

TIMES picked up 10 more men from the gliders, though in so doing his group became engaged at close range by enemy machine gun fire and had to get for cover. Wandering into CAUQUIGNY (Note: This was the first potential capture of the western approach to the LA FIEF crossing.) they picked up another 30 men from Company D, 507. At that time, TIMES heard firing from the direction of AMFREVILLE and decided that his own Battalion was probably attacking the village from the north (according to plan) and that he had best take his group and move against AMFREVILLE from the east to assist the mission.

By this time, it was daylight. TIMES figured it would be inviting trouble to move his group via the main road, so he veered a little to the north of the CAUQUIGNY church and started them cross-country. They deployed along a hedgerow and then went ahead along the lateral hedgerows and ditches. There were about 40 men. They moved on through the group of farm buildings to northwest of the church; there they ran into a group of about 30 men under LT LEVY of 507. TIMES organized the enlarged party for all-around protection and again started forward. He imagined that he would be moving in on the rear and flank of an enemy force already engaged along its own front, once he came to AMFREVILLE. On this assumption, he weighted both his flanks with the idea that it would give him some advantage in the attack. As the group started moving up the high ground just to the east of AMFREVILLE, they ran

into a platoon of Americans, mainly from 507: but the platoon was concerned with getting on to its own objective—a position along the northeast flank of the 82d's sector. It moved off at right angles to the line which TIMMES was taking: within a very few minutes thereafter he was beginning to find trouble. The Germans had taken up fire positions along the top of the high ground; apparently, there weren't very many of them, but some small arms fire from beyond the hedges on both flanks began to take slow toll of TIMMES' men. By the time TIMMES started to move into the village, he realized that his estimate of the situation had been entirely wrong. The enemy was not being engaged by any other Americans; the only firing from the village was being directed against him; and he felt that he was gradually losing control of his own force without doing any hurt to the Germans. The attack drew machine gun fire from out of the tops of some of the buildings; that simply spurred TIMMES' decision to withdraw and reorganize. He had lost 7 or 8 men, some of them killed. During the withdrawal, enemy fire again harassed his flanks; some of the Germans in AMFREVILLE had followed him out, and one machine gun made itself especially obnoxious, trailing the group by one hedgerow distance. By 0930 TIMMES had taken up a defensive position in an orchard next the marsh, somewhat less than a mile north of the CAUQUIGNY church. He put his men to work digging in and otherwise organizing the position. That morning they had abandoned a 57 AT gun in one of the gliders and

TIMMES intended to recover it if he could. But the position continued to draw some fire from outside its perimeter: in the morning, this was of desultory character and the group could have picked up and moved on had they chosen. In mid-afternoon of that day, TIMMES would have moved, but by that time it was too late.*

As for the advance of Company A, 505, against the LA FIERE position, there was nothing either accidental or casual about it. That was the Company's target; they went straight to it and were well fitted for the undertaking. The Company came into the same Drop Zone as the two Battalions which were to fight in STE MERE EGLISE; it became the first company to assemble that morning. All in all, that was perhaps the most remarkable assembly accomplished during OPERATION NEPTUNE, since, despite the darkness, all but two men were accounted for within one hour of the drop. They began gathering while on the move and the first sticks were already proceeding toward the objective when the last sticks hit the field. Perfect briefing followed by a perfect drop accounted for this phenomenon.**

They had proceeded to within 300 yards of the LA FIERE bridge

*This was TIMMES' statement. He spoke with regret of what he considered a lost opportunity.

**This is not the HO's opinion but the statement of the men. Company A material was obtained at a Company critique with all surviving officers and NCOs present.

and were at the road junction just to east of it when they
crew sniper fire from their left flank and within a few
seconds bumped into a front of machine gun fire covering the
houses at MANOIR DE LA FIERE. They believed that they were
the first Americans on the scene. LT GEORGE W. PRESNELL led
one squad far over to the right almost to the bank of the
river, then tried to move by the left flank against the build-
ings; the group got past the first band of fire and was mov-
ing in behind the first enemy gun position when it came under
fire from a second machine gun positioned near the bridge;
PRESNELL grenaded the first gun and thought he knocked it
out; then the squad had to withdraw.

While these things were happening to Company A, 505, the
LINDQUIST group, including WISNER'S party, were coming toward
LA FIERE down the east bank of the River. GEN GAVIN and his
force were still on the west shore or finding their way across
the marsh. It had been reported to GAVIN that LINDQUIST'S
column was moving down the railroad and he (GAVIN) was about
ready to take off along the same route when two gliders landed
on the west shore about 400 yards from GAVIN'S position. Up
till then, the GAVIN party had managed to retrieve only one
bazooka and a few rounds of ammunition; all other heavy equip-
ment, including radios, had been lost in the marsh. The glider
landing therefore seemed like a gift from above; with luck,
one of the gliders might even contain a 57 AT gun; so the move

south was postponed and a patrol was sent to reconnoiter the glider. The patrol's leader, LT GRAHAM, returned in about 30 minutes; he needed 25-30 additional men; one glider contained a 57 gun and the other a jeep; they had landed in a marsh, and added to the normal difficulties of the situation, the enemy was putting small arms fire on the marsh. (Note by HO: From examination of the ground, it seems probable that the orchard where GAVIN had landed is the same one where TIMES force became held.) The patrol left on its mission but GRAHAM was back within the hour; he said that the men couldn't budge the equipment and the enemy fire was building up steadily. This time GAVIN accompanied him to the marsh. He found that the men had gone to ground in old German positions where they were under such grazing fire that the primary difficulty was to get them out of their holes and working. He went back to the position along the marsh shore after giving MALONEY instructions to either get the men on their task at once or give it up. MALONEY tried, but no good came of it. The men couldn't manhandle the heavy equipment out of the bog; even after they had braved the fire and got the first part of the detail accomplished, the jeep sank from its own weight into the mud; in the end they had to destroy both jeep and gun; they were lucky to get out, such was the build-up of the German fire.

by that time it was broad daylight—0600 or 0630. GAVIN now

felt that he had no choice in the matter. The evidence of enemy strength to west of the river was such that he believed it was impossible to move down the west shore and go at the Bridge from the western approach; the risk of crossing the marsh in daylight seemed the lesser; so the column moved across the marsh to the railroad embankment, where it turned south and followed the rails to LA FIERE. It was GAVIN'S idea that his force would pick up all that could be found of 508, contact whatever elements of 505 were at LA FIERE, and attack the causeway from the east.

The enemy did not crowd them as they waded out into the water; they crossed to the east shore without any additional trouble.*

*The varying operational parts of this chapter come from the GAVIN interview, the first and second LINDQUIST interviews, the TIMMES interview, the 507th narrative (prepared with the help of LT WISNER) and the AMES interview, in addition to the Company A critique, previously mentioned.

THE MORNING FIGHT

Although the LA FIERE bridgehead was the Number 2 objective, it was surprising in view of the bad circumstances of the drop how many parties went after the bridge at MANCIR DE LA FIERE that morning. Or again the very circumstances of the drop may have reacted in that direction. Far more sticks were dropped in the vicinity of LA FIERE than had been intended, and those which did so, knowing how badly they themselves had fared, were under the additional pressure of worry lest the forces committed to LA FIERE had been dropped no less far from the assigned objective.

