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A History of "Victoria": The 953rd Field Artillery Battalion, Formerly the 2nd BN. of the 186th F.A. Regt.

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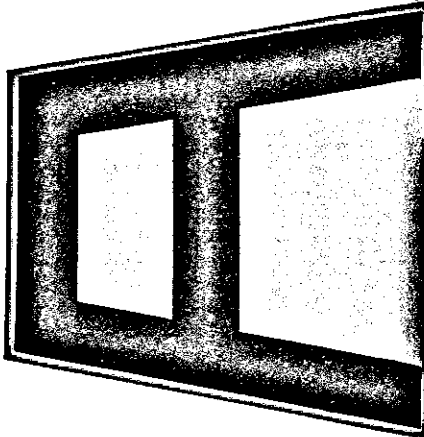
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A HISTORY OF
"VICTORIA"

THE 953RD FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION



FORMERLY
THE 2ND BN. OF THE 186TH F. A. REGT.



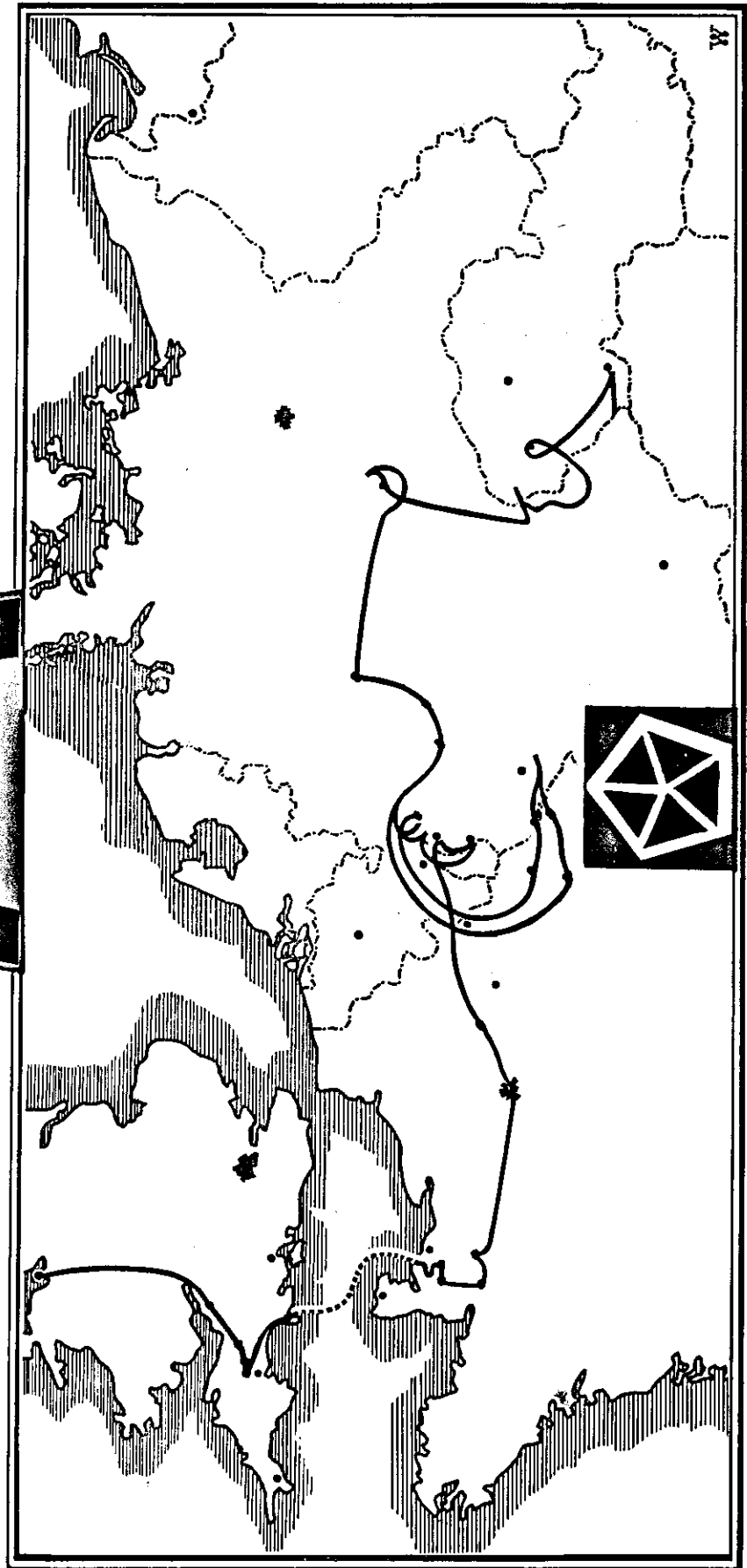
1940
NEW YORK, N.Y.

1941
MADISON BARACKS
FT. ETHAN ALLEN CAROLINAS

1942
FT. ETHAN ALLEN
PINE CAMP

1943
FT. ETHAN ALLEN
ARHILL, TENNESSEE-ENGLAND

JUNE 1944 - MAY 1945
NORMANDY
NORTHERN FRANCE
RHINELAND-ARDENNES
CENTRAL EUROPE



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Preface

This history was made possible by, and is the work of, you who read it. In the matter of getting it on paper, much of the editing was done by Captain Rogers, and he is to blame for any error or misinformation which you find. Credit is due to many of the members of the battalion for the history in its present form: T/5 Forkey for rewrite work; M/Sgt Trunfio for the maps; T/5 Ellsberry and Pfc Conkwright for the illustrations; T/5 Fox for the photographs; and, as battery representatives and general assistants, T/Sgt Reeves, T/4 Morgan, T/4 Mancusi, Cpl Downey, and Pfc Slinker.

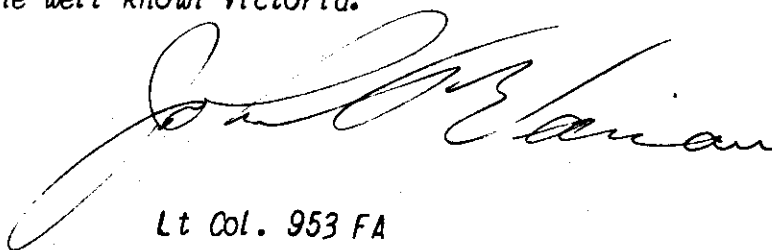
For the benefit of families -- maybe even grandchildren (we hope) -- who may read this, and also for the benefit of any former 953 men who may get rusty on their artillery terms as peace rules the world during the coming years (how we hope for that!), the following glossary of the numerous abbreviations appearing in the history is offered:

- OP - Observation Post
- CP - Command Post
- FDC - Fire Direction Center -- the brains and nerves of a Field Artillery battalion in action
- Gp - Group -- a Field Artillery headquarters higher than the battalion from whom we usually took orders
- Able
Baker
Charlie - variants of "A", "B", and "C" Batteries
- Hq - Headquarters (usually referring to Headquarters Battery)
- SNAFU - really not in the vocabulary of the 953rd Field Artillery Battalion, but may be found in any dictionary if desired

Col. O. A. Axelson
C.O. 906th FA Group.

TO THE MEN OF VICTORIA

The compliments to Victoria and the awards for merit to me are yours. During our training and our combat you worked hard to produce the superior organization that we know Victoria was recognized to be. On your behalf I have accepted the praise which you so justly deserved. I feel highly honored by the continuous loyal support given by each officer and every man, without which we would have been only another average battalion, not the well known Victoria.



John M. Blain

Lt Col. 953 FA

HEADQUARTERS

953rd Field Artillery Battalion
Fort Ethan Allen
Vermont

GENERAL ORDERS

18 February 1943

NUMBER 1

The Headquarters of the 953rd Field Artillery Battalion is hereby opened at Fort Ethan Allen, Vermont, at 0401Z this date.

By Order of Lt. Col. VARIAN

That was the first official act of the 953rd Field Artillery, the new designation given to an already active battalion of Corps field artillery.

The unit's history is actually considerably older than that, dating back to the 23rd Infantry Regiment of the New York National Guard, organized in Brooklyn in 1862. After service in the Gettysburg Campaign in 1863, the regiment continued to be active and well known, having its huge armory at Belford and Atlantic Avenues, Brooklyn. After the 23rd served on the Mexican border in 1916-17, it was redesignated the 106th Infantry Regiment during World War 1 and served overseas as part of the 27th Division, taking part in the Battles of Flanders and Ypres-Lys and in the Somme Offensive. Upon its return the personnel of this war regiment returned to the 23rd Infantry of the New York National Guard. A permanent change in designation of this National Guard regiment to "106th Infantry" was made in 1921.

In September 1940 the 106th Infantry became the 186th Field Artillery Regiment, New York National Guard. This unit was inducted into Federal Service on Jan. 27, 1941, leaving Brooklyn for training at Madison Barracks, N.Y. on Feb. 7, 1941, as part of the 71st Field Artillery Brigade.

Then on the 18th of February 1943 the 2nd Battalion of the 186th Field Artillery Regiment was made a separate battalion of Corps Artillery and renamed the:

953rd Field Artillery Battalion

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Training Daze

A few members of the 953 FA Battalion could recall the days when, as part of the 106th Infantry, they took part in the maneuvers at DeKalb Junction in northern New York State, but most of us did not become associated with the organization until after it had become part of the 186th Regiment. Some of the men and officers were active in that organization from its designation on 22 September 1940, but the larger portion did not join until after the induction of the unit on 27 January 1941. From then on our training was intensive, first at the Armory, and after February 7th at Madison Barracks, when both our officers and our men learned about Field Artillery and the running of army organizations.

Many of the traditions of the unit and considerable credit for its high standards are due to the personality of the Commanding Officer of the 186th FA Regt during this training phase:

Colonel James Madison Garrett Jr, a thorough instructor, a driver, a perfectionist. Because of these traits he undoubtedly had many an unhappy moment with this green outfit but because of them he was largely responsible for our success.

Credit should also be given to the Battalion Commander, Lt. Col. George Beavers, who commanded for the first six months of training and whose teachings contributed almost as much as Col. Garrett's to the foundation of the unit. Lt. Col. Tom B. Blocker, who replaced "Jigs," formed the battalion into an efficient organization during his long period as commander.

The initial work at Madison Barracks was bewilderingly difficult and tedious, handicapped as we were by too much weather and too little material for training. By early spring we felt that we had the beginnings of a real organization and were able to accept our first group of replacements designed to bring us up to full strength. These selectees, mostly from New York State, provided us with many of our future ranking non-coms and they, with the original National Guardsmen, formed the backbone of our organization throughout its training and combat days.

Were you there when these selectees arrived on 28 April 1941? Do you remember? The Regimental Band meeting us at the Sackett's harbor Station at one o'clock in the morning to give us a royal reception after a tedious train trip, the good natured rivalry between the National Guardsmen and the Selectees throughout the years -- our first tussle with pots and pans on our first K.P. assignment -- the Andrews Sisters' sweet rendition of "I'll be With You in Apple Blossom Time", the most played tune in all the Watertown juke joints -- our first parade on the Madison Barracks Campus -- the way we jumped when we fired the Schneiders for the first time on the Range.

Were you with us when we moved to Fort Ethan Allen, trading places with the 258th? Remember those swimming details? Down at Lake Champlain -- our first Maneuvers around the Camp Devens' area with the Good Humor ice-cream wagons playing a large part in the battle -- nostalgia. Sweet nostalgia!

Had you joined us when we started the Carolina maneuvers in the early fall of 1941? Memories of -- that long trek to the sand-fly infested peach tree region of North Carolina for the big Maneuver that was to pay dividends later on in combat those numerous "March Orders" in the midst of fitful slumber in the wee hours of the morning -- the boys all humming and whistling "Goodbye Dear I'll Be Back in a Year" -- little did we know then! Now we're singing "Long Ago and Far Away".

Do you recall -- the men over 28 signing their discharge papers before going

back to Ethan Allen -- the same papers being thrown in the basket after the Pearl Harbor incident -- the new theme song, "Good-bye Mama, I'm off Yokohama" and some of us were heading in that direction when our first shipment disembarked in Australia -- those frigid problems out on the Range under the towering Mt Mansfield -- and of course, that overnight problem with the temperature hovering at 24 below zero -- the way we "Old Vets" broke in the green shavetails fresh from Ft Sill OCS; they've certainly acquired all the know-how and proven themselves in combat -- those romances culminating in marriage for a good many -- getting a good "load on" at the Black Cat, High Hat, Sugar House, Paragon and our own P.X. -- that mad dash for the Montreal week-end special with a roll call in the lobby of the Mount Hotel every Sunday morning -- were the boys actually going up there for the scenery???

Were you with us when we moved to Pine Camp in the spring of 1942? Lest we forget -- those 25 mile hikes at Pine Camp -- our work there with the pride of Gen. Patton's 3rd Army, the 4th Armored Division -- those week-end passes to neighboring Utica and Syracuse with some of us going the whole hog and riding all the way into New York -- seeing movies under the stars in the outdoor amphitheater where our projector got basic training in breaking down even tho' it did cost us 15 cents admission -- some more of the boys being shipped out to amphibious outfits.

Perhaps you came before we moved back to Ethan Allen in the fall of '42 and remember -- the addition of those 31st Div men who made the trip from Louisiana Maneuvers in their sunbans to join us in coolish Ethan Allen with goose pimples until our Supply Sgts could issue wool ODS -- the football team, the Yellowjackets, who had a whale of a good time traveling to foreign fields for games and the swell impression they left with the coeds at Green Mt. Jr. College in Poultney, Vt. -- those early morning trots around the Post before breakfast -- the nightly Infantry tactics on the ice-covered slopes just in case -- the inter-battery cannoneers' competitions with the winners being rewarded by sleeping thru Reveille on Sunday morning -- that big fire in Able's barrack with everyone pitching in to help squelch it, boy, we really moved then -- those "alerts" when we were confined to camp and the attendance at the Post Theater soared -- the Coca-Cola machines giving us refreshment for those ten minute pauses.

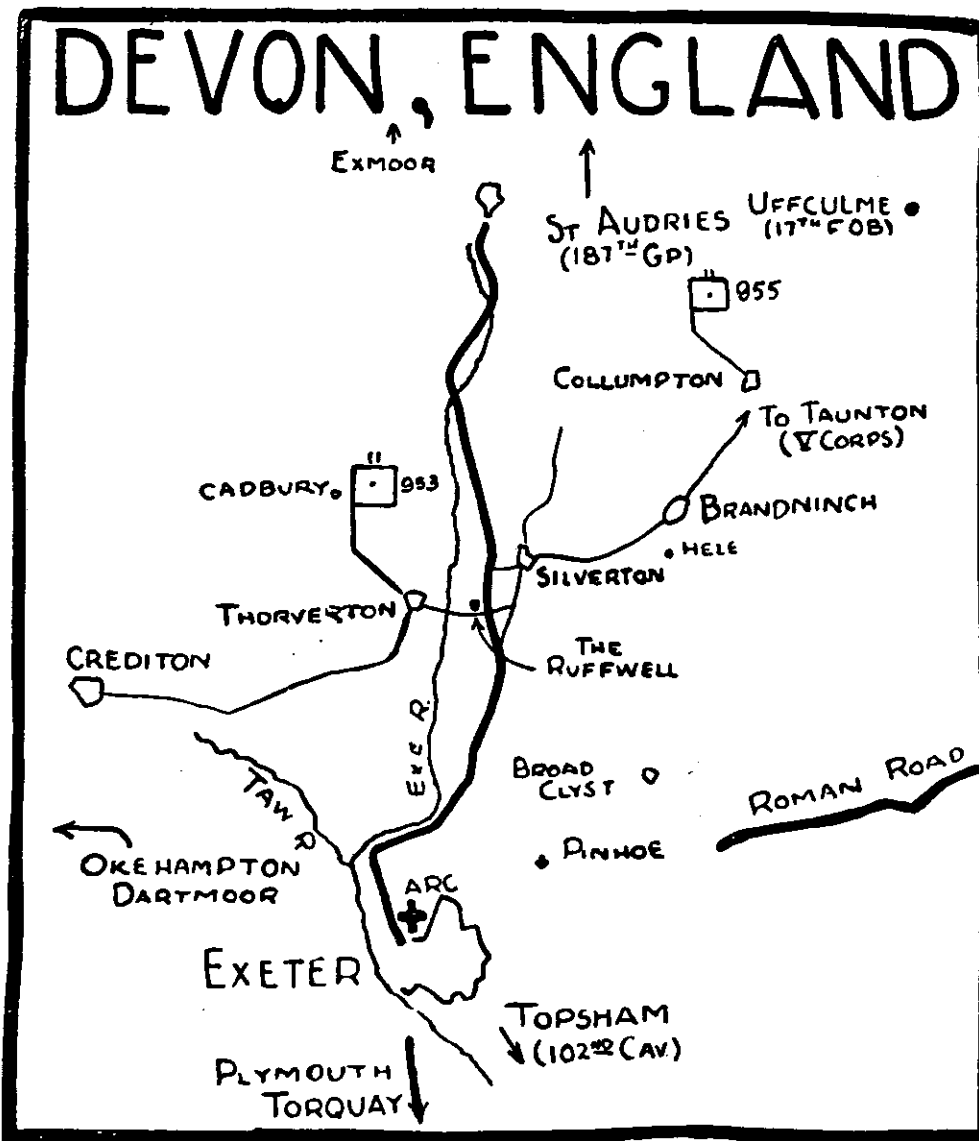
Surely you remember the 953rd first order -- Lt. Col. Varian becoming CO of Victoria when we parted company with the 186th -- those practices for practice loading and chocking of vehicles on flat cars prior to our departure for A. P. Hill, Va. -- the tearful farewells to our loved ones and friends in Burlington, Vinton and other Vt. localities. Then, too -- fighting those forest fires on the Range at A. P. Hill spoiling many a good date in Bowling Green and Fredericksburg -- those two day passes during which most of us saw our Capital for the first time -- the glow of pride when we traded our Schneiders in for M1's -- that feeling on the infiltration course with .50 caliber slugs whizzing over our -- --, that's when we learned to keep our tails down -- the boys beginning to wonder whether we were ever going overseas (now it's a case of vice-versa).

Remember the trip to Tennessee in the middle of June 1943? -- those Tennessee Maneuvers complete with chiggers, snakes and intolerable heat -- Nashville on a 48 hour pass with hotel rooms at a premium -- Murfreesboro's quaint theater where the pop-corn crackled throughout the show -- the boys becoming sailors and sleeping in hammocks to prevent being eaten up alive by chiggers -- the G.I.'s washing their ears by eating watermelon -- the first time lots of us got a chance to pick cotton -- the boys starting to sing "Chattanooga Choo-Choo" after returning from a date with a WAC stationed at Ft Oglethorpe.

Were you around when we learned we were to go to Dix? Remember -- the start-

ling announcement that we were headed for Ft Dix and we knew what that meant -- we became convinced when we traveled first class Pullman to Dix and were served ice cream and candy on the ride there!!! Think of the time that -- we turned in all our organizational equipment, were inspected repeatedly, had to "cough" for at least 20 different doctors and even went through the practice of boarding a vessel and climbing down a rope in case of a sinking -- we threw a hand grenade for the first time -- we went on a few more conditioning hikes and were thoroughly lectured on buttoning our lip -- the last furlough in which we stocked up on many a fond memory to recall when our spirits were low.

Most of us were at Camp Kilmer, the POE, the last stop before we set sail -- those overnight passes, never knowing which one was to be the last -- then the announcement -- we were confined -- this was it!!!



Reminiscing -- the ferryboat ride from the Jersey side of the river -- our first Red Cross Coffee'n doughnuts -- boarding the Monarch of Bermuda and seeing the New York skyline for the last time in a long while -- pulling KP -- working our way across and getting a break at that; at least we could eat a hearty meal while the rest of the passengers ate like canaries -- the swell entertainment provided by the cast of "This Is The Army" and a USO unit all the way across -- the various crap

games aboard ship with some of our lucky lads making a terrific killing -- arriving in Liverpool Harbor in a typical English fog and anchoring there for 3 days -- the American tunes played surprisingly well by a Limey military band as we disembarked -- seeing bombed out areas for the first time as we boarded those English trains -- the beauty and quietude of the English countryside making it hard to believe that there was a war going on -- our arrival at Thorverton & Silverton in a blackout, it seemed odd after basking in America's lights for so long -- our visit to the local pubs, the warm beer, the small supply of spirit in stock and our first dart game "Double Fordeen" -- the beautiful patch-quilt panorama of the Devon farm lands -- the thatch roofed pastel shaded, toyland cottages in the quaint villages -- then came the Moors -- Heathcliff Brr!!! -- visit to Exeter and our resentment when we viewed the bombed areas -- the Hollywood premier effects of searchlights probing the skies for hostile aircraft -- passes and furloughs for some to London and the boys returning with glowing tales of English womanhood and Picadilly Circus -- the driving on the wrong side of the road -- "proper day, in ee?" -- some of us experiencing our first air-raid in London and thrilling to the fourth of July display set up by the English ack-ack -- amphibious training near Torquay and lots of us turning "green around the gills" on an L.C.I. -- "Got any gum, chum?" from the kids being answered by "Got a sister, mister?" from the GI's -- hikes and ball games to put us in shape for the big show -- those land Army girls could find their way to a haystack in a blackout -- doing the Hokey-Pokey -- singing "Roll Me Over" -- the practice water-proofing of howitzers and vehicles showing us that something was in the wind -- the long expected announcement that hit us like a ton of bricks -- the invasion was on -- This Was It!!! the chips were down, the "chicken" all behind us and we're now playing for keeps.

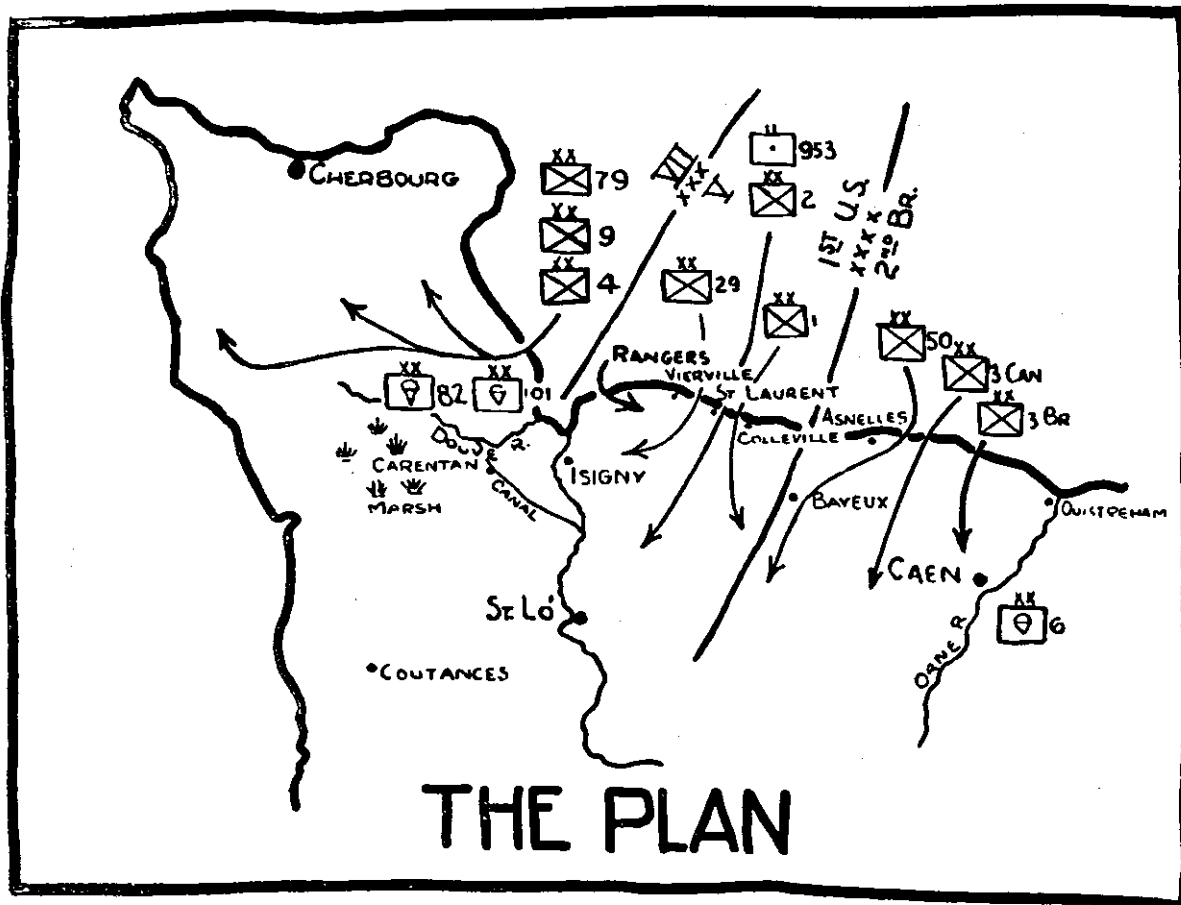
Well fellows, the rest is all history with which you're well acquainted. Our Battalion's teamwork paid off, we've made a grand showing and an enviable record one which we're mighty proud of.

Phase 1 Normandy

THE BIG PICTURE---The Battle of Europe, destined to go down in history as one of the greatest military undertakings with perhaps the greatest consequences at stake, was begun by the Allies on the morning of 6 June 1944 with an invasion of the north-west coast of France. Actually the invasion was postponed one day because of bad weather.

The spot selected for the invasion was a strip of beaches between the river Orne, on the East, to Varaville, near the Carentan Estuary, on the West. Along this sixty miles of beaches, five strips had been selected for attack. Each strip was about three miles long. The plan was to assault these five beachheads, to push inland as fast as possible, spreading out, and, with help from the airborne forces landed in the enemy's rear, to establish a sixty mile front which could be supplied over the beaches. This is how the assault task was apportioned:

On the right flank, between Varaville and the Carentan Estuary, the Fourth U.S. Infantry Division was to assault one beach. Here there were no bluffs, but behind the beaches was a mile-deep inundated strip, across which ran several causeways with bridges. To prevent the enemy from blowing the bridges and causeways, and to protect the left flank of this isolated attack on the Cherbourg Peninsula, two airborne divisions were to be landed well before dawn. The 101st was to take the



high ground behind the beaches, capture St. Martin de Varaville, and there make contact with the Fourth Division. The 82nd was to land farther inland, near St. Mere Eglise, destroy bridges and hold the left flank while two other divisions were

getting ashore. Then, with five divisions ashore, the VII Corps was to fight its way to Cherbourg.

On a beach to the east of the Carentan Estuary between Varaville and Colleville, the V Corps was to assault with one regiment of the tested 1st Division and one regiment of the 29th. Their task was to push straight south and form a continuous front with the British on their left flank. On the right flank the estuary was considered sufficient protection until the V Corps and VII could be joined. But on the two capes, far to the right, the Germans had heavy batteries capable of shelling both American beaches. Two battalions of Rangers were detailed to reduce them.

To the east, going toward Port Bessin, the sandy beaches trailed away into mud flats, to become beaches again near Asnelles. Between Asnelles and Ouistrham, a distance of seventeen miles, were good beaches, and these were the objectives of the British and Canadians. The 50th Northumbrians Division was to assault the beach on the right nearest the American's left flank. The 3rd Canadian Division was to assault the center beach, and the Third British Division the one on the left. Once past these beaches the troops were to close the gap between them and the Americans, then push south to a depth of several miles. To protect the British left flank from attack from the east, where the enemy had his strongest reserves, the British Sixth Airborne Division was to land before H-hour across the Orne River. Reinforced by Commandoes, it was to delay enemy reserves until the main British forces could fight their way to it.

Our tactics were designed to meet a counter-attack, which we expected by D plus 3, and still keep the initiative to maintain a foothold below the peninsula while we took the peninsula and Cherbourg.

Most of the enemy's strength in western Europe, some sixty divisions, was concentrated east of Cherbourg peninsula, between LeHarve and the hook of Holland. The task of the British, therefore, would be to hold off counter-attacks from the east while probing for a firmer foothold. The American V Corps would reinforce the British and also try to push a little deeper. With the enemy thus engaged in the east and south, the American VII Corps, protected by the terrain on its left, would sweep north and capture Cherbourg. Those tactics, although modified in detail to meet changing conditions, were followed through to success.

On the second American beach, between the British and VII Corps, things did not go well. Two unpredictable things had combined to make the situation critical. One was the weather which had raised waves four feet high to swamp the boats, conceal the obstacles and make the Infantry sick. The other was the stroke of intuition, information or luck that caused the Germans to move their 352nd Division to the coast during the night, 5-6 June. Many a machine gun section set up its machine gun on the bluff that morning, looked down and beheld an invasion.

The landing went wrong from the beginning. The Engineers' commanding officer was killed a few minutes after he reached the beach. One Engineer battalion lost 60% of its personnel before it could clear a path to the beach. While the demolition parties worked to clear the obstacles, the landing craft grew thicker behind them. They fouled one another, a few blew up on mines.

Where landings could be made, Infantry got ashore a boatload at a time, too few to storm the beach defenses. All they could do was to dig in on the beach and wait pitifully for reinforcements. The longer they stayed on the ground, the harder it was for them to move when sufficient troops did get ashore. They kept piling up on the beach until the 1st Division's Assistant Division Commander personally went

ashore and relieved the situation. In the early afternoon, the first waves of troops got off the beach and began to spread out in the high ground beyond the bluffs. By then the beach was strewn with wreckage and bodies, and it was hard to find a place to land. However, by late afternoon, V Corps had advanced inland three miles to the Aure River.

VII Corps was doing well, and the Corps Headquarters had already moved ashore. No word had been heard from the 82nd Airborne, but it was later learned that they accomplished their mission although at a terrific cost of men. By late evening British troops were in Bayeux, five miles inland. VII Corps was still moving forward, with almost all her vehicles and men ashore on schedule. Radio contact had finally been established with the 82nd Airborne Division. V Corps was ashore and inland about four miles, but it was a precarious toehold that they held.

ESTABLISHING THE BEACHHEAD: The following days were days of heavy fighting on all fronts. No rapid advance was anticipated, but a slow steady advance to link up the different beaches, to clear the wreckage from them especially in the V Corps sector and to bring in reinforcements to strengthen the lines in preparation for the expected counter-attack.

Because of the slow start on the V Corps beach, General Bradley changed the plan of attack somewhat. The salient between the V and VII Corps, from Isigny to Carentan was now vulnerable. Instead of going straight for Cherbourg, leaving V Corps to protect its rear, VII Corps was to attack toward Carentan, while V Corps was to take Isigny and move west until they met the VII Corps.

By D plus 5 the beachheads were secure. The Allies held a sixty-mile fluid front. The right flank was somewhere between Quineville and Ozeville. From there the line ran south of Montebourg thence to the Carentan Canal. Between Carentan and Isigny the two Corps had joined although Carentan was still in enemy hands. From Isigny the line ran southward and eastward between Bayeux and Tilly toward Caen. From north of Caen the line followed the Orne River to the sea. This line represented a steady cautious advance and buildup with the Allies ready at any time to meet a heavy counter-attack. We had, at this time, sixteen divisions ashore, and the enemy had an estimated fourteen opposing us.

Now the wisdom of our leaders began to prove itself. As was mentioned before, the enemy had the majority of his reserves east of the bridgehead. As was expected and planned for, as his reserves were brought up from the east they committed at once. Consequently, the British were the first to encounter these attacks. They, however, expecting them before the others, had planned their advance accordingly, and all counterattacks were held. The opposition became increasingly stronger along the line from the British sector to the V Corps sector, as the enemy brought up his reserves and committed them. VII Corps then, by these enemy tactics, were able to build up their forces without too much opposition, for their drive up the Cherbourg peninsula toward the large port.

On D plus 5, General Bradley moved his headquarters ashore, and, the same day, General Montgomery announced that the battle of the beaches was won.

SECURING THE BEACHHEAD AND CAPTURE OF CHERBOURG: On D plus 6 the VII Corps started their attack to clear the Cherbourg peninsula. The plan called for a drive across the base of the peninsula from Carentan toward Barneville sur Mer. While this operation was being conducted, an attack would be made northwards toward the port. However, the enemy staged a strong counter-attack all along the Allied front this day, and it was not until D plus 9 that the counter-attack was stopped and the VII Corps got going. By D plus 12 the peninsula had been cut and 25,000 Germans in

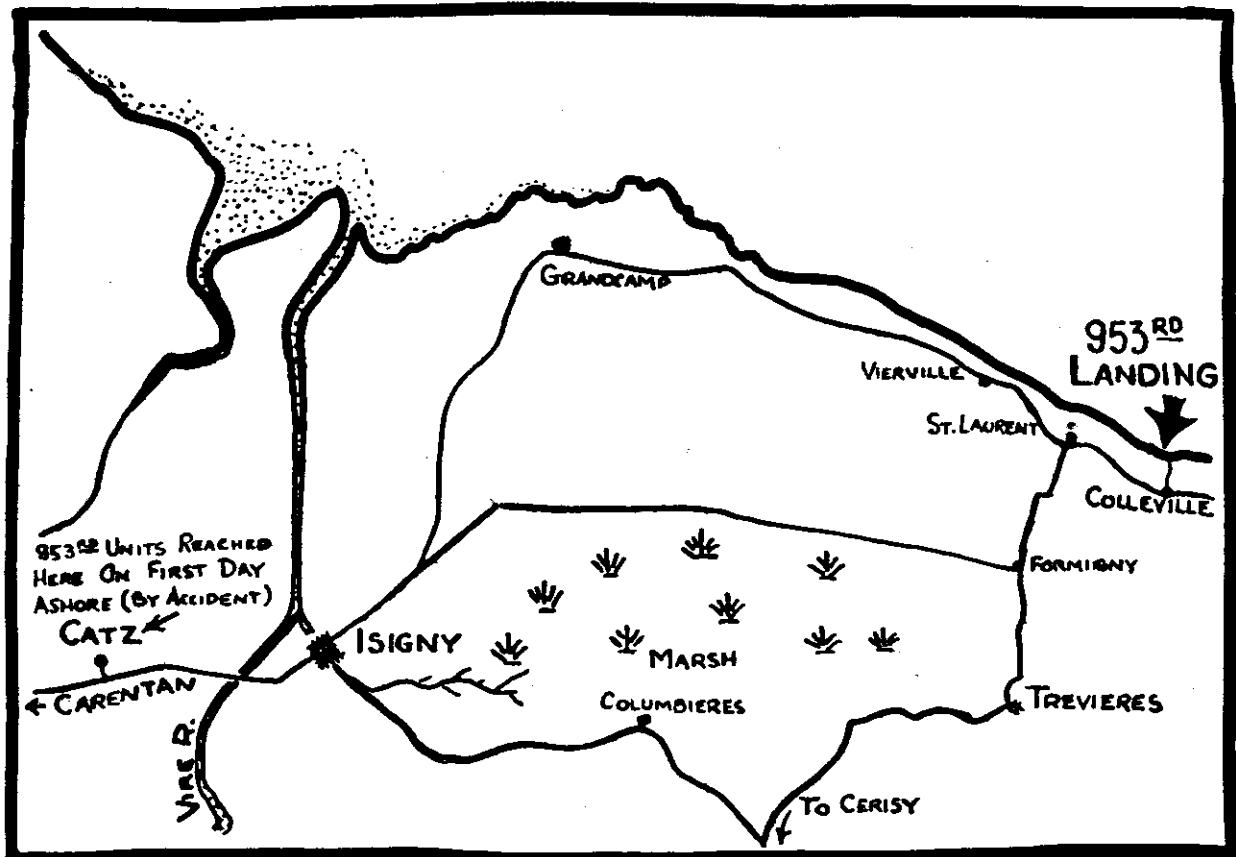
the peninsula were cut off. Now with three divisions: the 4th on the east, the 79th in the center and the 9th on the left, the main effort turned northwards.

