

# BATTLE DIARY

By FRANK SMITH











# BATTLE DIARY

## The Story of the 243rd Field Artillery Battalion in Combat

EDITED BY  
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ILLUSTRATED  
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IN MEMORIAM

LOUIS E. SANIESKI  
CHARLES H. HENDERSON  
CARL S. BEYER



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**PART ONE**  
**THE STORY IN BRIEF**



## THE STORY IN BRIEF

The 243rd Field Artillery Battalion was activated August 1942 at Camp Shelby, Mississippi, one of the earliest of the separate artillery units to be activated after the beginning of World War II. Armed with the 105 howitzer, the battalion was attached directly to Army Ground Forces, with some administrative control exercised by the Third United States Army.

The enlisted cadre for the new battalion was drawn from the 192nd Field Artillery Battalion and the 203rd Field Artillery Battalion, both National Guard units that had been part of the 43rd (New England) Division. The cadremen included selectees who had been assigned to the two battalions after induction. The officer cadre was drawn in part from the same two organizations, with a regular army officer, Lt. Col. Joseph L. Hardin, as commanding officer. Lieutenants were supplied by a shipment of ten graduates of Class 26, Field Artillery Officer Candidate School, Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

The first group of fillers (bulk of the enlisted men) reached the battalion late in September, two hundred men from upper New York State who had been inducted at Fort Niagara, New York. The second group, approximately seventy men, arrived several days later from Fort

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Ethan Allen, Vermont, to which they had been originally shipped following induction in the Middle West. The final large group of men came from Fort Devons, Massachusetts, approximately two hundred men from throughout the New England states.

Basic training began in October, and the first battalion field problems were being conducted in November. Baker Battery had the honor of firing the first 105 rounds on Thanksgiving Day. The second and last group of officers to join the battalion, twelve second lieutenants from OCS Class '41, reported in the middle of December.

On December 31, orders came through for advance parties from Battalion Headquarters, Able, Baker, and Charlie batteries to report to Camp Blanding, Florida; Wilmington, North Carolina; Charleston, South Carolina; and Miami, Florida. The battalion was being transferred for immediate duty with the Easter Defense Command, Southern Sector.

Before the battalion relieved the 102nd Field Artillery Battalion, 26th Division, however, it was decided to give it three months of intensive battery training at Camp Blanding. Ammunition allowances in unprecedented quantities were provided, and service practice was fired as often as twice per week. The gun crews of the three firing batteries rapidly reached a high state of proficiency.

In April the battalion was split up to assume its new duties with combat teams along the coast. Headquarters and Service batteries, the latter with ammunition sections farmed out to the firing batteries, moved to Atlantic Beach,



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Florida, on the coast from Jacksonville, where the headquarters of the 144th Infantry Regiment was also located. Each firing battery became the artillery of an infantry combat town that was built around a battalion of the 144th. "A" was at Carolina Beach, North Carolina, near Wilmington; "B" was at Stoney Field, on the campus of The Citadel, at Charleston; and "C" was on 79th St., in Northwest Miami.

There were unpleasant intervals during the eight months that followed, such as the swamp maneuvers for "A" and "B"; the battle of Pontre Vedro for Headquarters and Service; and mosquito fights in the Everglades for "C"; but nothing happened that was serious enough to mark a record of pleasant living that will remain a bright spot in the Army memories of all the men who participated.

The end to inaction came at Thanksgiving, 1943, when the battalion moved to Fort Jackson, South Carolina, and was assigned to the 112th Field Artillery Group, XII Corps, the first artillery higher headquarters under which it had ever served. An intensive training program to prepare it for early combat service began immediately. During this period the battalion was transferred to the 203rd Field Artillery Group, and took the basic training tests late in January.

Shortly after this, War Department orders went into effect changing the weapon of the battalion to the eight-inch gun. On February 4, 1944, the 243rd moved to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, to receive its new weapons and begin training for what was obviously to be a very early movement to the combat zone. The battal-

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ion was assigned to the 211th Field Artillery Group of the XIII Corps.

Neither officers nor men of the battalion were familiar with the eight-inch gun, the newest weapon turned out by the Army Ordnance Department, but they soon found out that nobody else knew any more. The huge gun came in two loads and it could shoot twenty miles. It was towed with tractors and put into position with a crane. Firing data could be prepared only with intricate complications of corrections.

During this training period Col. Hardin was transferred to an overseas assignment, and Joseph G. Rucks was ordered in as battalion commander, along with a new executive officer, Maj. Garell Burgoon. Richard G. Banks, Able battery commander, was made S-3.

The gun was soon mastered, however, in three months of hard work on the part of every man in the battalion. In addition to learning the gun and taking the rigorous Army Ground Force firing tests, all the multiple details in connection with POM (preparation for overseas movement) had to be complied with at the same time.

The battalion left Fort Bragg on June 14, for the Camp Shanks, New York, port of embarkation. The guns, cranes and prime movers had been shipped ten days earlier. After the arrival at Camp Shanks there was still a week of hurried bustle in connection with final POM requirements, but the battalion was finally cleared for shipment and qualified for 50 per cent twelve hour passes, pending the final alert. Passes were issued on Saturday and Sunday, June 17 and 18, and each member of the battalion got a chance to spend a few hours in

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New York or visit relatives and friends who were within striking distance.

On Monday the alert came and Wednesday night, June 21, the battalion marched aboard the giant liner "Queen Elizabeth." The marching was not in the best military fashion, for each man was burdened with a full pack and his duffel bag, with a few unlucky stalwarts having to manage a free hand for typewriters, bags of flashlights and personnel records.

The "Elizabeth," fastest liner afloat, sailed without naval escort, but took the southern route across the Atlantic to stay within range of the air bases of Bermuda and the Azores. Leaving New York Harbor on Thursday morning, June 22, she came to anchor in the Ferth of Clyde, at Greenock, Scotland, late Tuesday night, June 27. The trip was comfortable as far as the weather was concerned, but the jam-packed housing of 15,000 troops on the ship made living conditions crowded and uncomfortable. The mass feeding provided a poor quality of food, and all the men were glad to see the rolling hills of Scotland through the rain that came to be accepted as part of Britain.

The 243rd, along with the 256th Field Artillery Battalion (also 8-inch guns), was assigned to Camp Stanage Park, just inside the Welsh border between the villages of Knighton and Bucknell. The housing was perambular tents, but the hospitality of the surrounding countryside more than made up for such inadequacies. Knighton, within easy walking distance, became the most popular place to visit, but all of the near-by territory was covered, including historic Ludlow, a few miles to the south.

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Upon arrival in England the battalion was informed that it was assigned to the Third Army, commanded by the already fabulous George S. Patton, Jr., and then marshalling for movement into France for a decisive strike against the Germans. The stay in England was filled with a rush of training in new developments stressed in the European Theatre of Operations and the assembly of supplies and equipment from the various depots in every corner of Britain.

Third Army units began to move to Normandy in the last days of July, and the call came for the 243rd a few days later. The battalion moved to a marshalling area near Dorchester, and boarded LST's in the Weymouth harbor on the morning of Saturday, August 5. In the afternoon the naval craft moved out in the harbor to join a huge convoy bound for Utah beach. The LST crossing proved both smooth and comfortable. The Channel provoked few cases of seasickness and the Navy cooks served food that earned the praise of all men aboard.

The ships beached late on the night of the sixth of August, and the first prime movers of the battalion pulled their guns and carriages onto French soil exactly two months after D-day. The final assembly from the various transports was completed on the night of the seventh with the battalion in rendezvous near the town of Bricquebec. The St. Lo breakthrough had been made a few days before. Half of the Third Army was racing through Brittany and the other half was sweeping around the southern flank of the front toward Paris. The proper disposition of heavy artillery units was a question still un-

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decided, and the 243rd spent the night of the eighth once again in the Bricquebec rendezvous.

On the ninth orders came to move into rendezvous near the front, and the battalion moved through the battle-scarred country of Normandy to rendezvous near Sautilly, only a few miles behind the German counterattack then being bitterly pressed in an effort to cut off Brittany from the Normandy supply bases. On the night of the ninth, combat orders came to the battalion for the first time. It was to go into position outside St. Malo and support the VIII Corps in its attack on the resort town where trapped German units were desperately fighting back.

St. Malo was under attack by the 83rd Infantry Division, augmented by one regimental combat team of the 8th Division, both supported by several battalions of corps artillery. The 243rd, along with the 256th, was attached to the 202nd Field Artillery Group with a mission of supporting the entire corps' attack.

The first round into the German lines was fired by Charlie Battery late in the afternoon of the tenth. Germans were not the target. It was a registration on a tip of land being made by an observer from a liaison plane. Profitable targets were not long in developing, however, the most spectacular being the harbor-isle of Cezembre, whose guns were a constant menace to troops attacking strong points in the town.

The 243rd furnished more than a full quota of observers in the St. Malo attack and fired several missions in direct support of the infantry, in addition to regular counterbattery and interdiction fires. Guns and ammunition

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dumps on Cezembre were destroyed, and German strongholds on the mainland were also attacked in the general assault that finally led to the surrender of all forces except those which held out on Cezembre, nearly two miles out in the harbor, and the fortress citadel, where the St. Malo garrison commander, Col. von Aulock, had retired to continue the struggle. Von Aulock, refusing surrender in the face of the inevitable destruction of his fortress, was a temporarily famous figure as "The Madman of St. Malo." His "impregnable" fortress, the Citadel, turned back infantry attacks in force that had air and artillery support, and the possibility of a long siege seemed imminent.

One final assault was planned. Heavy artillery was to pound with direct fire the portion of the fort above ground. A squadron of P-38's was to follow with a gelatin-bombing attack, and the infantry was to move up for the hand-to-hand assault under cover of the smoke from this attack. Charlie Battery of the 243rd was selected to fire the direct fire mission.

The dangers were obvious. The guns had to be emplaced within 2400 yards of the fort, where even light machine guns could be effective against the crews. Because the normal minimum elevation of the eight-inch gun is ten degrees the guns had to be emplaced on a forward slope of ten degrees to provide direct fire. The friendly darkness of only one night could be used in the emplacement, and it would have to be done entirely by the winch method, for the situation made cranes impossible.

The soil was almost entirely rock, and the sweating cannoneers could not finish the exca-

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vation of the pits and the erection of parapets until dawn. A smoke screen was placed in front of the fortress for concealment until the moment of attack which came at 0900.

The first round was effective, and the guns began their systematic work of destruction by first knocking out all gun emplacements on the side of the fort that they faced. The effectiveness of these first rounds well paid for them for no counterbattery was received during the entire firing. Most of the structure of the Citadel above ground had been reduced to rubble when a halt was called to the firing after 112 rounds. White flags appeared from among the ruins--the Madman of St. Malo had decided to give up.

For several tense moments it appeared that the surrender was coming too late. The P-38's were swinging into position to begin their attack at the appointed time, and communications with them failed temporarily. The "cease fire" did not reach the planes until one of them had dropped its fire load.

The direct fire feat of the battalion attracted the favorable attention of military leaders throughout the European Theatre of Operations, and was described in a War Department Combat Bulletin and a Twelfth Army Group Artillery Report. The commanding general of the 83rd Infantry Division and the VIII Corps Artillery ordered commendations for the men who participated.

With only the Isle of Cezembre left to hold out a few days longer, the 243rd moved with the main elements of the VIII Corps to begin the siege of Brest, the major Brittany port. The

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march across the peninsula was one of the highlights of life in France for the men of the battalion. Thousands of French people, joyously celebrating the liberation of their home country and the impending attack upon the last of the enemy at Brest, lined the road from St. Malo to Lesneven to watch the American troops moving up for the battle.

After two days of bivouac near Lesneven, the battalion went into position near Coatmeal, and fired the first rounds of the preparation for the initial attack on Brest. Able and Baker batteries were laid to cover most of Brest proper, and Charlie was laid to cover the Le Conquet peninsula to the west of Brest, known to contain many enemy batteries and an undetermined number of troops.

Le Conquet soon developed into the principal target of the battalion during the early stages of the siege. Hillock (the battalion telephone code name) observers soon discovered three 380 millimeter howitzers, free to traverse in any direction, active far beyond the German lines in the area. Although accurate observation was impossible at the long range necessary (14,000 yards) effective interdiction could be fired, and the guns (identified in the corps by 243rd concentration numbers G1, G2, and G3) were rendered relatively useless to the enemy until they were finally knocked out completely.

A week after the attack began, Able Battery was withdrawn to join the artillery task force that supported the 2nd Division drive down the Plougastel-Daoules peninsula into the Brest harbor. Operating separately and attached to



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other units, the battery handled many longrange missions in support of the corps' east flank.

Only one displacement was made by the other two batteries of the battalion during the Brest campaign. As the battle entered its final stages a movement was made to positions southwest of St. Renan. From this position the chief activity was firing at enemy gun positions on the Crozon Peninsula, last stronghold to fall. Two observation posts were set up on the mainland shore to conduct fire on gun positions across the bay by means of bilateral observation, with the plotting and computations being made in the battalion fire direction center. Firing the guns of three other battalions (155 rifles, 8-inch howitzers and 240 howitzers) in addition to its own, this 243rd counterbattery team was credited with destroying twenty-three enemy gun positions during a week's operation.

During the closing days of the Brest campaign control passed from the Third to the Ninth Army, and most of the corps artillery was bivouaced after the final surrender at Coetquidon; a French artillery training center near Rennes. Here orders came for the 243rd to return to the Third Army, XX Corps, on the front near Metz. A five-day march was made across France to reach the major fighting front, along a route that offered a rare sight-seeing tour to the men of the battalion--Rennes, Laval, Le Mans, Chartres, Paris, Chalons-sur-Marne and Verdun. Two memorable nights of the trip were bivouacs in the Bois de Vincennes, in Paris, and the city park in Chalons. The long march was a severe test for the M10 and T2 prime movers of the battalion, but the maintenance prac-

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ticed by drivers and mechanics proved to have been more than adequate, with no breakdowns occurring on the entire route.

Assigned to the 203rd Field Artillery Group, the battalion went into position on a high hillside near Villecey on October 2 with all six guns laid to cover Metz and German installations to the south of the fortress city. During the first week support was given the 5th Division task force attempting to take Fort Driant, with normal harassing and interdiction fire conducted against rear area targets in Metz and beyond the city.

Early in October a German railroad gun of at least 380 millimeter size put in its appearance along the Third Army front, shelling rear area installations and higher unit headquarters. One gun of Able Battery was detached and placed in position near the town of Batailly to fire at the "phantom" railroad gun. A day later orders came to attach Charlie Battery to the XII Corps, east of Nancy, for the same purpose, and the remaining gun of Able was sent to Rombas, farther north of Batailly. Baker Battery was displaced nearer the front to enable it to fire at possible positions for the railroad gun.

A 240 howitzer was placed with each of Able Battery's guns, and battalion headquarters were moved to Homecourt, a small industrial town between the two batteries' positions, on October 15. This happened during the worst of the acute shortage of ammunition that occurred all along the front at the time, and few of the guns did any shooting. Baker Battery was for a few days assigned a captured German 155 battery and

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fired several hundred rounds of ammunition without restriction, using as gun crews men recruited from the motor, wire, and ammunition sections. The monotony was broken for battalion headquarters with the furious one-day attack made by the 90th Division on the town of Mezieres-les-Metz, when all ammunition restrictions were momentarily lifted, and two more batteries, one 240 and the other 8-inch howitzer, were assigned. On November 1 the battalion was attached to the 195th Field Artillery Group under which it was to remain throughout the remainder of combat.

Despite the apparent lull along the front preparations for a big Third Army offensive were under way. Charlie Battery was placed in the vanguard of XII Corps artillery being massed for a drive towards Saarbrücken; Baker was left in position opposite Metz to support the right flank assault of the XX Corps on the city; and Able moved into bivouac just outside of Luxembourg before going into position at Zoufftgen to fire in support of a projected smash across the Moselle above Thionville.

The general attack began on November 7 but moved sluggishly at first, largely because of heavy rains that brought the Moselle to its highest flood stage in years. During this period the battalion commander, Col. Rucks, was designated to coordinate artillery support for a task force of the 95th Division charged with taking Thionville and moving up the river to meet the 5th Division at Metz. Forward observation and liaison sections drawn from Able and Headquarters batteries worked with him on the mission that saw heavy casualties among the

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troops engaged, including three among the 243rd detachment. During the action, Capt. William S. McLean, Battalion S-2, distinguished himself with intrepid work as liaison officer with the assault infantry battalion, and Lt. Charles Hillegas adjusted eight-inch howitzer fire down to fifty yards in advance of our infantry.

T/5 James H. Kelly, radio operator, became the first man of the battalion to be twice decorated for valor.

As Patton's Army moved from the Moselle to the Saar, all three batteries of the 243rd followed closely behind the doughboys and tanks. Able crossed the Moselle at Thionville, and in the midst of a half dozen displacements that led it to the banks of the Saar became the first battery of the battalion to fire a round into Germany. Baker crossed the Moselle from its frontal position at Metz, and moved around the south side of the city. During the latter part of the great six weeks' offensive action, III Corps Artillery became operational, with Baker Battery as one of its attached units. This resulted in the battalion having a battery operating at the same time in each of three corps. Charlie Battery wore out its first set of tubes firing long range interdiction in advance of the XII Corps attack, and got anonymous headlines in most of the newspapers in the States when the streamers announced that Third Army eight-inch guns were shelling Saarbrücken, the first great German industrial center to be subjected to artillery fire.

The Saar offensive was six weeks of back-breaking labor for the battalion gun sections. Displacements were made regularly into posi-

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tions that were usually quagmires of rain and mud, but the cannoneers showed their stamina by always having the guns ready to fire at the required time.

The second week in December found Able in position near Guerstling, on the Nied River, with one gun in Germany and others thirty yards inside France. A few miles south, opposite Saarlautern, was Baker, but on the sixteenth orders came to displace far to the south, near the Saarbrücken position occupied by Charlie.

Then suddenly the Ardennes counteroffensive began, as von Runstedt's armies smashed into Belgium. The Third Army was ordered on the offensive to strike from the south into the enemy's flanks. But the long line from Luxembourg to the Seventh Army had to be held, and the XX Corps was assigned the job with two divisions and two cavalry squadrons to stretch out over the front, and one of the divisions, the 90th, was pulled out when it had been built back up to strength. The 243rd fell back to the vicinity of the town of Laumesfeld, high in the Saar-Moselle pocket. The III and XII corps, moving north, decided not to take along heavy artillery, so Baker and Charlie returned to battalion control.

A few days before Christmas the first heavy snow of winter fell and soon froze on the ground. The ice and snow continued until late in February. Winter war was not pleasant but it was in many respects easier to take than the mud of milder days. Well instructed in how to adapt themselves to the worst weather, the men of the battalion took good care of their health, and not a single case of trench foot developed

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during the winter, at a time when that malady was the major cause of non-battle casualties along the front.

The days in the Laumesfeld area were uneasy ones, for a German attack through the lightly held area was expected momentarily. During most of the period only a cavalry squadron held several miles of the front within a few miles of the battery positions, and on several occasions the Hillock OP across the Saar from Marzig was without even this protection. Despite the uneasy fear about the impending German attack, other distractions contributed occasional excitement. A robot bomb struck less than one hundred yards from an Able gun position. German air activity was at its highest peak through this period, and position areas were strafed on Christmas Day and January 1. On the later days, when the Battalion CP was strafed, battalion machine gunners received credit for knocking out an ME-109. On January 14 American P-47's, slightly mixed in directions, strafed the area.

As the tide of Battle of the Bulge began to change, Charlie Battery was once more called to XII Corps. On January 14 it moved to Boch, Luxembourg, to fire interdiction on communications centers through which the German retreat was moving, notably Bieburg and Trier. Operating its own fire direction center the battery maintained a heavy harassing and interdiction schedule daily until late in February, softening up the area for the February XII Corps offensive that was the first move in the Rhine offensive all along the allied front.

The remainder of the battalion continued in

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the Laumesfeld region until the 94th Division moved into the area and began its first preliminary offensive feints. The first displacement was a few miles forward to the village of Remeling, from which an Able gun fired a long range mission for a high performance aircraft that brought an official commendation from the corps for the efficiency of the gun crew. In February while the battalion was in the Remeling area a large scale XX Corps offensive, featuring the 94th Infantry and 10th Armored divisions, was launched northeast towards Saarburg, a stronghold that had been within range of an Able Battery gun back in November. During the period of the attack on Saarburg, the counterbattery missions fired from Hillock air OP's reached a peak of success. Lt. Richard P. Beck, principal air observer, was at the peak of his brilliant work in locating and knocking out enemy batteries, achieving a record unequalled by any other Third Army artillery observer.

As the initial phase of the general Third Army attack ended with XII and XX corps joining above Trier, Charlie Battery once more returned to XX Corps control, but not to the battalion. It moved into the Saarlautern area, quiet since the 95th Division bridgehead of December, to support the 26th Division holding the long line along the Saar. In the meantime, in the northern corps sector, some of the hardest fighting of the war was developing, with the Germans making what was to be their last determined stand anywhere east of the Rhine.

Throughout the major portion of this engagement the battalion was once more split up, with Able being assigned to the 270th Field Artil-

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lery Battalion, a 240 howitzer unit that had been in the same group since October, and the battalion headquarters retaining control of Baker and Charlie batteries of the 270th. While attached to the 270th, Able was forced to make the only rearward displacement made by the battalion during the war, except for the general retreat that came as a result of the Battle of the Bulge. A security outpost posted by the battery was overrun, but no casualties resulted. Baker Battery also luckily came through with no casualties when it received its heaviest shelling of the war at midnight on March 11, 1945.

The two batteries under the battalion fired heavy concentrations throughout the action. When the 26th Division, relieved by the 65th, moved north to join the 80th, and 10th Armored in the final all out push, their work was particularly effective. In the village of Haustedt, a few miles east of the Saar, TOT's fired by the batteries in two days of heavy fighting were known to have knocked out several field pieces, at least twelve nebelwufers, and killed an unestimated large number of men and horses.

The last Nazi resistance around the Saar began to crumble on March 18, and the battalion joined in the chase across the Saarland and Palatinate to the Rhine that followed. Early in the action Able Battery set a heretofore unequalled record for heavy artillery in combat by going into position twice and registering each time during one twelve-hour daylight period. From Meunchweiler on, however, there was no time to go into position. The gun remained on wheels, barely able to keep up with the rapid advance.



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On March 21, XX Corps artillery was put in position to support the last Third Army Rhine crossing, scheduled to be made north of Mainz. Charlie Battery, which had been on wheels from the time the 65th Division first penetrated the Siegfried line at Saarlautern, rejoined the battalion for this position. The guns were emplaced in the vicinity of the town of Oberolm, covering a front that ranged from the outskirts of Frankfurt on the east to the Rhine immediately north of Bingen on the west. Firing was light because the opposition to the crossing was not heavy. At 0230 on the morning of March 28, 1945, Charlie Battery fired a six-round concentration in support of VIII Corps troops northwest of Weisbaden, and the 243rd Field Artillery Battalion had fired its last round in the European Theatre.

Early on the morning of March 28 orders came to move to Simmern, Germany, west of Bingen, to act as military police in the Army rear areas, between the Saar and the Rhine. The next area policed was a large territory north of Frankfurt, where the battalion was officially made a Third Army MP unit, complete with painted helmets. From this area which centered around the resort town of Bad Neuheim, headquarters moved to Lohr, east of Frankfurt, and from there to Bamberg. On May 5 the battalion was policing an area that included Nurnberg and all the territory from Bayreuth west to Hanau, on the outskirts of Frankfurt. Upon being relieved of this assignment by the 4th Infantry Division, the 70th Infantry Division and the 38th Anti-aircraft Brigade, it was assigned to the operation of Prisoner of War cages.

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As the war ended, Col. Rucks and Maj. Banks were transferred from the unit; Col. Rucks to the Twelfth Army Group, War Crimes Section, and Maj. Banks to military government. Maj. Burgoon assumed command of the battalion, and Capts. Eldon B. Wood and Robert E. Lee, members of the original officer cadre, were named executive and S-3, respectively.

During its eight months of combat, it had participated in the major battles of St. Malo, Brest, Metz, Thionville, Saarlautern, Dilligen, Ensdorf, Saarbrücken, Moselle-Saar Triangle, Ardennes, Saar River and Rhine River. It fought under two armies and four corps; gave support to sixteen infantry divisions, four armored divisions, two cavalry squadrons and two ranger battalions.

The 243rd was slated for transfer to the Pacific for action against the Japs in the initial post V-E plans, but V-J day prevented their completion. After spending June at the Third Army PW enclosure at Bad Aibling, the battalion was moved to a tent camp on Seeham See for renewed combat training. During this period most of the high point men and officers were transferred out to begin the return to the United States and discharge.

With the end of the Pacific War in August, the 243rd returned to Bad Aibling to take over control of the permanent prison being established there. By the end of October every man who had come overseas with the battalion, and all except one officer, had been transferred out to high point units on their way home. The battalion itself reached the States in February, 1946, but with entirely new personnel.

PART TWO  
THE DIARY



## PRELUDE

WEDNESDAY, 14 June 1944.--Battalion departed Fort Bragg, North Carolina, at 1330 by rail.

THURSDAY, 15 June 1944.--Arrived Camp Shanks, New York, at 0945. Drizzling rain. As we moved up the hill to our barracks, long lines of troops in shiny equipment marched past us down the hill. Where were they going? The rumors flew; some outfits had been here for six weeks; we relaxed somewhat.

FRIDAY, 16 June 1944, through TUESDAY, 20 June 1944.--Battalion is completely POM qualified and ready for embarkation. This consisted in filling out personal equipment, which was showered on us in abundance we had never known of before. There were gas chamber drills, lessons in producing battalion theatricals, French classes taught by phonograph, and abandon ship practice, which consisted of descending landing nets into imitation boats. The third day an ex-bond salesman made such a speech to the assembled battalion on the value of insurance and allotments that 90 per cent of the men reached frantically for forms to sign their pay away. Pvt. McCullough, whose pay had long been cut to a few cents by Army requisitions, allotted more money than he was making. Others cut themselves to a dollar or two per month for recreation in

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England and eventually (we hoped) Paris. Mr. Padgett, Adjutant, his eyes glittering dangerously, said he'd like to meet that zealous salesman in a dark alley. The diminutive Rebel worked all night revising the pay records.

Highlight of our overseas qualification was the final physical inspection. The induction examination we had known so long ago was actually thorough compared to this final check on our fighting capability. You could have dug up your great-great-grandfather Ezekiel and passed him without difficulty.

On Saturday night half of the men and officers got 12-hour passes, while the other half left Sunday. Many living nearby got home for a last visit. Most of us went to New York City. There were lurid tales later of the Ziegfeld Follies, the Copacabana Club and the Astor Bar.

Monday morning we were alerted and all passes withdrawn. "Hell," said somebody, "this is getting serious."

WEDNESDAY, 21 June 1944.--Battalion departed Camp Shanks, New York, at 2030 by rail and harbor boat. Arrived at the gigantic embarkation pier at 2215. A hot jazz band blared as we walked the last mile, and Red Cross ladies moved up and down our ranks dispensing coffee and doughnuts, and forcing us to take their chocolate bars. Unaccountably, nobody was very hungry.

Not one man or officer will forget that last long mile from the train to the ferry, loaded with all our worldly possessions and trying to keep pace with the unencumbered WAC's ahead. To those who saw it, the highlight of this trip

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will be the sight of Capt. Banks with a WAC Major carrying his baggage.

Once aboard it didn't take thirty seconds to discover we were on the QUEEN ELIZABETH and that several hundred nurses and WAC's were with us. Licking their chops, the 500 wolves of the 243rd F.A. Bn. settled themselves for a luxury cruise--misguided lambs.

THURSDAY, 22 June 1944.--On a beautiful summer morning, we weighed anchor and sailed from New York Harbor. There were no bands, no cheering and no booming whistles. Over the shoulders of several thousand others we caught a last glimpse of the Statue of Liberty, and before we knew it the battalion was at sea, beginning an adventure whose duration and conclusion could not be foretold.

FRIDAY, 23 June, through TUESDAY, 27 June 1944.--Battalion at sea. First day out, all illusions of luxury were dissolved. The men were stacked three high in the bowels of the ship where fresh air never penetrated. Officers were just as crowded, but fortunately occupied cabins on main and promenade decks where the atmosphere was better. Chow was served twice a day in four or five shifts. The men waited in long lines, twisting through endless corridors of the ship. The food was pronounced by all and sundry as the worst they had eaten in their military careers thus far. The officers' mess, in the Tourist Class dining room, was excellent, being served in luxury style by efficient white-coated waiters.

Life settled to a grim routine of sleeping, eating and high finance. The latter was consummated by small groups of men viciously trad-

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ing through the medium of two tiny ivory cubes. This concentrated the wealth in the hands of a few and resulted in the formation of numerous holding companies and loan agencies which remained with us far into the future.

An unpleasant diversion was provided at noon each day--abandon ship drill. All hands were hurried on deck, tied into their life belts, and required to stand in a shivering mass for an hour. The only possible advantage to this experience was quashed--the WAC's and nurses were segregated.

Smoking was restricted to certain decks and to small areas within the ship. All portholes were closed at night and no one allowed on deck. Chief social activity for officers was playing cards with nurses in the Officers' Lounge; for the men--well, there were no social activities to speak of, only reading and the incessant financial transactions. Most of them never even saw a WAC for the girls were carefully roped off in a section of the Officers' Lounge.

Monday night a long expected show, produced by the passengers, was displayed five times to accommodate all on board. It was well received, and gave us our lightest moments of the cruise. Sgt. Broderick Crawford, formerly a cinema character-actor, was master of ceremonies and Glenn Miller's band (minus Capt. Glenn, who flew across) was the feature attraction. The performance also included several acts by talented WAC's.

The voyage required five days, from New York Harbor to Greenock Anchorage, near Glasgow, Scotland. The ship ran unescorted the entire





The Sante Fe Chief in Firing Position. This is a training scene taken at Camp Carl S. Beyer, at Seeham See, as the battalion was preparing for action in the Pacific.

The harbor and breakwater at Brest the day of surrender.





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route, steering a zigzag course to avoid submarines. It was explained to us en route that no protection was required as the ELIZABETH could outrun and outmaneuver any U-boat afloat. None were encountered, however. The crossing was calm and very few cases of seasickness were reported.

