

Finally we were almost out of ammunition so the squad leader came around and asked each of us how many bullets we had. I thought I had more but I found out I only had two rounds left. The sergeant only had two bullets himself, and as he checked the other guys, that's all they had too. Then the squad leader told me, "Since we only have two bullets left and no more grenades, we can't keep fighting so we might as well surrender to the prisoners in the basement." Right away I remember I'd given the prisoners a bad time by telling them to shut up while they were being searched so I knew if we gave up, they'd drag me out and shoot me to get even. I told the sergeant, "If you guys want to give up to the prisoners go ahead, but I have two bullets left, and I'm not giving up as I know the first thing they're going to do is shoot me. I'll take one more guy with me, whoever has to come up the stair to get me. I'll get him, and then with the last bullet I'll blow my brains out." I wasn't scared at all. I had my mind made up. I was feeling then just like I am now writing this story. I wasn't scared one bit and I was at peace. So the squad leader looks at me and says, "OK. If that's the way you're going to go, we'll all go down fighting. Then he goes back to his room and takes up his position again.

Within five minutes, we heard the SP gun start up. We then heard the ground soldiers talking, and the few that survived all jumped on the vehicle and everybody took off. We sat up the rest of the night and watched. Luckily no one else showed up. I was glad I had made up my mind not to surrender as now we would survive this fight. If we'd surrendered, we'd all be prisoners by now.

When the sun came up the next morning, we were happy to be alive and unhurt. That was a miracle after all the tank and artillery shells that pounded the house. When we went into the schoolhouse, there wasn't a scratch on it. The next morning when we came out, you could have driven a jeep or 3/4 ton truck through the hole the Germans had blown in the first floor.

After we left the building, we went out and there was a young German lieutenant on a wood pile between the schoolhouse and the garage where the German tank had hidden. He had been wounded and had been there all night and never made a sound. His leg had been shattered below the knee by one of our grenades. When we found him he said, "Agua, agua." We knew right away he wanted water so I ran into the house to get him some water, but he had bled so much during the night that he died before I got back with his water. There was nothing we could do. If he had

yelled for help, maybe the German soldiers could have helped him or if he'd yelled after they left we might have been able to do something for him. Apparently the Germans had taken practically all their dead and wounded with them. This lieutenant and the one soldier I know I'd dropped in front of the window the evening before were the only dead Germans we found in the area. We just left the bodies and assumed that the Frenchmen in the area would do something about them.

In fact there was a Frenchman in the schoolhouse before we left and maybe he buried them after we left. I don't even know who he was or when he showed up because I didn't see him when we rushed the schoolhouse or during the fight with the Germans. Maybe he was the teacher, but whoever he was, he was nice to us. We hadn't eaten since early the previous day. This man said something in French which we didn't understand. Then he made noise like a chicken. This was his way of telling us he'd fix us eggs and potatoes for breakfast which he did. After we ate and left, he was still in the schoolhouse.

We took the prisoners in the basement out with us as we left the schoolhouse, or what was left of it. We hiked out of the mountains and finally found our unit and turned the German prisoners over to someone else.

Some officer in our company must have decided we did something worthwhile in our little battle so he wrote us up for Bronze Star for Valor. I don't even remember when I learned about my Bronze Star. I do know the Bronze Star and my Purple Heart were sent to my mother in Hawaii after I was wounded.

During the action at Biffontaine, there were seven casualties and it took fourteen guys to carry them out. Captain Kim, the 100th Battalion S2 or Intelligence Officer, had also been lightly wounded so he went out with the rest of the wounded. There was an infantry officer in charge of the evacuation party but most of the men were the medics from the 100th Battalion plus two medics from the 3rd Battalion, 2nd Lt. Jimmy Kanaya and a white medic named Tex who was attached to the 3rd Battalion. As I'd mentioned before, we could hear the German soldiers talking way down the mountain. After we'd gone over the mountain, they'd closed the gap so as the evacuation group started walking out with the casualties and stretcher bearers, they came across all the German soldiers on top of the mountain. Both sides started arguing and saying, "You're our prisoners," "No! You are our prisoners!" There were twice as many Germans arguing so the majority ruled and all of our boys were captured. Captain Kim got

away without a scratch. He was wounded, but we never saw him again. That's the way this whole incident ended.

