

2ND PLATOON RECONN.

The second platoon arrived at Uath beach on the 27 of August, 1944, with the rest of the Battalion. Moving onto the beach they bivouaged and made preparations for movement to the front. Two days later they moved out at the head of one column of vehicles the Battalion having been divided into two columns, one heavy and one light. Lt. Stricklen, platoon leader of the second, heading the heavy column. Traveling for two days the column was held up for two days for lack of gasoline. It must be understood that at this time supply, as always, was a critical problem. Upon receiving supplies they again advanced passing through the city of Orleans enroute. At this time, Orleans was only across the river from the front lines. Continuing on their way without the presence of Pvt. G. A. Knight, who dropped from the column with a bad tire on his motorcycles. Advancing through, Sens, and Troyes, the Battalion caught up with the 35th Div. just to the east of, Troyes. They were attached to the 35th and after a layover of two days they advanced to, Thully, with the second platoon forming flank guard, one section with Staff Sergeant Higginbotham, taking the North side and the other with Lt. Stricklen, taking the South side.

At, Thully, the Battalion came under fire for the first time. Fortunately no one was hurt, though they were a little scared.

After a counterattack at, Toul, the Battalion was moved to that vicinity on their second night at, Thully. The second platoon doing route reconnaissance over two routes with the first platoon following with the rest of the Battalion.

While here the Battalion was attached to the 12th Corp., and working with the 9th T. D. Gp. Moving out they were included in the task force that took the city of, Nancy. Parts of the Battalion being among the first into, Nancy.

Immediately upon completion of their mission they were rushed North to the 80th Div. sector around, Dioluard. Here the Battalion, "B" Company, fired their first shots at the enemy. The enemy dispersed and ran.

Moving South in a forced march made at night the Battalion arrived in the vicinity of, Luneville France. On the morning of the next day the second platoon and "B" Company entered the town and set up positions on the northeastern edge of the city. Promptly at dusk they were attacked, after much shooting, "B" company and the second platoon withdrew from the town. Later the first platoon of "B" company was reorganized and sent back into the town, where they remained.

Upon the eve of the next day the second platoon and the rest of "B" company returned to the city. The night was spent with a lot of shooting, but nothing else.

On the next day toward dusk, First Sgt. Brown, and Capt. Bell, Capt. Bell, having taken over when, Capt. Westbrook, was wounded, advanced on the hill to the immediate front to see if they could contact a friendly unit. They dismounted from their vehicle there and were immediately fired upon by mg. and rifles. Both were wounded and plunged into a shell hole to avoid further harm. The vehicle in which they were in, an M20, raced back for help which was furnished in the form of the two armored cars of the second platoon. Advancing to the scene of action, Capt. Bell, being rescued they searched for, Sgt. Brown. In this action the MS of, S/Sgt. Higginbotham, was hit and set on fire by a German bazooka. Two of the men escaped with little harm but, S/Sgt. Higginbotham, was killed and the gunner, PFC Jenkins, was critically injured. Lt. Stricklen, returned to the scene and removed the body of S/Sgt. Higginbotham, in the face of enemy fire. The next morning the Battalion was withdrawn and moved to the north.

On the same night the second platoon moved into, Valbey, with one platoon of "B" company. They stayed here for several days with very little action.

Moving to the north just out side of, Arracourt, the second platoon stayed with "B" company and was saved from a pretty bad shellacking by the Air Corps. This was just to the east of hill 265. Lt. Watts, was killed here.

Moving back into, Arracourt, the platoon stayed with the Battalion Hq. for several days. Here they did but very little, and, Col. Buchanan, was killed.

From here the Platoon moved to, Richicourt (Lapelite). They did very little there either, outside of one mine sweeping job. In a way it was fun. We can remember sitting at the window and watching the shells fall into the church house roof, and just thinking if they misjudged their distance a few yards, they could have been hitting in our bedroom. War is funny that way, things that are not really funny make you laugh at the time.

It was here that we really began to sympathize with the Inf. man. After walking over the places they had been, we could see what they had been through. I will take my hat off to them any day.

From here we moved on to remember Moynvic. From there we moved on to the northeast. The towns are hard to remember because the whole front was on the move. We were attached to the 26th Div. at this time.

Heading in the general direction of, Saargemines, we finally ended up in the town of, Folkington, just to the south of, Saarburucken. Here we ran contact patrols contacting the first reconnaissance platoon in one direction and trying but never succeeding in contacting another unit in the other. We worked on a 24 hour bases, 24 on and 24 off. This was no picnic either. Our Infantry being dug in to our rear and the Heines to our immediate front. The Jerries missed their chance there.

It was soon after this that the battle of the bulge began, and the Battalion was pulled back and put on the road for there with the 87th Div.

Arriving in Belgium the Battalion went into action near, St. Hubert. The second was attached to "A" company here and did little except put out outpost. Soon they went to "C" company. However nothing much came of this except a lot of shells coming our direction. Resistance soon crumbled here and the Battalion was sent to Luxembourg.

Luxembourg, was a picnic for the second until the attack on the Siegfried line started. Then things weren't so rosy for awhile as the reconnaissance platoons, the calvary, and the engineers had to take over the places vacated by the Inf. This lasted until the Battalion was sent south and east into, Wailwissie France and Germany.

Upon arrival of the 65th Inf. the second placed outpost on the Siegfried line to aid "B" company. This lasted until the break through took place. From here it was just a rat race to see who beat who where. The second stopped in, Neunkirchen, while "B" company continued to the Rhine. After a few days here, in which "A" company was selfpropelled, they started for the Rhine.

Crossing the Rhine at, Mainz, with "C" company the second went almost to, Kassel, before heading due east. Later while on a reconnaissance mission near, Eschwege, and Oberhone, the platoon captured 58 prisoners including some SS that tried to get away, 3 did escape. Also taken were 3-20MM guns and a self-propelled 105 that had been put out of action by an incendiary grenade. The platoon smashed the AA guns and moved into, Eschwege.

