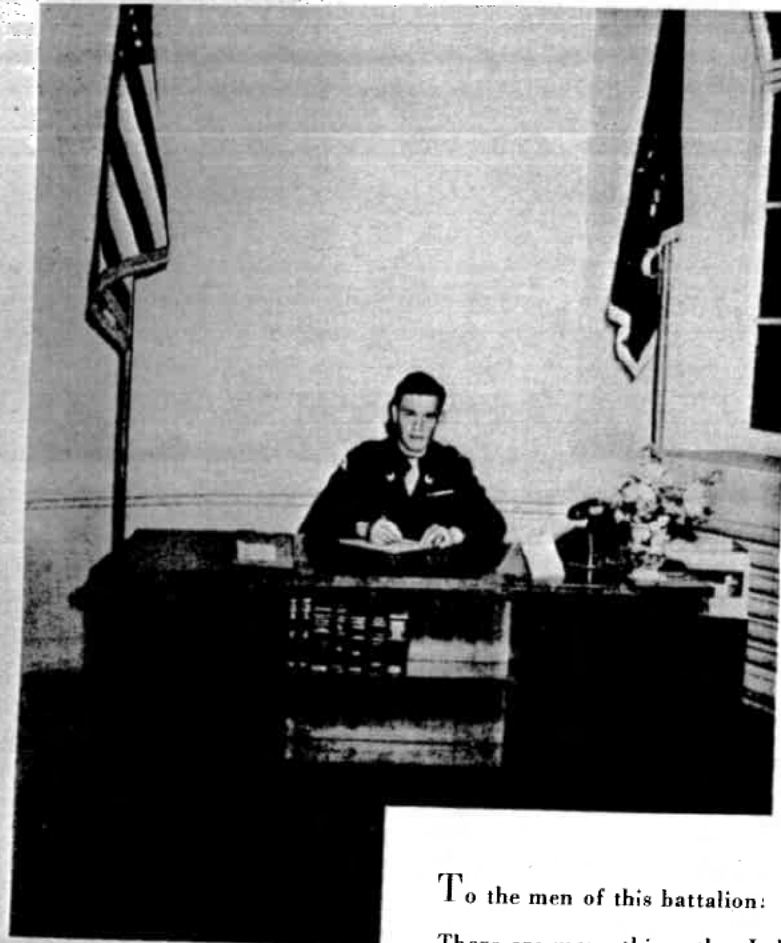




256TH

ENGINEER

BATTALION



To the men of this battalion:

There are many things that I should like to say to you — — many memories both pleasant and otherwise that I should like to talk over with you. There is, however, one main idea which I sincerely hope that I can get across to every man — and that is the fact that all of our success as well as the credit that has been given to us by those with whom we have associated could not have been possible were it not for the splendid cooperation and spirit which you have displayed. You have given, from the day of activation until now that extra something which is indefinable and yet means the difference between just a good outfit and a superior one. I should like you to know that I consider it the outstanding privilege of my career to have commanded you, and I can only hope that you will remember our association with the same amount of pride and pleasure that I do.

George R. Hull

D E D I C A T I O N

To soda clerks, to farm boys, to steel workers — — to the soldiers who live and to those who gave their lives — — to your friends in the Army, to the good and bad times you had together — — — — to all these things and to many more could this book be dedicated. Rather than to these, we dedicate this book to the knowledge kept by each and every one of you, that you fought for a just cause and must now see that tomorrow justice is not a hollow word in the world.

