th in securing the road. The job took until 1600 of the 27th. Company C then rejoined the 1st Battalion while the 3d Battalion of the 27th assumed security of the road from Rizal to Carranglan. For safety's sake, we had already called for and received an air drop of rations on the 64th Field Artillery airstrip near Carranglan. The drop was highly successful; there was better than 90% recovery. The 3d Battalion of the 35th pushed on to Carranglan on 28 February, setting up a perimeter on the west side of town. The next day Company K moved westward to Maringlu. The following morning, during a hard rain, about twenty Japs infiltrated through the company perimeter and inflicted several casualties. It had been planned that Company L would set up in the vicinity of Company K, but instead they proceeded further westward, about one mile beyond Company K. Company I in the meantime was still in perimeter in Carranglan. Company I of the 27th Infantry, attached to the 3d Battalion, patrolled to the north and maintained a road block on the road from Conversion.

THE SECOND BATTALION AT PUNCAN

We were getting to the high mountains now, and into the rain forests. The swift marches over the flat country were over now; we had to fall back on our jungle experience. It would be hard slugging over hills, through mud and thick, tangled vegetation. The Japs would be holed up in camouflaged caves, with machine guns and field pieces. Casualty rates would rise, in bitter fights to the death over every enemy position. At 0700, 28th February, the assault elements of the 2d Battalion, carrying two days supplies and leaving transportation and all other supplies at Carranglan, advanced overland via Maringalu and Cavislan, toward the Puncan Mountains.

By 1700 on the 28th, before making its way through dense undergrowth and wading waist deep rivers and streams, the Battalion occupied high ground at the junction of the Maringalu and Talavora Rivers. By darkness C Company, 65th Engineers, constructing a bulldozer road, were only a quarter mile behind the Battalion perimeter. During the night a small group of the enemy, unaware of the Battalion's presence, walked into one of the trail blocks, suffering six KIA. On 1 March, E and F

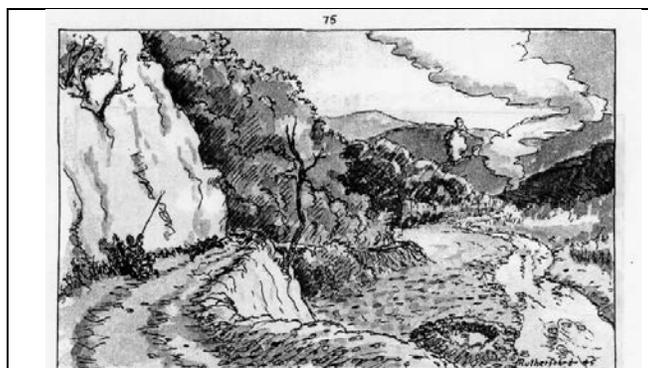


Companies, each with one of H Company's

machine gun platoons attached, jumped off and secured the high controlling ground northeast of Puncan. The ground was organized and positions dug during a sporadic enemy heavy artillery fire, which continued throughout the night in spite of counter-battery fire by the supporting 64th Field Artillery Battalion. The remainder of the battalion moved about 2000 yards south along the Maringalu River where they set up a perimeter to receive those elements of the Battalion left behind at Carranglan, and to afford security for the supporting 81mm and 4.2 mortars. During the night G Company, under the command of Captain Robert A. Edenfield, killed four enemy who wandered into their southern river block. The 1st Battalion, assigned the mission of protecting supply routes, sent A Company forward for that purpose.

On 2 March patrols from F Company probed west to the vicinity of Highway #5 with the mission of locating the artillery that had been firing the previous night. They located one dug-in 105mm howitzer, and destroyed a large quantity of artillery ammunition. E Company entered Puncan at 1200, 2 March, to establish a forward supply dump. The remainder of the 2d Battalion joined E Company during the afternoon. C Company, reinforced by one platoon of A Company, took over defense of the hill mass northeast of Puncan. During the night E and G Companies in Puncan received sporadic enemy fire from the vicinity of the Talavera River Bridge on Highway #5, and knee mortar fire from small attacking parties around the perimeter. During the night, eight infiltrators were killed in Puncan and twenty at the forward supply dump. On 4 March, F Company moved to Puncan.

There remained the job of clearing up the enemy pockets which were located in the two gulches just off the west side of Highway #5, north of the Talavera River Bridge. Artillery fire failed to drive the enemy from his caves or silence his guns. The 4.2 chemical mortars and 81mm mortars showed no visible effect. M-7's fired directly into the mouths of the caves. Attached tanks advanced daringly into the gulch, but even they could not knock out the caves. Flame throwers, bazookas, and twenty five pound TNT satchel charges were used to reduce and seal the caves. When the tops of some of the ridges were secured, the



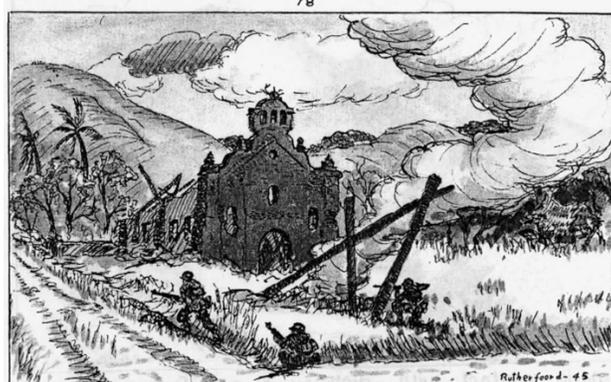
Flanked on either side by the 161, and the 35th, the 27th continued its drive northward astride Highway 5 against heavy resistance.



A gun position at the top of a sharp "S" curve in the road had its steel doors blown off twice by the Air Corps, and kept on firing until our artillery silenced it with direct hits



From the 161's objective we could see elements of the 35th coming down a hill on the other side of the valley,



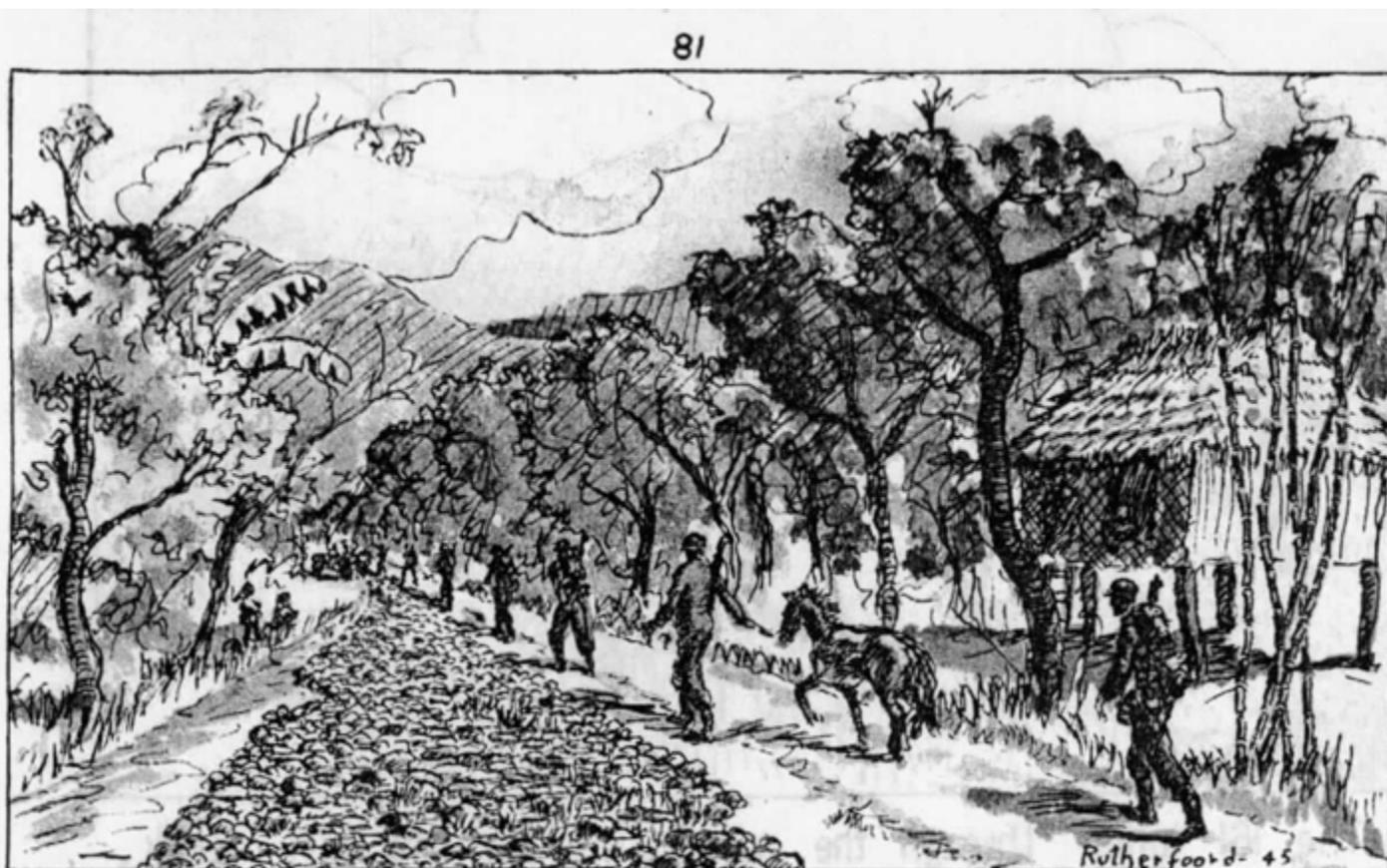
and entering Puncan from the east.

the

closing of other caves was accomplished by lowering charges by rope from above. Five gallon cans of gasoline and diesel oil thrown from the ridges and ignited by tracers and WP grenades, aided in burning out parts of the gulches and uncovering the entrances to additional caves, which were then sealed with satchel charges. Before the resistance was cleared the Battalion perimeter around Puncan received a great deal of harassing fire from that area.

Puncan and the immediate vicinity was declared cleared and secured on 5 March, with a total of two LMG's, three 47mm AT guns, three 105 howitzers captured or destroyed and eighty-six enemy counted dead, plus an unknown number sealed in caves. Our 2d Battalion, from 23 February to 5 March, lost ten killed, twenty wounded, and two died of wounds.

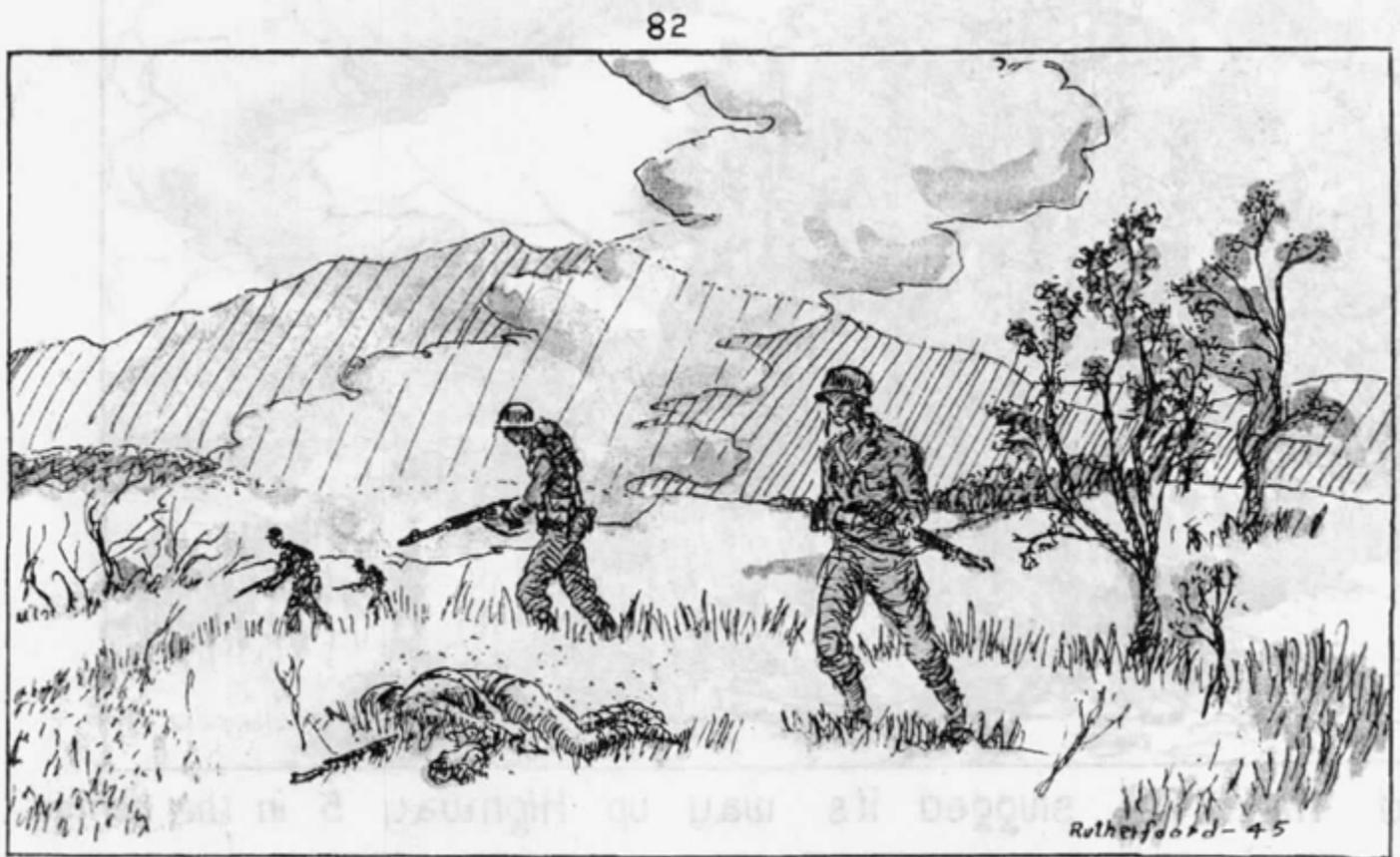
THIRD BATTALION AT DIGDIG



The 35th continued its march toward the north,

On the morning of 1 March, patrols from K Company moved on several different routes toward Digdig. One patrol contacted an enemy force entrenched in dug-outs and positions at 84.5-31.4. The position was neutralized after using white phosphorous grenades and flame throwers. The Japs had constructed a mass of intricate holes and tunnels thirty or forty feet long. The smoke from a white phosphorous grenade thrown in one hole would come out from another hole thirty feet away. Several Japs, upon being burned by flame throwers, ran out, but generally they stayed in the holes. Our men had to flush out each hole thoroughly, and in some instances the Japs fired on our men from the holes and tunnels. Several Japs upon being burned committed suicide by holding grenades to their bodies. Twenty-five enemy were killed, we had seven wounded.

