

1-1-1945

782nd Tank Batallion

United States Army

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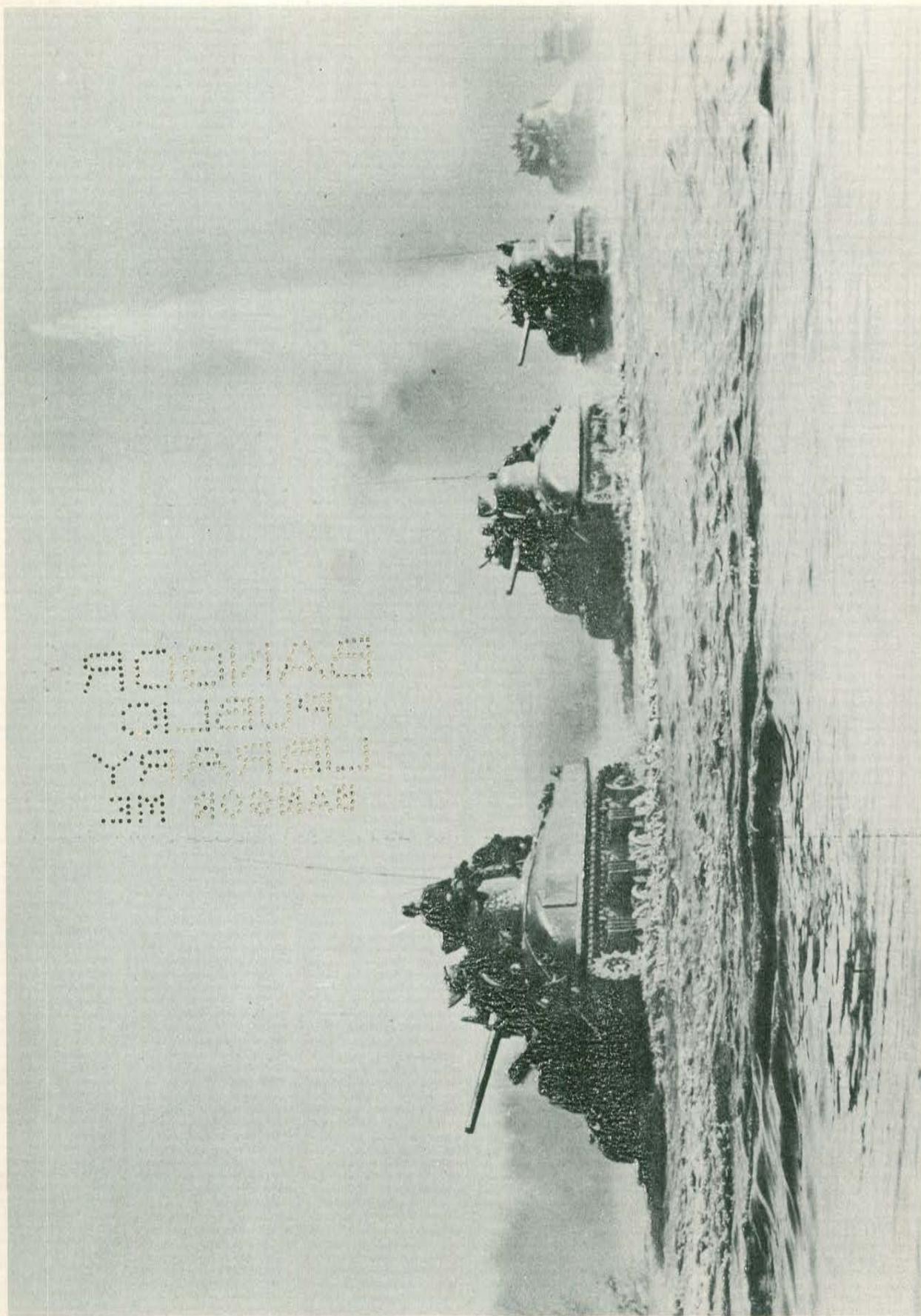
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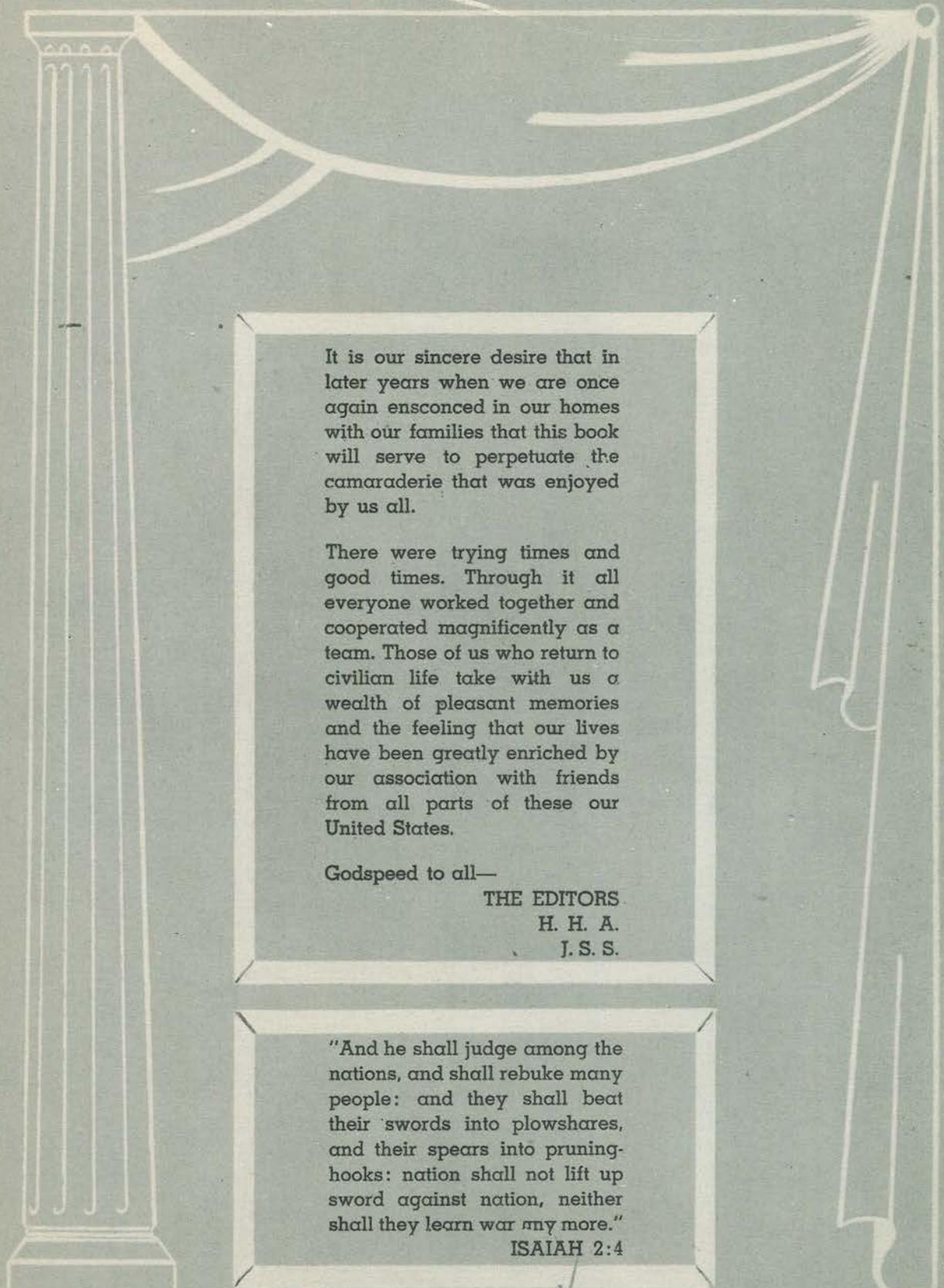
782ND



TANK BATTALION



SCENE FROM FILMING OF MOTION PICTURE "COUNTER-ATTACK" BY COLUMBIA PICTURES WITH 782ND PARTICIPATING — CAMP COOKE, CALIFORNIA, NOVEMBER 1944



It is our sincere desire that in later years when we are once again ensconced in our homes with our families that this book will serve to perpetuate the camaraderie that was enjoyed by us all.

There were trying times and good times. Through it all everyone worked together and cooperated magnificently as a team. Those of us who return to civilian life take with us a wealth of pleasant memories and the feeling that our lives have been greatly enriched by our association with friends from all parts of these our United States.

Godspeed to all—

THE EDITORS

H. H. A.

J. S. S.

"And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

ISAIAH 2:4

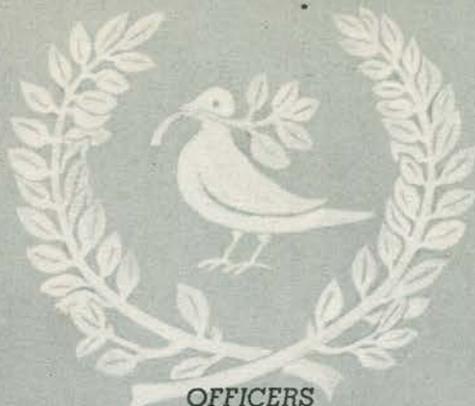


DEDICATION

This brief history of the 782nd Tank Battalion from 1943 to 1945 is dedicated to those we left behind.

Our hearts went out to those men then as they still do now.

Though they have passed from our sight they are not gone for they are kept alive in our thoughts and memories.



