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As you recall the idea for this book originated while we were at Camp Washington. If it isn't all you expected blame it on the confusion of redeployment and discharges with the attendant difficulty of reaching and securing material from men scattered in all parts of America. If you do find it of interest credit—Major Simmons who kept the spark burning when it appeared to be dead; Dyer, Kohlrus, Kulick, Ripley and Wiggins for their editorial contributions; Backes, Badgett, Case, Capaldi, Emrath, Fairchild, Grauch, LaViolette, Lines, Marshall, Mundy, Reynolds, Richardson, Secan, Simpson, Streppa, Vetere, Vettrano, Williams, Wingblad, Wiseman and Zielinski who, with many others supplied the photographic material; Lantrip for a portion of the art; Hively, Johnson, White and Wines for securing of subscriptions; Bauer, Kilcline, Kopczynski and Resnick for the clerical assistance, and to all of you for your patience in waiting for the final result. So follow the "Cleat" footsteps on their journey over half of the world.



Karl "Pop" Midney  
"EDITOR-IN-CHIEF"

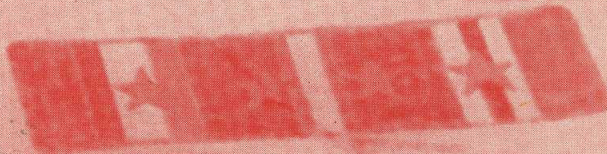
THE  
MICHIGAN  
ENGINEERS

# BATTALION HISTORY

*The* 554 ENGINEER  
HEAVY PONTON BN.

554

HEAVY PONTON  
(BRIDGE) BATTALION  
ROER RHINE



WESER ELBE

*Activated*

16 JANUARY 1943 - - - CAMP SWIFT, TEXAS

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Back of Book for Mounting  
Your Favorite Snapshots.

# Dedication

This book records the achievements of the 554th Engineer Heavy Ponton Battalion. It cannot tell the complete story of each member or perhaps even a separate company, but it does narrate the activities of the Battalion as a whole. We hope to express on paper, the trials and tribulations we all endured and the magnificent accomplishments and heroism of the "Michigan Engineers". We feel that it is fitting and proper that we dedicate our book to those of our Unit who gave the "last full measure of devotion" that democracy might triumph over the evil forces of tyranny . . . May their sacrifice contribute to a lasting peace.

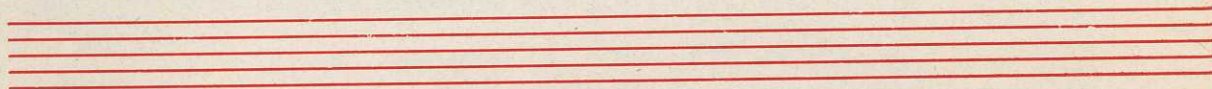




**WILLIAM F. GRAUCH**

Lt. Col., C. E.  
Commanding

31 March 1943 to  
26 July 1945



**WILLIAM A. SIMMONS**

Major, C. E.  
Commanding

26 July 1945 to  
28 November 1945



★  
★  
F O R E W O R D  
★

The 554th Engineers is just about the best Heavy Ponton Battalion in the Army of the United States. Such a reputation has been earned through the willing efforts of each and every member of the battalion during the arduous training period as well as through the uncertainties of actual and severe combat. My heartfelt thanks to each officer, non-com, Pfc, and just plain private for the honor I have enjoyed in being your leader during a good part of our existence.

This record—the written story of some of the highlights of our history—is intended to be a cherished memento to everyone who by accident of assignment, effort or design of affiliation, or just plain luck, contributed to our worthy name.

Although no help is needed in remembering those who gave their all, a fitting Memorium is included.

May God watch over each and every one and keep us steadfast and loyal to our beloved America; prosper us in health, endeavor and fortune; and reward the just cause for which we existed with everlasting peace.

Sincerely yours,

11 July 1945

Wm. F. GRAUCH

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My experience with the "Famous Five Fifty-Fourth" from Camp Swift, Texas to Magdeburg, Germany, and our return to the good old U. S. A., is one that I shall long remember. I am proud to have been a part of that organization and I am proud of its accomplishments. For each man of the 554th, wherever you are, I sincerely wish success and all the happiness that comes to successful men.

Sincerely,

April 16th, 1946

Wm. A. Simmons

★  
★  
★



**LEST WE FORGET**

**Pvt. FRANK CONIGLIO**  
12 OCTOBER 1943

**Lt. ROBERT L. CHILDS**  
23 FEBRUARY 1945

**Pfc. JOSEPH BOLLENBACHER**  
23 FEBRUARY 1945

**Pvt. CYRIL F. YUERGENS**  
23 FEBRUARY 1945

**Pvt. JOHN J. BEDROSSIAN**  
27 FEBRUARY 1945

**T/5 EDWARD L. STUMP**  
18 MARCH 1945

**Pvt. HARRIS A. GOULD**  
24 MARCH 1945

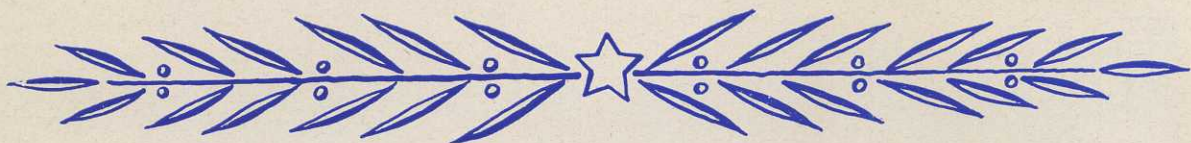
**Lt. THOMAS S. MACHEN**  
25 MARCH 1945

**T/5 ANDY SHEPTAK**  
25 MARCH 1945

**Pfc. ALVIN E. MILLER**  
25 MARCH 1945

**Pvt. WILSON BARNES**  
6 APRIL 1945

**Cpl. WILLIAM W. HOFBAUER**  
7 APRIL 1945



# I N M E M O R I A M

Jefferson in drafting the Declaration of Independence expressed the ideals of democracy in these words "Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness". Since that memorable document was written it has been necessary from time to time to sacrifice Life that Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness might continue. And so eleven men of the 554th have given their lives in preserving the right to live our lives as we chose. A minimum of casualties in a fighting outfit of four hundred but mere figures on paper cannot reveal the deep sorrow of their families or the void among their friends. We bow our heads in solemn respect and extend our heartfelt sympathy to the families of eleven fine Americans.



Bedrossian



Bollenbacher



Coniglio



Gould



Machen

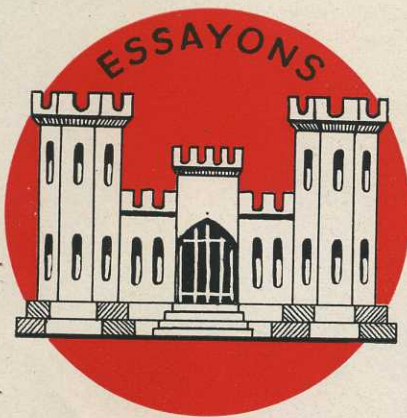


Miller



Stump

(Photos of other casualties not available.)

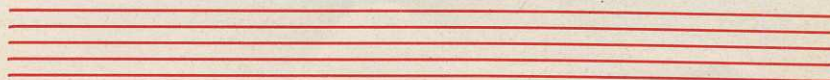


# The CORPS of ENGINEERS

The Corps of Engineers has a proud history dating back to the days of Washington. In every war that the United States has entered they have been the working, fighting team that has contributed so greatly in making victory possible. World War II has been no exception. In every important engagement the work of the Engineers was everywhere evident. Breaching obstacles, building bridges, constructing air strips, building roads, repairing ports, laying pipe lines, mapping entire continents, and countless other tasks were performed by the Engineers. A great many of these assignments were completed under direct enemy fire. On D Day in Normandy, for instance, the Engineers were the first troops to land and they cleared under-water obstacles, removed mines, and in general cleared the way for the following waves of other troops.

Our own training as a Heavy Ponton Battalion is a good example of the versatility of Engineers, for as you well remember, we learned to be proficient in the use of individual weapons, machine guns, demolitions, bazookas and grenades, besides the operation of assault and utility boats, dozers, cranes, trucks and tractors, and several types of bridge building of which the most important was the 25 Ton Heavy Ponton.

Our Unit in all of its engagements upheld the tradition of the Corps, which is exemplified by the motto "Essayons"... "Keep Trying".





**COMRADES in ARMS**



ROBERT "ROCK" ADCOCK, Freeman, Va., S/Sgt "A" Co. • PAUL  
 "PJ" AHERRON, Danville, Va., Stormboat Opr. "H/S" Co. • SOLOMON  
 ARCHIBEQUE, Albuquerque, N. M., Dozer Opr., "B" Co. • JOHN  
 BACKES, Marietta, Ohio, "B" Co. • JOE BADGETT, Denison, Tex.,  
 Photographer, "H/S" Co. • DOMINIC "BALDY" BALDINO, Philadelphia,  
 Pa., Plat. Sgt., "B" Co. • MONTE "JUG" BAUER, Niles, Mich., Company  
 Clerk, "A" Co. • WILBUR "BILL" BAUER, Nashua, Mont., Cook,  
 "H/S" Co. • GEORGE "BAWMY" BAUMBERGER, Pittsburgh, Pa.,  
 Co. Supply "H/S" Co. • ROBERT "SHORTY" BIGGERS, Saginaw,  
 Mich., Welder, "H/S" Co. • JOHN BOVIAR, Dearborn, Mich., Truck  
 Driver, "A" Co. • DONALD "DON" BOWDOIN, Milford, Mich.,  
 Water Supply, "H/S" Co. • GILBERT "GIL" BROWN, Charlottesville,  
 Va., Bn. Supply • JOHN "GI JOE" BROWN, Columbus, Ohio, 1st Sgt.,  
 "A" Co. • MERRILL "BROWNIE" BROWN, Corning, Iowa, Mess Sgt.,  
 "H/S" Co.

No Photos Available

WILLIAM BESANCON, Detroit, Mich., Sgt., "B" Co. • LUCIAN  
 BOMERSHINE, Brookville, Ohio, "A" Co. • CURTIS BOOTH,  
 Kampsville, Ill., "A" Co.



STANLEY BRUGGER, Coleman, Mich., Driver, "A" Co. • JOSEPH "JOE"  
 BURNS, Trenton, N. J., Plat. Lt., "A" Co. • EDWARD "ED" BUTALA,  
 Laurum, Mich., "A" Co. • WALTER BYROADE, Hicksville, Ohio, Mtr.  
 Sgt., "A" Co. • JOHN "CAL" CALAMARI, Elmhurst, N. Y., M/Sgt.,  
 Bn. Hq. • SAMUEL "CAM" CAMMARATA, Detroit, Mich., Unit Fore-  
 man, "A" Co. • RUSSELL "DAGO" CAPALDI, Detroit, Mich., Truck  
 Driver, "A" Co. • RALPH "SAD" CASE, St. Louis, Mich., "H/S"  
 Co. • GRAYSON "DAY" CHILDS, Baltimore, Md., CWO S-4 Bn.  
 Hq. • ROBERT "BOB" CHILDS, Flint, Mich., Ass't Sqd. Ldr., "B" Co.  
 • ROY CLOSSER, Garden City, Mich., Truck Driver, Dozer Opr., "A"  
 Co. • ROBERT "BOB" COWAN, Port Huron, Mich., "A" Co. •  
 CLAIR "SHORTY" CRYSLER, Grand Rapids, Mich., Truck Driver, Ass't  
 Foreman, "B" Co. • KNESLY CULBERT, Saginaw, Mich., Co. Supply,  
 "A" Co. • HOLLIS "TEX" DARVILLE, Port Arthur, Tex., "A" Co.

No Photos Available.

FRANCIS "FRANK" CAMPBELL, Scranton, Pa., S-1 Bn. Hq. • JOSEPH  
 CAPIGA, Yantic, Conn., "B" Co. • JAMES CHARLES, Benwood,  
 W. Va., "A" Co. • CHARLES COOKE, Westfield, N. J., "A" Co. •  
 CHARLES "RED" COTTRELL, Marysville, Tenn., "H/S" Co. • DONALD  
 CUYLER, Battle Creek, Mich., "A" Co.

