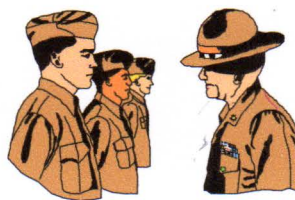


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## THE BEGINNING OF A SAGA

By Kenneth G. Bradstreet

On 22 June 1943, Ruth's birthday and 18 days after graduation from high school, I reported to the Sioux City Post Office for my service physical examination. I was told to strip and move past the examining line of doctors. After being prodded, poked and suffering other indignities I was declared alive and fit for service in Uncle Sam's Army. We were then taken to another room to be sworn in with the oath of loyalty. I thought then that we would leave immediately but instead we were given 14 days to get our affairs in order and to report back on July 6. I didn't have anything to put in order but decided that I liked the idea of having a few more days at home with Ruth.

On Sunday 5 July the whole family gathered at Riverside Park for a picnic. Ruth was there and I remember that we had a good time. The food was plentiful and good, as it always was when the family gathered, each cook trying to outdo the other. I had all the fried chicken, pie and ice cream I could hold and had to call a halt, even though more was being offered. Statements came with the offerings, "You don't know when you'll get another good meal" and "I'll bet you'll never get a meal like this in the army." No truer words were ever spoken!" I thought about that food many times in the next three years. The time for the gathering to disperse came and with it came a new experience in my life when everyone came to bid me goodbye and good luck. It was then that the finality of the time struck me when I heard, "Be Good" - "We'll write" - "Kill one for me" - "Take care of yourself" - "Don't get in trouble." and "We love you, hurry back." It was as though I would be gone forever! I had a lot to think about that night.

I reported for Army service on Monday July 6 at the north steps of the Post Office building across from the bus station on 6th street at 9:00 am. Ruth and my parents came to see me leave. The recruiter in charge formed the 36 of us up, roll was called and we were marched across the street to receive sack lunches and load on a bus. We were going to Camp Dodge located near Des Moines, Iowa, a distance of 140 miles to start our Army careers. As we left I could see Ruth from the window and it crossed my mind that I might not see her again. She was still waving as we rolled away.

The trip was a disaster. The route was on the Denison highway, Iowa 141, a narrow dangerous road that included "Dead Man's Hill." It took over 7 hours for the 100 mile trip due to two flat tires and only one spare. the day was hot and we were miserable. We finally arrived at Camp Dodge about 6:30 in the evening.

We were immediately marched to the medical building for another physical. This did not take long for these doctors and nurses knew what they were doing. After the physical we were marched to a mess hall and were fed our first Army meal. I remember that it sure tasted good after the day we had put in. After chow we were marched to the supply room and were issued uniforms, mattress covers and blankets. Then it was off to the barracks, staggering under our loads, and assigned to bunks. We were ordered to take off our civilian clothes and dress in our new khaki uniforms. Mine fit fairly well, just a little big (I found out later that this was on purpose, that you would gain weight quickly.) Some of the others did not fare as well and looked like hell. Some did not know how to tie their ties. It took about an hour to get all of us in uniform. It was about 8:45 pm when we were marched to a office barracks to take aptitude tests and fill out personal questionnaires. I was also issued my "Dog Tags" which were two small metal plates on a chain that gave my name, rank, serial number, religion and blood type. They were to be worn at all times like a necklace. After this it was back to the medics for our first shots. Then it was back to our barracks, on the run, through a rain shower. We were getting tired and were all ready for a shower. After the shower we had to make our beds and hang up our clothes, then it was off to bed. It was about 11:30 pm when I put my weary bones down on my cot and dropped off to sleep at once. It had been a long hard day for all of us and I slept sound.



I was rudely awakened the next morning by a bugle sounding "Reveille" at 5:00 am. I was used to getting up early but it seemed like I had just laid down. I rolled out of the bunk along with my 84 barracks buddies. It was a strange feeling! I woke as another person, Bradstreet, Kenneth G., Private, U.S. Army, Serial Number 37673633, it would be my identity until the day of my discharge or interment.

Camp Dodge was a Basic Training Trainee Receiving Center near Des Moines, Iowa comprised of 2,686 acres and had a troop capacity of 91 officers and 1,844 enlisted personnel. I was billeted in Barracks 209, C Company.

We were informed on awaking that we had 30 minutes to shower, shave, go to the latrine, dress, make our beds and fall out for reveille at 5:30 am sharp. It was a madhouse but the order was accomplished. I stood my first Army reveille that Tuesday morning. After reveille we were marched to the messhall for breakfast, it was good food, scrambled eggs, bacon, toast and butter with jelly, coffee or milk and plenty of everything.

The morning was spent on menial tasks of labor; cleaning up other barracks, preparing them for another incoming group of recruits. Noon chow call seemed a long time coming. We were formed up and marched to the messhall at attention. We were learning that you did nothing in the Army without orders or schedule. After chow we were marched to the company street and were made aware of a thing called "Close Order Drill" for an hour. We learned what "Attention" "Parade Rest" "At Ease" "Forward March" "To The Rear March" "Halt" "About Face" and "Fall Out and Fall In" meant. After becoming completely confused we were marched off to work as the Corporal in charge put us through the drill on the way. It was a take-off of a Chinese fire drill, people out of step, stumbling, to survive was admirable. At the order, "To the rear march" it was chaos. At that time I decided that to survive I had to change position and I moved to the outer file. There I could maneuver outside of the tangle and observe. It worked well. I learned that when any formation was called, that it was good to be in the first rank. Those who tried to take cover in the other three ranks usually drew the tough details. This time it was washing windows, raking lawn and laying sod. I decided to get on the raking detail, it was a mistake! The raking this day was not on the well-kept lawns but on the ball fields where there were no shade trees. We also got to double time the four blocks to the fields. It was another hot day and we were wet with sweat as we were marched back to our barracks to shower and change from fatigues to khakis before retreat. After retreat at 5:30 we went to chow and I really did it justice, though it was no gourmet meal! It was the meal when we were introduced to roast mutton! It reminded me of the times we went to my aunt's for Sunday dinner and the main course was young roast kid goat. After chow we were given free time. I went to the Post Exchange (P.X.) and had my first photo taken as a soldier in the camera booth. The cost was 12 photos for \$1.20. Then several of us went to the theater to see "Mr. Lucky."

I went back to the barracks after the show to write home to Ruth and Mom. Soldiers had franking privilege and postage was free. Lights out was at 11:00 pm. I was ready for some rest when I finished the letters, it had been another hard day. Rumor was that we would ship out tomorrow. My sleep was rudely interrupted several times by some of the guys who were already homesick. The sound of their sobbing really bothered me. It was hard to realize that there were people my age who had been so protected through the depression that they could not take being away from their families. Sure, it was tough leaving family and friends behind, but it had to be done. I thought about friends who had already given their lives, Bus Savage, on Guam, Kenny Bosley, still on the USS Arizona and Johnny Wells, shot down over France in his B-17. These people would have to learn to tough it out and do their duty.

We had also been taken to Personnel during the day and told that our monthly pay would be \$50 (\$600 annually), that there would be deductions; \$6.40 monthly for \$10,000 life insurance, \$18.75 monthly for Savings Bonds, there was also a deduction for laundry of \$2.50, and a family allotment of \$16.00, leaving the sum total of \$6.25 as net pay for the month, about \$.21 per day for the luxuries of army life. Packages from family, relatives, friends and the church kept us going, frugally but sufficiently. But I was used to being short on cash when I was home and so it was a case of still making do.



