

## COMPANY "B" 691 TANK DESTROYER BATTALION

### FIRST PLATOON.

On the 27th of Aug. we drove our destroyers from an LST on to Utah Beach. There we saw for the first time ruins created by our weapons of destruction. As we drove along the narrow road we noticed signs warning us of mines.

A few miles from the beach we bivouaced until orders were received to continue. A Colored soldier from a nearby outfit tried driving a tent peg with a German hand grenade, and thus ended his army career.

From here we started our run across France, each day bringing us nearer the front. German guns trucks and equipment lay scattered along the road, evidence that our enemy had felt the sting of our air power. We were anxious to find souvenirs but we remembered the horrors of booby traps as was taught to us in sunny Louisiana.

On Sept. 16 we came to Loisy, the bridge head across the Moselle. Our first active position in France was with the 35th division at Theully, where we spent a night and one day.

In our first position we had our first experience with incoming artillery. We had our position near the Moselle on a road block, and not being able to see any support we felt very much alone and words cannot express the feeling that first taste of artillery and mortar gave us.

At midnight we moved to Pagney which was a very cold ride. From here we moved to the outskirts of Nancy, one of the largest towns we had seen in France. The people were glad to see us, but in some parts of town no civilians were seen, and on a dark night one might wonder if those windows of a deserted house were really empty. Since we had not seen much combat we hardly know what to expect.

From Nancy we moved back across the Moselle river to the grape orchards near Lunneville. Then we took up positions in Lunneville where we met much resistance. That was on 21 Sept. Mortar shells burst around us as we dug in. Near dark, enemy machine guns, opened up and most of us thought our time had come.

A tank rolled up the road where we were crouched in fox holes. It carried a white star which was never more welcome to those of us who had visioned the appearance of an enemy tank.

The next couple of nights were spent in a nearby barn. Sometimes we would awaken from the horrifying sound of a Burp gun, and the tinkle of bullets against the cement walls.

Relieved from our positions we moved to a hill at Serries to another position, where we dug in for five days. We had rain almost every day. This was "sunny" France.

From that position, we took up new positions in a valley near Richecourt. Here we held for 18 days under heavy artillery and mortar fire. From our positions we could see our artillery burst, and were glad to hear the whine from our own shells.

Being under fire so long our nerves were on edge, some one might blow his nose and three or four men would dive for a hole.

The whine of an "88" was not a pleasant one, too many times this weapon had claimed the lives of our comrades. From this place, which we named "death valley", we returned to Aarocourt for indirect firing. Then we relieved our third platoon at Richecourt and again took up direct fire positions. Here side by side were four Mark fives knocked out. The muzzles of the 88's were bowed low, like some living monster which had met defeat. Their days of death dealing were over.

On the rear of one lay the burned body of a Germany tanker. On his throat was the innerphone mike, which would never again vibrate with commands against old glory. Near this position a battered pill box

offered some protection against enemy artillery. Once four shells came screaming near and three of were them duds, thanks to some friend we had never seen. Heinies had not respect for a man ven with his pants at half mast. Picture a fellow running, trousers held by one hand, a shovel in the other. He had no time to use the little packet found in the supper "K" rations.

From this place we relieved our second platoon just back of Reichcourt. Here we were served coffee and doughnuts by a clubmobile, even through enemy artillery came in a different intervals.

After more than two weeks in this position we moved through Moinvec and Harricourt then to Cutting. From there to Weikinger and Vommon for a supposed rest. Our next position was at Hingsing where we fired on woods about one thousands yards. Artillery and Anti-Aircraft also fired on the woods and the infantry moved in but the Heinies had moved and little resistance was encountered for a number of towns.

From here we went to Benstroff and to Huddling. Here we were in reserve and slept in a barn. German Artillery hammered the town at night. After five days we took up positions near and in Wolferding. At this place some of us slept in a green house, flowers every where but this life was not a bed of roses.

From here we moved back to Huddling for a night, then through Gurderkirch and Christmas Eve to Achen to set up for indiret fire. Not firing here we moved Chritmas Eve to Duss with light son. Using lights seemed strange since so many weeks at the front where not even the light from a match could be permitted.

At this town we had Christmas dinner, that night we left for Reims where we spent two days. Trenches and gun emplacements from World War I were still there. Duds large and small were laying halt buried in the soil. German handgrenades were almost completely rusted away, but the powder would still burn after more than 25 years of exposure.

On a moonlight night we left for Belgium where the Germans had made a large Counter attack. In Belgium we took up positions at Freux Menil, then on a high hill overlooking Jennievile and Morecy. Here Germans tanks fired on American infantry but were finally surrounded.



Leaving the town of Morecy itself, we again took up positions of indiret fire in a near by woods. By this time it was apparent to all that Runstedt's one last try had reached its high water mark, and the Tiger and Panthers once again started on the road backward. Our next stop was in the small country of Luxembourg. At this time we went into position with the 76 Inf. div., for indiret fire not far from the German border.

While at this place we heard the most encouraging news of the whole war. The fall of Warsaw and the Russians drive to the Oder. After about two weeks here most of us got passes to the city of Luxembourg. From here we moved to the ruined city of Eternach, Luxembourg a once beautiful city. The Germans had left only a few days before and still constantly shelled the town.

