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Pack up and move: a pictorial history of the 348th Engineer Combat Battalion

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Pack Up and Move



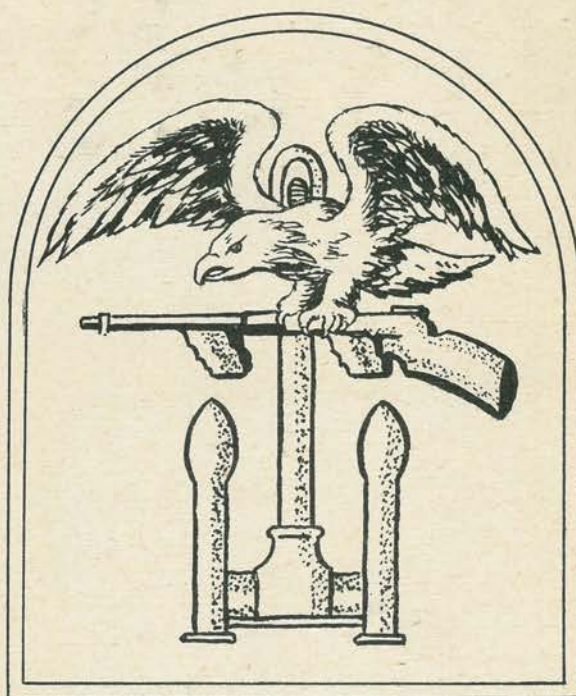
by

KEITH BRYAN

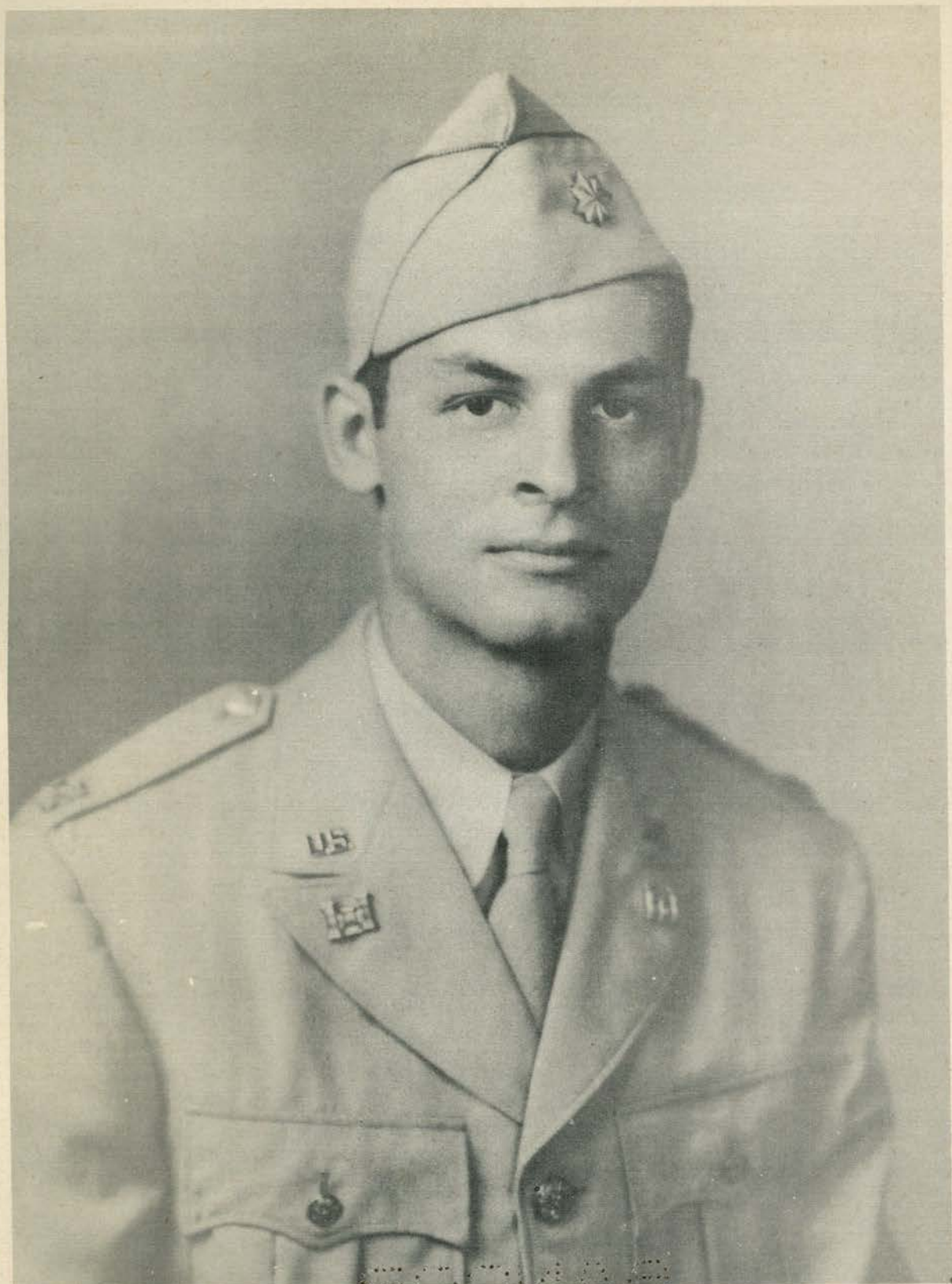
PACK UP AND MOVE

A Pictorial History
of the
348th Engineer Combat Battalion

by
KEITH BRYAN



THE ART PRINTERY
Columbus, Nebraska



Lt. Col. Richard L. Powell

PREFACE

Flying from the same staff with the colors of the 348th Engineers are the Croix de Guerre streamer and the streamers of the battles of Normandy, Northern France, the Ardennes, the Rhineland, and Central Europe. These silken ribbons alone tell much of the achievements of the Battalion; but the more detailed records of its excellent accomplishments exist in the offices in Washington, in the minds of the men who served the organization, and in this book.

In compiling this history I have made an attempt to do alone, after my separation from the unit, what should have been done by a staff of writers and at a much earlier date. The information on the following pages has been gleaned from my own experiences, from correspondence with men and officers formerly with the unit, and from official Battalion reports and records. You will probably find that reference to some events and dates is vague, possibly even incorrect in some cases; but I feel that this narrative is the most accurate that could be written under the existent circumstances. The story deals largely with places, events, and dates—rarely have I mentioned individuals. The mention of more than a few would have demanded the mention of all, which was certainly impossible. The personal experience stories in the text have been chosen simply because I thought these to be typical experiences. At least, they are interesting. It has been my aim throughout the writing of this history to produce a book with which the former members of the Battalion could sit down with their families and friends and recapture some of the glories and hardships they experienced while in the service of one of the Army's finest Engineer units. I hope I have succeeded.

I take this opportunity to thank the following named men for their contributions of some of the information and most of the pictures appearing on the succeeding pages: Tom Ley, Bill Dennis, Ambrose Doller, Morris Selfe, Bob Coffman, Joe Harvat, Sumner Peck, Robert Hoppe, Neil Larson, Roland Regan, Harold Heady, Charles Accettola, Marvin Zindel, Godfred Carland, Richard Powell, Steve Collins, and Lee Ashton. Thanks also to the Chambers of Commerce of Los Angeles, Yuma and Taunton. All pictures of Camps Crowder, Pickett, and Myles Standish are official Signal Corps photos and were donated by the Public Relations Officers of those camps.

The book is dedicated to those fellows who used to stand with us at Retreat formations, but who now lie "at ease" beneath the neat rows of white crosses in the cemeteries in France and Belgium . . .

THE AUTHOR

PACK UP AND MOVE

FALLING IN

It was on the 15th of July 1942 that the 348th Engineers were entered on the War Department records, as a General Service Regiment. The Regiment was organized at Camp Crowder, Missouri; and the greatest portion of its cadre was from the 19th Engineer Combat Regiment stationed, at that time, as Pasadena, California. The first group of "fillers" joined the unit early in the morning of August 22nd after traveling many miles by rail from the various induction centers of the Seventh Service Command. These men were followed in succeeding three days by two groups, one from New York, and the other from Michigan. The unit at this time was under the command of Major Clayton Gates, later under Colonel Sylvester Nortner, a West Pointer and then the ranking colonel of the United States Army. Personnel were quickly



Formation on Camp Crowder parade ground

inducted into a nine-week basic MTP training course that consisted largely of orientation and physical conditioning. Much time was given also to Infantry tactics and to the construction of fortifications and obstacles. A few hours were devoted to military bridging. Three days in pup tents made up most of the hours spent in living under field conditions at this station. Much training and instruction was given in marksmanship; and the days of official firing on the range will probably be remembered as the coldest and most miserable days experienced by the unit at Camp Crowder. During this period, and for the following six months, the basic arm was the Springfield 1903 rifle.

Camp Crowder, it will be recalled, was a Signal Corps Replacement Training Center; and its service clubs, Post Exchanges, and theatres

had much to offer in the way of entertainment and relaxation. The nearby towns most frequently visited by men on pass were Neosho and Joplin. Passes at this stage of training were not of sufficient length to allow long trips. Only a few individuals whose homes were in Iowa, Kansas, and Missouri were fortunate enough to spend a limited number of hours with relatives and friends of civilian days.

Camp Crowder, although not situated in the most scenic section of the state, will be remembered for its growth of golden-leaved oak trees that lent an autumn color to the entire landscape during the Regiment's last days at that post. On a cloudy and windy day, the 29th of October, the unit entrained for the journey to the California desert.



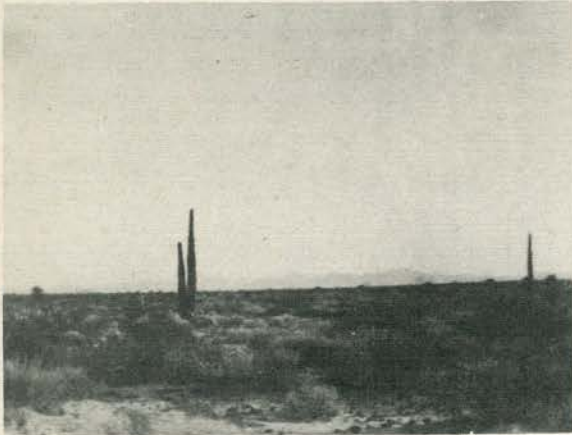
Lyon Gate, main gate to Camp Crowder

WESTWARD HO

Two trains were required for the transfer of men and equipment. The 2nd Battalion traveled a northern route; and while the men of this unit had snowball fights at train stops in the Colorado mountains, the men of the 1st Battalion drilled under a torrid Oklahoma Panhandle sun during one of their relaxation periods. The cars, naturally, were crowded; but this trip was far more comfortable than some of the later ones. The journey was slow and dreary; but to say it was uneventful would be misleading. Many were viewing

for the first time the western mountain ranges and prairies. Antelope and coyotes raced away from the tracks as the train crept along. Lean cowpunchers waved from their saddles, Mexican "muchachos" begged candy along the sidings, and blanket-draped Indians stared blankly from station platforms. The 2nd Battalion had sight of the Grand Canyon but the 1st Battalion had the misfortune to pass through the Painted Desert after nightfall.

SAND AND SUNSHINE



At dawn the morning of November 2nd, personnel of the 1st Battalion looked from their train windows and saw the bound expanse, the greasewood clumps, the rising clouds of dust, the towering saguaro cactus, and the jagged little mountain ranges that was the Mojave Desert so familiar to the thousands who trained there in 1942 and 1943. Freda, California—a mere whistle-stop in the middle of the some 10,000 acres that comprise Desert Training Center. Tanks and other items of equipment of the Armored units were to be seen by the hundreds. The dust was choking; and, in a few hours, the sun bore down with the heat of a giant

furnace. The Armored men with their bronzed faces and faded green coveralls were a sharp contrast to the OD-clad newcomers from Missouri. But there was no time for sight-seeing. The train should be unloaded quickly, the siding was needed for the loading of another eastbound. Kay Kyser's band played at Freda that afternoon; but few men in the 348th knew about it. They were much too busy. Equipment and baggage were transferred to trucks and moved to a site some three miles down the road. By the time the unloading was completed, the sun was dropping low in the west. The evening meal was served beneath a cooling sky. Pyramidal tents were erected with considerable difficulty in the darkness that night; and many tired men crept into their blankets without as much as clearing away the greasewood bushes that stood within the interiors of their tents.

Sleeping proved to be a problem, that night and several nights thereafter. The searing atmosphere of daytime gave way to the chill of night. There were no cots. After a couple of hours, the soft sand one went to bed on became the hardest type of concrete. Various arrangements of shelter halves and blankets were invented and experimented with in almost vain efforts to keep out the cold. In desperation, there were those who included newspapers in their bedding. The human being, however, was not alone in his discomfort during those chilly nights. It was not unusual, at breakfast time, to hear someone telling of the lizard, the horned toad, the centipede, the scorpion,



The Freda camp.



"C" Company street at Freda

or of the sidewinder that he shook out of his blankets on arising that morning.

The 2nd Battalion left its train in Nevada and made its way to Freda by motor convoy. The Regiment engaged in some training; but more time was devoted to improvement of the camp. Supplies came in, and among them were cots and additional blankets. There was also a new item of Government Issue—the M-1 steel helmet with papier mache liner. A miniature Post Exchange was set up to dispense candy, cigarettes, beer, Coca Cola, and sleeping bags. The establishment did a remarkable business on the latter. Three-day passes and week-end passes were brought into being; and there were those who visited such places as San Bernardino, El Centro, Riverside, Los Angeles, and Hollywood through this means.

The 1st Battalion moved to a site nine miles west of Yuma, Arizona the middle of November. They lived in pup tents here for nearly two weeks. Operations consisted of some road construction and the building of a water and shower point on the bank of an irrigation canal. Thanksgiving dinner was served at this camp; and it may be remembered that "coke", beer, and white bread were served with the meal. The bread heretofore served by the unit kitchens since arrival on the desert had been a brittle edible known as "rusk."



A soldierly appearance is maintained near Yuma

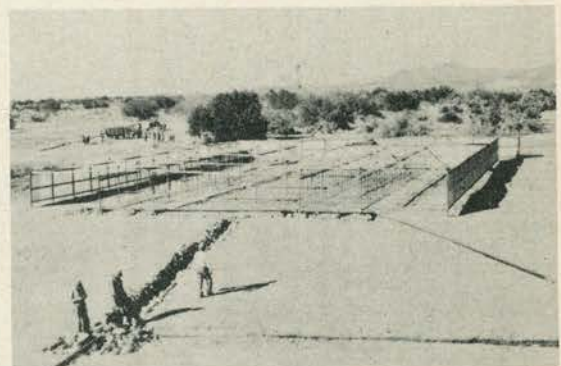
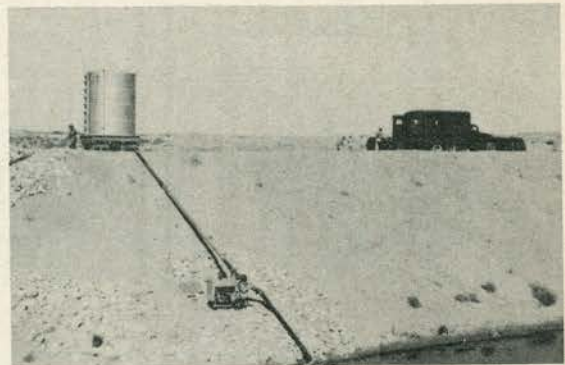


The pup-tent camp west of Yuma



Los Angeles from the air

(Courtesy of Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce)



Shower and water point built west of Yuma by the 348th

After about ten days in this camp, the Battalion executed a move to an area approximately a mile away. This camp was a pyramidal tent camp and adjacent to the scene of operations—the scene of operations being a camp site for the 6th Motorized Infantry Division which was scheduled to move into that sector. The work here consisted mainly of staking out areas, installing water points, and constructing camp roads. Road construction on the desert was a fairly simple process. When the desert soil was mixed with coarse gravel and then sprinkled with water, it could be rolled down into an extremely hard and comparatively durable surface. Without the gravel and water treatment, "A" Company, in a demonstration, cleared and graded a desert road across the sand at the rate of one mile in twenty minutes. Actual construction, however, required a great deal more work and time. Clearing crews would follow the surveyors' stakes with brush knives and axes to remove the ironwood bushes, the greasewood, and the cactus. Bulldozers aided in this operation. It was then a matter of minutes for a grader to build up a bed, since no deep ditches were necessary in that dry climate. Next on the scene were the gravel trucks. When the gravel was leveled it was sprinkled with water hauled several miles from the water points on the canal. The following traffic packed the surface.



Life in the Open

Those taking advantage of passes at this time were going to places like Palm Springs, Mexicali, and Yuma. An eleven o'clock curfew was enforced in Yuma; and when one left the town at that hour and crossed the Colorado River back into California, he found it to be only ten o'clock California time. This caused no end of unfavorable comment.

In the first part of December the 1st Battalion joined the 2nd Battalion, which had previously moved to a point some 15 miles north and east of Yuma. Approximately the same work was carried out here as at the previous location. 22 recruits from Fort Bliss, Texas came to the Regiment about the 7th of December. About three days later a group of approximately 140 reported in from Fort Devens, Mass. Officers and NCO's were drawn from the Companies of the Regiment; and a sep-



**Recruits learn rudiments of marksmanship
near Yuma**



Line-up for the evening meal

arate recruit detachment was formed at the extremities of the camp. The recruits were divided into platoons of from 20 to 25 men, one platoon for each Company of the Regiment. They were given three weeks of training that was somewhat limited by a lack of aids and material. They joined their respective Companies on January 5th.

Christmas was approached with much spirit during that winter on the desert, though there was little about the environment to remind any one of the personnel of Christmas as he must have known it. The weather had been extremely warm during the days. Each orderly room had a greasewood bush or evergreen tree of some sort at its door decorated with colored paper, foil from gum wrappers, bottle caps, popcorn, or anything else to catch the eye. A public address system relayed Christmas carols through the camp. Bing Crosby's recording of "White Christmas" was quite popular then; and it never lost its popularity though its melody filled the desert night air dozens of times with the germs of homesickness. Many of the Companies had formed three or four pyramidal tents together, furnished with crude tables and benches, as makeshift messhalls for the holiday meal. All meals before this had been both served and eaten in the open. Although some of the mess tents had been completed a day or two in advance, no one took advantage of their sacred shelter ahead of schedule — they were to be used for Christmas dinner and Christmas dinner alone. The sun arose bright and clear on Christmas morning



Christmas at Yuma, Oops, there goes the tent!

as on every other morning. But by nine o'clock a furious wind was sweeping across the desert bearing with it a wall of powdery sand that drifted beneath the tent walls and made it impossible for one to see the width of a company street. Tents collapsed, and the men attempted to reset them in the storm. The dinner was served with no change in menu; but once the men had made the dash from the kitchen tent to their own tents, they found their messkits of food covered with a crust

of sand. The carefully arranged messhalls were not used. The following day a carpenter detail was sent to Camp Young to aid in repair of the damaged buildings there.

It was near this time that the first furloughs were being authorized. One-way distances traveled by personnel on these furloughs ranged from 1000 to 3000 miles.



Main street of Yuma



Irrigated farm land of the Yuma Valley



Old Territorial Prison

(These pictures are printed through
the courtesy of the
Yuma Chamber of Commerce)

Also at about this time, the unit underwent a reorganization. The 2nd Battalion became the 233rd Engineer Combat Battalion and entrained for shipment to Fort Story, Virginia. Regimental Headquarters and Service Company formed the nucleus for both Battalion Headquarters and service Companies. The camp was struck and on a day of wind and flying sand, and the remaining elements of the 348th Engineers moved to Camp Young, near Indio, California.

At Camp Young, a change of commanding officers were made. Colonel Nortner became post commander of Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri at the grade of brigadier general; and Lieutenant Colonel Bauer, formerly with the 6th Armored Corps, accepted command of the 1st Battalion. A vast amount of construction was undertaken immediately upon arrival at Camp Young. The projects included two divisional camp sites, a 500-bed station hospital, and numerous smaller jobs. The work included surveying, road construction, excavation, frame building erection, the laying of welded pipe line, painting, plumbing, powerline construction, electrical wiring, water distribution, and concrete work. The Battalion was fortunate in having countless men with civilian experience in these fields; but the training received here by the majority was to prove valuable later under entirely different conditions. Approximately 1,000,000 board feet of lumber were used in the hospital construction, as well as countless feet of steel pipe and miles of wire. The station hospital was the last structure to be completed, final installations being made on this the second week in April.

On the 31st of March, the Battalion became the 348th Engineer Combat Battalion. A few days later the unit entered a physical conditioning program that emphasized hand-to-hand fighting, obstacle course running, and hiking. There was also instruction in weapons and Infantry tactics. It was during this lapse of time that the first machine gun crews were trained. Lieutenant Colonel Bauer was promoted to full colonelcy; and returned to the 6th Armored Corps. Major Richard L. Powell was appointed Battalion Commander.



Sunday was laundry day at Camp Young



A Camp Young mail call



Coxcomb campsite headquarters

Although the field life on the Mojave was an agreeable one, it lacked many of the conveniences to which the men had become accustomed during their garrison existence in Camp Crowder. Nearly all the letters to the folks at home throughout these five and one-half months were written by candlelight. Electric lights were available only to the headquarters and kitchen tents. Desert sand was underfoot 24 hours a day. Anyone who has watched his axe bounce from an ironwood branch will verify to the stovewood shortage. Ties from ancient railroads and timbers from abandoned mines substituted for the natural woods in the matter of stovewood. Water piped from a Colorado River

aqueduct supplied the coldest showers in California. Due to constructional demands, seldom was Sunday a "day off". But this vast area known to some as "the Devil's playground" had also its points of charm. It was a source of wonderment to watch the purple veil of dusk creep down the mountain walls to eventually envelop all that was in view. The desert moon was a silvery disk that seemingly could be touched by merely reaching for it. And when its light gleamed from the galvanized metal caps on the rows of tents as distant voices sang to a guitar's rhythm across the crisp night, a desert camp seemed to possess some attributes of home.

On the 19th of April, when temperatures were beginning to soar high above the hundred mark, the Battalion once more loaded aboard a train, this time for transcontinental shipment to Florida. It left behind a cadre for the headquarters of the 1120th Engineer Group. This made the fifth headquarters for which the Battalion had supplied nuclear personnel in the course of four months.



Camp is broken for the move to Florida



Every man a dishwasher



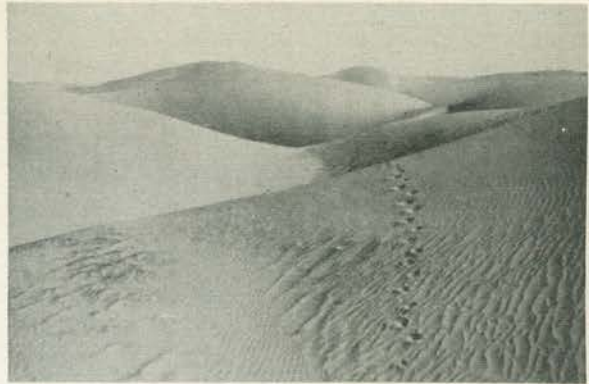
Wanderers of the wasteland



Camp Young street scene



**(Courtesy of the Los Angeles
Chamber of Commerce)**



DESERT LANDSCAPES



WORK IN A VACATIONLAND

The trip that carried the unit through Tucson, Douglas, Houston, San Antonio, New Orleans, Mobile, Jacksonville and finally brought them to the town of Fort Pierce, Florida at sunrise the 26th day of April was considerably more comfortable than the westward journey, despite its greater length. With fluttering guidons, the Battalion marched from the station through the streets of Fort Pierce across the bridge to the island where the camp lay, Fort Pierce Amphibious Training Base. Upon arrival the Battalion was assigned to the 1119th Engineer Combat Group under the command of Colonel W. D. Bridges. The two other Engineer Battalions in the Group were the 336th and 234th, former members of a General Service Regiment in Alabama. Other units attached and engaged in the training were the 294th Signal Company, the 203rd Quartermaster Gas Supply Battalion, and Company "B" 3rd Naval Beach Battalion. The base was one of several such training bases under the jurisdiction of Atlantic Fleet Amphibious Forces. This particular base was under command of Captain Clarence Gulbranson, USN. It was here that Engineers learned to refer to a floor as a "deck", and a rope as a "line", to the right as "starboard," and the Post Exchange as a "ship's store." Sailors, Engineers, and Signalmen lived together in the same company areas. The palm trees, frequent semi-tropical showers, and Atlantic blue water were welcome sensations to the desert-seared eyes and skins of the 348th men. It was quickly learned by a few unfortunates, however, that a sunburn may be obtained in Florida even on a cloudy day.

The first nine days were given to an indoctrination program in addition to the physical fitness course that persisted throughout the entire amphibious training period at the base. The first ride in the landing craft was over a rolling sea; and many made involuntary contributions to the fish over the gunwales. The triangular fins cutting the surface on calmer days, it was learned, were those of porpoise and not of sharks. Sharks did, however, inhabit the lagoon between the island and the mainland. Hundreds of men lined the bridge railing each evening at later dates, with bamboo poles and cans of bait; and several barracudas were caught by these fishermen. The physical program featured athletics, daily calisthenics, frequent speed marches in the sand, tumbling, Judo, and much swimming. Acquaintance was made with naval landing craft, flag signaling, the beach-marking system, and the new weapons—the M-1 rifle, the 50. caliber machine gun, and the "Bazooka".

Before the training was well under way, a large group of new men joined the unit to bring the strength up to that prescribed by the new Table of Organization. The greater number of these came from Camp Robinson, Arkansas, and had undergone basic Infantry training there. Limited service personnel in the unit, who could not be appropriately applied to the task that lay ahead, were transferred to Station Complement, Camp Murphy, Florida. Personnel over 38 years of age were transferred to the same post to effect their transfer to the Enlisted Reserve Corps.



Company street at the Fort Pierce base

The actual training was based on the losses and gains of the landing operations on the North African coast; and the first step was to break the Companies down into three main working parties with entirely different missions—Ship Platoons, Service Platoons and Shore Platoons. There was still a further breakdown to form the reconnaissance, road building, demolitions, and headquarters groups. The initial phase of the training was a four-week period of exercises with Companies and their attached personnel acting independently of the other Companies. The first "problem" was of 24-hour duration. Ship Platoons loaded, by hand, the craft at a point near the camp; and the cargoes were unloaded in the same manner by the Service Platoons at points several miles down the shore of the island. "DUKWS" had just taken their place in amphibious warfare; and their capabilities had not as yet been wholly recognized. The few that were used were operated by the Engineer Companies. The following simulated landings were of varying lengths less than 24 hours; and they commenced and ended at unpredicted hours of day and night. Despite operations in stormy weather and treacherous waters, there were no losses of life. All craft were beached in one exercise; and no cargo was landed throughout the stormy night. The final phase included problems on Battalion scale handled much in the same manner as the initial exercises. It is interesting to note that the performance of the 348th Engineers during both the Company and Battalion phases of training were superior to those of the other units taking part.



**Some of the first-made DUKW's
in the 348th motor pool**



These boxes were handled many times

Efforts were made to make the training on the beaches as realistic as was safely possible. The Navy "Scouts and Raiders", who played little part otherwise in the maneuvers, frequently played the role of the "enemy" on the shore, "capturing" careless personnel and in other ways making nuisances of themselves. Explosive charges were buried along the beaches beforehand and set off electrically during landings to simulate artillery bursts. Navy torpedo bombers had great sport "strafing" and "bombing" with bags of flour. More interest was added to the back-tiring tasks by these means.

A demolition school was held at the base; and several men of the 348th attended at one time or another. Instruction was given in underwater demolitions and the destruction of such obstacles as were known to exist on enemy-held shores. A radio operators' school was also organized, enlisting three men from each Engineer Company.

For the presentation of awards to officers of the 3rd Beach Battalion who had performed meritorious duty in North Africa, a parade and review was held in Fort Pierce with all units stationed at the base participating. The Color Guard was chosen from the 348th Engineers for this ceremony.

Florida had numerous resort facilities to offer the personnel as their off-duty time permitted. Excellent swimming and fishing were within



A DUKW gives aid to a stranded landing craft

walking distance of the camp. Well-known recreational centers such as Miami, Palm Beach, Vero Beach, and Daytona Beach could be reached with a few hours' driving. Even the men confined to the hospital enjoyed Florida's vacationland—they were quartered at Palm Beach's famous Breakers Hotel.

The constant and practically only complaint of the men during this phase of training was directed at the multitudes of mosquitoes and sand fleas that plagued them continually, particularly when on

the beaches. All spray and ointments were experimented with to little success. While nets were effective against mosquitoes, they could in no way cope with the tiny and industrious sand fleas.

With the training completed, the Battalion departed from Fort Pierce by train at 1830 on June 23rd for Camp Pickett, Virginia. The cars of this train had little to offer in the way of comfort; and the trip included such cities as Jacksonville, Atlanta, Charleston, and Durham. Arrival was made in Camp Pickett during the dark hours of the morning of June 25th.



City of Fort Pierce loaned their ball park
to Navy and Army personnel



A craft comes in at low tide



"Human chain" unloads an LCVP



(Signal Corps Photo)

Post Headquarters, Camp Picket, Virginia,

IN THE "OLD DOMINION"

The Battalion was again with the 1119th Engineer Group of the days in Florida. Training schedules were prepared, ignoring amphibious work entirely and concentrating on duties of regular Combat Engineers. Realism was introduced into the training whenever possible. It will be recalled that S/Sgt. Roy Brooks of "A" Company lost the fingers of one hand in an accidental booby-trap detonation, and that Cpl. Maurice Mattison of the same Company was killed while participating in street-fighting exercises in the mock "Nazi village". A great amount of time was expended on the laying and removal of all types of mines. Scouting and patrolling received their share of attention also, and those who became lost at times on such problems in the tangled Virginia woods are not few. Infantry tactics sent many elbow and knee injuries through the Medics' doors. In addition to the rifle range, there were the combat firing course, the transition course, and the infiltration course. Obstacles were constructed;

and flame throwers and demolition charges left their scars on the landscape of the reservation. Ponton bridges were thrown across the lakes. The H-10 bridge was met for the last time there; and introduction was made to its successor, the British Bailey bridge. Speed marches, the obstacle course, swimming, calisthenics, and an ardently-followed athletic schedule supplied the means of maintaining fitness.