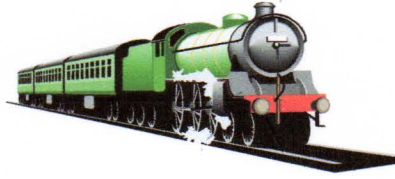
Next morning it was reveille again at 0500 Army time. Then to the messhall for breakfast with a menu of scrambled eggs, bacon or sausage, pancakes, fruit and coffee or milk. We left the messhall at 0700 for a period of calisthenics (on a breakfast stomach) and then off to work detail, again doing close-order drill on the way. Today it was camp cleanup and I mowed lawn with a reel-type push lawn mower.

At 1100 it was back to the barracks where we were told to box up our civilian clothes for shipment home. This was proof that I was cutting my last ties with civilian life - I was now a soldier in the United States Army! After this sobering chore it was time for noon chow call and we marched to the mess hall. After chow we were marched to the barracks street to stand formation. An officer informed us that we were shipping out and dismissed us to gather and pack our gear. Another experience was in the offing for me!

We were all packed and ready in a short time. This was when we learned an established part of United States Army Standard Operating Procedure... Hurry Up and Wait! We were called out of the barracks into the hot street and told to wait with our barracks bags. In about 20 sweating minutes trucks appeared and we were ordered to throw our bags on to them.

Then it was formation again and marched to the shady side of the barracks. At 1630 trucks appeared and parked in the street...still no action. At 1650 we were ordered to fall in, count off and board the trucks. At 1700 we waved goodbye to Camp Dodge and left for Des Moines, arriving at the railroad station at 1815. We were told that it would be an hour before we would board the train. I went to the U.S.O. area inside the depot and wrote to Mom and Ruth. I could see the golden dome of the Iowa State Capital shining in the evening sun. Civilians stared at us and moved past as they went home from their day's work. We boarded the train at 1930, were assigned seats and told to get settled for our journey. We still had not been told where we were going although there were lots of rumors including one that everyone liked..Airforce. I sat there in my sweaty uniform, trying to be comfortable, thinking over the events of the past two days and wondering what lay ahead, especially when we would be fed again, I was running on empty! The sage who said, "an army runs on its stomach," was certainly correct. I suddenly had a question to be answered, "why were meals served exactly on time on the post, but so erratically while on transport?" It was never answered in the time I served Uncle Sam!





## WESTWARD HO !

Kenneth G. Bradstreet

As I sat in my seat on the train I observed and took stock of my surroundings, feeling that it might be conducive to my practical survival. I noted that William "Bill" Conley of Sioux City was in the same car. The car itself was an aged railroad day coach that had seen better days. There were no bunks, my sleeping would be done sitting in my seat. I learned that there was a kitchen car six cars back of ours. It was in the middle of the troop train with six cars on the other end of it.

Our car had a latrine, thank God! To use it, you got in line and again waited your turn. At times this could be exciting. It was also a location for nightly recreation as an all night crap game going. The train was pulled by a coal-fired steam engine of huge proportion. At 2015 there was a jerk and the train started to move out of the station. As it gathered speed I looked out the window and my thoughts again turned to food and home. I knew that this move would take me much farther from my home and family. Bill swapped seats and sat in the seat beside me. We decided to work as a team as long as we were together.

We were informed that chow would be served starting when the train cleared the city. Chow would be served one car at a time. We were farthest away from the kitchen toward the engine and were served first. Chow consisted of a sack meal containing two sandwiches, one meat and one peanut butter and jelly, three cookies and coffee. It was tough making it back to our car with the cars swaying and half the coffee was spilled. The meal wasn't much and there were those who didn't eat it. Bill and I took care of those cast-away meals and were able to snack all night. We decided that we would stay awake for awhile and try to figure out which direction the train was headed. We watched for signs as we went through towns. It was not long before we saw that the route was directly west, toward Omaha, Nebraska. We decided that we would check again later after Omaha which was a railroad hub, knowing our train could go any direction from there. Our train pulled onto a siding for a long time with other trains going past. We decided to get some sleep. It was tough sitting in those old hard seats and sleeping.

I awoke early, woke Bill, and we went to the latrine, washed up and returned to our seats. The train was moving again and we were surprised that we were still in Iowa at Council Bluffs, across the Missouri River from Omaha. Chow call sounded and we went back, thinking about a sack lunch for breakfast. Instead we found that a car had been added to our train for eating. It had tall tables and no chairs. We received our food on Army trays and stood at the tables to eat. It worked good unless the car swayed with food or coffee half-way to your mouth, then it was disaster. After eating you washed your tray with a boing brush in a 30 gallon garbage can filled with soapy water and rinsed it in another can of clear water. The chow was good, sausage, scrambled eggs, fried potatoes, toast, coffee, and filled us to satisfaction.

Sgt. Donahoe, who was in charge, told us we had been stopped during the night to let troop and materiel trains heading east go through. They had priority. He also told us that our train had added 18 cars of Navy and Marine troops and would add cars as we went. There was no word of our destination but Bill and I decided it would be the west coast because of the navy and marines. Of course, rumors were flying as we went through Council Bluffs, Iowa, Omaha, Fremont and Schuyler, Nebraska during the morning.

It was during this phase of our journey that we learned a hard fact of troop-train travel. It was getting hot in the car and so windows were opened to get fresh air (there was no air-conditioning then). We learned then that steam locomotives expell sooty, black smoke and that the rush of air to the rear carries it back along the cars and into any open windows. It was not long before the car and everything in it was gathering a black hue. I wrote a letter in the latrine foyer to be mailed at the first stop. That stop was in Cheyenne, Wyoming for a half-hour while the engine was changed and more cars added.



By the way, every time the train was stopped in a station, we were unloaded and given calisthenics. It must have been a morale-uplifting for the civilians watching a group of grimy sweating recruits in ill-fitting uniforms jumping up and down in unison, and thinking, "These guys are going to win a war?" After considerable discussion we decided that these damned calisthenics served three purposes; to entertain the home-folks; to make the army happy; to keep our bodily functions operating to the fullest! Mike Martinek, former football fullback and linguist, added, "Yeh, and it keeps da gas outa yer guts." He could always be counted upon to comment upon subjects he had studied in biology as he worked to gain scholastic eligibility for football.

The engine we had now was a monster, built for pulling trains over the mountains, so Bill and I surmised that our destination that we had picked was correct. The landscape had become more interesting. I had not been west of the western border of Nebraska and it was entirely new to me. Then we passed through scenery of mountains and forests beautiful. Card and dice games were ongoing with even the civilian black porter becoming involved. I wrote letters to mail tomorrow. Night came and we tried to sleep again. It was fitful as the train started and stopped throughout the night.

We awoke early again on our fifth day in the Army and beat the crowd to the latrine. At 0730 we pass through Granger, Wyoming still heading west and up. Then came Evanston, Wyoming, about one hundred miles from the Utah border, going through the Rocky Mountains. The mountains were awe-inspiring, so monstrous in size. I felt so minute as they towered into the sky. It was chilling as the train passed over trestles where we could look down thousands of feet into yawning chasms. At one place we saw Rocky Mountain sheep above us on the mountain side. The scenery was so wild and beautiful it made you feel a new love of freedom. In Utah we came to Ogden where I mailed my letters, then on to Salt Lake City and Great Salt Lake. As we rolled across the salt flats I thought about how I always wanted to see this, and here I was! As a youngster I had read and loved the stories written by Zane Grey and had seen the west through his eyes and words, now I was seeing it through my own eyes as I remembered his words. It was a beautiful experience.

Rumors ran rampant! My razor and shaving cream were stolen. Eating behind this engine was like eating on a roller coaster, it was an art, balancing oneself, holding the tray with one hand and eating with the other (I had long since given up trying to drink with my meal.) The dirt and soot is getting worse. We learn about tunnels the hard way! We wash every chance we get now, our khakis are horribly dirty, but even then we were cleaner than those further back in the train. I wrote letters and mailed them at Ogden, Utah.

