

Derrick Of Dauntless

CO - 324th Engineer Combat Battalion

Written by Col. (Ret) J. R. Neale
Compiled and edited by his daughter, Elizabeth Neale Morris

Derrick Of Dauntless

CO - 324th Engineer Combat Battalion

Command and Staff photo taken late January, 1945



Lt. Jim Reeves S-2 Capt. Clifford Whitney S-4 Lt. F. M. Henderson MTO

Lt. Kinlaw S-1 Capt. Bill Talbot S-3 Lt. Col. J. R. Neale CO Maj. Kirby Webster Chaplain Capt. Bernard Loftfield C Co.

Capt. Louis Eble H/S Co. Capt. Bill Wasko B Co. Capt. Art Harverstick A Co. Lt. Charles Sissel ADE

Derrick Of Dauntless

CO - 324th Engineer Combat Battalion

Written by Col. (Ret) J. R. Neale

Compiled and edited by his daughter, Elizabeth Neale Morris

Introduction

- March 1941 JRN - Preparing for active duty
- April 1, 1941 JRN - Active duty (for one year only!), 1st Cavalry Division, assigned to the 8th Engineer Squadron at Ft Bliss, Texas
- July 1941 JRN - Louisiana Maneuvers, 6th Regiment of Horse, 1st Cavalry Division
- April 1, 1942 JRN - Camp Young, California
- September 1942 JRN - Camp A. P. Hill, Virginia
- November 15, 1942 BG Thompson Lawrence activated the 99th Infantry Division at Camp Van Dorn, Mississippi
- January 4, 1943 99th Infantry Division began basic training
- February 1943 JRN - Back to Ft. Bliss, Texas, as ExO and then later CO of the 161st Engineer Squadron (changed to 161st Airborne Engineer Battalion) and moved to Ft. Carson, Colorado
- April 3, 1943 99th Infantry Division completed basic training at Camp Van Dorn, Mississippi
- June 5, 1943 395th Combat Team demonstration by Col. A. J. Mackenzie, CO
- June 25, 1943 JRN - ExO of 324th Engineer Combat Battalion, Camp Van Dorn, Mississippi
- August 1, 1943 MG Lawrence departed to become the commander of the Infantry Replacement Center at Camp Roberts, California

August 2, 1943 BG Walter C. Lauer arrived at Camp Van Dorn to become the CG from 3rd Division Chief of Staff Africa

August 14, 1943 "D" series maneuvers started
BG Edwin L. Sibert, Division Artillery departed the 99th for G-2 SHAEF

September 5, 1943 "D" series maneuvers completed

September 16, 1943 99th Infantry Division departed Camp Van Dorn for Louisiana maneuvers

September 20, 1943 99th Infantry Division crossed into Louisiana, maneuvers began

October 3, 1943 Col. Paul R. Davison replaced Col. David Craig as Chief of Staff
BG Frederick N. Black replaced BG Sibert as Division Artillery CO

November 15, 1943 First members of the 99th Infantry Division crossed into Texas

November 1943 99th Infantry Division arrived at Camp Maxey, Texas

January 1944 JRN - Assumed command of the 99th Infantry Division's 324th Engineer Combat Battalion from Lt. Col. Roland Stenzel

March 1944 3000 men from ASTP received to replace soldiers transferred after the Louisiana maneuvers
Training for PQM qualifications

August 1944 "Box Factory" started, referenced Battle Babies, p 102

September 10, 1944 Departure of the 99th Infantry Division from Camp Maxey began

September 15, 1944 99th Infantry Division arrived at Camp Miles Standish, Massachusetts

September 29, 1944 JRN - Departed Camp Miles Standish for England on the SS Argentina

October 10, 1944 Arrived in England
Division assembled in Dorsetshire in Southern England

October 19, 1944	Staff and Command meeting - Crossing the Channel
November 1, 1944	"Be ready to move"
November 2, 1944	Camp-13, Southampton
November 3, 1944	Le Havre Harbor and on to Aubel, Belgium
November 8 -11, 1944	The 99th relieved the 9th
November 24, 1944	First Action for the 324th Engineer Combat Battalion - The Kalterherberg Pillbox
November 25, 1944	Derrick headquarters moves to Elsenborn
December 9, 1944	Col. Warren's visit and the Irish Coffee trip to Co.'s A & B
December 10, 1944	Back to the 324th Bn Headquarters and on to Division Headquarters
December 13, 1944	Attack Assignments for the Dams
December 13, 1944	The Lakes
December 14-16, 1944	Before Rocherath
December 16, 1944	Now What?
December 17, 1944	Maj. Sam Perrine (Bn S-3) KIA northeast of Krinkelt Capt. Tom Feeney (Bn S-2) KIA around Bullingen
December 18, 1944	Return to Elsenborn
December 19, 1944	Fortify the Ridge
December 20, 1944	Artillery Support
In Conclusion	

Derrick Of Dauntless

CO - 324th Engineer Combat Battalion

After my father's death in September of 1992, I collected all I could find of his notes and research for this project and brought them home with me to Georgia. I fully intended to complete the transcription in time for the 99th Infantry Division's convention in Denver in 1993.

Although a good deal of Dad's work was on the computer by the Denver convention, his approach to this project made it very slow going for some one else to pick up and finish. I know he was determined to complete this history before his increasingly poor health made it impossible, so his peculiar writing and filing systems were never explained to any one else.

Through the later years of his life, he wrote several versions of some of the stories, sometimes conflicting in important details; each with details not included in the others. I know he accomplished an amazing amount of research because I have the books, and notes, and binders full of xeroxed pages, all highlighted and written on. Unfortunately, he did not date any of his drafts so I had no way of knowing which version was the most recent, and therefore probably the most accurate. To complete this project for him required a good deal of research of my own and adequate time to do it well.

His death set in motion changes in my own life. Following the Denver convention, time that would have been available to continue working on this history had to be committed to other priorities. Divorce. Graduate School. Marriage. Three job changes and four moves. Through those years his boxes came with me, carefully packed and patiently waiting for their turn.

I had planned to complete his work during the summer of 1999, when I

learned we would be moving from Washington D.C. to Picatinny, N. J. on almost no notice at all. That brought about the fourth move and the third job hunt. The boxes had to wait until I finished teaching another school year.

So this summer, the summer of 2000, the boxes were unpacked, all the notes reread, and all the binders searched through page by page for any additional notes or drafts. What follows is all I have. It is all he left us.

I am certain there are many stories he did not have time to write. I believe he put off writing the ones that were most painful to remember, but fully intended to write them before completing the project. I know pieces of some of the stories having heard them occasionally as I was growing up. Some are known by other family members and friends. Articles about the 324th Engineer Combat Battalion were written up at the time in the Stars and Stripes. Dad wanted to include these in the Appendix and I have included the ones he copied. (Appendix E). The following story was unknown to me until told at Dad's grave side by Bill Meyers, fellow Jayhawker, fellow 99er, and friend. It honors both Dad and the men he commanded:

Colonel Neale was truly the "officer and gentleman."

He was respected by his men. Not feared. Respected. He was their leader. I've never, ever, heard one of the men under his command utter a harsh word about their beloved leader. For he truly was a leader. He never assigned any task that he wouldn't do himself.

Few people know, and he'd chastise me for sharing the story with you today, but Colonel Neale was a true hero. He led his men by example. At one time during the bleakest period of combat his men were low on ammunition and surrounded. Death was likely and being captured seemed to be the only alternative. But Bob Neale was not afraid. Outnumbered, he had the courage to lead his men in a cold steel charge against the Germans. They "fixed bayonets" and won that battle. It

took guts, determination, and the fullest cooperation of the men he led. They followed him because they believed in him.

In Dad's notes I found two different outlines written as timetables. One sketched his career during the period from '41 to '45. The other indexed the 99th Infantry Division's milestones up to its arrival in England. I also found the list of titles for the stories he intended to write. His completed drafts fit into the sequence of these titles. His correspondence files contained letters received from his men and fellow officers, hand-drafted copies of letters he wrote to them, two binders that contained letters that my mother, Joyce, wrote to his parents, and a few letters he wrote his parents and to his younger sister, Maryanne.

The final form this project has taken requires explanation. I blended the timetables and titles into one list. Dad's completed stories, other assorted notes, and excerpts from his collected letters have all been woven into a document that is as complete a narrative as I can compile. It has become a tribute to both of my parents as individuals and as a young, loving couple trying to stay together in a time of certain uncertainty.

My husband, Robert, knew my father as we were growing up at Ft. Sill, Oklahoma. A life-long friend, Rob helped me read through, sort, and organize all the resources I collected after Dad's death. After Rob and I were married, we traveled to Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, to the 99th Infantry Division archives to finalize and verify Dad's drafts as best we could. And this summer, he has read and reread this work as it progressed. I thank him and I know Dad does, too.

Elizabeth Neale Morris

In a letter written by JRN to Joyce - June 6, 1945 - from Dettlebach, Germany:

I had hopes of getting a battle history underway before this break up hit but you can't seem to get much excitement up among either the men or the officers. Our history could be worked up into a darn interesting book if all of our activities were properly and imaginatively set in type.

In a letter written by JRN to Norman Baehr - October 18, 1982:

Will Cavanaugh, an Englishman, wrote asking for an account of the 324th in and around Krinkelt-Rocherath from the 16th of December 1944 on. At the time I wasn't too interested in digging back into my memories, but he has kept after me. The most belated recognition that history is now according the 99th Division's first combat efforts has had a favorable effect on my attitude.

In a letter written by Winton Winter to JRN - April 30, 1985:

I want to encourage you to work on your story of the 324th Battalion as you saw it, as you lived it, and as you remember it now. I suggest that you may have a responsibility to your loved ones to record your memories. Do it once. Do it right. Do it now.

JRN quoted in a Lawton Constitution article (Appendix A) - September 23, 1990:

History took off on the wrong foot and it's taken us about 40 years to straighten it out.

In a letter written by JRN to Jean Phillippe Speder - May 10, 1991:

I have been trying to write "my story" of the Bulge for about 45 years. Some of the things I held up on in 1948-49 are still not written. But I intend to get it finished before I can't. I hope there is still a Checkerboard to print it in because I do not intend to publish it. I was paid to fight a war, not to write books.

JRN's Introduction -written in 1991

The January 12, 1944, edition of the Checkerboard (vol. 2 No. 7) had a front page headline that read "Engineer Battalion Employs Two Tons of Explosives to Clear Water Way for Denison Dam." On page two of this same Checkerboard, a second article was titled, "Col. Stenzel Starts New Duties at Ft. Lewis, Washington." (Appendix B).

The second article begins, "Lt. Col. Roland Stenzel, Commanding Officer of the 324th Engineer Combat Battalion has left the 99th Division to begin his duties as head of the 1152nd Engineer Combat Group at Ft. Lewis, Washington. The post calls for the rank of full colonel.

"Major Justice R. Neale is the 324th Engineer's new commanding officer..." Who was this Major Justice R. Neale? Read on, perhaps he will tell you, for this history will be the history of his 324th Engineer Combat Battalion (ECB), from its early life at Camp Van Dorn, Mississippi to its occupation duty in the area of Dettlebach, Germany, after the total defeat of the German nation in May of 1945.

Almost fifty years ago on the 10th of October 1944, the 99th Infantry Division arrived in England at several port cities and temporarily was assigned to various camps along the English south coast. Upon arrival, its principal activity was shaking itself out after a very unpleasant crossing of the Atlantic Ocean.

By November 11, 1944, the new to combat 99th Infantry Division had crossed the English Channel to Le Havre, France, motor marched across Belgium by way of the village of Aubel to the German-Belgium border, and established itself from Hofen/Kalterherberg to Losheim. (Appendix C). The division arrived ready to relieve the 9th Infantry Division and other American units in place.

During the next thirty-five days, the period between assuming responsibility

In a letter written by JRN to Joyce - June 6, 1945 - from Dettlebach, Germany:

I had hopes of getting a battle history underway before this break up hit but you can't seem to get much excitement up among either the men or the officers. Our history could be worked up into a darn interesting book if all of our activities were properly and imaginatively set in type.

In a letter written by JRN to Norman Baehr - October 18, 1982:

Will Cavanaugh, an Englishman, wrote asking for an account of the 324th in and around Krinkelt-Rocherath from the 16th of December 1944 on. At the time I wasn't too interested in digging back into my memories, but he has kept after me. The most belated recognition that history is now according the 99th Division's first combat efforts has had a favorable effect on my attitude.

In a letter written by Winton Winter to JRN - April 30, 1985:

I want to encourage you to work on your story of the 324th Battalion as you saw it, as you lived it, and as you remember it now. I suggest that you may have a responsibility to your loved ones to record your memories. Do it once. Do it right. Do it now.

JRN quoted in a Lawton Constitution article (Appendix A) - September 23, 1990:

History took off on the wrong foot and it's taken us about 40 years to straighten it out.