A few days later while on another reconnaissance mission 19 more prisoners were taken near, Falungen. From here they moved back with the rest of the Battalion to finish being reconverted. This was not completed even this time.

From here on until the end of the war it was just one race after another. At the end of the war the platoon was situated in, Limbach, with the rest of the Company, the front having been stabilized before it.

MARTIN E. STRICKLEN,
1st Lieut., F. A. (TD)

1st PLATOON RECONN.

1. After a very enjoyable, but monotonous trip across the deep on the U. S. S. WAKEFIELD, we landed in Liverpool, a part of "Cheery Old England", on August 1, 1944, at eleven o'clock in the evening. It has been said that we were the last to leave the ship, just like the "Faithful Old Captain". The sailors must have been very tired after that trip, for we had the job of cleaning the ship. From our well polished boat, we traveled by train to ABRAGAVENNY, and boarded double decker busses, the majority sought for the top deck, for with the small streets, you could see right into the second story windows, that is, if you were fast enough, for it seems there was no speed limit to the busses. We were brought to a small town called Crickhowell, famed for its pubs. It was the first night that the 691st arrived that all the Pubs in town, went dry.

From our short stay in Crickhowell, where we made many friends, and broke a few hearts, our bags were again packed, where we moved to a marshalling area in Southern England, where we camped for three days,

from there it was Weymouth, and aboard the LST, to Utah Beach, France, on the 27th of August, and scrambled here, there, and everywhere, trying to catch up to General Patton, till we ran completely out of gas at La Chaille, there we stayed a week. Finally we received priority, and received enough gas to get us at least, close to the front lines. Little did we realize what we were in for. At the time, there were two platoons, the 1st and the second, attached to Headquarters, and used throughout the Battalion where needed most.

Attached to the 35th Division, 134th Regiment, we received our initial "Baptism of Fire". We became very well acquainted with the German 88's at Germanay where we were reconnoitering a side road, Heinie artillery opened without warning, which almost ended our career at the start, this forced us to abandon the idea temporarily. The very next day, green as we were, penetrated deep into enemy territory, and were the first American troops in Perrie Aux Forge, the overjoyed civilians showered us with champagne, wine and whatnot. From there we returned to our C. P., and the Battalion moved to Pagne.

On the 15th September, we joined the 35th Division on its attack on Nancy, having a population of 400,000, otherwise known as the Paris of Eastern France. Our job, the 1st Platoon, was to provide an escort, as an armored guard for the general. We started

at six o'clock in the morning, and hit Nancy at 1 o'clock in the afternoon. It was indeed a "Sweat Job", being out in front, as a Spear-head for the column. Upon arriving, everything seemed peaceful, and quiet, too quiet, for when we reached the town square, hell broke loose. Bullets were flying all around, that, was another "first", the first time we were under Small Arms fire. At four o'clock, the same day, the town was completely liberated. After that accomplishment we were attached to the 80th Division and helped them cross the Moselle at St. Genevieve, which proved very costly to both sides, but our side completed its mission, the crossing was successful. From there we were attached to the 9th T. D. Group, and went to Vitremont, the next day, on a routine patrol, we suffered our first causality during an Artillery Barrage, Owen W. Edwards, a fellow that toy couldn't get angry.

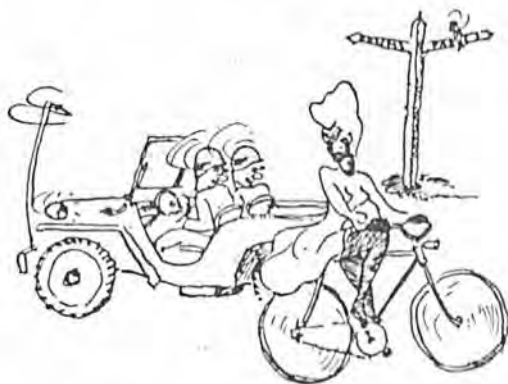
shrapnell, later we found out, he was on the way to the hospital. It was a tremendous shock to the platoon, made them more cautious, and more blood-thirsty. From there it was another attachment, we were with the Fourth Armored. Our platoon was our in front of Company "A" of our Battalion, protecting its guns at Vitremont, when at midnight, we received a call from the battalion C. P. to come, at once to Luneville to protect the forward Command Post. We left, at once, and while approaching Luneville, we noticed a withdrawal in force, but undaunted we went forward to put up a protective screen in front of the Battalion C. P., to fight off the Patrols, the Heinies were sending over. There was no sleep that night, or for three nights to come, the shell fire was terrific. Someone said, they even saw a kitchen sink come over.

From there we were attached to Patton's Ghosts, the Second Cavalry, to put out a protective screen for the southern flank of the 3rd Army.

On September 26th, we were reattached to the Fourth Armored Division, 10th Armored Infantry Regiment, at Reichcourt, where we went to hill 265, to protect our "A" Companies guns, and the Fourth Armoreds O. P. At this point we were met with another causality, a new replacement of two days, private Kinswater, a shrapnell wound in the neck, he was hospitalized or 6 months, and is now back in the battalion Fifteen days later, after going through hell on earth, being shelled, strafed, once by our own planes, we withdrew to Arracourt, for a much needed rest. During this rest, we operated Liaison for the Battalion to the 26th Division Headquarters, with whom we were attached, at the time.

On November 8th, we left our snug barn, and went to Myonvic, the tunneled City, every house had connecting tunnels. From there we trugged to Hampoint, where we received a very warm reception of Heinie Artillery fire, which lasted for days. There were times, when we thought that we were the only American soldiers in Europe. There were some mighty close one's, but thank God, no one went down for the count. After a few days, we had the Heinie's on the run again, and chased them clear past Conthil. The next day the civilians were evacuated, and all the time we were there not a shot was heard until the last civilian left, then the Heinies cut loose with their Artillery again. At the time we thought the cellars would be the best place, for a while, and headed for them, but Pronto.