OFFICERS

Captain Benson F. Coyle
2nd Lt. Wayne R. Allen 2nd Lt. David S. Johnson, Jr.
2nd Lt. Robert A. Korsmeier

ENLISTED MEN

T/Sgt. Everett E. Johnson	Cpl. Cecil J. Odom
T/Sgt. John H. Ricker	Cpl. Richard E. Ryan
S/Sgt. Harry W. Horr	Cpl. Robert Shaughnessy
S/Sgt. Romer J. Lach	T/5 Ignatius S. Fuss
S/Sgt. Constantin A. Sgourdas	T/5 Roy F. Israel
Sgt. Robert C. Amsbaugh	T/5 Robert L. Price
Sgt. Julius E. Farny	T/5 Alvin E. Timerson
Sgt. Paul N. Haas	T/5 Johnny G. Vrana
Sgt. Oscar L. Hardy	Pfc. Max R. Brock
Sgt. Forrester Jones	Pfc. Ralph L. Jackson
Sgt. Homer L. Lewis	Pfc. Edward J. Kaminski
Sgt. John J. McAuley	Pfc. Jesse C. Smith
Sgt. David H. McMullen	Pvt. Richard W. Boeklen
Sgt. Otto H. Schlottmann, Jr.	Pvt. Max Eisen
T/4 Kenneth W. Bain	Pvt. Donald E. Fulks
T/4 James F. Dollar	Pvt. Freddie L. Gregg
T/4 Manuel O. Enriquez	Pvt. Paul W. Hanson
T/4 George Gallagher	Pvt. Allan A. Henneman
T/4 Robert W. Graves	Pvt. Ray E. Henry
T/4 Elden Gribbos	Pvt. Benjamin W. Macon
T/4 Edward Maples	Pvt. Lawrence C. Miller
T/4 Joseph P. Paslawski	Pvt. Ernest M. Montgomery
T/4 Chester J. Pawelko	Pvt. James L. Pritchard
T/4 Melvin Rider	Pvt. George F. Trueit, Jr.
Cpl. Alfred B. Cornell	Pvt. Weldon W. Weatherford
Cpl. Harold R. Kilgore	Pvt. Robert I. Wiewel
Cpl. Joseph C. Lingo	Pvt. James E. Young



ST. ANDRE MILITARY CEMETERY, ST. ANDRE DE L'EURE, FRANCE

FROM ACTIVATION TO THE ENGLISH CHANNEL

by M/SGT. ALLEN L. HARKINS

This little history from 1 February 1943 up to the time of arrival in the ETO has been prepared so that present and former members of the battalion may have a few notes to recall some of the humorous, routine and sometimes serious moments of their days in the 782nd Tank Battalion. All facts and figures are obtained from the official Battalion History which is filed in the Historical Section of the War Department, Washington, D. C. What is to follow has been reworded slightly to make easier reading and if possible to add a laugh, give credit or to add a few bits of information that would ordinarily be lacking from an official communique.

"TREAT 'EM ROUGH"

Thumbing through the official notes here we find: "To be activated on or about 1 February 1943, the 782nd Tank Battalion (L) at Camp Campbell, Kentucky." And so, on the 1st day of February 1943 the Armored Force became the proud parents of a brand new Tank Battalion, the 782nd Tank Battalion (Light). Several days before the activation date the cadre of enlisted men from the 7th Armored Division had arrived to assist the officers, from the 6th and 9th Tank Groups and from OCS, in getting ready for the big day. Soon after, fillers from Camp Wolters, Texas; Camp Robinson, Arkansas; and Fort Sill, Oklahoma, arrived, approximately 600 strong. All the fillers were fresh recruits in the army and a tank was as new to them as the army itself. Then it started—Close Order Drill, Interior Guard Duty, Hikes, Shots in the arm from the Medics, Lectures, Inspections, and all the tortures of Basic Training. Those were tough days and the usual moaning and griping was in order, but time passed.

The Battalion was operating under the Light Tank Battalion Table of Organization and consisted of three tank companies, "A", "B", and "C", plus a Service and Headquarters Company. Normal complement called for approximately 700 men and 40 Officers.

Camp Campbell was also the home of the 12th and the 20th Armored Divisions at the time and many of us will remember the episodes in the PX at various times which later was to prove that a little tank battalion could stand up against the mightiest of armor whether it be tank warfare or beer drinking.

Training progressed quite rapidly and soon our little outfit was making a name for itself in the training areas and also with the MPs. Bivouacs were becoming a habit and soon we learned that a man could live in the field and get along as well, well, almost as well, as he could in the barracks. By this time the drivers were becoming quite expert at knocking down trees and houses; our mechanics had found out that there was no such thing as a key for a hydrostatic lock; the Reconnaissance Platoon had learned their map reading and each week they were finding new trails to choice spots; the medics had learned the difference between a short and a long arm; the company clerks had become experts on the typing out of charge sheets for court martials; the first sergeants had found the thrill of hearing their own voice; the officers, well, you know how it is—yes, yes, our little elephant had begun to growl and show its tusks. And so we grew until one day in October, October 19th, 1943 to be exact, our guiding armor fathers decided we had outgrown our light tank suit of armor and they changed us into some thicker armor to meet the approaching change of weather. October 19th, changes, changes—drastic in the minds of many but it happened. Medium tanks in the place of light tanks. The drivers and the mechanics were very unhappy at first but soon they adapted themselves to the change as if nothing had happened. A new company was formed, Company "D" which was to remain the Light Tank Company. Many of the old faithfuls decided to remain with their first love and were given the opportunity of staying if they so desired. Companies "A", "B", and "C" were now Medium Tank Companies. Tanks were borrowed and soon the trails of Camp Campbell were altered slightly until the drivers had learned that there was a gear shift on their new buggies. Soon after the change

Camp Campbell, Ky.



BEAUTIFICATION
OFFICER
782 Δ



10 MINUTE BREAK



"CHOW"



BIVOUAC

of the T/O the startling announcement came through that we were going on maneuvers in Tennessee. The rumors really started flying and many bets were made that we would go, would not, soon we would be going across, every angle imaginable was in the air. In spite of what you were thinking at the time, we went to Tennessee, remember?

Much preparation, lots of late hours—the 15th of November we moved into the maneuver area of Tennessee. It was cold and miserable but we moved in, drew our tanks, received maps, orders, etc.—we were ready for the approaching winter battle in Tennessee. The first problem was over, everyone had pitched in, a voice in the back of our head whispered something about "I think we're doing OK, we're just as good as they are if not better." We worked with some good outfits that were later to prove their worth in combat. Outfits like the 35th, 87th and 100th Infantry Divisions, also the 14th Armored Division. Things got all mixed up at times, they always do, maybe that's why we win. We learned a lot and came through with flying colors. They heard of us upstairs in the star department. This brought on more rumors, across or where? Status reports. What made us tick? Maneuvers came to a close and while bivouacked on the edge of Camp Forrest, Tennessee, our Battalion Commander assembled the battalion and told us we were going to Fort Knox, Kentucky, for some extensive training. So, January 26th, 1944 we moved into the never-to-be-forgotten Fort Knox.

Fort Knox, Kentucky, the home of the nation's gold vault, 35 miles from Louisville, need we say more.—Training, training and more training. Rumors were jet propelled, really flying. The outfit looked hot. Something happened, the statement, "We were not ready!" What now? Training continued, inspections became more frequent, there were parades every day, we learned to salute even the Coca Cola man, this was rugged, the army at its armiest. Suddenly an announcement that we were moving. Yes, leaving the brick pile. "Fort Bragg! Fort Bragg! No, any place but there, send me across, cut off my allotment, do anything, stop!"

June 1st, 1944, Fort Bragg, North Carolina, what a blow to all of us. The Animal Area, that's what they called it, our new home. Why were we here? That's still a mystery. Anyway, we moved in. What a reception they gave us here—the Artillery boys thought we shouldn't wear ties, (we thought so too, but, orders) so they started cutting them off. Of course a little friendly argument put 5 or 6 of the artillery boys in the hospital. We had no more trouble, well, not for a couple of days. It was hot here. It rained whenever you mentioned the word. The Post Commander frowned on our use of his roads and our tearing up his training swamps with the iron cleated monsters. We learned that an important battle had been fought in the nearby town, Fayetteville, during the Civil War. It's still going on. Getting back to the army—indirect firing we learned with excellent help from the artillery boys of the 100th Division; Combat Firing Problems; worked with the Engineers, Infantry and the Artillery—it looked like we were on the trail again. Movement orders! No! You're kidding. CALIFORNIA!!! True it was. We loaded our vehicles for the long trip across the continent, boarded our 2 troop trains and headed for the land of sunshine(?).

July 25th, 1944, Camp Cooke, California, on the edge of the Pacific Ocean. It was so foggy the train had a hard job finding the track ahead. This couldn't be California! Where was the wonderful weather and the sun? What was this liquid wind hitting us in the face? The nearby towns of Santa Maria and Lompoc were better than you know where. More training, the air ground test, firing, and what's this—how to climb down a rope ladder from a transport, oh, oh!

General Lear visited, period. September 12th we moved to San Diego for Amphibious Training under the direction of the Navy and Marines. Fort Rosecrans, what a place, wonderful! Training, something new had been added—water. How to climb down a net from the side of a bouncing transport, how to come out of a Higgins' boat, the difference between a boat and a ship, LSTs and LSMs—yes, the Army had suddenly gone Navy. Lots of paper work and planning—the correct way to load LSTs and LSMs so that you could come out shooting. We loaded up and headed for San Clemente Island, approximately 70 miles off the California Coast. What's the matter with my stomach? This was much different from paddling a row boat in the Arkansas River. Yes, much different! After a very rolling trip our task force slipped back into the cove at San Clemente Island and made ready for the simulated attack to take place in the early morning. Stand by, brace yourself, the LSMs headed for shore at full throttle. We hit. The doors swung open and our waterproofing of vehicles was put to test. Throughout the day the vehicles were loaded and unloaded from the various types of landing craft—back to mainland. The trip was over and many of us found that we belonged in the Army rather than the Navy.

Soon after the 3 day excursion to San Clemente we made ready for the 10-day problem which was to be the real thing. Troop Transports, Landing Craft of all sizes, Naval Escorts and Aircraft were made ready.—Some of us

Tenn. Maneuvers



RIVER CROSSING



AFTER A PROBLEM



IN PURSUIT OF THE ENEMY

got our first taste of a troop transport aboard the USS "American Legion" and USS "Hunter Liggett." The task force steamed out of San Diego Harbor and headed for San Clemente Island. The next day the attack was on. Destroyers of the Navy bombarded the island with their 5 inch guns, Naval Aircraft performed their dive bombing and simulated strafing, the Infantry went in aboard the LCVs and the Tanks hurried out of the LSMs and LSTs. 'T'was quite a show and made one think that the time was drawing nearer. The next time there might be someone shooting back at us. The problem was quite a success. All the Generals survived the trip without getting seasick. The Admirals were happy.

The sailors cursed the army for dirtying their beautiful tubs and the GIs were unhappy because the salt water played havoc with their rifles, machine guns and equipment. It was over for awhile and thankful we were.

After completion of the Amphibious Training at Fort Rosecrans, the battalion went back to Camp Cooke. Approximately 1 November, 1944, the battalion was back in the training routine again—Japanese Warfare, Recognition of Uniforms, Maps, etc. Everything pointed towards an assignment in the Pacific Area. Our tank companies were working with the 97th and 86th Infantry Divisions—"Tanks with Infantry." The doughboys were learning the art of riding on the backs of these iron kiddie cars learning to protect each other. They laughed and kidded about the awkwardness of our tin cans—some of these boys later substituted their laughter and harsh words for praise and thankfulness after the first taste of battle. The Infantry soon learned to love the tanks when the shells started flying.

The last week in November things began to happen. What's this! An advance detachment is leaving for overseas? Who? Which way are we going? When? The rumors were now in high gear and military secrecy was at a premium. We were officially alerted and this time it looked like the real thing. Physical checks, clothing and equipment inspections, all the last minute details were rushed, time was short. The advance detachment departed. That's all brother, we were in!

