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The soldier-railroaders' story of the 716th Railway Operating Battalion

United States Army

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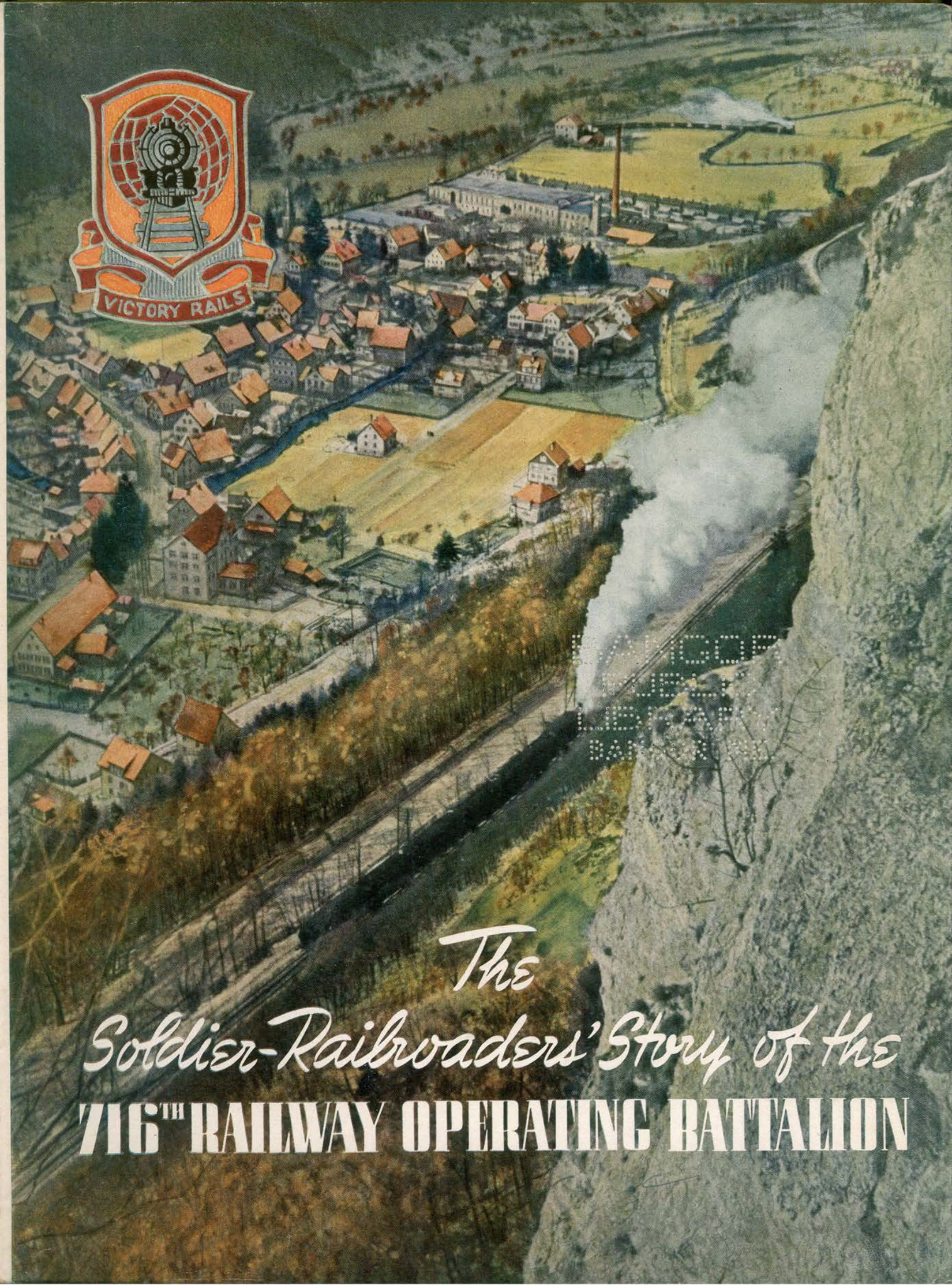
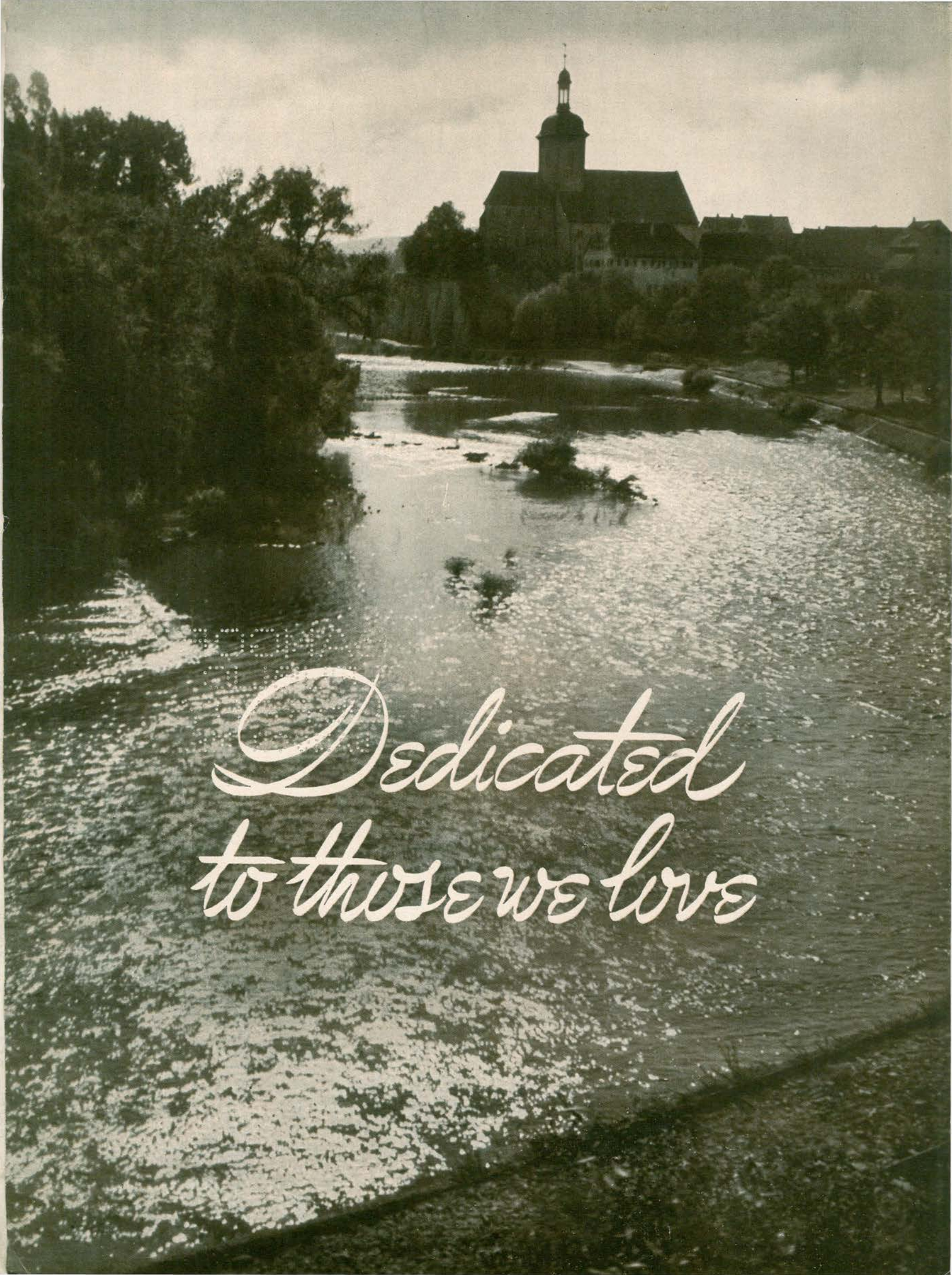
RAILWAY OPERATING BATTALION

THE SOLDIER-RAILROADERS' STORY OF THE 716TH RAILWAY OPERATING BATTALION



The Soldier-Railroaders' Story of the 716th RAILWAY OPERATING BATTALION


Dedicated
to those we love

F O R E W O R D

A blanket of snow covered the ground in a frosty white mantle. High above, the moon disappeared behind a dark cloud, leaving only a luminous glow in the sky. The two GI's huddled together in the foxhole shivered, and one stamped his feet . . .

Neither man spoke. But they were thinking. Of home . . . the wife and kid . . . And right up front was the Nazi war machine . . . still tough and full of fight.

Damn, it was cold. One soldier peered out across the clearing at the woods in the distance. Yes, the enemy was there . . . somewhere.

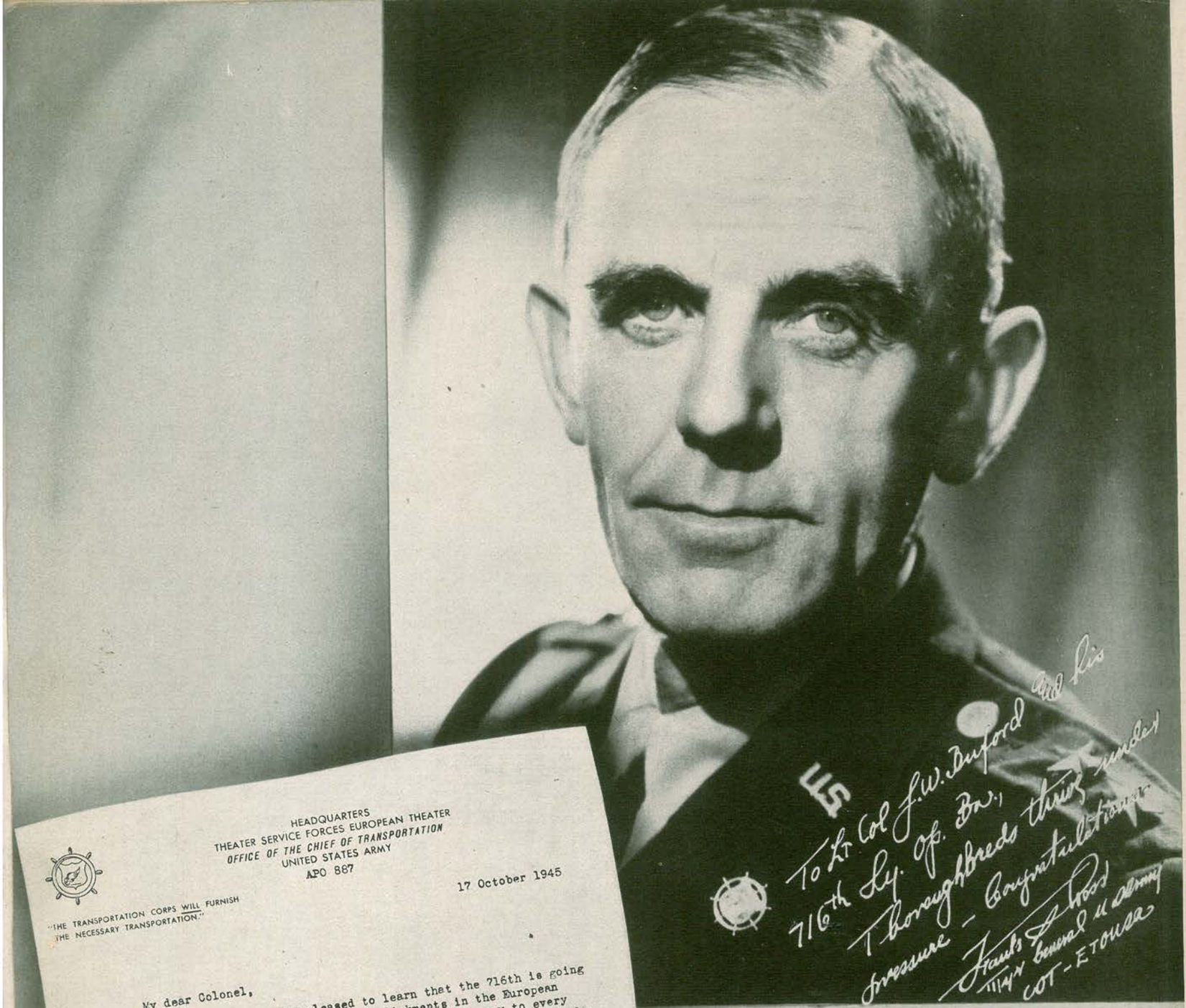
No sound broke the stillness. A feeling, vague and yet smothering, fell on both men. A sense of loneliness . . . yes, that was it. The sensation of being forgotten. Sure, there were lots of GI's like themselves around there, alongside them, behind them . . . maybe in front of them. But it was rough—that lonely vigil.

Well, suppose there was a bunch of Joes out there with them? How about the guys in the rear eschelons, living like kings? What did they know about war? About cold, wet foxholes? About death? What did they care about whether Joe gets his dinner tomorrow? Or whether he is going to get those things he needs . . . ammo . . . grenades . . . the wool gloves he wants so badly tonight?

It was lonesome out there . . . forgotten? Who knows? . . . And then they heard in the distance . . . not too near, not too far . . . a whistle. THE WHISTLE OF A GI LOCOMOTIVE! Sure, they could tell the difference from the French engines.

And then they both knew. They weren't forgotten.

. . . You couldn't see it out there in the darkness, but they were grinning at each other.



HEADQUARTERS
THEATER SERVICE FORCES EUROPEAN THEATER
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF TRANSPORTATION
UNITED STATES ARMY
APO 887

"THE TRANSPORTATION CORPS WILL FURNISH
THE NECESSARY TRANSPORTATION."

17 October 1945

My dear Colonel,

I am particularly pleased to learn that the 716th is going to publish a history of its accomplishments in the European Theater of Operations and I am asking you to convey to every individual in your organization the sincere appreciation of the Transportation Corps in general, and myself in particular, for the splendid way in which this particular battalion produced results when the chips were down.

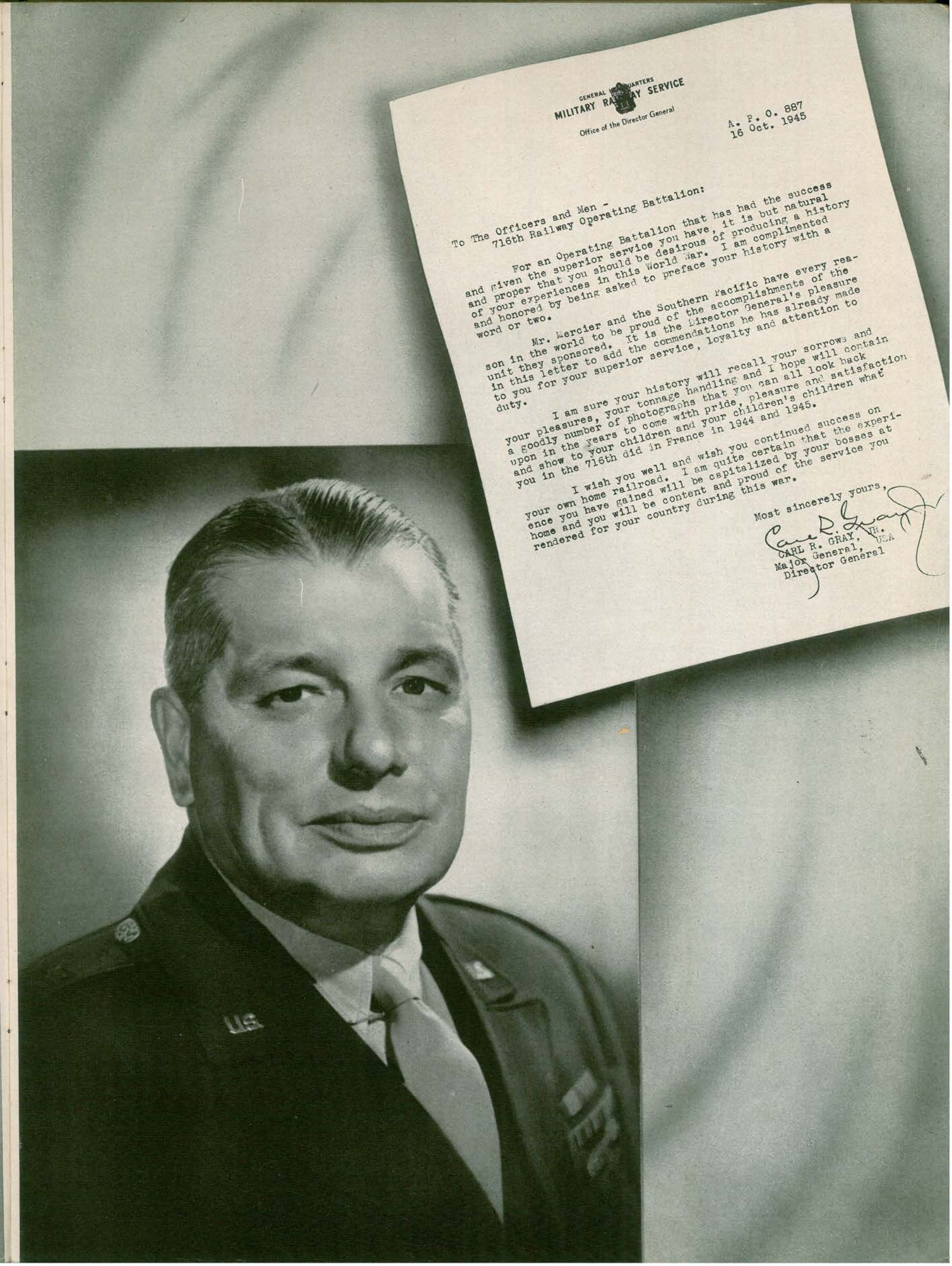
I know that it is a tremendous source of gratification to realize that you overcame as great a handicap as any unit in the history of the United States Army had to face and that you did it in such a manner that it left no doubt in the minds of anyone what kind of an outfit you are. Every one of you can return to your chosen occupations, to friends and loved ones, with the inherent satisfaction of knowing you kept the faith.

We members of the Corps who served with you will ever cherish your memory and you carry home with you our sincere wish that it will be your future lot in life to graze only in green pastures.

Very sincerely,

FRANK S. ROSS
Major General, U. S. Army
Chief of Transportation

Lt. Colonel J. W. Buford
Commanding Officer
716th Railway Operating Battalion
APO 350, U. S. Army



GENERAL HEADQUARTERS
MILITARY RAILWAY SERVICE
Office of the Director General

A. P. O. 887
16 Oct. 1945

To The Officers and Men -
716th Railway Operating Battalion:

For an Operating Battalion that has had the success and given the superior service you have, it is but natural and proper that you should be desirous of producing a history of your experiences in this World War. I am complimented and honored by being asked to preface your history with a word or two.

Mr. Mercier and the Southern Pacific have every reason in the world to be proud of the accomplishments of the unit they sponsored. It is the Director General's pleasure in this letter to add the commendations he has already made to you for your superior service, loyalty and attention to duty.

I am sure your history will recall your sorrows and your pleasures, your tonnage handling and I hope will contain a goodly number of photographs that you can all look back upon in the years to come with pride, pleasure and satisfaction and show to your children and your children's children what you in the 716th did in France in 1944 and 1945.

I wish you well and wish you continued success on your own home railroad. I am quite certain that the experience you have gained will be capitalized by your bosses at home and you will be content and proud of the service you rendered for your country during this war.

Most sincerely yours,

Carl R. Gray, Jr.

CARL R. GRAY, JR.
USA
Major General,
Director General

Headquarters
Second Military Railway Service
U.S. Army

APO 350
27 October 1945

Lt. Colonel J. W. Buford
Commanding Officer
716th Railway Operating Battalion
APO 350, U. S. Army

My dear Colonel Buford:

I desire to take this opportunity of expressing to you, to your officers and soldiers of the 716th Railway Operating Battalion, my appreciation of their services to the Second Military Railway Service.

From the time that they arrived in France until their Command was transferred to the First Military Railway Service, I have watched with great interest, the progress that you and your organization have made.

You have been called upon many times to perform a most difficult task under circumstances which it was almost impossible to carry out the mission. The officers and enlisted men of the 716th met the request and fulfilled it to the satisfaction of all concerned and was successful in delivering supplies to the Fighting Forces, which resulted in the defeat of the enemy.

Please convey to your officers and enlisted men, my personal congratulations and appreciation for a job that was well done.

I am sincerely yours,

C. L. BURPEE
Brigadier General, USA
Commanding

HEADQUARTERS
1ST MILITARY RAILWAY SERVICE
Office of General Manager

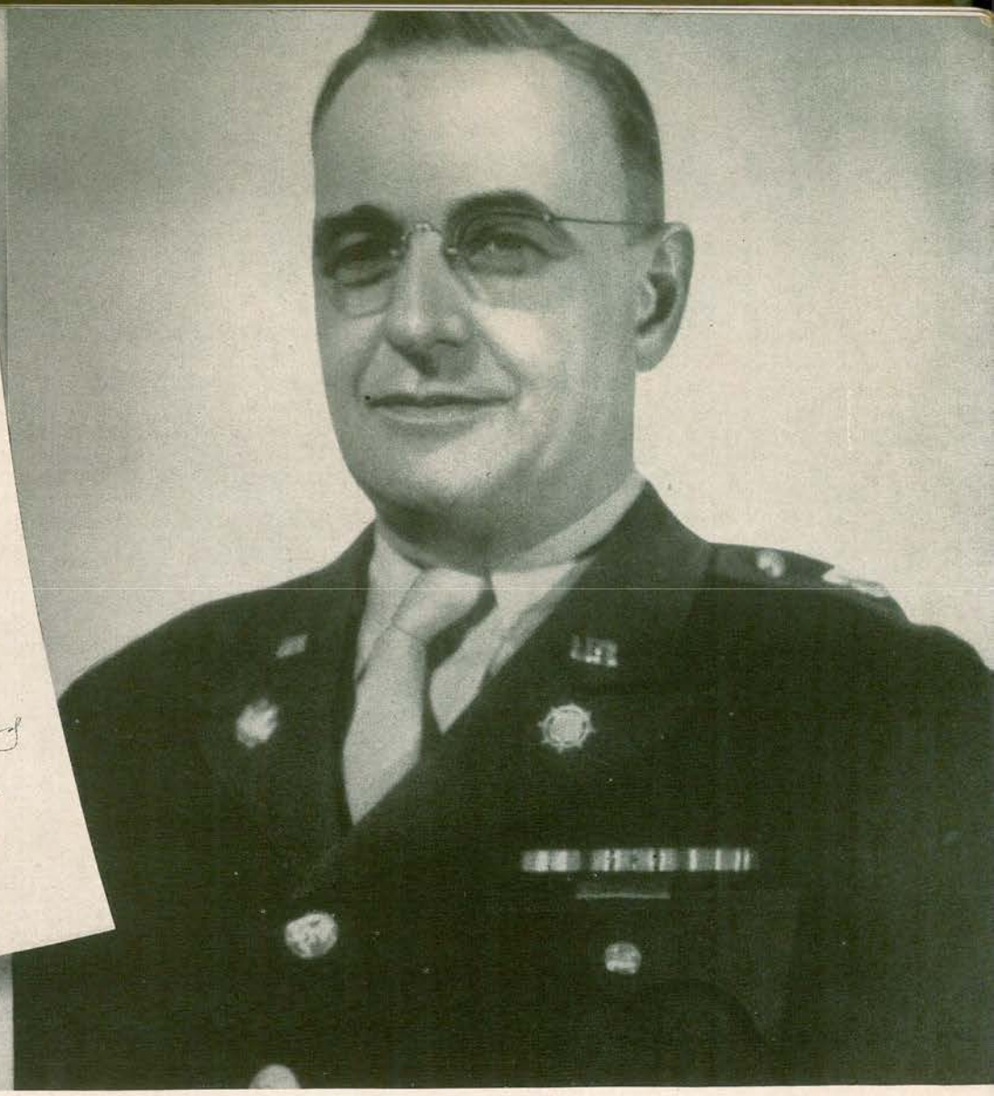
A.P.O. 772
1 November 1945

TO: THE OFFICERS AND MEN OF THE 716TH RAILWAY OPERATING BATTALION

It is a pleasure and an honor to be able to address you in this manner and to be asked to contribute to your historical record. Your unit has proven itself in many ways and now that your task is about completed, may I express my sincere thanks to you, one and all, my heartfelt regards, and God-speed in your return to the States and home.

Sincerely,

A. B. STODDARD
Colonel TC
General Manager



HEADQUARTERS
710TH RAILWAY GRAND DIVISION
APO 350
US ARMY

WCM/ez
8 November 1945.

All Members of the 716th:

Lt.Col.Buford has told me you wish a picture and a few words from me for the HISTORY. Here is the picture. It shows our French Liaison Officer, Captain Raoul Driant and myself seated at the desk once used by Kaiser Wilhelm II in the office of the Royal Suite in the Main Station at Metz.

The few words are: In a varied and altogether exciting life, I have never had an assignment which I enjoyed more nor have I ever been associated with a finer group of Americans than while I was one of you. And - I want six copies of the HISTORY.

Sincerely,

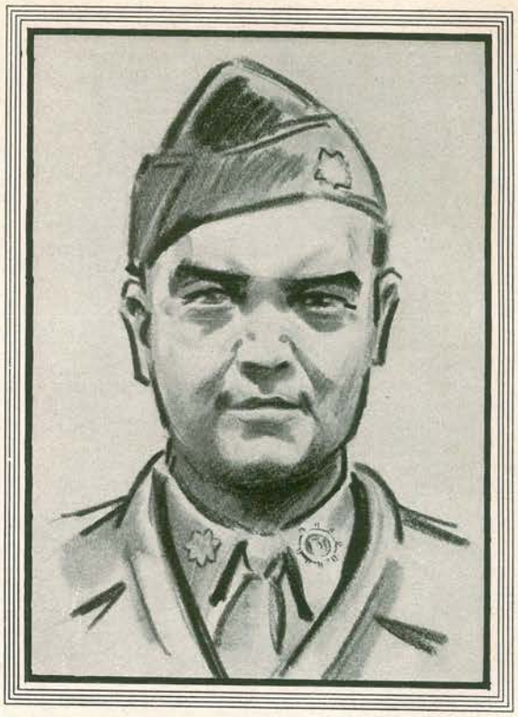
W.C. MORRIS
Lt.Col.,T.C.
Commanding.

1 IN
10 NOV 1945

MAJOR WALTER H. MARLIN

LT.COL. WILLIAM C. MORRIS, PRESENTLY COMMANDING THE 716TH RAILWAY GRAND DIVISION, SERVED AS COMMANDING OFFICER OF THE 716TH FROM JANUARY 1945 UNTIL SEPTEMBER 1945, DURING WHICH TIME MANY INNOVATIONS AND IMPROVEMENTS WERE BROUGHT ABOUT IN THE BATTALION. THE MERITORIOUS SERVICE PLAQUE WAS AWARDED THE 716TH FOR SUPERIOR PERFORMANCE, WHILE UNDER COMMAND OF COLONEL MORRIS.

LT. COL. R. J. MACNAMARA, WHO JOINED THE 716TH ON 23 JANUARY 1945, SERVED AS COMMANDING OFFICER UNTIL 27 JANUARY 1945. DURING HIS BRIEF STAY, COLONEL MACNAMARA GAINED WIDE POPULARITY AND RESPECT BY REASON OF HIS FRIENDLY PERSONALITY.



MAJOR CHARLES P. KENNY

COMMANDING OFFICERS

LT. COL. JACK W. BUFORD

CAPTAIN BURTON W. GIBSON

CAPTAIN CHARLES J. GEIDNER

OUR Staff OFFICERS

The Staff is the principal aid of the Commanding Officer. Staff officers relieve the Commander of details concerning operations, administration, supply, etc., so that he may devote his entire time to command functions.

In the 716th, the position of Executive Officer and Assistant Division Superintendent was held by Captain Charles J. Geidner, from November 1944 until October 1945. Captain Geidner was succeeded by Captain Burton W. Gibson as Executive Officer until November 1945, when the latter advanced to Commanding Officer, and the Executive duties were assumed by Captain Harold G. Gould.

The administrative duties of Adjutant were handled by Captain Gibson from February 1944 to October 1945, at which time 1st Lt. Leonard Navarra, former Personnel Officer, succeeded to that position.

The position of Battalion Supply Officer was occupied by Captain Clarence Pine from December 1943 until October 1945, when he was succeeded by 1st Lt. Raymond W. Drewes.

Upon activation of the Battalion in December 1943, Major William B. Sharp was assigned as Executive Officer, with Captain Harry G. Bligh as Adjutant. Captain Bligh was advanced to Executive Officer in February 1944.

1ST LT. LEONARD NAVARRA

CAPTAIN CLARENCE PINE

1ST LT. RAYMOND W. DREWES

CHAPLAIN WILLIAM M. ADDISON

CHAPLAIN JASPER L. DAVIDSON

CHAPLAIN ARNOLD L. SIMONSON

In every Army organization, the Chaplain occupies a singular place. His is the responsibility for seeing that the men—his men—are brought closer to God and the things of God. It is up to the Chaplain, either by conducting religious services or by arranging for services to be held, to assure himself that every soldier is given opportunity and encouragement in the practice of his religion. The Chaplain holds as his principal obligation the maintenance of a high standard of religion and morality in his organization.

To the GI in trouble, with distressing problems requiring friendly counsel and help, the Chaplain looms as a beacon in a storm. And the Chaplain, in his turn, has his own ways of assisting. Sound advice is forthcoming, and a word or two from the Chaplain to the higher-ups often makes smooth the way for the troubled GI. Truly, the Chaplain has earned his place in the hearts of "his boys"

IT IS REGRETTED THAT A PICTURE OF CHAPLAIN JOHN M. GOWDEY WAS NOT AVAILABLE FOR THIS PAGE. CHAPLAIN GOWDEY SUCCEEDED CHAPLAIN SIMONSON WITH THE BATTALION, AND WAS HELD IN HIGH ESTEEM BY ALL WHO KNEW HIM.

The Chaplains

MEN OF GOD—HELPERS OF MEN!

CAPTAIN HAROLD G. GOULD

CAPTAIN NEANDER E. PETERSON

COMPANY COMMANDERS

CAPTAIN SAMUEL S. GILLESPIE

CAPTAIN HOWARD C. CARMER

CAPTAIN ROY W. HARTZEL

CAPTAIN HARRY G. BLIGH

1ST LT. THOMAS A. FANTE

1ST LT. PATRICK G. CARR

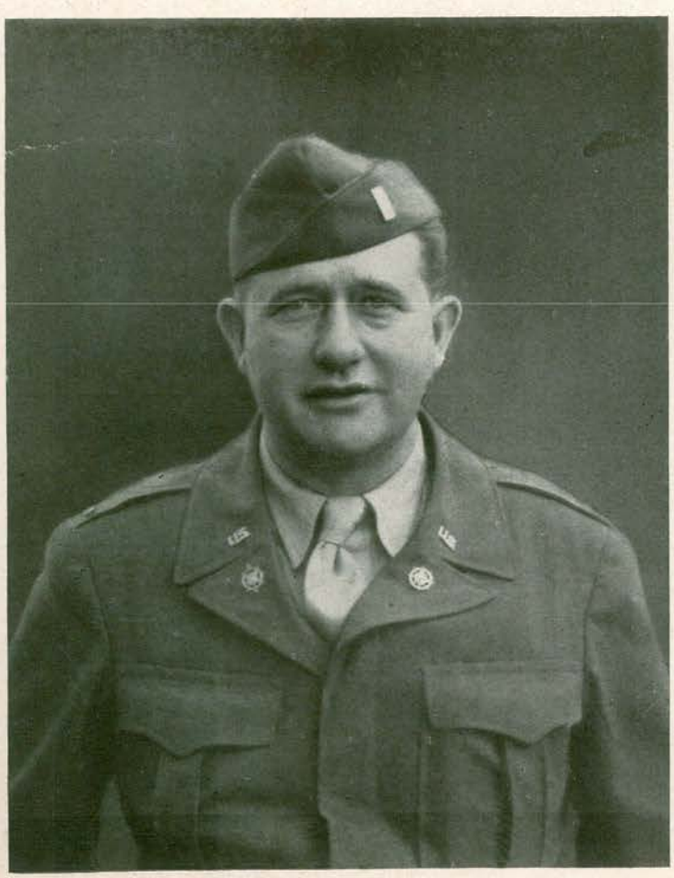
WARRANT OFFICER
EDWARD L. HOBBS

1ST LT. FLETCHER E. MAC ARTHUR

1ST LT. VICTOR E. JOHNSON

1ST LT. LAWRENCE L. STODDARD

1ST LT. FRED A. BAKER



1ST LT. DONALD N. MAC DONALD

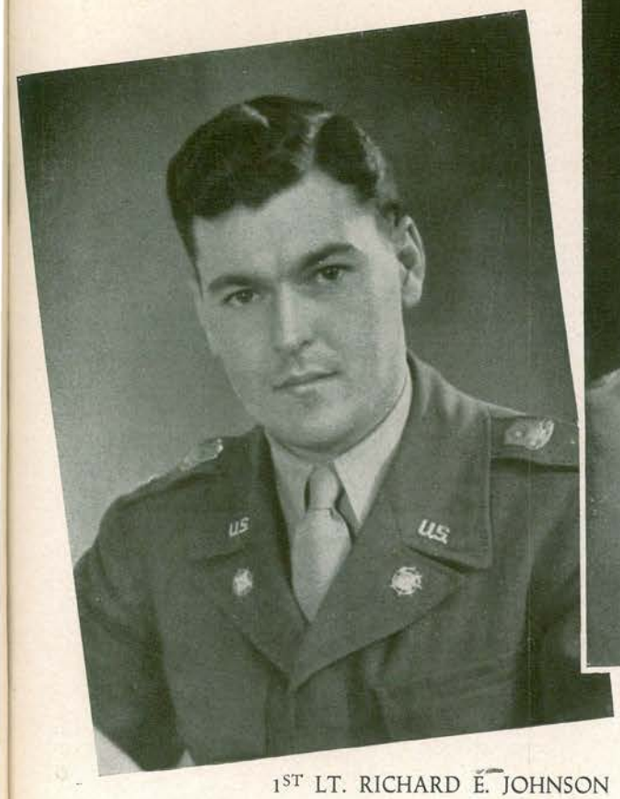
1ST LT. HIRAM C. STENGEL

1ST LT. EDWARD J. PUTRYAE

1ST LT. CHARLES R. WHITFIELD

1ST LT. WILLIAM R. O'NEILL

1ST LT. CHARLES O. ARANT



1ST LT. RICHARD E. JOHNSON

CAPTAIN WILLIAM P. OLSON

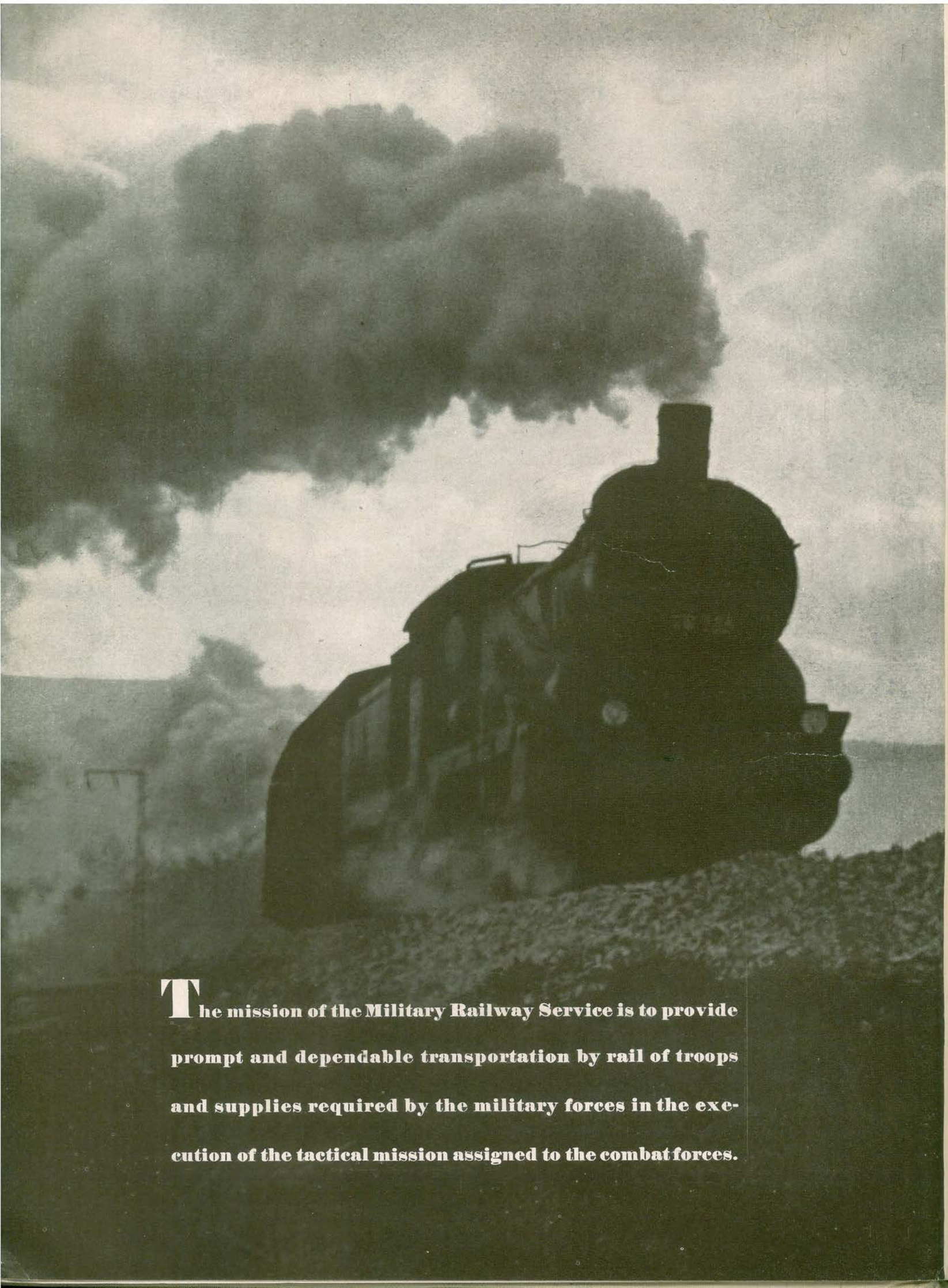
1ST LT. MERLE E. BROWN

It is regretted that photographs were not available of 1st Lt. Pliney P. Pusser and 1st Lt. Norris E. Loop, both of whom served with Company "C": the former as Company Commander December 1944 until May 1945, and the latter as Road Foreman of Engines December 1943 until January 1945.

1ST LT. ARIO D. DAL PORTO

1ST LT. JOHN W. SPRINGER

1ST LT. EDWARD CUCCIA



The mission of the Military Railway Service is to provide prompt and dependable transportation by rail of troops and supplies required by the military forces in the execution of the tactical mission assigned to the combat forces.

The Beginning

BATTALION ACTIVATED

December 21st, 1943 marked the day of activation of the 716th Railway Operating Battalion. The outfit, sponsored by the Southern Pacific Railroad, began its life at Fort Sam Houston (San Antonio), Texas with officer personnel drawn chiefly from the sponsor and a cadre made up of "veterans" of the 726th, the unit that had recently completed its technical training on the Santa Fe at Clovis, New Mexico. For the most part, both the officer personnel and the cadre were former railroad men.

Officers and cadre, aided by a few hastily-mustered raw recruits, found themselves working against a deadline to receive the hundreds of new inductees that were to arrive from all parts of the United States to complement the personnel of the 716th and other railway outfits to be activated at Fort Sam Houston. Barracks had to be readied—rations drawn—and a multitude of things done. As they did—they learned. This nucleous of officers and cadremen had to be one step ahead of the men they were to train and for whom they were to be responsible.

During the second week of January, the officers began checking Forms 20 and to their amazement found that of the full strength of 891 enlisted men (authorized strength—824) only 32% had previous railroad experience which fitted them for the ultimate mission. The task ahead was momentous—not only would they be required to make soldiers out of citizens—but railroaders, too, out of butchers, bakers, and truckdrivers (there wasn't a candlestickmaker among them).

BASIC BLUES

The first days of Texas convinced the embryo soldiers, as they endeavored to execute the commands of their stripe-happy non-commissioned officers, that the Army does have leaders gifted with foresight, in spite of arguments to the contrary. This was evident in the wise selection of the environment—for the Texas terrain, mud, and weather afforded many opportunities for the average soldier to immunize himself to almost any and all conditions which could prevail in an overseas theatre. And so in Texas for many months the personnel of the 716th were to respond to command—in rain and mud—in heat and cold—in dust and tornado—and even in snow—at good old San Antonio.

The schedule was a tight one."Mickey Mice" by the dozen—the A 3—O 3—lectures —examinations—KP—Guard. Bodies and minds slowly became accustomed to routine—and then to more routine. All the while—slowly but surely—the Army was having its ever-achieving way—the citizen was losing his individualistic impulses. He was beginning to think—to act—to eat—to sleep—and, sometimes, e v e n to dream collectively and as a unit. The 716th was truly in its swaddling clothes.

CAMP BULLIS

Practice hikes and marches one day turned into a long trek of 18 miles to Camp Bullis. This was not an infantry outfit (the infantry—motorized—cruised by at 40 per) but there were damned few who had the courage to drop out, even though the most walking the majority had done for years were the few miles that came as a part of their daily duties —and some probably had not walked more than the distance from home to street car for the previous five or six years. After consoling barking dogs, these "soldiers" complimented themselves on their first "campaign" and ventured forth for suds at the PX.

Bullis and Bull. My God! More rain! More marching! More close order drill! Mess kits for the first time! Then a sample of "C" rations—tasted pretty good—a prelude to the hundreds of meals to come of Meat and Vegetable Stew—but that for another day. Firing for record with a 30 caliber pencil, and "who fired that shot?" Then the 30 caliber machine gun—then the 50 at the phantoms of radio-controlled miniature planes. The outfit "took" Branntown but had the silhouetted defending soldiers been real there's not much doubt that they would have "taken" the 716th. Strange are the ways of the Army in giving men courage! Knee-deep mud and full field packs—really, the Japs and Germans slowly but surely were being put on the "hated" list. The infiltration course with machine gun bullets a good four feet overhead was all too realistic. Was there a man who didn't hug the good earth? Night problems—extended order drill—was the 716th a railroad outfit? Men began to say prayers—men that had never prayed before—to get rid of the ticks and Bullis. Please God, nothing can be so bad as this—lead us at once into technical training.

ON TO CUSHING!

God—and the Army—responded. The future railroad men again hiked—under a Texas sky and in Texas mud on the 21st day of February. Three years had passed at Bullis in three weeks—and 180 miles were endured in 18. This was the third "new home" of the dozens to come—Camp Cushing, named after a T. & N. O. colonel who, in his period of soldering, had never experienced what these men had already seen.

Camp Cushing was made by man—and the Army—so Cushing wasn't exactly perfect. One had to look up the hill to see a part of Fort Sam—if one looked down he saw nothing but earth or mud—because Cushing was at the bottom, "across the tracks" of the T. & N. O. Railroad. The tar-paper shacks, which the officers affectionately designated as barracks, mess halls, rec halls, PX, and "Officers' Quarters" just seemed to have slid into place in Texas mud, down along the tracks, so as to be convenient to the Government for the training of war-time railroaders. Someone said that the Government had paid the S. P. one dollar a year for the use of Cushing. Obviously the Government had been cheated! The first night men were discovered praying again—the ticks had marched the 180 miles, too. And within minutes it was found that there was another natural but greater menace to mankind. No, not a Nazi—not a Jap—but the unconquerable "chigger". The chigger is adept at warfare. He attacks in the most inconvenient spots and in great numbers. He digs in and waits. If the subject soldier doesn't immediately scratch, the chigger simply wishes him to scratch and, subconsciously, the subject soldier scratches. Having provoked warfare and obtained it, the chigger defies conquest. A defense has been

invented to repel the chigger—that defense is to get out of Texas. But that was months later.