***** RESCUING THE LOST BATTALION *****

After we returned from the schoolhouse shoot-out, our unit got a three day rest so we pulled back. After our welcomed rest, General Dahlquist of the 36th Division ordered us back into action to rescue one of his battalions that was surrounded by the Germans. He hadn't been able to rescue them with either of two white battalions of the division. We had to hike back to the area where the Battle of the Lost Battalion took place and which was our last major combat action in northeast France.

We started hiking back into the Vosges Mountains to rescue the Lost Battalion which was the 1st Battalion, 141st Regiment. The 275 men that were trapped were slowly getting wiped out. The only way they could get food and ammunition was from parachute drops from airplanes and most of that, we heard later, landed on German held positions so the Germans got all the good food and ammunition and whatever else was parachuted in. We pushed hard to go in and rescue them, but that was a really tough fight because around the Lost Battalion in the forest, there were lots of land mines. They had wire loops and if you stepped on one and moved, you triggered it off and the mine would bounce; we called it the Bouncing Baby. It would explode after jumping up about four feet in the air and hit you in the chest. As we were going in, one went off about thirty feet from me. One of our new recruits and one of our old veteran sergeants got hit in the chest with flying shrapnel. That was one of the first things that happened.

Since the sergeant was wounded, I had to take over the squad again. I was still a Pfc and the youngest guy, only 19. The rest of the boys were 22-23 and up to their 30's. I was the young kid telling the older guys what to do, but I had the most experience in fighting. I could teach them a lot of things about what to do and what not to do, what to watch for and what to listen for. Many of these new recruits that were sent up to reinforce the squad thought they were still in training. The first night I told them to watch for only two hours on guard and every one took turns. I had to check on them every hour to make certain they were all awake. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred they were asleep.

Well, back to the Lost Battalion story. The action was pretty hot and heavy. At one point as I was looking around, I saw a general standing there with his Aide-de-camp. I learned later it was General Dahlquist who was the 36th Division commander. He was grabbing our officers by the arms and shoving them towards the German positions and yelling, "Get going!" A couple of hours later his Aide was killed by enemy fire, and we never saw the general again.

Our company was back-up as reserve. Another company was ahead of us doing the dirty part of the fighting. I was sitting and leaning back against a big tree with my legs spread apart. The ground was soft as it had been raining day and night and the ground was wet and soft. All of a sudden I heard, "Zap-Zap" and when I looked down there were two big holes in the ground right between my knees made by dud mortar shells. It just wasn't my time to die! It seemed that right after the duds hit, a sniper shot at me and just missed my head. My ears were ringing the bullet was so close. I moved fast, and that was the last time I got directly shot at for awhile.

It was the end of October and it was cold and snowing already. I was thinking that Christmas wasn't too far away. Because of all this shrapnel coming down from the trees, we had covered our foxholes with branches and piled a lot of dirt on top of them. I cut a small branch and stuck it on the top of my foxhole cover and tied a little red ribbon on it and sang a little Christmas song.

The night of October 29th, the combat action seemed to have stopped. It was strangely quiet and there was no artillery shelling or anything. I told the guys, "I'm going to get a good night's rest tonight." I took off my boots but kept my socks on. I covered up with half a blanket as that's all we carried. An entire blanket weighed too much. I slept well. The next morning I woke and started to put my boots on but my feet were swollen so badly that at first I couldn't get them on. I thought I had trench foot. After struggling for some time, I finally got the boots on, but I could hardly walk. My feet were really swollen and they hurt, especially when I walked!

