



PAUL A LUCAS
3817 BRIDGERS ST NW
WILSON NC 27896-1105



**THE 30th INFANTRY
DIVISION
IN
WORLD WAR II**

Company M

Part of the 3rd Battalion - 120th Regiment - 30th Division

I was called into Federal Service on Sept. 16, 1940. We assembled at Wilson Army on Monday AT 9 A.M. - We stayed at Wilson Army for 6 days - Then we left on Sunday A.M., by Train, for Fort Jackson, S.C. - We had to stay in pup Tents for there were no barracks. We cleaned up Bivouac and the drill fields by hand - We Trained and went on maneuvers for approximately 2 years - Then we were Transferred to Camp Blanding, Florida in the Fall of 1942. We remained there until the Spring of 1943. We then went to Tennessee on a 6 month maneuver. Next we left Tennessee for Camp Attaberry, in Indiana. We left Indiana in the middle of January in 1944 for Boston, Massachusetts to prepare for overseas - We sailed from Boston Harbor about Feb. 12th - We arrived in England about Feb. 22nd. We continued Training there until 2nd week of June. Then we left and landed at Omaha Beach about June 12th or 13th - We continued fighting across France, Belgium, Holland and Germany until May 1945 - This was about the last of May. I got to come home with the First Group leaving as I had the highest points of the Company. These men are the only ones in our outfit still living - Most are from the Wilson Area -

Ed Winstedd

Sonny Farmer

Paul Lucas

J. F. Bone

Carl Winstead

Putney Winstead

James Horne.

Paul Turner

Paul Winstedd

Book of
Paul A. Lucas

Division, March 24—(AP)—
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drive across the Rhine. One
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lagher, in an Associated Press dispatch.

PARTIAL INFORMATION

TAKEN
FROM THIS

Book —→

ABOUT THE

30TH Infantry
Division —

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WILSON NATIONAL
GUARD COMPANY IN
WAS MERGED

INTO. TWELVE OF
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THE WILSON COUNTY CASUALTY LIST WERE IN THIS DIVISION

WORK HORSE OF THE WESTERN FRONT



*The Story of
The 30th Infantry Division*

By ROBERT L. HEWITT

WASHINGTON
INFANTRY JOURNAL PRESS

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INTRODUCTION

TO THE VETERANS OF THE 30TH:

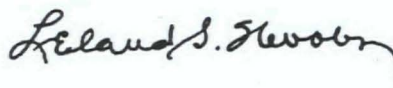
In this history of your fight on the Western Front I take my final opportunity to tell you once more the pride with which I commanded the Old Hickory Division in battle.

It is not necessary for me to remind you of the trials and triumphs we shared through France, Belgium, Holland and Germany, for they are covered in the body of this work.

But I do feel it necessary to convey once more the appreciation my superiors and I felt for the tremendously difficult tasks you completed so successfully during the course of our campaigns. Time and again, corps and army commanders commended your work in official correspondence.

Our Division was awarded a Fourragère by the Belgian Government for its contribution to the early work of liberation in Belgium and for the fighting in the Ardennes. In addition, at least twelve separate units within the Division received the Distinguished Unit Citation. The pride I feel in these citations turns first to you, the men of the 30th whose strength and courage and tenacity carried you through to one victory after another.

I sincerely trust you will have as much success in your future activities as you have had in your past campaigning. By your actions in war, you have earned happiness in peace. May you enjoy it.



LELAND S. HOBBS
Major General, U. S. Army

On the Rhine with the 30th Infantry Division, March 24—(AP)—
The American Army's work horse division, which the Germans nicknamed "Roosevelt's SS," more than made up for missing the Normandy landing by spearheading the Ninth Army's drive across the Rhine. One of the finest divisions in the American Army, the 30th has taken more than its share of tough fighting on the Western Front . . .

—Wes Gallagher, in an Associated Press dispatch.

PREFACE

More than 60 American divisions participated in the defeat of Germany in 1944-45. This is the story of one of the best of them, a division which fought continually from the Normandy beachhead to the banks of the Elbe River in the heart of Germany.

In a narrow sense this is a single unit's story. If it conveys to the men who fought Old Hickory's battles a better understanding of how they worked together and gained skill in what was, for most, an alien profession, it will have succeeded in its primary purpose.

