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**HISTORY OF THE NINTH RECONNAISSANCE TROOP  
NINTH INFANTRY DIVISION**

August, 1940 to May, 1945, inclusive.

Submitted

by

Cpl Earl F. Cook

to

Captain Filmore Ortof

at

Ingolstadt, Germany

2 June 1945

## IN MEMORIAM

This history of the Ninth Reconnaissance Troop is dedicated, in grateful and humble memory, to the following members of the troop who died that we might live:

	Killed in Action		
	on		in
Captain <i>James D. Long</i>	2 August	1944	France
1st Lt <i>Claude A. Howell</i>	10 August	1944	France
2nd Lt <i>Morton I. Bloom</i>	25 July	1944	France
S/Sgt <i>Carlyle H. Malmstrom</i>	6 April	1943	North Africa
S/Sgt <i>George A. Knapp</i>	17 June	1944	France
S/Sgt <i>Edward J. Thompson</i>	26 June	1944	France
S/Sgt <i>John B. Lunney</i>	26 April	1945	Germany
Sgt <i>Prentice L. Crawford</i>	7 August	1944	France
Tec 4 <i>Burliss D. Hubbard</i>	20 June	1944	France
Cpl <i>Dan Delaney</i>	7 September	1944	Belgium
Tec 5 <i>Louis Chobot</i>	3 January	1943	North Africa
Tec 5 <i>William O. Perkins</i>	19 June	1944	France
Tec 5 <i>Raymond A. Horn</i>	3 October	1944	Germany
Pfc <i>Charles P. Bacon</i>	20 April	1943	North Africa
Pfc <i>Morris Ciullo</i>	20 April	1943	North Africa
Pfc <i>Morris I. Greenfeld</i>	20 June	1944	France
Pfc <i>Braxton C. Goree</i>	24 July	1944	France
Pfc <i>William T. Albright</i>	2 August	1944	France
Pfc <i>Edward J. Zalewski</i>	12 October	1944	Germany
Pfc <i>Irvin Noble</i>	3 April	1945	Germany
Pvt <i>Venon E. Chandler</i>	15 June	1944	France
Pvt <i>John Lesnansky</i>	2 July	1944	France
Pvt <i>Kenneth O. Coonrod</i>	7 August	1944	France
Pvt <i>George J. Pawlicki</i>	7 October	1944	Germany

# HISTORY OF THE NINTH RECONNAISSANCE TROOP

## *I. United States of America*

Upon the activation of the Ninth Infantry Division at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, in August, 1940, a cadre of 18 enlisted men led by 1st Sgt Elmer Blank arrived from the 12th Cavalry of Forts Brown and Ringgold, Texas, to form the nucleus of the Ninth Reconnaissance Troop. 1st Lt W. F. Damon Jr. assumed temporary command, being relieved a week later by Capt Charles G. Meehan. Rookies from Ohio, Kentucky, and West Virginia arrived to fill out the troop.

The remainder of 1940 and the full year 1941 were spent in field exercises and maneuvers, including 70 days in the Carolina maneuvers which started in September, 1941. Lieutenant, now Captain, Damon resumed command of the troop in February, 1941, and continued in command until April, 1942. In March, 1942, the troop and the division started amphibious training. Many of the men were given commando training at Onslow Beach, N. C.; others took submarine training under the Navy at New London, Connecticut.

During this period two cadres were sent to organizations which later proved outstanding. The first cadre went to the reconnaissance troop of the 82nd Airborne Division and the second cadre, to the 88th Reconnaissance Troop; the former operated with great distinction in Sicily and the European Theater of Operations, the latter in Italy.

In the spring of 1942, the troop was the guard of honor for military leaders of the Allied Nations who visited Fort Bragg to review the division's amphibious training: General Marshall, Secretary of War Stimson, Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten (then chief of the British Combined Operations--the Commandos--and later Supreme Allied Commander of the Southeast

Asia Command), Field Marshall Sir John Dill, Lt Gen Lesley J. McNair, Lt Gen Mark W. Clark, and many others.

The troop also provided a farewell escort for Maj Gen Devers, the Division commander, who, shortly after the close of the European war, was commander of all the armies in the ETO. Brig Gen Gene E. DeR. Hoyle became the division commander; in July, he was succeeded by Brig Gen Manton S. Eddy.

That summer, the troop participated in the amphibious maneuvers at Solomons Island, where landing operations were practiced in that vicinity as part of the Atlantic Fleet, Amphibious Corps. Training and preparation continued until September; then the division was ready for the "wet run".

Maj Gen Patton, who was to command the Western Task Force in the invasion of North Africa, made his first speech to the officers and men of the Ninth Division. Several nurses who withstood his pungent exhortation for a while, finally retreated before the earthy language of "Old Blood and Guts". Maj Gen Manton S. Eddy, who later commanded the XII Corps of Patton's Third Army, was now commander of the division, Capt John D. Bradley Jr. was the troop commander, and James H. Parks, 1st Sergeant.

## *II. North Africa*

The 1st platoon of the troop, under 2nd Lt James D. Long, was attached to the 39th Infantry Regimental Combat Team and, in the middle of September, departed from Fort Bragg under sealed orders. In October, the 3rd platoon, commanded by 2nd Lt Filmore Ortof, was attached to the 60th Infantry Regimental Combat Team and departed under sealed orders.

One month later, 8 November 1942, American troops invaded French North Africa, starting on the long road to Berlin.

The troop had a part in three landings of the invasion. The 1st platoon, accompanying the 39th Combat Team, left Fort Dix, N. J., 27 September 1942 and, after short preparatory periods in Ireland and Scotland, reembarked and landed at Algiers. The

platoon, meeting minor resistance, captured the Algiers radio station, thus completing its invasion mission.