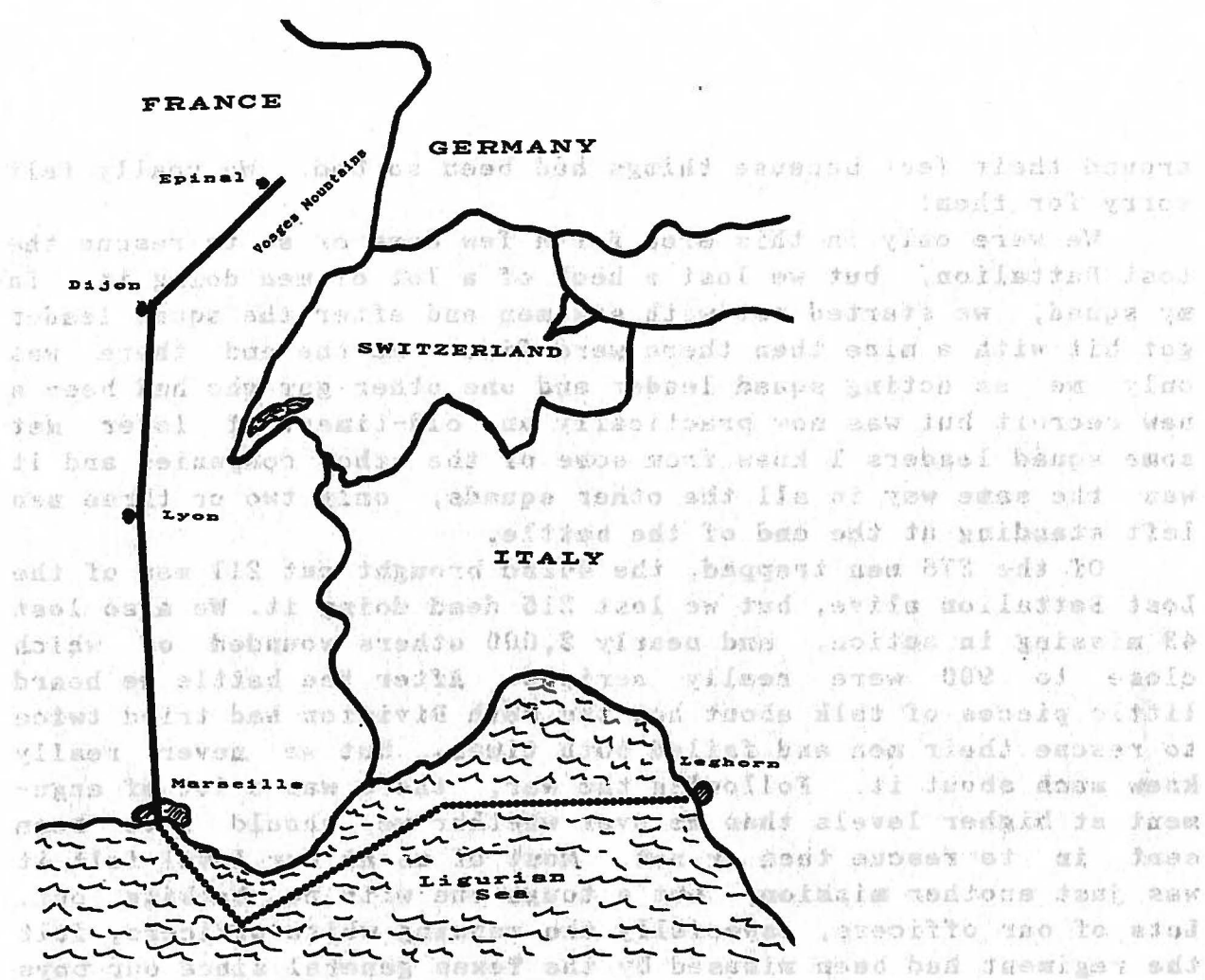
On October 30, 1944, we in the 100th Battalion and the rest of the 442nd rescued the men of the Lost Battalion. I know they were half starved and cold and hardly had anything left to fight with. They looked terrible as they walked out! Not one of them had a decent pair of shoes. They had burlap and canvas wrapped

around their feet because things had been so bad. We really felt sorry for them!

