

DEDICATION

WE RESPECTFULLY DEDICATE THIS BOOK
TO THE MEN OF OUR BATTALION; WHO
GAVE THEIR LIVES FOR THEIR FAMILIES,
THEIR BATTALION, AND THEIR COUNTRY.

Printed in Munich of Bavaria
by Knorr & Hirth, Sendlinger Strasse 80

OUR HONORED DEAD

BEBB, GUY L., Tec 5, Co. "B"	September 3, 1944
BELL, STEVE D., P. F. C., Co. "B"	July 13, 1944
BLACK, JAMES E., Pvt., Co. "B"	March 11, 1945
BLAKE, HARLEY S., Sgt., Co. "C"	September 24, 1944
BLUMBERG, JEROME M., 2nd Lieut., Co. "A"	February 28, 1945
BOWLIN, MARLIN L., S/Sgt., Co. "B"	July 17, 1944
BRAFFORD, EDWARD B., Sgt., Co. "A"	March 18, 1945
BRODT, OTTO S., Pvt., Co. "C"	July 11, 1944
CHIRICO, ANTHONY V., Pvt., Co. "C"	July 12, 1944
CHRISTOPHERSON, JOHN, Cpl., Co. "C"	July 12, 1944
CLINE, ROLAND JR., S/Sgt., Co. "C"	September 25, 1944
CONDON, JAMES, Sgt., Co. "B"	October 7, 1944
CULVER, ARTHUR W., P. F. C., Co. "B"	March 12, 1945
CUNNINGHAM, WILLIAM E., Tec 5, Co. "C"	September 24, 1944
DESBLEN, EARL F., P. F. C., Co. "B"	October 12, 1944
DOBBINS, GEORGE R., P. F. C., Co. "C"	August 16, 1944
DONAHUE, JAMES T., P. F. C., Co. "A"	August 6, 1944
DWYER, JOHN M., P. F. C., Co. "B"	July 15, 1944
EDMONDS, JOHN J., P. F. C., Co. "A"	March 18, 1945
EGGENA, CURTIS H., Tec 4, Co. "C"	October 31, 1944
EHNI, FRED R., P. F. C., Co. "B"	July 17, 1944
ELLINGTON, CORBY M., Tec 5, Co. "B"	March 23, 1943
ESMEIER, CLIFFORD M., S/Sgt., Co. "A"	October 14, 1944
FOSTER, FRED M., Sgt., Co. "B"	October 5, 1944
FROLAND, MILLER L., P. F. C., Co. "A"	July 11, 1944
FRIEND, THOMAS J., Pvt., Rcn. Co.	April 1, 1943
FULLERTON, ROBERT B., 1st Lieut., Co. "A"	October 14, 1944
FURGESON, FRED L., Pvt., Rcn. Co.	April 1, 1943
GUTH, ROBERT J., P. F. C., Co. "A"	August 7, 1944
HALCOMB, WILLIAM E., S/Sgt., Co. "C"	August 4, 1944
HEIBERGER, JOHN F., Tec 5, Co. "B"	March 23, 1943
HEIDEBRINK, LESTER R., Sgt., Rcn. Co.	September 2, 1944
HENDERSON, ROBERT C., 2nd Lieut., Co. "A"	March 30, 1943
HIGHLAND, ROBERT L., Tec 5, Co. "A"	July 11, 1944
HILL, RAYMOND C., S/Sgt., Co. "C"	October 31, 1944
JOHNSON, ARTHUR, Tec 5, Co. "B"	July 17, 1944

JOHNSON, BENJAMIN O., 1st Lieut., Co. "B"	December 10, 1944
JOHNSON, CLARENCE W., Tec 5, Hq. Co.	March 23, 1943
JOHNSON, LEONARD G., Pvt., Hq. Co.	October 31, 1944
JOHNSON, OLAF H., Sgt., Co. "A"	April 1, 1943
JUVA, STANLEY J., Cpl., Co. "B"	September 3, 1944
KOCH, ALVIN F., 2nd Lieut., Co. "B"	March 23, 1943
KNIGHT, JOHN C., Tec 4, Co. "B"	March 12, 1945
LUM, CHARLES D., S/Sgt., Co. "B"	July 17, 1944
LUTZ, FRANK G., Tec 5, Co. "C"	October 31, 1944
LYNCH, JEROME M., P.F.C., Rcn. Co.	February 21, 1945
MARSHALL, ROBERT E., Pvt., Rcn. Co.	September 1, 1944
MARONEY, WILLIAM J., Sgt., Co. "A"	July 11, 1944
McHENRY, ROBERT B., Cpl. Co. "A"	March 18, 1945
MEADOR, CECIL E., P.F.C., Co. "A"	March 18, 1945
MEISMER, CHARLES W., Pvt., Co. "B"	March 23, 1943
MERIDETH, WILLIAM, P.F.C., Rcn. Co.	February 21, 1945
MOIR, ARTHUR W., P.F.C., Co. "A"	March 1, 1945
NEWSWANGER, ROBERT H., Sgt., Co. "B"	December 11, 1944
PAUL, ROGER K., Tec 4, Hq. Co.	June 13, 1944
REEDER, JOSEPH E., P.F.C., Med. Det.	March 31, 1943
RICHARDSON, DONALD R., P.F.C., Co. "B"	July 17, 1944
ROBINSON, FREDERICK H., Tec 5, Co. "C"	March 26, 1943
RHOADES, ARNOLD, Sgt., Co. "B"	March 30, 1943
SKIBA, EDWARD V., Pvt., Co. "B"	March 23, 1943
SCHNACKER, DONALD L., P.F.C., Rcn. Co.	September 8, 1944
SELAVKO, HARRY, P.F.C., Co. "C"	November 20, 1944
SHANK, CLIFTON T., Pvt., Co. "C"	September 23, 1944
SCHLEGEL, JOHN A., Cpl., Co. "A"	March 15, 1945
SMILANCKSKY, PAUL S. JR., P.F.C., Co. "A"	April 7, 1945
TURNER, FLOYD E., Pvt., Co. "A"	September 22, 1944
WOLFF, ALFRED A., Pvt., Hq. Co.	March 29, 1943
WALTER, WALTER F., P.F.C., Rcn. Co.	April 1, 1943
WARD, GEORGE T., Sgt., Co. "B"	July 17, 1944
WHEELER, RICHARD A., Pvt., Co. "C"	August 16, 1944
WHITLOCK, LAWRENCE R., Tec 5, Co. "A"	March 14, 1945
YATES, JOHN T., Pvt., Co. "B"	December 12, 1944
ZANOYA, BURTON W., 2nd Lieut., Co. "B"	December 16, 1944
ZAWADA, STEPHEN W., Sgt., Co. "A"	March 1, 1945

MISSING IN ACTION

BASKIND, NATHAN B., 2nd Lieut., Co. "C"	June 23, 1944
NICHOLAS, VANDAN A., Sgt., Co. "C"	July 13, 1944
WICK, OREN B., Sgt., Co. "B"	July 18, 1944

Our Battalion, the 899th Tank Destroyer Battalion, was activated on July 1, 1940. In those days, it was known as the 99th Infantry Battalion (Anti Tank). We were stationed at Fort Lewis, Washington; not too far from Tacoma and Olympia, Washington, right on Highway 99.

Under the command of Lt. Col. Ransom, plus a cadre of old army men from the 15th Infantry Regiment to help train us, we began our not too happy struggle changing ourselves from care free civilians into soldiers.

Remember that first issue of clothes that we got when we first arrived? How could anyone forget those wooly knee breeches with wrap leggings, those flat tin helmets, high choker necked blouses, an those stiff high shoes? Surely, they must have dug deep in the historical files to unfold those uniforms for us.

Equipment was not too plentiful and training was usually carried out with what ever was on hand. We made our own mortars out of hollowed wooden tubes and used shells with only a sufficient charge to make it sound real, like a mortar, when we dropped one down our non-rusting tubes. The 37 mm anti tank gun was to be our primary weapon; but we didn't have many of them, even for practice. Sometimes we had to borrow one from another outfit for drill purposes, until our own finally arrived.

Stiff basic training was put into full swing and we learned the correct way to turn when someone shouted a command at us on the drill field. Also hikes, military courtesy, and all the other "seemed—to—be harrassing" basics were learned.

From Fort Lewis we went on to Hunter Liggett Military Reservation and tried our first crack at army maneuvers. Man, it was hot in that burning sun. We weren't very far from San Francisco or Los Angeles, and some of us got passes into those towns. By now, we were getting new equipment, 1/2 tons used as personnel carriers and prime movers for our new towed 37's. It was while on this two month maneuver that we captured "The General Hall Trophy". Some of our men went out into position and captured the General of the "enemy", Gen. Hall, and several staff officers that were with him at the time. His map board was later given to the Battalion for the successful part that they had played in the "action".

