

A WHITE CHRISTMAS IN KRINKELTER



FITTING TRIBUTE to the men who fight on far-off fronts this Christmas is this striking photograph of Allied infantrymen moving up over the snowy wastes of no-man's-land. James Thrasher's editorial expresses our deep appreciation for the selfless service of our fighting men.

BY JAMES THRASHER,
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They had plenty of snow for a white Christmas in Krinkelter — snow that stung your face as the North Sea swept it across the Belgian lowlands; snow that made walking slow and heavy; snow in gray clouds that pinned air support to the ground and left things pretty much up to the infantry; snow that made you a sitting-duck target in your OD uniform; snow that melted and soaked and froze if you fell in it.

A white Christmas, and back home some luckier guys were having a hot turkey dinner, and a cigar afterwards, and dry clothes and a fire. But up here the Krauts had forgotten to take time off for the holiday. They were hell-bent on going places and somebody had to stop them, Christmas or no Christmas.

So they walked across the fields outside of Krinkelter on Christmas, with guns slung over their shoulders and cold feet in their boots.

And some of them thought, "Well, maybe next year."

CANADA'S 8TH WINNER OF V.C.



Canada's Eighth and British Columbia's Fifth winner of the coveted Victoria Cross is Pte. Ernest Alvia (Smoky) Smith, 30, the Seaforth Highlanders of Canada. "Smoky", The one man Army as he is known, showed outstanding courage and determination in establishing a bridgehead over the Savio River which led to the capture of the Town of Cesena. At point black range, he destroyed two German tanks, and shot it out with the tank borne infantry.

Eighth Canadian in this war to win the highest award for valour in the British Empire, Pte. Smith is the first Canadian V.C. of the present war below the rank of commissioned officer. He hails from the same town, New Westminster, B.C., as Major John Mahony, who was awarded the V.C. in July.

Twice Wounded
Twice wounded before the brilliant action which won him the Victoria Cross, Smith had been in action with the Seaforth Highlander throughout their long and tough campaign in Sicily and Italy, with the exception of two months spent in hospital in North Africa. He was first wounded in Sicily on August 4, 1943, and was shipped to North Africa for hospitalization. He was wounded again in February 1944, when the Seaforths crossed the shell-torn Moro river, blocking the road to Ortona.

Pte. Smith was born at New Westminster on May 3, 1914, and lived there until he enlisted in the Seaforth Highlanders of Canada on March 5, 1940. He has been overseas since July 18, 1940.

"Smoky" and his two brothers are serving in the Canadian Active Army. Jack, aged 25, is with the Canadian Scottish "somewhere in Europe," and Burton, father, of three children is with the Saint John Fusiliers.

Text of Citation
Following is the complete citation covering the award of the Victoria Cross to Pte. Smith:

"In Italy on the night of 21-22 October, 1944, a Canadian infantry

brigade was ordered to establish a bridgehead across the Savio river. The Seaforth Highlanders of Canada were selected as the spearhead of the attack and in weather most unfavorable to the operation they crossed the river and captured their objective, in spite of strong opposition from the enemy.

Torrential rain had caused the Savio river to rise six feet in five hours and as the soft vertical banks made it impossible to bridge the river no tanks or anti-tank guns could be taken across the raging stream to the support of the rifle companies.

As the right forward company was consolidating its objective it was suddenly counter-attacked by a troop of three Mark Five Panther tanks supported by two self-propelled guns and about thirty infantry. The situation appeared almost hopeless.

Inspiring Leadership
"Under heavy fire from the approaching enemy tanks, Pte. Smith showing great initiative and inspiring leadership led his Platoon group of two men across an open field to a position from which the Platoon could best be employed. Leaving one man on the weapon, Pte. Smith crossed the road with a companion and obtained another Platoon. Almost immediately an enemy tank came down the road firing its machine-guns along the line of the ditches. Pte. Smith's comrade was wounded. At a range of 30 feet and having to expose himself to the full view of the enemy, Pte. Smith fired the Platoon and hit the tank, putting it out of action. Ten German infantry immediately jumped off the back of the tank and charged him with schmeissers and grenades. Without hesitation Pte. Smith moved out onto the road and at point blank range with his tommy gun killed four Germans and drove the remainder back. Almost immediately another tank opened fire and more enemy infantry closed in on Smith's position. Obtaining some abandoned tommy gun magazines from a ditch, he steadfastly held his positions protecting his comrade and fighting the enemy with his tommy gun until they finally gave up and withdrew in disorder.