From here we worked toward BENESEDORF, where we watched the civilians collecting the dead soldiers.



Again we left, to go to Courviller to work with the 26th Division, Reconnaissance, and pull security, a very tough job, for we then had thirteen hours of darkness.

Attached to the 86th Recon. Squadron "B" Troop, we went to Morsbach, where we ran foot patrols, and held security so the 26th could rest. It was just a week before Xmas when we left Morsbach, to go to Gerheim, Germany to join the 87th Division, where the 7th Army relieved us, so we went from one extreme to the other, from the southern flank of the 3rd Army, up to the Bulge, where there was a terrific amount of G. I. equipment lying all around. At this time it was in the dead of winter it would snow, freeze, snow, and snow again, and take our word for it, it's a job to try to dig into frozen ground. Many a night we'd work the entire night digging a hole, but we'd well know it'd be worth it the next day, for a hole means security during an Artillery Barrage.

After the capture of St. Hubert, in Belgium, we then headed for Luxembourg, joined the 2nd Cavalry, and helped erase a small pocket. Then we left for Strasbourg, Germany, where we had a very short stay of a couple of hours, then once again so we left another long cold journey to Saarlautern, where our platoon held an Observation Post for the Battalion on a Heinie Pill box, again we were subject to intense artillery and mortar fire, now and then a Screaming Mamie was heard. After chasing the Heinies from their well fortified Pill Boxes, we went on, what is generally called a "RAT RACE", trying to get the Heinies to make a stand, which they refused, except at intervals, till "A" Company of our Battalion was made self propelled, and spear headed an attack across the Rhine River, and across Germany to Langensalsa, where an intense battle of five hours. Surrender, hanging out white flags, and civilians waving to us, till we reached the heart, then the shooting started coming from all over. Heinie's were throwing grenades, firing everything from pistols to flak guns, we were bombed, and strafed by the Heinie super-men. After all was settled, the job done, we were relieved by the 65th Division.

Attached to the 76th Division we made an attack on Zeitz, where the Heinie's had a large Officers Training School, and proved very stubborn, till our 90. M. M. and 37 M. M. guns, gave them a good working over, then they decided it would be much healthier to give up. We then Spearheaded the 76th drive clear to Chemnitz, where our last shells were fired. We halted our offensive operations, for the Russians were to take the City.

Pfc. Burton Boston
Pfc. John Roberson.

HISTORY OF THIRD PLATOON, RCN

The Battalion being converted from Towed to Self propelled, the TO called for the activation of the third Reconnaissance platoon. The platoon was activated on March 23, 1945. The platoon was made up of men from the other gun companies. The Battalion was pulled in and assembled in, Langensalsa Germany, on March 24, 1945. The Third Platoon was allotted 24 hours to form and move out as a combat unit. No personnel, no vehicles, and no weapons. Under the supervision of the platoon leader, Lt. Joseph W. Callan, the platoon was formed to full T. E. and T. O. in the allotted time and moved out attached to company "C" as a combat unit.

The platoon moved to the vicinity of, Altenburg Germany, on mopping up action, in support of 3rd Battalion 285 Inf. Regt. attached to the third platoon of company "C".

The platoon was engaged in a fire fight on April 20, in Seifersbach, during a heavy artillery barrage, Lt. Callan, the platoon leader was wounded and evacuated. Staff Sergeant Kellum, became acting platoon leader. On April 27th the platoon was engaged in close support of "A" company 3rd Battalion 385 Inf. Regt. 76th Div., east of the Mulde River. On this date the platoon was the closest American troops in the Div. Sector to the Russian front. The platoon could hear Russian artillery barrages in the distance.

On the 29th of April the Platoon was pulled back and assembled under Company control in, Limbach Germany, waiting the meeting of the Russians and American forces.

The platoon was on administration duty with the Company when the news of the Armistice came on May 9th.

From this date until the present the platoon has been under Company control in support of Military Government in, Ronneberg Germany, and surrounding vicinity.

The platoon is now commanded by, Sergeant Harley F. Fynn.



MEDICAL-DETACHMENT- 691 T.D. BN.

This Medical Detachment is proud to present to the fellow country-men its history and training for combat, and its function during combat. Tiring days of classes and demonstrations were given this Detachment, also the Detachment giving demonstrations to the Battalion, preparing for combat.

The important function of this Detachment is to care for the sick and the wounded; and to keep track of administration, which protects the individual in many ways, as well as the government.

We have the honor and privilege of presenting one award, the PURPLE HEART. Given to the soldier for wounds and injuries received in action against the enemy.

The name "Pill Rollers" was given to this Detachment, along with the other Medical units in the Army. Our men have always laughed it off, and performed their duties for their fellowmen.

The Medical Detachment, attached to the 691st Tank Destroyer Battalion was activated 15 December 1941 at Fort Bliss, Texas. On this date there were only four men in the Detachment: Albert J. Ryan, Jack Carson, cadre from 3rd F.A. Bn., Med. Det., from Fort Riley, Kansas. Merele E. Johnson and Martin Mandell, cadre from 16th F.A. Bn., Med. Det., from Fort Riley, Kansas. The four men assumed the responsibility of taking care of the Battalion Sick Call by working with the 8th Engineer Medical Detachment.

Five days later, Captain Harry W. Free was assigned as Battalion Surgeon. On this date four more men were transferred into the Detachment: Elmer Williams, from the 69th F.A. Bn., Med. Det., Manuel Candelaria, from 82nd F.A. Bn., Med. Det., along with Anselme M. Contrera and Luis Moncada. Capt. Free called all members together on 20 Dec. 1941 to form our own Dispensary and to assign certain duties to each individual. The showdown was that the 8th Eng. Bn and the 691st Bn. had to combine the Dispensary that was centrally located between the two areas.