We were back from those maneuvers a month, until we went out again on our Washington, Oregon, maneuvers. It was during this time that McMinnville came into our army life. Remember that little town, where dances were held, drinks could be had, the oyster beds not too far away; the condition that some of the men returned to camp, stumbling around and then falling into "sump" holes. It rained practically all the time we were out. We didn't miss a swamp in all our travels during this trek, and we had quite a bit of "running around" chalked up to our credit. What a set up that lasted but six weeks.

While continuing our basic and specialist training programs, the announcement was made that all men over twenty-eight years of age would be discharged from the Army. Some of our men were transferred to the Reserve and sent home, others were looking forward to their "Certificate of Civilization" while the rest of us thought that we would soon have our one year of army training completed and would be "getting out".

On October 20, 1941, Lt. Col. Ransom, after having made full Colonel, left the Battalion and Lt. Col. McChrystal took over the command of our unit.

By this time winter had set in, and those continual "showers" and fog continued to make our days seem long and endless.

It was December 7th, the day the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, that rocked us to a realistic awakening to the meaning of War. About a hundred men were on furlough at the time. Telegrams were sent to their homes telling them to return to camp immediately; our men were called in from town; camp was buzzing with excitement. The Japs struck there, they might strike anyone of the larger towns or Army installations along the coast as well. Everyone moved out of the barracks into the nearby woods where we remained for three days. When we returned to our barracks everything was "blacked-out" and a defense (including anti-aircraft) was set up.

A week later we set up a defense in depth by moving near Montesano, with IX Corps, and from there we moved to Ilwaco on the coast. Some of the men were stationed out on a peninsula; which, when the tide came in, was but a small island. The chow truck to these men had to hit it at just the right time, or no chow. Remember the roving patrols that were set up, traveling all the roads?

On return to Fort Lewis, our home camp, more new enlisted men and officers from our own training center had joined us. Newer equipment had arrived and the vehicles were "broken in" by taking long convoys of them

around the countryside. Scenic trips were conducted for the the new men, up to Mt. Rainier and other places of interest.

On July 28th, under the command of Lt. Col. McChrystal we were moving to a new camp in Texas, Camp Hood. Our vehicles, with our men as guards, composed the one train; and a troop train for the remaining personnel carried us from Washington, south; across the hot desert and into Texas. That trip was miserable because of the heat, and upon our arrival at Camp Hood we soon learned that we would bivouac near Copperas Cove; in tents! What a deserted and foreign looking spot our new home was. Morale was low, we were miles from anywhere, all you had to look at was the wild open spaces, and every type of insect that roamed the plains.

Pyramidal tents were our homes. Even so, we were lucky I guess. As one season rolled into another we dropped the sides of our tents, adding the necessary boards to keep out the cold air, installing stoves, and proceeding to continue our life of garrison soldiers out in the wide open spaces.

During this time our training continued; hikes, lectures, gun drill, radio procedure, etc. The regular army routine, plus a blistering sun and the insects that flew, crawled, or just sat on you and clicked their heels. "Home was never like this!" and more forceful army acquired phrases were 'oft heard. True, we heard time and time again, "How tough it will be when—". But a happy soldier is a griping one, they always tell us. So gripe we did, only to learn in the years to follow, how true that statement was.

Night marches, on foot and in our vehicles, were added for good measure. Maps were on hand, and compasses too—but you know how it is—lost, found, and returned. Hills, valleys, creeks, mud; nothing was too great a barrier for us. Like all G. I. 's we lived for the week ends, by chance a 3 day pass, or luckier still a furlough! Days, weeks, months went on, gripes and groans—but all the while we were shaping ourselves into the smoothest operating T. D. Battalion in the Army. We realized this, but only begrudgingly would we admit it whenever we would look at a training schedule. Away from camp, "there was only one T. D. Bn., the 899th!" We actually were proud of our outfit then, but time has added a deeper, fonder, devotion to our unit, never to be forgotten!

The barracks were finally completed in Camp Hood proper, and into them we moved, pronto! What a relief, Running water, electric lights, mess halls, day rooms, everything! It was good to be "inside" once more. Even though it meant more spit n' polish. But that was almost second nature, the boys always did put on a good showing whenever called upon to do so, and with the added conveniences it was a minor detail.

"Spud" Murphy, the bugler boy, (age 40 some odd years) also a veteran of World War 1, continued to mystify us with his blaring horn. Tricky tunes,

but we soon caught on. Murphy had a call for nearly everything. He helped form our Battalion Drum and Bugler Corps, and will long be remembered as the "pivot man" for his left hand "toins" — stamping his left foot with bended knee well up in his protruding stomach. In addition he was mail orderly in "B" Company. And a common sight was Murphy with a bulging mail sack on his bent back—struggling and weaving up the road.

Another Thanksgiving Day which was a feast for us all. Turkey with all the trimmings! Army type meals forgotten, and an all out effort for something "almost like home". Time passed on—training continued. More furloughs to be granted; when out of a clear sky an alert was sounded that we would leave very shortly for a P. O. E. "Where to? How soon? What to take? How to pack?"—and many more such questions were asked by all.

It looked as though "our time" had come for certain. The sawing of wood, the pounding of nails, and the crates to pack our equipment took shape; painted, lettered, and numbered. Clothing checks, and the general confusion that goes on when an organization is getting ready to move.

Our orders came through, we would leave Gatesville station on Christmas Eve. The more fortunate men who had their wives or sweethearts near camp, had seen them for the last time for—no one knew how long.

Ideas and rumors as to where we were going were at their peak. "Well, we had had enough training for it, if we aren't ready now we never will be.", was most often heard. Yet none of us wanted to leave, but we had our duty, and our orders—and deep down inside us a willingness to put our common foe in the newly-allied-appointed place.

An advance party had left already, and we were loaded on Pullman coaches, waiting. Would it be Germany or Japan? The majority of us still did not know. Night fell and we were on our way. It became obvious that we were headed for the east coast. As days went by, and "home states" passed our train windows, most of us had a chance to brag up his state, and tell why it was the best. A proud bunch, proud of his family, home, and state; proud he was an American and lived in the U. S.

We arrived at our P. O. E., Fort Dix, New Jersey, at night. A drizzling rain falling, a black sky overhanging dimly lit mud covered streets. More barracks, but we soon learned that our new "homes" were to be tents, cold and rather barren looking. Fires were started and a thawing out began. Soon to bed, and an exhausted-wondering-sleep overcame us. "What's in store for tomorrow? Will we leave right away?"

Ft. Dix. We'll never forget. Namely because it was our P. O. E., but things that happened there; practice marches, observed chemical warfare demonstrations, and more clothing checks, physicals and shots. Then evenings devoted to elbowing your way through crowded PX's to buy a few beers and

some last minute things that you figured you'd need to take with you 'when'. Mail calls were few and far between but always well attended. New Years Eve came and went, celebrations were on a small scale—we were waiting, for parts unknown.

Then came more orders and we were loaded on a train headed toward Staten Island. All the while lugging our personal equipment, bed rolls, barracks bag and our arms.

January 13th, another date that we'll never forget. The Battalion was split, some of us were loaded on the U. S. S. Santa Rosa, others on the U. S. S. John T. Erickson; ready, waiting to leave port. It was to be the first sea voyage for most of us, and it looked as though it would be quite a novelty. What little we saw of New York City, and the docks, was fascinating, and the Statue of Liberty won everyone's admiration. We knew that she would be waiting to welcome us back when we returned.

We left Staten Island early in the morning and were on our way to parts unknown. Some of our men were given special details aboard ship such as, manning the 20 mm guns on the air defense decks and also the 3 in. naval guns, food storage supply and guard duty. Our crossing wasn't rough, but still you always have that lift and fall of the boat, so some of us got that same feeling inside of us. But the best of seamen get seasick and none of us came out the worse for wear.