We went from Eternach to the small town of Munschecker and joined the 2nd Cavalry Division. After a number of days here on a comparatively quiet sector of the front, we pulled back to a chateau for a ten day rest, which turned out to be two days. We then moved into Loraine where the 65 Div., was then preparing to cross the Sarr river. Then we moved to Guelfangen for about two weeks. This was a small town, but the cellars were full of wine, cider, etc., and made the stay quite pleasant. From there we went to Wallerfagen and then to Mercig, and crossed the Saur river. This was Germany which we had seen so often in the distance or perhaps just across a river, but always before there had been enough opposition to keep us from setting foot on the soil of the so called "super race".

From a little town we shelled a woods and started on our great advance toward the Rhine. It is always comforting to any soldier to see plenty of tanks and equipment to back up any advance he is included in. Here as we rapidly advanced toward the Rhine we saw more American equipemnt than we ever saw before. Resistance was light and we traveled fast, expelling the enemy to make a stand at the Rhine. At Openheim on the Rhine we took up positions to fire at any floating objects that came down the river. Germans bombed the river banks each night for some time and succeeded in knocking out one of our guns.

From here we traveled to Maines where we crossed the Rhine and were once more on our way to the

front. When near the front some of our men were sent back to Metz, where we were to receive the destroyers M-36 in place of our towed guns. Meanwhile the remaining men continued to support the infantry in taking more towns. With the new destroyers we were even more helpful.

Finally we came to Limback, not far from Chemnitz, where the Russians were to contact us. From here we moved to Oberlungwitz, where we heard the ever rejoicing word that the "War with Germany was over".

Now that the fighting was done we could count our points, and those of us who had not enough could consider all rumors pertaining to shipments to the Pacific Army of Occupations in Germany, or a furlough home.

WRITTEN BY  
Cpl. Lester D. Sharp.

## SECOND PLATOON, COMPANY "B"

Landing on the beaches of the once impregnable Fortress of Europe, little did we know what was in store for us in time to come. For about a week or more we traveled for miles and miles trying to catch up to the 3rd Army to whom we were attached. While on this "rat race" as you would call it, we got our first glimpse of what war was really like, town after town was completely destroyed. St Lo, Avranches, Le Mans, Orleans, and Avallons.

We were finally attached to a unit and received our first mission, that was the liberation of Nancy with the 35th Div. on September 15th, and it turned out to be an easy task. We still hadn't received a taste of war and its honors.

On September 9th a day that will never be forgotten by the 2nd Platoon, we attacked Morville-sur-Sille and took the town with ease by by-passing hundreds of Germans in the woods of Forest De Hayes, but Hell soon popped when the Germans observed our position from the next town. It had been raining all day and positions were hard to get into, so we winched our guns into position and didn't have time to even dig fox holes when the Germans started a counter-attack. We opened up with the 3 inch gun and stopped it after causing a little damage to the attacking force. Then the Germans located our position and all Hell broke loose. We were a bunch of happy guys when we were told that we were going to be relieved. That was our first taste of combat and the destruction it leaves behind and what was in store for us in the future.

Our next mission was to establish road blocks at Suicide Hill on September 15th, never knowing what the word Suicide meant. But it wasn't long till we found the true meaning of the word. This was our first meeting with the foot troops of the German Army.

On September 20th we went to Arracourt where our present platoon leader Lt. Wertz first joined us, but fate or the Germans cut his stay short for he met up with his first "88".

Here we were attached to the 10th Armoured Infantry and here we had the longest stay in any one place, and the most contested hill that we ever came in contact with, Hill 265. Here the Germans threw the "book" at us and where the 26th Div. was first committed to action, and with whom we stayed a long time.

After a short indirect firing mission we moved to the now famous "cave" above Reichcourt. The "cave" or "Hotel Splendor" the boys called it. The boys had a sign on one of the entrances, "Through these Portals pass the worlds most famous Mortals". We found out later they weren't fooling. In fact there were times when six or eight of us tried to get through the same entrance at the same time, even though there were four of them. Ask Sgt. Bruno about the time he fell in on Sgt. Gordons kitchen.

After the cave we moved to one of the many small towns in France. It was just around Thanksgiving Day up by Dueize. We got orders to open fire on a town in support of the Infantry. They told us to fire for 30 Minutes as fast as we could. The boy had the guns burning up. In fact they were firing so fast we think Shultz gave Geidel some empty shell cases to fire, but Geidel never quit, he fired those too.

Next came one of the 3rd Army famous pushes. You all know what that meant. Every time we moved or went on a "rat race" we had rain, plenty of rain. Yes, and mud too. If we didn't see anything else we saw plenty of rain and mud on those pushes.

But like everything else our joy rides came to an end. Then came the town of Wolfserding on the Saar river, a town the boys won't forget for a long time. We moved up at night, as usual, under the cover of darkness and were thankful it was dark because the Heines were sitting across the creek watching and listening. We tried to make as little noise as possible. Everything was going along fine, we were moving along at 2 miles per hour until we hit the outskirts of town, then Chief Brown started putting on his famous brakes, it sounded like New Years eve. He woke every Heine on the other side of the river. But all jokes aside we must have done a good job of sneaking in, because the Heines didn't open up with their first hundred Mortars until the next morning.

