

MUZZLE FLASH

PART ONE - CAMPAIGNS IN ITALY

I - STAGING: August - October 1943

We plunged into the new life in a blacked-out rattly train careening down the west shore of the Hudson River toward Hoboken. A brief glimpse of our favorite skyline, then listen for your last name, answer with your first, and pop into the yawning hold of the transport "Edmund B. Alexander" like a piece of coal down a cellar chute. Our farewell: the girl with the well-filled sweater who stood at the head of the pier and did us a "bump" worthy of Minsky's best.

Then the smooth sunny ride to the Mediterranean with a minimum of seasickness and a maximum of confusion as to who was supposed to be on deck when we craned our necks to see the first dim mountain of Africa, and soon, with the shining white city of Tangiers on our right, we entered the famous Straits of Gibraltar and watched a battered convoy of old British ships steam out on our left toward the Atlantic.

Oran will be remembered as a madhouse of insistent shoe-shine boys and bad vino. Near our windswept hilltop camp at Bou-Sfer, which overlooked the sparkling blue Mediterranean, we discovered marvelous swimming in the boisterous surf. Here we stayed five weeks, brushing up on essential training and gathering new equipment.

Once our materiel was assembled from the maze of Quartermaster and Ordnance warehouses scattered about the Oran area, we embarked for Italy aboard the Navy attack transport "Charles Carroll". Most of Staff Sergeant Jay Ramey's Motor Section, with several cannoneers and gun non-coms aboard and Lt. Nick Czuk in charge, drove overland to Algiers and came on by LST in another convoy.

For a few brief days those of us on the Carroll enjoyed delicious Navy meals, with fresh meat, fluffy white bread, butter from a cow rather than the rear end of a jeep, and real ice cream. Each hour was spiced with the thrill of heading out into the unknown. Tales of submarine strikes and air attacks passed from man to man. The word "Salerno" was still a symbol of coming combat and a reminder of impending danger. "General Quarters" alarms and boat drills helped keep us at a pitch of expectancy.

First the rugged mountains behind Salerno Bay loomed over the horizon -- then the Isle of Capri on our left, and the sprawling port of Naples in its crescent bay. At Bagnoli, a bomb-plastered sub-port just north of Naples, we hit the landing boats and headed in toward shore. We circled about, waiting for the Engineers to finish clearing the beach minefield, splashed in through three-foot surf, and, wet to the hips, marched up the dirty streets to the College of Count Costanza Ciano, camouflaged green-and-black against a wooded hillside.

Already the cries of "caramelli" rang in our ears as the ragged urchins swarmed about the marching column. Here was the strangeness of a foreign, war-torn people, and the excitement of being the first troops to land on a new beach. Only nine short days after the German evacuation -- indeed we felt we were practically behind the enemy lines!

Our timetable up to this time: Leave New York harbor on Saturday, August 21st, 1943; arrive Oran, Staging Area #2, on September 1st. The Salerno invasion was on September 9th. We sailed from Oran on October 7th and landed at Bagnoli on October 10th at "D plus 31" -- as wet behind the ears as were our surf-soaked pant-legs.

We stayed in the Bagnoli area for three weeks -- first in the Ciano College buildings and then in a pup-tent bivouac on an old parade-ground nearer Naples. Marching, swimming in a crystal-clear lagoon, being constantly off limits, wondering where the guns and trucks were, glomming souvenirs, having pictures taken by the innumerable street photographers, buying apples and nuts, and poking about the docks and surrounding warehouses in search of such non-T/O war equipment as British field mattresses, paratroop boots, and acetate paper for the survey section. Here Pvt. Joel Bailey's fox terrier Betty -- acquired in Africa -- gave birth to a litter of five pups.

A few of the officers got a crack at what they breathlessly supposed to be the "front lines" when they visited the 36th F.A. in position south of the Volturno River. This was during the battle for Capua and Benevento. Baptism of fire for the Battery as a whole, however, came with a major German air raid at Bagnoli on October 21st, when each plane as it screamed down out of the flare-filled night and each bomb as it whistled terribly toward us seemed destined to come crashing into the private foxhole of each of us.

Our LST convoy of trucks and guns, broken up piecemeal and landed wherever a beach afforded an opening, began arriving in the bivouac area the day after the raid. Some of the men had been on a ship anchored in Naples harbor right in the center of the bombers target area, and had witnessed an ammunition ship go up in flames a short distance away. Enough rolling stock was finally scraped together for a march by stages to Madallone, where we bivouacked in an orange orchard to await our guns and tractors.

Here pup Betty, a veteran of the Bagnoli air raid, dug a foxhole for her four remaining pups. Pvt. Ramon Velez spent most of his waking hours frying exotic Italian and Mexican dishes over a fire of sticks, and one eventful evening a number of our leading citizens made an analytical experiment on the product of the local grape. The tractors and guns arrived on October 30th, and we left "The Orange Grove" (as we later referred to it) on the 31st on our first tactical march in the combat zone.

Two years, five months and twenty-three days after the bulk of recruits arrived at Camp Blanding, Florida, to form "B" Battery of the 35th Field Artillery Regiment, we made our first battle move against the enemy, using at last our months of training and newly acquired habits in their intended role.

11 - THE BREAK-IN: October 31st - December 2nd, 1943

When you join a victorious advancing army you sort of slip into the picture without knowing you've done it. At the time of our debut, the Volturno Battle had just been won, and the fight for Venafro was in progress, with the 3rd Division on the left of the Volturno River and the 45th and 34th Divisions on the right.

Progress since the initial crossing had been rapid and we tenderfeet were surprised to see so little evidence of battle. The movies had led us to expect scenes of complete destruction, heaps of stinking bodies, row upon row of wrecked and abandoned vehicles, and boughless trees with the bark peeling from their naked trunks. Even now, after having lived in and passed through the worst battle grounds of the war, many of us are still amazed at the lack of visible damage to materiel and the thinly scattered bodies of the dead. We have learned through bitter personal experience, and each time more to our benefit, that a hundred men well dug in and dispersed can live through terrible concentrations of artillery fire which, to the distant observer, seem to be all-inclusive in their destructiveness.

Our first four days of combat were indeed a gentle introduction to the grim months which followed. Our first battle position was in a peaceful cultivated valley near Pietrovairano. As yet the heavy winter rains had not set in, but there was enough the day before to make the night-time occupation of the guns, with our yet imperfect familiarity with the M-4 tractors, a ticklish one across the plowed fields. The next day was spent in improving the position, chasing the pigs out of the CP, and hiring Italians to erase our track marks by re-plowing the brown fields. The cannoneers will tell you that we fired our first shot at the enemy at 1051 hours on November 2nd, 1943, but actually the machine gun section beat them to the punch the day before. Pvt. Thomas Kilgo poured as pretty a stream of .50 Caliber tracer as you ever did see into a low-flying Focke-Wulf that was trying to make a fast getaway from a strafing run nearby. The plane crashed in flames against a hillside a mile away, and we proudly chalked him up to Kilgo's steady hand.

Next morning came the big thrill that even Machine Gunner Kilgo was awaiting - the firing of the first shells to leave our tubes and land in enemy territory. Sgt. John Phelan graciously stepped aside to allow First Sgt. Lawrence Carter, our only `veteran of World War I, to pull the first lanyard on No. 1 gun. It was a fine cracking volley, fired well together. At this happy time the battery officers, enthused by the outstanding success of the day's operation, laid their good money on the boards toward the day of our victorious entry into Rome. The dates they picked: November 15th, December 1st, December 15th, and December 25th. The sad end of this tale is that Lt. Jack Weinberg, who picked December 25th, went home to the United States the following May without ever setting foot in the Eternal City.

At the time we entered combat, we were under the command of Brigadier General Carl Baehr, of the 71st F.A. Brigade. We left in Africa our former regimental headquarters, now designated the 35th F.A. Group.

Carl Baehr was a tough, friendly soldier -- a canny and experienced artilleryman to the core. At his first officers' meeting one dusty hot Sunday afternoon back in Oran he raised his huge fist and pointed to each man in his audience, saying "I will get you in plenty of trouble, and you (pointing) and you, and you, and you, -- are going to get me out. And none of you will rest until the campaign is over, because the heavy artillery, once committed, stays committed until victory is ours."

Looking back -- how true we know those words to bet It is only now that a great victory has been won that we have the opportunity to sit comfortably at a sun-bathed table, with the scent of summer blossoms lying heavy in the

air, and set down here for future reminiscence the events of our eight consecutive months in Italy's muddy battle line.

A hurried reconnaissance and an early morning march took us on November 3rd to a new position in the olive orchards north of Vairano. Pvt. George Smith and Gun Chief John Weeks -- our advance mine-sweeping detail -- looked suspiciously at a white-smoking hole in the ground, visualizing a treacherous Jerry booby-trap. We later found this to be a harmless smoke shell with a delayed-action fuse -- American and at least a day old. Sgt. John Phelan took his First Section into a registering position 600 yards to the right of the main battery position and fired a normal-charge registration, later returning to his usual slot. We fired moderately, and by the end of the second day we were sure we had become battle-seasoned veterans.

The recon party, while looking for a new position on November 7th, got "B" Battery's first taste of enemy shellfire. Fleeting recollections: Lt. Nick Czuk -- who was on a personal side mission at the moment -- pulling up his pants and diving for the ditch; Wire Sgt. Phil Van Tash crawling belly-flat down the edge of the Presenzano Road, cheered on by the casual and shell-wise MP's at the crossroads; the Survey Section bobbing back and forth between the aiming circle and a handy excavation; a very dead horse that contributed even more than the bursting shells to our desire to be elsewhere.

When the noise finally died down, the party went on relatively calmly about its business, until an infantry lieutenant decided to move his cannon company in behind our newly selected position. Only then did we suspect that all was not quite as the Fort Sill book said it should be. Our suspicions were sharpened by the presence of a lofty mountain staring down on us from the left front. We were not happy to hear that this height was currently German real estate, and were only slightly reassured when a staff officer told us it would fall to our victorious infantry in a matter of hours.

The mountain in question was the infamous Mt. Camino-Maggiore, destined to remain in hostile hands for the next month, as the first major obstacle since Salerno to Fifth Army's otherwise rapid progress. The battery position we selected that day, on an olive farm beside Highway 6 some fifteen miles south of Cassino, is now known to us as the "House Position", the "Presenzano" or "Camino" position, or as "Limpy's House".

The first section had a two-room barn here, in which they roasted and consumed scrawny sheep at irregular intervals; the third section took cover in the bed of a stream which showed its resentment by flash-flooding a few days later; the second and fourth scattered themselves about the neighboring culverts and olive groves. Wire found a stout cave, and CP grabbed the soft push in the stout stone farmhouse. What with the rain and floods, it didn't take very long for 48 men, by actual count, to collect themselves in the downstairs rooms of this building.

On November 8th, only 24 hours after we moved into this position, we had our first battle casualties, Cpl. Joseph Jarosz and Pvt. Stanley McArthur were hit by 88's in a surprise shelling. S/Sgt. John Weeks and Pvts. George Smith, Walter Grzbienski, Merrill Hoover, and Leo Arbuckle carried Jarosz through continued shellfire to safety in the house. They later got the Silver Star for this gallant act, our first decorations in the battery. The very next day a strafing ME dropped a frag bomb on Pfc. Eddy Mulhall, throwing a fragment into one knee. We were hurt and mad now -- really in the fight.

Rain and Jerry shellings started to come in earnest in mid-November, and Hostile air attacks were frequent but ineffective. We began to learn, slowly but surely, the peculiarities of the Long Tom under conditions of prolonged firing and foul weather. Our observation post on Mount Cessina (some 3 miles by trail to our right front) was frequently closed in by clouds and rain, and it was a steep, tiring hike up the slippery rocks and muddy trails. Wire lines to the OP were frequently blown out by shellfire and torn up by the treads of tanks working cross-country.

The first month at this position was a tough one -- learning the tricks of self-protection, the sound of shells, the quirks of the gun, the maddening constancy of the rain. Getting used to concussion on bodies and eardrums, seeing yourself and your comrade's tremble with fear and shock, and learning to stem the sweet red blood of their wounds. We lost Cpl. Walter Kanceljak, Paul Brinkley, Theo Hall, Edward Obertubessing, and Jay Spicker. John Suraski, David Winkelspecht and James Tigby were scratched, and Cpl. Michael Lattanzi and Anton Derschon were buried alive (also excavated unharmed).

We learned the danger of our own gun when Pvt. Pete Haas got his face in the way of the recoil and Cpl. Lattanzi and T/Sgt. Justin Katz were hurt by a falling tube. On the night of the 16th, Sgt. Verrastro's gun was destroyed by a direct hit, without human casualties. On November 30th, George Smith, now a Gunner Corporal, and Anthony Sarte were blown out of their hole and Pvt. Leo Arbuckle got badly mangled by a German 105 burst. With 16 flesh wounds, he was cracking jokes at the aid station like a clown in Ringling's a man who has the admiration of everyone in the battery.

Andre, one of our three Italian KP's and a former medic in Mussolini's army, was first on the spot to bandage Arbuckle's wounds. These three, Andre, Giuseppe, and Mario, joined us at "The Mill" (our first gun position) hoping to accompany us north to Turin, their home town.

In the big picture, Fifth Army had bogged down in the Mignano valley between November 1st and 15th. The 3rd, 34th, and 45th Divisions had pushed the Jerry rapidly north of Naples and across the Volturno, with the British X Corps on the left from Capua to Castel Volturno on the sea, and the British 8th Army on the right extending to the Adriatic. The advance had carried to the mountains behind Venafro in the VI Corps sector (34th and 45th Divisions) and to the Camino hill mass, the town of Mignano, Mount Lungo and Mt. Rotondo in the II Corps (3rd Div.) sector. We had joined the show just five days before the advance was stopped in our sector. 3rd Division 7th Infantry Regiment had pushed part way up the nose of the Camino mass, taken the town of Mignano in the valley; the 12th Infantry held Mt. Cessima and Rotondo, and the 15th extended thinly through the mountains to the right to join the 45th Division in the Venafro Sector.

Our battalion had come to the Mediterranean as part of a large artillery shipment sent over in preparation for the Italian Campaign, which it had been known would be fought in terrain favorable to the defense. Our 71st Brigade in the Mt. Camino sector consisted of the 976 FA BN (Long Toms), and the 194th F.A. Bn (8" How), the 938th, 932nd, one battalion of the 178th Regiment, and one battalion of the 77th Regiment (all 155 How's), plus the 939th F.A. Bn (4.5" gong and the 15th F.A. Observation Bn.

Other battalions recently arrived from the States made up the 18th Brigade which, over in the Venafro sector, reinforced the old 13th Brigade, veterans of North Africa and Sicily.

In addition to the seven battalions of our brigade there were jammed into our narrow valley the four artillery battalions of the 3rd Infantry Division and an unknown number of miscellaneous Tank Destroyers, Infantry cannon, and British weapons. Over all ruled serenely the dominating mass of Mt. Camino, occupied by keen-eyed Jerry observers. They gave us plenty of trouble during the month they held that peak, and we were probably saved from annihilation only because our massed sed artillery positions offered too many lucrative targets and because the enemy could not adequately supply his own artillery over his air-harassed supply routes.

III - OUR FIRST BATTLE: Camino - Maggiore - Lungo December 2-25, 1943

On November 18th the 36th Division relieved the exhausted 3rd in our sector, and preparations were made for an assault on Mt, Camino. On November 30th, in the still of the night, Sgt. Tom Wallace's Fourth Section sneaked forward into the front-line town of Mignano to prepare, a gun position for a special "roving gun" shoot. Finding the ground to be sticky clay of the most obstinate kind, they had to dig their foxholes with their hands helped out by a sense of urgency and a steady stream of uncomplimentary remarks about Italian soil in particular and the war in general.

The next night at dusk they moved the big gun up, rumbling loudly into the infantry area as big as life and feeling naked as a chorus girl under an X-ray lamp. It was a cold night, and new rain had made the ground slick. The elevating brake broke and the right body spade wouldn't fit, and the General arrived and talked in a loud voice when we were all whispering, and scared us half to death. Our covering fires, from other battalions, went off at 2100 right on schedule, blanketing the enemy observation posts with smoke. Being an hour behind time, however, and without communication to the rear, we had to get off our thirty rounds, starting at 2200, without the benefit of smoke protection.

The firing went well, however, and resulted, no doubt, in surprising certain Base Section Krauts who were sure they were out of range of our artillery. We expected to confuse Von Kesselring's G-2 as to the capabilities of our artillery, and the deployment of our weapons. Luckily, Jerry threw nothing our way that night. We later discovered that he had wind of coming events which were still unknown to us, and was moving his artillery to new defensive positions at the time of our shoot. Thus his guns were out of position and unable to retaliate.

December 2nd, 1943 is a red-letter day on our calendar, for on that day we fired our first coordinated preparation for a major attack. Promptly at 1700 hours, just as dusk was coming in, dive bombers screamed down the mountain passes. As the planes snarled upward from their dives, and, before the deep-toned "cramp" of their bombs could reach our ears, our whole valley erupted with the sudden thunder of a massive artillery barrage,

hundreds of guns speaking out at first with one huge voice -- then settling down to a persistent drumming as each piece fired according to its own schedule.... Haughty Mt. Camino erupted before our eyes in swirling pillars of dust and smoke and flying earth and rock. In the gathering dusk could be seen more and more clearly the red multiple streams of 40-millimeter AA fire pouring into dugout entrances and machine gun nests on the steep rocky slopes.

Green-clad men of the crack American-Canadian Special Service Force, whose three regiments and special equipment had been secretly brought up the night before, took off silently up the sheer cliff-sides, using grapnel hooks and silken ropes, and fighting only with bayonet and combat knife.

All night long the preparation continued through its various phases. The valley flickered like a wind-blown candle as the big pieces belched their brilliant flame. Here we launched the "serenade" fires, which were "zones" fired on enemy troop concentrations, sometimes five or six repetitions together. Here also the famous "TOT" -- came into its own -- the simultaneous arrival at the target of large numbers of shells from different guns. The "Time on Target" is announced and each battery subtracts from that moment the time of flight for its guns, and fires to the precise second. Jerry threw some counter-battery during the attack, but the best he could do was to tear Cpl. Roger Hill's and Pfc. Jimmy Mannarino's pants with a shell splinter, and drop a dud between #2's trails.

The 36th Division and the Special Service Force smashed enemy strong-points on Mt. Defensa on the first day and in the next 72 hours pushed on over Camino proper and Mt. Maggiore. The British X Corps pushed sharply on the left flank, and by Dec. 7th had reached the Garigliano River and the German strong point at Rocca D'Evandro. During this action Capt. Raleigh Hansl was shot in the head by a Jerry machine pistol during a counterattack on our OP atop Maggiore. Lt. Allen Halpern took command of the Battery while the Captain was away in hospital.

During the last three weeks of December a lull in artillery activity on both sides gave us opportunity to send 25 men at a time to a much-needed rest camp in Naples. The British moved their right flank over to the Cassino - Naples rail line, with one Regimental Combat Team of the 36th Division on their right, and an Italian Brigade astride Mt. Lungo. A nearly fatal German penetration of this Italian position in mid-December was stopped by the 142nd Infantry of the 36th Division, which was pulled from reserve to plug the resulting gap in our lines. The Italians were relieved immediately by the 15th Infantry of the 3rd Division, which mopped up the rest of Mt. Lungo toward the end of December.

Lt. Daniel Lattari was transferred to us from Service Battery on December 16th, the Captain returned from hospital on a rain-soaked Christmas Eve, and we were strengthened by the arrival of our first replacements. "The Twins" -- Pvts., KenneI-Pope and Richard Podzikowski went to the Fourth Gun Section; Pvts. Robert Rothenberger, James Crowder and Horace Townsend to the Third; Pvts. Ed Popiel and James Porter to the Second; Pvts. Harold Gilbert, Curtis Shawver, Norval Platt and Edgar Sullivan to the First, with Pvt. William Stearns to the

Machine-Gun Section. Lt. Jack Weinberg left us for the Air OP, to become the - battalion air observer, and Lt. Horace "Whitey" Langford reported from repple-depple for duty as Assistant Exec.

The constant rain of the closing weeks of 1943, and the problems of combating it are best told, with understandable pride, by the bards of the First Gun Section. (Chief Bard: Ernest Shawver)

As George Washington is to his country -- first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen even so is the First Section to "B" Battery. First in the chow line, first at the bar and first in their fox-holes. From the Chief of Section right down to the guy swatting flies at the latrine, there is a fierce amount of sectional pride and jealousy. Any two of them might beat each other's brains out with ratchet wrenches, but let an outsider try it and in effect he has signed his own death warrant.

"We will always remember the days we spent at Mt. Camino. We had our individual caves, but we sometimes slept in an old building which was a combination of house and barn. It had a tile roof, but after a few shells exploded nearby, this was no longer of any value. Did we need a roof? If a roof is supposed to keep out water, we most assuredly did. In fact, we could have used anything that was water-repellant, because the rain came down in torrents for weeks at a time. At first we tried to keep dry, but, finding this impossible, we became human ducks. We sometimes wondered which was worse, the rain or the mud, but we can all testify to the fact that we had too much of both.

"That house is probably the one spot on earth that the Pied Piper missed. It provided a home for hundreds of rats, of every size, color and breed. Charley Morris suggested that we spread rat food around, but we decided if they wouldn't eat the food we ate - the hell with them - let them starve.' We didn't mind too much when they kept us awake by scampering over us at night, but when they built a nest in McKenzie's drawers, that was going too far - either they move or we, - they won.

"Christmas Eve had its complement of Christmas Carols. While it can't be said that the singing was good, at least it was loud. As the section sang, the "Vino tenor" overshadowed the remaining voices.

"New Year's Day brought a drastic change in the weather. Instead of awakening with the usual patter of rain on the face, we awoke to find that "Sunny Italy" was draped in a blanket of wet snow, driven by a one-hundred and ninety mile gale, and that is wind in anybody's country.