The patrol continued on and reconnoitered the high ground northwest of Digdig. By dark on 1 March, the 1st and 2d Battalions were in position near Maringalu.

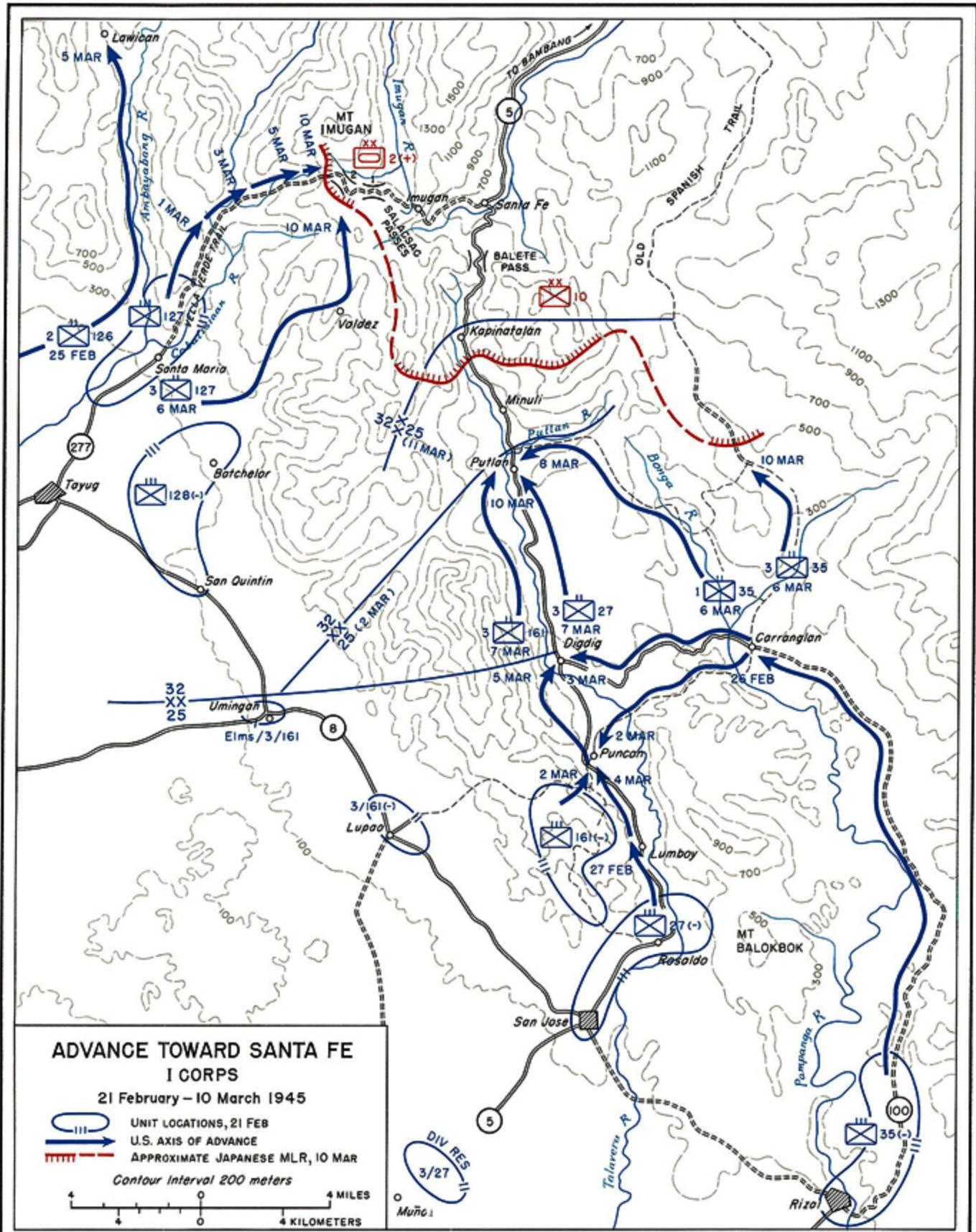


and then turned west to attack Digdig .

With a patrol in advance to reconnoiter the route, I Company jumped off at 0330 on the 2nd. At 0430, about 700 yards northwest of Maringalu, they were pinned down by Jap rifle, machine gun, and mortar fire. The Company held up until dawn, when K Company was moved in on the left. B Company, which had pushed out at daybreak with the mission of protecting the 3d Battalion's left flank, moved through K Company's position and occupied the left of the line.

After an artillery preparation, the advance was continued against enemy fire. At 0845, K Company received heavy Machine gun fire from their front. 81mm mortars, artillery and fire from M-7's were brought to bear on the enemy, and the advance was continued. In the afternoon, our forces met what at least seemed to be a definite line of resistance.

After a heavy ten minute artillery preparation, L, K and B Companies jumped off abreast. B Company on the left flank, reached heights overlooking the basin in which the Digdig road junction lay, and discovered at the foot of the high ground what must have been the enemy supply and repair dump for the entire sector. Advancing down off the heights, the company found itself following a narrow road through brush so thick that the advance was slowed to a crawl. They advanced to within four hundred yards of the road junction before pulling back to join the 3d Battalion perimeter for the night.



D. Holmes, Jr.

MAP XI



Digdig was of extreme strategic importance, but when the 35th entered it from the east

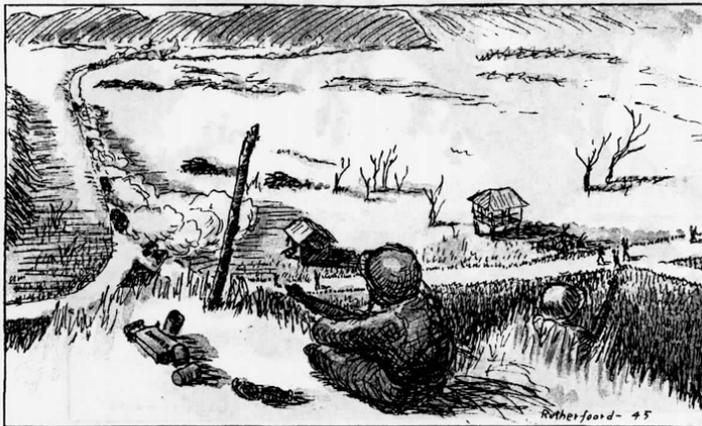
At 0745 on 3 March, the Battalion jumped off and at 0915 was in Digdig. B Company, advancing along the road which it had followed the day before, ran into a huge dump which must have been the main enemy supply and repair point for the entire sector. There were at least 150 Goodrich Tires. There were drill presses, lathes, huge stacks of gas and oil drums, and ammunition for all types of weapons.

At the Digdig Bridge, B Company found fully prepared positions – including a deeply dug-in tank position, pointing south – but all were deserted. The enemy had pulled out, possibly

to help defend Puncan when it was attacked.

Immediately upon clearing the town the 3d Battalion began acquiring the commanding ground around the road junction, and by 1230 had its units in position on all high ground.

As a result of the action on 2 March 159 enemy dead were counted. Eight enemy tanks, three passenger cars and about fifty drums of fuel were destroyed. In addition, a large amount of supplies of all types were captured intact.



everyone wondered where the town was.

B company, meanwhile, reverting to the 1st Battalion control, swung south at the Digdig Bridge, with mission of clearing the road and the areas on either side until they met the 2d Battalion coming up from Puncan. Much better time was made than expected. Both the condition of the grass and the wind were favorable, so the company simplified the problem of clearing the areas to the side of the road by lavish use of white phosphorous hand and rifle grenades, which set the brush on fire. This set off still another large ammunition dump between Digdig and Puncan.



Resistance was met from disorganized groups of Japs only; they were taken completely by surprise, and all of their defensive works were pointed to the south. The entire crews of three 47mm guns were caught away from their guns, and the guns, all pointing south, were captured intact. By the evening of the 3rd, Company B had cleared the Puncan-Digdig road to within 400 yards of the Japanese pockets still holding out at Puncan. On the orders of the regimental commander, they swung off the road,

moved to high ground overlooking the enemy pockets of resistance (occupying excellently constructed positions built by the Japs), and spent the next two days disposing of any Japs who tried to escape. On the 5th, when the fanatical defenders of Puncan were at last eliminated, the 35th Infantry's assignment was successfully completed. But the next was waiting.

THE FIRST BATTALION AT PUTLAN

On 6 March, all 35th Infantry troops in the Puncan-Digdig area of Highway #5 were relieved by the 27th Infantry. The 2d Battalion returned to Carranglan, while the 3rd set up a bivouac near the Old Spanish Trail as a base camp for strong patrols up the trail and up the Degruning river.

Back at Carranglan, the Anti-Tank Company sent out a patrol to investigate a civilian report of two Japs seen six hundred yards south of town. For once, the natives reported too little, rather than too much; they ran into a sizeable group of Japs, equipped with knee mortars. The patrol surrounded and held firm until 81mm mortars could be brought up. In liquidation of the trapped Japs, we had two men killed and three wounded, but eighteen of the enemy were counted dead when the area was cleared.

Upon being relieved at Puncan and Digdig by the 27th Infantry, the Regiment was assigned a variety of missions. We were to reconnoiter in force up the Old Spanish trail and on the trails to the north and northeast of Carranglan, and to continue to protect the east flank of the Division. The 2d and 3d Battalions were assigned these missions. The major task, however, was to make another end-run attack on Highway #5, this time just above Putlan, about four miles up the highway from Digdig. This move would prevent evacuation or reinforcement of the Jap force in the Putlan area. The Putlan Bridge was to be captured intact. There was no information as to the strength, disposition, or composition of the enemy force we were to attack. The Bonga River and the Putlan River Valleys were to be the axis of advance. This mission fell to the 1st Battalion.

From Carranglan, they were to make a wide sweep to the northwest, so that the objective would be approached from its northeast. Company C was designated as a screening force to move out the day before the main body of the Battalion. C Company of the 65th Engineers was to build a bulldozer road along the route of advance, with the lead bulldozer only slightly in rear of the last elements, so that supplies could be trucked up as far as possible during the advance.

At 1315 on 6 March, Company C moved out from the assembly area 2000 yards northeast of Carranglan. The remainder of the Battalion cleared the area by 0730 the following morning. A Company was in the lead, followed by Battalion Headquarters, Company D, Company B, and the Medical Detachment.

The march to the objective was without incident. On 7 March, C Company stopped on high ground 5000 yards northeast of Putlan, awaiting the remainder of the Battalion, which arrived just after dark and set up a perimeter for the night. For the next day's drive the order of march was rearranged; Company A led out, followed by Company B, the Battalion CP, Company D, and Company C.

The jump off was made at 0730, 8 March, and by 1300, A Company had reached the Putlan Bridge. Only then did they begin to receive heavy fire from the high ground on both sides of the bridge. The terrain in the immediate vicinity of the bridge was flat and open, and positions there were untenable due to a hill overlooking the bridge, in a position from which they could

protect it from attempts at demolition. B Company, moving up, attempted to occupy the ridge across the road from A Company, but was driven back by heavy small arms fire and hand grenades from the top of the ridge.

The situation was developing into a hotbox; the "unknown" number of Japs was proving to be a relatively large number, well dug in, well equipped and well supplied. C Company was assigned the job of occupying the ridge to the left of Company A. They accomplished the mission by 1700, against heavy rifle and mortar fire, but due to continuing of heavy fire, were not able to tie in with A Company before dark. B Company, unable to dig in on the west side of the road due to heavy rifle and mortar fire from numerous pillboxes in the area, was ordered back to set up a perimeter in the rear of the Battalion.

