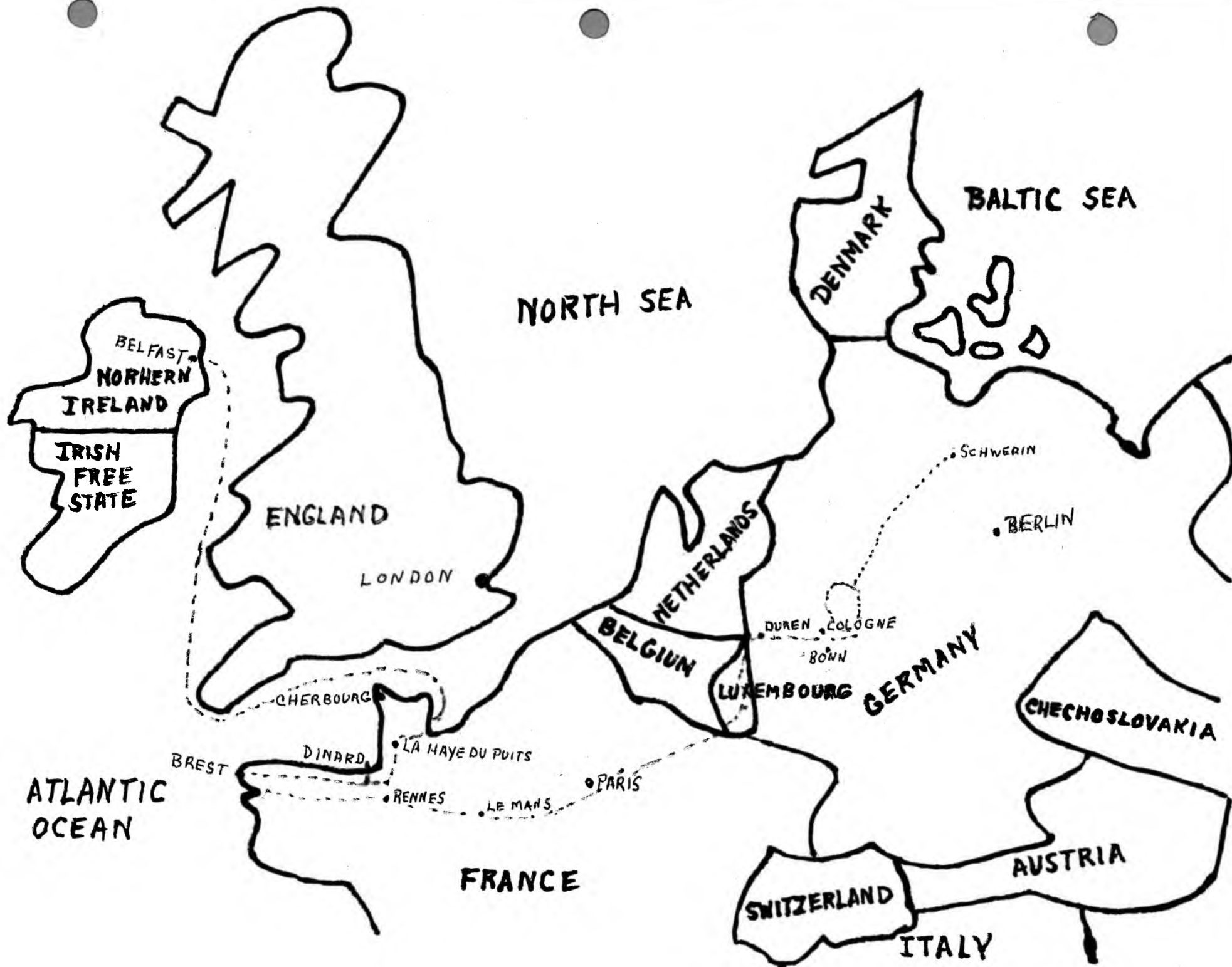


PRIVATE TO CAPTAIN  
Memories Of World War II  
By  
Capt. Durward M. Kelton





## INTRODUCTION

On February 18th 1997 , as part of Chapter 4324 AARP's observance of President's Day , I was invited to give a presentation on my experiences in World War II . At the conclusion, program chairperson Isabel Shapneck suggested that I write them up , so that they might be passed on to future generations .

This past winter I put some of what I can recall down on paper . The result is the forty-one pages contained in this folder . My memory barely touches the surface of my four years , ten months , and nineteen days of my Military Service that occurred fifty-four years ago .

We were required to burn the 1:20,000 and 1:10,000 inch maps that we worked off from , as soon as we were safely off them . Had those been available to me , this narrative would be many pages longer.

I have avoided going into detail about my personal feelings during this period.. The nightmare of combat has to be experienced to be believed .

Sources for my statistics are : Order of Battle , United States Army In World War II - European Theater Of Operations , Office of The Theater Historian 1945 . (2) Combat History Of The 121st Infantry Regiment . (3) The Officers Guide . (4) Time-Life Books : The Second Front , and Liberation . (5) A Dark And Bloody Ground - By Edward G. Miller . (6) Follow Me And Die - By Cecil B. Currey . (7) Citizen Soldiers - By Stephen E. Ambrose .

1940

My life was due to change after the passage of the Selective Service and Training Act of 1940. The September directive required that all men between the ages of twenty-one and thirty-five register with their draft board on the sixteenth of October for one years military service .

I moved from Walpole , N.H. to Walhalla Farms in Rexford , N.Y. on October 15th . I registered in Rexford the following day .

My Selective Service local board was No. 362 in Mechanicville .

I was notified on November 25th , that I had been Classified 1-A .

On November 27th I was directed to report to Dr. John C. O'Brien on December 3rd for a physical examination . I appeared at 100 North Main Street , in Mechanicville , along with eleven others . As luck would have it , I was the first to be examined . The Doctor's daughter was assisting him . She was a dentist . He used me to demonstrate to her how to draw blood . She then proceeded to "butcher" the other eleven . We appeared to be an unhealthy lot . I was one of two who passed .

1941

Induction into the Army came on January 6th , in Albany .

We went by rail to Fort Dix , N.J. We were housed in parmidal tents , with a small coal stove in the center . The last day I was there I passed out at retreat . I was diagnosed to have the flu . So , the next morning I left in a hospital car for Fort Bragg , N.C., where I spent the next sixteen days in an Army hospital .

I was then assigned to Company F , 60th Infantry , of the newly formed 9th Infantry Division

A cadre of non-commissioned officers , from the 1st Infantry in Fort Warren , Wyoming , gave us our basic training .

For next thirteen weeks we were restricted to the Company area , and paid \$21 a month . After those thirteen weeks we became "buck privates" at \$30 a month .

Our Division Commander was Maj. Gen. Jacob L. Devers ; who was later to become the Commanding General of the Sixth Army Group in the Invasion of Southern France .

Our Regimental Commander was Col. Frank C. Mahin .

We went on Carolina Maneuvers in North and South Carolina . I don't recall very much about them , except for one incident .

Our Regiment was in a convoy , riding blackout , on a dirt road that was so narrow that it was impossible for trucks to pass each other . Three other such convoys met us at a crossroads at precisely the same time . The "war" had to be called off , and the truck's lights turned on , and the mess unsnarled . We backed the trucks of my unit through a gateway into a small field , and bedded down for the rest of the night

We later learned that there were over 600 vehicles involved in the debacle .

Later on we convoyed to the A.P. Hill Military Reservation in Bowling Green , Va. to maneuver against the 44th Infantry Division from Ft. Dix , N.J. .

I had a ten day furlough in September .

The Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor on my 23rd birthday , one month before I was due to leave the Military Service . So , my one year turned into "the duration and six months" .

1942

I have no recollection of the date Maj. General Manton S. Eddy took Command of the 9th Division . He later Commanded the XII Corps of the U.S. Third Army in Europe . Col. William H. Wilbur took Command of the 60th Infantry at about the same time .

During the early part of the year we began to train for what would eventually be the North African landings .

Our training took us to New River , N.C. , and to Norfolk , Va. , with landings on Solomon Island in the Chesapeake Bay , from the S.S. Biddle and the S.S. Leonard Wood . These landings included several days of maneuvers inland , with tactical withdrawals back to the ships .

I was promoted to Private First Class , upon graduation from the 60th Infantry N.C.O. school .

On the 15th of May I received my promotion to Corporal .

Promotions were hard to come by in our Regiment . They were usually available only when members of the cadre that trained us left on one to form another Division . Even when they were busted , they continued in the same job until they were reinstated in their rank .

On June 11th I was notified that I had been tentatively accepted for Officer's Candidate School . A soldier with an I.Q. of 110 or over could apply . Mine was 119 , so I volunteered . I was apprehensive about being able to pass the course . However , I didn't feel that I had much

to loose . We were slated to return to either the 39th or the 47th Infantry Regiments in the 9th Division , whether we passed or flunked .

I celebrated the fourth of July by entering Officer's Candidate Class No. 75 , at Fort Benning , Ga. . I became a member of the Second Student Training Regiment .

We were divided into Platoons of two sections each , with twenty-five men in a section . Three platoons were white , and one was colored .

Each platoon had a Tactical Officer in charge .

At the end of each four weeks period we were required to rate each other in our section , one through twenty-four , excluding ourselves , and give reasons .

The Tactical Officer rated the two sections , and compared his marks with ours . This gave him a chance to compare our judgement with his , as well as gain some information about us that he might not otherwise know .

The low five in each section had to go before a board of Full Colonels , at the end of each four week period . You might be washed out at this time , or you might continue the course .

I was in the low five in my section at the end of my first four week period . In my appearance before the board , I learned that my negative response to one of the questions on a questionnaire we filled out upon entrance , was the cause of most of their concern . The question was : Do you prefer to go to combat ? I was informed that I was the only one who had ever responded in the negative to that question , in the history of the Infantry School .

I told them that I thought they were checking my truthfulness . I told them that I thought anyone who said they proffered to go to combat was either crazy or a liar . One Colonel on the board seemed inclined to agree with me . They indicated that my grades were satisfactory on my graded tests , and that they didn't anticipate calling me in , in the future .

Our quarters were inspected daily . Too many demerits on these could lead to dismissal . (Failure to carry out orders)

We were expected to know the material being presented to us . They emphasized that we watch the methods of instruction ; because we would be constantly teaching , as well as leading . In my case , I had to learn a great deal of it .

An I.Q. of 110 got you into O.C.S. , but 115 was required for graduation . One First Sergeant , with twelve years service , who was scholastically rated fourth in the class , had an I.Q. of 113 . He was allowed to take the test again . This time he scored 114 . He was washed out the night before he was to graduate , with his family from Ohio present .

I received a three star demerit on the last barracks inspection . Since it was a star demerit , extra duty went along with it . I was required to mow grass in the cemetery on a Sunday afternoon .

It seems that at the time of the last inspection , I was the only candidate that did not have a demerit in the class . So , they made sure I got one . No candidate had ever graduated from the Infantry School without one . They tore my bunk apart , and found my footlocker key in m comforter . I had kept it rolled up in it to keep from loosing it .

On the 28th of September I was Honorably Discharged from the Service for twenty-four hours , in order to accept a Commission as a Second Lieutenant in the Army Of The United States .

The following day I was graduated , and accepted the Commission . Out of 225 Candidates 191 were graduated .

I had orders to report to the 8th Motorized Division at Fort Jackson, S.C. , after completion of a ten day leave .

I had expected to return to the 9th Division , but they had left Fort Bragg for parts unknown . (The North African landings)

At Fort Jackson I was assigned to the 121st Infantry Regiment , a National Guard unit from Georgia .

When the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor , the 8th Division was a triangular one consisting of the 13th , 28th , and 34th Infantry Regiments . The 34th was hurriedly sent to Pearl Harbor , leaving the Division one Regiment short .

The 30th Infantry Division was a square National Guard Division , with four Infantry Regiments . The 121st was sent from it to the 8th Division , to bring the 8th up to full strength . The 30th was reorganized into a triangular one .

The 8th Motorized Division was on maneuvers in Tennessee . I joined the 121 outside of Nashville .

When I reported to the Regimental Commander , Col. Albert E. Peyton ; he told me that I might know the "school solution" , but I would do things his way in the 121 . He cautioned me to never give an order without following up on it , to be sure it was carried out .