In a letter written by JRN to Jean Phillippe Speder - May 10, 1991:

I have been trying to write "my story" of the Bulge for about 45 years. Some of the things I held up on in 1948-49 are still not written. But I intend to get it finished before I can't. I hope there is still a Checkerboard to print it in because I do not intend to publish it. I was paid to fight a war, not to write books.

for the defense of the area and the start of the German offensive that would come to be called the Battle of the Bulge, the fully trained but untested soldiers of the 99th Infantry Division worked at improving all elements of their combat skills. The men of the 324th ECB were first basic infantrymen and second, some type of engineer specialist with a few medics, cooks, and truck drivers. The goals were every man a vehicle operator, every man a heavy equipment operator, and every man an automatic weapons man and a rifleman. In addition, each trooper knew the Bailey Bridge, the M-2, and the M-4 floating bridge. Each day combat patrols probed deep into the German border fortifications to learn about their immediate enemy. We didn't allow the Germans to patrol our areas. The result was that we knew the area we had to fight in, against the Germans' Siegfried Line of permanent fortification. The enemy did not.

On the 6th of October 1990, the 99th Infantry Division Association dedicated a monument in the small park across the main street from the Church in Krinkelt, Belgium, honoring its former members who "gave their last full measure of devotion" in their country's battle to rid the world of an oppressive German government and to free the German people.

March 1941

Preparing for active duty

In letters written by Joyce from Phillips, Texas, to JRN's parents:

March 2, 1941 - I think Lt. Robert still lives here, but I couldn't swear to it. He ... went to Ft. Sill last week - left Wed. noon and got back Friday midnight. Bob got through quite satisfactorily. He weighed in at 185 lbs. - just one lb. under the limit. The X-rays showed the scars on his lungs still inactive. His blood pressure was just barely under the limit; and his feet just barely escaped being flat. Recommended he pick up marbles with his toes. With all that, Bob

passed. ...

Bob has a terrible cold. He caught it while driving to Ft. Sill. That's another thing - he had a temperature of 101° the day he took the exam. ...

Oh yes. 15 men will be leaving the lab within the next month. No. 1 - Lt. Robert - three young boys got into the air corps - one guy quit - two testers promoted to stillmen - and eight caught in the draft.

March 7, 1941 - Justice Robert goes to El Paso. ...

Lt. Justice Robert ordered his calling cards - \$3.50 per 100. Mrs. Lt. J. R. ordered her cards - \$4.50 per 100.

March 26, 1941 - Bob's uniforms came. He had paid extra to have them tailor made. The blouse and all the trousers were too large and had to be taken to a tailor here. He'll get them back today and will cost \$7.75. The measurements the tailor got were exactly the same as those we sent in. May send the bill to the uniform company.

April 1, 1941

JRN - Active duty (for one year only!), 1st Cavalry Division, assigned to the 8th Engineer Squadron at Ft. Bliss, Texas

In letters written by Joyce from El Paso, Texas, to JRN's parents:

April 4, 1941 - Ft. Bliss will soon be as big as K. C. in itself.

They're building more and more of everything (incidentally, I never saw so many riding horses before in my life) with tents clear to heck and gone. Have 27,000 soldiers now and expect 60,000.

Orders posted at the Ft. today were that the 8th Eng. Squadron will spend the entire month of August on maneuvers in the east - southern Louisiana, Georgia, etc.

Bob was the only one of the officers reporting who had any uniforms - and had had his physical. ... Bob is in command of the 2nd Platoon of the 8th Engineer Squadron. He has 40 draftees - some with two and some with 3 weeks training. ... Yesterday he had them out digging trenches and he came in with the most beautiful wind and sand burn all over his face, neck, and ears that I've ever seen. He was to take his "little urchins" out on the rifle range today so wasn't in for lunch. I

for the defense of the area and the start of the German offensive that would come to be called the Battle of the Bulge, the fully trained but untested soldiers of the 99th Infantry Division worked at improving all elements of their combat skills. The men of the 324th ECB were first basic infantrymen and second, some type of engineer specialist with a few medics, cooks, and truck drivers. The goals were every man a vehicle operator, every man a heavy equipment operator, and every man an automatic weapons man and a rifleman. In addition, each trooper knew the Bailey Bridge, the M-2, and the M-4 floating bridge. Each day combat patrols probed deep into the German border fortifications to learn about their immediate enemy. We didn't allow the Germans to patrol our areas. The result was that we knew the area we had to fight in, against the Germans' Siegfried Line of permanent fortification. The enemy did not.

On the 6th of October 1990, the 99th Infantry Division Association dedicated a monument in the small park across the main street from the Church in Krinkelt, Belgium, honoring its former members who "gave their last full measure of devotion" in their country's battle to rid the world of an oppressive German government and to free the German people.

March 1941

Preparing for active duty

In letters written by Joyce from Phillips, Texas, to JRN's parents:

March 2, 1941 - I think Lt. Robert still lives here, but I couldn't swear to it. He ... went to Ft. Sill last week - left Wed. noon and got back Friday midnight. Bob got through quite satisfactorily. He weighed in at 185 lbs. - just one lb. under the limit. The X-rays showed the scars on his lungs still inactive. His blood pressure was just barely under the limit; and his feet just barely escaped being flat. Recommended he pick up marbles with his toes. With all that, Bob

imagine it will be cheaper for him to eat out there at noon anyway as we're about 7 miles from the Ft. - about the same from the heart of El Paso.

April 10, 1941 - He has his "urchins" out for the night - patrol, scouting, and mostly walking.

The blackout was really fun and I hope that's the only kind we ever have. The searchlights picking out the planes, lighting them up like balls of fire, following them across the sky - and the flares dropped by the planes, combined to make as pretty a sight as any fireworks display I've ever seen.

April 24, 1941 - Tuesday mornings the squadron ladies go to the Red Cross in washed dresses and no fingernail polish. We tie a cheesecloth dofunny around our heads and roll bandages.

... There is nothing definite, but the Major said the other evening that Engineer Capt.'s and Lt.'s are needed quite badly in the new camps being opened and he didn't expect more than 4 of the 19 engineer officers here now, to still be here after the first of June. Then yesterday, someone called Bob in to see if he had ever studied water plant maintenance, or worked in a water lab. Since he had, a large "X" was placed by his name. If that goes through, he'll be sent to Ft. Belvoir, Va. June 15th, for six weeks. Then out to some new camp. It's fairly certain he'll be in for another year after this - as they seem to think he's making good.

In letters written by JRN from El Paso, Texas, to JRN's parents:

May 3, 1941 - Give me a couple of more months and I'll have the oil fields washed out of me. A year in the army should polish me for display in any drawing room.

New engineer units are to be formed shortly, so I may be leaving El Paso before too long. But then we may spend the entire year based here. One can never tell.

May 23, 1941 - This being transport officer has plenty of headaches. Yes, I got put on the staff. Why? Because I let them find out I knew motors and mechanics. I don't think I'll like this new job any too well, but in the Army you do what is in the best interest of the unit. I like line soldering best, probably because that's all I've ever done, but

then the staff job is further back. Oh yes, back where the Stukas get you.

I got in a week in the field before they sent me back to the Post and the job. My platoon set a record on the H-10 bridge which will be shot at and not hit for some time. Two hours to install 72 feet of steel span bridge. More than two hours better than the best time made by any other platoon in the Squadron. It's the one thing I've done since I've been in the Army that I'm proud of and the men who did it for me.

... Sunday I have to "wheel" a convoy to Radium Springs and then Monday "wheel" the whole mess back to Bliss. Hope I have better luck than my predecessor. He had two trucks wrecked on him in 70 miles.

In letters written by Joyce from El Paso, Texas, to JRN's parents:

May 14, 1941 - Bob left Saturday morning. The whole Squadron went to Radium Springs, N. M. Capt. Meadows has an infected foot, so Bob was to be police officer, transport officer and mess officer - and conduct a bugle school while there (that ought to be good!). The first report was that they were to be gone 10 days - then it was changed to two weeks - and the last time I heard it was 20 days. So, who knows? It's only 70 miles up there though, so "us women" are going up Sunday. I think they're going trying to arrange a party for the next weekend.

May 23, 1941 - It seems Bob has pulled Major Dunne out of several holes, by fixing balky motors just the minute before the General arrived. Then Sunday, up in Radium Spring, the Major and a colonel were out in the river, which was very swift, and the "putt putt" quit "putt putting". Bob was taken out and fixed it so the Major decided he needed a new Squadron Motor Officer and Bob is it. He's quite happy with all kinds of things to tear apart, but there seems to be headaches, too.

Anyway, he doesn't have to go on these field trips anymore. He takes the convoy and brings it back, but doesn't stay out. He will have to go on the 45 day one when the whole bunch goes to the swamps of Louisiana to play around. I still plan to "take out" then.

... We had a grand time at Radium Springs on Sunday. The mess sergeants really outdid themselves putting on a spread for us. ... One of the K. P.'s came and took care of Wilson while we ate - took him

down to the enlisted men's camp and all around. Every time I saw him he had a cookie in each hand and a grin all over his face.

June 2, 1941 - There seems to be quite a sabotage scare on post. The place was very open when we first came - which surprised me - but I became used to it. Now it really seems strange. I imagine the women will have to have identification cards before long. I can get in during the day with the post license on the car but I can only go certain places. The other night when I went out after Bob, I was stopped at the gate by about a dozen guards. I got in but when I pulled off the road by the Motor Pool and stopped to wait for Bob, four guards materialized very suddenly. Two started toward me with guns pointed right at me. Liked to scare me to death.

June 17, 1941 - I'm afraid Bob may be promoted to Capt. after the maneuver this fall. Afraid because it would mean we should dress a little bit better, do more entertaining - not to mention the added responsibility Bob would have - and not get the pay, as he wouldn't have his time in.

July 1941

JRN - Louisiana Maneuvers, 6th Regiment of Horse, 1st Cavalry Division

July 9, 1941 - ... but Bob has heard rumors that the 8th Engineers won't be coming back here after the maneuvers. ...

"Things" are really going this week, as the men leave Tuesday on two weeks of maneuvers about 70 miles NE of here. Bob will probably be back in a few times. They will get back in the 27th and leave for Louisiana the 5th.

In a letter written by JRN from El Paso, Texas, to JRN's parents:

July 13, 1941 - I may have been busier in my life, when I can't remember. Last Friday I became "officially" the Squadron Motor Officer. I've been doing the same job for two months but only rated assistant MTO. The Headquarters/Service Troop Commander was MTO. He didn't and still doesn't know any thing about motor transport

but by virtue of his CO capacity was MTO. Division Headquarters decided I should be MTO so now I am. It's just a paper change but anyhow, I'm it and I've got an assistant now. Lt. Burke.

... Jo is beginning to worry about packing for the trip; hope she has a good summer. For myself I think the Louisiana maneuvers will be a welcome rest after the last month. We leave for the field the 17th and return the 26th, then leave for Louisiana the 5th of August. We'll get back here the 15th of October, we hope. The convoy will contain 1200 trucks—some fun. First night will be in Marfa, 2nd in Del Rio, 3rd in San Antonio, 4th in Houston, and 5th in Jasper. The end.

In letters written by Joyce from El Paso, Texas, to JRN's parents:

July 18, 1941 - Rumors are flying thick and fast (as usual) as to where the 8th Engineers will be stationed following maneuvers. Just take your pick - the list includes every place from Dakar to Hawaii, via east, west, north or south. The only place not mentioned is Alaska - so that's probably where we'll go.

July 26, 1941 - ... Bob got back in yesterday, three days ahead of schedule. ... In fact, it rained on them practically all the time. Ought to get them in condition for the Louisiana swamps anyway. The cavalry was thoroughly trounced - again, In fact, Gen. Swift got so disgusted with them one day that he put all the horses in trucks and made the men walk back to camp - about 10 miles. The Engineers were the "enemy", as usual.

... P. S. - Orders today (official) - Engineers to leave one week earlier (29th) to build roads. I'll try to get away the 31st or the 1st.

July 28, 1941 - I think I have all Bob's things ready to go. He took the biggest share of them out this morning. I don't know how he's going to take everything. Orders are that no officer under a field commander is to take a locker. Orders also are that all officers must have at least six sets of khakis. Besides the rest of his clothing, Bob also has to take all his motor pool records, etc. Now just how is he supposed to get all that in one of those bags?

I certainly hope Bob gets his convoy there and back without any trouble. He is responsible and has to sign for every one of his vehicles (1200, I think). I certainly don't want to have to buy a couple

of Army trucks - or even a motorcycle or a jeep. They are taking five days to make the trip. They will average only about 150 miles a day. The second, crossing the mountains, and the fourth, traffic between San Antonio and Houston, will be the worst.

... Write me in Oberlin.

In letters written by Joyce from Oberlin, Kansas to JRN's parents:

August 8, 1941 - A letter reports a safe arrival with only one minor accident. A Mexican girl drove a Model A into a 4-ton truck. Result - one less Model A, but no injuries. He says they have a fairly nice camp site - on high ground, so no mosquitoes as yet.

August 21, 1941 - ... he is now the Commanding Officer of H&S Troop, much to the annoyance of the Regulars eligible for it. Some reshuffle of Major's caused the Capt. who was C.O. to be moved up.

August 27, 1941 - For all I know Dad, Ragley, La., may be the name of the truck that hauls the mail. But I do know Bob gets mail at the address I sent you. Most of his letters have been headed - Seale, La., and stamped either Dequincey or Lake Charles, but the last one, written in the field, was headed "two miles north of Pitkin, La.", and stamped DeRidder. I think Bob is just as fond of writing letters as he ever was. I hear from him about once a week - some weeks.

In a letter written by Joyce from Phillips, Texas, to JRN's parents:

October 3, 1941 - ... I plan to leave tomorrow morning. Will drop you a line when I get there. Had a letter from Bob today. He's on his way back.

