

We went around the south of the Falaise Pocket. The whole German Seventh Army was above us there. Looking at the situation map in the battalion CP, we felt rather nervous. We hoped the krauts would not pull anything out of the air! The war seemed to be going too well. At this rate, we thought, we would be home by Christmas.



It had become a war of movement. The cruel slogging battles of the hedgerows in Normandy were a thing of the past. We no longer measured advances in yards, but in miles. One day we went from Vire to Gathemo, 12 miles; then next day to Mortain, 15 miles; next day to Ger, 7 miles, and so on day after day. When there was a job to be done, one company stayed behind to do it while the rest of the battalion moved forward.

At L'Onlay L'Abbaye, "A" Company stayed behind to build a Bailey Bridge. Starting at 0800 on 15 August, the second platoon began sweeping for mines from the MSR to Mortain, through Ger, France, and finally completed its job at L'Onlay L'Abbaye, a total of 35 miles. Here they pitched in and assisted the first platoon in the construction of the fifty-foot bridge.

Traffic was already passing over the rubble of the demolished bridge, so that it was necessary to build the new bridge fifty feet back from the edge of the canal so that vehicles could pass. With the aid of construction rollers the bridge was completed and rolled into place, delaying the flow of traffic for only fifteen minutes.

The following morning, the second platoon was detailed to clear the rubble from underneath the bridge. This debris was acting as a dam, and the resulting rise of water threatened to overflow the banks of the canal. While the men worked there, a pretty little French girl promenaded back and forth over the pedestrian ramp



built on the side of the bridge. Naturally, the boys looked up. Soon a vehement argument was going on as to what the girl was wearing underneath her dress. Pvt. Alfred Bucco settled the question by disconnecting the air hose from his jackhammer, and with one well-directed blow, found that the answer was - nothing!

At Ger, "C" Company had to put in a Bailey Bridge. The first platoon began to clear an approach for the by-pass when they hit a heavily concentrated anti-personnel minefield. It took blood to clear that field. Three men died, six were injured. The bridge went in before the deadline. The second platoon built the bridge under harassing fire by kraut 88's and intermittent visits by the now almost invisible Luftwaffe. The third platoon finished its clean-up job in Ger itself, then the whole company moved into the battalion concentration area.

At 0100 on 20 August, it was black as pitch, and we began our longest road march yet. The XIX Corps was being shifted one hundred and fifty miles to the east and north. By this maneuver, the Falaise Gap was closed; our First Army linked up with the Canadians, and most of the German 7th Army, without its Panzers, was trapped. The artillery then took over and proceeded to annihilate them. We moved on.