

CONTINENTAL EDITION

# YANK

THE ARMY

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*By the men . . . for the  
men in the service*



# AND NORTH

# of Aachen

By Sgt. MACK MORRIS  
YANK Staff Correspondent

**W**ITH THE FIRST U.S. ARMY IN GERMANY. — There was a staff sergeant standing along the road, gloating over a Jerry pistol he'd just picked up, and he didn't know the name of the town his platoon had entered on the first day of the attack. He didn't know the name of the town just behind him, or the one just in front of him. He said:

"They're throwin' in some stuff over there, and I think we're still cleanin' a few snipers out. You know, I was just sayin' to the lieutenant here, 'Damn, I wish I could find me a P-38.' And I looked over there in the weeds and seen a helmet and a belt layin' there, and I went over and just picked up this P-38."

"Well, anyway, we went into this town in a column of deuces. No... I don't reckon we did; I guess we worked platoons in. We took our objective, anyway and got some prisoners. Came dark, we settled down, and they put an 88 barrage in on us and blew hell out of the place. That's about all. Damn, I'm lucky; got me a P-38."

The lieutenant said he thought the name of the town was Kerkrade. That's in Holland. Also it was taken on the second or third day of the attack, but it was the first day of the attack as far as the lieutenant and the sergeant's outfit was concerned.

You see, that's the trouble with these things. It's hard to get the *Big Picture*. One or two outfits will kick off and then another one will kick off a couple of days later, and then the Armor will break through and spread out, and some reserve units will come up and be committed where they're needed... and before long everything is mixed up so that you can't tell from nothing

**N**ow this attack was a thing very well conceived. It was to start off with Air.

"We'll go as soon as the weather permits us Air," the general had said. And the Air came, but it was a disappointment to the infantry. There wasn't enough of it in the right places, and when the Infantry captured a prisoner they asked him what had been the enemy reaction to our preparatory bombing. Unfortunately, the prisoner had been asleep at the time and he said, "What preparatory bombing?"

That was on the first day. But on the fifth day it was different. Air came in to give close support to the Infantry and to help break up a counterattack. Air was on 15-minute call all that day, and it did a nice job during the counter-attack. It also messed up a German barracks that had been well fortified and was giving trouble. Air was up, glistening in the sun and wheeling and diving so that there was something missing in the assault sounds if there were no planes up. And they would slid back into the sound pattern when they had gone and come back again, like the smooth instrumentation of woodwinds and brass. The Infantry had little argument with Air.

Or Armor. In the plan of this attack—in the *Big Picture*—the Infantry was to break through the Siegfried Line and the Armor was to follow, move past the Infantry and spread out to the front. It makes a very pretty picture, as you may well imagine, and you can illustrate it with arrows that streak through a breach in a wall. The Armor was a little slow starting, because the Infantry was a little slow breaching the wall, but Armor is at a

The Infantry held up before it reached the Line, then got set and hit, and the Jerries were ready, mixing mortars with artillery. It was tough, but the tired and dirty infantrymen moved forward, not knowing where they were going or where they had been.

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Of course, there are people who can tell you these things. Battalion knows where "C" Company is, and Regiment knows where "J" is, and Division knows the disposition of its units down to the 16th of an inch on a square of acetate covering a one-to two-hundred map. It's by ascending degrees that you get the *Big Picture*, but on the line...

**T**WO soldiers sat silently in a chapel. The chapel was on the right as you entered Rimberg castle. The castle was a little beat-up and the windows of the chapel were gone, and the gilded figures carved into the wall behind the altar-place were chipped here and there and pretty generally dirtied by the ancient plaster that had spilled from the ceiling when the shells hit.

Outside the artillery was still hitting, and occasionally men would scatter for cover; but our artillery and theirs together made such a noise that you had to be pretty good to tell what was going out and what was coming in; the whistlings and the blasts blended in together. The two infantrymen sat quietly, not moving. One of them had been reading a letter. The other held a long-necked bottle, dark and dusty.