The attack was swift at first, but it became slower and dogged when the Germans reached their outer fortifications. However, by D plus 15, the Americans were five miles from the city, and by D plus 21 the port of Cherbourg surrendered.

THE BUILD-UP: By 1 July the rest of the peninsula had been mopped up, and the armies were regrouping for the next effort. We were definitely firmly established on the soil of France. No longer could the enemy hope to push us into the sea. His effort was now to contain us in the peninsula. He had amassed a considerable amount of armor, especially in the Caen sector, and he was dug in depth to put up a bitter defense, as we later found out.

Supplies and troops were now pouring in over the beaches in preparation for the next effort. Slow steady advances were made, especially southward from the base of the Cherbourg peninsula. The bridgehead was slowly expanding to make room for the immense stores of ammunition, armored forces, reserve divisions and the material necessary to supply and support a drive to Paris and the Seine.

VICTORIA - ONCE OVER LIGHTLY - The 953rd FA Bn disembarked in France commencing at 0915B, 13 June 1944 at Omaha Beach near Colleville-sur-Mer. From its initial firing position north of Cerisy it reinforced the fires of the 2nd Infantry Division, to which it was attached. This attachment continued until 4th July when the battalion was attached to the 187th FA Gp, which in turn had the mission of supporting the 2nd Division, subject to calls for fire by the 29th or 5th Divisions, on the flank. On 9th July the battalion moved to positions south of Cerisy. Throughout this period many missions were fired, concentrating particularly at first on Hill 192 and later on the opening phase of "Operation Cobra."



VICTORIA - A LONG LOOK: It is June 1944. The dawn of the 6th is already several hours old in Thorverton Devon. Outside the little English village is a cluster of hutments--the seventh month old home of Headquarters and "A" batteries of the 953rd Field Artillery Battalion. The night C.Q. makes his way wearily to each hut to waken the sleeping men. In one a G.I. lights a cigarette as a prelude to the laborious business of getting up. Idly flipping the dial of the radio beside his bed, he stretches back to enjoy the smoke. The words of a BBC news caster fully awakens him. "The Germans report Allied paratroop landings in France."

"Say, did ya' hear that?"

"Yeah, wonder if there's anything to it."

"Don't know, but we oughta find out soon enough."

They did. Mid-morning brought confirmation from Allied sources and the calm, authoritative voice of General Eisenhower gave his historic speech. Later it was learned that V Corps of the First U.S. Army was taking part in the initial operations. We of the 953rd were attached to V Corps. What part were we to play?

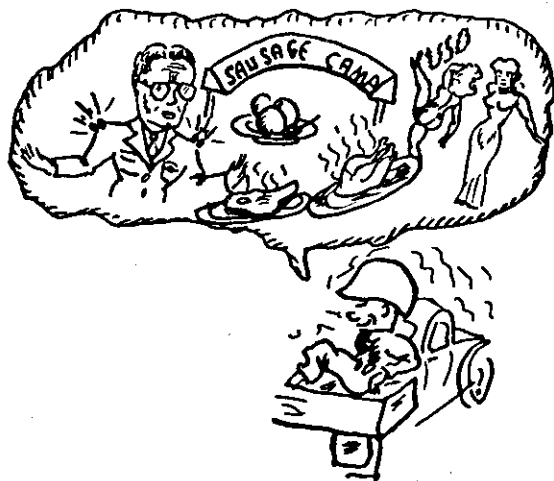
That we were to have a part could hardly be doubted. The vehicles and guns in the motor parks were waterproofed and waiting. For days frequent inspections had diminished the personal supply of excess or unneeded clothing and equipment; men in the C.P. and personnel departments had been unusually active; passes had been cancelled; men were restricted to their battery areas.

Yet, for all that, another day or two passed without indicating an immediate move. The batteries went on their short, brisk hikes as they had for some time past; there was no marked change in the daily routine.

In Silverton, the story was the same. Charlie and Service were ready, and Baker could not have been more so, unless Tony Carullo had been along. T/4 Tony of the radio section had stored his excess underwear, socks, and other little items in the battery and Vibrator pack of his 610's, but when the big day came he was on his way to the States with a broken leg.

One gray morning promised a definite move. Everything was in readiness, but by mid-morning, bedrolls were being removed from the trucks in anticipation of another day of waiting. Then began one of those searching, persistent rains peculiar to England. It lasted throughout the day and most of the night, but by morning had stopped. Again the column of trucks and guns were ready and this time the long road march to the staging area began.

As the battalion moved out the faint light of dawn lent a familiarity to the faces and figures of some of the villagers of Thorverton, and Silverton. More than



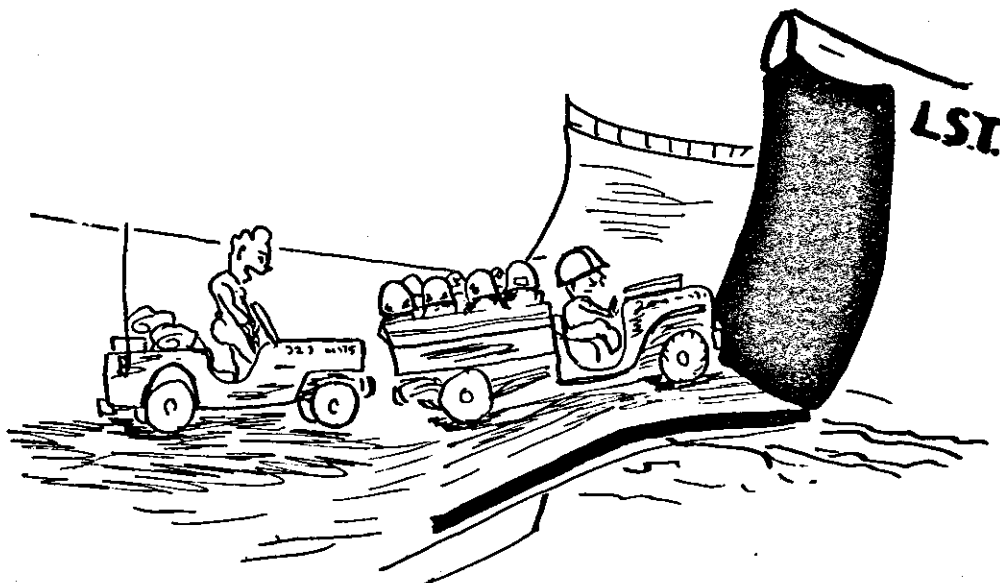
a few of them waved farewell and shouted their "good lucks" and "Cheerios" for the last time to the shadowy figures on the overloaded trucks. Past the old Ruffwell hotel and onto some of the familiar roads that had led to many a field exercise on some wind-swept moor; rolling by less familiar places along roads that finally ended at a great staging area at Weymouth.

Capt. Jones in the winter previous had given the battalion orientation lectures on the "sausage" camp. The ice cream, chicken and U.S.O. shows he had described failed to materialize; the nickname "sausage" might well have come from the nature of the food rather than the perimeter of the area for sausage the boys got, and sausage every meal.

Late in the afternoon of 10 June, the batteries were briefed on the plans of the operation already in progress on the Normandy Coast. The great battle for fortress Europe was on. Two Allied Armies were in the process of landing, ran the summary report of the over-all picture. More in detail was the story of V Corps; they had assaulted a beach to the east of Carentan Estuary near Colleville with one regiment of the famous 1st Division and one from the 29th. Their mission was to drive toward St. Lo and the high ground to the east. The 953 would probably support one of the V Corps divisions. Quite possibly, the 29th. "Is there anyone now", asked Lt. Hargett of headquarters, "who still thinks we'll never see action"? No one replied.

Meanwhile the final stages of the waterproofing had been completed. The battalion was finished and so was Baker Battery's Pvt. Fanelli. Carefully he had sewed his cherished love letters into his raincoat sealing them safely away from rain and dampness. PX rations were distributed among the men; British pounds were exchanged for French francs and a movie was shown which required neither as entrance fee. Life preservers were passed around and the battalion was divided into three sections; Headquarters to be on one boat; A.B.C. on a second and Service on a third.

The next day was D plus 5. The battalion moved from the staging area on its last road march in the British Isles, rolled to the channel port of Weymouth and joined the countless columns of guns and vehicles which were slowly disappearing into the bellies of the LST's converged off shore. Loudspeakers directed the convoys to the ships they were destined for, and technical men moved up and down the lines inspecting guns, trucks, and other equipment.



The time between the arrival of the battalion and its final loading passed slowly. A few card games were played in a perfunctory manner by some of the men while others chatted or strolled about or dozed in the seats of the vehicles. Red Cross girls appeared with the inevitable coffee and doughnuts; a more substantial meal was served later in the day.

Thirty-six hours passed from the time the battalion boarded the boats until its unloading on the Normandy beach; thirty-six amazing, exciting, but never very frightening hours. Headquarters had to share an LST with many other units, while Major Galbraith with Able, Baker, and Charlie were more fortunate in having their own LST. Service Battery had the same privacy aboard an LCT. The first night aboard everyone managed to unroll his blankets somewhere for at least a few hours sleep. On the deck of Headquarters' LST, some of the men used camouflage nets as mattresses; others slept below, curling up in any available spot; still others, more fortunate, used the bunks of the crew on duty.

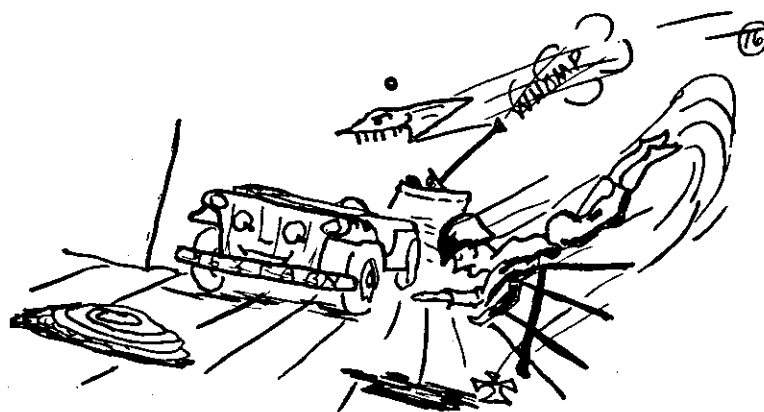
The next day was close to uneventful. The great fleet of landing craft plowed steadily away from the English coast through the green, blue waters of the channel. The comforting sight of a destroyer escort loomed in sight now and then, and only friendly planes were visible above the great barrage balloons floating above the ships. Men explored the ship and, tiring of this, began their eternal card games. In the afternoon men lounging on deck were startled by a sudden, slight jar of the ship and heavy, muffled explosions coming from nearby. Members of the ships' crew ran to their battle stations and the explosions were repeated. Destroyers had sighted or picked up a submarine in their instruments and were dropping depth charges on it.



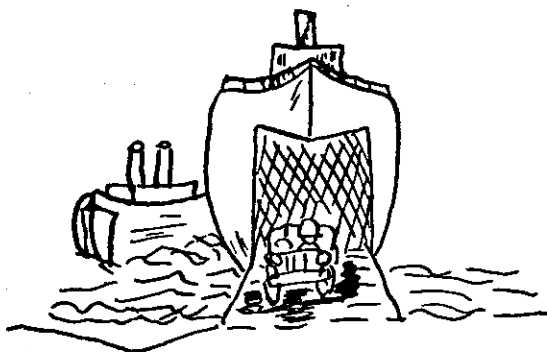
Later in the day the rough line of the Normandy coast became visible, more ships were sighted; destroyers, mine sweepers and the more familiar landing craft. The great flotilla stretched for miles along the coast and into the curving line of the beach. Far off somewhere a cruiser was firing its heavy guns at some enemy stronghold. From time to time a column of purple smoke gave warning of the destruction of shore mines by bomb disposal crews.



The June day waned and turned into night. The men of the 953 were told to bed down; there would be no unloading for them that night. With the hours of darkness came the German Luftwaffe. Shore batteries sent up shells with the peculiar, distinctive "whomp" of the Bofer guns. Far up in the night sky the projectiles burst, illuminating the darkness for a brief instant. The ack-ack guns of the boats joined



them and streams of red tracers crossed and recrossed each other, pouring from the rapid stuttering .50 caliber machine guns. Some of the men watched this display of fireworks from the decks; others sought refuge below or dove to shelter under a vehicle when a flying shell fragment whistled too close. After a time the enemy planes departed, and, as on the previous night, everyone managed to sleep.



Next day, 13 June, D plus 6, we unloaded on the beach at 0915 hours. Major Galbraith and Capt. Lee wanted to be the first ashore but their private "Higgins Boat" caught on a sand bar and they had to wait for the tide to go out. Capt. Wyeth on the other hand was asleep when the headquarters LST started to unload and just caught the medical detachment as it started down the ramp.

The strip of coast line near Colleville-sur Mer, known as Omaha Beach, still gave silent testimony to the fierce battle that had raged there. Crews were still cleaning the narrow sand strip of wreckage and working carefully to clear the well marked mine fields. Shell holes pock-marked the beach and the higher ground that sloped upward toward high bluffs. From further down the beach came, now and then, the sound of exploding mines, sending a plume of smoke and sand many feet in the air.

Onto the beach we rolled, as easily as we had boarded the LST's and as dry. Following a road that turned from the beach to higher ground, we headed for a vehicle transit area to de-waterproof the vehicles. The column of guns and vehicles labored slowly over the rise and gathered speed as it rolled inland. Not a cubic foot of space was free or left unused in the backs of the vehicles. The men stood upright, perhaps lightly tense, with expectation of a new and terrible experience. Others sat upon the high piles of bedrolls that had mysteriously swollen during the voyage across the Channel. A dull gleam of light played along the barrels of tightly gripped carbines as the convoy moved deeper inland.

We passed through a valley, reached a main east-west road, turned right on it to Colleville, then left to a field a little south of St. Laurent. Nothing but perplexing thoughts of the future had disturbed our trip yet; the men joked and talked with the careless, light banter of old. Our column of guns and vehicles moved onto the border of the field and dispersed itself along the tangled hedges. Dark blotches of shade from the thick trees served well as camouflage while the de-water-proofing was done. Later, it was learned that Charlie Battery had slipped past the MP in St. Laurent, but fortunately was turned back from Isigny before it reached the embattled town. Charlie, it was too, that suffered the first casualty when a heavy howitzer trail crushed Pvt. Norod's fingers.

Two tractors of Charlie led Lt. Tully and a tractor and wire truck of Able through Isigny to a bridge where they met an infantry colonel "on reconnaissance". Continuing, they reached Catz, just outside of Carentan, where tanks from the VII Corps told them to get out of no man's land and stay in the V Corps area.

While in the transit area we received our first mission, to support the 29th Inf. Division which was protecting the west of the V Corps beachhead. We were to go into position west of Colombiers to lessen the worry of counterattacks in the vicinity of Isigny and Carentan. Battery parties went on ahead, reconnaissance was completed, survey started and the battalion moved onto the road to its first assignment in the Normandy campaign.

V Corps was pushing slowly south to join the British who had stormed the beaches on their left flank. The British had met the stiff opposition they had expected; the Germans had counterattacked along the whole Allied line, and it was now in progress as the 953 rolled to the front.

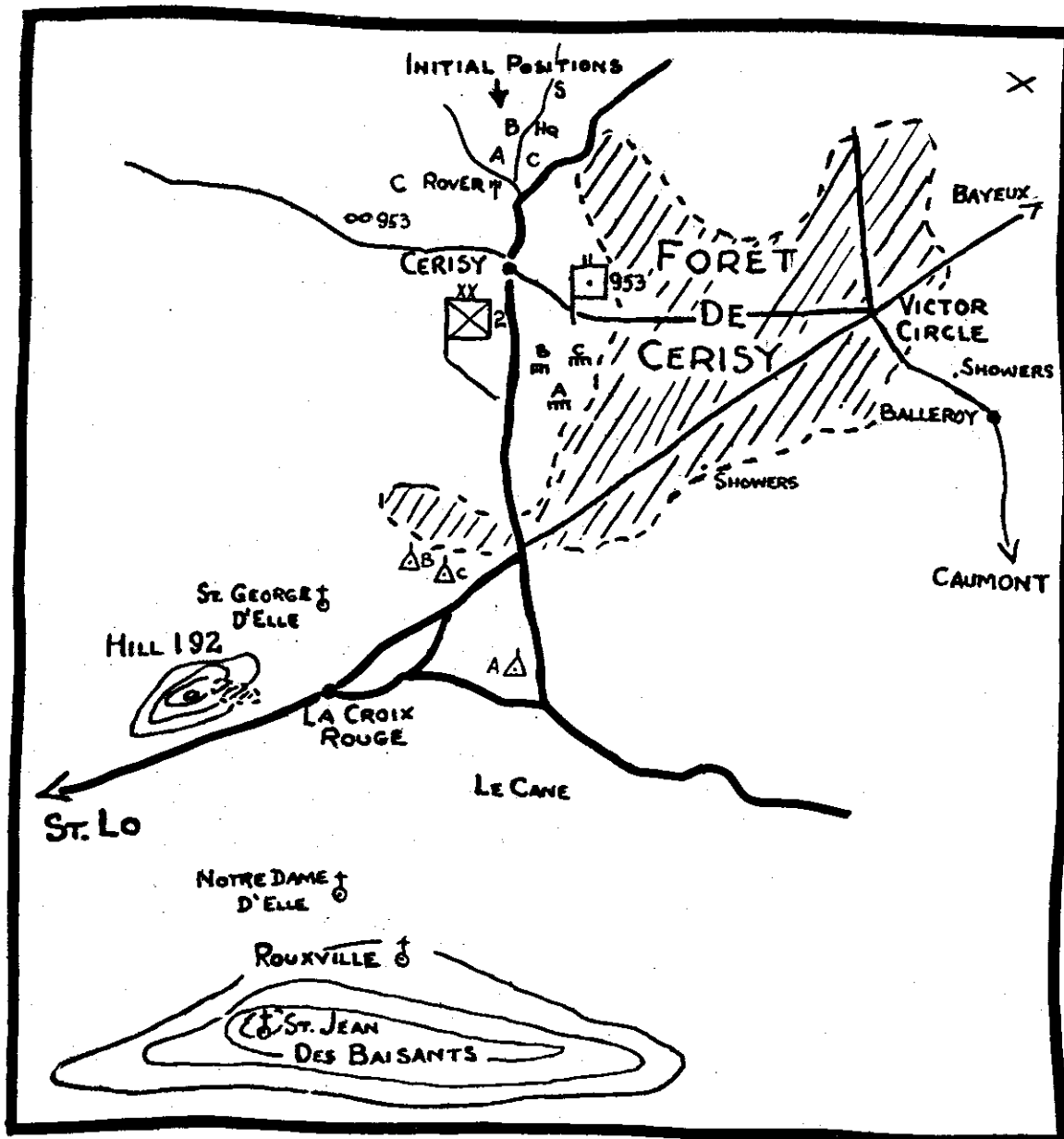
Meanwhile the battalion was re-routed as it moved to Colombiers and halted for a long, anxious hour, on the road. It might have been a road march on maneuver in far off Tennessee. The orchards and meadows that flanked the roadside were quiet and empty; no swarms of planes troubled the serenity of the skies; no whistling burst on the road junctions. What then, was the delay?

The answer was that our mission had been changed: We were to be in direct support of the 2nd Infantry Division from positions just north of Cerisy. Our "Goose-egg", direction of fire being given; there followed a hasty reconnaissance for already it was late in the day.

The waiting battalion back on the road moved again. The warmth of the day had passed; there was a cool breeze stirring and daylight was slowly fading as the column rolled smoothly along the hard surfaced road. Signs of day-old battles appeared in the shadows of the orchards and in the wide, green meadows. Ugly shell holes were plainly visible in the earth; and fragments had ripped long furrows in its bright surface. Dead cattle with bloated bellies could be seen now and then; their four legs pointed stiffly toward the sky. Shell-torn vehicles and an occasional burned out tank, told of more tragic casualties.

Trevieres was the first completely ruined town we saw--wreckage--odors--dazed people--This was war!

In falling darkness the battalion moved into firing position. The crackle of machine gun fire could be heard in the distance as we hastily camouflaged vehicles and gun positions. Fox holes were started along the hedge rows in the heavy shadows. Wire crews began their work; radios were in contact with higher headquarters. Soon the battalion was ready to fire.



We had not been given a choice area: The small "goose-egg" had forced a poor position on the entire unit. A crossroad was very near, on which at any moment we might expect a hail of artillery. The batteries were too close together and other unit were too close to them. The natural camouflage was far from ideal. It was plain to all that things could have been better.

The position being so cramped, Victoria 6 had Able move about 500 yards west the next morning, leaving its initial position as a "dummy position". After a German reconnaissance flight, heavy counterbattery fire landed, scoring two direct hits on the former #2 gun position and one hit on the machine gun pit.

Meanwhile, Capt. Jones, battalion liaison officer, and his party, moved off to the 2nd Division Command Post. There was no moon that night, and the roads were barely discernible in the enveloping darkness. The "burping" of German automatic guns, soon to become a familiar sound, seemed uncomfortably close as they arrived at the division C.P. where the Liaison party found a bustle of excitement. A German patrol had infiltrated and patrols were out in search of them. Presently two sni-

pers were brought in -- two wounded and frightened German soldiers, hardly more than boys. Dust and streaks of dirt covered their green gray uniforms and black leather boots.

Capt. Jones received a telephone call. It was from Capt. Wyeth back at the Battalion C.P. "Give us some missions. We came over here to shoot, you know." He got his missions.

About four hours later, Capt. Jones picked up the phone again and heard the voice of Capt. Wyeth, but the tone had changed: "For Pete's sake, can't you slow up a bit. We can fry eggs on the gun tubes". Captain Jones looked down at the "K" ration he had partly finished eating: "send us up a few, sunny side up; we could use them right now".

Next day, back at the battalion, the men had improved their fox holes. The cannoneers, weary from all night firing, were encouraged by the sound of nearby, strafing enemy planes. The skies were clouded and presently a drizzling rain fell which persisted on and off for days.

Early in the afternoon, quite without warning, there came thin, advancing wailing sound that ended in a dull, shattering explosion. Quite distinct from the sound of our own guns, no one had to be told what it was. When it came again, everyone for whom it was possible, had sought the safety of the closest fox hole.

In moments of danger, there is at times an element of humor which is only apparent when the danger has passed. Picture them, Cpl. J. Loane, diving for his fox hole and finding a visitor in the person of Captain Wyeth. "Oh, is this your hole, Loane", asked the Captain apologetically.

They also tell of Hearn and Iacomo of "C" Battery meeting head on diving for the same slit trench on a day not long after. And Chaplain Murphy who, not finding a "guest" fox hole, got some mental comfort hiding under a card table in the medical tent during an air raid. Many a man clung to the cool, damp earth in those early days with a greater fervor than ever a lover bestowed on his beloved.

Night came on again. In twenty-four hours the battalion had fired 1245 rounds. (Remember the extravagant days on the range at Ethan Allen when we had a full forty rounds to fire?) The big guns of our unit together with those of the surrounding units boomed almost incessantly day and night. Far distant gun flashes briefly illuminated the dark sky; the long, leaping orange flashes of those nearby lit for a long instant the dark tree tops of the scattered orchards. Up ahead, the light artillery pieces with an even greater steadiness, and on infrequent moments when they were quiet, the distant sound of rifle fire came faintly through the night.

The Second Division, spread over a wide front, was attempting to take Hill 192, which was the principal target for our rain of fire. This hill was the key to St. Lo. The grueling, casualty-strewn battle for this hill went on for days, never quite successful. Captain Lee spent an unhappy night with the infantry almost on the top of the hill but cut off from our troops and protected from the unfriendly Germans by only a hedge row.

The first night, as on many to follow, the Luftwaffe planes could be heard overhead. Sometimes they swept low, zooming overhead with an angry snarl. All of us soon learned the indefinable throb that distinguished German planes from our own.

All this time and during the long days to follow, Service Battery was performing its unsung job in a highly efficient manner. The glory of war, it seems, lies

in the sound and fury and not in the less spectacular feats of hauling ammo and gas and food over roads leading back to supply dumps. Some recognition was given Service Battery when its first sergeant later received the French Croix de Guerre with bronze star for his efficient management of the service details.

Service Battery, arriving later than the rest of the battalion, had its anxious moments between transit area and its position just in the rear of the firing batteries. Because of our ammunition shortage, the ammo train had to leave the de-waterproofing area after dark to deliver the batteries; missing a turn, they found themselves in the vicinity at later well known Victor circle when it was still known as No Man's Land. No casualties except for Sgt. Dwyer's foot. Perhaps Dwyer was excited when he told Tolliver, the aid man, that he hadn't seen Dwyer around. It has been told however, that Cpl. Horowitz and Tec. 5 Mike Parnicza were run over by a command car that night, which proved to Captain Betts that personnel men can get hurt, and, to the rest of us, that not all the clerks came over with the rear echelon.



Keenan, Berkey and Dumphy stood between a loaded ammunition truck and the hedgerow when a stray 50 caliber bullet struck the spare tire of the truck, the air shooting out with a loud gasp. All three Pfc's dove for the nearest fox holes, Keenan landing first, expecting the truck with its load of ammo to blow up in a tremendous explosion. Keenan said later that he learned a few new prayers that night. Very likely Tec. 4 Ralph Hester and Tec. 5 Charley Lick will never forget their first night in combat. The two battalion maintenance men with the machine gun Cpl. Dick Cerillo remained overnight in the de-waterproofing area with a truck and two trailers. Cpl. Cerillo drew the second two hour shift on the machine gun and during his guard shift a lone German plane flew over drawing machine gun fire from miles around. Shortly after the bombers came over attempting to bomb the ships lying off shore. By this time the other two men were fully awake, and the Corporal didn't lack for company the rest of his guard shift. The whistle of falling bombs was lost in the staccato bark of the machine guns and the exploding ack-ack. The crashing echo of exploding bombs reverberated from the hillsides; the night was ablaze with light from the streaming tracers, searchlights and gun flashes. There was little sleeping the remainder of the night and all three men were happy to re-join the battalion the next day.

A Cpl. of Service is writing home. The first few lines flow easily from his pen. Now he is lost for words. He scans his surroundings carefully trying to find something to put into words. He observes a figure at work in a fox hole; a smile lights his face and his pen begins: "He really has a fox hole. Of all the men in the battery, he is the only one who adores his hole. He stays in it day and night. Over the top he has draped a shelter half and at the bottom is wooden floor. Any time you want him, he will first stick his head out and look carefully around. Lately he has had his meals in its dark interior. His name is....."

Some mention should be made of Calvados -- a violent explosive made by distilling apple cider -- useful for lighter fluid or trouble making. Bathtub gin isn't in the same class.

The days slipped by and June began to grow old. For the men of the battalion, the fanciful story book picture of war they had carried with them from England dis-

solved into the less intense one of reality. There were long stretches of roads and fields free of mines; no hidden enemy sprang at them in the darkness; there were long moments of comparative safety.

New "reinforcements" were brought in and gradually absorbed into the daily routine of the batteries. The heated firing of the first few days settled into a more normal routine of a daily average of 150 rounds. Sometimes enemy artillery hit other battalions or the cross roads nearby. The Luftwaffe paid its nightly visits and now and then a speedy ME 109 strafed the nearby units. More and more often big fleets of Allied bombers sailed overhead flanked by fighter escorts. One ME 109 was shot down in Charlie Battery area. The slim, graceful German plane plummeted to earth trailing a stream of black smoke. They brought the broken, bullet-ridden body of the Luftwaffe pilot to Captain Betts for identification after the "Persons Unknown" had stripped him and his crashed plane of souvenirs.

Our own battalion "air force" was a frequent sight floating lazily overhead as the observers searched the forest and roads within the enemy lines for targets. Our pilots, Lts. Huff and Schatz, had arrived in Normandy before us on a nerve racking flight across the channel. They had seen no fighter cover and their extra equipment (rubber dinghy) life preservers, flare pistols, and extra gas tanks) did not ease their minds. Nevertheless, on our first day in combat, Lts. Schatz and Reese completed the registration in spite of ack-ack fragments which ripped two holes in the frail aircraft.

Meanwhile, the ground observers were having their trials, too. We had one of first units in the sector to give up hedgerow to hedgerow observation in favor of OP' giving better coverage although at longer ranges. In a church tower at St. George D'Elles, Lt. Blume had established his OP. In the shell ruined little village, enemy patrols could be seen at night -- dark, furtive figures slipping quietly in to the shadows of the ruined buildings. The Germans dropped 88 shells in the vicinity at frequent intervals. Carrying on the work of the OP in these ever present dangers later earned a Bronze Star for the lieutenant.

Lt. Col. McLeer of Group, complete with insignia, forest greens, and creases, displayed great calm while under observation of the enemy in giving the OP personnel a magnificent salute. He was on his way back and missed the mortar concentration that landed five minutes later where he was but wasn't any longer.

The hedgerow which Charlie had selected was more quiet, but nearby mortars coughed their fluttering, deadly missiles overhead every now and again.

In the early morning hours of 25 June Lt. Reese and his party at their OP near LaDillerie, heard the sound of a sharp, brief skirmish. In the early evening they had established a guard on their flank, because of the danger of enemy patrols. The noises they had heard came from that direction.

The scene of the place in the morning gave a clear story of the night before; a German patrol returning to its own lines had brushed our outposts, shooting and killing Sgt. Grefe of B Battery. The Sgt. had fallen face downward in his slit trench but his companion Pfc O'Neil had disappeared. It was assumed that he had been captured. The news of this tragedy left sorrow in Baker Battery and the Battalion.

After the taking of Hill 192, Lt. Beckman and his able Battery OP party established themselves on the front slope, where shell fire was constant. Lt. Reese had move in front of LaCroix Rouge. Intense artillery, mortar and small arms fire per-

sistently harrassed this position and disrupted wire communications with the Battalion. Nevertheless the OP was successfully manned and later on the Lts. Reese and Handaly along with Tec 5 DeMeo, Cpl. Feldman, PFC's Renner, G. Harris and Duell all received bronze stars for its efficient operation.

The passing days began to fall more and more into a familiar pattern. The rear echelon came with the mail, and the kitchen took over the job of preparing the 10 in 1 rations. Like the K's and C's, the 10 in 1's had long since lost their novelty. The corned pork loaf and tins of ham and eggs had lost their savor. The brightly colored packages of charms were given to the French children; the synthetic lemon powder added whatever fertilizing power it possessed to the Normandy soil. 10 in 1's, C's and K's -- these three; and the greatest of these were K's.

The beards, except for B Battery's DeMeo's, began disappearing from the faces of the men. The rear echelon brought barbering tools which ended the brief barbering careers of many a man in the battalion. Sgt. McLeod began bringing the mail in daily and the "Stars and Stripes".

Early in July we moved to a position south of Cerisy La Foret, but the mission was the same. Very elaborate fox holes were again in style with new architectural theories put into play. Sgt. Baker and Crozier of Headquarters had the interior of their hole furnished with electric lights and radio.

The men became acquainted with the Normandy villagers and farming folk and began gathering souvenirs. The farmer folk clip-clopped over the stony roads in wooden shoes which, later, nearly everyone secured as souvenirs. Sgt. Doss of Headquarters is not the smallest of the human species, so the farmer looked in dismay at Doss's feet when he requested a pair of wooden shoes. After waving his arms in despair, they consented to fashion him a pair. Next day Sgt. Doss had his shoes, but the two thick-trunked shade trees before the farmers door disappeared.

They tell in B Battery of Mathews and DeMarco sniping at each other with their carbines one dark night and for nights following no one felt safe. It was about that time too, when "Longevity" Amthor, after 15 years in the army became a three striper. Unfortunately the order read (Temp) Auth: A.R. 615-15.

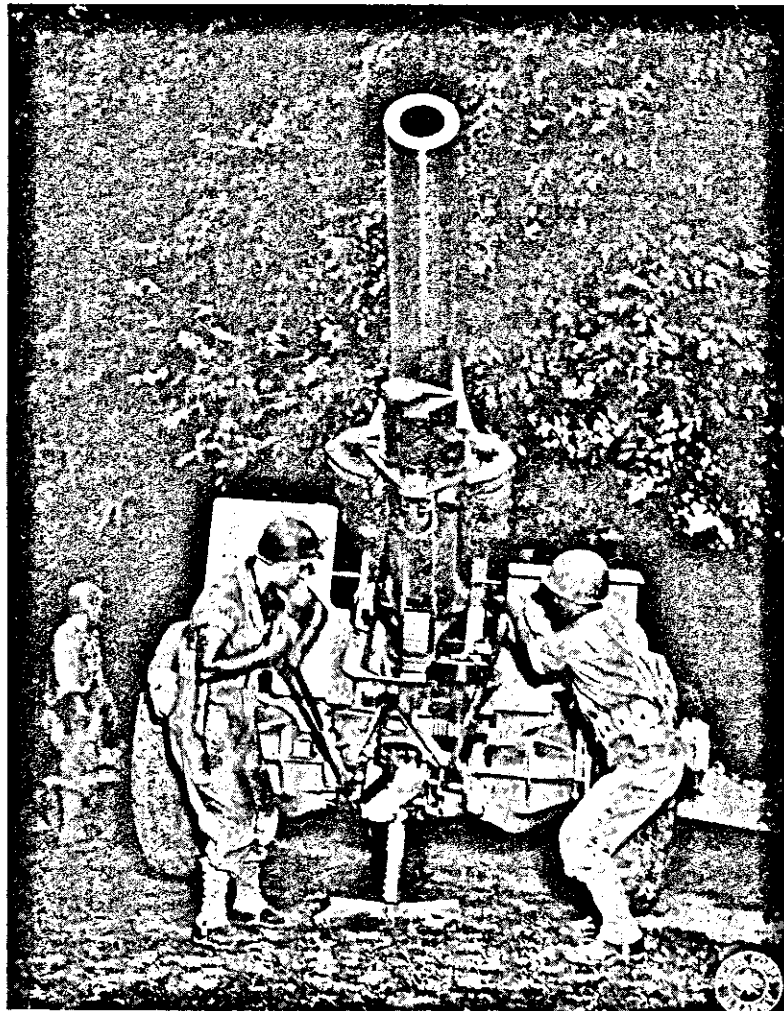
The grim business of war went on. Wire crews worked up and down the stretches of roads leading to the OP's. Passing vehicles enveloped them in clouds of dust that settled on the tangled vegetation on the roadsides. Sweat trickled from the shadows of their helmets, running down their faces and streaking their cheeks with mud. They strained and worked at the maze of tangled wires draped loosely over the roadside bushes. Farther up by the OP's they dropped to the ground at the warning whistle of the incoming shells. At night there was a constant threat of enemy patrols. Sometimes extra personnel was called on for assistance.