Rested from the agony of the advance from Bullis, the "heroes" of the 716th demanded, "Where's the railroad?" In response, they counted cadence to the field—of ragweed, thistles, and hidden stones and chiggers—for close order drill and lectures.

The men had forgotten, the officers had to get their feet on the ground first, the eternal system of being one jump ahead had to be observed. Logical, too, who in 'ell would want to try to assign men without knowing what a new line of railroad looked like?

TECHNICAL BEGINS

The T. & N. O. is an integral part of the far-flung empire of the Southern Pacific System. That portion utilized by contract with the Army for the training of the 716th extended west from San Antonio to Del Rio, east to Houston, and south to Corpus Christi.

After conferences with railroad representatives it was the duty of the several company commanders to distribute the personnel of their companies to numerous locations on the railroad and to make detailed arrangements for their technical training. The citizen had been made a soldier—now the soldier was to be made a "rail".

HEADQUARTERS COMPANY

Headquarters Company, in addition to carrying on unit administrative duties, handling ration and messing facilities and supplies, is required to provide trained personnel for several vital spots on the railroad. Captain Harold G. Gould (S. P.) deployed the "brains" of his company to strategic locations. Chief Dispatcher lst. Lt. Patrick G. Carr (U. P.) was given an office with the T. & N. O. Chief Dispatcher at San Antonio. Army Assistant Chief Dispatchers M/Sgt. C. N. Thomas (Frisco), T/Sgt. J. M. Berrier (Frisco), and T/Sgt. H. W. Elms (U. P.) worked alongside civilian chiefs. In anticipation of possible future emergencies three more were broken in as assistant chiefs, T/3 C. A. Reed, T/3 F. J. Capeller (B. & O.), and T/3 J. Braswell (M. P.). Operators were put in four towers in the San Antonio vicinity and out on the road from Luling to Del Rio. Men who later were to be confronted with supply and warehouse duties worked in the railroad warehouse at San Antonio, and Lt. T. A. Fante (S. P.) as Battalion Mess Officer, established messes at Cushing, Del Rio, Cuero, and Corpus Christi.

COMPANY "A"

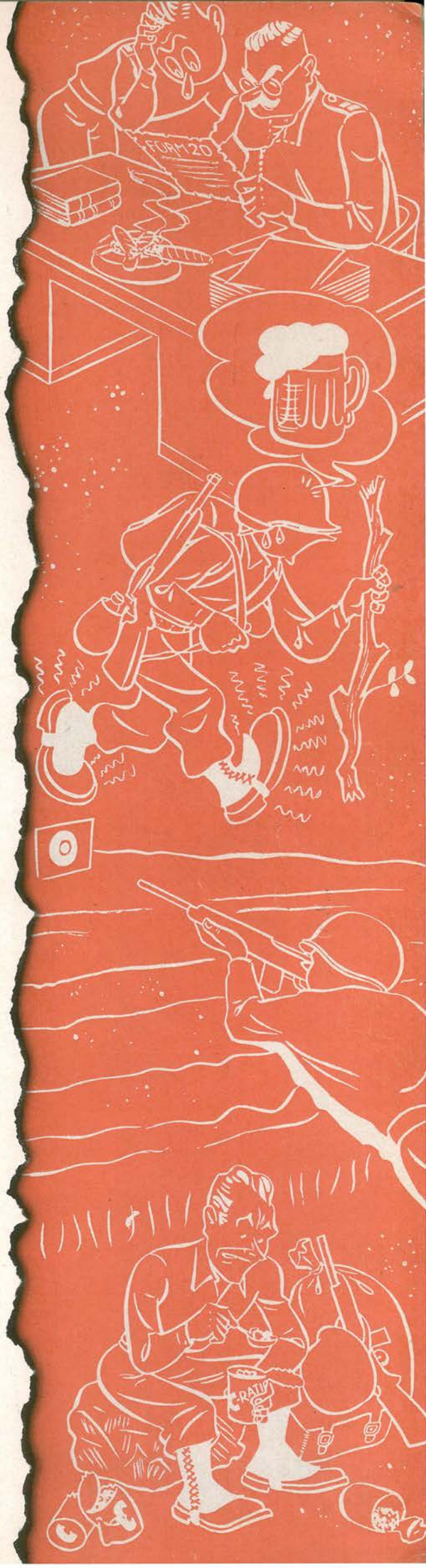
Company "A", commanded by Captain Neander E. Peterson (C. I. & M.), was divided into four platoons, headed by the cadremen of the 726th that had taught the men basic. Their responsibility, under direction of the respective officers, was to whip the men into a complete competent working unit. There were many novices in each occupational category.

Lt. Donald N. Macdonald (S. P.) and his subordinates, lst. Sgt. Le Roy Shirtzinger, Emilio Cardone and William Ledden, (C. R. I. & P.), had charge of the "gandies". Shirtzinger and Cardone had charge of a large detachment at Cuero where thousands of feet of track were laid and re-surfaced. The men learned how to put in and repair switches and turnouts. In fact, the men learned all they could that pertained to the work of trackmen. Included with the detachment of "gandies" were several motor pool drivers and heavy equipment operators. At Cuero, fun was mixed with work. The town was only ten minutes from camp and during the four months period many friends were made with the natives. At camp there was a PX with plenty of beer and cokes. Not far away was a swimming pool frequently resorted to as a relief from the Texas heat.

The mud, quicksand and chuckholes on the narrow roads about Cuero conditioned the motor pool boys for the damaged roads they were to find in the E. T. O. The heavy equipment operators had to make many excavations with their draglines and there was much leveling to do with their bulldozers. In the meantime, at Camp Cushing, Sgt. Ledden taught his men the art of "gandy dancing". It was under such good leaders that the men learned their jobs thoroughly.

Lt. F. A. Baker (S. P.) was the "Bossman" of the Bridge and Building gang. Sgts. Moore and Wooten, old cadremen, were his chief assistants. About half of the B & B men were sent out on detached service under Sgt. Moore. At Portland, Petus, Del Rio, and Corpus Christi they built new railroad bridges and repaired old ones, both steel and timbered. They hopped, so to speak, from bridge to bridge and saw a lot of Texas during their technical.

The B & B men that remained at Camp Cushing did carpentry in addition to bridge work.



With B & B were the water service men, under Sgt. Rosenberg. They worked mostly in the yards at San Antonio but water men were also sent out to such places as Cuero, Sanderson, Uvalde, and Del Rio. They laid waterlines, drains, repaired gasoline and diesel powered pumps and repaired and installed water cranes.

Sgt. Dulka was the ranking non-com of the Signal platoon which was under the direction of Lt. F. E. MacArthur (C. N.). From this platoon, as from the others, men were sent out on detached service to places such as Beeville, Petus, Sanderson, and Del Rio. They learned to operate and install switchboards, to string and repair lines, and to repair track circuits. They became familiar with the installation and operation of all types of communications.

Headquarters men of Company "A", with Lt. Victor Johnson (L. & N.), as their instructor, busied themselves with mechanical drawings and assorted drafts. They worked in conjunction with the other platoons and prepared blue prints of work performed by them. Others were busy with work in the orderly room and in battalion headquarters.

Ratings began to come out just before furlough time. To this day it isn't thoroughly understood why this man and that got a rating. It's immaterial now but there was much talk. The leadership of some men was so obviously outstanding that they were awarded sergeants' ratings within four months.

It was Captain Peterson, his officers and non-coms, who were responsible for welding together a group of novices, clerks, and tradesmen into a complete unit that could cope with any task assigned to them. Finding the S. P. lacking in adequate tools it was necessary, on many occasions, to improvise—something that stood them in good stead in the ETO.

COMPANY "B"

The primary function of "B" Company is that of maintenance of equipment. So, into the shops and into the bowels of locomotives went the future machinists of the Battalion. Some were skilled—some were not—but under the competent direction of the Espee's old-timers it was not long until coordination and team work was second nature to these men who were to achieve an enviable record in the E. T. O.

Slowly but surely, from what was seemingly nothing but a maze of chaos and confusion, was born and brought together the nuclei of the locomotive and car platoons. Those men who were veteran railroaders quickly distinguished themselves from the unlearned and most naturally they were gravitated towards the higher positions of authority, even though in some cases decisions regarding promotions were hotly disputed among the men, contending that railroading experience alone did not qualify a man as a leader. Such squabbles were of short duration, however, rendered so by the realization that griping was of no avail, and that cooperation and harmony was of pressing importance. Subjugation of the individual will for the common good and for the efficient functioning of the military team as a whole, soon became self-apparent and appreciated.

Too, competition was intensely keen in vying for the more lucrative positions and as a matter of fact, many men who theretofore were ignorant of railroading methods and work, by their interest and mechanical adaptability, soon rose to a par with others who had years of railroading behind them.

Temporarily, the stress was lifted from the military phase of training, although the best traditions of the Army were always strictly adhered to, and the inevitable weekly hikes and inspections were always there to plague everyone.

Company "B" at first was under the temporary command of lst. Lt. Edward J. Putryae (S. P.). On March 14th the command passed to the hands of lst. Lt. Samuel S. Gillespie (S. P.), who returned from overseas duty in North Africa with the 719th Railway Operating Battalion. Himself a railroad man of long standing, his capability was further augmented by his experiences garnered as a GI railroader under actual combat conditions which proved invaluable to the Company in preparing for its future role in the E. T. O. In recognition of his merit and services, Lt. Gillespie was promoted to Captain on May 22nd, 1944.

During "technical" the main body of the company was centered at the SP shops in San Antonio with small detachments of men at Del Rio and Cuero. The locomotive platoon, under the guidance of 1st Lt. Charles O. Arant (S.R.R.), was assigned to the round house and back-shop. The car platoon assimilated its knowledge at the rip track and car yards under the leadership of lst. Lt. Hiram C. (Call me "Casey") Stengel (S. P.). A shift system was established—two shifts of eight hours' duration on the basis of six days per week. Meals were delivered to the shop for the men on the day shift while lunches were carried by those on the night trick, to give the atmosphere that "homey" touch.

One of the more important functions of the car platoon was their maintenance of a wrecking crew, whose job was to accompany civilian crews to the scene of a wreck, and to collaborate and to work shoulder to shoulder with them in clearing the tracks of wreckage or re-railing locomotives and cars. Several times they had occasion to make such sorties and they conducted themselves in very creditable fashion.

The SP had a backlog of engines on which repairs had been held up because of the acute manpower shortage, and right then and there the "B" Company stalwarts came into their own. Men who had previous machine shop experience were assigned to collaborate with civilians in charge of various operations, such as engine-lathe, turret-lathe, wheel-lathe, grinders, shapers, boring-mills and the like. Every effort was made in each case to place each man in the position for which his civilian experience best suited him. Unfortunately, not everyone could be satisfied, as there was an overwhelming preponderance of machinists, and a few of them naturally trickled into jobs in which they were novices. However, everyone worked with a will and gave his job his best, and the rest took care of itself.

At the onset, switch engine No. 83 was turned over to the locomotive forces for a complete overhauling, and with a picked crew consisting for the greater part of veteran railroaders, the job was achieved in notably good time. Hard upon the heels of this, followed No. 85, now almost legendary in the memory of Company "B" and, profiting by the trials and errors of the previous engine, a job of repairing was accomplished which would have done credit to professionals. Tragedy is also connected with other nostalgic memories of old 85, in the form of the first fatality occuring in the company. While welding in the tender of 85, Eugene Lopez, of El Paso, was accidentally electrocuted, and death was instantaneous. He will long be remembered and missed by all who had occasion to know him.

Facilities at the SP shops were never at their best for the 716th trainees. Frequently the GIs were left to their own devices in providing for their needs. Even at this early date, their ingenuity, which was to bring big dividends later, began to assert itself. Tools of all types, which were so absolutely essential and always so woefully lacking, were impossible to be had through Army sources, and thus there was no alternative but to forge their own. It is impossible to describe accurately some of the tools so made, and it is a sure bet that they were never made from blue-print, nor were their replicas ever seen or advertised in any Sears & Roebuck catalogue. However, they more than served their purpose and after all, what are tools but a means to an end?

And in such a manner, the men of "B" Company prepared themselves for overseas duty. By trial and error, a working knowledge of both locomotives and rolling stock was obtained and everyone acquired better than a fair idea of what would be expected of him.

COMPANY "C"

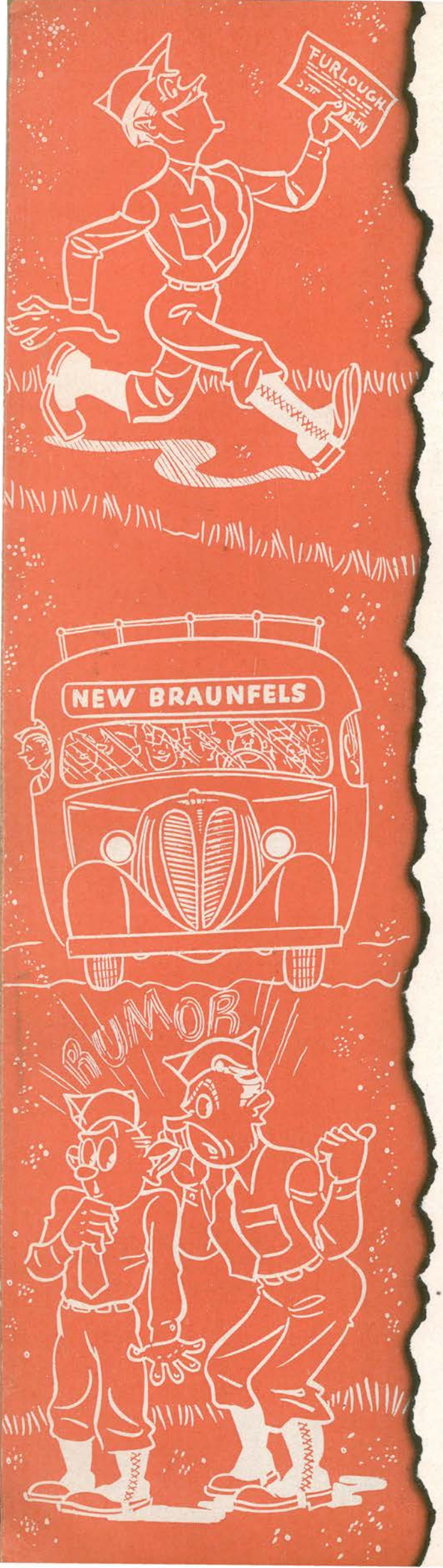
The enlisted men of "C" Company were the engineers, firemen, conductors, brakemen, yardmasters, switchmen, crew dispatchers, call boys, and the like that go into the intricate mechanism that provides the crews for yard switching and road trips. The "Old Man" of the company was the Trainmaster, Captain William P. Olson (S. P.), praised by his men from the start as a "square shooter". There were two Road Foremen of Engines. Lts. Ario Dal Porto (S. P.), and Norris E. Loop (C. R. I. & P.). The Assistant Trainmaster, Richard E. Johnson was a flagman off the Pennsylvania who'd gone through O. C. S. to get his 2nd Lieutenant's bars. Lt. John W. Springer, another SP man, was the general yardmaster, hailing from Sparks, Nevada.

It was not too difficult for the CO to assign his men. A crew board was set up in the San Antonio yard office in close proximity to that of the railroad and crews lined up for both road and yard work. To avoid having too many men in the cab, it was determined that only one GI engineman would be assigned to each crew. In addition, there was a conductor and brakeman assigned to each crew. There were seven first trick, six second trick, and five third trick jobs covered by the GIs in the San Antonio yards.

The gravy job was the fast through freight from San Antonio to Del Rio. Other semi-gravy jobs, which all paid six dollars per diem for expenses, were the Spofford, Kenmore, and Glidden locals. There was one short turn around local to Kerrville.

In yard switching both steam and diesel engines were used. It was another deal of gravy for scoop firemen to be able to sit and fire the oil burners. Later, in the ETO, the newly made firemen often wished that they had had some experience with coal before leaving the States.

Many "C" Company men had had many years of experience and to them the technical



training seemed to be nonsense. Nevertheless, it did give them opportunity to get acquainted with different types of signals and motive power. There was considerable "goofing off" at times but not to the extent that it seriously affected technical.

The burden of instruction fell upon the train and engine crews of the T. & N. O., as individual instruction was necessary in all cases. However, lectures by officers and noncoms were held at the round house for enginemen and on the rip track the embroyo conductors and brakemen were instructed in the "nomenclature" of a box car and learned how to dope a hot box and change brasses. The old saying that "an old dog can't be taught new tricks" hadn't sunk into an old "rail", J. J. Jones. Despite his long years of railroading it was found, when technical training came to a close, that he had put in more hours than any other man learning his job.

In "C" Company there was the usual bitching about ratings. An engineer was supposed to get a T/4; conductor, Buck Sergeant; fireman, T/5; and the lowly brakeman remained a private or got a PFC.

Technical training was not confined to the railroad. Each company's schedule contemplated class room instruction where the soldiers were acquainted with the manner in which the Army expected them to perform. Both officers and enlisted men acted as instructors, using principally the manuals that had been prepared by the War Department out of the experiences of the Civil War, World War II, and the technical knowledge of practical Army railroaders.

The period of technical training, lasting until June 10th, provided a period sorely needed by a majority of the men—who were more than happy to get away from the rigidity of Army routine and to engage in work so closely resembling civilian activity.

FURLOUGHS—AND RUMORS

Shortly after technical started, a furlough schedule was worked out—fifteen day's with six day's travelling time. This initiated the first serious sandhouse rumors about overseas movement. "There's no question about it—just as soon as the furlough schedule is completed we'll be alerted for shipment." It sounded reasonable.

Technical training completed and furloughs over, the soldier-railroaders were ready for shipment overseas. But immediate orders were not to come, so back to basic training. And to more instruction on the 50 caliber until blindfolded, they could put the "seer" in the "Seer slide." Gas mask drill by the hour—gas identification—and more trips through the gas chamber. One thought that surely the Germans already were using gas, so intense was the training.

FUN AND FOOLIN'

For recreation the GI railroader wormed his way through the milling masses of soldiers in what once had been sleepy old San Antone to the U. S. O., theatres, parks, and places of entertainment so graciously provided by the community. Or he went to "Snake Hill" to condition himself for "recreation" that was to follow in several European countries. It was reported that many went to Snake Hill who'd never seen snakes but upon the return were sure they were being chased by them. Or perhaps the soldier went to the well equipped Service Club on the Post at Fort Sam. All trainmen of the "C" companies of the several railway operating battalions that were in training under the jurisdiction of Fort Sam Houston were royally entertained one evening by Lodges 52 and 369 of the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen.

OVERSEAS PRELIMINARIES

Rumors of departure became hotter as inspections became more rigid and each individual was checked, double checked, and triple checked to ascertain that he had full equipment. Finally duffle bags were issued and stenciled with a shipping Number 4659 LL which brought forth a new crop of third-hole reports.

About the 20th of July it leaked out that an advance party, consisting of Captains Pine and Gould and S/Sgt. Carl Fleishmann (S. P.), was practically on its way. This was soon verified as truth. The advance party arrived at Fort Hamilton, New York, on the morning of July 23rd and was promptly alerted for overseas movement. It left New York on the 26th and arrived in London on August 8th. While in London Captains Pine and Gould had the experience of being blown out of bed when a buzz bomb exploded nearby. The party made arrangements for the establishment of a camp for the 716th at Eggerton. near Sedberry.

FAREWELL CUSHING

"Soldier-Railroaders—First—Last—Always"—that wording on the arch-way of Cushing was seen for the last time by the twenty-six officers, one warrant officer, and 777 enlisted men of the 716th when they left the camp on the evening of August 2nd to entrain for—well, for where? Now fully matriculated and with an unshakable sense of confidence in their ability to tackle successfully anything the future might hold, the men bid good-bye to Camp Cushing—but not without some regret and lumps in their throats, for the many months spent there had impressed themselves indelibly in the minds and hearts of all. However, not too much time was lost in reminiscing over past events, for the prospects and anticipation of going overseas, its novelties, its hard work and its dangers, loomed large in the minds of all, and those were the topics of conversation.

It was that evening that the climaxing reward came to "B" Company for their efforts in technical training—in seeing old No. 85 hooked onto the train which was to start the 716th on its way. At the sight, every man who had had something to do with putting No. 85 back into rolling condition again could not help but feel a suffused glow of pride come over him.

It appeared that the Army was endeavoring to confuse possible enemy agents—certainly the men were confused—as movements were made in all directions and over many railroads. Two trains were used—one for H & H and "C" Companies and one for "A" and "B" Companies. The first train passed through Fort Worth, Texarkana, Little Rock, Vicksburg, Meridian, Knoxville, Birmingham, Bristol, Roanoke, Lynchberg, Washington, D. C., Philadelphia, and New York City. The second train passed through Memphis, Corinth, Decator (Ala), Larksville, Chattanooga, Knoxville, Morristown, Limestone, Washington College, Jonesboro, Bristol, and Roanoke.

CAMP SHANKS

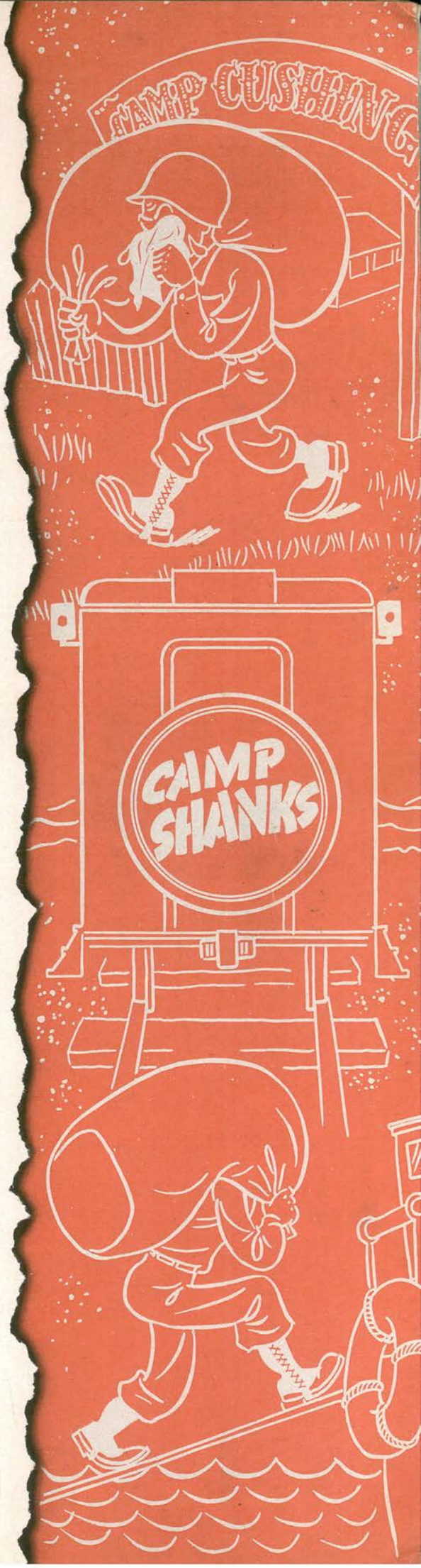
The guy, if there was one, who had guessed Camp Shanks, New York, was right, Camp Shanks—the P. O. E. "Will the 716th ever go overseas?" The question now was being answered with an assembly-line affirmative by the Shanks personnel that had processed and sent on their way soldiers by the thousands. Equipment checks and showdowns, security lectures, imposition of censorship, rapid-fire war bond sales talks, will making, shots, being instructed as to ship conduct and abandonment, and last but never to be forgotten, the final overseas physicals by medics so clever they could ascertain one's exact physical condition by the way he held a spoon. May it be recorded here to the everlasting credit of the 716th that it, as in many things, was physically perfect—there wasn't a rejection in the outfit. On the last physical, there were 13 men absent. Volunteers were called for and the 13 were passed by proxy!

Some of the men got passes to the Big City—others planned on one last fling. But the outfit was alerted and prepared to move out amid the non-effective but colorful profanity of the disappointed ones.

TO SHIPSIDE

The afternoon of August 10th saw the GI railroaders with full field packs, gas masks, carbines, and overcoats, marching in full heat to the train that was to be jammed with sweating, cursing men. The ride was as uneventful as it was uncomfortable. Then the station platform—to add to an already encumbered body a duffle bag that weighed 75 or more pounds. The struggle to the ferry was the worst yet experienced but only a forerunner to many similar ones. Leaving the ferry there was another tussel to get to shipside on Pier 84 where the Red Cross somewhat revived the exhausted railroaders with lemonade and donuts—coffee was getting short in the States! Some begin to have that "strange" feeling—this was the first ocean-going cruise for practically everyone and none felt that it was a pleasure jaunt.

One more struggle and the Shanks' assembly line ended at gang plank as each soldier shouted his first name and middle initial as his surname was called. Efficiency continued—as duffle bags and men poured into the hold it was quite obvious that the Americans must have been awarded the record for ability to put the greatest number in the smallest space. It was hot—there was no air—it was stifling—this was war! After the Calcutta Hole test the men were permitted to go on deck where some slept for the night.



UNDER WAY

It wasn't until 10 o'clock the following morning that the ship got under way. All men had been restricted to the hold and there they stayed until the limits of the harbor were behind and the loudspeaker (to which everyone was now accustomed) announced they could go on deck, provided that steel helmets and life belts were worn at all times.

The medics were aboard, too, and it wasn't long until they conceived the idea of more shots. The railroaders were "needled" twice during the trip. Bathing in cold salt water was a dismal failure with the Army-provided patented miraculous soap that is supposed to lather anywhere, anytime, and in anything. Smoking was prohibited in the hold and even in the latrines—it was a matter of getting smoked up sufficiently during the day to last for the night. Fresh water was rationed through two daily water calls. One of the favorable things was that when the harbor was left behind so were the taxes—cigarettes were five cents a pack and other things at PX call in proportion.

The novelty of the sea didn't deter crap games and the starting of a couple of interminable no-limit poker games. "First sitting of the Officers Mess!" was the signal to grab mess gear and join the line that had been formed voluntarily an hour earlier. Not to the Officers Mess—but way down in the hold where one speedily had his food (good and bad) flung at him. With deck weaving, the GI made his way to a high table where he stood as he gulped his share and wondered how long it would be his.

THE U.S.S. EXCELSIOR

The good ship, the U. S. S. Excelsior, had literally been through "hell and high water"—she had been an invasion ship on D-Day and had been hit three times. This was her eleventh crossing as a troop ship. She was a Class C-3 vessel of 10,000 tons with an average speed of 13 knots and a top speed of 22 knots. The average speed on this voyage was 15 knots. She was built by the Bethlehem Steel Company in 1942. Originally a freighter she had been converted to a troop ship by the construction of hundreds of steel-canvas bunks, so hung on the walls that they might be lifted during the day to make more room. About the third day out, gun practice was had by the Navy crew that manned the guns. The convoy was large—some say that it was the largest of all convoys—there were ships as far as the eye could see. Protection was offered by swift destroyers that seemed always to be playing tag with the convoy.

The long voyage was made easier by a fairly well organized program of relaxation. It was on the Excelsior that the 716th Orchestra was brought into being under the able leadership of Sgt. Charlie Culver. Lt. O'Neill toiled many long hours rounding up talent for deck shows and arranging for movies and church services, the latter being fully impressive and inspiring on the forward deck in the briny spray from the bow.

The eighth day when the railroaders ventured forth for breakfast they looked in amazement—the "protection" of the destroyers had vanished—as had all but a dozen of the ships. Frank answers would have brought expressions of uneasiness for the first time—there distinctly was that "queer" feeling.

ABROAD

The following day land was sighted—a range of mountains in the distance. The ship seemed not to get closer and there was much speculation as to what land it was—England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, or maybe the shores of the continent itself. Soon it was learned that the reduced convoy was proceeding in a northeasterly direction near the coast of Ireland. On the 22nd Ireland had been rounded and as noon approached the Excelsior slipped into the Firth of Clyde, Gourock, Scotland, and then slowly proceeded through the submarine nets to anchor. The second long leg of the journey had been completed.

All remained on board until the next day. Pending departure, the railroaders watched the Scots unload the cargo and discussed the never-ending question. "What next?" It was here that the Battalion Adjutant, Captain Burton W. Gibson, was lowered over shipside and sent to a hospital in England. Enroute he had undergone an appendectomy. He was not to rejoin the outfit for some time. As an enlisted man debarked on crutches one of the boys was heard to remark. "Well, Frank Shaw once said that if he had to go with the outfit on crutches he'd be there. I can see how he got by the POE, alright, but what of a hell of a way to go to war!"

THE ARMY WAY

The 716th entrained and rumor had it that the outfit was to head for the camp previously established by the advance party at Eggerton. But three minutes prior to the scheduled departure of the train, orders were received which directed the unit to proceed directly to Southampton. Night soon obliterated the colorful Scottish countryside as the train sped southward. At 2:20 AM the train passed through the outskirts of London, at which time an air raid was in progress. Upon arrival at Lehigh, England, at 6:45 AM, Thursday, August 24, one of the fellows who'd remained awake all night announced that the train had passed through New Biggen, Ormside, Ais Gill, Dent, Sette, Hellfield, Skipton, Kilwich, Kaughley, Leeds, Thackiey, Calverley, Aplley, Woodlesford, and Methley.

Off the train at Lehigh and onto trucks for an hour's ride to cover the five miles to the bivouac area at Southampton, which not a soul praised for comfort or attractiveness. And "C" rations were coming quite into vogue—there they were, for dinner, supper and breakfast. But that was just a one night stand before another of those backbreaking ordeals of marching, with full field packs, the miles to the docks where the boys saw the British pig boat, the Cheshire, that was to take them to France. Incidentally, the previous night the officers had declared Southampton "off limits" and stated that no passes would be issued. However, the EM helped the officers through the hole in the fence and practically everyone got their first and only English beer that night.

The first three-graders were accorded staterooms on the Cheshire, four men and comfort. But the others? 716ers still curse the Excelsior but it was more than curses for both accomodations and the scanty portions of the none-to-good food that was rationed out.

ADVENTURE

If the men of the 716th were ever apprehensive—it was during the channel crossing. There were thoughts of subs—of strafing—of mines—and even of buzz bombs and long range guns. But curiosity led most to the rails where everything afloat was observed with interest. But even thoughts of the proximity of war had not stopped the marathon crap and poker games. One lad took enough time to count his winnings with the marbles. He'd gotten on the Excelsior with a lone "sawbuck" but now he held 900 dollars in long green.

Both American and English radio programs were broadcast and for the first time in many days the men heard the latest news—of the advance of the armies and of news at home. Particularly gratifying was the flash that Paris had been liberated, even though the announcement was premature.

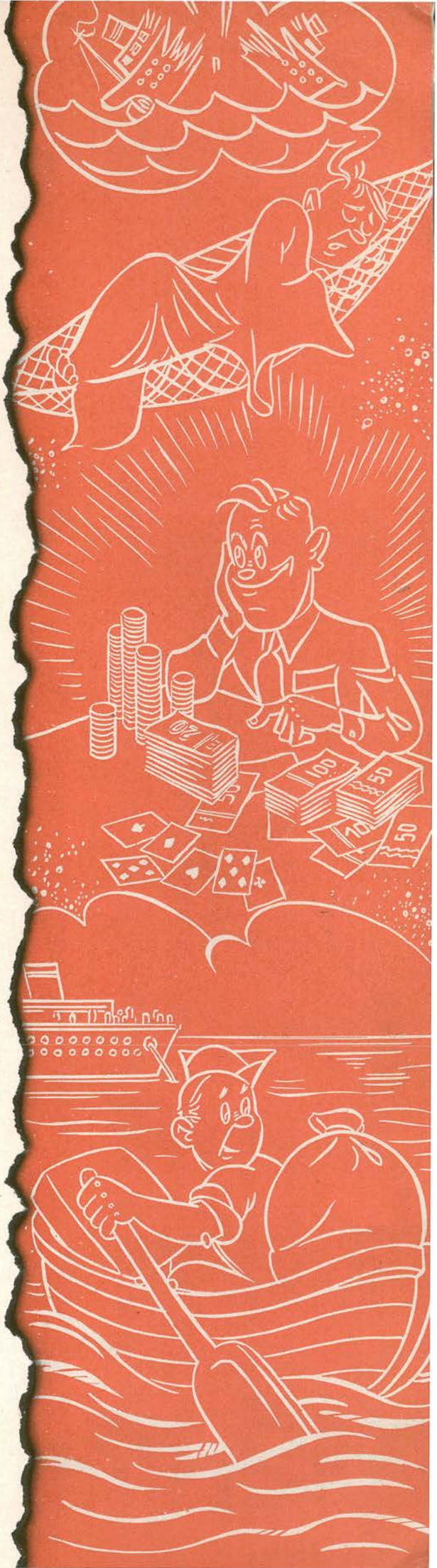
At 8 : 00 AM, August 26th, the men got their first sight of Cherbourg and France. While the Cheshire arrived off Omaha Beach in the afternoon it was not until the next day that debarkation was to be effected. When it was, men were startled to see duffle bags with radios and other breakables (so carefully protected during the journey) tossed 50 feet overside to the LST below. The men followed their bags into the "Y-Worry", clambering, with full field packs, down a swinging ladder to be packed like vienna sausages from bow to stern. "Hurry up and wait" was back again! There was waiting until one was tired of standing—he couldn't sit, all he could do was lean against his neighbor—and that neighbor against another. Then the ride to the beach seemed long—so long that one tired of looking at the hundreds of ships that had been scuttled to make the unnatural harbor that made D-Day possible.

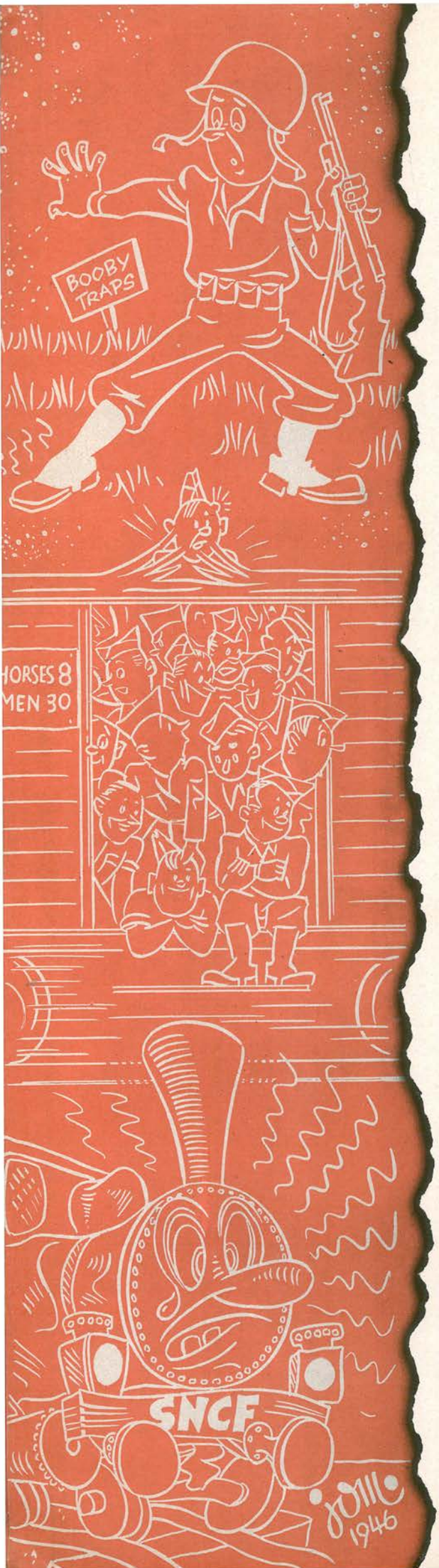
THE "INVASION"

D + 81 — the 716th's invasion of France. Every man fully armed—keyed to high tension with the spirit of battle—but not a damned round of ammo among the whole lot. Predecessors thoughtfully had built a steel pier so it wasn't with light pack and up to armpits in brine that these men charged the beach. Rather, they once more lugged their constant burden of bags and equipment up the rise and over into a field for a break.

A detail of cripples and gold-brickers remained there to guard the mountains of duffle bags while the main body marched nine miles in a variety of directions to reach a bivouac area some five miles distant where, in total darkness, they put to practice what they'd learned at Bullis about pitching shelter halves.

The next day more principles were put to practice. Men were cautioned about water, mine fields, and booby traps. They were a little skittish at first—they were not inclined





to think there was much danger in view of the thousands who'd occupied the same area. But, as they advanced, they learned—and it may be said to the credit of the unit that no injuries were ever sustained because of meddling or experimenting contrary to their teachings.

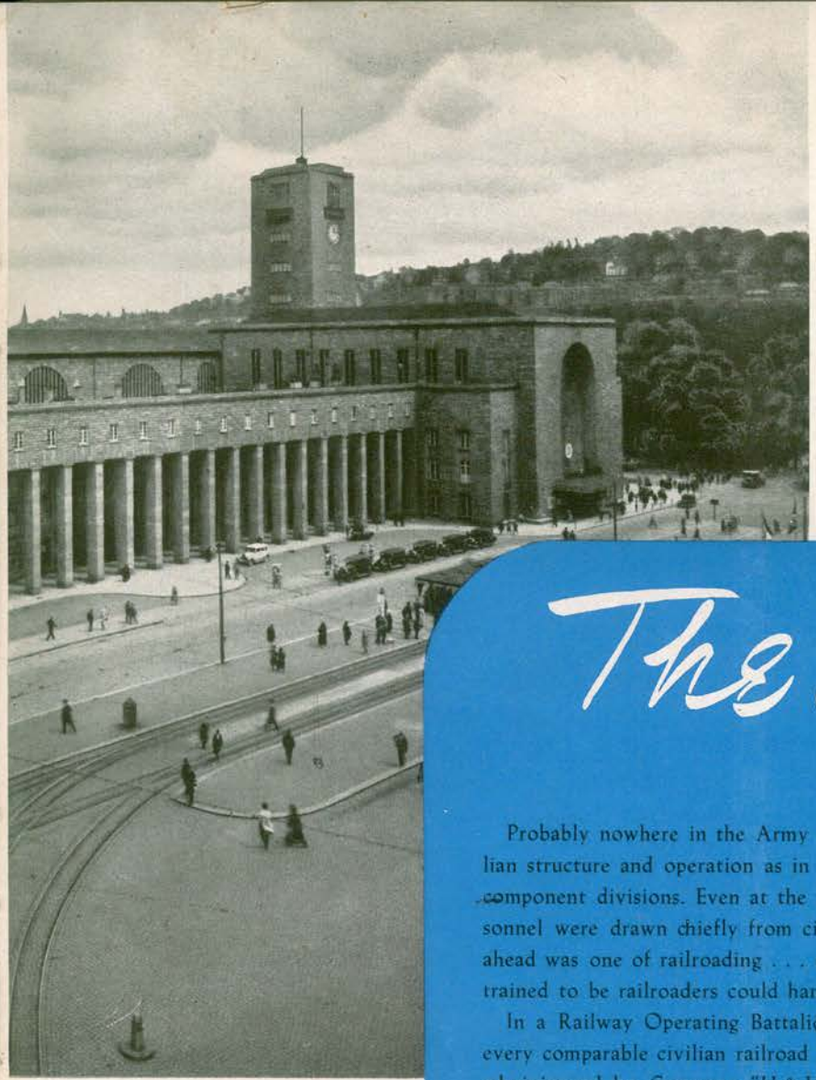
Two days in bivouac and rain—but Texas had prepared the men for that. They knew what to do—they just endured it. Of course, the menus were the ones anticipated, "C" and "K" rations.

A RAILROAD RIDE

During mid-afternoon of August 29th the men were trucked to the nearest rail point, Chef du Pont, where the railroaders got their first glimpse of a GI Diesel and a 2—8—0. They got their first good look at a French 40 & 8er, too. After a "K" ration in a nearby field they entrained—and entrained at 38 men and no horses to each car. Wonderful how the American strategists allowed for the larger size of the American and didn't try to compress 40 GIs into a single car. But they'd forgotten, apparently, that the GI is the best clothed and equipped soldier in the world and that he carries it all with him! There wasn't an inch to spare—with men, equipment, weapons, and cases of rations.

It was still daylight, 1930 hours, when the train whistled off—destination: Chartres. The next day it was learned that the 716 th's trains were in the middle of a string of 23 trains going in the same direction. On August 30th great progress was made, exactly five miles. At 1430 hours the following day a stop was made at Veriall for coal and the loading was done by hand—facilities, it was found, were not very good. The unit passed through St. Lo and other cities which saw much action. At Le Mans the 2—8—0 was cut off and a Diesel substituted. But the snail's pace was continued—it was not until five thirty in the afternoon that Chartres was reached. Duffle bags were unloaded and the men marched through an underpass, headed for a warehouse for a much needed rest. But during the march, orders were changed—they were marched back—they entrained—by God! someone had snafued the works again! Dawn of the following day hadn't broken when the train of the 716th, as tired as the men, gave a sigh of exhaustion as it pulled into "la gare" of Dreux. Five days from Chef du Pont to Dreux—even the wartime French schedule had been less than five hours! Dreux! Dreux! The old French town that was to be headquarters, —to be home—to be hell!

And so ends the first phase of the history of the 716th Railway Operating Battalion —a unit that was to play a dominant role in the making of wartime railroad history.

