

On the 21st of March, the battalion, having completed its assigned mission, departed from the Colmar area for Chateau-Salins in accordance with orders from the 3d Division. Due to the heavy equipment in the convoy, the previously planned route could not be taken because that road was closed to all but light traffic.

Upon arrival in Chateau-Salins the battalion was attached to the 343d Engineer Regiment and was given the mission of maintaining routes of communication. On the following morning the companies went to work in the vicinity of Chateau-Salins, Morhange, Remering, Moyenvic and Dieuse.

By the 27th of February, all roads were generally in good condition, and new assignment orders were received stating that the battalion was now attached to XXI Corps for operations and would execute a move to Remering, France, on March 1. The battalion's immediate higher headquarters was to be the 1145th Engineer Combat Group.

PART VI

G E R M A N Y

Holy German Soil

After an overnight stay in Remering, France, the battalion moved on March 20d to large French barracks in the town of Puttelange. Here, while under the 1145th, the battalion supported the 63d Infantry Division whose headquarters were located in the nearby town of St. Jean-Rohrbach, and who had just been committed to action — — their first engagement.

At Puttelange, the first group of men from the unit to go to rest camp left for Dijon, France.

A “change of scenery” seemed to warrant the movement of the command post to Sarreguemines on March 10th. Upon setting up, personnel again found running water, central heating, and electricity.

One of the first jobs required of the 256th upon settling at Sarreguemines was that of building a bridge across the Saar River from Grosbliedersdorf, France, to Kleinblittersdorf, Germany. Companies “A” and “C” were selected for the task, with “A” taking the French side and “C” the German. A 150’ triple-double Bailey bridge was to be built requiring an eighteen foot abutment on one side and a seven foot abutment on the other. By March 14th, the entire bridge had been completed and the battalion command post, plus “B” Company, moved to Kleinblittersdorf.



With American artillery behind the battalion and the infantry ahead, there was no lack of noise and action day or night. Both American and German artillery were pounding each other continuously.

On March 15th, at 0100, the Seventh Army began its attack on a fifty mile front. With this attack, the 256th again faced the prospects of mines, booby traps, roads and bridges.

A new job came up on the 16th: that of constructing a new MSR from Bliesbanbach to Eschringen. "C" Company received the orders for this road, which was to cut through the woods, over a hill, and down the long, muddy slope into Eschringen.

At the same time, "B" Company began construction on a Bailey bridge at Fechingen. The job site of both "B" and "C" were still under enemy artillery and mortar fire. Arrangements were made in advance for artillery fire to cover the "B" Company convoy to the bridge site at 0700 on March 17. Only a few rounds of artillery came in that morning, and at 1130, a seventy foot double-single Bailey was opened to traffic. From 1700 until 2400 that same night German 88's shelled Kleinblittersdorf. "C" Company completed the MSR on the 17th of March and traffic started rolling over it.



C CO. ROAD



FECHINGEN BAILEY



CRACKING

THE SIEGFRIED LINE



The battalion was now on the outer fringe of Hitler's vaunted barrier of concrete and steel — the Siegfried Line.