On December 19 and 20, 1944, our 2 troop trains leave dear old Camp Cooke and we are on our way to the POE. The trains were heading East so all our knowledge and information regarding the Japanese was tossed out of our minds. It definitely looked like we were going to the ETO and soon. The troop trains were not quite as joyous this time. We were counting each mile, each minute, wondering what the future would bring. It was the Xmas season also.

Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, 25 December 1944, Xmas Day. Merry Christmas everyone. This was the final processing camp before leaving for overseas. Clothing checked again, Sailing Rosters prepared, Lectures, and, oh yes, I almost forgot, we were all given the most thorough physical examination you can imagine. It took all of 20 seconds.

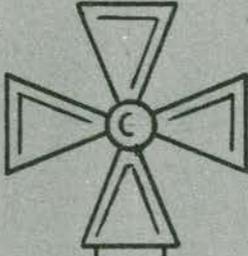
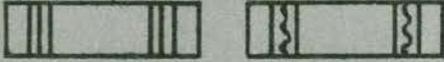
Passes for a lucky few to New York City. For some, the first visit to the big city. Restricted! Stand by, roll call, equipment was rolled and slung on our backs—THIS WAS IT!! The long march to the trains. Off the trains, another back breaking march to the Ferry Boats that would carry us to the Embarkation Pier. The Red Cross handed out coffee and doughnuts as we lined up in the cold and long pier. Yes, the band was there playing our favorite tunes. Sound off with your first name and initial as your name is called and hurry aboard. Up and down narrow passage ways. Finally we were resting on our bunks in the cramped and hot holds of the ship. Our new home for the next 2 weeks or so—the USS Henry Gibbons. It was January 1st, 1945 when we climbed aboard. Eleven o'clock, January 3rd, 1945, the ropes are swung clear, the tugs grab hold and jockey us into the channel. We're off! The Statue of Liberty was soon in the distance.

At sea—all the comforts of home. The weather was bad and the chow lines grew slimmer each day. Some blamed the slimness of the chow lines on the weather while others said that it was the food. Training schedules aboard ship. Clean your individual weapon then parade around the ship and let the salt spray wipe off the excess oil, orientation—Why we Fight, etc. Card games and crap shooting were taboo, so we never indulged except when we were alone or with someone. Some small fortunes were won and lost overnight.

After a week or so at sea we were all one happy family. The Officers had the Nurses and the enlisted men had the GIs. Good weather after the storm and so the entertainment provided by the various amateurs and also by the Air Force Band was a relief. We had learned to laugh again. Felt good! Where were we going? They told us. As if we hadn't known all the time. Time passed, so did the food—WHAM! What was that? Destroyers were skirting in and out of our convoy and those things they were tossing into the water were filled with TNT and they meant business—a submarine had been picked up by our good protectors, the Navy. Scared? We all were. Especially if you were below deck. The all clear was sounded and we breathed easier. Getting closer now. The Isle of Wight, off Southampton, in the murky distance. The convoy split, and next day would find us landing on the Continent.

ft. Knox, Ky.

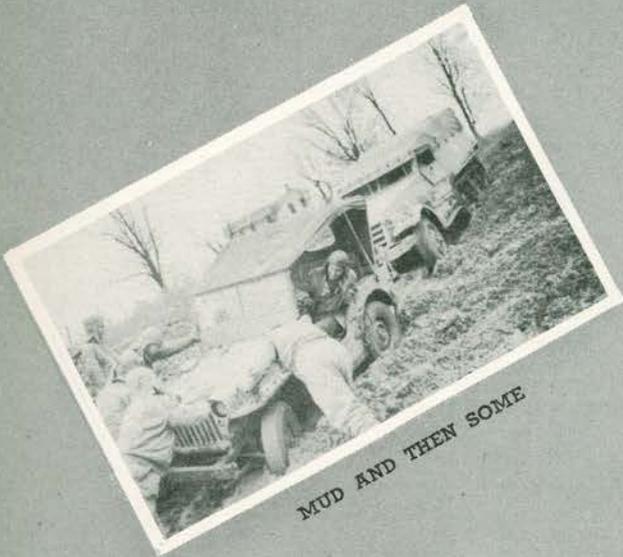
LE POST MILITAIRE



- ALERTED
- DEALERTED
- TYPHUS
- SEELBACH
- EQUADOR PARADE



PASSING IN REVIEW



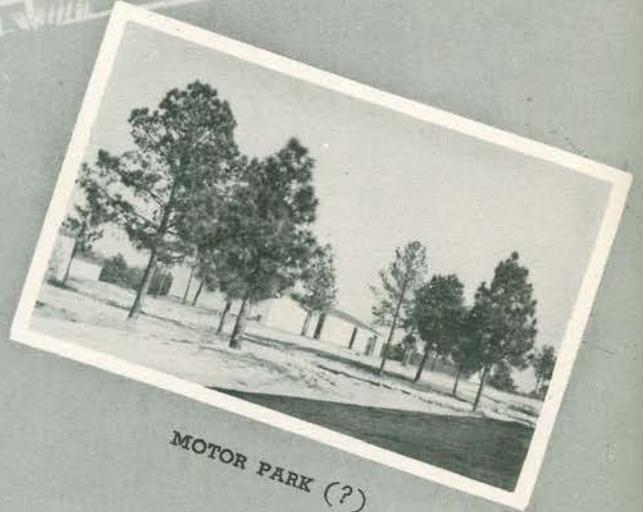
MUD AND THEN SOME



LINING UP FOR A PARADE

Ft. Bragg,
N.C.

WELCOME TO
THE
ANIMAL AREA
BY ORDER OF C.G.



MOTOR PARK (?)



WATERING TROUGH FOR TANKS IN MOTOR PARK



B. O. Q.

San Diego, Calif.



L. S. M.



HARBOR VIEW



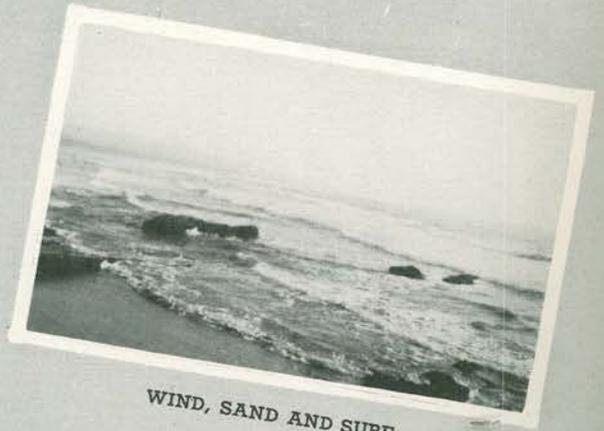
L. S. M.

Camp Cooke, Camp Calif.

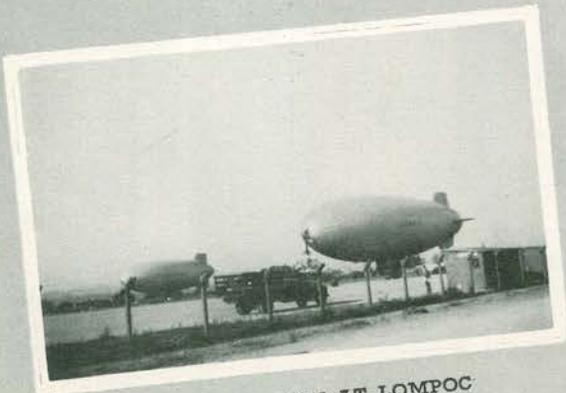
QUALIFY
DOM NYPOE ?
! YOU CAN'T WEAR
YOUR NEW CLOTHES-!
ETO ?
PACIFIC ?



SV. CO. MESS HALL — THANKSGIVING DAY



WIND, SAND AND SURF



NAVAL AIR BASE AT LOMPOC

The After Crossing The Channel

by LT. HENRY H. ATKINS

The snowy and barren cliffs of the French coast loomed into sight as our transport crept slowly across the English Channel—that narrow stretch of water separating England from the Continent. The upper decks were crowded with troops anxious to catch a glimpse of Le Havre. The big transport dropped anchor in the mouth of the Seine River at noon on the 16th of January. Mine sweepers darted in and out amongst the gray ships lying off Le Havre. A loud explosion pierced the still morning air and a freighter a few hundred yards from us, having hit a mine, sidled gently down into the water. For half a day we waited outside the breakwater viewing the bomb-scarred wreckage of one of the world's great ports. We were part of the first contingent of troops to land directly on the Continent from the United States. The gigantic destruction of Le Havre was a rude awakening to the realities of war. Just as the sun was setting, the "Henry Gibbons" slipped through the breakwater and docked at the quay. It was midnight before the 782nd's turn came to debark. Loaded with duffle bags, bed rolls, guns, and gas masks, we stumbled down the gang plank onto French soil. After dropping the duffle bags, we trudged through the dark cobblestone streets of the city to the railroad station. Here we loaded on to antiquated French box cars (40 and 8s) and started on a short but frigid trip to St. Valery en Caux, forty miles north of Le Havre.

About ten o'clock on the morning of the seventeenth, the slow train pulled up the last hill before coming into the station at St. Valery—a dead end. This was the first trip for the French engineer over this particular line. The brakes were applied too late. The train continued to gain momentum. The engine crashed through the station. Two cars piled up on top of the station, several others jumped the tracks, turned over, and crumbled. Many lives were saved by the quick thinking and actions of the officers and men in the Battalion who escaped from the wreckage uninjured. The wounded were evacuated to hospitals in Dieppe, Yvetot and Rouen. Those who lost their lives were buried in the U. S. Military Cemetery at St. Andre de l'Eure, not far from Paris. A simple and sincere memorial service was held by an Army Chaplain at Camp Lucky Strike and by the good people of St. Valery. In all, the losses to the Battalion were: 3 officers and 51 enlisted men killed; and 5 officers and 29 enlisted men remained in the hospital. A tragic blow to an outfit well trained and ready for combat.

After the wreck the Battalion reassembled at Camp Lucky Strike, a veritable mud hole, 4 miles south of St. Valery. Most of our individual equipment had been lost in the wreck and a major job of reequipping lay ahead. Together with this, there was a complete reorganization of the personnel within the Battalion to be accomplished. Every single person cooperated wholeheartedly during this period of reorganization and the job was carried out very smoothly. Special credit should go to the S-4 Section for their tire-some task, so well completed, of procuring our supply shortages.

During the last week in January, each company sent a detail of men to Le Havre to draw the tanks and prepare them for combat. Company "A" drew 76s, Companies "B" and "C" 75s and Company "D" 37s. The Assault Gun Platoon, for the first time, was fully equipped with 105s, while each of the medium companies drew one 105 Assault Gun. The tank recovery vehicle also became a reality; each medium company being assigned one and the Battalion Maintenance Section two. A new toy for the maintenance men!

