

The period of time from the day we left Camp Hood, Texas, until we pulled into Sebda, Algeria, is covered in two small notebooks. From the time we left Oran, to date, is in this large notebook. I will write a very brief account of the time spent near Sebda.

We came down the dusty "road" to an area & set up. The climate is dry and hot, with an amazing amount of dust. The altitude is 1260 meters, giving cold nights & hot days. The vegetation is thin & dry.

↙ Fifth Army Tank Destroyer Training Center provided us with ammunition to perfect our indirect fire methods, and did not bother us too much.

General Clark, whose HQ is at Oudja (Oujda?), has a Villa at Saïdia for his recreation hours. He has set up a rest camp there & at Port Say nearby.

These & the navy camp at Beni-Saff are on the Med. Sea between Spanish Morocco and Oran. I managed to spend days between the three. 7 days, & two week-end

(B)

*I had a chess set made of silver and brass by Arabs in Tlemcen. They use no leather.

hunts were the only relief from a dull monotony of routine. * I ask to be transferred from HQ to "A" Company, but the Col. wouldn't hear of it. Later Lou lost Fawcett in an auto accident & ask for me. He caught the Col. in a good mood & I got back in the line company.

The gazelle hunts were a great success. They were quite exciting, & the country (South of El Aricha) is unusual. It is a high plateau desert. Hale & I were together the first time. There were four other pairs in peeps. Of the ten, Hale & I were the only ones who had success. I got three. Hale got two.

Later I went down with Peter, Dotson, & Sgt. Tobiasson. Thanks to a bad peep, we would have left our bones on the desert except for a pair of German flare pistols. As it was we had a pretty dry time of it. Peter & Tobby got gazelle. On the way home we hit a terrific sand storm.

Later the maintenance section went down & got seven. That gave us enough of the very excellent meat to feed the company.

Initially we left the Tlemcen - Soudan road for the Oran Staging Area. After a week or more there we left for Italy.

Chapter
15 Sept., 1943

It rained as we loaded onto the British ship Otranto of the Orient Lines. Men were crowded into a poorly ventilated compartment on "G" deck. Food well prepared but not in large enough quantities. Pulled out into the stream just outside Oran and ~~anchored~~^{anchored} for the night. . . . troops aboard.

16 Sept., 1943

Convoy formed around us. We sailed at 2000. Our equipment is three days ahead of us. Men very dissatisfied with their quarters & food. Officers dine in style & have large lounge, typical of English. Food is scarce for us too. Lt. Mistkin claims he is starving & is having a feud with the waiters. There are 60+ nursed aboard. Ship's drills are poor for emergencies that may arise. Have made plans I consider necessary & instructed men.

→ 18 Sept. Have been talking a lot with English officers. After overcoming their initial reserve they are interesting and friendly, providing us with several bottles of Canadian whiskey. They seem to be continually amazed at our actions. The first night in the officers lounge when a piano player started us all singing they were amazed, but eventually sang when we switched to some of their songs. As the gathering broke up an English Capt. said to me, "I say, you Americans are a jolly bunch!" It has been with amusement that I watched several hundred officers seeking the favor of the 63 nurses aboard. Each tries to outdo the other. From 2300 to 0200 we passed a huge convoy setting outside Bizerte with running & anchor lights lit. We must not have much to fear. The news from Italy is bad.

→ 19 Sept. The peaks of Sicily are visible on our right (south). They look like a series of rugged islands since the low land is below the horizon. From comparisons of the news from BBC and the expectations of those aboard, it is obvious that Sicily Italy is not going "according to plan". The military governor for Naples is aboard. He expected to sail into Naples. Our tanks are loaded so that they should be unloaded at a dock. However knowing by

now how the news fits the fighting
 ○ it sounds as though we almost
 failed, and may skill fail. One
 good thing may come about, though
 Perhaps some of these loafers
 aboard who laid the plans
 and expected an easy victory
 may get shot up along with
 the combat troops. They are
 uneasy, and I am laughing.

→ 20 Sept. Rumors are
 running wild about Italy. It is
 planned that we will disembark
 and go in to shore in LCI's from
 50 miles out unless things
 improve. We received from the
 British a ration of 5 bars of
 chocolate per man.