DOUBLE-SINGLE BAILEY
OVER ANTI-TANK DITCH

DOZER FILLS
IN ANTI-TANK DITCH

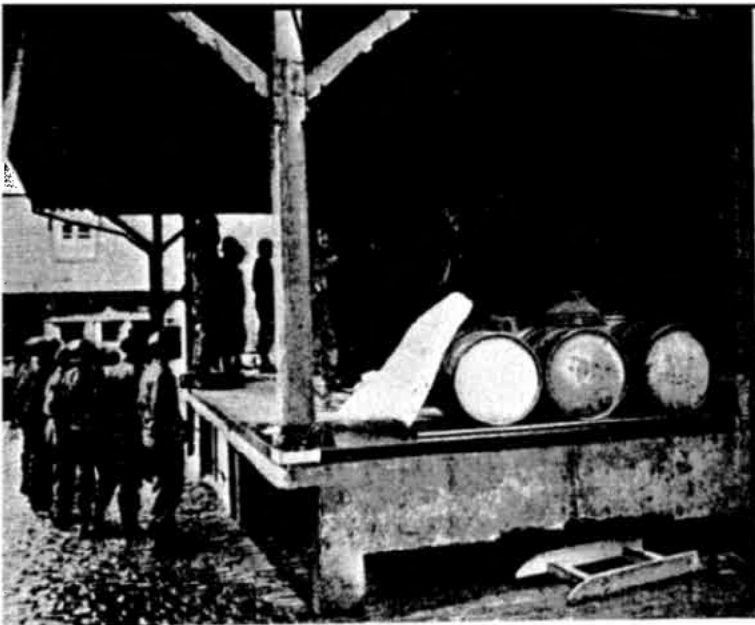


DRAGON TEETH

PILL BOX



The Siegfried Teeth

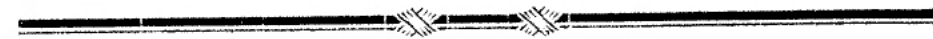


FRISKING THE SUPERMEN

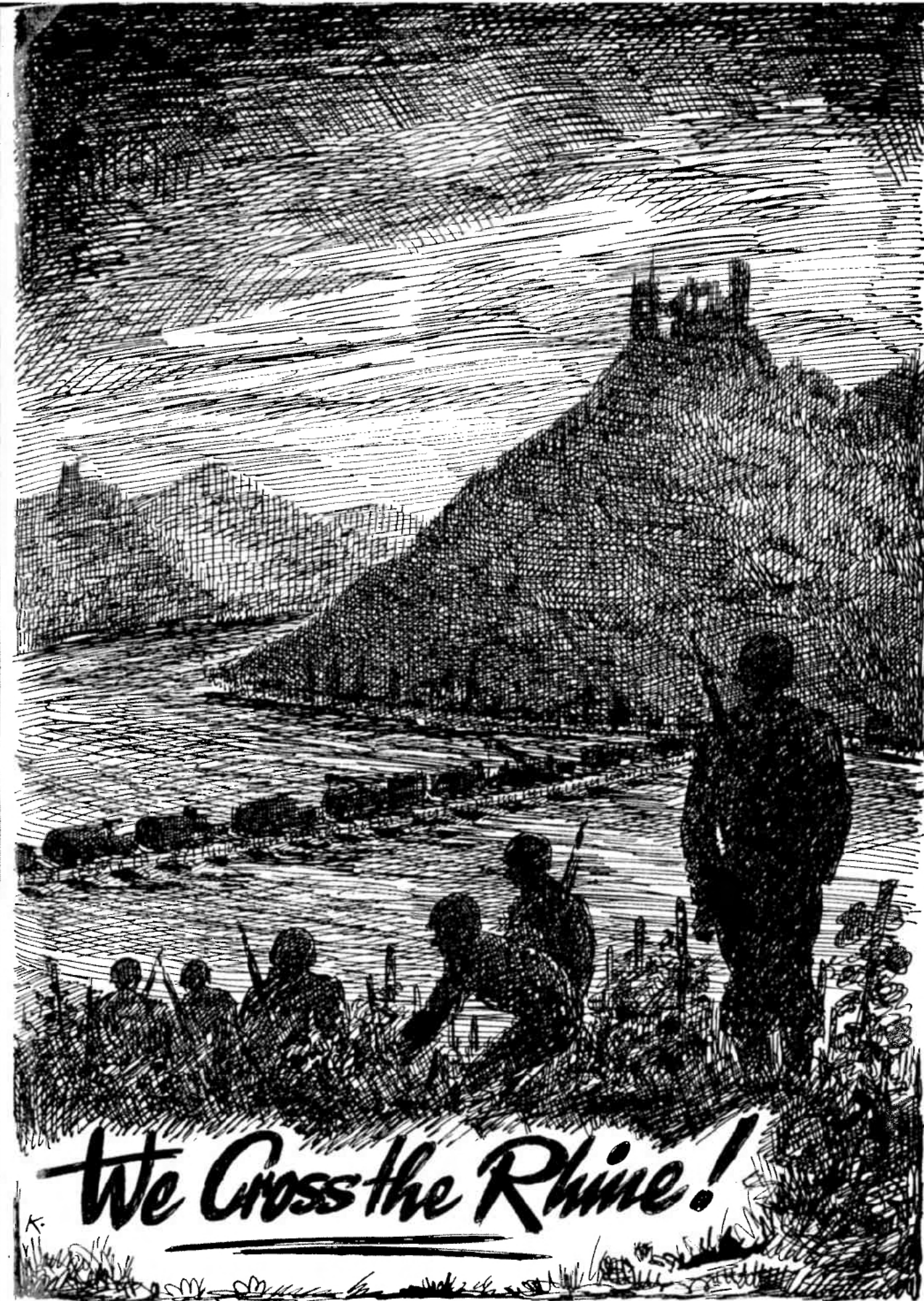
With the 63d moving, the Seventh Army rolling, respective CP's changed swiftly.

An overnight stay in Heidelberg was followed by a move to Neustadt, Germany, and a field day of taking German prisoners went on in the battalion. "B" Company brought in two, "C" brought three, and H/S captured eight followed by seven more with the compliments of "A" Company.

The battalion moved to Ormsheim on the 20th along with several convoys of various other combat units. The 116th Cavalry Squadron was held up because of mines and road blocks, hence a squad from "B" Company and one platoon from "C" Company "swept" the roads clear of mines and removed the road blocks.



March 28th found the battalion crossing the Rhine River at Worms, Germany and traffic was pouring across the heavy ponton bridge. This crossing brought the unit to Lampertheim where it bivouaced one night and then went on to Lorsch, which housed "C" and "H/S" Companies. "A" Company was located at Furth, and "B" Company was bivouaced in Ellenbach.





THE GAP AS SEEN FROM HIGHWAY

At Lorsch, the 256th was doing Corps engineering. In an attempt to tie up traffic going through Erbach, the Germans sent locomotives down the tracks to the blown-out bridge where they piled up on the MSR below. "A" Company was kept busy clearing these wrecks from the tracks, because rail cars continued coming down for quite a while. This situation was finally cleared up by blocking the rails above the gap.

AS SEEN FROM RAIL BED



Steinbach was the next battalion command post site after the overnight stay in Lorsch.