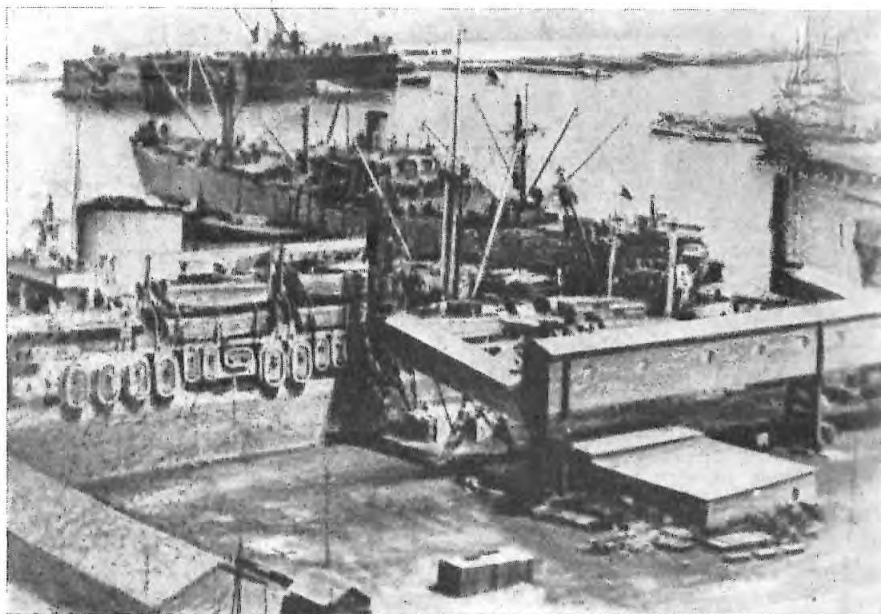
Still more rumors, when and where we would land. A week at sea passed, poker games, pinocle, books, tramping the decks, with general conversations to help pass the time away. Remember that mess halls? The "horse meat" and hard boiled egg order? Then when it did get a little rough, how you'd go sliding across the floor of the mess hall, sometimes on your feet but usually on the other end. You couldn't help but laugh at some of the sights.

Our trip was quite an experience; all of the ships in our convoy maneuvering, changing their courses all the time, and now coming in to dock. Everything moved along like clock work, one smooth giant machine, moving at an even tempo. This was only the beginning of the machine, bigger things were in store for us.

More days passed, when finally on the afternoon of January 25th (12 days after leaving the U.S.) we sighted land. Shortly before, handbooks on North Africa were passed out, telling us about the customs, cities, etc. Then we found out that we would be landing at the port of Casablanca. As we were pulling into the dock an air alert was sounded and we had the first of the enemy yet to see.

While on board ship we had our first look at the Arabs, those dirty scheming chaps that make Africa such an interesting country. We had to

stay on board until 2 A.M. the morning of the 26th, when we began moving down the gang plank. Only to be greeted at the bottom by yells for, "Shewing goom, bonbon, bisqueek?", from the Arabs. That phrase has haunted us from that day until now, "Schoulet, shewing goom, bonbon, bisqueek?" We started on foot from the docks. (The first time the



HARBOR AT CASA BLANCA

majority of us ever set foot on foreign soil.) We had a guide, but remember how he got mixed up in his directions and we walked miles in the wrong direction with full field equipment—— God bless him! But finally we did arrive at our new bivouac area, just on the outskirts of Casablanca, across the road from the lighthouse.

It was just about dawn, so we relaxed until daybreak and then proceeded to pitch our tents according to the "book"; everyone in line, evenly spaced, etc. Sometime later our tents were dispersed throughout the area. We were new at the game but we were learning fast.

We were no more than set up (everyone hoping that when our new vehicles did arrive, they would be the then new M 10) when the call came in that

we were to send men down to the docks to act as stevedores. Our duties took care of unloading the supplies from the ships, routing them to their proper dumps, and keeping a general watch over them. Two shifts, day and night were needed.

During this time the few remaining men worked at physical conditioning and small arms training, for we had no vehicles as yet. We also knew now



M 10 TANK DESTROYER FIRST USED IN AFRICA

that we were attached to the I Armored Corps, by Commanding General 5th Army, and attached to Corps Artillery.

The first week that we were in Africa we were honored by four surprise visitors. First was General George C. Marshall; the second, General (then Major General) George S. Patton Jr.; The Commanding General, I Armored Corps, then Major General Keyes; and Major General Eddy, commanding the 9th Infantry Division, in whose area we were bivouaced. A lot of "brass", the first time we ever personally saw these famous men.

Actually one could hardly believe that we were a part of this war machine in Africa. We had been listening to the radio, reading in the newspapers, and now here we were, soon to be in the thick of things.

News! Good news! Our Vehicles were being serviced and soon to be delivered to the Battalion, and they were the new M 10's! Our wishes came true. But problems of training, supply and maintenance now faced us. We already had experienced drivers in the Battalion (men who had attended drivers school in Camp Bowie, Texas). All available information was received, a copy of the manual on the 75 mm gun was acquired and excerpts were taken and mimeographed and sent out to the companies. Specialist schools were set up for those not working at the docks, everyone was "hot at it" again.

At this time Rommel struck Kasserine Pass and the American II Corps was having its worst trouble in Tunisia. More of our equipment came in, bazookas, rifle grenades, and anti-tank mines, etc., were on hand. Our last M 10 arrived in the Battalion, and we were given 3 days to fire our new weapons, from rifle grenades on up to the 3 inch guns.

The M 10 and gun was that which drew every ones appraisal and respect. Not only our boys, but the French and Arabs as well, looked on in wonderment.

Speaking of the Arabs again; remember how they use to run whenever you would blow the sirens on the M 10's? Their little donkeys about the size of an overgrown airdale, pulling those large carts. The salted pecans and fresh oranges you could buy from their baskets. Money, or preferably cigarettes or candy in exchange. The watered beer, vin rouge or blanc; but still we would buy it. Souvenirs galore, snappy pocketbooks, rugs, etc. Barter argue, then part the best of friends, that was the usual procedure. The prices were always three times the actual value of the article, so you'd "Bring him down". Remember the time the drum of oil broke and spilled on the dock? And the Arabs squatted all around it, dipping their black Arab bread in it and then proceeded to eat it with much delight. The time one of them received a nasty cut on his foot, but it didn't worry him, even though he lost a toe. It was that pure white bandage on that filthy mud caked foot that pleased him and all his friends who had gathered around admiring it. Then too, their foxy squatting position, then they'd get up and walk away leaving something behind that should have been left in the nearest latrine. But there were many more things too, that we can't take the time to mention.

More visitors, chief of whom was Lieutenant General Mark Clark. Demonstrations were given for him and others. Experienced men from the front gave us lectures on Jerry's ability as a fighter, his merciless tricks, and his cleverness at camouflage, etc. This was sound advice, and it was well heeded. And so, completing larger training schedules then ever before, and all last minute details, we were ready to leave.

Our Battalion had just been alerted for a long road and rail march across

French North Africa. At 0600 hours, 1 March 1943, the first of our convoy of wheeled vehicles passed the I.P. The track vehicles remained behind to be shipped on flat cars to our new destination, Le Kroub. The motor march turned out to be a freezing one, but more new and interesting sights were to be seen; all the while realizing that we were headed toward the front.

The ever present Arabs were seen, and eggs were to be had for a fee; 5 francs or 10 cents in American money, for one egg (Or as always, you could swap chocolate or candy for an egg). The motor march took seven and a half days to complete; covering a distance of 1400 miles up to our new bivouac area at Le Kroub, Algeria.

In the meantime the remaining track vehicles were being loaded onto flat cars, blocking them down and then wiring them fast so they wouldn't slip from the narrow cars. Their journey was a slow process, taking them many days. The engines, one in front and one in back, would stop at any little shack along the way, or so it seemed.

As we rolled along the rails, every Arab and his cousin would come out to bum candy or cigarettes from us, or just stand and look in wonderment. Remember too those long tunnels that you had to pass through? Coming out the other end looking like some colored folks from 'way down yonder'. It was new to us, but everything that was happening to us seemed so new and different; it was the text book in operation. (But at times, even that had to be thrown out the window, so to speak) actually it made you ask yourself, "Could this actually be happening to me?"

The wheeled part of the Battalion had been in Le Kroub five days before the last of the track vehicles arrived in the area. On arrival we all began to camouflage our vehicles and resume our training again.

On the morning of March 14, 1943 during one of the heaviest rain storms they had that winter, we turned south, toward the positions of the embattled II Corps. It wasn't until late that night that we arrived in our new area, east of Bou Chebka, just across the border in Tunisia—at last!

While enroute to our destination we had a miserable time trying to convoy through those woods, dirt covered roads now a soft oozing layer of mud, raining like the very devil so that you could hardly see the small cat eyes of the vehicle in front of you. The road was very steep at places and dangerous even in the daylight, but we made it with only a few vehicles stuck in the mud, and wondered how they would ever get out again, they were stuck in so deep. Came the next morning it was only a short time until the roads were becoming sunbaked and dry once again. Maintenance and recovery crews were busy replacing tracks and recovering vehicles that

had been bogged down, turned upside down, or broken down from the whirlwind march into the bivouac.

On the refueling stop at Youks les Bains at dusk, Lt. Colonel Tincher was met by Colonel Stevens, Commanding First Tank Destroyer Group, and told that II Corps was going to attack soon and that the first tactical mission of the Battalion was to be the defense of the Thelepte Airport, a fine natural drome recently retaken from the Germans.