→ 21 Sept. Everyone has been
 expecting to be bombed for
 the last few days, but no
 planes have come near us
 except for a couple of Spit-
 fires that circled us a
 day or two ago. We are to
 land today. We are sailing into
 the Bay of Salerno, however we
 must stay south of Salerno.
 Six bars "D" ration & 1 box "A"
 ration have been issued. The
 ship has gone in quite close to
 shore. We will disembark in LCI's.
 The ship's officers had all the men
 gotten up at 0430. At 1200 we

are still aboard. The sea's current has reversed. We are swinging on our anchor, and have to shift anchorage lest we go aground. More time wasted. There are many ships here. It is lucky for us that we have control of the air. I have never seen so many planes in the air. P-51's circle us constantly. The navy has marked certain areas with white smoke pots. I guess it is a signal to the planes. There are several large allied naval ships wandering around the area.

Finally we swing our barracks-bags and ourselves onto the landing craft and wade ashore. It is 1330. Once ashore we pile our life-preservers where they can be collected, and carry our burdens to the rallying point a couple of hundred yards across the sand. There we pile our bed-rolls onto a stack and prepare to march a couple of miles to our bivouack area. (Most of the barracks-bags are in the M-1 Trucks will haul the bed-rolls for us. Due to the specialized types of weapons we have, and the varied equipment being carried by our men we have got the infantry boys with their uniformly belted packs puzzled. We look like gypsies, and they tell us so. They are quite put out that we carry so much less than they. We quickly

formed two ranks and moved down
 (Completed Oct. 11) the road. Marched 5 miles
 Filled canteens & spring. Marched 4 more miles
 crossing Sele River on pontoon bridge. Trucks
 carried us on to area about 5 miles
 further on. At "D" ration, and, thank
 goodness, found some melons. Mosquitoes
 bad. Infantry marched past us all
 night, including some Japanese Americans.

Sept 22-28

Moved to new area when advanced port
 located us. Waited for equipment to
 be unloaded. Bathed in the Sele R.,
 and got off to several false alarms.
 (Concerning movements. I don't think
 this thing is being run at all well.)

Ran south ~ 15 miles in a
 peep to Praetium, and old
 Roman seaport. Visited the
 city's walls with their narrow
 passages, and went through
 the three major buildings. The
 largest, The Temple of Neptune,
 interested me most. It was
 of a more ponderous style than
 the others. The columns, though
 fluted, lacked the Grecian
 delicacy of design. The stone
 is Travertine - marble. No
 cement was used at all. The
 right angles on the stone
 blocks are still 90° perfect. The
 roof, which is gone, was
 supported by more columns.

Some of the blocks, very few, have started to pull away from one-another. The Italians have strapped these with iron. Some of the blocks must be 15' x 5' x 6'.

29 Sept. Last night was a rough night. We are camped in a wood. Since it has been threatening rain, nearly everyone had a shelter of some sort rigged up. A few hours after dark last night the storm, which we had seen in the distance, moved in on us with violence. Trees groaned and bent with the wind, and the roar was unbelievable. One tree in particular I expected to fall, because it had been partly shattered by shell-fire. No one was sleeping very close to it so it did not matter. The rain blew in the open end of my tent in spite of a nearby M-10 tank. I just crawled deeper into my sleeping-bag, threw a combat-jacket over my head, and went to sleep. Sometime during the night I was awakened by a trickle of water coming into bed with me. I threw a towel and a shirt at its source, and went back to sleep. This morning at 0600 I awoke and took stock of the situation. My mosquito net inside the shelter-halves had kept out a group of lizards that took refuge inside the tent. They were puzzledly scampering

around. Looking around outside everything was a mess. I had fared better than most. An over-loaded tarp, says Sgt. Larson, dumped 15 gallons of water on him. "It ran clear down to the bottom of my sleeping bag", he said. A large tree alongside Sorkilahti gave a sharp crack and broke off cleanly. Reece McCulloch and Edaskie were sleeping alongside him. The noise awoke Sorkilahti and McCulloch. The former, stark naked, dash through the mud, and rain, and under brush. Reece shook Edaskie and said, "Run, the trees falling on us!" Edaskie muttered, "Quit screwing around", and slept on. Luckily the tree hung up for a moment and they convinced him. The trunk was 18" in diameter, and fell right across their sleeping-bags. Rumors are flying about moving out. Got packed up. Movement cancelled. Still on one-hour alert.