Next day we awoke early, having slept through the state of Nevada and we find our train in California. Our destination is announced at breakfast - Camp Callan, California. It is located near San Diego, not too far from Mexico, a Coast Artillery Training Camp, built on the sea shore of the Pacific Ocean. I wrote letters that I mailed at Yermo, California, telling Ruth and Mom where I was and where we were heading. At Yermo, California, the train was broken up and certain of the cars put on other trains. Our train headed south, still some distance from our destination. The scenery was again new to me with the train passing vineyards and orange groves. Huge areas were irrigated, which we didn't do at home. We passed through towns with tall, swaying palm trees, which I had seen only in the movies and in books. It ran through my mind, "This is where the movies are made!" The train moved to rails nearer the coast and in the distance we could see the Pacific Ocean! Everyone was excited now as we watched the scenery go past. I wondered what coast artillery was and consisted of, artillery meant big guns, but how big? What would we be doing with the guns? The game became more intense, the fever built, couldn't the train move faster? In late morning it was announced that we only had about 20 miles to go. We settled down and waited for the order to disembark from the train and begin a new adventure in the United States Army Coast Artillery!





## CAMP CALLAN, CALIFORNIA

By Kenneth G. Bradstreet

It was late morning of Sunday 12 July 1943 when the troop train pulled on to Guerra (Spanish for war) siding at Linda Vista a few miles east of Camp Callan. The Guerra siding was named during WWI when troops were detrained there to go to Camp Kearney. In WWII, Camp Kearney was used as a Marine air corps practice ground. It was a disheveled, dirty group of soldiers that disembarked from the train. A shower would feel good, getting rid of the soot that was starting to itch. We had our last breakfast on the train, the same menu we had been fed every morning, scrambled eggs, fried potatoes, oatmeal, roll and coffee. We were met by our future battalion commanders or their designates who informed us that our training would be as Coast Artillery Anti-aircraft artillerymen. There were trucks waiting and we loaded up as the roll was called. Upon completing the loading we started for the camp and entered through the south gate.

Camp Callan was located atop 300-foot bluffs on the shore of the beautiful blue Pacific Ocean about 19 miles north of San Diego with the beautiful town of La Jolla (La Hoya) just a few miles away. The site occupied by the camp is known as the Torrey Pines Mesa. It is the only place in the world where the Torrey Pine grows. Climatically, Callan is the nation's ideal training site. Located in the most favorable weather belt in the country, the days find the temperature in the high 80's or nights that find it dropping into the low 30's are phenomena. The camp was designated as a Coast Artillery Antiaircraft Replacement Training Center. It was built on 3,782 acres and had a complement of 426 officers and 9,926 enlisted personnel. The ocean could be seen from every part of the camp and stretched endlessly west as far as the eye could see. The only drawback of the camp was it's neighbors consisting of three U.S. Marine training stations; Camp Mathews, Camp Elliott and El Toro Airbase. Then, of course, there were the U.S. Navy Bases in San Diego. Saturday nights in Diego were something else! The Military Police, Shore Patrol and Civilian Police were kept busy!

We were unloaded on the parade ground by our new barracks which were two-storied buildings holding 90 men and fell in to meet our cadre; Lt. Mason, Commanding Officer, Lt. Crowell, Executive Officer, Buck Sgt. Decker, Cpls Powell, Noguera and McDowell, who will be our fearless leaders through our basic training. I immediately picked Lt. Crowell and Cpl. Noguera as the movers and shakers of C Battery. Decker and McDowell I pegged as bullies and Powell as an old soldier doing his job with dignity.

We were informed that we were under quarantine for the first two weeks. I am now Bradstreet, Kenneth G., Private, Coast Artillery, Battery C, First Platoon, 58th Antiaircraft Training Battalion.

We were taken into our barracks where we were assigned bunks and left our barracks bags. Our next move was to the supply room where we received more G.I. personal equipment. In World war II, it was said that the American soldier was the best equipped in the world. When I was issued my equipment at Camp Dodge and Camp Callan, I was amazed at how much I was given in the line of clothing. Back home I had three pair of bib overalls, some blue cotton work shirts, old underwear, a work felt hat, a pair of work brogans, work gloves and several pair of work socks. For dress I had a couple pair of slacks, my graduation suit, a couple dress shirts, a pair of dress shoes, a couple pair of dress socks, a couple changes of good underwear and a dress hat. When I reported for service in the Army I had only what I was wearing with a change of socks and underwear plus my toilet kit. When I was issued my G.I. gear, it seemed like an awesome lot for me to



take care of and carry. I soon found out that the clothing was too big but I was told I'd grow into it...and I did!

I was issued the following:

1 Field Cap, Cotton (Khaki, overseas)	1 Field Cap, wool (Olive Drab overseas)
1 Field Jacket (Field Green)	2 Wool Shirts (Olive Drab)
2 Pair Wool Trousers (Olive Drab)	1 Wool Uniform Blouse (Olive Drab)
1 Cotton Necktie (Khaki)	2 Cotton Summer Shirts (Khaki)
2 Pair Cotton Summer Trousers (Khaki)	2 Denim Fatigue Blouses (Blue)
2 Pair Denim Fatigue Trousers (Blue)	1 Denim Fatigue Hat (Blue)
1 Raincoat (Rubber)	6 Cotton Undershirts (Olive Drab)
6 Cotton Boxer Underpants (Olive Drab)	6 Cotton Handkerchiefs (Olive Drab)
6 Pair Cotton Socks (Olive Drab)	6 Pair Wool Socks (Olive Drab)
2 Pair Leather Service Shoes (Brown)	2 Bath Towels (Olive Drab)
2 Hand Cloths (Olive Drab)	1 Toilet Kit (Olive Drab)
1 Cotton Mattress Cover (White)	2 Wool Blankets (Olive Drab)
--Plus--	
1 Waterproof Canvas Shelter Half ((Olive Drab) with 6 Wooden Tent Pegs, 1 Jointed Tent Pole, Rope	
1 First Aid Pouch and Packet (Olive Drab)	1 Canteen Cover (Olive Drab)
1 Aluminum Canteen with 1 Aluminum Canteen Cup	1 Canvas Musette Bag (Olive Drab)
1 Aluminum Mess Kit with Knife, Fork, Spoon	1 Steel Chamber Pot Helmet with Liner (Olive Drab)
1 Entrenching Tool (Olive Drab)	1 Steel Bayonet
1 Pack Carrier (Olive Drab)	1 Haversack, Open (Olive Drab)
1 Gas Mask and Carrier Bag (Olive Drab)	1 1903 Springfield Bolt Action .30 Calibre Rifle

These items were many times more personal possessions than I had ever possessed in all the previous years of my life.

After making up our bunks, hanging up our clothes and stowing our small gear in our foot lockers we were suddenly honored by the appearance of Sgt. Decker blowing his whistle (God, he was good on that whistle - a veritable symphonic musician. I so wanted to sheath it for him!) and shouting "Attention" at the top of his voice. He then endeared himself to us for life, saying, "You are the dirtiest God damn slovenly son of a bitch recruits we have ever accepted for training in C Company of the 58th and I can't stand your stink!" He turned and went out the door, slamming it shut. He came right back in, holding his nose and said, "You have one hour to wash, shave, crap, dress in O.D.s, tag your dirty laundry and fallout in formation on the parade ground outside the barracks." He left and Cpl. McDowell said, "Fall out and get with it." There was a mad scramble to undress and get to the shower and latrine. We were overjoyed to have the chance to get clean again. We dressed in our O.D.s and I thought, "And this is called Sunny California."

It was generally agreed that Sgt. Decker was a dyed-in-the wool bastard with McDowell, his two-stripe parrot, running a close second. We decided that Cpl. Powell, an older quiet spoken career man was the best of the group of non-coms. Soon McDowell shouted "Fall out!" We scrambled out and formed in ranks.