The Heines were so close to us at that until they knew just when our chow was ready. In fact the Infantry that fed us had to call us up on the phone but the Jerry could smell it. At every chow call they would let us have it with mortars, and machine guns fired up the street. In fact it got so bad that we lost a meal. They stopped feeding us three meals a day and cut it down to two, before dawn in the morning and after dark at night. That's what really made Bill Davies mad. He said when the Heines started taking a meal from him it was time to quit. One of the things that bothered the boys, or we should say their constitution was the latrine situation. It seemed that every time some one went outside to relieve themselves, in would come a Hell of a lot of 88's & mortars. So one of the boys named Dan Cvetichan fooled the Heines. He built his own right in his castle.

Then we were finally relieved at Wolfserding and traveled back across France for a short stay on the 3rd Arme southern flank. We say short stay because we were soon off on another long bitterly cold ride back across France once more. It looked for a long time like we would never get out of France, we went from one end to the other many times. But as we look back now I guess we wish we never have left France for we were heading for Belgium, and one of the most critical Battles of the war.

On reaching Belgium one of our first stops was a small town of Friel where everything was going along fairly quiet until the Heines decided to counter-attack. You all know what those words mean, counter-attack, and us usual every-one was on the alert and ready, running from here to there to get their orders and receiving them, all but Holcombe. He didn't have time for the Heines, for above the sound of artillery and small arms fire you could hear his voice shouting geidel! "Throw me the Turkey, we'd better cook it now, Hell knows what might happen." So as dawn was starting to break and the noise had quieted down there sat Holcombe and Geidel eating the last of their Turkey.

But all wasn't so humorous as the boys soon found out on our next move up to a town called Jenmville. We got a warm reception from the Burp guns and a couple of tanks that were just outside the town. It seemed as if they just watched us coming in to town and then let us have it before we even got into position. Suddenly out of nowhere came the Air Corps, our "boys" in the P-47s. Every man in the 2nd platoon will tell you that they were never so glad as they were that day to see the first plane unload his "eggs". We don't know where they came from but that was one of the many times they pulled us out of a tight spot.

But even in Jenmville, like some of the many other places, it had its laughs. It seems that there were two of the boys on guard looking over into the woods for this tank that was giving us trouble. They were in a barn up near the roof, just then Jerry let go his quota of mortars for that hour, one came screaming in and Cannady said "Hell, that hit close Fisher", the guy with him said "damn right, there goes the roof of the barn." You guessed it Both of them came down the ladder at the same time.

Ask the mine detelling team, T-4 Bruhn and Cordes about the short move we made over the snow covered field up there about 3 AM in the morning. But all came out OK again and after being relieved we left Belgium for Luxembourg.

In Luxembourg things went out way for a couple of weeks, we had a holding position. The lucky ones had a roof over their head. The second platoon got a nice position along the woods out in the snow. But it wasn't long before every section had a house, or rather they had built log cabins. But all went well while we were in the holding position. We often wondered how Noss liked the Salmon Ice Cream some of the boys made for him.

As usual that good deal didn't last for we were off again. This time to another one of the hot spots. Echtranall will long be remembered by the boys of the second platoon. It's true we didn't reach our objective on the first try, but the very next night we did and stayed there and took our "pounding". It was just one of those positions where you had to take it. They had Lansing running up and down the street so much the first night he thought the Germans were just shooting at him. At Echtranacht we got a chance to fire some more at a German pill box. Foster and Fisher were firing direct and Swede Anderson and Geidel were firing indirect. Between the four of them they kept the Jerries on the hop for a few days.

Then came the great push across the Saarland where town after town fell until the big "rat race" was on. Everyone heading straight for the Rhine.

This is where Lt. Wertz rejoined the 2nd platoon. We finally came to a stop on the west bank of the Rhine at the city of Oppenheim. There our job was to guard the bridges the 3rd Army had across the

Rhine river. We were to shoot at anything the Germans might send down the river to wreck the bridges. They shot plenty, they would fire at a match just to make sure that nothing that came down the river would wreck the bridges. The Germans Air Force raised Hell right over our positions trying their best to hit the bridges. They strafed night and day for three straight days trying to knock out the bridges but our ack ack boys were too much for them. Between the strafing and bombing the 2nd platoon had it bad for a few days. After dropping the Rhine things moved fast, for the defeat of Germany was close at hand. With the Russians closing in on Berlin from the East, and the Allies across the last barrier the Rhine river, the Germans knew that it was getting more and more hopeless and began to surrender by the thousands.

With the 304th Infantry of the 76th Div. the 2nd platoon helped capture town after town, moving day and night going after the Germans. It wasn't an easy task, for the men were tired, and the cold and rain didn't help matters any. But nevertheless they kept going, never stopping to rest long. Until the last day with this Regt. the 2nd platoon did a bang up job of wiping out enemy machine gun nests and gun positions.

We pulled back one night, and 24 hours later we were back on the line with our Destroyers picking up right where we had left off when we had the old towed guns. From here on we were with the 383rd Regt going day and night never stopping. We took towns after town until one afternoon a task that the 2nd platoon will remember for a long time came to us. It was the freeing of 600 Allied PW's. We will never forget the cheers and happy faces of the 200 American prisoners. When they saw our first Destroyer, Chimble's "Boogie Burner", pulling into the prison gates. Here Lt. Wertz and his men captured the hated SS and the rest of the German guards. They saw the Russian Army operate, and the wreck and ruin our Air Force had laid on the cities of Germany.