"Oscar of the Waldorf took a back seat to the section's culinary expert, Pete Hernandez, on the preparation of barbecued

IV - THE FIRST BATTLE FOR CASSINO December
26, 1943-January 27, 1944

The next job after clearing Mt. Lungo was to clean out the approaches to Cassino, starting with the town of San Pietro d'Infine, nestled beneath the rugged mount Samucro Ridge on the right of the Mignano Valley. "Saint Pete" fell on Dec. 26, encircled from behind by the Special Service Force and the 142nd Combat Team, after a futile attempt to take it from the front with tank support from the 1st Armored Division.

The fall of San Pietro was the signal for "B" Battery's second venture with the roving gun. This time the Second Section was selected and a position alongside Mt. Lungo on Highway 6 was chosen. The place was exposed to observation and small-arms fire from the enemy outpost line some 1500 yards up the road. The area was known to be heavily mined, and the entrance to the position was difficult. Two targets at near-extreme range were selected for ten rounds apiece, and an elaborate scheme of covering and blinding fires were to be delivered by the 69 F.A. (Arm'd 105 howitzers) of the 6th Arm'd F.A. Group to screen our entry and firing.

Reconnaissance and mine sweeping were completed by dawn of December 29th. Cpl. Jack Dooley threw in a quick survey at daybreak, and at dusk that evening we moved the gun up. Local security was provided by Lt. Tom Conkling and his HQ Battery Anti-Tank Platoon (M/Sgts Price and Chesser attached). Supporting fires by other battalions, intended to screen hostile OP's with smoke, were fired early by mistake. The smoke promptly blew away.

Two hours later, with our muzzle flash diffused only by a cluster of smoke-pots set out upwind of the gun, the section pooped out its twenty rounds smoothly in 17 minutes, working right on through some inaccurate nebelwerfer and light artillery counter-fire. This event is perhaps better described in General Mark Clark's official commendation:

To: Commanding Officer, Battery B, 976th Field Artillery
Battalion, APO 464, United States Army.

Under the provisions of Army Regulations 600-55, the following members of your organization are commended for meritorious service in action.

Staff Sergeant John M. Weeks
Technician Fourth Grade Justin E. Katz
Technician Fourth Grade Dalmon R. Roberson
Corporal Walter Grzbienski
Corporal George A. Smith
Technician Fifth Grade Walter O. Strunk
Technician Fifth Grade Wilbur Schroeder

Private First Class Frank Anderson
Private First Class Wright I. Bonds
Private First Class Anton Derschon
Private First Class Merrill E. Hoover Private First
Class Anthony E. Sarre Private James Chapman, Jr.
Private George Maluke
Private Edmond P. Popiel
Private James E. Porter
Private Miles Rosen,

COMMENDATION:

"The above named enlisted men, constituting the 2nd Gun Section, Battery B, 976th Field Artillery Battalion, are commended for meritorious service in action on the night of 29 December 1943, near Mount Lungo, Italy. These men transported their weapon, a 155mm rifle, to an exposed forward position fifteen hundred yards from German outposts, to carry out the mission of firing on two targets at extreme range. The purpose of this mission was to harass the enemy and confuse him as to the capabilities of American artillery. During the course of firing, the location of the gun was given away by muzzle flash, and counter-battery fire from hostile nebelwerfer and artillery was received. These men calmly continued their tasks throughout the enemy fire, and prepared their piece for evacuation in record time. The operation was accomplished in a manner which demonstrated teamwork, technical proficiency and soldierly courage exemplary of the high traditions of the Field Artillery."

MARK W. CLARK,
Lieutenant General, U. S. Army,
Commanding.

On New Year's Eve Lt. Henry Heubner, a new officer in the battalion, reported for duty as assistant Reconnaissance Officer -- just in time to witness our New Year's greeting of a three-round TOT to Adolph's supermen up the valley. Sgt. Tom Wallace, Chief of the Fourth Section, helped deliver this greeting, and here is how it happened

"It was New Year's Eve, 1943, and true to tradition the Fourth Gun Section was doing its best to make it festive and gay. In a pyramidal tent pitched about 40 yards from the gun, the boys were gathered around the stove gradually emptying a five gallon can of choice Italian vino. Outside the cold rain beat a constant tattoo on the canvas, but inside our hearts were young and gay (Apologies to Cornelia Otis Skinner and Emily Kimbrough). Before we knew it, midnight was at hand, the wine was half gone, as were most of the boys. Suddenly the cheer of the night was banished by the voice of the phone guard, who was bellowing "Fire Mission" at the top of his lungs.

"Sgt. Wallace, who had imbibed not wisely, but too well, clamped his helmet on his thinning locks and with a cry of "Follow me", charged through the door into the Stygian blackness. Across the slushy ground he sped with red flashlight as a guide to the others. Those in the rear were startled by a shriek, a splash and then utter silence. Some fiend had dug a fresh fox-hole directly in the path of the immortal sergeant and the rain had done the rest. Did he receive much needed sympathy? In a gnat's eye! While he struggled in the icy muck for his very life, Suraski, Connelly & Co. taunted him with derisive laughter, catcalls and a few Bronx cheers as added starters. After an eternity, he emerged bedraggled and shivering to take the commands for "Battery three rounds", which was our way of saying "Happy New 'fear" to the jittery Adolf. The "cease firing, end of mission" was followed by a cheery Happy New Year from the Exec.

"As he stood there miserable and half dead looking like two dollars worth of soiled laundry, Sgt. Wallace took his customary yearly pledge to abstain for the coming year."

On January 1st, 1944, Task Force "A" of the 1st Armored Division, plus attached troops, took over the valley sector and moved up to assault the town of San Vittore and the hills named La Chiaia and Porchia, which stuck up from the flat valley floor beyond San Vittore.

On January 2nd "B" Battery moved forward to a position on the right of Route 6 abreast of Mignano, the plan being that "B" Battery of the 985th, a new Long Tom outfit, was to occupy our old position. In the new area we had a tank battalion, 2 armored FA Batteries and ourselves all jammed into a one-battery position. Sgt. Ruby Salowitz was hit in the leg with shrapnel while route-marking during the move, and taken off to hospital.

On the 7th, Cpl. Walter Strunk's tractor got a direct hit, and Sgt. Phelan's First Section lost 23 rounds of powder set afire by a ricochet burst. Sgt. Domenic Verrastro who was standing nearby was temporarily deafened by the blast.

On the 10th of January we were besieged with rumors that we would take part in a new landing operation, which might have been anywhere from the Antarctic to New Guinea, depending on which end of the box you visited after breakfast. We were relieved -- again by the 985th -- and fell back to our old area for retubing and re-equipping. Many of the men who went to 109th Ordnance to work on their guns saw Joe E. Brown put on a show at II Corps Hq. All guns were retubed except No. 2, which had been out of action for two weeks to repair damage from shell fragments.

No. 1 had fired 1924 rounds, #3 - 1281, #4 - 1666, over a period of two months and 11 days.

January 13th brought the one move we hadn't expected, however -- back to the line. We took Able Battery's position for a couple of days, while Charley went forward to the San Vittore area and Able went back for retubing.

On the 15th we fired the preparation for the assault on Mt. Trocchio, which fell that day. On the 16th we moved to a new position by San Vittore which was a recently abandoned German strong point. The area was thick with mines and trip wires, most of which had fortunately been cleared by the infantry and engineers. Pfc. Jerry Gerardiello and Sgt. John Weeks found a live double S-mine, quite by accident, by stepping on the slack trip-wire. Exposed to observation from the Benedictine Monastery above Cassino, we took several bad shellings. Supply Sgt. Joseph Meehan, Cook Nick Talvacchia, and Truck Driver Joseph Hoisek, who were blown out of their hole by a direct hit, were evacuated to hospital. Pfc. Richardson was hit with a shell splinter in the leg while on guard duty and evacuated. This was the first position where we built splinter-proof dugouts and caves, and we did an excellent job for beginners. After 2½ months of combat, we still had a lot to learn about self-protection.

The ill-fated first attack on Cassino was scheduled for the night of January 20th. The 141st and 143rd regiments of the 36th Division were in the line before San Angelo, with the 34th Division (100th Jap Infantry Battalion attached) facing Cassino, and the French Corps in the mountains on their right. The British X Corps stretched from San Angelo to the sea along the Garigliano River, faced by German strong points at Minturno and Castelforte. The plan of attack contemplated a double-enveloping bridgehead across the Rapido River right and left of San Angelo, with Combat Command "B" of the 1st Arm'd Division to make the breakthrough from this bridgehead and cut off Cassino from the rear. At the same time the 34th Division was to establish a bridgehead up the Rapido from Cassino and work down into the town from the North.

This northern bridgehead was successfully established and held, with patrols entering the outskirts of the town. Assaulting forces at San Angelo, however, ran into very strong resistance and dense minefields, got part of a battalion across the Rapido, but had to abandon the effort after a strong German counterattack penetrated to our side of the river. This stab was finally broken up by Corps Artillery concentrations, in which we fired several missions at minimum range.

Although the 36th had suffered terrible casualties in these attacks, it made new efforts during the next two days, but without success. On the 23rd our Mt. Maggiore OP was called in for forward displacement. Lt. Heubner was transferred to Service Battery, on coming off the mountain, to replace Lt. Ashline, who was a casualty.

On January 22nd came the dramatic news of the Anzio Beachhead) Immediately hopes soared that the Cassino front might be encircled and that the road to Rome would once more be open to us. We knew now that the Anzio landing had been the mysterious operation for which we had been heading on our recent withdrawal from the line. D-plus-1 rumors from the beachhead reported the coastal highway (Route 7) cut and the main inland Highway 6 threatened by a penetration 30 miles wide and 15 miles deep.

On our own front, however, eleven strong German counterattacks in the San Angelo sector forced final abandonment of our efforts to seize Cassino by frontal attack. Limited bridgeheads across the Rapido River remained in the British X Corps sector and in the 34th Division area north of Cassino. The forces attacking San Angelo withdrew, and the first battle for Cassino -- now considered by many to have been a tactical blunder -- folded up in failure.

On January 27th we were withdrawn again to rear bivouac, this time convinced that we were bound for Anzio. Number 2 gun retubed that night (with 1344 rounds), and the next day we marched to bivouac in Caivano, near Naples, where we set about readying our equipment for whatever the next move might be.

V - ANZIO, FIRST PHASE
January 31st-February 23rd, 1944

Anzio, one of Europe's favorite watering-spots, where Nero fiddled and Mussolini cavorted on the sands. An orderly modern town with wide tree-lined boulevards sweeping along the broad white beaches. The single quay showed signs of battle damage, as did several buildings along the waterfront, but at 10:00 o'clock on the morning of Jan. 31st, 1944, an unusually warm sun shone down from a cloudless sky, dispelling all thoughts of war. A Paramount News photographer ground away at us as we rolled swiftly off the LST's and moved out to a temporary assembly area at the edge of town. Here the illusion of calm was rudely interrupted, during a leisurely lunch-hour, by the terrifying shriek and double-crack of long-range 170's. They had us dead on for deflection, with a most fortunate range bracket that straddled us over and short in each volley.

After a speedy reconnaissance we moved out of bivouac in early evening to occupy position in the Padiglione Forest -- a flat wooded area similar to the Louisiana maneuver-grounds. An otherwise smooth occupation was marred by the death of Pvt. Fred Lero in a tractor accident. This was our first death in battle and -- although we were well oriented to death caused by the enemy -- it seemed particularly tragic that he should go as he did.

"Jerry" - Lero's pup and Betty's only remaining offspring, now became Fourth Section guardian and playmate. Other notes from the Pet Department: "Elmer", the Second Section's lamb, made the landing with us. His skinny physique had staved off the stew pot on New Year's Eve and, by focusing his engaging personality on his would-be devourers, he had since become their pampered pet.

At this first Padiglione position we dismantled some sturdy German dugouts and acquired several stout railroad ties that have accompanied us ever since. At Anzio we had become part of the VI Corps Artillery, which we were pleased to note was under command of our old Cassino-front chief, Brigadier General Carl Baehr.

On February 1st we registered and fired several missions without retaliation. The closeness of the surrounding foliage and a general attitude of aggressive optimism made us feel quite secluded and out of ham's way. Being unable to see the horizon from our wooded gun position, we failed to realize that our night flashes were clearly visible from the heights of Albano in the Lepini Mts. straight ahead. Reports of progress were conflicting but the general G.I. belief was that we were gathering strength for another assault in an effort to enlarge the beachhead. We knew that the Irish Guards

of the British 1st Division held a prominent salient up to Aprilia and Carrocetto, and we felt confident that soon we would widen the base of this salient and press on to take the commanding ground at Albano.

Hardly had we completed digging our holes and getting set to do some shooting, than Jerry cracked back on the 2nd, 3rd and 4th with a strong counter-attack that surrounded the Irish Guards and cut off the 157th Infantry on their left, nipped off the Aprilia salient and forced our lines back to a limited salient north of the overpass--or "flyover" as the Limeys call it. We fired heavily the morning of the 2nd, and the Air Force was out in mass to stem the attack.

Charlie Battery caught a little counter-battery, suffering minor casualties, and there was an unidentified Cub plane overhead which was later rumored to be German. After several missions that night we caught a concentration of 170mm stuff from 2315 - 2345 hours. Pfc. Walter Morel was killed and Pfc. "Tiny" Lessard wounded by a tree burst. One powder pit at No. 3 gun burned and the dug-in Exec tent was ripped up by splinters.

At dawn we found the Royal Berkshire Infantry of the newly-arrived British 56th Division bivouacked in our area. They had come straight from the Garigliano sector and were tired and cut up before they ever reached Anzio.

Jerry adjusted on us early in the evening of the 3rd and gave us a concentration of 170's at 0100. The first shell, as usual, caused the greatest damage, catching the Third Section flatfooted at its gun. Sgt. Dom Verrastro and Cpls. Roger Hill and Selvin Fossand were wounded. Also Carmine Doderio, Horace Townsend, Jimmy Mannerino, and slight scratches on Lt. Czuk and Capt. Hansl. All evacuated except the officers.

The Third Section was completely reorganized. Cpl. Bill Henkel took command, with Cpl. Tom Loftus as gunner and Pvt. Terry as Ammo. Cpl. ... Spicher., Haft, Renner, and Chapman were transferred from other sections. It being now apparent that the present position offered no defilade, a request to move the following day was granted, and we slid about 1000 yards to the left front where we set up in a good-sized draw that offered excellent camouflage possibilities. That night it rained before we were set in, Henkel's tractor bogged down and McKenzie woke up to find himself afloat on his blankets. Very little sleep for anyone.

The following ten days were noted for a lot of digging, two soaking rains, unsuccessful Jerry local attacks on the 6th and 9th, constant friendly air cover broken frequently by low-flying ME's and FW's. Sgt. Wallace's gun was moved down past the kitchen, and an alternate position to the left rear was reconnoitered and surveyed.

A battery of 25-pounders from the 56th Division moved in on our right, and was later replaced by "Don" Troop, 39 Btry., 19th Field Reg't., 1st British Division, "Butterfly Benny" started his nightly frag-bombings during this period. Everybody got more or less sprinkled with the things, but several direct hits on sandbagged dugouts proved the ineffectiveness of these small bombs. Charley Battery lost several men caught without cover, and a 100-pounder dropped smack on their kitchen, destroying all their cooking equipment.

Sgt. J. E. Sappington, Chief of the Machine Gun Section, shot down two ME's in those early beachhead days, and sharp-eyed Kilgo got his second Focke-Wulf in three months. Here's the story, in their own words, of this machine gun packin' crew, who operated and maintained eleven .50 cal. machine guns and pulled outpost guard whenever there was a threat of hostile ground or para-troop action.

"Tis true that not every day the Germans came around for a Swedish massage at our hands, but nevertheless there stands the proof that we are in the war, what with Sgt. Sappington, who has since left us to go home on rotation, and Pfc. Kilgo, with two planes each to their credit. Notwithstanding all this seeming lack of employment of the Machine Gun Section, the German shells didn't make any distinction whatever when it came time for our daily dose of steel.

"Now these bits of anecdote are not designed to make the stout-hearted faint of heart and desirous of the long-sought-after Station Complement or the notorious P.B.S., but they are merely set forth to illustrate the noble aims and ambitions of these infernal (or eternal) hermits.

"Let us consider Mt. Camino, where we really conducted our first two-way argument with the Germans. We naturally thought that we were facing the best that Jerry had to offer. This impression was revised drastically some months later, but without a doubt our contacts and experience gained here gave everybody some valuable lessons in safety measures. As it has been brought out elsewhere, the entire battery lost quite a few men at this position, of which one belonged to the Machine Gun Section. Pvt. Brinkley received a serious head wound as the result of an 88 that hit near the opening of a culvert, in which he was sitting. There is no doubt in my mind that, as the result of his injury, Pvt's. Vahle's and Castonguay's lives were saved, for 2 days after they took over his hole, the Germans laid in a tree burst that filled their old hole with shrapnel. Nor does this end at all the close scrapes that have dogged the section from one end of the campaign to the other. For example Sgt. Sappington, PVT's. Stark and Seiders waking up one morning with the sight on the gun smashed over their heads and bits of steel lying around them on their blankets. Also Cpl. Milite, with his side kick Pvt. Halvey playing "in and out the window" with the Jerries, while they perforated his tent and tore equipment within inches of his head.

"Worthy of mention is the time that a shell came in when we were located beyond San Vittore, which landed in the bank of a small gully and drove a couple of hunks of steel through the open door of a dugout, passing between Sgt. Sappington and Pfc. Robbins and burying themselves in the dirt without

touching either one of them. Also some of the pieces giving Pvt. Stearns a beautiful view of the sky through the roof of his house.

"Now all this sounds very good and as though it were the main bout, but let us look into the horrible nightmare at Anzio that was ours for four months and which will be remembered by each and every man for many years to come. With us surrounded on three sides, it was easy for the Jerries to get the range on any position on the beachhead and in no time whatever it seemed we were eating everything from a 75 to a 170.

"We can remember one time in particular that Pvt. Halvey sweated plenty when two 170's came in one after the other, hitting a few feet from where he was hiding in a hole near his and Cpl. Milite's dugout. The concussion was so terrific that everything went black and he thought it was the end for him. Also the night an 88 very neatly took the front off the dugout while Vahle and Castonguay were lying inside writing letters. Some of the ammunition outside went off due to the hot fragments, and came in the hole -- but by a miracle neither received a scratch. To give the extent and magnitude of these shellings in words would be next to impossible so let us pass it off that "a good time was NOT had by all". It is hard for one to describe on paper the horrible fascination of watching huge geysers of dirt and trees going up before your very eyes. It is an experience that you have to go through yourself to appreciate the gripping tenseness and the everlasting question that drums again and again in your mind "is this to be my end?"

"We hope you don't get the impression that nothing happened that was funny because hearsay has come down in regard to the time that Robbins was taking a bath when two American planes, out on patrol, came a little low over his position. Now this in itself was not unusual, but with the possibility of jerries coming around at any moment it made a difference to Robbins, who took the incident in his own inimitable way. Without even the protection of dog-tags to cover his gaunt frame, he took off through the woods like a naked white nymph and dove into the nearest fox-hole. We have the very good word of Pvt. Felts that he would have had a great deal of difficulty in keeping up that day,, for he too was in the race for a hole and witnessed the embarrassing experience of John L.

"These anecdotes that have been related comprise only a small portion of the real adventures that we have been involved in, but let us close now with the hope that our dignity and your respect for us have been preserved and that it might be admitted we fight a different brand of war but nevertheless one necessary to the cause of victory."

Jerry started brewing up a storm on the 15th with widespread shelling 1900 - 2000 hours and heavy air attacks later in the night. All our outside wire lines went out. The Luftwaffe came over again in moderate strength at 0500 the 16th, dropping frags and demolition bombs on our troop concentrations. Breakfast was disrupted by a small concentration of 88's. Air and artillery action was strong on both sides all day, and we heard that Jerry had launched a general attack along the whole beachhead. Corps HQ. seemed confident that we could stop it, expecting it to break down in 48 hours. We were shelled and fragged again that night and the next morning, after being harassed since dawn. Pfc. Al Gaffney caught a shell fragment in the shoulder and several vehicles were damaged.

February 17th was the day of our big air show. Three hundred medium and heavy bombers, with scores of fighter escorts, swooped in from Naples and Sardinia to bomb the enemy troop formations. To the mud-bound ground soldier this majestic parade of power meant real excitement. We had a grandstand seat. Fighter-bombers peeled off in screaming dives for strafing and bombing runs. A B-17 struck by flak, went slanting down aflame over the German lines, leaving in her wake the bobbing white parachutes of some of her crew. A B-24 fell apart in the air -- a German fighter exploded and disappeared in a bright yellow flash. Small flights of Messerschmidt's and FW's sneaked through our fighter cover to bomb our forward positions, but didn't dare take on the bomber formations. All this was at low altitude -- perhaps two or three thousand feet -- it seemed at our very fingertips.

A German self-propelled opened up on us at 1545 that afternoon with 100 rounds of 75-millimeter cannon fire, but everyone hit their dugouts in time and there was no harm done.

We fired heavily all during the night of February 17-18, with no retaliation until noon, when miscellaneous harassing rounds began coming into the position. By 2100 the enemy attack had pushed a big salient into our lines down the Albano highway, almost reaching the overpass 3500 yards to our front. German prisoners said this was the supreme effort to push us right into the sea. Paratroop drops were expected and prepared for, with local security intensified and practice alerts held. Yet an air of calm confidence prevailed throughout the beachhead, as if we had an ace up our sleeve and were just waiting for the right time to play it.

Division Artillery kept up a constant fire in support of their infantry throughout the night of the 18th-19th, while we fired very little. All our wire lines were shelled out by 2000 hours, and the wire crew was out all night chasing down the breaks. Steady harassing fire fell in our position until 0230 in the morning, with several very near misses on dugouts in the First Section and CP areas. Despite our silence, however, we were not inactive. All night we sat up plotting new targets and computing data and new corrections for a coordinated counterattack. Something big was brewing.

