

1945

History 398th Engineer Regiment

United States Army

Evert C. Larson

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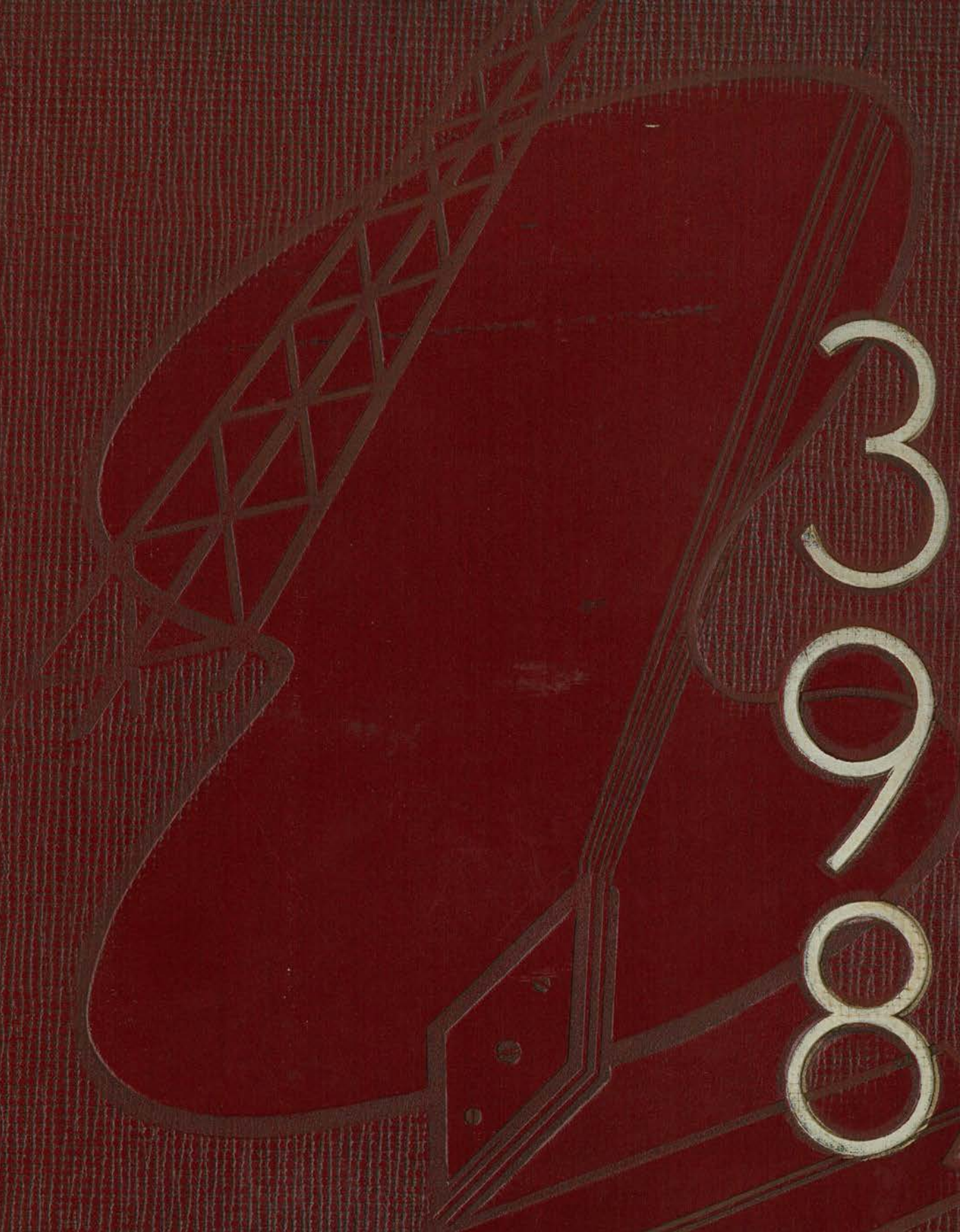
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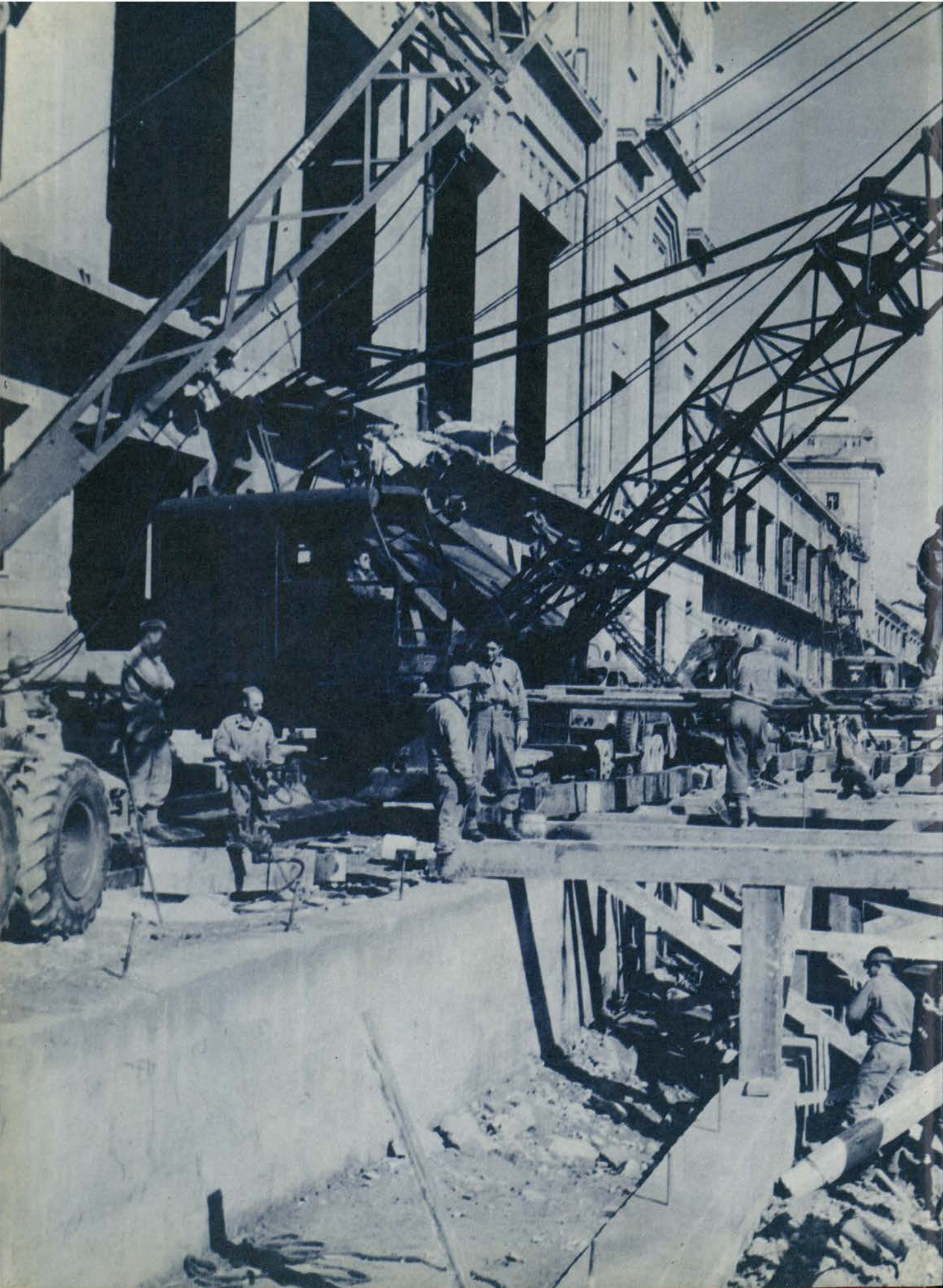
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ENGINEERS

1938








History

398th Engineer Regiment

by

Its Personnel

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*United States of America, Scotland, England,
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ROCKY MOUNTAIN
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YOUTH CENTER
200 ROCKY MOUNTAIN



HEADQUARTERS
398TH ENGINEER GENERAL SERVICE REGIMENT
CAMP CLAIBORNE, LOUISIANA

To the men of the 398th:

It is with a feeling of honor and great pride to have the privilege of expressing to all of you the appreciation of our superiors and associates for a job well done. The accomplishments and deeds of your regiment are a matter of glorious history in the records of our armed forces in World War II. This brief historical record should serve to bind together forever the men of the regiment who have served together, into a lifelong patriotic association of men. True to the motto of the Corps of Engineers, we tried. True to the motto of our regiment, we did our job. This is your history, prepared by the men of your regiment, and it seems most appropriate that we dedicate the book to those men of the regiment who gave their lives in the great conflict to bring about peace on earth, and good will toward men.

Addison H. Douglass

ADDISON H. DOUGLASS
Colonel, C. E.
Commanding

398th History Staff Credits

The preparation of this history was directed and written by Evert C. Larson. The cover design and Luxembourg tactical map were made by C. Robert Stork. All cartoons by Donald C. Wilson. Harvey C. Walton took the pictures appearing herein, except for those contributed by 398th personnel, which carry individual credit lines beneath photograph. Clyde E. Morrell assisted in obtaining anecdotes and supervised historical accuracy. Jack L. Beavers designed the title page, memoriam page and assisted the staff in laying out pictorial section.

An officers' advisory board was organized to facilitate necessary negotiations and included Lieutenant Colonel William S. Kingsbury, Jr., Chaplain (Captain) A. J. Jones, Jr., First Lieutenant James C. MacLachlan, First Lieutenant John W. Pulaski, Second Lieutenant Archie W. Pahl, Jr., and Second Lieutenant Johnson W. Casper.



Most of you were satisfied being just what you were—shipyard worker, clerk, logger, welder, printer, machinist, or a high school graduate. In a word, civilian. But a group of "friends and neighbors" had other plans. They were dispensing presidential greetings and intended neglecting no one—you in particular. So it was "report for induction."

Induction Center doors yawned open and swallowed the reporting men, briefed them and sent them along its assembly-lined examination stations. Finally an interview determined your degree of serviceability. Then, "I do solemnly swear and affirm . . ." You were inducted!

As a reserve you were given a week's furlough before reporting to Reception Center for active duty. Advantages were taken—you had parties; tied up loose ends of affairs you couldn't shake by merely saying, "I'm in the Army!"; got drunk; had a good time in general.

Festivities over, you packed your toothbrush and shaving articles—just the barest essentials. Then came goodbyes to family and friends. There were some tears, some silent handshakes—and feminine eyes welling up like Spring rivers, as feminine eyes are apt to do at such times. And someone—either Uncle Harry or Brother Joe—said something witty to break the heavy silence that hung so low.

And off you went!

Arrival at the Reception Center proved to be the actual beginning of your Army career. Immediately following another "physical" you were herded along with the men through a Quartermaster building where articles of clothing and equipment were issued you. A GI behind a counter looked you over, yelled out a size. His assistant reacted automatically; raised a garment and pitched it in the general direction you stood, naked as a jay-bird

except for wearing a bewildered expression.

Whether you received proper sizes or not mattered little here. You were told—and not without a tracing hint of impatience—you could get your size when you caught up with your unit. Reception Center sizes numbered two: Too large, too small. You received an assortment of each.

The next few days will never be quite clear—events happened too rapidly. Sure, there were more interviews: Bonds, allotments and insurance. AGC tests. Shots. Orientations. Articles of War. Sex training films. Everything—all at once.

Processing over, some of you had time enough to become familiar with the Army via details. There was KP, policing the areas, window-washing, quartermaster assistants and the like. Each day you prayerfully hoped your TMD would come through—release from the Detail Sergeant. But, before it came, this was going on:

On March 22, 1943, at Camp Claiborne, Louisiana, the paper work of organizing a new Engineer general service regiment was being completed in accordance with AG 320.2 (3-5-43) B-1-SOPU dated March 8, 1943, subject: "Activation of 398th Engineer General Service Regiment," and General Order No. 34, Headquarters, 8th Service Command, Dallas, Texas, dated March 15, 1943.

Lieutenant Colonel Frank F. Bell assumed command of the Regiment on March 22nd. Organization had really begun. Authorized strength was 52 officers, two warrant officers and 1241 enlisted men. Among the four original officers assigned to staff duties, two remained "for the duration": Rolly A. Andrew and Raymond W. Duncan—both being captains at time of discharge.

Reception Centers throughout the Nation were notified. Men—such as your-

self—were activated. Your TMD had come through!

Troop trains, passenger trains, busses—all led to one and the same place, so it seemed. The majority of you rode many hundreds of miles. Others came from camps within the vicinity. Come you did, overwhelming seams holding together the hot, dusty, dismal, tarpapered-shacked area officially—and to you, sorrowfully—known as the Engineer Unit Training Center, West Claiborne.

"Live in that cracker-box?" some of you asked, looking at the ugly, squat, repulsive huts.

The answer was yes—and like it!

During this infiltration of "rookies", a cadre was set up. By order of the 8th Service Command, 91 men from the 369th Engineer Special Service Regiment were commandeered on March 13. This qualified group formed the nucleus around which was built the organization which lead you through basic training and overseas missions. Foreign service wasn't new to them, however, for they spent several cold months in Canada on a project they were sworn not to reveal.

As one of wittier Pfc's put it: "It would have been far better had the project sworn never to reveal the men!"

The 398th grew rapidly. On March 24 enlisted men numbered 386 of which 101 were temporary cadremen—until the 369ers had been organized. By March 31 there were 39 officers and 1466 enlisted men. A week later 1650 enlisted men were tallied. This overstrength was authorized in activation orders for replacement purposes. After several months of basic training the extra men were dropped. Many were transferred to other branches of the service. Physical unfitness brought discharges for those for whom army life was found too rigorous.

Basic training officially began on Monday, March 29. The youthful 398th was attached to the Second Provisional Training Brigade under command of Colonel H. L. Robb, EUTC. It had two necessary phases: Five weeks of military training (Infantry), and eight weeks of Engineer basic.

Camp Claiborne, the men were prone to comment, "was the only spot on earth where you stood up to your neck in mud while dust blew in your face." When it rained it did just that. There was no procrastination here—never "putting off 'til tomorrow" what it could rain today. As quickly as lashing torrents doused freshly pressed suntans, just as suddenly did they depart. Not without its effects however. Ten minutes later silty dust was being blown into wet uniforms and sweaty faces. Bitch? Who didn't?

Making soldiers—that is to say, Engi-

neers—from shipyard workers, clerks, loggers, welders, printers, machinists and high-school graduates had really begun. Not necessarily new words but persistent words such as "orientation," "nomenclature," "bivouac," "close order" and "extended order drill" popped up everywhere.

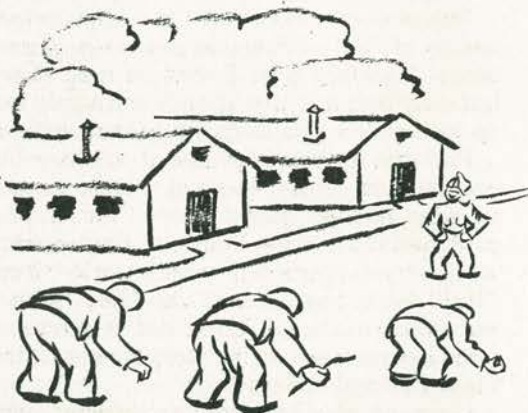
Most of you have undoubtedly forgotten your first day of training. Reprinted here is a facsimile of that day's schedule.

TIME	SUBJECT	AREA
0745-0815	Physical Training	Regimental
0815-0845	Close Order Drill	Regimental
0900-1200	Military Courtesy and Discipline	Theater
1300-1400	Close Order Drill	Regimental
1400-1500	Interior Guard Duty	Company
1500-1600	Sanitation and First Aid	Company
1600-1700	Close Order Drill	Regimental

First Call was officially 0600 hours though most of you were too sleepy to care about time during "the middle of the night." Our Reveille was whistled in at 0615 hours. Men ran out into company streets tucking in shirts or fastening loose ends of legging strings. One or more each morning would forget his hat or other article declaring him out of uniform. They'd rush back into barracks and out again hoping to make it before platoon sergeants called their names.

After reveille you went into your barracks and made your beds—GI. You swept the uncleanable floor, dusted, shined mud-caked shoes, aligned articles and clothing on shelves, and a million other sundry requirements. Then to breakfast—eating from a white plate if early, otherwise from your mess-gear.

Police Call followed breakfast. Outside you went, policing cigarette butts someone neglected to fieldstrip during the



hours of darkness. Sick Call, too, was a morning ritual. As the days progressed and training became more strenuous, sick call accumulated quite a sizeable following. You were still in the pink, but unfortunately as civilians.

Shrill whistles heralded your first training period: Physical Training. Better still, *physical straining*—for that's what it amounted to. Stripped to the waist except for your undershirt (cotton) you were instructed in the art of performing the impossible. Then came arm exercises, leg exercises, back and trunk exercises. When these had been practiced sufficiently, then followed coordinating exercises.

After this "stimulating" drill, some of you gathered around the bulletin board hoping to learn from the maze of instructions and directives just what uniform was required for the next period. Was it with or without "this" or "that"? You never really knew, did you? Whatever uniform you fell out with was usually wrong. So it seemed for practically always there was a mad scrambling back into barracks getting into what you were told was missing or inadequate. Just a forerunner to "rat-race deluxe!"

The hours rolled on. There was close order drill. It was during these maneuvers many of us suspected Nature had played us dirty and bestowed us with two left feet! "For'rd Harch!" "To the rear, harch!" "Column left . . . column right!" "Platoon halt!" "Rest." "Smoke if you've got them!"

Military courtesy taught you many things. There was a uniform manner of saluting—which later shifted to anything from a "Hiawatha horizon-scanning" ritual to what may be best described as a "Veronica Lake" where the right hand eclipsed the right side of your face. Some of you were more ingenious and managed to improve on the staid Army salute with a snappy flourish.

Instructions followed in appropriate usage of "sir". Where to put it—in a sentence! Injecting a sir here and a sir there not only helped your speech militarily but as well aided you in getting those stripes!

Perhaps no single phase of military life presents as many unusual predicaments as does interior guard duty. Challenging provided most of the laughter. Each novice would try a challenge which varied from "Halt! Who goes there?" to "Hey, where ya' goin', soldier?" Little did it matter—your hearts were in it. Only you and the Field Manual differed.

Care of clothing and equipment was another must. Keeping them in shape wasn't optional. You did it GI—or else. Most of us suffered from "or else."

Rifle marksmanship at the outset con-

sisted of lectures but soon developed into; use of slings; coach-and-pupil classes; positions of sitting, kneeling, standing and prone; sighting; trigger squeezing; and scoring. When these exercises were mastered, attempts at triangulation were begun.

Here you remember having special rifles mounted on special rests, aimed at special targets tacked to special frames using special "ammunition" for getting a special score. Triangulation meant sighting on a target three times while a marker dotted your "fire" on a sheet of paper. The size of your triangle determined how much training you'd need to aim accurately.

A complete account of basic training is neither practical or desirable. All the trials and tribulations you encountered cannot be enumerated here. The attempt so far has been designed toward the objective whereby the use of key words will recall memories strictly your own. It cannot be overstated how important your period of basic training in West Claiborne (and elsewhere) has become.



On April 12, 1943, Colonel Bell was relieved of 398th command and our new regimental commander was Colonel Theodore Wyman, Jr., the Regular who had accumulated numerous nicknames but more popularly known as "Ted". As we learned later in 398th history, our Regiment can boast of no more loyal a booster than Colonel Wyman.

To close this phase, it is timely to recollect how the 398th has been a unit of record smashers. During basic training, a 398th platoon constructed a 25-ton ponton bridge in 3½ hours which, by schedule, was supposed to have taken five. Footbridges were thrown across 400 feet of water in 11 minutes.

That's Engineering!



No two months in 398th History are more memorable than those spent in Arkansas and Luxembourg. Both had etched indelible memories. Chronologically, Arkansas comes first, and until the 31 days we spent along the Moselle River, supplied us with our chief definition for hardship. No one can look back on White River without remembering a period of unfortunate circumstances and some happier events.

Actually it all began during the winter months of 1942-43. Unusually heavy snowstorms covered the Central States and with the coming of Spring, riverlets and tributaries swelled beyond their banks. The rush of water emptied into the cantankerous White River which steadily rose to its flood level of 21.0 feet. About the 21st of May, 1943, it had reached 29.4 feet.

Soldiers in nearby camps were alerted. A rush call was sent to Camp Claiborne for Engineers. Men were needed desperately and quickly. Units in training forgot their training schedules and were moved by rail to the scene of ravaging water. It was May 21st that the 398th Engineers was alerted to pitch in against Nature's unharnessed promenade.

On May 22nd, we joined the trek of soldiers headed for Arkansas. Upon arrival we relieved the 359th Engineer General Service Regiment—First Battalion taking over at Biscoe, and Second Battalion, with H & S Company, locating at Peach Orchard Bluff.

Immediately countermeasures were begun. Twenty-four-hour patrols were initiated at once. And there were sandbags needed, brush to be cleared, culverts to be built, roads laid and repaired, bridges erected, log corduroying, grading, berm building and other miscellaneous construction.

Up at First Battalion's Biscoe Camp, the desperate cry was for sandbags. Thousands of them. All available men were

thrown into jobs of filling bags and transporting them by ponton barges to various slides and boils. Patrols were maintained along the levee where mud-slogging was at its ooziest.

Meanwhile Second Battalion undertook patrolling duties at Peach Orchard Bluff and began construction on culverts along Georgetown Crossing Road. Because of weakening from uncontrolled floodwaters, a 110-foot bridge on Postal Landing Road required 3-shift emergency repair group.



By the 26th of May conditions were bordering the intolerable. Rain, and its miserable companion, mud, undermined morale just as effectively as the wild waters were wearing down man-made structures in its path. Not even at the end of a 12-hour-or-more work shift could anyone look forward to dry comfort for pyramidal tents also had soggy, muddy, wet ground for floors.

Mosquitoes in astronomical figures added their bit to conditions. Poisonous snakes were still another hazard. Nerves and imaginations became tense; enough so to prompt one GI to create a scene of pathetic humor. After completing a long shift of work he returned to his tent. It was dark. It was raining. It was hell!

Nervous, tired and distraught he opined in no uncertain terms his hatred for existing conditions. With a real mouthful said against the snakes, he quit his bitching, went to bed, and drew shut his mosquito netting. Another GI threw a tentpole over the tired, nervous Engineer, and slowly pulled it downward, taking part of the netting with it. Instantly the nervous one sprang from his cot—axe in hand—yelling a warning to everyone that the tent was infested with snakes. The laughter that followed sounded hollow. Even practical jokes failed in Arkansas.

By the 31st of May the river had endured its second rise to 29.3 feet and was steadily falling. On June 6th the gauge recorded 25.9 feet.

Still there was work to be done—and much had been completed. The end of the month realized complete repairs to Georgetown Crossing Road. Miles of area adjacent to the river had been cleared of brush and trees where levees were built. A 36-foot timber bridge was erected on Tent Area Road. The third 6'x3' log culvert was completed. Companies A and C left Biscoe (where Company B remained) to a new camp site at Weeks Landing on the west side of the river.

Then it happened—dysentery! Not just a few cases, but a large majority. Everyone disposed of the usual "good morning" greeting for the more popular, "Have you got them yet?" Paths to canvas-enclosed latrines became constantly used thoroughfares. Some walked in anguish while others believed a 100-yard dash was the better policy.

There are hundreds of stories that can be told about "the GIs in Arkansas." And dysentery proved no respecter of persons. Even those whose shoulders bore brass were afflicted by what was probably caused from the nearby presence of pigs and cattle of residents and flood evacuees.

An Indian cook was concerned with ridding his kitchen of chickens that had wandered in. For persuasion he used a butcher knife. Charging from behind came a large sow followed by a family of offspring and ran through the kitchen tent, through the frantic Indian's legs and out into the open. The little "porkers" followed their mother's example in a continuous stream which undermined the Indian's equilibrium. And as the last "porker" ran from the tent, the cook was rolling in the mud outside the tent, calling out unprintable damnations.

Among the many officers who found themselves heir to Nature's intestinal wrath was a company commander. He felt the unmistakable pangs of the GIs at that time when tempers ceased to be civil. Frequent trips from his quarters had to be

made at all hours, under trying conditions. Many times his sprints for the latrine ended in near catastrophe.

A junior officer hated to see his commander trudging the necessary 150 yards so suggested he lay a blanket under a tree and there with a book he could read, rest and wait until Nature called him . . . which was often.

Taking his subordinate's suggestion seriously, the company commander put a blanket under a tree—read, rested and waited. Sometimes he fell asleep. Once in a while he slept . . .

The colonel also felt frequent and unnatural desired to visit the officer's latrine. Tracing the 175 yards from his quarters he found it much too far to walk. He issued an order whereby the officer's latrine be moved from its site by the enlisted men's to a place nearer headquarters. This was done.

Meanwhile the company commander awoke from his sleep—nor was he a rested man for his slumber had been



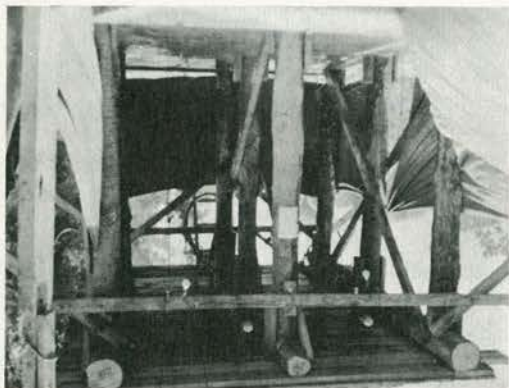
snatched from him by pronounced gurglings within and a very definite pressure. With what strength he had left—most of it being strained to stave off disaster—he rose from his blanket and made a bee-line for the latrine. But . . .

Instead of finding the canvassed enclosure he stood before a mound of newly turned dirt. There was no latrine! What did he do? Just what you would have done!

Even moving the latrine closer to headquarters didn't help our colonel as he had hoped. One day he dog-paced it desperately toward it. About half-way he stopped. His body stiffened into a tense, rigid attention. Every muscle was pressed into service. Suddenly a look of utter anguish fell across his face—his body relaxed to water limpness. Disgust in no uncertain terms appeared on his face. With exacting precision he executed a military about-face and slithered back to his tent!

With the advent and passing of the GIs, conditions became more bearable. Nothing man or river could throw upon them could or would equal it. So once again an accent was placed on work. Sandbags were still needed to fill in other slides and boils. Before the month was through, more than 150,000 bags had been filled with sand from high levels near White River.

More roads had to be built. Additional clearings along the subsiding river were



completed with axes, machettes and brush-axe. Hundreds of feet of corduroy roads were laid. Constant repairs had to be carried on as well as damage to other installations. The Kitty Barnes Levee was another assignment in addition to what was already in progress.

Mishaps caused more repairs. A bent and two spans of the western end of Postal Landing Road bridge had to be replaced after a heavy power grader overloaded the bridge, sending a bent into the clay bank. It wasn't a serious handicap but necessitated two days for repairs.

Operations along the levees were facilitated after the arrival of a Northwest dragline which was unloaded from a flat-car on a siding by battalion forces and walked 4.2 miles to the levee job-site.

On June 7th, First Battalion began construction of an H-10 low timber bridge of four 15-foot spans on an access road and was completed the following day.

Second Battalion continued bridge and culvert construction and began work on

berms. As time passed, less cantankerous White River reached safer levels and reduced details on patrol duty were put into effect. Once again man had controlled the unpredictable elements after they had gone berserk.

On June 11th we began to send troops back to Camp Claiborne. There was no longer any need for all 398th personnel to be in Arkansas. Jobs became a little more leisurely, and with warmer weather thoughts turned to swimming. In spite of orders to the contrary, 398ers couldn't resist taking plunges into the muddy water—in many cases the best bath we had during the month. Safest "beach" was that at "Gold Brick"—if the GI could swim the river.

And, how many will forget the dances organized for us by the communities of Augusta and Cotton Plant? Their citizens liked them as well as we did and planned more, but our returning to Camp Claiborne changed their plans and ours.

June 16th found all of us back at Claiborne. Truck convoys had brought us back—all 350 miles, with a bivouac at El Dorado. Everything seemed tame. There was not much more to look forward to than completing basic training which had been interrupted by "the Arkansas incident."





BOUND FOR THE ETO

Basic training and Arkansas were behind us. In the horizon loomed even greater opportunities and possibilities for we were told the 398th was headed for overseas. As an Engineer regiment we had been trained and partly seasoned by the experiences of combatting floodwaters. But before any new ventures would begin, we were going home. That's right—the War Department had a desired policy of sending men on furlough before going overseas.

Somehow that policy lapsed just before the 398th had completed its basic training. True, the War Department did not guarantee every man a furlough—it was simply desired. Just as strongly as the War Department desired giving us a furlough, to the same degree (and undoubtedly stronger) did we desire a visit home with our family and friends.

The explanation for cancellation of furloughs is very simple; perhaps too simple to be completely and willingly understood. When the 398th began its 13-week basic training, the War Department knew when we would be ready for overseas shipment. Everything, as you know, is planned on paper. And, on paper everything looks wonderfully complete and accurate.

However, Arkansas and White River hadn't been figured in on the War Department's schedule of troop movements. When the time arrived for furloughs, simultaneously it was "according to plan" for our debarkation. Instead of the Army scraping the multitudinous reams of paper which must have been involved, it was a much simpler matter to treat men as soldiers—able to take whatever disappointments circumstances might present.

"Dammit!" only partly expressed our sentiments.

As a grand finale to Claiborne, the 398th took part in an impressive, formal

Fourth of July parade. It was, up to that time, the largest military body of men ever to pass before official Claiborne viewers. Exact figures on the number of men who participated are not known, but unofficially it has been placed between 8,000 to 10,000.



From the 5th of July until the 17th, 398th personnel were busily engaged in preparations for overseas shipment. All equipment to accompany troops had to be crated, weighed, identified, stamped and tallied. Shakedown inspections were carried out on personnel equipment. Another "physical". More shots. Legal affairs had to be straightened out. And many more.

Camp Claiborne, during mid-summer months, isn't the coolest spot in the world. In spite of intense heat and furlough disappointments, there was a strong element of curiosity in knowing we were going overseas. It added a final zest.

On the 17th three troop trains left Camp Claiborne for Camp Shanks, at 2100, 2200 and 2300 hours. Rushing to Arkansas aboard trains had provided our first troop movement by rail, but in comparison, here was a distinctly different adventure. An unknown destination brought much speculation as to where we were going—what we would do.

Camp Shanks was reached on the 20th and immediate processing began. More examinations, inspections and interviews. So much to be done—and only three days' quarantine to do them in. But happily looked-for was the prospect of passes into New York City. Here again the 398th was "fouled up". Quarantine automatically passed into "alert". On the 23rd, A and B Companies took another train, then a ferry, which brought them to Pier 90—to the silent, gray hull of the *Queen Mary*. Remainder of the unit made the trip on the following day and by July 25th, the former luxury liner left her berth at 1400 hours and headed out to sea.

An Atlantic crossing in summertime aboard a transport has its ups and downs, as we soon found out. Instead of carrying a normal passenger list and crew of less than 2500, the zig-zagging *Queen* bulged with approximately 20,000 aboard.

Sleeping quarters presented a major problem. Somewhat solved, shifts were setup whereby we slept one night below decks, the other on promenade or sun decks. Though men were assigned specific areas above decks where they were to sleep, many of us were confused and had some difficulties "finding a spot".

One 398er, blankets in hand, roamed the sun deck in a conscientious attempt to locate his berthing place. Walking between stretched-out bodies he lost his balance and stepped upon a GI who was "trying the deck for size."

"Oh, I'm sorry—couldn't see you, bub," the 398er offered.

"That's okay, soldier," replied the one stepped on. "I'm getting used to it."

"I'm trying to find a place to sleep," said the 398er.

"You're standing on it!" a voice came up from the deck.

"Here?"

"Yeah—and you'd better grab it quick, or someone else will!" And he rolled over and became silent while the Engineer threw his blankets down in the narrow space and made up his "bunk".

"Chow" also presented a problem. Only

two meals were served daily—breakfast and supper. Most of us found the rations more greasy than usual and preferred standing in endless lines at the PXs to supplement our diet.

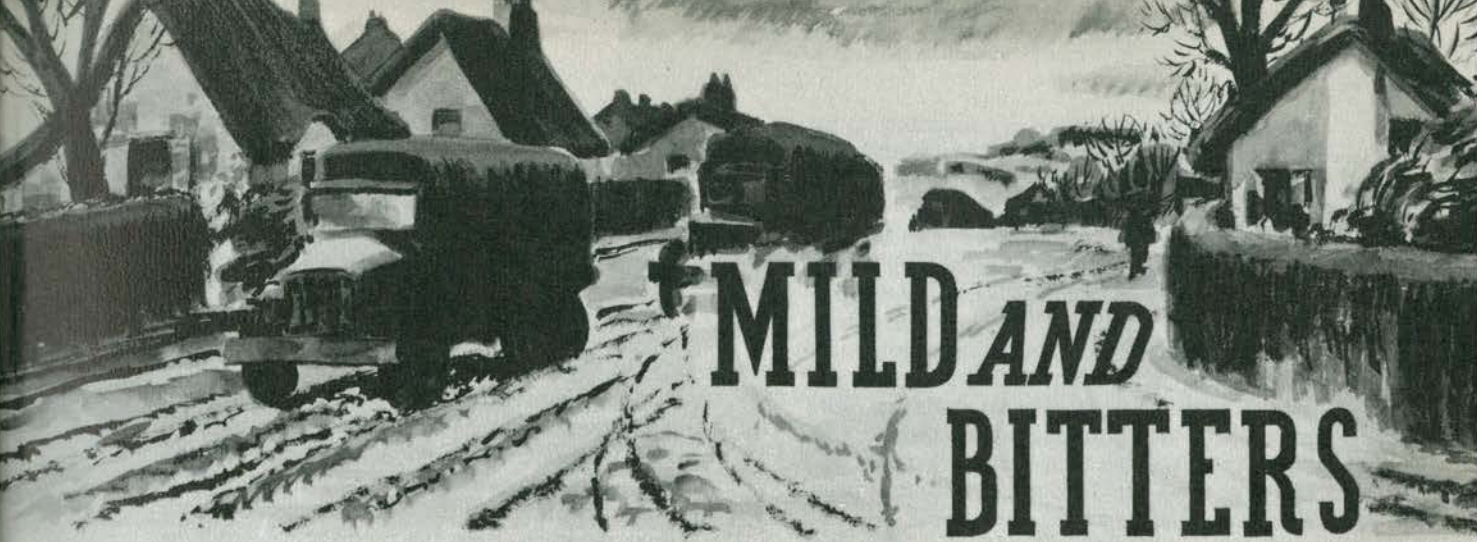
In spite of crowded conditions and unsatisfactory food, the crossing was extremely smooth and the majority who experienced this trip as their first on the high seas found it adventurous. To add to the thrill of crossing the Atlantic for the first time, there were countless rumors about how close "a submarine got to us" during the night before. German planes also came in on some of the accounts of how closely the *Queen* had come to Davy Jones' empire below the sea. Actually, logs aboard the ship (and publicized in newspaper articles) dispelled any foundation for such rumors. But they sure were fun listening to, even though it seemed butterflies were having a field day in our stomachs as we listened.

All rumors, food and sleeping problems vanished as the *Queen* entered the firth and approaches to Greenock, Scotland. Rails and portholes were lined and filled with anxious men seeking their first glimpse of Europe. This all happened on the 30th of July. Later in the day, *Queen Mary* dropped her anchor into the firth and immediately tenders began operating, taking troops from the liner to waiting troop trains in Greenock's station.

With the 398th all was not so simple. *Queen Mary* had to be policed and swept. Cabins' companionways and salons were cleared of countless candy wrappers, cookie boxes and other containers in which PX items were packed.

It was August 1st when the 398th disembarked and began its trek through beautiful Scotland, south to Devizes, England.





Our first location after arriving in England was at LeMarchant Camp, one mile west of Devizes, Wiltshire. We took over various types of buildings for our brief stay, but in every one there was a loud cry against the mattresses. Disuse had lowered them to a powdery substance instead of hay. This itched and tickled when laid upon.