"CLEAT"



CHARLES "FRENCHY" DEMYTTENAERE, Detroit, Mich., Carpenter, "H/S" Co. • ARNOLD DEPUNG, Grand Rapids, Mich., Driver, "B" Co.  
 • JOHN "SPERDONIA" DERDA, Detroit, Mich., Sgt. Equipment Sect., "H/S" Co. • WILLIAM "BILL" DEREMER, Breezewood, Pa., Mtr. Sgt., "B" Co. • HAROLD "DEEZ" DEZEN, Steubenville, Ohio, Equipment Sect., "H/S" Co. • WILLIAM "DONKEY" DONKER, River Forest, Ill., Lt., "H/S" Co. • BRUCE "BRUTE" DYER, Detroit, Mich., Personnel Sgt., Bn. Hq. • EDWARD "RED" DYMERSKI, Detroit, Mich., Driver, "A" Co. • CLIFTON "CLIFF" EARLE, Pateros, Wash., Dozer and Crane Opr., "A" Co. • DAVID "DAVE" EGELHOFF, Theinsville, Wisc., CO, "B" Co. • EDWARD "ED" EMRATH, Mt. Gilead, Ohio, Cook, "A" Co. • SAMUEL "SAM" EZMIRLIAN, Detroit, Mich., Driver "A" Co. • REX FAIR, Mt. Pleasant, Mich., Truck Driver, "B" Co. • ROBERT "BOB" FAIRCHILD, Niles, Mich., Truck Driver, "B" Co. • RICHARD "DICK" FEIMSTER, Statesville, N. C., Motor Pool, "H/S" Co.

No Photos Available.

OTIS DERRICK, Detroit, Mich., S/Sgt., "A" Co. • DENVER EADENS, Bowling Green, Ky., "B" Co.



ROBERT "BOB" FELTHOUSE, Dowagiac, Mich., Stormboat Opr., "H/S"  
 Co. • MAXWELL "MUTT" FIFE, Carson City, Mich., S/Sgt., "B"  
 Co. • WILLIAM "FISH" FISHER, St. Louis, Mo., Adjutant, Bn. Hq.  
 • FRANCIS "FRANKIE" GAETANO, Washington, D. C., Equipment  
 Sect., "H/S" Co. • JOSEPH "JOE" GALINDO, Detroit, Mich., Ass't  
 Sign Painter, "H/S" Co. • WILLIAM "BILL" GARRISON, Bronx, N. Y.,  
 Bn. Mail Clerk • ROBERT "BOB" GAY, Lincoln Park, Mich., Equipment  
 Sect. "H/S" Co. • GORDON "GORDY" GENCHOW, Detroit, Mich.,  
 Equipment Sect., "H/S" Co. • JOHN GIRIMONT, Boomer, W. Va.,  
 Outboard Mtr. Opr., "B" Co. • ELASCHER GLAND, Wilmington, Del.,  
 Equipment Sect., "H/S" Co. • WILLIAM "GREEK" GOSSIOS, Detroit,  
 Mich., Bn. Mail Clerk • WILLIAM "THE OLD MAN" GRAUCH, Medina,  
 N. Y., Lt. Col., Bn. C. O. • DONALD "DON" GRAUS, Detroit, Mich.,  
 Mail Clerk, "A" Co. • LOUIS "LOU" GREGORY, Rockaway Beach,  
 N. Y., Bn. Maintenance Officer • JACK "NIGGER" HAGOPIAN, Bronx,  
 N. Y., Driver, "H/S" Co.

No Photos Available.

GERALD FOSTER, Ludington, Mich., "H/S" Co. • LESTER GALLOWAY,  
 Detroit, Mich., "A" Co. • WESLEY GEIGER, Portland, Ore., Equip.  
 Sec., "H/S" Co. • RICHARD GRAHAM, Monticelo, Ark., "A" Co.

"CLEAT"





GEORGE HALL, Montpelier, Ind., 1st Sgt., "A" Co. • HERBERT "RED"  
 HALL, Mt. Pleasant, Mich., Telephone Lineman • JAMES "MR."  
 HARVEY, Hazard, Ky., WOJG Bn. Motor Pool • GEORGE HERBERT,  
 Hightstown, N. J., Utility Repairman, "B" Co. • ROBERT "NIGGER"  
 HILL, Detroit, Mich., "A" Co. • CECIL HODGE, Covington, Ky., Med.  
 Det. • MARVIN "MARV" HOGER, Detroit, Mich., Rations S-4 Bn.  
 Hq. • THOMAS "TOM" HOLESTEIN, Detroit, Mich., Truck Driver,  
 "A" Co. • DANA "SOAK" HONEYSETTE, Harbor Spgs., Mich.,  
 Supply Sgt. "H/S" Co. • ROBERT "ROB" HUMPHREY, Battle Creek,  
 Mich., "B" Co. • JOHN "HUSH" HUSCHER, Benton Harbor, Mich.,  
 Water Supply, "H/S" Co. • ANTHONY "TONY" IAFRATE, Detroit,  
 Mich., Line Cpl., "B" Co. • ROBERT "BOB" JENNY, Wakeman, Ohio,  
 "A" Co. • ARNOLD "BUD" JOHNSON, Midland, Mich., C. O., "A"  
 Co. • MIKE KAPTURE, Flint, Mich., Line Sgt., "A" Co.

No Photos Available.

HOWARD HAMLIN, Holabird, So. Dak., T/Sgt., Motor Pool, "A" Co. •  
 JOHN HANNON, Dearborn, Mich., "B" Co. • CHARLES HEIN, Erie,  
 Pa., "A" Co.

554 E



KENNETH "KYE" KATZBERG, Chicago, Ill., Utility Boat Opr., "A" Co.  
 • ERVIN "KEEFY" KEEFE, Dowagiac, Mich., Bn. Supply • RUDOLPH  
 "RUM" KEREZCZ, McKees Rocks, Pa., Truck Driver, "A" Co. • FRANK  
 KIDDER, Harbor Spgs., Mich., Line Sgt., "B" Co. • PAUL "PJ" KILCLINE,  
 Detroit, Mich., Personnel Technician, Bn. Hq. • ANDREW "ANDY"  
 KLAASEN, Grand Rapids, Mich., Mechanic, "H/S" Co. • ANTON  
 "BOOTS" KOHLRUS, Detroit, Mich., "A" Co. • PETER "PETE"  
 KOPCZYNSKI, Detroit, Mich., M/Sgt., S-1 Bn. Hq. • WALTER "KOPE"  
 KOPER, Petoskey, Mich., Truck Driver, "B" Co. • GERARD KOTHE,  
 Birmingham, Mich., "A" Co. • ROBERT "BOB" KOTLARSKY, Pontiac,  
 Mich., Line Cpl., "A" Co. • ALBERT "AL" KUIPER, Grand Rapids,  
 Mich., Driver, "H/S" Co. • GENE KULIK, Canton, Ohio, S/Sgt., Med.  
 Det. • JAMES "JIM" LACLAIR, Denver, Colo., Line Cpl., "H/S" Co.  
 • CARL LAHTI, Barnum, Minn., Driver "A" Co.

No Photos Available.

EDWARD KAZMIERCAK, Brooklyn, N. Y., "A" Co. • GEORGE KINNEY,  
 Birmingham, Mich., "B" Co.

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**"CLEAT"**



PATSY "PAT" LANESE, Cleveland, Ohio, M/Sgt., Bn. Motor Pool "H/S"  
 Co. • CECIL "CEC" LANTRIP, Oxford, Miss., Sign Technician, "H/S"  
 Co. • WALTER "POLAK" LASECKI, Cleveland, Ohio, Utility Repairs,  
 "A" Co. • CHARLES LAVIOLETTE, Minneapolis, Minn., "A" Co. •  
 VERNE "JUMBO" LEASE, Pontiac, Mich., Painter, "H/S" Co. • MONTE  
 "THE CROW" LEVIN, Brooklyn, N. Y., C. O. "H/S" Co. • DONALD  
 "POP" LINES, Lima, Ohio, Cook, "H/S" Co. • JESSE LINK, Nanticoke,  
 Pa., Co. Supply, "H/S" Co. • RAYMOND "RAY" LISKE, Hawks,  
 Mich., "B" Co. • LEONARD "BUD" LOGAN, Hudsonville, Mich., Bn.  
 Mtr. Pool, "H/S" Co. • ALFRED "LUKE" LUKASEK, Elmhurst, Ill.,  
 Capt., Med. Det., • RAYMOND "RAY" MACIEJEWSKI, Grand Rapids,  
 Mich., Bn. Mail Clerk, "H/S" Co. • JOSEPH "JOE" MAJOR, Providence,  
 Rd. Is., Driver, "B" Co. • ROMAN "MICK" MAJSICKI, Detroit, Mich.,  
 Line Cpl., "A" Co. • HERMAN MARSHALL, Bremond, Tex., "A" Co.

No Photo Available.

GEORGE LIZBINSKI, Detroit, Mich., "B" Co.



EMIL "HOPPY" MATSON, Detroit, Mich., Driver, Air Compressor, "H/S" Co. • BRUCE MCLENNAN, Hawks, Mich., S/Sgt., "B" Co. •  
 ROBERT "BOB" MENDELS, Grand Rapids, Mich., Msg. Ctr. Bn. Hq. •  
 HARVEY MENTEER, Kane, Pa., Outboard Opr., "B" Co. • JAMES  
 METHENY, Seattle, Wash., "A" Co. • KARL "POP" MIDNEY,  
 Youngstown, Ohio, S-3 Bn. Hq., "H/S" Co. • NORMAN "NORM"  
 MILLER, York, Pa., Bn. Mtr. Pool, "H/S" Co. • EARL "BIG JOB"  
 MINSTER, Adrian, Mich., Truck Driver, "B" Co. • JULIAN "FLEMO"  
 MONSERE, Detroit, Mich., Truck Driver, "A" Co. • CARMEN MORANO,  
 Uniontown, Pa., Truck Driver, "A" Co. • GEORGE MORSE, Grand  
 Rapids, Mich., Mechanic, Bn. Mtr. Pool, "H/S" Co. • RAY MUNDY,  
 Charleston, W. Va., Lt., 2nd Plat., "B" Co. • MARION MURRAY,  
 Benge, Ky., T/Sgt., "A" Co. • RUSSELL "RUSS" MYERS, Cedar  
 Rapids, Iowa, I & E, "B" Co. • BARNEY NAHIGIAN, Roslindale, Mass.,  
 Driver, "H/S" Co.

No Photos Available.

ROBERT MAYFIELD, San Antonio, Tex., "A" Co. • JOSEPH MELLEN,  
 Iron Mt., Mich., S/Sgt., "A" Co. • OLIVER MURPHY, Dowagiac,  
 Mich., Sq. Sgt., "A" Co.

"CLEAT"



JAMES "JIM" NEAR, Lincoln Pk., Mich., "A" Co. • SMILEY "SAM" ORVILLE  
 NELSON, Detroit, Mich., Bn. Supply Sgt., "H/S" Co. • ORVILLE  
 NEWTON, Grant, Mich., "B" Co. • ROBERT NODRUFF, Dowagiac,  
 Mich., T/4, "A" Co. • GEORGE OAKS, Cloverdale, Mich., "B" Co.  
 • JOSEPH OBIDZINSKI, Detroit, Mich., Sect. Ldr., "B" Co. • LOUIS  
 ORLANDO, Detroit, Mich., Tr. Dr., "B" Co. • LLOYD "OZZIE"  
 OSBORNE, Adrian, Mich., T/Sgt., Bn. Mtr. Pool, "H/S" Co. • ROBERT  
 "GESTAPO" OTTE, Detroit, Mich., Driver, "H/S" Co. • WILLIAM  
 "BIG STOOP" PARTRIDGE, So. Braintree, Mass., "B" Co. • CLINTON  
 "SUNSHINE" PECK, Grand Rapids, Mich., Mechanic, "B" Co. •  
 RAYMOND "ROY" PEGAN, Niles, Mich., Tr. Dr., "B" Co. • CONSTANT  
 "SHORTY" PELTIER, Mt. Clemens, Mich., Tool Cpl., "H/S" Co. • JOHN  
 "PENNY" PENNIMAN, Grosse Pt., Mich., Powerboat Opr., "B" Co. (Later,  
 Lt., 300 E, CBI) • DONALD "DON" PIEGOLS, Midland, Mich.,  
 "B" Co.

No Photos Available.

JOHN O'CONNOR, Galveston, Tex., 1st Lt., "A" Co. • RAYMOND  
 PATTERSON, Buffalo, N. Y., "A" Co. • WARREN PARRISH, Kinde,  
 Mich., "B" Co.