In letters written by Joyce from El Paso, Texas, to JRN's parents:

October 4, 1941 - I made it in exactly 12 hours and 15 minutes. ... Bob is not in yet. Living quarters plenty scarce, but I'm starting out now to look.

October 7, 1941 - The big news is a telegram received last night reading "Arrive Wed. about 1 P.M. Hold the Ft. Love, Bob." I don't know whether they have been held up by the floods or not.

October 14, 1941 - Our reunion party Sat. night certainly was nice. We lost only three officers (transferred, not killed) on maneuvers, and have ten new ones - so we have quite a gang now. All the gals blossomed out in new dresses. The men in dress uniforms and tuxedos - all very pretty. And the floor was jammed packed for the dance. I've never seen such a crowd - even Gen. Swift was there. They had a floor show at eleven - dancers from Mexico, trick skaters and singers. All very nice.

... Bob says he hopes Dad hasn't built his hopes too high, but it's impossible for him to be sent to Leavenworth staff school as no one under a major is eligible. They've been plenty busy since they got back. Orders came out for a complete check up on everything - sort of an inventory, which involves plenty of paper work. On top of that, Bob has to get all the equipment back in shape and they're plenty short handed as half the men who made the maneuvers are now on furlough. The other half will go when they get back - so I guess there's just no rest for the wicked Lt.'s.

October 24, 1941 - New regulations just issued for time in grade - one year active duty as a 2nd Lt. to a permanent 1st (instead of 3 years), and from 1st to a temporary captain - one year; to a permanent captain - two years (instead of 5). In other words, by passing all the tests, Bob can get his temporary captaincy next April (he can wear the double bars to do the work but won't get the money). Then at the end of his second year on active duty, he'll get the money - which is when he'll be out of the service - unless he's signed up for longer. I think it's three more years for a majority.

October 30, 1941 - Bob has actually spent the last two evenings at home - and got in a few minutes before six each time. However, night before last, he brought a bunch of paper work home, which kept him busy until ten - and last night he had the "droops" - head cold, burning eyes and headache - probably just over work, but I was afraid it might be flu as there's a lot of it around. I wish he could get a few days off to just rest, but I know he can't. I think he's loosing more weight, although he hasn't said anything about it - and I don't suppose it would hurt him any.

Bob had a chance to go to a Motor Transport Officers school at Ft. Wayne (Detroit), Ind. for four weeks. It came up day before

yesterday. He would have had four days to get there and he said he was afraid of the shape things would be in here when he got back - so he sent his assistant. Besides, a bunch of transfers are due next month and Bob said he wanted to be here in case something came up that he might be able to better himself - he'd want to be able to put in for it.

November 6, 1941 - The Squadron doctor did send Bob home from the post yesterday. He spent the day in bed but plodded back in this morning. Said he didn't have time to be sick.

November 12, 1941 - It seems someone decided the boys needed target practice, so we're to be sent to the Dona Ana range in New Mexico. It then developed that there was only enough barracks for one troop at a time up there. A Troop has been up for 15 days, H/S went up today, and B will go when they get back. Bob went up for the first 5 days, then he'll come in and Capt. Meadows will go up for 5 days, then Bob will go back for the last five.

November 21, 1941 - The Army celebrated yesterday. The Squadron had all the officer's families out to the mess halls for dinner. It was heaps of fun - the first time I've ever eaten with the troops. H/S, because of doing the administrative end, has more officers (that is, noncoms) than enlisted men. The tables were rather unbalanced. On one side were the enlisted men. In the center, were the officers and families (but none of us brought our kids and there are only four officers in the troop). On the other side were the noncoms, millions of 'em complete with wives and hundreds of kids. The troops drew straws for Major Dunne, Major Monroe (Division Engineer - Reserve) and Capt. McElheny (Executive Officer). We lost out altogether - tee hee - didn't have to listen to any speeches! After dinner, Bob took me through the kitchen to stare horrified at the size of the kettles used for cooking and the millions of gallons of stuff in the pantry. I want to report that they do have an electric potato peeler and it does work, but the dish washing is still done by elbow grease. The food was marvelous (Bob was mess officer, not that that has anything to do with it, everything cooked just right - and what food! To copy the menu - roast young turkey (eight 20 pounders) with sage dressing, cranberry sauce, giblet gravy, snowflake potatoes, green string beans, lettuce and tomato salad with Russian dressing, sweet mixed pickles, ripe olives, stuffed olives,

Parkerhouse rolls, butter, fruit cake, pumpkin pie with whipped cream, raisin pie, ice cream, lemonade, coffee sugar, milk, wine, cigars, cigarettes.

... I honestly don't see how he can work as hard as he does, as many hours a day as he does, get as little sleep as he does - and keeps going.

In a letter written by JRN from El Paso, Texas, to JRN's parents:

November 21, 1941 - Don't let this note knock you for a loop. But if I'm even going to get it written I might just as well prop open my eyes with toothpicks and get started. Why should I be tired? I don't know except that I'm not as young as I once was. I spent the last five days before the last four at Dona Ana Target range, 30 miles from here in New Mexico. I took the first group of 13 and myself up and worked them through and qualified all of them. Capt. Meadows was supposed to take the second group but decided that it would be too much work to shoot and teach too, so the last four days I have been driving up and back every day to teach him and the boys about how it should be done.

I have managed to qualify as expert three times the last week. Small bore - 194 out of 200 - 50 prone, 50 sitting, 50 kneeling, and 44 standing. Then on to the big gun, Cal. 30 - 305 out of 340. And on to the pistol with 86%. The old shooting eye is still pretty good I guess but I could see signs of fading at long ranges.

Tomorrow is record day again so I must go back again and give what aid I can to the boys who must do the shooting. Then Monday it's back again for the five day stay with the third group.

For some reason I work and work, but I know I'm nuts to do it. Others pass the buck but I just can't bring myself to do it.

I have heard rumors that I may go to Ft. Belvoir, Va., to school in the next class, but I'll believe it when I see the orders. I just can't see myself being handed the gravy train.

In letters written by Joyce from El Paso, Texas, to JRN's parents:

November 26, 1941 - Bob is back up at the target range this week. He may be in Friday evening, but it will probably be Saturday. He took the day off last Sunday and he and Wilson had a big time playing all day. And tomorrow is his birthday. The only time in his

life he'll be 27 on the 27th - and 'twould be Thanksgiving if Thanksgiving were on Thanksgiving.

December 2, 1941 - The Lt. is having more troubles. While he was in Dona Ana, government orders came out that all officer's were to have their pictures taken. Capt. Meadows filed the orders in his end basket. Bob got back and was thoroughly chewed out because he hadn't had said picture taken and the time limit was up. He also got a chewing out because eight reports were ordered out last week, while he was in Dona Ana, and nothing had been done about them. Also six of his prize boys got mad about the way they were being treated while he was gone, got drunk, got in a fight with the guards, and so the Lt. is sitting on a court martial trying to figure out a way to keep them out of the brig for six months. I also just heard that one private, after being presented a letter of praise by Major Dunne for his work in Louisiana and being well fortified with beer, walked up to Major Dunne and said, "I want to thank you, Major, for this letter; but I just want you to know that I didn't do it for you or for any other man in this outfit. I did it because Lt. Neale told me to. And—I want you you to know, too, that any man in this outfit would go to hell and back for Lt. Neale." ... I don't really know whether Bob knows of the incident or not. He's never mentioned it to me.

December 8, 1941 - Your letter came a couple of days ago - but realizing that you are no doubt wondering what our position is - I'll write - and tell you that I don't know a thing. That's a big help, isn't it?

Bob was at the post yesterday when the first news flash came through the radio. I tried to call him, but Ft. Bliss wouldn't answer. He said everyone had dashed out and stewed and brewed around. The 63rd Coast Artillery was ordered to the West Coast immediately, but the general opinion is that the largest share of the division will stay right here on the border for the present, anyway. However, our zone of defense is the Gulf, and south, so there was some talk yesterday of some units being sent to New Orleans with Panama and British Guiana as possible future destinations. Nothing definite has happened today or he would have called me.

My first thought yesterday upon hearing the news was of Helen Boetteher, whose husband is in the Philippines, at Manila the

the last I heard. ... Then I thought of the other young man from our squadron, Bob Sly, who was sent to Manila just last month. Then I thought of Kay Dunne who has a brother with the Air Force in Hawaii. But I'm afraid there's going to be an awful lot of them to think about before long.

... The news is no news. There were several officers calls today, but only for the purpose of informing them what to inform the men as to army regulations in war time rather than in peace time. The squadron also has orders to get all of their equipment in shape as soon as possible, and for them all to have complete field equipment on hand. However, no one seems to think anyone is going anywhere before Christmas. They're all hoping not, as the 63rd C. A. completely cleaned out the quartermaster's equipment - all the rifles, etc. In fact, they even had to borrow from the other units. The Engineers gave one of their bantams. ... we should all get as much as possible out of Christmas this year - and plans are going ahead for the Christmas parties.

December 13, 1941 - There are strong indications that the 8th Engineers will be used as a basic training unit. At present, they are busy loading out all the anti-aircraft units. Bob worked 30 hours straight through Wednesday, home for 5 hours sleep, and back for 24 hours. I was stopped on my way off post this morning, to show my identification card. Luckily I had it, although the order had just been issued yesterday.

December 17, 1941 - Our squadron has a consignment of O. D. wool yarn for the ladies to make into hospital sweaters for the Army and Navy. Not a very comforting thought, but they are easily made - just up the back and down the front - zip.

Bob is doing paper work at home tonight. Since he has to wear uniforms all the time now, I'm going to pack his civilian clothes away - give us more room in the closet. The latest orders are sorta dopey. The officers have to call out before they can leave the house, tell them where they are going, how long they expect to be gone, and call again when they get back. One of the heavy weapons troops today got orders to move out, but no one knows where to. We have quite a unique situation in the squadron now. Two days ago Capt. Meadows got his promotion to major and yesterday Capt. Ellison got his. That makes five majors and leaves only two captains so there will undoubtedly be

some changes made. The funniest thing is that four of them are reserves, have put in their time in grade and get the pay, while Major Dunne, the Regular and the C. O. is still getting captain's pay.

... These millions of planes constantly going over are about to drive me frantic. Wilson likes them though. When he hears them while outside, he just sits down with his mouth hanging open. Just so one doesn't drop a bomb down his throat.

December 23, 1941 - The squadron had quite some excitement yesterday morning. At 7:30 they got orders from the Division to go to Laredo (saboteurs had tried to blow up a power plant), but at 8:30 orders came from Corps for they to stay put.

December 30, 1941 - The shake up in the squadron has settled down and seems to line up this way - Major Munro, the new C. O. thinks the line troops who do the actual work are more important than H/S, the supply troop. So he shifted officers around and around to strengthen the line troops. Bob was sent to B Troop (where he was first in charge of recruits as adjutant to Lt. Wilson (a Regular) and damage control officer. But the day he reported, Lt. Wilson started on a short leave - and has since been sent to a 6 weeks school. So, temporarily at least, Bob is C.O. of B Troop. However, since Major Munro is a Reserve, I shouldn't be at all surprised if they send in a Regular before long to replace him. If and when that happens, the new C.O. will probably have still different ideas and shift everything again.

January 5, 1942 - And now for some squadron scandal. With Lt. Wilson gone, Bob had left in B Troop Lt.'s Hall, Johnson, and Campbell. Hall is leaving Friday. Campbell was sent to take a bunch down south of Marfa to start construction on a new air base. Before they got to Marfa, everyone was drunk as hoot owls, including Campbell. By the time Majors Munro and Meadows got there, Campbell and three top sergeants had passed out and the dear soldier boys fairly took the town apart. Campbell is now residing in the Fort D. A. Russell brig waiting to be busted out of the Army. Johnson was sent to take over. When Hall leaves Friday, Bob won't have a single officer left.

January 25, 1942 - ... the Lt. polished his brass, insignia, etc. this evening and went to bed. He was out two nights this week on night problems and worked late every other night. In fact, he has been averaging about three or four hours of sleep a night. So when he got home tonight earlier, he said he was afraid to get more sleep for fear it would make him tired.

February 2, 1942 - Gen. Swift issued an order Saturday that one troop officer must stay on duty all the time. Heretofore, it has been one squadron officer. At least, the air bases are completed, so Bob's men are back in. But, because of all the transfers, he has only two officers under him in the troop which means that he must stay out every third night, in addition to squadron O. D., night problems, and officer's school every Thursday night from 7:00 to 9:30 P.M.

February 18, 1942 - The Lt. has been home for lunch every day this week, but tonight is his first night in since Sunday. I put him to bed at 8:30. Practically had to carry him. Besides being so tired he couldn't even eat his supper, he got some sand mixed up with sock wrinkles in his shoes on a 12 mile march this afternoon - and has beautiful blisters on the bottoms of both feet. He has sinusitis again, and the squadron doctor told him he ought to go to the hospital for a couple of weeks and rest.

February 25, 1942 - Lt. Dullnig, who just got back from Ft. Belvoir, received orders yesterday to go back to Belvoir as a teacher. That leaves Bob just Lt. Roussel again and means he has to stay out at least every other night. He called this afternoon to say he had sent two platoons out on jobs - both unsatisfactory. So he has decided to have Noncoms school every night from 5:30 to 6:30 until the corporals learn something. And since there is officers school from 7 to 9 tonight, he wouldn't be home until late. Tomorrow night he stays again - and so it goes.