On April 3th the battalion moved to Amorbach, and in the middle of the night orders were received which relieved the 256th from attachment to the 1145th Engineer Combat Group and made the unit a mobile infantry reserve, with the principal duty of defending the right flank of the XXI Corps in the vicinity of Walldurn. With the exception of rear elements of H/S Company, the entire battalion was immediately moved to that area and was placed under a twenty minute alert status. In order to be able to move quickly, all heavy equipment was left in the former bivouac area under guard. Three days of waiting and looking for the anticipated attack followed. However, on the 6th of April the unit was once more attached to the 1145th to be used as engineers. This change meant another move and Miltenberg was the site selected, with the battalion reverting back to routine corps engineer responsibility. The mission was to guard the Bailey bridge across the Main River as well as its approaches.

A move to Würzburg was ordered for this job and for the first time since their arrival in the combat zone the entire unit was located in the same town. "C" Company maintained the Würzburg M. S. R. and heightened the arches of the bridges over it so that heavy equipment could move through. Twenty-four of the unit's 2¹/₂-ton trucks were used by the infantry for transportation.

There was still some enemy action and on April 8th, Raymond Markus of "B" Company was wounded in the shoulder by shell fragments. He was evacuated to the hospital where he could be given proper attention, and eventually recovered.

WÜRZBURG



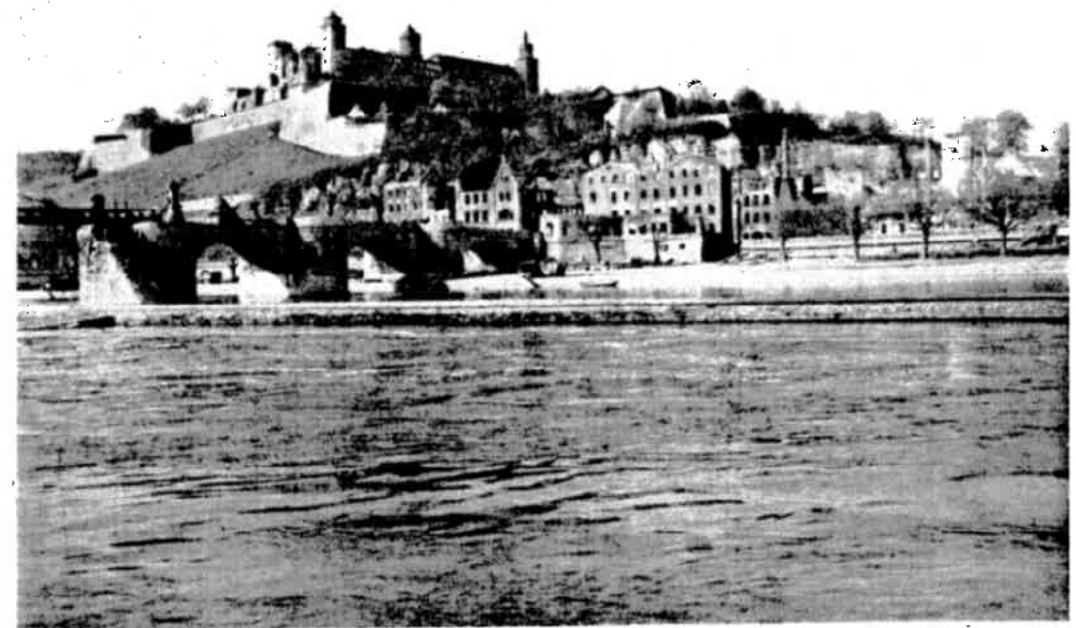
More prisoners were brought in by "A" Company, which was guarding the Main River Bailey bridge.

While "B" Company was employed in clearing a Luftwaffe air field near Würzburg, the 256th moved to Rottendorf to build runways and fill in the craters.

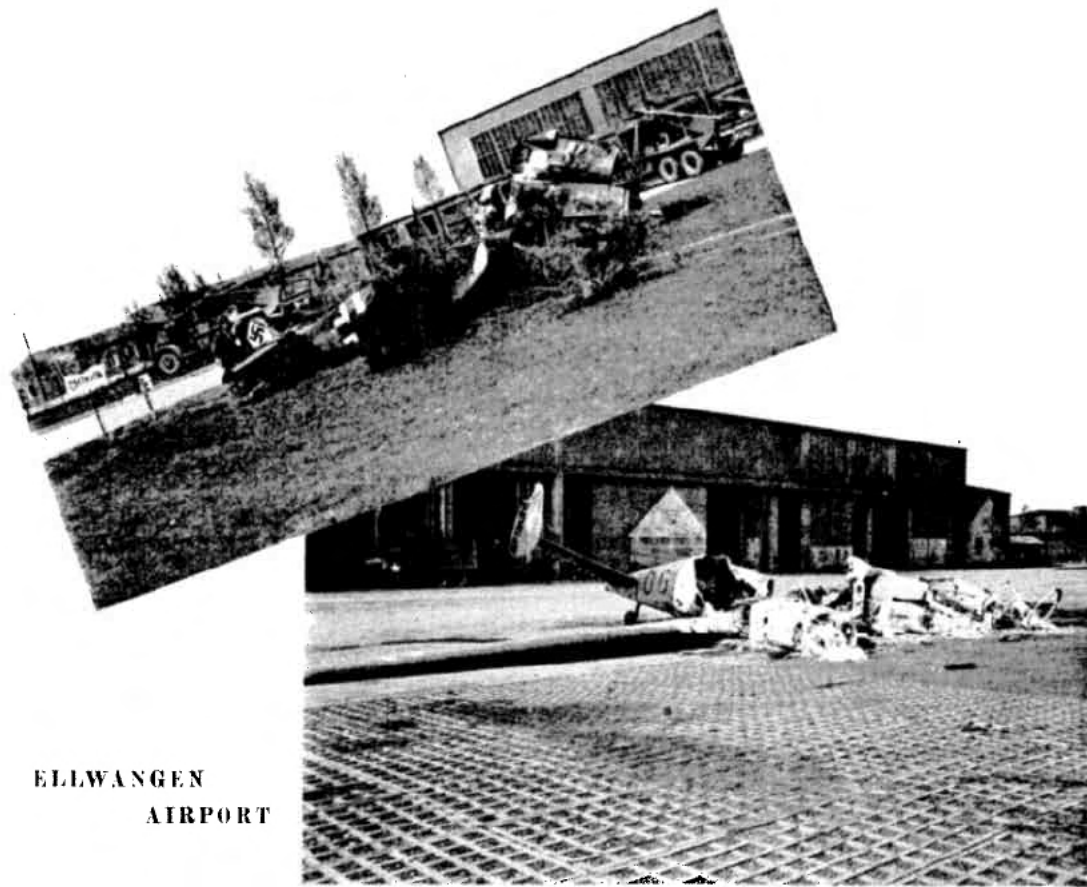
On April 13th the tragic news of the death of the commander-in-chief, President Roosevelt, reached the battalion. As did every American, the men knew his death to be a great loss to America.