"Wine," he said. "Good wine." He said it quietly. He wasn't drunk or anywhere near it, just relaxed for the moment. The chapel was suddenly very quiet. It had been there, perhaps 200 feet inside Germany, for several hundred years.

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So there had to be a fair-sized gap before the Armor could get going. Then it was all right.

**T**HIS attack north of Aachen in Germany was not the first penetration of the Siegfried Line. There had been other break-throughs south of Aachen, and this one up on the northern flank wasn't much different except that it came at the end of a lull, and the others came at the beginning. The southern break-throughs were from a running start; the northern one was from the standing position.

The southern people broke the Line and held. The northern people held up before they reached the Line, got set and then hit it.

Of course, the Germans got set too. That's why it was rugged. They got set with their artillery. By the second day and certainly by the fourth the Infantry had decided on one thing definitely: that there was more artillery coming in on them than there had been anywhere else before. The Germans mixed mortars in with artillery. They mortared and shelled until, as the Infantry said, it was better to keep your fingernails over your head than to have nothing up there at all. And battalion after battalion lowered the boom in answer until at night the sky flashed orange-white like the little lights on a busy telephone switchboard.

Artillery took up a lot of space in the *Big Picture*. And down in the impact zone...

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**F**ROM the OP you could traverse the scope over maybe an 800-yard front. It was pretty well plastered. There was a knocked-out Tiger tank over there and on the slope were two or three hundred shell craters which made the slope the most forlorn looking place in the world when you looked at it through the sterile eye of the BC scope. There was a haystack on the slope that looked partly knocked down, and nobody could tell whether it was a real haystack or a pillbox. Fifty-caliber tracer bullets have occasionally bounced off of haystacks in the vicinity. It was interesting, with the shells bursting and all.

But down below the OP and in front of it 300 or 400 yards was a little scene with more drama, although nobody in the OP paid much attention to it. There was a cross-road down there, and the road that went left curved out of sight around the bend. From the cross-road on, the road was under enemy observation. And he sat back there some place and sniped with 88s at whatever went up or down the road.

