

out for Bastogne, Belgium, to pick up the duffle bags and Val Paes that the Battalion had stored there. Upon arriving in the vicinity that had now become a battle ground, the men were told that it would be impossible for them to get into Bastogne. The heavy artillery barrage that could be heard coming into the city reaffirmed these words, so that the men had to return without the supplies.

During February, 1945, in Voerendaal, Holland, S Sgt. Abce received a battlefield commission and took command of the Transportation Platoon, Lt. Wing taking over command of one of the firing companies.

It was after the crossing of the Rhine, that two of the members of the platoon were captured by the Germans and held prisoners for forty-eight hours. Williams and Wallace, attached to Company "A", were sent out to pick up fuel. On the return trip, they ran into a German road block and were taken prisoners. Their vehicle, fuel and all, was burned. For two days Wallace and Williams moved with their German captors not knowing what their fate would be. On several occasions they were able to identify American machine gun fire. On another occasion, they, together with their captors, hit the ground when American planes appeared overhead. After two days of captivity, Williams and Wallace were released and told that they were free to return to the Allied lines in the prophetic lines of the German interpreter, "Go now! You are our prisoners today; tomorrow we shall be yours!"

## THE COMMUNICATIONS SECTION

Radio communication was one of the things that made possible the rapid movement of the Allied armored columns. It was radio that enabled us to visualize our own movements as well as the movements of those units located on our flanks.

When the Battalion jumped off from Ayranches, France, after the breakthrough at St. Lo in August, 1944, the Communications section under the command of Lt. Edward V. Jahoda began the task which kept each member of the section on the job until V-E day. During the drives through France and Germany it was necessary for all the operators to stay constantly on their sets so that communications with higher echelons would be maintained at all times. Any hour of the day or night would find Ellis in the Commanding Officer's vehicle working at his N. C. S. job. By the same token, the subordinate stations in the net were well manned by McLain and Rothman in the S-2, M-20 vehicle, Buchko in the Executive Officer's vehicle, Hayhow operating in the S-3 command car, Stein at the controls of his "506" in the S-4 vehicle and Jones at the "193".

From time to time radio silence would be invoked for security reasons. When this proved to be the case, the entire burden of seeing that all messages were expedited quickly and efficiently rested on the shoulders of the "bike" riders, Elton, Davis, Baylor, and Baer all of whom did their job and did it well. Electrical and mechanical radio troubles were capably handled by Boswell and Keller.

The section suffered its first casualty in Luxembourg when Reese, the S-3 liason operator, was injured in a vehicular accident shortly after the armored drive had taken the unit through France. The Battalion lost a respected individual and expert radio electrician when Boswell was killed in Wallendorf, Germany, during September, 1944. Elmer, the Communication Officer's radio operator was wounded in the same action.

Message Center was an important cog in the communications wheel with the task of dispatching and handling all messages by messenger and radio. When conditions became more stabilized, Message Center assumed the extra burden of maintaining a switch-board which necessitated the use of Baylor's and Morgan's talents as linemen. Fisher, Kole, Jago and Zilaunes were the men responsible for seeing that the Message Center functioned smoothly.

Meranda, in his capacity as Battalion Communications Chief, and Buchko, in his capacity as Headquarters Communications Sergeant, both deserve considerable credit for jobs well done. However, the section's top priority assignment was carried out successfully not by a few of the men but by the combined and sustained efforts of all the men in communications, working as a team.

#### KITCHEN STAFF

Upon landing in France, the kitchen served it first of 643 combat meals in the early evening in an apple orchard near the town of Briquebec. When the company started its movement through France, Torres, Patterson, Salvatore and Nanna were attached to the Transportation Section and moved with the company. Mountz, Frauenpreis remained behind with the 5th Armored Division trains where they guarded various supplies. These latter men rejoined the company at St. James, France, and remained with the company until Quellennes, France, where they were again assigned to guard various supplies. They remained here some three weeks and it was during this time that the name "Kitchen Commandos" became part and parcel of the kitchen crew. The cooks rejoined the company at Guerville, France. The company next moved on through Paris, the kitchen staff remaining behind at Guerville, France, not rejoining the company until Luxembourg prior to the initial offensive into the Siegfried Line. The kitchen crew did not move with the company on this offensive and later moved back to Bastogne, Belgium. The entire crew rejoined the company at Faymonville, Belgium, in mid-October and remained with the company from that point on. It was while the company was located at Faymonville, that the cooks woke up one morning to find that the wind had blown their make-shift kitchen away. Nor were the cooks immune to artillery fire. While at Rotgen, Germany, the cooks were baking a cake one afternoon in preparation for the Thanksgiving Day meal. The booming of the big artillery guns could be plainly heard. The rumbling of the guns caused pieces of plaster to fall spasmodically into the cake resulting in a flavoring that brought forth moans and groans at the evening meal that day. The kitchen crew received its first replacement in the person of Carlisle at Harze, Belgium, in January, 1945. Best remembered among the exploits of the "Kitchen Commandos" is the alcoholic inspired meal that was the result of an accidental mistake. Rather

than using water, the usual ingredient used in the making of gravy, on this particular occasion one of the inventive minds among the kitchen crew used a ten gallon pot of beer as the principal ingredient, the beer having been placed in the pot by mistake.