In another sense, however, the 30th's history illustrates what happened to a million other men in Europe. They fought with and were loyal to other divisions. But they struggled against approximately the same obstacles of terrain, enemy and the sheer complexity of their jobs. They too, were mainly civilian soldiers.

"Work Horse of the Western Front" is as accurate and honest an account as the writer could make it under the circumstances. Waging war is an exacting business undertaken under conditions which make for confusion and "snafu." The writer has taken the facts as he saw them, the bad as well as the good, with the conviction that he would slight the very real achievements of the Division if he attempted to present a saccharine picture of inevitable triumphs. The measure of a great fighting unit is not that it never runs into difficulties but that it minimizes its errors and gains by experience. By these standards, Old Hickory was a great division—as is evidenced by the caliber of the tasks it was called upon to perform.

Much of the book is based on the official after-action reports of the units concerned and of the Division staff sections. These reports, prepared monthly in the rush of battle conditions, are necessarily condensed and occasionally in error. They have been supplemented as much as possible by personal interviews, by the recollections of the writer, who was Assistant Intelligence Officer of the Division during the entire fighting period, and by all additional data he could obtain in Europe. In this connection, the information obtained by the Theater Historical Section, through interviews with all ranks from buck privates on up, has been extremely valuable. The excellent stenographic record of the Commanding General's telephone conversations provided vital data on the exercise of command. Much of the manuscript was reviewed by the commanders of the principal units of the Division and by the chiefs of Division staff sections. The wide scattering of personnel of the Division even before its deactivation in November 1945, however, made complete review of this type impractical.

Department in 1925 as a National Guard Division, with troops from Georgia added to the original components. Thereafter, until 1941, its story was the usual one of annual summer encampments and peacetime maneuvers. It participated in the first post-war mobilization at Camp Jackson, South Carolina, in 1928, and participated in the DeSoto National Forest maneuvers in Mississippi in 1938 and in the Third Army maneuvers in Louisiana in 1940. Within a month after its return from the Louisiana maneuvers it was recalled to full-time duty in September 1940, its ranks filled to wartime strength by volunteers. Conscription had not yet been established.

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THE NEW 30TH

One of the first four National Guard Divisions to be called into Federal service when the Army of the United States began expanding in 1940, the 30th Infantry Division trained for almost four years before it was committed to battle. During that period it underwent innumerable transformations and emerged, like most of the other National Guard divisions, with its pristine sectional and National Guard character all but buried under the influx of selectees, Reserve officers, Regular Army men and Officer Candidate School graduates from all sections of the country.

For two years the Division trained at Fort Jackson, near Columbia, South Carolina. In June 1941 the Division participated in Second Army maneuvers in Tennessee and in the fall of 1941 it took part in the First Army maneuvers in the Carolinas before returning to Fort Jackson. The first big exodus from the Division occurred then, when approximately 6,000 men left at the end of one-year enlistments or because of hardship cases. At this time the 121st Infantry Regiment was transferred to the 8th Infantry Division.

During the spring of 1942 the changes in the Division's personnel continued to be drastic. The Division was reorganized from an old-style square division, with two brigades and a total of four infantry regiments, into a triangular division, of three infantry regiments, its present form. Newly activated divisions, officer candidate schools, and Air Forces training continued to draw many men away from the Division. Major General Henry D. Russell, the National Guard division commander, was replaced by Major General William H. Simpson, a Regular Army officer, on May 1, 1942, and he in turn was succeeded on September 12, 1942, by another Regular, Major General Leland S. Hobbs, Old Hickory's commander in battle. By that time the Division had been cut down to a strength of approximately 6,000 men—about forty per cent of its normal strength—having lost within a year the equivalent of a full division in both officers and men.

During the fall of 1942 the Division was filled up to full strength again, with the 119th Infantry Regiment and the 197th Field Artillery Battalion constituted to replace the 118th Infantry Regiment and the 115th Field Artillery Battalion, which had been sent overseas during the summer as a combat team. The 117th Infantry Regiment went to Fort Benning, Georgia, September 13 and remained there on instructional and demonstration duty for The Infantry School until February 28, 1943. The Division, which had been transferred to Camp Blanding, Florida,

at the beginning of October, began training anew in December, with two-thirds of its enlisted personnel fresh from the reception center.