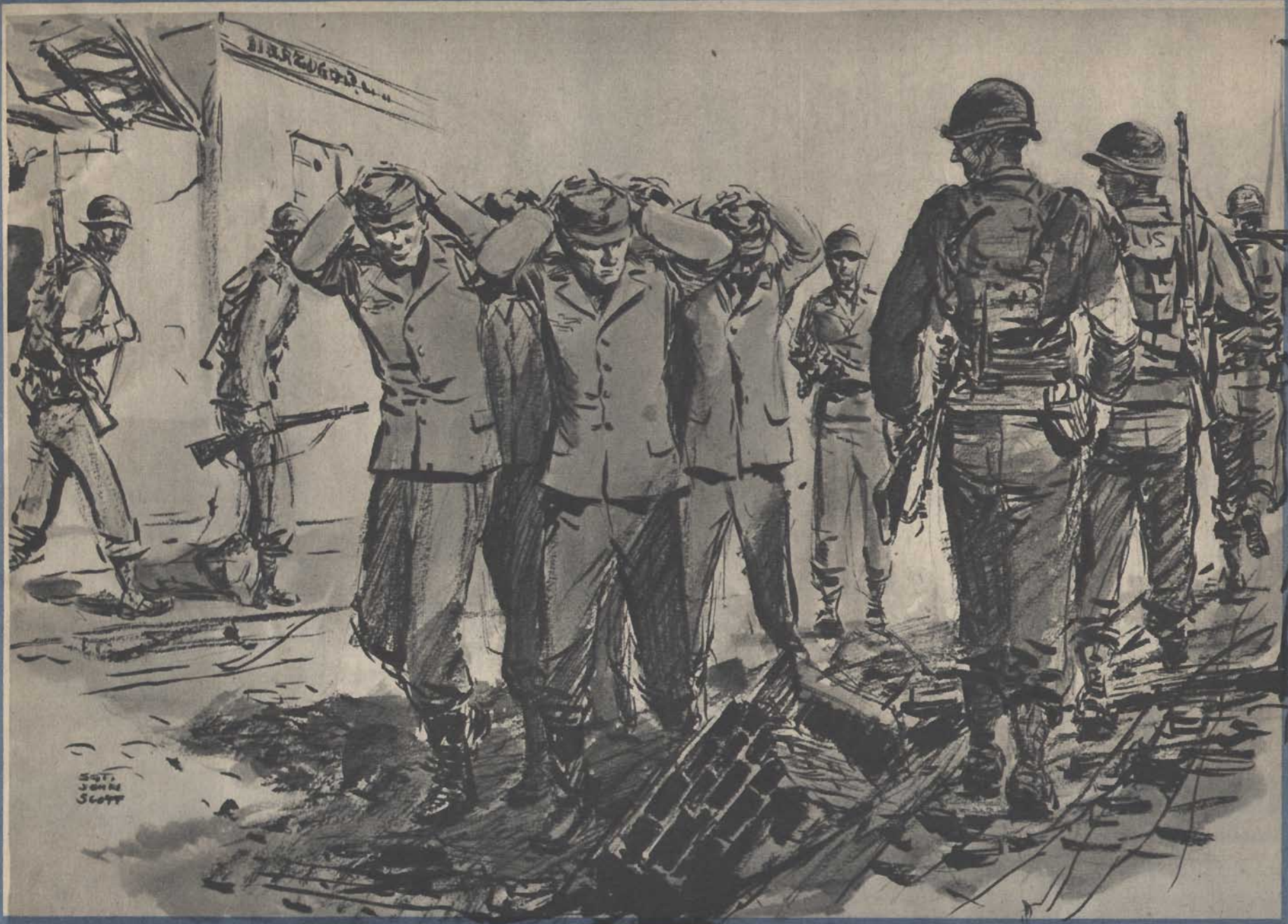
You could sit in the OP and hear the shells coming in on the road, four or five of them maybe, and then a jeep would come barreling around the bend toward you. And another jeep would start down toward the cross-road and go out of sight, and then you'd hear the shells come in again. You could always tell that they'd missed when the jeep rounded the bend coming toward you, but when one went down the road the other way you couldn't.

And as the jeep passed OP the guys would be just sitting there, like they were on their way home from a movie, and if you hadn't just seen it you'd never be able to tell from looking at them that, 30 seconds before, they'd been riding along like those little ducks that roll across the back end of a three-for-a-dime gallery.

But one time two jeeps and some shells met simultaneously at the cross-roads and in the confusion the drivers couldn't make up their minds which road to take. So they ran into each other. That was on the third day of the attack. It was funny.

**T**HERE was plenty of artillery both ways. But there was the Infantry and the Armor.

The Infantry went up against pillboxes, as the Infantry south of them had done before, and took the big boxcar-like hunks of concrete. The Germans fought from field fortifications around the pillboxes and then retired inside the pillboxes, but they weren't much better off in there. The Infan-



try picked them off with rifles, firing through the apertures so that an officer who was captured complained bitterly against that sort of marksmanship.

And then the Infantry took over the bunkers and sweated out Jerry artillery fire and then moved on. A bunker would become a platoon CP and then a company CP and then a battalion CP or an aid station.

Germans did most of the messing. If you had any occasion to wonder about the Germans shelling their own towns you should take a look at Ubach. It's not as bad as St. Lo or Cassino, certainly, but it will take a long time for the man who owned the hardware store to inventory his bicycle fenders and his light bulbs and rearrange his shelves.