At 0230 a heavy Jerry barrage broke out to our right front, followed by a strong tank-infantry attack near the overpass. This was the heaviest concentrations of German artillery fire we had ever heard -- his shells all rolled together in a solid wall of noise, indistinguishable in its parts.

Since we were on the extreme left fringe of this fire, we fortunately received only occasional rounds. Our lines bent and buckled under the hammer-blows of this all-out attack. The British 25-pounders at our side fired like a pack of little yelping dogs but still we held our fire.

At six o'clock came the welcome signal. Dawn had not quite arrived when we unleashed our barrage. The dark sky burst into sudden brightness with the frenzied flashing of four hundred guns. The noise was a constant roar -- a pressure on the ears. Conversation was impossible . For an hour and a quarter we fired without pause. The deep booming of a Navy cruiser joined us from the left, and as the grey dawn gave way to spreading sunshine divebombers got busy overhead, accompanied by droning flights of mediums.

Our counterattack -- spearheaded by Combat Command "A" of the 1st Arm'd Division -- made immediate progress, regaining 1500 yards of the lost salient by mid-afternoon. German shelling in the late afternoon caught our Fourth Gun Section standing by for a mission. The First shell -- an air or tree burst -- killed Cpl. Louis Nasta and wounded Sgt. Tom Wallace, Tom Vetter, John Suraski, Leroy Hart, and Jose Ventoso. Another burst near the kitchen caught Acting Supply Sergeant Joe Michelich in the leg. Wireman Robert Seaby was also hit by shell fragments that afternoon while servicing the lines to Battalion CP.

The back of the enemy's offensive was broken that morning, although he continued for three days to hammer with little success at the flanks of his now shortened salient.

At the height of this battle we received fourteen sorely needed replacements. The Fourth Section was immediately reorganized, with T/5 Willy Schroeder in command, Cpl. William Koehler -- one of the replacements -- as gunner, and Pfc. Ernest Adell as Ammunition Corporal. Replacements for this section were: Earl Varner, Franklin, Robert W. Smith, and Joe Sedillo.

Sgt. Phelan got John McDonald and Constant Mazaka, Sgt. Weeks got Arthur Giesey, and to Sgt. Stoller went Richard Steigler, Victor Ladnier, and James Fox. Edward Steitz went to the Instrument Section, and the Kitchen was strengthened by Cecil Hayes and Arthur Sluser, who had joined us at San Vittore.

On the 23rd, Jerry took advantage of the overcast, which prevented operation of our jeep planes, to shell us all morning without let-up, - a shell or two every few minutes for five hours. Everybody lay low excepting Mario Simon, our lively little Italian KP, whose arm was broken by a shell bursting near the kitchen. Catania and Dupree almost caught it when they were taking Mario to the Aid Station in a weapons carrier.

Lt. Langford got a direct hit on the wall of his dugout, gaining a window but no scratches. Splinters swept through the Exec. Post, knocking out a radio and the stove pipe. No. 2 gun caught a direct hit on one of its "self-sealing" powder pits which actually sealed, saving 20 some rounds of powder. Nawracaj arrived as a replacement and was assigned to the Second Section. Clerk Bill Clevenger took over Michelich's supply.

On that day the Germans ceased attacking. At long last, the battle was over.

VI - THE LONG HAUL-STALEMATE

February 24th-April 7th

Up to this time we had all harbored the secret hope that the beachhead was but a stepping stone to greater successes. But now it was clearly apparent that a hopeless deadlock existed. The initial mistake had been our inability to seize and hold tactically valuable ground. In turn, Jerry had hurt himself irreparably by underestimating our strength and by beating himself to a pulp against our defenses in his all-out effort of the 15th - 23rd Feb. to drive us into the sea.

With the end of this great battle we all realized that the role of the Beachhead would pass from a primary to a secondary one for some time to come. It was evident that we lacked the space to mass the many troops needed to break the German ring of steel, without coordinated attacks on the Cassino front,, Cassino, however, was in deadlock. Nor were the Germans able to concentrate enough troops to crush the Beachhead, as they had just learned at such great cost.

Thus, although we retained the initiative, we lacked the force to use it. Thus our next job was to gain time to build striking power. For the next three months our task was to spar with the enemy, keeping him confused and under control while behind us the machinery of war was being tuned for the last and final blow.

This sparring evolved into a massive artillery duel in which the advantage swung back and forth with each movement of weapons and adoption of new techniques. True, there was infantry activity in all sectors, but no major infantry efforts other than intensive patrolling and local operations. Despite superior enemy observation and gun positions we were able to gain, by the last three weeks of the beachheads short and bloody history, a clear-cut victory in the weight and effectiveness of artillery fires. Although we were materially aided in gaining this supremacy by superior ammunition supply and air support, ultimate responsibility for the Allied artillery victory rests squarely on the courageous and untiring efforts of all our artillerymen in face of great adversity. And on their teamwork -- between the British and Americans, the mud-covered, nerve-tired, overshelled cannoneers, the ever-ready "jeep pilots", the hardworking wire-crews, and on up to the imaginative Corps Artillery staff officers who worked out the most devastating counter-battery program in the history of Field Artillery.

Between the big February assault on the Beachhead and the second battle for Cassino, which opened on March 15th, we went through one time of trouble and one of relative ease. In the nine days following the collapse of the German attack on February 23rd we were shelled nine times by 75's, 88's and 105's. From March 4th to 17th he let us strictly alone. In the first of these two periods, his counter-battery fires were exclusively in light calibers'. He used his heavy rifles on the port area and his medium howitzers mostly on infantry positions, the port and ammo. dumps. On Feb. 24th a shell set the First Section tractor on fire; on the 27th, Maluke saw an 88 come through his parapet and burst on the left trail of No. 2 gun. On the 29th we were shelled three times. Henderson was hit in the hand when he was caught on the way back from chow with Cpls. Henkel and Shippy.

Cpl. D'Agati got a dud through his roof, passing between him and Vopata, as they were lying in the dugout. Next day the same thing happened to Gerardiello, who had taken refuge in Cpl. Corliss' hole.

On March 4th we completed our local anti-paratroop defense, and had a practice alert that night, all hands reaching their posts in 5 minutes.

By this time our artillery had been re-enforced by addition of the 938th Field (155 how's) and the 977th (Long Toms), and our counter-battery program became more active, gaining temporary superiority. The result was a period of two weeks of drudging work and boring existence, without even the unpleasant excitement of a shelling to liven up the dull hours.

Our OP at San Lorenzo Tower on the British 56 Div. Sector, established by Sgt. Eller's crew on the 18th of February, was doing good shooting with Charlie Battery in that sector, as well as turning in valuable intelligence reports.

On March 11th, men from the gun position started to visit the OP, a day at a time. Petruska and Vollmer started the ball rolling by spotting two SP guns that were harassing the coast road. Cpl. Gene Young fired Charlie Battery on them, and got good fire for effect after a quick adjustment.

By the 16th we had completed another tube change*, and moved back in on center line 6100 to add to Charlie's fire in the coastal sector. This was the day that Robbins and Seiders witnessed Captain Hansl's direct hit on a large Jerry bus full of Italian labor troops out on a trench-digging detail. Lt. Langford and Pfc. Mattio visited this target after the fall of Rome and were told by a local farmer that two hundred men had been killed or wounded in that concentration.

The Wire Section made frequent visits to this tower OP at San Lorenzo to service the oft-cut phone lines. Their travels over the last mile of barefaced road, under the muzzles of German SP's, and then cross-country along the sand dunes, were a constant source of exciting incidents.

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*Tube status at this change:

No 1 - 1729

No 2 - 1418 (plus 130 from a replacement gun)

No 3 - 1710

No 4 - 1572

Proportion of super to normal charge was about two to one.

"Yes," wrote Sgt. Jimmy Stoller four months later in peaceful bivouac, "looking back at it seems funny. However, in the dark days of Anzio it wasn't that at all.

"Remember when two of our vehicles became casualties at the OP? Well, if you don't then here is the story:

"Pvt. Gilmore. Cpl. Gualtieri, Pvt. Ladnier and Sgt. Stoller went up to tow out the command car. Pvt. Gilmore was driving our weapons carrier and when we hit the dirt road, it stalled. After awhile we managed to extricate the truck from there and we started to move slowly. We hadn't moved more than 30 yards when a shell landed in the spot we vacated a few minutes earlier. Seeing that and knowing that they were aiming at us we became excited. Gilmore stepped on the gas but the car wouldn't respond. "Dam it," yelled Gilmore, "there is no pep in this god-dam car". Then he noticed that he hadn't released the emergency brake. Having adjusted that little item, we proceeded to the highway and no sooner had we hit the paved road than two more rounds landed smack dab in the middle of it. Again Gilmore stepped on the gas but the car wouldn't respond. To his great astonishment he realized that he hadn't disengaged the four-wheel drive. Then we took off as fast as we could. After leaving about 2 miles behind us we pulled up to the side of the road. Gilmore exhaled loudly and said, "This is the first breath I've taken in 15 minutes." Yes, it seems funny now."

On March 15th our forces on the southern front launched a second major effort against Cassino. A frontal attack followed an air bombardment of 2000 tons and an artillery concentration of 4000 tons (in which were included the newly-arrived 240 howitzers of the 697 and 698 FA). On the beachhead our hopes ran high. A battalion of 8" howitzers (194 FA) arrived to bulk out our VI Corps fires, and a preparation was planned for a coordinated all-beachhead attack in the early morning of March 18th.

We were doomed, however, to disappointment, as the Cassino attack died in the face of unbelievable opposition in the rubble of that ill-fated town. Thus our preparation fires were reduced to a concentrated counter-battery program from 0440 to 0630 on the 18th. Infantry action was limited to a slight improvement of the British 1st Division sector.

We stayed on in the same gun position until April 6th, absorbing 14 more shelling, which built up from scattered light calibers at first to intense large-bore concentrations during the last few days there. On the 18th of March, Cpls. Bill Clevenger and George Astin's and Pfc. Joe Carpenter were wounded near the switchboard while riding in Astin's jeep. On the 23rd the switchboard hollow took a terrific pasting from mixed 150's and 88's, many of which burst in the trees. Two engineers were killed and 3 wounded while working

on the mudhole by Sgt. Frank Gillet's Ammo Dump, where 50 rds. of powder were burned and shells scattered to the 4 winds. Vahle and Castonguay, whose MG position was well zeroed in by that one, lost a few pounds and picked up some grey hair, but were otherwise undamaged.

Battery administration had been having a tough time. In January Cpl. Joe Michelich had replaced Supply Sgt. Joe Meehan who was blown out of his hole by a direct hit at San Vittore. When Michelich was wounded on February 23rd, Cpl. Bill Clevenger took over Supply "in addition to his other duties", ably assisted by Joe Carpenter. Following their loss on March 18th, Survey Cpl. Jack Dooley took over Supply, assisted by Pvt. Bill Renner. A new clerk, Dotson, was transferred in. On April 5, Cpl. Dooley was killed, and Dotson went off sick to the hospital. Renner carried on alone in Supply, and Castonguay pinch-hit as clerk, until the later return of Michelich and the arrival of a new clerk replacement, Pvt. George Bockman.

During these weeks, friendly relations had been firmly established with our British neighbors, and great was the traffic in beer and spirits, good cheer, battle dress jackets and other items of clothing and food. Pvt. Boyd, a professional English pugilist of questionable fame, came over occasionally to put on the gloves with Maluke or Porter at the Second section, while Popiel played tag with "Elmer", the inimitable sheep. The English B.C., dapper Capt. Derek Alton-Nagel, was a frequent visitor at mealtimes. and host to our officers in the evenings following "NAAFI Day". On St. Patrick's Day, Irish John Phelan got very, very mellow indeed on Irish Capt. Nagel's gin and regaled the surrounding countryside with sentimental renditions of fervent Irish love songs.

Toward the end of March, Jerry had regrouped and strengthened his artillery, and started a determined counter-battery program which, from our fox-hole point of view, seemed to concentrate on "B" Btry. Actually it was beach-head-wide, all the Corps howitzer and rifle battalions taking a bad beating. The 977th, after a month of quiet, was rocked severely, the 938th and 141st took many casualties, and our Charlie and Able received their share. Even the 35th Group Hq. took a shellacking, being in the line of fire of a battery of the 977th. Sgt. Salowitz returned from the hospital on the 26th with a patched-up rear end, and proceeded immediately to catch a direct-hit on his and Lander's dugout. It collapsed about their ears, but left them miraculously unhurt. What a welcome-homes

On the night of March 28th we started catching the very heavy stuff. They came over in pairs, sounding like wild freight cars rushing down a steep grade. First you heard the guns go off, low and far away like a deep soft tom-tom. Then a few seconds of silence -- feeling of slight pressure on your chest and a rushing, ripping, deep-roaring surge of overwhelming sound, quite unlike the impertinent whistle of the lighter calibers or the terrifying shriek of the 170. The impact of delay-fused rounds was more a physical shock than a loud noise, and the ground shook noticeably for many yards around. The deepest penetrations, which humped the earth but didn't burst the surface, made a sucking noise as they struck and a dull distant boom as they detonated below the ground.

A morning inspection after this terrible night revealed fifty-six colossal shell-holes near the Kitchen and Number Four Gun. Fragment

identification indicated a 220 mm howitzer. One crater at the Kitchen could have held a recon car. The dugouts of James Lee and Tom Loftus nearby, and of Cpl. Bill Koehler and Archie Palmerio at Number Four had very near misses. The kitchen truck itself was badly torn by huge fragments and many of the special 'leafing foxholes' had been completely obliterated. By great good luck the centers of impact of the two enemy howitzers, each using two elevations, were just "short" and "over" the bivouac areas of our Kitchen and Fourth Section crews. Since deflection was perfect a change of fifty feet in the center of impact would have meant the sure loss of twenty or thirty men. Our kitchen area had always been a hot spot in this position, so we moved it the next day several hundred feet forward, and somewhat to the left of Number Three Gun.

Possibility of German use of poison gas brought on a revival at this time of chemical training. This was supervised by Lt. Langford, Sgt. Gillet, and the Chiefs of Section. Also -- bug season being on hand -- malaria control was started, with atabrine, bed-nets and bug bombs in use. Our Motor and Supply Sections moved back to Service Battery and set up comfortably in an area which had been very quiet.

Our OP at "Shower Tower" had been steadily shelled, in a harassing sort of way since mid-February. In the last week of March, however, the shelling was intensified and succeeded in breaching the forward walls of the stout tower in several places and in demolishing most of the flat roof-platform. Because Jerry seemed determined to destroy it, and it was expected he would soon dive-bomb it, Lt. Halpern's crew was temporarily withdrawn on April 3rd. They later reoccupied it on a shift basis, with living quarters on the beach a mile to the rear.

On April 4th we caught a brief but accurate shelling with 170 mm delay, during which Cpl. Jack Dooley, Medic Jim Calloway and little Nick Remedio were killed, and Pfc. Irving Gold was very severely wounded in both legs. On the 5th Jerry let us alone, but on the night of the 6th he literally drove us out with two mortarings and three shellings -- 150 mm delay and 105 and 88 SQ mixed. Sgt. Weeks' phone hut was hit dead center by a light shell and there were many near misses around Number One and the CP. Very luckily no casualties -- but chalk up a big one against us in the war of nerves. By nightfall on the 7th we had moved out and were established in a new position 4000 yards to the rear, where we were to have a brief respite.

VII -PRELUDE TO ATTACK April 7-May 3, 1944

Our new position was in an open brush-covered field, just to the west-side of the Rome railroad tracks and behind the Padiglione woods. The guns had a straight front of 300 yards and tracking was limited to one ammo road that wound through the position. CP and EXEC post were located 150 yards to the left flank, with kitchen and switchboard another hundred further. Vehicles were kept at Service Battery. The water level, which was disappointingly high, prevented us from digging the guns in as planned. Dugouts at the gun positions

were shallow, with builtup sides. The many loose brush-bundles lying about provided excellent camouflage materials.

The funeral of Sheep Elmer, who was run over and killed during the move, was conducted by Cpl. Strunk with a sad Second Section in attendance. Sgt. Tom Wallace and Joe Michelich returned from hospital, followed shortly by Pfc. Horace! Townsend and Pfc Gaffney. Three replacements reached us on the 10th: James Gails (from the 36th F.A.) to Third Section, Francis E. Brown (from 34th Div.) to Wire Section, and Kenneth Sprengel (from Ft. Sill RTC) to First Section.

Jerry left us strictly alone for four days until the 11th, when we became a part of his nightly harassing program. By this time an elaborate system of shell-reps and counter-battery observations had been set up by Corps Artillery. The following weeks were to show good results from this work. To tie in shell-reps with active enemy known batteries and in order to speed up our CB fire, each firing battery established a fortified flash and sound post, with compass direction stakes out front. A guard was kept on nightly vigil here, so that any shells landing nearby could be promptly reported with direction, time, and estimated caliber and type. By plotting these reported directions, the Corps Counter-battery Officer determined which known or suspected enemy battery was firing, and brought counter-fire on it by our batteries not being shelled.

Our Tower OP reported that we gave out a pin-point flash from this new position, so it wasn't long before Jerry had us marked on his map. Curiously enough, Charlie battery, in its new position only 1000 yards to our left flank, was never shelled although its defilade was only slightly better than ours. Easter services on April 9th at Bn. HQ were broken up by 88's. On the 13th an air inspection of the area showed very good camouflage, needing only a darkening of the nets. This was done by throwing dark brush up, but as the leaves came out and the area bloomed, it was removed to match the spring green of the foliage. Our first real shelling (outside of the harassing 170's) was on the 19th -- 12 days after occupation, when we were shelled repeatedly with light stuff from 1330 to supper time. No casualties, no damage. "Butterfly Benny" sprayed us with incendiaries one night and dropped miscellaneous nuisances near us on several occasions, but he was generally discounted as a minor irritation.

On April 20th we got the first inkling of coming operations, when new gun positions were selected in the Cisterns Sector on the right flank of the Beachhead. The 22nd saw lots of light stuff chewing up the area, slightly wounding Pfc. Haft, and sending T/5 Porpiglia and Cpl. Jack D'Agati to the hospital. Porpiglia lost some "sitzfleisch" in the deal, but D'Agati was badly hurt with a nasty wound near his spine. Late-April shelling of our OP at Lorenzo Tower got so bad that we abandoned it, even for daylight use, on the 23rd. In the last shelling this tower took 16 direct hits out of 50 rounds of 150 mm thrown at it.

A light shelling at the gun position on the 25th nicked Acting First Sgt. Ramey in the leg. (First Sgt. Carter was ill in hospital.) From the 27th April our Artillery became more active, making a determined effort to reduce the effectiveness of Jerry's guns. Ammunition expenditure ran fairly, high with

daily shoots reaching 100 rds. per gun. Jerry concentrations fell off as our fire increased and our tactical air support stepped up, but his nightly harassing with heavy guns became even more troublesome than before. In the early morning of May 2nd, just before Sgt. Catania -loved in to set up chow, one of these heavy shells obliterated our-kitchen dugout, our hen, four freshly baked cakes and a case of eggs. By a fortunate flip of a coin the night before, Mess Sgt. Nick Dziobak had decided to put a precious keg of beer in a separate fox-hole, and it was safe.

On April 30th and May 1st all guns were retubed, with 2090, 2209, 1747, and 2247 rounds respectively. With First Sergeant Carter rumored to be states-bound from hospital, a chain reaction of promotions went down the non-com line, with Ramey, Roberson and Strunk going up one grade. Sgt. Phelan hit the rotation trail homeward at about the same time, lining Ben Shippy and Al Gaffney up for promotion in the First Section.

On April 28th Jerry threw his last powerful air-raid at the port, using more than fifty fighter-bombers. Our flak was thick -- "so thick", according to Sgt. Sappington, "you could walk on it". The planes never penetrated the port proper, dropped their bombs haphazardly and took off for home minus seven of their friends.

On May 6th we started to work on a new position in the 3rd Division sector on the Beachhead's right flank, with a bulldozer from the 39th Engineers joining us on the 7th. Rumors flew thick and fast about a breakout attack from the Beachhead -- estimates ranging from May 10 to June 1st. The 36th, 91st, and 99th Divisions were rumored to be in various places preparing for any one of several operations. General Alexander sent out a letter declaring that soon we would launch an attack with the objective of destroying the German 10th and 14th Armies in Italy.

From the 8th to the 21st of May almost half the battery bivouacked in the new position each night. Thus they could continue the digging and stay out of harms way, as our occupied position was still fairly hot.

On May 11th the Southern front broke loose and the beachhead artillery started a systematic daily workout on Jerry installations. These "false preparations" took the form of 15-minute to half-hour general fires by all our artillery on enemy front lines, artillery areas, command posts and communications. The purpose of these demonstrations was to do damage, destroy morale and confuse the enemy as to our intentions. Later reports from PW's confirmed the success of this program, as did the slackening and final cessation of the strong German harassing program. A captured Battery Commander reported that enemy light artillery was forced to move daily during this two-week period, and that many casualties were caused. As the days wore on and the southern front reported rapid progress, Jerry activity decreased on the beachhead and very strong patrols were sent out by VI Corps. Finally on the 19th we got the welcome order to move to our new position for the attack.

Each of the many positions we have occupied will stay in our memories for special reasons known only to ourselves. No doubt one Second Section cannoneer (who will be nameless) will remember this third Anzio position we were about to leave because of one of those nights when a fellow just can't quite seem to get his feet on the ground. According to his section-mates, this is what happened:

"One night we were just bedding down when the phone guard shouted "FIRE MISSION". Out we dashed into the Stygian blackness, ready as usual to break all section records. We got everything set, only to discover we had forgotten the aiming stake lights. So out went our Section Sad Sack to put them on. While beating about in the timber he fell plunk into a deep and water-filled shell-hole. Did this discourage our hero? Oh, not He dragged himself out of the mire, turned the lights on, and started back through the brush to what he thought was our gun, taking position alongside his shadowy comrades in the pit. Not until a strange voice asked him where the hell the powder was did he realize that his erring footsteps had led him astray to the number Four Gun.