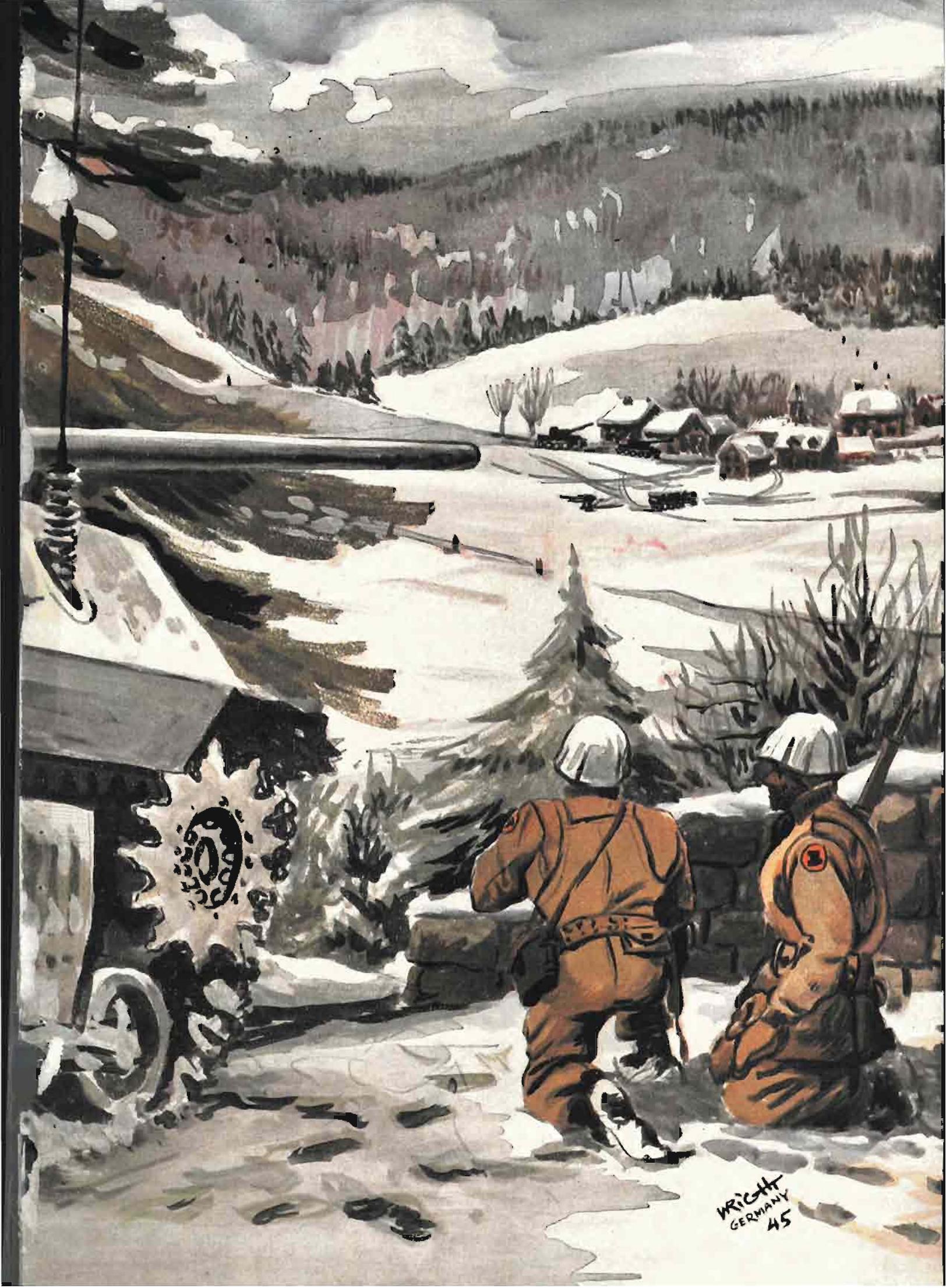
From the time the unit approached the Elbe until V-E day, the company performed military government duties. The company was in Wendezelle, Germany, when the news was officially announced to the effect that the war against Germany had ended. On May 10, 1945 the entire company moved to the town of Heiligenstadt, Germany.











WRIGHT  
GERMANY  
45

## History of Company "A"



Capt. James H. Lloyd  
Company Commander  
Wounded and Evacuated



1st Lt. Glenn O. Garber  
Company Commander



1st Lt. Pete Watral  
Executive Officer



2nd Lt. Leory Mercier  
Liaison Officer



1st Sgt. Mike Lewka  
First Sergeant

There are few men with us to-day whose service dates back to July, 1941 when the Battalion was activated at Tent City, Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania as the 28th Division Anti-Tank Battalion, commanded by Major Peterson, who is now a full colonel, commanding an Infantry Regiment. "A" Company's first commanding officer was Lt. Hoover and the 1st Sergeant was Rover Gilbert, the only man known whose voice had a greater range than that of a movie sergeant, greater even than Sgt. Koczan's.

Those were the days when we were the "Arsenal of Democracy" and we were getting a year's training "just in case". Consequently most of the equipment was improvised; an automobile rear-end from the nearest junk yard for a carriage, a stove pipe for a tube, and two pieces of angle iron for trails made a mean anti-tank gun; mean at least for the men who had to polish it for the Saturday inspections.



S Sgt. Francis Kilroy  
Supply Sgt.



S Sgt. William O. Nowels  
Communications Sgt.

Soon after it was activated the Battalion moved to A. P. Hill, near Bowling Green, Virginia. It was on this move that a loving cup disappeared from the Red Fox Inn and a showdown inspection of all barracks bags — a favorite pastime of the army — was made, but that is not where it was finally found.

After several weeks of training in anti-tank tactics, attending demonstrations, and making morale-building trips to Washington and other near-by places of interest, we moved back to Indiantown Gap in September, 1941, and soon after to the Carolina maneuver area, where Major Hernandez became Battalion Commander. It was here also that our unit became known as the 28th Division "Fire Department", because of the clanking of the brake drums on the improvised gun carriages.

Maneuvers were ended by December 6, 1941, a great day for all of us. We had done our bit for the Army. Many of the men were expecting discharges so they could return home and take up their lives where they had left off. Then came December 7, 1941, Pearl Harbor... War... everything suddenly had a different meaning, the game was being played for keeps now.

Early in January, 1942 the entire 28th Division started by convoy for Camp Livingston.



T 4 Cuthrell, T 4 Hood, Pfc. Stockton, Pfc. Ryn, T 4 Miller, S Sgt. Deeb, T 4 Wendelken, Pfc. Hodapp,  
T 4 Withers, T 4 Juba, T 4 Bednar, Sgt. Siulborski, S Sgt. Kilroy, T 4 DiSarro, Pfc. Le Page,  
Pfc. Stern, T 5 Celentano, 1st Sgt. Lewka, S Sgt. Nowels, T 5 Eppler



Pfc. Stockton, S Sgt. Deeb, Pfc. Begay,  
T 5 Eppler, T/4 Workman, T/4 Di Sarro, T 5 Celentano

Louisiana. A blizzard was raging and so were we, that being the reason we were not frozen. It was the first time a full division had traveled by convoy such a great distance.

Basic training started over again at Livingston. Several men had been transferred and at one time "A" Co., had only fifteen privates. After the K. P. and guard details were made up, the remainder of the men fell out for training, both of them. But then replacements came in and were welcomed with open arms and a big chicken dinner.

The division hid away in the swamps of Louisiana for several months of training, until Winchell discovered it and turned on the red hot heat of publicity. He seemed to think we should be fighting the war in Europe instead of on the Louisiana bayous, so some one started pushing a pencil and we found ourselves in Camp Hood, Texas, detached from the 28th Division and officially designated as the 628th Tank Destroyer Battalion.

Intensive training was continued at Hood. We participated in several demonstrations, some of them being photographed for use in training films. Another large group of replacements came to us at Camp Hood, bringing the Battalion up to full strength.