The situation as of dusk on the 8th was accurately described by the battalion commander, in a message to Regimental Headquarters, in one word – "rough". The enemy force had turned out to be larger than expected; and they were fighting from well-constructed and mutually supporting positions. Full advantage had been taken of the rough terrain and heavy vegetation. The enemy positions, often half cave and half pillbox, had fire lanes skillfully interlacing so that it was impossible to approach one without coming under fire from others. We were receiving sporadic artillery fire from artillery pieces somewhere back in the hills. The Battalion had suffered about thirty casualties during the day. To complete the picture, construction of the bulldozer road had been stopped by impassable terrain almost 5000 yards to the rear. The supply situation was precarious; for the present there could be no evacuation of the wounded. They had to be treated on the spot, bedded down in a safe place, and protected.

Only minor shifting's of the line occurred the next day. By mid-morning however, the complexion of things had brightened considerably. Company E was attached to the battalion to protect its supply lines and took over B Company positions in the rear. Company B then moved forward and occupied the ridge to the north of A Company without opposition. The company flanks were tied into each other.

At 0900 the 27th Infantry radioed that their advance elements had jumped off from Digdig that morning, and they were on their way to Putlan. And it was learned that Company C of the Engineers had, in their usual fashion, accomplished the impossible after a short delay: Their lead bulldozer was entering the valley, and right behind it were supplies and native carriers, litter squads and ambulances for the wounded. At 1700 a patrol from Company L of the 27th Infantry made contact with the Battalion CP.

The 10th was spent probing into the draws leading toward the enemy positions to the south. In the morning B Company located a Jap field piece. L Company of the 27th Infantry placed 81mm fire on the spot, and later the 64th Field Artillery Battalion chimed in, but the results were unknown at the end of the day.

Relief of the Battalion was effected by the 27th infantry on the morning of the 11th. At 1430 the battalion entrucked and returned by motor to their bivouac 2000 yards northeast of Carranglan. On the 12th they moved into Carranglan and set up a perimeter around the north end of town.

There is not much to be said about the part our 1st Battalion played at Putlan. It was exactly the sort of thing the press released dispose of with the phrase "minor action". The Battalion did not even finish the battle it had started. But its actions had been essential to the victory. Its presence above Putlan had ensured that the Japanese garrison there could not be

reinforced and could not retreat – and, retreating, blow up the bridge upon which our speedy advance up Highway #5 depended.

THE OLD SPANISH TRAIL

On 5 March 1945, upon relief at Digdig by the 27th Infantry, our 3d Battalion moved to San Augustine on the Old Spanish Trail. Our first objective on the trail was Salazar, about 4500 yards from San Augustine. Here the trail forks: one fork leads north to Balete Pass, the other northeast to Cauco. After two days of strong patrolling, K Company, reinforced set up a trail block at Burgos and patrolled to the north and northeast from there. On 9 March, a K Company patrol ran into a Jap trail block about a mile beyond their own block. Five Japs were killed during the ensuing firefight, with no loss to our side, after which the patrol withdrew to the base camp. On the 10th, a coordinated advance of K and I Companies seized without opposition the Jap road block encountered the previous day. From the high ground occupied here, we could see Salazar. The next day, another Jap road block was encountered, and six Japs killed. In this area, on St. Patrick's Day, 12 March, the battalion received its first enemy artillery fire during the Luzon Campaign. A few casualties were suffered, but the fire was tactically ineffective, and K Company established its block at the trail junction without difficulty.

On 11 March, a Division Field Order had added to the 35th Infantry's various missions – "Reconnoiter for routes direction Santa Fe." K and L Companies, moving up the Santa Fe fork of the Old Spanish Trail in accordance with these orders, hit a Japanese trail block manned by a reinforced company. After a short fire fight, the two companies withdrew to allow artillery fire to be placed in the area. Further probing of the enemy defense, which consisted of well-constructed and mutually supporting pillboxes, disclosed that despite the artillery fire laid in on them, they were still decidedly effective.

L Company withdrew to Salazar, leaving K Company to establish a block of its own just below the Jap block. Until a supply route could be constructed, the affair was stalemated. On 15 March, when it became obvious that a bulldozer road was not practicable over the rough and vegetation-choked terrain the trail crossed, K Company withdrew to Salazar, at the fork in the trail. This remained the 3rd Battalion's base camp during its subsequent operations on the Old Spanish Trail.

From the 15th to the 25th, the Battalion maintained its trail block at the Salazar junction, sending strong patrols up both forks of the trail, with the mission of investigating any trace of Jap patrols or other forces in the area, destroying or dispersing them if possible, and keeping especially on the alert for any sign of the movement of large bodies of troops down the trail. The prevailing Japanese mood in this area was offensive, and it was considered possible that, if constant pressure were not put on their positions, and against any advance of theirs, they might stage a large-scale attack down the trail. The objection to such an attack was that though it might afford us an opportunity to draw out a large Jap force and destroy it, invaluable strength would be diverted from the primary mission of securing Highway #5, Balete Pass, and the Cagayan Valley.

During the early stages of the 3d battalion operations on the Old Spanish Trail, a considerable amount of harassing fire was received from Japanese 150mm mortars and artillery holed up in the hills. With O.P. observations as a guide, patrols managed to locate the gun positions, and the 251st Field Artillery Battalion registered upon them. After several applications of the treatment, no more artillery fire was received.

Until the 25th of March, the 3rd Battalion remained at Salazar, sending out strong combat patrols up both forks of the trail. On the 25th, the 1st Regiment of the LGAF took over their task on the Old Spanish Trail, and they joined the regiment, which meanwhile had launched an attack on the Japanese forces in the Kapintalan area.

THE "ROLLER-COASTER" ROAD TOWARD KAPINTALAN

On 12 March the 2d battalion, minus E Company and G Company, had moved northeast from Carranglan and occupied the high ground overlooking the Old Spanish Trail. Battalion activities consisted of routine patrolling. Several small enemy infiltration attempts were repulsed.

On 16 March E Company returned to Carranglan to take over security of the town and the 64th Field Artillery Battalion. On the same date, the Battalion was alerted for possible action in the Tarlac area. Due to the alert status, the battalion was limited to routine patrolling close to the base camp.

Division Field Order No. 17, dated 15 March, had assigned the 35th Infantry the mission of securing the high ground to the east of the Balete Pass, and of protecting a bulldozer road to be constructed by the Engineers along the route of advance.

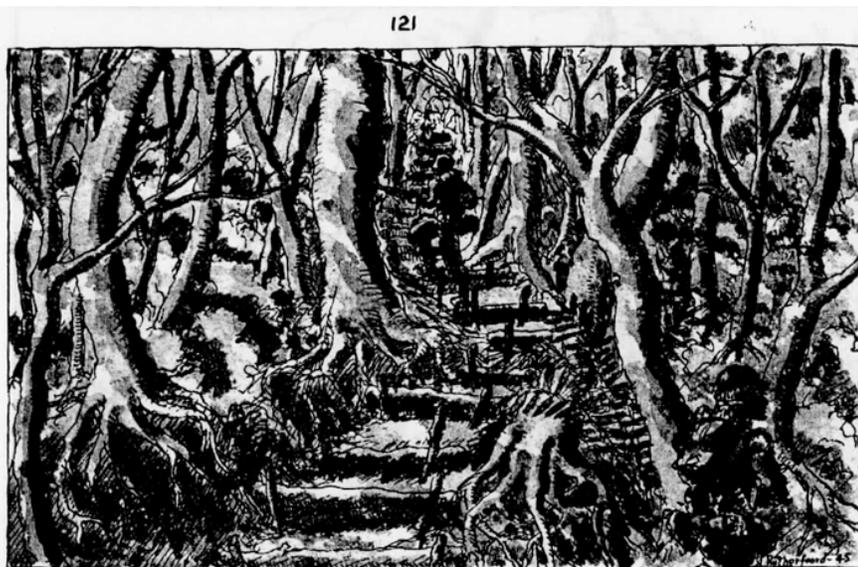
The 1st Battalion was assigned to protect the bulldozer road in its initial stages, and on the 15th C Company moved out to provide security for Company B of the 65th Engineers. On the 16th construction began, with C Company advancing ahead and patrolling far to the front.

B Company protected the rear of the engineer group, and patrolled on both sides of the road. The road was swept from beginning to end each day to clear it of mines laid by the Japs the night before.

On 19-20 March the 2d Battalion, less E Company, moved from the vicinity of the Old Spanish Trail to the bulldozer road east of Putlan. E Company moved from Carranglan the same day and joined the Battalion. From the 21st to 26th March they maintained guard on the bulldozer road being constructed behind the advance of the 1st Battalion. During this period the enemy made several attempts to destroy the bulldozers, using demolitions. Two dozers were damaged.

We were moving through unmapped territory. The sheet supposedly covering the area was blank except for one terrain

feature, the Barak River, which was shown in the wrong place. Intelligence reports were incomplete. It was certain that an enemy force of at least a battalion was deployed east of



In the path of the 35th, west of Myoko, and east of Highway 5, lay Kapintalan Ridge.

Highway #5, near Kapintalan. But how many more of the enemy was there in the sector, and where they were, was very uncertain indeed.

Meanwhile, at the head of the road, the 1st Battalion began to run into opposition. By the 19th, they had advanced some 7000 yards to the north. On the afternoon of the 20th, both A and C Companies encountered enemy riflemen, and a fire fight ensued, in which C Company lost one man killed.

The riflemen withdrew, and our advance was continued. On the 21st the situation continued to develop. At 1030 the Japs were contacted again, this time around armed with knee mortars, from which we suffered three casualties. The enemy was forced to retreat, and the advance continued.

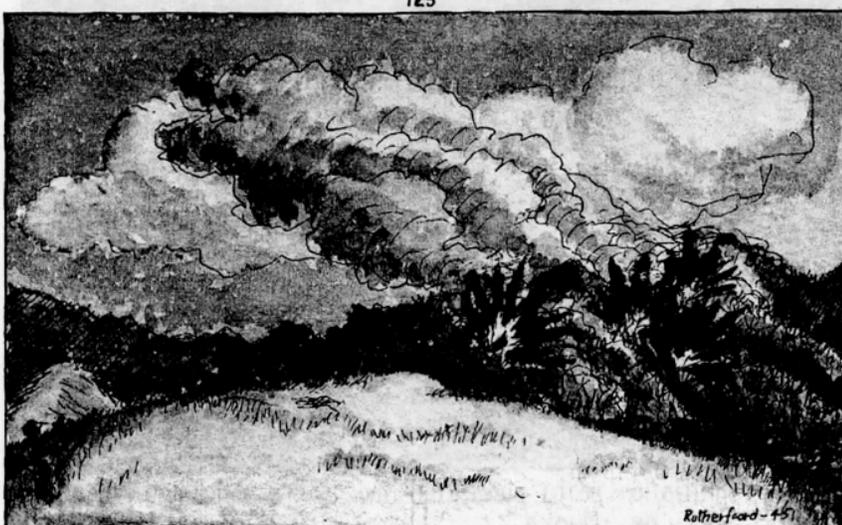
By the night of the 21st, we were within striking distance of our objective, which was a very steep and wooded ridge.

At 0900 on the 22nd, B Company moved through C Company and continued the advance toward the objective. Shortly after, they ran into an enemy block consisting of two machine guns supported by a platoon of riflemen.

The company held up and called for mortar and artillery fire on the enemy. Their increasingly offensive attitude indicated that they were being reinforced from the north. During the afternoon, the Japs attempted a flanking movement, but B Company set an ambush for them, and after suffering several casualties, the flanking party withdrew. Two platoons from A Company moved up to reinforce B Company during the day.



It soon became evident that the whole ridge line was swarming with Japs, and bristling with automatic weapons .



Kapintalan Ridge underwent a terrific shelling from M.7's, field artillery,

Hell broke loose during the night of 22-23 March. B Company repelled six banzai attacks during the night. Ten Japs, including one officer, were killed inside the perimeter. Over two hundred knee mortar and twelve 90mm mortar shells landed in the area during the night.

At 0950 the next morning, strong patrols from both A and B Companies jumped off, with A Company going around the right flank of the ridge, and B Company around the left flank. The mission

was to determine the strength of the unit and the extent of their flanks. Both patrols encountered stiff opposition from machine guns and riflemen, and returned to their positions at 1300.

Between 0945 and 1045 the Division Artillery treated the Jap positions to a solid hour of fire.

On the 22nd and 23rd, about seventy of the enemy had been killed. We lost nine men killed and thirteen wounded. It was evident that the "strong block" we had encountered on the 22nd was in reality an outpost of the enemy battalion reputed to be in the area.



and mortars .

Back on the bulldozer road, a serious supply and evacuation problem had been created by the Putlan River Valley. To cross the valley the road was forced considerably out of its way, and in addition, the valley was especially accessible to infiltrating Jap snipers and mine-laying parties. At 1600 on the 22nd the 65th Engineers completed a cable hoist stretching six hundred feet across the valley. This hoist proved invaluable, both in getting supplies forward and evacuating the wounded to the rear.

Company A relieved Company B on the morning of the 23rd, and on the 24th sent out probing patrols to locate the enemy flanks. At 1025 on the 25th, after an artillery preparation, the company jumped off and advanced to the point where Company B had met opposition on the 22nd. They hit the same positions, plus some new ones. Heavy machine guns and rifle fire was received from the right flank. A platoon of C Company went around A Company's left to flank the enemy positions there. By dusk, Company A had advanced about one hundred yards past the line of Departure, and dug in for the night.