"The curtain rises once more on our hero back with his own section. The first round goes off. He feels a warm trickle on his chin, and finds to his embarrassment that the concussion has given him a nosebleed. Now is the time, he thinks, for me to ease off a bit from the muzzle before something really bad happens to me. He backs off from the gun to where the concussion isn't quite so bad, but where he can still help the boys out, and finds himself at the rear end of the rammer staff. The next round is ready to load -our boy reaches down to pick up the staff just as our two big lads from West Virginia are taking it off the ground. His timing is perfect -- right in the eye he catches the end of it and next day he is sporting a lovely mouse.

"At last comes the "CEASE FIRE". He slinks off to his hole in the ground, which he shares with two off-duty characters. With a sigh of relief he lowers himself through the entrance, secure in the knowledge that at long last he will be safe from these persistent troubles. As he stretches out in his roll, his tired bones aching and shivering from the wet, one of his buddies swings a quick flashlight looking for a match and conks him square on the noggin.

"Despite all, our Sack is still around, and he is thankful for that much anyway."

VIII - THE BATTLE FOR ROME - "Operation Buffalo" May 23-June 4, 1944

On the day we moved we were still in the dark as to the plan of attack. Preparations for three different operations were made. For an operation known as "Turtle" we would support a main effort straight up the Albano-Anzio Road, firing from our just-vacated position by the Rome railroad track. Operation "Grasshopper" was directed down the coast through Littoria to meet II Corps at Terracing. Operation "Buffalo" involved the capture of Cisterna and the fortified RR bed running from there to Campoleone. This line was to become the jump-off for penetrations toward Cori and Velletri in the Appenine Mountains, and finally the rupture of Highway 6, some 20 miles inland, at Valmontone.

For either "Grasshopper" or "Buffalo" we would fire from our new dug-in position on the right flank. This was located near La Ferriere, in open rolling terrain. Ample time permitted the dumping of 400 rounds HE plus additional smoke per gun at the new position, and the gun pits were carefully and thoroughly prepared by the hard-working gun crews. In fact, our pits were the pride of the battalion and -- so we heard -- the best in the Corps Artillery. The deep emplacements were connected to roofed powder and crew shelters by full-depth trenches, some of them with overhead cover. Some of the pits were sandbagged throughout and all were carefully camouflaged with nets. The section fortifications were so large that we had to borrow nets from motor vehicles to cover them. All ammunition was scattered in piles of 30 and camouflaged with brush and all powder was dug in and roofed over.

The direction and progress of the southern action was to determine which plan the Beachhead forces would follow. By May 18th the Gustav Line had been broken. The British Eighth Army was engaged in bitter struggle at the Adolph Hitler Line. Cassino had fallen on the 17th and the Polish Corps was pushing through the mountains North of Cassino toward Piedimonte.

On the left the French Colonial Expeditionary Force (CEF) flanked on the Tyrrhenian Coast by American II Corps, was riding rough-shod through the mountains, cutting the main German lateral Highway (No. 82) between Itri and Pico. The 88th and 85th Divisions of II Corps had cut off Gaeta and taken Itri.

Von Kesselring, the German Commander, had withdrawn some of his artillery from the Beachhead to strengthen his southern defenses, and sent the 26th and 29th Panzer Grenadier divisions down from 14th Army Reserve to bolster up 10th Army's weakening Hitler Line. By May 18th, his 71st and 94th Infantry Divisions had been virtually annihilated by the Fifth Army drive, but he was still able to maintain strong resistance on the North flank of the Hitler Line from Aquino to Pico. The 44th Infantry and 90th Panzer Grenadier Divisions were identified there in addition to the 1st Parachute Division.

On the Beachhead, armored patrols penetrating deep into the coastal sector southeast of Littoria found that little trouble was to be expected on the extreme right flank. II Corps was progressing rapidly toward Terracing, the last obstacle before the Pontine flatlands leading to the beachhead and would evidently effect a breakthrough from the south without our having to swing a major attack that way. Thus "Grasshopper" was abandoned.

As the long tongue of Franco-American troops licked up the Tyrrhenian Coast, rapidly outdistancing the Anglo-Polish columns further inland, it became apparent that, by cutting Highway 6 behind the Hitler Line, it would be possible to encircle and wipe out the bulk of the German Tenth Army. Since "Buffalo" offered the shortest route to Highway 6, at Valmontone, this plan was selected. It would start with the fall of Terracing -- the cliff-bound shore city separating us on our south from the advance of II Corps.

Starting from the east or right flank of the Beachhead, our troops were lined up for the attack as follows: 39th Engineers, Special Service Force, 3rd Division, 1st Arm'd Div., 45th Div., 1st British and 5th British Divisions. In Corps Reserve were the 34th and the newly arrived 36th Div. Known to be facing us, in the same order were the 362nd Infantry, 3rd Panzer Grenadier, 715th Infantry Division and the 4th Parachute Division, with the Hermann Goering and Lehr Divisions and one SS Brigade or Division in reserve.

By this time our Corps Artillery had been strengthened by the 4th and 80th Medium Regiments, (British 4.5 and 5.5's) on the left, and a reinforced battery of two 240 howitzers and two 8" rifles, split with one pair on each flank of the Beachhead. 976th and 36th Bns. (Long Toms) centered on Cisterns, while 977th swung over to the left and the three 155 howitzer battalions to the right. The bulk of Divisional Artillery plus two 90 mm AA regiments, the Corps Reserve TD Bn. (M-10¹s) and the 69th Armd. and 463rd Parachute Arty Bns. were placed well to the right, covering mainly the Cisterna-Corivelletri triangle. Thus we developed a 10-1 artillery superiority in the zone of attack, maintaining about 2-1 superiority on the left (British) sector, where fires were to be thickened by Navy cruisers and AAF fighter-bombers.

Our preparation fires were cleverly worked out to cause maximum confusion and damage to the enemy. At 2030 on the 22nd, the 1st British Division jumped off after a 15 minute counter-battery program, attaining some of its limited objectives during the night. At 0415 the following morning the 5th British Division attacked up the coast after a 15 minute counter-battery shoot. Both of these preparations were similar to the last two weeks' "false starts", and both infantry actions were limited to close-in objectives, yet powerful enough to give the impression of major strength for several hours.

At 0545 the Corps preparation for the main attack was started. Phase 1 (H-45 to H-40) was on CP's and likely wire-routes, to break up communications and get the German wire crews out on the roads. Phase II (H-40 to H-15) was counter-battery. Phase III (H-15 to H-5) was a silent period, to make Jerry think this was the usual fake start and to allow him to come out of his holes and resume normal activities. Phase IV was a 5-minute anti-flak program, to allow fighter-bomber action at H-hour. Phase V (H to H plus 25) went back to counter-battery, with Phase VI (from H plus 25 to H plus 3 hours) being retires on all targets, priority fires going to new observed missions. Throughout the preparation harassing rounds were fired at the CP's and communication targets of Phase 1.

In addition to this program each battery in general support (all Long Toms and larger calibers, plus some medium howitzers) was given four enemy artillery positions to harass for 24 hours at 5 rounds per hour. Division artillery was in the meantime handling all direct-support infantry missions.

The Artillery program was closely coordinated with the tactical air force through the 111th Rcn. Squadron (P-51¹s), whose primary mission was artillery adjustment and through the Air Liaison Officer at the Counter-battery Office. Each flight of Recon planes was assigned a specific group of enemy batteries to watch with orders to adjust artillery on them or attack them from the air when they started to shoot.

This preparation was smothering. The enemy mine field was crossed without great difficulty, and Jerry was unable to put up any real resistance until he reorganized at the RR embankment. PW's poured in. Many talked freely, agreeing that the time and direction of the attack had caught them by surprise. Many were fooled by the "silent period" of the preparation, expecting another dry run.

In the first 24 hours of this battle, "B" Battery fired 992 rounds, top honors going to Sgt. Schroeder's Third Section with 271 rounds, or an average

of one round every 6 minutes 6 and 1/3 seconds. This heavy rate of fire was continued throughout the second day and we drew some harassing counter-battery fire from a 210 rifle, without casualties

A PW cage, set up near No. 4 gun, provided welcome entertainment. Many of the raggedy-ann "supermen" brought in were very young. Their clothes were cheap and ill-kept. Almost all were clean-shaven and had very long hair, which they combed frequently. Some were Russian laborers, who looked as if they hadn't had a square meal since the time of Katherine the Great. All were glad to be out of the war.

By May 25th Cisterna had fallen. The 3rd Division and Special Service Force were sweeping on to Cori, and tanks of the 1st Armored had cut the highway between Cori and Velletri. "B" Battery displaced across the Mussolini Canal, up the Purple Path through the German mine fields and the corpses and the smoldering tanks to nestle in behind the now-quiet RR bed NW of Cisterna. The 34th and 36th Divisions had been committed on the Velletri-Lanuvio line where they were now stalled before the steep RR embankment running between those two towns. The Anzio Beachhead ceased to exist on May 26th, when patrols from our 39th and II Corps 19th Engineers met on Route 7 south of Littoria.

In the Cori-Artena sector Jerry troops were cut off and eliminated, after a sharp fight, by the 3rd Division and the SSF. It was here, on the winding mountain roads, that the air force caught convoy after convoy of fleeing Germans on the road in daylight, knocking out vehicles by the hundred and jamming the road with wreckage.

Capt. Hansl, Staff Sgt. Bill Eller, Mattio and Steitz went up toward Velletri on a roving OP mission. Because observation was poor here, they moved over to the Lanuvio sector, where the 34th Division was pinned down before the RR bank by parts of the Hermann Goering and 4th Parachute Divisions. Both these OP locations produced water-cans full of excellent white wine, which were brought back to the battery for general consumption. Sgt. Eller's notes provide a picture of the highlights of this expedition.

"On the morning of May 26th we received orders to go forward and establish an OP wherever the action was in the general area of Velletri, Lanuvio, and the Alban Hills.

"Long ago we had resolved that we would at some future date establish an OP in the Pope's Palace, otherwise known as Castel del Gandolfo. We had also resolved that we would go swimming in Lake Albano. The forth-coming journey seemed to hold the promise of both of these objectives. What ensued can be described as the most memorable "rat race" in our lives.

"Capt. Hansl, Mattio, Steitz and I left the battery in "Battle-Scared Baby", looking more like a band of gypsies than anything else. We were loaded down with enough assorted merchandise to start a department store. Just exactly where or how far we could go we only knew slightly from our own G2 which was not too accurate.

"As we approached the front lines on Highway 7, we found ourselves in the middle of a tank column, where no one else was endowed with any better knowledge of their location than were we. When the tanks started to "button up", some sixth sense of the Captain's caused us to stop and back up a short distance and inquire of a recon outfit as to the situation. From these people we gleaned the information that Jerry was two or three hundred yards further ahead.

"Parking the jeep, the Captain and I went on foot to a house, which sat atop a rise in ground from which we had a good view of Velletri and the valley as far west as Lanuvio. Just below us in the wadi and on the opposite rise a snappy little battle was going on with machine gun and rifle firing predominating. We learned from observers already there that the house had been vacated by Jerry only a half hour before our arrival.

"We stayed at this point over night, discovering during our stay a vast underground wine cellar, where it was necessary to wade ankle deep in wine in order to reach a barrel as yet untapped. This barrel was covered with green mold and had the date 1920 burned on it. We consumed large samples of this wine and agreed that it was the best we had ever tasted. Although I never claim to be a connoisseur, no other wine I've ever had caused my tongue to stand up and pick my teeth for me.

"We decided that afternoon to move further to the west in the direction of Lanuvio. We reached a cozy little house surrounded by mulberry trees and grape arbors, after an incredible journey cross country in the "Baby". We rode down near-perpendicular hills, across rocky creeks, through fields with hay so tall it hid the jeep and through grape arbors which looked impassable.

"At this house, the Captain was replaced by Lt. Halpern. The jeep groaned under the added equipment which the change in command brought with it. At this place, as at the last, wine cellars were on hand and provided excellent shelters for sleeping. Since the fighting was particularly heavy and our advance had been stopped at Lanuvio, we spent several days at this place, each day going forth on reconnaissance in search of a better vantage point from which to observe the enemy.

"During our stay, Lt. Halpern and Steitz were nearly shot by two of our own infantrymen, who mistook them for Jerry snipers hiding in our wine cellar.

"Shooting was poor here, too, so we went over toward our right in the 36th Division Sector, where we had learned they were making progress up in the hills.

"We went beyond Velletri on Highway 7 until we observed one of our tank-men closing his turret and, sensing a general tenseness in the air, we stopped and after a short reconnaissance found a house, which we decided would serve our needs for the night. The cherries in the garden which were ripe, nearly tempted us to an untimely end when Jerry shells caught us up in a tree picking them.

"We enjoyed the comforts of beds with clean sheets, and fresh eggs for breakfast the next morning, all furnished by the hospitable Italian woman who owned the house. (So as not to overlook any technicalities, the eggs were furnished by the hens, which the woman owned.)

"The following day, we went high up in the mountains above Lanuvio, where the battle was still going on. Our intentions were to spend the night there, but due to hostile M. G. and rifle fire, we were "forced" to return to our beds and clean sheets for another night.

"Next day the situation moved very rapidly and we reached a high mountain above Albano. We were practically forced by grateful Italians to spend that night at a "unless nunnery (the sisters all having gone to the Vatican some time before.)

"Our overnight visit at this nunnery was the most unusual of all our adventures. It was one of the most beautiful scenic spots I have ever seen. The grounds overlooked Lake Albano, which nestled several hundred feet below. High mountains covered with dense forest rose from the other side of the lake, and from our side we could have seen Rome in the distance had the weather been clear. From here, also, we could see "Shower Tower" at San Lorenzo - "B" Battery's famous Anzio O.P.

"Among the people at the nunnery was a Major in the South African British Army, who had been captured at Tobruk, spent several months in a German prison camp at Bologna and finally escaped to take refuge until the Germans were driven out. His story was most interesting. One of the highlights of this visit was the sincere gratitude which these people showed at being freed of the Nazi clutch. We were showered with kisses from the women and warm handclasps from the men. The monks held our hands as we walked and the best wine was broken out in celebration of our arrival.

"We had a good breakfast the following morning with these people and left loaded down with fresh strawberries and cherries, which they had picked for us.

"The radio informed us that we were to return at once. We found our battery with no difficulty, learned that Rome had fallen and an O.P. was, therefore, no longer necessary."

Our gun tubes were changed again on the 31st of May, with 1617, 1670, 1682 and 1632 rounds on Nos. 1,2,3, and 4 respectively. Reconnaissance of a new position just south of Lanuvio was made, but since it was still under small arms fire, we decided not to occupy until the fall of the town. Several strong German counterattacks and a determined defense held the line against us in this sector, despite our massive superiority in air, artillery and tanks, so that the frontal attack on Lanuvio and Velletri was abandoned in favor of an envelopment of the line through the Alban Hills behind Velletri.

This range, known as the "Colli Lazali" was penetrated on the 29th of May by the 36th Engineers and 36th Division, while the 3rd Div., aided by the 88th and 85th Divs., were fighting parts of the Hermann Goering, the 92nd and 278th Infantry Divisions in Valmontone on Route 6. The British beachhead forces on the left were forging successfully ahead toward Campoleone.

Lanuvio, cut off now from the rear, fell on July 2nd, which allowed us to move to our new position on the 3rd. Although mortars and light SP's were still pecking haphazardly over the area, we fired harassing missions throughout the night, but awoke at dawn to find the bubble of resistance broken and the war swept on out of sight and out of range. At noon the good news arrived that Rome was ours. By the end of the day all territory South of the Tiber River was cleared of the enemy, and bivouac positions near Albano were selected and occupied by the battalion at nightfall.

IX - NORTH OF ROME

Life for us had changed now from one of constant nervous strain and drudging tasks to one of confidence, dash, and swift movement. We changed positions frequently, reconnoitered early and late, fired a little here and there, and got stuck sometimes in traffic jams, all the time pushing as fast as possible North of Rome. "B" Battery was detached from battalion control on June 7th and chased after the 34th Division 50 miles up Route One along the coast. We caught them at Civitavecchia, the "Port of Rome". Here we slapped into position after a high-speed dawn reconnaissance, and fired on the town of Tarquinia, harassing it until 0500 the 8th. That day we were transferred to the 36th Division, which had leap-frogged ahead, and we spent most of the 10th moving north over dusty by-passes and through jammed traffic.

We went into firing position North of Montalto and supported infantry and tanks in the Orbetebello area. The Third Section made some kind of a speed record here, slicking into position and laid in eight minutes after hitting the spade holes. Enemy tanks and cavalry were rumored to our right flank. Cpl. Armando Milite's crew pulled an all-night guard with ground-mounted .50 calibers and rocket-launchers, but nothing exciting developed.

In the fast-moving situation since the fall of Rome we answered a few controversial questions about heavy artillery, and learned some lessons that were to hold us in good stead later in the final phase of the war in Germany. Given fast prime-movers, well-organized reconnaissance, and competent survey-fire direction personnel, a separate Long Tom Battery can keep up with the fastest situations. This will hold true also for two or three gun batteries

with skeletonized headquarters personnel and service elements. With our own grasshopper planes working directly with us, we can use our long range aggressively to deliver effective fires well ahead of our most advance elements.

On the 12th of June 1944 we left the fighting line for the first time -- and the battle of Italy for keeps -- 226 days after occupying our first battle position, 240 days after our first bombing, 219 days after our first shelling and 330 days before the final defeat of the German Armies.

X - THE PAYOFF

What did we do to the enemy in our 226 days on the line to justify our years of training and fighting, and to atone for the lives and the suffering of the 57 men of Btry "B" who died or who will bear with them the permanent scars of battle? This is a tough one to answer in detail, because you never know what you do unless you see it and a large percentage of our missions were unobserved. We have, however, the following official record, which is but a tiny part of what we've done. On the Camino-Cassino front, the battalion has credit for silencing permanently 6 enemy batteries. In addition, several direct hits on enemy guns were seen by our OP crews, and many of our concentrations were seen sweeping accurately through enemy positions. In our first battle position, Pfc. Kilgo shot down a Focke-Wulf. On that front, from Nov. 1st 1943 to January 27th, 1944 we fired 7717 rounds, mostly on enemy artillery positions.

On the Anzio Beachhead, we have confirmed credit for one heavy railway gun (direct hit), two ME-109's (Sgt. Sappington and Pfc. Kilgo), 20 Germans personally seen by Sgt. Eller to fall from a burst in their midst, 200 Italian laborers and German soldiers and one large bus fired by Capt. Hansl and later confirmed by local inhabitants, numerous battery positions well-covered with fire by air and ground observers, materiel destroyed in many large fires started by us and an unknown number of German infantrymen in the open on the morning of Feb. 19th, when we fired Corps concentrations on the center of their attack.

PW after PW has commented on the overwhelming mass of our artillery fires, which alone in many instances has forced enemy groups to surrender. A partial inspection of enemy artillery positions fired on by VI Corps artillery was made after the Beachhead breakout. At 70 targets visited 52 were well shelled, 9 lightly or inaccurately shelled and nine shelled ineffectively or not at all. In these 70 positions, there were found many destroyed artillery pieces, which reflects only the action of the last days of the beachhead and shows nothing of those guns hit and hauled away for repair or salvage earlier in the game.

Here is the list: Five 75's, one 88, eight 105's, one Italian 149/19, thirteen 150's (how's and guns), three 170's, one 210 rifle, seven light AA guns, eight heavy guns, two AT guns and eight field pieces of type unidentified from the air. A total of 40 pieces of field artillery and 15 AA guns and two AT guns, or 57 pieces all told in these 70 selected positions. This does not include any materiel shot up or abandoned on the road as a result of air action. Compare these 57 German pieces destroyed, in the last few days only, with the 15 allied pieces (which include our #2 Gun with the punctured trail) knocked out over the entire beachhead period.

All in all, over the 7½ -months stretch of our combat life in Italy, we .
we of "B" Battery personally delivered to Herr Schickelgruber 29,553 rounds, or
1477 2/3 tons of steel, HE and white phosphorous smoke, fired through twenty-
three separate gun tubes.

MUZZLE FLASH

PART TWO - CAMPAIGNS IN FRANCE AND GERMANY

I - THE BREAK

June 12 to August 9, 1944

Our first and only big break from line duty found us in the Rome area, at the resort of Fregene on the Tyrrhennian Sea. One, three, and five day passes to Rome were liberally issued, so that we saw all we wanted of that gay burg during our 2 week stay. Our work hours we spent in maintenance, tightening 2 things up, knocking off the combat dirt, and preparing our equipment for another campaign. The Gun and Machine Gun sections lived in a grand villa, with the other sections spread out in smaller houses. Sgt. Dziobaks crew made a neat screened kitchen out of an open porch, and chow was eaten in a fresh-air beer garden beside the main villa. The beach, only a hundred yards away, offered fine swimming, and Special Service brought in movies and USO shows for evening entertainment. Most of our fun, however, was had in Rome,- the less said the better.

The only incident to mar the peace of this period was a T/O change which forced us to drop five men and change others to a T/D basis. Holman, Giesey, Alessi, Hayes, Sluser and Rigby left us, and Salowitz, Vahle, Ventoso, Seiders, Crowder, Stearns, Shutts, and Steigler were kept on T/D. In addition, T/5's Peake, Beresnewicz and Darnowski and Pfc. Ehlers came to us from Service Battery on a T/D basis.

On one of his foraging trips, Mess Sgt. Dziobak ran into three Yugoslav ex-soldiers in search of employment. Big Stanley, Little Stanley and Jack were their names, and they had worked since their release from P.W. Camp for a British Engineer outfit. Joining us now as KP's, they were shortly to prove themselves hard and loyal workers and good soldiers.