I think the Lt. should be in the hospital. The squadron doctor thinks so too and has told him so, but that's all the good it does. He hasn't been able to throw off the last cold he caught some two or three months ago - has a bad, deep cough - the sinusitis trouble he had in Phillips has come back. They haven't been able to get his head to open up for several days. Breathing all this dust through his mouth has

given him a terribly sore throat, which they keep painted with silver nitrate. Naturally, that doesn't give him a big appetite and he doesn't eat enough anyway. Many's a time I've seen him so tired it made him sick to his stomach to eat. Just found out the last medicine they gave him contained opium.

March 8, 1942 - What I have been expecting has happened. The Lt. is in the hospital. He doubled up with cramps yesterday noon. They rushed him to the hospital thinking it was appendicitis, but his blood count was normal. After the cramps left, they let him come home. He kept hurting but finally went to sleep for about an hour, then at midnight woke up with terrific cramps again. I called our doctor. He called the hospital and an ambulance arrived. That's all I know. They told me not to come over until 2 this afternoon unless they called - which they haven't. He also had a sprained ankle and a bone out of place after showing his basketball team how to do a "pivot block". Will let you know what the trouble is, if it is more than just utter exhaustion, as soon as I know.

March 9, 1942 - ... still nothing definite about the Lt. He can't straighten out without cramps in his middle - and says they are starving him - although he gets bloated with gas when he does eat. His temp was sub-normal but now is about a degree high, probably a reaction to the yellow fever shot four days ago. He said he told the doctor today that he wasn't sick so they'd just as well let him out, and the doctor said, "That's what you think." I gather they discovered some kind of kidney trouble because of his albumin.

March 11, 1942 - The Lt. was looking and feeling very ornery this evening. No, he isn't getting out, but what they are keeping him in for must be a military secret - least ways, they ain't telling! Oh, he isn't well by any means, but he does look a lot better than he has anytime in the past two months. They still have him on a very strict diet for building up his kidneys - they seem to have given up on the appendix, but think maybe he has —worms!! And he is supposed to go to the nose and throat clinic tomorrow.

March 16, 1942 - The Lt. walked in this noon, bathrobe in hand. Yes, they have turned him loose and he has gone back to work. They

finally diagnosed his case as simply "stomach disorders" - and he is to remain more or less on a diet - that is, there are certain things he is not to eat. I only hope he can take it a little easy for awhile - but I doubt it since two more of our officers were transferred last week.

March 18, 1942 - It's work again as usual for him - but he's still rather weak and says he feels like he's been beat on.

April 1, 1942

JRN - Camp Young, California

April 13, 1942 - I guess everything in the vicinity of the "Desert Training Center" is under control since our Lt. is safely there.

... The letter was very brief, merely stating they had arrived safely - in three and a half days. The Motor Transport Officer caught up with them the second day out - so with a little coaching - he was made to finish "convoying." Bob said his troop literally kidnapped him and put him in his command car for the last two days. Of course, B troop drew the job of unloading the train - so they worked all day and all night on that.

... I am quite lonely and get blue every once in awhile - but when I do - I soundly kick myself in the seat of the pants and go to work. I have been working quite hard. The house shines from stem to stern, the yards have been picked up, the flowers all weeded, the vines trimmed (somewhat), the sweater set finished (except for blocking), the bedroom drapes started, and the washing is done.

April 14, 1942 - I just received a special delivery air mail from Bob, asking me to make preparations to come out there. He asks me to sell all the furniture, except the piano - and store it. He seems to want me entirely free to be able to follow him on every move on a minute's notice - for as long as possible.

... Quote from Bob's letter, "My guess is that some of us will be here until September, but you can't tell. The purpose of this layout is still obscure. We start training on the 20th for six weeks. Then comes a period of development of equipment and experimental organization - from then on your guess is as good as mine."

Here's the thing - he writes, " Without knowing just what is in

store for us, it would not be a bad idea to get as much fun out of life as we can in what little time is available."

April 26, 1942 - I really haven't any news - but I might tell you about my experiences "clearing the post." I did it in only five hours of hard going. Since it was quite chilly I decided to have Mrs. Danby stay with Wilson - and am I glad I did! The wind was blowing harder than I've ever seen it - honestly! - a couple of times I sat right down in the middle of the sidewalk to keep from being blown over. No, I wasn't embarrassed. Everyone else was doing it, too.

Well, I got the clearance papers - four copies - which had to have fourteen signatures each. The first four I shouldn't have had to bother about since we didn't have quarters on post, but the forms were already made out so I had to have them signed anyway - property, utilities, inspectors, etc. That would have been the easiest to get, except the guys weren't in their offices and I had to go back - or this one couldn't sign until after others did, etc. So, I headed for the quartermaster area. Found out they wouldn't take checks for clearing - had to be cash - so I had to go halfway to town to get a check cashed. Then back. I had to go to warehouses 1, 2, 3, and 6 to clear the commissary. I had to go to 28 and 32 for post and engineer clearances. I don't know why, but I do know I was in places I never knew existed. Then out to station hospital for post surgeon's clearance (no trouble there) and the Officer's Club (no trouble). The Post Exchange was closed for auditing and they got slightly unhappy with me for wanting to pay them. Then to the Provost Marshall. For him I had to get signed certificate from the filling station that I owed them nothing, another from a MP station that I had turned in my identification card, and another from a different MP station that they had removed the post car tags. Then to the recreation office - for him certificates from all the theaters that I had no tickets and from all the libraries that I had no books. I was ready to quit and go back another day, but realized that having cleared the Provost Marshall I couldn't get back on Post (without considerable trouble, anyway) so had to go ahead and finish. Of course, no two offices are in the same building. I had to go into division headquarters for division signal officers' clearance (whatever that is), and by gum, a guy with a gun followed me around until I left. Finally, I had only the post inspector and billeting officer left - the latter couldn't sign until the former did - and of course, the

former couldn't be found. One of his aids, a corporal, looks at the papers, grins broadly and says, "Oh, are you Mrs. Neale?". He starts shaking my hand while I vainly try to figure out did I know him in Phillips, K.U., or where. He says, "I know Lt. Neale well. I got my recruit training under him a year ago. How is he? How are you? I'll find Col. Kennedy for you." He did and I got out of there. I didn't know it could be so hard to get away from a place. That's one reason I'm skeptical that the squadron's coming back here - I didn't have to clear last summer.

In letters written by Joyce from La Quinta, California, to JRN's parents:

May 3, 1942 - Took me over 12 hours to drive from El Paso to Phoenix. It was the hardest drive I've ever made, although I didn't have any car trouble - just bad roads, mountain detours, loaded car, hard wind, dust, heat, and a sick boy from Lords burgers. Guess the altitude got him but he was all right after leaving Phoenix and slept. Bob drove us right on through and we got in about 3 am. The Lt. looks fine and has a wonderful "leather" complexion.

May 5, 1942 - May 4th was quite a day in the lives of the younger Neale's. The extra bars were at long last added to our Bob's broad shoulders. I must have been a good omen. For me, the never to be forgotten experience of registering for sugar.

I was quite surprised this afternoon when a command car drove up. Bob and Bill Roussel jumped out and came in. They just kept talking about this and that - and it was ages before I noticed the bars. Then they dashed off again.

Ordinarily, Bob will be home twice a week. Each officer can go home one week night each week - and for the weekend the schedule is one troop officer on duty. Bob has two other officers now, so he'll have to stay out every third weekend. ... 'tis better than not seeing him at all.

Camp life seems to be agreeing with the men. They're all gaining weight, including Bob.

Major Meadows is in everyone's black book from all I hear. He never seems to be able to make up his mind about anything. I heard Lt. Herndon say he hoped to God they didn't get sent overseas under this C.O. or they'd all be killed before Earle could make up his mind

whether to attack or retreat.

May 11, 1941 - I was told by the other women that Bob wouldn't be in for two weeks because his two 2nd. Lts. had taken cars out without greasing the windshields. Some Major saw them, reported it to Gen. Patton, who looked up, traced the car numbers, and confined the whole troop to camp for two weeks. But at 6:30 Saturday evening, here was Bob. Just the two responsible men were confined.

Bob's Captaincy dates from February 1st, when it was approved - however, no back pay. Just one of the things covered by the order covering no promotions during that reorganization of divisions.

The 1st Cav division has been ordered for maneuvers July 18th. The 8th Engineers are officially still attached to the 1st Cav, but no one seems to think they'll go.

Woody Wilson goes to West Point to join the faculty June 1st. He doesn't like it much - as he has figured - being a Regular and a squadron executive officer - he was due his Majority in six months - and will now lose it. Guerdrom is supposed to be back from Belvoir, but isn't yet. Squadron executive will undoubtedly fall to either Bob or him. I know Bob would rather stay with his troop, but that isn't the place for advancement now.

Your clipping of the Desert Training Center reminds of Bob telling me yesterday of the trip he took the week before I came out. It seems an Engineer board showed up with three men quite familiar with the deserts of Egypt, Iran and Iraq. They got up an expedition of five trucks, put Bob in charge, and chased all over looking for spots. Whenever the three men agreed that one place looked like one of the foreign places, they'd try out some test camouflages and then go on. Hunting spots for individual units training or what, Bob didn't know.

May 17, 1942 - Nothing much has happened since I wrote you a few days ago - except we shan't be going to Louisiana as all the units here have been transferred to permanent station here. The Desert Training Center has been renamed, Camp Young.

June 3, 1942 - ... a bunch of the gals decided that since the men couldn't come in, we should go out there to see them. I was sorta against it, but didn't want to be a wet blanket - so went along. They were having some sort of big bug inspection so we just saw the men as they

dashed by.

I swear, one of these days my Dutch, or Irish, or whatever it is that makes me hot-headed is just naturally going to blow sky high. Those darn women, all screaming at their husbands every time they got within screaming distance of where we were sitting, didn't even say, "Hello", but started griping about everything under the sun. And the poor men, already with a million things on their minds, trying to squeeze out a couple of minutes to relax and having that to contend with, too. One of the times Bob dashed by I said, "If I ever act that way, I want you to kick me right in the seat of the pants." He said, "Don't worry - I will!" So I guess that settled that.

... Guerdrom got back from Belvoir on May 28, which didn't give Bob time to get to Belvoir for the new class June 1st. Woody Wilson thought Earle was going to make Bob executive so as not to run any risk of losing him from the squadron. That's one thing about Earle, he knows, and admits, that Bob can get things done that no one else can. However the position really belonged to Guerdrom. So Sunday, during a lull, Bob told me that Guerdrom was executive, and that he was "assistant division engineer. I don't know exactly what that is - but it has a lot of paper work. Bob did say he really liked it better as he'd get to work with the men some, although not directly with his troop as before, but he wouldn't as executive. Another time he dashed by he said, "I've heard the class at Belvoir was postponed until June 15 or July 1st, but I don't know whether I'm to go or not."

June 10, 1942 - The atmosphere around here has cleared considerably. There seems no immediate danger of the squadron leaving and, for the present, our trip to Belvoir is out. A new order says that no officer of grade captain or above will be sent to school, unless he is incompetent. So I don't guess we want to go now.

During the past ten days, the squadron has received seven new 2nd. Lts., brand new out of school and knowing nothing. Maybe they'll learn. The squadron is almost lined up to strength on officers now - lacking only 1 Lt. Col., 1 Major, 1 Captain, and 5 1st Lts. However, they are authorized only three 2nd. Lts. and have ten - so maybe some of them will work up to fill the vacancies. Also have about 90 new men - some from Ft. Logan, Colorado, and some from Ft. Riley.

I think Bob has lost a little weight, tho not much. Maybe I'm just getting used to seeing him so fat. He doesn't like his new job very

well, calls himself a "gang pusher." Says he spends most of his time running back and forth between Armoured Force Headquarters and 8th Engineer Headquarters. In a way, he could be called a Civil Engineer. Anyway, when Gen. Patton wants the Engineers to build something, he calls Bob (not personally). Bob dashes over to get all the details. Then goes back and works out the plan, including estimates of time, material, number of men required, etc. Then he submits it to Major Meadows. His approval generally requires a lot of changes, or at least arguments. The it goes to Armour Force Headquarters and usually revisions are required again. After it is accepted, Bob is supposed to see that it all gets done according to the plan.

He is also squadron "investigator." He has to make up all the accident reports, etc. However, other than being another step up the ladder, being on the staff means that he doesn't have to stay on troop duty, so he should be able to get in more often.

June 15, 1942 - All of a sudden, everyone thinks the 8th Engineers won't ever see overseas action. Their work as a training unit seems pretty well cut out. However, they are training officers as well as men, so my fear now is that Bob will be transferred to another organization, as he has been with this one longer than anyone except Major Meadows.

June 20, 1942 - Bob was in on Wednesday evening, but said he doubted if he'd get in at all this weekend. He has to have a rifle range built by Monday and the materials haven't come in yet so he'll have to work straight on through when it does come.