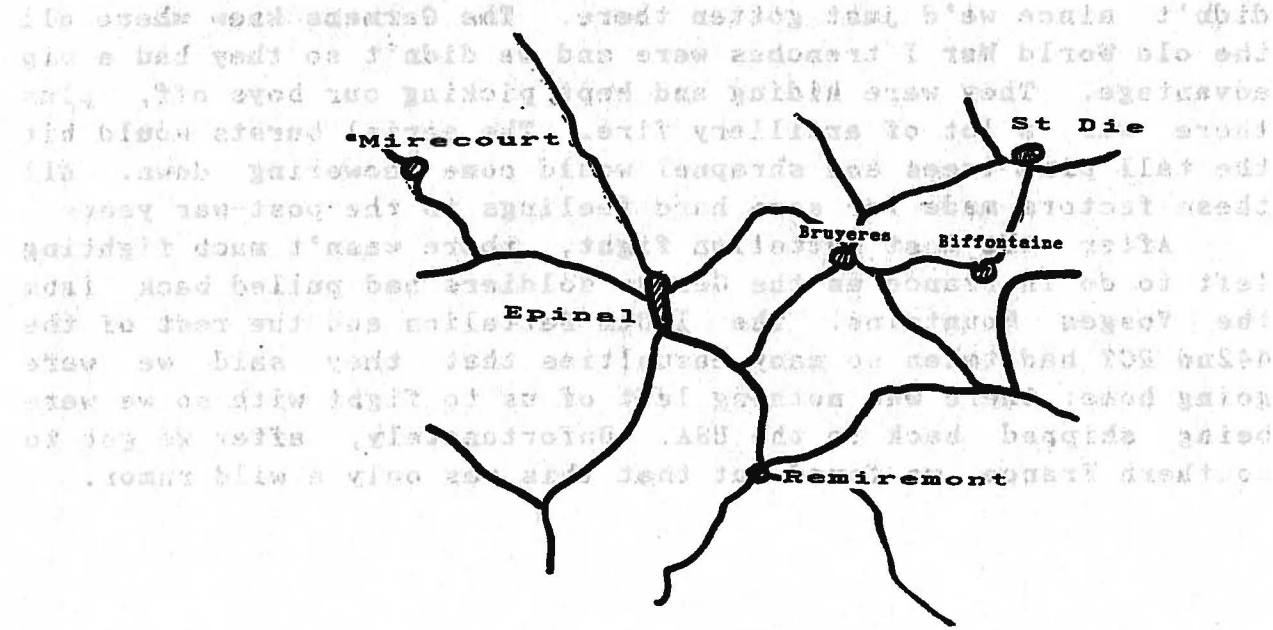
We were only in this area for a few days or so to rescue the Lost Battalion, but we lost a heck of a lot of men doing it. In my squad, we started out with six men and after the squad leader got hit with a mine then there were five. At the end there was only me as acting squad leader and one other guy who had been a new recruit but was now practically an old-timer. I later met some squad leaders I knew from some of the other companies and it was the same way in all the other squads, only two or three men left standing at the end of the battle.

Of the 275 men trapped, the 442nd brought out 211 men of the Lost Battalion alive, but we lost 215 dead doing it. We also lost 43 missing in action, and nearly 2,000 others wounded of which close to 900 were really serious. After the battle we heard little pieces of talk about how the 36th Division had tried twice to rescue their men and failed both times, but we never really knew much about it. Following the war, there was a lot of argument at higher levels than me over whether we should have been sent in to rescue them or not. Most of us at our level felt it was just another mission, but a tough one with no backing out. Lots of our officers, especially the ranking white officers, felt the regiment had been misused by the Texas general since our boys were "only Japanese." The Germans were well positioned for the forest fighting around the Lost Battalion. They knew every inch of the ground because they'd been there a couple of months and we didn't since we'd just gotten there. The Germans knew where all the old World War I trenches were and we didn't so they had a big advantage. They were hiding and kept picking our boys off, plus there was a lot of artillery fire. The aerial bursts would hit the tall pine trees and shrapnel would come showering down. All these factors made for some hard feelings in the post-war years.

After the Lost Battalion fight, there wasn't much fighting left to do in France as the German soldiers had pulled back from the Vosges Mountains. The 100th Battalion and the rest of the 442nd RCT had taken so many casualties that they said we were going home: there was nothing left of us to fight with so we were being shipped back to the USA. Unfortunately, after we got to southern France, we found out that this was only a wild rumor.



The 100th Bn/442nd RCT moved by troopship from Leghorn to Marseille and then by truck north to the Vosges Mountains.



Pfc Shimizu took part in the heavy fighting in the Bruyeres-Biffontaine area in October of 1944.