The 3rd platoon, with the 60th Combat Team, left Norfolk, Virginia, 23 October 1942 and landed at Port Lyautey, French Morocco. Operating as a dismounted assault platoon, it aided the 1st battalion of the 60th in the seizure of Port Lyautey and the nearby airfield against medium resistance.

Cpl Buechler and Pfc Silver, on detached service with the Atlantic Fleet, Amphibious Corps, left the submarine USS BARB at 2225 hours, 7 November 1942, and with three other enlisted men and one officer, proceeded by rubber boat seven miles to the harbor of Safi, French Morocco, where they marked the harbor for the attacking destroyers which preceded the assault landing by the 47th Combat Team.

The various combat teams involved in the widespread landings on two coasts of Africa departed from several ports in the United Kingdom and the United States and, rendezvousing in mid-Atlantic, 850 ships strong, continued on to the invasion coasts, setting a precedent for the larger-scale amphibious operations which came later in the war. Numerous enemy submarines were sent to the bottom by the escorting naval units, but the entire convoy reached its destinations without mishap.

Troop headquarters and the 2nd platoon left Fort Dix on 12 December 1942 and disembarked at Casablanca, French Morocco, on Christmas Eve.

Following the armistice on 11 November, the 1st platoon, after a period training French cadres, patrolled in Algeria. This platoon enjoyed beaucoup de vin, des oeufs, and des femmes; it did not rejoin the troop until about 1 March at Tebessa, Algeria.

The 3rd platoon, after good-will missions to Rabat, Meknes, and other Moroccan cities, patrolled between the Spanish and French Moroccan borders, sweating out a possible attack through Spain.

In January, after three weeks on the docks at Casablanca unloading a 1500-mile pipeline complete with valves and pumps and undergoing a heavy bombing by German four-motored bombers, the troop headquarters and the 2nd platoon moved to Part Lyautey, to be joined there by the 3rd platoon.

On 21 January 1943, the troop furnished part of the escort for a distinguished visitor who, to everyone's amazement, turned out to be President Roosevelt. After his conference with Prime Minister Churchill at Casablanca, President Roosevelt was intent on reviewing the troops who invaded and occupied French Morocco. With him that day were General Marshall, Lt Gen Clark, Maj Gen Patton and many other civilian and military notables.

After a short training and re-equipping period, the troop moved 355 miles to Tlemcen, Algeria, and bivouacked on the drill field of a Spahi regiment. The former horse cavalrymen of the troop welcomed a chance to mount an unmechanized steed again. While based at Tlemcen, the Troop ran patrols day and night in some of the worst weather yet encountered to maintain contact with French outposts guarding vital communication lines.

Then Rommel's Afrika Korps made its thrust through the Kasserine Pass. The division, averaging better than 150 miles per day, forced-marched to Tebessa, Algeria. The troop guarded the division over the entire 1094-mile route, most of it in the Atlas Mountains; except for inclement weather, which included a snow-storm, the trip was accomplished without misfortune. At Thala, the division artillery, which had travelled 777 miles in three days, was instrumental in halting the enemy drive, whose main objective was the famous and militarily vital crossroad at Tebessa.

The troop entered combat in Tunisia on 28 February 1943 when the 3rd platoon moved out to relieve elements of the 1st Armored Division in the Djebel Geubel Pass near Feriana. The 2nd platoon, commanded by 2nd Lt Herbert R. Gundrum, on the following day pushed reconnaissance into Kasserine Pass which was strewn with wrecked American equipment.

At Feriana, the troop shot down its first enemy aircraft, an ME-109, when Pvt Abraham Ginsberg, who got off six rounds before his .50-caliber machine gun jammed, shot the pilot through the rear end.

Near Feriana, Privates Mowl and McCutcheon, slightly exhilarated, pinned down a suspicious-looking Arab with machine gun fire for several hours until sympathetic onlookers positively identified the Arab as harmless. Thereafter, the relieved Arab appeared punctually each morning at the bivouac area with a peace offering of sour bread and goat cheese.

Reconnoitering toward Gafsa through extensive enemy minefields, the troop with one platoon from the 894th TD Recon Company attached, covered the II Corps front, 54 miles wide, 75 miles deep. For six days the troop maintained contact with the enemy at Gafsa while the 1st Infantry and 1st Armored Divisions maneuvered into position for the assault. The attached TD platoon had the ignominious distinction of being pursued over the desert country by four Mark IV tanks, a nerve-wracking experience which the newspapers noted as a slight brush between II Corps recon patrols and enemy armor.

At Gafsa, the 2nd and 3rd platoons engaged in their first fierce fire fight---until the adversary was discovered to be elements of the 1st Recon Troop! Movement at night caused the two forces to open fire on each other; fortunately, no casualties were incurred.

Volunteers from the troop crouched on Hill 900 overlooking Gafsa for three days and three nights, spotting artillery, machine gun and anti-tank positions until they were forced off the hill by two companies of enemy infantry. Later, the troop discovered it had been sold out by the Arabs; Thereafter, Arabs in No Man's Land were fair game.

As the forward elements of the division moved toward Maknassy and El Guettar, the troop performed a counter-intelligence mission by use of its radios. Knowing the Recon net was being monitored by enemy operators, the troop set up four stations near Maknassy and transmitted 27 Messages,



picking assembly areas for units of the entire division, hoping the enemy would be misled into believing that the main effort of the division was planned for there. At the same time, engineer units ran their vehicles up and down the dusty roads to permit enemy aircraft to observe considerable activity. Later, the troop was gratified to learn that some Panzer forces had been moved by the Jerries from El Guettar to Maknassy just before the division attacked---at El Guettar!