Where so many were drawn to the objective from various directions, where so few were present to defend it, the effectiveness of the resistance which kept the east end of the Causeway in German hands for almost seven hours after the arrival of overwhelming American forces cannot be explained in terms alone of a determined effort by a few die-hard individuals. In the nature of the circumstances, the Americans came to the contest piecemeal, and each element, apart from Company A, 505, was more or less probing its way into an uncertain situation. There was never a time when the American side knew its own strength; this, and the piecemeal character of the approach, gave the enemy a chance to deal with the onset in detail.

Battalion, 505, had been given the assignment, and

Company A, being ready, proceeded to the objective. It did so by the shortest route and without any extensive reconnaissance of the general position. Had such been undertaken that morning, Company A would have been surprised to learn that part of the American force had beaten it to the objective and already had LA FIERE under attack. A group of about 45 men, mainly from 507, had collected that morning on the east shore of the MERDERET just north of the LA FIERE Causeway. CAPT F. V. SCHWARTZWALDER had assembled them on the railway track. Possibly an hour before GAVIN came across the marsh with the body of the regiment (there were about 300 men of 507 with GAVIN finally, the greater number having been assembled by CAPT JAMES A. DICKERSON in the marsh to east of GOURBESVILLE) SCHWARTZWALDER'S party began to advance against MANOIR DE LA FIERE. They moved only a little distance along the southern side of the "Y" formed by the two highways and were then brought in check by the fire of a heavy machine gun. LT JOHN W. MARR, who was leading the point about 150 yards in advance of the Company, looked back and saw that the Company had stopped. He decided to try to take the gun out by moving far over to the left so that he came at the MANOIR from the south. His group got down to the first hedgerow next the river, then fire broke around them from a number of positions in or around the buildings at the MANOIR; MARR decided that the place was too hot and he led the point back to the Company; as he withdrew, the German gun which had opened the skirmish

displaced forward, hedgerow by hedgerow; its fire began to beat around SCHWARTZWALDER and the men and he ordered them to attack forward along the hedgerows. The gun withdrew over the same line along which it had advanced; the Company accomplished nothing except the killing of one sniper; but by this route the Company got up to the ground which the point had held for a few minutes before it, too, was forced to check.

They had made an approach which was to figure with ever-increasing emphasis in the story of the MERDERET bridgehead and at that moment, it was probably the key to the situation.

For it seemed to MARR, as he watched, that some of the enemy fire was being directed toward the opposite flank, though he had no way of knowing that this was because Company A, 505, was attacking from the other side. SCHWARTZWALDER told MARR to take his men and attempt to move forward along the hedgerow and get to a stone wall flanking the farm road which led into the bridge. MARR started across the field with four men; two of them were shot through the legs by a machine gun firing at 10 yards range as they closed on the hedgerow. They went flat. PFC 5 ESCOBAR, one of the wounded men, opened fire on the German gun with his tommy gun; he was firing wild; a German rose out of the position with his arm cocked to heave a potato masher; CPL LAWTON drilled him with his carbine; the German didn't die and he stood there, struggling to get the grenade away; LAWTON and PVT PARLETTO threw grenades right together;

that blew up the gun position and two Germans with it; by this time machine pistol fire was raising hell against the hedgerow where the five men lay; LAWTON, who was still looking for trouble although he was bleeding badly from two wounds, shot a German officer who was casually regarding the scene through binoculars from behind the bridge; after that, MARR decided that LAWTON was losing too much blood, and he carried him back, with the rest of the point following. The Company was several hedgerows to the rear, and what had been going on along the right flank (where Company A, 505, had engaged) all of this time, they knew nothing at all about. If a psychological moment had passed, at least none present were in position to recognize it.

Such tactical mishaps as occurred might be incomprehensible unless the development of situation is examined in the light of the extreme difficulties of ground. The area around MANOIR DE LA FIERE was strongly compartmented with high, box-like hedgerows which for the most part were over-run with blackberry and other thorn so that both observation and the opportunity for penetration were critically limited. The ground itself, considering the position from flank to flank, was most irregular. From the railway line westward, it rolls gently for a few hundred yards, then falls off sharply to the MERDERET: that is true of the triangle of land bounded by the railway and the highways leading into MANOIR DE LA FIERE; it is true of

the ground bordering both sides of the main road leading down to the River.

But the ground to the immediate south and east of the MANOIR buildings—a terrain that is partly pasture, partly orchard and partly truck garden—is extremely irregular. The side road cutting in through the MANOIR and used principally for the servicing of that establishment is bounded on the north by several large knolls, criss-crossed by hedgerows, and on the south by a series of rather large mounds, shaped not unlike the Indian "kitchen middens" of the United States. It was through these small hillocks and their surrounding hedges that SCHWARTZWALDER made the first bid of the morning to seize the eastern end of the Causeway.

The hills were thus a mass imposed between the two flanks of any force attempting to envelop the MANOIR position. The extreme height of the MANOIR buildings compounded this difficulty. They are not average French farm buildings, but are massive stone-walled affairs, averaging about four stories in height, both the houses and the barns. Moreover, where the buildings are not directly joined, they have connecting stone walls, higher than a man. The effect is like fighting on both sides of a block of apartments, where the latter are of such stout construction and fitted with such convenient works that mortar fire will hardly scar the walls. None of a very large force, perfectly joined in the first place,

could bring off an envelopment of MANOIR DE LA FIERE from the eastward, without risking the probability of a divorce of the two flanks. And of course those conditions were not present that morning.

For the time being, SCHWARTZWALDER practically gave over the attack on the left though DOLAN persisted on the right. GAVIN got there before LINDQUIST'S people had joined the battle. He knew nothing about SCHWARTZWALDER'S force or what the left had found. Briefly, he talked to MAJ KELLAM, commanding First Battalion, 505, who told him that Company A's point had gotten down almost to the bridge. He said that he was lightly opposed and that he expected to have the position within the hour. It was a correct premise but was reasoned to an incorrect conclusion.* GAVIN then decided that his own duty was to move south as quickly as possible; he had not seen LINDQUIST who was then deploying his own force to southeast of the MANOIR position without yet coming in contact with the enemy; but inasmuch as the LA FIERE bridgehead seemed to be coming under control, the situation at CHEF DU PONT became of foremost concern in the mind of the General; what was happening there and around Hill 30, where 508 was supposed to concentrate, was still unknown; but the fact that LINDQUIST'S party from 508 had been dropped so far north made it the less likely that there had been an effective concentration around Hill 30

*The data on German strength is to be found further along in the narrative.

which could clinch control of the lower bridgehead.

As a good part of LINDQUIST'S present force (mainly the men from 508) were already moving through the fields and along the hedges west of the railway in an attempt to round out the friendly line and effect an envelopment of the MANCIR position, the men from 507 who had been with GAVIN seemed most available for the southern task. But this group, under OSTBERG and MALONEY had already begun to swing toward the bridge position while GAVIN was talking with KELLAM, and it was with considerable difficulty that they were again brought under control and headed south toward CHEF DU PONT.