One day the line to the 955th was out. A wire crew was sent out to repair it. Nearing a village the men were pinned down by artillery fire. The shells screamed through the air and exploded not many yards distant. The wire crew crept to the shelter of a stone wall and ducked at the warning whistle of another shell. It struck the wall, sending a shower of rock fragments and dirt upon the men. When the shelling slackened, the shaken wire crew withdrew. Later, PFC's Fruett and Beamis, Headquarters drivers, got the line back in working order, though there was still occasional shell fire. This was a voluntary act on the part of the men, as no regular lineman was available. They were rewarded afterwards with Bronze Stars.

Sometimes, wiremen working near the front would see the wounded being brought

in on ambulances, jeeps or stretchers of the aid men. Weary men with pain glazed eyes, blooded bandages around the wounded limbs or taped to ugly skull gashes, were no infrequent sights. Sometimes they brought men in apparently uninjured, but the empty, detached expressions of their eyes told the story of (combat exhaustion). Meanwhile the sound of the battle throbbed and swelled in the distance.

Prisoners were taken. At first in dribbles; then by the scores. They marched bareheaded; their hands clasped behind their heads; their uniforms white with dust. The expressions of their faces ranged from fear to sullen defiance. Behind them strolled one or more doughboys, unsmiling men, with fixed bayonets protruding from their rifles. Despite the advent of B rations, showers and movies there was a suggestion of boredom throughout the battalion. Not even the whistling bombs, that the Luftwaffe dropped nearby one night, could dispell it. Beyond this the days have been pretty much alike. The weather had turned fair and the Norman farmers came into the sunny grain fields felling the tall hay with their bright bladed scythes. The men washed their clothing in the streams nearby, played cards or dozed in the shade during their free hours. The nights were pleasantly cool, and in the early morning the field and orchards were drenched with dew. But everyone wished and expected to move ahead before long. Tec 5 Henry Mercer summed up the general attitude one night as he crawled into his blankets; "All hell ought to break loose soon, sure enough."



L to R: Pvt. Roy Larsen, New York City, and Pfc. Joseph Terasi, Brooklyn, N.Y., raising the 155mm M-1 Howitzer for three point suspension while setting guns into position near Watervale, A Btry, 958 FA Bn.

Phase 2 Northern France Campaign

THE BIG PICTURE

Initial Breakthrough at St. Lo and Caen: On 25 July, following a mass attack by over 3,000 Allied planes on a German held area, ten miles square, American troops attacked southward toward Coutances and Avranches from St. Lo area. Six days before, the British in the Caen sector had attacked across the Orne River and had broken through to the plain southeast of the city. The Americans had cleared the city of St. Lo several days before. Further west in the peninsula, the Americans finally got across the vital St. Le-Periers high way, and on 25 July they had opened a hole in the German main defense line west of St. Jean de Daye. This was the signal for the armor to move. One column of armor pushed toward the sea at Coutances, forcing the enemy to withdraw from the north while other columns drove south and split, and then split again. Each time a column split, one arm would head for the sea, harassing the German retreat and cutting off groups in the rear, the other columns, their right flanks protected, driving south. By the first days of August they had cut off the peninsula at its base and columns of tanks, racing day and night, were in the port of Brest.

By then the British, shifting their attack to the west where resistance was weaker, also broke through. The whole German defense was crumbling. Swinging east, American and British columns filled the plains between the Seine and the Loire.

On 7 August, however, the Germans, fearing that they would be trapped anyhow, later on, massed four armored divisions along a five-mile front at Mortaine, and attacked. Their aim was to create a breakthrough of the thinly held and moving lines in the critical sector and drive to Avranches on the sea, cutting the narrow corridor which was being used to feed the fast moving armored columns further south. The attack was held by two divisions of American Infantry.

Meanwhile, the first of many large encircling movements was in progress further north. The British, after breaking through in the Caen sector, had sent one column headed generally southeast toward the lower Seine. The American First Army, after breaking through in the St. Lo area, had started eastward in their drive toward Paris and the Seine. Between these two armies was most of the German Seventh Army. So fast were the advances of the American First Army that the enemy had no time to foresee what was in store for him. Partly due to his adventure-some attack at Mer-tain, he was trapped in a pocket west of the Argentan-Falaise Highway. For seven days from 12 August to 19 August, his retreating forces were under constant artillery shelling and dive bomber attack. Although he managed to extricate the majority of his armor before the pocket was closed, it was this pocket which caught the bulk of the German Army in France and consequently necessitated a withdrawal of enemy forces in Northern France.

German Retreat to the Siegfried Line and the Surrounding of German Troops in Southwestern France: Meanwhile, the American Third Army was rushing almost unchecked through central France. The columns that had headed east from the Brittany peninsula area had, by 17 August, reached the Seine River northwest of Paris, and it appeared that another pocket was about to be formed around the few troops of the Seventh German Army who had managed to escape from the Falaise pocket. By 20 August, two bridgeheads were established across the Seine and infantry and armor was pouring across. On 25 August, American and French troops entered France's capital city, Paris. The British on the left flank were advancing swiftly to the lower Seine. The Third Army on the right flank of the First Army, now headed one column southeast

from the Paris area for the eventual link-up with the Seventh. Another column headed east for Metz and the Siegfried Line in this area. The First Army advanced on a wide front, one column headed toward Luxembourg and the Siegfried Line, another column headed toward Aachen and Dusseldorf. German troops were now in full retreat to their fortified line along the Reich's western frontier. The Allied Forces, pursuing at the average rate of twenty-five miles per day, swiftly crossed the Meuse River and at the end of August were sixteen miles from the Belgian border. Another force had reached the Argonne Forest near Verdun. The British, advancing swiftly on the left flank, had crossed the Somme River near Amiens. On 1 September, American forces entered Belgium north of Sedan. The British, continuing their advances, had reached Lille after clearing the channel port of Dieppe. The Germans were retreating very skillfully, making skillful use of a minimum number of troops to slow down our advances. By September 6, however, reconnaissance troops of the First Army had crossed the German frontier between Nancy and Luxembourg. On 10 September, the first Allied artillery shell landed on German soil, near Aachen. The next day American troops of the First Army crossed the German frontier and advanced five miles into the Reich, northwest of Trier. On 11 September American troops of the Third U.S. Army rejoined with troops of the American Seventh near Dijon, thus trapping some 20,000 troops who later surrendered in a body. The Allies now had a continuous solid line across western Europe extending from the English Channel, near Calais, to the Ligurian Sea, at Nice. On 16 September the Allied Forces were lined up along the western Europe sector in this manner, Canadian and British troops had reached almost to the Netherland border at the coast then east to Ghent along the Schelde Maastricht in Holland: the Americans were stretched from Maastricht southwest to Aachen along the German border to Trier, south to Metz, to Epinal then west to Dijon, to Besancon, to Belfort, then south along the Swiss border and Italian border to the sea near Nice.

Victoria: Once Over Lightly - The 953rd F.A. Bn. fired supporting fires for the opening phase of Operation Cobra from its position south of Cerisy. On 29 July the unit was re-attached to the 2nd Division and continued to support the during its drive south to and across the Vire River.

Early in August the 953rd F.A. Bn was detached from the 2nd Infantry Division and was attached to the 187th F.A. Group. Thereafter it made a wide swing to the south and east around the Falaise pocket ending at Argentan where it assisted in fire on the troops attempting to escape from the mouth of the pocket.

The 953rd F.A. Bn, still attached to the 187th F.A. Group, followed in the path of the V Corps to Paris, where the unit was temporarily attached to the 190th F.A. Group for a parade through Paris to gun positions on the outskirts. Attached to the 187th F.A. Group again, the unit moved northeast with V Corps troops after the retreating Germans. Although in direct support of the 28th Infantry Division, the unit was largely inactive.

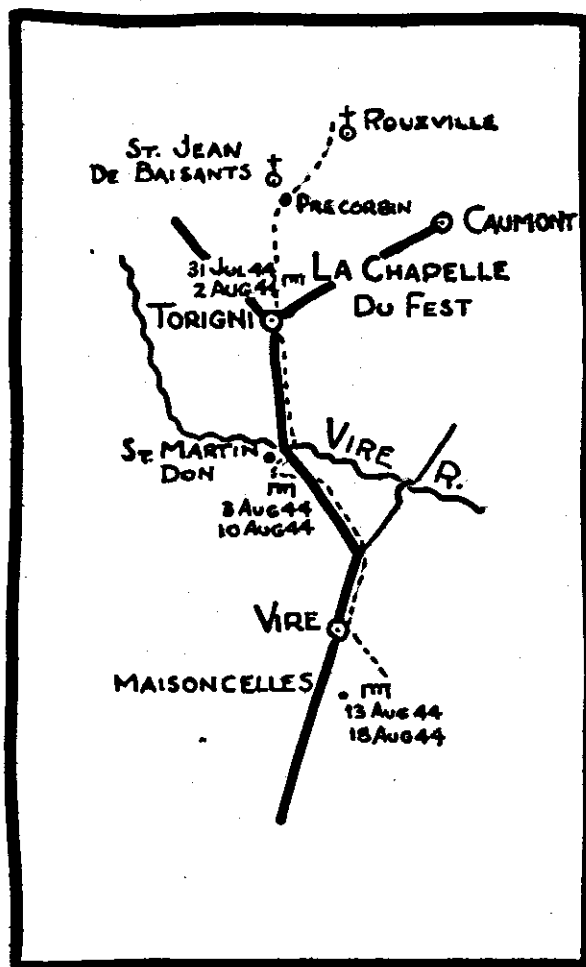
On 8 September the 953rd was released from V Corps control and attached to the 32nd F.A. Brigade to assist in the hauling of supplies operating from the vicinity of Hirson in Northern France.

Victoria: A Long Look - We had helped start the drive of the First Army in its attack southward toward Coutances and Avranches past St. Lo and over the St. Jean de Baisants ridge.

Yet in those latter days of July the battalion seemed temporarily out of the fight, but not for long. When our sector of the front finally began to move, we moved too, closely following the 2nd Division, to which we were still attached.

Though we were unaware of it at the time the race across France was under way.

Southeast of St. Georges d'Elle and northeast of Notre Dame d'Elle is le Cane. Only recently it had been occupied by the enemy and when the battalion moved near the village on the 29th of July, it found plenty of evidence of the Nazi occupation. Deep under the tangled hedges the enemy infantry had burrowed to escape our shell fire and the constant threat of strafing planes. It was apparent that they had been here for many weeks but abandoned equipment made it just as clear that their departure had been made in haste.



They had not been in such a hurry, however, as to forget to lay their deadly Tellermine or to sow the maze of footpaths with the sensitive S mines. The engineers had given fair warning of this with signs and fluttering little white flags; Sgt. MacFadden and some of the other Hq. men had discovered personnel mines as they carefully explored the new area.

Up and down the hedgerows was a litter of abandoned equipment: mess kits with unfinished meals still souring in them...torn clothing...hand grenades...an occasional rifle...helmets and an accumulation of all manner of filth. Dead cattle lay in the fields and flies hovered over them in dark little clouds. Dead soldiers were found unburied for days and lying as they had fallen. The air in places sheltered from the winds reeked with the sickening odor of decaying flesh. Mortars had furrowed the deep grass of the hedge-lined fields; huge tree trunks had been split and broken by the blasts of bursting shells; a litter of shell cases and cartridge belts lay around the roads and abandoned fox holes.

Our next move was our second big SNAFU. For two days a position had been prepared at Precorbin, six thousand yards northeast of Torigny. A wire detail had installed the necessary lines; Lt. Kocher and Sgt. Nelson had completed their survey; gun pits had been dug and the route markers had started directing the rolling column to the new area when Col. Varian, more surprised than pleased, was informed to move the battalion to a point three thousand yards beyond our original destination. This new move would put us in a position near la Chapelle du Fest.

There was nothing to do but pull the guns off the road and have the column wait while the new area was reconnoitered. This of course had to be done in haste, though the area was found to be well-sewn with mines. The goddess of Luck smiled on A Battery that day, for its gun position, although virtually a mine field was occupied without mishap. Not so fortunate was Service Battery; an ammunition vehicle drove into A's gun position and was blown up. Another name was added to the casualty list. Pfc. Forrester was sent to the hospital with a broken ankle.

Despite this, new-grown smoothness was becoming apparent in our operation. The first conflict of applying the methods learned in simulated combat to the actual thing was vanishing. Combat although still grim was no longer unfamiliar. War as it is to the Field Artillery was a daily event.

Again the men had dug themselves in and the batteries were firing. Even Conkwright of B Battery, whose digging in another area had resulted in his near burial, had no trouble this time.

Over in Service, Sgt. Boehner and T/5 Taylor again pitched a pup tent together: this time with a new arrangement in case of strafing or shelling attack. Taylor was to arouse the Sergeant before seeking cover. Sgt. Boehner remembered only too well discovering Taylor sleeping soundly in his hole early one morning after finding him missing from the narrow confines of their tent during a strafing attack. Cpl. Taylor had sought the safety of his hole earlier that morning without warning his sleeping partner.

Charlie Battery recalls that it was in this area that Pvt. Literski gained an honorable scar on his forehead while dodging mortar shells. Later he was to be awarded the Purple Heart.

During the short stay here, a cow grazed its way to Baker Battery's position. The sight of the thick-flanked animal could only call up one idea to the men who sighted her. Tender juicy steaks were not too often dropped into their mess gears at meal time. Whether Cpl. Heinemann's French had anything to do with luring the cow nearer is open to question, but certain it is that the swing of his axe enabled the Battery to enjoy fresh steaks for several days after.

On August 2nd we went into position three thousand yards due south of Torigny sur Vire. The Colonel had his troubles that day, first when asked to work from a beautiful 1/10,000 map (of another area) and next when the road on which the column was moving became jammed with traffic. It was no easy problem for the doubled column to disentangle itself from the wandering Gas Bn.

At any rate the area we now moved into was a great improvement over the preceding one—it was much cleaner and each Battery was allowed the use of one or more buildings.

Able's roving gun crew was highly complimented by General Hayes at this time

for the rapidity in which their gun was dug in. Some time before a falling bomb had helped the gun crew by creating a good sized crater, but this was quite unknown to the General.

Capt. Miller lost two tires from Mustard pot mines in this area. But Lt. Kocher has better reason to remember our fifth position in the Normandy battle. The survey officer located mines in one of the roads within the battalion area. Carefully clearing the dirt from the surface of the teller-mines, he began the removal of them from the road by means of a long rope. None of the first five mines exploded, so the officer, tiring of this slow method, decided to withdraw the next one by hand. He did so and nothing happened. Some whisper of caution must have come to him then, and he decided to revert to his original method of drawing them from the road at the safe end of a long rope. After securing the rope to the seventh mine he withdrew a fair distance and drew in the slack rope. With the next tug came a great explosion sending up a shower of dirt and rock fragments. The lieutenant, thankful that he could do so, went in search of a new rope.

The following day the battalion moved again. Early that morning a party set out to reconnoitre an area south of the Vire river near St. Martin Don. Finding the bridge blown out, the reconnaissance party had to turn to a bridge erected for temporary use. Up to this time no reconnaissance had proved so exciting. Cpl. Welch, wheeling his bug across country, suddenly saw a minefield marker appear ahead of his moving vehicle. Already he had passed over the interior of the minefield itself. But he managed to gain safer ground without incident.

The arrival at the position area gave little assurance of safety. It was encouraging to find the absence of the enemy, though there were signs that they had not long since departed, but the area was strangely empty of our own troops as well. Deserted buildings were still freely burning and now and again over the crackle of the flames came the unmistakable sounds of exploding shells. Cpl. Armogida was told but not convinced that these shells were exploding in the burning houses. When he learned of the capture of prisoners by Capt. Matsen and Capt. Miller in their battery areas he was even less convinced that the new position was free of enemy troops. Remember the showers Service set up there...the abandoned German supply dumps...the roar of the 155 rifles in our rear?

We joined the 187th Group on August 10th at Coutances just north of Vire. The positions were unorthodox, there being shower points on both sides of A Battery while Charlie was so close to the CP that we hung a tarpaulin to screen the guns from visiting brass. No one was fooled but it was good for a laugh.

The warm weather had a most unpleasant effect on the dead cattle in this area. We were almost glad to bury them, particularly when Major O'Connor blasted holes with Teller Mines for the carcasses. The many mines already in the area made this burying detail rather a dangerous one as Benefield of Baker Battery decided when he found a mine in his shovelful of dirt.

The roads and positions had been swept for mines, but we watched ourselves carefully, knowing that the Germans had left many a mine behind. In the trees above the sunken road leading to the CP from Baker Battery were the remains of a wagon, a grim reminder that a French mother and her children had been caught before us. It was at this same place that Danzl of Headquarters became the battalion's second fatality when he stepped off the road to allow a vehicle to pass. His foot caught a trip wire attached to a Teller Mine in the bank beside the road. Capt. Betts and Svien gave immediate aid, making him at least comfortable before sending him to the

hospital. In spite of our hopes and Danzl's own cheerfulness, his life could not be saved.

Victoria passed through Vire to Maisoncelles on August thirteenth and did a little firing in the direction of Mortain. While going through Vire, Pvt. Strollo of Baker Battery noticed a number of hatless and bare chested men at work on the roads. "Look", he remarked to the men on his vehicle, "German Prisoners!"

The "German prisoners" turned out to be British soldiers, and later we had a chance of viewing their artillerymen in action. There was an air of informality to the work of the British soldier in combat; helmetless and shirtless, their tanned bodies glistening with sweat, they worked at the grim business of war, sending out a tremendous volume of fire on every mission. There was hardly a trace of the stiff military manner so noticeable in their garrison life.

At this time, the siege of Brest was in progress and the Second Division, which we now recognized as an old friend, was sent there to aid in the capture of the city. In spite of Gen. Hayes' request that Victoria might accompany him, we were retained in V Corps.

The men of the battalion were well acquainted with the Norman folk and their customs by now; the tiny villages, the thatched roofed cottages, the spreading farmlands with their cluster of orchards all had worked their way into the pattern of everyday life. Except for the language many things were reminiscent of England, even to the cider that was easily obtained. Not so familiar at first was one of the products of the orchard, a distillation of cider known as Calvados: In appearance not unlike water, in odor not unlike whiskey, but in taste and effect quite unlike either. A tablespoon or more of this harmless looking liquid seared the throat and spread burning fingers through the stomach, leaving even the oldest disciples of John Barleycorn choking and gasping. That it was nearly pure alcohol could be verified by touching a lighted match to a few drops of it and noting the faint, almost colorless flame. It was found to make an excellent substitute for cigarette lighter fluid.

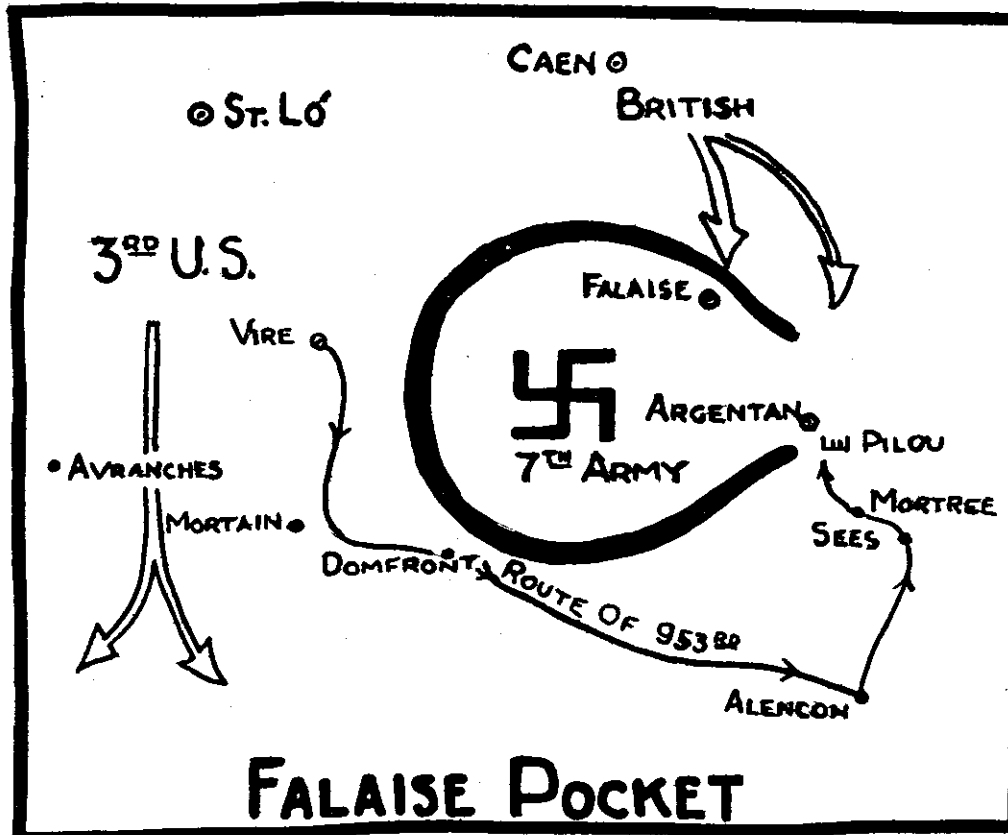
There was no way possible, so it seemed, either by solution or dilution, to remove the strong unpleasant taste. Its flavor persisted in the strongest coffee, and water dimmed its potency but not its taste. If it served any useful purpose other than as a lighter fluid it was in the consumption of the hated sythetic lemon powder with which it was mixed in a vain attempt to camouflage the revolting taste. So the men got their vitamin C. But the taste of Calavdos lingered after.

Baker Battery still remembers when Benefield drank 3 five gallon cans of cider and slept afterwards for a total of seventy-two hours, but they recall even more clearly when water was used mostly for washing by the same person. In some of the earlier positions as much as twelve dollars was paid for the sometimes colorless, sometimes faintly yellow Calvados; the time had now come when it was found by the barrelful.

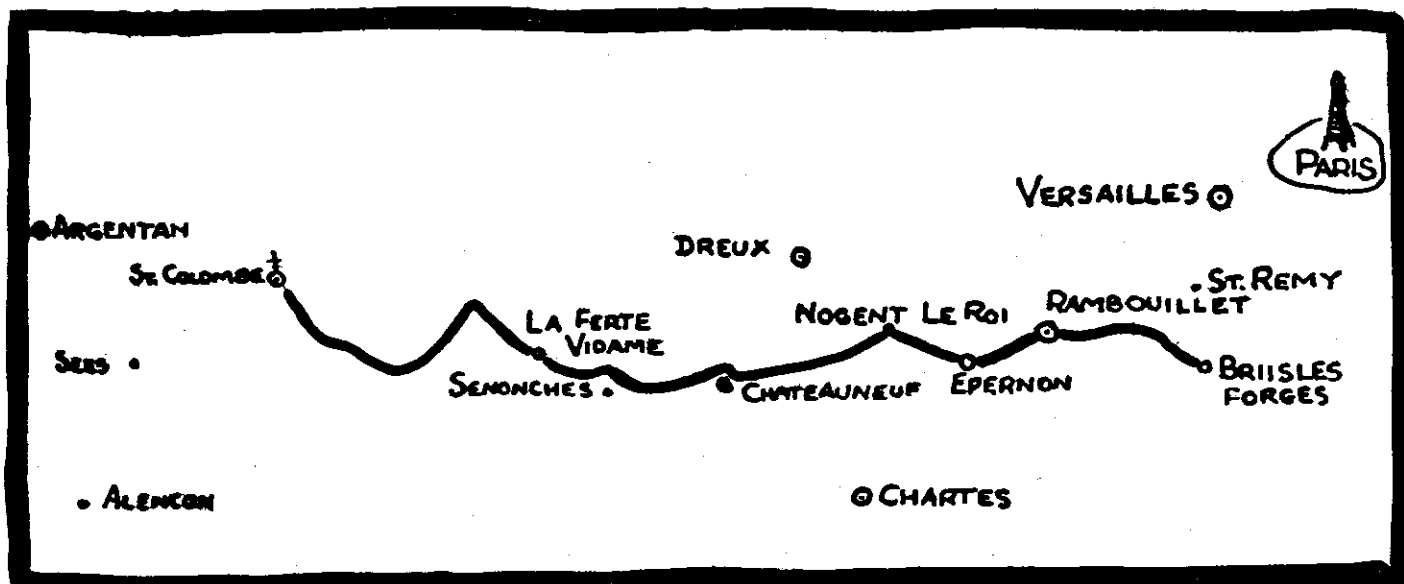
At 0200 on 18 August we started on our first long march in combat, going around the Falaise-Argentan pocket to the vicinity of Argentan. The trip was a hectic one, other battalions getting in our column at the start. Later the roads were poorly marked and jammed with many units. In spite of the difficulties we arrived in good order with no serious accidents, something for which we were doubly grateful after having seen a tractor and truck of sister battalions in accidents that resulted in fatalities. We were tired from the long march and our eyes burned from dust and sleepness but we were ready to take our share in the destruction of the Falaise

or Argentan pocket, from which the Nazis were making frantic efforts to escape through the fast narrowing gap still open to them.

Our positions at Pilou, 7,000 yards southeast of Argentan, were occupied on the afternoon of the eighteenth and we soon heard of the good shooting and the unusually good observation. The first night we fired interdiction and the next day, the nineteenth, was a field day for the observers.



Sometimes incidents pass over the consciousness as unnoticed as the ticking of telegraph, only to return in memory at a later date, with a significance unknown in the actual experience. In those casual drifts of remembrance might come again some of the events and scenes of our first months of combat; the time when the air section went out to see the effect of their shooting and met the Canadians coming from the other side of the gap. In their contact with the Canadians the Argentan pocket was sealed. Pfc. Bush can still show a photograph clipped from a London paper, showing himself perched on his vehicle clasping the hand of a Canadian soldier. There are some who can tell of the devastation and terror visited on the enemy in the trap at Argentan; the terrible destruction of men and material...the mangled bodies of horses and man...the roadside choked with fleeing columns, pounded and strafed by aircraft and under the constant rain of artillery fire...the little Piper cubs floating over the field of destruction to direct the fire...the constant muffled thunder of distant shelling and bombing...the continual cracking of our own guns...the searing and sweating cannoneers...the day-long transmissions of the 610's with fire missions almost too numerous to handle...the impatience of an air observer of a nearby battalion when he was denied all the fire he requested...his voice coming over the radio in anger and disgust, "But, goddamit to hell, those are Germans out there," and of course the swarms of bees that attacked the kitchens and made eating a misery.



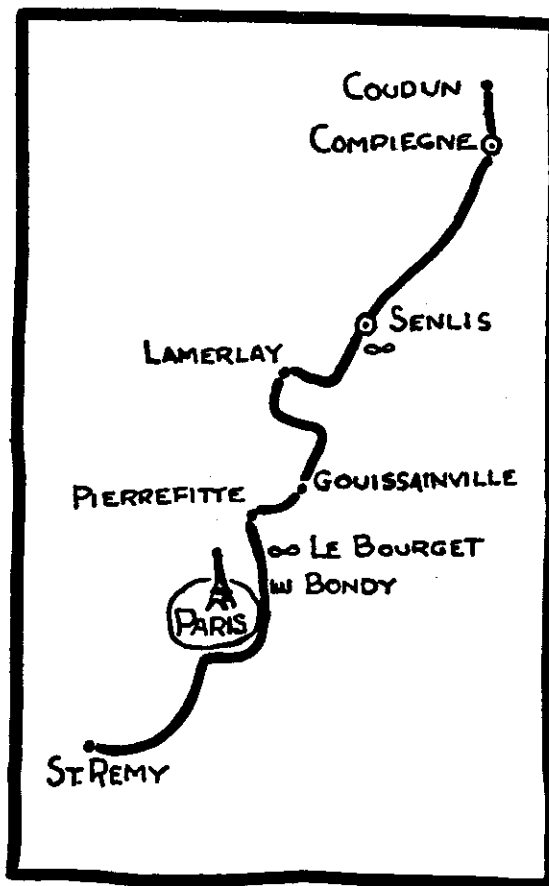
Now begins the historic march to and through Paris. After moving from Pilou, we stopped over night at St. Colombo la Petite and then moved on to a bivouac area - Briis sur Forge south of Paris. Another move brought Victoria to a chateau near Remy la Chevreuse where the 187th Gp. had already set up. These marches had a tenor much different from earlier ones. Friendly civilians thronged the roads to greet us - no cold reserved Normans here but a friendly folk who welcomed with unfeigned joy their American liberators.

The Germans may have stripped their country of its wealth, but the French still had material gifts to shower on the passing Americans. From the sidewalks and street corners they flung their bouquets of flowers and newly picked fruit at the moving columns; sometimes, when the brief halts allowed, the more satisfying gifts of eggs or even wine were forthcoming from the grateful farm-folk.

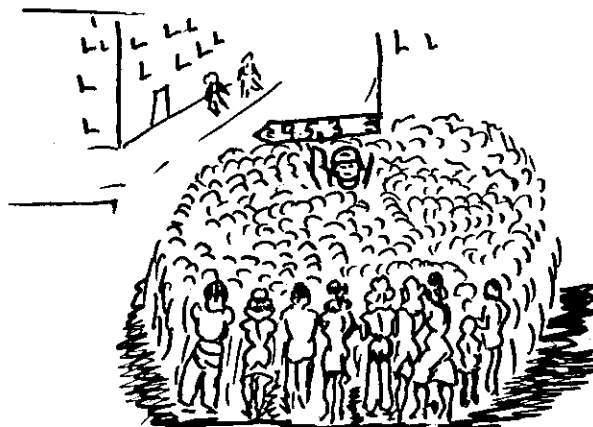
The first wave of emotion born of their regained freedom, which was to reach it's zenith at Paris, was now becoming apparent. The pretty girls rolled by on their bicycles managing to keep a decorum and grace incongruous with their costumes which looked quite unlike a dress designed for cycling. The little children came out and called for chocolate and the inevitable "cigarette pour papa." They got their cigarettes and their chocolate and many more things; in return they stripped the fields of their bright wild flowers and flung them to the passing convoy.

We were alerted for a parade through Paris; it was to take place the following day, but in the meantime the vehicles had to be cleaned - that task to be accomplished at night, without lights of course. A modification of the order came in later: only the tractors, guns and one command car were to parade; the balance of the battalion was to go around the outskirts of Paris and move to Bondy where they would prepare firing position.

The parade of the Americans that day was composed for the most part of the 28th Division and corps artillery 155 guns and howitzers with a sprinkling of TD's. Victoria formed at Bois de Boulogne surrounded by a curious and adulating throng. From this spot we moved to the avenue Marshal Foch and passed the Arc de Triomphe in the Place del Etoile; then along the Champs Elysee to roll past the reviewing stand at the Place de Concord. At this point the column split, half going along the Seine, the other portion up the Rue Royale to the Boulevards then on to Bondy and our new firing positions.



Two days before, the FFI had liberated the city. For four years the French had been dominated by their ancient enemy. The holiday spirit that reigned in their beautiful city was at peak. A single intense emotion whose essence was joy dominated the inhabitants for days. It caught the American troops and swept the battle weary men through the ancient city in a wave of exhilaration. The streets were thronged with vast, never-ending crowds under streaming banners and flags. The joy-crazed people hung from the windows and broke into the narrow corridors open to vehicular traffic. They climbed upon the vehicles and in a torrent of French bestowed their affections and gifts on the happy, dazed soldiers. Pretty girls with their strange becoming hairdos unrestrained by custom, locked their arms around fortunate GI's and showered them with kisses. The route markers were buried in the crowd; garlands and flower wreaths fixed to their helmets, encircling their necks blended them into gaily colored civilians. The subdued green of some of the smaller vehicles was nearly indistinguishable in the maze of color that covered them.



The portion of Victoria that skirted the city met the same holiday crowds. The crowds lacked the numbers of those in the heart of the city, but the manner of greeting was the same.

Lt. Bemederfer, having started at dawn to post his route markers, found it necessary to make the way for two parade columns and the balance of the column, all traveling different routes, without maps of the city or its suburbs. His special patrol rounded up stray vehicles from the too-enthusiastic civilians who insisted on drenching every American with flowers. That we all reached Bondy instead of disintegrating in Paris as the French troops had was largely due to Lt. Beme's efforts. Capt. Newman using his compass in the center of the city, to the civilians' amusement, did help to keep his column rolling straight. Perhaps if Capt. Wyeth had had Capt. Newman or Lt Bemederfer with him that evening with his convoy of "gas trucks" he would not have become lost and had to stop at all the landmarks (and cafes) to ask questions.

There were supposed to be snipers in Paris, although Victoria safely cleared the city. Nevertheless, some of the Charlie Battery men had a scare that day when an American officer was killed nearby while their first platoon was halted by heavy traffic. Moving on to Bondy, the crowds dwindled, but now and then a shower of fruit was still hurled at the column. A very large and very ripe tomato caught Milton "Winooski" Johnson square in the face when some French civilian misjudged the speed of the vehicle on which the Baker man was riding. The fringes of the French capital slipped away and the battalion moved into their positions at Bondy, just outside of one of the northeastern gates of the city.

Our position in Bondy was not as the books would order, for it was in the middle of a friendly community. Hq and Sv found a warehouse and factory which solved their problems fairly well, but those batteries considered themselves to have a canal on one side of them and gates or walls on the other. The firing batteries set up in the back yards of a housing development, their guns pointing formidably at the fast-dissolving German lines. Curious civilians gathered under the camouflage nets, to inspect the big howitzers and make the usual requests for chocolate and cigarettes. They were free with their own gifts, such champagne and wine as the Boche had not taken. In the early evening they strolled into our area, and those men who already had some little knowledge of the French language had an opportunity to learn more. The girls were pretty and graceful in comparison with their wooden-shod Normandy sisters, and in the ensuing hours nature's categorical imperative, not lacking in resourcefulness, managed to assert itself. Nevertheless all this did nothing towards prosecution of the war and the next day, not without some feeling of relief, we moved on.

The reconnaissance that next day was in a sense our most difficult due to the overwhelming welcome of the French people. The Germans had left the day before but with such obvious haste before the material superiority of the Americans, that the French had little fear of a return of the hated "boche". Accordingly they spent the day mobbing the Americans and ridding their town of Collaborators.