Shifting to the right flank toward the Sahara, the Troop then maintained contact with the famous French Camel Corps, across wastelands littered with the remains of P-38s and Spitfires. An arab caravan was halted for inspection and was found to be carrying C-rations and Chelsea cigarettes---no Camels, except the aromatic four-footed type.

Near Faid Pass, the troop relieved the Derbyshire Yeomen, an English reconnaissance regiment whose commanding officer, Col Payne Galloway, offered valuable information and suggestions. On 6 April, the troop, given a mission to make a feinting movement toward Faid Pass, fired self-propelled 75s and 81-mm mortars into the pass, churning up clouds of dust meanwhile. In the pass, the troop's second ME-109 was brought down. Retaining the same mission in the Faid-Sidi bou Zid area, the battle of El Guettar ended on 8 April 1943.

After assembly at Tebessa and replacement of casualties, the troop forced-marched 190 miles to the vicinity of Sedjenane in northern Tunisia. Completed by the entire II Corps in 12 days under the utmost secrecy, this march, directed by Maj Gen Bradley, was one of the most efficient and successful tactical moves of the war. The American corps cut the British 1st Army communication lines at right angles; only excellent coordination between the two armies prevented confusion and delay.

At Sedjenane, relieving the British 46th Recce Squadron, the troop built up a counter-reconnaissance screen along the Sedjenane-Mateur highway close by the notorious Green and Bald Mountains, where the British and Germans had been on a merry-go-round of attack and counterattack.

The troop chalked up its third enemy plane here. The Jerries, with growing respect for .50-caliber machine guns, became less aggressive in harassing the stretch of road known as Messerschmidt Lane.

Lt Nevil Blood of the 46th Recce Squadron was attached to the troop for three days at Sedjenane, led several patrols in the new sector, gave valuable information, and upon his departure ate his first pineapple in four years as a return for his passing around a much-appreciated bottle of Scotch.

At Sedjenane, Maj Gen Bradley took over command of II Corps, relieving Maj Gen Patton.

Until 21 April, the troop continued on mission, having several brushes with enemy patrols, including the ambush of an enemy mine-laying patrol which had the habit of infiltrating and remaining roads. The 3rd platoon, now commanded by Lt Paul L. Minear, permitted the unsuspecting German 40-man patrol to approach within 100 yards in bright moonlight and then cut loose with all available weapons. This Jerry patrol was never tried again.

At "Victory Bend", a peculiar curve of the road in this sector, one could make contact with the enemy at will. Here also, during a raid on a neighboring farmhouse, were found many silk and satin feminine garments, indicating that the Germans and Italians had had their women with them at the front. They knew how to fight a war!

As the 39th Infantry on the right hand ridge and the 60th on the left hand ridge flanking the Sedjenane Valley took succeeding objectives known in code as Packard, Cadillac, Etc., in place of the difficult Arabian names, the troop screened the heavily-mined valley between the two regiments. Here, another memorable road curve was aptly called "suicide corner". Facing direct fire from 88s, the troop was successful in forcing open the road, aided by the infantry who secured the high ground on the flanks. Because of fouled-up overlays received, the troop found itself taking objectives in the Sedjenane Valley two days in advance of the division schedule.

The division artillery moved down the valley behind the troop screen and supported the regiments who advanced over rugged, roadless terrain and were supplied by pack mules. Members of the troop had their initial experience in directing artillery fire.

Swinging out of the Sedjenane Valley on the right flank between the 47th Infantry and the 91st Recon Squadron, the troop pushed vigorous reconnaissance through the mountainous country on the road to Bizerte, finally breaking into open country near Mateur on the southern banks of Lake Achkeul. Across the lake to the north lay the final objective.

On 7 May 1943 came the last mission in North Africa: Push reconnaissance to Bizerte. With orders to proceed no farther than the airport, the troop moved out, accompanied by elements of the 894th TD Battalion, and led the way to the airport. While the troop for 30 minutes begged permission to enter the town, elements of the 894th with some medium tanks swung past and rolled into Bizerte, being met at the town gate by a hail of fire from across the Bizerte Canal; they entered just 20 minutes before the British 8th Army pushed into Tunis. Finally receiving permission, the troop entered Bizerte, the first element of the 9th Division to reach the town.

The troops eagerly seeking "Dirty Gertie from Bizerte" found only a decrepit old hag as an answer to their long quest for that legendary female.

Two days later, on 9 May 1943, the American II Corps accepted the first unconditional surrender of the war. On 14 May, the last enemy troops capitulated.

At this time, Privates Evans, Esquival and King, who had previously been reported missing in action, were recaptured and returned to the troop. Evans and Esquival had been on an Italy bound prison ship which was beached on the Cape Bon peninsula after an attack by Spitfires; King was in a German hospital in Tunis.

On 13 May, Capt Claud P. Brownley III took command of the Troop from Capt Bradley, who had been appointed Division Provost Marshal.

After a lazy week of resting and swimming in the blue Mediterranean (and cleaning and repairing guns, clothing and equipment), the troop moved with the division 900 miles back to Algeria. Bivouac was established on the outskirts of Magenta, 100 miles south of Oran, 40 miles north of the Sahara. Just to the north lay Sidi bel Abbès, home of the French Foreign Legion, red and white wines, outdoor cafes and watery beer.

The next seven weeks were devoted to maintenance, personal hygiene, military training and physical conditioning. The division decreed a daily siesta from 1300 to 1430 hours. A fond, indelible memory remains of the two-mile run run in shorts, shoes and helmet liner under the scorching sun which followed each restful siesta period.

At Magenta, Gen Patton delivered his second unprintable speech to the division, again promising further action, this time as part of his new command, the 7th Army.