Chief topic of speculation at conclusion of voyage: Who (and under what circumstances) lost a slip in the telephone booth near No. 5 staircase?

Fellow passengers, numbering 17,000, included Air Corps bomber crews, about 300 WAC's, two general hospitals, the newly formed Ninth Army headquarters, replacement troops of all types, an infantry regiment and numerous artillery battalions.

All agreed on one thing; they were happy to leave their "luxury liner" for the bare comforts of camps and bases.

WEDNESDAY, 28 June 1944.--Anchored at Greenock, Scotland, at 0425. After six days at sea under the Union Jack, we were cheered by the Stars and Stripes flying from the prow of the Transportation Officers' launch approaching us in the early dawn. As we had been warned, the weather was cold and wet, alternating rain and fog shrouding the high green hills around the harbor. It was hard to believe this was June. We disembarked in two sections via lightship, the first at 1330 and the second at 2000.

We had trouble at first in adjusting ourselves to British War Time. The sun finally set at 2300 and utter darkness did not fall until 0200.

First reactions to the British Isle were en-

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thusiastic. Passing through Scotland and Wales all agreed that it looked just like Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, Connecticut, Illinois, Wisconsin or any other home state.

THURSDAY, 29 June 1944.--First section arrived at Camp Stanage, Radnorshire, Wales, at 0300, the second at 1000. Lt. Lamoreaux, Mr. Plant and Sgt. Knox, who had preceded us to England by a month, were on hand to greet us. The 256th F.A. Bn., an 8-inch gun battalion which had accompanied us all the way from Bragg, was occupying one-half of our small camp. The rain continued.

FRIDAY, 30 June 1944, through WEDNESDAY, 2 August 1944.--Battalion bivouaced at Camp Stanage. Period was used for equipping and training. From a military point of view, the situation was confusing and not always amusing. Training was normal--occupying position, survey, fire direction and CPX's, but no firing other than small arms. Supply was the headache. At Bragg we had been stripped of all equipment except personal gear and the guns and their prime movers. Almost everything else was to be issued in England. Most of it was, but it meant running all over southern England to scattered supply bases to draw the required items. Hundreds of miles were rolled up on our trucks and trips were many times fruitless and had to be duplicated. Capt. Henderson once travelled 100 miles for a box of map pins; Lt. Argo was gone three days making the rounds of depots gathering up odds and ends. A few slight accidents resulted from long runs over the narrow winding roads of England, and long hours were put in by all personnel concerned with supply. Unani-

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mously, the system of supply in England was condemned as terrible.

A busy man during the stay in England was the Special Service Officer, who got off the boat much concerned over the men's morale in this foreign land. Fortunately the local British were just as worried, and consequently heaped up such a number of dances and socials for the boys that it soon became an impossible task to attend them all. Though most of our men would not have traded the whole island for a city block of Brooklyn, they agreed that their stay was more pleasant than expected.

Camp Stanage was in easy walking distance of the village of Knighton, which saw a lot of the 243rd in five weeks. Some overnight passes were available to Hereford and Shrewsbury, very nice towns. Quite a few British-American alliances developed, the most publicized one probably being that of Sgt. Previte and the blond bombshell.

THURSDAY, 3 August 1944.--Departed Camp Stanage, England, at 0600, by unit transportation. Light column arrived at D-14 Marshalling area at 2100, near Weymouth, England.

FRIDAY, 4 August 1944.--Heavy column rolled into D-14 Marshalling area at 1400. Everybody did their best to get a shower and wash all the clothes they possibly could, not knowing when the next chance would come.

SATURDAY, 5 August 1944.--Departed Marshalling area at 0510. Arrived at Portland, England, at 0600. Battalion boarded 2 LCT's and LST's at 0800.

We waited for twenty-four hours in the harbor before the convoy was formed and sailed for

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France. Mr. Padgett was allowed to sleep for several hours on the hood of a 3/4 ton truck before some kind soul awakened him with the news that he had a bunk inside.

## BRITTANY

SUNDAY, 6 August 1944.--Beached at Utah Beach, France, at 2330, D-60.

MONDAY, 7 August 1944.--Disembarked on Utah Beach, France, at 0650, and moved into assembly area west of La Foyer, France. At 1030 proceeded to bivouac area in vicinity of Briquibec.

TUESDAY, 8 August 1944.--Remained in bivouac area. Everybody very anxious to see their first day of battle.

WEDNESDAY, 9 August 1944.--Departed bivouac area at 0800 by unit transportation and arrived at Champcey, at 1400. Bivouaced for the night beneath the sound of German planes.

THURSDAY, 10 August 1944.--Departed Champcey, at 0630. Arrived at Miniac, at 1145. "C" Battery registered at 1700 to support the VIII Corps in its assault on St. Malo, Lt. Beck registering from the air. Fired 25 rounds on concrete gun emplacements and destroyed them.

FRIDAY, 11 August 1944.--35 rounds were fired during the day, highlighted by Capt. Henderson's adjustment on enemy gun emplacements and ammunition dumps on the Isle de Cezembre. It was the first time a 243rd ground observer had fired our guns, and the excitement among the

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gun crews, fire direction and the OP party was terrific when ammunition dumps blew up and lit the skies for miles around.

SATURDAY, 12 August 1944.--The highlight of the day's shooting was Capt. McLean's attempt to knock down the wall of the Chateau, last German stronghold in St. Malo proper. Infantry were seeking a break in the wall through which to move up for an attack.

SUNDAY, 13 August 1944.--We fired again at the Chateau, this time as part of the final preparation before the successful storming of the fortress by a regiment of the 83rd Division--243rd OP and wire crews have been getting a taste of the realities of street fighting in St. Malo.

MONDAY, 14 August 1944.--Lt. Whitehead, who with Lt. Beck is acting as regular air observer, today fired an adjustment and transfer to a German officers' barracks that must have violently disturbed quite a few Heine bigwigs.

TUESDAY, 15 August 1944.--Fired 157 rounds, largely counterbattery on gun positions on Cezembre, in support of an abortive attack by elements of the 83rd Infantry Division on the Citadel of St. Malo. Gathered in the Citadel are the remnants of all German troops in the area, commanded by Col. Von Aulock, already famous in newspaper reports in the States as the Madman of St. Malo.

WEDNESDAY, 16 August 1944.--A final, all-out assault on the Citadel is being prepared by VIII Corps, and the 243rd has been selected to play the featured role. Charlie Battery is to put its guns in position for direct fire on the fortress under cover of darkness tonight. In



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order to fire direct, the guns have to be dug in on a forward slope into ground that is almost solid rock.

Late at night, Cpl. Paul and PFC Young, Headquarters Battery, were fired on while taking a message to Col. Rucks at the Charlie position. Neither was hit, however, and the snipers could not be found.

THURSDAY, 17 August 1944.--After 112 rounds fired by Btry "C," the Madman of St. Malo surrendered, before either the Air Corps bombing or Infantry assault. (See Supplement No. I) Thanks to good shooting, the Citadel was never able to return the fire of our guns because all weapons were knocked out with the opening rounds. Effective counterbattery was fired by Baker and Able on the German guns on Cezembre throughout the morning, and they were ineffective against our forward guns.

FRIDAY, 18 August 1944.--A good part of the battalion went to see the remains of the Citadel.

SATURDAY, 19 August 1944.--Departed Miniac, at 0830, for Lesneven, which is near Brest. The French people were all along the road greeting us with flowers, cider, wine, cognac, eggs and all kinds of vegetables. At St. Brieuc, people were lined up solidly for miles and in some places 12 deep to greet us. Light column arrived at Lesneven at 1730 and bivouaced one mile outside of the town.

SUNDAY, 20 August 1944.--Heavy column arrived in Lesneven, at 1630, after remaining on the road for the night in pouring rain. People were all amazed to see such guns go by. The second gun of Btry "C" had a picture of Hitler

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with a rope around his neck, hanging on the gun tube. The picture was picked up at the Citadel in St. Malo and all the French people thought it was quite a scene.

MONDAY, 21 August 1944.--Capt. Anastasia had two eggs in his pocket; an enemy shell came over and he hit the ground. The eggs belonged to Maj. Banks and the loss has not been made good.

TUESDAY, 22 August 1944.--Battalion moved from bivouac to a new position, near Treglenou. No firing was done during the day. The French people who own the barn which we are using as our battalion CP dug up their radio, which had been hidden from the Germans for months, and we gave them the electricity to play it.

WEDNESDAY, 23 August 1944.--Btry "A" was selected to register with a roving gun. Position given was on ground with an underlying rock ledge. Original position selected could not be occupied because of rock, and difficulty was experienced in keeping trail spades in ground in position finally occupied. Good registration was obtained and gun returned and was employed in battalion area and prepared to fire at 2100.

THURSDAY, 24 August 1944.--Batteries improved their positions and alternate positions were reconnoitered and selected. Capt. McLean contacted the 29th Inf. Div. which we are supporting.

FRIDAY, 25 August 1944.--Batteries started firing from their positions into Brest at 1240, opening VIII Corps attack. Aerial bombardment of Brest was observed and clouds of smoke and

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dust were seen to rise thousands of feet in the air.

Mr. Padgett, Cpl. Ponton and Pvt. Bragdon were returning from a replacement depot with three replacements when their vehicle was side-swiped on the road by a passing vehicle. Their vehicle was pushed into a ditch where it hit a bank and overturned. Cpl. Ponton received hip injuries and two of the replacements were sent to a hospital.

Fired 109 rounds on enemy AA guns and heavy guns. With Capt. McLean as observer, we obtained a direct hit on a 280mm howitzer.

SATURDAY, 26 August 1944.--The bombers, while flying overhead towards Brest last night, dropped tin foil to offset the enemy's radar. A particle of the tin foil dropped between the terminals of a Btry "B" telephone and shorted it. The line was checked and rechecked and eventually the tin foil was found, much to the chagrin of the wire section. Btry "A" has been attached to the 174th F.A. Gp. and 561st F.A. Bn. Their new position is about 25 miles away and is located near Kerantau. Fired 25 rounds today at heavy guns.

SUNDAY, 27 August 1944.--Lt. Mahoney, S/Sgt. Kandetski of Hq. and Hq. Btry, T/5 Stanowski and Pvt. Linder of Btry "B," all had a hand in capturing two Germans while looking for an OP about 2000 meters south of St. Renan. S/Sgt. Kandetski, being able to speak German, found out that they had been traveling for several days trying to get to the American lines to surrender. Battalion fired 34 rounds at enemy heavy and 105mm guns.

Word has been received that Lt. Kays, who is

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a forward observer with the special artillery task force of which "A" Btry is a part, was wounded by a shell fragment last night, to become the first casualty since we entered combat. (The wound turned out to be slight.) With Lt. Kays as assistant observer is Cpl. Barnes of Charlie Btry. Cpl. Brong and PFC Eoylan, Hdqs, are radio operator and driver, respectively.

MONDAY, 28 August 1944.--Charlie Btry, whose guns are the only ones laid to cover the Le Conquet peninsula on the right flank of the corps, fired 72 rounds today at heavy enemy guns far inside their lines. The guns were located first at a Hillock (243rd telephone code name) OP by Capt. McLean. Identified as G1, G2, and G3, which are concentration numbers assigned by our fire direction, the guns are now infamous throughout the Brest front, and we have been assigned the mission of regular harassment to keep them from firing night or day. The chances of knocking them out, observing from a range of 14,000 yards, appear to be very slight, especially since we are confronted with ammunition restrictions that allow us to fire only when the enemy guns are firing.

TUESDAY, 29 August 1944.--Maj. Banks relieved Capt. McLean today as forward observer at OP One, located about one-half mile north of Tanber. Lt. Wikan relieved Lt. Mahoney as forward observer at OP two located about three miles south of St. Renan. Fourteen rounds were fired on the heavy guns and smoke was observed coming from the pits. Six rounds of harassing fire were laid on Hill 63.

WEDNESDAY, 30 August 1944.--Bad weather, and

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only 20 rounds of unobserved missions were fired during the day.

THURSDAY, 31 August 1944.--Capt. McLean established an OP today near Kervillou. Mail came in today for the first time in nine days. The distribution was small and many glum faces were seen in the area. Twenty-six rounds of harassing fire were placed on Fort Keranvoux, Fort de Dellec and 88 rounds were fired on "G's." During the night PFC Raymond Cahill, peep driver for Lt. Whitehead, conducted his first fire mission. Standing watch at the BC Scope he spotted the telltale flash of G-1, and reported the fact as ordered. Unfortunately nobody told him what to do from there. It was his first trip to the OP. "We will give you two rounds," replied the Fire Direction Center.

"O.K.," said Cahill, not being the bashful type.

There was a pause, then, "On the way," from the FDC.

"Let her come," he answered nonchalantly. Idly he watched the bursts far out in the night.

The FDC operator waited as long as he could.

"What is your sensing?" he finally snapped.

Cahill didn't know; he didn't even know what a sensing was. "Wait," he replied, "I'll have to wake the Lieutenant."

Yesterday's STARS AND STRIPES for the first time has a story about the impending point system for demobilization. Speculating about points is the most popular topic of conversation in these days when many are expecting the war to end momentarily as a result of the Third Army's rushing across France.

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FRIDAY, 1 September 1944.--The mess sergeant of Headquarters Battery, S/Sgt. Arrants, went out among the French people in the surrounding villages for the purpose of exchanging "C" Rations for fresh vegetables, eggs and chickens in preparation for the Red Cross girls that have been invited to dinner tomorrow.

Capt. McLean, S/Sgt. Christenson and T/5 Kelly were held down by machine gun and mortar fire for about half an hour but PFC "Blood and Guts" Carpenter brought them in safely. Forty-eight rounds were fired on the heavy guns, and enemy strong points, in preparation for the 29th Inf. Div. attack. Capt. McLean and Lt. Mahoney were the observers.

SATURDAY, 2 September 1944.--Our guests for dinner today were June and Grace Burdage from Ohio and Janet Hopkins from New York. They served coffee and doughnuts for about an hour and a half from their Clubmobile, "Atlanta." Thirty-nine rounds were fired at the heavy guns and batteries of 88's.

SUNDAY, 3 September 1944.--Church services were held today, the Protestant service was held at 1000 and Catholic Mass was at 1630. Both services were held in a large hayfield. Twenty rounds were fired at the heavy gun, G-1, and some rounds landed in the pit. Col. Rucks was the observer.

MONDAY, 4 September 1944.--Battery "A" moved to a new position just north of Loperhet, at 1830. Thirteen rounds were fired by "B" and "C" at the heavy guns. G-2 was destroyed today with Lt. Mahoney as observer firing a 240 howitzer.

TUESDAY, 5 September 1944.--The battalion

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commander and his party went forward today to locate new positions. The positions were selected and the battalion CP is to be located in a large chateau, near St. Renan. Forty-five rounds were fired at enemy heavy guns.

WEDNESDAY, 6 September 1944.--The battalion moved to the new positions located about three kilometers northwest of St. Renan. The battalion CP and EDC are located in the chateau with kitchen facilities, running water, bath and electric lights. The electric power is furnished by our small power unit.

THURSDAY, 7 September 1944.--The batteries are busy improving their positions. Ammunition restrictions keep the shooting very low, even though there is heavy fighting still going on in the streets of Erest, where the battle is being termed as the heaviest fighting of any single engagement of the war. Three infantry divisions are engaged in the fight--the 2nd, the 8th and the 29th.

FRIDAY, 8 September 1944.--The Lochrist guns (G-1 and G-3) were knocked out today. One by air bombardment and the other by artillery fired by the 269th FA Bn, which our observers directed. Eighty-eight rounds were fired on enemy guns with three hits in our first high performance aircraft shoot.

SATURDAY, 9 September 1944.--Maj. Burgoon and M. Sgt. Gallant went out on reconnaissance of the route to new position near Lorient. The trip was highly successful because of the number of bottles of rare perfume that were purchased. Fifty-two rounds were fired on heavy guns. Lt. Beck, Cpl. Pierson, and Pfc. Morganti, all of Battery "B" had just closed OP #4 and

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were headed for the Lochrist gun positions in their jeep. As they were about to enter the town of Le Conquet, Cpl. Pierson, the driver, noticed a suspicious movement in the bushes and stopped his vehicle. All the occupants dismounted with their guns drawn and at that moment a German came out of the hedgerow with his hands in the air. Three more soon followed with the third holding a white handkerchief. The vehicle was already crowded so the prisoners were marched down the road to an engineer battalion and turned over to them. The engineers immediately put them to work repairing a bridge that the Germans had destroyed.

SUNDAY, 10 September 1944.--The Baker Battery guns have been shifted so as to fire on new positions on the Crozon peninsula. Col. Ruicks went to see G-1 and G-3. Fifty rounds were expended on enemy guns.

MONDAY, 11 September 1944.--Capt. Gray and Lt. Wilson from the Office of the Chief of Ordnance were here and made an inspection of the guns. Our battalion was the second eight-inch gun outfit to land in France and our material is being watched very closely. Fifteen rounds were fired on enemy gun emplacements with two direct hits. Capt. McLean and Lt. Mahoney were the observers. Two OP's have been set up on the water front across from the Crozon peninsula, to which the enemy troops have been withdrawing from Brest. The two OP's are able to provide combined observation on enemy gun positions. The readings made at the OP's are plotted in fire direction where the commands are computed and relayed to the guns. This very effective method has already begun to pay divi-



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dends in guns knocked out, with the missions being handled in the fire direction center during all daylight hours. Most of the firing is being done by other outfits in the corps, including 155 rifles, 8-inch and 240 howitzers.

TUESDAY, 12 September 1944.--The OP's which we used for observation on the Crozon peninsula afforded an excellent view today and our observers fired some 240 howitzers and knocked out an enemy pillbox.

WEDNESDAY, 13 September 1944.--The men of FDC and other sections went to see the remains of the Lochrist batteries. They were large naval guns taken from the German battleship "Graf Spee" and were put in large concrete emplacements as part of the fortifications protecting the harbor at Brest. Three of the guns had a 360 degree traverse but one of them could only be fired toward the sea.

THURSDAY, 14 September 1944.--The battalion commander made an inspection of the men and weapons and the vehicles in "B" and "C" batteries. One of our observers fired on and destroyed four enemy pillboxes with the artillery of other battalions.

FRIDAY, 15 September 1944.--The battalion commander made an inspection of Headquarters Battery today. Very little firing has been done during the past three days..

SATURDAY, 16 September 1944.--Today was spent very quietly. Mopping up operations are proceeding in Brest and on the peninsula.

SUNDAY, 17 September 1944.--Col. Billings and Lt. Col. Finn from the 202nd FA Gp were here again today to use our modern bath. Cath-

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olic Mass was held at 1600 in an open field near "B" Battery's gun position.

MONDAY, 18 September 1944.--Brest surrendered today. The 243rd can claim as much share in the victory as any other artillery battalion. Missions fired by our observers and through our fire direction center resulted in approximately 30 gun positions being knocked out.

TUESDAY, 19 September 1944.--Capt. Anastasia, the battalion surgeon, gave medical aid to a Frenchman who had shot himself with a German rifle. The surgeon amputated a toe and then took the man to the hospital in St. Renan.

WEDNESDAY, 20 September 1944.--The battalion moved into a bivouac area a mile and a half southwest of Lesneven. The officers had a lobster feed with Capt. McLean acting as head cook. Capt. McLean bought about thirty lobsters at Portsel, and with his assistant cook, Lt. Mahoney, broiled them for the officers.

THURSDAY, 21 September 1944.--The Red Cross clubmobile girls were our guests for dinner again today. They served doughnuts and coffee to the boys and in return we fed them lobster.

FRIDAY, 22 September 1944.--The firing batteries went out today to calibrate their guns from a position about seven miles from the bivouac area. Apple pie was the dessert for Headquarters Battery today and what a treat it was! Passes were issued for the first time since our arrival in France. Lesneven is the only place to which we can go. Two hundred and fifty men from the battalion went to the movies in Lesneven. All the batteries had lobsters today

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for those who wished to buy them. The officers had another lobster dinner tonight.

SATURDAY, 23 September 1944.--Everybody seems to be getting quite a bit of rest. The battalion is waiting for movement orders to another front. All the staff officers and battery commanders went to Brest to see the effects of artillery fire. Passes were issued again today to go to Lesneven. They were only good for three hours. Our liaison planes have made a landing field of our bivouac area. It was quite a novelty at first to watch the little planes take off and land but it soon wore off. A hedgerow crossed one end of the field and we were given a thrill when Lt. Lamoureaux set his plane on it in his initial landing. Pfc. Catania's bulldozer tank from "C" Battery was called over to level the row. This tank is a contrivance of Sgts. Turner, Campbell and Judd.

SUNDAY, 24 September 1944.--Church services were held in the bivouac area. Two Protestant services were held there and one Catholic Mass was held in a cathedral in town. Movement orders came in late in the afternoon and there was a mad scramble to get packed and ready to move before nightfall. We moved only a short distance, to Ploudaniel.

MONDAY, 25 September 1944.--The battalion departed the area near Ploudaniel and traveled to a spot near Rostrenan, where we bivouaced for the night.

TUESDAY, 26 September 1944.--Today we moved to the vicinity of Coetquidan, near Rennes. Coetquidan was a World War I artillery camp.

## METZ AND THE MOSELLE

WEDNESDAY, 27 September 1944.--The day was spent in the care of matériel and the maintenance of the motor vehicles. In the evening a movie show was to be the highlight but something went wrong with the projector and there was a lull for a couple of hours. The evening would have been a complete flop but for some ingenious GI, who produced a government issue rubber product and proceeded to blow it up to gigantic proportions. Gradually the crowd joined in the fun and soon the room was filled with the improvised balloons. (The picture was entitled the "Minstrel Man" and for a long time was to be the classic of worthless pictures the battalion had seen.)

THURSDAY, 28 September 1944.--This was the big day. The battalion got to take hot showers and the boys had to get reacquainted with their buddies. The hot water was rationed and three or four men had to use the same shower at the same time. There was difficulty in regulating the water and the moans emitting from the shower room were, "It is too hot," or, "It is too cold."

FRIDAY, 29 September 1944.--We were on our

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way to the Third Army front as the battalion left Coetquidan. We bivouaced that night near Vaiges.

SATURDAY, 30 September 1944.--Our move today carried us to Chateaudun, near the famous cathedral city of Chartres.

SUNDAY, 1 October 1944.--Paris is off limits to all troops, but nothing can be done about it if a battalion on the way to the front has to bivouac right on the edge of the city in the Bois de Vincennes. Capt. McLean, the quartering officer on the trip, selected the area for us. The Parisians marveled at our big guns moving through the city and we marveled at the feminine citizens of the city, dressed in their Sunday finest. Paris appears to be everything we've ever heard it to be.

MONDAY, 2 October 1944.--The battalion left Paris and moved to Chalons and bivouaced in a park almost in the center of the town. Believe it or not, but the town was not off limits. The boys enjoyed the beer and the champagne.

TUESDAY, 3 October 1944.--We left Chalons and moved to a position near Villecy. The position is almost on the border of Alsace-Lorraine and not far from the old German border.

WEDNESDAY, 4 October 1944.--Considerable difficulty was met in digging in the guns in the rocky soil. Orders were given that all foxholes would have a substantial covering. Long through the night the men could be heard shouting, "Timber," which was being cut for their overhead covering.

THURSDAY, 5 October 1944.--Pvt. Angus Jonathon, of Headquarters Battery, was laying wire

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to the OP when he captured a German. Just before turning his prisoner over to the infantry, he noticed that he didn't have a shell in the chamber so he immediately loaded his gun and almost scared his prisoner to death.

FRIDAY, 6 October 1944.--A large German gun, believed to be a 280 mm railroad mounted gun and firing from ranges estimated at 30,000 to 40,000 yards, lobbed shells at XX Corps headquarters this morning. No casualties were reported. We received an order from the 203rd FA Gp directing that one gun be dispatched to the Corps (near Jarny) for the purpose of counter-battery fire on the railroad gun. Accordingly the second section of Battery "A," under Lt. Peterson, was moved into a position at Rombas, 3,000 yards from the front line, for the mission.

SATURDAY, 7 October 1944.--During the morning our detached gun fired a mission by high performance aircraft on a tunnel that was believed to be housing the 280 mm gun. The tunnel was reported smashed and Lt. Peterson was ordered to close station and return the gun to its battery. Corps evidently believed that the Boche gun was done for. The Second Section had hardly rolled back into the battalion area when it was told that it would go to a new position. The 280 had fired again from a new position. Lt. Peterson prepared to start, but another change in orders moved him back to Rombas.

SUNDAY, 8 October 1944.--More fire on the Corps Headquarters from the 280, and the remainder of Battery "A" was moved to Rombas, dropping off Lt. Russell's section at Batailly.



Fort Driant, near Metz, while the 243rd supported an attack on the German stronghold. The fort is in the center under the snow-covered ground, with three gun blisters visible. Note the three knocked out American tanks on the left.

A village scene in Lorraine typical of many where the battalion spent the fall and winter.







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Capt. Henderson's two sections are now seven miles apart. Simultaneously the 270th FA Bn (240 how) split up its "C" Battery, as ordered, sending one gun to Rombas and the other to Batailly. The Rombas gun was attached to "A" Battery and the whole battery is now called the "Henderson Battery" after our battery commander. Likewise the "A" Battery Second Section, under Lt. Russell, was attached to "C" Battery of the 270th which is called the "Adams Battery" after its battery commander. The four pieces are laid on varying compasses to cover the area opposite the Corps from the south of Metz northward to Uckange.

Church services were held in a pine grove in the main battalion area.

MONDAY, 9 October 1944.--There is rain and more mud. The boys of Headquarters are very envious of the "B" and "C" batteries, whose men are living in comparatively dry World War I dugouts.

TUESDAY, 10 October 1944.--Orders came from group originating at Third Army Headquarters, to detach another of our batteries to the XII Corps, at Nancy, 40 miles south. You guessed it, the fugitive railroad gun had opened up on General Eddy's headquarters and he was calling for protection. "Is there another corps in the Third Army?" asked the Colonel. "They'll be kicking because they haven't an 8-inch gun too." The staff members looked at each other uneasily. We had only one battery left.

WEDNESDAY, 11 October 1944.--Battery "C" departed for Nancy. Battery "B" was ordered to move to a hilltop across the valley only 300 metres from the front line. For a few hours our headquarters thought it might be headed for

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the MP's until it was learned that "B" was not to be detached. We still had a staff and headquarters battery to administrate, maintain and control the fire of two guns. Many of the fellows have completed their log huts and have made themselves quite comfortable with beds, chairs, tables, windows and even stoves made from used powder containers.

THURSDAY, 12 October 1944.--"C" reached Mazerulles, Alsace, last night after marching 35 miles, and spent the rest of the night digging in and occupying position. After a bad session with the mud both guns reported ready to fire at 10:00 a.m. A registration of high performance aircraft failed because of poor visibility. Battery "C" is now attached to the 738th FA Bn of the 183rd FA Gp, in the 35th Div sector of the XII Corps.

FRIDAY, 13 October 1944.--Enemy planes came over our positions for the first time in the daylight since we entered combat. AA platoons from the 455 AAA, attached to us, fired on the planes. Personnel in the area could be seen scrambling for their foxholes.

SATURDAY, 14 October 1944.--Enemy aircraft were again overhead and our AAA platoon fired again. Our own battalion machine gunners opened up for the first time, to aid in driving off the planes.

SUNDAY, 15 October 1944.--Movement orders came in and all work was stopped on the unfinished log cabins. Capt. Anastasia had just completed the little home that was his pride and joy and when he heard the news his morale dropped below zero. He was so disappointed that he could not sleep in his cabin during the

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last night. Capt. McLean was determined to finish his abode and was quite proud of his completed handiwork. His ingenious invention was a foxhole beneath his bunk, and anybody within two miles had to see it.

MONDAY, 16 October 1944.--Headquarters Battery has moved to Homecourt, one of the little industrial towns along the Orne River about 7 miles from its junction with the Moselle. Our lines run generally along the Moselle at this time, with the Germans holding a beachhead across the river opposite Metz. Our new mission is to organize the operations of the "Adams" and the "Henderson" batteries. Battery "B" has now been detached and remains in its old position, 20 miles to the south between Onville and Gorze. We are very fortunate in our new quarters, happily exchanging a muddy hillside for buildings in this little town. Headquarters installations and part of the battery are located in the Curvier Patronage, a home and dispensary for the factory workers and their families.

Fire Direction and CP are installed in what had been the kitchens, now completed with sinks and running water. Some of the men sleep in a large warehouse in the rear and the rest reside in an old auditorium a block away. Adjoining the latter is a small café serving coffee and watery beer at all hours. Unfortunately, the cognac supply is fleeting. Service Battery has moved with us and lives close by in a three-story house that they took over. The officers have rooms in the Hotel du Gare, not recommended for vacations but much better than pup tents.

Battery "C" finally registered the number

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one piece after three futile attempts during the last few days. Other than the attempted registrations, life has been pretty dull down in the XII Corps sector, Capt. Lee's men report. Shades of garrison duty. The men of "C" are now given passes to town. The town happens to be Nancy, second only to Paris in gaiety, and the quota every few days is 10 per cent of the battery strength. So far we have heard no complaints from the men on being separated from the battalion.

TUESDAY, 17 October 1944.--At Homecourt the men relax and enjoy city life only 3,000 yards from the front. There is a mélange of nationalities here--German, Italian and Polish, as well as French. This brings the linguistic abilities of a considerable number of men into play, and most of the battalion hereabouts is becoming well acquainted with the citizenry.

WEDNESDAY, 18 October 1944.--The day was spent in care of matériel and resting. The public baths have been open to troops in this area, a rare luxury. Showers or baths are 10 francs. Located in a sports stadium, these are now the center of attraction to us. Some of the boys went to a dance in Joeuf across the river. Despite the French orchestra and an unfamiliar style of dancing, everyone reports having a good time. Similar gaieties are reported from the Henderson Battery at Rombas.

THURSDAY, 19 October 1944.--The Henderson Number 1 gun (240) has received some 30 rounds of counterbattery, including time fire, in this area during the past few days. No casualties or damage have been reported. Lt. Col. Marshal, Corps Arty S-3, visited fire direction this af-

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ternoon to discuss plans for trapping the 280mm railroad gun. Our railway adversary sniped at Corps Headquarters again with 20 rounds last night, resulting in the death of one sentry.