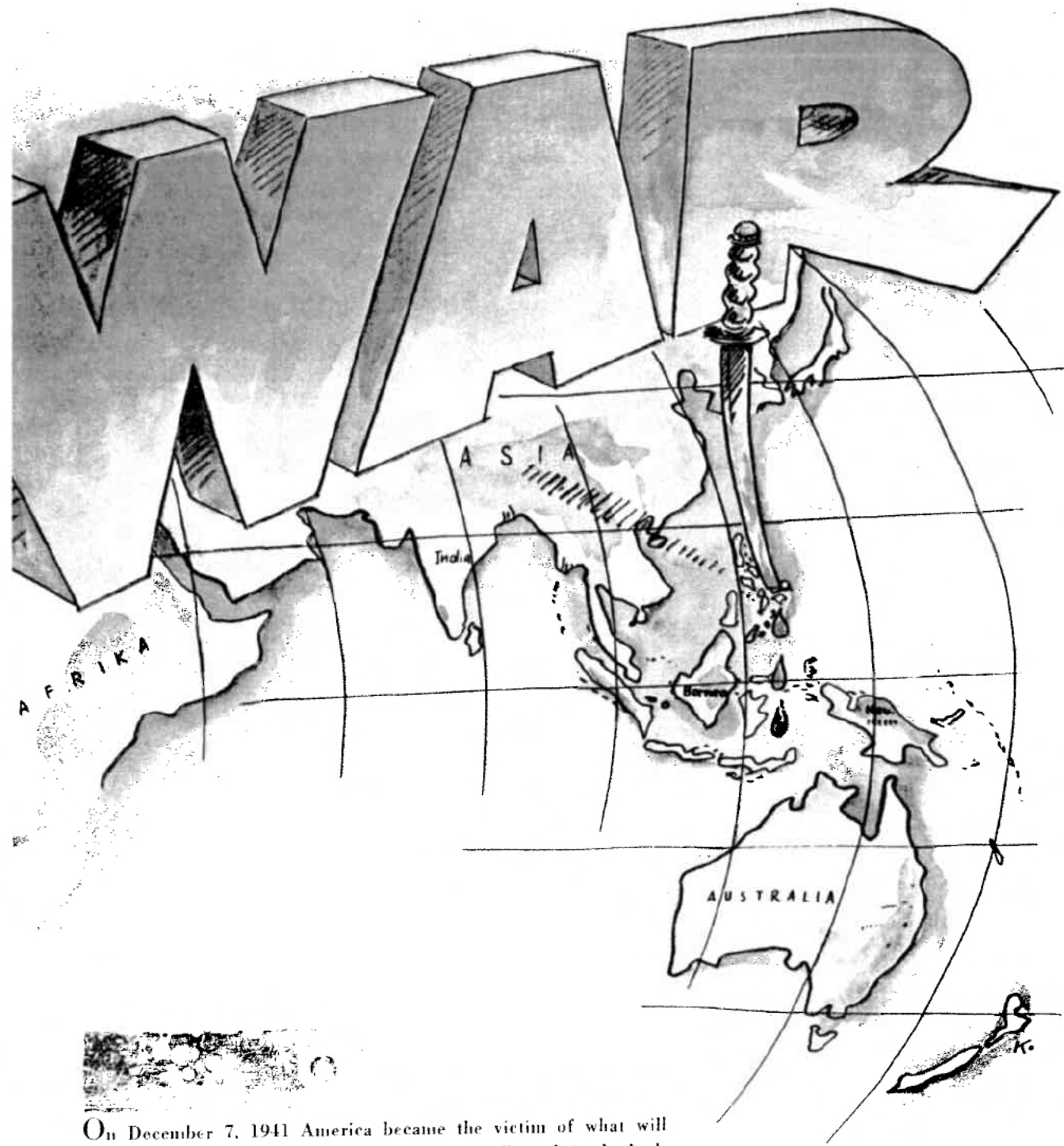
THE HISTORY OF YOUR BATTALION

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PART I
ACTIVATION



On December 7, 1941 America became the victim of what will probably go down in history as the most dastardly stab in the back that one nation has ever suffered from another — PEARL HARBOR.

Over night our nation was converted from a feeling of detachment from the war raging in the other parts of the world to one of seething indignation and firm, resolution that the threat of the Axis Powers would be crushed. In spite of all its efforts to keep the peace, and to avoid becoming involved in a second great period of bloodshed far greater than that of 1914, America was rudely awakened to tragic reality — War was no longer to be avoided — — WAR WAS NOW FACT.



Although the drafting of men into the armed forces had already been in operation for many months previous to Pearl Harbor, the number of men now needed to meet the emergency was sky rocketed to many times the original figure.

The drafting was, in a period of days, greatly accelerated and with the thousands of men pouring into reception centers from Maine to Florida, from Washington to Mexico, hundreds of new camps were set up for the raining of these men.

One of these hundreds — — deep in Georgia's sandhills — was desolate, sparse Camp Gordon. Chosen because of the very qualities that made it so unusual to live in, it was ideal for the conversion of soft, easy-going civilians into disciplined, hardened soldiers.

It was at this camp on Nov. 5, 1943 that the activation of a new battalion took place — — the 256TH ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION.

MAJ. THOMAS J. RIGGS JR.