In September the Battalion moved to Camp Bowie, Texas, where 1st Lt. Lloyd became "A" Co.'s Commanding Officer, then on to Camp Gordon Johnston, Florida, in January, 1943. Things easy to remember there were the "Top Hat" and the "incident" at the Beachcomber. One man will long remember coming home with only one shoe after losing the other in the mud in a race with an M. P. He won the race, though, and that was the important thing.



S Sgt. James P. Deeb  
Mess Sgt.



Sgt. De Long, Cpl. Rutkowski, T/4 A. Anderson, Pfc. Bodnar

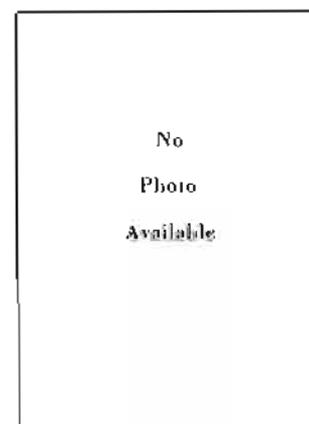


1st Lt. Aubrey O. James  
1st Platoon Leader



S/Sgt. Orval Graham  
1st Platoon Sgt.

The Battalion received its first M-10 Tank Destroyers at Camp Gordon Johnston, after much fuss, bother and consultation, we were allowed to take a swift glance inside and then finally to drive them. Here we got quite a bit of amphibious training also, assaulting the shores of Dog Island several times.



1st Lt. Thomas M. Darrah  
Evacuated To Hospital  
1st Platoon Leader

After moving to Camp Rucker, Alabama, training on the M-10s was intensified, though many say that intensified is not the word. Sherman may have been right about war, but this training was even worse. Our first training in artillery methods was taken at Camp Rucker. And the unit citation from Major General Oliver, Commander of the 5th Armored Division for our part in the artillery preparation prior to the crossing of the Roer River, is ample proof that the lessons had been learned well.

In June, 1943 the Battalion moved to the Tennessee maneuver area. There we learned about combat living conditions without realizing



Volkswagen Factory, Near Fallersleben, Germany

it. We learned many things that later paid dividends in actual combat. Each man became proficient at his own job and worked well with the others. At first some of the officers spent much of their time in the PW cages, but they learned a lot and the unit began to look like an aggressive fighting team. Another thing we learned at this time was to pitch pup tents by the numbers, with an aiming circle.

From Tennessee the Battalion returned to Camp Rucker, where most of us were given furloughs, then on to Camp Pickett, Virginia. There some time was spent in advanced amphibious training.

In November the Battalion moved to the mountains of West Virginia. There sub-zero weather seemed to be the usual thing with several inches of



T/5 Anderson

T/4 Linton

Sgt. D. Ryder

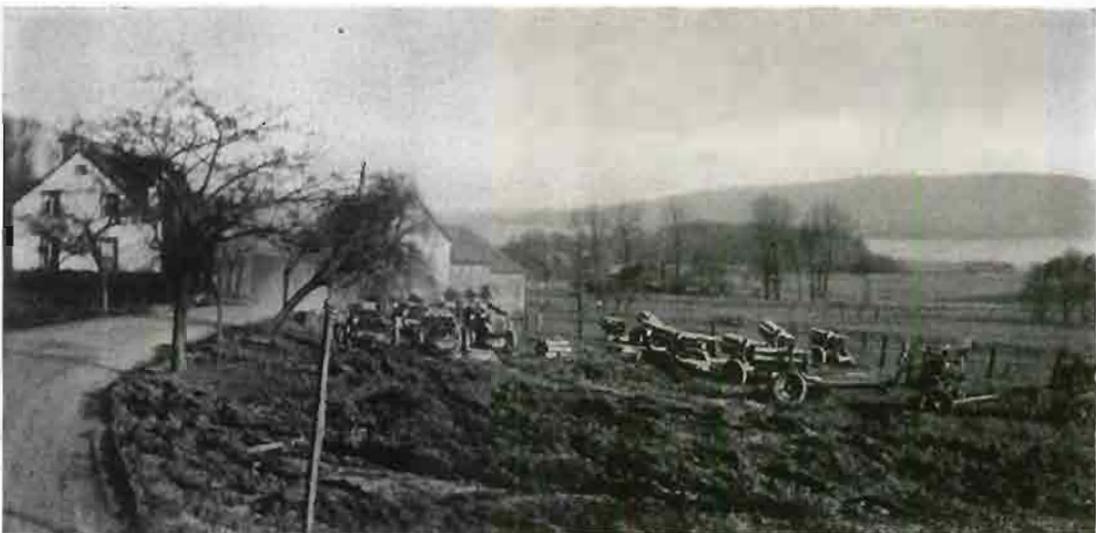


Sgt. Cincowien, Cpl. Kee, T/4 Floyd Jones,  
T/4 Clyde L. Reavis, T/5 T. Correia

snow most of the time. This was really life in the raw; much too raw for most of us. But we survived, just as we did similar weather conditions in Europe but this time under enemy fire. Men never know what they can take until they are given the test.

Thus we were all glad to move on to Fort Dix, New Jersey, though we felt that each move now brought us one step nearer the gangplank and no one was anxious to walk up that. We knew that would come eventually, though, and at least we would be living in houses at Fort Dix. (Incidentally, as it turned out we were quartered in an old CCC camp there on the opposite side of the Fort from town, about six miles from the first outpost and we had to pass through two M. P. gates to get into town.)

The concensus of opinion of all ranks and grades was that this camp was it. Thus it became known almost unanimously as "This Is It" camp. Many of



Nebelwerfers



Building On Fire At Fosse, Belgium

the men were lost to the company here for one reason or another, some even going so far as to shed their uniforms for those long lost civvies.

In reality this camp was it. It was a nightmare. Turning in clothes. Drawing more clothes. Turning in more clothes. Put 'em on. Take 'em off. Put 'em back on. The M-10s were turned in also. Day by day the supply sergeant's sparse locks were turning grey, for much depended on him at this stage of the game, and he showed his worth by re-equipping the Company in such an admirable manner. Show-down inspection followed show-down inspection, of clothing and equipment, for this was an important part of the processing for overseas duty that was to come very shortly.

