

36th

2nd Bn

The 2nd Battalion 36th Engineer Combat Regiment

Note

Because the 2nd Bn operated separately from the rest of the Regiment from 26 Sept 42 to Mid June 43 the history of this 2nd Bn has been unintentionally glossed over and some if it can be restored with the info prepared for his family by Art Cook who was Company Commander Co "E" 2nd Bn 36th Engr (C) Regt.

Items for emphasis--

1. The 36th Engineer Combat Regiment Spent more actual time in combat during WWII than any other Army unit in the ETO (Eastern Theatre of Operations) except the 34th US Army INF Division
2. The 36th was the only Engineer Regiment with 3 assigned Battalions.
3. The 36th was the only Regimental size unit with its own unique shoulder patch.
4. The 36th was the only Regimental size unit with its own BAND. (it was a great band--Patton usurped it as we entered combat).
5. The 36th was the only Engineer Regt to receive the Combat Infantry Badge (Awarded by Gen Mark Clark) (rescinded by the WAR Dept).
6. The 36th made 5 amphibious invasions during WWII.
7. The 36th was one helluva unit.

8 Nov 98

Dear Kids--

it is prophetic--Nov 8 is the 56th anniversary of our invasion of North Africa.

Just a few words to go with the scraps of paper I have assembled from my "Archives ?".

Since I had a commission of 2nd Lt in the reserves, it was no surprise to find myself on active duty 4 May 41.

I went to Fort Belvoir--just south of Washington DC to attend a refresher course--"The 5th Instructors Course". I was due to be released from active duty at 1 year (if not sooner).

While I was at Belvoir, I volunteered to transfer to Hawaii complete with family and household belongings. I was to go by ship to Hawaii--

to cover my cost of transportation to the POE I was given a first assignment to the Engineer School at Belvoir and proceeded await the ship's arrival. In a couple of weeks the Hawaii detail was cancelled and I was asked to go instead to the Philippines--no family, no household etc--so I declined.

This is when I was assigned to the 36th Engineer Combat Regiment located at Plattsburgh Barracks New York. Accordingly, with a delay en route, I reported to the 36th on 6 July 41.

As I joined this unit, I was assigned to Co "F" as junior officer since all the other officers in this unit out ranked me.

For no reason that I am aware, I was reassigned to Co "E"--2nd Platoon.

Our training area was the Macomb Reservation located 12 miles from the post at Plattsburgh.

We marched our outfit out to the reservation on Monday morning--trained all day--bivouac overnight--train all day Tues and march back to post Tues afternoon, Then on Wed we marched out and back to the reservation and on Thur we marched out and Fri we marched back-- a total of 6 trips times 12 mi or 72 mi per week. WE got to be in great physical shape.

In Aug we took our unit to Camp Devens Mass for a short Maneuver period.

Shortly after our return to Plattsburgh, we loaded up and went to the Carolina Maneuver at Norman N. Carolina. We camped in a peach orchard and nearly went berserk from the Peach Flies.

This maneuver lasted through Thanksgiving and we returned to Plattsburgh on Dec 7. While marching the regiment through Plattsburgh on the way to the post-- people on the sidewalks were saying "They're bombing Pearl Harbor"--I didnt even know who she was (haha).

WE were confined to barracks for a few days owing to the fact the emergency left a bunch of questions about " what do we do now".

Then I wrangled a 10 day leave to move my family (Me + Marj) into quarters on post.

We spent Christmas at the post then our 2nd bataillon moved to do engineer work in various areas in New England. Our Co "E" was assigned to build protective revetments on the Logan Airfield in Boston. We used an abandoned schoolhouse in South Boston as billets for the men and started work. It was cold especially out on the airstrip near the

ocean. We were making good progress, but near the end of January 42 we were ordered back to Plattsburgh.

In Plattsburgh we began to discuss amphibious landings--We had no information, but we started to use our imagination and using the parade ground as the "ocean" we tried to understand the mechanics of moving an assault force from ship to shore. Pretty heavy stuff for the uninitiated and uninformed.

Then in March our whole Regiment was relocated to Ft Bragg N.C. This was the beginning of our training as an Amphibious unit.

Before we got settled at Bragg, we were already sending some 36th Engr units on two week training sessions to the Solomon Islands (Chesapeak Bay).

We were working with the 9th Inf Div where one company of engineers was grouped with an Infantry Regiment and other support units to create an assault combat team trained to make assault landings on hostile shores.

Our Engineer organization permitted one battalion of Engineers to function with one Inf Regt--3 companies of Engineers and 3 Inf regiments--neat? But the Inf Div has 3 Regiments and our Engineer Regt has only two battalions. So You can easily imagine why our Engineer Regiment soon had a 3rd Battalion added and the 36th became the only USArmy Engineer Regiment with 3 battalions

We trained from April to Sept in 42 sending combat teams to the Chesapeak Bay for successive 2 wk sessions-- Every 2 wks we sent our battalions from Ft Bragg NC to the Chesapeak by truck (and with all our gear). It was a tough summer--the misquitos in Chesapeak are large and numerous during the summer.

But we worked on our concept of how to conduct an amphibious invasion and practiced and practiced until we thought we had it refined real well.

At Mid September, we learned that the 2nd battalion was to ship out ahead of the balance of the Regiment. I'm not sure the Regt Hq knew where the 2nd Bn was destined. Accordingly, we moved to the POE New York (Staten Island) and combat loaded our troops with the Infantry Div and other special troops-- we had altogether 5 ships.

