

1946

Buchenwald and beyond : 120th EVAC

United States Army

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BUCHENWALD

and beyond

120TH
EVAC





120TH EVAC

A large, bold, black graphic of a syringe is oriented diagonally across the page. The needle points towards the bottom left. The text "120TH" is positioned above the syringe's barrel, and "EVAC" is positioned below it, both in a bold, sans-serif font.

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DEDICATION

AT Buchenwald, Germany, the ashes of man's dignity were strewn ignobly on the bloody soil of a Nazi Concentration Camp.

Those whom fate spared from murder lived by the sheer force of faith and the hope of liberation. Into their emaciated bodies and tortured souls, we of the 120th Evacuation Hospital tried to inject the medicines of recovery.



Most of them died in daring to oppose a regime of hate and bloody conquest. Many suffered and died because of their courage.

To them and their comrades we humbly dedicate this history.

FOREWORD

Bound in this volume are memories of the 120th Evacuation Hospital (SM)—an evacuation hospital which served during World War II in an unusual capacity, i.e. rendering medical and surgical aid to Political Prisoners and Displaced Personnel at Buchenwald near Weimar, Germany, and Cham, Bavaria.

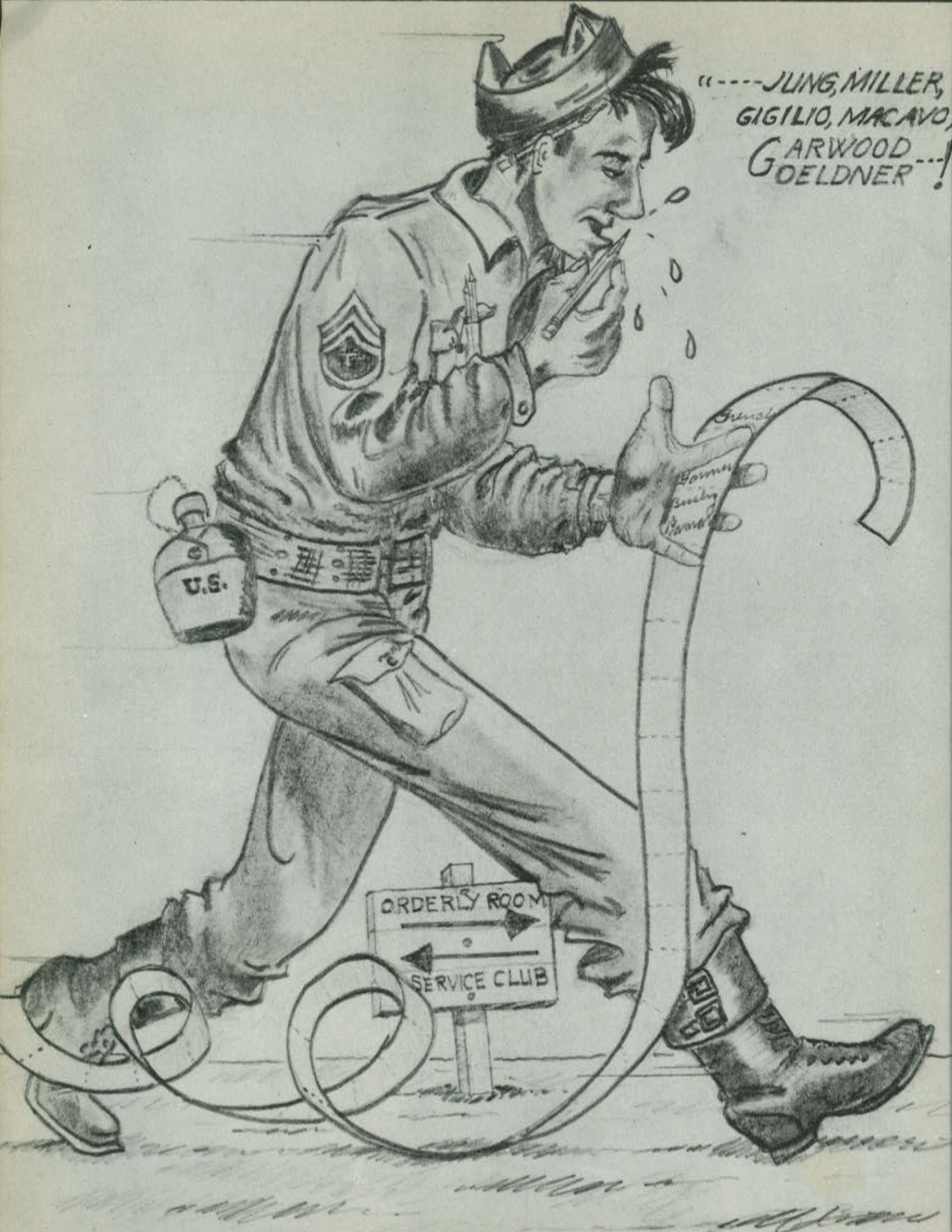
In that most of the members of the organization will return to civilian life, this book will serve as an informal record of their service in the army.

To the following, who made the publishing of this book possible, the members of the 120th Evac Hosp (SM) owe a debt of gratitude:

Capt. James Mahoney, I & E officer.
T/Sgt. Israel Friedman, writer.
Sgt. David Morrison, writer.
Tec 5 Norman Tannenbaum, writer.
Tec 5 Jerry Hontas, writer.
M/Sgt. Abraham Frank, re-writing and editing.
S/Sgt. Earl Caddock, re-writing and editing.
Tec 3 Karl H. Hertz, supervision and publishing arrangements.

William E. Williams,
Colonel, MC
Commanding.

"-----JUNG, MILLER,
GIGILIO, MACAVO,
GARWOOD-----!
GOELDNER!"



Shelby

Shelby

MISSISSIPPI is Deep South, a state where the summer sun stands high in the heavens and the red sand glares back blindingly. Only a few pines offer a half measure of shade, and at times a sudden rainstorm roars a noisy relief. In the heart of this country, a few miles out of Hattiesburg, is found Camp Shelby, first home of the 120th Evacuation Hospital.

Military records report that the 120th Evacuation Hospital was activated 25 March 1944, but records can only weakly reflect how sun and sand, military custom and discipline, molded the many individuals into a functioning unit.

The first to arrive on the scene were Major Oram R. Lawry, Jr., in command as senior officer present, Lt. "Uncle Joe" Milstein, impresario of the educated pasteboards, and 23 cadremen from the 65th Division, headed by M/Sgt. "Pappy" Shirk.

The next day S/Sgt. Lindsay R. Bobo and eleven others from the 598th Ambulance Co. joined the unit to complete the cadre. Bobo took over as acting first sergeant, and his familiar "Hell's Fire" resounded among the hutments.

Lt. Col. William E. Williams joined the unit on 13 April and took over the command. Other officers present in those early days were Captains Andriola and Long, and Lieutenants Arikawa and Murdoch.

It is not pleasant to dwell too long on these days. Every afternoon we busied ourselves with GI brushes, mops, and buckets and cleaned barracks, mess halls and latrines. The program called these afternoons "Preparation for filler replacements." As each new group arrived, we passed on the mop buckets, the brushes, and the "housemaid's knee."

We were a clannish group at the beginning, and the mixture was no easy one to handle. Apart from cadre we consisted of three large groups: the first came from the 104th Division. They came in wearing a chip on their shoulders. Misunderstanding bred hostility, and for a while they caught the dirty end of the stick.

Then came the recruits, strange to the army and its customs. The oldtimers took ad-

vantage, and the labor was passed on. Major Lawry, then S-3, saved them from the worst; amid protest from the rest, he exempted the recruits from KP for six weeks.

The last group to catch hell were the YD boys, also ex-ASTPers and ex-infantrymen from the 26th Division. They came in last, with the usual scorn of the rifleman for the pill-roller. If some of them caught it hotter and heavier than justice demanded, the fault lay in the fact that some among us were practiced hands at shirking unpleasant duties.

Memorable among the events of those early days is Bull Drennan's guttural "Ach-tung" as Major Lawry made his Saturday morning inspection. Abromowitz too was a perennial culprit, and a protesting one, among the YD boys.

Even for rookies basic training is a tedious undertaking; it was a daily torment for the rest of us. Still somehow we managed: "Column right," "Column left," Forms 52a, b, c, and d, took on meaning. We hiked at night, survived a compass problem, during which Tec 5 Steffy wondered aloud whether a certain "bastard" had come along and was reassured by that person that he had. We sang on our marches, familiar GI lyrics, "I've Been Working on the Railroad," "I've Got Sixpence," or

"The coffee in this Army, they say is
mighty fine,
Good for cuts and bruises, but tastes
like iodine.
I don't want no more of Army life;
Gee, Mom, but I wanna go home.

Then there might be a pause, as everyone silently assented to the mood of the singer, until the stillness was shattered by Ruley's "Cockreham, get in step."

In June Lt. Moshofsky arrived and became Detachment Commander. Soon everything was SOP. Long after the last pack is unrolled and the last leggin lace undone, the voice of "Eddie Moe" will still linger in the Mississippi twilight, "Men, this march to-night is SOP." Then with a quick glance at his watch, he will stride off into the gloom.

Lieutenants Frye and Neidorff arrived at

the same time. We soon discovered that Frye had a fund of stories about the Pacific theater, which the curious could prompt him into telling; and one night "The Penguin" taught us "Roll Me Over."

The NCO's attended evening classes several nights a week. Stermer, "Hup-hup" Mansfield, Smorto, Gus Volz, Chris Simon, Friedman, Vleck, and others contributed medical knowledge, but the climax of the evening was always the Frankie Lewis story. It was a mis-spent evening when Frankie had no new one to relate.

No doubt the most important part of basic, aside from medical lore, was learning to pitch the ward tent. On the drill field several mornings a week we unrolled tents, tied doors, pulled and stretched the canvas into line, drove corner pins, guy pins, and wall pins. We set in poles, then as numbers one, two, three, and four announced themselves as ready, we tugged and strained until the tent arose and finally stood straight and taut. Tec 5 Kearns taught these classes, and though the work was never easy, most of us saw its necessity and griped less and worked harder than at easier tasks.

Our first night in the field came in July. We had little to do except pitch pup tents, but their alignment was displeasing; so, late at night, we tied our tent ropes together and with the aid of flashlights re-lined all the tents.

We entered a ball team into the Non-divisional League and at season's end were tied for first. Warren Priest managed this aggregation. Hoblick was behind the plate to sparkplug the team. Cook, an Oklahoma old-timer, slow-balled his opponents into easy outs. In the infield Greek, Hill, Volz, and Lichtman played airtight ball; Shor, Williams, Tannenbaum, Distefano, and Hontas ranged in the outfield. The team won eight of nine League games and swept all five exhibition tilts.

In July Bobo's fiance arrived from Canada. After their honeymoon we gave them a party at Jules Landry's. "Dolf" Mayer supervised the arrangements and Barbarossa and dinner were equally enjoyed. Soon half the company had learned a new catch word, "Tell Jules, it's for Dolf."

Finally basic ended, and we were told that if we passed our test, we would get something to "hubba-hubba" about. Morale was

low, for furloughs were closed and passes hard to get; so most of us were skeptical of the outcome. A favorite slogan at the time was "This outfit will never go overseas." We were wrong; we passed the tests. Immediately some men left for Fitzsimmons General Hospital for training; Stermer headed another group at the Station Hospital; and some lucky fellows got furloughs.

At this time we received some new medical officers. Everyone still said, "This outfit will never go overseas," but only Chatfield believed it.

A Shelby institution that cannot go unmentioned is the Dispensary. Captain Andriola was dispensary surgeon; Iz Friedman presided over the sick book and the records; Chris Simon compounded the drugs, and in his spare hours challenged all comers at chess. The dispensary had its regulars; McIntosh, whose name led all others in sick book entries; Warsowe, who for a short while presided over the famous fifth platoon, the straggling group of the lame and the halt, known to many of us as Warsowe's Wonders. Rumor always seemed to reach the Dispensary first; it was news headquarters.

Retreat was regularly held on the drill field, where five days a week Dick Wright and later Deierhoi blew the bugle calls with what was sometimes a hesitant measure of success.

Just after the fellows at the Station Hospital came back, we bivouacked for a week near Biloxi. This was no summer camping trip; the pressure was on. As soon as we hit the area, tents began to go up until a 17-tent hospital was pitched. After evening chow, when we thought we had a rest coming, Bobo blew us out. First we pitched pup tents and dug foxholes for ourselves. Some finished early and sneaked off to the PX for beer, but there was no rest or rejoicing that night. Until late we dug foxholes for hypothetical patients around the various tents.

Early the next morning the labor continued; the tents were ditched, the foxholes deepened. Then followed hours of setting up instruments, arranging cots and boxes, fixing blackouts. Finally everything was ready for Second Army inspection.

Thursday night the Biloxi USO gave a dance for us. We put on carefully guarded

suntans—then the rain came. The ditches proved too small. For a hectic half hour, officers and enlisted men deepened ditches and loosened ropes; at their head was Colonel Williams, trouser legs rolled up and shovel in hand.

Still we got to Biloxi that night, and the dance was a great success. The next night the girls came out to entertain us with a brief show.

Furloughs continued, the last before going overseas. But no official word came until early October. Then one night Lt. Neidorff read the 28th Article of War to us. We were "alerted."

One test remained, the UTP. In the early afternoon it was almost a fiasco, as something went snafu and tents overlapped and ropes became entangled. We tore the whole thing down and set it up again just before the inspectors arrived. By the time the blackout part of the problem came, we were tired and pessimistic. But we cleared the area, convoyed to a new one, and set the hospital up perfectly in the dark. When we pulled out of the area for camp that night, we knew we were good.

Our nurses began to arrive and lived at the Station Hospital. They were to join us on the second week of our last bivouac. This was to be a recreational bivouac; the weather was delightful; we slept late, then played football and softball. But on a Friday afternoon of the first week everything changed. Our readiness date was moved up. Equipment had to be packed in a hurry.

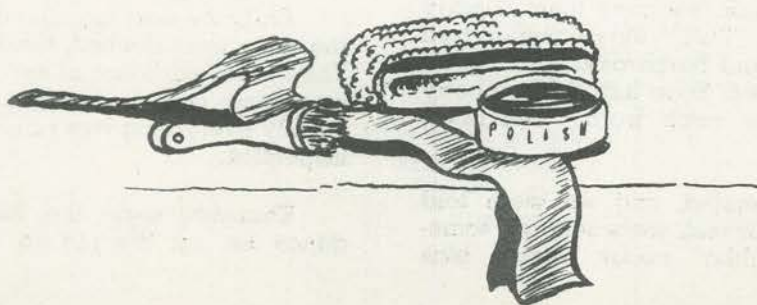
We returned from Biloxi the following

morning to a weekend of work. We worked late that Saturday night; we put in a full day Sunday. We began the next week with a packing schedule that called for work until ten o'clock every evening. Pete Verdicchio and his carpenters built boxes until dawn. Officers and enlisted men alike waterproofed, pasted, packed, and hammered. Yet morale was high, and within a week we had finished the major portion of the work.

The end of October and the month of November also saw a flood of promotions. Officers also shared in this. Already in September Col. Williams had made his eagle; Captains Andriola, Hoover, and Long acquired gold leaves. And among the enlisted men the privates became a minority, as technician's stripes appeared on many sleeves.

At last the order came to remove the Second Army patches. Moving day was close. We arranged a final beer bust; girls were few but beer was plentiful. The next night the restriction was on. The following day we were limited to the company area and the PX. That afternoon we turned in beds. The last night we slept on mattresses in barren huts.

Reveille came early; we tossed our duffle bags on the trucks and saw them leave. We policed up for the last time. Sergeant Bobo blew his whistle; we lined up; we entrucked; the convoy sped away to the train; there we detrucked; waiting only to catch our breaths, we swarmed into the Pullmans. At 0900 on 7 December 1944 as the last man swung aboard, the train shook itself and pulled out. We were on our way.



the Crossing

The Crossing

THE train sped east and north, sweeping across the Southland toward the Atlantic seaboard, confirming our "certainties" that our destination was the E.T.O. The most pressing question as the hours mounted and the miles sped by became this: "which is our P.O.E. and its nearby camp?" The scores of soldiers with homes, friends, or sweethearts in the New York area prayed for Kilmer, Shanks, or Hamilton; those from the Boston vicinity kept their fingers crossed for Standish.

Then on the third morning, at 0830, December 1944, the train backed into Kilmer, and we all marched off to the barracks area. Bobo read the P.O.M. requirements and we settled down to wade through the program we must complete before passes could be given.

First of all was the "rugged" P.O.E. physical which consisted of the S.O.P. "short-arm" plus a sidewise squint at the teeth. Later a clever corporal taught us how to abandon ship from a dummy platform. He knew all the ropes, but confessed he drew his overseas pay for a monthly trip on the Staten Island ferry.

A few more lectures, including some blasts on censorship, the last "shots", a few more showdowns, and we were eligible for passes. At least, 50% were, and the exodus from camp began. Most of the gang hopped the Pennsy for New York. Many were streaking for home; others were setting out to explore for their first time the great metropolis of our country. The hotel region, Broadway and the theatre dis-

trict, Greenwich village, the upper Bronx, and the nether portion of Brooklyn all were met for the first or last time, and gave up their merriment and laughter. Through it all hovered the need of getting enough of all of this because it might be the last time. The train was late but "Eddie Moe" was waiting at the M.P. booth to insure safe passage into camp.

At night, those who constituted the camp contingent made phone calls, went to the show. Fox and Stermer discovered the N.C.O. club and most of the non-coms gathered to sing and drink in a modification of the best barroom tradition.

With the alert next day, all communication with the outside world was cut off. We began to make the last preparations, and to assess the damage. A few minor tragedies came to light. Norm Schwartz contracted a fever from his shots and was unable to leave camp, although his home was only 30 miles away. Major Long fractured a bone in his foot during an impromptu tussle with Lt. Neidorff. Traynor was missing a few hours. Stacked against these misadventures was one item which later proved to be of good fortune—the acquisition of Edward Francis Moran, Akron's best insurance man.

On Friday, 15th of December at 2100, we moved out. We left the Kilmer siding on the Central of New Jersey. Traveling an hour, we were spilled from the train onto a ferry on the

Jersey shore; after alternate spurts and stops, chugging and drifting, the ferry slid into the pier of the Cunard White Star Lines under the gigantic stern of an ocean steamer. We looked up, and a cheer burst forth spontaneously as we read the faint legend just below the curve of the rail—QUEEN ELIZABETH. Our galley to wars was to be the biggest, fastest and safest ship afloat!

When the officers climbed the ramp to the dock, we cheered again to see our surgery chief hobbling ashore. Major Long could have stayed behind.

Then we all lined up inside the great shed to receive our coffee and doughnuts from the Red Cross. The brass band sounded a cheerful march as we answered to our names and hauled our dufflebags down the gangplank into the side of the "Lizzie". Down some stairs, turning, down some more, another turn, and more stairs . . . finally to shunted into a maize of bunks where we deposited our gear, received a few orders, and hit the canvas.

In the morning we were awakened by a nasty frog voice sputtering an invitation for those with number 1 mess cards. Ours were number fours; so we climbed the several flights of stairs to the promenade deck where we could watch the array of small boats plying to and fro as our own leviathan slowly glided down the channel. The old Lady with the Torch stuck her nose through the fog for a few moments, then was left behind. At last we were through the antisub nets and on the open seas. For most of us, our first ocean voyage had begun.

