

ASSAMSTADT, GERMANY

day 42

Securing the bridge at Lauffen proved difficult. The 11th Tank Battalion of which Melvin was part, was significantly instrumental in the



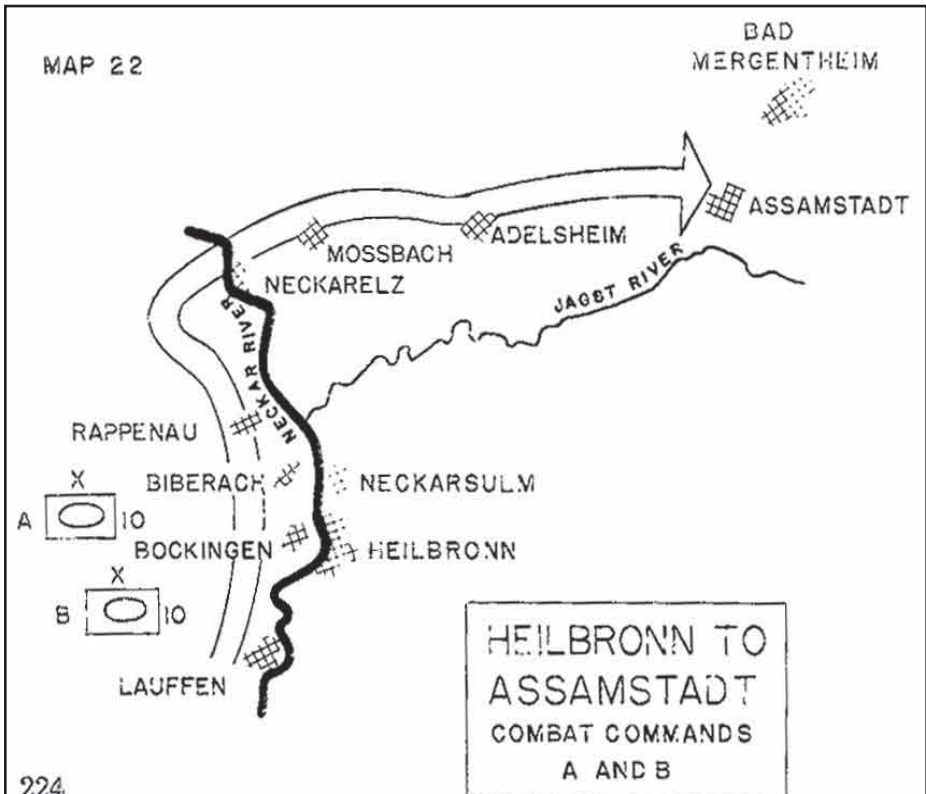
capture. The 54th Infantry and support groups followed the armor. Heavy casualties were the result of a great deal of German shelling from the east bank of the Neckar River.

The defending Germans

Present day Assamstadt

east of the river retreated after two days of heavy return shelling and arms fire by the 11th Tank Battalion and other forces. With the bridge secured, CC B was ordered north instead of directly east as had been in earlier plans. Their mission was to travel north, staying on the west bank of the Neckar River in order to find an additional bridge on which to cross. A bridge was located approximately 10 miles north of Heilbronn and Neckarelz.

Higher command now ordered CC B (11th



Tank Battalion) to push north to Assamstadt through Frankenbach, Kirchausen, Bonfeld, Huffenhardt, Bargaen, Helmstadt, and Aglaster Haussen. In effect, unknown to CC B, this would cut off any attempt of a northern retreat by the German army from the battle at Crailshiem which was about to take place.

It was nearly midnight on Friday, April 6, before the last of CC B had crossed the bridge at Neckarelz to the east bank of the Neckar River. They arrived in Assamstadt, nearly forty miles north east of Neckarelz in the early morning hours of Saturday, April 7.

Assamstadt, being a very small village, did not offer enough room to accommodate the division. Unfortunately the past several days had been very rainy, and the fields surrounding Assamstadt were deep with mud causing the medium tanks to mire and flounder. The typical divisional bivouac had to be altered forcing CC B units to fan out as best they could on any firm ground found outside of the village.

CC B was allowed a few hours of badly needed sleep prior to pushing ahead. Supplies and fuel trucks would arrive at dawn and would hurry through their all-too-familiar routine of resup-

plying and refueling. New orders were soon to arrive. Sleep would soon become nearly a non-entity.