In the first week of February, the line companies and the Assault Gun Platoon moved into large chateaux near Goderville, France. A refreshing change after the snow, mud and cold tents at Lucky Strike. Companies "A" and "D" were billeted in Chateau de Cretot, while "B" and "C" went to Chateau Trebons. The Assault Gun Platoon and part of the Mortar Platoon, along with the Battalion Maintenance Section, stayed at the Town Meeting Hall in the center of Goderville. Battalion Headquarters, Headquarters and Service Companies remained at Lucky Strike. Lucky fellows!! As soon as all the companies became settled in their new quarters a vigorous training of all the reinforcements was started. The new men, being eager both to learn and to cooperate, soon were filling their jobs with great efficiency. The old spirit came back to the Battalion in full force. Training was carried on for two months while we waited in France for the call to the front. All, however, was not work. Baseball teams were organized. Footballs, horseshoes, and frequent movies, obtained by our eager Special Service Section, all helped to keep the morale high. The big event of the week was always PX Day. Cigarettes, cigars, chewing gum and candy bars took on a new importance in our lives. They were excellent means of bartering to get our laundry done and of providing fresh eggs for the mountain burners to fry. Everyone soon learned to speak "un peu" French; and we all became acquainted with some of the French means of delayed torture—Cognac, and Calvados. "Compris?"

At last the waiting and expectation ended. The truck and jeep drivers went to Belgium to draw their vehicles. Before dawn on the 7th of April, we turned over the tank engines and assembled at Goderville for a long road march up to the Rhineland. Company "A" had loaded her tanks on flat cars and left the day before by train. Service Company followed the next day with the wheeled vehicle column.

The march of the tanks through Belgium and France to Germany was both tiring and interesting. We passed through Amiens and Cambrai in France. Cathedrals and cemeteries from the First World War blended into our impressions. In Belgium we followed the beautiful Meuse River Valley through Mons, Namur and Liege. On the morning of the 11th of April, we crossed the German border with all guns half-loaded and were soon in Aachen. One

glance at Aachen and we no longer feared that war had not really been brought home to the Germans. From Aachen we rolled down the Cologne Autobahn to Duren. After seeing Duren we realized how fortunate were the people of Aachen and thanked God that we were all Americans. Late in the afternoon we arrived at our destination, the small Rhineland town of Mechernich. We had driven the tanks 357 miles in 5½ days. No tank had failed to complete the trip. A good indication of the very high standard of maintenance in the companies and in the Battalion Maintenance Section.

One week was spent in Mechernich completing maintenance and getting the tanks ready for the final trip to the front. Here we had our first opportunity to try out all our new weapons on the range. Misfortune again hit the Battalion when the Reconnaissance Platoon Leader and two members of the platoon were killed near Mechernich by a mine explosion. It was while in Mechernich that we had our first opportunity to observe the German people, for we billeted in small houses in the town. Non-Fraternization was in order.

On the 18th of April, we started out once again, this time on a trip that would take us clear across Germany. From Mechernich we went to Bonn, crossing the Rhine on Hodge's Bridge at Bad Godesburg. We closed into bivouac that night at Hechtenbach and here our orders were changed. We no longer were to go to the First Army Area near Kassel. We were now assigned to the Third Army and given a new destination. We passed through Limburg, Giessen—swarming with liberated Russians—and Alsfeld on the way to Hildburghausen. Here we came in contact for the first time with the Luftwaffe or rather what was left of it. Just as we had closed our eyes for the night "Bed Check Charlie" came over and strafed an area a little too close to where we were sleeping to make our dreams pleasant. Many bed rolls were torn as men scrambled for the tanks. Those tanks coming into the bivouac area late had bullets bouncing off their turrets and hulls when the plane strafed the road several times.

From Hildburghausen we moved on through Hof to the little town of Oberkotzau, arriving late in the afternoon of the 21st of April. This time we had marched 329 miles in 4 days, and again we arrived at our destination with all the tanks present. We were now just a few miles from the front.

Since arriving in the ETO, the Battalion had been assigned to 3 different armies. On the 13th of January we were put in the 12th Army Group, and on the same day assigned to the 15th U. S. Army. On the 7th of April we were changed to the First U. S. Army. On the 20th of April we were relieved from the First Army and assigned to the Third U. S. Army, at the same time being attached to the XII Corps and the 97th Infantry Division.

No sooner had we chased the Germans out of the best houses in town and spent a night on comfortable fluffy mattresses than we received orders to move from Oberkotzau to Wundsiedel where we were to join the 97th Division. We had just one day to put the tanks in shape after the long trip across Germany. During this day the 76 mm. gun tanks were divided among the 3 medium companies. Companies "A", "B" and "C" now had one platoon of 76s and two platoons of 75s each.

By the end of April the Germans were being squeezed between the rapidly advancing Eastern and Western Fronts. Two areas where the enemy could stage a determined defense now remained unoccupied by Allied forces: the Bohemian Hills and the Bavarian Alps. General Patton's Third Army spearheads, after penetrating into Czechoslovakia and liberating the Sudetan city of Asch, wheeled in their tracks and plunged dramatically southward to the Danube and Austria to clear out the "Southern Redoubt". At the same time several divisions were left to continue the advance into Czechoslovakia, to protect the Third Army flank, and to prevent the Germans from organizing a defense in Bohemia. One of the divisions assigned this mission was the 97th Infantry with the 782nd Tank Battalion attached to render support.

The enemy forces left to guard the western Sudetenland consisted of parts of the 2nd German Panzer Division and members of the Volksturm (the German People's Volunteer Army). The terrain of the Sudetenland was rolling and covered with many dense woods, well suited for defensive action. The countryside was dotted with innumerable small villages. The defenders had constructed heavily mined road blocks at numerous points along all the roads leading from Germany into Czechoslovakia. All through the Sudetenland the tanks were greatly hampered by being largely roadbound. Nevertheless, the tanks proved a great asset to the Doughboys as the enemy was strongest in automatic and semi-automatic fire, so dangerous to the Infantry. The Infantry, on the other hand, protected the tanks from the ever-present Panzerfaust and 88 fire, deadly against armor. The tanks also proved valuable in blowing up road blocks and mounting up the Infantry to exploit the rout of the fast-crumbling remnants of the German Army. The Germans put up a stubborn defense of the border, but once this was broken, there was only scattered resistance throughout the Sudetenland and along the approaches to Pilsen. While in combat our units captured approximately 1,000 prisoners, several enemy hospitals, vehicles and weapons, inflicting numerous casualties on the German forces. Our only losses were: 1 Officer and 1 Enlisted Man captured, and 9 Enlisted Men injured. One tank was hit by Panzerfaust fire but recovered by our forces.

On the 22nd of April, the Battalion moved from Oberkotzau, Germany to Wundsiedel, Germany. Here the attachment of the line companies to the Regimental Combat Teams of the 97th Division was completed. We separated, not coming together again until the war was over. Company "A" joined the



FRANCE

Comment allez-vous



MUD CONTROL — CAMP LUCKY STRIKE



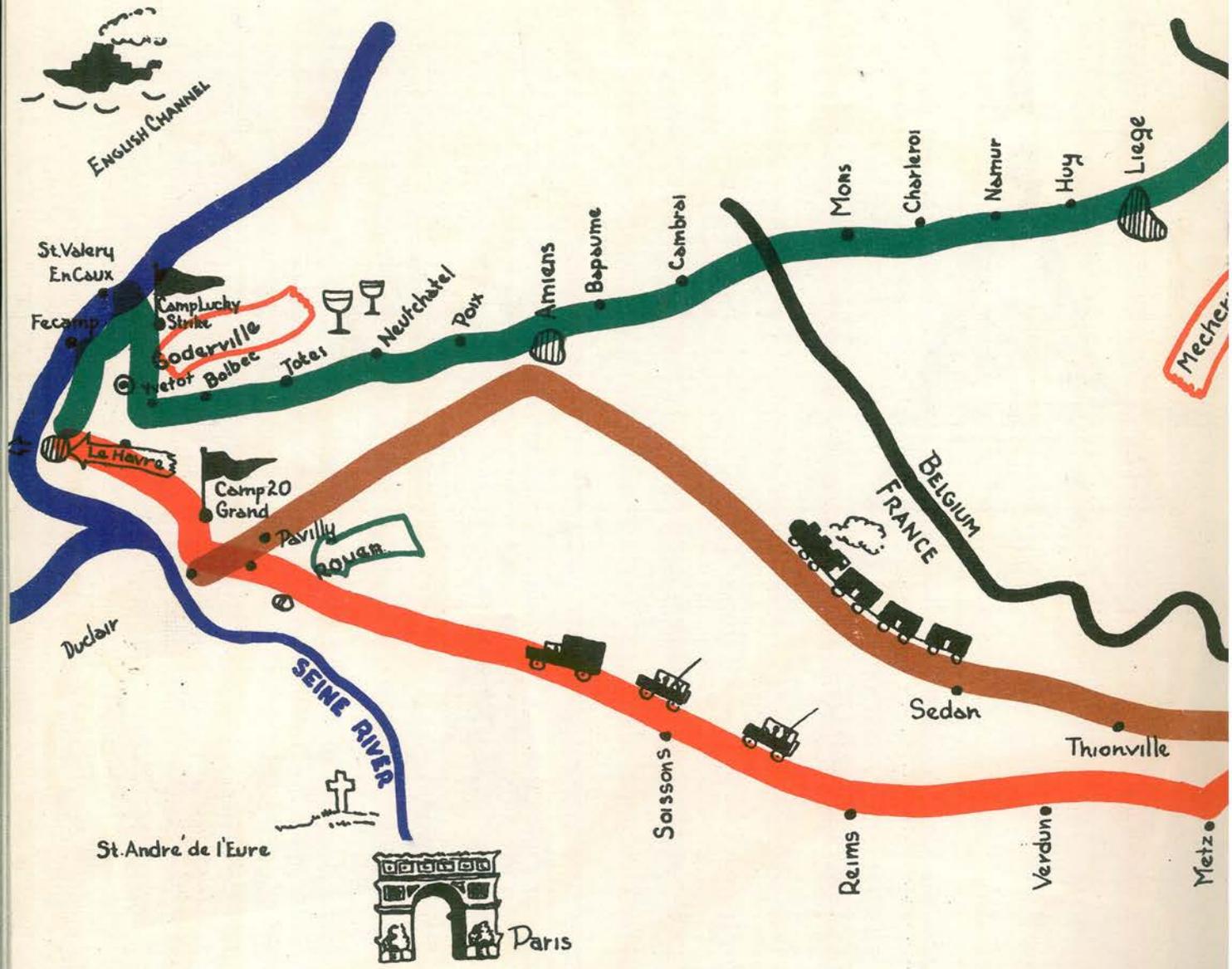
CHATEAU TREBONS — GRAINVILLE



CHATEAU DE CRETOT, GODERVILLE



CHOW LINE — CAMP 20 GRAND



782ND TR

LEGEND

-  TRAIN ROUTE TO CAMP 20 GR
-  ROUTE THROUGH E.T.O.
-  WHEEL VEHICLE COLUMN ROUTE
-  FURTHEREST POINT OF ADVANC
-  BORDER LINE

303rd at Rehau, Germany; Company "B" joined the 386th at Arzburg, Germany; and Company "C" the 387th at Waldsassen, Germany.