On the first of July we packed up and took off to the south, moving into open bivouac at Sparanise in the late afternoon. From a social point of view, the Sparanize bivouac left much to offer. The battery area itself was a hot dusty olive grove that had been occupied formerly by other troops. It had no buildings or piped water, and stood about two miles from the nearest town, which wasn't worth visiting anyway. Although most of us had had our fill of Rome, there were still enough men left to care about trips to Naples, Capua or Caserta. We played a little baseball, and threw up the volleyball nets and a boxing ring.

The day after we arrived we heard rumors that we were now members of the Seventh Army, long dormant in Sicily. This was later verified, as we started to draw our supplies through that headquarters. We were pleased to discover, also, that we were again in our beloved VI Corps, the family of the ANZIO Beachhead, with most of the same units which had fought so well together there. A mild training schedule was put into effect, consisting mostly of replacement training and reconnaissance-occupation problems, with the key non-coms acting as battery officers and junior non-coms and privates acting as chiefs of section.

The big event of this period was the Battery Dance given at the Soldiers+ Park in NAPLES on July 17th. A couple of carloads of smooth operators, put to work on the Caserta WAC detachments, produced a large turnout of lovely girls -real Americans. Highlight of the evening was a jitterbug demonstration by Ed Steitz and a cute little blond Corporal. A good time was had by all, and, no doubt, some liaison established for future reference.

The sightseers and camera fiends took a trip up to Cassino and the Gustav Line, to see what kind of shooting we'd been doing the previous fall and early winter. Limpy's house, they reported, looked the same as ever.

On the 20th of July we moved again to open bivouac near Qualiano, a half hour's drive from Naples. Here we had more heat and dust to contend with, and malarial mosquitoes to boot. We completed drawing our equipment, continued a little training, and practiced waterproofing our vehicles. One day we had a grand time out in the surf with them, using them for diving platforms when they swamped out.

While at Sparanise we had started regular runs to the San Carlo Opera House in Naples. These we continued from Qualiano, and added a couple of sightseeing trips to Pompeii. Toward the end of July we got our new APO number, 758. The officers attended a speech by General Truscott, the Corps Commander, in which he made it very clear that our next mission was to be against a hostile shore. Anybody's guess was as good as the next, but by the time we loaded on the British trooper "ASCANIA" in Naples Harbor on August 9th, there hadn't even been a really hot rumor as to destination, although most guesses centered around the Genoa area of North Italy or the Marseilles area in Southern France.

II - INVASION AND RIVIERA August 15-23rd.

We embarked for this invasion in three echelons. The First Echelon, consisting of about two-thirds of the men, without vehicles or heavy equipment, was to land across the beaches on D-Day. The Second, with the guns and essential combat equipment, was scheduled for D PLUS FIVE, and the Third, with whatever non-essential vehicles and other equipment was left over, was to come in with Service Battery on about D PLUS THIRTY. The First Echelon, which loaded on the 9th, was aboard the "ASCANIA". The other two embarked later on LST's.

The convoy, which had formed by the 12th, ran northward through calm seas and beautiful warm weather. Destroyers darted about the edges like bird dogs, trailing edge barrage balloons majestically overhead. The ship was British, the chow was British (which is not complimentary), and our fellow-passengers were, like us, miscellaneous troops without weapons who wondered what the hell they were doing in a D-Day convoy.

Next day we found out. The Battery Commander was briefed at a meeting topsides and came below to the troop compartment loaded down with maps, sketches, and a complete intelligence report on the German beach defenses. The objective was the coast of Southern France, over a thirty-mile strip between Toulon and Cannes. VI Corps was to force this landing alone, with the 3rd, 45th, and 36th

Divisions in line, from left to right. We were attached to the 45th Division Artillery from the landing until such later date as Corps Artillery decided to centralize control of its many units.

Little resistance was expected. We were to go ashore at about H plus Six Hours, find a bivouac, and wait until our guns arrived, then catch up with the action, wherever that might be. Not knowing what to expect, the Captain had, prior to embarking, reorganized the battery into platoons and squads, for ease of handling in case of trouble.

H HOUR was 0800 on August 15th. Although the waterborne assault waves were to hit the beaches at this time, glider and parachute troops had been going in since 0430, and naval and air bombardment had started at the crack of dawn. The "ASCANIA" lay some eight miles offshore until midmorning. All we could see of the action was the battleship TEXAS and some cruisers loosing their huge orange salvos at shore targets while flight after flight of all kinds of bombers droned overhead, their wings striped black and white for easy identification. We could see the fighter bombers go down in their steep dives over the shore, which appeared as a vague haze-bank along the horizon, crowned by occasional columns of dusty smoke. As the light improved and the ship crept closer to the shore, we could clearly see the dive bombers and Navy rocket-ships work over the 36th Division's Red Beach, where our assault waves had been repulsed. That whole section of shore line erupted in what seemed like one continual five-minute blast. The second assault slid easily ashore.

We lined up in squad order and filed down through various passageways to board an LCI through the hold doors. At 1350 hours Lieutenant Halpern set the first "B" Battery foot ashore by stepping off the right-hand ramp of the LCI into four feet of water. This was at Red Beach, 45th Division sector, which lay about a mile east of the resort town of Ste. Maxime, France.

A mile-and-a-half walk took us to a pine-wooded knoll where we set up a simple bivouac from what material we had carried in on our backs. Everything was soaked through with sea water but the warm weather dried us all off quickly. The next five days were spent in loafing in the bivouac, poking about the many abandoned German strong points and artillery positions for souvenirs and rations, and snooping around the nearby villages.

Jerry planes raided the shipping area every night, arriving usually at dusk. Our flak was heavy, and Jerry weak, so that he caused very little damage. He did, however, drop a glider-bomb smack on the LST which carried "A" Battery of the 977th F.A. and a battery of the 932nd, sinking it in shallow water.

The Corps landing had been a complete success, German installations proving to be substantially as reported in the Intelligence summary. The Airborne Task Force had had one night's trouble before penetrating to the shore from their inland drop area. But as soon as they had linked up with the Seaborne Forces, the whole Corps broke loose, reaching the Blue Line, (Corps objective for D PLUS One) on the night of D-Day itself.

French armor and infantry poured ashore these first few days, turning west to attack Toulon and Marseilles. General Truscott took the VI Corps up the Durance and Rhone River valleys as swiftly as possible. He led off with the improvised BUTLER Task Force, which was made up of all the separate tank, armored

artillery and Tank Destroyer Battalions of the various divisions. On the 20th we got word that the Second Echelon, with our battle equipment, was landing from the "JOHN T. SUMTER". After some mixups among the shipping people, we finally got assembled on the 23rd, when we made a forced march of 66 miles northwest to bivouac near the town of Barjols.

III - THE "CHAMPAGNE CAMPAIGN" August 23-September 20

Our bivouac at Barjols was on the grounds of a lovely old chateau surrounded by a high old brick wall. It sat in the middle of a fertile pasture and two planted fields which were cut by a crystal-clear stream that ran down ice-cold from the hill behind the estate. Vehicles and bivouac were camouflaged in the shade of huge sycamores that lined the drive in stately procession. The weather held sunny and warm, and most of us caught up here on our soap and sun bathing. We lay over here on the 24th because of gasoline shortage.

On August 25th we gassed up and moved 80 miles north to vicinity of Aspres, still trying in vain to catch up with the war. Just before starting that march, Sarte turned his tractor over to the 977th as a replacement for one of theirs sunk at the beach. On the 26th, while we were still at Aspres, the rain came down in torrents. That was the day the German 11th Panzers tangled with our 36th Division at Montelimar, and Lieutenants Halpern and Langford organized emergency convoys to truck a reinforcing battalion from the 45th Division over the hills to Crest.

The following day we shuttled fifty miles north over the foothills of the Haute Savoie to our first firing position of the campaign, at Grenoble. The scenery that day was unforgettably beautiful, as we wound through pass after pass and looked down on the picturesque village; in the valleys, with their white buildings and graceful churches and colored tile roofs.

Here we supported one of the many small road blocks set up to protect the flanks of the long extended finger of the 45th Division's advance. The front was fifty miles away straight north, but to either the East or the West we could expect Germans within 3000 yards. The OP detail went out to watch the particular road net we were protecting but, as usual in this "Champagne Campaign", nothing happened. On the 29th we displaced a few miles to vicinity Voiron, where we went into firing position beside the farm of a very voluble and hospitable old veteran of the war of 1870.

Our memories of this period of rapid movement through Southern France will always be warmed by the overwhelmingly enthusiastic welcome we received at the hands of the French people. As our column passed through towns, the people lined the curbs, tossing bouquets of flowers and bottles of wine into our vehicles, and reaching out to touch our hands as we sped past. At any halt, the trucks were swamped with enthusiastic kids, pretty girls, and a few old rumpots breathing frantic welcome. The Marquis were everywhere, armed with fantastic and all-inclusive assortments of firearms, ancient and modern, Allied and German. Many of these young bucks had really been in the Resistance Forces, but a great number were jumping the bandwagon, after the invasion, for political reasons and to impress the ladies. The ladies, it seemed, were more interested in our cigarettes

and chocolates than their companions' military prowess.

On August 31st, we took position near Bourgoin, attached to the 189th F.A. in support of a roadblock. On September 1st we had our only real excitement of the campaign in Southern France, when the reconnaissance party got cut off by a flank attack of the 11th Panzers in Meximieux. Although the heavy column was luckily re-routed, the light column actually did get into the town, took one look, and beat it back down the road across the Ain River Bridge. There it met the heavy column going into position in open flat fields about 1000 yards from the bridge. The Captain came in on his motorcycle as the battery was moving in, and set up fire direction jointly with Charlie Battery in a small cow-barn. We threw out strong bazooka and .50-calibre guard posts, disposed our AA half-tracks to give us ground coverage, and proceeded at once to take artillery targets under fire at ranges down to two thousand yards.

Our fires were adjusted by various airplanes in the vicinity, using whatever radio channel we could reach them with.

Our last target was four German tanks which plotted on the map to be between us and the surrounded 160th F.A. Battalion. We fired toward them, 160th turned around and fired toward us, and between the two of us we knocked all the tanks out. Capt. O'Daniel, Battalion S-2 went down to the bridge -- a half mile away -- in search of information, and came tearing back to report that Jerry was crossing it at that moment. Well, it's not common knowledge, but a battalion of Long Toms can do march order and hit the road in twenty-five minutes, ammo loaded and everything aboard.

We got no sleep that night or the next, as frequent moves, fog and rain kept us on the go until 0200 hours on the morning of the 3rd. By then -- exhausted -- we had changed position four times in 38 hours.

Now at Neuville, we enjoyed the good French hospitality of M. Georges Pagat, occupying his chateau gardens and buildings with our tents and equipment. His two kids, little Michel and eleven-year old "Pepe" were given so many K-ration candies and chocolate bars that it took a court order from Mama to stop them before they got sick. His two attractive young kitchen-maids were pursued by our more aggressive wolves, with unknown results. M. Pagat very kindly gave the battery three cases of the best wine from his cellar before we left. Those of us who knew George will be sorry to hear that he passed away in September 1945.

After leaving Neuville on September 5th, Sgt. Wallace's gun carried a loaded shell in the tube for ten days and about two hundred miles, finally firing it during a registration from Onans on Sept. 10th. The presence of this missile seemed to worry everyone but "B" Battery, from BG's and Corps Ordnance Officers on down.

In mid-September the fall rains set in in earnest. We joined hands on the left flank with the Third Army, and the enemy finally able to dig his toes into favorable terrain along the Vosges foothills forced us to take a breather and regroup for another Sunday punch. Our wheeled vehicles were well scattered over France at this time, hauling supplies for everybody. Sgt. Gillet was gone for ammunition, back and forth to the beaches, each time moving the battalion dump up a few more miles. Sgt. Roberson was off on a gas haul for the 45th Division.

Somehow, despite the rain, the Third Army, the enemy, and the lack of transportation, we managed to pull ourselves together and move to join the II Algerian Corps, French Army, via the American 13th F.A. Brigade. Thus we found ourselves on the extreme right flank of the Seventh Army -- between the Belfort Gap and Switzerland. In fact, Charlie Battery established an OP only fifty yards from Switzerland, and from our own OP in Fort du Lomont we could easily see the lights of Switzerland at night.

IV - BELFORT SECTOR Sept. 20-Oct. 4

We arrived at this position near the Swiss border on September 22nd, after several days in the Belfort Gap proper, or the valley of the Doubs River. Our guns lay just behind the town of Montecheroux. Evidently the French Army didn't like us to shoot over their towns and break their windows, for they sent a full-fledged General to invite us elsewhere. On his invitation -- which was backed up by an order from our own General Banks, we displaced to a new position in the woods near Chamesol.

This new position was unusual when we found it, and more so when we left it. A woods perched atop a hill, a steep hill. In the forward edge of the woods sat our guns, looking down over an extensive valley. Across the valley rose a long ridge, which acted as our mask. It rained the day we got there, and never stopped. Probably still is. Getting into this position was a problem, what with the steep hill, the slick mud, no paved or graveled approaches, and the desire to preserve a reasonable amount of camouflage discipline in our tracking. Growsers and chains were shifted about; cables strained and snapped; winch pins tore out; tempers wore thin, but the job got done. Somehow the rumor got around that this was it for the winter, so the BC got everybody hot on making themselves safe and comfortable.

By the end of two weeks that woods was honeycombed with subterranean caves and tunnels, the kitchen truck was surrounded by raised boardwalks and corduroy roads, and electric light wires hung in profusion from the trees. The only building on the place was a small stone farmhouse with a roof of questionable value and a huge fireplace where a brisk log fire burned twenty-four hours a day. Around the fire one could always find a score of shivering sodden souls striving to revive the spark of life. Here Vetter and Lattanzi and a number of others ran a chess tournament, while their muddy clothes, hung on the drying line.

Each section built itself an underground day room. With much love and labor, Cpl. Gaffney and Vollmer made a splendid stone fireplace in the first section dugout. Just when all this hard work was finished, and before we'd had a chance to enjoy the fruits of our labor, we got orders on Oct. 3rd to pull out. There was bitter disappointment in all the Sections.

V - VOSGES SECTOR Oct. 4-Nov. 8

However, at least we were to rejoin VI Corps, and go again on the offensive, both of which were pleasant in prospect. We completed a 150 mile road march,

going into position outside the town of Pierrepont, in the Epinal sector. As we drove to our position from Epinal, some thirty miles to the west, we crossed open rolling country. Right in front of our position, which lay in a valley, there rose a wooded ridge. This was the first ridge of the Vosges Mountains, and at the time we moved in, the battle of the doughboys was on that ridge. For one month thereafter the battle moved slowly down off that ridge and across the Mortain River and partway up the next ridge, a crow-flies distance of some three to four miles.

In those woods infantry casualties were heavy and armor almost useless. It was a slugfest pure and simple, with VI Corps trying to push through the hill mass to dominate the valley of St. Die, which in turn was the key to later operations further north.

Our position was wet for occupation and ammo supply, although many of the sections had indoor quarters. At the time we occupied, the front was some two thousand yards away. Being in such a likely artillery position, and within mortar range, the Battalion Commander decided to keep us silent until October 15th. This time we devoted to organization of position, improvement of drainage, camouflage, and evening-poker playing. Because of the attacks and counterattacks beating constantly back and forth on the ridge ahead, we kept 24-hour outposts on both forward flanks. The rain was persistent during our month here, and there was a lot of minor sickness in the outfit. Here Staff Sgt. Bill Eller left us for furlough the States, Pvt Simpson was shot accidentally in the knee, and Cpl Gaffney cracked a rib in a weapons-carrier accident.

Here was the "Potato Mill", where an old character named Henri put potatoes through a Rube Goldberg contraption which turned them into flour. We had movies (which usually broke down at various places round and about, and an OP in a church steeple in the front lines at Autrey. On 15th October we joined in the preparation for a Corps Attack from 0800 to 1253 hours. The attack gained ground slowly and steadily for the first few days, but not enough to warrant a move on our part. Butterfly Benny started nightly raids once more on the 20th, and on the 24th we had to drop some of our people who had been carried on TD since last July, and who had been members of our "family" for a long time.

It was particularly tough to lose Travis Tucker, the medic who was so much liked and respected by all of us. He went to the infantry as an aid man, we later discovered, and was killed during the winter in Alsace. We managed to hang on to Salowitz, Ventoso, and Peake, but had to let Crowder, Stearns, Shutts, Ehlers, Vahle, Steigler, Seiders, Darnowski, and Berenewics go. Seiders was transferred to the infantry and lost his life later in the winter. The others, as far as we have heard, came out all right.

By October 27th the attack was rolling very well, for that type of terrain, and we displaced 8000 yards forward to a position in the town of Housseras. The mud-slick road up there was littered with German and American equipment and burned-out vehicles. At the crossroads just short of the town there lay some forty dead cows which had been herded into a German mine field by our advancing infantry. Here everyone was able to get inside quarters except the gun guards on duty. We made ourselves thoroughly comfortable, although we were cramped in by batteries of the 158th FA on one side and the 938th on the other.

During the first week of November the old VI Corps began to lose its unique identity. We used to think of it as the 3rd, 36th, and 45th Divisions, with the 34th and 1st Armored as welcome guests, plus the Special Service Force, plus the 36th and 39th Engineers, plus the 938th, 17th, 141st, 36th, 976th, 977th and 194th FA Bns., plus the 82nd and 83rd Chemical Mortar people, the 15th Observation Battalion and any of several excellent Ordnance and AAA battalions. From our own point of view too, we had got used to working with certain Divarty's and other higher artillery HQ's, such as the 6th, 17th, or 35th F.A. Groups, or VI Corps Artillery HQ.

Since our junction with the Third Army, however, we had come to belong to ETO instead of MTO, and were destined soon to lose our peculiar cohesiveness through rubbing elbows with the mass of relatively untried and unknown troops which had landed in Normandy or later. At Pierrepont we found ourselves in the 405th F.A. Group a new HQ without battle experience. Within the first week of November, the 45th and 3rd Divisions disappeared from the Corps, to be replaced by two virgin divisions, the 100th and the 103rd. Rumor also had it that the 14th Armored Division, fresh from the States, was about to join our ranks. Also at this time our Corps Commander, Lt. General Lucian Truscott, who had led us through Anzio and Southern France, left to take command of the Fifth Army in Italy and major General Edward H. Brooks, a stranger to the VI Corps, took us over. Thus came to a close what was probably the closest cooperation of this war between military units, a cooperation built from ten long months of working together on a common job in the face of common dangers. From time to time various of the old units floated in and out of the Corps, but we could never count on their staying with us for long.

VI - XV CORPS

Nov. 8-Nov. 27

In early November we started to send 6-8 men a week to the new Group Rest Camp at Chaumont. On November 7th we too joined the exodus from VI Corps, along with 45 Div., and 17th F.A. Bn. on loan to XV Corps, our northern neighbor. This new Corps had the 79th Division, an outfit with an excellent battle record since the Normandy landings, the 44th Division, with no battle experience and a poor training reputation, and Gen. Le Clerc's Famous 2nd French Armored Division.

At this time Lieut. Halpern took over as Executive, and Lieut. Czuk shifted to Reconnaissance officer. From Housseras we moved to a muddy rain-sopped woods bivouac near Thiebeaumenil. We soaked here for two days while the engineers built an approach to another mud-slough which we occupied on the 10th. Armistice Day, November 11th, is now known to "B" Battery as "The Day Of The Great Tail-Chewing", for it was then that we discovered our attachment to the 144th F.A. Group. This HQ, commanded by a dyspeptic old relic of the Spanish-American War, had had three years experience guarding the West Coast of the USA and some two weeks experience in open warfare coming across France. Naturally, our standards were raised and our efficiency greatly improved by this enlightening contact. Ever since that day, Sgt. Verrastro has cowered beneath his limber, Mess Sgt. Dziobak has kept his jacket buttoned and checked Dupree's tires with his own (Dziobak's) lily-whites, and Capt. Hansl has kept his nose very close indeed to the "good book."

The artillery preparation for a major corps attack started at 1800 Nov. 12th. At that spectacular moment, the 44th Division, which had not yet proven

to the world that it couldn't fight its way out of a paper bag, was to leap forward in a drive on Saarburg, gateway to the plains of Alsace. "Old King Cole" had it figured out that we could displace within four hours after H, dashing eagerly forward to victory. Six days later when the 44th had eaked out a few thousand yards, we moved up at night over one-way, high-crowned, muddy-slick roads fighting two-way traffic. This sort of treatment went on until we re-joined the VI Corps in Alsace on Nov. 27th.

The only noteworthy points during this otherwise regrettable period were the arrival of shoepacs; the large number of stiff krauts in the woods by Hattigny where Cpl. Gene Young captured one reasonably alive, and the sweet day when our muzzle blast drove "Old King Cole" out of his CP at St. Jean. Strassburg was finally taken, despite the 44th Division's attempt to commit suicide east of Sarrebourg when their open left flank was hit hard by a panzer Division. (One infantry battalion and a TD company from the 45th Division were thrown in to save the 44th, and did.)

VII - ALSACE-PUSH TO THE SIEGFRIED Nov. 27th-Dec. 22nd

Rain, fog, mud and cold had been our constant companions for over a month by the time we pushed through Saverne down into the Alsace plains to occupy position near Printzheim on Nov. 27th, once more in support of the 45th Division and back again in our own VI Corps.

The tactical situation had developed very rapidly during the past two weeks on both the St. Die-Baccarat and Saarebourg Sectors, with the following results. VI Corps pushed through the Vosges, taking St. Die and the heights beyond, to dominate central Alsace and push down into the Rhine Valley toward Selestat, where they were stopped. This action, timed coincidentally withour (XV Corps) push through Sarrebourg and Saverne, had been carried out by the 36th, 100th and 103rd Divisions, with one Combat Command from the new 14th Armored Division.