Col. Marshal described the shelling thus-- First it fired a high burst adjustment near Conflans, then transferred to Corps Headquarters. About 10 rounds were fired, all landing in a hundred yard pattern, but 500-600 yards from all headquarters, fortunately. They exploded at zero height of burst, clearing the ground of trees and buildings within a 50 yard radius. The shell breaks into rectangular sections which have been known to cut down trees 20 inches in diameter. The gun fired a round at four or five minute intervals, much faster than ever before, and there is some debate in the Corps over the possibility of there being two of those weapons.

FRIDAY, 20 October 1944.--Fire direction under Capt. Smith has spent a futile afternoon trying to register the Henderson Guns for counterbattery fire with the 280mm. Observation conditions were very poor and Lt. Brockmeyer and Capt. Harrison in the plane lost most of their rounds. Simultaneously Flash "A" 7th FOB Bn tried to register the other gun, but on the point of entering fire for effect a spade jumped out and the registration was never completed.

A wire patrol under Cpl. Ouellette has been out for two days picking up wire. On their way back last night PFC Harry Comstock was jerked from the back of the truck by a low hanging wire over the road. He came up more frightened

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than hurt, suffering a burned face and a swollen lip.

Two replacements joined the battalion today, Pvt. Henry D. Faltz, cannoneer, and Pvt. Samuel Katz, wireman.

SATURDAY, 21 October 1944.--By now most of the battalion is wary of the light-fingered French. Headquarters' vehicles, parked in the streets of Homecourt, have been filched of all the rations that were being saved for a rainy day, and Sgt. Gallant reported the theft of 35 bars of soap, GI soap, of course. Children working in coordinated gangs are the worst offenders. Several will distract the guard, while the rest of them are working over the vehicles. Naturally the guard has been alerted and doubled.

Capt. "Up Front with McLean" returned from Corps with a sample fragment of the 280 projectile. It is 14 inches long, 2 inches wide and an inch thick, weighing ten lbs. The projectile is built to break up into such large fragments to cause a greater destructive effect with time fire. A similar piece was found to have knocked down a tree, penetrated two houses and broken two steel rails before coming to rest.

Battery "C" registered its second gun today using high performance aircraft for observation. Pvt. Olaf E. Olson, "C" Battery cannoneer, was evacuated to a hospital today, suffering from pains in the back.

SUNDAY, 22 October 1944.--Another day of inactivity and no noise from Big Bertha across the river. The battalion is held in readiness to let fly when the location of the railroad

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gun is discovered. Pilots Lamoureux and Brockmeyer have remained in the air most of the day, scanning the railroad tracks but they have found no evidence of the gun.

Sgt. Frederick J. Ead, the ammo sgt., and Sgt. Howard L. Patton, gun mechanic from "A" Battery, participated in the capture of a Kraut this afternoon near the Henderson No. 2 piece. A Frenchman first informed them that he had seen a German in the woods about 400 yards to the right of the gun. A posse made up of Tank Destroyer and AA men and the two sergeants were thrown around the woods. Hemming in the area they walked toward each other until the Boche screamed and threw up his hands. He revealed that he was one of a four-man patrol hidden in the woods for two days observing traffic on the road behind the Henderson Battery. The other three were not located.

Not to be outdone, the Adams Battery personnel turned up at the battalion CP with two suspicious French women who had been hanging around their gun position all day. The women, who were without papers, claimed to be looking for potatoes. A CIC sgt. came and took them away. "Our whole day has been spent in running down 'suspicious women,'" said he wearily. The women seemed to enjoy the whole episode.

MONDAY, 23 October 1944.--Last night, Tec. 5 William Mason and Pvt. Charles McGrail of Service Battery and Tec. 5 Tommy Young of Headquarters reported seeing a ghostly light pass through the sky as they stood their posts on guard. Capt. McLean, the S-2, also received the same report from a near-by infantry unit. All agree that the lights were seen traveling

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about 300 feet off the ground at a great speed, then suddenly began a sharp climb upward. There was no noise of a plane. All the observers agreed that the light appeared to be about the size of bicycle lamp; but it seems rather high for a bicycle. Upon reporting this information to Corps, Capt. McLean was informed that the whole matter was a "top secret." The wise guessers say that the lights are from some type of a robot bomb, but nobody knows whether we or the Germans are firing them.

TUESDAY, 24 October 1944.--Battery "B" has been issued four German 155 howitzers to amuse themselves with during this lull of activity. They will fire 300 rounds from the captured weapons before passing them on to some other outfit. Sgts. Wilcox, Thomas, Menaldino and Zaremski are the acting Chiefs of Section. The gun crews are made up of drivers and maintenance personnel. The 380mm monster fired on Pont á Mousson last night and Battery "B" answered with 5 rounds. The effect was not observed.

WEDNESDAY, 25 October 1944.--This sector was mildly excited today by two or three flying bombs passing over. Lt. Mahoney reported hearing one cut out and go into its glide not far from his OP. Peculiar thing; they all seemed to be falling in German territory and there have been no reports of any striking behind our lines.

Pvt. Elbert E. Gilmeister, Battery "B," wireman, was brought back from the hospital at Verdun by Capt. Wood. He was still receiving a rubdown for his back injury but the Baker Bat-



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tery BC promised to continue treatment in the Battery and Gilneister was brought "home."

THURSDAY, 26 October 1944.--Capt. Smith received two coca colas through the mail, the first we had seen since we left England. Tec. 5 Anthony Krewsky, of "A" Battery, has devised a new method of laying wire. When it was necessary to lay a line through a culbert too small for a man to crawl through, the resourceful Krewsky tied the line to a stray dog and coaxed him through.

Battery "C," now attached to the 738th FA Bn (8-inch how.) near Lixieres, has had one gun detached and in position 15 miles to the south. This leaves only "B" with both its guns intact. The railroad monster still hasn't been located.

SUNDAY, 29 October 1944.--The 90th Div. is making an all-out effort to take the little town of Mazierres in which they have been fighting for the past month. All corps artillery in this sector is supporting them in counterbattery and smoke missions, and our batteries have fired 124 rounds, some unobserved and some adjustments with liaison planes. Fighting slackened in the afternoon after many houses had been captured but the enemy still clung to the outskirts.

Lt. Mahoney at the OP had the scare of his life. While walking along a path through the woods, he hit a trip wire of a booby trap. Fortunately the wire had been strung loosely and he did not pull it enough to set off the mine.

MONDAY, 30 October 1944.--No observation, no shooting, no nothing--except Lana Turner. She turned up in a film at the Padgett Petit Play-

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house, disporting her lovely attributes to the pleasure of all. (Note: The playhouse is also the auditorium in which the men sleep. Nothing like lying in bed and seeing Miss Turner smiling at you even if she is just an optical illusion.)

Capt. Wright, of the "you name it--we will get it" department, claims that Service Battery should get a citation for operating closer to the front than the firing batteries. He recalls a convoy he and Lt. Acton conducted outside of Brest one day in search of water. After getting lost they soon found themselves on the receiving end of an 88 salvo. They might have been on the right road but they were sure going the wrong way.

From the "Let Acton Do It" Garage comes the report that the battalion now has nine trailers constructed of odds and ends of American and German equipment. The air section has a neat little French convertible coupe, commonly known as the "Bug." Unfortunately the mud is so deep around the air strip that they cannot move the diminutive vehicle in and out. They are saving it for that Paris leave.

There is no end of what the Service Battery mechanics can make for themselves when it saves physical labor. Tec. 4 Kortesmaki has utilized a 2 phase German starting motor for moving the beam on his M-1 wrecker up and down. Beats cranking, he says. Service has also rigged up a generator to operate their special service radio, awarded them back in England. They burned out the large set on the welding machine generator during our first days in France, but now have it back in operation.

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We were assigned to the 195th FA GP (code name of Coalbin) and had two more batteries added to our bastard family. They were "A" Battery of the 270th FA Bn (240) and "C" Battery of the 736th FA Bn (8-inch how.). Exemplary of the smooth method by which the corps operates is the following list of orders and counter orders.

1800--Telephonic order from Highpraise 4 directing the CO and S-3 and asst S-2 to report at 0800, Highpraise CP.

1900--Coalbin directs us not to report.

2000--Coalbin directs us to report to Highpraise as ordered.

2010--Coffee confirms the call of Coalbin.

2100--Highpraise asst S-3 calls and says to disregard everything.

Everything was disregarded and we start from scratch.

Lt. George S. Caley, Btry "C"'s intrepid Motor Officer, entered an Evac. Hospital three days ago with a stomach ailment, and X rays were taken today. Causes of his illness have not as yet been ascertained.

TUESDAY, 31 October 1944.--Our chief cynic, Ed Knox, had a word to say about the new campaign stars now being provided for service ribbons. "A bronze star plus a nickel will get you a cup of coffee anywhere in the United States." (Guess he never realized that some day those stars would mean five points, too.) Battery "A," though not our closest battery to the front lines ("B" has it beat by 3000 yards), seems to have the most trouble with the Boche.

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A patrol of three fired on an "A" Battery outpost consisting of Cpl. Stanley Olbrys, Privates Floyd Drew and Gordon Noble. Drew returned the fire but the patrol escaped through the woods. Additions to the battalion came in today. They were Privates first class John Calise, James J. Felton and Joseph F. Krauland, who went to "B" Battery, and Privates Clarence H. Deering, Paul H. Goldsmith and Daniel M. Quinton, who joined "A" Battery. Capt. Lee reports that his battery is living quietly and the "C" Fire Direction team is growing fat on the pancakes dealt them by the 738th Bn, with whom they are working. The "C" Battery first section was detached from its battery and was dispatched under the command of Lt. Whitehead to the support of the 80th Division. This section, which has been reinforced with two computers, extra wire and survey men, plus the crane and operators, moved to a position near Velecy.

WEDNESDAY, 1 November 1944.--The ration crew was shelled yesterday. T/5 James McDonough, Privates Robert G. Brown and Roy M. Teddy report that two 88's slammed in near their truck while making a delivery to the Ball Battery (8-inch how.) near Rombas. No damage done.

FRIDAY, 3 November 1944.--Orders came through about mid afternoon directing the 243rd with all its attached batteries to move northward about 25 miles to the small town of Aumetz. From rumor and second guessing, we deducted the following: The whole Third Army was preparing an all-out offensive across the Moselle. XX Corps was reorganizing under this plan. The First Army had already jumped off to the north and the Seventh Army to the south had done

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likewise. General Patton's drive, which would put all the armies on the offensive, is expected to join the big parade that will end the war this winter, we hope.

SATURDAY, 4 November 1944.--The movement was made on the wettest, coldest night conceivable, and was completed without a mishap, except for several trucks running past a route marker and getting lost. It was daylight before these could be chased down and set on the right route again. Consequently the route markers, made up of survey and wire personnel, spent the night standing in the rain on their respective corners. This made them all unhappy, especially the survey men, who had hardly downed their breakfast before they set out to survey the "A" Battery position. This was completed about 2200.

SUNDAY, 5 November 1944.--The battalion CP moved into the back room of a neat tavern at Zoufftgen. This is especially agreeable to the staff, who are only five steps away from Madame Beihl's spicy vin rouge and cognac. Other battalion installations are located under a roof, even though it be only a barn. Even Service Battery is in town. "A" is still awaiting orders to move up from Aumetz. "B" and "C" are now farther away than ever, remaining in the detached state. "B" is still with the 203rd Group and "C" with XII Corps.

MONDAY, 6 November 1944.--Ex-Lieutenant George S. Acton, motor officer, was promoted to captain today. The XX Corps' big offensive to cross the Moselle is waiting on good weather to jump off. We have established our first OP since leaving the Metz sector. It is located

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in a Maginot fort on a hill overlooking the river and the German held ridges on the other side. Lt. Mahoney, S/Sgt. Kandetski and T/5 Carlson make up the first observation crew. The wire laying and occupation was made after dark because the hilltop is too exposed to German artillery fire for daylight movement. In this wet and cold operation the battalion received another casualty. Pfc John J. Mattiacci was electrified while stringing wire on a high tension pole. As he changed his position on the top of the pole, his climbers slipped and he flung out his hands to catch himself. His left hand struck a high tension wire, knocking him unconscious and flinging him off the pole. Cpl. Watts and Jim Boorum immediately gave him artificial respiration and Cpl. La Sota rushed his weapons' carrier back for an ambulance. Later at the aid station the medico said that Mattiacci had a 50-50 chance of surviving and only because of the prompt first aid given him by Watts and Boorum. If he lives he will certainly lose a hand, the doctor stated. T/4 Robert Bender, the Headquarters clerk, returned from a four-day leave in the hospital where he was undergoing treatment for the chronic itch which has afflicted him these many months.

TUESDAY, 7 November 1944.--Additions to the battalion today consisted of Cpl. Chris Tillman and Pvt. Melvin Nelson for Headquarters, Pvt. George W. Zimmer to "A," Pvt. Mitro Gurney, "B," and Privates Kenneth E. Hill and Robert H. Murphy to "C" Battery. During the night "A" Battery moved its guns from the rendezvous near Aumetz into position across the cow pasture from Headquarters.

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WEDNESDAY, 8 November 1944.--Lt. Mahoney registered "A" with doubtful results. Maj. Banks's laconic statement to the observer was: "If this happens again I'm going to have you write 500 times, 'I will get a bracket.'" XII Corps began its offensive today, and in preparation "C" fired 30 rounds on towns and woods. Battery "C" is the most active battery in the 243rd, firing interdiction fire all during the night in support of the XII Corps attack. A round was on the way every 20 minutes.

THURSDAY, 9 November 1944.--The weather has finally cleared enough to allow the XX Corps to jump off. First infantry elements of the 90th and the 95th crossed the river in the early dawn and established a beachhead between Berg and Thionville. The roads in the rear were jammed with traffic moving toward the front. The 10th Armored was massing, while waiting for bridges to be completed so they could spearhead the push to the Rhine.

T/4 Willie Bender, Sgt. of the Guard today, was ordered to clear all civilian traffic from our roads to make room for heavy military movement. Later he dashed in the CP with the announcement that he had a convoy halted outside. Capt. McLean investigated and discovered Bender's convoy to be a bull and two cows drawing a hay wagon, with a trailer containing a calf hitched on the rear, and followed by eight more cows and a Frenchman.

T/5 Swede Carlson, radio operator, was brought in from the OP complaining of pains in his stomach. Capt. Anastasia proclaimed it appendicitis and rushed him to the hospital.

SATURDAY, 11 November 1944.--Madame Beihl

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provided a fine party in honor of Armistice Day. At the height of festivities, during the evening, an order from Group Headquarters called away Col. Rucks, Capt. McLean and Lt. Charles Hillegas to begin the most hazardous and important adventure experienced by any members of this unit to date.

At 1100 today every active gun in United States armies fired a round at the Boche.

SUNDAY, 12 November 1944.--The Colonel became corps artillery liaison officer with the 95th Div combat team making the main effort across the river from Thionville. Capt. McLean went out as liaison officer with one of the assault battalions, and Lt. Hillegas joined a company of this battalion as forward observer.

They took the following enlisted men with them: S/Sgt. Packeco, Asst to Lt. Hillegas, and T/5 Larrabee, his radio operator; Neipris, wireman, and Smith, driver, were also from "A." From headquarters were T/5 Gould, T/5 Cox and Cpl. Paul, who acted as the Colonel's radio operators and drivers; Clark, Boroom and Boylan, radio, wire and driver; Mullaney, clerk, Kelly and Mercier, radio operator and driver, respectively, for Capt. McLean; and a wire crew headed by Cpl. Cook, consisting of Katz, Violante, Pawlak, Comstock, Hamilton, and Pompeii. Daigle came later as relief driver when Mercier was wounded.

All the firing done by "A" to date has been registrations on check points. Today, however, Capt. Harrison located an enemy battery from the liaison plane and fired on it, getting several tree bursts in the battery position.

Task Force Whitehead, following the advance of the 80th Div. moved into position near



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Puzieux. While the section was busy emplacing its gun, jeep driver Cahill and radio operator Plapus set out to find an "executive post" among near-by buildings. At their first stop, a barn, they found a GI lying in the straw, a coat covering his face. "Wake up, Mac, you'll catch cold laying there," said the sympathetic Cahill, shaking him by the shoulder. The man did not move. Cahill, growing suspicious, lifted the coat. The man was dead. Retiring in haste, Cahill and Plapus found a new location for the exec's post. The cannoneers, however, spent the night in the loft upstairs. It was a sleepless night for cannoneer Amsden, who could not forget the corpse beneath him.

TUESDAY, 14 November 1944.--On orders from General Slack of Corps Arty, via 195th Group Headquarters, one gun from "A" moved 4000 yards down the road to the village of Soetrich. Our only OP was closed and Lt. Mahoney called in. He reported that it was long since he had seen a sign of the enemy, and that he was so far behind the lines that the service troops were holding night ball games in front of him. All division artillery and other combat troops were now well across the river. Loud were the howls from all quarters of the battalion at moving only four thousand yards closer to the front. It seemed senseless to spend a full day moving a heavy gun that can fire 35,000 yards such a short distance. However, we were to get used to this leap-frogging behind an advancing army.

It was adding insult to injury, however, when we discovered that an evacuation hospital with female nurses was already crossing the Moselle. When we do cross we expect to find a crisp WAC

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lieutenant on hand to show us where to put our guns.

Etry "C" is equalling Hq and "A" in rapidity of movement, in occupying a position near Chambrey today. Capt. Lee's battery found a knocked out 75 mm and several 20 mm guns, guarded by three dead Germans, in the vicinity.

Lt. Whitehead, with the detached section, had a bitter experience during the night in moving blackout through snow to his new position at Lesse. At one point a route marker informed him that the bridge was out up ahead and he would have to detour. Following this unknown route for some time without meeting a soul, he became worried about his proximity to the front. 'At the next town, the "C" exec stopped his column and called for the guard. There was no answer from the swirling snow. He discovered two GI trucks parked in the shadows of a building, and began scraping the mud off a bumper to read its designation. Suddenly came a low query from the cab: "What you doing?" He had found the guard. With reassurance that they were on the right route the column started again. A little later they met Maj. Collins, of the 267th, and passed a bottle of brandy among the wet, shivering men. With rejuvenated spirits they completed the march, and occupied position this morning.

WEDNESDAY, 15 November 1944.--A day of rest. Tech. Sgt. Maurice "Two-toned" Levitan fired his first problem from the liaison plane, registering the newly emplaced gun of "A." His falsetto voice emanating from the radio started kibitzers in FDC to believing the Pilot Lamoureux was doing some one-armed flying again. The

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Sergeant fired a successful problem. "Levi" had his troubles on return to FDC. Despite the large signs on Fire Direction's walls, to wit: "WATCH YOUR HAT AND COAT," "NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR STOLEN ARTICLES," and "IF YOU VALUE YOUR CLOTHES KEEP THEM ON," the willowy operations mentor left his helmet unguarded on a hat tree. When he returned a shiny German helmet was in its place. So if you see a wandering Kraut wearing a GI helmet report him to Sgt. Levitan; he wants to make a swap.

Cannoneers of the main portion of "C" are now happy--they are living in a house at last. The first section, however, is definitely irritated. Whitehead's group, whose prime mission is to hunt the Boche's fugitive railroad gun, was forced to move 500 yards to the rear today at the whim of a higher commander. While in the process of moving, the Air Corps discovered the monster deep in enemy territory, but naturally the gun section was caught with its barrel down. It was their first retreat in this war.

THURSDAY, 16 November 1944.--More wailings and gnashings of teeth. The "A" second section was moved several thousand yards forward of the first, and Hqs and Service took up residence in an old iron foundry on the outskirts of Thionville.

FRIDAY, 17 November 1944.--Col. Rucks and his warriors returned from the front. Their haggard, bearded faces testified to the hell they had gone through. Task Force Bacon, composed of green elements from the 95th Division, had forced the river crossing at Thionville, stormed the city's fort and taken the towns of Basse-Yutz and Haute-Yutz, near by, then moved

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southward down the Moselle as far as Ay-sur Moselle. Operating at headquarters first in Thionville and then crossing the river and moving southward behind the punching doughs, the Colonel acted as liaison officer for corps Artillery with the Task Force. Some days he worked with one battery, other times with a dozen battalions in support of the operation. Far into the night he sweated out "fire possibilities" and infantry barrage requirements to schedule harassing and supporting for corps artillery units. During the day, missions on targets of opportunity coming from forward observers were handled through this department. Most of our wiremen, drivers and clerks were attached to this sub-corps artillery headquarters.

"Nothing bothered me too much during the whole operation until the last day," said the Colonel, "when we passed a jeep alongside the road with the driver behind the wheel. The Krauts shelled the road after we had passed, and coming back we saw the same jeep, with the driver still at the wheel, but his head had been blown off. Somehow that got me. Sgt. Pacheco in the back seat said he felt a little sick too."

Though TF headquarters caught its share of mortar and shell fire, Capt. McLean, with an infantry battalion commander during the operation, took the worst punishment of any member of this battalion. He reports that he killed his first German with his M1 during this period.

Infantry of the 95th, getting their baptism of fire, blundered badly during the first two days, reported our S-2, and suffered needless

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casualties. At one time he accompanied the battalion commander moving with a small group of his men down a road. When they received small arms fire the men hit the ground, despite the Captain's urging to "keep moving or they'll put mortars on you." As they were afraid to move while the fire continued, the mortars began dropping about them, our captain wisely dashed to the flank, taking refuge in a shallow depression. All but four of the others were wounded or killed.

"But it was beautiful to watch them the third day," said McLean, "when they ran into fire they simply melted out of the road and went around the flanks, cleaning out the Germans while hardly losing a man. Casualties that third day were nothing compared to the first two."

Lt. Hillegas, Sgt. Pacheco and T/5 Larrabee, our forward observer party, were the first members of this battalion to cross the Moselle. They landed on the opposite shore from an assault boat on the afternoon of 12 Nov., and stayed with their assigned company until two of them were wounded. Though Capt. McLean complained of improper use of the forward observers, requiring them to stick with company commanders who were seldom in good observing positions, the order remained, and Lt. Hillegas and party advanced with the infantry. At one point the "A" RO knocked out a German pillbox only a hundred yards away with 8-inch howitzers.

The Lieutenant and Sgt. Pacheco were slightly wounded the first afternoon by mortar fire, but rejoined their company at 2 a.m. the next morning. "I had to cross a street under fire

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one time," said radio operator Larrabee, "and running with a part of the 610 in each hand, my helmet bounced around on my head until I couldn't see where I was going. I thought I'd never make it that time."

On the afternoon of 14 Nov., Kelly and Mercer were transporting a radio to Capt. McLean when shellfire dropped on them. They were standing behind a tree when a shell fragment hit Mercer in the leg, wounding him severely. He was the only serious casualty in our battalion during the operation. Two artillery observers from other battalions were killed in the action, however--a TD Officer and the Asst S-2 of the 270th FA Bn.

All men of the battalion performed creditably, the Colonel stated, and though it was exciting, interesting work, it was not a job he would relish again.

T/4 Solomon of the personnel section is walking the floor. His wife is expecting a baby and he is anxiously awaiting news.

SATURDAY, 18 November 1944.--Atlast we moved across the river. Headquarters takes up residence at Guenange while waiting for the guns to come up. Unfortunately, engineer officers refuse to allow the guns to cross the pontoon bridge at Thionville after dark, and they must sit on the roadside until dawn.

An order comes from Group directing us to push the guns to Flevy tomorrow. Looks as if the Third Army is on the loose again. We are starting "the Rat-race to the Rhine."

Btry "C" occupied position near Burlioncourt, Alsace, today. The CP was located in town. A burning half truck with two dead GI's near by

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gave mute evidence of the battery's proximity to the front lines.

SUNDAY, 19 November 1944.--Guns in position east of Fleury by 1800, and the "no fire line" on one section already exceeds the range. We will undoubtedly move tomorrow. Capt. Harrison registered from the plane this afternoon. During the problem he reported an enemy battery, and requested fire. By the time Corps had okayed the mission, a half-hour later, our Air Corps had bombed and strafed the target, thus cheating the Comm O out of his "shoot."

"B," though seldom heard from these days, is still with the 203rd Group, supporting the 5th Div. south of Metz. Capt. Wood was commended in a letter from the CO of 1301st Engineer Regt. for his cooperation in sending his crane to their aid in putting a bridge across the Moselle. The letter of commendation, which arrived some time later, was endorsed six times, including laudatory notes from Third Army, General Walker (XX Corps Commander) and General Slack, Corps Arty Commander, before it reached Capt. Wood. Those who deserve the real credit, however, are T/4 Zaremski and T/5 Prior, crane operators, who worked all night under shellfire, unloading pontoons for the vital bridge.

Down south, "C" has been using its ingenuity to lighten its load. The detached section, now in position at Morelange, discovered it had a fairly long walk to mess with its foster-battalion in an abandoned factory. Conveniently a narrow gauge railroad ran through the gun position and the factory yard, so Corporals Bryer, Francis and Lee rigged up a small motor car to run them down to mess. Later two hundred

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new bicycles were discovered in the vicinity of the gun, and the whole section went on wheels. Getting to mess was no problem at all.

MONDAY, 20 November 1944.--Having moved southward for the last three days to no avail, the inscrutable Corps Artillery now reverses the direction and orders us to trek northward. Our stop tonight will be Basse-Utz, a suburb of Thionville. Lt. Semenock, now acting as Liaison Officer between Corps and the 95th Div, put us wise to the fact that the 10th Armored and the 90th Div are expected to make their big drive for the Rhine from the vicinity of Koenigsmacker and Sierck northeast of Thionville. We are in support of the 10 Armored, whose objective is Frankfurt.

The night in Basse-Utz is spent in erstwhile apartments and houses of the villagers now absent before the scourge of war. The clothing situation in the battalion has now become more picturesque though less military. The battalion wire section are sporting red mufflers made of a captured Nazi flag; there are several silk top hats to be seen moving among our line of trucks and tanks, and tonight Cpl. Bill Hoard and William L. Deschesne are sleeping in nightgowns left by some nameless hostess. Capt. McLean sports an ornate walking stick, period Louis XIV, and John Burns, the yodelling orderly, has vastly improved the cutlery situation for the Officers' Mess from a stock left by the Boche.

At Brulioncourt, Capt. Lee's men displayed a grim sense of humor. Looking over three Krauts around their smashed gun near the "C" position, Pfc Vincenzo suddenly commanded: "Can-



## THE DIARY

noneers post!" The Boche never stirred--they were dead. A 20 mm ack-ack gun, apparently in good condition, had been left by the retreating Germans. Sgt. Clunan and Pfc Sadowski examined it carefully for booby traps and then for operation.

Said the Sergeant: "I think this gadget is the safety." He touched the object under consideration. "Wham--wham--wham!" The gun leaped into life, firing several shots, causing the two men to fall over backwards in getting away from it, and bringing the whole section to its feet with carbines ready.

Capt. Lee went on reconnaissance for new positions near the town of Alberstorf. However, the Germans had not been informed of his projected move and were still occupying the town.

To the north of him, Lt. Whitehead's section was having its troubles. In going into position at Gros-Genguin they found themselves ahead of the tank destroyers (105 armored artillery). At one time the crane operator, T/4 Richardson, had to lower his boom to permit the TD's to shoot over it. From his high position in the control seat he also had an excellent view of the fighting up ahead 900 yards.

"It was that way all the time," said Lt. Whitehead. "We'd occupy position in one town, while the infantry and tanks were fighting in the next. Then after a day or so we'd move on."

On that first evening, the Germans shelled the town all night long. As the first round came in, Privates first class Deliberto, Fulp and Page, working around the gun, dropped into the spade pits for safety. The gun had been emplaced right in town, with the exec's post in

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a house not far away. During the night, the exec and section chief Howe amused themselves by sensing the German rounds to each other over the telephone. "That last one was 400 yards right 200 short of me, etc.," was the style of their conversation.

At the height of this unpleasantness, T/4 Smith, gun mechanic, got a terse call from telephone operator Mercer at the exec's post. "Report to exec post at once, with corkscrew."

"I sure will, and in a hurry," replied Smith, not giving the Boche another thought. Mercer had located a bottle of wine, and it was well known that Smith had the only decent corkscrew in the section.

## ALONG THE SAAR

TUESDAY, 21 November 1944.--"A" occupied position in a sea of mud near Hunting, while Headquarters, as usual, took over empty houses in the town. The war is continually brought closer to this battalion by the increased destruction of villages we pass, and the regular sight of unburied corpses on the roadside. In our new position Sgt. Patton, "A" gun mechanic, retrieved a good P-38 pistol from a headless Kraut.

Lt. Elsted, now the "A" asst exec, is getting a rough initiation into the 243rd. The guns have been going in and out of position every two days now that we are on the move so much; the men frequently work all night to get a gun in, and 24 hours later work a half day to get the gun out and make a hard trip to the next position.

WEDNESDAY, 22 November 1944.--Eight cannon-eers of "A" turned up at sick call this morning mentally and physically exhausted. Nursing "The Comet" and "The Silver Meteor" in and out of position in the mud for so many days has left the gun sections in a bedraggled state. Maj. Burgoon, who is inevitably on hand for every movement of the heavy pieces, cites the instance of eight men failing to lift a trail spade

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where four had done so in normal times. Their feet sank so far in the mud that they couldn't move them.

Sgt. Arrants, headquarters mess sergeant, is worried over cooking the Thanksgiving turkeys. He hasn't stoves enough to do the job tomorrow morning. He finally resolved the difficulty by working the cooks all night to prepare the best possible turkey dinner under existing conditions.