Sections of the Reconnaissance Platoon were attached to each of the companies to act as liaison between Battalion Headquarters and the Companies. Two platoons of Company "D" remained at Hof to guard the Eastern approaches of the city from an expected counter-attack, while one platoon of Company "D", together with the Assault Gun Platoon, joined the 97th Reconnaissance Troop in the northwestern Sudeten city of Rossbach. The remainder of Headquarters Company and all of Service Company remained under Battalion control, all being part of the Division Reserve. The Division front now extended from Rossbach in the north to Tirschenreuth in the south. The platoon from Company "D" and the Assault Gun Platoon, with the Reconnaissance Troop, on the left flank, the 386th and the 387th Regimental Combat Teams in the center, and the 303rd on the right flank. Service Company had the difficult task of keeping the widely scattered tanks supplied with gas and ammunition, a job excellently performed. Frequently Company "D" provided light tanks to act as armed guards for the thin skinned trucks shuttling to the front.

The first objectives for the 386th and the 387th Combat Teams were the Sudeten cities of Franzenbad and Eger (Cheb), both key points in the road network of the Sudetenland. Eger, the German capital of the Sudetenland, had a population of 40,000, while the population of Franzenbad was 25,000.

The 386th, supported by Company "B" tanks, set out from Arzburg, Germany. One section of the team together with two of the tank platoons advanced on Franzenbad from the northwest, taking the objective on the 25th of April. The other section with one platoon of tanks travelled down the main road from Arzburg, meeting little resistance until they reached the outskirts of the city, where they came under heavy artillery and Panzerfaust fire. One tank was hit by a Panzerfaust, the platoon leader and driver being taken prisoners. This attack had penetrated into the city up to the Cheb River when the forces were withdrawn so as not to enter the 387th Zone.

The 387th jumped off from Waldsassen on the 25th of April. The tanks of Company "C" cleared out several machine gun nests and an anti-tank gun that were blocking the main road and holding up the Infantry's advance. That night the whole team bivouacked on the road halfway to Eger. German rockets (Screaming Meemies) came over all night, wounding two of the tankers. On the 26th of April, Eger fell to the Infantry and Tankers. Two thousand prisoners of war were liberated (Russians, French, and Poles). The resistance in the city was light for most of the Germans stationed there had moved out and had dug in around the Cheb Airfield, 1 mile north of the city. Division Artillery was unable to blast them out, so on the 28th of April Company "C", together with one battalion of Infantry moved against the airfield. Two anti-tank guns, two rocket projectors, several Panzerfausts, and four 40 mm. AA guns were destroyed. Numerous casualties were inflicted on the enemy, and over 600 prisoners were taken, along with "beaucoup" pistols and knives. It was a field day for the souvenir hunters. Not a prisoner escaped unfrisked.

On the 28th of April, the First U. S. Army extended her control southward and the Battalion was reassigned remaining under her control until the 6th of May, when we reverted once again to the Third Army.

The Battalion, minus the units already assigned to the Regimental Combat Teams, moved from Wundsiedel, Germany to Wieden, Germany on the 29th of April. Here the Division's stock of liberated alcohol was split up and we had a chance to compare German liquid fire with the French variety.

At this time the Division Front was moved to the south. The 386th Combat Team came from Selb, Germany down to Vohenstrauß, Germany and was assigned the mission of advancing on Pilsen, one of the last major strongholds of the German Army.

Company "A", after providing security for Tirschenreuth, moved out on the thirteenth of April with the 303rd, which now formed the northern flank of the Division's push into Czechoslovakia. The three tank platoons were attached to the three Infantry Battalions of the Regiment. After passing through Barnow, Germany, the tanks crossed into Czechoslovakia, fired missions on machine gun emplacements that were holding up the Infantry, and assisted in the capture of Wittichsthal. While advancing on Mähring, one platoon ran into heavy resistance from several 88s. At least two of them were knocked out by direct hits from the tank guns. Numerous machine guns and Panzerfausts were destroyed and many villages liberated during the 303rd's push into the Sudetenland. In spite of poor tank terrain, numerous mined road blocks, and heavy resistance in several spots, the tanks advanced 25 miles beyond the border. The enemy suffered heavily in casualties and hundreds of prisoners were taken.

Further South, the drive on Pilsen had started. At Zbraky, Czechoslovakia on the 1st of May, the Battalion minus "A" and "C" Company was assigned to the 386th Regimental Combat Team for this last drive of the war. The main road to Pilsen from the West started at Vohenstrauß, Germany and passed through Bor (Haid), Stribo (Mies) and Kosolupy, all large Sudeten towns. Another important road started at Eger (Cheb) in the North, passing through Tachov and joining the main route at Bor.

The Mortar Platoon and Tank Section of Headquarters Company provided effective security for the Battalion C. P. On the 2nd of May these units moved with the Forward C. P. from Zbraky to St. Sedliste, a town midway between Tachov and Bor (Haid). A large patch of woods near the town was filled with

GERMANY

Alles Kaput —



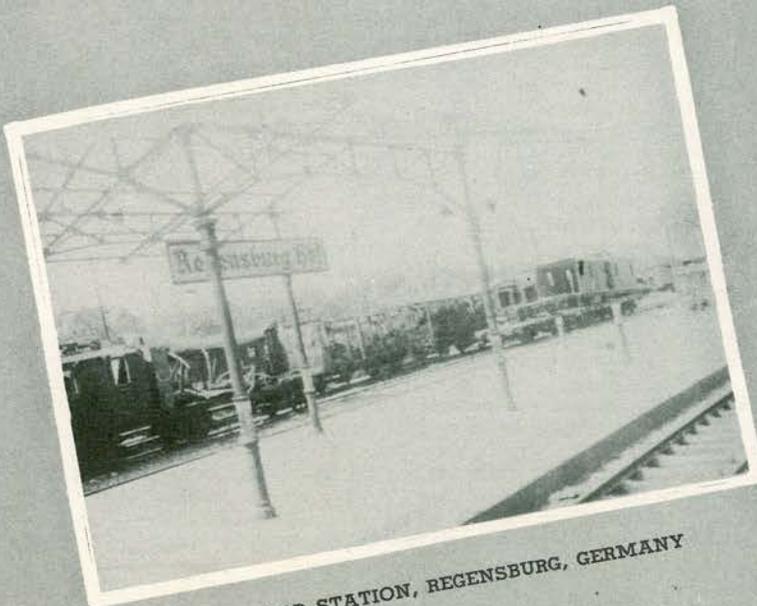
GEMUNDEN, GERMANY



DANUBE RIVER, NEAR REGENSBURG, GERMANY



HITLER'S SPORTSPLATZ—
NURNBERG, GERMANY



RAILROAD STATION, REGENSBURG, GERMANY



DEMOLISHED BRIDGE ACROSS
RHINE RIVER—MAINZ, GERMANY

Germans. The Mortar Platoon and the Tank Section advanced into the woods, flushed the enemy, captured 35 prisoners and a large quantity of equipment.

Tachov fell on the 3rd of May, as one platoon of Company "B" moved in on the town with the Infantry. The other two platoons, after advancing towards Bor from the west, were shifted north to Tachov, and the entire company advanced southwest through Pavlovice towards Stribo.

Meanwhile the Assault Gun Platoon supported an attack on Frauenreuth, a small town above Tachov. The Platoon then turned north and destroyed enemy automatic weapons, holding up elements of the 303rd near Halze.

The 387th Regiment having been placed in the Division Reserve, Company "C" was detached and attached to the 386th on the 5th of May. The tanks advanced down the main route, assisting in the liberation of Bor, Holestrevy and Stribo. Company "D" and the Assault Gun Platoon, after patrolling the roads around Bor, left the main road and cleared out the small pockets of resistance that were developing to the north as the Germans scattered in front of the main attack.

Company "C" tanks after liberating Kosolupy turned to the north to cut off the Germans retreating before "B" and "D" Companies. The advance of the 386th was halted at Kosolupy, 12 miles west of Pilsen on the 6th of May. So many prisoners had been taken, that all of the Division trucks were used to haul them to the rear. The 16th Armored Division passed through us at Kosolupy and drove into Pilsen, assisting the Czechs in driving out the last of the Germans late in the afternoon of the 6th.

"Cease all offensive action"— It was almost unbelievable. The 7th of May was a great day. Czechs were running around embracing all the soldiers they could find and pouring out drinks for one and all. Battalion Headquarters moved up to Kosolupy and we all waited for the President to proclaim complete victory in Europe. At 1500 on the 8th we huddled around radios, glasses in hand. It was true. What a feeling of satisfaction to have participated in the final defeat of the German Army, to have watched the last remnants of the destitute Nazi Empire crumble like dust under the tank tracks, to see the Czech People rise once again, a free nation.

On the 9th of May, all companies came back under Battalion control and we moved to Halze, Czechoslovakia, a few miles north of Tachau. At last mail caught up with us. We spent two days at Halze, reading mail and cleaning both ourselves and our equipment. From Halze, we moved to the vicinity of Domazlice, 62 miles to the south. Here we were attached to the 2nd Infantry Division. Most of the Battalion moved into the field a few miles out of Domazlice, but Company "A" and "C" became exclusive and moved into billets. Company "A" moved to a town 15 miles northwest of Domazlice, while Company "C" moved into a palatial summer resort hotel in Babylon. Battalion Headquarters, Headquarters and Service Companies didn't enjoy the woods too much and it wasn't long before they found comfortable living quarters in Domazlice. Companies "B" and "D" remained in the field—outdoor men.

For the first week, each company was assigned a section of the German-Czech Border to patrol. The Border was closed and no one was allowed to enter Germany without a Military Government pass. Those in the companies who spoke Russian, Polish, Czech, German, French or Italian were worked overtime interpreting. SS troopers and Wehrmacht stragglers were rounded up. The Czechs had a special treatment for the SSers they found. German equipment was hunted down. The Czech Army was racing around and it was hard to tell a General from a Private. After awhile the local people were refusing our Raleighs and offering us Camels and Luckies.

