

cluding several 155s. From 21-24 January the 63d prepared for its new mission, reorganizing just south of Hill 665. The 3d Battalion, which had been committed so far only to patrol activity, passed to control of the 43d Division for commitment in an adjoining sector, while the 53d Field Artillery Battalion reverted to control of the 63d to provide the Sightseers with closer and heavier supporting fire in their new mission. During this period, in a platoon attack on well entrenched enemy positions, Private First Class Lester M. Ruff distinguished himself by advancing alone on several enemy positions that were pouring accurate fire into our troops. Moving up within throwing distance, he lobbed grenades at the enemy emplacements, killed one Nip, drove off the remainder and captured the two knee mortars that had been causing the difficulties.

On 25 January, after a 30-minute concentration of artillery fire by the 53d Field and two battalions of the 43d Division, the 63d Infantry moved to the northeast, with the 2d Battalion on the left and 1st Battalion to the right rear. Little opposition was met until the advancing troops reached the intermediate objective, the high ground west of Esperanza, where a strong enemy force well dug in on the hill mass fronting the 1st Battalion directed a stream of mortar and small-arms fire into the Sightseers. The 1st Battalion suffered heavy casualties, and many infantrymen and aid men of the unit worked overtime under constant fire to help their wounded comrades. Private First Class James L. Stobie worked his way beyond the front lines to carry one wounded man to safety, after being pinned down several times while moving forward. Despite the increasing fire on the route of advance, he started out after another man lying in the same area, but was killed before he could evacuate him. In another sector two litter squads working in the front lines were brought under heavy machine-gun and rifle fire from camouflaged enemy positions. Staff Sergeant Cary M. Murdock crawled ahead of the squads, covering their advance to the wounded men, killing several snipers and wiping out a machine-gun nest before he was himself severely wounded.

By the following morning the intermediate objective was secured, and both battalions reorganized to continue the advance. Elements of the 1st Battalion ploughed through the Bued River under the ever-present artillery and mortar fire to seize positions on the hill north of Agat, at the southern extremity of the regimental objective. The 2d Bat-

talion, leaving Company F to hold the high ground at Esperanza, moved east to join the 1st while the 3d Battalion, which had seized Cauringan on the 24th and reverted to regimental control on the 26th, launched a night attack to join the rest of the regiment. The advance was slow, each enemy position offering a new problem in digging the camouflaged Japs out of their holes.

Privat First Class Robert E. O'Brien used grenades to destroy an enemy machine-gun emplacement that had pinned down his platoon, but was fatally wounded after crawling through heavy machine-gun and rifle fire to his forward position. In an attack on several emplacements which were holding up the advance of a leading platoon, Staff Sergeant Zuel S. Yarberry and Private First Class Delmer C. Dilsaver accompanied their platoon leader in an assault on the Nip positions. Advancing through the heavy fire by individual rushes, Yarberry employed rifle grenade fire and Dilsaver his BAR to silence the enemy weapons and kill their crews.

On the night of the 26th both the 3d and 1st Battalions suffered heavy losses when enemy shells rained down on the troops. Evacuation became an acute problem because of Jap infiltration and the necessarily long distance from battalion aid stations to the nearest road on which evacuating trucks and ambulances could travel. In one case, when the initial bursts of a 75mm barrage had wounded ten men in one platoon, Technician Fifth Grade Elmer E. Murphy, the platoon's medical aid man, declined to withdraw with the remainder of the unit, but remained with his stricken comrades administering life-saving treatment and dragging the seriously wounded to the protection of a reverse slope.

During the 27th and 28th increasingly rugged terrain added to the difficulties of the advance, but one by one the enemy emplacements were destroyed and the defenders killed or driven back. The doughs were aided immeasurably by the close supporting fire of the 53d Field Artillery, which moved forward close behind the infantry despite the steep slopes and covered ground that required each gun position to be cut out of the rocky hillside by bulldozers. Private First Class Alfred F. Turner stormed up one of the hills destroying an enemy strongpoint with automatic rifle fire, then was killed by an enemy machine gun while covering the advance of other doughs against a near-by emplacement. Staff Sergeant Wilbern McEntire also destroyed a concealed machine-gun emplacement with his automatic rifle, only



to be cut down by fire from a covering enemy gun.

A night attack on the 27th failed because of the poor visibility occasioned by a heavy rain and the jungle-like terrain that had to be traversed. But on the 28th, after a long uphill drive, the hill mass east of Highway 3 was secured. Private First Class Lester W. Davidson, after working his way over rugged terrain to help destroy an enemy 37mm gun with his tommy-gun, led a squad in an attack on two enemy pillboxes which were destroyed by hand grenades. When Private First Class Henry P. Short saw one of the members of his company seriously injured in a charge on the hill, he ran across a large open field that was exposed to heavy direct machine-gun fire, administered first aid to the man, then carried him back across the fire-swept clearing and down a steep ravine for 800 yards to an aid station.

When a volley of enemy grenades from well entrenched positions halted the advance of the platoon led by Lieutenant George J. Gingras, he filled a helmet with white phosphorus grenades, ran forward of our lines and routed the enemy from his positions by accurate throwing of the WPs. When the intensity of mortar and artillery fire made it impossible to evacuate casualties quickly, Captain Isadore E. Goldberg, battalion surgeon, organized a litter-carrying party of fifty men and led them up the hillside through the enemy fire. Working under a constant barrage of enemy shells, Captain Gold-

berg administered the necessary treatment to severely wounded men and sent the casualties to the rear by carrying parties.

During 29-31 January the 63d Infantry was relieved. The battle of Purple Heart Valley was over. The Sightseers had killed 971 of the enemy and captured four, while losing 103 killed in action and 486 wounded. The cost had been high, but considering the enemy's well entrenched position, the rugged terrain and the great number of the Nip's supporting weapons, not excessive. The way was now open for the drives on San Fernando and Baguio, and the whole southern shore of Lingayen Gulf had been secured.

Company C of the 6th Engineers throughout the campaign had pushed roads just behind the infantry, though it was able to follow existing roads for only one short stretch. The bulk of the main supply road was cut through the hills and ravines by bulldozer operators and other engineers subject at all times to enemy artillery, mortar and small-arms fire. The 53d Field Artillery Battalion had supported the ground movement in the second drive with concentrations of accurate 105mm fire. But primarily the campaign for the Damortis-Rosario highway was an infantry show. They had stormed the hills and suffered the heavy casualties, and their blood had coined a new name in Philippine geography and American history—Purple Heart Valley.

CHAPTER 13

THE BATTLE OF THE CABARUAN HILLS

WHILE the 63d RCT was seizing the high ground overlooking the Damortis-Rosario highway, the bulk of the Sightseeing Sixth continued its southward advance toward the ultimate goal—Manila, the Pearl of the Orient. After securing the Catablan-Malasiqui road, the 1st and 20th patrols continued probing to the south and east, meeting no opposition until they reached the vicinity of Lunec. Only a few miles to the south lay the Agno River, the only major natural barrier on the great central plain, and the Red Star staff officers anticipated that in the Lunec-Cabaruan Hills area the enemy would deploy delaying elements of considerable strength.

The Cabaruan Hills offered the enemy excellent defensive positions. They consist of a series of low hills, ridges and rolling terrain, covered with prickly bamboo thickets, scattered palms and patches of heavy scrub growth. The valleys and draws are free of trees, usually covered with cogon grass or cultivated fields. Hedges of bamboo thickets separate the fields at frequent intervals, offering natural defense lines, and each hill is more or less isolated, giving no opportunity for a covered approach. The enemy, consisting of about two thousand troops with artillery and tank attachments, had constructed his

main positions on a horseshoe-shaped ridge just west of Cabaruan town, though he had also organized all the principal ridges and hills to the west and northwest. The enemy was well equipped, thoroughly dug in and, according to early information obtained from guerrillas and prisoners, pledged to a suicidal defense of the strategically important hills.