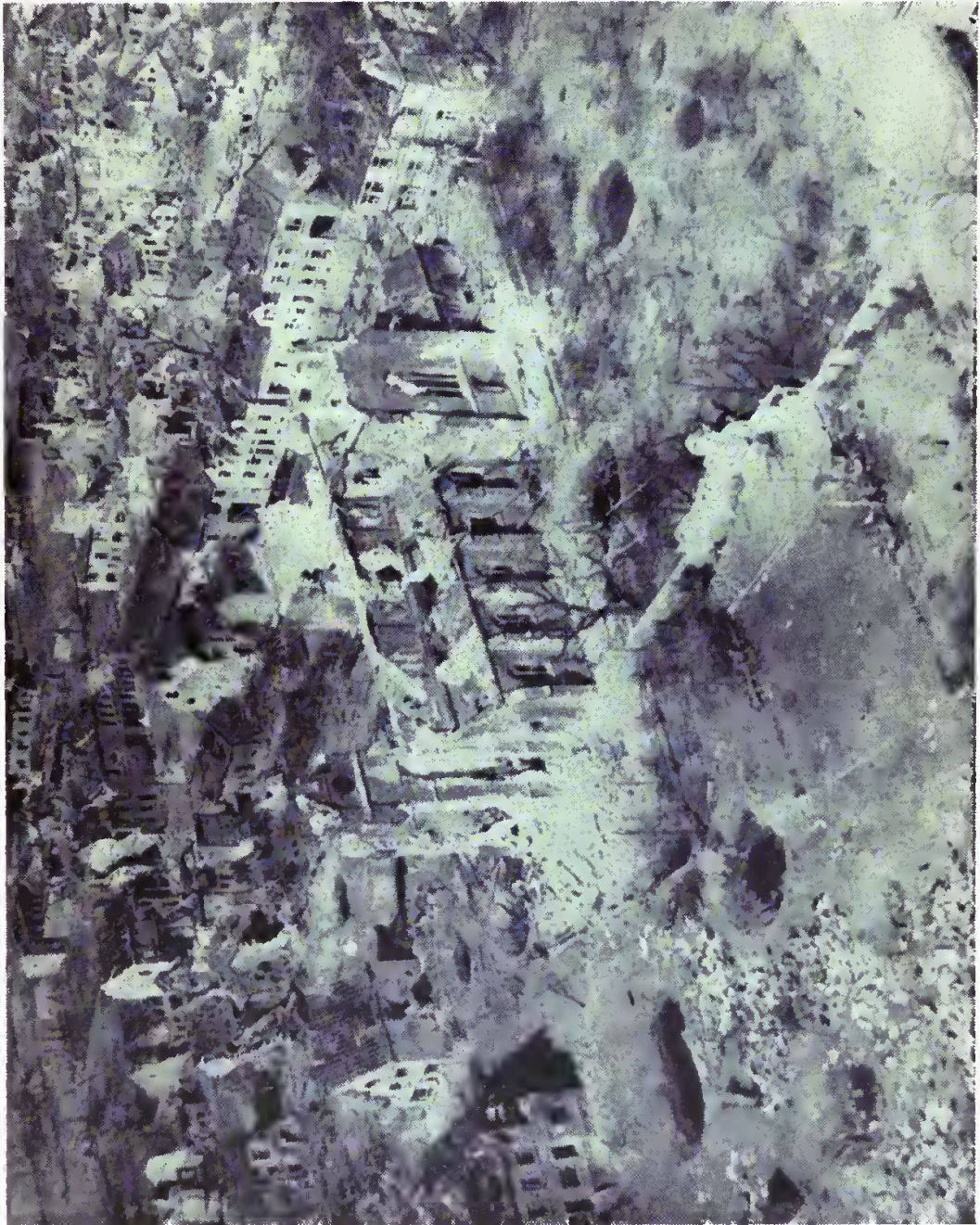
It is surprising but true that this battalion is now three-quarters shot, with "C" the worst off. Life of the 8-inch tube is set by ordnance as 400 service rounds. "C" has fired 319 rounds in one gun and 361 rounds in the other. "B" has expended 313 rounds in one and 238 in the other, while "A" is in best shape with 290 and 260 rounds fired in its guns.

Cpl. Donald J. Asp, gunner, lost to "A" through appendicitis on the day we left Camp Stanage, has returned to the battery.

The work of Sgt. Wolfe, ammunition sergeant for "C" is most unenviable. Keeping the detached section supplied with necessary ammo (they average 18 round fired per day) is no small problem. Every day he sets out with his crew, T/5 Kenniston and ammo handlers McAuliffe and Hill, for the appropriate ASP. Knowing that the section will move while he is gone, he must always stop by Corps Arty to find the new location of Lt. Whitehead's group before re-joining them.

Recently the normal ASP ran out of 8-inch ammunition.

"Get me some more if you have to go to Paris for it," commanded Lt. Whitehead. Sgt. Wolfe



Street scene in Saarlautern, one of the many towns along the Saar that the 243rd shelled for months.



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was gone three days, going as far as Toul and back. His trip took him three hundred miles, but he had the ammunition.

Attempts to keep up with Capt. Lee's and Capt. Wood's orphan batteries becomes increasingly difficult. Wood's outfit, in position four miles northeast of Pont á Mousson, has led the battalion in rounds fired, according to late ammo reports. "C" is divided into the "Howe" section and the "Previte" section (named for their section chiefs), with "Howe" at the village of Lesse, about 15 miles due east of "B," and "Previte" about 12 miles southeast of "Howe." Both batteries are generally about 40 miles from Headquarters.

Col. Rucks and Maj. Burgoon made the first reconnaissance on German soil.

THURSDAY, 23 November 1944.--Today was Thanksgiving and a good turkey dinner was spread at noon. Mess and movie in the afternoon helped assuage the pangs of homesickness that must have struck every man at some time during the day. The third straight day of sunless weather and drizzling rain did not improve our holiday, but each of us had much to be thankful for. We were incomparably better off than the men of the 90th Div Inf, for instance, who were celebrating their Thanksgiving with an attack on the Siegfried line at 1000.

The 10th Armored has bogged down before the German fortifications, and the infantry has been called up to make a hole for the armored to sweep through. This accounts for our three-day respite thus far.

Changes in the battalion make-up: Pvt. Charles E. McGrail has been transferred to Hqs



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as Capt. McLean's driver. Lt. Peterson has joined "B" to replace Lt. Beck, who is coming to Hqs as full time air observer.

Capt. Lee is still trying to accomplish his reconnaissance for gun positions in Alberstorf, but the Germans still have the town. He reports that "C" had an excellent Thanksgiving dinner with one drink of brandy per man.

SUNDAY, 26 November 1944.--Tide of battle shifted southeastward to the 90th Div sector and we moved to Monneren. "A" goes into position along the railroad tracks there, and Hqs occupies the near-by village of St. Marguerite. We are supporting the battle for the Saar River, and the infantry of the 90th and 95th divisions seems to be making rapid progress.

MONDAY, 27 November 1944.--For the first time in combat, we are allowed unlimited ammunition to fire, and the air section reports that observation is impossible! We have a new priority of fires--counterbattery first, bridges second, then towns. Since we are now firing into Germany, the authorities are no longer worried about whom or what they hit. Most of us, however, are quite concerned over this "counter-town" fire. If we shoot up all the villages it will be difficult to find comfortable quarters as we follow future advances.

"Well, we'll pick out the towns we want to live in," proposed Maj. Banks, "and let them alone."

Lts. Beck and Lamoureaux registered "A" this afternoon. In doing so they got lost in the fog and finally discovered they were well inside the German lines. They drew no fire, how-



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ever, and continued to fly over the area while conducting the registration.

TUESDAY, 28 November 1944.--The assistant S-2 returned from an infantry regimental CP with fresh information from a PW locating German infantry battalions in three towns 10 miles behind the German lines. In accordance with the new policy of shooting up towns we let 'em have a couple rounds per hour during the afternoon. Many of us would have given half a month's pay to have witnessed the expression on Kraut faces when houses began to collapse under the impact of our 240 lb. projectiles in supposedly safe rear areas.

WEDNESDAY, 29 November 1944.--The infantry has advanced four miles in the last three days and we are ordered to move up tomorrow. Our new home will be in Bizing, with "A" again on the railroad tracks northeast of there. We are now  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles from the German border.

Pvt. Burton D. Guy, lanky driver of a Hqs GMC, reports that he is planning to write his lawyer about his wife. He got a letter from her today addressed, "Dear Folks," and discovered by perusal that it was intended for his mother-in-law. The motive for writing to his lawyer, however, was a remark dropped in the letter to the effect that "if he kicks off" his wife will get \$10,000.

THURSDAY, 30 November 1944.--Maj. Banks and Capt. Smith, our S-3 section, were awarded Certificates of Merit today. T/Sgt V. V. Marymee, Service Battery and Tec. 4 H. L. Patten, Jr., of Btry "A," also received the same award.

Sgt. F. J. Ead, amiable Able ammo chief, is determined to go to Berlin. If the war fails

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to take him there, he already has his railroad passage--a long string of tickets, complete with transfers, properly lettered and stamped for necessary railroads. Railroad officials may object, however, since they have not been paid for. Taking advantage of the ticket office in an abandoned railroad station, Ead made up his own tickets and is now carrying them--just in case.

From our long orphaned "B" Battery we received this report, involving a slightly wishful opinion on the present location of our front lines. It reads:

"On 28 November 1944 Captain Eldon B. Wood, commanding "B," received a telephone call to report to 203rd FA Gp headquarters at 1300. There he was given the town of Ittersdorf to reconnoiter for gun positions, and he accordingly proceeded toward that town the following day.

"Captain Wood with a reconnaissance party consisting of 2nd Lt. Helfrich, 1st/Sgt. Eccleston, S/Sgt. Morgan, Cpl. Harvey, Tec. 5 Sierakowski, Tec. 5 Militello, Pfc's Warhol and Ciarlo took off in three vehicles for the exploration.

"On nearing Ittersdorf a few shots were heard which were thought at the time to be some soldier trying out this rifle. As the party continued forward, small arms fire went over our heads. There was no indication of where the fire was coming from, so the party made a run for it in the same direction we had been going. After advancing another two hundred yards we ran into an anti-tank ditch which we were unable to cross. Under small arms and au-

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automatic fire all drivers hurriedly turned their vehicles around on signal from the Captain. Fire was very heavy while this was going on. After outdistancing the machine gun and rifle fire, the Captain stopped the party to determine extent of damage, if any, to personnel and vehicles. Total damage consisted of a bullet hole through the detail truck radiator. Next day, at Group Hqs., the Captain learned that Ittersdorf was still held by the enemy. New positions were selected a little farther back. The skill and coolness of the drivers was mainly responsible for the fortunate lack of damage and casualties."

FRIDAY, 1 December 1944.--A Boche buzz bomb passed overhead tonight and its "Top Secret" rating precluded mentioning it by name over the telephone. A code word has been devised among Corps units for reporting these lethal weapons, and as a result Sgt. Levitan's intelligence report to group was as follows:

"Unseen unmentionable overheard overhead."

Sign of the times: Battalion was paid off in German marks (à la Morgenthau) today. We have but slight expectation of spending any during the month--except on poker games.

SATURDAY, 2 December 1944.--Most of our firing lately has been air OP's. First registration from this position was done by a 90th Div artillery observer from the ground, but all shooting since then has been either unobserved or conducted from the liaison planes. The weather is generally rainy and cold, cutting observation to a few hours a day or less.

MONDAY, 4 December 1944.--Lt. Beck had a good

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day shooting up three different gun batteries deep inside enemy lines. He got target hits, knocked down near-by buildings and set an ammunition dump afire.

TUESDAY, 5 December 1944.--We move to Neidwelling, a tiny village along the Nied River, which is now shared entirely by 243rd Hqs and a few civilians. "A" is northeast of us a kilometer, located just on the French side of the old international boundary. So close are they to Germany that the tube of the No. 2 gun extends across the border. Their position is again on the railroad tracks with a station house alongside each gun to provide cover for the cannoneers.

Hqs Battery had ice cream tonight, our first since leaving the U.S.A. It was accomplished by sending the ingredients to a commercial firm in Luxembourg for freezing.

Col. Rucks was presented the Croix de Guerre by the French Government, with Gen. Slack, XX Corps Artillery Commander, bestowing the honor at Group headquarters.

WEDNESDAY, 6 December 1944.--Lt. Beck continued his adjustments from the plane on enemy batteries with good effect. Showing the accuracy of survey, fire directions' computations and his own location of the target was his sensing on the first round of one mission: "Deflection correct, range correct."

Sgt. Levitan now has a new set of pin-ups in his field desk. They are exquisitely colored photos of lovely dishes--ham and eggs, ice cream cones, hot dogs and mustard, etc. "I'm in love with them all, except one," he murmured

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as he gazed upon them dreamily; "I don't care much for the roast chicken."

After firing a few rounds from the "A" 2nd section this evening, Capt. Henderson called to ask us if there would be any further shooting that night. "If so I'll have to move my men out of the house," he added; "the gun is shaking the roof down on top of them."

THURSDAY, 7 December 1944.--"B" is gradually approaching reunion with its parent headquarters. Each succeeding position brings us closer together and they are now only a few miles over the hill from Hqs and "A." Capt. Wood has handily emplaced his guns between houses of the small village of Leidingen, a few yards across the German boundary. In accordance with his new position as conquerer he has evacuated enough rooms in the village to house all his personnel.

Lt. Hillegas and S/Sgt Pacheco received Purple Hearts this morning for the wounds they got during operations in the Moselle River crossing, Thionville sector, a few weeks ago. Formal presentation was made by Red Cross lass Betty Liechty, Kinsley, Iowa, with a resounding kiss on each cheek for both.

Betty with her sisters-in-arms, Pat Naddox, Lafayette, Iowa, and Sally Reed, Dedham, Massachusetts, served coffee and doughnuts from their clubmobile, "Charleston," to both batteries.

Cpl. Ralph J. Watts received the Certificate of Merit.

FRIDAY, 8 December 1944.--The battalion is stirred somewhat by a new order directing us to transfer five per cent of the men, excluding medics, to the infantry. Battery commanders are

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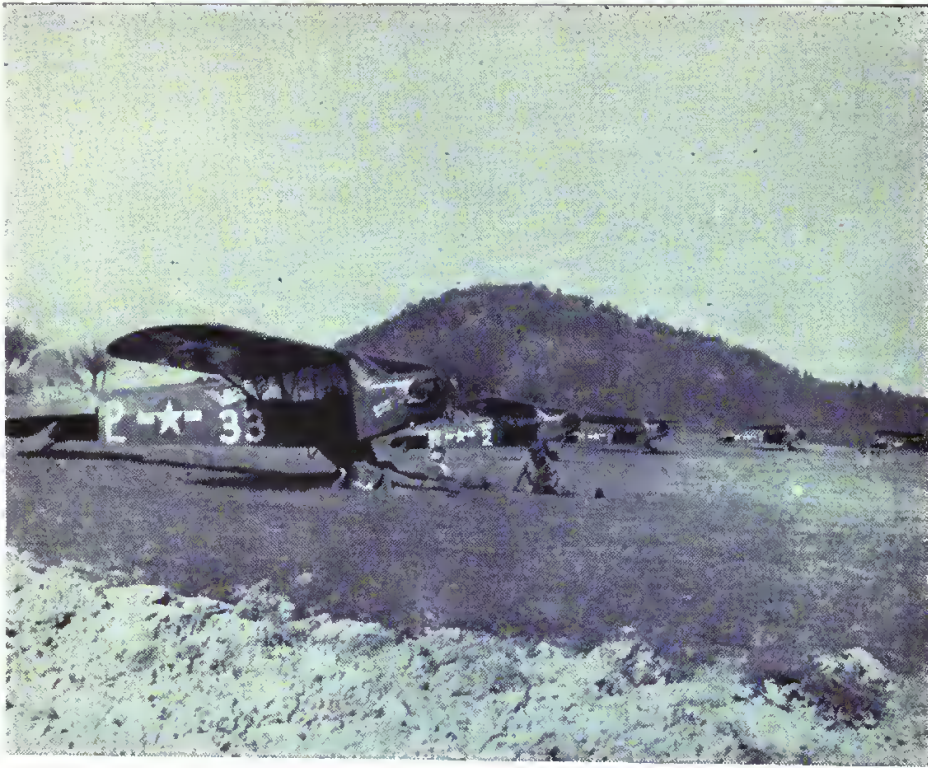
asking for volunteers first, before issuing orders. So far, in Headquarters Battery, S/Sgt. Arrants, mess sergeant; Tec. 4 Martin, HCO; Tec. 5 Cox; Tec. 5 Earlle and Pfc Hamblen have volunteered. The Colonel has objected to sending Martin, however, because of the importance of his job in fire direction center.

The ever-suspicious men of "A" during our time in France have reported many an innocent civilian as a Nazi spy, but today they learned that their distrusting natures had paid dividends. Tec. 5 Julien S. Beaulieu, acting on the report of a civilian, turned in a suspicious man who was living in Guerstling, present site of "A" truck park. The MP's stopped by today to report that the individual was found to be a genuine Nazi agent, considered highly "dangerous."

Service Battery announces that their first representative in Germany was S/Sgt. George C. Hofmeister with his cannon. Hofmeister, mess sergeant, wandered into Germany with his truck while looking for the battery. His cannons, incidentally, are the three immersion heaters which, under the Hofmeister usage, sound off like 240 howitzers, at first lighting. Service is now located in Benting, near Bouzenville, two miles to the rear of us. They have a good house in excellent condition, with the CP located in an erstwhile bar.

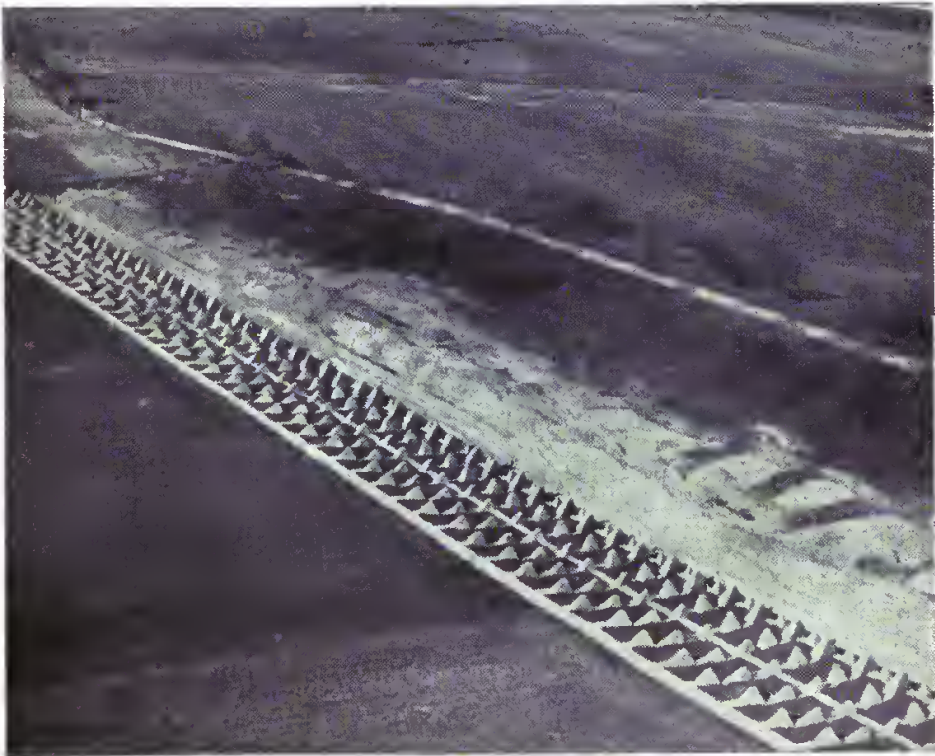
Tec. 5 Plecker and Pvt. Klingman of "B" were on the way to Landonvillers, France, today after rations when they noticed two men sitting alongside the road. "Weren't they dressed in German uniforms?" asked Plecker of Klingman.

"It sure looked like it," replied Klingman.



Battalion and 159th Group liaison planes paused during the final move up to the Rhine.

- Dragon's Teeth in the Siegfried Line near Orzholtz, Germany, in the Saar-Moselle Triangle.







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So they stopped the truck and backed up. The uniforms were German, and Klingman ordered the Heinies to get on the fenders for a ride to MP Hqs. When one complained it was too dirty, Tec. 5 Plecker influenced him with a rifle. So with the Germans draped across their truck they proceeded to MP Hqs. in Boulay. This boosted the "B" number of Germans captured to six and put them well out in the "League" lead. The standings:

Baker----	6
Hqs.-----	3
Able-----	2
Charlie--	0
Service--	0

SATURDAY, 9 December 1944.--Today and tomorrow members of the battalion are privileged to witness first demonstrations of the new magnetic artillery fuze known currently as "Pozit." The fuze, operating on the radar principle, sets off shells at a uniform height above the ground, 20 yards for light artillery and 35 yards for heavies. This is a great improvement over the old time fuze which is very erratic.

Many of us lucky enough to work on OP's and see front line infantry in action have held them in awe for the suffering and misery they must undergo. Yet, in reviewing our own gun positions, we are forced to admit that cannon-eers suffer more than the infantry does in the afflictions of weather. The infantry frequently takes refuge for the night in dry buildings and gets occasional relief from front line hardships when it can retire to ample shelter

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in rear areas, but gun sections and their officers are never held in reserve, and are almost never lucky enough to be in position near buildings which offer protection against rain and cold. Their home day in and day out is the pup tent, and their work is done in the deepest mud. Seldom does the excitement of war penetrate deep enough to erase from their minds the sense of their own discomforts, and they do not have the gratification of seeing what they are shooting at. What little satisfaction of personal achievement can be gained comes from the fire direction's cryptic reports: "You just set an ammo dump afire." "Those rounds hit an enemy battery, effect unobserved." "A pillbox destroyed on that one."

Now that we are firing interdiction missions into Germany during the nights and shooting at targets of opportunity during the day, the boredom is reduced. The men like to shoot, but still there is plenty of time to contemplate their fate: one dismal mud hole after another. Under such circumstances we feel that their morale is remarkably high.

For the past two days the medics have been having a jamboree--rolling up our sleeves and going to work on us with much gusto. They have begun "shooting" the battalion for tetanus. The serum seems to get worse every time we take it. Pfc Alpha J. Constant, Hq Btry, had hardly taken off his shirt when "chief sticker" Tec. 4 Alfred J. Kazerman produced the largest needle in captivity, an instrument borrowed from the veterinarians, I'm sure. The indomitable "Punchy," for once dominated, without a word put on his

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shirt and started for the door. "You can't stick me with that thing," he said.

Some excitement was created in Hqs and "A" during the night when German shells of heavy caliber began falling uncomfortably close to us. Reports from all sections, however, revealed that none had dropped close enough to be felt. During the height of shelling S/Sgt. Earl R. Bubar could be seen frantically searching the area for his dog. He eventually found the little animal and returned with him to cover. Later investigation proved the shells to be 170 mm and directed at an airstrip on top of a near-by hill.

SUNDAY, 10 December 1944.--Orders arrived from XX Corps today awarding the Bronze Star for meritorious service to fifteen members of the battalion. Most of the medals were presented for action in Brest and St. Malo campaigns.

Capt. Harrison, Com O, and wire Sgts. Lammela, of Hqs. and Wilcox of "B" were given the award for the excellent work they did in keeping the long wire lines at Brest and St. Malo operations. Capt. McLean, Lts. Mahoney and Wikan, S/Sgts. Kandetski, Morgan and Christensen, Tec. 5 Kelly and Pfc Carpenter were honored for their operations at OP's at Brest and St. Malo. Capt. Acton, Lt. Caley and M/Sgt. Hard were recognized for their competent work in keeping our motors running through these two campaigns and across France. Old and ailing as our tanks were, we did not leave a single one behind during that time. S/Sgt. Howe, "C" chief of gun section, was cited for his outstanding performance in handling his gun.

MONDAY, 11 December 1944.--S/Sgt. Charles C.

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Cerbone, erstwhile "A" supply sergeant, returned to the battalion today with one of the strangest adventures in the 243rd.

Cerbone accidentally shot himself in the leg on Sept. 7 during the Brest operations. Evacuated, his papers were marked for "UK" much to Cerbone's disgust since his leg was already half healed when he reached the coast. The ship medical commander told him before they left the beach that if any transportation had been available he would have sent him back to his outfit then. But Cerbone was out of luck, and a few days later he turned up in a general hospital near Hereford, and not far from Camp Stanage that had been home to us two months before.

Sweating out a very boring period there, he was finally shipped back to France on Dec. 1 through Le Havre to a replacement center 30 miles southeast of Paris. By Dec. 8 he was fed up with the waiting and began making inquiries of the Red Cross for the location of our battalion. They correctly informed him that we were near Thionville. According to the stalwart supply sergeant, he got permission from his commanding officer at the time to make his own way back to us but the CO told him that he must go through channels. Unfortunately Cerbone believed we were still in Ninth Army. He set out for its headquarters in the north, carrying full field equipment and side arms.

His first stop was Paris and the MP's picked him up there in five minutes. The MP lieutenant heard his story, tossed him some C rations and instructed him to "get going," with no impromptu furloughs on the way either. Judging by the

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distance covered and time consumed, Cerbone was true to these instructions.

On the Red Ball Highway he hitchhiked to Ninth Army Headquarters in Maastricht, Holland.

"I had no trouble getting rides," he said, "because everybody could see my field equipment and they knew I was heading east for the front."

Ninth Army was cordial, but informed him that we were on the Third Army front, and he would have to report to Third Army Headquarters in Verdun to reach us. Cerbone thought it out for himself and concluded this "going through channels" was too roundabout. He decided to strike out for Thionville and find us by himself. After spending the first night in Maastricht he hit the "Red Ball" again and wound up in Liege, Belgium, by evening--just in time for a buzz bomb attack on the town. The following night was spent with a Tank Destroyer outfit also on the road in Luxemburg. They gave him a day's rations and on the fourth day he reported to MP's in Thionville. At the APO he contacted the inevitable T/5 Heafner, battalion mail clerk, and reported to us on the morning of 11 Dec., three months and four days after leaving. His Odyssey had taken him 650 miles, through France, Holland, Belgium and Luxemburg.

He now holds the honor of having seen more of Europe during the war than any other man in the battalion.

TUESDAY, 12 December 1944.--German artillery in this area is the heaviest we have ever struck. They shelled an airstrip 1000 yards east of us the other night with 60 rounds of 170 mm. Then last night, Bouzonville, Third Corps Headquarters about 4 km. southeast of us,

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caught 25 rounds from a 380 mm gun, the largest weapon to strike on this front thus far. It did no damage other than demolishing a house and killing two civilians. A fragment of the huge projectile was five inches thick.

In return our artillery fire is heavier than we have ever seen it before, and the rumble of lighter pieces up ahead of us can be heard all night. We are now doing more firing at night than in the day. Usually three or four targets are assigned with some 30 or 40 rounds to be distributed on them during the night. This, unfortunately, harasses us as it does the Krauts since the harrowing explosions keep half the battalion awake, and the other half has to stay awake to produce them.

WEDNESDAY, 13 December 1944.--Our commission to inspect 8-inch gun battalions on other fronts left early this morning. It consisted of Maj. Burgoon, Capt. Smith, S/Sgt. Owaroff and driver Pfc Warren W. Chapman. They plan to be gone for two or three days.

1st Sgt. Haughs and his guard reported hearing shells going over during the night. They were headed for Bouzonville, and Third Corps Arty reported the town was hit by 280's for three hours, killing one GI. At Homecourt we considered that a big gun, but in the light of the previous night's shelling we deem it medium. Thus far, no shorts, which would hit us, have fallen.

THURSDAY, 14 December 1944.--S/Sgt. Bubar's dog was killed today by a vehicle. This was the same pet that caused the motor sgt. so much concern during the shelling two nights ago.

FRIDAY, 15 December 1944.--The 380 mm poured

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it to Bouzonville again last night and three rounds fell short, missing Service Battery by 150 yards. Mr. Radgett, OD, was struck in the head by a rock from one explosion while running out to inspect the guard. No noticeable difference in his behaviour was observed today, if that means anything.

Our roving ambassadors, Maj. Burgoon, Capt. Smith and S/Sgt. Owaroff, returned tonight from inspection tours of the First Army front where they visited the 153rd and 268th 8-inch gun battalions. Consensus of their opinion was that the 243rd was better off than any other super-heavy outfit they had seen, and they were "damn glad to be in it."

Spending the first night at Wallheim with a battery of the 153rd they learned that Col. Strickland's battalion had two batteries still manning their 8-inch guns while the third, with battalion headquarters and Headquarter Battery, was taking over 18 captured 105's with 10,000 rounds to shoot. They have had a half dozen casualties. An RO and pilot were killed when a friendly shell cut the wing off their plane, and a shell burst killed two and injured six enlisted men. This battery has been in the same position for three months, with no movement in sight yet. Doors and furnishings from German houses have been used to build shelters and board walks around the gun positions.

On the second day they had chow with Capt. Millman, our former commander of "C" Battery, now a battery commander in the 552nd (240 how.) bn.

Millman, who had been transferred to the 552nd shortly before we came overseas, said

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that his "greatest disappointment in the Army" was not coming overseas with the 243rd.

At Breining, Maj. Burgoon saw his brother, a mess sergeant in the 33rd Armored Regt. The young Burgoon satisfied a long standing question on comparison of American and German tanks. He said that US tanks are inferior to the Krauts in fire power. The German tank 75's and 88's are good weapons; accounted for 11 out of 17 tanks of his regiment in a recent engagement.

That evening they reached the 268th, our erstwhile neighbor in the 211 Gp. at Ft. Bragg, now in position at Luchheim with German 105's. Col. Blair announced as our group entered, "We just registered with 10 rounds." He has three firing batteries with six guns apiece and is attached to 9th Div Arty. They landed in France shortly after we did and their first mission was putting direct fire on the Isle of Cezembre off St. Malo, which we had left only a week before. This done, they moved across France to join the First Army, but the pace was too rapid for use as heavy artillery, and the unit spent two weeks in bivouac outside of Paris, along with the 153rd and 552rd, waiting for the war to slow down. It was their one advantage over us--they have seen Paris. Otherwise their luck has been much less than ours. They have had a number of casualties and conditions on the First Army front at the moment are much worse than to the south. They have lost two S-2's, one has gone crazy on an OP and another killed by a shell fragment outside a CP. A survey sergeant died of heart failure from exertion of



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climbing to an OP, and two men were killed by shell fire.

There are very few decent billets on the First Army front. Towns have been levelled, and hardly a roof has been left intact for shelter. During the night spent with Col. Blair's outfit, Capt. Smith lay awake, in his bedroll, listening to the shells coming in. There was no attempt to get shellreps, as is done so assiduously in this corps. As he and the S-2 beside him were discussing the caliber of the various missiles, the latter remarked that "there is no cellar in this building either," which indicates how unwise is the German civil population in the ways of war fought on home soil. Every respectable French home down here has a cellar of reinforced concrete for such national emergencies.