During the 5 weeks we were in Domazlice, we thoroughly enjoyed the hospitality of the Czechs. Dances were frequent and one usually finished off the evening having to carry the date's brother home. A special concert was given for us by the local choral society in their native costumes with the famous Czech composer—Jindrich Jindrich—accompanying. These were the first dances and concerts to be held in Domazlice in six years—since the Germans moved in. The 782nd's athletes formed teams to compete in small scale Olympic Games with the Domazlice Athletic Club. The Czechs were a little too skillful at soccer, but we held our own in track, boxing and swimming. The President of the Domazlice Club presented the Battalion with a citation in appreciation of our good showing and sportsmanship.

Our redeployment orders arrived on the 15th of June. We turned the tanks in and prepared to make the long journey back to France. The wheeled vehicles departed on the 16th and travelled 698 miles in 4 days to Camp Twenty Grand, on the Seine River just below Rouen. The remainder of the battalion loaded up on a train at Ober Traubing, Germany on the 17th, and arrived at Twenty Grand on the 21st of June after an uncomfortable 5-day 900 mile trip. On the 30th we set out for Le Havre and embarked on the USS "Wakefield." Destination: the United States.

The ship docked at Boston, and everyone was soon at home for a thirty day rest period. The only trouble with this was that we all learned to feel too much like civilians.

The Battalion reassembled at Fort Bragg from the 10th to the 24th of August. Redeployment training was started and then V-J Day. It was too good to be true. Civilian days became close for most of us. Army life would soon be but a memory, interesting and happy, dull and sad, but an experience that none of us would have missed.

What is to become of the 782nd? It is not going to be deactivated but will remain an active unit in the greatest Army in the world. "VIVE LES ETATS UNIS!"



CZECHOSLOVAKIA

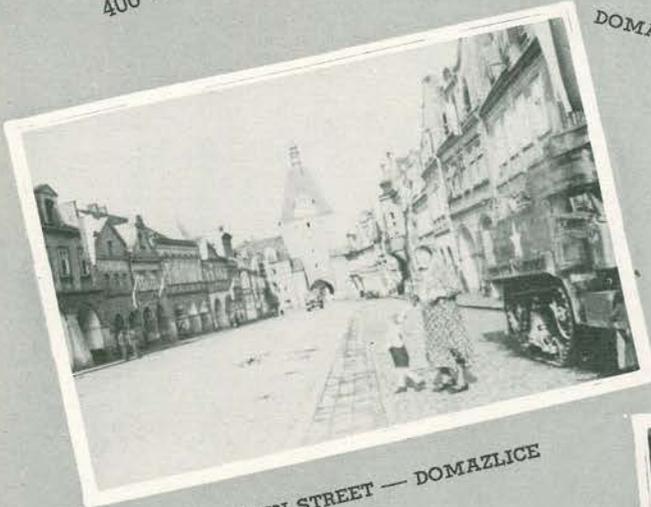
Nazdar!



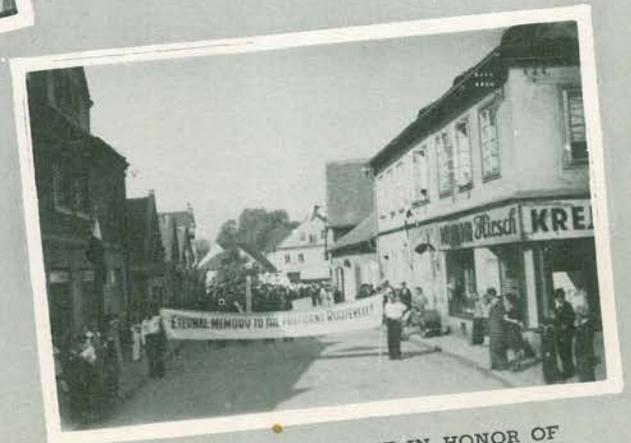
400 YEAR OLD ENTRANCE TO DOMAZLICE



DOMAZLICE FROM ADJACENT HILLTOP

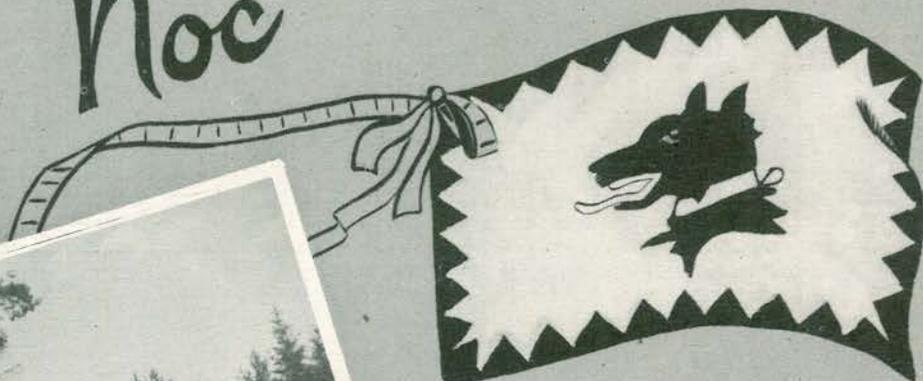


MAIN STREET — DOMAZLICE



PARADE IN DOMAZLICE IN HONOR OF
PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT

Dobre Noć



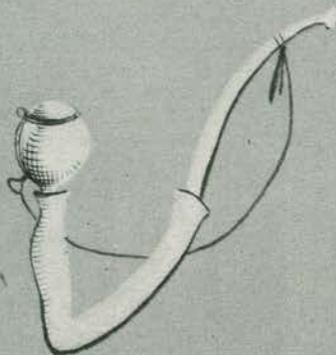
GERMAN AIRFIELD OUTSIDE OF PILSEN



CO. "C" IN EGER (CHEB)



CZECH COLLABORATOR WITH HER
GERMAN CHILD AFTER HAVING
HEAD SHAVED. — DOMAZLICE —
JUNE 1945.



Do You Remember?

WAXING SENTIMENTAL WITHOUT PERSONALITIES
by W.O.J.G. ALTER I. MILBERG

Activation ... 782nd TANK BATTALION (LIGHT) ... A STAR WAS BORN ... FEBRUARY 1, 1943 ... Camp Campbell, Kentucky (Feb.-Nov. 1943) ... Cadre pouring in ... green officers flushed with enthusiasm ... Recruits ... Light Tanks ... Basic Training ... Area 2 at Campbell ... Tests ... Hopkinsville, Ky. ... Clarksville, Tennessee ... 782nd began its solid, far-reaching reputation with the women ... the PX fights with the 12 Armored Division, gentle weren't they ... reshuffle and final company assignments ... night problems ... OCS Prep School (fizzled) ... General Henry, fresh from Armored School, conducting 20th Armored Division inspections of Beautification ... The change from Light to Medium Tanks in late October 1943 ... the "Move Out" order every half-hour no matter what the hour of day or night on Tennessee Maneuvers (Nov. 1943-Jan. 1944) ... the cold and the rain and the dampness and the snow and the tent pitching and the blackout driving ... the Medium Tanks received only two weeks before maneuvers after the light tanks ... ALL PART AND PARCEL OF MANEUVERS ... or would you rather remember those C-O-L-D C-O-L-D mornings awakening after a sleepless night in the Tennessee mud ... the lineup of Pup Tents after a Maneuver problem ... the days in Camp Campbell when barracks were a strange sight for sore eyes ... the FT. KNOX stay (Feb.-June 1944) ... when we GOT HOT AND ALERTED and the old slogan came back again ... THIS IS IT ... only to fade into a false alarm ... another LATRINE RUMOR had hit the dust ... this time because that 782 NUMBER was not ready for it ... remember School Troops of the Armored School at Fort Knox making you salute even a SHADOW ... ordering all to wear even a medal for 2nd Class Gunner with a Water Pistol ... remember Louisville and the HOTEL SEELBACH ... the liquor ... the women ... and so forth ... REMEMBER to change the subject if your wife should ask ... remember the night schools ... the indirect fire ... then Fort Bragg, North Carolina (June-July 1944) and the welcome received ... the ANIMAL AREA for the tanks (motor stables) ... Fayetteville ... remember the PX fights with the Artillery over the age-old question SHOULD A MAN WEAR A TIE OR NOT WEAR A TIE ... remember the HEAT ... the stolen bus ... the Artillery Method of Indirect Fire ... and the Infantry we did not train with ... the long train ride to Camp Cooke, California ... the short first stay there (August-September 1944) ... the change from summer to winter uniform upon reaching California in the latter part of "balmy" July ... GOLDEN CALIFORNIA ... damp, foggy, cold ... remember the TRUCKS ZOOMING around those curves at fifty miles an hour on the winding mountainous road to LOS ANGELES ... Santa Maria ... Lompoc ... our introduction to the 97th INFANTRY DIVISION who we were to meet again later on ... the Fort Rosecrans, California Amphibious Training (with the 97th Infantry Division) (Sept.-Oct. 1944) ... San Diego whoopee and sailors galore ... the view of the harbor ... the only motor park where the fishing was good ... the hill leading to the lower level ... the practice loadings ... the Marine Base at San Diego ... the debarkation nets ... the cruises on LSMs and LSTs on the Pacific ... the landings on San Clemente Island ... the taste of seasickness (they say it is all in the mind but the stomach reacts) ... occasional visits to Camp Callan, California and spotless, neat La Jolla ... return to Camp Cooke, California (Oct.-Dec. 1944) ... the secret floating tank, the Secret Project, SECRET, SECRET, that never was revealed to man or beast ... General Lear Commanding General, Army Ground Forces making his first visit when things were hot and he tried to make them HOTTER ... and the mess sergeant who told the general he hadn't been on a ten mile hike in ten years of army life ... his second visit ... the review of honor for him in the rain when he didn't show up ... the spirit of cooperation that began at Fort Rosecrans ... the ALERT for the Pacific ... THIS IS IT ... THE POM PREPARATIONS ... the showdown inspections ... what a rat race ... the last minute change in Alert ... to the Eastern Seaboard because of the Bulge ... the move to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey ... Christmas Day Arrival ... brief stay there (December 25, 1944 to Jan. 1, 1945) ... RUSH ... RUSH ... RUSH ... the "thorough" TWO SECOND physical examination ... first visit to the BIG LITTLE TOWN OF NEW YORK ... the LONG march down the LONG pier with those heavy duffle bags and full field ... setting sail ... the Henry Gibbons ... the Sub-alarms ... SEASICKNESS that incapacitated a score or two for the entire two week trip ... the crowded bunks ... first sea

