

**A History of the
98th Chemical Mortar Battalion**

and its predecessor unit, the

641st Tank Destroyer Battalion

Credits:

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Foreword

This is the history of the 641st Tank Destroyer Battalion from the time of its organization in December, 1941, through its three and one-half years in the Southwest Pacific. It served in many capacities and eventually became the 98th Chemical Mortar Battalion, armed with 4.2-inch mortars, firing high explosive and white phosphorus shells. During the course of its existence, this outfit served as stevedores, engineers, and artillerymen who fought in defense of their gun positions and never failed to answer the call of "Fire Mission." This account is based on declassified records from the U.S. War Department archives, my own S-3 records and personal recollections, and the valued help of Captain David E. Stimson, Captain John M. Slocum, Captain J. Richard Gerttula, Major Martin M. Staudacher, Lieutenant Colonel Roland M. Groder, and First Sergeant "Pappy" Bates. Special thanks to Major Frank Stubbs for the cover design [omitted in this presentation. Ed.] and much information. This is a story that should be told and is dedicated to those who served.

- Bennett M. Saunders

In Memoriam

PFC LeMann E. Berg - General Hospital, Brisbane, Australia

2nd Lt Wallace J. Carl - Seymour, Australia

Pvt Bing F. Chin - Luzon

Pvt William A. Condry - Luzon

Cpl Lantz O. Cross - Luzon

Capt Gilbert B. Doolittle - Luzon

T/5 Francis E. Heil - Oro Bay, New Guinea

S/Sgt Maurice Johnson - General Hospital, Melbourne, Australia

PFC Richard J. Kumor - Luzon

Sgt Max Monteith - Oro Bay, New Guinea

PFC Frank J. Puchoras - Luzon

2nd Lt Joseph P. Russell - Biak, New Guinea

T/4 Winfred A. Tillotson - Luzon

Sgt David Wetzel - Oro Bay, New Guinea

I - Fort Lewis to Fort Dix to Camp Seymour

The 641st Tank Destroyer Battalion was activated at Fort Lewis, Washington, on 18 December 1941. Its first commanding officer was Major Albert H. Swift and the executive officer was Major Irving M. Marr. The unit was composed of a Headquarters Company, and Companies A, B, C and D (A, B and C were weapons companies, D was a reconnaissance company). HQ Company and Companies A, B and C, were from anti-tank units of the 66th Artillery Brigade, which was deactivated when the 41st Infantry Division was reorganized as a triangular division. Company D was formerly Company F of the 116th Engineers.

The T/O & E (Table of Organization and Equipment) was for a self-propelled tank-destroyer unit, but as none of the required ordinance was then available, the battalion was armed with towed 37mm anti-tank guns. This situation made necessary the first of many adjustments in disposition of personnel which in the subsequent months and years became a way of life throughout the history of the organization. The company commanders were: Captain Neiswaner, Co. A; Lieutenant Wilson, Co. B; Lieutenant Marshall, Co. C; Lieutenant Brooks, Co. D; and Lieutenant Saunders, HQ Co. The staff was composed of: Captain Elliot, S-1 (administration); Lieutenant Brighton, S-3 (operations); Lieutenant Rushing, S-4 (supply); and Lieutenant Carl, Motor Officer. Doctors C. J. Ebner and W.A. Jones were in charge of the Medical Detachment.

Entering the year 1942, the battalion had about half its organizational complement of personnel. After the usual organizational work and some minor training activities in January, the battalion entrained 19 February 1942 for Fort Dix, New Jersey. All equipment and personnel were loaded on one combined train and routed non-stop across the continent. The train paused at division points to switch in new engines and train crews. According to the trainmen's story, it was the first time freight and passenger cars had ever been combined in a single train. Arriving at Fort Dix the third week of February, it was learned that the French liner, Normandie, on which the unit had been scheduled to embark, had been burned and sunk in New York harbor. As it was considered certain that the unit was destined for North Africa, every one studied desert warfare manuals long and hard.

At Fort Dix, the long and tedious business of processing records of personnel who were to bring the battalion up to strength was finished. The personnel came from New York National Guard units and labeled themselves "The Battling Bastards of Brooklyn". They called the members of the battalion from the West "The Cowboys". It was not a case of love at first sight.

Eventually the order came to proceed to the embarkation dock in Brooklyn. On arrival at the gangplank for the final check-off, it was found that a number of the recent additions at Fort Dix had opted out. Each of the companies had lost some of its new faces, but HQ Company topped the list with 35 ringing silences at the gangplank roll-call.

The transport was the ancient cruise ship, S.S. Uruguay, which was yanked out of retirement for the emergency. This rusty relic of 35,000 tons was to be the "home away from home" for some 4000 troops and 400 nurses for the next 40 days and nights. The first General Quarters call was not a sub alert, but for all men with plumbing experience to report to the ship's maintenance section and get the toilets in working order.

The Uruguay left New York harbor at dawn on 4 March 1942 and everyone had the feeling of being precipitated into the "Great Unknown" as the Statue of Liberty sank slowly into the sea. Unorganized and unready, the 641st TDB was the first TD battalion to leave the United States for combat. Of no particular help at this time was the rumor that a German sub had torpedoed a destroyer off the Jersey lightship the night before. All hands were cautioned to keep a sharp lookout for possible survivors. What a way to start a trip!

In the cargo holds were arms which no one had ever seen. Cases were opened; revealing air-cooled 30-caliber machine guns, Thompson sub-machine guns, and the wondrous air-cooled 50-caliber machine gun. A copy of Life Magazine was used to define the nomenclature and disassembly procedures and daily classes were held throughout the trip.

The convoy consisted of the S.S. Uruguay and the S.S. Santa Paula, which were the transport ships, plus two cruisers and the old aircraft carrier Hornet. Destroyers cruised back and forth around the convoy, more showing at daylight and dusk, with just a few during the rest of the day. Several times a Navy dirigible appeared overhead and flew along for a few miles, and some booming and banging of depth charges could be heard over the horizon, but the Navy did their job as the convoy was never

seriously attacked. Meanwhile, the convoy dragged through the gray Atlantic at a steady ten knots, the maximum speed of the oldest and slowest ship, which was none other than the S.S. Uruguay. Suddenly a large island appeared on the port side, which could only have been Cuba. At least our general direction was established.

The Navy must have been greatly relieved to see the Uruguay safely at anchor in the crowded harbor of Colon. For seven days it had been a part of the most heavily armed convoy ever mounted by the U.S. Navy. The next day the ship passed through the Panama Canal without incident and headed out into the blue Pacific alone.

The days went by as the ship sailed along the Equator, and it was about this time we were informed that the ship was only capable of making 60 tons of fresh water a day and was consuming 90 tons. All personnel were restricted to half a canteen of drinking water per day and of course all showers, shaves and laundry were done with saltwater, which had been the procedure from the start of the trip.

Most welcome was the sight of land on March 25 when the Uruguay sailed into the harbor at Bora-Bora in the Society Islands. Fresh water was taken on from the cruisers U.S.S. Richmond and U.S.S. New Orleans, and a Navy supply ship and repair crews worked all night on the ailing fresh water condensers of the Uruguay. No one was allowed to go ashore and the natives came out in their canoes, selling coconuts for "one dolah". At dawn, when the Uruguay left the harbor, a temporary thrill was provided when six moss-covered submarines emerged from the water, but the excitement subsided when they turned out to be ours.

On April 3, the coast of New Zealand came into view and the "fairly good" ship Uruguay sailed into the harbor of Auckland for another 24-hour stay to take on water. Apparently, the crew had given up trying to fix the condensers, and again no one was allowed on shore.

The next morning the Uruguay was again on its way. This time there was a rather strange looking craft in escort. Later information had it identified as a New Zealand auxiliary cruiser.

Easter was memorable that year, for a feast of roast turkey was served, which made everyone sick and created on the Uruguay a

slowly moving fountain of diarrhea. Any Jap sub would surely have turned away in disgust.

The first storm of the trip came the next day. At another time, and under other conditions, it might have been a memorable experience, but this was something to be forgotten, if possible. At the height of the storm, the turbines of the Uruguay finally gave up, and the ship was dead in the water for two hours while the auxiliary cruiser escort cruised round and round with signal lights angrily flashing. Finally, on the morning of 9 April 1942, the Uruguay limped into the harbor of Melbourne, Australia. The trip had taken 40 days and nights and covered more than 10,000 miles. Every day, the experience ranged between apathy and boredom, and nights spent in sweltering blackouts were something to be forgotten. After this many days on shipboard, it was hard for the men of the 641st TDB to realize they were at last on land. The inactivity of shipboard living, plus the occasional bouts of diarrhea and the general lassitude of the tropics, were all so enervating that many of the men had great difficulty even carrying their barracks bags to the truck convoy which was waiting in the loading area. We boarded the train in the Melbourne station and soon were rattling over the countryside. The accommodations were of a Spartan nature and when asked the location of the men's room, the conductor said: "Piss out the window, our boys do." And so we were introduced to the earthy Australian solution of a problem.

Eventually, the 641st, the first unit of the 6th Army in the SWPA (Southwest Pacific Area), arrived at Camp Seymour, which was about 50 miles northwest of Melbourne, to spend the next three months in training. As at Fort Lewis, the battalion was attached to the 41st Infantry Division for training and this somewhat reluctant relationship was to continue for some time and gave us the title of "The Bastard Boys".

II- The 641st TDB Trains in Australia

The men were never too keen on the U.S. army rations, but the Australian rations did not seem to get to first base with them. Until the U.S. Quartermaster Depot was functioning in Melbourne, the G.I. chow was heavy on oatmeal and bread with syrup for breakfast and beef or mutton stew with tea for other meals.

During the first field exercises, the command radio was tuned in to Tokyo Rose and we heard her welcome the 641st to Australia, as well as the 41st Infantry Division. "How did she know that?" everyone asked.

The next three months were busy ones, as the battalion was being shaken down and organized to handle the 37mm anti-tank guns. Headquarters Company received 12 Harley-Davidson motorcycles and a request for volunteer riders to serve in a battalion scout detachment was issued. Field exercises were staged with the Australian Tank Corps, many units of which had seen action in North Africa. Morale was boosted when the news was received in the first week of May 1942, that the U.S. Navy had fought the Japs to a standstill in the Battle of the Coral Sea. Rations were improving, and the men were enjoying the Melbourne hospitality on weekends. The Aussies were learning to say "Okay" and the general feeling of urgency was somewhat diminished. It was at this time the battalion suffered its first personnel loss. S/Sgt Maurice W. Johnson died in the hospital at Melbourne. The 641st provided the Guard of Honor for Sgt Johnson's funeral in Melbourne, which was attended by the command. On the return trip to Camp Seymour, Major Swift's car ran off the road, causing serious injury to him and the death of Lieutenant Wallace Carl, who was riding with him.

In July, orders came to move northward, and acting battalion CO, Major Marr, was in charge of the movement, first by truck to Albury and then by rail across New South Wales to the border of Queensland, and after a change to a different gauge railroad, the 641st finally arrived in Rockhampton.

Soon after arrival at Rockhampton, Lieutenant Colonel Arthur Fertig was ordered to command the 641st. Major Marr was ordered to the hospital and Captain Neiswaner was transferred. All first lieutenants who had been serving in a captain's position were promoted, and three infantry officers were transferred into the

battalion. Major Jack Morris, who had been aide to General Rilea, was made battalion executive. The 641st was at this time attached to I Corps but, as usual, shared training facilities with the 41st Infantry Division. The stepchild relationship continued. Maneuvers were conducted with the 41st Infantry Division and the battalion underwent field tests by I Corps. The unit received passing grades all along the line, and Lieutenant Scott Clawson's communications section received a superior rating. Staff Sergeants Fleury, Anderson and Slocum were each made 2nd lieutenant by field promotion. Companies alternated in guarding the air strip at Rockhampton. The new table of organization was as follows:

Lieutenant Colonel Fertig, CO
Major Morris, Exec. Officer
Captain Elliot, S-1
Captain Brighton, S-2
Captain Saunders, S-3
Captain Rushing, S-4
Captain Wilson, HQ Company
Captain White, Company A
Captain Marshall, Company B
Captain Staudacher, Company C
Captain Books, Company D
Captain Jones, Medical Detachment

A detail from Company C was sent to Gladstone to replace the Australians at the 41st Infantry Division embarkation point.

One day a message came from I Corps that, since the 641st was the original 6th Army unit, it would have the honor of providing the Guard of Honor for General Kreuger, who was assuming his post as 6th Army Commander. The date and place were noted, but the time was not specified. The battalion arrived in the school yard at Rockhampton at 0800 arrayed in bright new jungle suits. It was "Hurry up and wait" for three hours as the troops were herded into various alignments by members of the 41st Infantry Division and I Corps staff until, finally at 1100, General Kreuger appeared. His only comment at the end of the inspection was, "I guess you haven't done this before."

In December 1942, with the fighting reaching a crescendo in the Papuan Campaign, the 641st was alerted for movement. As it turned out, only Company D was to leave Australia at the time and embarked from Gladstone with Company A of the 116th Engineers on 10 January 1943.

Arriving at Port Moresby, our Company D unloaded its ship and stowed away in a warehouse about two tons of foodstuffs purchased in Australia with unit funds for use against hard times in the jungle. These supplies were almost immediately stolen and Company D loaded its equipment back on the same ship the next day to complete the trip to Oro Bay, somewhat sadder and wiser. While at Port Moresby, the company experienced its first air raids and fortunately had no casualties.

Landing at Oro Bay, Company D arrived with picks and shovels and marched twelve miles to the Sambogo River to start work on the road to Dobodura. Rations were hard to come by and "The Bastard Boys" seemed not to be getting much of it. A classic confrontation occurred at 1130 hours between 1st Sgt "Pappy" Bates and General Fuller at his headquarters at Dobodura. There it was all straightened out and Company D began to get its rightful share. This work was carried out with the doubtful aid of some 300 natives under the supervision of the ANGAU authority. This road was of prime importance, as it was the only route by which supplies could be brought from Oro Bay, which was the only ship-unloading point to the area of operations on the North Coast of New Guinea.

After about a month, heavy equipment began to come in and real progress was made. There were D-2 and D-4 caterpillars, a road grader and several jackhammers available and the road was soon completed. And none too soon, as Company D had only 35% of its personnel functioning at the finish as the rest were out of commission due to malaria, dysentery and various tropical maladies. During this time, the company lost Sergeant Max Monteith of Boise, Idaho in a truck accident and Sergeant Dave Wetzel, of Rigby, who died of typhus. On completion of the road from Wanigela to Dobodura, Company D had completed its first mission and was returned to the battalion, which had since arrived at Oro Bay.

Meanwhile, back at Rockhampton, January and February passed and the rest of the battalion was packed and ready to go, but no further orders were received until March. Then the unit was ordered to proceed to the embarkation point at Gladstone for transportation to New Guinea.

The Battle of the Bismarck Sea was being concluded, with the Fifth Air Force repulsing a major Jap effort to reinforce its New Guinea strongholds. Arriving at Gladstone, the 641st found the former KLM steamer Bontekoe at the pier discharging a cargo

of battlefield salvage, including blood-stained blankets, dented helmets, etc., which had a sobering effect on the troops.

The battalion's first experience in international relations came as a result of the initial loading preparations. Most of the inter-island ships had Malay crews, whose religious concepts required them to eat only freshly killed meat. Needless to say, the hold of the ship was malodorous with the offal of the chickens, goats and ducks which, with the humidity in the tropics, made the thought of personnel living in those quarters quite unbearable. Fire hoses were broken out to wash down the hold. Minutes later, the First Officer came running down the gangway screaming at the top of his lungs that the ship was sinking and that the "Yankee Pigs had better stop whatever they were doing". Unfortunately, the fires under the boilers had been damped and there was no steam to operate the bilge pumps, something overlooked by the land-lubbers.

III - Defending Milne Bay and Oro Bay, New Guinea

Eventually, the Bontekoe was loaded and sailed away northward along the coast of Australia to Townsville to await the intelligence which would allow the convoy to slip up the coast of New Guinea between Jap air raids. For 5 days the Bontekoe, with a sister ship, the Von Heemskirk, and a Liberty ship with the convoying Australian corvette, were anchored in the harbor at Townsville while the Japs plastered Darwin, Port Moresby, Milne Bay and Oro Bay with 100-plane raids. On the morning of the sixth day, G-2 predicted that the way would be clear long enough to dash up the coast of New Guinea. The convoy set out at full speed and by late afternoon was anchored near the head of Milne Bay. Almost as soon as the anchors dropped in the water a Red Alert was signaled by 3 rounds from the anti-aircraft at the airstrip. Immediately, the ship's captain ordered "Up Anchor" and at full speed the Bontekoe moved across the bay to the jetty at Waga-Waga Point.

As the Bontekoe touched the jetty, the order was given for all personnel to leave the ship. The unit was formed up outside the jetty area and prepared to spend the night. From shore, the wake of the Bontekoe could be seen heading out of the harbor at full speed. There was no air raid, but at 0200 hours, a message came from Headquarters that a Jap task force was headed for Milne Bay. The 641st was to form a defense for the area. Dirt flew as trenches were dug in the cold, gray dawn with all hands determined to sell their lives dearly.

All that day nothing happened. Then another day, and suddenly the Bontekoe was again at the jetty. The men filled in the trenches and policed the area and, after another night in the rain, they struggled back aboard ship and hung out bedding and clothing in the morning sunshine. As all hands settled in for a comfortable afternoon, the three shots from the anti-aircraft guns rang out and again the Red Alert was on. Lieutenant Colonel Fertig again ordered all personnel off the ship and this time it was for real. The high level bombers came down the bay in a beautiful formation, wheeled majestically and came back over the airstrip and dock area, blanketing the area with bombs. Then came the fighters and dive bombers. Every ship in the harbor took a thorough working over, except the Bontekoe. Suddenly it was over. One minute machine guns, bombs and anti-aircraft guns were wildly blasting, and then suddenly the planes were gone and there was silence.

Five ships in the harbor were hit by bombs and were on fire and sinking. The Australian corvette, which had been with the convoy from the start, escaped the concentrated attention of five dive bombers and was still blasting back fiercely when the raid ended. Throughout all this the Bontekoe had remained secured to the jetty and, apparently unnoticed, had escaped the attack. Thus ended the Battle of Milne Bay. The men filed on board ship again during the rest of the afternoon, watching salvage crews work to beach the bombed-out ships in the harbor. The Von Heemskirk was afire and had been run up on a reef where her load of artillery ammunition was booming and banging all night long.

Before dawn the Bontekoe cast off and, shortly after midnight of the second day, arrived in Oro Bay, blacked out in a wild tropical storm. Flashes of lightning revealed a small harbor with superstructures of sunken ships protruding from the water everywhere and a bombed-out jetty against the far shore. Out of this darkness and desolation, a barge propelled by a small launch, appeared and was secured to the ship. There was just enough room on the barge to accommodate all of the battalion personnel. Quickly the barge cast off and soon the men were on the beach and marching away from the shoreline.

With dawn came more rain. Details began to unload the ship; guns, trucks and ammunition were hurriedly lightered to the beach and taken away from the danger area. At the same time, the Australian Tank Attack unit, which the 641st was to replace, was bringing its guns and equipment to the beach and by 1800 hours that day, the Australian sergeant major reported to his CO that "The mob is on the boat," and the Bontekoe sailed out into the tropical dusk.

The 641st was assigned to coordinate defense of the Oro Bay area. Inherited from the Australians were three 25 lb. cannons that had been to Tobruk and back. These were sited on the beach north of Oro Bay. 50 and 30 caliber machine guns were emplaced and anti-tank guns were sited to cover areas of probable attack. Captain Jones was attached to the 41st Infantry Division reconnaissance platoon for two weeks up the coast to the Mambare River area.

Bombing raids were fairly frequent, but were mostly ineffective and caused no casualties. Again, the days went on in monotonous order. The personnel were singing the "Army Nurses' Song", but added the 641st at the end.

Army Nurses' Song

We don't

March like the infantry
Shoot like artillery
Ride like the cavalry

All we do is

Get up for reveille
We are the ANC!

A great morale boosting event took place on May 14, when the ships in the harbor were attacked one morning by the largest group of enemy aircraft operating in that area for some time. As the Jap dive bombers drifted down to the attack, newly arrived P-38's followed them and cleared them out of the sky. At one time there were twelve Jap planes either splashed or fire-balled in the sky over Oro Bay. It was a great sight and the GI's cheered as if they were watching a football game.

The Fifth Air Force was winning the Battle of New Guinea and at great cost was clearing the Jap planes from the sky. Without air cover the enemy could hardly be expected to attack the coastal installations which the 641st was defending.

In June, Lieutenant Colonel Fertig, Major Morris and Captain Rushing were ordered to Task Force 162 in the vicinity of Nassau Bay. 41st Infantry Division HQ ordered Major "Iron Mike" Davidson to the 641st as commanding officer. Shortly after, a new commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Charles G. Dawley was assigned and Major Davidson became executive officer.



Camp at Oro Bay

At this time the battalion entered into a new assignment for Advance Base B, which was the new designation for Oro Bay. Our Company D was relieved of duty with the 41st Infantry Division and rejoined the battalion. Then the company was immediately assigned to build a headquarters for the new base. The rest of the battalion was put to work constructing a new Quartermaster Depot and also to around-the-clock cargo handling the beach. A detachment was sent from Companies B and C to Morobe and Nassau Bay on forward cargo handling assignments for the Salamaua Operation. At the end of the Salamaua Campaign, the two detachments were returned to the battalion, which was hard at work moving cargo. Kitchens at Oro Bay worked 24 hour shifts so that combat troops returning from Salamaua were treated to doughnuts and fresh bread, delicacies they had not had for many a long day.

A wild aerial scramble occurred one morning over Oro Bay when the Jap attacking planes became mixed up in a flight of Fifth Air Force bombers coming back from a dawn raid on Madang. Radar control at the Dobodura airstrip apparently assumed the Japs were heading for them and ordered the returning U.S. planes to defer landing and group over the Oro Bay area. As it turned out, Oro Bay was the enemy's target, and the anti-aircraft fire from the ships in the harbor, in a wild few minutes, inadvertently succeeded in putting a few holes in the American planes.