30 Sept.

Breakfast at 0600. Slept without net last night. Mosquitoes delighted. Ready to move at 0730. Moved at 1300. Got 10 miles beyond Eboli. M.P.'s stopped us with order to return to bivouac area. I can't understand it. Still eating "C" ration. Not bad food. One hour

alert called off. Played "Hearts" in
 a half track for small stakes. I
 had a total of \$1¹⁵/₁₅ when I
 started. Won \$4²⁵/₂₅. Tomorrow is
 pay-day, but will not be paid
 for another month probably. Turned
 in at 10:00. (It gets dark at 1730)
 Received word to be ready to
 move out at 0630 tomorrow.

1 October, 1943

Up at 0530. Heated "C" ration, rolled up
 net and bed-roll. Ready to go at 0630.
 Moved at 0645, through Battapaglia
 this time. Road to Piazza, where
 we halted for the night, is more
 mountainous, curved, and narrow
 than any I have ever seen. Sgt.
 Larson, Silver Star, was killed at about
 1000. He was a great favorite of
 mine. At a temporary halt about 15
 minutes before, he and I had argued
 the merits of the Luger v. the P38
 (Walther) pistol. Piazza is in the
 southern end of the Montella
 Valley. The people there say the
 Germans boasted that we would
 never get supplies or vehicles
 over the road we just brought
 35 ton tanks over. Soil very
 fertile, people nice. They gave us
 a great ovation. During the night
 Lt. Peter went on forward
 with a section of M.10's. Startled
 me when they pulled out. Wondered

if I was supposed to go also, etc.

2 October,

up early. Morning clear. "C" ration of
cocoa. People came around trading
potatoes, onions, and apples for
other foods that we have. Caramel
is the children's big desire. People
much better than arabs, although
they are, in many cases, as poor,
clothed. Women's shoes seem to be
the big shortage. At 1200 ordered
to move at 1500. Rained torrents
from 1130 till 1400. At 1430 order to
move cancelled. At 1435 ordered to
move at 1500, which we did.

It has been like this for 5 days.

From Montella to Montemarano
the people lined the roads throwing
us grapes, apples, and peaches.
Just west of Montemarano, opposite
the Castelvetere R.J. lies Larson.

We pulled on west a bit and
stopped all night in an orchard on
a hill. Elevation: 966 meters. To the west
is a beautiful valley, 1050 feet lower
with the town of Vulturara in a pocket
on the far side of the valley. It is
truly beautiful. I wish I had film
for my camera. Our troops entered
Avellino around 0030 this morning.
It rained all night, but troops kept
us all dry.

3 October

Sunday, they say. It is truly a beautiful morning. Cusick and I drove down through Atripalda to Avellino. The road will be dangerous for the tanks. Rained on the way back. My new rain-coat is worth its weight in gold. Huber and his crew had chicken, potatoes, and corker apples for dinner. Chickens cost \$1.00 eggs - .10. Potatoes and apples can be had for a can or two of "hash". Played hearts with Lou, Cusick, Dotson, and Stoltz. Came out about even.

4 October

Slept in until 0900. Got up, took a can of "C" ration in my pocket, and drove north to Castelvetere with my drivers just in case we have to go through there at night. Even if we are careful we will knock chunks out of the buildings on one turn in town. Road is very narrow. Saw a woman carrying a four year old boy in a "C" ration case, balanced on her head. Women seem to carry everything from a handkerchief full of grapes to a 50 gallon oil drum on their head. An Italian family seems to let the younger women and girls (but always some woman) carry the heavy loads.

Washing is very primitive. Sat around and recalled tales of the Tunisian affair. Turned in early.
5 Oct.

Pulled M-10's up on a threshing platform to tighten tracks. Cracked same. Italians very much upset. I told them perhaps our engineers could give them a bit of concrete later. I try to be considerate to them, but we come first. None of us even want to be in Italy. Quite a few of these farms are owned by Italians whom came to the U.S., made a bit of money, and returned to Italy. They do not work. Others do their work, while they sit around like small noblemen. Wrote home (Carol). Played hearts again tonight. Checked the guard and turned in.

6 Oct.

Received letters from Bill P. and dad. Wrote Bill. Had quite a talk with Jess sitting out on the hill. We decided, disregarding the war, that we will come to no good end. Tomorrow I am going to try to buy a barretta to send home. It is 1530, and starting to rain. Patuschid came up today. Hannenberg went to hospital with malaria symptoms. Now is as good a time as any to write down the names of those men in my platoon.

○ Lt. Cole (thats me).

○ Jensen - driver

Wiemholt - Aid man

Furness - radio operator

Sunburg - Recon. corp. - left in hospital in Africa.