After the Christmas Holidays, Capt. Free scheduled many various topics of First Aid classes to the Detachment, along with the classes of First Aid the Detachment was required to take strenuous exercises to condition their bodies.

On 1 Feb. 1942, Samuel Cholfin became a member of the Detachment, and gave us more efficiency. Sam being a qualified massuer in civilian life added more efficiency to the Detachment. The following day the Detachment acquired nine more members: Angelo W. Lacrenza, Thomas Meyers, Gilbert W. Watkins, Jack Baer, Clarence Briton, Louis Thomanson, Charles Baumgarten, Franck J. LaBruyer, and C. B. Bowen.

After several weeks of intense training and numeral classes, the men were becoming good First Aid-men. At this time the Battalion was sent to participate in the 1942 Louisiana Maneuvers. Here, the men learned to do things they were taught in class work and made a splendid showing for themselves.

Captain Brewer D. Wheelis was assigned to this Detachment during the middle of the 1942 Maneuvers in Louisiana.

After completing maneuvers we were sent to Camp Hood, Texas, and here we really learned the function with a Tank Destroyer Bn, and under the supervision of, Capt Wheelis, Capt Reece, Lt Chaslin, Capt Wittcoff, and Lt Kraft, the detachment was taught how a Medical Detachment for a Tank Destroyer Bn should function. Administration work was scheduled in class work for approximately eight hours a week during our training period in Camp Hood, Texas.

Our next move was to the B.U.T.C. in Camp Bowie, Texas in Dec. 1942. Here Capt Reece was sent to Medical Officers School in Carlisle Barracks, Pa. Capt Wheelis took command of the Detachment

at this time. After about five days of deep sincere thinking and out-living the function of the Detachment, and trying to get the Detachment to higher efficiency, Capt Wheelis began submitting names for Surgical and Medical Technicians Courses in Army General Hospitals. Angelo Lacerenza, Frank LaBruyer, and Gilbert Watkins were the first to attend these courses at this time. Also at this time, the Detachment lost six members of the Detachment: Anselmo Contreras, Manuel Candelaria, Louis Moncada, Albert J. Ryan, and Thomas Meyers were sent to the Gun Companies of the Battalion. Here the Detachment was assigned thirteen new members who had been inducted only a few days in the Army prior to be assigned to the Detachment. The following named men were assigned at this time: John A. Starker, Donald F. Harkins, Edward C. Sheppard, Samuel E. Oden, Frank A. Pisok, Frederick J. Ross, John Miller, Dewey Beidler, John A. Bobbitt, Harry W. Jonas, John W. Leopold, Richard E. Vowles, and Albert A. Bilotto. The men received their basic training in the Army with other men who had joined them at this time at Camp Bowie. Before basic training was completed the Battalion was moved to Camp Claiborne, La. Here the men completed their basic training and then joined the Detachment on duty.

Jack Carson was sent to attend Surgical Technician School in Brookes General Hospital, Ft. Sam Houston, Texas on 29 Feb. 1943. One month later the following men were sent to Surgical Technician School in Ft. Sam Houston, Texas: Edward C. Sheppard, John F. Miller. The following at the Medical Technician School: John W. Leopold, and Dewey Beidler, while John A. Starker attended Surgical Technician School at Fitzsimons General Hospital in Denver, Colorado. All of this was due to the effort of Capt Wheelis trying to attain the highest peak of efficiency of the Detachment for the Battalion. Sam Kolfschand and Charles Baumgarten were transferred here. Sam to the Air Corps and Charles to 3rd Army's Surgeon's office.

During the months of April and May, 1943, the Battalion participated in the Louisiana Maneuvers. Here the new men learned what army life really was. They learned that the subjects taught to them in classes were very beneficial to them, and their fellowmen: hereby proving to their Detachment Commander that they were the men he wanted to serve for him in the Detachment for combat missions, to care for the men of the Battalion. Also how to obtain supplies and difficulties of administration was learned by our chief clerk, Albert A. Bilotto. By the time the maneuvers were completed every man knew his faults and errors he had made and were willing to correct them for the future.

Again the Battalion returned to Camp Clairborn, La., for further training and again the Detachment went through a series of classes of First Aid. Administration again was stressed very intensively by Capt Wheelis. This is very important for the company air man, if he has the knowledge of administration, he can save time and work and can be of great benefit, both to the government and the individual concerned.

Many field problems were scheduled for the Battalion in the fall of 1943, where members of the Detachment learned to use the new Jeep Litter Rack Carrier. Problems of various things were scheduled and the members of the Detachment brushed up on their work where they were weak.

One day in May of 1944 the Battalion moved to Camp Livingston, La. for final preparations for over-seas shipment. Here the Detachment reviewed on all subjects and again Capt Wheelis stressed first-aid, evacuation of sick and wounded, shock, hemorrhage, and administration, throughly to the Detachment.

The Battalion departed from Camp Livingston, La., on 11 July 1944, for Camp Myle Standish, Mass. After several weeks, the Battalion headed for Boston and loaded aboard the great ship "Wakefield", and started their long awaited journey across the Atlantic Ocean.

Due to illness, Elmer Williams remained hospitalized in Camp Myle Standish and Merle Johnson was made 1st Sgt of the Detachment.

On the 1st day of August 1944 the Battalion unloaded in Liverpool and journeyed to Wales. Here, supplies and equipment were obtained. Vehicles were checked and litter racks made and tried out thoroughly. Again Capt Wheelis gave the Detachment a final "brush up" before departing for France.

In September 1944, the Battalion was committed into combat. Approximately a month went by before we had a casualty. Our first casualties were treated and evacuated by Edward Sheppard and Eric Oppenheimer. These two soldiers did a wonderful job in obtaining the wounded men and did very excellent work in administration of first aid.

Two aid men were attached to each company of the Battalion and one attached to the rear echelon, while the Battalion possessed towed guns. Eight men assigned to the Battalion Aid station. The gun company aid man evacuated their patients through the Division Collecting Stations which were more forward than the Bn aid stations. This enabled the wounded faster service and quick evacuation where treatments were administered more effectively and the patient assured quicker recovery.