Next came some rapid administrative changes for the 641st. Lieutenant Colonel Dawley was made assistant commanding officer of Advance Base B, and Major Davidson was again battalion CO with Captain Elliott as executive officer. On November 15, Major Davidson was taken to the hospital critically ill with scrub typhus and Captain Elliott was acting CO.

A particularly pleasant interlude was the visit of Gary Cooper and his troupe of entertainers which included Phyllis Brooks and Una Merkel. They all had mess with the troops in HQ Company Mess Tent and signed hundreds of autographs.

At this juncture the unit had another change in command: Major Robert "Bubbles" Preston, formerly of I Corps staff, reported as Battalion CO. Captain Elliott was ordered to hospital and several days later, Lieutenant Colonel Cochran reported into the battalion as the new Battalion CO with Major Preston becoming executive officer. With this alignment, 1943 ended, a year of frustration and discouragement, and a lot of hard grubby work.

Ode to The 641

*We're the men behind the men behind the guns
We don't take gunfire when there's fighting to be done.
At fighting Japs
We'd look like saps
And I'm afraid we'd have to run.
You guessed it right the first time,
We're the fighting 641!*

We shine our shoes like a bunch of dopes

While the gents on Kings' Row air their hopes.
We don't look like soldiers
And never shoot a gun
It's like you said before, boys,
We're the fighting 641!

We're up so bright and early and take off for the docks
While the heroes on the hilltops are lounging on their cots.
We grab a swig of coffee and take it on the run
And the sailors on the ships all say,
"There's the fighting 641!"
We bust our tails, hustling rations, guns and gas
While the heroes who command us
Are lying on their ass.
We fill our pockets full of smokes
We're richer when we're done
And the checkers on the jetty say,
"That God-damn 641!"
We won the siege of Melbourne and set out for the North
And mothers hid their daughters
When the 641st set forth
When we got to Rocky we all had loads of fun
And now they're raising little bastards
Of the fighting 641!
Oh, we'll be staying here another year or two
And then we'll shine our shoes and say, "Another job is through"
When the last boat is leaving Oro, yep, when the war is won
The only ones without a ride
Will be the fighting 641!

IV - Into Action with 4.2 inch Mortars

The next big event for the 641st was the move to Borio, a few miles north of Oro Bay. The battalion was attached to the 1st Cavalry Division and apparently headed for a more active role in the war. New self-propelled tank destroyers rolled out of the Ordnance depot and looked great. Everyone had the hope that at last the battalion would be able to function in its proper mission. The 1st Cavalry Division was a new experience, as it was the battalion's first attachment to a regular Army division, and was a real pleasure, although too short-lived. Frantic preparations were made to begin training with the new weapons, but at this point, the heavens fell in. A War Department telegram was received, stating that the 641st was to be rearmed with 4.2" chemical mortars and the beautiful tank destroyers had to be turned back to the Ordnance depot. The great dream of going with the 1st Cavalry Division to the Admiralty Islands had turned to dust. Discouragement and disillusion were thick enough to cut with an axe, and it looked like a lot more of all about nothing.

Meanwhile, camp was improved until it was the most elegant yet. Showers for each company were constructed from LST (Landing Ship, Tank) ventilators and were installed as water tanks. These were filled with water each day by a battalion tank truck. Pyramidal tents were elevated and framed in and each man's cot was enclosed in mosquito net. Each tent had it's own DDT bomb and every GI had his own roll of toilet paper. This was a far cry from the days of Swamp Murray.

4.2" chemical mortars came from all directions. Lt Colonel Cochran and his staff quickly collected the components of the first mortar to appear. The rifled barrel weighed 90 lbs. the standard, 75 lbs.; and the baseplate, 150 lbs. Each shell weighed 25lbs with an added 10lbs for the crate and protective wrappings. There were no accompanying instructions or "How to Use" booklets, but the assembly was soon solved and the strange beast was carted out to a lonely area for its first workout. Major Preston acted as gunner and Captain Wilson and Lieutenant Sandwick acted as crew. Lieutenant Colonel Cochran selected a target and fired the first shell while Captain Brighton and Captain Saunders observed. Later, another target was selected

and Captain Saunders adjusted the fire while the rest observed. At the end of the session, it was agreed that the 4.2" was a weapon of great destructive capability. Each shell, with its vertical angle of impact exploding 8.5lbs of TNT, cleared a circle 30 feet in diameter with a powerful wallop. What could have been accomplished with these weapons at Buna and Sananana!

Ammunition was available, to be sure, but not a single training directive was provided. There were 48 mortars available which were divided into 12 for each company and which were in turn broken down into two platoons of six mortars each. A provisional T/O & E was worked up and crews began their everlasting gun drill. The 2nd Engineer Special Brigade at Camp Sudest cooperated with the use of LCM's (Landing Craft, Mechanized). Field exercises were carried out, including landing with LCM's and firing service ammunition. Firing exercises were conducted every day for 3 weeks until all battalion officers and a good many of the non-coms (non-commissioned officers) were qualified in the conduct of fire. The final exercise was the concentration of fire on a target by two companies. This was conducted by Lieutenant Colonel Cochran, flying in an artillery observation plane, and was done to perfection, with all 24 rounds falling in the target area.

Next, the 641st TD Battalion, less Company A, was ordered to Finschhafen and embarked from Oro Bay on the Liberty Ship, USS David E. Hughes. The battalion CO, S-3, and a HQ detachment of 38 men were attached to the artillery section of the 41st Infantry Division for the Letterpress Operation. Company B was attached to the 163rd Infantry Combat Team, Company C was attached to the 162nd Infantry Combat Team, and Company D was attached to the 186th Infantry Combat Team. It would be three months or more before the battalion would be back together again. Company A was assigned to the 24th Infantry Division and sailed from Oro Bay on the USAT Kota Intan on 12 April 1944, and landed in the staging area on Goodenough Island the following day. The first platoon was combat loaded on the USS Carter Hall and sailed on April 17 to rendezvous with the landing force already underway. The 2nd platoon embarked on LST 204 as part of the Noiseless Landing Force Reserve.

At last, the grand strategy began to be apparent and the 641st was to have a substantial part in it. General MacArthur's forces had captured the Admiralty Islands and secured a foothold on New Britain Island, thus securing the approaches to the Bismarck Sea. The first phase called for the capture of Aitape with its airfield which furnished a base for the RAAF P-40's which were

required to furnish air cover after the Navy planes left the Hollandia operation on D+3. This is how Company B participated in this operation which was the initial move to blockade all the Japs in New Guinea forever.

Sailing from Finschhafen on the USS Etamin, 19 April 1944, Company B landed at the Aitape beachhead with the 163rd Infantry Combat Team on 22 April 1944. In order to have air cover for the Hollandia operation, it was necessary to secure a fighter strip within flying range, so that the Aussie 78th Wing could take over flying cover after the U.S. Navy was scheduled to move out at D+3. It was anticipated that the Tadjì fighter strip could be quickly made operational for the Aussie P-40's. Later in the day the company was moved by LCPV (Landing Craft, Personnel, Vehicle) to a point between Karako and Pro Mission where the platoons registered on enemy positions. There was some sniper fire in position areas.

In the meantime, the 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the 163rd Infantry Combat Team had secured the Tadjì Fighter and Bomber strips and the Royal Australian Air Force 63rd Works Wing was hard at work making them operational. The next day a platoon of B Company was moved to the Tadjì Plantation and the other platoon to the Tabiki Plantation from where enemy positions were taken under fire. Red Alerts occurred during this period and there was occasional sniper fire.

April 24. The Aussie engineers, who had worked straight through for 48 hours, declared the Tadjì Fighter Strip ready and by 1630 hours, 25 P-40's of the 78th Wing, RAAF, were on the field. Thus land-based air support for the Hollandia Operation 100 miles to the west was established on schedule. Company B was moved to Lemieng Hamlet on April 25 and fire was directed on enemy positions in support of the 127th Infantry Regiment using air and forward observation. Sniper fire was again experienced in the platoon area. Red Alerts occurred during the night.

May 4. A detail of 70 men and 4 NCOs was ordered to Blue Beach to handle cargo, which continued until May 14. This ended the operational phase for Aitape, having fired a total of 173 rounds of smoke and high explosive. There were no casualties from enemy action. On May 14, Company B embarked for Humboldt Bay on LST 456. The main plum in the pie was Hollandia with its deep-water harbor and three airdromes. General MacArthur assigned the 24th and 41st Infantry Divisions to this task. The 41st Infantry Division landed on the east side of the Cyclops Peninsula,

captured Hollandia Town and overran the Cyclops and Sentani airfields.

This is how Companies C and D supported the 41st Infantry Division at Hollandia. Company C loaded on LST 466 and embarked from Finschhafen on April 18 for the Hollandia beachhead as part of the Letterpress Landing Force.

On D Day, the 2nd platoon of Company C landed on White Beach #1 at H+5 and the 1st platoon at H+90. As the unit was not able to reach its designated position, because of difficult terrain, both platoons went into position on Pancake Hill. Forward observers from the 2nd platoon reached Hollandia at 1700 hours with the 162nd Infantry Combat Team and reported no opposition. The next day the town was taken and the 2nd platoon, Company C, was moved there via LCM. Up to this time the only fire was for registration. The enemy bombing of White Beach #1 at 1930 hours resulted in the loss of 12 mortar carts and tremendous losses of supplies of all kinds. Soon after this, the 1st platoon was transported by boat to Hollandia. On April 24, the 2nd platoon fired a concentration on enemy positions and destroyed a machine gun nest. One enemy was captured. The following day the 1st platoon was transported by water to the north side of Challenger Cove and completed registration just before dark. Captain Saunders, T/Sgt Adams and Corporal Kaelke arrived from Battalion HQ.



The 2nd platoon killed one enemy in its perimeter. No further action was reported by either platoon and, by May 5, both were relieved of their assignments to the 41st Infantry Division and attached to the 34th Infantry Division and reported to Pim Jetty to handle cargo.

A total of 68 rounds of white phosphorous (WP) and high explosive (HE) shells were fired. No personnel were lost from enemy action, but one man was injured when he fell from a truck. Seven prisoners were taken and four of the enemy were killed by security patrols in position areas.

Company D landed on D Day at White Beach #3, Humboldt Bay. The 1st platoon went into position on Cape Tjewri at 0600 hours and was directing fire on Pim Jetty shortly thereafter. This was primarily a covering fire with smoke to cover the landing of the 3rd Battalion, 186th Infantry Combat Team. Excellent results were obtained and a commendation was received by the CO from General Fuller, Task Force Commander, via radio. Early that afternoon, the 2nd platoon landed at White Beach #3 and went into position near the 1st platoon. Later Lieutenant Lillie and

a security patrol killed an enemy officer and 3 soldiers in a pillbox situated between the two platoon positions. They had been observing the whole operation from concealment. The next day, registration was made for defensive barrages in the vicinity of Suikerbrood Hill. As the 186th Infantry Combat Team was meeting very little resistance, and soon was out of mortar range, the company was relieved on the following day and was attached to the 34th Infantry Division of the 24th Division Magic Force.

April 26. The 1st platoon was transported to the vicinity of the Koejaboe River, and the 2nd platoon supported the 34th Infantry Division in mopping up operations in the Hoebai River Valley. The infantry requested fire in an area occupied by a friendly patrol, causing some casualties. Enemy fire was coming from this area and our troops were reported at some distance from the target area.

A group of Sikh prisoners, captured by the Japanese at Singapore, were fed and turned over to the S-2 section of the 34th Infantry Division. The Sikhs were all males and had been used for hard physical labor by the Japanese. They were in horrible physical condition and appeared to have been on short rations. On April 30, Company D was relieved of attachment to the 34th Infantry Division and returned to Pim to stand by for orders. A total of 104 rounds WP and HE were fired and one man was wounded in action. Four of the enemy were killed by a security patrol. To complete the pincers movement on the airfields in the neck of the Cyclops Peninsula, the 24th Division landed on the shores of Tanahmerah Bay and proceeded west. Company A was there.

Company A sailed from Goodenough Island with the Noiseless Landing Force (24th Division) and a landing was made on D Day, April 22, at Red Beach #2, Tanahmerah Bay by the 1st platoon in support of the 21st Infantry Division. By the end of the day, the infantry had advanced rapidly against negligible enemy resistance and were out of 4.2 mortar range from Red Beach #2. As there were no roads on Red Beach #2, the 1st platoon was relieved of assignment to the 21st Infantry Division and assigned to the 19th Infantry Division as of April 23.

The 2nd platoon and Company HQ, with Task Force Reserve, was transported on April 24 by LST from Tanahmerah Bay to White Beach #3 in Humboldt Bay. On April 25, the 1st platoon was relieved of attachment to the 19th Infantry Division and assigned again to the 21st Infantry Division and transported to

Red Beach #1, Depapre Bay, except for Lieutenant Keller and 30 men who remained on Red Beach #2. On April 26, a section of the 1st platoon, composed of Lieutenant William Anderson, Lieutenant Prendergast, S/Sgt Searing, and 47 men with one mortar and a small amount of ammunition in hand carts, started up the trail over the mountains from Depapre Bay. By 1600 hours, they had arrived in Mariboe and spent the night there. By 1500 hours the next day the 1st platoon section had advanced to Jangkena and spent the night. No rations were available. Meanwhile, Lieutenant Keller and the 30-man detachment from the 1st platoon were transported from Red Beach #2, Tanahmerah Bay, to White Beach #3, Humboldt Bay, by LST to join the company there on April 28. Lieutenants. Prendergast and Anderson and the 1st platoon section arrived at 21st Infantry Division HQ at Hollandia Drome on this date. This closed the Tanahmerah Bay operation for Company A. No ammunition was expended and one man was injured in transfer from transport to LCM prior to the landing at Red Beach #2.

HQ Forward Detachment consisting of Lieutenant Colonel Cochran, Captain Saunders and 28 men were attached to the 41st Infantry Division Letterpress Landing Force. Because of enemy fire on White Beach #2, the detachment was not able to land until D+3, April 25. The detachment was transported across Jautefa Bay to Pim and by truck and then by foot to the 41st Infantry Division HQ in the vicinity of Lake Sentani, and there helped form the perimeter guard for the night. The security patrol brought in a Jap officer who had been found hiding in a cave. He was well dressed, had his bag packed with personal belongings and was obviously ready to be captured. We had no facilities for handling prisoners and were in a quandary as to what to do with him until the MP's arrived. Our visions of the die-hard Samurai were dispelled when he said, in perfect English: "I won't give you any trouble; I'm a civilian at heart."

April 26. The detachment was assigned to the 41st Infantry Division Artillery HQ, one mile west. Captain Saunders, T/Sgt Adams and Corporal Kaelke left for Company C at Hollandia. The detachment furnished labor details and perimeter guard for the division artillery HQ. On April 28th, Captain Saunders, T/Sgt Adams and Corporal Kaelke returned to Division Artillery HQ and, by May 5, HQ Detachment was transported to White Beach #3 and attached to Company A.

May 18. HQ Forward Detachment was ordered to report to division HQ at Hollandia Drome and was enroute to White Beach #1 when a fire broke out in stores of ammunition, gasoline and aerial

bombs being assembled there for the Biak Operation. They were unable to get through and were forced to spend the night at White Beach #2. Captain Saunders aided the Beachmaster in moving mobile equipment out of the path of the flames.

Company A was designated to construct a battalion campsite in the vicinity of Waibron Baroe, and the rear echelon reported in from Finschhafen.

Again the battalion was assembled with the exception of Company B. Some of the amenities arrived, including the "good" cigarettes, plus six bottles of beer for each man per week, and sometimes Coca-Cola. Soon the battalion was divided again among three landing forces. The 41st Infantry Division requested that Company D, its favorite "Bastard Boys," be attached for Hurricane Operation to Biak Island. Companies A and C were assigned to I Corps and attached to the 24th Division to stay in reserve at Hollandia. Company B remained with its original task force from Aitape, which was then designated Tornado Force. Lieutenant Colonel Cochran, Battalion CO, was ordered on temporary duty as assistant executive officer of the artillery section with the 41st Infantry Division and Major Preston then became acting battalion commander.

May 17, 1944. Company B landed on Yellow Beach in support of the 163rd Infantry Combat Team for the Wakde Island Operation. The LST hit a reef and all ammunition and equipment had to be carried through shoulder deep water. That afternoon, the unit, less one officer and 25 enlisted men, was transported to Insoemania Island and, after a difficult landing, went into position and commenced firing on adjacent Insoemoar Island. The detached officer and 25 men rejoined the company after having cleared a landing strip for artillery observation planes. Several Red Alerts occurred during the night. On May 18, the Wakde Drome area was shelled with excellent results. 603 rounds were expended on enemy positions. The unit had been under sniper fire all day.

May 19. Company B landed on the mainland at Arare at 1615 hours. After another difficult landing, the company moved to the 218th and 176th FA (Field Artillery) Battalion areas and formed a perimeter guard. There was heavy sniper fire in the area. Captain Marshall went on reconnaissance to the Tor River area.

The first fighter planes landed on the Wakde strip right on schedule. On May 20, Captain Marshall, S/Sgt Bettsworth and 20 men took a mortar six miles to the Tor River at 1500 hours. They

fired 18 rounds on enemy positions in support of Company I, 163rd Infantry Combat Team and returned to the company area. This concentration destroyed a machine gun that had pinned down an infantry patrol and enabled it to escape. Captain Marshall was relieved of command of Company B and Lieutenant Woebbeking assumed command. The next day Lieutenant Woebbeking and 25 men took a mortar south to Tementoe Creek. Lieutenant Finnegan observed from the air. A concentration was placed on enemy positions with good results. Orders were received for 13 men to return to the U.S. on rotation. Morale was sky-high.

May 22. The balance of Company B moved to Tementoe Creek and was again attached to the 163rd Infantry Combat Team. There was heavy sniper fire from the enemy in the area and everyone dug in deep. Sixteen men received promotion today to fill vacancies created by personnel leaving on rotation.

May 24 and 25, Company B remained in the same area. There was heavy sniper fire at times and some infiltration. One enemy was killed in the position area. Red Alerts occurred every night. On May 26, fire was concentrated on the enemy in the vicinity of Asisarer Village. There was enemy infiltration in the company area all night. On May 27, the 2nd platoon was subjected to an enemy attack at 0200 hours. Private James E. Umphries killed an enemy six feet from his mortar position. Enemy planes made seven bombing runs over the area during the night. The enemy attacked all along the beachhead at 2030 hours, but our infantry finally pushed them back and lines were finally restored after heavy fighting. After the counterattack was stopped, many of the enemy killed themselves.

May 28. Four sections of the 2nd platoon were moved to Tor River in support of the 158th Infantry Regiment and Major Preston, acting Battalion CO, arrived at Company HQ. Sniper fire was heavy all day. The enemy attacked S/Sgt Bettesworth's 2nd platoon at Tor River on May 29 with small arms and grenades and Corporal Walter J. Flain was wounded in the leg by a grenade. Sgt John Masayko killed an enemy in the vicinity of his mortar position at 0215 hours. The 1st platoon fired from 1100 to 0200 hours with a total of 355 rounds expended. Major Preston left the Company B area on May 30, accompanied by S/Sgt Gale Bettesworth for Battalion Headquarters at Hollandia. Sgt John Masayko was now the leader of the 2nd platoon.

The 2nd platoon fired 67 rounds to repulse an enemy attack at Tor River and furnished perimeter defense for the 158th Infantry Regiment. There were three Red Alerts and small arms fire on the

area all night. As there was only one 3/4-ton truck for the use of Company B, transportation was extremely difficult.

June 1. Company B killed one enemy and captured three in its defense perimeter. The 2nd platoon was at Tor River and fired 75 rounds on an enemy gun position. There was a Red Alert at 2030 hours and sniper fire on mortar positions.

June 2. Lieutenant Woebbeking and 12 men of the 1st platoon replaced Lieutenant Wagner and 12 men of the 2nd platoon at Tor River. An enemy attack on the 2nd platoon was repulsed with no casualties, and 72 rounds were expended on enemy positions. The next day 310 rounds were fired in the vicinity of Tementoe Creek at 0930 hours. Twelve men from the 1st platoon relieved an equal number from the 2nd platoon at Tor River. The enemy attacked Company E, 158th Infantry Regiment, in the vicinity of the 2nd platoon position at 2330 hours, but was repulsed. The 2nd platoon at Tor River fired 109 rounds, concentrating on enemy positions on June 4. At 1300 hours, the 1st platoon fired 27 rounds. There was enemy sniper fire in the area and a Red Alert at 2400 hours. On June 5, the 1st platoon moved to Tor River and the 2nd platoon moved to Toem. There was small arms fire in the vicinity of the Company command post during the night. One enemy was killed in the defense perimeter.

Four gun sections and the Command Post party joined the 191 Field Artillery (FA), 147th FA and 167th FA in a combined artillery operation. The 1st platoon fired 10 rounds in support of Company K, 158th Infantry Regiment. There was enemy activity in the perimeter all night. And there were still serious transportation difficulties.

June 6. Company B furnished security guard for the 147th FA and 167th FA, and the 1st platoon fired 104 rounds in support of the attack by Company F, 158th Infantry Regiment. There was a Red Alert at 0300 hours.

June 7. The 1st platoon fired a total of 90 rounds at intervals during the day and two mortar sections with the 167th FA expended 10 rounds on enemy positions. There was harassing enemy small arms fire on the mortar positions and a Red Alert at 0300 hours.

June 8. The 1st platoon, Company B, at the Tor River, fired 150 rounds during the night. Sixteen men were assigned for perimeter defense with Company I, 158th Infantry Regiment. Private Accusseo Piazza was wounded in the foot.

June 9. Company B again furnished perimeter guard and a Red Alert occurred at 0500 hours.