The 2d Battalion, back on the bulldozer road, had its troubles too. The road was cut at 1100 by an enemy force equipped with demolitions, machine guns and rifles. Two bulldozers were damaged before the road could be cleared by 1400.

On 26 March, B and C Companies moved forward to cover the trail to A Company's rear. A platoon from C Company attempted to swing around A Company's left flank, but was met by fierce resistance and could not advance. In the evening, the battalion was ordered to hold its present positions pending relief by the 2d battalion.

The 2d Battalion commenced relief of the 1st on the morning of 27 March. During the day, Company E passed through A and B Companies and occupied positions five hundred yards to their northeast. The remainder on the 2d Battalion bivouacked just behind A and B Companies for the night of the 27th. Relief of the 1st Battalion was completed early on the morning of the 28th. The 1st Battalion then fell back and, with the 3rd Battalion, who had moved to the bulldozer road upon relief on the Old Spanish Trail by the 1st ICAF Regiment, assumed joint responsibility for the road.

E Company continued pushing up the center of the ridge, with C Company on the left flank and F Company on the right. There was no way to flank the enemy positions, and no soft spots in their lines had been found. The advance was steady but slow, a dogged, persistent

slugging against a deeply dug-in, heavily defended positions. By dark, they had shoved their way one hundred fifty yards closer to the objective.

KAPINTALAN

On 28 March, the regiment received a change of orders. We were to maintain contact with the enemy in our present zone of advance until 31 March, and thereafter block the east approaches of the Putlan River Valley with one battalion less one company. Starting on 29 March, we were to relieve the 27th Infantry's 1st Battalion in its zone one company at a time, then to attack north astride Highway #5 in zone and by a series of close-in envelopment's, clear the highway. On battalion plus one company went into Division reserve. In case time hung heavy on our hands, we were to be prepared to assist the 27th and 161st Infantry Regiments in their zones immediately on call.

On the 29th and 30th, the 2d Battalion moved to the Putlan River Valley and went into Division reserve. The 1st Battalion, less B and C Companies, moved to the 64th Field Artillery area to provide local security. B Company went into Division CP as Guard, and C Company remained on the trail at the head of the Roller Coaster Road to block any Jap advance down the road. By the 30th, the 3d Battalion had completed relief of the 1st Battalion, 27th infantry in our new Regimental zone on Highway #5 near Kapintalan.



US Army troops in the hills on Luzon

Shortly after dusk on the 30th, a large Japanese force attacked C Company from all sides. The attack continued fiercely throughout the night. At dawn the company began to withdraw to the bulldozer road, and immediately came under attack by about one hundred fifty Japs in three groups. A Company moved out from the Battalion perimeter around the 64th Field Artillery Battalion's position to go to their aid. But the Japs had thrown three separate road blocks

across the approaches to the Roller Coaster Road and no connection could be made. Battalion Headquarters Company, "Smoot's Galoot's" (The Company of Guerillas attached to the regiment, and commanded by Captain Robert Smoot), and finally F Company of the 2d Battalion were brought into the struggle to break the road block. At 1900, the last of the blocks was reduced, and C and A Companies made contact. About fifty five Japs were killed during the fight, at a cost of one officer and six of our men killed, four wounded, and one officer missing in action.

The enemy had strong prepared positions in the Kapintalan area, astride all approaches to Balete Pass. We did not know too much about enemy strength in this sector, but their extremely aggressive attitude, suggested that their positions were strongly garrisoned. Approaches to the enemy positions were generally along narrow ridges, usually less than fifty yards wide, and all movement was canalized along the crests. Thus, a few well-placed pillboxes defended by auto weapons could hold up the advance of a much larger force. The enemy strongpoints were placed in depth along these narrow ridges. Attempts to go around the flanks were futile simply because the flanks could not be found. Every enemy strongpoint was protected by another just behind it. The only method was to select a line of advance. And push straight ahead, reducing one position after another.

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The rainy season

The plan for securing the Kapintalan area appeared intricate but it was actually extremely simple and flexible. Nine prominences in the pillbox and cave-infested area east of Highway #5 were marked as the objective. As nearly as possible they were selected to form a square with rows of three running east-west and columns of three running north-south. On the overlays, they looked rather like the marks the players make in a tic-tac-toe game. That advantage of the plan was that, after the southernmost row of the objectives were gained, a variety of choices

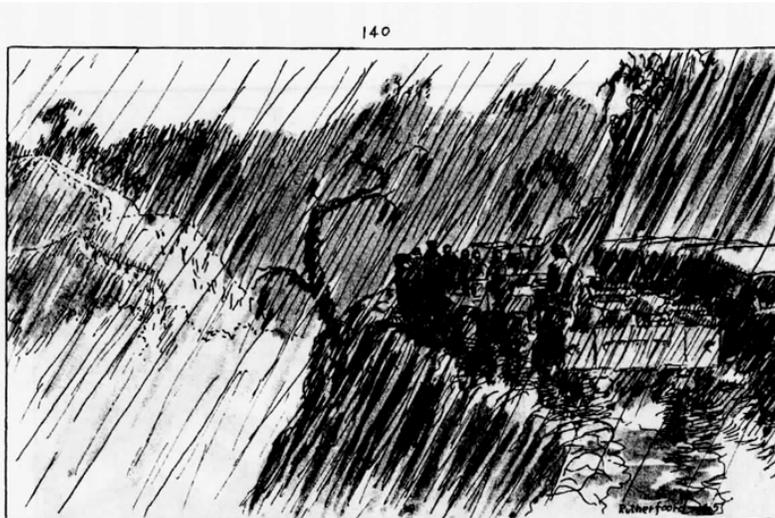
lay before us: if it were feasible we could move up the outer columns of the square to surround the area, or we could occupy all three objectives in each row before moving further north.

Objective number 1, on the southeast corner of the square, was a bare topped ridge known as the "Fishhook" because of its appearance on our photo-maps.

L Company, attacking north-northeast toward this terrain feature on the morning of 2 April, overran a large Jap outpost and advance four hundred yards, receiving only small arms and mortar fire. K Company moved up behind them and occupied the old L Company positions. The next day, both companies sent out patrols to determine the extent of the enemy lines. K Company ran into an east-west line of resistance two hundred yards to their front and suffered two wounded. We were running into thickly wooded terrain which drastically limited visibility. And heavy rains were bogging down the already slow advance.

On 5 April L Company patrols ran into resistance only ten yards from their own lines. Severe casualties were inflicted on the enemy, and the company advanced about one hundred seventy five yards during the day. K Company swung to the northwest with the purpose of coming into line on L Company's right flank. With the aid of Cannon Company, several pillboxes and caves were knocked out. By dark, the company was about two hundred yards southwest of L Company, and still in contact with the enemy. I Company followed behind K Company as it swung to the right, then cut north so as to come up on the line in the center.

On the 6th and 7th all three companies continues maneuvering into line. They were running into pillbox after pillbox, cleverly camouflaged in the dense undergrowth. When one was located, and our men began to move in on it, two or three others would open up. M-4 tanks, T-32 37mm guns, bazookas, flame-throwers, and white phosphorous grenades were employed against them, and on the 5th, 6th, and 7th, a total of thirty three pillboxes and caves were knocked out.



increased our difficulties a thousand times over.

Heavy rains enhanced the difficulty of the task, but on 8 April the battalion was at last lined up from left to right; K, I, and L. There was a small ditch running toward a piece of high ground on the Fishhook called "Pillbox Hill", from which machine gun fire had been encountered previously. Company K was given the task of occupying it. The company pushed up the ditch, using tanks and T-32's to knock out pillboxes, and flame throwers on individual holes. The objective was reached with only seven Japs accounted for; they had apparently evacuated the night before.

On 9 April, after an artillery preparation of approximately two thousand rounds, I and L Companies pushed straight forward five hundred yards and acquired the remainder of the Fishhook against slight resistance. Tanks and pack 37mm guns proved invaluable in accomplishing the mission. In this terrain, the T-32 s often more effective than the tanks in knocking out pillboxes, for they could be brought very close to the target before opening fire.

From the 10th to the 12th, the 3d Battalion remained in position on the Fishhook, sending patrols in all directions to find and destroy Jap stragglers and snipers in the area. On the 12th they were relieved by the 2d Battalion, and moved to the Division Rest Area at Puncan.

The Rest Camp at Puncan had been opened on 6 April in accordance with a Division plan to give combat troops a two-week period of rest and relaxation. One battalion from each regiment was to go in a rest camp; on 5 April, the Division had been continually in contact with the enemy for a period of seventy eight days. In addition to the nerve-tension inevitable during combat, the men were weary to the bone from constant marches and counter-marches over some of the roughest terrain on Luzon. The 2d Battalion, for instance, had ridden only four miles during all its maneuverings between the beachhead at Lingayen Gulf and the Putlan River Valley.

The 1st Battalion was the first to benefit from the plan, moving into the camp on the 6th of April. On the 12th, they moved to the Putlan River Valley and relieved the 2d Battalion, which in turn relieved the 3d Battalion at the Fishhook near Kapintalan.



The 35th on Kapintalan Ridge was supplied by carrying parties

Upon relieving the 3d Battalion on 12 April, the 2d Battalion continued the mission of seizing and securing Kapintalan. The 13th was spent reconnoitering enemy dispositions. At 0845 on the 14th, E Company jumped off from the Fishhook and advanced northward into a deep draw toward the high ground which was there objective. Early in the afternoon they reached the end of the draw, and spent the rest of the afternoon searching for a route to their objective. At nightfall, no opposition had been encountered. Company F, meanwhile, had moved east from Scar Hill and occupied the positions formerly held by

E Company on the Fishhook.

At 1245 on the 15th, E Company reached its first objective without opposition. G Company meanwhile, was attempting to reach the crest of a ridge near E Company's objective. At 1300, three caves and four pillboxes were spotted on the route of advance. T-32 37mm guns were employed against them, but they proved to have been abandoned, and the company continued its march. On the morning of 16 April, they passed through E Company's positions and continued to higher ground to the north, where they encountered Japs in well prepared positions. An artillery concentration was placed on the area, and G Company pushed on. In the preliminary skirmish which occurred this day, the company killed two Japs and had one of their men killed. Pushing forward the next morning they encountered several more pillboxes and killed twenty-one Japs. At 1030, F Company passed through G Company's lines and kept going until, in mid-afternoon, they were stopped by heavy and continuous 47mm, mortar, and machine gun and rifle fire from a deep wooded draw in their line of advance. Since it was too late to attack, they withdrew one hundred yards and dug in for the night.

At 1130 the next day, E Company passed through G Company's lines and after an artillery preparation pushed into the draw from which the enemy had stopped the F Company drive the day before. By nightfall they had reduced the enemy strongpoint and reached the high ground at the head of the draw, and on the morning of the 19th the company had moved out down the

ridge toward Highway #5. They advanced slowly during the day, meeting little opposition, but encountering numerous deserted caves and emplacements. The slow advance was due to the fact that each cave had to be investigated and destroyed, to prevent the Japs infiltrating back and reoccupying them – which may have been their intention. On the morning of the 20th, the forward elements of E Company reached Kapintalan Bridge on Highway #5, and, finding a large pillbox under the bridge, destroyed it, killing seven Japs.

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Kapintalan Ridge was a network of covered trenches, machine gun positions, and small caves from one end to the other.

From the 21st to the 23rd, the 2d Battalion patrolled extensively to the northeast, and swept the draws and ravines around Kapintalan, sealing caves and destroying emplacements and other Jap installations, including one large bamboo barracks. On the evening of the 21st, two Japs were observed going into a cave at the turn of the highway above Kapintalan Bridge. Only one came out. The next morning, G Company sealed the cave with demolitions. It was opened again at 1400 and yielded eighteen suffocated Japs, a brand new 47mm anti-tank gun, four Enfield rifles, two 1903 US army rifles, an M-1, a Jap .25 caliber rifle, and a light machine gun.

Reconnaissance patrols to the west of Highway #5 had disclosed the presence of a concentration of Jap positions which the 2d Battalion, totally committed to their present zone of advance were not able to handle. On the morning of the 17th, therefore, Company C was attached to the battalion with the mission of advancing and destroying the enemy in this area. By nightfall they had advanced five hundred yards from the jump off point, entered a deep ravine in which they encountered opposition from two enemy pillboxes, and destroyed them.

On the morning of 18 April the remainder of the 1st Battalion, leaving only D Company to guard the eastern approaches to the Putlan River Valley, moved up near C Company's location east of Highway #5 and south of the 2d Battalion's positions, with the mission of clearing the area of enemy pillboxes and caves. Company C, meanwhile, continued to move southwest down the deep wooded ravine they had entered the day before, reducing several enemy emplacements. At noon, Company B jumped off to catch up with company C. By 500, C Company had advanced another four hundred yards, and B Company held ground to their north. During the day, seven caves were sealed and a machine gun emplacement destroyed.



Captured Japanese Mountain Gun

The next day the two companies, continuing side by side down the draw, destroyed eighteen caves, six pillboxes, and encountered a number of spider holes. In addition, they knocked out a 70mm gun. Progress was slow down this draw not due to enemy action so much as the thick jungle growth, and the necessity of eliminating every cave or pillbox discovered. At the end of the day, the forward elements of B Company were six hundred yards south-southeast of Kapintalan Bridge; an advance of six hundred yards during the day.