KENNETH "KEN" PLOEG, Grand Rapids, Mich., Sqd. Ldr., "A" Co. •  
 ORRIS PORTER, Algonac, Mich., "A" Co. • ROBERT "BUD" PRINCE,  
 Auburn, Me., Ass't Tr. Dr., "B" Co. • ALFRED "AL" QUITMEYER,  
 St. Paul, Minn., "B" Co. • ELTON "FISH" RELYEA, Midland, Mich.,  
 S/Sgt. Mtr. Pool, "H/S" Co. • IRVING "IRV" RESNICK, Brooklyn,  
 N. Y., Co. Clerk, "B" Co. • LEWIS "BIG DEAL" REYNOLDS, Bay  
 City, Mich., Supply Sgt., "H/S" Co. • FLORION "RICH" RICHARDSON,  
 Villa Rica, Ga., T/Sgt., S-3 Bn. Hq., "H/S" Co. • ORA ROBERTS,  
 Salt Lick, Ky., Cook, "B" Co. • CAMILLE "ROCKY" ROCCOFORTE,  
 Port Arthur, Tex., Tr. Dr., "A" Co. • SEYMOUR "ROSY" ROSENTHAL,  
 Bronx, N. Y., Mail Clerk, "H/S" Co. • CARL "RUDY" RUDOLPH,  
 Kokomo, Ind., "A" Co. • PERCY "SLIDE" RULE, JR., Greensburg, Pa.,  
 Plat. Lt., "A" Co. • FRANCIS "RED" RUTTER Columbus, Ohio, Mtr.  
 Sgt., "H/S" Co. • DONATO "SABBY" SABATINO, Bangor, Pa., Unit  
 Foreman, "B" Co.

No Photos Available.

GERALD PORTER, Sunfield, Mich., "B" Co. • PAUL RICCARDI, Detroit,  
 Mich., "A" Co. • JOSEPH RUBINO, Birmingham, Mich., "A" Co. •

"CLEAT"



EDWARD "ED" SAJEWSKI, Detroit, Mich., WOJG Personnel, Bn. Hq. •  
 HAROLD "UNCLE" SCHNEIDER, Portland, Mich., Air Comp. Opr. "H/S"  
 Co. • ROBERT "BOB" SCHWARTZ, Harrisburg, Ill., S/Sgt., "B" Co.  
 • PAUL SECAN, Detroit, Mich., Sgt., "A" Co. • DELBERT "DEL"  
 SELLECK, Bentley, Mich., Stormboat Opr., "H/S" Co. • GROVER  
 "SARE" SERENBETZ, Flint, Mich., Radio Technician, "H/S" Co. •  
 EDDIE "SHANNY" SHANHOLTZ, Winchester, Va., Line Cpl., "A" Co. •  
 CHRISTOPHER "PAPPY" SHOOK, New Orleans, La., 1st Sgt., "B" Co.  
 • WILLIAM "BILL" SIMMONS, Dallas, Tex., Bn. C. O. • NELSON  
 "SULLY" SIMPSON, Long Pine, Nebr., CO., "H/S" Co. • DANIEL  
 "DAN" SLATER, East Bend, N. C., "A" Co. • RICHARD "SLIP"  
 SLIPKOVICH, Youngstown, Ohio, "B" Co. • GEORGE "DYNAMITE"  
 SMITH, High Point, N. C., Tool Clerk, "H/S" Co. • BERNARD SOVA,  
 Detroit, Mich., Cook, "H/S" Co. • ALFRED "LETER GO" STEIMEL,  
 Detroit, Mich., Line Cpl., "A" Co.

No Photos Available.

STANLEY SATKO, Detroit, Mich., Line Cpl., "B" Co. • RICHARD  
 "DICK" SHERWOOD, Chillicothe, Ohio Stormboat Opr., "H/S" Co. •  
 CECIL SPROAT, Ft. Wayne, Ind., "B" Co.



PERRY "SANDY" STEMEN, Lincoln Park, Mich., Tr. Dr., "B" Co. •  
 WILLIAM STONE, Wewoka, Okla., Plat. Sgt., "A" Co. • CLAUDE  
 "PETE" St. PIERRE, Two Rivers, Wisc., Sgt., S-3 Sect., "H/S" Co. •  
 NICKOLAS "NICK" STREPPA, Fairport, N. Y., "B" Co. • NORMAN  
 "NORM" STRIEWSKI, Detroit, Mich., Supply Sgt., "A" Co. • ELMOE  
 SULLINGER, Erlanger, Ky., "B" Co. • HAROLD SUMMERS, Bay City,  
 Mich., Sect. Ldr., "B" Co. • STANLEY "STAN" THAR, Benton Harbor,  
 Mich., Water Supply, "H/S" Co. • DONALD "GLOWORM" TIMMONS,  
 Highland Pk., Mich., Bugler, "H/S" Co. • ESKEW TRAMMEL, Pontiac,  
 Mich., "B" Co. • ROBERT "VAN" VANDER BOK, Grand Rapids,  
 Mich., Tr. Dr., "A" Co. • ALFRED VANEK, Granger, Tex., T/4, "B"  
 Co. • EUGENE VAN MALDEGEN, Grand Rapids, Mich., "A" Co.  
 • ROBERT VAN WIEREN, Holland, Mich., "B" Co. • FRANK  
 "FRANKIE" VETERE, Detroit, Mich., Bn. Dispatcher, "H/S" Co.

No Photos Available.

ORAL STRATTON, JR., Grand Rapids, Mich., T/4, "A" Co. • CHARLES  
 THOMAS, Hanford, Calif., "A" Co. • WALTER TACZYNSKI, Detroit,  
 Mich., "B" Co. • NICK TREVINO, San Antonio, Tex., "A" Co. •  
 JOSEPH TUHET, Detroit, Mich., "A" Co. • ANTHONY TUSZYNSKI,  
 Detroit, Mich., "A" Co. • JOHN UMLOR, Muskegon, Mich., "B" Co.

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"CLEAT"





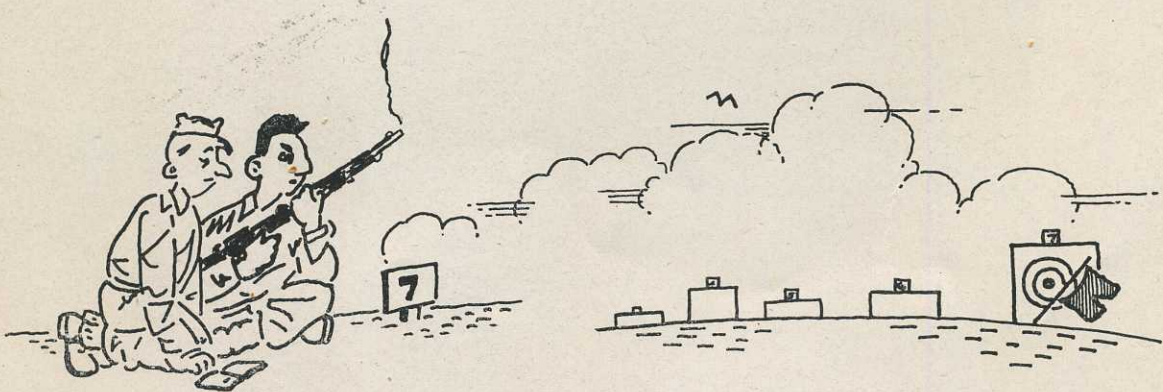
JOSEPH "JOE" VETTRAINO, Highland Pk., Mich., Mail Clerk, "B" Co. •  
 JAMES "BRUNO" VUONO, Newark, N. J., M/Sgt., Bn. Mtr. Pool, "H/S"  
 Co. • BERNARD "BEN" WAGNER, Rodgers City, Mich., "B" Co. •  
 KENNETH "KENNY" WALKER, Pontiac, Mich., Dispatch Rider, "B" Co.  
 • WILLIAM "BILL" WALTON, Seal Harbor, Me., "A" Co. •  
 RAYMOND "RAY" WEBER, Kingsley, Mich., T/4, Bn. Mtr. Pool, "H/S"  
 Co. • E. D. WELLS, Bremen, Ga., "B" Co. • CLARENCE WELSER,  
 St. Clair, Mich., T/4, Bn. Mtr. Pool, "H/S" Co. • IRVING "BOB" WENDT,  
 Milan, Mich., Rations, "H/S" Co. (Later, Lt., Inf. Burma) • JOHN  
 "JAWN" WHYMAN, Ft. Worth, Tex., C. O. "A" Co. • CARL WIEK,  
 Philadelphia, Pa., S-3 Officer, Bn. Hq. • RICHARD "RB" WIGGINS,  
 Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., Exec. Off., Bn. Hq. • GERALD WILHELM, Petoskey,  
 Mich., "B" Co • CURTIS "CURT" WILLIAMS, Grand Rapids, Mich.,  
 M/Sgt., Bn. Motor Pool, "H/S" Co • RICHARD "DICK" WINES,  
 Detroit, Mich., Communications Sgt., Bn. Hq., "H/S" Co.

No Photos Available.

WILLIAM WEST, Memphis, Tenn., Line Cpl., "B" Co. • CLARENCE  
 WHITE, Lead, So. Dak., Lt., "H/S" Co.



ARNOLD WINGBLAD, Detroit, Mich., 1st Lt., "B" Co. • ERNEST  
 "ERNE" WISEMAN, Lansing, Mich., Driver, "B" Co. • RICHARD  
 "DICK" WOLFE, Erie, Pa., Sgt., Med. Det. • JOHN "WOZY"  
 WOZOWICZ, No. Clymer, N. Y., T/4, "B" Co. • JOHN YASENCHAK,  
 Detroit, Mich., Demolitions, "A" Co. • BENJAMIN "ZACK" ZACHARIA,  
 Philadelphia, Pa., Mtr. Boat Opr., "B" Co. • EDMOND "HORIZONTAL"  
 ZIELINSKI, Detroit, Mich., Oper. Sgt., Bn. Hq., "H/S" Co. • RAYMOND  
 "RAY" ZIELINSKI, Detroit, Mich., S-3 Sect., "H/S" Co. (Later to 1551 E) •  
 RICHARD "ZIM" ZIMMERMAN, Detroit, Mich., Co. Clerk, "A" Co. •  
 LESTER "LES" ZOBAC, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Carpenter, "H/S" Co.



"CLEAT"

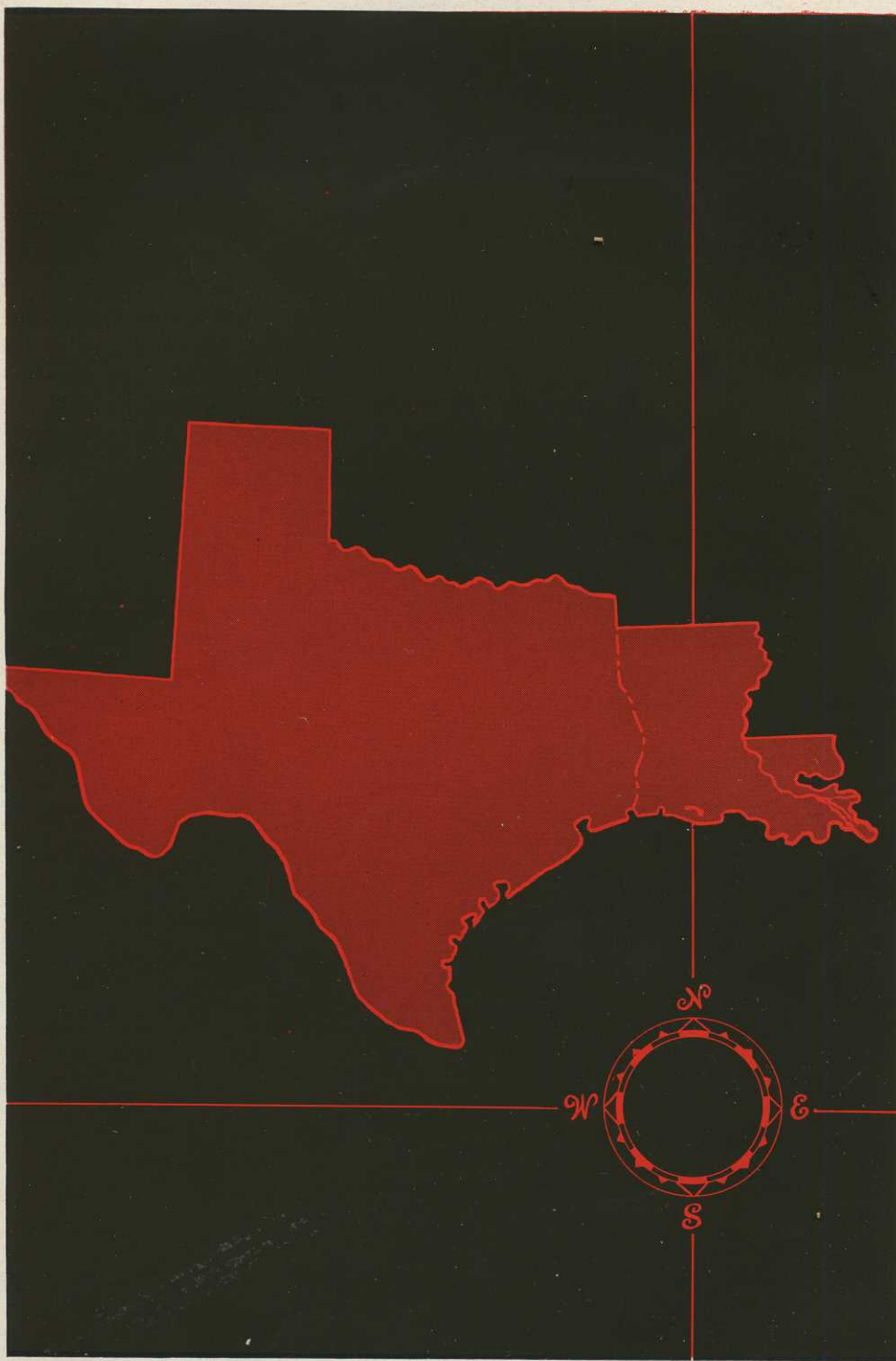
# THE MICHIGAN ENGINEERS

Come gaze on us young fellows  
We're soldiers from the North,  
You can tell we're educated  
By the stuff we're bringing forth,  
Each night we get a glow on  
From whiskey mixed with beer,  
We're the talk of the town,  
From miles around,  
We're the MICHIGAN ENGINEERS.