June 10. Two mortar sections of Company B, 1st platoon, returned to company control at 1000 hours, and two mortar sections were moved from Tor River to Maffin I. A total of 102 rounds were expended on enemy positions, including a direct hit on a 70 mm gun. There was intermittent enemy small arms fire in the area.

June 11. There was enemy activity all night with 3 Red Alerts. The 1st platoon expended 97 rounds on enemy positions.

June 12. Again, there was enemy activity all night long.

June 13. There was substantial enemy activity in the area and the 1st platoon fired 121 rounds on Tor River enemy positions. There was a Red Alert at 0300 hours.

June 14. The 1st platoon expended 120 rounds on the enemy at intervals during the day and furnished perimeter guard for the 147th FA and 167th FA.

June 15. Company B was relieved of perimeter guard duty and the 1st platoon was assigned to the 20th Infantry Regiment, 6th Infantry Division. The 2nd platoon at Tor River fired 73 rounds on enemy positions.

June 16. The 2nd platoon fired 170 rounds on enemy concentration in the Maffin Bay area.

June 17. Company B HQ was moved to the 21st Infantry Division area on the Tor River. The 2nd platoon fired 20 rounds on the enemy in the Maffin Bay area with good results.

June 18. Corporal Reckleff injured his left foot in an accident. Company B moved to the Maffin Bay area. There was tremendous difficulty with transportation.

June 19. Thirteen rounds were fired in support of 20th Infantry Regiment, attacking enemy positions in the vicinity of Sarmi. Transportation problems were acute.

June 20. Company B was under enemy counter-battery fire the entire day. Lieutenant Woebbeking and the 1st platoon went forward in close support of the 20th Infantry Regiment in final attack on Sarmi. 234 rounds of WP were fired, with good results.

June 21. Company B was still under enemy fire with the 1st platoon still in close support of the 20th Infantry Regiment. Two mortar carts were destroyed and two were damaged. At Maffin Bay, both platoons fired 329 rounds total in support of the infantry advance. There was a Red Alert at 2100 hours and PFC. Joseph Cohen was wounded in the left foot at 1730 hours.

June 22. PFC Thomas P. McKenna was wounded in the left arm at 1700 hours. The entire Company B is now in Maffin I area. 929 rounds were fired in support of a renewed infantry attack on Sarmi. Enemy artillery was effectively silenced.

June 23. Company B was relieved from attachment to the 21st Infantry Division and moved to Toem to form perimeter guard. Company strength was now down to 4 officers and 143 enlisted men.

June 24. Company B policed the area, checked ordnance and furnished perimeter guard. Three sections from each platoon were assigned to a practice landing operation.

June 25 - 26. The unit was standing by for orders, and Lieutenant Finnegan was ordered to the hospital.

June 27. Lieutenant Woebbeking and 24 enlisted men boarded LST 459. Lieutenant Wagner and 25 enlisted men boarded LST 472. Lieutenant Setzke and 3 men boarded LST 466. Pvt Anthony Campesi was burned on his face and T/5 Stephen Haywood was accidentally shot in the right foot. The balance of the unit was awaiting orders.

A summary of Company B on Wakde Island and vicinity: 3 enlisted men were wounded in action; 3 enlisted men were injured in accidents; 4 enemy were killed; 3 were taken prisoner; 3,005 rounds of smoke and HE were fired.

Meanwhile, 200 miles to the west, the Biak Island operation was in full swing. Originally conceived to provide a heavy bomber base to supplement the Navy's forthcoming operation in the Caroline Islands, it was anticipated that Mokmer Drome would be cleared of enemy as quickly as were the airfields in the past three operations. The Biak Island Task Force was a 41st Infantry Division operation, less the 163rd Infantry Combat Team at the start. The Task Force Commander requested that Company D of the 641st be assigned for this operation. An interesting sidelight was the assignment of 12 DUKWs from the 812th Amphibious Truck Company with their Negro drivers for the duration of the

operation. This probably makes Company D the first integrated unit in the SWPA (Southwest Pacific Area) and it was a happy occasion for all concerned.

May 27, 1944, Company D landed with Hurricane Task Force in the vicinity of Bosnek in support of the 186th Infantry Combat Team. By noon, Company D was ordered to Parai Jetty in support of the 162nd Infantry Combat Team but, due to hostile fire from the cliffs nearby, the DUKWs did not arrive on time and the move was delayed until the next day.

May 28 was a day of utmost confusion. The mortars were in place some 400 yards west of the jetty under sniper fire. The enemy was attacking in force and by infiltration, forcing the withdrawal of the 162nd Infantry Combat Team and, by 1300 hours, orders were received from Lieutenant Colonel Bailey, 162nd Infantry, to withdraw the 1st platoon to Ibdì and to cover the withdrawal of the 162nd Infantry Combat Team with fire from the 2nd platoon. The DUKWs pulled away from the reef with the 1st platoon, but were well peppered by 20 mm fire from the cliffs above. Hostile fire was becoming heavier and fire from our naval forces was crashing into the cliffs above in an attempt to stop the attack.

Captain Gerttula and Lieutenant Sandwick adjusted the fire of individual mortars on apparent sources of hostile fire. And after two hours of furious action, the 162nd Infantry Combat Team had withdrawn and the 2nd platoon maintained interdicting fire until its ammunition was almost exhausted. An estimated 400 rounds were fired during this period.

At this point, Lieutenant Bell took his 2nd platoon with what equipment could be carried to the reef and was there taken off by an LCT. The platoon suffered no casualties, but two sailors were wounded by hostile 20 mm fire from the cliffs.

Captain Gerttula and Pvts Koskela, Turner and Goorsky remained behind to render the mortars inoperable and destroy all other equipment. Captain Gerttula and his detail then walked along the beach and reached Ibdì shortly after the 2nd platoon arrived by LCT. During the course of this action, one of the DUKWs was sunk by 20 mm fire which the enemy was laying down with great accuracy from the caves above the beach. The driver was rescued, wet but unhurt.

May 29 - June 1, Company D remained in the vicinity of Ibdì.

June 2. The 2nd platoon received six new mortars replacing those destroyed, and went into position 300 yards west of Ibdi in support of Company K, 162nd Infantry Combat Team. The next day concentrations were fired in close support of the infantry until 2100 hours. Lieutenant Bell was sick and ordered to the hospital and Lieutenant Sandwick took over as leader of the 2nd platoon. The Company moved 50 yard from the original position, but did no more firing until June 7, when all were moved to Parai Jetty to support the 3rd Battalion, 162nd Infantry Combat Team. Registration for defensive fire was completed by 1900 hours on the same day.

June 8. Forward Observer (FO) Lieutenant Russell with the 3rd Battalion, 162nd Infantry Combat Team, reported his party under heavy mortar fire. By 1400 hours, all communications were lost. Pvt Kelly of the FO party came back to report that Lieutenant Russell had been killed and Pvts Prendergast and Daly had been wounded. A new FO party with S/Sgt White in charge was organized and took over adjustment of fire on the enemy position until 2230 hours when it was terminated on orders of Lieutenant Colonel Mollister of the 3rd Battalion, 162nd Infantry Combat Team. The 4.2s with Sgt Greenshields and Pvt Goorsky installing new communications under heavy fire were given credit for silencing enemy mortars and a direct hit on a machine gun emplacement.

The enemy control of the ridge overlooking Mokmer Village was a continual source of trouble to the 162nd Infantry Combat Team. Their regimental HQ was within mortar range as were the roads in the Mokmer Drome area. Concentration of fire from Company D temporarily silenced the enemy mortars.

June 10, Company D's mortars again adjusted fire on the ridge and, beginning at 0800 hours, placed a minimum of one round per minute on the target until 1515 hours. During a brief interruption of fire to move base plates, the enemy placed six rounds of mortar fire on the road, killing one man and wounding five. However, during the time the enemy fire was suppressed, the 162nd Infantry Combat Team was able to move 7 tanks and 50 trucks of supplies along the road to Mokmer Drome. 890 rounds of WP and HE were expended.

The next day Major Benson, 1st Battalion, 162nd Infantry Combat Team, requested the same concentration on the ridge area from 0645 hours to 1850 hours, which would insure free passage on the road in the vicinity of Parai for most of the day. Later, the same concentration was fired at 1930 hours until 1945 hours.

June 12. 115 rounds were fired in the same area beginning at 0700 hours with good effect. Vehicles were making practically unrestricted use of the Mokmer Drome road. A higher percentage of WP (White Phosphorus) was being used with each concentration, and the FO's report indicated wild screams from the shelled area as the WP shells found the enemy hiding in their holes.

June 13. Captain Gerttula, in an effort to improve the observation of the firing on the ridges, made arrangement to re-register the mortars from the deck of an LST outside the reef. Three tanks on board were also used in an attempt to achieve a precision adjustment on the enemy-occupied ridges. Concentrated fire was maintained until 1930 hours with apparently satisfactory results as the road was again open. Company D was again ordered to a position 100 yards north of Mokmer Drome on June 15. Registration was completed on the West Caves area in support of the 3rd Battalion, 162nd Infantry Combat Team, at 1645 hours. Also taken under fire was an emplacement of four naval guns. The infantry was meeting stiff resistance in this area.

June 16. Company D fired 400 rounds in preparation for the attack of the 3rd Battalion, 162nd Infantry Combat Team, in conjunction with 81mm mortars. This time the infantry met only minor resistance and counted 50 enemy dead in the target area.

June 17: Re-registered and fired harassing fire on the main road to West Caves.

June 22. Mokmer Drome came into limited use by the RAAF P-40 squadron. In the meantime, the 1st platoon was firing a concentration west of Young Man's Trail in support of the 163rd Infantry Combat Team to reduce Ibdi Pocket. Again, harassing fire was placed on the enemy road net in the West Caves area. At 1310 hours, a concentration was fired in conjunction with Division Artillery and 81mm mortars on enemy artillery, resulting in its silencing. Requested replacement of one defective mortar was made. At 0415 hours, a large fire was observed in the West Caves area which lasted for 30 minutes. Air observation was maintained every day by Captain Gerttula and S/Sgt White to make sure that shells were impacting the target area.

June 23. When Company D moved to positions 300 yards east of Mokmer Drome, the East Caves area was taken under fire. This was the same area fired on June 8-13. Precision adjustment was made from the air by Lieutenant Colonel Cochran, which effectively

silenced enemy interdicting fire which had been harassing the roads and jetty area. The next day, fire was continued in this area with the same good results. In the afternoon, Company D was relieved of assignment to the 162nd Infantry Combat Team and attached to the 186th Infantry Combat Team, and moved to positions 600 yards east of Borokoe Drome. Captain Gerttula acted as FO, with Pvt Kelly as radio operator, and took up position with the 3rd Battalion, 186th Infantry Combat Team, which was receiving heavy fire from concealed enemy positions. Sound sensing was used for registration as rough terrain made visual observation impossible. Later, a normal barrage of sweeping fire traversed the target area. When the infantry moved into the area it was found largely undefended, with abandoned weapons and several dazed enemy soldiers. They later asked if they had been bombarded by automatic artillery.

June 25. Company D was ordered to positions 1500 yards north of Mokmer Drome in support of the 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry Combat Team. As the enemy was interdicting supply routes again, the DUKWs were late because of that hostile fire, and the move was not accomplished until the next day.

June 27. S/Sgt White, who had been acting as a FO since Lieutenant Russell was killed, received a field promotion to the rank of 2nd lieutenant. He was assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 186th Infantry Combat Team, and successfully brought down a new concentration of fire on enemy strong points. Our infantry occupied the West Caves Area with only minor resistance, and counted 32 enemy dead. Captain Gerttula was called to 41st Infantry Division HQ to plan the silencing of the East Caves Area which was again harassing what was by then the division rear area. It was decided to displace one mortar to a position 300 yards east of Mokmer Drome, to locate the caves with smoke shells for an air strike.

June 28. The stage was set. With Captain Gerttula observing from an Air Corps OC 3, adjustment was made with smoke on the East Caves Area. The 405th Bombardment Squadron B-25's then plastered the area with tons of explosives.

The next day, Company D was relieved of attachment to the 186th Infantry Combat Team and ordered back to its old position at Mokmer Drome. Again fire was placed on the West Caves Area at irregular intervals at the rate of 15 rounds per hour. Adjustment was made by air with Lieutenant White using the Division Artillery plane. Sections were alternated in maintaining a round-the-clock firing schedule.

July 1. Fire was adjusted with E-53 ammunition, as all M-5 was exhausted. This continued until July 3, when infantry patrols reached the outlying West Caves Area with no apparent opposition. Captured in the caves were huge supplies of ammunition and four 20mm anti-aircraft guns. During the last four days, no enemy fire had fallen on any of the roads or docks. Captain Saunders and S/Sgt Adams arrived from Battalion HQ at Hollandia.

July 5. Patrols reached East Caves, killing three enemy and found many dead. A considerable amount of ordnance and ammunition was found plus lockers of records which had not been destroyed.

This completes the activities of Company D in support of the 41st Infantry Division in the conquest of Biak. In the last days, the DUKW drivers made a sweep of all the ships in the moorage area and returned with many goodies such as canned turkey and fresh fruit and vegetables which provided the final feast, to which were invited General Doe, Commanding General of the 41st Infantry Division and his staff. General Doe read a letter of commendation to the officers and men of Company D. Goodbyes were said to the faithful DUKW drivers who had served the company so well and had contributed so much to the success of the operation. With that, the "Bastard Boys" rode off into the sunset.

July 12. Orders were received from 6th Army HQ. The unit loaded on LST 475 from Bosnek on July 15 and arrived at Hollandia on July 17, then proceeding to the battalion area in the vicinity of Wabron Boroe. In addition to the letter of commendation to Company D from the commanding general, 41st Infantry Division, for the Biak operation, the following decorations were awarded for conduct under fire:

Capt Gerttula, Silver Star
Lt Russell, Bronze Star (posthumously)
Lt Bell, Bronze Star
Sgt Greenshields, Bronze Star
Pvt Koskela, Bronze Star
Pvt Turner, Bronze Star
Pvt Goorsky, Bronze Star

Summary: One officer KIA (Killed In Action); one officer and six enlisted men WIA (Wounded In Action); four enlisted men injured in accidents. A total of 7,986 rounds of smoke and HE were fired

in the 40 days that Company D was in action on Biak. This ended the last operation that Company D would have with the 41st Infantry Division, and the "Bastard Boys" again covered themselves with glory. Meanwhile, as Biak had gone long past the deadline for use as a heavy bomber base for the Carolines Operation, it was necessary to secure another fighter base at the head of Geelvnick Bay to short circuit any possible interference by land or sea of the staging operations for the Philippines. Noomfoor Island was the designated target and Company B was with the Task Force designated to take the air strips there.

June 30, 1944. Company B completed loading as part of Cyclone force. First Sgt O'Donnell and 34 enlisted men boarded LCI 106. Two enlisted men were left with the kitchen truck to join the company at D+2. E rations were the only food available on board. The 1st platoon landed July 2 on Yellow Beach, Noemfoor Island, in support of the 1st Battalion, 158th Infantry Regiment. The platoon went into position and immediately registered on enemy positions, firing 86 rounds. The 2nd platoon had a difficult time, as their LCT grounded on a coral reef 400 yards from shore and enemy fire added to the difficulties, but there were no casualties. The 2nd platoon moved to Kimiri Airdrome and fired 12 rounds in support of the 2nd Battalion, 158th Infantry Regiment.

July 3. The 1st platoon expended 90 rounds on enemy positions and the 2nd platoon fired 18 rounds. There was a Red Alert on the beachhead at 2300 hours.

July 4. The 1st platoon expended 70 rounds and the 2nd platoon experienced no activity. There was another Red Alert at 1945 hours.

July 5. The 1st platoon expended 95 rounds on enemy positions and the 2nd platoon again had no activity. There was a Red Alert again at 1945 hours. The 503rd Parachute Regiment dropped on Kimiri Drome and experienced many casualties as the planes came in too low.

July 6. The 2nd platoon supported the 2nd Battalion, 158th Infantry Regiment, on an encircling movement by water to Namber Drome. The 1st platoon fired 36 rounds during the night of harassing fire on enemy positions. There were Red Alerts at 2030, 2130 and 0300 hours.

July 7. Company B's 1st platoon at Kimir Drome is now attached to 503rd Parachute Regiment. There was a Red Alert at 2015 hours.

July 8. Company B, less the 2nd platoon awaiting orders. The 2nd platoon moved again by water in the vicinity of Namber Drome and landed with great difficulty because of the coral reef. Fire was adjusted on enemy positions in support of the 159th Infantry Regiment.

July 9. Lieutenant Woebbeking and six enlisted men of the 2nd platoon returned to the CP at Kimiri from Namber Drome. Company B's strength is now 138 enlisted men and 5 officers. Many men are suffering from exposure. There have been 6 Red Alerts in the last 24 hours. The 2nd platoon, in the vicinity of Namber Drome, fired 88 rounds.

July 10. The 2nd platoon expended 90 rounds on an enemy concentration in the vicinity of Namber Drome. The 1st platoon reported no activity. There was a Red Alert at 1950 hours.

July 11-13. Company B reports no activity from either platoon.

July 14. Company B is relieved from attachment to the 503rd Parachute Regiment and attached to the 158th Infantry Regiment. Transportation has been a continuing problem, as the unit has no trucks of its own and has been forced to beg and borrow trucks for normal existence.

July 15-19. Furnished details to the QM (Quartermaster) and ammunition dump, and unloaded a Liberty Ship.

July 20. Task Force HQ ordered Company B to board LST 469 by 1700 hours. Company B sailed for Hollandia at 1800 hours and was en route on July 21.

July 22. Landed at White Beach #1, Hollandia, at 1030 hours, and arrived at Base Camp Wabron Baroe at 1730 hours.

Summary: No personnel casualties resulted from enemy action and a total of 600 rounds of WP and HE were fired in the Noemfoor Operation. By the end of July, the Battalion was assembled at its base camp at Wabron Baroe. All units of the rear echelon had arrived from Finschhafen.

June 29. The unit was relieved from attachment to the 24th Division and became officially 6th Army troops. The Battalion

had been re-designated 98th Chemical Battalion (Motorized) and its branch was changed from Field Artillery to Chemical Warfare Service.

Lieutenant Colonel Cochran as ordered for duty to the 24th Division and Major Preston became acting battalion CO. Company D remained a reconnaissance company, and the firing companies were reorganized into three platoons of four mortars each, instead of two platoons of six mortars each. A training area was laid out and service practice was conducted using the new platoon alignment.

In August, Company A was alerted and embarked with the task force which landed on the island of Morotai in the Halamaheras in early September. This was the first task force to be operating outside the New Guinea area in the approach of US forces to the Philippines.

At this time Major Preston was relieved of command and Major Alexander Batlin, from the Chemical Warfare Section, 6th Army, was ordered to the Battalion as CO. The unit was then an integral part of the new 6th Army and would not ever again be with the 41st Infantry Division, which had now become part of the 8th Army.

The 641st TD Battalion had seen a lot of jungle days and nights and met monotony and danger since its last look at the Statue of Liberty. Some good men were lost along the way, and a lot of friendships were made. Although faced with considerable discouragement on some parts of the distance, the 641st had handled each job it had been given with integrity and competence.

V - On to the Philippines

Preparations for the second largest amphibious operation in World War II were under way in 16 staging areas in the Southwest Pacific by early November, 1944.

The U.S. Navy eventually amassed the ships to guard and transport 15 Divisions with their support troops, which made a 50-mile long column.

In December, the airfields at Leyte and Mindoro were made reasonably operational and the stage was set for the push to Luzon.

In the meantime, the Bastard Boys had found a home in the SIXTH Army and their presence was not only tolerated, but welcomed. The unit, now reborn as the 98th Chemical Mortar Battalion, left its comfortable camp at Wabron Baroe and was thus divided:

Companies A and D staged at Sansapor with one half of the battalion headquarters component. Major Robert Preston and Captain Gilbert Doolittle were the staff officers attached. Company A, with Captain Frank Stubbs commanding, was attached to the U.S. Navy to man the 4.2 inch mortars which were mounted on the LCIs (M) for close-in beach bombardment.

The weapons companies were in a new alignment, now having three platoons of four mortars each, rather than two platoons of six mortars as before. The theory was that each company supporting an infantry regiment would have a platoon with each assault battalion and one with the reserve battalion which should enable it to take a breather from the furious activity of combat. It did not always work out that way, but it was a good idea. This gave the infantry some beefed-up fire power with each assault battalion having direct control of a platoon of 4.2 inch mortars which was equivalent of a battery of 105mm cannon. In addition, the FO parties went forward with the infantry assault companies, which gave them the capacity for immediate response in emergency situations.

Each mortar section had its own 1/4-ton truck and trailer, and a 3/4-ton truck and trailer per platoon for ammunition. This was light years ahead of the arrangement for the original landings

at Aitape and Wakde, where Company B was attached to the Task Force Artillery and was reduced to thumbing rides.

Companies B and C staged at Aitape with the 43rd Division. The area had greatly changed from the time of the original landing on 22 April 1944, when B Company waded in through the surf with the 163rd Infantry Combat Team. At least the surf was the same. Captain Robert Dymond was the staff officer attached to the weapons companies. Major Alexander Batlin and the remainder of his headquarters staff staged at Aitape with the other weapons companies.

Company A sailed away on Navy LCI (Mortar) 974, 975, 1055 and 755 early in December. The 4.2 inch mortars of each platoon were emplaced 3 abreast in the well decks of each LCI and Captain Stubbs put up his command post on radar ranging ship LCI 974.

Meanwhile, Company A Provisional was organized with a platoon from Company D commanded by Lieutenant Benjamin Bell and enough men and an officer from the 20th Infantry Regiment and 53rd FA to make another platoon. Company A Provisional was then attached to the 20th Infantry Regiment.

Christmas arrived and a big batch of mail plus a turkey dinner made it a pretty good day all around. Everyone worked hard preparing personnel lists, checking equipment and waterproofing vehicles.

By midnight, 27 December 1944, the battalion was combat loaded and the convoy was beginning to take shape, and at 1600 hours, December 30 we sailed away from the shores of New Guinea forever. No tears were shed.