I was assigned to Company A , under the command of 1st Lt. Ephriam L. Prince .

We finished maneuvers around the 7th of November , and went to "tent city" at Camp Forest , Tenn. . We were a bit uncomfortable there , as the only heat was in the Company orderly room tents . We were there for about a month .

On the 3rd of December we moved to Fort Leonard Wood , Mo. into heated barracks .

Since we had been in the field for quite some time , the Inspector General made a routine check of the individual Companies . He found Company A's supply room in a deplorable state . Lt. Prince was relieved of Command , and Capt. David Ramey took over .

He was soon in trouble . Company A never crossed the line of departure , on a Batalion test . His Executive Officer was on detached service . So , he told 1st. Sgt. Kelly to act as his Executive Officer , in his attack order .

Sgt. Kelly was asleep , when the order came to move out . We were still in the assembly area when the test ended .

Major Macon , the 1st Bn C.O. , was extremely put out with me , for allowing an enlisted man to outrank me . My response was that as it was not actual combat I wanted to see how it played out .

The following episode was really Capt. Ramey's undoing . He had his 1st Sgt. prepare charges on one of his men for being A.W.O.L. . The 1st Sgt. got the A.W.O.L. date wrong . Capt. Ramey was President of the Courts Martial that tried the man . He stayed on the case , instead of ruling himself off it . Subsequently , the Military Police testified that the man was A.W.O.L. on a different day . Capt. Ramey threw his own case out of court for lack of evidence .

When Col. Peyton reviewed the case , he relieved Capt. Ramey of his Command . He told him that this might be the way law was practiced in Georgia , but it was not the way it was done in the U.S. Army .

Capt. Lindsey A. Maddox was named the new Company Commander .

One of the first things he did was to name me the Co. A Mess Officer

Later I was selected to conduct a Regimental school on the M-1 Rifle While we were firing on the rifle range , the Assistant Division Commander payed me a visit . He demanded that I recite all of the courses in the Field Manual for firing the M-1 Rifle. I recited the ones we were firing , but informed him that I colud not recite the manual in



it's entirety. He left growling that he thought I ought to know them all .

When I returned from the range that night , I found a message waiting for me . " Report to Regimental Headquarters as soon as possible." My thoughts were that I was going to catch it again . To my surprise , I was told by Col. Peyton that the General had commended my work . It seems that I was the only Officer out there that knew the course he was firing .

Gen. Ben Lear was one who made his presence felt . One of his pet tricks was to order an Officer to turn his back on his Platoon , and name the men as they stood in ranks .

He also ordered the troops of the Second Army to sing " This Is The Army " , while in step , on marches . His order stated that the troops would not be ordered to sing , but they would sing . He then sent 2nd Lts. out to check up on us . We were instructed to report to any strange Officers that we saw in our area . One Company C.O. reported to a strange 2nd Lt. , and the Lt. replied that he guessed he was the one who should be reporting , as he had been assigned to that Company .

1943

Along about the first of February the Division moved out of the barracks into the field on the Ft. Leonard Wood reservation .

The weather suddenly turned from the middle forties to fifteen below zero . Some of the men were frost bitten , even though we doubled up in pup tents .

While we were out there , some of the furnace fires went out , and water pipes froze up in the barracks .

Our Division Commander , Maj. Gen. Paul E. Peabody , requested that Ge. Lear allow him to pull the troops in from the cold . Gen. Lear refused to do so . So, Gen. Peabody went over Gen. Lear's head to the Surgeon General in Washington , D.C. . Permission was granted , and we were brought back to the barracks .

This resulted in Gen. Peabody being relieved of his Command , reduced to the rank of Colonel , and promoted back to Brigadier General on the same order . He was named Military Attache to the Court Of St. James in London , England .

Maj. Gen. William C. McMahon became our new Division Commander .

He ordered that each furnace fire in the Division area be checked by a Commissioned Officer twice each night ; once before midnight , and

once after . He didn't want any more frozen water pipes .

I was on that detail one night , and found Col. Peyton sitting in the dark waiting for me .

I had a seven day leave in February . It took me seventy hours by rail to travel from St. Louis to Bellows Falls , Vt. . This was normally an eighteen hour trip . The locomotive I was on froze up in Syracuse , N.Y.. So ,we waited while another was obtained from Rochester . There were seventeen engines reported frozen up in the yards in Albany . It was 48 degrees below zero in Bellows Falls , when I arrived there at 2:00 A.M.

I returned to Ft. Wood at 2200 hours , two hours before I was required to sign in .

At about 2300 I received a telephone call from the Regimental S-3 (Plans & Training) . I was to report to the parade ground the next morning at 0800 , to take charge of a Regimental school on the M-1 Rifle.

The General had found the instruction unsatisfactory ; and recalling my previous class , Col. Peyton felt that I was the one needed to get it into shape .

The next morning I was shaving , and wondering what I was getting into Dr. Samuel Rabinowitz , The Bn Surgeon was shaving next to me . Suddenly he asked me what I was doing that morning . I told him , and he promptly informed me that I had the mumps , and would be going to the hospital .

I have no idea what happened on the parade ground that morning . I spent the next two weeks in the hospital .

We moved to Camp Laguna , Arizona on the 24th of March . This was a part of the Desert Training Center .

It was like jumping out of an ice box into a fire . I don't know how hot it was , as no one had a thermometer . It was probably just as well . Had we known it would have been even more unbearable .

We were housed in pyramidal tents , with wooden latrines . For the next five months we were on dehydrated rations .

The first afternoon we had our trucks and White halftracks out in the desert . We had eighty-four flat tires . Some of them didn't go down until we were well down the hard top road to our base camp . Most of them were caused by broken greasewood bushes piercing them . They looked innocent enough , but they worked their way through a ten ply truck tire much like a porcupine quill . We learned to avoid them as much as possible .

The only wild life we saw were side winder rattle snakes , gila monsters , and long eared jack rabbits .

We were demotorized the 15th of April , and became the 8th Infantry Division . The vehicles stayed on the desert . The previous Division that trained there , turned them over to us . They had been new five months earlier , and approximately seventy-five percent of them were so full of sand that they would not start .

Twelve miles of marching in the desert sand was about our limit in the heat of the day . The troops' uniforms would become white with salt , but would never appear to be wet . The desert bags that hung on our Jeeps would leak , and the evaporation of the water would cool the contents . We were rationed one canteen of water during the daytime . We were allowed as much as we wanted , at the end of the day .

Gen. McMahon was a terror with his discipline . He put out an order that if he caught an Officer unprepared for the days instruction , that Officer would be fined half of his months pay , and confined to the area for one month .

One Officer commented that he might as well make out an allotment to the General , and save him the trouble of catching him .

A Division order was also issued that every unit in the Division would post a soldier in each kitchen , and latrine , to swat flies . He was to be on duty twenty-four hours a day .

The General hit Co. B one morning , when the unit was in the field . When the swatter on duty was asked what his job was ; he stepped smartly to the right oblique , swatted a fly on the tent pole , came back to attention , and replied , "Killing flies , Sir".

The men were soon going around calling the outfit , " The 8th fly swatting Division " .

One night about 1800 , we received an order stating that all units would have a wood top on their soakage pit by 2300 that night .

Lumber was practically unobtainable . Yuma was thirty-five miles away, and there was no way a purchase order could be obtained at that time of night , even if there was some to be purchased .

I mentioned to Capt. Maddox , that new latrines were being constructed next door to us , for the not yet arrived 644th Tank Destroyer Battalion . He decided to swipe one of the sides to one of them . One of our Company Officers was the Officer of The Day , that night . He tipped us off when the guard was away from that spot , and we moved in and took it .

Our artificer made a top out of it .

At Officer's Meeting the next evening , Col. Peyton mentioned the fac-

that C6 . A was the only Co. in the Regiment that had complied with that order . He also noted that a side had been reported missing on one of the latrines next door . He said wryly , " I like to see orders carried out . There will be an additional guard posted on those latrines tonight"

We were the defensive force during the Desert Maneuvers .

I took a ten day leave in August , and went to Los Angles .

We had a series of physical tests before we left the Desert . Co. A was the last unit to take them . I ran 150 yards and returned the fastest of anyone in the Division .

A physical examination of the troops showed an average weight loss of fifteen pounds per man ; due to the heat , and the dehydrated rations .

The fine sand penetrated everything we had . Some watch faces were so full that they were unreadable . The one that I was presented when I graduated from O.C.S. made it okay . The crystal showed signs of cracking but it made it through the rest of the war on my wrist .

On August 25th we moved back to Camp Forest by rail ; to prepare for overseas movement .

One thing that I will always remember about Camp Forest were the bed bugs that were waiting for us in the Officer's barracks . We moved in , and shortly afterward were out on the lawn . We slept out there , until the barracks were sealed and fumigated with cyanide gas .

When we returned one could strike a set of bed springs , and watch the bugs fall out by the shovels full .

Preparing for overseas movement meant following the manual P.O.M. to the letter . Everything had to be new , or it's equivalent . This required numerous inspections to bring things up to par .

I received a promotion to First Lieutenant on the ninth of October .

P.O.M. required that the Company's organizational equipment be crated and marked to it's specifications .

The Companies in the other two Batalions each took care of their own . Our Bn C.O. , Lt. Col. Robert M. Jones , decided to have one Officer take charge of the crating for the whole Batalion . I was chosen to do that .

I was allowed to pick my detail from all of the Companies in the Bn. I ran into problems constantly . Every man had to be qualified with his weapon . That meant that Co. C.O.s were constantly removing men from my detail , for range firing . I would no more than get things running smoothly , and then I'd loose a man or two . That left me breaking in new ones .

We had to work in shifts around the clock . I doubt if I slept over two hours a night that last week . My detail finished the last crate just before it was loaded for the Port of Embarkation .

On the 25th of November we moved to the staging area at Camp Kilmer , New Jersey .

While we were there ten percent of our troops received passes to New York City .

Then started a new duty , which lasted to the end of the war . We had to censor our men's outgoing mail . They were allowed to write on only one side of each sheet of paper . That permitted us to delete any objectionable material with a razor blade . If the letter was too badly cut up , we asked that it be written over . We were spot checked by Base Censor .

I was the Second Platoon leader . So, I had to censor all the letters these 40 odd men wrote . My the time I finished at night , there wasn't much time for anything else . I got so I could read them , and not recall anything that was said in them .

We sailed from Brooklyn , N.Y. on December 5th . Our Batalion was on the Columbie , a ship that had been liberated from the French after the North African landings . We were a part of a 99 ship convoy .

We encountered stormy weather most of the way in the North Atlantic .

We had two meals a day . How the French waiters kept their trays right side up was beyond my comprehension .

Many of the men became seasick . I overheard one man say that if we ever reached our destination , he was never going back to Georgia .

The ship landed in Belfast , Northern Ireland on the 15th of December.

The 1st Bn was billeted in Fintona at Camp Shadow .

My nightmare started at the docks in Belfast . My crating detail , and I , had to remain with the Batalion's equipment . We had to watch the unloading , and follow it to Fintona .

The unloading took so long that we had to lay over one night . No provision had been made to house and feed us . I had to do considerable conning to get us housed and fed . I don't recall how I did it , but somehow I managed it.

I soon found out that Officers were not allowed to ride in the coaches with their enlisted men . Part of the class system in the British Isles . The coaches had two seats facing each other , with a door on each side . There was no way to travel between coaches , once the train was in motion

My men didn't know their destination , or even where I was . I had some difficulty keeping tabs on them .

In Fintona we were housed in quonset huts on the edge of a golf course owned by Sir Basil Brooke , the Prime Minister of Northern Ireland .

We did close order drill on the fairways , and extended order in the neighboring peat bogs .

The weather was rainy and chilly most of the winter .

1944

The Irish Republican Army was alive and well . They tormented the Royal Ulster Constabulary , by blowing up a police station about once a month .

I spent two weeks with the Liverpool Scottish Battalion , in Bainbridge the County Down , as part of an Officer Exchange program with the British Army .

Lt. Gen. George S. Patton visited the Battalion while I was down there. The Battalion did a "marching fire" demonstration with live ammunition , for him . Two men from B Company were wounded during the exercise , but did not have their wounds attended to until the problem was over . Gen. Patton ordered that they be awarded the Soldier's Medal .