On their last mission the 2nd platoon helped liberate high ranking officials of India and Great Britain 75 French Generals and a whole Dutch Army Staff, American and Allied PW's. On this, like all the other tasks they did a great job. And now that the war in Europe is over, we are proud of the small part that the 2nd platoon contributed to help bring about the defeat of the Germany Army.

Written By  
WRITTEN BY.  
Corp Joseph Gaens



### THIRD PLATOON, COMPANY "B"

This outline starts from the time we landed at Utah Beach from L S T's and started our historic way across France, Belgium, Luxembourg and Germany to the 9th of May 1945, when official notice came to us that the war with Germany was over.

After landing, we moved to a designated area assigned to us to await road priority—we got it in three days—and then we set sail across France, which in the future was to become known as one of our famous RATERACES!

We travelled thru St Lo, Avranches, St Hilaire, Le-Mans, Orleans, Avallon and Troye's, getting our first true picture of the ravages of war.

We finally took up defensive positions at a town called Tronde's, to guard Corp command post. Never seeing a German soldier, or an enemy gun or plane, we thought this was a funny way to fight a war—but little did we know what was in store for us.

September 7th 10 we was the date we were committed to battle. Sept. 10th we were attached to the 35th division in the liberation of Nancy, but amidst all the cheering of the French we still never realized the dangers and horrors of war. The afternoon and night of the 8th we crossed the Moselle River at Loisy, and here we had our first taste of German artillery, here also it began to rain.

On Sept. 9th one platoon of T D's was attached to an Infantry spear-head attacking thru St Genevieve, thru the Forest De-Hayes, to Merville-sur-Sille, and here again we were subjected to our first taste of

direct fire from the famous German 88. After gaining our objective we held until darkness, then we committed our first withdrawal, first the Infantry, then the tanks, and lastly us, with our insignificant armorless guns.

On Sept. 11th we struck at Luneville (which we dubbed "Suicide Hill") here we fought German tanks, Cavalry, and Infantry, we were fortunate to escape with such light casualties. On Sept. 15th we continued on to Sirrie to set up a road block, and for the next five days we had it fairly easy, except for the ever continuing rains.

On Sept. 20th we went thru Arracourt and on to Rechicourt where we were attached to the 10th armored Infantry. As in Luneville this place was dubbed "Death Valley" of for military records "Hill 265" Here for 10 days we took a beating from artillery, tanks and heavy mortar fire, but here to we took our toll of enemy personal, knocking out numerous observation posts. Here we had 2 half tracks and one Gun severley damaged by shrapnel.

On Oct. 11th we moved to a new holding position, where for 24 hours a day we were subjected to severe heavy artillery concentrations by the enemy. It was at this position that the 26th division entered combat to earn an everlasting name for itself. On the 15th we were relieved by the first platoon, and moved back to Arracourt to do our first indirect firing. After a day and night of it a German counter-batterie forced us to seek new positions, after scoring a direct hit on one of our guns. On the 28th we moved back into direct fire positions at Rechicourt, and for 10 more days we withstood all the fire power they could throw at us from 88's up to 210 mm.

On Nov. 7th we moved to Coincourt ("The Cave") where we were attached to the 42nd Cavalry, This is where the Third Army's big push started with a three hour artillery barrage, we had a front seat to this, as our artillery was dropping in the midst of the Germans, 2000 yards in front of us.

Here we demolished 2 machine gun nests with direct fire from 4000 yards. With the attack still moving along we pressed on thru Moy-en-Vic, Selsmar and Harricourt, where again we continued our direct fire, this time at 6000 yards, and this time our results showed enemy machine guns, anti-tank guns, and enemy personal disabled.

Next we moved into Dommon-les-Duize where we had our Tanksgiving dinner, and sitting on the edge of our foxhole in the pouring rain, we were all thankful we were able to have cold turkey to eat.

Nov. 25th we continued on thru Louvre-sling, Nov. 28th Kappelkingen, Nov. 30th Harskirchen, Dec. 4th Schopperton, and all this time we had never ending rains. It was impossible to dig foxholes anymore, so we just sweated out all return fire from any place we could take cover.

Dec. 5th we were attached to the 6th armored division and moved up to Ippling, where we set up a road block for ten days, which turned out to be another 10 days of rain and mud. Here we could look down onto Saaregumines which the krauts still held, but where they were taking an awful beating from our artillery. On the 17th we moved to the lower Saar Basin on the left flank of the Seventh Army, where we joined the 87th division, we then took up defensive positions at Ershing. Here is where we got the news of the counter-offensive in Belgium, and we felt for sure we would be heading up there before many more days.

On the 23rd of Dec. we started our trip to Belgium, our first stop was in the vicinity of Duize where we had our Christmas dinner, then we continued on to Rhiems where we stayed for 2 days, and on the 28th of Dec. we entered Belgium. On the 29th we entered Secricourtaand took up defensive positions. After dark we started to move up to occupy Moicy, but were forced to withdraw under heavy tank and artillery fire. Here we had a few bad hours, as the Germans were pressing a desperate attack to hold one of their few remaining main supply routes. On the 31st of Dec. we moved into a new position at Fraux-Menil (Blizzard Hill) where our worst enemy turned out to be the weather.