In the back room he had a pot of coffee on the stove and it was still there, and the calendar on the

because he was almost turned inside out. A German lay in a pile of bricks and he was so mixed up in the mortar and bricks that he looked more like a rag doll, as if he had never had any bones at all. Another lay across the road, face up, and his face was yellow-red, the same color as the dust which the tanks ground up as they went by. A Sherman went by, and through its turret was a hole



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So the attack progressed, slowly. On the first day it moved just over the Wurm river, which is a little creek that approximates the border; then there was another crossing on the second day and the Armor began to push. On the third day the Infantry was in Ubach. Fourth day, stymied. On the fifth day the Germans counter-attacked at 0700 and retook six pillboxes. The Infantry fired 1,200 rounds of mortar fire and by 1000 the counter-attack was stopped. In the late afternoon the Infantry took its pillboxes back again.

And then everything began to move.

The weather was good and the air was good, and the Armor people said: "Now this is the way you're supposed to fight tanks and Infantry." The Infantry climbed up on the backs of the tanks and together they captured Alsborg. The *Big Picture* people reported 1,300 prisoners and several square miles gained, and when you've been banging against a wall it feels good to have the wall start softening up after awhile.

**T**HE weather was just like Indian Summer back home.

The sky over Palenburg and Ubach was blue with a few high clouds. When an 88 took a pot-shot at an L-5 over there, the airburst was dead black for a second against the white of the cloud. The 88 missed, by the way, but just barely; and the L-5 shied away from the burst like a high-strung colt.

Palenburg and Ubach are almost together and they're both messed up, but Ubach is worse than Palenburg and the funny part of it is that the

Germans did most of the messing. If you had any occasion to wonder about the Germans shelling their own towns you should take a look at Ubach. It's not as bad as St. Lo or Cassino, certainly, but it will take a long time for the man who owned the hardware store to inventory his bicycle fenders and his light bulbs and rearrange his shelves.

In the back room he had a pot of coffee on the stove and it was still there, and the calendar on the wall was dated two days ago. Up the street a few doors was a beer parlor, but now all the chairs and tables were flung around and the side that fronts the street was torn up so that it didn't look attractive at all. The bar was very nice, though; it looked like it had been chrome. Across the street was a hotel or something, and in one room there were two expensive radios and a bunch of *Reichsbanknotes* on the table. The radios weren't booby-trapped, either; at least they haven't exploded yet.

You can stand in one of these houses and marvel at the effects of high explosives on a civilian home, particularly if the place has been lived in for a long time and the people have collected a lot of junk through the years and stuck it in odd drawers and behind doors and whatnot. A sewing basket looks very strange when it's been blown into the dining room, and the knitting needles and scraps of cloth and 50 different kinds of buttons are scattered all over the place, mixed in with the knives and forks and the legs of a table and a couple of hundred pounds of bricks on the floor.

On the square in Ubach was the Party headquarters, with a couple of neat signs on the outside. Under the signs lay a soldier, an American, with a piece of burlap thrown over him. Through a hole in the burlap his chin stuck out and you could see the dust on his whiskers. Inside the headquarters were some double-decker bunks, and somebody had taken a big picture of Hitler and smashed it over one of the uprights on a bunk, leaving the frame caught there.

Further up the road were some Germans, and a sheep. The sheep must have caught a direct hit

because he was almost turned inside out. A German lay in a pile of bricks and he was so mixed up in the mortar and bricks that he looked more like a rag doll, as if he had never had any bones at all. Another lay across the road, face up, and his face was yellow-red, the same color as the dust which the tanks ground up as they went by. A Sherman went by, and through its turret was a hole like you'd make if you took a pencil and ran it through a piece of K-ration cheese. The Sherman was going back, and its crew rode it wearily.

The Infantry was passing through, on either side of the street. Down the middle of the street went a gang of German prisoners, and the two forces glanced briefly at each other and walked on. In a shelter off the street sat a few old people, civilians who were past their usefulness to anybody in Germany. They wore black. And in front of a wrecked beer hall stood a young guy and a girl, and this young guy had on plus-fours and white knitted socks and his hair was all combed back. And you wondered who the hell this joker was, but the Infantry just looked at him and at the girl and walked on.

**T**HE Infantry walked on up the hill that Ubach sits on, and the men were sweating in their ODs, with overcoats tied across the tops of their packs. They were sweating and the stubble on their faces caught the dust from the road, and they looked as Infantry always looks when it's the move in action... dirty and tired and numb.