M 10 BOGGED DOWN IN MUD NEAR BOU CHEBKA

Our Reconnaissance Company was sent to reconnoiter the surrounding roads leading south, and to recommend positions for the defense of Thelepte Airport. Later that afternoon the Colonel received orders to report to General Terry Allen, First Infantry Division Commander. On his return that night he had orders for us to leave our area near Bou Chebka at 2345 hours and arrive at a position southwest of Feriana at 0650 hours, 16 March 1943, to cover the attack of the First Division on Gafsa.

The plans for the attack were announced and our Battalion with the aid of the 601st T.D. Battalion, were to cover the detrucking of the First Division just three miles from Gafsa. Company "A" of the Battalion was atta-

ched to the 18th Combat Team and was to move into position astride the Gafsa-Feriana road, north of Gafsa. Company "B" was to move to a position three miles north of Gafsa and west of the Sidi Bou Zid Road. Reconnaissance Company was to reconnoiter the area north of Gafsa and east as far as the Maknassy Road.

It was here that 2nd Lieut Robert A. Hackett, of Recon Company made the first contact of anyone in the Battalion, with the enemy. He was out on a patrol and was fired on by enemy machine guns, northwest of Gafsa. Luckily there were no casualties.

That night the First Division moved forward in an avalanche of vehicles, detrucked and deployed. Meanwhile our men were digging their M 10's into the rocky hillside, until only the muzzles and the turrets could be seen, preparing for whatever the the daylight hours might bring.

Early in the morning Allied planes (B-26) bombed Gafsa, followed up by the First Division's Infantry attack, surging forth under the cover of its own artillery. There was little answering fire from the enemy, and as the Division entered the town it became evident that the enemy had evacuated the town without a fight.

With Gafsa and it's osais in American hands, the Battalion, less Company "A", was moved to an assembly position along the Sidi Bou Zid and Maknassy roads, north of Gafsa. One platoon of "A" Company was attached to a Battalion of Rangers while the other two platoons were attached to the 18th Infantry Regiment to protect them in their attack on El Guettar. And so we remained in these positions, with "A" Company later returning under Battalion control.

In the meantime, most of the action fought around Maknassy and El Guettar was a delaying action. The "Doughs" were given the job of flushing out gun positions, which usually had to be rushed before they could be silenced. Our own artillery fire increased, but it took a direct hit to dislodge the Germans and Italians from their positions.

It was March 23rd that Rommel, knowing that Montgomery was poised opposite the Mareth Line, and that the American advance threatened to cut him off, forced a crisis which gave us our first real crack at Germany's best.

In an unobserved night march, Rommel switched the 10th Panzer Division south and west and charged the American positions around El Guettar. Probably no one but the Germans themselves will ever know the exact number of tanks used, but most American observers say over a hundred enemy tanks moved into the valley at daylight. The 7th Panzer Regiment, of the 10th Panzer Division was identified in force.

Our Battalion still in mobile reserve near Gafsa, received orders to move

to El Guettar at 0845 hours. The plan for employing the Battalion was for "B" Company to go through the gap between the hills east of El Guettar, and engage the enemy tanks which had overrun a field artillery Battalion and knocked out nearly all of the 75 mm S.P. guns of the 601st T.D. Battalion. "C" Company was to cover "B" Company from positions along the ridgeline running south of the gap.

It was at 0955 hours when "B" Company rushed into the valley and engaged the enemy tanks which had taken the hull-down positions in the wadis and small hills on the north side of the valley.

I think they threw everything they had that day. An American minefield, together with the well chosen German positions, made maneuvering impossible. Three times, Captain Gerald G. Coady (then Lieut) tried to force his destroyers into covered positions to the north, and three times he was repulsed with losses. So with only the destroyers' armor for protection, "B" Company exchanged fire with the remaining tanks of the 10th Panzer Division, for six hectic hours.

At 1655 hours, Jerry launched his usual counterattack. Stukas and ME 109's bombed and strafed and across the floor of the valley came the German Infantry, overwatched by tanks and anti-tank guns. "C" Company was sitting there waiting for the enemy armor to come into range. From their positions you could watch all the proceedings, just like one would watch an opera from a balcony seat. At the beginning of the enemy infantry attack, First Division Artillery opened up on them using time fuse. And what a barrage that was! Disrupting Jerry's planned attack until it had failed. Only two Mk IV's ventured to come out, and they were knocked out by "C" Company's gunners. A German troop carrier and a captured American half-track towing a field piece, were also destroyed by the overwatching Company.

That evening "B" Company withdrew with seven of its twelve destroyers, four of their five half-tracks, and all of their "Thinned skinned" vehicles, to positions near "A" Company. One of the four damaged M 10's was recovered that night, repaired and ready for action the next morning. The men and officers claimed the destruction of ten Mark IV's and two 47 mm anti-tank guns, and three Mark IV's damaged.

THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME AMERICAN UNITS HAD STOPPED A GERMAN ARMORED ATTACK.

That night "C" Company completed digging in its destroyers and selecting alternate positions. With the aid of Recon Company's pioneer Platoon, four destroyers were dug into position on the north side of the gap, that

even a mountain goat would consider before occupying. From these positions the gunners commanded the entire valley. They could watch, wait, and ambush Jerry when he attacked again. But Rommel didn't attack. The 10th Panzer Division had been given as complete a beating as anyone could hope for, and that was what Montgomery was waiting for. The following morning the 8th Army hit the Mareth Line, and began its long march to Gabes, Sfax, Sousse, Enfidaville and Tunis.

From March 24 to March 29, our Battalion held positions on the west side of the valley, while the First Division fought to destroy the remaining German forces on the east side of the valley. Remember the long lines of prisoners that could be seen coming back through our lines? And the full realization that you, "had been there when it happened". The first dead soldier that you had seen, our own dead, and the wounded to be evacuated? You were doing things that as a civilian you never thought you could do, or take, but you were doing them and doing them well—like seasoned veterans. You suddenly discovered that all that "dry run" was not a lot of baloney. You did things automatically, with a surety, and you knew what to do. We were doing excellent, men!

During this time the High Command decided to halt the Foundouk and Maknassy thrusts and concentrate on the El Guettar sector. Part of the American armor was switched south, and the Ninth Division, less the 60th Infantry at Maknassy, came to the aid of the First Division. These two Divisions were to mop up the hills, while the armor shot through to contact the 8th Army at Gabes.

At this time General Patton formed a task force, of which we were a part, under the command of Colonel Benson, Commanding Officer of the 13th Armored Regiment, whose mission was to attack and meet the 8th Army north of Gabes.

On March 30th, the Task Force jumped off, "C" Company moved approximately 5,000 yards, when they started to draw fire. First Artillery and mortar fire, then the barrage began in earnest, and it continued while anti-tank guns opened up as well, as we drew into the range, successively of 88's, 75's, 57's and finally 47 mm guns.

The right flank of "C" Company received the heaviest resistance, and the only time that they could return fire on the enemy positions was by sighting the flash of the enemy gun that fired, due to the enemy's well camouflaged positions.

On the left flank resistance was lighter and two Italian tanks were destroyed and several detachments of Italian Infantry were routed. But one of "C" Company's destroyers charged through an Italian minefield that was in the

path of the platoon, overturned and was captured. The destroyer crew later captured the company of Italians that had captured them.

The 899th's score for the day's operation was, 2 enemy tanks destroyed, 1 tank damaged, 3-75 mm, 4-88 mm, and 6-47 mm guns were destroyed, 6 light machine gun nests were blown up, 1 Italian mortar crew and mortar destroyed, and one company of Italian Infantry forced to move back by H. E. fire directed in their trenches.

The Benson Force attempted another break-through but it too was unsuccessful. Jerry could not be dislodged from his positions and again the break-through force spent the night on the valley floor. On April 1st, the attack was resumed, but Jerry had brought up more reinforcements, and again it was impossible. Once more we took up positions on the north side of the valley. For the next four days Reconnaissance company continued to be active while the gun companies remained in defensive positions.

On April 7th, "A" Company was ordered to move eastward to cover a tank thrust, with "C" Company moving into their old positions. At 0930 hours, the attack showed signs of success and the remainder of the Battalion was ordered forward. The advance of the Benson Force plowed through the enemy positions and the long march into the desert began. Later that day a temporary halt was made. At this time, units of the Battalion made the American Army's first contact with the left flank of the British 8th Army.