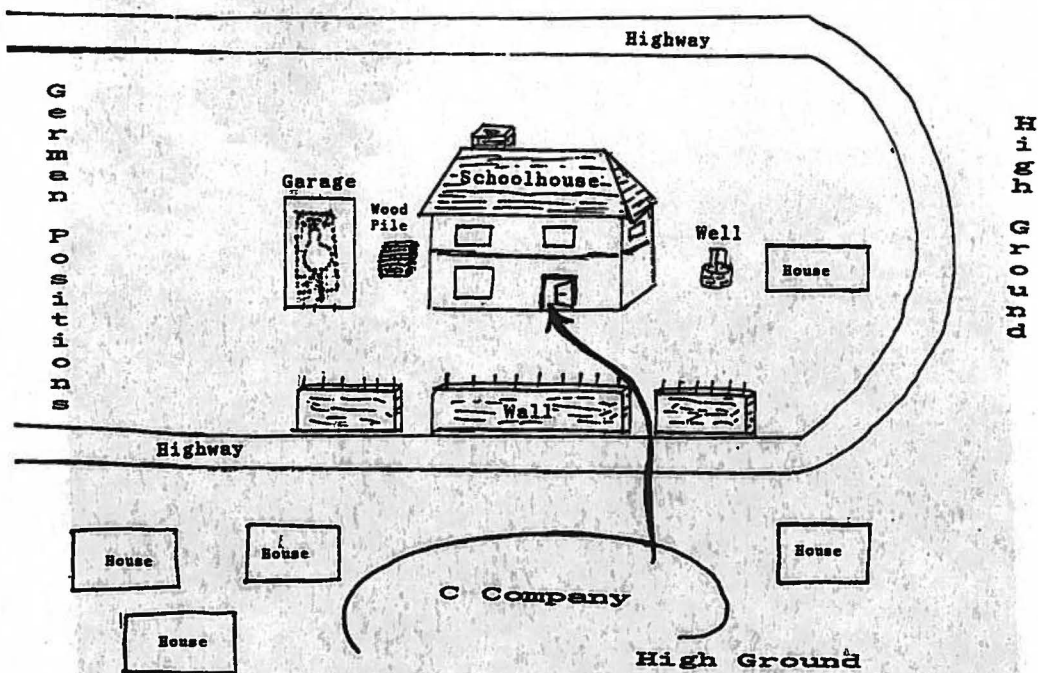


Looking down on Bruyeres from the nearby hills.

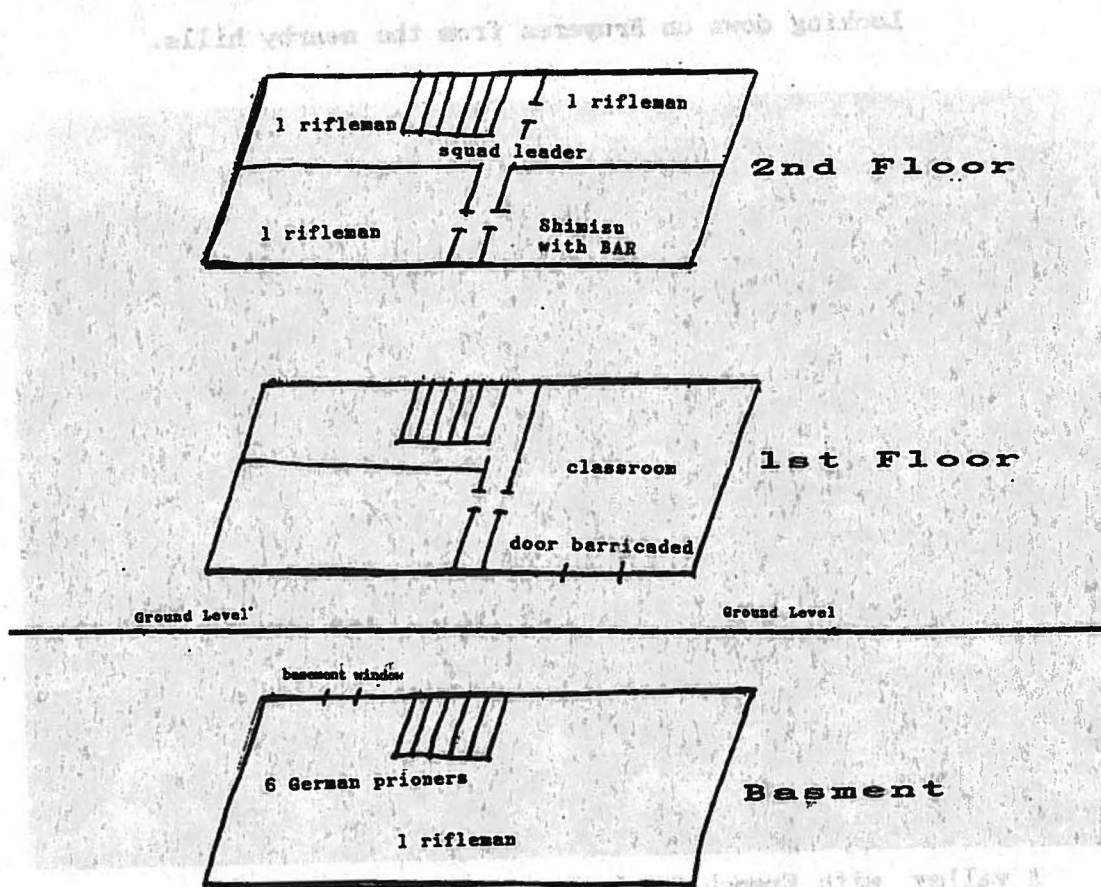


A valley with French farmhouses near Bruyeres that was fought over several times as the Germans and Americans battled throughout this area.