Fortunately for us August 7th brought another move and we located ourselves on a hill a mile west of Braunton, North Devon. In fields bounded by stone walls, we pitched our pup-tents for the first time on European soil. At night we learned that English soil was no softer than that found in United States on bivouac problems.

Similar to our other encampments, this was simply a temporary setup. With issuance of construction missions, the Regiment—like the Arabs—folded their tents and stole away in the night. Companies were scattered in all directions.

Regimental Headquarters and H & S Company set up operations four miles northwest of Taunton. A Company moved three miles southeast of Crowcombe. Company B and First Battalion took over at Brymore Camp, one mile west of Cannington—all three places within the shire of Somerset.

In North Devon, Companies C and E were located one and two miles, respectively, west of Braunton. Company D established itself one mile north of Bideford. Company F set up camp a half mile south of Croyde. And Second Battalion Headquarters operated from Saunton Sands.

All assignments for construction came from Base Section Engineer, Southern Base Section, through XIX District. Here is a brief outline of what we had accomplished up till December 31, 1943.

The Assault Training Course Quarters at Braunton, consisted of erecting 505

Nissen huts for quarters, dispensaries, showers, ablutions and mess halls to comprise a camp capable of housing 4250 men. We laid 5000 feet of sewer line and 8700 feet of water line. A 150,000-gallon capacity water reservoir and a sewer disposal tank of 40,000 gallons were also built. Several miles of roads were constructed.



Minehead Tank Runs meant constructing two 150-yard sided equilateral triangles, 20-foot wide hardcore tank runs at anti-tank range, together with accessory and connecting roads. For this project approximately 10,000 tons of quarry-run and crushed rock were used.

We enlarged the existing 1000-man hutted Camp at Brockley by erecting tents for 500 additional men. There were also concrete floors laid for tents as well as increasing shower, kitchen and latrine facilities in hutted portion of camp.

At Weston-Super-Mare we converted and reconstructed existing billet facilities in 20 houses which included plumbing, wiring and carpentry work. Other existing camps, Burnham-on-Sea, Street and Glas-

tonbury, were enlarged by erecting more Nissen huts and putting in plumbing, electrical and sewer facilities. Hardcore parking spaces were included.

Charlynch Camp required 12 concrete tent floors, while at Gotherney Hall Camp a 398th detail constructed a concrete generator base and installed the generators.

Sixty civilian installations were converted to billets at Midsomer-Norton, which meant more Nissen hutting, with plumbing, water supply, and general reconditioning. This type project was carried out as well in Radstock, Chilcompton, Keyford, Timbury and Kingswell.

Hestercombe House Camp required three units (16 huts) of Nissen, Romney and MOWP hutting, together with exterior and interior electrical installations; extension of water and sewer facilities, and numerous additions to original establishments.

Mess halls, complete with cooking, electrical, water and sewer facilities were erected at Ilfracombe and Woolacombe. Two complete shower units were constructed at the former.

Bideford Ordnance Depot required construction of Romney and Nissen huts for offices, shops and classrooms. Concrete drives and parking areas were built, as well as electrical, plumbing, water distribution and sewer facilities. The 398th established 70,000 sq. feet of parking space, 22,000 sq. ft. of roads, 6,336 sq. ft. of covered storage and office space, and 13,440 sq. ft. of shop space.

Hardstandings, driveways, sheds, plumbing, water distribution, electrical and sewer facilities, six reinforced brick walls and air raid shelters combined the construction operations at Fremington and Exeter Hospitals.

The summer tented camp at Crowcombe for 1,500 men meant building 20 Nissen and MOWB huts, four miles of 10- and 20-foot hardcore roads, 60,000 sq. ft. of hard-standing, small culverts, 30,000-gallon elevated water supply tank with the customary water distribution system, plumbing and electrical work.

Passing a critical eye over this partial list, one fails to grasp the conditions under which the work was accomplished. Here, on paper in this book, the account appears fixed but flexible enough to give proper proportion. But, without knowing—

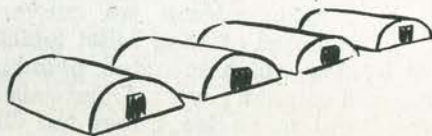
and remembering—the difficulties of trudging through knee-deep mud, carrying loads up to and exceeding 100 pounds, the tiring and monotonous tasks of wheeling a concrete-filled wheelbarrow through muck and rock, bolting ice cold sheets of corrugated iron for Nissen huts with numbed hands. Without knowing and recalling these, the itemized list of projects loses value.

Nor were those the only hardships or inconveniences. The constant, ever-present British drizzle, soaking clothes to the skin. The long working day, starting before sunrise, quitting after sunset with just enough time for a quick "mild or bitter" at the village "pub"—if we weren't too tired to walk the distance between.

And speaking of "pubs", it brings us to a lighter, brighter side of our year in Great Britain. Most of our Anglo-American relations began in these admirable institutions. Many an Engineer GI began by competing in a game of darts only to wind up visiting homes. Sometimes a lukewarm beer initiated a companionship. Slowly it dawned on GI minds that "Limey" wasn't a derogatory adjective, but a counterpart to our own commonplace "Yank". And from the number of men seen frequenting tea houses, it wasn't long before we "stopped for a spot" whenever occasions permitted (and sometimes when they didn't!)

As ambassadors of goodwill, we did a good job. By the "pub" grapevine, inhabitants of a town knew prematurely of our departures even before ourselves and those last remaining nights in a town or village were usually enough to create memories if previous time spent there failed. As well, there were those of the 398th who found English girls desirable and married them.

Highlighting 1943 in Anglo-American relations were the Christmas parties five of our companies gave English children living nearby. Boys and girls, dressed in their very best—and bringing winning manners and courtesies—came to our mess halls to eat Christmas dinner from GI mess-gear. Before the parties, 398th men saved candy from their rations. Yes, they had some gum, chum! And after an exciting meal—to many the delicacies of turkey, stuffing, olives, cranberry sauce, and sweet potato were their first experience—they settled down to an evening of Yankee fun in being entertained by entertaining. Then, just before it became too late, six-bys were filled with happy, smiling, stomach-filled youngsters who drove into the blackout shouting typically Yankee greetings they had learned.



Not always, however, were the parties sponsored by 398th personnel understood by townsfolk. When our officers had a dance at Braunton, much to-do was made among the inhabitants of that respectable English town. They just couldn't get over it. American Army Chaplains drinking and dancing! Of all things! How did they know? Simple, they said. "All the officers wore cathedrals on their uniform lapels!"

Unofficial diplomatic relations between Englishmen and Americans were furthered on two other occasions. Exchange of personnel between British and American Armies was introduced. The first "swap" offered four "Limies" to work with us for two weeks while four "Yanks" visited British Engineer units. The second exchange included eight soldiers of each nation. This trade of personnel did much to improve understanding one another—and few 398ers who knew them ("Dagwood" in particular) will never forget the "imported chowhounds." The "average Limey", popular consensus had it, was essentially pretty much the same as the "average Yank."

Unwittingly, one 398th GI was a British officer—for a very short period. It all began as a practical joke. A popular PX manager went swimming in a secluded pool, sans suit. While enjoying the luxury of a swim, other 398ers took his clothes and returned to camp. Not exactly accustomed to practicing public nudism, he made his way back toward camp using whatever foliage was available. But on encountering an open space, he came upon a British officer walking with his wife. With typically British suave and stoicism, the gallant officer loaned the embarrassed Engineer his coat—"pips" and all.

Practical jokers are as much a part of the American Army as the uniform itself. No group of veterans can ever congregate without reminiscing over incidents aimed specifically at one individual. For who can forget the pathetic picture of a C Company man who fell out one morning for reveille at Braunton, dragging his cot and rifle because they had all been tied together while he soundly slept those precious minutes before the whistle blew? Those were the days when we fell out with rifles and packs, and to be missing an item was the same as being absent.

By March 16, 1944, Headquarters had moved to a new location nine miles northwest of Taunton, Somerset. Line companies were continuing to reach out with squads and platoons to undertake and compete more construction missions. Suddenly a novelty came along with building, for as Nissen and MOWP huts were being



erected and finished, 398th personnel lived in them until moved on to another site. However, like death and taxes, mud continued to stay with us.

Many recall Colonel Douglass in the earlier days of England as "the major who slogged through the mud with the rest of us." He had been sent to the 398th by Southern Base to alleviate mud hazards, to install measures against the conditions brought about by our own rapid building program. Hardstands, cat-walks and drainage systems eventually solved our problem.

Other operations completed by April 15th include:

The Naval Supply Depot at Exeter where we put in a 10- and 20-foot road circuit within Depot area. Approximately 20,000 tons hardcore and crushed rock were used in 10,000-lineal-foot roadway.

Tyntesfield Camp at Failand consisted of constructing a 1500-man tented camp with 17 Nissen and MOWP huts, water tower and distribution system, and electrical distribution. Paths covered 30,360 sq. ft., hardstandings, 59,500 sq. ft., and 2500 lineal feet of 12-foot road.

Failand Golf Course Tented Camp was a similar 1500-man tented camp with 17 Nissen and MOWP huts, water tower and distribution system and electrical installations. Paths covered 38,400 sq. ft., hardstandings, 52,500 sq. ft., and 2100 lineal feet of 12-foot road.

Construction of a complete anti-tank range was made at Kilve Range, including mechanical target runs, hardcore roads and hardstandings, six Nissen huts. Laying 13,200 lineal feet of 12-foot hardcore road was accomplished at Highbridge POL Depot. At Morthoe Camp, other 398ers were busy erecting office buildings and building hardcore driveways and parking facilities.

Another tented camp housing 1000 men was added to the original buildings at Brymore House Camp. Included in the

project were erection of Nissen mess hall, concrete floors for tents, 6-inch sewer out-fall and a 50,000-gallon concrete sewer tank; also 60,000 sq. ft. hardcore parking space.

The Taunton Shop Detail was constructing 150 timber guard houses and seven timber master MP guard houses. Then followed building 5000 2-story bed assemblies.

Four other projects were: The 1500-man tented camp at Alfaxton Park (turned over to 374th Engineer General Service Regiment), electrification of 1000-man camp at Houndstone, 250-man addition to Crickett-St. Thomas tented camp, and 500 linear feet of 35-foot wide hardcore at Sparkford Rail Head.

A rough total of our accomplishments in England brings this staggering sum: 623 huts were built, 1,423, 650 sq. ft. of hardcore, 247,000 sq. ft. of hardstanding, sewer disposal capacity of 90,000 gallons, and 180,000-gallon water reservoir for housing enough GIs equal to the size of Galveston, Texas.

Early in our construction work we learned how desperately our projects were needed for almost without exception, troops moved into camps being built before completion. Whatever we built, it was put to use before we were through, and this in spite of our aptitude for completing camps and installations ahead of schedule.

A year had passed since our Regiment had been activated. To commemorate the occasion, officers and enlisted personnel sponsored their own parties. Guest of honor at the officers' banquet March 25th was Colonel Wyman who had been relieved of 398th command in February and assigned commander of XIX District, Southern Base Section. Lieutenant Colonel William E. Griffith became our new commander. Highlighting the evening was a dance held at Denzil House, Crowcombe.



The enlisted men held their anniversary dance on April 1st in the Post Assembly Hall. usic was played by our own 398th Engineer Regiment Orchestra.

On April 15th, our construction missions completed or turned over to other units, we moved by train and motor convoy to Porthcawl, Glamorgan, Wales. The purpose for sending us there—to Kenfig Hill and Queen's Field Camps—was for extensive training in port construction and repair work under tutelage of 1057th Port Construction and Repair Group.

Since training would be held in both locations, shuttling back and forth between the two camps became a habit during April 15th and July 1st. Each company averaged three moves. While at Kenfig, basic combat training was undergone . . . mock and simulated tactical problems being carried out on nearby sand-dunes; demolition theories practiced; hikes; rifle marksmanship.

Queen's Field Camp, located just outside of Porthcawl's center, was headquarters for exercises in port construction. We had daily hikes to the beaches where Bailey Bridges were erected between dunes; V-Type Trestle building; laying of railroad tracks; tubular scaffolding; ponton-barge construction. The Braithwaite ponton barges built by the 398th were actually used in D-Day operations for one company emblazoned their structure with their initial and it was later seen in channel waters off the French coast.

To most of us, after 9½ months of hard work in England, our stay in Porthcawl was not too unlike a vacation—or "holiday", as the British called it. There was the popular Coney Beach Amusement Park; Port Talbot, Neath, Cardiff, Swansea, Pyle and Bridgend for available cities and towns—"to get away from it all." And there always seemed to be something going on at the impressive promenade's Pavilion—dances, musicales, parties and theatricals.

Porthcawl offered us, as a Regiment, our first opportunity to organize and participate in a largescale sports program. Contests between companies included track meets, baseball, boxing matches and various other games with less participants. Most outstanding was boxing and the number of matches that were staged in the Regiment-built ring between sand-dunes. The shows were good. Damn good, in fact. And they had their lighter side—such as the night a Company A cook began mopping up the British dew between matches and was deluged by coins from the crowd, amounting to more than 12 shillings.

As for our training—since it was something new and different, there was little bitching. Repeating basic training wasn't what we wanted out of the war. We didn't quite know ourselves what we wanted. But we went about our tactical problems, rolled and crawled in the sand-dunes, threw up Bailey Bridges and tore them down, dug personnel and machine-gun emplacements and filled them up again.

This was okay for awhile, but after June 6th a restlessness came over us. France's Normandy coast had been invaded—and we sat in shifting Porthcawl beach sand listening to instructions along the same basic training lines. Most of us felt we weren't contributing anything to a Nazi defeat, and some tempers were unrelenting. One day, when tempers were exceptionally brittle, a 398er was ordered to do a menial task by a PC&RG supervising noncom. It wasn't more than any other task we had to do. But temperament, being what it was, the Engineer cautioned:

"Take it easy, sarge. I've stood at attention longer than you've been in the Army!"

Nor did our dispositions improve as days mounted into weeks. Always there was a hope—or perhaps just wishful thinking. It wasn't that we thought the war couldn't get along with us. It wasn't because we thought the war would end earlier because we would be in it. No. It was simply a desire to get our "coon-dog rears" out of the Porthcawl sands and do something—anything—on the Continent.

It may or may not have been the reason why one 398th man had his wedding unattended! Troops from the Regiment filled one church while the bewildered bride and groom were married in another on the opposite side of town. Finding out the mistake too late, the convoy of men arrived at the correct church just in time to see the couple depart.

"Oh well, what more can you expect at Porthcawl" was the general attitude. "Everything else seems just as backwards."

Then on July 2nd we were alerted. At last we were going to an English POE. What our mission would be we didn't know, but assumed it concerned port construction because of our Wales training. Morale went higher and higher. At last we would do *something!*

On July 3rd, the Second Battalion less Company D (but with the groom of one night!) moved by train and motor convoy to Melbury Park, Dorset. Here the men pitched their pup-tents in preparation for waiting until a "go-ahead" signal came from the marshalling area. Two days later

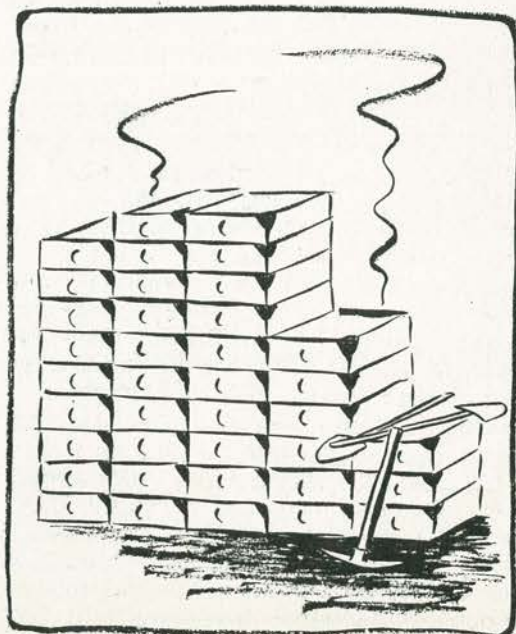
Headquarters, H&S Company, First Battalion and Company D went to Swanage, Dorsetshire.

By July 15th Second Battalion was located at D-8, Company B at C-55 (Lockerly), Company C at G-47 (Westbury), and Headquarters, H&S Company, First Battalion less Companies B and C at Swanage.

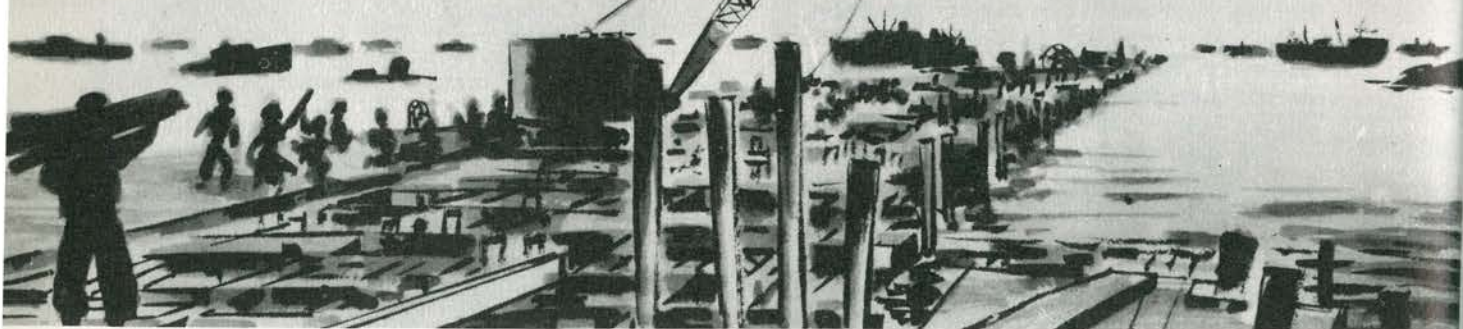
Whatever happened upon arrival at the Portland Embarking Area will never be fully known. Instead of being processed and sent with a force to France, our heels began to cool in the rain-drenched camps in which we were stationed. Again days passed into weeks—and as a means of keeping us busy, details were sent to repair and maintain hardstands and parking areas on Portland Harbor. Here we toyed with shovels and gravel while mechanized units and foot troops embarked on LCIs and LSTs—going to France. Our imaginations played havoc with us as we thought embarking units were looking down upon us—so we hid, when idle, behind ration stock piles.

In France, armored units were not quite "up to plan". Brest would not be taken as quickly as had been formulated on paper. It was our original mission to accompany follow-up forces into the submarine-pen harbor and perform construction operations immediately after the port fell into Allied hands. If necessary, plans called for 398th participation in taking Brest!

However, plans for the 398th were changed. July 30th came and we were alerted for crossing the Channel—starting our phase in European Theater of Operations which made it possible for us to have a worthwhile history to record and tell.



CHERBOURG RECONSTRUCTED



One year to the day of arriving in the British Isles—August 1st—our cross-Channel movement began. Second Battalion Headquarters Detachment, Second Battalion Medical Detachment, Companies E and F, boarded an LCI at Weymouth. On the 3rd they debarked at Utah Beach and hiked eight miles to their bivouac area.

The Dutch liner *Queen Emma* was used on the 2nd to transport all remaining 398th personnel with the exception of the men in attendance with our regimental equipment which crossed on an LST. *Queen Emma* was part of a convoy which reached Utah Beach at 1600 hours on the 3rd.

Crossing the Atlantic aboard the *Mary* had given few 398ers an opportunity to become seasick. The Channel gave a number of men a second offer—which some took seriously. However, it was a minority who found "travel by rail" necessary. Generally speaking, our trip from Weymouth to Utah Beach was uneventful—morale was good.

Few men will ever forget seeing Utah Beach for the first time. Hulls, stacks, bows and sterns of ships nosed out of their watery graves. Barrage balloons attached to ships and barges seemed to fill a hazy sky. There was some speculation as to whether some of the out-moded craft might not sink if the balloons were cut loose. And on the beach itself were the remnants of what had been—just a short time before—a mighty Nazi stronghold.

After disembarking, there was the eight-mile hike to our staging area. We really felt closer to the war as we tramped and sweated along roads marked "Achtung! Minen!" and "Mines cleared to hedge only!" Everywhere the ground had been pocked by artillery fire and bombs. Mangled, writhing wreckage was all

around us. This was our first picture of France—and it wasn't pretty.

At the bivouac area we became acquainted for the first time with the French version of "Any gum, chum?" Three little youngsters—two girls and a boy—in- vaded our area and received more at- tention than a visiting movie star. Army issued French-American books came out and 398ers tested their abilities with a new language—the majority of us realiz- ing then it wasn't so simple after all.

Despite frontline artillery only a few miles away, we slept and rested in that field beyond Isigny. In the morning trucks brought us to Chef du Pont where we boarded trains and travelled to Cher- bourg. Here another motor convoy took 398th personnel to a field location on a hill 1½ miles south of the city and over- looking the port.

On August 15th Lieutenant Colonel Griffith was relieved of 398th command and Lieutenant Colonel Addison H. Doug- lass became our new regimental com- mander.

Under orders from Base Section Engi- neer, Normandy Base Section, Communi- cations Zone, ETOUSA, we, the officers and enlisted men of the 398th Engineers, began our first major construction pro- gram as members of Allied forces against Germany.

Soon after work assignments had started, arrangements were made for quartering us within the city. Regimental Headquarters, Medical Detachment Head- quarters and H & S Company moved to Le Mont du Roc, two miles southeast of Cherbourg. First Battalion took over for- mer German gun emplacements and bar- racks on a hill in view of the harbor. Second Battalion occupied Fort du Hom- met (dubbed by a medical officer, "Fort du Vommit") in Cherbourg's arsenal

area. More will be said about our quarters later.

Colonel Karl Detzer in *The Mightiest Army* (published by Reader's Digest) has this to say about Cherbourg:

"The Germans had learned from long experience how to destroy ports and make them useless to conquerors. At Tunis and Bizerte in Africa, on Sicily, at Naples and Leghorn, they had learned the tactics of complete demolition. Now at Cherbourg they put to use all the destructive tricks they had perfected.

"The harbor was a shambles. Big vessels had been sunk across the harbor mouth, in channels and the anchorages; the breakwater had been dynamited. Heavily mined ships by the score lay at the piers. Not a single crane remained. Every pier was blasted. There wasn't a warehouse left. Booby traps ashore and under water took many lives.

"However, within forty-eight hours the first cargo ship nosed its way cautiously through one narrow channel, which Navy and Army crews already had cleared of mines. That was the beginning. Within six weeks Cherbourg was unloading more tonnage than it ever had known in peacetime. Soon the port was handling double its peacetime load. The American Army Engineers did one of the most magnificent jobs in their long history. Theirs was the task of removing all mines and bombs on and under and around the wrecked piers and the ships which had been sunk alongside them. Out in the harbor, Navy units cleared paths through the open water and set the buoys to mark the channels."

One particular point Colonel Detzer makes is of specific interest to 398th personnel for it deals with the net result of our labors. Military authorities, when planning Cherbourg reconstruction, figured an unloading capacity of 8,000 tons daily. Through the work of Engineers, this total was stepped up to 23,500 tons daily. This was not, however, the limit capacity—we could have, and did go, higher. Unfortunately, the railroad outlets leading from the arsenal area into central Cherbourg lines were inadequate to carry any more than the top figures quoted above.

Here, briefly, is an outline of our accomplishments — which helped bring about restoration of Cherbourg to usefulness:

On "Basin Napoleon" a four-track railroad siding was graded and laid; a Belgian block road was removed, filled, and

in its place we installed track and switches; repaired two bridges and cleared debris; built railroad marshalling yard of 9 tracks with 150-car capacity; removed approximately 6,000 tons of scrap iron, demolished buildings and obstacles; all of which opened the basin to six Liberty ships for dockage and unloading.

The "Qui Homme" project consisted of rebuilding Qui wall, dredging, forming wall with 650 yards of concrete, installing bullards, laying railroad siding with conversion to main line. Chief obstacle in construction was the tide, and a great deal of concrete had to be poured under water. The results here offered dockage to two ships.

One of the larger projects was "Arsenal Road Network" which included building a reinforced concrete bridge over a dry dock, widening a one-lane road to three-lane traffic at gate bottleneck; building an outlet four-lane highway to Red Ball Network, involving moving approximately 60,000 yards of dirt, hauling 12,000 yards of rock, spanning 120-foot gap with suspension bridge carrying three petroleum pipelines; widening Rue Militaire for four miles as well as all main arsenal area roads. We operated our own rock-crushing plant, using building debris for road rock and concrete aggregate.

"Gare Maritime" was perhaps our most impressive structure, for from a mass of metal and rock debris the dock for the



former French liner *Normandie* was restored, to which six or more ships (depending on size, whether Victory or Liberty ships) could dock at one time. Dredging along the dock site began the operation. German prisoners of war were detailed to perform the menial tasks under 398th supervision. With the tremendous task of driving piles and actually constructing the dock, there came the overwhelming reward of satisfaction as the crippled structure took on new shape. Before its completion, ships docked and

unloading derricks swung over 398th heads.

This was also true when constructing five Liberty ship berths on Quay de Homet and one on Forme de Homet. Like so much of our work in Cherbourg harbor, this project also was subjected to the whims of the tide. Anyone who has not seen the cluttered activity and "orderly confusion" which takes place on such a site cannot fully appreciate the work of an Engineer. In spite of all this, 398th casualties were held to a minimum with a majority of injuries amounting to banged-up hands or legs—nothing more serious.

Even at Cherbourg we sometimes had the feeling we weren't doing quite enough—enough to match efforts being made on the fronts. In a final analysis such equalizing is difficult if not impossible. Our chief trouble seemed to be this: We could see no farther than our noses. It was only the "unimportant" task we ourselves were executing that we were conscious of. Everything else—except for what was happening on the lines advancing toward Germany—was unreal.

However, a walk into our S-3 office at any time during our Cherbourg mission and a glance over the progress chart would have convinced any skeptic of our activities. For example, the following list of 21 jobs were those under construction between the 25th and 27th of October:

1. Port Coal Facilities—assembly of two steel bins.
2. Ordnance loading platforms at Quartermaster buildings A and F.
3. Electrical installations (arsenal area).
4. Water Point (Tourlaville).
5. Road Net improvements and repair (arsenal area).
6. Water Points (137241 and 143213, Cherbourg).
7. Electrical Installations (Twickenham Ferry).
8. Berth Markings (Cherbourg port area).
9. Port area clearance for open storage space.
10. Widen bridge with necessary railroad construction (Napoleon Basin).
11. Winterizing 4th Port Troop billets.
12. Water supply installations and changes (arsenal area).
13. Stiff leg derrick locations; 16 derricks (port area).
14. Berth construction at Naval dry dock (Quai Homet).
15. Railroad construction connecting marshalling yards.
16. Floodlight installations (Napoleon Basin).

17. Decanting point, work for installation, pipe line.

18. Hypochlorinator unit, installation (298th Hospital).

19. Floodlight installation for unloading.

20. Road and street maintenance (Cherbourg).

21. Building rehabilitation for Jerrican repair.

Naturally, not all were completed during the two-day period, but as jobs were finished, new assignments followed. More than 125 work missions were completed while we were stationed in Cherbourg. Some were small, requiring but a few days; others larger, taking a month or more to execute.

There were other activities in and around Cherbourg. Limited space makes it impossible to describe them all. However, there were some jobs—interesting jobs—which should receive some mention.

Take the mine-field clearing details for example. During basic training in Portcawl we studied American type booby traps and mines. We knew them thoroughly and could improvise many ingenious methods of application. However, our only contact with those used by the Germans was by chart, or in some cases, deactivated mines which were not complete. Our knowledge of Nazi demolitions was, to say the least, inadequate.



But into live mine-fields went 398th Engineers. The first day saw many nervous hands probing for dug-in contraptions. After a few had been discovered, unearthed and deactivated, confidence along with an element of thrill took the place of absolute nervousness. It became somewhat of a game as 398ers extracted thousands of Schu, Concrete and other varieties of mines and booby traps. One of our details was assigned a field which proved empty. Wanting "a little excitement and something to do" the detail brought their mine detectors into an ad-

jacent field. They were happy here for the ground reeked with explosive. During all of these ticklish assignments, we suffered no casualties.

Traffic from port and arsenal areas, hauling vitally needed munitions, equipment and rations to ever-expanding fronts, proved too much for the cobbled thoroughfares within Cherbourg. Never having been designed for such treatment, the city's streets took a hell of a beating. It was another 398th assignment to restore these pavements and still not interfere with its supply traffic. Rerouting was the obvious answer and few can forget the Fort du Homet-Le Mont du Roc trips, which formerly took 20 minutes, which were increased to $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour—just so the Red Ball Network would remain open and unimpeded.

Salvaging German, French and American equipment was another "sidelight" of 398th activity. Some 398ers, with foresight and ingenuity, went on scavenger hunts, locating whatever equipment had been left behind, or dumped, for lacking further usefulness. Among the many items our men restored were cement mixers, derricks, cranes, power shovels, generators, picks, shovels, tools, as well as vehicles.

The 398th also operated a provisional labor company. Here hundreds of German prisoners of war were enclosed and quartered, and made available through requisitioning for labor details on our projects throughout Cherbourg area. We built two enclosures, one south the other north, of the city. The northern camp was staffed by 398th personnel for operation.

Repairing and equipping buildings for 298th General Hospital was another assignment which had its interesting aspects. Concrete flooring had to be poured, walls and partitions within the former French hospital, erecting mess halls and kitchen, rewiring an entire wing which was to be occupied by American Medical Corps, installing sterilizing, heating, dental and medical apparatus, in addition to necessary plumbing, wiring and foundations.

An American anti-aircraft unit chose Fort Ile de Pelee for their 90mm guns. Atop this massive structure at the entrance of Cherbourg harbor were gun emplacements of reinforced concrete set in by Nazis. German engineers had built a timber ramp from the lowest level to the very top, grades being more than 45-degree angles. Another 398th detail first strengthened the ramps to permit our air compressor to approach the top.

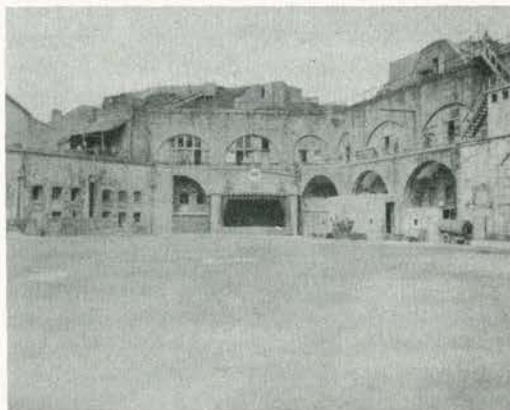
When this was accomplished, 398th de-

molition men drilled charge holes into the emplacements and filled them with American dynamite and German Donarit. Captured Nazi explosive was utilized here as we did all their other material whenever possible. In a week, Fort Ile de Pelee's "top had been blown" and installation of American guns was completed.

Finally, the restoration of Fort du Homet into living quarters, and its tower for Naval Radar and Port Control Station, is worth mentioning. Never in 398th history had such a conglomeration of odors been encountered as was found in the lower levels of this ugly, dirty, horrifying fort. Details of 398th Engineers, aided in the dirtier work by German POWs, "cleaned house" from top to bottom, sealing up unapproachable subterranean chambers from which came the foulest odors. The courtyard was cleaned of debris and gravelled. Soon after Homet became a livable structure and one of the better installations in which 398th personnel lived.

Not all of our time in Cherbourg was spent at work even though our remembrance of the French port is wrapped up chiefly in that thought. We did have our fun—as we've always managed to do. If no entertainment was offered us, we conceived our own. We had never been included in on USO Show circuits for our unit was always more or less scattered to the winds.

With an eye toward attracting this particular entertainment, 398th command approved and encouraged the erection of an outstanding stage within Fort du Homet's angular courtyard. Off-hour details rummaged through dump and junk heaps to



find all the necessary material to build the stage. German paints covered it, as well did their burlap camouflage supply our curtains. The wings were set off by two Georgian columns found in a debris pile. Then our regimental artist decorated the stage's front.

On this stage we saw four USO Show presentations. Our junk-supplied stage was getting results. When USO Shows were unobtainable, we presented our own shows with our own talent. The well-built structure came to mean entertainment—and we liked it. So did the performers who played upon it. Master-of-Ceremonies Freddie Lightner called it "the best in France."

Synonymous with Cherbourg and its docks is "football". It's only to 398th Engineers does it have such a strong significance—and a genuine disappointment. Through efforts by our staff and Special



Service Officer, men of the 398th created a winning football team which will always be remembered with admiration. Under the professional guidance of Jack Marsee and John Pulaski, the 398th scrimmaged through its practice sessions and took part on October 28, 1944, in the first organized football game to be played on French soil, in Cherbourg's Municipal Stadium before thousands of GIs, American sailors and French civilians.

Actually, the Normandy Football League didn't get its official start until a week later when the 398th Roadmasters met the Stevedores of a port battalion in a 0-0 tie. Our Roadmasters set an enviable record from the very start and held its lead throughout the season. The first two games were tied, while we won the remaining four. Our great disappointment came when—with one more game to win to take the Normandy championship—we were alerted for assignment in Verdun with Advance Section, Communications Zone.

Here are the results of the six games played:

398th .. 7	1186th Engineers	7
398th .. 0	500th Port Battalion	0
398th . 26	342nd Engineers	0
398th .. 6	5th Eng. Spec. Brigade .	0
398th .. 6	27th Ordnance	0
398th . 32	1314th Engineers	0

Because it is an unusual distinction, the following list is that of 398th personnel who participated in the first football game to be played by American Army soldiers in Western Europe: Frank Villareal, Harold Rodgers, T. Arrington, D. Harrington, Leslie Cook, John Pulaski, H. Ferrero, Glen Strand, Marvin Hall, Chester Jones, James Castoff, M. Greeley, Richard Fitz, Clyde Fields, John Steele, Don Togneri, H. Navarette, Alfred Terry, Mitchell Sandel, Robert Price, Jack Peterson, Ralph Hodash, James Bunnell, Juan Armenta, John Luke-tich, Walter Jones, Albert Cadeaux, Frank Pistochini, John Silver, Edward Reilly, Tom Garner, Dan Hernandez, Richard Dye, Alvin Roades, Donald Steiner, Thomas Walker, Harold Fix, Donald Wand, John Sanders, Louis Vagninni, Douglas Carter, Robert D. Price, Ralph Passaro, Paul Rodriguez, Jim Riley and John Uss.

At 0500 hours, December 8th, first call was sounded, but few of us had to be reminded of our pending "Forty-and-Eight" trip to an unknown destination, which turned out Verdun, Meuse. Not many were able to sleep on mattressless bunks. The commotion involved in rolling packs and streamlining duffle-bags made sleep an impossibility. So, for one of the only rare times we were ready and waiting long before trucks would pick us up at 0600 hours.

At Cherbourg station we waited in loud-talking groups and looked disparagingly at the waiting "40-&8s". It was a raw, damp, misty December morning. Morale was fairly decent, but talk persisted on losing out on the football title. While waiting we were served a K-ration breakfast with what passed off as coffee. At least it was hot—and nothing more can be said in its favor. Seven-thirty rolled around and we began boarding the boxcars.



For the 398th this was a new experience. Inside the boxcars there were neither seats to sit on or hooks upon which to hang our equipment. Seats weren't supplied, but immediately after entering the "40-&8", hammers and nails turned up—as though by magic. Before the train pulled out at 0800 hours, we were as well established as we'd ever be.

The cold, numbing three days and two nights spent en route to Verdun will undoubtedly never be forgotten. Not in all our lives had we known anything to equal the cramped, smelly, cold, uncomfortable mode of travel which was forced upon us. Hour-long waits on sidings never seemed to help our dispositions which were becoming more heated as the weather dropped.

Topping everything off, the order to shave before arriving in Verdun was, we thought, a masterpiece of "something or other." The few remaining miles were sped over in quicker time than before. In spite of this, with our helmets filled with cold water and grasping whatever was handy, we managed to shave after a fashion. Jostling cars spilled our water; turns carreened our unsteadied bodies; our faces were cut and bleeding. However, the feat of 30 or more men per car shaving under these conditions was accomplished—and we looked it. But, the train was several hours late and we arrived in Verdun long after dark—and no one to greet us, or to notice we had shaved at all!