No technical information of any value was received from these northern outfits since it was apparent they had been ill-used. At one time the 153rd FA Bn was in position so far behind the lines that it could reach no farther into enemy territory than light artillery. They have had none of the enormous wire-laying problems that we had at St. Malo and Brest, and have rarely been forced to work on 24-hour shifts firing night and day as we are doing now.

Our first group of men left for the infantry today. This was a hard blow to the battalion to lose many of the men who had lived and worked with us for over two years, but an unforeseen calamity in casualty estimates for Third Army required the transfer.

This unrecognized foe of front line infantry --trench foot! Fully 50% of their casualties

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have fallen before this scourge, and consequently the replacement situation on this front has been critical. Artillery and rear echelon units have been ordered to transfer 5% of their strength to infantry divisions for replacement training, giving first place to volunteers and drafting the rest. The following men from our battalion left for Metz today for training with the 26th Div.

Hq Btry: S/Sgt. Dale Arrants, Mess Sgt; T/5 Edward Cox, Radio Oper; T/5 Robert Earll; Pfc George Hamblen and William L. Deschesne.

Btry "A": Pvts. Albert Bernard, Peter Caporiccio, Joseph Novak, Charles Perry, Dominic Russo and George Zimmer.

Btry "B": T/5 John Johnson, T/5 Louis Sanieski, Pfc Karl Sundstrom, Pvts. Tom Carey, Al Pierson and Rayford Vaughn.

Btry "C": Pfc Thomas Farrell, Pvts. Arthur Frechette, Ernest Haddock, Charles Henderson, Raymond Nason and Velman Rhodes.

Sergeant Chapman, late of the Air Section, has taken over as Hqs. Mess Sgt.

SATURDAY, 16 December 1944.--Heavy shells slammed into the hills three hundred yards above Service Battery last night, again testifying to the fact that because of their proximity to the hub city of Bouzonville they are in much greater danger than are firing batteries several kilometers closer to the front.

In making shellreps this morning, First Sgt. Hoffman, Pfc Walker and Pvt. Stevenson scored the prize find of the month in shell fragments. They picked up the solid steel nose cap of one

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projectile and a large wall fragment fully three inches thick and eight inches long. Corps Arty identified the projectile as 280 mm and believed it came from a railroad gun that had shelled them recently.

Another ominous order reached the battalion today when we were directed to submit names of 5% more men for the infantry. It was unofficially revealed that perhaps as many as 30% of our outfit might eventually have to go. Such a loss would seriously handicap the firing batteries, and the Colonel reluctantly decided that Hqs would have to stand the great part of these inroads. Hqs and Serv would then be divided among firing batteries along with staff officers. Capt. Harrison, Hqs BC, was particularly depressed over the approaching loss of so many men he esteemed not only for knowledge of their jobs but also for personal character. Meanwhile, lists of the next 5% were being prepared, and there were no volunteers.

SUNDAY, 17 December 1944.--The following men will be transferred from the battalion to the infantry Tuesday, reporting to the 95th Div training center in Thionville.

Hq Btry: Pfc Warren Chapman, Pvts. Stanley Emerson, Paul Grewell, Charles McGrail and John Mullaney.

Btry "A": Pvts. Arthur Dorris, Henry Majerowicz, Harold Mott, Rooco Zinni and Joseph Wrono.

Btry "B": T/5 Reginald Larkin, Pfc's Thomas Wheat and Herbert Winters, Pvts. Edmond Banas and Samuel Trifoso.

Btry "C": Pfc's Victor Carona, Zenas Letham,

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Robert Mansfield Lawrence Daigle and Frederick Mielke.

Serv Btry: T/5's Robert Bollinger, William Mason and Palmer Strensrud.

MONDAY, 18 December 1944.--News from the north reports a German counterattack in progress on the First Army front which Major Burgoon & Co. had just quitted.

Btry "C," which had so worn its guns that the rounds were rattling in the tubes as they went out, is getting two new tubes. The tubes have been reported in France for some time but Ordnance seems to have lost track of them. It must have been quite a headache to some ordnance officer to know that two such ponderous pieces of material were lost among the maze of depots in France. Lt. Whitehead, executive officer, is expecting them to find them any day now.

TUESDAY, 19 December 1944.--Shocking news, 48 hours late, from First Army reveals that the German counterattack is a major offensive and has broken through our lines between Monchau, Belgium, and Luxembourg. Striking with Panzer Divisions and Wehrmacht has not been stopped and the situation is extremely confused. Reports say the 106th Div has been cut off; enemy paratroopers in American uniforms and bearing American arms have dropped on V corps headquarters. The German drive has carried them 20 miles through our lines, and foggy weather has prevented our Air Forces from helping hard pressed U.S. troops.

Disposition of forces in our sector has changed radically. We are reverting to the defensive for the first time since this battalion

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has been in France. III Corps is being moved northward to help stem the tide, and we are wondering if "B" will go with them. Rumors are flying thick and fast and Coalbin reported that PW information revealed the Germans planned a parachute attack tonight. One white flare will mean, "Here I am," and red--"Call for Artillery fire." The guard has been doubled and all officers and men are sleeping fully clothed and armed.

Col. Rucks left today to visit "C" near Sarreguemines, and Maj. Banks is spending a week with "B" now in III Corps in the St. Avold vicinity.

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WEDNESDAY, 20 December 1944.--The expected counterattack did not come off, and the night was passed without incident. Reports began to fly thick and fast during the day, however, when we heard that "C" was out of action, having its new tubes installed, and that "B" had received orders to return to us. A little later Group informed Maj. Burgoon that one of our batteries would go north with III Corps, so now we don't know whether "B" or "C" is returning, or whether neither is or both are.

At 1500 Major Burgoon received orders for Hqs and "A" to reconnoiter for new positions to the rear. It was a bad sign but perfectly logical under the situation. First Army is cloaked with secrecy and news came down as rumor only. However, we understood that the German drive was still progressing rapidly and that most of the Third Army strength was being concentrated in Luxembourg to prevent the Boche from turning our northern flank. The proposed rear positions are in the Monneren-St. Marguerite area which we occupied nearly a month ago.

Col. Rucks returned from "C" this afternoon, and, learning of the confusion as to the future of "B" and "C," he immediately set out for XX Corps in Thionville to get the

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truth of the matter. His report, besides informing us that the long-orphaned "B" and "C" batteries were to return to the fold, also gave us the "big picture" of the proposed operations in XX Corps sector.

Because of the transfer of III Corps to the north our lines have been so extended that the 90th and 95th divisions are forced to relinquish their hard won bridge heads across the Saar and retire behind in the high ridges overlooking the river. The two divisions are now covering 30 miles of front from the Moselle to Merzig, southward to Saarbrücken. XII Corps also is being moved northward and Seventh Army is taking over the defenses south of Saarbrücken. Such a spread of two divisions has forced them to put their infantry in mobile reserve and keep a cavalry screen out front to report the first signs of German counterattack. Greatest danger is thought to be north of Merzig where the lines run across the Saar to the Moselle river.

In case of forced withdrawal before a new German offensive in this area, the plan is to drop back about 10 kilometers to the old Maginot line and make a stand. This makes the situation look particularly gloomy to us, since our positions in such an event would be almost back to the Moselle, at Flevy, where we once spent a few days.

In preparing positions for "C" at Neufgrange, a digging party commanded by Sgt. Mullen was chased under its trucks by time fire. As they met in this undignified position Pfc Sadowski was overheard to say to Cpl. Langdon: "Just go on about your business; I'm checking

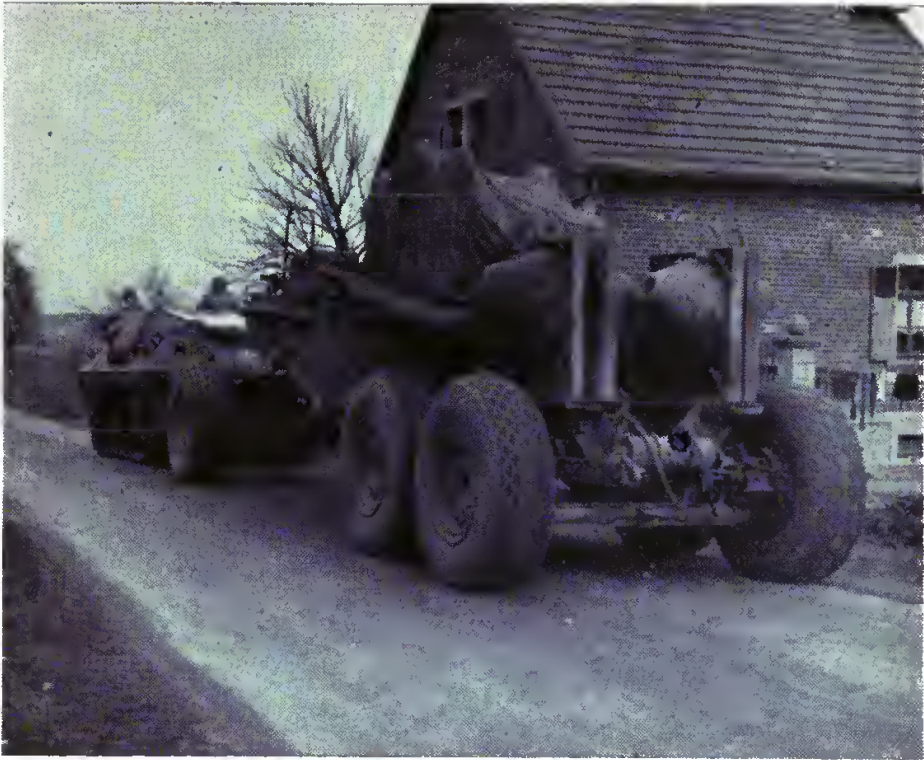
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the transmission." Pvt. Hoglund had the thrill of his life today in following a "C" signal crew out checking the line to Corps Arty. Hoglund, in his  $\frac{3}{4}$  ton truck, took the wrong road through Sarreguemines and found himself in a little town across the river. As he made a turn, a rifle cracked, then another, and a bullet smacked into his tire. Hoglund wheeled his truck around the first corner he came to and found himself stuck in a dead end alley. He then hastily retreated across the river and made his way back to his battery. Cpl. Whelan and crew organized themselves into commandos, armed with every weapon in the battery but the 8-inch gun itself, and set out to "recapture" their truck. On reaching the fateful street they deployed, slipped into the alley one by one. No opposition was encountered, although they found the tire had been punctured by several more gunshots. They changed the tire unmolested and drove the truck home.

XII Corps Arty S-4 called "C" Btry today to report that their second tube had arrived. The battery will withdraw from battle for a few days for refitting.

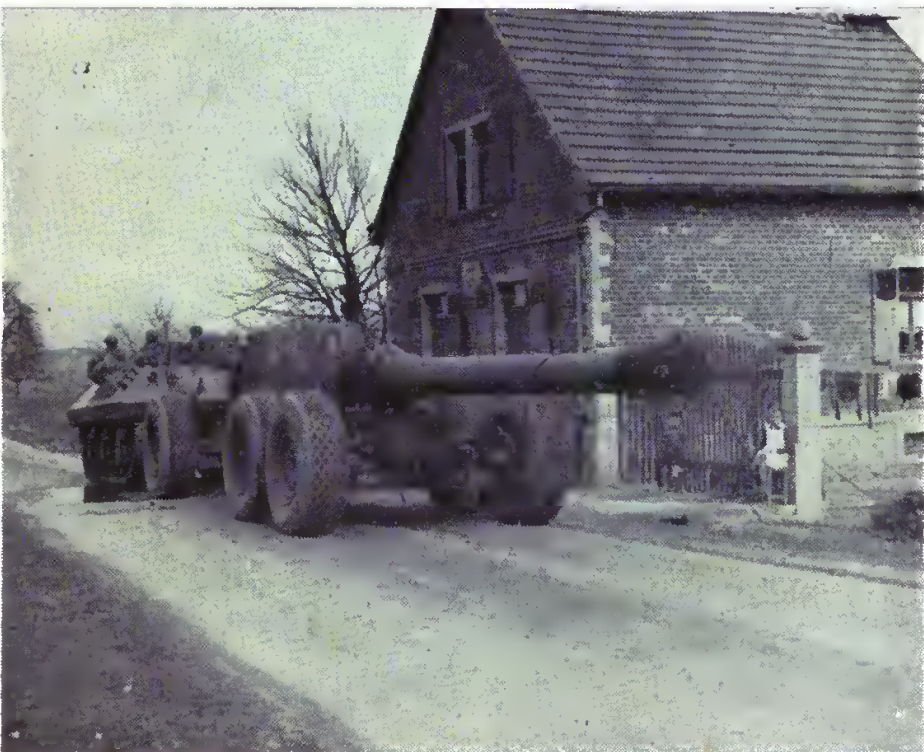
THURSDAY, 21 December 1944.--Today, along with most other units of the Corps, the 243rd made its first "strategic withdrawal." Hqs, Serv and "A" have taken up residence in Laumesfield, and "A" guns are in position along the railroad a kilometer south of us. Positions have been reconnoitered for "B" and "C," now on their way home, in our old areas of St. Marguerite and Monneren, respectively. News reached us today that Capt. Lee was in the hospital. He had hit his knee during blackout a few





Carriage moving up to the last battle position near Mainz. Taken at Hackenheim.

Tube a few minutes later.





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nights before and it became necessary to evacuate him for treatment. Pvt. Ashley, of "C," rather forcefully halted two dim figures in the dark last night. "You don't have to shout so loud," one of them reprimanded.

"I wanted to make damn sure you heard me," said Ashley grimly. It turned out that his quarry was a colonel from Corps Headquarters.

FRIDAY, 22 December 1944.--"B" and "C" batteries rolled in today, marking an important turn in battery history. The 243rd was reunited again after two and a half months of separation. Like matured offspring who have been off on their own in an indifferent world, the two batteries returned much more confident and competent than when they left. Survey, Fire Direction and Wire personnel particularly reflected this new independence since they had been running their own survey, shooting their own guns and establishing communications without help from a higher headquarters. Gun crews and motor had naturally improved with experience.

We had our first real snow early this morning, and the day dawned crystal clear. Yesterday, the first day of winter, meteorologically speaking, has provided a new deal in weather in this section of France. The temperature was below freezing all day, yet the sky has been cloudless for the first time since we left Brittany. This gave our air power its first chance to "work over" the Germans since they began their drive, but heavy air bombardment notwithstanding, the Germans are reported to be still advancing.

SATURDAY, 23 December 1944.--About 1600 this afternoon Cpl. Davis, gunner Corporal on "A's"

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second section, while standing outside the "A" CP, heard a peculiar noise from the north. Looking up, he saw a flaming plane sputtering a few hundred feet above the snow-clad hills and he knew instantly it was a buzz bomb. In fascination he watched it lazing through the air as did the assembled gun sections and several others who had come up from the cellar CP. The ack-ack on the bluff above them opened up on it, and suddenly the inscrutable machine cut out. There were a few seconds of swishing quiet, in which everybody hit the ground and Cpl. Davis tried to knock the men behind him back into the cellar. A terrific explosion shook them and the men later compared it to about the same effect as an 8-inch gun being fired. The robot struck about 200 yards beyond the battery, but since the guns are emplaced along a railroad draw with high bluffs on both sides, nobody was hurt. The AA people had a piece of steel rip through a tent, and the concussion broke windows in Laumesfeld, a half mile away. The thing made the biggest crater, however, that any of us had ever seen--thirty feet across and twenty feet deep. We believe it was a stray since no more have been seen.

Sunday, 24 December 1944.--Pvt. Bernat, Btry "A" cannoneer, was evacuated today after accidentally shooting himself in the leg with his carbine.

Living conditions in our present locations have become rather crowded. Headquarters Battery was informed three different times today that it would have to evacuate Laumesfeld to make room for 90th Div Hqs. Each time the order was countermanded. At day's end, Hqs was still

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firmly established, but at least one infantry company was combing the little village for more rooms to house its men. Capt. Wood has been carrying on a feud with Service Battery of the 344th FA Bn, now occupying half of his little town. He is currently winning the undeclared war, since one gun is emplaced so close to a building housing the Service unit that it is shaking the roof down about their heads.

Ex-Cpl. Kesler was reduced to private today for over-imbibement of Xmas "spirits" while on duty. When informed of the Colonel's remark that for such an act he could be court-martialed and sentenced to be "shot by musketry," the still foggy Kesler replied, "You can't kid me, I know that there's not a musket in the battalion!"

Today is Xmas Eve, and a white Xmas is in the offing. Snow is still on the ground, and the weather continues clear and cold. For two weeks Xmas packages have been pouring into the battalion, and the income has just about reached its peak. Some of the men are living on a near steady diet of candy and fruit cake, while many of us are picking up empty ammo boxes to hold the cheese, meat, pickles, cake and candy deluging us from home. It will be hard to return to the Army's austere fare in another month or so.

Aside from registrations our guns have been fairly quiet these few days. The German side of the river seems almost deserted and no activity has been observed from our OP recently established by Capt. McLean on a hill overlooking Merzig. We fired forty rounds from "C" into Merzig this morning. Moonlight now contrasts

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with the murky, wet darkness of a week ago, and the white snow makes it possible to observe any moving thing for several thousand yards. Still we receive warnings of impending attack with armor and paratroops, and the tension is felt by everyone.

BC's and survey sections went back to reconnoiter and survey our rear positions along the Moselle. We fervently pray that we never have to occupy them.

MONDAY, 25 December 1944.--Christmas dawned clear and cold. The battalion arose late (except for the cooks) and dined sumptuously on a breakfast which included at least one fresh egg per man. Dinner was even more magnificent, consisting of a mountain of turkey for everybody, with all the trimmings, including pumpkin pie. Coffee was served in the evening with doughnuts sent up from the rear by the Red Cross girls. They explained their own absence with this little statement:

Here's to the boys of the fighting F.A.,  
Out in the mud and the mire.  
When schedules were made for our "holiday"  
tours,  
To visit you was our desire.

But the Army says, "No, they're too busy up  
there  
Letting the Boches all have it."  
So we hope before long we can see you again,  
And by that time the Boche will have "had it."

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Meanwhile as a Christmas token of sorts  
Since we can't bring ourselves up there too,  
We send you doughnuts--the usual thing--  
But we've added best wishes for you.

Signed: The Clubmobile Girls  
of Corps Headquarters

Though most of the day was quiet, we had one unpleasant diversion at noon. Several P-47's with American markings began bombing and strafing American positions. Mixed in with them were two or three ME 109's, clearly German. Our ack-ack opened up, and two of them were reported to have been shot down. No damage was done by their bombing that we know of. However, all of our antiaircraft men were confused as to whether they could fire on US planes even though they were strafing our position. The order during the attack was, "Shoot at anything which attacks you." Later in the day it was changed to, "Permit fire only on planes with recognized German markings." Up until then we had all believed the P-47's were captured and used against us by Jerry. But we have since learned that the planes were actually American; they had mistaken the Moselle for the Saar and thought they were attacking German gun positions.

Finest Xmas present of the day was a radio report which said the Germans had been stopped in the offensive and the US north and south flanks were closing in. Everybody was visibly cheered by this news, and we now believe our chances of being attacked are considerably less.

Mass was held in the local chapel this morning with 174 soldiers attending. Pvt. John

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Burns, of Hq Btry, sang in the choir during the civilian mass.

Lt. Hillegas & Co. on our OP had two harassing rounds of light artillery fire hit close to them this morning. Fragments dropped around them, but no one was hit. Capt. Lee returned from the hospital today.

TUESDAY, 26 December 1944.--Air observer Beck and Pilots Lamoureaux and Brockmeyer were awarded the Air Medal today for the missions they have flown in observing artillery fire. They also described their unsuccessful attempts to bomb the Germans with mortar ammunition. With Lt. Beck carrying a mortar shell in his lap, Lt. Brockmeyer headed the plane for Merzig to see what they could do.

"Hurry up, Brock," said Beck from the rear seat, "I feel nervous carrying this thing." Flying low over Merzig, Beck pulled the pin and dropped their improvised bomb. It failed to go off. They tried another type but it fell end over end and hit on its side without exploding. The shells were captured Heinie projectiles, and Beck believes that some action of the propelling charge must arm them. "The Germans must not have liked us dropping 'em, however," said Beck. "We were fired upon several times with small arms."

The news was again bad this morning. Although the north and south prongs of the German thrust have been stopped at Malmedy and Bastogne, the center is still progressing and is now only 35 miles from the French border. The offensive is currently being called the Battle of Western Belgium, which also sounds ominous. G-2 bulletins from Army and Army Group headquarters have



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changed their tone from the confident predictions of two weeks ago that von Rundstedt could not mount another offensive in this war. They now say that the Nazis still have fifteen divisions in reserve, including Panzers, and may strike at another point along the front in case the present thrust is halted. The Germans now hold a long narrow bottle neck to the Murs river, with Ninth Army holding the north flank at Monschau and the Third Army holding the southern flank along the Luxembourg border. The most likely area for attack is the XX Corps front from Trier to Merzig. It is no wonder we are uneasy.

WEDNESDAY, 27 December 1944.--Our aid station has had comparatively light work during all our combat days so far. And we pray God it continues to. Currently, however, the Anastasia clinic is doing a brisk business at sick call, not for our own men, but for the numerous infantry quartered in town, and for civilians. So far the good doctor has had no serious operations--not even a baby to deliver--but it keeps his hands busy to administer to such a growing civilian practice.

THURSDAY, 28 December 1944.--T/4 Martin made the interesting discovery this afternoon that Capt. Harrison, the Comm O himself, was serving a trick on the battalion switchboard. Immediately the Captain was flooded with telephone calls, coming mostly from the numerous FDC phones and calling every other phone in Hqs. After battling heroically with the sudden surge of telephonic communication for some minutes, the Comm O discovered that all the calls were for him, and that the calling parties had been

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inquiring all over the battalion for him. He handled the tide efficiently, however, and everybody got his party--eventually.

Because of the greatly increased enemy air activity since Christmas, and the prospect of a lightning German offensive against us, Corps has devised a "flash warning" system to get first news of such dangers out to its units as fast as possible. The warning is received in conference call by our switchboard operator, who immediately puts it out to all batteries.

Members of the battalion witnessed a showing of world series film followed by a personal appearance of baseball greats--Frankie Frisch, Dutch Leonard and Bucky Walters.

"A" winterized their guns today. It was high time, since we have had freezing weather for the last week and the ground is now brick-hard. Mud is nonexistent now, and the roads are actually dusty. This good weather has permitted maximum allied air activity which is an important factor in stopping von Rundstedt's drive in the north.

In regard to the "flash warning" system of Corps, as a result a warning of some nature disturbs us every hour. There are Messerschmitts here and Focke-Wulfe's there, and parachutists are being dropped all over the place. But sometimes the warnings boomeranged. At 2200 came a warning from Corps that enemy in unknown number had infiltrated on our side of the river near Picard. We called our observer, Lt. Hillegas, who was spending the night with an infantry company, and asked him to get more information on it from the doughs. Shortly he reported back that the doughs were not surprised. They knew



German personnel trenches, anti-tank ditches and foxholes between Laumesfeld and the Saar River.



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the Krauts had built a footbridge across the river in that vicinity. When this was reported to Corps the lid blew off and they wanted to know more about it. Another call was put in to Hillegas for more information. As we called Corps with greater details supplied by the "A" RO we discovered they were calling us.

"You know that report about the Germans crossing the river?" asked the Corps S-2 operator.

"Yes," we answered.

"Well," said the operator, "it was entirely erroneous, forget it."

"Okay," we said. "You know that report about the Germans having a footbridge across the river?"

"Yes," he answered anxiously.

"Well, you can forget that too. It was blown out by artillery this morning." With many thanks and profuse apologies we rang off. The whole corps slept easier that night.

FRIDAY, 29 December 1944.--Lt. Helfrich, now "B" RO, reported from our OP this morning that there were no signs of enemy activity. He did mention a good bit of small arms fire in his vicinity, however. In an area where the line is held only by small outposts along the Saar and where so many heavy woods in the folds of hills provide good concealment for Boche marauding patrols, this was cause for worry. Before long, however, Helfrich & party, which included Sgt. Morgan, driver Shaw and wireman Kinkey, were vastly relieved when they discovered the real reason for the desultory shooting near by. Walking across the hilltop behind them, in plain view of God, the enemy and all

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the game wardens in creation, were four dough-boys hauling on their shoulders the carcasses of three deer they had just shot. The hunting is still continuing, Helfrich reported, and there seems to be no worry over game laws.

Maj. Tucker, Group S-2, stopped by the CP today with late information (36 hours late) on the fighting in First Army. Apparently Von Rundstedt's troops have gone over to the defensive four miles short of the Meuse River. Tanks are dug in along this line near Celles, Belgium, and U.S. G-2's believe the Panzers have run out of gas. The Third Army is still inching forward on the German salient's southern flank, and already has relieved the garrison cut off in Bastogne. Ninth Army holds firm on the northern flank, and it now remains to be seen whether Americans can cut off the German thrust, or whether von Rundstedt still has strength enough to launch a new offensive.

Pfc Kazek of "A" complains today that life in our position is almost as bad as the front lines, what with so many infantrymen training near by. He discovered two holes in his tent this morning, and they weren't made by moths. A rifle range across the tracks is suspected.

SUNDAY, 30 December 1944.--Headquarters Battery, filled with the Christmas spirit, is playing "Good Samaritan" to the stranded townspeople of Laumesfeld. Because they are not allowed to leave town on their own, our drivers occasionally take one of the villagers to Waldweisdorf to purchase bread and rations for resale to the town. Some of the magnanimous ventures of our men may be attributed to the personality of the

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purchasing agent, one Celestine, a young lady with a pretty smile.

SUNDAY, 31 December 1944.--Capt. McLean got an emergency call from "B" at 1900 tonight. Capt. Wood's men had trapped a German agent. They had suspected the presence of the agent for two nights running, after their guards had spotted light flashes behind a house in St. Marguerite, each night at the time an airplane was flying overhead. The hour of this occurrence was 1900, so tonight Capt. Wood had his guards posted in strategic places about the suspected house. The ack-ack people on a nearby hill first noted light flashes about 1800 and called the C.P. Sgt. Eccleston was on the scene at once. He caught a 19-year-old youth carrying an improvised light in the shadows of an outhouse. He had come outside to look for his dog, so he said. Even as they nabbed the character, an unidentified plane could be heard overhead.

Capt. McLean, with Cpl. Harvey as guard, took the blond youth, who spoke French and German fluently, to the MP's and witnessed a very persuasive system of questioning. When the agent treated the whole affair as a joke, answering languidly, an MP first smacked him alongside the jaw. The interrogator wore kid gloves and when a reply was not forthcoming quickly and respectfully, he slapped the suspect hard across the face. What information the youth gave was not revealed to his captors.

Fire direction reports a very perturbing problem has arisen in the battalion. We are now below our basic in ammunition and there is no more to be had in the Third Army. Evidently

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all possible supplies are diverted to the heavy fighting in First Army. General Slack, Corps Arty commander, gave orders not to fire on any target if somebody else could reach it. In searching for more ammunition, the only unclaimed 8-inch projectiles to be found were several deemed unserviceable in the ammo dump. They were frozen hard in the mud. Sgt. Ead, ammo sgt. from "A," Tec. 5 Hagan and Pvt. Deering, knowing that "beggars cannot be choosers," pried the rounds out of the ground and are now cleaning them for flight into Germany.

"A" had showers today at Halstroff, and about 75 erstwhile "maudlins" suddenly found themselves looking--and smelling--like their normal selves again. It was time for rejoicing.

MONDAY, 1 January 1945.--The New Year eased in uncharacteristically today. There was hardly a reeling drunk in the battalion and no sound emanated from the front. At midnight the village chapel bell tolled joyously. The night was bright and clear, the snow reflected the glitter of a full moon and the temperature was well under freezing. Here and there guards on post greeted the New Year with quiet salutations to each other. Inside our warm billets, those who had them passed their bottles around, toasting the advent of 1945. We don't believe that any other year, in the history of our lives, has been hailed with such hope and optimism. We are certain the war will end this year, perhaps in its early months; and secretly, each one of us feels an instinctive confidence that we will be safely home before the year is out.

Jerry gave us special New Year's felicitations this sparkling morning, just as he had



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done on Christmas. ME 109's and JU 88's were in the skies and two swept over every battery in the battalion at rooftop level. All gunners in Laumesfeld claim hits on one of the planes, for when it was last seen it was speeding over the woods to the north trailing smoke. In addition to this plane four planes were shot down in our vicinity by ack-ack units. One ME 109, which fell close to Group, was inspected by Sgt. Levitan, who reported that a single .50 cal. bullet through the magneto had downed the ship.

Though Capt. Wright is not putting in a claim on his own account, he privately believes that he might have contributed materially to the streaming smoke. As the plane came over he emptied his .45 at it--and it only takes one in the gas tank, y' know.

Hqs. machine gunners had hardly opened up on the strafing Jerry planes when Supply Sgt. McCauley was at their elbow, asking:

"How many rounds, how many round ya fire?"

Machine gunner Goldsmith of "A" was undressed when the attack started. Devoted to duty, he reached his gun in time to contribute fire to the rising crescendo, even though he stood barefooted in the snow.

Maj. Tucker of Coalbin stopped by today, confounding us with his innocent query over the whereabouts of Capt. McLean. "He leaves for Group every day," said the Colonel. "If he doesn't go there, I don't know where he goes."

"I haven't seen him for days," replied the Group S-2; "I think you've sent him off on a special mission you don't want us to know about."

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The mystery was solved at noon, however, when the enterprising captain came in with a deer. Days of fruitless searching and wasted hours were rewarded. Tactfully, no complaints were registered over those slight aberrations from duty. That venison looked too good, curing there in the barn.

Tec. 5 Bruce Heafner of Hqs today received the Certificate of Merit from Gen. Slack for his excellent work as battalion postmaster. The award was heartily approved by all members of the battalion for one of the most thankless and most abused jobs in the Army.

TUESDAY, 2 January 1945.--When the strafing Messerschmitts ripped through our skies yesterday, one of our group planes, a 270th ship, was in the air. It was not heard from again after the ME's passed. Today Lt. Lamoureux and Lt. Beck, searching in our plane, found the missing craft near a little village on the Saar River. Lts. Brockmeyer and Whitehead later flew low over the scene and observed an unrecognizable heap of twisted wreckage with the observers' legs protruding from it. Pilot and passenger in the plane are presumed lost.