Five-day furloughs were given to all or nearly all, and some of the men even made it home for Christmas. We seemed to be continually passing in



Sgt. Samson, Cpl. Tomlin, T/4 Roller,  
T/5 Hammond, T/5 Baumeister



Pfc. Wilson, T/5 Fowler, Pfc. Lortz, T/5 Hunter, T/5 Bonds, 1st Sgt. Graham,  
Sgt. Conners, Sgt. Bernhart, Pfc. Worley, Pfc. Nothdurft, Pfc. Gervais

review and formal retreat became routine. Many of the men lived near Fort Dix and they scurried back and forth between home and camp whenever possible. The others kept "Mike's Joint" in Wrightstown sold out, or nearly so.

Came the day we were given our shipping number, duffle bags were stenciled, clothing was checked for individual marking, security measures were laid down to the Company, and naturally we were restricted to camp. Everyone supposed that we would get no more passes and it looked as if our future was definitely cut out for us. There was a wonderful collection of long, drawn faces as we plodded through the first heavy snowfall of the season to the train for Camp Shanks, New York, and overseas.

In a few short hours we were in Camp Shanks trying to make ourselves comfortable. No passes were forthcoming and again we were subjected



Crossing Rhine Pontoon Bridge, March 31, 1945

to those eternal inspections. After seventy-two-hours of processing of men, clothing and equipment we were pleasantly surprised by being given passes and everyone who possibly could, went to New York City. Unfortunately there were big K. P. and guard details to be taken care of, but most of the men found a way to get out of camp for just one more fling at the States and then another and another. But finally, as all things good and bad do, our good thing came to an end, and on the afternoon of January 27, 1944, we boarded a train which shuttled us to the Hudson River, then a ferry across the river and there before us was the thing which had occupied our minds most of the time for the last month, the gangplank.

On boardship pandemonium reigned. Everyone struggled to get into one of those contraptions that pass for bunks, to make room for the next fellow. Out of chaos finally came order and then sleep.

Morning found the ship far out at sea and we had missed a last glimpse of the Lady with the Torch, but worse than that was the rolling and heaving of the ship. (Yes, the ship.) Many were the gills that turned green, but not with envy. The food was none too good but that mattered little, because no one seemed to have an appetite



1st Lt. Jack McCann  
1st Platoon Leader



S/Sgt. John A. Koczan  
2nd Platoon Sgt.



Cpl. Griswold, Sgt. C. B. Smith, Plc. McCauley, Sgt. Candelmo



Sgt. Locatelli, Pfc. Padilla, Cpl. Olsabeck,  
T/4 Brill, Pvt. Rodriguez

anyway. The fish in the Atlantic must have enjoyed the voyage though, because they were fed well. But just as we had everything else, we sweated this out and found that it was not too bad.

The sea was fairly calm, with only a couple very rough days. There was one submarine scare, and once there was an immense amount of flak thrown up at two German reconnaissance planes. We were sailing on the "Acquitania", a British ship. The ship had no escort and that didn't help our feelings at all.

On the morning of February 6, 1944, land was sighted and everyone rushed to the open decks, not for "Emergency Muster" but to get a glimpse of terra firma in any form. The ship dropped anchor in the harbor at Greenock, near Glasgow, Scotland and we slept on board that night, being awakened the next morning by the platoon sergeants yelling: "Get your stuff



Indirect Fire Mission, Lank Latum, Germany



Displaced Persons Near München-Gladbach, Germany

together". We unloaded in one of Scotland's famous drizzles and boarded a train for the heart of England and a camp known as Packington Park.

In Packington Park we were issued our equipment for training and the invasion of the continent, which we were certain was to take place, but when and where was anybody's guess and there was plenty of guessing, too. Choice rumors were a shilling a carload.

The stay in Packington Park was mostly taken up with the study of artillery work with our three-inch guns, and maintenance of our destroyers. Then we went to South Wales for three weeks of maneuvers and practical experience in the things we had been studying. This experience proved to be very profitable later, on the continent.

Upon our return to Packington Park we stored our equipment and moved to Dorchester on the coast of England to mother a few hundred thousand troops



Sgt. Koetje, Cpl. Love,  
Pfc. Brown, T/5 Pearce, Pfc. Orr



Pvt. Brown, Sgt. Kapica, Pfc. Orr,  
Pvt. Pierce, Cpl. Love

who were to make that first rough landing on the French coast. We felt relieved now that we knew what we were to do, and settled into the important SOS work of equipping the invasion army. Our first view of an enemy air raid on England came at this camp. The camp, incidentally, was called D-7 P, the P being for Poundbury.

June 6, 1944 an incredible number of planes of all types filled the sky and radios blared the news of the invasion of Fortress Europe. We kept marshalling troops who were going across the Channel to join in the fighting until we were relieved and started preparing for the trip ourselves.

Leaving Camp D-7 P we went to Camp D-2, readied our equipment, then on to Camp D-3 for a few days of the same kind of marshalling that we had



Airport, Stendal, Germany



German Self Propelled Gun, Danenberg, Germany

been doing. From there we loaded on LSTs in Portland Harbor. Our stay in England had been almost half a year and not altogether unpleasant, either. Some happy memories linger with us still, of the country and their quaint customs, and some of us can remember those English lassies, poignantly.

We left Portland Harbor at 0800 hours on the 29th of July, 1944 and the next day "A" Company unloaded on Utah beach on the coast of France. Air raids were frequent and everyone was a little jittery from the first taste of actual war that was in the air. We saw what the invasion had cost in equipment, for the wreckage was strewn as far as the eye could see. We began to realize something of the magnitude of the wanton waste of wealth and human life caused by war. Everyone must have resolved to do what he could to prevent the recurrence of this thing that so saps the life-blood of our country each generation.



T/5 Jarmon, Pfc. Sandige, Sgt. Koetje, Cpl. Beherns, S/Sgt. Kozan,  
Sgt. Adams, Pfc. Klaczkiewicz, Pfc. Sells, Cpl. Harrow, T/5 Harmon



Cpl. C. L. Thomas, Pfc. Gambol, Pfc. Blume,  
T4 C. H. Hunter, Sgt. O'Brien



2nd Lt. John J. Devine  
3rd Platoon Leader  
Killed in Action

Immediately upon unloading we moved to a semi-permanent assembly area to await orders. There we learned that war is a lot of waiting: waiting for orders, waiting for an attack, waiting to attack, and just plain everyday waiting, the best way in the world to get a first class case of the jitters.



2nd Lt. E. W. Winchester  
3rd Platoon Leader



S Sgt. John C. Boaffi  
3rd Platoon Sgt.

After receiving orders we moved to a bivouac area near La Valdecie, France. Here we occupied most of our time cleaning our guns and equipment and getting ready for our initial entry into actual combat. The Company as a whole was ready for combat and wanted to be at it rather than just sitting around.