By noon our pattern of life aboard ship was practically established. We had sampled for the first time that terrible "limey" chow; we had congregated on the open decks for emergency muster. Below decks a few boys were tossing their cookies. The first poker games were under way, and our demons with the dice—Fleetwood, Thomas and Lambert—were collecting cabbage on a Monte Carlo scale.

Many gathered on the decks every morning to sniff the salt air and watch the knife-edged prow churn the sea into a froth of white that slowly faded into a thousand shades of green. Others being told that English girls were starved for chocolate, jammed the PX lines to come away with cartons of Hershey bars. We bought our first tax-free cigarettes at 50¢ a carton, and carted our daily ration of Pepsi-cola from the hold.

Those inveterate bridge players—Low, Van Lare, Myers, Astor, Bengelsdorf, Cousin, Chadwick, Teitelbaum, Shor, Ellman, and Morrison, formed a club which played countless rubbers. The officers appeared briefly below to check on the welfare of the common man and to reassure the EMs that the cabins were damn well crowded.

After a day at sea, the Queen resembled a floating Monte Carlo. Poker games flourished everywhere; and a new term was added to the vocabulary of the 120th. "Charlie Chase" was born: "Charlie" is the hard luck cheerful gambler who will raise on a pair of deuces, draw two cards to fill a straight, and always

came off second best. The term at first applied more or less equally to Woodward Shaw and Gus Volz, but after Gus twice held royal flushes that lost to five of a kind, no one disputed his full right. "How many cards, Charlie?"

When the decks were opened on the fourth morning, we walked out to see silver wakes on either side, and in the distance the brightening silhouettes of escort destroyers and cruisers. The end of the crossing was near. Two hours later the dim outline of land crept above the horizon on the left, and Foxie, Kearns, and Moran danced a jig at the sight of old Erin. As the day passed the "Lizzie" traveled north through the Irish sea until at dusk on Thursday, December 21st, the highlands of Scotland swam in on the right, and we nosed into the Firth of Clyde.

The morning sun revealed that we were anchored in the firth just off a little Scottish town of Greenock. A seaman told us it was the port in use for the Elizabeth since Southampton had been bombed out. Our turn to debark came late in the afternoon, when we left the Queen to board a tiny scow. Ten minutes later we set foot for the first time on the soil of the U. K. portion of the E.T.O.

Again the American Red Cross met us, but this time the coffee and doughnuts were served by Scotch volunteers. We climbed into a train

with little compartments and looked at tiny toy-like freight cars on the neighboring track.

Without our realizing it, the train had begun to move. As we sped southward through the night, lights from station platforms sporadically flashed names once only a part of geography or history: Glasgow, Dumfries, Carlisle, Manchester, Shrewbury. An officer passing through the cars admitted we were headed for a seaport on the coast of South Wales. What then?—A ride across the channel to Cherbourg or Le Havre.

With daybreak we entered Wales and rode through the green hills and valleys that is the home of the old Britons. We remarked on the neat fields all nicely boxed with hedges, the musical Welsh names of the villages—Llandridodd Wells, Llanidloes, and Mergwyfwyny.

Neidorff came through the cars reminding everyone that he had spent two years in England, and to take his advice on buying things, and changing money. Another officer gave our destination as Tenby. As we passed through Carmarthen a sign said: Tenby 25 miles,—so we donned our packs once more and made ready to leave the train.

"Tenby!" We wondered if we might stay there overnight, or even a day or two. The day you remember was December 23rd.



Tenby



Living Quarters, Tenby

Tenby

AT 4 PM on the 23rd day of December 1945, the tired 120th Evac stirred in its overnight train from Scotland and peered through the windows at a quaint old village in Wales. This was Tenby, our permanent station in Great Britain. As we alighted from the train and proceeded up the cobbled streets, the quaint, narrow homes and stores immediately captured the interest of everyone.

We marched down the "Parade" and past the ancient grey walls of the five arches. Before us lay the Bristol Channel. All of us thought that a boat was waiting to ferry us across to France and the business of war in the ETO, but no, we came to a halt and found ourselves billeted in former resort hotels, overlooking the rugged cliffs and the wide stretch of sandy beach.

The facilities of our barracks-hotel, the Gunfort, were meagre. We slept in wooden double-deckers, with straw-filled gunny-sacks for mattresses supported by a criss-cross of wires. The walls were half down, the fire-places had little coal, and the gas-light was dim and cheerless.

But we didn't mind the lack of comfort particularly. We were located in the center of town, and there were numerous pubs with bitters and ale at a shilling per pint.

Our second evening in Tenby was a notable one; it was Christmas eve, and we were in strange surroundings. Someone suggested that we go carolling. That evening we gathered in front of the Gunfort and led by James, key-

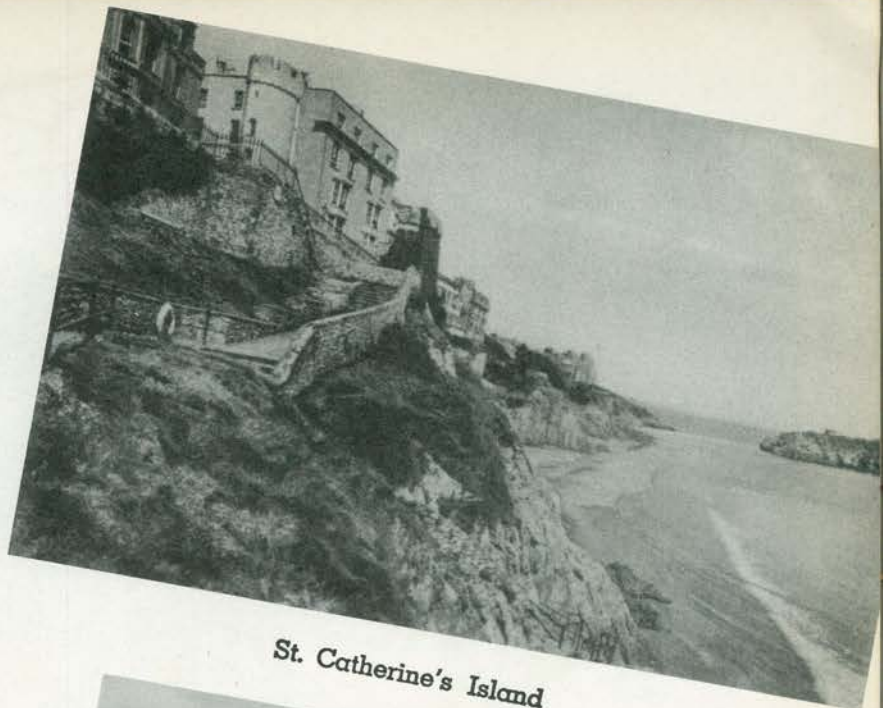


noted by Weidman on his violin, and assisted by some British youngsters collected by Priest, we gave Tenby an introduction to the singing 120th. First of course we visited the Atlantic Hotel where the nurses lived, to carol and to increase our numbers. The police inspector's home, the Red Cross, and the officers' quarters were also on our route. We thronged through the narrow blacked-out streets, singing the familiar Christmas songs.

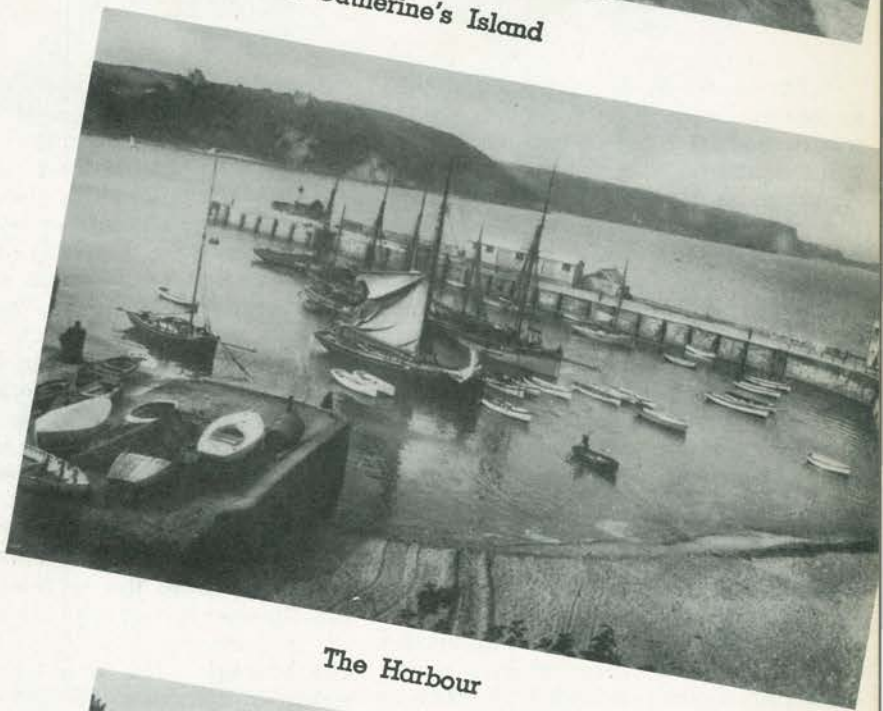
We finished the evening in a song-fest at the Red Cross. Here Colonel Williams introduced the lovely voice of Lieutenant Zahl to us. It became a nostalgic evening, and soon we were singing our homeland favorites, "White Christmas," "Home on the Range," "Deep in the Heart of Texas," "I've Been Working on the Railroad," "God Bless America," and many, many others.

On Upper Frog street was the famous De Valence Pavillon where three or four times a week the "hokey-pokey", Saint Bernard's waltz, and the Palais Glide were dished up in rollicking three-quarter time. Here the "Yanks" learned that English or Welsh girls could be interesting, even though they yearned for the chic, trim girls they had left behind. And after the dance, the stags would finish out their evening at the Red Cross where coffee and a sandwich combo for six pence was standard menu. The pubs closed promptly at 10 PM and we learned to finish our last pint quickly when the bar maid announced, "Time, please, Gents." In all Tenby the only meeting place was the Red Cross, open until midnight. Besides the pubs, dances, and Red Cross activities, the only other form of entertainment was the two British cinema houses, the South Beach Playhouse and the Royal Playhouse.

The 120th had its first PX in Tenby. Rosenberg and Teitelbaum were the chief proprietors. We bought everything there from fountain pens and lipstick to you-know-what. Many a Tenby romance was firmly cemented with a ration of PX chewing gum or candy, to say nothing of a forbidden gift of tax-free cigarettes. Tenby also saw the origin of the newsy "Hubba-Hubba," a mimeographed sheet edited by Morrison and Pasca that did its share for the boys' morale and company spirit. Reporting the gossip of the week or reporting the latest victory of the "Moshofsky Marauders" over the neighboring Evac Hosps, it was a welcome addition to the stock of readable matter.



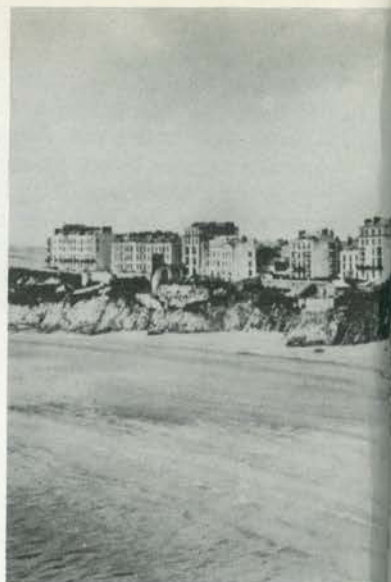
St. Catherine's Island



The Harbour



Fort From Castle Hill



For many of the medical officers, nurses and enlisted technicians, Jan. 14 meant a short farewell to Tenby. They were scattered throughout the United Kingdom on detached service, learning the trade, so to speak, at various base hospitals at that time overflowing with casualties from the front. This was the period of the Ardennes Bulge, and heavily loaded hospital trains were evacuating day and night. On DS the lectures we had listened to in the states began to have actual meaning as we saw thousands of American boys carried into the wards suffering from all types of battle injuries.

Toward the end of January everyone was given a furlough or leave. Most of the boys spent their time in London, which was full of women, drinks, and interesting land-marks. Here and there a bombed-in building reminded us that London had taken it. Compared to our own big cities, it wasn't exciting enough to get us flustered, but we enjoyed the change and left feeling that we knew all there was to know about the British Empire, or at least, all we wanted to know.

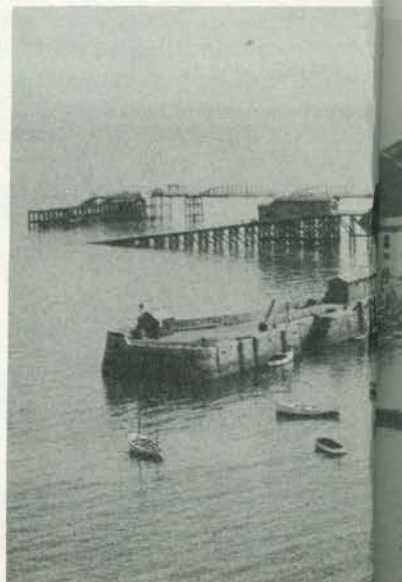
Meanwhile in Tenby the Royal Lion, the American Bar, the Hope and Anchor, the Wheatsheaf, the Sun Inn, the Prince of Wales, and the junior pubs kept dispensing ale, light or dark, as long as our pounds and shillings held out.

We wrote to our folks, describing the scenery and landscape of Tenby. The smooth swoop of the sea-gulls over the rocky cliffs, rising above the flat

beach below, the inexpressibly peaceful view of Bristol Channel with Caldy Island off in the distance, the slow, fat-bellied RAF Sunderland patrol plane flying lazily overhead, the stolid, immobile fortress standing guard on St. Catherine's Isle, the ebb and flow of the tides that would wash and rewash an already clean beach, the variously shaped row and sail boats that dotted the wharf-area of North Beach, the multi-colored hills that overlooked Tenby Bay—chameleon-like in their color scheme with each change in the sun's position, the platinum gleam of the moon on the waters at night, these were the things we wrote of—only to find that the censor had cut them out!

Many were the oddities of Tenby life. Stermer, for example, was rumored to have swapped his false teeth after a wild night at the Sun Inn. During a forum on fraternization with the nurses, Joe Vleck inquired about the absence of "mops and brooms." Hertz's sanitary detail had morning tea at the Manchester without fail. And "Puddles" came into our life; this nondescript female was a puppy of undomesticated habits who made her headquarters at the dispensary. We soon grew quite attached to her.

The day finally arrived when the rumor of our movement to another staging area became fact. In the early dawn of March 2, we packed our equipment hurriedly and while the town and its inhabitants slept, boarded the train "Enroute—Destination Un-





Top Row: Tenby Castle Ruins, South Sands from St. Catherine's; Left Center: View from Giltar Point; Bottom Row: The Harbour and Castle Hill, view from north cliff; Circle: North Shore and Gascar Rock.





"Puddles" born and adopted in Tenby; died in Frankfurt am Main. So named because of her childish inhibitions and inability to control them—thus embarrassing and taxing the hospitality shown her.

known." With our K rations tucked safely in our Red Cross bags, and the shrill whistle of Sgt. Bobo still ringing in our ears, we took a last look at the quaint homes and cobbled streets of this friendly Welsh village and wondered if someday in the future we might find ourselves visiting Tenby again—in civilian clothes.

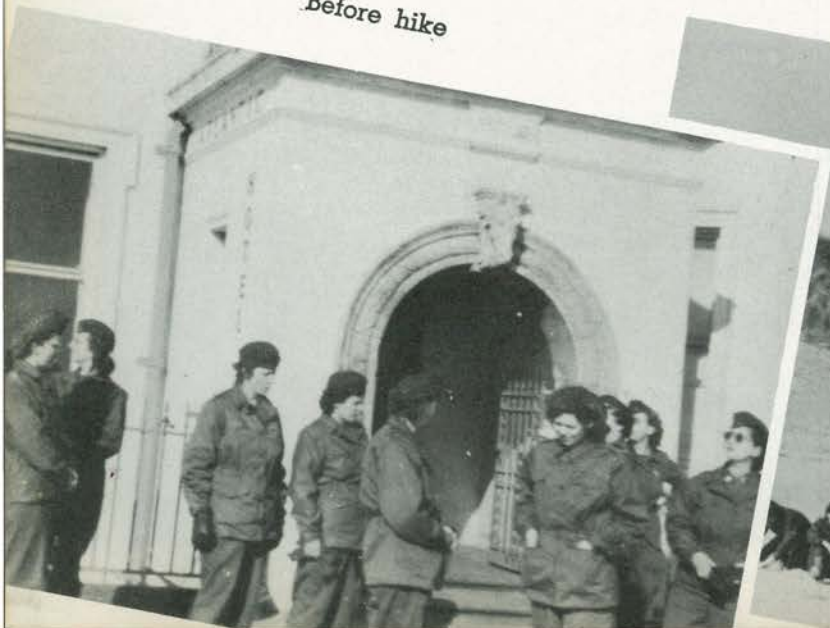
The train rolled out of the station and picked up speed as it hurried toward the coastline of the English Channel. We passed wide stretches of English countryside and quiet aloof English villages, until we finally arrived at C-5, the Channel staging area. In this barren hush-hush camp, dotted with Nissen huts and helter-skelter outfits, we whiled away five days of dull existence, the one bright spot being a double-time visit to the near-by Winchester Cathedral, an impressive monument in English culture and history.

C-5 as our last station in Great Britain. A few more blasts on Sgt. Bobo's whistle, a formation, a hurried pack-rolling, and we were on our way again. We moved out of C-5 by truck to Southampton and into the pier area.

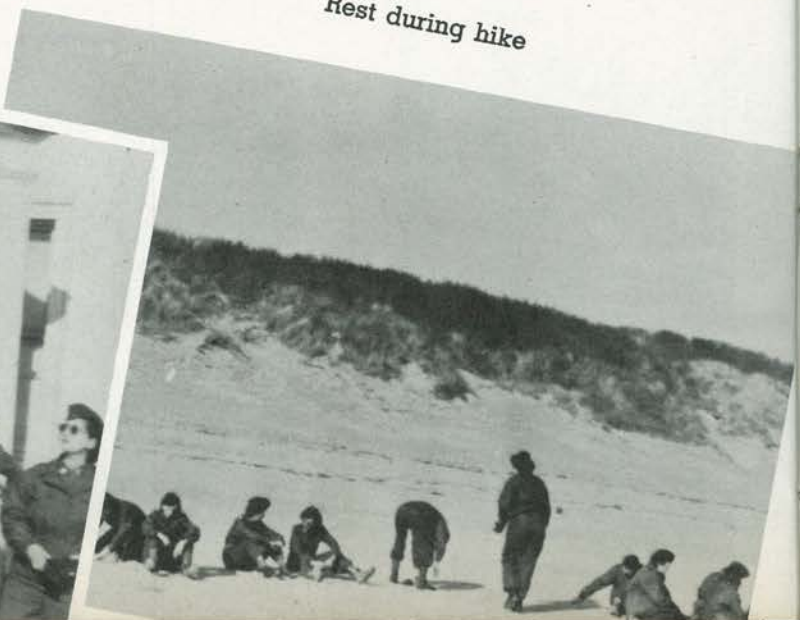
Once more the Red Cross as on hand to dish out the coffee and doughnuts. Finally we started up the gangplank and into the belly of our second big ship, the Sobieski, not as well-known or as enormous as the Elizabeth, but sea-worthy and clean. Here we dropped our packs and settled down for a week of sea, cramped quarters, and gambling.