During this period, a group of ten officers and 20 NCOs of the French 2nd Spahi Cavalry Regiment was attached to the troop for training in mechanized reconnaissance. Except for a slight misunderstanding about some misplaced wine, their training passed pleasantly; in return, some members of the troop accepted an invitation to spend a weekend wining and dining at Tlemcen, the home station of the red-Burmoosed, white-horsed Spahis, one of the more colorful cavalry units of the world.

The 9th Recon softball team won one game in Magenta.

On 8 July, the troop broke camp at Magenta and moved north to Bou Sfer, near Oran, where it staged for the trip to Sicily.

### *III. Sicily*

The invasion of Sicily, the stepping stone to the so-called "soft Underbelly" of Hitler's Fortress Europe, began 10 July 1943.

The troop embarked 27 July and arrived in Palermo harbor on 31 July. While aboard ship the troopers were assigned to

anti-aircraft guns; they had opportunity to display and improve their marksmanship during a two-hour air raid in the harbor. The troop sustained no casualties. Private Simpson was credited with shooting down one plane.

After disembarking and unloading the vehicles and equipment, the troop travelled over 100 miles to a point near Ceromi. Sicily turned out to be a mountainous country with poor roads having its fortress towns perched on high hills and its roads twisting through the valleys.

On 7 August, the troop was attached to the 47th Infantry and ordered to reconnoiter northeastward on the main Troina Cesaro road.

At Troina, the 39th Infantry supported by the division Artillery, together with combat teams from the "Big Red One", the 1st Division, fought one of the most savage and decisive battles of the Sicilian campaign.

As if moving over the thickly-mined, rugged terrain wasn't bad enough, the troop was initiated into the Screaming Meemie veterans club, when the German Nebelwerfers, the six-barrelled mortars, cooperated with the ever-present 88s to make life unbeautiful.

On the Troina-Cesaro road the 1st platoon from dawn until dusk, and the 3rd platoon for a shorter time, were pinned down by one of the heaviest and most concentrated enemy shellings in the troop's history.

After Cesaro came Randazzo. Randazzo was pulverized and cremated by the artillery of three armies: The American 7th, the British 8th and the Canadian 1st; days later, the crumbled volcanic buildings stones where once Randazzo stood were red hot. Moving through the mountains, the 60th Infantry outflanked and the 39th Infantry captured the town, cracking the enemy defense of the area.

During these days, Ernie Pyle, the beloved columnist of war's little men, wrote this philosophic comment on war: "... an emotional tapestry of one dull, dead pattern---yesterday is tomorrow, and Troina is Ranndazzo . . ."

On the 15th, Canadians, moving up from the south, pinched out the division at Bronte in the shadow of volcanic Mt. Etna. The struggle for Sicily ended victoriously three days later, 18 August 1943.

On the 22nd the troop moved to Cefalu, on the north coast about 40 miles east of Palermo, and bivouaced on the beach. Training and rehabilitation throughout the remainder of the summer was interspersed with passes to Palermo and swimming in the Tyrrhenian Sea. Besides marsala, vino and grapes, the troop had its first doughnuts; also, members had a chance to see several USO shows which featured Al Johnson, Larry Adler, Adolph Menjou and other entertainers. General Patton spoke again, complimenting the division on its work in Sicily and promising more action on the European continent.

Italy surrendered in the first week of September; soon after, American troops landed at Salerno and the British 8th Army swept across Messina Straits and started up the Italian boot. The division almost entered the Italian campaign, but after a four-day alert during which the Salerno beachhead was finally secured, returned to its preparations for a new journey.

At the end of the month, the troop, including vehicles, arms, personnel, equipment and records, was inspected by Maj Gen Keyes, who had relieved General Bradley as II Corps commander, and passed with flying colors.

In October, Staff Sergeants Phippen and Williams were the first men of the troop to be returned to the States under the rotation policy which had become operative in the Mediterranean Theater.

The 9th Recon softball team won no games in Cefalu.

The troop was reorganized at the end of October on the basis of a new streamlined table of organization which reduced the strength of the troop from 197 enlisted men and 7 officers to 149 EM and 6 officers; most of the separated surplus men were reassigned to the Infantry. The new table of equipment authorized the new M8 six-wheeled armored cars; although M8 technical manuals were studied in Sicily, the cars were first seen in England.

In November the troop moved to a staging area at Mondello and turned in all vehicles and equipment. Axis Sally, the notorious German radio propagandist, assured the division that it would be bombed here, but the promise was not kept.

After embarking on 10 November 1943, the troop sailed in convoy from Palermo, destination unknown.

#### *IV. England*

The convoy passed the great Rock of Gibraltar and headed due west into the Atlantic; wildly hopeful rumors were rampant until, within 1600 miles of US shores, the flotilla swung sharply to the north and then the northeast.

After docking in Liverpool in a foggy English mist, the troop disembarked and, travelling by train to Winchester, England, which was to be home for the ensuing six months, completed a journey of over 4000 miles.

Following a week of orientation on how to live with civilized but British people and how to avoid arguments about who won the First World War, the war debt, the colored race, and the residents of Buckingham palace, the 9th Division Tarzans were released for at will inspections of King Arthur's Round Table, Winchester Cathedral, quaint pubs and the ATS barracks.

In order to obtain suitable training areas, after a month in Winchester barracks, the troop moved out to Barton Stacey, a British camp about 11 miles from the town. Month followed month, winter changed slowly into spring, and the arduous training in preparation for the frontal assault on Nazi Germany's Atlantic Wall continued. In England the troop received entirely new equipment, except for the small arms which were carried from Sicily, including the M8 armored cars.

England, although not the United States, was the next best thing; passes were frequent, ten-day furloughs common, and the beer fair. The natives of Winchester took the 9th Division boys under their wing; mutual respect and admiration blossomed

into friendships---and sometimes deeper feelings---which will never be forgotten.