The FFI was still quite active at this time, chasing suspects to arrest or Americans to drink with. Women who had been too amorous with the Nazis were still having their heads shaved, after which they would be carried around the towns by horse and wagon - a display which brought the jeers and laughter from the more patriotic French.

A position area was selected in the vicinity of Pierrefite sur Seine, just north of Paris. An old fort gave us a good Headquarters; the firing batteries were

in a small housing development and Service in the streets of the town. Before setting up, we were ordered to the northeast, in the vicinity of Goussanville where we hoped to come within range of the Germans.

This was the scene of our first railroad station CP, although in truth our F.D.C. was in an abandoned German dugout in the station area. The boxcar made better sleeping accommodations than we had many times before and after. The firing batteries except for Charlie were out in the open plains, which discouraged some civilians until our planes landed and proved too big an attraction and the townspeople again streamed onto the field.

When Victoria 6 detected the absence of Service he decided to "turn over" the Fort which Headquarters had planned to use to the erring Battery. Each driver and assistant, so it seemed, had been the willing victim of the entertainment of at least three village families. The fort had not been left abandoned; Morgan and Upright had held it by remaining behind asleep when Headquarters had pulled out.

The moves at this time were frequent. Often we would stay only overnight in an area, moving on the next day only to repeat this performance. The whole vast front was moving steadily: the British and Canadians in the north had beaten back the heavy concentrations of the enemy that had opposed them earlier and to the south General Patton's tanks were stabbing swiftly through the French plains. The Seventh Army sometime back had invaded Southern France and their columns were spreading out to the north. The great First Army was not to be stopped until it had crossed the borders of the Reich.

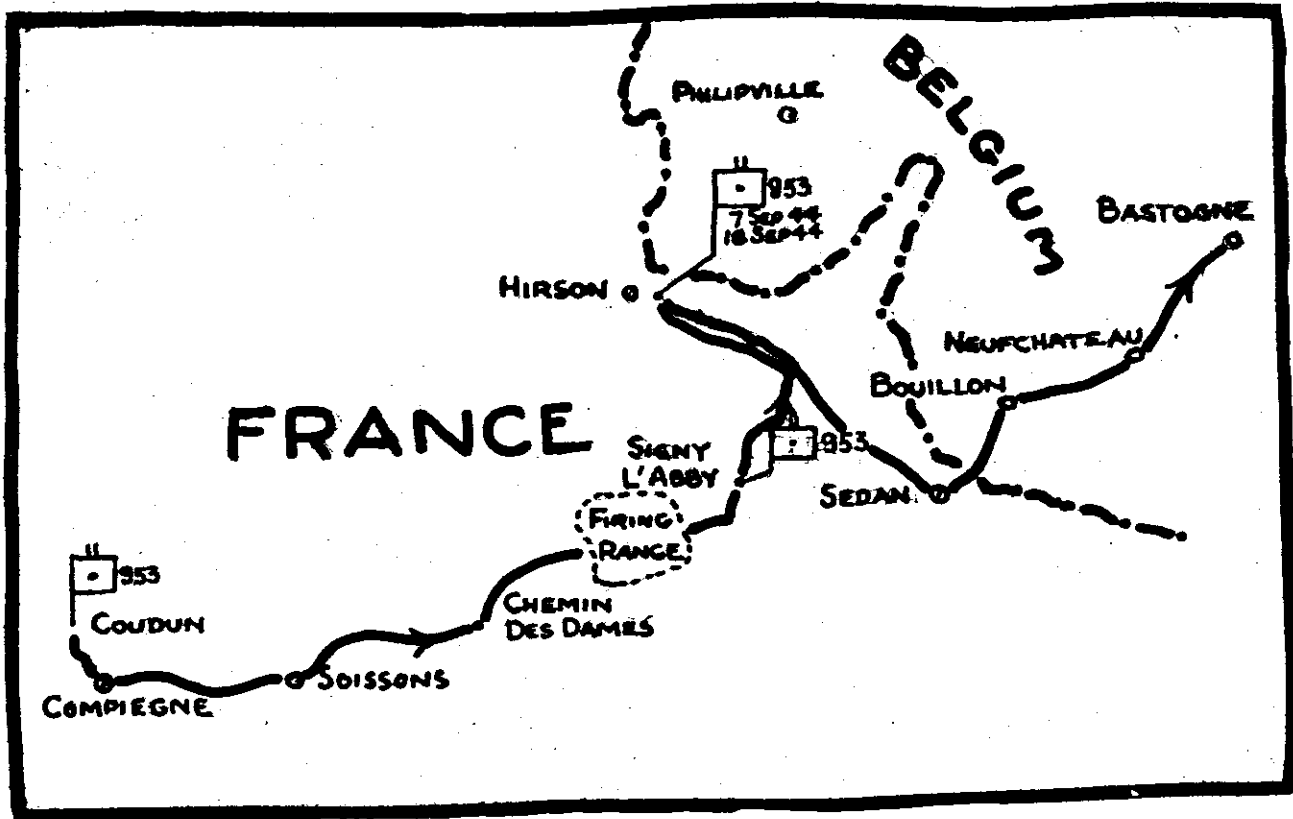
The roads we moved over in those late August and early September days gave good testimony of the character of the warfare that had swept ahead of us. The Germans in their headlong flight left a trail of abandoned and destroyed equipment behind them, lining the highways and scattered throughout the fields. Burned tanks and overturned vehicles, field pieces with trails still spread and glittering shell cases scattered around them, or unused ammunition still neatly piled near their gun position. Personal items: helmets, mess kits, rifles, told of the haste of the enemy retreat before the advancing allied armies.

So swift was the advance that V Corps decided not to try any longer to keep corps artillery in the race. Consequently we were reassigned to the 187th F.A. Group which we joined at an abandoned airport south of Senlis on 1 September. A number of belly tanks lay around in the woods which surrounded the field. At least one German plane was found which had cracked up some time before. Next morning in the still dark hours many of us were awakened by the sound of aircraft overhead. Moving low across the sky were two orange jets of flame accompanied by a sputtering roar, distinctive from any familiar aircraft. It was our first introduction to flying bombs which in coming months were to be a familiar though never a very welcome sight.

With the 187th Group and battalion we were sent to Coudon across the Oise River and north from Compeigne, where we had the dubious honor of being the first American troops in that section of France. Again we were greeted with flowers and fruit, handshaking, and in the case of Welch and Morgan, kisses from a mob of pretty girls.

Service began work on their showers and Headquarters settled down in their peat bog. Not far away was the forest of Compeigne where the armistice of the first World War was signed; near here also stood Napoleon's palace in Compeigne. Allied air forces had struck at the railyards here shortly before and the ruined bridges and tracks showed how effective their visit had been.

On the sixth day of September, another long march began that carried us to Signy l'Abbaye, within twenty-five miles of the Belgian border. We tangled in other long convoys, ran short of gas, heard stories of Nazi persecutions and gave Mathews of Baker a chance to cool off after Lt. Glenn had all but stolen his girl friend at Coudun. The French girl had invited Mathews to her home one night, but no permission was forthcoming unless an officer accompanied him. This detail fell to Lt. Glenn, and he writes to her, so it is said, even to this day.



Signy l'Abbaye had little to offer beyond a dismal rain and the chicken coop mansion of Capt. Newman and Armogida. But our stay there was short. It was now learned that Victoria, along with several other battalions, was to go into the trucking business. Combat was temporarily finished for us, supplies for the advance units being more important than artillery at the moment. It was indicated that at least twenty battalions of artillery were to be assigned to the 32nd FA Brigade which was to operate a "Red Ball" trucking service, with headquarters in the vicinity of Hirson. This town was to our northwest and only a few miles from the Belgian border.

On the 7th of September we arrived in Hirson, finding no signs of the units with which we were to work. Close to Hirson was a smaller village, St. Michel, still unoccupied by American troops. So we decided to set up here. Headquarters and Medical had the use of a railroad station and the nearby foundry was soon used also. The other batteries occupied positions a little outside the town, each having at least one farm building at their disposal.

Hirson was being built up into a large supply area. Hardly had we become settled when our 4 and 2½ ton trucks were dispatched to a heavy truck column whose mission was to haul gas from a dump south and west of Paris.

Our three-quarter ton vehicles went to join a light column carrying rations between Laon and Hirson. These two details employed the greater share of our vehicles and a good number of our men, though an attempt was made to rotate the drivers and their assistants in order to give as many men as possible a chance to see the country on the trips. Yet it was by no means a pleasurable detail beyond this one thing. There was no question but that the "Red Ball" service was doing an excellent job in getting supplies up to the front and to our area of Hirson and Phillipeville, some miles away in Belgium.

While these details were in progress, an ordnance inspection was carried on at the battalion positions. Victoria G elected to have the shiny tubes of the big guns painted, for as he stated it was unlikely that we would do much firing; wrong again. Another detail was furnished in our stay here to assist in the removal of an ammunition dump. Our men were assigned to a night shift while other units supplied a day time crew.

Nevertheless, for all the work, more entertainment and recreation was forthcoming that we had known for many months. Movies were shown in the railroad station and Special Service gave shows in Hirson. In the better weather soft ball games were played.

Then too, there was the village and its people. They greeted us warmly and in a few days many friendships were waxing strongly. They opened their cafes and the cognac and champagne which the "boche" had taken returned in part at the sight of the crisp new franc notes.

The families who had taken us into their hearts now took us into their homes. Many a bottle of "vin" recently dug up from a garden was consumed with fried "poulet" by merry groups of soldiers and French peasants.

Phil Portera, Baker's "essential man", set up his shop in the one house in the battery area. Here he patched up the OD's that had been stored away for weeks, ironing out the barrack bag wrinkles in an effort to make the boys a little more presentable. Remember Parish's plaintiff plea - "What happened now, Hod?" - He had only hit a bridge when the lights went out.

Elaborate arrangements for future parties and USO shows were being made when we received word that we were to go back into the war. We left St. Michel early in the morning of September 18th, not without some regrets, taking with us a host of pleasant memories. Our motor officer, Capt. Hudson, and a high ranking companion were unable to accompany us that day as they had been "forced" to go on a special reconnaissance near Paris for the Service 2½ driven by Dunphy and Richard which had disappeared after the first trucking detail.

Phase 3 The Battle Of The Rhine

THE BIG PICTURE---The third phase of the war in Europe was to be an operation intended to destroy the German armies west of the Rhine. It was believed at this time that the German high command would decide to fight the decisive battles west of the river barrier. Two main attempts were undertaken by the Allies to accomplish this.

THE OUTFLANKING ATTEMPT: The first operation, to accomplish phase three, was to be an airborne-ground attack to outflank the Siegfried Line at its northern hinge and to effect a crossing of the lower Rhine. The First Allied Airborne Army was to be dropped in the vicinity of Arnhem and Nimijen, Arnhem being across the group of rivers that flow from the Rhine in this sector. These airborne troops were first to establish a bridgehead across the Rhine, seize and hold the important Nimijen bridge until the ground forces of the British Second Army could push from the Netherlands and link up with the Airborne Forces. If these were accomplished all the German troops in the Netherlands would thus be cut off from their supplies, the Siegfried Line would be outflanked, and a stage would be set for a push across Northern Germany and along eastern Netherlands to the sea.

COMBINED ATTACK TO THE RHINE: The second attempt to accomplish Phase III was to be a coordinated attack along the entire Allied front. The American Ninth Army was to attack from a line between Eschweiler and Geilenkirchen, just south from Aachen, toward the Cologne Plain and Cologne itself. The Third Army was to attack toward Saarbrücken in coordination with the Seventh and French First who were to attack Belfort and the lower Rhine.

CLEARING THE APPROACHES TO ANTWERP: Although the great port of Antwerp had been taken by the British on 4 September, the sea approaches to the port were still unusable because of the mined waters and the presence of German troops along the Schelde Estuary. These troops were in small and medium sized pockets along both banks of the Schelde Estuary. A coordinated seaborne attack from the west and an attack from the Leopold canal westward was made by the Canadians. This fighting was to continue for several bloody weeks before the enemy was finally liquidated and the approaches to Antwerp could be made available to shipping. The fighting was almost a naval war, with the Canadians using all types of amphibious vehicles in the multitudinous canals and marshes that abound in this area. But Antwerp would have to be made available as a supply base for the northern group of armies before any main effort toward the Rhine could be attempted. From late October until mid November the British and Canadians fought an unorthodox type of land battle before the Germans were finally cleared from the approaches and the port was made available.

By mid November the coordinated attack toward the Rhine was begun. In the south the Third, Seventh and First French Armies attacked as planned. The Third attacked toward Strasbourg and captured the fortress city of Metz after a siege lasting seven days. The Seventh then advanced toward Colmar from the west, and the French attacked from Besancon toward the upper Rhine near the Swiss-French border. By 15 December all of remaining France had been cleared of the enemy excepting a small area north and east of Bitche where the Germans held out in sections of the Maginot Line. The stretch of the upper Rhine from Basel to Hagenau had been reached by our forces, and the Third Army stood facing the Siegfried Line.

In the First and Ninth Army sectors, however, things did not go so well. After ten days of the heaviest fighting yet seen on the western front, the British had advanced to three-and-a-half miles northeast of Geilenkirchen. The Ninth Army had finally reached the Roer opposite Duren and Julich after an advance of no more than seven miles in any sector. The First Army in their attack to secure the dams near

Schmidt (these dams controlled the course of the Roer River which flowed through the Ninth and British Armies' areas. If the Germans should blow the dams, a crossing of the Roer would be possible by the Ninth Army, and, if the banks overflowed, their troops, who were approaching the river, would be in danger) had managed to break through the thick fortifications of the Siegfried Line and capture Schmidt. However, the enemy counterattacked and threw our forces out of the town with considerable casualties. Further north, in the Huertgen forest, the fighting was even worse. After ten days of fighting in the woods, from tree to tree, our forces were still not out of them. The Germans knew the importance of both of these areas, and they defended them with skill and tenacity. Once the Huertgen forest was cleared, the terrain stretched out in a level plain all the way to the Rhine. By mid December the First and Ninth Armies were still slugging and advancing yard by yard to reach the Cologne plain.

VICTORIA: ONCE OVER LIGHTLY -- On 18 September 1944 the 953rd FA Bn was relieved of its attachment to the 32nd FA Brigade and attached to the 406th FA Gp. The attack of the 4th Division on the Siegfried Line was supported by the battalion from the vicinity of St. Vith. On 21 September the unit was attached to the 187th FA Gp moving to Ermsdorf, Luxembourg, where it was to fire in support of the 5th Armored Division. On 23 September the unit, together with the 187th Gp, moved to Malscheid, Belgium, to fire missions primarily for the 28th Division. The 28th began to move north on 3 October, at which time we were placed in support of the 43rd FA Bn of the 8th Division. This mission was temporary, however.

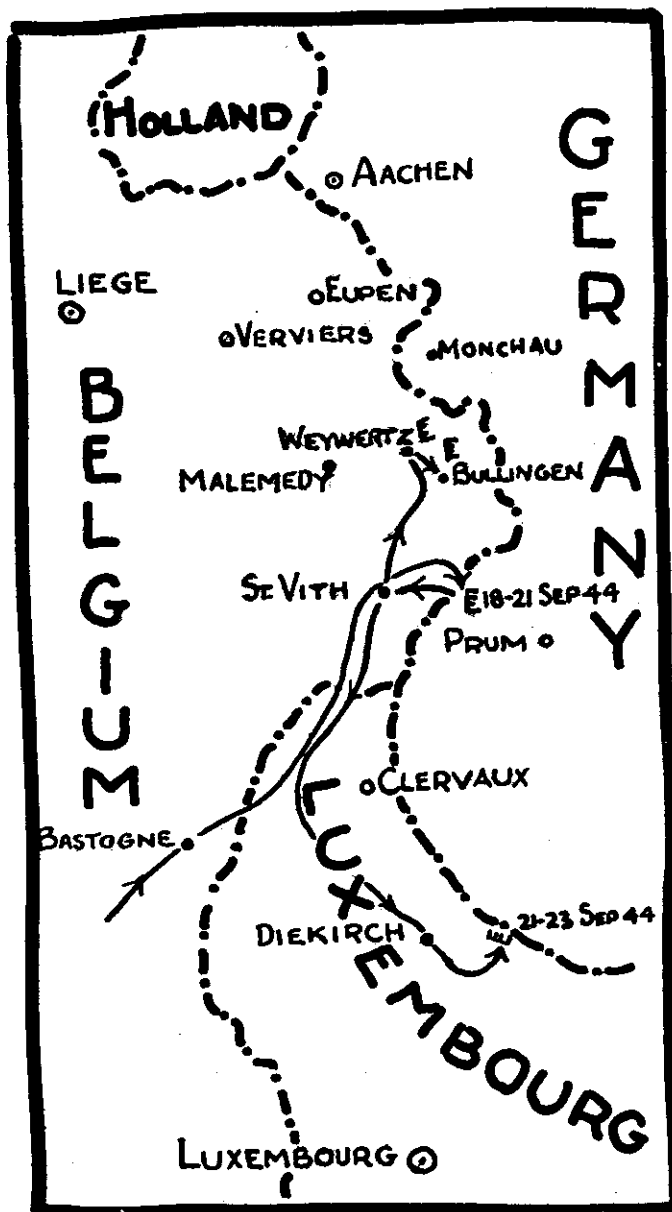
On 5 October the 953rd FA Bn moved north to the vicinity of Weywertz, Belgium, where it reinforced the fires of the 229th FA Bn of the 28th Division. Following the advance of the division the unit moved to Bullingen on 8 October.

On 27 October the 953rd FA Bn moved to the vicinity of Rotgen, Germany, where it found the 9th Division in position but about to be relieved by the 28th Division, whom we supported for some time. Missions were also fired for the 32nd Cavalry Squadron and later the 43rd FA Bn of the 8th Division.

These missions, involving several thousand rounds over a period of two months, were primarily in connection with the attempt to take Schmidt and to clear out the Hurtgen Forest to our northeast. On 3 December 1944 the unit moved northeast to the vicinity of Zweifall to reinforce the fires of the 4th Division for its attack towards Hurtgen. After a week in this area the battalion returned to the former position near Rotgen, shifting the direction of fire to the southeast to reinforce the fires of the 78th Division east of Lammersdorf. Still later we fired further south to support the initial phases of the attack of the 2nd Division in the area east of Monschau.

Victoria: A Long Look -- The motor march of 18 September carried us through a little strip of France into Belgium; over into Luxembourg and back again into Belgium. Moving east of St. Vith we crossed the German border for the first time. At the borders of the Reich was a sign we were to see time and again in the months to follow: "WARNING! THIS IS AN ENEMY COUNTRY; BE ON YOUR GUARD"! The civilian inhabitants of the little towns we passed through greeted us in surly silence, peering at the victorious American columns from their doorways and windows.

Near Mutzenich, we took up positions with the 406th Group. Our battalion CP. looked down into enemy terrain from the camouflage of a wooded hilltop. The Siegfried defenses lay in easy range and the bursts of our own shells could be seen as they fell within the enemy lines. It has been reported that the FDC could observe the effect of their own commands from the windows of their tent. The road leading



from here to the other battalions and the Group area was in plain view of the enemy. There was no feeling of security here such as we had known in Argentan; consequently more effort was forthcoming in the construction of fox-holes.

Our own guns began firing again and the thunderous crack of the howitzers, which we thought we had heard for the last time, rolled and echoed in the wooded valleys. Somehow there was a general feeling of insecurity in this position though it had no support. In fact there was little opposition from the enemy and the reported patrols and snipers never materialized. It was learned later that the area before us had been abandoned by the Germans and could easily have been taken. The 4th division however, decided not to enter this area which penetrated the Siegfried Line into the area around Prum.

Sometimes at night the Germans dropped shells on or near targets close enough to our positions to make us seek cover. But none of the whistling shells fell close enough to cause damage. Throughout our stay here, it gave us no little concern why the group commander laid such elaborate plans for the defense of the Group CP and for a rapid withdrawal in the case of an attack; why also, we wondered, was our own

CP in such an unusual locality? The expected attack never came, yet it was with considerable pleasure that we received orders to move on the 21st of September.

We were to return to the 187th Group in the vicinity of Diekirch, which was well to our south in Luxembourg. Group, it was learned later, had been working with the 5th Armored Division, which had exploited a breach in the Siegfried Line, similar to the one we had recently observed in the 4th Division sector. Their tanks had pushed forward through Wallendorf, Germany in an effort to take Bitburg. Crossing a stream here, they had found that the Germans were able to man a line of pillboxes to prevent a widening of the opening. Not only that but they also discovered another line of pillboxes to the rear of this line, in a position to make a further advance difficult. Moreover, they found it would be no trick for the enemy to rush in armored reinforcements to harass their rear and flank. Finding themselves in this awkward position, the Fifth Armored had no alternative but to withdraw across the river into Luxembourg. This was accomplished with no little difficulty; the Germans attacked fiercely; a gallant ack-ack battery held the bridge at Wallendorf while the Armored division pulled out.

The trip carried us through beautiful country: the roads curved through forested hills; far below the clear waters of lakes lay shimmering in the early Autumn sun. It was a trip intended for the camera lover or artist, never for a FA battalion in combat, for the twisting roads and steep hills taxed the nerves of driver and passenger and slowed down the speed of the column. Nor were the officers quite sure that these hills and forests that seemed so serene and peaceful were yet entirely cleared of enemy troops. However the move ended without accident or serious delay - another road march completed in the usual Victoria fashion. At twilight we arrived in the vicinity of Ermsdorf, east of Diekirch.

Our positions here were rather a problem since we were supposed to have the enemy on our right flank over a wooded hill, yet they were also down the draw to our front. One of the officers claimed to have mortars fired at him; for the most part things gave warning that the enemy was very near.

The units at this time and in this area were crowded closely together to provide mutual security against infiltrating patrols. To the rear of Victoria was a self-propelled 155 battalion whose shells constantly rushed overhead with a ragged scream. The firing was heavy, or so it seemed because of the nearness of the other battalions; the hills fairly rocked with the thunder of the artillery and the resounding echoes.

Our airport was between the self-propelled Long Toms and our own battalion and it was necessary to check with them before taking off. After hearing disturbing stories of other units we established close-in defenses for fear the Germans might decide to cross the river to continue the attack. However, we found no need for the lessons in patrolling and close-in defense tactics we had once been taught by Major Fogarty.

The 5th Armored, 187th Bn, and 187th Gp all having withdrawn from Germany, and the gap through which they had entered being closed, the higher command decided to shift our attack to another area, perhaps one that could be better reinforced and where a breakthrough could be better exploited.

So on 23 September we moved again in the direction of St. Vith, passing through Diekirch, Ettelbruck, and Wiltz. We went into position at Malscheid after passing from Luxembourg into Belgium just north of Trois Vierges. Malscheid was nothing more than a cluster of farmhouses, so nearby in a patch of woods Headquarters and

Medical set up. The firing batteries were somewhat closer to the enemy, A and C being definitely in Luxembourg near the village of Beiler. Both Service and B were located on the border of the two countries. Our observation posts were initially established in Belgium; our firing was into Germany. All this made us feel very cosmopolitan. Although the civilians of the area were quite definitely pro-German, they appeared at least theoretically friendly. Charlie Battery, without breaking the non-fraternization rule, managed to live quite comfortably in its little town, and Baker found a German who, having lived eleven years in the States, was "willing" to turn over his house to them for use as a kitchen and CP.

The day after we arrived in Beiler the Germans dropped some heavy shells periously close to the Baker area; Capt. Miller sent in a shell report and the battery was bothered no longer.

We were still attached to the 187th Group, but were reinforcing the fires of the 28th Division which was in the line just beyond the Our River. Before we left this area our OP's were able to move forward into Germany, but there was very little movement in the front lines during the stay. The 28th Division was being seasoned to combat at this time and was spread quite thinly throughout the area, acting as a screen for movement in the rear.

During our stay in Malscheid, Major O'Connor and Sgt. Trunfio put on a movie program that satisfied our wildest dreams. We had double-features morning noon and night for about a week, making up for the lack of movies in the past. Everything settled down again to the quiet routine we had known in Normandy. We were still very much aware that we were in the war, but we seemed to be doing little about it.

A Red Cross donut wagon visited us here for the first time and Baker Battery's 1st Sgt. Bugeresta was induced to wash dishes for the lovely ladies.

By 3 October the 28th Division began moving north and was replaced in our sector by the 8th Infantry Division. We were the last unit of Corps artillery to move north on 6 October to positions in the vicinity of Weywertz, Belgium. Here we dug in, in the old manner, although it was quite certain that we were out of firing range. We retained this silent policy for several days in positions at least moderately comfortable.

The little town of Weywertz was just southwest of Camp Elsenborn, a former training camp for the German army prior to the first World War. Belgium had annexed the area where the large camp stood after the war and had used it to train her own army.

Service Battery had discovered a "pub", which they used for a messhall and kitchen; and the personnel section quite appropriately had a kindergarten turned over to them for their duties. No doubt they had the best billeting in that area but Headquarters, as usual, did well enough. They had a little hotel at their disposal and a mill, while the firing Batteries with their growing ability to improvise, made themselves as comfortable as possible in the dugouts they constructed. "B" Battery's position was particularly noteworthy for the built-in fireplace and self draining cockpit in Capt. Miller's hole.

The 28th Division moved forward slightly and on Sunday, 8 October we made a short move to Bullingen. The area was already crowded with artillery and the surrounding locality heavily wooded or almost under water in the bed of a valley. As a result our positions were quite unorthodox and we all hoped that no visiting "brass" would make too close an inspection. B and C Batteries, located near a railroad track, had several of their sections actually on the rails and the others were grad-

ually forced upwards to the track by a swollen stream which rose higher and higher as the days went by. Able Battery was the show place of the battalion. With the aid of engineer bulldozers they had constructed huts, lined inside and out with plywood picked up at a nearby lumber yard. In addition they were equipped with electric lights and flooring and bunks ranged against the walls. Lt. Collins secured some camouflage material which made the area almost indistinguish from the terrain.

The town of Bullingen, although Belgian, had been pro-Nazi and had been evacuated of its inhabitants except for a few caretakers who gave us no trouble. Headquarters was set up comfortably in houses and in due time movies were shown in the local theatre and several USO shows were presented. It was not long either before showers were available to the Battalion.

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She was tall and somewhat angular and only a wisp of her blond hair showed under the bandanna wrapped over her head. She came into the town at night, so the story went, to care for the cattle and poultry that she had left behind when she left with the fleeing civilians. Where she stayed was a mystery that no one tried to solve. She was not loath to accept the amorous advances of the Headquarters men and into a shadowy cellar she lured them. The uncertain light of the cellar was kind; it softened the harshness of her mannish features; it deepened the lines of her generous bosom. Taste, when it cannot be selective, will accept whatever presents itself, and this silent creature was not only a feast but the only one in the vicinity. They came into the cellar and presently they left, emerging from the door with traces of frustration on their faces, but with stories of the charms of the lady of the cellar.

Into the cellar, one at a time, went the waiting men, a thin trickle of passion spilling into their blood. There before them was the sole woman of the fighting front. Preparatory advances were made; feverish hands explored. Suddenly a rude shock - the creature's anatomy was similar to their own! Then over their disgusted curses came the rude laughter of an invisible audience. Such were the courtships of "Honest" John Finke at Bullingen.

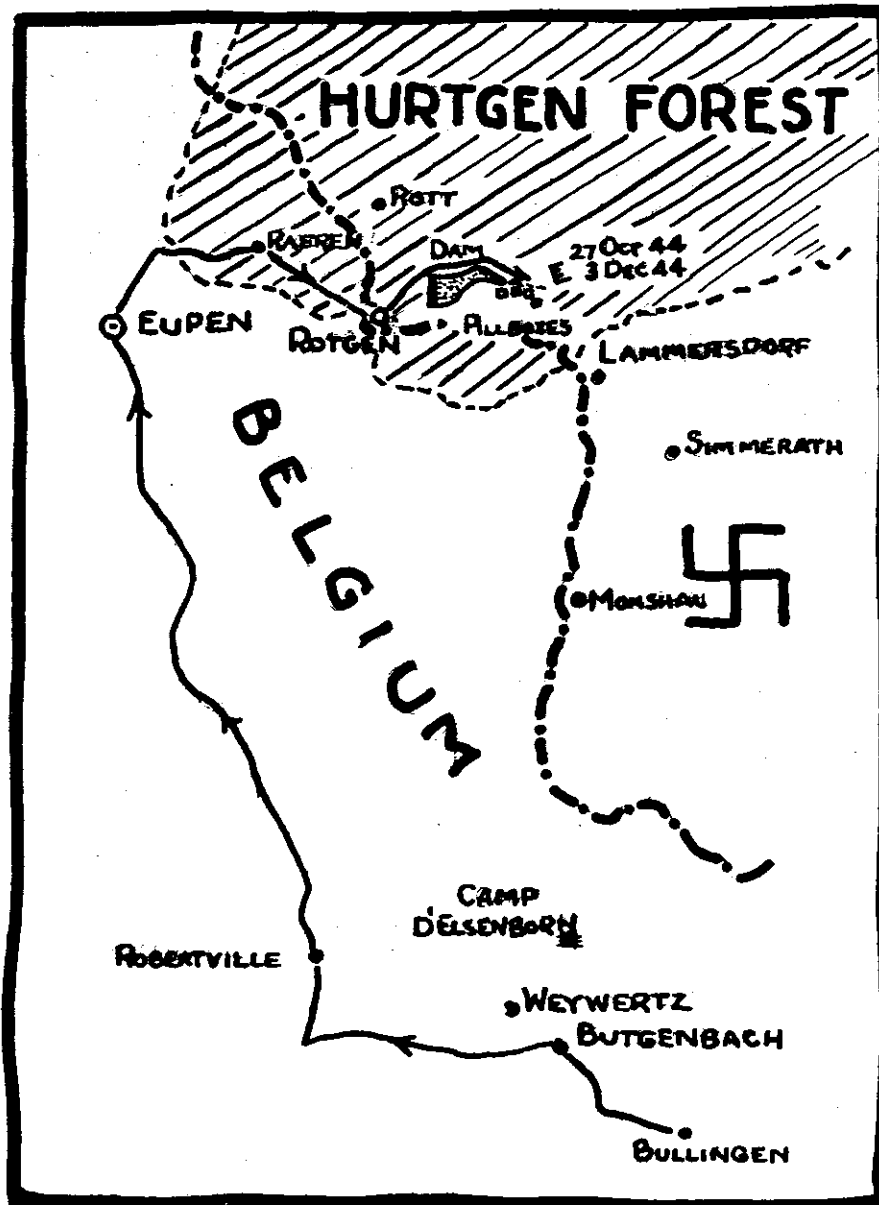
In his rummaging around, John had found the clothing of some departed Belgian women and with a little experiment with lipstick and a bit of upholstery had transferred himself into what was for all appearance a woman, if not a very attractive one. And the men he attracted by his uncertain charms were legion.

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While the battalion was at Bullingen, Service Battery moved to Nidrum, where they took over the 187th Gp's previous installations. A rest camp was established here, where the cannoneers, not as well setup as the Headquarters men, were able to get a few days of rest and relaxation.

Beginning on 12 October fire missions became more frequent for the next few weeks. We were firing corps and division missions quite steadily. Yet there was little change in the front lines and it appeared that the enemy was exerting very little pressure against the 28th Division.

We left Bullingen on the 27th after cleaning the houses and locking the doors of the buildings we had stayed in. A Battery's gun position was turned over to the 941st FA battalion and again we were on the move. Our route carried us north to the vicinity of Roetgen, Germany, where once more we were to support the 28th Division, which was just moving into that area. The Ninth Division was still unrelieved when we pulled into the new area and not until several days later was their relief completed.

After moving north to Eupen Victoria turned east over a road that wound through long valleys and past an unfinished dam intended to form a huge reservoir. Using these bad roads, we reached Roetgen, passed through this German village and on to our position to the northeast of the town. The road, in the final stages of the march, passed by "dragon's teeth" defenses and above a dam just north of Roetgen.



The reconnaissance parties had not found it easy to locate gun positions in this new area. Earlier, the battalion had been informed that all of the little village of Rott was for its use, but our working parties had found that a Division Headquarters, two Groups and three battalions had moved in and about the town. Again the reconnaissance party moved on and their work in two more areas had the same result: when our working parties arrived, other units were already there. Moving from its assigned area, the battalion was forced to take up undesirable positions well to the east and south of Rott, where not even the infantry had yet gone in. The position itself was not particularly close to the front lines, but only a thin screen of cavalry from the 39th Squadron "stood" between us and the German enemy. With no other American troops in the immediate vicinity, there was little to give the feeling of safety that an artillery battalion usually enjoys. Had we known

then that the cavalry screen consisted of only a one vehicle patrol of the roads every four hours throughout the day and nothing at all at night, it is extremely unlikely that we would have chosen these positions for use.

Back at the battalion it was felt that enemy patrols would probably by-pass our positions which lay off the road but there was nothing comforting in the expected results should a mass attack develop in this sector. Consequently secondary exits were arranged which would hasten our withdrawal, if occasion for it should arise. Our OP's - Charlie in the church in Lammersdorf and Baker in a cozy private observatory in the same town - were part of this defense plan.

A string of pillboxes along a stream was taken over by Headquarters Battery. At intervals of three hundred yards, the huge concrete and steel structures bordered the swift stream that tumbled through a narrow, marshy and wooded valley. These abandoned defenses of the Siegfried Line were homes to the Headquarters men for many weeks to follow. A large pill-box served Charlie Battery as a CP. Baker Battery's one pill-box looked out upon a lake and in the ensuing weeks found use as a wire and supply room. Able Battery and the gun sections of other batteries constructed log cabins from the evergreens of the dark forests running throughout the sector. Log cabin villages sprang up overnight; the rough buildings were of every shape and design, and were warmed by little stoves left behind by the enemy or anything that could be hammered into shape to hold the blaze of a wood fire. Charlie Battery officers, with sidewalk superintendent Captain Betts, turned out a structure of elaborate architecture. Mud, always a problem in warfare, consistently interfered with comfort and efficiency of the gun positions, though numerous methods of drainage were applied, many with good effect. Toward the end of our stay Baker moved to an area covered with crushed rock, and dry footing was a relief to the gun crews who could work the huge howitzers free from the mud that had sucked at their boot soles, slowing down the team work movement of gun crews in action.

