

1945

# Historical highlights of the Eighty-ninth Chemical Mortar Battalion

United States Army

George H. Esser

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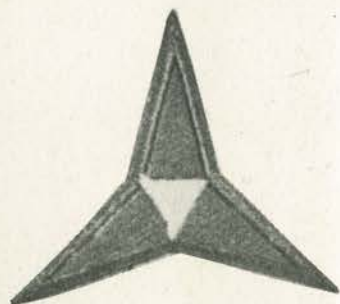


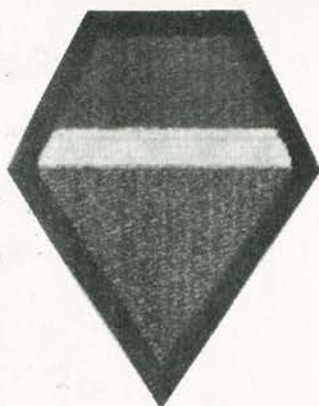
**Historical Highlights  
of the  
EIGHTY- NINTH  
CHEMICAL-MORTAR  
BATTALION**





# Historical Highlights of the

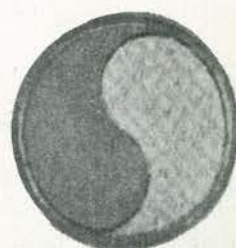




Eighty-ninth



Chemical Mortar



Battalion



BANDOR  
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1975





*Introduction by*  
***Lt. Col. James R. Hudson, CWS***  
***The Battalion Commander Who Activated***  
***and Organized the 89th***

## FOREWORD

The 89th Cml. Bn. was activated at a time when the 4.2 cml. Mortar was still some what of an unknown quantity as far as combat was concerned. Of the few Battalions that were activated before the 89th, only the 2nd and 3rd had seen any action. The rest were still in training.

The 40 Officers that were ordered to Camp Roberts pending activation were all well aware of the fact that we had little to go on as regards to lessons gained in combat. We had no manual and very few training aids. We knew that we would have to train from the "Cuff".

The first few weeks at Roberts were among the most trying of the unit's experience. We had no men, no equipment, no duties, no organization and time really hung heavy. Those that were there will never forget the Grass Drill, Football and Softball games, mountain climbing and speed marches.

Eventually things started happening. The activation orders came, a Sergeant from some Laboratory Company arrived, the cadre made its appearance one cold, foggy morning about 0400, and we started sweating out the arrival of the "Fillers".

Several years, or so it seemed, after the Officer and Enlisted cadre arrived, we had enough men to start one platoon in each Company in training. That was a great day. After looking over the men, it was evident that the 89th was destined to write many exciting pages of History.

Several factors stood out from the beginning. The Officer Cadre was far above the average in the number of outstanding Officers. They were all young, well trained, and ambitious.

The enlisted cadre was undoubtedly the best that ever came to Camp Sibert. They were in the "Pink", physically, well trained and full of enthusiasm. That original enthusiasm never slackened, but grew steadily. The fillers were soon imbued with it, and you did not need a crystal ball to foresee the kind of an outfit that was in the making. All of the predictions that were made for the 89th, by its officers and the inspectors, were fulfilled many times over. Any man who was fortunate to have served with the 89th can well be proud of that service. The friendships that were born during training and fused in the crucible of combat will be life long. No friendships, no matter where they are formed will be firmer or longer lasting.

My association with the 89th was the high point of my life, leaving it was definitely the lowest. I wanted to see everyone and say "So Long", but the lump in my throat was much too large. No commander ever had more support than the officers and men gave me. All I can say, is that I am truly grateful to you all. Sincerely,

JAMES R. HUDSON

*Dedicated to the Memory  
of the three members of the 89th Chemical  
Mortar Battalion who gave their lives in  
the service of their country:*

*Sergeant John R. Watts--24 March 1945*

*Company B*

*Private first class Theodore V. Mollinedo--*

*25 March 1945*

*Company C*

*Cpl. Ross W. Humekrey--30 April 1945*

*Company A*





HQ. 89TH CML. MORTAR BN.  
APO 339

Postmaster, New York, N. Y.

Of all the things which man has, I believe that none equals his memories of the past. The future is unknown and uncertain, and one is never sure that a future really exists for him; but the past is always with a man, and, best of all, one can select and remember those incidents which please him most. Time smooths out the rough spots of a man's life, and the harsh and bitter past is forgotten in favor of the joyous moments. Men have always been going to war—and I believe, that in spite of what idealists scream at us, men have always enjoyed wars—not for killing, the pain, or the hardships involved, but because of the comradeship, the friendship, and yes, the love of men at arms for each other which rises to heights far above that found in any other walk of life. I do not feel that we comrades really knew what we fought for, nor did our dead know what they died for; but to live, to fight, and to die, was our pattern of existence. Men of the 89th, you did it well and nobly, and, as you smoke your pipe in the evening by the quiet and piece of your home fire-place, remember the most thrilling days of your life.

DONALD E. YANKA  
LT. COLONEL CWS  
Commanding

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## CHAPTER ONE

### *"State-side"*

#### CHAPTER I

ON November 5, 1943, the 89th Chemical Battalion, Motorized, was activated at Camp Roberts, California per General Orders, Headquarters, 4th Army, by Command of Lt. General William A. Simpson. Major James R. Hudson, CWS, a reserve officer with experience in World War I in the Field Artillery, assumed command.

The day of activation found the battalion composed of forty officers and no enlisted men, and for the officers, the order of activation was an instrument so long postponed that it had become a standing joke. Many of them had been suffering labor pains since their attendance at the First Battalion Officers Course at the Chemical Warfare School in September, and all had been waiting at Roberts since mid-October.

Even before activation, Major Hudson had effected an organization so that on the day of activation, the battalion could wheel into action. The result was a staff that included:

Major Charles C. Cameron—Executive Officer.

Captain John R. Hyndman—S-1 and Hq. Detachment Commander.

2nd Lt. Gustav W. Krizek—S-2.

Captain Marshall E. Lentz—S-3.

Captain Sterling N. Vines—S-4.

And the company commanders:

Captain Amery B. Dunn—Company A.

Captain Mason L. Downing—Company B.  
1st Lt. Charles R. Landback—Company C.  
1st Lt. Thomas G. McCreanor—Company D.

Hardly had the ink dried on the activation order before the cadre, which had been groaning and sweating under a super-combat training program, was on its way from Camp Sibert where it had been recruited from the Replacement Training Center cadre. These 80 men pulled into Roberts on a bitterly cold Sunday morning at 0400 to be greeted by the battalion commander and his party and escorted to the luxurious setting of Camp Roberts' one and only "tent city". Together with a few ASTP men who wandered in during the month of December, they sweated out the cold and the tents until the coming of the New Year, when the battalion moved into the elegance of barracks, recently vacated by infantry cannon company units departed for the Pacific.

For the first three months after activation, the training schedule consisted of cadre training, sharply divided into two phases—physical conditioning spiced with a little infantry drill in the morning; and mortar training in the afternoon. Few are left of men and officers who took that training. Few, if any, of those will ever forget it. Calisthenics, grass drill, and double-timing were emphasized, but these and all that came before or after pale besides the memory of Cameron Hill, a young mountain that grew in the backyard of the 89th—and





Royal Gorge

being in the backyard, it must be climbed daily. The young men raced up; the older men plodded up; all the men collapsed at the top.

Because of the scarcity of men, particularly men without stripes, all up to and including the grade of sergeant pulled KP, guard, and fatigue details. No small wonder, then, that every new addition to the battalion was greeted with open arms—and sent to the kitchen—these boys fresh out of ASTP units on the coast. By January the battalion strength was well over one hundred men, and promotions began to come through for all who had proven themselves qualified.

Slowly but surely time passed on. Many men, particularly in the communications field, were sent to attend the excellent courses provided in the IRTC and FARTC across the highway at Roberts; others, teams of officers, were sent on detached service to field artillery battalions at Roberts and Hunter Liggett Military Reservation to find out what made tactical units run; still more, officers and enlisted men alike, were detailed to act as umpires in the maneuvers being conducted at Hunter Liggett between the 89th and 71st Divisions, maneuvers which were designed to prove the ultimate value of Light Divisions. The sum total of these experiences was to see how not to operate, lessons which received practical application in the months to come.

In the meantime, the battalion conducted some mortar shoots of its own, using the mortars which had been handed down to them by the 81st Chemical Bn. Notable among these shoots was the day when Lt. Esser, while conducting the cadre to the scene of dem-

onstration, led the men down the wrong valley, necessitating a walk of three miles to correct the error.

Having once occupied the barracks coveted so long, the companies found, to their consternation, that they were stripped and at once set about to remedy the situation, action which soon caused the Battalion to gain another reputation, that of procurement. Nightly reconnaissance and procurement trips, plus some conducted in broad daylight, into nearby vacated areas, soon served to make the living quarters of the 89th more habitable and comfortable. These operations came to a temporary halt, however, when the local Special Troops commander came upon a dismantling procedure on a highly prized pool table, not the property of the 89th, and discovered that those working on the job had the approval of a certain company executive officer. Some ears burned that day.

The first major personnel change in the battalion occurred on February 3, 1944, when Captain Vines bade good-bye to the storerooms of S-4 and assumed command of Company A, vice Captain Amery B. Dunn, transferred. Lt. Vincent Deptula, Exec. of A Co., succeeded to the S-4 job.

Early in February, in the midst of preparations for a three-day problem at Hunter Liggett, the electrifying and long-hoped for news came in—the fillers were on the way. And on February 8, 1944, the first group was "assigned and joined", via Fort Sill, Oklahoma. Hardly had the men been divided to the companies and training started when another group from Fort Sheridan, Illinois arrived, to be followed in quick succession by groups from Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana, Fort Meade, Maryland, and two and three from many of the reception stations in the Far West. By the middle of March the battalion was almost at full strength.

By reason of the haphazard manner in which the fillers reported, a makeshift system for beginning training was adopted that saw the first platoons in each company begin the first week of basic training, knock off and begin again two weeks later when their numbers were augmented. By the end of another fortnight the second platoons were at full strength and into the training program. But it was to still another month before the third platoons were at sufficient strength to start "MTP, Week No. 1." And in that month, things happened.

Late in March Captain Hyndman and Captain Downing left to attend a course at the Chemical Warfare School, with a resulting change in command that became permanent when they received orders transferring them from the battalion on the completion of their course. WOJG Juster, a new arrival, became personnel officer and Acting Adjutant; Lt. Krizek assumed command of Headquarters Detachment; and Lt. Esser succeeded to the command of "B" Company.

Mr. Juster immediately began a program of



reorganization and training in the personnel section that eventually resulted in the efficient unit that went on to draw down ratings of "Excellent" and "Superior" on the frequent inspections by the I. G. and Inspecting teams from higher headquarters which plague units from activation to deactivation.

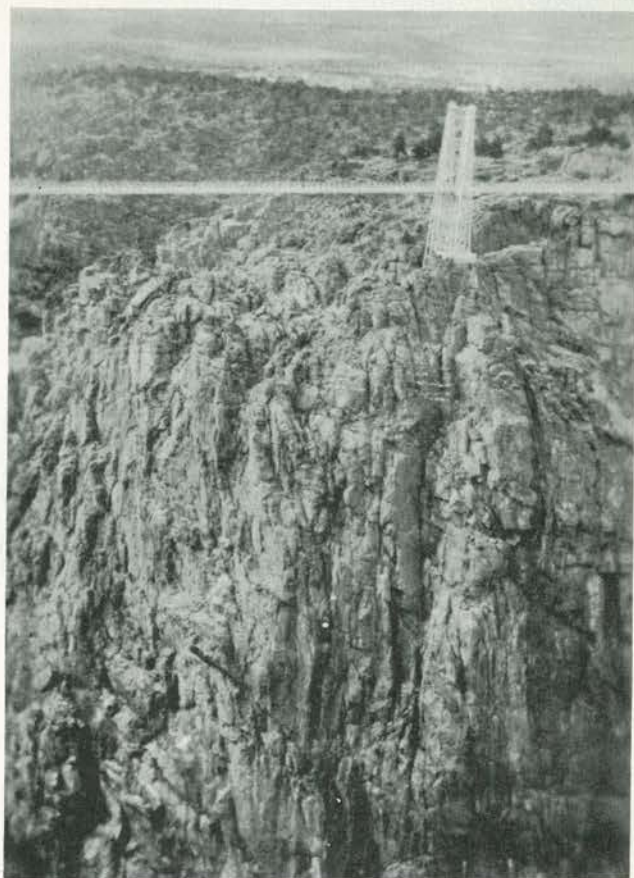
The discontinuance of the Army Specialized Training Program in March dumped around one thousand students in Camp Roberts, all destined for the 89th Division. However, a change in plans sent approximately one hundred to the 89th Cml. Bn., many of whom were immediately thrown into cadre jobs where the battalion was still understrength for a unit just beginning to train some five hundred new recruits.

To further complicate the problems already mounting, the IRTC was ordered to expand its facilities at Camp Roberts and to take in the areas now occupied by separate units, which were to be transferred. The 89th breathlessly awaited its destination—soon announced as Camp Carson, Colorado. In addition to carrying on its training program, the unit now had to pack its equipment—save for the jeeps which the mechanics had labored so many hours on to bring up to standard, only to turn them in with many never having had fifteen miles added to the speedometer.

Few wanted to leave California. California had been good. Los Angeles and San Francisco were within easy reach on weekends, the weather had been perfect, the glamor of the Far West was real. But orders were orders. Farewell to San Miguel and Paso Robles and San Jose and Cameron Hill and San Luis Obispo. California, and particularly Roberts, was hot in the summer anyway. The 89th would winter in California, vacation in the Rockies for the summer.

On April Fool's Day, by mere coincidence, the large shipment of fillers arrived from New Cumberland, Pa., and the battalion was up to strength at last. These men, fresh from a trans-continental train trip, had hardly gotten off the train before they were back on again—as the 89th Chemical Battalion, Motorized, boarded two trains on the 6th of April and pulled away. Up to Sacramento—over the Sierra Nevadas—through Reno—across the Great American Desert—through Salt Lake City—over the Rocky Mountains—through the Royal Gorge onto the Prairie at Pueblo—and up to Colorado Springs on a beautiful Saturday afternoon. The trains pulled into Carson late in the afternoon to be met by the advance party, Major Cameron and Lt. Kilby, and the companies were served their first meal in one of the new double mess halls that night.

Despite the fact that a snowstorm, the first of the season for the California veterans, swept over Carson the following day and that the 89th took Colorado Springs apart the following night, by Monday training was on in full swing as it was to be for months to come.



Royal Gorge Bridge

During the first week at Carson four more officers reported in to keep going the cycle of personnel changes that had been going on for two months. For one reason or another, forty percent of the original officer strength of the battalion had transferred to other units, their places being taken by recent graduates of the 26th and 27th Officer Candidate Classes. Among the officers new to the Battalion were Lts. Ellis, Evans, Weismiller, Parker, Kilby, Hagan, Haralson, McDow, Duncan, Kirsek, McDowell, and Reese.

The month of April witnessed the activation of the smallest, but one of the most important units in the battalion—the Medical Detachment. Headed by S/Sgt. Flavil H. Ransom, and Tec/4 Walter H. Hill, who operated the dispensary and trained the men, the original group included James L. Frazier, Arthur Oliver, Bernard R. Robinson, Caspare J. Madonia, Frank Jackson, Oda R. Pierce, Hyman Ruben, Dale C. Howe, Frederick O. Dail, Jerry E. Kent, Matthew J. Schmiers, Thomas E. Smeltzer, Thomas G. Hunniford, Carroll T. Luchard, James A. Stewart, and Lawrence J. Welling. For the first three months the detachment was trained by Lt. Buckley, a MAC officer on detached service to the 89th, and it was not until August that the first and only regularly assigned surgeon, Lt. John C. Christensen, joined the organization.

An eventuality that had long been plaguing the battalion commander became a fact in the first weeks at Carson when it became known that the 97th Chemical Bn, MTZ was to be activated early in May and that





Man-handling the Mortars across Carson's ridges

the 89th was expected to furnish the cadre. For a unit that could not boast 200 basically trained men and that was just getting its own MTP training well under way, it was a cruel blow to be expected to furnish 80 trained men. The problem was there, and by hook or by crook the men selected, approved by Col. Brice, XVI Corps Chemical Officer, and sent on their way May 5. Four Officers, Capt. Vines, Lt. Huber, Lt. Kaplan, and Lt. Hochstetler, were also lost. With Captain Vines departure, Lt. Clyde H. Westbrook took over the C.O.'s desk in Company A.

By the time May rolled around, it became apparent that the awkward organization of the unit in training was becoming too complicated to handle—that the condition of the first platoon leading the second by two weeks, while the third trailed the second two weeks, was somewhat of a strain on Plans and Operation. Accordingly, Corps directed that training be suspended for the first and second platoons for a four week period, at the end of which all of the platoons could continue on a common basis. The break was made at such a time that the first and second platoons had just finished their basic training period of 7 weeks, and the common start would be made as the specialist phase began.

During the quiet period, the men in the first and second platoons were granted furloughs

with the idea in mind that they might possibly have to be credited as their POM furloughs. This fact was no source of satisfaction to the late arrivals in the third platoons which continued training.

To do justice to the period of MTP training is impossible. The effort and toil and sweat and profanity that went into those weeks can never live as stark fact. Rather, the detail was smothered in the haze of plodding onward, day by day, while here and there something jumped out of the mist to be remembered.

Prominent among the high spots of individual training were: physical training where the lungs and legs of civilian life protested, expired, and rebounded into life with new-found strength; the hours on the drill-field where the awkwardness of the new recruit melted into the coordination of the soldier; the long hours becoming acquainted with the M-1, the carbine, and firing positions which finally culminated in the long days on the range for preliminary and record firing; the introduction to basic military subjects such as hygiene and sanitation, camouflage, military law, and military courtesy and discipline, all important but all subject to endless repetition in the future; and army discipline, a necessary evil which most men accepted and some few didn't.

The succeeding phase of specialist training necessitated the breaking down of men into



groups in order to learn the principal job planned for them. Their first assignments involved many mistakes and subsequent shifts, but eventually order appeared out of chaos. It was in these weeks that the mortar made its first appearance, together with its thrice-damned cart; that the platoon began to get their first experience as a unit tugging mortar carts up and down the barren gullies on the Carson ranges; that the companies first fired the 4.2 and miraculously failed to kill each other; that driver training began; that wire and radio were introduced to the embryo commo sections; that IMG men learned the mechanics of firing; that the day began at six and often did not end until ten at night with many thanks to S-3 and "addenda"; that the officers and non-coms cheerfully carried their hangovers to the firing range on Sundays; that passes were few and tempers short.

And all of this ended on a sunny Thursday

in July (the day after Wednesday, July 14 to be exact), when the battalion was given its MTP test by XVI Corps and came flying through with an E for "Excellent". A holiday weekend followed in which Colorado Springs was turned upside down, and pockets were turned inside out. At the same time, the worries of the men in the third platoons were erased as they set out on their long-awaited furloughs, during which the remainder of the battalion followed a strictly fill-in schedule.

It is generally agreed by the members of the battalion that Camp Carson was the most pleasant camp in which the battalion was stationed, despite the occasionally temperamental weather which brought alternate snow and heat at most annoying times. Just ten minutes away from the camp was Colorado Springs, and the opportunities ever present in a resort town were amply taken advantage of. Numberless recreational spots were within easy distance—the

the world-famed Broadmoor Hotel, offering athletic and social relaxation; Pike's Peak, Garden of the Gods, and Cave of the Winds, particularly popular for scenic relaxation; Will Rogers Memorial and the Zoo for sentimental interest; night spots of all kinds in the city itself. Denver was but 75 miles away for those who chose a conventional-type city.

Tough as the training schedule was, it was still possible to coordinate several trips of more than ordinary interest into the training. The first actual battalion convoy was made to Royal Gorge Canyon, over which hangs the world's longest suspension bridge; by company and battalion, trips were made to Cripple Creek, once the largest

Are you there?



Shoots at Carson



Cpl. Kelly prepared for a Medical test







Mountain Convoy

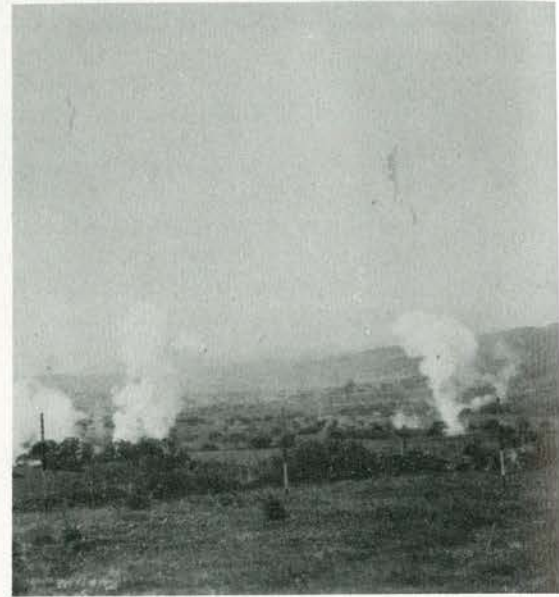
gold mining center in the world and now of interest since it is practically a "ghost" town; and there are those in Baker Company who will never forget their first trip to Cripple Creek via the Stagecoach Road when the turn of a curve on a one-way goat trail revealed a total washout, which the men filled in themselves and continued on their merry way.

One well-remembered trip came on July 4 when the Battalion motored to the Rocky Mountain Arsenal in Denver to march in the parade awarding the Army-Navy "E" to that CWS industrial plant. The heat was terrific, the ceremony long, and many men fainted before the last eulogy was delivered. But compensation came when, the parade over, the majority of the men headed for Denver and a quick spree.

During the mid-summer lull following MTP tests more personnel changes came about, including one which affected every man. Lt. Col. Hudson, as he had been since March, received orders transferring him to the Chemical Warfare School where he was scheduled to become Director of the Officer Candidate School. Battalion Commander since activation, Col. Hudson could feel that he had performed a job "well done", and the men and officers who had come to feel affection as well as respect for the Old Man hated to see him go fully as much as he hated to leave. Major Cameron assumed command following his departure. In addition, Lt. Francis J. Winters took over the duties of Adjutant with the transfer of Lt. Deptula to Washington. Six new second lieutenants, fresh from OCS, Lts. Connell, Almeida, Repschleger, Michaels, Bethea, and Linton, reported for duty.

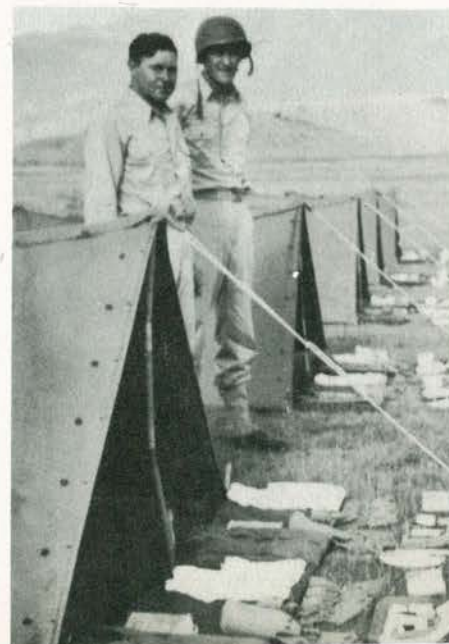
As the month of August arrived, the Battalion was scheduled to enter into a two-months period of unit training that never came off as planned. On July 31 headquarters received information to be prepared for AGF firing tests to be given by the CWS Board on August 17; tests that involved a state of training on a company level that would not normally be accomplished for two months. In a frenzy of activity the companies entered upon a series of problems designed to make them qualified for the test in two weeks, problems designed to teach every man the essentials of his duty, to make each platoon and company an efficient firing unit under almost every conceivable type of combat.

As any sane person could foresee, the job was too big for perfection, but miracles were performed in those two short weeks. Platoons that were thirty individuals under a commander on August 1 were awkward



WP Screen

Laid







Carson to Gruber



Head in the clouds

but efficient units on August 15. Mistakes were made but rarely repeated. So the great day arrived. That day was perhaps the biggest disappointment of the training period, for the tests that were to determine the battalion's fitness for combat turned out to be trial tests to provide information for the Board in Edgewood. Though the let-down was great, the two week-period still produced the most intensive and practical training undergone during the stay in the states.

Though the 89th never participated in any combined maneuvers, a strenuous and never-to-be-forgotten week in the field in the first week in September ranked as its longest and perhaps its best shakedown before it actually entered combat. For pure physical strain and exposure it at least equalled the worst that the continent had to offer.

It was during this phase of unit training that the 89th Chemical Battalion Motorized was definitely placed on the "alert" for overseas combat service and Preparation for Overseas Movement began. POM received its emphasis in training, supply, and

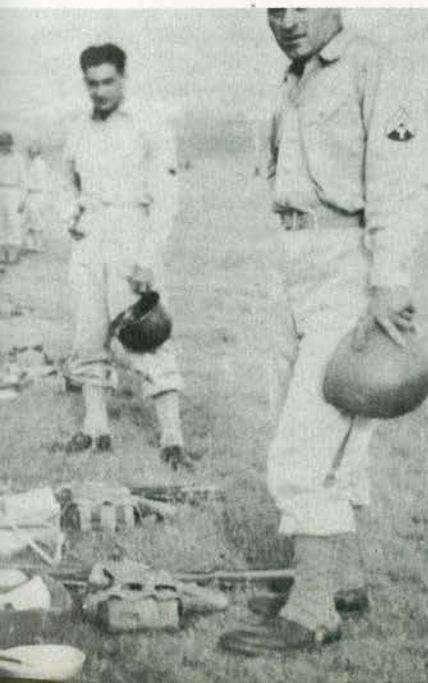
records, but the first way in which it affected the men of the battalion was in supply. Since the equipment in the hands of the companies was not combat serviceable as judged by inspection, immediate measures were taken by the S-4 section, under the supervision of Captain Edward E. Murray who became S-4 in May, and T/Sgt. Thomas J. Woods, to secure completely new equipment to replace the old, as well as to procure equipment authorized but never issued to the 89th. As the weeks passed, the priority of the battalion rose and high priority items, particularly in the ordnance and engineer classification, began to come in.

Personal equipment also received attention, and by sleight-of-hand and a magic wand the 89th drew sleeping bags and combat boots in addition to all new wool clothing, glamorous items to military eyes that drew envy from adjacent units which were not so equipped.

Beginning in August and extending into October, the XVI Corps, which was now the next higher headquarters, administered several tests on various subjects such as medical, intelligence, ground defense for air attack, all of which the battalion passed with high ratings.

The sands of time were running out on the stay at Carson with a wholesale evacuation of AGF troops from the post. Before final departure, however, most of the companies worked in a last fling with

Out





Colorado Springs' social life, and particularly to be remembered are lavish affairs staged by Dog Company and Baker Company on successive weekends at the Elks Club, with members of the WAC detachment as important and honored guests. The beer flowed and the sky was the limit on those nights.

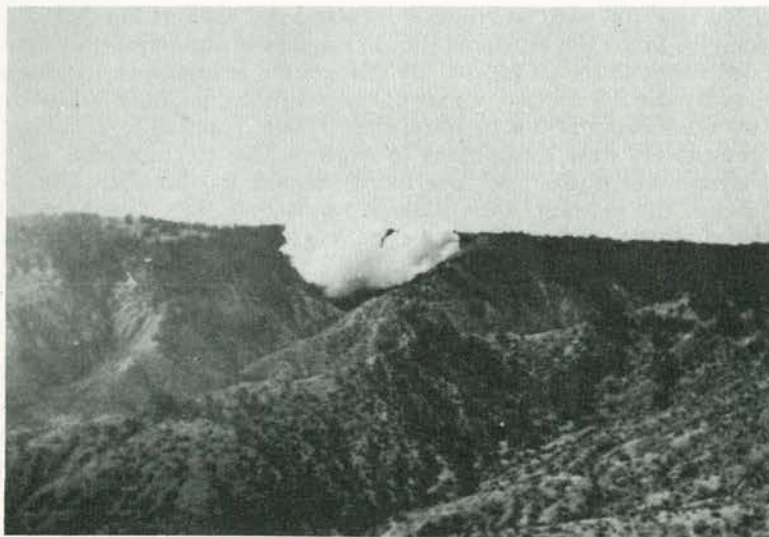
Also, not to be slighted was the Wild West Rodeo staged on the post with combined professional and GI entrants. Principal competitor from the 89th was Pfc. Edgar Groves of Baker Company who was bucked off his horse in the time of eight complete seconds.

One last major personnel change occurred as the Battalion entered its last fortnight at Carson, Capt. McCreanor leaving to join the 97th while Lt. Ignatius J. Spurio transferred from Baker Company to take over Dog.

On the 20th of September the 89th Chemical Battalion staged a parade with full field equipment, and as it marched from the parade ground the head of the column turned toward the railroad loading area where the men loaded Pullmans once more—this time for Camp Gruber, Oklahoma. The vehicles and equipment preceded the troops by a day on a special train, manned by a crew predominantly mechanics and commanded by 1st Lt. Bennett B. Harvey. After chugging its way across Nebraska, down through Missouri, and into Oklahoma, the train slid to a stop at Gruber on the morning of the 21st to be met by the advance party and a new commanding officer for the 89th, Lt. Col. Donald E. Yanka, formerly with the Replacement Training Center, Camp Sibert, Ala.

It was at Gruber that the final processing for overseas shipment was made, and the camp was jammed full of other troops with the same object in mind. POM charts became the most important item in the training program. Makeups were run

### Target



### FDC

on firing, training films, lectures, and administrative forms. Final physical checkups were made by Lt. Christensen. Those men unqualified for overseas service were screened and transferred.

As usual, S-4 bore the brunt of the task, closely followed by Mr. Juster's personnel section. Although it was the butt of many jokes, "Noory's Rug Shop" issued tremendous amounts of clothing most of which was new, and altered a considerable percentage of it. Capt. Murray and his men begged, borrowed, and stole to bring the clothing standards of the battalion up as high as possible. More unit equipment poured in. In all, seventeen shortage lists were processed involving clothing, individual equipment, and T/O and E equipment.

Almost immediately after settling down at Gruber, it became necessary to begin packing equipment for overseas shipment. To accomplish this job, Lt. Kilby was temporarily borrowed from Baker Company, given a detail headed by Pfc. Paul Whitfield and each company artificer, and told to go to work. Enormous numbers of boxes were procured into which the hundreds of items of equipment began to be packed, waterproofed, and banded. Each box had to be stenciled and copies made of the exact contents. Reams of paper were consumed to deliver the required number of copies detailing the contents of each and every box. When Lt. Kilby was taken off the job to go on the advance party, Lt. Krizek took over and supervised the cleanup and the packing of the TAT equipment that traveled along with the battalion.

By October 12, all of the men had been duly processed with the exception of the new replacements destined to join two weeks later in order to bring the 89th up to T/O strength. In the many months up to this time, literally hundreds of personnel changes and transfers were effected, involving both





Anti-Aircraft



Tank approaching fox hole

officers and enlisted men. Each company felt its way forward, changing men's assignments, dropping physically and mentally unqualified men, adapting personalities to jobs. All companies came up to strength on ratings with the cadre and ASTP veterans pulling down most of the first three grades, and the 89th-trained mortarmen snagging the lions' share of the remainder.

One big requirement remained to be filled. Ninety percent of the battalion was eligible for furloughs which were granted from October 12 to November 10, with each man and officer getting at least ten days at home. This period also saw those not on furlough giving the near-by city of Tulsa frequent visits, for the reception afforded by that oil city soon established it in the minds of the troops as one of the finest "leave" towns in the country. On one memorable visit, Lt. Harvey, a Tulsa resident, arranged for a weekend that included a police escort to lead the convoy of trucks into town with sirens blowing and all traffic cleared. Well over two hundred men made that trip.

The future now became a reality; training was a blur in the past; POM was largely completed. As millions of men before them had done, the men of the 89th faced the coming journey across the water with a cross between apprehension and anticipation.

First to leave was the advance party consisting of Major Cameron, Lt. Kilby, and M/Sgt. Louis W. Goldstein, battalion motor sergeant. On November 9 these men departed for New York, where on November 14 they boarded the "Aquitania", famous British liner and veteran troop ship. Next to take off were Captain Murray and Lt. Robert D. McDowell who acted as advance supply agents at the Boston Port of Embarkation, designated as the port of departure for the 89th. The bulk of the equipment was shipped to Boston on October 30, for loading

on a separate ship, and it was the task of Capt. Murray and Lt. McDowell to check this loading.

November 15th was the first anniversary for the battalion, but on that date the companies had orders to be on the move to the east, so a large-scale anniversary dance was scheduled for and held on November 12 at Gruber. A committee under the direction of Lt. Cartledge with S/Sgt. James Mickle as Master of Ceremonies made all arrangements, including the importation of girls from Tulsa, and the dance was a huge success.

On the 16th of November all was ready. Individually and collectively, the battalion was packed. That afternoon Hq. Detachment, Baker and Dog Companies boarded one train, Able and Charlie another, and both headed for Camp Myles Standish, Mass. by different routes. By Sunday afternoon, 19 November, the battalion was bedded down in Camp Standish, and the date of departure was in the hands of the officials in that camp.

The next few days were spent in fulfilling requirements established by the staging area—shots, showdown inspections, movies, lectures, and demonstrations. Three and four times men made their "last" telephone calls home. By the end of the week passes were authorized and taken—to Boston, Providence, and Pawtucket.

Then suddenly, the end approached. The 89th was restricted on November 30, advance details left Myles Standish to travel to Boston and board ship in order to facilitate the complete loading which was to come on the following day. For the umpteenth time every man repacked his equipment. Early on the morning of December 1, the 89th Chemical Battalion, Motorized climbed on still another train which pulled out for the Boston Port of Embarkation. Training was over. Next stop—the European Theater of Operations.



# ORGANIZATION OF 89th CML. BN. (MTZ)

1 December 1944

When It Sailed For The European Theater Of Operations

## HQ & HQ Detachment

C.O.—Lt. Col. Donald E. Yanka  
Exec.—Major Charles C. Cameron  
S-3—Major Marshall E. Lentz

Sgt. Major—Archibald Craig  
S-3 Sgt.—Charles W. Davis  
Motor Sgt.—Louis W. Goldstein  
S-2 Sgt.—Harry P. Haldt

Personnel Sgt.—Roger Lafrenier  
Comm. Sgt.—Louis F. La Rouché  
S-4 Sgt.—Thomas J. Wood  
S-4 Sgt.—Robert W. Easton

Motor Pool—Lester H. Dowell  
Motor Pool—Herndon Johns  
Ammunition Sgt.—Thomas W. Maxey

S-1—Lt. Francis J. Winters  
S-2—Lt. Gustav W. Krisek  
S-4—Capt. Edward E. Murray

## A Company

C.O.—Capt. Clyde H. Westbrook, Jr.  
Exec.—1st Lt. Sidney L. Wells  
1st Sgt.—Howard W. Meredith  
Supp. Sgt.—James W. Hesselgrave

### 1ST PLATOON:

Plat. Ldr.—1st Lt. Charles E. Miller  
Plat. Exec.—2nd Lt. Harry N. McDow  
Plat. Sgt.—Gerald E. Haecker

Sq. Ldr.—Ronald E. Babcock  
Sq. Ldr.—James F. Van Cleave  
Sq. Ldr.—Peter P. Cassella  
Sq. Ldr.—Donald E. Straub

### 2ND PLATOON:

Plat. Ldr.—1st Lt. William L. Sharpe  
Plat. Exec.—2nd Lt. Americo F. Almeida, Jr.  
Plat. Sgt.—Edward M. Lundgren

Sq. Ldr.—Armin F. von der Linden  
Sq. Ldr.—Ernest E. Bleam  
Sq. Ldr.—James M. Brier, III  
Sq. Ldr.—Ferdinand R. Bublit

### 3RD PLATOON:

Plat. Ldr.—1st Lt. James J. Feeks  
Plat. Exec.—2nd Lt. Marvin L. Ritzman  
Plat. Sgt.—R. J. Laney

Sq. Ldr.—Forrest A. Powers  
Sq. Ldr.—John Shahoian  
Sq. Ldr.—David L. Caniff  
Sq. Ldr.—Jesse E. Worth

## B Company

C.O.—Capt. George H. Esser, Jr.  
Exec.—1st Lt. Bennett B. Harvey  
1st Sgt.—Willis D. Barrett  
Supp. Sgt.—Manuel E. Sanders

### 1ST PLATOON:

Plat. Ldr.—1st Lt. Henry L. Parker  
Plat. Exec.—2nd Lt. George W. Connell, Jr.  
Plat. Sgt.—Harold A. Berkowitz

Sq. Ldr.—Neville R. Alderson  
Sq. Ldr.—Johnny J. Chastain  
Sq. Ldr.—Ernest E. Howey  
Sq. Ldr.—Heber W. Holt

### 2ND PLATOON:

Plat. Ldr.—1st Lt. Alfred M. Johnson  
Plat. Exec.—2nd Lt. Alan S. Michaels  
Plat. Sgt.—James M. Mickle

Sq. Ldr.—Fred L. Chamberlain  
Sq. Ldr.—James E. Murray  
Sq. Ldr.—Milton A. Dokken  
Sq. Ldr.—John R. Watts

### 3RD PLATOON:

Plat. Ldr.—1st Lt. Raymond J. Kilby  
Plat. Exec.—2nd Lt. Carl R. Duncan  
Plat. Sgt.—Samuel E. Watson

Mess Sgt.—William H. Cawthon  
Motor Sgt.—Roy E. Nelson  
Comm. Sgt.—Thomas V. Pitts  
Inst. Sgt.—Robert E. Jaggard

Sq. Ldr.—Jerry D. Sloan  
Sq. Ldr.—La Mar E. Thaxton  
Sq. Ldr.—Manuel Villa  
Sq. Ldr.—John J. Paki

## C Company

C.O.—Capt. Charles R. Landbach  
Exec.—1st Lt. William N. Cartledge  
1st Sgt.—Lucian B. Willoughby  
Supp. Sgt.—Alfred E. Perna

### 1ST PLATOON:

Plat. Ldr.—1st Lt. Ralph R. Wance  
Plat. Exec.—2nd Lt. Charles F. Bethea  
Plat. Sgt.—John R. Carson

Sq. Ldr.—William M. Haley  
Sq. Ldr.—Walter R. Cremeans  
Sq. Ldr.—James J. Dolan  
Sq. Ldr.—Joseph E. Burson

### 2ND PLATOON:

Plat. Ldr.—1st Lt. William F. Kanasky  
Plat. Exec.—2nd Lt. George R. Krsek  
Plat. Sgt.—William O. Towns

Sq. Ldr.—Leslie J. Gooding  
Sq. Ldr.—William V. Ludwico  
Sq. Ldr.—Joseph C. Hales  
Sq. Ldr.—Paul L. Hoff

### 3RD PLATOON:

Plat. Ldr.—1st Lt. John J. Hagan  
Plat. Exec.—2nd Lt. William Repschlegel  
Plat. Sgt.—Richard G. McClennand

Sq. Ldr.—Ralph P. Kress  
Sq. Ldr.—Harold E. Lindenlaub  
Sq. Ldr.—Godfrey J. Veague  
Sq. Ldr.—John E. Snell

Mess Sgt.—Albert J. Hoselton  
Motor Sgt.—Arne E. Olson  
Comm. Sgt.—George F. Melrose  
Inst. Sgt.—Edward N. Bynon

## D Company

C.O.—1st Lt. Ignatius J. Spurio  
Exec.—1st Lt. Alfred A. Ulanowski  
1st Sgt.—William J. Wethington  
Supp. Sgt.—Robert J. Peterson

### 1ST PLATOON:

Plat. Ldr.—1st Lt. Robert D. McDowell  
Plat. Exec.—2nd Lt. William H. Linton, Jr.  
Plat. Sgt.—Lewis D. Gillespie

Sq. Ldr.—Paul G. Hudson  
Sq. Ldr.—John C. Greenwood  
Sq. Ldr.—Paul Kersch  
Sq. Ldr.—Thomas Weaver

### 2ND PLATOON:

Plat. Ldr.—1st Lt. William F. Ellis  
Plat. Exec.—2nd Lt. Robert D. Ullrich  
Plat. Sgt.—Joseph P. Yourren

Sq. Ldr.—Peter D. Kuzmickus  
Sq. Ldr.—Darrel W. Eblen  
Sq. Ldr.—Paul E. Smith  
Sq. Ldr.—Ray F. Schull

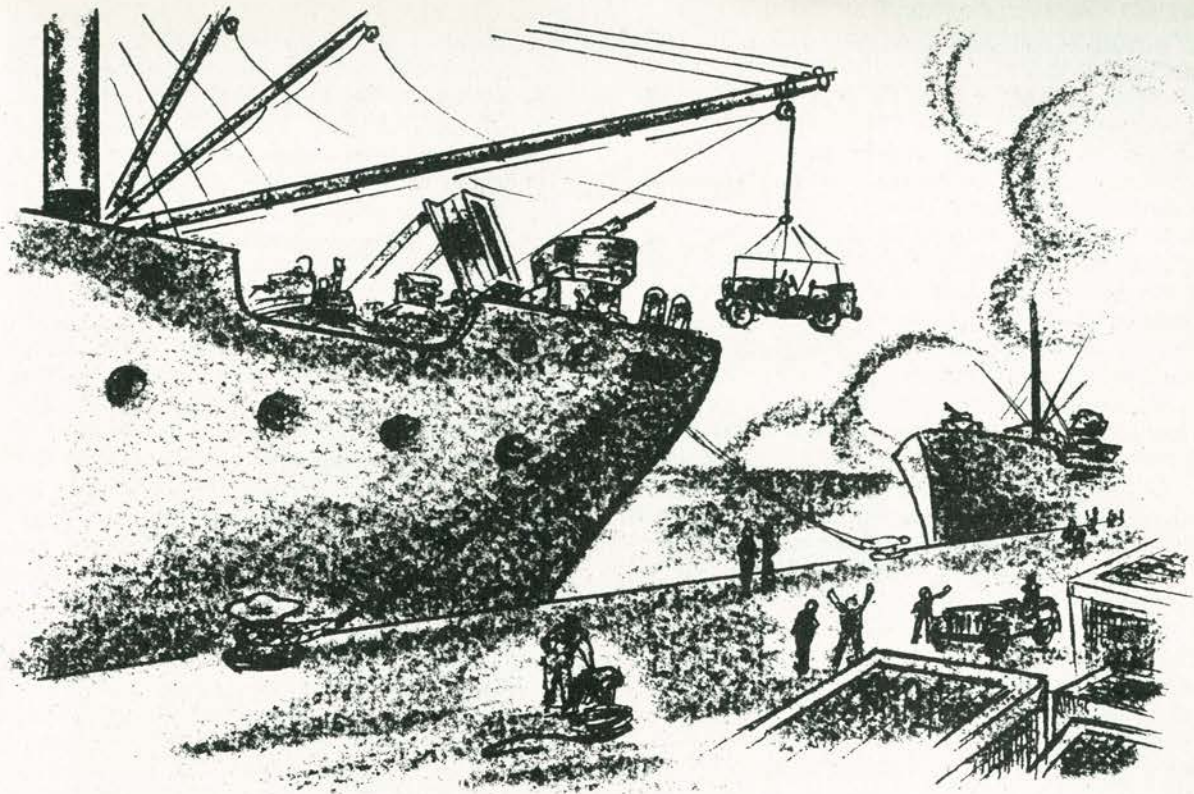
### 3RD PLATOON:

Plat. Ldr.—1st Lt. Joseph A. Lawler  
Plat. Exec.—2nd Lt. LeRoy E. Chaffet  
Plat. Sgt.—Gilbert W. McNeeley

Mess Sgt.—David M. Keith  
Motor Sgt.—William E. Foote  
Comm. Sgt.—Scott M. McCarty  
Inst. Sgt.—Lester M. Garlock

Sq. Ldr.—Robert L. Powell  
Sq. Ldr.—Robert L. Hall  
Sq. Ldr.—Eugene E. Wittrock  
Sq. Ldr.—Warren G. Gelston





## CHAPTER TWO

### *"Merrie England"*

ON the afternoon of December 1, 1944, the 89th was assembled on the Boston pier waiting the word to board ship. While a 4-F band filled the building with martial music, Red Cross Matrons treated the overseas bound mortarmen with hot coffee and doughnuts. With the festivities over, the battalion finally began to load. First went Headquarters Detachment, then Able, Baker, Charlie, and Dog Companies. The men lugged their shiny new duffle bags up and down the treacherous gangways, and at 1530 that afternoon they were packed tightly into their bunks awaiting departure.