He also gave orders for all Officers to have their insignia of rank welded on their steel helmets , and kept shined . He indicated that he did not want to hunt for the man in charge .

At one point we made a dummy move to Belfast , boarded ship , got off, and went back to Camp . Eighty-four telephone calls were monitored going out of Fintona to the German Embassy in Dublin .

The border between Northern Ireland and the Irish Free State was easy to accidentally get across . If a soldier was picked up there , he was interned for the rest of the war .

We moved to Dungannon for the Spring months . We were there on D-Day of the Normandy Invasion .

We pulled out of Belfast Harbor, under the cover of darkness , on the U.S. Marine Raven June 30th , destination Utah Beach , Normandy , France

My fourth of July was a memorable one . We climbed down cargo nets into landing craft , and hit the beaches where the 4th Division landed on D-Day .

We were well loaded down with our full field equipment , and extra ammunition for the troops that were fighting . We also had our impregnated long johns on . I had an escape map sewed in the lining of my shirt .

We marched to St. Saveur Le Viconte , and went into an assembly area .

That night one of my men , Marvin Robinson , shot a French cow . He challenged her , and after getting no response , emptied his B.A.R. into her . That caused all sorts of problems before the U.S. Army paid it's owner .

We move to another assembly area that was closer to the front . As darkness fell , on the evening of July 7th ; we moved up to the front , to relieve elements of the 82nd Airbourne Division , and bedded down on the back side of a hill .

The artillery from both sides boomed all night long , as we tried to get some sleep . I was wondering how many of my Second Platoon would still be around the following night . Then it dawned on me that I might not be around to know . Some of the words of the 23rd Psalm went through my mind Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death , I shall fear no evil . ----- But could I truthfully say that I felt no evil ? I was scared to death .

Finally I drifted into an uneasy sleep .

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The Normandy Campaign had started with the landings on June 6th , that cost the Allies 12,000 battle casualties , of which 2,500 were killed . ( The Second Front - Time-Life Books Page 161 )

It lasted until August first , Allied battle casualties totaled an additional 122,000 men . ( Liberation - Time-Life Books Page 31 )

The 121st Infantry was committed on July 8th with a full complement of 3,257 Officers and men , of which 123 were Officers . In the twenty - three days that followed 1,323 became casualties , 76 of them were Officers .

This was the Bocage country of hedgerows that had been formed to mark property lines , and protect crops from the violent sea winds . There were approximately 500 of these fields per square mile , covering an area 60 miles long and 25 miles wide . ( Liberation - Time-Life Books Page 21)

These hedge rows were not the kind one sees in the States . Their base was of soil that had become hard packed over the centuries . They were roughly 12 ft. across at the base and 5 ft. high , with bushes and trees growing on top .

They were difficult enough to scale , if we weren't being shot at . The German Army had dug into them , and set up their machine guns , and

88mm anti-tank guns . Add tanks and supporting artillery to the mix , and you had formidable defensive positions .

I have since read that the First Army had developed a blade for the Sherman tank that was quite successful in dozing through these hedgerows. In the five days that I fought there I never saw a U.S. Army tank in action -- Period .

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The next morning ( 8 July ) at 0700 we started up a dirt trail toward our line of departure . To my surprise , there in the trail stood a nude paratrooper taking a sponge bath in his helmet . German bullets were cutting the branches over his head , bringing the leaves down upon him . When he had finished soaping up ; he poured some water from a "Jerry" can into his helmet , lifted it above his head , and rinsed himself off .

To this day , when I take a shower , I can see the satisfied look on that paratrooper's face .

Before we crossed the line of departure , Capt. Maddox filled us in on what he knew of the situation . He indicated that the 82nd had not been taking any prisoners alive . That indicated that the Germans would not be giving up .

I was not prepared for the results of the slaughter that had occurred in the valley below us . Everywhere there were the bloated carcasses of dead cattle and horses . Scattered among them were dead German soldiers , whose faces had turned green . Mixed with the smell of gunpowder , and our own gas impregnated underwear in the heat of the July sun , made for an odor that was indescribable .

Shortly after we jumped off the 88's started picking us off . They didn't hesitate to shoot at single individuals . We worked our way down into the valley , where a dirt road ran East out of La Haye Du Puits . We were held up there by determined resistance . We made very little headway the remainder of the day .

That night we made a "Marching Fire" attack that allowed us to reach the top of the next ridge .

Capt. Maddox received a burst from a MG-42 through his left shoulder. We were unable to locate an aid man , or to locate the Bn Aid Station . I attempted to get volunteers to take him back to the Regimental Aid Station , that I had noticed when we jumped off earlier in the day . The men were fearful of being ambushed in the dark . So , I told Lt. Limperis I would take him back myself . He did not give me his permission , nor



did he order me not to go .

The Field manuals indicate that an Officer does not leave his Platoon to evacuate wounded .

I would estimate the Regimental Aid Station to be a little over a half a mile back of us . I had no trouble finding it , but plenty getting him back there .

I left him there , and quickly left to return to my Platoon; fully expecting to be courts-martialed for my actions . However , I had some doubts about living long enough for it to happen .

I rejoined my Platoon , and heard nothing more at the time .

I later learned that had I been five minutes later getting him back , he would not have lived .

The next night the hedgerows we were behind were so close to the enemy we could hear them talking . I spent most of the night making sure that someone was awake . I shook one man who was dozing , and warned him that the Krauts were only fifty yards away . His answer was "Tell the sons a bitches to go back to sleep".

When morning arrived , we received an order to attack at 0600 . It was already 0700 . The messenger had apparently ran into some shelling , and elected to wait it out .

We started advancing . The enemy had pulled back to another position . As we were scaling a hedgerow , Sgt. Milford W. Wilson extended his rifle from the top of it to Pvt. John Ruskin , to assist his getting over . When Ruskin pulled, Wilson had his finger through the trigger guard . The rifle went off , killing Ruskin instantly .

Sgt. Wilson took Ruskin's death very hard . I had serious reservations about his being able to lead his squad . ( Later on , when I returned from being hospitalised , I learned that this incident preyed on his mind to the point that he wanted to even the score). He was promoted to Tech. Sgt. , and was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross , posthumously

We moved to another hedgerow , where we confronted by a Mark IV tank . When I reported it to Batalion , I was told that there were no enemy tank in the area . I replied that I was looking at one with a black cross on it , and I was going to have it shot at . In the meantime I had Tech.Sgt. O'Kelly order Sgt. Grezzaffi to move his squad away from the part he was behind . They both objected to the move , but complied . When the tank shot up that section , they expressed their gratitude .

We finally got the tank to pull back , by dropping mortar shells around it .

By the fifth day Company A had lost four of its six Officers . A Rifle Company at full strength had 187 men and 6 Officers . I took Command of the Company around noon the fifth day . At about 2330 I received orders to hold up ; as we had advanced to a point where we were 2,000 yards ahead of the units on our left and right .

We were on the forward slope of a hill , with a trail leading down through the center of my position . Rations and water had been hand carried to us , and deposited at a point on that trail .

I decided to assemble the Platoon Sergeants there , to orient them on our situation . My one remaining Officer was not there , as I had already talked to him earlier .

We were undoubtedly bunched up too much , but there seemed to be no other alternative , as the Jerries were too close to us . The battle area was relatively quiet , except for occasional artillery fire from both sides . As I was whispering the situation to my Non-Coms , a stray mortar shell landed on the pile of rations that we were gathered around . That resulted in eleven casualties ; seven wounded , and four killed . I was the least injured of the group .

I had been hit by five shell fragments ; two in my back , and three in my left leg . Two were in the front of my left thigh , and one grazed my shin bone .

The Medics cut off my clothes , and gave me the morphine and sulphur drugs from my first aid packet . The gas impregnated long johns were a welcome loss . We were sure that the Enemy would smell us long before we reached them .

I was in an Evacuation Hospital on the beach by 0700 the next morning. There were two possibilities for me . I could either be sent back to the States in a C-47 , or to England in a L.S.T.

The Evacuation Hospital was a tent set up . I heard a Doctor tell a Nurse that she needed to take some rest , as she had been on duty for nineteen hours . Her reply was that she thought she was needed more there than in a bunk .

I went by L.S.T. to the 297th General Hospital in Stourport , England. It had been staffed for several weeks , and its nurses were fed up with close order drill .

We were its first patients .

When pay day came I was the only one in my ward that got paid in full. The others received only partial pay . My 201 file had been placed on my

litter , and I had been transferred out of the 121 to the hospital. This was the correct procedure .

I noticed another Officer down at the other end of the ward who looked strangely familiar . He was red haired , and looked like the Frey family, whose kids I had gone to school with , in Saxtons River , Vt.. So , I went down and asked him if he was from Saxtons River . He replied that he was from Jacksonville , Fla . ; but that he was a brother to the ones I knew in Vermont .

The walking wounded were asked to go to another ward to help cheer up a badly wounded patient there . He was an Infantry Lt. Col. who was only a few days from completing medical school , when he was called up . He had lost both arms and both legs , was blind , and had a hole shot through his penis . His positive attitude cheered us up , and we realized how fortunate we had been .

Another Officer that was in a bed next to mine , had one side of his buttocks shot off . The nurses periodically woke him up to give him shots of penacillen in the other side . He remarked that he thought that they were trying to shoot off the other side . The doctors told him that in World War I he would have been sent home , but in this one he would be able to go back and fight again .

I was x-rayed , and they decided to leave the fragments in my back and thigh . They placed gauze in the wounds ; periodically easing it out , to allow them to heal from the inside out . Oddly enough , the shin bone was the last to heal . I still had a dressing on it when I got back to France

There was another Officer there that was succeeding in making the doctors believe that he was crazy . Whenever he saw one of them coming , he would get up on his bunk and bounce his head against the wall and count cadence . We were never questioned about him , so we said nothing.

On 13 August I received my Purple Heart , for my wounds of 12 July . then I was sent to a Red Cross Rehab Hospital . It was an experiment in the rehabilitation of Officers . We were housed in a mansion on a country estate . My main recollection was a guided tour we took of Stratford-on-Avon .

On August 19th I was returned to duty , and sent to the 10th Replacement Depot in Litchfield .

While I was there I ran into Eddie Kearns from my old Company (F) in the 60th Infantry . He had been a Pfc . in my squad . He was now a First Sergeant . He told me that there was no one left in the unit that I would know . The Second Platoon had been wiped out , in Normandy .

I sailed from Southhampton with a package of men , to return to the fighting in France .

The Colonel in charge of the package made me the Mess Officer . It was a job that seemed to follow me . I had been the Officer's Mess Officer in Northern Ireland for the First Batalion . I was sent to check the enliste men's galley on the ship , but the British were not about to let me in .

We landed on Omaha Beach . I went to a replacement pool in Rennes ; where I waited for about three weeks , before rejoining the 121 .

Finally I rejoined them at an assembly area outside of Landernau . The fighting at Brest had just been concluded , after a thirty-five day seige

I reported to Co. A , where I learned that Lt. Tierney had been killed on July 18th . In ten days all of Co. A's Officers had become casualties. On July 26th the Company received 100 replacements .

The Regiment had suffered 1,197 battle casualties during August and September . That brought the total number of battle casualties up to 2,520 , since they landed in France . When one considers that only about 2,500 of the Regiment's men are front line troops ; it,s easy to see that most of them were replacements .

The few "old men" that knew me were in shock when I appeared in the Company area . They were under the impression that I had been one of those who had been killed by that mortar shell .

My stay with them was a short one . I received word that I was wanted at Batalion Headquarters , where Lt. Col. Jones informed me that he was giving me Command of Company C .

He had relieved Capt. Winship Wrigley of it's Command , for heating coffee , when he was supposed to be in the attack . The reserve Company had passed through his unit while he sat there . He had gotten down on knees and begged the Colonel to relieve him . He said that he could not handle a Rifle Company , as he was a Supply Officer .

Col. Jones placed him under arrest , and brought charges against him . Somewhere along the line the charges were dropped . He was promoted to Major , and made a Public Relations Officer for the 9th Army . Col. Jones was furious , but the matter was out of his control .