LINDQUIST, on getting to the ground and finding that Company A was already attacking, had tried, quite unsuccessfully, to find LT JOHN J. DOLAN, the Commander of Company A. During his search someone from Company A had told him (the statement was not strictly accurate) that Company A was moving forward on the right side of the main road; LINDQUIST therefore decided to advance his own force along the left of the main road. The body was still in march column, though it had left the road and was moving next the hedgerows, when it reached the fork several hundred yards east of the bridge. At that point the leading elements came under machine gun fire from the vicinity of the bridge; LINDQUIST looked over the foreground and decided that the field of fire was so clear to the defending weapons that further advance in that direction was prohibited;

he pulled the head of the column back about 100 yards or more to where the ground afforded protection and proceeded to organize the Battalion in column of companies. He then side-slipped the whole column leftward (south) several hundred yards so that his attack would go against the MANOIR from south of the local road which wound down through the farm buildings. His men thus deployed in the area of the mounds, where a multiplicity of hedgerows, in combination with the extreme irregularity of the ground, gave them advantageous cover for getting forward in small skirmishing parties.

But these movements, made without Company A becoming aware of them, had the effect of divorcing LINDQUIST'S force morally and physically during the next few critical hours from the undertakings on the right flank. Although only about 300 yards of compartmented fields separated the two commands, the right flank fought on through the morning without ever getting a sense that it was helped or supported. Most of the men did not know that there were other friendly forces working on the MANOIR.*

LINDQUIST was senior on the ground but never took command of Company A or of the general bridgehead operation. KELLAM, the responsible commander of the Battalion initially assigned the mission (most of the other elements of the Battalion had been

At the critique the statement of all concerned was clear and unequivocal on this point.

scattered and had not yet come up) had estimated the situation and reported it to GAVIN; then GAVIN had gone to CHEF DU POINT; no instruction had come to LINDQUIST to take the operation over. It was considerably later in the morning when GEN RIDGWAY came to LA FIERE from his CP near STE MERE EGLISE and gave LINDQUIST a positive instruction to clear up the situation-- which he proceeded to do.

In the intervening hours the advance of LINDQUIST'S men on the left had been slow, steady and uneventful; they had been harassed by a few snipers and an occasional burst of automatic fire, and by exercise of caution had kept down their losses. But over on the right, a great deal had happened to Company A. After PRESNELL'S patrol had withdrawn from the advanced ground on the right near the bridge, DOLAN tried for a time to soften up the enemy fire positions by liberal use of his 60 mm mortars; he thought that the effort had been somewhat successful. He then followed up with a plan of attack aimed at a general envelopment.

One patrol was sent far over to the right; it was told to get to the River and then move south along the embankment with the object of penetrating the enemy defenses from that flank, or at least of punching toward them and keeping them occupied: in the end this patrol could not make a near approach and it accomplished very little. A second patrol under 2ND LT WILLIAM OAKLEY was sent far over to the left to get to the embankment

south of the MANOIR with the same general purpose in mind: it is revealing of DOLAN'S state of information on the general situation that in so assigning his second patrol, he was in effect sending it around 508's flank and employing it as if no one else was present.

Company A's center was then sent forward across the ground flanking the main road—the ground which, after survey, LINDQUIST had considered was too well interdicted by automatic fire. LT DONALD G. COXON, leading the platoon in the center, was told by DOLAN to get his scouts out during the approach; the ground and hedges around them were already being beaten by intense fire from machine guns and machine pistols. COXON said: "Well sir, if I must send someone out, I'll go myself." So he crawled forward along the hedge, taking the first scout with him. They got about 100 yards. A bullet killed the scout; another bullet wounded COXON; he was pretty hard hit and he started coming back; while he was moving along another bullet hit him in the stomach; after that, he bled to death.

2ND LT ROBERT E. MC LAUGHLIN took over the platoon. His radio operator, CPL FRANK BUSA, moved on forward and was hit by a sniper's bullet. MC LAUGHLIN thought he was alive and went out to get him; before MC LAUGHLIN could make it, he himself was hit in the upper leg; the bullet went through the lower part of his stomach and came out of his buttocks. DOLAN and MAJ ROBERT E. MC GINITY, Battalion Executive, were observing from

the same hedgerow from which MC LAUGHLIN had crawled forward. A sniper's bullet hit MC GINITY and killed him; DOLAN located the sniper and killed him with a tommy gun. DOLAN then crawled on forward and dressed MC LAUGHLIN'S wounds; after that, he crawled back to the hedgerow; it began to rain softly; DOLAN crawled up to MC LAUGHLIN to cover him with a raincoat; MC LAUGHLIN was dead.

The enemy automatic fire had increased steadily during this time. However, Company A's position was such that it could not make suitable return. DOLAN was worrying about the two patrols moving in from the flanks and feared that he might shoot his own men. Already, about 10 men were dead and 20 wounded in the Company line. The hour was between 1000 and 1030. A few more men from 507 were coming into the area and were placed on the defensive line along the River to north of the area where DOLAN was attacking; a large number of 507 men under CAPT DICKERSON were already in line there. But of this increased strength, DOLAN could feel very little. He knew mainly that his own men were stopped for the time being.

It was about 1100 when word of Company A's trouble and of MAJ MC GINITY'S death reached LINDQUIST. This was after he had talked with GEN RIDGWAY. In his sweep around to the left, he had contacted and swallowed SCHWARTZWALDER'S force. He now sent for SCHWARTZWALDER and said: "I've got a mission for you." The plan he outlined was no novelty: SCHWARTZWALDER was to