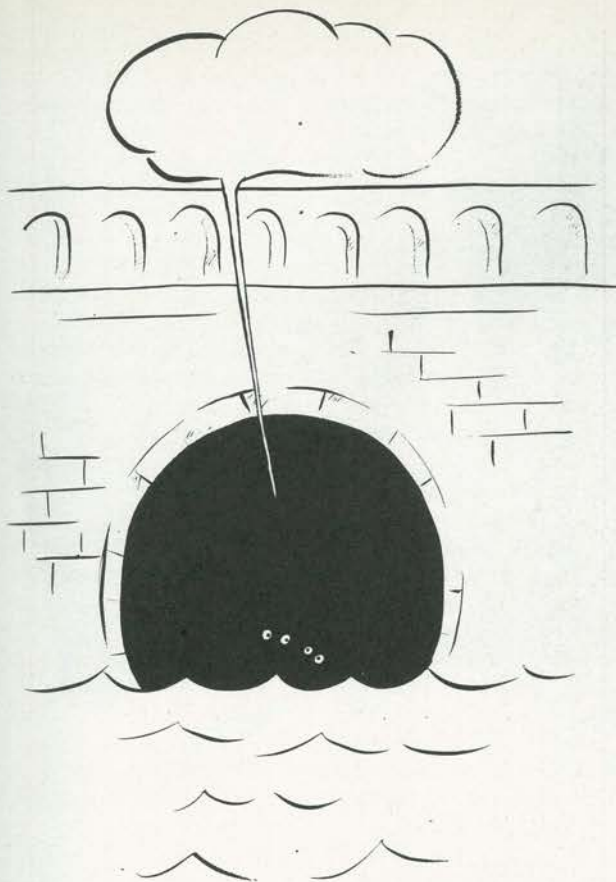


Before hike



Rest during hike





See Smarty! What did
I tell you about these
caves at high tide?



Going up

"We will serenade our nurses!"



Over the top.





Tour of Inspection?



Motor Officer



"Buddies"



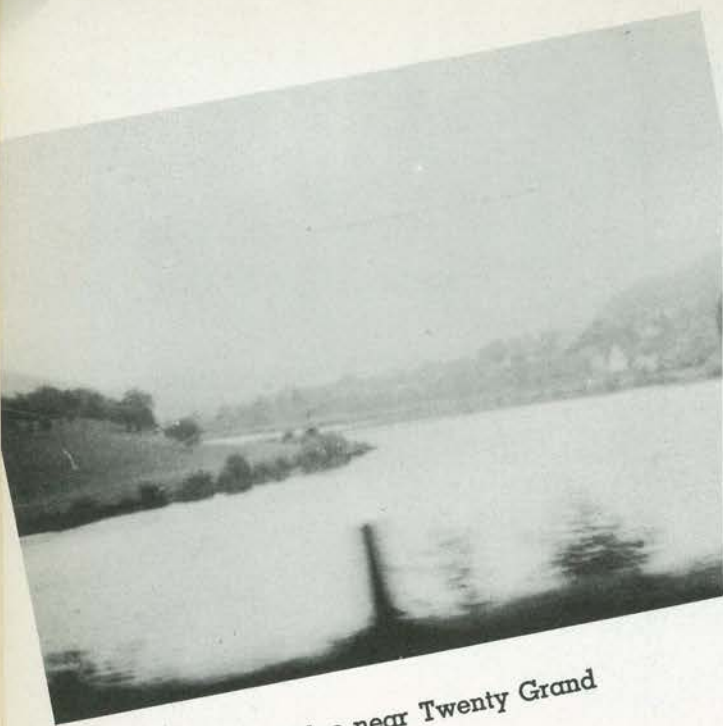
But I didn't hear any air raid alarm!



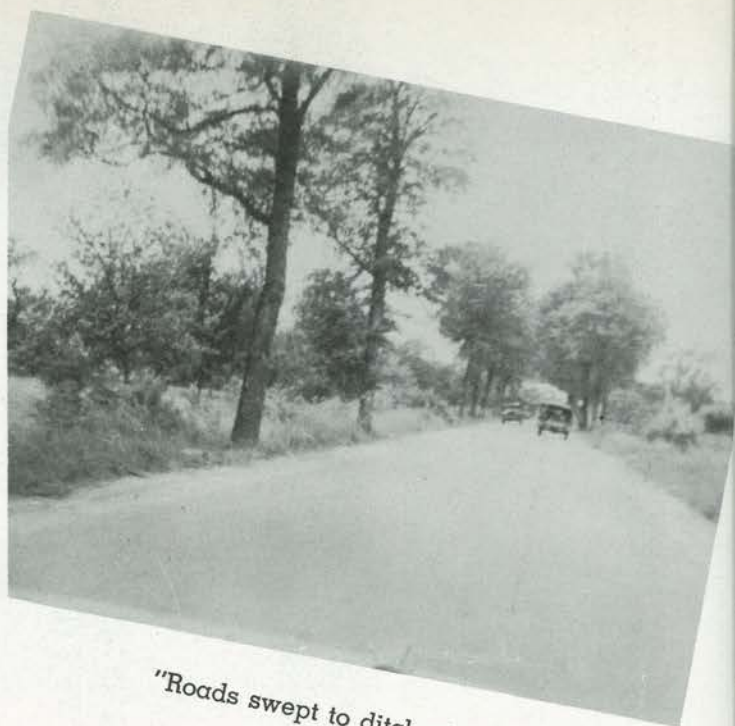
Railbirds



France



The Seine near Twenty Grand



"Roads swept to ditches"

France



Across France

THE continent at last. Before us lay the twisted ruins, the steel skeletons of former docks, and rubble everywhere. We had arrived.

We lined up in passenger list order, burdened with all our possessions. Again we had to wait. Battalions of Italian service troops disembarked first. The stream of the green-clad Eyeties seemed endless, but during a brief pause in their column, "Judge" Bray cheered us with "Well, that's the end of the A's."

Our time came. We moved down the gang-plank and along the great US Army dock to our waiting trucks. Huge QM semi-trailers waited for us; we tossed on our gear and climbed in after it. The spacious trucks were soon packed, fifty men and equipment in each.

It was a long, cold trip through the moonlit French country-side and the war-scarred villages. Finally we passed through Rouen and our trucks began to climb the long hill that led to Camp Twenty Grand. At last our convoy stopped and we were dumped by the roadside. It was a mile to our



Paris



area; tired, exhausted, angry, we lugged, tugged, rolled, and kicked our equipment down the road. But at least the officers had to do their own carrying. Unforgettable that night was Marblestein, laboring, struggling, wheezing, panting, cajoling, whimpering, and cursing until at last he too arrived. The "Battle of the Duffle Bags" was won.

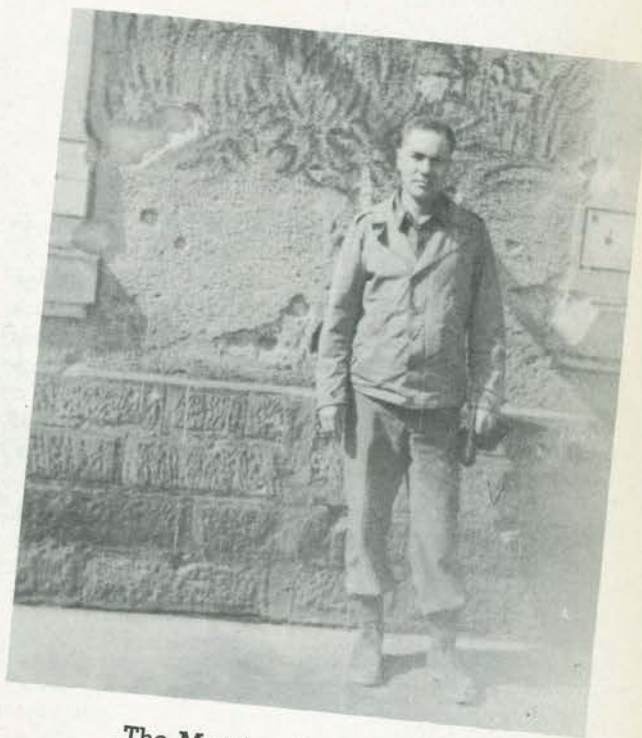
Perennial advance party man John Frye welcomed us and showed us to our billets. Depositing our equipment, we returned to draw our sleeping bags from John Vincek, then went to the messhall to gulp down a hot cup of coffee. After that we hit the sack.

Twenty Grand was endurable; card games and the motto, "The winners crack jokes, and the losers say, 'deal the - - - cards,'" flourished. In the chowlines sergeants and colonels sweated it out together; but soon we discovered 10-in-1's and began to prepare our own meals.

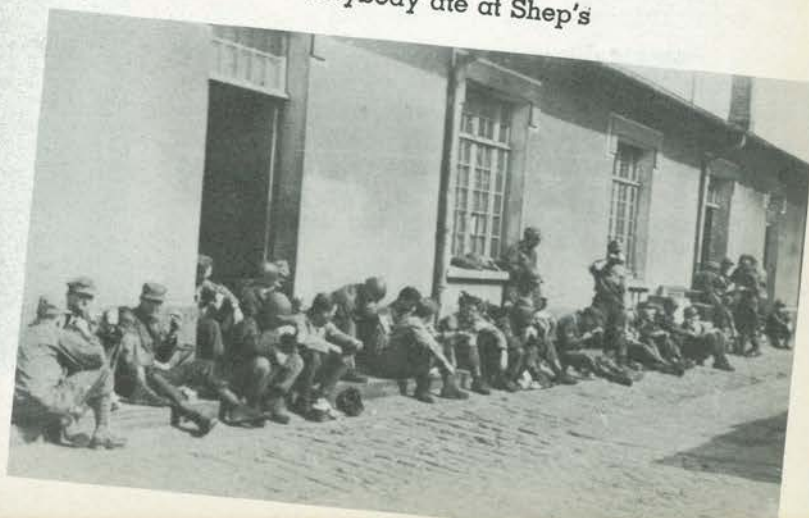
Here it was that Eli Geller rose to linguistic heights; eavesdropping on one of the hesitant conversations some carried on in schoolboy French, he screwed up his courage, stepped forward, and accosted a French ragamuffin with "Parlez-vous francais?"

On 11 March the advance party left by truck for Rambervillers. Several days later Hertz, Meppelink, Lein, Del Bosco, and Aldridge left for Chateau Mesnieres to fetch the nurses and their baggage. In a few days the main party followed them in the famous 40-and-8's from Rouen.

As we entrained at Rouen for the journey across France, we little realized the changes that lay be-



*The Mural and the Medic
Everybody ate at Shep's*





Off Limits—Nurses Quarters

fore us. For four days we lived, ate, and slept in boxcars. We made the best of what little space we had, gained a thorough knowledge of 10-in-1s and C rations, and found that we could sleep in the strangest positions. We spent Sunday in the Paris freight yards; somehow we smuggled in some *vin rouge*, caught a passing glimpse of French womanhood, and wished we could escape the vigilance of "Eddie Moe."

That same day our nurses were in Paris, doing the sights and eating at the Red Cross opposite *Le Gare du Nord*. But we did not actually see them until our trains joined forces north of Paris.

Meanwhile our trip continued. The trains rolled eastward, passing towns that were familiar names in yesterday's headlines. At Nancy we left the nurses behind to be picked up by our trucks. We continued to Luneville, where in the middle of the night we were finally rescued and convoyed to Rambervillers.

Rambervillers was a pleasant five-day pause. We were comfortably quartered in what were once French, later German barracks; we worked on equipment, but mostly we took showers, had our clothes washed, and played ball. At night we visited the town, trying out our meager French and drinking wine.



Primitive but effective



Puddles gets a bath



Officers in the Field



Yoachim gets a hit!



What makes Sammy run?

In the middle of a Saturday afternoon game between ward and surgery the advance party was called out. We were moving up. This time our trip took us through recently liberated French villages whose streets were still lined with cheering people and whose houses displayed the Tricolor. Our destination was a field near Dettwiller, an Alsatian village in a pleasant rolling valley of the Vosges mountains.

We moved in echelons and for the first time in the ETO set up our hospital. Until far in the night we pitched ward tents, finally completing our work by truck light. Tired and dirty we crawled into our sleeping bags. Then it began to rain. We were awakened by the shrill voice of Richard Myers, "Please, boys, get up now; we must get up; if we don't tie the tents down, they'll blow away. Get up. Get up. Won't someone please get up?" We got up, tied down the tents, moved the equipment out of the rain, and went back to bed.

In Dettwiller we were completely set up. But nothing happened. Day after day it rained until the fields turned swampy, the trucks stuck in the mud, and we slipped and slid back and forth from the mess hall. In a nearby field lay a damaged B-17; we stripped it, led by the enterprising raiders Andreiev, Dias, and Mansfield.



Hot water supply



In the Vosges Mountains



American Nurse—Nazi armband

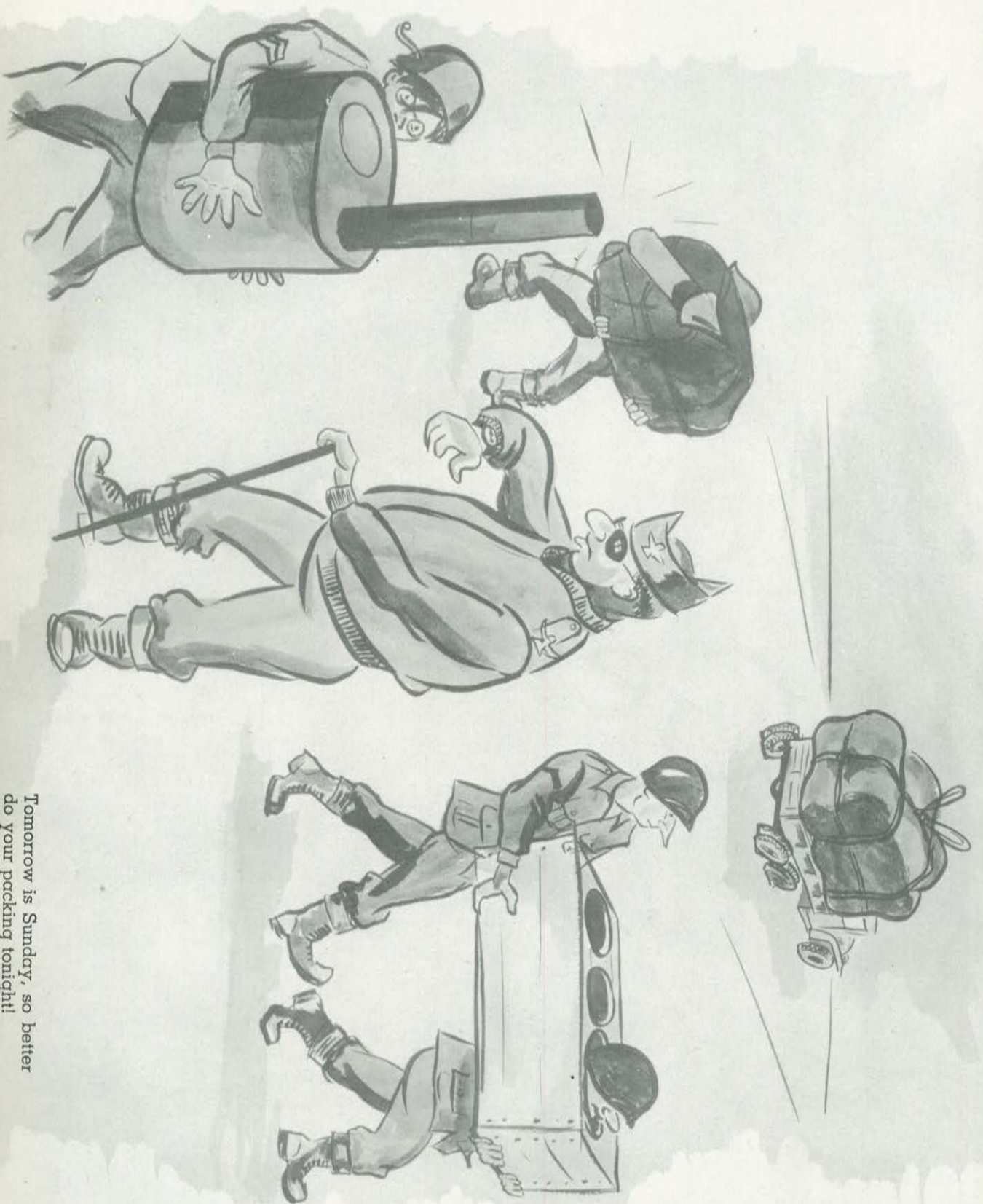


Chief Nurse



It rained every day

Germany



Tomorrow is Sunday, so better
do your packing tonight!



Siegfried Line

Germany

Combat Medic



LATE in the evening of 29 March we were called from our tents. The first echelon was to move in the morning. We still look back on this movement into Germany with pride. Not only did we cross into the enemy's homeland and see his devastated towns and sullen people, but this time we also set up the hospital with hardly a mishap. The advance party reached the new area outside Gollheim about 1700, the first echelon pulled in about an hour later, and by 2100 we had the crucial tents up. The next two days the other echelons arrived, set up their tents, and waited for whatever was coming. But again we were only to be ready and willing.

Mail finally caught up with us here, a whole truckload of it, and Peterson wore his vocal cords out calling it. H. B. Cranmer found a German car and temporarily it was part of our possessions.



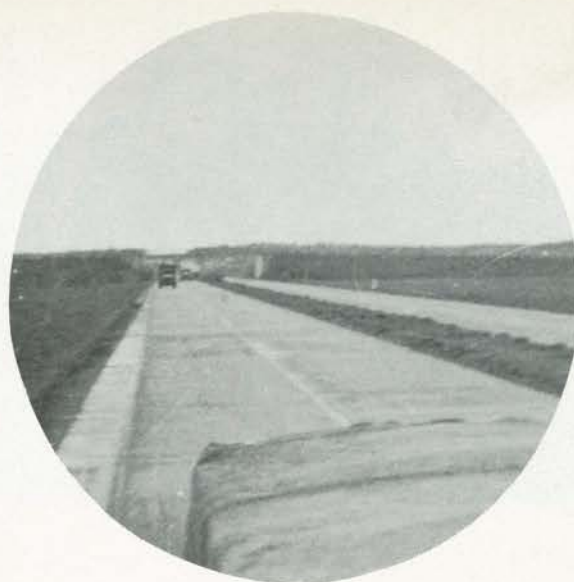
At Gollheim we were issued Carbines

First stop in Germany





Propaganda



Reich's Autobahn



Heading East

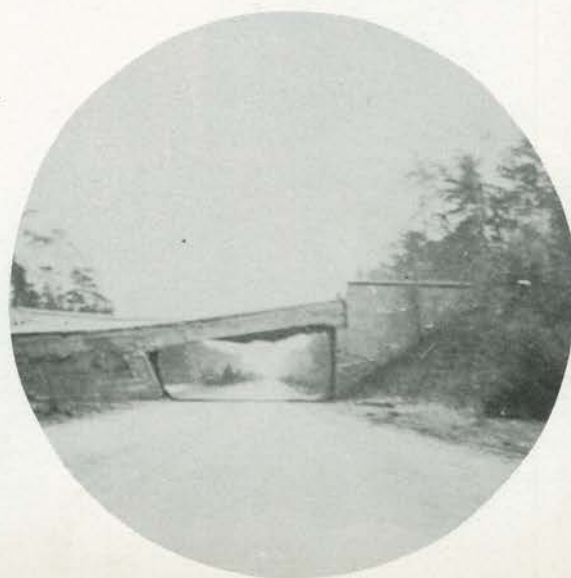
Rhine Crossing at Worms

On 4 April we moved forward again, this time across the Rhine into Frankfurt. We crossed at Worms and drove up one of Hitler's Superhighways into the recently captured city. Here we bivouacked in a race-track, setting up just enough tents to house equipment and personnel.