General Montgomery, who had commanded the British 8th Army in Africa and Sicily, visited the 9th Division in England. Later, the division was reviewed by Prime Minister Churchill in the company of General Eisenhower, Lt Gen Bradley (now commander of the US First Army), Air Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder and other high-ranking military men. Part of the troop provided the official escort; the remainder stood the review.

In England the men of the division, which was now in the VII Corps---the spearhead corps of the US First Army, met their new corps commander, Maj Gen J. Lawton ("Lightning Joe") Collins, who had come from Guadalcanal to take part in the invasion of Europe.

The 9th Recon softball team won no games in England.

On the night of 5 June, the continuous overhead drone of thousands of bombers, fighters and troop-laden transports east-bound from England convinced Everyone that D-Day was at hand.

The troop, completely waterproofed and combat loaded, on 7 June moved to a marshalling area at Jursley Park. 1st Lt James D. Long was now in command, with Lts Morton I. Bloom, Milton J. Buchanan, and Paul L. Minear leading the platoons.

### *V. France and Belgium*

On D-plus-4 the troop dropped off the LSTs which had borne it across the channel and plunged ashore, through three to five feet of water, on Utah Beach. Two armored cars which dropped into underwater craters were reluctantly abandoned; although the motors ran perfectly, they could not pull out.

The first continental bivouac area, near Fauville, just south of St. Mere Eglise, was shelled about 0200 hours of the first night in Normandy, quickly readjusting the troop to a combat environment.



As the 9th Division began cutting the Cherbourg peninsula, the troop on 13 June 1944 moved out on its first mission of the campaign, to maintain contact between the left flank of the 60th Infantry and the right flank of the 82nd Airborne Division. As the regiments pushed across the peninsula, the troop worked on the flanks and absorbed heavy artillery, mortar and small arms fire.

After the division cut the peninsula and swung toward Cherbourg, the troop operated between the regiments. The 1st platoon was the first Allied force into Bricquebec. The 3rd platoon proceeded up the west coast, taking many prisoners. After knocking out an enemy light tank, they engaged in a heavy fire fight at road junction 167, near Beaumont Hague. The 3rd destroyed one 88 AT gun but had a section knocked out by other German AT guns.

While the division closed on Cherbourg, the troop protected the exposed flank and pushed reconnaissance toward the Cotentin peninsula against strong resistance.

After Cherbourg fell, the division wheeled about and attacked the strong points discovered by the troop. Hedgerows and poor roads hindered reconnaissance as the platoons worked the regimental flanks. Resistance was strong and determined until the position at Beaumont Hague broke under concentrated artillery serenades and frequent bombardment. Then the troop pushed through the infantry, captured several hundred prisoners and helped clear the remainder of the peninsula---of Germans and alcoholic beverages.

The division was praised for its work on the Cherbourg peninsula by both military men and correspondents. Ernie Pyle, who was with the division during the campaign, said:

“The Ninth is one of our best divisions. In the Cherbourg campaign, it performed like a beautiful machine. Its previous battle experience paid off. Not only in individual fighting but in the perfect way the whole organization clicked.

“The Ninth kept tenaciously on the enemy’s neck. When the Germans would withdraw a little the Ninth was right on top of

them. It never gave them a chance to reassemble or get their balance. The Ninth moved so fast it got to be funny. I was based at the division CP, and we struck our tents and moved forward six times in seven days. I overheard one of the boys who took down and put up the tents saying, "J'd rather be with Ringling Brothers".

With the Cherbourg peninsula firmly in Allied hands, the division enjoyed a well earned five-day rest at Flammenville, where the men relaxed and sipped the native drinks, cognac and calvados. For five consecutive nights, the movie fans of the division tried to see "Destination Tokyo", but every night frequent air raid alerts and mechanical failures interrupted and prolonged the picture beyond endurance. The night the entire picture was finally shown, the men brought blankets and bed rolls; the final fade-out came at 3:30 AM!

On 9 July the division moved south of Carentan to a point near St. Jean de Daye. For the next 16 days, working on both flanks of the division, the troop maintained contact with the 30th Division on the left and the 83rd Division on the right. In this area, the 9th Division was hit by its first strong armored counterattack; fortunately, German hopes of capturing Isigny and splitting the beachhead were smashed by the effective coordination of infantry, TDs and air power. The German 130th Panzer Lehr Division participated in this attack---an outfit the division was to again encounter, several months and many miles later.

After two weeks of bitter, heartbreaking battle through the hedgerows, during which casualties were heavy and gains were measured in hundreds of yards, the division cut the St. Lo-Perriers road in preparation for one of the greatest concentrated bombings in history.

25 July 1944. The day of the St. Lo breakthrough, the day the Americans surged out of the confined Normandy beachhead and started on the rat-race across France and Belgium, the day which really opened the Second Front, a fateful day for all mankind.

At 1000 hours on that bright clear day, as the three infantry divisions--the 9th, 4th and 30th, of the spearheading VII Corps, lay on line in their foxholes Behind the St. Lo-Perriers road, the initial groups of fighters and divebombers came over. They machine gunned and dive bombed their staccato prelude to the tremendous percussion symphony which followed as wave after wave of high-level heavy bombers loosed their loads. For hours, 3000 planes poured their bombs into a ten square mile area; unfortunately some of the bombs fell short of the bomb line, among their own troops. Lt Gen Lesley McNair, commander of Army Ground Forces, was killed during this bombardment.

The area was further softened by the pounding of 30 artillery battalions; but when the troop, passing through the infantry, reached the jump-off line, it was greeted, incredibly enough, by heavy artillery and small arms fire. However, the enemy defense was soon cracked and American armor sliced through and started on the drive which liberated France and Belgium.