We can lick the Prussian Guards  
And we also play our cards,  
We can run like the devil  
When the grounds on the level  
For about ten thousand yards.  
And the girls, the little dears,  
They're in love up to their ears,  
They follow the styles  
To win the smiles  
Of the MICHIGAN ENGINEERS.

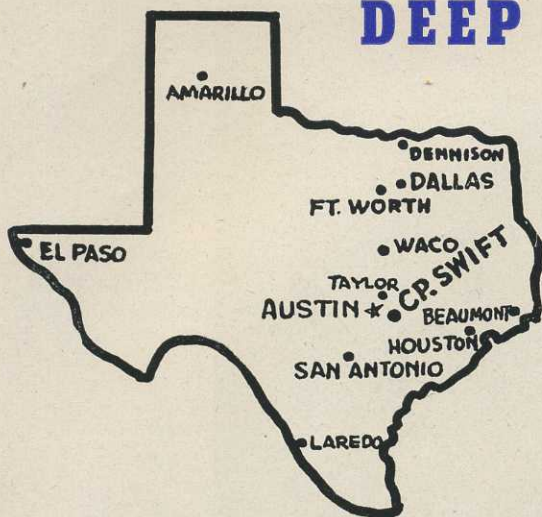
With swords in hand,  
We take our stand,  
Upon the land,  
That we love so grand,  
And we wear kid gloves  
So we won't get tan,  
We're the MICHIGAN ENGINEERS.





# THE AMERICAN SCENE

# DEEP IN THE HEART OF TEXAS!



Camp Swift, Texas, the place of our birth as a Battalion, is unique in many respects. The terrain is rolling, affording good drainage for the numerous heavy rains. In the hottest of the Texas summer, one could sleep very easily at night with the cool breezes from the Gulf of Mexico, however, at times it was extremely hot during the day.

Land area of the Camp is approximately 52,000 acres. The entire Government Reservation is fenced and considerably more than 48 miles of fencing was required for this purpose.

The area surrounding the camp is rich in Texas history. The small town of Bastrop, seven miles away, derived its name from the Baron De Bastrop, staunch friend of Stephen F. Austin who colonized Texas. The Camino Real —The Royal Road, which wasn't such a good highway to town, did however, in days prior to Texas' independence and Statehood, link the Eastern part of the State with Mexico.

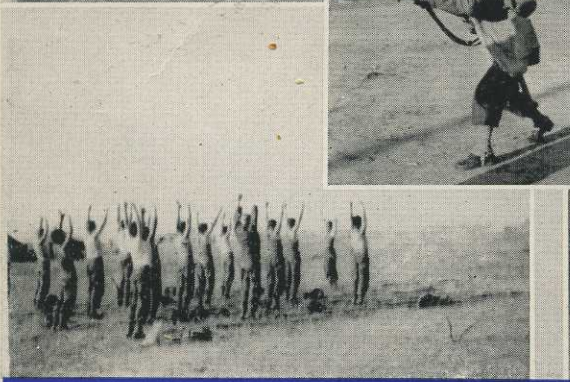
The camp itself derived its name from the late Major General Eben Swift, a distinguished officer who served his country in the Spanish American War and later in many other parts of the world.

Many were the days we boys used to wait for the shuttle buses to take us out the main gate and pass the M.P.'s to catch the bus to Elgin, Austin, Taylor, Bastrop and Houston.





*Oh My Aching Back!*



# YOU'LL BE SORRE-E!

**T**he 554th Engr. Hq. Bn. was activated in Camp Swift, Texas on January 16, 1943. A skeleton force of officers was present, and a handful of key non-commissioned officers, on the date of activation. It was this group which met the trains daily at Dunston and Bastrop, Texas, expecting a group of newly inducted men coming from the North to make up the compliment of enlisted personnel of our battalion. It was late in February when a trainload of men arrived from Camp Custer, Michigan. The majority of the men were from Michigan,



mostly from Detroit and vicinity. Our cadre N.C.O.'s and officers were from the North, East, South and West. The roll was called at the station, and a motely procession in three rows began when

everyone started for the barracks, our future home, which was about a mile distant. Upon our arrival at the barracks we were guided to the dispensary, where we began our many inoculations to safeguard our health, and simultaneously drawing clothing and equipment from the supply rooms. After having drawn our clothing, we were ordered to send all civilian garments home as we would have no further need for them in our stay in the army.

On the second or third day we were told that we were quarantined as several of the boys had gone to the hospital with German measles. On the day the quarantine was supposed to have been lifted,

several of the boys were taken sick with the mumps, which put the battalion right back in quarantine. The two periods combined totaled forty-three days. This was a terrible army life, as the average age in the battalion was twenty-one, and we hadn't received passes into any of the towns, especially Austin, which was to later become the stamping grounds of the 554th Engineers. Later we managed to obtain a few passes. However, just as we were beginning to enjoy army life, some sergeant mentioned and started training us in Basic Training. This meant no passes for the week nights into Austin, and oh how glad to see the week ends come for the next three months.

## BASIC TRAINING

Basic training, known as "those hut, two, three, four, days", was rugged. Having been a civilian for many years and now all at once beginning a conditioning program that would kill a horse was no fun! After a rude awakening by that man with the little brass horn, that stinker, the bugler, we would have breakfast before day break, then clean the barracks, make the bunks, which was an awful task, with not even a wrinkle in the blankets, barracks spotless, shoes shined, and then the bugler again with work call, and those tough sergeants with their whistles sounding off which meant for us to fall out for duty. Then we saw our platoon officers standing out in front of the platoon giving orders to the platoon sergeant. Usually for the first hour we had calisthenics, with an unholy number of pushups and back, leg, neck, shoulder, breathing, waist, and arm exercises. After an hour of this we would have scheduled periods of approximately



an hour each day on military courtesy, discipline, sanitation, close order drill, firing of a rifle, manual of arms, and numerous other subjects.

Basic Training is one thing that every soldier had to go through, and theoretically, it is the learning of the fundamentals of army life.

At the end of three months of basic training, we wondered what would come next, until one day we discovered it was going to be Unit Training.

## UNIT TRAINING

In unit training we were to learn to work together; function and maneuver as a unit.

First we had to get acquainted with our vehicles which were composed of Auto Cars, Macks, semi-trailers, Diamond Ts, G.M.C.s and jeeps. In doing this we were being taught how to really use the vehicles. We called this drivers' training. Each afternoon we had Motor Stables, which meant going down and performing first echelon maintenance. Simultaneously we were handling our bridging equipment and learning the nomenclature.

Each week we had field problems which lasted from one to three days, and later for two weeks consistently. In doing this we were becoming accustomed to

doing without all the modern conveniences. Oh! those damn "slit trenches"! \*

On these problems we were learning compass reading, military tactics, with one company battling against the other; however, during the period we were mainly interested in our bridging and maintenance of our vehicles. \*

In our bridging we first learned the nomenclature of each part of the bridge; later we would have dry-land bridging, which meant that we would put up parts of the bridge on the land just to see how it was fitted together. Next came the job of constructing the bridge on water with a current. We were divided into groups or sections of men and each had a specific duty to perform during the construction of the bridge. One group would set the abutment sill, one the trestle, another the hinge span and many other details. We would put it up, then dismantle it. We did this a number of times so that everyone would understand it completely. \*

It was during those two weeks, when we were bivouaced on the Colorado River between Smithville and Bastrop, Texas, that we mastered the bridge. At about the end of those two weeks, our Battalion Commander, Captain Grauch, formed the Battalion around him on the banks of the river and announced that we had been authorized fifteen day furloughs, which were our first. \*





# SONS OF FUN

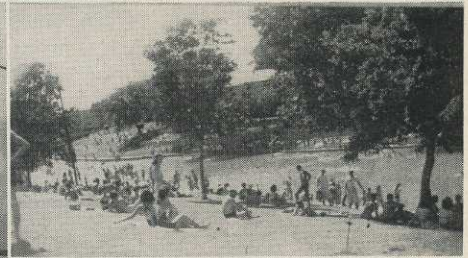
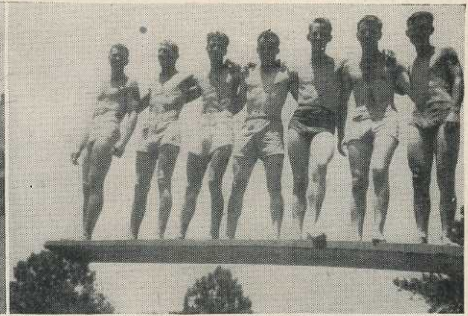
While its true that the Michigan Engineers trained and worked hard at Swift, no one will deny that in their off-duty hours they played equally hard. Some of the favorite hot spots were Jack and Helens, The Oasis, The Taylor Dance Hall and others of less renown. The Driskill "Cowboys" led by Evans, Sible and Nelson took over a section of that hotel each week end they were free. The pools at Swift, Barton Springs and Bastrop State Park furnished healthful outdoor recreation. For more sedate amusement the War

Department movies at the Camp, the USO shows at the Service Clubs and Bastrop furnished plenty to do at all times. Then, of course, there was the outdoor Beer Garden at Swift where we would buy by the case and where Luchay and his gang would always be found. Many of the boys had their wives living close by and some of the farewells when we pulled out for overseas were pretty tearful. Then there were those passes to San Antone, Dallas, Houston and Ft. Worth. All in all the boys will long remember Texas.



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The well remembered theater and bus station at Bastrop • A group of the boys at Bastrop State Park • Dances, Shows, long distance calls, etc., Service Club No. 1, Camp Swift • Fond memories—Barton Springs, Austin • No. 1 Pool at Swift • Stephen Austin Hotel, Austin (the Driskill was across the street) • First Run movies, 15c!





# LOUISIANA

**A**FTER we had all returned from our furloughs and leaves at the end of unit training, we received orders from the Third Army Headquarters, through Fifth Headquarters, which was commanded by Brigadier General Bartholf, that we were to report to the Louisiana Maneuver Area in the vicinity of Leesville, Louisiana, in September, 1943. We did not have our full allowance of vehicles and equipment and we were told that it was all going overseas. Therefore, we had the minimum of equipment for training. This made it very hard to transport all of the units equipment to the maneuver area.

Our first bivouac was on the west side of the Sabine River near Leesville, known as Burr Ferry. It was here that we really learned how to wheel our vehicles as each day came forth with a convoy, and this called for bulldozers to pull vehicles out of the clay ditches. While in this bivouac area Lt. McGee was riding a motorcycle when he struck a cow and broke his leg. He was taken to the hospital and at this time on 25 September, Lt. Wiggins assumed command of "B" Company.

During one phase of maneuvers the Battalion suffered it's first loss due to a serious truck accident on Highway 171. Pvt. Coniglio was killed and eight others injured. This carried the war home to the men for the first time.

We were in all phases of the maneuvers, however, active in but two of them. In the first in which we participated we were ordered to bivouac in the vicinity of Hadden Ferry on the east side of the Sabine River 20 miles from Leesville. When we received the order to move at about eleven o'clock at night, it was raining and there was a great deal of thunder and lightning. We traveled all the way bumper to bumper at a speed of five to six miles an hour.

The following night we were ordered to move up and construct a bridge at Hadden Ferry. We were all so excited and willing to work that the bridge went up in two hours and a half. The bridge was opened to traffic



# MANEUVERS



at twelve o'clock and over seven thousand vehicles passed over this bridge in pursuit of the enemy forces, which were the Red forces. It was our first great triumph on maneuvers.