It was while we were here that first actual contact between men of "A" Company and the enemy took place. This happened August 5, 1944, when Lt. Devine, Cpl. Cwiklowski and Pvt. Sherman encountered an enemy road block while out on reconnaissance. The Germans opened fire with machine guns and the fire was returned by



Prisoners Of War, Aberfontain, Belgium, January 1945

Lt. Devine's party long enough to determine the size of the enemy force, then they returned to the Company with the information.

The break-through at St. Lo had made the way ready for armor to roll over the Germans and blitz them from their hold on France. And blitz we did, for in the next few days we drove almost constantly, stopping only occasionally to fuel up or to sleep; sleep being the minor item of the two. Our first opposition was composed mostly of harrassing sniper fire and our small arms got a workout. A few times the Tank Destroyers were called upon to fire into houses in which the enemy had entrenched himself. By this time the jitters which usually come at the beginning of any campaign had passed and the men settled into the life of combat soldiers.



Sgt. F. Edwards, Pfc. Wolff, Sgt. Tartaglia, Pfc. Austin



Sgt. Laughner, T/S Tinker, Pvt. Kitt,  
Pfc. Alford, Pfc. D. M. Graham

"A" Company plus the 3rd Platoon of Reconnaissance Company was attached to CCA of the 5th Armored Division and the first real drive got under way August 8, 1944. For days we followed in column, dodging sniper fire and firing back when an enemy could be spotted. We had chow on the move, fired on the move and even fueled up on the move. All this time we were driving deeper into enemy territory, cutting a wide swath in the enemy infantry, so that our own infantry could come in and clear the supply lines. On August 12th the 2nd Platoon, consisting of two M-10s and a jeep was ordered to secure a road junction. There a German was observed dragging a wounded companion into a house. The Destroyers fired three rounds of HE into the house, killing sixteen of the enemy. Soon after darkness an unidentified column approached from the left of CCA. Sgt. Koczan challenged the leading vehicle but it kept on moving and he fired his pistol at the driver, killing him instantly. The leading Destroyer fired a round into the tail of the enemy column to prevent a withdrawal, then they



Prisoners Marching To The Rear, München-Gladbach, Germany



S/Sgt. Fieldhouse, Pfc. D. Graham, T/5 Watson, Pfc. O'Donnell, Sgt. Laughner, T/5 Tinker, Cpl. Cwikowski, Pfc. Olsen, T/5 W. Edwards, T/5 Alford, Pfc. Blume, Cpl. Thomas, Sgt. Kitt, Sgt. Kuhn, Pfc. Youzopovich, Pfc. Ryba, T/4 Roller, 1st Sgt. Boatti, Sgt. O'Brien, Pfc. Kyle, Cpl. Stamphill, Pfc. Sharp, Sgt. Tartaglia, T/5 Zdiepko, T/5 Morgenthaler, T/4 C. Hunter

started working on the column in earnest with machine guns, hand grenades and anything else at hand. The vehicles were filled with German infantry. The column was left flaming on the road, our first real toll of enemy equipment and troops; eight vehicles were destroyed, 240 men killed or captured and all without a single casualty.

We were still in action near Argentan when the first casualties were suffered. The 3rd Platoon Officer, Lt. Devine was wounded when his vehicle was hit by direct fire from an anti-tank gun August 12th and the injuries proved fatal. A short time later a 2nd Platoon Destroyer was hit by an AP shell. None of the crew escaped. The ensuing action was the hottest yet and we came through a tight spot. However, our Battalion Commander, Lt. Col. Hernandez was killed while helping the tankers spot the guns that had stopped the column. Two other Destroyers of the 2nd Platoon were hit



Pfc. Dan Graham, Cpl. Huey, Pfc. Stamphill Pfc. Youzopovich, Sgt. Kuhn



Pfc. Olsen, Pfc. Kyle, Cpl. Cwiklowski, 1st Sgt. Boatti, Cpl. Watson,  
Pfc. Sharp, T/5 Zdziepko, Pfc. Ryba, Sgt. Fieldhouse

before the tanks and guns of the enemy could be silenced. but they were not damaged seriously and the casualties were very light.

After bivouacing for the night the 3rd Platoon knocked out two German tanks, gunners Tartaglia and O'Brien each accounting for one. The next day the same two gunners drew blood again, this time getting two Mark Vs, one anti-tank gun and an armored reconnaissance car. Also the platoon captured 18 prisoners.

August 22nd the 1st and 3rd Platoons were sent on missions around the flanks of CCA, but the hunting was poor and no enemy equipment was destroyed. The next day we were moving in column with CCA, fighting as we drove. The 1st and 3rd Platoons were moved forward as anti-tank protection for the front and flanks of the convoy. The 1st Platoon ran into opposition two miles south of Illy, France. Cpl. Kee was credited with the



Security Section, Woltorf, Germany, May 1945

destruction of one Mark V and an armored reconnaissance car. The platoon knocked out three machine gun nests and killed a number of the enemy. Our casualties were Cpl. John Kurkowski and Pfc. Jesse G. Hunter, slightly wounded by small arms fire.

The next few days we saw little action and outside of a few moves we did little. We received a new Destroyer in place of the one that was lost, and put in a much needed maintenance period on all the Destroyers. Capt. James H. Lloyd replaced Capt. Thomas as "A's", Company Commander.

The Company was released from CCA and reverted to Battalion control just in time for all of us to be together for the march through Paris, which was a thrill in itself, with vast crowds lining the streets and cheering as we convoyed our Destroyers and other vehicles through the city.

We were assigned again, this time with CCB of the 5th Armored Division and another drive was under way. Our mission was to drive in a north-eastern direction to a pre-designated spot near the Belgian border and cut several important roads that Jerry had been using as supply routes and literally run down and destroy any and all columns that could be found. Once again we were eating on the run, fueling on the run and doing everything on the run, for no time was lost in hastening to our destination. At last we were there, which was Conde, France.

The 1st and 3rd Platoons set up road blocks around the town and both met some small arms fire. With no casualties to ourselves we wounded several men and took about twenty prisoners.



T/Sgt. Daily  
Motor Sgt.



T/4 Cuthrell, T/4 Little, T/4 Hood, T/5 Wendelken, T/4 Juba

After leaving Conde we pulled back into France, then into Belgium and finally into Luxembourg, moving a great number of times for such a small amount of country. On these marches we met only scattered resistance. The three firing platoons were put into road block positions. Here we drew two months pay, the first since leaving England. After being paid the entire Company drew an indirect fire mission. Since we were only about three miles from the German border we set up in our artillery position and proceeded to fire on targets inside Germany, these targets being cities, bridges and road junctions. Most of this was harrassing fire and nothing could be claimed as actually destroyed.