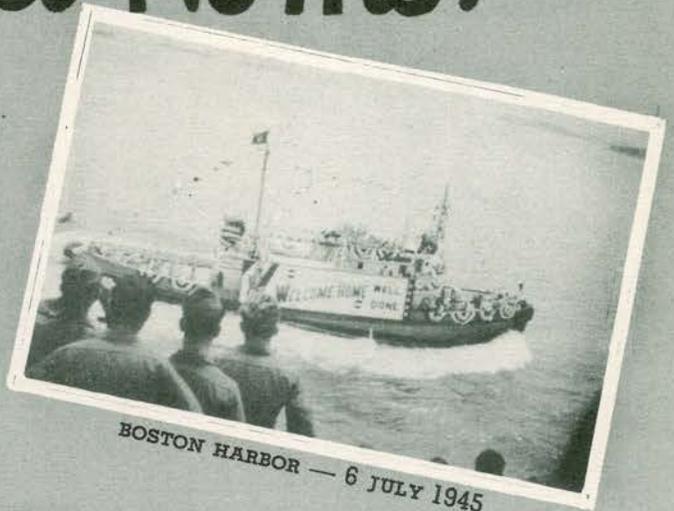
voyage for many a landlubber ... the Nurses ... landing at Le Havre, France at night (Jan. 16, 1945) ... the confusion ... the long hike to the train with blanket roll, full field, weapons ... the World War I French Boxcars (40 and 8s—40 men (hommes) or 8 horses (cheveaux)) ... K rations ... the train wreck ... Camp Lucky Strike, France (Jan. 17-April 1945) ... lack of fuel ... the c-o-l-d ... the rush for coal ... THE NECESSITIES OF LIFE—food, warm clothing, shelter ... the MUD in France like the mud anywhere else ... WARM (?) LATRINES ... franc notes ... French oui, oui, oui (wee, wee, wee) ... French bread (du pain), cider, Benedictine, wine, Cognac ... Yvetot ... Fecamp ... Rouen ... Le Havre, our palatial motor park on the Seine River ... the CHATEAU SEELBACH—new style, no windows, no doors, complete air conditioning ... the RUINS OF LE HAVRE, our first sight of the horrors of war ... the French people ... starving ... lack of food ... begging ... old clothes ... our Goderville stay with a small detachment at Lucky Strike ... the cafes ... Chateau Cretot ... Chateau Trebons ... Chocolat ... Cigarette for Papa ... the purchasing power of Chocolate and Cigarettes ... popularity of American food and soap ... the French toilet facilities, must we remember that ... Do you remember the importance of the weekly PX ... weeks without a shower ... sponge baths out of helmets ... shaving with cold water ... movies in the cold tent at Lucky Strike ... reveille ... our loudspeaker with records and radio programs going all day ... the TOP, TOP Secret Move into Germany and the Rhineland (early April 1945) ... Belgian hospitality ... showers in Liege ... that long road march ... the Bogie Wheel Trouble ... ruins of Aachen and Duren ... the Autobahn ... Bedcheck Charlie ... night attack from a Jerry plane ... Mechernich ... non-fraternization ... signs of Nazism in the homes ... richly stocked German homes with wares from captured countries ... Oberkottzau ... Wunsiedel ... Weiden ... joining up with the 97th Infantry Division ... old pals ... working with Infantry on patrol ... COMBAT ... screaming meemies (rockets) ... move into Czechoslovakia with Third Army ... capture of Eger (Cheb) ... machine gun bullets ricocheting off the Battalion CP ... Tachov ... remember those slave laborers ... gaunt ... starving ... confused ... broken in body and spirit ... shadows of men ... overjoyed and bewildered at sight of American troops ... V-E DAY SURRENDER (May 7, 1945) ... wholesale rejoicing ... END OF ETO WAR CELEBRATION IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA ... welcome received ... native costumes of many colors, red stockings and all ... bicycles ... our few days stay in the field ... move to Domazlice (Taus) Czechoslovakia and our stay there (May 15-June 16, 1945) ... Hotel Kalous ... Hotel Karuna ... Hotel Praga ... Track meet ... soccer game ... vacation spot—Babylon ... Czech hospitality ... boxing ... kronen and marks ... dances ... displaced persons ... Czech soldiers ... captured Storm Troopers and gentle treatment! ... head shavings of women who were collaborators ... movie showings in the Kino ... Slivovitz ... Czech black beer ... cheap powerful German whiskey ... Souvenir Collecting ... bartering cigarettes and chocolate for Czech haircuts, cut glass, woodcut articles, scarfs ... soap for laundry ... Diemkus (long Czech pipes) ... NAZDAR ... War Dept. announces Point System of Discharge ... 85 Points ... Redeployment ... move thru Germany ... beautiful scenery ... Camp Twenty Grand, France (short stay 24-30 June 1945) ... German prisoners serving us in the Mess Hall ... happy about it all ... we were going to the USA and we were happy too ... USS WAKEFIELD (old liner Manhattan) ... sailing from Le Havre on June 30, 1945 for good old USA ... though crowded conditions aboard ship ... everyone in good humor ... July 6, 1945 ... Boston Harbor ... WELCOME HOME, WELL DONE ... THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA ... Camp Myles Standish, Mass. ... the band ... the humorous welcome speech ... fresh food ... milk ... fresh vegetables ... ice cream ... PX ... reception stations ... thirty days recuperation AT HOME ... family and friends ... American women ... American language ... stores stocked with merchandise ... enough chocolate and candy to satisfy even your own craving ... automobiles a plenty running around ... few bicycles on main thoroughfares ... only one fly in the ointment ... redeployment to the Pacific War with Japan in the near future facing us ... back to Fort Bragg, North Carolina for reassembly ... (August 1945) ... shortly after ... V-J DAY ... formal surrender (September 2, 1945) ... AT LONG LAST THE ALMOST FOUR YEAR OLD (FOR THE UNITED STATES) WAR ENDED ... the relief was so great that some took it calmly as if a great load had been lifted from their shoulders ... Point System of Discharges as of V-J Day ... 30 day furloughs ... almost a vacation in the Army ... SEPARATION CENTERS ... some sooner ... some later ... back to the goal of every civilian in uniform ... CIVILIAN LIFE ... DO YOU REMEMBER? ... OR HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN? IF YOU REMEMBER AT ALL ... SWEAR THAT YOU'LL NEVER FORGET!

U.S.S. WAKEFIELD

and Home!