July 18, 1942 - Rumor now has it that the 8th will stay here for maneuvers with the 1st Armored which begin around the middle of next month and last approximately two months. At least the 1st Cavalry, from Bliss, has been ordered to Louisiana without the 8th Engineers. They think the maneuvers here will continue to use Camp Young as a supply base. If so, I'll stay right here both to keep a house and because I'd have as much chance of seeing Bob as I would by going anywhere else. However, the squadron still has too many captains and has just received another, Capt. Robert Dice. So I live in constant fear of a transfer to a unit "moving out."

If Bob stays with the 8th he won't be eligible for a majority for

some time. The job he has now as assistant division engineer is supposed to be held by a senior captain. The rule is that the officer serves six months in a job of a grade higher than his rank. If satisfactory, he is then eligible for promotion to that grade. So, with the 8th, Bob will have to wait five more months to take over the executive and then wait six more months. With length of service it would take Bob around ten more years for a majority. So he would probably have a better chance of rapid advancement with some newly organized unit, but most of them are sent on as soon as organized--so that's not so good.

July 31, 1942 - The squadron needs only one company to become a battalion (foreign service strength). ... I thought you might like to know Bob's feelings on the matter. I think they're pretty grand! He says it's a job that has to be done and he'll do his part. He says he doesn't hate the Japs or anyone (although he admits that might come) as he thinks most of them are guys who don't want to fight any more than he does. He has no fear of being killed - says the thing he'll hate most is being away from his family, and not seeing Wilson grow up. For myself - I know that if he goes, he'll come back. Naturally, I'll suffer all the time for the things that might happen to him, but my chief worry will be the emotional readjustment necessary for him to start "living" again after it's over. In the meantime I'll be working hard, doing all I can to help him and the rest.

August 8, 1942 - Bob also gave out tonight with the possible good news that the squadron won't be on the maneuvers much. He thinks they'll only go out a troop at a time - or something similar.

August 11, 1942 - ... it rained last night. Bob dashed out when it first started to close the car windows and said, "That's the first time I've been scalded by rain." ... I get fighting mad when anyone ruffles him these days. I could say that I'm not really myself. Each time I see Bob, I feel as if I've been granted a stay of execution.

August 17, 1942 - The unexpected has happened here again. The squadron wasn't ordered out for maneuvers here, so we felt we were going to stay and do some more camp expanding. Now, suddenly, they have been ordered to maneuvers in the desert area around Needles, California, and northern Arizona. They go Friday of this week and are

to be gone approximately ten weeks. That sounds like a long time to stay here by myself but I think most (of the wives) will stay. ... And, in case they were ordered out during maneuvers, which is entirely possible - I'd want to be here.

August 21, 1942 - A bunch of us drove out to the Camp last night for a "maneuver farewell." The men were acting as silly as spring chickens so we really had a nice time. ... Bob will not go on maneuver for another week or so. He had brought his lockers in Wednesday night and packed a lot of junk - and had packed his stuff out there. Then at noon yesterday he got a contract to build some stuff--anyway, he has to stay in until he gets that done.

August 22, 1942 - Immediate moving orders for the unit - still in the states however.

September 1942

JRN- Camp A. P. Hill, Virginia

In letters written by Joyce from Bowling Green, Virginia, to JRN's parents:

September 9, 1942 - No Captain at the station so I took a cab here. No word and no Captain here so I will call the Camp. No line to the 8th Engineer Battalion, but they took a message to be delivered. I had supper, registered and was just ready to bathe when a knock came at the door - and there was our beloved Captain, looking better and more handsome than ever. ... The majority has been put in for, but can't be expected before the middle of November since an officer must serve six months in grade.

September 12, 1942 - We are only 5 miles from the Camp, so I see Bob - if only for a few minutes - almost every day.

September 22, 1942 - Bob had four shots one afternoon last week. The one he expected to give him no trouble is the one that is still troubling him - the smallpox. It's taking again!

September 23, 1942 - The Captain spent the day at home - in bed. ... While on a reconnaissance, he and his driver got stuck in a creek bed. Having no shovels, or any tools, it took them five and a half hours to dig the jeep out - and 'twas raining part of the time. The next morning (yesterday) he got his first typhus shot. He was sick last night and ran quite a temperature, but staggered out this morning. When I got home from breakfast, about 9:15, he was asleep in the bed. The doctor had sent him home. ... He has his second typhoid tomorrow.

September 28, 1942 - Bob was home in bed four days last week. He went out Thursday to get the second typhoid shot - or too much time would have elapsed and he'd have to start over. The doctor sent him right back as he still had fever. ... he said Bob had had a light touch of pneumonia, brought on by that exposure when he had a fever from the shots.

September 29, 1942 - The gang is having a dinner party Thursday night - will probably be our farewell party although the deadline, in most opinions, has been extended to the 15th of next month. Of course, when they leave here will give no clue of the date of embarkation, but it would be senseless for me to follow, as the embarkation station is the same as a penitentiary.

October 1, 1942 - Bob spent a little over \$50 for clothes in Washington the other day, but got more for his money than at any time since we got in this Army. The reason - he bought enlisted men's clothes. Officers must dress the same as the men when in battle. The three wool O.D. suits certainly look horrible beside the pretty officer ones. He also got two new khaki suits, jeep caps, cloth belt for his blouse, six each shirts and shorts, and three pairs of long handles.

Mrs. Homes, the landlady, informed me tonight that Bob was a considerable help to her in her teaching, as each time her 5th graders get lax in something she says, "Now, Captain Neale says if you don't know arithmetic, or whatever it happens to be, you can't do any good in the Army." They immediately get down to business.

October 7, 1942 - Standing orders of the 8th Engineers issued yesterday are as follows: Capt. Robert Dice, relieved as executive officer and assigned to assistant S-2. Capt. Justice R. Neale, in addition

to his duties as assistant division engineer is assigned executive officer. Sir Bob was whistling at the top of his voice as he came in last night so I knew something had happened. Of course, it will mean more work having two important big jobs and I probably won't see him as often - but it's where he belongs. It should insure the majority next month.

October 17, 1942 - We have been marooned, except for one foot bridge across on river to Richmond, for three days....I have been "awe struck" at the way it has rained this entire month. Just pouring, never letting up day or night.

The natives are very unperturbed as to Bowling Green's fate. They say they get completely isolated for a week or two at least once a year, but the water never gets up here. The only thing that worries them is that, with so many extra people, they may run out of food. The food situation is pretty bad at any time. It seems they just can't get enough stuff in - seldom any meat (except chicken), no coffee. I've eaten stuff I'd sworn I'd never touch. But when one is hungry--

At least, while this keeps up the squadron can't move out. They can't load out the other units equipment, let alone their own until the bridges, railroad tracks, etc. are rebuilt and from all reports that may take weeks. Maybe the engineers will get the job.

October 22, 1942 - I asked Bob if there were anything he would like that I might get him for "surprise packages" and he said there was one thing he would really like to have, but doubted if it could be found. That's a 45 Colt Automatic - one which would use government issue ammunition as that's the only kind he could get and can't take any along. He would carry it on him.

October 30, 1942 - Then I think I'll come back to Kansas. Bob and I have been talking about it quite a lot lately. There is bound to be a change of some kind soon, but it's likely I could keep following indefinitely. That isn't a very satisfactory sort of life and neither of us think Butch should be dragged around any more. It's pure selfishness on our part to want to be together. The past two months Bob has needed me more than Butch, but with the new job and with the (future) promotion, Bob will be much happier, more satisfied and settled. Butch mustn't get the idea that both his Mama and Daddy have deserted him. Then too, we know the separation has to come sometime and I know Bob would

feel better if he knew I was settled. We both feel quite strongly on the subject of "war work slackers" too. As Bob says - I have two perfectly good hands which could, and should, be used for more than holding bridge cards.

November 6, 1942 - Bob is now a Major. The special orders were telegraphed from Washington, yesterday. When he came in last night, the gold leaves were glittering like diamonds. ... The squadron has been transferred to Camp Sutton, North Carolina, near Charlotte. ... The enlisted men are now authorized ten day furloughs and we're to be stationed at Camp Sutton until the first of the year at least.

In letters written by Joyce from Charlotte, North Carolina to JRN's parents:

November 11, 1942 - The only reason they're still there is a lack of boats for transport - which could be remedied at any time. The move is only to get them out of the mud hole since winter has set in.

November 13, 1943 - ... I never realized how much depends upon the women behind the scenes. I have a full time job on my hands now, which I can't leave until the boat sails. I feel terribly inadequate, but if anything I do might help a wonderful organization to stick together through hell and high water when they get "over there" - well, I can certainly have a good try at it anyway.

November 15, 1942

BG Thompson Lawrence activated the 99th Infantry Division at Camp Van Dorn, Mississippi

November 23, 1942 - The men arrived today - and are in this evening for a few minutes. They are going back out so as not to lose one of their evenings at home - orders being they can have only three night a week.

There is no news, except that the Major looks just as grand as he did as a captain - or as a Lt. - or as a Mr.

December 3, 1942 - ... we're all so darn mad at the civilians here we're about to explode. We've been treated the nastiest here of any place we've been - no one will take our checks, they tell us they don't want the Army in Charlotte, and numerous other things. The wives who tried to get gasoline were told they had to have records sent here from Va. They did, and then were told they had to get books at camp. So they went out there and of course, there was no ration board. Going back, they were told they'd have to appear before a special board which will meet in about three weeks - and they have absolutely no gas. Now to top it off, they have decided all Army vehicles can have only a gallon and a half, a day. The big equipment can't even get started on that. A fine lot of training the boys will get. I'm beginning to believe the Army should just quit if that's the kind of thing we're fighting for. A little taste of Hitler's government would be good for them.

December 7, 1943 - Who knows - things may go on for months the way they have been the past several months. It isn't at all likely, but one never knows. Then too, there's always a remote chance that Bob would be transferred to some new unit - and would be permanently stationed for a time. I can't run out on him now - nor do I want to start something I'd have to stay with should it be possible for me to be with him instead. So-, I'm really in a pickle!

Later - Bob came in at that point - so we have argued back and forth - vice and vice versa - etc and etcetera - and have decided I'm going to stay here until the last dog is hanged. The separation, when it comes will be too long anyway. I do appreciate your looking up all these things for me. ... There will be work of some kind for me when I get back. Possibly I can do dental assisting until another something comes up. I'm confident my job is here for the present.

In a letter written by JRN from Charlotte, North Carolina, to his parents:

December 12, 1942 - It still rains here nearly every day and the mud is slick and gooey. We made a 12 mile tactical march yesterday and boy did I get a case of the sniffles. I can't get over this cold at all. All I need to do is get damp and my nose runs and runs.

We got a big bang out of the clippings. One of the things I miss most is sound editorial comment. These radical southerners hate with a

blind passion or speak wild and foolishly. A rational person is an oddity in this part of the world.

After this mess is over I would write a book if I could only spell. This army offers all the necessary background for an infinite number of stories of the O'Henry style. Does your club, Mother, approve of O'Henry?

Dad, I still wear the same caps I wore when I joined in April '41. The only difference, they now cover a wealth of gray hair instead of jet black. The authority I exercise daily might lead one to believe I was a bit of a prude at times, but the effect on 700 or so of a wrong decision usually has first consideration, even though the decision is made in the batting of an eye. There is one thing for certain. You soon learn to think on your feet, or you fail miserably. I do not consider myself a failure yet.

January 4, 1943

99th Infantry Division began basic training

In a letter written by Joyce from Charlotte, North Carolina to JRN's parents:

January 2, 1943 - We have just found out that the government has ordered travel pay from California to Virginia illegal - and all those paid must refund it. That includes us.

February 1943

JRN - Back to Ft. Bliss, Texas, as ExO and then later CO of the 161st Engineer Squadron (changed to 161st Airborne Engineer Battalion) and moved to Ft. Carson, Colorado

In letters written by Joyce from El Paso, Texas to JRN's parents:

February 26, 1943 - We got here this morning at 5 am.

March 1, 1943 - Both El Paso and Ft. Bliss are just the same as before. Both look awfully good to us, but we wish we knew what we are going to do.

March 9, 1943 - I met the troop train--the 8th has arrived! They certainly looked good to me! They have moved into their old area and the 161st is now down in Isleta with some Air Corps group. They get in every night though. Oh yes, Gen. Swift personally greeted the 8th and had the 5th Cav. band on hand.

March 12, 1943 - Officers have been traded back and forth between the 8th and the 161st until I don't know who is what anymore. They are try to bring the 8th up to strength. Lt. Col. Ellison wants as many bachelors as possible, so has taken all the bachelors and some of the married from the 161st (total of eleven). In addition, we now have Roussel, Skaggs, Morrow and Lovett with us in the 161st.

March 23, 1943 - Right now I have a bunch of unhappy wives on my hands. They're all new to the Army game and since Bob has taken over, have had their first taste of "overnight problems" and starting today, a four day field problem. They think it's horrible and I'm surprised the trouble I am having convincing them that it's better they know a little about how to fight in case they do see active service.

April 3, 1943

99th Infantry Division completed basic training at Camp Van Dorn, Mississippi

April 3, 1943 - The 8th is in the field this week. Bob had planned to take the 161st back out next week, but has postponed it until after the 8th is moved back.

April 8, 1943 - Bob brought home the news, possibly you've already guessed; yes, we have warning orders for another move. We don't know just when - but soon. The orders are restricted, so don't "be telling." You see, although I can't tell you where we're to go, you'll know just as well as if I had it down in black and white - when I merely say it is the same place we went the last time we left here. Isn't that perfect hell!