The convoy moved steadily northward and on 4 January 1945 we could see the lights of Tacloban on the horizon. That night a Jap plane came over and was picked up in the searchlights. The AA cut loose and he came down in flames. How everybody cheered!

The next day we were sailing through the Surigao Strait and there was enemy occupied land on either side of the convoy. Attack was expected momentarily and we were at General Quarters a good part of the time but nothing happened.

Sailing through the Mindanao Sea with enemy held islands all around us was an eerie feeling. Jap planes were in the air but no serious attack occurred.

In the afternoon we came abreast of Negros Island and could see the Zamboango peninsula in the distance. Just at dark we heard depth charges and were later told that the column had been attacked by two submarines, one of which was sunk.

About 20 miles ahead of the column a two engine Betty attacked the Ove Ommaney Bay which was damaged so badly that it had to be sunk by shellfire.

General Quarters was called at 0200 hours on January 7 and we saw two planes knocked down over our column up ahead. There were two more GQ's before evening mess.

We passed the Minandoro beachhead and were beyond the last remaining U.S. Air corps cover. It was all up to the Navy from here on.

About 2230 hours, star shells lit up the sky and the Navy blasted away with its heavy guns. We could see the shells striking and there was a lot of fire in the night sky. Our Navy got a Jap destroyer and it was quite a sight.

Another General Quarters occurred at 0300 on January 8 but nothing happened. At 0530 we passed Manila Bay and at 0800 the fight began. Jap planes came from all directions and were diving into the ships. This was the first Kamikaze attack we had seen. These vicious attacks were to cost the Navy 95 ships sunk or disabled and over 3000 casualties before the war was over. The AA was shooting the planes to pieces, but they still kept coming. A cruiser knocked down a two-engine plane but a single-engine fighter crashed into the stern of a nearby destroyer escort. Despite considerable damage the ship stayed in the convoy.

Here is an eyewitness account on that day from the memoirs of T/Sgt William P. Adams. (See more of his memoirs at [Observations & Reflections.](#))

"The day before we were to arrive at our Lingayen Bay destination, we had a very frightening attack by a Japanese dive or skip bomber that selected us as easy to attack out of our relatively small convoy. We were in a group of about thirty ships in the immediate area on the way to the rendezvous the next day for the invasion of Luzon. Our entire company was on a large landing craft called an LST. There were larger ships in our convoy including destroyers, but they picked our ship to

hit. The minute our radar picked up enemy planes in the area we were all shoved below deck. This ship was a metal ship with a solid metal deck and, weather permitting and if it was safe, we made most of the trip on deck. Below deck was one large open area in which we slept and our equipment was stored. Eventual disembarkation was through a large opening in front of the vessel that was large enough to drive trucks through. In landings they would just ram the ship onto the beach, open the gates, and away we would go.

"Our ship was armed with two 40mm Bofor anti-aircraft guns, manned by navy gunners. We were all pretty scared as we knew we were in a "tin can" and if our ship was hit with a bomb of any kind it was curtains for us. We crouched below deck and soon heard the pounding of our two anti-aircraft guns mounted on the deck above us. The deck was constructed of steel plate and the guns firing directly above our heads made a heck of a racket. There was little time for prayers; we just waited helplessly for a bomb or suicide bomber to ram us. It seemed to last forever, but finally we heard one last loud explosion and felt the ship shake violently, then all was suddenly quiet. The metal door leading to the top deck was opened and we joined a cheering crew. Our navy gunners saved the day by hitting the plane while it was making his run at us. It was apparently a suicide bomber and our navy gunners knocked it down before it could reach us and the plane exploded nearby."

That night we had a good dinner with ice cream!

S-Day, 9 January 1945. The Navy, while under intense air attack, had been pounding the enemy defenses of Lingayen for 2 days.

We were up before daylight. The sky was clear and there was a last quarter moon low in the sky. The sea was dead calm. Those who could ate breakfast.

Here is another eyewitness account from T/Sgt. William P. Adams on that morning.

"The rendezvous point was made on time, and when dawn broke, as was expected there were ships everywhere. Battleships, aircraft carriers, and large and small ships engaged either in bombardment of the beach area or in the preparation for landing. The bombardment of our landing points had been in progress for several hours before dawn and was still in full swing at daybreak. During the dark they dropped star shells which lit the

areas on shore brightly and aided in the shelling. It was truly a sight to behold. We had seen four landing area bombardments before, but nothing like this. The Japanese air force made one last desperate attack, many of the planes being suicide bombers. They also infiltrated our ship armada with suicide one-man submarines. One of our mortar LCI's was sunk right off the beach by one and we had quite a few casualties in one platoon. The air was full of planes attacking and being shot down for over an hour. We lost quite a few ships but we saw a lot of Japanese planes destroyed by ship gunners and many other enemy planes were shot down by our fighter planes. It was learned later that this last stand Japanese attack was successful in sinking or damaging four or five naval vessels including several Battleships in addition to a fair number of landing and supply ships. It was non-stop air and sea action from dawn until we hit the beach. Naval vessels of all varieties fired thousands of rounds of big shells on the landing sites and inland areas which presented points of potential resistance. Even with the greatest stretch of one's imagination, it is difficult to visualize the magnitude of the deadly naval and air activity going on around us during that last hour before landing."

By 0730 hours, our LCIs (Mortar) with Company A's 4.2 inch mortars in action were blasting the beachhead with a carpet of steel in the advance of the assault infantry.

Admiral Kincaid viewed this with great satisfaction and offered the opinion that the mortars were more effective than aerial strafing.

After completing its mission, the LCI (M) group moved about 2 miles away from the shore and took up positions in order to lay down a massive smoke screen on the invasion fleet if the enemy should attack in force.

Before dawn the next morning, the enemy attacked with "E" Boats and succeeded in exploding a charge under the stern of LCI (M) 974, blowing it apart. (Editor: See [oral history of the LCI's skipper](#) on the website of the Naval History & Heritage Command). All members of the command group and the 1st platoon were rescued except for Pvt William A. Condry, who was lost. The following personnel were hospitalized for wounds and exposure:

Capt Frank E. Stubbs
1st Lt Clare M. Prendergast

Cpl Robert A. Berentsen
PFC Joseph C. Betynm
S/Sgt James L. Searing
Sgt Lawrence W. Schafer
T/5 William E. Closser
PFC Gus W. Erdakos
T/5 Ben H. Snowden
Corporal Edmund F. Kelly

The Jap "E" Boats were part of a flotilla of prefabricated craft designed for suicide missions similar to the Air Force Kamikaze. Fortunately, only a relatively few ever reached the assembly point in a small bay north of Lingayen and the plan never really came off in the way it was intended.

The SIXTH Army had two main objectives. I Corps was to divide General Yamashito's forces and push the 150,000 men in the Shobu Group into the northern mountains where it could be neutralized. And the XIV Corps was to drive into the Tarlac Valley and secure Clark Field and eventually enter Manila.

The 43rd and 6th Infantry Divisions were on the right flank of I Corps and had the task of driving the wedge into the enemy's main line of communication.

All forces landed on schedule and the 20th Infantry Regiment with Company A Provisional in support was right there. Beach congestion was at its worst and extensive rice paddies back of the beach worsened the normally complicated traffic problems. Telephone wires were being continually torn up by tracked vehicles and our SCR 300 radios all had dead batteries.

Things gradually sorted themselves out and Lieutenant Benjamin Bell, with Company A's 1st platoon provisional, moved out with the 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment. The forward observer crossed the Bued River with Company B, 20th Infantry Regiment, and secured a position in Dagupan from which to direct fired on other parts of the city. The 2nd platoon provisional accompanied the 2nd Battalion.


As Captain Stubbs had been hospitalized with wounds as a result of the "E" boat attack, Captain Gilbert Doolittle was ordered to command Company A. The two platoons loaned to the Navy were returned to duty and by S+3, Lieutenant Bell's provisional platoon had been returned to Company D.

The 1st Infantry Regiment supported by Company D, 98th Chemical Mortar Battalion, had landed on the left flank of the 20th Infantry Regiment and the FO parties were advancing with the patrols which quickly gobbled up the road blocks that the Japs had set up to slow the advance. Many of the Filipinos offered to help carry ammo and do other manual labor, for which they were paid in "Invasion Money."

Captain Gerttula went forward with the infantry command group in a fast moving situation. The 2nd platoon went into position on the outskirts of Mapandan and fired at dawn for the assault troops who afterward reported hauling 4 truckloads of enemy dead out of the impact area.

During the day, the 3rd platoon moved to Lunec and on January 13 the platoons were attached to the 2nd Battalion and went into position between Tebag and Minien. The 2nd platoon party had a bit of bad luck when a short round from our artillery landed in the infantry lines and PFC Paul E. Toombs, S/Sgt John R. Kinkey, Corporal Joseph J. Ponte and Private Norman A. Couse were wounded, but remained at their posts until the mission they were firing was completed. Corporal Ponte and S/Sgt Kinkey were recommended for the Bronze Star. Company D was now down to four officers and the NCOs were taking over and performing capably. The infantry later reported 25 dead Japs in the area impacted by this day's fire. The 3rd platoon moved to Binday and reported to the 169th Infantry Regiment of the 43rd Division.

Captain Gerttula moved the Company D command post to Catablan with the 2nd Battalion, 1st Infantry Regiment. The platoons were in position nearby and fired heavy concentration southeast of the village. Sgt Leroy G. Hawes was promoted to S/Sgt and Pvt Glenn E. Childs was promoted to Corporal. T/4 Hill transferred in from HQ Company. At nightfall, enemy artillery opened up but we were well dug in and had no casualties.

By now it was obvious that the enemy was withdrawing to the fortified area in the vicinity of Urdeneta and Cabaruan Hills to protect the line of communication along Route 3. The famous Japanese 2nd Tank Division was withdrawn along the Santa Barbara  Urdeneta Road and almost had one of its units trapped by the 1st Infantry Regiment which was leap-frogging down the road in the same direction. The 1st and 2nd Battalions converged on the town with our platoons firing heavy concentrations into the town together with other arms, including M-4 tanks of the 44th Tank Battalion. Huge fires were started and the enemy could be seen running around and providing the infantry with a turkey shoot.

The town was flattened and huge quantities of supplies were destroyed together with nine tanks before the Japs were driven out.

The 1st Infantry Regiment sped south on Route 3 to effectively surround the Cabaruan Hills. The 1st and 2nd platoons of Company D moved to the outskirts of Urdeneta and commenced firing to the southwest where the enemy was dug in with tanks and heavy artillery.

[Editor's note: For more detail on the Battle of Cabaruan Hills, see the [Addendum](#) to this history.]

Meanwhile, the 20th Infantry Regiment with Company A in support was approaching from the northwest. The 1st Battalion was ordered as a reconnaissance in force into the Cabaruan Hills in an effort to locate the enemy positions. It was planned to surprise the Japs by making a night march into the hills and confront them in the light of dawn. Unfortunately, the movement had to be carried out in a tropical rainstorm which made progress extremely difficult as three of the 1st platoon vehicles were bogged down. The platoon was able to struggle into Company C's perimeter by daylight and began firing for the patrol action which was developing. That afternoon the platoon was relieved by the 2nd platoon and returned to Santa Barbara to repair its vehicles. The 1st Battalion was slowly moving through the hills without finding more than a few roving enemy patrols. The enemy was apparently centering his defenses on the north flank of the Cabaruan Hills. The 20th Infantry Regiment then moved to San Jose which had previously been secured by the 1st Infantry Regiment.

Lieutenant Bell's 3rd platoon of Company D was moving south with the 169th Infantry Regiment of the 43rd Division and joined up with Company C of the 98th CMB for several days on the Pozorrubio Road. At this time the 25th Infantry Division entered the scene and Captain Gerttula reported to Major General C. L. Mullins at San Jacinto. The two divisions were moving cautiously in an effort to corner the Japs for a knockout blow.

The 3rd Battalion of the 20th Infantry Regiment, which was supposed to follow the same route as the 1st Battalion through the Carabuan Hills, was surprised to find that the Japs had moved back in force and had established defensive positions which stopped them cold. The infantry found themselves facing an enemy dug in and, having the advantage of observation from high ground, was administering a punishing fire. The 3rd platoon,

Company A, went into position and kept up a sustained fire for 24 hours. S/Sgt Wayne A. Perry, FO under the direction of the 2nd Battalion CO, pinpointed fire of the four mortars of his platoon so successfully that he was recommended for a field commission. At this point most of the forward observers were NCOs and achieving good results all around.

The infantry was able to take the immediate high ground but flanking fire from the ridge 900 yards to the East forced them to fall back.

By S+14, the enemy defenses were pretty well outlined and the 1st and 2nd platoons of Company A were brought up to help the 3rd platoon. All the FO parties were together on the crest of a ridge overlooking the enemy positions 600 yards away. The mortars were to mark the corners of the target area for an air strike by 21 A-20s.

This was a classic textbook situation and quite a few high ranking observers were attracted to the scene of the battle. The following morning it was announced that the air strike would be delayed but the preliminary bombardment would go as scheduled. Accordingly, all artillery, infantry mortars, and 4.2s plastered the target area. The air strike arrived at 1100 hours and the 4.2s covered the ridge with smoke immediately afterward. Company G, 20th Infantry Regiment, the assault unit, moved up the left flank of the ridge with fixed bayonets. Once on the summit the infantry found a scene of utter destruction with over 160 enemy dead and heavy weapons including 90 mm mortars and a 77mm field gun and light and heavy machine guns destroyed. At this moment all hell broke loose as the surviving Japs had moved into the brush on either flank of Company G and blasted it with mortar and small arms fire. At the same time, the enemy on the northeast side of the ridge opened fire on advancing companies E and F and effectively pinned them down. The situation of Company G was critical as one of its supporting M-4 tanks had been knocked out and most of its officers and NCOs were casualties.

Captain Doolittle, CO of Company A, 98th CMB, was aware of the panicky situation developing and obtained permission to take command of Company G, 20th Infantry Regiment. He was able to maneuver the reserve platoon into position for covering fire and collected the available infantrymen to man a defensive perimeter. The 3rd platoon was ordered to cover the enemy positions with WP and the other platoons were ordered to go into position and do the same. The 1st and 2nd platoons had been

mobile loaded in order to move forward with the anticipated infantry advance.

Behind a smoke screen, Company G successfully evacuated its casualties and reorganized. Captain Doolittle was recommended for the Silver Star and his radio operator the Bronze Star.

The three platoons fired 1,850 rounds of HE and WP on the enemy in this engagement.

The infantry battalion was replaced by 2nd Battalion, 1st Infantry Regiment, shortly thereafter and the 1st platoon, Company A was attached to this new unit. The other two platoons went into reserve with the 20th Infantry Regiment and 2nd Lieutenants Dwyer and Andersen were promoted to 1st Lieutenant.

As luck would have it, the 1st platoon was ordered into a very exposed position and everyone dug in deep. The first round for registration landed squarely on an ammo dump and flames and explosions continued for hours afterward. Enemy artillery was crashing down on our position and there was even small arms fire as we were very close to enemy lines. Firing was at minimum range which did not make for accuracy and more than 500 rounds were fired in 24 hours. In weather this hot, the WP components in the mortar shells melted, making them unbalanced and therefore erratic in flight. During the second evening in that position, the 2nd platoon showed up to relieve the unit and immediately requested permission to move further to the rear, which was refused, as the infantry considered the situation critical and needed the uninterrupted 4.2 support.

By this time, the 1st Battalion, 1st Infantry Regiment, had moved around the 2nd Battalion's flank and effectively sealed off the enemy position. Fighting continued with unabated ferocity all day, and by night the Japs had compressed into an area about 300 by 400 yards. The 2nd platoon was with the 1st Battalion and together with the division artillery, shelled the enemy all night long.

At 0700 hours, January 27, both platoons laid down a heavy preparatory barrage followed by a smoke screen, and the infantry went forward and the FO party of the 2nd platoon went with Company A, 1st Infantry Regiment, which was leading the assault. Lashed by heavy small arms fire, the infantry succeeded in reaching the base of the ridge before being pinned down.

The FO and his radio operator set up business in a shell crater with an infantryman who was immediately shot by a sniper. A smoke screen was laid on the enemy positions while the casualties were evacuated and supporting platoons brought up. The infantry crawled slowly up the ridge and late in the afternoon dug in just below the crest. Company C, 1st Infantry Regiment, came up just before dark and assisted in consolidating the position. The enemy was now in such a narrow area that the FO recommended that the target not be fired on by artillery. The CO of 1st Battalion, 1st Infantry Regiment, overruled this as there was a very real fear of an enemy counter attack and the infantry were barely hanging on.

The FO then moved up with the infantry outpost and called the defensive fires all night with some rounds coming so close that the FO party was showered with dirt and shell fragments and a nearby infantryman was evacuated in shock.

The next morning it was found that a Jap had moved into a hole just 20 feet from the FO position. Another Jap who came in to surrender said the 4.2s had been falling on their CP on the reverse side of the ridge all night, sealing many Japs in caves and most of those who weren't killed had committed suicide. He said that officers had tried to take away all weapons from their men to try and keep them from killing themselves.

The infantry occupied the ridge the next day and found over 800 enemy dead on the battlefield and there were undoubtedly more in the caves sealed by the landslides on the reverse side of the ridge. S/Sgt Lloyd W. Taisey of Company A was recommended for promotion to 2nd Lieutenant as a result of his great work as a FO.

By noon, January 25, the battle for the Cabaruan Hills was officially concluded. An infantry company was left behind to deal with the stragglers, not a very enviable assignment with the stench of rotting human flesh thick in the air. Surrounded and having neither the option of maneuver or retreat, the Japanese fulfilled General Yamashita's prediction that "every soldier fights to his grave". The Omori Detachment of the Japanese 23rd Division was annihilated.

Company D, 98th CMB, was assigned to the 25th Infantry Division which had been inserted between the 6th and 43rd Infantry Divisions to fill the ever widening arc in the lines as the troops drove further into the interior. The 1st platoon was assigned to the 27th Infantry Regiment and the platoon and

Company Command Post moved in with them at Urdeneta. The 2nd platoon was ordered to support the 161st Infantry Regiment which had the mission of taking San Manuel.

The 2nd platoon received a fire mission and was ordered to go into position immediately under heavy artillery fire. Lieutenant John Slocum set up his mortars in a hurry and held them there until the mission was completed for which he was awarded the Bronze Star. The infantry assigned a reinforced platoon to act as perimeter guard for the mortars. This solved the continuing problem of fighting off infiltrators all night and firing all day. Later, as the infantry casualties began to mount, there were fewer men available and the security situation again became a problem.

The 2nd platoon fired on enemy tanks for the first time using an artillery air observer and got one with two probables. We were able to use the artillery observers with no difficulty as we both used the same artillery fire direction procedures.

The Japs had set up a last ditch stand in the San Manuel cemetery and hung so tough that the infantry decided to pull back and take another look at the situation. The 161st Infantry Regiment was a veteran outfit and had a sound professional attitude.



Destroyed Japanese Tank

General MacArthur looked in on the 2nd platoon today and said some nice things. We appreciated the kind words.

On the right flank of the I Corps advance, the 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, supported by Lieutenant Dave Stimson's 3rd platoon of Company A, advanced down Highway 15 toward Guimba. Near the Baloy River Jap tanks suddenly burst from concealment and, spitting steel, roared toward the infantry. S/Sgt Wane Perry, FO, called for immediate fire. The platoon, which was back on the highway, mobile-loaded and awaiting orders, hurriedly threw the base plates off the trailers, attached the mortar tubes, made a quick estimate of range and distance and quickly had a round on the way which landed on the lead tank. It immediately burst into flames and the other tanks appeared to mill around in confusion and presented a prime target for S/Sgt Perry and his volleys from the 4.2s. Before the afternoon was over, the 3rd platoon had destroyed at least ten tanks in conjunction with other arms, and helped to clear the way to Guimba.

New attack plans were formulated by the 3rd Battalion, 161st Infantry Regiment, with Company D's 1st and 2nd platoons at Binalonan. Early intelligence credited the Japs with 600 men and 16 tanks in San Manuel when in reality there were 4000 men and 60 tanks. We were getting the hard-core defenses of the Japanese 2nd Tank Division and strangely enough, the 98th Chemical Mortar Battalion was to be a tank destroyer after all.

By January 23, the 1st and 2nd platoons of Company D were in position on the north side of the main road 1500 yards west of San Manuel in support of the 161st Infantry Regiment. The 3rd platoon moved up with the 169th Infantry Regiment.

The next morning the infantry jumped off after the usual barrage and the CO, 2nd Battalion, 169th Infantry Regiment gave Lieutenant Bell's 3rd platoon credit for the 180 enemy dead found in the target area. The FO and the three men in his party directed the fire from an exposed position with such skill that they were all recommended for the Bronze Star. Sgts Joseph Able and McKay Evans were recommended for promotion to 2nd Lieutenant.

The enemy was counter attacking and on several occasions was dangerously close to breaking thorough the infantry lines in the

six days of furious fighting. Company D fired over 3,500 rounds of HE and WP and burned out six mortar tubes during this battle.

On January 25, the 3rd platoon was attached to the 1st Battalion, 169th Infantry Regiment, for the attack on Mt Penger which was on the outskirts of San Manuel. The Japs were well dug in but the shelling with WP got them out of their holes and the infantry was able to move in.

On January 28, the 3rd platoon was to support the 3rd Battalion for the morning's attack when the Japs attacked first and secured a hill directly in front of the 3rd platoon mortars from where they unleashed a merciless fire down on the 4.2s position for six hours. The infantry finally came up and drove the Japs off the hill and the 3rd platoon displaced forward in order to get closer to the infantry security units.

By January 29, the enemy hold on San Manuel was broken at a cost to them of 3,000 casualties and the loss of 48 tanks as well as numerous field guns, mortars and machine guns. Company D was credited with the destruction of four tanks and partial credit for fifteen more, which were destroyed in conjunction with other arms. No serious casualties were sustained by Company D in this action.