Sgt. Bubar, "A" motor sergeant, was awarded the Certificate of Merit.

The ingenious Sgt. Beyer, Service Battery's ace inventor, has devised a forge for heating and softening iron. Using an air compressor on a coal burning forge, it develops intense heat and is excellent for working with iron.

WEDNESDAY, 3 January 1945.--Capt. Smith moved through the litter and confusion of fire direction center this morning looking for a bottle opener. In his hand was a strange, unfamiliar

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bottle containing a mysterious dark liquid. Some of us had faint stirrings of memory, but none could say exactly what it was. Having opened it at last, he stood in front of the fire copiously quaffing the sparkling liquid. In the silence of the room, hissed a sibilant whisper: "He's got a real, honest-to-God coca cola!"

It was a part of a case being sent to him by mail, one bottle at a time.

Among his other accomplishments, the Epicurean Ass't S-3 is known to have amassed the largest larder of delectable foods we have seen since the sub-pens at Brest. Spilling out of Christmas boxes, piled high in heaps around his bunk, lining the window sill and bulging from his pockets, are all shapes, sizes and varieties of spam, cheese, creamed honey, jams, jellies, cookies, crackers, candies, balonies, nuts, cakes, dates and chocolate bars.

Pvt. Mielke of "C" was a much relieved soldier today, while Col. Rucks was slightly peeved. The CO was replying by endorsement to the Corps CO because of the aforesaid private. Mielke, one of Capt. Lee's delegates to the infantry three weeks ago, had bounced. He was deemed physically unfit by the 95th Div because of flat feet, and the Colonel must now explain that Mielke had passed physical examinations at Bragg and Shanks before coming overseas, and nobody, not even his battery commander, knew of his unfortunate condition. Mielke, however, doesn't think the condition so unfortunate--he is on his way back to us.

In picking his alternate gun positions today, Capt. Wood and some of his men stumbled onto

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the Maginot Line. The first bastions of these underground forts crop out of the wooded hills behind "B" position. Down through tomb like stillness, the Captain and his men descended 200 feet into the ground, where they came to the famed underground railway. Though they did not follow the line, it is presumed the tunnels connect all the bunkers and pillboxes along the line and undoubtedly extend to the echelons of defenses back to the Moselle.

The bunker through which they descended, a typical one, is a two-story fort built into the hillside. One level contains three-inch guns, apparently loaded and fired electrically, although they have been jammed and rendered useless by the Germans. The guns form an interlocking plane of fire with a similar fortification across the Veckring road on the next hill. Living quarters, ammo lofts, and machinery fill the second level and a now useless elevator system connects these ground levels with the railroad in its bowels.

Later Sgt. Dumais, Sgt. Strnad, Cpl. Jones and Sierakowski returned to the forts and retrieved several chain hoists to supplement the motor sections' towing and lifting equipment.

For two weeks we have been sharing our little village with a company of infantry from the 90th Div, waiting their turn into the line. Many of our men formed fast friendships among the doughs, and most gained further insight into the grim life of the front line troops.

The infantry pulled out today, and in doing so, broke up one of the hottest little night clubs on the western front. It was known as Capt Wright's Nite Club, in honor of Service's

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B.C., and it nightly featured good music, harmonious singing and an occasional dance routine. Featured performers were a host of infantrymen and several Service Btry artists. The gathering started one evening as Capt. Wright's boys were entertaining themselves on their own instruments, and soon discovered an avid and appreciative audience of doughs amongst them. These GI's brought along their own performers and the combination produced a snappy show every night.

For Service Btry, Pfc Walker plucked the guitar, Sgt. Utz strummed his mandolin and Tec. 4 Suefert played a violin he had "captured" in the Citadel at St. Malo. Sgt. Marymee contributed rhythm with his spoons, retrieved from an old German supply dump. The infantry donated a clarinet to the ensemble, but the "sugar-stick" has not been put into action yet, as it is lacking a reed. Artists from the infantry included an accordionist, a tap dancer and numerous singers for the choral group.

THURSDAY, 4 January 1945.--Of all the battalions's comparatively simple work these days, the most tedious job is the OP tour. "A" and "B" are currently swapping off observers, every other day. Generally, Lts. Hillegas, Helfrich and Peterson are the lucky appointees. The OP is nothing more than a few holes hidden in a thin line of leafless bushes on an exposed hilltop. To reach it, you bounce your jeep for an eternity across the frozen slopes in plain view of the enemy. For some inscrutable reason the Krauts never shoot at them. Even the OP, which must be known to our "friends" across the

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river by now, never draws shell fire, except for an occasional stray.

All day the observing party and a wire crew sit in the snow, watching the deserted, tomb-quiet hillsides across the Saar.

Merzig is a ghost city, and seldom is there a sign of life visible, much less a profitable artillery target. One day Lt. Helfrich discovered several men grouped around a small cart in a Merzig street. He was given Highchief (4.5) guns to fire on them, but at his observing range, he was never able to pick up the bursts. The men disappeared into a near-by building after the first shot, and shortly afterwards light snow dropped a curtain over the target. Even this short diversion had petered out, and Helfrich and his men settled again into the boring business of looking--at nothing.

FRIDAY, 5 January 1945.--The happiest man in "A" today was Pvt. Clarence H. Doering, a replacement who joined the battery in October. He had just been awarded a furlough guaranteeing him 21 days at home. The lucky cannoneer, late of the Fifth Div., has been overseas for 40 months and has not seen his family since 1941. Men of "A" collected \$175 as a farewell gift for the returning soldier. It is estimated that it will require three months to get him home for furlough and back to us. By then, the war may be over, we hope. (Ed. note--The war was over when Doering returned in May.)

"B" had more trouble with suspicious characters last night. Pvt. Grigg, on guard near number one section, saw mysterious figures approaching him in the dark. He became extremely apprehensive when he challenged and a voice an-

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swered in broken English. He felt more uncomfortable when he discovered a group of 28 men headed by an officer and all dressed in queer uniforms. In a flash the whole first section was turned out while the men were covered with a machine gun. Sgt. of the Guard Wilcox and 1st Sgt. Eccleston proceeded to the scene on the run.

The officer in charge of the mysterious group protested that they were a French patrol, part of the chasseurs attached to XX Corps.

"Take their guns," commanded Sgt. Eccleston.

"No, no, French soldiers," said the officer. The men were disarmed. "No, no, French officer," said their leader again as the sergeant relieved him of his .45.

While his men waited outside, the French lieutenant was examined in the CP by Capt. Wood. After scanning the official pass from XX Corps signed by Gen. Walker, Capt. Wood was ready to release them, when the officer asked to be given the password. A call was put through to Coffee (XX Corps Arty) S-2, who asked a few questions and finally ordered the men released.

So "B" did not boost its lead in German captured that night.

TUESDAY, 9 January 1945.--Cpl. Cave, Battalion Agent, now residing with Group at Waldwiesestrof, reports that he assisted in the delivery of a calf last night. With the help of three others, and the indifferent cooperation of the mother, Cave and the farmer finally pulled the little animal into the world by brute strength. Mother and son are doing well, says Cave.

FRIDAY, 12 January 1945.--Pfc Tom Lee, Service's rotund sentinel, stands guard at the

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East entrance of our village. It is his job to stop strange vehicles and ask for the password. Today, the slow-speaking Lee halted a peep while smoking a cigarette.

"I didn't see any marks on his car, but when I looked up at his helmet, I saw two great big stars on it," said Lee, in a typical "sad-sackian" manner. The general proceeded to verbally stomp on the private's flinching frame. He was reminded very emphatically that one does not smoke on guard. Amen.

SATURDAY, 13 January 1945.--Today was one of those unfortunate days which have occurred too often of late, inflaming the antagonism between ground forces and air forces. Back in the States, we used to gripe at the Air Corps boys because they wore sloppy hats and were insufferably conceited. Now we have another "petty grievance" against them. They can't read maps. And because they can't read maps--or something--they strafe and bomb us with a gusto and inaccuracy that is alarming.

This afternoon there were a dozen P-47's in the sky, when suddenly they broke formation, and in the next instant pairs of them were strafing and bombing around us. They laid eggs in the vicinity of "B"; they fired, woefully wild, at our AA and machine gunners in Hqs area, and all around us we could see them bombing and strafing in other areas. Poor old Codger (270th FA Bn) got shot up worst of all, just as they suffered on Christmas when the P-47's laced in to them. The attacks resulted in the killing of two doughboys in Halstroff.

Capt. Henderson was returning from a reconnaissance to the rear when he heard the howling



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crescendo of a diving plane behind him and suddenly--

"I looked to my right and there was dirt dancing all along the road and looked to the left, and saw the same thing," he said later, laughing heartily, "so I yelled--'Head for the ditch, Repasky, they're shooting at us.' As I dived for the ground my helmet flew off, and I started to crawl for it when the sonovabitch came over again....Looking back I could see one struggling mass of humanity as Lt. Elsted, Sgt. Vadas and Cpl. Larrabee tried to climb out of the car all at once."

When the planes had passed, Cpl. Johnson, "C" Btry routemarker, could be heard to moan from a near-by ditch: "Please, somebody call a medic, I've been hit." When the "A" Btry party got to him, he pointed to his leg. Sgt. Vadas started to cut his pants away, when he noted that there was no blood on them--a strange phenomenon for a wounded man. As it turned out the soldier had been hit by a piece of ice flung up by a .50 cal. bullet. It was some time before he was convinced that he was not shot.

The appalling thing about these attacks is their inaccuracy. If our Air Force can't hit the enemy any more than they do us during one of these hit and run missions, then their claims in the press must be drastically exaggerated.

It is especially trying for our gunners who have had so many orders and counterorders directing their actions during attack by friendly aircraft, that they don't know whether to shoot or not. However, it is hard to hold your fire

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when some trigger-happy kid at the controls of those big ships is shooting at you.

A classic story derives from an attack by our P-47's on American ack-ack back at Sierck in November. One of the planes was shot down, and the pilot bailed out across the Moselle, which he had evidently mistaken for the Saar.

"Hell, but that's hot over there--why don't some of our artillery take care of those ack-ack guns?" he queried innocently when picked up. We hope he was properly mortified when he learned the truth.

SUNDAY, 14 January 1945.--The situation on our front is very tense these days. All latest G-2 information points to a major German offensive in this area within the next 48 hours. There are reports from various sources of four or five Panzer divisions concentrated across the river from Saarlautern. Unusual vehicular activity has been noted all up and down the Corps front. Something is in the wind, and it is believed the enemy will strike with full armored attack a few miles south of Saarlautern at the juncture of the Third and Seventh armies. At least three armored divisions of ours are poised in rear areas for a counterattack. The plan is to let the Germans come through with the 95th Div folding back along the Nied. When the Germans get well across the Saar, and out of their Siegfried Line defenses, then our armor will hit them, and (according to confident predictions of G-2's) deal them one of the worse defeats of the war. The Corps Commander is allegedly hoping the Jerries will attack, to give his armor a chance at them. As for us, we don't care what they do as long as they don't hit our

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front, the sector opposite Merzig, which is thinly held by cavalry troops.

Though we are close to the old German border, the girls hereabouts are still definitely French. Marie and Celestine are the two latest sweethearts of Headquarters Battery. They live in the house which contains our CP and they are most obliging in taking care of the men's washing and mending. They will even cook up a cake for us once in a while, using "D" bars for the chocolate icing. Typical French playfulness is elementary with them. Celestine, after doing a little washing for a GI one day, rendered extra service by sewing up the pockets in his shirt and the buttonholes in his shorts. Our men conferred, then counterattacked by filling the girls' bed with wood. Their attack was absorbed and returned with vigor the following night when our men discovered their beds well larded with salt. The war is still continuing, in the words of one member of the CP personnel.

"The girls have caused quite a commotion around headquarters and receive as much attention as if they were movie stars." They are ably accompanied to all the movies and the amount of English they have picked up is amazing.

"C" was ordered to XII Corps again yesterday and directed to move to Bech, Luxembourg, which was more easily said than done. Because of ice and snow on the roads, the tanks spun their tracks like buzzsaws, but could not budge the ponderous guns an inch. A T-2 from "B" with grousers was borrowed and this succeeded in moving the heavily laden wagons up the icy grades. Taking the "B" tank along, they had to shuttle the tubes and carriages, one by one at

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each slippery stretch they came to. It took all afternoon to reach the Luxembourg road along the Moselle.

Most of the march was made in blackout, and Lt. Whitehead reports that they descended one hill which he would have never dared could he have stopped. Moving in blackout, he had crossed the summit and started down before he realized the sharp decline of the grade. Braking the lead vehicle to a halt was useless because as the heavier loads descended, it was impossible to stop them. As the Exec described it: "We sweated it out all the way down, including the hairpin curve about halfway down. The drivers did a wonderful job of guiding the tons and tons of valuable equipment to the bottom."

"C" finally closed into Bech about 4:00 a.m. and occupied position immediately, the last gun in reporting ready to fire at noon. The battery is in general support, firing on the hinge of the German salient at Trier, and they began firing harassing missions soon after occupying position. Luxembourg city is only 12 miles away and one of their missions was firing four rounds into German held Trier every time the Krauts dropped a round in Luxembourg.

MONDAY, 15 January 1945.--Two men of "C" were badly burned during the night, when their bed-rolls were accidentally set afire. Pvt. Gazzo and Pfc McAuliffe were asleep when a powder bag, unnoticed in the corner of their hut, caught afire from the heat of a near-by stove. The intense heat and flame ignited their bed-rolls at the foot. Sgt. DeRosa got the men out, but not before they had been severely burned. Both were evacuated.

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. Unidentified rounds of heavy caliber dropped near the "C" Btry position. Apropos relative to his job as delivery and supply mento, Capt. Wright assisted in the delivery of a calf last night. Mess Sergeant Hofmeister was second midwife, while a French farmer performed the obstetrics.

TUESDAY, 16 January 1945.--Lt. Hillegas and S/Sgt Pacheco were awarded Bronze Stars today to go with their Purple Hearts. T/5 Larrabee also received the Bronze Star. All medals were awarded for the Thionville operations. Capt. McLean has received an Oak Leaf cluster to his Bronze Star, for the same campaign.

THURSDAY, 18 January 1945.--Our first contingent of Paris leaves left this morning at 4:00 a.m. for the "Cultural Capital" of the world. Four officers and 15 enlisted men are making the trip, which allows them 72 hours in Paris.

SATURDAY, 20 January 1945.--Lt. Hillegas, of "A," is now our liaison officer to the 241st FA, a 105 how. outfit supporting the 94th Div. Lts. Argo, Helfrich and Caley today received their silver bars.

MONDAY, 22 January 1945.--"A" has moved to Remeling, a little town about 3 miles to the north. They are supporting the 94th's push northward along the Moselle. The remainder of the battalion expects to move also if the doughs continue to push ahead. In their new location, Tec. 5 McMillan found his brother, a doughboy with the 94th Div.

Sgt. Ead, "A" ammo chief, is sweating out the loss of ten rounds of ammunition on hand. It is a bookkeeping error, he hopes, adding that

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the rounds certainly did not fall off a truck somewhere--or did they?

2nd Lt. James F. Conway joined the battalion today and was assigned to Hqs, in lieu of the absent Lt. Semenock, whose detached status is rapidly becoming permanent.

SATURDAY, 27 January 1945.--Sgt. Cerbone, of "A," was evacuated today because of trouble resulting from his leg injury suffered at Brest.

Gun Section #27 of "A" fired their 1000th round today. Pop Malone, the popular jack-of-all-trades, who fired the first round at St. Malo, pulled the lanyard on the 1000th round.

THURSDAY, 1 February 1945.--The battalion moved about five miles northward to Remeling, a slightly larger, though partly destroyed, village than our erstwhile Laumesfeld home. CP and FDC have been located in the rectory and the kitchen holds spacious quarters in the local Gasthaus (bar). "A" is located in the east end of town with the guns emplaced in the backyards of the village houses, and "B" is similarly set up in the hamlet of Obernaunumen, 2 miles west of us. Happily, all personnel have dry rooms and stoves--even the cannoneers.

Today was a full day for all hands. Besides the work of emplacing the guns, laying wire, surveying, setting up new homes, etc., special service ran off two showings of Abbot and Costello's latest pix--"Lost in a Harem"--which managed to draw good crowds, and the Clubmobile girls made one of their rare visits with doughnuts, coffee and the secretly gratifying chatter of real American girls.

A south wind brought rain and thaw over the last two days, washing away the two-foot snows

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built up during January. This is creating some consternation among OP crews who have had their vehicles painted bright white, and have just been issued their new snow suits. We can shed the snow suits, but the paint job on the vehicles leaves us in a quandary. If we leave it on, the trucks stand out like white flags on a hilltop, and this insulting conspicuousness may force the Boche into shooting at us, if only to prove that they are still in the war. So far our OP has not heard the whine of a shell since Christmas Day, when Lt. Hillegas heard shrapnel singing overhead from a near-by random burst. How the Germans could miss our two stoves, our table, our white maps blowing in the breeze, the mass of footprints and the ever constant stream of observers marching from vehicle to dugout across an exposed hilltop, I do not know. Perhaps the PW was right who said the Germans are short of ammo, being allowed only 6 to 8 rounds per gun per day, and even though the Boche have us spotted, they won't waste powder on us. If this is the case, let us praise the Lord and hope no one passes the ammunition.

First Sergeant Eccleston of "B" accidentally shot himself in the foot with his .45 tonight. He was getting ready to go on pass in the morning to the Metz Rest Center and was going to clean his pistol. He has been evacuated.

FRIDAY, 2 February 1945.--The battalion is now experimenting with a type of projectile new and unique in field artillery annals. It is a tracer shell, used extensively, we suppose, in naval gunnery, but certainly not exactly the most reassuring type of fire for us, when you consider that a German OP may spot the fiery

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round coming up from behind a hill and thus locate our position.

This naval projectile, especially adapted for our gun, was first fired by "C" at Trier several nights ago. The gun sections reported it looked like a ball of fire going out. But PW's captured during the next few days said it had caused quite a scare among the people in the vicinity of its trajectory, who thought it a German buzz-bomb gone astray.

"A" fired several this afternoon, and the tracer could not be seen at all in daylight. Major Banks, S-3, has ordered that the small incendiary plug in the base of the projectile be removed for all night firing, so that the Boche will have no chance of locating us by the azimuth of flight. "But I'm not so sure we should remove the tracer element," he said on hearing of "C's" success. "If it's going to scare the Germans that much, it might be worth the risk to keep them guessing."

"C," who is in XII Corps and not under our control, has been ordered to cease and desist from shooting these fire balls at night. It not only worries the Germans, but Corps Artillery too.

SATURDAY, 3 February 1945.--News, in the form of letters and rumors of our erstwhile battery-mates transferred to the infantry, has seeped back irregularly.

Tec. 5 Sanieski, late of Battery "B," was the first member of this battalion to be killed in action. The young, likeable corporal lost his life in mid-January while serving with the 26th Division in Luxembourg. Several other "B" men had bad luck. Pvt. Pierson is now in a



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hospital in Briquebec on the coast, having been hit in the back by grenade fragments while on outpost duty. He was also in the 25th Div. Pvt. Carey, serving as a runner with the same division, was wounded on Jan. 13, and Tec. 5 Johnson, of the 9th Armored Inf. was in the hospital with a leg injury.

From Hqs Btry, it was learned that ex-mess sergeant Arrants had been hit while operating as a BAR man with the 26th Div. He is now in a hospital and expects to get back into action soon. Tec. 5 Cox is in a hospital in England with an old injury, and Tec. 5 Earll is laid up with trench foot. Pvt. Mullaney is with a battlefield salvage unit of the 95th and Pvts. Chapman and McGrail are also with the 95th Div.

From "A" it was learned that ex-cannoneer Pvt. Caporiccio, in a few short weeks with the infantry, has earned the Bronze Star and the Purple Heart. Former "A" wireman Majerowicz is now in a wire section of the infantry battalion and Pvt. Perry Russo and Novak are with the 95th Div.

TUESDAY, 6 February 1945.--Our recently adopted home, Remeling, is now increased in population by one. The newcomer is named John J. Anastasia Remi, after our worthy medical officer, Capt. Anastasia. It was the doctor's first delivery in France and though he mentioned it noncommittally at breakfast, it was obvious to one and all that he was satisfied with a job well done.

On further questioning it develops that this delivery had complications that required diplomatic skill as well as medical talents, and the Captain displayed both. He was called to the

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Remi house at 3:00 a.m. where the madame informed him worriedly that her daughter--26, unmarried--was suffering pains in her stomach and asked him if he would look at her. The doctor is known for his benevolence among the natives and so he examined the girl, discovering the incontrovertible symptoms of pregnancy--a pregnancy, in fact, which was almost concluded--but the unfortunate mother denied the condition and the grandmother seconded her. After earnest argument and gentle persuasion the redoubtable doctor finally convinced them both, and stayed with the girl until the baby was born at 7:30 a.m.

Who is the father? Well, we are not in a position to say, but Capt. Anastasia swears that the little fellow emerged into this world with arm upraised in the Nazi salute.

Cpl. Ponton, Tec. 5 Kenniston, Pfc. Ashley and Pfc. Koberlein, all of Btry "C," improvised a pumping system for washing vehicles. Using the village's abandoned fire hose cart, a small pump-carrying vehicle for fighting fires, they pumped their water up from a flooded cellar and produced a powerful stream to clean the mud off the trucks. A Signal Corps photographer was impressed and snapped their picture.

A throwback to old training days in the States reached us today--Orientation Films. The compulsory movie dealt with the theme, "Your Job in Germany," or the conduct of occupation troops. After a straight shot of this hypodermic, hating the Germans becomes a much simpler matter, and the reasons for non-fraternization much clearer.

Cpl. Krewsky, "A," met his brother today for

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the first time in three years. The other Krewsky is in the 704th TD's, now operating in XX Corps.

WEDNESDAY, 7 February 1945.--Capt. McLean left the battalion for an evacuation hospital. He has been suffering with a bad case of the nerves for some time and Capt. Anastasia has recommended that he be evacuated for observation. The fate of our erstwhile S-2 is watched with extreme interest. It is an even bet that he will be going home. Lt. Mahoney has taken over the Captain's job, while Lt. Semenock is assistant S-2.

FRIDAY, 9 February 1945.--Cpl. Paul's crew brought in a report tonight of a mysterious light near one of the wire routes. They were out repairing a line when they noticed the light moving through a near-by woods as if someone were searching the ground with a flashlight. As the Corporal and Sgt. Kandetsky approached, the light went out, and there was no answer to their challenge in the darkness. Cpl. Paul put out a couple of rounds in the direction that the light was seen, but no groan or thud of a falling body responded to his fire. Since our wire had been cut in this vicinity, a German agent is suspected and a patrol will comb the woods tomorrow. We heard that Capt. McLean was aboard a plane on his way for either Paris or the UK. "C" now has a pig, which is more an institution than a pet. The men feed him well, and lick their lips as they await the day when he will be big enough to butcher.

SATURDAY, 10 February 1945.--The patrol, 20 men, went out as projected. In a driving rain they combed the woods and found--nothing--but lost one man. At four o'clock Pvt. Drew of "A"

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stalked wearily into the battery, after having successfully eluded the patrol sent out to find him.

MONDAY, 12 February 1945.--T/5 Kelly, radio operator, was the happiest man in the battalion today--and one of the luckiest in the ETO. At this writing he is on his way across France to catch the boat for home. The fortunate corporal has been awarded a 30-day furlough in the States as the most decorated man (Bronze Star Medal with one oak-leaf cluster) in the battalion.

S/Sgt. McCauley, Hqs supply sgt, received the Bronze Star Medal for his remarkable work in keeping the battalion supplied with wire during the Brest campaign. At that time the battalion had almost a hundred miles of wire on the ground during the period when it was a critical item.

TUESDAY, 13 February 1945.--Our firing in the last three nights has picked up considerably. We have expended 50 rounds a night harassing distant German towns to the north. Before, these missions had been few. Capt. Harrison fired one mission into Haustadt from the plane, setting large fires and doing considerable damage to the town.

"C" in XII Corps, however, has been firing a prodigious rate compared to us. They have easily equalled the output of the other batteries, mostly in unobserved missions on German towns.

A bright spot for us in this dull routine of war is the new rest camp set up in Metz for Corps Artillery troops. Every week we send a contingent of 24 men and one officer to this haven. The camp, arranged in an old Catholic

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Seminary, provides every man with a bed, showers and tubs with hot and cold water, clean clothes, and GI food prepared by French chefs and served restaurant style by thirty pretty French girls. A small orchestra plays soft and soothing music at all meals but breakfast. There are well equipped day rooms, a tap room, a post exchange, movies every night and dances several times a week, and the best part of it all is that every man can do as he pleases (almost anyway). One may visit Metz but it is still in the throes of war and almost all stores are closed and money can buy very little. Many fellows have taken advantage of their rest period to visit some of the French towns in which the battalion had been stationed many months ago. Many lasting friendships have been made and old acquaintances renewed. "B" has a unique and nostalgic way of selecting their candidates for these little vacations. Each man has his number on a large faro wheel, similar to those at carnivals in the States, and a spin of the wheel makes the selection.

FRIDAY, 16 February 1945.--Capt. Smith, currently residing with "C" in XII Corps, reports that the battery had picked up Lt. Beck on the radio. The straight line distance from the plane to "C" was about 18 miles--pretty good for a 610. It speaks well of the work of Sgt. Mills, the "C" Radio Chief. From 7 to 13 Feb. "C" has fired 37 rounds into the German town of Schweich. Today a Kraut medical officer, under a flag of truce, came to our lines with a request to cease fire on that target. There was a large hospital in the town and the rounds were coming dangerously close. Corps Arty im-

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mediately ordered "C" to cease firing but it could not help letting them know their fire was accurate.

SUNDAY, 18 February 1945.--A group of reinforcements was welcomed to the battalion today. They are, "A"--Pvts. Clyde Brigner, William Hall, Elmer Riggins; "B"--Pvt. Richard Kunkel; "C"--Pvts. Fred Goglia, Clayton Lesman, William Mohr, Arville Ruble; Hqs--Fred LaFrenier, William Pritchardt and Harold Sawyer. Cpl. Krewsky of "A" was promoted to Tec. 4. Gerald Miller returned to Hdqs after spending some time in the hospital.

Capt. Wright and Capt. Henderson are now flying regular missions in the planes. They are learning the ropes as extra observers in case of mishap with Lt. Beck or Capt. Harrison. Lt. Beck is rapidly gaining a fine reputation in observation abilities. Considering the number of missions he has flown and the successes he has had, he is considered the most reliable observer in Corps.

MONDAY, 19 February 1945.--For many weeks the 94th Inf. Division has been gnawing, digging and picking at the Siegfried "Switch," a branch of the Siegfried Line which cuts across the Moselle-Saar triangle to the north of us. They have suffered severe casualties and many setbacks in capturing Tettigen, Siny, Borg; they have captured and lost Campholz Woods several times and Orsholtz--the main bastion of this thick network of casemates, communication trenches, dragons' teeth and mines--still remains in enemy hands. But today, like a man tired of trying to pick the lock, the 94th smashed in the door, and breeched the line in an attack

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which may clear all the Germans from the west banks of the Saar. The attack started early this morning with a 15,000 round preparation fired by all units of corps and division artillery, neutralizing and destroying enemy gun positions, communication centers and CP. Even XII Corps Arty participated, by firing on enemy OP's across the Moselle. As a result, the infantry was well through the main defense fortifications by 0900 and Corps was about to commit its ace-in-the-hole, the 10th Armd Div. By tonight, nobody knows exactly where the front lines are; the tankers have raced through the 94th's hole and have pushed to the north. The 94th has swung eastward to take Orsholtz and drive the Krauts across the Saar. (Ed. note-- Little did we know at the time this was going on that it was really the start of General Patton's final drive into Germany.)

TUESDAY, 20 February 1945.--Air observers had a field day today. Lt. Beck fired missions on three enemy batteries and a truck convoy. During the afternoon Capt. Henderson spotted a battery of 150's limbered and standing on the road. He shouted, howled and pleaded for half an hour over his radio to get fire on it; but we were out of ammunition, and communications had failed between Group and the other battalions, since they were in the process of moving northward. Finally Henderson reported that one of our tanks had come across the crest of a near-by hill and had begun to shoot at the column. (Two days later we moved to the scene of this incident and found two guns and several supply wagons smashed where the tank had hit them.) The above action occurred at Rommel-

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fangen, 5 miles north of the breakthrough yesterday, which shows how the 10th Armored is progressing. The armor is working in the western side of the triangle, while the 94th has encircled Orsholtz and is pushing toward Saarburg on the east.

WEDNESDAY, 21 February 1945.--It is apparent now that the defeat of the Germans between the Saar and Moselle to the north has turned into a real rout, and half the Corps artillery is moving northward in support. We have occupied positions in the vicinity of Borg, a frontline town, three days ago. "B" is occupying position tonight and "A" will come in tomorrow. Hqs was installed itself in Hellendorf, a dirty German village south of Borg. We already have orders to go forward on reconnaissance in the morning, however, so another movement is in the offing.

THURSDAY, 22 February 1945.--The battalion today found a new home in villages approximately in the center of the Saar-Moselle triangle, and still there is no assurance that we will not move tomorrow. We have orders to start reconnaissance farther north the first thing in the morning. Hqs is now in Sudlingen, "A" in Rommelfangen, a mile to the north, and "B" in Beuren, a mile to the south. Before leaving Hellendorf, however, Headquarters took time to hold its first annual (we hope) rodeo. Wild bulls and bucking broncos were drafted from the livestock wandering through town, and a typical wild west show ensued. Climax occurred when the veteran cowhand from Florida, T/5 Gould, was thrown by a not-too-wild bull. The first act of T/5 Carlson on hitting town was to milk an amiable cow.