In our sector to the north of VI Corps, a final burst of power had carried the French 2nd Armored Division in a rapid sweep to Strasbourg on the Rhine River, where they were relieved by the American 3rd Division, which had been in Army Reserve.

Still further north, the XII Corps of the Third Army, on our left flank, had pushed on through to the Maginot Line, which bent back from the Rhine along the Saar River through Bitche, Saarlautern, and Saarbrucken. To the south of VI Corps, along the Vosges Mountains down to the Swiss border, the First French Army had broken through the Belfort Gap, taken Belfort and pushed up the Rhine Valley almost to Mulhouse.

Thus we had troops on the Rhine near the Swiss border, and also in the Strasbourg area. The German-held region in between, extending from the Rhine just south of Strasbourg, west to Selestat, thence south along the Vosges foot-hills to Mulhouse, and back again to the Rhine, became known as the Colmar Pocket.

Colmar was the large city in the center of this area. The enemy had access to this pocket over several bridges, the largest being at Neuf Brisach.

This was roughly the picture on November 27th, when a major regrouping of our troops got under way. XV Corps swung north from Saverne to penetrate the Maginot at Bitche and go on to the Siegfried. In this Corps, as reorganized, were the 44th and 100th Divisions. VI Corps, with the 45th, 103rd 79th and part of the 14th Arm'd, was to push east and, north from Saverne through Bouxwiller and Haguenau to the Maginot at Soultz and on to the Siegfried along the German border. The 3rd Division, from Strasbourg, and the 36th Division, from the Vosges, were to push south and east under French Army control, to reduce the Colmar pocket with the help of French troops pushing in from the Vosges and up from Belfort.

The pattern which took shape at this time contained two serious weaknesses -- the overextended VI Corps salient in Northern Alsace and the German dent into our lines at Colmar. Seventh Army set out at once to eliminate both these weaknesses by attacking on the north of VI Corps in the Bitche Sector and on the south in the Colmar Sector. The fact that these December operations were unsuccessful may be laid partially to the effects of the German Ardennes Offensive and partially to the unexpected German reinforcement of their forces in the Colmar Pocket.

Our position at the start of December was on the reverse slope of a vineyard-covered hill a short distance north of Printzheim. The Rear Echelon lived back in the town in covered quarters, while the Detail and Kitchen were bivouacked in tents on a wooded knoll to the right front of the guns. The position was some four miles south of Bouxwiller through which ran the infantry lines at that time.

Continuous bad weather and long weeks of exposure in muddy gunpits and trails had given us many cases of trenchfoot. The cannoneers were hardest hit. By the end of December, however, the intensive program of foot-care carried out by the Chiefs of Section, aided by the new shoepacs and heavy wool socks, began to result in a drop-off in cases. Jerry air was out in some force, although we seemed to get more of a dose from our own planes and low-shooting ack-ack than we did from the Luftwaffe. The Wire Section will remember the 40 millimeter AA shells that burst in the road beside their switchboard.

Sgt. Schroeder's gun, which had been at Ordnance, returned on the 2nd of December and went next day to an advanced position in Uhrwiller, a wrecked town just cleared by the infantry. His mission was to shoot long-range targets with observation by P-51 pilots, but on all shoots something went wrong. The radio broke down or the pilot doped off, or fog closed in, so that by the time they moved to our next position on the 6th they had succeeded only in eating a number of Nazi geese and young pigs. Ladnier and Mannerino, it is rumored, officiated at the slaughter.

This next position was by a woods near Schillersdorf. The actual gun positions were firm enough, but a bottomless pit on the approach to his stakes ensnared Schroeder, his gun, and six tractors which arrived on emergency call

from Able and Charlie batteries. This was an unhappy birthday present for Lieutenant Czuk, who was in charge of the expedition. On the day before the move, a Public Relations man from 12th Army Group had showed up with a recording machine to take messages for transmission by radio to the folks at home. Some twenty men took part. Also on this day Lieutenant "Whitey" Langford, went off to Service Battery as Bn. Motor Officer, and was replaced by Lt. Henry Heubner, who had been with us a year before in Italy.

Sgt. Shippy, with his Section and Sgt. Katz, set up shop in a courtyard in town and stripped Number One down to clean up her wheel bearings and give her a six-month checkup. On the 9th we moved to open fields near Offwiller, where Shippy's people overtook us on the 11th. It was while we were here that three B-24's came crashing down about our ears with a hellish shriek. Roberson, Young, MacDonald and some others were near one that hit outside Schillersdorf, and tried without success to be of aid to the crew.

The infantry, pushing forward against tough resistance all along the Corps front, soon cleared the line of the Moder River, from Niederbronn to Reichshoffen to Haguenau. Thus we were able to move on the 12th by infiltration, through Zinswiller and Gumbrechtshofen to position in Reichshoffen. Unfortunately, reconnaissance had been made during fog. As we were occupying position later in the day the fog lifted, revealing an enemy-held hill mass directly to the front. Having profited from our Anzio experiences, we made another hurried reconnaissance and moved into more cramped quarters down along the railroad tracks. That night we used the flash reducers for the first time, and were pleased with their effect. Verrastro put Number Two into a shed here and started his six-month check-up. On the 14th we moved to Woerth in a smooth march marred only by the difficulties of approach to the Number Four slot. Wallace's gun bogged to the axles four times, shearing the turntable, screws on the limber, breaking the lifting pin, and bending the left body spade. Verrastro sent his spade as a replacement, and the 89th Ordnance arrived with nitrogen and repair materials in good time. There was comfortable housing for everybody, including a kraut soldier we found in a chapel on the main corner with his throat slit from ear to ear.

With the passing of Haguenau and Niederbronn, VI Corps took off rapidly over open plains country, to enter Germany all along its front on the night of December 15-16th. The new 103rd Division seemed to be doing very well, and the 79th, which had taken Haguenau, pushed on in grand style up to the very corner of Alsace at Lauterbourg. The 36th Division, we heard, was taking a beating at Selestat and was finally forced to withdraw. The offensive on the Colmar Pocket was not going well, but XV Corps on our left seemed to be making satisfactory headway toward Bitche.

On the 16th we moved up to the little town of Memelshofen, where Sgt. Kiefer fell off the tailgate of the maintenance truck and chipped his elbow. At Memelshofen Sgt. Wallace took his gun out of action for the check-up, since Verrastro was back in action again. Here first Sgt. Lawrence Carter, grand old man, wet-nurse, father confessor and disciplinarian of "B" Btry since its founding, left us for hospital. Jay Ramey had earlier transferred to Service Battery as Motor Sgt., so S/Sgt. John Weeks became Acting First Sgt. and Tom Wallace Acting Gun Chief.

While in this position, our recon party ran into seventeen broilers looking for a home, and asked Dziobak to accommodate them. This worthy remarked that seventeen were hardly enough, so another crew went out and salvaged an additional four, which provided just enough for a fairly thin but tasty deep dish pie.

On Dec. 18th "B" Battery's forward surge reached, unbeknownst to us at the time, its furthestmost point of advance for the winter. This was Steinseltz, some 3000 yards short of the key border town of Wissembourg. Reports from our infantry and armor, already into the Siegfried Line, indicated that resistance was not as stiff as expected.

The assault forces were ably aided by an M-12 self-propelled GPF manned by men from our battalion. Cpl. Fossand, and Pfc.'s Dimura and Hart were key men in that composite crew. Their first mission was destruction of a pillbox, firing at short range from a sunken road. On getting several hits on it with concrete-piercing fuze, Joe DiMura distinguished himself at the Number One position by his coolness during Jerry's 88-millimetre counterfire. Their second mission, a few days later, was from a hill near ROTT, where they took apart some more boxes in the Siegfried.

VIII - RETREAT TO THE MAGINOT Dec. 22-Jan. 6.

It was at Steinseltz that we first heard the news of Von Rundstedt's breakthrough in the Ardennes, and by the 22nd of December the effects of this operation began to show up on our front. The Third Army swung north into the flank of the German thrust and-turned over much of its former sector to Seventh Army. This meant that every Corps in our Army had to spread thin in the effort to control more terrain. Three new American divisions, the 42nd, 63rd, and 70th, which were beginning to arrive piecemeal on the Seventh Army scene came in handy at this time as extra appendages to divisions already on the line.

Thus on the 22nd December, 1944, "B" Battery started the first tactical retreat of its history, when the recon party took off, with Lt. Col. Haley of the 17th F.A. Bn. on a long reconnaissance back to the Niederbronn area. The purpose? The 45th Division, reinforced by the equivalent of three infantry regiments, was to hold the entire left flank of VI Corps. Its sector extended all the way from Wissembourg along the hills west to Bitche. To support this wide sector, Divarty was reinforced by a groupment, under Col. Haley's command, consisting of the 17th B.A. Bn., ourselves, and later Charlie Battery of the 995th (8" How.). The march to Niederbronn on the 23rd was made over roadsjammed with elements of the 103rd and 14th Arm'd Divisions -- moving-to the rear to help fill the line in the SAAR sector on our left.

VI Corps was then left with the 45th (reinforced as described) and the 79th, which extended all the way from Wissembourg to Lauterbourg on the Rhine, then up river to the Haguenau Forest, where our line was connected with the 3rd in Strasbourg by a nebulous series of cavalry reconnaissance patrols. The offensive into Bitche was called off and the offensive into Colmar had already

failed with the withdrawal of the 36th from Selestat. Thus the VI Corps salient, already overextended into the Siegfried Line, was seriously weakened by the loss of half its striking power.

A withdrawal by VI Corps was called for, yet it had to be a controlled withdrawal. Intelligence showed an absence of immediate German offensive power in our sector, but a very dangerous potential.. So our flanks were strengthened at the expense of the point, and the engineers went to work reviving the Maginot Line as a main defensive position preparatory to a general withdrawal of the Corps.

Our occupation at Niederbronn was made in grand clear winter weather, over hard-frozen ground. Limitations of the area forced the gun sections to construct outside bivouacs, but the rest of the battery fitted itself into the town proper. The kitchen took over a liberated restaurant, complete with beer on tap, and the Motors Section moved in to what had been a civilian repair and servicing garage. CP and Switchboard were in houses on opposite corners of a street crossing. The distance from guns to chow was so long that the cannoneers went down in trucks in two shifts.

Dziobak's people did wonders with the Christmas dinner, which lasted from one to six o'clock. There were fat turkeys and fancy fixings, walnuts and hard candy, and beer flowed in quantity. Even though it was Alsatian beer, which leaves much to be desired in both body and flavor, it added greatly to the general merriment.

On December 26th we received surprise orders to reconnitre positions in the vicinity of Auenheim. This town lay in the flat Rhine valley about two miles short of the river and some ten miles north of Strasbourg. This sector had been precariously held by cavalry elements with some artillery support from the 33rd F.A. Brigade, an ex-Third Army outfit. At the time we were to prepare our positions there, infantry elements of the 63rd and 70th Divisions were relieving the cavalry screen, and we encountered numbers of their advance parties, as well as parties from other battalions of VI Corps artillery. Our orders were to prepare gun pits, but haul no ammunition and install no wire communications, and to expect to move one gun per battalion to the new area for registration on call.

These peculiar requirements gave rise to the suspicion of a ruse on our part to make Jerry think we were preparing a cross-Rhine operation in that sector. Extensive bombing operations were carried out against the German rail centers of Karlsruhe, and Rastatt and against Siegfried line installations across the river in that sector. A Battery work party consisting of men from all sections, under the leadership of Lt. Czuk and Staff Sgt. Weeks, moved down there to prepare the pits. These we located right in the town of Auenheim, in order to take advantage of what little flash defilade the houses could afford. The work party stayed until New Years Day, returning just in time for New Year's dinner.

On December 27th we were called on to provide a roving gun in the forward area north of Niederbronn. Cpl. Gaffney took the First Section up (Sgt. Shippy was at Chaumont Rest Camp) under Lt. Halpern's direction. The position selected was beyond Baerenthal, about 1000 yards from the thinly-held outpost line. Although defilade was good, Gaffney put the piece close in behind a farmhouse to give him a ready-made parapet against enemy mortar fire. An auxiliary Fire Direction Center was set-up at the gun in case wire communication should fail. After registering

on the 30th, the section fired 53 rounds of harassing fire against two distant enemy batteries, with a partial re-fire on the 31st.

Due to unexpected casualties in the recent "Bulge" operation, all non-infantry units were required to transfer ten percent of their strength to the infantry. On the thirtieth, Corporals Altom and Milite with Hart, Felts, Redd, Wilson, Haft, Dixon, Halvey, Meehan, Renner and Brown left us on this transfer. All good men, it was hard to see them go. (Fortunately from available accounts, they all seem to have gotten through the war successfully.)

One night at Niederbronn, S/Sgt. Dalmon Roberson, commander of the guard, arrested an odd character, who said he was a French soldier. Having been wounded while serving informally with an American Cavalry Group, he claimed to be enroute from hospital to that unit. Because of the paratroop scares prevalent at that time, the odd mixture of uniforms worn by this fellow, and his only semi-coherent story, the Captain grew suspicious of him and turned him over to CIC. They promptly hired him! "Joe", as he got to be known in the battery, came around several times daily to bum one thing or another or chase after the lady friend of a certain Corporal, who shall be nameless.

The end of the year brought cheering word that Von Rundstedt's advance in Belgium had been stopped. We punctuated the good news with General Baehr's usual three-round New Year's Greeting at midnight.

As it turned out, however, our rejoicing was premature, for the very next day the Germans, in order to relieve pressure on their Belgian salient, launched a full-scale attack in Alsace. They hit simultaneously at Bitche and Baerenthal with eight divisions in line, some of which had been brought from Holland and Belgium. Our just-vacated roving gun position before Baerenthal was immediately over-run, and the situation in Niederbronn itself became doubtful. The next day VI Corps withdrew from Wissembourg and Lauterbourg to the Maginot Line, thus freeing more troops to repel the German action at Bitche, which was threatening to cut through to our rear at Saverne. "B" Battery withdrew to its old early-December position in the woods near Schillersdorf, with line of fire toward Bitche. The Avenheim preparations, which we later learned had indeed been a ruse, were abandoned.

It should be noted here that we had been operating as a separate battery since December 22nd, taking our fire missions from whatever unit we supported or to which we were attached. At the completion of the move to Schillersdorf, we found ourselves without any higher headquarters at all and without orders as to source of our targets. Realizing the tightness of the Bitchesituation, however, we started shooting for anyone and everyone. We contacted headquarters and air observers we had never heard of before. Lt. Ralph Stotts, our battalion air observer, finally contacted us with several missions, and we began to shoot up a real storm. Sgt. Gillet's crew, on the run for forty-eight hours hauling ammo from the dumps -- were hard pressed to keep the hungry guns supplied.

Between Jan 1 and Jan 6th, 1945, we fired 1319 rounds against the German attack. Most of these were on unobserved counter-battery and harassing missions, but we enjoyed several fine air-observed shoots. On the 5th, we burned one tank and immobilized three in a group of four, destroyed two self-propelled guns and one vehicle in another enemy position, and cut to pieces a horse and foot column on the road. The guns shot fast and accurately, and the entire battery functioned in a veteran manner of which we could well be proud.

While at Schillersdorf we received twelve replacements. Most of the new men were ex-infantrymen and all were limited service. We were glad to seem chem. Wallace McMillion came from the 44th Div.; Victor Lescynski from the 9th; Michael Murray from the 29th; Carmen DeCarlo from the 8th; Victor Mignoli from the 4th; George Konetsky from the 28th; Roney Williams from the States; Richard Sauve from the States; Earl Burns and Glenn Gellinger from the 1st; William Morris and Frank Miozzi from the States. Before leaving Niederbronn we had been joined by Lyle Whipple and Frederick Rickard, both from the States. For the first time we had a number of men who were not old VI Corps people.

IX - WINTER RETREAT Jan 6-Jan 20

When the Bitche attack had been broken, on January 6th, we rejoined the Battalion at Gumbrechtshoffen. Sgt. Wallace moved first, the other Sections following when he was in position. Just as he reported ready to fire somebody got a hot target and the Fourth Section spent a busy afternoon firing some 200 rounds toward Wingen. Schroeder returned from a 24-hour repair trip to Ordnance, bringing us up to full strength again. Our tubes averaged 1950-2200 rounds by this time, but the situation was still too tense to allow time off for retubing.

Some of the green troops newly arrived on the Rhine River above Strasbourg went to sleep on the job one night in early January and let a strong German force across without a fight. This set the stage for the unfortunate Hatten-Rittershoffen penetration which shortly developed, of which more later.

Although cold winter set in here in earnest, we found Gumbrechtshofen to our liking, as everyone had good indoor quarters except the on-duty gun crews. There was a reasonable supply of Schnapps, and available Nazi Party members, who had been rounded up by the FFI Chief, provided a readily available source of labor. T/5 George Bockman left us here, for a clerk's job in HQ Battery. Steve Petruska, Fred Haney and Owen Pecora were promoted to T/5 on T/O changes, as were Tom Loftus and Ulrich Kaufmann. This same change in T/O took away from us a GMC and a 1-ton trailer.

On the 10th of January Lt. Czuk, Cpl. Mike Kaczowski, Pecora, and Mattio bundled themselves up in the new OP bunny-suits and disappeared into the snow to establish an OP in the hills overlooking Dambach and Phillipsburg to the north. Also on this day the 21st Panzer and 7th SS Paratroop Divisions broke through the thin line held by our 79th. Division in the Hatten-Rittershofen area above Strasbourg. This partial penetration remained a serious threat for several days, and contributed to our later withdrawal.

One battery of the 995th's 8" howitzers, which was located on the other side of Gumbrechtshofen from us, was out of defilade. It drew counter-battery fire from a 280 millimeter rifle several nights in a row. On the 11th we made a rearward reconnaissance into the Vosges in the town of La Petite Pierre, as a precaution against further withdrawal. The snow, though not deep, held steadily for several weeks in the cold crisp air, forcing us to devise white camouflage against enemy aircraft. We painted the guns white, and experimented with various kinds of net paint. Finally we requisitioned from the local Nazis their supply of bed linen, which the cannoneers tore into strips and threaded through the nets, remov-

ing the summer-colored garlands. A very neat and effective job indeed -which gained us the praise of General Baehr and the attention of a Signal Corps photographer.

Although Jerry air activity had been rather light since our arrival in France, he had always maintained enough strafing and scouting activity to warrant extreme care in camouflage and AA alertness. In January he pulled the jet-propelled fighter-bomber out of his bag of tricks -- an elusive will-o'-the-wisp that set the ack-ack boys back on their heels. Charlie battery caught two frag bombs from them one day and had one casualty, but we only seemed to see them when they were working on somebody else.

By mid-January the BitchVingen sector had quieted down and the Hatten battle, though violent, was being fought to a draw by our armor and infantry. Thus, our volume of fire was considerably reduced the second and third weeks of the month. The 103rd Division returned to our sector and we got the good news that the First and Third Armies had met across the Belgian Bulge and were in the last stages of liquidating that threat. First Sgt. Carter returned from hospital on the fifteenth, and Haft and Felts came back from infantry training, due to a change in policy.

The Battalion's M-12 crew, now sporting Fossand, Henderson, DiMura, and Ubipple from our Battery, had put in a couple of missions in Rittershofen, and were sitting up in Surburg bumming meals off the 634th F.A. between assignments.

Life was settling down to an even routine when, like a bolt out of the blue there came on the 20th an order to reconnoiter for further withdrawal behind the line Schillersdorf-Nieffern-Mertzwiller-Haguenau. Pressure on all sides of the Corps perimeter made it impossible to hold out any longer at Hatten and along the Maginot, so it was decided to drop back before we got kicked back. The move was made in a blizzard, on ice-slick highways choked almost to immovability with double-banked traffic. It was carried out at night in blackout, and, despite the initial confusion and terrible road conditions, we pulled it off without a hitch. Everything arrived in goad shape at the new position in Imbsheim, some four miles west of Boux'willer.

X - HOLD AND SPAR January
20-March 15

After the usual adjustments of occupying a new position, which in this case involved prying the 781st Tank Bn. out of buildings with a shoe-' horn, we settled down to sit out the winter. Firing dropped off as ammunition was hoarded for the spring offensive. The shortening of our lines allowed a defensive density that gave adequate security against further German threats. Our divisions stood now, left to right: 45th, 103rd, 101st AB (replacing the 79th), 36th.

We hibernated as much as possible during the cold spell that lasted well into February. Indoor quarters were adequate for all. We had a few showers and movies, a little replacement training, and a revival of gas training. In addition we developed an elaborate local defense plan for use against paratroopers or breakthrough. The Battery area fairly bristled in all directions with small arms, bazookas, and machine guns. We both amused and instructed ourselves with occasional practice alerts and firing sessions. Although we shared our town with 103rd Div. HQ, which was a pain in a certain spot, we managed to keep our distance. As a precaution against a repetition of the Ardennes surprise, all Chiefs and most of the Corporals oriented themselves on routes and positions to the rear. Service Battery dropped back a million miles toward the Atlantic, making an overnight safari necessary to obtain a jeep part. Personnel changes during the Imbsheim period took Cpl. Ed Popiel away to head the M-12 crew, replacing Cpl. Fossand. Pvt. Wallace McMillion joined him. Pezze and Metzger, our first representatives of the "schoolboy draft", reported for duty, and we received a new shavetail, Lt. Kingsley, from the 89th Division. Pvt. George Gellinger went home to the states on rotation.

By the end of January, some of our tubes had hit 2500 rounds. They still looked pretty good, but concussion was mounting. Chow was running in top shape, helped by Justin Katz' sharp eye for the local four-footeds. The kitchen yard fairly ran with cow blood for a week straight.