On the morning of the 8th we had a chance to see our quarters for in the black-out on arrival the night before, we saw nothing—and had banged-up shins to prove it! Regimental Headquarters, Medical Detachment Headquarters and H & S Company took over a massive house at 9 Place du Cathedral, opposite the Verdun Cathedral. All line companies and First and Second Battalion Headquarters moved into Caserne Anthouard.

Our assignment in Verdun consisted of remodelling and restoring numerous buildings for hospital use. It wasn't as spectacular a mission as that just completed at Cherbourg—but it had its interesting sidelights. Who can forget the nightly flight of "Bed-check Charlie" and the accompanying pencils of searchlight scrawling through a murky night sky, and tracers filling the air with fiery, lethal streamers?

Historically interesting was the Verdun Gate, from which was designed the Corps of Engineers Castle. The shield above the gate was utilized in designing our own shield (which appears embossed on this history's outside back cover). Our design incorporates half of the Verdun original in shape and using the vertical bars. The rest: Wreath, stars and motto are our own. The wreath signifies our status as a Meritorious Service Unit, the stars for Northern France, Rhineland and Ardennes Campaigns. The motto, "Factum est," means "It is done!"

But, our stay in Verdun was short. Events were happening on the Western Front which weren't "according to plan,"

THE G. S. ENGINEERS

We are the G. S. Engineers,
The best you've ever seen,
And if you'll spare a moment
I'll tell you what I mean.

We build things up, tear them down
Then build them up again.
Sometimes we do it once;
Sometimes we do it ten.

An English colonel once did say
"Those bloody Yankee fools
Can do most any job with
The least amount of tools."

For if we have no shovels,
We still can dig a trench;
We built a V-Type Trestle
And never used a wrench.

We built 16 Bailey Bridges
Without a hammer, rod, or bar;
We encircled a thousand prisoners
With twenty feet of wire.

They called for us in Cherbourg,
But there must have been a slip,
For when we came to be deported
We didn't have a ship.

But we weren't disappointed
Because we had no boat.
We gently took our pants off
And began to swim and float.

It isn't far across the Channel—
Just eighty miles or more.
But it took us thirty minutes
To reach the other shore.

We finally reached the land
And thought we'd get a break,
But caught hell from our colonel
For being fifteen minutes late.

Now we're building railroads
And it sure does make us bitch
To try to hook an English rail
To a cock-eyed Frenchman's switch.

I hope that you won't doubt this,
Although it does sound queer,
But as I said in the beginning,
We're the G. S. Engineers.

—Erwin L. Brooks; France



OUR LUXEMBOURG MISSION

Field Marshall von Rundstedt's December 16th breakthrough into Ardennes gave the European war picture new significance. What had begun just as another counterattack was developing into threatening proportions. The Nazi army was staking all in an apparent gamble and it was up to the Allies to match their stakes—or lose. What followed then is best told by Colonel Detzer, again taking an excerpt from his *The Mightiest Army*.

"On the morning of the 18th General Hodges had ordered his headquarters staff to remove all documents and to start north. He kept with him only his ranking officers and some of the Service troops attached to Headquarters. Between him and the Germans remained one badly battered Infantry regiment which was falling back, taking severe losses and which in the end would seem to disintegrate, leaving an open gate and a broad smooth road to Spa and Liege. Once there, fueled up and equipped with new American guns, the Germans could have raised hell.

"Brigadier General Eddie Plank, a plump, puckish little regular with a shrill, contagious laugh, was commanding the Advance Sector of the Communications Zone, back here in the valley of the Meuse.

"In this sector we had built great supply installations, at the very back doors of our armies, where they could pick up what they needed of munitions, food and supplies. Northwest of the Advance Sector lay what was known as Oise Section, another area dedicated to logistics and supply, under command of slim, gray little Brigadier General Charles O. Thrasher.

"For soldiers they had service troops—Quartermaster and Ordnance men,

Engineer general service regiments, Adjutant General detachments, Judge Advocates, bakers, truck companies, salvage crews. There were Military Police and Medical Corpsmen and Chemical Warfare depot operators, railroaders and cooks and clerks and telephone linemen.

"Generals Thrasher and Plank had no big guns, nor any units trained to operate them. They had no tanks, no infantry. They had rifles, carbines, pistols, a few machine guns, a few anti-aircraft pieces. And the Germans were rolling forward, only a few miles away.

"As the situation on the front became more desperate, General Eisenhower called General Lee and asked whether he had any units or any men he could spare. General Lee called General Plank and General Thrasher. Did they have anyone they could throw into the lines to back up the Infantry?

"Anyone? Hell, yes! They had thousands of the best damn soldiers in the world. Maybe they weren't all you could ask for physically and they hadn't trained for combat but by damn!, you could count on them to stand up and fight. So they formed battalions and companies of this collection of pen pushers and truck drivers, of grocers and laundry operators and shoemakers and sent them forward toward the approaching battle line.

"The German army swept forward. The Service troops along the Meuse could hear the rattle of rifle fire only a little way ahead. Ordnance companies had moved up and the Infantry fell back on them. A battalion of Military Police had shed its brassards, and looked very tall and grim, as it marched with long, anxious strides, over a little bridge and went exploring for the front.

The men of an Engineer regiment with honest roadbuilding mud on their faces, moved off into a southeasterly direction toward the place where the gunfire seemed the loudest. Then a laundry company with the suds hardly dry on their hands. And a salvage company. And a bakery company, a little thick around the midriff. And a company of telephone linemen. All moving up. All going to the war.

"Everywhere along that cold and bloody front, Service troops stood shoulder to shoulder with the weary Infantry. Everywhere the enemy surged forward and broke against the stubborn lines of bakers and shoemakers, roadbuilders and clerks and Military Police. Many of them died in the snow with their boots on and the guns hot in their hands."

We were alerted at 1500 hours, December 22nd. Two hours later our Verdun construction projects had been shelved—our tools were put away. By 1800 hours our advance party left Verdun by motor convoy to its unknown destination in Luxembourg. At 2000 hours, First Battalion followed in all available regimental vehicles.

Upon arrival in Luxembourg City, XII Corps Headquarters was consulted and learned the 398th had been attached to Task Force Reed, XII Corps, Third Army, and received orders to proceed, with First Battalion, to an assembly point in the vicinity of Sandweiler. On the 23rd, Company C remained here while Company B moved on to Outrange and Company A to Schrassig.

Second Battalion and H & S Company left Verdun at 2000 hours, December 23rd, by motor convoy provided by Twelfth Army Group. At Luxembourg City the convoy was reformed and guided to an assembly point near Moutfort. Although considerable enemy air activity was observed during the moves, no enemy fire was directed at the convoy.

Task Force Reed was composed of the Second Cavalry Group, Second Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, 808th Tank Destroyer Battalion (less one company), 276th Field Artillery Battalion (105s), 398th Engineer General Service Regiment and 372nd Engineer General Service Regiment. This task force was divided into two units: Combat Team Costello and Combat Team Hargis. The 398th was attached to the former team which also included Second Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, Company A of 808th Tank Destroyer Battalion.

The mission of Combat Team Costello was to relieve elements of the Fourth Infantry Division in sector extending from Ihnen to Mertert inclusive, and to defend and repel any crossing of the Moselle River attempted by the enemy, and to prepare alternate delaying positions.

The sector of Combat Team Costello was further divided into two subsectors with A Troop and one platoon of C Troop of the Second Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron and our own First Battalion. These troops occupied the southern subsector between Ihnen and northern Wormeldange, a total front along the Moselle of 9.6 kilometers. The northern subsector extended for 15 kilometers from Grevenmacher to Mertert inclusive, and was occupied by B Troop of Second Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron and the 398th's Second Battalion.

Immediately following a reconnaissance made by battalion and company commanders in conjunction with Second Cavalry Troop commander, defensive positions were agreed upon and we began "digging in." By 1800 hours on December 24th (Christmas Eve) the Fourth Infantry was relieved.



Practically all of our positions were under direct enemy observation making it necessary for reliefs to change after dark. Nights when there was a full moon it was impossible not to be detected, consequently we received frequent mortar and artillery shellings. Also, the town of Machtum within the First Battalion sector was occupied by an enemy force of unknown strength at the time we moved on to the line.

Weapons? That was another matter! We had carbines and 1903 Springfield rifles. Our 30 and 50 caliber machine guns and rocket launchers had been taken away from us by Normandy Base Section while we were rebuilding Cherbourg's harbor. About all we had for defense were the guns Fourth Infantry left in established positions. A few days later our requisitions for additional machine guns

were filled and we felt more secure. Ten days later we were issued M-1s in place of our '03s.

Here is a list of locations set up as headquarters on the 24th of December: Regimental Headquarters was located near Biwer, First Battalion Headquarters at Niederdonven, Second Battalion Headquarters at Manternach. Company A's Headquarters was at Lenningen, while its platoon headquarters and positions were: First at Ihnen, Second at Lenningen, Third at Oberwormeldange. Company B was held in reserve at Gostingen. Company C at Oberdonven. Companies D, E and F were located in Manternach.

Christmas Day found us improving and amplifying our First Line of Defense be-



tween Ihnen and Ahn, shifting some OPs (Observation Posts) because of heavy enemy artillery fire. CPs (Command Posts) were set up at Munschecker and Syre. On the 398th's first patrolling mission, one Engineer was wounded by an exploding booby trap near Syre.

December 26th was another day of improving and shifting—always closer to the Moselle with an eye toward clearing its west shore of enemy troops. Flaxweiler was chosen for Company B where it could undergo special combat training. Costingen was under 88mm artillery fire from 0600 to 0900 hours, without casualties. Oberdonven was also subjected to 88s from 0400 to 0630 hours, also without casualties. Enemy mortar and artillery fire continued intermittently along our regimental line.

Each night patrols operated out of Mertert. On the 27th a night patrol into Machtum was pinned down by enemy fire, but managed to escape during a brief lull, without casualties. Another 398th company was assigned the task of booby-trapping an area over which enemy patrols operated out of Grevenmacher—"Moselle Ghost Town."

During the early hours of the 28th, German night patrols out of Mertert, Machtum and Grevenmacher as well as from

positions on the east bank of the Moselle, operated within our lines—obviously in search for information. In retaliation, joint 398th and Second Cavalry reconnaissance patrols invaded German-held positions on the 29th at 1900 hours and returned at 2345 hours with necessary information pertaining to enemy installations on the Moselle's east side, vicinity of Wincheringen.

At 1900 hours on the 31st, a 12-man patrol crossed the thinly iced Moselle and penetrated three miles into enemy territory, again in the Wincheringen area. Here they encountered a nest of five enemy machine guns. Four men of the patrol (three from the 398th) were cut down by a surprise spray of lethal lead. Remainder of the patrol dispersed and upon completion of mission, returned to friendly areas. The four who had been shot down were beyond reach and evacuation was impossible. Later we learned only one man survived.

Earlier in the day, efforts were begun to dislodge enemy holdings within Machtum. Friendly artillery laid down a moving barrage on the town and followed with Second Cavalry light tanks. A 398th platoon occupied a hill overlooking Machtum at 1630 hours where a Jerry prisoner was taken for interrogation. Meanwhile the Second Cavalry forces withdrew from the town. A 398th squad attacked an adjacent hill overlooking Machtum and removed an enemy strong point. The Germans then laid down a 3-hour 88mm and mortar barrage, pinning down the squad, and followed it up with attacks by three patrols. At 0300 hours the 1st of January our squad withdrew because of lack of sufficient tank support for they were unable to maneuver steep slopes near town and had to be withdrawn. However, the 398th suffered no casualties during the operations.

At 1140 hours began a ten-minute air attack on Wecker, a nearby road intersection and an open area immediately north. About 30 500-pound bombs and numerous incendiaries were dropped, setting fire and demolishing buildings within Wecker. The road intersection and adjacent area were heavily cratered, temporarily delaying road travel, and severed telephone lines disrupted communications for a period not exceeding an hour. Road repair was easily and rapidly accomplished by dozers, and 398th personnel repaired telephone lines.

Because of low clouds with few breaks, identification of the planes was difficult. However, from evidence left by fragments and unexploded shells, and collected observations, the general belief was that

the aircraft was American B-17s who were confused as to target. We suffered no casualties.

But this was beginning to be a nasty habit. At 1020 hours on the 1st, a squadron of unidentified fighter bombers of the P-38 type, taking advantage of the bright, clear weather, again attacked Wecker and vicinity. They made two runs, the first a dive-bombing mission upon the western portion of the town. The second consisted of 50-caliber machine-gun strafing of same area, including an outlying portion of regimental headquarters area. Fortunately there were no casualties.

At 1100 hours, two 398th platoons, supported by a platoon of Second Cavalry light tanks again attacked the enemy's hill position outside of Machtum. An undetermined number of Germans were killed and wounded. The position was overtaken and 398th personnel manned former Jerry installations from that time onward. Our casualties during the mission numbered nine wounded, seven seriously.

During patrol operations across the Moselle on the night of January 2nd, another 398th man was wounded and listed as "missing in action." About the same time this was taking place on German soil (2300 hours), a Nazi patrol attacked one of our outposts and wounded two 398ers while they were in their foxholes. However, one Jerry was wounded and the patrol dispersed without any further action.

On January 3rd, Regimental Headquarters moved from Biver to a position atop a hill near Bucholz. Because of severe icy conditions, Colonel Douglass received internal leg injuries and was hospitalized. Lieutenant Colonel William S. Kingsbury, Jr., assumed command.

During our entire Luxembourg campaign, our popular Chaplain conducted services whenever and wherever possible. Barns, factories, cellars and deserted houses were locales for numerous worship services. On one particular day, the Chaplain and his assistant entered the forward outpost positions to offer services for men who had long been isolated from any group activity.

We shall never forget the portable organ which accompanied the Chaplain and his assistant wherever they went. On this day, services had begun and the assistant was leading singing the "Old Rugged Cross" which carried well across the river. With a sideward glance the organist looked toward and beyond the Moselle only to see a Nazi prying around a building corner to learn where the music and

singing was coming from. Possibly he respected the Christian service for instead of firing (which would have been easy as not) he lingered awhile and then returned to whatever he was doing on the building's other side.

Another German patrol operated within our lines on January 6th and attacked one of our company's machine-gun position, killing two 398th men and seriously wounding a third. With the ground now completely covered with snow, detection of white-clad German patrols became more difficult. Our men were requisitioning curtains, tablecloths and sheets to compare with German snow-suits. For camouflage, 398ers were utilizing white cloth to conceal the dirt of foxhole parapets.

"Any damn thing," the fellows said, "just as long as we can remain unseen!"

On January 9th another attack was made on Machtum by Second Cavalry and a platoon of 398th men. Beginning at 0200 hours, a marching barrage was laid by friendly artillery. One attacking force entered the town from the east and established outposts in cellars and were pinned down by heavy enemy mortar fire at daybreak. The remaining force set up posi-



tions between the hill and river, south of the town, to intercept possible retreating enemy. At daylight, all our positions were under direct German observation and fire from Nittel. Consequently, our forces were compelled to move out only to resume the attack on the 10th which resulted in Machtum's fall.

All of this time in Luxembourg wasn't without humor—by whatever brand it may be classified. It is possible only to recall and tell a few for most of Luxembourg incidents were lost because of far-spreading locations with limited means of contact. However, those who know will never forget the first sergeant who tried—but with no success—to milk a pregnant cow which had been taken hostage in lieu of the meat shortage.

Speaking of the meat shortage, we did manage to have beef and venison. Then higher headquarters issued an order whereby cattle could be disposed of in kitchens only if they were killed during military operations. It was unfortunate for the deer and cows that fell to Engineer rifles after that—but it was "impossible" to tell a Nazi from a cow, especially from certain angles.

C-rations, up till Luxembourg, had been more of a novelty than anything else. But day following day of eating cold C-rations in even colder foxholes soon wore the



novelty thin. It became monotonous. In spite of them—we repeat, *in spite of them*—we maintained a high degree of good health and sick call witnessed a minimum of GIs suffering from either malnutrition or diet deficiency.

Highlighting Luxembourg is champagne and schnapps, which proved more palatable than local water supplies. The number of bottles of champagne consumed will never be known. Intoxication through champagne was a rarity—and the few who did violate our frontline code of ethics were justifiably disciplined. As for schnapps, it tasted to the majority as being no more than unadulterated embalming fluid and was put to more practical usage as cigarette lighter fluid. But there were those who sipped gently, shook their heads and pressed their eyes back into their sockets, exclaiming, "Gee, damn good stuff!"

Passwords and countersigns had their moments of humor. Who will forget the regimental surgeon the night he offered "Three Feathers" for the official "Four Roses"? Or the battalion surgeon who

went to the latrine with two guards, and after being ticklishly surprised by a cat, beat the guards back to the aid station in spite of his trousers being at "half-mast"?

Then too there was the officer who had his troubles during the reported German counterattack. When asked by a motor-pool mechanic what was to be done with the trailers (since all equipment was being readied for evacuation to a rear position) said, "Crank them up! Crank them up and get them the hell out of here!"

And the Pfc. who called out a resting platoon out of their quarters because he had been frightened by a cat stalking in a woodshed. And the GI who found a cache of wine in a cellar and had to make three trips during a shelling to have a bottle for himself. Twice as he left the shelled building and ran for his quarters, shells made him take to the ground, breaking both bottles in the fall.

Yes, there are many memories that have come with us out of Luxembourg. The cold, snowy nights of guard duty; patrols into Germany across the icy Moselle; shellings and bombings; inadequate food, munitions and clothing; church services; movies in cellars and barns; actions caused by fear and courage. And so many, many more.

Until we were relieved by the 1252nd and 1258th Engineer Combat Battalions on January 23rd, after 31 successive days on the line, activities were becoming commonplace as compared with what had already gone before. No longer were we "green," to which we have the tutelage of the Second Cavalry to thank.

We learned how effectively our artillery was working with their round-the-clock harrassing fire on targets within enemy territory. And, though not as concentrated, we also learned the harrassing effectiveness of German artillery on such points as Oberdonven, Manternach, Bucholz, Grevenmacher and all throughout the regimental line from Merttert to Ihnen. Mortar fire was often intense on the front lines and as far back as Lenningen, Niederdonven and Syre.

Snow fell at various times, and during our 31 days the area was continually blanketed with a foot or more of snow which made daytime movements not only impeded, but ill-advised.

Machine-gun positions and foxholes were dug in ground frozen to a depth of two feet. Some positions were roofed over with logs and banked with earth and camouflaged with snow or cloth, and later fully concealed by natural snowstorms. Other positions were in houses in towns along the river, permitting excellent observation of enemy activities.

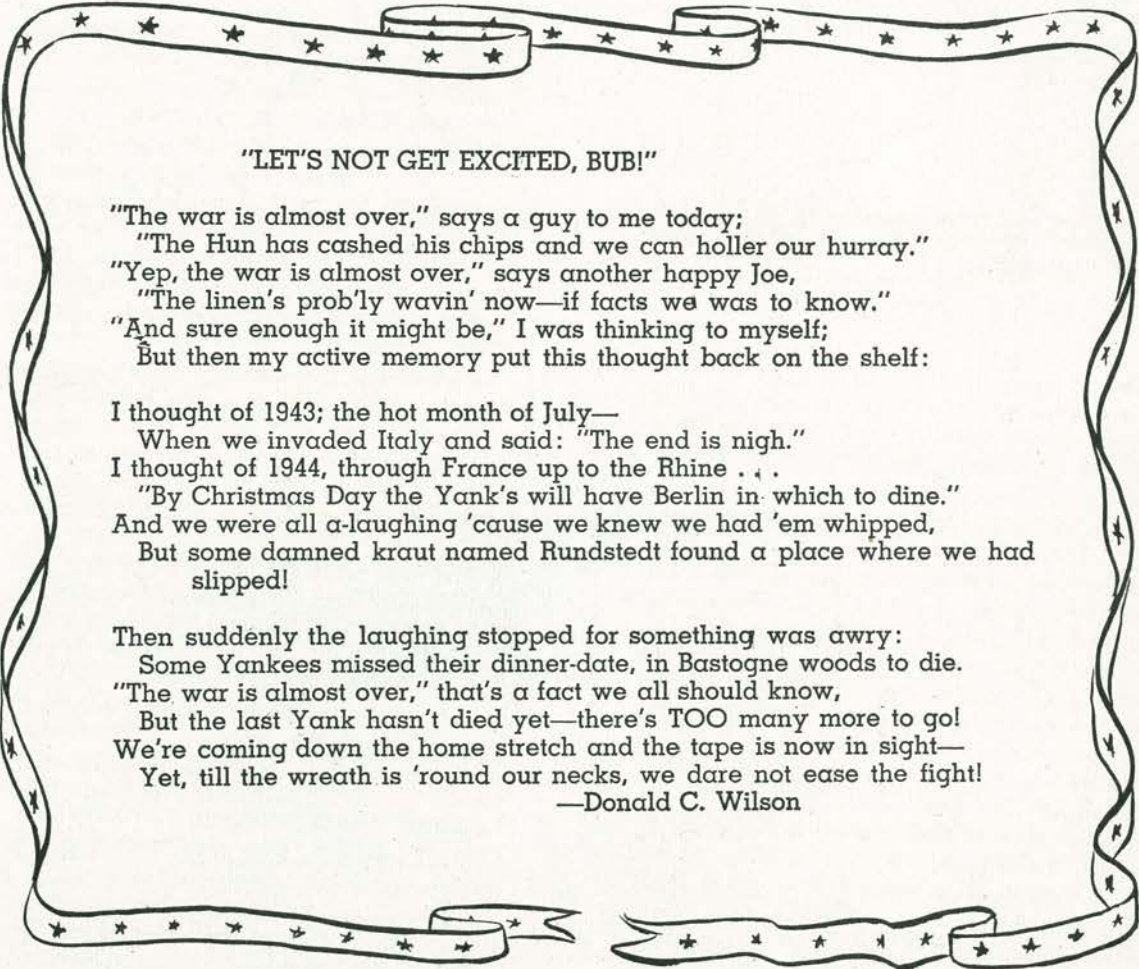
Communications between OPs and CPs was by telephone. Numerous times the wires were cut by enemy patrols or severed by enemy fire. Men of the 398th made repairs readily and phone communications were never disrupted for more than an hour at any time.

During the period from January 20 to the 23rd, friendly air activity along the Moselle and beyond was intense. Targets on the east side of the Moselle from positions opposite Ahn to Wasserbillig, and eastward toward Saarsburg, were repeatedly bombed and strafed, all in connection with a drive northward by the adjacent Forty-Second Division.

Elements of the 398th participated in creating a diversion in the vicinity of Ihnen to Ahn to assist in simulating prep-

This sham was aimed at diverting the 1st Panzer Division, which was somewhere in the Saarburg locality, to this area, and away from the drive being prepared for the north front at Echternach. Various amplified sounds of starting tank motors, grinding gears, running vehicles, recorded on records were thrown across the river. Our attempts to manufacture a "dry-run" assault were successful and the 42nd Division made its northward drive.

Our Luxembourg combat mission completed, the entire Regiment was en route by motor convoy and train by 0600 hours on January 24th. Our new mission in construction was again in the rear, at Sissonne, France, with our work orders originating in Oise Base Section, Reims.

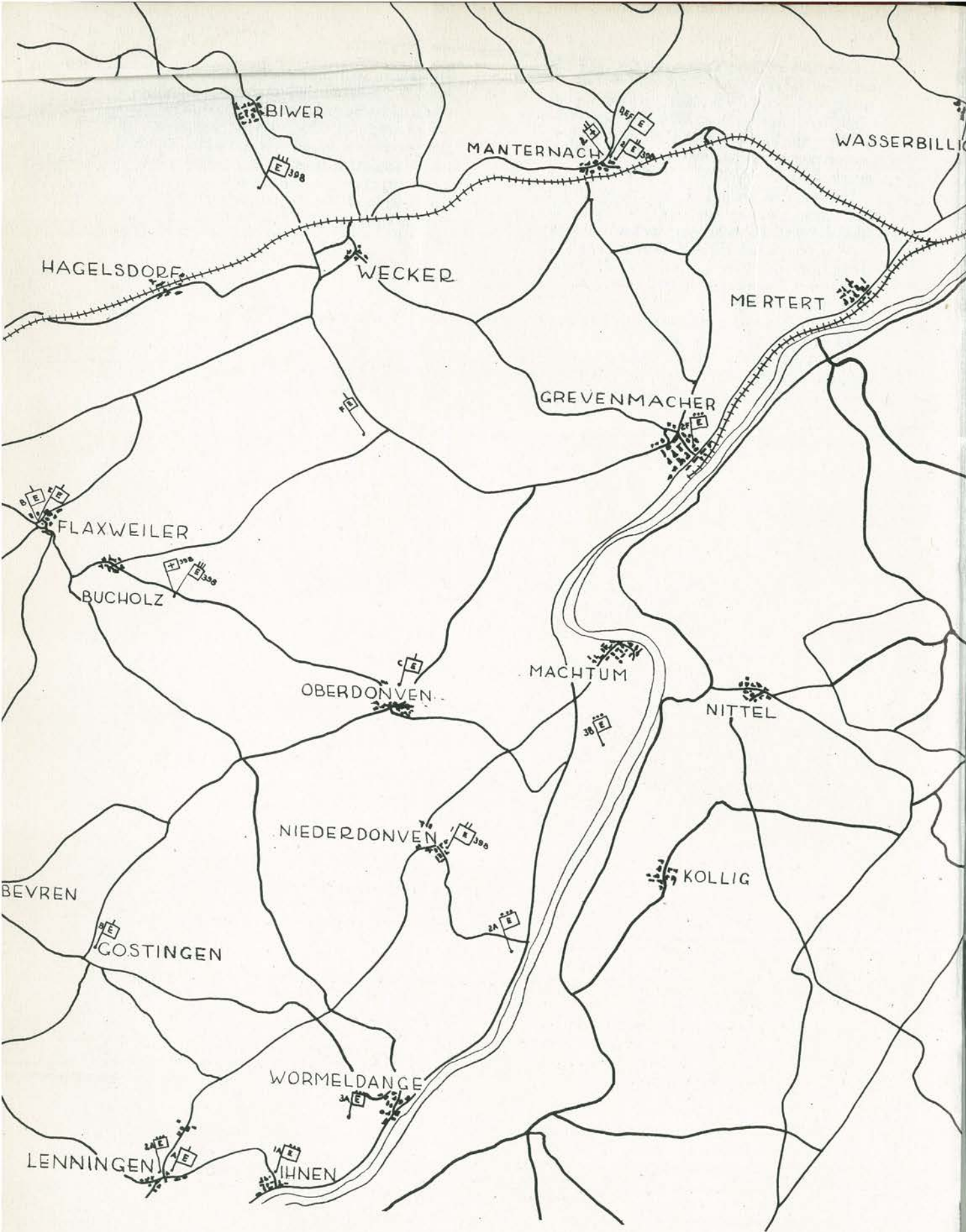


"LET'S NOT GET EXCITED, BUB!"

"The war is almost over," says a guy to me today;
"The Hun has cashed his chips and we can holler our hurray."
"Yep, the war is almost over," says another happy Joe,
"The linen's prob'ly wavin' now—if facts we was to know."
"And sure enough it might be," I was thinking to myself;
But then my active memory put this thought back on the shelf:

I thought of 1943; the hot month of July—
When we invaded Italy and said: "The end is nigh."
I thought of 1944, through France up to the Rhine . . .
"By Christmas Day the Yank's will have Berlin in which to dine."
And we were all a-laughing 'cause we knew we had 'em whipped,
But some damned kraut named Rundstedt found a place where we had
slipped!

Then suddenly the laughing stopped for something was awry:
Some Yankees missed their dinner-date, in Bastogne woods to die.
"The war is almost over," that's a fact we all should know,
But the last Yank hasn't died yet—there's TOO many more to go!
We're coming down the home stretch and the tape is now in sight—
Yet, till the wreath is 'round our necks, we dare not ease the fight!
—Donald C. Wilson



L U X E M B O U R G

Christmas Parties in England



Vailly-sur-Aisne, France

International Relations



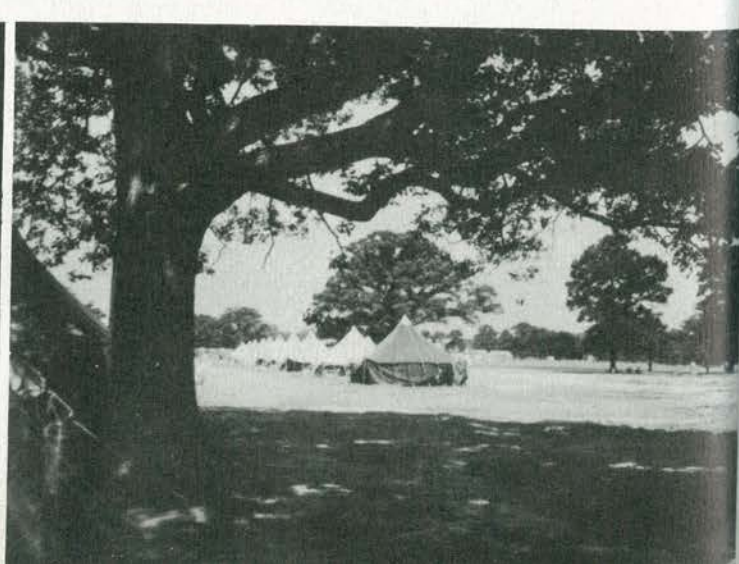
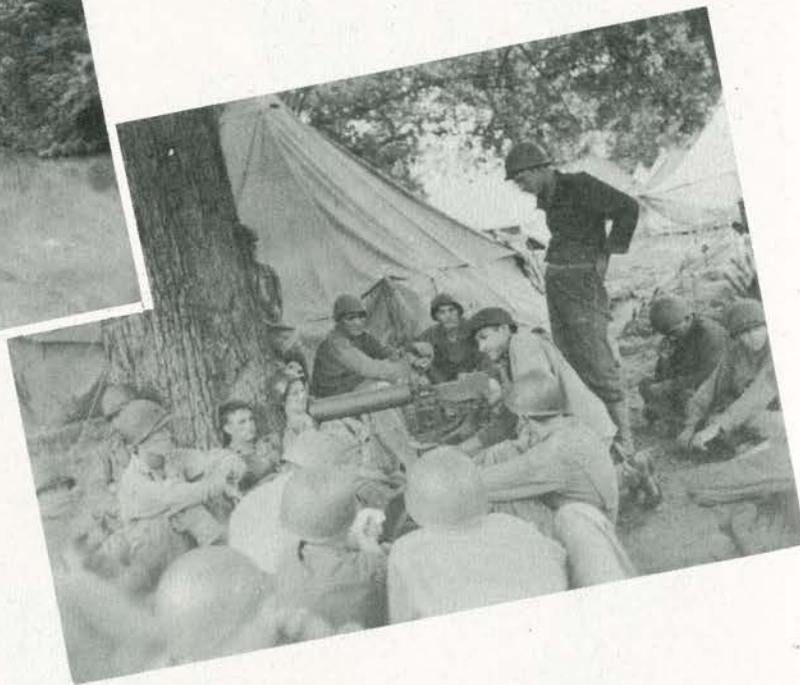
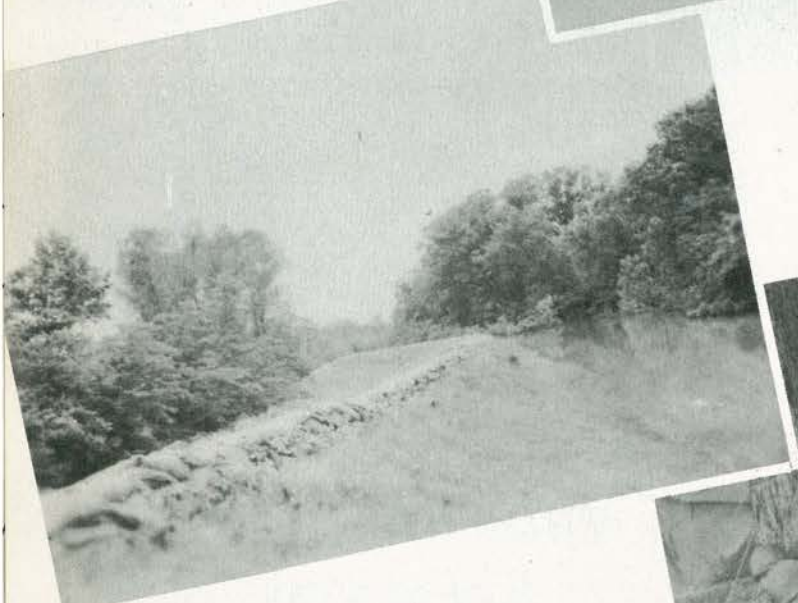
Belleau Wood, France

Just Off Utah Beach





ENGINEERS BATTLE



ARKANSAS FLOODS

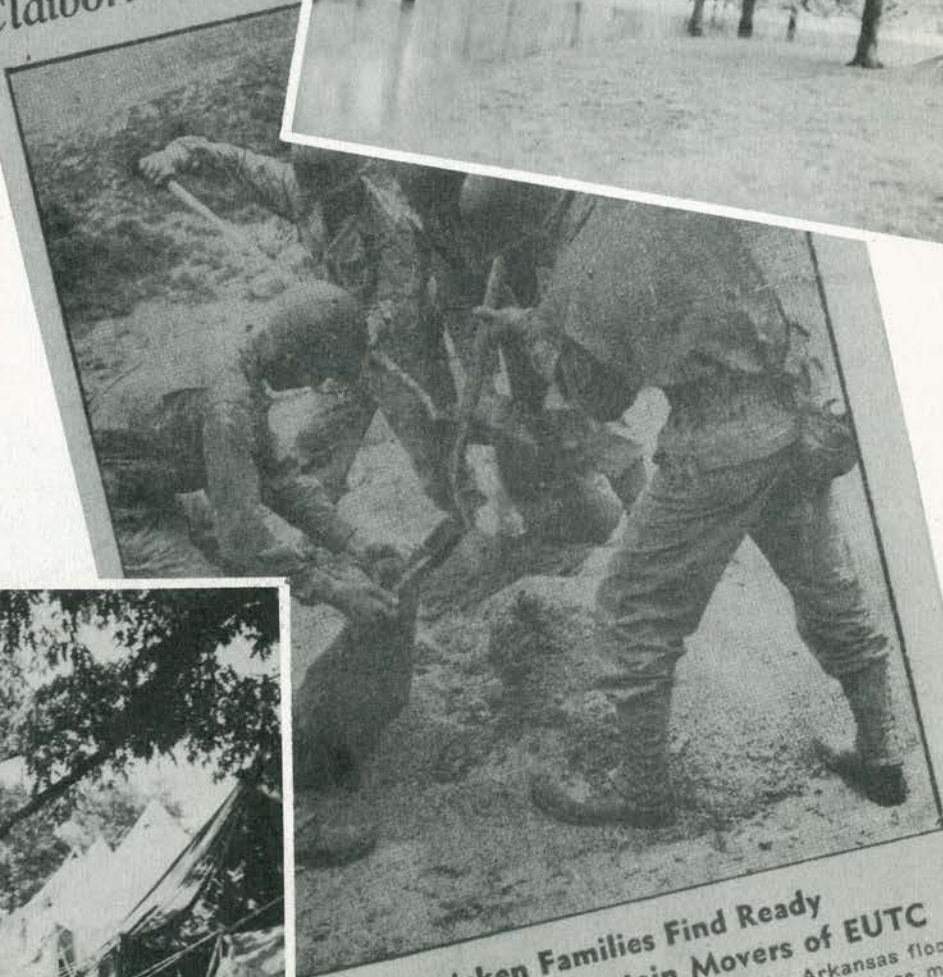
5-20-43

Thousands of EUTC Troops Rushed to Scene of Emergency As Rising Waters Kill, Destroy

Special Training Given Mountain Movers Demonstrates Foresight of Engineers

The main strength of five regiments
battled a new enemy—floods—at the
Arkansas and White rivers, in Arkansas.
Responding to a call from the
ing of May 12, the 95th, 359th, 39th
exodus toward the scene of action
(Continued)