"One tank and both self-propelled guns had been destroyed by this time but another tank swept the area with fire from a longer range. Pte. Smith still showing utter contempt for enemy fire helped his wounded comrade to cover and obtained medical aid for him behind a nearby building. He then returned to his position beside the road to await the possibility of a further enemy attack.

Bridgehead Held
"No further immediate attack developed and as a result the battalion was able to consolidate the bridgehead position so vital to the success of the whole operation which led to the eventual capture of an Lorgio Cosene and a further advance to the Ronco river.

"Thus by dogged determination outstanding devotion to duty and superb gallantry of this private soldier, his comrades were so inspired that the bridgehead was held against all enemy attacks pending the arrival of tanks and anti-tank guns some hours later."

DREGS OF GERMAN MANPOWER



While Germany apparently was massing its "crack" troops behind the lines for the current counter-offensive, the Volkssturm — German People's Army comprising old men and boys — was dispatched to defend the Siegfried Line. But the above members didn't stay in the fight for long — they were captured by Allied Army Forces.

82... AND STILL SWINGING



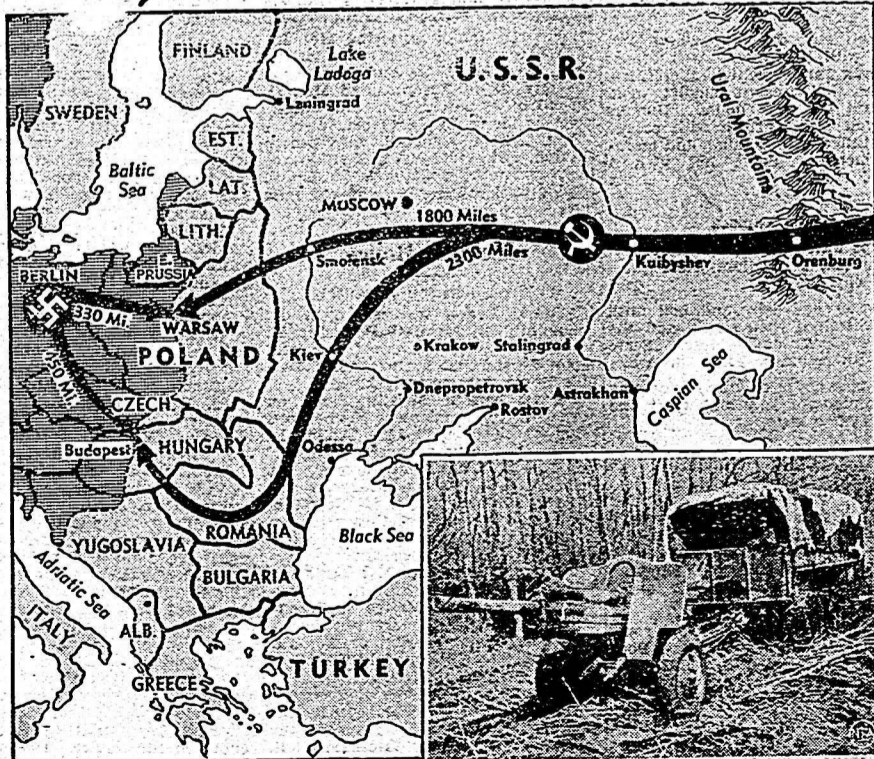
Connie Mack celebrates 82nd birthday in Los Angeles, where he is enjoying one of his rare vacations. The only manager the Philadelphia Athletics ever had gives signs behind a catcher's mitt just as he did 60 years ago, an indication, no doubt, that he will still run the works at Shibe Park in 1945.

JOYOUS JAILBREAK



Pushing joyously from jail in the Alsatian border town of Haguenau, where they had been imprisoned by the Nazis for political offenses, the French women above were some of 300 freed when the Nazis left town as the Allies moved in. Many had been in jail two years.

WHY REDS ARE SLOWED ON POLISH FRONT



The nearer the Russians drive to Berlin, the tougher they find the going because (1) the German supply lines have thus been shortened and, by the same token, the Reds' supply routes, some of which run all the way back to the Urals, have been lengthened, as shown on map above; (2) muddy terrain in Poland, where freezing weather comes several weeks later than on the Steppes, causes mechanized transport to bog down, as in inset picture. In order to shorten their supply lines, Russians are moving whole factories nearer the front, reeling in railroads to reach up to the fighting lines.