We stayed for ten days, long enough to begin exploring the vicinity. Our greatest find was abandoned leather works. Soon leathercraft ranked with poker as a pleasant pastime. But the leather works served other purposes too; lab found some equipment they could use; sterilization carried off a cabinet; and supply increased its supply of tools.

Next to the leather works was a pickle factory. Major Long and Lieutenant Johnson tasted the pickles one evening and pronounced

The Yanks had been here





Frankfurt

them good. While we did not profit too much by this exploit, it gave us courage to try some other liberated material that came in barrels. The Krauts had thoughtfully left a PX train in Frankfurt, and we acquired some German rum. If anyone had planned sabotage against us, he could not have done a neater job. One night of rum, and Smorto was ready to move his bed in with the boys next door. Stermer and his Pharmacy, Lab, X-ray boys failed to show up one morning, and finally Eddie Moe solved the situation by rationing the stuff in non-lethal doses of a half-canteen cup apiece.

We profited in another way by the rapid advance of our troops. Near Frankfurt was a large German medical depot now in American hands. We made two trips in our trucks and added several German medical chests to our equipment.

Trench—Frankfurt Race Track



Washday



Bivouac—Frankfurt Race Track

The defenders had fled





Search Light



Bomb Shelter



Hide Out
Bomb Crater

We played ball, took showers, got haircuts, wrote innumerable letters, and rode motorcycles around the racetrack. Here we were issued carbines, and considered ourselves masters of the situation after a half-hour lecture on nomenclature by Mitcheltree and Priest, Distefano, and Lein.

In Frankfurt a minor tragedy visited us one day; the inimitable "Puddles" died.

By early one Sunday morning, for we always moved on Sunday, we discovered we were in the Third Army, and urged on by Eddie Moe, we crawled out of our sacks, gathered in the dayroom tent, and heard John Frye tell us that at eight o'clock that morning we would be on our way to a new assignment, and this time it would not be a dry run. We ate breakfast in the semi-darkness, struck our tents, tossed tents,

Abandoned Shelter





Right in the Fuehrer's face



Trophy

packs, duffle bags, gas masks, loot, and rum on the trucks, loaded our own and forty QM vehicles to overflowing, and promptly on the hour the first echelon moved out.

That Sunday ride was the longest and fastest we made. We sped across Central Germany on an Autobahn, north of Frankfurt, past Hersfeld, by-passed Eisenach and Erfurt, caught up with some Fourth Armored tanks, and at four in the afternoon found ourselves parked on a road outside of Weimar. Within a couple of hours we were on our way; Major Long guided us into our new area, and that evening we pitched our tents in the shadow of Schloss Ettersburg, within walking distance of Buchenwald Concentration Camp. We were the farthest forward of the Evac Hospitals in the Third Army.

No Races Today



Allan does the laundry

"Between poker games, we relaxed"





Surgery Smiles
For The
Photographer



Guess what?



Poker fiends

Along the Main

Return to Frankfurt

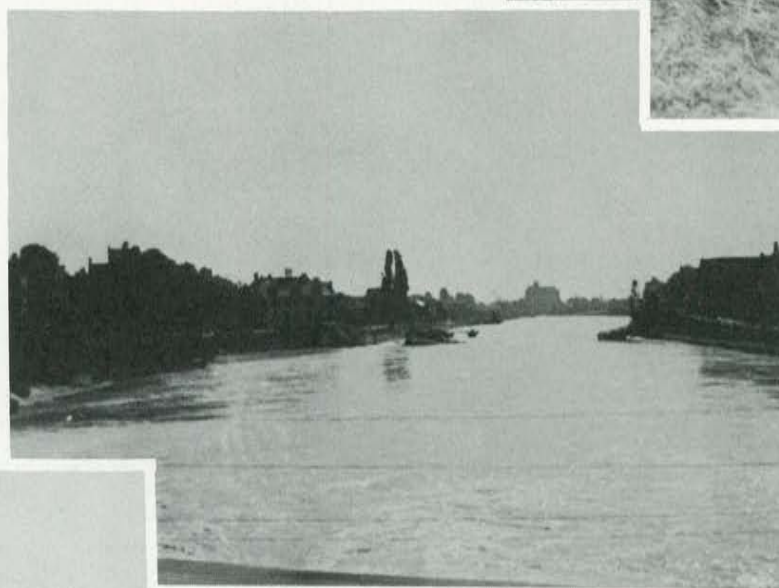




The bridge is out



Out at first!



River scene

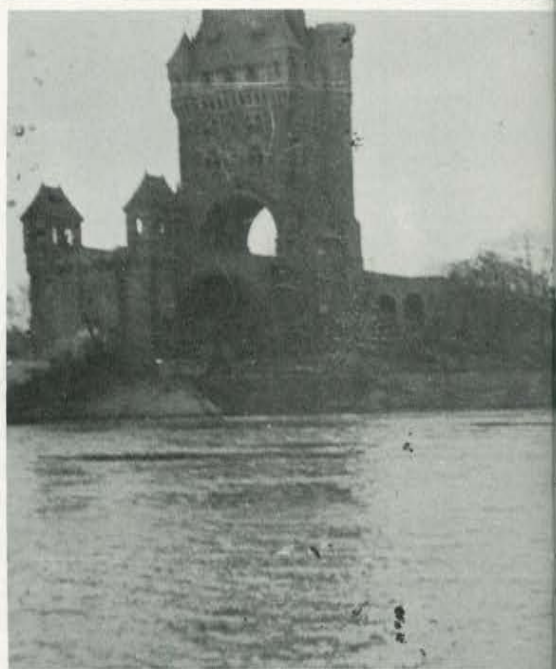
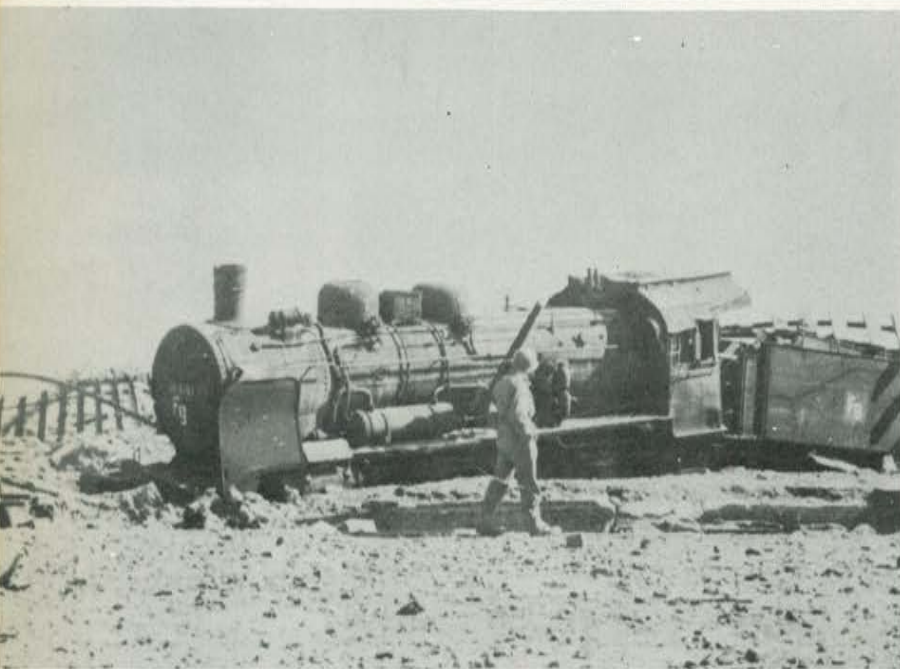


The Main — Frankfurt

Wash Day!



War's Devastation Along Our Travel Route







TODAY among other things it is what they have lost that is haunting the Germans. As long as the Nazis were still there, exhorting them, promising them victory and restoration, most of them did not realize how complete their loss really was. It is a material loss measurable in homes destroyed and industries blasted into ruin, fortunes burned up in incendiary raids. It is a moral loss felt in loss of national honor, independence and dignity. It is the loss of every foundation of their lives.



Buchenwald

BUCHENWALD

A MOUNTAINTOP has always been an ideal location for a camp. This one was no exception. From its tabletop you could walk to the edge in almost any direction and look for miles onto the checkered, fertile fields below.

Yes, a mountain has always been considered the ideal health resort, yet 51,000 people, perhaps more, died here. Died? Not exactly. They were burned to death here, they were tortured to death here, they were beaten to death here, they were hanged to death here, and they were mischievously shot to death here. Many, many thousands more were kept at the threshold of death, suffering illness and hunger and torture until even dying was a welcome thing. Yes, a mountain is a healthy place, but at Buchenwald Concentration Camp in Germany death was a very ordinary thing. So ordinary that the men who died during the night were routinely carted outside by their roommates and left at the corner for the collection detail.

Everyone knows the horrors that were found at Buchenwald. By this time all have read the story of the piles of bodies found outside the crematory, all have seen the pictures of the heaps of bones, have heard the commentators describe the remains found in the furnaces and tell of the lampshades made of human skin. They are all true. But how can words and pictures alone properly convey the suffering that existed? Can they show you how day after day exhausted bodies were found dead all over the place, even after we arrived. How any of them kept alive was the great miracle of the place. It can't be said that the Nazis starved the inmates. They did feed them, grass soup with dirt and stones in it for bulk, with some sort of bread, a watery coffee affair, and scrap of margarine or sausage. No, they were not starved to death. But it was very easy to die of tuberculosis, pneumonia, exhaustion, and practically anything else.

The camp itself wasn't very large, built to house 20,000 but holding as many as 80,000 at times. A charged wire fence ran all around it, and at the base was some heavy barbed wire barricade.

Behind this fence were kept some of Europe's greatest men



Main gate



Inside the main gate

Prisoner's Quarters





Where penalties were paid



Beds!

Here politics was life and death



At frequent intervals tall guardhouses commanded the entire area. Immediately inside the main gate was the large assembly area which was also used as a public punishment arena. And nearby, surrounded by low wooden fences, the dreaded crematory.

Day and night the smoke could be seen rising from the chimneys and the fuel used was not always dead. There were two entrances to the basement of the very modern crematory. One was the stairs from the furnace room, and the other was through a trap door from the outside. It was through this entrance that the victims were most often dropped to be hung on the hooks that lined the basement wall. Sometimes they arrived after being shot through the back of the neck. Eight large human-sized furnaces waited to receive them. The remains were taken out of the rear of the furnaces and poured into variously shaped urns to be sent home.

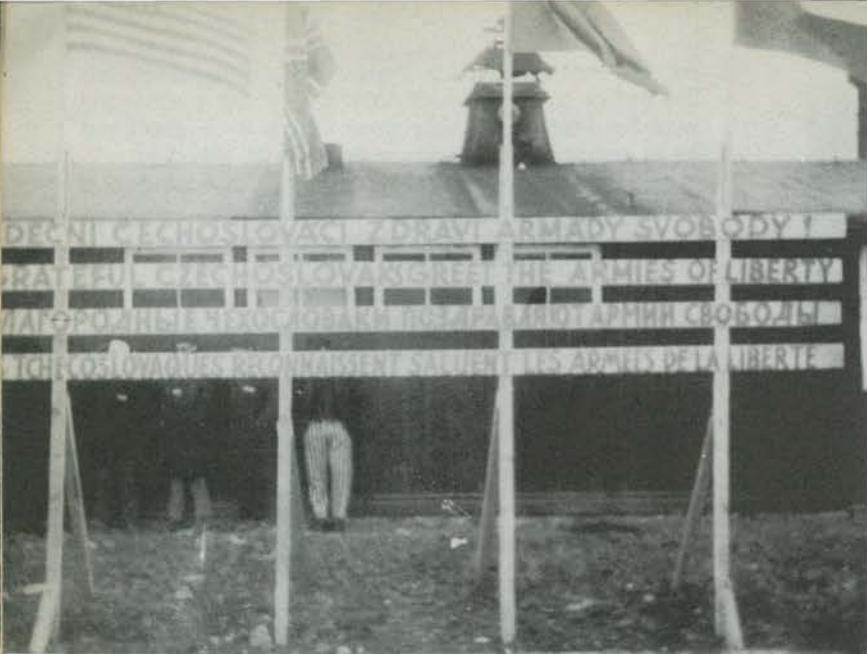
The men lived in long low barracks arranged in blocks and most of them surrounded by barbed wire fences. There was only one toilet building in the camp, an outdoor no-flush type. Other toilet facilities were provided in the form of small holes in each corner. Not much work went on in the camp. There was some repair of binoculars but mostly the men who were physically capable were sent to factories in the vicinity or on transport to other areas. There was an efficient hospital on the grounds, staffed by prisoners and severely hampered by lack of medicines, equipment, and other materials. One other important building was a research laboratory that manufactured all the typhus serum used by the German army. The SS men meted out punishment often and ruthlessly for such major infractions as not making a bed properly or fast enough.

Buchenwald was a political camp; here were sent only Hitler's political enemies. Thus the prisoners included Germany's foremost writers, scientists, and artists, who had not managed to escape to the democratic countries. They organized themselves into a highly integrated underground government and ran their own society under the noses of the SS watchmen.

They maintained themselves by subterfuge, cunning, ruthlessness, and infinite precaution. No member knew more than two others—the one he received instructions from and the one to whom he

The striped trousers are the distinguishing mark!





passed them on. Newcomers were immediately investigated. Thus they settled down to wait. It was a militant organization, and they manufactured guns and other weapons from the parts they laboriously smuggled in. They had a hidden radio and knew immediately of the invasion of the Continent. Sabotage went on everywhere.

In every way the prisoners tried to keep their mental and physical faculties alive. How well they succeeded may be judged by the fact that they assembled several hundred guns over a period of years and made plans for the day of liberation. When the first American tanks were spotted entering a nearby town, the prisoners attacked from the rear and captured both the camp and the SS troops firing upon our tanks. Within a few days flags of all nations were flying over the barracks housing the people of those nations. A conference was immediately held and program for Germany's future was prepared to be brought to a greater conference to be held by the liberated people of all Germany.

Antifascists



THE "NAZI-DENYING" WEIMAR POPULACE

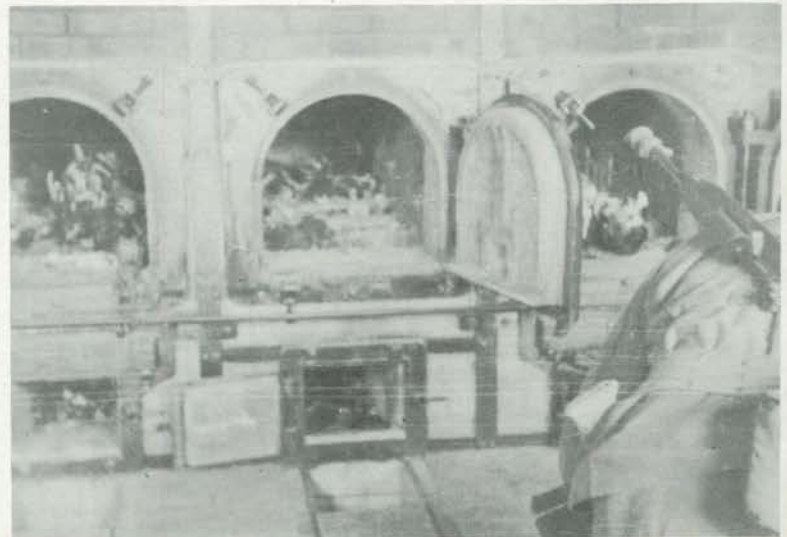
"This is the picnic and picnic-grounds which you and your kind planned and promoted, 'gentlemen.' Look closely and deeply and then search futilely for justification—for pride in your race and your beloved Führer."

As the prisoners worked on the road between Weimar and Buchenwald the "unknowing" populace jeered at and spat upon them.





Members of Parliament (Britian) and Congress (U. S.) tour and inspect Buchenwald



"The only escape was through the chimney of the crematory"

Crematory



The dead were counted in wagonloads



Design in human skin



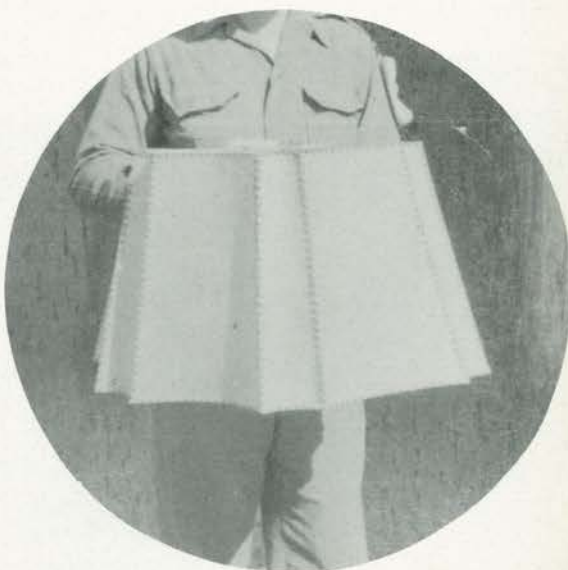
"Freedom is a hard-bought thing"



Close up of mass murder



Some just fell exhausted



The Commandant's wife was interested in lamp shades — of Human Skin



The SS Barracks



We set up a Hospital in former SS Barracks



The Living . . .



Skin and Bones

Our first patients at Buchenwald





Grotesque in death, yes — but
indeed more so in life

There were children here too!



This Polish fellow is rather bewildered over his newly gained freedom. Many questions heretofore, mere worrisome musings, now became of foremost importance as oppression is removed and elation dwindled. Does his family live? Can his nation of people once again rise without too great internal strife? Can time and experience, which alters all perspectives, bring order out of this chaos about him?



No longer need the starving find contentment with a few grams of bread each day. Bread had indeed become the bread of life. Men died clutching small molded pieces of it and slept with self-rationed pieces next to their bodies. Later in deep Germany we found that each D.P., foot-weary and disease ridden, carried an infested morsel of bread among his belongings. They reluctantly relinquished it.



THURINGIA AND BAYERN



ETTERSBURG — SCHLOSS
AND VILLAGE



THE DUKE OF WEIMAR
ONCE LIVED HERE

WHILE the fame and the honors of Buchenwald resulted from the treatment of the camp's prisoners and its attendant publicity, our sojourn on the Thuringian plain was replete with events of humor and mischief, of adventure and excitement.