Again the advance began when Colonel Tincher received orders to move north and cut the El Guettar-Sfax Road, better known as the "Gumtree" Road. Again we led the Benson Force. This time we moved out into the gathering dusk and an uncertain fate in the open Tunisian desert. At dusk, "B" and "C" Companies were attacked from the right flank by German tanks. The two forces exchanged fire until the German tank commander was killed and the enemy withdrew. All hell broke loose again and we were firing on "Gumtree" Road at the retreating enemy. The following morning, reconnaissance units went out and found the road littered with destroyed enemy equipment.

That same day we were ordered to withdraw to a position west of Sobkret Sidi Mansour, where the entire Battalion rallied for the first time since Bou Chebka. On April 9th we all moved through El Guettar and Gafsa, then pulled into a bivouac area near Bir El Haffey. It was here that we were relieved from the Benson Force and attached to the First Armored Division, and reattached to Combat Command "B", First Armored Division.

The following morning we sent out the Reconnaissance Company in preparation to move with Combat Command "B" in the attack of the First Armored Division on Faïd Pass and beyond. It was now April 11th and the 8th Army was moving rapidly up the coast of Tunisia. Fondouk Pass and

Kairouan fell to the British 6th Armored Division and the U. S. 34th Infantry Division, ending the war in the south.

Our Battalion was relieved from attachment to the First Armored Division and was ordered to its old bivouac area near Bou Chebka. Again we were under the command of the First Tank Destroyer Group, in Corps reserve.

It was a welcomed change, and reorganization and maintenance kept us busy, with organized athletics to help amuse us. On the 23rd of April the Battalion moved to reserve positions at Morsott, Algeria near the First Armored Regiment. More training for the newly reorganized companies, most of our time was spent in "The correction of deficiencies noted in Combat", and "Artillery Fire Procedure".

From this area we moved to Roumes Souk, Algeria, continuing in Corps reserve, awaiting the knock-out blow on Rommel's forces in North Africa, at Tunis and Bizerte. But when the blow did fall, we were still in the cork forests.

From here, for a few weeks, we were lucky to be able to get to Le Calle on the Mediterranean Sea and have a few days swimming, getting a tan, enjoying the vin rouge, and having one "whale" of a time just relaxing. Large camps, containing thousands of the so called "super race" were near, and this was only the beginning of the downfall of this misguided race.

The Battalion received orders to leave our cork grove and move west to the vicinity of Oran, Algeria. The wheeled vehicles were to convoy, and the "tracks" to move to Ghardimaou, to await transportation by rail.

At the end of the sixth days' march, the Battalion bivouaced near Sidi Bel Abbes, and received word that it would be stationed near Sebdom instead of Oran and work under the newly activated 5th Army Training Center. We were relieved of attachment to II Corps and attached to I Armored Corps, Reinforced.

In the meantime the "tracks" were waiting in Ghardimaou for transportation. It was a good deal and we all enjoyed it. Tunis wasn't too far away, and you could "hitch" a ride into it or Carthage. The weather was all on our side, so soft ball games were a big thing. Available train transportation finally arrived at the station, we loaded up and left to join the Battalion. It was the same train ride as before, only longer. Training schedules were staring us full in the face as soon as we all were together again.

Sebdom. What a memorable place. Not a building for miles, a scorching sun, dust storms, desert sores, and millions of flies to help keep you entertained. Training began on a large scale, putting emphasis on artillery training with the 3 inch gun. The open terrain with unlimited training areas and large allotments of training ammunition were an S-3's paradise.

Group problems, maneuvers against tanks, firing demonstrations, together with physical training passed away the time.

Passes to Telemcem were had, and that was some town, wasn't it? The Red Cross, the Arabs, French people, and a small town—that was Telemcem. As usual, all you could buy to eat, while in town, was hard boiled eggs and tomato sandwiches, or go to the Red Cross and get a snack. Do



INDIRECT FIRE TRAINING IN DESERT AT SEBDOU

you remember the times when we went to Beni Saf, where we swam and just lolled in the sun? Some went on fishing boats with the Arabs, while others just had themselves a time wherever possible. It was a good rest, away from our desert home.

Our artillery instructions continued in intensity, and every day we learned more and more about the subject. Amazing how you could control, direct and observe the effectiveness of a gun miles away. It was very interesting to some and quite boring to others. The nightly bull sessions were always in full swing, while bartered eggs from the Arabs were frying on the open fires. Weekly inspections, parades, and formations were all part of our stay in Sebdu.

When the Allies invaded Sicily, the Battalion was still in Sebdu, a part of the new 7th Army, wearing O.D.'s in the desert, and awaiting the call to Sicily, but it never came and the Battalion was there a long time after the invasion of Italy. The Battalion was relieved from assignment to the 7th Army and assigned to the 5th.

A reduction in personnel came in September, when the Battalion went



HARBOR AND DOCKS AT ORAN

under a new table of organization, which changed the number of officers from 38 to 36 and the authorized enlisted strength from 860 to 636.

At last the long awaited alert arrived; we would be moving out. Our not too old pyramidal tents, recently winterized, were to be left behind; and again the packings was begun all over again.

We left Sebdu with some funny incidents as memories, but no regrets. We were moving to Oran, Staging Area Number Two. From there, everyone guessed that Italy would be our next stop, and so we proceeded to get ready for our next sea voyage.

Individual and equipment checks were made. Again the confusion of



BIVOUAC IN BAGNOLI CONSTANZO CIANO
UNIVERSITY BUILDINGS

packing and that ever present tension of troops that are on the move to parts unknown. Passes were given into Oran, and some of the more fortunate got to see Algiers. Time went rather slow until we loaded on the boats. The Battalion was split again for this trip. Our vehicles plus two men with each vehicle went on Liberty ships, while the remainder of the Battalion went on a troop transport. Remember the Polish boat that we loaded onto? How could anyone ever forget it.

By November 1st the last of the Battalion was loaded on some 7 or 8 different ships in 5 different convoys. The men all seemed to enjoy this trip after we got the food situation straightened out. We made a very brief stay, a matter of a few hours in Sicily, and then on to Naples, our destination.

On November 10th, Naples, Italy, received its heaviest air bombardment as the main body of the Battalion arrived off Capri at dawn and saw

the "fire works". We were to be back in again soon. We unloaded and marched on foot to our new temporary bivouac area in Bagnoli, Italy, 2 miles north of Naples in the Constanzo Ciano University buildings.

While waiting for our orders, some of us visited the famous cities of Naples and Pompeii. We also enjoyed what amusing things we could find that hadn't been bombed out or diseased. Orders came that we were to prepare for a water movement to the British Isles, and the remaining seven days were spent turning in equipment and supplies.

On November 18th, our Battalion was at sea again. This time everyone was on the same ship, the U. S. S. Charles Carroll, a navy amphibious transport which had made all amphibious operations; Africa, Sicily and Italy. Our trip took us back to Oran, this time our crossing was a little calmer than on our way to Italy. Even though our meals were the best, some of them had to go uneaten, you know that old up and down feeling again. We arrived in Oran in good shape, and layed over there for a few days.

While at Oran we could get off the boat, but only to go on foot marches for exercise. Soon we put out to sea again, and spent Thanksgiving Day at sea. That meal was one of the best that we ever had in all our time spent in this man's army.

On the 10th of December we dropped anchor in the Firth of Clyde, among many other boats, including two aircraft carriers. Our trip was another good one, but by this time we were beginning to think that we should be drawing some kind of Navy pay, due to the time we spent on the water during the past few months. Remember the obstacle course that was tried on board ship? Tricky, that course, especially when the boat lurched.

The following day of our arrival in Scotland we disembarked and loaded on troop trains to take us to Danebury Manor, near Stockbridge, Hampshire, South England on the edge of the ancient Salisbury plain.

England looked like the quaint country that we had all heard about. Every country we had always been to, there is always something new and different, new people, new customs. What would our stay here in England be like?, and many more such questions were topmost in our minds.

After an all night trip on the train we arrived at Stockbridge where we unloaded from the train and got into army trucks to take us out to camp. Naturally it was foggy and a dreary day in general, but later on we learned that England's weather is not always rain and fog. The camp was made up of Nissen huts with electric lights, running water, in fact it looked like an excellent camp.

New equipment was drawn, and we proceeded to make ourselves comfortable in our new home. You see, we had spent the past year and a half living

in the field without any kind of cover, only our pup tents or pyramidal for shelter, whenever that was possible. Now we began a new kind, of life; one of spit 'n polish, shining shoes and buttons, taking hot showers, going on furloughs, leaves or passes, and spending money for something besides poker or Arab eggs.



ROLLING THE BONES

London, Edinburgh, and Bristol were most frequented by men on furlough and many other places of interest and amusement. Stockbridge and Middle Wallop were our local interests. British "pubs" were almost a "must" on our list. We had a great deal of fun in those old taverns, singing, joking and just carrying on in general. The historic town of Salisbury was just 12 miles away, and we proceeded to make a little history of our own in that town, and other English towns as well.