On 15 January the push started when Company E of the 20th Infantry captured the town of Lunec against light opposition, following a bombing and strafing mission by supporting aircraft. During the 16th several contacts were made with small enemy outposts, while the 1st Battalion of the Sykesmen repulsed an enemy counterattack. On the same day the 1st Infantry was ordered to seize Urdaneta, key point on the north-south highway, while the 20th Infantry was directed to seize and occupy the Cabaruan Hills area. At the same time the 6th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop was to reconnoiter south to the Agno River.

The attack on Urdaneta was launched by the 3d Battalion of the 1st Infantry on the morning of the 17th. In the western outskirts of the town, their advance was halted at about 1130 by heavy enemy fire from machine guns, mortars and tank-mounted





47mm guns. The doughboys armed with rifles jumped for the ditches, while the 1st Field Artillery Battalion fired heavy concentrations on the enemy strongpoints. With three Jap medium tanks destroyed, and aided by a company of the 716th Tank Battalion and elements of the 98th Chemical Battalion, the remaining doughboys of the 1st Infantry joined the 3d Battalion in a coordinated attack that drove the enemy from his entrenched positions and left burning pillboxes and tanks littering the roads and gardens of Urdaneta. During the tank battle two of our tanks were set on fire by enemy shelling. Private First Class Louis B. Krawiec,



seeing one of the men trying to clamber out of a smoking tank, ran across an open field through murderous machine-gun fire and dragged three wounded and dazed tankmen from their burning vehicle. The occupation of the town was completed by 1200 on the 18th. The 1st and 2nd Battalions and the 1st Field Artillery Battalion immediately moved toward Villasis, while the 3d Battalion remained in Urdaneta supported by firepower of the 53d and 80th Field Artillery.

Meanwhile the 20th Infantry had been hammering at the Nips holding the Cabaruan Hills. Following a preparation by artillery of the 51st Field





Artillery Battalion and by 4.2 chemical mortars, the 2d Battalion attacked to the southeast from its assembly area near Lunec. The men advanced across the open rice paddies through the crossfire of entrenched machine guns to destroy numerous enemy emplacements and kill approximately a hundred of the enemy.

During the attack Captain Robert E. Phelps led his company across one thousand yards of open terrain under heavy fire, until they were pinned down at the base of a high ridge. Phelps crawled forward of our lines toward one particularly strong pillbox and threw a grenade into the embrasure. The grenade was tossed back, wounding him in both legs, but the men of the company followed their commander to storm the position and take the ridge. At the same time Technical Sergeant Efton A. Kitchens crawled forward to find suitable advance positions for his machine-gun sections. After signaling his section sergeants to the positions, he crawled forward to destroy a machine gun that had lain on

the platoon's route of advance. Although mortally wounded in his advance, he destroyed the gun and killed the crew by use of fragmentation grenades.

Many Sykesmen and supporting troops risked their lives to help wounded comrades. Technician Fifth Grade Lawrence Kostaneski of the 51st Field Artillery had to kill one sniper and wound another before he could successfully evacuate a wounded infantryman to a place of safety. Staff Sergeant Edward C. Commers and Private First Class Sol Blumenthal rushed forward when they saw their company commander fall, knelt between him and the enemy fire while administering first aid, then carried him to a protected spot. One of the Sykesmen's aid men, Technician Fourth Grade Laurin M. Preston, ran thirty yards beyond the foremost elements of the assaulting company and remained there with two wounded men for almost half an hour while machine-gun slugs bit into the ground around him, until litter bearers could carry the men to the rear.

On the morning of the 18th the 1st Battalion,

which had advanced to a point west of Labit, attacked to the north to seize the barrio south of Cabaruan town against only slight resistance, while the 2d Battalion attacked east, their objective the high ground overlooking Cabaruan. After wiping out several light machine-gun and mortar positions and killing some fifty Nips, the battalion consolidated its lines for the night about 2,500 yards southeast of the town.

While infantrymen scraped C rations out of a can or enjoyed an early morning cigarette, artillery, cannon and 4.2 mortar fire was placed on known enemy positions prior to the advance on 19 January. Then the footsloggers of the 2d Battalion moved out to the northwest with the 3d Battalion following them on the right flank. During the advance, which was supported by two medium tanks, the two battalions destroyed two enemy artillery pieces, three 37mm guns, numerous pillboxes and one ammunition dump that was blown up. While the 1st Battalion was withdrawn to take up the advance south of the Agno River, the 2d and 3d Battalions consolidated their positions approximately 1,500 yards southwest of Cabaruan town.

The 1st Infantry had in the meantime moved quickly down the main highway, overcoming enemy resistance at Villasis to reach the banks of the Agno River. With several spans of the huge bridge destroyed, the 1st Battalion crossed the river in LVTs and continued their drive south while the 2d Battalion remained in Villasis, mopping up and establishing roadblocks around the town. Enemy fire during the crossing of the wide river caused some casualties among the doughboys. Staff Sergeant Donald H. Hildebrandt and Private First Class Raymond E. Lehmann both lost their lives while trying to rescue men wounded on the far side of the river. Volunteering to accompany a landing vehicle, they succeeded in knocking out an enemy machine gun and killing two riflemen before themselves being mortally wounded by an enemy burst. Private First Class Walter R. Ross also attempted to reach a wounded comrade during the fight for control of the river crossing, rushing through a hail of machine-gun fire, only to be killed by an enemy sniper just as he reached his stricken buddy.

During the attack on Villasis, commanding the approaches to the Agno River, Private First Class Glen S. Crum advanced beyond his pinned-down platoon, used grenades and his M-1 rifle to destroy singlehanded the machine-gun position holding up



his unit and kill the four-man crew. Private First Class Lawrence G. Gogue in the same action was fired upon at almost point-blank range as he advanced at the head of a combat patrol. He turned quickly and killed one of four Japs, then followed the remaining three into a thick canefield. As the Nips charged him, he cut down all three of them with well aimed shots.

Because only two regiments were then available to the Division to secure the long front south of the Agno River, it was decided to leave only one battalion of infantrymen plus supporting units to dig out the Nips remaining in the Cabaruan Hills. The 3d Battalion of the 20th and the 51st Field Artillery were therefore ordered to San Manuel, and the 2d took up the Cabaruan advance supported by one platoon of the 98th Chemical Battalion, Company C of the 44th Tank Battalion, the 1st Field Artillery Battalion which turned its guns north from positions near Villasis, and Corps-artillery units firing from the vicinity of Urdaneta. Resuming the attack, the doughs advanced slowly against intense artillery and mortar fire, overran and destroyed five machine-gun emplacements and captured two additional 75mm guns.

When the advance of his company was halted by machine-gun fire from several positions, Staff Sergeant Harold E. Smith crawled forward to a point from which he was able to throw hand grenades into two enemy positions, silencing both of them. Locating two additional enemy emplacements, Smith worked his way to the enemy flank and hurled more grenades to account for a total of four machine-gun positions destroyed. Staff Sergeant Charles J. Baker,



leader of a 60mm mortar squad only 150 yards away from enemy positions and in their line of fire, ordered his men to seek cover from the concentrated enemy fire, and alone operated his mortar, laying down so large a volume of fire that the company was able to continue its advance up the strongly defended hillside. When another platoon was pinned down, Sergeant George W. Long advanced into the enemy fire and took one of the fortified positions, killing all of the occupants. Though wounded, he continued to direct the squad from his forward vantage point until another enemy position was taken and a machine gun silenced. By 1800 on the 20th the 2d Battalion was facing the last high ground before reaching Cabaruan town.

On the 21st the 20th Infantry limited its activities to patrolling and reconnaissance, while the 2d Battalion of the 1st Infantry killed thirty Japs from the Cabaruan Hills who were caught near Villasis while retreating to the river. During the morning of 22

January the Sykesmen swore and sweated while waiting for a promised air strike on the Cabaruan area. Though the planes were four hours late, they put on a good show when they did arrive, twenty-two A-20s bombing and strafing the area until it seemed impossible for any groups of the enemy to live through the pounding. Then the infantry moved in behind a rolling artillery and mortar preparation, meeting only sporadic small-arms fire until suddenly halted by a tremendous outburst of all types of enemy fire from the hillside which had just received the brunt of the air strike. An intense fire fight developed, the doughs digging in and holding their own, but further advance was impossible for the enemy was obviously holding defensive positions superior to anything the Sightseers had yet encountered on Luzon.