During the month of October 1944 we lost Frank LaBruyer due to combat exhaustion. Leo Lapon accidentally was shot through the knee when a rifle was discharged accidentally. We received two new members during the month of October: John A. Savona and Richard E. Vowles, who rejoined the Detachment; being transferred to a gun company prior to embarking for over-sea shipment.

Two days prior to the jump off into Germany, Frank A. Pisok, distinguished himself by dashing into a mine field trying to rescue three seriously wounded men who had hit mines with their Jeep. Frank was tossed approximately ten or fifteen feet a bouncing betty which he had stepped on unknowing, due to concentrating solely upon the injured men. He was awarded the Silver Star for his act of bravery.

Three more members distinguished themselves on hill 265, near Reichcourt, France by going to the aid of the wounded under enemy fire, and being pinned down for hours by sniper fire, namely C. B. Bowen, and John A. Bobbitt and Edward C. Sheppard, who for their heroic and meritorious service were awarded the Bronze Service Star.

Near the end of the war, Jack Carson distinguished himself by dismounting from a vehicle under heavy sniper fire while on patrol in Siegmars Germany and administered first-aid to three wounded men and evacuating them to safety. He was awarded the Bronze Service Star.

During the Battalion's time of combat, efficient administrative work was carried out by Albert A. Bilotto, the Detachment Clerk. We are very proud to present so efficient a clerk, who has willingly worked hour after hour without tiring, never forgetting his great job.

Near the close of the war, the Detachment was over strength one man, due to Harry Jonas and John Leopold being assigned to the Detachment after the Battalion changed to Self propelled vehicles and guns. John Savona was transferred to HQ. Co.



T/5 Albert BILOTTO.

“ GET THAT MESSAGE THROUGH ”

Send this message out right away!!

Call the companies on the radio immediately!!

Go out and check the telephone line!!

Have that radio checked!!

Those phrases were familiar ones used during the heat of battle and the Communication Platoon, responded magnificently.

It has been definitely proven that no unit in the Armed Forces can function properly without communications. The government has devoted millions and millions of dollars so that schools and equipment could be set up for the teaching of this fascinating subject. In order to have good communications, you must have....

A Communication Chief that can handle his job as well as his men and is qualified to take any tack concerning communication regardless of what it is. T/Sgt Erwin L. Schmeideberg has proven this fact to be true during our ten months of combat. When the going got tough he was there with his men to boost their morale and give them courage to go on. You must have.....

Men, above all, qualified to clear traffic of all types and get the message through even if it is impossible. As far as the men were concerned no message was impossible and every message that was handed to an operator was cleared either by radio, wire or messenger. The Battalion although handicapped by the shortage of CW operators functioned normally. The vital radio session with “ Twenty Four Hour A Day ” Sg Raymond K. Ruggiero in charge operated under conditions that the books in Camp Hood said were impossible. Putting in long hours with little or no sleep became routine with the radio crew and numerous times their duties were performed under the most hazardous conditions. On flygian black nights two radio operators would depart in a radio jeep for the front lines and defy the foe's harassing fire until every message was cleared. At all times when the Battalion was engaging the enemy there was a radio operator on the job and he would remain by the radio no matter how dangerous his position became. We would like to bring out one point especially,

not to knock Camp Hood tactics, however it was proven that CW operation was vital during our breaching of the Seigfried Line at Echternach, Luxembourg between our Companies within the Battalion. Although the radio section at that time had six men, three of which went to different line Companies to establish communication on that offensive. They were Sgt Daniel H. Wilshire to Company C. Sgt Donald P. Dale to Company A. Corporal Clarence E. Bozello to Company B. These men were radio men a Communication Officer can be proud of. Under hazardous fire and stiff enemy opposition these men worked night and day clearing traffic to the three remaining operators back at the Command Post. Those operators were S/Sgt Giovanni B. Lamboghini, Sgt Raymond K. Ruggiero and Corporal Edward J. Auwaerter. The very few men put their hearts into the job as well as many hard tiresome hours. The nights were long and dreary and the receivers sang out with messages of importance to help the unit function in the greatest task on earth. "War against Axis Germany". You must have.....

A Message Center and our Message Center is one the Battalion is proud of. Under the superior supervision of Sgt George Acklin the Message Center functioned without rest over the long period of combat we faced. To express in words on paper how it all operated would be nearly impossible. Every man on his toes ready to clear traffic of all sorts was the motto of Message Center. Each man knowing the job of the next, ready to take over under any circumstances. This was proven by Corporal Harry B. Hornikel when Sgt George Acklin and Pfc Thomas B. Wood were delivering an urgent message to Division. Due to an unfortunate accident they were both injured. Cpl Hornikel took the job over regardless of the loss to the Message Center. He managed and achieved a goal to look up to. Pfc Thomas B. Wood for several months was the only messenger the Center had. Without complaints he carried messages through thick and thin. Tired and weary at times he never complained but hopped to the order of get that message through. You must have.....



A wire crew. The wire section is another vital cog in communications and it is headed by Sgt Lawrence A. Miller. Sgt Miller became so adept at laying wire that oftimes he had wire communication with our line companies and Division before our Command Post closed into its new position. Wire was layed and lines checked under all kinds of abverse conditions including weather, Mine fields, enemy fire and booby traps. The switchboard was necessary at nearly all installations and at times two twelve drop boards were needed for the Battalion to function quickly and efficiently. You must have.....

A Battalion Repair Section. One that can handle any job of repair whatsoever. Sgt John W. Eskins and Corporal Laing T. Batchler put in hours untought of by any T/O. They repaired stes that any human would think was junk. Many a time radio sets unfit for any type of operation whatsoever were repaired in no time by the two "Brains" and on the line ready to face combat once again.