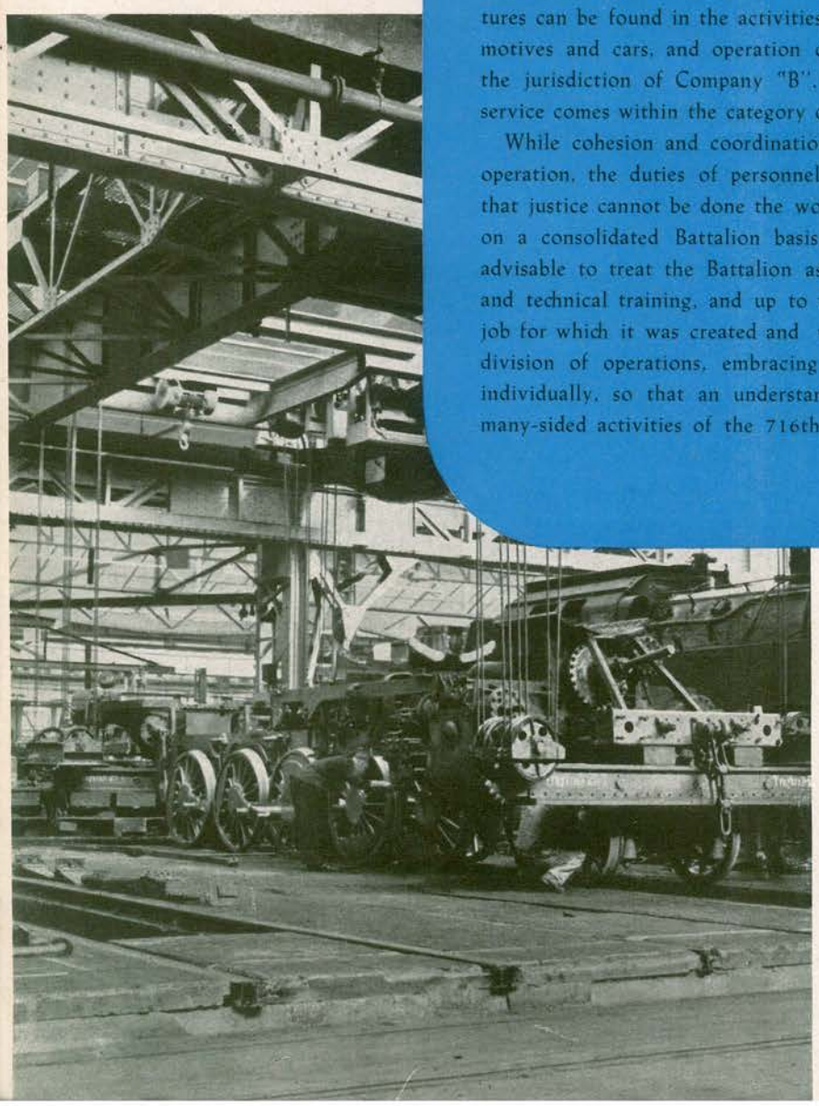


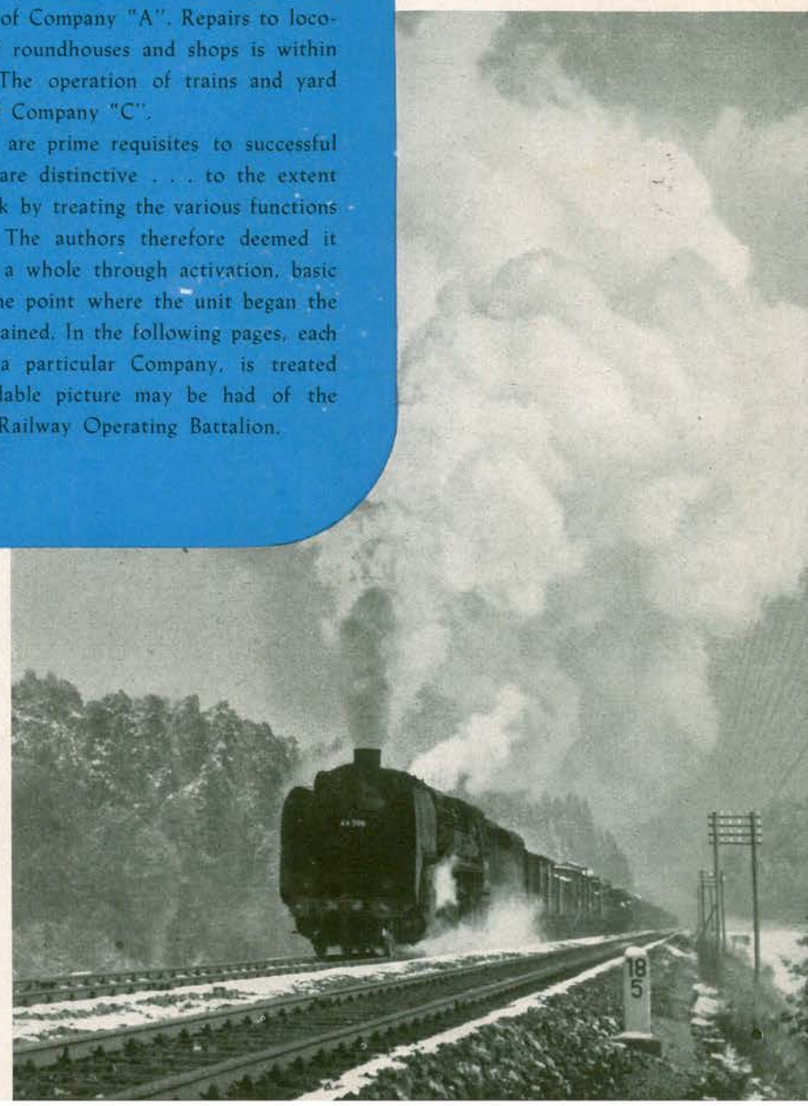
The Job

Probably nowhere in the Army does a unit so closely resemble civilian structure and operation as in the Military Railway Service and its component divisions. Even at the inception of the service, officer personnel were drawn chiefly from civilian railroads . . . the primary job ahead was one of railroading . . . one which only railroaders and those trained to be railroaders could handle.

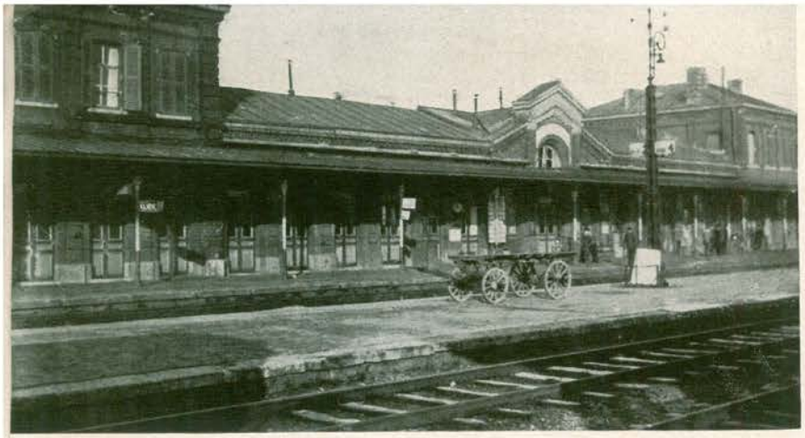
In a Railway Operating Battalion there is a counterpart for nearly every comparable civilian railroad function. Headquarters and supply is administered by Company "H & H". Maintenance of ways and structures can be found in the activities of Company "A". Repairs to locomotives and cars, and operation of roundhouses and shops is within the jurisdiction of Company "B". The operation of trains and yard service comes within the category of Company "C".

While cohesion and coordination are prime requisites to successful operation, the duties of personnel are distinctive . . . to the extent that justice cannot be done the work by treating the various functions on a consolidated Battalion basis. The authors therefore deemed it advisable to treat the Battalion as a whole through activation, basic and technical training, and up to the point where the unit began the job for which it was created and trained. In the following pages, each division of operations, embracing a particular Company, is treated individually, so that an understandable picture may be had of the many-sided activities of the 716th Railway Operating Battalion.





Company "A & A"



Aulnoye Station

Headquarters Company, Metz

(Above) Reichsbahndirektion Building, Stuttgart
(Below) Battalion Headquarters, Esslingen

DREUX

THE FIRST JOB

So this is it? Yes, the first item on the agenda after the long trip by land and sea was a clean-up detail—something necessary at Dreux as well as at Fort Sam or Cushing.

The same day the battalion arrived at Dreux the first H & H men were sent out on their First jobs as soldier—railroaders. As they departed, loaded down with equipment and 10 in 1's, little did they realize that it would be some time before they were together again as a unit.

This first contingent consisted of fourteen men, in charge of 1st. Lt. P. G. Carr and Master Sergeant C. N. Thomas, chief and assistant chief dispatchers, respectively. Proceeding westerly to Surdon, two operators, with rations, were dropped off at the stations, or "la gares", that were to serve as block limits on the main line from Cherbourg to Paris, the line that was to speed supplies and tools of destruction to spell "doom" to the enemy. As the men were left it was up to them to make a portion of each station their living quarters. This was not easy as generally there was but little left of the stations.

At Surdon mess and housing facilities were set up to accomodate transient train crews. The detachment was under command of Lt. Richard E. Johnson. Technically, the 716th relieved the 740th in the area—that battalion had been unable to move anything east because the rails were not yet in order. But things were shaping up and within 24 hours the 716th began running trains toward Paris.

PROBLEMS—AND SOLUTIONS

Because of two bad bridges between Legel and Borth there was single track operation. At first, operations were possible by use of the French 'phone system—but it soon bogged down, necessitating the transmission of train orders by trucks until Lt. MacArthur and his able signalmen established block 'phones between stations and a direct line to the dispatcher's office in Dreux. The Surdon-Dreux territory was under the jurisdiction of the 716th until September 10th, at which time it was turned over to the 723rd R.O.B.

At Dreux, in the meantime, H & H men were being further fanned out. Block stations were established on the single track, Class II, line—Maintenon to Chartres. It was over that branch that westbound empties were to be routed so as to relieve the heavy traffic on the Paris—Dreux line.

NIGHT TRAIN TO VERSAILLES

At the throttle of the first test train on the Dreux-Paris main line on September 8th was Lt. "Torpedo" DalPorto. With him was Captain H. G. Gould who deployed operators along the line. How they were ever found again remains a mystery as into the night at a snail's pace the train went forward with its precious gas and ammo, dropping off 716th operators at block stations, to shift for themselves. The following morning at 0820 hours the train crept into Versailles station where the last of the operators and towermen were placed in the main tower.

On September 11th the dispatcher's office was moved from Dreux to Gare Montparnesse in Paris so as to work in conjunction with the French dispatchers at that location.

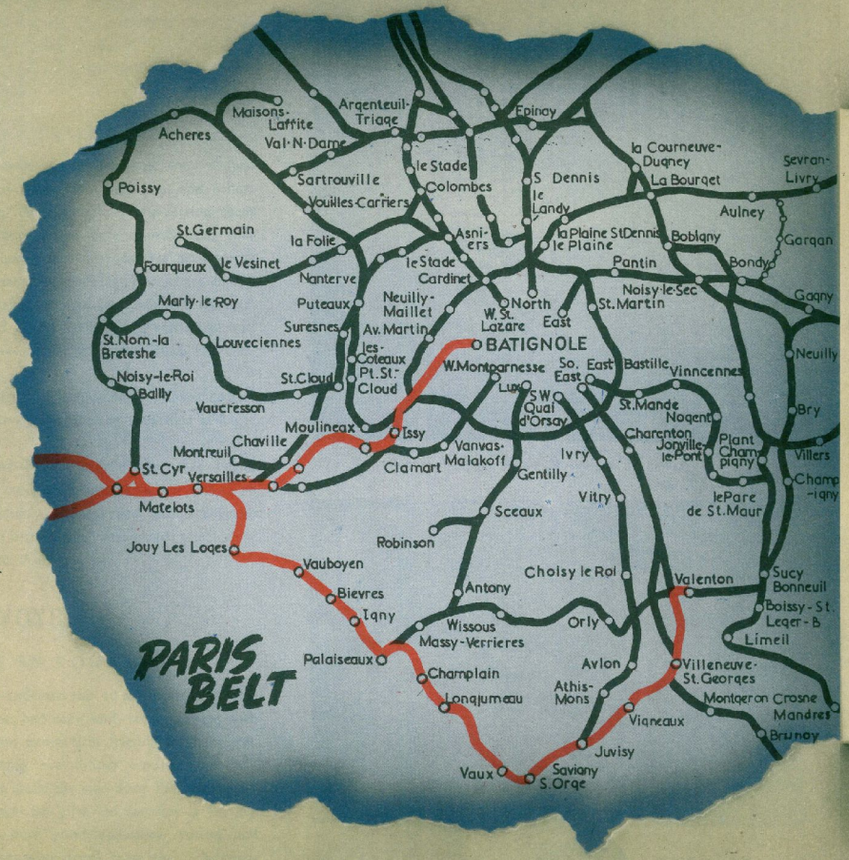
SETTING UP THE MESSES

Lt. Fante had a multitude of problems in establishing messes at Dreux, Versailles, Trappes, and Villiers. Mess halls had to be found, cook teams organized, and civilians hired for KP—technically trained men were much too valuable to now be used for pots and pans. Later, a mess hall was set up at Houdan for an "A" Company detachment.

The Chain of Supply thru France

In the days of the "Big Push" through France, when every man and every gun counted in the relentless pursuit of the enemy, the men of the 716th were called upon to "deliver the goods" in a seemingly impossible manner. But deliver they did.

The Chain of Supply through France began at the beaches of Normandy, and its links reached across the fertile countryside of France, connecting beachhead with front in a never-ending flow of men and material. One of the most vital elements in the delivery of goods to the armies was the railroad line Surdon—Dreux—Paris. Over this section of the Chain of Supply poured trainload after trainload of guns, ammunition, food and gasoline. With a minimum average of one train every half hour, every man in the 716th was pressed to the limit to keep things moving. But the job was done. The hard work and teamwork of each soldier-railroader forged each trainload into another link in the Chain of Supply.



Battalion Supply set up their headquarters originally at Dreux and then moved to Batignole yards in Paris on 21st September 1944. The midnight oil was burned by them for many weeks in order that they might keep all units supplied with the necessary equipment for the job of railroading that had to be done.

"HOME"—AND FRIENDS

The living quarters of the operators along the lines were indeed varied. A few utilized waiting rooms, some used box cars, and others were fortunate enough to talk the "chef de gare" into letting them have private rooms over the stations. There were improvisions that would rival Rube Goldberg creations—but a hot shower was worth putting in a week's work. French madames made improvements on 10 in 1's and an occasional rabbit, pheasant, or wild boar balanced the fare.

Tie-ups on the line and "occupied blocks" resulted in visits and bull sessions with train crews who always demanded coffee from the constantly steaming pot.

As friends were made, the French brought out their hidden bottles of "du vin" and cognac. Life was strangely different than that at home but there were factors that helped!

H & H men worked their 12 hours—lived the best they could—wrote streams of letters home—and were ready, as always, when orders to move came on December 23rd. Quickly, they turned things over to the 723rd and for the first time in months assembled with their buddies for the movement north to Aulnoye.

AULNOYE

CHRISTMAS EN ROUTE

'Twas the day before Christmas—and into the 40 & 8ers were loaded bags, equipment, and men. Good-byes had been said—some perhaps with heavy heart and tear in eye because many firm friendships had been made. Speeding northward, Christmas Eve dinner consisted of "C" rations, heated over the stoves that made the side-door Pullmans quite cozy. No trees with tinsel trappings—no gifts—no families—a far cry from past Christmases. But there were good comrades, stories and memories were told—and a few toasts were drunk from the "Christmas cheer" some were thoughtful enough to bring along.

Dawn found the outfit still rolling with cheery voices heralding "Merry Christmas" and a breakfast of "Cs". The menu didn't vary as the destination, Aulnoye, was reached at noon. Right after chow the officers set out on an inspection tour. Supper that night was real meat and potatoes—and then, except for those on details and guard, the outfit bedded down for the night.

The next day, December 26, saw the personnel of H & H being scattered to the four winds. Operators, cooks, and truck drivers were distributed from Tergnier to Jeaumont, Belgium. Later, more were to be dispatched down the Aulnoye-Verdun line.

"JERRY" STRIKES

That night saw something else. The red glow of the many chimneys from the strings of box cars made an ideal target for Jerry—the outfit was strafed for the first time—an experience never to be forgotten. For quite a few nights "Bed Check Charlie" appeared regularly—his visits remain a matter of record as the boys used to OS him on train sheets as he passed by their stations.

The Battalion's operations were quite close to the "Battle of the Bulge". Because of this, the men were briefed by Captain Gould on their duties and responsibilites in event of attack, and plans were drawn up for the possible destruction of all equipment and supplies.

T/4 Kaufman at teletype, Train Movement Section

(Above) Sheet Dispatcher T/3 Robert Hilburn

(Left)"Hard at work"

(Below) "The Inner Sanctum."Sitting:T/3 Booth, T/Sgt. Berrier. Standing: T/3 Westrick, T/3 Knotts

The "Mess Masters" — L to R; front: S/Sgt. Ammons, T/4 Sparling, T/4 Burden, T/4 Henze; back: T/5 Coronado, Pvt. Massey, PFC Stimson, PFC Zamora

Good . . .

. . . better . . .

. . . best

PATTON GETS THE GOODS

In the Aulnoye area, past experiences and the ability to coordinate, learned the hard way at Dreux and Paris, put the Battalion in position to do a splendid job of delivering supplies to the Third Army—the Army that was "delivering" up front.

The job was not easy. The outfit had fallen heir to about 300 miles of double track with men and equipment intended for operations of betwen 75 and 100 miles. The strength of the outfit had been reduced some 20% by C.I.D. investigations. The load was lightened somewhat by replacements; causing shake-ups as men had to be shifted so that newcomers could be distributed among the "old timers".

On January 15th the territory was extended from Jeaumont, France to Charleroi, Belgium. Ten days later more territory, from Valenciennes to Hirson, was added.

Due to the hazard of living in the yards, billets were found for the men in the town of Aulnoye. Battalion headquarters was left in the rolling offices close to "la gare" where the dispatcher's office was located. Messes were established at Tergnier, Aulnoye, Maubeuge, Jeaumont, and Lumes.

It was in this territory that the outfit was confronted with loads going both east and west. Those moving west came out of the newly opened port of Antwerp and were destined to Rheims and Paris. Coal for hospitals and industries vital to victory came out of the territory and every available wagon was pressed into service.

"RAIL" TO "DOUGHFOOT"

The front line situation became critical. Supply units were to fill quotas of replacements from personnel under the age of thirty. Starting January 30th the younger men of the Battalion were examined physically at Aulnoye and then began sweating out the question of going to the Infantry.

But another order to move came through—and in the hurry and bustle of loading up and getting off, the Infantry physicals were forgotten by the 716th—and by the Infantry, too.

METZ

A FORTRESS—OPEN FOR BUSINESS

Metz, the fortress city—the battles had been bitter but the Americans had triumphed. And, "according to plan", a railway operating battalion was to take over, rehabilitate the battered equipment and right of way, and push further ahead the road of iron—the chain of supply.

The men were raring to go after a good nights sleep *sans* the click of rails and the jostling of the horse cars. It was old stuff now, leaving headquarters and setting up at stations on the lines over which supplies would flow in the never-ending stream that would spell VICTORY sooner than anticipated.

"SPIDER—WEB" RAILROAD

While Battalion headquarters and the dispatcher's office were established at Gare Ancienne in Metz, the real problem was the proper distribution of personnel over the vast system so that operations would be safe and expeditious. But the matter of distribution was old stuff to the officers, too, so it wasn't long until operations were under way at Conflans-Jarney, Audon le Roman, Florange, Thionville, Longuyon, Landres, and Mancieulles.

Sablon yard at Metz was a maze of devastation—the French estimated that more than 3 months would be required to put it back in operation.

But Sablon was needed badly, so Co. "A", with a contingent of Frenchmen, introduced assemblyline methods—and Sablon was used as a main classification yard in three week's time—an outstanding job.

Wartime railroading is quite different from peace-time railroading under private enterprise. The Army has no concern about profits—expenses—manpower or union contracts—everything is expendable. Whether an order is logical or illogical—it is carried out. Someone at the top, with an eye to the entire picture, directs.

MORE RAILROAD

It wasn't long until the Thionville—Hargarten-Falck line was opened—a double track road into Germany that supplied three armies.

There was the "Three Star Special" which carried high priority goods. Right over orders could go only to the many Hospital trains. Then later came the "Toot Sweet" that carried the mail, sometimes more important than food.

Check the record! The 716th, during February, March, and April, handled an average of 74 military freight trains per day. That figure does not include the many troop, POW, hospital, D.P. trains.

Technical days at Cushing seemed far away. There the men knew they were being trained for tough assignments, but the reality of actual wartime operations was far beyond the most extravagant thoughts of the soldier—railroaders as they daily accepted and accomplished their "missions" without hesitancy. Surely there was much bitching but that was only because Army operations demanded Army customs.

Proof of the accomplishments of the unit during the Metz "occupation" was in the presentation of the Meritorious Service Award, received for the period February 1st to March 31st.

It was during this period that from all legs of the huge spider-web of track, trains flowed into the funnel at Thionville where they were numbered, classed by priority and dispatched down the Falck Line for delivery to the 732nd—on one more leg of the long journey from beach-head to the front. As the Falck Line opened it was necessary to move part of the dispatcher's staff to Thionville and later, to Hargatten-Falck.

Outside of the original operations on the Paris—Dreux Line, H & H experienced the roughest of its operations in the ETO in Metz and the contiguous areas.

ESSLINGEN

GERMANY AND VICTORY

As the main body of the 716th crossed the Rhine on May 8th the shooting war in the E. T. O. was over. V-E Day—Victory in Europe! Over the radio came newscasts of the "madness" of victory in the celebrations in the big cities at home.

While 716ers shared the happy feelings of victory they were fully cognizant of what the future might hold for them. First, there was still a tremendous job of transportation in Europe. Food, supplies, and mail still had to go to the Armies. Masses of men and materials would have to be moved to ports, destined to either the U.S. or the South Pacific. There were to be hundreds of thousands of DPs (Displaced Persons—the slave workers imported to Germany from conquered countries) moving back to their homelands. Then, too, the war was but half over—the Japs were still to be beaten. Will the 716th be sent to the Pacific? Will the outfit be busted up? There were a hundred questions and but few answers.

The "Morale Boosters" Mailmen T/4 Tyson, T/5 Brown

Motor Pool, Dreux: Sergeant Bowman "lines things up"

Battalion Supply—in person. Front: PFC Maata, T/5 Lacertosa, Capt. Pine, Mr. Hobbs, T/4 Vandiver, S/Sgt. Zabell, T/Sgt. Grant. Rear: T/4 Slackman, Interpreter, T/4 Day, T/5 Otto, T/4 Campbell, PFC Collins, PFC Merriam

Above: Cpl. Sniegowski checks personnel records. Center: H & H Orderly Room; (L-R) PFC Hoch, 1/Sgt. Battson, T/3 Gebel, PFC Walker. Below: Cpl. Roe, Cpl. Arrison, Cpl. Merriam, Cpl. Sniegowski, T/5 Wells, T/4 Leslie

GETTING SET AGAIN

Headquarters were set up in Esslingen with administrative offices, dispatcher's office, dispensary, PX, "H & H" and "A" Company orderly rooms, and "H & H" billets in the Merkel and Kienlin factory, which had been found by the advance party to be quite suitable.

The new consolidated battalion mess was a mess sergeant's dream—in this case the joint dream of Sergeants Fischer, Ammons, and Brancoli, who found themselves in a modern kitchen with every convenience, including steam and electric cookers—the best they'd had since hitting Europe.

The men were soon fanned out again, from Ludwigsburg to Augsburg, to commence active operations on May 15th. At first three operators were assigned to each station and for a short period they enjoyed, for the first time in months, an eight-hour day. But the size of the territory soon necessitated return to the old twelve hour shifts as men were pulled out to open new stations.

The dispatching was under the direct supervision of Assistant Chief Dispatcher M/Sgt C. N. Thomas, who acted in lieu of Lt. Fante whose services temporarily were required in the large territory around Buchloe. Fante returned and took over temporarily until moved to Stuttgart as the battalion's Transportation Officer. Captain R. W. Hartzel then was loaned to the 716th by Headquarters of the First Military Railway Service to head the dispatcher's office.

"TWO DOWN AND ONE TO GO"

Hardly had the outfit settled down when at headquarters and at all detachments every man was required to see "Two Down And One To Go". The Point System! Already there had been much talk about redeployment, the army of occupation, possible discharges, and going home. Now the talk was accelerated—and rumors multiplied by the dozen.

PROGRESS

Train movements over the territory were at first slow due in part to single track operation over the Danube between Ulm and New Ulm and to the many slow orders in effect because of saggy road bed. The total time over the division was twenty hours when through operations were inaugurated. As the days passed the running time was steadily reduced as the road bed was repaired by the Germans under the direction of Company "A". By the end of May part of the dispatcher's staff had been moved to Neu Offingen, which cut down greatly the overall time.

With the completion of the double-track over the Danube at Ulm the office at Neu Offingen was closed. Even though the territory was then extended to Heilbronn from Ludwigsburg, the railroad was running sufficiently smooth to revert to the eight-hour day, a thing now desired as thoroughly by the officers as the enlisted men.

A PAL IS LOST

During July H & H Company lost a beloved buddy and a charter member of the 716th. T/5 Thomas Hawkins, who was drowned while swimming in the Danube. "Sadie", as he was affectionately called by all who knew him, was a lad of highest character and his passing was keenly felt.

REVERSION

Early in August a radical change was made in dispatching methods. Anticipating the time when the railroad would be "turned back to the

Left: Personnel Section. (Seated) T/5 Wells, T/5 Grybosky, PFC Butler, T/5 Costello, T/5 Hisson, T/5 Stratton, T/5 Faltz, T/5 Kuhne, PFC Moreland. (Standing) T/5 Gamble, Pvt. Nowak, T/4 Santos, PFC De la Montagne, T/5 Sharkey, M/Sgt. Doyle

Indians", the American dispatcher's office was moved from Esslingen to Stuttgart and consolidated with that of the Germans in the Reichsbahn-direktion Building. Thereafter, the main burden of dispatching duties rested on the employees of the Deutsche Reichsbahn, under the close supervision of H & H personnel.

WELL DONE!

To H & H Company rightfully belongs a "superior" rating for a splendid job of administration and coordination. The nerve center of any railroad operation is the dispatcher and his staff—from the chief down to the last operator on the division rests the first responsibility for safe and efficient operation. The record of H & H is ample proof of the diligence and faith with which duties were performed. Men engaged in the many other functions of H & H Company, not directly concerned with the physical operation of the railroad, are deserving of equal commendation—for upon them rested the responsibility of keeping the outfit straight—the Army way!

Above: (Top) GI pilot gets his train orders from the operator. (Circle) Midnight message

Left: (Top) Flag stop for orders. (Bottom) The most important operator of all—the mimeograph operator

Company "A"

DREUX

FIRST STOP DREUX

With curious glances, the men of Company "A" looked out of their "side door dormitories", to view the battered outline of Dreux station. looming vaguely in the mists of early morning. "What place is this? Dreux? Never heard of it . . . how far are we from Paris?"

But Paris was "beaucoup kilometers" away that cold gray dawn, and a simple French town—in those days nothing more than a name—was soon to become indelibly impressed on the minds and memories of GI's who huddled around small fires built next to their cars on the morning of 2 September 1944. This was Dreux. The first big job.

By noon of that memorable first day, the linemen, the bridge men and the trackmen were hard at work, making the newly-acquired billets at the Caserne habitable. They discovered, as they subsequently did at many another place, that their quarters needed a thorough cleaning and much repair work. It was up to the B & B gang to get windows blacked out and handle the various carpentry jobs. The water service crew saw to it that there was running water, and that antiquated French plumbing didn't leak. Signal men busied themselves with electric wiring and connections—although at first there weren't any lights in the whole countryside. The remainder of the Company, not to be outdone, pitched in with the general housekeeping. And it was during those "moving in" days that the shortage of tools, which was to plague "A" Company for months to come, first made its appearance.

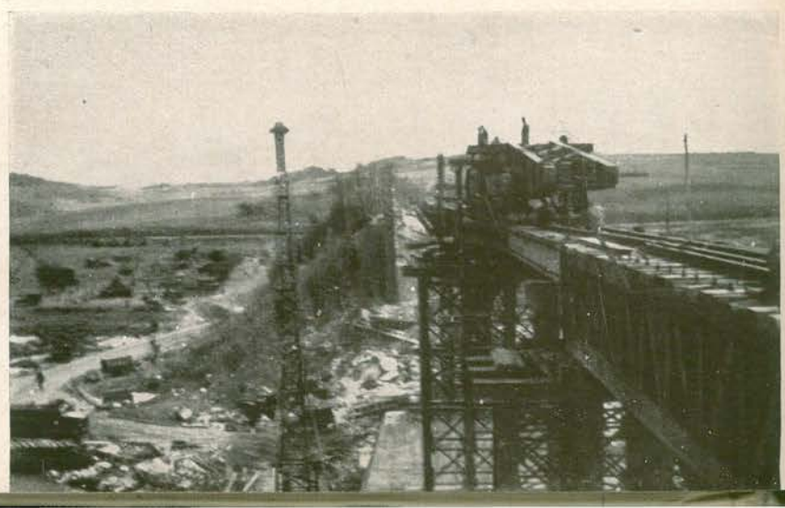
When hammers had stopped pounding and mop handles no longer tripped up the unwary passer-by, the men of "A" Company settled down to enjoy the fruits of their labors, as best they could—in spite of "C" rations and candlelight.

PRESENTING—THE JOB

The Battalion having been assigned territory from Dreux to Paris, with other lines running to Chartres and Surdon, the various sections of "A" Company were quickly organized and deployed along the newly opened division. The Signal crew, under the capable guidance of Lt. F. E. MacArthur, and his right-hand man S/Sgt N. Dulka, was assigned the work of installing and maintaining communications, including dispatchers' circuits and telephone lines, which had been seriously disrupted by bombings. New wire had to be strung, poles and insulators replaced, relays and switches had to be repaired and patched, and countless other jobs done before vitally-needed communications could be provided.

The Trackmen, with Lt. D. N. Macdonald and S/Sgt J. J. (Snuffy) Smith in charge, found a tremendous job awaiting them right in Dreux

Top: Bridge at Maintenon. Center: "A" Company express. Corner: 10-Minute break. Bottom: Dreux bridge



Yards. The yards had been badly damaged by bombing and strafing, track and switches were torn up, and demolished rolling stock lay in every conceivable position. The track crew, undismayed, rolled up their sleeves and started things moving. They cleared out wrecked cars and debris, filled in bomb craters, and repaired and rehabilitated blasted trackage. When the noise of shovels and tamping bars subsided, Dreux Yard had taken on a new appearance: in place of the single main track and two short sidings, which originally comprised yard facilities, there now appeared two main lines and nine long sidings running through the yard, in addition to 1200 feet of double track on the Dreux Bridge. This work had the effect of restoring Dreux Yard to almost normal operating condition.

Under supervision of Lt. F. A. Baker and S/Sgt. W. L. Smedley, the Water Service men, assisted by the B & B gang in charge of T/Sgt. J. T. Moore, replaced 300 feet of 12" water main in Dreux yard, in spite of inadequate tools and soil that had case-hardened tendencies.

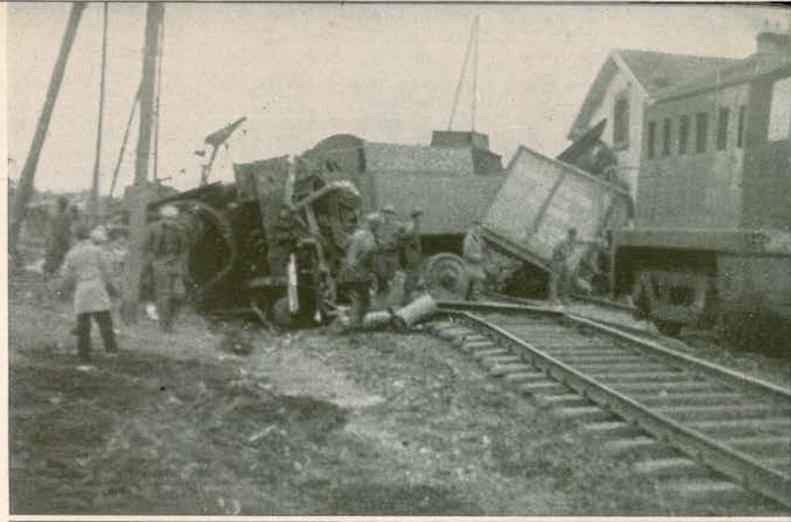
It wasn't very long thereafter before the Company began to spread out. Detached service offered the only means by which the overwhelming amount of work in prospect could be properly apportioned and accomplished, and in consequence, there soon appeared groups of men, duffle bag on shoulder, boarding trucks for "DS" at Houdon, Villiers-Neauphle and Versailles.

An emergency pumping station was set up at Houdon, to permit watering of through trains between Dreux and Paris. The Water Service men operating the plant found the only quarters available to them was a weatherbeaten hayloft, but they made the best of their lonely existence, offset only by the discovery that a half-dozen cows were making their residence in the lower section of the building. A group of trackmen, also stationed at Houdon, were kept busy hauling ballast, filling bomb craters and maintaining track, where "soft spots" required continual raising and lining. Living conditions at Houdon were enjoyable, and the acquisition of a set of "real dishes" lent a homelike atmosphere to the mess hall.

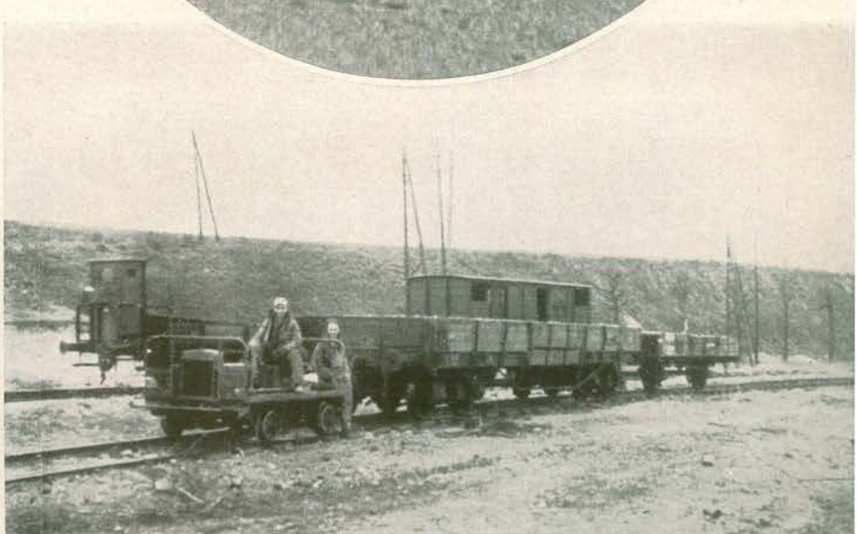
A second emergency pumping plant was provided at Villiers, which installation rapidly proved to be the equivalent of a main watering point. A detachment of hard-working bridge men and "gandies" were stationed at Villiers, where, between calls to go out on the line and clean up wrecks, they did general maintenance work on track and structures.

DIFFICULTIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Inadequate tools and poor weather were two difficulties constantly besetting the men of "A" Company. Working in the open, in sunshine and in rain, and with little equipment, Captain Peterson's men demon-



Top: Pile-up at Villiers. Circle: "A" Company chateau, Villiers. Corner: Who said: "Get an engine?" Bottom: The "Gandies" at work.



strated that characteristic tenacity and ingenuity of the American GI. A last-minute change in the supply situation made it necessary for the Battalion to land in France minus its "railroading" equipment. And to do a job was impossible without tools . . . so the only alternative for the "gandies" and the "B & B boys" was to borrow tools from the French. Those tools, long hidden from the Germans by French railroaders, were quite inferior to what the GI's had experienced back on the S.P., however an energetic supply organization made a "find" of some captured German tools, which greatly relieved the situation.

The B & B gang, stretched out on various jobs from Dreux to Paris, found that it wasn't so very far from Cuero to Dreux or Houdon or Villiers . . . the mud was still there, and if anything, it was stickier! But the mud didn't slow down the B & B men-it only made the job harder. One bridge job followed another as the weeks rolled by. If it wasn't a new project, it turned out that more repairs were needed on some previous job. When the work was totaled up, however, the Bridge and Building crews had been credited with eight bridges repaired from Dreux to Paris, and five other bridges from Versailles to Paris and Valenton. The B & B men weren't strictly "typed" in their kind of work, as they were also called upon to construct coal chutes and reconstruct turntables—the latter item in many instances being nothing more than a water-filled bomb crater to start with.

Besides their never-ending job of maintaining telephone and dispatchers' lines along the railroad, the Signal gang was called upon to rehabilitate two telephone circuits in the Paris—Dreux area.

To the "gandies" goes the credit of installing twenty turnouts on the high line from St. Cyr to Versailles, in addition to a crossover at Marchezais, three switches at Houdon, and one at Montfort.

The "blueprint boys", headed by Lt. V. E. Johnson and S/Sgt L. K. Allen, came in for their share of work during the hectic days of operation between Dreux and Paris. With nothing more than two drawing boards and some drawing material, the Engineering Section worked long hours and burned gallons of midnight oil turning out important plans and charts for use by the other sections in the field. Two important contributions to operational data were surveys and grade lines made from Dreux to Paris and Villeneuve St. George.

This chapter would be amiss if some mention was not made of the work done by the drivers of Company "A", who comprised the bulk of personnel in the Battalion Motor Pool. "Delivering the goods" was the function of the drivers; in rain or shine, day or night. Handling trucks and prime movers, "Cats" or cranes, they sometimes worked days without rest. When other men ate warm meals in the mess hall, the drivers ate cold "C" rations by the roadside. When some men relaxed after a hard day's work, the drivers changed tires and tuned up motors. The excellent performance rendered by the Company on every occasion, but particularly during the critical operation of the Dreux-Paris line, was enhanced greatly by the faithful and dependable service of the "man behind the wheel".

. . . 'TWAS THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS

In the closing weeks of December, the men of "A" Company were moved in to Company headquarters at Versailles, where they were readied for movement "up front". Speculation ran high as to where the move would terminate, but every man was certain that it had something to do with the current German counter-offensive in Belgium.

And so it was that on a memorable Christmas Eve in 1944, "A" Company, crowded in now-familiar "40 and 8" box cars, rattled and lurched through the pitch darkness of the night, destined for other

Above: "Policing the area". Panels: Aftermath of a wreck

fields of endeavor before them . . . long remembered for the work they had left behind them.

AULNOYE

AULNOYE ADVENTURE

Christmas Day 1944, dawning cold and clear, found the "A" Company train spotted on a siding in Aulnoye yard, while plans were being made and reconnaisances conducted to set up operations on the newly-acquired railroad line. Over a never-to-be-forgotten Christmas breakfast of cold "meat and beans"—and an equally unforgettable "GI party" around the station and yards—signal men, "gandies" and bridgemen renewed old acquaintances and recounted their experiences to friends they had not seen in many months. In an operating outfit such as the 716th, it required a Battalion move to bring together men long separated on different detachments . . . always a welcome experience.

The imminent prospects of continued vicious attacks by air caused newly-organized division soon found men moving out once more on detached service.

On the night after Christmas, an enemy plane, dubbed "Bedcheck Charlie" flew low over the Aulnoye area, strafing and shooting up railroad installations. The Company "A" train, still parked on the siding, made an excellent target for the marauder, however, when the "baptism of fire" was over, it was found that the Company had suffered only one casualty, T/4 Frank Dulzer, who later returned to the States and is now reported OK.

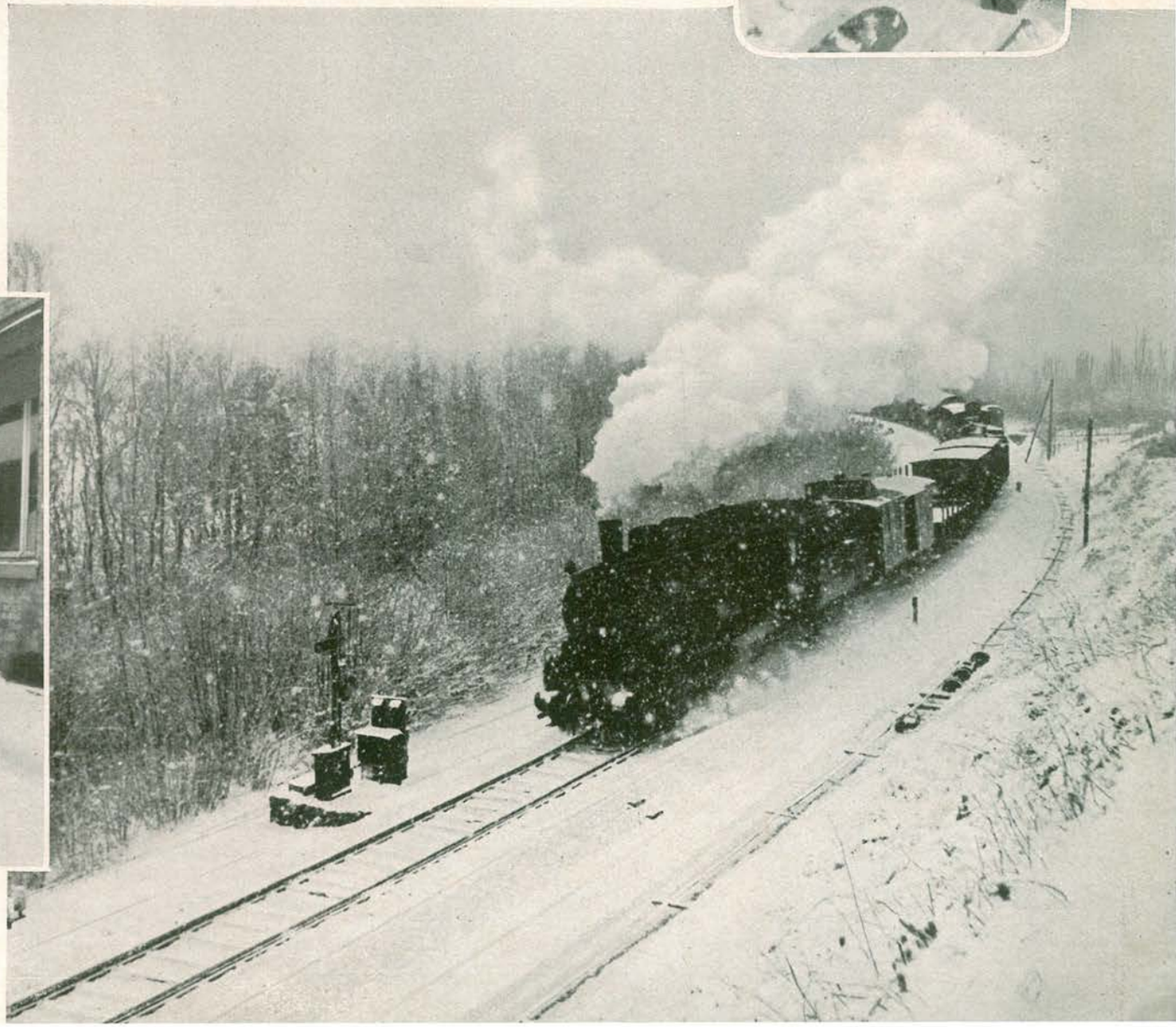
The imminent prospects of continued vicious attacks by air caused the "brass" to go into a huddle, with the consequent result that orders were forthcoming to move from cars into new billets on the edge of town.