After being called to attention we were inspected by Lt. Crowell and Sgt. Decker for proper attire. Several were giggled and informed that they would be on K.P. (Kitchen Police) the next day. We were then given "Parade Rest" and the Lieutenant welcomed us and explained that we would be taking 13 weeks of Army Basic Training in Battery C. When he finished it was time for retreat so we remained in ranks and stood retreat. After retreat we were dismissed for evening mess call. It could come none too soon for we had not eaten since breakfast. The meal was like a feast, we were famished and that ocean air really created a healthy appetite. When we left the messhall we found that the O.D.s were appropriate wear, the ocean air became very cool when the sun dropped. I went to the barracks and wrote to Mom and Ruth, then prepared to spend my first night in the Coast Artillery. I knew that reveille would sound at 0530 and that we would again meet our lovable Sgt. Decker, of the protruding teeth, who never smiled and had the personality of a Piranha. It had been a day to remember.



The next day reveille sounded at 0530 over the orderly room loudspeaker. I rolled out quick, grabbed my personal gear and headed for the latrine to do the morning chore, shower and shave. Then it was back to get dressed in my fatigues, make my bed, straighten up my lockers and get ready to fall out for 0600 formation and roll call. Some of the guys were still asleep at 0545 when "The Piranha" exploded into the barracks. He pulled the late sleepers out of their bunks, mattress and all, onto the floor. It was a shock to them when they hit the floor. Decker made a list of the sleepyheads, showing great enjoyment in his actions. I made myself a promise that when the time came, he would not manhandle me in any way, even if it meant court-martial.

The first call at 0600 included roll call, reveille and personnel inspection by Lt. Crowell. Those who were "Gigged" were put on the duty list by "The Piranha". He always had a list, we soon found out, that he continually added to. Mess call was at 0630 with a menu consisting of eggs, "shit on a shingle" (chipped beef over toasted buns), milk, coffee and our everyday staple, prunes. (Man, they kept your system regular.)

The work day started at 0730 and the agenda was: calisthenics, gas mask drill and nomenclature, close-order drill without arms, rifle nomenclature, noon mess, retrieved our rifles from the barracks, cleaning and hands-on nomenclature of the 1903 bolt-action Springfield rifle, re-racked rifles in the barracks, more close-order drill and double-time marching around the perimeter of the parade ground. Fell out at 1600 to clean up for retreat at 1700. Immediately after retreat it was evening mess with roast beef, potatoes and gravy, vegetable, bread, cobbler, milk or coffee. Very good!

After mess the evening was my own. I wrote a letter to Ruth and went to the P.X. for a beer and a candy bar, came back to the barracks and got acquainted with the men in the bunks around me. There was Jess Corona from Arizona, former copper miner, married, wife named Wilma, tough and knows his way around. Carlos Esparza was older than the rest of us, quiet, mannerly with a warm smile. Vittorio Columbo, small of stature, energetic, nervous and did not make friends easily. His closest buddy was Juanito "Pancho" Martine, a thick-set, powerful, medium height Mexican, always laughing but very tough. He was Columbo's protector and made it known. I sensed that he and Carlos were not men to take lightly. These men later became my close friends, Carlos until his death in 1990. Taps at 2200. I was tired and went to sleep easily as I listened to the sound of the ocean. It had been another eventful day.

The next day we were informed by the Piranha, that as stupid as we were, he and his people were going to do their very best to make the finest of soldiers of us. This, of course, endeared him even more to us. After an hour of close-order drill and another of manual of arms we were marched to the area rec hall and shown the first film of the training series "Why We Fight."

Now, it is one thing to take seats on the floor, but with a gas mask strapped on, it is another, especially when required to sit cross-legged. We were informed that it would be worn all during the training day except at reveille, mess, retreat or while in barracks. We felt much safer, in case of a Jap gas attack, knowing we could only die at reveille, mess, retreat or in barracks. It became a hated symbol of the Piranha, who loved to double-time the troops with that gas mask in its bag beating the wearer to death. After the film there was a lecture by a medical officer on the perils of cohabiting with the female gender, followed by the chaplain who assured us that he would be available to hear our problems. We were also informed that hard work and ambition was just as essential in the Army as in civilian life if you wished to advance, that the camp motto was "Train Right to Win the Fight." I knew right then that I could be like my hero, the Piranha and even better!

After noon mess we were invited by the cadre to take a hike out to the artillery range, a distance of about two miles. I took note that the First Soldier Perrins and the Piranha rode in a jeep with McDowell bouncing in the rear. My respect for Powell and Noguera went up at the sight. We also found out that Lt. Crowell never rode to the ranges but trotted out shanks-mare. There we were introduced to our heavy weapons. The main weapon was the 90 millimeter rifle, the most efficient heavy anti-aircraft weapon ever developed. Its firepower great, its accuracy uncanny and it has a fighting range of nearly six miles. Next was the 40 millimeter gun, used against aircraft, tanks, ground installations or mechanized units. It can be fired single shot or automatic. The 50 calibre water-cooled machine gun, automatic, fires shells 1/2 inch in diameter at



the rate of 600 per minute against air or ground forces. The 30 calibre watercooled or air-cooled machine gun is the army standby for almost any sort of fighting.

Besides the guns we were shown the searchlights, the director, which computes firing data for the gunners; power and control units, sound locators and other detecting devices, observation instruments and others. The game was getting more interesting all the time and I started thinking about what I wanted to do. We were informed that part of each weekday or night would be spent on the artillery range. Other training areas near the artillery range were the gas chambers and infiltration course. The small arms range and bayonet area was just to the north across an inlet bay. It was very close to our area. All the ranges were right on the shoreline where all weapons could be fired out to sea.

Swimming instruction was held at the Del Mar Hotel a few miles north of the camp. It was part of the Delmar holdings of Bing Crosby, along with his Delmar Racetrack. There was an olympic size freshwater pool and a huge pier to teach "abandon ship." The pier extended over 100 feet out over the Pacific Ocean with about a 35 foot drop off the end to the water. The drill was to move to the pier end, dressed in fatigues and life jacket, jump, crossing your legs so you didn't wishbone yourself. When you hit the water it seemed like you would never stop going down, but suddenly you would pop out of the water like a cork, then swim to shore. I enjoyed this part of the training.

La Jolla was a favorite place to visit. It is a seaside community, the nearest to the camp. It is a noted summer and winter resort with beautiful homes and estates, year-round swimming facilities, an art gallery, and a museum and aquarium at Scripps Institution of Oceanography. San Diego was also a good place to visit with the zoo in Balboa Park. The town of Tijuana was just across the Mexican border, interesting to visit, but not for long, soldiers were targets there. The Cross on Mount Soledad where the area Easter Service is held made a strong impression on us as we were marched under full pack up Mount Soledad to it as part of our training. Ginger Rogers home was nearby and she invited soldiers to her home each Sunday for dinner. I was lucky to go one time, what a meal and what an afternoon! She was a great lady who shared with us. It was easy to get around the area as bus service ran on the hour from #10 Px. Fare was 40 cents for the round trip or 25 cents one way. Quartermaster buses ran from the south gate to the hospital at the north end of camp every half hour.

During the second week I was put in charge of a 90 mm gun crew. I had to take special training in all the firing equipment, learning all of what it took to fire a battery of anti-aircraft weapons. I liked the challenge of what I was doing and soon everything fell into place. I was sent to school to learn fire observation and graduated third in the class. During the eighth week I took the tests for Officer's Candidate School and the Army Specialized Training Program. I passed both sets of tests and settled down to await results. At this time the Piranha started using me for a target, KP and Latrine detail as often as he could get away with it. I made it look like I enjoyed every minute and it drove him and the Parrot crazy! My buddies and I sure ate well when I was on KP. Mom always told me that good overcomes evil if you keep a cheerful outlook but my idea of the situation was to kill them with kindness and wait for revenge, the time would come.