1ST LT. LEON BANDES



CAPT. DONATO G. DIMANNO

1ST LT. IVAN W. HORNE

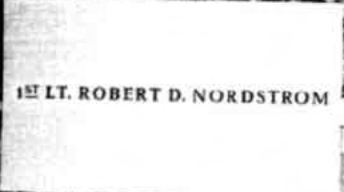


1ST LT. GEO. W. HENDERSON



CAPT. JAMES E. WALKER

1ST LT. ROBERT D. NORDSTROM



CAPT. THOMAS B. RILEY

2ND LT. JAMES A. GORMAN



CADRE OFFICERS NOT PICTURED:
2ND LT. FRANCIS S. KANE
2ND LT. JOSEPH E. APPENFELDER



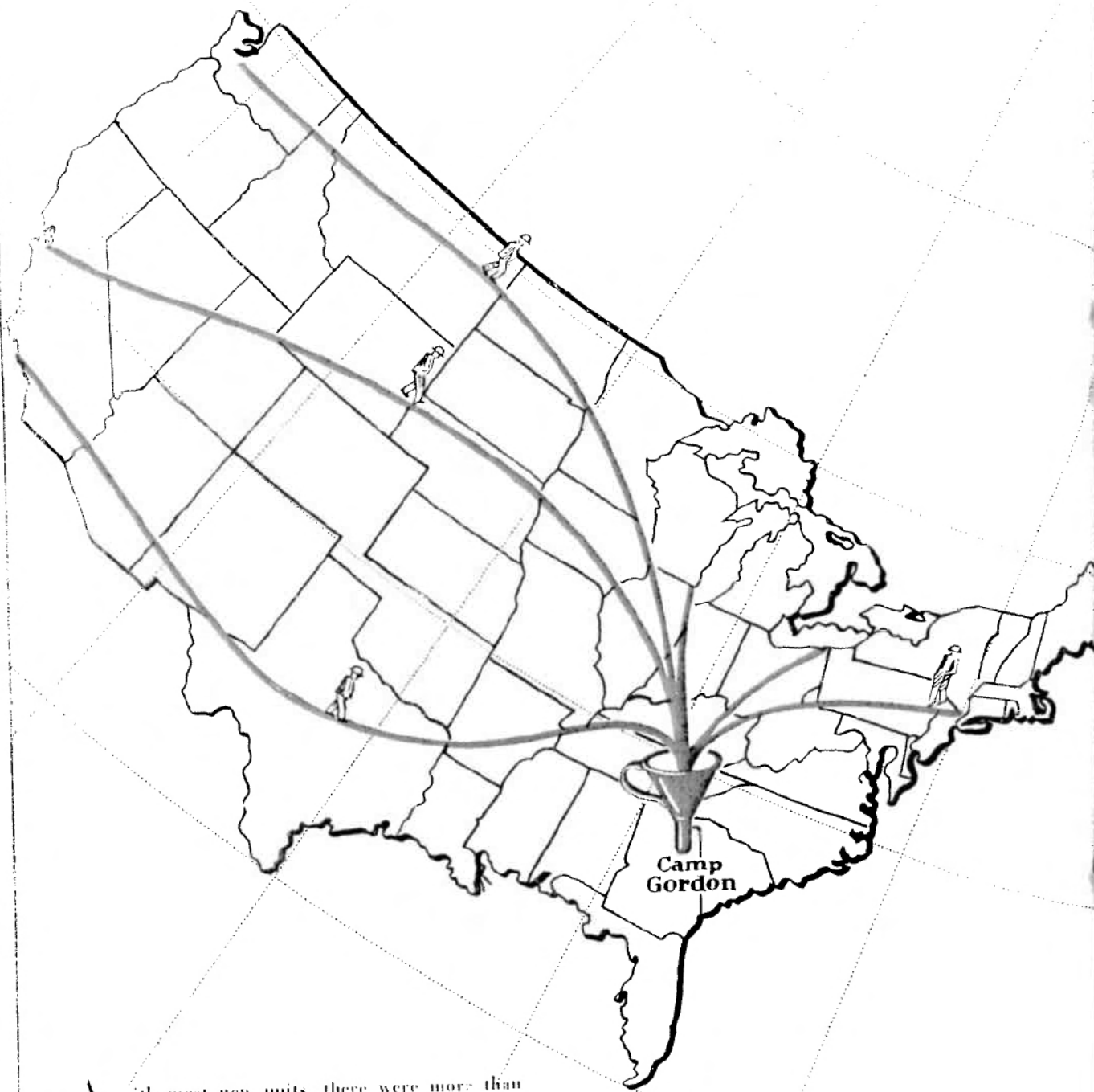
1ST LT. SAMUEL F. DUGGAN



2ND LT. PAUL M. CROSBY



2ND LT. ALBERT E. DONNELLY



As with most new units, there were more than a few difficulties that confronted each man in the battalion. The main problems, however, were those of administration.

Replacements arriving at odd intervals, misleading information of classification cards, return for correction of rosters by the Adjutant General, these were but a few of the administrative headaches. Gradually however, the kinks were straightened out and functions became routine.

Late in December, 1943, Major Riggs was transferred out of the battalion by Second Army and soon after Major Hull was given command by headquarters of the XXI Corps.

It was also in December of this year that S/Sgt Percy Vaughn, personnel sergeant, was appointed WOJG and assigned to the battalion as personnel officer. This was the first promotion of an enlisted man to officer grade in the battalion.



"Squeeze that Trigger Soldier!"

On January the 3d, 1944 BASIC TRAINING was begun. The sequence of events that each man found himself going through was the same that every GI in this man's army has at one time or another undergone.