WAR



WÜRZBURG SKY LINE



ELLWANGEN
AIRPORT

The next day the 256th was placed in direct support of the 12th Armored Division, this unit's first assignment to an Armored Division. The main axis of attack was to be along the Kitzingen-Nuremberg line. Company "B" was to be in direct support of CCR, and Company "A" in support of CCA. The objective was to by pass Niirnberg to the south and to take Insbruck meeting the forces from Italy at the Brenner-Pass.



DIETERSHEIM BRIDGE

After these assignments had been made, the 256th moved to Uffenheim. On March 15, Company "B" constructed a thirty foot timber trestle bridge at Dietersheim, replacing a treadway. It was desirable to construct as many timber bridges as possible in order that treadway might be used for other work further forward during the rapid advance that was going on.

While leading a bridge train on the morning of the 17th, members of the battalion Command Post captured thirty-three German prisoners. At this same time, "A" Company was busy building an eight foot double-single Bailey over the gap left by a demolished railroad bridge.

In addition to building bridges, all the companies were engaged in removing roadblocks, filling craters, sweeping roads for mines and anything else to aid in the 12th Armored Division's advance.

On April 18th while Company "B" was constructing a thirt-six foot tread-way at Schwaighausen, the 256th bivouaced in a field on the outskirts of Ob Dachstettin. While pulling into the bivouac field, men of the 12th Armored could be seen digging prone shelters on the side of a slope which overlooked the various Combat Command's advance points.



B CO - ANSBACH BAILEY

While in convoy enroute to Swabach on the 19th of April, "A" Company was stopped by civilian refugees who said nine armed German soldiers were located in the woods near the side of the road. A squad was sent out to clean up the resistance and after a short skirmish eight Germans were captured and one was killed by the squad. In the meantime, the battalion CP had moved to Ansbach, occupying the Hotel Zirkel along with the 119th Engineers of the 12th Armored. "C" Company constructed a ninety foot triple-single Bailey bridge at Lehrberg and company "B" built a sixty-foot double-single Bailey at Ansbach.

The battalion moved into Fenchtwangen two hours after the city had been cleared of the enemy. At 1800 hours on the 21st of April, Company "A" convoy was preparing to move on when an enemy glider landed approximately 1000 yards to their rear left. Four men were seen to leave the glider, two moving into a patch of woods, and the other two into a group of farm buildings about 500 yards to the left. The convoy fired machine guns at the enemy while a 37 mm AAA gun fired five rounds of heavy explosive into the woods and another five into the buildings, setting them afire. Later, while bivouacking in nearby Walxheim, the company noticed two armed men hiding in a ditch.



C CO - BRIDGE LEHRBERG





B Co 80 Ft. Schwabsburg Bailey



B Co 140 Ft. Bailey over Lech River



Blown Lovingen Bridge over Danube

The two men were ordered to surrender but instead they chose to attempt an escape and were shot and killed.

On the 21st of April orders releasing the battalion from the 12th Armored Division were received and the unit was then placed in direct support of the 4th Infantry Division, located at Hohenberg. The assignment was to sweep the roads for mines and to remove road blocks on the division's MSR. While "B" Company constructed an eighty foot double-single Bailey at Schwabsberg, the 256th moved into Huttlingen on the 24th.

The Danube River crossing called for a bridge at Lovingen and "C" Company received orders to do this job. A 210 foot triple-single Bailey was built. As a security measure, all objects floating down the river were fired on in the event that they might turn out to be floating mines.

April 27th found the battalion moving to Rommelsried and on the 28th it was once more attached to the 1150th Engineer Combat Group. The main job was the construction of a 140 foot Bailey over the Lech River. The chosen site was in full view of the enemy and "B" Company, who was to build the bridge, had a good chance of seeing action. Enemy resistance was adequately taken care of by the infantry and the job was completed on time without any casualties.