At the completion of this phase, we dismantled the bridge, loaded it on our trailers, and returned to our bivouac area where we were alerted for the following phase. Then we received orders to move to the vicinity of Burr Ferry and bivouac. It was in this area the enemy forces infiltrated through and planted dynamite on our equipment loaded on the trucks. These vehicles were ruled out as having been destroyed, so they were not eligible to participate in the problem.



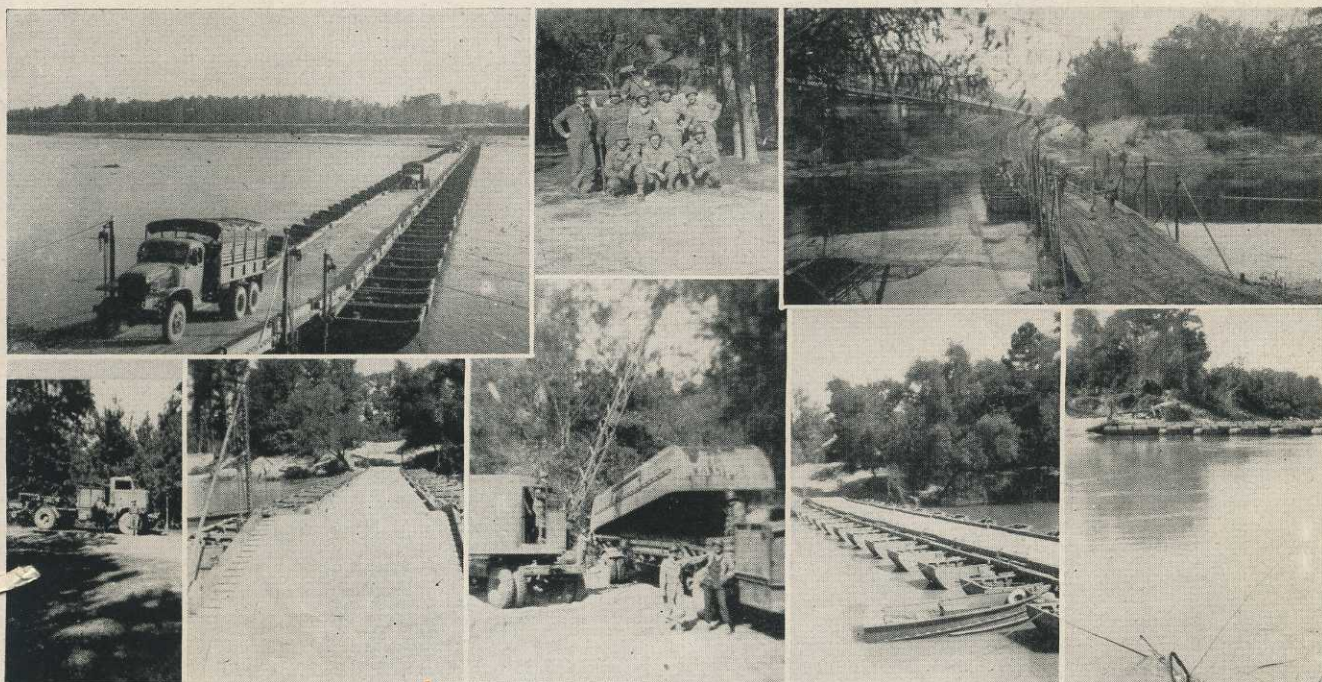
The following night we moved down to Burr Ferry and began the construction of the bridge. Due to the skill of S/Sgt Gent who set six "near shore" trestles by hand, and the speed of Sgt. Wingblad and his crew on the hinge span raft, we broke all records for time needed on the construction of that particular bridge. Sgt. Fife, known as "the abutment kid", laid the abutment sill and then led his crew on to the erection of the trestles. T/4 Pavka, one of the best crane operators in the army, greatly aided operations by his speedy and skillful unloading of the heavy pontoons from the semi-trailers into the Sabine River.



Our bridge was 350 feet long and was finished in three and one half hours, which was definitely and unquestionably a new record for ponton bridging. During construction, visiting officers from the Engineer Board of Fort Belvoir, Virginia, made highly complimentary remarks about the work and about the ability of the men to cooperate with one another. Major General Crittenberger of the XIX Corps commended the Battalion for its superior performance on maneuvers.



This brought our maneuver period to a close. We received orders a few days later to report back to Camp Swift, and we heard rumors that we were going straight overseas.



# EVERYTHING HANGING

Upon arrival at Camp Swift in November, we moved into two-story barracks, which were almost a luxury after the living conditions in the field. We polished all the vehicles, and made up a good looking motor pool, with the big Macks standing in a glistening row and in good order. We then began practice on fixed and floating Bailey bridges.

About the first of December we received word that Company B would make a Training Film of the Heavy Ponton Bridge. It was near Christmas when the representative of the Engineer School Board of Fort Belvoir came down and the film was begun. It was made at bridge site number five on the Colorado River near Bastrop, Texas. It took three and a half days for the picture to be taken, as minute details were explained to the cameraman by each N. C. O. in charge of each working group. The film was to be put into immediate use in the training of Pontoneers who would follow us.

We continued work on all types of bridges until late in February when we became "hot" for an overseas assignment. All leaves and furloughs were cancelled, and all men returned to Camp Swift only to find themselves in the midst of inspection after inspection ("POM") of individual clothing and equipment by higher authorities. All TO & E vehicles were turned in to the post leaving the outfit without transportation. We soon received word that our tentative shipping date had been pushed back to July. This meant an additional four or five weeks of inspections and repacking and recrating of equipment for the overseas movement.

It was during this period that the Cadre of fifty men was transferred to form the 1551st Engr. Hv. Pon. Bn.

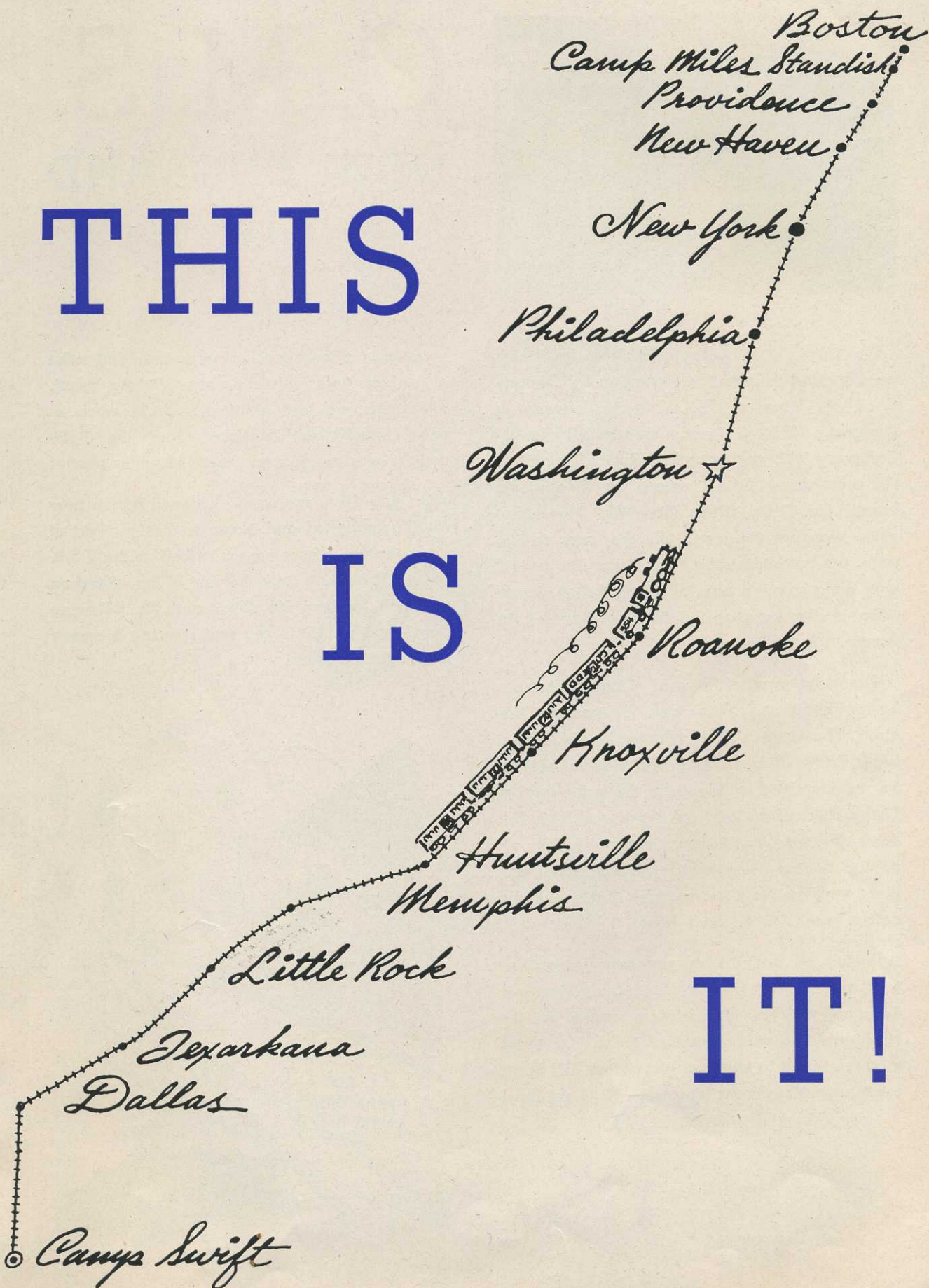
We had completed the 25 mile hike (an overseas requirement), additional range firing, live grenade and bazooka firing, a rigid (?) physical inspection with booster shots, more training films and everything was in readiness.

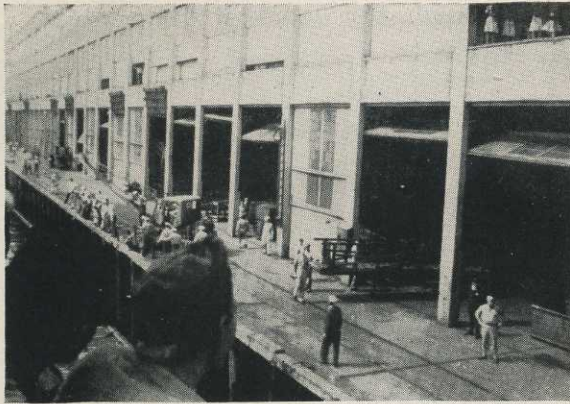


THIS

IS

IT!





# C. M. S.

## NEW ENGLAND IN JULY

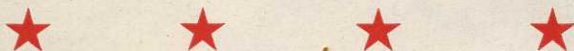
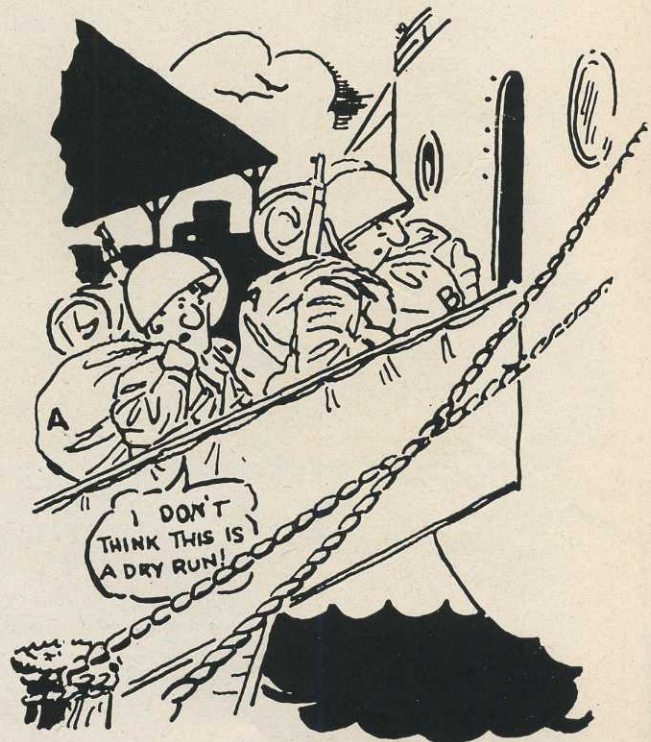
On July 11, 1944, the Michigan Engineers were formed in Battalion formation by Captain Cook of Company "A", Captain Johnson of Company "H & S", and Captain Wiggins of Company "B", and marched down E street to the warehouse district where the troop train bound for Camp Miles Standish, Massachusetts, was awaiting us. On the way to the train, the Battalion song, "Michigan Engineers" was sung many times in hopes that it would echo in the ears of the little lassies left in Austin.