At reveille of the first day the customary roll was taken after which the men returned to their barracks to clean the buildings, make up beds in accordance with previous instructions and to see that everything was generally in order. The customary arguments over the proper way to make up the bed or to arrange clothing and equipment ensued, however, before many days these phases of training too became but routine matters.

The days following were filled with one continuous series of orientations, sanitation classes, first aid, rifle marksmanship, obstacle courses, carpentry, military courtesy and all the other subjects that a soldier must have during basic training.

PART II
BASIC TRAINING

BASIC TRAINING



TIMBER BRIDGE TRAINING



BAILEY BRIDGE TRAINING



BRIDGE CARPENTERS



MINE PROBING



BRIDGE TIMBER PREPARATION



BALL GAME AT GORDON



COMMUNICATIONS



"A" COMPANY COMMUNICATIONS



AND STILL MORE BAILEY TRAINING



USING AIR COMPRESSION



RIGGERS AT WORK



DEMOLITIONS



DRILLING WITH AIR



WATER PURIFICATION

CHLORINATOR

F1



HALFWAY DONE



BRIDGE TRAINING SITE

SHAPE CHARGE



BEFORE



AFTER



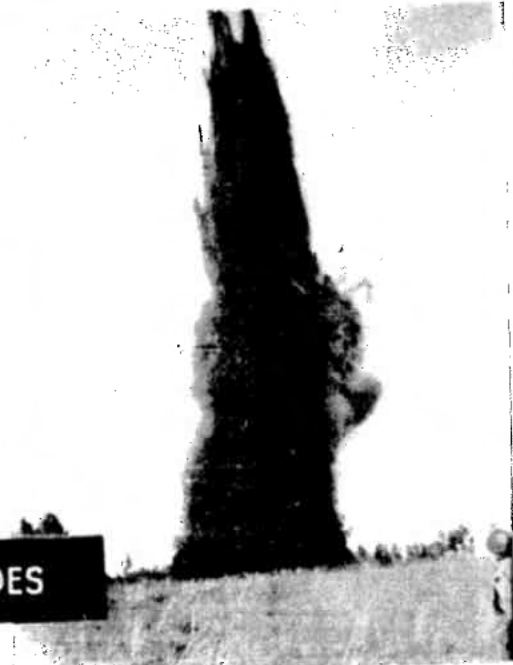
DEMOLITION

AFTER THE SHOT

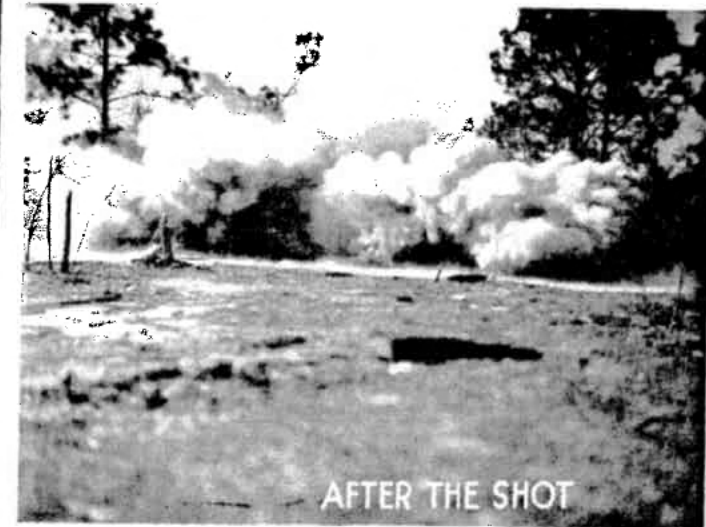


DEMOLITION CLASS

THERE IT GOES



"THE MAIN THING TO REMEMBER IS ___"