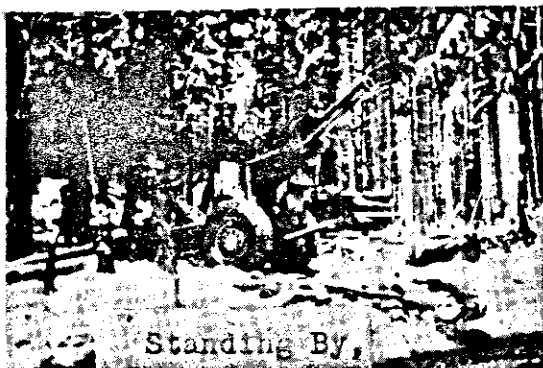
The town of Schmidt was not large, but its importance to operations was very great, for in it lay the key to the control of the dam on the Roer river. The passing weeks proved the importance of the bitterly contested German village. Advancing units were constantly thrown back with heavy casualties, the enemy realizing as much as we how the dams in this area were capable of flooding the great river valley to the north and west of the Rhine. Thus, our higher Headquarters was trying desperately to obtain control of the dam, for troops would have faced isolation and annihilation had they crossed the river and moved towards the Rhine with the enemy still capable of flooding the valley and attacking the balance of our forces from above the dam.

The 9th Division had attacked here initially with success. Relief from the 28th Division came to the harassed 9th, but the new division's attack with a regiment attempting to push from Germeter through Vossenach to Schmidt was halted by the furious defenses of the enemy. Before the Ardennes counter-offensive a final attack was made by the 8th Division and the 4th. It succeeded in clearing the Hurtgen Forest area to the north and west of Vossemeach, but the Germans stopped any attempt to take Schmidt.

Through all this we laid down many preparatory fires for the attacks and enough interdiction fire to bring our total expenditure for November to 13,449 rounds -- more than we had ever fired in any position previously.

The exhilaration of early Fall, when an expectation of the collapse of Hitler's Reich was abroad, had now vanished completely. The grim, persistent business of war of the Normandy days came back and the days slipped from the calendar with a painful

slowness. The skys clouded and the short daylight hours passed in dreary procession. Wet snows began falling and turned our positions into bogs of mud. Then the weather grew colder and the earth and forests were blanketed with snow and ice. The little stoves in the cabins and pill-boxes were fed day and night and the men, in their free time, huddled around them to keep warm. They played poker and wrote letters, dreamed of home and cursed the Germans. Passes were given and a lucky few went off to Paris to return with glowing tales of the French capital. But all things pointed to a long war and we agreed silently with the Commanding General that bitter battles were ahead.



Perhaps our stay in the "first pill-box area", as it is now referred to, is more filled with memories than any others except the first Normandy positions. Words can sometimes symbolize experience. More often they can but suggest it. Perhaps in the following paragraphs, will come again a scene or a face, that will let loose the flood of memories to some of the men who lived with Victoria in these trying days.

There was the night the burning British Lancaster, a moving furnace in the darkness, came roaring down brushing the tree tops and crashed beyond Headquarters kitchen, barely missing some of our huts -- the Australian gunner coming from the woods in the early morning after he had hidden during the long night, not knowing whether the troops in the area were friendly or enemy -- the 500 pound bomb that dropped next to a "B" Battery gun and failed to explode -- the personnel bombs that exploded on the roofs of the log cabins of the same battery, injuring two men -- the log bridge constructed by Major O'Connor, Capt. Lange, Sgts. Carpenter and Pugh to replace one blown out by the Germans; it was fifty feet in length and a praiseworthy accomplishment -- B Battery discovering that the tunnel in their area went through a shaft, leading to a dam controlled by the Germans; the Germans, they found, could infiltrate through the tunnel and later permit water to flow through the shaft overflowing the reservoir and flooding the valley in the vicinity of Rott and Zwei fall -- the two German-looking strangers in American uniforms found puttering in the tunnel entrance, who turned out to be interpreters from the newly arrived division -- the flying bombs and then jet-propelled planes gliding through the night over our positions -- the strafing Luftwaffe -- the P-47's bombing Roetgen which was mistaken for Schmidt and the anxious moments of our section -- the homelike toilet of Baker's observatory -- Cpl. Feldman's "disappointment" at being detailed to Paris for ten days with Captain Miller -- the P-47 that crashed into a Baker gun position barely missing their number four gun -- the two bottles of champagne given Sgt. Armstrong for having the cleanest gun in Baker's muddy area -- the log cabin that Pucky and Murphy work on for so long and never slept in until we came back to the area for a second time -- McGough and Bell of Service diving to fox holes filled with water at the approach of a strafing plane -- the German plane shot down by Sgt. Tanner and Sgt. Colihan of the same battery while on an ammo detail at A.S.P. 127 -- the relay station established by Cpl. Burrett and company near an infantry rear position in

the dark hours of a December night -- Lynch, Finklesteen and McCleod bringing in trucks overloaded with Christmas packages.

During the time we were here the greatest experiences and difficulties came to the "gallant OP crews", which were run on a twenty-four hour basis. They were constantly in danger by enemy shell fire and the wire lines running back to the battalion were always under observation. Yet hard working wire crews managed to keep them intact despite the enemy artillery.

Able's OP was originally established well to the East in the village of Germeter, just west of Vossenach. The road here represented our outpost line; the front line of the infantry being about 300 yards to the west, below the crest of the hill. In the early days of the OP, the Able men had a loaded machine gun constantly pointing from a window of the downstairs room of their house, at the German lines, three hundred yards distant in the edge of the Hurtgen Forest. When the 28th Division made their attack, this house was included in the enemy counter-preparation for the attack, being on the northern flank of the attack. The shell report that Lt. Beckman turned in the ebb of the day would often read not unlike this: "1200 rounds light artillery -- our house was struck twice by shells -- many times by fragments".

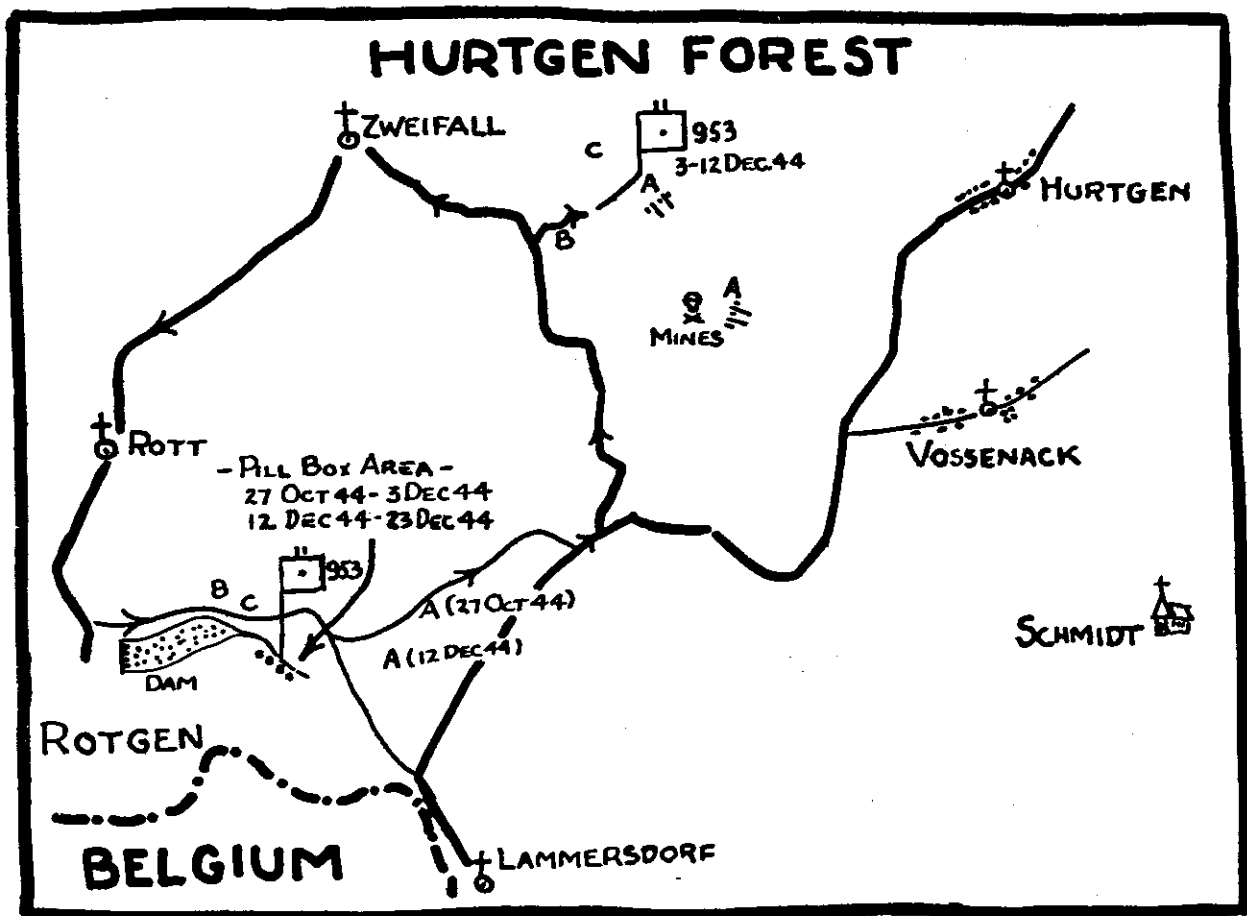
Flat trajectory guns to the north firing south through Germeter were particularly troublesome and eventually the OP was moved to the center of the town where it was protected from fire from the north. Barely was this accomplished when, on the following day, the former location was visited with a rain of shells that completely destroyed the house, leaving only smoldering timbers to mark the sight of the OP. The heavily mined area to the east and north of this harassed spot was strongly defended by the enemy and was abandoned as a sector for the attack of the "Bloody bucket" division, altho later the 4th and 8th cleared this section of the Hurtgen Forest.

Tech Sgt. Fitzgerald was lost to the outfit there after being struck in the face by fragments in the CP area of the 43rd FA Bn. It was reported that he was severely hurt, but he subsequently returned to the battalion.

While the battalion was in the Roetgen area, Service was located in the woods of a swamp west of Rott and east of the main north and south road in that area. Higher Headquarters had indicated that the battery was to remain there come hell or high water. The former did not come but the arrival of the latter made it seem such. Lt. Donovan, in an effort to drain his own area, flooded the kitchen and personnel sections in the stream that poured from his drainage canal. Captain Brown's trackless waste discouraged visiting brass and his confusing one-way road system was apparently designed to make a trip to Service's mud flats an all day affair. Even Major O'Connor had to "reply by indorsement" for violating traffic rules. Towards the end of our long stay in this area, Service Battery was required to establish a security guard on the main road near them. A high ranking officer was greatly embarrassed one time by a too energetic guard who demanded the pass word in the method of the Field Manual.

The 28th Division, after thrusting a narrow finger in the direction of Schmidt, failed in an attack when units that had pushed on to Schmidt received no reinforcements. The terrain made it difficult to bring up reinforcements and the division was left with only a portion of Vossenach under its control. Our Able OP, operating from the center of Germeter, had assisted the infantry operations and numerous missions were fired to help the relief of the isolated troops in the vicinity of Schmidt and Konnerscheidt and to break up the attack of the enemy aimed at Vossenach and designed to cut off a great number of troops.

The enemy artillery and mortar fire was extremely effective on our own infantry in this position and in order to silence it shell reports became an absolute necessity. We furnished a set of "shell report" teams to the infantry in our sector and, with Captain Lee in charge, a detail set forth to the 13th Infantry regiment where one EM was assigned to each front line infantry company in position west of Schmidt. The detail included besides the captain: Sgt. Howell and Pfc. Doyle of "A" Btry; Pfc's Pickens and Miller of Charlie and Fastow of Baker. These men were complimented on the splendid work they did in getting accurate readings of shellings and Captain Lee was able to relay the information to headquarters quickly enough to permit the enemy guns to be fired upon before they had a chance to move.



On 3 December we moved from our pill-box positions north and east in the vicinity of Zweifall. Here we supported another attack designed to secure control of the Roer river dams by cleaning out pockets to the north of Vossenach. The roads that criss-crossed the embattled Hurtgen forests were streams of thick mud that seeped in to the woods where we were located. Trucks labored slowly through the hub deep sea of mud churning the sucking liquid into an even thickness. Little quarter ton vehicles had to be drawn out by larger trucks. Mud was everywhere. It found its way to the hilltops on the boots of the men and wheels of the vehicles. It was ankle deep at the gun positions and moments free from firing the men worked to drain the area. It flew from the spinning wheels of passing vehicles and splattered on men and equipment. Bad as it was before, it was worse in this area. While we moved to this cheerless locality the Luftwaffe swooped from the gray skies and strafed the roads. None of our batteries suffered casualties and the move was completed without accident.

"A" Battery's first platoon was given an advance position in order to fire a

required amount of green bag ammunition and Schneider projectiles. Our positions seemed too far forward, but in truth, self propelled artillery was in front of our howitzers. This position of Able's first platoon was the scene of the battalion's last accident. Cpl. Torreo in search of an ideal position for his machine gun, stepped out of the "swept" area and set off one of the numerous mines in the locality. His companion, Pfc Hawkins, attempted to reach the falling Torreo, but himself set off another mine. Lt. Collins and other men succeeded in getting the two injured men from the mined area and aid men treated the badly hurt Torreo and Hawkins. Cpl. Torreo died later in the hospital and Hawkins lost his leg as the result of the accident.

Victoria returned in a short time to the pill-box positions they had recently vacated, preparing to support another attack on the town of Schmidt. This time, however, the attack was coming more from the south rather than from the area near Vossenach. "A" Battery was given a dry position on top of a rock pile at another entrance to the tunnel which had ended in "B" Battery's position and "A" Battery's OP in the vicinity of Germeter was shifted down to a hill in the vicinity of Paust-ambach, southeast of Lammersdorf. In its new position Able's OP could watch the shelling of Baker and Charlie's OP's in Lammersdorf. After their experiences in Germeter they were relieved to find that others took it as well as they.

We began our first firing of "Pozit" fuses and the report given for them was as bewildering as the results we expected, though they were not the same. "B" Battery insisted that they received premature bursts whenever they fired a volley and Able OP reported a belief that the fuses were "being cut short", resulting in bursts high overhead, Careful examination revealed that the fuses were doing what was expected of them and proving quite effective.

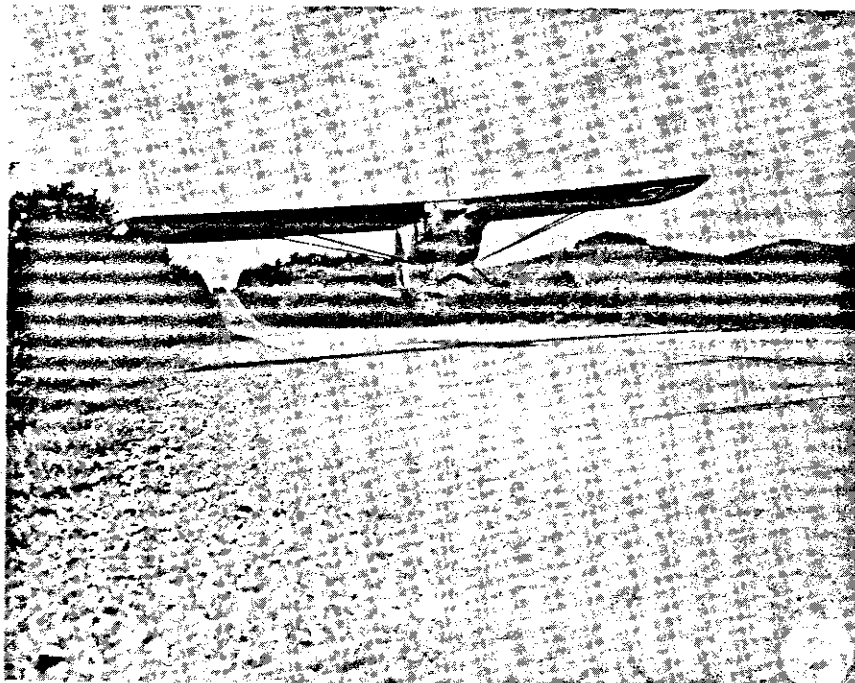
The newly arrived 78th Division now began a successful attack to the southeast, from their positions between Lammersdorf and Jaegerhaus to the north. They succeeded in capturing Simmerath and Rollesbroich and pushing on into Kesternich. Striking from farther south the 2nd Division worked to the East and North in an effort to come behind Schmidt and the volume of water backed up by the dams in this area. On 16 December we were called upon to fire to the south of the 78th in the direction of Monschau to stop what we thought was a small counter-attack.

The usual flying bombs flamed overhead during these nights and sometimes could be seen in the daytime. "Diver" reports of them were sent in and Lt. Blume sighted the take off of one from his OP. After his report the air-corps visited the site and no more flying bombs were seen from that spot.

Captain Matsen was lost to the battalion in the trying days of December -- an examination of him by Captain Betts led to hospitalization and a removal to England and later to the States.

But there were moments of humor even in those trying days -- Fokakis of Headquarters slamming shut the heavy iron doors of his pill-box during the excitement of an air attack, and leaving his shouting comrades vainly pounding on the door. Remember the fire one night at Headquarters which destroyed the "home" of Lts. Witty and Heath and lost for them all their worldly equipment save one bottle of Scotch? Memories in another vein might carry us to the town of Rollesbreich where we were requested to set a fire for a cavalry unit. Three rounds of phosphorus started a blaze that continued throughout the night. Remember also the church tower in Schmidt that none of our fire seemed able to destroy -- the shelling of the ack-ack Headquarters above our CP one night putting 13 holes in the M/Sgt's tent?

This grim drudgery did not go unrecognized. Many Bronze Stars were awarded to members of the battalion for heroic achievement during this period. Among them were Pfc Wilson, Lt. Beckman, Lt. Hockman, Lt. Rogers, Pfc Schiavone, Cpl. Kristall, Pfc Ingram, and many others. Pvt Charles Richards of "A" received the British Military Medal for heroism.



Reconnaissance plane of the 953rd FA Bn taking off highway 70N.

Phase 4 The Ardennes: Continuation Of The Battle Of The Rhine

The Big Picture---On the morning of 16 December the Germans launched a mightily offensive in the Ardennes area. Under cover of foggy and cloudy winter weather, they had amassed some twenty odd divisions, ten of them armored divisions, along a front of sixty miles, from the Hurtgen Forest to the northern tip of Luxembourg. (Trier) The time and place were well chosen. The area was thinly held by American troops of the First Army who had been sent to this sector for reorganization and a rest after the terrific fighting around the Hurtgen Forest and Schmidt. Other Divisions were new divisions just recently arrived. Also at this time the First Army was attacking from Monschau and south hoping to relieve some of the pressure against the troops attacking in the Duren sector. The heaviest thrust was made at the heart of the Ardennes, east of Malmedy. Another column attacked at Monschau and at the northwest tip of Luxembourg, and at two points farther south near the Moselle.

The primary aim of the attack seemed to be to cut in behind the First Army and destroy the bulk of it, recapture Antwerp and Liege, our big supply bases, roll up the other armies to the north; and even, if possible, to wheel through France toward Paris. The attack came as a surprise and armored columns quickly exploited the initial breakthrough. Spearheads were quickly fanning out toward Liege, Bastogne, and the Meuse River. However, small heroic local actions by small groups of First Army veterans who would not surrender delayed the breakthrough in critical spots and enabled General Bradley to save the day. Notable of some of these actions was the stand of the 7th Armored Division at St. Vith, the 101st Airborne Division's stand at Bastogne, the 2nd Division in front of Elsenborn ridge and the holding of the vital Stavelot-Malmedy area by the 30th Division. Speedily and efficiently the allied command moved her reserves to the critical area. Due to the delay of the German armored columns in the Elsenborn area, a defensive line was formed from the town of Elsenborn west along the ridge to Malmedy and Stavelot. This line held against the repeated attacks of the armored columns, thus protecting the norther side of the bulge. The speedy movement of part of the Third Army from the south to stop the German salient near Arlon played an important part in stopping the German drive. The Third also attacked the German flank near Luxembourg and sent a flying armored column to the besieged city of Bastogne which was completely surrounded. It was the heroic defense of the critical communications center that prevented the enemy armor from breaking through to Sedan and France. With the spearheads thus channelized, the British Second Army was sent from western Belgium to set up a defensive line along the Meuse river, especially near Namur to stop the forward plunge of the attack. Three weeks after the initial breakthrough the counterattack was definitely stopped, and the Allies went over to the offensive. By the end of the fourth week the bulge was compressed to half its size. The troops in the forward end of the salient were running out of food and supplies especially fuel for their armor. By 8 February the bulge was completely liquidated. As was later proven this attack turned out to be the biggest mistake of the German High Command. If the secondary aim of the drive had been to delay the Allies for four to six months from their attack toward the Rhine, it failed. The initial aim of the attack, the seizure of the supply base at Liege, was also frustrated. Two months after the initial breakthrough, the Allies were even more ready than before to continue their main attack.

Continuation of the Battle of the Rhine: The Germans were given no rest, no chance to reorganize, for on the twenty-third of February the assault on the Rhine began. Earlier, as a matter of fact on 8 February, the British had started the battle by attacking southeast from Nimijen. The plan, it appeared, was for the Canadian First Army to attack south toward Duisburg, basing their left flank on the Rhine.

The American Ninth was to cross the Roer, in the Duren-Julich area and send one column headed for Duisburg, the other toward Duisdorf in the Gladbach area. The First Army was to cross the Roer and head for the Cologne-Bonn area and a point midway between Coblenz and Bonn. The Third Army would maintain pressure on the enemy, but not do anything rash until the First had reached the Rhine, and then the Third was to attack toward Coblenz. There was to be a number of spearheads, offensives to the Rhine, and then a wheeling movement in both directions by each army, thus forming many pockets between the Siegfried Line and the River.

The British, already through some of the German defenses guarding the approaches to the Rhine, sent an armored spearhead, paralleling the Rhine, speeding toward the Cologne plain and sent one column heading northeast toward Duisburg, the other toward the high ground north of Cologne. The First Army after a terrific artillery barrage, crossed the swollen and swift Roer River near Duren. Once the crossing was effected and secure one armored column crossed the river, passed through the Infantry and headed for the high ground just north of Cologne. Another column headed southeast toward Bonn. On 4 March, the First Army reached the Rhine. Now it was time for Patton to move. While the First and Ninth Armies were advancing to the Rhine his Third Army was struggling through the Siegfried Line in the area between Luxembourg and Saarbrucken. He was three-fourths of the way through when the First reached the Rhine. Now the plan began to shape. One armored column from the First pushed south toward the city of Coblenz at the same time that the Third Army attack toward the same city. Another column of the First drove southeast after crossing the Roer River, and it was this column of the Ninth Armored Division which on 7 March reached the Rhine River at Remagen. Luckily the bridge here was still intact and the fortunate situation was quickly exploited. A crossing was made by the armor and troops and supplies were immediately rushed to establish and hold the bridgehead. Meanwhile the Third Army was approaching Coblenz, which was reached the next day. The Germans surrendered in droves as columns of the First heading south and east, and other columns of the Third heading northeast, joined and cut them off. With a bridgehead across the Rhine, and American troops along the Rhine from Coblenz to Nimijen, the final battle of the Rhine took shape. Quickly establishing bridgeheads across the Moselle, the Third Army armored columns headed south, through the industrial Saar toward the attacking Seventh Army which was still plugging away at the maze of Siegfried defenses along the German border near Saarbrucken. Before the Germans manning these defenses knew what was happening the spearheads of the Third were attacking them from the rear. The Seventh broke through the defenses and quickly sent spearheads to link up with the Third's. In less than ten days the entire Saar Valley from the Moselle River to the French border and east to the Rhine was cleared, with thousands of prisoners. Meanwhile further north in the Remagen Bridgehead, General Hodges was anxious to exploit his good fortune and break out. But General Bradley told him to buildup and to expand slightly, but not to get excited. Mopping up the few remaining pockets west of the Rhine was speedily accomplished, and by 23 March, one month after the crossing of the Roer, all German troops west of the Rhine had been liquidated.

VICTORIA: ONCE OVER LIGHTLY---Late in the afternoon of 16 December 1944 the 953rd FA Bn fired to assist the 2nd and 99th Divisions in meeting the German attack in the vicinity of Monschau and Konzen. On 23 December the battalion moved to the vicinity of Francorchamps, Belgium, northeast of Stavelot, where it passed to the control of the 406th FA Gp with the mission of general support of the 30th Division. On 15 January 1945 the battalion passed to the control of the 190th FA Gp, moved to Arimont, just east of Malmedy, and fired in support of the 7th Armored Division advancing into the St. Vith area from the vicinity of Malmedy and also in support of the attack of the 1st Division farther east. On 27 January the battalion moved to a position near Weywertz, where it was attached to the 187th FA Gp which was given the

mission of support of the 2nd Division.

The 953 FA Bn followed the 2nd Division from Weywertz back into Germany to the vicinity of Schleiden and Gemund where the firing was in support of the 69th Division and later in support of the 28th Division which relieved the 2nd at the end of February. Fire was also delivered for the 32nd FA Bn of the first Division during a portion of this period.

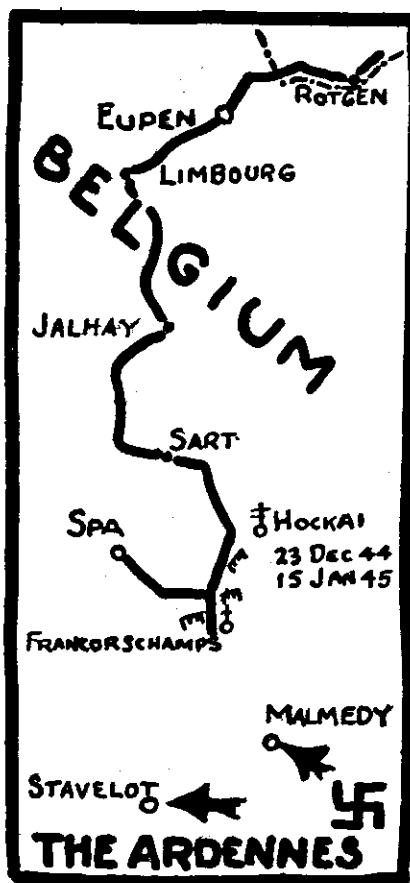
The 953rd FA Bn, although in the general vicinity at the time, did not take part in the Rhine River crossing at Remagen but instead was sent to the Seventh Army where it supported the assault on Saarbrucken. The battalion was attached to the XXI Corps on 11 March and further attached temporarily to the 413th FA Gp and finally to the 36th FA Gp. The missions fired were in support of the 63rd Division to the east of Saarbrucken. Later the battalion moved to the vicinity of Bitche to assist the attack there. On 27 March the 953 FA Bn was relieved of its attachment to the Seventh Army and on 29th March began its return to the First Army area.

VICTORIA: A LONG LOOK---We remained at Roetgen during the first days of the German breakthrough firing rather steadily almost due south into the Monschau area, particularly the towns of Eicherscheid and Hofen, where apparently the heavy artillery fire from our vicinity prevented or helped prevent the Germans from pushing through. During this time we began to hear more unpleasant reports of the area in which we had previously operated. The initial German attack appeared to have gone right through the little town of Bullingen in which we had been so comfortable for almost six weeks. After passing there the attack had attempted to spread to the North up through Weywertz and toward Camp Elsenborn, but the 2nd Division had been able to prevent the taking of the ridge which dominated this area. Had the German attack in the vicinity of Monschau pushed through, it is possible that the 2nd Division would have been forced to give up this ridge and permitted the Germans to make a considerably greater exploitation of the breakthrough in this area. The town of St. Vith through which we had passed on our way to our first positions in Germany was the scene of very bitter fighting during this first week. The Area near Malscheid and Beiler was of course overrun by the Germans. There were indications also that the enemy was planning or attempting an attack in the vicinity of Diekirch, Luxembourg, but apparently this was somewhat further north in the vicinity of Clervaux and Wiltz through which we had passed on our way to Diekirch.

All of this, together with the news that the 186th and 955th FA Bns were in the Monschau area, brought the war close to us. There was also the possibility that the enemy might attempt a further attack in the vicinity of Lammersdorf in an effort to drive through to Eupen and bypass the Monschau and Elsenborn defenses. In this connection we had numerous reports and alerts of the dropping of paratroopers both in our area and slightly to the rear between Eupen and Roetgen and between Eupen and Bullingen. Even at this time it is hard to say how much truth and how much rumor there was to the reports.

During the first few days of the breakthrough there were some unusual incidents which are perhaps worthy of note. Mr. Schade, with about 15 EM, was in the Victor rest center at Eupen on the day of the breakthrough. Not having heard from him for several days, we assumed that he had beaten a hasty retreat across the English Channel. His story, however, is that he plus the men were commandeered and put on guard in the city armed with such weapons as were available. From all reports, and they were loud and many, Mr. Schade did not consider this a pass. We also had had men in the hospital at Butgenbach which was between Elsenborn and Bullingen, and these were unheard of for some time. Rumor had it that German tanks had entered Butgenbach with the patients still there, but they had permitted the American ambulances to evacuate the men. Just how the evacuation was effected was at first

unknown, but Cpl. Corradetti had quite a tale to tell: One morning he saw a column of weapon carriers and half-tracks go down the road, and twenty minutes later they returned. He then realized it was a German column, but fortunately they never harmed the clearing station. Immediately after, with no interference from the Germans, the hospital moved to Malmedy. He stayed in Malmedy one night and had to sleep in an air-raid shelter because the Germans were really pouring artillery in there. The next morning all the litter cases were evacuated and Corradetti had to walk to a place of safety in Spa, a considerable distance.



On 23 December the need for us in our old positions had passed and we were sent to the vicinity of Francorchamps, Belgium, to work with the 406th FA Gp, firing in the direction of Stavelot and Malmedy as need arose. At that time the front was still, to put it mildly, quite fluid, and we were not certain which way our next move might be. The G-2 reports indicated that the enemy might be expected to send a force up from Stavelot in our direction in an effort to disrupt the communication lines behind us. One thing, however, was certain; we were in a real war again and anything might happen.

The positions we initially occupied were north of Francorchamps in the vicinity Hockai, where a fairly well dispersed battalion area was available. The following day, however, the ground haze lifted enough to permit us to see the bursts of artillery fire upon the hills in front of us, and we realized that two of our batteries at least had observation posts rather than gun positions. Accordingly these were moved off the hill and further forward to the vicinity of Francorchamps itself. "B" Battery was south and east of the town, with one gun sited for anti-tank fire on the road coming from Stavelot; "C" was between the town of Francorchamps and the next road junction to the north; and "A" was beyond the crossroad in the direction of Hockai. These positions were not particularly good, but they did offer some con-

cealment and a fairly good footing. If the enemy artillery fire were accurate it it would not affect the battery. As yet we had seen no enemy air activity in this area.

Our move to new positions appeared ill-advised very shortly after when a flight of P-47's bombed the road junction behind "A" and "C" batteries, one bomb killing an MP and demolishing a dummy anti-tank site in the center of the road junction. The ack-ack in the area opened up on these planes and one was brought down. In the afternoon of the same day a second flight of planes circled the area and one came down to inspect the area. Ack-ack again went up. Some bombs were dropped before one of the planes was shot down. This time the pilot was identified as American, and stated that he had been sent out to look for German targets, that the front was very fluid in this area, and that he had come down to determine whether the targets he saw on the road were friendly or enemy. This was the last attack of this nature which we had in this area.

Our OP's were established well over to our east, two of them overlooking the town of Malmedy and the other one being further east in the direction of Wertzfeld. These OP's, incidentally, had an opportunity to watch two bombing attacks on the town of Malmedy by friendly planes. The town at that time was mostly held by our troops (did you ever hear Capt. Hudson's story about the people of Malmedy who didn't complain that our air force bombed the town?).

The weather had turned unusually cold, well below freezing, and there was considerable snow on the ground. As a result our camouflage, insofar as possible, was changed from that used in the Roetgen area to white, and our observers began to wear the white capes first seen on the infantry. It was not until our next position that we were able to obtain the white cloth to complete the gun positions.

We spent Christmas and New Years in this position expectantly awaiting a German attack and not being called upon to do much offensive firing. We did, however at midnight of 31 December, fire our 50,000th round in combat. Lt. Collins of "A" Battery pulled the lanyard. Did the lanyard really break?

During the comparatively quiet period we had many a thrill. The flying bombs of course were thick, apparently being headed toward Liege and Verviers. At one time it was reported that 55 passed overhead in the course of one hour. Most of the batteries did not get the same thrill out of these that Headquarters did, since Hq was perched on the top of a hill and could see them come and go. "A" Battery had one drop near them in the fields, but it only burnt. The air section had one land on the field, but it failed to explode. Captain Newman claims he saw one hit the surface of the lake at Robertsville, skid along and take off again, but we doubt it. The ack-ack around us did not fire at the flying bombs, but they did have many an opportunity to fire at German reconnaissance planes which seemed to be quite common. On the morning of New Years Day we were given our first real exhibition of German air power when four German planes went slightly to our west, apparently as decoys for a very low-flying flight of at least 25 planes which went directly over the CP headed for Liege. This was part of the German air force's attempt to put on a big offensive on New Year's day, which attempt, however, was unsuccessful due to the ack-ack fire encountered behind our lines. For we who had been waiting for an attack in this area, it appeared to be the warning that big things were about to happen. Cpl. Pasmik alone got in 1500 rounds of 50 caliber.

At the time of our arrival in the Francorchamps area we had been alerted for our possible withdrawal to positions in the rear, and as a matter of fact positions had been selected in the vicinity of Jalhay, Belgium, the survey had been completed

and some initial preparation for the occupation made. The plan at that time indicated that we were to occupy a series of delaying positions and that in the position of Jalhay we would be under the 190th Gp and our next position in the vicinity of Verviers would bring us under the 406th Gp or the 187th Gp. This coupled with the rumor that General Montgomery advised the abandonment of the Malmedy-Eupen area made us ready to pack our rolls and get moving.