Then I was handed a copy of General Order No. 30 , Headquarters Eighth Infantry Division , dated 26 July 1944 . I had been awarded the Bronze Star Medal for saving Capt. Maddox's life .

Of the eleven men on that order , I was the only one that had an award dated 8 July , our first day of combat .

In Normandy we had been in the First Army , under the Command of Lt. Gen. Omar N. Bradley . We were in the VIII Corps , Commanded by Maj. Gen. Troy H. Middleton .

While I was in the hospital , the Division was in the Third Army under Lt. Gen. George S. Patton - for approximately two weeks . Then the VIII Corps was made a part of Lt. Ge. William H. Simpson's Ninth Army . At the end of September the VIII Corps became part of the First Army once again . This time it was Commanded by Lt. Gen. Courtney H. Hodges ; and we went by French box cars , "forty and eight (forty men or eight horses) , to Luxembourg .

The First Batalion went into a defensive position along the Our River. The Eighth Division had a thirty mile frontage . My men were spread ptetty thin . It took me two hours to walk my Company front . The men on my outpost line had no visual contact with each other . They had sound powered telephones for communication ; with wires running between them , and back to Company Headquarters .

Batalion had it's headquarters in a castle .

The Corps had self propelled artillery roaming around in the rear , to give the appearance of more artillery than there actually was .

We were sure that the war would soon be over . Elements of the Fifth Armored Division had gone completely through the Siegfried Line , just before we relieved them . They found the fortifications unmanned .

We were quartered in Befort , when we were in reserve . My Company Officers , and myself , were quartered with a delightful family ; a Doctor , his wife , and teen aged daughter . We had cooked meals , and slept in beds . Their English was quite good . The Doctor had an office in Etternach , which he traveled to daily . He was also a dentist , as well as an M.D. . He said that he was required to study Latin for eleven years in pre-med .

The enlisted men were housed in a school gym . We were rationed mortar ammunition ; and authorized to shoot , only if there was a target of thirty or more .

On one occasion we cheated . Enemy soldiers were observed going into a clump of bushes , in a ravine next to the river . We waited until one of them went in , and dropped a shell in them . He vacated the premises in a hurry , with his trousers down around his ankles .

On one occasion I counted nineteen consecive incoming shells that failed to explode . Probably caused by sabatage by their slave laborers .

At times shells came in that screamed , but did not explode . I found one that appeared to be an empty shell casing , but it had holes bored at different angles in the base . They were apparently shot for their psychological effect .

The V-1 " buzz bombs " flew over during the night time hours , on their way to London .

One of them turned around and came back , landing in a field between us and Befort . It flattened the hay stubble as if it had been rolled . We were in a draw , so the concussion went over us . The glass was blown out of the windows in Befort .

Company C had captured the German paymaster at Brest , and the men had more money than they knew what to do with . We were not allowed to send more money home than we were paid . I sent a Jeep and trailer to a brewery in Diekirch to purchase some kegs of beer . The brewer refused to take any more money than he was owed . The beer was of excellent quality .

We received replacements while we were there . One of mine was a 2nd Lt. from Stevens Point , Wisconsin , Lt. Robert O. Delzell . He had taken high school R.O.T.C. for one semester , and then dropped it . Lo and behold he received a Commission in the mail , and was ordered to report to a replacement center . He was sent overseas to me , without any more training . He was essentially a civilian in the Army . I placed him in a Platoon that had an excellent Platoon Sergeant , and let him tag along .

Another lad came to me with tears in his eyes ; and explained that there were eleven million men in the Armed Service , but only seven hundred thousand would ever be shot at . He wanted to know why he had to be one of them .

From time to time the enemy infiltrated our lines in captured American uniforms . We made sure our passwords contained words that they had some difficulty pronouncing .

I went to a Top Secret briefing in Wiltz . The Briefing Officer said that the Germans had sixty divisions facing the Russians , and about twenty facing the Allies . The attitude there was that the war had not long to go on .

I had one man who had a habit of getting into trouble . On one occasion he traded a pair of shoes with a bartender for some beer . The bartender thought he was being forced to , because the soldier laid his rifle on the counter .

On another occasion he took a captured MG-42 into some woods and

limbered it up . The town's people evacuated the nearby village . They thought the Germans had come back , as the village was off limits to U.S. troops .

His crowning achievement was to steal a Jeep from D Co. , and go to Paris with a couple of buddies . They returned when they heard rumors in Paris that we were going to move out . We were in Diekirch , getting ready to leave, when they arrived back . They were given their weapons , and continued on with us under arrest .

The night before our 107 mile motor march to the Huertgen Forest area, Capt. James A. Danforth returned from wounds to take over Co. C . He was a Capt. , and Co. C's previous Commander , and I was only a 1st Lt., so he got his Company back . ( He turned out to be former Vice President Dan Quale's uncle )

Lt. Col. Jones called me on the telephone , and told me he was not demoting me . I was to remain unattached , until he needed another Co. Commander .

While the Regiment was in Luxembourg it sustained 36 battle casualties . The trip to the Huertgen area was a wet one . We rode in open vehicles getting thoroughly drenched by the time we reached an assembly area in the vicinity of Rotgen , Germany .

At 1700 the rain changed to snow . The cooks had a five-in-one ration ready for us .

We were now going to become a part of the V Corps of the First Army , Commanded by Maj. Gen. Leonard T. Gerow .

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The Huertgen Forest was a seventy square mile area of roller coaster real estate , southeast of Aachen , just through the Siegfried Line . It consisted of seventy-five foot planted fir trees , with fire breaks , pill boxes , log bunkers , and some twenty small farming villages .

It was here during the last three months of 1944 , that six Infantry Divisions , and one Armored Division , tried to sweep 80,000 German soldiers from the forest . At one time or other it involved 123,000 U.S. troops , who suffered 24,000 battle casualties , and 9,000 non-battle casualties .

Early on the shells burst in the tree tops , causing heavy U.S. losses . The defenders were in pill boxes and log bunkers , that gave them protection from our artillery .

Later on in the conflict , the area had the worst winter in thirty years . Rain, snow , and fog made air support virtually impossible .

Eight years after the war was over ; the forester of Huertgen , Herr Herman Kamp , said that 50,000 mines , hand grenades , artillery shells , mines , and bombs , totaling more than 700 tons had been rendered harmless since the war . ( Reuters , Aachen , Germany , 25 Oct. 1952 )

In 1979 Vossenack Burgomeister , Herr Baptiste Palme , informed Cecil B. Currey that 56,000 soldiers and civilians lost their lives in the Vossenack , and Germeter area . As many as fifteen decomposed bodies had been uncovered annually by farmers and laborers . (Follow Me and Die - Cecil B. Currey )

As late as 1985 , approximately one and one half million pieces of ammunition , etc., were picked up in the state where Huertgen is located.

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On the evening of the 19th of November we started a seven mile march through the forest , where the trees were planted so close together that their tops closed out any light . We grasped the cartridge belt of the man ahead of us to keep from getting lost . Meanwhile a mixture of rain and snow continued to fall .

A guide from the 12th Inf. of the 4th Div. was leading us in . He became lost several times . We sat and waited for him to get his bearings . It took the remainder of the night to reach our destination . We could hear the artillery constantly growing louder as we went along .

When daylight came , the landscape we saw defied description . The branches of the trees had been shot off , and the seventy-five foot firs were reduced to fifteen foot toothpicks . The ground was littered with discarded equipment from both sides .

We met the remnants of the 12th Infantry coming out . I had never seen U.S. troops so badly beaten . They had left their weapons on the ground . Tears streamed down their dirty , unshaven faces . One Lt . said to me as we passed " Good luck Lieutenant , because you're damned sure going to need it . We've had three sets of replacements in the last two weeks , and we're still in the same holes " .

It was then that I knew that we were in for a rough time .

We were supposed to make a coordinated attack , but that was not to be . Company Commanders were not given time to reconnoiter . Each Company went directly into the attack , as soon as it had relieved the 12th Infantry . Each one of them took a severe beating .



I stayed in the Bn Hdqs pillbox , until the afternoon of the 22nd . It was then that Col. Jones told me that he was relieving Capt. Maxwell of Command of Co. A , and that I was to take over .

The firebreak that led to Co. A's position was parallel to the front . The areas on each side were mined , amid a tangle of broken trees . The firebreak was periodically traversed with mortar fire . It was the only route I could use .

I met Capt. Maxwell and his Executive Officer , outside a large log bunker . He told me that he had made three attacks , starting out with a full strength company . What was left of it was inside that bunker , ten men and one Officer . He said he had been ordered to make a fourth , and had refused . He said that he had told Bn to bring the Bn staff up , and they would all make another attack ; but he was not ordering those men in the bunker to make another one .

Capt. Maxwell and his Exec. then left , to go back to Bn .

I received a memorandum some time later , that stated that they had both been courts-martialed , and been sentenced to three years in the Leavenworth Penal Barracks , and dishonorably discharged from the Service for refusing to obey a direct order .

The next day was Thanksgiving Day . I received an order to send a detail to pick up Thanksgiving dinner . I told them that if it was all the same to them , we would just as soon eat K-Rations as go after the meal . I was promptly told that I would send the detail . Gen. Eisenhower had ordered that every soldier in the E.T.O. would have the traditional Thanksgiving dinner .

I sent two men . Only one returned . One had become a casualty , and the other was leading a horse ; with the marmite cans slung over it's back , held together with a piece of rope !

We unloaded the horse , and sent him on his way back down the trail alone . I have often wondered what happened to him .

We set up a chow line in a small clearing next to the bunker . Before anyone got to eat anything, enemy artillery fire blew it all over the area .

That night I received an order to make a dawn attack the next morning . The objective was to be a triangular section where two roads forked , leading to the village of Heurtgen . We were to be supported by thirty batalions of Corps artillery , firing on the section for twenty minutes.

I was told that Corps artillery consisted of three-hundred guns ,

that were capable of laying down 5,000 rounds in twenty minutes .

I told my troops that our best chance of success was to follow the supporting fires as close as possible , so that when they were lifted we would be able to close with the enemy .

We moved out , and the supporting artillery fire was awesome . Luck was with us . The Krauts had pulled out ; leaving a covering force , that put up some resistance before surrendering .

I later learned that the area was littered with anti-personnel mines . When our kitchen crew moved in there , sometime later , one of the cooks lost a foot . The area had to be taped off . I was probably fortunate that I had so few men . We had walked around in that area and hit nothing .

Shortly after we had secured the area , a tank from the 5th Armored Division's Combat Command R tried to go up the road to our right . As it reached the road fork , it struck a land mine , blowing off a track . The crew went to work to replace it , with the enemy taking pot shots at them .

Sometime later a team from First Army arrived , with instructions to blow it off the road . The Tankers asked them how long it would take them to do it . The Capt. in charge told them it would probably take an hour . The Tankers indicated that they could have it back and running in about ten minutes . The answer was that they had orders to blow it off the road , from Gen. Hodges himself , and that they were not going back and tell him that they hadn't done it . So , the Tank crew stood aside and let them do it .

Sometime prior to the 28th of November the First Batalion crossed that same road. The amount of communications wire that lay along the sides was a testament to the intensity of the artillery and mortar fire . Wire crews found it quicker to to lay new wire than to find the breaks in the old wire . They had hardly got across the road , when they hit mines . The two attached Engineers were the first to loose their feet . The lead Company continued , with volunteers loosing theirs . There was no shortage of volunteers . They felt that they might get out of there alive that way . Each man stepped in the tracks of the one in front of him , as there was about three inches of snow on the ground .

We finally reached the wooded area south of Heurtgen . The enemy knew we were there , because they shelled the area constantly .

The village of Heurtgen fell to the troops of the Second Batalion of the 121 , and CCR of the Fifth Armored Division , on November 28th . The First Batalion of the 121 moved in from the south that night , under

the cover of darkness .

Both Capt. Danforth and Lt. Fitzpatrick ; Commanders of Companies C and B , were killed in that action .

My little Company got in a basement that was reinforced with concrete and steel . Overhead , the rubble from the stone building gave us added protection from direct hits from artillery and mortar shells . There were plenty of them . The dust sifted down on us , and the sound was very much like being inside a big bass drum .

The second basement we got in was somewhat quieter .