On the 20th, forward elements of both companies reached the highway, B company encountered no resistance; C Company engaged in two firefights, both times with small suicide groups which delayed the advance only temporarily. The battalion spent the 21st mopping up in the area they had taken. Six more caves were destroyed and twenty-one Japs killed; this the last enemy resistance in the ravine. By nightfall on the 21st, Highway #5 was cleared of the enemy as far north as Kapintalan Bridge.

D Company, relieved in the Putlan River Valley by the 25th Reconnaissance Troop, rejoined the battalion on the 22nd. Although the road was clear as far as Kapintalan, many bypassed Jap positions remained in the draws and ravines east of Highway #5, and it was not until the 28th that the job was completed.

THE DRIVE NORTHEAST FROM KAPINTALAN 23 APRIL – 12 MAY 45

On the 23rd, the 2d Battalion commenced a new drive with the mission of securing an enemy strongpoint on a ridge thirteen hundred yards north-northeast of Kapintalan, and six hundred yards north of their former positions on the Fishhook. While we pushed up toward this objective, the 27th Infantry, which had established itself on Balete Ridge between Mount Myoko and Balete Pass, was to attack from the east. When the two regiments made contact at the objective, all Jap forces north and south of the line would be cut off from retreat.

The plan called for one company to push ahead as rapidly as possible to gain each successive objective, overrunning or bypassing opposition with no attempt to eliminate it completely. The following companies were to cover the territory gained in a more systematic

fashion, investigating and destroying all enemy positions found. The 1st Battalion, still occupied in the mopping up the Kapintalan area, would gradually extend their patrols farther afield to make the final mop up, slowly moving north as the job was completed.

G Company jumped off at 1300, moving slowly over very rugged and densely wooded terrain toward a small ridge which was the day's objective. Just short of this ridge they ran into determined enemy resistance from a dug-in enemy force. The company attacked immediately, overran the position, and occupied the ridge at 1640. Fourteen dead Japs were counted.

The next morning F Company passed through G Company's lines and continued northeast. About four hundred yards out, they received heavy fire from caves and pillboxes in a ravine, but bypassed this opposition and followed the next ridge northeast toward their objective.

E Company, while tidying up enemy positions bypassed or missed by the forward units, repeated G Company's cave experiment of the 22nd. Observing two Japs entering a cave just after dawn on the 24th, they immediately sealed it, and opened it up again at 1600. By a coincidence which has caused considerable annoyance since, they found eighteen dead Japs and a new 47mm with pneumatic tires, as well as assorted sabers and battle flags. The annoyance comes when an E Company man tries to tell the story; he is always interrupted with a disbelieving "G Company did that!"

At 0945 on the 25th, F Company occupied the second objective without opposition, and sent out a strong combat patrol to the northeast, to reconnoiter a route of advance to the final objective, about three hundred yards away, and to obtain a toehold on the hogback leading up to it if possible. The remainder of the company waited ready to advance.

The next morning at 0600, about a platoon of Japs flanked the ambush party north of the 2d battalion CP, reaching a small hill overlooking the CP, and commenced raking the area with knee mortar and machine gun fire. G Company flanked the hill and drove the enemy off by 0800, killing twenty three Japs and capturing twenty small arms and two heavy machine guns. Meanwhile, however, the CP received a severe pounding. The Battalion Sergeant Major was seriously wounded and his assistant was killed when a mortar shell landed on the edge of their foxhole.



I should be observed that throughout this phase of the campaign, the Battalion CP and the Regimental CP received considerable intermittent mortar and artillery fire. Although this fire was tactically ineffective, since none of the CPs were knocked out, it was indicative of the effectiveness of Jap observation and reconnaissance. A trained infiltrator, taking full advantage of the dense growth in the ravines, could go almost anywhere unobserved. Any unit which remained in the same location for two days in a row could expect shelling on the second day. The enemy artillery pieces were emplaced in caves. Indirect fire could seldom knock them out. The most effective weapon against them, and the one which eventually abated the nuisance, was the 90mm Anti-Aircraft gun, which could be set up on high

ground overlooking the caves, and fired directly into their mouths.

On the 26th, F Company continued pushing up the wooded ridge toward their objective, and at 1315 ran into a nest of pillboxes and spider holes on the forward slopes of the hill which was

their next objective. The enemy resistance was bitter and determined, and the outpost was not reduced until dark. The next morning, after beating off an attack by a small group of Japs using knee mortars and two heavy machine guns, F Company continued pushing up the hill, but advanced only one hundred yards before coming under machine gun crossfire. They withdrew a short distance and laid mortar fire on the enemy positions, after which they succeeded in reaching the top of the hill. The rest of the day was spent consolidating the position.



Men of the 122d Field Artillery Battalion, 33d Division, fire a 105-mm. howitzer against a Japanese pocket in the hills of Luzon. (National Archives)

During the afternoon of the 28th, Company A moved up to the position F Company had just taken, and on the morning of the 29th, began an advance northeast to form a junction with the 27th Infantry, which was moving down the same main ridge. After moving about two hundred yards, Company A encountered a large enemy force dug in on the ridge to their front. A fierce firefight ensued, and the company was unable to advance farther. At 1400, they were pulled back to permit an artillery concentration in the area. At 1030 on the 30th, the company again jumped off, and advanced three hundred yards against light resistance before running into another strongly defended position. This enemy force still held up the drive on the 1st of May. In an attempt to flank the positions, two platoons were sent around to the right, and one to the left, but both groups met heavy rifle and machine gun fire from all points of the enemy perimeter, and withdrew to their original position for the night.

On 2 May, after a heavy artillery concentration, A Company pushed off again at 1030 and passed through the enemy positions with only light resistance. The company continued to push northeast on the 3rd, making no contact with the enemy until 1330, when they received heavy rifle fire from a hill to their front. At this point, they were six hundred yards from Company B of the 35th Infantry, which, attached to the 3d Battalion of the 27th infantry, was at that time the forward element of that battalion.

On the 4th and 5th, A Company continued to attack this hill, but despite the help of two M-7s, they met no success. Several flanking attacks were met with heavy rifle and machine gun crossfire from all points of the enemy perimeter they approached. On the 6th, this company took over A Company's positions. A Company thereupon moved to outpost a planned supply route to the 27th Infantry, which was being supplied by airdrop.

After an artillery preparation, K Company jumped off at 1015, 7 May, but met heavy rifle and machine gun crossfire after only advancing a short distance. The resistance came from at least six machine guns and their supporting riflemen situated on the forward slope of the hill. Throughout the day, the company pounded at these positions with all weapons at their command but was unable to make any headway. On the 8th, two platoons moved two hundred yards up the ravine to the right to make a flanking attack, but were met by machine gun and rifle fire. For a short time they were cut off from the remainder of the company, but at last, after receiving several casualties, managed to extricate themselves. Several more casualties

were incurred while rescuing the wounded, but at least all of them were evacuated to the company perimeter.

On the 9th, after another artillery preparation, the company drove almost half way up the slope, spotting several pillboxes and knocking one out before they were forced to withdraw. The difficulties of moving up this slope were enhanced by the fact that our own artillery and mortar fire had almost denuded the area of growth, without materially damaging the enemy's positions. They simply withdrew deep into their caves when the shells began to fall. Only direct fire could knock out these positions, and there was no dominating terrain facing the slope from which it could be based. On the 10th, heavy mortar fire was placed on the enemy positions and another attempt was made, this time with flame throwers. But the enemy positions were as strongly defended as ever, and their fire lanes were so skillfully interlaced that the flame throwers could not be brought close enough to operate effectively.

On the 11th of May, after a mortar and M-7 preparation, K Company jumped off in coordination with E Company 27th Infantry, which had been attacking to the north end of the Jap perimeter under much the same conditions and with the same results as K Company's attacks. The two companies made contact at 1800, and on the morning of the 12th a line between the two companies was secured. The 12th and 13th was spent mopping up emplacements on the plateau and the many caves dug into its slopes. From the 11th to the 13th, more than one hundred Japs were killed by the two companies, and approximately two hundred caves were counted. Some were so deep that ladders were required to enter them, and almost all were connected by tunnels, so that it was possible for the Japs to shift troops all around their perimeter without once venturing above ground. It would almost be true to say there was more blank space than earth in the hill. On one occasion during the mopping up operations, a K Company man dug his foxhole completely through the roof of a cave, and almost fell into a nest of sealed up Japs. The hole was quickly filled, and he chose another spot for his foxhole – and, for once, left it rather on the shallow side. It is easier to scrunch down than to scrunch up.

The course of the battle for this unnamed plateau was an archetype of all the fighting in the Caraballo Mountains. Possessing the initial advantage of being on the defensive, and exploiting the rugged terrain to the full, The Japs dug in so deeply that even though the surface might be occupied, they could hold out indefinitely against any number of troops attempting to reach them in their caves. The only possibility they did not anticipate – and for countless numbers of them, it was a tragic oversight – was the technique of cave-sealing our troops have developed. It is improbable that even a fairly accurate estimate will ever be obtained of the number of Japs sealed in caves during the course of the war against Japan.

In general, the reduction of Japanese strong points in the mountains followed the same pattern. After days and even weeks of seemingly futile attacks and an often fantastic amount of pounding by bombs, artillery, and mortars, an attack would be made, no different from others that had failed, and the position would be taken with comparative ease. During the Luzon Campaign, even the Emperor's Birthday, Empire Day, and Army Day elicited no large-scale response. This, together with the comparatively huge number of prisoners captured during the campaign, seems to indicate that the well-known Banzai Spirit is beginning to wear thin. The Japs have proven that they can take any amount of physical punishment, and come back for more. They can face to certainty of personal death with equanimity, and sometimes even joy. What they cannot take is the knowledge of racial defeat.

B COMPANY ACTIVITIES WITH THE 3D BATTALION 27TH INFANTRY 27 APRIL-10 MAY 1945

On 27 April, B Company passed to Division control, with the mission of patrolling the "Sawmill Road" from Lone Tree Hill on Balete Pass. On the 28th, however, the orders were cancelled, and the company was attached to the 3d Battalion of the 27th Infantry, which was then pushing southeast toward Kapintalan to meet the 35th infantry pushing up.

After checking in at the 27th Infantry CP on the 28th, B Company headed for the 3d Battalion CP on Lone Tree Hill. After breaking up a Jap trail block and killing six Japs, the company joined the battalion that night, and formed part of the perimeter. Throughout the night their sector was attacked by a large group of Japs, using LMGs and knee mortars. B Company fought off the attack, killing twenty eight Japs that night. K/27th jumped off down the ridge that morning and took a small hill about two hundred yards to the southwest. At 1700, B Company passed through K/27th's positions with the mission of taking another small hill four hundred yards farther down the ridge. Digging in for the night about two hundred yards out, the company was again attacked all through the night, receiving hand grenades as well as knee mortars, machine gun, and rifle fire. Several casualties were suffered and eight Japs were killed. On the morning of the 30th, they found that the Japs had set up a block, so they withdrew to K Company's position, and went down the left side of the ridge. After preparatory fire by mortars and M-7s, the company attacked the enemy's left flank, but was driven back by continuous fire from knee mortars and three heavy machine guns. That afternoon, the company again went back to K/27s positions, and went down the right side of the ridge. Descending into the dense growth of the ravine, they managed to work their way unnoticed to within a few yards of the Jap defenders of the hill, who were under the impression they were still on the other flank. Just before dark, B Company pulled a Banzai in reverse, storming the hill with bayonets. The Japs were caught away from their machine guns, and could not put up an effective defense. Fifteen were killed, and the rest escaped into the ravine.

That night B Company dug in on the hill they had just taken, under heavy machine gun and knee mortar fire from the main Japanese strongpoint in this area, which lay across this ravine, about one hundred yards distant. On the morning of the 31st, they jumped off to attack across the ravine. They had almost reached the objective along a steep hogback, when they were stopped by heavy fire from caves. After several attempts to flank the strongpoint, they withdrew to their former position. It was later found that this hogback was defended from more than one hundred caves.

For three days, B Company sat on its hill, exchanging fire with the Japs across the way. On the 4th of May, K/27 passed through them to attack the hill, but was driven back. On the 5th, B Company went back to Lone Tree Hill, leaving one platoon with K Company. Here they remained until the 11th, when E/27 and K/35 made contact. On the 12th they rejoined their battalion.

3D BATTALION OPERATIONS WITH THE 27TH INFANTRY 27 APRIL-5 MAY 45

After nine days at the Puncan Rest Camp, the 3d Battalion moved to the Putlan River Valley on the 23 April, to block the Japs attempting to move down the river. A few Japs were killed, but the main problem was supply. Pack trains were used extensively.

On 27 April the 3d Battalion was attached to the 27th Infantry, and joined that regiment on Myoko Mountain, almost due east of Balete Pass. The 27th Infantry's 3d Battalion was at this time attempting to drive southwest to form a junction with the 35th Infantry. Our 3d Battalion's mission was to seize three hills from which 3/27's right flank and supply trail were threatened. These hills were located atop a larger hill, known as the Crescent, which lay astride the precipitous ridge forming the backbone of Myoko Mountain.