Private First Class Claude D. Poole distinguished himself during the advance by dashing to a near-by disabled tank after his company had been pinned

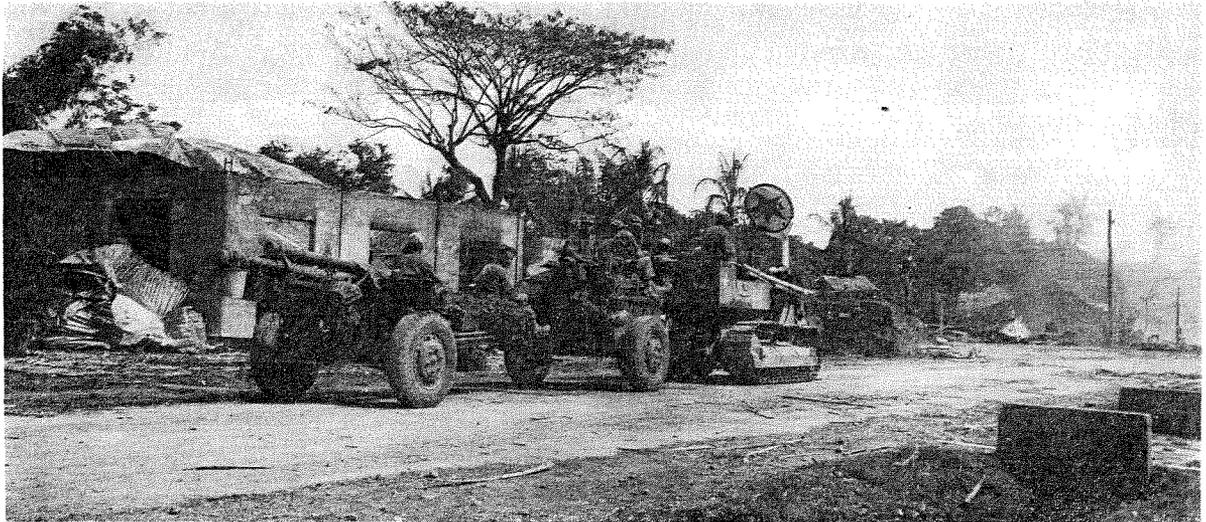




down by antitank and mortar fire, and turning the mounted 75mm gun on the enemy positions. He succeeded in destroying an enemy field piece and killing an undetermined number of enemy personnel, allowing his company to maneuver to a more favorable position. Lieutenant Harry M. Leonard, attached to an assault company to provide antitank protection, led his bazooka team to the flank of a strong enemy position and, at the cost of his life, succeeded in knocking out two heavy machine guns, several knee mortars and one 47mm field piece which had been holding up the advance of the company. Another pillbox astride the route of advance was charged by Staff Sergeant Clarence E. Anderson, who used white phosphorus and fragmentation grenades to destroy the emplacement and kill four of the enemy.

When an artillery officer observer and several

members of his party were wounded by shells falling in their exposed hilltop position, Corporal Daniel A. Metzger, 51st Field Artillery Battalion, pulled the wounded back to a covered position, rendered first aid, and returned to the OP to direct artillery concentrations on the enemy positions until relieved on the following evening. Sergeant John R. Beatty saved the lives of several of his comrades when he made six hazardous trips to recover as many wounded men from a fire-swept field, administered first aid to all, and acted as litter bearer during the night, carrying the stricken men to places of safety. One of many miraculous escapes occurred when Privates First Class Keefer Evans and Eugene E. Hendrix were setting up their machine gun in a new position to lay down preparatory fire for an advance on the 22d. A Nip machine gun opened up on them before they could place their gun in action and scored a







direct hit with the first burst, kicking up dirt all around the position and cutting several holes in the gun's water hose. Hendrix had a line of bullet holes from his shoulder to his waist—bullet holes in his shirt, the only slug that touched his body cutting a small but neat groove along the side of his buttocks.

On 23 January the 2d Battalion of the 1st Infantry was rushed to the area from Villasis and established a line about 2,000 yards east of Cabaruan, while the Sykesmen's Cannon Company, the 1st Field Artillery Battalion, the attached 55th Field Artillery Battalion and our 4.2 mortars registered on enemy positions preparatory to an all-out attack on the 24th. During the day Lieutenant Theodore Frankel led his assault team behind enemy positions to evacuate three trapped wounded men. After personally destroying an enemy machine gun and killing its crew of four, he led his team through the enemy territory and, after a small fire fight, succeeded in carrying the wounded men back to the perimeter.

While the battle-weary 20th Infantry held its positions west of town, the 2d Battalion of the 1st Infantry with tank attachments moved in from the east. They ran into the same type of defenses that the 20th had encountered—the ground honeycombed with foxholes and prepared earthworks, dense thickets and bamboo clumps that made observation of the enemy impossible, well concealed antitank guns that forced our tanks to proceed with the utmost caution, and open routes of approach that sub-

jected the advancing doughs to constant observation and fire by the enemy. Against such strong defensive positions the attack had necessarily to move slowly. During the 25th the Semper Primus men consolidated their positions along the road running south from the town. The digging out process was continued on the following day with the battalion's assault team carrying the brunt of the attack, using flame throwers, bazookas, WP grenades and demolitions against all types of enemy emplacements. The 1st Battalion of the 1st Infantry was thrown into the final attack on the 27th. Company A, the 1st Battalion assault team and a machine-gun platoon of Company D led the assault that cleared the entire north and east portions of the horseshoe ridge.

The four-day attack was highlighted by many instances of individual achievement. Among the Semper Primus men who led the assault were Private First Class Vermon Gearlds, who, unassisted, used his BAR to neutralize enemy positions containing two machine guns and a squad of supporting riflemen; Lieutenant William J. Driscoll, who destroyed one machine-gun pillbox with his tommy-gun, then lost his life covering the evacuation of wounded men; Private First Class Pelva J. Van Winkle crawling across open ground in full view of enemy machine gunners to throw two grenades into the position, completely destroying it; Private First Class William S. Guest assaulting a strong enemy position, killing eleven Nips and neutralizing the

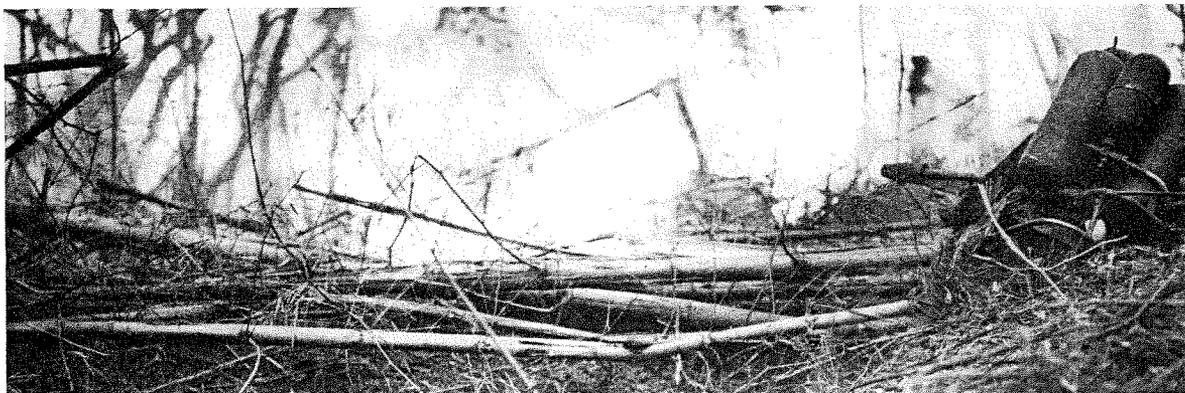


position before he was cut down by enemy rifle fire; Technical Sergeant Gorman F. Hardin, who led two tanks to a forward position from which they could knock out a well dug-in enemy 47mm gun, but lost his life before the enemy piece was destroyed; Private First Class Walter D. Rowe who, after knocking his platoon leader out of the way of an enemy grenade hurtling toward him, charged a camouflaged emplacement with his automatic rifle, killing two machine gunners and two supporting riflemen to destroy the position; Lieutenant Charles G. Canas, howitzer platoon leader, who reconnoitered the for-

ward area on foot, killing two snipers on the way, then led his self-propelled mounts in an encircling move that eliminated one enemy scout car and five pillboxes; Private First Class Jack B. Morrison, Private First Class John N. Teril and Private First Class Robert Victor who, with other members of the assault team, used flame throwers, BAR and rifle fire to destroy numerous enemy positions.