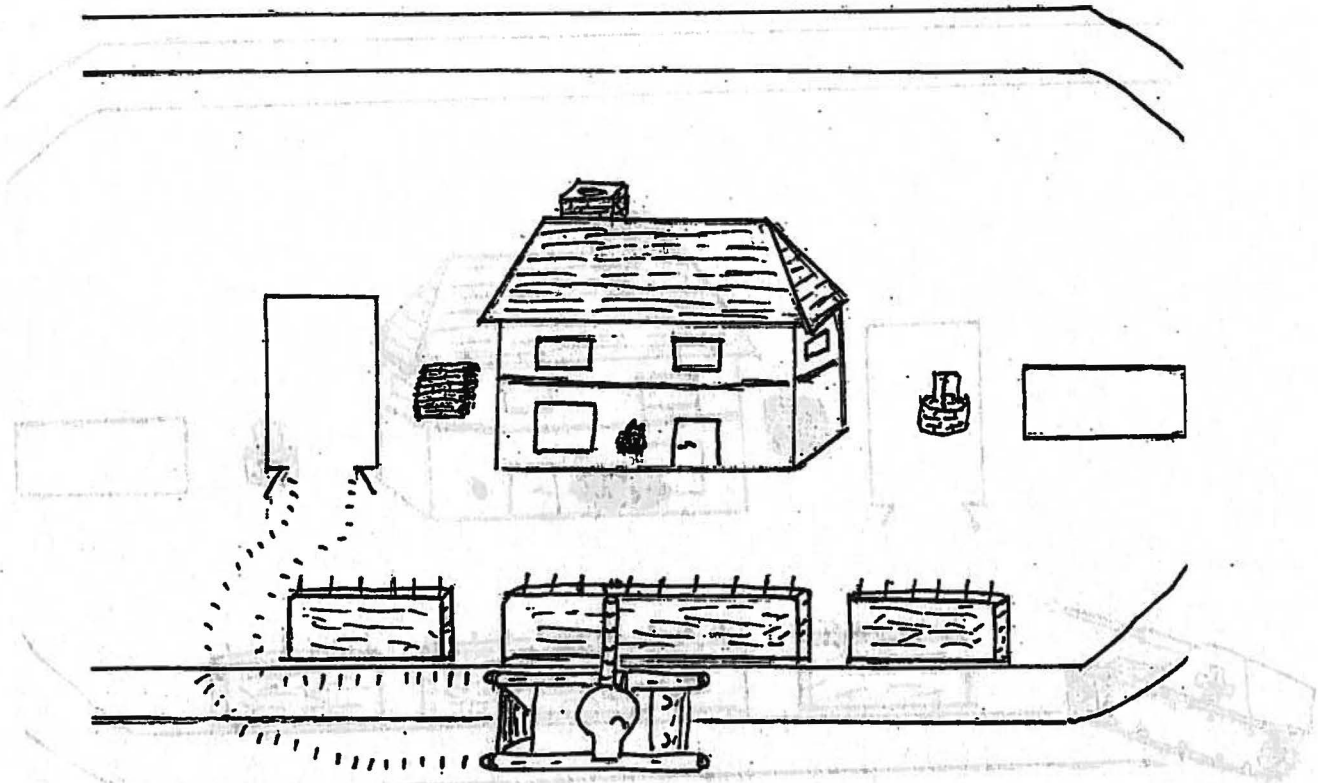
High Ground



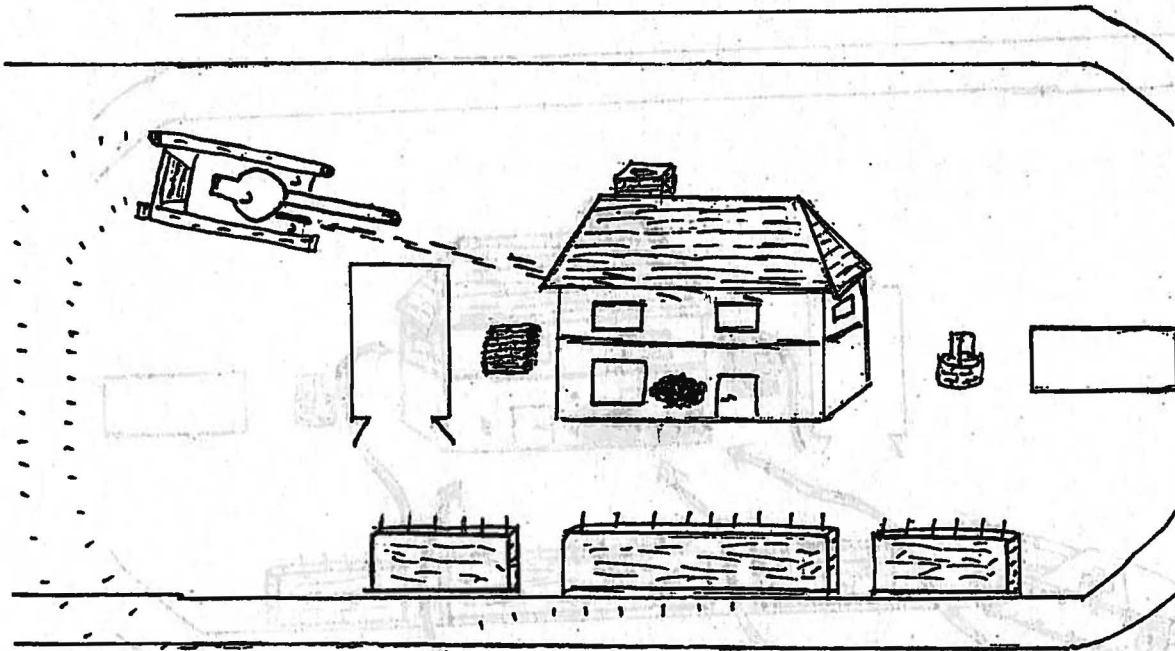
Shimizu's squad rushes into a French schoolhouse and captures six German soldiers.