Training at Camp Blanding followed the usual pattern of training camps throughout the country—thirteen weeks emphasizing individual training, followed by a like period of small-unit training. As far as tests could determine, the Division was progressing well. In May, just before the Division was ready for its first real field work, the Division Artillery, under Brigadier General Arthur McK. Harper, set a new Army Ground Forces record in field firing tests at Camp Gordon, Georgia. Meanwhile the rest of the Division was proceeding by train and motors to Camp Forrest, Tennessee, where it set up a tent encampment on the edge of the post and went to work on intradivisional field maneuvers near Lynchburg, Tennessee. By the end of September it was ready for large-scale maneuvers, and joined the 94th and 98th Infantry Divisions, the 12th Armored Division, IV Armored Corps, and a host of corps and army troops in a two-month maneuver period. This period was particularly valuable in training commanders and staffs, and although the problems, which usually lasted for about a week at a time, were not officially won or lost, the Division showed considerable alertness and skill, and was credited with knocking out several "enemy" battalions in succession by double envelopments. Aside from the training afforded staffs in how to function, this success provided the chief value of the maneuver period. The Division entered the maneuvers with good morale; it left them with the conviction that it had "won" and was now ready to do some real fighting.

From the maneuver area the 30th, in November, moved north by truck to Camp Atterbury, Indiana, where it concentrated on preparation for movement overseas. At Atterbury, Division Artillery again set a new Army Ground Forces record for battalion firing tests.

In February 1944, the Division started its trip by train for Camp Myles Standish, Massachusetts, one of the staging camps serving the Boston Port of Embarkation. On February 12, loaded on three transports, the *John Ericsson*, the *Brazil* and the *Argentina*, it left Boston Harbor in a blinding snowstorm to join its convoy for Europe. An advance party led by Brigadier General William K. Harrison, the assistant division commander, had previously sailed on the *Queen Mary*.

The repeated inspections and pressure of the period, just before sailing, left most of the men with a feeling of finality, almost as though they would come off the ships fighting and would leave civilian pleasures behind until the war was over. Crowded as they were on the boats, they had little room for training, although troop commanders went through the motions of trying to set up instruction.

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The convoy was an impressive sight, with ships spread out over the ocean as far as the eye could see, shepherded by a battleship and by destroyers frisking around the edges of the great pattern of ships. Periodically naval gun crews on the transports held gunnery practice, and blackout instructions were strict. Rumors of submarines went the rounds.

Nevertheless, the passage had been unusually uneventful as the convoy headed into the Irish Sea and split up. The 120th Infantry landed on the Clyde in Scotland, the 117th at Liverpool and the 119th at Bristol. February 22, Washington's birthday, the Division was in port. Some of the troops were given a brief introduction to the air war on their first night ashore, as their blacked-out trains were sidetracked and re-routed through marshalling yards of London because of a German air raid. In their new area the men of the Division were to find air raids almost a nightly affair, with the enemy raiders flying over their heads from the English Channel toward London.

The 30th's first training area in England was on the south coast, with the division headquarters at the ancient town of Chichester; two of the regiments, the 119th and 120th, billeted on Channel coast towns to the south; while the 117th, Division Artillery and other troops spread northward toward London. In April the Division moved north to the London suburbs, with headquarters at Chesham.

All of the billets had previously been used by British troops. Most of them were private houses, although some units lived in Nissen huts.

England, somewhat begrimed and shabby after four years of war, was no foxhole. Men adjusted themselves to the wartime weakness of British beer, made friends with the British and attempted to cope with the perils of British pronunciation and idiom and with the endless pitfalls of trying to keep warm in wintertime without central heating. Gradually, even before they were initiated into the plans for invasion then being made, the troops began to sense the urgency in what was going on in England that spring. Closer to the war already, if only because they were in a land being bombed, the men of the 30th began to see more and more military equipment around the countryside. Some main roads were so monopolized by trucks and tanks that a stray civilian vehicle seemed almost to have arrived there by mistake.