On Jan. 5th we started at mid-night for Gerimont, and after a recon trip, we decided to infiltrate our guns one at a time. Here we had good positions overlooking the town of Tillet, and here again was another withdrawal.

Facing overwhelming odds the Infantry withdrew to regroup and strengthen itself, and while this was going on we faced the enemy alone. The day of Jan. 8th was quite epic, and here American training and discipline showed its just reward.

Here we had one gun protecting our flank and rear, and the other three guns fighting off six camouflaged German tanks. As soon as a gun would open fire revealing its position, it was subjected to the heaviest concentration of artillery and tank fire we had yet faced.

During the next four hours it was a battle of "Give and Take" and a game of "Hide and Seek", but thru it all we maintained our guns in action, destroying three tanks, damaging one, and eliminating one beinie motor section from front line duty. Of course there's always the fisherman's story of the biggest one that got away—A tiger royal ran the gauntlet and somehow succeeded in eluding us.

Our next move was north of Fraux-Menil to bolster the flank of "A" company on Jan. 9th, and on Jan. 12th we moved up to the Cross-Roads at Pironpre' to support a platoon of "C" company, here we suffered thru another blizzard which left us just about snowbound. We continued on thru Bonnerue' to Amberloup where the 87th division was finally squeezed out by a French Canadian unit.

On Jan. 14th we left Belgium and started for Luxembourg, we went thru the city of Luxembourg and stopped at Contern for the night. On Jan. 16th we relieved the 802nd T D Bn, at Schidgen, and also broke in another new division, the 76th.

It was here our acting platoon leader S/Sgt Splitsfoser received his battle field commission, to take over the reins in full and lead us gallantly on. We stayed here for 20 days, during which we thought we were "Living Like Kings", as, for the first time since entering combat we had a roof over our heads, and with the exception of a routine 23 hour guard duty, a heated room where we could rest our weary bones.

On Feb. 5th we moved into indirect fire positions, and fired into the Siegfried Line defenses. It was here that enemy air-craft showed signs of activity, our ack-ack defenses bringing down one ME 109.

On Feb. 7th we continued our exploits of carrying on where others had failed—we entered Echternach amidst a hail of heavy artillery, and over roads yet unswept for mines, to overlook the Sauer River. Here we were on one side and the krauts, with all their Siegfried line pillboxes and fortifications on the other, less than a 1000 yards between us, and it was here that they threw the books at us, including a 16 inch railroad gun, and batteries of 120 mm mortars. On Feb. 12th another big push started, with the 76th forcing a bridge head across the river to attack the Siegfried line, with our guns in direct support.

On Feb. 19th we crossed the Sauer river and entered Hitler's holy grounds, advancing thru the first defenses of the Siegfried line to the town of Ernzgen.

Here we took up positions approximately 300 yards from the Prum river, under a hail of artillery, mortar and machine gun fire. On Feb. 24th we moved back to Dickweiler for indirect firing, being attached to the 2nd Cavalry div.

On the 4th of March we again moved to a new sector, and another new division. This time under cover of darkness we moved into Fitten, on the Saar river where we had a five mile front to cover. Operating out of Fitten, nightly we would advance to the river, fire on pillboxes and fortifications and return again before dawn.

On the 19th of March we crossed the Saar at Merzig, thru Duppenweiler, Saarwellingen to Nalbach, where we laid down a beautiful barrage of direct fire to protect our advancing Infantry. From here to the Rhine it has been impossible to remember the names of the towns that has fallen, we have moved so fast, but on the 24th of March we entered Oppenheim on the Rhine, five days after crossing the Saar.

We stayed on the Rhine for six days, guarding the bridge heads against floating explosives, and it turned out to be six days and nights of constant bombing and strafing, the Germans trying desperately to smash our bridge heads, but we had such an effective air covering that all attempts failed.

On the 31st of March we crossed the Rhine at Mainz, over the longest tactical bridge ever built—1896 feet long, and we continued our fast pace, leaving behind us Frankfort, Bad Hamburg, Friedberg, Giessen, Hensfield, Bebra, Sontra, Eschwege and on to Mulhausen. Here we were finally relieved from the 65th to return to Sontra.

On April 7th we were again attached to the 76th and continued our destruction thru Hestra, Bad Tennstadt and Stroussfort. On April 11th we converted to M36's, self propelled, and started on our merry way again, taking a dozen or more towns, and hundreds of prisoners, finally stopping at Altenburg for the night.

On April 19th we entered Rabenslien—Gruna—and Sigmar area's and here we really gave these places a going over from the 19th to the 2nd of May. On the 2nd of May we were relieved by the second platoon and moved into reserve at Hohenstein for four days. On the morning of the 2nd we relieved a platoon of "A" company on the outskirts of Limbach, and on the 8th, official news came to us that at one minute past mid-night, unconditional surrender would become effective to end the war.

Thruout this war, from September 7th 1944 to May 9th 1945 the third platoon fought incessantly for a total of 243 two hundred and forty three days, and nights without any rest periods.