Here in Danebury, we were assigned to First Army, attached to VII Corps, and attached to the Ninth Infantry Division for training and administration.

Training began once more, and we proceeded to make our Battalion even

a smoother running machine than it had been in the past. Everyone was as happy as they ever had been since they left the states. No, we had not forgotten about the folks back home, our mail was a bit delayed at times, but everyone, as always, looked forward to mail call.

We even tried the English ranges on the coast of Southern England which proved to be different from our own ranges in the states; gasoline engine carriages making a moving target was something new in the line of ranges.

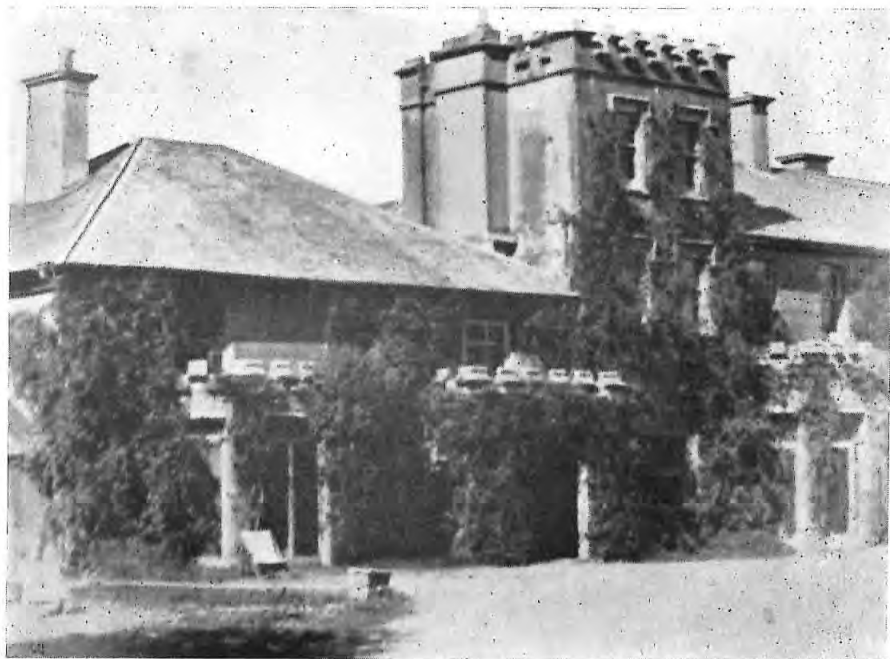
Getting used to that left hand driving was soon taken care of; the English customs that we had to get used to were temporarily adopted and everyone was getting along famously.

As time went by in England, that feeling that something big was in the air and a certain tension kept mounting. When would it all begin? The invasion of Europe; one of the largest scaled invasions of all times. There was no doubt in our



VEHICLES BEING TESTED AFTER WATER PROOFING

minds that it would be a success; our land, sea and air forces were being built up all the while during the past few years and the time was drawing near for us to end the war in this theater. Plans were being checked, orders were being issued, and last minute training was taking place. Waterproofing the vehicles began, and those of us that didn't know the difference between a spark plug and a coil had a good chance to learn. That sticky stuff had



DANE BURY MANOR
(The white House)

to go everywhere, and where that didn't go, there was a kind of adhesive tape to be put on. In fact, both were used for good measure, or so it seemed to be, at some places.

The time was drawing nearer, you could feel it. But the days went on, beautiful clear blue sky days. We had last minute details to do, equipment checked, inspections, and many other things. But we were ready, waiting.

Things were on a larger, more secretive scale than before. Huge dumps of supplies and equipment could be seen all over the English Countryside. Practice landings were made by some outfits. The air force had increased

their attacks to a much greater degree and striking power. Remember the large formations that we use to see go over our area? And that was only a small percentage of the number that was flying over the continent. Gliders were ready and waiting for the Airborne Forces. Everything seemed to be in order. We were all listening to the news broadcasts as to how the war was progressing in the other part of the continent.

Word got around that something very secret had arrived at the Castle, our officers' quarters, and a twenty-four hour guard was needed, in order to admit no one to the room but the proper authorities. Later it became known as the "Poop Roost" to most of us. And at a later date it was learned that in that room were the plans, our copies, of the invasion.

Now rumors, guesses, etc., were going the rounds. When would D-Day come off? Where? And the magnitude of the whole operation. Outfits were already in the marshalling yards, loading onto ships of all sizes, shapes and forms. All of them had a purpose, and their abilities as to type were long before proven.

The Battalion was alerted to move! Notice came around that two of the line companies, "A" and "C", would leave, plus a part of the Battalion forward C.P. The last minute loading, well wishes, and hurried goodbyes were given to the men that were leaving. Prayers, and hopes that it would all go well and soon be over, were silently said. "B" Company and Recon. Company, plus the balance of the C.P. group were to follow on D-Day plus 4.

We all knew that there were to be Paratroops landed before the actual invasion began; but little did we realize that one of our officers would be in that wave until we landed on the shores of France and learned that Lt. Wade was our liaison with that branch of the service. He has some hair raising stories on what happened to them behind the enemy lines.

We all heard of the marshalling yards that we would be going through, before we were loaded on our respective boats. It was in these yards that the last and most important stages of our waterproofing were completed. A briefing on the situation and last minute details were gone over once more. Meals were the best ever; in fact, remember how the guys in these camps kind of made you feel as though this were your last meal. "Take as much as you want; have more!", and then that pitying "you unlucky guys" look. Civilians, too, would wave and have tears in their eyes, knowing only too well where you were going, but not knowing how soon. We loaded up and hadn't the slightest idea how long we might be sitting around on these boats.

We moved out and were sailing around the channel for four days, in a rendezvous, picking up the rest of our armada of ships. Then we set out

the morning of the 4th to make the invasion of France on the 5th, only to have it called off at the last minute due to bad weather.

But the morning of the 6th of June, 1944, found us off the shores of France, starting the greatest invasion of all time, the one to end the Nazi terror in all of Europe. We landed on Utah beach, in wave 25. Attached to the 4th Inf. Div. The other beachhead, Omaha, was running into some stiff resistance. Even so, our beachhead was no pushover.

I don't think that any of us will ever forget the things that we saw on the beaches, or how we felt while landing. How our big naval battlewagons were sitting off shore with their big guns roaring out certain death to the enemy, and the huge brown clouds of smoke that practically covered them every time that they fired their guns. The smaller rocket firing LCT's pulling back, all black with grime and smoke, after they had fired their rockets. The less fortunate ships that hit floating mines, their huge bows slowly pointing skyward, quietly settling on the bottom of the sea. Men jumping overboard, screaming in terror. Lord, it seemed they were throwing everything they had at us. Land mines going off, sending men and broken pieces of equipment high into the air. Wave after wave of infantry landed on the beaches as we watched them from our ship, just off shore. Enemy artillery began to fall on the beach, making it seem more like a living hell.

Our time to disembark was drawing nearer, oh, how we wished to get off these boats. It seemed like you were at a shooting gallery, only you were thing that was being shot at. On shore? No, we weren't overly anxious to land either. You'd think of home, the folks; and the damndest things would pop into your mind; even the 4-F's, oh, how we wished they were here with us.

The loud speaker on the ship was telling us what to do. They would call out the number, your number, as soon as they were in close enough for us to land. Slowly we picked our way nearer the beach, the large ramp on the front of the ship began to drop. You could see everything now, just like a curtain going up on a stage, only what a setting this was. You wondered if "they" were watching your ship in particular; would they try to register on it? Maybe there was an S.P. out there somewhere that was taking a bead on you. Things like that were going through your mind. Sure, we were scared, who wouldn't be? But it had to be done and we were but a very small part of the force that was doing it.

The first number for one of our vehicles came over the loud speaker TAKE OFF! And that was the beginning of our long line to shore; M 10's, some pulling jeeps and other vehicles behind them so they wouldn't get stuck. At places the water was washed out, and deeper holes were in our

path; but we all made it to shore O.K. Now enemy artillery was really raining down on the beach; they hit one of our ammunition dumps, it too was exploding and not helping the situation very much. Out of the water and up the beaches we rolled. There was a certain area that we were to go to, then take off the waterproofing. Be ready for anything we were told.

Our area was located without too much trouble; remember how surprised the boys from "A" Company were when they discovered that they had gone on ahead of the infantry into the area, and later the "Doughs" came on through. What a time, what a life, and we were damn glad that we were on shore, the good old solid terra firma! Our planes were still going at it; diving low, lower than seemed humanly possible. Diving, strafing, and disrupting the Germans as only our Air Force knows how to do.