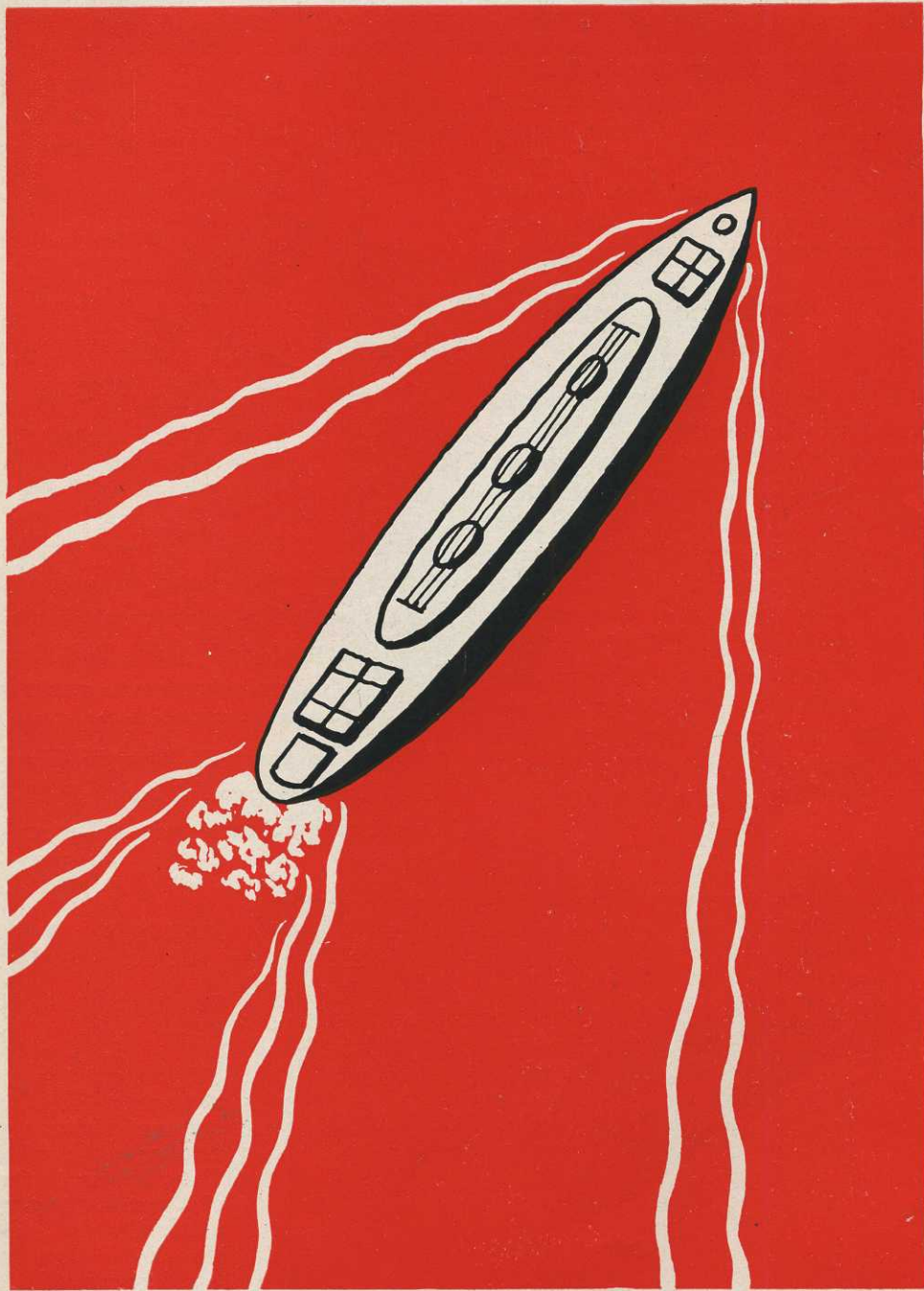
The trip was slow and dreary; through Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas, Tennessee, Virginia, Washington D. C., Pennsylvania, Maryland, Rhode Island, and into Massachusetts. As we prepared to detrain in the rail yards of Camp Miles Standish, we heard a Public Address System roaring out orders; telling us how to detrain, how to form, where to go; and then were led to the barracks that would be called home for the next week.

During off duty hours, passes were authorized, and such cities as Boston (Scully Square!), Taunton, and Providence were aware that the Michigan Engineers were in town. For those who remained in camp, a last phone call home meant sweating out a long line. KP in the huge

mess was a long and arduous task and talks on sea voyages left everyone slightly bored. Then, too, we had additional shots, were issued impregnated uniforms and the light-weight gas mask and the 554th was ready!

On July 23rd, we were entrained at the now familiar railyard and taken to Boston, Port of Embarkation, where we embarked on the U.S.S. Mount Vernon. It took the rest of the afternoon to finish loading the ship, and the following day found us out to sea and steering a course to the British Isles.





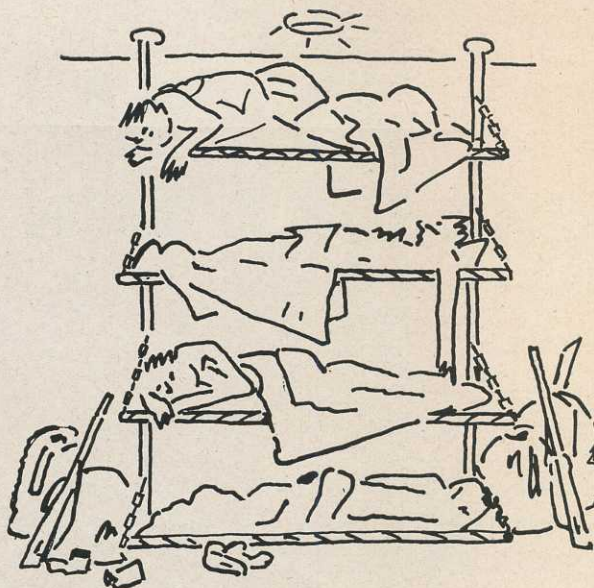
# EUROPEAN INTERLUDE



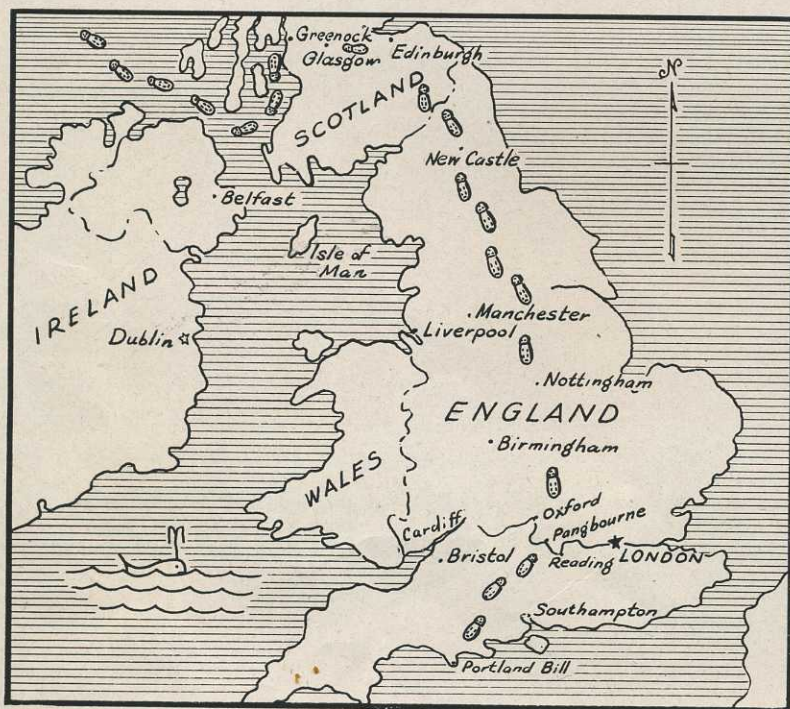
# STARBOARD AND PORT...

It was with a lump in our throats that we took the last look we would have of America for many months as the U.S.S. Mount Vernon (formerly the S.S. Washington) pulled out of Boston Harbor on the 24th of July. The first day out was mostly spent in debate as to whether we were going to the Pacific Theater or the European Theater, but on the second day we were told that we were going to the British Isles.

The food and the accommodations on the Mount Vernon were not the best. We did not know whether to "gripe" or not since we did not know what the foreign land would be like. We were issued booklets to acquaint us with the English people and some of their customs. Rumor after rumor spread as to where we would land. On the morning of the seventh day, we sailed into the Firth of Clyde in Scotland. A British General came on board and gave us a welcoming and orientation speech. It was here that we witnessed our first sights of war wreckage as we viewed the many vessels demolished by the Germans in previous raids.



We were transferred to a barge-like craft which carried us to Greenock, Scotland, where we debarked and found Red Cross women with coffee and doughnuts awaiting us. We then boarded an English train (what "beat-up" jobs!) and traveled through Glasgow, Edinburgh, Nottingham, Oxford, and on down to Pangbourne, near Reading, England.



## "YOU CAWN'T MISS IT!"

Upon arriving at the train station in Pangbourne, we met our advance party who had preceded us by a month. They led us to the outskirts of town and to our barracks at Combe Lo Camp, a British installation, which we found very untidy. The troops who had originally occupied them had participated in the invasion of the continent along the coast of France. It was our first experience with Quonset Huts.

After settling down, we converted our American dollars into English currency. When we walked into stores

or "pubs" we would just lay some money on the table and hope and pray that the people were honest and were giving us the right change.

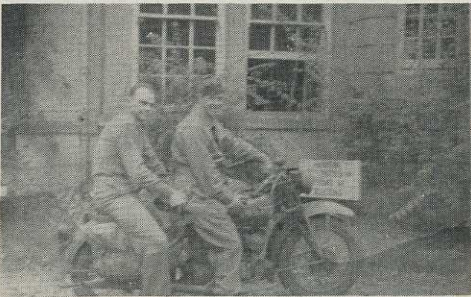
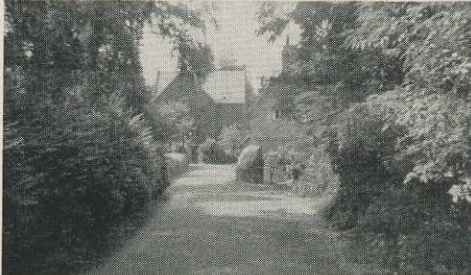
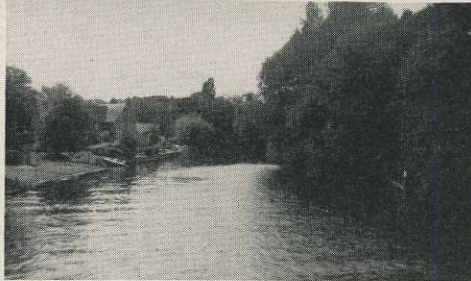
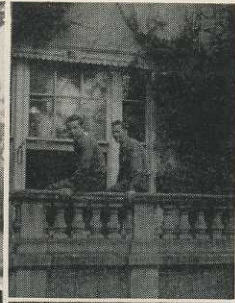
The pubs were plentiful and well patronized by our boys. We could buy two kinds of beer, light and dark. It was a few days later that we learned that there were two prices on the beer, which was due to the class of people, rich or poor.

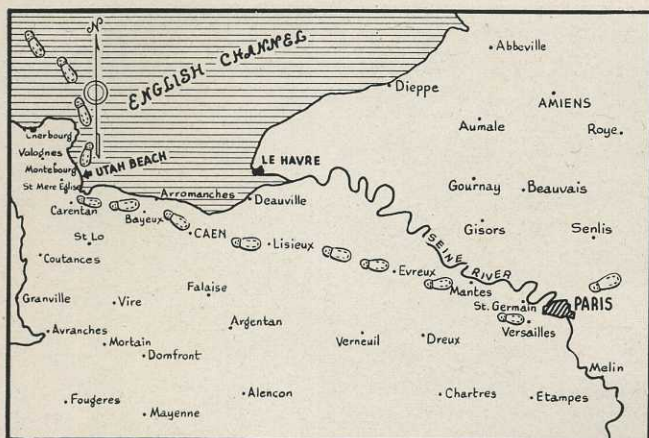
Passes were authorized and the womenfolk were plentiful. They were far from beautiful, but their companionship was greatly appreciated by our boys. As for a certain Pfc., Pearly Park was heaven. In fact, it was heaven for several men, as it was here that most of the English girls who were evacuees from London and Liverpool came for relaxation. It was here that the social calls really made work of the switchboard—ask Wines! Passes were also authorized for Reading and nearby towns, and occasionally a few were authorized for London. No one was considered to have visited London unless he had been through Picadilly Circus.