At noon of our first day in the back yard of Ettersburg, Dave Morrison, flanked by two D. P.'s, strolled into camp with three whimpering members of the Wehrmacht who feared a broken tommy-gun more than the prospect of a prison camp.—The vagrant trucks of the motor pool began to drift in with loot from nearby Reich warehouses. Soon every man and most nurses were rambling about in fur vests and jackets. The first visitors at the camp returned with binoculars, starting a fruitful run on the optical shop until a pair of field glasses hanging from the neck became a trademark of the 120th. Many of our trucks were hauling supplies to the advance units of the 3rd army driving toward Czechoslovakian border.

By the time the first group of technicians had cleared enough SS barracks to set up the first wards of the hospital, the nurses were packed and passed off on the 121st Evac Hosp. back near Erfurt. Then we all moved up on the hill into the



Our encampment near Weimar



Hector and the Pups

At the bottom of the hill



Fur Jacket





Our first prisoners



The prisoners are questioned



An Arsenal of captured weapons



Spoils of war

castle and court once owned by the Grand Duke of Weimar, lately a private school. The officers moved into the chateau itself, and the enlisted men set themselves up in the three wings of the administrative quarters. From history books still on the shelves, and with added tid-bits from Karl Hertz, our German scholar, we learned that these rooms had served as the homes of Goethe and Schiller. Of more immediate interest were the stocks of pickles, fruits, and squces in the cellar, and the colony of Polish girls in the outlying buildings jealously guarded by old chin-whiskers, former headmaster of the school. It was during this period that the linguistic ability of Tandit, Novak, and Pinkowski made them necessary accomplices.

When the British M. P.'s arrived and also our own Congressmen, to visit Buchenwald, and investigate conditions for the War Crimes Commission, Col. Williams and staff received and feted them in the Grand Ballroom. Margaret Bourke-White, *Life* photographer, dropped in one evening for a can of D.D.T. Clare Booth Luce rode through one day, escorted by Lt. General Vandenburg, 9th A. F. Commander.

Figuring on a long stay, we

tried to fix our dwellings with the conveniences of home. Ganden and Lella set up a laundry. At night detachment headquarters became a leathercraft work-shop. The Chaplain fitted up a library and art studio in his office. The officers dressed their tables with "liberated" linen and silver. Chadwick and Morrison rigged up a loudspeaker which played records liberated from a warehouse by Priest. Hertz accompanied Lt. Orr, Lt. Frye, Galbreath and Jim Moore in the search for food, and by speaking perfect German, he talked a warehouse manager out of several sides of beef. Rosenblum, Pasca, Ellman, and Mansfield brought in a collection of cameras which were raffled off.

The grand strategy of war soon shook us out of our pleasant berths. Patton had reversed his field, and was traveling southeast through Bavaria. The First Army took over the occupation of the Weimar area, and we headed for a new assignment. We remember that it was a hurried trip, for the Colonel was advised of a "First come, first to draw an assignment" policy with an alternative of being broken up and parceled out to other hospitals. We set up the tents at Kersbach, a few miles north of Nuernberg.



In the courtyard of Schloss Ettersburg



Before entrance of the Fruit Cellar



Four of a kind



The Colonel's jeep and driver



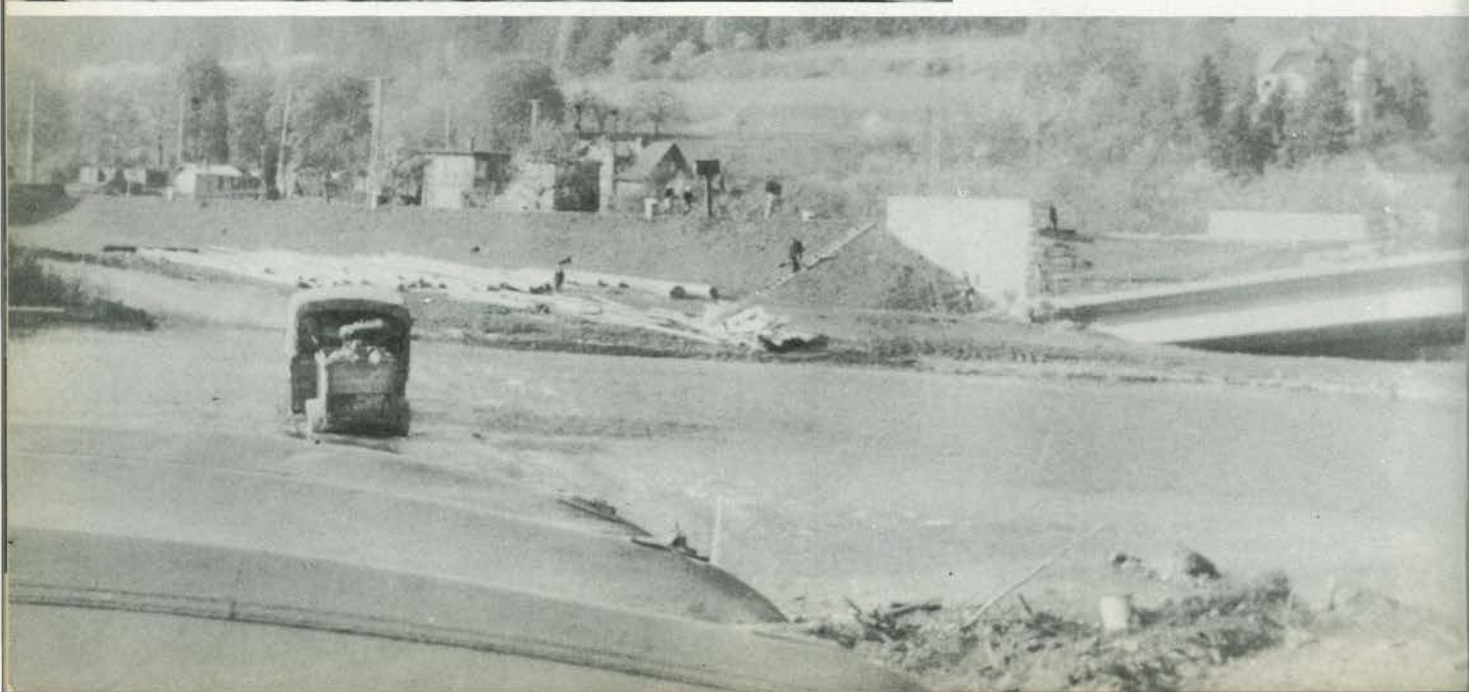
Our stay in Kersbach was of little import. Our nurses were reissued to us, and the 5th division officers were once more around our area. Bed-check Charlie paid a visit early every evening, but couldn't find the front door. Lt. Neidorff left to lawyer for War Crimes Inc.

Finally Col. Williams emerged successfully from his battle to preserve the unity of the 120th, and the advance party left to set up a hospital in Cham, where a batch of ailing DP's were in need of care. Well, that was our specialty ---



Top: Nurses in the field; Center: Fording the Saale at Saalford; Below: On the way to Kersbach

Bobo arrived late, found the Detachment tent not pitched. He asked DeLong, "Where do you expect me to sleep? On the ground?" Kenny looked about, replied, "Plenty of room, isn't there?"



Cham



Cham

WHEN we moved into Cham, the Infantrymen of the 90th Division were still there. Tanks and guns rolled through the narrow main street in the direction of the Czech border. The debris of war still littered the town. An ordinance small arms repair company was at work; combat MP's directed traffic, and advancing units still kept their headquarters and their billets in town. The first night there was no room for us, so we pitched our tents in the fields. The next day we began to clean the Hotel Alte Post for hospital use and patients began to arrive.

The situation differed from Buchenwald in that there was no camp here. The Nazis had marched 15000 men from the Flossenbergl Concentration Camp when the Russians came near. Five thousand were shot when they faltered, and the other 10,000 scattered over a wide area and left to die when the Allied approach was swifter than the Nazis expected.

We cleared two hotels, and a couple of stores to house the hospital while the French Red Cross girls continued endlessly to deposit walking skeletons in front of the Receiving room. Finally seven large wards were in operation, crammed with patients only a little this side of death's door. This improvised hospital often held as many as 2,000 patients, and very few were lost, thanks to the hard work of the officers, nurses, and technicians.

One feature of the work at Cham was the policy of conscripting the local Germans as charwomen, attendants, cooks, litter-bearers, and utility personnel. Some ex-Werhmacht nurses also helped in the wards.

Once again we lived in passable quarters. Several of the domiciles surrounding the



Looking West



Picturesque Regen River as it runs toward you along edge of Cham



"Das Biertor"
The Beer Gate

market square known as von Hindenberg Platz were evacuated of German tenants and we moved in. The Joseph Heilingbrunner store was turned into the Coconut Grove restaurant, managed by Joe Wygal and served the commissioned personnel. The E. M. also attended a ritzy mess in the Cafe' Gottschalk (known to Eddie Moe as the Cafe' Eingang) where Sheppards' crew held forth. Jim Moore's legation had the soft touch-overseeing the German cooks and kitchen-maids who prepared the inevitable stews for our D. P. patients.

For recreation, the nurses perched on their balconies and watched officers of the 5th and 90th Divisions struggle to see who should first set foot upon the staircase. Our own officers, though they did not reject the feminine, also looked to their athletic laurels. They formed a softball team which nightly scrimmaged against the E. M. aggregation. A day room was established in the Cafe' Krone where Traynor presided over a chromium bar that served free beer in unlimited quantities. Recorded music wove a spell of romance; magazines tried vainly to take the blunt edge off desire. After darkness set in, the principal diversion was to strap on shoulder holsters, sneak past the screen of M. P.'s and search through the ancient tenements for glimpses of the maids who inspired "Lili Marlene." Although our discipline was high and no one fraternized, many a medic returned to his quarters late but elated.



The Regen — Dam in background



Bridge across the Regen



"Eddie Moe" will remember the Drug Store on the corner



Main street — Cham

For afternoons off, the gentle curves of the Regen river afforded several excellent swimming holes. The banks were well decorated by the village maidens draped in bathing suits of the latest cut. Binoculars again were standard wear for every stroller. We learned more German words daily.

Our movie-machine was propped up in the picturesque *Film-theater* and showed films twice nightly to all the troops in the area. Though the films available were mostly on the corny side, and had to be hauled daily from Regensburg, 60 miles away, the programs were well attended. Our crew of projectionists—Vleck, Steffy and Dahlen—generously contributed their free time to this purpose.

Vic Pasca procured the facilities of a photography studio, and developed hundreds of rolls of films for all of us. Since we had been storing up exposed rolls for months, this turned out to be a merry business. Others who devoted their time were O'Sullivan, Mongiello, Friedman, and Mason.

Anderson built up a good business with his camera and pistol exchanges. Ellman finally liberated a Zeiss Contax and was the happiest man in Germany. Neophyte camera enthusiasts, notably buddies Priest and Hontas, came rushing to Seymour for advice. Mailmen Peterson and Thomas developed combat fatigue lugging the loot and had to enlist aid from Whalen and Damon.



Detachment Headquarters



Cafe Gottschalk, the enlisted mess hall



Burgomeister's office

Our first bloc of transfers left following the lure of permanent E.T.O. duty. Rosenblum, Mayer, Lohuis, Vincek, Tandit, Rosenberg joined the linguists in A.M.G. Jitterbug Leslie, Bennie Austin and O. D. Hughes vamoosed with a trucking firm. Claypool was lost from the outfit because of the effect frauliens had on his susceptible blood pressure. Lt. Krinsky finally went on sick call with his trick knee and was flown back to France. Lts. Zahl and McDaniels of the A.N.C. left to join their husbands who had been ZI'd.

Many of the doctors and nurses were promoted. Chatfield and Frank moved up to Tech—Verdicchio to staff.

It was in Cham that V.E. day came and went. Although that momentous day was one of the happiest in our lives, it passed very quietly, for we were jammed with patients. In the evening we sat around the radios and listened to description of the wild throngs that jammed Picadilly Circus, the Champ Elysees, Times Square, Pennsylvania Avenue. A nip of wine to go with our bacon and eggs was our



Chow Line



Motor Pool at Von Hindenburg Platz



Von Hindenburg Platz



"CQ"



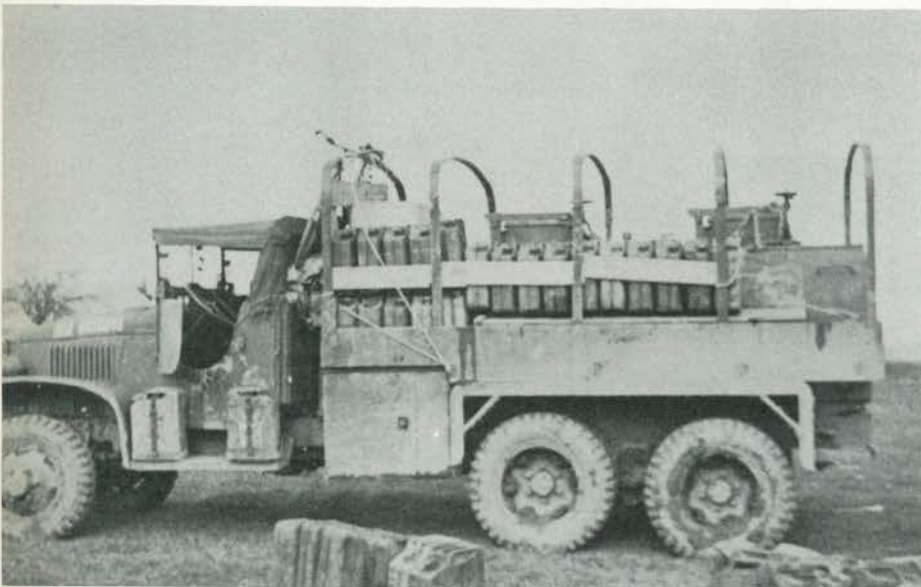
Motor Sergeant



2nd Echelon maintenance



Weapons



Water Truck

celebration; our turn to spree would come on debarkation day in the U.S.A. whenever that might be.

One fortunate circumstance was the position of the village egg market in the rear of the Cafe' Krone. A pack or two of cigarettes were easily bartered for a helmet full of "Eier". Added to bacon rustled from "10 in 1" rations stocked in kitchen supply, these eggs became our chief sustenance and helped to revive the custom of a late evening meal learned in Tenby.



Gas Dump



Looking for



carrier



Two girls and a jeep

Once we were visited by two Red Cross girls from Regensburg with coffee and doughnuts. Soon after we were allotted two Red Cross girls for our own unit. Peggy Kemutzer and Marge Conant boosted morale 1000 per cent.

We worked hard in Cham. During the first week the flood of patients seemed endless. At the beginning Central Supply was hard pressed to furnish the necessary sterile I.V. sets for glucose and blood. Duty hours ran from seven to seven, and a night shift worked in all the wards, as well as in Central



Cafe Krone Interior



something?



Cafe Krone Exterior



Nurses quarters on the square



Stadtpfarrkirche Altar



Hotel Gress — Part of our hospital in Cham



Stadtpfarrkirche Tower

Supply during the first few hectic days.

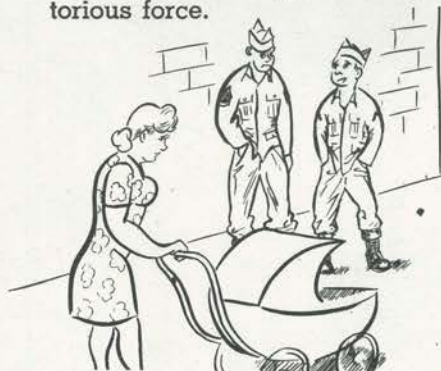
Surgery was not quite as hardpressed, but Major Long soon found some patients for the operating room across the street, and several major operations were successfully performed.

Medical supply, pharmacy, and property exchange were almost swamped the first few days. Chatfield, Verdicchio, Simon, Mason, Ryan, and Shamel had their headaches, for someone always needed an item that had just run out or had never been in our table of equipment. Captured German supplies were used to supplement our own, for the patients far out numbered our original capacity.

Yet in our postwar reminiscences the sun will always shine brightly on the streets of Cham. Like so many German villages when viewed from the

distant hills, this Bavarian town looked the perfect picture of peace; a cluster of buildings wherein life flowed slowly and kindly, without a trace of evil.

Cham to us was sunny because we were happy there. Like Tenby in Wales, it was one of our high-water marks. Our work, if sometimes unpleasant, was well rewarded with success. Although we lived in the midst of a hostile people there was never a sense of danger. And after the war ended on May 12, we took for ourselves what luxuries remained as the right of a victorious force.



Probably full of wine. Never saw a baby in one yet!



Our theater in Cham



German civilian laborers and D.P.'s



Find anything?



"Doc" Hontas checking the "Russky"



PLX poses for the Photographer



Do you think we really
need to take all these
pianos?