During the same period countless doughs risked their lives to rush or crawl through heavy enemy fire in an effort to render aid to and evacuate wounded comrades—among them Private First Class



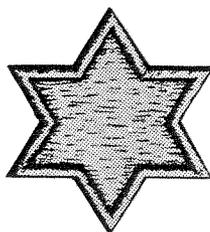


Irvin W. Hagan, Captain Daniel S. LaShelle, Technician Fifth Grade Roy W. Stemple, Staff Sergeant Lloyd Nedved and Lieutenant Marshall D. Savoy. Outstanding also was the adjustment of devastating concentrations of fire on enemy positions by Staff Sergeant Clarence D. Bailey, who was placed in command of a 1st Field forward observer party because of the shortage of available commissioned officers, and continued to direct rolling barrages in front of the doughboys' advance despite the constant enemy fire that was thrown at his OP.

On 28 January final mopping-up was accomplished in the hills, the doughs being led to the remaining positions by a prisoner captured during the night of 27-28 January, who donned an American uniform and pointed out the last outposts manned by his former comrades. By 1600 all opposition was destroyed and the bulk of the Division withdrew south of the Agno River, leaving only Company C of the 1st Infantry reinforced by Filipino guerrillas to search

the hill area for any possible remaining stragglers.

That company, scouring the hills on 29 January, found only a blackened denuded stretch of shell-torn earth, covered with Jap bodies and equipment, and encountered no living remnants of the strong enemy force which had defended the vital heights so desperately. Total enemy casualties for the action in the Cabaruan Hills were 1,432 killed and 7 POW, the 20th Infantry accounting for 919 enemy dead and the 1st Infantry 513. Equipment captured or destroyed included seven 75mm guns, 1 tankette, 1 medium tank, 14 knee mortars, 20 light machine guns, 13 heavy machine guns and numerous other items of enemy equipment. Our own battle casualties for this action totalled 81 dead and 198 wounded or injured in action. The major natural obstacles in the path of the troops advancing to the south—the Cabaruan Hills and the Agno River—had been overcome and their defenders annihilated by the fighting men of the Sightseeing Sixth.



CHAPTER 14

THE BATTLE OF MUÑOZ

RED Star patrols, after crossing the Agno River, continued to move south and east, running into light enemy opposition but securing quickly the towns of Rosales, Cuyapo, Guimba, Talavera and others in the Division zone, until Company K of the 20th Infantry was prevented from entering Muñoz by heavy rifle fire. While the two divisions on the Sightseers' right flank continued the rapid advance down the main highways leading to Manila, the Sixth swung to the left towards the rugged mountains of Luzon's east coast.

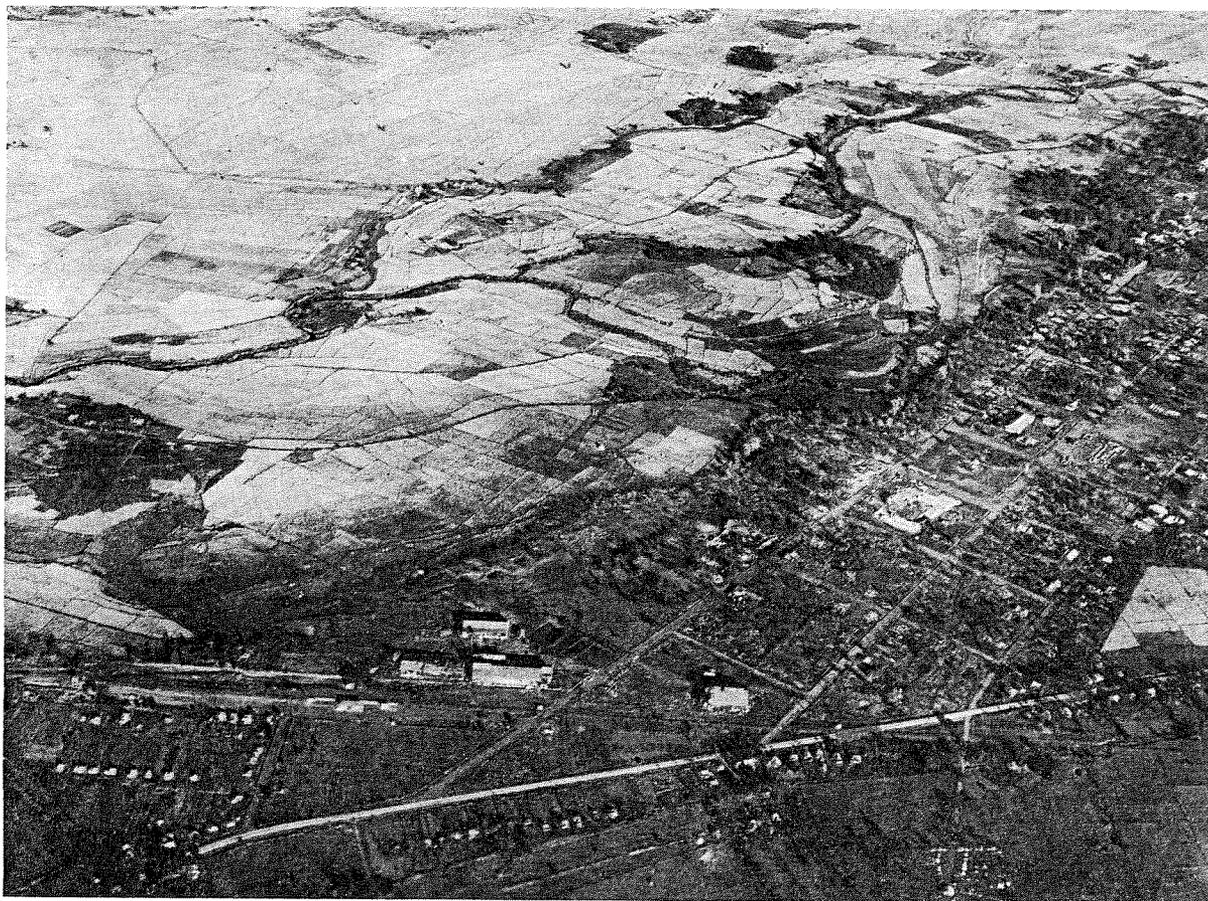
Muñoz is a small town located among the rice paddies that have earned the surrounding area the name "Rice Bowl of Luzon." Situated at the junction of Highway 5 and the railway just east of the Sierra Madre Mountains, the town's area is approximately twelve hundred by five hundred yards and contains several hundred nipa homes, a few larger frame dwellings, a large rice mill, the usual market square, a stone church and city hall, and several school buildings. When the Sightseers first saw Muñoz, it had been partially leveled by air strikes, but in the Cabaruans and elsewhere the enemy had demonstrated how well he could withstand even concentrated air blows. The doughboys who first hit Muñoz could see a line of pillboxes and other emplacements paralleling the road at the west end of town, though there was no other sign of enemy activity that could be seen from the ground. The many bomb-shattered buildings afforded excellent cover for snipers and ideal camouflage for enemy emplacements. A 51st FA Battalion air observer spotted tank tracks and some enemy activity in the north section of town on 30 January. Otherwise, Muñoz seemed merely a somewhat battered version of the quiet town it had once been.