April 14, 1943 - As for the subject you are anxious to know more about, I have nothing to report.

April 22, 1943 - More darned excitement around here.

Yesterday our warning orders for Indio were canceled. ... Also, today we got another set of orders. These came from Washington and await only the approval of the Commanding General of the 3rd Army to get us moving. Of course, he might not approve - and then here we'd be again. However it looks pretty definite and the Major has been packing his things tonight. These orders aren't restricted so I'll say we'll be living closer to you than we have at any time. The station is to be Camp Gruber, 18 miles from Muskogee.

April 23, 1943 - Do you know of a nice, calm, quiet insane asylum where I could go for the duration - and jabber and rave with all the other maniacs? I'm in the mood!!!

Yes, our orders for Camp Gruber, Muskogee, Oklahoma, were cancelled today. We "hear" that our orders for someplace else are in the mail and should be here in a day or two.

The gals in the 8th aren't very nice about it anymore. You see, they have portioned out our houses among them - and are anxious for us to get gone.

April 29, 1943 - This has been a horrible day - but it's about over. The packers and storage people will be here tomorrow morning.

In a letters written by Joyce from Colorado Springs, Colorado, to JRN's parents:

May 1, 1943 - End of the trail and a bunch of tired people after driving Thursday afternoon until Friday at 5:30 pm - straight through. Don't know if Bob has arrived or not.

June 5, 1943

395th Combat Team demonstration by Col. A. J. Mackenzie, CO

June 25, 1943

JRN - ExO of 324th Engineer Combat Battalion, Camp Van Dorn, Mississippi

August 1, 1943

MG Lawrence departed to become the commander of the Infantry Replacement Center at Camp Roberts, California

August 2, 1943

BG Walter C. Lauer arrived at Camp Van Dorn to become the CG from 3rd Division Chief of Staff Africa

August 14, 1943

"D" series maneuvers start

BG Edwin L. Sibert, Division Artillery departed the 99th for G-2 SHAEF

September 5, 1943

"D" series maneuvers completed

September 16, 1943

99th Infantry Division departed Camp Van Dorn for Louisiana maneuvers

September 20, 1943

99th Infantry Division crossed into Louisiana, maneuvers began

October 3, 1943

**Col. Paul R. Davison replaced Col. David Craig as Chief of Staff
BG Frederick N. Black replaced BG Sibert as Division Artillery CO**

November 15, 1943

First members of the 99th Infantry Division crossed into Texas

November 1943

99th Infantry Division arrived at Camp Maxey, Texas

January 1944

JRN - Assumed command of the 99th Infantry Division's 324th Engineer Combat Battalion from Lt. Col. Roland Stenzel

In a letter written by JRN to Frank Kyser - September 2, 1988:

I remember the Bugs Bunny paintings of Baehr and Dickey that were to teach my soldiers to zip their lips. They were not too successful. Most learned to say "What's up, Doc?"

March 1944

**3000 men from A.S.T.P. received to replace soldiers transferred after the Louisiana maneuvers
Training for PQM qualifications**

In letters written by Joyce from Hugo, Oklahoma, to JRN's parents:

May 3, 1944 - Bob got in tonight for the first time this week. The Camp was flooded, several roads damaged, etc., so the poor engineers have, as usual, been working 36 hours a day.

May 9, 1944 - Letters from the 8th arrived in a bunch - and we are plenty glad to see them. They all report just crawling out of fox holes, written April 1 to 15, and related various reactions. The 8th was all split up, a small part going with each landing force. Lt. Col. Ellison wrote a nice general picture of the entire campaign and gave out with the simply amazing "casualty list." One officer had a slight foot wound, already back on duty, and five enlisted men killed. The first to fall was Bob's driver. The D.S.C.'s were being handed out generously - one of the first going to an Old Time Sgt. of the Motor Pool who "mothered" Bob all the time he was with them.

August 1944

"Box Factory" started, referenced Battle Babies, p 102

System developed by JRN

Basic box - 24' x 24' x 36', color-coded corners

Each type of company (unit) packed exactly the same

After the 324th shut down the box factory at Maxey it turned in the two construction saws that were utilized to build the wood structures at the northeast Texas camp, just a few miles north of Paris. I packed my own gear in some of these same boxes and prepared to go overseas.

September 10, 1944

Departure of the 99th Infantry Division from Camp Maxey began

September 15, 1944

**99th Infantry Division arrived at Camp Miles Standish,
Massachusetts**

September 29, 1944

**JRN - Departed Camp Miles Standish for England on the SS
Argentina**

Army transport - George W. Goethal

Ex-freighters - Explorer, Excelsior, and Exchequer

Luxury Liner - Argentina - 393th Infantry Regiment, 324th Engineer

Combat Battalion, and 370th Field Artillery Battalion

October 10, 1944

Arrive in England

Division assembled in Dorsetshire in Southern England

October 19, 1944

Staff and Command meeting - Crossing the Channel

At Division Headquarters, a Staff and Command meeting was held to advise

the Commanders on the details of our cross-channel move to France and on to the east. The meeting was conducted by Services of Supply (SOS) personnel and its theme was, "Don't ask us, we'll tell you what you need to know." How un-American.

Our Chief of Staff, Col. Paul R. Davison, in the absence of Maj. Gen. Walter Lauer, presided over the meeting. When the SOS had completed its instruction, the Chief called an adjournment but announced only a ten minute break for the Commanders of the 99th Infantry Division. When the meeting reconvened the SOS personnel were absent and we received our instructions.

Instruction #1: When you receive the alert for your unit, do as you are instructed. Don't ask questions; just comply, and trust these SOS people. Remember they have done this several times.

Instruction #2: Don't think, don't question, and don't suggest. When you are on the soil of the continent, just quickly and quietly reassume your commands.

Instruction #3: When you are reassembled and ready to travel, you will be furnished strip maps that will tell you where to go and how you will get there. The route will not be identified. Strip maps will be furnished one per vehicle. The route will end somewhere and there you will find your advance party.

In closing the meeting, Col. Davison remarked, "You know as much as I do about when, we know in general where, we know why, but as of now we don't need to know how or what. I'll see you all on the other side, keep us informed.

You are dismissed."

November 1, 1944

"Be ready to move"

There was no apparent action for several days. Physical exercise and the

receipt of the last items of equipment occupied each day. Then on November 1, 1944, from Division came the first word. "Be ready to move on six hours notice, that is all," signed for the Commanding General, Norman G-3. Derrick's six hours started at 0930 hrs. At 1230 hrs. we received orders by motorcycle messenger to move to Camp-13, by route 13, Initial Point (IP) time 1400 hrs. What happened to six hours notice? A call to G-3 informed them of our alert condition. A return call "Corrects order." Time at IP was changed to 1800 hrs. The order went to Cpt. Art Harverstick's A Company (Able), Cpt. Bill Wasko's B Company (Baker), and Capt. Bernard Loftfield's C Company (Charlie). Able was to follow Cpt. Louis Eble's H/S Company (How), then Baker, and last Charlie.

We crossed the IP at 1900 hrs. Able joined the column on schedule as did Baker, but Charlie decided to "eat on the ground" and was late. However, Charlie got into the column before How got to the final control point at the entrance to Camp-13. Camp-13 turned out to be a British operation that shipped out through the port of Southampton.

November 2, 1944

Camp-13, Southampton

The luminous bands on my GI watch indicated that it was 0200 hrs., so it was now November 2, 1944. We passed through a pair of massive gates and parked bumper to bumper alongside a large warehouse-type building with a wall of new, large, roll-up doors. The doors were open but everything was blacked out.

An Englishman with a cat-eye flashlight passed our vehicle, "Dismount all and enter at the nearest door, except the driver and the other in the seat next to the driver. Trailers will travel hitched to their truck, engineer heavy equipment on its own trailer counts as a vehicle." He repeated this same instruction at each vehicle.

A work party appeared and started measuring the trucks and trailers. They prepared a list with the vehicle hood number, the names of the two men who would travel with it, the trailer number, and the overall length.

We dismounted and entered the building. We stood in the dark but before long the doors unrolled down. I glanced at my watch again; it was 0230 hrs. I heard the vehicles outside cranking-up and they left. I did not know it but they would not be seen again until daylight on the 3rd of November 1944, in France.

The lights in the building came on, barely, and our eyes adjusted to the low light. A gentleman with a clipboard announced, "We will prepare a passenger list. You will fall in under the letter of your last name." I moved to the letter N. "You will arrange yourselves alphabetically by last name, by second letter or third letter if necessary. Some names alphabetically by first names. You know, Bob Smith on the right of Richard Smith and so forth." This administrative action took until 0300 hrs. and then our leader announced, "Follow me."

The lights went out and we passed through a swinging door, walking for several minutes until we arrived at a group of small Quonset huts. Inside were wood-framed canvas bunks, two high. The man at the door counted in forty men and then said "No more, please. Breakfast will be at 0545 hrs., with mess kits. Sleep well, you will be called, knocked up in plenty of time."

The outside door closed. American blacked-out flashlights appeared in increasing numbers as bunk space became occupied.

The time between 0300 hrs. and 0545 hrs. passed in an instant. At 0600 hrs. I became aware that How Co., at least the part of it I was with was getting up, so I sat up and obtained my mess kit from my musette bag and my canteen cup from the canteen carrier on my pistol belt; shortly I was ready to travel. The mess hall turned out to be just a short distance away in another small Quonset hut. It was set up just

as a field kitchen was supposed to be.

Hot soapy water first, with brushes for scrubbing as necessary, then a boiling hot first rinse, followed by boiling water again; all three in standard GI cans sitting on gasoline field heaters, under the roof of an open shed. After the boiling water burned your fingers and you waved the mess kit dry, you entered the dimly lighted kitchen mess hall through a blackout door.

The breakfast was US Army menu as prepared by the British: pancakes, choice of sausage or bacon, toast and embalmed butter, jelly of choice, and coffee with cream and sugar or black. As each man finished eating he left the mess area through a blackout door at the opposite end of the tube. The same equipment for cleaning mess gear was provided with a fourth GI can added for scraps. An individual inspected your "leavings" for wasted food. If in his opinion you had been wasteful you were lectured: "Everything you eat here and over there has to be shipped. Do you want to be the cause of a ship being sunk? Take all you want, but eat what you take. Waste not." This individual made his speech every now and then, even if there was no one scraping. He certainly gave himself no chance to forget it.

When I arrived back in the sleeping tube a new individual with a new speech was getting us packed and ready to travel. He repeated his speech at frequent intervals, "Police up your gear; be ready to move out. You can't return for what you have mislaid. You will not pass this way again."

At 0730 hrs. the door to the tube opened and a new escort instructed us, "Walk in file, and we'll be on with it." After a short interval of time, during which we walked in file, one behind the other with no particular interval between us, we arrived at the same structure, or one just like it, where we checked in earlier that morning.

We entered through a blackout door and were guided to the sort out area. A new face was speaking. "Place yourselves under the letter of your last name, same game as when you arrived. At each letter is a box of special chalk, when you are checked off, you will receive your loading number. Put the number on your helmet, both sides, about five inches high with the chalk and then put it back in the box." After this activity we had to keep our helmets on for the rest of the movement.

Two individuals, one with a clipboard and one an interrogator moved slowly, starting at location A, then moving on to B, and then C, D, and E. I thought, "Gee, I'm glad my name's not Zumwalt."

After the helmet number exercise came the obliteration of our Dauntless insignia. Opaque tape was issued to cover the painted insignia on the front of each helmet. The insignia on the shoulder of the field jacket could be either covered by tape or removed, individual's preference.

The clock was moving very slowly and it seemed to move even more slowly as the men started moving to the available latrines to meet nature's demands for attention.

Eventually, the clock indicated that it was 1145 hrs. and an individual arrived with sack lunches, drinking water, and coffee. The instructions were to eat in place. Two sandwiches, one Spam and one corned beef, also an orange or an apple or two plums. We were to pack away that which was not eaten, to save it for evening. "Your next meal will be in France, if you make it."

I managed to eat one sandwich, the Spam one, and the apple, and had a cup of the black coffee. I emptied my canteen and refilled it with Southampton water.

The lunch period dragged on. It was approaching 1400 hrs. before any of the port help reappeared. When the two with the clipboard reappeared, they

announced that we had ten minutes to police and pack up, but they didn't tell us it was only for dog tag conformation. Starting with the first A, each man presented his dog tags to the reader, who announced to the clipboard the last name and the army serial number. The last name had to match the helmet number and the alphabetical name on the clipboard's list. The clock read 1600 hrs. when this was finished.

At 1630 hrs. we were instructed to fall-in in file with gear, weapons slung across the body and over the shoulder. The line formed and when completed, a roll-up door went up and we saw the side metal of what had to be a small ship. We turned left to the north and walked in file for ten minutes or so. We approached an unkempt ship, a true rust bucket docked with its bow to the south so that the starboard side was against the dock. A walk-up ramp was in place. The ship's name was the Empire Lance. For an instant the thought of going AWOL flashed through my mind. But then I reasoned, maybe it was a type of camouflage; it wouldn't be here if it wasn't a sea-worthy ship. By then I was at the top of the gangway and I turned sharp right and then left and then went down the short ramp to the deck. The solid rail was about four or five feet above the top deck.