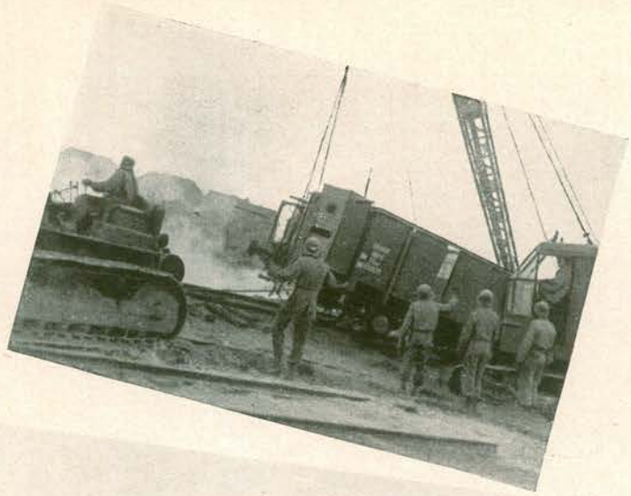
Above:
Winter Scene, Aulnoye

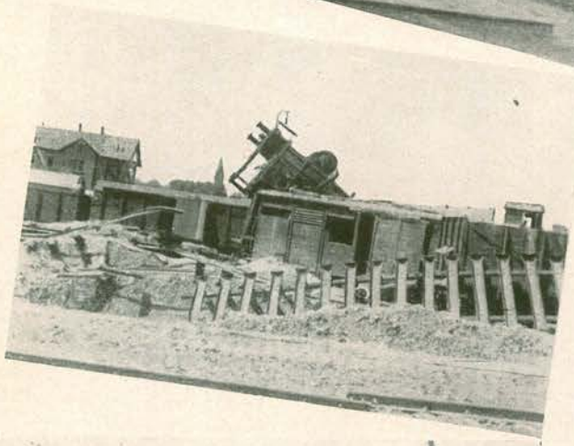
Right:
Emergency communications

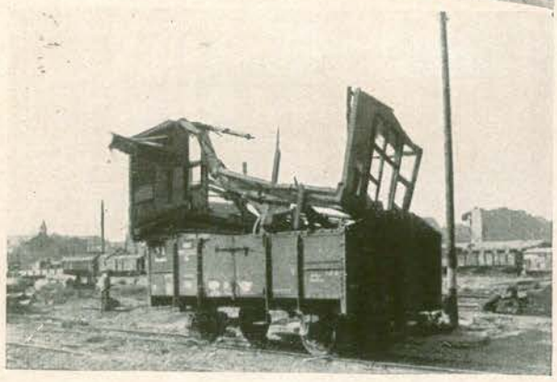
Right: "Blue Star Special" near Aulnoye

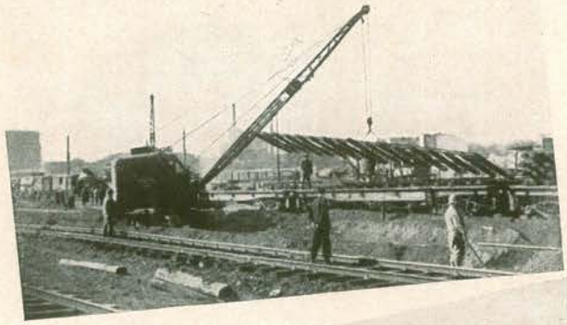
Below: A long way from home











WORK—AND COMPLICATIONS

The B & B gang and Engineering Section remained in the Aulnoye area most of the time, but made frequent trips to other points on the line. There was "beaucoup" work in and around Aulnoye, for both sections. There didn't seem to be any let up; with one thing completed, another situation clamored for attention.

Bridge and Building men turned from one job to find another staring them in the face. Five bridges in the Aulnoye sector were repaired by B & B men, permitting traffic to move safely and smoothly over 716th territory. Howling winds and blinding snow made work on the bridges dangerous as well as difficult. In cold weather, extreme caution had to be used in handling heavy beams and large timbers, as the iced surfaces of the bridge structures made footing treacherously insecure.

Not only did the B & B men wrestle with icy timbers on bridge repairs, but they were incessantly called upon to do a multitude of

Panel: Rehabilitation, Sablon Yard
Below: B & B men "on the job" near Hargarten-Falck

repair jobs in various billets and Battalion installations. Mess halls and quarters were made habitable, windows patched, furniture constructed, and hundreds of individual tasks taken care of.

At Aulnoye, Water Service men were confronted with the problem of providing water for the roundhouse on the other side of town. The pumping plant at the roundhouse had been destroyed by bombing, and the only available water for servicing locomotives was at the station, quite some distance from the roundhouse. As in Houdon and Villiers, an emergency pumping station was set up to service engines, and 2400 feet of ten-inch pipe were laid from the station to the roundhouse, necessitating a four-foot ditch being dug across roads, under fences, around homes and through backyards. The French townsfolk must have thought the war was going to be fought behind their backyard fences.

The 200-odd mile section of railroad operated by the Battalion, stretching from Valenciennes to Verdun and from Tergnier, France, to Charleroi, Belgium, required considerable reconstruction and maintenance work. And the "gandies" had the full distance of trackage to patrol . . . one of the biggest jobs being to keep switches cleared of ice and snow. At least once a day, and more frequently if it snowed, the "gandies" had to climb on their open motor cars, in freezing

weather, and patrol the railroad line, checking trackage and sweeping out switches . . . a miserable trip at best, but completely exasperating when snowdrifts or icy rails made it necessary to travel at a snail's pace.

Reconstruction and rehabilitation of four telephone circuits-one each from Charleville to Aulnoye and Aulnoye to Valenciennes, and two from Tergnier to Charleroi, kept the Signal Platoon busy. Sleet and ice played havoc with wire communications, and many was the "nasty job" that the Signal men were called upon to do, at all hours and in all kinds of weather.

NIGHTMARE AT LUMES

At St. Quentin, a detachment of Signal men were detailed to maintain communications, while Trackmen were set up at the vast marshalling yard at Lumes, France, some areas of which were rumored as having yet to be explored by man.

Lumes was more than a headache to the "A" Company men . . . it was more like a nightmare. Completely disregarding the fact that they had a tremendous amount of work to do, "Bedcheck Charlie" hounded the Trackmen day and night . . . and on those occasions when "Bedcheck" failed to show, he was ably represented by the fiendish V-1 "buzz bomb". No one who has ever experienced the peculiar squeamish feeling in the pit of his stomach when one of the V-bombs "cut out" right over his head and began to fall, will ever forget it. But the tenacity and loyalty of the "boys at Lumes" proved itself, and they accomplished their mission in a highly commendable manner.

. . . And so the winter months passed. The bitter wind and white landscapes gave way to sunshine and melting snows . . . and with the coming of Spring, another "inside" rumor made the rounds: Yep—this is the straight dope. The outfit is moving to Metz!

METZ

STILL HOUSEKEEPING

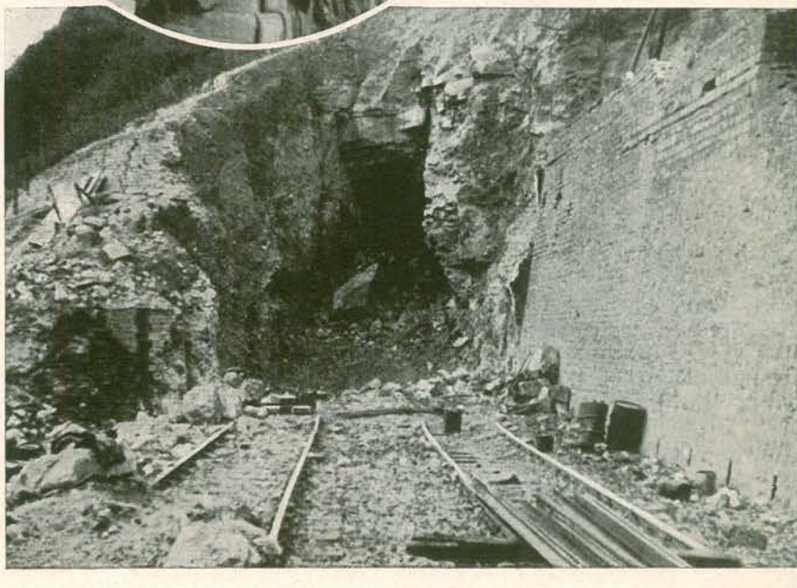
The "rumor" turned out to be a fact, and on 7 February 1945, "A" Company entrained for the front line city of Metz, France.

Upon arrival in Metz, the company was billeted in their boxcars until such time as suitable quarters could be found. The Battalion soon lined up living facilities in what had once been a Seminary and later a barracks for Nazi soldiers. The outlook was favorable for a continued stay in Metz, so a considerable amount of "elbow grease" was expended on cleaning up the buildings and area. There was a great deal of repair work necessary on the buildings and facilities, before they could be considered completely habitable, and repairs had scarcely begun before a major difficulty presented itself. Sufficient tools were on hand to do the job, but materials—wood, pipe, glass, etc.—were conspicuous by their absence. But not for long, however. S/Sgt. Allen B. Clark, with his sixth sense of locating material, was the man who found the needed items, and soon the Seminary rang with the sound of hammer and saw, as GI ingenuity displayed itself in the renovation of living quarters and repair of facilities.

SETTING A RECORD

Sablon Yard was the scene of "A" Company's outstanding accomplishment in the Metz area. Metz-Sablon had been one of the major yard installations in France before the war, and consequently it became the target of numerous Allied bombing raids as the German armies were thrown out of eastern France. When the Battalion moved into Metz, Sablon had been completely put out of action. The yards were a

Above: The "Big Hook." Left: T/5 Atchison—Telephone trouble-shooter. Below: Demolished tunnel, Falck line



Left: Wire communications were the "nerves" of the railroad.

Below: Charts and maps were T/4 Carmean's specialty

Below: Mobile Engineering Section

shambles of wrecked cars and grotesquely-twisted trackage, upended cranes and demolished buildings. With the prospect of heavy traffic in the offing, the 716th was faced with the necessity of rehabilitating the yard and restoring it to service in the shortest possible time.

SNCF officials estimated that to put the yard in working order would take at least four months. But the war couldn't wait four months for fixing up Sablon. Working twelve-hour shifts, B & B men and trackmen, assisted by three cranes and five bulldozers, plus accompanying help from "B" Company and the 718th wrecking crew, proceeded to clear the yard of wrecked cars and debris. A total of 400 cars were removed from the scene, while 25 large bomb craters were filled in and 45 damaged tracks repaired. Rehabilitation of destroyed track was accomplished by laying entire "panels" of track—sections of rails complete with ties. These panels were brought in on flat cars, lifted off the cars and laid on the ground by cranes. Bulldozers butted each new panel against the preceding one, and the "gandies" bolted them together. At the same time, approximately one mile of new track was laid, exclusive of the panel assemblies.

Working at top speed, with American "assembly-line" methods, the men of Company "A" triumphantly terminated the rehabilitation of Sablon Yard inside of one month, with only one-sixth of the manpower estimated by the French!

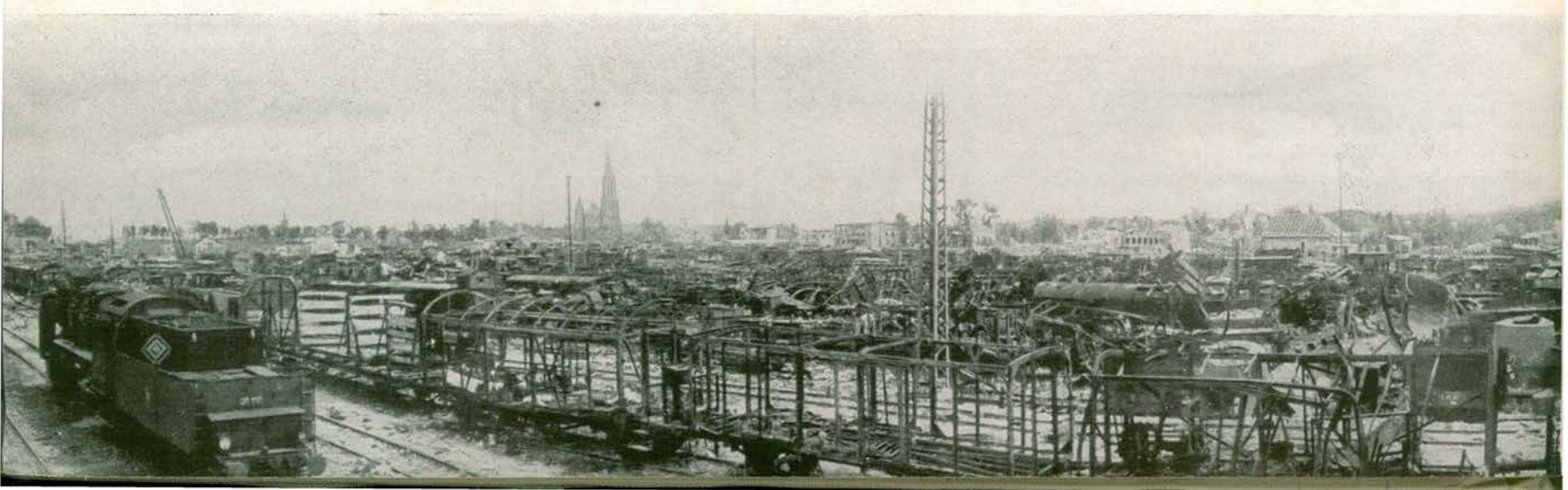
"BEAUCOUP TRAVAIL"

The B & B gang repaired bridges . . . and bridges. And more bridges. When a bridge was too badly damaged to be repaired, the B & B boys built a new one. Working long and hard hours, they raised, braced, shimmed and lined up bridge structures. Some spans required strengthening of abutments or guard rails. On the loop in the Metz area, the B & B gang built four bridges, working at top speed. And when the pent-up traffic poured over 716th territory, the bridges were ready.

The "gandies" had a job on their hands, too. They converted thirteen miles of single track to double track. That task wouldn't have been so much of a headache if some bomb-happy saboteur hadn't decided to "button up" one of the tunnels straddling the line, so that when the smoke had cleared away, hundreds of tons of earth and rock blocked the bore about 100 feet inside the entrance. When the men of Company "A" found this job was on their agenda, they set to work diligently, fortifying their excavating efforts with two trusty bulldozers. And so the trackmen, in company with the B & B men, cleared the tunnel in record time—in spite of the head-shaking opinions of those who decided "it just can't be done!"

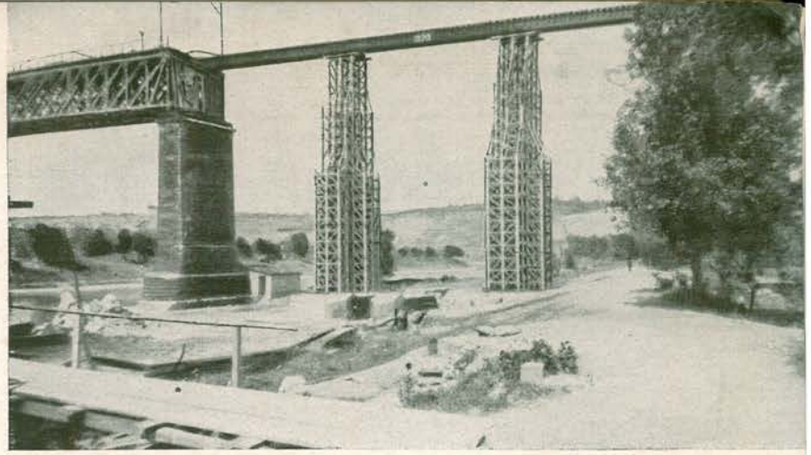
Signal men installed and reconstructed a dispatcher's line in Metz. Similarly, a message line was set up Metz—Audun le Roman—Conflans—Arnaville, and Metz—Courcelles. Those lines weren't easy to put in service, due to insufficient tools and materials, but the job was completed in record time. In addition, a 50-drop and a 10-drop switchboard were installed at Headquarters.

Panorama: Chaotic



Detachments at Audun le Roman, Bouzonville, Hargarten-Falck, Thionville and Friestoff were staffed with "A" Company personnel, in order to carry on maintenance and construction work. Back at Metz, the Engineering Section finally rounded up enough equipment to set up a first-class office in Headquarters, but they found that the more equipment they secured, the more the work poured in. A solution was finally worked out by dividing the day into two shifts, each of twelve hours' duration, after which the draftsmen were able to keep abreast of demands for maps and technical data.

After a succession of well-rendered jobs over the entire 716th district, the closing days of the war in Europe found "A" Company, in conjunction with the rest of the Battalion, on the move into Germany.



Münster Bridge, Bad Cannstatt

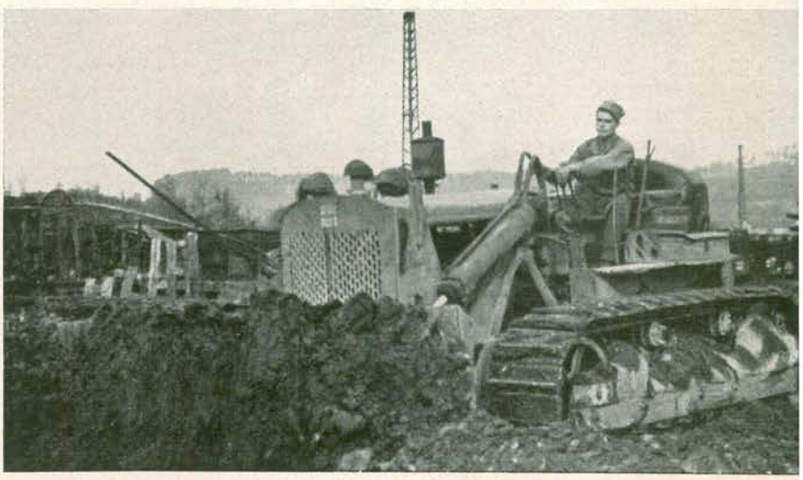
GERMANY

THE FIGHTING STOPS—THE WORK GOES ON

Having completed their mission in Metz, the first week in May saw Company "A" deep in the heart of Germany. Following what was later to be the 716th main line, the Company tied up at Heilbronn from 2 May until 6 May, at which point a cache of vermouth and schnaps was uncovered. Needless to say, a staggering good time was had by all.

As the white flags of surrender began to appear up front, "A" Company moved, this time to Kornwestheim, where, even before Company headquarters had been set up at Esslingen, men were sent out on the always-welcome detached service. Groups of "A" Company personnel were established at Augsburg, Plochingen, Stuttgart, Gunzburg, Herrlingen (Ulm), Ludwigsburg and Neu Offingen.

Lt. L. L. Stoddard, Administrative Officer, together with First Sergeant M. W. Dicke and his right hand man T/4 Raoul Santos, set up Company headquarters at Esslingen, in conjunction with Battalion headquarters. Billets were situated in a building adjacent to the consolidated mess hall, where it was soon found that the proximity of the Neckar river canal provided a quick and efficient medium for disposal of bottles, apple cores and cigarette butts, in the "zero hour" preceding Saturday inspections.



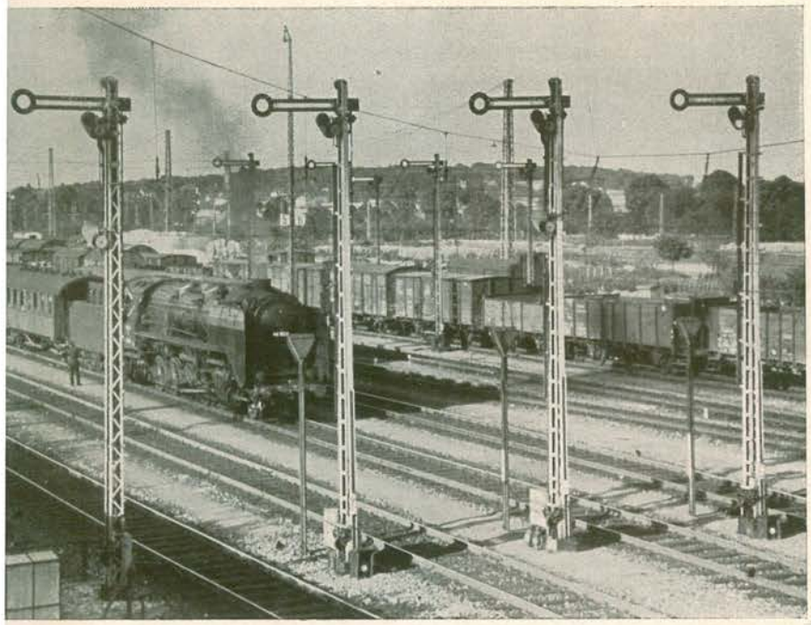
The "Cats" were indispensable

"ALLES KAPUT"

"Alles Kaput" is a German expression meaning "everything is finished". And "Alles Kaput" was the only term by which the yards at Ulm, on the banks of the beautiful Blue Danube, could be described. Here, a grotesquely littered yard greeted the men of "A" Company. The view of twisted rail and steel, interlaced with smashed and splintered cars, was definitely breathtaking. The awe-struck GI's stared at an appalling scene of yards and buildings obliterated by terrific bombings, which left Ulm a desolated city, save for the lonely Cathedral Spire, mutely surveying the broken promise of a leader who had once stated that bombs would never desecrate German soil.

Rommel House, Herrlingen

destruction in Ulm Yard



Above: Yards at Kornwestheim

Circle: On the Autobahn

Below: German workmen repairing tracks, Stuttgart

. . . And even though the war was over, there was still plenty of work to be done. The yards at Ulm and Neu Ulm had to be made serviceable for rail traffic, soon to be expanded in token of Pacific Theater redeployment. So the "A" Company men didn't remain staring at the wreckage-filled yards. Like modern Caesars, they came, they saw . . . and they conquered the blockade at Ulm.

GLORIFIED JUNK YARD

Trackmen, B & B men and Water Service men were stationed at Gunzburg and Herrlingen, from which points they concentrated their efforts on cleaning out both Ulm and Neu Ulm yards. Bulldozers appeared on the scene, augmented by heavy-duty cranes and the labor of hundreds of gray-green clad PW's.

An interesting sidelight on the Herrlingen detachment was the fact that the "A" Company men, together with representatives from the other Companies, were quartered in the home of former Field Marshall Erwin Rommel, once famed as the "Desert Fox", and later relegated to a simple grave visited by many members of the Herrlingen detachment stationed nearby. "Who'd ever thought it? A year ago we were reading about Rommel in the paper . . . today we're living in his house, and stretching out in his easy chair!"

With the work at Ulm and Neu Ulm in progress, the yards took on a more ordered appearance. Hundreds of burnt and blasted cars were dragged from their entanglements of steel rail and wreckage, loaded on flat cars, and moved out of the area. Bomb craters were filled in, new ballast provided, and section upon section of rail was laid and made fast. Switches were repaired or replaced. Pipe lines disrupted by bombing were rehabilitated, furnishing badly-needed water for makeshift roundhouse operations.

Week followed week, and gradually order replaced chaos. The single track main line running through the yard was paralleled by another track. At frequent intervals, new sidings were made available. Switching moves increased and expanded, and the bottleneck at Ulm and Neu Ulm had been broken! . . . The work continued, but the "big job" had been accomplished.

The Danube River bridge, under construction by the Engineers, required professional attention on the part of "A" Company, and a group of trackmen and B & B men were detailed to check trackage and bridges. Patrolling the tracks kept men "on the jump". Maintenance work had generally replaced new construction, though, and while the lighter nature of their labors permitted men to have more leisure time, no man found time dragging on his hands for want of something to do.

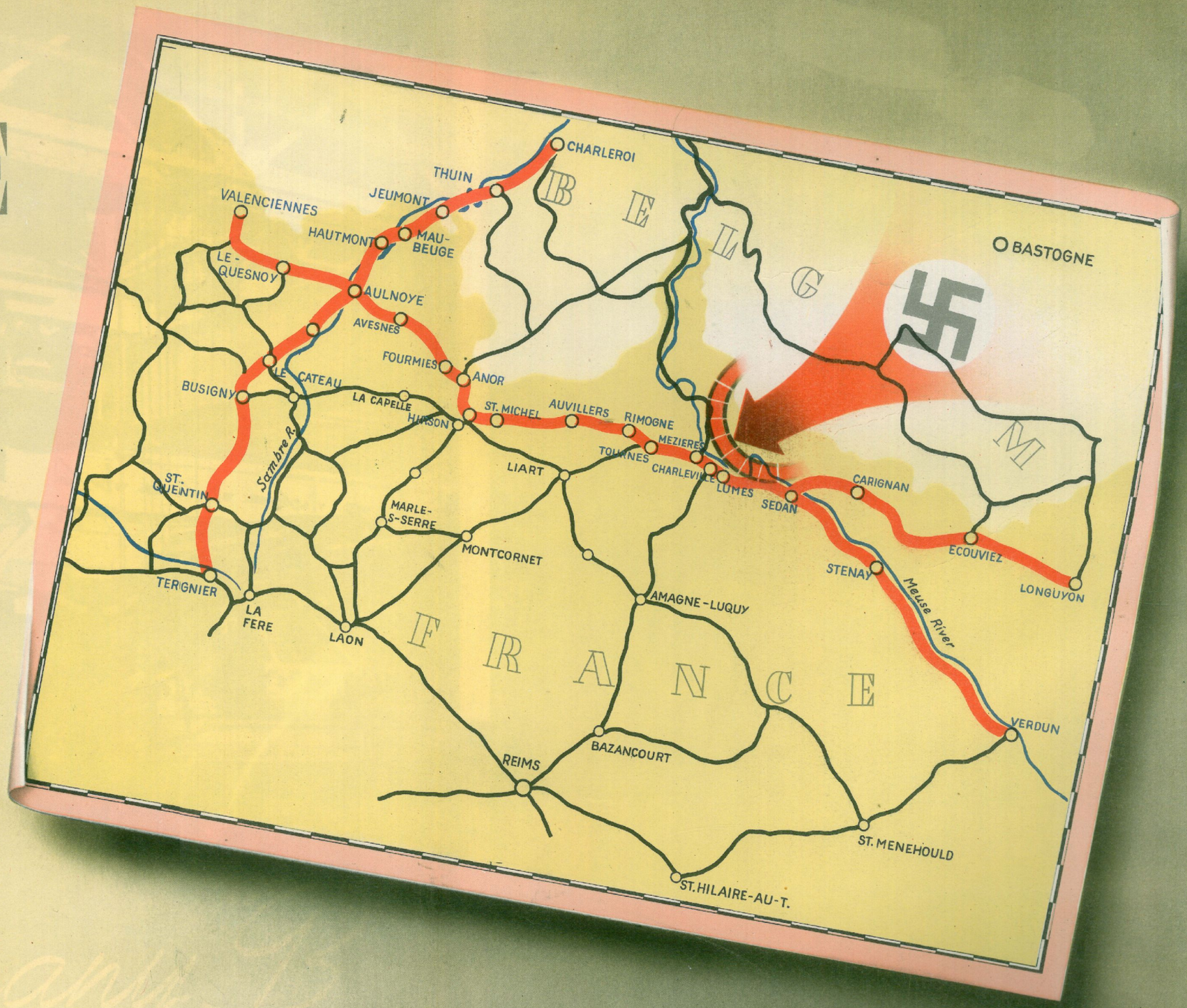
As time went on, organization of the Reichsbahn was perfected, and the men of "A" Company, together with their fellow-workers in other companies, found that it was possible to turn back the larger portion of work to the Germans. For the first time since arriving on the Continent, men really found time for leisure and recreation. And as they relaxed, they remembered the days which had gone before. They recalled the work, the toil and sweat, the backbreaking hours and the miserable weather. But they could also look back, with a feeling of genuine satisfaction, on the work they had done. They could, in retrospect, compare the big jobs and the little jobs with the over-all benefit accruing to the Battalion. Every rail laid, every bridge repaired, meant that the tremendous flow of traffic, which was eventually to overwhelm the Nazi machine, could be channeled to the front in a shorter time. And every man in "A" Company could feel, truly, that he had a personal part in the long-awaited victory.

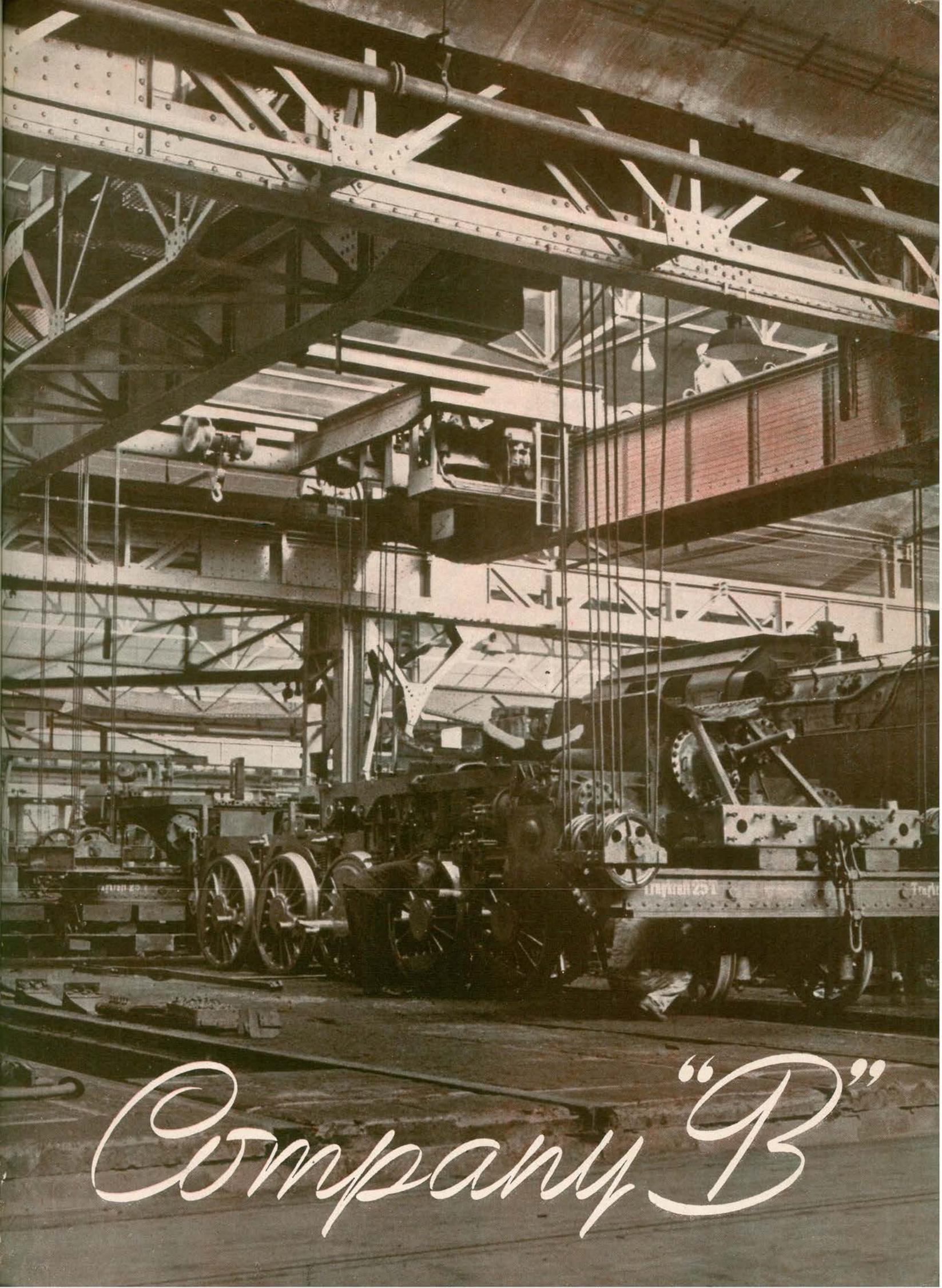
The AULNOYE Area

"The Aulnoye Area", as it was generally termed by the men of the 716th, embraced a considerable portion of the railroad line stretching across the path of the German offensive in the Ardennes Campaign of 1944—45. Running parallel to the then-threatening "Bulge", trains were often attacked savagely by enemy planes, while stations, yards and installations frequently were the targets for night raids.

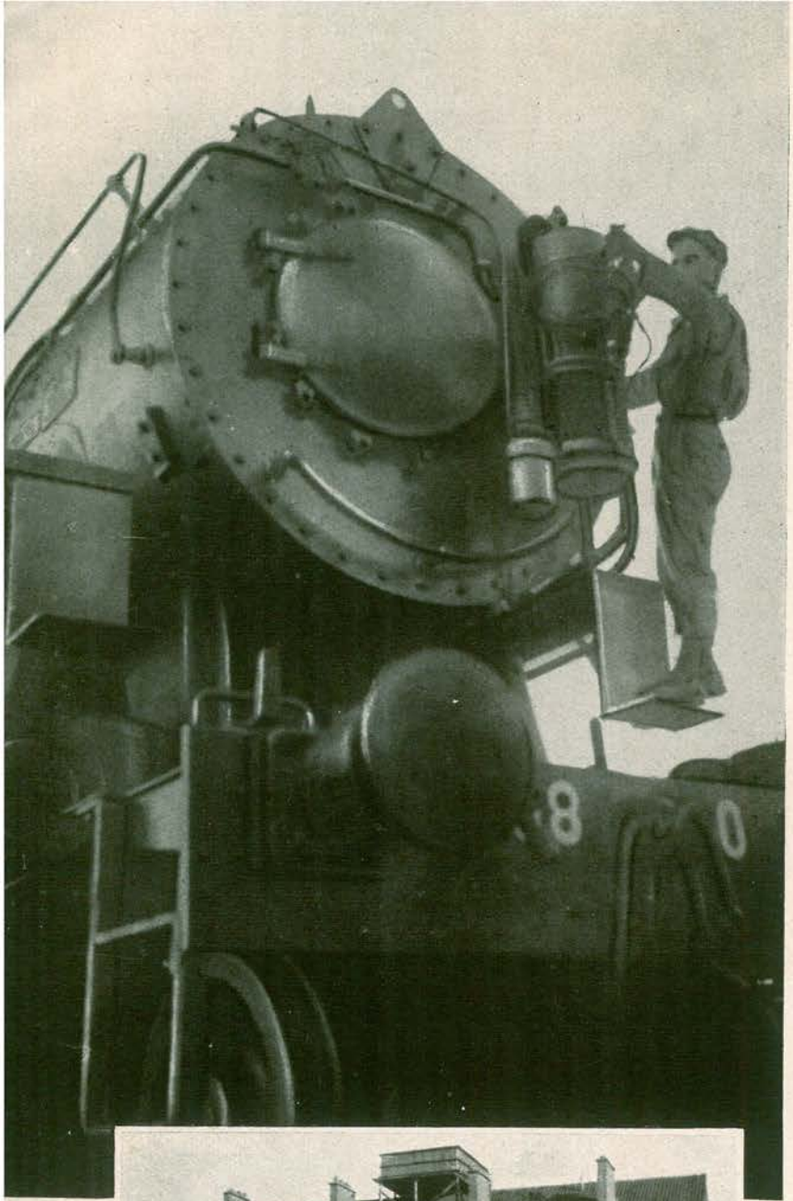
The railroad lines in the "Aulnoye Area" were an important link in the chain of supply then moving to the Armies at the front, particularly the Third Army, served by the yards at Lumes.

Operations were carried on under hazardous and difficult conditions, with snowstorms and blackout restrictions presenting additional problems to the hard-working GI railroaders.





Company "B"



Above: Air pump repairs

Center: "B" Company billets, Dreux

Right: Changing out driving box cellar

DREUX

ACTION AT LAST

Operating a railroad . . . a theoretical activity just the day before, became a stern and immediate reality when the Battalion arrived at Dreux on the morning of 2 September 1944. Trains waiting in the yards, engines standing idly at the enginehouse—while a traffic crisis loomed—all made prompt action imperative. Captain Sam Gillespie, Master Mechanic, surveying the area, lit a new cigar and began to get things moving.

"B" Company locomotive men were brought directly from their cars to the roundhouse, and set to work at once. "Never mind, pal . . . somebody will haul your bags for you—just start getting some engines hot!"

And getting engines hot proved to be a real job . . . there wasn't any enginehouse; just a shop building and some servicing facilities for through trains. But that was "pre-war". Now the shop was bombed out, and there weren't any more facilities. The only water was at the station, and a decrepit French crane of ancient vintage was on hand to coal engines. The "roundhouse" area was a maze of twisted trackage and wrecked locomotives, but GI ingenuity finally evolved a one-way, dead end, service track . . . the locomotive had to come out the same way it went in. An adjoining track was set up as a ready track, and the "roundhouse" was open for business.

Of course, there weren't any tools or equipment to work with . . . those items caught up with the company months later. In the meantime, through diligent use of acrobatic gestures and pigeon French, a few hammers and wrenches were provided by the SNCF.

The car men likewise found themselves at work without any delay. "No tools. Well, you can always inspect cars, can't you?" became the classic comeback of the day. There were beaucoup trains in the yards . . . "and, brother, those cars just gotta be inspected, toot sweet!" And the car men did do a splendid job, setting out bad order cars, and making certain that when those trains did move out of the yards, there wouldn't be any trouble with bad brakes or hot boxes.

The men who weren't called out for work immediately didn't continue resting for long . . . they moved everybody's baggage to the first permanent quarters, the Caserne at Dreux.

Days at Dreux passed quickly. The motive power situation had been eased by the hard work of the locomotive men—the car men were beginning to catch their respective breaths—and billets had been cleaned from top to bottom . . . in short, life was beginning to bear some semblance of normalicy when "B" Company received orders to move, independently of the Battalion, to Trappes, near Versailles.

TRAPPES

TWISTED STEEL

On the map, Trappes was a thriving community. On the ground, Trappes was a dismal investment. A half-hour bombing raid had played havoc with the railroad, and with the surrounding town besides. The advance party, finding no suitable quarters in town, finally located billets in an abandoned chateau on the outskirts of town. Shortly thereafter, on the morning of 8 September, the peace and quiet of that elegant setting was shattered by the roar of trucks, the banging of tailgates, and the vocal exuberance of GI's, as "B" Company moved in.

As a rail center, Trappes was completely defunct. The shop and roundhouse facilities, once one of the major installations in France, were now in utter chaos. Where once modern engine sheds had stood, a tangled heap of steel and concrete now covered the area. Gaping

bomb craters testified to the destructive force of Allied air power . . . power that had driven the Germans away, but had left in its wake a shambles of up-ended locomotives and twisted rails.

Into this scene of destruction moved the men of "B" Company. There wasn't much that could be done there . . . what could a man do without tools, without electricity or water or coal? The only real job that could be tackled was to inspect and lubricate engines on trains running through Trappes. And the locomotive men soon found that a GI pocketknife was a pretty handy tool to have around. "More engines are repaired with a jackknife than the 'big brass' ever dreams about" was both a byword and a fact.

At the same time, Lt. "Casey" Stengel and his Car Platoon found the yards in a similar state of confused wreckage. Thousands of cars, in every stage of destruction, choked sidings and made organization of the yard impossible. Wading into the situation with scarcely more than their own ingenuity, the car men set to work re-railing and repairing as many cars as they could handle, clearing out, with the aid of a switch engine, cars too badly damaged to repair.

The car inspectors were assigned to check trains running through Trappes, but there wasn't much work at first. With the increasing number of trains running into Paris, however, the tempo of work began to pick up, and these car men soon were giving the French "cheminots" a demonstration of efficient train inspection . . . a la USA.

In their spare time, the men of "B" Company set to work making the old chateau liveable. Carefully-trained mechanics demonstrated their ability, not to do outstanding work with hammer and monkey-wrench, but to do superhuman feats with a mop and broom . . . the forerunner of many such jobs in the future.

Sparkplugged by First Sergeant LaVerne Fuller, broken windows were patched and covered, beds and bunks began to appear in the rooms, and the crowning gesture came with acquisition of a German Junkers electric generator, which was connected up to furnish lighting for the chateau. This electrical marvel was of short duration, however, as somebody had forgotten to fill the crankcase of the diesel engine with oil, and soon thereafter, amidst a shower of babbit from burned-out bearings, the generator was "finee".

A crude but serviceable hot water shower system was constructed in an adjoining building, and plans were in progress for setting up some kind of recreational facilities, when the entire program was brought to an abrupt halt . . . "Heard the news? Company's moving to Paree!"

PARIS

THE ROYAL ASTORIA

Moving to a large metropolis such as Paris was easier said than done. It was hard to locate billets . . . like trying to find the right "Chef" on the SNCF.

"C" Company crews, running into Paris, were tying up at Batignole, the largest yard in the Paris area. The Battalion had the good fortune to secure use of a fair-sized school adjacent to the yard, which building was handy for GI crews coming in off a run. When "B" Company proposed moving to Paris, it was found that the Batignole School was not large enough to accomodate both "C" and "B" Companies. A hasty search was made, and through a stroke of luck, the "brass" commandeered the Royal Astoria Hotel, on Rue Lafayette—the longest street in Paris. The hotel was everything that could be expected: separate rooms, bath facilities, dining room, and an elevator which habitually managed to get stuck between the third and fourth floors.

All was not sweetness and light at the Royal Astoria, however, as it was necessary to truck men to and from work, through the congested,

Top: Destruction, Trappes roundhouse

Center: Chateau, Trappes

Below: Wrecked engines, Trappes

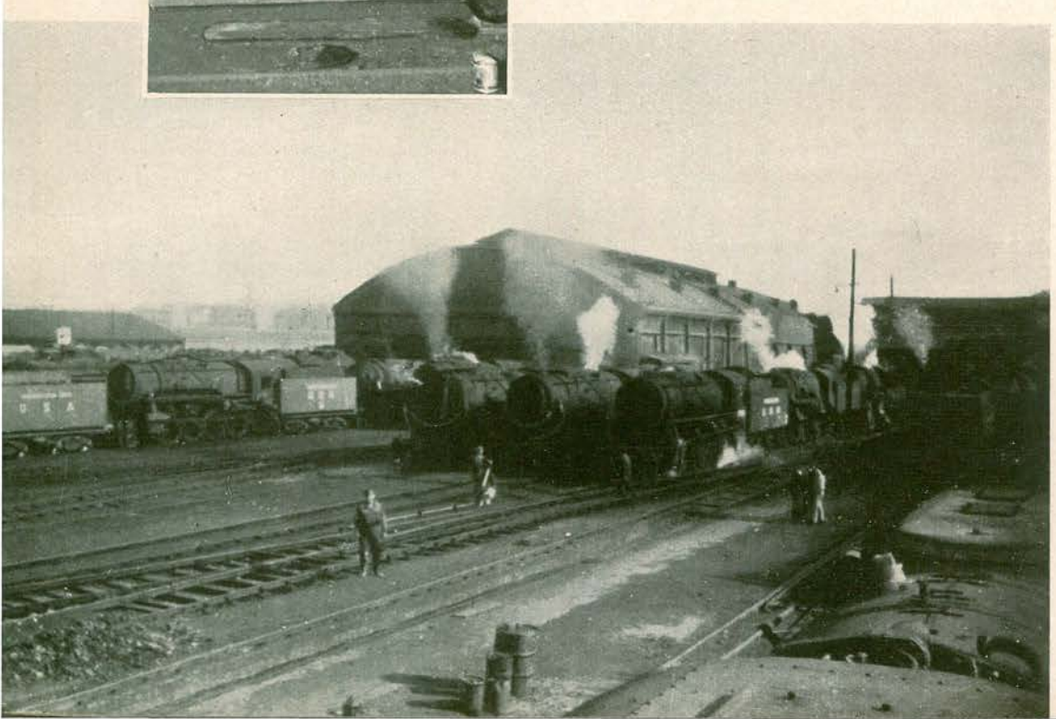
Right: You guessed it— Sgts. Jones and Fields

Top: Royal Astoria Hotel, Paris

Above: Sgt. King "cutting up"

Left: Time out for a photo—Wright, Lackner and Wofford

Below: Batignole Shops, Paris



teeming streets of Paris. That ride was breathtaking anytime, but as Parisians began driving their Renaults and Opels again for the first time in four years, the ride assumed terrifying proportions. To the credit of the hard-working drivers, however, no one was ever injured on those rides . . . although occasionally a truck arrived minus a fender or with a bicycle draped around the radiator grille.

Living in a hotel in the heart of "Gay Paree" would certainly have been fun . . . if it hadn't been for the overwhelming work and man-killing hours . . . and that damn truck ride.

BOTTLENECK AT BATIGNOLE

The railroad situation in the Paris area in mid-September was growing ominous. As the Allied armies routed the Germans from one stronghold after another, supply lines grew taut, then began to stretch. Military traffic on the railroad, funneled into the Paris gateway, began to swell to unprecedented heights, and with that increase came persistent demands for more motive power to handle trains choking the yards.