The division then pushed south to the northwestern corner of the Falaise-Argentan trap, formed by the fast-moving armor. On 2 August, Capt James D Long was KIA and 1st Lt Filmore Ortof assumed command. The troop then advanced west into the pocket, operating between the 9th and 4th Divisions until physical contact could be established by the two units.

On 7 August, the 1st platoon, under 2nd Lt Waymon D. Grammer, was protecting the flank of the 39th Infantry which was working north into the pocket. At 0100 hours the platoon collided head-on with the spearhead of a German counterattack designed to split the 1st and 3rd US Armies by recapturing Avranches. Several vehicles were lost, two men were captured, but the remainder of the platoon was able to fall back and warn the infantry of the impending attack.

This action occurred near Le Mesnil Tove and Charence le Roussel, just north of Mortain. Once again, the combined efforts of infantry, TDs and aircraft (including rocket-firing RAF Typhoons) stopped the Germans, destroying 135 Jerry tanks and chewing up some of the best SS Panzer divisions. The new German Tiger Royal tank was seen for the first time here.

After the war, Col Gen Jodl, Field Marshal Keitel, and Gen von Kesselring, three top men of the German General Staff, told American officers they had been astonished that this attack failed to reach Avranches and cut off the 3rd Army, and that this was one of the biggest factors in the ultimate Nazi defeat. Gen Bradley, while holding the attack, sent four divisions racing around the German flank, thus enabling the Allies to sweep across France.

The troop worked with the 39th Infantry, at first helping to hold the position, and later sending reconnaissance patrols seeking the retreating Germans with whom contact had been lost; the troop was eight days in this "Little Valley of Death"!

After working at the southern part of the pocket, the troop jumped 75 miles to put a reconnaissance screen out in front of the 1st Army flank. At this time, Maj Gen Manton A. Craig took over the 9th Division.

The troop, continuing north, contacted British troops who were working south at the north edge of the pocket.

Near Mortagne, Bullet was killed by a jeep. Bullet, a small female mongrel, purchased from an Arab in Orleansville, Algeria, became the troop mascot, although she was partial to Cpl Delaney, who smuggled her into England in his musette bag. On the ship from Sicily, she presented the troop with a litter of puppies and she repeated just before boarding the LSTs to cross the channel.

From here, the troop pushed reconnaissance rapidly toward Paris. Although the disappointed outfit did not enter the city itself, all three platoons spent a night in the suburbs and began to reap the harvest of liberation---cognac, champagne, kisses, flowers and fresh vegetables.

On 27 August the troop led the division across the Seine River at Tilly; for the ensuing hectic days, the mission was to reconnoiter in front of the infantry within the division zone of action and to keep contact with the 3rd Armored Division. Somehow the troop often wound up in front of the armor and the Corps cavalry; one time, Lt John D. Pricer, now commanding

the 2nd platoon, was forced to dance up and down on the road, waving an orange identification panel as the medium tanks of the armor deployed for the attack.

Hundreds of grateful, joy-filled towns were liberated by the bearded troopers in their dusty vehicles as they raced past the battlefields of the last war---the Marne River, the Aisne River, Belleau Wood, Chateau Theirry and many others.

On August 25th, Staff Sergeant James F. Harner received the first battlefield commission in the troop; on 2 September 1944 at 1107 hours, Lt Harner led the 3rd platoon across the Belgian border---the first Allied soldiers to enter Belgium since 1940. They sped across at 35 mph and encountered no resistance until reaching Macon, where the platoon met and engaged panzer grenadier units for several hours, until the 60th Infantry arrived to control the situation. After the 3rd platoon entered the town, higher headquarters sent down an intercepted German radio message which read, "Enemy reconnaissance at Macon. Thrust out and destroy them".

Resistance grew heavier. On 5 September, the troop reached the Meuse River at Hastiere and at Dinant. At Hastiere the 3rd platoon arrived just as the enemy blew the river bridge; they fought for six hours against heavy anti-tank and machine gun fire, inflicting many casualties upon the enemy, containing him and diverting his attention while infantry forces maneuvered into position for the assault crossing. Also at Hastiere, the troop rescued two American pilots who had been forced down and had been hiding out for six months under the protection of the Armee Blanche (the Belgian underground movement).

John Doucet, a large, blond-headed Belgian, joined the troop voluntarily at Dinant. A former member of the Armee Blanche, John made many friends as he worked and fought with the troop into Germany. In November, Belgians were classified as irregulars and John reluctantly returned to his Charleroi home.

Another Belgian, a small fellow known only as "Snuffy", attached himself to the troop about this same time, for the purpose of regaining a large amount of money which the

Germans had stolen from him. "Recovering" the money a little at a time from captured prisoners, Snuffy intended to return home when he had regained the same amount which had been taken from him. He was near his goal when he was caught in machine gun fire in the Hürtgen Forest in late September and was killed. When his body was recovered, it was found that the Germans had again stolen Snuffy's francs!

The crossing of the Meuse by the 9th Division against fierce resistance by strongly entrenched enemy forces was one of the most difficult tasks of the war. Using assault boats and rafts, the division established a bridgehead, held against counter-attacks, and despite murderous casualties, completed the crossing and routed the enemy.

After passing through Huy, the troop cut eastward from the Meuse River. At the Ourthe River, the 1st platoon attacked and liberated the town of Harze and recaptured eight young Belgian girls who had been abducted by SS troops. Members of the troop later attended the liberation services held by the townspeople in their beautiful cathedral.

The 3rd platoon, the first troops into Spa, ran into a German convoy outside the town and forced it to about face. As the Jerry column retreated under the fire of the platoon, the Nazis wantonly burned to the ground a Belgian village in the path of the pursuers.

The troop, on 12 September, had infantry and TDs attached to form Task Force Buchanan which was assigned the mission of pushing aggressive reconnaissance in force through the Siegfried Line and on to Cologne if possible.