At 0730 on 31 January, following harassing fire during the night and a brief morning artillery preparation by the 51st FA battalion, Company K attacked to the northeast from a position astride the railroad, advancing about two hundred yards to the rice mill and railroad crossing without opposition. Suddenly, without warning, a stream of automatic-weapons fire from emplacements hitherto invisible pinned down the assault platoons. Lacking sufficient cover for the employment of supporting weapons or flanking patrols, the doughs dug in to hold the

ground already gained and to escape the withering fire that covered their positions throughout the day. At 1630 the balance of the 3d Battalion with a platoon of 4.2 mortars worked its way to the line held by Company K and dug in for the night.

A fifteen-minute preparation by the 51st FA and two chemical mortar platoons preceded the battalion's attack on the following morning, with the north-south road along the west edge of town as the first objective. Again the attack was stopped, this time by much heavier fire than the battalion had previously experienced, for the enemy was now making use of both artillery and 47mm fire in addition to the automatic weapons whose interlocking lanes of fire kept the infantrymen from approaching the entrenched positions. Artillery and mortar fire were adjusted on the positions, and two tanks and one field piece were knocked out. The 1st Battalion of the 20th had in the meantime advanced on the right flank, only to be halted by machine gun and 47mm fire. Patrols from Company A disposed of two dug-in medium tanks with rockets and anti-tank grenades, but further advance was impossible in the face of the intense fire from remaining enemy positions.

During the first two days of probing the enemy defenses, the doughboys had many chances to test their infantry weapons against strongly entrenched armor and supporting positions. Private First Class Gerald L. Halverson stood up in the face of withering machine-gun fire to destroy an emplaced enemy tank with two rounds from his rocket launcher, then worked his way to within fifteen yards of a machine-gun emplacement and launched a rocket into the position, silencing it. He fired one more round into a 47mm position, but was fatally wounded by a shell from the gun at which he had fired. Lieutenant William M. Ogden used hand grenades to kill several of the enemy and destroy a strong enemy pillbox before he was killed by supporting riflemen. Staff Sergeant Hugh R. Hooper, seriously wounded by an enemy grenade, ordered his squad to withdraw to a covered position, then advanced to within five yards of an enemy pillbox and killed its occupants before being killed by rifle fire from a supporting emplacement. Captain Charles A. Figley, Jr., used rifle fire to kill two enemy riflemen firing on his



troops, then used rifle grenades to destroy an enemy tank and kill its six occupants. Technical Sergeant Harold W. Bieraugel, in knocking out another tank and killing the crew and supporting infantrymen with grenades and bayonet, achieved the distinction of winning both the Silver Star and the Purple Heart for having his thumb bitten. After killing one of the supporting Nips with a butt stroke, he whirled at the shout of one of his men and had his weapon knocked out of his hand, to face another Nip barehanded. Lunging for the enemy, Bieraugel got one hand behind his head and was reaching for his eyes with the other when the Nip clamped his oversize teeth on Bieraugel's thumb, cutting it to the bone. The rifleman who had warned him bayoneted the carnivorous Jap while Bieraugel nursed a bloody finger.

Other men who were more seriously wounded owe their lives to Sightseers willing to risk life or limb for sake of a friend. One wounded officer lying in open terrain in front of two enemy 47mm AT

guns, one light machine gun and a squad of riflemen, was carried back to safety by Private First Class William W. Flannagan, who, after moving cautiously for seventy-five yards to reach the officer, realized that speed was essential if the wounded man was to be saved, shouldered him and ran upright back to a place of-safety with machine-gun and rifle slugs hitting the ground at his heels with every step. One of the men wounded in an ambush on 31 August when the Red Star Engineers attempted to push a road through enemy territory owes his life to Corporal Emil C. Barta and Sergeant Paul Blodgett, both of the 6th Engineer Combat Battalion, who remained at their positions, covering the withdrawal and evacuation of the squad, until both were killed by the concealed enemy.

On 2 February a coordinated attack by the 20th Infantry was stopped all along the front, the troops being pinned down by heavy cross-fire from automatic weapons and by artillery and tank fire before they could enter the town limits. Three Jap tanks



pulled out of their covered positions to charge the 3d Battalion front, but were quickly disposed of by bazookas and rifle grenades, while the 51st FA Battalion and the Sykesmen's mortars destroyed two 47mm guns supporting the tank attack. That night tank-stalking parties, which had located camouflaged positions during the day's battle, destroyed several machine-gun positions and one tank by worming their way under cover of darkness through the protecting line of emplacements to their objectives.

The attack was resumed the next morning, preceded by a heavy artillery and mortar concentration. While the 2d Battalion moved to the left flank and advanced to within one hundred yards of the west end of town, the 3d Battalion, supported by direct tank fire and Cannon Company's self-propelled mounts, crashed through the enemy's first line of defense, destroying one 105mm howitzer and four armored cars in addition to pillboxes and machine gun emplacements that barred the advance. The gain was costly, but it represented the first piercing of the bristling fortress, and the doughboys, doubtful at first of their ability to destroy so great a concentration of armored might, gained a little more confidence in their infantry weapons.

During the attack, Staff Sergeant Chester G. John-

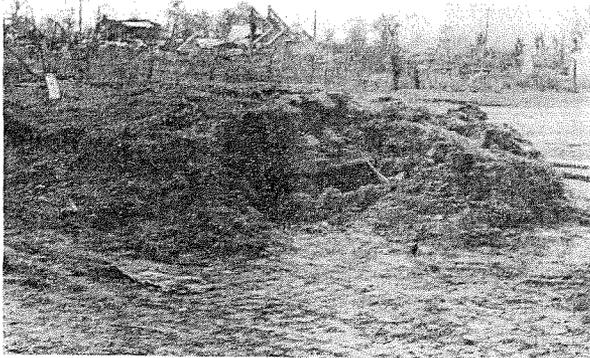
son crawled slowly toward a dug-in enemy tank that was firing on his squad, until an enemy artillery observer spotted him and directed an artillery piece at him. Then Johnson closed in with a rush that carried him to within twenty-five yards of the objective and scored a direct hit with his rocket launcher, destroying the tank and its crew. Sergeant Robert E. Millious of the attached 98th Chemical Battalion accounted for two enemy tanks by accurate observation and direction from his OP in advance of the infantry units, a position that he maintained despite the intense fire that was directed at him. Lieutenant James L. Giangrosso, after leading his platoon forward and repelling an enemy counterattack, noticed that several of his men were missing. He directed the platoon sergeant to take over, crawled forward under constant enemy fire to find two of the wounded men near several enemy positions. One he evacuated to a rear area, but the other had to await the coming of a litter team before he could be moved. Giangrosso returned to the spot, remained with the man throughout the night, while enemy patrols moved all about their shell-hole position, and finally directed a litter team to the area the following morning.

Captain James P. Jolivette lost his life when he led a small group in an assault across open ground

against a strongly defended enemy bunker in an attempt to evacuate a wounded officer. Four members of a litter squad, advancing under cover of a smoke screen to within fifteen feet of an enemy machine-gun nest to evacuate a casualty, were caught in the open when the smoke lifted sufficiently to give the enemy gunners a clear field of fire. The machine gun bursts killed Privates First Class John N. Braun, Carrol P. Jarmoska and James L. McConnell, only Private First Class Howell H. Houseton escaping the fire from the near-by position. Others who lost their lives during this period trying to ease the pain of wounded comrades were Privates First Class Eugene A. Mendenhall and Robert C. Gillman. Staff Sergeant James B. Patterson and Staff Sergeant Paul F. Tossava were luckier. When they ran forward in the face of a heavy machine gun to evacuate a wounded friend, one burst of enemy fire tore a pocket off Patterson's trousers, while another threw dirt in Tossava's eyes. Both came through unscathed, however, carrying the wounded man back to safety without any mishaps.