○ Larson - Killed in Italy, 1 Oct, 1943.

Commanded 1st Destroyer Section.

Hansenburg - hosp. in Italy. - Temporary

I hope. Possibly finest gunner in the army.

McCulloch - loader

Edoakic - Radio Operator -

Wuttke - Driver

○ Corp. Olson

Sarkilabti

Wilhelmi

Davenport

Henson

○ Sgt. Britz

Willingham

Byious

Roberts

Riddle

○ Corp. Hubert

De Kock

Lucerna

Freihage

○ Franco

(March 8, 1961
The marks at the
left were painted
on the tank "A"
destroyers - Co. "A"
1st Platoon, 76th TD, - to
aid me in
visual identification
We had to change
the last because from
a distance it looks
like the German
cross. Cole

○ It will be interesting to see how
we make out. Received letters from
Dewey, Carol, & 1/2 from mom. Air-
mail & "V-mail" same speed.

Furness is cooking potatoes, 2 chickens and some GI food for supper. The potatoes we trade hash for. Chickens are a dollar. Olive oil is all we have for grease. (Dewey says he is going to get engaged this Saturday night to Merrill Ashland. I should be there to slow him down a bit. I don't know the girl.) Just checked ammunition. We have — Cal. 45 - 3200 rds.

.50 - 4200
3" - 320 - 4 = 80/mi
carbine - 100

Smoke, incendiary, fragmentation, & AF grenades are plentiful. Many of us have German weapons also.

9 Oct.

The last three days have been a flurry of movements all night long, over blown mountain trails, with the rain driving down on us. This movement has been so goofy that it must have been planned by a Brigadier General at least. Two crossings were very bad. We turned on our head-lights. A bit of air is safer than the crossings in the dark. Hale, Wadle, Peter, & I cussed the situation together. At 1600 I led out of Rotondi with the company divided into two 6-gun batteries instead of the usual three platoons. Lou & Jess have gone ahead to find positions near Balai

where we can fire on, and beyond, the Volturno River. We moved west to the Montesarchio Road Junction and waited to follow the 175th F.A., to whom we are attached. They cleared at 1710. We proceeded westward through Maddaloni, and north-west to Caserta. From there we went north to the high ground south of Castel Morrone. We moved at 15 mph until dark; then at 10 mph. Mt. Vesuvius was visible just before dark, and the flames periodically shot forth in the dark. Sgt. Smith was to proceed me with a security section, and mark the bad places for the M-10's, but he got lost. I "sweat that out". Just north-west of Mezzanone the road ascended very sharply with many hair-pin turns. The destroyers had to back up and turn again on some of the curves. The road was crowded, with columns cutting in and out of each other up to Caserta, but here we seem to be all alone. Lou & Jess met us, & led us into position. The moon helped us. We had to use grousers. We are well protected, but our flash will heat the Volturno. ^(Henningson rejoined us.) Just in time.

10 Oct.

155 Rifles awakened us with a salvo at 0545. We got up. Dug the guns level. The wall gave us a bit of trouble, but by breaking it down in spots we got a minimum elevation of 185 ft. 160 ft. (8500) was the requirement. Put up the ^{camouflage} nets, but they can't do us much good here. Hic &

hurried lunch and went, with Peter & Lou, up to Pianelli. Some of the people are still in the rather battered town. They look completely cowed. The hillsides around are so steep that we must place our guns well away from them. Our only cover is a curse and a prayer. This is still a vacation to us after direct fire. Every one else is creeping around in "peeps" without windshields or tops. We are in John Smith's "peep". I have to laugh at the contrast. The rather nervous young 2nd Lt. (Baker) told us in this morning has gone back to his battery. Ready to move at 1700. At 1630 ordered not to move. FA moved. Played Hearts from 1900 to 2200, during which time the "dutchmen" threw a lot of stuff over our heads. The crest we are on is hard for them to pick up. We are protected from "shorts", and the "overs" fall far beyond. At 2200 Lou went up to the 175 C.P. with Pietz. He got back around 2400. We are to remain in place. ~~THE~~

11 Oct., 1948.

At 0100 message came, signed by General. Officer that we were detached from 175, and attached to 151 FA. Lou went to see them. "C" Co. had just joined them. The 151 Col. called G-3, and ask what the deal was. His (G-3's) first remark was, "God damn it! I knew it would get screwed up!" (All this about 0500.) We are re-assigned to our own battalion. Col. has great new plan. We are