Somewhere along the line, someone noted my helmet number and that it was in the correct sequence. I was aboard a tramp steamer and it was to get me to the Le Havre Harbor during the night. As previously instructed, I didn't question anything, but my faith was severely tested.

There didn't appear to be any other unit on board and that proved to be the case. The Empire Lance got underway about 1730 hrs. After casting off from the dock, a single small tug guided her into the lane of southbound traffic.

The Empire Lance was the property of the East Indian Trading Company, on lease to the British Crown. The crew members were all natives of India; the ship's officers had all been educated in England. The public address system talked in "the

King's English." Shortly after casting off, the polished voice of the Captain invited all the officers aboard to move to the deck cabin for the crossing. Everyone would stay inside until it was totally dark. We did not wish to make it easy for Mr. Hitler's submarines.

The Isle of Wight slipped by on our starboard side and before long there was no England visible to the port side of the Lance, only water, the ocean water of the south end of the English Channel. By 1900 hrs. it was totally dark. The ship's engines came to life. A constant rhythmic vibration began as the torque turned the propeller at a greater RPM. We were under way, for better or for worse.

Presently, the voice of the ship's Captain spoke. "You may travel on the open deck but no smoking. I say again, no smoking in the open night. Go and come through the blackout door. We should stand off Le Havre Harbor just before midnight. You will be prepared to disembark at once on my instructions."

At about 2300 hrs. the ship's propulsion power was cut back and the Lance faced north. A bluish light blinked off the starboard bow. We had to be standing off Le Havre Harbor. A voice came on the loud speaker and as it spoke in a unknown tongue, selected crew members moved to the sheep pen on the bow deck. By the numbers in that unknown tongue, they removed the tarpaulin that covered a rope net.

Yes, we were going to disembark over the starboard side. The crew team installed the netting. It was made of at least one-inch rope and was possibly twenty feet wide. They fastened it to the deck tie-downs, manhandled the bundle onto the rail, and then controlled its descent with two ropes that were attached at about the one-third points of its width.

The captain spoke again in his Oxford English, "Please, everybody line up in a column, ten wide. Be sure all your gear is slung over your shoulders so it can't slip

off because your neck is in the way. Check your weapon's sling, check the frogs and keepers. A landing craft of the sort available will tie up along side. How many it will carry, you will just have to wait until its skipper tells us. The crafts come in all sizes."

The sound of an approaching craft completed the Captain's speech, but not for long. The Captain spoke again, "The Boche let us have a clean trip over. If you enjoyed your trip, recommend us to your friends. But remember, we only transport passengers west to east. You have been splendid sports, let's see how you handle the net."

A face appeared over the rail and spoke to a crew member. It then disappeared and the crewman watched over the rail. He turned and signaled the starter. The first ten men moved to the net, climbed up the rail, stopped at the top, turned about and started down. Looked easy, most of the troops practiced this at Camp Maxey. I now wished I had.

The second ten moved out; they climbed. We of the third ten moved forward before the second ten was out of sight. We executed as if we had practiced for a week. At least the net was dry. The craft took on about eighty. The skipper signaled with a cut across his throat. The ninth ten was held up.

The Lance crew pulled the net up out of the landing craft and we parted company. As we pulled out into the black night, a similar craft took our place.

We traveled for about ten minutes. A bull horn spoke, "Brace for grounding." The motors sped up, then cut back to idle. The bow went aground. The jar wasn't too bad.

November 3, 1944

Le Havre Harbor and on to Aubel, Belgium

The bow ramp dropped. Since there was no splash, we should have dry feet. We did. A guide with a cat-eye flashlight awaited us. We moved out a ways and then waited for the others. I looked again at my issue watch, it indicated 0030 hrs. It was November 3, 1944. I was safely on the continent of Europe in the country of liberated France.

By 0115 hrs. all the passengers who crossed on the Empire Lance were ashore. Our guide then advised, "We will take a little hike to get out of the Boche's port target area." It was not hard to move rapidly to get out of a bomb target area. Until that moment, though, the only American soldier I could remember referring to the German enemy as the "Boche" was our commanding general, General Lauer.

At about 0130 hrs. we arrived at an assembly area and parked there were most of our vehicles. It appeared that most of our equipment had crossed ahead of us. Maj. Sam Perrine (S-3) and Capt. Eble were requested to determine what, if anything, was missing. The guide instructed us to move out by 0200 hrs. for the bivouac at Forges, a distance of about 67 miles based on the strip map that CWO Alex Lindner (Personnel Officer) had been provided. (Appendix D). For the first time we knew where we were supposed to go next: Aubel, Belgium, about 16 miles northeast of Liege. The map indicated a total trip distance of 320.5 miles.

We thanked the guide and at 0200 hrs. we started the motors. Capt. Eble and CWO Lindner led us out of the assembly area with headlights burning bright. Our map instructed us to turn them off at Namur, only cat-eye lights would be used from Liege to Aubel. Where did the guide with the cat-eye flashlight go?

The trip moved slowly. We arrived at Forges at 0430 hrs. and followed the signs for highway N321, more or less to the south. The signs indicated the rest

point, (RP), and we turned off the road. Guides placed our vehicles in rows facing north, ready to continue on. We were issued C rations and were told we would have a hot meal at Bapaume, about 80 miles northeast. We were to depart for the Bapaume camp at 0600 hrs. and would pass from SOS to United States Army Europe control at a checkpoint east of Valenciennes at the French-Belgium border.

We rolled on time. Although local traffic built up as daylight developed, by 1100 hrs. we had arrived at the bivouac area at Bapaume. The hot meal of C rations was ready for us. The camp commander had no road clearance for us to continue to Aubel so he told us, "Settle down and get some rest. You still have about 160 miles to travel."

While eating my hot meal I was advised that Art Harverstick's Able Co. had arrived and was in the next section of the camp. Bill Wasko's Baker Co. arrived about 45 minutes later and Bernard Loftfield's Charlie Co. was only a few minutes behind Bill's last vehicles. At about 1600 hrs. CWO John Hayes (Motor Warrant Officer) arrived with the 4-ton wrecker escorting three deuce-and-a-halves that had to fall out during the march.

Word was received to be prepared to continue the motor march to Aubel at 0600 hrs. on November 4th. The word was passed to CWO Hayes and before long all four motor sections were busy supervising the servicing of their vehicles.

With the arrival of CWO Hayes at Bapaume, I assumed, erroneously, that all elements of the 324th were in camp. Short was the C Co. dozer, trailer, and prime mover as well as three other deuce-and-a-half's. I did not learn of this shortage until late January, 1945.

As evening turned into night only a few pup tents were pitched. Most men, it appeared, would just as soon sleep under the stars. At 0300 hrs. we were advised that "your motor march" would cross the IP at 0630 hrs. All elements were

instructed to feed breakfast, our first self-prepared meal in Europe, at 0430 hrs. and that kitchens would roll with the companies, as usual.

By 0615 hrs. the serials of the march unit were ready to roll out and by 0630 hrs. all were headed for Aubel.

Most of the staff section jeeps were leading their deuce-and-a-half's. The battalion headquarters was following the headquarters company's kitchen and supply trucks. As the point reached Cambrai, the 324th was stretched out over about five miles of French highway N29. As we continued on to Valenciennes, still on N29, we crossed a World War I battle area that contained wreckage from World War II as well, mostly destroyed German armor. I saw nothing for CWO Hayes to strip for parts.

We traveled on through Valenciennes on N29 until we were about four miles north and one mile east; there we stopped at the French-Belgian border. We had arrived at our last checkpoint. Somewhere between Bapaume and this checkpoint I had decided that I wasn't needed in the convoy, so I had Al Botti, my driver, pull up to the head of the column. I requested that CWO Lindner make a carbon copy of his strip map. Then I walked back along the vehicles to the S-3 section and its lead jeep. Maj. Perrine occupied the right hand seat. Already, he had his pipe fired up. "Sam, it's rumored that you need additional training as a convoy commander and besides that, I don't want the job! At this point we enter the back door of First Army and leave SOS."

"Well--Sir--can I have Thomas to help me?"

"Well--yes, you may need some of his capabilities to interpret our enemy's intentions."

"Well-- tell him he has to ride with me. Then Sgt. Brown will get to ride in a front seat."

Capt. Thomas Feeney (S-2) left his jeep on the wave of my hand. "Capt. Feeney reporting, Sir."

"Tom, you have been appointed deputy convoy commander to Sam and you will ride in Sam's jeep. Learn all you can, the next trip may be your's."

"What happens to Sgt. Brown?"

"He will ride in your S-2 vehicle. Any other questions?"

Capt. Feeney, "No more questions."

Maj. Perrine, "Just one more question, sir. What are you going to do and where will you be?"

"That's two questions. Ahead on the road to Aubel or behind, with Hayes and the wrecker."

"Sir. Don't you worry about a thing."

"What, me worry?"

As I walked back to my jeep, Botti was looking at the carbon copy strip map prepared by the most efficient personnel officer. "Botti, can we get there with that piece of paper?"

"Yes, if it doesn't get wet."

And so at the appointed hour, Capt. Eble's jeep moved through the IP and Botti with him. Very shortly, I gave the signal to break out of the column and pass the leader. I waved as we passed Capt. Eble's jeep, but was completely ignored. I looked back and Maj. Perrine and Capt. Feeney were placing their jeep in the space we had just created.

In Belgium the road signs were still in French, but I noticed that the French highway N29 was now Belgium N22. In the draft of the jeep's 35 mph speed, I asked Botti for the map. In due course he removed it from his field jacket. The map confirmed that we were to be on N22 and would continue on it to Namur. I started

adding: 14 to Mons plus 10 to Binche plus 13 to Charleroi plus 24 to Namur, a total of 61 miles. We should be there in two hours. Then I noticed the title to the map, "Traffic Headquarters, First US Army. Bapaume to Aubel, 04-11-44, for Dauntless."

"Botti, if this map is for us we must be Dauntless."

"If you say so, Sir."

"But all of the 99th will use this route, with the date changed. Therefore, the 99th must be Dauntless."

"If you think so, Sir." Then I noticed we were passing through Binche. A small sign, about 10 inches by 12 inches, displayed an arrow, pointing up, and the word, "Dauntless."

"Botti, Dauntless is the route we follow to locate our advance party."

At Namur, N22 changed to N17 and the signs guided us correctly and quickly through the city and on to Huy. At Huy the signs placed us on N43 headed for Liege. As we crossed the Meuse River to the south side, the countryside was no longer agricultural and we saw more and more industry as the road followed the Meuse. At Liege we followed the Dauntless signs through the maze of this ancient city's intersections and came out as the map indicated on N3. We quickly covered the eleven miles to the village of Battice, where the Dauntless signs took us off of N3 to a local road for the five miles to Aubel, even though our map showed Aubel to be on N3.

Moving slowly up the main street of Aubel, Mike Korley spotted a sign with an arrow that read "Dauntless AP." We turned in to a very narrow asphalt driveway which turned out to be the entrance to an estate with a large, a very large house-type structure. At the entrance was a small Dauntless sign.

Botti stopped the jeep without instruction and I dismounted and entered. The first individual I saw was Lt. Col. Warren Simpson, Headquarters

Commandant, 99th Infantry Division.

"Hey, Simp, where's Norman?"

"You mean, Baldy."

"Maybe, if that's what you call my Exec."

"That's it. He's in the mess hall. He hasn't missed a meal with us since we left Maxey. Just follow your nose, we're having boiled cabbage for lunch. You know, practicing to live off the land."

I smelled no cabbage but found the mess area without any trouble by tracing the odor of stove-burned gasoline to the kitchen and then turning left into a large, hall-type room. Sure enough, I saw Maj. Norman Lovett along with the G-3 and G-4 of Dauntless, Lt. Col. Daniel Norman and Lt. Col. Roy Ross. Norm saw me and screamed out, "What are you doing here already?"

My reply was not thought out. "Major, you know how fast I walk."

"We had a call from Army when you left, Bapaume. You are about three hours early."

"I just decided Sam needed more experience commanding Engineer convoys. So I turned the battalion over to him and came on ahead. You keep riding these advance parties and you'll wake up in S-3."

Col. Norman decided it was time to interrupt, and so he did. "My good colonel, why don't you eat a bite and then go into Germany and visit with Col. Young, the Jayhawk Engineer, you will find him in Kornelimunster at Jayhawk Tac."

"Sounds like it might be interesting. Is this a Dauntless order or just fatherly advice?"

"Neither, but Roy and I can supervise Norm when your people get here. He already knows where they go and why, when they arrive. It's all advance party

business; that's what we came here to do. But you have time to eat. It will take only a couple of hours to go and come back, if you make it."

A plate of heated C-rations and a cup of coffee was handed me. "Courtesy of Col. Simpson," stated the kitchen orderly. I thanked the orderly and instructed him to extend my thanks to Col. Simpson. He "yes sir-ed" and departed as did Col. Ross and Col. Norman, with the lame excuse that they had work waiting.

After the two G's disappeared, Maj. Lovett and I talked Engineer talk as I ate my lunch, particularly the trip through Camp-13 and the over-the-side of the Empire Lance. During this talk I asked Norman the why of his nickname, Baldy, as Col. Simpson had identified him. "It's because of the lack of hair on the scar on the top of my head. The hair never grew back after the skin healed." With that explanation the conversation moved on to my plans for the afternoon.