The artillery was blasting from four sides, most of it ours. Jerry wasn't shelling today as he had been yesterday and the day before, but now and then there would be something coming in.

Somebody on the street asked the Infantry, what outfit? And a tired guy looked up disinterestedly and told him the outfit's number. Then he added the company, in the phonetic alphabet.

"Easy," he said.

And it was pure irony, the way he said it.

BRITISH EDITION

# YANK

THE ARMY




WEEKLY

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By the men . . . for the  
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THE INFANTRY HAS TO WALK, AND THE ARTILLERY HAS TO SET UP HEAVY GUNS IN THIS GERMAN QUAGMIRE. AND THESE GIs HAVE TO GET THAT PURIFIED WATER UP TO THE FRONT SOMEHOW.

# THE BIG PICTURE

When the air, the infantry, the armor and the artillery all get working together, without argument, it makes a pretty picture on the map, and the attack is acknowledged to be "very well conceived." These are logistics, however, and the men on the line say simply, "Now this is the way we're supposed to fight."

Now this attack was a thing very well conceived. It was to start off with air. "Well, as soon as the weather permits," the general had said. And the air came, but it was a disappointment to the infantry. There wasn't enough of it in the right places; and when the infantry captured a prisoner, they asked him what had been the enemy reaction to our preparatory bombing. Unfortunately, the prisoner had been asleep at the time and he said, "What pre-

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BUT HERE THE ALLIES MARCH THROUGH THE SIEGFRIED LINE.



ONCE PAST THE LINE, AMERICAN FORCES CAPTURED THE  
GERMAN TOWN OF STOLBERG, WHICH NOW LOOKS LIKE THIS.



NEXT, AN ALLIED MILITARY GOVERNMENT UNIT TOOK OVER.  
HERE ARE SOME EX-HITLER YOUTH BEING QUESTIONED.



GERMAN CIVILIANS, PAYING THE PRICE OF WAR AT LAST,  
DESERT UBACH FOR THE SAFETY OF THE ALLIED LINES.

up a lot of space in the big picture—and down in the impact zone.

From the observation post you could traverse the telescope over maybe an 800-yard front. It was pretty well plastered. There was a knocked-out Tiger tank over there, and on the slope were two or three hundred shell craters which made the slope the most forlorn-looking place in the world when you looked at it through the sterile eye of the battery commander's telescope. There was a haystack on the hill that looked partly knocked down, and no one could tell if it was a real haystack or a pillbox. Fifty calibre tracer bullets have occasionally bounced off haystacks in this vicinity.

It was interesting, with the shells bursting and all. But down below the observation post and in front of it three or four hundred yards distant was a little scene containing more drama, although no one in the OP paid much attention to it. There was a crossroads down there and the road that went to the left curved out of sight around the bend. From the crossroads on, the road was under enemy observation. And Jerry sat back there some place and sniped with 88s at whatever went up or down the road. You could sit in the OP and hear the shells coming in on the road, four or five of them, maybe, and then a jeep would come barging around the bend toward you. And another jeep would start down toward the crossroads and go out of sight. Then you'd hear the shells come in again. You could always tell that they'd missed when the jeep rounded the bend coming toward you, but when one went down the road the other way you couldn't tell. And as the jeep passed the OP, the guys would be just sitting there, like they were on their way home from a movie. If you hadn't just seen it, you'd never be able to tell from looking at them that, thirty seconds before, they'd been riding along like those little ducks that roll across the back end of a shooting gallery.

But one time two jeeps and some shells met simultaneously at the crossroads, and in the confusion the drivers couldn't make up their minds which road to take. So they ran into each other. That was on the third day of the attack. It was very funny. So was an incident that occurred when some soldiers stopped off in a barn on the fourth day. There was some shelling, and a shell came through the wall of the barn. It hit a cow and took off her leg. And then the shell spun around and around on the floor in the midst of the soldiers, and never did go off.

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