The Marine Wolf was a converted freighter, Type C-4, small in size, yet equipped to carry two or three thousand troops. Bunks, stacked in closely packed tiers of five, had been erected in the hold originally designed for carrying freight; into a compartment such as this was packed the 89th, complete with equipment, as well as parts of other units.

The mess hall was about as conveniently situated as the hold. Tables were the proper height to eat standing, and they were just close enough to afford trouble for the passage of two hefty GI's with life preservers.

The Marine Wolf waited calmly at the dock Friday night, but she got underway in the gray light of the morning of Dec. 2. After the momentary thrill of the first ocean voyage

had deserted the men, they were snapped back to reality with the organization of work details, which consisted of KP, Guard, latrine orderlies, and general police of the ship. First Sergeant William J. Wethington of Dog Company, sole commander of the duty department, established a flexible roster which enabled the duties to be distributed evenly among the four companies and Headquarters Detachment.

Battalion Headquarters was set up to handle the administrative problems in conjunction with the Regimental Headquarters of the different commands on board, and Col. Yanka was put in command of all troop passengers. The Battalion's medical section assisted that of the ship, while the signal department furnished men to operate the radios used in ship to ship communications for convoy control.

On the following day out the ship began to show signs of being in deep water as the sea tossed and foamed, throwing the little Marine Wolf back and forth from crest to trough. Waves broke even with the gunwales of the boat, spraying the deck with wintry salt water, first signs of seasickness became prevalent. It was not uncommon to see the stairs leading from quarters to latrine lined with pale faced GI's carrying their steel helmets, hopelessly making a last effort to reach the sanctuary in time.

Those that were religiously inclined and still



able to navigate, attended makeshift church services in the mess hall.

The Marine Wolf was but one ship in a large convoy—composed of ships rendezvoused from every major port on the Eastern seaboard. There were tankers, freighters, large troop transports, and a British aircraft carrier, with little destroyer escorts to be the "eyes and ears" for the convoy commander. The course lay southward, then due east, until, just off the Bay of Biscay, a turn was made to the north. At this point the convoy split, one group continuing due north to Liverpool while the other headed for Southampton.

As the voyage progressed special services came into play. Movies were shown in the mess hall to large attendances, even though the pictures were old and the film broken in several places. It was an escape from seasickness, tension created by the crowded conditions, and the unpleasantness of the passage in general. Lt. Robert Ullrich organized a swing band which appeared several times before capacity crowds on the open deck, as well as in the mess hall when weather would not permit activity above. Pfc. Ignazio Licata and Sgt. Ray Shull and their accordions contributed special sessions in the hold, and Cpl. Lindley B. Bynum kept the joint jumping with his "boogie-woogie" on the ivories.

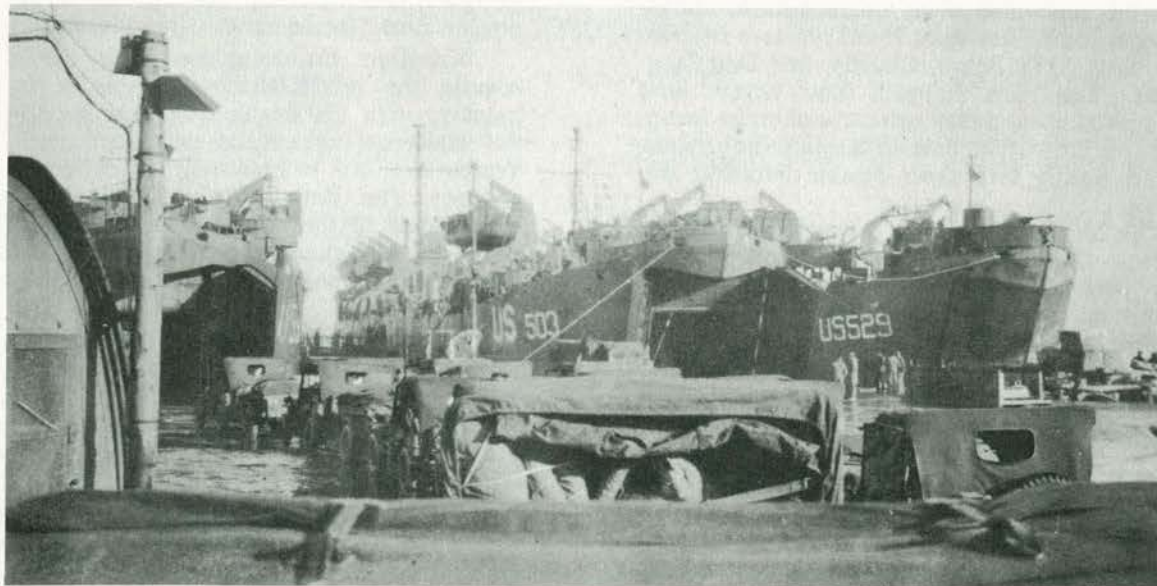
An athletic program, sponsored by Lt. Charles F. Bethea, featured boxing every evening as long as the fighters held out. Each company furnished participants, and the men were paired off according to their weights; other battalions on board also participated. The program featured a former pro from Fritzie Zivic's stables, an exhibition by a former Light Heavy Champion of Golden Gloves fame, and Sgt. Heber Holt of Baker Company, and bouts by Tec/5 Gaylord Rolfe, who was crowned Heavy-weight Champion of the Battalion.

Chow was the most talked of subject of the

trip. Meals were served only twice a day because of inadequate messing space, and when the men did get inside the mess hall they were invariably served stew of the worst variety. Each troop compartment was assigned specific times to eat, and the last man was hardly through the chow line for the first meal when the first man for supper was ready to eat. The food was generally poor, and the atmosphere in the mess hall did not add to the taste of the food. Volunteers for KP were plentiful in a desperate attempt to fill their empty stomachs. However, the famine was mitigated somewhat by the cooks and butchers, who faithfully smuggled food into the troop compartments to their buddies.

A day aboard ship usually started at 0630 with the ever popular words, "It is now reveille," droning over the loud speaker. When the men heard that remarkable announcement, they invariably rolled over and ignored the rest of the world until chow time. Soon after the morning meal was completed, the emergency alarm would ring summoning them back to their quarters for "Abandon Ship" drill. Because of the crowded conditions, confusion always reigned, and many an unfortunate face in the lower bunks was squashed by an oversized brogan. While the men shivered on the open deck, supposedly at their "abandon ship" stations, the Ship's Commander inspected their quarters, suggesting changes and improvements here, there, and everywhere. The end of another complete and perfect day was always manifest when the unseen voice announced that "It is now blackout—no more smoking on the open decks."

After the voyage had progressed uneventfully for several days, it was revealed that the Marine Wolf's original orders to dock at Cherbourg, France had been changed to read Southampton, England where the 89th was to receive further orders. At the time the orders were only known by the



Going Over



Battalion Commander and the ship's Captain, but they no doubt changed the lives of every soldier on board the Marine Wolf.

With the absence of undue excitement, the trip continued, and special service facilities, few that there were, entertained the men to the best of their abilities. Cigarettes, donated by the automobile manufacturers and tobacco companies, were distributed to the troops, each man receiving a pack a day. Tec/4 Dean C. Wolf and Tec/5 Melvin C. Frost of Headquarters Detachment assisted the special service non-com of the Transportation Corps in this job. Playing cards, dice, checkers, and various

spouting water. Rumors soon made the rounds. The explosions were depth charges, and the destroyers were chasing Jerry submarines who were searching for innocent prey. However, the scare persisted through the rest of the day without any tangible occurrence, and the excitement gradually subsided. At no time was there any evidence of consternation as the men never knew what was actually happening.

At 0845 on the morning of Dec. 12, the hope and expectation that had been utmost in the minds of the men since the day they had boarded the ship was fulfilled. Land had been sighted. The morale of everyone hit an unpre-



other games were distributed, and reading material, ranging from English classics to comic books, were available to the personnel. To keep up with their current literature, some of the men forsook the heat and poor lighting of their compartment and searched out cool spots in the cold storage rooms below and the decks above.

On December 11, as the voyage seemed to be nearing its termination, activity among the boats of the convoy was noted by the men on deck. Ships which had been following the convoy closely all the way began dispersing maneuvers, followed by unidentified explosions and

cedented high as they crowded to the decks to get a glimpse of the almost invisible shores of England. That night the Marine Wolf anchored outside the harbor of Southampton, and the next day she slowly worked her way past the Isle of Wight and up the river into port. The battalion stayed aboard until 0200 on the 14th, when the companies debarked and dropped their duffle bags on the soil of jolly old England.

After being served coffee and doughnuts on the pier by the Salvation Army, everyone entrained for Stone, Staffordshire, England, where the battalion was to be quartered. The train passed through the outskirts of London,





Headquarter's Hideout

affording a glimpse of some effects of the blitz in that metropolis. Twice the men were served tea and pastries on the trip, but first contact with English food was not a culinary success.

The battalion arrived in Stone on the afternoon of the 14th. After detraining, the troops marched through the village to the Fuston Factory where hot chow was served; then they proceeded to their assigned billets. Headquarters Detachment was to stay at a former working man's organization, The Lotus Club; Able and Dog Companies were billeted in the factory, pre-war home of English pottery, and, more recently, quarters for Tommies; Baker Company was given the Redlands estate on the outskirts of Stone; and Charlie Company was put in some Nissen Huts in the Lotus Club area. Radford Hall, another wealthy but ancient estate, housed Battalion Headquarters and the commissioned personnel of the unit.

Naturally, the first few days at Stone were spent in getting oriented to the situation, customs of the people, British monetary system, and England in general.

The first big job on the hands of the staff was to reorganize the Battalion according to a new T/O and E which called for three line Companies instead of four, and a Headquarters Company instead of a mere detachment. There was no fundamental change in the organization of the line companies except for a shift and increase in personnel, but the major revision was the formation of a large and omnipotent Headquarters Company. This fourth company consisted of the original detachment functions plus a large ammunition section, a larger communications division, and its own mess.

The problem which immediately presented itself was which company should be de-activated. The difficult decision was finally reached, and according to General Order No. 1, 19 Dec. 1944, re-organization of the Battalion would be

effected by the de-activation of Dog Company and the absorption of its personnel by the rest of the Battalion. By the same order, Headquarters Company was activated.

Reorganization began with the dissolution of the Third Platoon of Able Company, the Third Platoon of Charlie Company, and the Second Platoon of Dog Company. The First Platoon of Charlie Company, with Lt. McDowell, Lt. Linton and S/Sgt. Gillespie became the Third Platoon of Charlie Company, and Lt. Lawler, Lt. Chaffee, S/Sgt. McNeeley and their Third Platoon of Dog Company became the Third Platoon of Able Company. S/Sgt. Joseph Youren became the platoon sergeant of the First Platoon of Baker Company, and the rest of his original Second Platoon was dissolved and absorbed by the various platoons of Baker Company, since none of them were broken up. The personnel of the other two platoons that were dissolved found themselves scattered throughout the companies of the battalion.

Capt. Edward E. Murray was assigned Commander of Headquarters Company in addition to his regular duties as Battalion S-4; Lt. Robert Ullrich became Executive Officer; and First Sergeant Wethington was appointed First Sergeant. Dog Company's motor pool personnel was transferred to Headquarters and S/Sgt. William F. Foote became Company Motor Sergeant. Mess personnel of the defunct unit was transferred to Charlie Company while the latter's cooks moved to Headquarters, and Dog Company supply men were assigned to Headquarters, with S/Sgt. Robert J. Petersen becoming Supply Sergeant for the Company.

The Headquarters ammunition section was also formed at this time. 1st Lt. James J. Feeks, recently transferred from Able Company, was designated Battalion Ammunition Officer, and S/Sgt. R. H. Laney from Able Company became



Battalion Ammunition Sergeant. The whole department of ammunition supply was divided into three working sections headed by S/Sgt. Harold A. Berkowitz from Baker Company, S/Sgt. Richard G. McLennand from Charlie Company, and S/Sgt. Tom Maxey.

First Lt. Alfred A. Ulanowski was assigned to Baker Company and at the same time, designated Assistant Battalion S-3; 2nd Lt. William F. Repschleger moved to Able; 2nd Lt. Marvin L. Ritzman went to Charlie; and 2nd Lt. Charles F. Bethea was sent to Charlie Company.

2nd Lt. William F. Ellis was assigned to Baker Company as Weather Officer, and 2nd Lt. George R. Krsek was designated Battalion Communications Officer. Capt. Ignatius J. Spurio, formerly Company Commander of Dog Company, was assigned to Headquarters Company and designated as Battalion Motor Officer.

With reorganization completed, the days at Stone were spent drawing equipment and brushing up on communication systems in connection with fire direction control. In every phase of the training, the individual job of every man was stressed. All vehicles were drawn at Stone, as were mortars, the new mortar sights, new adjustable carbine sights, signal equipment, and quartermaster supplies.

Battalion communications in the village were much better than anyone had hoped for, and they contributed materially to the administration of the unit at Stone. Battalion phones were tied in with the commercial lines of Stone, and by calling 47, a through trunk line could be gotten to any point in the United Kingdom. Two operators from each company handled the switchboard.

In these days many were the trips to the far corners of England for procurement of equipment and supplies. The S-4 section, communications, the motor pool, and ammunition men made pilgrimages to Newberry, Bristol, London, Tidworth, Tewksbury, Liverpool, and several places in Wales. Lt. Krizek visited London for seven days when he was called to an Army Information Staff School, and WOJG Martin W. Juster and T/Sgt. Roger LaFrenier, as well as the Executive Officers of each company, attended a Graves Registration Course in the same city.

Passes were liberal at Stone, and the men lost no time in taking advantage of them. Nightly they visited Hanley, Newcastle, and other towns in the vicinity, and on two day passes there was always London to see. London (and Picadilly Circus) had more points of interest to offer.

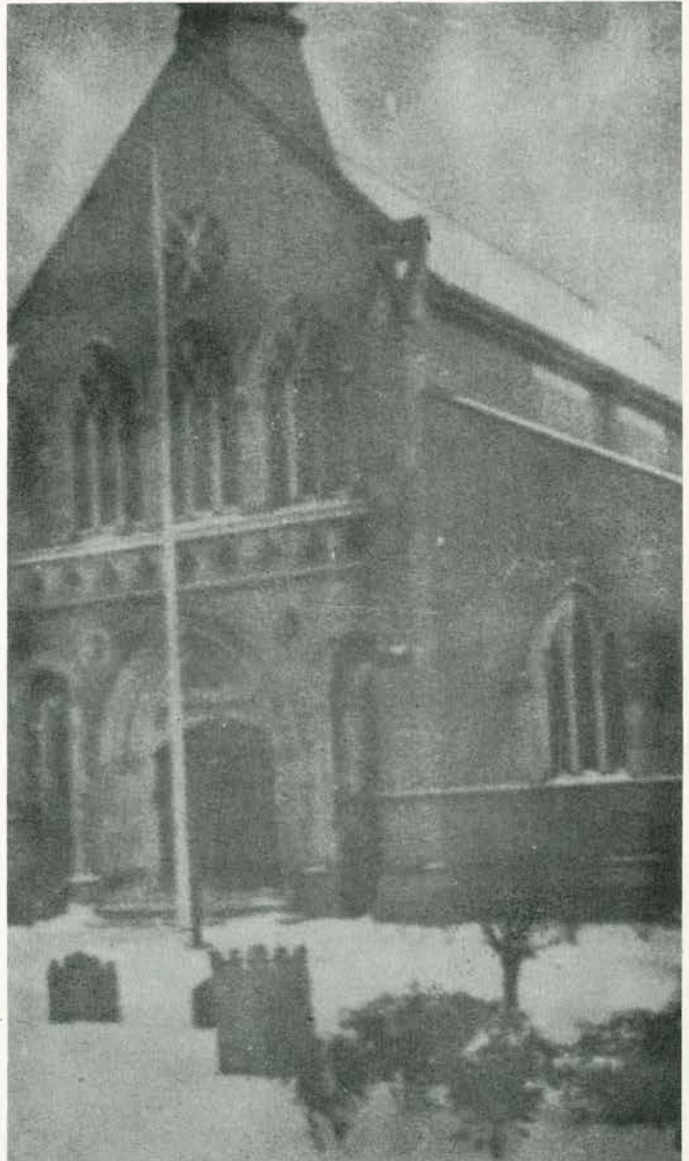
As for the majority of the men, they frequented the pubs wherever they went. Warm beer, dart games, community singing, and tall tales with the Limeys gave the places a homely atmosphere which everyone enjoyed. At the Crown and Anchor or the White Horse a "chug a lug" game could almost always be found in

progress; that entertainment furnished hours of pleasure for the heartiest drinkers.

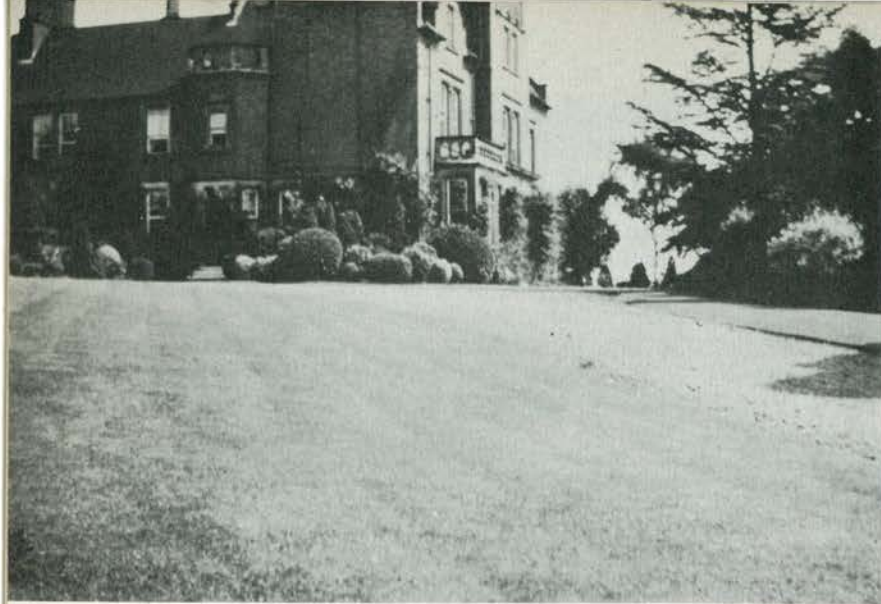
Outstanding among female companions were the WAF's stationed in Stafford; they helped brighten many a GI night. The American Red Cross, with its dances, girls, coffee and doughnuts was a popular place for the society set. The British Women's Voluntary Service was also a good place to spend some time, and the homes of many of the residents were opened to the men, especially at Christmas time.

The last week in Stone was spent servicing the newly acquired vehicles, mounting new equipment and packing everything for the Battalion's next jump. On the morning of Feb. 13, 1945, the men waved goodbye to Stone, and the vehicles moved south in the cold, rainy

Stone's Presbyterian Church







Redlands

darkness. The predominant problem for the most part of the trip was how to keep warm and this was solved in many fashions, none of them very satisfactory. Neither did slow convoy speed of 15 miles per hour improve the mental attitude of the men.

At 2300 that night the convoy moved into a gasoline dump on the southern coast where they filled the thirsty tanks; from there it was a short trip on to the staging camp near Weymouth. The rows of empty, wind whipped tents looked entirely uninviting to the men, notwithstanding the fact that they had been on the road seventeen hours. No lights, no hot water in the latrines, and sickening C rations led them to hope for immediate shipment to the continent. However, everyone slept soundly for the remainder of the night.

Early the next morning the battalion prepared to load on the LST's and LSI's. After much confusion, without which a movement could not be made, the unit was divided into two parties. Vehicles, with two men each, were loaded on LST's, Baker and Charlie Company on one and Headquarters and Able on the other. The remainder of the men, the walking party, were put on an LSI later in the afternoon, and all ships pointed their bows toward Le Havre, France.

After an uneventful evening and morning the landing party debarked at noon, Feb. 15, From Le Havre they moved by truck convoy to Camp Twenty Grand, arriving there later in the day, but the convoy of the 89th's vehicles was a little more unfortunate; they didn't arrive till 0200 the following morning.

Le Havre was the first glimpse of all out war that presented itself to the men. True, they had seen the results of the blitz on London, but damage in England was slight as compared with what met the eye in France. Damaged vehicles, gutted buildings, pillboxes, and gun emplacements; grown men fighting for cigarettes; women and children searching for coal along railroad tracks; everywhere reminders of the Nazis; this was the cruel perspective that greeted the 89th.

Camp Twenty Grand was located approximately nine miles northwest of Rouen, France. A

comparatively new staging area, there was nothing but the barest necessities. Men spent most of the days wading the knee deep mud between the motor pool and the battalion area. The cold nights were good for sleeping if one could keep warm, but often the solitude was disturbed by trigger-happy negro guards who spent their evenings taking pot shots at frightened GIs.

It was at Twenty Grand that the men first learned the value of bartering. Cigarettes, candy, gum, coffee, soap, and anything else that could be salvaged from overloaded duffle bags was offered in return for fresh eggs, french bread, and cider which was often strengthened by H<sup>2</sup>O.

All activities at the mud hole were centered around last minute preparations for combat. Wire cutters were added to the jeep; they seemed to be the order of the day in the ETO in the late winter. Vehicles were packed, unpacked, and repacked in an effort to get the maximum advantage of the precious storage space. Enclosures were added to their vehicles by several ingenious drivers; coming cold weather was in the back of the mind of every man.

Lt. Parker, Lt. Cartledge, and S/Sgt. Laney drew the Battalion's basic load of small arms ammunition at Le Havre. Each man's ration, which was issued to him at once, consisted of forty-five rounds of carbine shells or eighty M-1 rounds, and smoke and fragmentation grenades.

The Twenty Grand motor pool sponsored a working detail to haul rocks and rubble from nearby Rouen to hard surface the camp roads. 89th men thoroughly enjoyed themselves on these trips as five man crews only hauled two loads a day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Several hours were spent in Rouen, seeing the city and visiting bars and other popular retreats.

It was while the battalion was awaiting orders that the ammunition section was organized to fit the battalion's prospective combat needs. Lt. Feeks remained as ammunition officer, and he chose two direct assistants, S/Sgt. Laney, and S/Sgt. Erdman. The three sections were named alphabetically to correspond with the three firing companies. S/Sgt. Johns' section was designated to supply Able Company; S/Sgt. Berkowitz, Baker Company; and S/Sgt. McLennand, Charlie Company. S/Sgt. Martin was in charge of a small section designated as Headquarters ammunition; this would be a mobile group, and would assist any other section that needed help at any particular time.

A few fortunate individuals were able to get a quick view of Paris from Twenty Grand. Lt. Krsek, Tec/4 Wolf, Tec/4 Reeder, Tec/5 Gill, and Pvt. Camerlengo of the Battalion Communications section made a last minute trip to the French capital to secure vital supplies; the party was unavoidably detained for one night in the city. Their route along the Seine River afforded them a clear picture of the destruction wrought by the American Armies in their push through France.



On the 17th of February the Battalion Ammunition Section traveled to Somme-Sons, France to pick up the basic load of 4.2 shells, the allotment of which was 40 rounds of HE and forty rounds of WP per mortar. That convoy, which passed through Chateau-Thierry, also had a welcome delay in Paris at the expense of three flat tires.

Two days after the ammunition had been secured, the 89th received orders stating that they were now assigned to the United States Ninth Army and were to report to Nieustadt, Holland for further orders. The next day the advance party left for Ninth Army Headquarters in Maastricht, Holland.

At Maastricht, the party was oriented, and informed that the Roer River would be crossed within the next few days. The 89th was ordered to stand by at their assembly area at Nieustadt and await orders from the XVI Corps committing the battalion for action.

The next morning Capt. Murray, T/Sgt. Wood, and Sgt. Pitts reported to XVI Corps Headquarters at Sittard, Holland; there they received orders to hold the unit at Nieustadt pending the arrival of further orders.

Captain Murray's party arrived at their destination about noon and spent the remainder of the day locating billets for the men. Fear of thickly planted mine fields and booby traps slowed the work considerably, but on the other hand no civilians had to be evacuated due to the efficiency of German and American artillery.

Meanwhile Col. Yanka, Maj. Lentz, and the Executive Officers from each company, with their enlisted men, moved forward to observe the 92nd Cml. Mortar Battalion in action at Julich, Germany, where it had just completed the crossing of the Roer in support of the 29th Division. From Battalion Headquarters, the party from each company was sent forward to the CP of the corresponding company in the 92nd to observe their methods of operation. Even in the midst of combat the hosts were very cordial and helpful, but the advance party left the front with a vivid picture of battle conditions in their minds. After passing through war torn Aachen and Duren, Col. Yanka and his convoy arrived at Nieustadt at 2300, Feb. 23.

The main body of the battalion left Twenty Grand on the morning of Feb. 22. The convoy was divided into platoon serials, and they moved out at the usual intervals; but the trip had hardly begun when a catastrophe occurred at Rouen. Major Cameron's jeep and a first platoon jeep of Baker Company carrying Pfc. Maurice Beasley, Pfc. Lewis Jones, Pfc. Bill Spradlin, and Pfc. Roy Wileman were squeezed together by a heavy truck. Fortunately, no one was injured, but both jeeps were salvaged and replacements pulling one-ton trailers, a somewhat over-balanced combination, were drawn on the spot.

The ever-present cold necessitated the use of blankets in profusion during the trip. Lasting impressions were made by a preponderance of burned out vehicles along the roads, allied as well as enemy; many of the men wondered if their own vehicle might soon be seen along the roadside in the same condition. Other impressive, but amusing sights were the French open air sidewalk latrines; they served the purpose although they afforded little privacy in doing so.

The battalion proceeded as far as Cambrai, France the first day. Here the vehicles were given first echelon maintenance, and the men prepared their bivouac area in an open field just beyond the town. Hot "ten-in-one" rations were the sum total of the menu, and the cold wintery ground was the bed for everyone except a few acrobats who managed to curl up in jeeps and trailers.

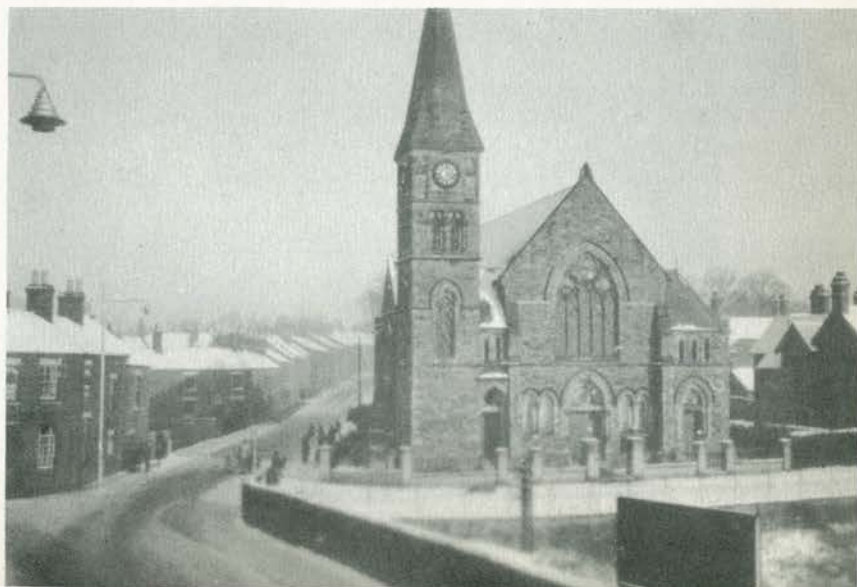
The next day brought the convoy into Belgium. At every opportunity the men conversed with the people and learned, first hand, of the ferocious crimes of the Germans.

Early in the evening of Feb. 23 the convoy moved into Holland, and passed the 95th Division, which was in reserve, just before reaching Maastricht. On the other side of the Ninth Army Headquarters all lights were turned out to conform with blackout precautions.

At 2000 the first serial approached Nieustadt where it was met and let into the town by Capt. Murray, Sgt. Wood, and Sgt. Pitts. Strict warnings were issued of mines in the area, and mine detectors were used to clear areas for the vehicles which were dispersed and camouflaged. Assigned billets were found, and after much excitement about booby traps, everyone quieted down for the night.

Distant rumblings of artillery and an occasional aircraft overhead reminded everyone

#### City Life — Times Square





that the battle was near; the gutted buildings and stories of civilians testified that this very town had recently been the scene of combat.

On the afternoon of the 25th the battalion suffered its first casualties when T/Sgt. Charles Marriott, Lt. Sidney L. Wells, and Tec/4 James Henson were injured in the explosion of a Jerry hand grenade. All three men were quickly evacuated; Lt. Wells and Sgt. Henson later returned to the battalion but Sgt. Marriott was sent back to the States.

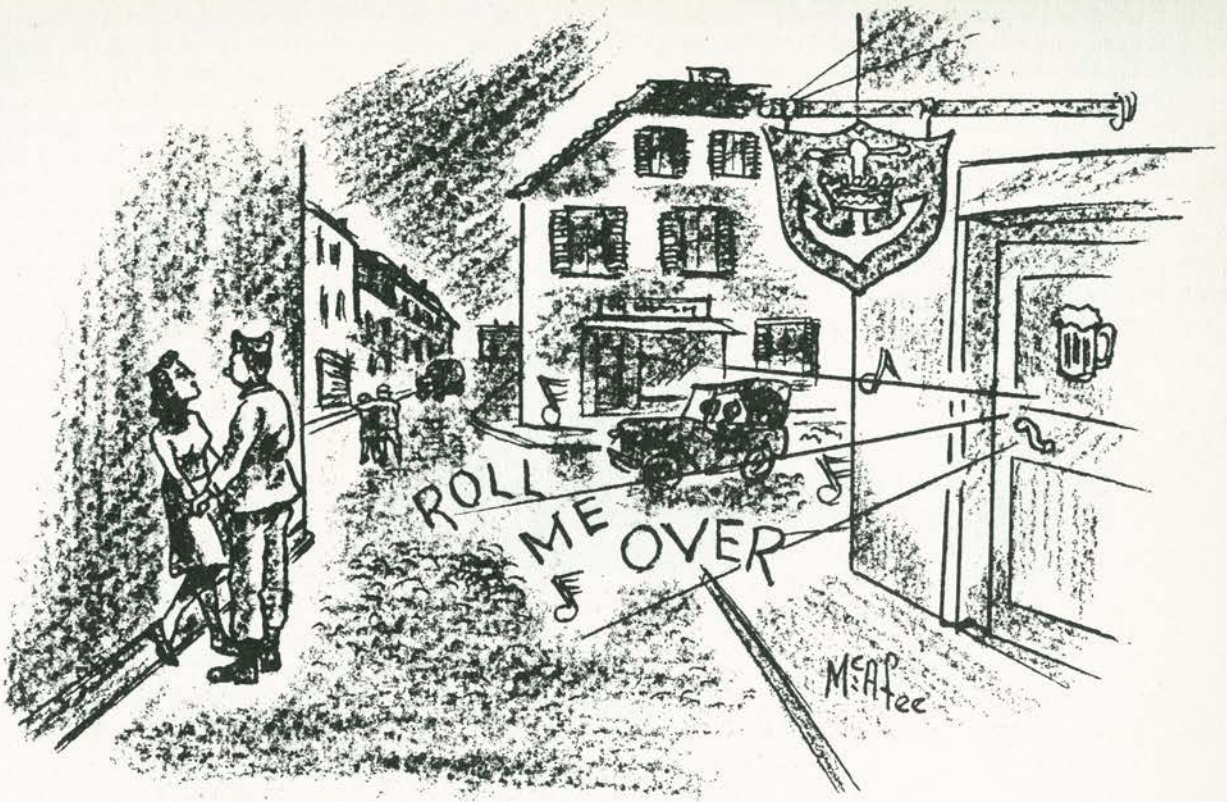
The following day at Nieustadt was spent

in further packing vehicles again. Much excess equipment was moved to a battalion dump, and each man was stripped of everything but his essentials. Details were furnished to assist a section of the 30th Cml. Decontaminating Company in cleaning shells for the ASP. The 89th men did a particularly efficient job because they expected to be using the shells very soon.

One thought was uppermost—when would the battalion receive its first combat assignment?







Famed Piccadilly Circus — home for the lonely





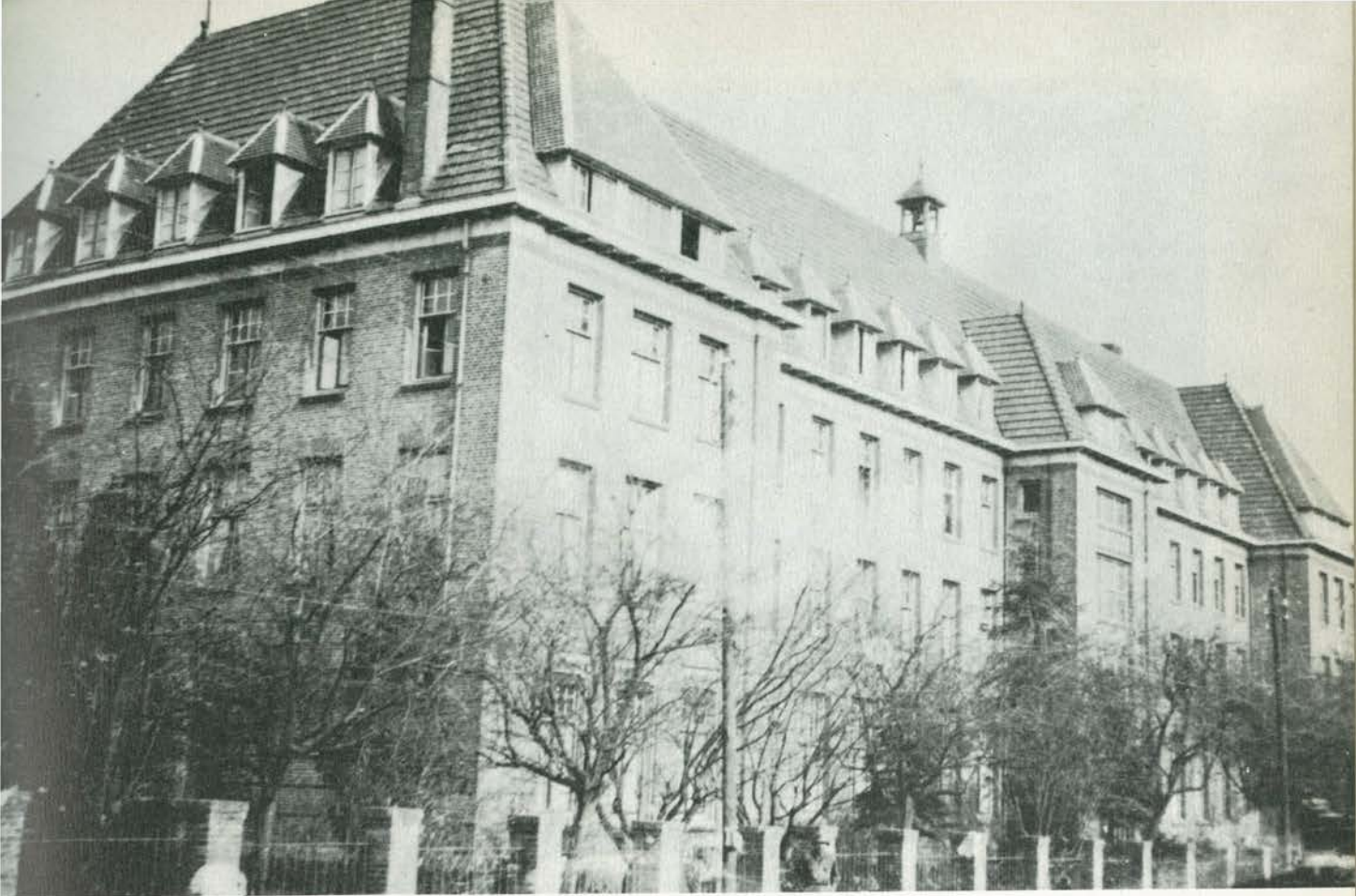
Convoy from Stone to  
Portland-Weymouth

Eating Out



Benefits of civilization at  
Camp Twenty Grand



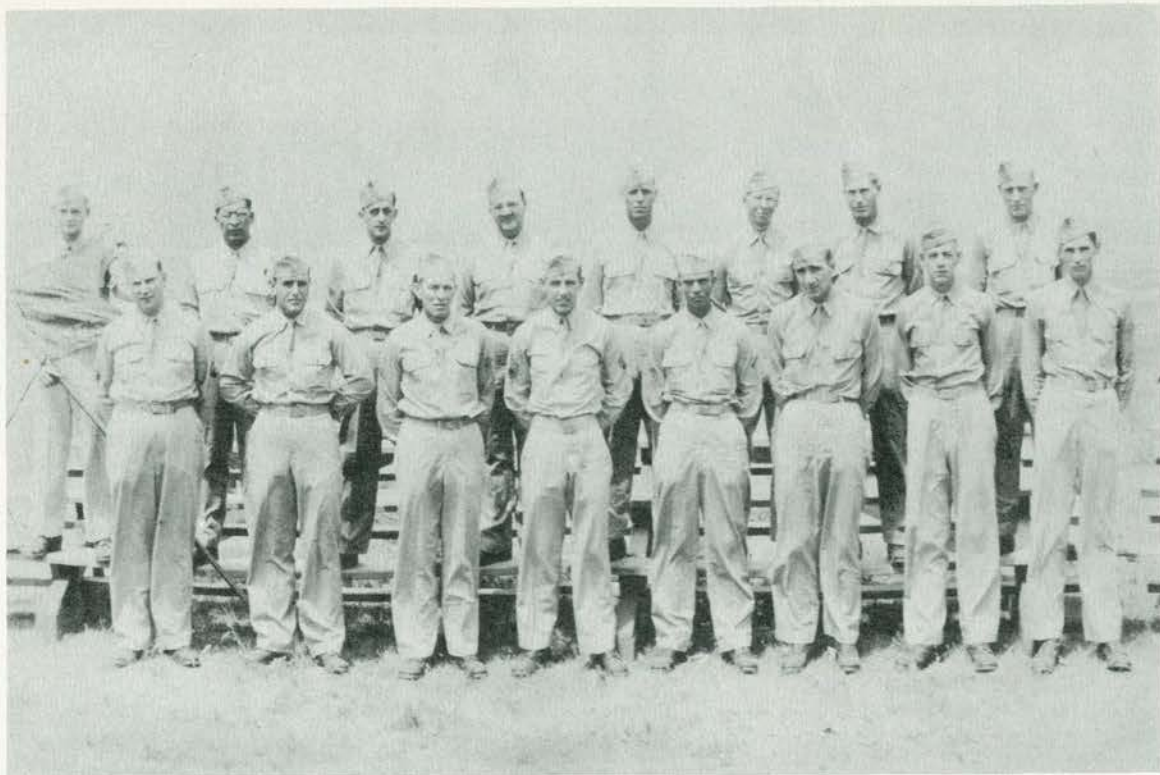


Battalion Headquarters in the Cloisters  
at Nuth, Holland

Main Street of Nuth







#### MEDICAL DETACHMENT

1st Row, L to R: Pierce, Shegas, Stewart, Ransom, Dale, Robinson, Holliday, Oliver. 2nd Row, L to R: Allen, Hockletubbe, Madonia, Smeltzer, Jackson, Frazier, Schmiers, Howe.