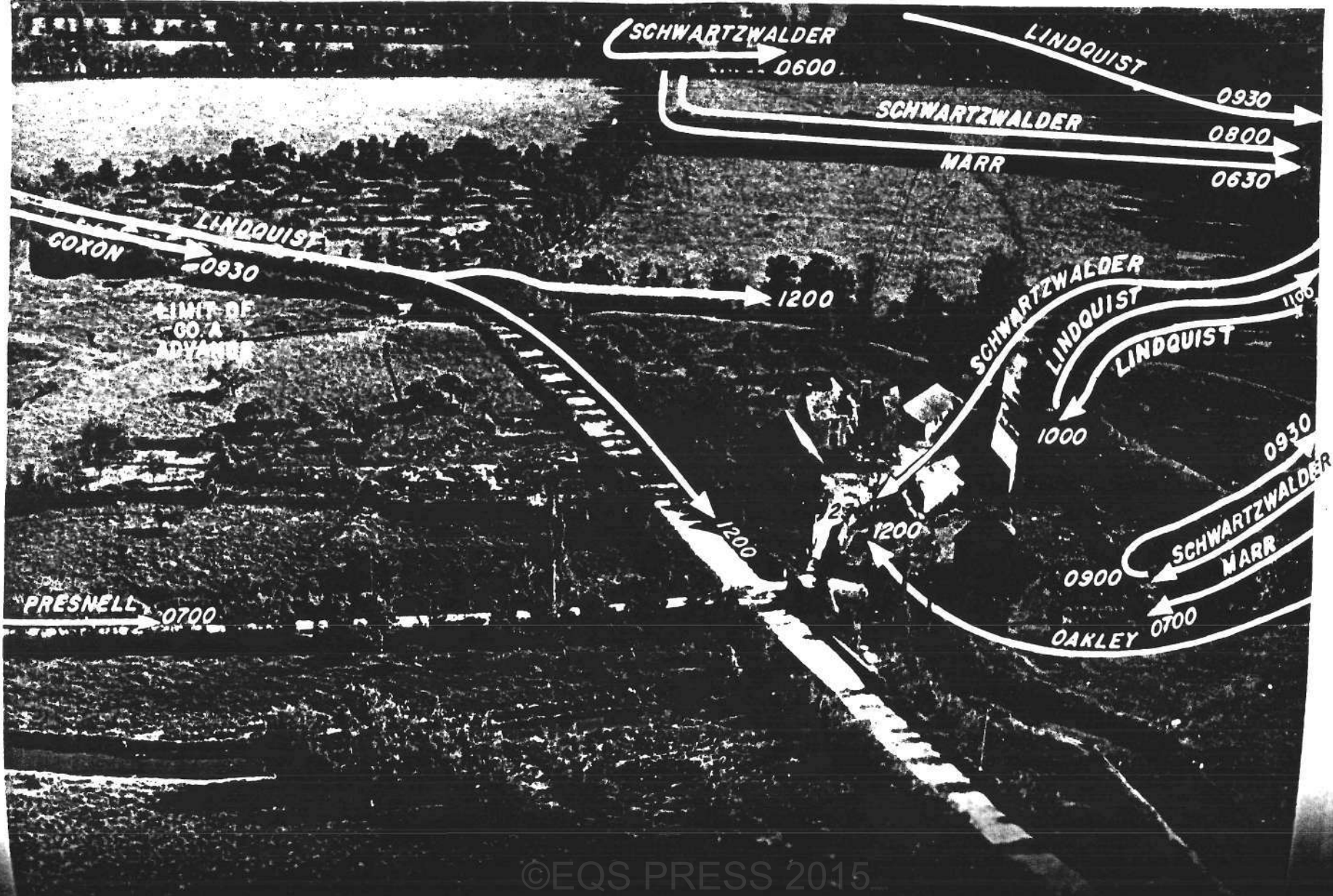
attack the MANOIR from the south over exactly the same route he had gone early that morning. LINDQUIST then sent an officer to tell DOLAN that at 1200, the two forces would advance on both sides of the main road, with Company A, 505, sweeping along the right, and Company B, 508, keeping pace with it through the fields to the left. When the noon hour came, LINDQUIST saw no signs of movement on the right and heard nothing from DOLAN. He tried to contact the right, then failing, he told his own men to go ahead. Their progress was almost uninterrupted; the enemy had had enough. During the search of the buildings at the MANOIR, the 508 force killed 6 Germans, wounded about the same number and captured 9 or 10. The losses among 508 were two wounded and one killed; the Germans put up a white flag and as one of LINDQUIST'S men stepped into the open to receive the surrender, he was shot dead.

The final footnote to the engagement was that LT OAKLEY'S patrol from Company A, which had swung out and around LINDQUIST'S force, reached the appointed ground in time to clean up the left, or at least to soften it to a point where, when SCHWARTZWALDER came through, he had clear sailing.

The patrol slipped smoothly down to the River embankment, moving toward the MERDERET along the third hedgerow south of the MANOIR. The enemy did not see them until they had moved up to the first hedgerow, which was almost on top of the German

position. Machine gun and machine pistol fire then came against them but they were snug against the hedgerow embankment and no one was hit. OAKLEY and SGT OSCAR L. QUEEN, using rifles, eliminated one German with a machine pistol and two riflemen.

Then the patrol ran for the cover of the stone wall which runs from the southernmost barn of the MANOIR almost to the bridge, thus covering the side road along its south facing. (This wall greatly influences the tactical situation during succeeding operations at the bridgehead.) They made it without hurt and opened fire on an enemy machine gun to north of the main road. (This gun was in position to operate against the American right flank.) The others covered while QUEEN crossed the side road, running as low as he could. As QUEEN ducked through a gate in the stone wall opposite, a grenade exploded about five feet away and stunned him slightly. He heard someone behind him firing a .45. A figure moved in the branches of a tree near where he lay; with his carbine, QUEEN shot a man out of the tree. Then he ran back across the road. He found that CAPT DALE ROYDEN had done the pistol shooting: ROYDEN had seen someone in the house throwing grenades at QUEEN. The patrol sent back for a machine gun. When the gun got there, they put it in action at the lower end of the stone wall, firing at the German gun on the other side of the main road. The position was strengthened and the situation further



cleared a short time later by the arrival on the far left flank of the force from Company G, 507.

SCHWARTZWALDER advanced his men to this ground almost in a romp. There was still a little automatic fire over the front, but the final surrender to LINDQUIST'S force was fast approaching. About 4 or 5 men were lightly wounded in moving the Company up to the stone wall. They had to stop there. 2ND LTS JOHN G. DARLING and EDWARD KEEHAN, on taking the advance party as far as the bridge, had been turned back by mortar fire coming from the American right flank.

But enemy resistance had died around the MANOIR and SCHWARTZWALDER was straining to get to the other side of the Causeway.

LEVY'S PATROL

TIMES hadn't forgotten the LA FIERE bridge and bridgehead. It was about mid-morning when he called LT LEVY and told him to take 10 men, move southward, capture the ground around the church and establish a fire position which would dominate the Causeway from the western end. The order thus loosely given became one link in a chain of events which resulted in one of the bravest episodes of the MERDERET battle. It was the supreme irony of the day that this same heroism came of an episode which thwarted GEN GAVIN of his main chance for a quick victory. The LEVY group moved out equipped with rifles, grenades, one tommy gun, one BAR and a rifle equipped with anti-tank grenades.