Members of the Battalion visited the post theaters and clubs freely. Several unit parties were promoted in collaboration with the WAC detachments in the station. Some of the towns that received the attentions of 348th men on pass were Blackstone, Lynchburg, Farmville, Petersburg, Richmond, and Washington, D. C. New York and some New England cities were visited by a few, mainly those whose homes were there. Furloughs were issued during the first days of July; and issue was continued on into August.



Camp Pickett machine gun range



Ponton bridge construction at Birchen Lake

(Signal Corps Photos)

The 234th Engineer Battalion left the Group for overseas movement; and some men of the 348th were transferred to this unit before shipment. The 234th was replaced in the Group by the 37th Engineer Battalion, which had come up from Florida. A further sifting of personnel was made and several men were transferred to hospitals and other units for discharge. The 348th was again brought up to strength when a group of men was transferred in from Fort Devens.

Amphibious training was once more brought to the foreground in late July when "B" Company, with reinforcements, moved to Camp Bradford, Virginia to engage in a one-week amphibious maneuver on the Chesapeake Bay with the Atlantic Fleet Amphibious Forces. In September, the entire Battalion with its Naval, Signal, and Quartermaster attachments took part in a second Chesapeake maneuver with the 114th Infantry of the 28th Division. These exercises were based on the same doctrines as was the training previously received at Fort Pierce, but were on a much larger scale. "Liberty" ships were met with for the first time by the Engineers and their loading and unloading were largely under the direction of members of the Battalion who had attended a school on these operations throughout most of the summer. Acquaintance was made with some of the

larger landing craft. Simulation of actual landing conditions played a part here, too, with both Navy and Army planes overhead and with Navy guns laying down a short barrage. The "enemy" planes sprayed an effective screen of tear gas along the beach area. The maneuver demanded a great amount of work and exertion in the handling of cargoes, but the work of the Battalion won the acclaim of General McNair and other members of the Washington Staff who were on the scene.

The unit returned to Camp Pickett once more to resume its training in the work of Combat Engineers. Countless showdown inspections were held, also, to insure the possession of the necessary clothing and equipment in the necessary quantities. All organizational equipment, with the exception of kitchen ranges, was turned in. All personnel were urged to take out the full amount of life insurance, allotments were taken out or increased, and Service Records were brought up to date. All Battalion records not deemed absolutely necessary for administration were filed at Post Headquarters. Early in October all men had been given furloughs and all was in order for shipment to a staging area. The train was boarded on October 9th for movement to Camp Myles Standish, Massachusetts.



Bailey bridge erection, Camp Pickett

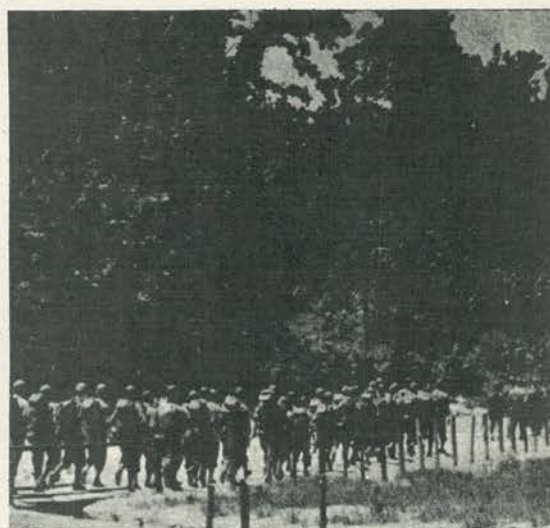
(Signal Corps Photo)



Range Firing



Mine Detection



Off to Work

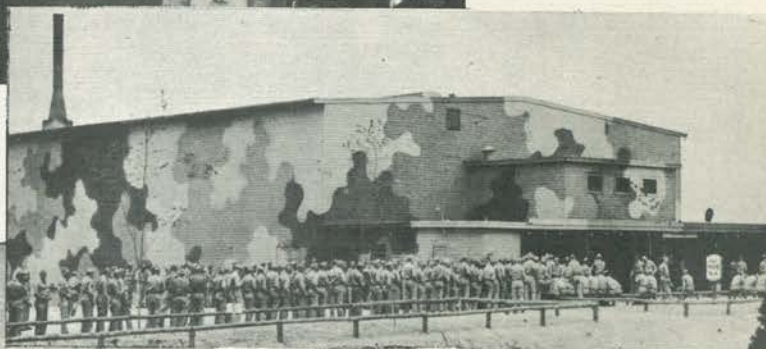
Right—Up and over the mock-up

Photos by Signal Corps
U. S. Army





Service club lounge
Below: Infiltration course



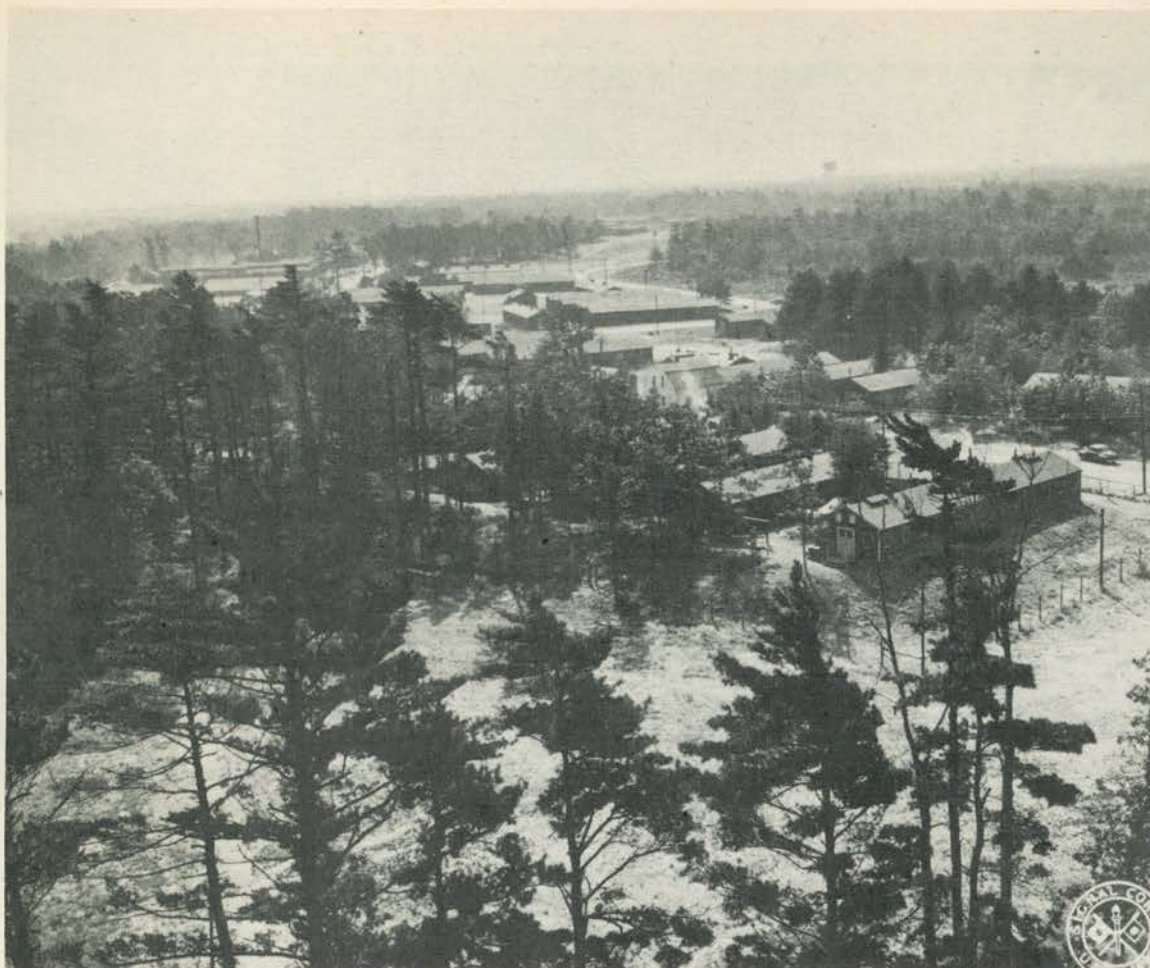
Post theatre



Below: Barracks scene



(Signal Corps Photos)



Camp Myles Standish, Mass.

(Signal Corps Photo)

NEW ENGLAND IN THE AUTUMN

It was two days later when the Battalion stepped from the train in Camp Standish to move into the tar paper barracks of that post. Training was resumed; and, due to lack of equipment, it was devoted to body conditioning through the means of drill, calisthenics, obstacle courses, and hikes—the first of which was of 23-mile length. Further inspections of equipment were carried out. There were issues of special clothing and of odds and ends said to be necessary overseas, gas-proof clothing, mackinaws, shoe dubbin, and rifle oil. Lectures were given on a range of subjects from censorship to life in combat. Censorship was already in force; and an APO was being used.

All was not work without play, however; for passes were authorized to the not-too-distant cities and towns—Taunton, Brockton, Providence, and Boston. A large number of the personnel were from Massachusetts and some of the surrounding

states; and most of them visited their homes one or more times during the stay at the camp. Several basketball games were held in the gymnasium adjacent to the Battalion area. There were also service clubs and theaters, as on any other post, at which some of the hours of waiting could be passed.

All other units of the Group and attached troops for the Boston Port of Embarkation. The being left the camp one day toward the last of October left behind caused some anxiety within the 348th. But on the 30th of October they too loaded onto a train while "swing" records were played over a public address system and the static troops of the post waved them a farewell. The train moved away through the autumn colors of the New England countryside, past the prim white houses of the villages, north, and finally across the border into Canada—destination unknown.



(Signal Corps Photo)



Taunton city square

(Courtesy of Taunton Chamber of Commerce)

AWAY TO EUROPE

Halifax, on the 31st of October, was where the train came to a final halt. The ship lay at a dock near the platform where the Companies formed after leaving the train, her funnels and bridge showing above the roofs of the warehouses that lined the wharf, a British flag flying from her signal mast. The Battalion was moved out in a single file up the almost endless ramp, each man with his pack, rifle, barracks bag, and chalked inscription on the front of his steel helmet. It was a gray evening; and there were no band or cheering crowds. The men moved noisily through a corridor and at last came to the exit that opened onto the gangplank. An official at a desk called out the last name of each man as he approached, whereupon the man answered with his first name and middle initial—a check to insure that the ship was being loaded according to roster. The file extended across the plank, onto a linoleumed lower deck, and down stairways that could hardly be referred to as “ladders”, as they were known on the previous encountered “Liberty” ships. This was a former luxury liner; and, as later inquiry proved, the HMS Mauretania. There was little luxury, however, it was decided as the men crowded into their quarters on “B” deck. Equipment was stuffed into every little niche. A few men staked claims to the just as few bunks, the majority strung up hammocks, others were to sleep on the deck and mess tables.

The Mauretania lay at the dock until November 2nd. During this time it was learned that the ship was one of the fastest afloat, and that she was to cross alone and without escort. By changing her course once every seven minutes it was hoped that no lurking U-boat could accurately get a bead on her. Also, she could cruise at 22 knots, and that she could do 34 knots if spurred to it. On the 2nd, she left the harbor and put out to sea. The passengers were an assortment of representatives of various services. There were, in addition to American soldiers and nurses, Canadian, Australian, New Zealand, Newfoundland, Norwegian, Polish, and Scottish soldiers. There was little visible sign of tension among any, despite the lack of naval escort. As the vessel cut her way out into the smooth ocean, hundreds clung to the rails watching the last hilltops disappear in the distance. As M/Sgt. Horn put it: “You don’t know how good North America looks till you see ‘er a-slippin’ over the horizon”.

Aside from the issue of life jackets and emergency flashlights, each person was given a Red Cross “ditty bag” that contained cigarettes, playing cards, and writing material. Many was the deck of such playing cards that did not last the trip. A number of letters were written, their writers not knowing when the letters would be mailed. There were guard and police details to keep some partially occupied, and others hours were expended in strolling on the decks, reading, and discussing the past and future. There were frequent “abandon ship” drills; and the ship’s captain directed these over a public address system from the bridge. Through these verbal instructions, and other suggestions on living aboard a crowded ship, his English accent became familiar to the Americans aboard to the point of impersonation. His cautionings on blackout discipline in the evenings were the signal for droves to go “top side” to catch a last pre-darkness smoke on the open deck. On Sunday, the speaker system was employed to broadcast religious services throughout the ship.

Not all the hours were spent enjoyably, however. The rolling sea encountered on the second day out proved to be more than the digestive systems of the majority could cope with. The following day offered little chance for recovery. On the fourth day, the bow was, at times, dipping beneath the surface. As for meals, the galley never did exhibit and high standard of menu.

On Monday, the 8th of November, the Mauretania turned into the choppy waters of the Firth of Clyde. The cliffs of the coast of Ireland could be seen from the starboard rail; and the hills of Scotland were to be seen from the opposite side. The eyes that watched these terrestrial panoramas slide by in the distance were eyes that had, for days, been hungry for the sight of land. The Isle of Man was passed at about 11 o’clock. It was necessary because of the deep draft of the ship to wait for the high tide of the early hours of the morning of the 9th to move into the Liverpool docks.

Disembarkation was commenced at nightfall that night. As the men marched through the blacked-out streets of Liverpool that night, they saw stark walls of gutted buildings rising into the moonlight—the first scars of war ever to meet their eyes. A train was boarded after a long hike through the crowded, yet silent, streets to the Liverpool station. While the personnel were becoming accustomed to the comforts of the English train, Red Cross girls boarded the cars and passed out coffee and doughnuts. After the train started the winding journey southward across the English countryside, many of the men chose to watch from the windows rather than to sleep. They saw more scenes of destruction, the work of the Luftwaffe. At 3 o’clock in the morning, transfer was made at Swansea, South Wales from the train to a fleet of double-deck buses. The buses carried the unit, six miles to a small resort village with a quaint name—Mumbles. The Companies were scattered at different locations around this village; Headquarters and a portion of “B” Company at Summerland, “A” Company at Newton, other elements of “B” at Singleton Park, and “C” Company at Caswell Bay Hotel. Nissen huts became the abode of the majority of the Battalion. Another unit has prepared the camps for the newcomers; and, in some cases, hot meals were ready for them on their arrival, regardless of the late hour.

The Battalion was among the first American troops to arrive in this section of Great Britain. The climate proved to be quite disagreeable at first. As a result, there was an epidemic of serious colds among the personnel of the Battalion. A shortage of American cigarettes developed into an absolute non-existence of said luxuries. English brands of cigarettes were purchased at the local shops after a conversion of money. But the act of trading at the shops with the English money presented its problems, too. The names: “bob”, “thrupny bit”, “ha’pny”, and “two-and six” almost defied decoding until some practice had become acquired. The taverns were referred to as “pubs”; and their “nut-brown ale”, or “spirits”, and “half and half” became substitutes for the beverages dispensed over the Americans bars.

A few days after arrival, training was resumed. Calisthenics, Infantry problems, and bayonet work took up most of the remaining part of the program. Athletics again played a big role with softball and football being the headline sports. "A" and "C" Companies played a Thanksgiving Day football classic on the beach of Caswell Bay, "C" Company emerging as the victor.

There were many and varied places in which the winter evenings could be spent. British theaters were operating; and they ran a number of American pictures. A dance could be found with very little reconnaissance almost any evening of the week. There were Rugby games to attend; and many attended football games held between American service teams of some of the large units. Memories of names like "King's Arms" and "West Cross" linger in the minds of some. Men were free to attend services at the churches in any of the surrounding towns and villages.

On Thanksgiving Day, the cooks of all four Companies did their utmost to give each man the dinner that is expected on that holiday. In the way of coincidence, a Major Powell of the British Home Guard was a dinner guest of Major Powell, commanding officer of the Battalion that day. More interesting still, the first mail from home was received Thanksgiving Day.

The personnel of "B" Company stationed at Singleton Park were working there with the 37th Engineer Battalion improving the camp area.

On November 12th, the 1119th Group was reorganized into the 5th Engineer Special Brigade. The Brigade included the same units that were originally in the Group; and, eventually, new units were added to enable it to function as a Brigade. In command was Brigadier General William G. Hoge, with the former Group commander as executive officer. The three Engineer Battalions became known as "far shore Engineers".

During the first week of December, the entire Battalion moved to a new camp on the outskirts of Swansea—Camp Manselton. The camp was still under construction and the initial mission of the Battalion there was to finish the camp and make improvements in the area. Major Powell was designated as camp commander; and Battalion Headquarters became Camp Headquarters for all units in the area. Training was, of course, included in the activities. There was the usual conditioning, endurance marching, combat problems and intra-Battalion technical schools. Several key personnel attended technical schools at other units. All personnel of the line Companies became familiar with the Bailey bridge. They built and removed several times floating Bailey bridges across a lake near the Manselton camp. A number of bridging exercises were given at night.

Various recreational programs were put into effect while at the camp. Convoys were sent into Swansea nightly in connection with pass privileges. The "Pier", no doubt, became the favorite night spot. Each Company held parties in uptown clubs and halls. A complete and well-stocked Battalion Post Exchange was organized; and its shelves did much to satisfy the individual needs, even though many of the items sold there were made in Britain.

The unit experienced its second Christmas at Camp Manselton; but the hearts and thoughts of the men were home that day. All faiths attended services that morning, either at the churches in town or at the camp. A Swansea dramatics group presented the "Nativity Play" at the recreation hall at the camp Christmas morning. The cooks went "all out" once more and a tasty dinner was served at noontime. Many men went on pass in

the afternoon to attend a show or to visit with families with whom they had become acquainted.

New Year's Day was another day of a tasty meal, a liberal amount of passes, and thoughts of home.

In the early days of January, Major Powell was placed on detached service; and the executive officer, Major Meharg, assumed command. But on the 12th of January, Lieutenant Colonel Earl Houston joined the Battalion from the 5th Brigade and accepted command. The new commanding officer had participated in amphibious operations in Africa and Italy. His presence was a foreshadowing of coming events.

Toward the middle of January it was made definitely known that the Battalion would take part in amphibious operations on the Continent at an undisclosed date. Special equipment that would be needed for such operations was drawn; and instructions and training in the use of it was started. On the 2nd of March the Battalion moved to a camp on the Gower Peninsula west of Swansea. The line Companies marched the 18 miles to the new camp. The camp was known locally as Scurllage Castle. The organization was joined here by other units which were to train with it, and eventually operate with it on the Continent. These units included the 453rd Amphibious Truck Company, 559th Quartermaster Railhead Company, Company "B" 6th Naval Beach Battalion, Company "C" 61st Medical Battalion, 4143rd Quartermaster Service Company, 2nd Platoon Company "A" 203rd Quartermaster Gas Supply Battalion, 2nd Platoon 3460th Ordnance MAM Company, 2nd Section Mag. Platoon 616th Ordnance Ammunition Company, 2nd Section Depot Office 616th Ordnance Ammunition Company, 3rd Platoon 210th MP Company, 3rd Platoon (Teams 7, 8, & 9) 294th JA Signal Company, and the 3rd Platoon 30th Chemical Decontamination Company. The first days were spent in making improvements on the camp. Then, on the 8th, a three-day maneuver, exercise "SNIPE", started on the beach of Eynon Bay. This was the first problem for the combined Beach Team. Plans for the coming invasion on the Continent were being prepared as these practice operations were being held; and considerable attention was given to both the unfavorable and favorable outcomings of these operations. The second exercise commenced on the morning of the 15th, and was of two-day duration. By mid-afternoon of the first day, 387 tons of supplies had been unloaded. The next and last exercise was not held until April; and all personnel were kept busy at Scurllage Castle during this passage of time by caring for the great amount of special equipment, and at other duties about the camp. Off duty hours were usually spent in Swansea or at the small villages near the camp. There was, also, an elaborate recreation hall in the Battalion area that was well-patronized. Paratrooper boots and Amphibian Command shoulder patches were issued during this period. It will be remembered that their first appearance on the streets of Swansea drew an abundance of curious comment from the citizens as well as from other troops. The final maneuver was started at Oxwich Bay on April 4th; and it ended at 1300 hours on the 6th. A great amount of work was undertaken during the following several days at the camp. Signs were painted by the hundreds, beach and road markers were constructed, the Amphibious insignia and white arcs were painted on helmets, duffel bags and packing boxes were marked with shipping colors, equipment was repaired, and plans were

drawn up for the coming operation. A 25-per cent overstrength was transferred in to all units in the Brigade. Early in the morning of the 24th the Battalion boarded a train at the Swansea station and traveled 7 hours to Dorchester, England. The majority of the unit was dispatched to Camp D-11; but there were elements at D-8, D-6, and at other small stations in the vicinity. The overstrength and components of Force "B" were left behind in Wales. They moved first to Mynydd Llew, and from there to marshalling camps as these camps were vacated by units of Force "O".

Field Order 6 for Exercise "FABIUS" designated the Battalion with its attached units as the 348th Battalion Beach Group. It was to support the 18th Infantry Regiment of the 1st Division in the exercise that simulated as closely as was possible the actual landings on the French coast. The problem was held on Slapton Sands Beach on the south coast of England. Embarkation was made onto the APA's, LST's, and LCT's on the first of May. The landing was executed by means of Rhino ferries and the smaller landing craft. At the time of embarkation, it was not definitely known by a number of the personnel whether the exercise was a maneuver or an actual operation. Both the American and British naval vessels shelled the beaches ahead of the mock landing; and a considerable amount of live demolitions and ammunition was expended on the shore. The maneuver lasted only two days; but it was not until May 6th that all personnel of the Battalion who were in Force "O" were returned to Camp D-11 by rail and truck. This particular camp will be remembered for its chilly atmosphere, the crowded living conditions, and the frequent raids of the Luftwaffe. Here the plans for the invasion were again revised, and the landing tables were reshuffled in accordance with the information gained from the Exercise "FABIUS". Aside from compliance with a training schedule, there was little for a large percentage of the personnel to do. Drivers checked the water-proofing on their vehicles, individual clothing and equipment was checked, road construction material was drawn, and countless other duties were attended to in order to prepare the unit for combat. Movies were shown in a large tent in the center of the camp, and there were passes to Dorchester. Continuous liaison was maintained between Battalion, Brigade, and 18th Infantry headquarters; and, by the middle of the month, plans for Operation "NEPTUNE" had been published and distributed. Immediately after this, all troops taking part in the operation were given a comprehensive briefing. Photographs were studied, there were sand table models of the chosen sectors of the Normandy coast, and much intelligence data was made known. There was not a man

who did not possess at least a few items of "Top Secret" information. With the briefing completed, personnel were, of course, restricted to their areas. On the 28th of May, Force "O" was moved to its final marshalling camps; and on the 30th the Battalion began loading its men and equipment aboard the craft and vessels at Weymouth. Loading was completed in the following four days. Use was made of each available inch of deck space; and there were not sufficient sleeping accommodations on any of the vessels to allow over a fraction of the men to sleep in bunks. The open decks served as beds for many. The craft carrying members of Force "O" departed from the port at different times; but the last had gone by the evening of June 5th. Departure had been executed on June 4th; but the operation had been delayed due to inclement weather. The enemy did little to disturb the invasion fleet as it moved from the ports to the rendezvous zone.

While the invasion force was enroute to the rendezvous area in the Channel, a message from General Eisenhower was distributed to all members of the Allied invasion forces. It reads as follows:

"You are about to embark upon the great crusade toward which we have striven these many months. The eyes of the world are upon you. The hopes and prayers of liberty-loving people everywhere march with you. In company with our brave Allies and brothers-in-arms on other Fronts, you will bring about the destruction of the German war machine, the elimination of Nazi tyranny over the oppressed people of Europe, and security for ourselves in a free world.

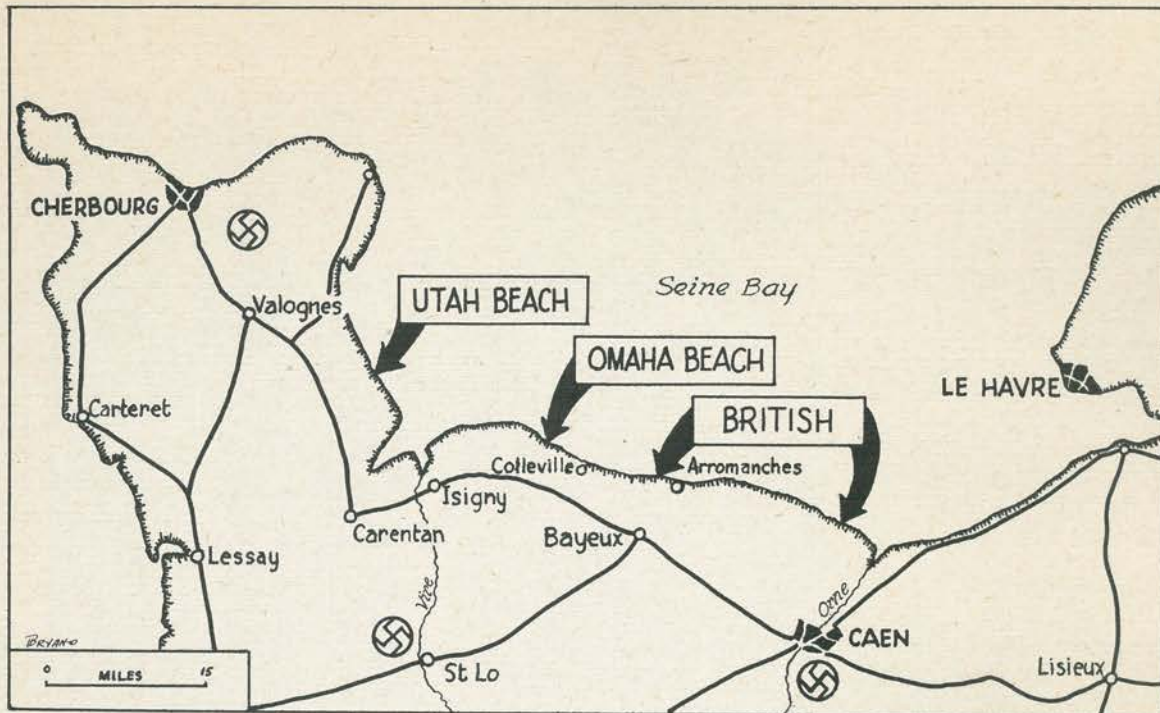
"Your task will not be an easy one. Your enemy is well trained, well equipped and battle-hardened. He will fight savagely.

"But this is the year 1944! Much has happened since the Nazi triumphs of 1940-41. The United Nations have inflicted upon the Germans great defeats, in open battle man-to-man. Our air offensive has seriously reduced their strength in the air and their capacity to wage war on the ground. Our Home Fronts have given us an overwhelming superiority in weapons and munitions of war, and placed at our disposal great reserves of trained fighting men. The tide has turned! The free men of the world are marching together to Victory!

"I have full confidence in your courage, devotion to duty and skill in battle. We will accept nothing less than full Victory!

"Good luck! And let us all beseech the blessing of Almighty God upon this great and noble undertaking.

/s/Dwight D. Eisenhower"



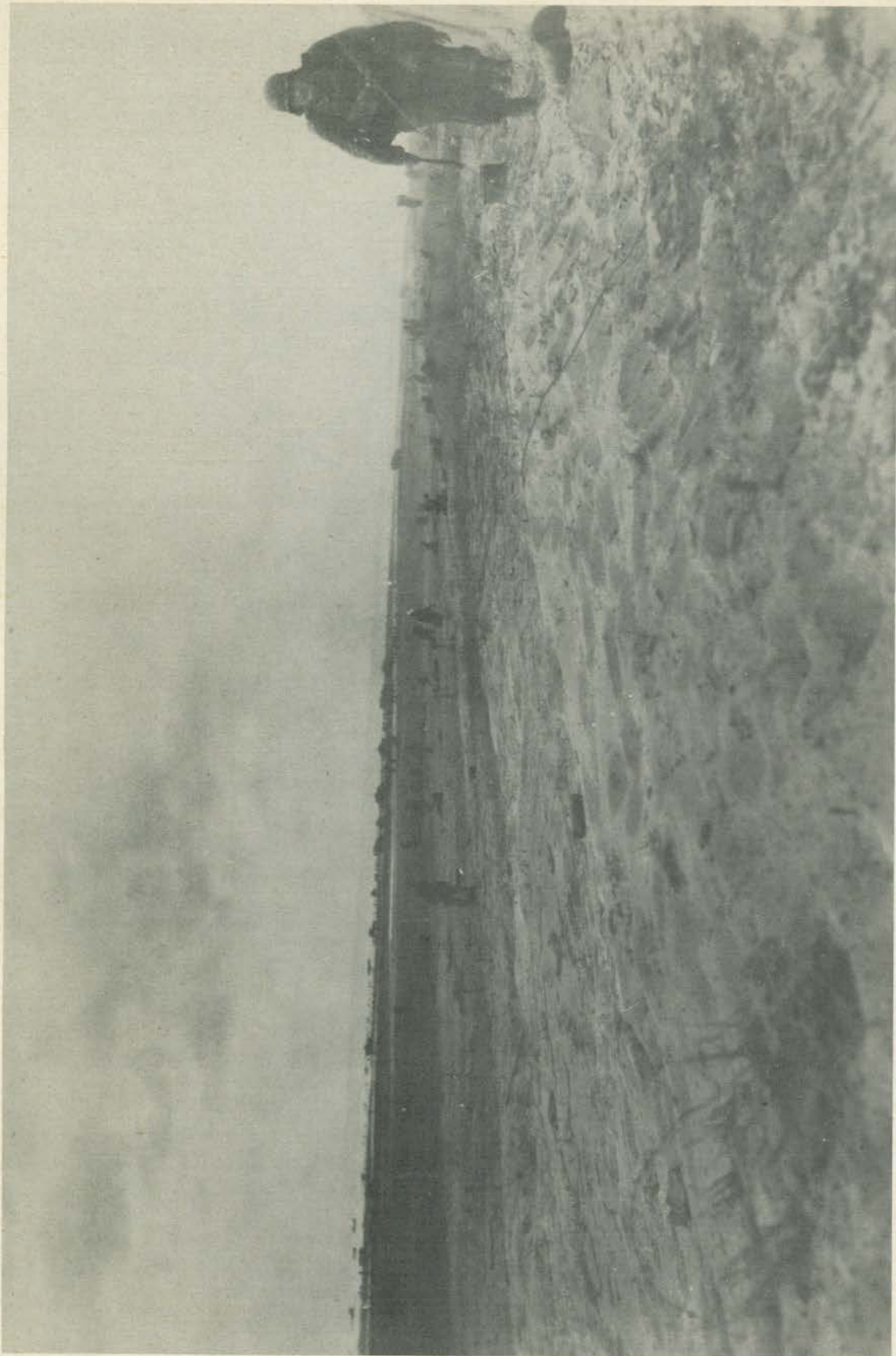
THE LANDING—ON PAPER

The assault upon Hitler's famed "Atlantik Wall" called upon the American First Army and the British Second Army, supported by American Naval and Air units, to attack selected beaches on the Normandy coast and establish beachheads for the purpose of continuation of joint operations inland. It was decided to secure, in the American sector, the port of Cherbourg in a campaign sweeping northward up the Cherbourg Peninsula from the beach at the east side of the peninsula. This beach was designated as "UTAH" beach, and was to be taken and secured by the VII U. S. Corps with the 82nd Airborne Division and supported by the 1st Engineer Special Brigade. The beach to the east, on the Normandy mainland was named "OMAHA" beach. Assaulting this beach was the V. U. S. Corps supported by the 5th and 6th Engineer Special Brigades. The 101st Airborne Division was to drop in the Vierville-Carentan area and assist mainly, the VII Corps. It was the responsibility of the Engineer Special Brigades to aid in taking their respective beaches and to then land supplies until the flow of supplies could be supplemented by the clearing of Cherbourg and other ports.