We are very proud of our record, and of our leader, who, always to our front, fearlessly led us to our achievements and victories.



Written By:

Sgt. Brown, R G  
Third Platoon, Co. B  
691 T. D. Bn.

## HEADQUARTERS PLATOON, COMPANY " B "

On the hot summer day of 25 June 1944, our battalion Commander, the late Lt. Col. Frank S. Buchanan, ordered the battalion to the main theatre in Camp Livingston, La., and it was there he told us, "men you are about to embark on a great adventure. " B " Co. took little interest in his talk at the time, but later those words proved to be a true fact.

Two weeks passed, and we were still doing that routine training, but of the 11th July 1945 the end had come as far as training was concerned, for on that day we boarded the train and was heading northeast, towards, Camp Miles Standish, mass to await further orders to go to the P. O. E.

Fourteen days later on 25th July 1944, we left Camp Miles Standish by train to go to the Boston P. O. E., where at 09.15 in the morning we were moving up the gang plank on one of America's greatest luxury liners. At 20.15 that night the anchor was lifted, and to the tune "of Over There" played by the ship's band, the liner slowly pulled out from her pier, and sailed majestically out of the harbor. Many a man stared at the shores, until they were completely out of site. They now realized the great adventure had begun.

For six long days and nights, the mighty luxury liner, fortified like a naval cruiser, plowed through the cold waters of the North Atlantic. For many of our men, it was their first trip on water, so of course sea sickness resulted, while, others took the trip like veterans of the seas. The living conditions on the ship were very good, with every one having a bunk, and eating to good meals each day.

Entertainment was had every night on the main deck, and it was here we would get a glimpse of the twenty female nurses, that was amongst us 8,000 G. I. "wolves". The trip was very interesting, as we saw lots of strange things we had never seen before, such as porpoises, schools of them jumping in and out of the water. Once or twice a day we would be visited by our shore patrol planes, doing look-out work for enemy subs, as we were un-escorted.

Finally, on the first day of August, port was sighted, after a calm and peaceful voyage where no enemy action what's ever was encountered. Entering the great port of Liverpool, England, the ships rails were lined with happy faced soldiers, their thoughts being to God for having brought them across in safety.

We watched men of the Air Corps, Infantry, Artillery and, nurses get off the ship, and as they'd debark from the ship, they'd receive loud applause from those waiting their turn to get off. Our turn came some 72 hours after the ships docking. As we were the last troops to leave the ship, it was here we were assigned our first overseas detail. We had to clean the ships quarters, and "twitching" had started in the E. T. O.

After getting off the ships, we were welcomed by Red Cross girls, who had doughnuts and hot coffee for us. After that we got on the train, and were headed for Aberveevanny, Wales some 175 miles from Liverpool. In reaching Aberveevanny we were surrounded by children, all of them crying out, "any gum chum", and of course the easy going G. I. had gum for all of them. In Albergenny we then got aboard a bus that took us to our barracks in Crickhowell, 8 miles away.

During our brief stay in Crickhowell, we were fully equipped with our guns, radio's half tracks, jeeps and all that goes with us in battle. While in Crickhowell, we were astonished to see how daylight still appeared at the late hour of 23:00, but once it got dark, it really was dark, as one would get lost in his own area, and would take quite some time to find his way home. When chow time came, we would be accommodated with thousands of honey bees, who would politely help themselves to our desert. It was no use in swatting the bees, as it would only result in a sting.

Nineteen days after arriving in Crickhowell, being fully equipped, we were again ready for another journey, this time to the southern part of England, to the part of Weymouth. Here on 25th August we boarded LST, and after a nights anchorage in the bay we set sail for the coast of France on that famous English Channel. On 27 August 1944 at 2100 we set foot on French soil, at the exact spot where the invasion had been made on D-Day. Wreckage that lined the shores proved that to us.

We moved in about three miles that evening, and then put up for a couple of nights rest, to wait further orders. On the 29th August the orders came, and we then started our dash across France to catch up with the front lines.

The man we had to catch up with was, the famous General Patton better known as "(Blood and Guts)" As he was in charge of the lucky Third Army in which we were all proud to have served in. There is no use of speaking about the Third Army as the world knows what it has done in World War 2.



On our way to catch up to the front lines, we saw our first results of warfare when we went through St Mere d-D-Eglise, Carathen, and St Lo, as these places were level ed by the armies in the first weeks of the invasion. We knew hundreds had been buried alive under the falling buildings, as we could smell the dead. Continuing we saw the big cities of Alecon, Le Mans, Chataudon, Orleans, Sens, Troyes, and Chaumont, all of which had scars of recent battles. All along the way we saw debris of wrecked American and German tanks, half tracks, and jeeps. White crosses here and there marked the graves of American soldiers who had died in action, while black crosses marked the graves of the dead German soldiers. In studying the faces of the men at this point, they were to full of emotion to explain what their thoughts were. Some no doubt were thinking of home, some of the future days to come, and some of that talked of adventure which the late Lt. Col. Buchanan had spoke of back in Camp Livingston, L.A.