Halfway to the church, LEVY ran into LT JOSEPH KORMYLO of Company D and about 20 men, including a crew with a light machine gun. KORMYLO had already seen the bridge; in fact, he had seen quite a lot of the countryside that morning. He had dropped into a field covered by enemy fire near the GREY CASTLE, and after working his way cautiously out of that hot spot, he had traveled south, collecting men as he went along. The first were glider men and anti-tank men; finally he found a machine gun crew and some riflemen from his own unit. The group steered clear of farmhouses as it moved along; on coming to the group of farmhouses northwest of the church at CAU-
BERRY, KORMYLO figured that he had better set up a defensive

position and wait the time that he could attach himself to some larger group. They set up among the buildings and established a perimeter defense; they were still there when LEVY came along. KORMYLO briefed him on the situation. He had already set up his machine gun near the marsh line so that it covered the bridge and Causeway, though in so doing he had worked blind. Initially the gun had been pointed in that direction because they could hear firing from there. KORMYLO then routed a Frenchman out of one of the houses, and after checking through his phrase sheet, he asked: "Le Pont?" and pointed to the south. The Frenchman led him to where he could see the bridge across the marsh; also, he could see the church and he knew from these things that his guess with the gun had been a good one. It was deeply in his mind that the Bridge was the secondary mission of the Division and he figured that he had better collect his gang and get on down there; but it was just at this moment that LEVY and his group came along.*

LEVY and KORMYLO discussed the situation briefly, and in the face of the facts that KORMYLO was impressed with the importance of the objective and neither officer knew the state of things at the Bridge, it was decided to send all of KORMYLO'S men except the machine gun crew to TIMES' position in the orchard. In this decision, their awareness that TIMES had

*From KORMYLO.

seen fit to send only 10 men to the bridge doubtless played a large part. Since LEVY was senior, KORMYLO incorporated his men into the group and they started south. LEVY told KORMYLO that they would get to the church as quickly as possible; their numbers considered, LEVY felt that occupation of the ground around the church was the strongest move the group could make. The hour was about 1130 when the movement got underway; KORMYLO did not expect any real trouble. He had moved up and down the west bank quite openly prior to LEVY'S coming and had drawn no fire. During this time, he had heard firing on the east bank, but it was a ragged and irregular fire and he did not get the impression that any important action was taking place.

The group moved down to the first hedgerow confronting the HERDERET along the western bank, then walked along it toward their objective. The first lap was easy. As they started through the second hedgerow short of the church, they drew sniper fire. It seemed to be coming from eastward of them, as if from enemy fire positions in the lowland along the swamp. (It is quite possible this was American fire from the west bank.) They went low along the hedgerows, trying both for protection and to keep their presence hid. But the fire built up in volume as they went along until it prohibited passage. At the last hedgerow north of the church LEVY called a halt. To go ahead on that line meant that the patrol would

have to move in the open. He led them back along the north-running hedgerow, then moved west and south, taking advantage of the embankment cover, and finally brought them into the church along a lane paralleling the main road. The passage was unopposed; it was exactly noon when the patrol took the church over. After setting up a fire position, the men broke out their rations. A Frenchman came over and served them milk and cider. The machine gun was set up so that it had a field of fire ranging along the western bank north of the bridge. This seemed the best use to make of it; the patrol did not sense at this time that there were other friendly forces close at hand along the western shore, though looking beyond the far end of the Causeway they could see a 57 gun on the high ground beyond the LA FIERE buildings—the only indication of the position of the Americans attacking the bridge from the east.

As LEVY completed his defensive arrangements, two 508th officers and about 40 men came into the church from south of the main road. This group had assembled on the western side of the MERDERET. The newcomers agreed with LEVY that the position was of prime importance and after joining forces with him, they set up a defensive position covering the road fork near the church and the ground lying south of it. The 508th party had a bazooka; a road block, covering to the west, was set up near the church. LEVY sent a runner back to TIMMES

with the message that he had secured the bridgehead.

While these arrangements went forward, KORMYLO noticed a sudden pickup of activity along the east bank. Mortar fire was hitting heavily into the LA FIERE buildings and the small arms fire was making a swift crescendo. Men could be seen moving rapidly along the hedgerows toward the Causeway. Knowing that friendly forces were engaging on the far side, KORMYLO and LEVY sent word up and down the line to hold fire; but despite their restraining efforts, a number of the riflemen kept banging away in the general direction of the MANOIR DE LA FIERE buildings.

LEVY walked out onto the road and looked through his field glasses eastward along the Causeway.

"KORMYLO," he yelled, "Damn it! That's a paratrooper coming across the bridge."

KORMYLO threw an orange smoke grenade out into the middle of the road. Immediately there came back an answering wave of an orange flag from the other side of the River.

These were small acts, and in themselves, they were perfectly correct. They seemed to signal that the Causeway fight was over and the 82d Division had won the MERDERET bridgehead at slight cost. Yet of them came much trouble.*

*KORMYLO. His statements were all supported by other members of the patrol.

THE FIRST CROSSING

On the east bank the ball had been passed to CAPT SCHWARTZWALDER'S Company—the same commander who had happened to be present that morning when GEN RIDGWAY said to COL LINDQUIST: "I want that bridge taken!*"—the same company which had found the soft spot along the right flank of the German defenses east of the bridge. With SCHWARTZWALDER as the noon hour came and passed, there were about 80 men. LINDQUIST in going to the north flank of the position had taken most of SCHWARTZWALDER'S own men: there remained about 12 men from Company G and the others were mainly from other companies of the same battalion.

The time was about 1330. GEN GAVIN was away on his personal reconnaissance of the situation at CHEF DU PONT. SCHWARTZWALDER'S force was practically non-engaged and over on the right the situation had quieted. From across the river around the CAUQUIGNY church there had come no sign that Americans were present. These were the general circumstances when the order came that SCHWARTZWALDER was to take his men on across. SCHWARTZWALDER told LT MARR to lead out with the point. MARR already knew something of the situation into which he would be moving; a captured German NCO had told him that there were occupied fire pits strung out along the Causeway. MARR looked

"This was SCHWARTZWALDER'S recollection of the order. According to LINDQUIST, RIDGWAY said: "I want this area cleared of all Germans and the bridgehead secured."

at his watch as the lead scout, PVT JAMES L. MATTINGLY, stepped off; it was 1345.