With the task of clearing the eastern sectors of OMAHA Beach, the 1st Infantry Division was to land on these sectors at H-Hour of D-Day, reduce the beach defense in its zone of action, and secure a Phase-Line approximately two miles in-

land by darkness of the same day. Supporting this division was to be the 5th Engineer Special Brigade. The 29th Infantry Division was to have a like mission on the western extremities of the beach; and to support this unit, was the 6th Engineer Special Brigade. The Engineer Special Brigades were under a headquarters known as Provisional Special Engineer Brigade Group under the apt leadership of Brig. Gen. William Hoge, who was later to receive fame with other units in Germany, particularly for the capture of the Remagen bridge on the Rhine.

The mission of the 348th Battalion Beach Group was to land with the supporting 18th Infantry Regiment at about H plus 3 hours on EASY RED and FOX GREEN Beaches. On arrival, they were to relieve the Divisional Combat Engineers in their sector for movement inland with their respective units. Initial tasks on the beach called for the opening of passages through fields of beach obstacles and mines, and the developing and maintaining of the landing-beach sector assigned to them, giving priority to the opening of the beach exit E-3 and the clearing of passages across the beach to this exit. Secondly, they were to open and maintain road nets to the initial dumps in the beach area, to take over and operate transit areas, and to generally conduct the handling of cargo and operations on the beach.

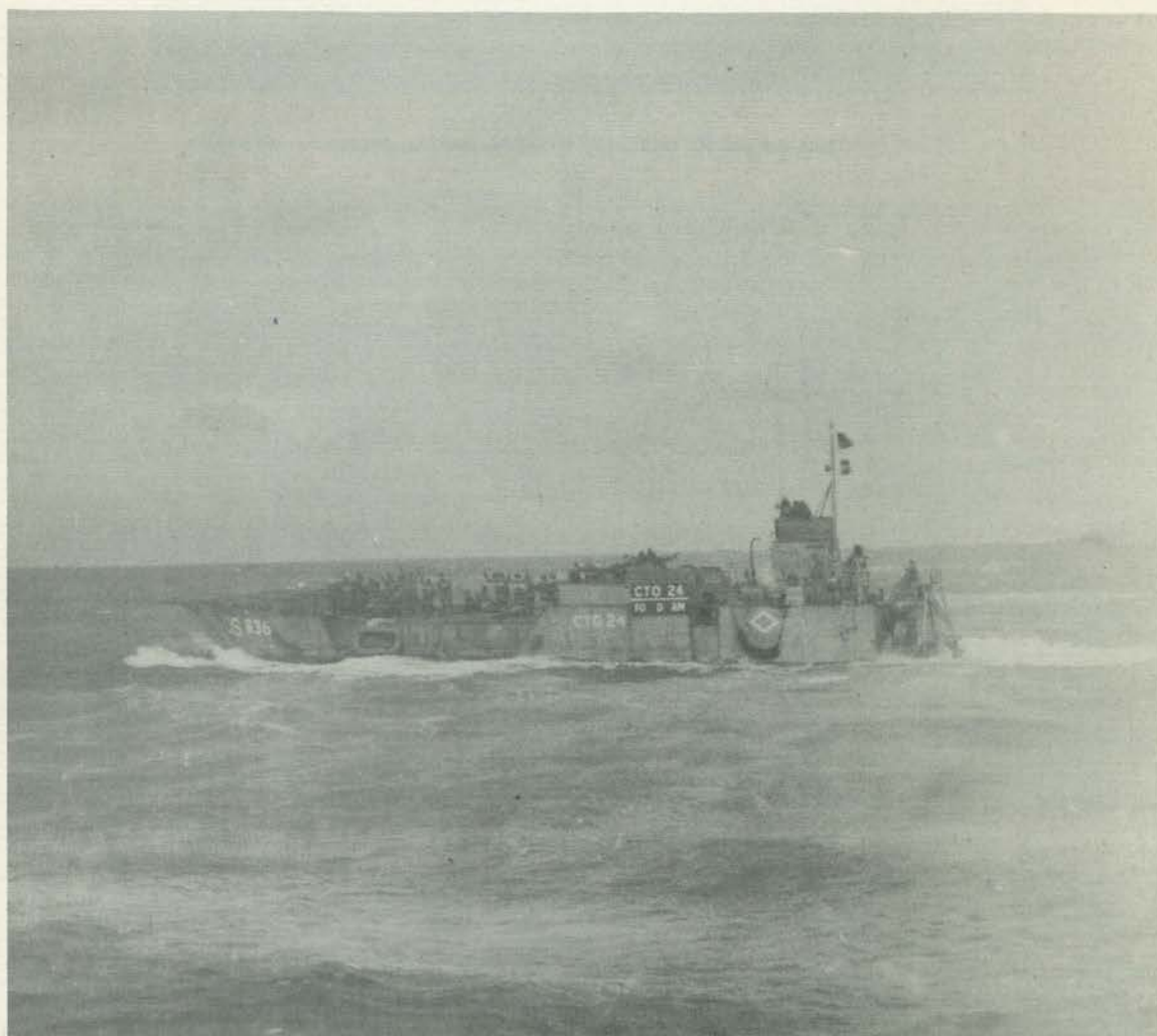


Infantry on the beach shortly after H-Hour.

THE LANDING—ON THE BEACH

It is a generally known fact that the landings did not go exactly according to schedule and plan. The reason for this lies with, probably, the lack of intelligence data; although the advance information given to the commanders and troops was fairly up-to-date and accurate in most cases. Probably the most offsetting element of which the incoming troops had no knowledge was the presence of a well-equipped and seasoned German Infantry Division in the OMAHA sector. It had arrived there only a few days before the invasion and Allied Headquarters had not as yet gained the knowledge of its presence. Too, the number and extensiveness of obstacles on the beach were underestimated. Many mortar and automatic weapon positions had not been previously located. Several temporary positions for 75mm and 88mm guns 1000 to 2500 yards to the rear of the beach

area had not been plotted; and these continued to molest operations as late as D plus 2. Stationary flamethrowers and tank turrets set in concrete wells mounted with machine guns or light anti-tank weapons received no mention whatsoever in intelligence reports. Some of the passages thought to be roads were found to be only trails; and, in some cases, considerable more work than had been planned was expended in making them capable of carrying traffic. In a few instances, substitute routes had to be employed. Extent of mine fields and barbed wire was not fully known. Of the German 716th Static Division headquartered in Caen, the 726th Regiment faced the 29th Division at the west end of OMAHA Beach. The German 352nd Infantry Division, reportedly at St. Lo, was encountered by the 1st Division near Colleville.



An LCT heads for the beach



An LCVP becomes an early victim of gunfire and underwater obstacles

The German guns along the shore were manned by an inferior coastal defense battalion; but they were supported by three regiments of the crack 352nd Field Division. It might be mentioned, however, that the field of fire for every gun on the shore had been previously plotted and charted by the Germans and accurate firing was not all difficult for even the most inept of gun crews.

Due to predictions of cloudy and unfavorable bombing weather, the staff of the 8th Air Force, several hours before the assault, informed Gen. Eisenhower's headquarters that bombers would not be able to pin-point beach targets on the morning of D Day, and that havoc might be brought down on the heads of the assault forces should such tactics be carried out. Bombardiers were, therefore, instructed to allow a 5 to 30-second safety factor in releasing bombs to locate the centers of their bomb patterns up to 2 miles inland. As a result of this, only two bomb patterns were found north of the Bayeaux-Isigny highway. Although this bombing undoubtedly disrupted the enemy's attempts to reinforce his beach positions, it allowed the gunners on the shore to pour a destructive and unhampered hail of fire on the first wave of the invaders.

The following narrative entitled "The OMAHA Landings" is quoted from the history of the Provisional Engineer Special Brigade Group:

"Elements of the 16th and 116th Infantry Regiments, supported by 16 joint Army-Navy gap assault teams and two tank battalions, landed on OMAHA Beach at approximately 0630 hours, D-Day, 6 June 1944, and succeeded in establishing a ragged firing line in some sectors of the beach in half an hour's time. The landings were effected in the face of machine gun, mortar, and artillery fire which swept the tidal flat causing heavy casualties.

"Enemy defenses on the beach and atop the cliffs behind the beach were not bombed by planes immediately prior to H-Hour. Naval vessels shelled the defenses but failed to wipe them out, although their effectiveness was probably reduced. Nearly half of the 64 DD (floating) tanks, which had been scheduled to land at H minus 5 minutes and shell the pillboxes and emplacements, were lost because of high seas and enemy action. LCT (R)'s discharged 9,000 rockets, but they were seen to go over the cliffs or fall short, leaving shore installations unharmed.

"Instead of finding the enemy groggy from sea, air and tank bombardment as the units had been briefed to expect, the men were faced with the necessity of reducing most of the strongpoints by small arms fire and grenades. The Engineers of the gap assault teams, who had been prepared to face artillery fire while clearing the beach of obstacles for succeeding waves of Infantry, found themselves under rifle and machine gun fire as well. The result was temporary breakdown of planned operations until the beach could be cleared of the unexpected opposition. . .

"The Naval bombardment began on schedule at H minus 45 minutes, but reports of its effectiveness are not available. Inland targets were also heavily shelled. Only one shot was fired at the Naval vessels from the shore (in the early morning bombardment), and that missed its mark. The enemy was apparently trying to keep the location of his emplacements secret. The success of the shelling of the beach defenses by gunfire from support craft and by tanks and by self-propelled artillery aboard LCT's is questionable. They were either damaged by gunfire or were late in arriving offshore. Of the 16 carrying M4 tanks, two were

lost at sea and three were delayed. The LCT(R)'s approached the beach on schedule and fired their rockets at 0629 hours, but gap assault team personnel and Infantrymen agree that none hit their targets.

"Nor did the DD tanks prove effective. The 741st Tank Battalion attempted to discharge 29 of its 32 tanks at sea. Twenty-seven foundered and two swam ashore, beaching on EASY RED Beach at H-Hour. The remaining three were eventually landed from an LCT in the same place. The 743rd Tank Battalion made no attempt to launch its tanks at sea and discharged them in the usual manner from LCT's. Eight were lost, but 24 were reported to have landed on the western end of the beach between H minus 20 minutes and H-Hour. No reports are available on the operations of these tanks, but they were unable to neutralize enemy fire.



Early D-Day, LCT's await signal to go in

"In spite of the elaborate plans to knock out the beach defenses, most of the enemy emplacements were intact at H-Hour, ready to cover the beach with artillery mortar, and small arms fire. The outcome of the operation, therefore, rested on the shoulders of the Infantry".



Waves break over wrecked Medics' jeep

The following description is quoted from the history of the 5th Brigade:

"Landings of the First Units:

"Because of the length of the beach and the difficulty of timing the arrival of the craft accurately, the exact order of landing cannot be ascertained, but it is known that one of the gap assault teams came in five minutes ahead of H-Hour and that a number of Infantry units touched down at approximately the same time. Many of the craft carrying Infantry were late, and at least eight of the gap assault teams came in either ahead of or with the first wave. The neat minute-by-minute timing of the Plan did not work in practice, and during a period of about 15 minutes the landing craft beached when and where they could.

"When the craft came in, machine guns were firing from the beach and the cliffs, but the artillery, for the most part, withheld its fire until the ramps of the craft were down and the soldiers were disembarking. Then mortars and 75 mm and 88mm guns opened up with deadly accuracy. Of the 16 LCM's from which the gap assault teams landed, at least eight were hit by shells, and Infantry landing craft losses were heavy.

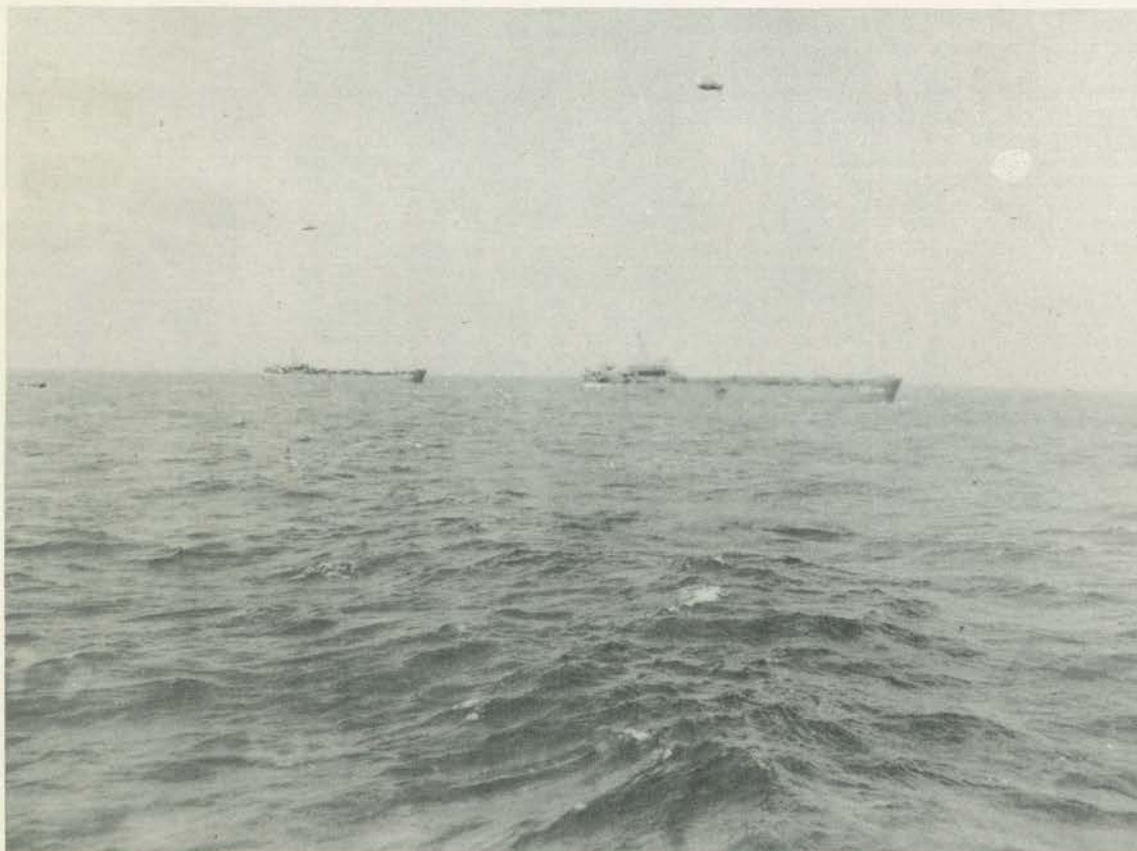
"As the ramps were lowered, the Infantry rushed for the partial shelter of the obstacles in an attempt to gain cover, but the protection offered

was slight, and casualties were high. Men who escaped the machine gun bullets and shell burst made their way toward the shore in short rushes, lying in the runnels and crawling through the slight defilades in the sand. They dug in behind the comparative safety of the shingle pile and sea wall and slowly began to build up a fire line. In this they were handicapped, however, by the fact that many men had unserviceable weapons. In some instances rifles were soaked when landing craft unloaded troops in water above their heads, and the weapons were clogged with beach sand.

"As has been mentioned, the assault teams came in at approximately the scheduled time, the first at 0625 hours and the last at 0640 hours, but most of them landed too far to the east because of confusion in identifying landmarks and inadequate briefing of LCM crews. Only five teams came in on their assigned beaches.

"Boat team 14, the first to touch-down, landed on EASY RED Beach at 0625 hours, well in advance of the Infantry, its Commanding Officer believing H-Hour to be 0620 hours instead of 0630. The Army team no sooner got off the LCM than a shell hit it, blowing it up and killing most of the members of the Navy team.

"The members of the teams, laden with tetryol packs, scattered among the obstacles, taking shelter and, at the same time, tying charges and link-



LST's wait far out for Jerry guns to be knocked out.

ing them with primacord. Most of the teams were able to tie charges for at least partial gaps, but only five managed to detonate the charges. The others were forced to leave the explosives unblown because of the wounded lying on the tidal flat and the Infantry still in the obstacle area. Team 12, which wired its gap on EASY RED Beach, found it impossible to clear the sector of Infantry and had begun to make for shore when a mortar shell exploded and the primacord, setting off the charge, killing ten members of the team, and killing or wounding many Infantrymen.

"Team 7 was about to blow its gap when an LCM loaded with Infantry crashed through the stakes, setting off seven tellermines, which wrecked the craft. Two crews, 6 and 8, managed to clear their gaps, but others were unable to do any work. Team 13 reached the beach and was working under heavy fire when a shell hit the Navy unit's explosives, killing seven men. The LCM of team 16 was blown up near Exit E-3 after its team had disembarked.

"Only six of the 16 M4 tank dozers, which were supposed to land with the teams, got ashore. Two had been lost when an LCT was swamped, and the remaining eight were believed lost at sea. The six M4 tank dozers were prime targets, and all but one were eventually shot out of commission.

"The two command craft also landed behind schedule. Command boat 1, which was bracketed at

one time by 88 fire, rescued a number of drowning men before landing at 0700 hours, and Command Boat 2 came in too far to the east and had to reverse its course to reach the proper beach. Smoke from burning craft and vehicles was drifting down the beach, limiting visibility and making identification of landmarks difficult.

"In all, five narrow gaps were cleared to the beach and three partial gaps were blown by 0700 hours. All were inadequately marked, and the only one which proved useful was a gap in front of EASY RED BEACH.

"Landing of Rangers.

"West of OMAHA Beach, the enemy emplacements at Pointe du Hoe were shelled by the USS Texas from H minus 40 to H minus 5 minutes as planned, but the boats carrying the Ranger units did not arrive until 0710 hours, by which time the German troops had reoccupied the fortifications and were waiting with machine guns, mortars, rifles, and grenades. The Rangers were pinned under the cliffs and were being cut to pieces until the Destroyer Satterlee opened fire and the survivors managed to get a foothold. Nearly 60 per cent of the first wave were killed in the first two hours of the assault.

"The Beach at 0700 Hours.

"By 0700, when the demolition teams were forced ashore, the Infantry had footholds at scattered points on the beach. Many of the wounded had been dragged inshore, but others remained on the tidal flat and numbers of them were drowned by the incoming tide. Assault troops were still



Landing craft make way to cleared channels through fields of obstacles

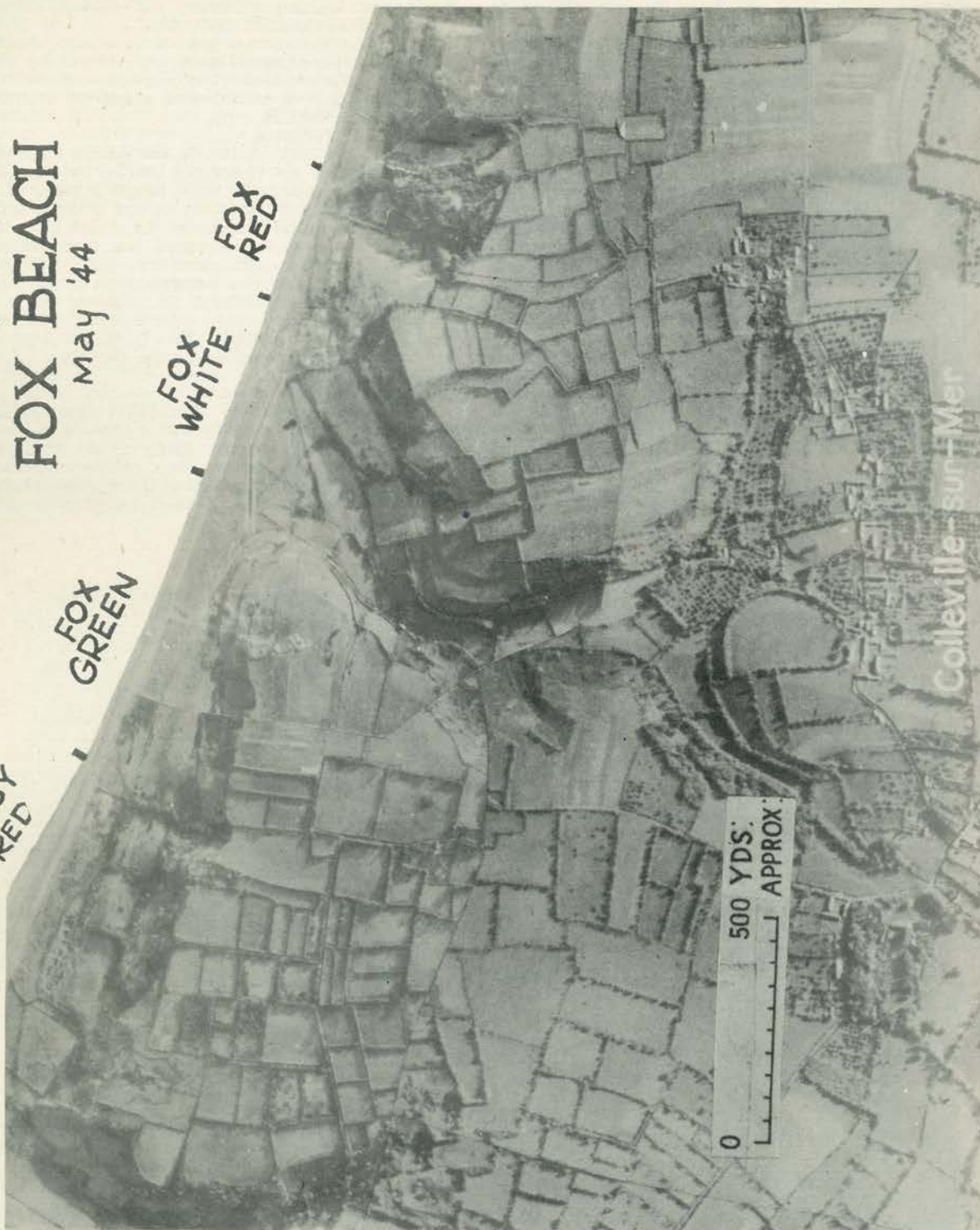
Aerial Photo
OF
FOX BEACH
May '44

EASY
RED

FOX
GREEN

FOX
WHITE

FOX
RED



Colleville-sur-Mer

0 500 YDS.
APPROX

infiltrating through the obstacles, and most of the survivors of the first waves were now behind the shingle pile along some 8000 yards of beach. Whenever a man attempted to move, he drew immediate rifle fire from the hills, and any attempt of two or more men to move at the same time drew machine gun and mortar fire. The only complete shelter offered was under the cliffs at the FOX end of the beach.

"Craft could still unload men seaward of the obstacle belt, but the rapidly rising water was making such landings increasingly difficult. The accuracy of the enemy artillery fire was deadly, particularly on the eastern half of the beach where many of the approaching craft were immediately hit.

"The Second Hour.

"The confusion of the first hour of the Invasion mounted during the period from 0730 hours. Landings continued, but men and vehicles could not move off the beach. Divisional and Group Engineers blew gaps here and there in the barbed wire along the dunes, and a few small Infantry detachments managed to work their way toward the base of the slopes where they found areas of defilade. In at least three instances, small groups succeeded in scaling the hills and penetrating beyond the crest. A majority of the units, however, piled up behind the shingle bank, where they lay in rows sometimes three deep. In many cases these units were leaderless, their officers having been killed or wounded. Very few were on their pre-assigned beach. Elements of the 116th Regimental Combat Team, for instance, were mixed in with the 16th. The Group Engineer units, charged with the clearance of the western end of the beach, came in far to the east. Nevertheless, a few machine guns were set up, and individual soldiers were able to clean the sand from their rifles and start firing on enemy strongpoints. Others aided the wounded and began the first rudimentary work of clearing the beach of mines and obstructions.

"Early Infiltrations.

"... at least three infiltrations beyond the crest of the hill began before the end of the second hour of the assault. The earliest of these occurred in the area between Exits D-1 and D-3, probably a few minutes before 0800 hours. This part of the beach, just west of Exit D-3, had been the scene of many landings, and the congestion had become grave indeed. It was essential to get men moving, both to clear the beach and to eliminate the source of enemy fire. Here and there gaps were blown in the wire with bangalore torpedoes, and small groups of men made their way across the flat land south of the beach lateral road to the defiladed area under the hill. The hill was not a smooth



Walking wounded carry less fortunate buddy to shelter of cliffs

slope, and it was possible for the first parties to take advantage of the hollows and depressed paths to make what was undoubtedly a slow and perilous ascent. Evidence indicates that elements of the 116th Regimental Combat Team made this initial penetration of the enemy-held hill crest defenses, closely followed by Rangers who had landed on the same clogged beach. These troops, like others who made their way over the hill in the course of the morning, did not attempt to clean out many of the enemy positions. Rather, they infiltrated between them and continued on across the open fields behind the crest of the bluff. While this resulted in our getting men over the top of the hill, it contributed little, especially in this early stage, to the comfort and safety of the men on the beach. The German positions were connected by tunnels and deep trenches, and in some instances it is clear that the Americans were allowed to pass over the hill, whereupon the enemy returned to his fire points and continued to pick off the troops below.

"A similar penetration took place not much later in the sector between Exits E-1 and E-3. Sometime about 0830 hours units of Companies "E" and "G" of the 16th Regimental Combat Team, together with two sections of Company "E" of the 116th Regimental Combat Team that had landed on EASY RED Beach began the ascent of the bluff a little to the east of midway between the two exits. Here, again, the climb was made in a series of slow, crawling advances that took advantage of every small area of defilade. In the account of the day by Company "B" (16th Inf.), the 5th section of the Company gets credit for destroying two machine gun nests and securing the edge of the high ground. The sections of Company "E" of the 116th moved west to a point near Exit E-1 where they met stubborn resistance from enemy troops in a network of pillboxes and trenches overlooking the exit. They finally succeeded in clearing the nest and capturing an officer and 20 men. The other troops spread out into the country behind the point of ascent, and little further is known of their progress throughout the morning, except that at 0900 hours Company "G" reported being 1000 yards inland.

"... a third penetration was made that reached the high ground above FOX GREEN Beach by 0900 hours. Some of the elements of the 3rd Battalion of the 16th Regimental Combat Team made their ascent, aided by small groups of the 116th, who had landed far from their assigned beach. During the attack, losses were heavy among company officers, and difficulties were encountered in mopping up isolated positions on the flanks of the draw, but at 0900 hours Company "L" Headquarters reached high ground and made contact with Battalion Headquarters on the beach."

The Group historian describes the situation in the early afternoon as follows:

"The period from 1230 hours until mid-afternoon was one of continuous slow progress, with no spectacular developments. Landings proceeded in spite of unceasing artillery fire, and both Brigade Group and Infantry forces were built up slowly, although still behind schedule.

"Shortly before 1230 hours the 1st Battalion of the 18th Regiment Combat Team landed on EASY RED and FOX GREEN beaches. The 3rd Battalion, landing between 1300 and 1400 hours, found that the beach was still accurately covered by artillery fire. This Regiment (the 18th) was able to organize on the beach more effectively than the 16th or the 116th and eventually played an important part in the drive south.



"At 1300 hours Company "G" of the 16th Infantry Regiment sent a section into Colleville-sur-Mer, behind Exit E-3. The village was held by about 180 of the enemy, and other scattered elements were posted in the orchards to the southwest. The American troops seized a few buildings near the church at the west end of the village, where they were encircled and cut off from supporting units farther west. Eventually they were able to escape the encirclement and withdraw. Units of the 16th and the 116th penetrated as far as the outskirts of St. Laurent-sur-Mer, and the Rangers, together with elements of the 116th, fought their way into Vierville at 1400 hours. This was the first town captured by the Americans in the OMAHA area, but it was by no means completely cleared of the enemy. Germans continued to infiltrate into the town throughout D-Day and D plus 1, delaying the complete opening of Exit D-1 although tanks were able to use the road from time to time beginning at 1400.

"Throughout this period Exit E-1 continued to be the focal point of beach operation, but considerable progress had been made in clearing Exits D-1 and E-3. Enemy strongpoints at the latter exit were practically neutralized, although German troops managed to reoccupy the entrenchments on several occasions, and one pillbox at the end of the draw held out until evening. Opposition in the FOX sector was considerably diminished, but Exit F-1 could not be used because there was no road.

"The first group of pre-loaded DUKW's, operated by the 459th Amphibian Truck Company of the 131st Quartermaster Mobile Battalion, were now coming in. Due to land at 0735 hours, the DUKW's had been held off-shore after one unit had tried to land at the planned time. Its officer had been killed and none of the DUKW's had reached the beach. Beginning at noon, however, they began landing, and by 1400 hours most were ashore. The later arrivals suffered lighter casualties as enemy fire began to die down.

"The Beach at 1500 Hours.