The end of the first week of February brought the combined Franco-American operation against the Colmar Pocket to a successful close, thus securing our right flank for future operations against the Siegfried. A new "training schedule" was happily interrupted by a move some four miles north to the vicinity of Weiterswiller. Although our position was an outdoor one, the warming weather made it a welcome change from the past weeks of huddling over a gas stove in a sweaty room. The air was clear and clean -- early spring was on the way. The line of guns was in an open grassy draw behind a hill which gave good flash defilade, and all other installations were in an extensive woods nearby. Traffic to the guns was limited to one ammo road that ran through and out. We were afraid at first, that the thaw and continuing scattered rains would make this impassable, but the ground soon dried out to give a good firm base. All bivouacs were under trees and splinter-proofed.

We stayed in this position more than a month -- a period of relatively little activity. We concentrated on making our quarters as comfortable as possible, with board flooring and homemade furniture, in building boardwalks and tables at the kitchen, and in maintaining our materiel in top shape. The gun pits were neat as a pin, with gravel bases, excellent drainage, and strong parapets.

We carried on advanced training in fire direction, survey and radio for selected personnel, motor maintenance and tractor driving for understudies, and sight work, and we put in three good weeks on a home-built small-arms range.

We banged away at anything that would stand or move, with all weapons from 45's to bazookas, and ended up the practice period with a big contest on March 3rd. Phillip Henderson, Richard Sauve, and Earl Burns won first, second and third prizes respectively in the carbine shooting. Their prizes were trips to Nancy and Paris, and unlimited break-in rights on the chowline for a week. The First Section won a bottle of American whiskey for best section team in all events, while the Motors Section walked off with "Shippy's Super Chamber-Pot" for Booby-Prize. Kaufmann got a "TS" slip for "most effort with least results" on the carbine range.

On March 6th we held open house for visiting Generals. The place looked like the Milky Way all day, as French stars and American stars passed through and "ohed" and "ahed" at the perfection of our area. Cpl. Popielts crew put on an able demonstration of the M-12 going into action. There was an embarrassing moment during a demonstration fire mission when we selected as a target, quite by chance, a Niederbronn house belonging to our French General's brother-in-law.

From our OF in a barn near Schalkendorf, some of the cannoneers, on "sightseeing tours", had a chance to peer at the ruins of Kindwiller, which was about all that could be seen from there. Michael Murray and Richard Podzowski took trips to see their relatives, Murray to the States on TD and "Podz" to visit his brother in Metz. Seventy-two-hour passes to Paris were getting under way at this time, with glowing reports of amatory conquest accompanying the return of the lucky ones.

Sgt. Tom Wallace, with George Smith, Michael Lattanzi and several loyal assistants worked very hard during our stay at Weilerswiler producing public relations releases for the home town papers of each man in the battery. They finished just before we moved out for the big spring drive. Thanks to the conscientious typing of Pezze, Henderson, and Castonguay.

Our first inkling of the new offensive came on March 11th when we got a hurry-call to retube our guns. At the time, they were carrying slightly over 2600 rounds each.

On the 14th Lt. Henry Heubner, who had been with us briefly during the Italian campaign, returned to replace Lt. Kingsley, who transferred to the Air O.P. That evening the OP detail returned with definite information that the Corps attack would be launched the following day at 0700 hours.

XI - BREAKTHROUGH TO THE RHINE March 15-March 31

The VI Corps sector for the attack ran from Strasbourg on the right to Bitche on the left, with the French 5th Armored Division on the right. In VI Corps: French 5th Armored, American 36th, 103rd, and 42nd Divisions in line to the left, and the 14th Armored in reserve. In XV Corps, extending from Bitche to the Saar Valley, were the 3rd, 100th, 44th and 45th Divisions. The

XXIst Corps was further to the left, bordering Third Army. At the time of the Seventh Army jump-off, Third Army had already reached the Rhine at Coblenz, crossed the Moselle, and was swinging down behind the Siegfried on our front. Our task was to pin the enemy's forces in the Siegfried and act as the anvil upon which Third Army would smash them from the rear.

XV Corps, making the main effort, jumped off at 0100 on the morning of the 15th, with our VI Corps following at 0700. The first day's operations in our sector were very successful, penetrating to the outskirts of Reichshoffen. On that same day HQ, Able and Charlie Batteries leap-frogged us to positions near Schillersdorf (Charlie sat down in our old twice-occupied position in the woods), and we carried the brunt of the firing that night. Our expectations for a move on the 16th were unfulfilled due to 42nd Div's failure to dislodge Germans in our contemplated position near Offwiller. However, on the 17th we took off at the crack of dawn for positions near Uhrwiller, passing through shell-ruined Muhlhausen and its surrounding minefields and strong points. Our new position was flanked by an abandoned German reserve position, well decorated with assorted stiffs and varied military equipment. Sgt. Verrastro salvaged an American M-65 BC scope from the wreckage.

On the 18th the front broke loose. After moving to a bivouac beside our old Niederbronn position, we waited for the "powers" to decide just where the front was and how we might get there. A long nightfall reconnaissance to Obersteinbach, a town just short of the Siegfried in the hills north of Phillipsburg, was completed at dawn, and the column arrived shortly after daylight. Our gun position, which curved around the base of a hill, gave the freak impression that the guns were pointing in several directions. Number two was perched atop a bluff in what seemed like an inaccessible spot. 42nd Divarty HQ set up shop a hundred yards in front of our muzzles, probably through ignorance, and somehow managed to stay there throughout our fire. We fired independently until the remainder of the battalion moved up to the same valley later in the day. That evening one of the infrequent enemy shellings landed nearby causing shovels to fly in "B" Battery. We stayed put through the 20th, while XV Corps broke through the Siegfried on our left, the 103rd and 36th broke through on our right, and the Third Army crashed south on Worms and Kaiserslautern, joining the Seventh in two places and cutting off the retreat of hundreds of thousands of Nazis.

One small pocket remained opposite Karlsruhe, on our side of the Rhine. Jerry had fled in disorder to the bridge there, but bottlenecked himself in a mass of traffic jams, so that we had him surrounded from south, west, and north. Air Force and artillery were working over the bridge and ferry crossings. On the 22nd we moved in to add our fire to the slaughter, joining the 13th FA Brigade in support of the French Division as they advanced through the Lauter Forest. The columns arrived at night, pushing through interdiction fire at the release point.

"B" Battery swung into position in open rolling prairie just south of the Lauter River and the German border. "A" Battery, across the river, was the first to occupy position in Germany proper. We awoke the next dawn to a drumfire barrage, to find ourselves surrounded on all sides by masses of artillery, both French and American, spewing steel as fast as they could load. (To top it off, there was a constant stream of divebombers going into the bridgehead all day long.) The result was reduction of the German pocket to one-third size by nightfall, the collapse of the bridge, and a destruction of men and material defying description.

On the 24th we crossed into Germany, at last, through the high-arched "Wine Gate" north of Wissembourg. Through the jutting dragons' teeth of the defunct Westwall, and past the formidable pillboxes lining the slopes. Lucky, we thought, for a lot of doughfeet, that these defenses had not been fully manned. After bivouacking at Pleisweiler, beside a fixed "88" position, we broke out a few demijohns of the delicious Pfalz Rheinwein in way of celebration. The next day we left the battalion again for independent action with the 405th F.A. Group, to support the XV Corps crossing of the Rhine at Mannheim. Our route took us through the flat Rhine valley of the Pfalz region, through Landau and many small villages which dotted the countryside. You might better call it the "wineside", for as far as eye could reach there appeared vineyard after vineyard. Silk stockings, good clothing, pretty girls, and evidences of a good diet were much to be seen. At that time most of us were impressed with the value of the non-fraternization policy, and it must be noted that those first Germans didn't seem any more friendly to us than we did to them. Cold stares and turned backs were the general attitude as we passed through the town streets. Such a difference from the warm and heartfelt welcome of Southern France.

We closed into position near Schifferstadt at 1900, threw out our security guards, and folded up, awaiting the morning for registration. XV Corps pushed across easily, with very little help from us, and Mannheim fell the next day. Pfc's Victor Ladnier, Robert Gilmore, and Cpl Marion Gualtieri went out for a looksee that day and brought in a dozen sleepy kraut soldiers who were camped near the switchboard. By the 27th the "No Fire Line" moved out to Heidelberg, the 36th Division on our right had forced a good crossing, and General Patton's Third Army was reported in Bavaria.

XII - HEILBRONN AND CRAILSHEIM April 1-15

On March 28th and 29th we sat tight, while divisions were regrouped, infantry hauled, and a large ponton bridge at Mannheim built by the Engineers. On the 30th we moved across the Rhine ahead of the 100th Division (now in VI Corps) to bivouac alongside the Autobahn three miles beyond that city. Mannheim, our first sight of a ruined German city, drove home to us the terrific effect of strategic bombing on civilian life. Crossing the river past the twisted wreckage of two permanent bridges, and winding our way through rubble-strewn streets, we couldn't find a single building standing whole in the center of the city. Against the bright moonlight the skeleton walls seemed completely desolate, the gaping windows like the eyes of skulls. By our bivouac were the railroad yards, jammed with trains, loaded down with military supplies of all kinds. The population lost no time in discovering the stocks of food in those trains, and filled the by-ways carrying their bundles and pulling their carts, like a community of ants bustling back and forth.

The next big objective was Heilbronn, some 30 miles to the east. The 10th Armored Division, now with VI Corps, had broken loose in that direction. It's doubtful they themselves knew where they were most of the time, being at so many places

simultaneously. Certainly nobody else did. Their mission was to move fast, bypassing anything that looked tough and leaving such places

to be cleaned out by the slower-moving 63rd and 100th Divisions which followed in their rear. The Corps artillery battalions wandered about on their own, usually between the armor and the infantry. We never could tell when a bypassed Jerry unit was liable to pop up from a clump of woods, or when a full-scale friendly infantry attack was about to sweep through our own position with our kitchen as its objective. This happened the morning we ran into Armando Milite and Walter Redd, now doughfeet of the 100th Division. Great was our surprise when their people, with full tank support, deployed in our area and "attacked" the woods to our front which we had considered a very friendly mask. Greater was their surprise (and our relief) when they found nothing there but the quiet woodland creatures.

Finally it was decided that certain Corps artillery units would be attached to the Combat Commands of the 10th Armored Division, and the rest would follow along behind the infantry divisions. On April 3rd, while we were in a windy draw at Baierthal, we were detached from Battalion and sent to join CCB of the 10th Armored, then developing the Heilbronn situation.

We moved next morning to Massenbach, with center line on Heilbronn. The battery was attached to 405th Group along the 141st FA (155 howitzers), the 93rd Armored (an old VI Corps battalion), and the 423 Armored (from the 10th Arm'd Div.) Group acted as Artillery HQ for CCB.

We had no idea at the time just what it meant for a Long Tom battery to be attached to an armored task force, but we were soon to find out the true meaning of "rat-race". The 141st very kindly arranged to draw rations for us and allow us the use of their Service Battery for automotive repair. We hauled our own gasoline and ammunition, and Sgts. Roberson and Gillet were hard put to it during the next two weeks to keep us supplied. Gillet, taking off for dumps near Heidelberg, ended up way back in Alsace after much fruitless searching of near-empty dumps on this side of the Rhine in both Seventh and Third Army sectors. Sgt. Roberson had liberated an Italian cab-over-engine cargo truck, ton-and-a-half size, which Kiefer turned into an excellent gasoline trailer by removing the engine and hooking up a tow-bar. This contraption was towed behind the "Ford", as we called a large German command car picked up back in St. Jean the previous November.

The woods at Massenbach were full. of deer, and shots rang out at odd intervals throughout the day. Just after we were set up, dog, Jerry went off a-hunting, and rounded up a small herd of deer, which she promptly drove out across the line of metal, in full sight of the battery. Everything except the 155's and bazookas, including the "AA" quadruple fifties, opened up on this ill-fated group. Mien the tracers had cleared away and the Motors Section, which has in the line of fire, had dared poke their noses out of foxholes, a litter party collected four well-perforated and quite dead deer. How Jerry survived the barrage will always be a mystery. That night, by actual physical count, there were eleven and a half deer and one cow hanging by the heels at the kitchen.

Operating our own FDC, we pooped out several missions, observed and unobserved, and settled down on the 6th for what seemed like a quiet night. Just at nightfall, however, we were ordered on a night march off into the unknown on a huge looping move which turned out to be the relief expedition for

It was at this time that we saw Jerry's jet planes in plentiful display, strafing up and down the main highway and making monkeys out of the 'AA' people. Flights of C-47's carrying supplies to the encircled force swooped low overhead. It was an earnest game we played by comparing the number that went in to those which came out again. They didn't match up on all flights. On the 10th we finally got under way in a rapid sweep down the Crailsheim. highway, which had been reopened and held open by tank-carried infantry of the 44th and 4th Infantry Divisions. The Recon Party, accompanied by its tanks, penetrated through virgin territory to a small town south of Kirsch-berg, a few miles short of Crailsheim, and prepared position for the battery. In mid-march, however, the plan was changed-and the column turned around south of Blaufeld to retrace its steps to the rear in search of a new bivouac. Jet jobs were over the highway all morning, but by chance did not coincide with our march time. Nevertheless, we had taken the extra precautions of having the 40-millimetre guns roll in firing readiness. The poor guys who manned them looked like statues of solid dust when we reached our bivouac. That march was probably the fastest we had ever managed. The road was paved, dry, and fairly level. All tractors had been more or less patched up, and the prevailing spirit was one of speed. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the column averaged thirty miles an hour that morning.

At first we wondered over this reversal of plan, but later discovered that, having relieved Crailsheim, the powers were more interested in breaking the Heilbronn deadlock than in pursuing the already overextended Crailsheim operation. In addition, G-2 reported the approach of two Panzer divisions on our exposed left flank. So we drew back into our shells to drive a strong wedge through the 63rd Division sector closer in behind Heilbronn. On the 12th, Ohringen fell to the 10th Armored and most of Heilbronn to the 100th Div. During the re-shuffle most of our stored-up ordnance trouble came to a head, forcing us to double-load and shuttle all along the line. Roberson and his men did a masterful job of glomming parts and gasoline and arguing doubting ordnance people into doing jobs for us when we had no business in their shops.

The highlight of this short operation was a breathtaking move through trails axle-deep in mud and just wide enough by centimeters to allow our big stuff to pass by a steep river bank. At one place the bank gave way, donating our large gas trailer, with most of its contents, to the swift waters. However, we made it by dint of much winching and hair-splitting, to arrive in an open orchard position by the little town of Hermersberg. Our area was well sprinkled with German bodies, felled evidently by an accurate concentration of time fire. Much was our dismay to find, with the lifting of the fog, a prominent castle gazing down upon us from a distant German-held height. As a precaution against breaking defilade, Schroeder and Wallace moved several hundred yards to the right front into a shallow draw. As fate would have it, however, we did no firing from that position after the initial registration. On April 15th we ended our first attachment to the 10th Armored Division. They went straight south, while we swung west again to rejoin our battalion after a separation of two weeks.

Our actual accomplishments during that period might better be measured in miles traveled than in rounds fired. Not the least important, we proved again the adaptability of a single Long Tom battery to rapid armored movements. We hope somebody learned what we actually could do, and also that we were seldom called upon to deliver heavy fire. It's debatable whether we burned up more dollars worth of gasoline or of ammunition. Nevertheless we can stand proud of our efficient functioning under most unsuitable circumstances, and we can rest assured that we were appreciated by the higher commanders who had used us. It was on this Crailsheim operation, incidentally, that pup Jerry conceived her blitz-puppies, with the more-than-willing cooperation of a spaniel named Tony, of the ack-ack department:

XIII - THE KNOCKOUT
April 16 to May 1

On April 15th we rejoined the battalion at Weinsberg, near Heilbronn, preparatory to a push southward toward the Swiss border. Here we inherited a large ex-PW cage for British flyers, with its usual share of "souvenirs", and a dirty concrete swimming pool that used to be the Public Baths for the people of the town. Sergeant Weeks (now acting First Sergeant again, in Sgt. Carter's absence) engaged in a pitched battle with the local water supply system in a determined effort to fill the pool for swimming, but by the time we moved on two days later he had produced only a good deep mud-puddle. The next position was in a meadow on the edge of the burning village of Voiron, which we reached over a narrow winding trail through woods of questionable ownership. The CPExec Post occupied the only house still standing. This house, in turn, had its windows broken by concussion from the guns of Able Battery, which were only two hundred yards to our rear. On the night of the 19th, the eve of Schickelgruber's birthday, our guards were doubled to prevent an expected "werewolf" uprising which never materialized.

The fall of Heilbronn on April 13th had signalled the end of all organized German resistance in the VI Corps sector. Beginning with our move to the Voiron position, our job right up to the end of the war was to be a grand effort to keep up with the "No Fire Line" as the tank-infantry team pushed rapidly forward against weakly-held roadblocks. Again gasoline supply became our major headache. Transportation was frequently sent off on infantry-hauling runs. The weather had held mild and warm since late March, so that the roads were generally in excellent condition for this rapid type of action. On the 20th we made a twelve-mile displacement to Sulzbach. The 21st saw us off to an area south of Winnenden, firing moderately into surrounded Stuttgart, which had been cut off by the junction of a 10th Armored spearhead with the French Army on our right. Here we received the good news of the fall of Bologna in Italy to the 5th Army and the approach of Russian forces to within four miles of Berlin, with patrols only twenty-five miles from Patton in Czechoslovakia. The Motors Section on this day picked up a grand four-wheeled trailer for gasoline, to replace the cut-down truck we had lost in the river eight days before.

On the 22nd winter overtook us again while crossing a traffic-jammed mountain pass en route to Steinbach, a small town southwest of Goppin, gen. The twenty four hours we spent in that burg were an exciting novelty to most of us, since we were the first Americans to enter it. It was also our first close contact with large numbers of Allied PW's (French and Italian) and Displaced Persons (mostly French, Polish, and Russian). The situation didn't call for much firepower, so we left the center platoon out of action, after running them over the stakes. All sections were comfortably bedded down in inside quarters of one kind or another, and arrangements were made for the local factory boss to heat up his extensive plant showers for the men. At the civilian weapons round-up a good haul of Lugers, P-38's and miscellaneous materials was made. By the end of the day we had corralled over a hundred kraut PW's, who trickled out from cellars and woods to give themselves up. Generally, they were of fair appearance physically, though completely without the will to fight. We kept up a constant shuttle-run to the PW cage at Kirchheim, the county seat. An enterprising young French Pfc named Van de Walle was appointed temporary Military Governor of the town, and some forty of his men, armed with captured German arms, were detailed to police the streets.

Their sincerity in this task was sharply pointed out the following morning when they delivered evidences of an incipient "Werewolf" plot. What with reconnaissance and a move on the day's ticket, further investigation was called off until the battery cleared, leaving behind a squad of twenty or so men to handle the situation. Guided by Van de Walle, flying squads went through the town arresting known Nazi leaders and other suspected plotters. In short the whole thing either never existed or was nipped in the bud when the local population became aware of the temper of our boys and their liberated allies. Our last recollection of the town, as we pulled out late in the afternoon, was of two Italians and three Frenchmen in wide-open and full-throated pursuit down the main street after a pair of semi-naked and somewhatthe-worse-for-wear ex-Gestapo suspects.

(Incidental intelligence: Eye-witness reports Sgt. Wallace herding twenty German prisoners down the main street. A sharp young German Sergeant was counting cadence. Twenty-one people were in steps)

The tempo of final operations speeded up. On the 23rd fifteen miles to Dettingen; on the 24th to Lapheim; on the 25th to Weihungzell. Prisoners poured down the road in column of fours, under their own officers, and were ignored. On the 27th we were again attached to the 10th Armored, this time to join CCA. The Recon Party did four jobs that day, as the situation was rapidly changing. The Battery, which had gone into rendezvous at Kelimunz, finally took off to Join the recon people, now at Ober-Germeringen, who had engaged in a splendid weapons-hunt after completing the survey and center lines. Just as the column arrived, CSMO came again from the 634th F.A. Bn., to whom we were attached, and Recon dashed off once more, leaving the column in rendezvous beside the road. Finally, at 1850 hours, the battery occupied position by a sawmill at Osterzell, deep in the heart of Bavaria. That night we fired sixty harassing rounds at a bridge across the Danube River, to the consternation and near collapse of the former German occupants of the Exec Post house. It seems they objected to the noise of the guns! These sixty were the last combat rounds to be fired by "B" Battery.

On the 29th we moved to Erwenschwang, where we enjoyed ourselves thoroughly in an abandoned German signal-center. Cameras, film, guns, uniforms, champagne in quantity, and even a good Ford V-8 truck were acquired. We had to envy the luck of the 634th, which found several cases of Luger pistols and uncovered the find of the campaign, hundreds of brand-new 35 millimeter cameras. We took the usual dozens of prisoners, but these were becoming by now more of a bore than a source of amusement or excitement. In rejoining the Battalion at Fussen on April 30th, we moved out of our last firing position and out of the European war.

XIV - OCCUPATION May 1 to July 1

This phase of our military existence lasted only two months, but it will be indelibly engraved ^{on} the memories of most of us as the time of most concentrated work, frustration, pleasure and general hell-raising. Our quarters at Fussen were mostly in the ^superb apartments of high-ranking German officers. Almost everybody slept in soft feather beds, in rooms richly appointed with fine furniture and decorations. A pyjamaed cannoneer was not an uncommon sight. Dziobak's crew 'cleaned out two large basement storerooms for kitchen and messhall, and a program of decoration was started, with Gillet, Salowitz, Shippy and Kauffman providing curtains, lampshades and wall pictures. Our motor park stood at first in a plowed field out in front, but a turn of bad and. snowy weather made us move the guns and vehicles up to hard standing around the buildings and alongside the road. Our stay at Fussen was taken up by cleaning the materiel, listening eagerly to news of the rapidly-collapsing fronts, doing initial, police duty about the city, and dreaming up grandiose plans to turn the place into a soldiers' paradise for whatever tin was allotted to us to stay there. Assuming that we had to stick around on occupation duty for a few months, we had what we thought was about the ideal spot. The town of Fussen lay on the Lech River, nestled at the foot of the towering snow-clad. Alps. Only a few miles away lay Austria, where we found within within easy reach the famous winter resorts of Garmisch-Partenkirchen and Innsbruck. Many of us took trips to these places, passing en route through historic Oberammergau, site of the famous Passion Plays.