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The entire battalion is now installed in Germany. Service Battery was the last unit to arrive when it occupied the town we left yesterday. The villages are almost the same as western France, except in one major respect: they are utterly devoid of all humanity except for the Army. All German civilians evidently have been evacuated from the triangle, and we are much concerned over our laundry situation. Nobody to wash our clothes but ourselves. This lack of natives has its saving graces, plenty of room and no fraternization problems. We shall miss our Celestines, Maries and Fifis; it is just as well, however, that there are no blonde and buxom frauleins around to tempt us to smile or say a friendly word. The villages are in a much poorer condition than any we have been in so far. Every building has been hit, and many are completely demolished; but despite this havoc it is still possible to find ample housing.

Possibly the most interesting operations in the war for us occur in following a breakthrough. (The cannoneers will dispute this, as it means one bone-wearying occupation after another for them.) We move every other day; villages are still smoking when we pass through; the roads are jammed like Fifth Ave.; traffic snarls with tanks, trucks and guns moving up, while the wrecked equipment of yesterday's fighting is heaped along the roadsides, and here and there we pass a little huddle of bodies flung in the ungainly attitudes of death. Reassuringly, most of the dead we have seen on this move have been Krauts.

This is the country into which we have fired

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so many missions for the last two months from Laumesfeld and Remeling. Though the effects of our fire cannot be distinguished from anybody else's, it is still possible to see the terrible results of artillery fire around us. In our battalion area there are three or four destroyed German batteries, and several smashed tractors and guns standing on the road where our tanks have hit them.

The present "B" position is located in an area formerly occupied by a Kraut battery which was bombed. A 500 lb. unexploded memo of our Air Force still lies in the area, only fifty yards from a "B" gun. Bets are being taken as to whether it will explode from concussion the first time the gun fires. If it does--winners and losers will be collected.

"A" has just proved erroneous our statement that the villages are entirely devoid of Germans. In their village Lt. Hillegas, T/5 Lindsley and Pfc Smith were looking for a house to live in. From the cellar of one of the buildings they heard voices--with guttural accents. When the occupants refused to come out, Lt. Hillegas tossed a grenade into the basement. The fugitives then came out readily, revealing themselves as members of the Wermacht, armed with machine pistols. Their hands were up, however, and they were not interested in an argument. Quite a few of the men had been through the house during the day--we are looking under our beds now.

Now that cities are no longer "liberated" as they were in France, Mr. Padgett has coined a new word for the captured hamlets--"obliterated." Headquarters Battery, tonight, consumed

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thirty chickens for supper. Since chicken was not included in the daily ration, their source is Mess Officer Argo's secret.

FRIDAY, 23 February 1945.--New battery positions were selected and surveyed farther north. No indication yet of when we will occupy them. Col. Rucks has become so used to initialing official documents that he automatically initials "Yank" when he finishes reading them.

Service Battery has joined "B" in Beuren today. "C" is returning to XX Corps. They have shot the life out of their second set of tubes, and the battery is attached to 204th FA Gp in support of the 26th Inf Division opposite Saarlautern, while waiting on their third issue of tubes. The battalion today threw harassing fire into the railroad marshalling yards in Trier. The guns are now fanned out so they can fire into the area north of the Saar-Moselle junction, and in support of the 10th Armd and 94th Inf Div also. Both of these units now have a bridgehead across the Saar, and have bitten deep into the Siegfried Line's strongest defenses. All Germans have now been cleared from the triangle, and the axis of the attack has swung eastward. Our second group of officers and men have left for Paris.

SATURDAY, 24 February 1945.--Our daring pilots, Lts. Lamoreaux and Brockmeyer, today executed their most heroic deed of the war. Along with a dozen other XX Corps Arty liaison pilots, they volunteered to fly rations, ammo and blood plasma to a battalion of the 94th Inf Division, cut off on a hill just across the Saar northeast of Saarburg. The Krauts held hills 300 feet above the area of our surrounded troops

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and the planes had to fly through a hail of machine gun fire coming from above them to make an accurate dropping of the supplies. The planes were slightly perforated but the pilots were untouched. "I volunteered for that one," said Lamoureaux afterward, "but they'll have to order me next time!"

William L. Deschene, former member of the Hqs survey section, now with the 26th Inf Div. writes that he has been cited for the Bronze Star and the Silver Star, but has succeeded in getting only the Purple Heart so far. At one time, he and Cpl. Johnson, formerly with "B," were lost behind enemy lines and lay in brush only seven feet from a group of Germans while waiting to make a break for their own lines. They got back safely at midnight, and Deschene joined an outpost guard of eight other doughs. The Germans counterattacked in early morning and a brisk fight ensued. By daylight, it was discovered the small outpost had held off 150 Germans. For the first adventure, Deschene was named for a Bronze Star and for the second, the Silver Star award.

SUNDAY, 25 February 1945.--The battalion continued its harassing missions on the railroad yards in Trier, and joined the other group battalions, the 270th FA Bn (240 how.) and 736th FA Bn (8-inch how.)--in a TOT on an enemy battery. After routing the Germans on the Saar western banks, the 94th and 10th Armored divisions have followed them right across the river. The 94th has a large bridgehead between Serrig and Taben-Rodt, with a ponton bridge at each of these places, and the 10th Armd holds a small

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sector across from Saarburg. The latter city is now cleared except for snipers.

The men of Hqs now have a mount, an ex-artillery horse, one of many hundred now roaming the countryside. Until a saddle can be found, he is being ridden with just a German blanket and surcingle.

MONDAY, 26 February 1945.--We are moving again--this time five miles north to Onsdorf. "A" occupies position on a hilltop across the valley from town, and "B" will emplace near Ober-Sost, two miles south of us. The battalion is now "holding" XX Corps' northern flank. There is nothing betwixt us and Jerry at the junction of the Saar-Moselle, five miles north, but a handful of cavalry and the 8-inch hows. Our guns are still laid northeast and east, however, to cover the Corps attack up the river to Trier.

As usual, the sunny weather of last week has evaporated and a damp mist cloaks the muddy world. We are moving northward by an old Roman road now chopped to pieces by the guns and armor of the 10th Armored Division. Grinding through the holes and breaks in this ancient trail along the highest ridge west of the Saar, we thread our way through the 10th's half-tracks, tanks and trucks scattered along the roadside, waiting to move southward to cross the river at Serrig.

We moved in echelon, emplacing one gun from each battery before closing out of the old area. By the time the rear half of Fire Direction Center started forward the 10th had begun its southward move, and Boylan, driving the CP truck, marshalled all his skill to by-pass the

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heavy tanks and half-tracks without slipping his own vehicle inextricably off the road. It was a bad night for the rear gun sections of "A" and "B." "A" had mud trouble in winching out of position and "B" dropped a gun-wagon into a tank trap. It took the crane and two tanks to drag the heavy back on the road. All the way up, vehicles of both batteries continued to slip off the road in the thick darkness. The last section closed in the new position at 0430. Col. Rucks, winking his eye at a Corps order, instructed the executives to let the men sleep until daylight before emplacing the guns.

FRIDAY, 2 March 1945.--Capt. Smith, anxious to fire as observer at least one mission against the enemy before the war was over, asked to go to the OP today. He did not fire himself, but offered a German machine gunner an opportunity to fire a problem on him. It was a quiet day interrupted only by the sight of a U.S. tank firing on a pillbox across the Saar. To see better, Smith led the OP party, including Lt. Semenock, Sgt. Kandetski, and Pfc Lewandowski, down to the river's edge to watch the battle across the stream. They soon discovered their box seat was much too close to the show, when machine gun fire streaked over their heads. While the others crouched in the hollow Lewandowski lay across the seat of his jeep, turned it around, using his hands to work the controls, and the party leaped on and raced for safety. No hits, no runs and one error--going there in the first place.

A "B" gasoline truck caught fire, burned and exploded today. The occupants escaped before

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the fire spread and were unharmed. Driver could not explain the cause.

Trier was entered by elements of the Tenth Armored, marking XX Corps' best progress since crossing of the Moselle back in November. Coincidentally with the clearing of the triangle, the 94th established a large bridgehead across the Saar at Serrig, and the 10th pushed across in a small area at Saarburg. These two have been linked, three bridges were established, and the Tenth, aided by the 5th Rangers eastward to Zerf, then turned northward on the main highway to Trier. A large pocket of Jerries has been caught between the 10th pincers and the Saar. Meanwhile, XII Corps' 76th Div. is approaching Trier from the north to finish that industrial city.

SATURDAY, 3 March 1945.--A large part of the battalion, this morning, was contentedly watching the best movie we had seen in a long time, "Saratoga Trunk," when march order was sounded, stopping the show right when the best part of the picture was on. "A" was detached and moved across the river with the 270th FA Bn. Hqs and "B" moved south to Weitan and acquired the "C" Btry of the 270th. We are now in position three thousand yards from the front line, along the river, which is held by a handful of cavalry troops.

The men of "C" are currently waiting for their new tubes in the southern Corps area. Attached to the 733rd Bn, they have dug three times as the Bn CO continues to change his mind on the direction of fire.

In the movement of "A" from Onsdorf to

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Oberemmel, Pfc Liddick suffered a broken arm and collar bone when his truck turned over.

SUNDAY, 4 March 1945.--For the first time a part of the battalion is occupying a German city still complete with its civilian population (or part of it). "A's" present home town, Oberemmel, contains several hundred natives. Last night, cannoneers were awakened by a terrific commotion of women and children crying, men cursing and people moving about in great haste. A battalion of infantry had arrived in town, and, with the prerogative of conquerors, had ordered the civilians to evacuate a whole block at once. When this arrangement had been completed and peace restored, a similar disturbance occurred, even louder than before. A second infantry battalion had arrived and demanded another block. The process was repeated.

MONDAY, 5 March 1945.--The team of T/4 Zaremski, crane operator, and T/5 Prior, driver, announce the completion of 104 successful emplacement operations with setting up of "B's" guns on March 3rd.

The cigar smoke has hung heavy over "B" during the last few months as many of its men received the tidings of their newly acquired fatherhood. Uwellling, Klingman, Thomas, Eccleston and Marr are all proud papas now. Lt. Peterson has attained the rank of 1st Lt., which leaves Lts. Conway and Elsted as our sole remaining virgin shavetails.

TUESDAY, 6 March 1945.--T/5 Larrabee reports from "A" early this morning. "We received what some are pleased to call counterbattery fire. It caused excitement but no especial worry. Later in the day the exec went on reconnaissance



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and the battery was alerted for march order. In the meantime considerable anxiety arose when we were unable to contact our outpost. A patrol was sent out to locate the outpost and encountered the personnel returning to the battery position. These men reported they were subjected to so much enemy infantry and artillery fire that they were forced to withdraw leaving matériel and personal equipment behind. Shortly after they returned, the battery went into march order."

The truth was that the Krauts had been steadily infiltrating through our lines and Corps Arty had finally deemed it wise to pull back its heavies across the Saar. Before 195th Gp. could clear out, however, a 170 mm shell burst in their CP backyard, killing 3 and wounding 9. "A" and the 270th Bn withdrew from the bridgehead without casualties.

THURSDAY, 8 March 1945.--It was decided today that T/5 Bender of "C," currently in hot water for stealing some tractor tools from another battalion, will get only battery punishment. After all, it is one thing to steal money or a watch--that calls for court-martial--but quite another matter to "borrow" tools for the benefit of your own organization. This latter act is known as "moonlight requisitioning." However, one should not get caught at it.

"He should get the Bronze Star for being that much interested in his work," opined Mr. Padgett.

To replace some of the Gp's recent casualties, the battalion today transferred T/4 Monica, Pfc Duncan, of Hqs., and Pfc Hickman, "B," to Col. Clark's organization. Monica will become

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mess sergeant and Duncan gets the Headquarters clerk post, which may mean T/4 for him, and Hickman will be a  $\frac{3}{4}$  ton driver.

FRIDAY, 9 March 1945.--Pvt. Paupis, a former MP, and recent reinforcement to our battalion, has done plenty of guard duty in his time, but never did he run into the likes of the intrepid Berton D. Guy, the dour supply truck driver.

"Who's there?" challenged Paupis to the darkness.

"Guy," said Guy.

"What guy?"

"Guy."

"Yeah, but what's your name?"

"Guy," persisted Beton D., not contributing any enlightenment to Paupis.

Sgt. Levitan happened to pass at that moment. "Who's that guy?" asked Paupis of the sergeant, excitedly.

"That's a guy in the battery, name of Guy," replied Levitan, solving the situation.

SATURDAY, 10 March 1945.--The battalion today got its baby bulldozer, complete with trailer to haul it on. Hqs. is currently sponsoring the little animal, with Berton Guy as driver. He plans to name it "White Elephant." The contraption is intended for levelling gun positions. It may also be used for grading roads or clearing trash out of the front yard.

SUNDAY, 11 March 1945.--Since the capture of Saarburg, wine has been flowing like water through the supply channels of the corps. Our battery has had beaucoup litres of the atrocious liquid, but Sgt. Pacheco was the first to take that "wine like water" simile literally. To wash some newly developed prints he filled

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his water pan from the first beadon he could find. Later noticing a peculiar smell to the operation, he examined the washing liquid more carefully, and discovered it to be wine, not water. Naturally he finished washing his prints, and naturally he did not throw out the "water" as he usually does.

Gun 27 left for Thionville to have a new tube installed. The "Silver Meteor" had fired better than 800 full service rounds. Its sister piece is also expecting a new tube in the near future.

MONDAY, 12 March 1945.--Pfc Santo Guido returned to "A" Battery after hospitalization in England. He had left us on Thanksgiving Day. Pfc Joe Pinzone gunned his M-10 tank into the "A" position with Gun 27's new tube. The section can now go back to work.

Capt. Harrison and Lt. Argo have brought in a trout for the Colonel's dinner. Since flies and spinners are nonexistent in the war zone they have instituted a new and somewhat dubious method of catching fish. A German "egg grenade" (nonfragmentation) tossed into the right pool of a good trout stream will turn any fish belly-up that doesn't take advantage of the six seconds delay to escape. They were not too successful with their new method--only one fish before the grenades ran out. However, the fish may be striking better tomorrow.

TUESDAY, 13 March 1945.--XX Corps jumped off in a grand offensive this morning--three divisions abreast, the 26th, 80th and 94th. The latter two are striking east from the bridgehead toward the Rhine, and the 26th is moving southward down the Saar to outflank the Siegfried

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opposite us. All Corps Arty, ourselves included, fired their usual missions against enemy batteries, CP's, communication and road nets.

WEDNESDAY, 14 March 1945.--Six rounds of 170 mm slammed into "B's" number 1 gun position at around 2400 last night. All men were in the cellar except the guard on the piece, who quickly dropped into a spade pit. One round hit only eight yards away, tearing holes into five rounds of ammunition but leaving him unhurt. "B" welcomed back 1st Sgt. Eccleston today after a month's absence with the wound in his foot.

THURSDAY, 15 March 1945.--The new offensive of XX Corps has been going well. The 80th and 94th divs. have advanced several miles, taking a number of towns and several thousand PW's. The 26th has run into trouble from pillboxes among the high wooded hills along the river and has not made much progress. It expects to break into rolling open country on the road to Merzig tomorrow, however. One gun of "A" has gone across the river with the 270th. We expect to follow tomorrow or the next day.

We learned today that former T/4 Monica, transferred to Group a few days ago, is now staff sergeant. Pvt. Louis L. Jones came to this battalion from Group.

Uncommunicative Communication Dept: Since the battalions of Group have been scattered on the two banks of the Saar our worthy higher-headquarters has had difficulty keeping in communications with its flock. For instance, Maj. Burgoon tried to call Group tonight. Of necessity he had to go through several switchboards--too many, in fact. Our operator, Hillock, gave

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him Highridge, who plugged it through to Headgear; Headgear got a little off the beam and connected him with Hairline. Hairline had never heard of Coalbin (our Group Hqs), but was willing to try to find them. At length the Major heard the plaintive call of a harried operator far away--"Hey, Dick, come down here for Christ-sake; I've got a bunch of confusion on the line."

Sgt. Arrants, now with the 26th Inf., dropped in to say hello to Hqs. Battery recently. The erstwhile mess sergeant had lost weight and looked the typical grim and grizzled veteran of frontline combat.

FRIDAY, 16 March 1945.--It looks like the true race to the Rhine has begun, and we are champing at the bit. The 80th Division, aided and preceded by a combat team of the 10th Armored, is moving rapidly; the 94th is even farther east than the 80th, and today the 26th broke from the hills along the Saar, gaining several miles towards Merzig.

Meanwhile everybody is crossing the river but us. We learned that even the nurses have gone across--and here we sit, even as we followed belatedly across the Moselle. Only one consolation alleviates this ignominy--if we are the farthest back, perhaps we will be first to leave when this conflict concludes. At any rate we are to cross tomorrow.

SATURDAY, 17 March 1945.--Battalion has occupied position in Bergen, several miles across the Saar. Spearheaded by the 10th Armored, the Corps is now pushing so fast that we do not know exactly how far forward are the front lines. 26th has outflanked Merzig and is proceeding southward to take Saarlautern from the

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north. An attack by the 65th on Saarlautern from the west is brewing.

Codger Charlie, attached to us for 10 days, has rejoined the 270th and we hear that our "C" is due back soon.

Lt. Helfrich and Cpl. Chalk picked up two Krauts while reconnoitering their position. Probably plenty more around here--the infantry didn't take time to prod every haystack.

SUNDAY, 18 March 1945.--Hqs. moved into a crumbling chateau near Nunkirchen, and "A" and "B" are in new positions in the field near by. The battalion has accomplished the remarkable feat (for 8-inch guns) of registering from two positions in one day; first from Bergen early this morning, and again from our new position this afternoon. Weather continues to be clear and sunny.

The civilians living in Hqs. chateau have been moved into a separate wing. Col. Rucks ordered all firearms collected from them. He now has a motley assemblage of ancient fowling pieces and blunderbusses in the CP.

Now that we have reached a part of Germany not cleared of civilians, we have felt the stings of the nonfraternization policy. We have all been considerably chastened by reports that a private was fined \$65 and an officer \$390 for breach of that rule. However, it is claimed that some of the men are giving German girls \$32.50 stares. Others maintain that it is all right to look as long as you don't smile. But what are we to do when the frauleins smile at us first? Paging Mr. Anthony!

"C" was supposed to pull in today, but we have not seen or heard from them. The rations

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we have been drawing for them are now beginning to pile up.

MONDAY, 19 March 1945.--Corps Arty has decided to have us sit and wait this day. The no fire line is already out of range for us. Maj. Burgoon bets we will be on the Rhine (yet 50 miles away) by Wednesday. Still no "C."

TUESDAY, 20 March 1945.--We rolled for mile after mile, through village after village, without seeing a single GI or the slightest vestige of war (except for occasional piles of abandoned German equipment). The towns appeared deserted as the people stayed in their houses; white flags hung from the windows.

Finally caught up with the fringes of the war zone--service forces, truck convoys, bivouac troops and a few dead horses. But we still are nowhere near the fighting. The battalion has now taken over various sections of the town of Winterbach, moving out civilians forthwith. Bivouac only.

WEDNESDAY, 21 March 1945.--The battalion moves into bivouac at Weilerbach, near Kaiserslautern, which was entered by the 80th Div and 10th Armored yesterday. One report from a tank commander said: "Am on a super-duper, making 25 MPH," which must have meant he was on the Autobahn headed for the Rhine. We are still 30 miles from the first European waterway, but we are certain advance elements of the corps are now on its banks. The 26th and 65th have cleaned up Saarlautern and are now moving eastward in conjunction with the XV Corps of Seventh Army.

Lt. Conway and driver Katz captured 27 Germans and a village today. They merely drove into a town, found it unoccupied, but its de-

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fending forces ready to surrender. Cpl. Cave and T/5 Caliguiri captured a Kraut and dropped him off at Service. 1st Sgt. Hoffman put him to work digging latrines. They learned his name was Freddy, gave him C rations and coffee and considered keeping him as an orderly, but finally decided it was illegal.

Still no "C." Lt. Mahoney has been dispatched to find them, somewhere in the 65th sector around Saarlautern, and bring 'em back alive.

THURSDAY, 22 March 1945.--Battalion still resting comfortably in Weilerbach and no sign of going into position yet. It is known, however, that the whole corps is closed up to the Rhine, which means that all the Allied armies in the west are poised along the Rhine except for a small German bridgehead in the Seventh Army Sector.

"C" has returned to the fold and taken up bivouac in town. They have had a comparatively easy time during their detachment in the southern sector of the Corps. Their only firing was done a week ago when they poured two hundred rounds into Lembach during one night.

We are still collecting Krauts. Lt. Argo and T/5 Gould, while out foraging for spare tires, hauled in nine to the PW enclosure.

FRIDAY, 23 March.--This has been a day of plot and counterplot. First it was understood that within three days we would be occupying position under cover of darkness to support a great corps offensive to cross the Rhine. In fact it was revealed that all our armies, excluding the First, which is already across,



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would open mass offensives during this period to bridge the Rhine.

But by late afternoon all Corps traffic was frozen on the roads and we had learned we were merely going to a new bivouac to the north. The news is out that the 90th Div of XII Corps to the north crossed the Rhine this morning, taking the initiative away from XX Corps. Our area has now been taken over by Seventh Army and we are in Army reserve. It looks like the fighting is over for us for the time being, and who knows, if this offensive goes well, the war may end in the next few weeks.

Besides the collecting of Kraut prisoners, the collecting of Kraut matériel has also proceeded amongst the Battalion at an alarming rate. "C" has several motorcycles, "B" has two or three German trucks, and the personnel section now has a shiny new sedan. But the ultimate in "looting" was achieved today when Lt. Argo brought in a giant Diesel truck. It will practically haul the whole battery by itself.

The men are not used to not smiling and not looking at the girls. In desperation Pfc Lewandowski asked if it was all right to fraternize with the Polish and Russian girls in town, of whom there are beaucoup.

"No" said Col. (Mr. Anthony) Rucks firmly.

SATURDAY, 24 March.--Battalion moved to Lollbach late this afternoon. Before dark T/5 Hartquist and Firestone had captured four Krauts and Maj. Banks set out to deliver them to proper authorities. Finding proper authorities, however, is something else. No MP's could be located and Group Hqs. refused to take them. Finally we discovered the nearest PWE was 25

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miles away. We decided to keep them overnight in an improvised cage.

The XII Corps bridgehead on the Rhine has been enlarged and it now looks as if XX Corps may move through XII to strike deeper into Germany.

In Jeckenbach, Capt. Wright, as senior officer in town, discovered himself to be Bürgermeister. With Sgt. Hoffman as interpreter and assistant, he played Solomon to the trying problems of food purchasing, the slaughtering of cattle, passes to leave town, etc. His touchiest case was that of two "old maids" who wanted to hire a man as foreman on their farm. The S-4 thoughtfully left this for Military Government to investigate when they take over.

SUNDAY, 25 March.--Prisoners picked up by Group, the 270th, and the attached AA, were contributed to our PW cage overnight. This morning T/4 Ottenbreit, Hqs. mechanic, drove up with three Krauts.

"I didn't want to take them," he said, "but they forced themselves on me."

All were hauled to the Corps enclosure this afternoon.

Civilians have been pressed into labor gangs removing the road blocks in town.

MONDAY, 26 March.--Battalion moves to bivouac in Bodenheim and Hackenheim near Bad Kreuznach. According to the present plan we will occupy position a few thousand yards from the Rhine bank tomorrow, but doubt if the program is ever carried through. Our troops are fanning out from the bridgehead so fast that it does not appear as if there will be any targets left by the time we could shoot.

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Getting closer to the great river all the time. May cross it next jump, who knows?

TUESDAY, 27 March.--Sgt. Wolfe and Firestone, of "C," on their way back from an ammunition hauling detail, stirred up a brisk man hunt. Stopping to fix a flat they saw three Kraut soldiers go into a house near Kaiserlautern. Enlisting the aid of an infantry squad, bivouaced near by, they went in after them, capturing one while the other two escaped under a hail of small arms fire and tossed grenades.

WEDNESDAY, 28 March.--Due to a snafued ration arrangement Service still held the claim of being our most forward battery on the battalion. Instead of going to the rear to draw food, Cpls. Teddy, Brown and Pfc Stevenson crossed the Rhine to a dump opposite Mainz. Though proudly boasting they were the first members of the 243rd to cross the famed river, the battalion was not so proud of them. They returned with nothing but "C" rations.

This one slip is forgivable, however, in consideration of the generally good rations we have had on the continent. In our trip across France, these same lads, then aided by WO Plant and Cpl McDonough, brought top grade rations to the battalion in spite of the fact that the unit travelled well over a hundred miles each day.

THURSDAY, 29 March.--It looks as if three years of training and combat experience are going into the scrap heap. The war has become too fleeting for us heavies and we are being converted to security guards in the near future. The order has come through dissolving Corps Artillery and sending the 195th Group to

## BATTLE DIARY

Third Army to be utilized as patrols and sentinels on roads and bridges in the Army areas.

Not a very pleasant outlook for artillerymen, but really a sign of the times. The war must be nearly over. All sorts of wild rumors are flying--Fourth Armored in Nurnberg, Third Army tanks 100 miles east of the Rhine, Patton's tanks within 20 miles of Berlin. All the news is rapid armored movement against slight opposition...streams of prisoners moving back...collapse of German defenses in the west...Russians at Austrian border...First Army fifteen miles from Munster.

One thing is apparent--we have fired our last round in the ETO. Tomorrow we leave our positions at Ober-Olm and Winterheim and march northwest to Simmern, 40 miles away, there to reorganize for our new guard duties. Whether this will develop us into post-war occupational troops is the next question.

The last rounds were fired, appropriately enough, by Charlie Battery, which has fired more than any other battery during our combat period. Although the opposition to the 80th Division crossing in the Mainz area was comparatively light, Baker and Able received several targets. Charlie, laid to the left of Weisbaden, appearing to be facing the prospect of a position without a target, but at approximately 0230 we were called on for an eight-round concentration to break up a counterattack in the VIII Corps area, and Charlie was able to take the target. When the last flash died in the sky the shooting was over for the 243rd.

## FINALE

FRIDAY, 30 March 1945.--The battalion has closed into Simmern, and all hands are comfortably installed in civilian homes. Some are fortunate enough to have bathtubs, hot water and feather beds. Living in the rear areas is going to have some compensations after all.

SATURDAY, 31 March.--There is no longer a question of our future in this war; we are MP's now. Temporarily attached to the 503rd MP Battalion as the police force for Third Army rear area, our batteries are being split up between the police battalion's companies. "A" goes to Kirchberg and "B" to Trier. The men will be scattered from Trier to the Rhine in small detachments, working as assistants to the Army MP's already in position.

We are lugging the guns and prime movers with us--just in case our armies should bog down somewhere and need the heavies again. Even so, we are probably better off than our old associates, 270th; they are now running prisoners, while 195th Gp. is taking over an army of Belgian soldiers to guard roads and bridges in the rear areas.

SUNDAY, 1 April.--Easter came and passed today with no great alteration in our routine. Catholic and Protestant church services were

## BATTLE DIARY

held. The batteries continued cleaning up equipment and preparing it for a long period of disuse. Capt. Henderson confides that the cannoneers in "A," after these many months of cursing their noisy monster, asked today to put the gun in position. "We can clean it easier," mumbled the chief of section, but he didn't fool anybody.

MONDAY, 2 April 1945.--"A" and "B" men, along with men from "C" and Hqs attached, pulled out today for their new homes. By nightfall some of them were already out on busy corners prominently displaying the bright new brassards--MP.

THURSDAY, 5 April 1945.--It now appears that we will be full-fledged MP's before we know it. The 503rd is moving across the Rhine shortly, leaving us in sole command of all their area. On the 10th of this month we will transfer to the newly-formed 15th Army. Eventually Com Zone will take over policing of all territory to the Rhine, while the rest of Germany will be considered a combat zone, to be maintained by combat troops--such as we.

At present "A" has detachments at Wittlich, Bernkastel and Kirchberg; "B" maintains detachments at Trier, Birkenfeld, Oberstein and Kirn. Hqs generally sends out four mounted (jeep) patrols a day for traffic control and maintenance of law and order. The remainder of "C" and Service with technicians from the other batteries are staying in Simmern to take care of the guns, tanks and cranes.

FRIDAY, 6 April 1945.--Besides performing the normal functions of MP's our detachments find their job saddles them with the duty of being Good Samaritan, gas station and hash house

## THE DIARY

for transients on the road. "A," at Morbach, recently fed thirty visitors in one day and gave away 500 gallons of gas; Sv's wrecker boys, T/4 Kortesmaki, T/5 Campbell and Pvt. DiDio made a 70 mile trip to haul in a damaged truck. Returning at 2300, they had hardly got in bed before a colored boy stopped in to ask for help with his broken down truck. Aid, however, was postponed until daylight.

SATURDAY, 7 April 1945.--"B" has had a trying day in Trier, a city pregnant with possible crime. About 0500 this morning a "B" patrol, riding a weapons carrier, discovered three furtive figures looting in a small village across the river from Trier. Two of them immediately surrendered when challenged but the third started for Pvt. Grigg. The unperturbed Grigg properly called "halt" twice and when the man kept coming Grigg fired, killing him instantly. The other two were taken back to the displaced persons' camp, and Lt. Wikan announced, through an interpreter, that other looters would be treated in like manner.

At Kirn, members of the "B" detachment witnessed the explosion of a Flying Fortress at 20,000 feet. They saw bodies falling through the air, only four of which had parachutes. These four landed safely, and two had chow at the Kirn mess hall a short while later. "They were surprisingly calm and unexcited about it all," observed Cpl. Coe afterward. Five bodies were found in the plane wreckage or where they had fallen near by.

SUNDAY, 8 April 1945.--Speaking of patience, Hqs today saw a prime example. A colored soldier approached one of our MP's and told him

## BATTLE DIARY

that he was driver of a truck which was broken down. He had been waiting with his truck for four days for somebody to come get him. "I wouldn't have left now," he added, "but I got hungry. I haven't eaten in two days." The battery fed him and started looking for his outfit.

These main supply routes to the front are similar to the primary truck highways at home. Trucks are broken down all along them, and wrecks--most of them minor--occur every day.

Sgt. Levitan, just returned with two trucks from a detail of hauling Belgian soldiers, reports that life is somewhat different in the Belgian army from ours. Not only did these men bring two Frenchwomen along with them, but they also included in their baggage tables, chairs, clocks, radios and other odds and ends from the house they were then occupying. As a last straw they threw a sentry-box aboard. The Belgians are being brought up to guard roads and bridges.

