

This is a history of my tour of the ETO and I hope you will find it interesting, although I am a bit hazy on some of the happenings and incidents. All histories and stories have to have a beginning so I may as well start with that fateful day, Sept. 1944, when we marched off the train in New York harbor and up the gang-plank onto the H.M.T. Arawa, an old British cruiser, guess the Limeys would call it a Luxury Liner, but ask the boys who were on it what it was like. Well anyway we boarded her about eight o'clock in the evening but didn't hoist anchor until about 5 o'clock the next morning. Most every one, even at that early hour, was up and about so as to get one last good look at the good old U.S.A. and the Statue of Liberty. The trip lasted thirteen days as we were in one of the largest convoys to leave the States up till then. It was uneventful except for the usual cases of seasickness and they were quite numerous the first few days. It so happened that I was one of the few fortunate ones and didn't suffer the consequences so I wasn't too bad off. The food too was lousy as the devil and we all cussed the Limey cooks at least three times a day.

When we finally spotted good old terra firma the guesses flew fast and furious as to where we were. The first foreign soil we gazed on, we found out later on, was the Isle of Man. We finally dropped anchor in the river Clyde and after quite a long wait, proceeded on to Glasgow, Scotland. Boy! did it ever feel good to set foot on good old solid ground once more. Here we were loaded, late at night, into what the English have the nerve to call a railway coach. After seventeen hours of steady riding we finally reached our destination in southern England, Oct. 12th. We found out the next day we were in the city of Bournemouth and despite the constant daily rumor of moving out, we stayed until Dec. 4th. We really enjoyed our stay in England despite the black out and especially the ten o'clock curfew at the pubs. (beer joints) The English money was a bit confusing at first but like anything else he gets in contact with, the G.I.'s caught on fast. I believe I've told you in my letters from England, most of the things we did while we were there so I'll sum it all up by saying, "For mine, they can have their merry ole England".

We left Bournemouth, England, via motor convoy and after an over-night stay on the highway outside of Weymouth, England, we boarded an LST No. 393 in Portland harbor, and expected to cast off immediately but due to a storm reported raging in the channel we laid in the harbor for four days. We finally cast off and believe you me, the English Channel is every bit as rough as it is reported to be. Many of the boys sick during this crossing, but as before I was lucky enough not to be numbered amongst them. The trip across the channel didn't take long but as the weather wasn't too good we weren't able to do much sightseeing. We laid over night in the harbor of LeHarve, France and unloaded from our LST just before dinner, leaving behind a good meal of pork chops, on Dec. 10th. The Bn. suffered its first casualty during the unloading when one of the boys from another company was crushed to death between one of our vehicles and the side of the LST. I must add we got a very good welcoming at LeHarve, every building flattened to the ground by the magnificent work of our good old boys in the skies.

The weather in France at this time of the year was definitely on the bad side. We darn near froze to death during our drive from LeHarve to Bremonter where it turned out to be we were to spend the next twelve days. Life here was a bit on the rugged side as the majority of the boys slept in pup tents pitched out in the fields so we really got a taste of sleeping out in the open. This, along with the rainy, snowy, and sleety weather made our stay here anything but pleasant. We left our so-called "Roadside Home" on Dec. 21st, and everyone was glad to leave the place, leaving behind the rain and mud.

Everyone was of course thinking of what was ahead of us as we'd been told we were headed for the front lines. We didn't make it non-stop tho as we drove that day to a small village near Tongres, Belgium, where we billeted over night in barns, etc. Here we had our first contact with the Belgiques and found them to be very friendly and likeable people. Everyone it seemed was a bit uneasy when we pulled stakes the next afternoon for we were sure that our next stop would probably find us swapping lead with the

Krauts. Our trip to the front took us through Aachen and this city like LeHarve also took a beating from the birds in the skies. We bivouacked that night in holes in the ground covered with logs and dirt, in the woods of the Hertgen Forest, and during the night the platoons pulled out to take up gun positions near Bergel, Germany, just across the Roer River from Duren, Germany. So here old 112 was actually in the front lines at last and getting ready to fight and no kiddin, I was plenty scared.

Our stay in this sector was short lived as the Wehrmacht was on the loose and had started their drive into Belgium, and the famed "Battle of the Bulge" was in the making. My first experience in dodging Heinie fire was in Bergel where we spent our Christmas. It was mortar fire and it drove all of us to the basement except the "top-kick" who was wandering around and was caught outside and had to find shelter in the nearest thing available which happened to be a nice wide ditch filled with ice cold water. So after the shelling he came in dripping wet so we all got a good laugh out of it anyway. We got our first taste of the 88's on the day after Xmas while we were eating breakfast in a woods we drove to earlier in the morning. We were about all finished and getting ready to pull out when the shelling started, but we hugged the ground several times before the convoy got under way. We were sure glad to get out of there and we learned later that the Krauts really gave the place a good shellacking. And from rumors floating around things would be hot as hell where we were going, but we drove on regardless.

We ended up after a long motor march at Havoland, Belgium, to help stop the German drive into Belgium. We were having real winter weather and a guy had to keep on the move as much as possible to keep warm. But cold or warm the fighting was on and we were in it and doing our share.