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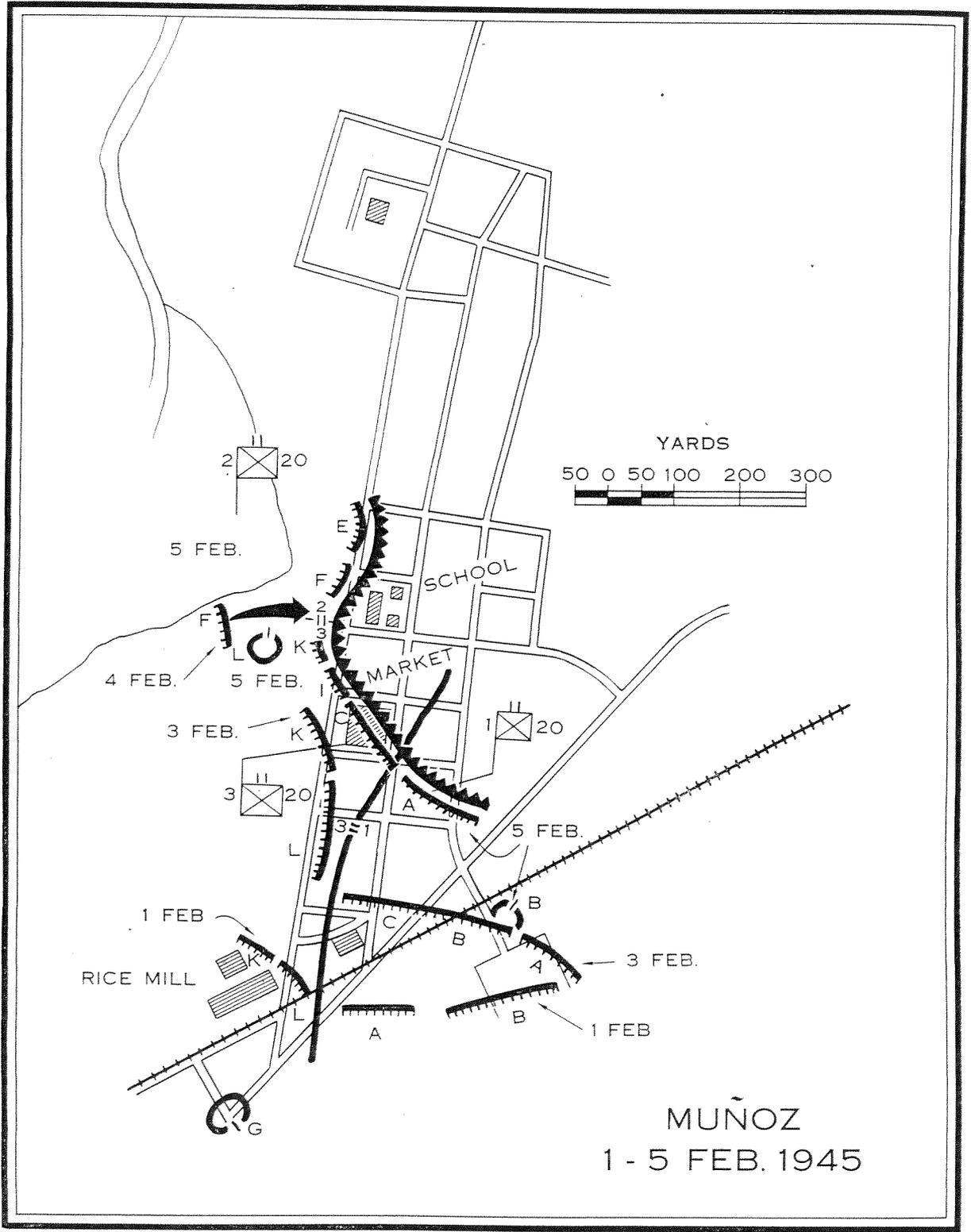
While the 20th continued pounding at the entrenched enemy armor in Muñoz, the 1st and 63d Regiments were also running into tank opposition and strong enemy emplacements farther east, where both units were preparing for an attack on San Jose, whose capture would seal the Nips' escape route to the north by cutting off their avenue of approach to the road that runs through Balete Pass to northern Luzon. While the 2d Battalion of the 1st Infantry established strong positions astride the Rizal Highway near Bicos, the 3d Battalion drove off an enemy force to capture the Talavera River bridge, killing 57 Japs and destroying 2 medium tanks, 1 light tank, 1 loaded cargo truck, 1 personnel carrier, a small-arms ammunition dump and a fuel dump.



The 63d Infantry, minus the 1st Battalion which had remained in I Corps reserve, by-passed Muñoz to the south and stormed into the grounds of the Agricultural School between Muñoz and San Jose. With Company L directed to mop up in the school area, the balance of the 63d moved up the highway on 4 February, only to be halted short of San Jose by heavy enemy fire. While the 63d doughs concentrated on the strong enemy force to their front, the 1st Infantry, with 1st and 3d Battalions abreast, moved into San Jose on 4 February and secured the town and all routes of entry by 1200.

During the attack on the Agricultural School, Sergeant Ole Rod, a mortar observer with the 63d, crawled fifty yards in front of our lines, exposing himself to concentrated enemy fire in order to locate profitable targets and direct more accurate mortar





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1 - 5 FEB. 1945

fire. His fire orders resulted in the destruction of a machine-gun nest and the death of several enemy before he was killed by a sniper's bullet. Sergeant Everett E. Fuller volunteered to lead M-7 mounts against the strong positions. Climbing to the top of an M-7, exposed at all times to direct enemy fire, he directed the fire at several pillboxes, then led his squad into the network of emplacements to mop-up remaining enemy resistance. Corporal Frank J. Tarzia, gunner on a self-propelled mount, remained at his post pouring fire into assigned enemy objectives despite intense antitank fire directed at him from enemy 47mm guns. He completed his mission, but was struck by a 47 shell before he could move to an alternate position. Sergeant James M. Walker crawled forward of the lines under heavy mortar and small-arms fire to use hand grenades and his BAR in destroying an enemy pillbox and all its occupants.

Lieutenant Thomas D. Ingle led two men forward to a line of emplacements impeding the advance of his company and by repeated use of white phosphorus grenades and rifle fire destroyed seven of the strongpoints, killing an undetermined number of the enemy. Private First Class Edward J. Henly found his rifle grenades effective against a steel pillbox, knocking the strong position out with direct hits at a distance of fifty yards.

In the attack on San Jose, Lieutenant Nathan E. Dodge of the 1st Infantry, after reconnoitering the enemy area, led his self-propelled mounts against enemy positions, neutralizing two machine guns and a dual-purpose 37mm gun, as well as destroying two enemy trucks and an ammunition and supply dump. Private First Class Tony Trujillo of the 63d, after locating a concealed machine-gun nest that was holding up the advance, crawled to the enemy position, killing several snipers and all but one of the crew occupying the machine-gun position. As he stood to throw the last grenade into the emplacement, he was fatally wounded.

On 4 February all three battalions of the 20th Infantry continued to knock out enemy defenses while trying to drive a wedge in the ring of emplacements that laid a curtain of fire around Muñoz. The 80th Field Artillery Battalion was now adding its 155s to the 105s of the 51st Field, and three battalions of Corps' 191st Artillery Group were also supporting the advance, but despite incessant pounding by the artillery and the infantry weapons, attack after attack by the Sykesmen was stopped by the

enemy's undiminished fire. On the following day, however, the 2d Battalion made several penetrations in the wall of fire, using flame throwers and demolitions to reduce twelve pillboxes, while the 1st Battalion slowly pushed its left flank forward to the market place, alongside I Company, and repulsed an enemy counterattack by destroying three enemy tanks.

The 2d Battalion's penetration of the town was sparked by Technical Sergeant Donald E. Rudolph's destruction of a whole line of enemy fortifications. After administering first aid to two wounded men in a forward area and killing three snipers in a near-by culvert, Rudolph crawled 75 yards across open terrain, threw a grenade through the embrasure of a machine-gun position, then tore a hole with his bare hands in the wood and earth covering of the pillbox to drop a second grenade, killing all occupants. He picked up an enemy pick-mattock lying on the ground, stood up in a hail of machine-gun and rifle fire to tear a hole in the top of another emplacement, and killed all enemy gunners and riflemen. In quick succession Rudolph disposed of six additional enemy pillboxes, using his hands and the pick-mattock to open the emplacements, and grenades and rifle fire to kill the occupants, though surrounded at all times by heavy machine-gun and rifle fire from enemy covering positions.