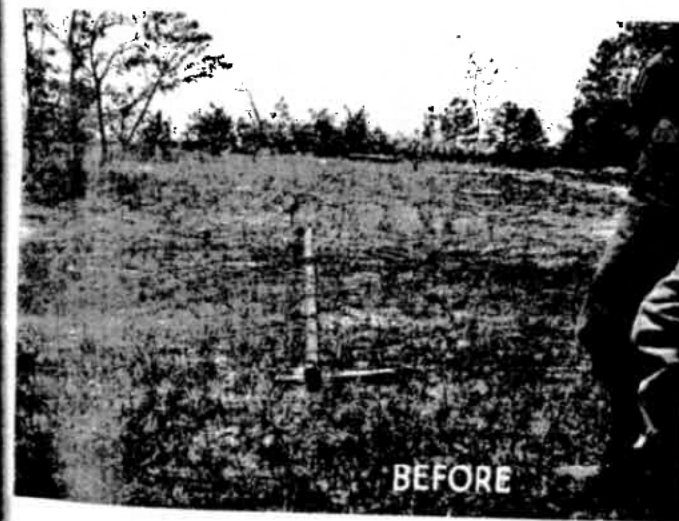


AFTER THE SHOT



PREPARE THE CHARGE

CAMP GORDON MARCH 1944



BEFORE



AFTER

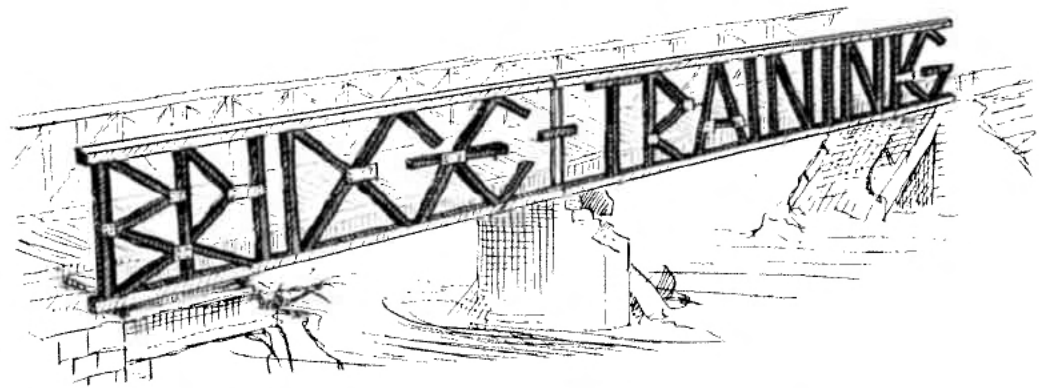
BANGALOR - TORPEDO



Day after day, week after week, the training continued — — hikes — — inspections — — lectures — — drill — — drill — — drill. Some men dropped out because of physical defects, but for the most part, every man kept going. Even though the men were not aware of the changes gradually taking place in themselves, they were getting in better physical condition every day and becoming more than just civilians in soldiers' clothes. But even more important, they were learning the essentials of those subjects that some day might mean the difference between a successful campaign or a failure — — indeed between life and death.