No railroad system is any better than its locomotives and cars. The French railroad had suffered great loss and damage to equipment, and now, at the crucial moment, the power situation began to show signs of cracking. It might have been that there were not enough serviceable engines to go around . . . or possibly French methods of handling power were unsuited to the needs of the hour. Whatever the cause, operations were definitely not up to requirements. Even with the influx of new GI power, things were bogging down. The USA locomotives, after laboriously threading their way over newly-opened lines, began arriving in Paris, in need of servicing and repairs. But with the stalemated situation, they soon began to "stack up" . . . unserviced and unattended . . . while back in Normandy trains blocked the yards waiting on power. Something definitely had to be done.

. . . And something was done. On 20 September "B" Company was moved into Batignole Shops, the largest operating shops in Paris. A small detachment of locomotive men had previously been sent to Batignole from Trappes, to assist the French in the handling of the newly-arriving USA power; but though the detachment worked valiently, they could not cope with the increasing demand for power, and the entire company soon followed them into Batignole.

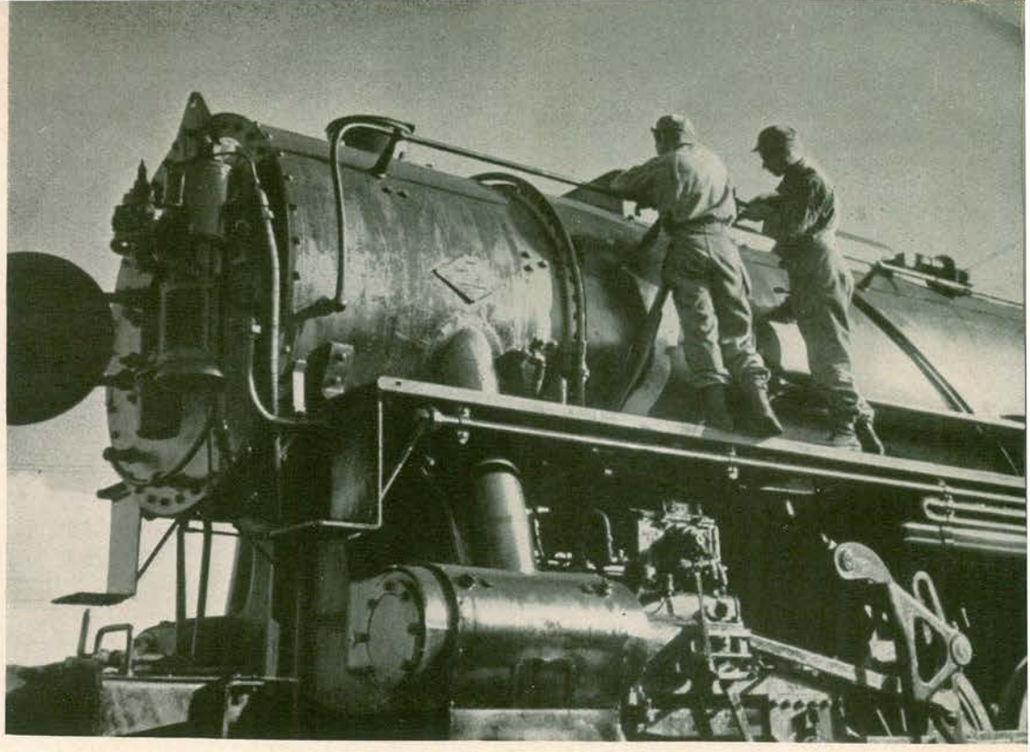
At Batignole, quarterbacked by Lt. C. O. Arant, Lt. E. J. Putryae, and Tech Sgt. R. W. Newman, two 12-hour shifts were immediately organized and every locomotive man possible made available for service, with instructions to break the bottleneck of GI engines. An agreement—or truce—was reached with French shop officials to the effect that repairs to USA locomotives would be left to the GI's, while the French would look after their own power. The joker in the deal was that the same shop tracks had to be used by both parties—an exasperating situation at best.

There were serious handicaps in those early days. The shop equipment and tools, which had looked so good on paper, still had not caught up with the Battalion, and the SNCF had few tools of their own. The shortage was partly overcome by rounding up every chisel, hammer and wrench that could be located at neighboring shops in and around Paris. The "city of light" was still blacked out at night, and there were no lighting facilities at the shop other than

that provided by a few odd hand lanterns and kerosine lamps.

Men waited their turn for the use of a single wrench or chisel . . . inspected locomotives by the light of a flickering oil lamp, or without lights at all . . . improvised and patched parts for which there were no replacements . . . made water glass gaskets from "K" ration boxes. Weary men climbed down off one engine and back onto the next one. There wasn't any let-up, and there wasn't going to be any.

Every day saw more USA engines in the shop, or patiently waiting out in the yard. On some occasions the 12 hour shift ran into 18 hours; every one of the fifty-five locomotive men sweating and straining to keep power on hand. The daily average of locomotives turned ran from 51 to 56 . . . a peak being reached on 7 October, when 63 USA engines were turned and serviced in 24 hours.



MEDICS ON WHEELS

St. Lazaire Station was a big place . . . it reminded one strikingly of some large metropolitan station back in the States. There was the usual hubbub and clatter found at any railroad terminal, but there were two exceptions: First, the realization that all this commotion was directly geared to the war effort going on "up front" . . . Second, the hospital trains.

. . . The hospital trains glided into the big canopied shed of St. Lazaire, and disgorged their loads of wounded GI's, fresh from the front, into ambulances waiting to rush them to the General Hospitals in and around Paris. There weren't too many hospital trains available in those days, and what few were in service were constantly in demand. Added to this, every train arriving at St. Lazaire had to be inspected, watered and serviced, batteries charged, and a multitude of mechanical details attended to.

The car men arrived on the scene just before the red cross-emblazioned trains began rolling into St. Lazaire in numbers up to twenty a day. It was soon found necessary to set up a program and facilities for servicing and maintaining these trains, and this was accomplished in such a manner as to win praise from Grand Division and M. R. S. officials. Service and inspection crews worked around the clock, cleaning, inspecting and making repairs. Here, too, the "heat was on" . . . but no hospital train was ever delayed at St. Lazaire through the fault of the men from "B" Company.

CAR REPAIRS—A LA MODE

At the same time that the hospital train detail was working at St. Lazaire, the remainder of the Car Platoon was situated in the Batignole and Clichy yards, inspecting trains and making running repairs to cars. And it wasn't easy to effect repairs in those days. Lack of proper tools and facilities continually made it a test of ingenuity rather than skill. Hot boxes were doped, brasses changed, couplers adjusted, grab irons fixed, floors patched, wheels changed out, brakes adjusted . . . all with a force of only 38 men, working 12 hour shifts . . . totaling up to a daily average of 1700 cars inspected and given necessary attention.

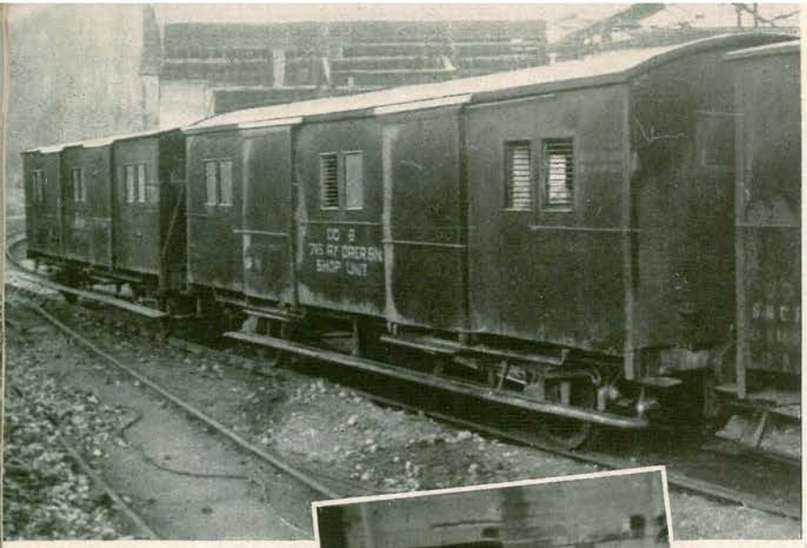
DETACHED SERVICE

On 13 September, a detachment of locomotive and car men were located at Versailles-Chantiers Station; followed on 22 September by the establishment of a small detachment at Dreux. Both groups had for

Above: The "iron horse" gets a going-over

Center: Eiffel Tower

Right: Friendly argument—Stora, Forsythe, Foster and Gilbertson



Above: "B" Company shop unit, Matelots

Right: Car yard, Matelots

Panel:
Car repairman Beard—always busy
Every man his own hostler—T/5 Willman
PFC Gasparotto working up a locomotive part—or maybe it's a knife

their major purpose the inspection and running repair of locomotives and cars operating in through service. Shortly thereafter, on 24 September, another small detachment was set up at Matelots Yard, near Versailles, to check trains and service diesel locomotives.

All three detachments rendered splendid performance, and their work made it possible to keep trains moving smoothly and efficiently over 716th territory with a minimum of mechanical difficulty.

"THE LAST TIME I SAW PARIS . . ."

"B" Company's work in Batignole Shops ended abruptly on 14 October when the shop operations were taken over by the 764th Railway Shop Battalion. Four days later, the company moved from Paris . . . back to Dreux! An "advance to the rear", some called it.

There were many experiences ahead, but no one will ever forget those days in Paris . . . "Gay Paree" . . . Capitol of France . . . Queen City of Europe . . . a place of beauty in peace—a hell-hole of work in war.

MATELOTS

STRICTLY SNAFU

On arriving at Dreux, 18 October 1944, orders were received to return the entire company to Matelots Yard, situated just outside Versailles . . . "This is a hell of a way to fight a war . . . riding around on the back of a truck! Yeah, strictly snafu!"

The gripes weren't really justified, though. The war was away ahead of schedule in those days, and plans and strategy made only yesterday had to be scrapped today. The railroad situation changed continually—sometimes hourly—and the consumption of erasers and aspirin at various headquarters skyrocketed. By mid-October it had been found feasible to route trains around Paris proper, and set up some mechanical terminal west of that city, so that engines could be changed out and serviced, thus enabling traffic to be handled uninterruptedly around Paris and to the front. The mechanical terminal decided upon was at Matelots . . . and Matelots was in 716th territory. So "B" Company got the job.

SCHOOL DAYS

When the company invaded Dreux for the second time, they were quartered in the St. Pierre School, on the outskirts of town. And when

the company was ordered to Matelots, the "brass" began to look worried, because there just weren't any billets—to say nothing of buildings—around Matelots. The only structure (it wasn't even a building) was occupied by "C" Company transient crews, who had to have some place to grab a few hours' sleep between runs. A search of the Matelots area proved hopeless as to finding quarters for "B" Company . . . a row of stone barracks was discovered, but investigation proved that they had not been occupied by troops since around 1790—the subsequent period having been devoted to stabling horses and other assorted animals.

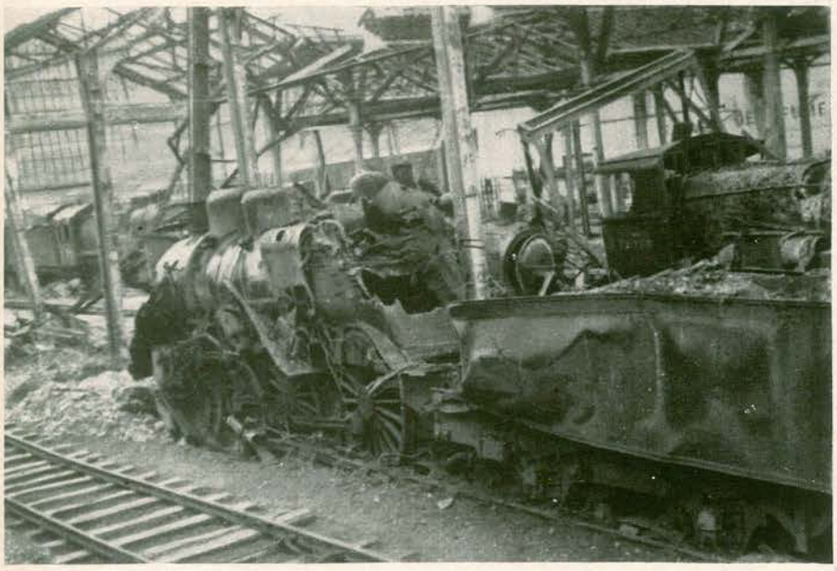
The quest for quarters finally led to nearby Versailles—a town enshrined in history, and presently bulging with the various bureaus and agencies of SHAEF . . . to say nothing of the uncounted regiments of WACS who seemed to have every billet occupied or reserved. However, at the zero hour, a chance remark over a midnight cup of coffee at the Versailles mess hall, led the weary First Sergeant and his searching party to a bombed-out school opposite the Versailles-Chantiers Railway Station. The "Ecole Jeunnes Filles" was completely air conditioned . . . a careful search revealed two unbroken windowpanes . . . but it was a home. And after removal of 35 to 40 tons of broken glass from the premises by means of one somewhat bedragged broom, the men of "B" Company set to work to make their quarters liveable.

The original detachment which had been set up at Matelots in September to service and inspect trains, had remained at that point while the company negotiated the "boomerang" from Paris to Dreux to Matelots. This detachment, therefore, suddenly found themselves transformed into an "advance party" for the expanded operations in that area . . . ending abruptly the blissful existence of detachment life.

"DEAD-END" ROUNDHOUSE

When the SNCF laid out Matelots roundhouse, they did a good job. And when the American Air Force "laid out" Matelots roundhouse, they, too, did a "good job". Both the roundhouse itself and the surrounding installations had been subjected to severe bombing action . . . in the French vernacular so recently acquired from the Germans, they were "kaput".

The roundhouse had taken direct hits on the stalls and turntable; the lead tracks and storage tracks were a mass of tangled steel; and ruined locomotives, in every conceivable position, littered the ground. Electrical, steam and air installations had been destroyed, but a portion of

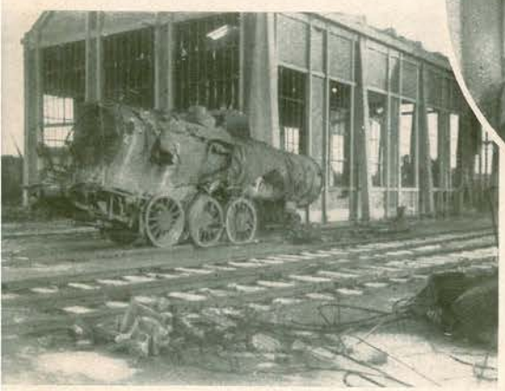


Panel:
Three of "Casey's Mighty Men"—Rau, King and Jackson
Wash day—T/5 Charlton
A picture of precision—T/4 Lerch

Left and Bottom: Wrecked engines at Matelots Roundhouse

Above: Tower, Aulnoye

Below: Air raid alert, Aulnoye



Chetwynd, Tryon and Blanchard

Above: A big repair job—Aulnoye enginehouse

Right: "B" Company Christmas card—PFC Ragar

the watering facilities had been rehabilitated, affording a meager supply of water.

Inasmuch as the west end of the enginehouse was obliterated, it was necessary to set up engine turning operations at the east end, which at one time had been the back shop area. A series of crossover tracks were connected from the main yard to create a single lead track into and out of the roundhouse, the far end of which terminated in a shell-hole. Operating a locomotive maintenance plant under single-lead conditions, necessitating backing an engine out the same way it came in, was far from desirable, but one couldn't be too "choosy" under the circumstances. There being no serviceable buildings in the immediate area, the "roundhouse" was set up in the open, with the sky as a rather unpredictable roof.

When the two machinist's hammers and a misfit wrench had been unpacked, plus a few discarded French tools and a battered oilcan, the "B" Company mechanical facilities at Matelots were open for business.

. . . And the "business" rolled in. An average of one train every half hour arrived at Matelots, generally requiring change of engines. Working under the most difficult conditions, in all kinds of weather, with pitifully few lights at night, and insufficient tools at all times, laboring from 12 to 18 hours daily, the locomotive men met the staggering demand for power . . . and more power.

No man was a specialist at his own trade, in those days. Mechanics worked as boilermakers, and boilermakers doubled as firebuilders. Every man was his own hostler. Lessons taught in the sedate surroundings of San Antonio roundhouse seemed grotesquely out of place at Matelots, but railroading is railroading anywhere, and the novices of February found that they were fast becoming experts by November—the principles implanted by the SP old-timers standing them in good stead when the "pressure was on".

. . . And it was only through the unflagging efforts of the Locomotive Platoon that "B" Company was able to chalk up an average of 36 USA engines serviced and repaired each day—for a consecutive two and a half month period—without rest or relief.

KEEP 'EM ROLLING

The GI riding over the "high line" and looking down into Matelots Yard thought "that's a helluva lot of cars busted up" . . . and turned his thoughts to other things. The GI car man standing in the middle of the yard and surveying the damage thought "that's a helluva lot of cars busted up" . . . and wondered how to get repairs started.

And there were "Beaucoup" troubles in those hectic days when the "B" Company car men began setting up their repair and inspection facilities. Excellently-directed bombs had disposed of any and all car maintenance installations, so a new rip track was designated east of the roundhouse. Most of the cars in the yard were wrecked beyond repair, but some, not so badly damaged, were patched up and returned to service. The big problem, however, was not with the idle equipment in the yard, but with the cars moving in trains . . . those cars carried priority loads, and when such a car was set out at Matelots, the rip track gang labored valiently, with scanty equipment, to return it to service in the shortest possible time. Shifted loads were adjusted, sticking brakes were corrected, hot boxes were doped, brasses and wheels were changed out . . . the rip track was always full of cripples, waiting to be fixed up and sent on their way again . . . which was just what the car men did — to the tune of three or more cars every day.

The car inspectors, too, came in for their share of headaches. With an average of 48 trains running through Matelots daily, each to be inspected, journal boxes oiled and bad orders set out, they didn't have much time for sandhouse gossip. Here, also, it was the same old story . . .

inadequate tools and ridiculously few lights for night work. It was hard, but GI ingenuity and a will to work saw the job through.

"B" Company's wrecking crew had its share of work, too. The wrecks occurring on 716th territory weren't what could be termed frequent, but neither could they be classed as scarce. Somewhere in between the two extremes, telephones jingled, men crawled sleepily from between warm blankets, donned clothing and oilskins, and hurriedly manned the "big hook" for a fast run to the scene of the accident.

On some occasions, the entire company was turned out to clear the main line of wreckage. Some collisions involved burning and exploding gasoline, and the inevitable disposal of thousands of jerricans. The spirit of cooperation between the men of "B" and "A" Companies—the latter operating the indispensable bulldozers—was evident on all occasions . . . but particularly during the memorable crack-ups at St. Cyr (when a battery of trucks used their winches to pull both cars and locomotive off the "main", over the embankment); at Versailles, at Houdon, and at Villiers.

HOME ON WHEELS

As the pressure of work increased at the roundhouse and on the rip track, it became apparent that something would have to be done about machine shop facilities. All kinds of records could be broken while inspecting, coaling and watering engines, but when one showed up in need of new piston rings, cab fittings, oil cups, or with something damaged . . . a bent main rod, for example . . . some kind of shop set-up was imperative.

The long-awaited drill presses, lathes, and other machine tools were beginning to arrive at Matelots, when it became obvious that there was no place in which to set up a machine shop. Building material was not available, and the only alternative was to house the machinery in box cars, out of the weather. It was only natural, therefore, that the idea presented itself to create a mobile machine shop, which could travel with the company wherever it went. And in the course of a few weeks, five cars had been selected, and were fitted up as the shop unit: consisting of a machine shop equipped with lathes, drill press, grinder, etc.; blacksmith shop, with forge and anvil; air brake shop; electrical shop; and air compressor car. Necessary tool and supply cars were added, to make a self-contained, highly mobile shop unit.

As the mobile shop neared completion, a new and intriguing idea took hold of the "brass" . . . "We're fixing up a shop on wheels, to avoid moving all that machinery everywhere we go . . . why not put the whole company on wheels, and forget about looking for billets next time we move?"

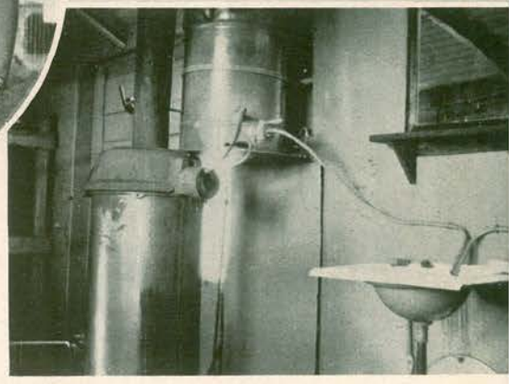
That inspiration flamed into action, and soon "B" Company personnel could be found, after their daily labors were finished, working on their new "quarters" . . . a string of specially-selected box cars. GI enthusiasm grew as the job was completed, and when the company moved into the train from Versailles School, each car had been painted inside and out, the train was electrically lighted, cars had individual stoves, hot and cold running water, radios, writing desks and assorted furniture. A shower car was fitted up, affording hot showers and washing facilities. In addition, a traveling kitchen and mess hall was planned, but was never developed due to Battalion mess arrangements having been made nearby.

"That 'B' Company train" was to provide many hours of comfort and good living for the hard-working GI's . . . a "home" away from home.

Below: Yes, "B" Company lived here, too

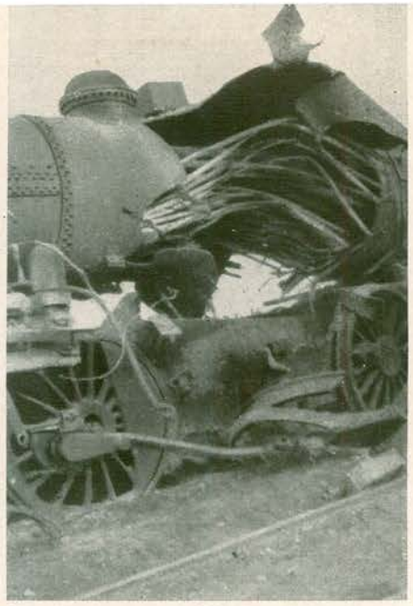
Above: Guess where?

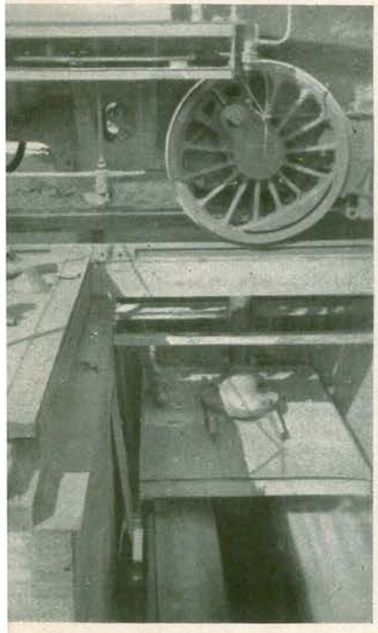
Gibgot, Godfrey, Anderson



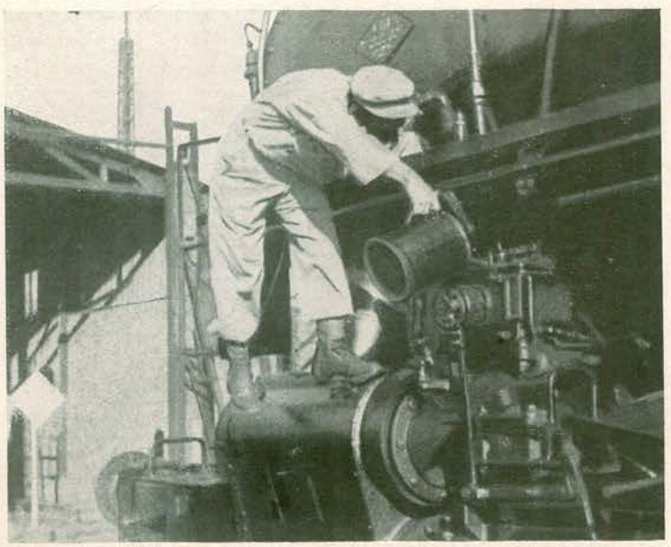
Above: There was hot and cold running water in the cars

Left: Injector repairs— Sgts. Anderson and Lerch





Top Left: What was left of Sablon roundhouse
Top Right: Obviously in need of repairs
Bottom Left: GI-built drop pit, Frescaty
Bottom Right: Wreck at Longuyon
Below: Lubrication was always important



DETACHMENTS AGAIN

Towards the end of October 1944, detachments were set up at Villiers and Villeneuve St. George. The Villiers detachment was composed of locomotive men, who serviced and inspected engines on through trains. The Villeneuve St. George group comprised both locomotive and car men, who handled USA power at the roundhouse and inspected trains in the yards.

AULNOYE

ENTER "BED CHECK CHARLIE"

The onslaught of the Ardennes offensive quickly changed the character of military railway operations, and Christmas Eve 1944 found "B" Company departing from the Versailles-Paris area, bound for the northeastern sector of France, where the Battalion was to operate a railroad line parallel to the then-threatening "bulge".

Company headquarters were set up at Aulnoye, where roundhouse and repair facilities were available. Enemy action was prevalent, and plans for living in cars were rudely shattered, when on the night of 26 December the "B" Company train was savagely attacked by a German plane, causing three casualties and a bad case of "jitters" among the rest of the company. In view of the probability of an early return of "Bed Check Charlie", as the midnight intruder was quickly nicknamed, it was deemed advisable to find less vulnerable quarters for the company, and shortly thereafter a move was made to an abandoned factory on the edge of town. The factory premises were in various stages of disrepair, and heavy snowfalls and biting winds made living conditions far from satisfactory. In consequence, a further search of the Aulnoye area was made, resulting in the acquisition of a small school building on the other side of town. Relatively comfortable quarters were established there, despite the fact that crowded quarters necessitated men sleeping in triple-tiered bunks; subconsciously alert to the unidentified planes droning overhead each night.

ICICLE INTERLUDE

Aulnoye was strategically located on the railroad, particularly from a mechanical standpoint, which meant that engines could be changed out and cars inspected on trains running in either direction, with maximum efficiency.

The vast effort which was exerted to turn back the abortive German thrust was at that time gathering momentum, and was rapidly bringing about an increase in traffic which pyramided daily. The locomotive men at Aulnoye, within days of their arrival, found themselves suddenly called upon to make available motive power in ever-increasing quantities. Once more, they worked long and difficult hours. Three Star Specials, priority trains, hospital trains . . . a never-ending stream of war materials demanded engines . . . engines . . . engines . . .

The old headaches were there, too. At a critical point in the power situation, the coaling gantry broke down, and locomotives had to be coaled by hand until a gasoline crane could be provided. Snow and freezing weather made repairs difficult and exasperating. Steam brakes and injector lines froze up on engines, requiring constant thawing out . . . only to find that some other part had frozen in the meantime. The imminent danger of air attack, resulting in continuous alerts, lent a nerve-wracking aspect to roundhouse work; which was further hampered by blackout conditions at night, when it appeared power demands were always heaviest.

Car Platoon forces were deployed at the station, inspecting trains, and on the rip track. The car men labored under the same uncomfor-

table conditions as their comrades in the roundhouse, but they "delivered the goods" to the tune of over 1,900 cars inspected daily, in addition to those repaired.

Hospital trains required special consideration at Aulnoye, as they did everywhere else. Only certain types of power were equipped with steam-heating facilities, needed on the hospital trains—presenting a continual problem to the roundhouse. Likewise, the rolling hospitals, during their brief stops, had to be inspected and serviced in a matter of minutes . . . definitely a trying job in freezing weather with the yards blacked out.

"UP FRONT WITH PATTON"

From 1 January to 10 February 1945, a detachment of "B" Company personnel was established at Lumes, near Charleville-Mezieres, in charge of Staff Sgt. Gilbert A. Fields. Lumes was one of the largest classification yards in France, situated close behind the Third Army front, making it a vital marshalling area for food, gasoline and ammunition, during the critical days of the Ardennes Campaign. The tremendous volume of traffic moving through Lumes was naturally reflected in the number of engines turned at the roundhouse, where, owing to a shortage in both military and civilian personnel, "B" Company men handled USA power exclusively, while the French took care of their own locomotives. There were only eleven GI locomotive men at Lumes, but they set a dazzling pace by turning and repairing a daily average of 20 engines.

A small group of car men, also stationed at Lumes, turned in a creditable account of themselves by their train inspections; assuring prompt and safe movement of vitally-needed supplies.

The proximity of enemy action at Lumes made the situation decidedly uncomfortable at times, but the soldier-railroaders soon learned to disregard V-bombs and shelling as easily as they disregarded rest and sleep when "Patton called for power".

LEST WE FORGET

A detachment of "B" Company was established at Hirson on 4 January, and another detachment at Jeumont, Belgium on 15 January. Both groups rendered exceedingly fine work in keeping power available and trains inspected.

METZ

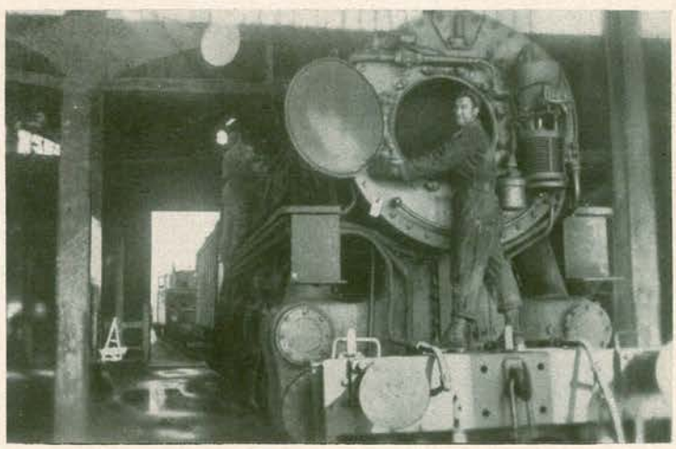
SUBSTITUTE ROUNDHOUSE

The rapidly-expanding front, in the early part of 1945, brought the Battalion to Metz on 7 February where "B" Company shortly thereafter set up headquarters on the outskirts of town, at Frescaty roundhouse. Having returned to their "home on wheels" preparatory for the move from Aulnoye, the men of "B" Company now found it advantageous to remain in their car-billets, which had been parked on a siding at the roundhouse.

With the increase in war traffic, motive power operations at Metz had entered a critical phase, due to the total destruction of Metz-Sablon, the main yard and roundhouse facility in that locality. All five roundhouses at Sablon had been demolished, together with trackage, turntables, gantry cranes and watering installations. The nearest undamaged roundhouse was at Frescaty, about two miles from Sablon; and upon the destruction of the latter facility, the SNCF had moved engine turning and repair activities to Frescaty.

Machine tools and equipment were badly needed at Frescaty to handle the volume of work that had formerly been done at Sablon, and to compensate for this the mobile shop unit was moved inside the engine-house proper, where repairs were made and new material fabricated.

Owing to the distance from Metz station to Frescaty, it was soon



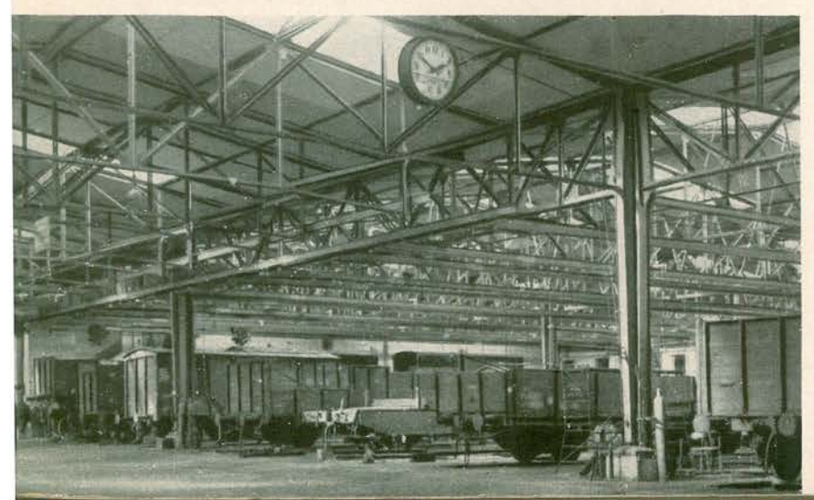
Top: You always had to outguess the SNCF
Center: Boilerwash at Frescaty—T/5 Herman
Below: Hargarten-Falck was a busy place

Top: Machine shop, Esslingen

Below: GI locomotives in storage, Stuttgart-Rosenstein

Center: "Keep 'em rolling"

Bottom: Car shop, Augsburg



found necessary to set up some kind of engine turning operations nearer to requirements. Logically, it was decided to rehabilitate enough of Sablon roundhouse to permit rapid servicing of locomotives only; sending any repair work to Frescaty for handling. This program proved successful, and a constant supply of motive power was made available.

VERSATILE PLATOON

Car Platoon forces were engaged for the most part in the rehabilitation of Montigny Car Shops, a major car repair installation for the SNCF. Montigny had at one time handled both repairs and new construction work, but successive bombings had reduced the plant to a mass of crumbling masonry and twisted girders. The car men formulated a program by which the French, working with the GI's, began cleaning up the wreckage, building by building; making limited repairs and restoring necessary facilities. A small amount of car repair work was undertaken, but the preponderance of effort was centered on rehabilitation of the shop.

The car men, however, were busy on other jobs in the Metz area. At Sablon Yard, the wrecking crew, together with the 718th wrecking crew, assisted "A" Company in their task of clearing up the yard and providing new trackage. Hundreds of burnt and destroyed cars were removed, and a great quantity of other wreckage hauled away. In addition, car inspectors were stationed in Sablon Yard, and also at Hagondange, checking trains originating and passing through the Metz gateway.

STILL MORE DETACHMENTS

Changing methods of operation made it necessary to set up a detachment at Audon-Le-Roman from 1 March to 1 April, for the purpose of handling locomotive servicing and car inspections. However, the shifting volume of traffic suddenly centered on Thionville, and the "B" Company "minute men" shortly thereafter moved from Audon to Thionville.

The roundhouse at Thionville, like so many others, had been heavily damaged; but arrangements were made to service and repair USA locomotives outside the house, on lead and storage tracks. Water was available, and coaling was accomplished by means of a gasoline crane.

From 5 April to 8 April, "B" Company operated the roundhouse at Hargarten-Falck, after which the facilities were turned over to the 732nd Railway Operating Battalion.

...AND STILL SNAFU

In the latter part of March, with an impending car shortage, it became necessary to release to general service all cars previously used for special purposes . . . which meant that "B" Company had to move again . . . this time out of their cars, and into a vacant chateau in Metz.

Just as it always happens, the inevitable came to pass, and the company, having settled themselves comfortably in their new home, were beginning to enjoy the novelty of climbing stairs again, when orders were received to move back into the vacated cars — for the 716th invasion of Germany!

GERMANY

AUGSBURG

V-E Day in Europe found "B" Company with its advance headquarters at Augsburg, Germany, and its main body of men enroute from Metz. For some reason not readily apparent, the roundhouse and shop installations at Augsburg had completely escaped damage from bombing; however, the yards had been badly disrupted. There were two roundhouses—one for electric locomotives, and one for steam;

however, as the electric catenary system was not in operation, only steam power was available when the locomotive men moved in.

The company was situated in the Post Hotel at Augsburg—a comfortable 34-room building complete with separate mess and laundry accommodations, located in the center of town.

At the same time, a detachment of "B" Company personnel was stationed at Esslingen, near Stuttgart, for the purpose of directing operations at the Esslingen back shop of the Reichsbahn—a large, completely equipped shop, which had escaped damage, and which was the only available shop for heavy locomotive repairs on 716th territory.

Another detachment was set up at Plochingen, whose function was to supervise car repairs and locomotive turning at that point.

REHABILITATING THE REICHSBAHN

When "B" Company first assumed control over German railroad mechanical operations, they found shops and enginehouses seriously undermanned, due to employes having fled their jobs upon entry of the Allied troops. The logical step, therefore, was to get as many former employes back to work as possible; this being accomplished by a vigorous campaign in conjunction with the Military Government. Many new men were hired, among them a large number of mechanics displaced from other industries disrupted by the war. In one instance, the personnel employed at a single shop was increased by 200 per cent.

A considerable number of shop machine tools were found to be without motors—such motors having been damaged or removed and hidden during the war; and on numerous occasions it was necessary to search for suitable motors to put the machines in working order.

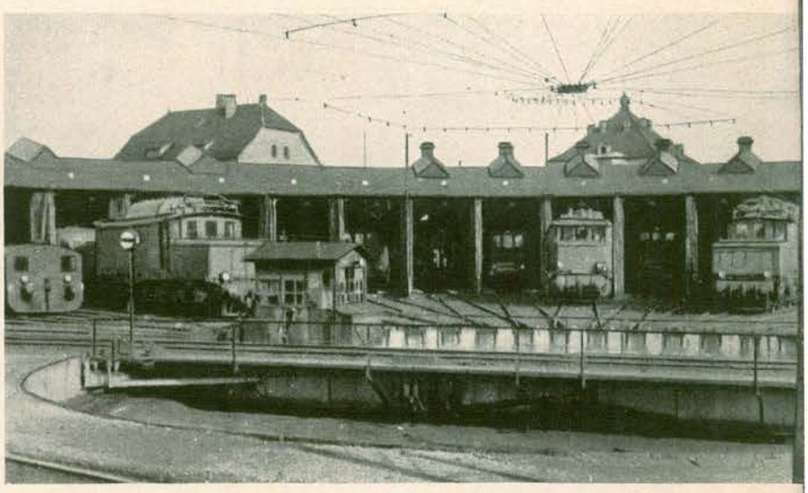
With roundhouses and shops gradually returning to normal operations, the next step was to put motive power in condition to handle trains. The majority of locomotives were strung out along the railroad, on side tracks and branch lines. Many engines had been strafed and badly damaged; others could be made serviceable with minor repairs . . . but all of them had to be dragged into shop for repairs of some kind. To get the greatest number of locomotives into service in the shortest time became the "number one" order of the day. At Augsburg and Esslingen large heavy-duty engines were given preference in shop over other types, and the combined programs resulted in making available a pool of heavy power for 716th operations.

Under the guidance of Tech Sgt. George S. Carruth and Staff Sgt. Ross S. King, a program of stenciling all captured German locomotives and rolling stock was inaugurated by the Car Platoon; both military personnel and civilians being utilized for the job. Territory involved in the stenciling campaign included the main line Stuttgart to Augsburg and all branch lines; also all territory south to the Swiss-Austrian border. The program was highly successful—a total of 18,250 cars and 850 locomotives having been stenciled at the completion of the campaign.

During May and June, as the operation of the railroad developed, it was necessary to set up additional detachments at Neuoffingen, Amstetten, Geislingen and Unterturkheim. These detachments were composed of both locomotive and car men, with the exception of Amstetten, which, being a train inspection point at the top of the Geislingen grade, involved only car inspectors.

In the first part of June, diesel fueling facilities were set up at various points on the railroad, and diesel-electric motive power was inaugurated on the Stuttgart—Augsburg line, to supplement steam power.

The end of June saw the electric catenary restored from Unterturkheim to Augsburg, permitting use of electric locomotives on trains. While repairs had been under way on the catenary, "B" Company had prepared 22 electric locomotives for immediate service upon resumption of electric operations. The advent of the electric line quickly terminated the need for extensive steam locomotive operations at Augsburg.

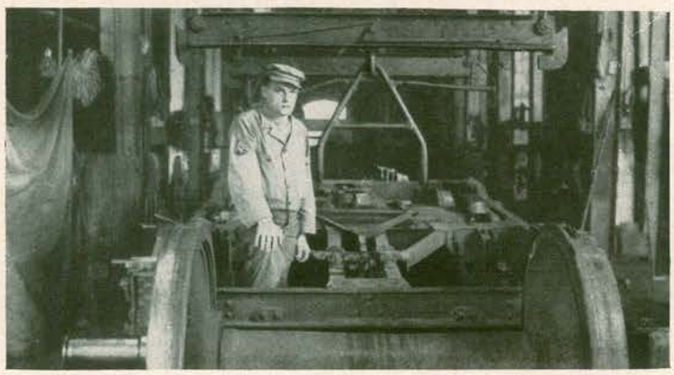


Top: Car carpenter Stodola makes the sawdust fly—Bad Cannstatt

Center: Electric locomotive roundhouse, Augsburg

Bottom: The biggest question of all

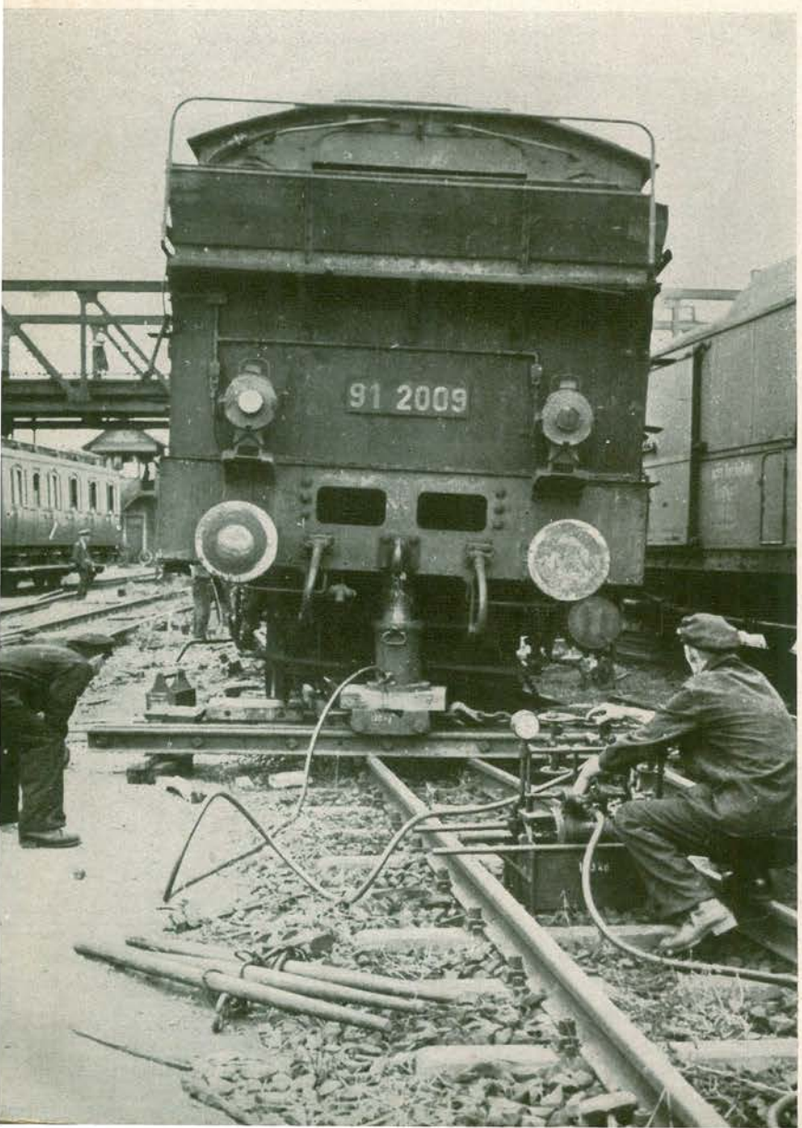
Corner: Locomotive back shop, Esslingen



Top: "Air conditioned" forge shop

Center: T/5 Studnicka changes out a pair of wheels

Below: Rerailing locomotive, Stuttgart



however, and "B" Company shortly received orders to move to Esslingen, inasmuch as a mechanical organization basically suited to work with steam power was no longer needed at Augsburg. A small detachment was left behind to supervise locomotive and car work.