There was work to be done. First was the fundamental task of restoring the fine edge of technique and endurance dulled by days in transit. The infantry marched and marched and marched. The artillery fired problem after problem on tiny ranges as full of local ground rules as a tricky golf course. One shell broke a civilian's wooden leg; the civilian himself was unhurt. Another shell hit a bull that had strayed onto the range. These were the exceptions.

Small-unit techniques were practiced. Weapons were fired. For the first time the 30th's infantrymen practiced in earnest working with tanks. Special teams visited the troops to demonstrate German uniforms and methods. The military police platoon, practicing the handling of prisoners, tried out close-order drill in German. The higher-ups came around on visits of inspection, trying to be cordial and friendly, but looking the men over appraisingly—General Eisenhower, General Montgomery, General Bradley, the Secretary of War, General Corlett of XIX Corps. And so the spring wore on. Soon there were other jobs to be done—waterproofing of vehicles so that they could wade across the sandy beaches of Normandy without stalling. Invasion rumors were everywhere, one penny if one wanted to read them in the newspapers, otherwise free.

Sometime in March 1944, when the Division was still in the vicinity of Chichester, and more than two months before the actual invasion, an armed officer-courier delivered a bundle of documents containing a plan known as "Neptune," published by U.S. First Army. It was perhaps the most breathtaking document ever received at the 30th Division: "The object of NEPTUNE is to secure a lodgement area on the continent from which further offensive operations can be developed. It is part of a large strategic plan designed to bring about the total defeat of Germany." From there it went on—the places, the troops, the method. Everything but the time. D-day was to be announced. Y-day, the target day, was May 30.

The First Army was to land on D-day, H-hour, at Utah Beach, on the east side of the Cherbourg Peninsula north of Carentan and at Omaha Beach facing north into the English Channel just east of Isigny. The VII Corps would assault Utah Beach, the V Corps, led by the 1st and 29th Infantry Divisions, Omaha Beach. Two airborne American divisions would make a vertical envelopment behind the western assault areas. The British would attack with three divisions initially, their first objectives Caen and Bayeux. Overwhelming air and naval power would support the assault. The 30th would land on Omaha Beach as a part of XIX Corps, after the initial beachhead had been established. XIX Corps on landing would consist principally of the 30th, 2d and 3d Armored Divisions. After it was all ashore it was contemplated that the XIX Corps would pick up the 29th Division and lose the 2d Armored Division.

This was the secret the 30th Division guarded zealously and effectively, as did many other units, during that restless spring. A planning room was set up under armed guard. Special lists were made of those who could enter the room and consult the documents there. Countless details had to be worked out at division level—particularly the problems

of supply, administration, and equipment. Study by the commanding general and his operational staff officers at first was generalized, then became more specific. In mid-May XIX Corps issued a tentative field order—the 30th must be prepared for one of three jobs: (1) to assist VII Corps (101st Airborne Division) in capturing Carentan; (2) to pass through elements of the 29th Division, advancing on the west to seize Marigny and the high ground near Montpichon or to help the 29th take St. Lô; (3) to pass through the 29th to take St. Lô, frontally.

The area along the Vire-et-Taute Canal just south of the beach area had been deliberately flooded by the Germans. Air photographs of the area showed the fields neatly ticked off by hedgerows, many of the ancient roads worn down into ruts yards below the general ground level. In the entire area of the American assault were four German divisions, three of them so-called static divisions, weak in transportation and numerical strength and heavily padded with Russian and Polish troops. This was the set-up before the invasion. It would be hard to predict what the situation would be by the time the 30th landed.

The days passed slowly or quickly, depending on one's mood. Gradually more and more of the Division's commanders were brought into the planning room and introduced to the plan and the terrain, outlined on huge curtained maps in a special wing of the headquarters building in Chesham. Bets were made; wry jokes about a Second Front were repeated in the pubs. Nobody except perhaps General Hobbs knew when the invasion was supposed to take place.

May gave way to June. The weather was unsettled. June 5 looked as though it might be the day. General Hobbs scheduled talks to the troops, reminding them with especial seriousness of the simple basic things they must keep in mind in battle. But the 5th passed quietly, under cloudy skies.

There were two things particularly noticeable about Tuesday, June 6, as the troops woke up and looked outside. The first important thing was that the sun was shining, the skies were clear. The second thing was that those skies were filled with more planes than anyone had ever seen before, not the heavy four-motor bombers of normal times, but light twin-engine attack bombers. Almost all of them were flying purposefully south. All of them carried black stripes on the undersides of their wings. The invasion was on.