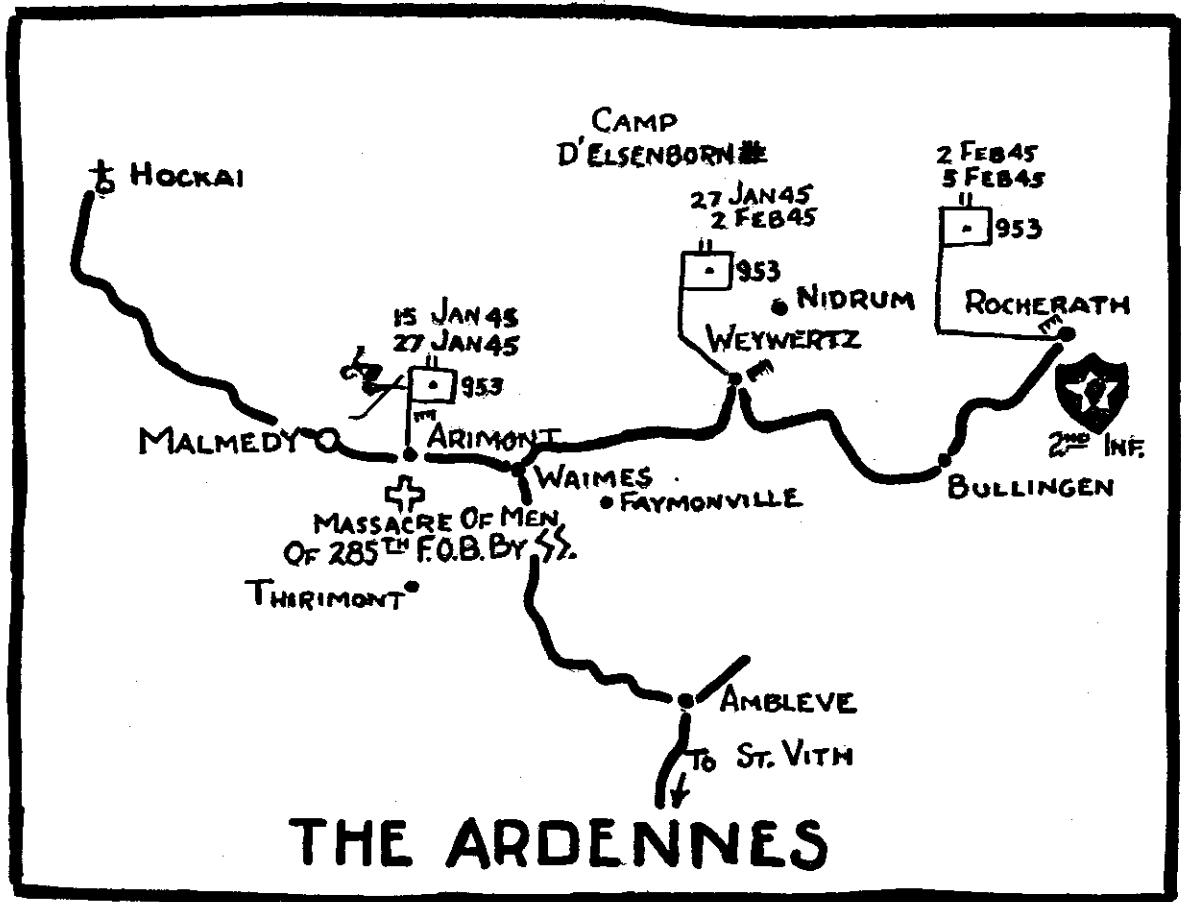
Service Battery had not been permitted to come into the area near Francorchamps except temporarily, because it was felt that withdrawal was probable and the presence of Service vehicles would unnecessarily interfere with traffic. Service Battery, by Corps orders, had set up shop north of Verviers near Battice. Again communication and contact with Service Battery was very difficult, but every request of the firing batteries was promptly and efficiently handled by Service in spite of the distances and times that might be involved. Incidentally Captain Betts claims to be the first medical officer to give a monthly physical inspection in a convent, which he did at Service.

On 1 January the Battalion was ordered to furnish 35 men on DS to V Corps Artillery. Since these plus other additional men carried on our books for the benefit of V Corps would have left us well below strength, we were further ordered to form the Battalion into two firing batteries of six guns each. We were not given the opportunity of operating shorthanded with these three firing batteries; higher headquarters felt it advisable that we have only two firing batteries. It was with great regret that we permitted these men to leave us, since we suspected, and correctly so, that they would be retained by higher headquarters for a considerable period in spite of the fact we were then assured it was an emergency measure made necessary by the breakthrough and the sudden demand upon the replacement centers. Baker Battery existed only on the Morning Report - one officer present, Lt. Reese, and 23 EM on DS.

For the purpose of the reorganization "A" and "C" btrys were made to six gun batteries and Captain Miller of "B" Battery was transferred to "C". It was just about this time also that Captain Hudson, our motor officer, left to go to the 7th Armored Division as Public Relations Officer, a job for which he was obviously suited and in which he produced excellent results, if the releases in the Stars and Stripes can be taken as proof. We can't understand why he didn't do as much for us while he was with us; we certainly should be just as good copy.

Our missions in general support of the 30th Division were initially to our southwest and then shifted to the south and then finally to the southeast. This all indicated the arrival of additional troops around the edges of the German Bulge and as time went on indicated the gradual withdrawal of the German lines before the increasing pressure of the American forces. As our direction of fire changed and the lines moved forward we looked for a displacement, but it was some time before any move was made.

On 15 January the attack to reduce the German salient had gained enough momentum to make a move possible. We accordingly went through Malmedy to the village of Arimont about a mile and a half southeast of the larger town. This village was at time of our entry into it still occupied by the Infantry, but we were able to set up satisfactorily and eventually had the town for our exclusive use. The people in this village apparently were glad that the Germans had been forced out of it, but they were not particularly pleased by Lt. Keefer's gun positions which seemed to be carefully placed outside the kitchen windows of each house. The move into the positions was without incident, although our trip to them required us to go down steep hills which were very badly iced. In the interest of safety we found it necessary



to go back to using our 4 tons as prime movers rather than rely on the tractors which at that time had not been equipped with growlers for icy operations.

In our new position we became attached to the 190th Gp and our missions shifted from the 30th Infantry Division to the 1st Division on our east and later to the support of the 7th Armored Division attacking against St. Vith. Our Service Battery was still miles and miles away with the distance becoming longer each day as the road became worse. The main difficulty at this time was drifting snow and ice rather than mud but the results were the same; it was a full day's trip to Service.

Our problem in this area was particularly one of communications and we came to rely more and more on radio communications, particularly with the 7th Armored Div. approaching St. Vith. For a time Sgt. Reeves with the liaison radio set provided the only link between the advanced elements of the 7th Armored Div. and their supporting artillery. Our work for the 7th Armored was apparently greatly appreciated by both the Division and the 190th Gp with which we were working.

While we were in position in Francorchamps we had considerable difficulty with our howitzers due to the extreme cold weather. The recoil mechanisms began giving us trouble and it was not unusual for us to have two or three guns out of action at a time for repairs to the recoil mechanisms. At the same time the trail spades began splitting the way they had on the Schneider trails at Ethan Allen. Most of the damage was done one morning before we realized that the trail spades were subject to the same difficulty that the Schneiders were.

While in the Francorchamps area we found that the famous baths of Spa were close enough to be used as a shower point. The town of Spa had previously been used

by the First Army for its Headquarters, but at the time of the breakthrough First Army decided that the town was unhealthy and had abandoned for the use of combat troops who might be situated in the area. Many of our men got quite a thrill out of going to the famous health resort, but the general opinion of the well-known mineral baths was that they were too hot and too long to be healthy; something more to be written home about than to be really enjoyed. Rumor has it that Sgt. Mandelson cornered the perfume market in Spa.

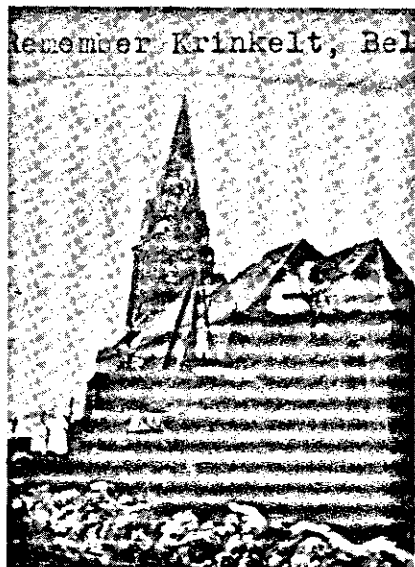
On 27 January the battalion moved from Arimont to one of its former positions just north of Weywertz. Had it not been for the several other units of the 2nd and 99th Div. Arty. which were already in the area, we would have occupied the same gun slots and used our original survey data, if only to make a good story out of the move.

Here we were finally able to bring Service Battery back into the same county with us, finding a spot for them in the town of Xhoffraix (Showfray, we are told by reputable natives) near Malmedy. Even here they were somewhat inaccessible because of the road net and the snow which drifted badly. It was, though, a real relief to feel that they could be reached if necessary. Their position proved quite useful when a thaw revealed that it was an old ordnance dump and that the previous outfit had left in such a hurry there was considerable salvageable material nearby. The ammunition train also discovered some ammunition in the dump below Robertville which the Germans had captured but done nothing about.

In this position we returned to the control of the 187th Gp with the mission of supporting the 2nd Division which was attacking east from Camp Elsenborn. It was rather like a homecoming for us to work with Impede, Imperial, and Inspire with whom we had been associated during the period at Cerisy and through Vire.

We remained at Weywertz only until 2 February, at which time we moved to the village of Rocherath, Belgium, a town which we had previously considered the front line when we were so long in Bullingen. The towns of Krinkelt and Rocherath, which actually are so close together as to be indistinguishable, had been held by the 2nd Division on the day of the German breakthrough, 16 December. We had previously heard reports that the Germans had cut to the south and west of Krinkelt and Bullingen through the 99th Division and had swung into Krinkelt from the rear. Rumor had told us that then the men of the 2nd Division and the tank destroyer units particularly had chased German tanks through the town knocking them out with bazookas and did a creditable job before they were forced to withdraw. An examination of the town clearly indicated that the Germans had taken some terrific losses in the village streets -- there being at least ten tanks, mainly the heavy Tiger tanks, knocked out and considerable other material damaged or destroyed. We also found enough American equipment which had either been abandoned during the attack or had been collected by the Germans during their stay in the village to equip a whole battalion. Certainly our supply sergeants were able to make up any shortages in equipment which they had.

These two villages, so utterly changed since we last saw them in October, were an impressive testimony to the effectiveness of artillery power. There had been no air attacks here -- only some 6000 rounds of artillery fire, mostly fired in one thunderous barrage the morning we moved in because the Germans couldn't seem to comprehend that their lease on Rocherath-Krinkelt had expired. The scrambled, smashed, messy remnants of these towns left a strong imprint of revulsion in our minds and an unspoken gratefulness that most of the artillery was on our side. This initial desolation, plus the sloppiness brought on by a sharp thaw, plus the congestion brought by the arrival of the 99th and 1st Div Arty combined to make this area an unholy



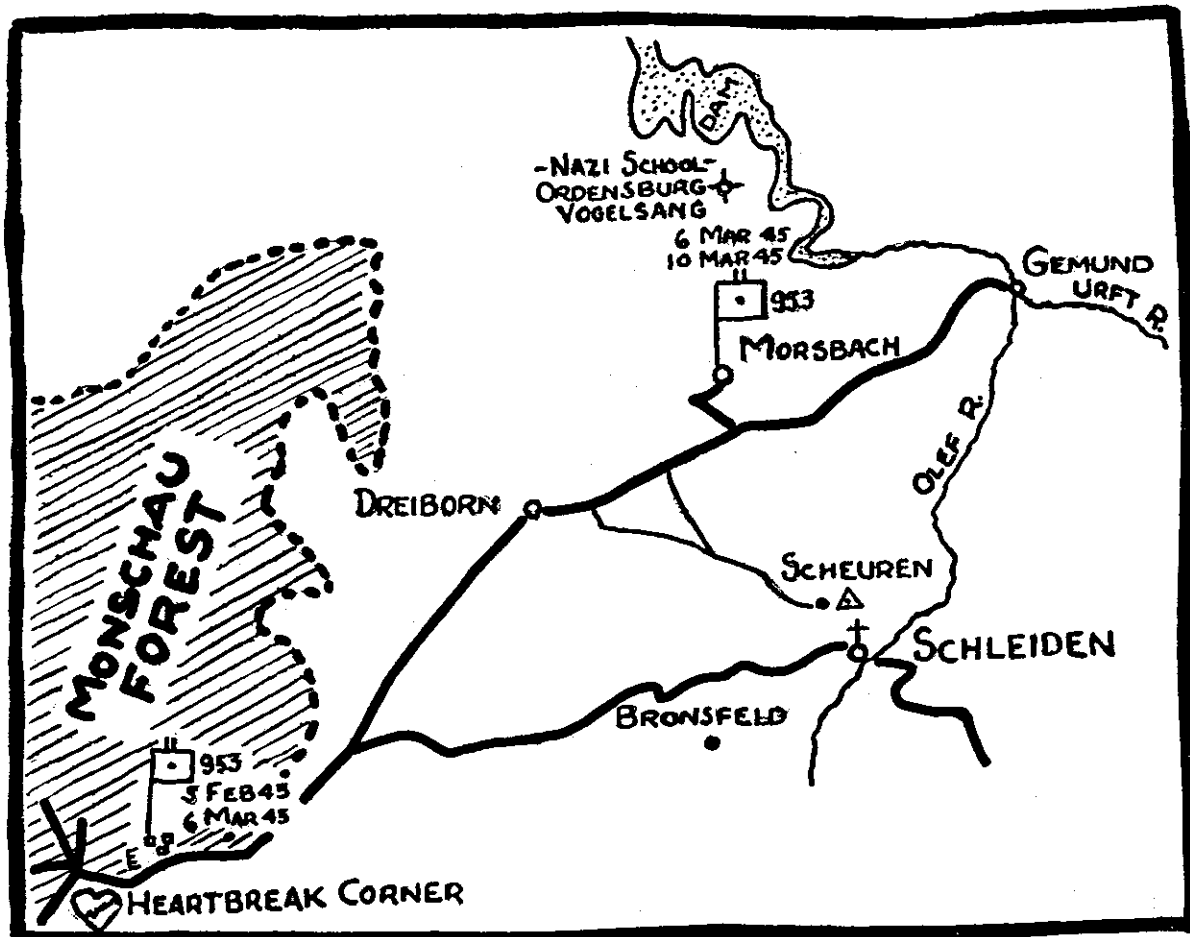
mess, from which we were only too glad to get away.

Get away we did, on 5 February, to an area known as "Heartbreak Corner", which was about 7000 yards north of Rocherath. This road junction had received its name during the attack of the 2nd Division in this sector prior to December 16. The road junction was just beyond the German border, in thick woods on main roads to Bullingen, Monschau, and Schleiden. The Germans had organized extensive pillbox defenses and minefields throughout this area which had proved quite costly during the attack of the 2nd Division. The second time, however, the area had been taken with comparatively little trouble, although the original fighting had destroyed the trees and littered the area considerably. Hq was able to use a super-deluxe pillbox and a series of shelters apparently built by a German horse-drawn artillery unit which must have occupied the area for some time. Able Btry discovered two well camouflaged dugouts and were able to make use of some other shelter nearby. Charlie, on the other hand, after moving twice, was compelled to construct its own shelters for the majority of the battery, although its maintenance section stayed near Hq. All of these positions were off the main road on an interior road net. This was a big help in some ways, but the bottom soon dropped out of the roads and Charlie Btry was almost isolated.

Service Btry had by this time been moved up to the town of Hofen, just southeast of Monschau, where they were again moderately close to us. The supply dumps, however, were still well in the rear, and road conditions had become such that it took hours to go even a few miles. The excellent road from Bullingen to Malmedy had disappeared under at least four feet of mud, with the result that the road was 'off limits'. The road from Monschau to Eupen was also closed to traffic in an effort to permit emergency repairs. The trips to the ammunition dumps were a nightmare to the ammunition train, since they had to be made at night, when there was no traffic, or else were certain to last into the night if they began when there was traffic on the roads.

During our stay in this position the 187th Gp established a rest center on the lake at Robertville, which was in charge of Capt. Lee who had been transferred to the Group from this battalion. From all reports the rest camp was appreciated by our men, but the trip there was a real problem.

Our mission in this area was originally the direct support of the 2nd Division,



firing generally to the east in the direction of Schleiden. We did, however, shift well to the north to fire on the dams south of Schmidt, and also shift to the south to support the attack of the 69th Div in the Hellenthal woods area. Before we left these positions we were relieved of our direct support mission and placed in general support of the sector under the 187th Gp. By this time the 2nd Div had moved to the north in the vicinity of Dreiborn and turned the area before Schleiden over to our old acquaintances, the 28th or "Bloody Bucket" Div.

The work of the firing batteries in this area was largely routine -- just to fire missions under uncomfortable conditions at all hours of the day and night. The work of the OP's was quite another matter. Able and Baker established OP's in the town of Bronsfeld and Charlie had his OP on the eastern edge of Scheuren, both villages being on the hills overlooking the Olef river and looking down on Schleiden. The only trouble with these OP's and the approaches to them was that the hills on the far side of the river, which was held by the Germans, looked down upon the roads and houses throughout the whole area back to our gun positions. It was very much as though the OP's and the roads to them were on a plate which was tipped forward so that the enemy could see every bit of activity in front of them. If our OP's were able to see any activity on the German side, it was certain the Germans could see every bit of activity on our side. The Germans also had a series of pillboxes along the hills near the river, which provided several OP's. These, coupled with the mortars which were hidden in the valley running off the main stream made it possible for the Germans to fire accurately at any activity they chose to attack. Luckily and for some reason which no one could understand the Germans did not fire on most of the activity.

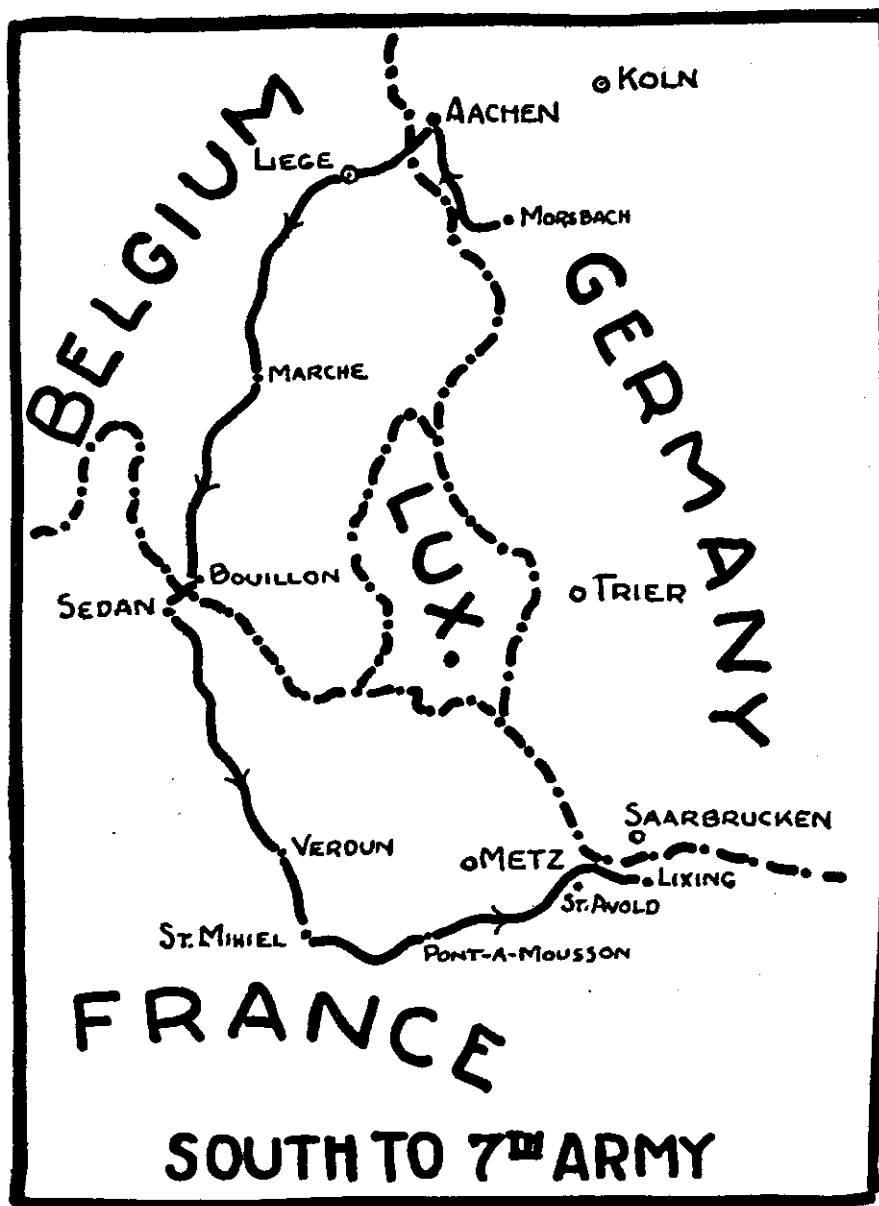
During the operation of these OP's, and particularly during the last part of our stay in the area, we had considerable good shooting and much excitement. The Charlie OP in Scheuren was able to advise the division artillery headquarters that the infantry was undertaking an attack on Schleiden of which the Div Arty S-3 had not been advised. This same OP, when it reported that the enemy in Schleiden had withdrawn, was able to answer the doubt of the division by stating that 152 men had been counted going up the road from Schleiden at intervals during the early morning hours. The Germans apparently took the mortars and self propelled artillery out of the area toward the end and replaced them with batteries of Nebelwerfers, the six-tube rocket gun. These provided considerable excitement for several nights since they fired in the vicinity of Able and Baker OP's and moved rapidly to new locations every 15 or 30 minutes. The game we had to play was to get an intersection on their positions from Charlie and either Able or Baker OP's and then fire our guns into the area before the rocket guns could be moved. We had a lot of fun doing this, but we never felt that we were completely successful, although we did silence them for three or four hours at a time.

By March 6 the enemy had been cleared out from the south of the dams and the west of the Olef River, and the 28th Div had extended north toward Gemund. On that day we moved to Morsbach, where we were instructed to go into position, but the crossing of the river and the outflanking of the dams by the 78th Div and the 2nd Div made it unlikely that we would fire here. Within 24 hours it was quite obvious that the front was crumbling rapidly, and that except for mines and scattered resistance the Germans were not attempting to hold up our advance to the Rhine. Our stay at this position was undramatic in spite of the thrilling news we heard on the radio of Allied advances. We were fairly comfortably set up and had an opportunity to take some care of our material. Some of us were able to see the famous Nazi school at Ordensberg-Vogelsang which was within a mile of Charlie Btry's position. The unit had acquired several peculiar vehicles by this time, one a German command car which Cpl. Altman was experiencing great difficulty in keeping in operation in order to furnish additional relief to the overcrowded FDC truck.

The 1st Army had reached the Rhine on 4 March, and then on 7 March the 9th Armored Div reached and crossed the bridge at Remagen. This sudden development sent us on immediate reconnaissance for an assembly area west of the Rhine, with the expectation that from these positions we would be rushed across the river in exploitation of the bridgehead. Much to our surprise and the surprise of the 187th Gp, we were ordered to another army's sector to assist in the beginning of a new push. The move was to be completely secret, and we painted off the battalion identification from all our vehicles. When we were ordered to take the 'A' off our shoulders we were sure that we were moving out of the First Army's area and rumors were rampant that we were 7th Army bound. Early on the morning of the 10th we started out, knowing only that we were to be in Verdun, France, that night where further orders would await us. Our advance parties took a different route from the main body in an effort to get the full dope for us sooner. The column itself headed out from Morsbach toward Aachen, and we went through the area into which we had fired during the breakthrough days of December. Our route passed through such towns as Kesternich, Simmerath, and Konzen, which towns had borne the brunt of the fighting of the north shoulder of the Von Rundstedt counter-offensive. The much destroyed Aachen was inspected for the first time by the battalion -- some units taking one route through the town and others another (unintentionally). Then onto Liege, Boullion, Sedan, and finally Verdun, where we arrived a three-gun battalion. Some of the tractors had run out of gas, more had had bogie trouble, and some had done both. Suffice it to say that we were not the ABCHqSv unit that had left Morsbach some 14 hours before.

The German command car piloted by Cpl. Altman mentioned before negotiated the

steep hills on the first leg of the journey with the greatest of ease, in spite of being loaded to the gunwales with the overflow of FDC and Cp equipment and personnel, and entertained high hopes of making the trip comfortably in a vehicle with springs! However, before reaching Aachen trouble developed and we proceeded through that town in a series of jumps and halts, accompanied by a terrific barrage of backfiring. Shortly thereafter the vehicle expired by the side of the road, and it was necessary to flag down a Service vehicle and transfer the load in order to continue the journey. Capt. Brown, a foresighted soul, had purposely kept the load on this Service truck light in anticipation of just such a calamity.



The Transportation Corps took us in tow in Verdun, passed us up and provided a handy field for the night bivouac which proved to be adjacent to the cemetery where World War I casualties were buried. There was to be no sleep for Capt. Bylica, Mr. Schmidt, and many other members of Service Btry that night, though, for they were to spend the night corralling new bogies, a new engine for one tractor, track etc. By morning ten guns were in our field and ready to roll, so we took off at 0700 for St. Avold. Our march of 11 March took us through territory famous from World War I, and among other landmarks we saw the enormous and lovely St. Michel cemetery. Just

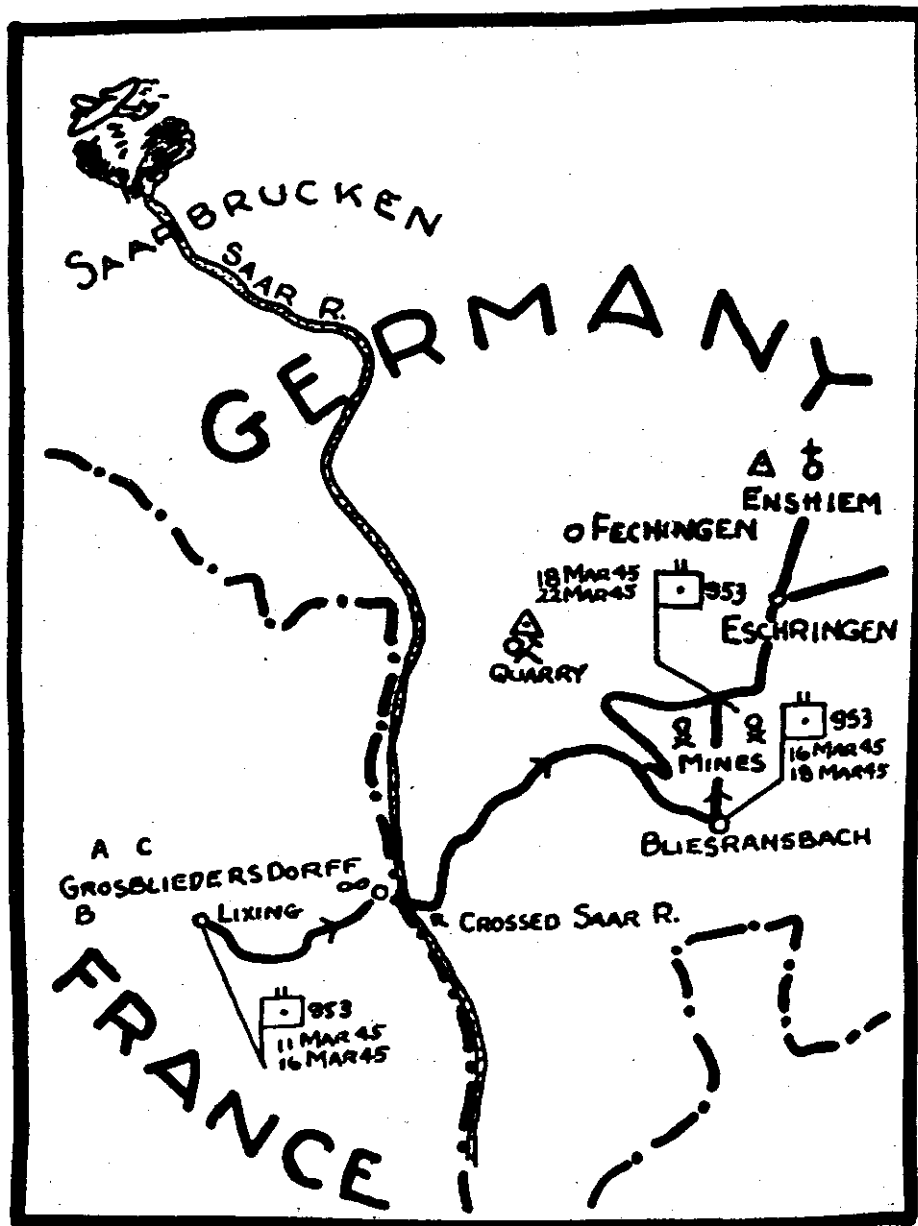
short of St. Avold we were met by Capt. Jones, who told us that gun positions had been reconnoitered for us in the vicinity of Lixing, but that they could not be occupied during daylight hours because of enemy observation. Accordingly we pulled into a field to wait for the coming of darkness. The night came darker than we wanted, and had it not been for the artificial moonlight provided by 7th Army search lights playing on the clouds, we might have had serious trouble getting into position. As it was, everyone got in all right, though Able Btry had to do a bit of turning about.

The new positions were to be just east of the Saar River and about 6000 yards south of Saarbrucken. The command post was set up in the town of Lixing, which was occupied by other troops and many civilians. These civilians were supposedly French, but they spoke German and we did not feel that they were particularly friendly to us. The entry into the positions was made at night, and in spite of the artificial moonlight resulted in some difficulty since there was considerable traffic on the road, and the roads were very poorly marked. Service Btry established an information booth at Diebling and directed the numerous stragling vehicles on to the position area, with the result that by morning the battalion was in position ready to fire.

Observation posts were established on both sides of the valley of the Saar, with the mission of observing the outskirts of Saarbrucken. These OP's demonstrated graphically to us that we were in a new area with a new army where the war was being fought differently. Lt. Hochman discovered that as long as he occupied the same OP that the preceding unit had used he could observe unmolested, but that if he advanced even so much as 100 yards he would immediately be brought under mortar fire. It was obvious that the Germans were not interested in a fight in this area, but rather hoped to keep the front quiet. The American troops seemed to be in agreement with this since sun baths and baseball games in the gun positions were the order of the day for units which had been there for any length of time. There was no question in our minds but that the Germans could and did observe most of the movement behind our lines. It made us appear rather like rookies to attempt to conceal our movement while all the older units ignored the threat of German fire. Actually, the front was dangerous, and the enemy did have mortars and artillery. These, however, only became active in the event of patrol activity or signs of offensive action on our part. Since our policy was initially a silent one, we experienced no difficulty although it did annoy us to see so many targets in enemy territory at which we were not permitted to shoot.

The day following our arrival the battalion was instructed to operate with three firing batteries. Accordingly, the Baker Btry gun sections and kitchen were reformed and Capt. Rogers given command of the battery -- which was at this time avowedly a temporary and makeshift one, causing some handy individuals to have double or triple jobs. Cpl. DeMeo, for example, was radio operator, jeep driver, 1/4 of the wire crew, and agent in this rebirth. We considered ourselves very fortunate to be ordered to reform our third battery; and we hoped that it would be sufficient excuse for us to continue it in operation when we returned to V Corps.

It was not until one o'clock on the morning of 14 March that we began to fire in any volume. This firing was in connection with the attack by the 7th Army in the Saar, one of the first objectives being the taking of Saarbrucken and breaching the Siegfried Line in this area. The initial phase of the attack succeeded quite well with the result that the enemy withdrew beyond the Saar river to the west of Saarbrucken without offering opposition. Our mission then shifted to the support of the troops attacking the Siegfried Line to the East of Saarbrucken.



On 15 March the battalion was directed to move east of the Saar River to positions in the vicinity of Bliesransbach, a move of only about five miles, but our direction of fire became almost due north and our activity increased. Our missions were in a large part smoke and preparation fires in connection with the attack on the Siegfried Line which appeared to be progressing quite well. The initial defenses were overrun and we had high hopes that the infantry would be able to push on through the area. However, the secondary defenses began to offer considerable resistance, and on March 19 we were displaced forward to Eschringen, a move of only about 3000 yards. This apparently was in hopes of reinforcing the fires of the 63rd Div which was massed in that area in expectation of a breakthrough. The turning of the Siegfried defenses in this area by the Third Army's attack from the west made the defenses untenable, and it was felt quite possible that a sudden break might occur

Our first positions across the Saar River were on the reverse slope of a hill north of Bliesransbach. This area had been assigned to us by "higher headquarters" which had evidently never looked at the ground either actually or on the map before

giving it to us. In order to comply with instructions it was necessary for us to put the three batteries almost on the crest of a hill on opposite sides of the division's main supply route and within 400 yards of each other. The fact that the slope of the hill was obviously mined and that our reconnaissance was made at dark and our occupation at night did not improve matters. We were able to occupy the positions without any accident, although A Btry had many anxious moments before it was finally in. C Btry was rerouted over the hill to the vicinity of the village of Eschringen, where it was able to have good defilade and at least 200 yards between it and the next unit. The following day A and B Batteries were displaced further forward and occupied positions on the reverse slope of the hill in front of Eschringen. This position would have been acceptable had it not been for the many other units in and about the village and the main supply route which went through the village.

We realized how undesirable this area was when the German artillery, apparently using up its ammunition prior to a withdrawal, fired large concentrations into the towns. In the middle of the afternoon of the 20th a heavy concentration scored two hits on a powder pit in the Charlie ammunition dump. Powder canisters were thrown about, powder was ignited, and the resulting fire caused other canisters to be blown about the area, some while burning. These other canisters landed on other pits of shells, powder and fuses. Sgt. Holmberg, Cpl. Amato, and Pfc. Johnson received Bronze Stars for their heroic action in getting this fire under control and preventing a serious disaster.

Our OP's after the unit crossed the Saar River were both interesting and exciting. Able Btry maintained its post at the edge of a huge quarry on top of a hill overlooking the eastern end of Saarbrucken. This point remained advantageous for some time after the initial attack, since the plan was to circle Saarbrucken from the east and not to assault it directly across the river. As the lines moved out Charlie OP was taken from the chateau in the Saar River valley over to the area just west of Ensheim. The OP was originally very far forward, but that was necessary to permit precision adjustments to be made on certain pillboxes from which the infantry anticipated considerable opposition. As the attack progressed and the division artillery units moved into the vicinity of Ensheim this OP remained effective and continued in operation until the defenses broke.

It was at this particular OP -- which, because of incessant mortar fire, was probably the "hottest" of the many OP's occupied by Victoria -- that the two highest decorations awarded to members of this battalion were won. The Silver Star was awarded to Pfc. Bruszewski and Pvt. Iacono for their heroism and gallantry in rescuing, under very heavy fire, two wounded infantrymen from the foxhole in which they had been wounded.

The attack of the 63rd Div was going slowly but apparently successfully through the defenses of the Siegfried Line when all of a sudden the front collapsed, as indicated by reports from our OP's to the effect that the former occupants of the various pillboxes were emerging carrying white flags and sitting down in front of the pillboxes waiting their turn to surrender to the advancing troops. The collapse was probably due to the withdrawal of troops either to meet or escape the thrust of Third Army. In all events, the infantry divisions were suddenly able to advance at will and without artillery support, and we were relieved of our direct support mission.

On March 22 the battalion moved toward Bitche, France, where a push had started some days before. Evidently here, too, the Germans had withdrawn, for by the time we reached our area a few thousand yards north of the town, the enemy was out of

range and we went into bivouac. For the next few days we made many reconnaissances for positions to the north in the direction of Pirmasens and Kaiserslautern and to the northeast through the Hartz mountains, and on the Rhine plain in the vicinity of Neustadt. Then, on the 27th of March, we received word that we were relieved of our attachment to the XXI Corps and the 36th FA Gp and instructed to await further orders from 7th Army. This change was obviously necessary because of the collapse of all German resistance this side of the Rhine and the successful crossing of the Rhine by a corps other than the XXI.