The Battle of France was nearing an end and it looked as though the Company was due for a rest before entering into the next phase of the war. There was re-organizing to be done, supplies were badly needed and many other minor items required attention. All of us looked forward eagerly to a break in the fighting, but no one expected too much after seeing for two months how wars are fought and all that must go into them. And it was just as well that we did not let our hopes go soaring to the sky, for they would only have come tumbling down when we were again assigned to CCB and another mission was in the offing.

The Battle of France had been won after two and a half months of hard fighting, with the majority of the German troops being pulled back into their Fatherland, presumably for a last stand. We had seen our supply lines stretching to dangerous lengths and we realized that there might be a stalemate in the fighting until our gains could be consolidated and a concentrated reorganization be effected. But without a break of any kind CCB was given the mission of making a stab at the Seigfreid Line.

"A" Company was assigned to support 5th Armored's Divisional Artillery in the artillery assault that was to precede the first actual invasion of German soil, and after so doing for nearly four days we were re-assigned to CCB in direct support of Capt. Godfrey's Company of Sherman tanks. We assembled, were briefed and literally took off.

At 1700 hours on Saturday, September 16, 1944, we crossed the river dividing Germany and Luxembourg and were on German soil for the first time. We could see evidence of the fierce fighting that had been taking place. Everywhere the fields and roads were pock-marked with shell holes as a result of the artillery barrage that had preceded the attack. Without further ado we proceeded to the foot of Hill 375, set up for the night and waited to attack the next morning.

The morning of September 17th our Tank Destroyers were lined up with the Sherman Tanks in battle formation, the signal was given and the assault began. It was here that we heard our first Screaming Meemies. They descended on us in droves with an ear-splitting sound, a sound that was to become too familiar to us during the next few days. Their range or deflection was never right though, and they did no real damage except to scare most of us out of our wits.

That first day was a hectic one. After winning Hill 375 we proceeded further into Germany, knocking out a number of pillboxes and shooting and

capturing a group of foot troops. About a mile and a half beyond the hill the trouble really began.

As we moved forward through a saddle between the hills we had to pass a grove of evergreen trees. As Sgt. Graham's Destroyer, which was in the lead, came on a line with the grove, a hand grenade was thrown. Simultaneously a bazooka was fired at Sgt. Heyward's Destroyer, missing it and going between Sgt. "Chuck" Conner's Security truck and trailer. O. J. Walker, who was riding on the truck, had a word for it: "By God, this is as far as I go!"

And it was as far as any of us went, for in the ensuing small arms battle the 1st Platoon Sergeant, Sgt. Mike Lewka, caught a bullet in his leg. Security Machine Gunner Spencer Smith got it in the mouth and the platoon was temporarily disorganized while the men cared for the wounded and established radio communication to bring up the Medics.

Pulling back we dug in again on Hill 375 and prepared to sweat it out. The night was comparatively quiet, though a double guard was maintained. The next morning we were awakened by enemy artillery, which was trying to adjust on us for harrasing fire to allow their infantry to infiltrate. The day was taken up with dodging shells and firing at snipers. With darkness came the thing that we had all been dreading, fog.

That night we again maintained the double guard. Very few of us slept, though we were dog-tired. We were alerted early the next morning by shots and prepared to fight it out with the enemy infantry, but this time they were attacking in force under cover of the fog. The fog was so dense that they were able to get into our bivouac area without detection and the next hour was a hot one indeed. About eighty men attacked our position but by quick and careful action we broke up the attack, killing or wounding most of them and capturing their attack orders. We were constantly under sniper fire and artillery shells and Screaming Meemies were again coming in on us. All afternoon enemy infantry tried to get into our position. They were using burp guns, bazookas and rifles. Two were caught in the nick of time by T/4 DeMont Roller and riddled by the 50 calibre machine gun on his Tank Destroyer. We were forced to fire up our rifle and carbine grenades, using them in the manner of mortars. Many of the men in the task force were wounded. This was the day that Hill 375 was renamed "Purple Heart Hill".

The task force commander learned at the observation post that Jerry was bringing up reserves, which proved our mission a success. We had drawn enemy troops from another sector, thus weakening it so that a large scale attack could be made. That night under cover of darkness and the fog, we moved off the hill and back into Luxembourg, to the exact spot from which we had taken off for the initial invasion of Germany. We were thinking how often and loudly we had cursed the fog and how thankful we were for its cover as we moved off the hot spot on Hill 375.

With the end of this, the Wallendorf mission, came the stalemate in the war that everyone had expected; a pause for re-organization and for supplies to catch up with us. For almost two months we fired indirect missions in support of the Division's regularly assigned artillery. Finally in

the middle of December we were in on a drive with CCA to the Roer River which we thought was to open the way for the next phase of the war against Germany. We were shelled from the start to the finish of this mission, and consequently it was our toughest mission to date. The 1st Platoon leader, Lt. Thomas M. Darrah, was lost on this drive and was replaced by Lt. Aubrey O. James.

Immediately after this drive the entire Battalion was detached from the 5th Armored Division and sent back to the Battle of the Bulge, or the Break-through of the Ardennes, as it was called. On this mission we were with the 75th and 78th Divisions at different times, but most of the time with the 82nd Airborne Division. Winter had set in, in earnest and the entire action was one of misery and suffering from the intense cold. There was an unprecedented number of casualties. It was the costliest battle of the war for us, just as it was for the whole United States Army. We lost one entire Tank Destroyer crew, five of the best men in the Company.

A break came in the bitter cold and soon after we were assigned to support Division Artillery in an artillery assault prior to the crossing of the Roer River. Here on the morning of February 23rd "A" Company fired 80 missions of 1342 rounds. The good weather lasted, real consolidation took place and everyone got ready for the final phase of the war.

After the crossing of the Roer we were again assigned to CCA and fought our way to the "impregnable" Rhine.

But the Rhine was not impregnable and with the aid of the 1st Army's surprise "Remagen Bridgehead" it was crossed more easily than the Roer. We were firing artillery for the crossing. It was here that the 1st Platoon took its worst beating. On the morning of March 15th "A" Company's position received counterbattery fire, most of the rounds landing in the 1st Platoon area. Three men were killed and five others seriously wounded, definite proof of the statement that "War is hell." We moved from there to our alternate area and remained until orders were given for our crossing of the Rhine.