Money was short so Pancho and I decided to sign up for the Friday night boxing card, for after all, the winner got \$5 and the loser got \$3. Pancho won 4 fights and I won 3 fights. I'd of won 4 but the other guy was good and the referee disqualified me for a few illegal punches. What was I to do, the guy was good! We retired after those four matches, independently wealthy with \$38 in our welfare fund!

While at Camp Callan, a school friend of mine, Duane Brownell, came to visit on a weekend. He was stationed on a ship in port at Diego. He was an Armed Guard in the Navy. Their job was to man the ship's anti-aircraft weapons on the deck. It was good to have him visit and bring news of other friends.

In late September I was notified that I had been rejected for OCS due to the quotas being full but that my records would be kept in candidate files, to be perhaps chosen at a later date. One down, one to go, perhaps the ASTP would materialize. At least there was a chance!



The Piranha finally got far enough out of line. One day at hand to hand combat instruction he showed up mean and took over from Noguera and Powell, making the comment that they were letting us goldbrick. We wondered what would happen as Noguera and Powell moved away. They had never let us back off and we had learned well, always being told that what we learned might save our lives. The Piranha pulled off his shirt and said something to the effect that we were now even in rank. He looked for a victim and called out my friend Carlos, who had lived under authoritative rule all his life. I knew he would not accept the challenge and would only give a half-hearted response. The Piranha went right after Carlos, I'm sure he knew that Carlos would not fight back. He threw him down, told him to get up, called him a name, threw him again and put his knee on Carlos throat and gave a wild yell. He let Carlos go back into the ranks where Noguera came to him right away. I knew who would be next and stepped forward. I had made up my mind that he would not do to me what he had done to Carlos. I decided that I would not go to him but would make him come to me. I moved out and waited and I could see that it bothered him. I called him a coward to bait him. He came at me, thinking I'd make the mistakes he needed. I waited and then went to the ground. I pulled him down and hit him in the groin, then hit him in the face, making his nose bleed. He got mad and I knew I had him. He forgot his training and I could tag him at will. It would have ended in the next few minutes but we were stopped by Lt. Crowell whom I had not seen in the area. He sent the Piranha back to the battery area with Cpl. Powell and then asked what had happened. Noguera told him and he asked others, all the stories were the same. He was not a man to lie to, he was a black belt in hand to hand combat. He told me to remain and Noguera to continue the class. The Piranha never did regain control and was transferred that next week. I received no reprimand or punishment for investigation found that he was drinking on duty and acting out of his realm of authority. I breathed a big sigh of relief and figured if it hadn't been me, it would have been someone else. Someone like Pancho or Acuna. I never had to watch my back after that day. Lt. Crowell took interest in me, tore a monstrous chunk out of my rear extremities and taught me more self-defense. He stood about 5'9", about 175 pounds, was rotund but hard and tough. He held a black belt in Ju Jitsu and Judo. He was a good man and I respected him.

One of the highlights while at Callan was when I got to go to San Diego to see the Shrine East - West Pro Football Classic played by the World Champion Washington Redskins. It was played in San Diego Stadium on Sunday the 15th of August 1943. Talk about excitement, I was really up! I was to see play in person some of my football heroes; 'Slingin' Sammy Baugh, Clyde Shugart, Bob Masterson, Joe Aguirre, Willie Wilkin, Don Nolander and Steve Bogarus. The Redskins were my favorite team followed by the Chicago Bears. It was a big deal to be on the same field with them, or should I say, in the same stadium.. It was a great day to write home about! I treasure the program from that game.

I also went to Balboa Park, the home of the huge San Diego Zoo. I had never been to a zoo before, only had seen wild animals in the circus menageris. To me, it was the eighth wonder of the world. It again was something to write home about.

I also liked the desert training out in the area around Borega Springs. It was the first time for me in the desert and everything was interesting. How hot it would get during the day and how cold at night. The overnight bivouacs in the Eucalyptus groves were pretty much cut and dried, an eighteen mile hike under pack to get there, a cook truck messkit meal, sleep if you weren't on guard playing sneak-up with a couple non-coms who didn't know how to sleep. Of course, they rode back on the cook truck! After rolling out in the morning, striking camp, having a K-Ration breakfast, it was an eighteen mile hike back, with double-time the last half mile. At the end of the first overnight bivouac and hike we ended up at the infiltration course for a little run-through under fire. The course was in a beautiful area with ditches, sharp rocks and plenty of cacti, talk about wounds, there were plenty!

On the last day of August, after finishing the 7th week of basic training in the Coast Artillery at Camp Callan I was called in by the Commanding Officer and was told that I had been accepted for entrance into the Army Specialized Training Program. He explained that I had passed the test and that I would be taken out of combat service and sent to college, remaining there until I graduated as an engineer, civil or electrical, and quite possibly receive a commission as an Army officer. I was a bit apprehensive and doubting, it all sounded too good. I thought about it and decided that if I could get an education and stay away from combat at the same time, it was worth a go. I went the next morning and signed the papers, noting that they



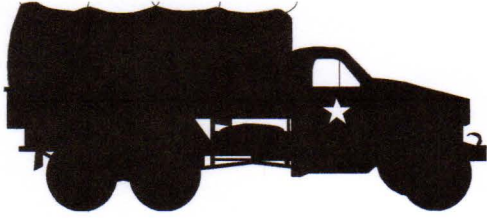
were in contract form. I guessed right then that Uncle Sam needed engineers bad and that this program would see me through a good college education which there was no civilian way to pay for except working my way through.

That same day I was sent to Fire Control and Observation School for eight weeks. There were twenty-three of us in the school. The course consisted of classes in Observing and Spotting Instruments, Aircraft Recognition, Armored Vehicle Recognition, Selection, Occupation and Operation of Observation Posts, Communications(Telephone and Panels, Map and Aerial Photograph Reading and Sensing Fire. I was quite comfortable with this turn of events and pitched into the job, forgetting about the ASTP contract. I finished at the top of my class and we graduated on the 23rd of October 1943. This all happened in September and October and on November 18 I was told that I would be leaving for ASTP on the morrow. All but 40 men had already shipped out. Sixty to Ft. Bliss, Texas to Anti-aircraft units, the 23 Missouri ROTC boys to Air Force OCS and 12 to ASTP in Michigan. The other 213 were shipped to active combat units. Twenty-seven of us were going to ASTP at Chaffey Junior College at Ontario, California. I had never heard of the town or the college but found out that it was on the outskirts of Los Angeles. I was off on another chapter in my Army career.