Here is an excerpt from a letter by Colonel James Dalton, CO of the 161st Infantry Regiment.

"During the period 19-30 January 1945, Company D, 98th Chemical Mortar Battalion was attached to the 161st Infantry for attack on San Manuel, P.I. Elements of the company were employed in both direct support of assault battalions and in general support of regimental action. Throughout the period, Company D fired 3,000 rounds of smoke and high explosives in preparatory fire, support fire and normal barrage. The firing was remarkable in its accuracy and its destructive effect. Not one round fell short or in any way damaged our troops. The liaison established with front line elements and with command posts was thorough and continually efficient. I wish to state my admiration for the proficiency of Company D and to commend its officers and enlisted men for their valuable assistance in the taking of San Manuel.

"Especially, I wish to commend Captain J. R. Gerttula, commanding Company D, who functioned under me at my command post. He was constantly alert, aggressive and cooperative. He

commanded a superior unit in a superior manner. I should be pleased to have this letter made the basis of a Bronze Star award for Captain Gerttula for this cited performance."

The end of January 1945 saw the 1st and 2nd platoons with the Company D CP at Santa Maria in division reserve. The 3rd platoon was attached to the 127th Infantry Regiment of the 32nd Infantry Division and was firing in support of that unit. Patrols approaching Munoz were told by the natives that the Japs had moved out and gone to San Jose. The 20th Infantry Regiment went through town and indeed, there were many abandoned defense positions and no sign of the enemy. With this evidence, the 1st Infantry Regiment cut across the fields in a night march and took up positions south of San Jose.

The 20th Infantry Regiment was to move through Munoz and attack from the west and was just abreast of Munoz when it was surprised by heavy fire from the town resulting in heavy casualties. Recovering from this setback, the infantry drew up in defensive positions and returned fire.

The 3rd platoon of Company A, 98th CMB, was attached to the 3rd Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, which had taken the bulk of the fire from Munoz and had gone into position while the infantry was digging in. Suddenly two tanks burst out of town, their guns firing furiously at the infantry. The 3rd platoon FO called for fire and secured a hit on one, setting it on fire. The other tank turned and with its 47mm gun spitting steel, came directly at the FO who called for six rounds from the 4.2s which tore off its treads. While nearby infantrymen covered him, the FO ran up and dropped a grenade in the hatch, killing the crew inside.

The next day the battalion attempted to assault the town but dug-in defenses and camouflaged tanks laid a curtain of fire down that was so dense the infantry could make no headway. The 3rd platoon FO brought his fire within 75 yards of the infantry and enabled them to dig in a bit closer to town. Two more tanks were destroyed in the process.

The 1st and 2nd Battalions, 20th Infantry Regiment, came up the next day and took up positions abreast of the 3rd Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, facing Munoz. Captain Doolittle, CO of Company A, went forward with the 1st platoon FO and proceeded to use a small rice mill as an OP (Observation Post). The building was under heavy fire by enemy small arms, and a 47mm tank shell had torn off a corner of the building. Seeing that the 1st

platoon was much too close to enemy lines, Captain Doolittle ordered it to move back 300 yards. About that time the radio operator announced that number 4 mortar had fired, and the FO and Doolittle stayed in the front room of the building to observe the shell burst. The FO ran back to the radio operator with the sensing and Captain Doolittle stayed in the front room where he was fatally shot. Two infantrymen were wounded there by shell fragments, and the OP party was forced to leave because of the intense fire that was being laid down on the building. Later four volunteers from Company A brought out Captain Doolittle's body while the 1st platoon brought down a smoke screen on the enemy. The radio operator's antenna was clipped by a sniper's bullet but he was unhurt. The next day all infantry and artillery weapons fired on the town and effectively leveled it. The 1st platoon radio operator who had been so lucky the previous day, PFC Morris Rubenstein, had his luck run out and was shot through the chest, but eventually recovered.

Lieutenant David Stimson, leader of the 3rd platoon, was named CO of Company A and recommended for promotion to captain. The infantry patrolled and probed for a few days and the platoons devised new ways of destroying the tanks which seemed to be in Munoz in great numbers. WP fire was effective in burning off the camouflage of the dug in tanks which could then be destroyed with pin point HE fire. The mobile tanks could sometimes be forced into a concentration previously laid on a given point and thus destroyed. The 3rd platoon FO was especially adept at bracketing a tank and then closing the bracket until it was destroyed. On one occasion, he and his radio operator and the nearby infantry were pinned down by a tank which was running up and down the road firing its 47mm cannon. The FO was able to drop one shell in front of the tank and another close behind, setting the tank afire. The crew jumped out and the FO shot one, and a nearby infantryman got another. The two remaining members of the crew tried to set up a light machine gun in a nearby ditch, but the next 4.2 round wiped them out.

By February 5, the 3rd platoon had racked up ten kills and two probables, and the 1st platoon had two definites and two probables. While firing on two dug-in tanks in a brush area in Munoz, a large fire was started and Japs who were concealed around the tanks jumped out of their holes and were cut down by volleys of 4.2 fire.

The 1st platoon FO located a pillbox in a hillside and adjusted the fire of one mortar until a shell dropped squarely on it. This was followed with six rounds from the platoon and we were

told later by the infantry that between 58 and 60 Japs had been killed and a field piece emplaced at the entrance of the pillbox had been demolished.

In the meantime, the 63rd Infantry Regiment had taken up positions on the north and east sides of the town after dark, thus blocking any enemy escape route, and the 1st Infantry Regiment was dug in about eight miles away in front of San Jose.

During the night of February 7, the enemy attacked the 20th Infantry Regiment to the south and west of town in an effort to cover the evacuation of their main force from Munoz. Apparently, the Japs were not aware of the 63rd Infantry Regiment ready and waiting along their intended escape route, and by morning the Munoz-San Jose road was the scene of indescribable slaughter.

On the other side of town, the 4.2s were firing into the massed attacking forces and there, too, was only death and destruction for the enemy.

By morning it was all over and only mopping up remained. Bodies and destroyed equipment were strewn far and wide over the countryside, and the town of Munoz was a smoking ruin. Company A's 4.2s were officially credited with the destruction of 15 enemy tanks plus two probables, two half-tracks, two field pieces, pillboxes and a large number of enemy soldiers, probably more than 200.

Captain Stimson led his Company A platoons down the road past Major General Patrick, 6th Infantry Division commander and his staff, in an impromptu review of his dirty, red-eyed and tired soldiers who had fought their hearts out to help the infantry take Munoz.

This letter was from the commanding officer, 20th Infantry Regiment:

"It is a pleasure to inform you that the 1st and 3rd platoons of Company A, 98th Chemical Battalion, which was attached to this organization during the operation at Munoz, played no small part in the successful outcome. The added fire power afforded by the 4.2inch mortars was an important factor. The officers and men were impressed by the terrific striking power of these weapons and the accuracy with which the fire was placed upon enemy materiel and installations. If and when the regiment is again committed, it is our hope that you are on hand to lend support.

If not, we hope that any organization of like character which may be attached to us, does its job as splendidly as that done by members of your organization."

One more major battle was required to break General Yamashita's North-South line of communication for good. Going back to February 5, the 25th Infantry Division was coming into the picture. Captain Gerttula of our Company D reported to Major General C.L. Mullins and was assigned to the 35th Infantry Regiment at San Roque which was 1.5 miles west of Lupao. The 1st platoon was attached to the 1st Battalion and went into position in a rice paddy 300 yards in the rear of the assault companies. There was no camouflage and of course no defilade. Registration was begun in Lupao and, as the buildings began to burn, twelve Japs ran out and were caught in the ensuing volley of HE. Each probable route of the enemy approach was included in the registration fires for the night. Several unsuccessful attempts at infiltration were made after dark.

The 2nd platoon, Company D, joined the 3rd Battalion which had marched around the enemy defenses and established a road block on the east side of Lupao. To join its supported unit, the 2nd platoon had to move through Jap-held territory and was pretty thoroughly peppered by small arms fire the entire way, but no serious harm was done to either personnel or vehicles. On reaching its assigned area, the platoon discovered the ground was solid rock and there was no possibility of digging in. At dark it began to rain and the Japs attacked the 1st Battalion in force.

As the two battalions of the 35th Infantry Regiment were on opposite sides of the town, a good deal of the defensive fire of the 1st Battalion was falling in the 3rd Battalion area. To complicate matters, the Jap tanks began firing their 47mm cannon into the 2nd platoon area. Fortunately, they were using armor-piercing ammunition which had very little effect except to destroy a bamboo grove behind the mortar positions.

After a wild night, the 1st platoon fired a rolling barrage as the infantry started forward. The infantry had barely started when intense machine gun and small arms fire stopped them cold, and at 1100 hours the enemy counter-attacked. As luck would have it, the Japs had to cross an area which was in the numbered concentration areas prepared the night before by the 1st platoon FO and the infantry. A volley of 4.2 fire was called down and the attack was broken up leaving many enemy dead. Targets of

opportunity were picked up during the afternoon and defenses were again tied in with the infantry for the night. The Japs attempted infiltration again but were unsuccessful.

The 2nd platoon began its barrage on the north side of town early in the morning but by 0900 hours the FO who was with the assault infantry reported that Jap tank fire had stopped the attack. The fire was so accurate and intense that the infantry could neither move forward nor withdraw. The 4.2's were called in to fire on the source of the enemy fire and, after 150 rounds, the enemy was able to inch forward. Suddenly two Jap tanks broke into the open and headed for the platoon position. An antitank gun quickly knocked out one but the other advanced to within 50 feet of the mortar positions where Sgt Roy Carlson destroyed it with a borrowed bazooka.

The next day the 1st platoon circled around Lupao and went into position directly in the rear of the 2nd platoon and registered for defensive fires. The infantry had regrouped and plans were ready to attack Lupao from three directions simultaneously. As the target was concentrated in a narrow area, it was decided not to use the artillery and the burden fell on the 4.2's to carry the attack. As a tribute to our platoon, in three days of almost continuous firing, not one round fell on our own troops even though at times the curtain of fire was within 25 yards of our lines. This drew favorable comments from the infantry. During the 72 hours of furious combat, the mortar crews snatched food and sleep when they could during lulls in the firing.

During the night of February 7, the enemy made a determined effort to break through the surrounding troops with massed tanks and infantry. This was met with volleys of 4.2 fire effectively breaking up the attack and enabling our infantry to repulse it, but sustaining heavy losses in doing so.

The next day the town of Lupao was entered by patrols who reported unbelievable scenes of death and destruction. The 3rd Battalion CO generously credited the 4.2s with at least half the victory. Company D had fired over 3,000 rounds in the battle and burned out eight mortar tubes. Needless to say, the FO parties and the gun crews were exhausted. S/Sgts John T. Dieterich and Leroy G. Hawes were recommended for promotion to 2nd lieutenant.

Captain Gerttula was ordered to the U.S. on rotation, and Lieutenant John Slocum was ordered to command Company D. The company was relieved of its assignment and went into division reserve. We received our first ration of beer!

The 6th and 43rd Infantry Divisions, with the help of the 25th, had succeeded in driving a substantial wedge between General Yamashita's north and south forces and he would no longer be able to have access to the mountains of supplies stored in Manila. How the SIXTH Army drove the enemy forces into the mountains where they could be effectively neutralized is the rest of the story.

VI - The Fight for Luzon

The terrain facing the northern part of the landing beaches was a series of rolling hills admirably situated for emplacing artillery. This is what the enemy did and succeeded in bringing down artillery fire on the beaches with great accuracy. Obviously it was necessary to eliminate this artillery as quickly as possible and that was the mission of the 43rd Infantry Division with Company C of the 98th CMB in support.



Company C on Luzon

On January 9, the 43rd Infantry Division landed with the 172nd, 169th and 103rd Infantry Regiments abreast. Company C (see group photo at right) was attached to the 103rd Infantry Regiment and came up to the beach in its eight DUKWs at exactly H-hour plus 50 on the dot. Captain Staudacher checked all Company C platoons and reported to Colonel Cleland, CO of the 103rd Infantry Regiment, in the vicinity of San Fabian. The 1st and 2nd platoons were attached to the 1st and 2nd Battalions and commenced firing at 1600 hours, and the enemy replied immediately. Artillery shells came in all night but we had no casualties. The next day there was occasional firing as the infantry patrols vigorously pursued the enemy. The Jap artillery

had found the range and dirt flew as everyone dug in deep. Hot iron was flying through the air all night.

The enemy body count which is noted frequently was generally made by the infantry intelligence and reconnaissance platoons, and was not only of interest to higher headquarters in estimating enemy capabilities, but was also relayed to our weapons platoons to let the men know that their efforts were effective and appreciated.

On S+2, the Company CP was moved to Manoag. The Filipinos were beginning to come around and it was sad to see how dirt poor they were. We used some of them to pack ammo and do some manual work around the CP. Captain Staudacher bought an egg today! We had it enshrined as no one had seen one for years.

The 6th Infantry Division HQ moved into San Fabian on S+3 and had a close call as the Japs attempted to rush the defensive perimeter that night. After a wild melee they were repulsed and the defenders had two casualties.

The Japs attempted to get into the 2nd platoon during the night but were driven off after a sharp fight after which they were carrying off their dead and wounded but left a machine gun and a mortar. We had no casualties.

The infantry was making good time through the low hills overlooking the beachhead and were overrunning the occasional road block that had been set up to slow down the advance. However, on S+4, Hill 355 loomed up ahead and provided the infantry with a hard nut to crack. The 3rd platoon reported to the CO of the 169th Infantry Regiment for assignment. Early the next morning, infantry patrols probed the enemy positions and were met with heavy mortar fire from the reverse slopes of Hill 355. Nearby Mt Alva provided the enemy with clear observation on our positions.

The 3rd platoon fired six missions that afternoon and finally laid down a smoke screen to blind the enemy OP on Mt Alva. As our infantry tried to cross the Bued River, a mountain gun on the forward slope of Hill 355 blasted them back. The 3rd platoon FO spotted the gun and laid a volley of 37 rounds on it. The infantry reported pieces of gun and its crew blown into the air. The assault troops crossed the river and came under a murderous cross fire from pillboxes at the foot of Mt Alva and Hill 355. A mission of 268 rounds of HE was ordered on the pillboxes which quieted them down.

By S+6 the infantry had enlarged its river crossing but its supply lines were under constant enemy fire. The 4.2s were called in again to enable our troops to bring in supplies and evacuate the wounded. Another mission was ordered in the afternoon to smoke the enemy positions and the infantry withdrew, indicating a change of plans.

The enemy strength was by now apparent and it was obviously a regimental rather than a battalion objective.

Further south and west, the 1st platoon was attached to the 1st Battalion, 103rd Infantry Regiment which had moved to Pozorrubio and set up a road block at Malasin Mission, reinforced by an anti-tank platoon and a section of heavy machine guns. The night of January 14, an enemy column attacked the road block with armor and a force estimated at 500 to 600 men. At 2240 hours, the FO called for fire but had difficulty observing because of the intense enemy direct weapon fire which kept everybody's head down. The FO continued to call for fire and was able to adjust on the attacking Japs. By 0300, the attack slackened and finally stopped, only to come on again from a different direction. This was beaten off by the 4.2s and antitank guns, but minutes later they came back again from the north and once again they were beaten back.

At daybreak, the FO spotted a 77mm mountain gun going into position and knocked it out. Later he fired several volleys into an adjacent draw where the enemy was assembling for still another attack. The final mission of the day was a smoke screen to enable the troops to evacuate casualties, one of which was the CO of Company A, 103rd Infantry Regiment, who insisted on thanking the members of the platoon personally before he was carried away on a stretcher. He reported to his battalion commander that the 4.2s were responsible for saving the road block. The CO of the anti-tank company reported the same. The 1st platoon FO was awarded the Bronze Star for his night's work.

This letter came from the commanding officer; Company A, 103rd Infantry Regiment:

"On 14 January, 1945, Company A, 103rd Infantry Regiment, putting in a road block at Malasin, Luzon, Philippines Islands, was reinforced by a section of heavy machine guns, one platoon of 57mm anti-tank guns and a 4.2inch mortar platoon. During the day, Japs were observed coming our way while we were digging in. The mortars directed well placed and accurate fire, inflicting

casualties and disorganizing the enemy and discouraging any further attempts of breaking through from that direction.

"During the night of 14 January 1945, and the morning of 15 January 1945, when the enemy tried to break through with horse-drawn artillery ammunition supplies, they were stopped at the edge of the perimeter and scattered all around us. Again, mortar fire was called for and a ring was place around our perimeter within 30 yards of our troops inflicting casualties on and demoralizing the enemy."

The 3rd platoon, Company C, was with the 169th Infantry Regiment, preparing for the final assault on Hill 355. They were in position firing on machine guns in the vicinity of Manoag on the Pozorrubio Road and suffered a serious enemy attack during the night in which medic Sgt Winfred A. Tillotson was killed, Company C's first casualty. That same night the Japs rushed the 103rd Infantry CP and killed one of the defenders.

The 2nd platoon was with the 2nd Battalion, 103rd Infantry, which was still trying to root the Japs off Hill 200. Lieutenant Henry Salmon, our executive officer, had been ordered to command Company B as Captain Woebebing was wounded and evacuated. Company C's CP was scheduled to move to Pozorrubio but the Filipinos reported the town was full of Japs. The infantry sent a patrol and two tanks to flush them out and were later able to move in.

Our 1st and 3rd platoons were attached to the 1st and 3rd Battalions, 103rd Infantry Regiment, for the assault on Hill 600 which overlooked Route 3 north of Palacpalac. The enemy had extensive defensive positions there and controlled the traffic on Route 3. The infantry advanced but took serious casualties and were stopped. Both of our platoons were under intensive shelling as was the Company CP in Pozorrubio. Clearly, we had run into a hornet's nest.

The OP was under extreme pressure and both the FO, Sgt Edwin H. Nelson, and his radio operator, Corporal Vern Losser, were wounded and had to be evacuated. Lieutenant Colonel Barron, the artillery CO, was wounded minutes after Captain Staudacher left the OP. The two platoons laid down a smoke screen to enable the infantry to evacuate 57 casualties and consolidate its lines. The 3rd platoon was most severely shelled but there were no casualties and only a trailer was slightly damaged. The ground was carpeted with shell fragments.

That night the Japs rushed the 3rd platoon perimeter and were driven off but only after a fierce fight. PFC Matt Vocana and Sgt Leonard A. Milano were wounded by mortar fragments, and Lieutenant Bertram W. McElroy was wounded in the face by a grenade. PFC J.B. Harris and Pvt Skylarck were taken to the hospital in shock.

The 1st platoon FO, Lieutenant Darius Nease, was creased by a sniper and had to be evacuated. An NCO took over and performed most capably. The infantry again assaulted Hill 600 in the morning and the two platoons fired over 1,350 rounds during the day, but the Japs were well entrenched and could not be driven out. Private Foster was deafened by a premature mortar explosion and PFC Norman Mussleman killed a Jap hiding near the mortar position.

Here is another letter from the commanding officer of Company A, 103rd Regiment:

"At 1700 hours, 23 January 1945, a patrol consisting of 17 men was pinned down on a bare hill northeast of Pozorrubio by enemy snipers and machine gun fire, killing three and wounding four men of the Company A patrol. Calling the mortar company commander and giving him approximately the position of the patrol, he directed smoke in the area, covering the men and allowing them to get the wounded and themselves out from a very serious position.

"At 1830 hours, 24 January 1945, a patrol consisting of 35 men, while crossing an open field from a small wooded area at the foot of the hills southeast of Sison, were fired on by enemy snipers and machine guns. One man was wounded and left in the open field out of reach because of enemy fire. Again the 4.2 mortars attached to the 2nd Battalion, 103rd Infantry Regiment, were called upon and placed a very effective smoke screen. The wounded man was able to be picked up and brought to cover. A short while later another man was wounded. With two litter cases on our hands and under enemy fire, the 4.2 mortars placed a heavy smoke screen on the hills and covered the open fields allowing the patrol to get to safety.

"The 1st platoon, Company C, 98th Chemical Mortar Battalion, is commended for its extraordinary heroism, gallantry, determination, endurance and esprit de corps. It contributed materially to the success of this company in the Philippine Islands at Malasin on 14-15 January 1945, and at Pozorrubio on 23 January 1945, and at Sison on 24 January, 1945."

Today we drew our first B rations. How do you cook on one burner?

The 103rd Infantry Regiment took a part of Hill 600 which was really part of an extended ridge. We had very little ammo left as Colonel Cleland ordered all that remained be sent to the 2nd platoon at Sison. The other platoons returned to Company C's CP at Pozorrubio for a breather and some hot chow from the kitchen which had just come in from the beach. There was no word yet from the rear echelon which had our barracks bags containing extra shoes and clothing.

The next day, January 25, was spent making ready for the push to Hill 600. More ammo was now available and the 1st platoon joined the 2nd platoon in support of the 2nd Battalion, 103rd Infantry Regiment. The barrage started at daylight and ended at 0800 hours. The air strike came in at 1030 hours, with the 4.2's marking the boundaries with WP shells, and H and E companies were on the crest of Hill 600 by noon. S/Sgt's Alan O. Weddel and Jack B. Stengel were recommended for promotion to 2nd lieutenant on the basis of their outstanding performance.

Now it was Hill 355's turn, and the 196th Infantry Regiment sent its 2nd Battalion south of Mt Alava with Company C's 1st platoon in support. The FO party went forward with the assault units under mortar and small arms fire. The fight went on all that day and continued the next. The 4.2's shelled the enemy positions in front of the infantry assault and then the flanks to deny the Japs any movement or reinforcement. When the infantry finally took the hill, the 4.2's were credited with killing 180 Japs and destroying one mountain gun and a number of mortars and machine guns. We received four loads of ammo.

January 27 was a big day! The first mail arrived but with no packages. The 103rd Infantry Regiment was going into reserve and we reported to the 169th Infantry Regiment. The 33rd Division appears to be moving into the area and we hope to go into reserve and get some clothing replaced and service our vehicles.