On 29 April, L Company affected the relief of 27th infantry elements under close range fire from enemy machine guns and riflemen on Hill A, the first objective, as well as determined attempts at infiltration. An idea of the type and ferocity of the fighting in this area may be gained by the fact that fifteen Japs were killed by L Company within the perimeter or within grenade range while the relief was taking place. Enemy troops were dug in on the reverse slope of the hill which we occupied.

When all elements of the 27th had been relieved, L Company continued to attack, seizing against heavy resistance a small dominating hill known as OP Hill, from which the final enemy stronghold on Mount Myoko could be observed.



On 30 April, L Company attacked the first objective, seizing about half the hill in the initial assault. After several hours of close-in fighting, the enemy was driven from the other half, and L Company occupied the crest. At about 2200 that night the Japs counterattacked with grenades and machine guns, The attack was repulsed, as was another which came at 0430 the following morning. On several occasions grenades landed in our foxholes and the men were able to jump out of the holes or throw them back before they exploded. At daybreak, twenty

five dead Japs were counted within three yards of our lines. Throughout the entire period, both this hill and OP Hill were under direct 47mm fire from positions on higher ground.

On 1 May, L Company made a combat reconnaissance of the next objective, and on the 2nd, I Company passed through L Company to attack the next hill. For two days they attacked with the Japs savagely defending the top of the hill. Twice the company reached the top only to be pushed back by grenade barrages and flanking machine gun fire. While they were in action, supporting tanks protected them from flanking fire, but one was knocked out on 3 May by a direct hit from a 75mm gun, and the other was forced to withdraw from its exposed position. Later I Company captured a Japanese field order issued during the attack, and found that our entire disposition was fully mapped, with the two tanks correctly placed, and even a detour on the bulldozer road which dipped down the slope away from the Japs accurately mapped.

On the 4th, I Company had again driven up the hill and had a toehold on the crest when they were relieved by elements of the 148th infantry. On 5 May, the 3d Battalion rejoined the 35th infantry, and K Company was attached to the 1st Battalion to make the final push northeast to meet the 27th coming down. The rest of the battalion outposted the jungle covered hills and ravines along Highway #5 above Kapintalan.

MOP UP NORTH OF KAPINTALAN

When the 2d Battalion was relieved by the 1st Battalion of its mission of driving northeast to meet the 27th infantry, it turned west, toward Highway #5, with the all-inclusive mission of working the draws and ravines leading toward the Highway, systematically destroying all enemy positions found, capturing or destroying all enemy equipment, and killing or capturing all enemy troops in the area, and then swinging north and continuing the process to a line about one thousand yards south of Balete Pass. The general plan was for E and F Companies

to move slowly toward the highway abreast and about three hundred yards apart, sending patrols to the front and flanks, and maintaining constant contact with each other. If determined resistance was met from a position of any considerable strength, the forward elements would draw back slightly to permit artillery and mortar registration, and then overrun the position.



Sniper fire keeps infantrymen low as medium tanks advance.
(National Archives)

The first phase of the plan went through without a hitch. On 29 April the battalion pushed off, with F Company on the right and E Company on the left and G Company following behind to eliminate the leftovers. By the 3d of May, E and F Companies reached Highway #5. All of the work had been done by patrols of platoon strength. Some resistance was met at many points, but it was never necessary to launch a company attack.

On the 4th, G Company swung north to begin the second phase of the plan. At 0920 the Company jumped off from a point about 2000 yards south of Balete Pass. G Company was ordered to move from the southeast toward this position in support of G Company, but was held up by a deep gorge across their route of march and did not make the junction with G Company. About one hundred yards northeast of the jump off point, G Company ran into heavy small arms fire from Japs in spider holes, pillboxes, and caves in a ravine to their front. The company attacked the position, destroying one cave and clearing several spider holes, but was unable to penetrate further.

On the 5th G Company remained stationary, with the exception of one platoon which was dispatched to guard tanks driving up Highway #5 to deliver supporting fire to E Company. The tanks, preceded by a minesweeping party, moved up the highway to a point almost directly west of G Company's positions and delivered fire on the enemy pocket. On the way back to their base, both tanks hit mines which had been laid by Jap infiltrators while they had been firing. One tank had a rack torn off, and was immobilized, but the other, though damaged, was still mobile. At 1140, E Company jumped off down a large ravine toward the enemy concentration G Company had engaged the previous evening, and at 1315 ran into intense machine gun and rifle fire from a number of thickly wooded areas. The company forged slowly ahead, but was greatly handicapped by the difficulty of spotting enemy positions in the dense brush. Company E was ordered to bypass the position and advance toward Balete Pass before dark. Company G then resumed the attack against this pocket from the southwest.

On the 6th, Company G was still unable to locate enemy positions in the pocket, which had now held up the advance for two days. E Company continued north without opposition and occupied a ridge about eight hundred yards south of Calso near Highway #5, but left a patrol to help pinpoint enemy emplacements in the pocket prior to another attack. That afternoon, a coordinated attack was made. Simultaneously, a platoon from E Company attacked from the northeast, an F Company platoon from the southeast, and a C Company platoon east from Highway #5. The E Company platoon swept to Highway #5 without making contact, but the F Company platoon killed four Japs and found fifteen dead from mortar and M-7 fire. C Company killed seven Japs and closed eight caves. Between 2050 and 2400, a G Company

ambush north of the ravine killed seven more Japs attempting to escape. On the morning of the 8th, G Company pushed through the ravine and sealed the remaining caves. Again, after several days of stiff and determined resistance, from ideally located positions, the enemy had suddenly broken.

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Clouds enveloped the whole Pass area in the mornings ,

On the afternoon of 7 May, Company L was attached to the 2d Battalion and moved into position between Company C and Company E, five hundred yards east of Highway #5, and eight hundred yards south of Calso. At 1230, on the 8th, after a preparation by tanks and assault guns, Company C and Company L advanced northeast to attack an enemy strongpoint three hundred yards to their front. At 1600, Company L reached the top of a small rise just short of the objective only to find about a platoon of Japs occupying the usual caves and spider holes on the reverse slope. A brisk fire fight developed and continued until dark, when L Company dug in. Company G, meanwhile, bypassed this engagement and bivouacked for the night a hundred yards to the north. On the morning of the 9th, Company L knocked out the resistance on the reverse slope of the hill after a short fire fight, while Company C, continuing northeast up the ravine, hit a large concentration of caves, spider holes, and pillboxes. A fierce fire fight developed, which continued during the afternoon. L Company moved around the right flank. Working down a ridge toward the enemy's flank in an attempt to attack from the rear, they were met by heavy fire from a knob to their front. They withdrew a short distance to commanding ground and dug in for the night. A patrol contacted C Company at 1630. At 0915 on the 10th, they continued to receive light opposition as they advanced, however, and spent the day cleaning out pockets of resistance in the area.



Balete Pass a few days after the breakthrough

The next morning C Company discovered that the six hour fire fight of the 9th had reduced the enemy pocket to remnant status. They overran the position killing six Japs and capturing a 47mm gun and ammunition, two heavy machine guns, and two flame throwers. Leaving a small force to mop up the area, Company C swung north toward Highway #5. Just before noon, they contacted I Company of the 27th on the highway nine hundred yards south of Balete Pass.

On the 10th, the remainder of the 3d Battalion, less Company E, which was still attached to the 1st Battalion, moved north up Highway #5. L Company reverted to their control, and C Company was attached. The 3d Battalion thereupon continued to drive to the north. This marked the completion of the 2d Battalion's share of the drive north from Kapintalan. Even though their strength was augmented by Companies C and L, who deserve full shares of the credit, they had racked up an enviable score. From the 27th of April to the 10th of May, they had killed two hundred seventy five Japs by nose count, and captured three prisoners. The number of Japs sealed up in caves will never be computed. Captured or destroyed materials include: four 47mm A-T guns, numerous medical supplies and pack saddles, three trucks, one entire dump of small arms ammunition, and ninety five cases of 47mm ammunition.

The 3d Battalion's principal mission was to check out a strong Jap concentration near Highway #5, about nine hundred yards from Balete Pass, which was preventing continuous use of Highway #5 as a supply route. Companies C and I were given the job. Advancing northward, Company I ran into a series of pillboxes to their front, and made no progress against it by nightfall. The two tanks attached to the battalion registered upon the enemy

position during the day, however, and on the 11th, after c Company had cleared the highway, the tanks moved along the highway and up the ravine to give close support to a coordinated attack by C and I Companies. I Company advanced northeast down the ravine, while C Company drove up from the opposite direction. By the evening of the 13th, the two companies had, with the very effective aid of indirect tank fire and 81mm mortar fire contained the Japs in the upper end of the draw. Sixty two Japs had been killed at the end of the day. That night, several small parties of Japs attempted to escape through I Company block, but were repulsed. On the 14th, Company C reverted to the 1st Battalion, and by the 15th, with nineteen more Japs added to the score, the draw was cleared of the enemy. This action completed the wiping out of the Jap 63d Infantry Regiment CP.

Upon reversion to 3d Battalion control on 12 March, L Company was ordered to drive southeast to contact K Company, which was then attached to the 1st battalion, but was expected to rejoin the 3d Battalion soon. On the 14th, having completed their mission with the 1st Battalion when the hill which had been the 1/35 and 3/27 common objective was secured, K Company reverted to the 3d Battalion. Both companies pushed slowly toward each other, against slight but steady resistance from small enemy groups which each of the two mopped up as they went along. On the afternoon of the 14th, the juncture was made. The next day, on the march to the battalion, several Jap stragglers were killed. Although Highway #5 had been declared open on the 13th, it was not actually secured until C, I, K and L Companies of the 35th had eliminated the last vestige of resistance south of the pass on the 15th.

THE CAPTURE OF SANTA FE

2D BATTALION OPERATIONS IN THE BOLONG AREA 15-21 MAY 45

After Balete Pass, the 25th Division objective was Santa Fe, a village about three thousand yards north-northeast of the pass as the crow flies, but twice that via Highway #5.

The 35th Infantry's share of the Division mission was simple and direct: " Attack north in zone

to seize and secure Santa Fe; seek and destroy enemy forces in zone; seize, secure and open Highway #5 in zone," Our zone of responsibility stretched from Balete Pass to Santa Fe astride Highway #5, widening from about four hundred yards at Balete Pass to 1500 at Santa Fe in order to take in the torturous meandering of the highway.

On 13 May, Regimental Field Order #6 was issued. The 2d Battalion was assigned the zone to the right of the

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making the 35th look like a regiment of ghosts as it passed through the Division's center for the attack on Bolong .

Rutherford-45

highway exclusive; the 1st Battalion was to advance on the left, including the highway. The 3d Battalion, which was still mopping up the last resistance south of the pass, was ordered to move to Balete Pass upon completion of their mission and remain in regimental reserve.

F and G Companies had already moved to Balete Pass and relieved elements of the 27th Infantry there on the 12th. On the 13th, F Company jumped off and advanced north-northeast almost one thousand yards without opposition. They dug in for the night just south of Bolong. At 0630, twelve Japs attacked the perimeter; five were killed in the ensuing fight. G Company, patrolling to the Balete Pass Rest House, sealed three caves near the rest house which contained several Japs.

E Company jumped off at 0930 on the 14th from Balete Ridge and made contact with F Company near Bolong before dark. At 0600 on the 15th, E and F Companies were attacked by what was thought to be a small group of infiltrators. The situation developed into a large scale counterattack from the south-southwest. Taking full advantage of heavy rain and fog, the Japs attacked throughout the morning. They were able to approach quite near the perimeter under cover of the fog, and considerable close in fighting took place. The attack gradually petered out, however, and by noon the enemy had withdrawn. At 1400, when the fog lifted enough to permit observation, forty eight dead Japs were counted around E and F Companies perimeters. During the afternoon, a platoon from each company moved north to attempt to obtain a toehold on higher ground, but was stopped by heavy fire from their front. For a short while, they were cut off from their companies, but fought their way back by 1500. Throughout

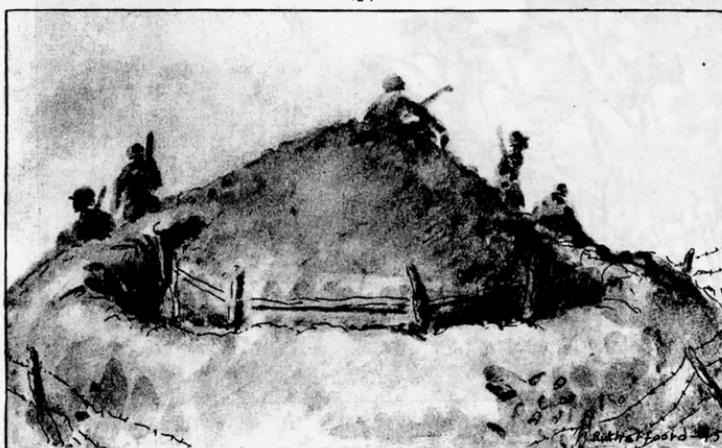


Climbing along the steep slopes that fell away before Balete Pass, I stumbled onto countless numbers of blasted caves, and wrecked field pieces which had once been a constant menace to the whole division.

the day, G Company, H Company, and the Battalion CP, who had bivouacked about halfway between Balete Ridge and E Company's positions, received 105mm fire from the Villa Verda Trail area.