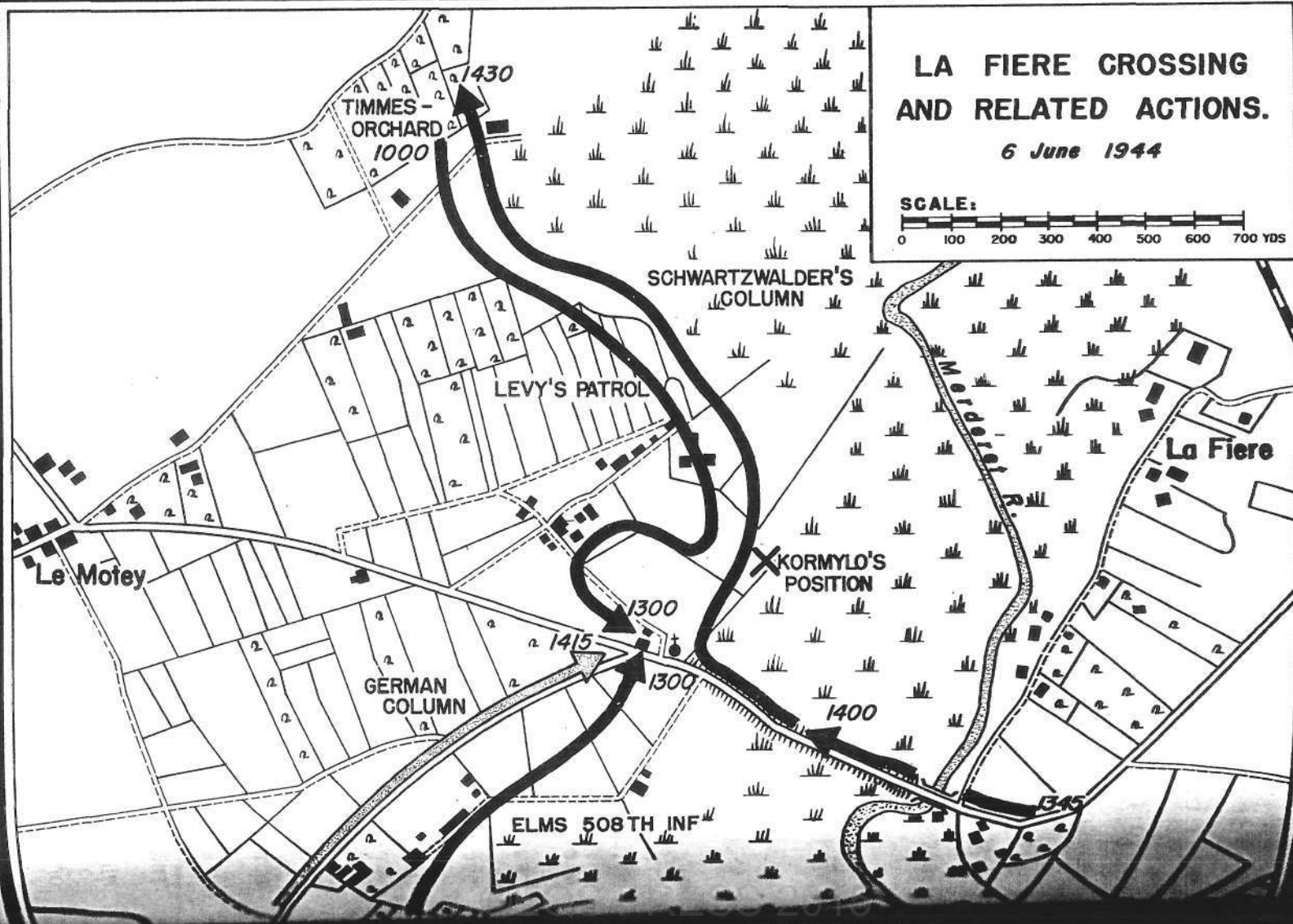
Walking erect, right along the top of the embankment, MATTINGLY got 100 yards west of the bridge without a shot being fired; then an enemy rifleman in a machine gun emplacement on the north side of the Causeway blazed away at him. MATTINGLY emptied his rifle into the position as fast as he could pull the trigger, then went flat and threw a grenade. It hit fair on the target, killing one man and wounding another. From the same emplacement, two other Germans jumped up with their hands in air. Then five Germans who had been in foxholes right next to MATTINGLY rose up in surrender. He had no choice but to take them in because his own rifle was empty. So he waved them on back toward the Company. The Americans behind MATTINGLY saw this action clearly, noticed its boldness and were greatly encouraged by it; they felt that the resistance was crumbling. They also saw that both of the German groups had quitted machine guns—MG-42s—with which they could have covered the embankments on both sides. Only one man was shot crossing the Causeway; he got a bullet in his buttocks from a sniper firing from the marsh somewhere south of the Causeway. MATTINGLY continued to lead the advance. Behind him came PVT JOHNNIE K. WARD, the second scout, and behind WARD came MARR.

As they moved along, they thought they saw a few Americans on

LA FIERE CROSSING AND RELATED ACTIONS.

6 June 1944

SCALE:



the west bank. SCHWARTZWALDER told one of his men to break out an orange flag; as he did so, he saw an orange flare light up in the roadway next the church. LT WISNER, who was observing from off on the flank of the MANOIR position along the east shore, saw the same flare—the orange smoke grenade thrown by KORMYLO. To WISNER, it indicated that SCHWARTZWALDER'S forces had reached the west bank and he realized that the move should be supported. He reported the matter to CAPT DICKERSON of 507 who replied: "Yes, we intend to cross at once." WISNER relaxed, figuring that the situation was at last coming well under control. But the circumstances had set up an entirely different train of thought in SCHWARTZWALDER'S mind; he had expected to meet stern resistance and instead he had beaten down the resistance swiftly and had then received the friendly signal from what he had supposed was a hostile quarter. It filled him with optimism and he went forward thinking that the Americans were solidly in possession of the west bank and that his tour de force had been scarcely needed. The impression was deepened when LEVY and KORMYLO came forward along the western end of the Causeway to meet MARR. There was a little sniper fire coming from the marshes to south of the Causeway. After the meeting, LEVY continued on to the east bank where he talked to a field officer and assured him, as he had assured SCHWARTZWALDER, that he had the west bank under control. LEVY was back in about 15 minutes; he told KORMYLO that he had a promise that a Battalion of 505th

was on its way to take the bridgehead over.*

In the few minutes before LEVY'S return, SCHWARTZWALDER and his men moved in beside the churchyard and deployed along the hedgerow which faced the MERDERET. The point, under MARR, steadied at the northern end of this hedgerow. It was thus that LEVY found them when he got back to his own men. They had not moved westward as if to protect the bridgehead from enemy pressure from that side, but were already pointed as if they intended moving north. LEVY and SCHWARTZWALDER talked over the situation. SCHWARTZWALDER figured that the bridge was already "captured" and he had it firmly in his mind that he ought to be on his way to AMFREVILLE—his original objective. LEVY made no objection. But he felt that since TIMMES had sent him to outpost the bridge, he had better stick there. However, he told SCHWARTZWALDER about the situation of TIMMES' group, and when a very few minutes later SCHWARTZWALDER started moving north along the hedgerow, he had already decided that he would go to AMFREVILLE via the orchard where TIMMES was in difficulty. Further weakening the bridgehead, most of the men of 508th who had been standing by LEVY picked up and

*SCHWARTZWALDER'S reactions are set down as he reported them to the HO. At the time of the interview, he had no idea of the full consequences of his action at the Bridge and his testimony was given fully and freely. WISNER was the witness as to how DICKERSON happened to make his move. KORMYLO told of LEVY'S course of action. MARR and MATTINGLY told about the crossing. GAVIN'S check on his own schedule placed him at CHAT DU PONT.

went with SCHWARTZWALDER; in fact, only two 508 officers and 8 enlisted men remained behind in the immediate vicinity of the church. The others figured that the show was over at this point; so they moved on, looking for another fight.

The tag-end files of SCHWARTZWALDER'S column had scarcely disappeared beyond the first hedgerow when KORMYLO'S attention was drawn in the opposite direction. At first he could hear only rifle fire, as if at a considerable distance; it was joined very quickly by the steady rat-tat-tat of machine gun fire though he could not be sure that these were German guns. Then rather indistinctly he could hear tanks coming toward him and he knew that these rumblings were from west of the River.

Suddenly, opposite him, a German ambulance bobbed out of the trail which ran south along the River and turned west into the road leading to AMFREVILLE. The ambulance stopped for a second; a German waved a Red Cross flag from the door. Before anyone thought to do anything, the ambulance was on its way again and speeding down the road; but the German had had time to see that there were Americans on the west bank of the MERDET and covering the bridge.