ESSLINGEN

BACK TO SCHOOL AGAIN

Even after the European war had ended, and the forces of peace were gathering momentum, "B" Company was still moving from one place to another . . . Having been forced to give up quarters in the Post Hotel at Augsburg, the men were moved to individual apartment houses on the outskirts of town, where comfortable billets were established. An adjoining restaurant became an excellent mess-hall, with open air grounds and bowling alleys for relaxation.

The order to vacate Augsburg and move to Esslingen cut short this enjoyable situation, and upon arriving at Esslingen the Company was billeted in the Schiller School, a presentable three-story affair, which already housed personnel of other companies. After a short period of reminiscing over the "good old days", the men of "B" Company settled down to life in their new home in Esslingen.

POSTWAR — BUT NO REST

At the same time that Company headquarters were moved to Esslingen, "B" Company car forces were assigned supervision over the passenger car shops at Bad Cannstatt, and the freight car shops at Stuttgart-Nord. Repair work at both shops had been brought to a standstill by Allied bombing, and it was necessary to set up a program of car repairs, in order to start production at both car shops. After initial difficulties occasioned by locating former personnel and rehabilitating portions of the shops, work was resumed under supervision of "B" Company car men, and progressed from then on in a satisfactory manner. Car shops at Augsburg, Plochingen and Unterturkheim, along with Bad Cannstatt and Stuttgart-Nord, together averaged a daily output of 65 car repairs, at the cessation of 716th operations.

In the latter part of June 1945, "B" Company received instructions to receive and store a portion of the USA steam locomotives on the Continent which were no longer required in service. Plans originally called for repairing and storing power at Esslingen, but lack of storage space prevented this being done. Arrangements were therefore made to take over the locomotive shop at Stuttgart-Rosenstein, situated about one mile outside Stuttgart proper, where sufficient track room was available for storage of locomotives. Each engine arriving for storage was thoroughly inspected and given a boiler wash. New rod brasses, crown brasses and other fittings were applied where necessary; air brakes and pumps were cleaned; piping and cab fixtures were checked, etc., after which the locomotive was given a first-class paint job inside and out and placed on the storage track.

About the same time that the Locomotive Platoon began storing locomotives at Rosenstein shop, orders were received to store USA diesel-electric locomotives at Esslingen and Unterturkheim. The program was not of long standing, and shortly thereafter a change of plans sent the 716th-stored diesels to Munich for storage, in care of the 762nd Railway Shop Battalion.

During the latter part of June, instructions were received to locate, assemble and make ready for shipment a considerable number of French steam locomotives which had been taken to Germany during the war, and were now to be returned to France. Lt. Putryae was designated American liaison officer on a French military commission which had as its purpose the locating and identification of French locomotives in southern Germany; much of the survey being made by airplane.

Actual tracking down of these locomotives was accomplished by "B" Company personnel in charge of S/Sgt. L. M. Harbour, who covered the various territories specified by the Commission, and brought in the French power to assembly points such as Esslingen and Plochingen, where it was repaired and made ready for movement in trains to France.

June and July also found "B" Company busily engaged in assembling and preparing for shipment several units of German railroad equipment, including a 2—10—0 "Camel" type steam locomotive (which condensed its exhaust steam back into water for further use), a conventional 2—10—0 type locomotive, a box car, flat car and gondola car. Considerable effort was devoted to making repairs and readying the equipment for movement, and eventually it was all shipped to the United States for examination and study.

MORE TERRITORY AND MORE HEADACHES

About the middle of July, 716th territory was extended northward to Heilbron from Stuttgart. A detachment was promptly moved to Heilbron to look after locomotive maintenance and car inspections. Due to traffic re-routing occasioned by bridge repairs on another line, Heilbron suddenly found itself handling the bulk of all railway traffic moving on the district. Just after "B" Company forces took over, what had been a routine mechanical assignment overnight became another headache, with engine and car maintenance skyrocketing. The situation eventually returned to normal, however, in about three weeks' time.

Towards the middle of August, major yard operations were moved from Unterturkheim to Kornwestheim, a larger and better-equipped yard. This necessitated moving mechanical forces from Unterturkheim to Kornwestheim, where they resumed their duties of supervising locomotive and car work.

During July, August and September 1945, Car Platoon forces at Bad Cannstatt, under direction of T/4 John N. Stodola, were busily engaged in construction of three private diesel trains, for the use of General Officers in the European Theater. Each train, consisting of three units, was complete with separate bedrooms, a special master bedroom, dining room, kitchen, lounge car, marble showers, upholstered furniture, and numerous other accessories for luxury and comfort. A diesel motor in each end of the train furnished motive power for smooth, high-speed operation.

To add to its extended activities in Germany, the month of August also saw "B" Company taking over the management and supervision of the Maschinenfabrik plant at Esslingen, a large industry devoted to construction of locomotives and other heavy equipment. Orders had been approved for building 38 large steam locomotives and numerous items of miscellaneous machinery, and considerable time was devoted to securing materials from all over Germany.

For the entire time that "B" Company operated in Germany, the Esslingen back shop was under the supervision of the Locomotive Platoon. Light and heavy repairs were made to both steam and electric power; which, together with a great deal of miscellaneous repair work, made Esslingen back shop one of the busiest spots on 716th territory.

During the months of September and October, the men of "B" Company felt the impact of the Redeployment Program. "Buddies" since the days of Cushing and Bullis shook hands and waved farewells . . . some for a time, others for "keeps". New names and new faces began to appear in formations, mainly from the 712th Railway Operating Battalion, which had in turn assimilated a considerable number of "B" Company men. Old-timers and newcomers rapidly became acquainted, both with the same thought uppermost in their minds: The job is finished. When do we go home?

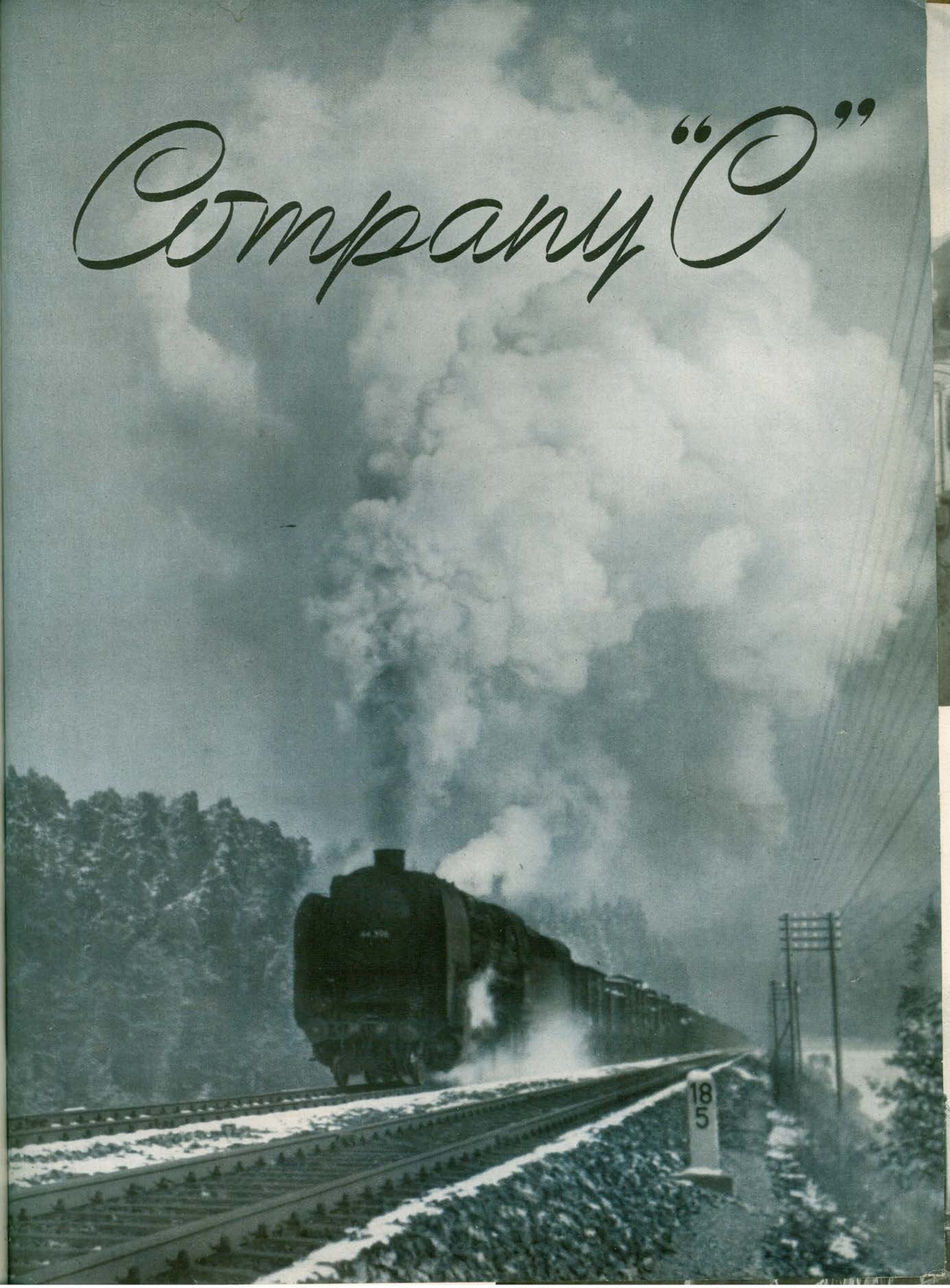
Above: Apprentice boys at work, Esslingen shop
Center: Rip track, Bad Cannstatt
Below: (L to R) Lt. O'Neill, T/5 Newman, PFC Mencke, PFC Dumesnil, T/4 Mulhall, T/Sgt. Foster

The Spider-Web of Metz

In the words of the Commanding Officer of the Grand Division the 716th was then serving under, the Battalion's part was to "... perform an unforeseen task in supplying three Armies over one rail line of communication, which would normally supply only one Army. Your Battalion is the gateway to this line, and upon your officers and men depends the success of our entire undertaking!"

And not only was the 716th the gateway ... the outfit had over 200 miles of railroad west, south and north of that gateway, into which supplies were being poured faster than they could be unloaded by the Armies.

Notwithstanding those difficulties, the Battalion moved, during a 30-day period, 24% more net tonnage than its commitment ..., in a ten-day period, 23% more cars were moved—54% more net tonnage than the Battalion's commitment. There never was a time when the eastward connecting line did not have a train "knocking at the door", ready to go, if they could take it!

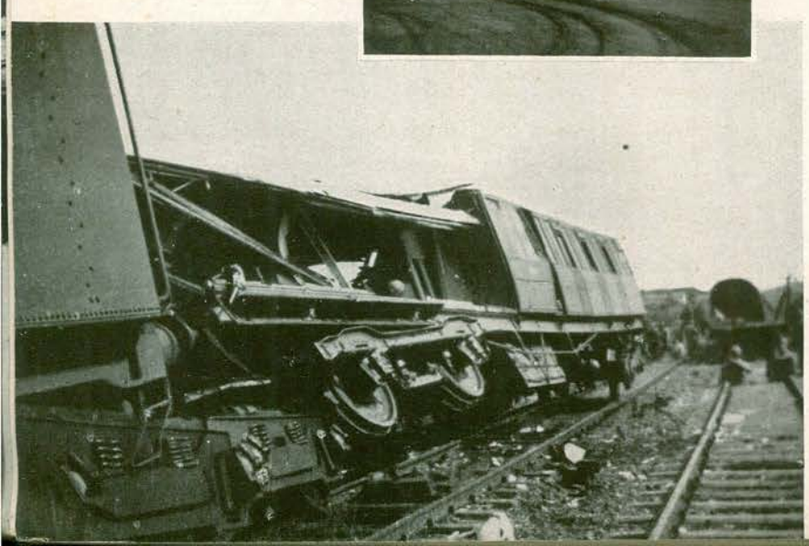

Company "C"
18
5

Above: "C" Company quarters, Dreux

Left: Moving day—Burgess and Lucas

Right: Caserne at Dreux

Below: Wreck of hospital train near Dreux



DREUX

THE "NEW" WORLD

The men of Company "C" forever will be grateful to their comrades in the other companies. It was H & H that supplied the "white collar" administrative workers, the dispatchers and operators, record keepers, pay roll men, and last—but most important to the inner men—the cooks. It was "A" Company that inspected and repaired the tracks, bridges, and structures and made communications possible. It was "B" Company that was responsible for having power available for the ready track. Without the splendid work performed by their buddies, the men of "C" Company would have been utterly helpless.

However, "C" Company has a pride all its own-for it is the actual operating personnel that has the final responsibility of "keeping 'em rolling" and delivering the goods. It was up to "C" Company men to deliver—and deliver they did.

In the gray dawn that made the battered and windowless ghost-like Dreux station look all the more ghostly, the men stretched as they weaved their way among heaps of duffle bags over to a French engine where the "mechanician" (engineer) obligingly let them fill their helmets with hot water. Some shaved, some washed—some just looked around. Look at that yard—will we ever get that mess cleared out? Where's the roundhouse—wonder if they've got any engines? When do we eat? Where we gonna' live?

While dozens of questions went answerless, "Cap" Olson, Trainmaster, was looking the "deal" over—this is what he had volunteered for—wartime railroading. Now he had a job on his hands—what must be done first? The yards looked bad—he needed a couple of mains and a half dozen auxiliary tracks. Well, he had some good men—the job would get started—and soon.

1st. Lt. John W. Springer, a yardmaster for the S P at Sparks, Nevada, and General Yardmaster for the unit, made a hurried survey of the yard. The mains looked good but "A" Company would have to get on the ball if that junk was to be moved out and the yard made serviceable. Better get a switch engine in there "pretty pronto".

Meanwhile, Road Foreman of Engines, 1st. Lt. Norris E. Loop (Engineer off the Rock Island in Kansas) was "casing" the roundhouse, seeing how many engines might be available. It didn't look too good but the men in "B" Company were reliable.

Fall in! The soldier-railroaders were reluctant and stiff and sore and tired—the 5-day trip from the beachhead had wearied them. Hell, we thought we'd start railroading—where do they get this Army stuff? But fall in they did—with full field packs tugging again at weary shoulders. Up the hill to wait while the amatuer booby-trap "experts" checked the building. Then a rush for rooms with everyone finally gravitating into quarters—maybe not too much to his liking. While cleaning up after the Germans there was a "chow" call. What, already! Say, those cooks are the ones that are on the ball. Bur what is this. A "K" ration, boys.

THEY BEGIN

Speculation ran high as to when operations would start and as to who would be on the first crew. Say, there's a big bridge out here that's got the main line to Paris tied up. Is that where we run?—here I come, Gay Paree! Yeah, and there's another route—a single track line—looks like we'll use that first—guess we're stuck here for a while.

But they weren't stuck. Word was sent up the hill that a five man switching crew would be needed soon—to start clearing the yard. There was no reluctance on the men's part to work, rather, they vied with one another to see who'd get on the job first.

That night the first road crew was called—for a test train to Chartres. Sgt. Anthony J. (Sack) Saccinti, a switchman off the Rock Island, was the conductor, T/4 Theodore F. (Ted) Gardiner, formerly a fireman off the Espee, was engineer, T/5 Henry J. Binch, fireman off the D and RGW was at "home" on the end of a scoop, Pvt. Alton C. Whitt, brakeman off the Illinois Central, rode the engine as head brakeman, and Gerald Kramer, a farm boy from Minnesota, did the job of flagging. In addition, Lt. Loop rode the test job as Road Foreman of Engines. Another train, with Gory's crew, was to follow in 30 minutes.

The test train left Dreux at 2245 hours (10:45 P.M.). The whole crew had been over the road before—cramped up in a dark box car—so didn't know an inch of the road. There was no headlight—even in peacetime the French operate without headlights and those who constructed GI locomotives followed the French custom. Anyhow, a headlight was a bit too conspicuous those days. To know where they were it was necessary to try to catch the name of a station with a flash light as they went by—and that wasn't of much help because the names of French towns meant nothing to them—the important thing was not to go by Chartres and tangle up with something.

But these men were war-time railroaders. The old "feel" of the rails was there—this was home—even though trouble might come—and come quick. What's that light, a signal? No, can't be. Pinch 'er down, Ted, we're hitting a bridge—maybe she won't take much. Better give her some water, lad, your glass is getting low—you know how to keep her hot, doncha'? What's the name of that town? Don't work 'er too hard, Ted, she's going pretty good, now—say, gimmie a cigarette, will ya?

Finally Chartres! at 0300 hours—4' 15"—too much time, but it was the first trip. The water was low—much too low. Where's that French pilot? Where's the water spout? Hell, uncouple the engine—we'll have to kill the fire. So ended the first trip—the railroaders were at work!

SHAPING UP

At Dreux, order of a sort soon came out of confusion—while 1st. Sgt. Anderson was having billeting troubles, T/4 Constantino J. Lovecchio, (NYC), crew dispatcher, began to line up crews for possible movement. A yard office was set up in the Dreux station—"C" Company was open for business. There was plenty of business, too, backed up along the line—but first it had to get to our division—then the rails had to be opened to Paris.

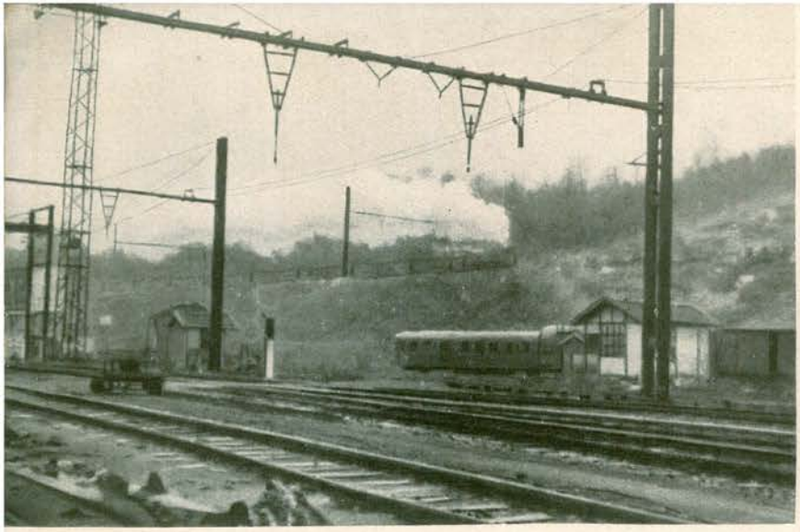
Meantime, while waiting for their first calls, the train and engine crews made their quarters as comfortable as possible. They set up stoves, and got pieces of furniture here and there. The French people were more than friendly—fresh vegetables were gotten from nearby farms—women were glad to wash the accumulation of dirty clothes for a bit of chocolate or a bar of soap. Civilians were direly in want—the war had been severe and the Boche had taken much from them.

The crew on the test train at Chartres—and the one that followed—were to be the first of the 716th to hit Paris. On their rest they were called at Chartres for a train, the consist of which was gasoline and ammo (later found to be strictly against the rules). Saccinti's crew had a Diesel on the head end and Gory had a steamer for pusher (Sgt. R. J. Gory (NYC), Conductor, T/4 J. J. O'Brien (B & M), Engineer, Louis J. Waeghe, Fireman, Donovan W. "Slim" Cromwell, Brakeman, and Raymond F. Collins, Flagman). At Dreux Captain Olson told them not to stop—to go on to Paris via Maintenon. While making the "Y" at Maintenon, Gory flagged a gasoline train that was following and that remained in the block. A few hours later that train was ploughed into

Above: Batignole Yard

Right: Empties headed west

Below: Switching crew



Above: Matelots Yard—"high line" in background

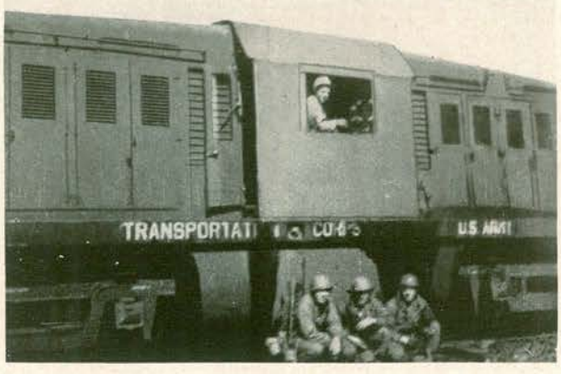
Right: Matelots after the bombing

Left: "Ventilated" box cars—Melton, the "Chef" and Marker

Above: Where's "B" Company?—Melton and Pozzi

Left: "Caboose hop"—Gardiner, Hiltbrand and Rost

Below: 650 HP diesel, with yard crew



by still another—resulting in wreckage tying up the line for some 36 hours. (Neither was a 716th crew.) At about seven in the morning of September 4th the precious load of gas and ammo arrived in Paris. Later, there was a friendly dispute as to which 716th crew actually got to Paris first. As between these two crews, it finally was determined that Gory's crew was the first because when the train was "Y'd" at Maintenon that put the steam engine on the head end—and the head end generally got in first. Saccinti's crew had chalked up 134 continuous hours on the road before it returned to Dreux. Gory's crew didn't get back until September 16th—fourteen days. They went off 716th's "legitimate" territory to move supplies nearer to the rapidly advancing Armies.

Another "first" crew was T/4 Roddie G. Ziese (S. P. R. R.) who went out as pilot with a French crew on the 2nd. He may be able to claim that he was the first 716th man who worked into Paris.

The first crew to work the Dreux Yards was Sgt. R. U. Stampley, conductor, T/4 Howard B. Riggle, (P. M.), eng., T. O. Robinson, fireman and Everett L. Thrower and Travis U. Thornton, brakemen.

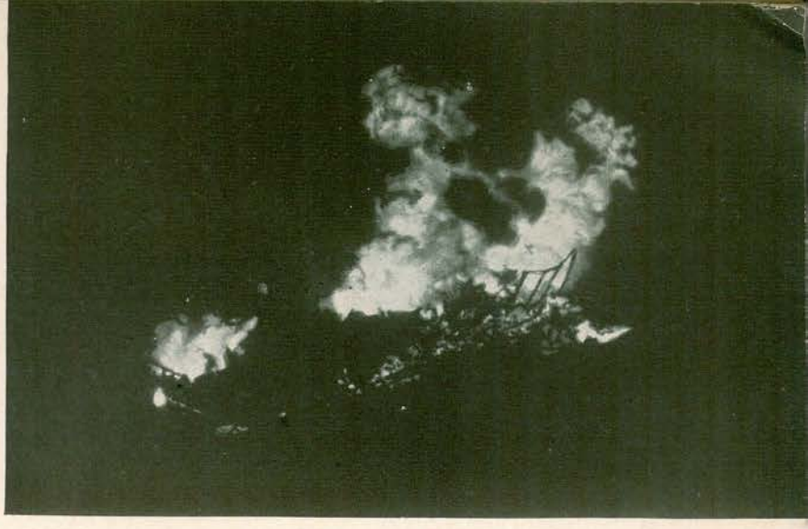
On September 4th a "cab hop" (crew: Sgt. G. E. Davis, Nickel Plate, conductor, T/4 H. C. Baird, Engineer, Lymon C. Rife, (M. P.) fireman, "Mike" F. Bruzina, (P. R. R.), Brakeman, and Ben V. Gibson, flagman) took four deadhead crews to Surdon. All the crews returned to Dreux the following day with trains destined to Paris. The previous day, Lt. "Torpedo Dal" Dal Porto had made an inspection trip over the Surdon-Dreux line.

Lt. Richard E. Johnson, Assistant Trainmaster, had led an advance Party to Chartres ahead of the outfit to locate quarters and to make appropriate arrangements for "reception" of the outfit. But the 716th trains passed through Chartres without his knowledge. Finding that the 716th was at Dreux he proceeded to that location, to be immediately sent to Surdon to take charge of the detachment established there.

On September 8th the Dreux bridge was finally completed and east bound loads started over the "main" to Paris. The single track line via Maintenon thereafter was used for the movement of west bound empties. It was used, too, for other movements when the main line was tied up by wrecks.

THE FRENCH SYSTEM

S.N.C.F.—"Société Nationale des Chemins de Fer Français" (The National Railroad Company)—the nationalized railways of France—soon were designated by the boys as the "SNAFU Railroad". And no wonder! Hand and lamp signals were confusing—a washout with a white light meant "come ahead" to the French. Automatic signals were inoperative—for safety's sake a positive block system, controlled by operators at stations, was adopted by the Americans. There was a shortage of lanterns, fusees, and torpedoes, so necessary for safe railroading. The



language barrier was the worst handicap—some moves could be made only after pictures were drawn in the dirt or snow.

At Dreux our operations were Phase II—GI crews intermingled with French civilian crews. (Phase I operations are strictly GI—Phase II, intermingled—Phase III Civilian operations under GI supervision.) It was the policy that GI crews would be accompanied by a French pilot and that French crews would be accompanied by a GI pilot. However, the policy was disregarded in certain instances so trains could be moved. The GIs had been trained in the States to conform to rules laid down in TM 55—265 but in France TM 55—265 was thrown into the Siene. The rules called for formal watch inspection and daily comparison. But—no watches. In didn't matter anyhow—the only time element that really mattered was getting the trains to their destinations.

The freight cars or "wagons" were miniatures compared to those in the States. Rather than double to the caboose it was the French practice to get about eight men and push the caboose onto the train. Couplings were strictly non-automatic—one had to stand between the cars and drop the link over the hook and then tighten the turnbuckle for a good coupling. French switchmen were experts but most GIs who had railroaded in the States were wary at first—it looked foolhardy to stand in the middle of the rails with link poised as the cars came together.

Many "wagons" were not equipped with brakes—just a straight air line. On brake-equipped cars there was a goodly portion that were inoperative. If a conductor found that he had 50% brakes that was "satisfactory"—if he had less, that was "satisfactory", too, but he went forward generally and advised the engineer what he was up against—then it was a question of good or bad judgment.

The French government allowed a wine ration of one liter a day for their enginemen (none for conductors) because of coal dust and physical labor. Company "C" men were provided with road rations, too,—"Cs" and "Ks". French food was short and it was a common practice for the soldier-railroaders to share with their civilian comrades.

French railroaders were reluctant to go beyond division points because of the food situation. To relieve that and to materially augment the number of hours obtainable, provision was made for "on duty" French crews to eat at the mess halls established by the 716th.

JUST PLAIN WORK

GI railroaders returning to the States will be fortified with a storehouse of real yarns to vie with the tales of the old time "rails" who still are want to tell of the days before the 16-hour law and full crew bills. For the GI there was no limit on hours—there are hundreds of cases where it was four or more days before they returned to their home terminals—some swore they "met themselves coming back"—not unlikely, either, as the French have a left-handed operation, to us, against

Left: Batignole school, Paris

Above: Rear-ender at Versailles

Right: Loaded up and ready to go

Above: The flagman

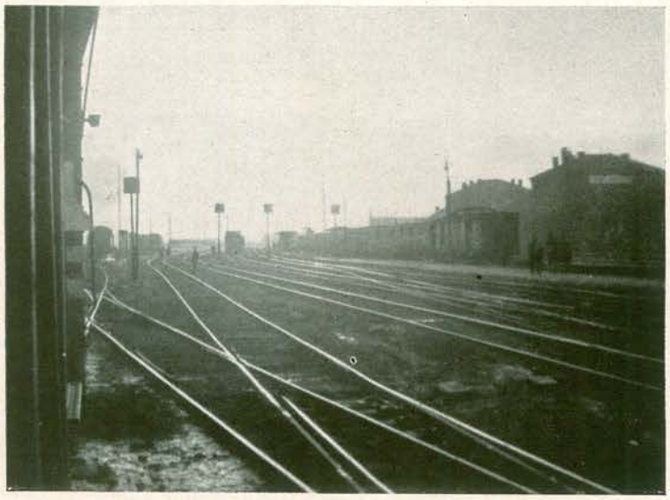
Right: Leaving town

Below: Easing off on the throttle

Above: Head-on at Aulnoye

Left: Caboose telescoped by tender, Aulnoye

Below: Aulnoye yards



the current of traffic, and it was common for a GI to get that weak feeling in his solar plexus when it appeared that he was about to have a head-on.

While the engineer had the toughest job—feeling his way at times—wondering what might be ahead in the pitch black of night and praying to God that there would be enough braking power to stop—the other jobs were not easy. The fireman, often at the point of exhaustion, had to draw upon every ounce of reserve strength to keep steam up—God! we can't get hung up on that hill! The head brakeman (so long as there were five-man crews) was a second pair of eyes for the engineer and aided the fireman on occasions. The conductor, as skipper, with his inspections—hoping signals would be seen and obeyed—"parleyed avec" French towermen and agents in an endeavor to move his train forward. The flagman—flashing his lantern occasionally—moving back a "sufficient distance" to the rear of his train—"one in the chamber" of his carbine—and wondering if a sniper would take a pot shot at him as he stood for long hours protecting his train.

The 716th had its share of accidents and wrecks—a few trains were piled up and burnt up—with gasoline and supplies that were direly needed. But "A" and "B" companies—and everyone else—cleared the right of way—put the rails down again—and more trains moved up. There was talk about the wrecks and other things—and the men were quick to learn from the experiences of others. Each "mission" continued to be a separate adventure and a separate story in the mind of every member of the crew.

The 716th has its sad memories, too. On November 19th, Newton T. Rushing made the supreme sacrifice for his country, when his engine crashed into another train on the Villiers curve. Newton was known and liked by every man in the company. He, too, worked for the Victory we enjoy today—his services will never go unrecognized. Nor will the boys ever forget George Trimmer, a swell guy and a real comrade, whose passing left a cloud of gloom.

As time passed, more yards and territory were added. Trains soon were diverted at the Versailles Junction to the yard at Villenieux St. George for delivery to the 712th Railway Operating Battalion. The yards at Matelots, near Versailles, became an important classification yard of the 716th and there delivery was made to the 724th operating north.

THEY PROVE THEMSELVES

There weren't enough men. Beginning on October 11th, the head brakeman was cut off and crews reduced to four. The strain and long hours were beginning to tell—then the 716th suffered a severe loss of men and "C" Company was hard hit. Operations were impaired. Twenty experienced crews came from the 732nd. Former infantrymen from replacement depots came in and were made railroaders. "A" Company men and supply clerks were drafted to augment the crews. Men had to be upgraded. Non-railroaders like Bobbie Snyder, Jimmie Dyer, Dwight Pogue, Forrest Scott, Charles Rohr, Ted Polkoski, Ray Durham, and Bob Duda were "made" engineers—and engineers they were. The youngest was 19, Dean K. Van Volkenburg—he, too, got trains over the road. An old time railroader would have turned grey to ride behind a youngster whose total experience was 2 months on an oil burner and 2 months with a scoop in the ETO. But a month of experiences in the ETO was worth a year—perhaps two years—at home.

It wouldn't be fair to close the "Paris Chapter" without mentioning the tremendous receptions given GI trains for the first few weeks they ran into Paris. People would line the tracks, waving and shouting their enthusiasm for the Americans. This was but a reflection of the warmness constantly accorded the GI railroaders throughout France. Truly, the French are a great people.

AULNOYE

MEN OF EXPERIENCE

It is true that all had not been experienced railroaders in technical training. It is true that there had been mistakes made—bad judgment exercised—by "C" Company men as they acquired their reputation for railroading on the Druex-Paris run.

It is also true that they were not the same men, either mentally or physically. They were more serious—they were more hardened and more tenacious. Physically, they were a bit more lean but definitely more tough. Nearly four months of unrelenting work, under trying conditions, had made them so.

It is true that they had the hell scared out of them during the strafing at Aulnoye and when Jerry tackled them on the road and when they saw buzz bombs streaking across the sky. But it is also true that they responded to calls—they grumbled and cursed when they were called again short of rest. But, despite all, they railroaded.

When they took a train out they never knew how long it would be before they'd see their home terminals again. They weren't sure when they'd eat a hot meal. Long since, those things—really vital—had become relatively unimportant.

"I'm new to you men—I've never seen some of you before—but I'm your commanding officer. You've got a pretty damned good reputation as railroaders. I want you to keep it. I'm not going to ask much more of you. That's all now." Such was the speech of Lt. Pliney P. Pusser, who'd come to the outfit shortly before leaving the Paris area—and that was the first time he'd seen much of the company together. It was a short speech—a longer one would have been inappropriate.

To the crew dispatchers and callers their own company was always a puzzle. Once the men were scattered out—at detachments and on the road—it took much book work to figure out where they were, approximately. A battalion is intended to handle a division of railroad of considerably less than 100 miles but there were in excess of 300 miles of double track under the jurisdiction of the 716th when it was headquartered at Aulnoye—and even then it was not uncommon for crews to be ordered off their own territory.

Above: City Hall, Aulnoye

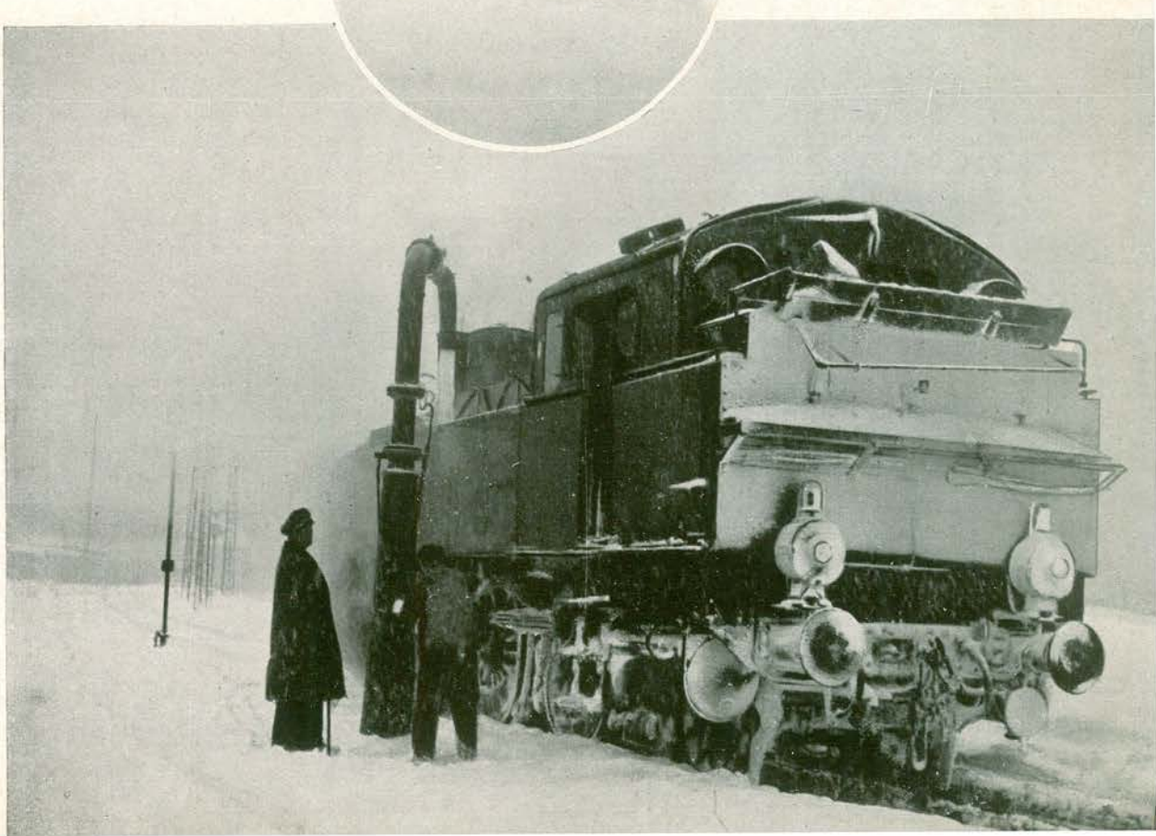
Right: Link and pin coupling-Sgt. McHale

Circle: "On the firing line" at Aulnoye

Bottom: Taking ice-water near Aulnoye

REWARD—SATISFACTION OF DOING

There were outstanding bits of work done, too. On the 26th of December Sgts. Saccinti and Covington and Privates Bice and Gattuso were called at Aulnoye to deadhead by truck to Tergnier. (Deadheading by truck had long been in vogue in the 716th—it provided for greater utilization of manpower.) The crew arrived and hung around the yard office at Tergnier until about 11 p.m., at which time "Bed Check Charlie" came over and made them seek refuge in the station bomb shelter. A few hours later the caller came around and rousted out three 722nd crews and Saccinti's crew to take five light engines to Soissons. Soissons was not 716th territory but that meant nothing.

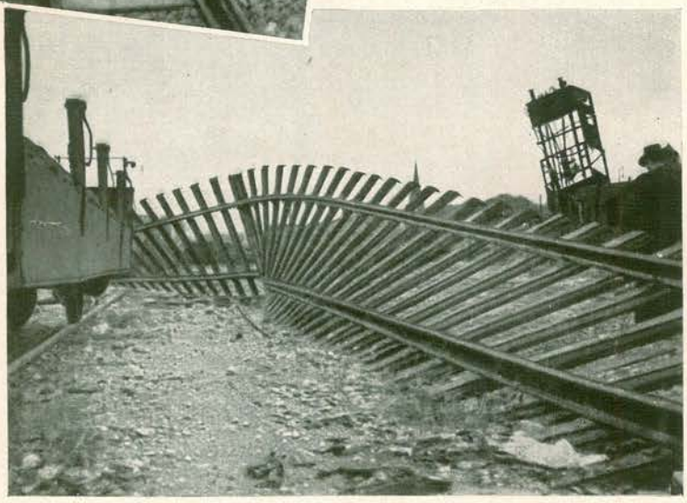


Above: Metz station

Left: You had to throw your own switches

Below: Destruction at Sablon Yard

Bottom: "The ravages of war"



With Jerry still annoying them from overhead, they moved out of Tergnier Yard about 1 A. M., everyone a bit nervous for it was impossible to black out one steam locomotive, much less five of them.

About forty miles later, after reaching the station of Soissons, they were told that all hell had broken loose at the "ammo" dump and there wasn't any chance of getting in. Sack and his crew returned to Laon but later, at 11 A. M., they were ordered to Curvy and upon arrival there found a colonel and a major on the ground. The brass ordered the boys to the dump with instructions to save whatever they could.

The 716th crew had the job of switching the ammo out and delivering it to a 722nd crew on the main. This wasn't too easy. It meant many trips as a cut of seven wagons was all that could be handled at one time. It meant, too, that with every move they had to go between two dumps that were afire and from which almost every variety of ammo was taking off in no particular direction. They returned some 90 cars of ammo and two GI engines that had been abandoned when the bombing started. After all this, the crew bummed a few cans of "C" rations off a passing train—then they were ordered back to Tergnier without rest. 'Twas all part of a day's work.

One day Ziese came back to Aulnoye and told his story about a double header being strafed at Busigny. The GI crew hit the dirt but the French crew didn't and they paid with their lives.

The outfit was still short men but forces were soon augmented, on January 8, by the addition of 128 replacements from a "repple depple" at Compegine.

LIFE—AND MAIL—AND WAR

There was many a post-Christmas celebration as Yule packages continued through February. Mail was more than important. Even if dead tired, a man's first stop upon arrival was the mail car. Sometimes nothing—and those were the days when one's stock went way down. Sometimes an accumulation, maybe of weeks, and a guy would happily read himself to sleep.

Those enginemen and trainmen continue to have memories of those long trips to Valenciennes or Douai for coal—of being so close to the "bulge" on runs to Lumes, Verdun, and Longuyon—of snatches of sleep at Tergnier before being called for a trip to Charleroi, Belgium—and of constant wondering why a man couldn't stay put on one of the lines—never did he seem to get to his home terminal for clothes or mail. Yardmasters remember and still wonder why solid trains of identical commodities moved both east and west.

While the yards were in fairly good shape physically when the outfit moved into the Aulnoye area it kept the yard forces humping to classify and direct to their destinations the various classes in accordance with priority demands. Army classes were roughly as follows:

Class I — Quartermaster—chiefly food, PX, and clothing.
Class II — Ordnance
Class III — Petroleum, Oil, Lubricants (POL)
Class IV — Coal, Engineering Equipment, and Miscellaneous
Class V — Ammunition (Ammo).

HAT trains (Hospital Ambulance Trains), of course, got priority over everything and crews went far beyond the call of duty in expediting their movement. Troop trains moved up and POW trains increased in number. The first of the French DPs (Displaced Persons) began to move back home. The valient—the wounded—the conquered—and the freed—each day one saw the basic emotions of man.

It was while at Aulnoye that the Blue Star Special, carrying high priority freight to the front from Cherbourg, was inaugurated. Regular crews were assigned to the special service and everyone, from top to bottom, was on the ball to see that it got through without delay.

On the 27th of January a Blue Star Special met with tragedy when

it was involved in a head-on with a string of empties at Aulnoye, in which one officer and one EM from another railway operating battalion were killed.

ANOTHER MOVE

The "Buffet" at Aulnoye, which had pretty good cognac about three times a week, was put off limits. But there was a back door and perhaps it was there that the rumors started that the 716th was to move again. One guy was sure that the outfit would stay another 30 days—another had it "direct" that a move would be made within 15. Anyhow, the outfit was alerted for movement and, as the trains were lined up to go, the winner, a teetotaler, spent a portion of his winnings on cognac for the loser—perhaps hoping he'd have another pipe dream and put up money on another bet.

METZ

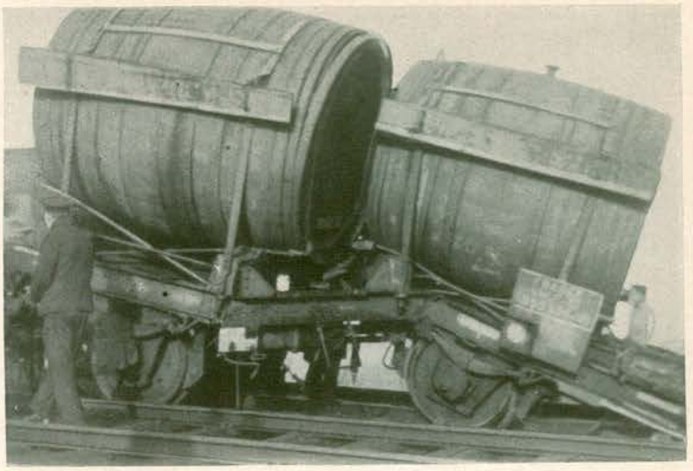
NEW TERRITORY—AND A NEW LIFE

During the trip from Aulnoye to Metz the boys "in the know" pointed out the places of interest, battle grounds, etc.—from their side-door Pullmans. Nine times out of ten they were wrong but that mattered little—even those who generally distinguished between fiction and fact didn't bother to verify. Prevailing thoughts were those as to destination, how close up they were going, and whether life would be easier, harder, or about the same.

They wondered about the Commanding Officer of the Battalion. Lt. Col. Wm. C. Morris, a newcomer since the 27th of January. Most of these railroaders hadn't met him yet but they'd heard he was a strict disciplinarian. In the following months they were to find that true—they learned, whether they liked it or not, that they were expected to be model soldiers and model railroaders. Soldiering was to come first but railroading performance was not to slacken. However, if any outfit could do it, the 716th could—and did.