All this is needed to keep the Battalion ready to move and to face and engage the enemy effecttively. We can say that Communications are the eyes of our well organized Battllion.

" SAGA OF SUPPLY "

Did you ever hear, or read, of an action in which the guns of " Company D ", or of the " 1st. Platoon " did so and so, under such and such conditions? And, if so, did you wonder where they got the shells with which to do it, or, for that matter, the guns? And how do you suppose they manage to keep so well-fed, well-clothed, well-equipped; how can they always be so well-supplied with gasoline, and oil, and all of the many other things without which they could not hop to successfully wage war, especially the fluid type of battle now demanded by

the mobility of modern war machines? To be quite frank, possibly they could not, but for the efforts of a small but quite necessary, section; Battalion Supply, or, more popularly, "S-4", whose responsibility it was to see to it that never did any part of the Battalion lack for anything which it should have. And it never did.

Since the first day on which the Battalion saw action, early in September, 1944, never for one single day has S-4 ceased to function, even though often that meant that it was up to, someone to make a trip of four or five hundred miles, in order to get needed clothing, or equipment. Nor were we ever stopped by weather conditions, or tactical situations, or lack of familiarity with local terrain. It was a full-time, day and night job, which had to be done, and right away, at that. Our buddies in the Destroyer companies may not have felt that we were doing quite as much of a job as they were, but even so they always knew that we would be there when needed, with what was needed. Which shouldn't be too bad, as a commendation.

When we first came over, our section was headed by Capt. L. B. Edwards, Supply officer, under whose supervision we worked until late March, when the Captain left us, and was succeeded by 1st Lt. George M. Cushing. The original section was composed of the following men: T/Sgt. L. E. Keele, S/Sgt. M. E. Evans, Sgt. F. A. Read, T/4 R. E. Bechtol, T/5 Burton Boston, T/5 Charles Lange, T/4 Ray Ruggiero, (Radio), Pfc. Roger Still, and Pfc. Alvin H. Mundy. Gradually, however, our personnel underwent an almost complete change, until at present there are only two men of the original group who are still here, Mundy and Read. In addition to those mentioned above, we have also the following list, who came to us at various times, within the past eight months: T/5 John Hine, driver of the ration truck, S/Sgt. Fred Kerby, assistant Supply Sgt., T/5 Herbert Grasley, gas and oil Non-Com, Sgt. Kyle G. Baker, Ammo. Sgt., T/5 Luedecke, Ration Detail, Pfc. Jose Chavez, rations, Pfc. Charles Morris, driver, and Pfc. Joseph Wanko, driver. All of these are still in the Section, though many are now in new jobs.

As pertains to official recognition of our services, we have not been commended or decorated, either individually or as a Section, and the purple Heart worn by Cpl. Luedecke is the only medal of which we might boast, but we are more than glad to see the medals go where they belong, to the real combat soldiers of the letter companies and Recon. Company, of our outfit. For our part, we shall always be able to look back on a tough job well done, and be content with what we have been able to accomplish, under such adverse conditions. For we know we have done our job.

COMPANY HEADQUARTERS PLATOON

The importance of Company Headquarters platoon in any organization cannot be emphasized too strongly. This platoon is chiefly made up of its First Sergeant, Motor Sergeant, Supply Sergeant, Mess Sergeant, and their necessary assistants.

During the ten (10) months of combat this Organization has been through, Company Headquarters platoon has functioned with the greatest of efficiency, stability, and regularity.

Through the leadership and guidance of First Sergeant Ernest F. Osborn, the platoon can be called highly successful. Sgt. Osborn has always been close to his platoon and has always aided his men in every possible way.

T/Sgt. Walter W. Rule, Company Motor Sergeant, with the aid of his assistants, Tec. 4 Jack B. Tucker, Tec. 4 Joseph H. Yates, and Tec. 5 Joseph H. Folino, has done a magnificent job of keeping our vehicles in running condition.

S/Sgt. Juan M. Benavides, Company Supply Sergeant, with the assistance of Tec. 5 James G. Karangel and Charles J. Lange, and with the aid of his driver, Pfc. Melvin E. Steringa, has drawn and issued supplies in all types of weather and hardships. It has been Sgt. Benavides' aim to keep the men well supplied.

S/Sgt. Theodore C. Brose, Mess Sergeant, with the aid of his assistants, Tec. 4 Daniel Alexander, Tec. 4 Joseph Szucs, Tec. 5 David S. Brown, Tec. 5 Harry L. Brubaker, Pfc. Ernest S. Yoder, and Pfc. Robert H. Allland, has come through with the "chow". Most of the time hot meals were available and when not, ten in one menu or "C" rations were put to very good use.

Tec. 5 George E. Marshall, Battalion Mail Clerk, with the aid of his assistant, Tec. 5 Paul J. Goedde, and his driver, Pfc. Joe T. Carpenter, the mail has come through under all types of difficulties and with most regularity. His efficiency can be exceeded by none.

After considering what we have had to work with, and under what conditions we had to work in, the men performed their duties expertly. Each was dependent of each other and through the keen co-operation of all, Company Headquarters platoon functioned very successfully.

UNIT PERSONNEL SECTION

691st TANK DESTROYER BATTALION

Less, perhaps, than any does this chapter reflect to the history of the 691st Tank Destroyer Battalion, heroic action, achievement and exposure to suffering, yet since all other great adventures have their more less thrilling episodes, it cannot possibly be omitted, lest a false impression of indifference be created. However, let me relate that the Unit Personnel Section, under the genial guidance of CWO JACK H. BURDAN, performed its required duties in an exceptionally competent manner, and at times, under most difficult working conditions, foregoing sleep and rest, continuously maintained its records at a high standard, contributing immeasurably to the successful and smooth operation of the Battalion Administration throughout the 691st's journey in the European Theater of Operations.

Hereforth, this shall attempt to pass roughly the procedures, experiences, and travels of the Section subsequent its arrival upon the European continent on 27 August, 1944...