Claiborne Minutemen

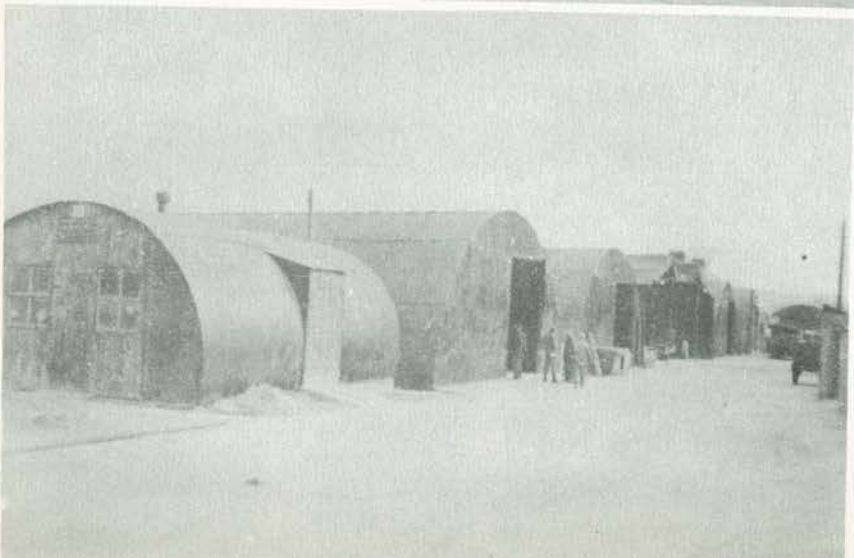
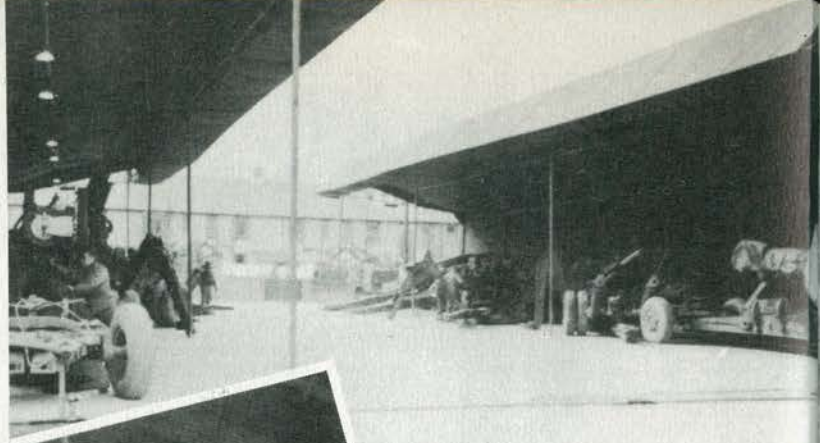


Flood Stricken Families Find Ready Champions in Mountain Movers of EUTC

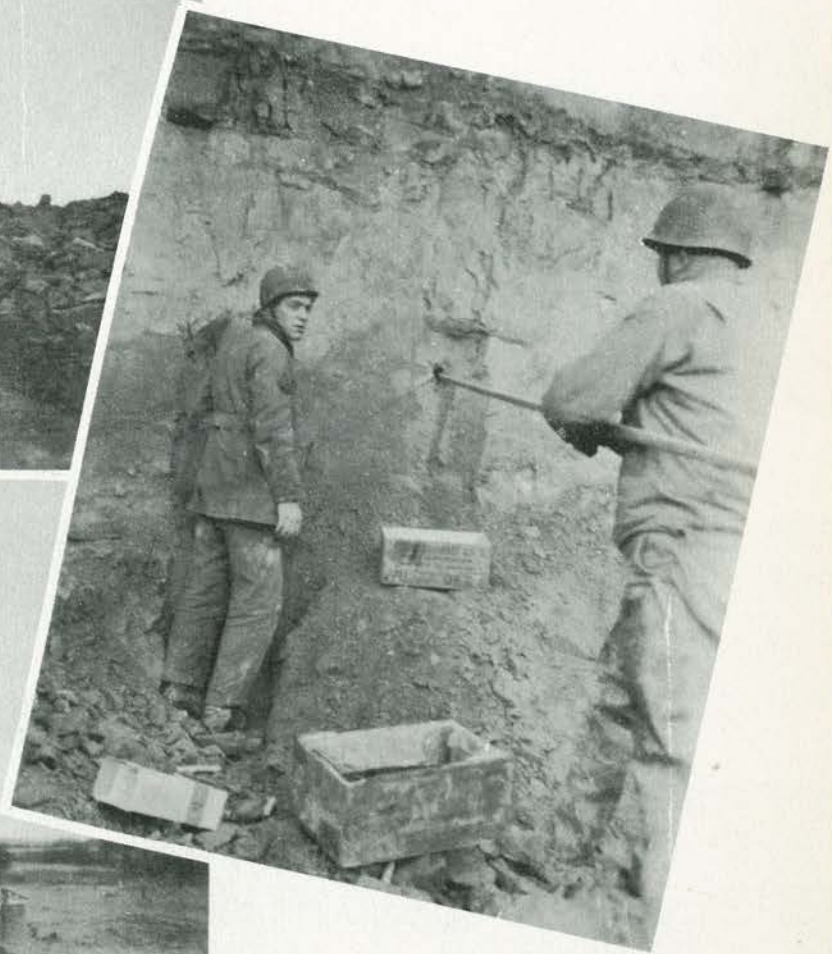
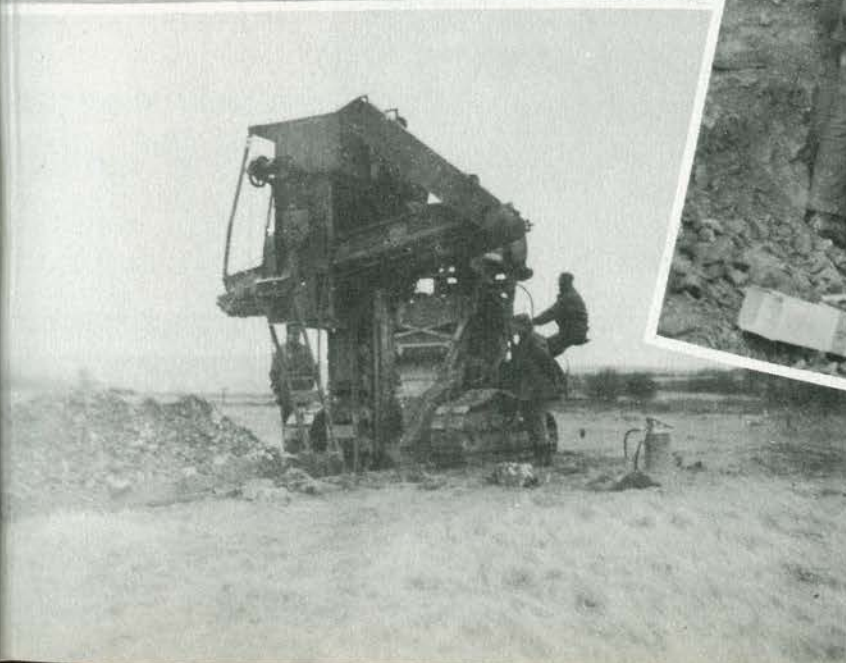
Claiborne Engineers were rushed to battle the Arkansas floods
week because they had been trained to do the job. These men,
and but awaiting call, demonstrate the type of work their
in the fight against rising waters. EUTC Photo



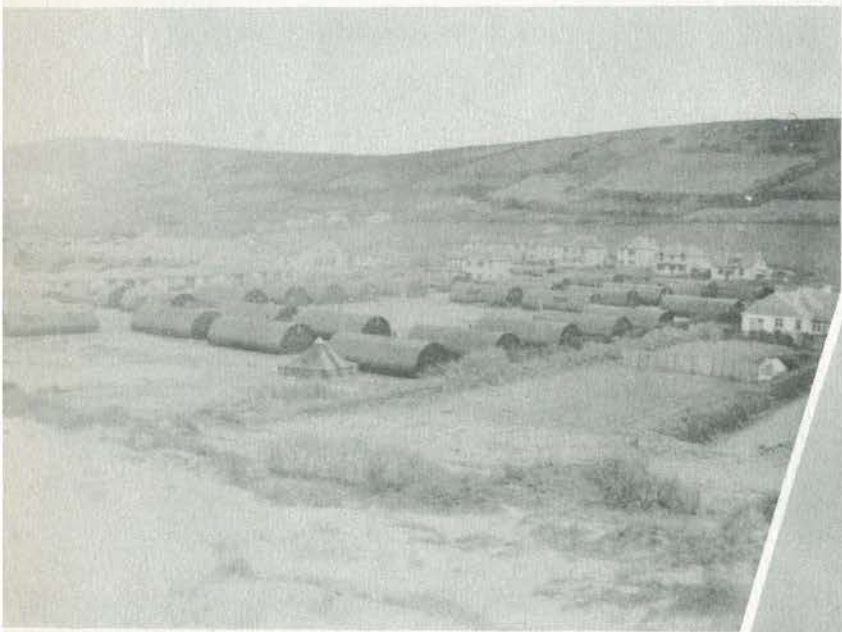
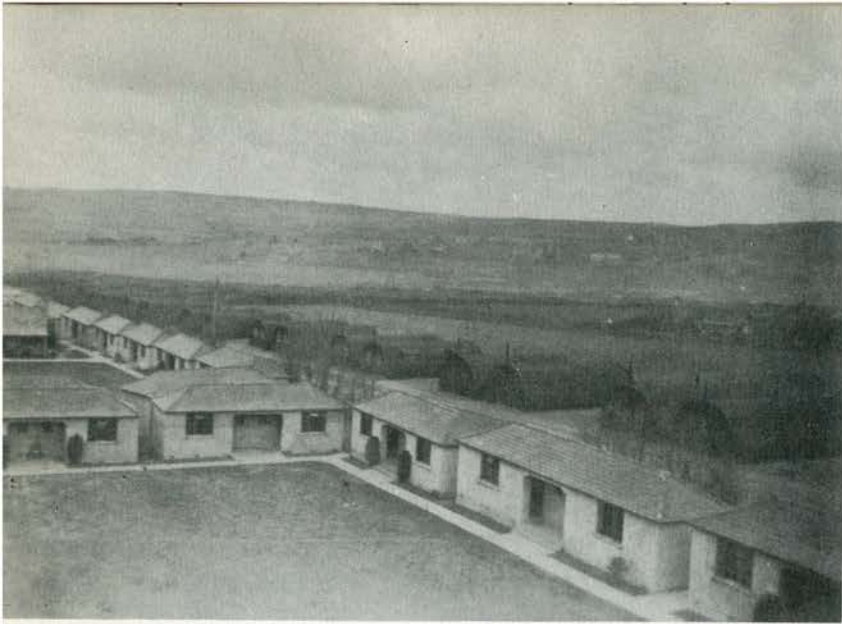
*Bideford
Ordnance
Depot*



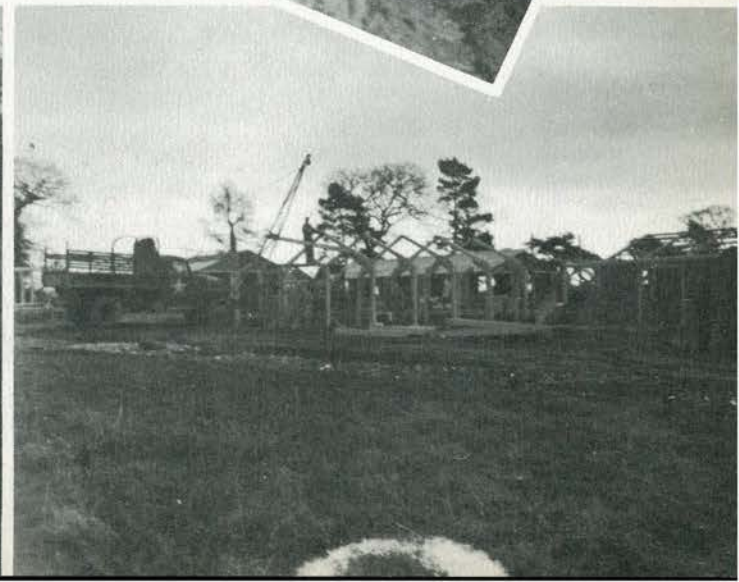
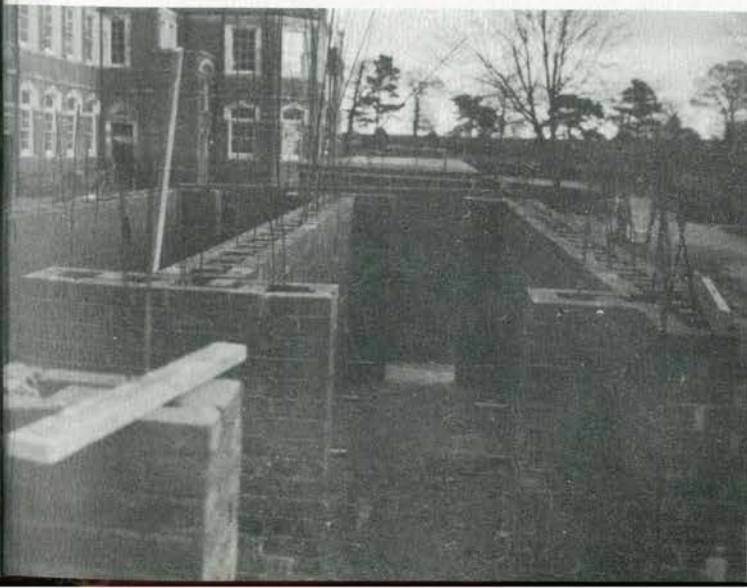
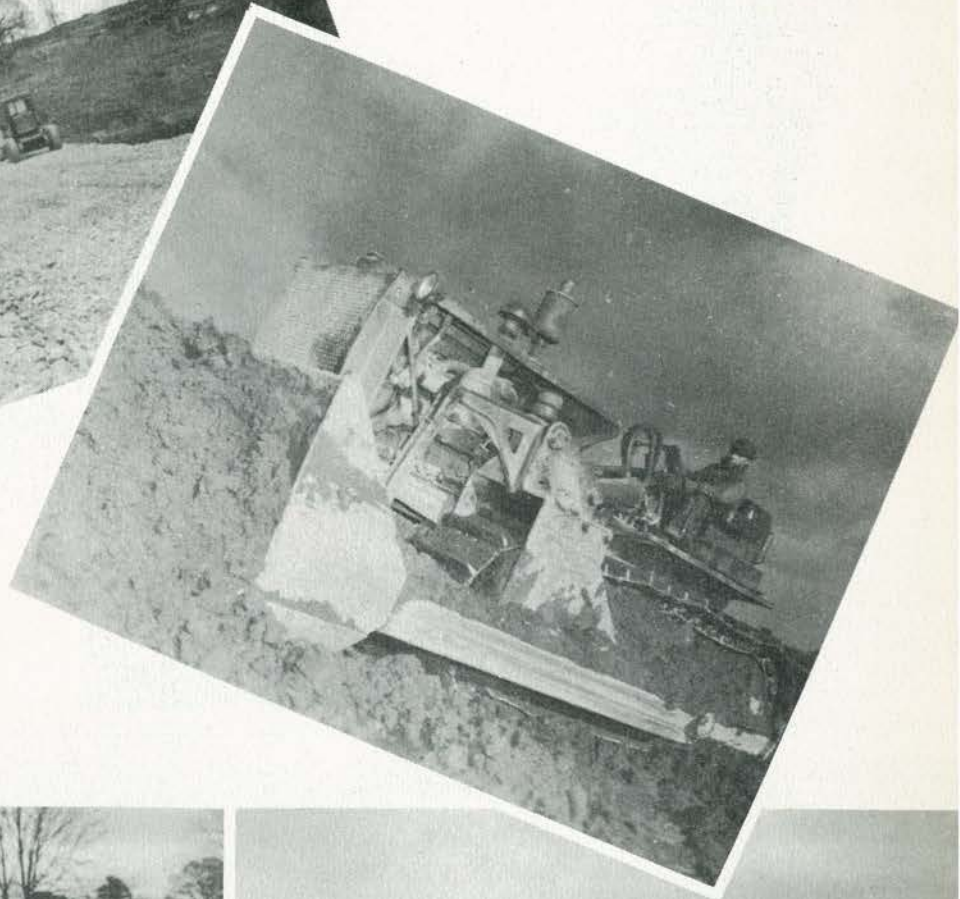
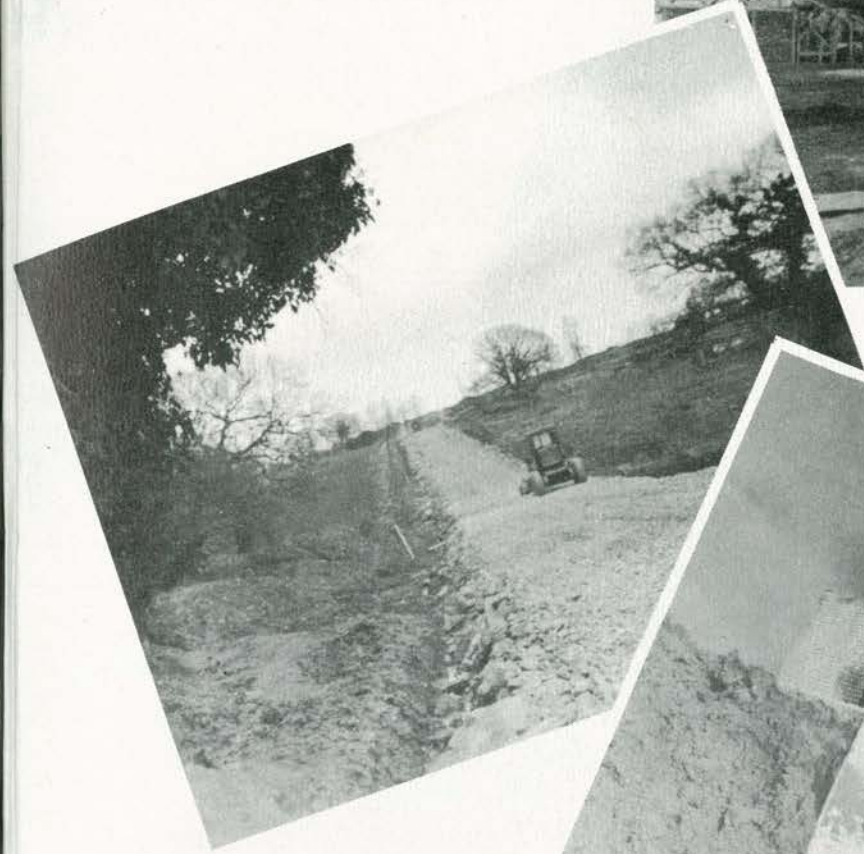
Digging In for Construction



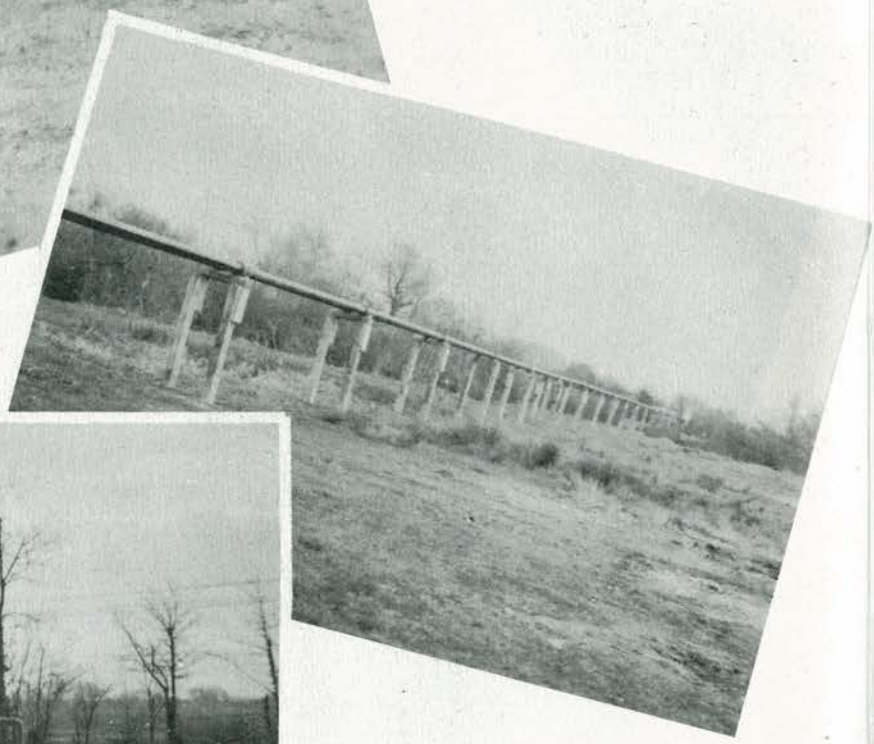
Croyde Camp



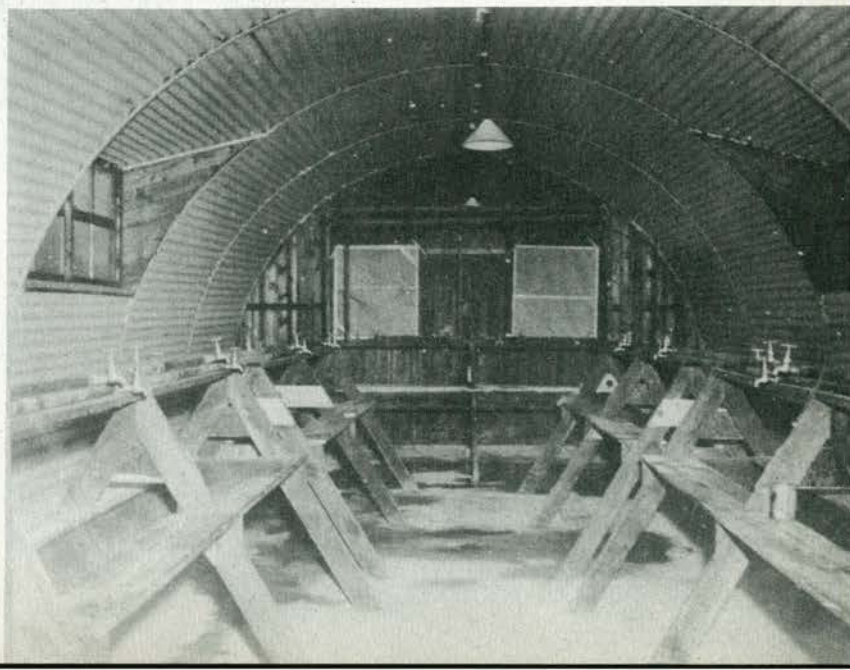
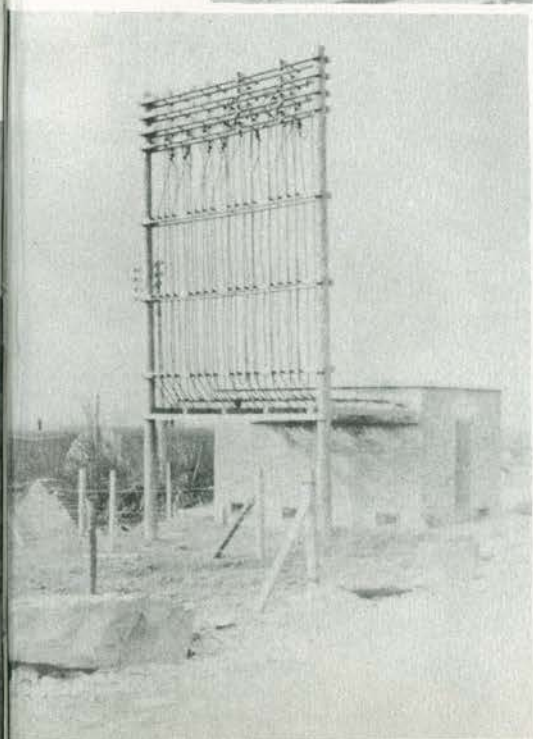
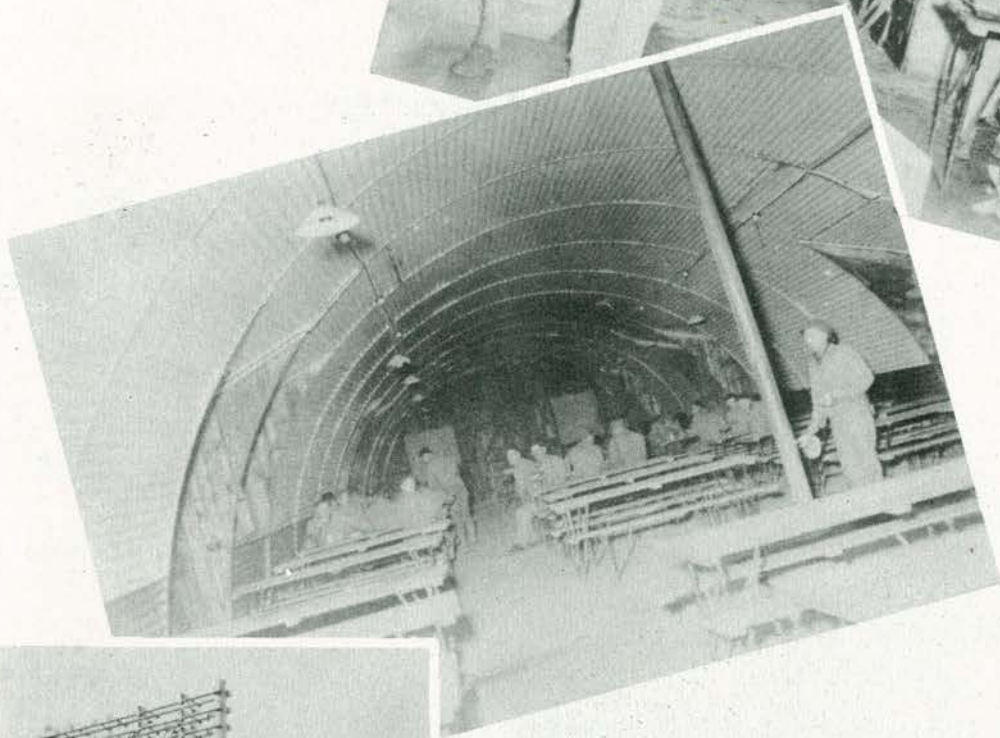
Exeter Hospital



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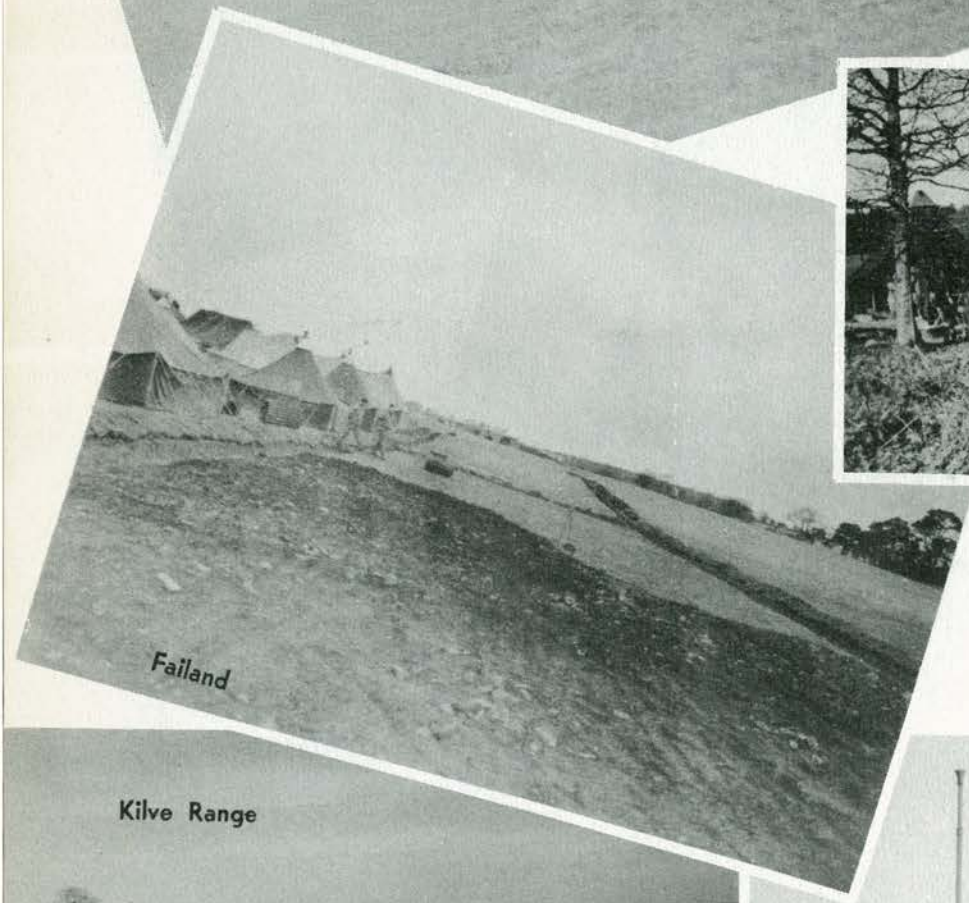
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Crowcombe (Mehling)



Failand

Kilve Range

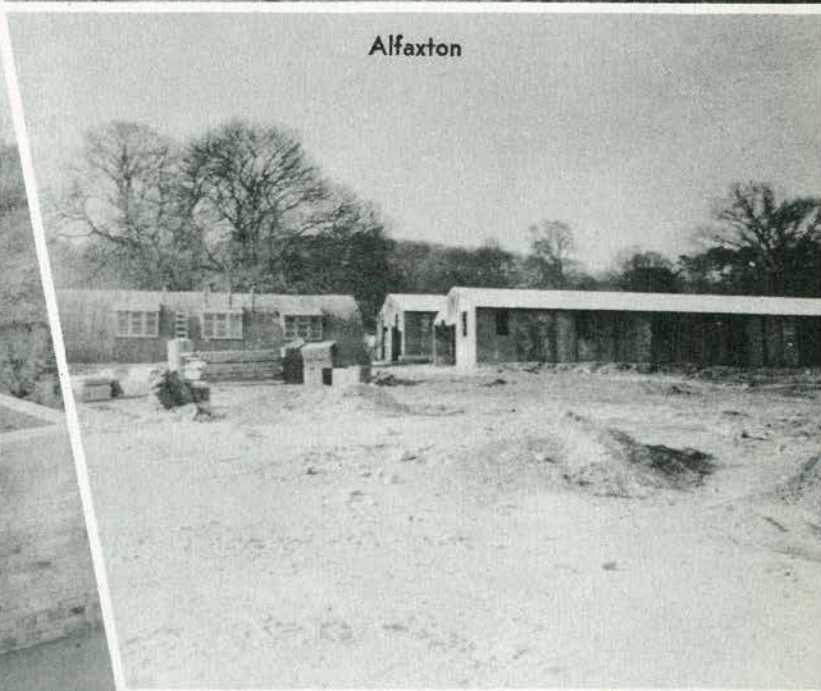
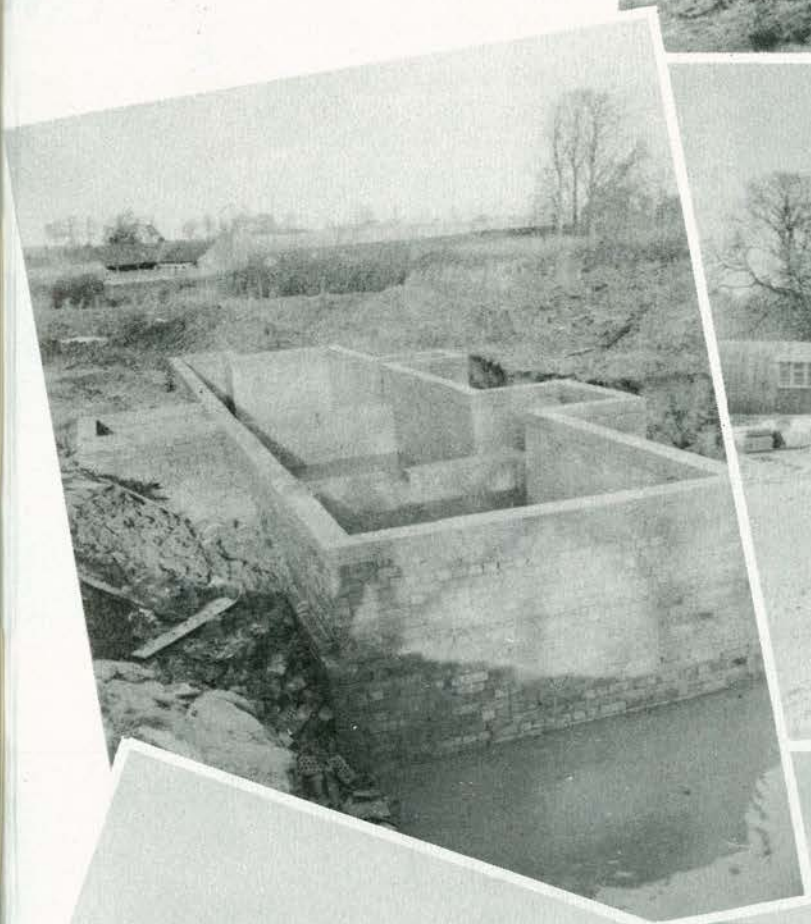


Swanage Convoy

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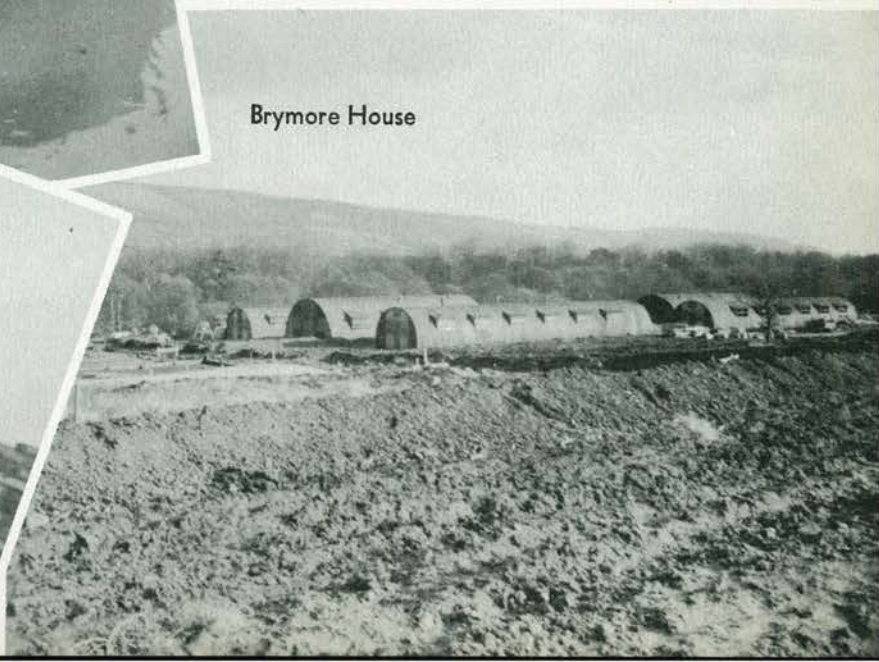
Alfaxton



Brymore House



Bridgewater (Hawryluk)

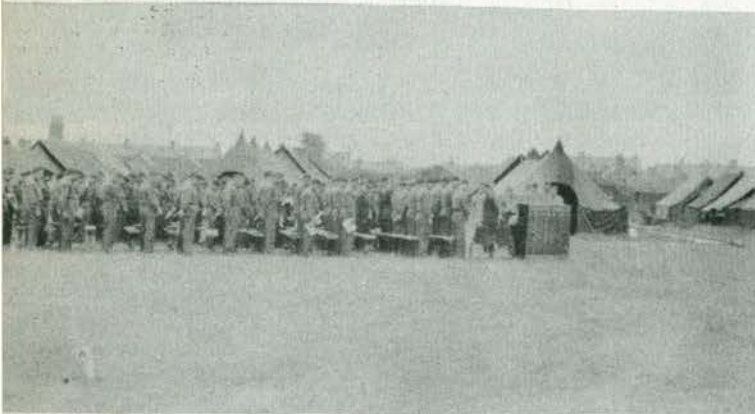




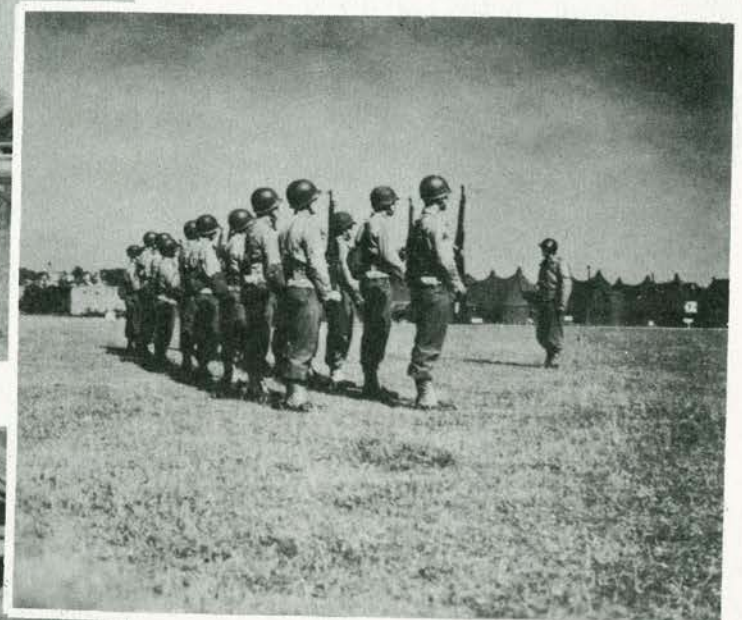
Full Field Inspection (Hawryluk)



