

Bethlehem Officer, Lieut. Colonel At 24, Climbs Army Success Ladder Quickly

JAN 8 1945

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Ken Lindner Shapes Destinies of Men Many Years His Senior

WITH THE FIRST U. S. ARMY—Shaping the destinies of men 10 to 15 years his senior is not new for 24-year-old Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth Lindner, 432 Montclair Avenue, Bethlehem. He has been doing it since he entered the Army as a 21-year-old Company Commander.

Lt. Col. Lindner's meteoric rise to Army fame began back in 1936 when, caught by a high school yen for adventure, he enrolled for a summer session with the Citizen's Military Training Camp. One summer was almost enough for young Lindner, but his father had other plans. "Don't start anything you can't finish," he warned his son. "I'd like to see you in an officers uniform." That was enough for young Lindner. That winter he studied military tactics in his spare time and the following summer returned to the CMTC for more training.

In 1939 he finished his officer training extension course and applied for his commission as a Second Lieutenant in the Infantry. No soap, said the War Department, you're only 20—regulations say you will have to be 21.

Lindner didn't worry. He joined the National Guard as a buck private and went to work as a crane operator for the Bethlehem Steel Corporation.

On his twenty-first birthday Lindner again applied for his commission. But again it bounced back. "Ten pounds under weight," was the crisp reply. "After that," says Col. Lindner, "I ate everything in sight, sometimes four meals a day with plenty of bananas in between."

FOOD DOES TRICK

The extra food did the trick and on June 11, 1941, Kenneth Lindner was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the Infantry and assigned to Company K, 3rd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment. The same Regiment he has served with for over four years and whose 3rd Battalion he now commands.

In 1941 officers were at a premium. No sooner had Col. Lindner

reported for duty than he was made a company commander. "In fact," says Col. Lindner, "I was the only officer in the company. When we went on maneuvers I was the C. O., executive officer and leader of four platoons at one time. Don't think I wasn't one busy 'shave-tail.'"

From then on his rise was rapid. First lieutenant then captain. On D-Day he landed on the Normandy beach at H-Hour plus 4. Thirteen days later he was made executive officer of his battalion when the battalion executive was killed. But because of the shortage of officers at the moment, he continued in a dual capacity of battalion executive and company commander. Three days later his company was cut off from the rest of the battalion. Just as Col. Lindner was preparing to attack back toward his own lines, tanks came to the rescue. The tank commander dismounted, handed Col. Lindner a letter. He opened it and read the hastily scribbled note. The battalion C. O. had been killed—he was now in command and would attack immediately.

IN FIELD OF ACTION

Without a moment's delay he organized his company, briefed his platoon leaders on the audacious plan and "jumped off." The plan called for a break-through of the enemy lines—a 360 degree encircling movement by the break-through



LT. COL. LINDNER

... Alger story of the Army

unit and when completed, the entire battalion would attack from the front.

The attack clicked. The Germans, caught off their guard, thinking they were surrounded from all sides, started fighting toward their rear. By this time Col. Lindner's units had completed the 360 degree circle, were back in their original foxholes and ready for the surprise frontal attack that spearheaded the fourth divisional drive ending three days later when Col. Lindner's battalion entered the key city of Cherbourg.

Since D-Day the "Colonel" has added to his long string of laurels.

While commanding Company K I took up defensive positions for the night only to find that enemy machine gun nests were in such a position that it was impossible for the company to dig in. Exposing himself to enemy fire, Col. Lindner stood up on a hill and with army and hand signals directed mortar fire from a field 100 yards to the rear, knocking out two machine guns in three rounds. For this he received the Bronze Star.

AT ST. LO BREAKTHROUGH

Later, in July, after the breakthrough at St. Lo, Col. Lindner was directing a combined infantry-tank attack on strong enemy positions when a German 88 shell burst, wounding him with steel splinter. Wounded, he continued to direct the successful attack until the enemy position was wiped out. For this feat he received the Silver Star and the Purple Heart.

His second Purple Heart came out of the blue about 1000 yards south west of La Moientrie, France, where his command post farm house caught a direct hit from a heavy German artillery shell. The whole roof caved in on his head.

Nothing is impossible if "the Colonel" says so. When the great rot of the German army across France began in August, the famous Fourth Division gave chase. Transportation was scarce, so Col. Lindner and his battalion joined the chase on foot. In nine days they chased the ragged Wehrmacht from the Franco-Belgian border across Belgium to the Siegfried Line and with the exertion of seven miles, the battalion walked or ran every foot of the way.

Marching with full equipment wasn't all Col. Lindner's rugged infantrymen did. As each river was reached, the Germans would leave behind a small rear guard detaching force to blow the bridges and stall the rapid battalion advance. Each river crossing meant establishing a new bridgehead and each bridgehead meant fighting. Sometimes stiff, sometimes light, but a fight is a fight and when you have already marched 11 to 15 miles with all your equipment plus extra ammunition, it amounts to one tough task.

But, Col. Lindner and his men did the job and arrived at the Siegfried Line the middle of September, where they stopped the chase on orders of higher echelon.

"25" LUCKY NUMBER

Twenty-five is Lt. Col. Lindner's lucky number. On June 25 his battalion aided in the capture of the first big American prize—Cherbourg. On July 25, his battalion aided in the break-through at St. Lo, which sent the Allied armies sweeping through France. On August 25 he led his battalion, together with an armored cavalry unit, into the city of Paris, helped capture the commanding German general, and was promoted to his present rank of Lieutenant-Colonel (although he did not know it until some time later). On September 25 his battalion was relieved at the Siegfried Line and returned to a rest area, their first rest after the gruelling chase across Belgium.

Of the future, Lt. Col. Lindner has three plans. One, to take an "active" part in the Army of Occupation. Two, to kill Japs in the Pacific, and, three, to be commissioned in the regular U. S. Army. If his superior officers have anything to say in the matter, all three will come true.

Lt. Col. Lindner is the son of Mrs. Emma Lindner, 432 Montclair Avenue, Bethlehem, Pa. Two younger brothers are following his Army footsteps. One is a staff sergeant now in France, and the youngest is 1-A in the draft waiting for his letter from the President.

January 8, 1945