#### HEADQUARTERS ADMINISTRATION

1st Row, L to R: Noory, Howard, Haldt, Capt. Murray, Major Cameron, Capt. Spurio, Easton, Batts, Kelly. 2nd Row, L to R: Weider, Fiore, Craig, Lt. Krsek, Goldstein, La Rouche, Woods, Wolfe, Matriciano. 3rd Row, L to R: Reeder, Garlock, Maughan, Camerlengo, Bower, Grahl, Chambliss, De Schamps, Solonika, Harsh, Belloni, Whitfield, Antil, Broadhus. 4th Row, L to R: Duane, Guenther, Green, Hunniford, Bombe, Walanski, Ferrou, Mahrenholz.





#### HEADQUARTERS AMMO

1st Row, L to R: Dankel, Laney, Capt. Krizek, Wethington, Johns. 2nd Row, L to R: Weaver, Frase, Maze, Anderson, Fischer, Nolan. 3rd Row, L to R: Merkle, Barros, Kneller, Warford, Cassella. 4th Row, L to R: Keller, Dean, Hose, Stahl, Edwards.



1st Row: Lt. Ullrich. 2nd Row, L to R: Forgione, Eudy, Veague, Vernon, Summerlin. 3rd Row, L to R: Nordeen, McConn, Wilson, Roberts, Calloway. 4th Row, L to R: Narus, Addis, Bo-cock, Otto, Licata. 5th Row, L to R: Cook, Couch.





1st Row, L to R: Day, Corder, Martin, Hebel, Dobson, Seggerman. 2nd Row, L to R: Delmer, Brantley, Coder, Eddleman, Minton, Abell. 3rd Row, L to R: Sawtell, Bailey, Blair, Pulley, Prim, Wall. 4th Row, L to R: Auld, Falco, Freehill Holmes, Hicks.





## CHAPTER THREE

### *"Roer to the Rhine"*

THE 89th now officially designated as "Cart-wheel" had not long to wait for their first combat assignments. On the afternoon of February 25 orders were received from XVI Corps Headquarters attaching Charlie Company to the 35th "Santa Fe" Division, which was poised near Linnich for the jump across the Roer.

An advance party reconnoitered the east bank of the river that evening while the company remained at Nieustadt, quietly preparing for their introduction to combat. A few hours later, in the darkness of the early hours of February 26, the men climbed into their vehicles and moved toward Porcelen where positions had been selected. The convoy ran into difficulty several times when drivers allowed the interval between their jeeps to become too great for blackout driving. When the light began to break through, the twisted bodies of German soldiers could be seen scattered along the road, and the stomachs of the men tightened because they knew that at last they had hit combat.

At daybreak the company was forced to cross a half mile strip of road which was under full observation of the enemy. Perhaps the hour was too early for the Jerry observers to be functioning, because the convoy passed over the spot safely and reached Porcelen shortly after.

The mortars were immediately set up in the soggy sod of the river bottom, and peri-

meter defense was established, but no fire missions were called for by the observers.

The first instance of any excitement occurred at 0100 the following morning when an enemy patrol moved directly through the first platoon's mortar positions. Opening contact with the enemy so surprised the men that the Jerries escaped unharmed, and a chance to capture the first prisoners in the battalion was lost.

Later in the morning the company moved to Birgelen and prepared to fire again, but the 134th Infantry, which Charlie Company was supporting, was moving so swiftly that the 4.2's were not needed.

Birgelen was in the so-called northern hinge of the infamous Siegfried Line, and the village and surrounding hills were dotted with huge reinforced concrete pillboxes, most of which were untouched by the lightning thrust of the doughs. It was around one of these German emplacements that Pfc. Wigert noticed some suspicious activity. He immediately called S/Sgt. Carson who soon identified the suspects as Jerries. The first platoon sergeant, with the aid of T/4 (Windy Dick) Butler and Sgt. Joe Burson, soon had extricated seven luckless Krauts from their fortress. For his action Sgt. Carson was awarded the Bronze Star.

The captors made one mistake which was soon corrected and thereafter never dupli-



cated. Although they searched the prisoners they neglected to relieve them of their watches and jewelry.

While Charlie Company was getting their introduction under fire, the rest of the battalion was nervously awaiting assignment at Nieustadt. At 0600 on February 27, the 89th was attached to the 79th Division Artillery, which was supporting the line on the left flank of the XVI Corps front, and further attached to the Division Artillery.

The Colonel reconnoitered for a Battalion C.P. and finally selected a site at Waldfeucht, just beyond the German-Dutch frontier.

Able Company was further attached to the 694th Field Artillery Bn. in support of the 15th Cavalry Squadron. At 0600 on the morning of the 28th advance parties left Divarty Headquarters to select mortar positions at Linne, Holland and St. Odilienburg, Germany. Lt. Miller, S/Sgt. Haecker, Cpl. Humphrey, and Cpl. Mokcsay reconnoitered for gun positions in St. Odilienburg, while the second and third platoons prepared to move into Linne.

The remainder of the company waited nervously at Nieustadt for the return of the reconnaissance parties, and squad leaders were briefed on anticipated missions by Lt. McDow. About mid-morning the advance parties came back, and Able Company started to move up.

Everyone was tense and expectant as the convoys advanced, but nothing except the dull boom of guns in the distance disturbed the quiet atmosphere. The first platoon moved to an orchard near St. Odilienburg and immediately dug in, but no fire missions were forthcoming. The company communications system was slow in being established, and when contact was eventually made with the company CP, the platoon was notified to join the second and third at Linne, which was 3 miles from their position.

Meanwhile the second platoon under Lt. William L. Sharpe had fired the first rounds in the battalion when they laid concentrations on the outskirts of Roermond, which was the next objective for the 15th Cavalry.

Late in the day all of Able Company was firmly entrenched in and around Linne, and they were ready to support the Cavalry's jump off at 0600.

When the 15th Squadron crossed the Roer the next morning they found the east side of the river surprisingly free from Jerries and moved into Roermond without opposition. Shortly after the capture of Roermond, the mortars were relieved from support of the Cavalry and ordered to return to the battalion area at Waldfeucht. At 1200, Captain Westbrook and one enlisted man from each platoon selected billets near the Battalion CP, and later in the afternoon the company moved into their assigned houses.

Along with the advance parties of Able Company, Capt. Esser, Lt. Harvey, and the Platoon Leaders of Baker Company proceeded

to Division Artillery Headquarters, where they were sent to the 310th Field Artillery Battalion CP. Colonel Safford, the CO of the artillery outfit was undecided as to what use he could make of the mortars since the front, which was merely a holding line, was comparatively inactive.

It was finally decided that Baker Company would emplace their guns in the area of the 314th Infantry. The town of Hingen was chosen for the tentative positions, and the



Stately Spires

Artillery Survey Officer led the advance party forward. He had some difficulty locating Hingen so it was 1030 before the party selected their site. Lt. Harvey immediately returned to Nieustadt, where the company was waiting, and led them to the mortar positions.

Intelligence soon informed the CP of the 314th that the Jerries were withdrawing from



their bank of the river. At 1300 Col. Safford notified Capt. Esser not to set up in Hingen, but to look over the area to the northwest. The Captain immediately reconnoitered a woods near Muningsboschof, and shortly after dark the company moved into the positions he had selected.

For security's sake, the motor pool and kitchen units were left at Hingen, but that town received a shelling during the night, belying the idea that it was a rear area.



Let 'er fly

The three firing platoons dug positions in a dike, and the CP moved into a portion of a house a few hundred yards ahead of the mortars. Phones were tied in to the 15th Cavalry, and all preparations for firing were completed that night, but as with Able Company, there were no missions.

Lt. Kilby, with Pfc. Bruce as radio oper-

ator, moved forward into St. Odilienburg where they selected the first OP in a church steeple of that hamlet. Nearby infantrymen had butchered a calf, but before they could exploit their handiwork they received orders to move out; Lt. Kilby and Pfc. Bruce prudently hauled the calf back to the third platoon where it served its purpose.

At 1130 a phone call from Major Cameron ordered the company back to battalion control at Waldfeucht. After two platoons took wrong turns and several vehicles had been stuck in the mud, the company finally assembled in some bombed out houses that the S-4 section had designated for them. Eventually, slightly better quarters were located, and the company settled down to another session of waiting.

On February 28, upon receipt of orders from the 134th Regt., Charlie Company organized a security and reconnaissance patrol to clear the town, Dohr. Lt. Cartledge, together with the Platoon leaders, the First Sergeant, and a few men entered the town, but no resistance was encountered and the patrol returned to Bergelen to prepare to move.

Rations were nil in the company since the mess truck, when ordered forward from Porcelen to Bergelen, had taken a wrong turn somewhere on the eight mile trip, and had headed for parts unknown. As a result the platoons ate what food they could find. However, they didn't fare too badly; they found sufficient eggs, ham, canned cherries, cheese in toothpaste tubes, canned sardines, and chicken, to appease their appetites, and there was also plenty to drink.

To this day no one has been able to trace the route of the mess truck in its ensuing three day ramble, but it is believed to have covered most of the Ninth Army sector as well as points on the British and Canadian fronts. The driver used all his gas and filled his tank with borrowed fuel three times. For those three days the cooks kept hot coffee on the field ranges and the ingredients of a meal at their elbows in the event that they should unexpectedly run into the company in their wanderings.

By the 28th the situation had developed into a fast moving race with the 134th Infantry right on the heels of the Jerries, pushing them all the way to the Rhine. The mortars followed the swift infantry thrusts as closely as they were able in their vehicles; they seldom set up the weapons as no support was needed by the spearhead.

Before daylight on March 2 the company moved into Kaldenkirchen. The entire Division was on the move, and the roads were so congested that traffic was suspended at several points. The Commanding General of the 35th Division had the good fortune to catch Charlie Company's vehicles lined up bumper to bumper awaiting repairs on a bridge. While Lt. Cartledge feigned sleep, the General asked Sgt. Willoughby some very embarrassing questions.

The mess truck finally found the company



in Kaldenkirchen, and within an hour of their arrival a hot meal was served; the first the hungry men had eaten in several days. The meal was interrupted only once when a barrage of screaming meemies landed a few hundred yards from the mess truck.

From Kaldenkirchen Charlie Company moved to Straelen. All three platoons emplaced immediately, but the third platoon was abruptly pulled out at 1400 and ordered to set up the guns in Geldern. Lt. McDowell, Sgt. Gillespie, Cpl. Zuercher, Cpl. Hayser, and T/5 Rolfe contacted the infantry, and the platoon was brought to within a mile of a skirmish between U. S. tanks and strong German machine gun positions. After a reconnaissance for gun positions, the platoon moved into their designated area, but found it occupied by 81 mm mortars, so the 4.2's moved into an alternate site, a cluster of farmhouses.

The F.O. party advanced into Geldern via a foot bridge which was the only available route, and while crossing they were subjected to heavy machine gun fire but everyone effected the passage successfully. Having established radio contact with the platoon, preparations were made to fire on the town, but since the exact position of friendly troops was unknown no firing was done. After an hour of waiting, it was learned that the British 2nd Army troops were entering Geldern from the north and linking with the 35th in the center of the town.

The guns were then laid in for possible defensive fire, but there was no activity on either

side during the night, and the next morning the third platoon reverted to company control at Straelen without having fired a round.

On March 3rd Capt. Landback, Sgt. Bynon, and Sgt. Melrose reconnoitered Bonningshof for possible gun positions for the coming night. During their search they ran across two Jerry paratroopers who appeared more than happy to surrender. The captors liberated a German luger from one of the prisoners, thereby gaining the distinction of taking the first pistol from a live German.

Charlie Company immediately moved into Bonningshof; there they were relieved from the 134th Infantry on the following day, March 4th, and attached to the 320th which was taking over the starring role of the "Santa Fe" Division.

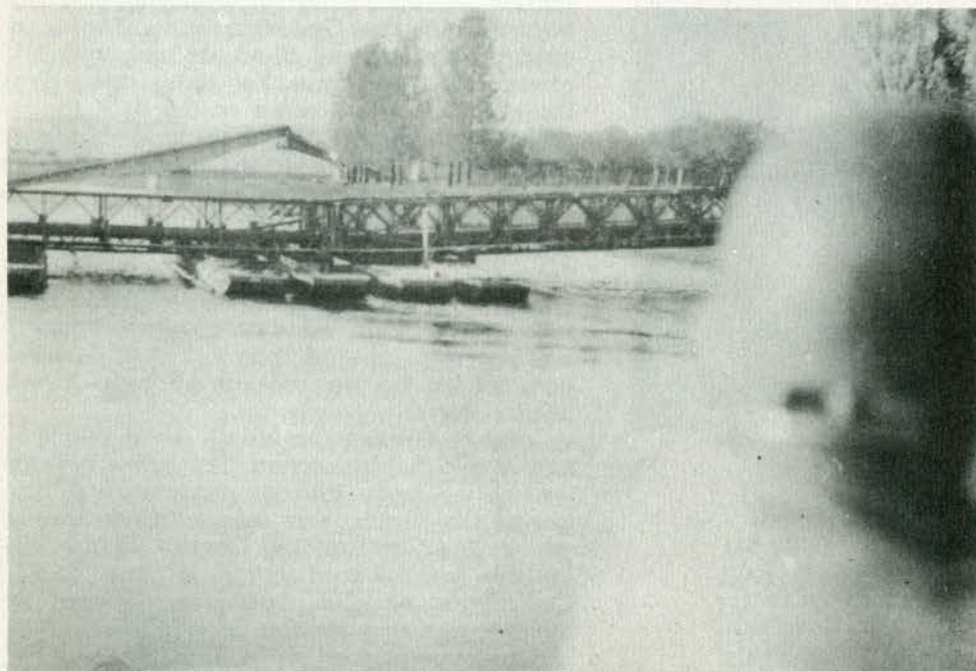
The pocket formed by the Canadian First Army and the U. S. Ninth was the last one west of the Rhine in the northern sector, and as it was being squeezed tightly, the resistance toughened considerably, bringing into extensive use for the first time the 4.2 mortars manned by the 89th.

At 1010 on March 5, Lt. Wance fired the first platoon (through the company FDC) from positions in Oermten. The first target was enemy snipers who were holding up the infantry's advance. The first round was short, but the second hit squarely on the target; 12 more rounds neutralized the position. A few hours later the second platoon expended 45 rounds of HE in destroying an enemy strongpoint.

Late in the afternoon the company moved into Kamp, a picturesque old village, built around an ancient cathedral on a lone hill. The town had been badly shelled, and torn bodies of soldiers, civilians, and animals cluttered the floors of many of the buildings.

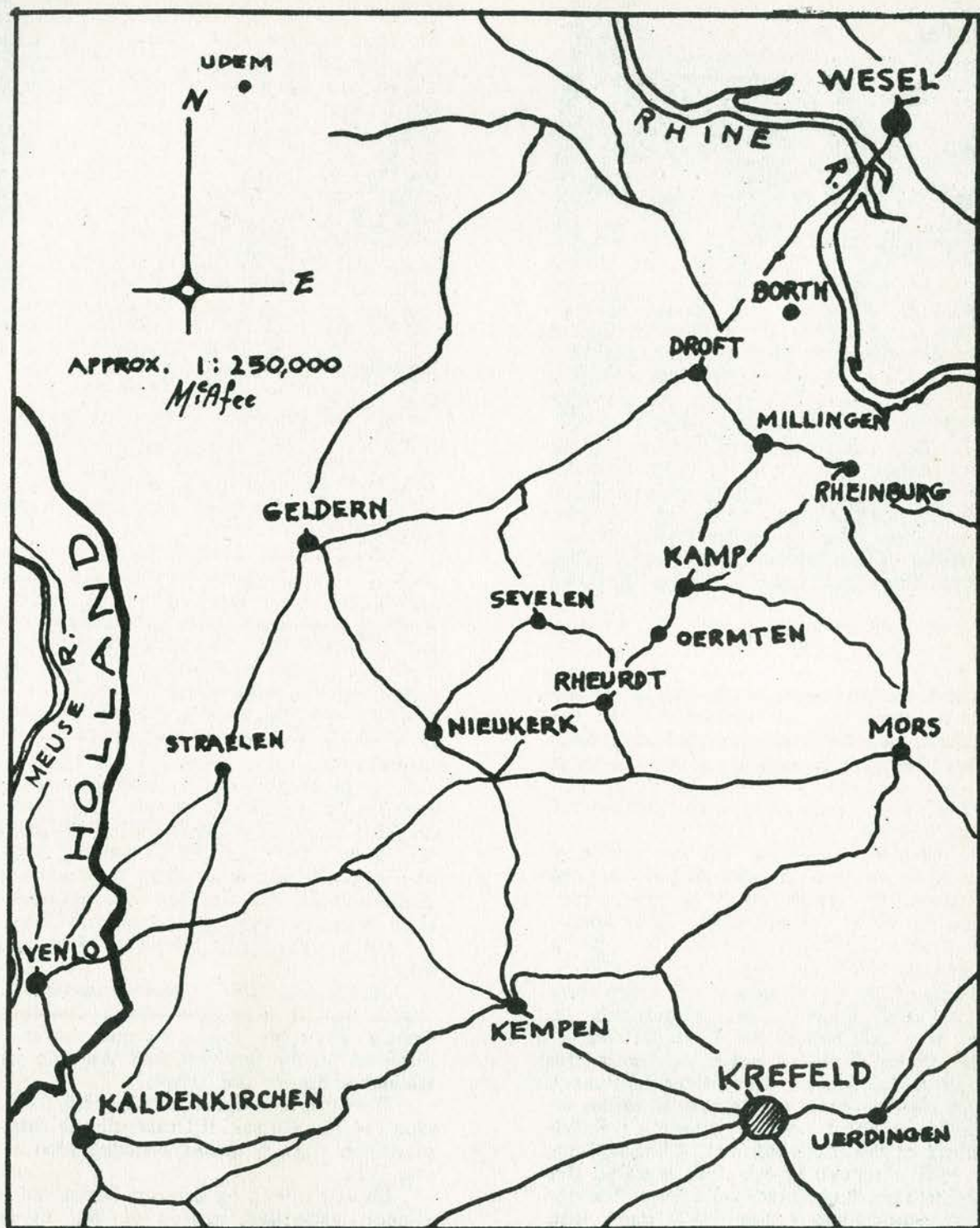
Lt. Feeks, Battalion Ammunition Officer, arrived late the same evening with a number of replacements from Battalion Headquarters, and the new men spent their initial night in combat sweating out a heavy enemy barrage in a group of battered houses.

Ever tightening German resistance was making the Wesel bridge pocket a tough nut to crack. The Jerries, in a final desperate attempt to retain



Over the Roer





Scene of Charlie Company's main operation in campaign from Roer to the Rhine





Out Panzered

their last foothold west of the Rhine, threw crack paratroopers and SS men into the bridgehead. Most of the enemy's heavy artillery had been displaced to the east side of the river, but there were still plenty of self-propelled guns, mortars, and rockets left for close-in defense.

Lt. Wance, while FO for the company March 7, encountered a piece of hot shrapnel that scooped the works out of his wrist watch and momentarily stunned him. Cpl. Thorpe, the Lt's. radio operator, continued to register the company while the former recovered from the shock of his experience. After a few minutes rest and a fresh chew of tobacco, Lt. Wance was able to resume his observing.

Later in the day the same two, with the addition of Cpl. Marcil, were forced to cross a heavily shelled area under fire in order to direct fire support for the attack of Baker Company of the 320th Infantry. Charlie Company laid a smoke screen that enabled the doughs to take their initial objectives, but opposition was so great that the infantry was forced to withdraw, again under cover of smoke. In spite of the terrific resistance encountered, no casualties were suffered, and that phenomenon was attributed to the success of the protective screen. For his part in the action, Lt. Wance was awarded the Silver Star.

Upon the completion of the mission, the first and third platoons moved to new positions along well observed roads. Heavy mortar fire forced them to infiltrate into their areas,

but no casualties were suffered until the following morning, when a heavy mortar shell landed between the third and fourth guns of the first platoon. Cpl. Mears of the number four gun suffered eight pieces of shrapnel in the left arm, chest and stomach from the blast. Sgt. Lindenlaub, the new company mess sergeant who was just then leaving the area in a jeep, was hit by a fragment which pierced the base of his skull, wounding him seriously. Other near casualties were Sgt. Willoughby who had his helmet dented by another missile and Pvt. Briggs who sat in the back seat of the jeep while two pieces of hit lead slashed the canvas curtain on either side of his head. The two casualties were immediately treated by Pfc. Frederick O. Dail, who handled his first victims in a swift, efficient manner; they were then evacuated by Sgt. Willoughby and Pvt. Guacci.

All platoons fired on the town of Millingen that night. German troops were scattered when he cracked the slate roofs of their billets and WP was dropped through the apertures to finish the job. Virtually two thirds of the town was destroyed in that manner.

In the attack on Millingen, Lt. Charles F. Bethea was acting as FO for the company, and was with the infantry as it braved heavy artillery fire to advance on the town, where the Germans were improving their positions. Both the mortar and artillery forward observation parties selected OP's in a convenient house, but on the way to the OP were caught in a mortar barrage. The Field artillery party turned around and came back to the infantry CP, but Lt. Bethea and his men sweated it out and finally reached the house. Here he found an abundance of targets, and he immediately laid down a 200-round HE barrage on prepared enemy positions, resulting in the surrender of approximately 70 German paratroopers. Despite being annoyed by his own artillery, the FO party continued to man the OP during the attack.

March 9th saw a concentration of 400 rounds laid on a wooded area concealing the enemy. After the downpour ended some two hundred Jerries decided that they no longer wished to die for Der Fuhrer.

Directing and correcting fire, the third platoon set the village of Drupt aflame late that afternoon with a mixed concentration of HE and WP.

Shortly after they fired on Drupt, the same platoon expended rounds of WP in maintenance of a smoke screen to cover the flank of infantry units which were entering the town of Holmanshof. Although extreme difficulties in emplacements were encountered, the screen was maintained for one hour. Number one and two guns were forced to go out of action five times, the number three gun four times, and the last gun once. Base plates were set on the ground, and the guns were fired until the muzzles were ten inches from ground level. Even enemy shells, which fell exceedingly



close to the mortar positions, failed to break up the protective shroud through which the infantry advanced.

By March 10th, the three firing platoons of Charlie Company were nearing the Rhine, and the majority of their targets were already situated on the eastern bank of the river. Observers, from what vantage points they could find on the sparsely settled river bottom, proceeded to direct harrassing fire whenever and wherever the retreating men of the Wehrmacht could be found. Various targets, such as boat loads of troops, vehicles, emplacements, moving artillery, and infantry activity, kept the mortars busily engaged.

Back at the company ammunition dump could be found many German dead who had never been searched thoroughly. The ammunition section occupied their spare time by looking for pistols, watches, binoculars, and other souvenirs that might have been missed by the cursory inspection of the hurried doughs. Pvt. James Allen's search led him to poke in a haystack where he unexpectedly flushed a slightly wounded Jerry soldier. Both Allen and the kraut were so frightened that they were unable to decide on the proper procedure for the capture of a prisoner, but Allen finally brought his man in.

The next day marked extensive fire by all platoons on targets of opportunity. As the company was assembling for the noon meal, the Jerry entertained them with another screaming meemie barrage, which was more noisy than dangerous.

The Wesel pocket was eliminated on the morning of March 11th and, as the 35th Division no longer needed the heavy mortars, Charlie Company dug their guns out of the dikes of the Rhine and headed back to Battalion Headquarters which was then at Bruggen, Germany.

In all of Charlie Company's action from the Roer to the Rhine, ammunition was supplied by S/Sgt. McLennand and his battalion ammunition section. With his three trucks Sgt. McLennand hauled the necessary ammunition from the ASP to the company dump, and often right up to the mortar positions, under complete observation and heavy shellfire from the enemy. Although the section had only been organized two months before in England and some of the replacements had not come in till after the campaign had started, it functioned smoothly and played a vital role in Charlie Company's effective support of the 134th and 320th Regiments.

After the return of Charlie Company to Bruggen, an ammunition section from Headquarters Company was dispatched to pick up the un-expended ammunition left behind near Millingen. Sgt. Shull led the party which ran into more trouble than it anticipated, and had with him T/5 Patenaude, and Pfc's. Newman, Maselink, Couch, Mathews, Caloway, and J. Edwards.

The men found the positions where

Charlie's platoons had left the ammunition under harassing enemy fire but succeeded in loading it up and getting under way. On reaching Straelen on the return trip, however, they found the bridge which they had used on the forward journey had been knocked out. Engineers pressed into action to repair the damage while the loaded ammo trucks waited nervously. At last the bridge was repaired and the detail resumed their journey back to Bruggen without further incident.

While the only active company in the Battalion was cavorting around the Rhineland in the wake of the 35th Division, Able and Baker Companies remained at Waldfeucht with Battalion Headquarters. Finding themselves among the citizens of an enemy nation for the first time, the men of the 89th were not quite sure how to act. Guards were extremely nervous and trigger fingers itchy; a man was virtually taking his life in his hands if he ventured on the street after dark.

Everyone collected their first German souvenirs when an abandoned wooden shoe factory was discovered in the town. Full of the clumsy footwear when the battalion moved in, the factory was soon cleaned out, but no profit was realized by the stock holders. Waldfeucht was a badly shelled town and



Moving up



very few of the buildings were untouched, but the men curiously poked around in the ruins, uncovering nothing but still enjoying themselves.

On Sunday morning, March 4th, Col. Yanka decided that the battalion had fallen too far behind the advancing infantry, so he took an advance party consisting of the Company Commanders and aides, crossed the Roer at Heinsberg, and proceeded north to Venlo. At Venlo, where the Colonel contacted 35th Division Headquarters, he was advised to contact Corps Headquarters at Kaldenkirchen. At Corps they were rather critical of the proposed move, but they finally consented to it in the event that an open town could be located. The Colonel was warned that all towns off the main roads had not yet been cleared and that he was taking a chance by moving up.

The advance party spent the night at Kaldenkirchen and the next morning the town of Bruggen was located, eight miles away, which proved to be unoccupied. Billets were scouted and marked, and parties from each company were left to guard the area while Col. Yanka and the Company Commanders returned to Waldfeucht to the unit.

The move to Bruggen was effected on a dreary afternoon marked by sporadic cloud-bursts which dampened everyone spiritually and physically. However, dispositions brightened somewhat when the convoys reached their destination. Bruggen was a town almost entirely untouched by the transient warfare, and in addition to the gratifying number of comfortable billets, there was a noticeable scarcity of civilian population, a fact which greatly facilitated the battalion's foraging expeditions.

The remainder of March 5th, after the arrival at Bruggen, was spent by acquiring for the houses additional furniture, stoves, dishes, or whatever else was deemed necessary for the ultimate in comfort.

The village was a looter's paradise. The entire battalion roamed the streets from morning till night searching every house that caught their fancy. Barracks bags were loaded with souvenirs, most of which were later discarded to make room for more valuable loot. Bicycles and motorcycles were seized, and the pedestrians were not safe in the streets. There were many unopened safes in Bruggen, and they kept many amateur crackers busy, but when the battalion moved, the contents of the majority were still unmolested.

Pfc. Ronald Walker of the third platoon of Baker Company was the only casualty at Bruggen. While cleaning his carbine in his spacious billet one afternoon, Walker accidentally shot himself in the foot and had to be evacuated.

The 89th was treated to a gruesome preview of the horrors of combat when they visited the Graves Collecting Company which was located across the road from Battalion Head-

quarters. The Collecting outfit, whose job it was to retrieve the dead from the battlefield, was busy from morning till night sorting their cadavers. It was most appalling to watch a truck pull up to the building and a head roll out onto the cement with a hollow, sickening thump. Spectators were all imbued with the same thought, "This might be me".

Hardly any of the Ninth Army's rations were touched when the men found an abundance of canned fruit in the cellars. Tempting eatables were set with borrowed china, and banquets of fried chickens, potatoes, fruits, and vegetables were devoured.

The intriguing novelty of the banquets was that the dishes never had to be washed. After each meal the dirty china was hauled away, and clean utensils were acquired at one of the neighbor's.

The 89th anticipated a long stay at Bruggen; a training schedule was soon published and all platoons simulated classes through the day. The men still managed to find time to explore the town, however.

On March 10, the battalion was assigned to the 30th Division, and they received the interesting news that they were chosen to support the Rhine River assault two weeks hence. Intricate plans had been formulated, giving the 89th a vital role to play in the affair. Orientation began, training plans were intensified, and the men began to realize that someone wasn't fooling about the whole thing.

The next day the companies were ordered to pack their equipment and/or "loot" and be ready to move back into Holland for the two week preparation. The night before the companies left Bruggen, the battalion was relieved from the "Old Hickory" and attached to the 79th Division, which had been chosen as the other assault division for the crossing.

The convoys left their German haven shortly after daybreak the morning of the 12th and proceeded to a small Dutch village near the German border. At Nuth, quartered in the railroad station, beer halls, and private homes, the men found a comfortable, friendly community such as they had not seen since they left England.







1st Row: E. Smith, Hesselgrave, Capt. Westbrook, Lt. Wells, Lt. Bethea, Nightingale, Smetana. 2nd Row: Long, Casselman, Wagner, Zollo, Gutnecht, T. Smith, Lundgren. 3rd Row: Dow, Hensen, Williams, Kos, Martin, Flatt. 4th Row: Zippodt, Fletcher, Crisalli, Albert, DeVary, Giorla, Rosenbrock. 5th Row: DeNisco, Kinney, Johnson, Boyd, Blum, Ried, Kerns.

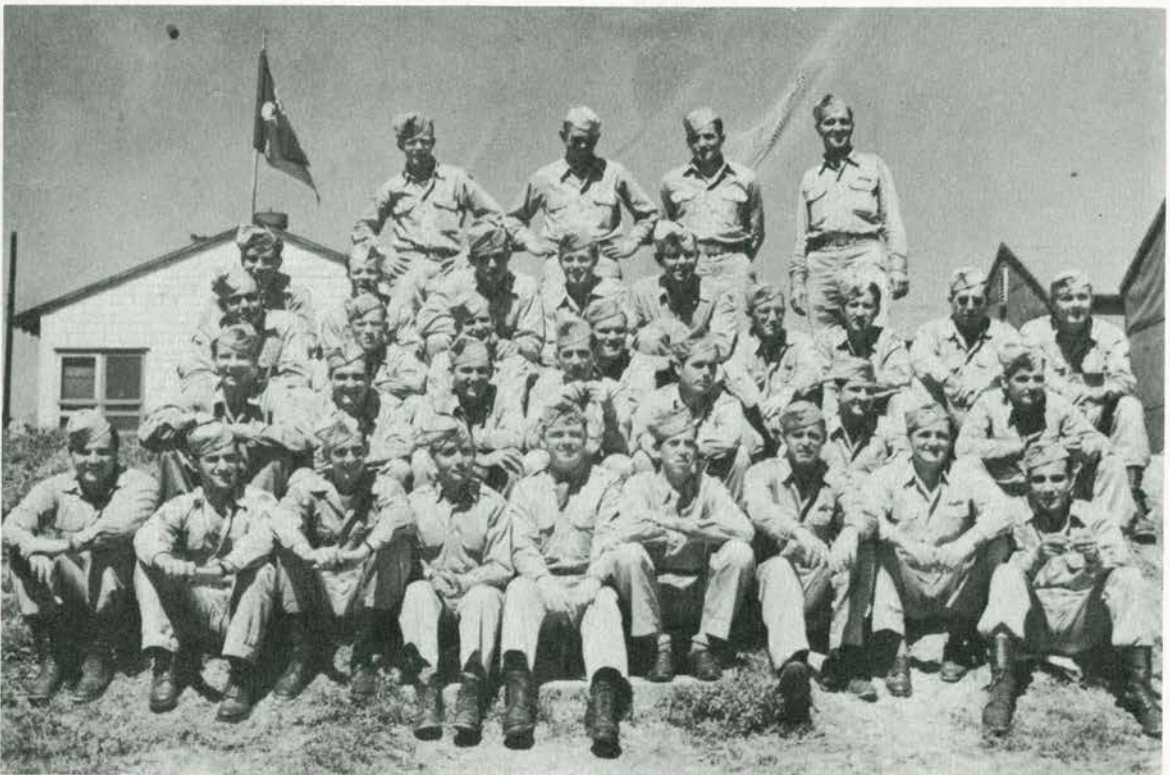


1st Row: Vetrone, Rayburn, Mokcsay, Lt. Chaffee, Lt. Miller, Straub, D. Smith, Kluber, Powers. 2nd Row: Bows, Kuba, Snoke, Friar, Junglewirth, Mickalach. 3rd Row: Fox, Minton, Brown, Shahoian, Hudnall, Whittaker, Barnard, Carinelli, Menard. 4th Row: Burnett, Felicicchia, Helsey, Carloni, Carden, Cothran. 5th Row: Hoskins, Garland, Babcock, Pavoris, Sitterley, Lawler.





1st Row: Prentiss, Swartout, Gill, Lt. Sharpe, Lt. Almeida, Lundgren, Cromwell, Worth, van-lancourt. 2nd Row: Gatto, Robinson, Crossley, Manfrina, Price, Hall, Sweeney. 3rd Row: Blead, Pennington, Danos, Matthew, Hahn, Hite, Mancuso, Head. 4th Row: von der Linden, Hawkins, Robertson, Rey, Taylor, Duvall, Claycomb.



1st Row: Cuniff, Karnavas, Coleman, Lt. Pedigo, Lt. Lawler, Barnfield, Popelier, McMakin, Ziegenfuss. 2nd Row: Ballantine, Hortin, Arseni, Higgins, Mills, Sumner. 3rd Row: Wittrock, Peters, Nagle, Pendley, Brown, Weitz, McCall, Erickson. 4th Row: Grey, Scott. 5th Row: Bynum, Bartells, Fricke, McKale.





## CHAPTER FOUR

### *"The Rhine Crossing"*

THE period from March 11 to March 27, 1945, was the most eventful in the whole war for the battalion.

Preliminary instructions from the 79th Division brought about the move to Nuth on the morning of March 11, from the recently conquered enemy territory back into a land of friends. It was immediately apparent, as the companies drove in, that this was no ordinary rest area, for this little town had not been injured by war. It looked something like home.

While Col. Yanka and Major Lentz were making their formal visits in Division Headquarters, the men went about the job of settling down and creating a home. Each company was billeted in different areas of town, and "home", essentially a shelter, took the form of private homes, schoolhouses, beer halls, and railroad stations. Battalion Headquarters was housed in a massive Catholic home for the aged, and headquarters personnel soon became accustomed to the presence and customs of the nuns who operated it.

Initial duties consisted of cleaning equipment, washing clothes, and getting comfortable. The practice of procurement as in Germany could no longer be repeated, and the absence of "a mattress per man" was so acute that Baker Company went to the extremes of sending a convoy back into Bruggen for such luxuries. At once, the business of making friends was in full force, and it was anything but difficult to do. In fact, the Dutch were so insistently friendly and generous that many men found it difficult to accept all of the prof-

ferred hospitality.

On the afternoon of the 11th, the company commanders reported in to their respective regimental headquarters and, there, first got an inkling of the job ahead of them. Able was attached to the 313th Regiment, Baker to the 314th, and Charlie to the 315th. With the information they elicited, plus the "big picture" carried back by Col. Yanka and Major Lentz, the general situation became clear.

The Ninth Army, in conjunction with the British Second Army, was to force a crossing of the Rhine River at an early but unspecified date. The 79th Division and the 30th Division, were to be the assault divisions of the Ninth Army, with the 79th crossing on the right flank. The 89th Chemical Mortar Battalion was to act in direct support of the 79th Division.

That was the plan in all its simplicity. Cross the Rhine. It was an operation long accepted as a foregone conclusion. Yet the mortarmen, still wet behind the ears, figuratively speaking, were awed at the scope of the operation—the biggest river-crossing ever attempted, and the 89th would be right in the thick of it.

On the 13th Mr. Juster and his personnel section departed from the Battalion to join the Division rear area at Bucholtz, Holland, and that was the last seen of the typewriter warriors for a month to come.

Planning for the coming operation descended to the company level now as each individual company commander went over in detail with the respective regimental commanders the part his company was to play.





The Rhine is bridged

**A** On March 13, CO Edwin N. Van Bibber, Regimental Commander of the 313th Infantry, took members of his staff, battalion commanders, and commanders of attached units, which included Captain Westbrook, forward on reconnaissance. The site selected for the crossing was Orsoy, Germany, a small town somewhat northwest of Hamborn, the closest Ruhr industrial area. Here the terrain was moderately favorable for a river crossing, but the routes of approach into the town were quite open and under excellent observation from the enemy in his factory buildings across the river.

The town itself had a population of about 1,000 which was evacuated in the period March 12-15, and, as in all towns, it afforded several good mortar positions, most of which had been zeroed in by Jerry artillery. In front of the town and next to the river was a 20 foot dike which sloped up to a 5-10 foot thickness at the top, but north of the town it curved away from the river. In the lowland between stood a large three-story factory, a natural OP, which American units used only when necessary and which the Germans never shelled, strangely enough.

After getting an idea of the terrain on both sides of the river, the reconnaissance party returned, and were briefed on the job the following day.

**C** The 315th, commanded by Col. Andrew J. Schriver, was slated to make the assault to the north, with the crossing to come somewhat southeast of the farm community, Milchplatz, consisting of several brick farm buildings clustered together 200 yards from the river. Here, too, the country was flat, and the enemy had excellent observation of all routes of approach from several large houses on his side of the river. An extension of the dike at Orsoy ran between Milchplatz and the river.

On the enemy side of the river, a marshy, level flatland bulged out toward the American side for perhaps a thousand yards from a dike of approximately the same proportions as the one on the western side of the river. At a point almost directly opposite Milchplatz the river wound back almost into the dike. Beyond the dike at a distance of about 1,000 yards was a railroad embankment. To the south, opposite Orsoy, was the entrance to a large commercial canal, connecting the Ruhr cities with the river. Beyond the railroad embankment were several mill towns, hidden to the American observers, beyond which rose a gently sloping hill.

**HQ** The battle plan of the 79th Division called for the 313th Infantry to cross on the right and swing south, protecting the right flank of the attack, and then to gradually move south until it had cleared the area to the canal which it was to aggressively hold. The 315 was to cross on the left, advance and seize the high ground beyond Dinslaken. The 314th, commanded by Colonel Robinson, was to remain in reserve in order to either give assistance if one of the assault regiments had trouble or to move between them and exploit the crossing.

And in this grandiose plan, what part was the chemical mortar battalion to play? Its part was three-fold in the initial operation—to fire HE and WP prearranged fires in the artillery preparation; to fire prearranged concentrations in the initial phases of the assault; and at daylight to screen the right flank of the attack, along the canal, in order to prevent observation and possible counterattack. All companies were to assist in the first two phases while Able Company bore the brunt of the screen.

That was the situation as it presented itself on the 14th of March. When was D-Day? That was still a secret. Plans for the assault had been worked on for weeks and even months; flood experts from the United States

The Dikes above the Rhine





had been watching the river and tabulating data. When they indicated a favorable time and preparations had been completed, the attack would be unleashed.

Meantime there was work to be done. Instruction and demonstrations in the methods of river crossing in the Naval landing craft were attended. Planning and coordination in the job of the mortars and the mechanics of crossing the river progressed daily. Platoon and company firing techniques were brushed up. Supply procedures were worked out.

On the 15th Captain Westbrook and Major Cameron returned to Orsoy for further reconnaissance and to select mortar positions. On the 16th Captain Landback and Lt. Linton reconnoitered mortar positions at Milchplatz, and Battalion headquarters an advance CP and assembly area at Vluyt. On the 17th the companies were issued weasels for training, and it became a common sight to see the little tracked vehicles roaring over the muddy roads near Nuth.

Up until this time, Baker Company had no definite assignment for the preparation to the assault, but on the 16th, at a conference at Division Headquarters, a tentative plan calling for the division of Baker's platoons to help support the other companies in the preparatory fire was made that was eventually carried out. Acting on this tentative information, Captain Esser contacted Captain Landback and Captain Westbrook to begin coordinating the details of the proposed attachment. Further efforts to establish the exact role of Baker Company in the initial phases failed on the 17th and 18th. Meantime, Able and Charlie Companies went forward with their preparations and instructed Lt. Feeks, Battalion Ammunition Officer, to have approximately ten thousand rounds of ammunition available for each of their positions for the D-Day firing. The ration

#### Preparatory Barrage



#### Laying 'em in

was to be approximately 50-50, but later calculations upped the percentage of WP for Able Company.