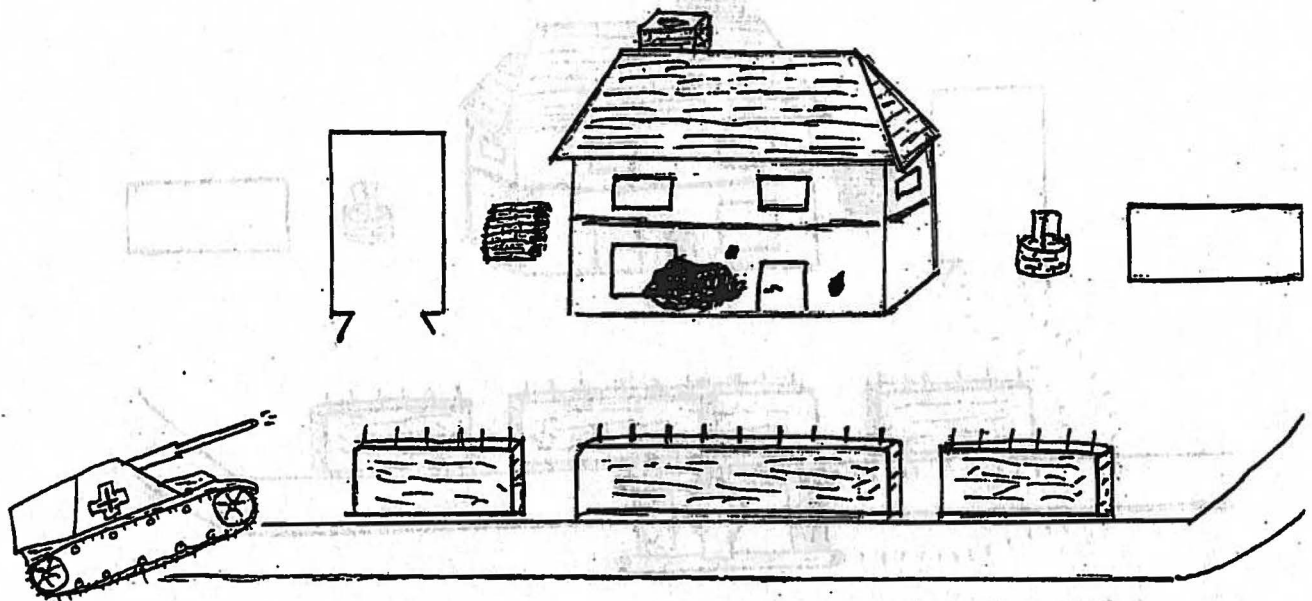
The German prisoners are placed in the basement under guard while the squad takes up defensive positions on the second floor.