Most of the next month we were on the move throughout Belgium -- Hutton, Erzee, Louviegne (three day break due to weather conditions), Abrefontaine, Goronne, Salmchateau, Veilsalm, and Burtonville, just to mention a few of the places -- and began to lose a few of the boys from being wounded, frozen feet, trench foot, etc., but only one killed, Ahlberg, due to enemy action. Our luck, despite all the action we'd seen and been through was holding out pretty good.

We "Yanks" now about this time had the Germans pretty well under control, so someone, among the higher-ups decided it was time the 772 was getting on the move again and do a little more sight-seeing, so again we pulled up our stakes and took off. I'll swear we moved oftener than any other outfit in the ETO considering the length of time we'd been in the thick of things. This time, thank gosh, we were moving to the south so everyone thought it would be warmer but you sure wouldn't have known it as I came closer to freezing to death than at any other time during the winter. Spent two days with an over-night bivouac at Vandonville, France. On this march we wound up in Ribeauville, after going across the Vosges Mountains. I'll never forget that trip, especially going over the mountains and despite the cold I was actually sweating, the ground covered with snow, and going around sharp hair-pin curves, up and down hills and everything else, no kiddin, it sure wasn't no joy ride. Here we came in contact for the first time with the Free French Forces, and talk about your screwballs and loony drivers, those guys topped any I've ever seen. Darn good fighters though and always about half canned up from drinking the wine which could be found in every basement (what was left of them), and needless to say our outfit did its share of consuming the stuff.

I don't recall the names of all the town we were in and out of in this part of the country, but to mention a few -- Appeniwir, wihr-in-Plaine, Buschweiler and Horburg. These towns are in the area near or around Colmar, and we lost three men in this area, Greene, Spoonmore and Thorpe, due to enemy land mines. Our outfit, which had been attached to the 75th Division ever since the "Battle of the Bulge" was cited along with the Division for our part in the liberation of Colmar.

We were on the move again to the north on Feb. 11th and ended up in the small village of Zimcourt, France. We enjoyed a few days rest here and remember this place due to the fact that it was here that we had our first taste of beer since coming to this side of the channel. I call it a taste because all it amounted to was two small bottles per man and that ain't much. We started moving again on Feb. 16th. On this trip we went through Nancy, France, the weather was by far the nicest since we hit the ETO and it was a welcome relief from the intense cold and snow we had to endure all winter. Stopped this time at Gemblaux, Belgium, and really received the nicest treatment from the Belgians. They opened their homes to us travel-weary G.I.'s, fed us and let us sleep in good, soft feather beds. This, like all good deals in the army, didn't last long enough and the next morning found us pulling stakes again and once more we were on the move, destination unknown.

Our next stop found us in another small viillage, Wonck, Belgium. We remember this place because of the small cafe where us G.I.'s gathered to drink beer, listen to a three piece Belgian band and flirt around with the Belgium gals. But that didn't last long either for on Feb. 21st we hit the road again and this time added another country to our list of countries visited, this time it was Holland, the home of the huge windmills and dikes. Here, near Neu-California we relieved the British and took up indirect firing positions along the Roer River. We stayed in this area until the 5th of March when we crossed the Roer River and moved back into Germany again. Stayed in the village of Alst for four days and then moved up to Mors, near the banks of the Rhine River. It was evident at this time that the big push across the Rhine was about to break and break it did on the morning of March 24th. I was in bed about twelve feet under-ground when the opening barrage let loose but didn't stay there long as I just had to get up and watch the fire-works and excitement. Yeah man, it was really sumpin and those Krauts on the other side were really catching Hell, and I don't mean perhaps.

During our stay west of the Rhine our battalion was reorganized and we turned our towed gund and half tracks and exchanged them for a new destroyer mounting a millimeter gun, and with these we crossed the Rhine on March 29th on a pontoon bridge near Duisberg, Germany. Of course there were other troops had crossed the river prior to this date so we weren't the first ones to cross. Anyway, this was the first time in 125 years that a conquering army had every crossed the Rhine River.

From there on we were constantly on the move until the 8th of April and more than an over-nite stay at any one place was a novelty. But the Wehrmacht was definitely on its last legs and headin for the last round-up and the "Yanks" weren't even giving them time to catch their breath. The 75th to which we were still attached, was engaged in helping to eliminate the "Ruhr Pocket" and it was in the destruction of this pocket that the 772 saw their last action in the war against the Third Reich. The platoons were pulled out of the front lines on April 14th and the company reassembled near Somborn.

Next, we spent a week's rest period near Bam bour, Germany, but on the 22nd of April we were on the move again. We wound up in Warburg, Germany, but after a three day stay we took to our wheels again, this time to the village of Valbert. Here for the first time we were definitely sure that our combat days in the ETO were over for we began functioning as Military Government. We remained in Valbert until May 8th, V-E Day, and moved to our present location at Schwelm, Germany. Our future is still a question mark (?) --- will it be the South Pacific or the Army of Occupation. You Guess.