Metz was "up next" to where the boys were slugging it out with the krauts. The yards and lines were in a hell of a shape. No sooner had the boys gotten settled down than the inevitable process of separation began. Detachments were set up at Audun Le Roman, an important junction point; Longuyon, on the main line to Sedan and Aulnoye; Landres and Mancieulles, P. O. L. dumps; Florange, a classification yard; Arnaville, on the main line to Nancy; Conflans, receiving point from the 712th from Verdun; Hargarten Falck, on the main line into Germany; and at Thionville, called by the Germans "Diedenhofen."

Battalion Headquarters were maintained at Metz. But Thionville, so far as operations were concerned, was quite as important. It was the center of the web of rails that covered the vast territory serviced by the 716th. The men had learned, long ago, that detached service was preferable to being around headquarters or a large terminal where disciplinarians were too quick to note improper dress or to insist upon the acme of orderliness. There weren't sufficient officers to command each detachment so unusual authority was necessarily vested in enlisted men who managed to get



Top: Yes, those barrels were full of wine

Above: "Keep 'em rolling" — German version

Right: Highball

Below: On the high-line near Metz

Top: GI diesels on ready track, Unterturkheim

Middle: "The boys" at Augsburg

Bottom: Mess hall, Augsburg

Corner: On the Geislingen grade

results without jeopardizing the spirit of comraderie that continuously was prevalent in the 716th. There was keen rivalry among the detachments about getting things done—men boasted about how many cars of P. O. L. were loaded daily—or the number of wagons switched, or the number of trains that had cleared their yards without delay.

WORK—AND MORE WORK

The Metz-Thionville area was Alsace-Lorraine territory—the scene of bitter controversy between the French and Germans for decades. This was reflected in the language. GIs who had picked up enough French to get along in the Paris and Aulnoye areas found themselves confounded when they'd get a "nicht verstehen" to an inquiry made in French. Sign language was resorted to again and the railroading continued.

The road crews were severely taxed. The outfit was supplying three armies over one main line and frequently crews were run far beyond the limits of the division—the stuff couldn't stop—a bog-down then would have imperiled the advancing forces more than at any other time. Sometimes the road crews wished they'd phenegled themselves into yard detachments—at least there would have been regular meals and regular sleep.

Operations were dual in nature. In French territory there were both GI and French crews running and pilots were almost a thing of the past on Phase II lines. Then there were lines that the French "cheminots" didn't take to—those in territory that had been strictly German. So there it was strictly Phase I—and to some GIs it was a relief not to be bothered by the differences in operation which always arose when civilians and soldiers were on the same job.

In the yards in territory just recently wrested from Hitler's "supermen" were hundreds of cars of captured equipment and empty wagons. There had been a severe shortage of rolling stock so crews were sent on special missions to round up equipment. In this manner, hundreds of wagons were returned to France for both military and civilian use.

AND PLEASURE, TOO

Several crews will long remember the trips along the beautiful Moselle River between Luxembourg and Germany, up to Trier, where not only captured equipment was brought back but also huge jugs of "Liberated Liquid Lightening", a sour wine that went down easily and which frequently and fittingly topped off the day's work.

It was while in this area that the personnel of Company "C" finally was issued 45 pistols to replace the carbine. While the carbine unquestionably was more effective than the .45, it was a weapon that was unhandy and subjected its carrier to the additional hazard of accident.

It wasn't by coincidence that the engineer who ran the first 716th train in France was the engineer who ran the last 716th train in that country. "Ted" Gardiner, who had piloted that first train from Dreux to Chartres on September 2nd, 1944, made a request upon Lt. Pusser that he be allowed to take one of the troop trains as it left Thionville for Germany. His request was granted and, as the French mechanician looked on, "Ted" nursed the throttle as France was left behind.

GERMANY

A JUMP AND A MISS

A game of leap-frog had been in progress ever since there were any number of railway operating battalions in the E. T. O. An outfit would work a territory for a while—things would be gotten to running smoothly—then a new outfit would come in or the territories of other outfits would be expanded to cover the area—and the old outfit would jump over a series of units to a territory closer to the front.

Having been deprived of the honor of being the first unit to operate into Germany or across the Rhine, the 716th hoped to win the distinction of being the furthermost unit in the line of rail supply in Germany. And it was nearly so. An advance detachment left Metz on May lst to make reconnaisance on the assignment of territory from Stuttgart to Munich. The main body, in its movement to Germany a few days later, was to be detained on several occasions because bridges were not yet repaired.

The 716th did not gain the distinction of being the furthermost unit—before facilities in Germany had been repaired so as to permit main line operation, the assigned territory was changed by cutting off the extreme eastern portion from Augsburg to Munich and giving it to another unit, the 761st Transportation Company (Company "C" only). The 716th's territory, as modified, was between Ludwigsburg and Augsburg.

THOSE FRIENDLY GERMANS

Allied bombings and demolition of the retreating Boche had played havoc with railroad facilities and equipment. Bridges had to be rebuilt before main line operations could be inaugurated. But much could be done—and was done— — —

When a detachment first moved into a German terminal—less than 10 days behind the retreating Germans—conditions were entirely different than those previously experienced in France. In the Paris, Aulnoye, and Metz districts the French were always on hand with a warm welcome for their liberators and a ready hand to assist in starting and carrying on operations.

But Germany was a conquered land—the war was still in progress—and the "Eisenbahnarbeiters" didn't know, at first, if they were expected to work. So there just wasn't anyone on hand the first few hours as the advance detachments went through the stations, shops, and yards, taking everything in and estimating what work must be done to prepare for operation. In almost all cases the yards were severely damaged, signals inoperative, shops wrecked, and other facilities certainly not ready for immediate use. For the first time since railroading on the Continent began, the "Eisenbahn" was paralyzed—"kaput", for the time being, at least, in the full sense of the word.

Then the "Oberinspektor" would appear, somewhat timidly but with German stubbornness, to see what was happening to the railroad. To his surprise, he would be informed that the Americans expected the Germans to return to work immediately and that he was expected to extend himself to effect their return. Local citizens who could speak English or American (and there is a difference between the two languages) were hired as interpreters—there were only a half dozen in the entire outfit who could "sprechen Deutsch".

Obviously, the German railway workers were surprised at the attitude of the American railroaders. They found them firm but not oppressive. They found them obsessed with a single idea—to get the railroad running. And the Germans sensed that it was to their advantage to cooperate—the sooner they got it running the sooner they'd be back on the payroll.

LIFE BEGINS AGAIN

Very rapidly things began to shape up. The sight of the first switch engine clearing up the yards seemed to be a signal to townspeople to come from behind their white flags and shutters and make an attempt at life again. As in America, the railroad was a vertabrae in the life of the country—if the railroad was running there was no reason why other things should not run.

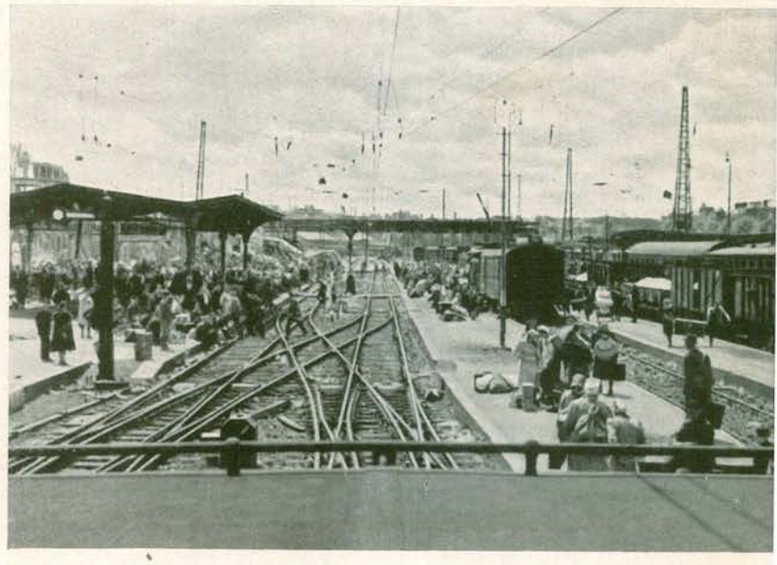
Workers immediately in the vicinity flocked back to work. Word was sent to those who'd sought refuge in the hills and small villages. Soon the shops were going—track men were salvaging rails and repairing the

Corner: Switch crew on the job at Augsburg

Below: Heilbronn Bahnhof

Middle: DP's waiting for a train—Ulm

Bottom: This is what was left of Ulm station



Above: The main line

Circle: Hand signals

Below: An "electric" on the head end

Insert: Brand new diesel, direct from the States

yards—electrical workers were picking up the overhead and reconstructing the catenary for electrical operation—signalmen were testing—workmen in every category diligently went about their labors without question.

VICTORY—AND MORE WORK

The GI railroaders heaved a sigh of relief when hostilities came to an end on May 8th—V-E Day! The main body of the 716th crossed the Rhine that day—good cause for the celebrations that were had. But no letting up for the advance detachments that were readying the railroad. And no let-up on the part of the German railway workers—the inevitable had happened and it seemed as though they heaved a sigh of relief, too.

There was no question of cooperation—the slightest wish of an American soldier was a command. In France there had been arguments at times—there the railroads had been run on a "partnership" basis—ally in conjunction with ally. In Germany it was supreme rule of the conqueror—a considerable difference.

NORMALCY APPROACHES

Through freight service over the division as far as Ulm was inaugurated the early part of May with steam power only.

On June 2nd the first sector of the electrified lines were put into operation from Neuoffingen to Augsburg. June 15th saw the first electric train operating from Ulm to Unterturkheim.

During the month of June the 716th was assigned the territory from Heilbronn to Ludwigsburg, giving the unit a total of 139.5 miles of main line trackage. It was during that month that leave train service was inaugurated over the outfit's division.

Because most of the facilities were inoperative in the main classification yard, Kornwestheim, it was necessary, at first, for the 716th to utilize the yards at Unterturkheim for classification purposes. By August the Kornwestheim yards were 80% operative and the detachment at Unterturkheim was moved to that location.

Men of Company "C" occasionally found themselves in critical situations and performed deeds which were outstanding and heroic. On May 28th ammo stored in cars at Beckstetten ignited. At great personal risk and in the midst of exploding artillery shells, PFC Bobbie D. Snyder made his way to within one car-length of the burning cars in order to cut away the remaining cars, thus eliminating spread of fire.

LET THEM DO IT

When the outfit left Metz for Germany Lt. P. P. Pusser was dropped as CO of "C" Company and Captain Howard C. Carmer took over as company commander and the deployer of the company's advance detachments in Germany. At the outset, he made it clear that in all possible cases the Germans were to do the work under American supervision. So the GIs did as little of the actual work as possible—but some found that directing was sometimes harder than doing the actual work. Yard operations from the start were almost exclusively German but GIs were constantly there to see that what was wanted was done properly. GI pilots were provided for practically every train operated. In reality, they were not pilots but representatives of Uncle Sam—there to see that military supplies and troops were moved expeditiously and safely. At first, road jobs were exclusively GI but that soon was made a German obligation.

The Ending

Above: Tower, Esslingen
Below: Battalion Motor Pool—T/5 Lone, T/4 Bowman

THE TASK AHEAD

When the men of the 716th entered Germany they anticipated a life entirely different from that experienced in France, Belgium, and Luxembourg. In those countries, freed from the Nazi oppressor's yolk, the liberated peoples had not only been grateful but were willing and ready to cooperate with the soldier-railroaders in the latter's methods of rehabilitation and railroading. True, there had been some differences at times because of languages and customs but compared to the whole they were minor. Certainly, there had been but little difficulty in making friendships, many of which were to outlast the war and the life of the unit itself.

As the war in the European Theatre came to an end the main body of the outfit crossed the Ernie Pyle Memorial Bridge over the Rhine. While there was a bit of hilarity and a few sporadic celebrations, thoughts chiefly were on the job ahead. The Japs were still very much in the picture so there might be need of a great many of the railroaders in the South Pacific. And, even though the Germans had folded, a tremendous assignment in railroading confronted the Military Railway Service in Deutschland. Thousands of tons of supplies had to go in for the Armies, captured equipment and munitions had to be transported to ports for shipment to either the States or to the Pacific, millions of "slave workers" had to be repatriated to their home countries, and hundreds of thousands of troops shifted about in the puzzling redeployment program.

SETTING UP HOUSEKEEPING

In new surroundings and a strange atmosphere, the soldier-railroaders set to work. Those whose duties were primarily in conjunction with railroad functions set about rounding up civilians and readying the facilities. Others secured housing facilities and established messes.

LIVING QUARTERS

It was not too difficult to obtain suitable quarters. Likely places were inspected and application made to the Military Government for their use. If M. G. detachments were not yet operating in the particular area, the German proprietors or tenants seemed only too willing for the Americans to move in and make themselves at home. Difficulty was experienced only at a few locations where the devastation had been so great that there was nothing but rubble. At Heilbronn, for example, it was necessary to set up a mess and quarter the men in the station because it was the only building in the immediate vicinity that was still above the ground. A similar situation existed at Stuttgart.

At Ludwigsburg the detachment was billeted in a large private home, much to the chagrin of the owner who had to move in with his neighbors at the order of the Military Government. Later, when it was determined to open up the huge yard at nearby Kornwestheim, the

facilities at Ludwigsburg were abandoned and the men were quartered in the renovated "Ledigenheim" quarters previously operated by the railroad for bachelors. At Unterturkheim, too, a "Ledigenheim" was pressed into service. Both hotels and private houses were utilized in Plochingen, Geislingen, Augsburg, and Herrlingen. The house used at Herrlingen was formerly the residence of the "Desert Fox", the late Field Marshal Rommel. At headquarters in Esslingen, it was necessary to requisition a schoolhouse, a "Ledigenheim", private homes, hotels, and the facilities of a huge woolen factory. Even at the smallest detachments, consisting of but two or three men, pretty fair accomodations were found. Almost all the soldiers were satisfied with the living conditions in Germany.

RECREATION AND FRATERNIZATION

There was no complaint about recreation during the first few weeks as the problem of "getting the wheels rolling" occupied everyone's mind. So, it was with nonchalance that the Army program of entertainment, consisting chiefly of movies, was accepted.

The Army had imposed upon the soldier a rigid rule that there would be no fraternization with the civilian population. It appeared at first that such things as dances and a stroll in the park with one of the opposite sex were out of the question. But not so—such association was permitted with the DPs (Displaced Persons) who were awaiting return to their own countries.

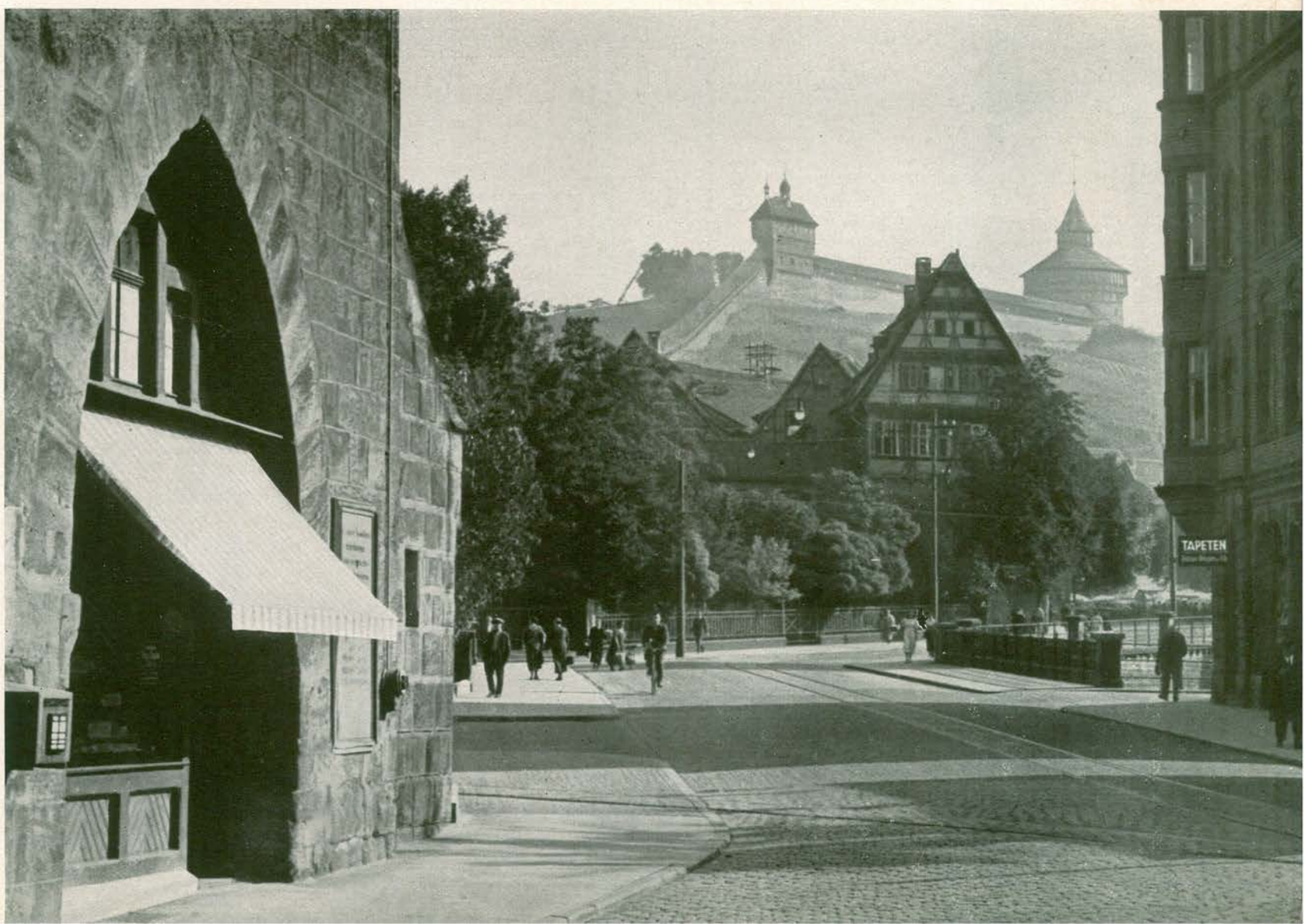
By the time most of the DPs had been repatriated the non-fraternization policy was lifted to the extent that the only remaining ban was the billeting of troops with Germans.

Direct association with the German population was of benefit to all. It permitted the GI to be himself once again—the stringent restrictions

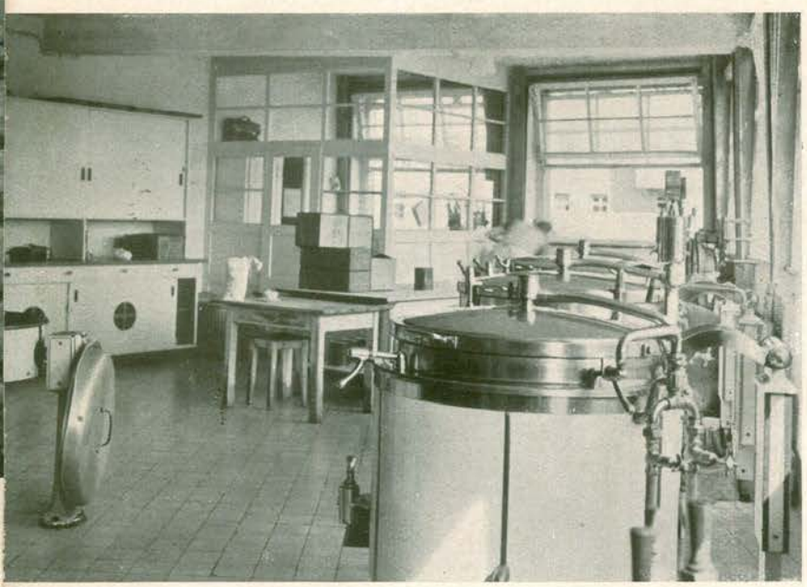
Above: Waiting for a clear board

Left: GI and German mechanic working together on a job

Below: Street scene, Esslingen



"Chow" at Plochingen mess hall



Above: Modern kitchen, Esslingen mess hall

Below: Sgt. Owen Jennings enters enlisted mens' "paradise"

on what he considered his personal liberties had been quite unpopular. The Germans, in their contacts with the Americans, learned of America and of democracy—something of which they were sorely in need.

ECONOMICALLY

Economically, the soldier was better off in Germany. Paid in Marks, he found that the Mark was worth 10 cents in redemption value. But the Mark to the Germans was worth in excess of forty cents and prices were comparatively low. In France there was a serious inflation coupled with an exchange rate unfavorable to the dollar. The soldier had to pay two cents for one Franc. A haircut, for example, in Germany was 80 Pfennigs, in France 75 francs—the difference between 8 cents and a dollar and a half. In France, a liter of cognac was never less than 600 francs (12 dollars) while in Germany the same amount of cognac could be obtained for less than 40 Marks (4 dollars). While the ravages of war had left but few commodities to be purchased, prices for the few unrationed things that were left on the open market in Germany were found to be uninflated.

THE CLUBS

As the railroad was put in shape and everything started running smoothly the men, themselves, took a hand at providing additional entertainment facilities. At Esslingen, up on the hill, a Sergeants' Club was established. Not to be outdone, the Privates and Corporals opened up the "5-6-7 Club" in the downtown area. Detachments soon followed the example, and clubs sprang up at almost all of the outside points. Dances, floor shows, and other means of entertainment were commonplace, but only through the hard work of the several club managers.

SPORTS

Covered separately in this history is a record of the men's achievements in sporting activities. As in everything, the outfit was far from being in an inferior class.

THE CBI

But the outfit was to see many changes. No sooner had they gotten into the swing of things than many of the men had to pack up duffle bags and head for France to join the 732nd R. O. B. scheduled for the CBI via a furlough in the States.

Then, on August 15th, President Truman formally announced the conclusion of the war with Japan. The 732nd, practically at shipside, its personnel with American dollars in their pockets, suffered dissolution. Most of the low pointers who had been with the 716th found themselves passing back through 716th territory in Germany to Linz, Austria, to become a part of the Army of Occupation.

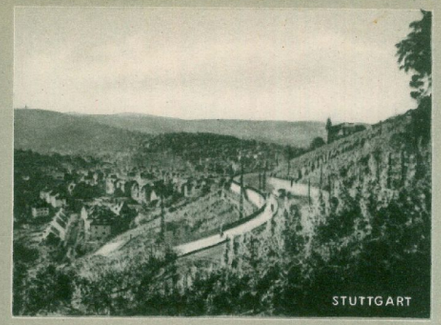
MORRIS MOVES UP

With appropriate formality, Lt. Col. Morris relinquished command of the 716th about V-J Day to go to the 707th Railway Grand Division as its Commanding Officer. Pending the assignment of another permanent commander, Captain Charles J. Geidner headed the 716th with Captain Howard C. Carmer stepping up as Executive Officer.

THE 716th HIGH-BALL

During the latter part of August another morale booster was conceived and duly "activated" on the 1st day of September. On that day appeared the first issue of "The 716th High-Ball", then called the "Question Mark", the unit newspaper that was to develop and take its place alongside the important things that made life livable.

OPERATIONS IN GERMANY


STUTTGART

ESSLINGEN

GEISLINGEN CURVE

A NEW BOSS

The first issue of High-Ball announced the fact that Lt. Col. Jack W. Buford was assuming command of the outfit, resulting in Captains Geidner and Carmer being "bumped" back to their former positions. In Colonel Buford's administration, many improvements were brought about in working and living conditions. The members of the Battalion were highly appreciative of their new boss.

REPLACEMENT POOL

More changes came in September. The 716th, without official designation, turned into a "replacement pool" for the Military Railway Service. High point men were transferred to the 712th, 718th, 759th, 743th, and the 741st, outfits that were scheduled for "early" redeployment. There had been high hopes, that the outfit, as a unit, would be sent home on a "first in-first out" basis, in the order in which the various railroad battalions had been sent overseas. Now it was obvious, however, that the only first in-first out deal would be in accordance with point scores of individual men.

AWARD FOR SERVICE

On September 19th the 716th was presented with the Meritorious Service Plaque for the period of railroading from February 1st to March 31st, when the outfit was under the command of Lt. Col. Morris. It was the first official recognition of the outstanding work that had been performed by them since operations had started more than a year before.

EASING OFF

The passage of time meant easier work for practically everyone in the Battalion. Most of the actual railroad work was performed by the German employes under the supervision of GIs. It became possible to operate in certain locations with very little supervision.

HOME THOUGHTS

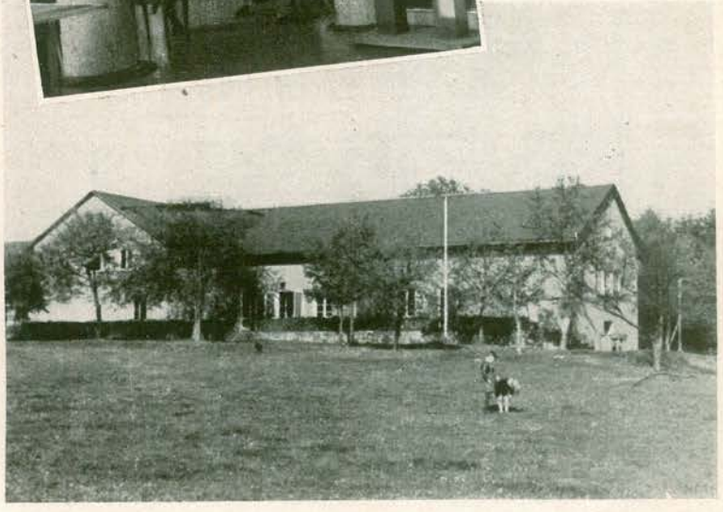
The passage of time meant also more and keener thoughts of home. Officers were constantly plagued with inquiries as to when the outfit might be relieved of railroad duties and be shipped home. Homegoing thoughts had originally stemmed out of the plan to return some 20,000

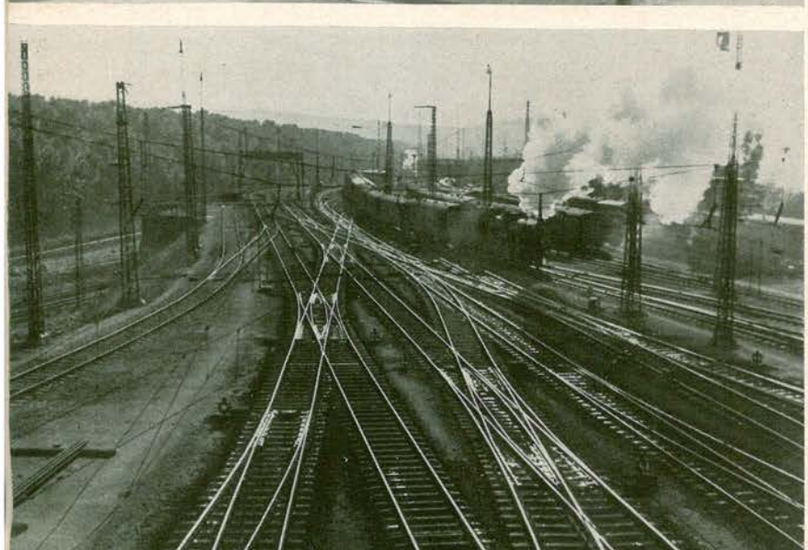
Above: "5—6—7" Club Esslingen

Above: Plochingen EM club
Right: 716th club at Herrlingen

Left: Officers' club, Esslingen

Below left: Entrance to Reichsbahn Hotel, Stuttgart
Below right: Sergeants' club, Esslingen





railroaders to the States just prior to the capitulation of Japan. The war's end, however, terminated that program as suddenly as it had started. The idea that a westward voyage might be in the offing couldn't be stopped, though, and wishful thinking grew to almost a demand for a return home. Criticism of the redeployment program was plentiful.

REST CAMP

When the war ended the men of the 716th deserved a rest . . . and so a rest camp was set up. Camp Tamalpais, situated in the hills 37 km from Esslingen, was formerly used as a school for German youth. Accommodations were excellent. During a 3-day stay, a man was treated to a type of hospitality reminiscent of civilian life. Entertainment was left to the discretion of the individual. Deer hunting and fishing were most popular. Good German beer was on tap. There was no better place in Germany to rest than at Camp Tamalpais.

SHAPING UP

The 716th, resembling a "repple depple", apparently was to become a 56-64 point outfit. At least, things were shaping up that way when an order came through on November 3rd to transfer all enlisted men with 55 or less points to the 115th AAA Gun Battalion. It was anticipated that the unit then would be filled to T/O strength—and rumors from "usually reliable sources" had it that the 716th was scheduled for shipping early in December.

BUSTED UP

On November 9th additional orders from Headquarters of the Military Railway Service changed the entire picture. All but 167 enlisted men were ordered transferred to various units. It meant but one thing—instead of shipping home as a unit, the men of the 716th were being scattered to the four winds while still in Europe.

BUFORD HEADS HOME

Lt. Col. Buford, possessor of 91 points, saw his hopes of taking the 716th home vanish. Having been eligible for discharge for some time he promptly exercised his right and relinquished command of the organization. He started home on November 16th. Captain Burton W. Gibson, Executive Officer and former Adjutant, was advanced to the position of Commanding Officer of the Battalion.

RAILROADING FINISHED

Effective at 2400 hours, 14 November 1945, the 716th ceased active railroad operations and relinquished its territory to two railway operating battalions that had been functioning in the areas contiguous to that of the 716th. The 746th under the command of Lt. Col. Pruett, extended its territory westward to Ulm, operating in conjunction with the RBD at Augsburg. 752nd operations were extended eastward to Ulm. That outfit, headed by Lt. Col. Triggs, took over the RBD at Stuttgart.

THE END

Thus, the 716th dwindled to a skeleton of its former self. Left were but a few officers and enlisted men, some of whom were of the original

From top to bottom:
Time for chow—Mess Hall, Esslingen
Lounge car, General Appleton's train—built by "B" Company
Schiller School, Esslingen
Stuttgart Yards

outfit. Going about the hum-drum tasks, they reflected upon the happenings of the previous two years. It was with a feeling of sorrow that they had seen their comrades leave. Like those departed comrades, they would have preferred to stay together in the Battalion, to have gone home as a unit. But the Army, in its infinite wisdom, had decreed otherwise—and had chosen the "Army way".

The 716th may again be raised to T/O strength, but it will not be the same, for only in the heat of war can such comradeship and such "know how" be forged and tempered.

It has been said, and truly so, that war is a terrible thing. But it is equally true that the efforts to obtain victory likewise have their compensations. For out of the cauldron of tears and blood and sweat have been born friendships and associations that the passage of the years cannot destroy. The men of the 716th realized that only too well, as trainload after trainload of their buddies rolled out of Esslingen station, and disappeared into the distance. They knew, as only men who "have been through the mill" can know, that the 716th — their 716th — could never die. Though the years will mellow thoughts and feelings, the "old 716th" will live on . . . as long as a single member of the outfit remains alive.

AUTHORS' COMMENT

It may be natural to boast of an outfit—to say. "This is the best outfit in the Army." Many men thought that of the 716th. The primary duty of the authors here is not to boast but to record. In our recording we may not have been impartial—we are frank to admit we loved the outfit, and are proud of its accomplishments. We know that the 716th wasn't the best outfit in the ETO. And we know that it wasn't the worst. We rather are inclined to think of the 716th as an outfit capable of performing its assigned missions in creditable fashion as a part of the ponderous machine that won a war. The officers and men were average Americans, with their full share of virtues and faults. They were comrades, buddies, that endured with one another—just as men in other units endured with one another. One of our reasons for having related this "Soldier-Railroaders' History of the 716th" is to give to the men of the outfit a bare outline of their experiences so that whenever they choose, they may reminisce and fill in for themselves the detail and color so necessary for proper conception of the individual's notion of the whole.

In undertaking to chronicle the life of the 716th, the authors were mindful of their task. They realized it would be difficult even inadequately to portray the deeds and accomplishments of the unit, without endeavoring to treat the matter in the light of individual accomplishments.

All that could be done was to give a running history of the outfit in which the work of the Battalion and its component companies are described. In a few cases resort was made to individual incidents or accomplishments—not for the sake of glorifying individuals—but because they aided in highlighting the general record.

Although the element of time made it impossible to do justice to all the individuals and incidents so worthy of attention, yet each member of the 716th R.O.B. can well be proud of the part he played in the successful completion of the Battalion's mission, and in the premature ending of Hitler's Thousand Year Reich . . . nine hundred and eighty-eight years too soon.

From top to bottom:
"The Last Roundup"
Homeward bound—Esslingen station
Some fellows had to sweat it out . . .
. . . while others were more fortunate

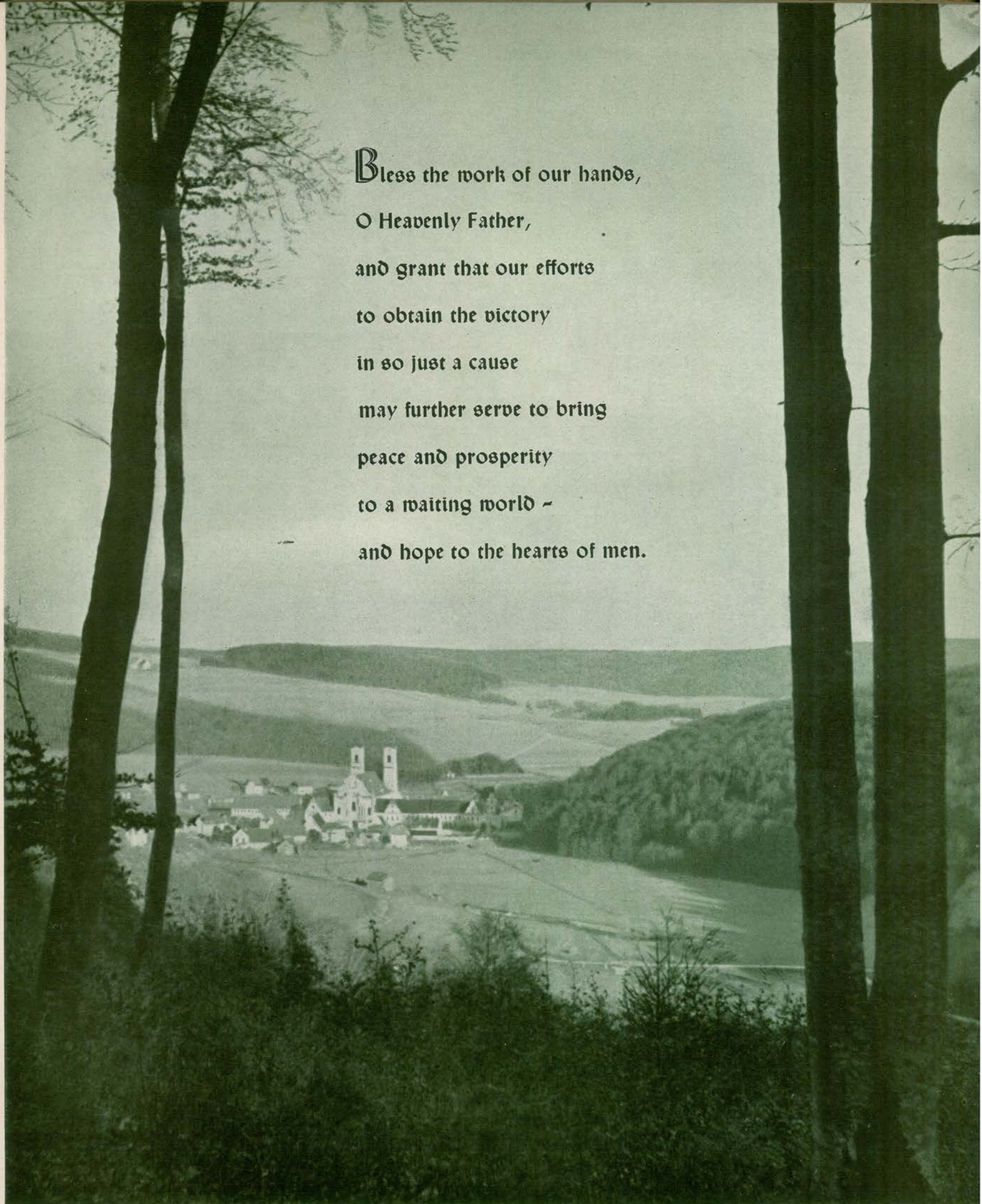
No history of the 716th would be complete if it failed to include in its pages some mention of the widely-publicized incident which took place in Paris in November 1944. It is that part of our history which, unfortunately, through volumes of unjustified publicity, made us conspicuous in the eyes of our fellow soldiers and in the eyes of those at home.

It is not our purpose here to judge any act, great or trivial, which remotely concerns the individuals involved, or the tribunals by which they were tried. But this we do know . . . those men were our comrades, and from working with them day and night, we know that they were guilty of no serious crime or offense against the Government or their fellow-soldiers. We do know that these men did their part towards moving the supplies to the front, and winning the war. Since the time of their trials almost all of them have returned to service and are soldiering in harmony with the Army's highest standards.

The entire situation became a challenge to the 716th. It was up to the men who remained to do an outstanding job of railroading during the critical campaigns of last winter . . . to demonstrate that men CAN achieve, in spite of the most adverse conditions. Though suddenly deprived of many of its essential workers, the 716th did not hesitate. It did not falter. Saddened but determined, it carried on.

We feel that no finer tribute could be given to an organization than that paid by Major General Ross, Chief of Transportation, in his letter to the 716th . . . in addition to which we simply say:

We stand on our record!



Bless the work of our hands,
O Heavenly Father,
and grant that our efforts
to obtain the victory
in so just a cause
may further serve to bring
peace and prosperity
to a waiting world -
and hope to the hearts of men.

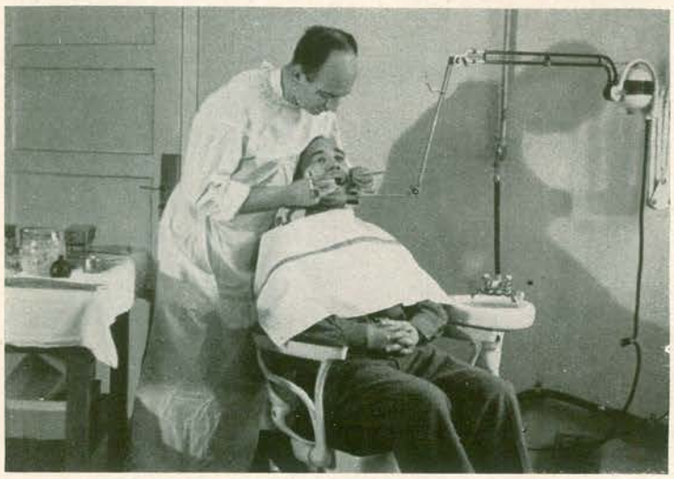
BENEDICTION

Top, L to R:
Capt. Harry E. Beard; Capt. Emanuel Lipschik; Lt. Seymour Lehrman

Left: T/5 Roland O. Clark and S/Sgt. Donald C. Pittman

Below: Meet the Medics

Bottom: Lt. Lehrman gives a patient "the works"



THE 716TH MEDICS

The officers and men of the 716th realize that they owe a debt of gratitude to their Medics that can not easily be paid. They recognize this debt all the more because there was a time when they had no medical detachment upon which to call for help; it was a most unhappy situation. Men of the 716th do not even like to think of what might have been had the going gotten really rough before the Medics joined them. It was with a sigh of relief, therefore, that they welcomed into their midst, on October 15th, 1944, the nine enlisted men and two officers from the Medical Corps.

From the moment that they arrived at 716th Headquarters, then at Dreux, France, the Medics were kept continually on the go. They were on call twenty-four hours a day, seven days per week, without let-up, and they were called often. The job of preserving the health and treating the illnesses and injuries of 900 odd railroaders was complicated by the fact that men were stationed at widely separated points. There were times when detachments were to be found scattered over an area bordering the 300 miles of track for which the Battalion was responsible; far too few Medics for the many detachments.

During the Battle of the Bulge when the 716th living cars, in the railroad yards at Aulnoye, France, were strafed, the Medics proved beyond a doubt both their competence and courage. Four men were seriously injured. Before the air-raid was over, while an enemy plane was still hovering overhead, the Medics administered first aid and evacuated the wounded.

At times, the men of the 716th cursed the Medics, for few indeed enjoyed taking the injections that the Army insists be administered with relentless regularity, but the cursing represented no deep feeling for the injections were not very painful and they forstalled much greater anguish. The men realized that the Medics were seeing to it that the best possible sanitary conditions were maintained at each of the detachments and they were grateful. The consideration and skill with which the injured and ill were cared for was and is appreciated.

THE "TOP KICKS"

The life of a First Sergeant is not a happy one. By Army standards, he is well paid, but the responsibilities of his office weigh heavily on his shoulders. The First Sergeant is the intermediary between officers and enlisted men, and to him is delegated the difficult task of relaying orders and securing compliance therewith. But the "Top Kick's" job doesn't end there. He must also represent the enlisted man to his officers, and take the part of the GI who brings a grievance or request to his attention.

Although preoccupied with administrative duties, the First Sergeant must keep in close touch with company activities, and be ready to offer recommendations for improvements or changes whenever the occasion arises.

On a Battalion level, the Sergeant Major is the counterpart of the First Sergeant. He is the link between the men of the Battalion and the administrative officers. Working directly under the Adjutant, he relays orders and information from the Commanding Officer to the various companies.

The "Six Stripers" are the top ranking noncommissioned officers.

Master Sergeant Donald W. Wolfe, Sergeant Major

Left:
First Sergeant Emmett L. Battson, Company "H & H"

Right:
First Sergeant Michael W. Dicke, Company "A"

Left:
First Sergeant Leonard L. Fuller, Company "B"

Right:
First Sergeant Carl F. Fleishman, Company "C"

...for a job well done!

Climaxing long months of training and railroading, the 716th Railway Operating Battalion came into its own when the organization was formally presented the Meritorious Service Plaque "for superior performance of duty in the performance of exceptionally difficult tasks and for the achievement and maintenance of a high standard of discipline."

The presentation, at the Scala Theater in Esslingen on Wednesday, September 19th 1945, was made by Lt. Col. Greiner, Executive Officer of the Second Military Railway Service, acting in behalf of Brig.General Clarence Burpee. He lauded the personnel of the Battalion for their achievements in railroading under the hazards and difficulties encountered in more than a year's service in France, Belgium, Luxembourg, and Germany. Greiner was not sparing in his praise of fellow railroaders who played such a valiant part in the war against the Nazi machine.

The man who had led the 716th during the period for which it was cited, Lt. Col. W. C. Morris, Commanding Officer of the 710th Railway Grand Division, recalled to the attention of his former command their accomplishments in Northern France and other locations. He was emphatic in his statement that he wanted to be remembered as having been a part of the 716th. He expressed gratitude that the organization was receiving recognition for service so nobly performed.

Lt. Col. Buford expressed gratification over being privileged to lead an organization with such an enviable reputation. "It is with a great sense of humility and pride alike that I am permitted to take part in this ceremony because I realize I have in no way shared in the earning of it," he said, demonstrating again his frankness and qualities which had brought to him the respect of his command within few short weeks. He made it clear that when the 716th departed for the States the entire personnel could look back at its colorful history and be forever proud.