"I think I'll locate Kornelimunster and Jayhawk Tac, go through the destroyed city of Aachen, turn right and go about six miles. Want to go along?"

"Not particularly. I need to be here when Sam arrives. I'll show you where the battalion and H/S will be when you get back."

I finished the corned beef hash and coffee and we left the Dauntless AP and wandered out into Aabel. I noted that the jeep was parked beside a structure. It followed me as I walked with Maj. Lovett to the several buildings the Engineer Battalion would occupy upon arrival. Maj. Lovett explained that the men would pitch tents in the apple orchards. Having determined where I was to live, I turned and signaled Botti to close up.

With an informal "See you after while," Maj. Lovett and I parted, me to the jeep and the Major, back towards the Dauntless AP.

Botti's "Where to, Sir?" brought me back to the present.

"Do you know how to get to Kornelimunster?"

Botti, "No, where is it?"

"It's southeast of Aachen, so you turn around and go back to Battice. At the sign that reads "Aachen, Henri Chapelle," turn left. At Aachen look for Jayhawk Tac signs. We're going to visit the V Corps Engineer's office. We'll just follow the signs."

From the jeep's rear seat, our radio operator Walt Williams was heard from, "If the 99th is Dauntless and VII Corps is Jayhawk, who are we?"

"Who knows, I forgot to ask at Dauntless AP. I'll find out when I get to Jayhawk."

At Henri Chapelle a road split from N3 toward the north and there was a sign that read, "Jayhawk Cemetery - 4 miles - Graves Registration Unit." As we approached the intersection a 2-1/2 ton truck going west on N3 turned right, its bumper identification read, "1A 7C GR11." Its rear opening canvas was in place and closed.

"Anyone want to bet what's in that truck?"

Botti, "It's probably not rations."

From the rear seat, "They probably don't need rations any more."

From me, "All bets are off."

As we approached the German border, it was apparent that the Belgium countryside had been fought over twice. The old, weathered, unrepaired damage from the German advance through Belgium could be seen as well as the very recent damage caused when the 1st Division, with the aid of allied air, drove the Germans back into Germany in September.

At the German border we entered the city of Aachen. No one was manning the destroyed city gates. No civilians were seen. A Jayhawk Tac sign directed us to proceed east on the dozer-cleared road. Military bulldozers had stacked the rubble

from Aachen's destruction as high as the tops of the first floors on both sides of the street. Military traffic was moving smoothly in both directions. As Highway N3 turned left to the NE, a road intersection through the right rubble pile pointed SE. A sign read, "Kornelimunster - 6 km" and another sign read, "Jayhawk Tac" with an arrow pointing straight ahead.

Soon we were out of the destroyed city and in open farmland again. We traveled past the village of Brand, or what was left of it. The next village sign read, "Kornelimunster." The Jayhawk Tac signs led to what appeared to be a three-story school building standing alone in an open area.

Botti stopped at the entrance and I dismounted, telling him to find coffee and/or gasoline and to return in about 30 minutes. The entry guard asked for the password of the day and I gave the correct reply. He then asked for my personal identification and I showed him my I.D. card with picture. He then asked who I wished to see and I answered that I wanted to see Col. Young, the Corps Engineer. The guard then asked for my unit. He stepped to an E-8 telephone, cranked the crank, asked something, and then hung up the phone. "A guide will show you to the Engineer Section." A fully armed soldier appeared from the doorway and said, "Col. Neale, follow me." I was inside. We climbed the stairs to the second floor and turned right down a short hallway. My escort knocked on the door, waited an instant and then opened it. We entered the Jayhawk Engineer Section. A sign on the front of the first desk read, "Jayhawk Engineer, Welcome."

The escort disappeared and a captain whose name now escapes me, looked up, stood up, and extended his hand. "Welcome to Germany, Col. Neale, do I have news for you. First, Col. Young is at a meeting in Spa, with Col. Carter, the 1st Army Engineer. He called about twenty minutes ago and advised us that Dauntless would not be coming to Jayhawk and that tomorrow we can expect a Colonel

Schermerhorn from the 15th Engineers to drop in and that Maj. Fraser may be with him.

"Were you expecting me today?"

"No, not necessarily, but we were expecting you about a month ago. We expected that you would land at La Havre directly from the States."

"Jerry's air force caused a change in plans."

"Around here changes can be expected until it happens. So you arrived in England--Southampton."

"And so, as of right now, the 9th Division will arrive instead of the 99th."

"I didn't say that."

"I know, but you see, I know Col. Schermerhorn from the African Task Force A days and our stay at A.P. Hill." The VII Corps would get the 9th Division from V Corps and the 99th would relieve the 9th Division in place. Well at least it was an uneventful trip to Germany, even though it was very short.

"How about a cup of coffee? Would you like to meet some of the others?"

After a pleasant fifteen minutes, I suggested that perhaps my transportation could be alerted for departure. "Can do, what's your driver's name?"

"Botti," I replied.

The captain cranked the phone, asked for the motor pool, and requested that Botti pick up his passenger in five minutes. By the time I had expressed my appreciation to the engineer staff, my disappointment in not meeting the Corps Engineer, and then descended the stairs to the front door, more than five minutes had passed, for Botti and Williams were sitting in the jeep in the loading zone with the motor running.

"You two ready to travel? Did you get some coffee? How do you like Germany?" Since these questions were directed to no one in particular, they were

not answered.

However, Botti spoke when I finished.

"Sir, where to? Back to Aubel the way we came?"

"No, the opposite way, it's shorter. You will have to spot the backside of the Jayhawk signs."

"Damn Sir, if you don't teach all the time."

It had been a long day, so I practiced my vehicle-in-motion sleeping. It was a good practice. The return trip was uneventful. I came to as Botti made the turn into the 324th Engineer Battalion area in Aubel. There was a great deal of on-going activity as the four companies hurried to move in before darkness.

Botti moved the jeep through the activity until he located 1st Sgt. Walter Stevens.

"Where's the Battalion Headquarters?"

"Straight ahead about a block. It has a sign on it."

It was easy to find, the sign read, "Headquarters Derrick." So the 324th Engineer Combat Battalion became "Derrick." What next?

November 8 - 11, 1944

The 99th relieved the 9th

The road south from Elsenborn first passed through Berg, then Butgenbach, and then soon crossed the boundary that separated the areas of responsibility of the Vth and the VIIIth Army Corps. The 99th Infantry Division established its headquarters at Butgenbach.

In the north part of the new Dauntless section the 395th Regimental Combat Team (RCT) set up its headquarters in Kalterherberg on November 9th. It relieved some elements of the 39th Infantry of the 9th Infantry Division, the CCB 5th

Armored Division, the 85th Recon Group and the 102nd Cavalry Group. The 393rd Infantry moved into the center at Krinkelt on November 10th relieving the rest of the 39th Infantry of the 9th Infantry Division. Finally on November 11th, the 394th Infantry established its regimental headquarters in the south at Wirtzfeld. It relieved the 60th Infantry of the 9th Infantry Division.

The 99th Division's SOP required that a platoon of Engineers be in close support of each regiment, attached for all practical purposes except engineer supply, at all times. The companies, less any detached platoons, always operated within the regimental areas, but under operational control and command of the Engineer Battalion Commander. All of the 324th's Charlie Co. was attached to the 395th Infantry in Kalterherberg. Attached to the 393rd Infantry, Able Co. was at Elsenborn with its 1st platoon in Rocherath. Derrick's Baker Co. was in Honsfeld attached to the 394th with its 1st platoon at Murringen.

Upon arrival in the 99th Infantry Division area on November 11th, the 324th Engineer Combat Battalion established its headquarters in Butgenbach because the headquarters of the 15th Engineer Combat Battalion of the 9th Infantry Division was settled there. The Derrick Engineer paid a visit to 15th's commander, Lt. Col. Schermerhorn, and learned two things. First, he was leaving for a promotion and a new command and second, in his opinion his headquarters was "too close to the throne." I also noted from his situation maps, though it was not discussed, that his line companies had not been located in support of any particular regiment of the parent division, the 39th, 47th, or 60th Infantry.

Lt. Col. Schermerhorn, talking to his wall map, explained that up front there were no troops in the first three miles south of the V Corps/VIII Corps boundary. However, it was his understanding that an armored cavalry group would soon be attached to the 2nd Infantry Division and fill in the Losheim Gap. He stated that he

understood that the 2nd Infantry Division had a company observation position on the rise west of Lanzerath and rotated the rifle companies of a regiment through the position on a weekly basis, but he didn't know whether it was the 9th, 23rd, or the 38th regiment. He suggested that my three should get with his three and get copies of the south mine field plan and my four should get with his four on truck head responsibilities at the dump in Butgenbach.

November 24, 1944

First Action for the 324th Combat Engineer Battalion - The Kalterherberg Pillbox

In a letter written by JRN to Bailey Gunn - June 8, 1990:

From memory and notes, your platoon leader, Lt. James Reaves was the battalion's first casualty. He went on an infantry patrol and on the return trip a gray suit burped a burp-gun at him and three slugs drifted into the calf of his leg. Capt. Harry Fischer (Battalion Surgeon) quartered him but he was not evacuated. Lt. George Sharpnack was the C Co. Executive Officer and he took over command of the first platoon.

Later, Cpt. Loftfield and Lt. Sharpnack took out the first platoon on a mission to open a route to a German pillbox just east and a little south of Kalterherberg. It was believed that this box, though empty in the daytime, was occupied by the enemy at night and was utilized to direct mortar fire on American movements within Kalterherberg at night. The patrol's mission was a first step in the plan to eliminate the box.

The village of Kalterherberg is on the German/Belgium border. It was totally included in the Siegfried Line, a belt of boxes at the border on the south and west and a second belt on the north and east. The troublesome box was therefore facing generally away from the city side and its rear was protected by wire and antipersonnel mines, principally the Schue (shoc) mine, a little cheap wooden box of death.) Narrow, shallow trenches connected it with other boxes to the east and south.

Almost as soon as the operation started, Lt. Sharpnack gingerly picked up a freed mine to safety it with a safety pin. It exploded. Lt. Sharpnack and Cpt. Loftfield went down, but both would live to tell of the event. Cpt. Loftfield's wound was a huge nail embedded in his backbone parallel to his spinal cord. After x-rays at the evacuation hospital, he was placed on quarters, at his request, in the care of Capt. Fischer. Lt. Sharpnack was obviously very seriously wounded. He was evacuated through the Surgical Team at Waimes and on to the States by way of Africa and the Azores. To the best of my knowledge, the nail in Cpt. Loftfield's back was never removed.

Lt. F. M. Henderson assumed the day to day responsibility for the fate of C Co. and the evening following the aborted effort he and I, took a patrol of Engineers to the box and destroyed it.

Just at dusk, and in failing light we arrived at the site with each soldier knowing the distinct job he was to do. First, security took their planned positions. Six soldiers, all good with the US Army 45-caliber machine pistol, ready to cover and defend the work party. Two probers moved toward the wire, probing and marking the safe area with tape. No additional mines were found.

Two additional soldiers with a pair of wire cutters joined the probers and with care they made a path through the wire and marked the route to the access trench with white engineer tape. Security moved into the trench away from the target box ready to stop any enemy approach from the east.

Two additional soldiers delivered the M-1's of the entry team to them at the trench and they established a close-in security. Lt. Henderson and the platoon sergeant of the first platoon entered the pillbox at the steel blast door after checking its top, sides, and bottom for booby traps. Using clear flashlights they explored the structure. It went down several landings with only the gun room at the surface level.

Meanwhile seven cases of TNT were delivered to the trench and made ready. Two demolition men awaited the return of Lt. Henderson with instructions as to where to place the explosives so they would do the most good. After what seemed like hours, Lt. Henderson opened the blackout door. The cases of TNT and the two demolition men disappeared inside as the door closed again. The demolition plan called for two instantaneous prima-cord systems and two identically timed, slow-burning delay fuses, measured for twenty five minutes.

Manual ignition was with fuse lighters.

Eventually the door opened and out came the demolition soldiers, then the platoon sergeant, and finally Lt. Henderson. He gave the ready signal and a runner moved out to get the far out security. Their return by way of the trench was uneventful. They relieved the M-1 security and all but Lt. Henderson and one demolition soldier fell back through the gap in the wire. Lt. Henderson and the demolition soldier counted to three together and pulled the lighters. They waited, determined that the fuses were ignited, and then placed them carefully inside the door frame and closed the door.

Quietly these two moved away from the box and through the wire. Calmly the group returned to the C Co. headquarters and the company kitchen area where hot coffee and company-cook prepared cinnamon rolls awaited. The entire operation had taken too long—about an hour and a half, but it had been done by the book, at least my version of it. If it went bang at 2120 hrs. as calculated, it would be a good show. It was now 2107 hrs.

At 2121 hrs. the ground wave of an explosion rocked the headquarters building and then a muffled boom, followed quickly by an incoming mortar barrage. Apparently the Hun was working over the area between the box and the company CP and they knew exactly where it was.

This successful effort apparently settled C Co. for there were no more problems. Cpt. Loftfield returned to the company prior to December 12th and stayed until he became battalion ExO on December 28th.

After incurring these casualties in November 1944, I arranged with G-3 for nine patrols, three with each regiment, to go along as excess baggage to evaluate infantry support. I joined them. The outcome was that the engineers no longer handled Schue mines. We backed off and blew them using prima-cord braids to clear paths.