For the next few days, the men of the 30th felt curiously out of touch with things. Packed and ready to go, they remained in place, listening to the radio and reading the newspapers. Corps was swallowed up in the elaborate staging area system and ceased to be a source of information. Then the Division itself was alerted, and, unit by unit, moved down

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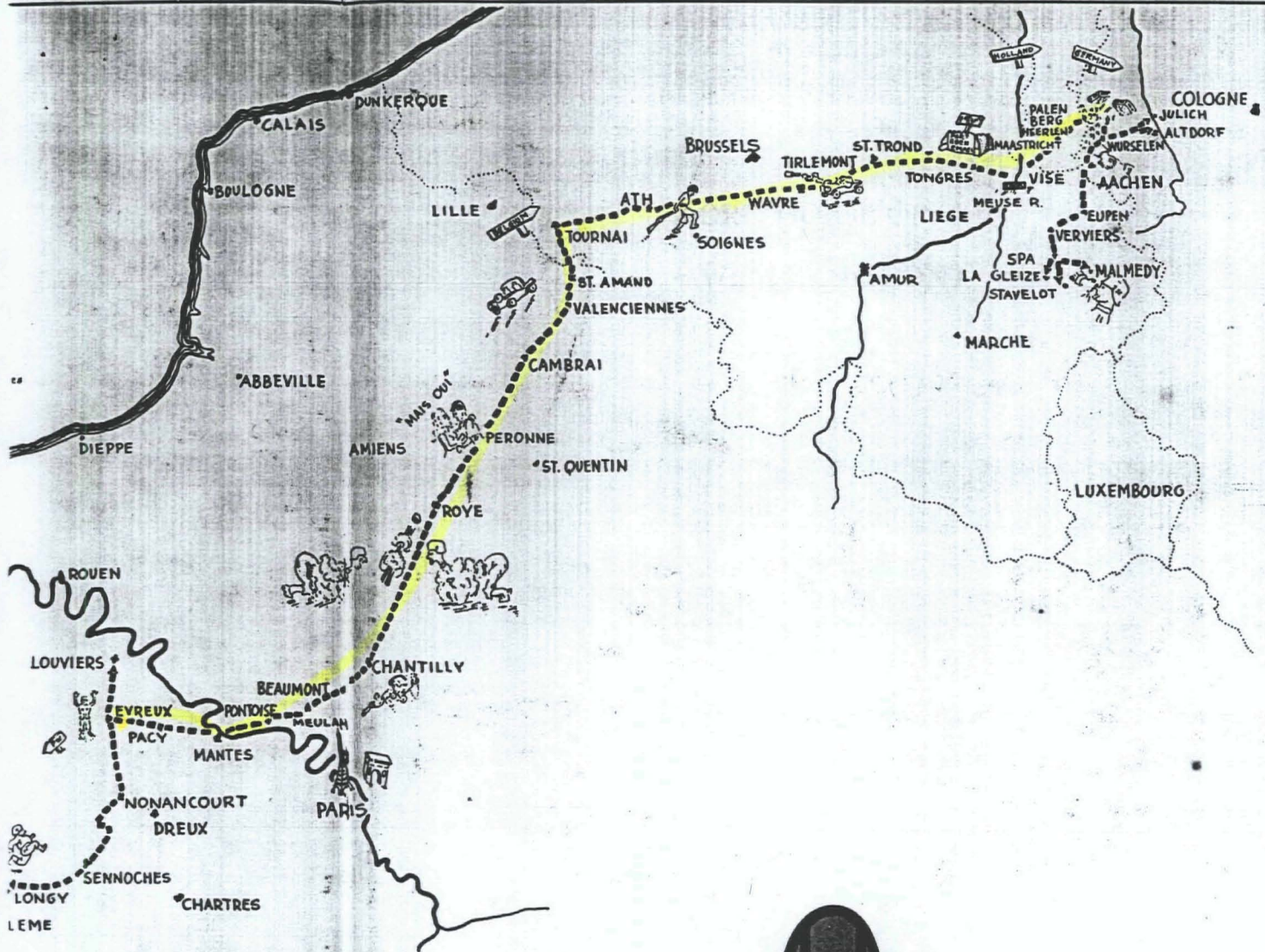
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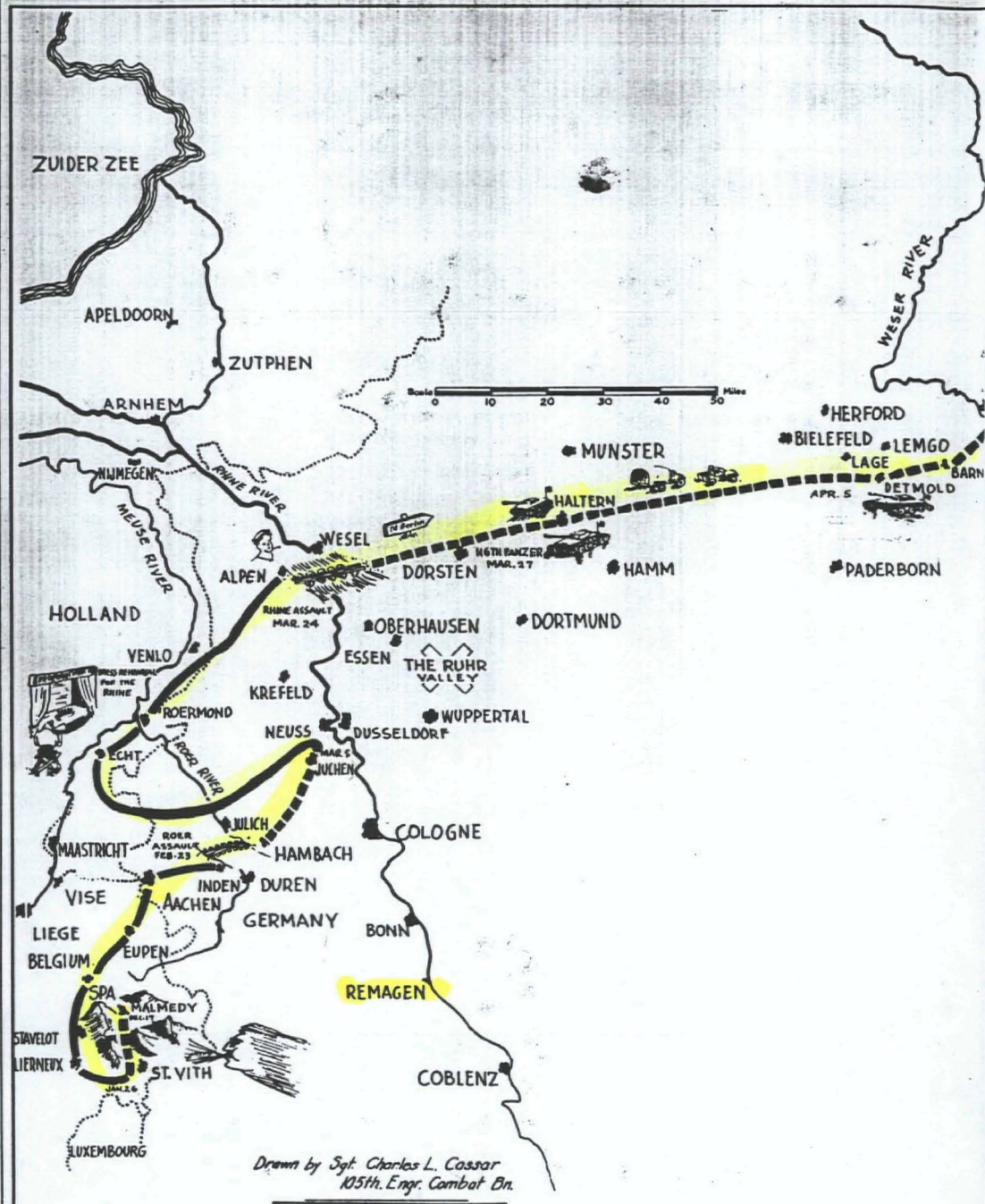