Waterproofing



Religious Services



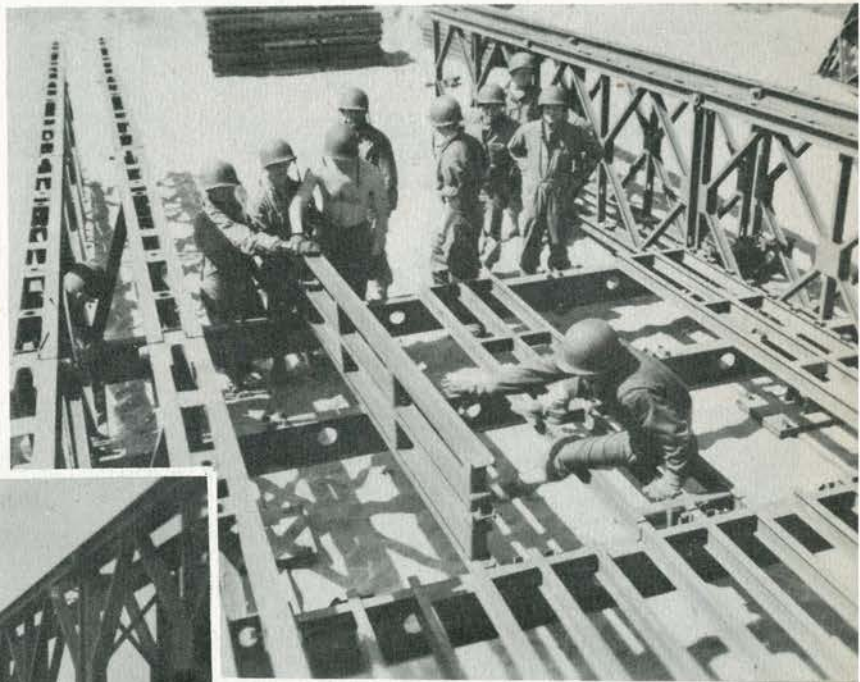
Guard Mount



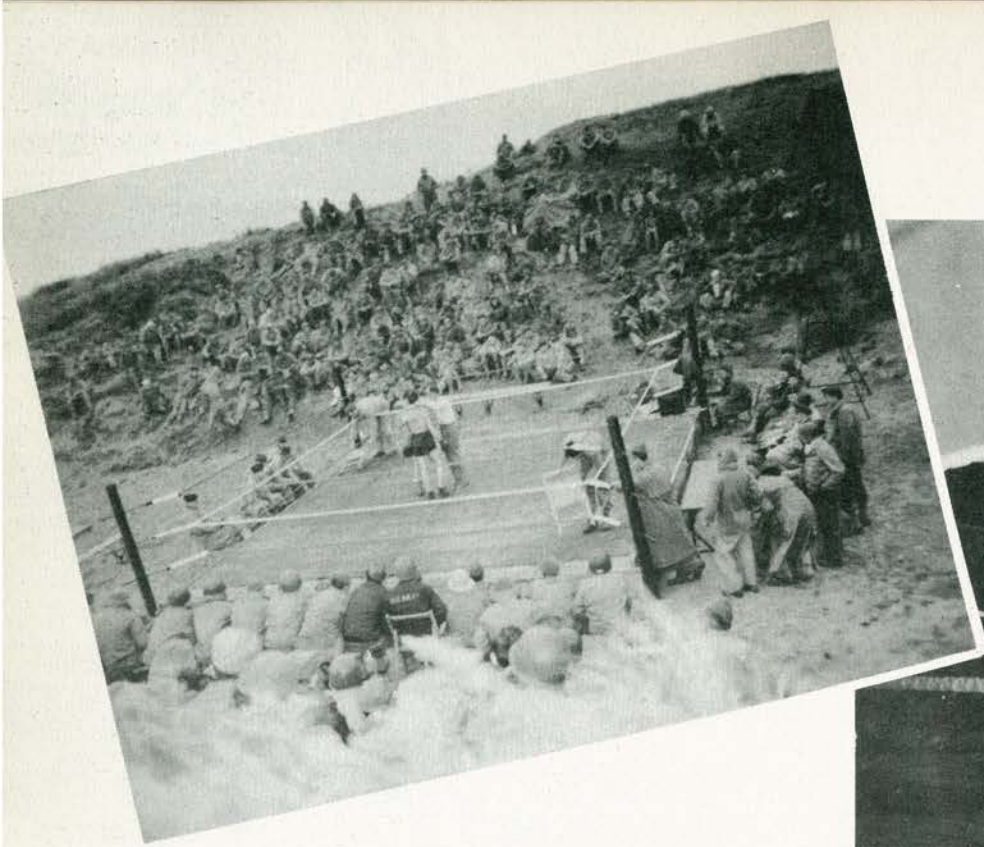
"Take Ten" (Hawryluk)

Porth

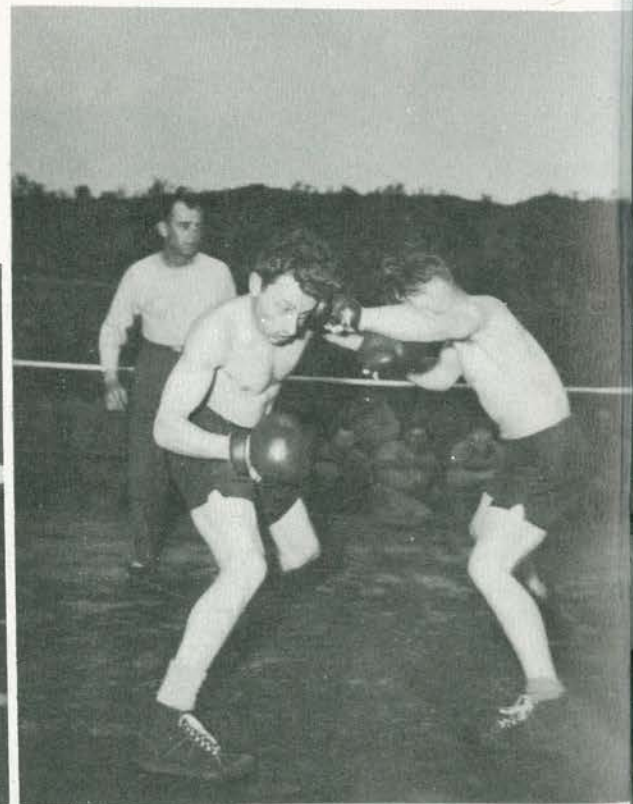
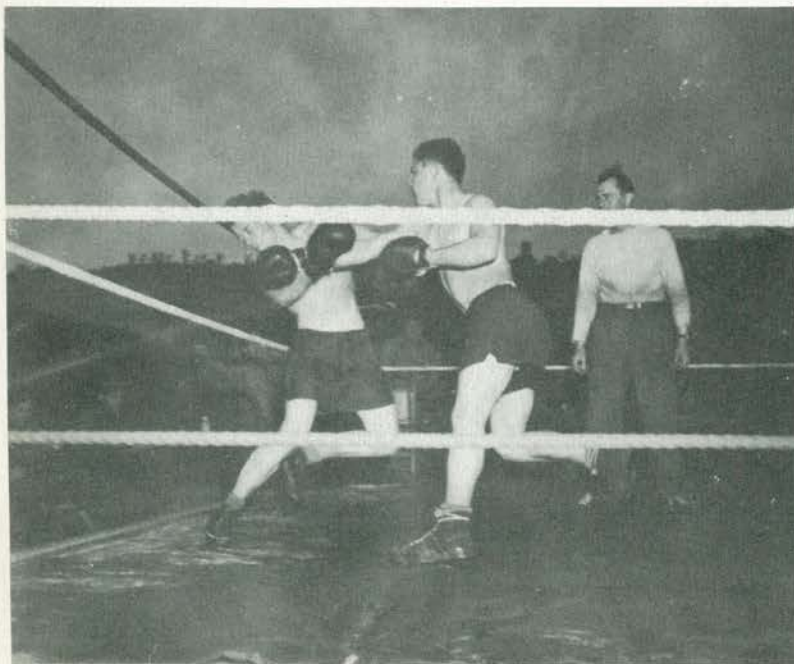
cawl Wales



Bailey Bridges



*Kenfig
Boxing
Matches*





***Cherbourg
Road
Repairs***





Before



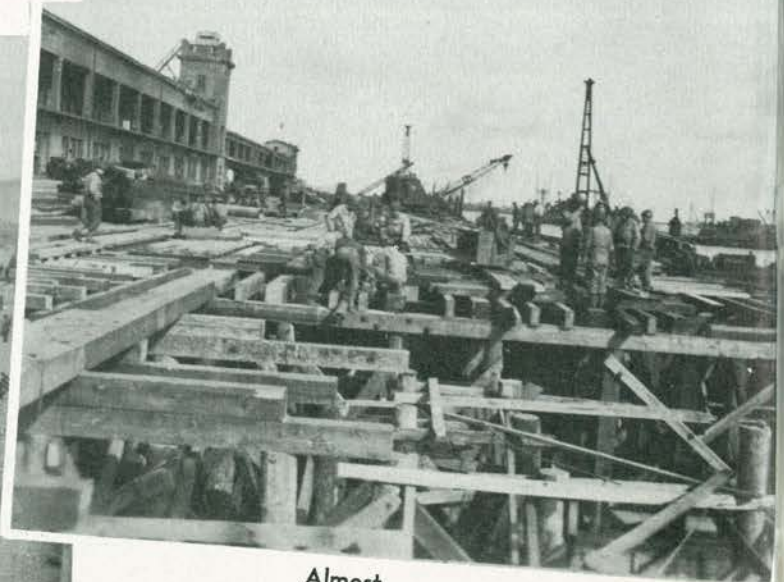
Beginning



Midway



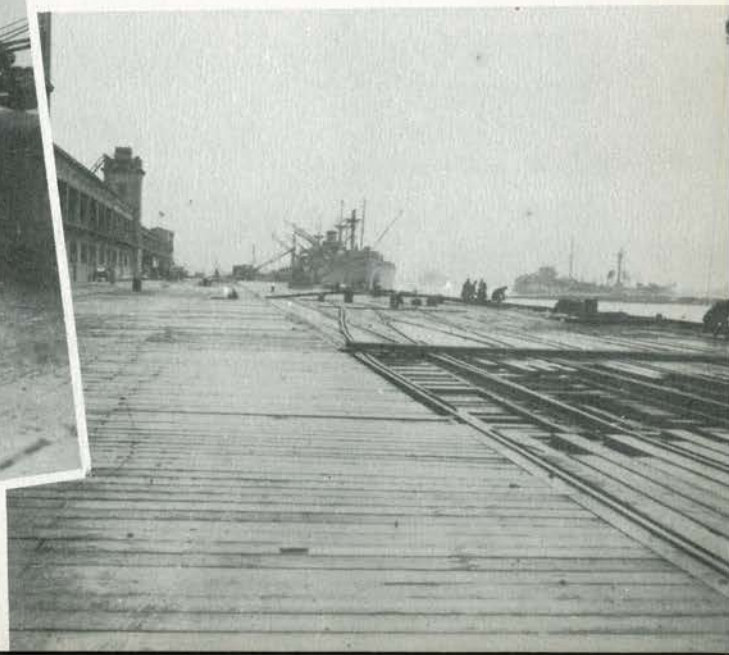
Completed



Almost

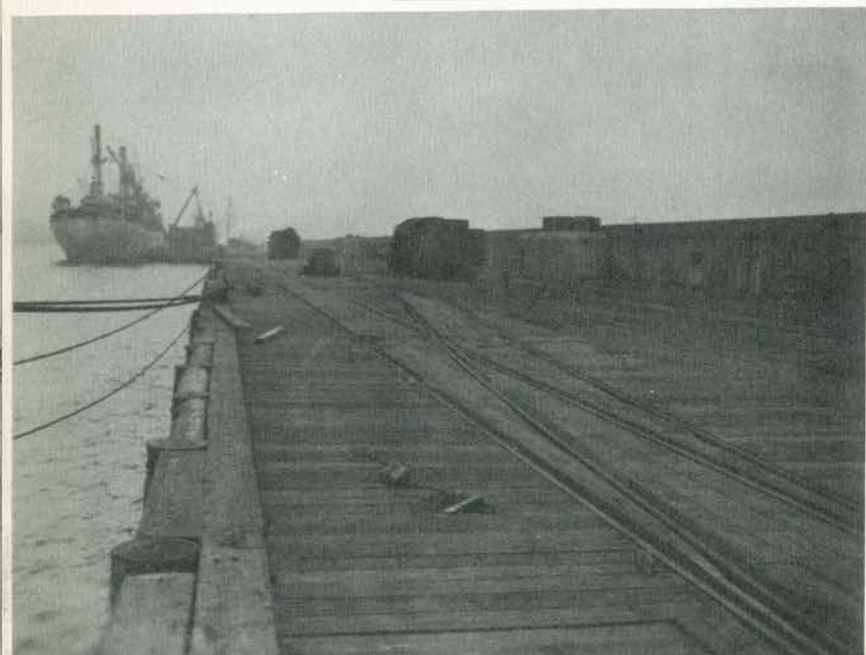
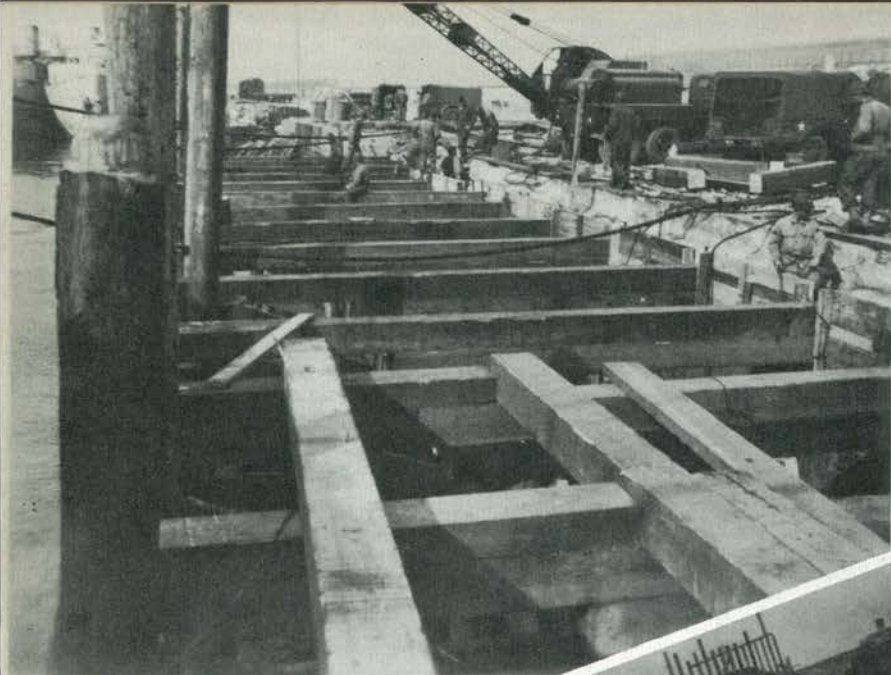
Gare

Maritime

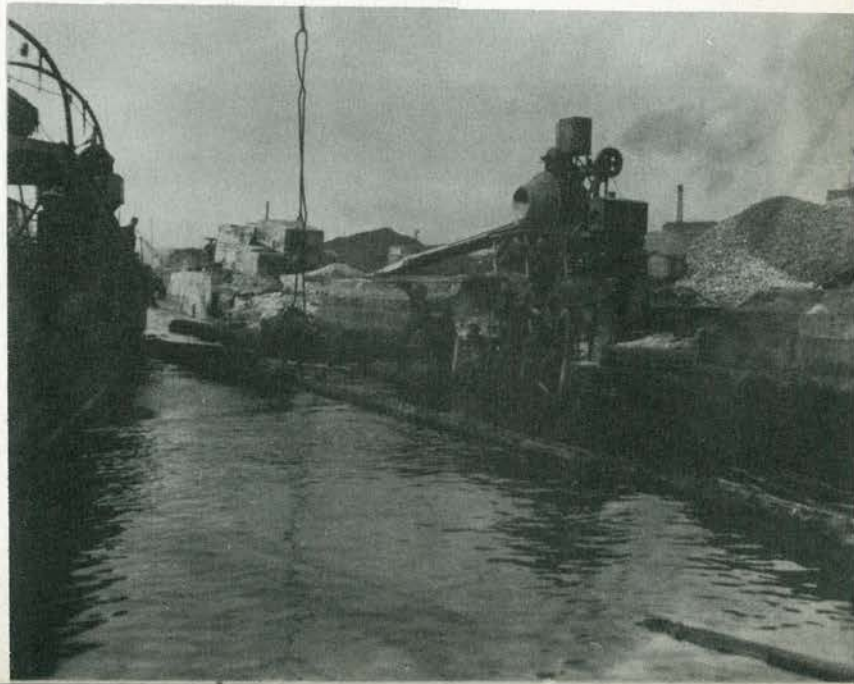
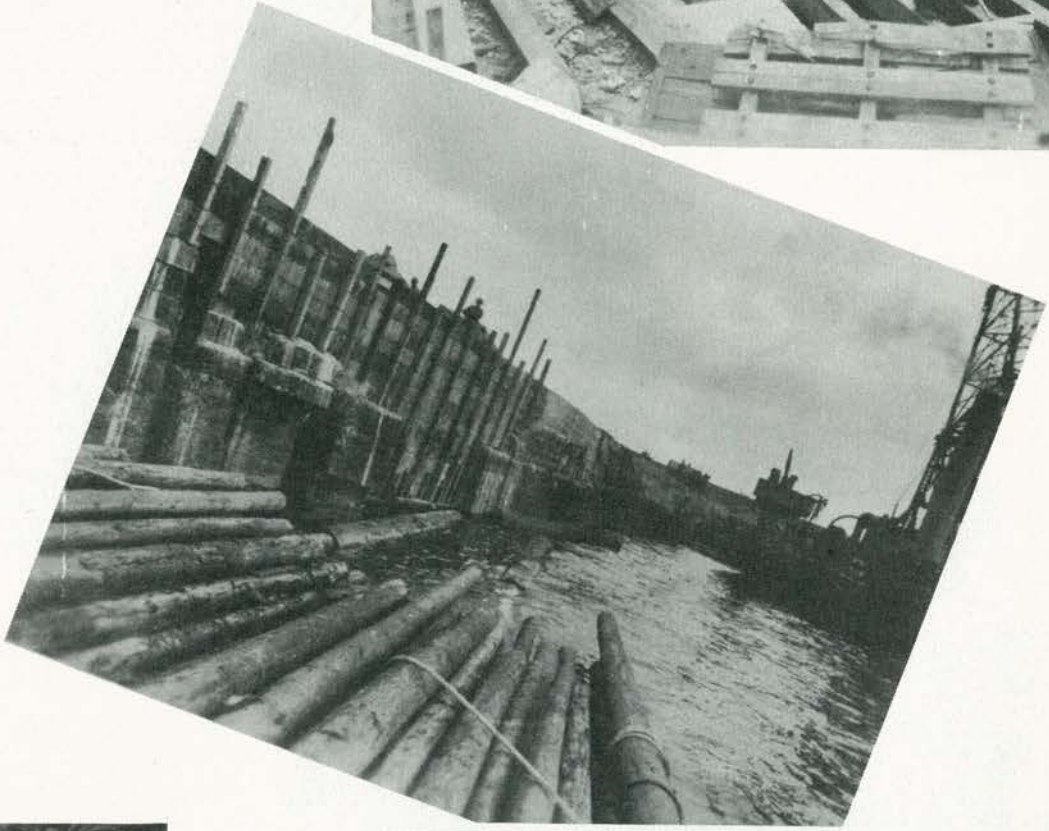


Dig

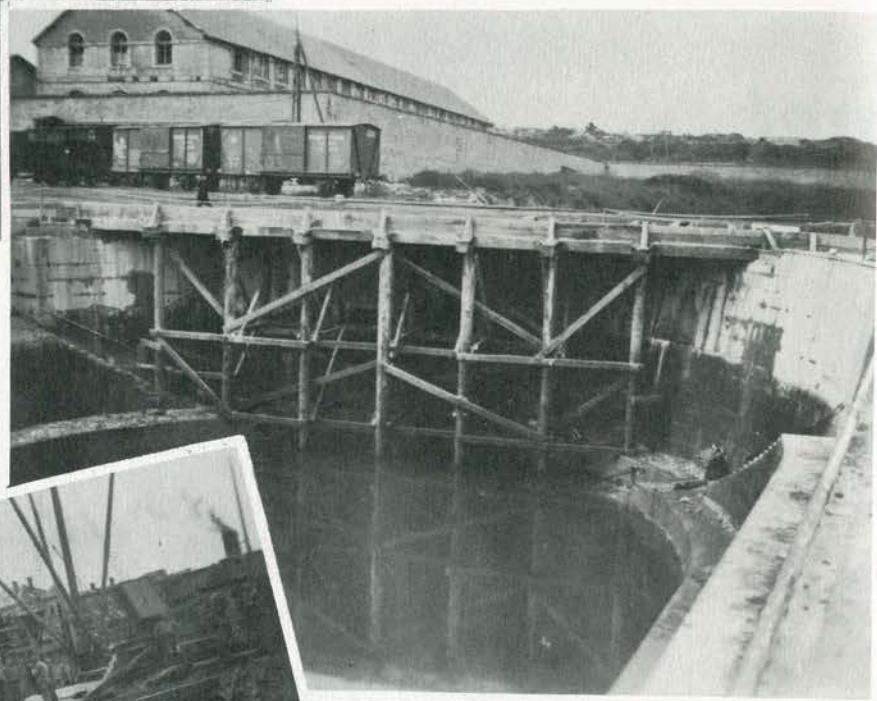
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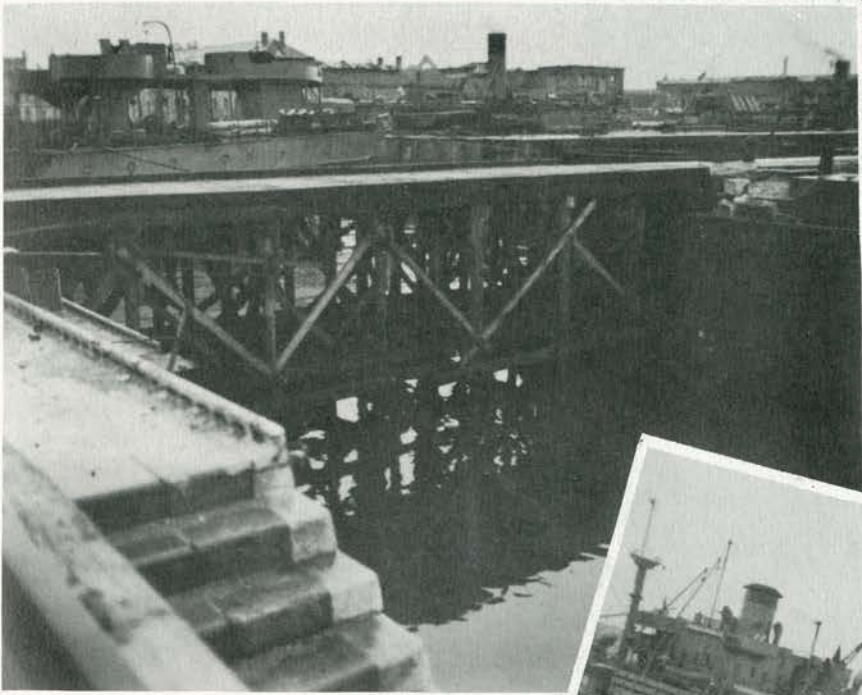
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Bridges *the*



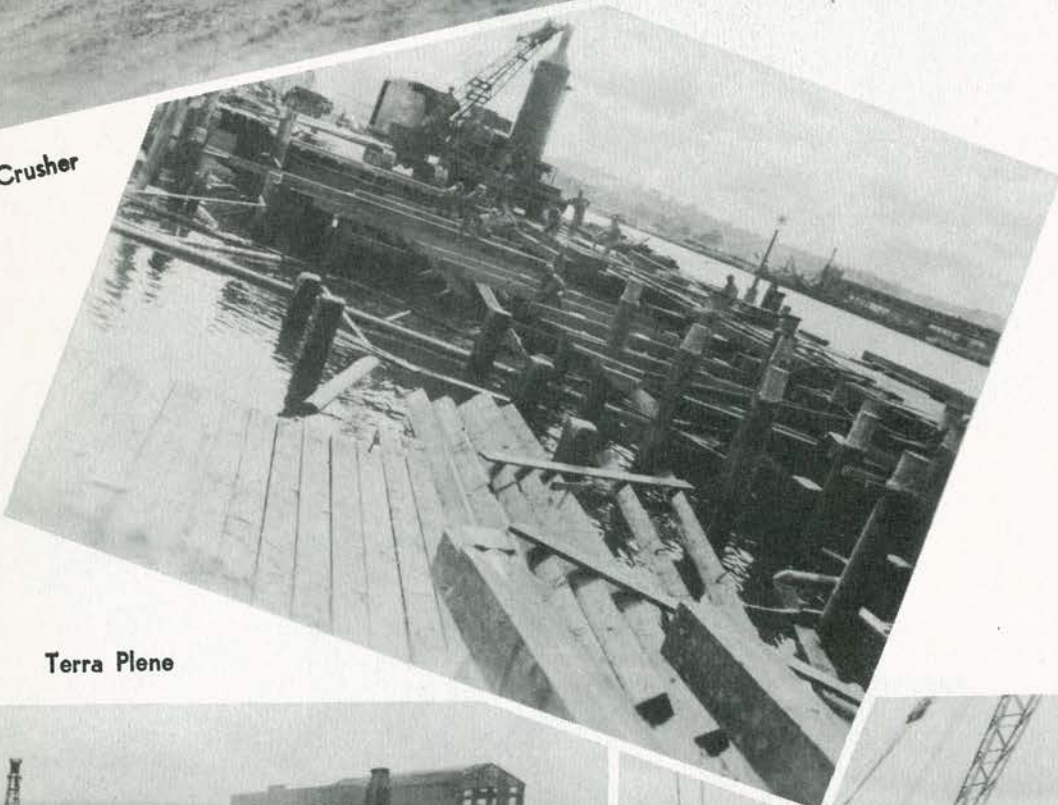
in
Arsenal
Area



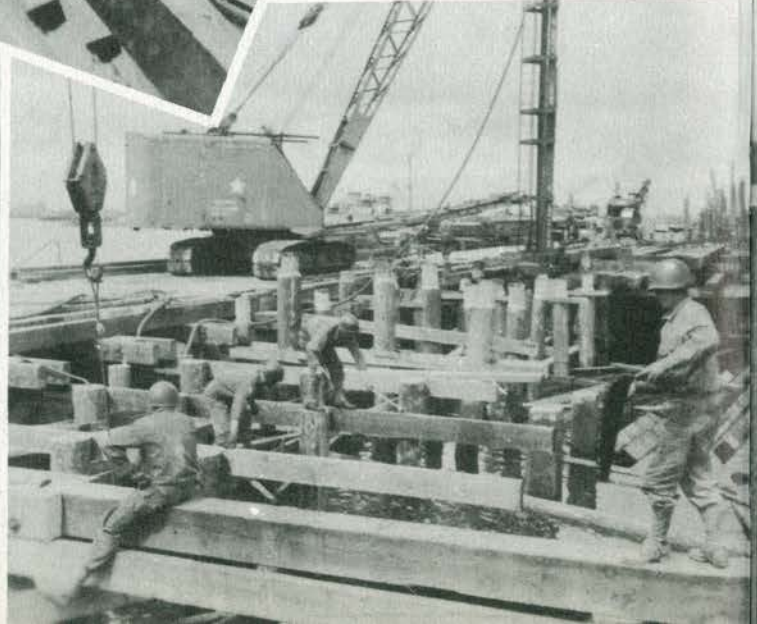
More Cher



Rock Crusher



Terra Plene



bourg Jobs



Water Point

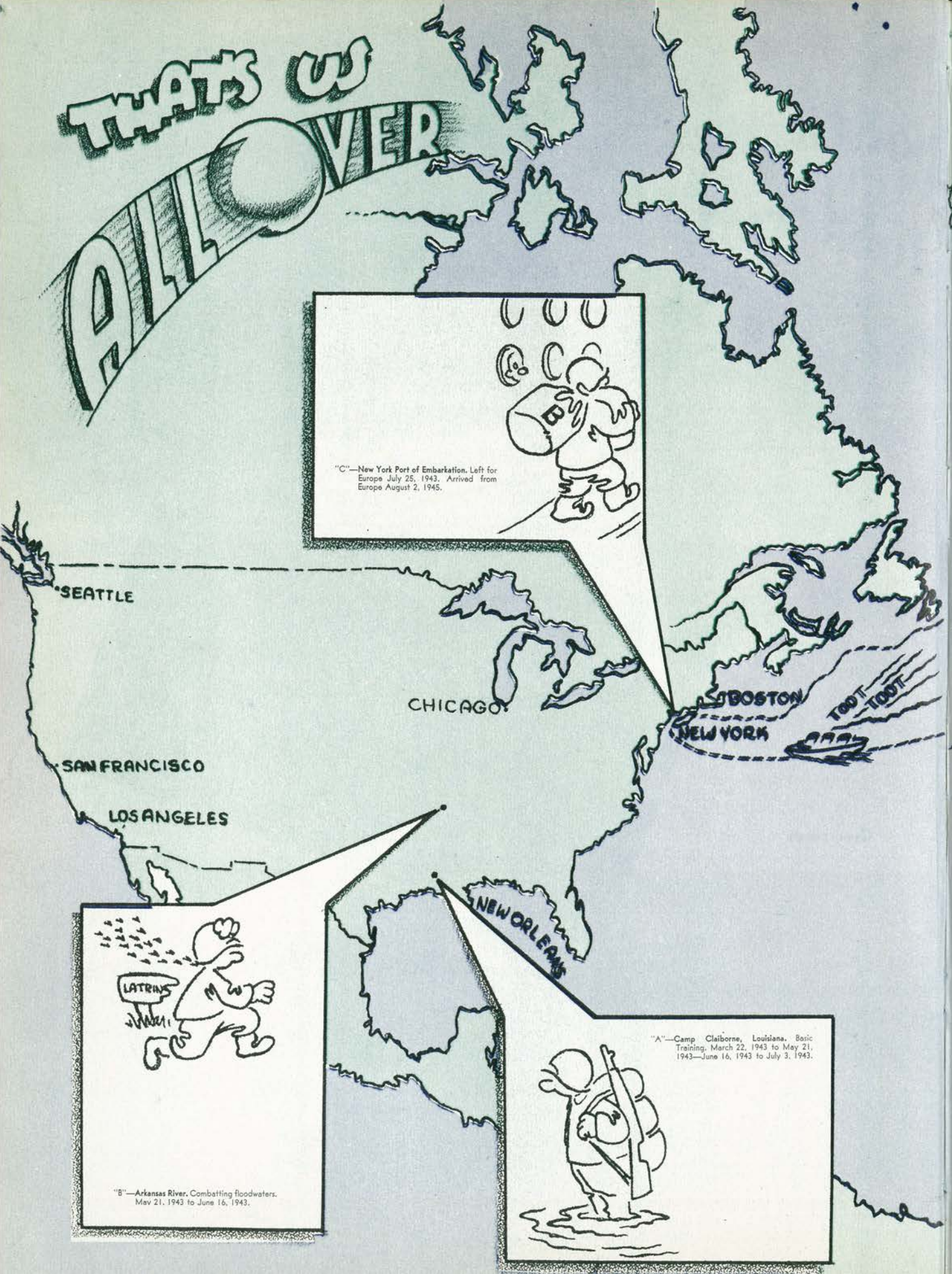


Compounds



THAT'S US

WELCOME



"C"—New York Port of Embarkation. Left for Europe July 25, 1943. Arrived from Europe August 2, 1945.

SEATTLE

CHICAGO

SAN FRANCISCO

LOS ANGELES

BOSTON

NEW YORK

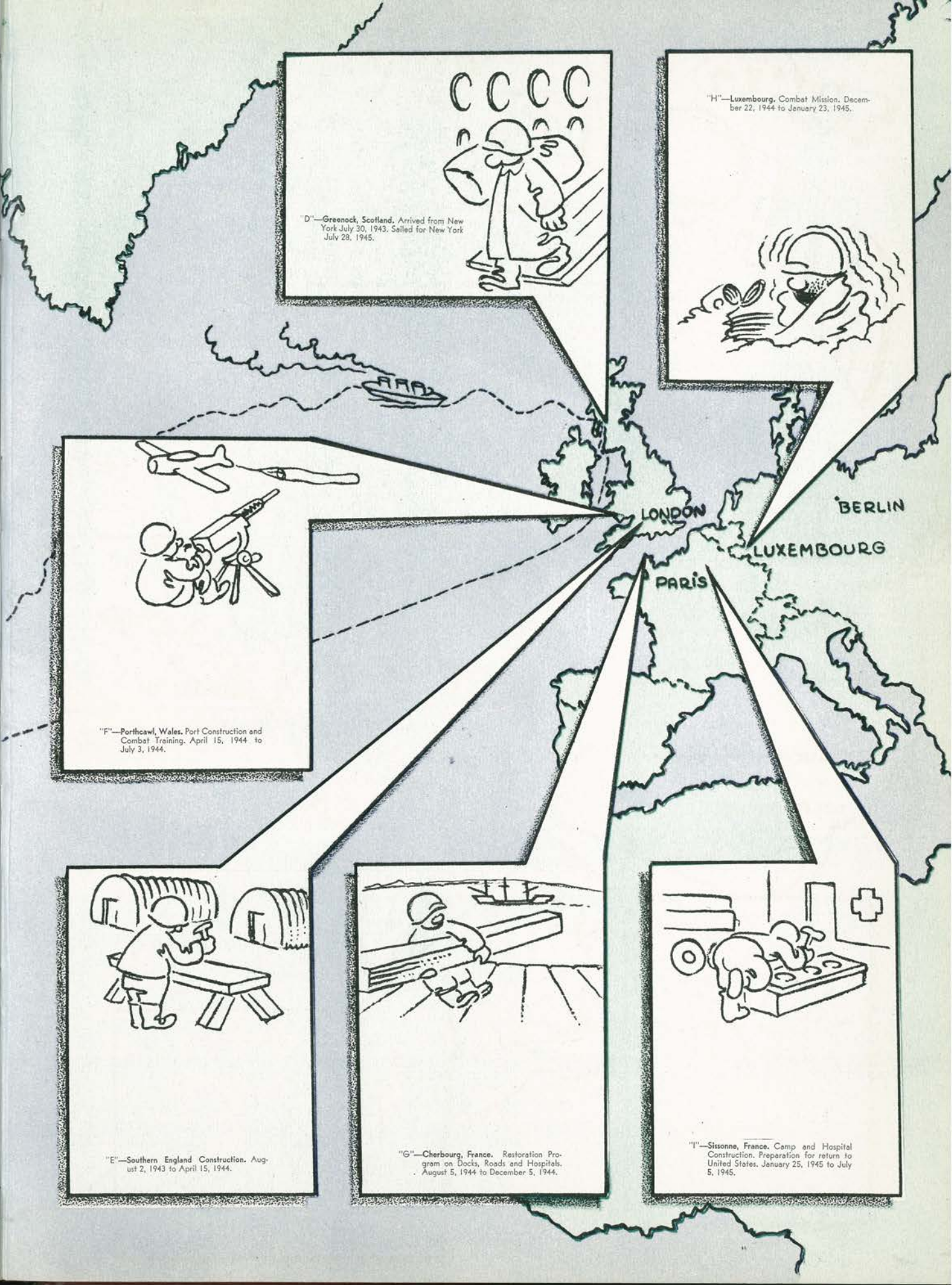
TOOT TOOT

NEW ORLEANS

LATRIN

"A"—Camp Claiborne, Louisiana. Basic Training, March 22, 1943 to May 21, 1943—June 16, 1943 to July 3, 1943.