The widely known Thames (pronounced "Tems") River runs through Pangbourne, and it was here that we practiced with our stormboats. It was a pleasure, as along the Thames banks it is very beautiful and picturesque. Most of all, it was a playground for most of the English girls who would come down and watch us.

Our stay in Pangbourne was not all play, as we were drawing our TO & E equipment from all corners of the British Isles. Then came the job of getting it in shape, as we were leaving for the continent in the near future.

Bn. Hq. at Pangbourne • Wines and St. Pierre take a break from the switchboard • The beautiful Thames • Wiggins with his boys • The path to the mill house • Buddies • Furr and Harvey • A London "Bobbie" • Picadilly, London • The Greystone Pub, Pangbourne • Church of England, Whitchurch, Oxonshire, England.





# D-DAY PLUS 90

At last the Battalion was fully equipped, and on the last day of August we left Pangbourne for an unknown destination. We wound over the twisty roads of southern England, with some of the vehicles becoming temporarily lost, but at lunch time the Convoy was again regrouped and all noses counted. We moved into the Assembly Area in late after-

noon in foul weather. A lot of equipment had been left behind in the Area and many of the boys equipped themselves with cots and one group even appropriated a 50 cal. MG! They had to return this, however, Commandos!

After waiting out the storm for two days we finally moved on to Portland Isle where we boarded 17 LST's and LCT's. The Channel was still too rough for the crossing, so we sat it out in the Harbor for another couple of days. All of the ships finally crossed and made the landing at Utah Beach by the sixth of September. Some of the men could not enjoy the good Navy food on the way over as they spent most of their time hanging over the rail, or in their hammocks. At Utah we followed the paths that were marked "cleared of mines" over rough roads to the St. Germain Assembly Area where one of the first large "mail calls" we had in two weeks helped to raise the morale of the men.



Some of "B" Co. aboard the LST's . . . The RR's ran on the main streets in France . . . Sacre Coeur-Church in Paris . . . Place de la Concorde . . . Notre Dame.

# JE NE COMPRENDS PAS!



Upon landing on the continent we were "loaned" by the Ninth Army to the First Army for an impending operation, and after the Battalion was entirely reassembled the Convoy pulled out in the early hours of September 9th for a destination somewhere in Belgium. The route was to be via Bayeaux, Caen, Mantes, Paris, Soissons, LaCappelle, Dinant and Nandrin. Due to the refusal of the English to let our Convoy pass thru their assigned sector our vehicles became scattered over a wide area of France, and it was not until two days later that we were regrouped at St. Cloud on the outskirts of Paris.

(T/5 Iafrati was lost for three weeks). Some of the earlier arrivals had a very good opportunity to see the sights of Gay Paree, and to get acquainted with some of it's madamoiselles. During this time snipers were still active for the city had been liberated but a very short time.

When we finally did move we did so at night, for security reasons traveling only two miles and bivouacing in the Bois de Boulogne, after which we again moved out before day-break the following morning. Due to the suddenness of the move some of the boys were left behind.



Capaldi and his cousin (?) in Paris . . . War Crimes building, Paris . . .  
The famous Arch of Triumph . . . Paris Opera House . . . Eiffel Tower.

## AND SO TO BELGIUM . .

After leaving Paris we broke our journey to Nandrin by a three day stop-over in a bivouac area at LaCappelle. We then continued on and moved into the estate surrounding the Chateau Imperiali, near Nandrin, Belgium. This was owned by a Marquis and his family, who claimed that he belonged to the Belgium resistance movement.

We were living in tents and the weather turned quite rainy and cold, and after about a month of this "B" Company moved to Huy on the Meuse, "A" Company moved into the Chateau Bougnia at Tavieres, and H & S Company moved inside the Chateau Imperiali. During this time the Battalion was engaged



Front of Chateau Imperiali at Nandrin

in further training in bridge construction, rafting, outboard motor operator training and transporting Engineer equipment to forward areas.

While the town of Liege was "off limits" we were permitted to go in and enjoy the luxury of showers and swimming in the six story building devoted to that purpose. (The beer and "glace" on the sixth floor was an added attraction). It was also during this time that Aachen was captured and some of our men were in the city while the fighting was still going on and one certain Captain got "winged" while souvenir hunting. Aachen was the last major point captured before the Allied offensive bogged down in the mud and cold of a European winter.





Treadway over Meuse . . . German "Baby Factory" . . . Chateau Bougnia Taviors . . . Manikin . . . Vapor Trails . . . a typical farm-yard . . . Peck, Vanek and Pafka . . . Main street in Nandrin . . . Chateau at Huy where "B" Co. stayed . . . Olt and Strang . . . Tynan demonstrates the "rugged" life . . . Demyttenaere and Bowdoin with their little Belgium sweetheart . . . "Pappy" Shook steps gingerly thrus the mud . . . Some of the H/S boys give a motor the "once-over" . . . One of the Pontons equipped with "bow-adapters" which the 554th built . . . Finally a couple of horses which the Germans overlooked.

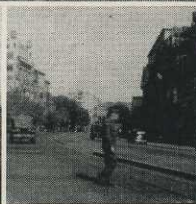
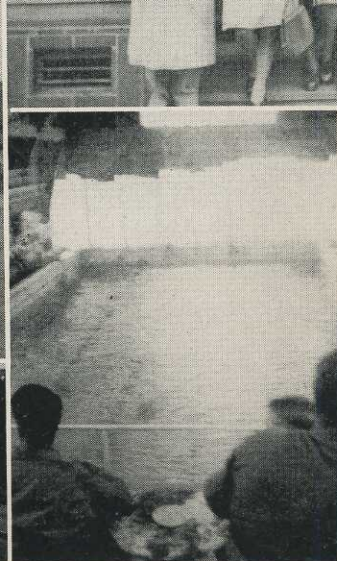
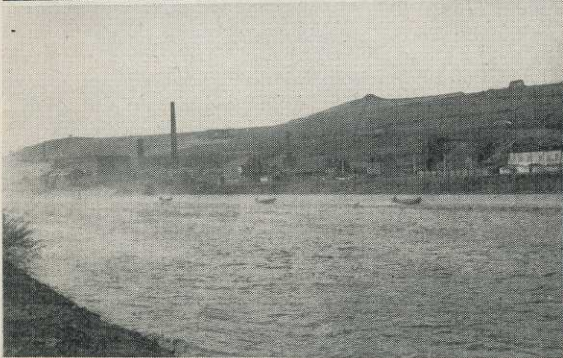
# FIERCE WAS THE PAIN!

The duties of the Battalion during the month of October and November were many and varied. Many hours were spent in building and maneuvering three and five boat rafts in the swift current of the Meuse River. The objective was to start and land at exact points. There were as many as fourteen men handling the various details on each single raft which were designed to ferry various types of equipment, including tanks.

Another job was putting into service and breaking in British Propulsion Units in connection with English "pontoons". There were many descriptive "adjectives" used during this period. While this was going on the stormboat and outboard experts were training additional men. The carpenters with a lot of other assistants built ponton bow adapters to fit all of the 554th equipment which were supposed to keep the pontoons from swamping in swift currents. Our Tractors and Trailers were busy on detached service, hauling timber in the Aachen area.

"B" Company experienced a humorous incident. The Belgium Army requested their assistance in storming a hill and house where there were supposed to be some saboteurs. The only thing they found to shoot at were a couple of cows, but the operation did yield a few bottles of whiskey from the basement!

During the latter part of November "H & S" Company moved into Liege where they were quartered in a former school building, located near the main supply routes and bridges, which were prime targets for the Jerries' V-1's. These were coming over in a round-the-clock schedule, and the boys promptly nicknamed it "Buzz Bomb Alley". Most of the windows were blown out from the concussion, and some of the walls were cracking and starting to cave in. It was while we were here that the General Hospital suffered a direct hit. No one was sorry when we pulled out for Holland the Saturday after Thanksgiving.



Panorama of Liege . . . The Basilique and World War I memorial on the hill overlooking Liege—the memorial had a gaping hole half way up at one corner . . . The Pont de Fragnee as it looked before it was blasted into the river . . . The wedding party at Tilft, you'll recognize the groom and Mrs. Childs as well as Major Simmons . . . Stormboat training on the Meuse . . . Ruins of industrial district of Liege caused principally by Allied bombings . . . Monte Levin dodges the GI drivers in Liege . . . The swimming pool on the top floor of the "Bain Douche" place in Liege . . . Rutter churns up the water.



# THE LAND OF WINDMILLS AND WOODEN SHOES

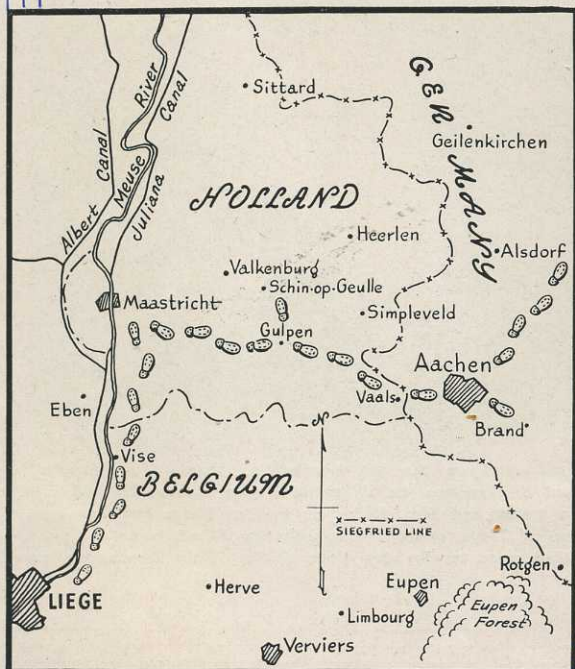
Upon moving to Holland the Battalion reverted to the control of the Ninth Army. Due to difficulty in finding billets of sufficient size we were split up and billeted in three different places. "A" Company at Schin op Guelle, "B" Company at Vaals and H & S and Headquarters at Gulpen. It was while we were at these places that we spent our first Christmas in a foreign country, and many of the Hollanders entertained us over the holiday season. We in turn had a couple of parties for the youngsters.

The Dutch Santa is called "Black Pete" and "A" Company's Madjseki blackened his face and played the part. The men contributed their candy and gum rations for this party. Another party for the youngsters was held in the school at Gulpen, and over 200 kids of all ages attended. The men again filled several boxes with candy, chewing gum etc., added to the cake and hot chocolate H & S kitchen whipped up.

It was also during this time that the Luftwaffe suddenly came to life in preparation for the last great German offensive. Single planes would come over almost every night, bombing and strafing, and there were constant rumors of paratroopers being dropped behind the lines. As a result the guard detail was doubled, and machine guns were manned day and night.

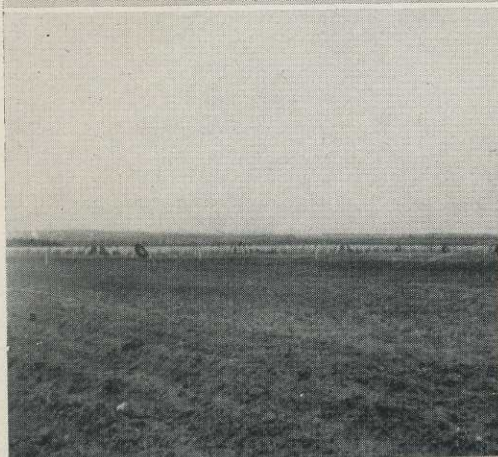
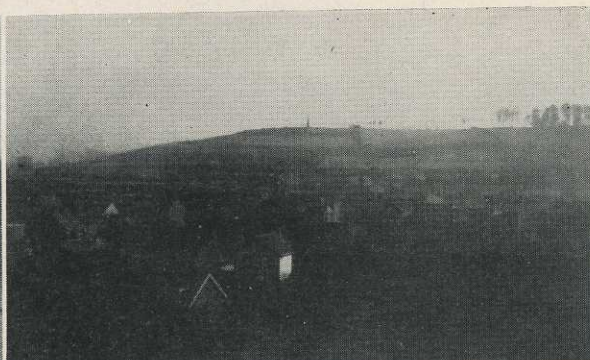
Many of the men in the Battalion, together with our tractors and trailers engaged in hauling timber in the Eupen forest, and in the area of Rotgen, both of which were located in the immediate vicinity of the break-through, and it was for this activity that the Battalion was awarded the Ardennes Campaign star.

The offensive reached it's farthest forward point shortly after Christmas when the Battalion received orders to move to the west side of the Meuse River.