"By 1500 hours the situation was improving rapidly. Artillery fire still covered all exits, and small arms fire continued in the western sector around Exits D-1 and D-3, but troops on the eastern half of the beach were less harassed. At Exit E-1, vehicles were getting through the dunes and scattering along the base of the hills. Fire was still too heavy at Exit E-3 to allow traffic to pass over the beach, but Brigade Group Engineers were sweeping the beach lateral road for mines and hacking gaps through the shingle pile. Farther east, Infantrymen were moving over the hills around the undeveloped Exit F-1.

"The Tactical Situation at Nightfall.

"When darkness fell on D-Day, the Infantry, artillery, and tanks had not reached any of their D-Day objectives. Generally speaking, the American line ran along the Vierville-St. Laurent road and dipped south to include a point about a mile south of Colleville-sur-Mer. None of these villages had been completely cleared of the enemy, and in the Vierville area, the Rangers and units of the



A First Division jeep proceeds cautiously along littered beach

18th and 116th Regimental Combat teams, who were on the western edge of the village, were battling repeated German infiltrations. Elements of the 18th and 115th were in and south of St. Laurent-sur-Mer, and Colleville-sur-Mer was almost surrounded, with the 16th to the west and northwest, part of the 18th to the west and southwest, and one Battalion of the 26th to the northeast. A slight penetration into the St. Laurent-Vierville-Formigny triangle had been made by another Battalion of the 26th.

"On the left flank of the beach there was still some sniper fire, and a security platoon of one officer and 31 men of the 336th Engineer Combat Battalion made its way to the top of the hill east of Exit F-1, where the left flank security of the beach was found to consist of six Infantrymen with five rifles and a BAR. The platoon took its position in a German trench and set up abandoned German machine guns..

"The Impossible Takes a Little Longer"

"The D-Day tasks assigned to the Engineer Special Brigades had been based on assumptions that proved incorrect. The persistence of the defenders of the hill-crest positions, and the accuracy of the observed artillery fire resulted, as has been shown, in imposing serious delays upon all phases of the operation. The irregularities in the landings of Engineer units and the destruction of vital equipment combined with the congestion of troops on the beaches to prevent the Engineer Special Brigades from carrying out on schedule the missions assigned to them.

"By nightfall, however, the energy and determination of the Brigade Group Engineer units, working under severe handicaps, had been directed toward the accomplishment of essential jobs that assured the progressive development of the beach during the succeeding days. The Brigade Group Engineers had found that one of their principal tasks was mine clearance, and in this work they assisted the Divisional Engineers. The clearance, organization, development, and operation of the beaches, prescribed in the plan, could be considered a continuing job that was successfully started on D-Day. The opening of Exits D-1, D-3, and E-1 by H plus 3 hours, and of Exit F-1 by H plus 12 hours was obviously impossible, but by the morning of D plus 1 traffic was moving off the beach over the hill. The assumption of control over transit areas depended upon the clearance of the enemy from his advanced positions, which was partially accomplished by the end of D-Day. The supply situation was far from being under control, but the achievement of bringing in supplies and equipment at all on such a hotly contested beach should not be minimized. The day was only partially successful, when judged by the prearranged plan. When judged by the actualities of the situation, however, the achievements of the day had laid a foundation on which the Brigade Group Engineers could build."



Incoming tide and German fire keep these men close to cliffs east of FOX Beach

Consolidated Landing Table

for Exercise "FABIUS"

The following is the 348th landing schedule for the dress rehearsal of the assault operation. There were only minor changes in the revised schedule that was the timetable for the landings on the French shore.

Force	No. of Personnel	Day to land	Day Landed
1st Tide	308	D-Day	D-Day and D plus 1
2nd Tide	217	D-Day	D-Day and D plus 1
3rd Tide (Force B)	68	D plus 1	D plus 1 to D plus 5
Bristol Channel Pre-Load	31	D plus 2	D plus 2 to D plus 6
Build-Up and Ferry	16	D plus 2	D plus 3
Residue	36	D plus 16	Completed D plus 36

The above figures in the column titled Number of Personnel refer to 348th personnel with both the 348th and the 37th Battalions. A great percentage of Force "O" (Tides 1 and 2) landed as per schedule; but the heavier-than-expected resistance on the shore caused the "back-phasing" of the succeeding waves, as is indicated above. Craft of the 2nd Tide, particularly Rhino Ferries, were, for the most part, compelled to wait until the morning of D plus 1 after most of the enemy's shore defenses were put out of action.

60 per cent of the 5th Brigade personnel were scheduled to land on D-Day, but it is not definitely known what percentage actually landed that day.



The War Department disclosed the role of the two Infantry Regiments which stormed OMAHA Beach on D-Day as follows, quoting from an article which appeared in the STARS AND STRIPES in the middle of August, 1944:

"WASHINGTON, August 3—The War Department today described the bloody D-Day battle in which two U. S. Infantry Regiments defied withering enemy fire and at heavy cost drove through Hitler's Atlantic Wall to establish the beachhead which for two days remained the Allies' principal gateway to Normandy.

"The two spearheading Regiments were Virginia's 116th Infantry from the 29th Division and New York's 16th Infantry from the First Division. The landing cost the 116th more than 800 casualties while the 16th lost at least one third of its assault strength. The First and 29th were assigned to storm the beach just east of Carentan which bristled with concrete pillboxes, machine guns, and sniper nests. Moreover, an entire German division was in the same area on a maneuver.

"The 16th was heading for the shore near Colleville-sur-Mer when it was swamped by violent seas and hurled from assault boats into mined waters. Struggling toward the shore, the entire Regiment became the target for pointblank fire from the enemy cliff positions. Slowly the Regiment regrouped. They answered German artillery and machine guns with rifles and rifle-propelled rockets.

"A breach was blown in the barbed wire and the 16th poured through—but at a terrible cost. Lt. General Omar N. Bradley said 'individually

and collectively, members of the 16th Regiment turned threatened catastrophe into glorious victory for the American Army.'

"Infantrymen of the 116th went ashore near Vierville-sur-Mer at a beach heavily fortified with barbed wire, concrete walls, and land mines. The 116th neutralized cliff positions, forged through mines, and routed the enemy."

The foregoing paragraphs give a general overall picture of the beach action, particularly of the efforts of the Infantry. The first troops of the Engineer Special Brigade Provisional Group to land were the members of a reconnaissance party of the 37th Engineer Battalion. They landed near Exit E-3 at 0700 hours, ten minutes ahead of schedule. There were 398 men of the 348th attached to the 37th for the initial phase of the operation; and it is possible that one or two 348th men were with this party that landed at H plus 30 minutes. The 348th Battalion in turn had attached to it 331 men of the 336th Engineer Battalion. Companies "B" and "C", the assault Companies, were to clear the beach and to prepare it for operation. "A" Company, in reserve, was to land later and to construct the necessary roads leading from the beach to the initial dump areas. The 5th Brigade History offers the following description of the landings of the 348th:

"Those of the 348th Engineers attached to the 37th Engineers were in support of the landing of the 16th Infantry Regiment. During the morning, their reconnaissance and weapons sections landed,



Crowded Top Deck of an LST

together with parts of their mine-clearing and road construction sections. Beginning at H plus 70 minutes, and during the early afternoon, the remainder of these sections, with bulldozers and trailers carrying matting for roadways, were unloading on the beach. Their mission, initially, was to take over the work started by the assault Engineers in the opening of passages through beach obstacles and minefields, while the latter moved inland.

"A heavy concentration of enemy artillery and mortar fire, as well as machine gun and small arms fire, covered the beach. The sandbars and beach obstacles composed of stakes, hedgehogs, anti-personnel mines, Element "C", and log ramps increased the hazard to the landing of craft, troops and vehicles.

"In the face of these difficulties they worked their way through the beach obstacles, the bursting shells, the machine gun fire, to the back of the beach where they took cover behind the dune line. On the areas from defiladed side of the dunes, where they had taken cover, those newly landing found many troops pinned to the ground due to the enemy's superior observation and coverage by fire power.

"In order to help neutralize the enemy's fire from these positions, which was taking a heavy toll of men and equipment, the reconnaissance and weapons sections of the 348th Engineer Combat Battalion, together with some of the road construction and mine-clearing sections, all joined in combat along with troops of the 37th Engineer Combat Battalion to which they were attached. Their weapons sections set up machine gun positions along the dune line and fired point-blank into the pillboxes on either side of Beach Exit E-3, which they were assigned for opening. Other individuals of the unit supported these positions with small arms fire. With this coverage, they helped engage the enemy while organized patrols from the Infantry and from the 37th Engineer Combat Battalion encircled the enemy's strong-points. By mid-afternoon the enemy's fire from pillboxes and dugouts immediately commanding the beach had been silenced, but from isolated positions they were still doing considerable damage with their machine guns, snipers, and from artillery positions behind the high ridge line of the beach.



Capt. Wilson casts an anxious eye beachward.



The ramp is dropped.



A pair of D-Day prisoners.

The events experienced by the 348th reconnaissance parties is more accurately portrayed in the following interview with one of the members of the group, who desires to have his name withheld:

"I was a member of one of the two reconnaissance parties that were the first men of the Battalion to land on OMAHA Beach. There were ten of us, eight men and two officers, making up the parties of "B" and "C" Companies. We were on LCT 341 and were scheduled to hit the beach 30 minutes after H-Hour with the Infantry. Hardly anybody landed according to the table that day, however, and we didn't get in until about 7:30. When we made our first run in, there was quite a bit of firing going on. We were keeping low in the LCT and taking cover behind the halftracks and jeeps that he had aboard. Some of the 16th Infantry were with us; and they knew from previous landings that everything in Normandy was not going according to schedule that morning. We were just a short distance offshore when an 88 shell smashed into the engine room. The LCT went out of control temporarily, and we made a circle to make another run at the beach. The ramp was finally dropped and we stepped off into water about chest-deep. We were carrying rolled-up beach marker panels, and we had a little trouble with them in the surf. Some of the shorter men had about all they could do to keep their heads above the water. After we got out of the water we started for the dune line. The firing was still going on. We were loaded down so heavily that we couldn't run all the way—we had to walk part of the time to catch our wind. There wasn't much wreckage along the beach at that time in the morning; but I did notice a lot of dead and wounded scattered among the obstacles on the sand. We landed on the 37th beach and started down to the 348th beach at once. We kept pretty low and had to take frequent breaks on the way. The loose sand and gravel made it pretty tough walking—and then we were still carrying all that stuff. We got as far as the concrete platform on FOX GREEN Beach. There were a lot of men taking cover around there, both Infantry and Engineers. There was a low place in the dune line just east of there, and nobody was getting across it. We took cover behind the dune line with the rest of them. After a couple of hours some of our weapons section came in. The Infantry got organized and was ordered to cross the dune line and move up the hill in front of us. We set up a gun near the concrete platform and supplied covering fire for them. We also used our rifles and "bazookas" as much as we could. Mines were discovered in the swampy area between us and the hill; and the Infantry moved through there in single file. I saw a few of them get picked off as they went up the face of the hill. I ran out of ammunition and went out onto the beach to get some more off of somebody who didn't need it any longer. The tide was coming in, and all the wounded were begging to be brought in to the dune line. We moved all of them that we could. No matter how bad they were hurt they just gritted their teeth and let us drag them in. When we'd get them to the dune line, they'd ask for a cigarette and maybe say 'thanks'.

"After the tide was in and the Infantry had gone on over the top of the hill, we decided to dig in close to the bottom of the slope. We dug in right in the middle of a minefield—but we didn't find out until the next day that it was mined. Talk about lucky. Somehow or another that afternoon a grass fire was started down west of us, and it was blowing our way. Just as it got to our holes we moved out to let it pass over. When it had gone by, we crawled back in the holes. It was pretty smoky, but we didn't want to stay out in the open.



"Some halftracks pulled up on the dune line a little to our left. I guess they were supposed to lead an attack against some positions that were still firing up on the slope. They drew a lot of mortar fire, and some of them were knocked out. The rest of them must have been abandoned because they didn't move until the next day.

"We went down that afternoon to set up a marker in the center of FOX Beach. There were some shells coming in from guns set in the cliffs to both the east and west of us, but we got the marker up without too much trouble.

"That evening we moved a little higher up on the hill and dug some new holes for the night. We didn't have any blankets, and it was pretty cold sleeping. Next morning we found the Company ("B" Company) dug in just around the curve of the hill. They were busy clearing dead and wounded from the beach area getting ready to build roads across the dune line and to set up for operations. We put up our flank markers and then joined the Company."

The "C" Company historian gives the following account of the difficulties encountered in the opening of Exit E-3 by the men of his company:

"Several channels had been cleared through the obstacles on D-Day, so that it was possible to land small craft carrying equipment and personnel with some risk. Only one small craft at a time could use a channel, so the flow of supplies was much too slow. Our beach demolitions group, headed by Lt. Walter Sidlowski and Cpl. Carl A. Twill, grabbed TNT blocks and primacord and proceeded to untangle the mess of obstacles which barred the passage of supply craft to the beach. They worked the afternoon of 7 June and on through the night, stopping only long enough to eat a K ration, and by the afternoon of D plus 2 the remains of the log ramp, post, and tetrahedron obstacles were down and piled along the beach. At times the tide forced them to stand in water waist-deep with a heavy surf breaking over their heads; but time was an important element, so they worked straight through.

"The road building platoon was responsible for E-3, the main supply exit from the beach. The vehicles carrying road-building materials had failed to reach the shore intact; and Lt. Robert Walsh and his crew faced the problem of building a road with no materials on hand. During the



A mine detector goes ashore.

occasional shelling of the early morning hours of June 7th, they scouted the beach for Somerfeld matting and wire, and fished enough of it out of the water to have E-3 receiving considerable traffic on D plus 1. Meanwhile, the beach had to be policed to facilitate the buildings of roads. Details from the Company were busy all during the night of 6 to 7 June clearing the road sites of the dead, life belts, rifles, packs and equipment which lay everywhere.

"The primary objective of the mine clearing platoon, under S/Sgt. Albion S. Liskovec, was to clear E-3 of mines and obstacles. This was accomplished from the water to Colleville-sur-Mer on D plus 1. Then they put their detectors and bayonets to work on the Company bivouac area, which was cleared the same day. They had the transfer point area free of mines in time to have the point operating on D plus 3. In addition to the above assigned tasks, the mine platoon cleared mines efficiently and without suffering a casualty in the Battalion Beach Maintenance Area, as far back as Colleville."

The disruption of the landing table is well illustrated in the account of the landings of the major groups of "A" Company personnel. The Company, on LST 6, was to arrive at the beach at 9:30 D-Day morning. The 1st Platoon of the Company, previously designated as reserve platoon and on APA 2 (a transport), was to arrive an hour later. While on the APA, it was decided to send an advance party from the platoon ashore with a preceding group of the 336th Engineers. The Company boarded a Rhino Ferry and came in to the beach on schedule but was driven out by artillery fire. A third and successful attempt to land was not made until the following morning. Meanwhile, the 1st Platoon, receiving a similar welcome before noon, made a third and successful landing at about 1530 hours. The advance party landed on their first attempt at approximately one o'clock. The story of the landing of the 1st Platoon, commanded by Lt. Robert M. Allison, is told below in the words of platoon sergeant S/Sgt. Ambrose Doller:

"When we boarded the APA in England, we had 44 men and one officer. The platoon was supposed to be the reserve platoon of the Company, but we actually landed ahead of the Company as well as some of the elements of the forward Companies. We were scheduled to land at H plus 240 minutes on EASY RED Beach and to cross over to FOX WHITE Beach as the situation permitted. On board the APA the day before landing it was decided to send Sgt. Hoppe and six men in on an LCVP with part of the 336th. Hoppe's crew boarded their landing craft about 9:30 in the morning of

D-Day, and the remainder of the platoon unloaded onto an LCT at about 10:30. The firing was pretty heavy when we came in, and we either had to pull out or get blown out. It was the same way when we came in a while later. The LCT developed motor trouble about a mile out—possibly from a shell hit—and the crew bailed water for about an hour before we made the last run to the beach. As we came in, the landing craft on the beach, loaded and empty, were being sent out. The firing was still going on, and these other craft were streaming by us going in the opposite direction. It was like being headed the wrong way on a one-way street. But our LCT was sinking, and the skipper was trying to make the beach before she went down. The water was about four feet deep where the ramp was dropped, but it got about six feet deep between there and shallow water. The tide was out, and the beach appeared to be five miles wide instead of some 200 yards that it was. And the situation hadn't calmed down any, either. Some of the men had a little trouble in the water. After we got up on the sand we trotted by spurts to the dune line. Quite a bit of stuff was bursting around right then.

"The area was covered with wrecked equipment. There were only a few men in sight—and they were either dead or wounded. Everybody else was taking cover wherever it could be found. The Infantry was dug in along the dune line, but they moved up a short while later. Some of the men in the platoon, not wanting to stay on the beach and not knowing what else to do, moved up the hill with the Infantry. Hoppe and his crew had come in about one o'clock, and we ran across them. They had heard that the rest of the Company had been wiped out. There were 'Schu' mines at the top of the hill and the Infantry held up until a path was cleared.

"Other men of the platoon were detailed to carry dead and wounded. This work went on into the night. Sgt. Earnhardt was going around bandaging up wounded men with what bandages he could find.

"We dug in on the dune line near the 6th Beach Battalion Aid Station. We got to looking around and saw that mortar shells had dropped in that area; and, just in case that mortar hadn't been knocked out, we decided to move. No sooner had we moved out than an 88 shell flattened the Aid station. The mortar worked that area over again, too. We moved on up the hill. Another 88 hit a jeep right behind Hoppe's squad. The jeep was blown sky-high, and a piece of shrapnel went through Hoppe's pack and messkit.



Sgt. West passes pole charge that did not realize its purpose.

"It wasn't very comforting to look out from the top of that hill that evening when the tide was out and see not a single thing stirring along the high-water mark. All the ships and craft were far out on the Channel, and we were wondering who was going to have that beach when morning came.

"Michienzi got hit in the ribs by a piece of shrapnel on the way in, and we decided to evacuate him at dusk. We were dug in in a mine field, so we got him out of there and across the anti-tank ditch that had about five feet of cold and pretty rank water in it. Down at the beach we found out that we couldn't evacuate him because there weren't any boats coming in. So we took him back to the foxholes. Getting wet in that ditch didn't help sleeping that night.

"Right after dark, a Ju88 came down over the beach and dropped three bombs right below us. The explosion knocked over an LCT, but there wasn't any other damage that I could see. We stayed on the hill that night.

"The first thing the next morning we started looking for the rest of the Company again, even though we had heard that they had been wiped out. We found part of "C" Company, so we decided to move down with them. They were on FOX GREEN. While we were moving down there, McClure got hit. The Jerries still were sending some stuff in that morning, but nothing like they were the day before. The Company came in later in the morning, and we all went to work clearing off the beach, picking up mines, and putting some roads through. A bulldozer uncovered a mine field on the site of the road we were building. The mine platoon worked in there until after dark that night and part of the next day. We finished the road the next day."

The only available record indicates that there were 32 "H/S" Company men who landed on D-Day, but little is known of their missions or activities that day. Staff Sections were not set up until the afternoon of D plus 1. The "H/S" Company historian, however, has the following to say of the Battalion Medical Detachment:

"The eight men of the Detachment who were able to get in D-Day spent the whole of their time tending to the wounded and evacuating them by every available means. It is estimated that they, in one way or another, handled 250 patients. As soon as the beach was cleared of the wounded, the Aid Station was set up in a captured enemy 88mm gun emplacement. The wounded were thereafter treated under more suitable conditions and more accurate records completed. They were still evacuated through the same channels, however. This, at times, necessitated carrying litters half a mile to the Clearing Station. Finally, on D plus 3 the two remaining EM reported to the Aid Station. Their first landing craft had developed a leak and was abandoned. In the course of events, they changed landing craft no less than eight times."

T/5 Raymond Grille, Battalion aid man, describes his D-Day experiences:

"Swanson and I left England on LCT 121. Also on that craft were two cranes of the Battalion and about 25 men representing all three line Companies. We came in on the 37th Beach at about 11 o'clock in the morning when the tide was in. There was a lot of wreckage on the beach, but very little right where we landed. There was a wounded man right in front of our ramp, so Swanson and I took care of him. The LCT drew no fire for about five minutes while it was being unloaded. We stayed around about ten minutes, and there were some shells falling near where we left. We started to make our way to the 348th Beach, which was only a few hundred yards away. The shelling grew worse as we moved along. We had to hit the dirt several times. As we lay on the ground during the worst of the shelling, it was that old story of de-



Bed rolls littered the beach.

bating whether to stay there or to run for a better spot. Three times we decided to run for it, and each time the Jerries 'zeroed in' on the areas we had just evacuated. We came on to "C" Company's beach in about a half-hour. The shelling was still going on, and everybody was sticking pretty close to the ground. A couple of "B" Company men were manning a machine gun against a Jerry machine gun nest up on the hillside when we arrived.

"As we came down the beach, we took care of the wounded as we happened upon them. I remember one man who had been hit in the face. The flesh had been torn away from his mouth, and his teeth were bared. That is probably the most disagreeable case we found on the way along the beach.

"An officer and some men of the 37th spotted a small pillbox in the beach area as we were moving along. The officer told one of his men to signal the Navy by means of flags to bring gunfire on the position. The Jerries were going quite a bit of shooting right then, and the man refused to stand up to signal the Navy. The officer got sore, grabbed the flags, and signaled the Navy himself. It was a surprise to me, but he got results. The Navy hit the pillbox the first shot. The box went up skyhigh and came down in little pieces.

"We stayed low with the rest of the boys on the "C" Company beach and doctored up the wounded as best we could. A lieutenant from the First Division called me over to the dune line to patch up a couple of his boys that had been hit by shrapnel. I went over and fixed them up, keeping close to the ground all the while. The artillery was really getting hot by this time. Coming back over the dune line, a sniper got a bead on me and let me have it. I moved on over to where Swanson was and he fixed me up. We stayed around in that area the rest of the day, still taking care of wounded. I was evacuated that night on an LCV to an LST. I was sent to a hospital in England and returned to the unit with the residue on July 7th."

Late in the afternoon of D plus 1 the last salvo of 88 shells dropped on the FOX sector of OMAHA Beach. Back of the beach, the front line was some two or three miles inland at that time, and there was only occasional sniper fire in the cleared area. There was danger at night in the beach area, however, more from the falling flak from anti-aircraft shells than from the enemy planes that droned overhead nightly for several following weeks.

Through the assault, the Battalion had been very fortunate indeed in sustaining extremely light casualties. It was probably due to this, and to the

fact that there was not as much wreckage on FOX Beach as on EASY Beach, that the Battalion was able to organize its beach and to start efficient operations immediately. The beach was hastily cleared of obstacles, wreckage and barbed wire were removed, anti-tank ditches were filled, and mines were dug up and disposed of. Capt. William R. Clark and a small group of men representing almost all Companies routed 16 Germans from and underground headquarters with hand grenades on D plus 1. The quarters were taken over by our own Battalion Headquarters on the same day. Lt. Chester Stawski of "A" Company became probably the Battalion's leading captor when he rounded up 12 former Wehrmacht members singlehandedly. The beach area was literally sown with mines. "A" Company's records reveal that, in the first six days, they removed 350 French anti-tank mines, 400 German bounding "S" mines, and so many wooden "Schu" mines that all count of them was lost. All Companies gleaned considerable numbers of mines. In a report on vehicle losses in the history of the 131st Quartermaster Battalion, there is this paragraph:

"The only loss that might be characterized as unusual was the loss of a DUKW of the 453rd Amphibian Truck Company. This particular vehicle was loaded with mines and taken out into the English Channel for the purpose of sinking its lethal cargo. The first mine that was dropped overboard exploded close to the DUKW, causing grave hazard of activation of the rest of the cargo. The personnel aboard the DUKW leaped into the water and were picked up by a nearby Naval craft. To avoid danger to shipping in the vicinity, the naval commander fired upon the abandoned DUKW and sank it and its cargo of mines."

The writer of this account did not state that the person in charge of this mine disposal venture was Lt. Walter Sidlowski of "C" Company, 348th Engineers.

On June 8th, an LST carrying a few 348th personnel and vehicles, was torpedoed on the Channel by a German "E" boat. T/5 Everard Russell of Company "C" was killed. Other men of the Battalion killed at about this time, but by mines on the beach, were Pvt. Albert Soto of "B" Company and Pvt. Jerome Bernstein of "A" Company.

Transfer points, where cranes transferred cargoes from DUKW's to trucks, were set up and operating on D plus 3. Some weeks later, transfer points of another type, but for the same purpose, employing Clark-Lift cranes operating on a plat-



Message Center men and Sergeant Major at work in their underground office.

form of truck-bed height, made their appearance.

The Battalion's trucks, as well as those of the attached Quartermaster Truck Companies, were on the roads to and from the dumps 24 hours a day, unless deadlined for repairs. Night driving proved to be nerve-racking. Only a minimum of light was permitted, the roads were narrow and of many turns, there were a few snipers in the rear areas, and occasionally a plane strafed or bombed a dump area. Many drivers were made more comfortable by armed friends "riding shotgun" on the seats beside them during some of those inky nights in Normandy.

The "H/S" Company historian gives the following description of the activities of his Company during this period.

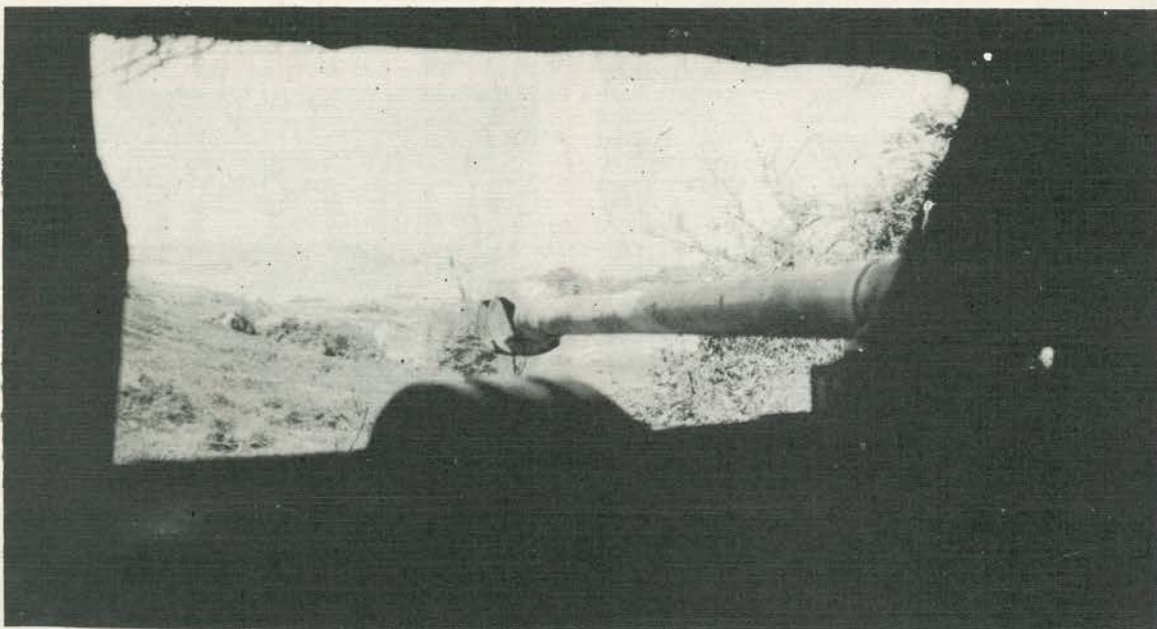
"After the early stages of the operation, "H/S" Company bivouacked behind the Beach Area in tents or temporary foxholes. When circumstances permitted, improvements were made for the welfare and comforts of the men.

"Four men of the Water Purification Unit of this Battalion made a reconnaissance for a likely site on D plus 2. By noon of D plus 3 the Water Purification Unit was set up and in operation. The Water point of this Battalion has been complemented by higher headquarters to be one of the best of its kind in operation on this shore. Its normal operating capacity is between 25,000 and 30,000 gallons a day. At this writing (31 August) 1,750,000 gallons have been purified."

The writer neglected to mention the makeshift showers that the Water Point personnel erected, primarily for their own use but eventually used by a great number of men of all Companies. These showers were the first of an ever-improving series of showers built in Company areas in the succeeding stations in Normandy.



Sergeants Holt, St. George, and Jones and pin-up girls inhabit formerly German quarters.



One German gun crew had this view of the beach.



Major Meharg poses with unidentified captain on shingle gravel that made landings more difficult.



Capt. Jackson and Sgt. Cox prepare for the worst.



On the way up, Sherman tanks pass parked "Weasels".



Capt. Cummings and Sgt. Petersen of ADE, at work shortly after D-Day.



348th men and officers toe the line for D-Day decorations.



Camouflage, German Style



Camouflage, "H/S" Company Style

In regard to the work of the Medics, the "H/S" historian continues:

"As things become organized, a permanent schedule was drawn up whereby the Aid men were quartered with all Companies of the Battalion, and in that way they took care of every emergency. As an additional precaution, the beach was patrolled 24 hours a day, and the more serious cases were brought to the Aid Station. This set-up worked very efficiently . . .

The Aid Station also maintained an informal sick-call throughout the day and in this way cuts

down on the time wasted by men coming in for treatment. During the first week this was accomplished by using salvaged Medical material from landing craft on the beach. All regular TE equipment was lost during the landing."

"H/S" Company trucks were on the road along with the trucks of the line Companies engaged in the task of moving cargoes to dump areas. In addition, their motor pool personnel lent helping hands in keeping the vast amount of motor equipment of the Battalion in operating condition.



348th Water Point, near Colleville, pumped more water than any other unit on Omaha Beach.



Gun overlooking Exit E-3.



A blasted LCI.



One of the initial transfer points in operation.



Capt. Clark and Lt. Wilson at the first "A" Company beach CP.

"A" Company's history of the period reveals that:

"...The Company did not establish a permanent bivouac area until D plus 3. The standard abode at that time was a foxhole; but a few days later, when the beachhead was more firmly held and the Luftwaffe's nightly attempts became more futile, the men began to erect shacks from material salvaged along the beach. Still later, material was requisitioned for this purpose, and the shacks became more numerous and more habitable. At about D plus 5 the kitchen was set up, and the Mess Sergeant and his crew began applying their talents to what few rations could be obtained at that time. K and C rations had constituted the previous menus. In early August the kitchen was improved to equal a garrison kitchen in size and in amount and quality of food."



Ambulance passes a dumb-barge after transporting wounded to an LST.