While we were in the Bitche area we had an opportunity to examine the many defenses which existed there. Those in our immediate area were of the French Maginot Line and certainly lived up to all our expectations, with a network of tunnels and elevators leading to turrets concealed in the top of the hills in preparation to defend the area from an attack from the north. Our men had an opportunity to ride on the underground trolley cars which had been featured in all the pictures of the Maginot Line.

Beginning on the 26th of March there was a steady stream of traffic of all sorts past our bivouac area, with particular emphasis on heavy bridging materials. It was obvious that the 7th Army had succeeded in making a crossing of the Rhine in its area and was planning to exploit it to the fullest.

On the 28th of March we received the good news that we were to return to the First Army area. Our pleasure was somewhat dampened, however, when we were given a route which was practically identical to the route we had used coming down to the Saar, although in the meantime the Saar-Mosel pocket had been completely cleaned out. The reason given for this long roundabout route instead of the comparatively short route was not the safety of it, but merely that the Third Army refused to permit any units to cross in its area.

Reference should be made to the trip of the air section both down to and back from the Saar, flying as they did from one headquarters to another until they were able to reach one with information as to Victoria's location. The trip down to the Saar was particularly difficult because of the abominable flying conditions at the start of the trip. Pilots from two other units from V Corps who started out with our pilots decided against continuing the flight, even though they also knew that their presence would be of considerable assistance in the new area. The return trip was not as difficult from a flying point of view but did require some resourcefulness on their part in quickly reaching the unit in its new area.

Phase 4 The Battle Of Central Europe

The Big Picture---While the Canadian First and the American Armies were busy cleaning the Rhine's east bank, the British opposite Wesel were building up for the grand all out across the Rhine. In the Remagen bridgehead, the First Army had three corps ready to jump off. The Third Army was poised along the Rhine from Coblenz to Mainz. The Seventh was sitting along the Rhine from Mannheim to Karlsruhe. The French First Army on the extreme right had been sitting along the Rhine for months.

The aim of Phase Four was principally the envelopment of the Ruhr, the last remaining industrial area in Germany. Also in this area was about a half million German fighting troops, the only organized fighting force remaining, as was later shown. The British and American Ninth were to cross the Rhine north of the Ruhr and drive toward Munster and Paderborn. The American First already across was to wait until the Third Army had effected a crossing and was then to attack from their bridgehead eastward toward Giessen, at which point they would send a spearhead toward Paderborn for a linkup with the Ninth. These complicated movements can be better illustrated on the map.

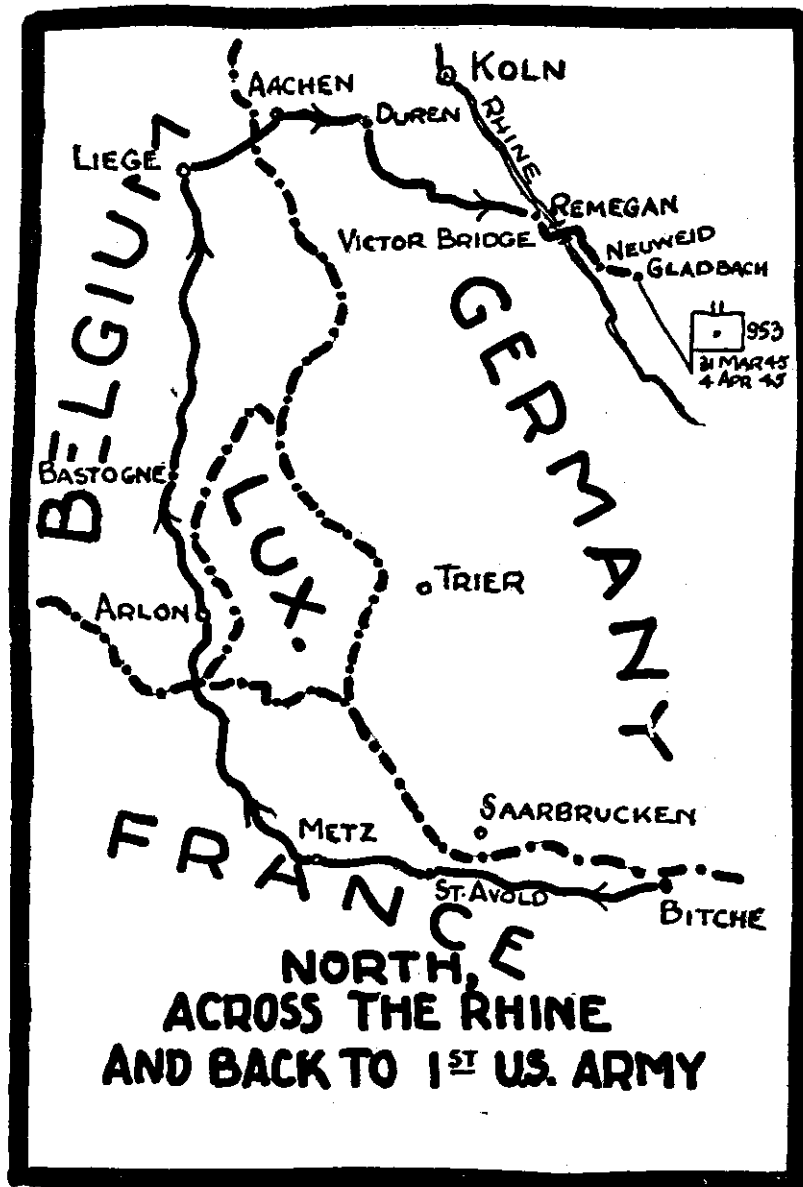
On 23 March without air or artillery support the Third Army crossed the Rhine near Oppenheim. The time and place were well chosen. Most of the German troops were either well to the north opposite the British who were threatening to cross any day; or opposite the First Army's bridgehead at Remagen. The crossing was made without much difficulty and twenty-four hours later Patton's troops were eighteen miles from the river. Then Hodges broke out of his bridgehead headed for Giessen. Meanwhile as soon as the First Army broke out, the British, after a terrific artillery and air preparation, crossed the Rhine and headed for Munster. The Ninth followed in order heading toward Paderborn. The First quickly reached Giessen, and then sent a column racing straight north toward Paderborn, where a juncture was made, cutting off the entire Ruhr Valley and pocketing 400,000 Germans. The Ninth and part of the First remained to clean out the pocket, and the remainder headed east toward the Elbe River. The German Armies were routed and beaten. They surrendered by the thousands without a fight, in some places, but in others they fought like fanatics. On the whole however, the war in the ETO ended with the closing of the Ruhr Pocket. The advances across Southern Germany by the Third and Seventh American Armies, and the advance through Czechoslovakia by the Russians gave the Germans no time to prepare their reported redoubt in the Bavarian Alps. Little fighting was encountered in this area as our forces reached Munich and pushed on to Linz.

Contact was finally made with our Russian allies near Leipzig along the Oder River. Other contacts were quickly formed, and on 7 May, at Rheims, France, the first unconditional surrender of the German Armed Forces was signed.

VICTORIA: Once Over Lightly---On its return to the First Army area and V Corps sector, the 953rd FA Bn was attached to the 187th FA Gp until 4 April when the unit passed to the 406th FA Gp in the vicinity of Warburg. The battalion continued with the 406th Group, without firing, until 15 April, when it was attached to the 69th Infantry Division with the mission of direct support of the 862nd FA Bn., engaged in the attack on Leipzig. On 19 April the 953rd was attached to the 187th FA Group for the purpose of aiding in the police of the city of Leipzig. This assignment continued until 30th April.

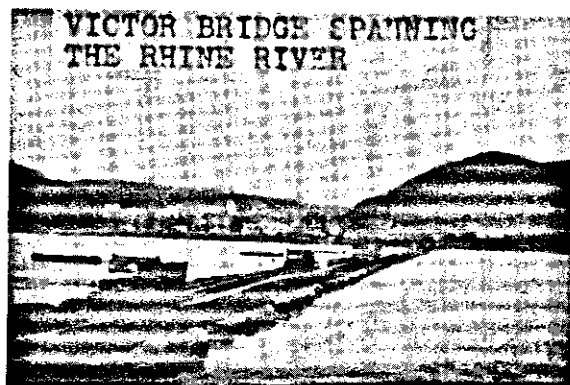
On 30 April the 953rd FA Bn, temporarily under control of the 190th FA Group, moved south toward the border of Czechoslovakia. On 2 May the battalion was attached to the 2nd Infantry Division in support of the divisions attack to Pilsen from

the southwest. With the battalion in direct support of the 23rd Infantry Regiment of the 2nd Division the unit advanced to Pilsen airport, arriving there on 7 May. We were here when news of the cessation of hostilities was received.



VICTORIA: A Long Look---At 1130 on 29 March the battalion cleared Bitche heading North, but by one of the most circuitous routes ever devised by man. Instead of taking the short and direct route up the Moselle Valley and following the Rhine to our destination, we were routed through Metz, Etain, Longuyon and Arlon well to the West. We made Arlon without incident, refueling and bunking down for the night in an unoccupied convent. The morning of the 30th had us travelling through battle-scarred areas. At Bastogne there was many a crashed glider, burned-out tanks and tank destroyers of both American and German origin. At Liege we neatly and inadvertently changed our order of march when Baker Btry decided to sight-see through the center of town and found itself just in back of the wrecker on the far side. We continued to Aachen and Eupen on our way to the front. At Duren we stopped for some time to refuel and then pushed on through Euskirchen to Remagen where we turned off the road into bivouac still on the west side of the Rhine. Our stay here was short, however, because at two o'clock in the morning Capt. Wyeth and Lt. Kocher returned from Vex Rear with orders that the Rhine was to be crossed by us during the night.

With only two brief hours of sleep for our drivers we hit the road for a memorable ride. Victoria crossed the Rhine at 0330 in bright moonlight on a pontoon bridge called "Victor" bridge, and, according to the signs, one which was the "longest, strongest, first and best" bridge in the area. This bridge was to the southeast of Remagen. Once across the river we turned southeast to Neuweid which was about ten miles northwest of Coblenz. At Neuweid we left the Rhine and went inland about four miles to the little village of Gladbach where we found an adequate bivouac and some buildings awaiting us.



The trip back to our old home with V Corps Artillery was memorable for many reasons. Probably the most unforgettable part was the long drive of the second day coupled with Vex's insistence that we get up in the middle of the night and continue across the river. This perhaps would not have seemed so important to us had we not remained inactive in Gladbach for some days. On our trip through Belgium we also noticed with considerable pleasure the increased appreciation of American troops by the Belgians who had just recently been subjected to or threatened with the German army during the Battle of the Bulge. Perhaps this time the Belgians knew the Americans had come to stay and that the Germans were finished. Most of us were also very much gratified to see the damage which had been done to the German cities particularly Duren, Julich, and Euskirchen. It made us feel that perhaps the damage caused by the Germans in France and in Belgium was to be in part repaid. We understand that Sgt. Reeves and Pfc. Bruszewski could not be bothered with bridges in crossing the Rhine, but discovered their own private ferry in the vicinity of Coblenz. The idea was an excellent one, except that the crew turned out to be drunk and ran the boat aground in a marsh from which a tractor had to pull their command car out. Their report on the city of Coblenz through which they passed made us realize that the Air Force had done a remarkably good job of destroying the large cities.

In the village of Gladbach we were back with the 187th Gp and our old friends the 187th and 941st FA Bns. We were at first threatened with more trucking details, but managed to escape this except when the 187th and 941st Bns were sent out of the area while their trucks were hauling supplies. In Gladbach we were able to do some maintenance on our vehicles, see some movies, watch the 187th Gp administer the village, and attempted to get used to the presence of German civilians. It was Capt. Betts belief that the German civilians, particularly the attractive young female ones, knew that we were not supposed to fraternize and did everything in their power to make us unhappy about it. Actually the civilians in the village did not bother us much, did not appear to resent our presence and at times seemed glad that the war was over as far as they were concerned.

We discovered a factory in the town of Neuweid where there were excellent showers which we were able to use. It was here that we met our first displaced persons who were the slave labor who had formerly operated the plant. We had no

difficulty with them, but we could easily understand why the Germans were so worried about them since the slave workers were admittedly on their first holiday in some years and were certainly making the most of it.



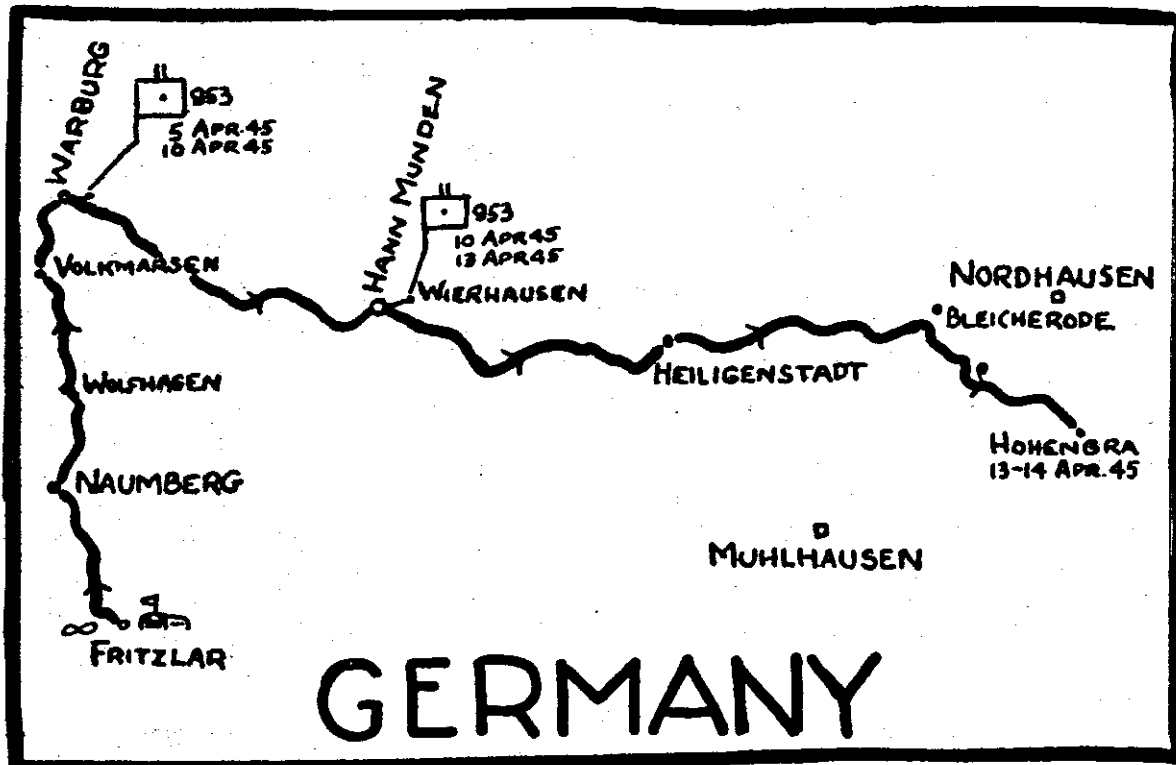
On the 4th of April the battalion started for Fritzlar. The route had been announced earlier, an advance reconnaissance party had gone out and the 187th Gp was to precede us. Even so this trip was probably one of the most individualistic marches that the unit had ever made. The prescribed route was apparently designed to miss every bit of good road that could be discovered throughout the whole distance, although it was obviously planned to permit us to see the good road from time to time. In addition the road was designed to cross and re-cross every other unit's main supply routes as many times as possible with five points extra being given for every time we were compelled to turn off a good main supply route onto a secondary mud road.

Service Btry luckily missed the first turn on leaving the area and thereafter with imagination and a fine disregard for the rules of the game picked its own route to the new area, arriving there approximately three hours before any of the other batteries without having encountered any traffic or any bad roads throughout the entire distance. A second battery kept in the column most of the way but after travelling secondary roads for five miles within sight of a lightly travelled Autobahn which was going practically the same place moved to the Autobahn and had a comparatively easy time. It is claimed but not believed that the Btry Commander made a wrong turn by mistake and accidentally found himself on the Autobahn. The rest of the Battalion followed bad roads and into blind alleys. We were, however, unable to keep up when the leaders finally discovered a road through which only light vehicles could pass and which required everyone of our heavy vehicles to be winched through for a space of at least 200 yards. All in all the trip was a magnificent fiasco that appeared to us inexcusable. We still think we were right.

Just south of Fritzlar our advance parties had selected a bivouac area on a large airport where garages and barracks made what would have been an ideal arrangement for a long stay. Since we anticipated the possibility of being used for the hauling of supplies in support of the rapid advance, our officers were anxious to be as well set up as possible. From all accounts the staff in the home of the Major General in charge of the airport did quite well by themselves. The 187th Gp and the 941st Bn were also on the airport but in different sections of it, with the 941st being given the job of defending, patrolling and safeguarding the airport and its equipment.

During the early morning hours of 5 April we were detached from the 187th FA Gp and attached to the 408th Gp, then in the vicinity of Warburg. Early in the morning we began our move north, luckily being permitted to pick our own route and this time we did a better job. Our new position area was to be just south and east of Warburg, where for a time we were said to be the American troops nearest Berlin. Our direction of fire then being northeast we had hopes that we were to be part of the spearhead charged with the capture of the German capital.

By the time the batteries arrived in the position areas it was apparent that the Germans had passed out of range already and accordingly the batteries went into an assembly position rather than firing positions. Able and Baker batteries were in the town of Herlinghausen and Charlie and Hq were in Dalheim. Service Btry by Gp order was a considerable distance away, in Welda. The positions for the most part were quite passable in spite of the German civilians and the factory of refugees located on the outskirts of Warburg. We decided that since we might be here for some time we should get training in the operation of Military Government and accordingly contacted the burgemoisters of the villages, enforced curfews, checked passes, etc. Our men found this was quite novel and interesting although they did regret not being able to get into the fight.



It was in this position we lost three officers who had been with us since our days in Therverton and Silverton. These were Lt. Abright, our air observer, Lt.

Handaly, who had done an excellent job as Asst. Reconnaissance Officer in Baker Btry, and Lt. Heath, who is well-known by all of the men in the battalion, having served in each battery in turn. They were assigned to the 9th Armored Division which was spearheading the drive of V Corps in this area and which had suffered heavy casualties among its forward and air observers.

The Battalion's next move on 10 April took us to Wiershausen, a little town just northeast of Hann-Munden which in turn was northeast of Kassell. The latter was by-passed by going cross-country to the north, which was unfortunate since the ruins of Kassell were said to be quite impressive. The air section reported that it was very badly damaged even when judged by St Lo or Coblenz standards. The 941st Bn had moved from the Fritzlar airport to Military Government of this town and again we saw no reason to envy them.

Wiershausen was the first of our bivouacs in the so-called "manure towns". Up to this time most of the villages had been built around industry, but now we were approaching a purely agricultural area and we were to suffer accordingly. The town was poor, it was dirty, it was smelly, and the people were unpleasant. All in all we would have been much more comfortable in the woods. One of the particularly objectionable features of the town was the fact that the civilians resented our using their firewood, their radios and their furniture. After a few discussions we compromised and they let us use them.

The fields and woods in the vicinity of Hann-Munden and Wiershausen indicated that the Germans had attempted a stand on the east of the Weser river in this area. There were many vehicles knocked out or abandoned by the Germans and prisoners were still being taken in the woods. The reports had it that a German boys' military school or officers training school had been in the area and had attempted to hold up the American advance. Certainly the prisoners which we saw were apparently intelligent and alert boys rather than trained soldiers.

On 11 April we were required to send out almost all of our trucks for another trucking detail. This time they were to be operated by some of our officers but under control of an engineer outfit which was to set up in Hellmenstadt, almost due east and on the road to Leipzig. We also furnished at this time our 193 radio set which was to operate as a relay station for the control of the trucking details. This trucking organization appeared to be quite efficiently handled, operating a steady service along the main supply route and shuttling supplies from one point to another. The advance detachments established bases for their operation along the main supply route which led thru its bases for maintenance, meals and rest. From all accounts, however, rest was noticeable by its absence during the first few days.

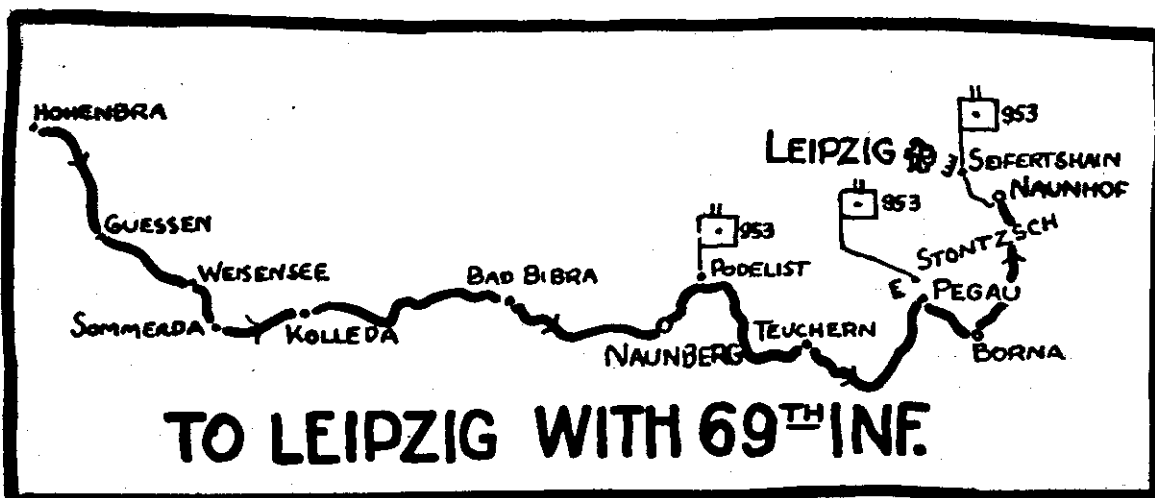
On 13 April we moved again to an assembly area in the vicinity of Hohenbra which was a small farm town south of Sondershausen and in turn south of Nordhausen where the batteries were quartered in factories except for Hq which again found itself a railroad station, this time reportedly complete with an excellent cellar. Because of the absence of our trucks on the special detail it was necessary for us to shuttle the ammunition and equipment using any and all sorts of transportation. We had some help in our shuttling from Mr. Schade's "V-99" which had been "borrowed" from the Post Office Department at Warburg, a German armored half-track which we had found in Wiershausen, plus a German truck which came from no one knew where. Eventually all of our equipment was assembled in Hohenbra and the surplus was turned over to Service Btry so that a rear echelon could be established in the event of another move. This rear echelon was also to be the home station for our trucks which were on the trucking detail.

The battalion had some interesting but informal shooting in the area, Baker Btry bagging one scared German Volksturner who attempted to escape when halted and Hq Btry failing to get two deer which popped up in the middle of a patrol looking for snipers. (who was he?) one of our route markers near Hohenbra picked up almost a dozen prisoners who proved quite a nuisance when he was trying to direct traffic into our area. It was in this position that every EM apparently became the owner of a Nazi flag, a German generator and a German sword. Most of these items came from a German supply dump in the vicinity of Ebeleben to our south-west. These little personal treasures made many of our men quite happy until they discovered what the members of higher headquarters were picking up for themselves in the larger towns to which they always seemed to be forced in order to find adequate quarters.

The battalion remained at Hohenbra only overnight and then hit the road to the east on 14 April, this time for an assembly area in the vicinity of the village of Podelist which was north of Naumberg. This entire sector had just been taken from the enemy and there was considerable speculation on the possibility of meeting enemy troops in the course of our move. As a matter of fact the route taken by the battalion was the scene some nights later of an ambush of one of the trucks on the trucking detail, although luckily none of our trucks were bothered.

We were still attached to the 406 Group, which moved the next day to the village of Freyburg to our west. We were soon relieved of this attachment, however, and told that we would be attached to the 69th Division. The 69th Division Arty immediately gave us the mission of supporting the 862nd FA Bn for the attack of the Division south of Leipzig. Since we understood that the Division had been meeting considerable resistance from certain well-defended anti-aircraft positions around Leipzig, we moved forward with the possibility of some more fighting which after our trip across Germany would certainly be appreciated.

On the 15th we moved to the village of Runthal, about ten miles East of Naumberg and the Hq of the 862nd FA Bn. Our batterys went into firing positions but it was obvious that there was nothing within range at this time. We were able to find places for three batterys in the same village and began to shuttle our equipment up from the previous Rear Echelon at Hohenbra.



It was this last move through Naumberg which took us by the huge prisoner of war enclosure and along the roads on which long columns of German prisoners were being marched. This was the first time that we had seen relatively large groups of German prisoners, and we were quite impressed by the sight. Most of us were some-

what disappointed at the neat and orderly appearance of most of the columns of troops. After the few prisoners we had seen in the past taken during actual combat, these appeared too well-fed and too well-cared for. The explanation was of course that the prisoners had decided to abandon the war and were not actually forced to surrender.

On 16 April the battalion moved late at night to the village of Stontzch just outside the larger town of Pegau, which in turn was approximately ten miles southwest of Leipzig. The area here was very flat and offered no defilade from the possible fire of high-velocity anti-aircraft guns in the vicinity of Leipzig of which we had recently received considerable warning. The reconnaissance was made at dusk for the positions and in order to provide some concealment and defilade, it was felt necessary to make use of the buildings in the town. For this reason each one of the batteries was placed in back of the town with the guns as close as possible to the rear of the buildings in hopes that any flat trajectory weapons would hit the buildings rather than continue beyond into the gun positions. This was of course our excuse, but actually most of us rather enjoyed the effect produced on the German population by our guns in their backyards. It was bad enough when we went into position, but when we began to fire the tiles began to come from the roofs, and we knew that this village at least was going to remember the war and was going to have some appreciation of the discomforts which war causes.

The battalion did not fire very much from this position, but we understand that the first round through the tubes caused a lot of money to change hands in the battalion. Our air section set down just in back of the town and from this airport was able to give considerable assistance in the adjustment of fire and furnish reports on the progress of the 69th Division. The information we had received of the anti-aircraft positions around the town were certainly accurate, as an examination of the positions themselves disclosed as many as 60 ack-ack guns in one small concentration all of them being capable of ground fire as well as high-angle fire.

The village of Stontzch lived up to its name and there were no regrets that we received instructions to move further east beyond Leipzig in order to support the attack of the 69th Division which was to be aimed at Leipzig from the southeast. The area assigned to us had not yet been occupied by American troops at the time the battalion hit the road. As a matter of fact the town in which we found our positions was actually liberated by our reconnaissance units, and even that was done after the main body of the battalion had started. We made good use of the air section in coordinating this move, using Lt. Huff as a messenger to re-route the battalion on forward as more advanced assembly areas were secured and found safe to occupy. This move was probably our most disjointed as far as having the various elements of the battalion split in small groups over a long distance. By this time such things had become common to us and no one registered surprise at a messenger changing the route or giving additional instructions on the spur of the moment.

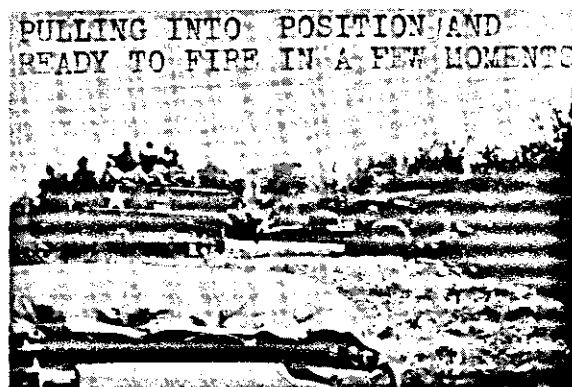
Our new positions were in the village of Seifertshain which was approximately 8,000 yards from the center of Leipzig in a southeasterly direction. At the time we occupied this village we had no knowledge of any troops in front of us or on our left flank, although our right flank and our rear were apparently secure. We accordingly set up again close to the buildings with our positions organized for close-in defense, particular attention being given to the placing of the .50 cal. multiple mounts of the ack-ack attached to us. The town was undoubtedly filled with ardent Nazis and many a German soldier, but we had no opportunity to search the area and could only take prisoners who turned themselves in. A major exception to this rule was the Sgt. Major who had to surrender when Hq wanted to use his room for the switchboard. It is reported that he had no Luger to turn in.

It was on 18 April that we reached this new position and we almost immediately began firing in support of the 69th Division's attack on the southeastern edges of Leipzig. Initially we did not fire into the city proper, but on targets reported by the infantry or by our observers who were attached to the infantry. Later our fire was shifted into the city in hopes of encouraging the surrender without a battle. On the 19th the attack continued, resistance having been met in the vicinity of the huge monument to the Battle of Nations or Battle of Leipzig in which Napoleon had been defeated by the Allied armies. This massive and incredibly ugly monument provided an excellent OP for the enemy which dominated all of the surrounding terrain. The park adjacent to the monument had been prepared for defense and furnished excellent machine gun and mortar positions. As protection against our artillery the defenders of the monument could rely on bomb shelters and a system of trenches running out from the monument. All in this was a well placed defensive area could be held by a small unit and placed a serious obstacle in to the passage of our troops.

By this time the 2nd Division's attack from the west had penetrated the city's defenses and had reached the river running through the town. Other troops coming from the east had by passed the Battle of Nations monument and had linked up with the 2nd Division leaving only the southwestern corner of the city untaken.

It was at this point that the battalion began its next, and for many of us, its busiest and most interesting phase of the fighting in Europe. This was its operation as police in the city of Leipzig.

Actually the firing batterys remained in position firing into the park at the Battle of Nations monument for some time after other members of the battalion had entered the city and taken up their new duties. The idea of our observers in the southeastern edge of the town directing our artillery into the town proper to disorganize the resistance seemed incompatible with the mission of other members of the battalion in the center sector of the town attempting to restore order and protect both lives and property. It was not until the middle of the afternoon that we were relieved from our fire missions and permitted to move our firing batterys into the town and take up what was to be a most unusual mission.



As far back as Podelist on 14 April we had had rumors that we might perhaps be used for a police force in one of the large cities, it being contemplated at that time that Corps Arty could be made available for this purpose. The lack of further information made us doubtful and when we were attached to the 69th Division we felt that the matter was a thing of the past. On April 17 at Stontzch we received another warning that we might perhaps be used for police work in Leipzig, but even though the officer had a map of the city of Leipzig showing boundaries of the different units and already had his helmet painted with the red band and letters "LP", we did not feel that we were to be withdrawn from combat. We believed that other

units not actively engaged in the fighting would more likely be called on. On arriving in Siefertshain, however, it was obvious that the presence of the 953rd in Leipzig was expected and we began to paint helmets of those men who would not be required to expose themselves in combat with the red bands that were prescribed.

At about ten o'clock on 19 April we received orders to move into Leipzig from the east, reporting to the railroad station for further instructions.

In view of the fact that our battalion was still attached to the 69th Division and still actively engaged in supporting that unit's attack on the southeastern edge of the city, we moved only a portion of our battalion into town, leaving FDC and the gun sections still operating with the 69th Div. At the railroad station we found several other units drawn up in close column awaiting instructions which apparently had not been distributed to anyone prior to their entry into the city. The administration of the city was turned over to Military Government detachments, but the police of the city and the control of its vital functions had been delegated to Col. Jim Dan Hill of the 190th Gp who was to act as a temporary mayor of the city. Under Col. Hill, whose 190th Gp was in general charge, came the 406th Gp with Col. Axelson in charge of public utilities and food supplies and the 187th Gp with Col. Green in command charged with the police of the city, the running of the jails, re-establishment of the local police force and the enforcement of law and order generally. The 187th Gp initially had the 953rd FA Bn, the 200th FA Bn, the 462nd AAA Bn and the 196th FA Bn which had been operating on Military Government assignments for some time.

Victoria, generally speaking, had the center of the city, its western boundary being the river and canal through the town, its north and south boundaries the city limits and its northeastern boundary running generally east and northwest from the main railroad station. Actually a portion of this was in the 462nd AAA Bn's zone, but since Baker Btry was attached to the Ack-Ack and was given the area near the railroad station, we could consider that Victoria itself had the section east of the railroad station. We had some assistance in our area from a detachment of the 196th FA Bn and six multiple-mount ack-ack guns from the 462nd AAA Bn. The area however was much larger than we could possibly have been expected to police and protect.

Until the arrival of the battalion in Leipzig no indication had been given us of our mission, or even the general plan for the running of the city. After we had been advised that we were to act as part of the police force in a certain area, we had to discover what the police force was expected to do. It was several days before we actually discovered all of the items which might have been considered part of our job that first afternoon. Many of the duties which the mimeographed directive indicated as essential and all-important were not done initially. Some of them would have required such an expenditure of personnel that we do not believe anybody ever considered how these duties were to be performed. We were, for example, expected to guard all banks, postoffices, telephone exchanges, electric light plants, food stores, food warehouses, manufacturing plants and political party offices, plus a special list of addresses which were supposed to have political or military importance. To have complied with this one requirement of furnishing guards would have required the use of at least a regiment of infantry if it were to be done adequately on a 24-hour basis.

Not having the benefit of these written instructions and special lists, we undertook to do our best to restore order, protect lives and property and particularly to stop looting and rioting in the city. Throughout our stay our men worked very hard, but there was a feeling of accomplishment in that after the first day we had in our area very little if any disturbances. On our first day we found that it

was necessary at times to call out special guards or the ack-ack half-tracks to discourage rioting and looting, but at no time did it ever get out of hand in our area.

Having had no opportunity to examine town plans or know anything about the area which the battalion was to police, it was necessary to divide the city up to the batteries from the town plan, assigning each battery an area, telling the btry commander to find quarters, motor parks and set up the necessary guard within his own area to preserve law and order. As time went on these guards were coordinated and some re-districting of the area was required, but on the whole the system worked fairly well.

The CP acted as a central place for the distribution of information and the answering of questions as they arose. Because of the novel situations which continually occurred, the telephone lines to the CP and to Vagabond were constantly in use all hours of the day and night. There is no question but that the Battalion CP and Btry CP's were more overworked during our stay in Leipzig than they had been at any time or place since the organization of the Battalion.

One of chief problems which began early and continued until the end of our stay was the handling of prisoners or former members of the German Armed Forces, who were picked up by our guard or who turned themselves in. These were initially handled at the Bn CP, but later some effort was made by the batteries to handle them in their own areas, sending only those that appeared to be eligible for the prisoner of war enclosure on to the CP. The main difficulty here was determining whether a person was to be considered a prisoner of war or not. For example, we found many discharges of a very recent date indicating that perhaps they had been discharged from the army just to avoid the prisoner of war enclosure. On the other hand we found wounded veterans who were officially still members of the Army, but either on a leave or hospital status and perhaps even engaged in civilian occupations. Besides that, we of course ran into the Nazi party members in varying ranks, the high officials being held for further questioning and the petty members being registered and permitted to return to their homes. The handling of this mass of people required hours of hard work initially by Capt. Lange and Capt. Newman and later the representatives of the batteries as well.