This same day, at Ovifat, the troop had three armored cars knocked out by four enemy tanks in ambush supported by 300 Wehrmacht infantry. The lead armored car hit a Mark IV tank 12 times with 37-mm AP at 600 yards. These rounds bounced off the enemy tank like buckshot; so long-range 155-mm and TD fire was called down upon the enemy and that routed him.

## *VI. Germany*

Sourbrodt and Camp Elsenborn fell quickly and, on 14 September, the troop crossed the German border to aid in the capture of their first German town, Kalterherberg. Just beyond lay Hofen and the dragon teeth and pillboxes of the Siegfried Line, where the pursuit halted and the troop found itself again four and one-half months later.

To the north, the 47th Infantry breached the Siegfried and the 39th and 60th Infantry Regiments drove into the Hürtgen Forest, where followed months of the worst fighting of the war. The troop moved through Rötgen and into the Hürtgen just east of Zweifall.

The 1st platoon, dismounted, while protecting the flank of the 39th Infantry near Vossenack, caught the brunt of a two-company German counterattack preceded by a vicious 20-minute artillery and mortar barrage. After one outpost was overrun, the platoon with infantry and dismounted tankers helped stop the German advance and inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy.

After weeks of patrolling, setting up road blocks, and maintaining outpost positions, the troop, 111 consecutive days in combat, moved back to Camp Elsenborn on 27 October for the second rest of the European campaign. Here, Lt Filmore Ortof, the troop commander, was promoted to Captain.

A week later, the troop shifted to Bullingen, Germany, where the training program initiated at Elsenborn was continued; at the same time, the troop was held on an alert status, prepared for an enemy breakthrough in the thinly-held Ardennes. Bullingen was one of the first towns taken by the Germans in their December breakthrough, a few days after the troop moved out!

At both Elsenborn and Bullingen, the troop trained, ate and slept to the vibrating roar of low-flying buzz-bombs; these V-1 rockets, called "dehydrated airplanes" by the troopers, passed over at frequent intervals, day and night, carrying death to

Liege, Brussels, Antwerp and London. In the daytime, vertical white vapor trails rising from behind the enemy lines, marked the launching paths of the incredibly fast, high flying, jet-propelled V-2 bombs.

Sgt Robert J. Lynch won his battlefield commission at this time, for the aggressive work he performed through France and Belgium; he then took command of the 1st platoon.

In early December, the division moved north to the Stolberg-Eschweiler vicinity just northeast of Aachen and began the slow, bitter, relentless drive which carried to the Roer River. On 16 December 1944, the great German winter counter-offensive broke through in the Ardennes; the troop pulled out of the line, across the river from Düren, where it had been maintaining contact with the 104th Division, and started patrolling for enemy paratroopers.

The troop moved with the division to Sourbrodt and then to Eupen, in which general area the division was ordered to hold the north shoulder of the Bulge; the division stood firmly at Monschau and prevented lateral expansion of the breakthrough. The troop held a hill at Kalterherberg until relieved by an infantry battalion; after this, the troop patrolled the Eupen-Monschau area, apprehending enemy paratroopers, and also prepared defensive positions in case of further German advances.

The Luftwaffe was active, dispersing several chow lines and giving opportunities to warm up the .50-calibers. Shoe pacs, sweaters, mufflers, and other winter clothing protected the troop from the rigors of the winter which brought snow, ice, and extreme cold. The armored cars were whitewashed for operations in the snow.

On 29 January 1945, the troop relieved elements of the 39th Infantry at Kalterherberg as the division commenced the attack through the Siegfried Line (the second time the division fought through the Siegfried) and the Monschau Forest toward the vital dams of the Roer River. After the division captured the south dam and closed up to the river, the troop maintained



contact with the 78th Division on the left flank. The division then swung north to aid the 78th in the capture of the northern dam. With the dams in American hands, the US 1st and 9th Armies, on 23 February, started to cross the Roer and launched the Rhineland offensive.

The troop left Hurtgen on 1 March, crossed the Roer and relieved the 1st battalion of the 47th Infantry near Berg. The next day the troop moved out to locate the front lines and to maintain contact with the 9th Armored Division. After this, the troop pushed rapidly to Euskirchen.

The 1st platoon, moving through elements of the armor near Wichterich, attacked and disorganized the withdrawal of several hundred enemy infantry, permitting rapid conquest by our infantry.

After crossing the Erft Canal, the troop drove from Meckenheim to the Rhine River at Bad Godesberg; on 7 March, the troop cleared eight kilometers of the west bank, upstream from Bad Godesberg, capturing several hundred prisoners and many boats and barges which otherwise would have been used by the retreating Germans.

The Remagen bridge was captured by the 9th Armored Division on the same day and the 9th Division was immediately rushed into the bridgehead. Elements of the troop were on and under the Remagen bridge for three days guarding against enemy sabotage. All this time the bridge was under continuous attack by enemy artillery and aircraft. Everything from 88s to giant railway guns threw shells at the bridge, the approaches to the bridge, and the towns of Erpel and Remagen. Old-fashioned JU-88s and the newest jet-propelled planes swerved and rolled through the terrific concentration of ack-ack to drop their bombs.

The 1st platoon, huddled over .30-caliber machine guns mounted on the bridge piers with nothing but luck to protect them from the flying shrapnel. The 2nd platoon armored cars, stationed under the bridge on both sides of the river, were constantly bracketted by shells and bombs. The third platoon,

also on both sides of the river, maintained radio communication between the division CP and the traffic control officer on the west bank, to promote swift and orderly traffic movement across the river; eight men from this platoon worked as MPs on and near the bridge, reinforcing the hard-hit MP Detachment.