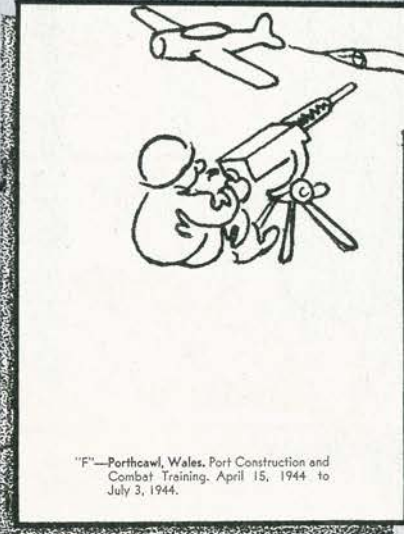
"B"—Arkansas River. Combatting floodwaters. May 21, 1943 to June 16, 1943.



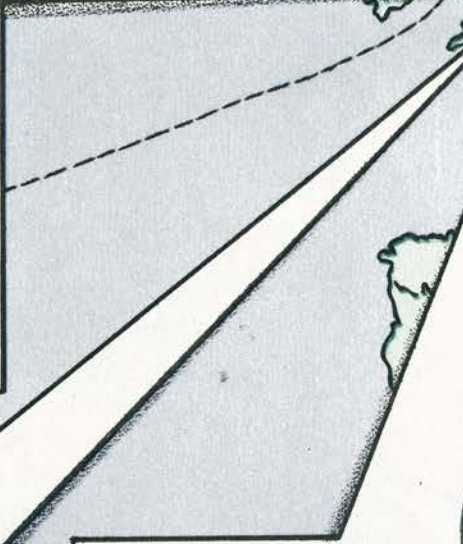
"D"—Greenock, Scotland. Arrived from New York July 30, 1943. Sailed for New York July 28, 1945.



"H"—Luxembourg. Combat Mission. December 22, 1944 to January 23, 1945.



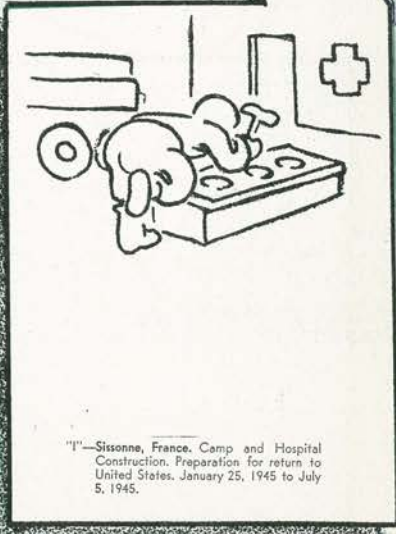
"F"—Porthcawl, Wales. Port Construction and Combat Training. April 15, 1944 to July 3, 1944.



"G"—Cherbourg, France. Restoration Program on Docks, Roads and Hospitals. August 5, 1944 to December 5, 1944.

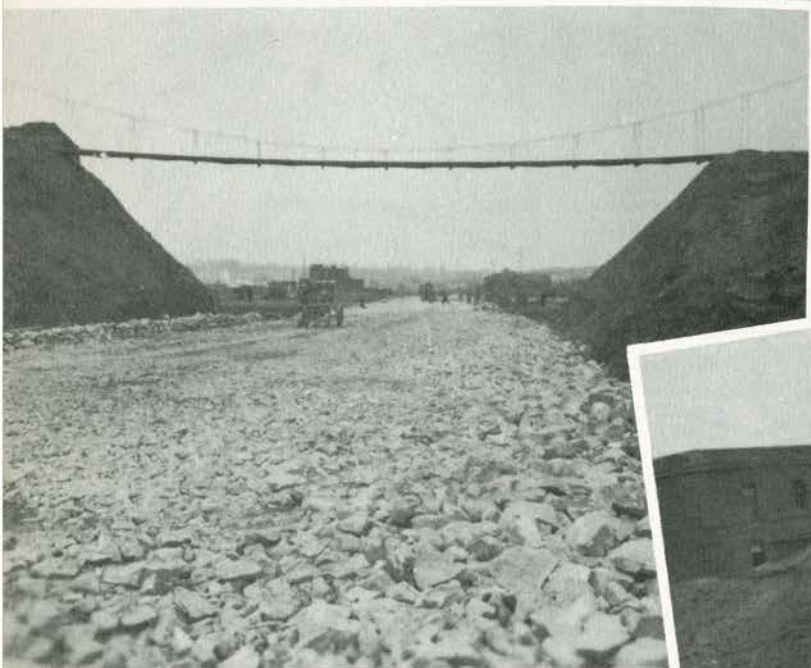
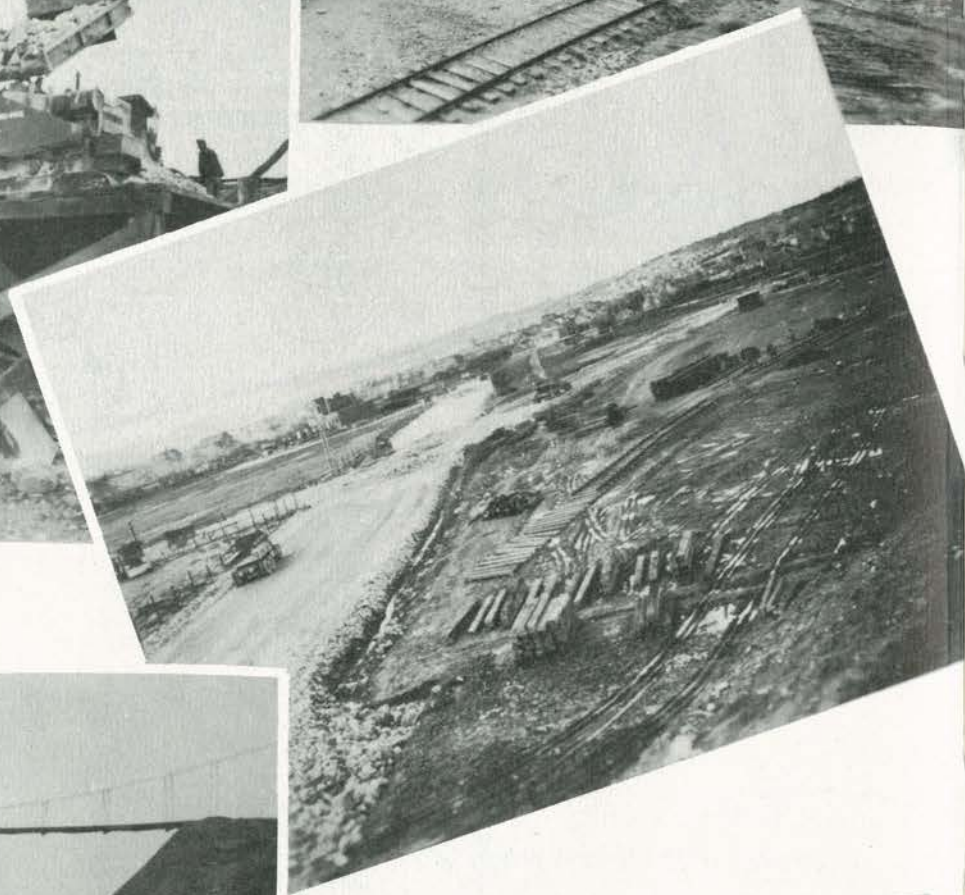
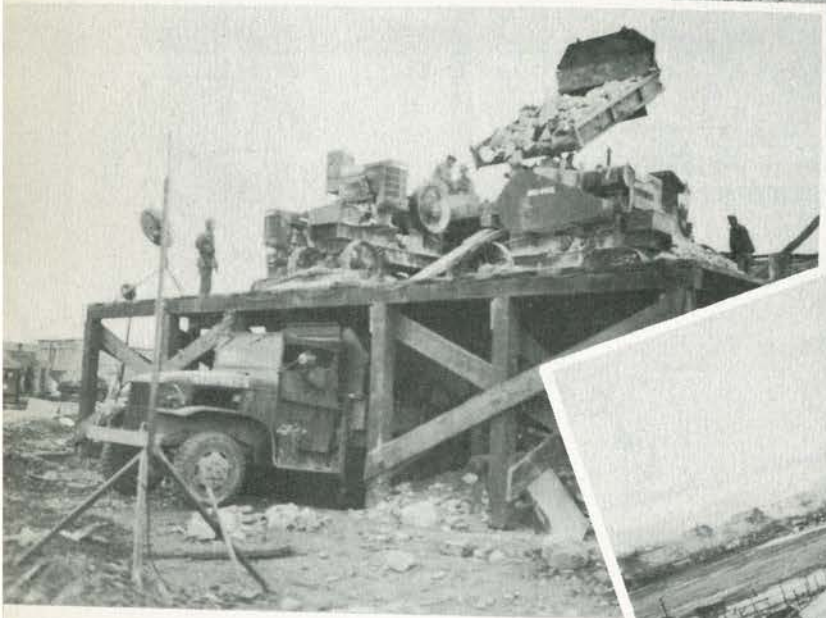


"E"—Southern England Construction. August 2, 1943 to April 15, 1944.



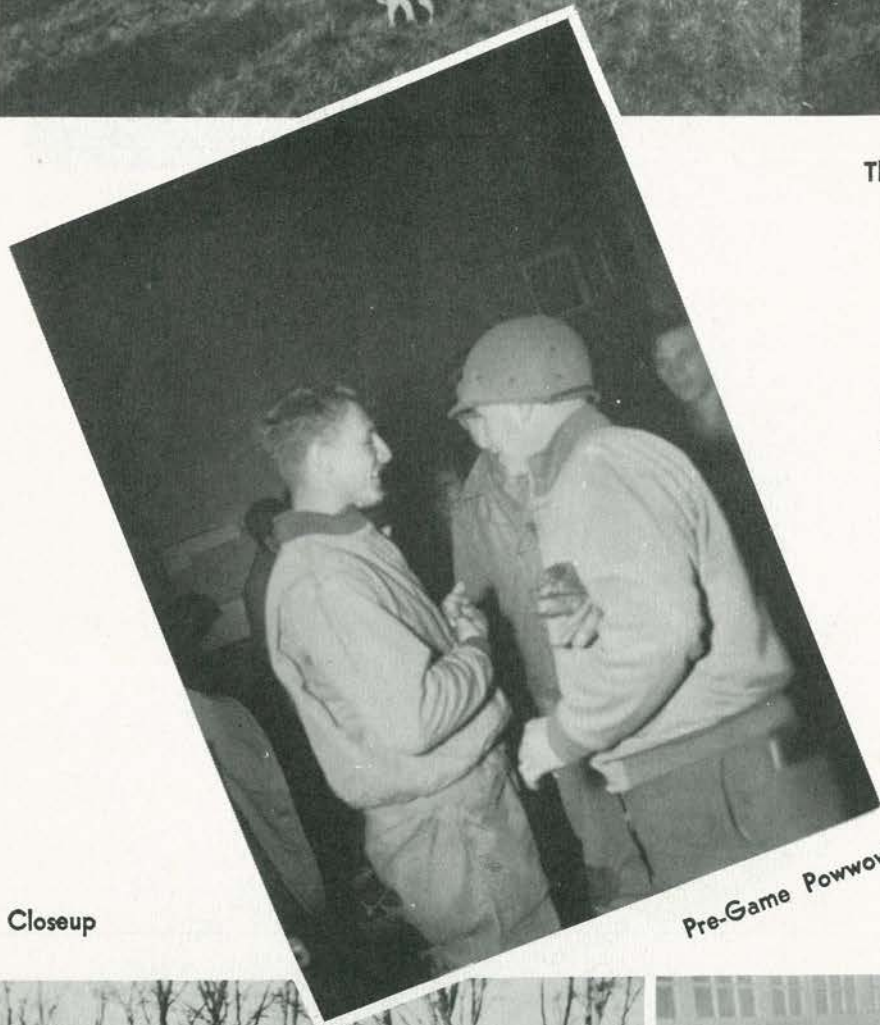
"I"—Sissonne, France. Camp and Hospital Construction. Preparation for return to United States. January 25, 1945 to July 5, 1945.

Arsenal Road Net





The Team

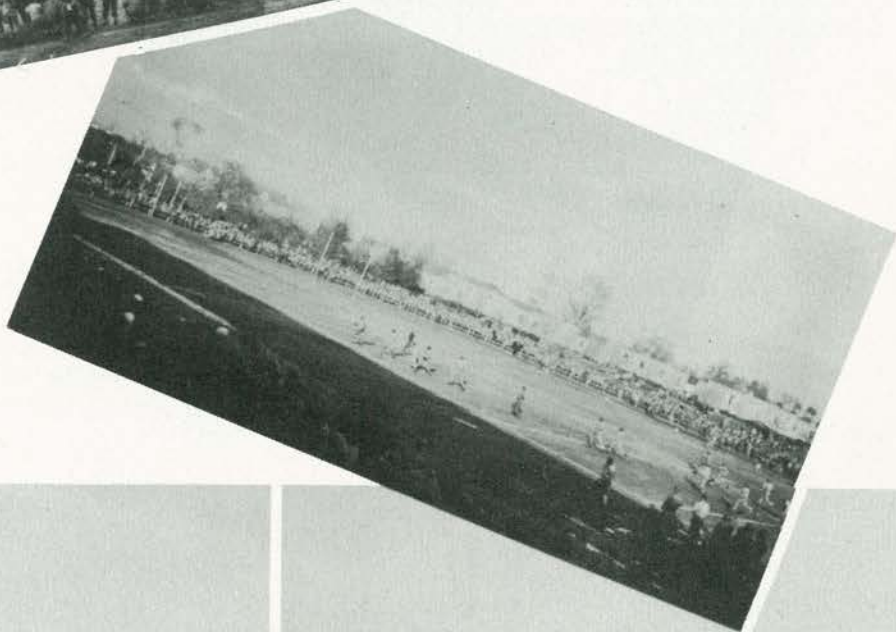
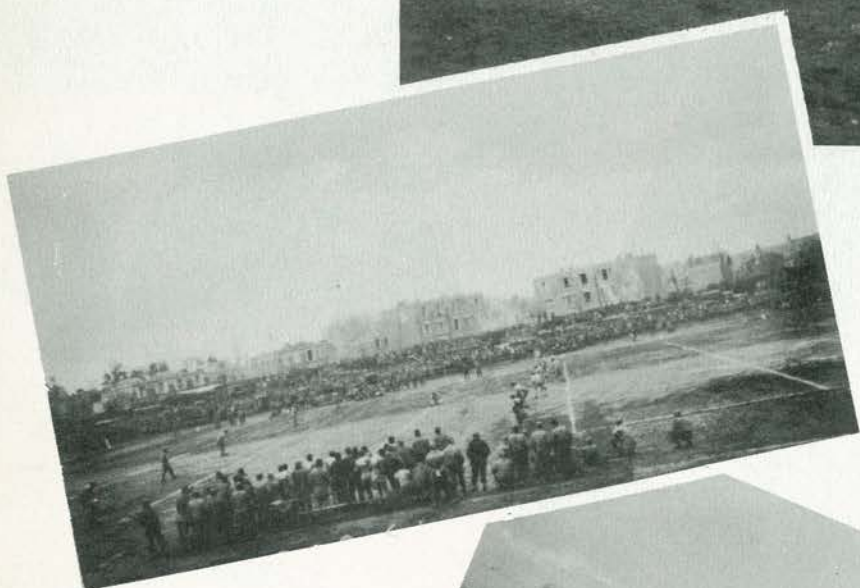


Closeup

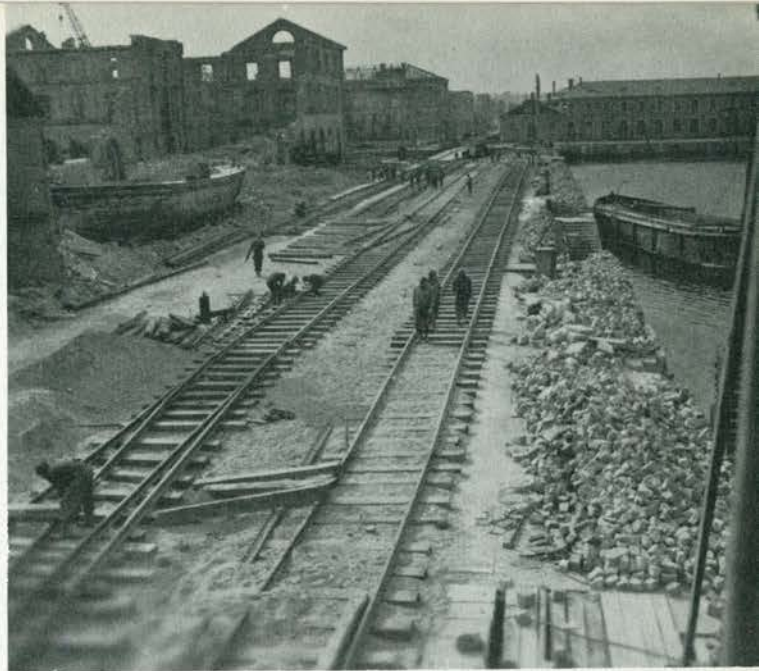
**Undeclared
398th
Football
Team**

Pre-Game Powwow

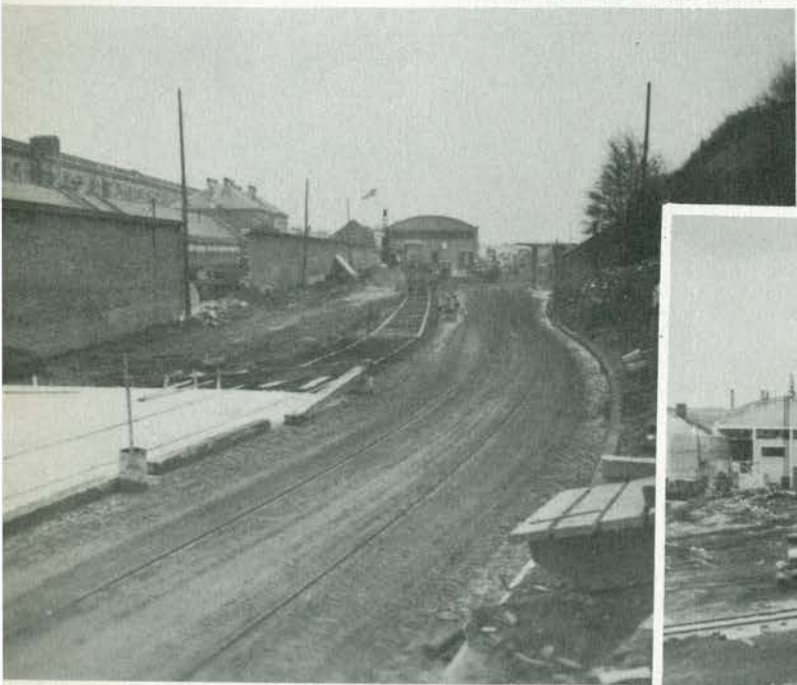
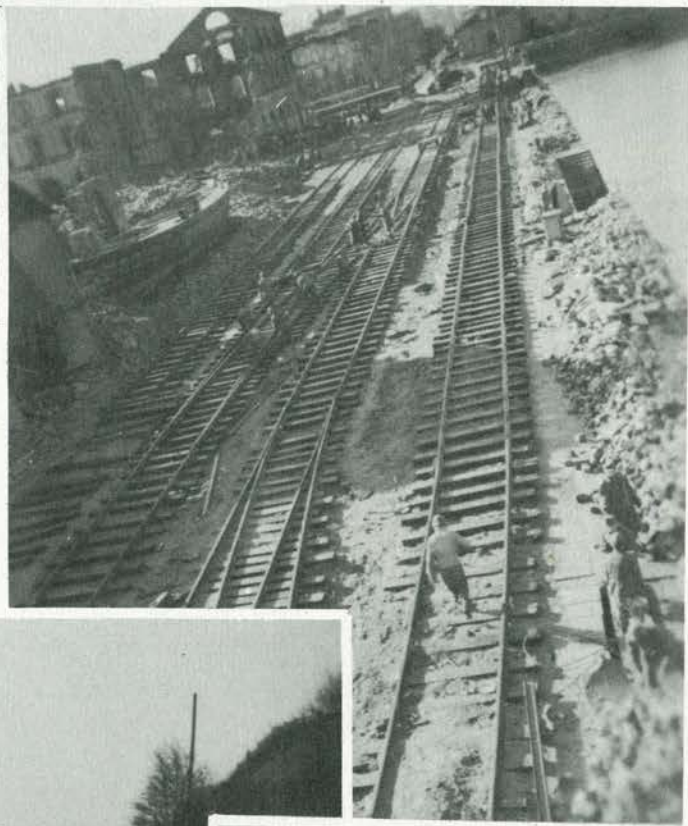
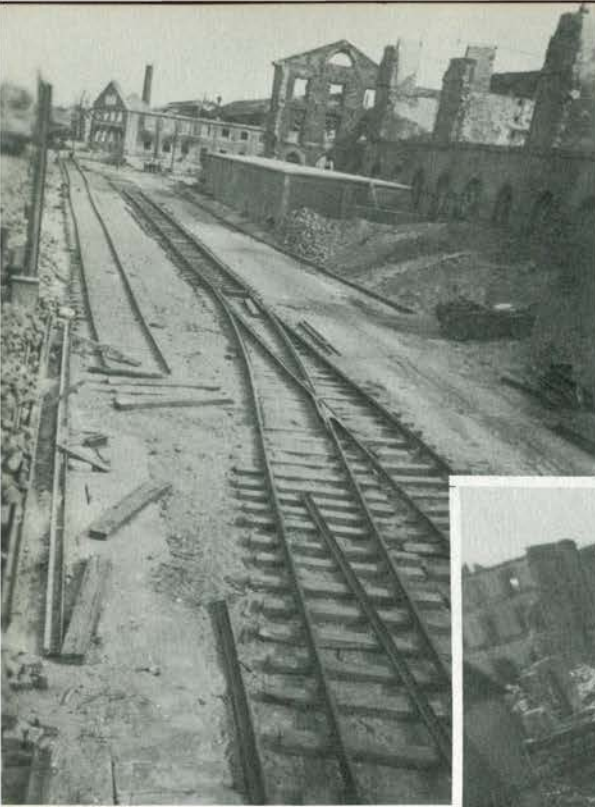




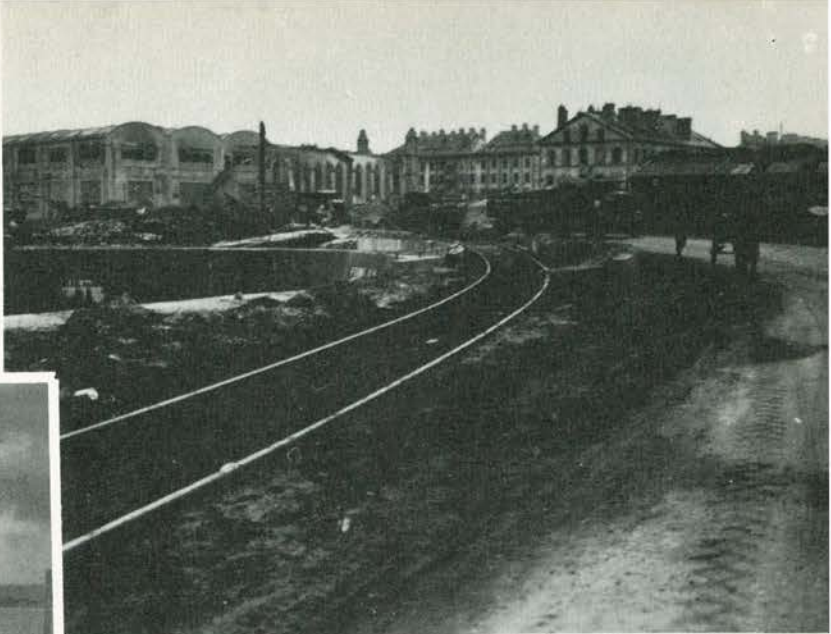
*Railroads
Within the
Arsenal Area*



And More Rail



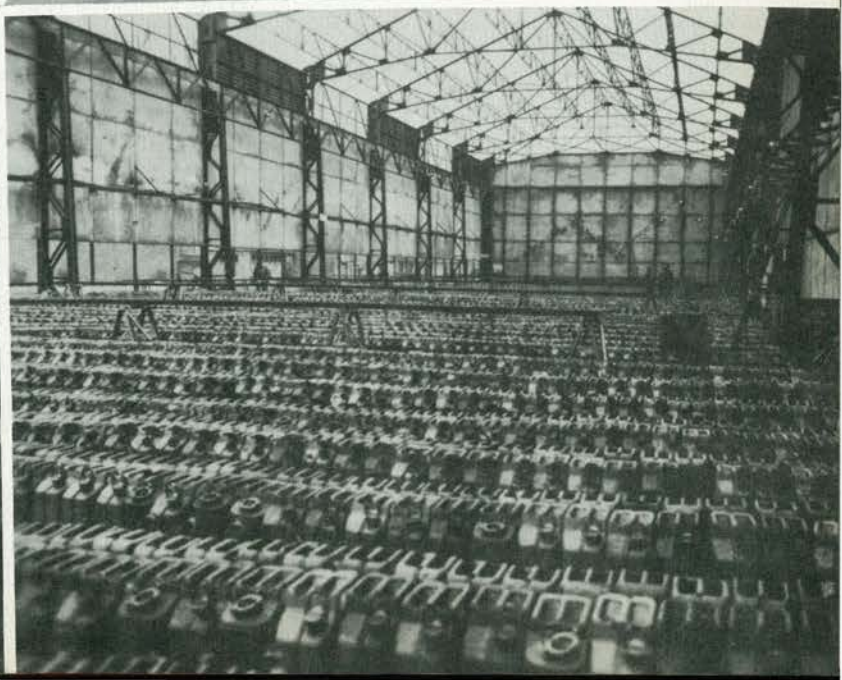
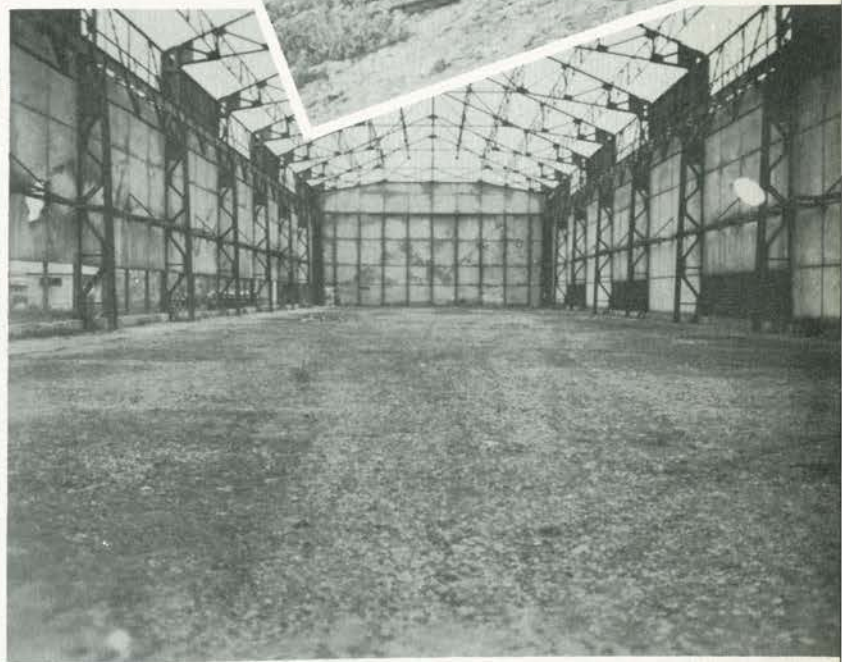
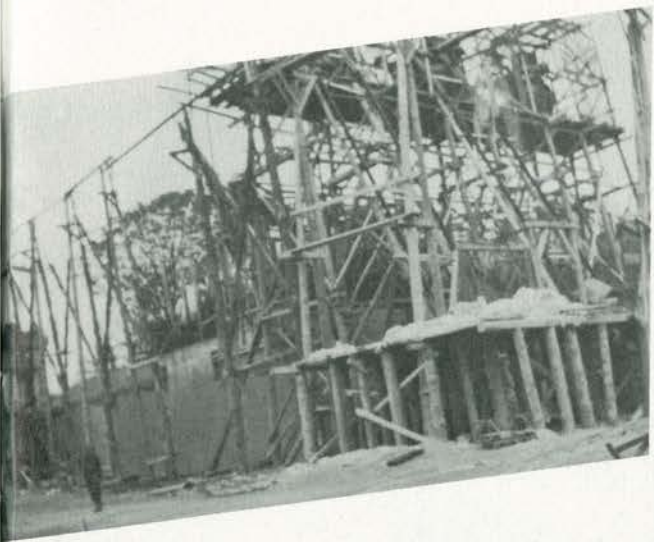
roads



Preparing Space for



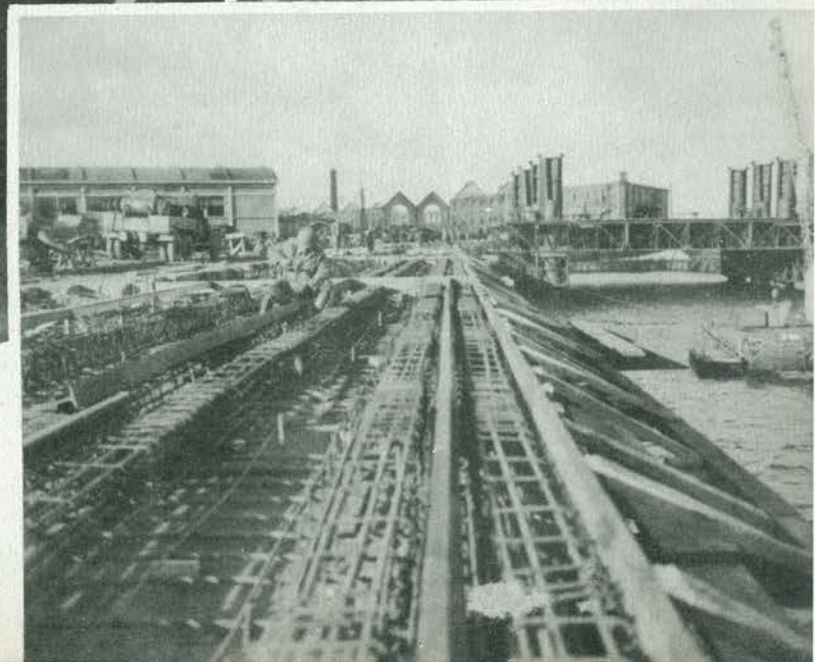
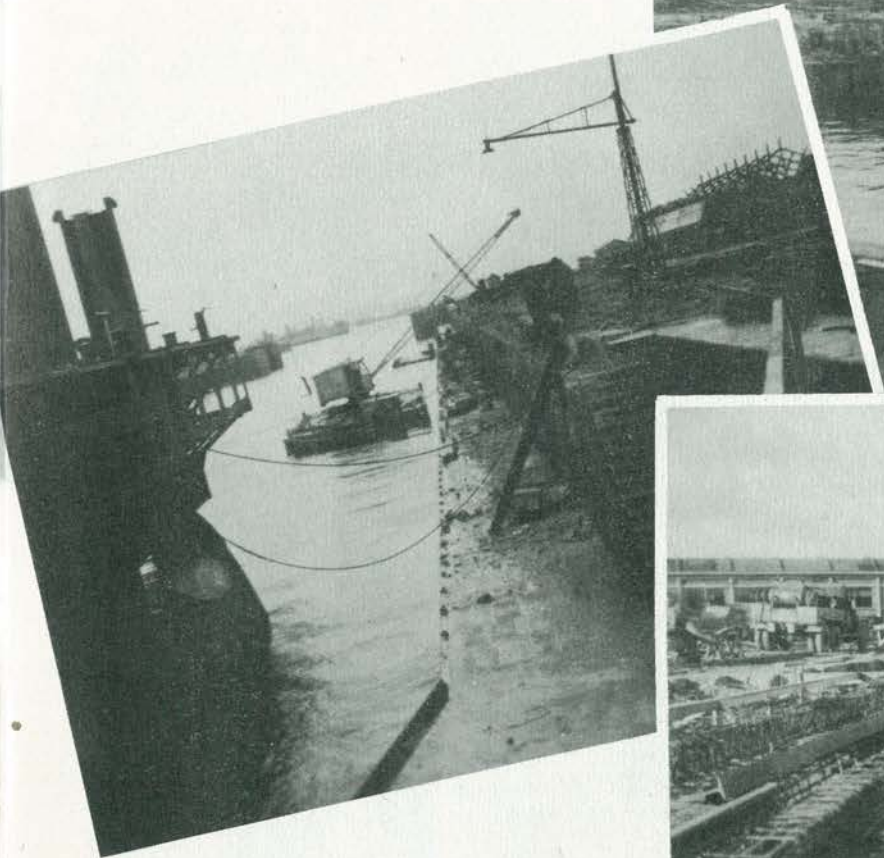
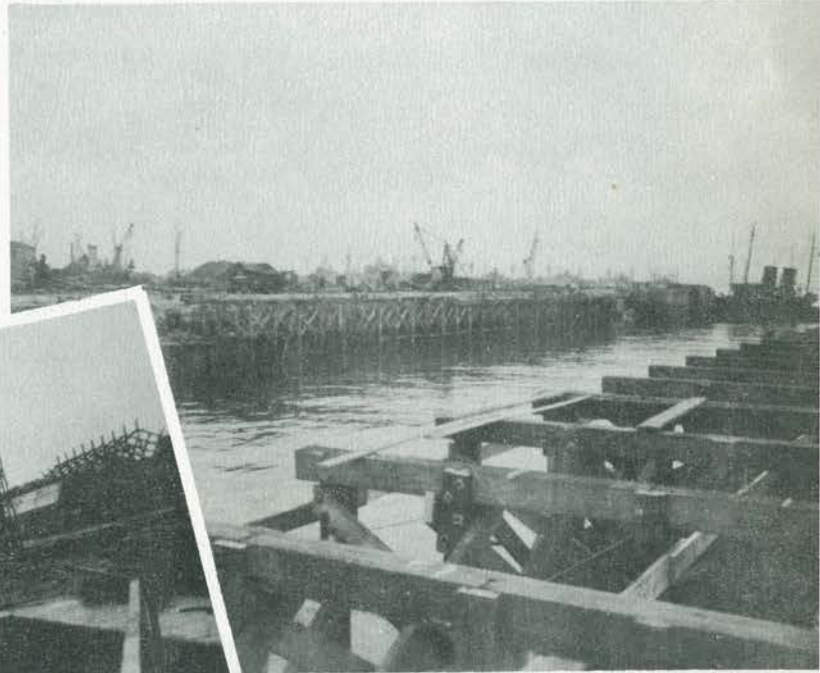
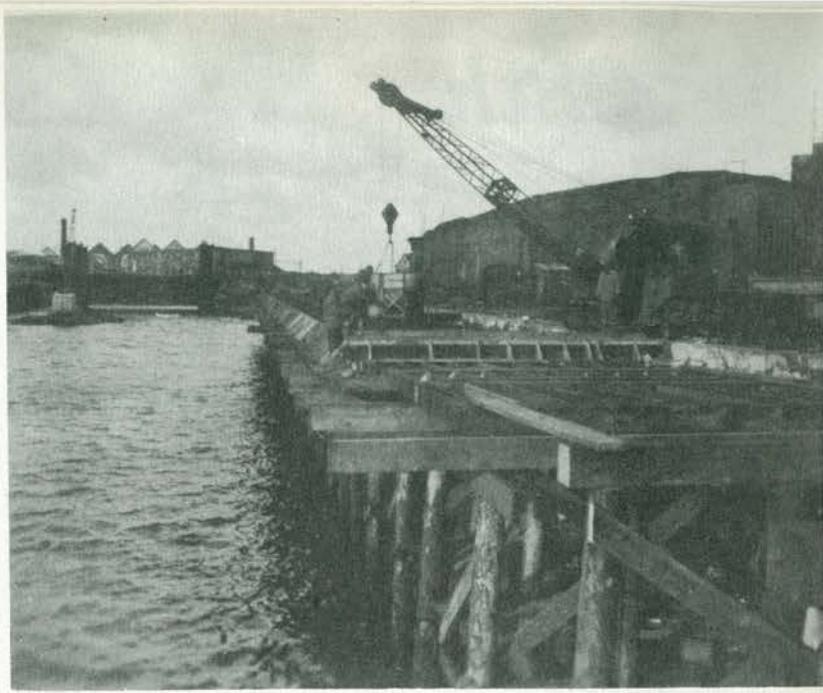
Frontline Supplies