As the dumps were moved farther inland, the road nets connecting them became more far-reaching. The 336th Engineers, on FOX RED Beach, were dispatched to maintain these extra miles of roads. "A" Company had previously been responsible for road maintenance in the dump areas, but:

"On June 18th the Company took over the operation of FOX WHITE Beach, later designated as Beach No. 8. Their duties consisted of beach maintenance and unloading of DUKW's and landing craft. In the period from 7 June to 31 August the organization unloaded in excess of 300 LST's in addition to a number of LCT's and dumb-barges. Late in August they loaned a hand in the loading of ammunition onto LST's to be sent to another port."



Lumber-loading detail on FOX Beach.



"A" Company motor pool personnel pose before "duplex" shanty.



Cranes, DUKW's, and trucks kept a 24-hour schedule.

"In the latter part of June a motor maintenance shop was erected on the beach to check and maintain the Company trucks, which had hauled supplies inland night and day since the landing."

The following is an account of "B" Company's activities:

"The main task of the Company, after the beaches became organized, consisted of unloading Rhino Ferries, LCT's and other types of smaller craft. The majority of these had to be unloaded by hand labor.

"For the first few days, the Company CP was maintained on the beach in what was formerly an enemy installation. Eventually however, it was moved off the beach into a suitable bivouac area. Improvements are constantly being made and at the present time (31 August) a mess hall that would be the envy of any garrison camp is being constructed.

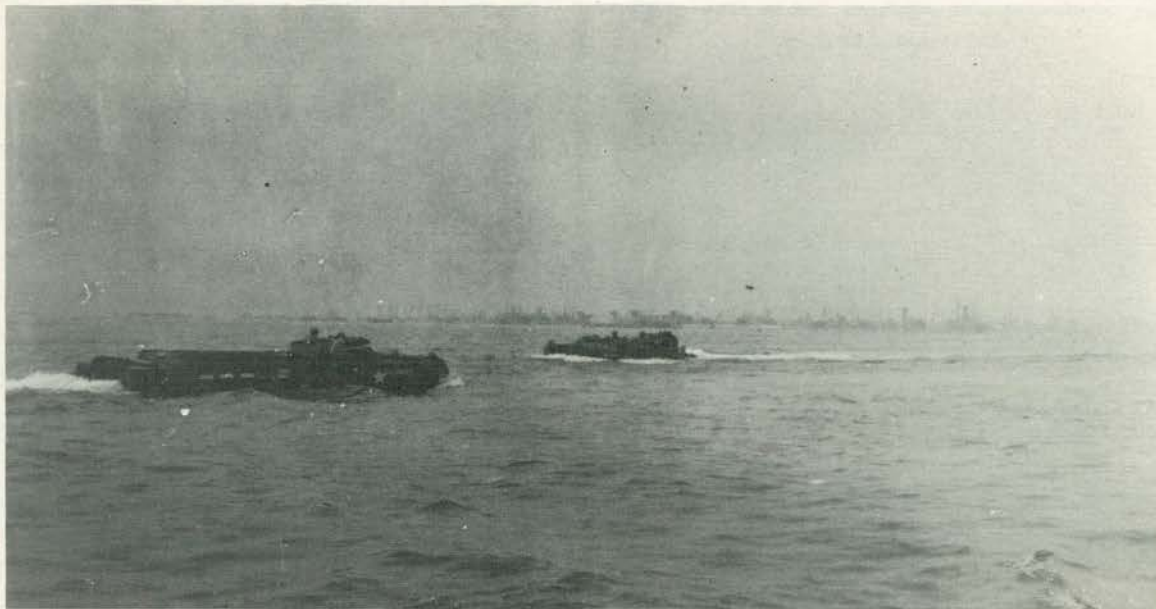


LST's ready for unloading.

"Everything now has fallen into a routine. Shifts have been organized so that the men can plan their working and leisure time. The well-needed supplies keep coming in, and there is always an enthusiastic crew waiting to load and transport the supplies to the proper dumps.

"All trucks of the Company were on duty 24 hours daily, hauling supplies to the interior. At no time were there more than two vehicles deadlined per week, and those deadlined were laid up for no longer than a 12 hour period.

"The operations from 7 June to 31 August proceeded in a very efficient manner. Interruption of operations has been due only to weather conditions which hampered the use of landing craft in the beaching of cargo. All Company functions have been of the type described with the exception of a crew of enlisted men who have become 'sailing soldiers' beaching the craft on the designated beach for unloading."



Normandy victories depended largely upon supplies landed by DUKW's.



Engineer heavy equipment in the beach area.



Noon-hour confab of the "brass". Lt Col. Houston in sun-glasses.



Quartermasters pile acres of "10 in One" rations in ration dump.



French laborers unload a dumb-barge on FOX RED Beach.



DUKW-borne photographer snapped transports in distance.



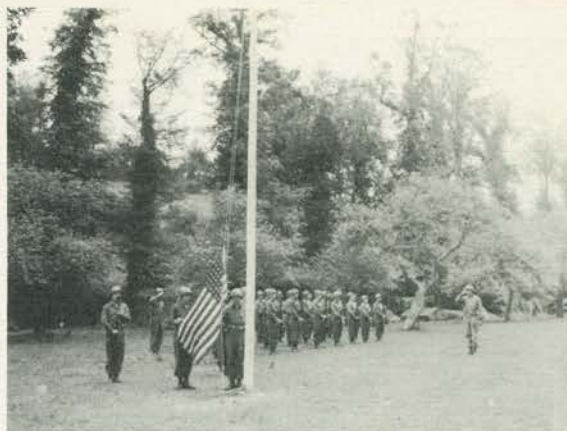
Old Glory and Medics' wash fly from top of casemated dispensary.



"C" Company beach CP.

The "C" Company historian, in his portrayal of the post-invasion beach activities, includes a graphic description of his Company Area during this period, which was fairly typical of the areas of the other Companies:

"With the establishment of a crane-operated transfer point on D plus 3, under Lt. Harold T. Heady, DUKW's, which had been driving directly from ship to supply dumps, could transfer their loads to trucks on the beach, and return to the ships immediately. From that day till the middle of July, the Company trucks were idle only long enough to be refueled and to change drivers. The drivers were on the road 14 to 16 hours a day without relief during the first week of the operation, and more than one truck arrived in the dumps with sniper's bullet holes in it. A few men, who could be spared from other operations, volunteered to drive, and in that way, enough drivers were available to enable one or two to take time off for a little needed sleep. The mechanics, headed by Sgt. Homer S. Ramsey, 'kept 'em rolling' at all hours of the day and night, and none of the trucks were dead-lined during this crucial stage of the operation.

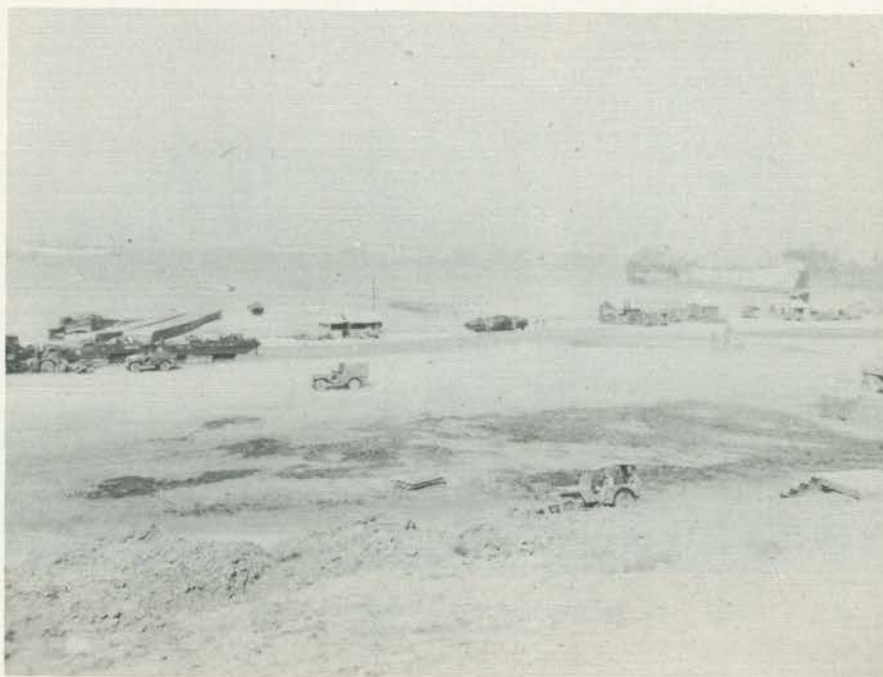


"C" Company Retreat formation at the "Fox Green Country Club".

"The coordination of the above efforts, which led to the successful consummation of the Company mission, was in the hands of Capt. Joseph R. Kaufmann, Company Commander. . . The CP was located below the bluff directly opposite E-3, and was operating by late afternoon of D-Day.

"During the first six days of the operation, the Company was bivouacked on the beach near the CP. Five days and nights of hard work produced a well-organized system of transfer points and roads on the beach, and the Company moved to a new bivouac area about a half-mile inland on 12th June.

"The carpenters commenced making the new area into a habitable place. An orderly room supply room, and kitchen were speedily built, and within a week 'Charlie's Tonsorial Shoppe', Charles C. Vaughan, T/5, proprietor, was doing a booming business trimming Invasion Beards. 'Spudich Steam Baths', a two-head shower, was erected, complete with facilities for hot water, and the 'Biltmore Hotel' was ready for its tenants (Quarters for Officers). Tables were built creating





Capt. Slota and S/Sgt. Liskovec brouse about hospital area. Photo was in "Yank".



Colored Quartermaster troops sort supplies in QM dump.

'Richie's Roadside Rest', where the Elite meet to eat. The front gate was repaired, and a sign placed thereon informed passers-by that the 'Fox Green Country Club' was officially open. When the area was inspected by the Assistant Brigade Commander, it received the rating 'Excellent.'

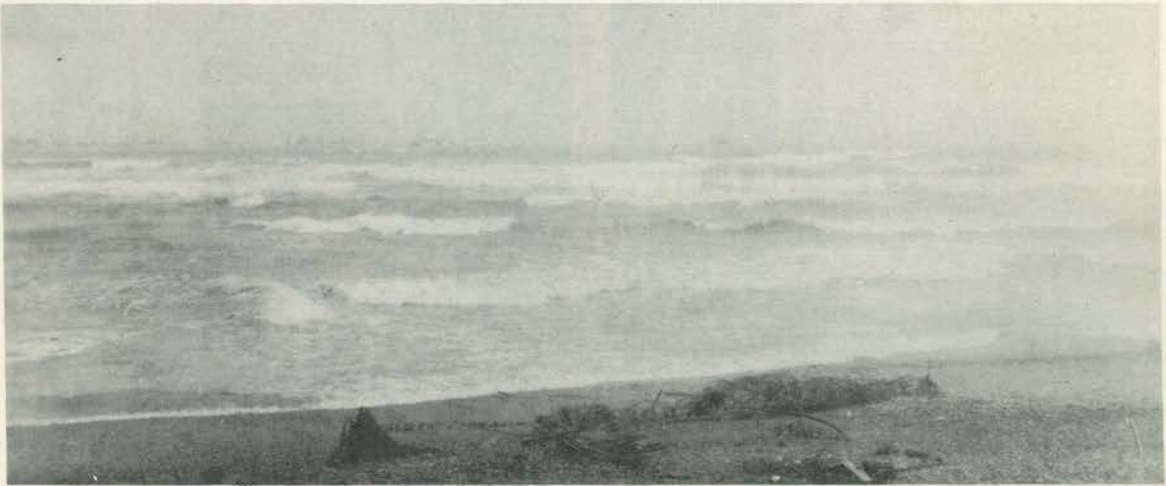
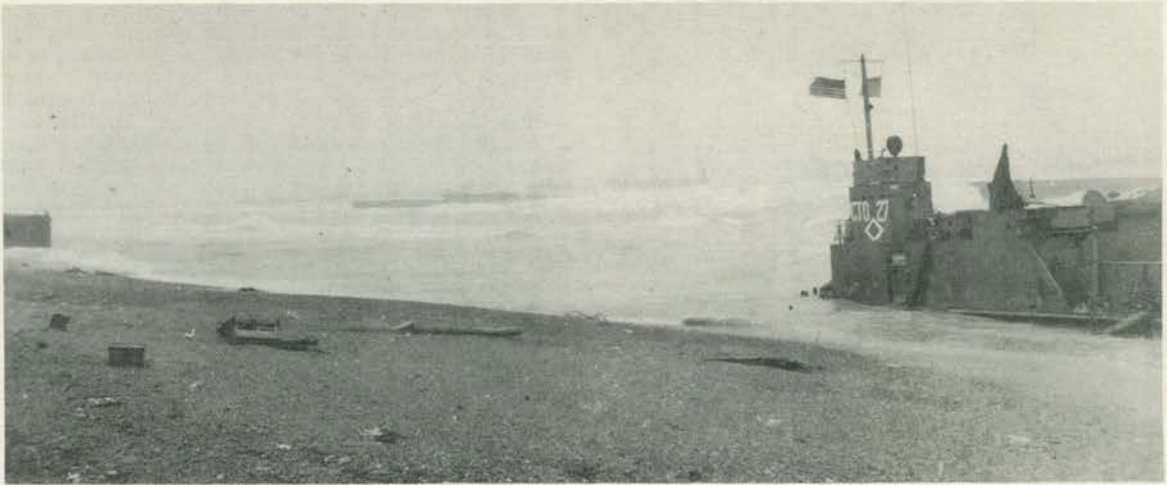
"Work on the beach progressed satisfactorily, with the men working twelve hour shifts. The only interference was occasional enemy air raids from which we suffered very little loss of working time, and no casualties. On June 30th the lesson of how well the Germans had prepared was driven home when Pvt J. C. Horton, Jr., was blown off his 'Cat' by an exploding Tellermine. The mine had apparently been buried so deep that it was uncovered only after the dozer had moved several feet of earth. Horton was only slightly injured."

(It is fitting to add here that three of the Battalion's dozers were wrecked by Tellermine blasts long after the beachhead had been secured. The final accident of this kind happened in August. Fortunately, all concerned operators escaped with only minor injuries.)

"The Company Area was being constantly improved, and soon there were recreational facilities which included a ping pong table, volley ball court, etc. The latter part of August, a mess hall was built with real wood floors, an honest-to-God wood and tar-paper roof, and plenty of room for everybody. The place doubles as a day room for personnel. A housing project sprang up at one end of the area, and spread to all corners, till now it is a poor man indeed who doesn't have a piece of real estate that would be the envy of any FHA."



British start a Tiger tank on trip to England for salvage of metal.



The storm that slowed operations from 17th to 21st of June.



After the storm.



PARIS



During the early part of September passes were authorized to some of the French cities, including such cities as Versailles on the outskirts of Paris. Paris itself was still "off limits", since there were still an estimated 10,000 Germans within its limits in early September. Unofficially, of course, the majority of the men who took passes to such places as Versailles spent the greater part of their time in Paris. One pair of men had the occasion of being fellow passengers of a German soldier in full uniform on the Paris subway. The Parisians, at this time, were still elated over their recent liberation, and the American visitors generally considered their days in Paris as time well-spent.



Eiffel Tower.



Arc de Triomphe.



Champs Elysee



Art gallery at Trocadero.



Above left:
Pool and fountains at west side of
Eiffel Tower.



Above right:
War plane display at base of Eiffel
Tower, August 1945.

Right:
Plaza at National Academy of Music.



Lower right:
Noire Dame Cathedral.





Traffic direction with a smile by a Brigade MP.

In regard to the main mission, the work on the beach, all types of military supplies from PX goods to one-ton bombs were being landed and being sent to their appropriate destinations. During the first few days, of course, only materials required by the front-line troops were brought in, i. e., ammunition and rations. Gasoline closely followed. Then came clothing, telephone poles, signal wire, office supplies, tires, vehicles, airplane motors, medicines, and even officers' liquor rations. Necessarily, there were no cargoes handled on D-Day. 23 tons, however, came in on D plus 1, and on D plus 2 there were 138 tons. The daily tonnage of the Battalion steadily increased, with the exception of the period of 17th through 21st of June when a storm swept the Channel, until the output of 3170 tons was reached on the 26th of June, the Battalion record for the month. In the period 6th of June to 31 July the 5th Brigade handled 241,829 tons of supplies, of which 126,511 tons were

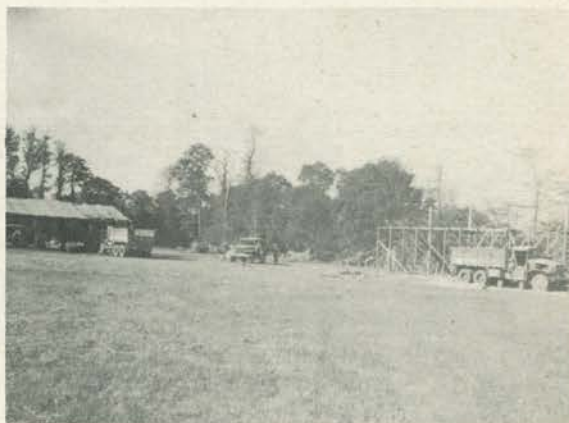


Birthday party for Capt. Kaufmann at "C" Company mess.

handled by the 348th. The Brigade tonnage for the month of August amounted to 180,729 tons. The Battalion tonnage for the same period was 98,983 tons. The Brigade Commander commended his troops for landing the record amount of 8,314 tons in a 24-hour period ending at 1800 hours the 9th of August. The 348th's share of this tonnage was 4,410 tons. The Brigade's record week was from the 6th through the 12th of August with a tonnage of 51,343. During the same week the 348th landed 27,528 tons. The record day for the Brigade of the entire operation was the 25th of August with 9,067 tons landed. The 348th Battalion handled in their record day, 30th of August, 5,295 tons. No records are available on the supplies landed by the entire Brigade after August 31; but, from the 6th of June to this date, they had sent 422,566 tons of cargo on their way to inland dumps, of which 225,494 tons were put



"H/S" motor pool



"H/S" motor pool, improvements being made.



Clark-Lift tractor crane in operation.

across the beach by the 348th. Due to inclement weather, operations dropped off during the month of September. The 348th landed 55,555 tons during this month, bringing their total for nearly the entire operation to 281,049 tons. The 37th and 348th Battalions were responsible for the operations on the beaches under 5th Brigade jurisdiction, aided by Port Battalion personnel and Quartermaster trucks and DUKW's. The 336th Battalion had beach responsibilities during the first few days of the operation and during the latter two weeks of August, and it will be noted that the tonnages of the 348th exceeded half the amount of supplies landed by the entire Brigade.

On July 25th 1944, Col. Gullatt, Commanding Officer of the 5th Engineer Special Brigade at that time, recommended the 348th Engineer Combat Battalion for the Award of Unit Citation for:

"...extraordinary heroism and outstanding performance of duty in action, while supporting

the initial Infantry assault troops landing on OMAHA Beach, on the northern coast of France, 6 June 1944. . ."

Col. W. D. Bridges, who relieved Col. Gullatt July 31st, commended all Brigade troops in the following message of October 23:

"To the personnel of the Engineer Special Brigades, who made the assault landings, developed the beachhead, and who are still maintaining the flow of supplies over the beaches, goes the credit for keeping sufficient quantities of supplies available for movement to the combat elements at the front.

"To each and every individual in the 5th Engineer Special Brigade, I want to express my appreciation for his devoted and conscientious efforts, which are thus making possible the continued progress of our forces in Europe."



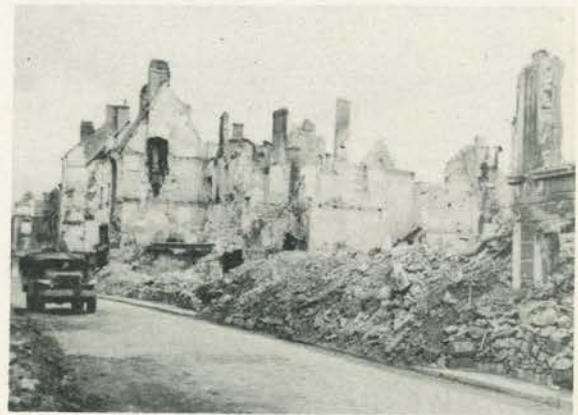
A jeep gets the once-over in "H/S" motor pool.



A Tiger that was "tamed" near St. Lo.

At later dates, the 348th Engineers received Bronze Battle Participation Stars for the battles of Normandy and Northern France, the Bronze Arrowhead Award for the assault landing on OMAHA Beach, and the Croix de Guerre from the French government.

Rough weather and lengthening lines of supply during the autumn months made it more practical to unload personnel, supplies, and equipment at LeHavre, Cherbourg, and other ports along the Channel. On the 19th of November, unloading operations ceased on the sector of OMAHA Beach under 5th Brigade control, thus ending the greatest beach operation in the history of warfare.



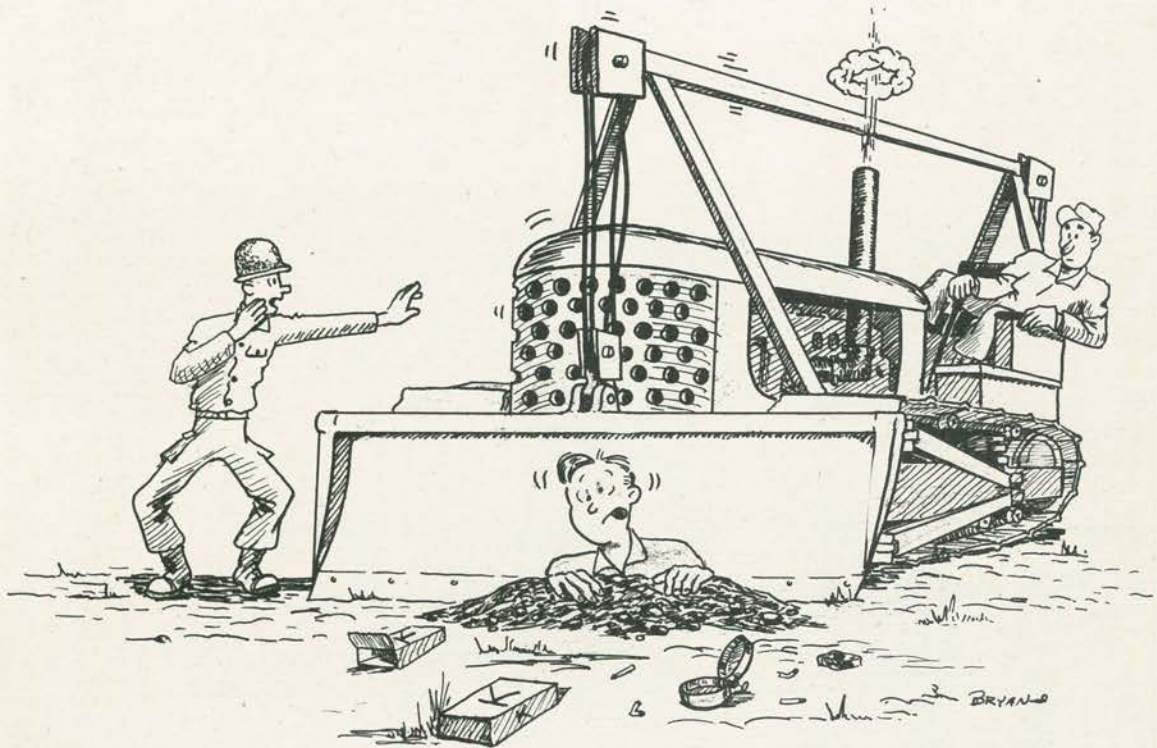
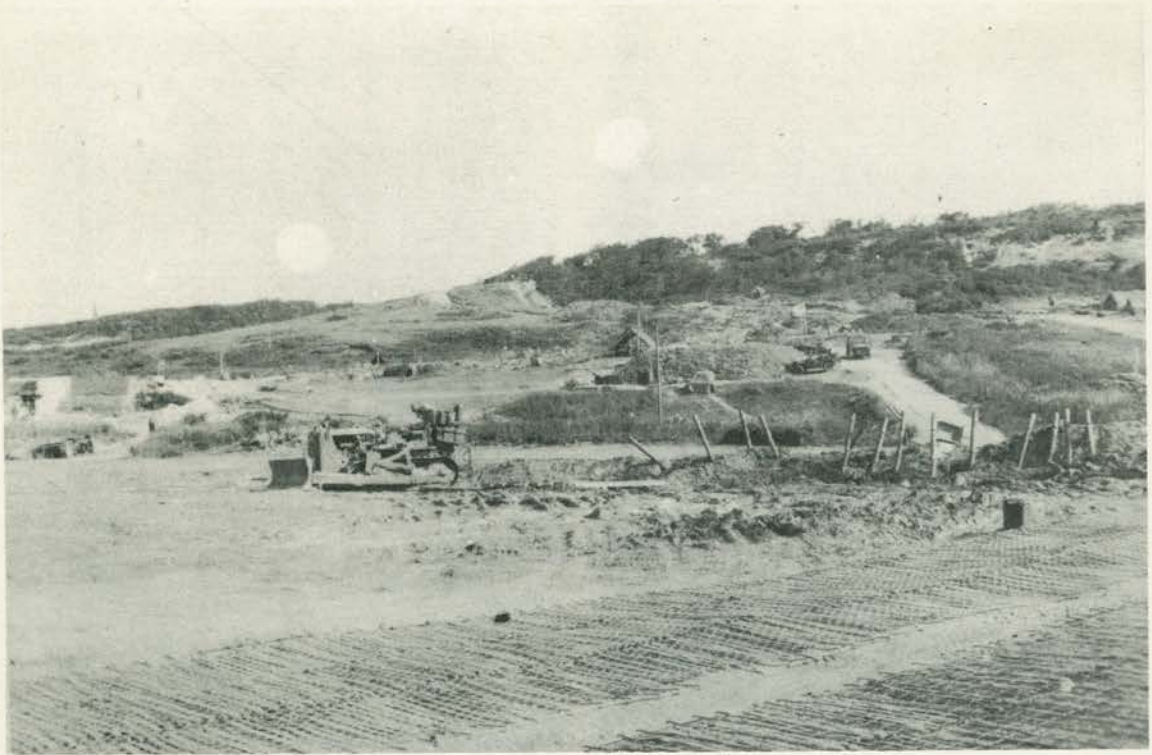
American cemetery on OMAHA Beach.



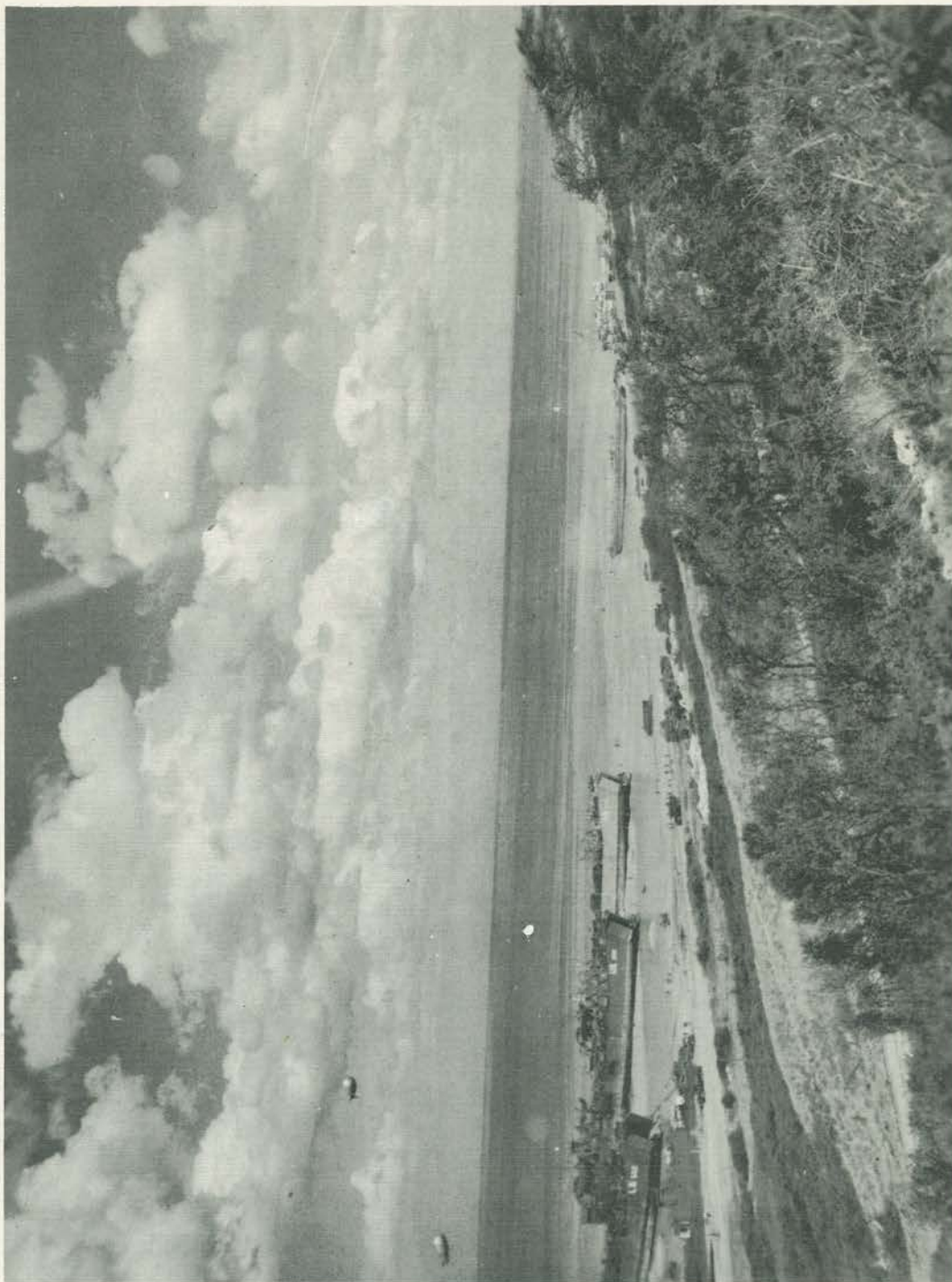
Destruction in French cities.



Scenes in St. Lo.



"Better back 'er up a little, Al".