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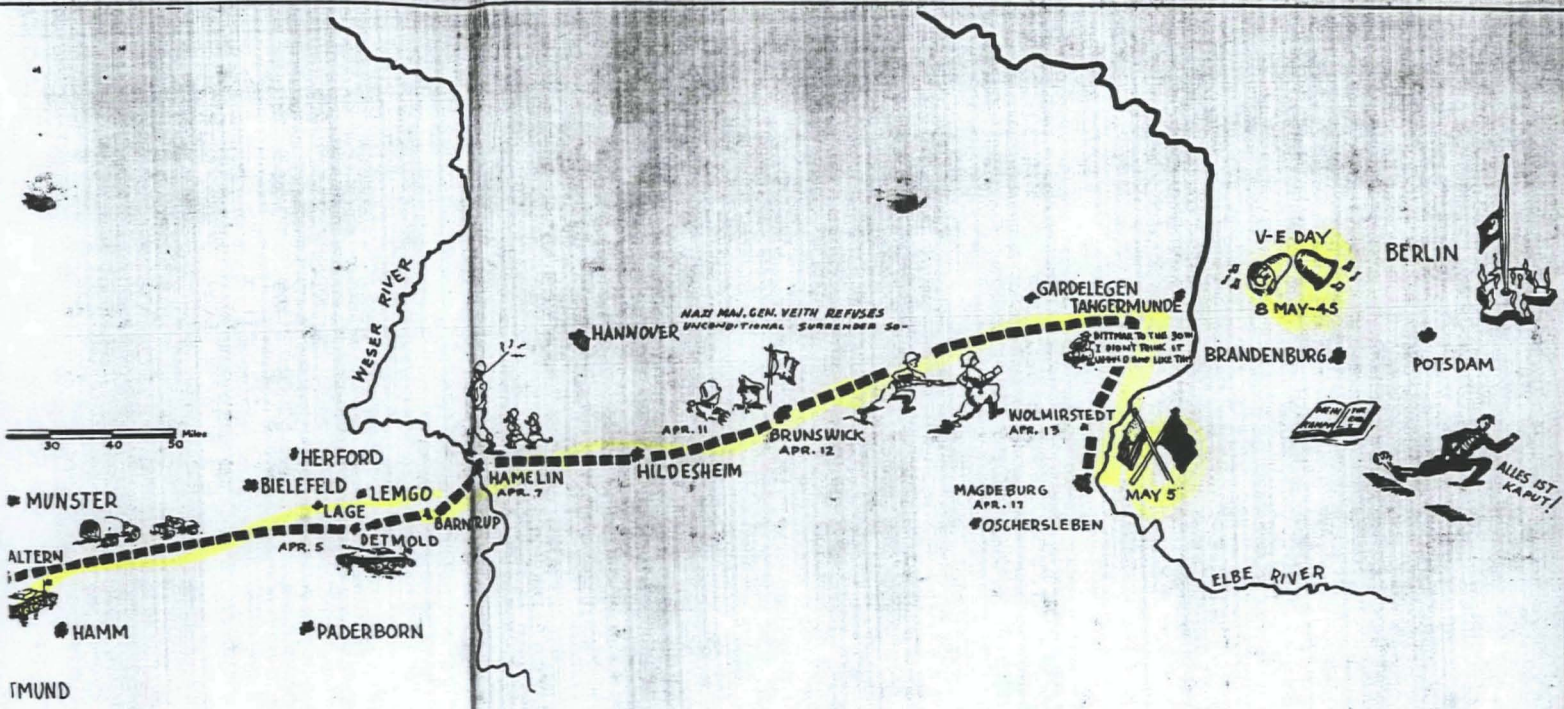
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into the sprawling tent cities of the staging areas in southern England. Here their sense of isolation increased. They were briefed, but with information days old. They waited, were alerted, were told to forget about the alert order. The Division was split up into separate groups, with communication between them all but impossible. Finally, they moved down to the Southampton docks and were loaded into their transports. Then they waited more, with the unhurried personnel of the dock area seemingly unaware of the fact that a war was being fought on the other side of the Channel. Thus it is always with impatient men. At last the convoys gathered themselves together and started across the channel, protected by E-boats and with a grotesque little barrage balloon floating above each ship.



**BATTLE ROUTE OF THE
30th INFANTRY DIVISION 1944**





**BATTLE ROUTE OF THE
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