On Sunday morning, Col. Yanka briefed all officers on the complete operation. Later in the day instructions were received to have two platoons of Baker Company support Charlie Company and one platoon support Able Company on D-Day. In line with these orders, Captain Esser assigned the third platoon of Baker to Capt. Westbrook and the first and second to Capt. Landback. On the following morning Capt. Westbrook took Lt. Kilby into Orsoy on reconnaissance, while Capt. Esser arranged to assist Captain Landback in handling the five-platoon company at Milchplatz.

Since the transfer of over twenty-thousand rounds of ammunition prepared for firing into the gun positions was such a tremendous job, large details of men were sent to Nieuwkirk, the Army Supply Point, to check and prepare the ammo on Tuesday. These men remained at Nieuwkirk until the job had been finished. Headquarters ammunition sections had been broken down as follows:

Able Company—S/Sgt. McClen-nand and section.

Baker Company—S/Sgt. Harold A. Berkowitz and section.

Charlie Company—S/Sgt. Herndon A. Johns and section.

Both Charlie and Able Companies kept details of about forty men working continuously checking fuzes and safeties on every round that was to go into the trucks bound for the gun positions. As a result of their efforts, not one man was injured from defective ammunition in the form of barrel bursts.

From Tuesday, March 20, the operations broke down from a battalion effort into two distinct phases, one at Orsoy and one at Milchplatz. First to go into active participation was Able Company—





1/4 T Truck — B-14

**A** All during the day of the 20th Able Company was busy loading equipment, storing excess baggage, and readying themselves to move out that night with the 313th Infantry. At 2000 the convoy pulled out, traveling in two march units and at a very slow rate of speed. Sometime after midnight the bivouac area near Neukerchenfeld was reached, where Lt. Wells and a quartering party had made arrangements.

At the same time Lt. Lawler took a survey party composed of S/Sgt. Gilbert Mc-Neeley, Sgt. Eugene Wittrock, and Cpl. Niles Hoff into Orsoy and surveyed the mortar positions in order to tie them into one fire plan. Throughout the entire three hours, the little group was under continuous observation and intermittent fire, but the mission was completed.

During the daylight hours of the 21st, the men rested while Captain Westbrook further checked on ammunition and attended a conference on targets. Movement of the ammunition promised to be a touchy problem for the units of the 75th Division in Orsoy would not permit hauling to begin until the night of the 21st, and the projected crossing was scheduled for the early morning hours of the 24th, allowing but two nights for actually moving in ammunition.



The morning

Under the cover of darkness on the 21st, Able Company moved into their pre-located positions and also brought in about 3,000 rounds of ammunition. Since the mortar positions were in and around the town, the shelter provided by buildings afforded them cover and concealment during daylight, and work was carried on all through the following day setting up and digging in the guns. Behind the very average exterior, frontline position, men were working during the day, but the approach of vehicles was strictly limited. Some counter-artillery fire was experienced each day, and one corner in particular came to be known as Purple Heart Corner.

At night, however, the picture changed. Tank Destroyers rumbled in to emplace their 76-mm TD's in revetments in the dike. Infantry and artillery observers thronged in to get the lay of the land. Convoys of ammunition trucks rolled through the shell-pocked streets to disgorge their loads and return for more.

After dark on the 22nd the third platoon of Baker Company moved into position and about 5,000 additional rounds of ammunition came in. On the next day, the 23rd, based on the final target assignments given Capt. Westbrook by Col. Safford on the 22nd, the date for each concentration was computed and concentrations assigned to the various platoons. Down at each platoon, ammunition was drawn to correspond with each assigned concentration and a final check of the shells was made.

Beginning at 1200, each of the four platoons registered on targets across the river, the registration being with 15 rounds of HE and each platoon firing one half an hour after the preceding one. Following registration, each gun





after

## Counter Battery

position was checked, and the men were released to get some rest until the beginning of the operation. All of the guns were either dug in and camouflaged or emplaced behind buildings and parapetted, with a variety of material ranging from sacks of flour to an old tank truck used for the parapets. The communications were kept busy repairing the complicated system of wires that were continually being cut by enemy fire and friendly vehicles. Able Company was ready—

Meantime in Charlie and Baker Companies—

On March 20, Charlie Company was preparing to move north with the 315th that night while Baker Company had one more day to remain in Nuth. Captain Esser, Lt. Johnson, and Lt. Parker reconnoitered the Milchplatz area and selected mortar positions for the Baker Company platoons, a choice that was difficult for both companies since German observation of the area was good; the recon party was fired on by mortars three different times.

That night Charlie Company pulled out in convoy along with the 315th Infantry and arrived at their assembly area southeast of Linfort at 0500 the next morning. Traffic on the roads was heavy, since all of the units destined to participate in the crossing were moving up at the same time, and in the blackout driving several weasels collided but no one was injured.

The next day was one spent in preparation for a full night's activity. Baker Company packed and prepared to move; details from Baker and Charlie Company moved up near Milchplatz so as to be able to go in under the cover of darkness and prepare mortar positions; the ammunition details worked hard

in order to have enough rounds prepared so that the trucks could move full loads that night.

All had been quiet on the front around Milchplatz for more than two weeks. The 75th Division was holding the line, and the only activity had been occasional firing and light patrol action. Several patrols from the 75th returned with valuable information on the battery positions of Jerry Artillery, and one night a German patrol which drifted across the river on a boat, had been captured and divulged the fact that a strong raiding party was coming across the river the next night to capture Allied prisoners to get information.

By day the area was quiet and movement and activity were kept to a sleepy-looking minimum. No vehicles were allowed past the infantry battalion command post in Budberg Eversael, and the reconnaissance parties walked out to the Fox company command post at Milchplatz.

At night, though, the place became a beehive of activity. Tank Destroyers dug revetments in the banks of the dike for their TD's as at Orsoy. Infantry mortarmen emplaced 60-mm and 81-mm mortars. A few anti-tank guns were dug into place for harassing fire on observation posts during the day. Artillery observers dug in deep pits and set up BC scopes. And the engineers rolled heavy trucks, graders, and caterpillars along the narrow roads, improving them for the heavy traffic that would use them. Ammo trucks kept up a steady stream along the roads.

Sgt. James Goodwin of Charlie Company, with the assistance of the attached Headquarters ammo section, moved four thousand rounds of 4.2 ammunition into the position and spotted it in one of the few cellars in the area





### M-1 and WP

and in dumps near the gun positions. That same night Baker Company moved up from Nuth to its assembly area in Vluyn-Busch, a large pine forest.

Before dawn came again, all was quiet. To the enemy observers, this area was merely another section of a quiet front. Only in the CP's and ammunition dumps was there any activity while most of the men slept, preparing for the full night's work ahead.

That night the final conference briefing all commanders on the coming operation was held while once more the infantry, the artillery, and the engineers went to work. The mortar men improved their positions, dug emplacements for their 50 cal. machine guns and brought 5,600 more rounds of ammunition in. Lt. Jack Hagan, Sgt. Edward Bynon, Cpl. John Thorpe, Cpl. Arthur Amling, T/5 Glen Harvey, T/5 Walter Hartfield, and T/5 Joe Ferguson were returning from a survey party about ten o'clock in two jeeps when an ammunition truck from another outfit crashed head-on into the lead jeep. Harvey and Bynon were pretty seriously injured and turned over to an evac hospital while the others received only minor injuries.

By now, all troops had been informed that Saturday, the 24th, was D-Day, and the greater part of the 23rd was taken up in last minute preparations. All platoons registered in the afternoon with desultory fire to lead the enemy to believe that the fire was nothing more than harassing fire.

Along the entire Army front, from near the river to four and five miles back, the massed battalions of artillery were dug in and camouflaged. The ammunition stood ready, the data on the concentrations was being completed. The infantry bivouacked in assembly areas near the river, ready to move up under the cover of darkness. Operation Flash-point was about to begin.

Meantime Battalion Headquarters had remained at Nuth until the 22nd when it moved by infiltration into Vluyn. The battalion staff had been busy all week working to coordinate supply and ammunition arrangements with the Division. As finally determined, each company settled slightly different procedures with its respective regiment, but in general, once the river had been crossed, the regiments were to be responsible for supply until such time as Headquarters company

has crossed and could once more be responsible.

Baker Company was further handicapped by a strict priority set up on the order of vehicles to cross the river that deprived it of half its organic transportation for the first day after the crossing.

By midnight of the 23rd, all platoons were ready to fire their concentrations which required more than a round per minute per gun. In the absolute quiet that preceded the attack, the tension mounted and was relieved only when the 30th Division to the left began its artillery preparation at 0100.

At H-1, or two o'clock on the morning of March 24, the artillery supporting the 79th Division began its part in the largest artillery preparation in the entire annals of warfare. From the

rear echelons of massive corps artillery to the front-line banging of 4.2's, ammunition was being passed furiously as thousands of gun muzzles belched flame and smoke; the roaring concussions were heard twenty miles to the rear. For an hour the barrage went on—plastering every nerve point in the German defense. Enough shells were fired in that hour to put one burst in every square foot of the opposite shores of the Rhine which was to be stormed by the infantry.

Able Company, on the division right flank, fired more than 4,000 rounds of high explosive shells in the sixty minutes preceding H-hour. The tremendous preparatory fire was lifted at 0300 and then concentrated across the river while the crossing was being made.

Charlie Company and the two Baker platoons in and around Milchplatz also began firing at H-1. Approximately 2,400 rounds were expended on road junctions, cross roads, observation posts, machine guns positions, artillery emplacements, and strongpoints.

At Orsoy, the beginning of the firing began the longest mission ever fired by a com-

### Approaches





pany in the 89th Chemical Mortar Battalion. The initial preparation lasted for about one hour in which each platoon fired about 500 rounds, predominantly HE. At H-Hour, the guns shifted to pre-arranged concentrations designed to support the advance of the infantry which was now crossing the river in assault boats, and these concentrations were fired until H plus 75.

Two forward observer teams from Able Company crossed with the assaulting battalions—Lt. Charles E. Miller, Sgt. Gerald Haecker, and Cpl. Adam F. Mocksay in one, and Lt. William L. Sharpe, Cpl. Francis A. Somers, and Cpl. Dale P. Cromwell, in the other. Though they were supposed to call for fire on targets of opportunity, the darkness and confusion prevented them from picking up suitable targets.

Following the scheduled fire, the third platoon of Baker Company was relieved and remained in position with equipment packed, alert until such time as they were instructed to move.

During the night and morning counter battery fire was fairly heavy. Communications lines were broken several times in the night, and Cpl. Thad Vreeland, of Baker Company, distinguished himself by darting out in the midst of a mortar barrage to repair a line over which vital firing data was passing. Later in the morning a shell landed near the factory in which the third platoon of Baker was waiting, and a fragment freakishly came into the cellar and ripped through Cpl. Kenneth Lizer's scalp. He was evacuated.

By 0630, all guns in Able Company were transferred to cover the line to be screened, and the company commenced the screen at that time. Enemy small arms and observed artillery fire was harassing the infantry from this flank and continued to do so whenever a gap appeared in the screen. To initiate the screen a 15 round volley was fired followed

Milchplatz



### Big Police Job

by continuous fire at 15 seconds interval, which was further cut until the average for the day was one per minute per gun.

The forward observers called in several targets during the day at which time the FDC would relieve one gun to fire the mission. In addition the FO's were checking the screen. Both Lt. Sharpe and Lt. Miller were forced to expose themselves time and again in order to get the required observation, and they, and their parties, received Bronze Stars for their part in the day's operations.

Because of the unusual amount of firing which was being done, a great many problems came up during the course of the day. Several positions collapsed and had to be re-dug because of the poor soil, and breakage on the mortars was high because of the high rate of fire.

On regimental order, a reconnaissance party led by Capt. Westbrook went across the river to find positions to move into, but it was decided to remain in Orsoy for the following day and continue firing the screen from the same positions. The recon party was pinned down by enemy fire much of the time and was delayed by having to take three prisoners from a house.

Back in Orsoy, an observation post was manned in one of the houses on the waterfront under Sgt. Dave Cunniff. In the early stages of the firing the OP became the target for enemy fire and the men in the post spent a hectic night trying to line the walls of the room with sandbags.

During the afternoon, Lt. Joseph Lawler, Cpl. Niles Hoff, and Cpl. Richard Coleman were on reconnaissance when their jeep, driven by Hoff, struck a shell hole and Lt. Lawler and Coleman were thrown out and injured. This necessitated their evacuation and Lt. Repschleger took over the third platoon.

Firing of the screen was suspended at 1930 and the men were given an opportunity to rest. For the balance of the night, the Bn ammo train hauled more WP into the positions in preparation for the next day's firing.

On the following day, the tactical situation demanded that the screen be resumed at 0600 and it was continued, as on D-Day, until 1930. Based on experience gained the first day, Capt. Westbrook recommended to Division Artillery that the length of the screen be





..The Weasel and Carson

reduced to 2,800 yards, because the platoons firing up to 4,000 yards were having a high breakage rate on barrels and base plates and the guns were becoming imbedded in the soil after about 40 rounds, necessitating re-emplacement. This recommendation was accepted.

For the men, March 25 was not as fatiguing as the previous day, although the physical strain remained great. Throughout the day, intermittent counter-battery fire was received in the positions, and several humorous incidents were to be observed, such as one small foxhole disgorging Cpl. Ziegenfuss, Sgt. Powell, Sgt. McNeeley, and Lt. Pedigo after a close "88" came in; and McNeeley trying to butcher a calf during the firing to feed the third platoon.

During the day, Capt. Westbrook selected positions in the vicinity of Overbrück into which the company was to move during the night in order to be able to continue the screen the next day. "March Order" brought a mad scramble in the company to get together the equipment for the crossing. The company neared the river about midnight in the midst of a Luftwaffe strafing attack on the bridge site. Flak put out by the anti-aircraft brought down two of the night raiders, and the pyrotechnic rain of tracers kept them at a distance while Able was moving across the river.

Navy landing craft took the vehicles and equipment across the swiftly-moving river, but landings on the other side were hazardous as some of the boats landed at an angle in the darkness. A third platoon jeep driven by Cpl. Ziegenfuss was completely wrecked and had to be abandoned. Despite the confusion of the crossing and the distracting Jerry planes, the company reassembled and made their way into Overbrück, where positions were occupied in time to begin the screen again the next morning.

But, in order to fire the screen, enough ammunition had to be on hand to insure continuous firing—and the ammunition was over in Orsoy. Since most of the active personnel was concerned in the actual move of the platoons, Capt. Westbrook charged Lt. LeRoy E. Chaffee to pick up a detail from supply and the kitchen to help move 1,500 rounds of HE and WP from Orsoy into Over-

brück in time for the next day's firings.

As finally assembled the detail consisted of S/Sgt. James Hesselgrave, the supply sergeant, T/4 James H. Henson, mechanic, T/4 David H. Long, T/4 Paul L. Huck, T/5 Russell R. Castleman, and Pfc. Charles E. Wagner, cooks, and T/5 Elroy C. Nenn, a truck driver. These men loaded the ammunition into DUKW's, and in two round trips across the river into Overbrück under enemy observation and artillery fire, completed the mission. The smoke screen, which was so fundamental in the success of the operations of the 313th Infantry, was resumed on schedule on the morning of March 26.

The screen fired on the 26th was destined to be the last required as the 313th reached the banks of the canal and took up strong defensive positions, thus anchoring firmly the right side of the Ninth Army bridgehead across the Rhine River. Additional HE missions were fired on calls from the forward observers, these teams being the same ones that had crossed on the 24th.

Thus was closed the role of Able Company in the crossing of the Rhine.

During the three-day period, March 24-26, Able Company maintained a screen varying in length from 2,800 to 4,000 yards during all of the daylight hours. Total ammunition expenditure on the screen was 14,938 rounds of WP and 810 rounds of FS. Together with the HE missions fired during this time, the expenditure for the entire three day period was 19,378 rounds, a record for the battalion, and one of the notable achievements by a chemical mortar company in the European Theater of Operations.

For their part in the Rhine Crossing, Able Company, plus the attached platoon of Baker Company, received a commendation from Col. Edwin N. Van Bibber, Regimental Commander of the 313th Infantry Regiment, and this commendation is reproduced in the Appendix.

As the scheduled fire for Charlie and Baker Company began in Milchplatz at H-Hour on D-Day, all went well. All of the platoons were firing at a rate of 4 or 5 rounds per minute, and for the first twenty-minutes, no enemy counter-battery fire was received. About 0225, enemy artillery fire began to fall in the vicinity of the Co. FDC and the second platoon of Baker Company, positions within 150 yards of each other.

The Company CP and FDC was located in the basement of a strongly built home, but the room was hardly big enough for the number of personnel required. Immediately behind this building was another farmhouse in which an infantry company from the 75th Division was concentrated. In the yard behind this building, the guns of the second platoon of Baker Company were dug in, while the ammunition for the platoon was stored in three brick sheds. Of the approximately 1,000 rounds in the position, 800 was dug into the ground while the remainder was at the gun positions for firing.



When the counter-battery fire began to concentrate around this position all gun crews were reduced to a minimum to lessen possible injury. At 0235 the rounds began to hit the roof of the house in which the infantry company was located, and then came over the house to hit directly on the No. 4 gun emplacement. Sgt. John R. Watts, squad leader, and at the moment actively firing the gun, was mortally wounded. The rest of the squad, Cpl. Harold Barnhart, T/5 Edward Bryant, and Pfc. Horace Shaffer, were less seriously injured.

The first hit set fire to the powder on some shells being made ready to fire as well as some straw in the attic of the shed immediately behind the gun, and the intensity of the counter fire prevented platoon personnel from attacking the fire instantly. Twelve hits of large caliber were scored in the next two minutes.

Lt. Alfred N. Johnson, platoon leader, immediately sized up the situation and realized that within a matter of minutes the fire would set off the ammunition and eventually set off the large stock of dug-in ammunition. Accordingly, he immediately ordered the position evacuated. Under the leadership of Lt. Alan S. Michaels, the platoon executive, and S/Sgt. James Mickle, the majority of the men successfully reached the fields to the rear of the position and took cover.

In the meantime, T/5 James A. Stewart, aid man with the platoon, was working over Cpl. Barnhart who had been the first injured, and with Pfc. Francis A. Pierce, he carried Cpl. Barnhart through the artillery and mortar fire to an infantry aid station in Budberg Eversael, one mile to the rear. At the same time, Cpl. Donnell E. Kaufman, communications corporal for the platoon, went to the burning gun position, picked up Sergeant Watts and carried him around the building to the Company CP where Captain Esser and T/4 Huckle-tubbe, aid man for C Company, helped him carry the unconscious boy inside. Both Cpl. Kaufman and T/5 Stewart were awarded the Silver Star for their action as the mortar fire they braved was intense.

When the platoon had occupied the position, the vehicles had been scattered over as wide an area as the position permitted, and only three were within one hundred yards of the guns. One of these belonged to Cpl. Henry E. Meador and Pfc. Henry A. Deranleau of the third squad, and they braved the impending explosion of their own ammunition to drive the vehicle out of the vicinity and later found cover in the CP.

Lt. Johnson personally assured himself that all personnel were out of the platoon position before he himself took cover in the FDC. Thus in a period of five minutes after the shells began to hit, the position was evacuated without further injury. At 0240, the ammunition which had first caught fire exploded, and from that time until 1700, the fire and exploding 4.2 ammunition made it almost impossible for anyone to move in a vicinity of 150 yards from the position.



### Nazi Officer, Alias Sgt. Garlock

Sergeant Watts was given as much aid as was humanly possible, but he had given too much and died in fifteen minutes without having regained consciousness. He was awarded the Silver Star posthumously.

In the meantime, the other platoons were not having any particular trouble, though the second of Charlie and the first of Baker were emplaced into the dike itself, and the muzzle flashed from their guns could easily be seen from the other side of the river.

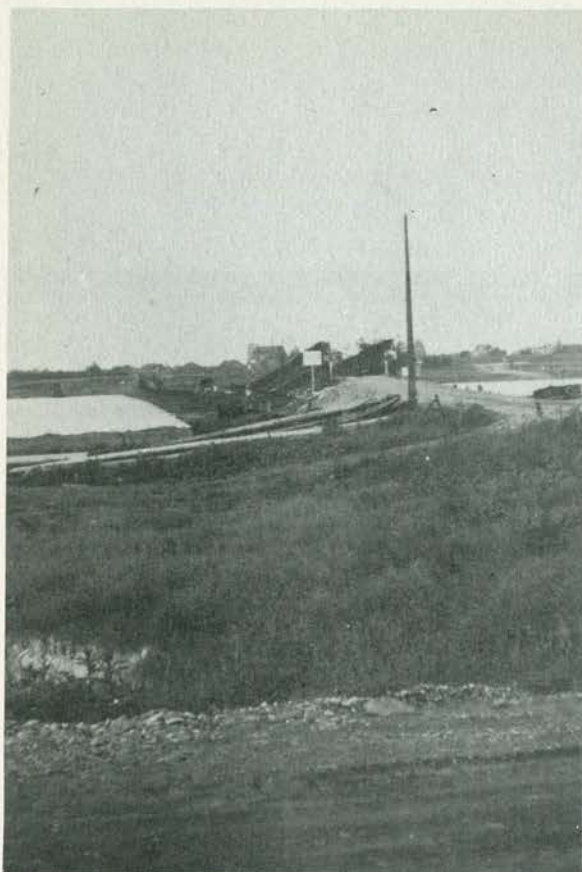
At this time, communications with the regiment were severed and lines to all platoons, except the third of Charlie and the first of Baker, went out. Immediately, while the wiremen were attempting to trace the breaks in the line, Sgt. George Melrose, Charlie communications sergeant, aided by T/4 Allan E. Goldey and T/4 John D. Smith, went outside to the jeep parked behind a small building and began unpacking the radio. The first radio unpacked, the SCR-610, failed to contact anyone, so the SCR-284 was brought out. In getting these radios they were exposed not only to the Jerry fire but also to the 1,000 rounds of unexploded ammunition in the smoldering position to the rear.

Contact was made with regimental headquarters through the 284, and it was found that fires had been lifted properly. Contact was kept with the platoons through use of the SCR-300.

The remaining four platoons fired their scheduled concentrations from H-Hour to H plus one, and the final total of ammunition fired in support of the 315th Infantry in the two hours was 3,760 HE and 240 WP.

After 0300, the fire spread to the farmhouse in which the infantry had been housed, but which had been evacuated to the Charlie FDC. At about 0315, a tremendous explosion of 4.2 ammunition occurred which completely destroyed the buildings in which the ammunition had been stored and buried the equipment and much of the still unexploded ammo. Two Baker company vehicles were completely destroyed as well as six other vehicles belonging to the infantry and engineers which were parked too near. In addition small arms and hand grenades stored in the farmhouse soon





Another Rhine Bridge

caught fire and added to the hazard of being in the open.

The work done by the linemen from the platoons in face of this storm of destruction was highly commendable, for all lines were checked and back in operation by 0600. Among those men who received commendation for their work on policing the wire that night were Cpl. Hugh V. Smith and Pvt. Lewis O. May of the first platoon of Baker Company, Cpl. Keith M. Brubaker, Pfc. Morris Pike, Roy Erickson, and Pfc. Albert J. Mayer of the third platoon of Charlie Company, and Pfc. Woodrow W. Yeary, Pfc. Larry A. Clark, and Pfc. Donald O. Hornstein of the second platoon of Charlie Company.

As dawn began to break, the fire in the now destroyed platoon position died down, and the burning buildings no longer offered any danger to the building where the FDC was housed. Members of the second platoon of Baker Company began to filter in from the field and it was quickly decided to send them back to the rear under Lt. Johnson to re-equip. A report was made by phone to Battalion Headquarters and measures taken to insure rapid re-equipping. More of the men ended up at Lt. Parker's position on the dike, and these, too, were instructed to report to the rear. By 1000, it was ascertained that no more casualties had been incurred, and most of the men were on their way back for a rest.

Reports from the forward observers, Lt.

Kanasky and Lt. McDowell, indicated that good progress was being made but only two missions were called for. Sporadic artillery fire continued to fall, but it was now directed on the engineers who were attempting to start a bridge across the river.

About 1100, Captain Landback received instructions to cross the river and make a foot reconnaissance, and he departed immediately. Soon after, the infantry had made such good progress in the attack that the remaining platoon of Baker Company was relieved from attachment to Charlie Company, and both companies prepared to cross the river.

All during the afternoon, Charlie Company was in the process of moving across the Rhine in Naval landing craft with the platoons crossing in order: first, second, third. The first and second platoons immediately went into position but did not fire, and on the morning of the 25th both platoons displaced forward to the eastern outskirts of Dinslaken, and though they fired very little they were under heavy artillery fire all day. A total of five missions were fired.

Pfc. Theodore Mollinedo, a linesman from the company communications section, was killed as he was repairing a break in the wire at a crossroad. At the first platoon gun position Cpl. Tom Bittner was wounded seriously in the leg by shrapnel, and Private Morris Pike of the third platoon was also wounded by flying fragments of brick when an "88" dud smashed into the building beside him.

All that day the bridgehead and banks of the Rhine were being shelled and strafed as traffic to the eastern bank increased. Ammunition was being supplied for Charlie Company by DUKWs shuttling across the river under the command of Sgt. James O. Goodwin, the company ammunition sergeant. On one of these trips, Sgt. Goodwin was warned on the west bank that the river crossing was under heavy fire, and that all traffic had been ceased temporarily until the full force of the barrage was spent. After determining that there were actually no orders against crossing, Sgt. Goodwin called for volunteers from his crew and went ahead to cross, knowing that ammunition would be essential if a counter-attack developed. A particularly heavy concentration came in just then, and he and his six men, Jeremiah Lyons, Kenneth D. Bleau, George J. Robinson, Charles R. Marll, Henry M. Bedwell, and Patrick Nolan, men of the headquarters ammunition section, abandoned the truck for the comparative safety of a nearby slit trench. When they climbed out after the barrage, they found that their "duck" had several torn holes in the flotation tanks. Despite the condition of the vehicle, they crossed the river under fire, delivered their ammunition, and returned for more. In all they made thirty trips during the day. Sgt. Goodwin was awarded the Silver Star, and all of his men the Bronze Star, for the courage and tenacity of purpose displayed.

By nightfall on the 25th, the 315th Infantry had reached all of their objectives and they were passed through by the 35th Division and shifted to clear the Emscher Canal to the 313th Infantry. On the 26th Charlie Company moved behind the regiment and took up positions at Waldhuck, but did not begin firing.



The following day was also quiet with but two missions fired, although the platoons were under fairly heavy artillery fire during the day. Pfc. Arthur Davis provided the principal excitement by capturing a wounded German soldier who had hidden from the infantry.

After Baker Company had reverted to the control of the 314th, Captain Esser proceeded to contact the regiment and received immediate orders for the first and third platoons to cross the river. Forward Observers, Lt. Duncan and Lt. Connell, were already across with the infantry which had just been committed to capture a factory and small village south of Dinslaken.

The first platoon crossed in the early afternoon and went into support of the first battalion at once, while the third platoon crossed at 1830 and was held at Walsum overnight, moving up early the next morning at Averbruck where the platoons reverted to company control.

On the night of the 24th the first platoon was strafed by fighter planes but suffered nothing more serious than three flat tires. At 0200 the morning of the 25th, Lt. Parker moved his platoon into Averbruck, and the men were forced to clear the area of dead Germans before they could go into position.

On the 25th the first platoon was not called upon to fire, but the third platoon actively supported the second battalion in its attempt to cross the highway leading from Dinslaken to Sterkrade. Lt. Raymond J. Kilby, with Pfc. John Bruce as radio operator, was forward observer for the platoon and was forward with the company commander of the assault company. Suddenly enemy machine guns and mortar fire held up the advance of the company and pinned it down on the edge of an open space 1,200 yards in length. The infantry company commander advanced through enemy fire on reconnaissance with Lt. Kilby. Once across the area, Lt. Kilby called for a smoke screen which effectively blocked enemy observation and enabled the company to advance and hold the position.

In the morning the second platoon and the rest of company headquarters crossed the river, and all of the platoons received the vehicles they had left behind for the actual crossing.

Before dawn on the 26th, the first platoon moved into position in the forward part of Heisfeld, while the second and third platoons took up positions in the southern part of town. Rapid advances by the first battalion, which was attacking directly east, forced the first platoon to move once again in mid-morning, but at no time were they called upon to fire. The other two platoons supported the attack to the southeast, firing several missions during the day on enemy machine gun nests and troop concentrations.

At dusk that night, Lt. Duncan, observing for the third platoon, was with the company commander of Co. F, when a counter-attack began to develop out of the woods one hundred yards in front of his observation post. He quickly called for a concentration of WP and HE that hit the Jerries as they came out of the woods and routed them,

breaking up the attack. A few minutes later another concentration eliminated a machine gun which was preventing the GIs from consolidating their position.

During the time that the companies were following up the infantry closely incident to the crossing and expanding the bridgehead, battalion headquarters was kept in the rear areas. After moving to Vluyt on March 22, Cartwheel had no supply or tactical functions until March 27.

During the whole period, Col. Yanka and Major Lentz kept in close touch with the companies and Division Headquarters. For the actual crossing, Col. Yanka joined Capt. Westbrook at Able Company on the 23rd and remained with Able Company until the 26th. At the same time Major Lentz joined Charlie Company, leaving them at noon on the 24th to speed the re-equipping of the second platoon of Baker Company.

From the moment that the information concerning the loss of 75% of the equipment of the platoon reached the CP at Vluyt, Major Cameron, with the assistance of Capt. Murray and Lt. Harvey, worked on nothing else, and by nightfall on the 24th the equipment had been drawn and issued. Lt. Johnson effected quick reorganization of the platoon, shifting Cpl. Meador over to take command of the fourth squad, and moving veteran gunners into the vacant assistant squad leaders' posts. Of the entire 41 men in the platoon, only two were so shell-shocked that they could not return to action on the following day.

All of the battalion ammunition sections crossed the river with the companies to which they were attached and did very commendable jobs. The signal section, under Lt. George R. Krsek and T/Sgt. LaRouche, kept in constant contact with the companies and effected immediate replacement of damaged signal items, which were many.

On March 26, the Battalion CP, with the exception of the kitchen and Motor Pool, moved into Overbruch and resumed responsibility for supply functions.

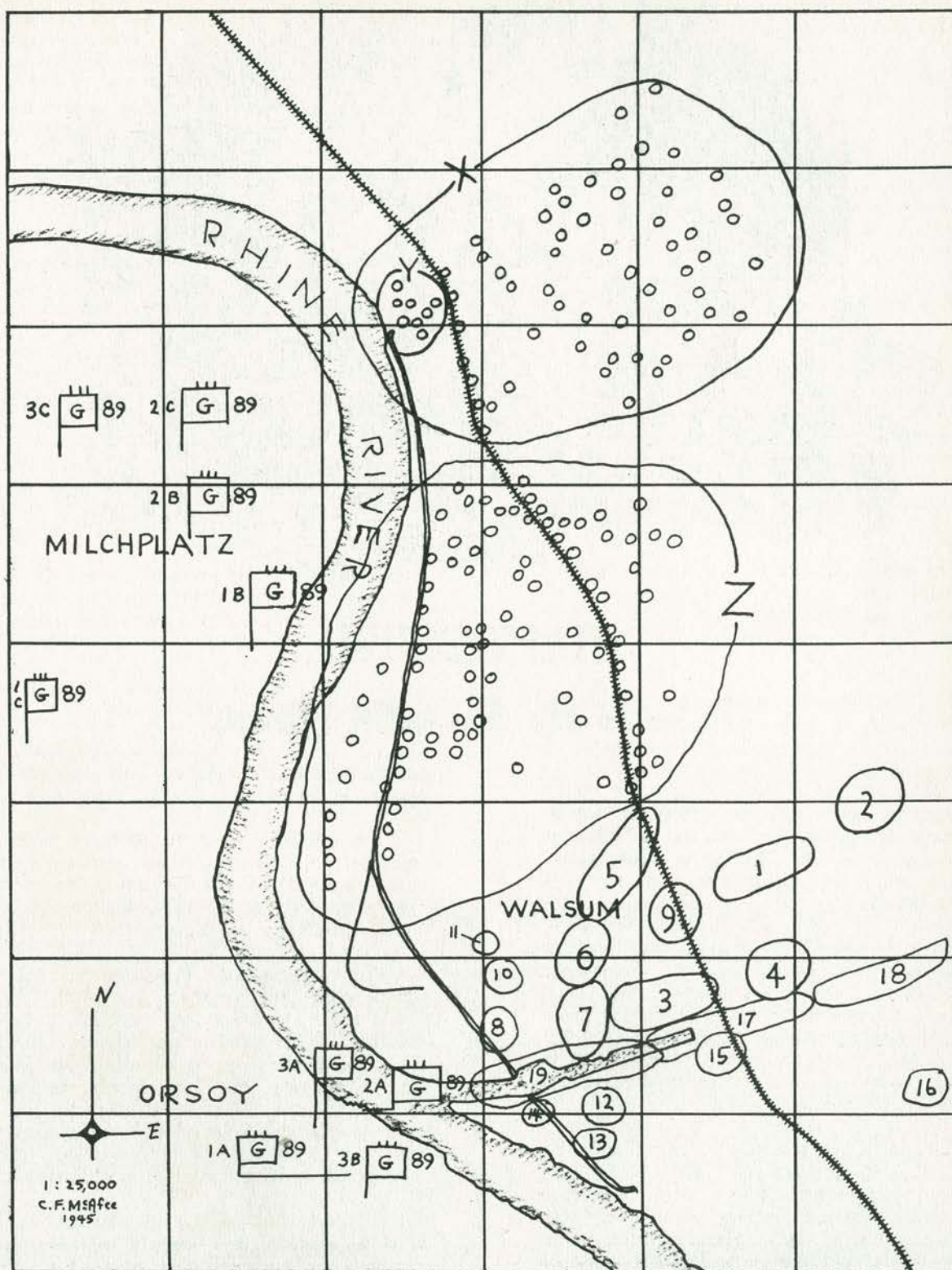
By the night of the 26th, the 79th Division had made secure its bridgehead on the eastern bank of the Rhine River, and on the 27th, it directed its attack to the south with the Emscher Canal as its ultimate objective, while the 35th Division pressed the attack to the east.

In support of the assault over the Rhine and the securing of the bridgehead, the 89th Chemical Mortar Battalion fired approximately 25,000 rounds with very positive results. Casualties during these three days operations consisted of two men killed and ten men wounded.



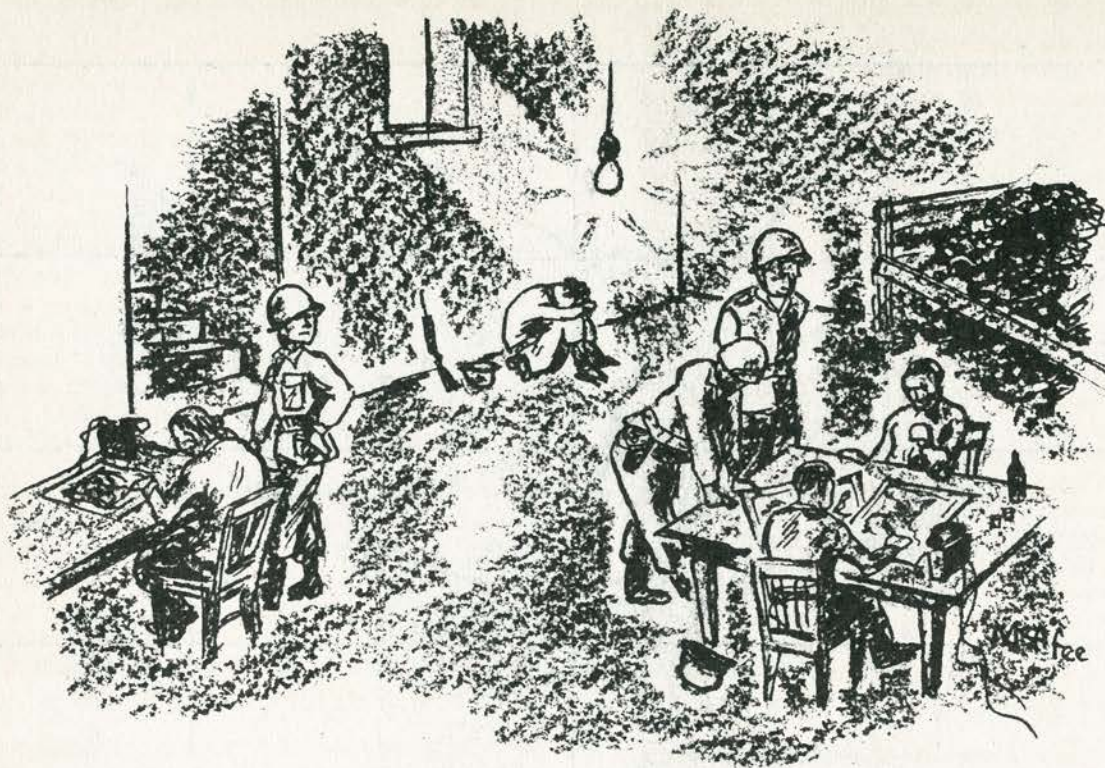






Fire plan for the 89th Chemical Mortar Battalion in the preparatory fire preceding the Crossing of the Rhine River by the 79th Division. Numbers 17, 18, 19 indicate original line of three-day smoke screen maintained by Able Company. All circles indicate areas fired on.





## CHAPTER FIVE

### *"Drive to the Emscher Canal"*

**T**HE 27th day of March found the entire battalion, with the exception of Headquarters Rear, on the east side of the Rhine in close support of the 79th spearhead which was supplying the northern tong of the pincers on the Ruhr.

**HQ** When the rear party crossed the river via pontoon bridge, they located at Overbruck just a few hundred yards behind Able Company's positions near Hosterbruck. Since Baker Company was at Hiesfield and Charlie in the same general area, the service sections were in a good position to supply all the firing companies quickly and efficiently.

**A** Supporting fire missions of their respective regiments kept all companies busy during the day. Following the 313th, Able Company moved their platoons forward one at a time. At 1230 the first platoon opened up from their new positions, and the second platoon began to fire on enemy strong points an hour later; at 1945 that evening, the third platoon fired intensively for fifteen minutes, expending 170 rounds of HE on enemy positions.

March 28th, Brigadier General Hugh W. Rowan, Chief Chemical Officer and Colonel A. T. Brice, Corps Chemical Officer, visited the battalion on an inspection tour. The Officers, who were highly impressed by the work the

battalion was doing, found Able Company preparing to move from Hosterbruck at 1300.

Immediately after the advance parties left in search of new positions, orders were received from XVI Corps Headquarters attaching Able Company to the 137 Infantry of the 35th Division at 2400 that night.

Capt. Westbrook organized a reconnaissance party to report to the 137th CP, and while trying to locate the post, his jeep, containing Sgt. Zipprodt, Sgt. Martin, Pfc. Smetana, Tec/5 Smeltzer, and himself, came under heavy artillery fire. Two rounds landed precariously close, but a few holes in the jeep and a scratch on Pfc. Smetana's cheek were the only instances of damage.

At the Regimental CP, which, due to the fast moving situation, was far behind advance rifle companies, the Captain learned that the platoons of his company would be attached to the three battalions of the 137th in direct support while the headquarters platoon would stay close to the Infantry Regimental Headquarters.

The company was summoned from Overbruck to the new CP at Brink, the same town in which the 137th CP was located. On arrival platoon leaders were given their assignments; each platoon was to support the corresponding



infantry battalion, and as soon as they were ready, the three officers led their men forward to report to their battalion CPs.

The entire communications system of the mortars became quite confused in the fast forward action. Early on the morning of the 29th, Captain Westbrook contacted the regimental S-3 to find the location of his mortar platoons. He then visited each platoon, and with the platoon leaders, decided to have each firing unit lay phone lines to the nearest infantry switchboard, thus forming a loose liaison with his own CP.

The 137th Infantry employed their 4.2 mortar differently than had been experienced by the 89th before. The mortar platoons were attached directly to the heavy weapons company in each battalion, and sometimes their fire was directed by their own observers and sometimes by the 81 mm. observers. Many of the targets the chemical mortars fired upon were those that could have been handled equally successfully by the smaller weapons, but this was explained by the regimental commander who said that ammunition was not rationed for the chemical mortars while it was for the 81s.

Lt. Miller received the First platoon's opening fire mission early in the morning. At 0230 the platoon, from positions in Schramm, fired on the German autobahn at troops out of range of the infantry's heavy weapons which were offering unexpectedly stiff resistance. After an hour and fifteen minutes of sweating out the mortar barrage, the Jerries finally evacuated their position, allowing the mortar-men to get a little sleep for the rest of the night. The only other first platoon activity dur-

ing the day was a smoke screen in the afternoon and a few area targets later in the day.

The Second platoon, after it had spent the night chasing the Jerries from the factories and houses of Boer Bohmes, was ordered to advance early in the morning through the same village to be in a position to support the initial thrusts on the industrially important city of Gladbeck. Several missions had to be fired during the advance when concentrations of Krauts momentarily checked the doughboys. When the platoon moved into Gladbeck on the heel of the infantry and tanks, they intended to stay on wheels until necessary to fire, but almost immediately they were called on to eradicate sniper fire which was holding up the advance.

The platoon was so near the advance elements that houses fifty yards to the left of the gun positions had to be cleared before the mortars could fire. The target, a refinery, was set afire with the initial round of WP from the No. 2 gun, and immediately after completion of that mission the guns fired for effect on a barracks containing enemy troops.

Operations had to be suspended momentarily while until a 75 mm gun could be brought up to fire point blank on a machine gun which had been keeping the platoon inactive.