When the Battalion embarked at Dorchester, England, 25 August 44, for destination France, the personnel section was comprised of the Sergeant Major—T/Sgt Michael J. Cordos, from New Brunswick, New Jersey—S-1 Clerk, Tec 5 John P. Bellish, Cannonsburg, Pennsylvania—respective Clerks from Co. "A", Cpl. Maynard B. Drummond, Memphis, Missouri—Co. "B", Cpl. John F. Kozlincar, Richmondale, Pennsylvania—Co. "C", Edwin R. Zaehler, Park Ridge, Illinois—Hq Co., Cpl. Richard A. Martsolf, Beavert Pennsylvania Driver, Pfc William F. Phillips, Washington, D. C., under the supervision of CWO JACK H. BURDAN, an eighteen year Army Regular, from El Paso, Texas...

The UPO, upon crossing the English Channel, debarked on Utah Beach with the Bn on the eve of the 27 August, 1944, and got its first glimpse of France by night. Losing no time, the 691st was immediately assigned to the 35th Infantry Division, veterans of Normandy, at which time the UPO departed its parent unit for the first occasion and joined the Infantry Rear Echelon Headquarters which was located in a large underground fortress near Blamont, France. Upon setting up our office, we embarked upon our basic administrative duties, which in the subsequent ten months were to so dominate our every day procedures. At that time, the section, being unexperienced in ETOUSA Administrative policies, had much to be desired, and consequently the candles frequently burned by night. However, after our initial casualties and losses were processed, enlightening the boys on the conventional "Musts", "Do's", "Fors" and "Whys", there was a minimum of difficulty towards the ends of completing our work satisfactorily.

After the Battalion had been relieved from assignment with the 35th Infantry Div. on the 15 Sep. 44 and assigned to the Fourth Armored Division, the UPO then made its next jump. Through the courtesy of Pvt William F. Phillips and his 2 1/2 ton GMC truck, we moved eastward to Trondes, where we established our office in a vacated French "Ecole Pour Enfants" which site, I believe, will not be soon forgotten by Cpl Drummond, who seemed to learn "beaucoup things" from a certain French school teacher. Upon its liberation by the 691st in late September, 1944, the UPO then moved into Nancy, France, where it occupied, with Co. "C", a large French Garrison, which the Germans had just evacuated. It was here that the section first became "souvenir conscience", as the Germans, in their hasty departure, had abandoned material supplies of equipment in a nearby area. The ensuing morning, silk scarfs (made from German parachutes) German helmets, silver-ware, sets of dishes, clocks, and everything practical, boxed, wrapped and labeled bona-fide gifts or was trophies, were, to Mr Burdan's amazement, found strewn all over his desk awaiting censorship. Pvt Phillips had the slight edge. As soon as all had been comfortably set up, General PATTON, who outranks everyone in the section, decided he wanted the garrison for his Third Army Headquarters. Hence, we decided to give it to him, packing and moving into the next village, Laneville, France, where we again set up in a School House. A brief description of the social activities with the French Mademoiselles, after completion of our work, is not justified, as some of the personnel concerned have rank to proteil and others wives. On 15 Oct. 44, the UPO moved back into Nancy, France, where we joined the 26th Infantry Div. Rear. To say we were "monkeys-in-a-cage", here, is just hinting at the facts, as the Division policy of "All work and No play" was greatly assisted by a 6 ft wall enveloping its "Rear" establishment. It was here, that we commenced the huge task of making new Form 20's (Classification Cards) for the personnel in the Bn., only to be completed as of recent. Thanksgiving Day found us eating well and still working hard. Incidentally, that meal of the 25 Nov. 44 really had its effects. Turkey, Stuffings, Mashed Potatoes and Gravy, Custard Pudding, Cranberries, Apple Pie, and all that stuff. But, Oh, that night. Seemed like the GI's knocked at everyone's backdoor. Outside, that night, amidst the innumerable array of flash lights, Broadway, be ore the cur ew

was enacted, was closely visualized. On the 10 Dec. 44, the 691st went to work against the Himmies under the 6th Armored Division and the UPO moved approximately 200 Kilometers east to the small French village of Lexing, where the Armored Rear was located. However, this attachment did not endure, for on the 18 Dec. 44, the Germans had commenced their last great offensive in the Ardennes and the 691st was reassigned to the 87th Inf. Div. in Belgium. With an urgent time element involved, the Bn departed towards Belgium leaving the UPO behind, and without informing them of their intentions. Likewise, the 6th Armored Rear departed, and the UPO, no longer being attached to them was forced to remain alone, with a limited supply of "K" and "C" rations. With news-casts to inform us of the current German advances, we estimated the Enemy forces to be not more than 10 miles in front of us. Having a large percentage of Bn Records and files in our custody and with limited armament to adequately defend them or ourselves, we commended to become a little jittery and on edge. With but 7 EM and 1 WO in our section, we were forced to pull double guard shifts of four hours nightly in the bitter colds of December, in addition to our daily office routines. Under these tiring circumstances the 691st UPO celebrated Christmas, 44 and welcomed in the 1945 New Year. On January 6, 1945, a 2 1/2 ton GMC Truck from the Bn came and moved us to Naurcy, France, about 10 Kilometers from Reims, where we joined the 87th Inf. Div. Rear which subsequently moved into Belgium and established its Headquarters in a large old hunting lodge, allegedly that of King Albert of Belgium. Here, was winter in its real form. Snow drifts has accumulated to over 36 inches in depth and the roads were covered with blankets of ice. On the 27 Jan. 45 the 691st was assigned to the 76th Inf. Div. and the UPO rejoined the Battalion which was in Luxembourg, and set up Offices in Oberanavan, which were subsequently moved to Mensdorf, at which station we remained for several weeks. On 4 Mar 45, the UPO joined the 65th Inf. Div. Rear in Boulay, France and on 20 Mar 45 crossed the German Border and arrived at Saur-lautern, Germany. The spectacle of the utter destruction rendered this German City was far-reaching and gave UPO members the first feeling that the end of the war here in Europe was actually in sight. On 23 Mar 45 the 691st was converted from towed TD to self-propelled TD, which authorized an additional Company and Classification Clerk for the section. The UPO was to increase its family. Cpl Stanley F. Tuznik, Erie, Pennsylvania, was to be the new Reconnaissance Company Clerk, and Cpl John F. Zozlevcar, Co. "B" Clerk, was to assume the duties of Classification, to be replaced at the Co. "B" desk by Pfc Richard H. Taylor, from Salt Lake City, Utah. Let me add that with the assignment of Cpl Tuznik to the UPO, the moral was increased immensely—he is an excellent Accordionist. On the 6 Apr. 45 we joined the 76th Inf. Div. Rear in Lancensalza, Germany, which Headquarters, the UPO was attached up to the cessation of hostilities.