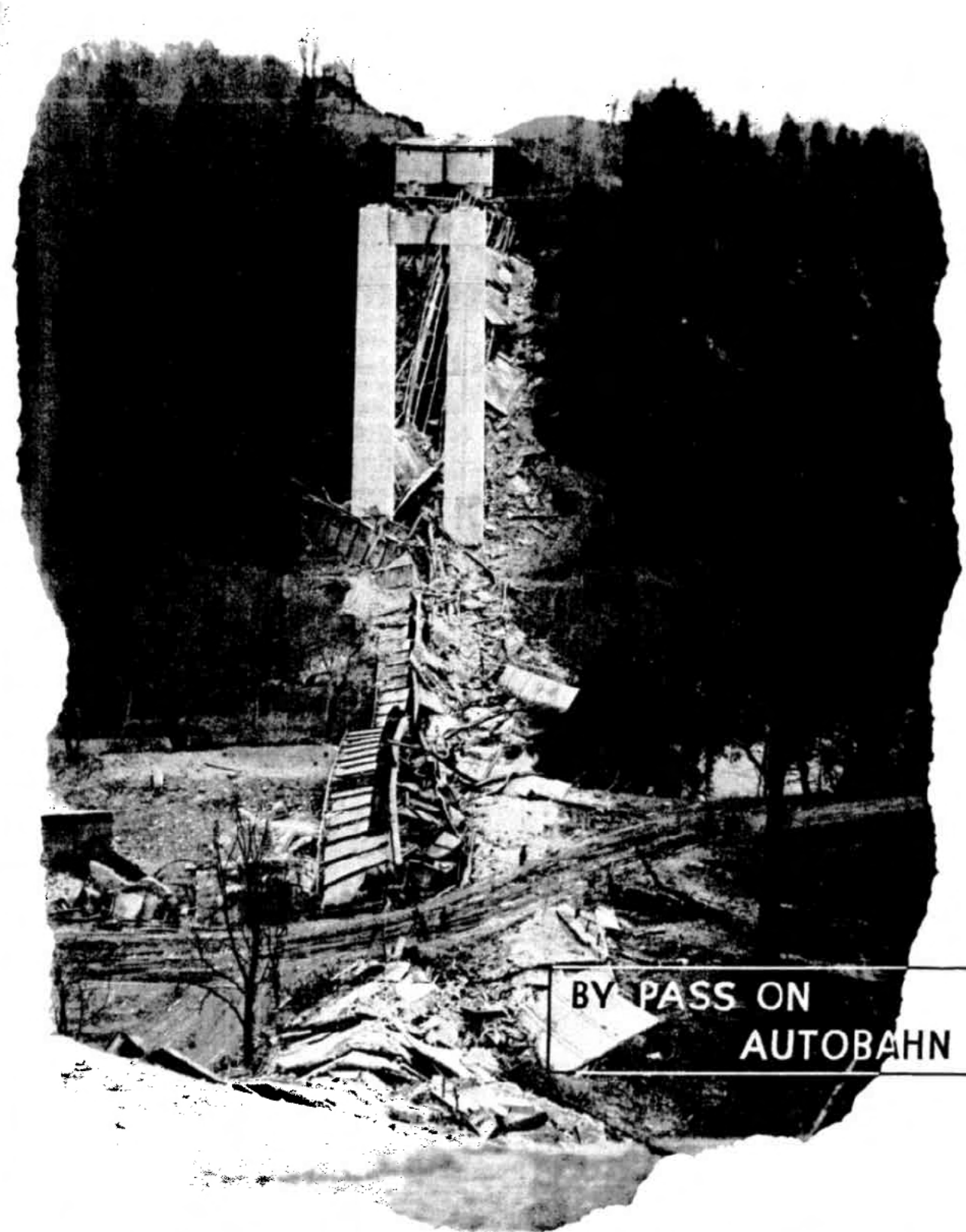
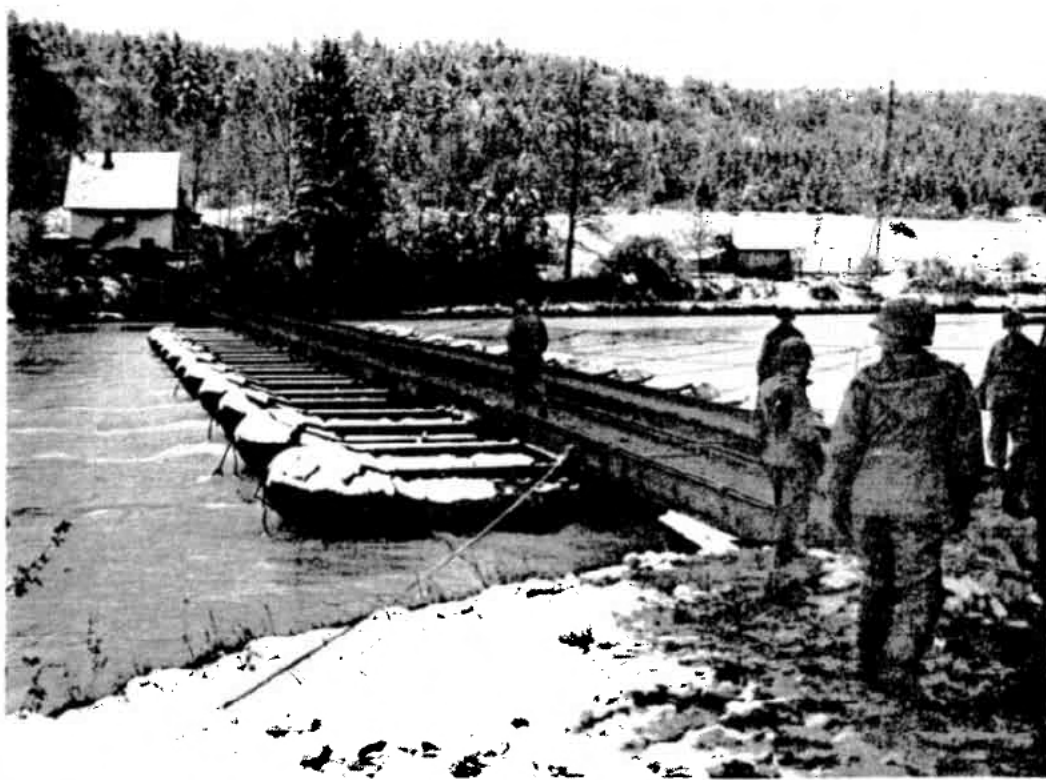