Between the hours of 0900 and 1130, the guns fired a smoke screen to cover the advancing troops, but after that they were quiet for the rest of the day. Stone porches of the houses in that sector afforded invaluable cover

The Old and The New





and protection, and they were generally accredited as the reason for the absence of casualties in the intense operations of the day.

The Third platoon followed the Third infantry battalion into a wooded area on the approaches of Gladbeck; there they set up their mortars beside a dairy farm. They fired several smoke screens through the day, but due to the fast advance of the doughs, the mortars were generally inactive.

The following day the company CP moved up to Gladbeck, while the firing platoons advanced deeper into the heart of the city, and even beyond it. The First platoon had entered the town of Lochskemper during the night despite the presence of much small arms and machine gun fire. While numerous blazes were still licking at the town, the platoon fired on Jerries in a brickyard east of Bottrop. They later fired on several enemy occupied houses in Horst, and at 1900 they moved into the latter town on the heels of the infantry.

The Second platoon moved into the center of Gladbeck, but they did not emplace their guns until 1500 that afternoon when they set up in a school yard just before the area was warmed up by a few armor piercing shells which hit the platoon billets; however, there

were no casualties. At 2100 the guns opened up on enemy strong points in Bottrop. Enemy mortar positions, railroad yards, and a Jerry supply train were all hit and damaged considerably. Cpl. Sweeney brought in a German prisoner the same night, a feat which was still something of a novelty to the mortar men.

After moving to the other side of Gladbeck to an abandoned mine occupied by wounded Jerries, the platoon scored several more hits on enemy mortar emplacements.

For the second successive day the Third platoon did little firing. At 0500 they fired one mission from their position at Ney on an enemy controlled crossroad. The rest of the day was spent moving up through Gladbeck and eventually settling down north-west of Gelsenkirchen.

On the 31st of March, the 137th had reached the banks of the Neu Emscher canal, and the Able Company CP had moved forward to Buer Bechausen. All the platoons had spent a busy day moving twice and firing on enemy strong points between hops.

Easter Sunday and April Fool's Day was just another day of work for the mortars. The command post had to move twice to keep up with the advance of the firing platoons who were swiftly approaching the banks of the canal. Both the First and Second platoons had fired smoke screens and concentrations on troops during the day, and by nightfall they were prepared to defend the north bank of the canal in case of counter-attack.

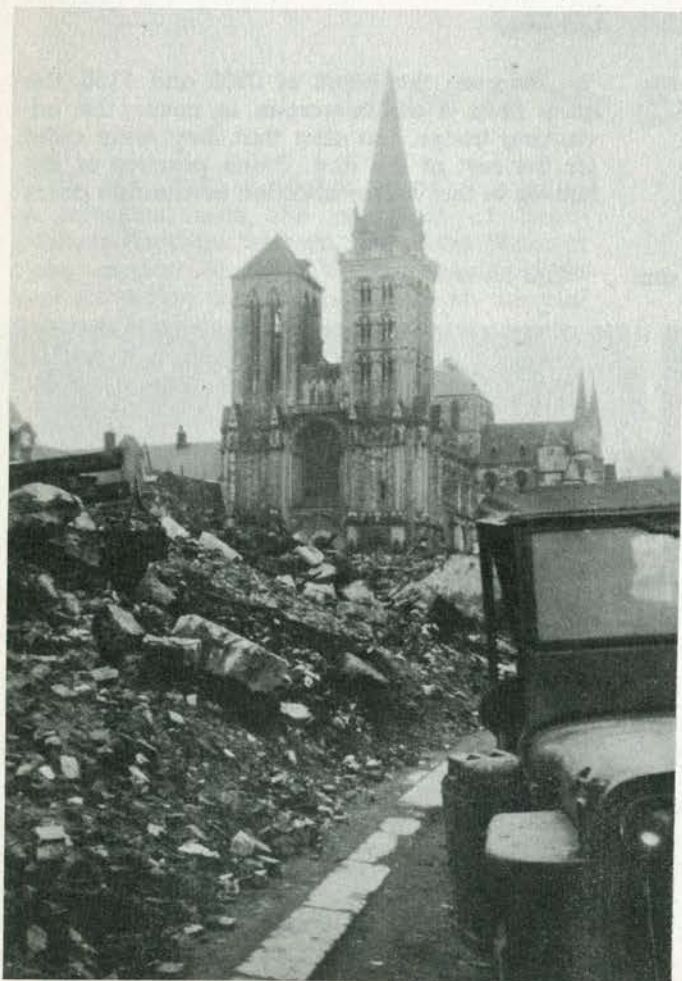
The Third platoon appeared to be a little more fortunate when they moved into a factory in Recklinghausen. After spending the night harassing the Jerries, the daylight hours were spent hunting treasures. Lt. Lawler utilized his knowledge of German to talk the factory guards out of seven pistols, and also 30 cases of fine liquor which came in quite handy.

Units of the 35th Division had, by that time, pulled up to the canal, and they began to merely hold their line and at the same time get a few days of rest. The mortars of Able company were all laid in for defensive fire in the vicinity of Recklinghausen, and various targets of opportunity were fired.

On April 2, the First platoon harassed an enemy OP, and also provided a screen for infantry patrols which had passed beyond the canal. The Second platoon fired four missions, the most important being a railroad gun position and a railroad junction on the opposite side of the canal; both targets were taken care of effectively. A screen for the infantry and concentrations on enemy troops were also fired by the third platoon.

But on the following day the entire front was quiet. The Second platoon set fire to a group of wooden barracks, and the Third platoon laid a few concentrations on opportunity targets, but the majority of the time was spent cleaning equipment which had been neglected so many days.

War ravaged cities





On April 4, Able Company made the newsreels, as Signal Corps cameramen filmed some of their fire missions. Most of the firing that day and the following was done by the Second platoon who fired on a factory, houses and gun emplacements. The Third platoon laid a few concentrations on targets of opportunity, and Lt. Lawler, across the canal on patrol, returned with three prisoners.

The only casualty of the period was S/Sgt. McNeeley when he fell from one floor to another in a bomb-shattered building, fracturing his skull and breaking both his arms.

While Able Company was supporting one regiment of the 35th Division, Baker and Charlie Companies remained with their regiments of the 79th.

Baker Company, following the spearheading 314th, spent a busy four days from March 27 to 30. The First platoon was inactive, but the Second fired in support of company I of the 314th. The infantry had been pinned down by intense small arms and machine gun fire coming from the ridge upon which the town of Hiesfield was located, and while Lt. Michaels and his radio operator, Cpl. Durham were registering the platoon on the ridge, Capt. Jackson, CO of I company, moved to a new position. Lt. Michaels and Cpl. Durham were pinned down by more flat trajectory fire, but they finally managed to locate the Capt. via radio. They then directed fire on a self-propelled 88 which was soon silenced. Since the gun had been an effective threat to the infantry advancing into the town, and since their action had been instrumental in removing the danger, Lt. Michaels and Cpl. Durham were cited and later awarded the Bronze Star.

The Third platoon, emplaced but a few hundred yards from the Second, did no firing during the day because the regiment had to by-pass a Jerry strong-point on the right hand side of the sector, and supporting weapons could not be used.

The by-passed area caused excitement in Cartwheel Baker later in the day. After Col. Robinson had informed Capt. Esser that the pocket had been wiped out, Capt. Esser, accompanied by Lt. Connell and Pfc. Milton Harig, went into the disputed area to locate mortar positions. Pausing at a likely looking position, they were suddenly straited to see tanks open up and destroy a house 300 yards ahead while the infantry poured out of the woods 500 yards behind. Then it was wiped out.

The First platoon and company CP moved into this area that night, but were harassed all night by enemy sniper and machine gun fire. Pfc. Lawrence Ziegler winged one of the snipers who was captured next morning. It was in this No-Man's Land that Sgt. Haldt and Sgt. LaRouche ventured for information on ammunition, as related below.

When General Rowan and his party vis-



Down Town

ited the battalion, he was served dinner at Baker Company rear; his meal was disturbed at one point by three incoming shells, none of which landed close enough to do any damage. After dinner he moved forward and located the CP two miles south of Hiesfield where the company was supporting a drive across the autobahn toward Sterkrade on the Neu Em-scher canal.

In their only action of the day, the First platoon fired on two area targets, expending a total of 77 rounds of WP and 73 of HE.

For the Second Platoon Lt. Michaels and Cpl. Hardy made a reconnaissance and chose gun positions in the town of Heisfeld, on the ridge from which so much resistance had been encountered the previous day. The platoon was moved near the position at about 0600, and because machine gun fire was still raking the area, the platoon vehicles were dispatched to the position at 5 minute intervals. The first squad's vehicle, first into the position, was caught by machine gun fire, but the only damage was the loss of a button on Sgt. Chamberlain's jacket. Beyond that, the emplacement continued smoothly and without mishap.



A considerable amount of ammunition was expended that day, most of it being directed by Lt. Ellis on a synthetic oil plant, the results being the most dramatic of the campaign. Several storage tanks were hit, and the resulting fires burned fiercely and illuminated the area for several days. Late in the afternoon of the day a few enemy artillery and mortar shells began to land in front of the guns, but appropriate security measures were taken, and there were no casualties.

Baker Company's Third platoon, located at Hingmanshof, was in direct support of the First battalion which was to drive through the town of Dunkelschlag, across the autobahn, and through the Third battalion in an effort to take Sterkrade.

At Dunkelschlag Lt. Kilby was relieved from his FO position by Lt. Connel and Pfc. L. O. May,

that they would have to go to the forward post for the information. Upon arrival there they were directed to the platoon gun positions where they would be sure to find out exactly how many rounds had been shot up.

The First platoon report was secured without any trouble, as was the Second platoon's, except for the difficulty of searching the men out of the scores of houses in the vicinity; but it was not so easy to find the Third platoon in Hingmanshof, a town which was still partly occupied by the Jerries. On one of the darkened streets they were challenged by a concealed sentry, and on answering hot, which they thought to be the password, they received no reply. They breathed easier when the sentinel, instead of blowing their heads off, questioned them; he then told them that the pass-



Suburban District

Lt. Duncan and Pfc. Cort going to the First Battalion. Shortly after the autobahn had been crossed, stiff resistance was met, and an enemy mortar barrage pinned everyone down.

While discussing immediate plans of the attack, Lt. Connell stood between Pfc. May and the infantry CO, but when the barrage landed, Pfc. May and the infantryman were both wounded, and Lt. Connell did not receive a scratch.

On the night of the 27th T/Sgt. LaRouche and T/Sgt. Haldt of Headquarters were sent from the Battalion CP at Overbruck to pick up the ammunition expenditure report at Baker Company; there followed one of the wildest experiences of which any man in the 89th can boast.

At 2130 the pair started out. After getting lost several times in Dinslaken, they reached the company's rear CP near Hiesfield, only to learn

word was not *hot*, but good. He then informed the two that the Third platoon was in the vicinity, but he did not know where; he also warned them to be careful as he had been fired upon by small arms in the last half hour. So with a few additional grey hairs, some doubt, and much anxiety, they continued their search.

The gun positions were eventually located, but again the CP could not be found. After stumbling around the darkened streets for some time, they decided that they had better commence a retrograde movement before the enemy was forced to waste any ammunition on them needlessly. The report would be just as valuable if figured by higher mathematics than it would have been from first hand information.

On the return trip they were warned about a stretch of woods which seemed to be full of small





More misery for the Jerries

arms fire, but the trip proved uneventful until an approaching tank suddenly loomed out of the darkness twenty feet ahead of them. After they managed to elude the treads of the monster, they made their way back to battalion headquarters peacefully, with a concrete and comprehensive understanding of the value of an ammunition report.

March 29th saw Baker Company moving into the approaches of Sterkrade. The firing platoons left the company behind at Huhne Heide, and moved forward, firing little, but advancing in leaps and bounds. While the First platoon was moving south-east of Waldteich, the Second was entering Sterkrade at 0700. During the day they worked their way through the city to the canal, and in order to be ready in case the need for defensive fire arose, the guns were leap frogged into positions. Lt. Michaels and Lt. Hindin each took charge of two guns, but since they were in a large city, the infantry had little need for supporting fire, so the platoon gave all their attention to advancing, too.

The Third platoon had a little more trouble when they moved into the city. Soon after their entry into Sterkrade, they were stopped by an artillery barrage, and by nightfall they had only moved a block. Their only offensive action of the day had been concentrations on two enemy machine gun emplacements with excellent results.

The following day the city was cleared out, all the platoons moved in deeper, and the company CP was brought up in proximity to them. After they had dug in, the guns opened up on every target that was available on the other side of the canals.

South of Sterkrade there flowed two canals. The main stream, the Rhine Herne, lay south of the smaller one, the Neu Emscher, and between these two was a dike or

an island which was wide at some points, and narrow at others. The infantry had pushed the Jerries off this strip of land, and spanning the Neu Emscher with foot bridges, they used it for their forward outposts.

The area was also an ideal location for good observation, and Lt. Connel accordingly appropriated a convenient soccer stadium, from which he directed the fire of the first platoon. Their first target for the 30th was a moving train; and after the mortars had finished with it, the railroad could have entered it in the lost column. All the targets weren't so inviting, but the rest of the day was spent firing at activities in trenches and dugouts.

Lt. Ellis, with K company of the 314th, directed the fire of the Second platoon on a wooded area in support of the completion of the infantry's advance to the banks of the Rhine Herne. So completely did the mortars devastate the area, that the infantry had little or no trouble in reaching the canal that afternoon.

After the OP had moved forward through to the banks of the canal, an infantry sergeant pointed out several appetizing targets to Lt. Ellis. Although consistently harassed by sniper fire, the FO continued to fire the Second platoon until dark, causing much havoc and confusion among troop concentrations and emplacements south of the canal.

The first battalion was unopposed for the remainder of their advance to the canal, and the third platoon of Baker Company moved up to the banks where they registered for defensive fire.

Meanwhile Charlie Company was at the heels of the 315th Infantry which was paralleling the drive of the 314th on the right. On the 27th of March the regiment was still meeting comparatively tough resistance, and Charlie Company was too busy dodging enemy shells to do much firing during the day. The first and third platoons, each

The end of the war for them







"Gertie"

completed one mission successfully, but the real hero of the day was second platoon mechanic Arthur Davis, who brought in a prisoner of war.

On the following day, the company opened up, however, and let fly at any target which presented itself. Lt. Ulanowski, FO with the infantry which had already reached the Rhine Herne west of Sterkrade, fired the mortars at burp guns, machine guns, houses, and a large variety of targets. The CO of the 315th expressed his pleasure for the work done by the mortars during the day.

The company moved to Biefang on the 29th, and the Third platoon advanced to within 800 yards of the enemy lines to be able to fire on a strong point of anti-aircraft guns and 88's. Telling concentrations were fired by the first platoon just after midnight and by the first and third platoons at 0600 when the infantry jumped off to take the point.

Lt. McDowell and Sgt. Greenwood, FO's shunned the aid of busy infantrymen when they wiped out two enemy machine gun nests with their small arms fire. Between them they accounted for three Krauts.

Early on the morning of the 30th, the first and third platoons fired on two defensive lines near Conrodias and Westriedhof. For the second platoon, Lt. Cartledge and Sgt. Bynon directed

fire on an enemy OP, using WP and HE at irregular intervals to keep the Jerries too worried to observe. Other targets of the day were enemy vehicles and crossroads; 210 rounds of HE and 46 of WP were used on these.

The next day all guns were set up for defensive fire, as the 315th, too, stopped pushing and were content to hold their ground.

Battalion headquarters remained at Overbruck until Easter Sunday when they moved into Sterkrade not far from Baker Company. Through March 29th the supply section continued to bring equipment over the Rhine. With the firing platoons of the three companies so widely spread and so far in advance of headquarters, it was difficult to keep them supplied with ammunition, and at times the shortage became acute.

The following day the shower unit was set up at Overbruck. Under the supervision of Tec/5 Orin H. Hutchcraft and Pfc. Paul Whitfield, clean clothes could be received in place of dirty ones, and the companies sent small parties of men back to clean up whenever they were able.

On the 31st, Lt. Krsek took a party forward to Bottrop to set up an advance communications center. A deserted SS Corps headquarters, complete with electricity, electric ventilation, and Jerry signal equipment was picked as the center. The place turned out to be a hot spot and it was shelled sporadically, but that didn't prevent Tec/4 Howard from establishing a complete photographic laboratory in his spare time.

On the morning of Easter Sunday Major Cameron took a party forward in a search for a new CP. The co-ordinates given them proved to be a bomb wracked town with an insufficient number of houses for even the civilian population, and the party moved back to Overbruck and then to Sterkrade. In the latter city a number of large, comfortable apartment houses were chosen, and Major Cameron and Lt. Winters returned to Overbruck to lead the company up.

#### Take Ten





The detail which was left to unhouse the civilians had a rough time since it was Easter and the Germans used this to play on the sympathy of the men; however they were still unhoused.

Capt. Murray had considerable trouble bringing in the convoy of heavy trucks that night as the roads leading up to the CP were then under heavy artillery fire. The men who had been at Bottrop at the advance communications center joined the battalion the same night.

The battalion, with the exception of Able Company, remained in or around Sterkrade for almost a week supplying defensive fire for the holding line of the 79th Division. The week, for most of the men, was one of relaxation, general cleaning, souvenir trips (until the Military Government moved in) and a little firing now and then.

From the 1st to the 5th of April Baker and Charlie Companies sat in their positions and popped away at gun emplacements, houses, and any other targets that could be seen from the OP's between the two canals. Whenever possible the men were sent back to wash the grime of battle from their backs.

Battalion headquarters remained at Sterkrade for this period arranging shower schedules, showing movies, and taking advantage of the lull to replenish and repair the battered equipment of the companies.

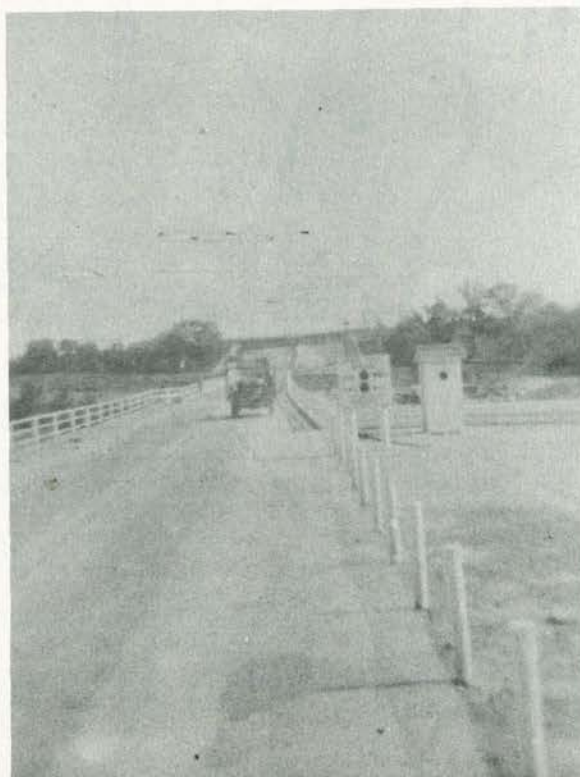
On the 3rd of April Charlie Company moved to Bottrop where they again set up defensively and fired on targets of opportunity,

notable among which was a self-propelled gun which they succeeded in knocking out of action.

Baker Company limbered up their guns and fired a number of missions on the 4th. The first platoon fired on four area targets, the second did considerable damage to a bridge across the canal, and the third obtained good results from fire on enemy burp guns and 20 mm gun emplacements.

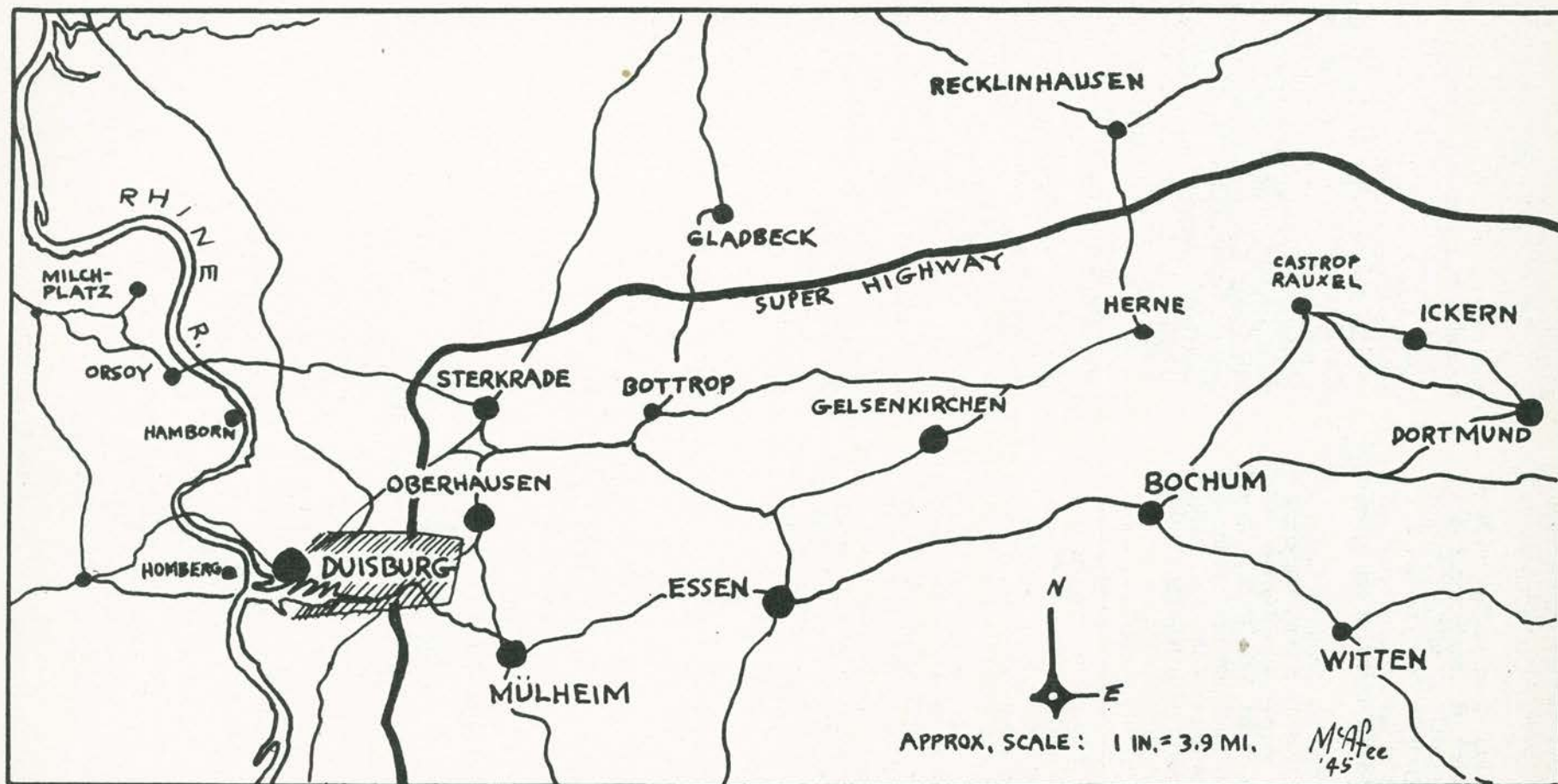
On the 5th, while Baker company was virtually inactive, Charlie company was requested to lay down supporting fire on enemy locations which had been revealed by PW's. The first platoon laid heavy concentrations of HE and WP on that target, and the second platoon knocked out three Jerry heavy machine guns which were bringing withering fire to bear on forward infantry elements.

While it was at Sterkrade, the battalion received General Dwight D. Eisenhower's order of the day for the 4th of April; directed to the troops of the First and Ninth Armies it stated: "The encirclement of the Ruhr by a wide pincer movement has cut off the whole of Army Group 'B' and parts of Army Group 'H'. Thus forming a large pocket of enemy troops whose fate is sealed and who are ripe for annihilation. The most vital industrial area is denied to the German war potentials. The magnificent feat of arms will bring the war more rapidly to a close. It will long be remembered in history as an outstanding battle—The Battle of the Ruhr."



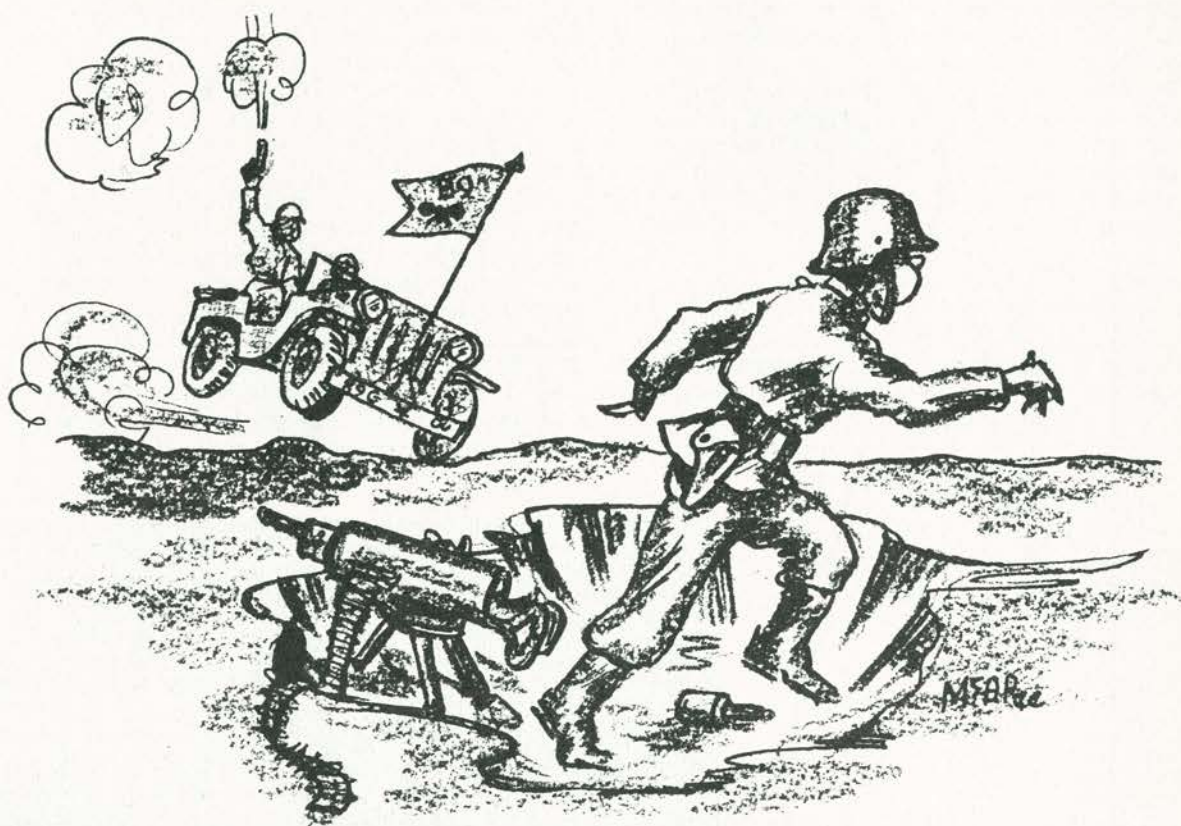
To the Memory of "Ernie"





General Area of Ruhr Campaign as seen by the 89th





## CHAPTER SIX

### *"Drive Thru the Ruhr"*

ON Friday, April 6, the period of comparative inactivity and welcome rest drew to a close as Baker and Charlie companies began preparations for the next push of the 79th, the crossing of the Rhine-Herne Canal. The date for the assault had been set for early morning hours of the 7th, so at 1100 Friday, Charlie company, in support of the 315th Infantry moved east to Karnap, and a few hours later Baker Company occupied a row of apartment houses in Horst. Later in the afternoon Battalion Headquarters followed the two companies and set up their CP at Boy, northwest of Charlie company's positions.

While the other companies were getting set up for the night of intensive fire, Able company remained at Recklinghausen in support of the 137th Infantry of the 35th Division. In

their only major action of the day, the first platoon scored three hits on enemy heavy machine gun emplacement southeast of Horst. Both the gun and the crew were completely destroyed. During the night the second platoon kept up interdictory fire in anticipation of enemy patrol action, but the Jerries seemed to be watching and waiting, too.

The interval of quiet lasted all through the morning, although, on the right, the 313th and 315th Infantries were storming and securing their bridgeheads on the south bank of the Rhine-Herne at the cost of considerable casualties. Finally on the front of the 137th the enemy opened up with a counter-attack Saturday night. In an effort to stem the advancing forces the four guns of the second platoon laid down a tremendous barrage of HE. The



platoon as a whole fired 426 rounds in 15 minutes, and the first squad fired their allotment of 120 shells in 12 minutes. Cpl. Frances Taylor, gunner in the fourth squad, fired 30 rounds in approximately one minute in an attempt to make up for time lost on a mis-fire.

The same day Lt. Archer, platoon executive of the first platoon, was appointed liaison officer, and Lt. Repschleger took over his post. The next day, the latter was transferred to Charlie Company leaving the job vacant again.

The first platoon moved closer to the canal on Sunday in order to increase their target area, but in the only missions of the day, the second platoon fired on snipers located in a tunnel, and the third platoon helped to wipe out an enemy strongpoint located in a cemetery.

The social highlight for the day was a fashion review staged by Cpl. Paul Prentiss, and Cpl. William (Wild Bill) Robertson, ammo chief. Robertson sported the latest in theater dress of top hat and tails, and Prentiss offered a preview of official naval regalia. His resplendent admiral's uniform was viewed with much disfavor by the remainder of Hitler's people.

While Able company was enjoying the privileges of a quiet front, the other two firing companies were keeping the mortar barrels hot smoking canal and helping the 79th to expand their foothold.

After they had moved into temporary positions in the northern section of Horst, Capt. Esser and the platoon leaders of Baker Company reconnoitered possible gun positions close to the canal. Lt. Parker selected a court yard in the rear of a beer hall, and the second platoon moved into a wrecked mine across the street; the top of the mine tower served as an OP. The third platoon set up in Horst, but soon moved into the east end of Karnap. All the platoons registered their guns and waited for the signal to start their barrage.

The mission of the 313th Infantry was to cross the canal and drive south to the Ruhr River.

At 2100, Captain Esser was called back to the 310th Artillery FDC and assigned preparatory fire missions with the two-fold purpose of starting fires and blasting strong points. Since these missions were to begin at 2400, there was not much time to get ready, and ammunition had to be prepared in the total darkness. The second and third platoons were placed in direct support of the assault battalions, with the first platoon in general reserve.

Lt. Ellis, liaison officer, was in the forward regimental CP in a factory on the island between the Emscher and the Rhine-Herne and at 2200 he sent instructions for the concentrations to be fired

before the regiment jumped off in the morning. Ammunition was hauled and prepared in the darkness, and the bearers worked feverishly to have it ready in time.

Preparatory fire commenced at 0100 on Saturday morning and lasted till 0345. For miles around sleepers were awakened by the first reports of the terrific barrage, which slackened only when the infantry jumped off at 0300. Big John Slattery kept the second platoon guns going almost single-handedly by carrying ammunition, as many as seven rounds at a time.

Shortly after they started firing Baker company called for two ammunition trucks from Battalion headquarters to replenish their waning supply. Accordingly, Sgt. Paul Kersch, Pfc. Roberts, Pfc. Watson Lynch, Pfc. Oscar Gobble, and S/Sgt. Sanders delivered the trucks at the forward CP, after waiting out an intense shelling that the gun



Fire

positions were being subjected to.

Since all roads in the vicinity were being shelled sporadically, arrangements were made for the men to spend the remainder of the night at the company's rear CP and return to Headquarters for more ammunition the following morning.

After wandering around the streets of Horst for the better part of the night, and stopping the trucks whenever the shells came too close, the men came upon a familiar street which they followed back to Hq. CP at Boy.

Lt. Michaels and Cpl. Durham were in the OP party of the First Battalion when it moved across the canals. The party advanced south from the bank to a slag pile near a factory. Here they were stopped and dispersed by heavy tracer machine gun fire which caused them to scatter and reassemble later. Pinned down, and without any protection other than carbines and pistols, the party



remained motionless till well into the morning when the situation eased enough for an adequate CP to be chosen.

The second battalion and their attached third platoon of Baker company ran into stiff opposition at their crossing site at Karnap. The assault troops crossed the Emscher Canal on foot bridges and the Rhine-Herne in assault boats. For 1,000 yards past the canal the going was easy, but there they ran into serious trouble. Machine gun and sniper fire was extremely troublesome, and no one seemed to be able to locate their hiding places.

At the same time Fox company of the 313th suffered heavy casualties when they ran into a concentration of SS men and paratroopers in a nearby factory. As observation was impossible, no assistance could be given until tank destroyers crossed the canals on long delayed bridges about noon the next day.

On the north side of the canals the engineers were having their troubles, too. In trying to construct a bridge they suffered heavily, losing almost an entire company. As a last resort all civilians were evacuated from the north bank of

Hagemannshof they were two thousand yards ahead of the battalions on either side of them.

At 1500 the engineers requested a smoke screen, and at 1515, under the direction of Lt. Ellis, two guns from the first platoon and two from the second built a 1,000 yard screen which they continued for the rest of the daylight hours.

This request for the initial screen commenced what eventually became an immense operation taxing Battalion headquarters ammunition to the fullest extent to keep the companies supplied with WP. At 2230 the strain on transportation was alleviated somewhat by the acquisition of 12 trucks from the 79th Division Quartermaster. These trucks were ordered to the Army Supply Point at Dilken, Germany to pick up ammunition.

The ammunition trucks of Baker and Charlie companies waited impatiently for the arrival of loaded trucks. The situation became serious when, late in the afternoon, the first platoon of Baker company ran out of ammunition. Fortunately a truck arrived from the ASP, and WP was unloaded at the gun positions of the platoon two minutes after the last round had been fired.

The extensive screening operations were also destructive to mortar parts as well as to the enemy. When a call came in for vitally needed parts, T/Sgt. Woods and Pfc. Kidder drove nine hours in blackout to Krefeld, Germany to secure the items.

By the morning of the 8th the Battalion had a supply of WP on hand that wasn't exhausted for the remainder of the battle of the Ruhr.

Charlie company did very little firing previous to their screening mission on the 7th. By 1000 on the night of the 6th all platoons were registered by Lt. Henry Linton. During the registration of the first platoon, an enemy vehicle parked on the crossroads which was serving as the base point. Lt. Linton immediately called for fire and the vehicle was destroyed by a direct hit. Col. Schriver, regimental CO, of the 315th who was witnessing the registration, expressed his delight at the results. The only other firing of the evening was done by the third

platoon, which concentrated on four enemy 120 mm mortars that had been located by the third battalion.

Early in the morning the 315th Infantry attacked and established a foothold across the canal. A bridge was erected, but it was immediately knocked out, and it was thought that observation for the fire on the bridge was coming from large factories and tall buildings occupied by the enemy on the right flank of the regiment. Charlie company was assigned to the task of enterdictory fire on these suspected OP's so that the reserve regiment, the 314th could move across with armor and break out of the bridgehead.

But before this mission could be accomplished it was necessary for the mortars to screen the area so that the engineers could erect another bridge. The screen was built at 1340 on a front of 2,000 yards by the first and second platoons, leaving



Captured "88"

the canal and constructions advanced more satisfactorily.

Counter-battery fire hampered the third platoon throughout the day. No casualties were suffered and only one incident worth of mention occurred. One of the German shells suddenly and completely removed the roof of a house behind the gun positions. Through the resultant opening could be seen an old, gray headed man popping up to a sitting position in his bed on the second floor. When he saw that he no longer had a roof over his head he became very perturbed and preceeded to tell everyone, but to no avail.

In an effort to ease the situation for the hard-pressed infantry the mortars finally laid down four rolling smoke screens. These barriers more than served their purpose as they enabled the Second Battalion to forge ahead of their flanking units, and when they entered the outskirts of





the third platoon free to fire on call from the units across the canal. The screen was so effective that it not only offered concealment for the construction and traffic on the bridge during the rest of the daylight hours, but it also burned to the ground two groups of enemy barracks, generating a hasty retreat from the area. When the chaos of the enemy troops was noted the third squad of the first platoon was ordered to exploit the opportunity. The other three guns of the platoon was ordered opened up to cover the vacancy left by the number three gun while Sgt. Kress's squad fired concentrations of HE on the confused enemy troops.

The next morning Baker and Charlie companies stood ready to repeat their screens of the previous day, but a heavy fog blanketed the area and very little WP was necessary to conceal the operations. The first platoon of Baker company fired on screen at 1100, while the other two platoons fired on targets of opportunity and at 0900, Captain Esser, Lt. Duncan, Pvt. Rogers, and Sgt. Eblen were ferried across the canal in their jeep and reconnoitered forward for positions into which the third platoon, the first motorized unit scheduled to cross, could move. Pvt. Rogers was left on the south bank of the canal with his vehicle to act as a guide, while the rest of the party returned on foot and then prepared to move across the canal.

While the platoons of Charlie company were preparing to cross, Capt. Charles Landback, Lt. Ralph Wance, S/Sgt. Bill Towns, S/Sgt. Lew Gillespie, and Sgt. Edward Bynon made a foot reconnaissance for mortar positions south of the canal. They were constantly harassed on the other side by sporadic small arms fire. While searching for a likely spot to set up the mortars, Sgt. Towns was fired on by a sniper. The sergeant immediately located the offender, a civilian, in a window and killed the German with one shot of his M-1.

The platoons moved across the canal about noon and set up in Barkerferheide, where Lt. McDowell, as FO, immediately registered the guns. During the afternoon the 315th Cannon Company requested fire on an enemy anti-tank gun which they could not reach with their own guns. The second platoon took care of the weapon with 12 rounds of HE. Observers stated that the gun flew into the air twice when shells hit it.

At 2000 the first platoon moved well forward to be in position to support the first battalion of the 315th when they jumped off the following morning. Since their salient was very narrow, a wrong turn meant running into enemy positions. To guard against this possibility Lt. Wance walked ahead of the jeeps checking his map at every cross-road. The platoon arrived at its position at 0130 and prepared to fire. Cpl. Jack Thorpe was dispatched for more ammunition and he returned at 0600 in time for the morning's firing.

Two hours after the first platoon moved forward the second platoon was detached from the company to form part of the Task Force X under command of Lt. Bennett Harvey.

The first motorized unit across the canal was the third platoon of Baker company which moved over at 0945 with the second Battalion 313th and went into position at Katernburg. After they had set up they fired a screen 1,000 yards in front of the infantry, increasing the range as the infantry advanced until the battalion had crossed the high ground west of Schonnebeck. Later in the day the assault troops ran into severe 20-mm and anti-aircraft fire but when the third platoon knocked three of the guns out of action the enemy became confused and the position was overrun resulting the capture of 14 more guns. The battalion advanced as far as Kray and remained overnight.

The first and second platoons of Baker company, with the exception of the solitary smoking mission, spent the forenoon quietly, and late in the afternoon they crossed the canal and moved into Ottenkamphoff, but there was no firing to be done. The canal bridge was receiving sporadic 155 mm. enemy fire, but no casualties were suffered.

While reconnoitering for a company CP late in the afternoon, Lt. Harvey, together with Pvt. Rhodes and Pvt. Taylor were following the regimental wire team vehicle until Lt. Harvey's intuition told him that something was wrong and he turned back. The Infantry vehicle was found later that night, blown to bits.

At 2036 Battalion headquarters received orders from division to detach one platoon from Baker and one platoon from Charlie companies for the purposes of forming a provisional task force to support the 314th Infantry. Because of Able company's attachment to the 35th Division, the 314th had heretofore been without any heavy mortar support in the present operation. By giving them support of the provisional force, the two original firing companies were broken up into three units of two platoons each, one for each of the three infantry regiments.

It was decided that Task Force X would be made up of a first platoon (third platoon of Baker) and a second platoon (second platoon of Charlie). Lt. Harvey was relieved from his duties as company executive officer of Baker company and given command of the provisional force and S/Sgt. Laney from Bat-



talion headquarters became acting first sergeant.

Early Monday morning, April 9th, the first platoon of X company moved into Kray in direct support of the first battalion of the 314th Infantry. Lt. Kilby reported to the Battalion Commander, Lt. Col. Kihan, and was ordered to move his platoon into position at Kray. After receiving some sniper fire the platoon succeeded in entrenching only to receive orders to move again, this time to Schonnebeck.

The second platoon was placed in support of the third battalion of the 314th. They also moved up into position, but no missions were called for.

The mission of the 314th was to drive straight south to the Ruhr river. Both mortar platoons spent the next day firing at targets of opportunity. From prepared positions in Kray the first platoon fired on bunkers, anti-aircraft gun positions, armored vehicles and tanks. Then the platoon moved farther east to Stalleicken where they fired on an enemy held woods and a road junction that was handling a large volume of vehicular traffic. The second platoon firing from Stalleicken laid concentrations on a road junction and a large building housing enemy personnel. Both HE and WP were used in this mission and results of the barrage was a heartwarming fire.

On the 11th the first battalion jumped off east moving up the north bank of the Ruhr. At 1100 they ran into a strong point of pill-boxes and concrete emplacements in the vicinity of Roneburg. An hour barrage had to be laid on the point after which the infantry advanced and took it with considerable casualties. Our mortar fire accounted for four machine gun nests.

The second platoon moved several times during the day in order to be in position to fire for the third battalion, but no missions were called for and they dug in at Linderdalhausen for the night.