Once across the Rhine it was a repeat performance of our blitz through France, much to our surprise. Our armor was really rolling, prowling for any and all enemy targets. The three firing platoons chalked up to their credit immense quantities of enemy equipment destroyed, plus dead Jerries and prisoners. One day the 1st Platoon took 70 prisoners from a town smaller than Wrightstown (remember it?). At the same time the 3rd Platoon was about twelve miles away in Tangermunde having one of the toughest fights yet known. The platoon lost one Destroyer by bazooka fire and Sgt. Swilley was killed by small arms fire. Cpl. Salamone, the Brooklyn Kid, was slightly wounded.

A few days later we were pulled back for what we hoped would be a rest period, but after one day of rest we were at it again the mission being to clear a swath to the Elbe, the last river before Berlin. Once before we had been to the Elbe at another point, when the 3rd Platoon was fighting in Tangermunde. The hunting was good and we destroyed more equipment

for the Battalion record. After five days we had reached our objective and were pulled back in reserve.

For weeks we had seen the once mighty Wehrmacht crumbling and we knew that the Battle of Germany was almost over. When the official announcement of the war's end came we were sitting in the small town of Woltorf, between Brunswick and Hannover. The keen edge of happiness brought by this announcement was dulled by sorrow for those buddies who were not with us any more. We missed them even more at this moment of final victory.

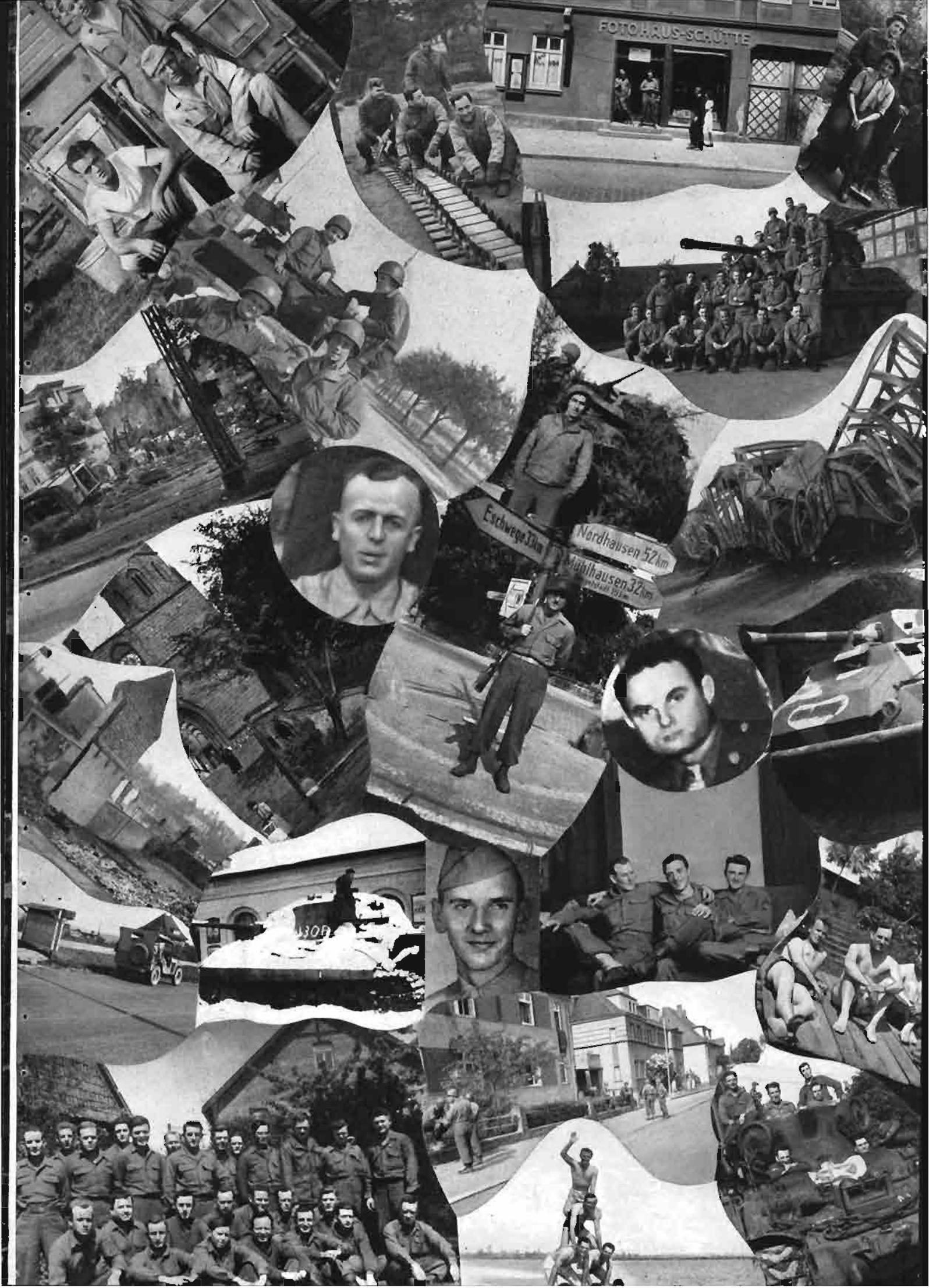
Once again the guns are silenced on the Western Front. The overwhelming might of men with a cause and unlimited material have crushed the enemy. They are no longer the Master Race but the mastered race. They are an active menace no more. Most of us will be leaving these fields of battle soon, some to fight in the war against Japan and some turning homeward to gather up the scattered threads of their lives. But we shall never forget those for whom all wars are over forever, those friends and comrades of ours who gave their lives to prove that Freedom and Truth are living, breathing things that cannot be trampled in the dust by maniacal despots striving for world domination. We shall not break faith with them, but pass on to our children and theirs a heritage of Freedom from Fear and Want that is their birthright.





WALK ON PLASTER BARLEY BRIDGE  
**CAPT VICTOR J VEGA BRIDGE**  
CONSTRUCTED BY  
BATTALION OF THE  
1st U.S. ARMY CORPS  
1945

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# Company "B" 628th Tank Destroyer Battalion (Sp)

APO 758, U. S. ARMY

## TRAINING AND TACTICAL HISTORY OF COMPANY "B"



Major Paul L. Mc Pherran  
Company Commander  
Transferred To 106 Division  
As Anti-Tank Officer



Capt. Frank E. Hurt Jr.  
Company Commander



1st Lt. Theodore W. Rabey  
Executive Officer



2nd Lt. Homer R. Lindler  
Liason Officer



1st Sgt. Daniel A. Lawlor  
First Sergeant

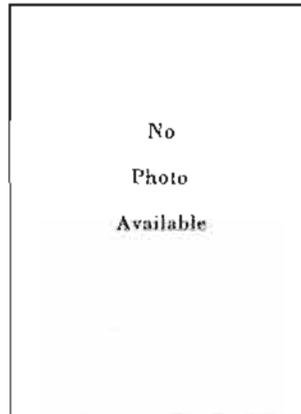
The 628th Tank Destroyer Battalion was activated on 10 July 1941, at the Indiantown Gap Military Reservation, near Lebanon, Pennsylvania. At first called the 28th Provisional Anti-Tank Battalion, the 628th was not known by it's own name until 15 December 1941 on the return from the Carolina maneuvers.