In other sectors, the enemy was also feeling the might of the American doughboy. Private First Class Anthony F. Dischinger, after crawling fifty yards ahead of his lines, loaded and fired his bazooka repeatedly, setting afire and completely destroying two tanks that had impeded the advance of his platoon. Sergeant Gene D. Smith, at the head of a volunteer recon patrol, killed 3 enemy snipers, destroyed 2 machine guns and the 7 men who operated them, then lost his life covering the withdrawal of his patrol. Private First Class Lester E. Sundmacker, after crawling to within yards of a strong emplacement, had a rocket launcher shot out of his hands by a machine-gun burst. Quickly withdrawing, he returned immediately with another launcher and destroyed the position, killing all the occupants. Staff Sergeant Page H. Simpson and Private First Class Charles A. Carik had an enemy tank pass less than two yards away from their 37mm position, after they had wheeled the gun from another position to stop the attack. They rapidly turned the gun around and continued firing on the tank until it was knocked out. An immobilized enemy tank still firing its ma-



chine guns and 47mm gun from a position 150 yards in front of our lines was attacked by Lieutenant Virgilio R. Felix and Private First Class Homer E. Wenger, who climbed the sides and dropped WP grenades into the turret to destroy the tank and crew.

During enemy counterattacks on the night of the 5th, the toll of destroyed enemy armor was increased. When three tanks suddenly charged the positions of the company led by Captain Albert L. deCharleroy, temporarily demoralizing the men facing the unexpected attack with only infantry weapons, the CO raced 25 yards across open terrain right under the tanks, shouting to his men to hold their positions, then wheeled a 37mm AT gun into position by himself, immobilized the first tank with the first round and set the second on fire with three successive rounds. The men rallied behind deCharleroy, setting up a line of bazooka and rifle grenades that destroyed the immobilized tank and killed several of the crew members trying to escape from their burning coffins. On the same night Technical Sergeant Rudolph again took the lead in stopping an attacking tank, climbing the turret under the covering fire of two riflemen and dropping a WP grenade inside.

Dawn of the 6th found the 20th Infantry again storming Muñoz, but failing to make any gains despite the heaviest artillery preparation yet attempted by supporting units. Farther east, however, the stage was being set for an all-out assault on the town. The highway from the Agricultural School to San Jose was completely cleared of the enemy when the 1st Battalion of the 1st Infantry launched a surprise daybreak assault on the rear of the enemy elements opposing the northward advance of the 63d, killing 150 Nips and capturing or destroying many automatic weapons and field pieces. Meanwhile Companies L and K of the 63d had completed mopping up the Agricultural School area, killing 72 of the enemy and destroying 1 tank, 12 47mm guns and 16 machine guns.

The destruction of enemy personnel and equipment by the 1st Infantry along the San Jose road was spearheaded by the company under Captain Gerald W. Wiggins, whose personal direction of flame-thrower teams and supporting self-propelled mounts played a large part in the rout of the enemy forces. Private First Class Lloyd I. Moore played his part in the general destruction by working his way forward under continuous enemy fire to place demolition charges in four enemy positions, destroying all



of the emplacements and their personnel. Lieutenant Carl H. Parsiola led a five-man patrol to the reported position of several enemy tanks. After advancing across open ground to the positions, Private First Class Robert G. Farley and Private First Class Herman M. Wood knocked out one tank with a rocket launcher while Parsiola dropped a WP grenade in the turret of another and killed the escaping crew with his sub-machine gun. In the 63d area the advance had been aided by the team of Private First Class William L. Gabner and Private First Class Cecil L. Porter, who crawled forward 75 yards carrying their rocket launcher to destroy a strongly defended pillbox that had impeded the advance.

Plans for the morning of 7 February called for

a heavy Napalm (inflammable petroleum jelly) air strike on Muñoz, a rolling barrage from the massed guns of three artillery battalions and a renewed attack by both the 20th and 63d Infantry Regiments that was intended to destroy the remaining tanks and pillboxes in the town, but the Nips' decision to make a break for freedom saved the doughboys the trouble involved in charging entrenched tanks and field pieces. At 0330 the stillness that enveloped watchful guards and sleeping riflemen was rent by sudden shouts and the rumble of tank motors and tractors. Four tanks loomed out of the night before the perimeter of the 1st Battalion of the 20th, spitting machine-gun slugs and 47mm shells in a diversionary attack meant to cover the





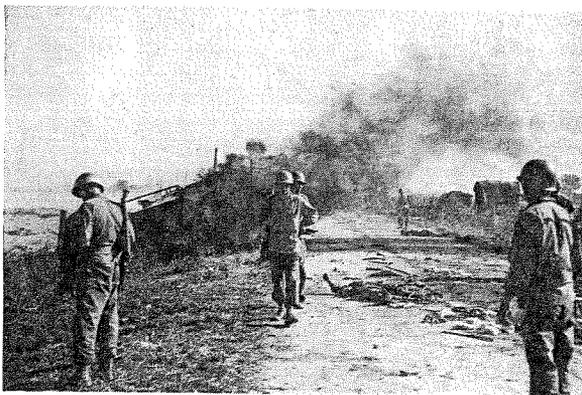
drive of the remainder of the tanks and weapons for the highway and San Jose. Infantrymen destroyed all four of the tanks, while supporting weapons knocked out three tanks and a 105mm howitzer only seventy-five yards in front of the 3d Battalion lines.

The balance of the enemy tanks, armored cars and assorted vehicles roared onto the highway and took off to the east under cover of darkness and the early morning fog for San Jose and the road to northern Luzon. As they neared the first 63d Infantry roadblock at the Agricultural School, a hail of 37mm and .50 caliber machine-gun fire was loosed at them, destroying two of the tanks. Farther along the road the 53d and 80th Field Artillery Battalions lowered their muzzles, made adjustments for Kentucky windage and fired point-blank against the advancing column. While the enemy vehicles and tank-riding infantry turned to attack the battery positions and were held off by perimeter guards and roadblocks, artillery shells knocked the turrets off

some tanks, tore through others, or sent armored cars and tractors turning end over end into the irrigation ditches that paralleled the road. Blazing vehicles illuminated the highway and the roar of exploding ammunition in the burning tanks almost drowned out the noise of the Sightseers' fire.

In the 20th Infantry's area, Technical Sergeant Leon D. Sexton and Private First Class Jim O. Tedder armed themselves with a rocket launcher while Staff Sergeant Wilbur C. Mages carried rifle grenades, the three men stalking enemy tanks half concealed in the early morning mists, destroying two and killing all of their crews. In the 63d area, Corporal Leslie G. Streible and Private First Class Mathew B. Jacobs stayed at their 37mm gun under the fire of a tank that swerved to overrun their position. They damaged the tank just before it demolished their gun, and the escaping tank crew was immediately killed.

Artillerymen of the 53d Field who played a large part in the early morning destruction included Technician Fourth Grade Byron E. Weston, Sergeant Henry E. Hammond, Sergeant George V. King and Sergeant David P. Brown. When their 105 was knocked out by a direct hit from enemy tanks, they took over an adjacent howitzer that had been temporarily abandoned because of the heavy fire on the position, drove off the attacking tanks and left two completely destroyed. Private First Class Tillman M. Goodman was acting gunner of a 105mm howitzer that was less than 200 yards from the column of enemy tanks on the highway. Ignoring the intense machine-gun and cannon fire that was raking his position, Goodman remained with the gun, searching for targets through the gun sight in the

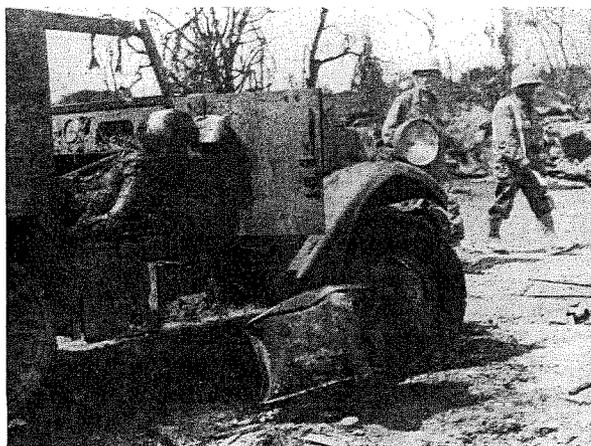


darkness and fog of early morning. Just as he picked up his first target, an enemy shell landed in the gun pit, killing him instantly.