Part of Surgery

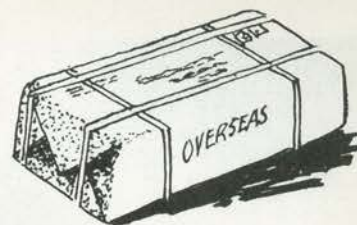


The Colonel explains
the situation to the first
soldier





Drugstore Cowboys



Down by the river



Bruce Cook sits triumphantly
astride a twisted "88"

Supply Section



Williams and his pal "Skinny"



Probably out looking for Beer



Water Boy



"Bobby" and John



On afternoons off we explored the countryside



Relaxing

Jimmy doffs his hat



Camera fiends



"Out for blood"



Reading the day's news



"Leave it to Dias and Andreiev"



Dias built the boat from a German wing tank and two B-17 oxygen tanks



Jean and friend



Campbell looks reflective



Refugees



Unmatched team of oxen used for power



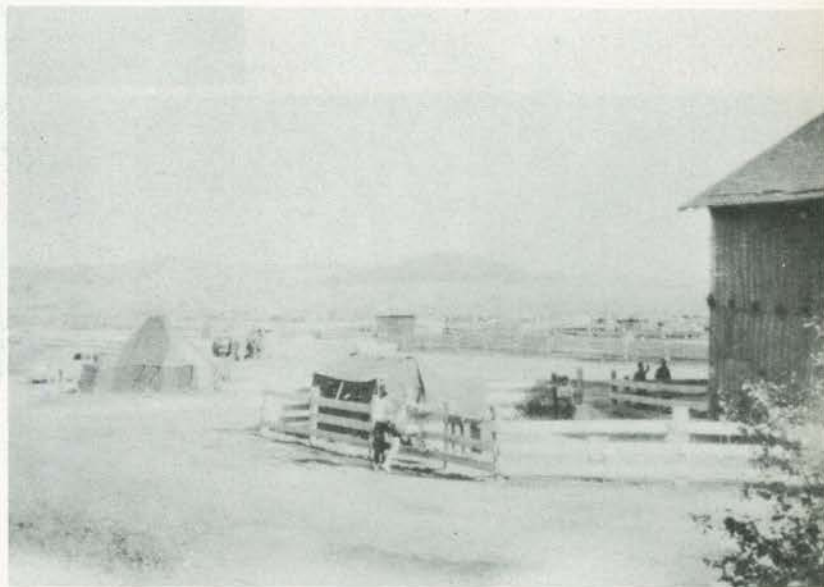
POWs by the thousands



Along the road



The Daily Round-up

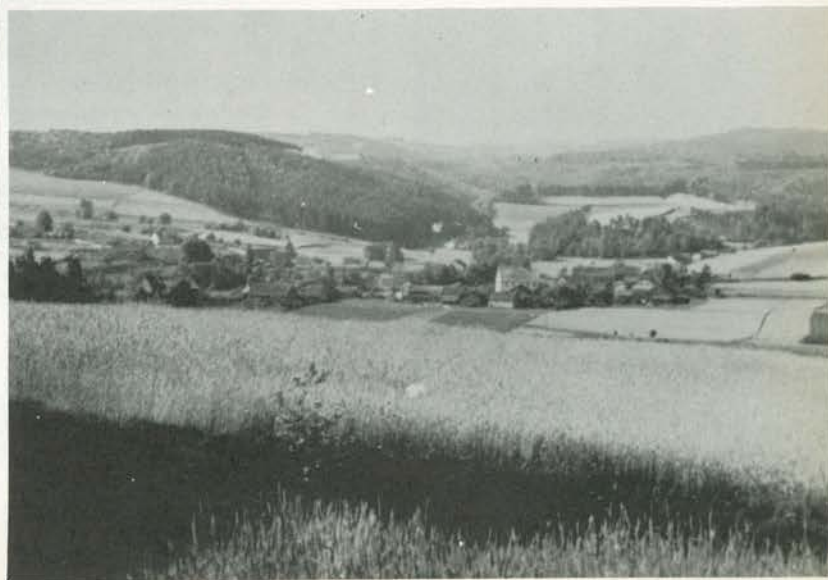
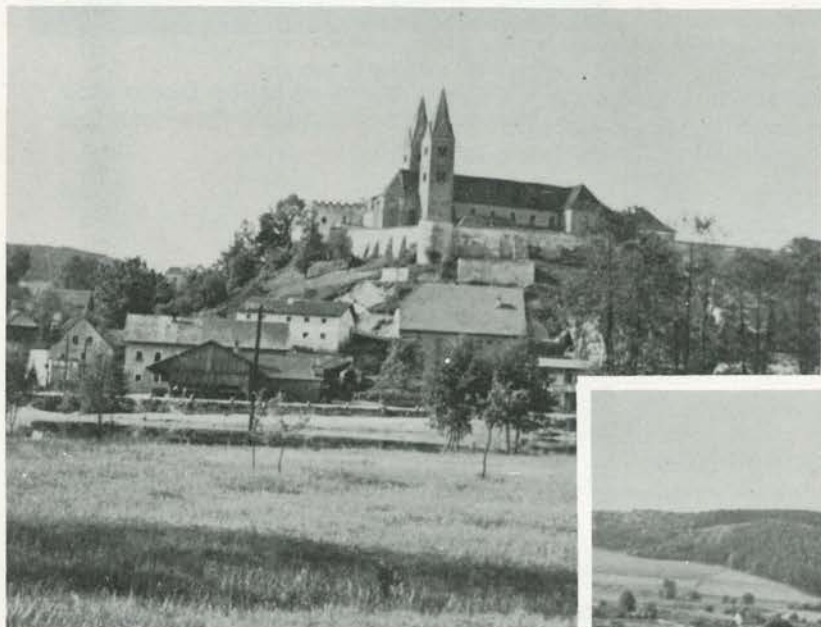
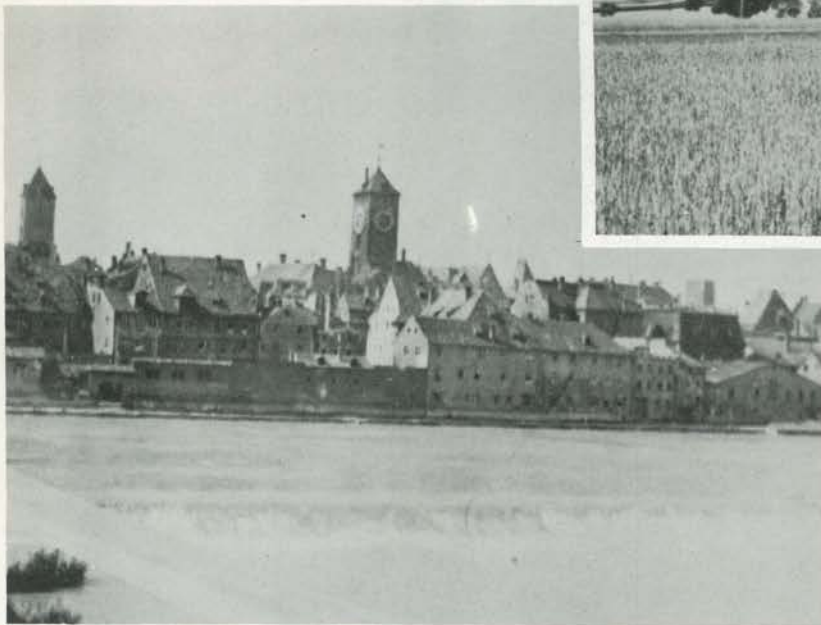


Cham Prisoner Stockade

Corpus Christi Procession



Bavarian Countryside

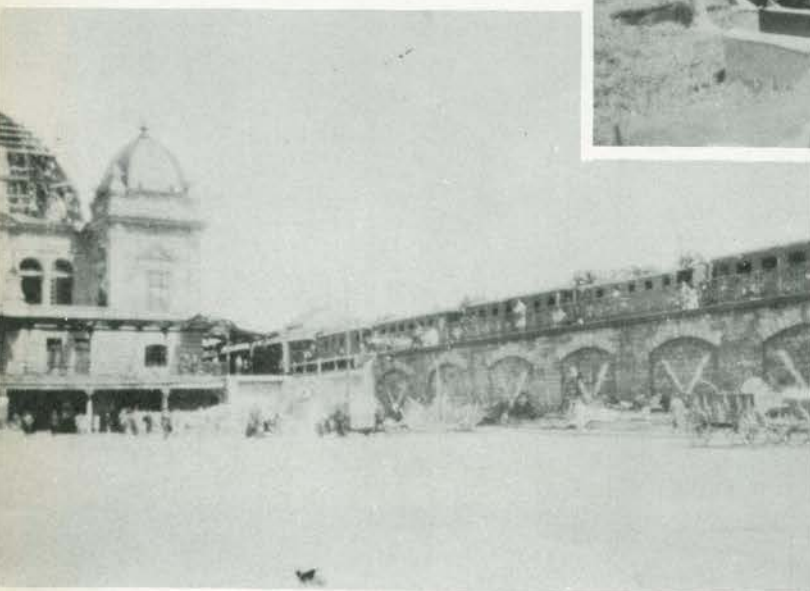




Street scene in Taus



Chapman grimaces at the Czech kids' appreciation of good ole American Jazz



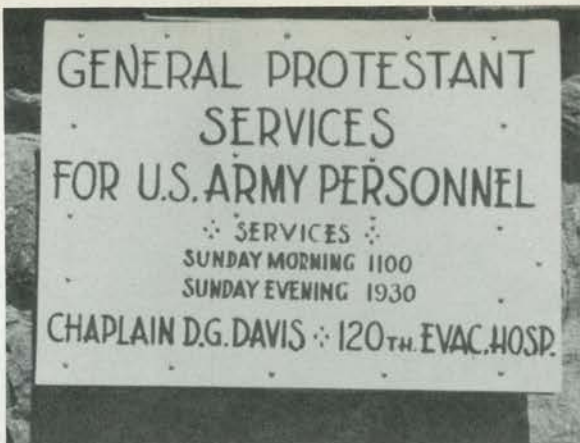
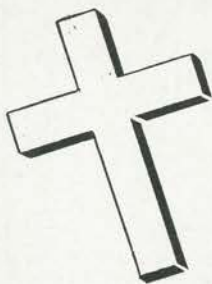
Pilsen

Bomb battered railway station already under repair by Jerry prisoner labor. Heavily laden train prepares to leave station with Russian and Polish D. P.'s.



Picnic in Czechoslovakia





Religious Activities

IN August 1944 Lieutenant (later Captain) Donald G. Davis joined the 120th Evac Hosp as chaplain. Services were held in the recreation building and later in the day-room since no nearby chapel was available.

In England religious activities were expanded to include regular Jewish services every Friday; the Chaplain conducted Protestant services in the Presbyterian church kindly loaned to us for this purpose; Catholic personnel attended the local Catholic church.

It was on the continent that difficulties threatened to upset the schedule of religious activities. For five Sundays in succession part of the organization was on the road moving from one place to another. Under the circumstances services were held where occasion permitted; e. g., in the Paris railroad yards, in a ward tent at Dettwiller, in the open air at Gollheim, in the grandstand of the racetrack at Frankfurt. Here for the first time we spent a Sunday when no one was on the road moving. It was in Frankfurt too that our Jewish services were probably among the first such services publicly held in Frankfurt in many years.

At Buchenwald Protestant services were held in the little Lutheran chapel that was part of the Schloss Ettersburg. At Kersbach we once again moved on

Sunday, but open-air services were nonetheless held. In Cham we regularly had the use of the Evangelical church for Protestant services; Catholic personnel attended mass at the Redemptionist Fathers church; Jewish members held their services in the officers mess.

No matter what the difficulties, wherever we went, we found a place and a time for religious worship.



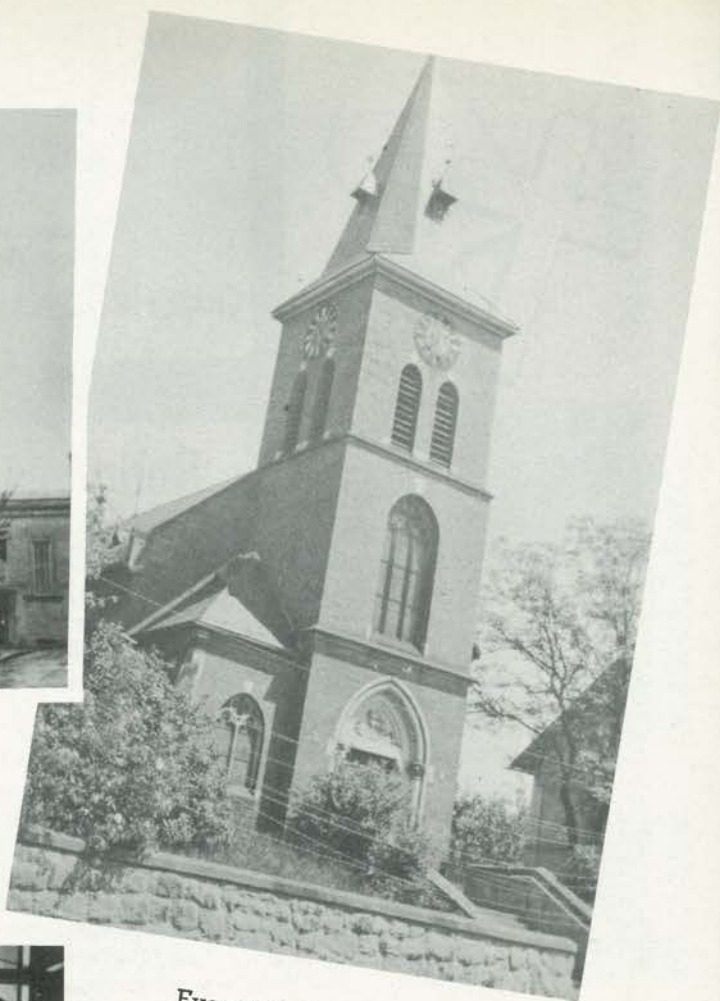
Chaplain Davis



Chaplain and Assistant



Presbyterian Church — Tenby



Evangelical Church — Cham



Grandstand, Race Track, Frankfurt



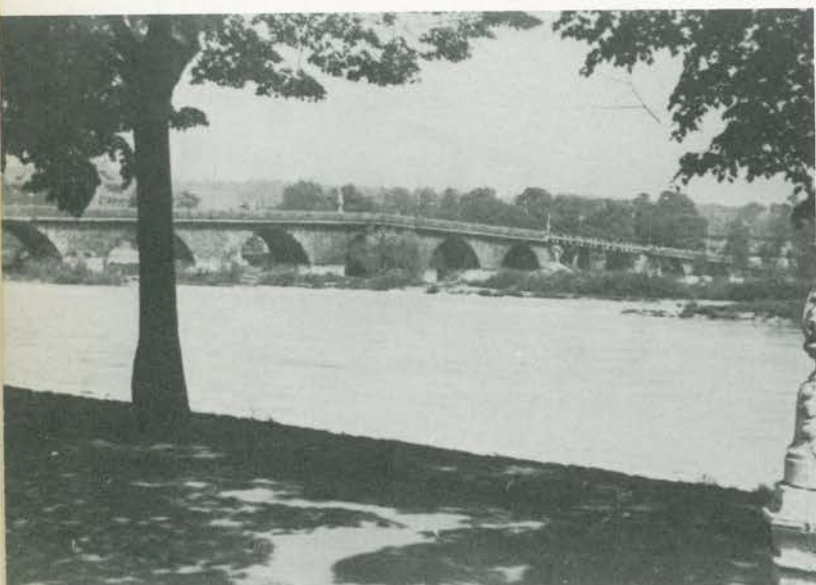
Paris Freight Yards

the Return Trip

The Return



The road back



The Danube, Regensburg

Noon halt — Convoy home



RUMOR had run rampant during our last weeks in Cham, and leisure made for increased susceptibility to unbased rumblings from phantom headquarters. Was our lot to be cast at Marseilles or Le Havre? Was our destination to be the South Pacific or the United States? Rumor blossomed into fact on June 10 when we learned that on the morrow the 120th would take the shortest possible route to our home shores. All hands were busy loading trucks with equipment, luggage, and making ready space for a small complement of men.

Dawn and the morning came in a drizzling rain, the zero hour of 1000 approached and ticked by as the convoy waited for Pvt. Fixit Dias, who finally joined the motor complement with six pistols he had just fished out of the Regen River. The motors were revved-up, Pinkowsky adjusted his goggles, and with the simple forward motion of Lt. Murdoch's arm the movement toward the U.S. began. That memorable date held a meaning which caused an extra beat in our hearts, because the golden dreams of departure from Europe to our homes and loved ones had transformed itself into reality.

The motor trip by the advance party back across Germany and France was both trying and interesting. Rear quarters begged for release from relentless jolting, the sudden change from Shep's Beanery at the Cafe Gottschalk to the ten-in-ones embarrassed the stomach, and the joviality became mere veneer, but the Traynor-Kitch combination often brought spirits back to



P. M.!

Trip

normal when tension grew. The German landscape as it rolled by could be observed more closely and critically, for we had gained a basic understanding of the German people and their culture. The immaculate fields, kept so in the face of warring foes with medieval implements and methods, the clean villages, the controlled and neat forests, the broad superhighways, all reflected a methodical but militaristic people. The ruined cities and the sullen faces could only be explained through stubborn German aggressiveness and American ingenuity. Many of us were often amazed to see only sturdy smoke stacks towering as mute symbols above their crumbled factories.

After the convoy spent an uneventful but interesting first day on the road, the night was spent under make-shift shelters at the 3rd Army Lucky Bivouac Area deep in the forests near Ansbach. Only the aborigines could have titled it as such, but the weariness of day and the ill-prospects of the night ahead were soon forgotten when a keg of Cham-Cafe Krone beer was uncorked and tilted. The second day enroute was likewise uneventful except when Ross led half the convoy astray by following another outfit. Perhaps he liked Germany and its wealth of Frauleins. "Rupe" Farmer, true to form, proved to be able to sleep anywhere and in all positions. The night was spent along the superhighway on the outskirts of Kaiserlautern. Diligent search, principally by John Ryan the III, produced fresh eggs which supplemented a continual "10 in 1" diet.



Convoy halt



Ready to move on after Bivouac

Bridge guard



Morning toilet



Convoy stop



War-shattered village along the way

Ernie Pyle Memorial Bridge across the Rhine



Refugees

The evening of the third day found us bivouacked with numerous other units on the outskirts of Soisson, France. Here for the first time we were able to observe the effects of inflation in France as the people clamored and bartered. Pacensa was in his realm and did landslide business. A good morning chow at the bivouac area mess unit, and we were once again on our way.

We arrived in Camp Twenty Grand at 1500 June 14, and here we awaited the arrival of the rest of the outfit who were on their way by rail.

Before we proceed further, let us return to Cham for the purpose of following the movement of the rail complement of the 120th. On Tuesday morning, June 12, we followed the advance party by truck with the purpose of entraining at Regensburg. The early summer green of the rolling hills and the thick forests formed the scenery of the final act in our trek across Bavaria.

The black and gold mosque-like steeple of Cham's main church faded into the background as the convoy sped past the huge PW camp on the outskirts of town.

A few minutes later we passed an outfit bivouacked in a valley. While we were on our way home, those poor Joes were performing the early morning

ritual of calisthenics. We sympathized with them briefly—but only briefly. There were no regrets in any of our hearts during that motor trip to Regensburg. Home, and the exalting thrill of furloughs kept whirling around in our minds, teasing us, and causing every passing minute to resemble eternity. Now and then we would pass destroyed German fighter planes—targets of American strafing. D. P.'s in their slow, melancholy cavalcade would glance up disinterestedly from the side of the road as we rumbled on. Through quiet, picturesque Bavarian villages, across stretches of highway flanked by broad, lush meadows, and finally at Straubing we crossed the pontoon bridge flung across the murky Danube.

The railroad station at Regensburg, near where we alighted from the trucks to board our train, was a mass of twisted steel and general havoc. The camera fiends enjoyed a field day.

Remember the short beer-bust we had prior to the train's departure? Beer, oh glorious brew, mingled with the taste of "liberated" scallions from nearby gardens, to put us all in the mood to forgive the humpty-dumpty shabbiness of our Twenty Grand Limited.

The sign painters in the crowd lost no time. In minutes flat the sides of the coaches advertised to the world that the

Convoy home



France again



Noon Chow

Gassing up on the Boulevard





Time to Rise and Shine

"Battered Bastards of Buchenwald" were homeward bound. Everything was written on them from "Moshofsky's Kindergarten" to "Oklahoma, How I Love You."

At last we boarded and the train began to move as everyone gritted his teeth at the expectation of five days of hell. Amazingly enough, however, the train stayed on the tracks, and none of us could actually complain of any hardship except "Shep", kingpin of the immortal mess. Someone sneaked in line for seconds on coffee at one particular stop and consequently upset the whole kitchen routine. The devil has been paying for it since.

Water was a problem; we rationed it in 5 gallon cans, filled them at every stop, and used our purifying tablets liberally. Shaving water we used to commandeer from the locomotive whenever our train halted long enough. (And that happened frequently until we reached France.) Jim-boy and Del Bosco carried water for the kitchen car; every now and then Pratt commandeered a crew to replenish the officers' and nurses' supply.

Our basic diet was the K ration, prepared with what ingenuity we possessed and supplemented with such delicacies as chance and shrewd bargaining brought our way.

Of course, sleeping conditions in the cramped compartments at night were not entirely de luxe. Many of us shook our warped and beaten minds until we drum-



Cleaning up at Soisson Bivouac Area



Chowline Soissons



Loading up



"Frankie" looks on



Farewell to Cham



On our way at last

med up the idea of "liberating" lumber planks at certain stops and placing them across the seats—Buchenwald style. Once the stillness of the night was broken by a sharp scream from the No. 3 coach. All of us awoke fitfully, only to learn the next morning that it was nothing more than Marblestein turning over in his sleep and crushing "Lil' Joe" Allen next to him.

We were tired, but comparatively we traveled in luxury. We still remember the D. P.s on the open flatcars; rain or shine, they would sit huddled together among boxes and heavy machinery.