The 3rd platoon was ordered to go into position on Hill 355 which was a mistake as the area was still full of Japs. We were under small arms fire and Pvt Vernon C Page was wounded. We killed three of the enemy in the perimeter that night.

The 2nd platoon attempted to move out but the enemy had mined the roads all around it.

The alert 1st platoon FO spotted a Jap convoy and took it under fire, destroying most of the trucks and killing 73 of the enemy. The platoon engaged in a wild fire fight with infiltrators that night. Two Japs were killed by machine guns and three by grenades, and the guerillas shot one. Security patrols got two later. The guerillas were helpful in a limited way when they overcame their tendency to be trigger happy.

Suddenly on January 30 we discovered that the enemy had moved out leaving huge quantities of equipment, including a 150mm mortar which made the 4.2 look like a baby. Another communication center on Route 3 had been secured and the way opened for the drive to Cayagan Valley.



Captured Japanese 150mm mortar

The north or extreme left flank of the SIXTH Army was in charge of the 172nd Infantry Regiment of the 43rd Infantry Division on landing. Supporting this unit was our Company B. Below is a

photo of a captured Japanese 150mm smooth-bore mortar. The 4.2inch mortar is rifled and equivalent to about 106.7mm.

Following the shelling of the beach by Company A mortars on the LCI (M)'s, the assault troops of the 172nd Infantry Regiment landed and with them was the 2nd platoon of Company B on LSM 41. The 1st platoon was not so lucky, as the first vehicle stalled after the landing ramp hit the sand, thus holding up the entire landing process on LSM 219. At that moment the Jap artillery dropped six rounds of high explosive shells into the waist of the ship, killing six and wounding 22. The ship was the scene of indescribable confusion with wrecked vehicles in the hold and dead and dying men everywhere. Lieutenant Roland Groder, executive officer, succeeded in getting three sections of the 1st platoon off, but the other section could not move. LSM 219 then pulled off the beach and transferred the dead and wounded to the APA Dupage.

B Company casualties were as follows:

S/Sgt Gordon E. McKennett

T/4 Lloyd J. Lytle

PFC Robert H. Burroughs

PFC James C. Chase

T/5 Lauro A. Parki

Cpl George Chernitsky

PFC John F. Rutherford

T/4 William B. Isley

Pvt Raey M. Hastings

Pvt Herman Gold

Pvt Norman E. Couse

T/5 Edwin M. Balfour

That afternoon, the LSM 219 came back to the beach and unloaded the balance of the equipment without incident. Captain Woebeking had landed with the free wave and set up Company B's

CP, and Lieutenant Groder came in with the three sections of the 1st platoon. The 2nd and 3rd platoons were in position and their FO parties had gone forward with the assault infantry.

As usually happens, the unit having the most trouble getting into position has the first fire mission. The 1st platoon expended 77 rounds with its three mortars on a Jap 77mm gun and neatly put it out of action, which was confirmed by the 172nd Infantry Regiment. Artillery fire was heavy and air raids were continuous throughout the night, but we had no casualties. Digging in pays.

On S+1, we moved further inland to get away from the artillery and aerial bombs which were impacting the beachhead. Lieutenants Darius Nease and Terry Barnholdt, and the ten 4.2 mortar instructors, were released with thanks by the U.S. Navy.

The infantry was driving forward to force the Jap artillery back out of range of the beachhead and the platoons moved forward accordingly. The 1st Battalion, 172nd Infantry Regiment, set up a road block 1.5 miles north of Alacan, and the 2nd platoon moved into position for the covering fire.

On S+2, the enemy artillery came crashing in all night. There were some close calls but no one was hurt. S/Sgt James Persons and T/5 Sears brought the maintenance truck up from the beach and two of our slightly wounded from the LSM 219 came back from the hospital.

The 158th Regimental Combat Team, our old friends from Toem and Noemfoor, landed today. Our 2nd platoon was attached to them for the push on Rosa Rio at the junction of routes 2 and 11, and went into position 1 mile south of Rabon after dark. There was plenty of mortar fire falling in our position.

The infantry now approached the limit of the 4.2 range and, as there were no roads, the issue of hand carrying the mortars came up which General Krueger settled with a resounding "No". The battalion CO, Major Batlin, visited us today.

The 2nd platoon moved to Damortis. The 3rd Battalion, 172nd Infantry Regiment, stormed Hill 580 which dominates the surrounding area, with the 1st platoon firing the initial barrage. Later a 40-minute smoke screen was fired with good results but overheated the mortar tubes causing premature ignition of one powder increment, resulting in some burns to the

gun crew. However, they kept the mortars firing until the mission was complete and they earned the thanks of the infantry.

All platoons were under intense artillery fire and the communications section was doing heroic work in keeping the lines open. Sgt Martin W. Rebich was the leader of the 1st platoon in place of S/Sgt Mckennett, and doing a great job. The shortage of personnel is so great that executive officer Lieutenant Groder is acting as FO for the first platoon. All OPs are constantly on the move as enemy fire on them is intense.

By S+3, the 2nd and 3rd Battalions, 172nd Infantry Regiment, had passed through Rosaric and moved on to Concepcion. The 158th RCT is swinging to the north from Route 3 as the Japs are retreating into the mountains in the Cataguintingan area. The 3rd Battalion moved north along the ridge outlines by Hills 580, 565 and 665, an enemy stronghold overlooking the Apangat River valley. The initial assault was on hill 580 by Company K, 172nd Infantry Regiment. WP was used to set the dry grass and brush on fire, and the Japs jumped out of their holes and were wiped out by the infantry, which then occupied the hill and dug in for the night.

A Navy pilot, whose plane was shot down, parachuted into the 3rd platoon area and was given first aid by medic T/4 Paul E. Vigus before being evacuated to the aid station.

The forward CP of Company B was established with the 2nd Battalion, 172nd Infantry Regiment, in the hills 1000 yards south of Rosario. By January 17, it had moved to join the 2nd platoon, which was firing on enemy artillery and taking heavy counter-battery fire in return. The next day, the 2nd platoon fired on Hill 500, east of Damortis, and broke up an enemy attack. A concentration was fired later on the same area to disperse the Japs forming up for another thrust at the infantry.

The next morning we had word from the FO that Captain Woebbeking had been wounded by artillery fire and was evacuated. Lieutenant Henry Salmon, executive officer of Company C, was appointed CO of Company B and his promotion to Captain was requested.

The 3rd platoon finally hand carried its mortars some 200 yards from the road to Hill 500 with the help of Filipino ammo carriers. The 1st platoon got as far as Hill 565 and went into position and the 2nd platoon fired interditory fire in the early morning and succeeded in exploding an ammo dump which lit up the countryside. Later the platoon fired in support of an assault on Hill 300, 2,600 yards east of Damortis, and on an

enemy assembly area in the vicinity of Amlang. The 1st Battalion, 158th Infantry Regiment, advanced through the impact area and reported many enemy dead.

The infantry was almost out of range again and Sgt Martin W. Rebich and Corporal Ingram reconnoitered the area around Hill 565 under intense artillery fire, and both were recommended for the Bronze Star. Eventually the 1st platoon found a position some 400 yards southwest of Rosario and immediately got a mission to fire on enemy troops in the open at 3,000 yards. A volley of HE was laid on them and they disappeared in a hurry. Major Murray, CO of the 1st Battalion, 158th Infantry Regiment, commended the platoon for the speed and accuracy in taking the target under fire. An enemy supply convoy was spotted entering a draw and subsequent fire in that area lit up another ammo dump. Colonel Sandlin afterward ordered the platoon to displace to a position 400 yards south of Amlang where interdiction fire was kept up during the night. The 3rd platoon was credited for a direct hit on a 77mm field gun.

The 2nd platoon ran into a bit of bad luck when four men suffered burns when powder increments ignited at a mortar position. The platoon did not stop firing, and destroyed an ammo dump and a field gun. The infantry afterward reported finding 30 dead Japs in the area.

Guerillas were reporting in for security duty, but they were so undisciplined we were hard put to find a use for them. The FOs were under constant artillery and small arms fire, as the enemy was very active.

Sgt Leonard A. Milano and Pvt Park were wounded.

As the B Company CP was close to the platoons, the men were able to come in at night for a hot meal and some sleep inside the CP perimeter and be back in position before daylight the next morning. Company B was by now so short of personnel it was impossible to set up security in the platoon areas at night. There were still many roving bands of enemy in the hills and it was necessary to exercise extreme caution when away from friendly troops. The days were very hot but the nights were cool.

January 27 was a memorable day as the 158th RCT began to feed the 2nd platoon two hot meals a day. The infantrymen carried the food containers up the steep trails to the platoon positions and

in addition furnished a security guard at night. We must have done something right!

That day and the next, the 1st platoon fired missions enabling the infantry to extricate itself from several exposed positions. Later, the 1st and 3rd platoons were relieved and ordered to Company B's CP at Rosario. After three weeks of furious activity, B Company was 40% under strength and the men were physically depleted. Barracks bags had not yet come in with extra clothing and shoes, so they all looked a bit on the raggedy side, but were full of fight and anxious to get the job done. Lieutenant Bertram W. McElroy, T/Sgt William P. Adams and S/Sgt Joseph R. Able were transferred into B Company to help out.

The SIXTH Army was now entering a new phase in its operation. The Japanese, except for the scattered bands, retreated into the mountains where General Yamashita had been preparing his famous Baguio-Bambang-Bontoc defensive triangle. The immediate objectives of the SIXTH Army were Baguio, which was at the head of Route 11, also known as Kennon Road, and Santa Fe, which was the key to the Cayan Valley. This valley, known as the "Garden of Luzon" was to be the source of foodstuffs for the Japanese last ditch fight. The Japs had to make haste to get the crops harvested and stored away, as the U.S. advance was more rapid than they had thought possible.

The 43rd Infantry Division was busy turning its sectors of activity over to the 33rd Infantry Division, and Company C, 98th CMB, was having a few days of relaxation as ammo was very low. Chow was improving as the food situation eased. Farmers were coming in with a few chickens, the local lassies were contracting for soldiers' laundry, and Company C's maintenance section was turning out a good grade of "jungle juice".

The 158th RCT was charged with maintaining the north flank and extending its occupation along the shores of the gulf. The Japs had been driven from the Rosario-Damortis road, but strong enemy forces still remained in the adjacent mountains. The 33rd Infantry Division had the objective of liberating Baguio by way of the Kennon Road, and the 32nd Infantry Division was to move on Santa Fe by way of the Villa Verde Trail which was thought to be only lightly defended. The 25th Infantry Division was to drive up Route 5, which included eliminating all of the enemy in the smaller valleys which branched off in every direction.

By February 13, the 33rd Infantry Division was well in command and Captain Salmon of Company B reported to Major General Clarkson for assignment.

We had developed our firing techniques to a fine point. The FOs registered one round with one mortar on some feature in the enemy zone and estimated in yards how far on one side or another short or over of this point the fire would be needed and made these in numbered concentrations. This chart was in the hands of the platoon CO and the front-line infantry which could call for concentrations by number when the enemy appeared. Adjusting fire on individual fixed targets was usually accomplished with one mortar in the interest of economical use of ammo. Moving targets were usually attacked with all mortars firing volley fire for maximum effect in a hurry. As the FO was generally under fire, he could only hazard one quick look at the burst from his own mortar round and estimate its distance from the target. This was called sensing the round, which the platoon CO then used to make his corrections for range or direction. Teamwork was the name of the game, and corrections were made with surprising speed and accuracy.

The Villa Verde Trail was a narrow winding trail through mountainous country. Most of the trail was under enemy observation, so supplies and troop movements had to be brought in after dark. Company A was in support of the 32nd Infantry Division, a veteran outfit, but not in top condition because it had not had more than two or three weeks rest since the vigorous Leyte campaign. Company A was in need of shoes and clothing, as were the other companies, and the vehicles needed maintenance and everyone needed rest. Most of those on the ill-fated LCI (M) 974 had returned from the hospital. Field commissions were awarded to Sgt's Robert Millious and Ralph Peterson.

Moving up the Villa Verde Trail was Company A, 98th CMB, in support of the 127th Infantry Regiment in the vicinity of Hill 300.

The 3rd Battalion had the task of making the frontal assault supported by the Co A's 3rd platoon. The 1st Battalion, with the 1st and 2nd platoons in support, was to circle around and take the hill from the other side. It was not long before Company C radioed that it was pinned down and that the leader of the assault platoon would adjust fire on the enemy positions. His sensings were relayed through the battalion CP and became garbled in transmission with the result that the first round

dropped on our own infantry resulting in two killed and three wounded.

The next day, Company K found itself in an exposed position and the 3rd platoon laid a smoke screen which enabled the infantry to evacuate wounded and bring up reinforcements. A Jap pillbox on Hill 300 had been holding up the advance for two days when it was spotted by an alert FO, and it was wiped out with three well placed rounds from one mortar.

That night, the 1st and 2nd platoons fired WP on Hills 400 and 500, and ignited the dry brush and grass which burned until morning. After a dawn barrage, the infantry occupied the hills and dug in.

The next week was occupied with probing patrols, and Company A, 98th CMB, had a brief opportunity to get cleaned up. The platoon positions looked like Mrs. Murphy's washday with ragged uniforms drying all over the place.

Company C of the 98th was still fighting off infiltrations and dodging artillery fire. The enemy was determined to destroy the 4.2's and, to make things worse, it was raining hard and the foxholes were full of water.

Lieutenant Darius Nease was awarded the Bronze Star. And some mail came in.

Our infantry patrolled towards Taboyog, and Lieutenant Bell's 3rd platoon is credited by the infantry with destroying a 147mm A/T gun and a 90mm mortar, and killing 56 Japs. Lieutenant Bertram W. McElroy was transferred to Company B. A jeep accident on February 4 resulted in badly broken legs for T/5 Joe H. Stephens, but the driver, PFC Carley Royal was not hurt. The vehicle was totaled.

Two days later, a heavy artillery barrage at daylight damaged a jeep and a 3/4-ton truck, and the following day the enemy scored a direct hit on the kitchen truck. There was hot iron all around but we had no casualties, so we were very lucky. Bread from a newly arrived bakery tasted like cake. We hadn't had any for months.

February 7, 1945, was memorable. Jones, T/5 Weldon T. Riley, Korak, T/4 Don E. Hooktra and Harris were ordered to the U.S. on rotation. Morale went up 100% and we also liberated twelve bottles of saki. All in all, this was a very satisfactory day.

Lieutenant Colonel Devine, CO of 169th Infantry Regiment, came by to look us over and went on reconnaissance with Captain Staudacher. The Japs were moving in heavier artillery and we were catching a good bit of it. S/Sgt's Jack T. Powell and Lefren l. Iverson were recommended for promotion to 2nd lieutenant. Lieutenant Joe D. Bennett was wounded.

As the 98th was the only chemical mortar unit with I Corps, we didn't have a chance to go into reserve for a little R&R. Company C was attached officially to the 33rd Infantry Division with obviously more action ahead. Rumors of beer available at the base sent Captain Staudacher, with a pocket full of money, burning up the road, but he found nothing.

Battalion HQ had a few PX supplies such as soap and razor blades. We sent a few men out of the area on pass. Sgt Carlson is now 2nd Lieutenant Carlson, and we received 600 rounds of ammo today so things are looking up. Battalion staff officers looked in on us every day.

Colonel Cavanee, CO, 136th Infantry came in with Colonel Cirl, Division Chemical Officer, to check us out. Company C HQ was at Manoal and was joined by the 2nd platoon. The Ludencia Ventura family contracted us to do our laundry.

Supplies of eggs and fresh meat have become available and that helped. Colonel Cleland, CO of the 103rd Infantry Regiment, stopped in to say goodbye and gave us a letter of commendation.

"During the time Company C, 98th Chemical Battalion, has been attached to this regiment, the manner in which you and the officers and men of this splendid organization have performed their duties has been most exemplary. "While engaged in the complex task of planning the movement of the regiment with the attached troops we have received from you the heartiest cooperation. From the date contact with the enemy was made, until your unit was detached from us, you and your company have played a major part in the success of this organization. "I wish to commend you and your organization and to express my appreciation of the splendid work they have done. Your willing cooperation and untiring efforts have made our association pleasant. I sincerely hope that at some later date your organization will again be with us."

All members of Company C were very happy as it was a fine tribute to the men of the unit. A letter from Major Walpole,

Chemical Officer of the 43rd Infantry Division, was also received.

Lieutenant Murienthal was transferred to Battalion HQ and we received 39 replacements from the 82nd Chemical Mortar Battalion. A Bronze Star was awarded to PFC Edmund T. Ezell. Lieutenant John J. Cassin Jr. was wounded.

February 20 was a big day. The rear echelon equipment and vehicles came in from the beach including barracks bags. We received Christmas mail including packages and a ration of BEER!

An order from Battalion HQ said we are qualified to wear the Philippines Campaign Ribbon with bronze arrow head for the Lingayan landing. We also were awarded a star on our New Guinea Campaign ribbon for the Bismarck Archipelago.

Captain Staudacher and two men were ordered to the U.S. on rotation, and some guerillas came into camp and talked about throwing a big party.

Action was picking up for the 1st and 2nd platoons of Company C, firing on Hill 1500. By the time the infantry mounted the crest of the hill, the Japs had vanished. PFC Edwin H. Hanson was wounded by a grenade.

We helped the 33rd Infantry Division celebrate its fourth anniversary today. Canned turkey and all the trimmings were served. Blackouts have been lifted and the Company CP has been moved to Sison with two platoons, and the 2nd platoon was in Dongon. A beer ration of twelve bottles per man made for one damn fine party!

We watched a demonstration of the Jap 150mm mortar firing. It was an awesome monster for sure.

Lieutenant Darius Nease was awarded the Bronze Star.

On March 17, Company C was disbanded and each of the weapons platoons was assigned to one of the other companies. Company D was now to become officially Company C. Thus ended the existence of a great outfit that for over five years had been Battery D of the 218th Field Artillery Battalion, and Company C of the 641st Tank Destroyer Battalion, and had given a quality performance all the way.

Companies A and D (now designated C) started on the long trek to Santa Fe. Company A had received 25 replacements from the 82nd Chemical Mortar Battalion which were most welcome as we were considerably under strength because of sickness and the general attrition of combat conditions. On February 26, Company A was attached to the 126th Infantry Regiment of the 32nd Infantry Division. Part of our rear echelon supplies arrived including the kitchen truck, and S/Sgt Howard Ross began to wheel and deal with the local farmers with his invasion money.

The Company A CP moved to San Nicholas to be nearer the platoons on the Villa Verde Trail. Company E, 126th Infantry Regiment, started the assault on the first of many ridges but got no further than its base. The 1st platoon registered with WP and soon burned off the ridge revealing several substantial pillboxes. Switching to HE, the 4.2 shells soon had logs and bodies flying in all directions. A front-line infantryman said: "Them 4.2's sure pack a wallop. You can fire them all you want!" S/Sgts Lloyd W. Taisey and Wayne A. Perry were commissioned as 2nd lieutenants.

Company A was finding the increasingly rough and rocky terrain full of problems. The 32nd Infantry Division Engineers were striving to build a one-way road but heavy rains were falling and construction could not keep up with the troops. The 2nd platoon was ordered to go into position in an inaccessible area and finally, with the help of the other two platoons, one mortar and some ammo was hauled up the steep trail by hand. This effort consumed a lot of time for very small effect.

Company B of the 98th was attached to the 33rd Infantry Division for its drive up the Kennon Road to Baguio. T/Sgt William P. Adams and S/Sgt Joseph Able were recommended for field commissions. We received 19 replacements from the 72nd Chemical Mortar Battalion to fill our sadly depleted ranks. At the 3rd platoon position, Sgt. Arthur Hincke wounded a Jap trying to infiltrate the mortar positions. The 1st and 3rd platoons were attached to the 130th Infantry Regiment, and the 2nd platoon to the 123rd Infantry Regiment.

On February 17, FO Lieutenant Joseph Able spotted a native hut in the target area and blew it sky high with a 4.2 round. There were fires and explosions in the area for some time, much to the delight of the infantry. Lieutenant Able then shifted his fire to an area where enemy mortars were laying down a harassing fire on the infantry. Enemy fire ceased for the rest of the day and the CO of Company C, 130th Infantry Regiment, commended the

platoon for its help. The next three days were taken up with defensive fires at night and targets of opportunity during the day.

The 1st Battalion, 130th Infantry Regiment, again advanced along the Kennon Road, with the 1st platoon firing the preparatory barrage. On February 24, the platoon fired for the 1st Battalion, 123rd Infantry Regiment, which succeeded in taking its objective. Company B, 123rd Infantry Regiment, was the assault unit and reported many dead in the ravines which were covered by 4.2 fire.

The Bronze Star was awarded to five men in Company B. Unfortunately, the names are not available.

Later, the 3rd platoon fired in support of the 2nd Battalion, 130th Infantry Regiment, using an artillery observer in an L-4 plane. WP and HE were dropped into the deep ravines where the enemy had been safe from the division artillery fire because of its flatter trajectory. Harassing fire was kept up all night, and infantry patrols next day counted over 50 dead Japs. The infantry was so pleased with the 4.2's performance that the FO, Lieutenant Dutton, was given two Jap rifles and a flag. The artillery observer in the L-4 radioed back "Beautiful shooting!"

By March 4, Company B's CP had moved to Rosario with the 3rd platoon. The 2nd platoon broke up a mass attack by firing into the Japs as they tried to overrun the defense perimeter of Company F, 123rd Infantry Regiment. Executive Officer Lieutenant Roland Groder was ordered on TDY to act as defense counsel in an impending court martial.

On March 20, we received a complete platoon consisting of 35 men and one officer from Company C which had been disbanded. This brought Company B back to combat strength and celebrations began with an issue of 12 bottles of beer per man. Company B's CP is now at Concepcion and it is raining hard and the roads are almost impassable.