X company CP, which had moved into Steele from Ising the previous day, took part in a small but consuming riot Thursday. Lt. Harvey, Sgt. Watson, and T/5 Wagner finally had to resort to small arms fire to control the German civilians and Polish refugees who were having their differences. Because of the decadent condition of their trigger fingers, the three produced no casualties.

The first platoon fired on numerous targets during the day. These included cross roads, anti-aircraft gun emplacements, a railroad junction, and a heavily wooded area. Two guns went out of action during the day's firing and had to be taken to battalion headquarters for repair.

During the day the second platoon fired on 12 targets and most gratifying results were scored on a motor pool and a large cement factory housing enemy troops.

The next day the first platoon fired on an enemy tank, an enemy OP, a ferry boat, an enemy motor pool, and horse drawn artillery in the vicinity of Altendorf. The second platoon was inactive.

Sgts. Jerry D. Sloan, Manuel Villa, and Pfc. Frank Robinson of the first platoon spent the day working on a safe that had intrigued them. They busily engaged themselves with armor piercing shells, picks, axes, and anything else they

could lay their hands on and after breaking their backs with their honest labors for the better part of several hours they were eventually rewarded. The safe flew open and the loot was rotten peanuts and German ration coupons.

On the 9th of April, with four widely separated firing companies to supply, Battalion Headquarters moved into Karnap where they stayed until April 13 when they received orders relieving the battalion from its attachment to the 79th and attaching them to the 75h Division.

At Karnap the ammunition section released one fully loaded truck to each company. The remaining trucks were kept at battalion headquarters so that as many as five thousand rounds could be placed at any company position within an hour's notice.

The 35th Division crossed the two canals on Monday, April 8. Commencing at 2300 the previous night the first platoon of A company fired on a woods northeast of Herne. Fire was brought to bear on the target every two hours until 0700 on the 9th when it was increased to one round per gun per minute. The barrage finally lifted at 1100. Meanwhile the second platoon moved forward to within 75 yards of the canal to increase their target area. Four jeeps and trailers and the communications section left from the new position to pick up ammunition and to establish communications with the company FDC which had remained in Recklinghausen along with the other two platoons.

In three hours the jeeps returned safely, but the communications section was pinned down till morning by machine gun fire. Several missions were fired throughout the night, although they were to no avail as the infantry was unsuccessful in several attempts to establish a toehold on the other side of the canal. The mortar positions were

#### Chow Time





the target for heavy machine gun and small arms fire during these attempts.

When the crossing was again attempted, it was discovered that the enemy had withdrawn and left only a holding force, and the infantry reached the south bank without opposition. They advanced into Herne with the second platoon at their heels.

In their only mission of the day the third platoon knocked out an enemy machine gun nest.

Early the next morning the rest of Able Company moved over the canal, and into the town of Herne. The first platoon, with its new executive, Lt. Chaffee, worked hard at their positions. Three of the four squads were forced to cut trees down to obtain their fields of fire. When they were finally ready to fire, Capt. Westbrook issued orders for the platoon to move on south to another section of town. After moving twice during the day the first platoon finally located south of Herne. Artillery fire was encountered on both moves but no casualties resulted.

Meanwhile the second platoon had set up in the business district of Herne and retired to spacious apartments in the rear of the gun positions. The infantry was advancing so swiftly that it was impossible to fire from these positions, so the inviting apartments were left behind and the platoon moved to the south of town.

During the day the third platoon had moved into the northern sections of Herne, so at the end of the 10th of April, Able company had two platoons south of the town and one north of it. The swift advances of the infantry had made supporting fire unnecessary, so part of the day had been given over to testing and trying the various modes of civilian transportation. The only other activities were care and filling of empty stomachs and a few hours sleep.

Because of lightning infantry advances the three platoons adopted a leap-frog plan of movement the following day. One platoon emplaced and fired if necessary, and when the attack had moved forward, the other two platoons would move ahead of the one that was firing. The procedure would then be repeated as often as necessary to keep within range.

This plan of movement necessitated an FO with the infantry at all times. It was on one of these FO parties that Sgt. Dave Cuniff and Sgt. Gene Wittrock became disgusted with the lack of activity. They had walked 10 miles without encountering any Krauts, so they were ripe for some excitement. With the aid of German pistols (but no carbines) they determined to hunt out a German sniper who had been firing on passing vehicles. Unfortunately, the Jerry had evacuated the premises, but perhaps it was best since they discovered that only one of their German weapons was capable of firing at all.

The first platoon moved three times during the day, following in the wake of the infantry. Once, while in position north of Herbedet, they received heavy counter mortar fire. During the barrage Pvt. Michalack had a finger cut by shrapnel but he did not have to be evacuated. The platoon fired several missions throughout the day, the foremost being a successful concentration on a machine gun emplacement at 1500. They finally entrenched at Ouerenburg, 1,000 yards from the Ruhr river.

The second platoon, after moving twice, stopped at Oberstiepel. Before the mortars could be emplaced the fleeing enemy was out of range, so new positions had to be picked. During the reconnaissance for positions German gun emplacements were spotted, and when the mortars were set up fire was directed on the emplacements. A factory surrounded by self-propelled weapons and housing enemy personnel was the most popular target. The fire continued for one and a half hours, setting several barracks ablaze and scattering the troops who became more confused when HE was thrown after the WP. During the action the fourth gun had a muzzle burst, but there were no casualties and Cpl. Taylor and Pfc. Lawrence Pennington kept firing without a break.

During the afternoon and evening the platoon received heavy counter-battery fire. When one shell came in particularly close, S/Sgt. Edward Lundgren proved to be quite a proficient high jumper by clearing an SCR-300 with long antenna in one prodigious leap.

The third platoon, although it moved three times to keep abreast of the attack, did very little firing. They finally set up for the night in a farmyard in Oberstiepel where they spent the night.

Pfc. Nelson Boyle of the first platoon entertained himself at Owenburg by opening an impromptu shooting gallery, using some unhappy frau's china for targets. The cost of his spree was to roll a full field pack and blanket roll in 10 minutes for Lt. Miller.

After a profitable trip through the rich

The streets of town





Ruhr valley, the men were well-equipped for bartering. Cameras, Lugers, and binoculars were popular items for exchange with the infantry.

The next day the first and third platoons fired on enemy artillery emplacements with much success, but the second platoon didn't take the mortars off the trailers. The company CP moved back to Herne. At 1900 Able company was relieved from their attachment to the 35th Division and returned to Battalion control. The platoons immediately moved back to Herne with the CP.

The company remained at Herne through the 12th and 13th of April. The interlude was most welcome to the tired men, and also to those who as yet hadn't collected their allotment of pistols. To fill out their supply the company helped the British government collect weapons from the civilians. The mortar-men intercepted the Germans and relieved them of their bundlesome pistols, thereby saving them the trouble of delivering them to AMG headquarters. Oddly enough the British Army did not appreciate the help so willingly offered by Able company.

The third platoon spent their free time at celebrating the unexpected discovery of a store of liquor. Results of the party were rather disastrous, resulting in two casualties. When a lighted candle set the tablecloth on fire Sgt. Robert Hall inadvertently threw a can of gasoline on the flame, burning his hands severely. Later Cpl. Dave "Binky" Bynum, who was having bad dreams, woke from his sleep with a start and stuck his hand through a window cutting himself. Neither was awarded the Purple Heart for his gallant action.

The Cathedrals are spared



Lou Fricke is believed to have broken all existing records when he volunteered for 14 hours of guard without relief. Perhaps it would be well to add that he was perfectly rational at the time and not a victim of combat fatigue.

Herne was the scene of domestic troubles for the fourth squad of the third platoon. When they moved into their new home, the former owners pleaded with Pvt. George Weitz, the squad interpreter, to let him feed his chickens every evening. After some contemplation it was decided that his request was fair, and permission was granted. That evening he walked around to the back yard with a heaping double handful of grain. There he was unexpectedly confronted with the horrible sight of George finishing the job of cleaning the last chicken. The old man turned slowly, threw the grain into the air and muttered, "All is Kaput."

The boys at the company CP had an opportunity to play good samaritan on Friday when a displaced Russian asked for food and clothes. The men took him in, fed him, gave him a bath and clean clothes, the wardrobe of the German family who owned the house. When the infuriated German owner tried to chase the Russian away he was forced to give the latter all his cigarettes.

On Saturday morning the men were ordered to pack up their pistols, whiskey, and other spoils of the campaign for the trip to Ickern where the battalion awaited them. What was to come next was merely a matter of speculation.

After they crossed the canal Baker company took a more circuitous route to the Ruhr than Able company. They followed the 313th south to Schonnebeck and all the way east to Bochum and again they continued on to the river.

The first platoon had fired their screening missions from the north side of the canal in general reserve of the 313th infantry, but when they crossed the river they were put in direct support

of the third battalion. Little opposition was encountered on the 9th and Lt. Ellis and Lt. Parker reconnoitered and finally moved the platoon to Kray.

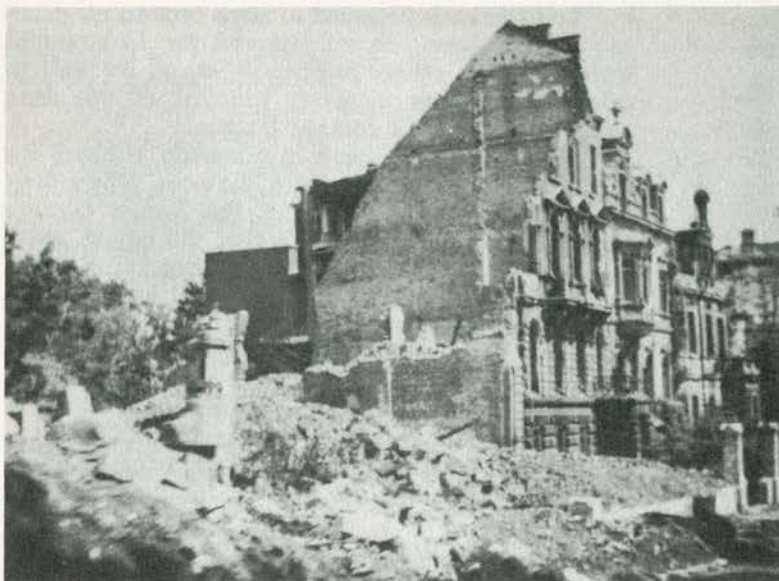
The second platoon moved from Ottenkamphoff early Monday morning and registered at Schonnebeck at 0800. Lt. Michaels, FO, called for the guns to register on a house in a group of farm buildings. When, after a few rounds had been fired, a direct hit resulted on the house, and an old man ran out of the door with an armload of makeshift white flags. Feverishly he placed them on every building around the area so that the soldiers would be sure to see them.

During the day the platoon fired on targets of opportunity. Most gratifying results were received when a searchlight was put out of commission by a round which landed directly in the center of the pit.

By this time the third platoon had already left Baker company to form Task Force X.

On the 10th the 313th moved east from Kray toward their next objective, Bochum. The first and second platoons followed but little opposition was met and the mortars moved several times without a shot being fired. They finally set up in the outskirts of the city when the infantry ran into some resistance. The first platoon immediately fired on some railroad yards where the Jerries surrendered without any further argument.





Efficiency Apartments

British flame throwing tanks were seen in action in Bochum. The Germans were constantly on watch for this weapon, and as soon as they discovered it was being employed against them they surrendered.

The platoons dug in for the night and the company CP moved up in proximity to them. Pfc. Luther Leshar, recently of the first platoon, was detailed to stand guard at the entrance to the house which served as headquarters. During the night Luther, who was always quick on the trigger after dark, thought he heard a noise behind him. When he whirled around he accidentally fired his M-1, but nothing except a hissing sound was noticed so Luther went back to his vigil. Repercussions occurred the next morning when Capt. Esser discovered an unexplicable bullet hole in the right rear tire of his jeep.

After clearing all the area between Schonnebeck and Bochum, the 313th was pulled back to the vicinity of Essen next day where they resumed their push south to the river. The first platoon moved into position west of Bredeney and Lt. Ellis, as FO, joined the commander of a heavy weapons company. The party was moving along rapidly meeting no resistance when the lead jeep was hit and everyone in it wounded. Small arms fire was heavy so the party quickly dispersed into a group of houses.

In the excitement Pfc. Joe Luchard, radio operator for Lt. Ellis, lost his hand set and they were unable to contact the platoon for support. Without the supporting fire, the infantry was pinned down and unable to move. Finally, with a borrowed hand set, Lt. Ellis was able to reach the company CP and Capt. Esser brought a new radio to him. The forward observers then arranged a simultaneous barrage on the woods in front of them. 4.2's, 81 mm's

and cannon all fired, and when the barrage lifted the infantry advanced to the river without any further trouble.

Lt. Ellis established an OP on a high bluff on the bank of the river across from Werden. A number of German soldiers working on a bridge were sighted, and surprise fire without registration on the target caused much devastation and confusion till an ack-ack gun zeroed in on the OP and it had to be evacuated. The next day it was reported that the fires started by WP had blown up an ammunition dump.

Meanwhile the second platoon moved back with the second battalion of the 313th to their assembly area at Huttrop, south of Essen. From there they moved on the town of Kettwig. Leading elements of the infantry drove the Germans across the river well before dark. However the character of the terrain afforded Jerries excellent observation of the town and the hill beyond. Because of this it was necessary to infiltrate into positions about 300 yards away from the river. From this point they registered for defensive fire. During the night the town itself was subjected to heavy enemy fire and, although the platoon was out of range, Lt. Johnson and Cpl. Kaufman in the FO party spent a restless night.

Heros for the day were Cpl. Easton and Pfc. Edmunds who uncovered some 300 quarts of cognac for the consumption by the platoon.

Envy of all Baker company in the vicinity of Bredeney was company headquarters who moved into a country estate overlooking the river. In what was probably the most successful reconnaissance of his career, Lt. Hindin led a party into the town and after some debate settled on the largest estate which could be found. For the ensuing two days the platoon was wallowing in luxury, a good share of which they carried away with them when they left.

Sgt. Holt's gun in the first platoon had a field day on Thursday. Firing on a house at a range of 3,200 yards the gun scored 14 direct hits out of 20 rounds fired. Tank destroyer was firing in the cellar window at the same time, with the result that the occupants of the house were pretty badly battered.

Although one company of the second battalion of the 313th had forced a crossing of the river during the night they were pulled back in the morning, and it was learned that the river was not to be crossed as it was the southern boundry of the Ninth Army sector. Lt. Johnson was instructed to fire at everything that he deemed a profitable target during the day, and he spent the entire time firing on buildings, gun positions and one tank, which, although out of gas, was manned and causing a lot of trouble. With the aid of the field artillery the bothersome tank was finally disabled.

About 1500 the second platoon was ordered



back into Essen when it was learned that the area was going to be defended by an airborne unit. The 313th was moving to another sector.

On April 13th Baker company was relieved from attachment to the 313th infantry. The company CP moved to Langendreer, a few miles from the second platoon, and Capt. Esser spent the day trying to reorganize the unit. The CP remained at Landendreer that night, and the next morning all platoons commenced preparing for the move to their rest area near Ickern.

After the second platoon of Charlie company was detached and sent to Task Force X, the remainder of the company moved forward to Stoppenberg. Both platoons displaced twice to stay within range of the target areas, but little firing was done.

Cpl. Brubaker, while accompanying FO Lt. McDowell as radio operator, was slightly wounded when a sniper fired on the party. A bullet passed between his right hand and his hip, grazing his hand. He was treated by an Aid-man and continued to operate the radio.

The next morning, the 10th, Charlie company again moved forward with the attacking elements of the infantry. The first platoon registered on a point 400 yards south of the Ruhr river, and the third platoon registered on a large railroad station in the northwest section of Essen. The registration, handled by S/Sgt. Gillespie and Lt. Harry McDow for their respective platoons, was completed at 1600.

The general mission of the 315th at that time was one of defense so the platoons provided defensive fire for the regimental front. The third platoon was assigned to destroy a large house containing enemy personnel and the resultant fire was termed very satisfactory by the infantry.

Late in the afternoon Lt. McDow and his party accompanied a reconnaissance-in-force into the eastern limits of Essen. No resistance encountered, so the next day the regiment moved in.

To facilitate the occupation of the great city the first and third platoons were attached directly to the first and second battalions of the 315th, and on Wednesday the attacking forces pushed all the way to Mulheim on the Ruhr.

There the platoons went back to company control. Registration was again conducted and a defensive fire plan set up.

During the advance that afternoon Cpl. Albert Marcil performed an extraordinary life saving act in a most heroic fashion. When a WP grenade on the belt of an infantryman was ignited by a sniper's bullet, Cpl. Marcil overtook the doughboy, threw him to the ground and extinguished the fire with dirt. For his action he was recommended for the bronze star.

Charlie company stayed at Mulheim for another day, but no missions were fired. Late in the afternoon Capt. Landback and Lt. Cartledge discovered a buried dump of Volksstrum equipment near the company CP. The extent of the find was two pistols, 13 rifles, helmets, uniforms, arm bands

and ammunition.

That afternoon the 315th was ordered to occupy a new defensive position for the following morning. Accordingly, an advance party was sent into the area, then being cleared by the 35th division, to reconnoiter possible gun positions.

Lt. Wance, Sgt. Carson, and Cpl. Thorp proceeded to the town which had been designated for the tentative mortar positions. They were passing through a small town still five miles from their destination when they first noticed the peculiar, wondering stares that the doughboys, standing in doorways, gave them. However, nothing appeared to be wrong, and even sporadic machine gun and small arms fire did not perturb the party. Half a mile beyond the village they came upon a road blocked, and while looking for a way around the block a few rounds of artillery fire dropped a hundred yards away. They quickly realized that they were in unoccupied territory with their own artillery firing in the vicinity. Two burp guns opened up and helped to chase them back to the friendly protection of the occupied town.

At 0700 the next morning the company moved to their new positions. The first platoon set up in a courtyard of a large machine shop after being harassed by snipers. One doughboy, while talking with a mortarman, was hit squarely in the forehead by a sniper's bullet. The offender was quickly taken care of.

The town was heavily shelled that morning and the platoons did no firing themselves till late afternoon, when they fired on targets of opportunity. At dusk, their positions received a 30 minute barrage followed by flat trajectory fire which harassed them for the remainder of the night.

On Saturday, Charlie company learned of their detachment from the 315th infantry, and orders to return to battalion control. They moved from their CP at Haarl by motor convoy and arrived at Ickern that afternoon.

Thus, on the 14th of April, after three weeks of individual and divers assignments from the west bank of the Rhine river to the southern boundary of the Ninth Army on the Ruhr, the companies of the battalion were assembled at Ickern, Germany with the 75th Division. What awaited the mortars at Ickern and beyond no man could guess, but whatever it was, the men could be reasonably sure that it would be anti-climatic to the Rhine-Ruhr campaign.

Neither were the campaign and its sensational results without notice from higher headquarters; several days after the 89th had left on their mission into the heart of Germany Shaefer issued the following order of the day,

APO 339  
21 April 1945

330.13 GNMAG  
SUBJECT: Order of the Day  
TO: See Distribution

The following order of the day issued by the Supreme Commander is to be delivered to



every member of all headquarters and units under your command:

**"TO EVERY MEMBER OF THE AEF:**

THE BATTLE OF THE RUHR HAS ENDED WITH COMPLETE SUCCESS! FOLLOWING HARD UPON THE FINAL DESTRUCTION OF THE GERMAN FORCES WEST OF THE RHINE, THE 21ST ARMY GROUP THRUST POWERFULLY ACROSS THAT RIVER WITH THE US NINTH ARMY UNDER ITS COMMAND! SIMULTANEOUSLY, RAPID DRIVES ACROSS THE RHINE AND FROM THE REMEGAN BRIDGEHEAD BY TWELFTH AND SIXTH ARMY GROUPS PROVIDED THE SOUTHERN ARM OF A GREAT DOUBLE ENVELOPMENT WHICH COMPLETELY ENCIRCLED THE ENTIRE GERMAN ARMY GROUP 'B' AND TWO CORPS OF ARMY GROUP 'H' WHOSE MOBILITY WAS RENDERED ALMOST ZERO BY OUR MAGNIFICENT AND TIRELESS AIR FORCES! THEREAFTER, IN THE POCKET THUS CREATED, THE TWELFTH ARMY GROUP ELIMINATED TWENTY-ONE ENEMY DIVISIONS, INCLUDING THREE PANZER, ONE PANZER GRENADIER AND THREE PARACHUTE DIVISIONS! OVER 317,000 PRISONERS OF WAR WERE CAPTURED INCLUDING TWENTY-FOUR GENERALS AND ONE ADMIRAL! MANY TANKS AND MORE THAN 750 GUNS

WERE DESTROYED OR TAKEN! BOOTY IS IMMENSE AND STILL BEING COUNTED! THE ENEMIES TOTAL LOSSES IN KILLED AND WOUNDED WILL NEVER BE ACCURATELY KNOWN!

THE RAPIDITY AND DETERMINATION WITH WHICH THIS BRILLIANT ACTION WAS EXECUTED TORE ASSUNDER THE DEFENSES (?) OF FIELD MARSHAL MODEL, AND ENABLED ALL ARMY GROUPS WITHOUT PAUSE TO CONTINUE THEIR DRIVE EASTWARD INTO THE HEART OF GERMANY!

THIS VICTORY OF THE ALLIED FORCES IS A FITTING PRELUDE TO THE FINAL BATTLES TO CRUSH THE RAGGED REMNANTS OF HITLER'S ARMIES OF THE WEST, NOW TOTTERING ON THE THRESHHOLD OF DEFEAT.

(SIGNED) DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER" 20 April 1945.

By command of Lieutenant General Simpson:

JOHN B. WILLIAMS (SIGNED)

John B. Williams,

Lt. Col., AGD,

Asst. Adjutant General

Distribution:  
"A" & "D"







#### BAKER COMPANY HEADQUARTERS

1st Row: Chwalek, Ingold, Barrett, Carot. Esser, Lt. Ellis, Sanders, Jaggard, Rogers. 2nd Row: Rhodes, Cawthon, Miller, Rylatt, Jensen, Summers, Sermersheim, Witte. 3rd Row: McCarty, Evans, Rouzee, Glines, McAfee, Clegg. 4th Row: Henry, Parlette, Owens. 5th Row: Pacelli, Pascerali, Bradley, W. Taylor.



#### BAKER COMPANY FIRST PLATOON

1st Row: Kuzmickus, Ficklin, Smith, Lt. Parker, Lt. Connell, Luchard, Burgess, Villa. 2nd Row: Wiley, Seay, Spradlin, Tyson, McGinty, Wright, Balback, Talbot. 3rd Row: Hankins, Chastain, Norton, Strickland, Lee, Groves, Humphrey. 4th Row: Lacy, Runyon, Bufton, Villaneuva, Samples, Walsh. 5th Row: Beasley, Wileman, Coppedge, Jones.





BAKER COMPANY SECOND PLATOON

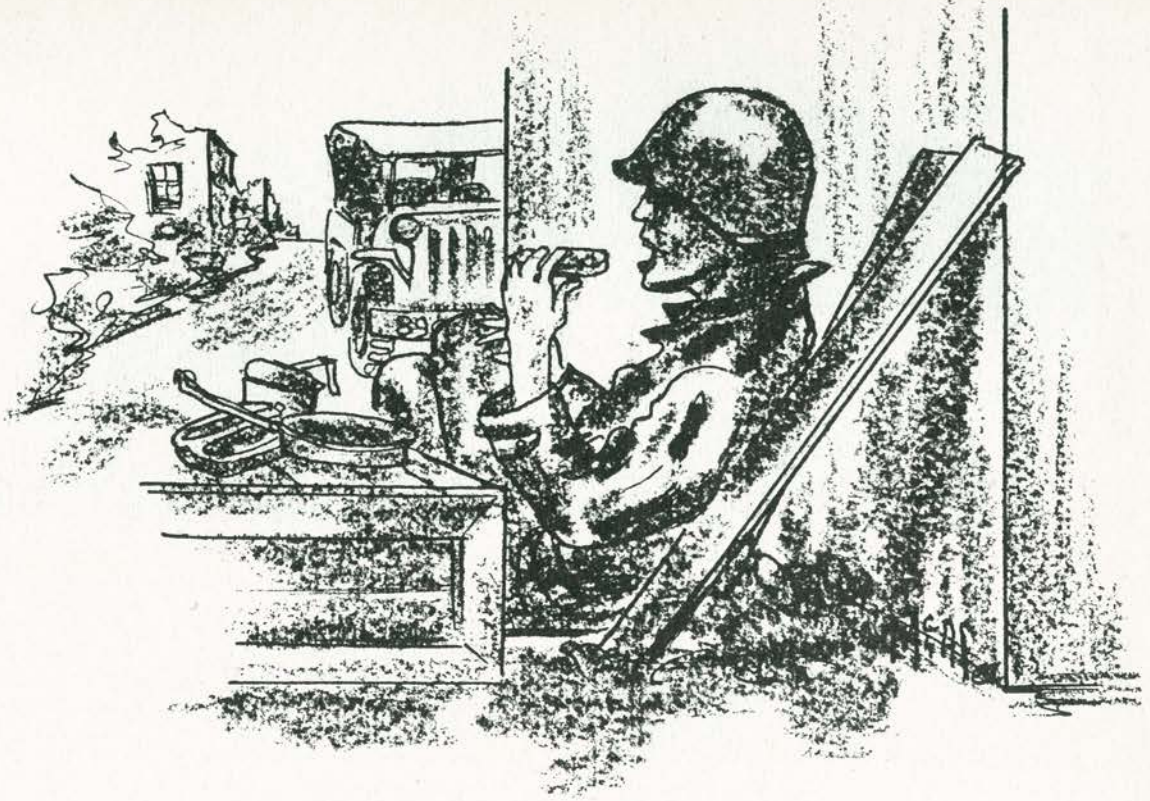
1st Row: Durham, Cavey, Alfrey, Lt. Johnson, Mickle, Schneekloth, Kaufman. 2nd Row: Chamberlain, Easton, Walker, Edmunds, Shelton, Campbell, Shippe. 3rd Row: Hopkins, Batt, Kestner, Venegas, Petteway, Lanier, Slattery. 4th Row: Dokken, Crane, Paseka, Deranleau, Schlener, Gantt, Boyd. 5th Row: Meador, Sokolowski, Pierce, Sutherland, Shaffer, Joyner, Hardy.



BAKER COMPANY THIRD PLATOON

1st Row: Bruce, Samford, Watson, Lt. Kilby, Eblen, Vreeland, Lord. 2nd Row: Sloan, Flanagan, Bobcek, Wagner, Gould, Taylor, Stanley. 3rd Row: Thaxton, Long, Bell, Dickenson, G. Walker, Hunter, Harig. 4th Row: Marlette, Terrell, Huber, Antaya, Dedo, Leo, Steinbacher. 5th Row: Olson, DeCarli, Venious, Hoffman, Terreri, Gryniowski.





## CHAPTER SEVEN

### *"To the Elbe"*

AS the 89th re-assembled at Ickern, the tide of battle had carried hundreds of miles past the Ruhr, and even now the American Armies were perched on the banks of the Elbe, striving to establish contact with the Russians approaching from the other direction. The need for chemical mortar battalions seemed to have ended, and the men of the 89th began to resign themselves to the prospect of policing chemical factories in the area soon to be governed by the 75th Division.

But meantime, while waiting for higher headquarters to make up their minds, the now battle-hardened troops began to live as human beings once more. Three hot meals a day, mail every day, movies every night, hot and cold showers as the temperament of the "decon truck" went, radios which picked up everything from "Duffy's Tavern" to "Radio Luxembourg" and, above all, sleep and plenty of it, were the order of the day, every day. Though Ickern showed all of the effects of aerial and ground warfare, still there were enough areas left intact to provide comfortable living quarters for all the companies, in addition to divisional units.

The men went about the tiresome but necessary tasks of cleaning and repairing ve-

hicles, weapons, mortars, and weary minds and bodies in a manner which showed that they had passed through their first weeks of combat and come out as veterans. As the days passed, some even found the additional energy for softball, hikes, and curiosity-hunting.

All good things must come to an end, and so passed this interlude. At 1900 on 18 April, just as the companies were getting their evening parties into full swing, the company commanders were summoned to the Battalion CP and given orders for a move halfway across Germany that would bring the 89th back into combat in support of the 84th Division in the vicinity of Magdeburg.

Company advance parties were ordered to leave early the next morning, with the battalion following six hours behind, for Arendsee, near the Elbe, the destination. The orders caught the battalion with its pants trailing its knees, and the mad scramble to prepare for immediate movement was but the preview for another of the Army's editions of "hurry up and wait". For that is exactly what happened.

The advance party, however, got off on schedule, under the command of Major Cameron and including all of the company commanders. Steady traveling in beautiful weath-





The Elbe Bridge

er carried them the whole way in a single day, breezing along unconcernedly within a few miles of the raiding parties that threatened to cut off the Ninth Army supply lines. As darkness fell, the abbreviated convoy pulled in to Arendsee to find Capt. Krizek waiting with orders cancelling the assignment to the 84th Division and assigning the battalion to the 29th Division for a new mission 100 miles back along the route just traveled. Since travel that night back along roads partially in German hands was out of the question, the party settled down for the night near Arendsee.

To this day it is a wonder to the men on that advance party, plus Major Lentz and Capt. Krizek, how they managed to come through on April 19-20 without running smack into a Jerry raiding party. Though succeeding days cleared up the situation for them, on the two days mentioned these groups traveled merrily through dozens of towns and villages under the impression that they were in American hands, although they had not been under American control for three days. On the trip up to Arendsee the men and officers casually wondered why units in the larger towns were setting up a perimeter defense, never realizing that the countryside was not safe for lonely travel.

On the morning after the night spent in Arendsee, the town was attacked by Jerry fighter planes, but the men of the 89th were, for the most part, being quickly awakened when the attack had passed over. Throughout the morning of the 20th on the way back to join the battalion, the advance party drove along the MLR in as innocent and naive a fashion as one could imagine, without drawing one single warning. Small wonder that it seemed like a screwy war.

What had actually happened was this: in the drive for the Elbe the American Ninth Army had outstripped the British so that now the left flank of the XIII Corps was exposed to attack from many small units of the German Army not yet engaged. Organized into raiding

parties, the Germans were cutting out supply trains, burning the trucks, and threatening the existence of the entire supply and communication system. To erase this threat, the 29th Division was brought up from the rear and given the mission of clearing the left flank to the Elbe, while the British finished the job in the north.

While the advance party merrily retraced its steps next morning through towns "held by the enemy", the battalion was on the move. After departing from Ickern on the afternoon of the 19th, the battalion had billeted for the night at Buckeberg. On the move once again the next morning, the leading elements got no farther than Netze before they were sidetracked and whisked off to respective regiments in the 29th for duty—as follows:

Able Co. attached to 115th Inf. Regt.

Baker Co. attached to 116th Inf. Regt.

Charlie Co. attached to 175th Inf. Regt.

An interesting sidelight on the confusion resulting from the changed assignment is the following:

A Headquarters company truck, loaded with men returning from passes to Paris, was met at Ickern by T/Sgt. La Rouche, who had orders to bring the men up to the CP, which was to have been established at Arendsee. The party included a majority of Headquarters wire section, as well as S/Sgt. Ransom and T/4 Allen of the medical detachment.

On their way to Arendsee, they were greeted by numerous cheers and greetings, such as "Hurray for the Infantry". Nearing their arrival at Arendsee, a German ME 109 came down set to kill, but ack-ack fire from American anti-aircraft batteries in the fields nearby frightened the Jerry pilot and he withdrew.

Upon reporting to an infantry colonel from the 84th Division, La Rouche and his men were ordered to stay there for the night and remain under cover as enemy snipers were prevalent. Three of the towns through which they had passed were termed "in enemy hands". On the



following morning the truck made its way to XIII Corps headquarters and received instructions on how to rejoin the 89th.

Able and Baker Companies, meanwhile, took off behind their regiments in a mad dash for the Elbe in which little time was found to set up the guns, much less to fire. No organized opposition of any sort was encountered until the infantry got almost into sight of the river. Charlie Company settled down for target practice, during the same period, on pockets which had been isolated and surrounded.

Able Company joined the 115th at Nettlekamp on the afternoon of the 20th, and moved into action on the following day. In their approach on the town of Godderstadt, the infantry had been stopped and the mortars were called upon to give supporting fire. Lt. Miller headed a forward observation party, including Sgt. Straub, Pfc. Boyles, and Pfc. Leo Brown, which accompanied the infantry, and called for targets which knocked out the opposition and enabled the regiment to take the town by 1900.

On the 22nd the first and second platoons remained in reserve at Godderstadt, and, though ordered to move forward, stayed there all day because the proposed new locations were so crowded with troops.

Early that morning the third platoon was assigned to support the TD's of the second battalion. For a time the infantry was pinned down, but later moved forward without opposition, without calling on the mortars.

During this day, T/5 McCall and Pfc. Rickards went on a house-searching tour and flushed out a civilian who claimed to be an American with treatment as such. He had been a tobacconist in Hamburg, leaving hurriedly after the air raids, but he was professedly so happy to see the American soldiers that he showered them with gifts of cigarette lighters, cigars, and pipes.

During the next two days Able moved often—to Brasche, to Zernien, to Street. On the 24th the infantry borrowed the use of the com-

pany's jeeps to speed the advance to the Elbe. Nothing of interest happened save in the first platoon where Lt. Miller accompanied his drivers and vehicles along with the infantry. Anti-tank mines became more and more numerous, and on one occasion the platoon became lost and had to retrace their route, which revealed that mines had blown up a British vehicle on the same road they had just covered.

The town of Street was about two miles from the Elbe, and the whole area was quiet while Able occupied it. Chief among the daily duties were foraging trips to a binocular factory nearby for souvenirs.

After catching up with Regimental Headquarters at Hankensbüttel on the 20th, Baker Company began touring the high roads and by-roads. While the first and third platoons followed closely behind their respective battalions, the second platoon and company headquarters followed at a distance in reserve. Practically no opposition was encountered for three days and only once was a platoon required to set up its guns.

Large numbers of displaced Russians and Poles were liberated from the surrounding farms as the Yanks advanced, and the third platoon and company headquarters acted the Good Samaritan two times each in as many days with T/5 Arthur Chwalek and Pvt. James Markin providing the linguistic know-how to uncover the evidence on mistreatment of the Allied civilians. On one occasion the third platoon had to use force to stop a riot.

On April 21, the 5th Armored Division sent a task force across the front of the 116th Regiment that crushed German resistance from Salzwedel to the Elbe, and the final day of advance to the Elbe consisted of mopping up Jerries left behind by the tankers. On the evening of the 23rd the regiment was about five miles from the river, just south of the woods known to be full of stragglers. The second battalion, to which the third platoon of Baker was

### Supermen's Super-highways





attached, established a perimeter defense two miles in advance of the rest of the regiment, around a cross-road which had been the scene of bitter fighting the day before. Buildings were still burning and dead GIs and Jerries still lay around. In occupying the position the third platoon took several prisoners, and had to fire on stragglers who occasionally advanced from the woods.

The Company CP at the same time was at Weische, and at 2200 that night a message reached Capt. Esser calling for ten men and three officers to be at Bn Hq at 0600 the next morning for a pass to Paris. Not content to let a few Germans knock anyone out of a Paris trip, the Captain, Lt. Harvey, Pfc. Harig, and Pvt. Markin ventured forth to contact the third platoon. Luck was with them and they brought Lt. Kilby, Sgt. John Paki, and T/5 John Dickenson back with them three hours later. A similar expedition routed Lt. Johnson out of bed at 0200, and he with Sgt. James Murray and Pfc. Ernest Kestner joined the group which rendez-

Commanding General of ALL Jerries PW's in the Northwest sector



Nazis Retreat from Russians into our lines

vous at Luchow and began the long 500-mile journey back into Belgium to catch the pass train.

Next morning the second platoon, which was now committed with the third battalion, was wending its way through artillery fire and over poor roads when their ton and a half truck, overloaded with ammunition and supplies, bogged down in a mud hole. It was necessary to unload the truck and then, only by using a winch was it possible to get the vehicle rolling again.

Baker Company added 19 prisoners to their total when the first platoon bagged that number next morning. During the day all of the platoons moved to the vicinity of Breese, near the river, but only the third platoon fired a mission.

On March 25, all of the platoons of Baker Company fired missions which were to be the final ones fired by the battalion in combat, though several platoons fired registration rounds in the Elbe crossing. The first platoon pinned down a number of Jerries and forced them to scuttle their ammunition and vehicles and to surrender. The second platoon was ordered to fire into Laase, a little town on the southwest bank of the river, and Sgt. Fred Chamberlain's squad did a solo job on the mission. The 60 rounds fired destroyed several houses, started fires, and drew especial commendation from the infantry battalion commander because it enabled the infantry to capture the town with 200 prisoners and 10 machine guns without serious casualties. The third platoon fired one harassing mission.

While Baker and Able Companies were occupied with the frenzied dash to the river, Charlie Company fought the war in style. Initially, the 175th Infantry was not committed so





the company joined the regiment in its assembly area at Kakerbeck, where Lt. Cartledge has remarked that the company went from the best residential areas in a city one night to the cold wet woods in Kakerbeck the next, not a pleasant comparison.

On the following day the infantry cleared out a woods occupied by 400 Wehrmacht and SS troopers from the Von Clausewitz defense group. 120 rounds of HE was the only preparatory fire used by the regiment and this was fired by the third platoon of Charlie. Later the second came along to help put 42 more rounds of HE into the woods in direct support of the advance. The remainder of the company stayed in reserve. By 1900 the woods were cleared and all of the units moved into the city of Klotze for the night.

The 22nd and 23rd brought no missions for the company which enjoyed the comparative luxury of the Corps' Headquarters town. On the 23rd, convoys of mortarmen were taken by Capt. Landback to Gardelegen to see firsthand the results of the atrocity committed by the SS, in which hundreds of innocent political prisoners had been locked in a barn which was then saturated with gasoline and set fire to. Late that afternoon reconnaissance parties left to select mortar positions from which an attack to clear another patch of woods could be supported.

East and west of Mellen a pocket of Germans were entrenched in a woods, and into that woods the first and second platoons poured 550 rounds of HE as preparation for the attack. H-Hour was delayed to allow a public address system vehicle offer the enemy a chance to surrender after the heavy barrage, but the psychological maneuver received

negative results. The third platoon, which had been held in reserve, came up to support the other two at 1200, soon after which the infantry jumped off. During the advance HE and WP were fired ahead of advancing companies and the woods were successfully cleared.

Next day the company moved into position to fire on a 15-mile square area in the Forst Knesebeck, a woods south of Wittingen. At the last minute, however, the regimental commander cancelled the firing because the S-2 could not positively identify troops in the target area which were suspected to be friendly. In mid-afternoon the mission was cancelled and the platoons moved to Grussendorf.

**HQ** When Cartwheel had originally been attached to the 29th on April 20th, the Battalion CP was temporarily set up at Uetze, but on the next day it moved to Wieren. From here it dispatched two ammunition trucks to Charlie Company that took nine hours to make the trip because of necessary detours around enemy-controlled points.



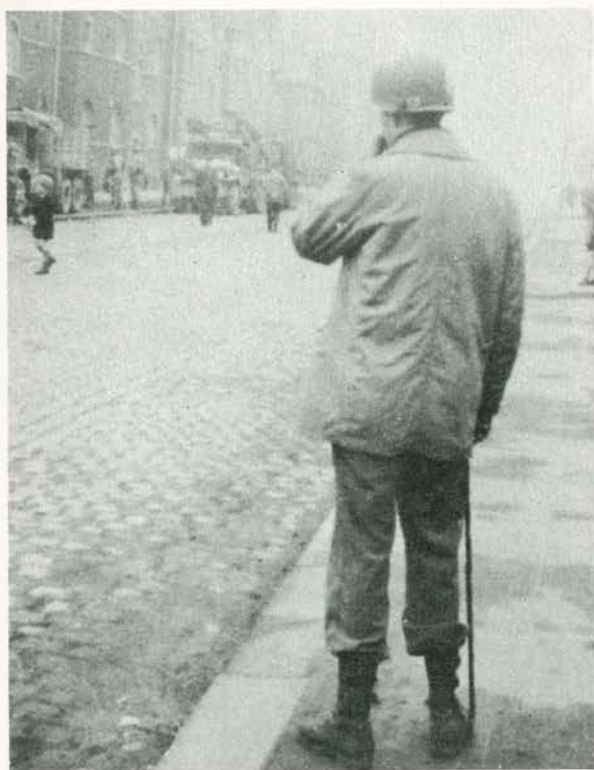


Until April 24, the CP remained at Wieren, while the staff members made daily trips, in order to keep track of the companies. On that date a move was made to Wustrow. By midnight on the 25th all fighting south of the Elbe had ceased and troops were scattered to military police duties, with the 89th moving to an area around Klenze, under the control of the 747th Tank Battalion. Able Company went to Leiftz, Baker to Krote, and Charlie to Gaddau. Each company was given motor patrol duties on the main supply route.

Since the Elbe River was rumored to be the international boundary, most of the men believed that the last combat mission had been completed, that the war was over for the 89th in Europe. This was a natural opinion to hold, even though it was to be rudely changed.

In the first few days of duty recreational programs were set up by the companies; the showers at Battalion CP went into high gear; and the troops once more began to relax a bit. On the 28th one change took place which assigned to Able Company the job of policing a chemical plant in the 115th Regimental area. Red Cross mobile canteens made their appearance at Cartwheel CP, and the men enjoyed coffee, doughnuts, and American music from American girls.