The big day came on the evening of September 6, 1944, when the platoons of "B" Co. were split up, and brought up on the front lines for ready action. This was at a point near Neufchateau, France. We in Head-quarters platoon, ("B" Co., C. P.) didn't think or realize what it was all about yet, as the shells we saw exploding in the distance meant no danger to us. At this time, we were more worried about eating "C" and "K" rations than far off busting shells. Once being used to eating good hot "A" and "B" rations, it was quite a moral breaker to be eating those cold "C" and "K" rations. It was here we first saw how the infantrymen of the 35th Div. operated in battle conditions, and let me assure you they were a hard looking bunch of men, already veterans as compared to us rookies who had yet to see action for their first time.

A few days passed, and we then left the 35th Div., to go to protect the 12th Corps Hdq., which had been attacked the night before by big German tiger tanks. This was at a place called Pagny Meurth et Moselle. Our C. P. was in the woods in a town called Trondes. It was a quite village, which had already had it's taste of warfare.

From there we left for one of the greatest sights we had in France, for on Sept. 15th we received orders, and set out to liberate the great city of Nancy. The trip the rewas slowed up, as the highways leading to Nancy had been heavily mined. The mines were listed, and we moved in slow and cautiously. Some G. I.'s were not so fortunate as we, as their vehicles never did get into Nancy. After passing the mined filled highways we finally reached the outskirts of the big city, and with the aid of the Free French Forces of the Interior the Germans were driven from the city. In entering Nancy, it was one oration, after another, by wold hysterical people, happy to be given freedom again. They throwos flowers, gave us wine, grabbed and kissed us, and nothing was too good for their liberation.

We didn't stay in Nancy too long as that same night, the 80th Div., was having rough going on the Port de Mousson area. We were immediately summoned out to re-enforce them. After riding through most of the night, we found a great welcome in the morning as we were showered with a barrage of artillery from those famous 88's. It was a mad scramble for cover, with no one getting injured thus far. It was here we saw a pontoon bridge blown up, and repaired under fire, by some engineer unit, which suffered heavy losses. It was here "B" Co. had it's first casulties, and how we wished it would have been the last. It was also here, that it began to rain for every day for about two months, making the going that much more miserable.

When things got under control at the Port de Masesson we were then sent on another mission in Luneville, better know as the "mouth to hell". Here we were attached to the 42nd Cavalry. We moved in under the cover of darkness and it wasn't long before "B" Co. C. P. was being shelled by a hail of 88's. Then came the barking of both ours and the enemy machine guns, with tracer bullets flying over our heads. Rifles, Sub-Machine Guns, German Burp guns all let loose, and it was here we knew why prayers are said. It's the same story over again, there are no neatherns in fox holes. It was a night of shivering, not from the cold, but from fear. It was here we had our Company Commander, Capt. Westbrook wounded from shrapnel. It sure was great to see daylight again. That day, Capt. Bell became our Company Commander, but he didn't last too long, as eighteen hours after Capt Westbrook was wounded, he too was wounded by Machine Gun bullets and had to be evacuated. It was here too we had a first Sgt killed. It seems as though the enemy really were after the rank.

It sure was a relief to hear that we were going to leave Luneville and go to a point near the town of Maxie. The C. P. was in a little orchard, and it's a wonder we didn't drown here, as we never hone seen such a down pour it rained every day. We were forced to move in a barn in the village of Serres, and here we met another kind of enemy. It was the strange aroma of horse and cow manure.

At times the smell was so bad it nearly gagged us, but even that was hotter than drowning in a fox hole. From here on any shed, barn, or half orn up house became the home for the C. P.

After a couple of days in Serres we then moved to Arracourt, where we made our home for about six weeks. It was here our armies dug in to meet a strong enemy. Day in and out we got our daily shower of 88's, mud played it's part here, as daily rains made the going harder than ever. Here our casualty listed mounted every week, and losing Officers became a habit. We were first attached to the famous 4th Armored Div. here, and later the 26th Yankee Div., relieved the 4th Armored, and again the 26th showed that they lived

up to their record of the 1st World War. They held when odds were against them, even though it was at a high cost. We were at their flank, and what the enemy forgot to give them, they gave it to us. Arracourt will never be forgotten by the men who were there, it became the final resting place of many a "B" Co. man.

From Arracourt we then went to Reichcourt, where we became attached to the 2nd Cavalry. This place was another Arracourt, with daily showers of German Artillery and natural rains. It was here we spent November 11th (Armistice Day) of World War I, and how we hoped it would be a repeated day in history, but no such luck. While in Reichcourt we got our first welcome from big 220 MM shells. When they would hit, it seemed as though the end of the world had come. Many a day and night was spent in cellars, the heaven from that Hienie artillery.

Then came another big day, for on November 12, the third Army opened up with a big push. It was a cold day and instead of rain, it was snow that made the going rough. We moved our CP on to Moyon vec. This was the first town we had seen completely evacuated, and it seemed very spooky. While pulling guard that night, one could think of nothing but the dead we passed along the road that day. The adventure now was more of a nightmare than anything else. It was here that Capt Westbrook came back to us again, fully healed of his wounds. He relieved Lt Sims, who had been in charge of us since Capt Bell had been wounded. Rain still played its part with snow and sleet, making it useless to dig fox holes, as they would flood themselves in an hours time.

We then moved on to Donnom where we spent Thanksgiving day, eating turkey that had been cooked by the natives of the village. Here we could hear the talk of home, how we use to spend our Thanksgiving Day while in civilian life. There wasn't one of us that didn't have the blues that day.