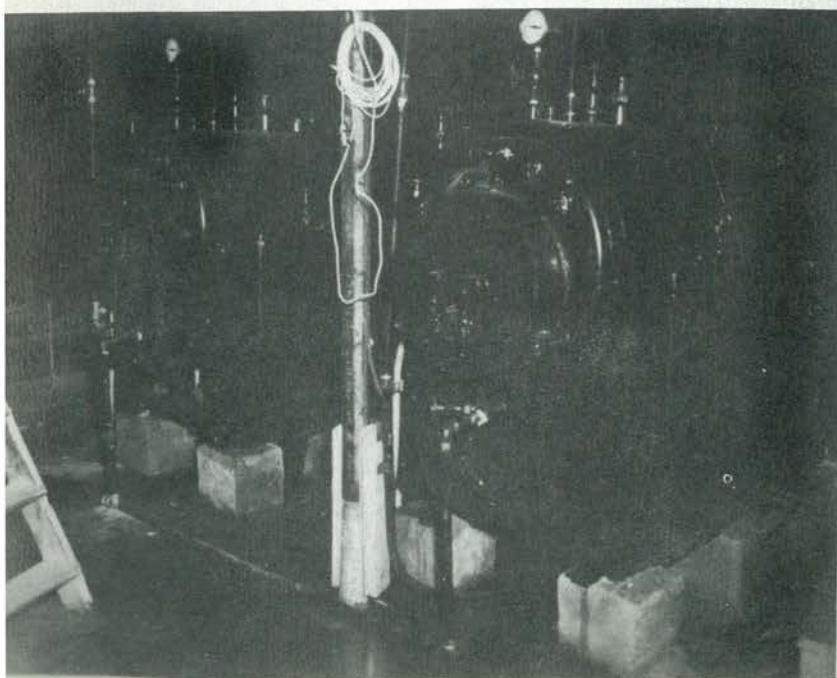
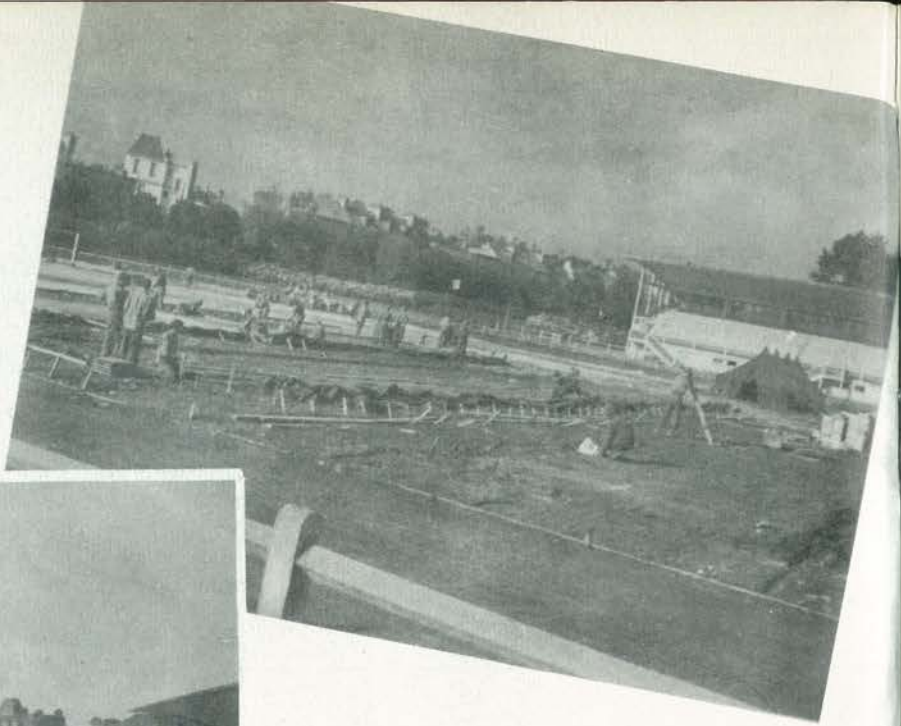
And Still



More Docks



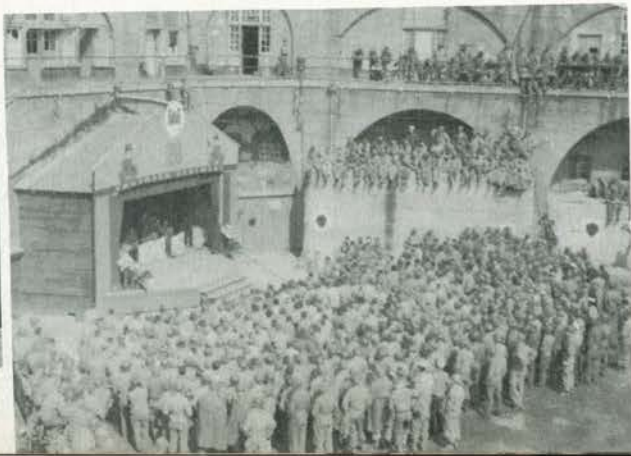
298th General Hospital



Cherbourg, France



*Entertainment
On
Fort du Homet
Stage*



Luxem
Com
Miss



(Mehling)



(Andrew)



bourg
bat
ion



(Kawryluk)



(Mehling)



(Hawryluk)



Camp Sissonne



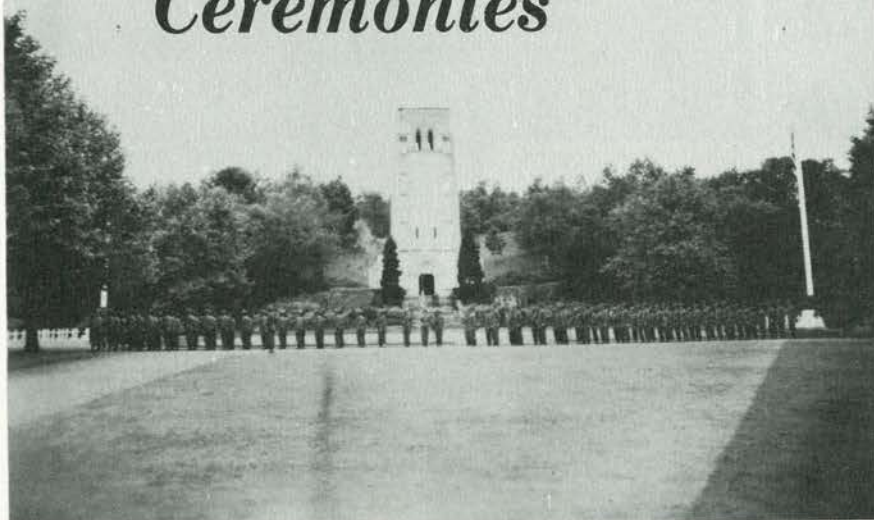
Pictures by John Barger



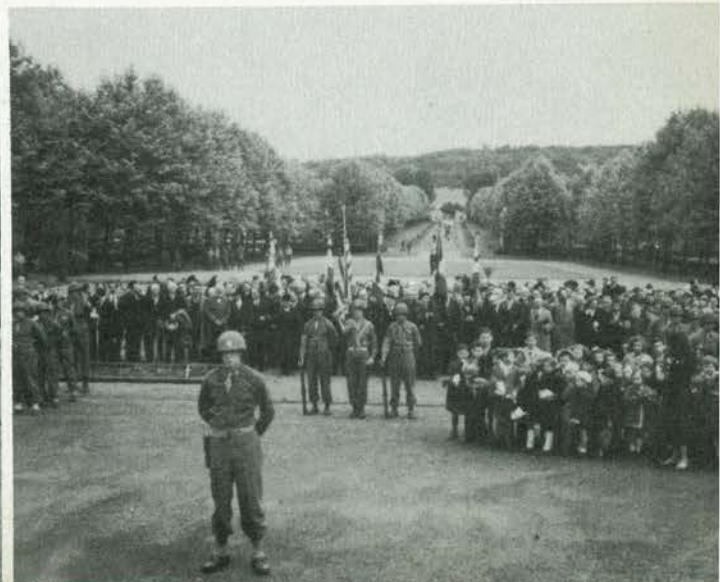
Buildings for 241st and 242nd General Hospitals



Memorial Day Ceremonies



American Military Cemeteries at Belleau Wood and Chateau Thierry





Belleau Wood

*Some
398th
Men
Receive
Awards*

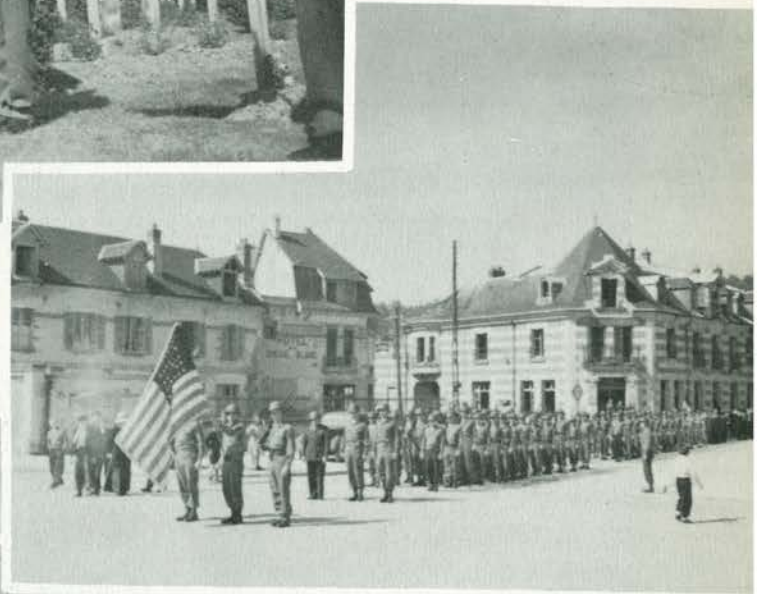


Sissonne



Laon

V-E Day Parade



Vailly-sur-Aisne, France

Random Shots



A Prayer at Belleau Wood



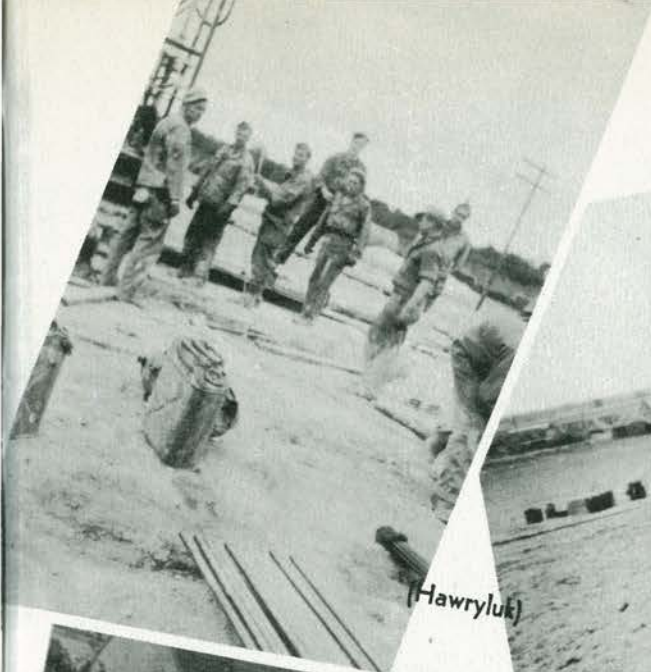
A Few Direct Commissions



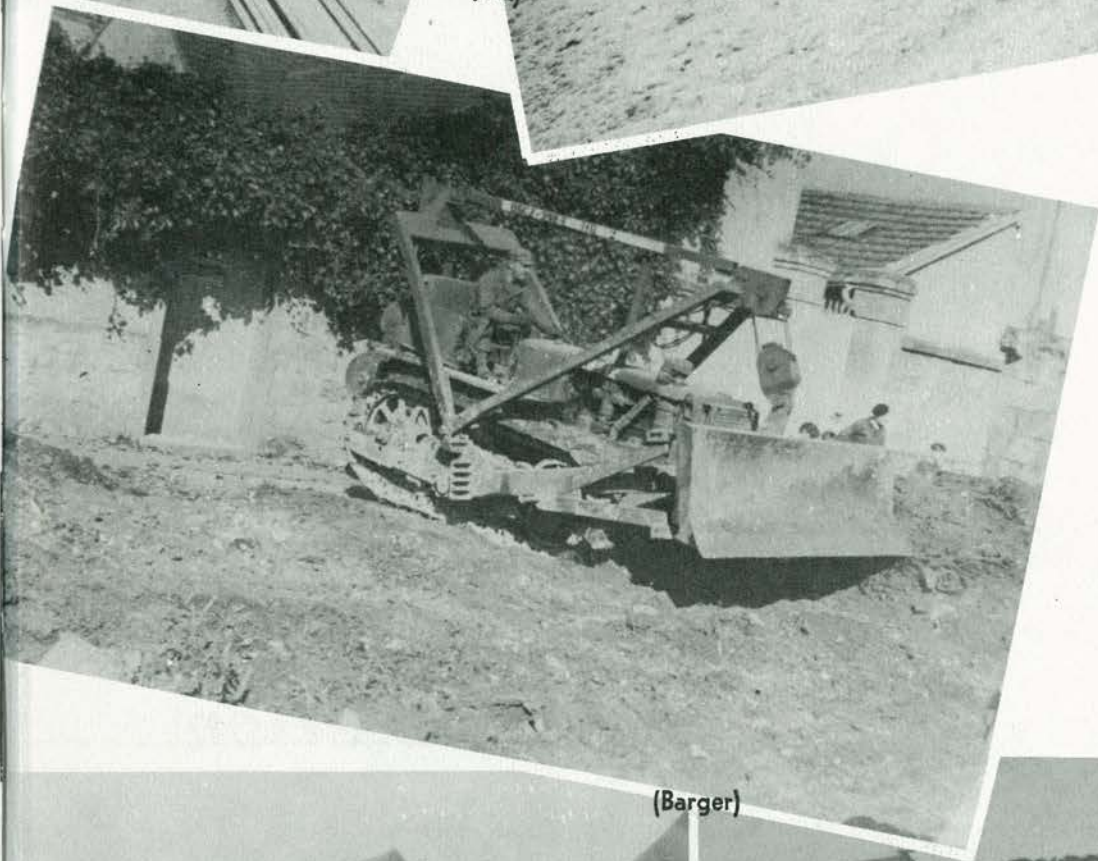
Mess-Hall Scene



Verdun Gate (Hawryluk)



(Hawryluk)



(Barger)

Camp Chicago

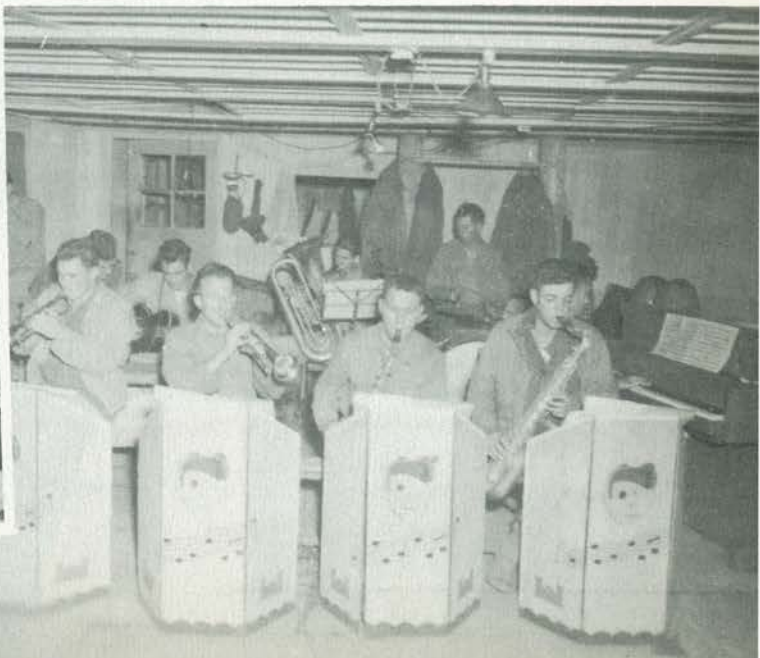
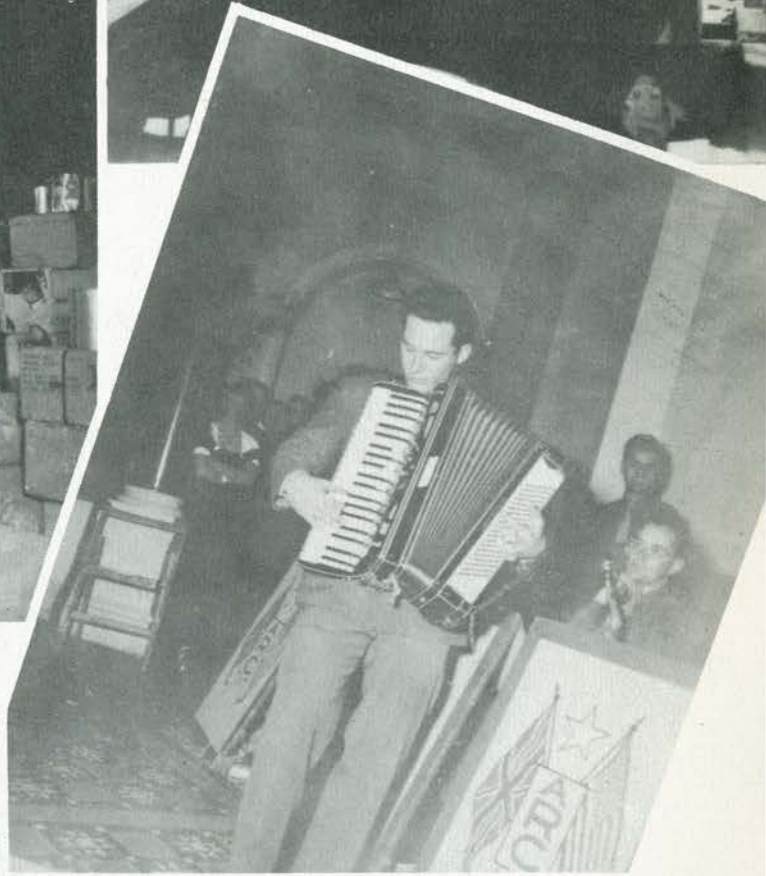


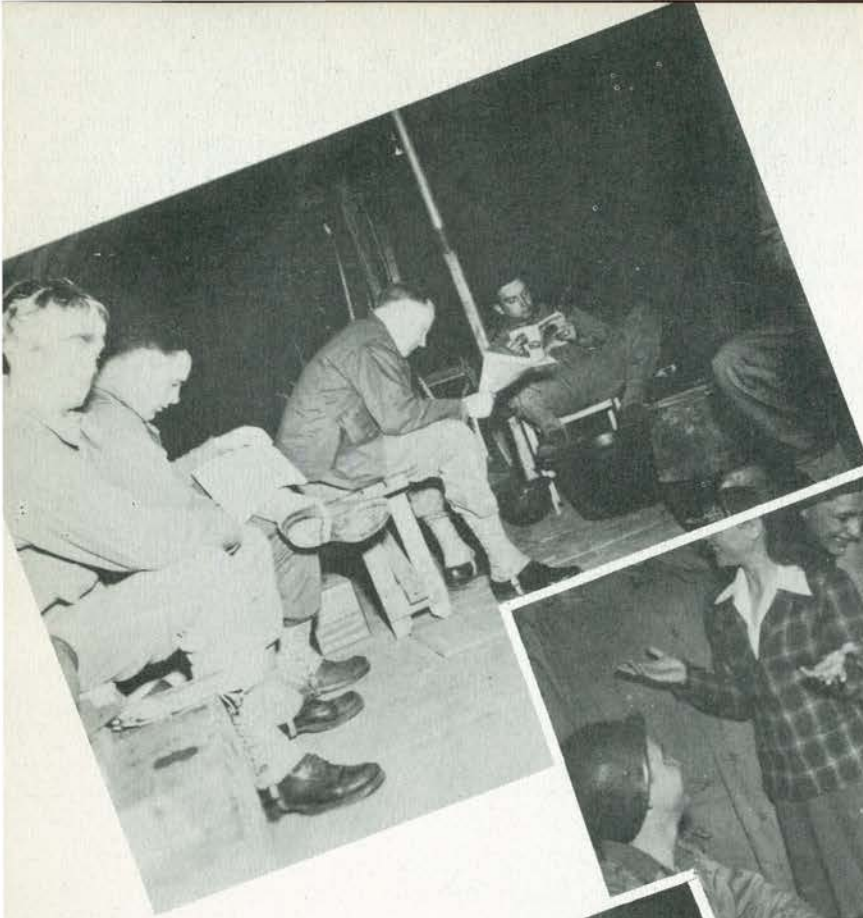


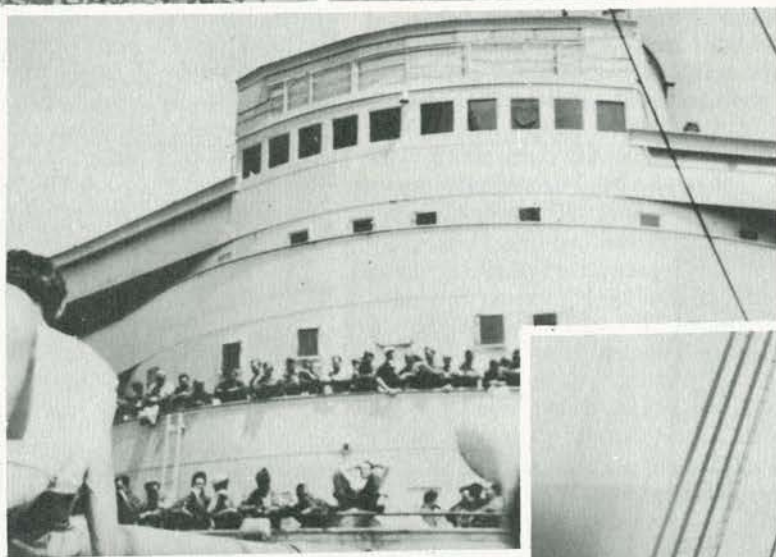
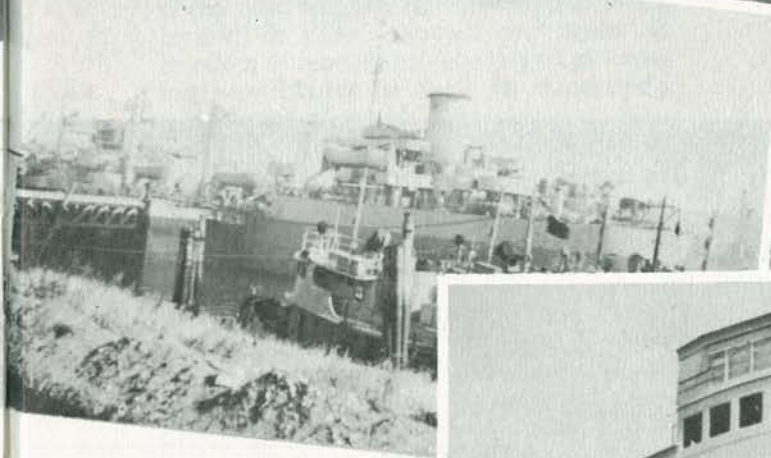
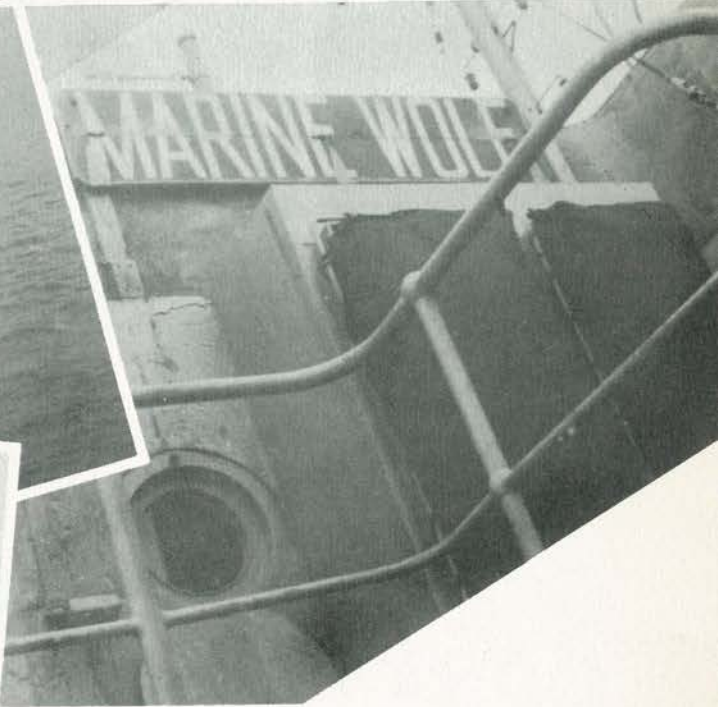
Relaxation



*Familiar
Scenes
Around
Camp*

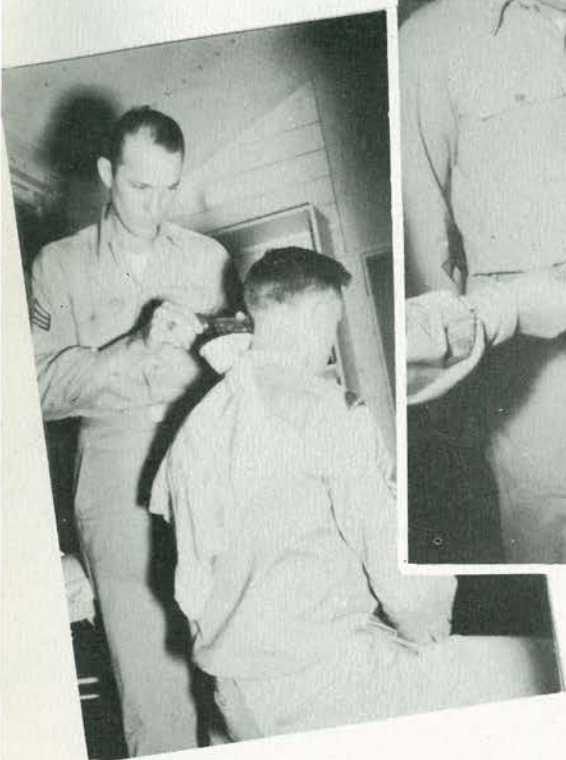






Going Home

Pictures by Hawryluk and Barger



Sick Call



GOING HOME



"Back from the wars" was a new way of looking at it. At Sissonne, moving into a former rest area of the 82nd Airborne Division, there were opportunities to relax—and to look at low-flying planes in a different, but anxious, light. The feel of an M-1, caution of movement, the sound of whizzing 88s, the thunderous explosions of bombs and shells—all these were a part of the past. Now again there would be the feeling of picks, shovels and saws. A freedom of movement. The sound of whining saw blades as they bit generously into planks of wood.

At the very beginning there was time for rest—time for the Regiment to receive its orders and S-3 to plan them for operation. Camp de Sissonne offered us new outlets in way of entertainment and recreation. The Red Cross was there, movies and sports were available. And there were fairly comfortable barracks which became a fairly bothersome part of our garrison life—especially after knowing combat freedom in living quarters.

We like to think of our first official function upon returning to France the Memorial Services honoring 398th personnel who were killed, wounded and

missing in action. On February 4th, the entire Regiment filled the Sissonne Post Theater, taking part in our most respected ceremony. Nor are we likely to forget the inspiring talk by Colonel Kingsbury, the memorable memorial address by Chaplain Jones, or the superior musical selections sung by the 398th's own octette. The ceremony gave honor to honorable men—men for whom not only we page homage, but so do all freedom-loving people.

And as we look upon the Honor Page at the beginning of this printed history, we remember the clear, beautiful tones of Galen F. Ebie's trumpet as he sounded "Taps"—and our Flag was lowered to half-mast.

Then began work projects, some large, some small. The Camp de Sissonne buildings had to be made into hospital wards and specialist rooms. Two 1800-bed hospitals were installed—the 241st and 242nd General Hospitals. Another was built in St. Quentin for the 228th General Hospital. The 200th and 230th General Hospitals were established at Soissons and the 229th General Hospital at Valenciennes.

In addition, we operated our own carpentry, blacksmithing and welding shops, repaired roads, laid water and sewer lines, installed electrical lines, maintained a supply depot, furnished water through our water-points, operated provisional labor (POW) camps, built furniture, and manned a rock quarry in Compiègne.

Simultaneously, we had an assignment to erect three divisional camps, one for the 82nd Airborne. These were tented affairs with many Nissen and prefabricated huts for headquarters, ablutions, kitchens and recreation halls. At the outset frost was still in the French ground making digging and driving into it next to impossible. By mid-February the Sissonne fields were



converted from frozen land to fenced-in strips of mud.

Meanwhile, a sadder note crept into 398th history. The Ground Forces had undergone a greater loss of men than had been planned. Their effective numbers were being reduced to threatening ineffectiveness. They needed men! Desperately. As the rear echelon units had provided them during the Ardennes Breakthrough, there was no reason, command decided, that they shouldn't be supplied through these same channels. Consequently we came to know what we called the "Infantry Draft."



Until the end of May we saw almost 500 of our men go to camps for retraining as Ground Force personnel. Companies, platoons and squads prepared farewell parties for these men who were to leave just as Victory seemed so near and final. Army friendships are seldom of long duration, but these men had spent the better part of two years together, sharing the same inconveniences, applauds and pleasures. To be trite, they'd been through thick and thin! Dammit! It just wasn't fair to split up a unit such as ours. We were—and always will be—one of the Army's happier "big family" groups.

But our personal wishes and desires were secondary—as they must be in a military organization. The greatest turn in events had already occurred and the armies needed men to see it through. Germany and her occupied lands were rapidly shrinking into nonexistence. Along with thousands of others from every conceivable Service organization, 398th men were thrown into the final efforts which crippled Germany permanently.

As our men left the 398th, in their stead came fellows from the Infantry, Armored Corps, Artillery, Air Corps, Airborne, and other combat units who had been wounded and placed in "limited assignment" status. Also, men within the same category were shipped from the United States.

In all fairness, a misunderstanding should be clarified. As these ex-combat men entered the 398th there was a certain element of ill-feeling on both sides. On the part of the remaining original 398ers against those coming in because they were taking the places of friends they felt never could be replaced. On the part of the ex-combat men because they were assigned to a unit which to them meant (because of rear-echelon assignments) a "4-F outfit."

As time passed, both sides found their impressions in error. Among the newcomers, 398ers found many friends. Among the ex-combat men, many soon found the "esprit de corps" of the 398th not just an idle expression. Once again the 398th Engineers was unified.

Long before completion of the Infantry draft late in May, our Regiment was scattered in all directions. North, east, south and west—all within a 100-mile radius circle of Headquarters located in the small, picturesque village of Vailly-sur-Aisne.

Vailly-sur-Aisne was the scene of a number of our formal ceremonies—or emanated from there. The most impressive ceremony we have to remember is the Memorial Day exercises conducted at the American Military Cemetery at Belleau Wood. The 398th was chosen to conduct this colorful ceremony which was attended by an overwhelming gathering of French military personnel and civilians. In his speech, Colonel Douglass said:

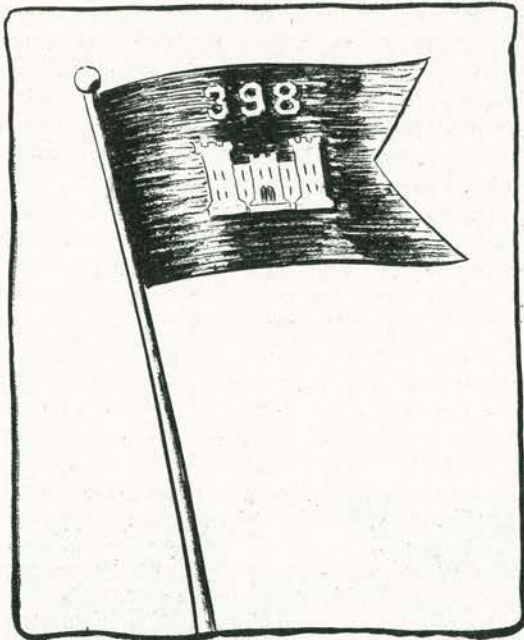
"It is a great honor for me personally to have been granted the privilege of conducting this ceremony with my Regiment in this war, in that I am returning after all these years to this same front where, with my battery near Lucy le Bocage, we helped drive the Boche from the Bois de Belleau and your surrounding communities.

"Many of my schoolmates, buddies of the last war, lie here in their graves. In behalf of their loved ones, at home in America, I wish to thank you French who have done so much in all these years to maintain this beautiful resting place.

"May it forever indicate a lasting bond between our two great nations. May the lives of the men resting here not have been in vain."



Other reviews were held in Sissons, Vailly-sur-Aisne and on the field outside of Laon to honor 398th men who were awarded medals for gallantry and meritorious service. Twenty noncommissioned officers of our Regiment received direct commissions of second lieutenants by Brigadier General Charles O. Thrasher in Reims.



Franco-American relations toward better understanding were as active in France as they had been in England with the English. Through efforts by our staff officers and the French Welcoming Committee, numerous dances were organized and enjoyed. Many 398th personnel were invited into French homes. Highlighting our better-neighbor policy was the Washington Birthday distribution of candy to French boys and girls in schools and hospitals. Again under the direction of our Chaplain, we made friends with the children of a foreign nation. The principal of a girls' school wrote:

"The pupils of the girls' school of Sissons give thanks to the soldiers of the 398th Regiment du Genie for their sweets and chocolates and for their good feeling for them. Your sweets and chocolates are delicious and they like them very much. They don't forget that the American soldiers have liberated their land. They wish the wars end as soon as possible and that all the soldiers find again their little boys and girls in the great U. S. A."

It was in this picturesque town of Vailly-

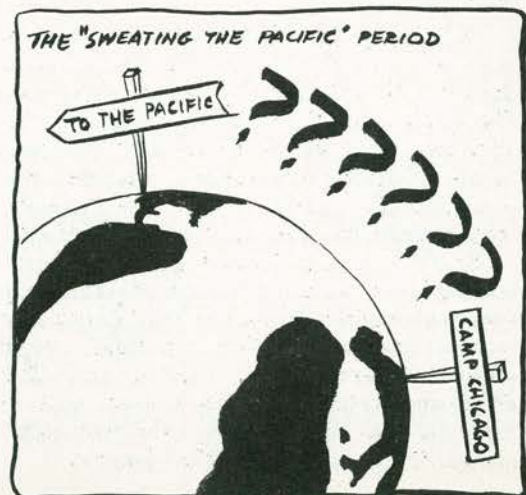
sur-Aisne that the 398th joined with the French population in celebrating with formal parades and ceremonies, the fall of Nazi Germany on June 8th after the dramatic and long-awaited surrender-signing in the "Little Red Schoolhouse" in Reims, France.

After the unconditional surrender, our work in France had new meaning and interpretation. What we had been building in an active theater of operations was no longer needed as such. Over night an accent was placed on shipping men and equipment to the Pacific that the Japanese war might be completed earlier than had been scheduled.