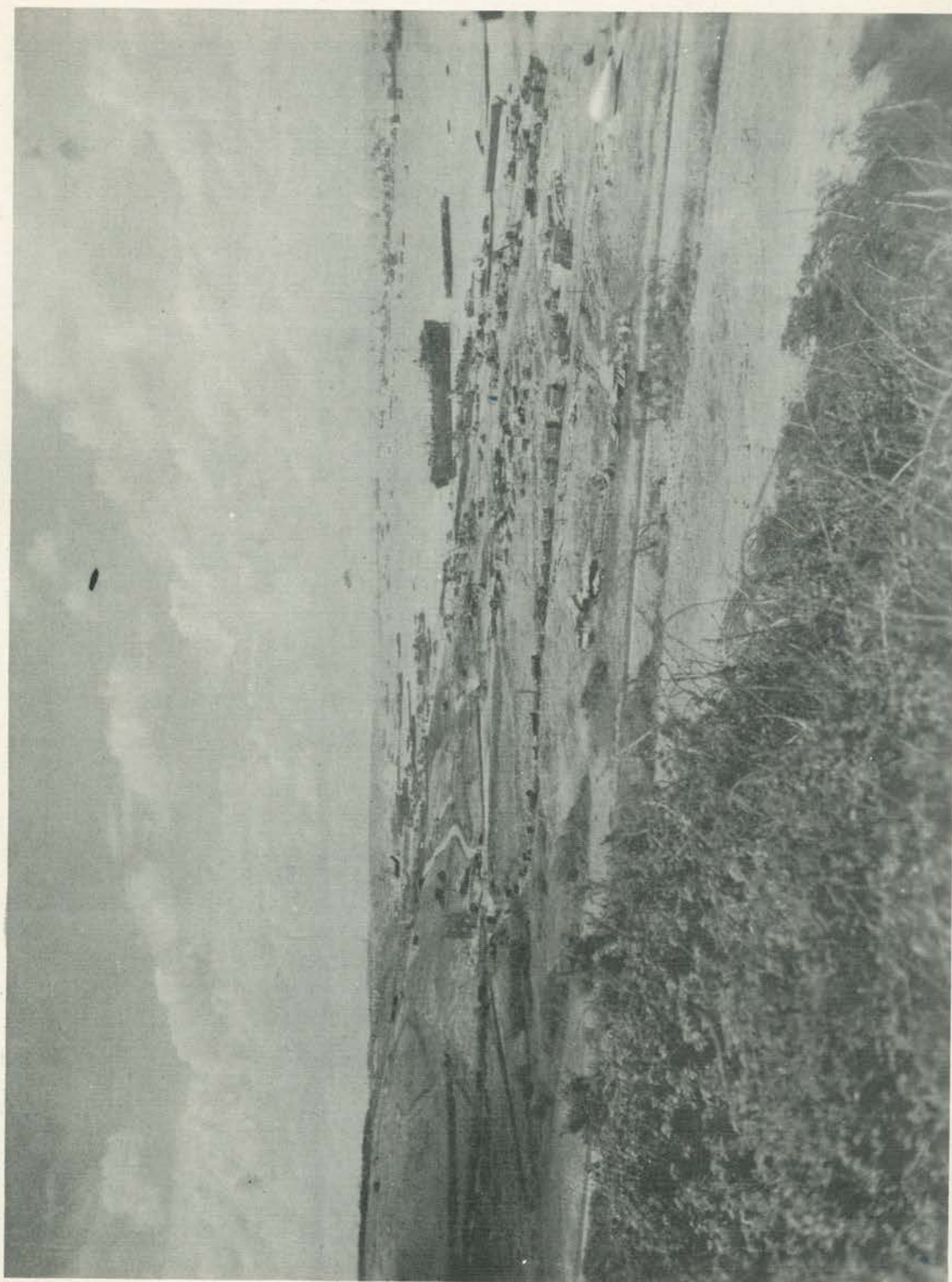
FOX RED Beach, July 1944.



Eastern half of FOX WHITE Beach, July 1944



Western half of FOX WHITE Beach, July 1944



FOX GREEN, EASY RED, and western extremities of OMAHA Beach, July 1944.

ARROMANCHES

On the 5th of October, Major Powell re-assumed command of the 348th Engineers, relieving Lt. Col. Houston, who became commanding officer of Arromanches Beach Command. On the 10th and 11th of October, the 348th moved to a camp site 2 miles east of Arromanches. Prefabricated floating docks had been installed in the harbor at Arromanches, but landing operations there under the British had not come up to expectations. It was the mission of the 348th to aid in these operations.

Tent frames were erected, construction of mess halls and shower rooms was started at once, and roads and walks were laid across the grassy area. It was the understanding that the unit would remain there for at least the majority of the winter weeks; and the construction was carried out accordingly, with emphasis on warmth and general garrison living conditions. A stove was set up in every tent, mess halls were completed, hot showers were to be had, and movies were being shown by the last of October.

But the rainy weather brought on conditions beyond all expectations. The camp, the dock area, the roads, and the dumps were engulfed in a sea of mud. Of the 36 days of operations at Arromanches, rain was reported on 24 of them. There were winds of gale intensity on two days, and heavy seas with pounding surf were reported nine different days. Barges used in shuttling cargoes from "Liberty" ships to shore were damaged, lost, and sunk. Rarely were all assigned barges in operation. Millions of pieces of sharp shrapnel lay hidden in the mud, and these were a constant cause of flat tires. Drivers had as high as eight flat tires per day, and badly damaged tires could not be replaced due to the tire shortage during that period. Consequently, operations were often held up due to the fact that the majority of the trucks were on dead-line. Target cargo quotas were never met; and, on four consecutive days in November, not a single ton of cargo was landed. The record day of the period was October 22 when 1,890 tons were handled. The entire 36 days of operation netted only 19,922 tons from five "Liberty" ships.

German prisoners of war were used in the dumps and at work in the camp area. In early November, when prisoners were used in road maintenance work, the number employed amounted to as high as 250. The Battalion drew several hundred prisoners from the British stockade in that sector, and operated a stockade of its own.

Many men went on passes to Bayeux from the Arromanches camp even though the city had little to offer in the way of recreation. A parade of British, French, and American forces was held in Bayeux in the early part of November commemorating a French military holiday. A picked platoon from "A" Company represented the American forces. The same platoon was called again to participate in the Armistice Day parade a few days later.



Major Meharg at his desk at Arromanches.



Right: Mud kept drivers busy with vehicle maintenance.

5th Brigade requisitioned football uniforms and equipment later in October for its football team, made up from players from the various units in the Brigade. The 348th supplied several players, and three or four games were played with other units in the Normandy Base Section—without too much success for the Brigade eleven.

A chateau in Arromanches was taken over by the Battalion to be converted into a recreation hall. Several men from all Companies of the Battalion, with the help of a number of German prisoners, worked for more than a week with brooms, hammers, saws, and paint brushes building a bar, game tables, and generally readying the place for comfortable relaxation. The work lacked only a few minor touches from being completed when the Battalion was alerted for movement.



A pillbox that defended beach attacked by the British.



Start of the Armistice Day parade in Bayeux



A Normandy POW stockade.



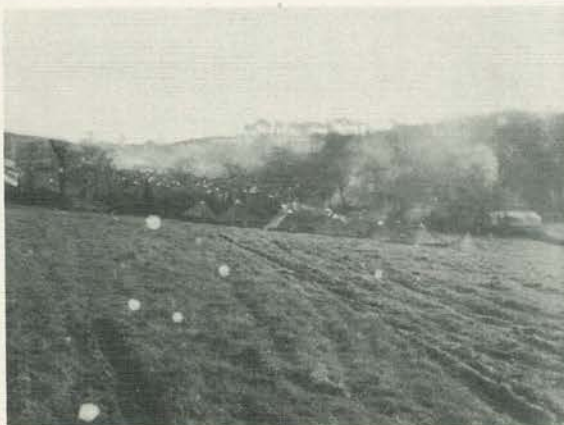
CHERBOURG

The movement to Cherbourg was completed by the 24th of November. The new camp was located in a draw at the top of a hill overlooking the city and port, approximately a mile from the town. To avoid, as much as was possible, the mud that was encountered in the camp area at Arromanches, the camp was set up on a fairly steep slope where there would be natural drainage. No vehicles were allowed in the area to cut up the existent sod. Trucks and jeeps were either parked along the road just outside the camp or in a motor pool slightly less than a mile from the camp. Nearly the entire Arromanches camp was brought along in this move, including tent frames and used lumber; and all this material, in addition to the normal items of unit property, had to be carried from the truck into the area by hand. The tents were hastily erected over the frames, and construction forged ahead on the mess halls and shower rooms. It was once more the understanding that this was to be the scene of operations for the winter.

The Battalion actively took over the operation of "Terre Plein" dock on November 23, Thanksgiving Day. Specialized Engineers had long since cleared the harbor and dock area of its maze of sunken ships and mines, that which was left when the German defenses had been overcome on June 27. The work consisted of landing the usual run of military supplies from transport ships via barges. By means of stiff-leg cranes, the cargoes were loaded directly to box cars. Port Battalion personnel and German prisoners aided in the operations. The cranes, although simple of design, required the constant adjustments and observance of the Battalion mechanics. Work was slowed largely by lack of railway cars; and though the daily tonnage hardly ever equalled the quotas, the amounts were so much higher than those handled by units previously operating the same docks that the results appeared satisfactory in the eyes of the Port Headquarters. There are no further reports or records available regarding the amount of supplies handled by the 348th Engineers across the Cherbourg docks.



Medical chiefs, Capt Accettola and S/Sgt. Harvat pose at the Cherbourg camp.



Pillbox that covered mouth of Cherbourg harbor.



The Cherbourg encampment.

Cherbourg had within its limits a number of American headquarters, including Normandy Base Section Headquarters; and a large number of troops were therefore stationed in that area. Hence, there was more in the way of recreation in Cherbourg than had been encountered in some of the coast towns of the French mainland. Also, the city had not suffered the severe damage inflicted on a number of the other towns. There was a Red Cross club that did its utmost to occupy part of the off-duty hours of the soldiers, and many of the local shops were open and enjoying a tourist trade similar to that which supported them prior to the war. The citizens of that sector, however, were not overly friendly toward the service troops that followed the liberating forces. Many men had the opportunity to see the bombproof submarine docks so often mentioned in the press and news-reels. There were also a number of robot bomb launching ramps in that area, and many men saw the ramps from which these missiles were fired before they ever saw one of the bombs in flight. The Germans had commenced hurling the "buzz bombs" in great numbers at southern England a few days after the invasion.

While at Cherbourg, the Battalion was ordered to reduce its number of personnel to that required by the Table of Organization; and the "over-strength" that had assisted so ably in previous operations was transferred to replacement depots. Administration of replacement depots presented many problems and difficulties, and most men who had any knowledge of these centers also had an utter dread of them. The men who transferred from the Brigades at that time, however, spent little more time in the "reple depots" than was necessary to train them for service with Infantry or forward Engineer units.

Near the middle of December, the 348th was alerted for another move. Little information was gained about the concerning mission, but rumor had it that they were to join the Ninth Army who had recently arrived in Belgium to aid the British Second Army and the American First Army in crushing the northern flank of the Siegfried Line. Members of the Battalion, who had not heard the scream of shrapnel in months and who were more concerned with daily tonnage that they were with the demolition of concrete emplacements, took a hurried stock of the situation. The attack of the First Army launched at St. Lo on July 25th, and followed by the Third Army during the first days of August, had broken out of the Normandy perimeter and resulted in a race across France and Belgium. In the course of a few weeks, the 348th found themselves several hundred miles to the rear of the front lines. The British had captured the port of Antwerp in Belgium on the 4th of September. The Germans had held out on islands in the mouth of the harbor; and the port was not cleared and put into operation until about November 27th, even then it was under heavy V-1 and V-2 fire. The American First Army had cracked forward elements of the Siegfried Line and taken Aachen, after a bitter fight, on October 21st. There was a hope among all Allied troops that Germany, faced with winter, heavy bombing, and penetration of her western defenses, would "crack from the inside"; but there was no material evidence that such an event would come to pass.

The alert of the 348th hung fire, and rumors as to the probable destination were numerous and varied. Some hinted a move to Antwerp, others suggested coast defense adjacent to the Guernsey

Islands in France where isolated German troops were staging periodic raids on the coast, and the rumors concerning assignments to the Ninth Army still persisted.

But on the morning of the 16th of December, the 5th and 6th SS Panzer Armies with the 15th and 7th German Armies running interference, broke into Luxembourg through the lines lightly-held by the 106th Division of the U. S. VIII Corps. Field Marshal Model, in command of the skillfully planned move, had 26 divisions with supporting troops at his disposal. The numbers were overwhelming, German intelligence was comprehensive, the thrust was a complete surprise on the part of the Allied forces; and the Germans rolled 16 miles in the first two days of the offensive. On the 16th of December, the 348th Engineers were re-alerted, for movement to Belgium. Top priority was granted them in replacing vehicles, weapons, and other equipment; and the next few days were spent in readying the unit for service as Combat Engineers.

The 22nd of December found the 348th prepared to move. An advance party from "H/S" Company had, of course, departed previously to this date. The orders for movement specified that the unit travel in four company serials, the first moving out at 2300 hours of the 22nd. "H/S" Company left at this hour, and the three line Companies followed at 15-minute intervals. For the first time since the landing, a move was being made where trucks could not be shuttled. Therefore all men and equipment had to be loaded on the trucks at one time. Each squad of men, its weapons, baggage, and tools were loaded onto the truck assigned to the squad. All available space was filled, and the men were required to sit, upright on the seats most of the time throughout the 500-mile journey. As the convoys moved inland away from the coast, they met with freezing temperatures. Meals served along the way varied somewhat with Companies, but sandwiches, K-rations, and hot coffee nourished the majority.

The second night found the Battalion in the vicinity of Paris. On the following morning, the trucks were gassed up at a dump in Reims. It was not until the arrival at Reims that the ultimate destination was learned. Orders obtained there revealed that unit was to proceed to Liege, Belgium. The proposed route included Dinant, but serials arriving at the French-Belgian border at dusk of the 24th were informed by MP's that the Germans were closing in on Dinant and that an alternate route should be taken. Sections of the Battalion detoured, therefore, by way of Namur. From the border on, weapons were loaded and locked, and the ring-mounted 50 caliber machine guns were manned as a precaution against possible air raid. Excitement hung heavily over the landscape that Christmas Eve as anti-aircraft guns blasted skyward from positions along the way.

"C" Company arrived at Liege about midnight Christmas Eve, after having traveled on ahead of the other Companies from Paris. Many of their men were fortunate in being invited into Belgian homes to join in the fireside Christmas festivities. Men of the other Companies stopped for the night in the vicinity of Namur, with "A" Company sleeping, or attempting to sleep, on their trucks. It was a cold, moonlit, starry night with "buzz bombs" rattling along overhead on their errands of destruction.

WINTER A LA BELGIQUE

The next morning the remainder of the Battalion proceeded to Liege. Liege was bustling with activity. The streets were littered with glass and bricks from "buzz bomb" explosions of the night before, anti-aircraft and anti-tank guns were being dug in along the streets, the First Army Infantry, Artillery, and Armored units were moving out to attack the flanks of the German penetration. 28th Division troops were withdrawing through the city, their vehicles bearing bullet holes and shattered windshields. Taking advantage of some of the first clear weather of the campaign, both Allied and German planes were weaving the sky into a web of vapor trails. The Germans threw between 1000 and 2000 planes into their counter-offensive at about this time. "H/S" and "A" Companies drew up at a chateau at Banneux, a short distance out of Liege. A P-47 shot down a hedgehopping Focke-Wulf 190 practically over their heads a few minutes after their arrival. About half of "A" Company's convoy became separated from the remainder of the unit in the traffic confusion and started, mistakenly, toward the front lines with elements of the 3rd Armored Division. Fortunately they discovered their error in time, although only yards from territory under German ground observation. "C" Company located also in a chateau near Banneux, and "B" Company took over the Prince de Liege Chateau at Trooz.

The Battalion was assigned at once to the 1110th Engineer Group, which was responsible for road maintenance in the sector and the guarding of dumps, bridges, and road obstacles in a defense



Vapor trails in the Belgian skies.

ring a few miles outside of Liege. The Battalion broke up by squads over a wide area on like missions the following day.

The Germans were halted some 20 miles to the southeast of Liege in their northward expansion, but there were constant sources of alarm and excitement in the city and area surrounding it. "Buzz bombs", for instance, dropped on the city, and near it, quite regularly, sometimes at the rate of one every five minutes. More, perhaps, as a



Chateau occupied by Battalion and "A" Company Headquarters at Banneux.

men on road guard, "A" Company had men stationed probably closer to the actual fighting zone than any other Company. Elements of the Company took over road blocks and bridges to the southeast of Liege. Though they were never subject to ground fire, they became well-acquainted with the sounds of artillery and small arms. The following is an account of the experiences of one of the men of "A" Company's 2nd Platoon during his first days in Belgium:

"We moved to a place about one and one-half miles out of Remouchamps where we took over two road blocks. One was a double row of trees, with charges in place, to be blown across the road, and the other was a road crater-charge. The two were about a half-mile apart.



The road leading north out of Spa.



Soft snow hides the scars of a bombed-out Belgian bridge.

"About a week later we moved from there to Theux. At Theux we took over one road block, one crater, and a bridge, all of them ready to blow. These charges were to be set off upon the approach of the enemy, or upon orders from higher headquarters. Two of us and a fellow from another outfit were standing guard on this bridge one night watching the 'buzz bombs' go over when one of them 'cut out' up above us. We took off one direction and the other fellow took off the other way. After running awhile, we got to thinking that maybe we were running the wrong way; so we started back. On the bridge we met the other fellow coming back—he had changed his mind, too. So we stopped there right where we had started from. Just then the 'buzz bomb' exploded about a half-mile from where we were. It hit a farmer's barn and killed eight cows.

"The people there at Theux were very nice to us, and we hated to leave. But we took the TNT off the bridge and then moved to Aywaille and into the Albert Hotel. There we got the first good beds to sleep on since we had left the States. Also, we had dishes to eat out of, so we put away our mess kits for the time we were there. The lady of the house cooked our chow for us, and once in a while she cooked up an extra dish that wasn't included in the rations sent out by the Mess Sergeant.

"But the home-like living was just getting to be habit when the fighting had moved so far up that it wasn't necessary to have the road blocks anymore. So one day we picked up all our TNT; and from then on, we were on road work."

During the first weeks of January "H/S" Company and the headquarters of "A" and "C" Companies were located at Banneux. "B" Company was at Trooz. As was previously mentioned, "A" Company was guarding defense barriers. "H/S"

was starting its almost never-to-end job of painting road-marking signs and also conducting some experiments in the patching of bituminous roads. Road maintenance, hauling and spreading of cinders on icy pavement, and security were occupying "C" Company. Medical aid men were assigned to and quartered with all the Companies.

On New Year's Eve six men of the Battalion were sent on detached service to First Army radio school then located at Tongress, later moved to Spa.

On January 13, "A" Company's 1st Platoon was assigned the task of picking up an American minefield that was frozen in the ground under several inches of snow. Pfc. Albert Martin was instantly killed when a mine he was removing exploded. Two men near him were injured by the blast. Some weeks later the award of the Silver Star was approved for Martin and his assistant dozer operator, Pfc. Melvin Thompson, for operating a bulldozer under fire on OMAHA Beach D-Day.

Between January 11 and 20, "C" Company built the Battalion's only pile-bent bridge during extremely cold weather at Comblain au Pont.

The issue of the new-type sleeping bags, that had commenced with front line troops in December, was continued; and the 348th received their supply in January. These "sacks", as they became



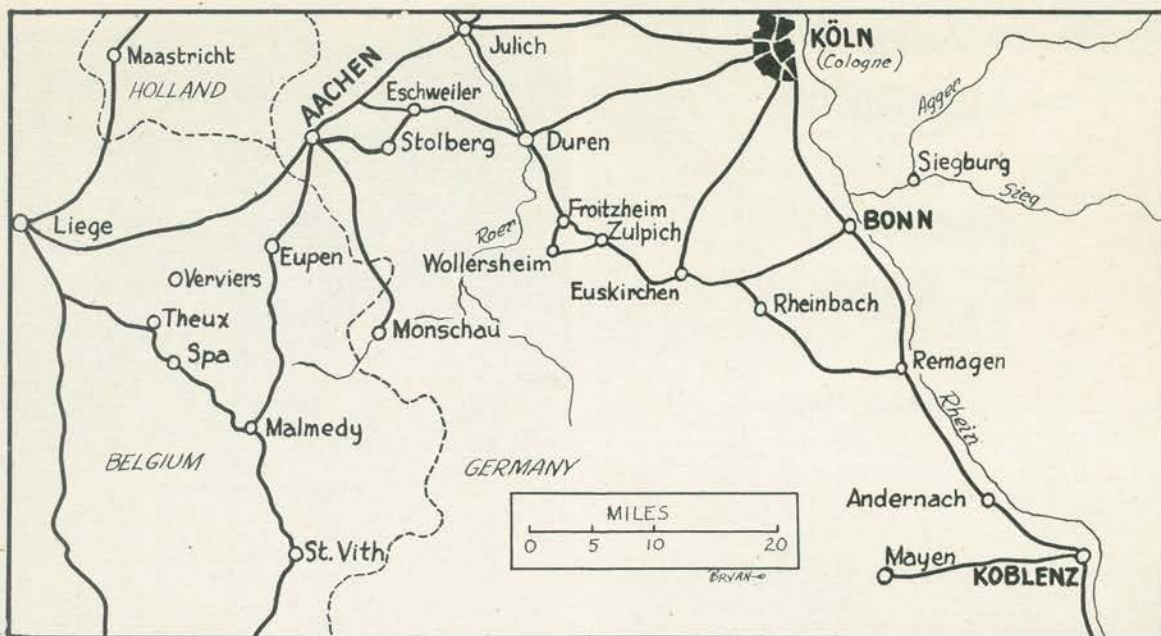
Sawmill work at Trooz.

known as, were welcome additions to the two Army blankets and whatever Navy or German blankets the individual Engineer had in his possession.

The majority of the personnel were committed to road maintenance during the last ten days of January. In addition, two hospitals were being winterized, one by "C" Company and the other by "B" Company. "A" Company converted a Belgian Cavalry barracks in Spa to a hospital; and this job was followed by the construction of a timber bent bridge at Salme-Chateau, all during these days. They also had a group of men operating and guarding a lumber yard at Trooz, as did "B" Company. On January 27, four men of the Battalion were sent on detached service to study the operation of a new type of water-tractor known as the "Sea Mule". Two of the Battalion's snow plows were cleaning snow from roads under Battalion control during this period. "B" Company was responsible for the maintenance of a 26-mile road net.



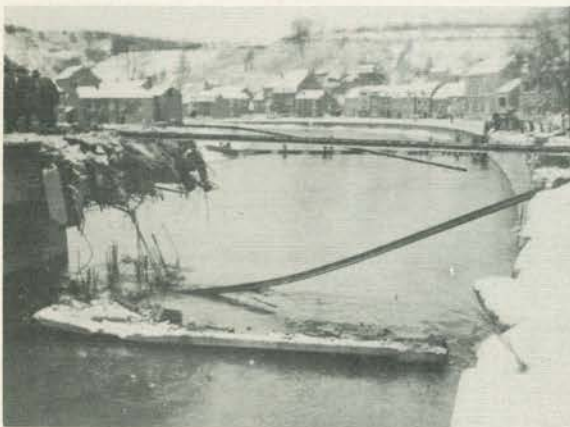
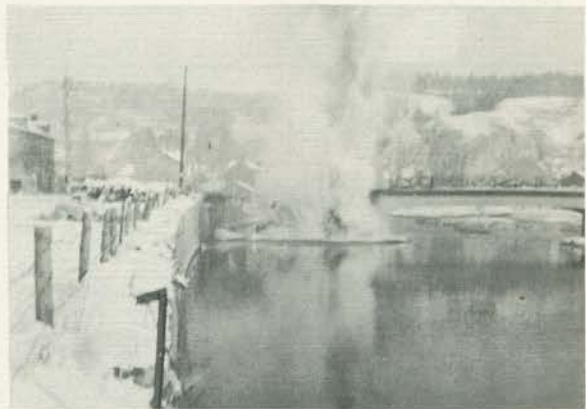
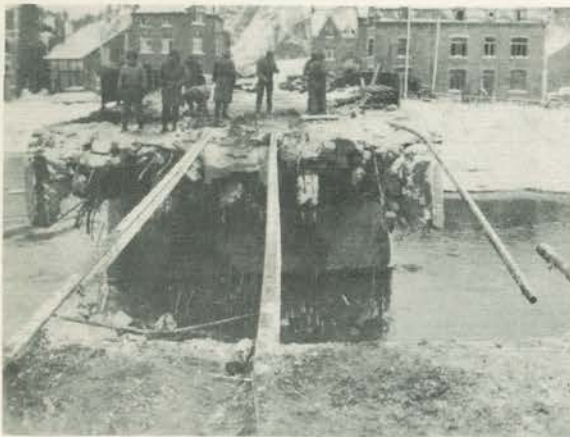
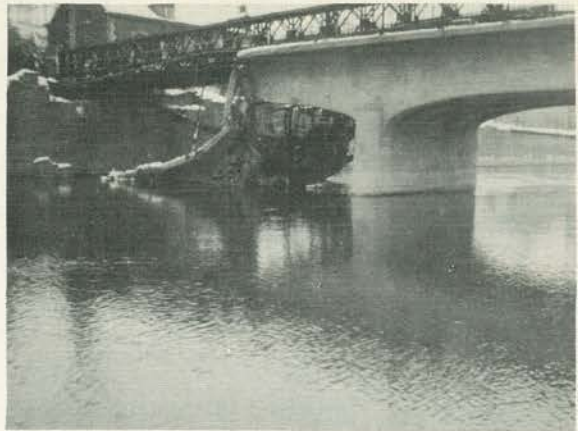
Hospital winterizing.



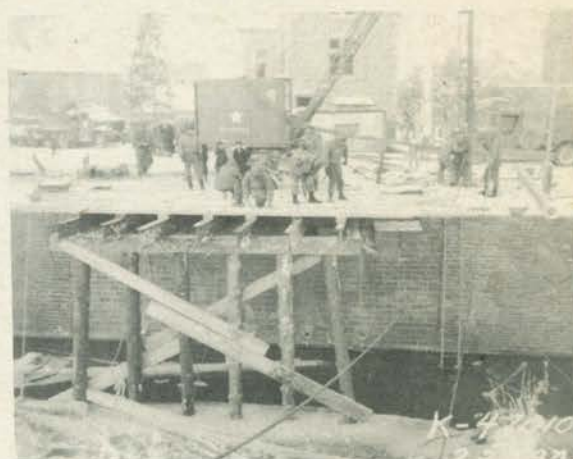
Snow-covered floating treadway bridge in the Ardennes.

**BRIDGE
CONSTRUCTION**
at
**Comblain au Pont,
Belgium**

January 1945



Built by Company "C". The original bridge was constructed by the Germans in 1941 and destroyed by them in 1944. The bridge was the only pile-bent and the first bridge of any type to be built by the Battalion on the Continent. The Bailey that was in place was slipped out on soaped blocks — no rollers were available. A thousand pounds of TNT including "beehive" charges and bangalore torpedoes, were used in clearing debris. Abutments were cut away with air hammers and acetylene torches. The span was wider than the crane could safely reach, so a half-ton of sand bags was attached to the back of the crane and a cable, running from the crane, was anchored to railroad tracks in the street. The river bed was solid rock; and, even with using steel "boots" improvised by the "H/S" motor pool, about 25 per cent of the piles were broken in driving. Temperatures near the zero mark added much to the discomforts of the workmen.



BRIDGE CONSTRUCTION

at

Salme-Chateau,
Belgium

Built by 3rd Platoon of "A" Company. Former bridge, in the vicinity of Malmedy, was completely destroyed by the Germans. Work began at 0930 hours January 24, and all debris was removed and abutments were in place 24 hours later. Gin pole was employed to aid in construction. Bents were in place by noon of the 26th. Stringers and decking were laid the following day. First traffic crossed at 1000 hours January 28, M-4 tanks crossed at noon. Bridge was completed at three o'clock that afternoon. Class 70 two-way, 1505 man-hours expended. Freezing temperatures and lack of closed-in billets caused extremely disagreeable working and sleeping conditions.

January 1945





The month of February brought about the end of the Battle of the Bulge, the Germans sustaining the greater loss of men and material at a time when they could afford to lose little at all. The Russians had launched an attack along almost all eastern fronts on January 15; and once again General Eisenhower planned his thrust into western Germany with higher hopes than before. The offensive to come, of course, demanded a large amount of supplies; and it was necessary to assign many Engineer units to the maintenance of miles and miles of roads rapidly deteriorating under heavy traffic and winter weather. The work of the 348th Engineers was predominantly of this type during February. As the First Army shifted again to its former position along the West Wall, in the vicinity of and to the south of Aachen; the 348th began moving to areas forward of the sites of their January activities. On February 5, "C" Company arrived at Neu Moresnet, Belgium. On the same day "A" Company moved 32 miles to Welkenraedt, and on the following day moved again to Bomken, Belgium. The spelling of these latter names suggests the location of all of them, along the German border. Battalion Headquarters also arrived at Bomken on the 6th. "B" Company alone remained in the old sector, still occupied with construction in a hospital area.

On February 12th, "H/S" Company moved to a location one-half mile east of Freport, Belgium. "C" Company entered Germany on the 19th, arriving at Breinig at 1100 hours. On the same day



S-2 reconnaissance crew pauses at German border.

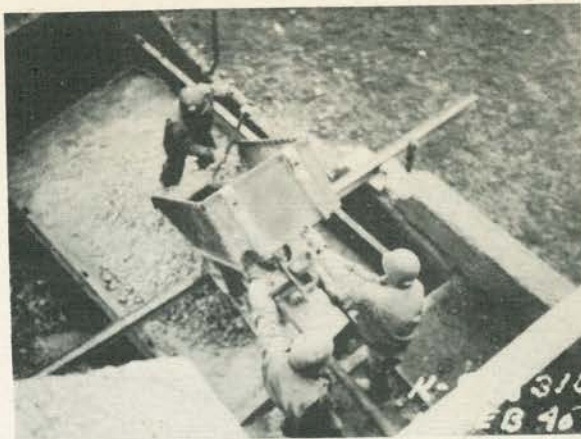
"B" Company moved to Hahn, Germany; and, in addition to road responsibility, commenced work on another hospital. The Battalion, at this time, had under its jurisdiction several miles of both N-3 and N-28. A group of men were also working at Engineer Dump E-7. Battalion Headquarters moved to Brand, Germany on the 23rd.