The next evening I was notified by Batalion that I was receiving fifty four replacements ,

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During November 1944 the Eighth Infantry Division suffered 1,092 battle casualties , including 154 Officers and men killed , and another 1,051 non battle casualties . The Division received 1,317 officers and enlisted replacements . Though personnel officers reported casualties by the month , it is safe to say that most of the losses occurred after 20 November . ( A Dark And Bloody Ground - Edward G. Miller - Page 152 )

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I was told that I would have the next day to get organized . It was going to be a problem to get much accomplished in the darkness . I had about six of my original men left . They would have to be assigned eight or nine men each , to make understrength squads .

At 0100 fifty of the replacements arrived . Four had been wounded on the way up to me .

We had no more than found places to get them undercover , when Batalic changed it's mind . We were to move out and occupy an area south and east of the town , before daylight .

Someone had their wires crossed , and we were sent to the wrong place Sgt. Walter A. Butler , my Communications Sgt. , and I were in the lead , with the remainder of the unit following . We were in no shape to contend with what we hit . Our weapons were slung across our shoulders , and our hands were occupied with map boards and flashlights . We suddenly found ourselves in the midst of a group of German soldiers . They were as suprised as we were , because we high tailed it out of there without being shot at .

The next thing we knew we were in the Third Battalion area . We then cut back into Heurtgen , with daylight upon us . There Col. Ginder , sent from the Third Army to assist in the capture of Heurtgen , told me that my Company was in the trenches on the right side of the road leading out of the village . These trenches were dug by the Germans to help defend the town .

We had to scramble from shell hole to shell hole , through artillery fire , to reach the Company . Lt. Ringerud had taken them there , after learning that was where we were supposed to be . He was the lone Officer among the men I had inherited .

We were there to protect the advance of CCR of the Fifth Armored , as they attacked the Village of Kleinhau . The artillery fire grew more intense , as the day went on . We had no Medical Personnel , and no way of evacuating our wounded . So we patched up our wounded as best we could and sweat it out .

The 56th Field Artillery had a Shell Rep Team with us , counting the incoming rounds , and trying to estimate their direction and range .

CCR was successful in taking Kleinhau . We left for Kleinhau as night fell . I asked the Officer in charge of the Shell Rep Team how many rounds came into our area . He replied , 1,200 .

We trudged up the road to Kleinhau , where I found a pillbox large enough to house our entire unit .

The next day we were ordered to occupy CCR's positions , while they mounted an attack on Gey and Strauss .

Their holes were very shallow , and located on the back side of a ridge , where Artillery shells were apt to go over them . Not so with mortar shells , however . We were plastered with them all day . Our attempts to improve these positions were not very successful . The shale like content of the frozen soil made digging with our small entrenching tools difficult .

By late afternoon the Armored Infantry fell back to our positions . So , we had two units and only one set of holes . Their losses helped the situation to some extent . A badly wounded Major was placed on top of me , in my hole . He bled to death shortly thereafter .

The Armored Infantry pulled out just before darkness set in . I moved my men back to the pillbox in Kleinhau just after dark . They went back in groups of two . When I was sure that they were all out , I went back to join them .

On the evening of the 6th of December , we were ordered to move south down the road to a nose opposite Brandenburg .

On the left side of the road between Kleinhau and Brandenburg , there were three noses . We were to relieve a unit on the last one .

An artillery barrage interrupted us , as we reached the outskirts of Brandenburg . The troops scattered , and took cover ; making it almost impossible to locate them in the darkness , until it became daylight . By the time I got them under control , and reached the nose it was well into the afternoon .

I received a call from Batalion , wanting to know why we hadn't reached the place on time . I hadn't seen anyone from Batalion in two weeks , and I was in a foul mood . I informed the person on the other end of the line , that if they were where they should be they would know .

I found out later that we had had three Batalion Commanders during the period 25 November through 6 December . Two of them I have never met .

Along toward night a 1st Lt. from Co. I arrived to take over my Co. I was to show him my position , and then report to Batalion . A runner with the Lt. would show me the way back .

I was in the process of showing him around ; when another messenger arrived , calling the whole thing off . The Regimental Commander , Col. Thomas J. Cross , had found out where The Bn C.O. was in relation to his troops , and relieved him . Col. Cross had decided that he was in no position to relieve anyone .

The next few days were spent alternating between the positions along the ridge .

On another move from Kleinhau to one of the ridges , one of my replacements deliberately took off down the road to Huertgen . My 1st Sgt found him in a cellar there . When I questioned the man about it , his reply was that he just couldn't take it any more . He preferred being courts-martialed than staying. So, I granted him his wish . I later got a memorandum saying that he had been found guilty of straggling ; and had been sentenced to three years in the Lewisburg.Penal Barracks , and dishonorably discharged from the Service

It was not until I was separated from the Service in September of 1941 that I found out that he was the son of my Aunt's next door neighbor . When she questioned me about it , I played dumb . I felt that if the U.S. Government had not publicised the matter that I wouldn't either .

One night when we were in a defensive position along the Brandenburg ridge , Tech Sgt. Otis Smith came into my bunker from his outpost . While

he was there I questioned him about Tech. Sgt. Milford W. Wilson's death at Dinard .

He told me that he thought the U.S. Government ought to be ashamed for having only awarding Wilson the Distinguished Service Cross , instead of the Congressional Medal of Honor .

The tears ran down his dirty unshaven face , as he talked . He said that Wilson was wounded in the stomach , and his intestines hung out like a pig being butchered . His Platoon was out in the open , while attacking a fortified position . He had someone strap a B.A.R. over his right shoulder . He directed his Platoon to fall back under cover , when he got up and started shootigg . He held his intestines in with his left arm , and fired until he dropped dead .

Sgt. Smith asked , " How can a man do more than that for his Country"?

I consoled him as best I could , before he left . Less than one hour later Sgt. Otis Smith was dead , ambushed on his way back to his outpost.

Capt. Dan Henry , a replacement Officer , took over Command of Co. A on the 17th of December .I felt that my days as a Co. C.O. were over . I had taken over Co. A twice , and Co. C once . Maybe it was three times and out .

I became the Executive Officer of Co. A . During the following week the First Batalion attacked the village of Obermaubach , on the Roer River . For the action that took place that week , I was given an Oak Leaf cluster to my Bronze Star Medal . The objective was the Village and a dam on the river .

On Christmas Eve Co. C was told that Co. B was already in town . They were to join them . The information was erroneous . The enemy allowed them to get onto the village , and then closed the trap . Co. C was captured .

Obermaubach fell to the First Batalion late in the afternoon of 26 December .

Christmas morning , much to my supprise , I was notified that I was to go to a field south of Vossenack , and take over a group of men that would become the new Co. C . I was to be it's Company Commander .

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January 15 , 1946 former First Sgt. William L. Shi wrote me a letter, part of which follows : "Col. Cross had me come to Regtl. Hq. . He asked me who I wanted as a C.O. . I don't think he had the right dope on you .

Some one had told him something about you , but he said , " Okay if you want Kelton , you get him."

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So by the Grace of God , Col. Cross , and the First Sgt. I became the Company Commander of the reconstituted Company C .

We all arrived at the field at approximately the same time : 1st Lt. William McClure , Jr. , 25 men from the 3rd Bn , 15 men from the 2nd Bn , 25 green replacements , 1st Sgt. Bill Shi , the Co. Clerk , and one understrength squad that had been attached to the 13th Inf. In that squad was 2nd Lt. Robert O. Delzell .

Sgt. Shi and the Co. Clerk , Sgt. Schweiker , had been catching up on awards at Bn . The rear echelon of the old company was still under Bn control . This included the Supply Sgt. , Mess Sgt. , cooks , articifer , and the drivers .

I had Lt. McClure and Sgt. Shi assign the men to their Platoons , while I interviewed some of them .

Among these was Sgt. Litton , from Co. L . He was to become my Weapons Platoon Sgt. I told him that I wanted the 60mm mortars used , not just carried around . I was aware that most of the men didn't like that , for fear of their drawing enemy fire . I told him that they drew fire because the enemy didn't like being shot at by them . His face lit up when I said that . He told me that I was talking his kind of language , and that I was the first Officer that agreed with him .

Lt. McClure asked me which Platoon I wanted him to take over . Much to his supprise , I told him that he was to be my Executive Officer . I told him the lesson I learned from that test in Ft. Leonard Wood , and that I wanted a Commissioned Officer in charge of Co. Hq., when calls came to my Command Post .

That afternoon we relieved elements of the 13th Inf. on the high ground above the Kall River Gorge . This position was directly across from the villages of Kommerscheidt and and Schmidt .

That night I received a visit from Col. Cross and the 8th Division Commander , Brig. Gen. William G. Weaver .

Gen. Weaver asked me about the position we had taken over from the 13th Inf. I told him that it lacked depth , but we were taking steps to remedy that situstion .

As they left they were not quire out of earshot , when I heard Gen. Weaver tell Col. Cross not to be worried about this outfit , it was in

" good hands."

Although we didn't know it at the time ; the Germans had sent 300,000 troops through the Ardennes , that was the beginning of the "Battle Of The Bulge." On 21 December our sector was turned over to Lt. Gen. William H. Simpson and his Ninth Army . We were now in the XIX Corps , under the Command of Maj. Gen . Raymond S. Mclain .

1945

On New Year's Eve the 56th Field Artillery's first radar shells were used on Schmidt and Kommerscheidt , as a New Year's Greeting. They were designed to explode when they were at a certain distance above any object on the ground .

During the month of January we occupied several defensive positions between Kleinhau and Bergstein . We kept active by patrolling during the night hours .

I continued to receive replacements , as well as hospital returnees ; until we were pretty much up to full strength . The replacement Officers were of quite high caliber . I received one Tech. Sgt. too many . I had him placed in a Platoon that had an Officer and a Platoon Sgt. I told him to learn as much as he could , because he stood a chance of taking over , if one of them became a casualty . He had previously been an instructor at Cooks and Baker's School in Ft. Reilly , Kansas . He had been sent to a basic infantry training school , and then overseas . He turned out to be a Superior Platoon Sgt.

Fortunately , we didn't get into any offensive action , so I had a chance to get the Company into the kind of unit I thought I could be successful with .

Those of us who had been in the Forest the longest had a chance to go to some rest areas .

I went to one in Holland . Before I went , I washed and shaved for the first time in seventy-five days . The rest area I went to was run by the Red Cross . Their personnel pointed at us as if we were freaks . I guess we looked the part . Some of the others had not shaved . I had been from the 19th of November until the 3rd of February , without a change of clothing , shaving , or washing .

When I returned , the Company entrucked for a shower point in Stolberg . There was no attempt to make us look fancy . Clothes that had been through the Quartermaster Laundry ; were in piles according to size , small , medium , and large . We grabbed our size , and showered .



Then we went to an unheated German theater , and saw a U.S.O. show . It turned out to be Marlene Dietrich , and a piano player . I recall that she sang Lilly Marlane , while accompanying herself on a musical saw . She wore a gold lame evening gown with spagetti straps . I had a front row seat ; and I couldn't see a goose bump on her arms , even though I was half frozen in my winter uniform . She spoke almost perfect English .

During November and December the Regiment had 1,265 battle casualties. In January we had 130 .

On 1 February we went back into the First Army , and the VII Corps .

Col. Cross pinned an Oak Leaf Cluster to my Bronze Star Medal , in a woodland ceremony , on February 5th .

On the 8th of February we went to the village of Wenau , and did some small unit training .

The rest of the Batalion followed a training schedule , submitted by Regiment . Col. Cros felt that my situation was unique , and that I knew more about what my unit needed . So, I was allowed to submit my own .

The 56th Field Artillery had a battery that was set up right behind the house we were housed in . The muzzle blasts from their guns during the night made us aware that there was still a war going on .

This was about the only building that was still inhabitable . We used the remainder of the village for training in street fighting . We found that the German panzerfaust would blow a hole through a building that a man could walk through . Our bazooka , on the other hand , only made a small penetrating hole . The German weapon could be used only once , but they had been left in the streets , in plentiful numbers . Our only anxiety was their being booby trapped . However it was a trade off that it might be necessary to take , if nothing else was available .