With the cessation of hostilities in Europe, the UPO closed a long and eventful chapter in the narrative of the history of the 691st Tank Destroyer Battalion, which could be written only after 10 months actually spent in the ETO, and I am assured that the travels and experiences incurred will follow each member throughout life.

Richard A. MARTSOLF.

LIFE OF BATTALION MAINTENANCE IN THE E. T. O.

Battalion maintenance started an all out campaign for Victory at Utah Beach. The first job was aiding in unloading IST No. 25 on 27 August, 1944 and continued striving with a solid crew of twenty-two men under the general supervision and administrative leadership of Captain Ernest G. Vocke and W. O. Floyd Willis to accomplish our mission in the E. T. O.

Ours was not the toughest assignment of the Battalion but vital enough to require the utmost security so as to function properly. Realizing this, each man did his job well, working long hard hours in the most adverse weather conditions such as rain and mud, and then winters cold and snow to keep 189 vehicles from the ever bobular jeeb to the noblest of T. D. equipment—the M-36 Purring. Many times the parts from one or more knocked out or mechanically disabled vehicle was used to condition another for use at the front. In some instances when parts acquirable from ordonance could not be gotten, many were made within the platoon. Knowing our work may save many lives and keep the Battalion rolling when it was needed most towards final victory—each discarded his personal thoughts and feelings. To add to our security, each man regardless of what duties he had performed or how tired he was, took his turn on guard duty during the night.

Each will remember that day so long ago, we landed on the beach. Every-one was green and anxiety ran high with many unanswered questions in each mans mind. In this condition we started our trek across France towards the front. Early we learned Battle Recovery proved to be a very hazardous task. To make this easier and less dangerous, through the ingenuity and work of the men, a light wrecker (Little Thunder Mug) was made on an M-20. The necessary material and parts was gathered from salvaged material laying along roads and fields. This proved to be a success in recovering vehicles from places where at times it was impossible to take the heavy wrecker. Welding supplies such as oxygen and acetylene were very scarce in the E. T. O. This created a grave situation which had to be overcome. By combining a jeep motor and a scuttled German generator and ARC welding machine was made, thus solving the problem. Many similar problems had been presented to and solved by the maintenance section. The sole source of acquiring materials for making modifications, body repairs ect. was taken from German vehicles and supplies left behind in their hasty retreat.



All was not easy in the rear. Many times we found ourselves instinctively running for cover, expecting a patrol through or getting on a machine gun to protect ourselves from the Luftwaffe. It can be recalled when Handcuff Rear was within 3 to 4 miles of the actual front with only an infantry outpost between us and the enemy, firing their 50 caliber machine gun to draw enemy fire. We are quite familiar with the bowl of the harrasing well known 88's. The memories of Lunville, Ilceville, Aaracourt, Richicourt, Vic-sur-Seille, Tbeddingen and many others will always remain in the memories of members of our personnel. The duties that created these terrorizing experiences were in the process of administrative, repair and recovery of Battalion vehicles and guns in territory under direct observation and fire of enemy small arms and artillery.

Our trail had been a long and hazardous one, never knowing what lurked around the next corner, but we made our way through France, Belgium, Luxembourg and Germany. We managed to keep the vehicles rolling or replace them with one that would.

Our greatest loss, as a platoon, came on 1st of April 1945 when Mr Willis and Sgt. Anderson, parts procurer, started for a destination 40 miles to the rear to pick up vitally needed parts and never returned. Having met with enemy action in which Mr Willis was killed and "Andy" was wounded, we mourn their loss and will probably never know the real story.

TRANSPORTATION

Yes these are the Cowboys but without them you wouldn't had that 90 M.M. shell, gas or " K " ration, when you needed it. ' So these Joes had a big hand in helping the 691st see V-E day.

Schneider (the boys call him staff) don't talk much but things get done when they should with George (Stick) Maves and Al leading with the work. It takes good driving to take the " Old 6 x 6 " in mud, snow, and rain, through France, Luxemburg, and Germany. You have to have such good drivers like Riddle, Quevs, Jones, Whited, Houston, Malone and Culley to handle them.

Let of laughs and good humor is spread threw the platoon by Riddle and " General " Culley, with " Mon " Yoder helping with the gags. By the way, Yoder did all the cooking for the voys for 10 months and made some fine pies which would often have these chow hounds esting more then their share. This cartoon gang also got a new member in March 1945 who yells from the land of, to-bacc-er, Ver-gin-ie, and thats Leo Belivens. It was easy for guye like Bleivens, Hall, Wanko, Birmister, Siemers and Kindswater to makes good friends, when they Joined the boys later on as good workers they are.

With the Jap defeat coming near these boys will always remember some of their pals who were lost in combat, when sent to the Infantry. The lives of James Conrad and James Burgess will always be held high as part of the 691st.

So I know that the Transportation—didn't want to be here— but inst like you they have to be—se, deep in their hearts they are—proud to be—" THE COW BOYS ".