Meanwhile, Company C (formerly Company D) is still at San Jose with the 3rd platoon in reserve with the 1st platoon. The night of March 3, the enemy made a determined attempt to break into the CP of the 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry Regiment. The 2nd platoon laid down fire on the defensive perimeter and in the morning 22 dead Japs were found in the area. That day the 2nd platoon followed the infantry through Digdig to Carranglan. S/Sgt John D. Buss was appointed First Sergeant. Trucks with the

rear echelon arrived from Manila with much needed shoes and clothing.

The forward CP of Company C was set up with the 27th Infantry Regiment at Puncan. While making the reconnaissance for the CP, Captain Slocum captured a Jap prisoner who was turned over to S-2 of the 27th Infantry Regiment. By March 14, Company C's CP was moved to Putlan as the infantry moved up. Route 5 was a paved road up the valley but it was under enemy observation and any daytime movement on the road was immediately taken under fire.

The infantry was within six miles of Balete Pass but the enemy defense was anchored in the mountainous country where General Yamashita had ordered his men to fight to the death. Defenses were well dug in with log and earth covers and carefully revetted with sand bags. The infantry fought the enemy for observation posts on the highest hills but we also had to call our flying artillery observers to adjust our fire.



Captured Japanese 250mm gun

The infantry units were relieved at intervals but we were passed on to successive units without much of a break and the strain of 81 days in the presence of the enemy was beginning to show. Fortunately, as part of General MacArthur's "Shoe String" forces for three years, we had learned how to improvise to get the job done. Morale was still high and the call of "Fire Mission" gave us one more crack at Tojo.

VII - Luzon Is Ours

Fortunately, on February 20, we received a complete platoon from the disbanded original Company C which distributed its personnel to the other weapons companies. This enabled us to rotate personnel under enemy fire and bring in equipment for needed maintenance.

By the 1st of April, the infantry was locked in a death struggle with the enemy for Balete Pass. Each day began with a massive barrage by division artillery, infantry mortars and 4.2s, and as it lifted, the infantry would go forward to begin its long crawl up another ridge while the artillery shifted to the flanks and surrounding ravines to keep the enemy from rushing in reinforcements. If the attack was successful, the infantry would dig in and the 4.2s registered for defense on all avenues of an enemy counterattack. This was pretty much the daily program.

Representatives of the Labor and Production Board from Washington, D.C. visited us on April 16, and the 2nd platoon fired on an enemy mortar position and everyone was suitably impressed. The 3rd platoon was relieved by the 1st platoon and went into reserve at San Jose.

Colonel Dalton, CO of the 161st Infantry Regiment called in at the 3rd platoon position and said some nice things about its work, making everyone feel good.

The 161st Infantry Regiment was driving on Balete Pass and we were within 1/2 mile by April 23. The fighting was fierce, casualties were heavy and we were continually being called on for smoke screens to evacuate the wounded. The 161st S-3 called for fire in the Balete Pass area and was rewarded with a huge explosion followed by flames and a huge column of black smoke. We hit a gas dump!

Five days later, the 3rd platoon marked the boundaries for an air strike and afterward received favorable comment from the Army Air Forces. The 35th Infantry Regiment, supported by the 1st platoon, was approaching Balete Pass from the south and the 27th Infantry Regiment with the 2nd platoon in support was approaching from the southeast. As the enemy defenses began to crumble, the Japs broke into small units and disappeared into the hills only to reappear behind our infantry lines to disrupt supplies of ammo and reinforcements. This made for slow going but by the first week in May the pass was reasonably clear of enemy.

By March 21, the tempo of fighting on the Kennon Road had again picked up. Company B was now using the new delay fuse which had first been an experiment and was now pronounced effective. The tests were done under the direction of Lieutenant Terry Barnholdt.

We were ordered to stockpile at least 500 rounds of ammo at each platoon position as there was growing evidence that the enemy planned a massive counterattack. Registration was made all around the defensive perimeter and on March 23 the enemy made his move. Fortunately, the terrain forced the Japs to come across an open area in front of Company F, 123rd Infantry Regiment, and that was where the 2nd platoon's volley fire caught them. The 4.2 bursts landed squarely on the advancing Nips and effectively broke up the attack. The infantry reported more than 50 enemy bodies lying in front of their positions in the morning. No further attacks developed and there was only fire for a Company L, 123rd Infantry Regiment combat patrol the next day. The infantry was on the move and the platoons were alerted to displace on March 27.

Some administrative changes were made as T/5 Frank J. Keleman was made company clerk, Corporal Joe O. Schneider made motor sergeant, T/5 Arrondo J. Chelini was appointed truck driver, T/4 Kenyon C. Coryall became CW radio operator, and Sharbono company barber.

The platoons all moved and on the 28th were firing in support of the 2nd Battalion, 123rd Infantry Regiment in the vicinity of the Pugo River. The FO of the 2nd platoon spotted enemy in the open and caught them standing up with the first round. An ammo truck ran over a land mine and lost its front right wheel and had to be towed to the 173rd Ordnance Depot. The platoon fired 210 rounds in five missions for Company A, 123rd Infantry Regiment during the day, silencing two enemy mortars. We heard that all enlisted men of Company B, 98th CMB, were entitled to wear the Good Conduct Medal.

The next day the 1st platoon registered on the objective area of Company A and B, 123rd Infantry, and at 1930 hours several missions were fired for night defense. The 2nd platoon was able to fire only one mortar as the other three had bent elevating screws.

By the end of March, the 1st platoon was in Galiano. Its ammo truck was caught in a traffic jam on a one way mountain road and came under fire by a 77mm gun. T/5 Philip Mustacchia and Pvt

Joseph M. Kusko were wounded by shell fragments and refused to go to the hospital. The platoon later neutralized an enemy mortar and fired a barrage for and assault on a ridge by Companies B and C, and later fired on the flank of Company B to block off an enemy attack. The 3rd platoon, from positions near Camp 3 on Kennon Road, fired on an enemy concentration for Company F.

Easter Sunday came on April 1st, in the year of our Lord, 1945. The Japs observed it by bombarding the weapons platoons and company CP with artillery and mortars for two days. The CP jeep was riddled by shell fire but is still serviceable, and ditto for PFC Harry Johnson, who was struck in the head by shell fragments but refused hospitalization. Enemy activity was increasing and it rained hard most of the time.

The 1st platoon knocked out an anti-tank gun that had been making things miserable for the infantry, and fired on a gasoline dump which burned off the surrounding area and exposed the enemy positions. At 1730 hours, the enemy opened up with a hail of machine gun and small arms fire but 50 rounds of HE quieted things down. The 3rd platoon FO spotted a Jap patrol in the open and later our infantry accounted for about 20 of them.

Company A, 123rd Infantry Regiment was assigned Hill 3000 as the next day's objective, but ran into such fierce resistance it had to pull back and make another run at it after a barrage of WP from the 1st platoon burned off the area. On securing the hill, Company A reported finding over 100 dead Japs. Firing was almost continuous for the next two days as Companies B and C fought the fiercely resisting enemy.

The 3rd Battalion, 123rd Infantry Regiment relieved the 2nd Battalion, and the 2nd platoon, Company B, 98th CMB, was turned over to the new unit but there would be no relief for Company B. The 3rd platoon was now supporting the 2nd Battalion, 136th Infantry.

The 1st platoon was shifting its mortars to fire on a new target when the Japs fired first with a volley of artillery on the platoon position. One shell exploded five feet from the Number 2 mortar, igniting some of the powder charges that had been prepared for firing. There were no casualties but everyone was a bit shaken and quite a bit of equipment was destroyed.

At 2045 hours, the FO reported the enemy with flashlights descending a trail to a waterhole. Three volleys put out the

flashlights. All week various targets were taken under fire and at one time the 1st platoon was firing 3 concentrations with 3 separate mortars. That would have been pretty fancy shooting on any artillery range. In the early morning the Japs tried to infiltrate the platoon position and in the wild melee Corporal George Chernitsky was wounded.

The 3rd Battalion, 123rd Infantry Regiment, moved out and left the 2nd platoon isolated. This infantry unit seemed unable to grasp the value of working with the 4.2s.

The 1st platoon, while near the town of Galliano, lost a valued member of the FO party when Corporal Lantz O. Cross was struck in the head by a shell fragment and instantly killed. The whole platoon came near disaster soon afterward when a WP shell burst on leaving the tube and showered the area with burning white phosphorus particles. Several members of the gun crews suffered burns but fortunately none were serious.

The Japs now made a determined effort to knock out the 4.2s by artillery shelling and night infiltration, and for several days it was impossible to answer any night fire missions as we were fighting for our lives. Lieutenant Dutton, the 3rd platoon FO, did manage to catch a large number of the enemy in the open and killed at least 30 of them.

Later, the division artillery observer called for 4.2 fire on several strong points that his guns could not reach and he reported good success. The 2nd platoon did not fire for four days but the 3rd platoon fired regularly on enemy positions and in return was shelled for four nights straight. Obviously, somebody didn't like us. Company B had another tragedy when PFC Richard J. Kumor was killed in a truck accident.

The situation was pretty well stalemated as the enemy was in an inaccessible area and well dug in. There were no roads and the old issue of hand carrying the mortars came up again. The enemy had good observation of our operational area and every move brought a hail of hostile fire. Infantry patrols captured enemy maps and documents, the location of their aid station, and orders from commanders to form "Suicide Squads" to infiltrate the lines and destroy the 4.2's.

The 1st platoon returned to Company B's CP at Concepcion for seven days in reserve, but by April 21 was back in action with the 3rd Battalion, 123rd Infantry Regiment. The 3rd platoon was far forward in enemy territory and fired on enemy targets in

almost every direction as the enemy was now backed deep into their defensive positions.

The 2nd platoon was in a muddy area that provided no firm footing for the base plates which consequently had to be dug out and reset after only a few rounds were fired. Sometimes all four mortars would be firing on different targets. The 3rd platoon is slowly moving up the Pugo-Tuba Trail with the 3rd Battalion, 123rd Infantry Regiment, toward Baguio. Progress was slow and casualties heavy as the Japs had no room left to maneuver and could only fight and die.

On April 21, the 1st platoon relieved the 2nd platoon which went into reserve with Company B's CP which was now at Pugo. Before leaving, the gunners fired the last 50 rounds at an enemy strong point to say goodbye. Companies I and K patrolled this area the following day and counted 16 dead Japs.

On the Villa Verde Trail the picture was far from rosy. By March 10, the 32nd Infantry Division engineers had built a road as far as Santa Rosa, and Company A, 98th CMB, went into reserve there. Captain Stimson ordered the CP, kitchen, and vehicle maintenance section set up, and all weapons platoons were together there until March 20. The infantry was moving slowly through almost inaccessible country and was almost out of range.

The issue of hand carrying the mortars came up again and also the possibility of using the 4.2's as pack artillery. General Kreuger made the final decision that horses could only be used after a six-week training period. The issue was resolved and the general undoubtedly got a good private chuckle out of it.

We received an entire platoon from the disbanded Company C and it was most welcome as Company A was considerably under strength. Lieutenant Keller and two enlisted men were transferred to HQ Company. Lieutenant Colonel Batlin, battalion CO, came in to see us today.

The platoons were alerted to a march order on March 21, and the 1st and 3rd platoons moved to an area about 5,000 yards SW of Imugin to support the 1st Battalion, 127th Infantry Regiment. The 2nd platoon was ordered to join the 1st Battalion, 126th Infantry Regiment. The 2nd Battalion, 126th Infantry Regiment was pushing up the Ambayan River valley in advance of the 32nd Infantry Division engineers who were building a road there.

Captain Stimson divided Company A into the forward echelon, which included the CP and S/Sgt Howard Ross's kitchen that was stationed about two miles behind the weapons platoon, and the rear echelon which remained at Santa Rosa. S/Sgt William Searing was promoted to 2nd lieutenant.

By March 22, action was renewed and the assault on Hill 502 was spearheaded by Company E, 126th Infantry Regiment. This hill marked the boundary between the zones of action along the Villa Verde Trail with the 126th Infantry Regiment being on the left and the 127th and 128th Infantry Regiments on the right.

Everything went well for two days and the 2nd platoon was firing rolling barrages for Companies G and L which were leading the assault, when the enemy struck back. The attacks were continuous for that night and all the next day until they were finally broken up and the Japs were pushed back. All three platoons fired continuously for 32 hours.

This was the first indication that the intelligence report that reported the Villa Verde Trail was lightly defended by the enemy was in error. In fact, the Japs had resurrected our old adversary, the 2nd Tank Division and, after losing their tanks at San Manuel and Lupao, this formidable opponent, with an infusion of new soldiers, was now fighting as infantry, and harder than ever.

It rained every night and was hot and humid during the days. The 32nd Infantry Division was having hard going and taking many casualties.

By March 27, the attack was again in full swing and assault teams were concentrating on the hill tops from which the enemy had an unobstructed observation of our movements and could adjust their artillery fire accordingly. They placed mortars on the reverse slopes of the ridges and could not be reached by anything except our mortars.

The 2nd platoon began trying out the new delay and "Superquick" fuses. The 1st platoon fired on Hill 506 and got a machine gun nest and an ammo dump before laying a smoke screen to cover the advance of Company B, 128th Infantry Regiment. The position was taken after an HE barrage, and at the same time the 3rd platoon kept harassing fire on the surrounding hills until 506 was secured. The CO of the 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry Regiment gave both platoons a verbal commendation.

Easter Sunday, 1 April 1 1945. The 32nd Infantry Division obviously had too wide a sector to cover, so the 37th Infantry Division moved in to help. The 32nd Infantry Division was committed to action only three short weeks from the strenuous Leyte campaign, and the mounting casualties and general attrition of combat conditions was beginning to have an effect. The 126th Infantry Regiment moved over to the right side of the Villa Verde Trail with the other two regiments taking the 2nd platoon along. The 3rd platoon came back to Tayug for a rest.

Personnel were much depleted physically, and an effort was made to get as many as possible of the men away on pass for an afternoon. Everyone was still full of fight and the following letter from the CO of the 2nd Battalion, 126th Infantry Regiment, helped our morale:

"From 22 March 1945 to 3 April 1945, while this battalion was engaging enemy forces north of San Nicholas along the Abayabanga River, from Sapinat to Tebbo, Luzon Philippine Islands, Company A, 98th Chemical Mortar Battalion, was in direct support of this battalion. By their efficiency of firing, alertness to fire orders and completeness of target coverage, they greatly aided this battalion in gaining their objectives. By their accurate firing and alertness to call they rendered invaluable assistance to this battalion in repulsing five enemy counter attacks against our positions. Their attention to duty and efficiency of action reflects a credit upon their organization and the military forces of the United States."

The 1st platoon was taking heavy artillery counter battery fire, and the nearby infantry moved out making necessary and hurried preparations for perimeter defense. The next two days were occupied in firing screening missions for the infantry. On April 6, a defective round fell 200 yards short, on the infantry perimeter, wounding six and killing two men. The incident so unnerved the platoon leader, who was suffering from fatigue and battle strain, that he had to be evacuated. Nevertheless, the infantry commander requested the 1st platoon FO to continue the smoke screen on the enemy positions as his unit was pinned down by hostile fire.

The 1st platoon was relieved on the morning of April 7 and went into reserve at Tayug with the 3rd platoon, to be joined a week later by the 2nd platoon. Sgt Donald P. Martin was granted a 30-day emergency furlough back to the U.S. Lieutenant Clare Prendergast returned from the hospital after being wounded in the sinking of the ill-fated LCI 754 (M).

The 3rd platoon went forward into position on April 8 and was greeted by a round from a 90mm mortar which landed in the mortar positions, wounding three men who were evacuated. Later the platoons fired on two machine guns and a 77mm mountain gun, putting all out of action. At 2000 hours, the enemy staged a banzai charge which was quickly broken up by a 4.2 barrage. The next day, the platoons took an enemy mortar position under fire and the infantry battalion CO said he could see Jap bodies flying through the air and rolling down the hillside. At 1600 hours, the area was marked with smoke for an air strike which was right on target.

The 3rd platoon again had some bad luck on April 18 when enemy artillery ranged in on its position and destroyed about 200 rounds of ammo and started fires in the surrounding brush. Because of excellent dispersal, most of the platoon's ammo was saved, but most of it had to go back to the ammo dump for reprocessing after being subjected to the terrific heat. The executive officer of the 2nd Battalion, 126th Infantry Regiment, ordered the 3rd platoon to withdraw to a more protected area.

It was announced today that the former CO of Company A, Captain Doolittle, was awarded the Silver Star posthumously for his courageous action in the battle of Cabaruan Hills, February 1945.

The 2nd platoon relieved the 3rd platoon about 900 yards northeast of its former position on April 22 so it could go back to San Nicholas for vehicle maintenance. The 2nd and 1st platoons were in deep holes and well dispersed, which was just as well as the enemy shelled the area that night with extreme accuracy but no one was hurt. Plenty of hot iron fell in the holes.

Captain Stimson was relieved of command the next day and ordered to the U.S. on rotation. Executive Officer Lieutenant Benjamin Bell was appointed CO of Company A. Battalion CO Lieutenant Colonel Batlin came by.

The guerillas were very active behind enemy lines, and their organized units were being used by the SIXTH Army as combat troops. By now the Japanese communications were tenuous at best as the U.S. Army Air Forces patrolled the roads in daytime and the guerillas made night movement very hazardous. Enemy rations were down to 1/4 lbs. of rice per day and gasoline for their few trucks was almost nonexistent.



1st Platoon, Co B; front row, 2nd from the left
is Lt Joseph Able, FO for the platoon

Company B, 98th CMB, was still on the Kennon Rd with the 33rd Infantry Division. Lieutenant Joe Able, FO of the 1st platoon, spotted an enemy patrol in the open and opened up on it with a volley of HE. The survivors ran away yelling "Bloody murder" (translated).

The 3rd platoon was involved in an action at Thirty Minute Creek on April 26 where the 3rd Battalion, 136th Infantry Regiment, was patrolling with reinforced platoons. Suddenly the enemy blanketed the infantry with fire which effectively immobilized them, and the FO called for fire on the enemy strong points. The 3rd platoon shifted its mortars and brought down a volley of HE and WP, and by 1600 hours they had fired 425 rounds and the mortar tubes were smoking hot. A flashback ignited the powder charges in the ready rack and the fire ignited the kunai grass and brush in the area.

Unfortunately, the enemy had used this same area as a mortar position and a lot of their ammo was still lying around on the

ground. It began to explode as the fire burned the surrounding grass. Platoon leader Lieutenant Dutton ordered the mortar crews to take cover below a cut bank until the fire had burned itself out. However, the FO radioed that an infantry patrol had requested a smoke screen in order to evacuate some badly wounded men, so Lieutenant Dutton called for volunteers to man the No. 4 mortar and four men responded immediately and began firing the smoke screen. The men of the other sections came back to prepare and carry ammo to mortar No. 4. The area was blanketed with fire and smoke, and Jap ammunition was still blowing up all around but the mission was still completed. Lieutenant Dutton recommended four men for the Silver Star and 8 for the Bronze Star. PFC Filipe C. Valverde and Pvt Oliver C. Walker were wounded. The CO of the 3rd Battalion, 136th Infantry Regiment, couldn't say enough good things about the 3rd platoon CO, Company B, 98th CMB.

The Japs were pulling back as their 23rd Division had suffered tremendous casualties and was in bad shape. Infantry patrols passing through the Thirty Minute Creek area, the scene of the previous day's battle, counted 51 dead Japs, and there were probably more. The 3rd platoon was somewhat shaken by yesterday's experience but was ready to go and fired for a Company K patrol in the afternoon.

The weapons platoon saw very limited action for several days and, by April 30, the 33rd Infantry Division had Baguio firmly secured, and Company B moved in. So the northwest anchor of General Yamashita's defensive triangle with its mountains of supplies fell to the SIXTH Army.



Lt. Adams and friend in heavily damaged Baguio

On May 3, the 3rd platoon reported to the 2nd Battalion, 136th Infantry Regiment at San Manuel. The rainy season was here by now and mud was everywhere. By May 5, the 1st platoon was under canvas with the infantry at Trinidad. The 2nd platoon was given a fire mission but the results were not satisfactory as the base plates were deep in mud after the first two or three rounds.

The 2nd platoon moved over to the Kennon Rd and had several fire missions, one of which broke up a banzai attack as the infantry drove the Japs back into the hills where they holed up in areas that division artillery could not reach. The FO used the L-4 observation plane to adjust 4.2 fire as it was the only observation, we had of the battle area.

The terrain was so rough that the mortars could not be moved, but the 33rd Infantry Division pack train succeeded in bringing two mortars at a time into position with the help of the infantry which had developed a great liking for the 4.2's. A patrol reported 127 dead Japs in the area fired on May 9.

An unfortunate accident in the Company B area resulted in PFC Aulis and T/4s Coryell and Latimer being hurt.

Company B units were relieved and under canvas at Baguio for two weeks when the call came to report to the 3rd Battalion, 130th Infantry Regiment on May 30. This presented some difficulty as many of the men were on pass in Manila. However, there were personnel enough to man three mortars in each of the 1st and 2nd platoons, so ammo and 10-in-1 rations were mobile loaded and positions were occupied the next day.

At that point, Captain Salmon was relieved of command and ordered to the U.S. on rotation, and Captain Stanley L. Marienthal was appointed CO of Company B. First Sgt David R. Luevano was transferred to HQ Company and S/Sgt Leonard R. Roseland and Sgt George Shirilla were transferred in from HQ Company with S/Sgt Roseland to be acting First Sergeant.

We received 30 replacements and they were welcomed with enthusiasm and apportioned to the weapons platoons for on-the-job training.

Meanwhile Company A was having hard going with the 32nd Infantry Division on the Villa Verde Trail as the enemy was obviously preparing for a stand in the Salacsac Pass. Constant rain turned the primitive roads into mud wallows and the steep hills were impossible to climb. The infantry, though suffering many casualties and much illness from tropical fevers, did not let up, and we kept firing with the help of artillery observers in their L-4 planes. All platoons are far advanced into enemy territory and both the 1st and 2nd platoons endured infiltration and banzai attacks at night. On April 27, the enemy succeeded in placing a demolition charge under a ¼-ton truck, damaging it extensively, but was driven off before any further damage could be done.