The panzerfaust was a shoulder fired missile launcher , that had an eleven pound warhead screwed on to fins on the end of a tube . It had a sight on it , and was held under the arm pit , when being fired . ----- I decided to find out how far the fins would go , without a warhead on it . When it went off , I thought my head was going with it . It left me stunned , and my ears ringing .

I asked Schweiker , who spoke and read German , what it said on the tube . He answered something to the effect that it said : " Warning , it is dangerous to fire this weapon without the warhead attached . .

On 24 February we moved to an assembly area near Rolsdorf ; in preparation for a crossing of the Roer River .

We were not selected to be in the assault waves of that action . The 13th Infantry , with the 121st Infantry's Co. H attached , made the river crossing at Duren . They were proceeded by a tremendous artillery barrage that began at 0300 , and lasted for forty-five minutes . The enemy was stunned to the point that they put up very little resistance .

We crossed the river at Duren , and went into action at Binsfeld . It was there that Capt. Dan Henry was wounded , Commanding Co. A .

March 2nd , while the 3rd Bn was fighting in Kerpen , Co. C was sent through the fields around the left side of the village . Our mission was to cut the road that ran out of Kerpen toward Modrath ; and mount the tanks of the 740th Tank Batalion , and attack Modrath before daybreak .

We cut the road at approximately 0500 . We waited for the tanks , but the only ones that appeared were German . Before we realized that they were not ours ; they crossed the bridge over the Erft Canal , into Modrath .

I was unable to reach anyone by radio . It was approaching daybreak , so I decided to withdraw into Kerpen . I found the tanks there . The Major in charge of them refused to go into Modrath , unless my Company went ahead of them . I managed to get in touch with Col. Cross by radio . I asked him if I should go on without them . His reply was " No " , he would be right down .

As I was going into a building to talk to him , an enemy artillery shell landed in the street behind me . Fragments ripped a hole in the seat of my trousers . I bent over and asked my runner , Harper , if I was entitled to a cluster to my Purple Heart . He replied that it was red , but there wasn't any blood .

Inside , I told Col. Cross about the refusal of the tank batalion to go with me . He sent for the Major , and gave him another chance to refuse . The Major refused again . He told the Colonel that it was the improper way to use tanks . Col. Cros put him under arrest , and placed a 1st Lt. in charge of the tanks . Then he asked me how long it would take me to be ready to get going . I replied that I had been ready since 0500 ; and that we could go in ten minutes . His reply was ; Let's not go half calked , let's take an hour . It's now 1000 , attack at 1100 ."

He indicated to me that the area aas the only natural barrier on the Cologne Plain . The Erft River , the Erft Canal , and sixteen bridges and underpasses made it a formidal obstacle .

He asked me if I would like some supporting fires .I told him I would like some , but not heavy enough to arouse them too much .

He arranged for artillery support , and additional fire from the 644th Tank Destroyer Batalion . He learned that the 87th Chemical Batalion had 5,000 rounds of smoke shells . He had them lay a smoke screen along the tree lined road that we would be going down .

We jumped off at 1100 . Col. Cross was standing in the street , as the tanks carrying my troops rolled by . One soldier shouted to him , " Come on down in about twenty minutes , and we'll have your next C.P. ready for you ."

I was told later by The Batalion S-2 , Capt. Murphy Roy , that the remark pleased the Col. . He said , "That's morale , not Red Cross Girls and doughnuts ."

The Krauts were not going to give up without a fight . As we approached the bridge , they blew it up in our face . Then to add insult to injury, they knocked out the lead tank with anti-tank fire . The men riding on it were either wounded or shell shocked .

1st Lt. Pliney A. Winchester led the remainder of the Platoon across the dry bed of the canal into Modrath .

I was on the first tank behind his last squad . We promptly dismounted and followed . I found him in the first building , seriously wounded . He had to be evacuated .

Shortly thereafter I received a call from Batalion wanting to know how many of us had reached town . I replied , " All of us."

We started the methodical business of clearing the town . By nightfall we had reached one of the railroad underpasses , that ran across our front . It was completely blocked with rubble . We were hesitant to try to go up over the tracks , for fear that the enemy might have machine guns trained down them .

That night I received a call from Col. Cross , informing me that we were the farthest into Europe of any Allied forces . I was instructed to "button up" and hold fast until the 12th Engineer Batalion got a bridge across to us .

The next morning Lt. McClure went back to the C.P. we had occupied the day before , to get some champagne that was in the cellar . He came back empty handed , and a bit shaken . The Luftwaffe had tried to bomb the bridge that the Engineers were buliding . One of their bombs missed it's target and hit our old C.P. , completely obliterating it .

At 1300 we received a call , informing us that the bridge had been completed . We began clearing the buildings to our right , along the railroad tracks .

A squad led by Sgt. Murgertroyd found an underpass guarded by an enemy demolition team . Aggressive action on his part eliminated the enemy guards . I called up the Engineers to deactivate the explosives the Krauts had planned to blow the underpass with .

We then had a way for the unit relieving us to continue the attack .

The Cologne Plain was flat agricultural land , with villages scattered across it . Their inhabitants were farmers that worked the land . There were no houses or barns between villages .

During the Cologne Plain operation , we attacked continuously for seventy-two hours . Then a reserve unit would pass through us , and we slept for twenty-four hours . Then we relieved another unit that had been fighting for seventy-two hours . That way we kept the pressure on the enemy constantly .

Behind us there were gigantic search lights trained on the clouds in front of us at night . Their reflection off the clouds acted as artificial moonlight , as we were fighting at a time when there was no moon .

We took Horbell in a night attack on March 5th . We were in the process of moping up , just before daybreak , when a flak wagon made an entrance . An enterprising bazooka man blew the occupants into the air .

When daylight came , one of our own P-47's started to peel off to drop a bomb on us . I yelled to the crew of an M-10 Tank Destroyer to get out their signal panels . Thank God he had been attached to us . They were just in the nick of time . The Thunderbolt pulled out of his dive , wagged his wings , and headed elsewhere .

Shortly thereafter , we attacked Hermulheim . There we encountered a considerable amount of artillery fire . It was there that I lost my radio operator . We were on the ground floor of a three story building . My runner , Harper, was with the radio operator , and myself . A delayed fused shell came down through the ceiling , and exploded in the room with us . Harper and I received no more than a splattering of debris , and a ringing of the ears . The radio operator (whose name I do not recall) had a large shell fragment penetrate the SCR-300 radio on his back , and come out through his chest . It was large enough to put a football through . He sucked air for a few moments ; almost like a

a chicken with it's head cut off . Harper asked me if there was anything we could do for him . I told him that we didn't have first aid packets enough in the whole Company to fill that hole . The best thing we could do for him was to say a prayer , because he was beyond our help .

As we reached the Rhine at Bonn , we came across a wine cellar in our zone of action . I placed a guard on it , as I didn't want the whole Co. drunk . The Company stayed sober , but the guard didn't .

I picked out a building on the river bank for a Command Post . Harper flipped a light switch , and lo and behold the ceiling light bulb came on . I had the only electric lights in the city of Bonn .

That night ( 14 March ) I received a telephone call . I thought it was Sgt. Humph , the Batalion Sgt. Major , when he addressed me as Captain Kelton . I answered by admonishing him for calling me a Captain . The voice on the other end informed me that I was not talking to Sgt. Humph . It was Col. Cross , the Regimental Commander . He informed me that I was a Captain , and had been for two days .

He said , " I used your Company for a spearhead crossing the Cologne Plain . You took more objectives than any other Company in the Regiment ; and had the fewest casualties doing it , and I like that ."

He asked me if I had a set of Captain's bars . I replied in the negative . He said he would send me a set that he had when he was a Capt. He did just that . They were sterling silver .

On 22 March we relieved elements of the 104th Division at Longerwich , just outside of Cologne . There we had time to see a U.S.O. show .

I had to attend a reclassification hearing on Lt. Robert O. Delzell . He didn't hold anything against me for having him recasssified . He told the First Army board that he considered my action a favor . He was a professional student , and he could certainly be of better use to the Service in some other capacity .

The 121st Infantry had 410 battle casualties crossing the Cologne PLain , with Maj. Gen. J. Lawton Collins' VII Corps .

We crossed the Rhine at Bonn on an Engineer bridge on 31 March ; and became a part of Maj. Gen. Matthew B. Ridgeway's XVIII Airbourne Corps .

The trap had been closed on 314,000 German troops in the Rhur by two armored columns of the U.S. First Army , at Padderborn .

The XVIII Airbourne Corps consisted of the 8th , 78th , 86th and the 13th Armored Divisions . It's mission was to cut the Rhur Pocket in two

During the fighting there the First Batalion's rifle companies acted as reinforced combat patrols . I had attachments ranging from mortars , machine guns , 57mm anti-tank guns , to 105mm cannons . Each rifle Company was assigned a town to go after , Our only contact with each other , and Batalion was by radio . When an objective was taken , we received another from Lt. Col. Willis J. Adams , our C.O.

We were clearing one town when a motorcycle , with a girl in the sidecar , tried to dash through town . A round from a bazooka spoiled the attempt . An envelope fell into the street . I had it sent back to Batalion . The next day the Bn S-2 informed me that it contained a list of all the supply points in the Pocket , and their locations .

Shortly thereafter the rocket firing Typhoons of the British Royal Air Force gave them a going over .

On another occasion the First Batalion was attacking Benfe , a cross roads town in a valley that ran parallel to our front. Companies B , and C were held up at night fall by an enemy tank , as they attacked astride a road leading into the town . The Batalion C.O. decided to commit his reserve Company , Co.A , on a flanking attack . Company A got into some trouble ; so he sent Company C to sssist them , after darkness had set in in .

The trail that I followed did not lead where it was indicated on the map . Instead , it lead through the enemy lines . We ended up in a house with their artillery located in the back yard .

I posted a sentry inside the door . It paid off when two enemy soldiers came in , and were captured .

It was obvoius that we were in the wrong place : so we left by the same route we came .

One of our soldiers went to sleep, and was left behind . He woke up and came out the same way that we did , but after daybreak . He reported that there were a group of ememy soldiers , asleep on both sides of the the trail we had come down . He walked down through , without awakening any of them .

We started all over again . By this time it was daylight , and I took a trail that was not on the map. We went down into the valley , and foun a foot bridge that crossed a small stream, that ran parallel to our fron A path ran up from it , across an open field to a house . A sniper hit two of my men , as they tried to cross the bridge . They fell into the water . By that time the rest of my men became hesitant about trying to

about trying to cross the bridge . So , I took a turn at it . I hit the bridge on the run ; and proceeded on up the hill to the house , not knowing whether there were friend or foe inside . I heard bullets crack while I was in the clearing . Afterward I was told that they were hitting the ground right where my foot had just left . I was in luck when I arrived . The occupants were the rear elements of Company A .

When the remainder of the Company began coming across , the sniper must have gotten cold feet . We heard no more from him .

We reached the wooded hill, and found the rest of Company A . They had been in a fire fight , and were some what disorganized .

I contacted Batalion by radio , and advised them of my position . I was ordered to attack Benfe from the rear by 1800 .

We proceeded through the woods , with Sgt. Lenburg's Platoon in the lead , until we reached the road that led into Benfe from the rear .

Looking out of the woods , it was quite a sight . There in the open in front of us , stretched a line of dug in log emplacements , with the enemy occupants looking the other way . About one hundred yards away was the village .

Then our radio became noisy , clamoring for a blow by blow account of our movements , just as the enemy relief was coming up the road . I instructed the radio operator to " shut the damned thing off " , and not to turn it on until I told him to . It was so loud that I was fearful of it's giving our position away .

We captured all of them , but one , who ran into the bushes . When questioned , the lone Officer in the group told me that there were no tanks in the village . I hoped he was being truthful , because I was going to mount a " marching fire " attack on the town .

The enemy , in the log positions in front of us were annihilated . The town was taken shortly thereafter, yielding about twenty prisoners . We had no casualties .

At exactly 1800 I ordered the radio turned back on , and gave Bn the news . We remained there that night , and marched the prisoners up the road to Batalion the next morning .

I recomended Sgt. Litton and Sgt. Lenburg for battle field promotions to 2nd. Lt. . Sgt. Lenburg turned his down . He said that he was willing to lead his Platoon , but feared that the promotion would delay his separation from the Service when the war was over . He was thirty-four years old , and had a wife and children waiting for him .