After an artillery preparation on the morning of May 16, F Company and one platoon of E Company jumped off at 1130. F Company, moving north, then east to a point almost due north of E Company, and then north down a ravine, reached their objective at 1545 without opposition. The E Company platoon worked down a ridge to the west, and at 1530 dug in for the night on a small rise about one hundred fifty yards west of

Bolong. The remainder of E Company stayed in the old position, where they were joined in the evening by an advance platoon of G Company. On the morning of the 17th, E Company joined their forward platoon.



I saw a former Jap observation post on Balete Ridge manned by our own artillerymen,

E and F Companies were now on an east-west line about two hundred yards apart. The area between the two companies was infested with snipers. Both companies remained in position throughout the 17th and sent strong patrols to the north. An E Company patrol west of Highway #5, (was) attacked near the highway by a Jap force of undetermined strength, (and) killed six

before withdrawing. G Company meanwhile patrolled the terrain through which E and F Companies had advanced, searching ravines and destroying caves and other emplacements. Ten caves were sealed in a single ravine.

On the morning of the 18th, preparations were completed for an attack northwest by F and G companies the next day. The supply trail between the two companies was cleared of snipers. During the morning G Company moved to a point one hundred yards north of E, and jumped off at 1200. The company drove four hundred yards northwest through open country against small arms fire gradually increasing in intensity, until at 1400 they were stopped by a machine gun crossfire coming from four different positions. Because of the open terrain the company was unable to hold its ground against increasingly heavy fire, and moved to higher ground to the south.

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and I watched elements of the 35th Infantry move through the Pass to start a downhill fight for the first time .

F Company, working down a ravine on G Company's right, was forced back to its former position by enfilading machine gun fire from their right flank. Jumping off again on the 19th after a preparation had been fired and a smoke screen laid to cover their advance over open country, the company advanced until nightfall with no contact. The next day they advanced another three hundred yards without opposition, but on the 21st swung back to their left flank to clear a ravine from which enemy fire had been received.

On the 19th, G Company had also swung to the south, to secure a hill from which the enemy was holding up progress on Highway #5. After eliminating enemy resistance on the hill, they

moved to their positions again, and prepared for another attack the next day. At 1200 on the 20th, after an artillery preparation and an air strike, the company reinforced by an F Company platoon jumped off and advanced toward the high ground overlooking Santa Fe which was the battalion objective. Only stragglers were met and at 1700 the objective was secured. E company move up and occupied high ground to the right of G Company on the 20th. On the 21st, both companies were relieved by I and E Companies. The Battalion then moved back to Minuli in regimental reserve.

3D BATTALION ACTIVITIES ON HIGH GROUND OVERLOOKING SANTA FE

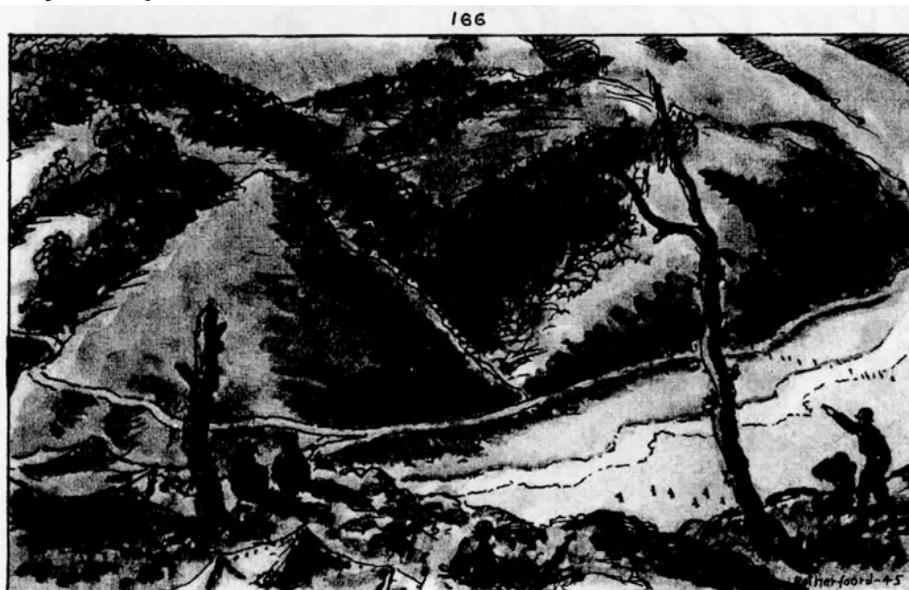
On the 21st of May, I and K Companies moved north from Balete Ridge and relieved E and G Companies on the high ground overlooking Santa Fe. On the 22nd, I Company pushed out after an artillery preparation in a northeasterly direction to secure the high ground northeast of Santa Fe. Although movement was slow owing to the difficulty of moving across numerous deep gulches, the company dug in on high ground about six hundred yards east-northeast of Santa Fe that afternoon.



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It was downhill to Bolong, but the Japs were still in prepared positions, and Americans continued to pay the price of war with their blood.

L Company moved up from Balete Ridge and occupied I Company's old position. L Company's mission was to guard the supply trails and by extensive combat patrolling, mop up any enemy personnel or positions left in the regimental zone of responsibility east of Highway #5. In addition to local security patrols, all companies of the battalion sent out such patrols. The patrol routes were plotted so that all of the major draws and ravines in the area and most of the smaller ones would eventually be explored.

On the 23rd, a K Company patrol north down a draw toward Highway #5 ran into a group of small caves with canvas covers over their mouths. Thirty five Japs, who returned fire only with pistols were flushed and killed. Examination of the bodies yielded no identifying



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I visited "K" Company of the 35th to watch our troops close in on Santa Fe, the gateway to the Cagayan Valley, and the final objective of the 25th Division.

papers or insignia, but the patrol must have been composed almost entirely of NCOs and officers, for the patrol turned into a souvenir hunter's paradise. The arguments were not over who should get the battle flags and sabers, but who should get the extra flags and sabers. Their combined value, C.O.D. Clark Field, was estimated as somewhere between a small and medium sized fortune.

At midnight on 25-26 May, an I Company outpost east of the

company observed a large group of Japs attempting to evacuate a ravine to their front. The outpost placed machine gun fire on the mouth of the ravine and contained them for the night, during which time mortar fire was laid in on them. In the morning, a strong patrol moved into the ravine and killed twenty three. An additional twenty nine were found dead from mortar fragments.

With these two exceptions, patrol results were almost identical. Countless abandoned caves were sealed; and five to ten Japs were killed each day. These Japs were stragglers, either alone or in groups of not more than three or four.

From its position north and east of Santa Fe the 3d Battalion was in a position to exercise an effective, though long-distance command over Japanese activities in the entire area around the town. Though hilly, this area was sparsely wooded: interdiction fire could be brought upon any movement of men or material in the area. From 22 May to the 27th, when Santa Fe was taken, the 3d Battalion's principal occupation was the placing of machine gun and/or mortar fire on almost literally anything that moved to or from Santa Fe in any direction. Results in enemy killed and material destroyed were impossible to ascertain, but it is certain no movement or operation of tactical importance got past the preliminary stage during this period.

THE 1ST BATTALION DRIVE ASTRIDE HIGHWAY #5 15-27 MAY 1945

From Balete Pass to Santa Fe, Highway #5 follows the line of least resistance – which means that a hundred yard stretch selected at random is almost as likely to lead east, west, or even south, as it is to lead north toward Santa Fe. On the photo maps, it looks rather like a string which has been dropped from above, and fallen into fantastic loops and curves and zigzags, almost but not quite crossing each other. The most noticeable idiosyncrasy of the highway lies just south of Santa Fe, where it runs east, then northwest, then east again to form a rough "Z" with arms five hundred yards in length.



At last Santa Fe was open to traffic, and the stage was set for an American drive down the Cagayan Valley to the north.

The watershed system through which the highway passes consists of deep, narrow ravines descending generally north. The country is further cut up by very irregular tributary draws and gulches, which are liable to wander aimlessly about before debouching into the main ravines.

The back bone of the enemy's southern defense of the Cagayan Valley had actually been broken in the fighting south of Balete Pass. Throughout the area between the Pass and Santa Fe he had countless prepared positions, but not sufficient men to knit them into a tight defensive set-up.

It is impossible to narrate except in the most general way the operations of the 1st Battalion during their advance from Balete Pass to Santa Fe. At least ninety percent of the activity was patrolling. A detailed report of patrolling activity would require volumes and would become so complex as to be meaningless. The difficulties of narration are enhanced by the fact that there

is no terrain feature in this area outstanding enough to have a name. Highway #5 itself is outstanding enough, but can seldom be used for a point of reference, since a unit in notice anywhere in its immediate vicinity might easily be moving from, moving toward, and moving parallel to it at the same time.

The plan was simply to move northward on both sides of the highway, sweeping the entire battalion zone with combat patrols, and destroying the enemy and his installations whenever encountered. Artillery was utilized to the full. When an enemy position was spotted, either by foot patrols or by artillery reconnaissance planes, heavy fire would be laid on it, after which a strong combat patrol would advance into the area and mop up the remaining opposition.

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The 25th Division was then given the job of securing the highway ,

On the morning of 15 May, A Company jumped off from the battalion assembly area at Balete Pass, driving down a ravine west of the highway. On the 15th and 16th, the company advanced nine hundred yards without meeting any organized resistance. Numerous caves were sealed, but only eight Japs were encountered. B Company moved out on the morning of the 16th, following a course angling slightly westward from A Company's route. Their mission was to patrol extensively toward the highway, seeking out and destroying all enemy in the zone, and then secure an enemy position about eight hundred yards north of Balete Pass, near where Highway #5 curved north after having run east-west for about four hundred yards. The company reached the area of their objective on the evening of the 16th. Advancing down a ravine toward the highway, they received heavy small arms and machine gun fire from their front, and withdrew to allow mortar and artillery fire on the area. On the morning of the 17th

they moved forward to clear the area, and found that the Japs had evacuated the night before. On the previous day, a patrol had reported another Jap concentration about two hundred yards to the northwest which the artillery also pounded during the night. At 0930 on the 17th, after a short mortar preparation, B Company jumped off to seize this position. Throughout the 17th and 18th they mopped up in the ravine, gradually moving northward. The strongpoint had not been abandoned by the Japs, but it was evident that some key positions had been knocked out by the shelling, for the caves were not able to protect each other. The demolition squads could do almost anything but walk straight up in front of the caves. Fire was received from some caves, but all of those were approached from above and sealed. Ten Japs were killed in spider holes.

On the 17th, meanwhile, A Company crossed Highway #5 at the eastern end of the east-west stretch nine hundred yards north of Balete Pass, and turned west to clear a large ravine which ran parallel to the highway. One bazooka ammunition dump exploded, and the entire side of the hill caved in.

Turning north, A Company advanced another two hundred yards, still parallel to Highway #5, and on the 18th was as far north on the east of the highway as B Company was on the west.

On the 16th, C Company began an advance down Highway #5, investigating and clearing out ravines running down toward the highway from the east. On the morning of the 17th, after an artillery and mortar preparation, they attacked a ravine northeast of Highway #5, about one hundred yards east of the point on the highway which A Company had crossed on the 17th. After mopping up this ravine and bagging ten Japs, C Company cut northeast across-country, and on the 18th was as far north as A and B Companies. On the 19th, 20th, and 21st, all three companies advanced roughly in line, with B Company sweeping Highway #5 and the battalion zone to its left, A Company mopping up the draws and ravines running into Highway #5 from the east, and Company C cleaning up in the battalion zone to the east, and maintaining contact by patrol with elements of the 2d Battalion, which were then advancing north as the regiment's right flank. On the afternoon of the 20th, B Company, advancing north up a ravine, destroying pillboxes and caves, observed one Jap enter a cave. A grenade was thrown into the cave, setting off an explosion on the high ground directly above the patrol. B Company suffered twenty three casualties, and two 65th Engineer Battalion men, who were accompanying the patrol, were killed.

On the afternoon of the 22nd, B Company, advancing to cross a ravine about three hundred yards south of the "Z" in Highway #5, was met by heavy small arms fire, and mortar fire from two 90mm mortars. A Company, which was flanking the area, attempted to move into the ravine from the top, but was unable to do so. After an artillery preparation, B Company tried to move forward late in the afternoon but was met by a volume of fire as heavy as before.

Two tanks were brought forward, to deliver direct fire on the position from a high point on Highway #5. After a heavy preparation, A Company jumped off on 23 May to drive down the draw from the west, but were stopped near the upper end by mortar, rifle, and machine gun fire. On the 24th, despite the use of a flame thrower tank, no progress could be made down the ravine, which was very deep and filled with boulders.

During the afternoon of the 24th, B Company moved around to the north of the ravine. On the 25th, A Company attacked, this time from the south across the ravine's southern ridge. This attack is also driven back. At 1030 on the 25th, A Company jumped off from the highway to drive up the ravine, while B Company worked down. Both companies worked deep into the draw, and at 0830 on the 26th jumped off again, employing a T-32 pack 37mm gun to help close

the caves. At 1230, the ravine was cleared, and Highway #5 was declared open as far north as the ravine, though not swept for mines.