At Mainz, straddling the Rhine, stood the Franklin D. Roosevelt Memorial Bridge. Here we crossed to the west. It was cherry-picking time in the Rhine valley, and our traders went to work. Near Bad Kruznach coffee, cigarettes, Hershey bars, and K rations were swapped for helmetfuls of sweet cherries and an occasional bottle of wine.

We were hardened to the sight of ruined towns, yet the ruins of Saarbruecken shocked us. And many of us held our breaths as we crossed the river on a hastily propped up bridge.

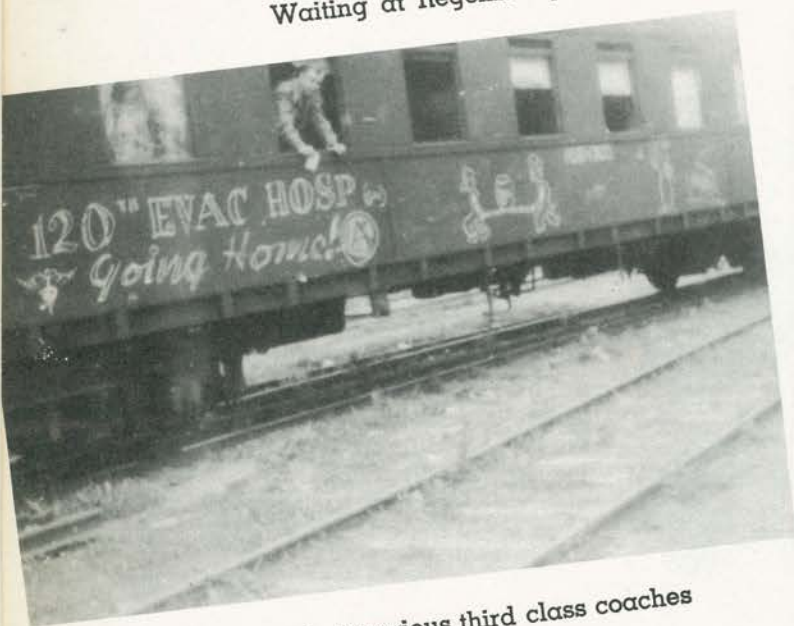
That evening a U.S.-built locomotive picked up our train for the long climb up the mountain from Thionville. As we rode slowly past the villages along the railway, the French came out to see us and to gather the cigarettes, candies, gum, and whatever else we scattered from the coaches in a



Pontoon bridge over the Danube at Straubing



Waiting at Regensburg



We traveled in luxurious third class coaches



We stopped every half hour



The nurses had a coach to themselves

wild burst of extravagance. We were back in France.

While at first we were somewhat suspicious whether our train would hold together long enough to reach France, we finally gained confidence, and the last day the more intrepid among us rode on the outside platforms much to the astonishment of the French villagers and peasants. "Chief" Mongiello, "Fireman" Rager, Willie Marchant, and Murphy became experienced hands at this pastime. Major Wagner, train commander, probably gained a few gray hairs, but there were no mishaps.

That night and the next day our train picked up speed as it headed west across France. In late afternoon we were in Amiens. Then we turned south.

Late that fifth night we jolted to a stop at a siding. After a short delay, trucks picked us up and after another cold, crowded ride in the night we were back at Twenty Grand.

Here we made last minute preparations, signed our customs declarations, received those two battle stars with their precious ten points, then sat in the sun and waited. Postel, Lester, and Worden, 85 pointers all, departed to sweat out a voyage home as discharges. Finally on 23 June everything was ready. Trucks picked us up and we sped down the highway to Le Havre. Here the U.S. transport Cristobal, al-



Framed in a car window



Mess Car

ready loaded to the gunwales, was waiting for us. It didn't matter; we climbed on, found our bunks in the bottom hold, and looked forward to the voyage home.

We were double loaded, so we divided our sleeping between the hold and the deck. But a good part of our time was spent in chow lines. Poker flourished wherever room could be found, and some of our number enriched themselves. Everyone except Bobo and Shirk pulled KP, but no one minded too much. The chow was excellent, and the KPs could eat their fill.

As we neared our destination, everyone began to figure our time on board, for we had a pool of \$135 for the lucky man who guessed closest.

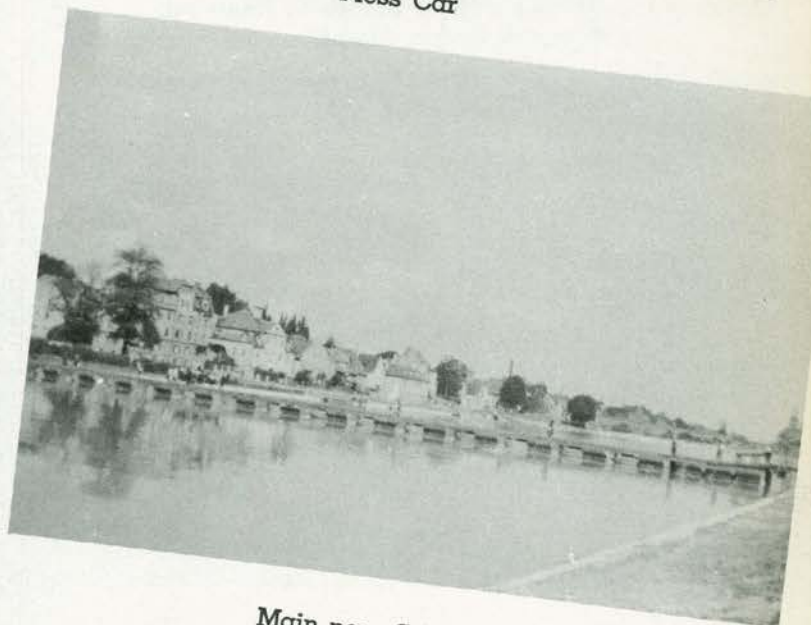
Finally on the eighth day, as the seagulls chaperoned us into placid waters, the cry arose, "Land." The shoreline of Virginia broke out on the horizon. We had made it.

The harbor of Hampton Roads boiled painfully as the sun kept knocking the hell out of Fahrenheit. We sweated and strained on deck until it was our turn to disembark. Guided by buxom Wacs, serenaded by an Army band, welcomed by the Red Cross, we came down the gangplank onto American soil.

Willie Marchant just nosed out Leon Lichtman for the big pot. Our total time was 221 hours and 47 minutes.

Waiting trains took us to Camp Patrick Henry. Again a band welcomed us, and better yet, the mess hall set a meal before us that fulfilled even our wildest dreams.

That evening we drew our suntans, called or wired home, and waited for our turn. By noon the next day the first group began to leave for the Reception Stations and thirty days of recuperation at home.