**THE TRAVELER 1943**





## **ASTP - HERE I COME**

**Kenneth G. Bradstreet**

**It was 7:30 am, November 18th and after saying my goodbyes, I threw my duffle bag on my shoulder, picked up my musette bag and headed for the Army 6x6 truck that would carry my buddies and I to our new station at Chaffey Junior College in Ontario, California. I threw my gear up, called out my name and climbed up into the cargo box of the truck. My gear had been passed to the front, so I took my seat on the side bench of the truck and settled down for the long ride north on Highway 101. The seats in a 6x6 are not like those in a bus, they are built of wood slats and are real butt-busters, so we made sure each of us had room to squirm. The canvas was top-tied so I knew we would get a good view of the ocean and the other scenery as we went. I was ready to go, though I hated to leave Camp Callan, it would always hold memories for me.**

**The driver started the truck and we were off. We went out the north camp entrance, turned left on Highway 101 toward Los Angeles. After a few miles we would see new places that we had not seen before. As we left the camp we were saluted by the 90's down on the point that were firing at practice sleeves pulled by navy planes. I had thought about the pilots many times and always thought that I would not like to do their job. I also found out that some of the pilots were women. It was fun to watch as we pulled away.**

**We soon passed the U.S. Marine camps, Pendleton, Mathews and El Toro and moved through San Clemente. Then came the old missions San Juan Capistrano and Mission Viejo. I had read of these in school and enjoyed the song titled, "When The Swallows Come Back To Capistrano." Bing Crosby sang it and my mom swooned! Then it was on to Fullerton where a truck left the column to drop some of the troops at the college there. We continued on to Ontario. It was an interesting trip and our first sight of Ontario was that of a smaller town with clean streets, beautiful houses, palm trees and flowers, very agreeable and morale raising.**

**We drove down the beautiful tree-lined streets and onto the campus of Chaffey Junior College and to an area that was paved behind one of the buildings. We unloaded and awaited further orders as the trucks pulled away. Soon we were formed in rank and the commanding officer of ASTP STARU 3935, Lt. Col. Knickerbocker appeared to address his new charges. He gave his welcome to us and assured us that he would do everything in his power to make our stay a pleasant and rewarding one. As he spoke I was thinking about something to eat, that sack lunch for noon mess was not holding. Good thing I wasn't tested on the speech context.**



We were taken inside then to be assigned our billets. Don Alexander, my buddy from Kansas and I stayed together and were billeted side by side. Don is a stocky guy with a droll sense of humor that is manifested in his description of our situations. There were no formal dormitories or barracks. We were barracked in the gym and its anterooms, 250 of us, bunkbeds and living out of our barrack and musette bags. It was definitely spartan-like compared to the barracks we were accustomed to. But we got settled in just before being called out to retreat. After retreat we were taken to a big room with a kitchen and wooden tables with benches for our evening mess. It was a very good meal with ham, mashed potatoes and gravy, green beans, bread with butter, coffee or milk and apple pie. I was getting to like the place and Don agreed though he remarked that mom was not there with the apple pie.

After the meal and announcements, Don and I, along with several others decided to acquaint ourselves with the area. We went out the door to the sports area. The November sun was shining at a beautiful scene, the San Gabriel Mountains, just a short distance to the north, roughly 15 miles. Things were getting better all the time. Some of the cadre passed the word that there was more great scenery a few miles down the road at Pomona College, an all girl school.

The next day the curriculum was explained to us, that we would not only study in the classroom but would also have a full schedule of physical training. So we hit the books, did the push-ups and got with it. Our daily schedule is: reveille at 5:50 followed by morning mess; 7:00-11:30 classes; 11:30-12:30 pm noon mess and rest; 12:30-4:50 classes: retreat 5:00; 5:15-6:40 evening mess and rest; 6:45-8:50 study; 9:00-10:00 personal time and lights out 15 minutes later. We had two professors whose names were Christ and Moses. At first it seemed like a review of high school physics, geometry, trigonometry, advanced math and it went well. Soon it got a little hard to handle as the courses were speeded up. It took more of our leisure time to study and compete. This was especially tough on Don because his wife, Faye, had just arrived to be with him. He had found a small couple rooms nearby.

Getting back to the Physical Training bit recently adopted by the ASTP at Chaffey; the program of exercises was prescribed by WD Training Circular No. 87. These new exercises were known as the "Daily Dozen," and guaranteed to build muscle where they were never known to exist. Introduced November 17, 1942, these "backbreakers" were scientifically prepared by leading physical training instructors as a means of standardizing exercise throughout the Army. One of the exercises, the "Burpee" is named after Dr. Burpee of Stanford University. All twelve, each one bearing a title, follow in order: Swing jump, Burpee, Squat Bend, Row Boat, Push-up, Annie Over, Side Stretch, Leg Swing, Squat Bounce, Trunk Bend, Stationary Run and Burpee Push. The names were required learning so that everyone knew what to do if they were not ordered in sequence. They weren't really that bad.



Our group quickly started welding together: Charles Petty, Frank Hornacek, Don Alexander, George Hammer, Phil Suchy, John Halverson, Bill Jones and I, plus others named Mayne, Lang and Richards. We hung around together enjoying games of touch football in our minutes of leisure time and helping each other in studies at Chaffey. Many times we pulled weekend duty for Don so that he could be with Faye. This was not without its rewards for Faye would have Don bring one of us home with him for a great home-cooked meal or a great picnic meal down on beach. It was a good group with everyone doing their part as friends.

It was Christmas time and I received a 72 hour pass to visit kin in Long Beach, aunt, uncle, cousins and special cousin Polly, whom I had grown up with. She made sure that I saw the sights of the area, Grauman's Theater with the stars hand and shoe prints in the cement out front. We went to see a show there. Also took a trip to Hollywood and a trip to see the star's homes. She also took me down on the Pike which was a highlight of the visit. I had a very good time and hated to go back.

We saw a lot of camp shows with name stars. We were trucked to March airfield one night to see a show starring Kay Kyser and his Band with Ish Kabibble and Ginny Sims plus guest stars Lucille Ball and Bob Eberle. It was a terrific show. Red Skelton came to the school at Pomona and the girls invited us to the performance. We had nice long lecture on etiquette, manners and deportment before going. It was a great show, Red is the greatest of all time.

While at Chaffey a newspaper titled "The Lamp and Sword" was published every other Thursday. It was a supplement of the Chaffey United Press and prepared by a staff of military personnel.

The Lamp and Sword, 16 December 1943 issue, devoted a good part of a page of garbled information to the Army Specialized Training Program. Titled "Cream of the Army Crop is Kept Busy in Specialist Training," it really opened our eyes to the con job that had been perpetrated upon us by the U.S. Army, the page read as follows:

The least of Uncle Sam's manpower worries today is officer personnel for the Army. The need for commissioned officers, it has been announced, has been "largely met." In a two-year period--from the summer of 1941 to this last summer--the number of officers skyrocketed from 93,000 to 521,000. That, roughly, is to be the size of the Army officer corps in our Army of 7,700,000 officers and men that will face the foe at the end of 1943. The program of the Officer Candidate Schools, which schools have turned out more than 200,000 officers, has been sharply curtailed, and now a commission in the Army has become as elusive as a Japanese victory,

This state of affairs helps in explaining the situation of 140,000 young soldiers--admittedly "officer material" and the "cream of the crop"--who, as members of the Army Specialized Training Program, are being given a college education to make



special-ists of them. Tops from an I.Q. standpoint, the soldiers to qualify, needed a score of 140 in the special test for college aptitude, are being trained as linguists, mechanical, chemical and civil engineers, psychologists, medical doctors, dentists and so on. The 222 colleges and universities where they are studying are among the foremost in the country.

Just the same, with some exceptions, these bright young soldiers have no assurance of ever wearing bars, leaves, eagles or stars on their shoulders, no matter how hard they study in the ASTP. The fact is, there are simply not enough commissions in the Army to take care of them.

The ASTP has been called a revolutionary step in Army training, an unprecedented interlock of the college classroom with the battlefield. Behind it lies many reasons. To understand the principle one, Col. Herman Beukema, director of the program, asks you take a backward glance in American history; "The years which separate yuong America's fight for independence and mature America's struggle to hold it secure have witnessed startling changes in the definition of a soldier. In 1775 raw courage, a musket and the ability to use it were considered enough to qualify a man as a defender of his country. Washington soon discovered that the Minute Man, however brave, was no soldier. Long and hard months of training, ending on the battlefield, were needed to convert him into a dependable fighter. Today's soldier needs everything that Washington's veterans of Yorktown could boast--and vastly more. Every advance in the mechanization of armies has multiplied the demands we make on a finished soldier, the standards we set for him. When a single infantry battalion uses three times as much equipment and delivers at least 10 times as much firepower as Washington's entire army, we get some notions of the demands on our 1943 infantrymen. For the Artillery, the armored and mechanized units and the Air Forces, the demand is vastly greater. There is but one way to meet the problem imposed by modern technology. That is training--carefully planned, closely supervised, endlessly continued training..."