The knocking out of this strongpoint on the 26th eliminated the last Jap defense of Santa Fe. On the 25th and 26th c Company had patrolled to the town (which consisted of a few huts and a fork in the highway). During the morning of 27 June (May), B and C Companies completed the occupation of the town, and at 1130, when the road was cleared of mines, Santa Fe was declared fallen. The 25th Division mission in the Caraballo Mountains was accomplished: Highway #5 was open from San Jose to Santa Fe.

THE OLD SPANISH TRAIL 10 -27 JUNE 1945

During the period 28 May – 10 June, the 35th Infantry engaged in no action against the enemy except routine patrolling, in the course of which some thirty five Japs were killed.

On 9 June, the Regiment was alerted for a new assignment and on 10 and 11 June, we received our orders: To Secure Highway #5 from Santa Fe to Aritao; maintain road blocks at Dupex, Malasin, and west of Aritao; and, most important, to attack south on the Old Spanish Trail to secure the Marang River Fork.

The job of outpostting highway #5 was given to the 1st Battalion. This assignment lasted only from the 10th to the 15th. During that period the battalion, disposed along the highway, patrolled to the west, killing a total of thirty five Japs and capturing two prisoners. On the 15th of June, they were relieved by elements of the 126th Infantry, and joined the 2d Battalion on the Old Spanish Trail.

The 1st Battalion was assigned the task of patrolling and maintaining road blocks in the Aritao-Dupex-Malasin area. By the 13th the battalion had set up a total of fourteen blocks, strategically located to stop Jap movement from the east and south. At their road blocks and in the course of extensive patrolling, the battalion killed one hundred one Japs and captured three prisoners.



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There was an artillery field piece hidden in a cave on Bolong which cost the United States Government one million dollars before we could destroy it .
Rutherford-45

The 2d Battalion was given the mission of driving seventeen thousand yards south on the Old Spanish Trail to the Marang River Forks, and thereafter contacting the 27th Infantry.

F Company jumped off from Aritao on the 11th, and by nightfall had moved six thousand yards. On the 12th, patrols reconnoitered the trail for another thirty five hundred yards, while g Company bypassed F and occupied San Francisco, a thousand yards to the front. F Company patrols found evidence of Jap activity all along the trail.

At 103 of the 13th, G Company pushed off from San Francisco, and at 1630, ran into a group of Japs dug in on the ridges on both sides of the trail. Mortar and artillery fire was placed on the enemy, while patrols from the rear of the column crossed both ridges and worked up on the enemy rear. When the artillery fire ceased, they jumped the enemy from the rear, destroying the positions and killing fifteen Japs.

On 14 June, G Company was reinforced by a platoon each from E and F Companies, to patrol along the ridges to the right and left flanks respectively during the advance. After an artillery preparation, G Company jumped off, and advanced four hundred yards before receiving intense machine gun fire from the right flank. The E Company platoon flanked the machine gun nest and eliminated it. One thousand yards further up the trail, the company hit a strong river and trail block, knocked it out, and occupied the position for the night.

The 3d Battalion was relieved of its assignment along Highway #5 on 15 June, and moved by truck to the end of the bulldozer road on the Old Spanish Trail. At the end of the day, they bivouacked just behind the 2d Battalion, with the mission of following up the 2d Battalion's advance, patrolling extensively on both sides of the trail, and securing the bulldozer road.

In anticipation of their arrival, E and F Companies, whose elements had been deployed along the trail for a considerable distance behind G Company, moved forward on 14 June until the three companies were abreast. At 0730 on the 15th, the drive continued, with E company in the valley, G Company on the ridge to the right, and F Company on the ridge to the left. After a nine hundred yard advance, E Company hit a Jap trail block which was not knocked out until 1600. F Company moved seven hundred yards farther South on the left ridge. G Company advanced seven hundred yards beyond E, and set up a road block which bagged six Japs during the night.

Shortly after jumping off on the 16th, the battalion ran into two groups of Japs, established astride the ridges and attempting to dominate the trail by machine gun and knee mortar fire. After a mortar and artillery preparation, F and G Companies moved forward and cleaned out the enemy positions on both ridges. During the remainder of the day's advance there was no enemy contact except for a few small parties of three to five Japs attempting to evacuate to the northeast. Throughout the entire drive down the Old Spanish Trail these small escape parties were found both along the trail and in the adjacent areas covered by our patrols: chasing and killing them became a routine chore.

When the 2d Battalion dug in for the night of the 16th, they were within four thousand yards of the Marang River Forks, having driven thirteen thousand yards up the Old Spanish Trail in six days: an average of better than two thousand yards per day.

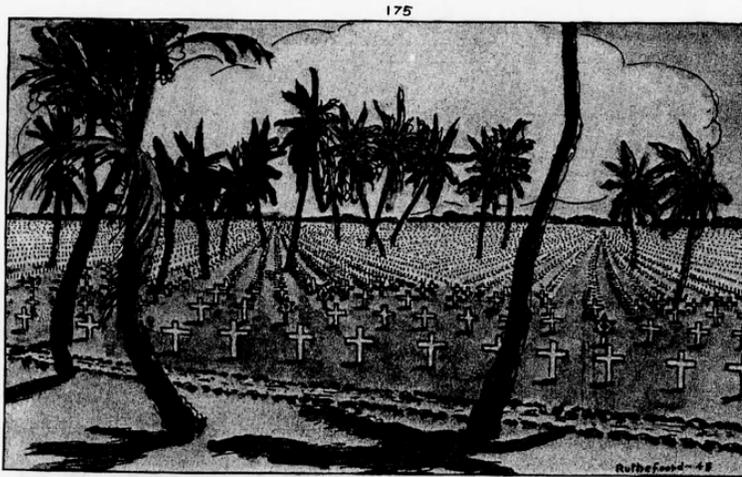
After an artillery preparation, E and G Companies moved out on the morning of the 17th, F Company remained in position of the ridge to the left of the valley. At 1315, G Company received 150mm, 90mm, and knee mortar fire from a gulch to their left front. 81mm mortar fire was placed in the gulch, after which the two companies advanced to within three hundred yards of the gulch and dug in for the night.

On the morning of the 18th, F Company passed through G to clear the gully, but found the Japs had pulled out during the night. G Company remained in position throughout the day, while E and F Companies advanced to a point two thousand yards north of the Forks. Only minor contacts with the enemy were made, but many land mines were found along the trail, all of which were neutralized with no casualties incurred.

On 19 June, the 3d Battalion assumed responsibility for the valley to the left of the Marang River. E Company led the 2d Battalion movement up the right side of the valley. At 1025 they ran into a large Jap hospital area, in which were found several fresh graves and nine unburied bodies. The bodies were those of wounded men who had evidently been too weak to evacuate under their own power, and had died of starvation and lack of proper care of their wounds after the hospital units had left. The bodies were unarmed: their comrades had not even left

them a knife or a hand grenade with which to achieve the Japanese idea of an honorable death.

At 1530, 19 June, E company reached the Marang River Fork. In nine days, from the 11th to the 19th of June, the 2d Battalion had driven seventeen thousand yards. After the 16th, the advance had slowed to a mere fifteen hundred yards a day due to the increasing density of Japs in the area attempting to escape northeast, and the necessity of patrolling farther and farther afield in order to intercept them.



Each white cross and each Star of David at Santa Barbara marked the grave of a man whose most fervent desire had been to go home, where he could live in the dignity of freedom.

On the left side of the valley, L Company, which had moved ahead of the battalion on the 18th, led the advance, with K Company following, reached the Fork at 1600, a half hour behind E Company on the right side.

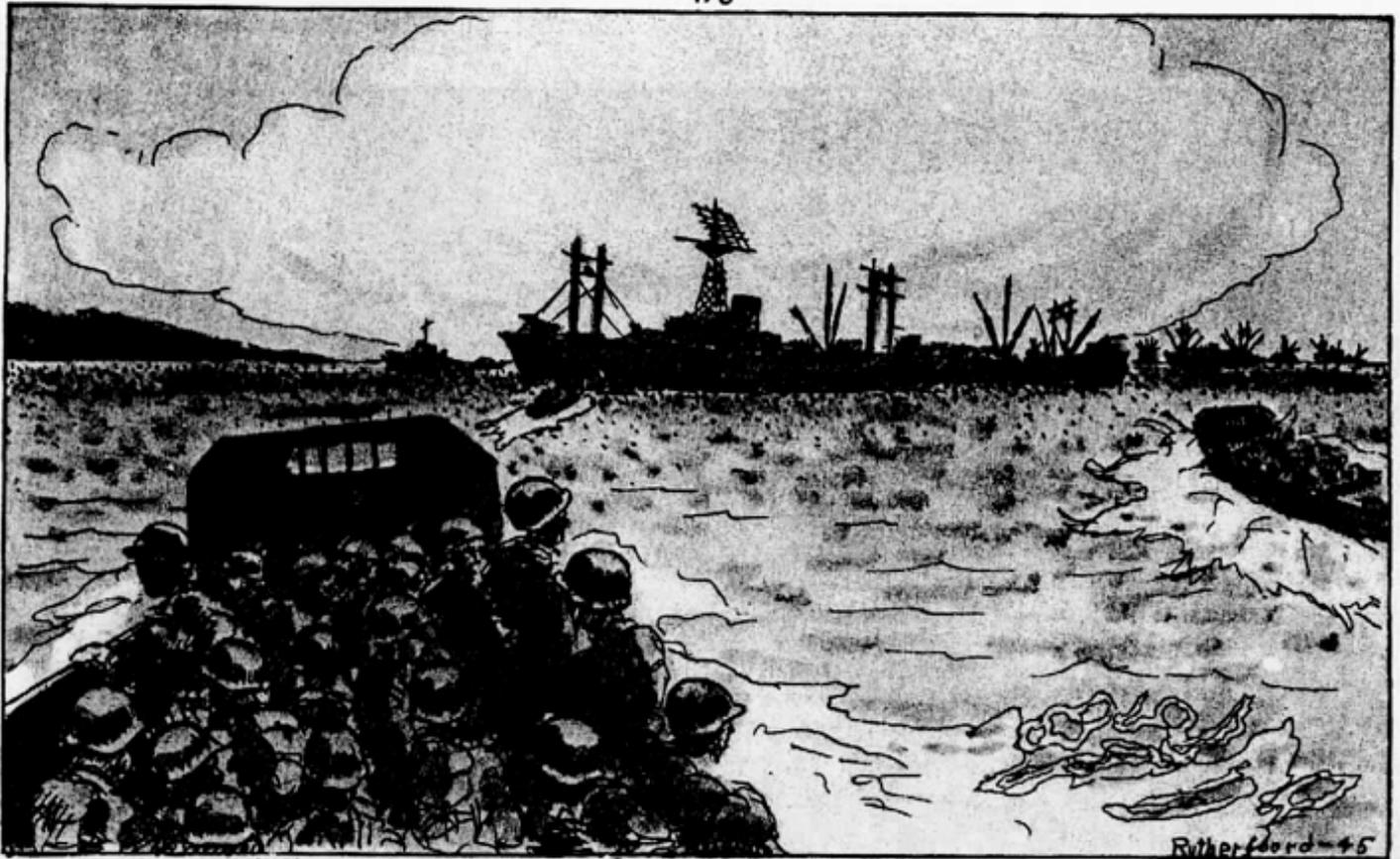
The mission now was to contact the 27th Infantry, who had been working north up the trail from Carranglan. The 2d Battalion with C attached assumed responsibility for securing the bulldozer road and patrolling to either side. On the 20th, C Company took over positions at the Fork, to maintain communications between the 2d Battalion and the 3d Battalion elements on both forks of the

trail.

L Company pushed off on 20 June, and pushed one thousand yards southeast up the Cauco Trail before running into heavy small arms fire. The next morning the company jumped off after an artillery preparation and passed through the area without contact. This process was repeated on the 21st, 22nd, and the 23rd. The opposition was evidently a delaying force employing the technique of setting up a strong block, delivering heavy fire upon our advancing troops, and then retreating before battle could be joined. Thus, with only a small force they could reduce the speed of our advance about one-third. On the 24th, from a point on the hill about three thousand yards southeast of the fork, patrols were sent forward another two thousand yards without making contact with the 27th. On the 25th, they were relieved by I Company and moved back to the Fork. No further attempts were made to reach the 27th on the Cauco Trail.

On the 21st, meanwhile, K Company pushed southeast up the Old Spanish Trail without meeting organized opposition, and set up a perimeter three thousand yards southwest of the fork. On the 22nd, a combat patrol to Mt. Kitayama, almost directly south, met a 27th Infantry patrol. However, this meeting did not complete the mission, which was to make contact on the trail.

On the 24th, a two-day combat patrol jumped off from K Company and drove three thousand yards up the trail to Susuki Pass, where they met a patrol from the 2d Battalion 27th Infantry, thus accomplishing both the Regiment's and the Division's mission of the campaign in the Carabello Mountains.



So it was with mixed emotions that we left them there, and headed for the transports, and Japan.

165 DAYS



A story of the 25th Division on Luzon

by

William de Jarnette Rutherford



After one hundred and sixtyfive consecutive days of combat, we were relieved, and the doughboys began their long journey

Many of the Illustrations contained in this article are from 165 Days, by William Rutherford.

The record number of days in combat would stand until the Vietnam War when the record was broken again by the 3d Brigade, 25th Infantry Division.