

*Battalion) was shipped to Blue Beach where it arrived on 15 May. The rest of the regiment, together with rear echelons of other 32d Division units, arrived at Aitape later in the month. Early in June the 128th Infantry was released from its Alamo Force reserve role for Wakdi-Sarmi and reverted to the control of the 32d Division and the Persecution Task Force.*

To begin with, General Gill organized his defensive position around Tadjai airfield with the 126th RCT manning the West Sector, the 127th RCT responsible for the East Sector. On 10 June 1944, after the 128th RCT reverted to Division control, he created a Center Sector manned by the 128th between the other two. Regular patrolling about ten miles inland was established, and outpost line of resistance and a main line of resistance were designated and defensive positions organized behind them.

Different units of the 32d Division had fought the enemy at various times and places since September 1942. But this defense of the Aitape area marked the first employment of the Division as a whole on a single mission.

From the first, the East Sector was the most active one. Colonel Merle H. Howe, CO of the 127th Infantry, took command of the sector on 6 May. On the 7th, the Nyaparake Force (Company C, reinforced, of the 127th Infantry, under Captain Tally D. Fulmer) started patrols to the east and inland. Reinforced on the 8th by a rifle platoon and a light-machine gun section from Company A, and aided by Seventh Fleet patrol craft and RAAF P-40s, Captain Fulmer pushed the bulk of his force eastward against increasing enemy opposition. On the night of 13-14 May, three attacks struck his small command. The rest of Company A, under Captain Herman Bottcher, who had won the DSC and battlefield promotion from Sergeant during the Papuan campaign, had also been moved eastward along the coast. On the 14th, Captain Fulmer's force was surrounded and Captain Bottcher's force harassed by strong patrols. There was obviously no point in sacrificing these troops. Their reinforcement and supply was not practicable, nor was the retention of their positions essential to the Division's principal mission of defending Tadjai airfield. So General Gill promptly decided to evacuate both detachments to Nyaparake by small craft. This was done the next day.

On 19 May, Gill made further changes. He put Brigadier General Clarence Martin, the assistant Division commander, in command of east sector and gave Captain Bottcher command of Nyaparake Force. This was now to consist of Company A, 127th Infantry, and the 32d Reconnaissance Troop. Company C was relieved from the force.

Nyaparake Force came under strong enemy attack on the 22nd and, in accordance with his orders, Bottcher retired west along the coast during the next few days, more than once having to fight his way out through encircling forces. Convinced now that the continued and increasing enemy

pressure meant that he was being driven back to the Aitape airfield. General Gill transferred the 127th to the East Sector, and General Martin returned to the West Sector.

On 30 May, as the move was initiated, the senior officers of all ranks from both the Aus and US forces participated in the Memorial Day ceremony in their own heads.

The next day, the 1st Battalion, Lieutenant Colonel Cladie A. Martin, but soon ran into strong resistance. On 1 June, General Martin ordered the 127th Infantry to reconnoiter the hills of the Torricelli Mountains as a base. Company G, 127th Infantry, relieved Captain Bottcher's force of Yakumul. The experiences of these days are well told in the Appendix reproduced here because it gives a clear picture of the 127th Battalion both seeking information and making advance.

*During the night of 29-30 May, the battalion command post which had been set up at Tadjai was divided in two. Company A, Headquarters, and the remainder of the battalion. This combined group, under the command of Captain Martin, designated Herrick Force, moved south along the Harech River.*

*The Japanese soon attacked the command post of Herrick Force. On 31 May, attacks against Company A, Headquarters, and the remainder of the battalion, and varying in width from 100 to 200 yards. Other Japanese attacks, on the next morning, were directed against Herrick Force and the 127th Infantry.*

*Sporadic small arms fire was directed at all parts*

forced), and by this determined action has shortened the completion of the Leyte Campaign.

Every officer and every enlisted man in the Division as well as those attached played a vitally important part in the Division's success.

I wish to compliment each individual and to express my personal appreciation for the splendid work accomplished by them in this campaign. Without this coordinated effort of each individual the Division could not have been successful.

I extend the Season's Greetings to each of you, and in so doing, express my confidence in your continued success. May God watch over you and help you through the strenuous days ahead.

With all of Highway No. 2 now in American hands, an X Corp order shifted the direction of advance of the 32d Division westward toward the coast.