The Army early in its expansion ran into a serious shortage of certain types of specialists. On top of this the Selective Service Act was changed so as to lower the draft age to 18, and that cut off the flow of trained men from the colleges. If, said Col. Beukman, if the colleges could have been moved bodily into the Army camps, the problem would have been simplified. That was impossible, and so the War Department (and also the Navy Department) decided to reverse the flow and place selected men in the colleges for varying periods of intensive training.

On December 17, 1942, Secretary of War Stimson and Secretary of the Navy Knox announced that colleges would be used for training of specialists. Outstanding teachers worked with the Army in preparing the curricula. Soldiers, in order to qualify, must make a score of 110 or better, in a special test for college aptitude. There are two programs--basic and advanced. For the first, the soldier must be under 22 and must be a high school graduate or show that he has the equivalent of a



high school education. The advanced program is for men 18 and over who have one year or more of college work, and who are deemed to have the necessary qualifications.

And that brings up the question of commissions. Apparently many of the boys who were enrolled in ASTP were under the impression that they not only would be specialists, but commissioned officers as well. That to say the least, a misapprehension. Some would get commissions; in fact, some were assured of commissions, provided they made the grade. In this category were the doctors. A doctor must continue his training until he gets his degree, there is no such thing as a partially trained doctor. And Army custom ordains that a doctor be commissioned when he dons the uniform. The other soldier students--the prospective engineers, linguists, etc.--learned, if they did not already know, that ASTP did not necessarily lead to a commission. They might get one, but there were no assurances.

Over at the Pentagon Building they say that the ASTP boys were never misled on this. It was always perfectly clear, they say, that the ASTP was not the OCS--that is it was not an officers candidate school. The program, they add, was designed entirely with a view to the Army's need of specialists, and no other view. As for the postwar benefits to the soldiers and to the nation, the Army Specialized Training Division had this to say to the boys: "Whatever your college training in the army may provide as a basis for your life career is incidental to the major purpose of fitting you for the most advanced military duties you are qualified to perform."

In some of the statements made by high-ranking army officers at the outset, soldiers may have thought that they detected the promise of a commission through the ASTP. Thus, Gen. George C. Marshall, Army Chief of Staff, made this statement in explaining the objective of the program: "The Army has been increasingly handicapped by a shortage of men possessing desirable combinations of intelligence, aptitude, education, and training in fields such as medicine, engineering, languages, science, mathematics, and psychology, who are qualified for service as officers of the army. With the establishment of the minimum Selective Service age of 18, the Army was compelled to assure itself that there would be no more interruption in the flow of professionally and technically trained men who have hitherto been provided in regular increments by American colleges and universities."

The Army Specialized Training Division explained to the student-soldiers that Gen. Marshall's statement should not be interpreted to mean that a graduate of ASTP will be assigned directly to Officer Candidate School upon completion of his college course. The graduate, it was further explained, will be assigned to some arm of the service where his special qualifications and recommendations of the commandant of the ASTP will be "given due consideration."

A War Department release issued on November 5 to announce that 1,500 men had already been graduated from ASTP, put the questions of commissions this way: "A number of graduates have been selected for Officer Candidate Schools, among them



the Transportation Corps OCS and the Corps of Engineers OCS. The ASTP is not to be regarded, however, as a sure road to a commission, as ASTP graduates must compete with all other enlisted men for selection to fill the few vacancies in the OCS. Although the trainees' chances for advancement are enhanced by successful completion of their courses, with officer training a possibility, the primary aim of the program is to train soldiers for the highest duties they are capable of performing in specialized fields where the Army has greater needs."

The Army regards the boys in the ASTP as officer material, but the fact is, as was stated at the outset, that there simply are not enough commissions to go around. If 140,000 youngsters, and the thousands who are to follow them in the ASTP, were given commissions, the result would be a lop-sided army. The Army is having no trouble getting enough boys to fill its own ASTP quotas.

The program itself already has been hailed as a great success, and it is expected to have a notable chapter in the Army's history of this war. The specialists the Army needs already are beginning to flow from the colleges and this flow will increase steadily in the months ahead. Some of the graduates are already overseas, carrying out, in many cases, highly dramatic assignments. This part of the story probably won't be known until after the war. The program has definitely emphasized one thing -- America's richness in young men possessing what Gen. Marshall called the "desirable combinations of intelligence, aptitude, education" and other qualities needed by the Army in this greatest of all wars.

The article was discussed among all of us and a certain amount of anger became apparent throughout the troops. Most had been told that a commission was in the offing when they had signed up for ASTP. It was shocking to everyone to realize that the Army had perpetrated a con job on so many people. A number of the boys went immediately to the commanding officer and asked to return to duty. Our group talked it over and decided to stay with ASTP as long as possible. We could see the handwriting on the wall - ASTP would be closed down in the near future and we would be thrown back into a replacement pool for infantry - so why not ride it out. The atmosphere changed to a get-by attitude as far as everything but the studies. We figured that we might as well learn as long as we were here.

Just after Christmas rumors of a shut-down of the Chaffey ASTP were flying through the ranks. Our group started to speculate on where we would be sent and whether we would be together. This went on until January 30 when passes were restricted because we were on shipping orders. I was shipping out on February 3. Not long after, orders were posted for movement and we found that our group would be posted to other schools. Don Alexander was going to Utah. I was going to New Mexico College of Agriculture and Mechanical Arts at Las Cruces, New Mexico was Bill Jones, the others of the group would go to other schools. I would soon embark on another chapter of my career in the Army.





## **Army Specialized Training Program**

**On November 19, 1943 at Chaffey Junior College STARU 3935 we were issued our new ASTP shoulder insignias.**

**The Army Specialized Training Program insignia is a blue-bordered gold octagon, 2 5/8 x 2 1/4 inches with a blue lamp of knowledge superimposed by a blue and gold sword, the portion of the sword on the lamp golden. It depicts the sword of valor against a lamp of knowledge.**

**Artists of the Quartermaster Corps and Special Service Division collaborated to design a series of insignia.**

**To learn the preference of soldiers in the program, a cross-section vote was held at Georgetown University with approximately 150 soldiers veiwing a number of samples of shoulder insignia patterns. The pattern described above ran far ahead in the voting.**

**Soldier-students, members of Army Specialized Training Units at 33 western colleges and universities, received the special identifying shoulder sleeve insignia on November 19, it was announced at the Ninth Service Command Headquarters At Fort Douglas, Utah.**

**Members of the division are on duty at universities and colleges as soldier-students for training in subjects identified with modern warfare and military government. All are enlisted men especially selected for training through the Army Specialized Training Program, many of whom have distinguished themselves in various scholastic fields. Many are veterans of battle. The soldier-students have completed basic training at military installations. They are under-going intensive training in the study of basic sciences, medicine, foreign areas and languages, engineering and other subjects associated with modern warfare. All were ordered to the classrooms as soldiers are ordered to any other duty.**

**Note: With the irreverent attitude of all soldiers when testing the system, the ASTP soldiers quickly dubbed the new shoulder insignia "The flaming bedpan on a pogo stick."**





## THE ARMY SPECIALIZED TRAINING PROGRAM

The Army Specialized Training Program (A.S.T.P.) was created by the United States Army to fill a need for engineering-type officers in the army. One of the basic requirements for entrance was an I.Q. of 110 or higher on the Army General Classification Test (AGCT), which was the level demanded for commissioning as an officer. An additional requirement was screening by a classification board to determine if the soldier was considered potential officer material, on the premise that if the training was completed satisfactorily a commission would follow. An interesting aspect of the program was that a promissory contract was given by the government to the cadets fresh out of high school to continue them in the course once they had (1) passed the original entrance examination, (2) volunteered for service, (3) continued making passing grades in the course. No one knew, of course, how long the war would last and the Army was interested in insuring a continuing supply of trained engineers.