On one of these trips -- south through Innsbruck to the Brenner Pass -- we started our faithful. two Stanleys and Jack, on their way home to-Yugoslavia with their gear loaded in an ancient French Citroen truck recently liberated by the Motors Section. With Big Stanley and Jack at the wheel, mercifully aided by - Anthony Sarte, and despite several breakdowns and near collisions, our safari reached the Italian border, only to be informed that the border was closed to all traffic. They chose to stay nearby, hoping to find work with some outfit in the vicinity of Innsbruck until passage should again be permitted. We left them there with a week's rations and fervent hopes for a safe passage.

Hard by Fussen stood mad King Ludwig's Castle Neu Schwanstein on the crystal-clear Schwansee. (Recently Nazi Education Minister Rosenberg's summer estate, complete with German mistress and looted art treasures.) Indeed, our hopes for the development of this occupation area were high. As luck would have it, however, we moved away after two short weeks, on May the 14th.

Shower Towers 61, 62, 63

Shower Towers 61, 62, 63

Shower Towers 61, 62, 63

Our new abode was at Gauting, a medium-sized town some ten miles southwest of the Bavarian capital of Munich. Being still inexperienced in the ways of "occupation" life, we leapt immediately to the conclusion that this, at last, was to be our permanent occupation station. It developed, however, that plans must ever change and troops regroup as redeployment got under way, so that we were to leave here about a month later for yet another area.

At Gauting we jumped into Security Police work with both feet. There were so many "targets" and traffic control posts to man that many men were on guard 48 hours straight and off 24. We tried to keep it down to a 24-24 basis, but too many special things came up that required attention. In addition to the routine guard, there was extensive house searching to be done, prisoners to haul about to one PW cage or another, and untold complications in civilian affairs to get straightened out.

It wasn't all work and no play, however. After all, 24 hours off is 24 hours, and it didn't take very long to solve a simple problem in supply and demand.

Lt. Halpern took command of the Battery for the month of June while Capt. Hansl was on special duty demobilizing the 19th German Army. While there, he procured six riding horses for the Battery, complete with saddles and two grooms. From Gauting our first "high-pointers", First Sgt. Lawrence Carter, Cpl. George Smith, and Pfc. James Gailes left us for redeployment to the States.

In mid-June the battery packed up and moved to Seefeld, a village on the Pilsensee some fifteen miles southeast of Gauting. We left behind us at Gauting (among other things) a frustrated mayor, the glib Dr. Penzell, who was under the impression that he had some authority, which we never allowed him to exercise. The disappointed owners of our billets were forbidden to reenter the comfortable houses we had occupied, for we had reserved them for Charlie Battery of the 265th F.A. Bn. This was a First Army 240 Howitzer outfit commanded by Lt. Col. Dale King, who as a Captain had been "B" Battery's much-beloved B.C. back in the Camp Blanding days of 1941.

Our set-up at Seefeld was both better and worse than the Gauting establishment. We had more bed-space, better chow facilities, and a grand lake for swimming and boating. On the other hand, the village was very small, full of the odor of country barn on hot days, and afforded houses of less luxury than those of Gauting. However, we were off the beaten track and by ourselves, so that there was little bother from transient brass. From the duty viewpoint, the new area was far superior, with very few posts to be manned. Here most men were on duty 24 hours and off 48 hours.

Since the first days at Gauting the battery had been reorganized into three platoons. The First Platoon, commanded by Sgt. Verrastro, was composed of the 1st and 2nd Gun Sections. The Second Platoon, commanded by Sgt. Wallace, had the 3rd and 4th Gun Sections. The Third Platoon, commanded by Staff Sgt. Roberson, which was made up mainly of Motors and Kitchen personnel, pulled interior guard only. In addition there was a small Headquarters Section for communications, special service, interpreting and the usual administrative and supply functions of a Battery HQ.

Our billets were scattered throughout the town, which centered about a cross road at which stood the local Bierhall. This we took over as our mess-hall, with quarters above for kitchen staff and others. The Bierstube proper we took over as a day-room, which ran smoothly under the loving care of "Mojo" Mattio at the bar and Eddy Natalucci as self-appointed chairman of the Dayroom Committee (consisting of Natalucci). The horses were brought along and stabled nearby. At the lake we took over a swimming and boating beach, and equipped it with a diving raft and assorted sailboats and canoes.

As time went on, guard duty fell off so that we had more time for recreation, and for maintenance of our materiel, which had been perforce neglected during the high-pressure police days of Gauting. The Captain came back from leave in Alsace full of bright ideas of starting a Battery rest camp near Strasbourg. He rounded up Sgt. Willy Schroeder, T/4 Steve Petruska, T/5 Owen Pecora, Pvt. Larcheveque, and Cpl. Al Gaffney as a reconnaissance detail and took off in a weapons carrier to make the necessary arrangements. The expedition was doomed to failure, however, because of the uncooperative attitude of the French Army, which had the province of Alsace tightly sewed up for its own purposes. Chaumont, Nancy, and Paris trips were still in operation, however, although never on the scale we would have desired. One group got off to the Riviera for a week's stay in that "GI Paradise", They gave glowing reports of their visit and of the trip back through northern Italy and the Brenner Pass.

XV - REDEPLOYMENT July 1945

During the past two months of occupation duty we had been besieged by various rumors of our future fate. About the middle of June it became definitely known that the outfit was slated for action in the Pacific, after a brief sojourn in the United States for re-equipment and retraining. Only volunteers and individuals with low points, however, would remain with the battalion, all others to be transferred by July to other outfits scheduled for demobilization.

After much backing and filling the plan finally took shape. By means of trading personnel of like qualifications, all our men with 85 points or over would go to the 733rd F.A. Bn., a relatively green Long Tom outfit, or to the 265th, Col. King's 240 Howitzer battalion. Men with 70 to 85 points or with combat experience in both the Mediterranean and European Theaters, would go to the 9th Infantry Division, a Category I outfit which was to stay on permanent European occupation duty. Our status (Pacific-bound) was labeled Category II, and demobilization-bound outfits were known as Category IV.

Starting early in July, the transfers began. The first large group to go, after a colossal farewell party in the Beer Hall, consisted of some 65 men to the 733rd. Because the 733rd was unable to trade many high-ranking non-coms with us, most of the men to go on this day were in the grade of Corporal, PFC and Private. Lt. Allen Halpern also went in this transfer. It was a sad occasion that saw the breakup of this soldier family that had trained, fought and lived together for four years.

New men moved in to fill their places, and for the next two weeks we were a motley group indeed, as every other face in the chow line was a strange one. A second group left a few days later, to the 9th Division, but those of us who stayed behind were pleased to see them return for several Sunday visits during July and August. Not until the middle of July did the remainder of the high-pointers leave us. This group consisted largely of the Chiefs of Section and other key non-coms. Staff Sgt. John Weeks had by this time been promoted to the grade of First Sgt., Sgt. Tom Wallace to Staff to take over Weeks' job, and T/4 William Jablonowski had come back from Headquarters Battery to fill Bill Ellerts shoes as Staff Sgt. Chief of Detail. Pvt. Victor Ladnier and Pfc. John McDonald volunteered to stay with the outfit for the Pacific Campaign, along with Lts. Henry Heubner and Nick Czuk and Capt. Raleigh Hansl. Twelve of the "junior members", recent replacements with low points, also remained through the redeployment.

The 733rd and 265th moved, very shortly after the personnel transfers, to the Rheims Assembly Area in France, where they worked on processing equipment and troops bound for the Pacific Theater. With the end of the Japanese war, "B" Battery's status in Category II was changed, and individuals were released for demobilization as they became qualified through accumulation of points. The 733rd and 265th headed home in early October, and it appears likely that most of the members of "B" Battery, excepting possibly the youngest replacements, managed to don the long-awaited pin-stripe suit by Christmas, 1945.

-- Thus Endeth The Saga --

The Battery Commander's Message on V-E Day

8 May 1945

To the Officers and Men of "B" Battery:

Today is Victory Day in Europe.

We have just vanquished completely the most powerful enemy the United States has ever opposed. Our combat record is long and honorable. Our accomplishments have been many; our travels long.

We came overseas in the first bulk shipment of artillery in this war and first locked horns with the enemy in support of VI Corps, Fifth Army, during the attack on Venafro, Italy, on October 31, 1943. A few days later we transferred to II Corps. We supported them through the difficult winter campaign for Cassino until January 27, 1944, when we rejoined the VI Corps at Anzio. We were in on the kill at Rome and pushed north to Montalto, where we were relieved on June 12 for a long deserved rest and preparation for an unknown future action.

By this time we had won a place among the elite of the U.S. Army in Europe, a place we have never relinquished. We won this place because we delivered the fire when and where it was needed; because we moved smoothly; because our motor maintenance was superior; because we have kept ourselves neat and clean and alert; because we have had confidence in our comrades and cooperation among our sections; because each of us has taken pride in his work and **in** his battery.

We enjoyed the "Champagne Campaign" in southern France with the Seventh Army and endured the hard Alsatian winter. We enjoyed the slaughter and demoralization of the German Army which has just ended and in which we have participated since March 17th.

Our guns have fired more than any other Battery of this Battalion, which, in turn, has fired more rounds than any other Long Tom Battalion in the U.S. Army. We have been praised time after time by higher commanders, staff officers and inspectors. More important--we have been especially selected, time after time, for separate missions and attached to various Groups, Divisions or Task Forces.

We have distinguished ourselves in the muddy stability of Anzio and the speedy armored columns of Bavaria. We stand proud of each of our four-hundred-and ninety-one days of battle.

For many of us the combat war is over. Our job, now, as members of the Army, is to maintain ourselves in a state of readiness for future action, should we be needed, and, at the same time to police the fallen enemy in a manner which will leave no doubt in his mind as to the power and the efficiency of the United States of America. As we met trying times before, in combat, we will meet them now in occupation. We are once more in a garrison army. Combat has departed from the continent of Europe and with it the carefree as well as the terrible aspects

of war. In accepting this departure we shall substitute with pleasure the exactness of garrison life for the horrors of battle and we shall carry on our daily work with the cheer and efficiency which have so distinguished "B" Battery in combat.

As your commander, I want to tell you that I am mighty proud of you; that the cause for your superior performance lies in the interest and craftsmanly pride of each of you in his work, whether that work has been in the role of leader or follower, headworker, or handworker or technician.

Soon there will be a division in our ranks. Some will go home; some will proceed to other assignments, some will fight again in another theater. May each of you carry with you when you go, my appreciation of a job well done and my best wishes for your future success.

Raleigh Hansl, Jr. Capt. "B" Battery 976th FA BIN.

PART THREE - INFORMATION OF INTEREST

I - RECORD OF FIRING POSITIONS

A- ITALY

- 1- Pietrovairano, Oct. 31- Nov. 5, 1943 (71st F.A. Brigade)
- 2- Vairano-, Nov. 5-8
- 3-•Presenzano., Nov. 8, 1943- Jan. 2, 1944
Fourth Section Roving Gun, Mignano, Dec. 1-2, 1943 Second
Section Roving Gun, Mt. Lungo, Dec. 29, 1943
- 4- Mignano, Jan. 2-11, 1944 (Tank-crowded area)
- 5- Mignano Forward, Jan. 13-16 (Able's old position)
- 6- San Vittore, Jan. 16-27
- 7- Anzio, Padiglione Forest No. 1, Jan. 31- Feb. 4 (VI Corps Arty)
- 8- ft ti it No. 2, Feb. 4- Apr. 7
- 9- Edgeware Road, Apr. 7- May 19
- 10- La Ferriere, May 19-25 (Jump-off position)
- 11- Cisterna RR Embankment, May 25- June 3
- 12- Lanuvio, June 3-4
- 13- Bracciano, June 6-8 (North of Rome) (45th Division)
- 14- Civitavecchia, June 8-9 (34th Division)
- 15- Montalto, June 9-12 (36th Division)

B- FRANCE--ALSACE

- 1- Grenoble, Aug. 27-30 (VI Corps-45th Division)
- 2- Voiron, Aug. 30-31
- 3- Bourgoin., Aug. 31- Sept. 1
- 4- Les Gaboureaux ,Sept. 1 (Meximieux action)
- 5- Ste. Julie, Sept. 1-2
- 6- Ambronay, Sept. 2
- 7- Neuville-sur-Ain, Sept. 3-5
- 8- Lanans, Sept. 9-10
- 9- Gondenans, Sept. 10-21 (13th F.A. Brigade, French Sector)
- 10- Montecheroux, Sept. 22-25
- 11- Chamesol, Sept. 25- Oct. 6
- 12- Pierrepont, Oct. 6-31 (VI Corps-405th Group)
- 13- Housseras, Oct. 31- Nov. 8
- 14- Thiebaumenil, Nov. 10-19 (XV Corps-144th Group)
- 15- Amenoncourt, Nov. 19-20
- 16- Hattigny, Nov. 20-21
- 17- St. Jean, Nov. 22-26
- 18- Pfalzburg, Nov. 26-27
- 19- Printzheim, Nov. 27- Dec. 6 (VI Corps-45th Division)
- 20- Uhrwiller, Third Section Forward Gun, Dec. 2-6
- 21- Schillersdorf, Dec. 6-9 (VI Corps-405th Group)
- 22- Offwiller, Dec. 9-12
- 23- Reichshoffen,, Dec. 12-14
- 24- Woerth, Dec. 14-16
- 25- Memelshofen, Dec. 16-18
- 26- Steinseltz, Dec. 18-23
- 27- Niederbromm, Dec. 23- Jan. 3, 1945 (Task Force Herron, 17th F.A. Bn.)

- 28- Baerenthal, First Section Roving Gun, Dec. 30-31
- 29- Schillersdorf, Jan. 3-6 (45th Divarty)
- 30- Gumbrechtshoffen, Jan. 6-20 (VI Corps, 405th Group)
- 31- Imbsheim, Jan 20- Feb. 14 (VI Corps, 35th Group)
- 32- Weiterswiller, Feb. 14- Mar. 17
- 33- Uhrwiller, Mar. 17-18
- 34- Obersteinbach, Mar. 19-22 (42nd Divarty)
- 35- Scheibenhardt, Mar. 22-24 (13th Brigade, 6th Group, French Sector)

G- GERMANY

- 1- Schifferstadt, Mar. 25-31 (XV and VI Corps, 405th Group)
- 2- Mannheim, Mar. 31 (By Autobahn)
- 3- Bruchhausen, Apr. 1 (By Autobahn)
- 4- Baiertal, Apr. 2-4 (VI Corps, 6th Group)
- 5- Massenbach, Apr. 4-7 (CCB, 10th Armored Division)
- 6- Windischbusch, Apr. 7
- 7- Lillistadt, Apr. 8-10
- 8- Crispenhofen, Apr. 11-13
- 9- Hermersberg, Apr. 13-15 (VI Corps, 35th Group)
- 10- Weinsberg, Apr. 15-17, (6th Group, support of 100th Division)
- 11- Vorhof, Apr. 17-20
- 12- Sulzbach, Apr. 20-21
- 13- Winnenden, Apr. 21-22
- 14- Steinbach (Wernau), Apr. 22-23 (VI Corps, 17th Group)
- 15- Dettingen, Apr. 23
- 16- Lapheim, Apr. 24
- 17- Weihungzell, Apr. 25
- 18- Obergermeringen, Apr. 27 (CCA, 10th Armored Division)
- 19- Osterzell, Apr. 27
- 20- Erwenschwang, Apr. 28-30

(REFER TO NUMBERED POSITIONS SHOWN ON MAP, BACK COVER.)

II - GUN TUBE RECORDS, AMMUNITION TOTALS

Section:	1007 4th	3rd	26 2nd	1st
Tube No.:			#237	
Date changed:			1/27/4	
Total rounds:			4	
Tube No.:	#217	#29 & 792	1344	#234
Date changed:	1/11/44	1/11/44	#695 &	1/11/44
Total rounds:	1666	1281	3/16/4	1924
Tube No.:	#870	#852	4	#847
Date changed:	3/16/44	3/16/44	1548	3/16/44
Total rounds:	1572	1710	#2012	1729
Tube No.:	#2015	#1818	5/1/44	#1225
Date changed:	4/30/44	4/30/44	2209	5/1/44
Total rounds:	1747	2247	#1558	2090
Tube No.:	#1578	#1579	5/31/4	#1353
Date changed:	5/31/44	5/31/44	4	5/31/44
Total rounds:	1632	1682	1670	1617
Tube No.:	#1641	#2066	#1017	#1222
Last tube	3/12/45	3/12/45	3/12/4	3/12/45
Total rounds:	2882	2657	5	2628
			2620	
Grand Total:	#413	#1343	#902	#369
Battery	660	643		624
total:	10,159		10,156	10,612

10,220

10,159

10,220

10,156

10,612

41,147

III - RECORD OF INDEPENDENT OPERATIONS

A-ITALY

- 1- Civitavecchia, June 8-9, 1944. Attached to 34th Divarty to support the Division's attack on Tarquinia. Fired moderately into the town, fire adjusted by Divarty air observer.
- 2- Montalto, June 9-12, 1944. Attached to 36th Divarty to support the Division's attack on Orbetebello. Fired several missions against fortified positions and enemy columns on the road. General Hess, Divarty CG, reported excellent results following later survey of target area. Fire adjusted by 976 AirOP.

B-FRANCE-ALSACE

- 3- Grenoble, Aug. 27-30, 1944. Attached to 45th Divarty, in support of a roadblock. Did not fire.
- 4- Voiron, Aug. 30-31. Another roadblock, did not fire.
- 5- Bourgoin Aug. 31. Attached to 189th FA Bn., 45 Div., in support of a road block, did not fire.
- 6- Lanans, Sept. 10. Attached to 45th Divarty to support attack of the Division up the Doubs River valley. Registered, no target missions.
- 7- Printzheim, Dec. 5. Attached to 45th Divarty to cover leap-frog movement of remainder of our battalion. Did not fire, but relayed several missions by radio to Able Battery on targets in their sector.
- 8- Woerth, Dec. 14-16. Attached to 405th Group because of overextended communications to our own battalion. Registered and fired several missions.
- 9- Niederbronn, Dec. 23.-Jan 2, 1945. Attached to 17th F.A. Bn. in support of Task Force Herron, an emergency group formed to cover the left flank of VI Corps during regrouping of troops caused by German Ardennes Offensive. Fired moderately, mostly unobserved counter-battery and harassing missions, plus frequent registrations through 17th FA Bn AirOP. First Section Roving Gun at Baerental registered and fired two counterbattery missions.
- 10- Schillersdorf, Jan. 3-6. No attachment. Mission to shoot in support of 45th. Division's defense against strong German attacks in the Bitche sector. Registered and fired very heavily, mostly on artillery, tank and column targets reported by various air observers. Did our best shooting with Lieut. Stotts on Jan. 5th.
- 11- Uhrwiller, Mar. 17-18. Attached to 35th Group because of overextended communications to our own battalion. Did not fire.
- 12- Obersteinbach, Mar. 19. Attached to 35th Group in support of 42nd Division's attack on the Siegfried at Fischbach. After registration, reverted to battalion control following their arrival later in day.

C-GERMANY

- 13- Schifferstadt, Mar. 25-30. Attached to 405th Group in support of XV Corps Rhine Crossing north of Mannheim. Registered several times and fired moderately on CB and harassing missions.
- 14- Mannheim, Mar. 31st. Attached to 405th Group, with radio contact only, in support of 100th Division advance beyond Heidelberg, during displacement of remainder of battalion. Registered and fired one mission on a truck convoy, observed by 976 AirOP.

15-

- Baiertal, Apr. 2-4. Attached to our own battalion, but operating independent FDC because of difficult radio communication. Did not register, but fired several TOT's and harassing missions, unobserved, using corrections from other batteries. This position was occupied to protect right flank of VI Corps against remaining German pocket to the south in vicinity Eppinger.
- 16- Massenbach, Apr. 4-6. Attached to CCB, 10th Armored Division, in support of their operations in Heilbronn sector, 405th Group acted as CCB Art HQ. Registered and fired several CB and harassing missions and TOTs.
- 17- Windischbusch, Apr. 7. Same set-up. CCB's new mission was to relieve entrapped CCA in Crailsheim, by re-opening the blocked road in their rear. This involved a long enveloping march of 14 hours which ended at this position. Did not fire.
- 18- Lillistadt, Apr. 8-10. Same set-up, with CCB stopped at Bartenstein by strong German block. Fired moderately, observed and unobserved, against infantry, artillery, and towns. Our people broke through on Apr. 10th. Reconnaissance went that day almost into Crailsheim, but the column was turned around on the highway at Blaufeld because of a change in plan, going into bivouac vicinity Ailsringen.
- 19- Crispenhofen, Apr. 11-13. Started with same set-up, switched over on Apr. 12th to 35th Group, in support of new 10th Arm'd.-63rd Inf. combined drive on Ohringen behind Heilbronn. Registered and fired moderately.
- 20- Hermersberg, Apr. 13-15. Same set-up, but only registered, as armor broke through and took No Fire Line out of range.
- 21- Osterzell, Apr. 27. Attached to CCA of 10th Arm'd Div., working through 634th FA Bn. for reconnaissance and missions, in support of armored sweep across the Danube River into lower Bavaria. Fired our last combat rounds here, sixty rounds unobserved harassing fire on bridge.
- 22- Erwenschwang, Apr. 28-30. Same set-up. Did not fire. Relieved to rejoin battalion because of unsuitability of our weapon for operation in the deep Alpine passes.

D-SUMMARY OF INDEPENDENT OPERATIONS

Twenty-two positions; sixty-two days; generally moderate firing, except for very heavy firing from Niederbronn and Schillersdorf positions Jan. 1-6, 1945. 70 missions, 1319 rounds.