The 1st platoon fired for Company E and K, 123rd Infantry Regiment, on an enemy-held ridge and, as the Japs attempted to withdraw, the infantry picked off quite a few of them. The next day an air observer spotted a Jap bivouac area which was taken under fire immediately and the Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon later counted over 100 dead Japs in this vicinity.

On April 29, the two platoons fired 1,200 rounds on Hill 517 and broke up a determined attack on the infantry perimeter that night. Over 100 dead were counted in front of the infantry position the next morning. Both platoons received verbal

commendations from the CO, 1st Battalion, 127th Infantry Regiment.

We heard that Baguio had fallen and that our infantry was beginning to crack the Salacsac Pass defenses. Lieutenants Searing, Taisey and Perry were promoted to 1st lieutenant. Lieutenant Robert Millious was awarded the Silver Star for courageous action in combat. Corporal Richard H. Meyers and Pvt Joseph C. Betyn were awarded the Silver Star, and Corporal Christopher S. Franzen was awarded the Bronze Star. So ended our first 111 days in the Philippines and the rain was coming down continuously.

Approximately a week later, the 2nd platoon fired four concentrations for the 128th Infantry Regiment in the vicinity of Imugan and took a vicious shelling in return, but there were no casualties. The infantry reported 30 enemy dead in our impact area. On May 12, the 1st platoon relieved the 2nd platoon which returned to San Nicholas. The 1st platoon continued to fire on Imugan and the 3rd platoon fired on Hill 517 for the advance of the 3rd Battalion, 127th Infantry Regiment.

The next day the 3rd platoon started firing on Yamashita Ridge, a knifelike promontory which hid numerous caves and mortar emplacements on its reverse slopes. The 2nd Battalion, 128th Infantry Regiment, had the task of cracking this tough nut and called on the 3rd platoon which laid down several heavy concentrations with aid from the artillery aerial observer. This resulted in some gigantic mud slides which sealed numerous caves. Fire was also concentrated on Hill 508 and the adjacent draws. The CO of the 2nd Battalion, 128th Infantry Regiment, commended the 3rd platoon on the effectiveness of the mission.

The 3rd platoon fired on a variety of targets until May 21, including a supply dump, and we hoped their tubs of pickled fish were destroyed. A patrol by Company K reported that the 2nd platoon fire the first week of May had killed an entire company of 180 Japs. This was verified by a prisoner under interrogation at 128th Infantry Regiment HQ.

The division artillery and 4.2s working together leveled the enemy defenses in another area, and the infantry S-2 reported an unbelievable scene of destruction and one vast Jap graveyard. The Bronze Star Medal was awarded to T/5 James M. Jeffery for bravery in action.

The 3rd platoon was replaced by the 2nd platoon which fired on Hill 525 for the 128th Infantry Regiment as the fight for Imugan reached a crescendo, but by May 29 it was pretty much all over. The 25th and 32nd Infantry Divisions made contact along Route 5 near Santa Fe, and another anchor of General Yamashita's defensive triangle was effectively crushed, and the way was open to the Cayagan Valley. Although some smaller units still fought bravely, there was to be no further coordinated action within the Shobu Group.

Company A was relieved of duty with the 32nd Infantry Division and went back to San Nichols to be under canvas for the first time in 142 days. S/Sgt Howard Ross's good chow tasted great. Company CO Lieutenant Benjamin Bell was promoted to Captain.

Later the company moved to an area 1.25 miles west of Aringay where they enjoyed the pleasures of camp life with no blackouts or fire missions and received occasional passes to the surrounding towns.

On June 12, Company A was ordered attached to the 6th Infantry Division, and Captain Bell reported to Major General E.D. Patrick for operations up Routes 4 and 5.

Company C was still with the 25th Infantry Division during the first week of May 1945. They were in the Balete Pass area and the going was almost impossible because of weather conditions. Intelligence had sadly underestimated the enemy strength which was originally posted at about 4,000, and soon the 25th and 32nd Divisions were facing a force of over 10,000 troops, including the veteran Japanese 10th Division. By the end of May, the 32nd Infantry Division had 3,000 casualties and the 25th Infantry Division almost as many. The 35th Infantry Regiment alone was 750 men under strength.

During this first week of May, the 2nd platoon, Company C was in the hills on the right of Route 5 with the 27th Infantry Regiment, and the 3rd platoon, Company C was on the left flank. The 161st Infantry and the 1st platoon were in the center supporting the 35th Infantry Regiment.

At 0430 hours, May 3, the Japs staged a banzai charge on the 35th Infantry Regiment front. Fortunately, they crossed an area which had been previously registered in, and the 1st platoon FO only had to shift his concentration to cover the area with seven volleys of HE which turned the attack into a rout. At daylight,

the infantry counted 15 bodies in front of its position which was confirmed by Captain Lamenzo, S-3 of the 25th Infantry.

A battalion staff officer on his daily trip to Company C, drove through a Jap road block consisting of riflemen and a light machine gun. Neither the officer nor his driver was hurt but the jeep was pretty well peppered. The infantry later located the road block and knocked it out.

Our ammo was now very low and we had orders to fire only at well-defined targets. When it was expended, we loaded up and moved back to San Jose only to find that the only available camp site was in the middle of a rice paddy which required hauling in tons of gravel. During this time, a section of the 2nd platoon fired a test pattern for the 25th Infantry Division chemical officer to determine the probability of error when firing incorrectly stored ammo.

By May 20, Balete Pass had been secured and the 25th Infantry Division was advancing on Santa Fe. The 2nd platoon moved out of camp and went into position in a deep draw some 400 yards from Balete Pass and within range of Santa Fe. As usual, all water had to be hauled in to wet down the 10-in-1 ration. Enemy shells sailed overhead to explode on the next hillside and we felt rather secure.

Company C's command post tents were erected on bamboo framework and the mess hall was constructed with rough floor boards. A water tank was liberated from a wrecked Jap truck and set up for a shower, and a suspension bridge was constructed of homemade cable made of twisted telephone wires and placed over a nearby stream. As usual, field expedients were the name of the game.

Five days later, the 3rd platoon relieved the 2nd platoon. The sector was relatively inactive except for an occasional artillery shell or Jap straggler trying to find his way through the infantry outposts.

The next day, the 3rd platoon was ordered to supplement the fire of Company A for the 126th Infantry Regiment on the Villa Verde Trail as the fight for Imugan was in its initial stages. The platoon was ordered into an area of soft clay which provided no footing for the mortar base plates. It was necessary to cut logs and place them in tiers to support the base plates in order to carry out the fire missions. Again, more field expedients.

The 3rd platoon moved to Imugen five days later where a good mortar position was found with excellent observation of the enemy territory. The platoon fired for four hours with good results. The 2nd platoon relieved the 3rd platoon and moved to positions 1,500 yards northeast of Santa Fe on May 30 in support of the 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment. The 1st and 2nd platoons moved in and began firing as more ammo was now available. Enemy troops were trapped in a narrow valley and were the immediate target.

The 1st platoon returned to Company C's Command Post at San Jose.

All personnel were now entitled to wear a second star on their New Guinea Campaign ribbon for the Bismarck Archipelago. Corporal John J. Cassin received an appointment as 2nd Lieutenant.

A dinner was given at Battalion HQ in honor of Colonel Arthur, I Corps chemical officer, and all company COs were invited.

The 6th Infantry Division was back in the area, and two platoons from Company A, 98th CMB, were attached to the 63rd Infantry Regiment north of Bagabag, and the other platoon was attached to the 20th Infantry Regiment near Bagabag. On June 12, the company moved up Route 5 and stopped overnight with Company C at San Jose. The next day Company A's command post was set up one mile north of Bagabag.

Meanwhile, the 63rd Infantry Regiment was moved ahead and its 3rd Battalion encountered the enemy about six miles north of town where the 3rd platoon, Company A, went into position. At daylight the assault began with the 4.2s firing the preparation, and the infantry found 25 enemy dead after occupying the area. The platoon then displaced to a position in the vicinity of the Payawan Rest House at noon and immediately was under heavy machine gun fire which resulted in the wounding of PFC Clarence Dempsey, Jr, and damage to the ammo truck. The 2nd platoon registered for defensive fires before dark for the 2nd Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, and assisted in breaking up six different attacks during the night. The 1st platoon was in company reserve.

The 3rd platoon displaced some 800 yards to the rear to get away from the automatic weapons fire but then came under heavy mortar fire which soon ceased, as the infantry forced the enemy back out of range. Everyone dug in deep, which was a good move as the

Japs attacked during the night but were driven off by the infantry.

Company A's forward CP is now at Bambang, which is 25 miles south of Bagabag, and the platoons are with the 20th Infantry Regiment.

The maintenance section sent a tow truck with four guards to bring in the ammo truck damaged at the 3rd platoon position. The tow started out in a convoy of trucks, tanks and armored cars which had only gone 1/2 mile before running into an ambush. The Company A trucks caught the bulk of the small arms and machine gun fire and a demolition charge was thrown into one of the trucks. Driver PFC Frank J. Puchoras, and Assistant driver Pvt Bing F. Chin, were killed, and guards Pvt Benjamin. S. Brown, Pvt Garland H. Booth and T/5 Alger F. Koester were wounded.

After several more fire missions deep in enemy territory, the FO parties were brought in for rest. The days were hot and muggy and it rained every night.

On June 24, the 1st platoon, Company A, was attached to the 1st Battalion, 63rd Infantry Regiment, which was in heavy combat for three days at the end of which the enemy disappeared. Very little firing was done after this assignment. At 1200 hours, 30 June 1945, Company A of the 98th CMB was ordered into reserve at Battalion HQ at San Jose.

Entering the sixth month of combat in the Philippines, Company C was involved in what more or less was a mopping up operation. General Yamashita's defenses were now in complete disarray, but scattered bands of the enemy still roamed the hills and set up a series of strong points in a valley northwest of Imugan. The 3rd platoon was firing steadily into this area, and by June 10 was credited by Captain Schultz, S-3, 126th Infantry Regiment, with knocking out two 150mm mortars and a heavy machine gun, and sealing the caves which killed at least 22 Japs.

The next week Company C moved east to the Old Spanish Trail, where the hard-fighting Tsuda Detachment was still holding out in an area twelve miles north of Carranglan. On June 21, the 2nd platoon killed a Jap while on reconnaissance for positions, 2,000 yards east of Dupax. When the platoon went into position, fire was brought down on the enemy bivouac, and the infantry reported the enemy disappeared.

The 3rd platoon, firing on a schedule, was credited by Captain Leonard S-3, 3rd Battalion, 27th Infantry with landslides which sealed 19 caves.

At 2400 hours, June 30, Company C was relieved of all assignments and ordered into the battalion reserve at San Jose. Beer was issued, twelve bottles per man. What a party!

Company B was at Baguio the first week in June with very little activity. The 1st platoon helped the 3rd Battalion, 130th Infantry Regiment with a dawn barrage, and the S-3 afterward credited the 4.2s with a 47mm gun and 21 dead Japs.

The next day, the 1st and 2nd platoons, Company B, moved up as the infantry advanced, but local Filipinos asked a sergeant to come back to the old positions and kill a Jap hiding there. So much for not getting along with the neighbors. And two Japs seen near the 1st platoon position provided small arms target practice.

Lieutenant Colonel Batlin, Battalion CO; Colonel Arthur, I Corps chemical officer; and Colonel Burns, SIXTH Army chemical officer, visited us today.

There was very little activity in the 2nd week of June. The 3rd platoon is at the CP at Baguio constructing a permanent camp. We had beer rations of six bottles per man, but not enough for a party to start. A Jap was killed just outside the 1st platoon perimeter at daybreak.

The Company B kitchen was destroyed by fire on June 21, and all equipment and rations were lost. PFC Oliver C. Walker was wounded for the 2nd time, and 2nd Lieutenant William P. Adams was promoted to 1st lieutenants.

On June 30, Company B was relieved of all assignments and ordered to battalion reserve with the other weapons companies at San Jose.

Following are four commendations received from units supported by Company B. 98th Chemical Mortar Battalion.

Commendation from Brigadier General Hanford McMider, CG, 158th Regimental Combat Team

"From 23 May 1944 to 14 June 1944, Company B was in support of this regiment in the vicinity of the Tortirfoam River of the

Wake-Sarmi area of Dutch New Guinea. In this action we were opposed by a numerically superior force which was well trained and equipped, and extremely aggressive. Throughout this period the enemy attempted many organized attacks against our perimeter. During these enemy attacks, your mortars were used most effectively against enemy troops assembling for the attack, and in some instances they became so disorganized that an effective attack was impossible. "On Noemfoor Island, Netherlands East Indies, you were again committed in support of the 158th Infantry Regiment from 2 July, 1944 until the island was cleared of enemy. "From approximately 12 Jan 1945 until 13 Feb 1945, your unit was in support of us for the third time in the Damortis-Rosario area of Luzon, Philippine Islands. Throughout this operation all fire missions which were given you were accomplished speedily and accurately. "The conduct of your organization during all of these operations is indicative of superior combat efficiency. The cooperative spirit, the aggressiveness, and the ability of your unit to give excellent support, even under the most unfavorable conditions, has rightfully earned for you the respect and appreciation of the entire command."

Commendation from Major General Clarkston, CG, 33rd Infantry Division.

"It has come to my attention that Company B, 98th Chemical Mortar Battalion, since being attached to this Division, has performed in a highly superior manner while supporting our assault troops. "Especially commendable was the destruction of enemy concentrations in the ravines along the Kennon Road, which hastened the completion of our mission in that area. "This letter will express to the officers and men of Company B, 98th Chemical Mortar Battalion, my sincere appreciation for a job well done, and for the courage, efficiency and skill displayed by all concerned."

Commendation from the 123rd Infantry Regiment.

"During the period Feb-March, two platoons of Company B, 98th Chemical Mortar Battalion were attached to this Regiment. During this period, we were engaged with the enemy astride the Kennon Road, generally along a line, Rosario-Camp 1-Cauringan. This terrain is extremely rugged and has many canyons and ravines that artillery fire cannot reach effectively. We found the 4.2 mortars invaluable for counter battery against Jap 81mm mortars and against Jap concentrations in ravines. The white phosphorus

shell was extremely effective in these ravines, both for burning off the vegetation and smoking the Japs out of the holes."

Commendation from Colonel Philip F. Lindeman, CO, 27th Infantry Regiment.

"In the campaign of Luzon which started on Jan 9, 1945 and which is still in progress, your company has performed a great service in support of this regiment. "The effectiveness of your mortar fire has played no small part in our successes to date. I realize that this was possible only after you surmounted great obstacles to the accomplishment of your mission, both from enemy action and terrain difficulties. Your hard work and resourcefulness in the performance of combat duties speak highly of the superior combat efficiency of your company. "I wish to commend you and the members of your company for the manner in which you have worked with this regiment and thank you for the valuable service you have rendered us."

We did not know it at the time, but the war was over for the 98th Chemical Mortar Battalion. The Bastard Boys came to the end of the war a hard, proud outfit that honed its skills in the highest standards of military professionalism, and had never failed to answer the call, "Fire Mission".

Now the shooting's over

Now the war is won

We'll get no more of those shells and bombs

From the sons of the Rising Sun

They're on their way back to Tokyo Rose

With a kiss from the 641!

Cease Firing - Close stations - March Order

Mission Complete

Appendix

A. Citations and Commendations

B. Purple Heart Awards

C. Field Promotions

D. Abbreviations

A. Citations and Commendations

Silver Star

Pvt Joseph G. Betyne
Capt Gilbert B. Doolittle
Capt J. Richard Gerttula
1st Lt Robert E. Millious
Cpl Richard H. Myers

Bronze Star

2nd Lt Joseph P. Russell*
1st Lt Benjamin Bell
Sgt William J. Greenshields
PFC James L. Turner
T/5 Robert W. Goorsky
Maj Charles R. Preston
S/Sgt John R. Kinkey
Capt John M. Slocum
PFC Edmund T. Ezell
1st Lt Darius H. Nease
Cpl Joseph J. Ponte
Cpl Christopher S. Franzen
T/5 James M. Jeffery
Sgt Martin W. Rebich
Cpl Ingram

*Awarded posthumously

B. Purple Heart Awards - For wounds or injuries received as a result of enemy action in places indicated.

Milne Bay

W/O Harold M. Roth

Wakde

Pvt Joseph Cohen

Pvt Lantz O. Cross

Cpl Walter J. Flain

PFC Thomas P. McKenna

Biak

Lt Col Gerald P. Cochran*

T/4 Charles N. Cohen

Pvt Francis S. Cross

Pvt Leo T. Daly

Pvt Anthony S. Festa

Pvt Paul A. Gilbert

1st Lt Kenneth H. Lillie

PFC Donald A O'Brien

Pvt Harold J. Prendergast

PFC Ramon G. Rodriguez

Luzon

T/5 Edwin M. Balfour
1st Lt Joseph D. Bennett
Cpl Robert A. Berentsen
PFC Joseph C. Betynm
Pvt Garland H. Booth
Pvt Benjamin S. Brown
PFC Robert H. Burroughs
Pvt Gilardo C. Capece
2nd Lt John J. Cassin, Jr
PFC James C. Chase
Cpl George Chernitsky*
T/5 William E. Closser
Pvt Norman E. Couse*
PFC Clarence Dempsey, Jr
PFC Gus W. Erdakos
Cpl Louis H. Fravel
Cpl Arthur E. Geiger
Pvt Herman Gold
PFC Edwin H. Hanson
Pvt Raey M. Hastings
1st Lt Leroy G. Hawes
T/5 Donald R. Houpt
T/4 William B. Isley
Pvt Harry Johnson
Cpl Edmond F. Kelly
S/Sgt John R. Kinkey
PFC Alger F. Koester

Pvt Joseph M. Kosko
Pvt Richard J. Kumor
S/Sgt Richard S. Later
Cpl Vern Losser
T/4 Lloyd J. Lytle
T/5 John M. Mandel
Sgt Donald P. Martin
1st Lt Bertram W. McElroy
1st Lt Richard M. McIntosh
S/Sgt Gordon E. McKennett
Sgt Leonard A. Milano
1st Lt Robert E. Millious
Cpl Raymond B. Morton
PFC Norman Mussman
T/5 Philip Mustaccia
1st Lt Darius H. Nease
Sgt Edwin A. Nelson
T/5 Donald C. Newton
Pvt Wilson Nicewander
Sgt John R. O'Donnell, Jr
Pvt Vernon C. Page
T/5 Lauro A. Parki
1st Lt Richard W. Peters
Pvt Luis G. Polanco
Cpl Joseph J. Ponte
Capt Clare M. Prendergast
PFC Morris Rubenstein
PFC John F. Rutherford

Sgt Lawrence W. Schafer
Sgt Francis E. Schnorr
1st Lt James L. Searing
T/5 Ben H. Snowden
1st Lt Jack B. Stengel
Maj Frank E. Stubbs
Cpl Grady L. Sturges
Sgt Guy Tedders
PFC Paul Toombs
PFC Felipe C. Valverde
PFC Matt Vocana
PFC Oliver C. Walker*
Capt Vernon F. Woebbeking

*Oak Leaf Cluster for second wound or injury

C. Field Promotions - To the rank of second lieutenant

Sgt Joseph R. Able
T/Sgt William P. Adams
S/Sgt Lloyd E. Anderson
S/Sgt Woodrow H. Carlson
Cpl John J. Cassin
M/Sgt John T. Deterich
Sgt McKay Evans
M/Sgt John M. Fleury
S/Sgt Leroy G. Hawes
Sgt Leroy G. Iverson
Sgt Robert E. Millious
S/Sgt Wayne A. Perry
Sgt Ralph Peterson
Sgt Jack T. Powell
S/Sgt Clare M. Prendergas
T/4 Cosmo R. Riviello
Sgt James L. Searing
S/Sgt John M. Slocum
S/Sgt Jack B. Stengel
S/Sgt Lloyd W. Taisey
S/Sgt Alan O. Weddell
S/Sgt James W. White

D. Abbreviations

1st Lt - First Lieutenant (O-2)
1st Sgt - First Sergeant (E-7)
2nd Lt - Second Lieutenant (O-1)
AA - Anti-aircraft
Arty - Artillery
Bn - Battalion
Capt - Captain (O-3)
CG - Commanding General
CMB - Chemical Mortar Battalion
CO - Commanding Officer
Co - Company
Col - Colonel (O-6)
Cos - Companies
CP - Command Post
Cpl - Corporal (E-3)
CWO - Chief Warrant Officer
CVE - Aircraft carrier Escort
Div - Division
DUKW - Amphibious truck
FO - Forward Observer
Gen - General (4 stars)
GI - A soldier (Government Issue)
HE - High Explosive
Hq - Headquarters
Inf - Infantry
KIA - Killed In Action

LCI (M) - Landing Craft, Infantry (Mortar)
LCM - Landing Craft, Mechanized
LCPV - Landing Craft Personnel Vehicle
LCT - Landing Craft, Tank
LST - Landing Ship, Tank
Lt - Lieutenant (may be either 1st or 2nd Lt)
Lt Col - Lieutenant Colonel (O-5)
LSD - Landing Ship Dock
LVT - Landing Vehicle, Tracked
Maj - Major (O-4)
Maj Gen - Major General (2 stars)
M/Sgt - Master Sergeant (E-7)
OP - Observation Post
PFC - Private First Class (E-2)
Pvt - Private (E-1)
QM - Quartermaster
RAAF - Royal Australian Air Force
RCT - Regimental Combat Team
Recon - Reconnaissance
Sgt - Sergeant (E-4)
S/Sgt - Staff Sergeant (E-5)
T/3 - Technician Third Class (E-5)
T/4 - Technician Fourth Class (E-4)
T/5 - Technician Fifth Class (E-3)
T/Sgt - Technical Sergeant (E-6)
TDY - Temporary Duty
TO&E - Table of Organization and Equipment
WIA - Wounded In Action

WP - White Phosphorus