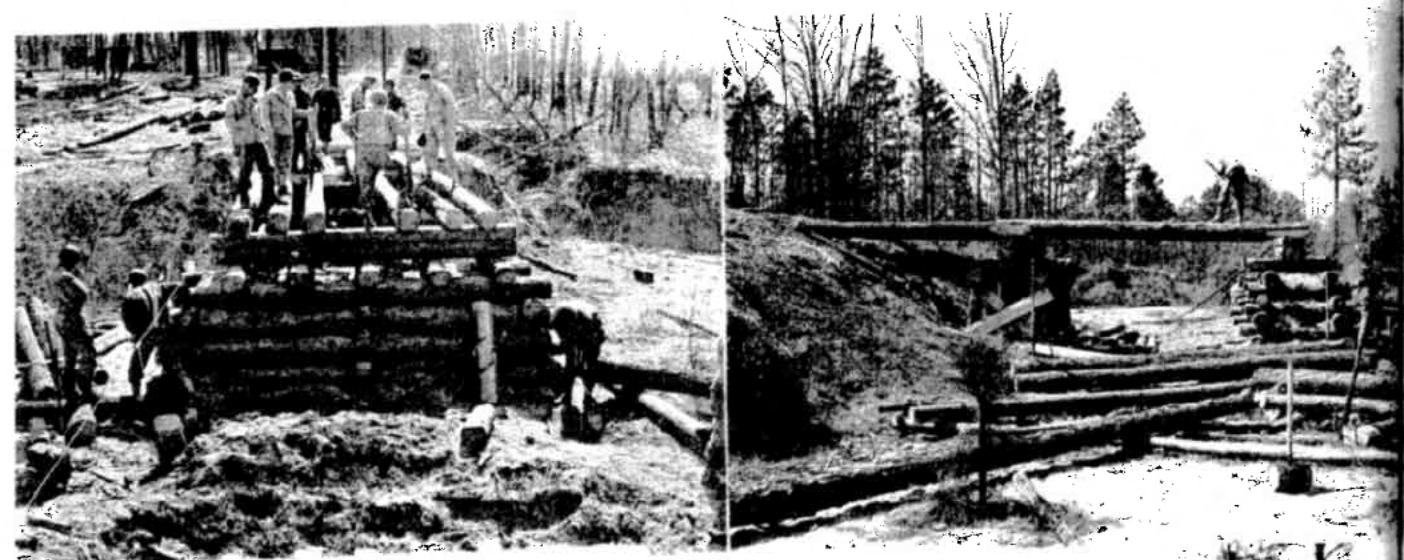


A BRIDGE CARPENTER'S DREAM — DEMOLITION'S DELIGHT —



PART II

BASIC TRAINING



Top: SPECIALIST TRAINING

Right: ERECTING A BAILEY

Below: H&S CO. BRIDGE SITE



BASIC TRAINING



BRIDGE CARPENTERS



TIMBER BRIDGE TRAINING



BAILEY BRIDGE TRAINING



BRIDGE TIMBER PREPARATION



MINE PROBING



COMMUNICATIONS



RIGGERS AT WORK



WATER PURIFICATION

CHLORINATOR

FI



HALFWAY DONE



BRIDGE TRAINING SITE



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DEMOLITIONS



DRILLING WITH AIR



USING AIR COMPRESSION



AND STILL MORE BAILEY TRAINING

SHAPE CHARGE



AFTER



BEFORE

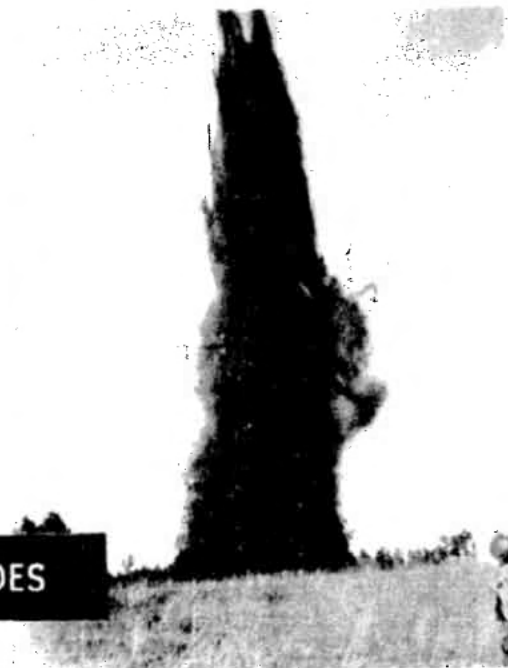


AFTER THE SHOT

DEMOLITION



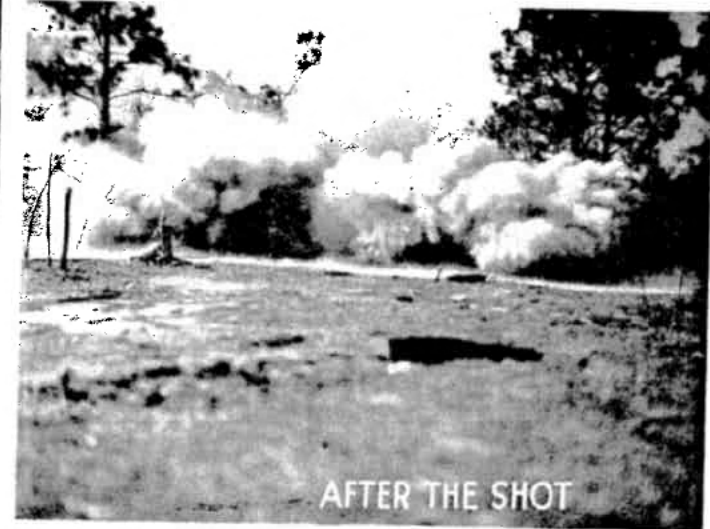
DEMOLITION CLASS



THERE IT GOES



"THE MAIN THING TO REMEMBER IS___"