The next day we moved on to Altweiler where we again became attached to the 26th Div.

Our next move was to Hidling where we were attached to the 6th Armored Division. Our platoons were guarding the Saar River, where we got our first sight of Germany. We didn't stay in Hudling too long, as we were ordered to be with the 87th Division, who at this time opened an assault south of Sarguemines. It was here our C. P. was only 600 yds from German soil. It was here we got news of Von Runstedts big counter offensive drive.

On the afternoon of Dec. 23, we were given the March order, and at that signal we knew we were headed for Belgium to reenforce General Hodges, 1st Army. We moved into Duss on Christmas Eve. And we were a tired bunch. We had our hot Christmas day dinner in Duss, and at 1800 that night we were again on the move. We went through Nancy and headed for Rhiems, reaching there the following morning. Here we put up for a 2 day rest, and this was our first and last rest while the war lasted. We again got moving and let me tell you, the weather was bitter cold. We passed through the big city of Charleville, on the French-Belgium border, no one was on the streets to cheer, as it was too damn cold for that. How we spoke of being home near a nice warm fire, doing parlor duty with the little honey. We knew it was foolish talk, but it did take our minds from the cold weather a little bit.

Finally on the morning of December 29th we found ourselves on the front lines again in Belgium, meeting that drive of Von Runstedts. Here we were meeting a determined enemy, fighting like maniacs, trying to fight their way back to Paris. It was here we can thank the cooperation which the Air corps gave us in helping to stop the movement of those German tanks and infantry. For a week it was one battle after another, with our forces finally getting the best of it. New Years Eve was plenty noisy, but it wasn't from celebrating, it was from the cannons, mortars, rockets, bombs, and everything else that goes in battle. It was here we also met a new kind of enemy, that was frozen feet. I can not say which was worse, the cold weather, or the fear of being killed. After about 14 days, the end of enemy action came to an end for us, and that sure was something to rejoice about. Our position in Belgium had been in a town called Morciy, in between St Hubert on the left and Bastogne on the right.

On January 12 we left Belgium, and headed for the country of Luxembourg. On the move, we passed an American Military Cemetery where we saw the white crosses laying row on row, thousands of them. About a half mile away we saw the German Military cemetery, and there too thousands had been buried, with more coming every day.

After a nights sleep in one small village we continued on to the front where we became attached to the 5th Div. It was this Division that held Von Runstedt from pushing on through Luxembourg. In Echternach we became attached to the 76th Division, and here again we had daily visits from that German Artillery. The shells were coming from the other side of the Our River, where Germany had one pillbox after another defending her territory. It was here in Luxembourg we got a new Company Commander. Lt. David F. O'Shell Jr., who is still with us.

Finally on March 4th, came the big day when we moved our C. P. in German Territory, the land where Hitler once said no one could penetrate. Those big concrete pill boxes, those big dragon jaws of steel and concrete used for Anti-tank blockade meant nothing now. It was here that the so called "Rat Race" began.

It was one division, racing the other division to see who would reach the Rhine River first. It was here we knew the German armies were beginning to get disorganized and we had a feeling the end of the war was close.

On the 18th of March we found our C. P. on the Rhine River in the city of Oppenheim. It was here our Company was guarding the pontoon bridges that carried thousands of troops across. It was here we got our daily night attacks from Me 109. They would bomb and strafe us, trying to blow up the pontoon bridges, but the only results was that they would end up being shot out of the skies by the anti-aircraft units. When the Nazi planes would come, it was another race to be the first one in the cellar, as bombs aren't so good if you care to live. At that time we had been attached to both the 65th and 26th Divisions.

After knowing the pontoon bridge were secured from any further danger, we then moved on through Mainz, where we crossed the Rhine River. We headed for the big highway known as the Reichs autobahn and kept on moving to our next destination. We passed Frankfurt and finally came to Langenselza our destination. Here we became attached to the 76th Division and stayed with them until the end of the war.

While on that move we saw thousands upon thousands of the freed prisoners that Germany was using as slave laborers. There were French, Poles, Russians and Czech. It was a sad looking sight as some of them looked like skeletons. Just by looking at them one knew the hell they must of been through. It was here we knew that our fighting was not done for nothing, and had Germany won the war, it would of been a tragic world to live in. It was while in Langenselza that "B" Co. was converted from a 3" gun towed outfit, to a 90MM self-propelled outfit. It sure was great to receive these new weapons, as there was plenty of protection for the men. Now we were really ready to finish the job.

From Langenselza to our final town in Hoenstien, it was one victory after another, taking town after town. Our guns would fire a few shots in the village, and then all the white surrender flags would come up. It was the same sight day after day, seeing hundreds of German soldiers surrendering, and also seeing the thousands of liberated slave workers heading for their home, some of them too hungry to walk another step.

Finally on the morning of May 9th at 0001 o'clock the word of victory was announced, and not too much excitement was among us. We were sort of stunned, and couldn't realize the great adventure had come to an end, only after countless lives had been lost. Even though the end had come, we still kept on the alert, as the sources of past history warned us how tricky the enemy was and just couldn't be trusted.

Pfc Leo E. Cote.