Our companies were in Soissons, Prosnes, Mourmelon le Grand, Vailly-sur-Aisne, Valenciennes Nord, Coucy-les-Eppes, Compiègne and Marchais. They were engaged in diversified construction projects from hospital restoration to camp building, including the 17th Airborne's takeoff camp. Our largest project was participation in building 17 Redeployment Camps named after American cities. Only one, however, was solely constructed by us—Camp Chicago—for the others had but small 398th details.

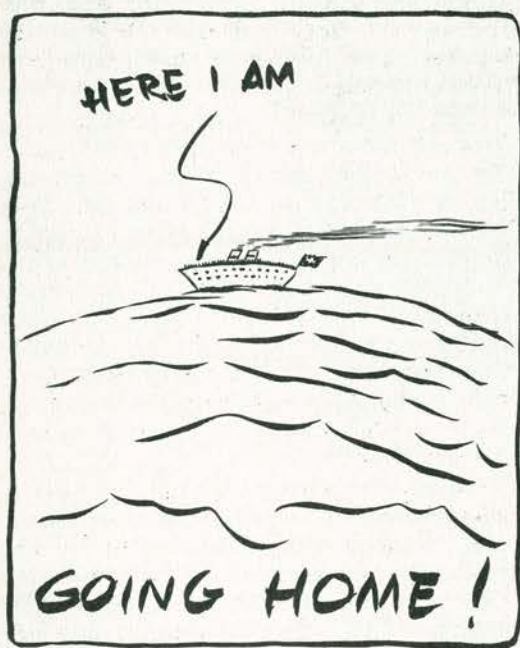
It was from Camp Chicago we were to be included on the Army's redeployment plan for shipment to the Pacific, by way of 30-day furloughs in the United States. On June 15th all 398th companies were stationed in Camp Chicago awaiting processing, and a week later our official work missions were assumed by other engineering units. We were homeward bound!

The 5th of July was reached before any definite action was taken on redeploying the 398th. We hung around the dusty Camp Chicago and drank our weekly allotment of two bottles of beer in one day and craved more the remaining six days. To help pass the time there were organ-



ized sports—too well organized! Baseball morning and afternoon. And, there was close-order drill!

On July 8th we left Camp Chicago, boarded French troop trains at St. Erme and the next day arrived at Le Havre where we were stationed at Camp Herbert Tarreyton. Expectations were to leave Le Havre by Liberty ship direct to the United States. A week passed and instead we embarked upon the *Marine Wolf* and were shuttled across the English Channel to Southampton.



Here we were billeted at Camp Barton Stacey for almost two weeks, which afforded many 398ers to revisit English friends or to travel, mainly to London. On July 27th we boarded another British troop train and moved through England into Scotland and Greenock, arriving there the 28th. Immediately upon arrival we embarked the *Queen Mary* for the second time and at 1700 hours began our homeward journey.

With only 15,000 GIs aboard, the return trip was slightly less confusing than its west to east crossing two years before. Sleeping conditions were the same, but rations had improved noticeably. Tempers were fairly well controlled; morale was exceptionally good. Again the crossing was extremely calm and without mishap.

At 0530 hours August 2nd, the *Mary* entered New York harbor accompanied by two welcoming boats. At 0600 hours she was docked at Pier 90 and at 0605, troops began disembarking operations. The 398th disembarked at 0840 hours, took a ferry to the Jersey side and by train, moved to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey.

At Kilmer processing for furloughs took two days and by midnight of the 3rd all 398th personnel were en route to the Reception Centers nearest their homes where they were given 30 days at home.

During our furloughs, events in the Pacific were brought to a climax when the mighty atomic bomb and participation by Russian forces were pitted against Japanese homeland and far-flung armies. On August 14th the Japanese war was ended—complete victory had come to the Allies.

Returning to our Reception Centers, then to Camp Claiborne, 398th personnel reassembled only to find almost 80% soon eligible for discharge. With the war won and thoughts turning to civilian pursuits, some of us became close to approaching Section Eights. By October 20th only a few more than 100 398ers remained, the majority 60-pointers, also waiting for discharge. The record-making 398th Engineer General Service Regiment has become a part of American Army history. Whatever the future holds for this Regiment, time alone will tell, but wherever it goes, whatever it does, the more than



2300 men who have been associated with it, have given it a background for pride, justifiable and genuine.

There you have it. A brief history of the 398th Engineers—a fragmentary account of your part played in the greatest of all world conflicts.

You have known the confusion and physical hardships of basic training—civilian to rookie.

You have known, early in your military life, the meaning of sweat and work while combatting the ravages of White River in Arkansas in floodtime—rookie to basic Engineer.

You have known the plight of working conditions in inclement British weather, laboring long hours in calf-deep mud building camps and installations for American assault troops arriving in England—basic Engineer to Engineer.

You have known and endured the pressure of working against time in building and restoring Cherbourg docks to usefulness, aiding in getting laden Victory ships' supplies to the fighting fronts—Engineer to seasoned Engineer.

You have known and survived the rigors and adversities of combat during Von Rundstedt's December Breakthrough in Luxembourg and Belgium—seasoned Engineer to soldier.

You have known the sweet vintage of victory; the pride and satisfaction of having done your job well—soldier to Engineer soldier.

Because of such men, the Army Service Forces coined a slogan "The impossible we do at once. The miraculous may take a little longer." The Corps of Engineers encouraged us with its "Essayens"—"Let us try." With pride and confidence the 398th can reply, "Factum est" . . . that is to say, "It Is Done!"

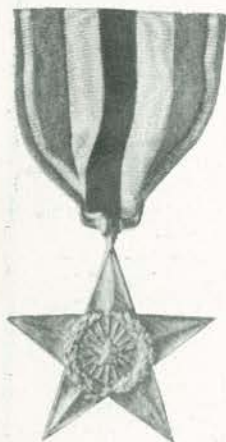


Walter C. Fields



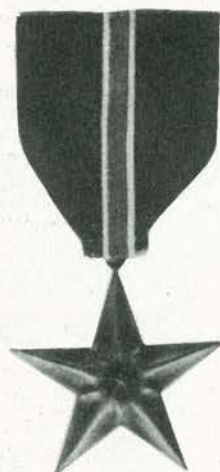
Joseph T. Gollup

LEGION OF MERIT



SILVER STAR

Rolly A. Andrew
John L. Durham
Ivan C. Kincaid
Jack McLemore
Miles D. Sutherland



BRONZE STAR

Andrew F. Bares
William A. Friend
John M. Hames
Edwin K Houchens
Grover W. James
William S. Kingsbury, Jr.
Ralph A. Lancaster
James C. MacLachlan
Vaughn Monahan
John M. Nelson
Olyn V. Price
Richard A. Rogers
John P. Rowen
Kenneth W. Schlueter
Gentry Tumlinson
Oren H. Williams
Robert H. Wilson



SOLDIERS MEDAL

William H. Chambers

Donald M. Aguilar
John J. Amabile
Edward D. Booth
Arthur J. Boyd
Joe Childers
William K. Clevenger

Royce S. Coppens
Tull T. Curd
Edward J. Curtis
Delvin D. Davis
Arthur R. Donahue
Desmond D. Erickson
Thomas E. Filer

Roy R. Grable
Clarence I. Hall
Andrew Hallahan
Harold H. Harrelson
Jennings P. Harris
Claude H. Hawks
Conrad A. Henrich
Emanuel T. Hoffman
Guy B. Hughes
Alfred Kuhn
Joseph L. Kumor
Mark Lacina
Karl J. Ludwick
Frank P. Mastrianna

Donald J. Manning
Woodrow W. McDaniel
Jack McLemore
Joseph F. McLinden
Joseph M. Miga
Francis Rawe
Emmett W. Rice



PURPLE HEART

Estil Rowe
Clifton S. Scioneaux
Robert W. Scisco
George C. Soto
Frederick B. Spencer
James R. Storey
Miles D. Sutherland
Herman E. Threet
R. P. Walker
Horace M. Ward
William L. Weaver
Jesse E. Whately, Jr.
James W. Wilson
George M. Woods

MERITORIOUS SERVICE UNIT PLAQUE

398th Engineer General Servie Regiment
"For the unselfish devotion to duty, efficiency and courage,
displayed . . . in the successful accomplishments of hazardous
and difficult missions."



DIRECT COMMISSIONS

Harry E. Adkins
Johnson W. Casper
William R. Colton, Jr.
Joseph W. Davis
Harold E. Fix
Marion E. Flanery
James P. Frady
David N. Frederickson
Arthur J. Freeborg
Joseph T. Gollup

Wilfred F. Greenwood
John Griffith
Merwin L. Laufer
Emmett J. Lisle
Vaughn Monahan
Archie W. Pahl, Jr.
Fritz L. Spencer
Robert H. Stephan
Harold Welty
Robert L. Willis

"UNKNOWN . . ."

He's just a man in uniform,
Who in his own small way
Is trying to serve his noble land
And speed that glorious day—
Of Victory!

He's not a hero of the sky
Or battle-hardened Ranger;
He doesn't go in for combat ways,
Or Paratroopers' danger—
"Beyond the Line of Duty!"

At times he fights the Nazi foe
With rifles and the lot.
At times he's in a lone foxhole
Upon some outpost plot—
Of Dangerous Ground!

Then he fights from dawn to dawn
Far behind the lines
With all the tools at his command,
That those "up front" might find—
Supplies, Hospitals!

The average person back, at home,
Doesn't know that he exists;
The papers fail to tell his tale,
And leave him in the mists—
To Be Forgotten!

But General Service Engineers,
In which he lives and dies,
Are men who build with sweat and toil
The road upon which lies—
Freedom!

—Clyde E. Morrell.



COMMENDATIONS

The following quotations are excerpts taken from official commendations bestowed upon the 398th Engineers and its personnel for its performance as an outstanding unit in the Corps of Engineers.

Upon our return from Arkansas, Colonel Jarvis J. Bain, CE, District Engineer at Memphis, Tennessee, wrote Colonel Wyman:

"It is with a very real sense of appreciation that I express to you, and through you to the men under your command, the gratitude of myself and the Memphis Engineer District for the magnificent work performed by your Regiment on the occasion of the recent floods on the White River, Arkansas.

". . . The troops under your command accepted a challenge which they successfully met. To do so required untiring devotion to duty and unsparing effort in the placing of sandbags ahead of the rising tide of the flood. Their performance of construction tasks . . . has been no less admirable and commendable.

"The fine record of the officers and men of the 398th is not only appreciated for the moment but will add considerably to the finest and best traditions of the Corps of Engineers."

Brigadier General M. C. Tyler, President of the Mississippi River Commission, expressed his appreciation and thanks, adding:

". . . Their cheerful endurance of the hardships of working long hours in mud and water, on a section of levee in imminent danger of collapse, stamps them as true soldiers, for whom we have nothing but the highest praise. Their work at this crucial point was up to the finest traditions of the Corps of Engineers."

Arkansas' Governor, Homer M. Adkins, wrote to Brigadier General John W. M. Schulz, EUTC Commander:

"The people of Arkansas are extremely grateful for the fine service rendered by the officers and men under your command. In all my experience during the past twenty years with floods, I have never seen a finer piece of work than was performed by the troops of the Engineer Unit Training Center from Camp Claiborne, Louisiana.

"I would appreciate it if you would extend my thanks to the officers and men of the 398th Engineer Regiment who worked under the command of Colonel Theodore Wyman, Jr., at various points on the White River. I am deeply gratified by your quick action in making these troops available during the recent major flood on the Arkansas river."

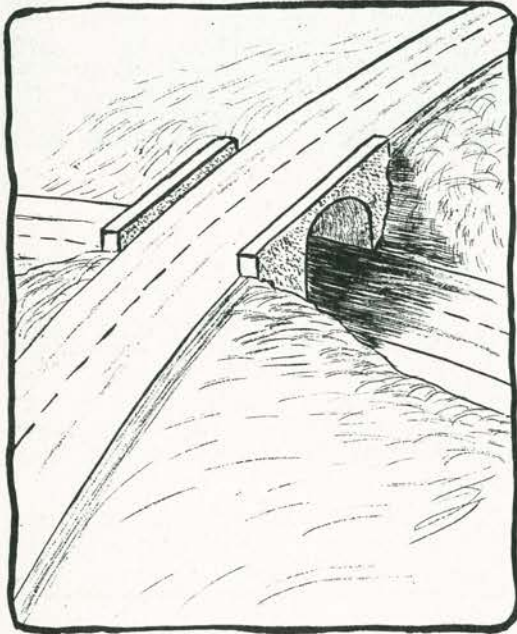
Brigadier General Schulz, upon the 398th's alert order for overseas shipment, wrote Colonel Wyman:

"It has been a matter of great pride and satisfaction to the Engineer Unit Training Center to have had a part in the formation and development of your Regiment as one of the units of the Center. With only a short period of training time available, the maximum possible use was made of the opportunity to create an organization which will carry forward with credit the high traditions of the Corps of Engineers and the United States Army.

"As commander of this Center . . . I am sure that the 398th Regiment will give a good account of itself in the work that lies ahead, as you have already done in your training here and in the recent flood fighting on the White River in Arkansas, in which your organization rendered such valuable service. During the few short months of your Regiment's existence your men have established enviable accomplishments. The EUTC will follow with interest the fortunes and services of the 398th Engineer Regiment."

When Company E completed its road construction mission at the Naval Base in Exeter, England (Eleventh Amphibious Force) its commander, John Wilkes, wrote Colonel Wyman, then commandant of the 19th District, Southern Base Section:

"It has been reported to this command that the work by the 398th Engineers, U. S. Army, Captain K. W. Schlueter commanding . . . was performed in an outstanding manner.



"The work was performed in a very orderly and systematic manner producing complete roadways that are highly satisfactory. Their ready acquiescence in modifying their operations to fit the overall plan of the construction of the Base and still maintain the Base as an operating unit was above normal expectations.

"The Army Engineers began work at this Base on Monday, 10 January 1944 and were here for 49 days, during which time they completed in excess of 45,000 square yards of roadway using over 27,000 tons of rock which were hauled from quarries an average distance of twenty miles.

"This command expresses its sincere appreciation for the expeditious manner in which the subject officers and men accomplished this work."

Colonel Wyman then sent this commendation to Major General C. R. Moore, Chief Engineer, European Theater of Operations, who also acknowledged Company E's outstanding work, and added:

"The excellent coordination between Captain Schlueter's Company and the Navy Construction Battalion leads to a closer understanding and appreciation of the mutual construction problems that are

encountered by both the Army and Navy Construction Units. The successful completion of the project and the mutual goodwill which has been established is an example of the high degree of cooperation which can be attained by the Army and Navy Unit Commanders on the same project."

Not only did we receive commendations for construction work, but for recognition as being a helpful unit toward others. In a commendation from Lieutenant Colonel W. H. E. Dunham of the 392nd Engineer General Service Regiment, he says:

"It is desired to commend the officers and men of Company F, 398th Engineer GS Regiment. When Companies D and F plus attached personnel, 392nd Engineer GS Regiment, were assigned on short notice accommodations then under construction by the unit (Company F, 398th Engineers) it went out of its way to assist and accommodate the incoming troops. Hot coffee and sandwiches were provided for each soldier, thus raising morale after a hard day of travelling.

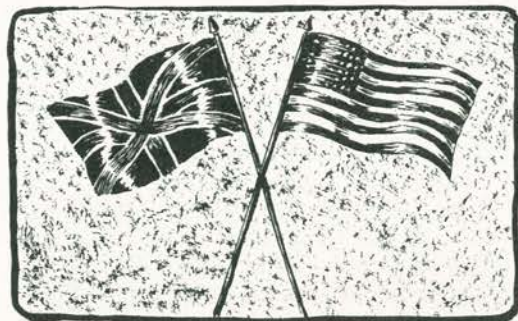
"The helpful spirit manifested by Company F . . . is much appreciated by the officers and men of the 392nd Engineer GS Regiment who stayed at their camp at Tyntesfield, and who hope to be able someday to reciprocate."

To this Colonel Wyman made the following indorsement to Lieutenant Colonel Griffith:

"My past association with your organization gives me a justifiable pride in the spirit, of cooperation and of helping others, that you have demonstrated and which is no necessary in our daily tasks to gain final victory."

After the exchange of British Engineers and 398th personnel, the following commendation was received from Lieutenant Colonel M. M. Brydon, Royal Engineers, commanding the 695th Artisan Works Company:

". . . The men of your Regiment recently stationed with me were a fine advertisement for the United States and the U. S. Army.



"Working, training, and in relaxation, they were a fine bunch of lads and I hope mine gave as much satisfaction.

"I had intended giving each of the boys a note from me to take away with them but failing that, I shall be glad if you can let them know that they more than upheld the honor of their native country and of their native states, which if I remember rightly are: Wisconsin, California, Pennsylvania, New York, Texas, Connecticut, Rhode Island and Massachusetts."

Colonel James B. Cress, commander of the 1056th Port Construction and Repair Group offered this commendation:

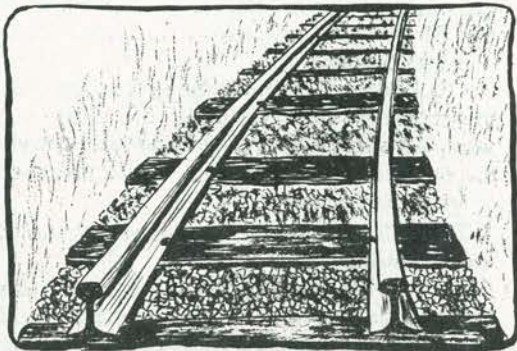
"I wish to express my appreciation as group commander of the hard work done by the officers and men of Company A of your Regiment in constructing the railroad yard on the east side of Basin Napoleon III (Cherbourg).

"The changes of war often bring about circumstances which make construction doubly difficult, but despite all set-backs, Company A worked night and day to accomplish its mission. Men at the front have the excitement of action to stir them on toward greater accomplishments, while those of us working here have the satisfaction of work well done, knowing that the development of this port is one of the critical operations of the war and on its success depends to a great degree the success of those directly in contact with the enemy."

Another Cherbourg commendation came from Lieutenant Colonel Walter G. Maddock, commander of the 298th General Hospital, to our commanding officer:

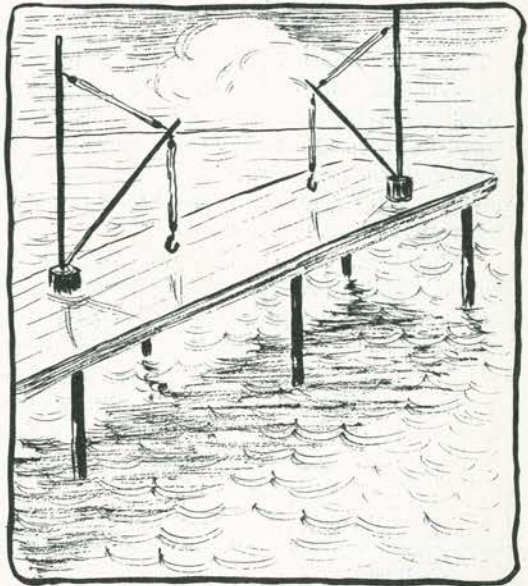
"I desire to express to you my complete satisfaction in the work of your men at this hospital. The spirit of Captain O'Brien and the officers and men under him has invariably been one of helpfulness and cooperation. They have accomplished much, and in the work ahead I am sure will continue their excellent record here. It is a pleasure to have this group helping us."

Following the November 11th parade in



Cherbourg, a French Civil Official wrote concerning Company B, who participated:

"The presence of the American Army among the French troops review and parade, gave a particular brightness to the National Day of the 11th of November. I have noticed with a great pleasure the smart behavior of your troops and the precision of their movements. I would appreciate very much if you would be so kind as to forward my congratulations



to the officers and men who shared in the parade."

First place in our long list of commendations is held by this one, written to Colonel Douglass by Lieutenant General John C. H. Lee, Commanding Communications Zone, European Theater of Operations:

"Commendation has been received from the Commanding Officer Combat Team Costello, XII Corps, reading substantially:

"The 398th Engineer General Service Regiment came into the line without any previous combat experience—possibly without any previous Infantry training. However, the officers and men of that Regiment, under their commander, Lieutenant Colonel A. H. Douglass, took hold and did themselves credit under enemy fire. Because of emergency situations, it was necessary for me to use the Regiment in the attack, in the defense, and on extensive patrolling. The Regiment cooperated to the fullest extent and never questioned instructions or messages assigned to them. Their departure from this command was deeply regretted."

"The above quoted commendation from Colonel N. A. Costello is acknowledged

as coming from a distinguished soldier of unusual ability. You and your Regiment have my sincere congratulations and best wishes."

To this, General Moore added:

"I take great pleasure in forwarding this commendation and wish to add my personal congratulations for a job well done."

Upon completion of establishing transient camps, Lieutenant General L. H. Brereton, Commander of the First Allied Airborne Army, wrote to General Lee:

"Please express to your Oise, Normandy, Seine and Channel Base Sections, and to all other members of your staff and organization who participated, the appreciation of this Headquarters for the efficient manner in which the transient camps for airborne troops were recently constructed and operated.

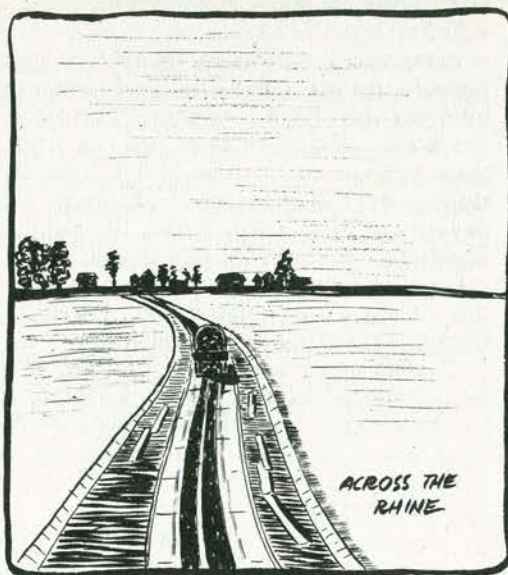
"The First Allied Airborne Army's airborne operation across the Rhine, 24 March 1945, in support of the British Second Army, was materially assisted by your efficient organization. It is hoped that your officers and men realize that they played a very important part in that operation and share generously in the credit for its success.

In forwarding the commendation down through channels, General Lee added this indorsement:

"Forwarded with appreciation for another task well done. Please convey my thanks to the members of your staff who assisted in this operation."

And in forwarding it to the 398th Engineer Commander, General Thrasher commented:

"Your efforts are well known to me and I am proud to add my commendation to those of General Brereton and General Lee; it is of utmost gratification to me to



receive such fine commendation from higher headquarters for work performed by officers and enlisted men under my command."

Colonel E. G. Herb, Oise Section Engineer, offered:

"I take pleasure in forwarding the commendations expressed in the basic communications (above) and the two indorsements. While the work involved was not primarily Engineering, it was done in a manner that is traditional with the Corps of Engineers."

And from Major General James M. Gavin, Commander of the 82nd Airborne Division, comes this commendation:

"This Division is most appreciative of the fine spirit of cooperation displayed by you and by the officers and men of your command in their efforts to assist us upon our return to Camp Sissonne, France.

"Although your primary mission at Camp Sissonne involved only the preparation of the post for hospital purposes, the members of your command have been unsparing in their efforts to assist us with the problem of preparing this area for incoming troops.

"The helpful attitude displayed by your organization is a credit to the Service. I would appreciate it if you would convey the thanks of this Division to the members of your Regiment."

To which General Thrasher added his indorsement:

"It is with pleasure that I forward this commendation on to you, to which I wish to add my own and express my thanks and appreciation to the officers and men



of your organization who contributed toward this outstanding performance of duty."

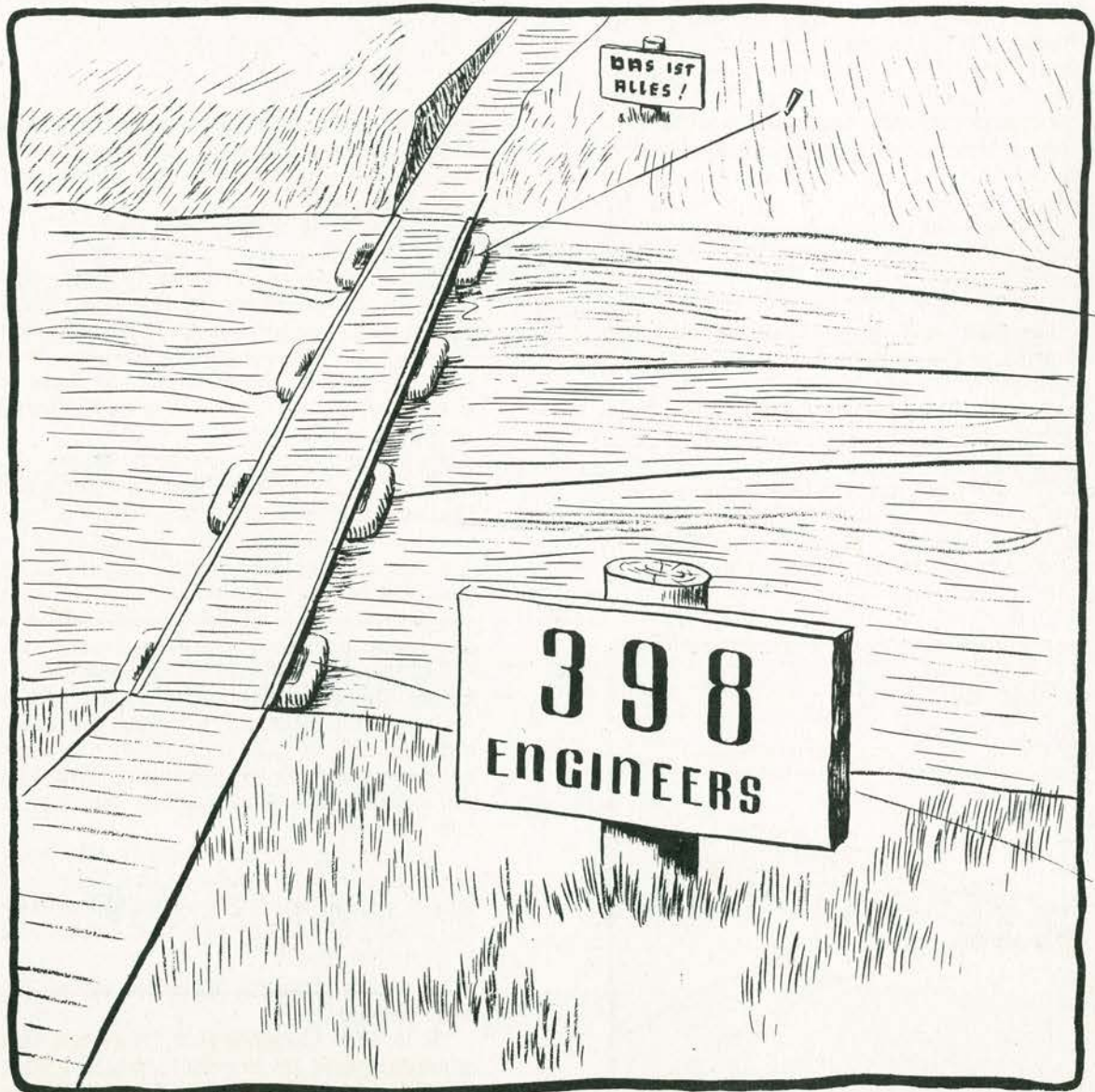
General of the Army Dwight D. Eisenhower sent the following citation to General Lee and General Ewart G. Plank:

"Headquarters, Communications Zone, and the Staffs and Troops in Advance Section and Oise Section, Communications Zone, are commended for exceptional service in the emergency created by the German offensive starting December 16, 1944. Quick and decisive action in the Communications Zone resulted in establishing and manning the defenses of the Meuse River crossings and in the rapid

transportation of combat troops to critical points, as well as the continuation of supply functions, thus making a major contribution to the stopping of the German threat and making possible a speedy initiation of counter-thrusts."

In forwarding the citation to 398th level, General Plank, Commander of Advance Sector, Communications Zone, said:

"This splendid citation from the Theater Commander was well earned by the soldiers of Advance Section Communications Zone, and my heartfelt thanks and appreciation are extended to each officer and man in this command for his superior performance during the emergency just passed."



Song of The 3-9 and 8
Words and Music by James C. MacLachlan



WE ARE THE BOYS OF THE THREE NINE AND EIGHT

MAH- CHING A - LONG TO OUR FATE -----, WERE

ALL WAYS IN THE MUD BUT WE CAN TAKE IT BUD IN OUR

OUT - FIT WE HAVE PRIDE BECAUSE, SOMETHING HERE IN SIDE HEY
WEVE

UP AT THE FRONT OR IN THE REAR WEVE SHOWN WE HAVE NO
THAT

FEAR ----- WHO BUILDS A BRIDGE AND FIGHTS THE , DONT YOU
HUNS

KNOW HELL WERE THE ONES THE THREE NINETY EIGHT ENG IN EERS

RUMOR

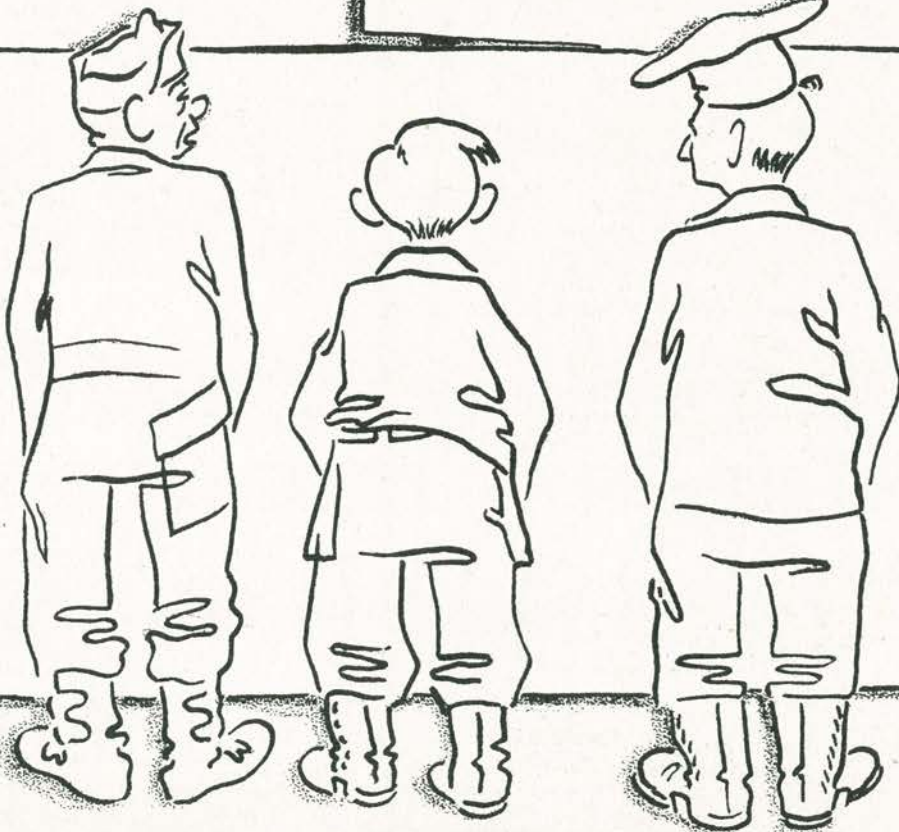
CARTOONS



"Let's pool our points and toss for 'em."



"Compre, Madame? .Laundry .foot-sweet. C.B.I."



"Hey, Robert L., didja know the Colonel's sun-tans are in the tailor shop?"



D—"I tell ya, Bertie, those Nazis ain't human. You can tell by lookin' at 'em."



E—"Gallion won't eat 'em. Sez there's a ketch to this eggs-ev'ry-mornin' stuff."



don Wilson

**OFFICER ROSTER of all who have
been transferred and who are still
with the 398th**

Frank T. Adams, Jr.
Box 696
Whitefish, Montana

Rolly A. Andrew
310 N. Sweetzer
Los Angeles, California

Alexander C. Allen
368 Main Street
Chatham, New Jersey

Leroy Awalt
1704 Edison Drive
San Antonio, Texas

John F. Barger
657 Riddle Road
Cincinnati, Ohio

Harold K. Barte
625 W. 9 Mile Road
Ferndale, Michigan

John H. Baumgart
438 S. Yellowstone Street
Livingston, Montana

William L. Benton
135 Old Ivey
Atlanta, Georgia

Wesley E. Bogart
75 Jewel Street
Rochester, New York

Chester M. Bostwick
1415 Green Street
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

Roland C. Brower
2915 Harlandale
Dallas, Texas

Donald D. Brown
2903 S. 16th Street
Omaha, Nebraska

Eugene J. Carr
South Warren Street
Wilson, North Carolina

Douglass M. Carter
Pine Park
Gainesville, Florida

Johnson W. Casper
449 North Vermont Avenue
Glendora, California

Forrest W. Coile
205 River Road
Hilton Village, Virginia

Raymond C. Comings
8730 Prairie Avenue
Highland, Indiana

William C. Cook
94 Pelham Avenue
Schoolfield, Virginia

Ferrere Costa
36-20 23rd Avenue
Long Island City, New York

Nixon F. Crossley
Route 2
Corona, California

Addison H. Douglass
2407 Girard Avenue
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Raymond W. Duncan
Route 3
Lena, Mississippi

William P. Elliott
27 Muir Avenue
Piedmont, California

Gerald Fisher
264 West Market Street
Akron, Ohio

Joseph W. Folger
77 West 16th Street
Bayonne, New Jersey

Alfred M. Fort
35 Melvin Avenue
Catonsville, Maryland

David N. Frederickson
Route 1, Box 522
Grants Pass, Oregon

Arthur J. Freeborg
1208 West 12th Avenue
Spokane, Washington

Marion E. Flanery
208 N. W. 17th Street
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

William A. Friend
701 Richwood Avenue
Morgantown, West Virginia

William S. Kingsbury, Jr.
1950 1/2 West 25th Street
Long Beach, California

Frederick T. Krueger
207 South 12th Street
Petersburg, Illinois

William H. Kuonen
604 West 18th Street
North Little Rock, Arkansas

Alex T. Langston, Jr.
625 1/2 10th Street, S. W.
Birmingham, Alabama

Elmer W. Fugitt
1642 Primrose Road, N. W.
Washington, D. C.

Arthur V. Gartland
1331 Laurel Street
St. Louis, Missouri

Daniel R. Gatlin, Sr.
814 South Walter Street
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Joseph T. Gollup
4330 44th Street
Long Island City, Queens, N. Y.

Wilfrid F. Greenwood
21 Capen Street
Windsor, Connecticut

Lawrence W. Gregory
1239 Oakshire Lane
Kirkwood, Missouri

William E. Griffith
2810 Bellaire Street
Denver, Colorado

Robert N. Grunow
330 Pence Street
Tallahassee, Florida

Earl M. Harter, Jr.
Box 623
Tullos, Louisiana

Raymond E. Haynes
919 Belmont
Toledo, Ohio

Joseph W. House

Eugene T. Hoban
2053 North Bissell Street
Chicago, Illinois

Gregory J. Hoffmann
Pierce, Nebraska

Joe M. Horwich
1403 North 33rd Street
Omaha, Nebraska

Philip A. Irwin
415 East Church Street
Decatur, Alabama

Ernest G. James
Exira, Iowa

Atwood J. Jones, Jr.
3406 East Rosedale
Fort Worth, Texas

Joseph H. Lewis
Box 55
Repton, Alabama

Emmett J. Lisle
Route 1
Caldwell, Idaho

James C. MacLachlan
Andover, Massachusetts

William J. Maier
304 East 88th Street
New York, New York

Jack H. Marsee
3529 Central
Kansas City, Missouri

J. Govane McClees
2929 Charles Street
Baltimore, Maryland

Edward J. McManus
Montrose, New York

Daniel J. McHugh
60 Prospect Place
Brooklyn, New York

Charles F. Miller, Jr.
1511 Bank Street
Baltimore, Maryland

Malcolm J. Morgan
3205 Porter Street, N. W.
Washington, D. C.

George L. O'Brien, Jr.
956 Dowling Blvd.
San Leandro, California

Robert W. Orton
Pierce, Colorado

Archie W. Pahl, Jr.
1678 Grove Avenue
Hollydale, California

John Plasky
13 Simpson Avenue
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