Haus Vaalsbrocht b. Vaals (Holland)



"B" Co. stayed here (Vaals) . . . The hill overlooking Gulpen where the first American tank appeared . . . The American cemetery at Margraten, midway between Maastricht and Gulpen on Nr 1 . . . A common scene in Holland . . . Co. "A" Supply—Culbert, Bauer and Hall . . . Some of the "B" Co. men make music at Vaals . . . A little Hollander . . . A few "A" Co. men cut up on Xmas Day at Schin-op-Guelle . . . Bottom: Left to right—Gay, Kelly, Honeysette, Evans and Koper.

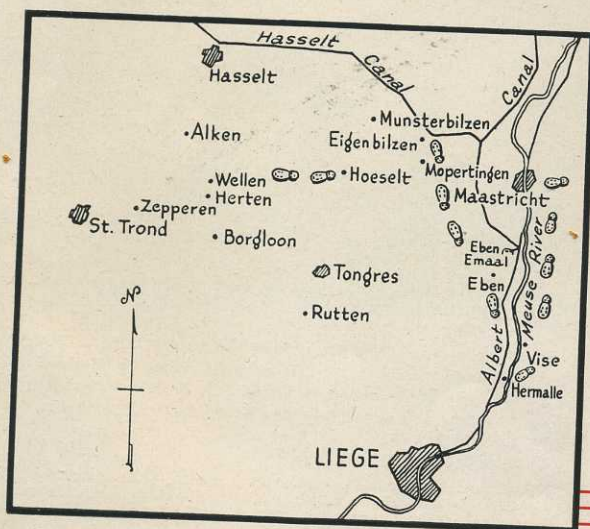
# SPARE THAT TREE!

After the Battalion left Holland, during the last week of 1944, they paused for a couple of days beside the Meuse River and prepared the bridge at Vise for demolition. We then received an assignment for operating 13 lumber mills. "A" Company was located at Wellen in the school buildings of the town. "B" Company at Mopertingen and H & S Company at Eben in a large hall, which had a tavern on the ground floor. The men found the natives extremely friendly, and the hospitality was enjoyed by all.

The 459th Duck Company was attached to the Battalion for the lumbering operation. This included negotiating with the owners for standing timber, felling the trees, hauling them to the mills, and delivering the finished timber to forward Engineer Dumps. The actual sawing in the mills was performed by Belgians, but we had NCO's who supervised each mill and kept records of the logs in, and the lumber out. These records were assembled and compiled at Battalion Headquarters, and during the five weeks in which we operated, new production records were established. The 554th scored again. Versatile—that's us!

It was at Wellen that "A" Company uncovered and broke up a civilian black market of looted G. I. items, which were being sold to the natives at fabulous prices.

On the last day of January we received orders to move to the vicinity of Aachen for the impending Roer River crossing.





Assault boat training, Meuse River, Vise, January, Brrr! . . . Panorama at Maastricht, notice city hall where our pass trucks always waited . . . "Uncle Dave" Egelhoff at Eben . . . Joe Brown at Wellen . . . Some of "A" Co., note the mud . . . Outboard expert "Red" Rutter . . . Skyline Bridge—unusual BB construction over Albert Canal . . . A Dutch barge on the Maas (Meuse) . . . Ed watches Rich eat snow . . . HQ at Eben . . . Rule poses for a fast snap . . . A break during lumber operations, "A" Co. at Wellen . . . Just to prove there was snow . . . The Maas and it's parallel canal and one of the main bridges at Maastricht (before the Nazis blew it).

# AACHEN . . . . .

Upon arriving in Aachen we were immediately put on the alert to be ready to construct a bridge across the Roer River at Julich.

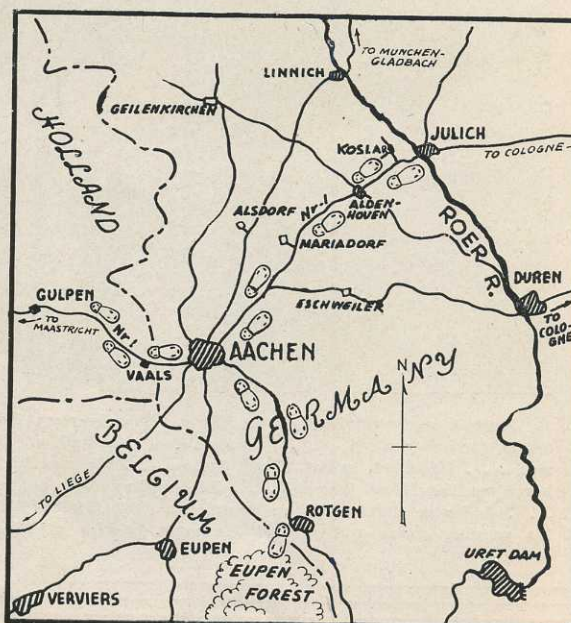
The Jerries apparently sensed the Allied preparation for making the crossing, consequently they opened the flood gates of the Schwammenauel and Urft Dams, which flooded the Roer Valley along it's entire length, in some places to a width of over a mile. During this period "A" Company with H & S were located in Brand on the outskirts of Aachen, and "B" Company was billeted in some bombed-out buildings in Aachen.

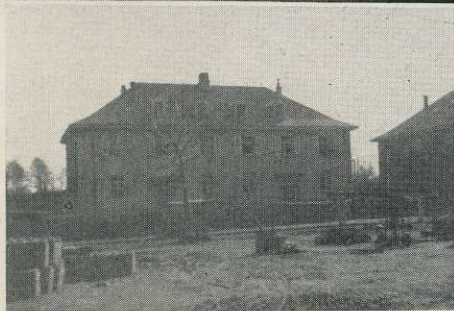
While waiting for the flood water to recede the Battalion put up a practice bridge on a lake near Aachen. This work was done to determine the exact time for building and dismantling.

We also had some observers keeping check on the height and flow of the headwaters. It was here that Wingo's jeep hit a German mine, completely demolishing the vehicle, and hospitalizing Wingo. These men at the observation post had direct observation of the enemy outposts, and likewise were under observation. All river readings had to be made in extreme quiet, under cover of darkness.

The decision finally came down from higher headquarters (XIX Corps, 1104th E. Gp.) that conditions would be favorable on the 23rd of February, and during the late afternoon of the 22nd, Colonel Grauch briefed the entire Battalion, and all equipment and personnel engaged in the operation moved forward that night to the hill overlooking Julich.

HQ at Brand . . . Some of Aachen's ruins . . .  
 More of the same . . . Egelhoff and Simmons . . .  
 Backes and one of the pillboxes that guarded Aachen  
 . . . H/S orderly room and billets at Brand . . . Ditto  
 "A" Co. . . . Chrysler tries out a pair of "captured"  
 roller skates . . . Part of the HQ "brass"—Grauch,  
 Grout, Nelson, Fisher and Levin . . . More ruins . . .  
 Three views of the Siegfried Line near Aachen . . .  
 Another pillbox disguised as a house.





# THE ROER

Everyone sat tensely waiting for "H" hour, which was scheduled for 0300 hours 23rd February. At this time the greatest barrage of artillery ever fired started to roar overhead. This was taking place on both the Ninth and First Army fronts, and was planned to soften up the many gun positions the Germans had dug in the preceding weeks.

The 554th was scheduled to move up to the bridge site at "H" hour plus one, following the assault crossing of the 29th Division. Construction was scheduled to start at this time, but was impossible due to the continued heavy mortar and 88 fire from the enemy side. Time

dragged on until the break of day when the personnel moved up to the site, only to be scattered time after time. It was during this period that several of the men were hit. At eleven o'clock the other bridges were reported to be knocked out, and it was ordered that ours must proceed, regardless of cost. At 1615 hours the bridge was opened to traffic and the tanks attached to the Division crossed. After this the far shore was rapidly cleared of all enemy fire.

Lt. Childs and Pvts. Yuergins and Bollenbacher were killed, and fourteen enlisted men were wounded.



Bronze stars awarded to Grauch, Simpson, Wiggins, Murray, Fife, Pavka and Stone. Ten certificates of merit were also awarded and Sgts. Wingblad, Gent and Mundy received battlefield commissions, as a result of this operation. Captain Wiggins was in charge of construction. Many others were cited for their parts in this first test under fire in which each and every man fulfilled his part. It was a shining example of teamwork at its best.

The 554th bridge was the first vehicular bridge completed and opened in either Army sector, and under the conditions was considered a real feat of engineering. Letters of commendation were received from Corps Headquarters as well as Group Headquarters.

On page opposite is aerial view of Julich while shelling was taking place. Note bombed-out bridges and "Sports Palast" at left • On this page are views of Roer bridge during construction and after completion.





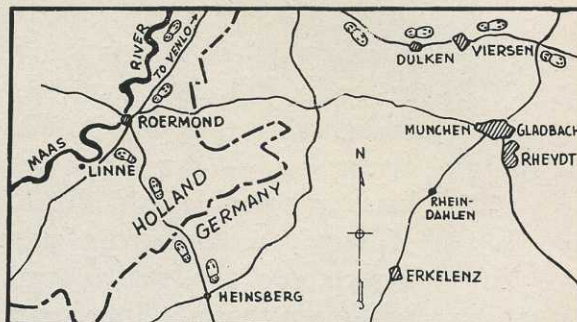


Bn. HQ at Koslar . . . "Horizontal" in an uprights pose . . . The centuries-old Citidal at Julich . . . Peck, Sobzack, Vanek and Wozowicz have a roadside snack . . . We didn't see Berlin but we helped the others get there . . . One of the master-race gives up . . . Murray on the Bridge . . . The broken infantry bridge with a soldier's body . . . Construction progresses on the fixed bridge at Julich . . . Hall, Gregory, Rule and Graus "take 10" . . . this was a Kraut machine gun nest . . . Herbert looks 'em over . . . Weik, Brown and Reynolds.

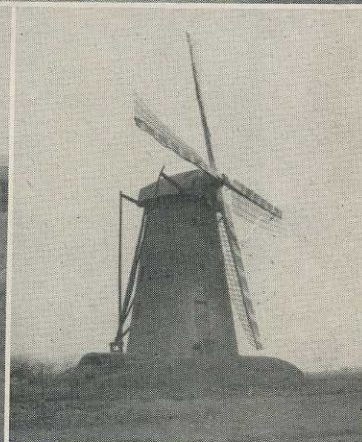
# BACK TO HOLLAND

After the Roer Crossing the 554th was then attached to the 1142nd Engr. (C) Gp., still under XIX Corps, and was engaged in maintaining seven bridges. On 2 March all stormboats and operators were attached to the 258th Engr. (C) Bn. to train new operators for the impending assault crossing of the Rhine. This mission assumed gargantuan proportions with an influx of men only briefly acquainted with outboard motors and a limited time schedule. Within the space of forty-eight hours over one hundred full-fledged operators were turned out by our stormboat detachment.

On 12 March 1945 the battalion was relieved of attachment to the XIX Corps and attached to the XVI Corps and further to the 1153rd Engr. (C) Gp. and moved to Linne.



Holland. Co. "B" 171st Engr. (C) Bn. was attached to Co. "B" of the 554th. Further river training was initiated as well as additional hauling to depots. The entire battalion moved 18 March to Kamp, Germany, to complete final preparation for the Rhine Crossing.



# OPERATION FLASHPOINT

★ At last the goal of over two years was in sight, the Rhine River Crossing or "Operation Flashpoint" as it was known by in code. All thru training and maneuvers this was to be THE operation — the most gigantic bridging problem in the history of warfare. Elaborate preparations were evident everywhere while we were billeted in Kamp and Lintfort and huge piles of equipment of every description could be seen in the woods or under camouflage nets. Even the Navy had a hand in the planning.

★ This operation wasn't postponed like the Roer Crossing— Jerry didn't have any dams to open this time, and the Rhine was within two feet of the lowest level in a ten year period. The weather experts also promised favorable weather lasting several days. Our chosen bridge site

had a strip of beach about two hundred feet wide with an earth dike which protected the adjoining country from floods. The nearest house was about five hundred yards away. We were assigned to the sector on the left flank of the Ninth Army and on our left was the British Second Army. The 554th was split up for three different assignments in connection with the crossing. Part of "A" Co. with "B" Co. of 171st Engr. (C) Bn. were to install an anti-mine and submarine boom at Buderich. This was under Captain Simpson's command. The balance of "A" and all of "B" Co. together with the 180th Engr. Hv. Pon. Bn. were assigned to the Ponton Bridge. The 554th had the far shore detail. The third important task was the assault boat crossing with H/S Equipment Section, ten men from "A" and seven from "B" Co. attached to the 258th Engr. (C) Bn. and under the command of Lt. Levin.

At 0100 hours 24 March the Artillery opened up in unprecedented violence and this lasted for one hour. At 0200 the storm-boat operators crossed the dike and in quick unison launched their boats which were to ferry the first wave of the 30th Infantry Div. across the twelve hundred feet of water that

(Continued on Page 60)