MONDAY, 9 April 1945.--Pvt. Howard Myers, Hqs radio operator, has just finished a week with a spearhead tank company and is itching to get back. Assigned to a tank of the 6th Armored Div. he could not tell where he had been but he knew it was over 100 miles east of the Rhine. During his detachment he fired several thousand rounds of .50's at ME 109's, shot up a town with a bazooka, and never operated the radio once. ("Damn thing's been busted since we landed," one of the tankers told him.) T/5 Leon LaPage, Hqs, went on detached service with Myers. He served as radio operator with XX Corps and led a generally quiet life.

T/5 Alfred Hale and Pvt. Charles E. Chaires,





Street scene in Simmern, where the 243rd saw its first MP duty.



## THE DIARY

"C," were transferred to the hospital. Five members of "A" were slightly hurt when their truck skidded into the Moselle. Two other trucks of Lt. Hillegas' Treis MP detachment were along and stopped to help them. Pvt. Rote lost ten years' growth through fright when he found himself pinned under the truck in the Moselle. Fortunately he could barely hold his head above water. Skillful operation of the winch on a 3/4 ton raised the truck and he was pulled out. Men who were injured were Cpl. Asp, Pfc's Johnson, Sammis and Sekyra, and Pvt. Rote.

Pfc John Brugett, "A," received a 45 day furlough to Jasper, Alabama, for rest and recovery. T/5 James McDonough, Sv, was promoted to sergeant.

It was about 9:30 in the evening when a long, sleek limousine pulled up in front of Service Battery. A moment later Cpl. Paul Dupre burst into the Sv CP. "Guess what? I just gassed up General Patton's vehicle! I personally poured in the gas." A shudder went through the listeners as they thought the demigod was so close. But Dupre resolved their fears. "Of course the General wasn't in it, but it was his car," he added.

TUESDAY, 10 April 1945.--S/Sgt Cerbone came back to "A" today. The loyal supply sergeant, who returned from his second trip to the hospital for treatment of a leg wound, was headed for a replacement depot when he spotted a battalion truck approaching. Cerbone forced his vehicle to stop, flagged our GMC and thus returned to "A" by this unorthodox but direct route. It was Cerbone who in November jumped a replacement depot near Paris and hitchhiked

## BATTLE DIARY

all over the western front before he found us near Thionville.

WEDNESDAY, 11 April, 1945.--Pfc Martinich, "A" cook, has composed a song called "Section 8 Polka" which is rendered blithely during meals by a young German boy on his accordin. The boy, working as a KP for rations, also plays "Lili Marlene" every noon for the sentimental delight of Capt. Henderson in the "Snake Pit Cafe and Coffee Shoppe."

Following men were promoted to Pfc: Clyde Brigner, Earl Cole, Charles Fry, Joseph Goldie, Jerome Gordon, William Hall, Robert Harrington and Elmer Riggins.

THURSDAY, 12 April 1945.--We will be moving soon. Fifteenth Army is taking over the rear areas and XXIII Corps is setting up at Oberstein to supervise the occupation troops. A new artillery battalion, one month overseas, is to take over our posts and detachments. Tonight one of their officers came up to excitedly tell us that they had surrounded a house containing a German radio station. Upon investigating T/4 Knox, with Pfc "Rocky" Young as interpreter, found a cordon of men, with rifles ready, surrounding a farmhouse with the old couple within slightly terrified. An old wireless sending set was found in the attic, broken and apparently unused for years. "But we heard the sound of a wireless," they insisted. At that moment the rapping sound of dots and dashes occurred again, from the barn. With guns ready, they threw open the doors and there discovered--a flock of ducks, quacking briskly as they waddled into the flashlight beam.

FRIDAY, 13 April 1945.--The battalion heard

## THE DIARY

in shocked silence today of the death of President Roosevelt. Oddly enough, the news came first to many men from German civilians.

SATURDAY, 14 April 1945.--We are soon to move across the Rhine. Col. Rucks with a reconnaissance party has gone forward to contact Third Army Hqs and scout a new area.

SUNDAY, 15 April 1945.--Capt. Harrison, waiting in Friedburg for his battery to come up tomorrow, found plenty of MP business even though he had not officially set up for operations. Russians and Poles were running true to form--looting and disturbing the peace. But in one case this law enforcement produced a veritable gold mine. Capt. Harrison investigated the report that two Russians were trying to break into a wine cellar. The Russians had fled by the time he arrived, but the old cellar-keeper willingly showed the Hqs BC his stock--a great quantity of Wehrmacht reserved liqueurs and cognac. Lt. Beck, our wine connoisseur, examined the hoard later and discovered it included large amounts of Cointreau, and some of the best cognac from France.

MONDAY, 16 April 1945.--The battalion marched to its new area across the Rhine today. We say "marched" with reservations because it was more of a rat race than a march. The supply truck (Sgt. McCauley's of Hqs.) and Sgt. McDade's medic truck took a short cut by mistake, got ahead of the column and lead it all the way in. Everybody had strip maps, and knew where he was supposed to go, but a marker went to sleep on a corner near Bad Homburg and parts of the Battalion went under the Autobahn instead of driving up on it, and some got on the Autobahn go-

## BATTLE DIARY

ing in the wrong direction. Then no one was on hand to pull "B" out of column at Bad Homburg so they drove blithely past, until the mistake was caught and they were turned back to their destination.

In general the march turned out to be more an infiltration than a column. As Mr. Padgett described: "I was doing 55 mph with my truck and couldn't see a soul in front of me or behind, yet I was supposed to be the middle of the convoy." All men and trucks reached their destination in good time, however, so perhaps all the precautions of marking routes and leading columns are not necessary after all.

Hqs has set up in Friedburg, and occupies the town's largest hotel, a roomy and comfortable old place, with beer on tap and beds in every room. "A" has taken over the Hotel Langsdorf, in Bad Nauheim, a beautiful resort town, with detachments in Gedern and Grunberg. Service and remnants of "C" are also in Bad Nauheim taking care of the battalion supply and maintenance of our guns, which we are still hauling behind us. "B" headquarters is in Bad Homberg, and they have detachments in Limburg and Ruckangen near Hannau.

WEDNESDAY, 18 April 1945.--Lt. Hillegas's Detachment "A" in Grunberg has uncovered the interesting situation of a private acting as military governor of the town while AWOL from his infantry unit. The private explained that the Captain of Military Government in this Kreis had given him permission to run the town and he had acted accordingly. The MG captain admitted it was true, adding that at the time he was desperate for some help in his domain. The boy

## THE DIARY

had done a good job, apparently, collecting all weapons, issuing passes, keeping the Burgermeister in line, but he is in the jug now for AWOL, and the MG captain is in a sweat for having bestowed an illegal authority.

THURSDAY, 19 April 1945.--Biggest business in the MP trade these days seems to be in PW's. Military Government and CIC in Friedburg finally cracked a sensational case which revealed the burgermeister as a Wehrmacht Lieutenant, and some fifty-odd others as members of the German Army who had discarded their uniforms and were happily settling into civilian life again. When cornered all confessed they were German soldiers, put on their uniforms and climbed into our truck for the long journey to the PW cage. Lt. Hillegas has a more direct way of nabbing PW's. He informs the town burgermeister that he will accept any ex-German soldiers who want to give themselves up as PW's, otherwise they might be shot as spies. He is doing good business--six yesterday, ten today, etc.

FRIDAY, 20 April 1945.--Two P-51's returning from a flight over Czechoslovakia, collided above Friedburg and the pilots parachuted down safely. However, when our patrols rushed out to pick them up, they startled us for a moment by drawing pistols and running for a ditch--ready to do battle. When proper identification was made, they explained they thought they had dropped into the Ruhr pocket, and "we weren't about to get captured." When we told them they were some two hundred miles south of the Ruhr one said to the other--"Didn't miss it far after all, did I?" The planes were based in Eng-

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land and had been strafing and shooting at jet planes over Czechoslovakia--just a good morning's work.

Maj. Banks and 1st Sgt. Vadas of "A" received Bronze Stars. Sgt. Menaldino, who had been convalescing from an injury sustained during the Brest campaign, finally returned to "B," along with Pvt. Smola who has been in the hospital for a month.

Pvt. James Knight of "C" had a little excitement in trying to halt a civilian motorcycle rider. The man did not slow up but drew a pistol and fired at Knight. MP Knight answered with three rounds from his carbine, but the man got away.

SATURDAY, 21 April 1945.--The situation between the American and German armies in Bad Nauheim is confused, to say the least. There are more Germans in uniform there than Americans. All of them are wounded occupants of the many hospitals or the medics who take care of them, but it is startling at first to pass a man in field-gray and receive his salute as normally as if you were in Fayetteville on Saturday afternoon. The men are getting a kick out of the situation, however. The Germans salute everybody, from privates on up.

SUNDAY, 22 April 1945.--"B" moved from Bad Homberg to Hailbach today, a small town near Aschaffenburg, while "A" has moved to the sleepy resort town of Bad Orb.

MONDAY, 23 April 1945.--Hqs moved from Friedburg to Lohr, and Sv and "C" to Hailbach, so that the whole battalion is now moved into its new area south and east of Frankfurt.

TUESDAY, 24 April 1945.--Orders have been



## THE DIARY

received transferring Maj. Fanks and Lt. Mahoney to Military Government. Having volunteered for this duty several weeks ago, they now learn that their fate includes two week's school at Troyes, France, 100 miles from Paris. This of course has created an opening in the promotion lists of the battalion and a shake-up of officers has resulted. Capt. Lee takes over as S-3 and Capt. Harrison as S-2. Lt. Semenock has become new Com O and Hqs Btry chief, while Lt. Wikan will leave "B" and go to "C" as BC in Capt. Lee's place. The former S-3 and S-2 plan to leave for school on Friday.

Following up a report from Lt. Hillegas' detachment that 3,000 SS troops were rumored hiding out in his area, Lt. Michel van der Hout, a Dutch Infantry officer, was sent down from Third Army headquarters to investigate. This trouble shooter from the Netherlands questioned natives (none too gently) and flew over the suspicious area, but found no evidences of the troops. The whole report has been ascribed to vicious rumor. Lt. van der Hout fought with the Dutch Army in 1939 and 1940, spent three days in a concentration camp, was condemned to death, escaped, and hid in the attic of his home until the British and Canadian armies liberated him in November.

Capt. Anastasia and his medics had their toughest workout since the war started. It also came at the worst time--four a.m. A truck hauling PW's turned over in this vicinity and thirty-seven were hurt, many seriously. Lt. Conway reported from MP headquarters that some were coming in with their ribs sticking out, with compound fractures and other body wounds.

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The good doctor and his men did their best for them and put them in the German army hospital in Lohr. Four, however, are not expected to live.

WEDNESDAY, 25 April 1945.--"C" is now taking on full operational status and has moved from Hailbach to Ruckingen to take over "B's" detachment there and "A's" at Gedern. Cpl. Ferraldi, machine gunner on post in the Hqs motor park, got quite a jolt today. He idly watched two barefoot girls wrapped in blankets strolling down the street. A wagon stopped by them. As one climbed in her blanket slipped to the ground revealing her as completely nude. Ferraldi didn't see which way the wagon went, or who was driving it, or what happened to the other girl. He just saw a good deal of German womanhood. It was later learned, however, that there is a nudist colony in the vicinity and they always wrap up in blankets when coming to town.

THURSDAY, 26 April 1945.--An ambulance brought in five more Germans hurt when a PW truck hit a tank. They were turned over to the German Army hospital.

FRIDAY, 27 April 1945.--In addition to Maj. Banks and Lt. Mahoney, Lt. Argo is also transferring to Military Government. Lt. Mahoney's departure was threatened because the lanky S-2, who has sweated out more OP's than any other officer in the battalion, didn't have a clean pair of pants to wear back to the civilization of France. Reduced to only one pair by various rigors of combat, "Scoop" has had no opportunity to have them washed. The problem has been solved in time, however, by Sgt. McCauley. The

## THE DIARY

versatile officer, whose accomplishments include being the principle author of this diary, is on his way. (Ed. note--Mahoney's first post in Military Government was at the familiar town of Merzig. It developed that the blonde fraulein assigned him as secretary was the daughter of a citizen of the town who had been killed by American artillery fire on New Year's day. Capt. Mahoney--he was promoted in the interim--was careful not to report that he was part of the unit doing the shooting that day.)

SATURDAY, 28 April 1945.--Another big shift in the area we are assigned to police is under way, necessitating moves by all batteries. Charlie is moving into the resort town of Bad Kissengen, with a detachment a few miles up the road under Lt. Caley at Bad Neustadt. Able is moving into Bayreuth, site of the famous Wagnerian festival, and will have a detachment at Kulmbach.

SUNDAY, 29 April 1945.--Headquarters and Baker battery have taken over the police of the town of Bamberg, one of the oldest of German cities. Accommodations are a little less luxurious than we have been accustomed to, for a new army order has ended the practice of occupying luxurious private homes and hotels. According to the latest law from Third Army, no German civilians will be evicted, and troops have to use what public buildings are vacant. Bamberg is a city without modern conveniences in its public buildings, thanks to American bombs.

MONDAY, 30 April 1945.--The cellars of Bamberg are literally floating in wines and liquors of all descriptions, and the major problem of our

## BATTLE DIARY

MP's is to keep down the trouble that results when soldiers and displaced persons drink too much of it. Lt. Conway's police station is filled every night.

TUESDAY, 1 May 1945.--A Baker battery patrol, checking a lonely road south of Coburg late this afternoon, was waved to a stop by two frantic medics who reported that their GMC had been taken by armed German soldiers. It developed that after the two medics had been captured they were forced to wave down a jeep, containing a Captain and his driver. (When these latter two were being taken prisoner they managed to escape by attacking their guards, later investigation revealed, although they were reported by the two medics as killed.)

Told that the German troops numbered at least twenty or thirty, the Baker patrol returned to battery headquarters in Bamberg, and a full sized patrol was organized under Lt. Peterson. The area was searched, but no trace of the Germans could be found. German civilians also joined in the search. (The investigation showed that the captain who had escaped told the near-by village burgermeister that the town would be blown up unless the German troops in the vicinity were turned in.)

WEDNESDAY, 2 May 1945.--The search for the German troops in the big wooded area south of Coburg continued today, with a combined air and ground patrol. Lt. Brockmeyer, with Sgt. O'Rourke as observer and radio operator, searched the area from the air, maintaining contact with a jeep ground patrol consisting of Capt. Smith, Sgt. Brong, Cpl. Clark and Pfc Katz. Although the plane could find no evidence of the Germans,

## THE DIARY

the men on the ground almost ran right into them. German civilians, still fearful about the fate of their village, warned them in time of the numbers and organization of the enemy.

There were approximately 50 members of an SS Panzer division, by-passed in the fighting, still fully armed, well fed on captured American rations and with several American vehicles. Well organized under a lieutenant, they had built carefully camouflaged positions almost impossible to pick up.

A civilian in the village was dispatched to carry a message to the Germans, with a demand for their immediate surrender. A defiant answer came back from the SS officer, stating that he would not surrender until the German army did, and that he was ready to fight anybody who attacked. A company of tank destroyers was called in to handle the challenge, but the Krauts turned out to be not quite so eager to fight. A few were captured in the area, but most managed to escape in scattered groups.

THURSDAY, 3 May 1945.--Service Battery is now established in Bamberg, along with the full detachment from each firing battery necessary to perform maintenance on the tanks, guns and cranes. The Service Battery area is a popular place to visit, for it happens to be one of the few places in the whole town where a hot shower may be acquired.

FRIDAY, 4 May 1945.--There is no chance to get settled down comfortably even on an MP job. Plans are in the air for all elements of the battalion to move again. Even Lt. Wikan's Charlie Battery boys will have to desert the luxury of their resort hotel at Bad Kissengen.

## BATTLE DIARY

SATURDAY, 5 May 1945.--Headquarters today moved to Furth, and set up comfortably in an unoccupied hospital. Charlie Battery is in Lauf, west of Nurnberg, while Baker is handling four jobs at the moment: Palace Guard at Third Army rear, Erlangen; MP detachments still at Bamberg and another at Schwabach, south of Nurnberg; and a detachment at Weiden prepared to take over a Corps PW cage.

SUNDAY, 6 May 1945.--The battalion is about to change primary jobs--from MP's to the operation of PW cages. Charlie Battery is taking over a huge cage west of Furth, and Baker will shortly move to Regensburg to take over another. We are in the process of being relieved from our MP job, at a time when we are covering thousands of square miles of German territory. East to west our area runs from Bayreuth to Hannau (just east of Frankfurt) and north to south it extends from the farthest outpost at Bad Neustadt to 15 miles south of Nurnberg. The best idea of the extent of the job being handled is to note the troops that are necessary to relieve us: Fourth Infantry Division, 71st Infantry Division, 38th AAA Brigade.

MONDAY, 7 May 1945.--There is a walking-on-clouds feeling of lightness in the air as it becomes obvious that the end of the war will be announced in a matter of hours. The excitement has prevailed for days, so there is not likely to be any widespread demonstration when the end does come. Everyone has an individual hope that he'll be getting home soon.

TUESDAY, 8 May 1945.--In Headquarters Battery and among a few men in other batteries who participated in the pools, a major share of the

## THE DIARY

excitement over the end of the war is the speculation as to who will win the two V-E Day pools which have been conducted since the too-optimistic days of last September at Brest. (The holder of the lucky day--9--turned out to be the same man in both pools, and Tec. 4 John J. Delimat, assistant battalion survey sergeant, collected a cool \$1,140.)

WEDNESDAY, 9 May 1945.--The war is over, and the long road that began for a lot of us at Camp Shelby is beginning to show an end. During its months of combat the 243rd has been miraculously lucky with regard to casualties, but danger has always been present and unending hard labor has been the lot of most men. Every man who has performed his duty to the best of his ability can feel a full sense of satisfaction, for the battalion has had a share in every major success of the Third Army. Every round that has been fired has made the march into Germany a little easier for the doughboy in front.





PART THREE  
ANNEXES



## THE REDUCTION OF FORT DE LA CITE OF ST. MALO

By the evening of 15 August 1944, all of St. Malo, Dinard and environs, with the exception of "Fort de la Cite" and Isle de Cezembre, were in Allied hands.

The Isle de Cezembre is an island approximately 1000 yards long and 500 yards wide, heavily fortified, and about 4000 yards from St. Malo proper. Fort de la Cite, popularly referred to as the "Citadel," is a heavily walled and tunnelled, partly underground fort built on a point projecting into the River Rance from the town of St. Servan Sur Mer.

Shortly after noon on the sixteenth of August, 1944, the 243rd Field Artillery Battalion received a telephonic moving order from VIII Corps concerning the use of one battery for direct laying against the Citadel. This mission was to be fired the following day as part of the preparation for an infantry assault.

At 1445 the Battalion CO, S-3 and BC of Battery "C" met Maj. Gen. Macon, Commander of the 83rd Division, together with the Assistant Division Commander and his Artillery Commander at the OP of the 329th Infantry, the regiment which was to make the assault on the Citadel. Battery "C" left its position some fifteen miles from St. Malo at 1630 and moved to a rendezvous

## BATTLE DIARY

on the outskirts of St. Servan Sur Mer. Positions were selected and the order given for occupation of position starting at 2000 that night.

The positions selected were approximately 2400 yards from the Citadel and afforded a direct view for the gun sights. Since the minimum elevation for the eight-inch gun is 10 degrees or 178 mils on level ground and since this elevation gives a range of 10800 yards for reduced charge, 15000 for normal charge and 16900 for super-charge, it was obvious that the gun must be put into position with the carriages on a pronounced forward slope. The slopes were worked with a bulldozer supplied by the Engineer Battalion of the 83rd Division and by hand until a forward slope of approximately 10 degrees was reached. The guns were winched into position during the night. This was a rather difficult occupation due to the rocky nature of the ground and to the lack of practice on the part of the officers and men in going into position on sloping ground. Number two gun was ready to fire at approximately 0905. The first shot fired by number one kicked the spades out, and the gun went out of action for about fifteen minutes.

Since the drift for the range amounted to one mil laying for deflection was accomplished by the gunner's sighting directly on the target. Elevations were determined by measuring the minimum elevation (site) and applying to it the elevation for 2400 yards.

Three OP's, one axial and two lateral, were occupied. The axial OP was located in a tower on a chateau about 100 yards in rear of number

## ANNEXES

one gun. It served as a central fire direction point, having direct communications with each gun and each OP. The left OP was about 2400 yards from the target with an angle T of 100 mils. The right OP was about 900 yards from the target with an angle T of 1100 mils. When a target was attacked, the executive was directed to lay on it for deflection and given a computed elevation. Sensings were taken at all three OP's and corrections given to the guns from the central OP in form of changes to both deflections and elevations as right one, up five.

One hundred and twelve rounds were fired in attacking five targets. HE fused t105 with charge normal, white bag was used exclusively. Charge normal has a muzzle velocity of 2600 feet per second and super-charge 2840 feet per second. Charge normal was used since the increase was slight compared with the increased erosion on the gun. The conversion factor of normal charge to super-charge is .526.

The Citadel surrendered immediately after the shelling by this battalion, and without any assault by the infantry. In view of the fact that the Citadel had ample stocks of water and food and that it had been bombed and shelled by lighter caliber for some days, it is believed that the firing of Battery "C" of this battalion was responsible for the capitulation.

### EFFECT:

In all five targets we fired upon, there consisted an open gate, three gun turrets and a steel pillbox. We were told to put one round

## BATTLE DIARY

through the open gate before firing on the remainder of the targets. The first round landed on the masonry about ten feet left of the gate penetrated about five feet and made a hole about ten feet in diameter. The masonry on the gun turrets was blown quickly away but little effect was had upon the steel plates below the masonry. Almost no effect was had on the steel pillbox itself but the gun in the pillbox was apparently put out of action by concussion. Out of 91 rounds fired on the four targets exclusive of the pillbox, 89 were hits. Out of 21 rounds fired on the pillbox, not more than 4 are believed to have been hits.

## HQ 243RD FA BN

SO 145

APO 403 US Army  
15 Dec 44

1. The following named EM are trfd in gr to the 26th Inf Div and WP not later than 16 Dec 44 to the GG thereof for dy. Organic transportation will be utilized. Equipment to accompany personnel upon transfer as prescribed in Sec II Cir 80 Hq ETOUSA dtd 12 July 44:

### HEADQUARTERS BATTERY

S/Sgt	Arrants Dale H	6863253
Tec 5	Cox Edward M	11085110
Tec 5	Earll Robert B	32144261
Pfc	Hamblen George W	31202779
Pvt	Deschene William L	20146856

### BATTERY A

Pvt	Bernard Albert J	20146861
Pvt	Caporiccio Peter R	32470768
Pvt	Novak Joseph R	31166573
Pvt	Perry Charles L	20146912
Pvt	Russo Dominic	32930907
Pvt	Zimmer George W	37411966

## BATTLE DIARY

### BATTERY B

Tec 5	Johnson John V	31084133
Tec 5	Sanieski Louis E	31189381
Pfc	Sundstrom Karl S	32815216
Pvt	Carey Thomas	11048856
Pvt	Pierson Alfred W	11095758
Pvt	Vaughn Rayford J	34083267

### BATTERY C

Pfc	Farrell Thomas F	31084254
Pvt	Frechette Arthur R	31152705
Pvt	Haddock Ernest J	34782207
Pvt	Henderson Charles H	31147732
Pvt	Nason Raymond H	13131521
Pvt	Rhodes Velman G Jr	33643107

AUTH: Ltr Hq TUSA Subject Enlisted Personnel for Retraining as Infantry Rifleman: Dtd 8 Dec 44.

By order of Lt Col RUCKS:

JOHN L PADGETT JR  
CWO USA  
Adj



## HQ 243RD FA BN

SO 147

APO 403 US Army  
18 Dec 44

1. The following named EM are trfd in gr to the 95th Inf Div and WP not later than 19 Dec 44 reporting to the GG thereof for dy. Complete clothing and equipment including rifle and overshoes will be taken. Organization transportation will be utilized:

### HEADQUARTERS BATTERY

Pfc Chapman, Warren W	11089852
Pvt Emerson, Stanley W	33678728
Pvt Grewell, Paul B	35916897
Pvt McGrail, Charles F Jr	11090029
Pvt Mullaney, John P	31180530

### BATTERY "A"

Pvt Dorris, Arthur L	31084317
Pvt Majerowicz, Henry M	12140011
Pvt Mott, Harold B	32470758
Pvt Zinni, Mocco	32144269
Pvt Wrona, Joseph F	37299423

## BATTLE DIARY

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Tec 5 Larkin, Reginald W	31084299
Pfc Wheat, Thomas W	34543738
Pfc Winters, Herbert T	32428604
Pvt Banas, Edmond	31129735
Pvt Trifoso, Samuel L Jr	32470784

### BATTERY "C"

Pfc Carona, Victor A	12140171
Pfc Latham, Zenas A	34687579
Pfc Mansfield, Robert A	31202855
Pvt Daigle, Lawrence E	34236342
Pvt Mielke, Frederick W	36298755

### SERVICE BATTERY

Tec 5 Bollinger, Robert M	35019176
Tec 5 Mason, William P	32634131
Tec 5 Strensrud, Plamer K	37299813

AUTH: Ltr Hq Third US Army Sub: Enlisted  
Personnel for Retraining as Infantry Riflemen,  
dtd 15 Dec 44.

By order of Lt Col RUCKS:

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CWO USA  
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SECRET

EXTRACT FROM SPECIAL REPORT OF ARTY/R's  
XX CORPS ARTY, DTD FEB 4

1. ARTY/R, 1400 Hours, 2 Feb 1945

This Arty/R was requested on the basis of intelligence obtained from a sortie of low obliques taken along the SAAR R on 5 January. This particular sortie was remarkable in itself, having been flown at a mean elevation of about 50 feet under severe anti-aircraft fire which occasioned material damage to the airplane and grave risk to the pilot concerned.

Numerous profitable targets had already been located from examination of the photographs obtained in this sortie, and these targets had been fired upon where within range of the Corps Arty.

One of the more important targets not so engaged was a heavy pontoon bridge at OCKEEN (L1615) which lay, initially, beyond the range of any piece in the XX Corps Arty. This bridge consisted of permanent wooden approaches on either bank of the SAAR R. Upstream from these approaches were moored a series of double barges, across each set of which was layed a section of roadway. By floating these barges down to a point between the wooden approaches, it was possible to form a pontoon bridge across the river.

## BATTLE DIARY

An 8" gun Btry ("A" Btry 243d FA Bn) was subsequently displaced to positions from which this bridge could be reached, but discontinuous bad weather had prevented the use of high performance aircraft for adjustment until the afternoon of 2 Feb, at which time radio contact was made with a pilot of the 10th Photo Recon Sq., operating under the call sign "DUMPLING BLUE."

The mission which followed presented a fine example of what may be accomplished by a trained pilot and a reliable gun crew even when operating with velocity weapons, at long range.

The first target engaged was the pair of barges nearest to the approaches. Firing with map data corrected, the first round fell 50 yards short, deflection correct, at a range of 28,000 yds. Another round was fired at the same range setting, in the expectation that the dispersion of the piece would possibly result in a range bracket. This round also fell approximately 50 yards short, and corrections were applied. The third round burst over and slightly right of the target, the fourth scattered fragments into it, and the fifth scored a direct hit.

The pilot then proceeded to adjust upon four other sets of barges. During the adjustments on the second shot, shell fragments severed the guy ropes and a pair of barges began to drift down stream. The pilot requested permission to adjust on this target and expressed disappointment when advised that capabilities of the piece did not effect much prospect of obtaining hits on a moving target. Adjustment was continued on the remaining barges.

At one point in the proceedings, the pilot

## ANNEXES

observed a motor boat pulling out from shore to rescue the loose barges which were still floating down stream. Although prevented from using his machine guns due to orders against the offensive employment of such weapons by reconnaissance planes, the pilot dived on the motor boat and frightened it away from the barge. The mission continued until the remaining barges had all been sunk or damaged. Thirty-eight rounds of ammunition were expended, four barges knocked out, and one (as indicated) released to float down stream.

The mission was an unqualified success and reflects credit both on the accuracy of the fire and alertness of the observer since all firing was conducted with a high velocity weapon at considerable range, and the greater part of the targets were so defiladed as to be in dead space to rounds at the short end of the dispersion scale.

For the Commanding Officer:

Pardee Marshall

PARDEE MARSHALL

LT COL. FA, S-3

(Ed. note--The XX Corps S-3 didn't point it out, but this mission is a high tribute to the accuracy of the Able Battery cannoneers under the leadership of Lt. Russell and Sgts. Davis and Baker. The battalion fire direction center was right on the nose with all data, not a very easy job at such a range.)

## THE GERMAN WOMAN AT WAR

The following captured circular was published by a Hamburg firm:

"Dear Front Soldier:

When will you come back on leave?

When will you be able to forget the hard duties of a soldier and exchange them for a few days of joy, happiness and love? Back at home we know of your heroic struggle; however we do understand that even the bravest gets tired and that he needs a soft pillow, tenderness and healthy pleasure.

WE ARE WAITING FOR YOU.

For you who have been compelled to spend your leave in a foreign town; we are waiting for you whom the war has robbed of his home; waiting for you who stand alone in the world without a wife, without a fiancée, without a flirt.

WE ARE WAITING FOR YOU.

Cut out our badge of this letter. Display it visibly on your glass in every tea room, in every bar which is in the vicinity of a railway station. Soon a member of our League of Lonely Women will take charge of you and the dreams you dreamt in the front line and the longings of lonely nights will find fulfilment. It is

## ANNEXES

you we want, not your money; therefore ask for our membership at once. There are members everywhere, since we German women understand our duties towards our country and towards those who defend it.

Naturally, we are not unselfish--for years and years we have been separated from our men-folks, surrounded by all these foreigners. Naturally we long to have again a real German boy to press to our bosom. Don't be shy, your wife, your sister or your sweetheart is also one of us.

We think of you but we also think of the future of our Country.

HE WHO RESTS, RUSTS.

LEAGUE OF LONELY WAR WOMEN  
(VEREIN EINSAMER KRIEGERFRAUN)"





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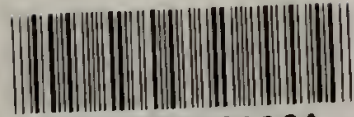
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