This Company, or Company "B", was made up of former members of "E" and "B" Batteries of the 109th Field Artillery Battalion of the 28th Division, a Pennsylvania National Guard Organization of proud military history.

In the early stages of training, the Company's main armament consisted of 37 mm Anti-Tank Cannon. with an Anti-Aircraft section attached to each



S/Sgt. Carl D. Nodler  
Supply Sgt.



S/Sgt. John W. Colby  
Rcn. Sgt.  
Returned To U.S.A.



S/Sgt. Walter Kohlage  
Communication Sgt.

gun section. However, the majority of these guns were homemade wooden affairs, as were many of the individual arms and in most cases, individual imagination played a large role in the training period of those days.

On August 6th, 1941, the Company moved to A. P. Hill, near Fredericksburg, Virginia, where additional training was received for almost a month. Inspections and demonstrations were galore, and the Company returned to the Gap on September 15th, 1941.

September 21st, 1941, was the day the Company left the Gap to participate in the Carolina Maneuvers. It was during this time that the term. Speed-Power-and-Destruction became a reality, with emphasis on "Speed". Blitzing over roads, very dusty roads, and across fields for more than two months and this rugged type training came to an end. December 6th, 1941. the Company packed-up and headed for the Gap once more. Upon arrival it was learned that our country had been attacked and the men began to realize the importance of their training.



S/Sgt. Clubb, T/5 Kutyla, Cpl. Reynolds, T/5 Goines, T/5 Meyers,  
T/4 Westervelt, Pfc. Kienzie, Pfc. Portwood, T/4 Hyatt, Pfc. Keller



Pfc. Banks, Sgt. A. Smith, Pfc. Bourland, Pfc. Skole, T/4 Iacona, T/5 Charles

The Company left the Gap on January 10th, 1942, and was on the march for Camp Livingston, Louisiana where it began to lay the foundations for some excellent, tactical training. In March the Company was brought to full strength under the T/O for the first time, when the Battalion received some 450 new men.

Under the capable hands of the officers and non-coms, the new-comers were whipped into fine physical condition. All summer the accent was on hikes and dismounted road marches, beginning with short five-mile jaunts and culminating with forced 30-mile marches under a hot southern sun that will never be forgotten.

In addition, a three-day period of firing on moving target ranges with real 37mm guns at Leesville, Louisiana, proved most interesting and instructive and laid the foundation for the high degree of accuracy in firing that the Company constantly maintained thereafter.

On August 29th, 1942, the organization entrained for Camp Hood, Texas, hub of all Tank Destroyer units. The training there was speedily and enthusiastically received, and its famous obstacle course, grueling as it was, brought many laughs and a few thrills. The hand-to-hand combat, the Nazi village, the weapons firing and last but not least, the infiltration course, where the men for the first time had a taste of live ammunition, will be remembered by all.

While at Camp Hood, this Company set a new high in camp scores in the firing of weapons of all types, particularly with the 75mm guns with which the Company had been recently equipped.

Due to cadres and men leaving for Officers Candidate Schools, the Company was again under strength, so a new quota of men was assigned and they



S/Sgt. Benje Hutchinson  
Mess Sgt.



Pfc. Constantino, T/4 Coley, S/Sgt. Mead, Cpl. Harper, T/4 Bell



1st Lt. Basil W. Belew  
1st Platoon Leader

had to be given their Basic Training, while at Camp Hood. The new men remained to finish their training while the rest of the Company moved to Camp Bowie, Texas, not far from Hood. Camp Bowie again was the scene of extensive tactical training. An Army Ground Force Test was given and the Company came through very satisfactorily.



S Sgt. Joseph T. Darrah  
1st Platoon Sgt.

Upon completion of the work at Bowie, the Company became a smoothly functioning team, ready for the next stage of training which was realized very soon when the organization again hit the road, this time toward Florida.

The Company arrived at Camp Gordon Johnston, on the west coast of Florida, on a cold and rainy day in mid-January, 1943. Settling down amidst the deep sand and chilly breezes, the Company went through all the phases of amphibious warfare, complete to swimming lessons in the Gulf of Mexico. Short but pleasant cruises aboard Navy LCT's broke to some extent the monotony of sand and water and of speed hikes in that very tiring terrain. An occasional invasion of Dog Island proved the training profitable. A very fine weapons school was established and soon every man had qualified and knew his weapon in all its detail.



2nd Platoon Vehicles Zweidorf, Germany, V-E Day

In the latter part of April the outfit received the new M-10 Tank Destroyers and as soon as the men were familiar with the operation of these vehicles, the organization again entrained, this time the destination was Camp Rucker, Alabama. After the arrival, which was in the early part of June, the Company began its training. Tank trails and courses greatly suited for developing skilled drivers were available. Gunners had their fling at firing the new three-inch gun, and enough ammunition was fired to enable the crews to become fast accurate teams. Field Artillery procedure was a new addition to the training and everyone was eager to learn this technique.

Came July and with it the Tennessee Maneuvers, the most useful training this organization had received thus far. Driving blackout became an art, speedy marches over all types of terrain were common, and above all the



T/4 Bennett, Cpl. DeWitt, Sgt. West, Cpl. Prokupek



Pfc. Simas, Cpl. Milliman, Sgt. Ross, T/4 Monaco

training for the rough hard life of combat, toward which all men's minds were directed.

Maneuvers over, the Company returned to Camp Rucker once more, where the big job was maintenance and preparation for the next move to Camp Pickett, Virginia, where infiltration courses, carbine firing, cargo-net climbing and a series of aircraft identification schools, made up the training. A short period of amphibious training at Camp Bradford, Va., interrupted the stay at Pickett. This training was more like the real thing, the loading on Navy LST's, the rides on the assault craft, LCI's, and the actual rope ladder climbing aboard the YAG, a very interesting type of training taught by Navy Personnel. Back to Pickett again, but not for long, when orders were received to proceed to West Virginia for winter mountain maneuvers.



Red Cross Coffee Truck, Voerendaal, Holland