Headquarter's Ammo



Rest stop in a German village

This time spent in the vicinity of Klenze was the only military government duty performed by the battalion during their entire stay in Germany. However, it was not to last long, for on April 29 orders were received that were to send the mortarmen to witness the final drama of victory in Europe.







Cutting it close

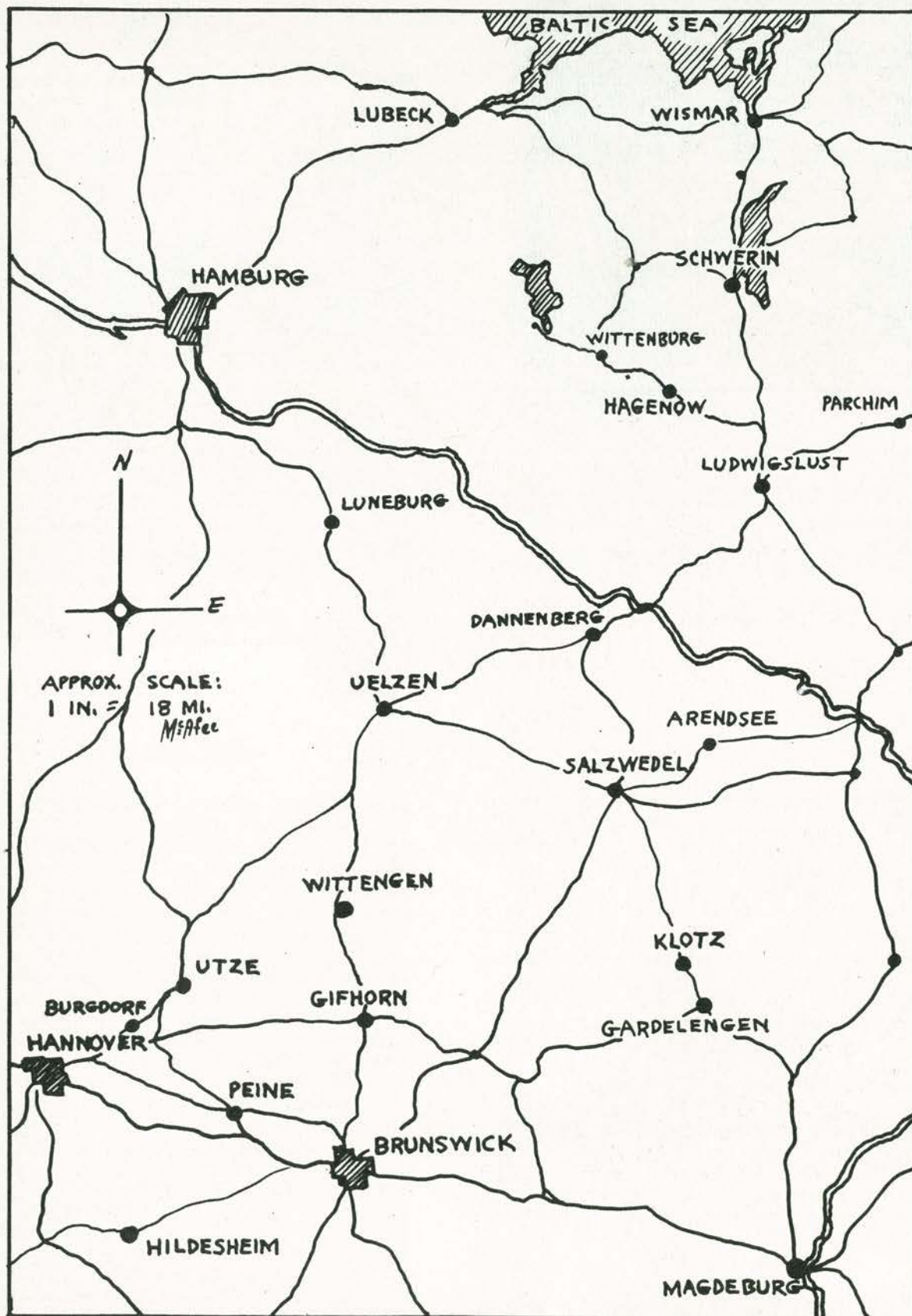


The famous German "88"  
set up at Magdeburg

Transportation

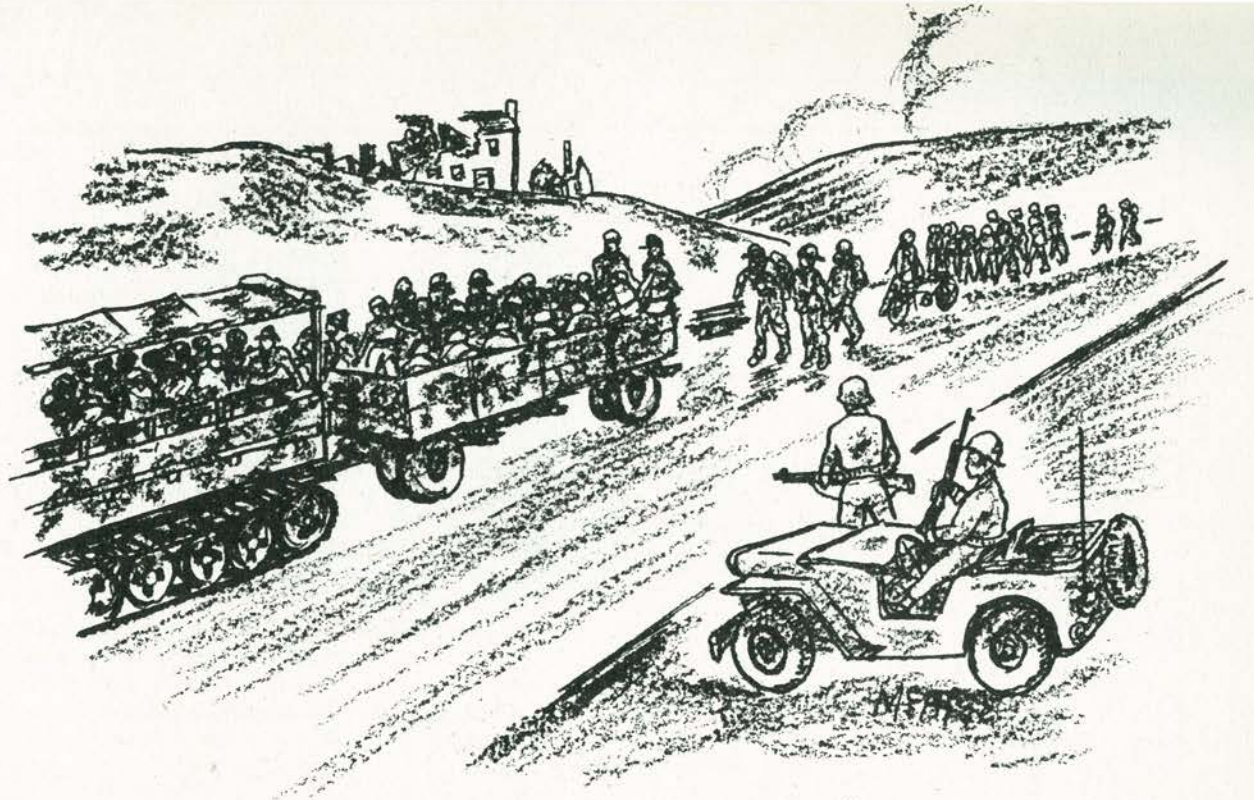






Area covered in campaigns North and South of Elbe River





## CHAPTER EIGHT

### *"Victory"*

**S**UDDENLY, on the 29th of April, when everyone in the Battalion was anticipating a long seige of occupation, an emergency meeting of company commanders was called at Battalion headquarters in Klenze. Cartwheel had received orders relieving it from the XIII Corps and attaching it to the XVIII Corps (Airborne), which at that time had become an integral part of the British Second Army just north of the U. S. Ninth.

The mission of the Second Army was to cross the Elbe south of Hamburg and contact the Russians at Wismar on the Baltic Sea, at the same time cutting off all German troops in Denmark. The operation was designed to be one of the final pushes to bring about the capitulation of the enemy.

Immediately after the staff meeting, company commanders organized billeting parties and proceeded to Uelzen, Germany, where Major Lentz met them and gave them further information about the deployment of their units.

XVIII Corps had decided to attach Able Company to the 504th Infantry of the 82nd Airborne Division, and Baker and Charlie companies were sent to a veteran regular army Division, the Eighth (Arrowhead). The former

company was attached to the 28th Infantry, and the latter to the 121st.

Each unit was assigned to billeting areas, and after securing shelter for their companies, the commanders returned to Klenze to prepare for the move. Early on the morning of the 30th, Headquarters, Baker, and Charlie companies moved out of their AMG posts and headed for their assigned destinations. Battalion Headquarters moved to Seedorf, Germany, where they set up an efficient communication system with existing commercial lines. Baker company moved to the town of Boddenstedt, in proximity to the CP of the 28th Infantry, and Charlie company moved into the 121st Regimental area at Poitzen.

But poor, unfortunate Able company was not allowed a minute of preparation before they were pushed into the front lines again. Through a cold night of rain and snow the company drove to positions near Bleckede, Germany where they arrived at the beginning of the crossing of the 82nd. Artillery fire and frequent strafing made it impossible for the Second platoon to move their vehicles up to their positions, and the men were forced to go in on foot.

An FO party consisting of Lt. Miller, Lt.





Final Bridgehead

Sharpe, S/Sgt. Haecker, Cpl. Humphrey, Cpl. Mokscay, and Cpl. Ward proceeded to contact the forward elements of the assaulting infantry. While waiting for transportation across the Elbe by a British operated "Buffalo", several rounds of enemy artillery came in at their loading site, resulting in the instant death of Cpl. Humphrey and injuries to Lt. Miller, Sgt. Haecker, and Cpl. Ward; Haecker and Ward were evacuated to the hospital.

A new FO party crossed the river, but the infantry did not request the use of the mortars, and the company remained on the west bank awaiting further orders. Heavy artillery fire was encountered all day, so heavy that the ammunition section attached to the company later stated that this was their toughest spot during combat.

On May 1, Able company crossed the river. On the other side many mines were uncovered, some containing as high as 15 lbs. of high explosive. These mechanisms were so potent that even large trucks and tanks were thrown some distance by the concussion.

Once the bridgehead had been expanded to facilitate movement, the opposition became negligible, and the men didn't have to unload the mortars all day. Evening found the First platoon at Heidorf, and the remainder of the company at Eldine.

Baker company crossed the Elbe near Hintelhagen, and moved into a soggy marshy



'Nuff said

field near 28th Infantry headquarters on May 1. The night, a cold, rainy one, was the first the company had spent in the open since the Rhine crossing, but the men made the most of several large straw stacks in the vicinity, and everyone spent a comfortable night.

Early the following morning the platoons lined up behind their respective infantry battalions, and waited for word to move out. Good roads were few in the bridgehead, and traffic was stalled, sometimes for an hour or more. Vehicles were lined up bumper to bumper for miles with columns of infantry in the middle of the road. The set would have been the Luftwaffe's delight, but their planes were unavoidably grounded.

After a few hours of confusion and congregation the columns began to fan out and advance. Tank riding doughboys of the 121st had dashed through the area early, and no Krauts were uncovered by the 28th. Eventually, they too tired of walking, and loading on every semblance of a vehicle, they advanced swiftly for the remainder of the day. When they finally pulled up for the night, the regiment had cleared half the distance to the Elbe. The infantry CP was set up, and Baker company headquarters dropped off at Sandkrug where they could supply their platoons located in nearby towns.

After a long blackout drive, Charlie company crossed the river at 0130 May 1. Like Baker company, the unit could find no shelter in the sparsely settled farm land and they, too, slept out for the remainder of the night. A little flat trajectory fire was encountered during the night, but no damage was done.

Early in the morning the mortars were emplaced for the infantry's jump off, but there was nothing to shoot so the company packed up again and followed the 121st doughs. At Rugensee, the regiment was ordered to spearhead the right flank drive of the Second Army to the Baltic, and the tank riding doughboys



got as far as Schwerin before they contacted the Russian horde.

Shortly before it stopped, the convoy was harassed by a Stuka dive bomber who came in low apparently expecting no trouble. He was, no doubt, thoroughly surprised because machine guns all along the column opened up and he was shot down almost immediately. Sgt. Melrose contributed his share of the fire from the .50 caliber gun on the communications truck.

A gasoline shortage threatened to force some vehicles to a stop during the spearhead advance, but when each can in the company was squeezed dry, there proved to be enough to keep everyone moving.

All companies were catching a night's rest, and preparing to move on when there began the unforgettable surrender en masse of the proud and highly vaunted German army. The following three days will constitute one of the most amazing pages in history, and they will long live in the minds of every American soldier who was fortunate enough to witness the drama. For days the roads were filled with jostling, interminable columns of broken, beaten, but inexplicably happy German soldiers. They came in every form of conveyance; tractors, trucks, half-tracks, civilian automobiles, horse drawn wagons; and those that couldn't crowd onto one of the vehicles, trod perseveringly along the side of the road.

But there were more than German soldiers in the surrender column. The hausfraus and the whole family rode along in the back of the wagons, swinging their legs gayly over the sides; and when a halt was called for a meal, they would produce a few scrubby pots and search for food to beg, borrow, or steal.

For the less fortunate single soldiers Herr Hitler had evidently provided patriotic frauleins as companions, and, although the allotment was slim, everyone concerned seemed to be quite contented with the arrangement.

### The Last Man



After the first influx of soldiers had subsided, the entire civilian population of Northern Germany attempted to solicit the protection of the American armies. Fleeing from fabled Russian oppression, the innocent Krauts immediately accepted the GIs as bosom buddies and wanted to know when the Yanks were going to fight the Russians; they were all anxious to help.

Every mortarman increased his store of wealth (at the expense of the German army's Ordnance Corps) during the surrender. GIs lined the roads, accepting tokens of surrender, watches, binoculars, cameras, pistols, any insignificant souvenirs that the Jerries were unwilling to part with. When the excitement was over, everyone had an assortment of pistols that would drive most collectors mad.

Ben Cothorn, of the First platoon of Able company looked like a one man jewelry shop, but despite the aid of his numerous timepieces, he had considerable trouble being at the right place at the proper time.

Shortly after the surrender began, Battalion headquarters crossed the river and located at Hagenow near the Corps CP. The personnel was somewhat perturbed to find that they were a little too far in the rear to collect any weapons from the Germans; there were numerous trips to the forward area, but they produced few pistols, and most of the headquarters souvenirs had to be donated by friends in the line companies.

For the men that were able to see it, Ludwigslust prison camp was a gruesome and poignant record of what the armies were struggling to eradicate in the three and a half long years of war against Naziism. Who could forget the sickening odor emanating from the freshly opened mass graves as bodies of political and military prisoners of all nationalities were uncovered by reluctant German civilians; who could forget the appalling sight of emaciated, weakened internees lying helplessly on their dirt pallets beside their neighbors who had died, perhaps within the last hour, of utter starvation. Words would never be sufficient to describe the horrible picture; and every man that saw it fervently wished he could take the complete perspective with him to show to the unbelievers.

Immediately after the surrender began, Able and Baker companies were assigned to police details with their particular regiments. Able company helped the 504th Infantry clear away, and destroy all enemy equipment in their area, and Baker company operated infantry outposts for the control of military and civilian traffic.

Charlie company, located in a group of farm houses between Wismar and Schwerin, was assigned to the task of guarding prisoners as numerous cages containing several thousand Jerries had to be kept under constant surveillance. After a few days of rural life, the company moved into Schwerin where they



could continue their work in a more pleasant atmosphere. There was even the rare privilege of electricity, and those who didn't have radios soon acquired them while the luxury lasted.

May 9th, 1945 was declared V-E Day by President Truman, but it was an anti-climax for the troops north of the Elbe. Their excitement was over by that time, and their only concern was who was slated for the Pacific first. The question of direct passage or routing through the states was on everybody's tongue.

General Eisenhower, the Supreme Commander, generously allotted all troops champagne, wine, and cognac for the celebration of the victory. Although there was hardly enough for each man to wet his throat, it was still a pleasant wetting.

When two Russian soldiers infiltrated across the international boundary, they were well entertained by members of the First platoon of Able company. Pfc. Zollo, for his exciting floor show, was rewarded by two Russians who showered him with kisses throughout the party.

As suddenly as the order for attachment had come, so came the detachment papers. The Battalion was given a few hours to wind up their activities in the Corps area before it began its movement back across the Elbe to the XIII Corps.



Spring and Peace



Prisoner Cage



V-E Day

Mechanized Panzer Armies







Russian — Pole — Jew — American

Mass Graves



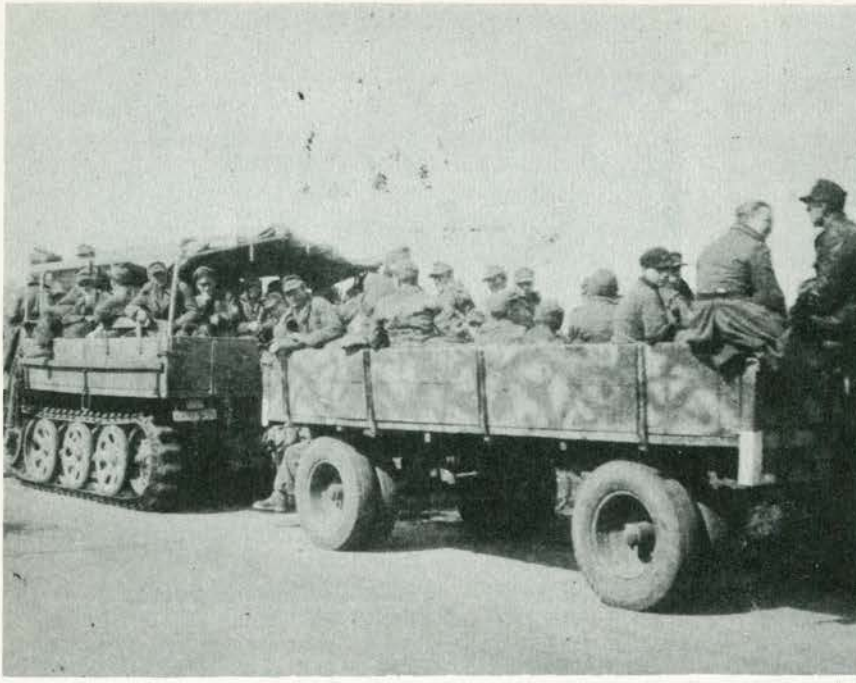
Gardelegen Human Barriers

Political Prisoner

Horror of Ludwigst







Remnants of the German Armies

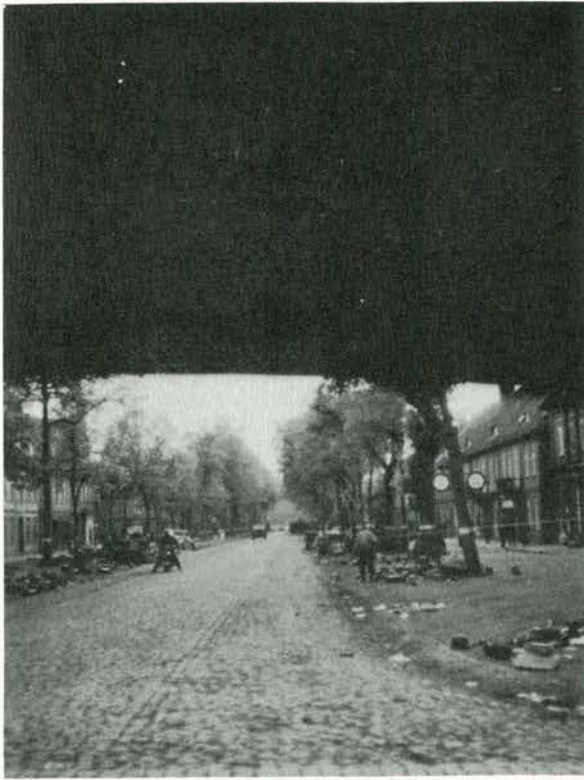


Demobilized

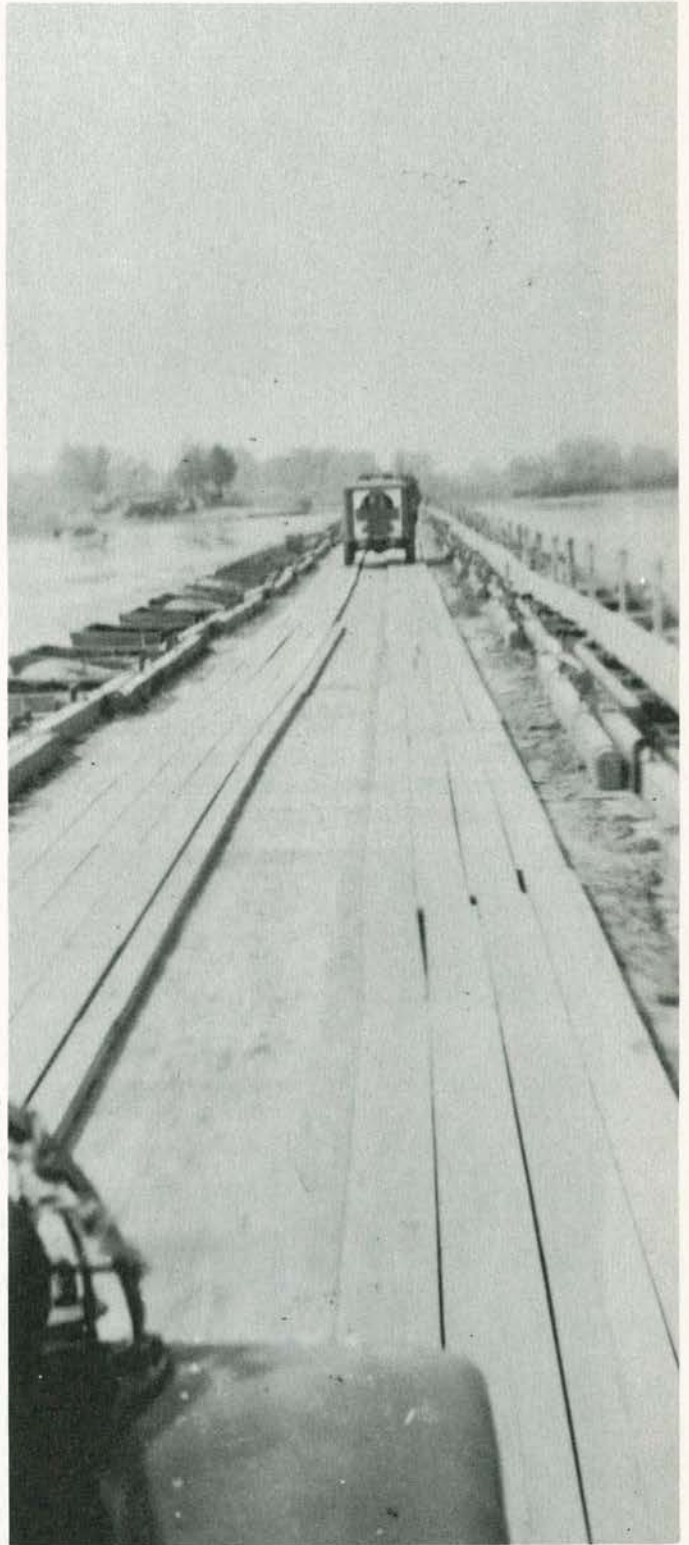


Back to Nature





Statement of changes



The Last River



And soft beds





CHARLIE COMPANY HEADQUARTERS

1st Row: Hoselton, Perna, Lt. Hagan, Capt. Landback, Lt. Cartledge, Willoughby, Olson.  
 2nd Row: Ziegler, Goldey, Bolander, Cecil, McKillop, Colvard. 3rd Row: Goodwin, Hainley,  
 Butler, Barnett, Zakrajsek. 4th Row: Sanford, Ferguson, Wall, Hartfield, Binnicker, Briggs, By-  
 non. 5th Row: Lanz, Ames, Yee, Pigott.



CHARLIE COMPANY FIRST PLATOON

1st Row: Gibbons, Berrier, Marcil, Carson, Lt. Wance, Sexton, Cherry, Lobdell. 2nd Row:  
 Tyer, Wooden, Vanesse. 3rd Row: Haley, C. Burson, Stowers, Allen. 4th Row: Winklebauer,  
 McGee, Peacock, Mrozek, Gill, Stipe, Hamilton. 5th Row: T. Burson, Barnes, Kasperak,  
 Strawn, Wiegert, Horsfield.





CHARLIE COMPANY SECOND PLATOON

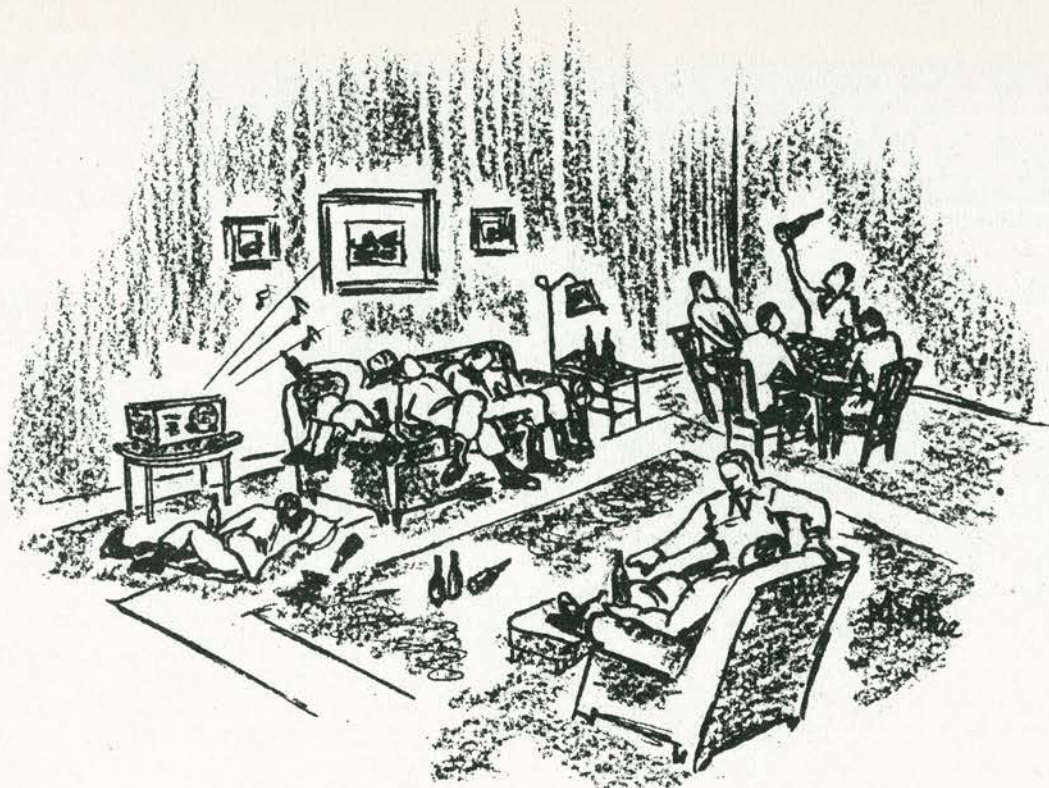
1st Row: Clark, Hornstein, Lt. Ritzman, Towns, Browning, Amling. 2nd Row: Jewett, Sherwood, Matthews, Turner, Wilson, Nothacker. 3rd Row: Ludwico, Lewis, Hontz, W. Erickson, Olson, Robach. 4th Row: Henderson, Kolupski. 5th Row: Philips, Sutton, Hood, Dubogai, Mahoney.



CHARLIE COMPANY THIRD PLATOON

1st Row: Zuercher, Harlan, Lt. Linton, Lt. McDowell, Heyser, Mayer, Sullivan, R. Erickson. 2nd Row: Mercer, P. Gill, Trosin, Tiger, Keithley, Rolfe, Koehler. 3rd Row: Shannon, Rickner, Volack, Billings. 4th Row: Breedon, Bru-baker, Paquin, Wyatt, Trosin, Hertel. 5th Row: Kress, Stevens, Seigman, Hobschied, Fulton.





## CHAPTER NINE

### *"Home Again"*

**T**WO days after official V-E Day, while the western world was still celebrating its freedom from oppression, the 89th left Hagenow on what proved to be the first leg of their long journey back to the land they had left five months before. By platoon serials the companies moved out of the Baltic parts to the vicinity of Gardelegen where they were to be attached to the 102nd Division.

However, as each serial arrived at Gardelegen, the commander was notified of a change in orders and told to proceed to a small town by the name of Bortfeld, 9 miles from Ninth Army Headquarters at Braunschweig. The convoy, after a hot, tortuous afternoon of riding, and a number of wrong turns in the route, finally arrived at Bortfeld late in the day.

Houses and beds were difficult to find in the village, and the advance parties had barely secured billets for their companies when the men arrived. Some of the platoons were crowded up in small houses with an insufficient number of beds, but additional houses were acquired the next morning, making the living conditions more pleasant.

Signs of imminent overseas shipment were manifest the first Sunday at Bortfeld when the enlisted personnel were subjected to a rugged POM physical examination. Oddly enough, it was the first overseas physical that everyone wanted to pass; they were sure the next sea voyage would be in the right direction.

At Bortfeld the battalion was again attached to the XIII Corps and on the 15th of May, as everyone had suspected, the 89th was alerted for shipment within 30 days. To make the men feel closer to home and garrison life, a training schedule was made up commencing with reveille at 0645. The schedule was a very liberal one, emphasizing athletics and training films. Softball and volleyball leagues were organized, and each platoon was instructed to have a team for each sport. Although many interesting contests were played, the results of the leagues were never published so no one knew how they stood.

The sport that captured and held the interest of the battalion was the formation of the Cartwheel Softball League. Consisting of teams representing each of the four companies, the league sponsored a scheduled game every evening during the week. Many stars were uncovered in the games, with the result that team managers built up four well functioning combinations that held the athletic attention of the battalion for the duration of its stay in Germany.

An All-Star battalion team composed of the leading players from the four company teams played one doubleheader away from home while at Bortfeld. Journeying to play the 3rd Separate Battalion, the Cartwheel boys were walloped 10-2 in the first game, but managed to eke out a 2-1 margin in the second contest which was called at the end of five innings.



More POM qualifications were fulfilled. The battalion underwent a dental survey and attention was given to those who needed it. A rifle range was constructed a few miles from town and the companies expended their excess ammunition at ranges of 100, 200, and 300 yards.

The town theater was taken over by the battalion and many of the latest films were shown to the men. The theater ran two shows a night except when the schedule was interrupted by mechanical or electrical disturbances.

A canal a few blocks from Charlie Company's area on the edge of town furnished the men with a wartime version of the old swimming hole. They were allowed to go in small groups with a non com in charge. Although the majority enjoyed swimming in the cold, invigorating water, a few apparently went to take sun baths. Perhaps the sun addicts were drawn by the scenery which was gracefully augmented by a good percentage of the town's female population.

At Bortfeld the pass situation took a sharp turn for the better. Allotments were increased considerably and partial payments were drawn for the benefit of those in financial distress. Groups were sent to Paris, Brussels, and the Heerlen Rest Center for three days, but the coveted vacation which came to only a few was the seven day furlough at the French Riviera, the GIs European playground.

Vehicles were given a thorough overhauling in the two weeks the battalion was at Bortfeld. After being cleaned and reprocessed they were all repainted and stenciled. However, the German

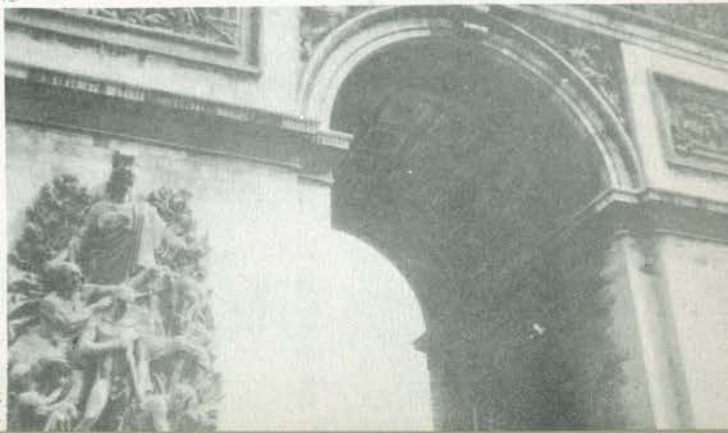
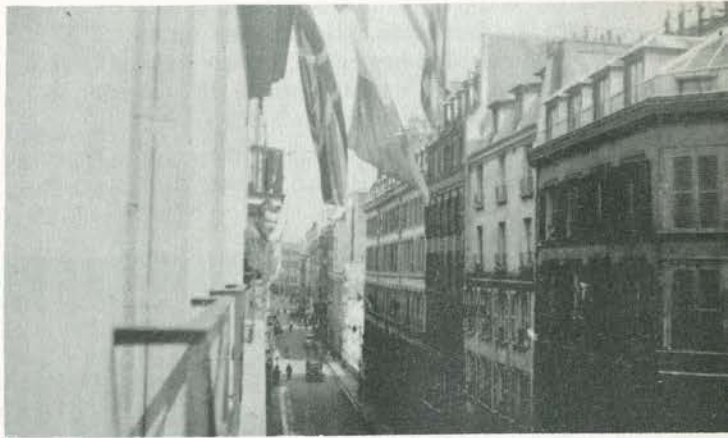
vehicles which had been acquired in its travels were lost to the battalion. They were hauled away to Ordnance, and many a tear was shed as the convoy composed of 21 vehicles of all descriptions moved out of sight.

Before going ahead to re-supply the battalion for its return trip across the continent and home, the S-4 section, under Capt. Murray, took stock of its operations during the campaign and came up with some interesting facts.

While on the continent, the battalion vehicles were driven an approximate total of 631,000 miles. The headquarters mechanics, under M/Sgt. Louis Goldstein, repaired 50 to 60 punctures daily, of which 15 to 20 required replacement, and also proved to be prime procurers of priority equipment, for scarce hot patches were plentiful in the 89th. Worthy of note, also, is the luxurious fittings of the Motor Pool wrecker, which had undoubtedly the fanciest traveling living quarters in the battalion.

Supply in the battalion was a business of dealing often from several hundred miles behind the front with rear area Corps and Army dumps to front line distribution, repair and issue of food, equipment, fuels, clothing, ammunition, and the thousand other needs of a combat unit. Aside from the superior job of ammunition supply handled under Lt. Feeks and his ammunition sections, one of the most striking features of supply was the speed with damaged mortar parts were replaced. During just two days at the Rhine, A and B Companies burned out nine barrels and drew immediate replacement. Following is a table showing the replacement and repair from each of the three companies during combat.

### Gay Pares





	Co. A	Co. B	Co. C
Mortar, 4.2 inch, complete	4	6	3
Barrel, complete	13	5	6
Baseplate, complete	4	4	7
Standard, complete	8	2	2
Screw, elevating	3	6	7
Fork-barrel, locking	11	17	22
Sight, 4.2 inch Mortar	1	1	1
Stakes, aiming	1	19	0
Light device, aiming post	1	4	0

In the ammunition line, a grand total of 50,079 rounds of ammunition were fired by the three companies in a little over two months of combat, with Able Company being credited with a little over half of the total as a result of the screen fired on the crossing of the Rhine.

Only casualty of the battalion at Bortfeld was Pfc. Shaeffer of Baker Company's second platoon when he was accidentally shot in the leg with a carbine. First wounded during the preparatory firing across the Rhine, Shaeffer was soon tagged as the "Lead Man". After a few days in the hospital he returned to the company with a slight limp.

The tragic case of Baker Company's ball diamond is also worth of note. The third platoon worked tirelessly to produce a ball diamond from a cow pasture. Sod was removed for the infield, the ground was graded and rolled and rolled and rolled, with the acquisition and operation of the 10-ton roller creating a story in itself. When the ex-pasture was finally ready to become the scene of historic diamond conquests, the battalion moved, leaving the stadium to the cows and the British.

Everyone had become well situated in Bortfeld when word came down from the powers that the 89th would move again. Scheduled passes were immediately cancelled and everything was prepared to leave within 48 hours. It was announced that the battalion would move on the 28th of May, and on Monday morning the vehicles were cranked up and headed south in the general direction of Frankfurt on the Main.

The 180 mile journey southwest from Braunschweig was made at such a fast clip that the

majority of the battalion's photographers didn't have time to get many shots of the beautiful scenery through which the convoy passed.

Hot and dusty from their long trip, the last miles of which had been on a dirt road, the convoy arrived late in the afternoon at a group of woods in an abandoned Luftwaffe airfield outside of the town of Nidda, 12 miles from Freidburg.

Although everyone admitted that their luck had been extraordinary thus far, they had still hoped for something better than the hard ground for a bed. However, they were soon cautioned that it was only through good fortune and fast talking that they would be allowed the shelter of the woods. Two battalions nearby were lining up their tents in the open field where the hot sun beat down on them without mercy.

After parking the vehicles in the semblance of a battalion formation, the men moved into their allotted areas. Impervious to the piles of German bombs that dotted the woods, they pitched their little used tents and cooked 10-in-1 rations over makeshift fires.

The next morning came the big picture. The unit was attached to the XIX Corps. At Nidda it was to be processed for redeployment to the States, which procedure would take anywhere from 15 to 21 days depending on the cooperation of the men. Naturally, everyone was more than willing to assist.

Everyone soon became accustomed to living in the field again. The areas were cleared of brush and undergrowth, and everywhere the manifestations of camp handiwork, complicated huts, clothes racks, and wash stands sprung up.

The training schedule was still followed at Nidda although most of the time was devoted to the care of equipment in anticipation for the forthcoming Inspector General's inspection.

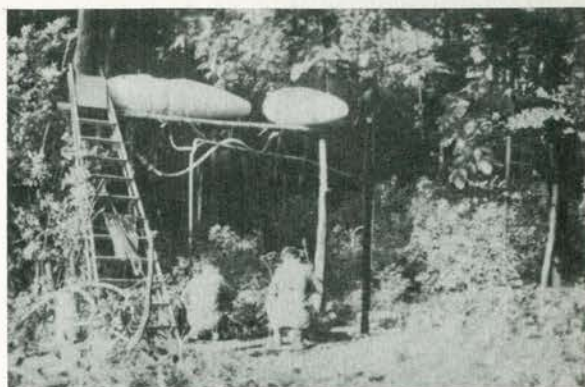
With the aid of a friendly bulldozer areas were cleared for another softball field and volley ball court for each company. Platoon games were again scheduled for the afternoon, but interest in the Cartwheel League games flourished and occupied the attention of the sports fans.



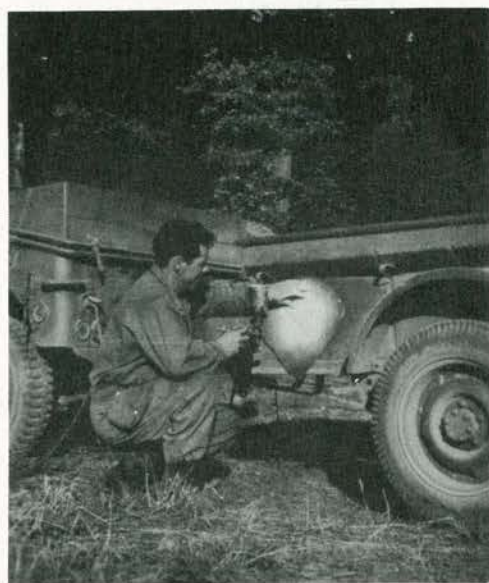




Vehicles at Nidda, Germany



Running Water



Paint job



Signs and the painter

Competition became stiffer when Battalion Headquarters, the weak sister of the league, suddenly acquired a speedball hurler in a group of replacements. Behind the superb twirling of Pvt. Roger L. Sawtell, Headquarters quickly vacated the cellar position and climbed to the top. As the season progressed, more and more rabid fans were drawn to the contests, and more and more money exchanged hands as team advocates backed their favorites with cold cash.

The betting fever reached its peak at the final contest between Headquarters and Baker Companies. After seven innings of thrill packed ball, Headquarters emerged the victor, 8-7. Pfc. Geller, who held the money for Baker Company backers, turned over approximately \$150 at the end of the contest.

Final standings of the Cartwheel League were as follows:

	Won	Lost
Headquarters	5	4
Baker	5	4
Able	4	5
Charlie	4	5

Twice a day those who wished were hauled into Nidda to swim. At the modern cement pool the men swam, dived, acquired sun tans, and played volley ball. A town hall next to the pool served as a theater for the several battalions in the vicinity. Pictures were shown twice nightly to capacity crowds.

One of the favorite activities at Nidda was the trip to the mineral baths at Bad Nauheim. On these trips the men took fresh water and salt baths at a resort, swam in Bad Nauheim's swimming pool, and played tennis or loafed at the Red Cross. The trips commenced as four hour affairs in the mornings, but gradually the time was advanced till they were all day trips.

A few miles north of Bad Nauheim was a mountain retreat known as Hitler's Hideout. An underground network of passages and rooms that finally emerged into what had once been a luxurious hunting lodge, the hideout was a disappointment to most of the men since it had been stripped of all its furnishings and anything that might be construed as a souvenir, and there was nothing to see but the bare walls.

Company cooks lost their buddies when they were ordered to send their permanent KPs home from Nidda. The helpers, Belgians and French who had been picked up a month previously, had been offering their services in exchange for transportation back to their own countries.





Stalwart Crew

All ammunition, excess weapons, overcoats, and other items of equipment were turned into Supply Sergeants at Nidda. In addition to the turn ins, requisitions were drawn, and between the two, the keepers of the stores were kept well occupied.