Main near Schweinfurt



Railway Station, Mainz



Crossing the Rhine on The Franklin D. Roosevelt Memorial Bridge, Mainz



The old and the new bridge — Mainz



Waiting to climb the mountain, Thionville



Refugees — also homeward bound





Somewhere in France



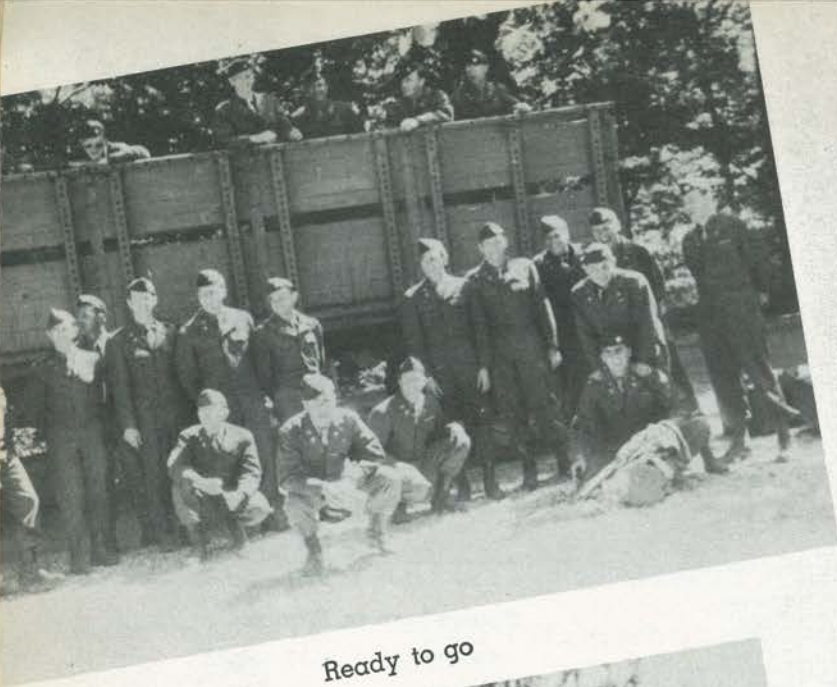
Packing for home



Twenty Grand had changed



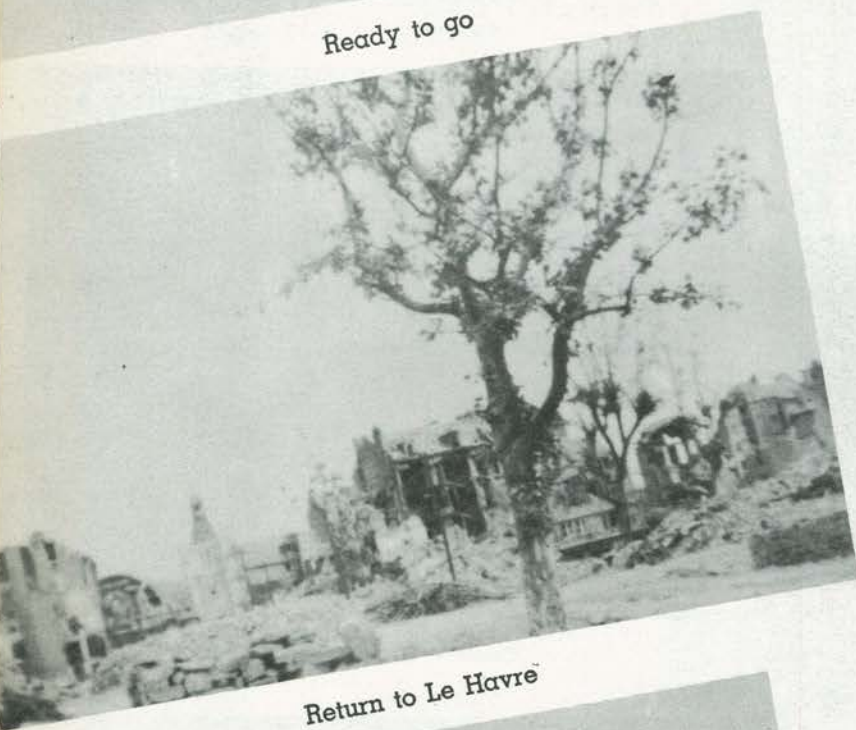
The Colonel listens in



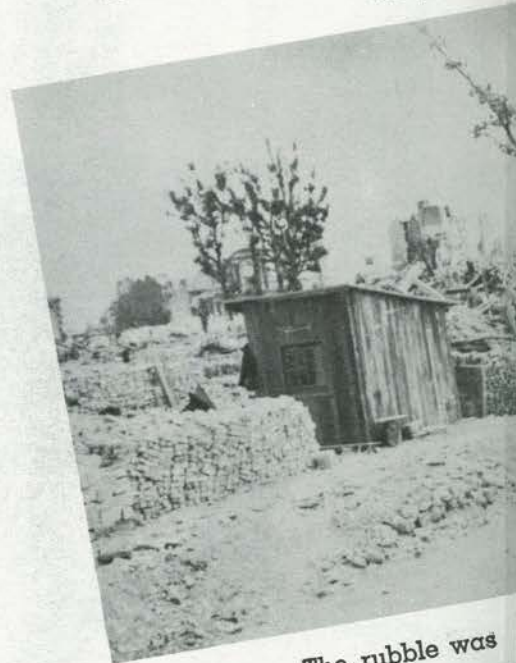
Ready to go



They shall



Return to Le Havre



The rubble was



First Glimpse





have music



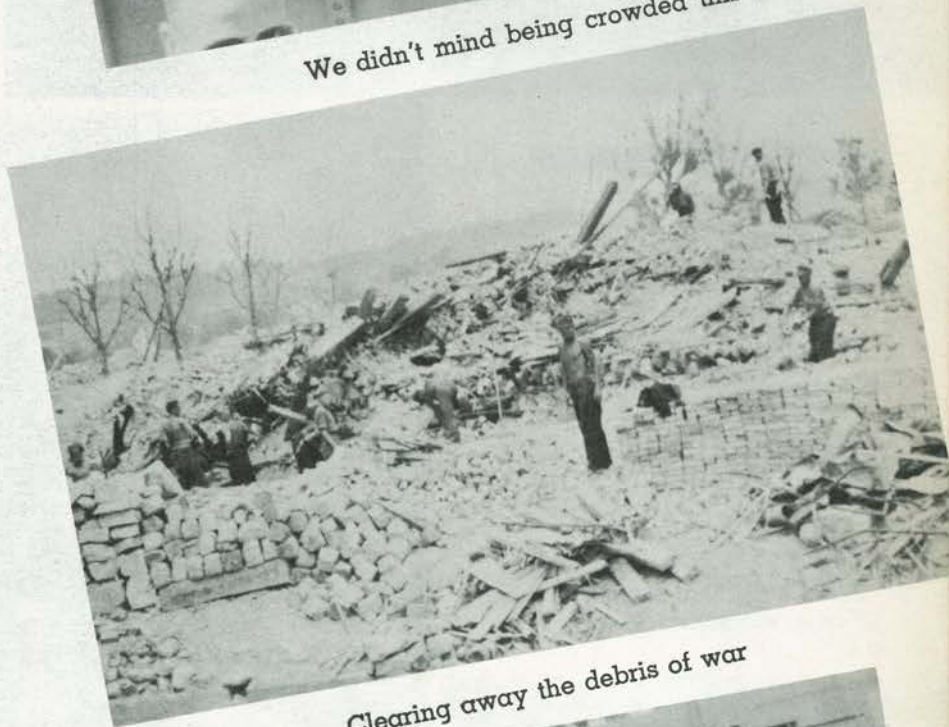
neatly stacked



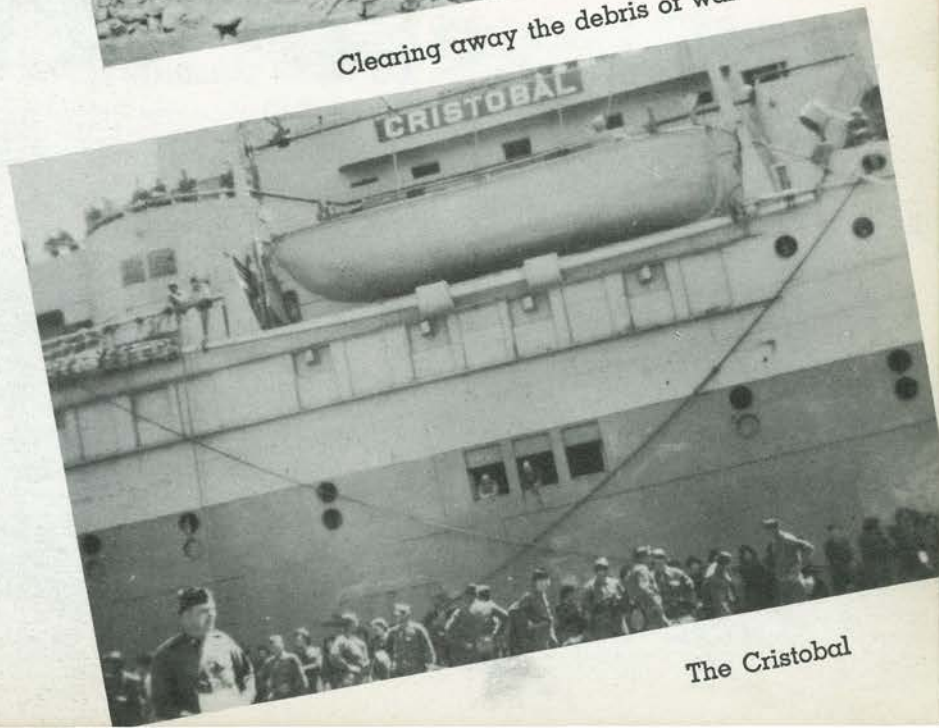
She looked like a seaworthy craft



We didn't mind being crowded this time



Clearing away the debris of war



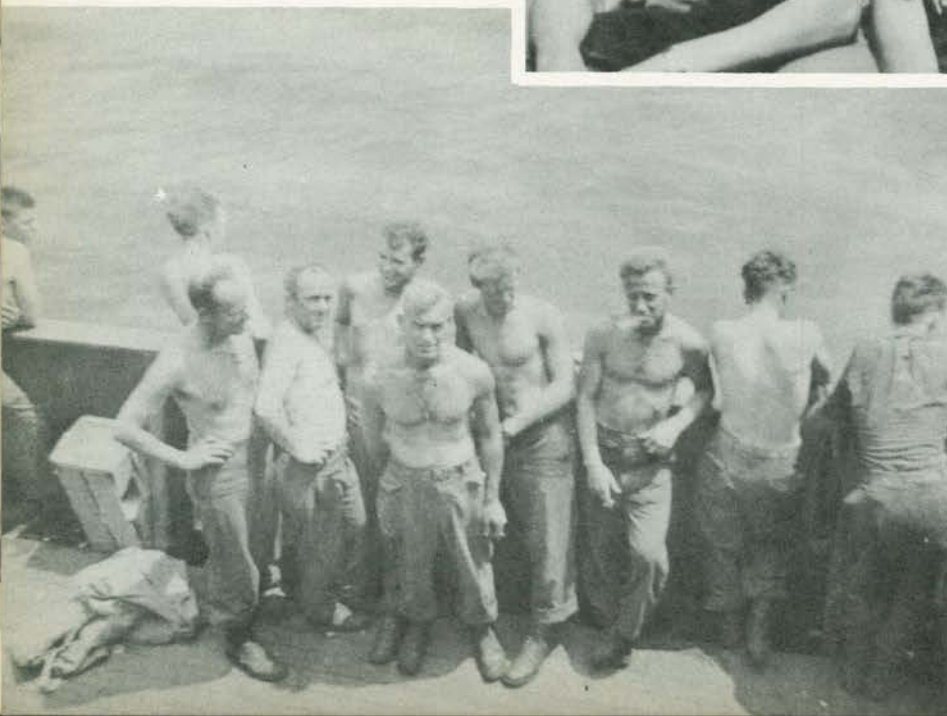
The Cristobal



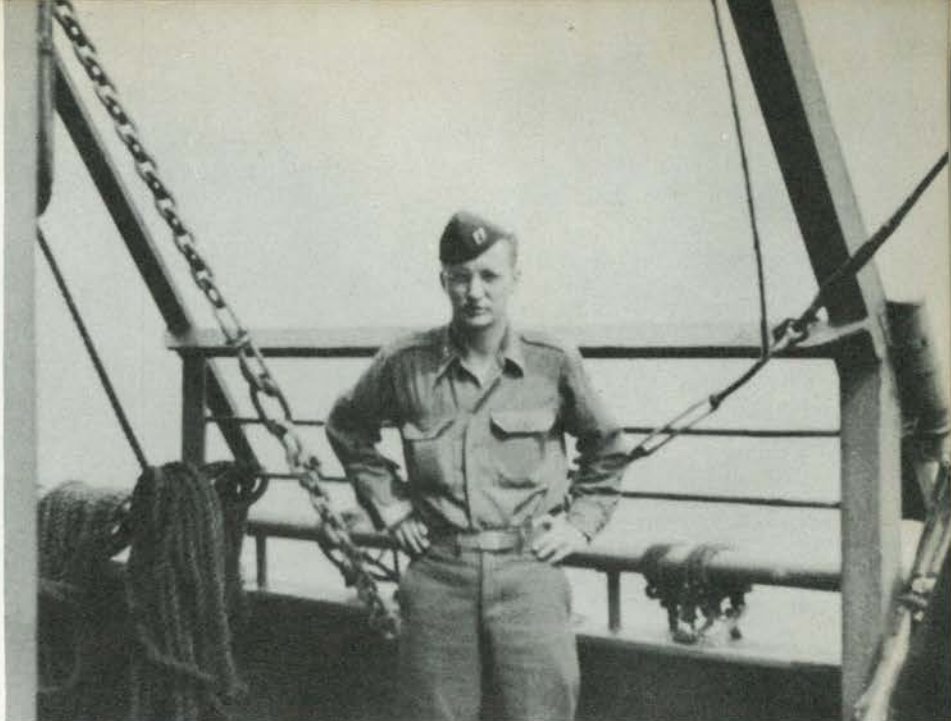
Getting the afternoon sun



Some watched the water—
Some just stood around



A Motley crew aboard the
Cristobal



Somewhere on the Atlantic



We were a bit crowded

Officer's stateroom

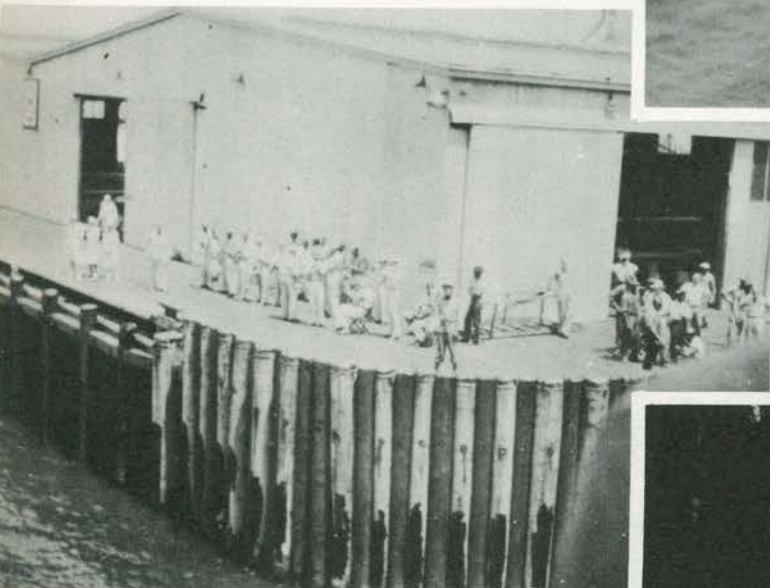




Relaxing with a three-star general



A boat came out to welcome us



As we pulled into the dock at Hampton Roads, Newport News, Va. after 8 days at sea the strains of familiar music from a band reached our ears.



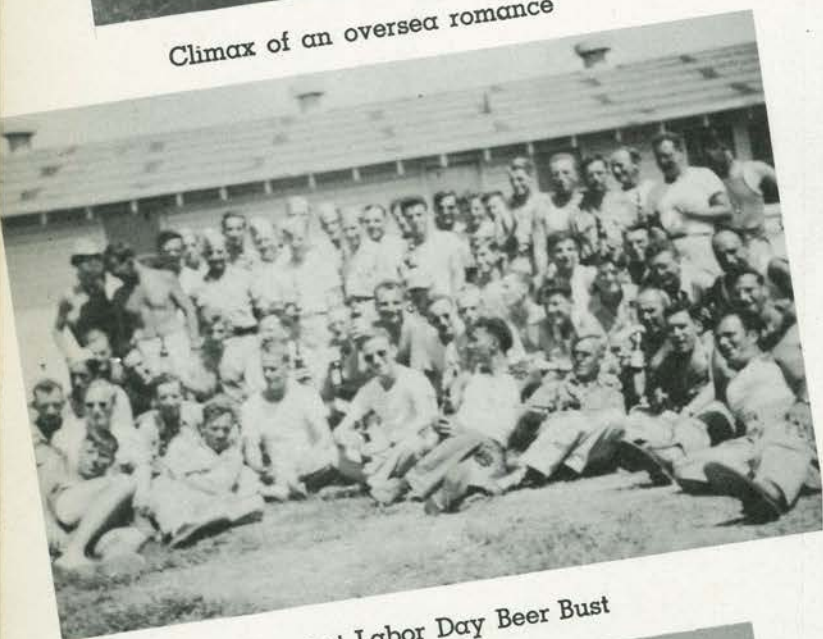
Entry into Camp Patrick Henry

Camp Polk

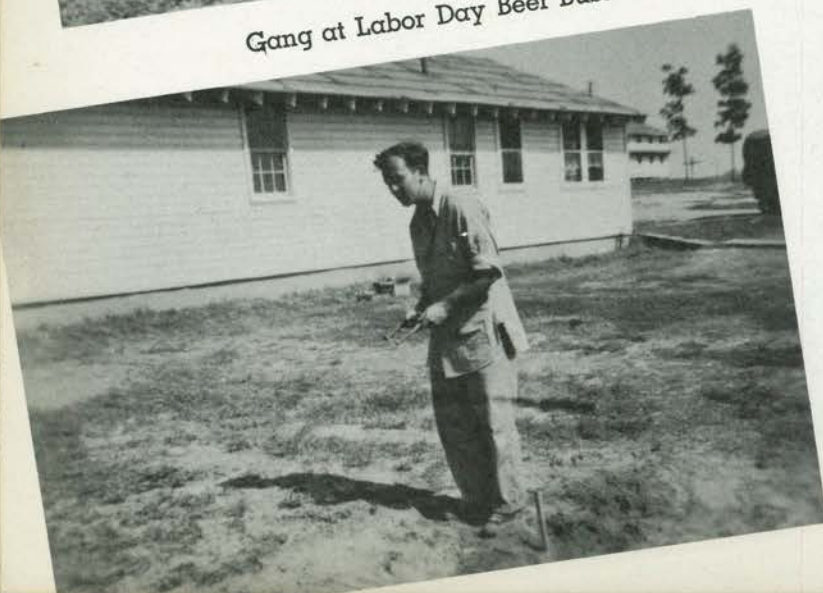
Camp



Climax of an oversea romance



Gang at Labor Day Beer Bust



Horseshoe Champ

FOR one month the 120th was just a name on paper. Then July was over, and the first week in August marked our return to the Reception Stations.

Gathering in shipping room, we all discussed the happy days at home, vying with each other for the best reports on home-cooked meals and the man-hunger of the girls. We also looked forward with misgivings to our future in the Pacific war, and with equal concern to the prospect of exile in Camp Polk.

But then a bomb dropped on Hiroshima. Scanning the jubilant headlines, we forgot our dread of the future and looked forward to an early peace. Camp Polk, yes, but not for long.

Forgotten were the sneers of the Reception Center workers. At least our battle stars were worth ten points.

The troop trains labored Polkward with their customary lethargy. Stops in St. Louis, New Orleans, Shreveport, and Phoenix helped replenish the liquor supply, and the trip had a pleasant aura. Many timetables were erratic. Meppelink sent his wife to Leesville, but was held back two weeks at Sheridan.

Garwood and Farmer were sipping sodas in a service club at Grant when their train pulled out.

Bill Kearns returned a father, William Jr. being born during the recuperation period. Verdicchio returned tired and streamlined. Pasca set a travel record, shuttling between New York and Frisco to visit his Dutch delight. Four men took brides: Chris Simon, Joe Vleck, Bob Rager, and James, the latter marrying Lt. Sheppard, one of our nurses, to culminate a romance that began in Tenby.

By the time the last group straggled into Polk, peace negotiations were underway. Life at Polk was a matter of "sweating it out." Peace, discharges, new furloughs—every man had his own goal.

Not all the first rosy dreams came true. We still had to continue a training program that seemed senseless and futile. Inspections, both planned and unwarned, increased in number. Restrictions on passes and furloughs remained in effect. Life was not hard; we had it easy, but there was a sense of aimlessness, a feeling of rotting away while the War Department made up its mind. Still the prospect of an ocean voyage faded like a ghost until one day an official TWX rescinded the orders. Soon the first men left for discharges.

September 2 brought new point scores and new critical levels for additional service. Yet 95% of us were still waiting. The more am-

Polk

bitious began to write to Congressmen. A few boys—Bobo, Lewis, Proud, and Symons were lullabied into the recruiting service. Pappy Shirk, sitting on the fence between Regular Army and a trip home for good, was pushed off into civilian clothes before he could make up his mind.

Meanwhile Special Service concocted a beer bust for Labor Day and organized an intra-unit softball league. Detached service at the Regional Hospital soon killed that. Our team entered the 32nd HQ league and quickly took the lead, holding it despite concentrated pressure from the rest of the pack. Ellis Thomas won the horseshoe tournament; Teitelbaum was headed for the ping-pong championship when furloughs terminated play.

That's right—furloughs. A directive finally drifted down to our HQ authorizing 30-day furloughs for 25% of the personnel at a time. Each section held its draw, and the lucky men began to leave by fives.

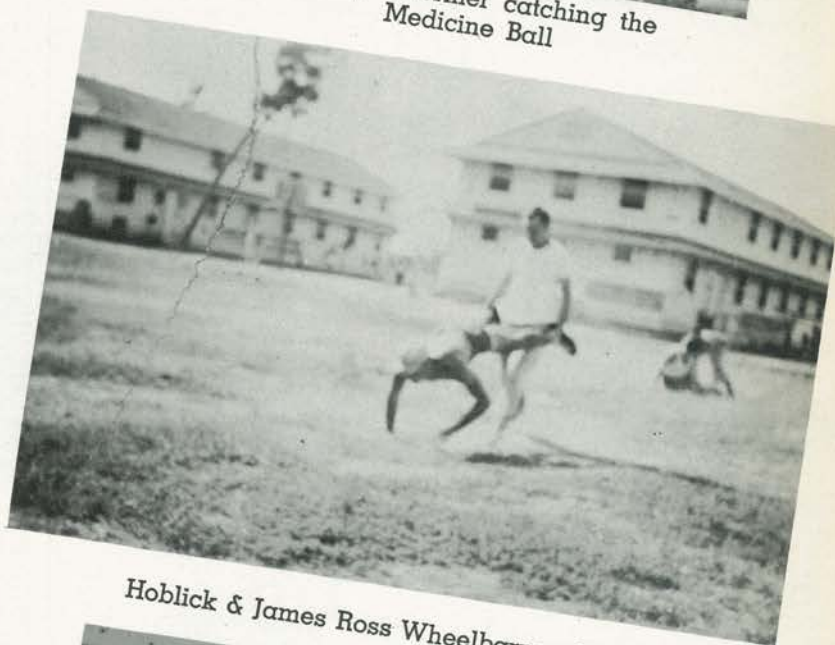
When Camp Polk's Separation Center finally opened, Cranmer and Traynor were the first to be discharged. Three clerks left to aid the Army's most vital process: Ballard, Healy, and Mashburn. Stermer became First Sergeant, Frank took over as Sergeant Major, and Verdicchio moved up to Tech. Promotions came fast in many departments, a late compensations to many long blocked by an obstinate T/O.

We finally managed to squander a large portion of our bank account by throwing a big party at the Leesville Country Club. Girls came from camp, from Leesville and De Ridder; some of our nurses also attended. The post's top band produced the music; special service supplied the beer; Jim Moore, Jordan, and the inevitable Sheppard provided a lunch no mess hall ever saw.

As the first week in October arrived, the persistent rumor of deactivation took concrete form. Our medical officers and nurses left us; then our enlisted strength was cut to fifty persons. Soon, possibly very soon, the 120th will be only a name in WD reports and a memory for its former members. It had a trying start, when no one seemed to like it; but luck was with it; still, perhaps it was not all luck; we like to feel that we did finally prove ourselves a good outfit. And we hope our story will be told with pride by those who knew us best, our own personnel.



"Curly" Stermer catching the Medicine Ball



Hoblick & James Ross Wheelbarrow Race



—You pays your money
and you takes your
choice



Through the hoop for two



Who's looking after whom here?



. . . and still champion



Fox and friend



—Bottle Babies—



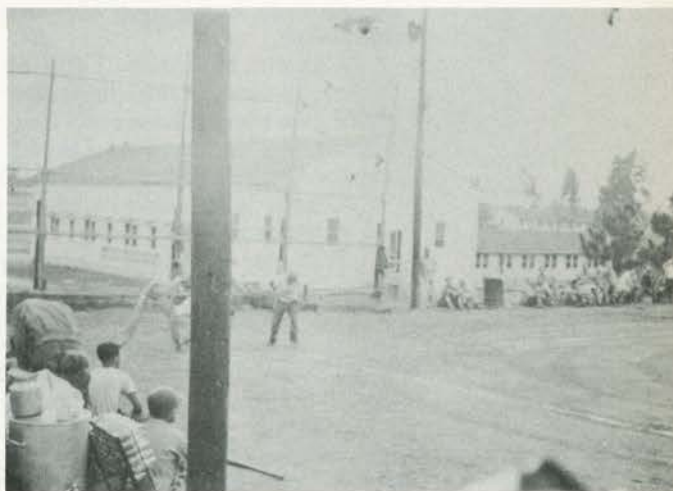
When "Bud" was King



Ball Club



Jean Hill on the mound



Hoblick about to bunt

Final Standings

	W	L	T	Pts.
120th Evac	11	2	0	22
808th Rp Bn	9	3	0	18
97th Chem Co A	8	3	0	16
97th Chem Co B	8	3	0	16
3150th Ord	7	4	1	15
1154th Eng	7	5	1	15
258th Ord	7	6	0	14
417th QM	6	5	0	12
97th Chem Co C	6	6	0	12
665th QM	4	7	2	10
97th Chem HQ	5	7	0	10
14th Chem	2	9	2	6
131st Evac	2	10	1	5
449th QM	0	12	1	1

Acknowledgements

EVERYBODY had a hand in making the history of the 120th Evacuation Hospital, but in the last few weeks, as we wrote the story, certain persons contributed time and effort to this work.

Colonel Williams deserves a word of appreciation for his cooperation and active support in the face of impending deactivation.

Captain Mahoney, I & E officer, helped in various ways. We made use of Lieutenant Murdoch's report to Third Army to check our facts. Lieutenant Garcia and First Sergeant Stermer contributed manpower. Lieutenant Camper represented the nurses. Captain Dinolt identified German scenes.

Others who deserve credit include:

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DIRECTORY

THIS roster of personnel is taken from one drawn up in Cham and lists those who were overseas with the 120th. We have made no changes except to correct spellings and add a few names missing from the Cham roster.

Achen, Catherine V.
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 Anderson, Helen
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 Blumenthal, Thelma M.
 Bobo, Lindsey R., Jr.
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 Bouse, Butch E.
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 3944 Platt Avenue
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 2906 W. Sharp Avenue
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 135 S. Spring Street
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 Davis, Donald G.
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 Dinolt, Robert
 Distefano, Salvatore J.
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 Duryea, Florence L.
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 Faber, Ottolina M.
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 Farmer, Rupert S.
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 Hardy, Orville R.
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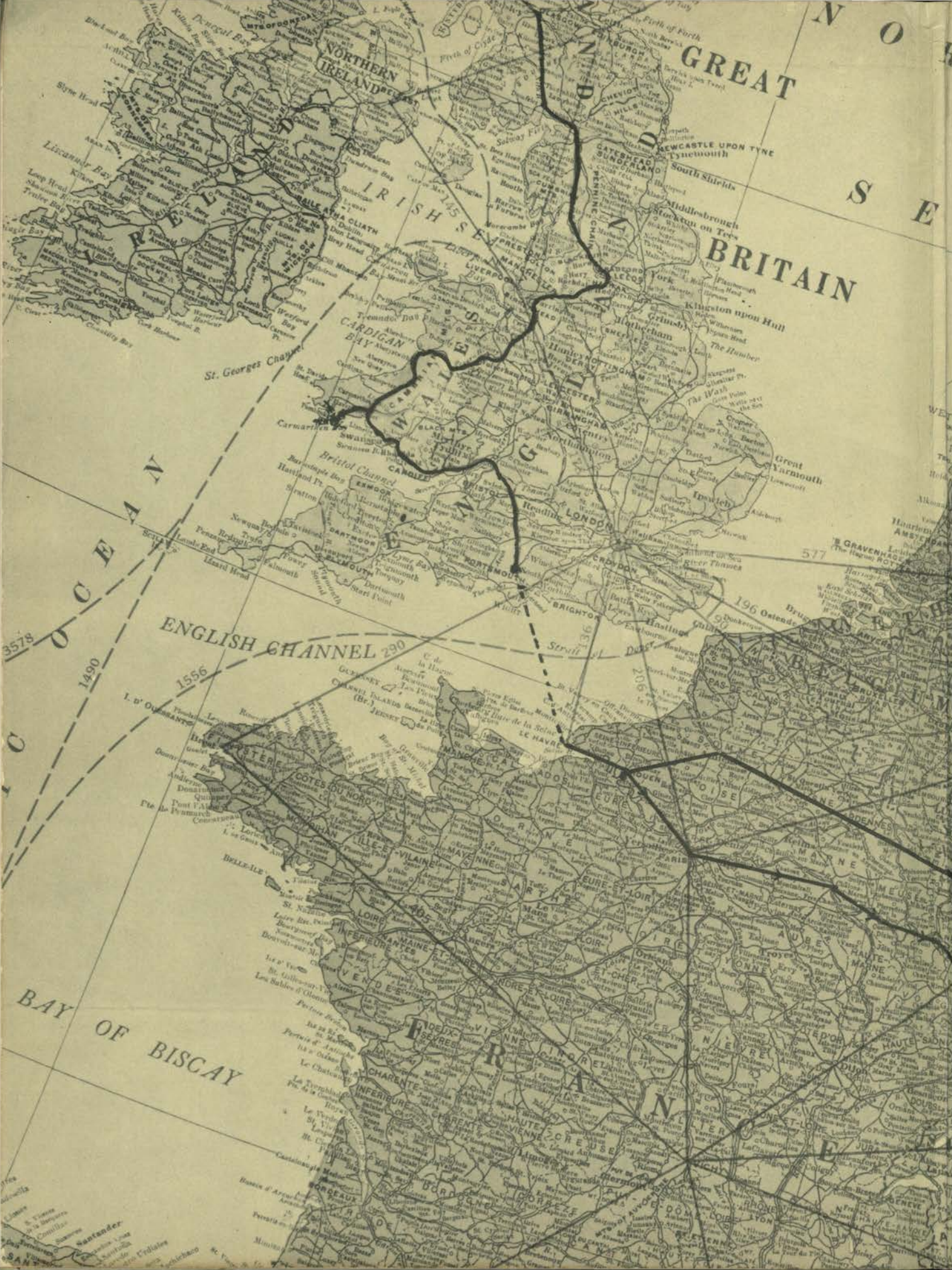
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