Within three minutes, a shell landed on the intersection west of the Causeway and was followed after an interval by four or five others. The shells then searched northward along the

River hedgerow, and SCHWARTZWALDER, feeling them singeing his tail but not knowing the full inferences of the build-up, urged his men to move along faster. They went on the double until they got to the sixth hedgerow north of the church. Still, some of the men must have guessed what was happening behind them. Days later, MARR remembered that during a momentary pause in the shooting, he had heard the men passing around the word: "Tanks!" He scarcely believed it at the time.

SCHWARTZWALDER pressed on; he wanted to talk to TIMMES and find out if he needed help; and he also wanted TIMMES' advice about whether he should strike for AMFREVILLE. So thinking, he unwittingly led his own men into ground where a force equal to their own had remained immobile for hours because of fire from north and west of them. Thereby they were wasted; joining TIMMES, SCHWARTZWALDER and his men contrived only to share their immobility during the next 48 hours.

Back at the church, LEVY, KORMYLO, the two 508 officers and 8 enlisted men* built up a line inside the hedgerow and paralleling the main road. The bazooka had departed with the group which moved north to the orchard. The machine gun was so placed that it covered a line running across the rear of the church. The riflemen were spread out at intervals of

*There were a few other men from 508 to south of the road though LEVY'S men did not know it at the time.

10 to 15 yards, the officers taking their place in line as riflemen.

These things done, they looked to the south and westward and awaited the enemy.

THE ONE-SQUAD STAND

But LEVY couldn't stay quiet. He told KORMYLO and an unidentified private (He was a stranger to LEVY and KORMYLO, and because he became KIA during the afternoon and was lost to the detail, KORMYLO never learned his name) to follow him and then he moved out along the hedgerow extending to their own right flank. A very narrow sunken lane cuts through into the side road at a right angle behind the church. LEVY made for the spot where the hedgerow bounding the main road and the hedgerow bounding the lane came together—about 200 yards beyond the church. This was within stone's-throw of the southward-leading road along which he thought the Germans were coming. He said to KORMYLO: "We may be able to swing around their left and get in a few licks before they know what has hit them." Until now he had seen no enemy and he had no idea whether they were coming forward deployed or in column.

Just short of the main road, there is a shallow but heavily-screened bay in the hedgerow bordering the lane. Here LEVY waited; KORMYLO and the private were told to go on; he said he would cover their line of retreat. The pair slipped quietly along the hedge until only a stride or two separated them from the open road. The enemy tanks were making a clatter; now, KORMYLO could see their turrets as they came on into the intersection; and at that point he could see also a group of many riflemen coming obliquely across his front from the left.

The tanks were moving in about the same direction but were inside the line of riflemen. KORMYLO and the private fired a few quick rounds with their rifles, and without stopping to see the effect, they ran back down the lane as fast as they could go. They passed LEVY and he yelled: "Go on!" But he did not follow. They jumped in the ditch and continued to run, thinking the Germans were right behind them. But the enemy had stopped to set up a machine gun right at the turn of the hedge where the lane met the road. The embankment covered the Germans so that the crew handling the machine gun inside the churchyard did not even see them. However, they were within 10 yards of where LEVY waited in the bay of the hedgerow. He could hear them talking excitedly as they set up the gun. So he took out a grenade, pulled the pin, counted three and gave it a little toss. It exploded between the two Germans and wounded both: LEVY took a few quick steps and dispatched them with his rifle. Then he came running back; KORMYLO and the private had halted some distance down the lane, realizing on second thought that they had better stand to cover LEVY. He was helmetless and was laughing like mad when he reached them. KORMYLO remembered then that he had heard a second grenade go off; he knew it was LEVY'S habit to laugh hard when the heat was on and he took it, though nothing was said, that the second grenade had almost got LEVY.*

*The description in detail is KORMYLO'S. The HO checked over the ground and found enough to wholly confirm most of

The tanks were already up and shelling the church and a few of the American riflemen had pulled back from the position. The German infantry had closed right up on the side road next the church and the half dozen men remaining on the American line were fighting it out with them through the hedgerow. The forces were not 10 yards apart; yet neither could see the other very well because of the hedge. They were throwing grenades at one another and although the Americans were holding their own for the moment, it was perfectly clear from the way the enemy numbers were building up that the position could not be held. KORMYLO saw a German come up over the hedgerow embankment; at a range of two feet, he emptied his carbine into him and shattered the top of his skull. By this time, LEVY had disappeared; KORMYLO thought he had pulled out but in fact he had only moved down the hedgerow to try and get within grenade distance of the tanks. KORMYLO looked around and saw only one other American still standing at the hedgerow line; he yelled to him: "Come on, let's go!" and they dashed for the rear of the church.

Earlier in the game, PVT ORLIN STEWART had been sent well over to the right of the position to cover the bazooka man. When the bazooka man pulled out to go with SCHWARTZWALDER, STEWART

was killed; that is, there was physical evidence that an action of this kind had taken place. KORMYLO said of LEVY (who was KIA and therefore could not be interviewed): "He was the bravest man I have even seen in battle."

stayed. He was there when the tanks came along. At the fork of the road, the lead tank was hit straight on by a rocket and knocked out; the source of the rocket was a mystery; there was no one in the position armed with a bazooka; the men figured out later that a bazooka man, working alone, must have been in hiding somewhere to south of the main road. A sharp volley of rifle fire broke out all along the enemy line as the tank went dead. Then two Renault tanks came alongside the damaged tank and tried to pass it, headed for the bridge. Being all alone, STEWART didn't see how he could stop them. Unexpected help arrived—a first sergeant and a private whom he had never seen before (still unidentified) came crawling along the same ditch where he lay hidden. Both carried gammon grenades; STEWART had a BAR and several gammon grenades. STEWART passed them his grenades and stood ready to cover them as they threw. The hedge gave them partial cover; the tanks came on past them, moving slowly; the two grenadiers stood and threw all of their gammons at the metal. There were several explosions, very close together. The tanks rolled on a few yards and stopped—disabled. The crews tried to clear out; as the first two men jumped down, the first sergeant got them both with a fragmentation grenade; STEWART shot the third man as he ran; the second crew ducked back into the tank. At that moment a medium German tank moved up to the road fork, trailed by a large group of infantry. STEWART and his companions didn't waste a second glance on them; their grenades were gone; they got up from their ditch and started moving

back along the hedgerows leading north.*

Back of the church, LEVY and the others joined them. This was the last of the action for the squad. They got out in pretty good order, carrying their machine gun and staying collected as they moved along the hedgerows until they re-joined TIMMES' force.