The big event in the woods was the inevitable Inspector General's visit. Records were brought up to date, equipment laid out, and full field gear of each man displayed for the assortment of brass that invaded Camp Cartwheel. The Inspector General found the battalion's vehicles to be the finest he had seen in his 20 years of experience, and the unit as a whole received a rating of superior. As a reward the men were given a vacation of a day and a half.

Although there were no passes to the Black Market centers, the men still sold and traded pistols among themselves and neighboring units. The weapons were cleaned and oiled carefully to be in condition for the approaching sea voyage. Carbines and M-1s were neglected and even forgotten while everyone worked on their German weapons.

After several months of free PX rations the men of the 89th again started to pay for their candy and cigarettes. Sgt. Erdman, the PX man, built himself a home at the busiest intersection in Camp Cartwheel, and he and a few assistants dispensed cokes, candy bars, cigarettes, and gum to the battalion.

After the I. G. inspection one could hear rumors of the advance party to the States. It seemed to be only a matter of days till it left, yet nothing official was said about it. The stories came to a head when each man was issued government forms to notify correspondents to stop writing. Simultaneously, the unit censorship of mail ceased. Everyone knew it wouldn't be long then.

And it wasn't long. The following Monday advance parties from each company left the woods headed for Camp Lucky Strike situated on the coast of France between Dieppe and Le Havre.

Bad weather plagued the men of the advance detachment during their two day journey. The rain and cold followed them all the way out of Germany and into Luxembourg City where they spent the night at the Luxembourg Rest Center. Expecting something similar to the gay night life of Paris and other European capitals, the men were sadly disappointed to find Luxembourg just a good rest center. Civilians even had plenty of cigarettes.

A little excitement was promised the next night



Motor Pool



Maintenance



Sweating it out





Hitler's Hideout at Schloss Ziegenburg near  
Bad Nauheim



The Fountains at Bad Nauheim



Sunbathing at lake near Nidda. Sgt. Easton, Cpl.  
Bombe, Tec/4 Eufemia, Pfc. Corder, Tec/4  
Belloni

when Major Cameron, who was in charge of the party, planned to stop at Amiens, France. The city looked promising enough, but unfortunately it was off limits of ground force troops (to make room for air force personnel stationed outside of town) and the convoy was forced to go all the way through to Lucky Strike.

The rest of the battalion moved out of Nidda two days after the advance party left. After an uneventful trip which included one overnight stop at Trier, the 89th stopped at a convoy bivouac area near Soisson.

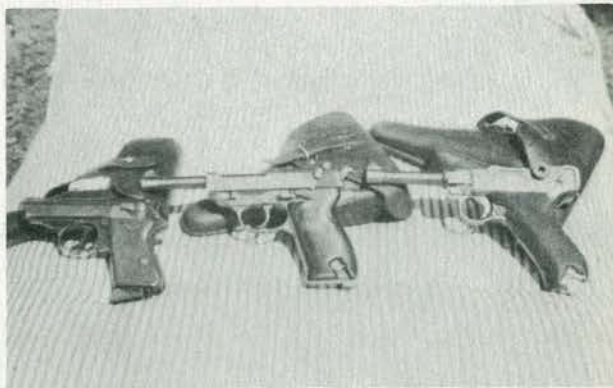
This stop proved to be a peddler's paradise. The men dragged out all the loot, clothing, and bedding they had been carrying for months, and the opulent but needy French thronged to the area to buy up everything in sight. Every salesman gathered his merchandise into a little pile and waited till someone took a fancy to it. Despite minor linguistic difficulties everyone disposed of their goods that night.

Early the next afternoon the convoy moved into Lucky Strike, and the tired, grimy men climbed out of their vehicles and crawled into the waiting cots.

The consensus of the men was that Lucky Strike was a much better staging area than Twenty Grand had been. Built on what had once been a spacious airdrome, the camp had a network of concrete and steel runways which very suitably took care of the camp's traffic. Troops were housed in pyramidal tents which, although crowded, were adequate protection against the hot sun of the days and the cool of the nights.

One of the principal modes of recreation was the ever popular sun bathing. Lacking a beach, swimming suits, and the other essentials, the men merely striped and moved their cots out of the tents. The ensuing nine days produced scores of handsome, brown physiques, and a few extremely red ones.

The Red Cross was very active at Lucky Strike. Coffee and cocoa and sandwiches were served every afternoon and evening, and literature and games were available in the serviceman's center in D block. There were several theaters in camp, and during the battalion's stay several USO shows (with French performers) entertained large audiences. But perhaps the greatest diversion of all was the shower unit. Nothing was needed; a man could take a shower with GI soap, pick up a clean hot towel, exchange his dirty underwear or socks for clean ones, and leave with a much happier prospective on living. It had been a long time



Fire arms of the Jerries: Walther 7.65,  
P-38, and Luger





Tent City



Soaking up the sun



LCT

since the men had had hot showers with an abundance of water, and they made the most of the opportunity.

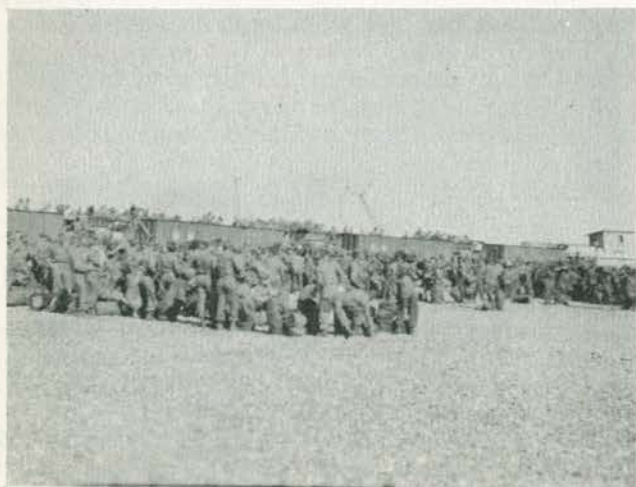
A few days after the battalion arrived at Lucky Strike, all the vehicles were turned in at Le Havre. They were soon followed by the weapons, and other equipment; a minimum of T.A.T. was boxed.

Throughout the eight days at the staging area rumors were rampant; they reached their climax on Saturday afternoon when the men were notified that the largest United States Hospital ship, the USS George Washington, was at Le Havre waiting for the battalion.

Soon after the first inklings reached the men, it was confirmed that T.A.T. would be loaded early the following morning, and that the personnel would embark later in the day.

Last minute packing and policing details kept the men busy Sunday morning and early afternoon. Finally, at approximately 1500, everyone carried their equipment out to the road where they lined up in passenger list order to await the arrival of the trucks.

The transportation proved to be the same type of trucks that first ushered the men into the heart of the European Theater of Operations, and after forty miles of familiar bouncing and jolting on the French improved road

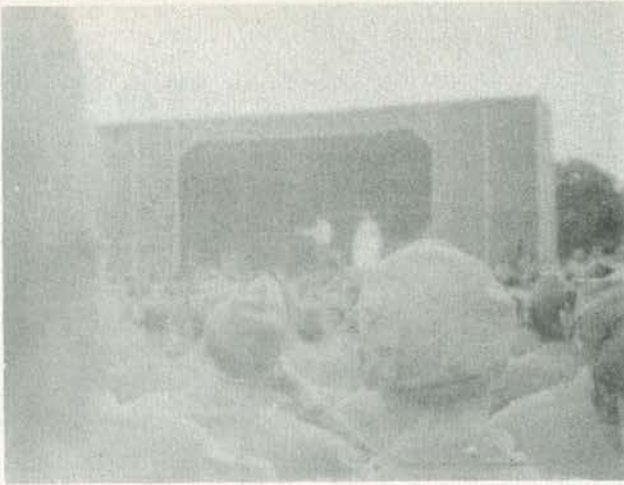


Last ETO truckride



Le Havre





**Camp Lucky Strike**



**Soisson**

system, the trucks pulled up at the same beach that four months before had welcomed the vehicles of the 89th.

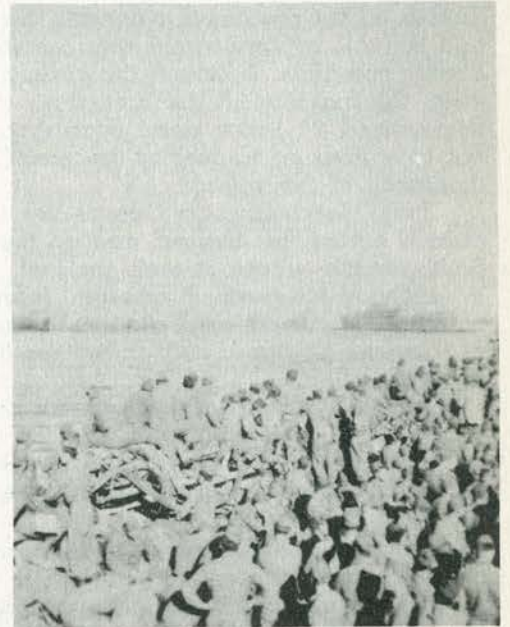
Loading the entire battalion on one LCT proved to be quite a squeeze, but the trip out to the George Washington was short, and not too uncomfortable. After all, one could endure a little discomfort when he was going home.

Early Sunday evening the men were stowed away in the bowels of the big ship, little the worse for climbing up and down several flights of steps with bulky, overloaded duffle bags.

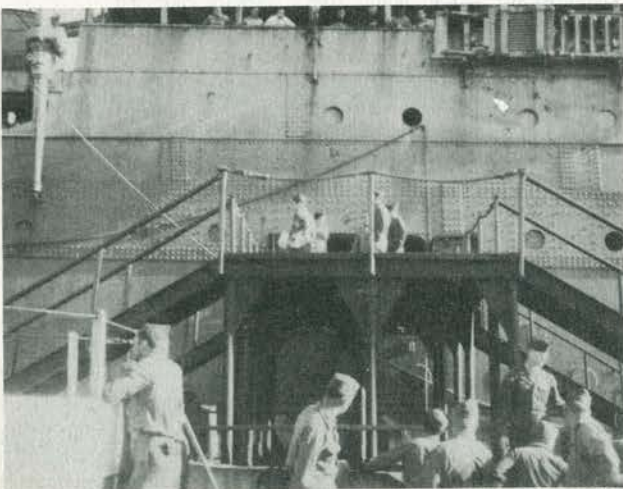
The ship's officers, behind the protective shelter of their blustering public address system, were not adverse to admitting that the 89th had the good fortune to be on one of the most comfortable ships afloat, and although there would be some work on board, after a pleasant voyage of eight days the ship would dock at New York.

The next afternoon the George Washington moved laboriously out of Le Havre's battered port bound for Cherbourg to pick up a load of recuperating casualties for the return trip.

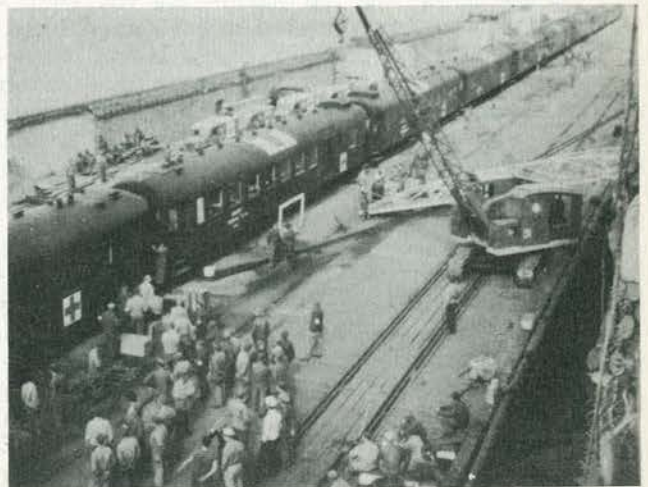
Meanwhile it was revealed that the 89th, being the only battalion on the ship in its entirety, would assume responsibility for all details. When broken down farther it was decided that Headquarters would be the permanent



**USS Washington in sight**



**Loading On**



**Wounded at Cherbourg**





Cherbourg docks

ship's guard, Able and Charlie Companies would furnish all the personnel to operate the troop mess, and Baker Company would keep the ship in clean, livable condition. Although the various details did keep the majority of the men from getting their accustomed 24 hours sleep each day, they were not so tedious as to destroy the pleasing, languid monotony of the voyage.

From Cherbourg, the George Washington proceeded across the channel and up the Thames to Southampton where it took on fuel and water. Wednesday afternoon, it emerged from the river's mouth and moved west around the southern tip of jolly old England, and at last the 89th was on it's way home.

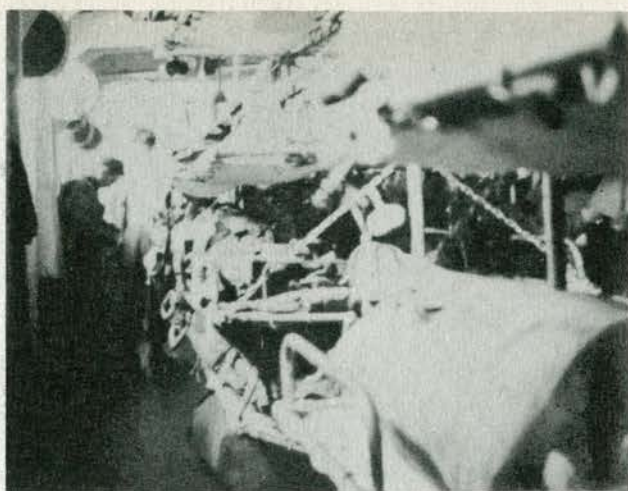
As always, sun bathing was the popular sport on board. The weather was very provocative for this sort of entertainment, and every afternoon found the decks littered with near naked GIs soaking up the rays of old sol.

The rear hatchway on C deck became the improvised enlisted man's theater while the officers viewed the pictures in the officer's lounge on the boat deck. Pictures were shown continuously from 0800 till 2000, and many men, for lack of anything else to do, saw the same show two or three times.

A few days after the start of the voyage the George Washington sprouted a hot dance band. Under the direction of T/Sgt. Peale Halldt, the orchestra entertained the troops for an hour or so every evening on B deck aft. Peale's Jumpin' Jivers played and sang anything and everything for the amusement of the men. Featured songster was ebony Ace Baylor. No doubt some of the men can hear the haunting strains of the melodies yet.

Post Exchange rations were plentiful in the ship's store and everyone stocked up on candy and cigarettes for the anticipated 30 days they would have to spend in the throes of civilian rationing and scarcities.

No one knew what sort of customs inspection the battalion would be subject to, and speculation ran high on a few items. Many souvenirs changed hands, and many went to the ship's crew. When everyone was safely ashore with no realization of the expected search, there were many disgusted GIs when they thought what might have been.



Cramped quarters

On the Fourth of July the George Washington was one day out of New York. For the occasion a short, fitting ceremony was arranged on board. After an interlude of band music and a short address by the ship's Chaplain, machine guns mounted on the port and starboard sides chattered tracer bullets at imaginary targets. Then the men of the 89th, the battle tested veterans who had been initiated with shattering explosions, frayed nerves, and the deafening din of combat, stood on the hatchway and almost jumped out of their boots when the blasts of two anti-aircraft guns on the stern rocked the boat.

Land was sighted the next afternoon, and through a misty harbor filled with ships of war from many nations, the George Washington slipped slowly, Coney Island took shape and was passed, the Statue of Liberty was seen in the vague distance, and shortly after 1700 the boat docked at gayly decorated piers on Staten Island.

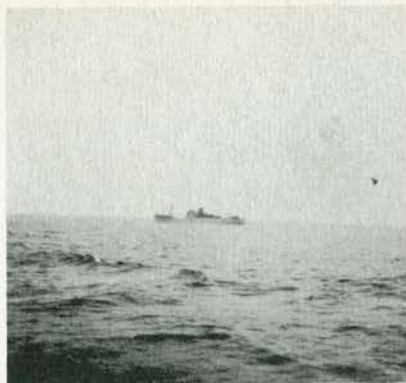
The welcoming committee, consisting of a WAC band and civilian girls in bright dresses, had hovered close on their steamer in the harbor. They had stayed just long enough to verify the fact that things at home were just as they had been, and with that in mind the men literally sweated out the remaining time until they could debark.

The actual debarking was the reverse of the

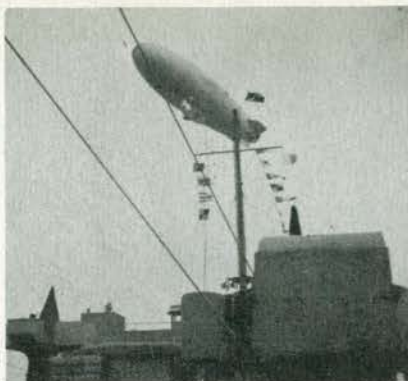


Aboard siesta

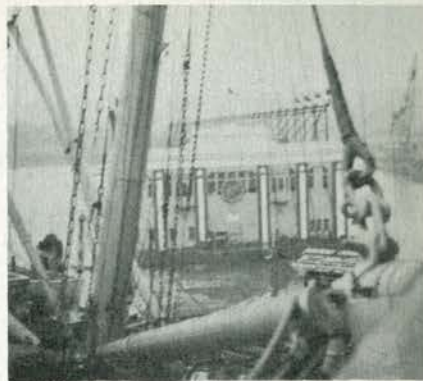




Passing ship



Welcome home—well done



Staten Island Piers

embarkation at Boston. Men filed off the boat in order and were lined up on the pier for a quick cup of milk and sugared doughnuts; then they were hustled on to a waiting ferry for the short trip to the New Jersey shore.

On this boat trip the men were treated with a closer view of the Statue of Liberty. The ferry continued past the battery, and up the Hudson River where the Manhattan skyscrapers hove into view, and finally docked at Weehawken. There the men carried their bags virtually miles to a waiting train, and at 2000 they were unloading them some thirty miles north of New York City at Camp Shanks.

After the men had loaded their equipment into waiting trucks, and had started the long hike to their area, it commenced to rain. To say it rained is gross understatement; it poured, it came down in torrents. By the time everyone had arrived at the area theater for their orientation lecture even the waterproof wristwatches were soaked.

While the men squirmed uneasily in their rain soaked seats, several officers gave them the big picture. They would be on their way home within twenty-four hours and they would get this and they would get that, but no one mentioned getting to bed for some sleep. However, the last speaker proved to be most popular when he men-

tioned something concerning the biggest steak anyone had seen for months; it seemed then that no one was sleepy anymore.

After a quick trip to the barracks to deposit extra equipment, everyone hurried to the mess hall. There they sat down to a meal like the one they had been dreaming about. It consisted of a huge steak with french fried potatoes, corn, beans, combination salad, hot rolls, coffee, milk, or cocoa to drink, and watermelon and apple pie with ice cream for dessert. After a meal like that, it was rumored that at few unworthy individuals went back for seconds.

After everyone had recovered sufficiently to walk back to their barracks, the little processing which had to be done was taken care of, a suit of suntans was drawn for the homeward trip, and everyone, except a few men who worked on the records, went to bed.

The exodus from Camp Shanks started at approximately 1000 the next morning when the first trains left for several separation centers. The men had nothing to do until their trains were scheduled to leave, and most of their time was spent in the PXs and phone booths. Everything proceeded according to plan, and by 1800 that night, less than twenty-four hours after their arrival the men of the 89th were on their way to spending 30 days making up for time lost.



Women



One homeward bound RR car





The 89th Chemical Mortar Battalion passes in review under Maj. Cameron



Maj. Gen. Gardner, CG 12th Det. Co. presents Bronze Star to Capt. Esser and Capt. Westbrook: Silver Star to Lt. R. R. Wance.



Provisional Group Commander, Lt. Col. Yanka, salutes Gen. Gardner. Battalion in background.



Parade for awarding of Decorations, 20 September, 1945



## *Postlogue*

On Tuesday, August 7, 1945, the vanguard of the 89th began to arrive at Fort Jackson with Captain Ignatius Spurio the first member of the advance party to arrive. By Friday reception station groups began to pour men back from furlough into the organization, and by the 20th over 80% of the personnel were present for duty.

By the time that the battalion had assembled, the flush of elation over the capitulation of Japan had worn off somewhat, but it was an inwardly rebellious organization which attacked the POM training schedule required by higher headquarters. For two weeks the personnel of the 89th sweated out the possibility of the unit's being sent overseas to act as occupation troops, a possibility that was anything but pleasant to contemplate.

During that period, the required subjects for redeployed units were taken in hand—extending even to the rifle and carbine ranges. For all intents and purposes, the war was not over, and in premature desperation, many men applied for special discharges.

On 1 September the welcome news came through—no more overseas duty for the 89th—and joy reigned with the mortarmen. Even though it took three weeks for the channels of information to completely do away with the combat training program, a feeling of satisfaction was maintained throughout the companies. Discharges began coming through—first for the men 38 and over, then down to 35 years of age plus two years service. Point totals for the Adjusted Service Rating were recomputed, and all men with 80 and above departed for separation.

Late in September, everyone but a minimum number for essential details and those men becoming eligible for discharge on October 1 was sent home on a 45-day furlough. So closed the last active period for the battalion as a unit. The days at Jackson had been pleasant on the whole, full of rumor and hope and a look to the future. In the weeks to come, the majority of the members of the battalion could reasonably expect to receive a discharge button and exchange the khaki for mufti, emergency service to the country rendered.

As a combat unit, the 89th Chemical Mortar Battalion actually ceased to exist on the day that it boarded ship at Le Havre. Ever after, the organization was but a means of administration. During its almost two years of activation the battalion made history which spoke for itself. At all times it kept its standards high, and this was consistently reflected in the superior method of performance and high morale of the men and officers. Though its period of participation in combat was short, it chalked up a record to which every mortarmen can point with pride and satisfaction.

To speak of what each man in the 89th will carry into civilian life from his army service is not in the scope of this book. The past is the past, and as time passes, the experiences of war will be clouded into a pleasant memory. Let it remain so.

As this book goes to press, orders for the de-activation of the 89th Chemical Mortar Battalion have been received. Thus, after almost two years of honorable service, the organization will cease to exist save in the official documents of World War II.



# Decorations

The following named men of the 89th Chemical Mortar Battalion have received the decorations indicated:

## Silver Star

Hinden, Herman, 1st Lt.  
McDowell, Robert D., 1st Lt.  
Wance, Ralph R., 1st Lt.

Goodwin, James O., Pvt.  
Kaufman, Donnell E., Cpl.  
Stewart, James A., T/5

Watts, John R., Sgt. (Posthumous)

## Bronze Star

Bethea, Charles F., 2nd Lt.  
Chaffee, LeRoy E., 1st Lt.  
Duncan, Carl R., 1st Lt.  
Esser, George H., Jr., Capt.  
Johnson, Alfred M., 1st Lt.  
Kilby, Raymond J., 1st Lt.  
Landback, Charles R., Capt.  
Lawler, Joseph A., 1st Lt.  
Michaels, Alan S., 2nd Lt.  
Miller, Charles E., 1st Lt.  
Sharpe, William L., 1st Lt.  
Westbrook, Clyde H., Capt.  
Alcalde, Francisco, Pvt.  
Bedwell, Henry M., Pvt.  
Bleau, Kenneth D., Pvt.  
Bruce, John W., Pfc.  
Castleman, Russell R., T/5  
Clark, Larry A., Pfc.  
Cort, Martin, Pfc.

Lyons, Jeremiah, Pvt.  
Marll, Charles, Pvt.  
Meador, Henry E., Cpl.  
Melrose, George F., Sgt.  
Nenn, Elroy C., T/5  
Nolan, Patrick J., Pvt.  
Nothacker, Donald, Pfc.  
Pierce, Francis C., Pfc.  
Rhodes, Oros, Pfc.  
Robinson, George J., Pfc.  
Smith, Hugh V., Jr., Cpl.  
Smith, John D., T/4  
Schneekloth, John A., T/5  
Somers, Francis A., Cpl.  
Van Epps, Charles B., Pfc.  
Vreeland, Thad, Jr., Cpl.  
Wagner, Charles E., Pfc.  
Wittrock, Eugene E., Sgt.  
Yeary, Woodrow W., Pfc.

Cromwell, Dale P., Cpl.  
Dobson, Ardith, Pvt.  
Durham, Edgar S., Cpl.  
Ficklin, Ernest F., T/5  
Geller, Robert A., Pfc.  
Gibbons, Francis E., Pfc.  
Gooding, Leslie J., Sgt.  
Goldey, Allan E., T/4  
Hardy, Earl H., Cpl.  
Hesselgrave, James W., S/Sgt.  
Hensen, James S., T/4  
Hoff, Niles W., Cpl.  
Hornstein, Donald O., Pfc.  
Huck, Paul L., T/4  
Jewett, Milton A., Cpl.  
Lacy, Jerry, T/5  
Laney, R. H., S/Sgt.  
Lilly, James E., Pfc.  
Long, David H., T/4

## Purple Heart

Bethea, Charles F., 2nd Lt.  
Hindin, Herman, 1st Lt.  
Lawler, Joseph A., 1st Lt.  
Miller, Charles E., 1st Lt.  
Pedigo, Earl B., 2nd Lt.

Alfrey, Edwin L., Pfc.  
Brubacker, Kenneth, Cpl.  
Bittner, Thomas M., Cpl.  
Coleman, Richard, Cpl.  
Henson, James L., T/4

Lizer, Kenneth C., Cpl.  
May, Lewis O., Pvt.  
Mears, Roland, Cpl.  
Shaeffer, Horace L., Pfc.  
Shahoian, John, Sgt.

The following named men have been recommended to receive the Bronze Star Medal, but at the time of publication of this book, their recommendations have not been acted upon by higher headquarters:

Americo F. Almeida, 1st Lt.  
Charles C. Cameron, Major  
William N. Cartledge, 1st Lt.  
George W. Connell, 2nd Lt.  
William F. Ellis, 1st Lt.  
John J. Hagan, 1st Lt.  
Bennett B. Harvey, 1st Lt.  
William F. Kanasky, 1st Lt.  
Gustav W. Krizek, Capt.  
Marshall E. Lentz, Major  
Robert D. McDowell, 1st Lt.  
Edward E. Murray, Capt.  
Henry L. Parker, 1st Lt.  
Marvin L. Ritzman, 1st Lt.  
Sidney L. Wells, 1st Lt.  
Francis J. Winters, 1st Lt.

Keith M. Brubaker, Cpl.  
Archibald Craig, M/Sgt.  
Roy Erickson, Pfc.  
John C. Greenwood, Sgt.  
Gerald J. Haecker, S/Sgt.  
Arthur R. Hazard, Cpl.  
Herndon D. Jones, S/Sgt.  
Albert R. Marcil, Cpl.  
Albert J. Mayer, Pfc.  
Adam Mokcsay, Cpl.  
Morris Pike, Pfc.  
Robert P. Roselle, Pfc.  
Roy J. Sexton, Pfc.  
Jacob E. Stahl, Pfc.  
William O. Towns, S/Sgt.  
Lucian B. Willoughby, 1st/Sgt.  
Thomas J. Wood, T/Sgt.



HEADQUARTERS  
EUROPEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS  
UNITED STATES ARMY  
CHEMICAL WARFARE SERVICE  
APO 887

18 June 1945.

File: ETCWS-200.6/112  
SUBJECT: Commendation.  
TO: Commanding Officer, 89th Chemical Mortar Battalion, Camp Lucky Strike, APO 562, U. S. Army.

1. Upon termination of your stay in this Theater, I would like to take this opportunity of commending you and your Unit for superior performance of duty while a part of this Command.
2. Although your Battalion did not see action until late in the campaign it still participated in sufficient battles to bring honor and glory to the members of your Battalion and to the Chemical Warfare Service.
3. I am sorry to see you leave but with the termination of war here we are all turning to the further task of utterly defeating Japan. Good luck to you all wherever you may go, whatever you may do in the future, and may you all return soon to the paths of peace.

HUGH W. ROWAN,  
Brigadier General, USA,  
Chief Chemical Warfare Officer.



HEADQUARTERS 313TH INFANTRY  
Office of the Regimental Commander

APO 79, U. S. Army.  
31 March 1945

SUBJECT: Commendation.  
TO: Commanding General, 79th Infantry Division,  
APO 79, U. S. Army

1. On behalf of the officers and men of this Regiment, I wish to commend the splendid services rendered by Company "A", and the attached Platoon of Company "B", 89th Chemical Mortar Battalion (4.2), which were attached to this Regiment during the recent Rhine Bridgehead operation.
2. The Commanding Officer, his officers, and all of his men, worked with an untiring zeal in the support of this Regiment. In firing 10,192 rounds of smoke, screening the south flank, it is thought that they have set some sort of a record. Their firing approximately 2,500 rounds of HE during the pre-H-hour concentration, in a period of 2 hours, was also a tremendous factor in "discouraging" the enemy.
3. Their cooperation with the Artillery and with the Infantry was a model for future operations, both in the arduous training program on the Maas River, and in the actual crossing of the Rhine.

*Edwin M. Van Bibber*  
EDWIN M. VAN BIBBER,  
Colonel, Infantry,  
Commanding.

201.22 (31 Mar 45)

1st Ind.

HEADQUARTERS 79TH INFANTRY DIVISION, APO 79, U. S. Army, 5 April 1945.

TO: Commanding Officer, 89th Chem. Mortar Battalion.  
The Division Commander has read with pleasure this commendation and directs me to convey his own appreciation of a good job well done.

*Kramer Thomas*  
KRAMER THOMAS,  
Colonel, G. S. C.,  
Chief of Staff.

HEADQUARTERS 315TH INFANTRY  
Office of the Commanding Officer

AJS:O  
APO 79, U. S. Army,  
19 April, 1945.

SUBJECT: Commendation.  
TO: Commanding Officer, Company "C", 89th Chemical Mortar Battalion.  
THRU: Commanding General, 79th Infantry Division.

1. During the attachment of your company to this regiment from March 11, 1945 to April 14, 1945, the company performed its duties in a superior manner. This was true both during the preliminary training period, the crossing of the Rhine River, and subsequent engagement on the east banks of the Rhine, and enthusiasm for the task at hand and aggressive-ness and to our rapid advance. I desire to commend the Officers and men of this company for the superior job they did while attached to this unit. I would especially desire to have this company attached to my Regiment at all times.
2. The work of CAPT. LANDBACH and his cooperation was most noteworthy.

*Andrew J. Schriver, Jr.*  
ANDREW J. SCHRIVER, JR.,  
Colonel, 315th Infantry,  
Commanding.

330.13 (19 Apr 45)  
HEADQUARTERS 79TH INFANTRY DIVISION, APO 79, U. S. Army, 21 Apr 45.  
TO: The Division Commander is pleased to forward this commendation which he knows to be well earned.  
*Kramer Thomas*  
KRAMER THOMAS,  
Colonel, G.S.C.,  
Chief of Staff,  
April 22, 1945.



# Casualties

## KILLED IN ACTION

Humphrey, Ross W., Cpl.

Mollinedo, Theodore V., Pfc.

Watts, John R., Sgt.

## WOUNDED IN ACTION

Lawler, Joseph A., 1st Lt.  
Miller, Charles E., 1st Lt.  
Wells, Syndey L., 1st Lt.  
Alcalde, Francisco J., Pvt.  
Alfrey, Edwin L., Pfc.  
Barnhart, Harold J., Cpl.  
Bittner, Thomas M., Cpl.  
Brubaker, Keith M., Cpl.  
Bryant, James H., Tec/5  
Coleman, Richard A., Jr., Cpl.

Haecker, Gerald J., S/Sgt.  
Lindenlaub, Harold E., S/Sgt.  
Lizer, Kenneth C., Cpl.  
May, Lewis O., Pfc.  
Mears, Rolland F., Cpl.  
McNeeley, Gilbert, S/Sgt.  
Michalack, Frank, Pfc.  
Pike, Morris, Pvt.  
Shaeffer, Horace L., Pfc.  
Ward, Raymond S., Cpl.

## NON-BATTLE

### KILLED

Schesney, Francis S., Tec/4

### WOUNDED

Andrew, Edward W., Pfc.  
Faulkner, James R., Pfc.  
Hensen, James H., Tec/4  
Holden, James R., Pfc.

James, Wilson W., Pvt.  
Marriot, Charles E., T/Sgt.  
McCormick, Clinton C., Pfc.  
Stone, John W., Pfc.

Peters, Richard V., Pfc.  
Oliver, Arthur, Pvt.



# ROSTER OF ORIGINAL BATTALION

## CADRE

### *Officers*

Major James R. Hudson  
Major Charles C. Cameron  
Captain Amery B. Dunn  
Captain Mason L. Downing  
Captain John R. Hyndman  
Captain Marshall E. Lentz  
Captain John M. McDonald  
Captain Sterling N. Vines  
1st Lt. Vincent Deptula  
1st Lt. George H. Esser, Jr.  
1st Lt. William M. Hochstetler  
1st Lt. Robert R. Huber  
1st Lt. Gerald Kaplan

1st Lt. Charles R. Landback  
1st Lt. Thomas G. McCreanor  
1st Lt. John E. Moody  
1st Lt. Edward E. Murray  
1st Lt. Ignatius J. Spurio  
1st Lt. Preston F. Tinsley, Jr.  
1st Lt. Alfred A. Ulanowski  
1st Lt. Clyde H. Westbrook, Jr.  
2nd Lt. John H. Becque  
2nd Lt. Andrew F. Carson  
2nd Lt. William N. Cartledge  
2nd Lt. James J. Feeks  
2nd Lt. Jack S. Geesen  
2nd Lt. Bennett B. Harvey

2nd Lt. August J. Haschka  
2nd Lt. Salvatore C. Imbergamo  
2nd Lt. Alfred M. Johnson  
2nd Lt. William F. Kanasky  
2nd Lt. Gustav W. Krizek  
2nd Lt. Joseph A. Lawler  
2nd Lt. Harold F. Laws  
2nd Lt. Charles E. Miller  
2nd Lt. Bert Parsons  
2nd Lt. William L. Sharpe  
2nd Lt. William Wallach  
2nd Lt. Ralph R. Wance  
2nd Lt. Sidney L. Wells

### *Enlisted Men*

#### *Cadre from Sibert*

#### HEADQUARTERS DETACHMENT

M/Sgt. Carl W. Sanders  
T/Sgt. Edward J. Conway  
S/Sgt. Stanley A. Davis  
S/Sgt. Thomas J. Wood  
Sgt. Louis W. Goldstein

Sgt. Louis F. La Rouché, Jr.  
Cpl. Thurman A. Brister  
Cpl. Clifton B. Dodge  
Cpl. Maurice J. Anctil  
Cpl. Robert J. Peterson  
Pvt. Michael J. Eufemia

T/4 Joseph N. Roberts  
T/5 James L. Ferguson  
Pvt. Roger La Frenier  
Pvt. Gerard J. Ehler  
Pvt. Gerald J. Haecher

#### COMPANY "A"

Sgt. Howard L. Meredith  
Sgt. Frederick W. Krieger  
T/4 Clifton Keith  
Cpl. Emil Buraas  
Cpl. Daniel T. Gibbs  
T/5 William L. Brooks

Cpl. James M. Hesselgrave  
Pvt. Peter P. Cassella  
Pvt. John Shahoian  
T/4 Guy A. Sanguinette  
Cpl. R. H. Laney

T/5 John A. Petkus  
Pvt. Ronald G. Babcock  
Pvt. John J. O'Brien  
Pvt. James H. Henson  
Pvt. Albert R. Hess  
Pvt. George K. Albert

#### COMPANY "B"

S/Sgt. Samuel Carre  
S/Sgt. Manuel E. Sanders  
Sgt. Everett C. Cash  
Sgt. Ben L. Poglianich  
Cpl. Roy E. Nelson

#### COMPANY "C"

1st/Sgt. Lyle P. Youngdahl  
S/Sgt. Alfred Perna  
Sgt. Leslie R. Elliott  
Cpl. Arne E. Olson  
Cpl. Lucian B. Willoughby

#### COMPANY "D"

1st/Sgt. William J. Wethington  
Sgt. Gilbert W. McNeeley  
T/4 Everett F. Cooney  
Cpl. Scott M. McCarty  
T/4 James V. Bonghi

Cpl. James M. Mickle  
Cpl. Harold A. Berkowitz  
Cpl. Harold M. Lundgren  
Cpl. Harry P. Haldt, Jr.  
T/5 Renton J. Johnson  
Pfc. Clarence G. Merrifield

T/5 Albert J. Hoselton  
Pvt. John R. Carson  
Pvt. William O. Towns  
Pvt. Joseph S. Levonas  
Pvt. Leslie J. Gooding

Cpl. Joseph P. Yourren  
Cpl. Peter D. Kuzmickus  
T/5 John P. Hergenreter  
Pvt. John C. Greenwood  
Pvt. Robert I. Powell, Jr.

Pvt. George W. Dyson, Jr.  
Pvt. William H. Cawthon  
Pvt. John J. Leo  
Pvt. Rudolph J. Berberich  
Pvt. Thomas V. Pitts

Pvt. Richard G. McLennand  
Pvt. Bert Hayslip  
Pvt. Lester H. Dowell  
Pvt. William M. Haley  
Pvt. Frank De Francesco

Cpl. Lewis D. Gillespie  
T/5 Lyace P. Millican  
Pvt. Giles P. Ralston  
Pvt. Paul G. Hudson  
Pvt. Pervey R. Chandler



# ROSTER OF CADRE FURNISHED FOR 97th CHEMICAL MORTAR BATTALION

## OFFICERS

Capt. Sterling N. Vines  
1st Lt. Gerald Kaplan

1st Lt. William M. Hochstetler  
1st Lt. Robert R. Huber

M/Sgt. Carl W. Sanders  
M/Sgt. Edwin L. Beck  
T/Sgt. Verne L. Brooks  
T/Sgt. Clyde L. Lewis  
S/Sgt. Harry Levin  
S/Sgt. Charles H. Kerr  
S/Sgt. Herry R. Wolocen  
S/Sgt. Freerick W. Krieger  
S/Sgt. Leslie R. Elliott  
S/Sgt. William L. Brooks  
S/Sgt. Daniel T. Gibbs  
S/Sgt. Lawrence V. Armstrong  
S/Sgt. Roy R. Roberts  
S/Sgt. Anthony L. De Marco  
Sgt. Floyd A. Davis  
Sgt. Frank Bielaczysz  
Sgt. George W. Dyson, Jr.  
Sgt. Ben L. Poglianich  
Sgt. Earl G. Parsons  
T/4 Walter F. Hill, Jr.  
T/4 John P. Hergenreter  
T/4 Everett F. Cooney  
T/4 Renton J. Johnson  
T/4 John A. Petkus  
T/4 Emil Buraas  
T/4 James L. Ferguson  
Cpl. Joel F. Goodwin  
Cpl. Ransom S. Haig  
Cpl. Pervey R. Chandler  
Cpl. William F. Needles, Jr.  
Cpl. Elton E. Stephens  
Cpl. John J. O'Brien  
T/5 Fred Currey  
T/5 Floyd S. Schean  
T/5 Robert E. Govanus  
T/5 Aura L. McGahey, Jr.  
T/5 Edward J. Kerns  
T/5 Herman M. Derden  
T/5 Leo Rasnick  
T/5 Kenneth L. Hall  
T/5 Gerard J. Ehler

Pfc. Stephan G. Kornicker  
Pfc. Thomas G. Stevenson  
Pfc. Albert R. Hess  
Pfc. Bert Hayslip  
Pfc. Ray V. Jones  
Pvt. Edmund A. Ringuette  
Pvt. Richard R. Newton  
Pvt. Alfred C. Marsh  
Pvt. William E. Davis  
Pvt. Harlan B. Tuttle  
Pvt. William Short, Jr.  
Pvt. Fred E. Dunbar  
Pvt. Cecil O. Daniels  
Pvt. Donald E. Chick  
Pvt. Willis A. Weberg  
Pvt. Robert Taylor  
Pvt. Morton K. Wolf  
Pvt. Stanford S. Paik  
Pvt. Frank P. Beloyed  
Pvt. Arthur F. Patterson  
Pvt. Arthur J. Sullivan, Jr.  
Pvt. Joe W. Gage  
Pvt. Harold R. Goodall  
Pvt. Irvine S. Walsh  
Pvt. Farris A. Mirage  
Pvt. James K. Danielson  
Pvt. Walter W. Hirsch  
Pvt. Stanford J. Taylor  
Pvt. Ralph W. Dockendorff, Jr.  
Pvt. Charles A. Dykstra  
Pvt. John A. Zaffle  
Pvt. Clyde W. Cimarick  
Pvt. Nisan Y. Matlin  
Pvt. Walton R. Barnhart  
Pvt. Walter Poiniski  
Pvt. Joseph L. Slavitt  
Pvt. Philip D. Cogshall  
S/Sgt. Wayne E. Palmer  
T/5 Clarence G. Merrifield  
Pvt. Billy T. Smith  
Pvt. Smith H. Boring, Jr.



# DIRECTORY

**Complete roster of men who have  
served the 89th Chemical  
Mortar Battalion**



# ROSTER OF THE 89TH CHEMICAL MORTAR BATTALION, 1 AUGUST 45

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The information was assembled from official battalion reports, company reports, and personal reminiscences, after which the narrative was put together by members of the staff and edited by Sgt. Ingold and Capt. Esser. Time and space did not allow as complete a book as might be desired, but it is believed that all of the principal events and important periods are adequately covered.

It has been impossible to mention the names of all of the personnel who did work worthy of citation, and it is regretted if injustice is done to any person or group of persons, because an impartial approach in writing the book was kept at all times.

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