In the 80th FA Battalion area, while 155mm gun crews were picking off enemy tanks and assorted vehicles, using unfuzed projectiles to protect the perimeter guards and gun crews only 10 to 100 yards from the tank targets, the roadblocks along the highway were using their rocket launchers and .50 caliber machine guns right under the guns of the approaching convoy. The 155mm howitzer crew under Lieutenant Henry Mohr and Sergeant Stanley Wood kept particularly busy throwing 23 rounds into the column, while perimeter guards manning the positions within only a few yards of the enemy tanks included Private George R. Alexander, Private First Class William J. Bain, Sergeant Robert R. Goetz, Private First Class Orrie G. Hoisington, Private First Class Lloyd R. Kelley, Corporal Anthony Kirtley and Private First Class Glenn J. Turner. A .50 caliber machine gun operated by Corporal Angelo Ramacci, Private First Class James W. E. Fraser, all of the 80th's Service Battery, was overrun by one of the medium tanks that swerved out of the column. Ramacci was killed and the gun was destroyed, but the remainder of the crew jumped to another position from which to fight the enemy attack. Captain Willis H. Bassett, Private First Class Stanley M. Chrislock and Private First Class Walter Keierleber were among those killed while coming to the aid of wounded comrades in the fire-swept battery area.

Daylight found the highway from Muñoz to Santo Tomas littered with smoking Jap tanks, trucks, prime movers and enemy dead. Exhilarated artillerymen clapped each other on the back, while the doughboys walked down the highway grinning at the burning wreckage or clambering up a battered hulk in search of uncharred souvenirs. The entire Jap column had been destroyed, including 10 medium tanks, 1 light tank, 10 2½-ton personnel carriers, 2 prime movers and 2 105mm guns. A total of 247 dead Nips was counted on the highway, and the number of additional enemy blown to bits could only be conjectured.

The 20th Infantry finished the job by pushing through Muñoz, destroying the one remaining tank and killing several snipers who had been left behind in the general exodus. By 1100 on 7 February not a wall or a tree or a Jap remained standing in Muñoz. The town contained only wood and tin debris,



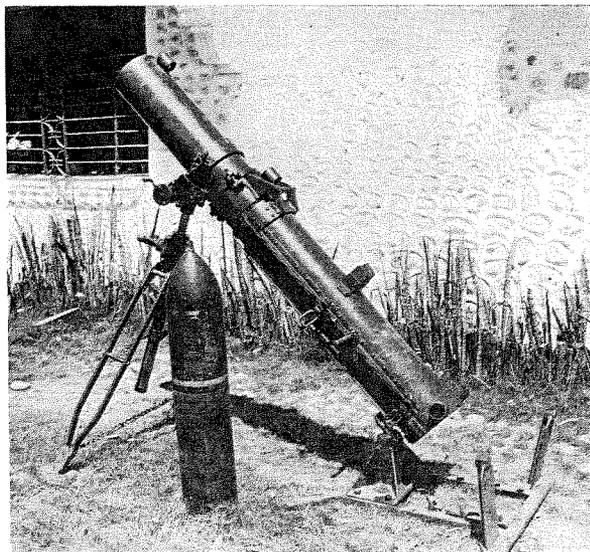


smoking tanks and charred bodies of enemy soldiers.

In the Muñoz-San Jose battle, the Sightseers had faced and destroyed the major part of the Jap 2d Armored Division, including the 6th Tank Regiment, an antitank battalion, 3d Tank Brigade Headquarters, 2d Mobile Artillery and an armored infantry battalion. They had stormed the fortress that the Nips had made of the little town of Muñoz, ad-

vancing in the face of withering fire from 47mm and machine guns emanating from tanks dug in so thoroughly that only part of their turrets was visible. Tanks and antitank guns had been mutually supporting, and each was in addition protected by numerous pillboxes and individual foxholes. Yet the doughboys assaulting the town and the artillerymen firing on the armor had destroyed 48 medium tanks, 4 light tanks, 4 armored cars, 2 tracked prime movers, 41 trucks, 4 105mm howitzers and 16 47mm AT guns. The strength of the units they had annihilated totalled 1,935, although only 1,527 Nip bodies could be found in a sufficiently whole state to be counted. Total casualties for the Red Star Division and attached units were 97 dead and 303 wounded, of which the 20th Infantry lost 54 killed and 152 wounded.

In addition to breaking the backbone of Jap armored might in Luzon and destroying the greatest concentration of enemy armored strength ever encountered in the Pacific, the wearers of the Red Star had denied to the enemy in southern Luzon his last route of escape to the north. The Sightseers had won the most decisive victory of the Luzon campaign.



CHAPTER 15

THE DRIVE TO THE EAST COAST

THERE was to be no rest for the weary Sightseers. On 7 February, while doughboys were still counting the tanks and bodies that lined the road from Muñoz to San Jose, the 1st Battalion of the 63d Infantry moved to an assembly area near Mabina, while the 1st Infantry, less one battalion still stationed at San Jose, displaced east of the Talavera River to an assembly area northwest of Rizal. The Red Star was now facing the Sierra Madre Mountains that bounded the entire east coast of Luzon and the men knew for the first time that theirs was to be the long job of cleaning out the mountain areas, digging the enemy out of his caves and tunnels, and chasing him over the rugged slopes.

The 1st Infantry set up strong patrols north of Rizal to block all routes of escape, while the 63d moved north from Pinagpanaan to capture Rizal, destroying or capturing large quantities of enemy equipment east of the Rizal Bridge and securing the high ground north and east of the town. The bulk of the 20th moved by truck to Bongabon, their advance screened by elements of the 6th Recon, and occupied the town without opposition. The Sykesmen's 2d Battalion moved into Division reserve at Pinagpanaan with the mission of securing the main supply route. During this period Div Arty had a chance to fire one of the classic fire problems which they had encountered frequently during training at Fort Leonard Wood and Fort Sill, but had never hoped to meet in the field. A 1st Field air observer spotted an enemy battalion of horse-drawn artillery trying to steal out of the area. Too far away for the 1st FA guns to engage, the enemy column was brought under fire by the 155s of the 80th Field and by the 760th FA Battalion, one of the Corps units attached to the Sightseers during the Muñoz battle. The barrage destroyed 9 Nips, 6 horses, 1 artillery piece and 2 caissons.

Reports from guerrillas and hill-dwelling civilians indicated the presence of unorganized groups of the enemy in the foothills east of Rizal, so extensive patrolling was conducted by all Red Star units to clean out the stragglers. For the bulk of the Division, however, the next few days were a breather. In Rizal, Bongabon and other towns the Sightseers spent the hours between patrols catching up on their sleep, widening their circle of acquaintances

among the attractive Filipinas, or enjoying the local beverages. CPs were set up in empty schoolhouses or market places, and for at least a few days some of the men enjoyed the luxury of a roof over their heads and a relatively clean cement floor or even a soft wood floor under their feet.

Two patrols were sent out on 10 February to reconnoiter the central Sierra Madre range. Company L of the 20th Infantry, reinforced by one platoon of the 6th Reconnaissance Troop, a detachment of the 6th Engineer Battalion and the Reconnaissance Platoon of the attached 775th Tank Battalion, set out for Dingalan Bay, while a strong foot patrol from Company E of the 63d Infantry moved across the mountains toward Baler Bay. The patrols were well armed and well supplied on their march through the enemy held range, and the men were prepared for any eventuality as they trucked or walked up