I was the Military Governor of the village of Cronenberg for a week , until Military Government caught up with us . I don't recall the exact date , but I do recall that it was there that we learned of the death of President Roosevelt .

I used a Command Car that was formerly used by the Commanding General of the 9th Panzer Division . It was a Mercedes Benz . Our mechanics blew out the fuel lines , and painted a white star on it . I had to leave it behind , when we left to cross the Elbe River .

Earlier I got Lt. Chester A. Ringerud back from A Company . Capt. Guyer had been having some disagreements with him , and Col. Adams asked me if I had any objections to taking him . I assigned him to a Platoon , and had no further problems with him .

During our involvement in the Rhur Pocket we had 463 additional battle casualties in the Regiment .

We crossed the Elbe River at Bleckade on a bridge built by the 82nd Airbourne's Engineers .

We remained in the XVIII Airbourne Corps ; but became a part of the British Second Army , under the Command of Lt. Gen. Sir Miles C. Dempsey. Our supplies came from the U.S. Ninth Army .

2 May was the last day of the war for us . Lt. McClure and I were up most of the night of the first of May , making plans for the next day . We hated to loose anyone , with victory so close at hand .

We rode the tanks of the 740th Tank Batalion , with orders to beat the British 6th A.B. Division into Wittenburg . As it turned out , we both arrived at the same time . I negotiated with the British Major to take my column down the right side of the road through town . He would use the left side .

Later on down the road, came one of the more gratifying parts of warfare . We liberated a P.O.W. camp that contained British P.O.W.'s that had been there since Dunkirk in 1940 .

During the remainder of the day the German Army came down the road by the thousands . Complete units , with their white flags tied to their antennas , and their guns turned backward . The civilians were also using the same roads , creating a massive traffic jam . If they had started a riot , we would have had a hard time stopping it . They were anxious to get as far away from the Russians as possible .

Towards evening I was notified that I was five miles into the Russian sector . So , I had to withdraw to a village designated by Batalion .



I occupied one half of the town , and the Russians the other half . There was quite a contrast between the two halves . The Russian half was dead , with only Russian soldiers moving about . In our half there was considerable civilian activity .

The remainder of the Regiment took Schwerin , and liberated a German concentration camp at Wobblein .

The camp would turn one's stomach . It contained 2,500 starving human beings ; 200 of which were in a pit , most of them dead . Only a flutter of an eyelid would indicate that a few were alive .

The last day of the conflict the 8th Division captured 244,600 of the enemy , bringing the grand total to 316,187 for the whole war .

The Regiment had 12 more battle casualties , bringing it's total to 4,842 , of which 1,000 were killed .

Out of a Divisional strength of 15,347 , it had 13,458 battle casualties .

My Company guarded 46,000 prisoners for about a week , until Military Government caught up with the staggering total . We herded them into an area surrounded by roads , and set up our machine guns so they could fire down them . In reality , if they wanted to get out they could .

Their food and water was issued to them , and their own military organizations ran the camp inside . An Oberst ( Colonel ) was in charge.

When I learned that the Oberst had two girls in his headquarters , I told him that they had to leave . That didn;t seem to sink in . The next time he made his daily report to my Headquarters , I told him that they had to be out by 1800 that night , or they would be shot on sight . He had been using an interperter to talk to me , but on hearing this his need for one vanished . At 1755 they came out .

Schwerin is a beautiful city , situated among seven lakes , and the Schwerin Sea . It's population was 64,000 . We had a Division review on the grounds of Mecklenburg Castle . We also had time to go sailing on the sea ( approximately ten miles long and 3 miles wide)

Lt. Victor Roland came to my Headquarters one day , and told me that Tech. Sgt. Leslie McGinnis had gone beserk , after getting drunk on some benzine from a German automobile's gasoline tank . He had held a portion of the Company at bay with his rifle . Lt. Roland had knocked him out cold , and put him under guard . When Batalion found out about it , they wanted to Courts-martial him for striking an enlisted man . They also wanted to Courts-martial McGinnis . I told them that I thought Lt. Rolan

ought to receive a medal for taking care of the situation . They decided to transfer Lt. Roland to another Company .

As for McGuinness , I talked to the Batalion Surgeon , and he suggested that he be placed on sick call immediately , and he would transfer him out of the Regiment to a hospital . The last I knew he was still in one ; left permanently mentally ill .

Later I was issued a sixty gallon barrel of kimmel . That seemed to me to be too much of a good thing . I allowed everyone to have some , who desired to , and ran the remainder on the ground .

During the reconstituting of Company C , in that field in Vossanack , the Mickel twins were among the twenty-five replacements . They came from De Queen , Arkansas . I asked them why they had not been placed in different outfits , instead of always being together . They told me that their mother did not wish to see either of them , unless they both came home .

So , I did what everyone else had done , put them in the same squad .

They got hold of a captured German motorcycle in Schwerin , and went for a ride . It did not have a second seat , so one of them rode on the rear fender . They went over a bump ; and the one on the fender was thrown off , and was killed .

We left Schwerin by rail for Kassel . While we were in a rail yard enroute , Lt. Hensley Hobbs allowed his Company to draw water out of the boiler of the engine , to make coffee .

I stopped my men from following suit , as we were the next Company in the cars next to his .

Company B's entire complement of men came down with the disentery , contracted from the boiler compounds . Lt. Hobbs was releived of the Command of Company B .

When we reached Kassel , Regiment decided to reassign all of the Officers , with the exception of the Company Commanders and their Executive Officers . The move was suggested by by Lt. Col. Adams . Lt. Col. Hogan , the Third Batalion Commander , was not at all pleased by it , and neither was I . I would have rather kept the Officers I had .

Col. Adams was left with a problem , concerning Lt. Hobbs . He had expected to have the Executive Officers moved also . He called me and asked me if I would object to taking Lt. Hobbs , and moving Lt. McClure to B Company . I suggested that he move all the Executive Officers in the Batalion . That way it would look fairer to Lt. McClure . Lt. McClure was devastated by the move .

In June we went to Camp Liberty , outside of Le Harve . Col. Adams took the First Batalion Company Commanders to Dieppe to view the area the Canadians took such a beating . We walked over the entire area . I was thankful that we hadn't had to go in there .

Maj. Gen. Bryant E. Moore , our Division Commander , addressed the Officers of the Division , and told us that the high point enlisted men would be discharged when we got home . But he said that we could hardly expect him to let his experienced Officers go . We would be part of the First Army's invasion force against the Japaneese mainland .

We left Le Harve on July 13th on the S.S. Leonard Wood . The trip was a calm one .

We landed in Boston , and went to Camp Edwards , Mass. , where we received thirty day leaves .

During my leave the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki The Japaneese surrendered on the last day of my leave .

We returned to Ft. Devens , Mass. , and left from there in windowless wooden coaches . We stopped on every siding on the way to Fort Leonard Wood , as we no longer had a priority .

While I was at Fort Leonard Wood I continued to Command Company C . We continued our training . On one march we found ourselves in artillery impact area , and were shelled . Apparently some one forgot to put out their range guards . Fortunately , no one was injured .

Col. Adams tried to induce me to remain in the Army . He informed me that my Efficiency rating had been "Excellent" in the States , before the War , and "Superior" overseas . He thought that a promotion to Major would be almost a sure thing .

I told him that I was of the opinion that the public was going to clamor for the boys to be brought home , and returned to civilian life . I thought there would be more Chiefs than Indians , and I would be reduced to a permanent rank of Corporal. I was one of the very few Officers that had not been to college , making my advancement very unlikely .

I was separated from the Service on 25 November , after sixty-four days of accrued leave , having been in combat 162 days , 150 of them as a Rifle Company Commander .

Enlisted Serial Number 32040504

Officer Serial Number 0-1294847

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## CITATION FOR THE OAK LEAF CLUSTER TO THE BRONZE STAR MEDAL

( Omitted From Page 27 )

" For heroic achievement in connection with military operations against the enemy from 22 to 26 December 1944 in the vicinity of Obermaubach , Germany . On several occasions Lieutenant Kelton's platoon was pinned down by murderous enemy artillery , mortar , and machine gun fire during an attack against an enemy held ridge . Lieutenant Kelton , with utter disregard for his personal safety , moved out alone , covering more than 100 yards under enemy observation and through intense enemy artillery and mortar fire , in order to reach a position from which he could direct artillery and mortar fire on enemy gun positions . His accurate fire enabled his platoon to continue the advance and capture their objective . Lieutenant Kelton's leadership and courage are in the highest traditions of the military service ."

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Regimental casualties are taken from Page 90 of " The Gray Bonnet , Combat History Of The 121st Infantry Regiment " ; as are the number of combat days .

Division casualties are from Page 280 of " Citizen Soldiers " , by Stephen E. Ambrose .

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<u>PERSONAL COMBAT TIME</u>		<u>MEDALS , RIBBONS , &amp; BADGES</u>
<u>1944</u>	<u>1945</u>	
July 5 days	Jan. 21 days	1. Bronze Star & Oak Leaf Cluster
Aug. 0	Feb. 13	2. Purple Heart .
Sept, 1	March 21	3. European Theater Ribbon , With Three Campaign Stars .
Oct. 30	Apr. 16	4. Combat Infantry Badge .
Nov. 22	May 2	5. American Defense Medal .
Dec. 31		6. Victory Ribbon .
		7. Presidential Unit Citation .
Total : 162 days		8. Diplome d'Honneur de la Medaille du Cinquantenaire des debarquement de Normandie et de Provence .
<u>121st Inf. Battle Casualties</u>		9. Three Overseas Stripes .
Regimental Strength	3,257	10. New York State Conspicuous Service Cross .
Killed In Action	903	
Died Of Wounds	99	
Wounded in action	3,840	
Total Casualties	4,842	
Combat Time	205 days	
8th Division Combat Time	266	
8th Division Casualties	21,056	
8th Division Battle Casualties	13,458	
Prisoners Captured By 8th Div.	316,187	

HEADQUARTERS 121ST INFANTRY  
Office of the Regimental Commander  
APO #8, United States Army

5 December 1944

MEMORANDUM:

I desire to extend to each member of the 121st Infantry and the First Battalion 13th Infantry, Companies B and C 86th Chemical Battalion, 12th Engineer Combat Battalion, 709 Tank Battalion, 644 TD Battalion and 56th Field Artillery Battalion, my congratulations and sincere thanks for the successful conclusion of the battle of Hurtgen Forest, and capture of the key town of Hurtgen which will be recorded in history as one of the hardest and most bitter battles in this war.

The operation of this Corps depended on the capture of the key towns of Hurtgen and Kleinhau which provided avenues for further advances to the east and eventually to the Rhine. The success of the attack on Hurtgen and surrounding area and the efficient manner in which it was conducted has earned warm praise from the Army, Corps and Division Commanders who have asked that their appreciation for a hard task well done be communicated to each member of the Regiment and attached Units.

I am well aware of the hardships and the conditions under which this fighting was conducted. The combination of a determined enemy and such obstacles as foul weather, rain, snow and sleet, difficult wooded terrain, and the ever present mud were overcome by your sheer courage and your will to conquer the enemy even though he was bringing to bear all possible resistance in a desperate effort to hold his position. In spite of these seemingly unsurmountable obstacles in each instance you have succeeded in defeating him and capturing your objective.

Each member of the Regiment and attached Units has just cause to be proud of what they have accomplished. The knowledge that you have materially contributed to the ultimate defeat of the enemy will cause your relatives and friends at home to share with you the pride of accomplishment in the success of this operation.

I am proud to command such a splendid fighting Regiment.