Although specific mention was made in the award of the months of February and March 1945, in a larger sense, the diligent and productive labors of the Battalion from the time that it arrived overseas were recognized. Perhaps the men of the Battalion worked harder during other periods than they did during February and March, certainly they worked as hard at other times, but that is not important as the only reward for which they asked was the ultimate defeat of the enemy.

SERVICE
AWARD OF MERIT
716th Railway Operating Battalion
1 February 1945 to 31 March 1945.

THE 716TH HIGH BALL

Reconversion and redeployment were the primary interests of the editors of the "716th High Ball" just as reconversion and redeployment were the foremost problems of Congress and the American people. The editors were interested in keeping their soldier readers both informed and amused. Editorially the newspaper was in no wise sterile. It discussed vital problems forcefully, yet managed to stay on an even keel. The editorials aroused interest in and promoted discussion on topics important to soldier-citizens.

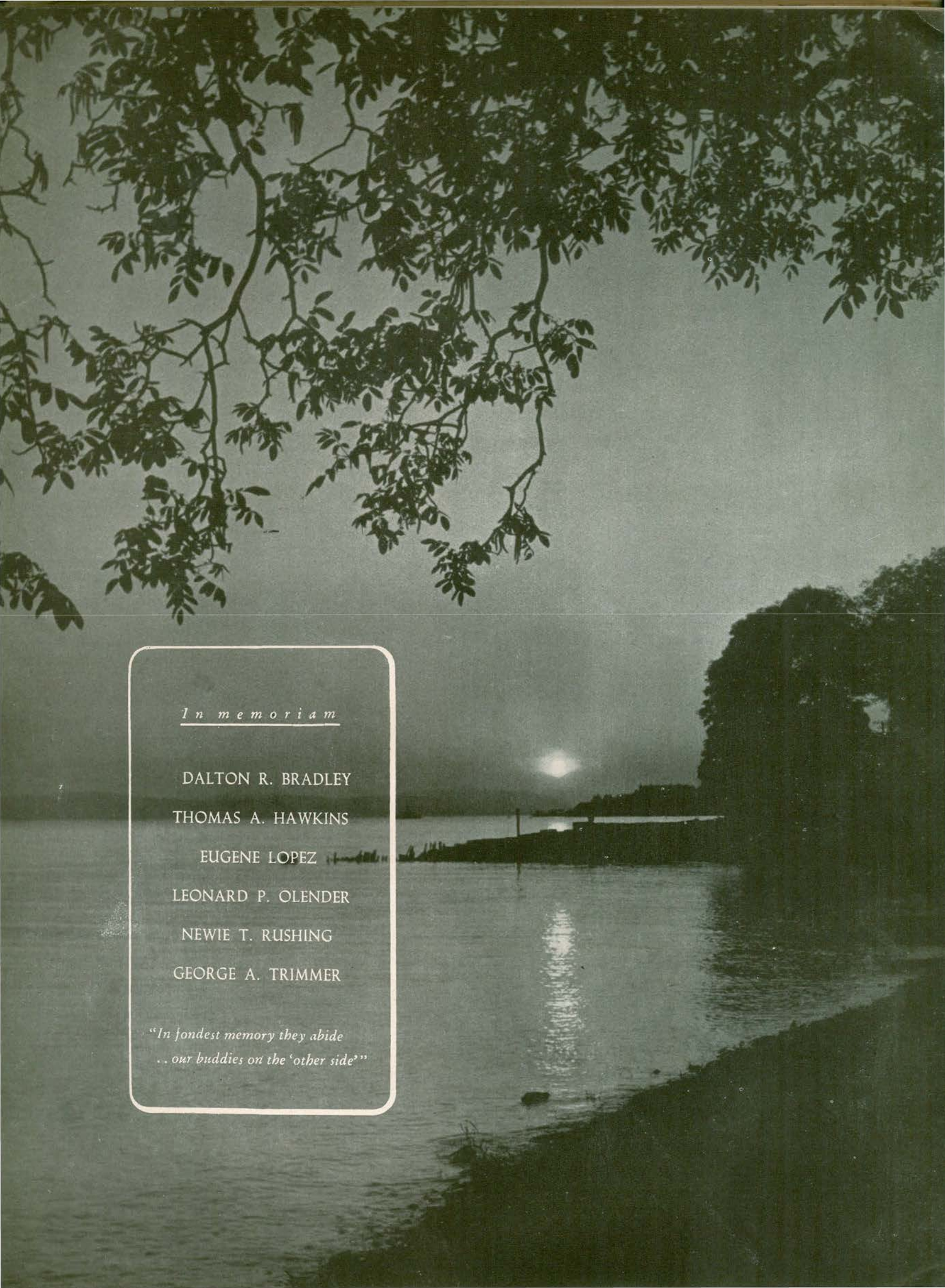
Sgts. Bertilacci and Nutter editorialized about their newspaper thus: "We want it to be just as free as the words 'Freedom of the Press' imply. We know, of course, that we must stay 'on the reservation' so there will be no danger of disturbing the orderly deployment program. We helped to preserve the four freedoms for America and parts of the world. Is there any reason why we should not be permitted to exercise the rights which we helped to preserve? To deny us such rights would be a transgression on our rights as American citizens and, in our mind, ours is a citizens' Army." The editors' wish was granted: they were permitted complete freedom of action.

At the start the "High Ball" was little more than a bulletin covering military news, health problems, announcements of church services and of available entertainment. It discussed the Battalion's activities in sports as well as the latest rumors on redeployment. Members of the staff, anxious to keep their minds occupied while awaiting assignment to a homeward bound ship, searched for work, hunted ways in which to improve their "brainchild". To the newspaper were added human interest stories and columns on the detachments' activities. Soon a series of profiles were started of the officers and highranking non-coms who had led the Battalion. The newspaper increased in size weekly from 4 pages, to 8 pages, to 16 pages, and larger. Maps were drawn detailing Battalion territory from the time that operations in Europe were started. Recognizing the value of photographs, the editors used them more and more extensively in each new issue.

The newspaper ran articles, clearly punctuated by pictures, describing the opportunities, the interests, the beauties of furloughs to such places as the Riviera, Paris, and Brussels. The premature suspension of publication prevented the newspaper from finishing its series of descriptions of each detachment. Features such as the "Question of the Week" and letters to the editor, called "Griefs", were printed weekly. Reports on the detachments and on sports became more extensive, so that they alone covered more space than had been alloted to the whole first issue. The "High Ball" prided itself on printing up-to-the-minute news and printing it correctly. In that way, rumors about the Battalion were almost immediately verified or proven false. The last issue of the "High Ball", printed Nov. 14th, 1945, was a magazine rather then a newspaper, because it carried so many articles of more than local interest.

The Battalion newspaper turned out to be more than something to be read and discarded. The "716th High Ball" was a chronicle of the Battalion's activities in Germany, a handbook of furloughs and leaves, a sports review, and material for nostalgic reminiscences on detachment antics. Sets of the twelve issues became prized souvenirs.

Top Left: M/Sgt. Joseph R. Bertilacci, Editor
Center Right: T/3 William P. Nutter, Associate Editor



In memoriam

DALTON R. BRADLEY

THOMAS A. HAWKINS

EUGENE LOPEZ

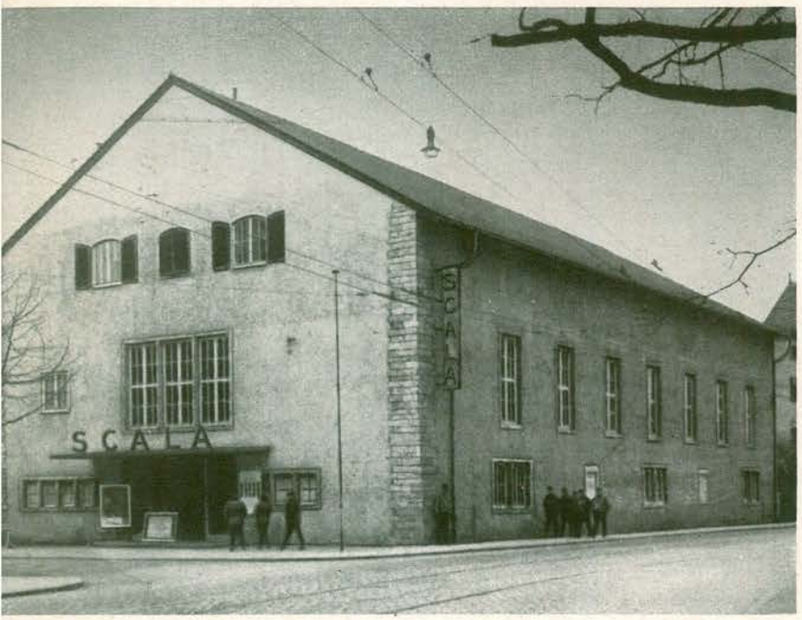
LEONARD P. OLENDER

NEWIE T. RUSHING

GEORGE A. TRIMMER

"In fondest memory they abide
.. our buddies on the 'other side'"

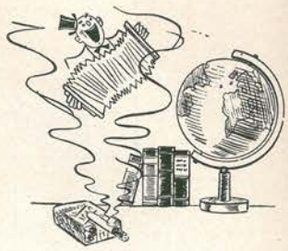
The Orchestra



716th Theater

Biarritz University

P X, I and E,
SPECIAL SERVICE



Three departments concerned directly with the morale of soldiers are Special Service, Information and Education, and Post Exchange. As good morale is important in the Army, so these departments were important to the 716th R. O. B.

Of first importance both during the war and afterward, when men were awaiting redeployment, were Post Exchange rations. When the outfit landed in France, rations were difficult to get for there was a scarcity on the Continent and combat troops had top priority. The Chaplain had to make special trips and exert all the influence of his office before he was able to procure for the Battalion its first P. X. rations, three weeks after the Battalion landed in France. After a short time, however, the 716th was able to draw rations weekly. A truck service had to be set up so that the coveted chocolate and cigarettes could be distributed to the detachments. It was an especially difficult job locating the Company "C" men who were almost always on the road.

Various expedients were resorted to in an effort to fairly distribute P. X. rations. In addition to the P. X. truck, a box car was used at one time for rations. Another time, a tea room was converted into an Exchange. While the Battalion was in Germany, a whole train, following a strict weekly schedule, brought P. X. supplies to outlying detachments. The train even had a barber shop.

It was not until after V-E Day that the Department of Information and Education became important. Before then, the men of the 716th had been too busy to be very interested in study. With the end of hostilities, and the tapering off of responsibility for vital transport, however, men felt an urge to better prepare themselves for civilian life. To occupy their time while awaiting transportation home, some of them turned to education.

In the short time that the I. & E. Office functioned, it sent a man to England to study at Oxford, another man went to Paris to study French Civilization. To the Biarritz American University the 716th sent twenty-five men. Aside from the men who went away to school, a good many men were interested in correspondence courses or in university extension courses which they could take without leaving the Battalion.

Other functions of I. & E. were taking care of subscriptions to the "Stars and Stripes" and assisting men interested in civilian jobs with the Military Government. The I. & E. Officer was charged with interesting men in the Regular Army, a task in which he had little success.

Special Service is charged directly with the maintenance of high morale of the troops. A large measure of the credit for the high morale of the men of 716th possibly during the war and certainly afterwards, should be attributed to Special Service Officer, Lt. Cuccia, and the enlisted men who worked with him, principally Cpl. Elgeroy Williams.

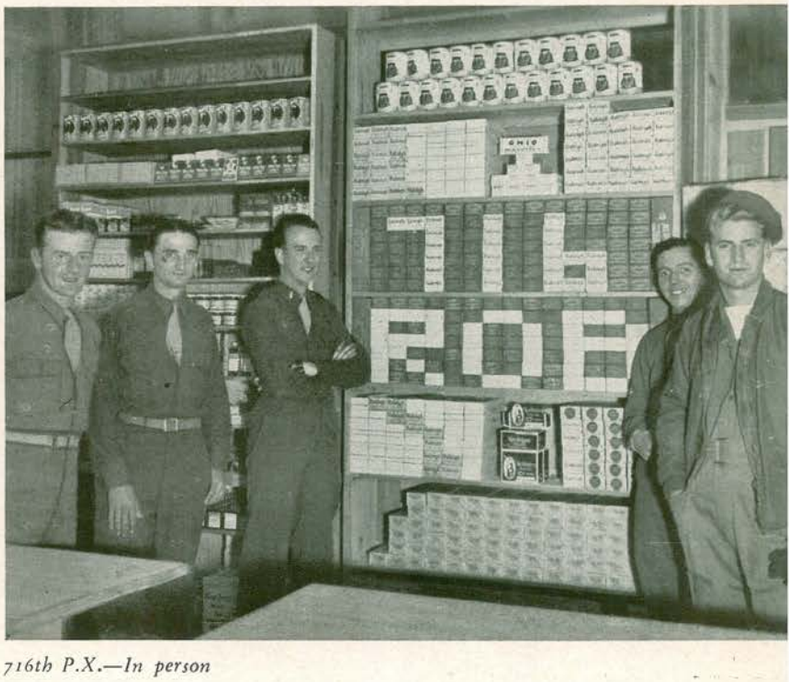
While the 716th R. O. B. was at Metz, three U. S. O. shows were procured for the pleasure of its personnel. Later on, in Esslingen, three more U. S. O. shows were obtained. When athletic equipment was acquired from higher headquarters, the men needed little urging to form teams and leagues. The teams that they formed, by the way, were quite successful. In Metz, weekly dances were held. As soon as a moving picture projector was obtained, the cinema was brought to all the major detachments. Here again there was the problem of dealing with men spread out all over, but the problem was solved to the extent that most of them had an opportunity to see at least one movie per week.

Special Service was especially proud of the Battalion Band. To Sgt. Howard Riggle goes the major part of the credit for the band which he organized. It was a job locating instruments, but he did that too. The 716th says the band was the best non-professional six man band in the European Theater of Operations.

The personnel of the 716th R. O. B. are grateful for those moments of enjoyment provided by the three departments. They are grateful for those little extras, cigarettes, tobacco, candy, gum, etc. that were provided by the P. X. When a man is in a foreign land helping fight a war, when he has few comforts, small luxuries and relaxing recreation, which permits him to forget briefly both his job and his longing for home, these "helps" mean a great deal to his morale.

Students' Quarters—Biarritz

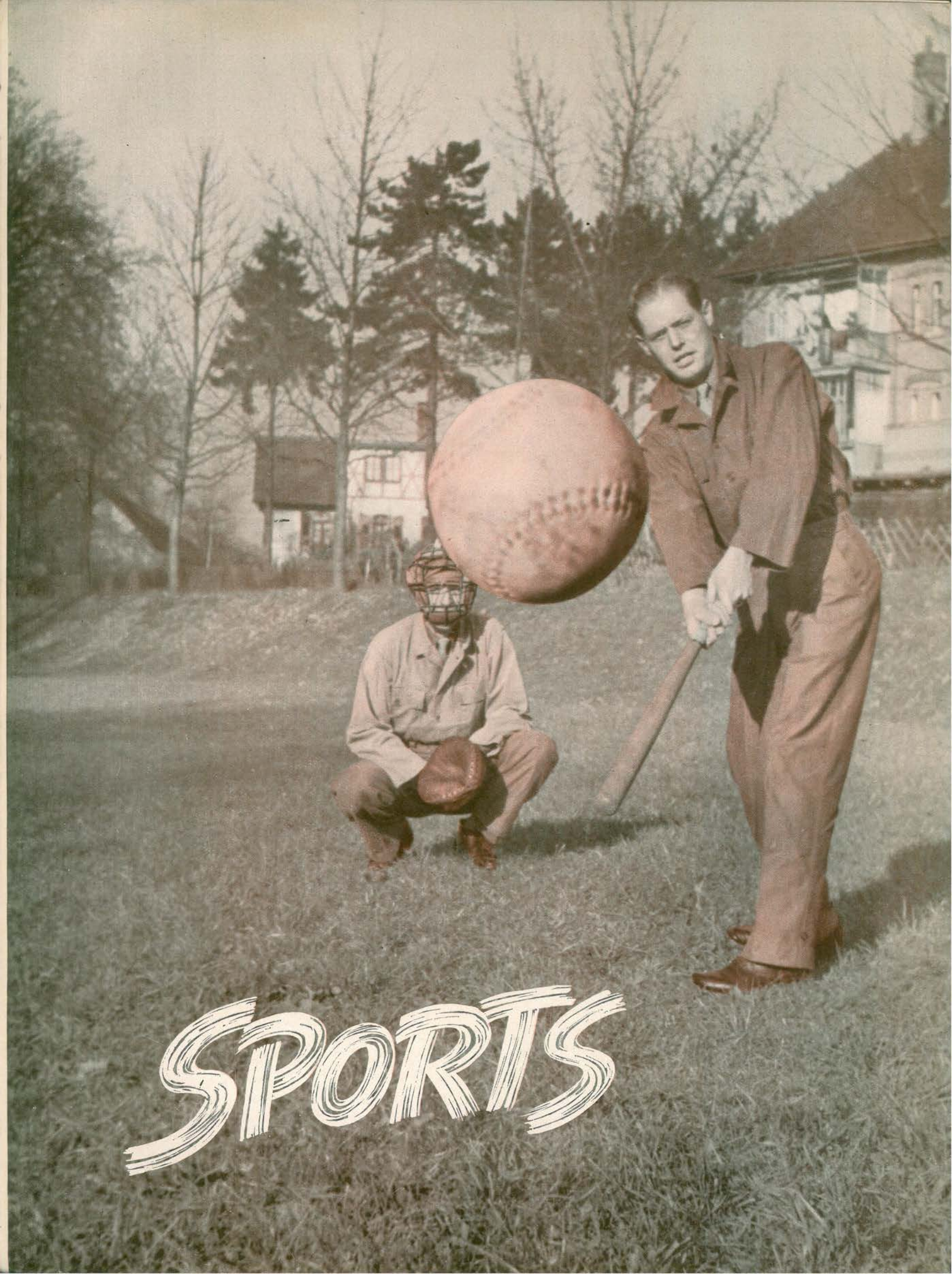
P.X.Car—T/5 C. E. Cooke



716th P.X.—In person

Dictionary

American	German	French
Alcoholic drink made from any one of the following: potatoes, corn, cherries, apples, plums, or pears	Schnaps *(shnahpss)*	calvados *(kahl-va-dos)*
barber shop	Friseur *(free-zer)*	coiffeur *(kwa-fur)*
c'est la guerre	c'est la guerre *(say lah ghair)*	c'est la guerre *(say lah ghair)*
chewing gum	Kaugummi *(KOW-guh-mee)*	gomme à mâcher *(gomm a mah-sheh)*
cider	Apfelsaft *(AHP-feel-zahft)*	cidre *(see-DRUH)*
cold	kalt *(kahlt)*	froid *(fruah)*
come here	kommen Sie her *(KAWM-MEN zee hayr)*	venez ici *(vuh-NAY-Z-ee-SEE)*
don't understand	nicht verstehen *(nix fer-SHTAY-en)*	non compris *(NAWNG KAWM-pree)*
eat	essen *(ess-sen)*	manger *(mahn-JAY)*
engine	Lokomotive *(luck-omm-ot-eev-uh)*	locomotive *(luck-omm-ot-eev)*
engineer	Lokführer *(LUCK-feer-rer)*	mécanicien *(may-ka-neess-YANG)*
everything destroyed	alles kaput *(ahl-less KAH-PUT)*	tous kaput *(tooss kahput)*
go	geh *(geh)*	allez *(ah-LAY)*
good evening	Guten Abend *(GOO-ten AH-bent)*	bonsoir *(bawn-SWAR)*
good morning	Guten Morgen *(GOO-ten MAWR-ger)*	bonjour *(bawn-JOOR)*
hot	heiß *(haiss)*	chaud *(shoh)*
how goes it	wie geht's *(vee GAYTS)*	comment ça va *(kaw-MAHNG-sa-VA)*
how much *(many)*	wie viel *(vee FEEL)*	combien *(kawm-B-YANG)*
it is all the same	egal *(eh-GAHL)*	égal *(eh-GAHL)*
lousy coal	Kohle nicht gut *(kohl-luh nix goot)*	pas bon charbon *pah bong shahr-bong)*
much work	viel Arbeit *(feel AR-byt)*	beaucoup travaille *(boh-koo trahv-i)*
no smoking	nicht rauchen *(nix ROW-ken)*	défense de fumer *(deh-fahnss duh few-may)*
quickly	mach schnell *(MAK shnel)*	vite *(veet)*
scram	rauss *(rauss)*	parti tout de suite *(partee toot SWEET)*
slow	langsam *(LAHNK-zahm)*	lentement *(LAHNT-mahng)*
so long	auf Wiedersehen *(owf VEE-der-zayn)*	au revoir *(o ruh-VWAR)*
station	der Bahnhof *(dayr BAHN-hohf)*	la gare *(la GAR)*
stop	halt *(hahlt)*	arrêtez *(ah-ret-tay)*
swell	prima *(prema)*	très bon *(tray bawng)*
track	Gleis *(glaiss)*	voie *(voah)*
walk	spazieren *(SHPAHT-zeer-ren)*	promenade *(prom-men-nahd)*
what are you doing	was machen Sie *(VAHSS MAK-KEN zee)*	qu'avez-vous *(KAH-vay VOO)*
what's cooking	was ist los *(VAHSS ist LOWSS)*	qu'est-ce que c'est *(kess kuh SAY)*
what's your name	wie heißen Sie *(VEE HAI-senzee)*	comment vous appelez vous *(kaw-MAHNG voo-z-ah-puh-lay VOO)*
what time is it	wieviel Uhr ist es *(vee-feel OOR ist ess)*	quelle heure est-il *(kel UR ay-t-EEL)*
where is	wo ist *(vo ist)*	où est *(oo AY)*
yes	ja *(ya)*	oui *(WEE)*


SPORTS

Top to Bottom:

Teddy Black gets set to slug one

Glen Jackson scores winning run for the Esslingen softball crown

A "heated dispute"

The softball "Champs" take off to meet the opposition

The 716th Railway Operating Battalion's participation in sporting activities has been spectacular ever since its activation in December, 1943. Whenever the Battalion was represented on a softball field, it came out on top. The first opportunity for the 716th to show its ability in softball came in the summer of 1944, at Camp Cushing, Texas. At that time, the Battalion, though busily engaged in technical railroad work still found time and opportunity to place two outstanding softball teams in the Red and Blue sections of the Fort Sam Houston 1944 Softball Tourney. These teams together made quite a name for themselves in that part of the country, because both clubs came out the League leaders of their respective sections, making it necessary for the "716th Reds" to battle the "716th Blues" to decide the Fort Sam Houston softball championship. During the course of the season there was much speculation in the Battalion, as to which team was the most spectacular, the "Reds" or the "Blues", and each had its share of enthusiastic rooters at every game.

The Red team was managed by T/5 John Bookshaw, and the team captain was Sgt. John Tawney. This team lost only one League game in the entire season, a close affair, to the 510th M. P. Battalion by one run, 5—4, but the team got its revenge, when they played the M. P.'s a return contest with the result that the "Reds" unleashed all their power to crush the Military Police ball club 17—5. The real threat to the Red team in the League was furnished by the 18th Medical Lab. This team was beaten only once during the League playing, when the 716th Red team toppled them 3—1. The League season ended with the 716th Red team and the 18th Medical ten having identical records, necessitating a playoff game—which likewise resulted in a 7—7 tie. It was a thrilling extra inning game, with the lead changing hands a number of times all through the game. The Red team tied the score in the bottom half of the eighth inning, when Tawney stole home. However the 18th Medics had previously broken the deadlock in their half of the same inning when they tallied two runs to take a 7—5 lead. The game was called off because of darkness and so another game had to be staged. That game was played before a good crowd, and the Red team of the 716th won the game 2—0, behind the brilliant pitching of Teddy Harwazynski of Co. A, thus giving them the Red section title, plus the chance for the League crown and the beautiful trophy which went to the Fort Sam Houston champions.

Now, for a look at the Blue team's accomplishments. The "Blues" started out very swiftly, capturing the first three games, but then went into a slump, largely because the stars of the team went home on furlough, resulting in their "taking a licking" in the next two games. The 35th Medical Co. was at the top of the Blue section throughout most of the season, and they appeared a sure-win for the Blue section honors. However, the 716th Blue team, under the able guidance of T/5 Jimmy Lacertosa, fiery manager, never gave up and played spirited softball to finally catch up to the 35th Medics. One particular ball game in which the Blue team showed their "never die" attitude and team spirit came when the aggressive Blue team was playing the 25th QM Bakers with the score 7—0 against them in the fourth inning. If the Blue team had lost this game, they would have lost the chance of capturing the Blue section title, so things looked pretty dismal. Suddenly in the top half

of the fifth inning, the Blue team's bats started to boom, especially the big stick of T/4 Glen Jackson of Co. B, and sparked by Glen the team totaled up eight runs in the next three innings, to win the game 8—7. The stage was thus set for another crack at the 35th Medical Co., who had previously administered the Blue squad a bad beating, 9—1, during the early part of the season. As a result of that triumph against the 25th Bakers, making 8 wins and two setbacks, for the "Blues", the Blue section standings, like the Red section's, came out a standstill between the Blue team and the 35th Medical club. It wasn't long before these two teams tangled, and again it was a pitcher who figured in the victory. The Blue team won the game 4—0, behind the strong right arm of Sgt. G. E. Davis of Co. C, who blanked the Medics, yielding them only four singles. And so the 716th Blue team was the Blue section winner, and it looked forward to its Championship battle with the 716th Red team.

The morning of the big day of the game was spent by all the ballplayers in their quarters and on their bunks, just like big leaguers taking it easy before the "game of the year". The game that day was one of the most exciting ever played in the big ball park in Fort Sam Houston. The contest was witnessed by the whole Battalion, the approximate attendance being, according to the Fort Sam Houston "Blazon", approximately 1,500 persons. When it is considered that the St. Louis Browns, in one game during the same year, drew only 700 cash customers, it will be seen that the 716th set records in attendance as well as in railroading and softball. Here is the line up for the two teams as they played this championship game.

*

RED TEAM:		BLUE TEAM:	
Tony Romano	scf	Hal Vandiver	ss
Nick Tanella	ss	Roy Herman	1b
Marty Snider	1f	Bill Anderson	1f
John Tawney	3b	Glen Jackson	3b
Eddey Humphreys	1b	Dan Pitarro	2b
Candy Candello	2b	Robert Rogan	c
Clifford Fisher	cf	Clyde Ragar	scf
Eddey Hobbs	rf	Jerry Grant	rf
Odell Kirkland	c	Al Priato	cf
Teddy Harwazynski	p	G. E. Davis	p

*

Major Marlin threw out the first ball and the battle was on. The Red team "broke the ice" by scoring two runs in the top half of the third inning, the most telling blow being a long double by "Skip" Tanella. The Blue team came roaring back in their half of the third by tallying one run and so the score stood at 2—1, Red teams advantage. at the end of three innings. The score remained that way until the hectic ninth inning, because in this frame both teams supplied the fireworks. The Red squad started the rumpus by smashing over four big runs as a result of a tremendous triple over Andersons' head in

Top to Bottom:

Sieverding smashes a hard one

43rd Ordnance batter gets ready to swing on one of Shea's fast ones

A close one at first—and Zipperer is safe

43rd Ordnance slugger steps out of the way of Shea's ball

left field by Marty Snider, the bases being all filled with "Red" players at the time. Marty climaxed his drive by coming in to score the fourth run himself. In the bottom half of the ninth, with the score 6—1 against them, the Blue team came fighting back to score three runs, but they ran just a bit short, and the ball game ended with the 716th Red team winning 6—4, and becoming the Fort Sam Houston Champions.

As a fitting tribute to the new Fort Sam Houston champions, the Red team was presented a beautiful Trophy. Manager Bookshaw turned the award over to team captain Tawney, who then gave it to Major Marlin, Commanding Officer of the 716th. Each player on the Red squad, received a beautiful gold softball pin and the Blue team runner-ups received silver softball pins. Besides the Fort Sam Houston Trophy, the Red team was given another trophy by the Coca-Cola Co., and also each Red player was awarded another pin. And so ended one of the brightest records ever chalked up by softball teams in Fort Sam Houston.

After the Fort Sam Houston League was won by the 716th Red team, the FSH Special Service Officials and the combined unit managers represented in the league chose the most outstanding players, which individuals would represent Fort Sam Houston in the San Antonio USO League. They were called the "Fort Sam Houston All-Stars". The "All-Stars" squad was dominated by 716th men, Nick Tanella, Red Humphries, Al Priato, Tony Romano, Marty Snider, Teddy Harwazynski, and John Tawney. Every man gave a good account of himself while playing with the All-Stars, but they had to withdraw from the team, because the 716th ROB had work to do in Europe.

When the 716th ROB first entered the ETO, sport participation was out of the question, because of the tremendous railroading tasks that confronted the battalion. But after eight months of toil and strife the battalion's sporting activities came into the limelight again. It was while the battalion was stationed at Metz, France, that the 716th Special Service, under the direction of Cpl. E. Williams, organized a softball team which played other units in the surrounding areas of Metz, and as usual, the team came out on top in almost every encounter.

It was in Esslingen, Germany, that the 716th captured another crown in softball. The battalion was represented in the Seventh Army Softball League and, when it was all over, the 716th came out victorious to add another accomplishment to those achieved in both railroading and sports. The softballers started off on the right track to win their first game in the league when they whipped the 9th Air Group Squadron 6-5 behind the smooth twirling of Martin Coon. It was the first game Martin ever pitched in his softball career, and it was a significant success for Coon. Coon had been playing first base all the time, before

Top to Bottom:

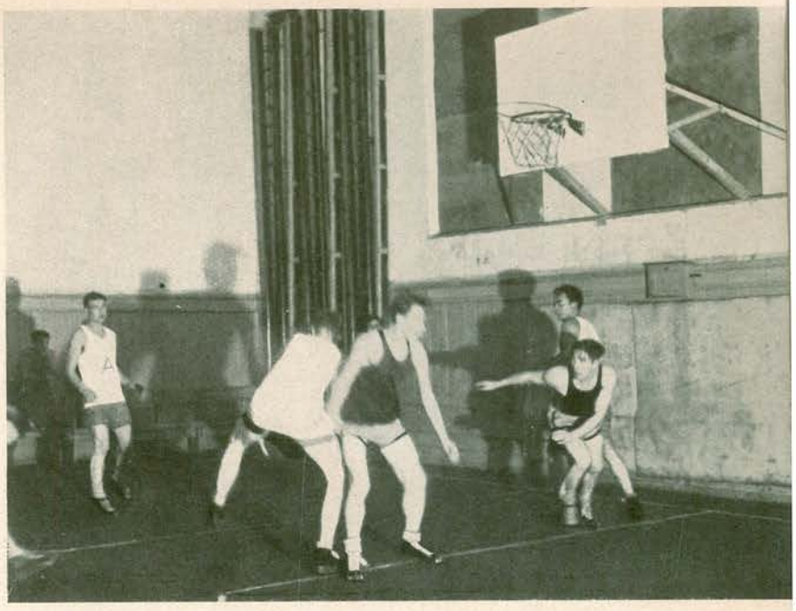
Roy Herman gets ready to swing

There's the swing—and he connects!

The "Ball Club":
Kneeling, L to R: Grant, Vandiver, Snider, Lone, Seaton, Hassen
Standing, L to R: Zipperer, Black, Shea, Seiverding, Nuckels, Coon, Herman, Jackson, Davis, Williams

the league opened, but he came along in the pitching department to aid the team in winning the league. In the team's second encounter in league play they were beaten 4-3 by the 143rd AAA Battalion. It was "Hard Luck" Bob Shea who was losing twirler in this game. Bob pitched brilliant ball all season, but came out on the short end in almost every game. He was credited with losing three games that the team threw away on errors. It seemed that whenever Bob pitched, the team would go on an "error spree"; everything would go wrong, so Bob would be beaten in games where he allowed the opposition but three or four hits. Bob proved that he was the outstanding pitcher of the league when he won the most important game of the season, the championship contest between the 716th and the 43rd Ordnance Battalion. The railroaders were victorious, 2—1. Of the ten league games the 716th triumphed in seven. Each of the 716th three setbacks was a hard fought, close game in which bad breaks tipped the scales in favor of the opposition. When the pressure was on, the team did come through, a fact that was proved in the affair between the 716th and the Ordnance. In this game Shea yielded only three hits, which, coupled with the clutch hitting of Ace Acevas, made victory possible, thus assuring them of the league title. The first three innings were held scoreless. In the fourth frame, the battalion team scored its initial counter, on a single by Snider; he came trotting in on a long double by Glen (what again) Jackson. The 43rd came back to tie the count in their half of the fourth. Three more scorless frames for the two clubs brings us up to the eight inning when Russell Seaton started things off by taking a stroll to first base, (compliments of the pitcher). He advanced to second when speedy Hal Vandiver legged it to first on a pitcher's error. Then came Acevas' clutch hit, a clean single to center, which brought Seaton racing in with the run that gave the 716th Railway Operating Battalion another crown in softball, the Esslingen Softball Champions. The champion team was managed and captained by Pfc. Charlie "Baldy" Davis. It was Charlie's leadership and aggressiveness that paced the team to success in the league. "Baldy" took over the manager's reins when the team first entered the league and rapidly moulded it into a solid run-scoring machine. Charlie used his head to good advantage out on the ball field as the tournment progressed; he proved that he could handle ball players.

As a reward for victory, the ballplayers were given a chance to go to the Riviera on pass, a trip sponsored by the Seventh Army Officials, who were the organizers of the Esslingen league. Transfers hit the battalion like the Atomic Bomb hit Japan so most all the ball players, transferred to other units, were unable to make the trip to the resort center. The team still had the crown and the title as Esslingen Softball Champions; that's what really counted the most.



Top to Bottom:

Cage game between Headquarters crew and Co. A "Swish Kids"

A tense moment in any man's game

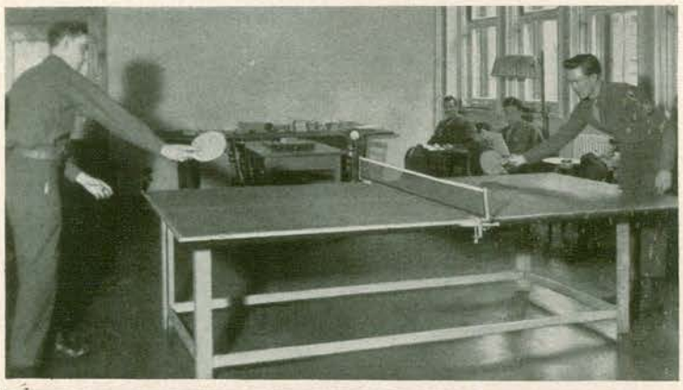
Hoop action between H & H "Phantom Crew" and 100th Division

Top to Bottom:

PFC Joe Siegel on his favorite horse

Ping-pong action in Headquarters Day Room

Russo and Romano squaring off in a fast game; Co. A recreation center



Here is the list of players who captured the title in Esslingen, playing outstanding softball all season. They succeeded in upholding the 716th's grand record in sporting activities.

*

1. HAL VANDIVER, SS—Best shortstop in and around Esslingen. What ground those legs covered!
2. TONY ROMANO, SCF—"Kid Lightning" on the bases. Dependable fielder and a fair hitter. Always in there fighting!
3. ALLIE HASSEN, UMPIRE—Our roving arbitrator. Umpiring is right up Allie's alley, any place, anytime, where you can holler!
4. "ACE" ACEVAS, OF—Always there when you want him; on the ball all the time, meaning softball.
5. GLEN JACKSON, 3B—A manager's dream ball player, plenty of power at the plate and a brilliant fielder.
6. RUSSEL SEATON, 2B—A great defensive ball player; also quite a lad with the stick.
7. CLARENCE SIEVERDING, OF—Our "Charlie Keller" at the plate. He has plenty of speed out in the green pastures.
8. TEDDY BLACK, IF—Has plenty of speed around the keystone sack and is dependable with the wood.
9. BOB "JOHNIE" SHEA, P—Our unorthodox tosser, cool, relaxed and collected in the tough spots. Has plenty of determination and twirls with everything he has got.
10. JERRY GRANT, OF—A swell fly chaser who is always out there to win.
11. ROY HERMAN, 1B—Our lanky colorful first sacker who thrilled everyone who saw him in action. Has beaucoup team spirit.
12. MARTIN COON, P—Our converted first baseman who tossed superbly all season. Has great promise and plenty of stuff on the ball.
13. GREEN NUCKELS, C—Spirited receiver who kept the chatter up constantly.
14. CHARLIE DAVIS, MGR—Much of the success of the ball team was due to "Baldy's" guidance, leadership and field strategy.
15. MARTY SNIDER, OF—Was the team's slugging star. He held his own in the outfield.
16. SEVER LONE, OF—"Kid Clutch" himself. Drove in many tallies when it counted. The "Ted Williams" of the 716th team.
17. RAY ZIPPERER, C—The teams aggressive catcher who deserves credit for the pitchers excellent tossing. He has a swell throwing arm and is always on his toes.

Left: Trophy presented to T/5 Don Otto, champion ping-pong player of the 716th

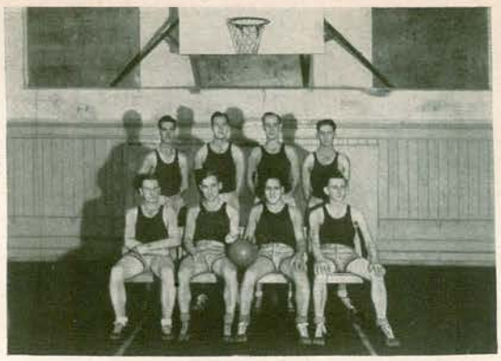
18. ELGY WILLIAMS, ASST. MGR.—Supplied the team with excellent playing equipment and entered the club in the league. He also aided Davis in handling the champions.

*

Beside Softball, the 716th ROB was well represented in other fields of sports. One outstanding achievement is credited to Antonio "Jockey" Aragon, who sparked the other 716th entrants in the Esslingen Horse Show, sponsored by the 6th Corps. He captured for the 716th first place in the Show, adding another honor to the battalion's star-studded record. Aragon is highly esteemed as a horseman, having won many trophies back in the States. Other 716th personnel who starred in the show were S/Sgt. Bob Ammonds, Pfc. May, Pfc. Siegel, and Pvt. Martin Martinez. They all deserve a lot of credit for the job done at the show. Other units represented in the show were the 6th Corps and 100 Division.

After the softball season in Esslingen ended, Special Service organized a battalion ping-pong tournament. The first eliminations were held in Esslingen on one table located at Battalion Supply and another one at Co. A Billets. In the first round most of the favorites came through as was expected. The most thrilling match was the one between Monroe Goldfinger and Hal Vandiver, with tricky "Goldy" finally winning out. Other first round results saw Antonio Aragon best Don Merriam, Wilbur Carpenter defeat Gerry Grant; Emerick oust Baldy Davis in two close games 21—18 and 21—19; Don Otto, the pre-tournament favorite, have an easy time beating Sgt. Dulka. Although "Hup-Hup" really tried, Lopez came through to beat out Ace Acevas. Jimmy "Smily" Atchinson beat T/5 Campbell; and another favorite, Walter Lalatin, easily eliminated Whitey Sieverding. Mail man Bevard joined the first round victors by downing Walker of the medics; Sam "Shoe" Indiviglia took time out from the Engineering Department to come through victorious over Jerry Wilkens; and Roger Bigler knocked out "SS" Williams. At the same time the various detachments of the battalion were holding similar matches to determine the men best qualified to appear in the grand finale on September 24th, 1945. From Esslingen the men who qualified in the playoffs were Goldfinger. Otto, and Lipkin. Goldfinger later dropped put of the tournament because he was transferred to another outfit. In the tournament at Ulm, Johnny Bartinichak took top position. Two men were chosen from the other four detachments of Kornwestheim, Geislingen, Ludwigsburg and Augsburg. When the tournament ended, the "champion of them all" was T/5 Donald Otto, of Battalion Supply.

And so the organized sporting events of the Battalion came to a close. Informal games of various kinds continued to occupy the time of sports enthusiasts, but time and redeployment had taken its toll of "big time" games.



Co. H & H "Phantom Crew"

Front, L to R: Otto, Atnip, George, Sniegowski

Rear, L to R: Hartley, Leslie, Briggs, Navarra

Co. A "Swish Kids"

Front, L to R: Hisson, Novak, Romano, Tanella

Rear, L to R: Graham, Indiviglia, Welch, Prather, Williams

Co. C "Wizards." The Champs

Front, L to R: Kiser, Campbell, Shea, McCullough, Cunningham

Rear, L to R: Maxwell, Fowler, Jellison, Napier

(Not in picture: Sexton, Pio, Noonan, Watson)

Co. B "Hoopsters"

Front to rear: Stratton, Grinnan, Barr, Hanson, Green, Opalich, Mialicik, Demshki, Waisa, Anderson

Right: Championship plaque presented to Co. C. "Wizards", together with individual miniature basketballs for each team member

About the Book...

As the story of the 716th draws to a close, and the reader closes the book with a reminiscent far-away look in his eyes, thinking of associations and memories evoked by the brief narrative in the foregoing pages, the Staff feels that it will not be out of place here to make mention of some of the features embodying the History: features that might not be noticed at first glance, but which nevertheless consumed much time and effort to make this book worthy to be representative of the high standards of the 716th.

The paper on which the History is printed is the best that could be obtained. Typesetting was done in "Trajanus" style—the newest German type, designed in 1939. Design, layouts and art were the work of one of Germany's top notch artists, Mr. Joe Mueller, of Cologne and Stuttgart. Photographic work was done by one of the foremost photographers in Germany, Mr. Breuer-Courth, of Stuttgart. All in all, the most expert craftsmanship went into the engraving, printing and binding of this history. Sharing the enthusiasm of the Staff, the various civilian firms outdid themselves in creating a worthy souvenir of the 716th. As an example of the excellence attained in the printing art, witness the full-color title page, transformed from an original black-and-white snow scene.

The Staff will have many memories of the difficulties and exasperating delays encountered in making up the book. Such things as lack of materials, forcing expeditions to be sent out all over Germany to procure paper, cloth, engraving plates, chemicals, etc.; a constant drain on civilian manpower caused by requisitioning of labor for street cleaning and woodchopping purposes; a shortage of vital electricity due to a power conservation plan which eliminated three days out of each week; and over all, the dangling sword of an uncertain time limit for completion of the job, creating an atmosphere of suspense and tension. Literally, the Staff had one eye on the clock and the other on the calendar. Nothing was available: everything had to be located and collected. Even the cardboard for the covers and the mailing boxes had to be manufactured to order.

All this, added to the vagrancies of an overworked Opel sedan, with a chronic flat tire and bad carburetor, made the publication of the History a memorable event.

The Staff wishes to express its appreciation to everyone who in any way contributed to the making up of the History, through photographs, data, etc. Also, the work of Lt. T. A. Fante, who pioneered the original planning of the book, is acknowledged.

It is debatable whether any mention should be made of the gallons of black coffee consumed during the wee hours, when the authors collaborated in writing the foregoing pages; nor of the innumerable "bull sessions" into which the evenings usually degenerated about 4 AM, spurred onward by some chance recollection hidden between the lines of the narrative.

Seriously, though, the Staff does not wish to appear to be giving itself a "pat on the back"; but has mentioned the above events to bring the reader the thought that, in spite of difficulties and delays, the 716th, as always, "delivered the goods" . . . on time.

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