After the first night in the city it became necessary for us to establish road blocks to the entrances to the city where our guards were instructed to prevent the passage of civilians or unauthorized military vehicles. These guard posts required considerable coordinating and produced many unpleasant situations before we left. We particularly regretted having to pick up a 2nd Div. 2½ ton loaded with liquor which apparently had no authority to be going out of the city. We also were told quite emphatically by a representative of the press that he was entitled to go any place that he felt like going. We corrected his impression.

The city jails in our area did not technically come under our jurisdiction, one being operated as a prisoner of war enclosure and the other being operated by a special officer detailed to that job. However in both cases it was necessary for us to furnish personnel to assist in the guarding of the jails. Sgt. Irving's crew which was stationed at the Main City jail on Moltke Strasse had many an interesting and amusing incident there before they were relieved.

One of the other city jails was found to be filled with Czech political prisoners who were behaving themselves quite nicely except that they had locked up the German guards. Major Galbraith undertook to supervise this jail, provide food and solve their problems pending their movement home. This led him very soon to the Women's Prison in the southern part of the city where again a great many of the inmates were political prisoners. Major Galbraith soon found himself operating the

displaced persons section for the battalion, having under his jurisdiction a huge displaced persons camp, the jail full of Czechs, the Women's Prison and innumerable small groups of refugees or slave laborers throughout the city. From all accounts it was a most interesting but trying job particularly in the Women's Prison where it was necessary to maintain guards in order to help the German attendants keep the women criminals from releasing themselves or forging pardons or releases on the prison stationery.



Initially the problem of rioting and looting was our primary consideration. This was handled by using the ack-ack half-tracks as a mobile reserve to be sent any place where rioting or looting by a considerable number was reported. In addition we had vehicles from our units patrolling the roads in the area, stationary guard posts at critical points and in the center of the city proper a series of foot patrols designed to have the area under surveillance. At first it was very easy to discover any looting because a crowd would immediately begin to gather and the increased traffic would lead a guard to the scene of the trouble. Once knowing where the difficulty was it was usually a simple matter to disperse the group and see that the section was adequately guarded for the time being. In some cases it was possible to remove the guard shortly thereafter, or by changing the route of a foot or motor patrol to keep the place under surveillance sufficiently to discourage looting. Well to the northwest of our sector was a huge railroad yard where some difficulty was experienced. Here a unit of the 69th Div. broke up the rioting by the use of force, but except for a few shots from an officer's pistol into the ground we found no occasion to use firearms in connection with looting or rioting.

Later we found that we were receiving many reports of looting or suspected looting from civilians. Sometimes these proved to be correct, but more often they were reports made by those who were afraid that their property might be injured and were hoping to receive special protection, or else were reports made by those who were unable to purchase a commodity at a shop when other people were able to purchase and take the articles away. Our greatest trouble throughout in connection with looting and rioting were the displaced persons who moved out of the camps and cantonments and roamed the city at will initially. Later we were able to have these people moved to central spots largely out of our area with the result that we had almost no difficulty with foreign workers during the last five days of our stay.

The German population was almost without exception 100% cooperative with us. This might in part be explained by the report that Leipzig had been an anti-Hitler city. Another explanation was probably that the Germans were so afraid of the foreign workers in the city that they welcomed any efforts to restore order and keep the displaced persons under control. The last point which encouraged them to cooperate with us was their fear of the Russians and the realization that the Russians might occupy the city, and that if they did the situation would be better if the Russians found an orderly and well-run city when they came in. During our stay we had some reports of damage to our wire lines, but only on one or two occasions did this appear to have been intentional and malicious. Usually the damage was by accident or through ignorance as in the case of the old German turned in by the Germans themselves who explained that he cut the wire thinking it was of no value.

We did have some difficulty with the Germans in connection with the enforcement of the curfew. At first the curfew permitted the Germans on the streets for only a few hours during the day and this could be efficiently enforced. Almost immediately, however, innumerable headquarters began giving conflicting instructions as to the hours of curfew with the result that after the first day anyone on the streets during the hours of daylight could claim to have been told by some Hq that it was all right for him to be out. For this reason the curfew was not rigidly enforced during the first few days. Later the curfew hours were set and the enforcement of them was begun. Initially we attempted to educate the civilian population by taking the violators into custody for a short time and then releasing them with a pass to return home. This however was not satisfactory and we then held the violators until the next hours at which they were to be permitted on the streets. In the cases of those picked up at 2030 hours in the evening it meant that they stayed at our Hq until the next morning at 0700 hours. We have no record of any repeaters for a curfew violation after we started this program. Some of those who were kept overnight became violent about it, but for the most part they took it as a matter of course and rather philosophically.

During the first two days we had considerable trouble with soldiers of the 2nd and 69th Divisions who had captured the city. They as yet had not been moved outside the city limits and, of course, felt that they had a right to go anywhere and do anything that they liked. For the most part the difficulty was merely in being on the streets obstructing traffic and to some drinking. In some cases we had reports of looting, although this was almost exclusively limited to the taking of liquor.

One of our big jobs during our occupation of the city was the collection of arms and ammunition from the civilians in the city. These were turned in primarily to the Btry Hq (later to the local police stations) from which place they were sent to the Bn Hq and from there to a central point for destruction. By special directions all good pistols and shot guns were sent to higher headquarters where a stock of them was to be available for the high brass that came in looking for souvenirs.

This seemed at first rather unusual, but after having many visitors looking for souvenirs, arms and weapons interrupt the business of guarding and administering the city's affairs we felt that this was almost a protection for us. The units were all amazed at the weapons which were turned in including everything from air rifles to antique swords and daggers. Many of these things seemed to be much more interesting as souvenirs than dangerous as weapons.

During our stay in the city we found that we began to organize our affairs in such a way that it became possible for us to have some recreation. Initially this consisted of showers, but later we even found time for movies. On the whole the men and officers were kept busy almost all of the time, but that work was so varied and for the most part so interesting that there were very few complaints at the long, hard hours. This was in part due to the feeling that we were laying the foundations for a well-ordered city which would make considerably easier our future work there. Since we anticipated being around for a few weeks, we thought we were helping ourselves by doing the hard work initially.

At the time of the battalion's entry into the city at approximately two o'clock on 19 April Service Btry had just arrived in our former positions at Siefertshain and the gun sections themselves were still engaged in firing into the southeastern sector of the city. With this in mind, Service Btry was assigned the area in which the fighting was still going on and Able Btry was given the northwestern part, Hq the central part, Baker the area east of the railroad station and Charlie the large southeastern section within our zone. After the placing of guards by the respective batteries a reconnaissance was made for quarters within the various areas. The initial selections were made very hurriedly, but in all cases were adequate, although later on some readjustment was considered advisable due in part to the re-districting which was done later on.

Able Btry found itself set up very comfortably in a hotel with a garage for its vehicles. Hq had an office building which would have been quite satisfactory had it not been for the difficulty of taking care of large numbers of visitors on the upper floors of the building. Accordingly Hq moved almost immediately to a large apartment building at 1 Kron Prinz Strasse where prisoners and visitors could be more easily handled and where the long queues of persons waiting to be interviewed did not create a traffic problem on the streets. Later on Able Btry found another hotel just across from the huge Krupp or Junkers plant which had been set up in the fair grounds of the former Leipzig Fair. Charlie Btry originally set up in an apartment building, but after finding that someone in higher headquarters was continually giving the former occupants permission to re-enter the premises at any and all times and for any and all purposes, this building was abandoned in favor of a very modern building which formerly served as the Command Post for the German 15th Army Group. Service Btry when it did arrive in town set up in a group of factory buildings where they were able to use the offices for living quarters. Having located these quarters the batteries were able to take care of the balance of the men and vehicles when they arrived in the city at dusk of the first day, having been relieved of their fire missions for the 69th Division at approximately four o'clock in the afternoon. Baker on detached service was comfortably set up in a large apartment building, with a mammoth garage for its vehicles.

Perhaps our biggest headache initially was the fact that we had in our area two places of interest to every visitor and every civilian. One was the Battle of Nations monument which had been referred to on the radio and was known to be the last defended area in the city, the other was the Rathaus which was the City Hall and the scene of some fighting, some suicides and considerable destruction. The Battle of Nations monument did not cause us too much difficulty once an adequate

guard was established, but at first it seemed that there was no end to the number of exits from the monument. Since the monument had been well stocked with stores of food and ammunition the civilians attempted to remove this by the many exits of which they knew. After the first day however, we had little difficulty except in directing the innumerable correspondents and sight-seers around the area.

The Rathaus was a proper problem for a whole battalion all by itself. The building of course was an important one because of the civic records which were stored there, including as we all hoped records of the Nazi party and possibly even of the army. In addition there was a large liquor supply in the basement of the building which together with the stocks of food found there might have been for the use of the restaurant in the building. At the time we took over the police of the city we found that a unit of the "fighting troops" had already occupied the Rathaus and was busily engaged in making what use they could of all the items in it. This unit, however, did not appear to care what happened to the records, the building itself or the contents thereof, and it was necessary for us to establish a guard to prevent the removal from the building of any records and to prevent the entry into it of other than American soldiers. This was not adequately protecting the building and its contents, but in view of the delicate distinction between combat and non-combat troops which the occupants seemed to make, this appeared to be the most tactful course. The difficulty of keeping people out of so interesting a place was clearly indicated when our higher headquarters instructed our guards to keep everyone out of this building, and one guard found himself suddenly confronted with two generals intent on having a picture taken by their public relations officer showing them raising our flag over the Rathaus.

The difficulty of divided control and responsibility was further indicated early the next morning when our Fire Marshal, Capt. Betts of the Medford N.J. Fire Department, found a fire burning on the seventh floor of the building and insisted that we should have pressure hoses to put it out. After considerable difficulty some men of the unit occupying the building who were capable of proceeding to the seventh floor with some coaxing could be "interested" in assisting to extinguish the fire. Actually the unit and the men had very little interest in this problem because they knew they were about to move. As a matter of fact all of the men on the original detail did leave as soon as Capt. Betts turned his back and it was necessary for him to get assistance from our battalion before the fire could be put out and the building preserved.

Capt. Betts apparently did not take this additional work too seriously, however, because while he was waiting for his additional helpers he discovered an excellent radio in one of the offices. When the second detail found him he was listening to the radio-completely ignoring the fact that there were three quite dead individuals in the same room with him. These bodies were the family of the burgo-meister who had all committed suicide by taking poison. Additional suicides were found in adjoining offices and there was no medical business for the doctor.

The Rathaus continued to be a problem first for the battalion as a whole and then for Baker Btry to whom the mess was assigned. This was because of the liquor and food in the basement which required a large guard to protect and made necessary innumerable phone calls to permit the removal of items from the supplies from time to time.

The condition of the city on the whole was rather orderly and except for some minor damage done during the recent attack, the city was neat and the streets clean. The buildings themselves however were very badly damaged and for the most part this damage had not been repaired, although it had occurred during bombings some long time before. In the residential districts whole blocks of houses had been bombed

and burned out so long ago that all traces of the fire had disappeared, the area had been neatly swept and salvage collected. These buildings were seemingly of no importance to the civilians and no effort had been made to restore them. Factory buildings on the other hand which had been hit were in most cases repaired in order to permit the continued operation of the plants, many of which although quite extensive showed almost no signs of damage whatsoever. The huge Krupp or Junkers plant had been in operation just prior to our entry into the city and apparently was not seriously damaged. Other war plants were still capable of production, and in fact we received a request that one be permitted to continue work on the manufacture of Panzerfausts in order to complete its contract for the German Army. This request was refused. The recent fighting had caused some damage but this was mostly from small arms or tank guns and only near the Battle of Nations monument had there been any sustained artillery fire by heavy caliber weapons. Since this area was outside of the center of the city and in a comparatively undeveloped sector there was no substantial damage caused. In truth it was rather disappointing to see how little damage had been done to the monument by all of the heavy shells which had been fired into it.

The bombing and fighting had damaged the life of the city, however, particularly by disrupting the street car, water and light services. The street cars were in operation prior to our departure, while the light service and water were available in some parts of the city at the time of our entry and were rapidly resumed in the balance of the city. The general feeling was that war's coming to Leipzig had not seriously interfered with the life of the city, although the bombing (they admit seven bombings) had undoubtedly destroyed innumerable civilian residences which had not been repaired.

The war did have some effect on the city's life, however, in that it resulted in the removal from office of all Nazi officials. Since almost all of the city officials and several utilities workers were Nazi party members, this meant that at one time or another everyone of them had to be removed from his job, although after screening by the CIC many were permitted to return to their work. From the reports we received it appeared very difficult to obtain anti-Nazi individuals to take over the running of the city which was the main goal of the 190th Gp.

Before we left the city the civilian police force had been screened, ardent Nazis removed and the more trusted Germans permitted to resume operations as city police. To provide adequate supervision of their activity Lt. Huff and Capt. Jones were installed in the district police station covering our portion of the city. Any major decision by the police Major had to be cleared with them. This made it possible for the local stations to pass initially on any requests for passes or special permits and also made the registering of the civilian people easier. We found the civilian police a considerable help in preserving law and order once they were finally recognized as assistants to the American Army.

Just north of the city of Leipzig was Erla which had been the scene of a Nazi atrocity just prior to our entry into the city. The Nazis had filled a building with political prisoners, set fire to the building and machine-gunned any of the victims who attempted to escape the burning building. During our stay in the city a mass funeral for these victims was held in the vicinity of the Battle of Nations monument. This being in our area we were responsible for the police of the area, the police of the funeral and the prevention of any disturbances by either displaced persons or the civilians, of whom a certain number were required to attend the funeral. Tomaino of Service Btry had the distinction of being the bugler at this formation. During the early part of our stay in the city we found a great need for additional vehicles for our guard posts and for dispatching of messengers and guards. Accordingly we operated quite a fleet of German Wehrmacht vehicles throughout our

stay. This emergency was somewhat relieved when all our trucks were finally released from the long trucking detail which they had been on for almost three weeks.

One of the most interesting special details during our stay was Sgt. Mandelson's running of a displaced persons camp with over 5,000 inmates, male and female, of all origins. He was assisted by Nicosia and Doyle; and from all reports did an excellent job, while having quite an interesting time. He did have some difficulty with the Russian displaced persons, particularly after a tactless Russian officer advised them of their rights and lack of responsibilities.

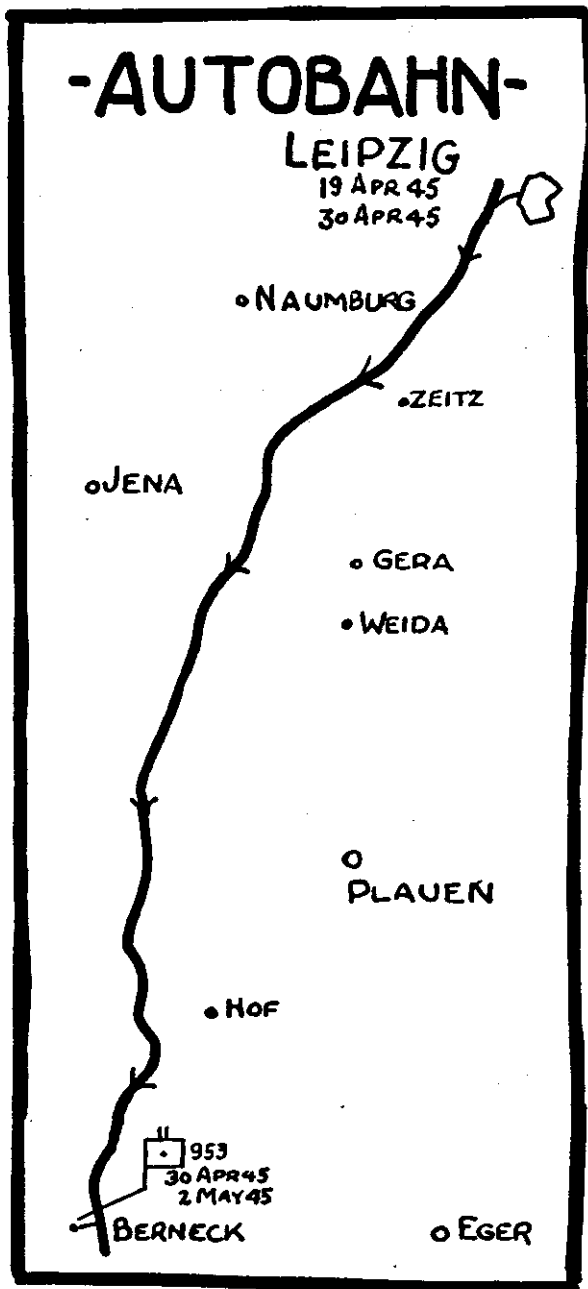
The air section was required to make daily reconnaissance flights looking for fires and crowds of unusual numbers of people within the city, or any activity on the outskirts which might indicate future difficulty within the city limits.

After having been in the city for some days the northwestern portion of our area was given over to the newly arrived 190th FA Bn which reduced our responsibilities somewhat and permitted us to readjust our batteries, taking Able Btry from the northwest and assigning it to the southeastern part of the city. The arrival of VII Corps troops in the area indicated that we were to be relieved entirely, and in fact on April 30th VII Corps took over the city and we were relieved from our duty as military police.

Surprising as it may seem there was a considerable feeling of disappointment among both men and officers at our leaving at this time, and particularly over the manner in which the relief was effected. The incoming troops made very little effort to contact us and find out what we had been doing and had accomplished during our stay in the city. Their attitude seemed to be that everything would have to be done over again and that any decisions which we had made would be in no way binding on the new units. We could of course foresee from this the loss of all the order which we had been able to produce in the city--the system of permits and passes, the reorganization of the police force, the efficient administration of displaced persons and generally the operation of the city services appeared about to return to a state of chaos. However, orders had been given and it was necessary for us to leave the city, turning over our old area to a company of Belgian Frontier Guards who arrived at seven o'clock in the morning when our column had to leave at eight o'clock. This certainly did not impress us as efficient and we were quite certain that the effect upon the civilian people within the city would be far from good.

Our move on April 30th took us to Berneck, Germany a little village just north of Bayreuth where we stayed until May 2nd. Our move from this village was handicapped by conflicting orders from higher headquarters because of an apparent misunderstanding as to which group we were working under. On the first of May the unit actually was on the road, and the recon parties had already reached the new area, when orders were countermanded and we were instructed to remain in our old positions. It was necessary for the firing batteries to make a loop through Berneck out on the Autobahn and back to their position areas because the road was narrow and other Corps Arty units had also received the changed instructions, which created quite a traffic jam in the village. At the same time word was radioed to the reconnaissance parties to return by using our two Cub planes as relay stations plus another ground set half way between.

On May second we went southeast of Weyden and selected positions in the village of Eslarn just west of the Czechoslovakian border where we were to work with the 187th FA Gp in support of the advance of the 2nd Division. Before the batteries arrived we were placed in direct support of the 2nd Div Arty and took the batteries into firing positions across the Czech border in a deep river valley at Schwanen-



bruckl. This was of course in Sudetenland where the people were decidedly pro-Nazi and non-fraternization was still the rule. Even so, we could get quite a kick out of being in another country and feeling that we were once again in the battle.

On 4 May we began very rapid moves with the 38th FA Bn and the 23rd Inf Regt of the 2nd Div. The plan was to motorize the infantry which with tank support would advance rapidly on Pilsen to the northeast calling on the firing batteries for support. In order to assure the infantry columns of immediate artillery support, each battalion was attached to a battalion of infantry. It then became the battalion's problem to leapfrog their batteries in such a way that at least one and preferably two of its batteries could fire on any targets holding up the advance of the leading elements of the infantry. On May 4th we stopped for the night with our CP in Beverov and the firing batteries in nearby farm villages. The next night the CP was in Vitani with the batteries again displaced in the adjacent villages. On 6 May we reached the larger town of Chetesov still southwest of Pilsen, but in time to hear

that all resistance in and about Pilsen had apparently collapsed and that no firing could be immediately expected.

During part of this rapid advance we were handicapped by the absence of our 2½ ton trucks which were taken for the movement of infantry. We also found that it was necessary for us to relearn some of the lessons regarding rapid occupation of position which we had forgotten during our long period of comparatively methodical warfare. We found difficulty in coordinating our radio communication over the long distances, particularly when we had two FDCs in operation and our missions came from forward observers or Liaison officers well to the front. We solved this in part by the use of our Cub planes as relay stations in spite of wretched weather conditions which made flying almost impossible and certainly kept the division observation pilots grounded. During the three days we saw no other liaison pilots, although there were adjacent columns almost within sight of the one which we were supporting.



The town of Chetesov which we reached on the 7th had a convent which had formerly been used by the German airforce and which we immediately moved into. Here we discovered parachutes, watches and many an item of capturable German equipment. The firing batteries originally went into firing positions near this town and the village of Line, but it soon became apparent that there was to be no need for any firing.

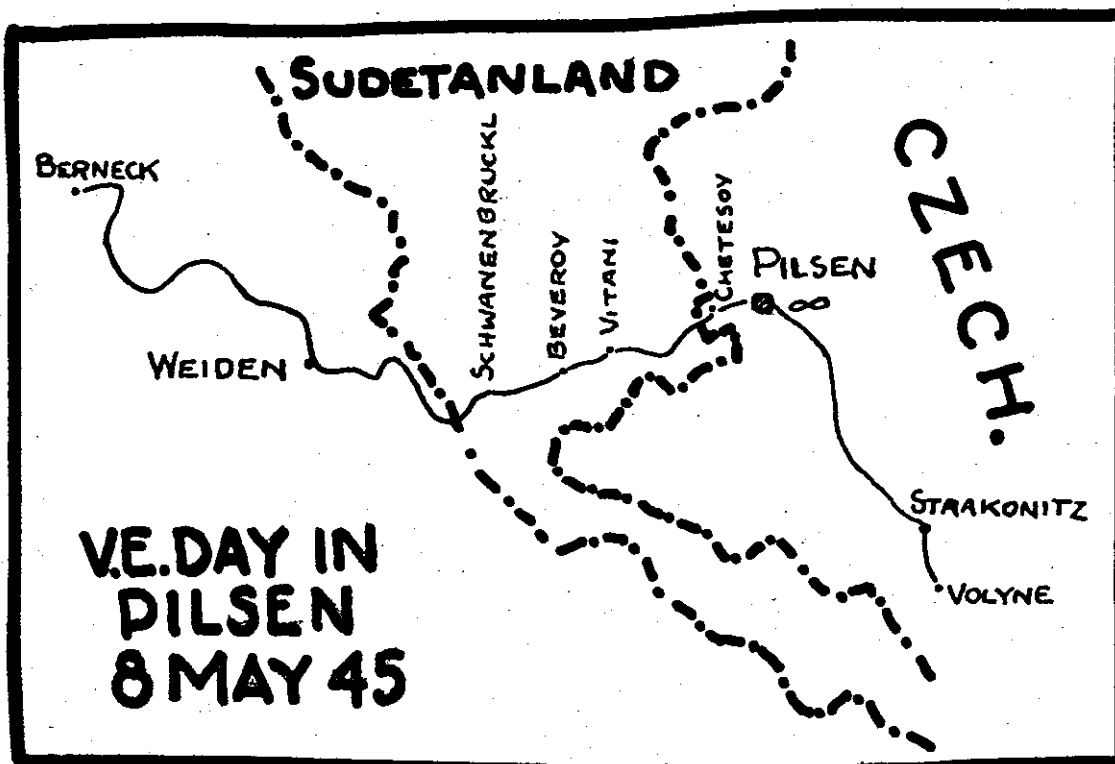
This area was now across the Czechoslovakia-Suedetenland border and we received here one of the most enthusiastic and genuine welcomes of the whole war. We found the Czechs a stolid appearing race, but they were certainly loud and strenuous in the cheering and waving. Pilsen beer made its appearance in some of the batteries, although the many other troops which had poured into the area converging on Pilsen created quite a little competition for the favors of the civilians.

The last two days of our advance had been marked by our meeting many a long column of German prisoners, initially on foot but later still equipped with all of their transport, usually horse-drawn. Able Btry also spent one night at Belan Rad which was the center of the German Cavalry remount area. They had concentrated here the most magnificent horses of all of Europe for breeding purposes. The point of particular interest was not the horses themselves, but that a high-ranking American officer had made an agreement with the Germans which permitted them to keep uniformed guards caring for the horses while assuring them that no American troops would be permitted to fire into the area for fear of injuring the animals. This was rather a difficult thing to understand when it was necessary for our batteries to fire from the center of the area and just prior to that the infantry had met some opposition adjacent to the remount area.

Early on the morning of 7 May the Battalion moved forward to the outskirts of Pilsen, occupying a large barracks on the airport for its firing batteries with Charlie Btry being across the airfield in some temporary buildings. Initially we

remained attached to the 23rd Inf Regt and assisted in the police of the airport and were threatened with the running of a prisoner of war cage for the 2nd Division.

We were in this position when it was announced that all German resistance had ceased and that VE day had finally arrived. Contrary to all expectations there was no large celebration on the part of the battalion or its members since most of us felt that this announcement had been long overdue and merely marked the beginning of another and somewhat trying phase of our operations--waiting to go home. However some of our neighboring units put on a very intensive and illuminating pyrotechnic display, shooting off thousands of vari-colored flares throughout most of the night. We came to the conclusion that peace might prove more dangerous than war when some over-enthusiastic celebrators (from the other units) started testing out some of the German machine guns which were emplaced about the field.



At first the enthusiastic reception of American troops in the city of Pilsen made it difficult to do any sight-seeing. Shortly thereafter so many American troops were concentrated in this area that this city held little appeal to the American soldiers. We were in fact quite glad that we had our barracks to ourselves and were able to amuse ourselves watching the planes on the field rather than by wandering through the city. Some of the men of course enjoyed the passes that were permitted in the town, but most found that the girls although friendly to soldiers in vehicles were not given to making acquaintances with them. To fill in the gaps we resorted to the beginning of the I & E program and were able to obtain USO shows and movies as well as a dance or two. For the most part we relaxed, took care of our equipment, enjoyed the excellent showers and waited for information as to what the point scoring basis would be and what the critical score was to be set at.

On 16 May the unit moved southeast of Pilsen to the town of Volyne where Hq set up, with the firing batteries in small villages to the northeast. This was a rather unsettled situation at first with the 4th Armd Div having troops in the area occupied by Hq and Service and the Russians having troops on all sides of Charlie Btry. The Russian soldiers at first proved to be quite a nuisance wandering through our area, but later this was solved by a series of road blocks and the gradual with-

drawal of the Russian activities. During our stay here we were charged with the collection of prisoners, the consolidating of civilian traffic on the roads and particularly with the control of displaced persons. We had two railroads running through the area, one which ran into Russian occupied territory and the other into American occupied Austria. It was necessary for our guards to check the trains and remove any displaced persons attempting to pass on through our area without proper credentials.

The people in this area were still very enthusiastic in their welcome of American troops. At first this welcome appeared superficial but later we realized that these people were truly friends and were quite glad to have us with them. Many a romance was borne and blossomed in this area in spite of all the reports that the Czech girls were too well chaperoned, spoke another language and were too reticent. Our stay here was further enlivened by the very fine swimming pool in the area. It was soon named the "Victoria Country Club" and furnished many of our men with opportunities for swimming, learning to swim and also getting acquainted with some of the local belles.

The first results of the critical score bore fruit here also when we sent home six excited and happy EMs headed by Sgt. Carpenter and Sgt. Fitzgerald of Hq Btry. Later on we were to send seven more, which naturally aroused the hopes of the remaining "high-score" men.

It was with considerable regret that we were ordered to turn our sector over to the 94th Division and move southeast of Pilsen close to the Suedetenland border in the vicinity of Kout na Sumave. This move was apparently made in connection with the plans for the redeployment of the various units, for we found all of the Corps FA concentrated in a comparatively small area. The troops had little real military work to do, but were kept busy trying to figure out what the next development in redeployment would be. After having been formally notified that we were in Category IV and due to go back to the States as a unit and demobilized, we were advised that we were actually to be in Category II (to fight the Jap).

After waiting for an additional week we finally, on Saturday June 30th at two o'clock, sent 225 of our high score men from the unit to join a Category IV unit, the 805th FA Bn. This marked the beginning of the end, for these 225 men comprised almost half the battalion and certainly the older members of it. In addition it was known that the balance of the high score men totalling approximately 125 plus some 20 officers would leave the organization on Monday July 2.

These changes left only the name and the reputation of the 953rd FA Bn intact. Its traditions and its records cannot be forgotten by anyone who has been in any way associated with the unit either as a member of it, or as one who has watched it in action. The future 953rd FA Bn may rise to heights as great as the old, but certainly in the minds of those who were with it on June 30th it could never be the same unit.



953rd Field Artillery Battalion

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Abe Eisenhart, N.Y.

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Franklin Moreland, Rice St., Irvine, Kv.
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Edward R. Noll

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Walter R. Svien, 511 Nebraska St., Sioux City, Iowa
Melvin F. Tolliver, 2615 Lawn Avenue, Kansas City, Missouri
John R. Woodruff, Industry, Illinois

AWARDS RECEIVED BY MEMBERS OF THIS BATTALION.

The following is a partial list of awards received by members of this organization:

SILVER STAR:

Rank Name
Pfc. Joe A. Bruszewski
Pvt. Michael P. Iacono

BRONZE STAR FOR HEROIC ACHIEVEMENT:

1st Lt. Lloyd R. Blume
1st Lt. Claude E. Hargett
1st Lt. Kenneth D. Reese
Pvt. Wilburn Beamis
Pvt. Ricco E. Fruet
Pvt. Herbert R. Shelton
Cpl. Gerald L. Harris
Cpl. Ferdinand DeMeo
Pvt. George O. Duell, Jr.
Cpl. Leo J. Feldman
Pfc. Rudolph C. Renner
S/Sgt. Gregor A. Holmberg
Cpl. James Amato
Pfc. Kenneth R. Johnson
1st Lt. Frederick Beckman
Capt. James T. Rogers
Cpl. Richard E. Slack
T/5 Raymond B. Hodgins
Pfc. Merrill L. Smith
Pfc. Sinton A. Powell
1st Lt. Herschel J. Hochman
Cpl. William F. Couch
T/5 Louis Fox
T/5 Michael P. Hearn
Pfc. Ralph F. Schiavone
Pfc. Sam B. Wilson
T/5 Harold F. Schlapman

BRONZE STAR FOR MERITORIOUS SERVICE

Maj. John F. Galbraith
Capt. Richard W. Betts
Capt. Kenneth F. Newman
WOJG Charles H. Schade
Maj. Walter B. O'Connor
Capt. Dale S. Jones
Capt. George A. Wyeth, Jr.
1st Lt. Ernest F. Kocher
CWO Edward A. Schmidt
Lt. Col. John F. Varian
T/4 Charles E. Morgan
T/Sgt. Harold Mandelson
S/Sgt. George R. Brehm
S/Sgt. Max M. Kinneer
S/Sgt. Charles D. Schifilliti
T/5 Mike Parnicza
Cpl. Bernard Kristall
Pfc. Milton A. Ingram

AIR MEDAL

1st Lt. Samuel Huff
1st Lt. DeOrval J. Schatz
Capt. Kenneth F. Newman
Lt. Col. John F. Varian

1st OAK LEAF CLUSTER TO AIR MEDAL

1st Lt. Samuel Huff
1st Lt. DeOrval J. Schatz
Capt. Kenneth F. Newman

2nd OAK LEAF CLUSTER TO AIR MEDAL

1st Lt. Samuel Huff
1st Lt. DeOrval J. Schatz

3rd OAK LEAF CLUSTER TO AIR MEDAL

1st Lt. Samuel Huff
1st Lt. DeOrval J. Schatz

4th OAK LEAF CLUSTER TO AIR MEDAL

1st Lt. Samuel Huff
1st Lt. DeOrval J. Schatz

5th OAK LEAF CLUSTER TO AIR MEDAL

1st Lt. Samuel Huff
1st Lt. DeOrval J. Schatz

CROIX de GUERRE avec Palme

Lt. Col. John F. Varian

CROIX de GUERRE avec Etoile de Bronze

1st Sgt. Stellario J. Laimo

BRITISH MILITARY MEDAL

Pvt. Charles J. Richards

CERTIFICATE OF MERIT - GO 22, 953rd FA Bn, 30 June 45.

Hq Btry

1st Sgt. Stanley E. Carpenter
M Sgt. Anthony L. Trunfio
T Sgt. William J. Reeves, Jr.
S Sgt. George F. Doss
Tec 3 Stanley W. Everson
Sgt. Frank McLeod
Tec 4 Reingold G. Schneider

Tec 4 Andrew Yuschak
Tec 4 Daniel J. Cronin
Tec 4 Vernon V. Hawkins
Cpl. Richard A. Whitmore
Tec 5 Elmer E. Tschappler
Tec 5 Leon Kanowitz

"A" Btry

1st Sgt. Alvah W. Burlingame
S Sgt. John J. Mullen
S Sgt. Michael F. Valachovic
S Sgt. Edward J. Kurta
S Sgt. Gustav A. Floodquist
Sgt. Harold L. Brasfield
S Sgt. Gustav A. Floodquist

Sgt. Edward F. McDermott
Cpl. Mabrie O. Gilmer
Cpl. Anthony C. Moscola
Cpl. Donald F. Thomas
Tec 5 Joseph J. Terrasi
Tec 5 Benjamin Kessler

"B" Btry

1st Sgt. Casmer J. Bugeresta
S Sgt. Greal H. Armstrong
S Sgt. George C. Baker
Sgt. Rural E. Pierce
Sgt. Odom A. Bailey
Sgt. Edward A. Winslow
Sgt. George J. Anthor

Tec 4 William J.L. Grant
Tec 4 Avery Horne
Tec 4 John C. Richman, Jr.
Cpl. John Pasmik
Tec 5 Finnie L. Timbes, Jr.
Tec 5 Harold A. Heinamann

"C" Btry

1st Sgt. Royden H. Pugh
S Sgt. William J. Costello
S Sgt. Kenneth N. King
S Sgt. Louis J. Vetere
Sgt. Wheeler J. Phillips
Sgt. George M. Poe
Sgt. Walter O. Small

Sgt. Colonel D. Neil, Jr.
Tec 4 Cyril F. Biegen
Tec 4 Walter G. Drexler
Tec 4 Robert L. Holland
Cpl. John M. Downey

Service Btry

M Sgt. Thomas J. Meaney
T Sgt. Frank M. Bochner
S Sgt. John W. Granade
S Sgt. Bernard E. Kraveski
S Sgt. Patrick J. Lee

S Sgt. Max H. Wolff
Sgt. Edward J. Colehan, Jr.
Sgt. Edward R. Noll
Sgt. John J. Scaduto

Med Det

Tec 3 Joseph F. Ertl