The 29th of April saw the beginning of short fast moves for the 256th — from Grassaitingen to Egling, to Hochstadt — with an advance billeting party being sent from Hochstadt as soon as the battalion arrived.

During the night of the 30th, the battalion was ordered to construct a 260 foot bridge across the Isar River. "A" Company, which was closest to the site at the time, was given the assignment. As the bridge train was being guided to the site, snow mixed with rain made the roads extremely slippery; the big Brockways were continually slipping off the roads into the soft shoulders. They would be pulled back, proceed a few hundred yards, and bog down again. Four trucks skidded and turned over into the ditches. Eventually the materials for the job were collected at the site and as April ended, "A" Company started to work on the bridge.



A CO 260 FT. TREADWAY OVER ISAR RIVER



BY PASS ON
AUTOBAHN

Still in direct support of the 4th Infantry Division, the battalion's work continued — — a treadway bridge at Wolfratshausen was built by Company "A" — — road maintenance — — mine sweeping — — and bridge guarding. A move to Wolfratshausen was made and "B" Company began building a by-pass around a blown-out bridge on the Autobahn.

On May 6th the 256th was relieved of direct support of the 4th and was assigned the task of patrolling and maintaining the M. S. R.'s of the 36th Infantry Division, XXI Corps, and the 101st Infantry Division.

PART VII

V. E. DAY

V-E Day



MAY 8, 1945

On May 8, 1945 the war in Europe ended. Everyone had known for days that the end could not be far away and probably for that reason there was very little display of emotion — little visible excitement. Instead, most men took the news calmly with the only sign of deep interest being the group around the numerous radios.

Soon after, the battalion moved from Wolfratshausen to Murnau. The latter was situated near a large lake and was, without a doubt, one of the best locations that the unit had throughout the war. Here, during the early days following the end of the war, personnel of the 256th enjoyed catching up on needed sleep, going swimming, or boating. The line companies were in excellent spots also, being located around lakes and in tourist meccas. A public address system was set up at headquarters rear on the side of the hill beside the lake and music could be heard all around the lake resort.

The battalion moved out of Murnau on May 15th headed for Goppingen where the 1145th Engineer Combat Group was then located. The stay in Goppingen was for only a couple of days since a billeting party had been looking for a location suitable to house the entire unit. This was found in Salach, a small town only a few miles from Goppingen. Headquarters was set up in the local schoolhouse, while the line companies took over as many residences as were needed to comfortably house the men.