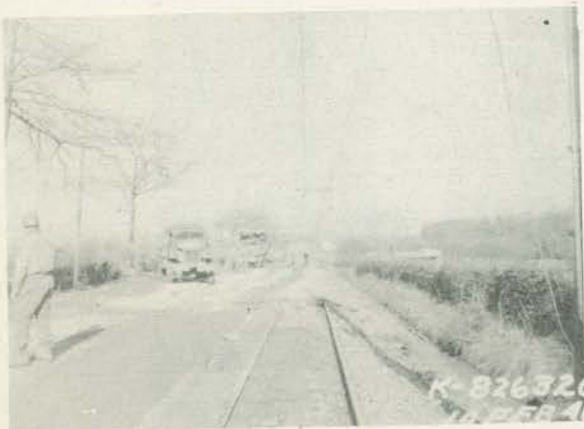
"Dragon's teeth", forward element of the Siegfried Line.



"I'll give you five million Reichsmarks for it!"



Local quarries supplied rock for road repair.



Work progresses on "A" Company's section of N-3.
Civilians were employed.



N-3 is repaired past well-hidden pillbox.

INTO DER FUEHRER'S REICH

The Tactical and Strategic Allied Air Forces flew nearly 10,000 sorties on February 22nd from bases in Britain, France and Italy in an effort to isolate the western front. The next day Ninth Army troops crossed the Roer River at points in and near Duren. Due to the fact that the river was at flood stage, there was some difficulty in obtaining the initial bridgeheads; but progress thereafter was steady, and Armored columns reached the Rhine to the north and south of Dusseldorf on the 2nd of March. On March 1, the 348th began movement to the Roer with "A" and "B" Companies arriving in Rolsdorf, a suburb of Duren, that day. Battalion Headquarters reached Rolsdorf on the next day, but "C" Company did not arrive until

the 6th. The heavy shelling and bombing that preceded the river-crossing left in their wake a vast amount of road clearance and repair. The area surrounding Duren was heavily mined by both armies, and some mine removal was therefore necessary. "A" Company commenced building a timber-bent bridge across the Roer in Duren and also remodeling a hospital building at the outskirts of the city. Both jobs were completed on schedule on the 8th. "B" and "C" Companies assumed the repairing of roads and removal of mines. While working with mines in the sector, "C" Company suffered two casualties and "B" Company three.



Duren scenes. Culvert in lower photo was built by "B" Company.



Scenes along the Roer in Duren, after the crossing.

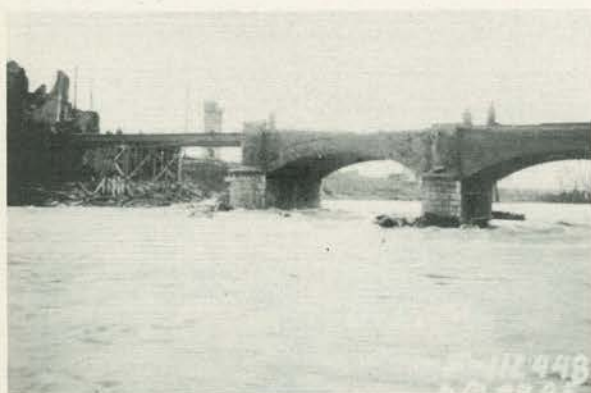
BRIDGE CONSTRUCTION

at
Duren, Germany

March 1945

Built across Roer River by "A" Company. Original plans called for removal of Bailey and construction of two 44-foot spans to be completed on March 7th. Work commenced March 2. Later inspection revealed that one existing masonry span was weak, and another 44-foot span was necessary. One double trestle bent was used. Stringers were 50-foot "I" beams with 19½" web and 11½" flange, eight per span. Other material included 8000 feet of 3"x12" planking, 1200 feet of 2"x12, 400 feet of 12"x12", and one thousand pounds of nails. Class 40 two-way. 2450 man hours. First traffic crossed at noon March 7.







T/5 Shaffer, DSC, and Pfc. Thompson, Silver Star.



S/Sgt. Harvat, Silver Star.



Major Meharg, Bronze Star.



T/Sgt. Dennis (then T/4), Bronze Star.

First Army troops drove stiff enemy resistance from west Cologne on the 7th of March. On the 11th, the 348th S-3 and ADE survey crew met with mishap while conducting a survey of the Rhine in the ruins of Cologne. They became the target for German mortar fire from the opposite bank, and Capt. Cummings was seriously wounded. Sgt. Jesse Holt died a few hours later of wounds received when he attempted to pull the captain to safety. On the 16th, Capt. Clark was transferred from "A" Company to become Battaion S-3 Officer; and there was further shuffling of Company and Section officers at about that time. The first furloughs to England were also given on March 15, with four men of the Battalion departing for the United Kingdom on that day.



"Flail tank" in use in "B" Company mine clearance



Capt. Bill Clark, "A" Company Commander, later S-3 Officer.



Breech of knocked-out 88.



Washday at Rolsdorf

March 9, elements of the 9th Armored Division of the First Army caught German Engineers "asleep at the switch" at the Ludendorf bridge at Remagen. The bridge, still intact, was crossed, and a small bridgehead was hastily built-up. This windfall took both armies by surprise and completely off balance but the Americans were the first to shift strong reinforcements to the sector. The bridgehead was exploited further, and thus came about the change of strategy that perhaps shortened the war against Germany by several weeks. The unpredicted gateway across the Rhine called for a shifting of forces, to a certain extent, and March 17 found "A" and "B" Companies enroute to new locations to the southeast of Duren. Company "B" stopped at Zulpich and "A" Company located at Nemmench. "C" Company moved to Lovennich the following day. Battalion Headquarters moved to Mechernich, in the same area, March 24. Here again, most of the work undertaken was, road repair and maintenance and the posting of route signs. The Battalion's road net included the towns of Stockheim, Froitzheim, Wallersheim, Hergarten, Drove, and Berg. Also that time, all three line Companies had cranes and operators at Engineer Dump E-7. "B" Company was also clearing a path for a communications line constructed by the 438th Signal Construction Battalion through an extensive minefield. A "flail tank" was employed for part of this clearance. Three water gauges for the purpose of obtaining data for bridging were installed and operated on the Rhine by the Battalion during the month of March. The gauges were at Cologne, Bonn, and Andernach. "B" and "C" Companies furnished details for the operation and reading.

"A" Company moved to Nettersheim on March 26 and took over road responsibility in their new area with the added responsibility of salvaging Government equipment and material in the sector. March 28 was moving day for the entire Battalion with Battalion Headquarters and "C" Company moving to Mayen, 15 miles directly west of Koblenz, "B" Company moving to Niederzissen, and "A" Company moving again to Konigsfeld. Road repair continued here on a 24-hour schedule and included widening, patching, draining, and route posting. March 31, when an "A" Company squad was preparing to fill a crater in a road, a charge in the crater was detonated by an undetermined cause, killing Sgt. Clarence Cramer. Other

work in this sector was the construction of two PW stockades by "C" Company, one of which was not completed, and the removal of mines and the marking of mined areas by "A" and "C" Companies.

On about the 29th of March the Battalion was given a new area of responsibility east of the Rhine and to the north and west of Limburg. On the 30th all Companies, with the exception of "C" Company, were prepared to move to that area. April 1 "A" Company moved to Holzappel and "B" Company arrived at Elz. These were moves of approximately 60 miles.

The final days of March and the first week of April produced some of the fastest moving and most decisive blows of the entire war. The French First and the American Third and Seventh Armies were advancing in the south, the Seventh crossing the Rhine near Mannheim the last week in March. Mannheim was captured, and advance was made 25 miles to the east. The German High Command had expected a thrust at the Ruhr from the direction of the Remagen bridgehead, and strong forces of their Army Group "B" had taken up positions to the north of the Sieg River as a counter-measure. But the First Army broke to the southeast from the bridgehead, taking Limburg on March 26 and then racing along the Autobahn (super highway) toward Frankfurt. Other columns moved to the east, gaining as much as 40 miles a day, and reaching Marburg and Giessen by 28 March. They then swung north through the hills west of Kassel. The arrival on the 30th of March of the 15th U. S. Army on the west bank of the Rhine in the vicinity of Dusseldorf and Cologne gave the Ninth and First Armies greater freedom of action. The Ninth pushed off on the 1st of April, crossing the Rhine and sweeping toward Munster against relatively light resistance. Their columns contacted the First Army columns west of Paderborn on April 1st and closed the Ruhr pocket—later to become officially known as the Rose Pocket. Elements of 19 German divisions of the First Parachute Army, the Fifth Panzer Army, and the 15th German Army were thus trapped in the biggest pocket in the history of warfare. As the Ninth and First Armies continued to the east, the XVIII Airborne Corps was left behind to annihilate the German forces in the Duisburg-Bonn-Paderborn triangle.



"A" Company road crew at work near Froitzheim.

THE RUHR CAMPAIGN

April 2nd, the 348th Engineer Battalion was attached to the XVIII Corps, and "C" Company departed at once on a 92-mile move to Alsdorf. On the next day they had two platoons at work constructing a Bailey bridge across the Sieg at Alsdorf, and one platoon was on security. By the 5th, all Companies had moved to the Ruhr area with "H/S" Company locating at Dresselndorf, "A" Company at Dillenburg, and "B" Company at Oberscheld. Also on that day a platoon of the 994th Treadway Bridge Company was attached to the Battalion. The records reveal that in the 18 days that it took to reduce the Ruhr pocket, the Battalion built seven Bailey bridges, two per company for "A" and "B" Companies and three for Company "C". "C" Company, on one occasion, was called upon by Corps Headquarters to install road blocks in a sector where a German counter-attack was expected. Their men also guarded the blocks throughout one night, but charges were removed on the following day after the attack had been offset by an attack by the U. S. 8th Division. Other work in the area was road clearance, largely the responsibility of "B" Company; and the hauling of a considerable amount of bridging material, done chiefly by "A" Company but assisted by all Companies and the 500th Light Ponton Company; security and bridge guard, by all Companies; and culvert construction by "B" Company. There was an instance when an M-4 tank collapsed a light-traffic Bailey bridge being guarded by "A" Company.

As the perimeter of the Ruhr pocket shrank, units began shifting closer to its center. On the 11th "A" Company was dispatched from Dillenburg to Uckerath to support the 1262nd Engineer Combat Battalion in the Siegburg and Bonn area. On the 13th they were in Wahl and constructing twin 104-foot triple-single Bailey spans across the Sieg. The 14th, they moved to Bucholz. They remained there until the 16th when they moved to Siegburg-Mulldorf. The next day they were located at Bielstein, where they stayed for the remainder of the operation.

April 12th brought the deaths of T/Sgt. Dale Nuss and S/Sgt. Russel TerHark and the serious injury to their driver, T/5 Jack Brady. These "H/S" Company men were on an S-2 reconnaissance mission in the Siegburg area when their jeep was demolished by one or a pair of Tellermines buried a road shoulder.

"H/S", "B", and "C" Companies moved 50 miles north through Siegen and Olpe to Meinerzhagen on the 13th. "B" Company located approximately six miles to the west of Ronsahl. The work here was mainly road maintenance and guard duty on bridges in place. "B" Company, however, was ordered almost immediately upon arrival to install a traffic check point on the main highway to the east of Ronsahl for the purpose of checking credentials of the masses of civilians who were moving east. They traveled by all methods of transportation, car, truck, wagon, bicycle, cart, and on foot but the "B" Company crews halted



Colors at the center of "H/S" area in Dresselndorf.



Site in Alsdorf where "C" Company built and removed same Bailey in one night.



Ruhr landscape.

them all and scanned their papers. They also relieved the travelers of weapons, cameras, and other possessions forbidden to German citizens. It was not uncommon upon halting groups to find numbers of German soldiers in either civilian dress or in uniform. Many carried discharges from the German Army or passes authorizing them to travel to Berlin or other cities, all signed by their commanding officers. Probably they hoped these papers would aid in circumventing POW stockades.

Twelve women and girls of the German army auxiliary service and one lieutenant colonel were taken into custody at the "B" Company check point, in addition to many ordinary prisoners of war.

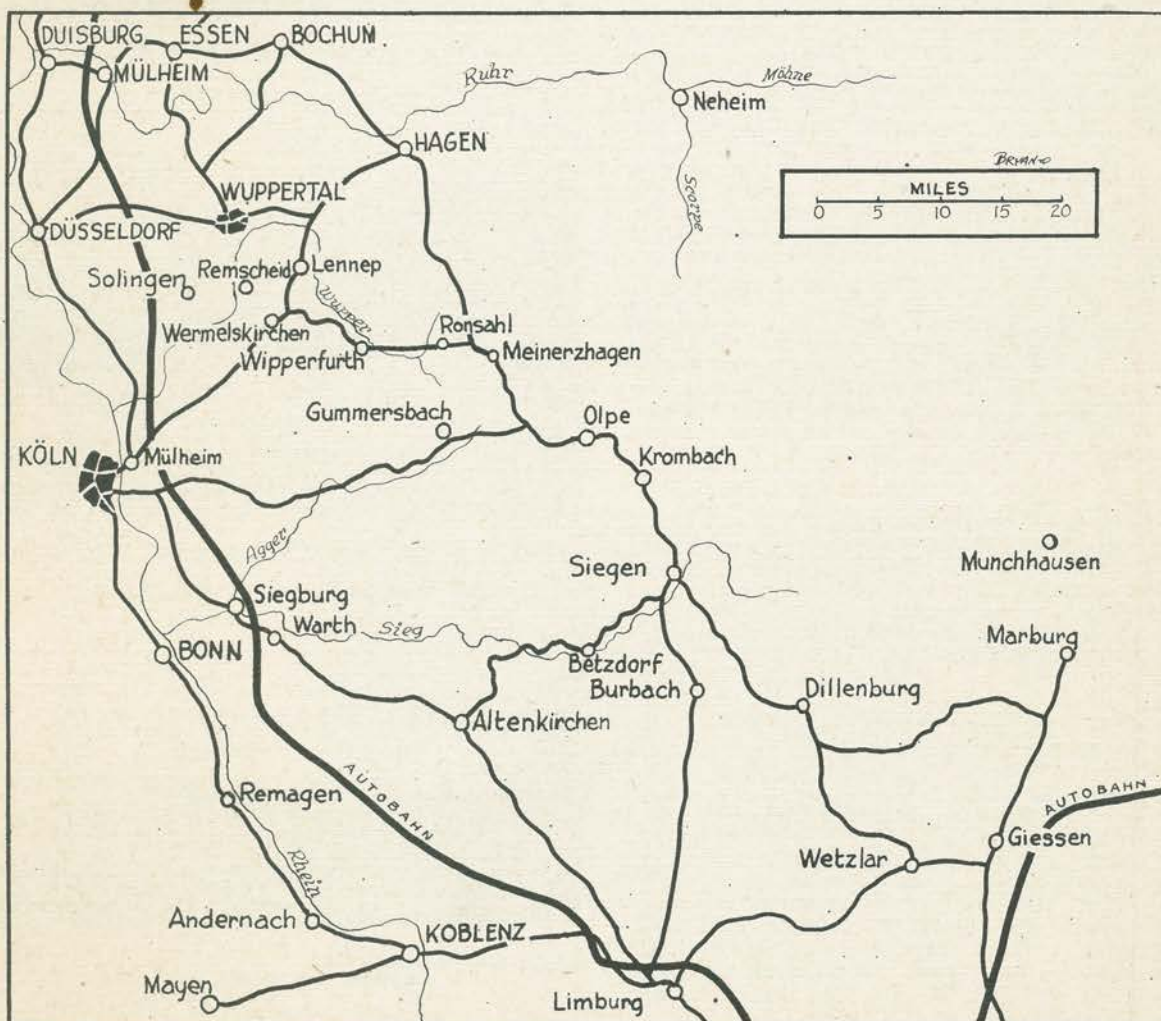
Totals of the prisoners taken by the Companies of the Battalion in the Ruhr action are: "H/S" Company 59, "A" Company 25, "B" Company 351, and "C" Company 31. The stockade at Gummersbach was a tangible example of "walls do not a prison make". A valley, perhaps a quarter-mile wide and surrounded by armed guards was packed with German ex-soldiers standing and sitting shoulder to shoulder for the extent of a mile. Their multitude of voices blended into a whispered roar, and cigarette smoke hung above the mass in a giant cloud. Convoy-loads went and convoy-loads came, and the Military Police in charge kept a balance on hand of upward of 100,000 prisoners. The Ruhr campaign netted 300,000 in all. Undoubtedly many escaped through the hills and prolific timberlands to their nearby

homes. Field Marshal Model made a successful escape, and notices bearing his description were forwarded to all American units in the area. It was generally believed that he committed suicide.

The 348th S-4 set up a water point at the Gummersbach enclosure on April 18 to supply the thousands of prisoners with drinking water.

348th reconnaissance parties rarely found their missions dull while operating in the Ruhr. They discovered stores of arms and ammunition, booby-trapped equipment, and demolitions, usually aerial bombs, in place on several bridges and overpasses. On the 14th of April, "B" Company men found three cases of "butterfly" bombs broken open and strewn about the immediate premises near Ronsahl. These men, remembering from Britain, that "butterfly" bombs had unpredictable firing devices, merely marked-off the perilous area. An S-2 reconnaissance crew came upon a German railway train in the Wipperfurth area loaded with small arms and other ordnance equipment, most of it defective and most of it American. An "A" Company detail guarded this train for several days.

The Message Center, too, had its interesting difficulties in the Ruhr campaign when the Battalion was scattered over a wide area, particularly during the latter weeks when "A" Company was located some 45 miles from Battalion Headquarters. Radio contact was always difficult to maintain and therefore seldom used. Messages were usually delivered by motorcycle courier. Snipers occasionally fired on messengers at night; and



jeeps or weapons carriers were ordinarily used for night deliveries so that the messengers could travel in pairs. Night rides on motorcycles offered a number of risks, even without snipers operating along the roads.

Due to the profusion of factories and war plants in the Ruhr, hordes of slave laborers were encountered as the operation drew to a close. They were predominantly Russians, Poles, and Italians; but there were representations of all countries overrun by the German armies. After the ending of the Ruhr campaign, they started their gigantic migrations, jamming roads, bridges, and cities and taking food, shelter, and clothing wherever they could find them. Later, they were necessarily taken under the wing of Military Government to become classified as "Displaced Persons", or more simply as "DP'S".

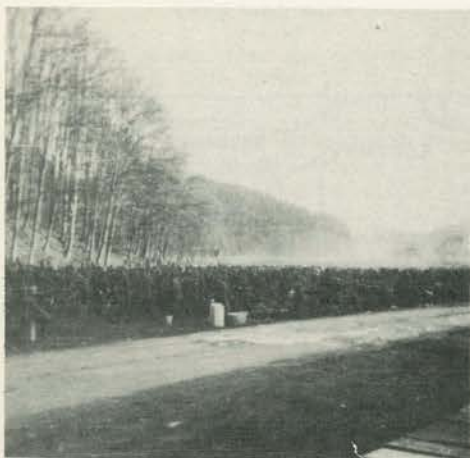
In downtown Meinerzhagen there was an oval cindered area taking in three or four acres that made an ideal motor pool area for "H/S" and "C" Companies. Many of the men found time to tinker with captured automobiles and motorcycles here, and the area was often transformed to a speedway during the twilight hours. Russian refugees stood amazed and well-covered with dust as Engineers circled the field with trucks, motorcycles, and sport coupes, giving the vehicles a thorough testing before entrusting them to the roads. Regulations, however, forbid ownership of such equipment and further stated that captured vehicles should be turned over to Ordnance units for use in rear areas. More often than not, the vehicles were merely abandoned.

Before the movement to the Ruhr, and while stationed there, most of the Companies of the Bat-

talion reconverted captured trailers to fit their own uses. This was permitted by the then current regulations. The eventual outcome was the appearance of kitchen trailers, shop trailers, office trailers, and small trailers for the transporting of an ever-increasing amount of baggage and equipment. Trailer-mounted German electrical generators were found to be superior to American generators by most practical standards, and ever so much easier to obtain. American generators were of the 110-volt type, and nearly all German fixtures and appliances were made for 220 volts. It proved to be much simpler to locate a well-conditioned German generator than a supply of 110-volt bulbs, flatirons, and radios. Convoys became caravans, with the trailer hitch of every vehicle being put to its intended use.

As the 348th again more or less marked time between assignments, and as the weather became warmer, drier, and generally more agreeable, the crates containing sports equipment were broken open. After a few days of practice, the softball season was on. The "ordnance proving grounds" in Meinerzhagen became a ball diamond with the mere laying out of bases and foul lines. Several games were played during the stay there between teams made up from "C" Company, "H/S" Company and the officer personnel. It was here that the "C" Company club started their long series of victories.

It was also at Meinerzhagen, on April 20, that the news sheet, Ram's Head, began its spasmodic existence under the promotion of the S-3 Section. Coming off the hectograph once, twice, or three times a week in extreme cases, it featured sports news and Battalion gossip.



Above and upper right: Gummersbach stockade, prisoners by the acre.

Right: "A" Company's Siegburg bridge.



ONE MORE RIVER TO CROSS

On April 24, the Battalion was alerted once more for movement, and all Companies were relieved of responsibilities on the roads and bridges. The destination of the move remained an attractive secret. The Ninth Army had reached the Elbe River in the middle of April and had some not-too-successful bridgeheads across the stream within a few days' time. These were in the Wittenberge and Magdeburg area directly west of Berlin. Hanover and Braunschweig (Brunswick) had fallen to Ninth Army Infantry. The British were at the outskirts of Bremen and Hamburg. Leipzig, Halle, and Dessau had already been taken by First Army troops; and the First Army had contacted the Russians at the predetermined site on the Elbe, Torgau, almost directly south of Berlin, on April 25. The 348th Engineers, however, remained assigned to the XVIII Airborne Corps; and there was much speculation among the men of the Battalion as to the mission of this famed Corps. April 27, the Battalion, with the 500th Light Ponton Company attached, moved approximately 270 miles to Holdenstedt, in the vicinity of Uelzen. The trip required one night and one day of traveling.

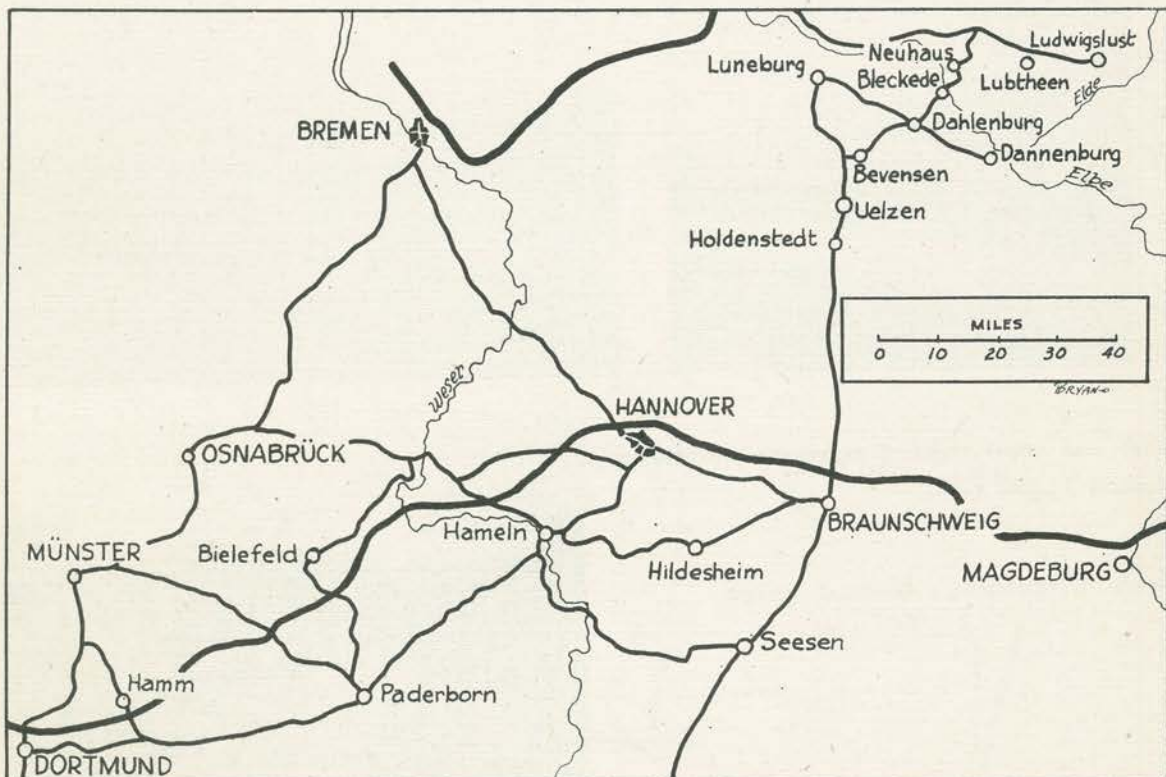
In the next three days "B" Company was constructing a roadway for the 111th Evacuation Hospital, "C" Company was building a bridge approach near Holdenstedt, all Companies were furnishing trucks and trailers for the transporting of assault boats and bridging, and the 500th Light Ponton Company was relieved from attachment to the 348th.

"A" Company moved to Dahlen, near the Elbe River north of Dahlenburg, on April 30. All other Companies were ready to move. The 82nd Airborne Division made an assault crossing of the Elbe near Bleckede on the 30th, and "A" Company went to work at once ferrying troops.

A 2nd Platoon man of "A" Company gives a somewhat humorous account of his experiences during the Elbe operation:

"At Holdenstedt, we manned the trucks at about ten-thirty in the morning; and, as usual, we shoved off at three in the afternoon for the marshalling areas along the Elbe River. Bleckede was the site of the crossing, we had already been informed; and, as we rode along, our guess was that the initial crossing had not been made the night before as planned, and that we were going to support the 82nd Airborne Division in said crossing.

"The distance from Holdenstedt to Bleckede is approximately 20 miles, and the road good; and we traveled right along till we stopped for the 1st Platoon to find a place toward the rear for billets. From there the 2nd Platoon headed on toward the front, maybe because there wasn't any place to turn around. We moved on up the river, where we quickly deployed our trucks and waited around for further orders. They were not long in coming. We were told that the crossing had been made the night before and was very successful with very light resistance from the opposite shore. Then we were sorry, of course, that we came so late. We missed out on some easy glory.





"A" Company vehicle ferry on the Elbe.

"The bank of the river was strewn with outboard motors and storm boats as far as the eye could see. The first thing that came to our minds was that we were to police up the area, since we had a good record for that on OMAHA Beach as early as D plus 1. But we were informed that we were to relieve the 187th Engineers who had assisted in the crossing the night before. Our job was to first get the boats in operation, and then our real mission, to ferry personnel across the river some time later that evening thus eliminating much traffic on the ponton bridge already bogged down with Armored columns on their way up to the fast moving front.

"So began our work—or fun, as you choose to call it, for it was a pleasure to sit behind the controls of a high-powered outboard motor and skim across the still waters of the little lagoon being used as a harbor for the small craft. Gathering up ship-shape boats and usable motors was no easy task; and the sand reefs and sloping banks, together with the fact that it was dark, had raised havoc with all the equipment. However, the boys were doing very well, and the boat teams were all set to take their loads across, when something happened that we hadn't planned on. The men did not have to be told that it was an artillery barrage. The war wasn't over after all—not even for the 348th Engineers. Boats were headed toward the shore; and, in nothing flat, we were all in a very pronounced prone position on the bank with our heads to the earth.

"The barrages came at intervals every five or ten minutes and lasted for ten minutes or so. Each time the shelling started we could look up and see the wooded spot from where it came was very

near; and each time a volley was fired, the muzzle blasts were easily visible. We could hear the guns on the opposite bank, the shell explosions on our bank, and the eerie whistles as the shells passed over. Occasionally you could hear a dull thud as a dud landed. The percentage of duds was very high; and, consequently, little damage was done. However, there is no way to tell a dud from the real thing when it comes whistling overhead.

"About nine o'clock our chow truck casually ambled down the wrong road to the bridge to encounter a barrage all its own. The boys said they wished it had been the breakfast meal they were bringing out so that they could have armor-plated the vehicle with a few of Bakkum's pancakes and felt perfectly safe.

"Later, as we watched the woods where the firing originated, we saw a large flash, heard an explosion, and saw a little smoke. It was all over. No longer did the artillery bother the boys of the 348th.

"The hours wore on and the night became much colder and much darker. Frost began forming on the shaggy Jerry blankets covering weary Joes on the bank. A few 'strictly-combat' soldiers had their 'sacks' with them; and now they lay zipped up to the top, fully clothed, and ready to go whenever the time came. At two o'clock we sent a squad back to prepare a 'home' for us. By morning we had all been relieved by the 1st Platoon.

"With all due respect we hereby admit that the 3rd Platoon was on our left flank operating a vehicle ferry. At the time of the first artillery burst, they were out in the middle of the river on their slow-moving ferry—but somebody else will have to glorify that bunch. I sign off here."

"B" Company moved across the Elbe May 1 and began the removal of mines. In addition to the standard types of German mines there was an improvised land model of a floating magnetic sea mine. The intricate firing devices were suspended in large wooden boxes; and they could be detonated both by vibration and the presence of metal. Their mechanisms could be set, before the mines were buried, so that a certain number of vehicles, or men, could pass them before they finally fired. Capped charges of approximately 100 pounds of TNT were buried with the firing mechanisms, and connected to them by wires. These mines could, and did, completely wreck medium tanks, not to mention the damage they could cause to lighter trucks and half-tracks. The danger of removal lay in uncovering the boxes. Once uncovered, the wires could be cut, rendering the mines harmless.