NORTH ATLANTIC



BOSTON HARBOR — 6 JULY 1945

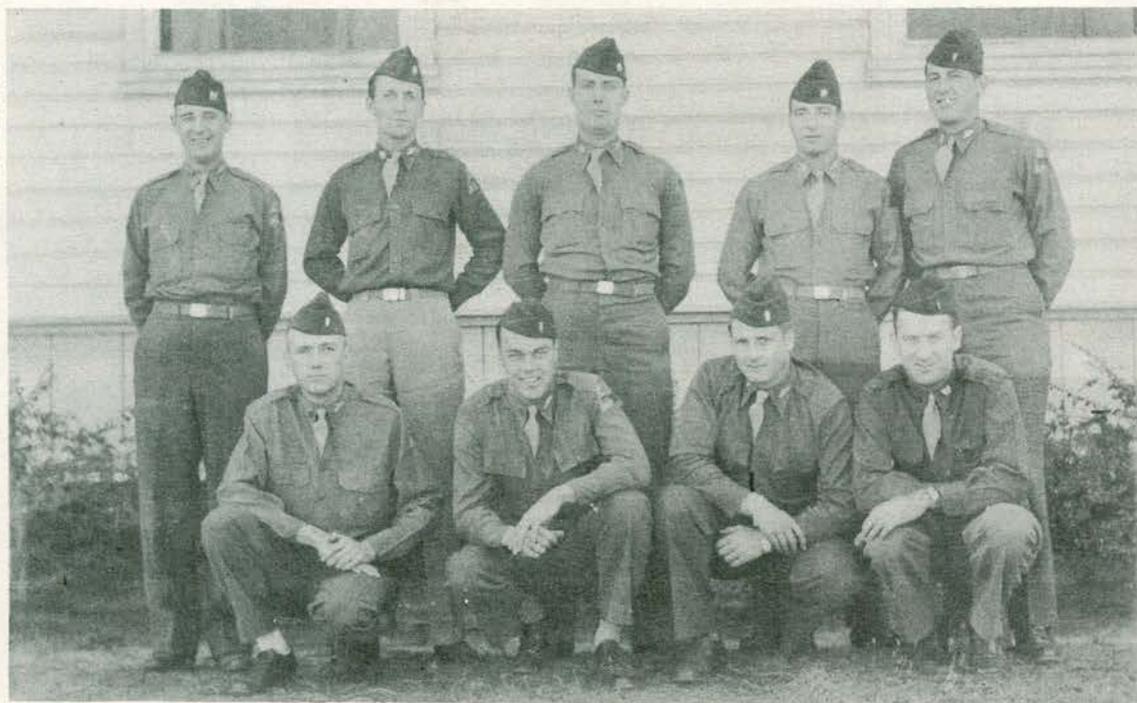


U.S.S. WAKEFIELD IN LE HAVRE HARBOR



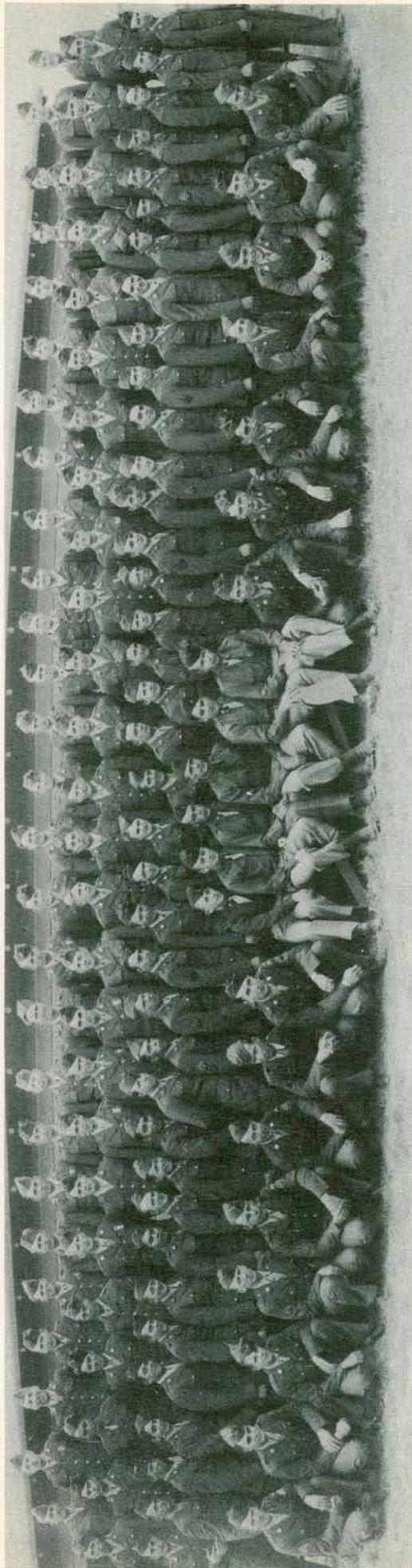
L.C.T. BRINGING TROOPS TO THE WAKEFIELD

C.O. and Staff

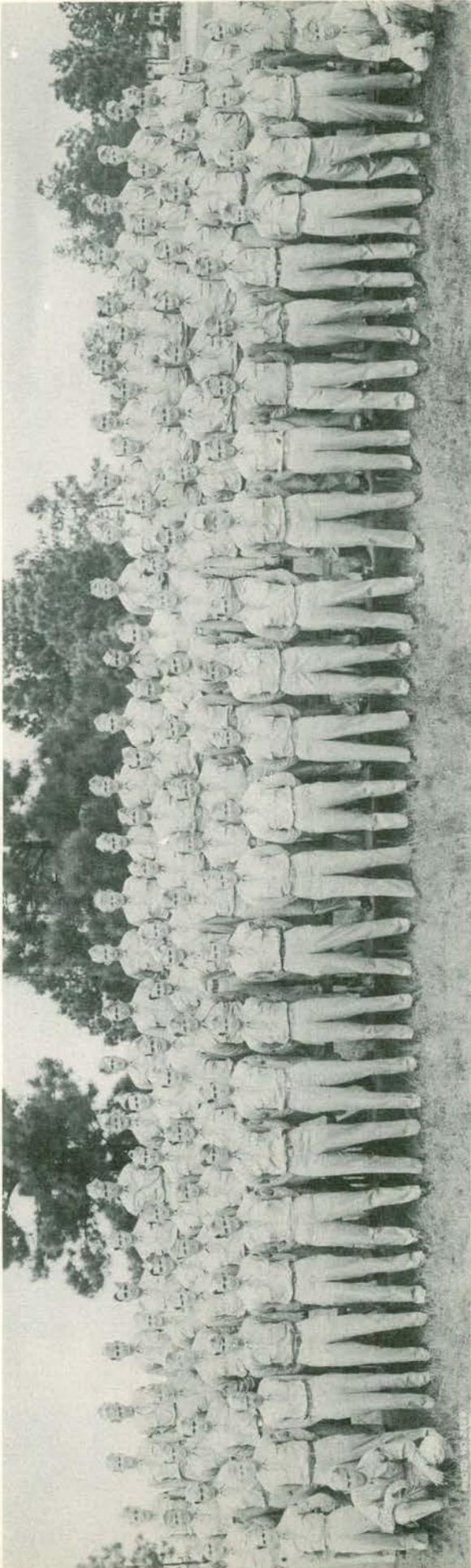


TOP ROW: L to R—CAPT. BYRON E. SMITH, S-4; MAJOR JACK S. SIMMLER, S-3; MAJOR EDWARD INGLIS, C.O.; MAJOR ROBERT C. SACHS, EX. O.; 1ST LT. VERNON D. PELZ, MOTOR O.

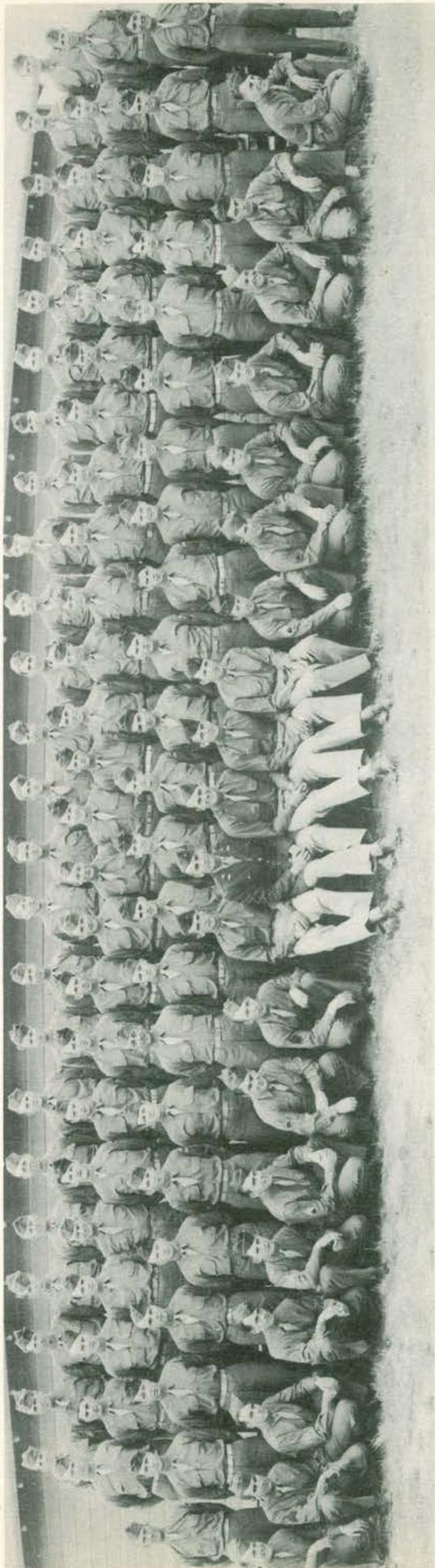
BOTTOM ROW: L to R—1ST LT. MARION E. COLLIER, ADJ.; 1ST LT. RICHARD G. POTTER, LN. O.; 1ST LT. HENRY H. ATKINS, S-2; WOJG ALTER I. MILBERG, PERS.O.



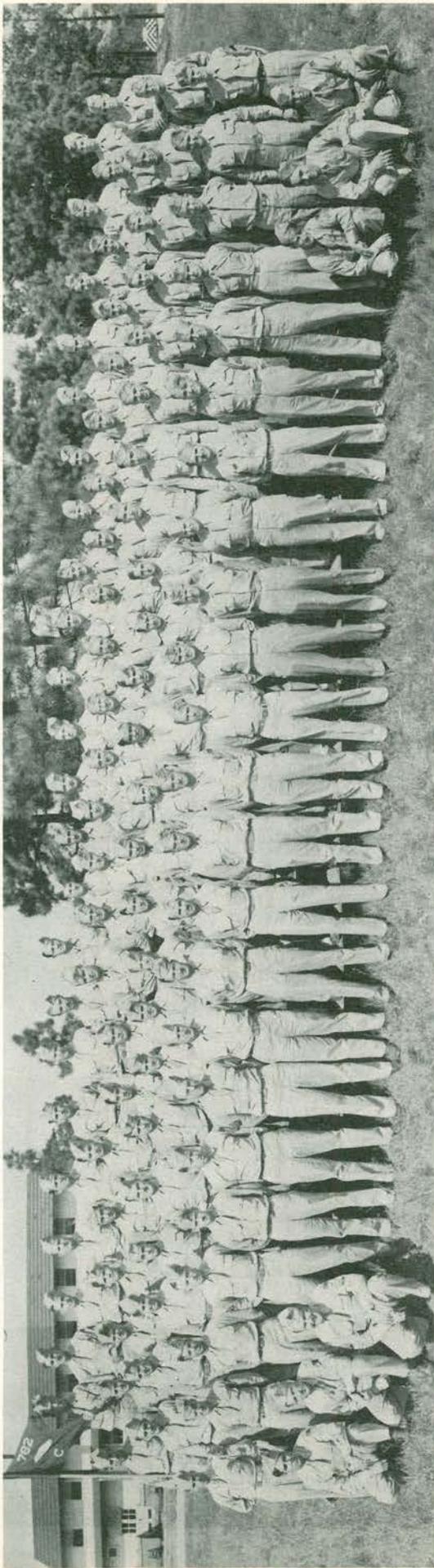
HEADQUARTERS COMPANY



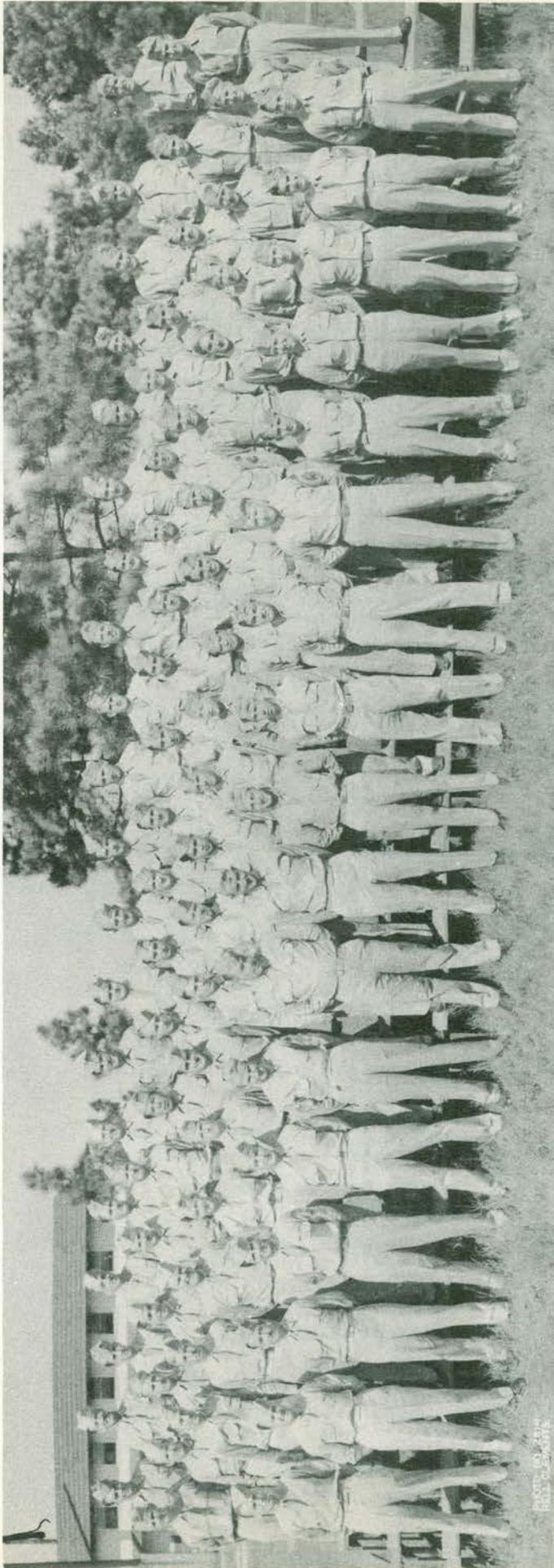
"A" COMPANY



"B" COMPANY



"C" COMPANY



"D" COMPANY

Atkins, Henry H.
" m m



SERVICE COMPANY



MEDICAL DETACHMENT