On board ship all you could hear was the continual roar and blast from the huge naval guns and the bombs bursting on shore. Now small arms fire filled in between the great explosions. It all was sight that none of us ever will forget; and we were more than glad that it was over, that is, the invasion part of it.

Here we were, the first T.D. Battalion to land in France, south of Cherbourg so many miles. Our Unit's mission was that of anti-tank protection for the artillery. No casualties, or loss of equipment the first day. At least, not among those landing on Utah Beach that day. But one platoon of "A" Company was missing, and no one had the slightest idea where it was. They had started out with us, but somewhere along the line it had been separated. It wasn't until some days later that we found out that Lt. Fullerton's platoon, the missing platoon, was on one of the boats that had trouble and was delayed for a time. Then only to be landed on Omaha beach, the wrong one, not even connected physically with ours as yet. From June 8th until the 16th, when they rejoined their company, they were down there having it out with Jerry, operating with the 101st Airborne Division.

In the meantime, the only news, that any of us that had remained behind had, of the Battalion, was radio news. After the Battalion had left, for a then unknown part of the French coast, we waited our turn to leave. Radios were on continuously; where must they be, how were things going. It was the first time the Battalion had been split for any major operation.

It soon was time for the rest of us to go to the marshalling yards. The invasion had started; successful landings were made, the beachheads were established. Ship convoys were made up and the trip from England had begun. These men were split up, just two men per vehicle went with the vehicles; the remainder went on troop transports. Everyone was to meet in the vicinity of Utah Beach. An unnecessary mistake by someone caused

"B" Company's vehicles to be routed to Omaha Beach, a mistake which cost us some of our vehicles in the unloading. However, after two days it was straightened out, and everyone ended up at their proper areas.

Omaha Beach must have been a terrific landing to make. Just off the water, about 200 yards, a steep hill arose. It looked almost impossible to even climb the hill. But our engineers had built a road up the side of the hill, and there was a continuous line of supplies and equipment ever moving off the beach.

Thousands of boats of every type participated in the initial invasion, and here were thousands more; unloading men and their equipment. Here some of us got our first look at the magnitude of the whole operation that was going on; it was almost inconceivable. The fighting was inland a few miles but still buried land mines were being set off all the time. Half buried bodies stuck out of the sand, some lay dead where they were mowed down by machine gun fire; knocked out tanks, trucks, and other types of vehicles were scattered out over the beach. Hulls of ships stuck out of the water at low tide. It wasn't a pretty sight to see, even then.

On June 12th, the Battalion was all together again in the vicinity of Utah Beach. Small villages were being captured by our forces, the enemy was slowly being pushed back; the beachheads were gradually enlarging. The Battalion was being used more differently than ever before: Companies went out to be attached to the Infantry Regiments. The M 10's were being used as assault guns, our boys were moving with the front line troops all the time. Hedgrows were always our biggest trouble. Towns were all torn up, demolished, practically nothing left standing. Fighting was fierce and at very close range.

Some of our men were wounded and evacuated, or killed in action. Everything was going along, but at a slow pace, when on June 18th a task force was formed, which included the 1st platoon of "A" Company, Lt. Fullerton's again, one platoon of 57 mm guns, and a company of infantry; their mission was to take Barneville and cut the peninsula. Off they went like a bunch of commandoes, reaching Barneville without too much trouble, except for the German infantry infiltrating all the time. The roads were "open" but you always had to make a mad dash down one if you wanted to get there.

The peninsula was cut and our drive to the north began along the west coast; on up to Cherbourg. Prisoners were being taken every day the different companies. Machine gun nests, AT guns, and light German tanks were knocked out.

On June 25th the 2nd Platoon of "C" Company entered Cherbourg, the first of our Battalion to enter that city, also the first Tank Destroyer



CHERBOURG

Battalion to enter it. "A" Company moved on into the city the following Day, as well as the remainder of "C" Company. "B" Company remained on the flank of the Division, protecting it against any armored attacks that night develop.

During the drive to Cherbourg and on to Greville, the 2nd Platoon of our "C" Company was attached to the 2nd Battalion of the 47th Infantry, and it was for the heroic part during the attack, that the members of this platoon received the Presidential Citation. Driving toward Cherbourg, they destroyed, at a 300 yard range, a well concealed 77 mm gun which had been holding up the attack; during the street fighting in Cherbourg, five 20 mm guns were destroyed, which on two occasions required the destroyer to sweep around a corner and expose themselves at point blank range to the enemy gun. And at Greville, one destroyer crew exposed itself to heavy to heavy mortar fire while destroying three enemy strong-

points, even after damage of their destroyer by enemy mines, the gun continued to fire throughout the action. In all these actions, their total disregard for personal safety, and their accomplishment of successive missions, won the admiration of all those to whom they set their inspiring example of gallantry.

Cherbourg fell, and we proceeded to clean up the remaining tip of the peninsula. Now the drive for Beaumont-Hague began. During this drive, "B" Company destroyed 5 Renault tanks, one 88 mm gun, and fired on bunkers, gun emplacements, etc., on their drive toward the town.

During this month we were being attached to different divisions all the while; the 4th, 82nd Airborne, 90th, 101st Airborne, 79th, and the 9th Division, to whom we have remained attached to throughout our remaining campaigns on the continent. Our "A" company with the 39th, "B" company with the 60th, and "C" company with the 47th Regimental Combat Teams.

The month of June was gone already. At times it seemed as though time was flying, at others, as though an hour was a day, a day a lifetime. But we were more secure than ever before, Utah and Omaha beaches had long since been linked up, and men and supplies were still pouring onto the peninsula.

By July 1st the tip of the peninsula was cleared of the enemy, and we had our first chance to rest. We moved down near Carentan, and for the next six days we made all necessary repairs on our vehicles and got ourselves cleaned up. Those month old beards began to disappear, "baldies" became popular once more, and movies could be seen. It was good to have a short break; long delayed letters were answered, tales of past experiences were told, and even 12 hour passes to Cherbourg were given. We were still well aware that there was a war going on; always those long convoys of ambulances, supplies, and marching "doughs".

During this month we struck out and help stop Jerry's counter-attack toward the sea, in the vicinity of St. Jean-de-Day. It was about this time that "A" and "C" Companies had a field day on German armor at close range. It was one of those operations that you just "do" . . . we did, and came out on top. On the morning of July 11th, at 0200 hours, a strong German counterattack, led by enemy tanks and supporting infantry, had developed directly opposite these two companies. These spearheads contacted our waiting TD's; enemy tanks and lots of them! Firing at pointblank range, we stopped Jerry's attack cold. At the end of the day our "C" Company had destroyed six MK V's and a machine gun nest. While "A" Company destroyed 6 MK V's, 1 MK IV, 1 SP 75 mm gun, 3 MG nests and 2 AT grenade emplacements, and also captured 22 PW's. Later we learned that a mile down the road from our positions, there were 50 more tanks waiting

to exploit a breakthrough. They were given a thorough going over by our Air Force. "A" and "C" Companies had completely destroyed Jerry's attempt to split the beachhead. It was for this action that "A" and "C" Companies received the Presidential Citation on December 11, 1944.

The fighting was growing rougher all the time. Jerry was hardheaded, with nothing to gain, and everything to lose. Our air force was out on any kind of a day, giving his support whenever he could. We were running into more of Germany's armor all the time.

On July 25th the first front line bombing, done by our heavy bombers was executed by the 9th Tactical Air Force. "B" Company destroyers had to move back several hundred yards from their original positions, to give clearance for the bombing. The attack began late in the morning and continued for several hours. Remember those great formations of bombers as they came in and swung over the enemy's front lines? Our artillery marking targets with long tracers of purple smoke shells. You could hear the planes coming long before they could be seen; the drone of their engines, then the whine of their bombs falling toward the targets. Great blasts from exploding bombs, dirt, limbs of trees, pieces of unrecognizable equipment being thrown hundreds of feet in the air. Then there was that continual roar of air plane engines mixed with explosions; a roar that had to be shouted over if you wanted to talk to someone standing just a few feet away from you.

The cub planes were up too, helping to direct the planes. One formation fell short of their targets, and remember how we all dived into the nearest fox holes because the lead plane had dropped his "eggs" just three fields away, with the rest of them following suit until the cub got to them and stopped them, directing them to their target area. Dust from all this was now hanging in the air like a heavy fog high up into the sky.

Remember how the smoke from your cigarette just hung, quivering, in front of you: Then after the attack was over, how we had to fight like hell to get back the few hundred yards that we had cleared to make way for the bombing? How the German prisoners that we took were stunned, almost crazy? The terrific shelling that we had to live through along the Pierre-St. Lo Road before the bombing?