Battalion Headquarters moved to Bleckede on the 1st of May, and "C" Company moved to Barskamp the same day to stand by. All Companies were east of the river the next day. "H/S" Company moved to Suckau, receiving a scare from four Focke-Wulf fighters and two Stukas enroute. Company "A" located at Sumpfte, with two platoons still ferrying troops and one platoon filling road craters. Located at Keusendorf, "B" Company was still working at mine clearance on roads from Neuhaus to Volzrade and Stiepelse. "C" Company moved to Stiepelse and began reinforcing a bridge in that area. But by the afternoon of May 2, the war in northern Germany lacked only the flowery ceremonies of being over. When German troops on their own vehicles began moving through Suckau that evening, "C" Company installed a check point at the Suckau bridge to check them for weapons and to dispatch them to the stockades in the rear area. They had no weapons, they were already on their way to the stockades, and the traffic of that evening was only the vanguard of the mass migration that followed

the next several days. The entire German 21st Army had surrendered when the Americans and Russians met near Ludwigslust. The "C" Company men operating the check-point became traffic directors rather than investigators the next morning, so they abandoned operations.

On the 3rd, "A" Company finished its ferrying operations at nine in the morning. "B" Company was clearing mines and maintaining roads. "C" Company, with the same tasks, was moving to Ludwigslust. All other Companies were moving to Lubtheen. The roads were jammed with as many as two or three lanes of German traffic; and the move, although only of a few miles, required most of the day.



"C" Company check point at Suckau.



Conquerors meet the vanquished.



Troops of the German 21st Army moving through Suckau.

While Battalion Headquarters was located at Lubtheen, road repair was the main responsibility of the Companies; but there was very little work necessary due to the very light destruction of roads and bridges east of the Elbe. Most of the men found free time in which to take part in sports, ride about on captured bicycles, motorcycles, and cars, and to collect souvenirs. There were numbers of German soldiers on the roads who had not yet been relieved of their cameras, field glasses, and pistols. They were taken care of. A few miles out of Ludwigslust there was a side road along which a rather large German unit had disposed of its arms. There were rifles and "burp" guns by the thousands piled at the roadside, and a man feeling along the bottoms of the water-filled

ditches could produce a dozen pistols in a half-hour's time. The North Sea was only some 40 miles from Ludwigslust, and about the same from Lubtheen; and there is no record of the number of men of the Battalion who journeyed the distance to see it, but undoubtedly many did. Cameras and films were plentiful, and most owners of such equipment found their friends and the surrounding landscape photogenic.

Also near Ludwigslust, there was a small concentration camp. Though no pleasure whatsoever could be derived from visiting it, a majority of the Battalion personnel spent at least a few nauseating minutes within its boundaries. During the first days of May most of the live, half-alive, and

dead bodies remained there. Later, both the camp for women and camp for men were cleaned up, and the survivors were sent to hospitals. The Commanding General of the 82nd Airborne Division ordered two hundred families of the city of Ludwigslust to obtain one body each from a common grave at the camp and to transport and

bury the bodies in a cemetery prepared in the center of the town. The orders were carried out; and now two hundred white crosses bearing no inscription but the Cross of David are a constant reminder to the Ludwigslust citizens of some of the effects of Nazism.



Atrocities at the Ludwigslust camp. results of prison management by SS troops and "honor" prisoners.





German arms stacked at the roadside near Ludwigslust.

German military representatives signed the unconditional surrender terms in Reims May 7. Announcement of the official ending of the European war was received with reserve and without ovation by members of the 348th. Aside from one or two contests on the softball field at the outskirts of Lubtheen, VE Day was a quiet, ordinary day. A training schedule was inaugurated at about this time; and although it was not closely adhered to, reveille and retreat formations became usual daily functions.

On the summery day of May 13 the entire Battalion moved to Seesen, with "C" Company traveling 150 miles from Ludwigslust, all other Companies 125. Arrival at Seesen, 35 miles southwest of Braunschweig, was at about five o'clock in the afternoon; and the Companies took billets in various parts of the city. "C" Company located in a hotel at the edge of town, and a Battalion recreation room was activated there. Baseball and softball diamonds were laid out in a field adjacent to the "B" Company billets. Movies were shown at a theater in the city through the combined efforts of the Special Service sections of the 348th Engineers and Headquarters of the 83rd Division. All individual and organizational property and equipment was inspected and checked during the stay at Seesen, trucks and tools were painted, there was a considerable amount of close order drill; but, other than these, there were few official duties. May 21, "C" Company was attached to Berlin District Forward, and, they moved to Bielefeld two days later. During this period of attachment they prepared two former Wehrmacht maps for occupation by Headquarters Command, Berlin District; piled up more softball victories, and opened a swimming pool in their billeting area.

The Battalion was attached to the 2nd Armored Division for operations in a Ninth Army order dated May 23. The remaining three Companies moved to a former German airfield near Waggum, outside of Braunschweig a few days later. It was planned at that time to convert the field into a staging area for troops returning to America. The 348th became post Engineers in charge of all construction, repair, and layout work in the area. Quarters were taken up in the buildings formerly occupied by Luftwaffe personnel, there was ample space for living and offices, running water was to be had in the shower and wash rooms; and most of the 348th personnel found their existence here a comfortable one. The majority of the manual labor was done by German prisoners. Survey crews from S-3 marked out several areas for tent camps, which, incidentally were never built. To a better purpose were the ball diamonds, track, and volley ball courts, they marked out on the airfield. As other units moved into the area, there arose a grand scale participation in athletics, with "A" Company's becoming the Battalion's leading softball team in "C" Company's absence. A building across the street from the Battalion's barracks served as a theater where pictures were shown nightly; and an emergency water reservoir near the "H/S" Company kitchen was used as a swimming pool. "Ack Ack Antics", a stage show produced by a local anti-aircraft unit, was presented in a hangar at the edge of the field. A Reconnaissance Squadron stationed near the Headquarters Building willingly gave rides to all comers in their Piper Cubs; and it is known that a few men of the Battalion took a number of flying lessons. Lt. Klatt, Battalion Motor Officer, spent hours each day repairing a slightly damaged

German advanced trainer plane. A test at a later date proved that the plane would at least leave the ground. The initial plans suggested that the 348th would remain at the airdrome for possibly three months; and the unit Information and Education program prepared to go into full swing. Surveys were taken to determine the number of men wanting educational courses and the type of studies desired. However, when it later became apparent that the unit would not stay as long as had been previously indicated, planning of unit schools ceased, the course in French alone was the only class that was actually started. Passes to Riviera, Paris, Brussels, Holland, and England were continued with larger quotas than had been

allowed during the war. Some men, particularly officers, were fortunate in obtaining transportation by plane from the Braunschweig base to the Riviera. "C" Company men, at Bielefeld and Halle, were enjoying the same privileges.

A number of parades and ceremonies were held at the Braunschweig field, at one of which announcement was made of the Battalion's future assignment to the Pacific Theater of Operations. On June 6 a memorial parade was staged, commemorating the landing on Normandy a year before. Also on that date, a small group of men from the unit took part in dedication ceremonies of a monument to the 5th Brigade. The monument stands on OMAHA Beach.



Ball game on the airfield.



Windmill near Brunswick.



Retreat formation at Brunswick.



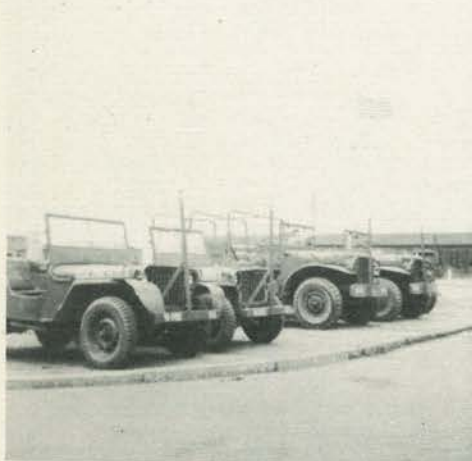
In memory of the 5th Engineer Brigade dead.



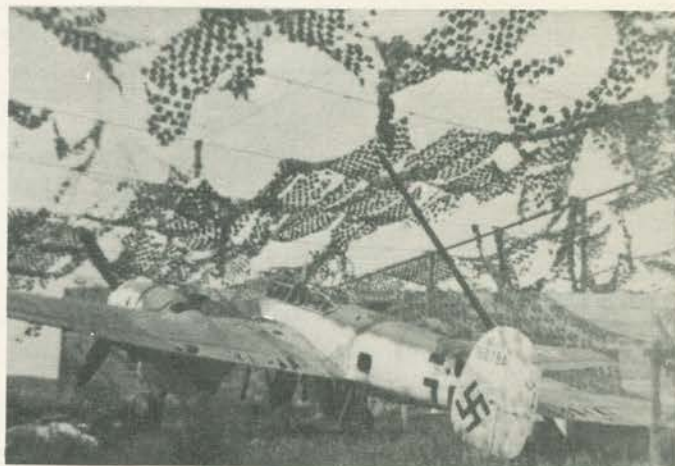
FW 190, German fighter.



Administration building of the Brunswick field.



Vehicle park.



Me 110, fighter bomber.



Focke-Wulf transport flown to the Brunswick base by surrendering Germans.

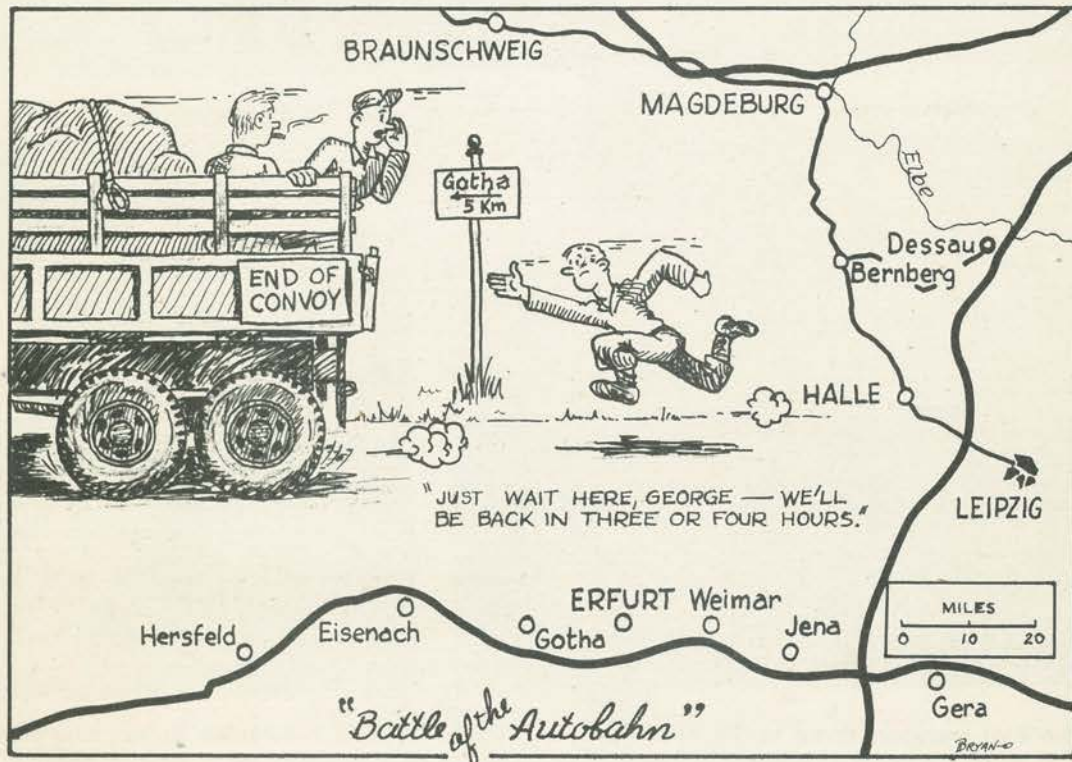


Capt. Accettola is awarded Bronze Star Medal.

THE AUTOBAHN CAMPAIGN

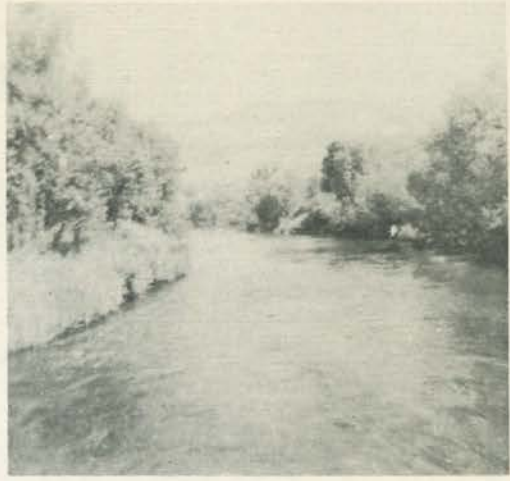
On the 19th of June, the Battalion was alerted for a move to Dessau, with Berlin as a probable ultimate destination. The three remaining Companies of the Battalion departed from Braunschweig on the 21st; and the 2nd Armored Division left too at about this time. Thus began the "Battle of the Autobahn" that became famous with the troops involved. One day's traveling brought the unit 120 miles to Dessau, with "A" and "B" Companies drawing up at Kochstedt, a few miles from Dessau. Travel orders were changed; and conflicting hints of movement to Berlin, Czechoslovakia, and Frankfurt were making their appearance in Battalion Headquarters on the following morning. The organization remained in and near Dessau for three days, doing absolutely nothing. Word was finally received to proceed to the vicinity of Frankfurt. On the morning of the 24th, the three Companies set out, picking up "C" Company en-route near Halle where they had moved on June 13. The unit also took to the super highway in this vicinity. 180 miles were covered that day, and bivouac was made that evening in a meadow near Hersfeld. Once more Battalion Headquarters was notified of a change of orders. Personnel whiled away another day as the orders were being straightened out. The new orders stipulated a return to Dessau. So the morning of the 26th, the 348th commenced back-tracking, with "A" and "B" Companies sending their kitchen trucks ahead so that the evening meal would be prepared on the Company's arrival. 55 miles east of Hersfeld, Military Police halted the convoy, stating that another

decision regarding the Battalion's destination had been made. They did not know what that decision was. All trucks were parked to the side of the road. Traffic was heavy that day as 2nd Armored and other Engineer Battalions' vehicles passed going both east and west, evidently attempting to comply with the same fickle orders given the 348th. Wechmar, a small village near Gotha, lay only a few hundred yards from the Autobahn; so the convoy drove in there in the afternoon and established a bivouac camp in fields at the southwest edge of town. Although having a meager supply of rations, "H/S" and "C" Companies had to furnish Companies "A" and "B" with supper, since their kitchen crews had the evening meal waiting 125 miles away. It rained at regular intervals during the three days at Wechmar, and the Special Services of an Infantry Division in the zone extended invitations to the 348th to partake of the recreational facilities they had to offer to aid in enduring those three dreary days. A number of the men from the Battalion attended a circus at Gotha, sponsored by this Division; and many credited it with being the best circus they had seen. By the 29th, the future disposition of the 348th Engineers had been settled by higher headquarters; and the organization took to the road that day, traveling 175 miles, and arriving near Zwingenberg late that afternoon. The new camp was set up in a wooded area approximately 15 miles south of Darmstadt.





Through deer country.



River scene near Wiemar.



A "friendly little game" along the way.



Resting during the stop near Hersfeld.



Noon-hour bull session.

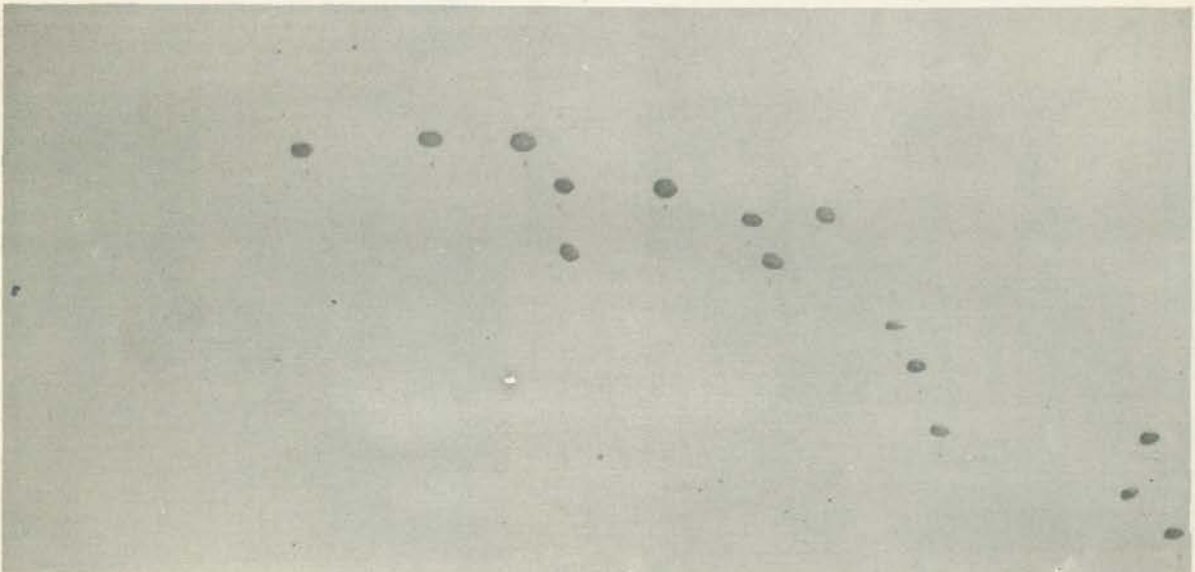


Frankfurt residential scene.

POST-WAR PROJECTS

Due to the concentration of American troops in the sector, and also to the fact that the German civilians there had not vacated their undamaged homes, men of the 348th were required to take up living in pup tents. Squad tents were provided for the Battalion and Company Headquarters. It rained frequently, bathing facilities in the immediate area were practically nil, the general living conditions were quite cramped and uncomfortable; but the men simply made the best of disagreeable circumstances. At first, there was little work to be done; and there was a widespread hope that the unit was on its way to the Pacific Theater via the United States. But compliance with a training schedule was once more required; and there were hikes, close order drill, Engineer instruction, and training in the use of new flamethrowers. There was ample time, however, for games of horseshoes, softball, and even badminton. At this encampment, "C" Company clinched the title of Battalion softball champions. A Battalion team was organized to eventually become runners-up in an area championship series.

Headquarters of the 1120th Engineer Combat Group, whose initial personnel came from the 348th in Camp Young, California, moved into the area in early July; and the Battalion was attached to this headquarters. Simultaneously, work commenced. Company "A" moved to Bensheim July 13 to undertake the construction of grave reburial boxes, as well as other various Engineer tasks. "B" Company moved to Heidelberg the next day to start erection of a Bailey bridge across the Neckar River in Heidelberg. "C" Company followed on the 17th to aid in the construction. Battalion Headquarters moved to Bensheim on the 18th. All Companies moved into billets at these new loca-



82nd Airborne "jump" demonstration at Frankfurt.

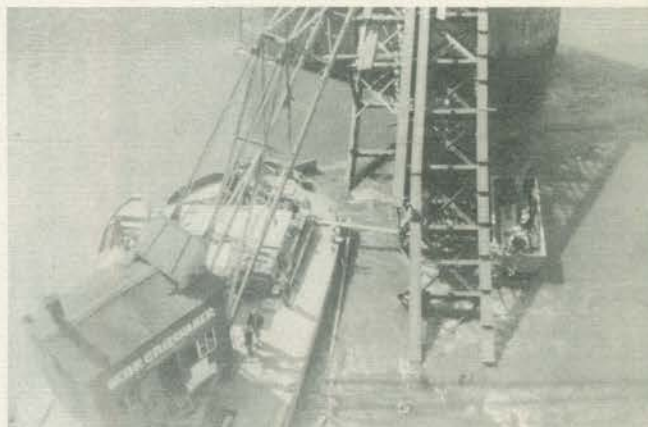
tions. The Heidelberg bridge required eight days to complete. There were countless small jobs after this; but the next sizeable mission called for channel clearance of fifty miles of the Neckar River from Heilbronn to Mannheim. This work involved the removal of beams and decks of demolished bridges, the repair of locks on a number of dams, and the removal of other debris. A channel of sufficient depth and width was to be cleared to allow the passage of empty barges. The barges were to be floated downstream for use on the Rhine. Much German labor and engineering equipment were employed. Demolition, torch-cutting, rigging, and planning was handled by Engineer personnel.

Records concerning the activities of the Battalion from July 1 to September 1 are rather sketchy; and some of the exact dates, locations, and details regarding work cannot be determined. From July 20 to July 27 Company "A" was doing various construction work for the VI and XXI Corps in Bensheim. This included the remodeling of a building for use as a Red Cross Club. "C" Company poured 500 square feet of concrete at 7th Army Headquarters in Heidelberg during this

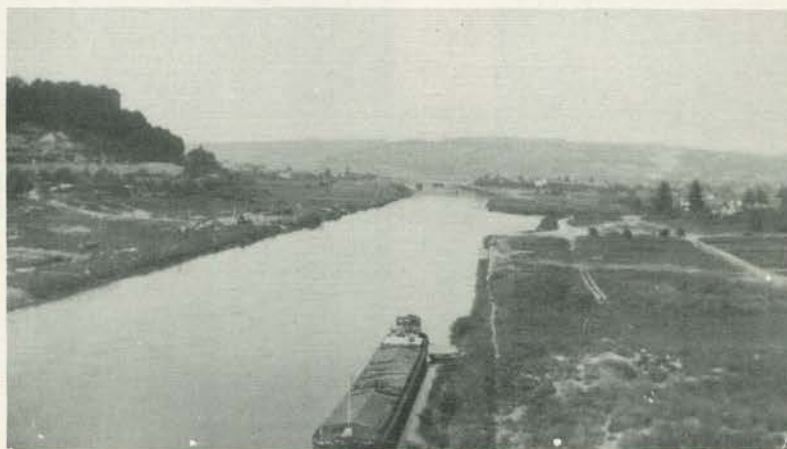
time. From July 27 to August 3 Companies "B" and "C" were at work on the Neckar. Later "A" Company had two platoons working on the river and one platoon repairing the Autobahn between Bensheim and Darmstadt. Battalion Headquarters moved to Kleingemund, near Heidelberg, during the next week; and all Companies were doing work along the Neckar. Company "A" also moved to Eberbach at approximately this time. River work continued for all Companies until August 17 when "C" Company took over 21 sawmills in the area surrounding Walldurn. They moved to Walldurn the next day. Both "B" and "C" Companies were handling lumber and sawmill work during the period 17 to 24 of August with "B" Company locating at Burstadt. During the final week of August, "B" and "C" Companies were still at lumber and sawmill work; "A" Company remained at the work on the Neckar, with two squads repairing a building in Bensheim for use by an Army publications unit. Battalion Headquarters moved to Eberbach August 29; and the Battalion was transferred to the 48th Engineer Combat Battalion a few days later. The Companies were relieved of all responsibilities.



Flamethrower training at Zwingenberg.



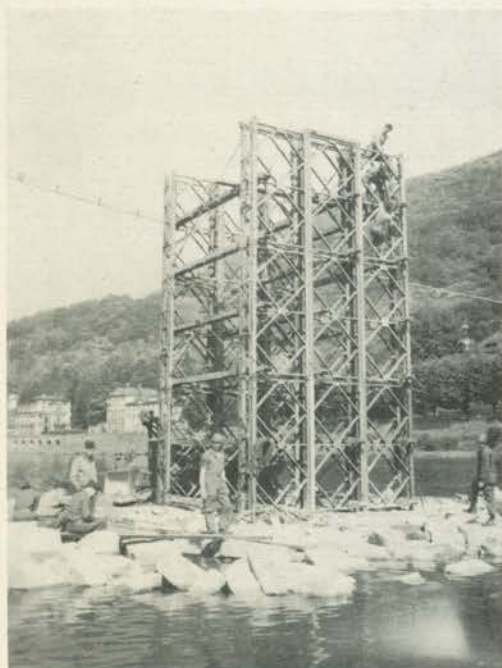
Work on the Neckar.



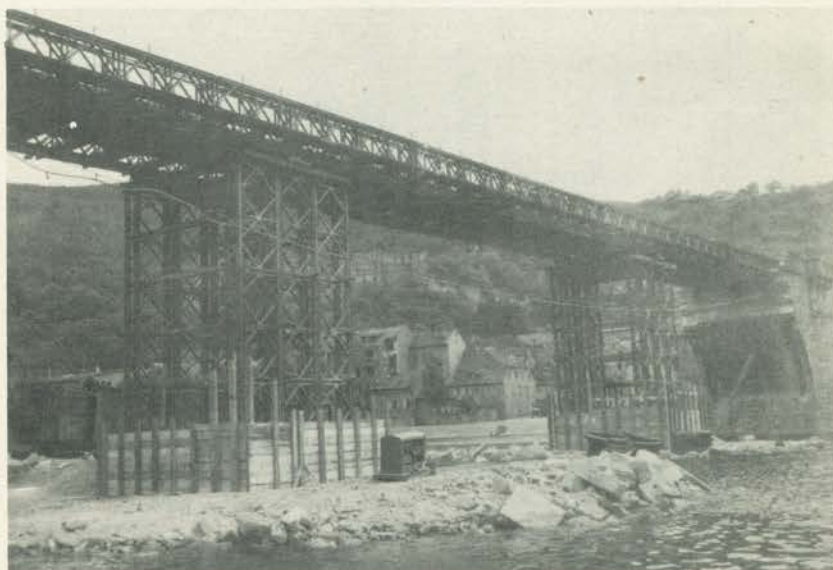
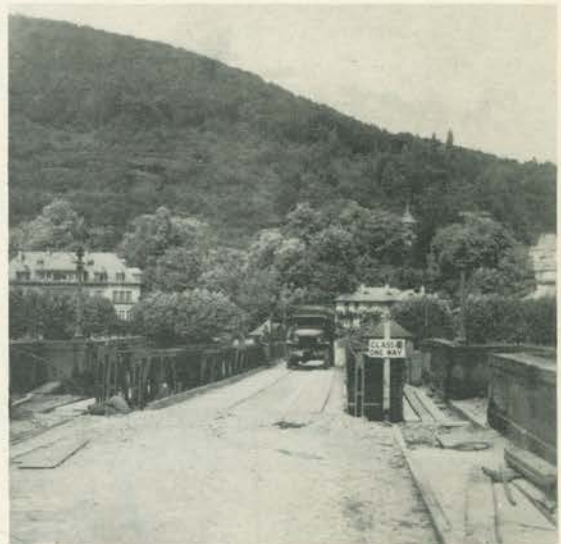
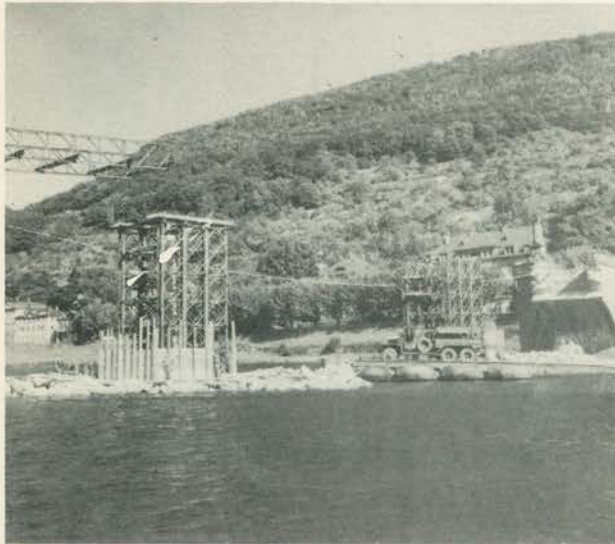
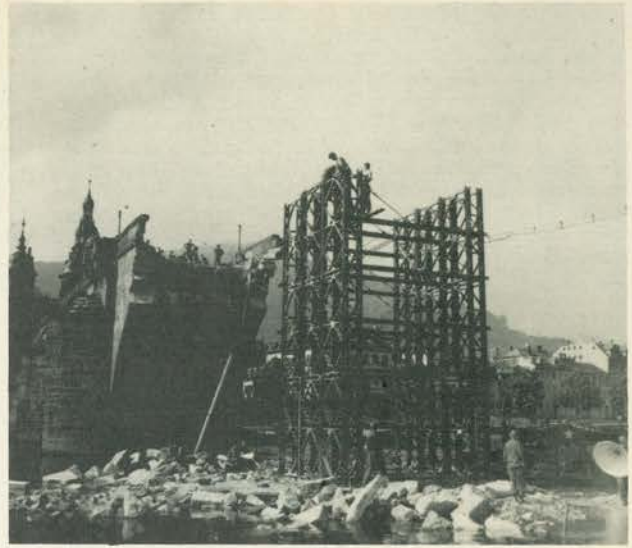
The Neckar River, near Eberbach.

BRIDGE CONSTRUCTION at Heidelberg, Germany

July 1945



Built by "B" and "C" Companies. Three spans of masonry bridge built across the Neckar in the 18th century had been demolished by SS Troopers in the face of Allied advances in the spring of 1945. Two piers approximately 35 feet in height were constructed of Bailey panels on the bases of the old piers. Lower sections of these steel piers were encased in concrete. Material and equipment was hauled from the bank to mid-river sites by pontoon treadway raft. Triple-single, class 40 one-way, 280 feet overall length. Completed in eight days on July 22.



Here the history of the 348th Engineer Combat Battalion, as it existed throughout the war, must cease. During the summer, groups of men with high numbers of discharge points had been transferring to other units; and the transfer to the 48th Engineers left the 348th with a skeleton force of one officer and four enlisted men. Some of these officers and men that made their final transfer had been with the 348th since its activation. They had seen the Battalion Headquarters pass through twenty-three States and five foreign countries. They had seen the Battalion Headquarters "pack up and move" a total of thirty-six

times, an average of almost one move per month. These moves had carried them over some 11,000 miles.

The officers and men who had served the 348th, and who now almost made up the entire roster of the 48th, left Germany September 11th enroute to an assembly area near Reims, France. After remaining there slightly over two weeks, they were moved to the Calas Staging Area at Marseille, France. They sailed from Marseille aboard the U. S. S. Admiral Capps on October 10th and arrived at Newport News, Virginia nine days later.





Scenes in and near Calas Staging Area.

HONOR ROLL

Distinguished Service Cross

Edward Shaffer

Silver Star

Joseph Harvat
Melvin Thompson
Albert Martin
Alva V. Short
Jesse J. Brannon
Clifford H. Swan

Bronze Star

Samuel G. Meharg
William F. Dennis
Morris W. Selfe
Edward C. Kozicki
Walter Sidlowski
Charles M. Accettola
John H. Cox
Robert Campbell

Soldier's Medal

Wallace E. Patrick

(A complete roster of the many men awarded the
Purple Heart is unavailable.)