On 16 March, when the bridge area was secure, the troop relieved the 3rd battalion of the 60th Infantry, plugging the gap between the 9th and 99th Divisions on the Weid River. In this position, the troop guarded thousands of civilians in mines and caves, captured many prisoners, and received intense enemy SP and artillery fire.

In coordination with the mass crossing of the Rhine downstream, the impatient US First Army broke out of the Remagen bridgehead on 24 March. In a few days, the fast-racing 3rd Armored Division met the 2nd Armored Division of the Ninth Army near Paderborn to put a steel ring around the Ruhr, trapping a quarter million German troops. The division, which had been moving with the armor, was rushed to the edge of the pocket, near Winterberg, in anticipation of an attempted enemy breakout.

At Marburg, the troop halted two days to guard a large food and ordnance warehouse. Everyone had plenty to eat and drink; when the troop pulled out, each vehicle carried a case of imported sardines which were eaten with C-ration crackers for days.

An armored car and a light tank were knocked out by AT fire at Arfeld on 31 March, after a bridge had been blown up by Volkssturm just in front of the troop.

At Medebach, the 9th Division met an old acquaintance, the 130th Panzer Lehr Division, trying to break out of the pocket, and once again stopped its attack.

After screening the division advance into the pocket until the enemy was encountered in force, the troop began a rapid series of moves, during which it worked both flanks of the division (contacting the 8th Division on the left and the 104th Division on the right) and filled any gaps which appeared among

the three regiments. In four days the troop moved 200 miles, changing sectors at least once each day.

The division was relieved on the Ruhr pocket and immediately jumped 150 miles to the Harz Mountain pocket. The troop made this move on 13 April, passing through Nordhausen, where hundreds of mutilated, emaciated bodies of political prisoners released by death from one of the most notorious Nazi concentration camps, were being buried by German civilians. These Herrenvolk, supporters of the bestial regime which perpetrated these atrocities, were forced to transport and inter the stinking, decayed corpses with their bare hands.

In the Harz Mountains, the troop, working on a 23,000-yard front to protect the exposed flank of the 39th Infantry, attacked into a heavily wooded area, removed defended road blocks and captured 700 prisoners in five days, allowing the regiment to close the Harz Mountain pocket. Later, the 1st platoon guarded important records which had been removed from the German Foreign Office in Berlin to the Harz for safekeeping, while the other platoons combed a large area for German soldiers, Hitler Jugend, and soldiers in civilian clothes.

On 22 April the troop moved to Köthen and on 26 April received its final combat mission of the war, the Commanding General ordering the troop (minus one platoon) to cross the Mulde River and reconnoiter toward Wittenberg and Coswig on the Elbe in order to determine the strength, disposition and intentions of the enemy and, if possible, to contact Soviet forces.

The troop crossed the Mulde and sped northeastward, confronted by endless streams of refugees fleeing westward and thousands of armed German soldiers; the latter were disarmed and sent back toward the Mulde.

The 2nd platoon, heading for Coswig, captured more than 1000 prisoners, including a German camp with its commandant. The platoon was halted just short of the Elbe by aggressive Germans who declared that, although they did not wish to fight Americans, they would resist any attempt to interfere with their defense against the Russians.

The 3rd platoon, proceeding toward Wittenberg, suddenly became involved in a fire fight about ten kilometers from the Elbe, against several hundred German infantry and two Panther (Mark V) tanks, losing three armored cars and Captain Ortof's jeep---knocked out by the panzers. The major portion of the platoon withdrew but six men and Lt James F. Harner were captured by the enemy. On the following day, these men were released after spending the night with a German general who reprimanded them for being allies of the Russians and who told Lt Harner he would surrender to American troops if they would occupy the territory he held. These seven unarmed men made their way back across the Mulde - about 20 miles - before they contacted any friendly troops.

The next day the division contacted the Russian 121st Division and on 30 April, the 2nd and 3rd platoons escorted Maj Gen Craig and staff to Pratau, where the Russian and American officers pledged allegiance to each other over many quarts of vodka.

On 7 May 1945 at 0241 hours, the Germans capitulated; later that day, the troops were told that 9 May 1945 would be official Victory in Europe Day!

### *VII. Mission complete*

And thus two and one-half years of warfare against the German Nation came to a victorious conclusion. Thirty months of heat and cold; of sun, rain and snow; of mud and dust; of beaches, deserts, plains, rivers and mountains; of hunger, thirst, tiredness, fright, sickness, hatred, horror, disgust, disillusionment and pain. Thirty months of pressing onward, ever onward against small arms, artillery, mines, rockets, buzz bombs booby traps, flame throwers, grenades, strafing, bombing, mortars, Screaming Meemies, Panthers, Tigers and Tiger Royals. Thirty months of "sweating it out", of living in the present for fear of the future, of seeing friends die and enemies live, of wondering "what the hell?" But also, thirty months of comradeship, of occasional

good times, of liberations with their kisses and champagne, of rests and passes to restore wasted nerves, of letters from home.

And now it's all over. The victory which at first seemed impossible, then hung in the balance, and later appeared inevitable, is here. But there has been no exultation, no wild celebrations; but rather, a tired thankfulness, a memory of friends fallen and lives wasted, and a devout prayer that this will never, never happen again.

Fighting in seven different countries, the NINTH CAVALRY RECONNAISSANCE TROOP MECHANIZED, in one of the finest divisions of the United States Army, has earned its reputation as an excellent combat outfit. In the eight campaigns in which the troop participated, troopers were awarded 95 Silver and Bronze Stars for gallantry in action and for meritorious service. The Purple Hearts are many.

Today, old members of the troop are going home. The new men, backed by a splendid record of accomplishment, will carry on the fine old traditions of the cavalry and bear the red-and-white guidon to greater heights.

THE END