AFTER THE SHOT



PREPARE THE CHARGE

CAMP GORDON MARCH 1944

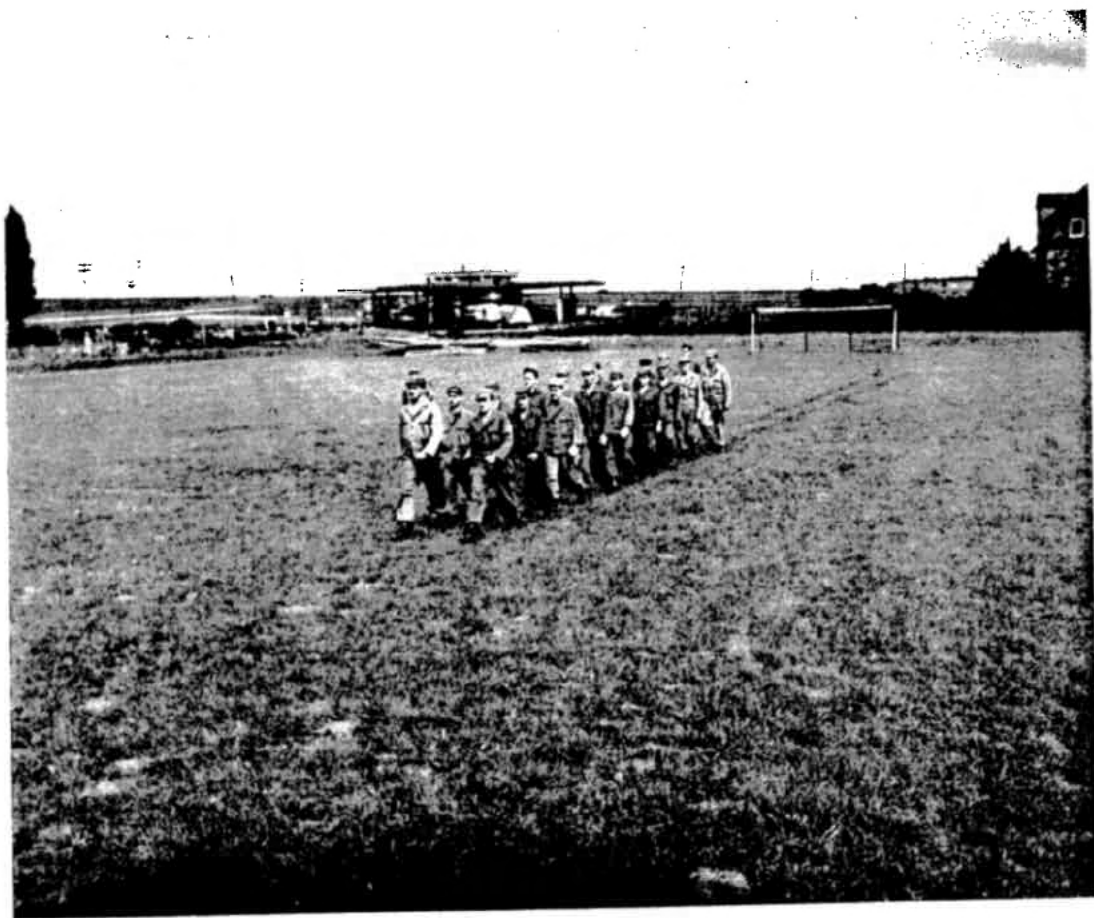


BEFORE



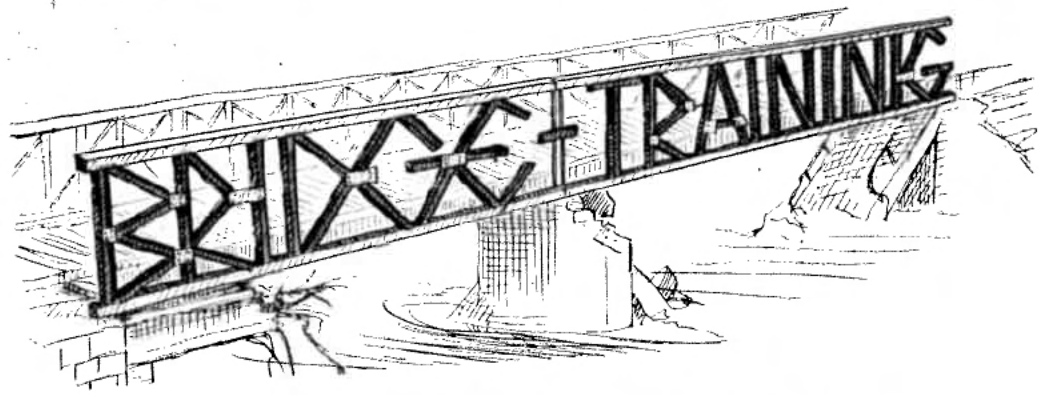
AFTER

BANGALOR - TORPEDO



Day after day, week after week, the training continued — — hikes — — inspections — — lectures — — drill — — drill — — drill. Some men dropped out because of physical defects, but for the most part, every man kept going. Even though the men were not aware of the changes gradually taking place in themselves, they were getting in better physical condition every day and becoming more than just civilians in soldiers' clothes. But even more important, they were learning the essentials of those subjects that some day might mean the difference between a successful campaign or a failure — — indeed between life and death.





As basic training went into its closing phase special emphasis was given to the more important subjects.

As was the usual thing in weeks to come, steady, drizzling rain preceded or accompanied the battalion's outdoor training — — range firing for record was no exception.

Following basic training several weeks were devoted to specialist schools conducted in the battalion, mixed with infantry training. There were problems in schools of carpentry, water purification, demolitions, communications, utility repair, cadre subjects, plumbing, rigging, bridge building, electricity. Added to these were day and night machine-gun firing, fortifications, obstacles, and road work — — punctuated with blackout driving.

The Mobilization Training Program (MTP) tests given by IX Corps and 1147th Engineer Combat Group signaled the end of specialist training for the battalion. Following these tests, unit training, cadre selection and furloughs began.