STAFFEL SEE



Bn. CP MURNAU

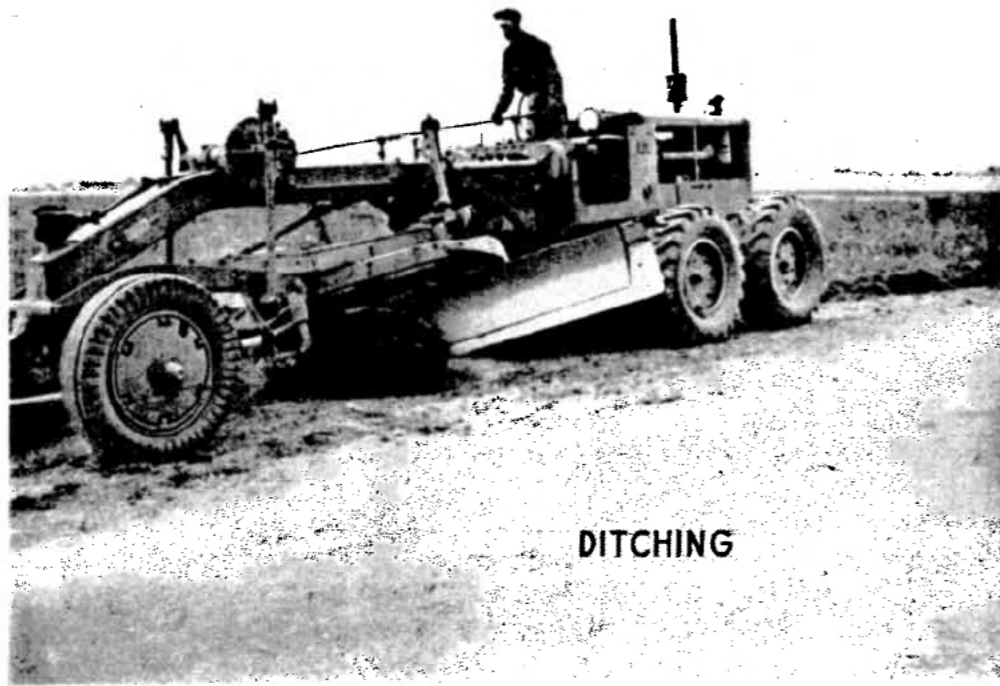


BOATER'S OUTING MURNAU

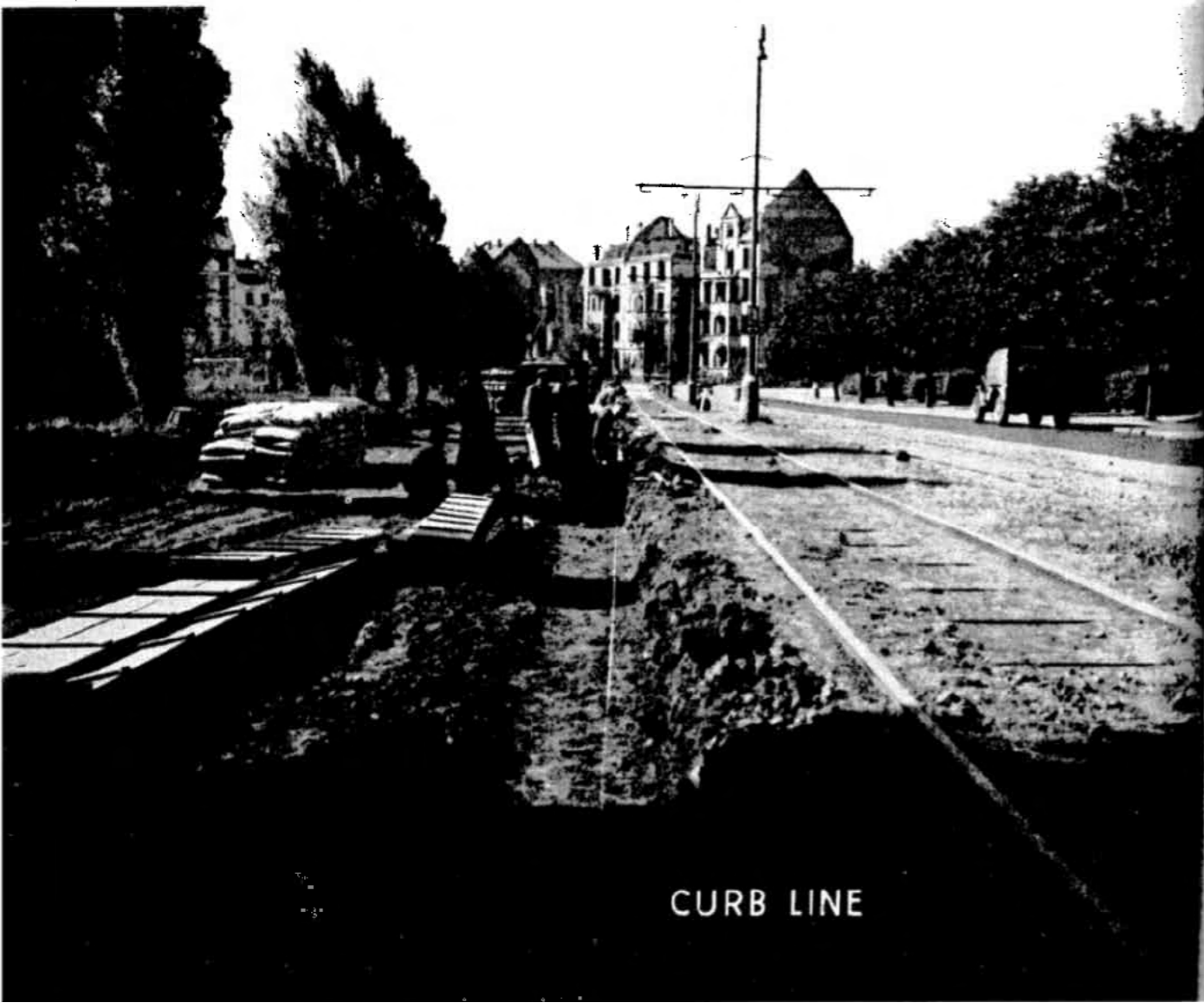
While first in Salach, normal duties were performed with the line companies being assigned jobs of maintenance throughout the area.

A change of duties came about when the 1110th Engineer Combat Group arrived in Goppingen relieving the 1145th Engineer Combat Group. Basic training was the new assignment — — due probably to the fact that the battalion was class II in the deployment program and might need brushing up on certain subjects should it ever go to Japan. On July 10th orders were received for the battalion to proceed to Frankfurt-am-Main to work as an engineer utilities unit directly under the 346th Engineer General Service Regiment, a branch of SHAEF Headquarters. In Frankfurt, work jobs were more than plentiful, for orders poured into the S-3 office all day long. These job orders were assigned to the various line companies, who in turn, would designate certain platoons or squads to carry them out.