It was broken, Jerry's defense line had collapsed, and he was retreating to his next one; where that would be, no one knew for sure, we could only guess. From here on there were daily attacks made in support of the attacking infantry. All wasn't going smoothly at times; Jerry was still using those infernal hedgerows as a part of his defense. Enemy armor kept trying to force their way through our lines, only to be repulsed with heavy losses. Enemy artillery fire was increasing in its intensity; even our own P-47's

seemed to be on the "other side" at times; strafing our own positions. More casualties were being inflicted on both sides all the time.

The summer months found us well established on the continent of Europe. The main German defense line seemed to be crumbling all along the western front. On August 5th Co. Attached to the 39th Infantry made an end-run to Juvigny with the objective of cutting off a pocket of enemy holding up the advance of the 9th Division. We pushed across the gap only to find on the morning of August 6th an enemy armored Division, with the objective of cutting through to Avaranches, had passed completely through the 39th Infantry. This left our forces with no command, and the command with no troops. Some hectic hours followed with the command making a wild dash,



M 10 FIRING AT A GERMAN OBSERVATION POST

2nd Pz Div
in reverse order, to get behind our troops. Meanwhile the second platoon and half of the third platoon, Co. A, at Cherence la Roussel were holding off the enemy infantry and armor. Five enemy tanks were K. O. d during that day's fighting, in repeated attempts of the enemy to break through to the coast. In recognition of their heroic stand they were awarded their second unit citation. Marginy, Forrest st. Savieur, Gathemo, Beaufice, Periers, Mayenne, and Percy were now past history. The Falaise Gap developed, and we worked on it. Our Reconnaissance Company going out

ahead of the infantry on the 17th of August and making contact with the British Army at Briouxe.

After the gap was cleaned out, we had another maintenance check near Le Ferte Mace. Everything seemed to be going swell, armored units were meeting little resistance and we started to follow them. On to Arpajon, just 12 miles south of recently taken Paris. Oh how we wished we would be able to get into that town, so near and yet so far.

The Seine was bridged and we moved on to Tilley ready to cross that historic river. Our crossing of the river was on August 28th. Pontoon bridges and tin boats linked together were up for our crossing. All along the way you could see the damage that our air force had dealt to the enemy; hindering his transportation, destroying his supplies, making movement in the daylight impossible for him.

We were nearing the old battlefields of World War I. Chateau-Thierry, Belleau Woods, and many other places were passed through. The still, half rotted away, wood-woven trenches, marred land, huge craters, and barren, still foreign looking "no man's land", wooded hills, creeks and rivers; old pieces of equipment, decayed shoes, rusted bayonets and helmets, only too well told of the struggle and strife that had been fought here during that war.

Combat Teams of infantry, T.D.'s, and tanks, had been formed moving along at roughly 60 miles a day and sometimes more; meeting very little resistance at the end of each day. Jerry was definitely on the run. This wasn't in the "book", it didn't seem possible, no definite German defense line was ever run into. Was this all a trick of his?

On we went, French civilians lining the streets, cheering, waving, throwing flowers, giving wine and cognac to us; tears streaming down the older folks' cheeks, every one was happy, gay, "The Americans were here!" We were "liberating" and it was fun. No "in-coming mail", mortars, or small arms; the war did have its good points we all decided.

We still continued our advances up into northern France. A Task Force was formed to help protect the Division's rear. Everything still seemed so odd. You could travel for miles and not see another G.I., or in some towns not even a civilian showed their head.

It was on September 3rd that "B" Company and the 60th Infantry went into Belgium at Macon and Chimay. Out of France, into another country, things were going better than we could hope for. The remainder of the Battalion and the Division followed.

By September 5th we were up to Dinant, ready for the Meuse River crossing. All the bridges had been blown; it would be a major operation. It looked as though Jerry was going to make a stand along the opposite bank



Top: SIEGFRIED LINE DRAGONS TEETH
Bottom: PILL BOX CAMOUFLAGED AS A COTTAGE

of the river. The infantry forced a crossing at some points after suffering heavy casualties. Fighting was scattered, and not too much trouble. Part of the Battalion, a task force, pushed, into Liege.

It was September 13th, that "A", "B" and "C" Companies moved into Germany. "A" Company driving to Lammersdorf, "C" Company driving to Zweifall, and "B" Company at Rotgen.

Germany! The Siegfried Line! Those huge cement blocks, (tank barriers or commonly known as "Dragons Teeth") blocking the roads; the pill boxes, well camouflaged, covering every avenue of approach, with walls anywhere from a foot to five feet in thickness, and steel doors barring the entrances. A defense line miles deep through thick Hurtgen forests.

We had to stop, we were out on a "limb", ahead of the rest of our armies; our supply lines were stretched almost to a breaking point. German soldiers were confused, they didn't know whose line they were behind; the Americans popped out of the damndest places. We were running into younger and older men than ever before.

A flushing out of the areas continued. With Sprigmont,

Aywaille, Verviers, and Eupen, all Belgium towns, a memory; we were concentrating mostly around such towns as Zweifall, Rotgen, Elsenborn, Vicht, Lammersdorf, and Monschau. Task Force Tincher and Task Force Gourley were activated; their duties were straightening out our lines, setting up road blocks, taking the remaining pill boxes that were still holding out, and keeping the contact that was needed at all times.

We continued our holding positions during most of the month of October. Changes being made wherever necessary, to make our positions more secure. It was during this month that the battle for the Hurtgen Forrest was fought. Not one of us who spent any time at all in that hell hole will ever forget those tree bursts, the land mines, how dark it would get at night, not knowing when or where the enemy would try and infiltrate next. How we had to stay inside our destroyers all the time, never leaving it because of flying shrapnel bouncing off the sides. How we would just sit there in among those trees, day after day. The many times it was impossible to get supplies up to the destroyers.

In those first few weeks it seemed like we were all alone; until later more outfits started to come into our sector, which covered roughly a 60 mile front. Anti tank positions were held throughout, and also some indirect firing was done by the companies at various times. The weather was getting colder, rain and fog seemed to add to the gloom of the situation.

It was on the 25th of October that we were relieved of our attachment to 7th Corps and joined 5th Corps. We were to move south in the vicinity of Robertville, Belgium. The Battalion, less "B" and "C" companies moved at once. "B" Company followed a few days later, and "C" Company remained attached to Combat Team of the 47th Infantry Regiment; not to join us until December 2nd. "C" Company remained in Anti Tank positions and also supported the field artillery, and became involved in the November 16th Offensive.

We were in Robertville for a short while, during which time a maintenance check was made. This was the first one that we had had since the one at Le Ferte Mace, France, in August. It was a good set up, but we didn't stay very long. From here we left to occupy Anti Tank positions in front of us east of Ellsenborn. That relief took place and lasted several days, after which we again returned to Robertville. We spent Thanksgiving Day in this town, and had the best meal we had since landing on the continent.

It was the beginning of December that we moved from this sector, north, to the vicinity of Eschweiler, Germany. From east of here the attack was made to the west bank of the Roer River, just across from Duren. Such

towns as Langerwehe, D'horn, Merode, Schlich, Luchem, Obergeich, Echtz, Hoven, Mariaweler-Hoven, and Konzen fell in our drive to the river.

Jerry was throwing heavy concentrations of artillery and mortar fire at our advancing elements, the going was plenty rough. We pulled up to the Roer and then Jerry started his winter counter-offensive just south of us,



M 10 IN FIRING POSITION

in part of the area that we had left before coming north. It was the first time that we had seen any of Jerry's planes for months, and they were out in strength. All night long we could hear the drone of their engines; he was dropping paratroopers, not only in the path of his drive, but in the rear areas anywhere in the vicinity. Flares lighted the night, bursts of ack ack flashed in the sky, and still they came over. The breakthrough was gaining momentum; if things continued, it threatened not only us from being cut off, but the whole northern part of the western front. Our attack

had stopped on the west bank of the Roer, there we sat, exchanging artillery blows with the enemy.

It was on December 19th, that a relief started to take place in our sector; with our units moving south once more to the northern edge of the Ardennes, in holding positions. Leaving "B" Company behind under the command of the 60th Combat Team. Shortly after they moved southward with an armored force only to be stopped on the road, turned around and sent



M 10 STUCK IN MUD AND SNOW AFTER SLIDING OFF THE ROAD

back to join the Battalion and Division once more, just south of Eupen. Here we sat for the next month, holding the front line from any attempted enemy counterattack in that sector. Remember the stiff restrictions that were implied on everyone? It wasn't safe to just wander around, especially if you didn't know the pass word. And how all German civilians were stopped, checked, and not left wandering around; only to be out on the streets on official business. The "pocket" was contained, and the process of elimination began from that sector. Soon Jerry was withdrawing his forces; a broken army; but still a stubborn one. Regrouping of forces began, plans were again taken up on the attack to the east.