In 10 minutes, or perhaps 15 minutes at most, the whole situation had become reversed and LEVY'S men hadn't been able to hold their ground long enough to see the first hard penalty exacted. Company B of 508th had been coming across the Causeway, getting up there, or so they thought, to support SCHWARTZ-WALDER'S bid for the bridgehead. The Germans swept past the church just after the middle of their column reached the western end of the Causeway. The blow caught them unaware; the Germans fire made it impossible for them to turn back the way they had come. The first of their number had only managed to cross the Causeway and start a deployment to south of the main road; they were just beginning to dig in when the blow fell. Those who followed had no choice but to flee for safety the best way they could, for there was no possibility of a deployment along the narrow Causeway or of maintaining the advance. The fire coming down the twisting road interdicted any movement to the right. They broke to the left and tried to

*Witnesses were KORMYLO, STEWART and PVT OWEN L. GARLING-
HOUSE, who saw this action.

work or swim their way back through the swamp and the river. But that hard choice cost them dear. The Germans were deployed along the western shore before any of the Company B men had managed to wade very far through the waist-deep water and the uneven ground and rushes of the marsh. Some of them were shot down; and some of them died from drowning within sight of their comrades on the east bank. These were the troops which CAPT DOLAN'S men saw shot while they were floundering through the swamp, and mistakenly assumed were paratroopers who had dropped on the west bank and were merely moving to an assembly; DOLAN and his men did not know that there had been an advance across the Causeway.*

*Some of the testimony with respect to the Company B men comes from COL LINDQUIST. WISNER, KORMYLO and some of the others remembered the departure of SCHWARTZWALDER'S company and the repulse of Company B as closely joined; separated, in fact, by only a few minutes. LINDQUIST thought the Company B group was well across and had been on the west bank for an interval before the collision occurred. The force described as "Company B" included some Division artillerymen and men from Regimental Headquarters, according to LINDQUIST—in all, about 40 men. LINDQUIST, who was senior officer at the bridge position all morning though he had not been formally placed in charge of the operation or of the force (in fact, he had not seen or talked to GAVIN) issued the order for the Causeway crossing at the same time that he had issued orders for the establishing of his own CP to rear of the LEROUX farmhouses at MANOIR DE LA FIERE. He knew that SCHWARTZWALDER intended to go on from CAUQUIGNY to TIMES' position. "He was hell bent for it and could talk of nothing else but making that move," LINDQUIST said. Accordingly, he followed with the first of the troops in the wake of SCHWARTZWALDER'S column, purposing to make a quick reconnaissance of the situation west of the bridge. But he was on the west bank for only a brief interval and then shuttled back to see how the establishment of the CP was coming along. Right after he returned to the east bank, the German tanks reached the west bank.

When LEVY'S group closed on the orchard, there were altogether 121 men and 21 officers under COL TIMMES' command. But the enlargement of the force in no wise improved TIMMES' position. Although the force was never charged by the German infantry (in fact, it saw almost nothing of the enemy) the pressure of the enemy fire intensified rapidly after SCHWARTZWALDER'S arrival. The orchard received rifle fire from all around the perimeter except on the MERDERET side and there were bands of automatic fire from the westward which covered the marshes and focused toward the road running east through the orchard. During the next two days, while remaining on this ground, 25 percent of TIMMES' men became casualties with disabling wounds; the lightly wounded were not counted.

On D night, however, after the bridgehead had been won for a fateful few minutes and then lost, LEVY and KORMYLO compared experiences. They agreed that if they had had one company present around the church, they could have beaten back the German attack and held the bridgehead. But this was only conjecture.*

The gradual envelopment of TIMMES' position was of course the natural complement of the German counter-attack against the LA FIERE bridgehead. The enemy knew that the under-water road running just south of the GREY CASTLE and connecting the

*From KORMYLO.

by GEN RIDGWAY to take a force not exceeding a battalion across the MERDERET, hold the village of AMFREVILLE and bring the western side of the bridgehead under control.

At about 1800 MARR joined First Battalion, 325th, which LEWIS had designated for the mission, and at about 2300 he started leading the column across the marsh to TIMMES' relief. Meantime he had sent PFC CARTER back to TIMMES with the message that a friendly force was coming in and he was to lift the minefields covering the road north of the orchard.* Engineers had gone ahead also and had marked the shoulders of the underwater road with white tape so that the passage was not too difficult in the darkness. While the column was in mid-passage, word came to COL LEWIS from Division that he was to disregard that part of the order which applied to AMFREVILLE and proceed immediately to the bridgehead with the object of capturing it before dawn. The Battalion reached the western shore of the marsh without being fired on and MARR got them into the cover of the first hedgerow along the embankment; he went on to make sure that the minefields had been lifted.

Fire came against the Battalion's position from the GREY CASTLE and Company C was sent to the right to put it down so that the Battalion could make the left turning into TIMMES' orchard.

*This came from the MARR interview. CARTER made the trip under machine gun fire with two men from 325th covering him. He received the Silver Star for this mission.

From that point, Company C was to turn south to the road from AMFREVILLE into CAUQUIGNY and attack across the road. Company B was ordered to turn around the western side of the orchard, move south as far as the AMFREVILLE-CAUQUIGNY road and then attack along the northern side of the road toward the west end of the Causeway. The mission given Company A was to secure the road junctions around LE MOTEY and protect the rear of Companies B and C against any advance from AMFREVILLE. MAJ SANFORD, commanding the Battalion, had conferred with TIMMES in the orchard and this was the plan that he had decided upon; but because of Company C's over-long commitment at the GREY CASTLE, it had the effect of feeding the companies into the action piecemeal and without juncture anywhere along their front. From TIMMES' party, LT LEVY was assigned to guide Company B and LT FORMAN to guide Company A. Company A, which was still at the GREY CASTLE but had completed driving the Germans from the buildings, was put in LT MARR'S hands. He led them south; the Germans swarmed right back into the buildings and fired at them as they withdrew through the hedgerows. The Company got down to the AMFREVILLE-CAUQUIGNY road without difficulty, knocking out one machine gun post enroute; while they were in movement, a runner came in with the message that Company B had advanced rapidly to the road and was now moving eastward along the northern side; they wanted Company C to come as rapidly as possible. This, they did, crossing the main road and deploying with platoons in line along a hedgerow

bounding an oat field, ready for the sweep east. As they moved out, they tripped several alarm devices set by the enemy.

MARR talked to the Company Commander and suggested that he had better try to make contact on the left; he was told that Company B was probably on ahead in any case and that contact would be made automatically when Company C pulled abreast. But right after that they came to a road fork in the darkness, mistook their direction and turned southward along the hedge-row, thinking this was the boundary of the main road. (Note: This is the same road along which SGT KNEALE moved his men on the following day.) It was then about 0330. They got about midway of the field along which they were advancing and began to draw sporadic fire from their front. Still, the Company moved on rapidly to the end of the field; there they came abreast of a sunken road, and as they looked through the hedge at what lay ahead, they saw they were almost within touching position of a German artillery position. Thirty yards away, MARR counted three 88s and a snub-nosed howitzer. It was still dark, but by the starlight he could see the guns and men grouped around them.

The Germans had seen the Company at the same time. Some of them began yelling: "Kamerad!" and other things in German. They seemed wholly shocked by the surprise and for the moment they made no move to fire. All along the American line men were yelling: "Don't fire! The Germans are going to surrender."