Leedstown--Westpoint--Thomas Stone--Almack--Samon P Chase

These ships were converted passenger liners about 10000 ton size. They carried several small landing craft and at least one LCM (medium size craft). Cargo and personnel had to unload over the side during an invasion--very slow and awkward. This was about a year before the

large LSTs, LCTs. LSIIs etc made their appearance

Incidentally, Our Regimental Headquarters had allowed our Battalion to leave for overseas with all officer personnel below TO&E grade-- The combat team commander recognized our plight and he used his office to obtain War Dept support to correct this. That is how I was promoted to "Captain" on the high seas and others (including the Engr Bn CO) were likewise promoted to correct status-- Now we were ready to perform at top efficiency.

I had taken command of CO"E" in July and I loaded my unit on the Thomas Stone-- CO"D" under Capt Joseph Lombard, loaded on the Samon P. Chase and CO "F" under Capt Henry Mohns, on the Leedstown--Co "E" was with the 2nd Bn of 39th Inf Regt. Co"D" was with the 1st bn and Co"F" was with the 3rd bn of the 39 Inf Regt. The Combat team HQ was on the Almac. Lt Col James Chubbuck was our 2nd Bn CO.

On the 26th Sept 42 our task force left USA and started a journey that resulted eventually in the invasion of North Africa at Algiers,Algeria.

History part2

Before we sailed the combat team commander scratched all of the Engineer vehicles to make room for items he felt were more needed for the combat phase--so we left to do our amphibious engineer job minus our vehicles.

We expected to 'just sail across the ocean to Europe', but it didnt happen just like that. We sailed out to the middle of the ocean and joined a flotilla of many, many ships (an accumulation of the forces destined to make the invasion--but trying to avoid detection by the enemy). We remained with this armada until mid October-- going north for 2 days and south for two days ,etc.

Then we left the flotilla and sailed to Belfast Ireland where we disembarked and took temporary shelter in a British compound at Downpatrick, Ireland. We pursued an exercise program for a few days and then we reloaded on our ships and staged a practice assault landing at Inverary Scotland - A nighttime exercise. (in the rain)

Following this night landing we moved our contingent to the bay at Glasgow, Scotland and sat there overnight.

The following morning we set sail finally headed for the invasion of North Africa-- WE were part of the Eastern Assault Force heading to make our invasion at Algiers, Algeria. This must have been roughly the 6th of Nov 42.

It was dark when we passed the ROCK of GIBRALTER- about 11pm.

Just before daybreak on the 7th of Nov Our ship was torpedoed-- only took the after section with rudder and propellor- the ship stayed afloat with a little good seamanship by the crew and good engineer help from our Engineer troops.

WE were a sitting "duck" The rest of the invasion force just kept on going and left us to ponder our own plight.

During the daylight hours, we were observed by enemy high flying air reconn and we fully expected this would result in an attack, but for some strange reason we were not attacked. And we were busy preparing to defend ourselves and it again became dark and about 11pm a British Corvette joined us to help protect our precious cargo.

About daylight a seagoing TUG from Gibraltar joined us--took us in tow and headed for Algiers. This was 8 Nov and the invasion had begun at daylight this day.

WE arrived at Algiers in time to participate in the combat phase of

the invasion and the hostilities were over shortly after we arrived. We unloaded our cargo and moved the troops ashore and left the injured ship at anchor in the bay at Algiers.

Our army was apparently unfamiliar with the procedures to acquire billeting space in a foreign setting like this. The British Army had requisitioned all the available buildings for their own use and there were no accommodations for US Troops.

The 39th Infantry swiftly moved Eastward toward the territory in the hands of the German Army--Our Engineer troops were left at Algiers--we had no vehicles--(the Combat Team CO had removed them from the loading Manifest for the operation and accordingly our vehicles were left at Staten Island)

There we were stranded at Algiers.

After a couple of weeks sleeping in the park above Algiers (Boise de Bologne) we found billets in a school building in a suburb--La Redoute --a catholic church compound. They were very good to our men and we were out of the cold winter weather

With no real immediate role in this war, we set about busying ourselves with continuous training--weapons assembly, exercise, first aid, etc. WE made a march of at least 5 miles twice a week (full gear).

About March 1 we were on our way eastward to perform engineer tasks for the Corps rear area. We maintained roads and built an Engineer Dump along the way. WE ended up in Tunisia Early May and the German troops surrendered 13 May 42.

Next we found ourselves on a North Africa railroad transport by box car to relocate to Arzew (near Oran)--a place chosen for our refresher and reequipment in preparation for the invasion of Sicily.

It was at Arzew we rejoined the rest of the regiment (1st Bn and 3rd Bn).

After a month at Arzew we were ready and we moved up Bizerta, Tunisia and prepared for the trip across the water to invade Sicily. the actual invasion was made on 9 July 42.

As part of Patton's 7th Army "E" co prepared and operated the beach just east of Licata. (Other 36th Engr Bns operated similar beaches along the coast which provided multiple invasion sites.) The landing was opposed briefly and it was a little sticky, but by the end of the first day we had everything running smoothly. The 3rd Inf Div landed on our beach and just kept on going --that was a fighting outfit.

By the end of the 1st week we moved our company to the docks and began unloading through the port facility. We were there about a month and on short notice we loaded on landing craft--returned to Bizerta to prepare for the invasion of Italy.

The rest of the story is well told in the historic document accompanying this one so I'll step aside and let you read that story.

Love to all--DAD