The 128th Infantry, which had been busily engaged in searching the Limon area and eliminating bypassed pockets of enemy troops, started patrols west on 23 December. And on the 24th, the 127th and 128th started toward the coast at 0800. Fortunately, enemy resistance was scattered and ineffective for the terrain itself was almost enough to stop the advance. Supply, which had been a major problem throughout the campaign, was now nearly impossible. Rations were soon low or completely gone. It wasn't a question of Christmas dinner but rather would they eat at all? The problem was solved largely by the use of the artillery's "grasshoppers"—the little observation planes that were certainly never designed as cargo carriers. Although their drops were understandably not always accurate, the planes did get enough supplies to the doughboys to enable them to push through to the coast.

On 29 December, both regiments reached their objectives: The 127th, the high ground overlooking Antipolo Point; The 128th, the vicinity of Compopo and Tabango Bays. Patrols were sent out which made contact with the 24th Infantry Division on the north and the 1st Cavalry Division to the south.

A last tragic message came into the Division's command post near Limon on the morning of 31 December 1944, just as it seemed as if the phrase, "Happy New Year" might have a little meaning. Herman Botche, the "fine combat soldier" whom General Eichelberger had recommended for promotion to captain from staff sergeant for his leadership in the Bumbay fighting, had been killed.

The 32d Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop was later given this citation:  
**THE 32d CAVALRY RECONNAISSANCE TROOP** is cited for outstanding performance of duty in action against the enemy from 20 November 1944 to 2 January 1945 during the Leyte,



Caves in which the Japanese blankets supported on ice Campaign map.



Left.—The Japs dug deep in there stubbornly, firing and

Right.—Memories of Christmas day and night for weeks fight enroute cross-country thru Artillery Observation planes terrain. (See map.)

Philippine Islands campaign. Operating in the Ormoc Valley sector for a period of 43 days, THE 32d CAVALRY RECONNAISSANCE TROOP established a patrol base behind enemy lines and near his rear area installations. From this patrol base the troop conducted numerous reconnaissance patrols, harassing raids, and maintained observation posts which directed long-range artillery fire on these installations and activities with devastating result to the enemy. Throughout the period operations were conducted under the most adverse conditions of weather and terrain. Heavy rains, with difficult mountainous jungle tracks and intermingled open valleys and forested mountains, made the movement of patrols ever subject to fire from enemy troops which occupied the area. The troop, operating with an average of 80 men from which its patrols and command posts were drawn, was attacked by enemy forces 14 times, but each attack was driven off and a total of 86 Japanese killed, with several hundred more being credited to artillery fire directed by the troop's observation posts. Ambushes set by the troop resulted in the capture of 11 prisoners of war for intelligence interrogation. The harassing raids resulted in the destruction of three important bridges over which the enemy was moving supplies, and the reconnaissance patrols pinpointed three artillery positions upon which counterbattery fire was placed. Patrols also furnished information on troop movements and concentrations in the Ormoc Valley from Valencia to Lonoy and west to Palompon. This information, because of its timeliness and accuracy, permitted large scale tactical planning which contributed greatly to the utter defeat of the Japanese troops resisting in the upper Ormoc Valley and the final collapse of all enemy resistance on Leyte.

This terminated for the 32d Division a campaign which had, in General Krueger's words, "made inordinate demands upon the troops," but there was little time available for rest, rehabilitation, and training. Sixth Army's next objective was Luzon, and the 32d had its place in Krueger's plan. The first step was the assembly of the Division in the Carigara--Pinamporan area along the shores of Carigara Bay.

The Leyte Campaign appears to have marked for the 32d Division its emergence from a sometimes bewildered and often scattered group of units into an integrated division capable of smooth teamplay. It had learned to adjust sound tactical principles and techniques to meet the peculiarities of Japanese combat methods and the unusual difficulties imposed by terrain and climate. The individual soldier had learned the importance of sanitation discipline. There had been less mixing of units and a correspondingly smoother functioning of normal chains of command. Improvisation to meet

the unexpected had been provided by observation planes to supply fuel to the coast. Lessons which had been learned in training camps were put to use in the field. The hard way, but they had been learned.

General Krueger paid tribute to the troops at the end of the Leyte campaign.

The combat troops had shown courage, tenacity and determination under exceedingly difficult terrain. The history of our arm was enriched by the combat troops who were equal to the service units, who were remittingly toiling day and night in the battle line.

The service units of the Division had done their part to get the weapons, medical supplies, clothing, and equipment for the offensive campaign. The 732d Ordnance Company had met an extraordinarily heavy demand for weapons, vehicles and instruments. The Division's motor vehicles had to be salvaged. Thirty cars were serviced and delivered to Division headquarters. The work was accomplished by mechanics who had begun in preparation for the campaign in January, 1945, the Division was complete, but they were adequate.