T. J. CROSS  
Colonel, Infantry  
Commanding

CHRONOLOGICAL MILITARY SERVICE

DURWARD M. KELTON

CHRONOLOGICAL MILITARY SERVICE

DURWARD M. KELTON

16 Oct. 1940 Registered for Selective Service at Rexford , N.Y.  
25 Nov. 1940 Classified 1-A by Local Board No. 362 , Mechanicville , N.Y.  
3 Dec. 1940 Passed physical examination , given by Dr. John C. O'Brien,  
100 North Main Street , Mechanicville , N.Y.  
6 Jan. 1941 U.S. Army induction at Albany , N.Y.-Serial No. 32040504  
Sent to Reception Center at Ft. Dix , N.J.  
10 Jan. 1941 Sent to Fort Bragg , N.C. - Assigned to Co. F , 60th Inf. ,  
9th Inf. Div.  
DIVISION COMMANDERS : MAJ. GEN. JACOB L. DEVERS  
MAJ. GEN. MANTON S. EDDY  
MAJ. GEN. RENE HOYLE  
REGIMENTAL COMMANDERS : COL. FRANK C. MAHIN  
COL. WILLIAM H. WILBUR  
1941 Participated in Carolina Maneuvers .  
1941 Participated in maneuvers against the 44th Div. on the A.P.  
Hill Reservation , Bowling Green , Va.  
Sept. 1941 Granted 10 day furlough .  
7 Mar. 1942 Graduated from 60th Inf. N.C.O. School .  
Promoted to Private First Class .  
15 May 1942 Promoted to Corporal .  
1942 Participated in amphibious maneuvers : Quantico , Va. ,  
Norfolk , Va. , New River , N.C. , and Chesapeake Bay area,  
Md.  
4 July 1942 Assigned to O.C.S. Class No. 75 , The Infantry School ,  
Ft. Benning , Ga.  
28 Sept. 1942 Honorably discharged from the Army of The United States  
29 Sept. 1942 Accepted Temporary Commission in the Army of The United  
States as a Second Lieutenant . Serial No. 0-1294847 .  
Granted 10 day leave .  
8 Oct. 1942 Reported to 8th Mtz. Div. , Ft. Jackson , S.C.  
Assigned to Co. A , 121st Inf. , Tenn. Maneuver Area ,  
Nashville , Tenn.  
DIVISION COMMANDER : MAJ. GEN. PAUL E. PEABODY  
REGIMENTAL COMMANDER : COL. ALBERT E. PEYTON  
7 Nov. 1942 Div. moved to Camp Forest , Tenn.  
3 Dec. 1942 Div. moved to Ft. Leonard Wood , Mo.  
1 Feb. 1943 DIVISION COMMANDER : MAJ. GEN. PAUL E. PEABODY - RELIEVED  
DIVISION COMMANDER : MAJ. GEN. WILLIAM C. McMAHON  
24 Mar. 1943 Div. moved to Desert Training Center , Camp Laguna , Ariz.  
15 Apr. 1943 Div. demotorized . Becomes 8th Inf. Div.  
Apr. 1943 Took Cadre of men to Camp Roberts , California .  
Aug. 1943 Granted 10 day leave .  
1943 Participated in Desert Maneuvers .

25 Aug. 1943 Div. moved to Camp Forest , Tenn. to prepare for overseas movement .  
Given charge of packing all Organizational Equipment for the 1st Bn. of the 121st Inf.

9 Oct. 1943 Promoted to 1st Lt.

25 Nov. 1943 Div. moved to Staging Area , Camp Kilmer , N.J.

5 Dec. 1943 Div. sailed from Brooklyn , N.Y. - Part of 100 ship convoy.

15 Dec. 1943 Div. landed in Belfast , Northern Ireland .  
1st Bn. billeted in Fintona , and later Dungannon .  
Participated in a two week Officer Exchange program with British Army . Liverpool Scottish Batalion .  
ARMY COMMANDER : LT. GEN. GEORGE S. PATTON

30 June 1944 Div. sailed from Belfast .

4 July 1944 Div. landed at Utah Beach , Normandy , France .

8 July 1944 FIRST U.S. ARMY : LT. GEN. OMAR N. BRADLEY  
VIII CORPS : MAJ. GE. TROY H. MIDDLETON  
Relieved elements of the 82nd Airbourne Div. in the vicinity of La Haye Du Puits .  
Offensive action as Second Platoon Leader of Co. A , 121st Inf.

9 July 1944 REGIMENTAL COMMANDER : COL. ALBERT E. PEYTON - RELIEVED  
REGIMENTAL COMMANDER : COL. JOHN R. JETER

12 July 1944 DIVISION COMMANDER : MAJ. GEN. WILLIAM C. McMAHON-RELIEVED  
DIVISION COMMANDER : BRIG. GEN. DONALD A. STROH  
Assumed Command of Co. A , 121st Inf. in action .  
Wounded in action at 2345 hours .

13 July 1944 Evacuated via Evacuation Hospital on beach , to 297th General Hospital , Stourport , England .

26 July 1944 Awarded Bronze Star Medal for action on 8 July . First Medal awarded in the 8th Div.

13 Aug. 1944 Awarded the Purple Heart for wounds received on 12 July .

14 Aug. 1944 Red Cross Rest Camp in England .

19 Aug. 1944 Returned to Active Duty .  
Sent to 10th Replacement Depot , Litchfield , England .  
Returned to Continent via Omah Beach from Southampton .  
Assigned to Replacement Pool at Rennes , France .

23 Sept. 1944 NINTH U.S. ARMY : LT. GEN. WILLIAM H. SIMPSON  
VIII CORPS : MAJ. GEN. TROY H. MIDDLETON  
Rejoined the 121st Inf. at Landerneau , Brittany , France after the fall of Brest .  
Assumed Command of Co. C , 121st Inf.

30 Sept. 1944 Div. moved by rail to Luxembourg .



30 Sept. 1944 1st Bn. in Defensive position in the vicinity of Beaufort, Luxembourg . Our River .  
8th Div had 30 mile defensive front .

1 Oct. 1944 FIRST U.S. ARMY : LT. GEN. COURTNEY H. HODGES  
VIII CORPS : MAJ. GEN. TROY H. MIDDLETON

19 Nov. 1944 Turned over Co. C , 121st Inf. to Capt. James A. Danforth, a former C Co. Commander returning from wounds .  
Div. moved to the Huertgen Forest region , Germany .

20 Nov. 1944 FIRST U.S. ARMY : LT. GEN. COURTNEY H. HODGES  
V CORPS : MAJ. GEN. LEONARD T. GEROW  
Left unassigned until Co. C.O. needed .  
Bn relieved elements of the 12th Inf. , 4th Div.

22 Nov. 1944 Assumed Command of Co. A , 121st Inf. ; when both C.O. and Exec. Officer refused to order further attacks .

25 Nov. 1944 REGIMENTAL COMMANDER : COL. JOHN R. JETER - RELIEVED  
REGIMENTAL COMMANDER : COL. THOMAS J. CROSS

28 Nov. 1944 DIVISION COMMANDER : MAJ. GEN. DONALD A. STROH - RELIEVED  
DIVISION COMMANDER : BRIG. GEN. WILLIAM G. WEAVER

17 Dec. 1944 Became Co. A Exec. Replacement Capt. assumed Command .

21 Dec. 1944 NINTH U.S. ARMY : LT. GEN. WILLIAM H. SIMPSON  
XIX CORPS : MAJ. GEN. RAYMOND S. McLAIN

24 Dec. 1944 Co. C , 121st Inf. captured at Obermaubach , Germany

25 Dec. 1944 Assumed Command of , and reconstituted Co. C , 121st Inf. (35 from 3rd Bn . , 15 from 2nd Bn. , 25 replacements )

26 Dec. 1944 Defensive position , Kall River gorge , Vosseneck, Germany.

8 Jan. 1945 Defensive position , Brandenburg , Germany .

5 Feb. 1945 Awarded Oak Leaf Cluster to Bronze Star Medal for action 22-24 Dec. 1944 .

8 Feb. 1945 Assembly area , Wenau , Germany .

24 Feb. 1945 FIRST U.S. ARMY : LT. GEN. COURTNEY H. HODGES  
VII CORPS : MAJ. GEN. J. LAWTON COLLINS

25 Feb. 1945 DIVISION COMMANDER : MAJ. GEN. WILLIAM G. WEAVER -RELIEVED  
DIVISION COMMANDER : BRIG. GEN. BRYANT E. MOORE  
Assembly Area , Rolsdorf , Germany .  
Crossed the Roer River at Duren- committed at Binsfeld .

2 Mar. 1945 Co. C , 121st Inf. established bridgehead across the Erft Canal at Modrath . Deepest penetration of any Allied Unit at that time .

7 Mar. 1945 Reached Southern suburbs of Cologne .

8 Mar. 1945 Placed in Div. reserve at Cologne .

12 Mar. 1945 Battlefield promotion to Captain .

14 Mar. 1945 Defensive position , Bonn , Germany  
28 Mar. 1945 Crossed the Rhine at Bonn , by truck , via U.S. Army Engineers bridge .  
29 March 1945 FIRST U.S. ARMY : LT. GEN. COURTNEY H. HODGES  
XVIII AIRBOURNE CORPS : MAJ. GEN. MATTHEW B. RIDGEWAY  
Relieved elements of the 1st Inf. Div. along the south bank of the Sieg River . Started reduction of the Rhur Pocket .  
5 Apr. 1945 REGIMENTAL COMMANDER : THOMAS J. CROSS - RELIEVED  
REGIMENTAL COMMANDER : COL. EARLE R. LORETTE  
10 Apr. 1945 Became Military Governor of Cronnenburg for a week .  
17 Apr. 1945 Reduction of Rhur Pocket completed .  
1 May 1945 OPERATIONAL CONTROL :  
BRITISH SECOND ARMY : LT. GEN. SIR MILES C. DEMPSEY  
XVIII AIRBOURNE CORPS : MAJ. GEN. MATTHEW B. RIDGEWAY  
Assembly area , Bleckede , Germany , Elbe River .  
2 May 1945 Linked up with Russian Army, west of Schwerin Germany .  
4 May 1945 Co. C guarded 46,000 German P.O.W.'s , part of the 244,600 taken the last two days of the war .  
8 May 1945 V.E. Day .  
16 May 1945 Turned P.O.W.'s over to U.S. MILITARY GOV'T units .  
24 May 1945 Regiment moved by rail to Kassel , Germany  
1 July 1945 Division moved to Camp Liberty , Le Harve , France .  
8 July 1945 Sailed from Le Harve on the S.S. Leonard Wood .  
16 July 1945 Disembarked at Boston Mass . Granted 30 day leave from Camp Edwards , Mass.  
14 Aug. 1945 Japan surrenders .  
15 Aug. 1945 Left Ft. Devens , Mass. for Ft. Leonard , Wood , Mo. by rail .  
22 Aug. 1945 Rejoined the 8th Div. at Ft. Leonard Wood , Mo.  
22 Sept. 1945 Granted two months and four days of accrued leave .  
25 Nov. 1945 Automatic separation from the Military Service .

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PERSONAL COMBAT TIME

<u>1944</u>		<u>1945</u>	
July	5 days	Jan.	21 days
Aug.	0	Feb.	13
Sept.	1	Mar.	21
Oct.	30	Apr.	16
Nov.	22	May	2
Dec.	31		
Total :		162 days	

MEDALS , RIBBONS , AND BADGES

Bronze Star Medal , With One Oak Leaf Cluster  
Purple Heart  
European Theater Ribbon , With Three Campaign Stars  
Combat Infantry Badge  
American Defense Medal  
Victory Ribbon  
Presidential Unit Citation  
Diplome d'Honneur de la Medaille du Cinquantenaire des debarquements  
de Normandie et de Provence  
Three Overseas Stripes  
New York State Conspicuous Service Cross

Battle Casualties Of The 121st Infantry Regiment

No.Of Troops At Full Strength	3,257
Killed In Action	903
Died Of Wounds	99
Wounded In Action	3,840
Total Casualties	4,842
Combat Time	205 days

UNITS MAKING UP THE EIGHTH INFANTRY DIVISION

13th Inf. Regiment , 28th Inf. Regiment , 121st Inf. Regiment , 28th  
Field Artillery Battalion , 43rd Field Artillery Battalion , 45th Field  
Artillery Battalion , 56th Field Artillery Battalion , 12th Engineer  
Battalion , 8th Medical Bn. , 8th Recon. Co. , 8th Signal Co. , 8th  
Quartermaster Co. , Division Hdg. Co. , 8th Military Police Platoon .

Total Strength : 15,245

8th Division Combat Time	266 days
8th Division Casualties	21,056*
Battle Casualties	13,458
Prisoners Captured	316,187

\* Combat exhaustion cases not counted as battle casualties .