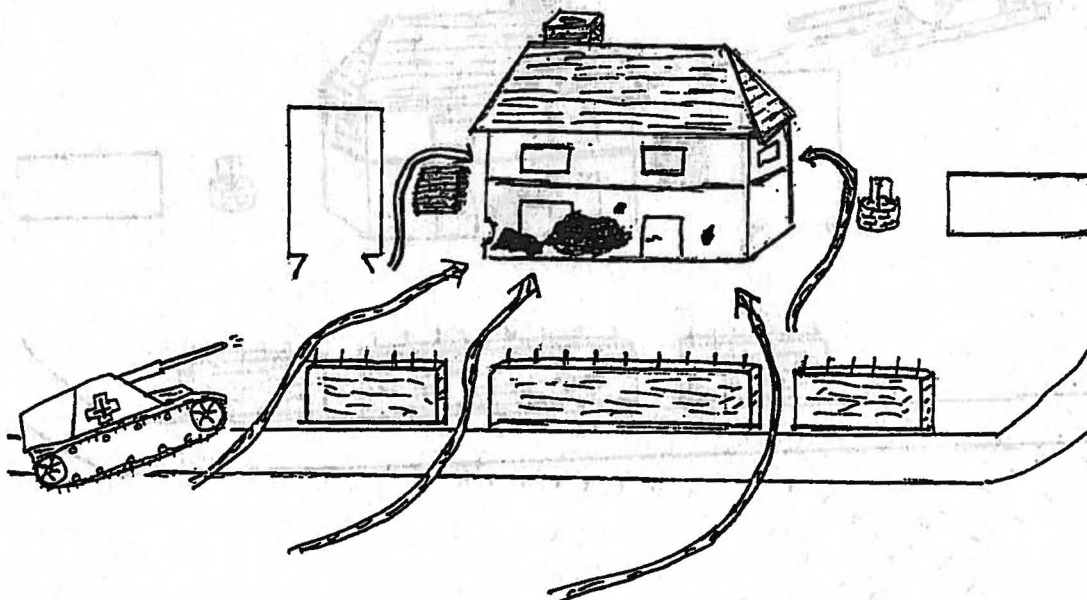
A German tank leaves the garage, moves into its first firing position, and shells the schoolhouse.



After all canon ammunition is shot, the German tank moves to its second firing position and fires all its machine gun ammunition before leaving the area.



A self propelled artillery weapon replaces the tank and begins to fire artillery shells at the schoolhouse.



German infantry assault the schoolhouse supported by artillery fire. Both artillery and infantry withdraw after a five hour fire fight that failed to dislodge the Shimizu squad from the schoolhouse and resulted in numerous German casualties.

CHAPTER 5

THE RHEINWALD - THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE

THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE

During the first week in November, my division loaded on a
 heavy-duty truck and moved away from the
 Luxembourg-Riffeltal area where we had been fighting for the past
 month. It was not a far trip. It was cold riding in those trucks
 and the road was icy. At certain times the convoys would stop,
 everyone would jump out, go to the bathroom along the road,
 eat some cold C rations, and jump back in the truck for the next
 leg of the trip. The main in the C rations was bad and even worse
 when it was cold. I hate bread. At least we felt good about it as
 would soon be going back to the States.

What we didn't know at that time was that trains carrying
 nearly 3,000 Allied reinforcements in "forty or eighty" railroad
 cars had left Luxembourg in northern France. "Forty or eighty"
 cars were old World War I vintage railroad cars designed to carry
 forty men or eight horses back in the days of the horse cavalry.
 These trains were heading for Metzville in northern France, some
 fifty miles west of where we were heading. Those 3,000 reinforcements
 would drastically change our plans.

After a two-and-a-half day motor road march, we arrived at
 the last Battalion light tank unit traveling in southeast-
 tern France. We were told that we were going to replace the last
 Special Service Force along the French-Italian border.

We were still north of Metz when we turned and headed north-
 eastward to the mountainous town of Toul, some 22 miles north of
 the coast and situated in the Alps. Distances about five miles
 west of the French frontier. Here we would stay for about a
 week. It was a bad place to be. He was lieutenant
 Colonel, a young Italian fellow. He acted like he was just one of
 the guys and was easy going. We all got along fine with him. It
 was now early in November of 1944.