Battalion Headquarters was located in nearby Höchst with "A" Company only a few blocks away. "B" and "C" Companies were located in that was formerly a school building on the edge of Frankfurt.



DITCHING



CURB LINE



JACK
HAMMER



POURING
ON ROAD JOB



OLD MAN PRO

PART VIII

V. J. DAY

V-J DAY



SEPT. 2, 1945

On September 2d President Truman announced the official ending of the war in Japan. With that one announcement, the months of "Blood, Sweat, and Tears" were at an end. To the soldier in the line and to millions of Americans everywhere home was much closer than it had been for many months.

There was, however, still a lot of "sweating out" to be done. Who goes, who stays, — why, — when do we go, — how many points. — — — A thousand problems to be answered and to each man his problems was vital.



A CO PARTY



B CO BAR



C CO PARTY

H & S CO BAR



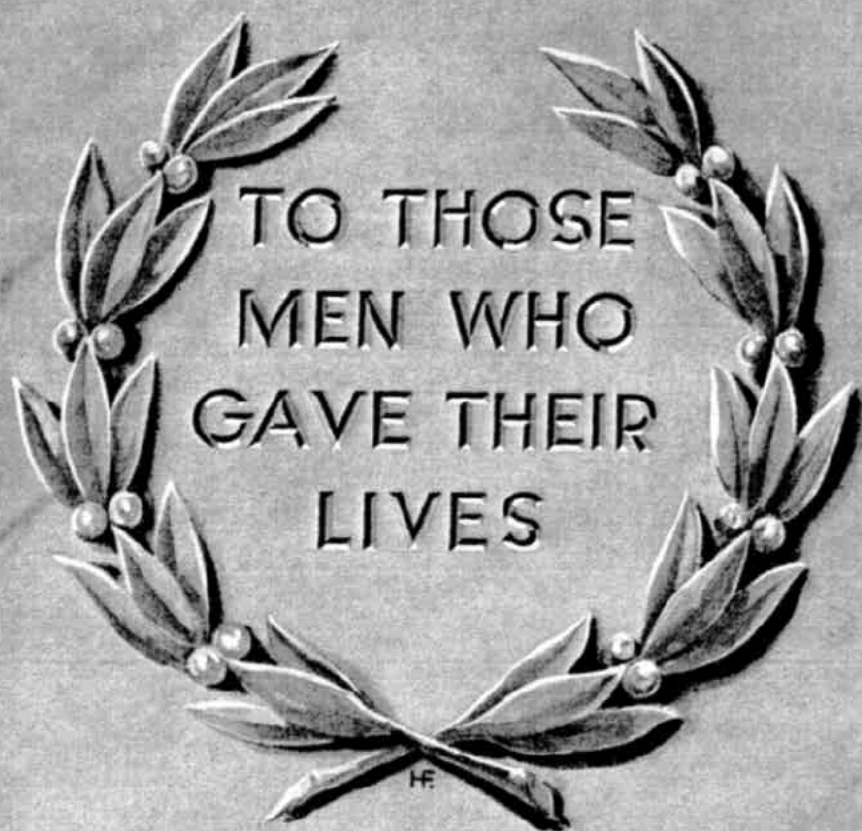
PARADE

FRANKFURT AM MAIN

In addition to these "questions" problems, the job assignments from USFET Headquarters continued to roll in. On Monday, September 17, a large portion of the battalion's personnel (188 men — — 8 officers) was transferred to the 346th Engineers. As a farewell gesture from the remaining part of the battalion, each company gave a party in honor of those men leaving and two days before their transfer took effect, a final parade was given with the entire battalion participating. The battalion now was operating on approximately two thirds strength, and yet its duties and responsibilities remained essentially the same. To every one the knowledge that we would probably soon undergo drastic changes became an accepted fact.

At the time of the editing of this book, it was still unknown just what the future held for the remaining portion of the 256th. Would the men be transferred — — would the battalion cease to exist — — or would replacements be given to the unit bringing it back to full strength? These were the questions on everyone's lips. As you read this book, you can remember the rest of the story and the portion that is left unwritten will be known by you.

IN MEMORIAM



1st Lt.	Robert Leone	Feb. 1944
T. Sgt.	Wilbur Noble	May 1944
Pvt.	Kenneth E. Wendling	May 1944
Pvt.	John Klem	May 1945
Pvt.	Willard Severt	May 1945

To the reader — —

It is orthodox practice for every book of this type to have within its covers somewhere the list of names of the editing staff. Rather than say that Lt. Watson and T/Sgt Clark were editors, or that Cpl. Chloodian and Sgt. Francis were in charge of the art — — Cpl. Pensinger and Sgt. Larson the photography, Cpl. Spomer liason with the printer. — — we will eliminate names. We shall also avoid saying that Sgt. Weiland was business manager — — Sgt. Thoenke and Sgt. Weaver had supply — — Sgt. Zickermann and Cpl. Gauger compiled the data, or that Cpl. Neiswender did the typing — — or even that Cpl. Kopanski practically wore out a set of tires running here and there for all of us. No man was confined to one job alone. instead everybody poked his nose into the duties and responsibilities of the other — — the result being what we hope is a fair and well written history and pictorial review of the battalion.

By common agreement it has been decided that we can also squeeze in on this page a word of thanks and appreciation for the cooperation that all of you officers and enlisted men have given us in order to make this book possible. We hope that you like the product.

Editor and Staff