Top: SPECIALIST TRAINING

Right: ERECTING A BAILEY

Below: H & S CO. BRIDGE SITE

PART III
MANEUVERS

Tennessee



H/S COMPANY BIVOUAC



COMMUNICATIONS BS

AND



ROAD QUARRY



CAT

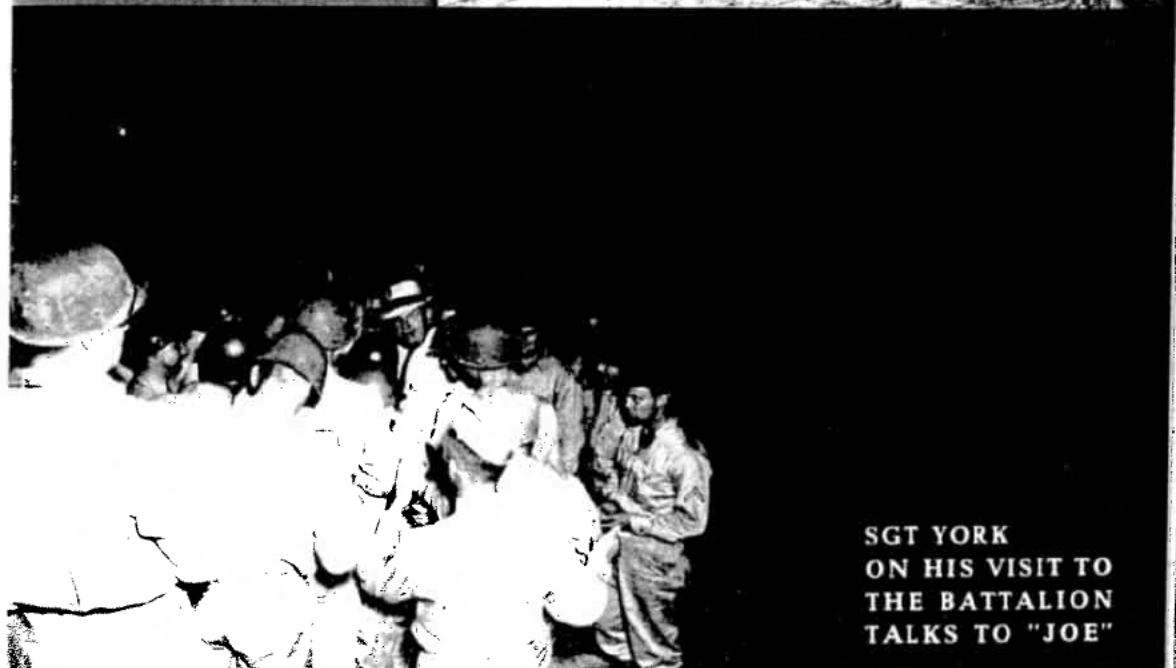
THE TENSSESSE

TENNESSEE — AS ONE GI SAW IT

The prospect of going to Tennessee on maneuvers didn't appeal to me particularly for several reasons. One reason was that I had the idea Tennessee would be all work and no play, and another, I suppose, was that I expected the maneuver section of the state to be sort of beat up and a pretty miserable place to be in. (I discovered later that both ideas were wrong.)



ONE OF THE MAIN JOBS WAS QUARRY OPERATION



SGT YORK ON HIS VISIT TO THE BATTALION TALKS TO "JOE"

On April 26, 1944, the battalion received orders to move into the Tennessee maneuver area. One week followed in which equipment was packed, vehicles checked, convoy route drawn up, and the advance party sent out. Maneuver area road and bridge work were the battalions' assignment on the job. Therefore, upon setting up in the new area, the battalion carried out the various work orders which poured in by filling holes in dirt roads, repairing paved surfaces, the construction and repair of numerous bridges.

By June 1, all work orders had been completed, an advance party was well on its way, and the main body of the battalion was moving out of the new area returning to Camp Gordon, the home station.

We moved out of Camp Gordon early in the morning of the 27th of April, and it was like every other morning that we had taken a trip — — rainy and dilly. The convoy had everything from bulldozers to power boats and every truck was pretty well loaded down with GI's and equipment.

I don't know for sure but I think there were about 100 vehicles in the convoy. Everything went fine until we got to Athens, Georgia, and there it seemed as if the vehicles went in a hundred different directions. Right in the middle of town were a bunch of trucks with their drivers yelling back and forth to each other such stuff as, "Pull your truck over Joe, you're supposed to be behind me!" Of course, that wasn't the language they used exactly. We finally got out of town though and after that things went OK.

Our first bivouac was at Fort Oglethorpe (Note — — this bivouac area was the main Confederate position on the Chickamagua battlefield.) Some men slept on the ground — — some in trucks — — all over. I slept lengthwise under the wooden seats of a power boat that was strapped to a trailer. The rain was pouring down like blue blazes, but we pulled the heavy canvas tarp across the boat and managed to keep dry.

Next day, the convoy went through Chattanooga, Tennessee and over Lookout Mountain. Cooking was done on the move and at meal time we would pull over to the side of the road, line up by company chow trucks and after getting our mael, eat along the roadside.

LEBANON LABORS



DRILLING IN ROCK



ASSEMBLY FOR TALK BY SGT YORK

May
1944



SHOVEL-DOZER TEAMWORK



ANOTHER CHARGE GONE

DIPPER FULL

DAY AND NIGHT

LOAD HER UP