The Army advertised the A.S.T.P. program in high schools all over the nation which resulted in thousands of seniors taking the test which would gain them admission into the program after entering the service. They would be called up immediately after their 18th birthday. The cadets would be given 17 weeks of regular army basic training before being assigned to a school.

The A.S.T.P. program course was the equivalent of the basic four-year college course in Civil Engineering to be completed in about a nine month shorter time. The A.S.T.P. Cadets were given intensive classroom training and instruction by civilian instructors, very heavy study periods often lasting into the wee hours of the night, minimum time off and limited military training. Most cadets had MOS numbers as specialists of one type or another. The Cadets carried no rank, all became Privates on entering the program regardless of rank before entering. Some lost as many as four grades. All ranks were temporary and denoted on removable armbands.

Minimum time off consisted of a "Good Conduct Pass" for 24 hours off the college campus as long as it was in a 20 mile radius of the campus. The issuance of these passes was dependent on the cadet's grades and deportment as interpreted by the commanding officer.

The shoulder patch worn by the A.S.T.P. Cadets was described as, "The sword of Valor superimposed on the Lamp of Knowledge." It was in a blunted diamond shape in colors of blue and gold. The Cadet Corps referred to the patch humorously as, "The Flaming Bedpan On A Pogo Stick."

The A.S.T.P. contract was terminated starting in late February 1944 by the Secretary of War. It had become clear that the war was turning in favor of the United States and her allies but exacting a high manpower cost.

The following letter was given to each cadet to impart the news that he would be transferred to a combat unit:

### MEMORANDUM TO EACH TRAINEE

The following telegram from the Secretary of War is quoted for your information:

"You were assigned to the Army Specialized Training Program because it was felt that the courses of instruction scheduled would materially increase your value to the military service. You have been working under high pressure to master as quickly as possible those essentials of college training of greatest importance to your development as a soldier.



The time is now come for the majority of you to be assigned to other active duty to break the enemy's defenses and force their unconditional surrender. It is necessary to hit them with the full weight of America's manpower.

Because of this imperative military necessity most of you will soon be ordered to field service before the completion of your normal course. The Army Specialized Training Program will be reduced prior to 1 April 1944 to 35,000 trainees which will include 5,000 pre-induction students and advanced medical, dental and engineer groups, the USMA prep courses and certain language groups.

Most of you released from the A.S.T.P. will be assigned to Army Ground Forces for duty with divisions and other groups and units. Your intelligence, training and high qualities of leadership are expected to raise the combat efficiency of those units. The thousands of A.S.T.P. trainees who have already been assigned to field service have set high standards for you to follow.

By order of the Secretary of War

By order of the Commandant

The morning formation at which this memorandum was given to the Cadets at New Mexico A & M almost turned into a mutiny, not because of the government decision to disband the program, not because of the memorandum, not because of transfer to combat units, but because of comments made by the A.S.T.P. Commandant, one Major Bell. After passing out the memorandums, he announced the transfers and made a statement, "Three out of every four of you will be dead at this time next year." This caused the formation to go out of control and the Major turned and ran away with no apology. From this time until the cadets shipped out there was little discipline and no more classes as the cadets did only what was necessary and did that very slowly. The Major was not seen by anyone before shipping out to the 12th.

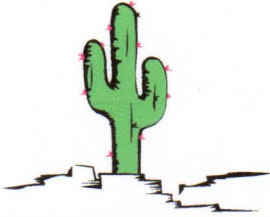
Twelve hundred seven (1,207) A.S.T.P. men were assigned to the 12th Armored Division at Camp Barkeley, Texas. They came from colleges in the states of Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, Nevada, California and Oklahoma. Most of the men arrived at Camp Barkeley in early March 1944. The 12th Armored Division was in the final phases of its training for overseas combat service and making certain personnel changes to bring the Division to physical specification.

The A.S.T.P. men were not welcomed with open arms to the 12th Armored Division. They were met with a cool disdain that was laced with some anxiety. The long-time Hellcats were disgruntled with the transfer of their buddies to other units to make room for the so-called "brains" and also felt threatened with loss of hard-earned rank to these incoming people. It seemed that all dirty jobs were reserved for the new Hellcats, but they stood up to all that was thrown at them and after a while, begrudgingly were accepted.

The A.S.T.P. men proved themselves well in the 12th Armored Division. Many were promoted and showed exceptional leadership, with several receiving battlefield commissions. Many were killed in action, became prisoners of war and many were wounded in action. They went on after the war serving in many capacities and offices in the 12th Armored Division Association to make it the World War II unit association looked up to by other World War unit associations. They continue in Hellcat comradeship to serve their comrades unselfishly in the 12th Armored Division→



# ASTP IN THE DESERT



We were awakened and followed the normal SOP on February 3, 1944 and after mess were told that we were on shipping alert and not to leave the area, that we should prepare our gear for movement and bring it out to a designated area. Then it was more of Army SOP - hurry up and wait. Noon mess came and went, groups of men were called out and left as we waited. At approximately 4:30 pm we heard our names called and we picked up our gear and took it to a truck that had just pulled up. It was about ten minutes later that we got orders to load our gear and board. The truck pulled away after we were told that we were going to the railroad station to board a troop train. When we arrived we found that most of the boys who had left earlier were already on the train. We heard that they would be dropped off at different places along the way.

At 6:30 pm the train moved out of the station and we were on our way! We settled back and got as comfortable as possible. I believe the coach was older and more decrepit than the one I had come west in! One thing was the same--I was hungry. Word came that there was a kitchen car and diner three cars back. About an hour later our car was invited to eat, I had visions of a sack lunch, but I was wrong, it was a good meal. We went back to our car satisfied and settled down to watch the countryside go by.

It turned to desert as we went seeing signs for Palm springs and going through Indio, Desert Center, Blythe and on to Phoenix, Arizona during the night. The scenery flashed by; desert, adobe huts, old ruins, 2 cars of German POW's on a siding, cotton gins, cotton fields, irrigation, dirty old towns, Mexican people, old bleached bones, it was interesting. I drew pictures to send to Ruth. I remember a town named Picacho, Arizona, population 22, 2 taverns, a store, post office and 2 shacks. Then there was Red Rock, Arizona and lots of mountains, heading for Tucson. After Tucson there was more green landscape as we headed east to Lordsburg, New Mexico. Our next stop was Deming where a car or two were left. Now we noticed we were turning south and the question became, "To where?" After a while we were going east again and the next stop was El Paso, Texas for about an hour where we again left off more men. Then our course was north to Las Cruces, a distance of about 50 miles.

The trip had taken two days and we were anxious to see our new home. It is four miles from Las Cruces. The name, Las Cruces, is "The Crosses" in Spanish. We arrived at 12:30 am and had to walk about a mile to the school where we were fed sandwiches, cupcakes and coffee. We were disappointed when we finally were taken to our billet, a place called McFie Hall, an old, and I do mean old, dormitory.



It was a helluva place, would have been great for soldiers in the late 1800's. We were assigned four men to a room, in ours were Bill Jones, Robert B. Mead, George Kveton and myself. Mead is from Los Angeles, Jones from Oregon, Tex Kveton is just 200 miles from home, Sweetwater, Texas. The room was dirty, the old plaster was cracked, the beds were ramshackle bunks with the springs tied in with rope. The boards in the floor squeaked and the door would not fit closed. The windows were loose and needed caulking. One redeeming factor was that the window sill board was loose and could be lifted out. There was open space between the 2x4s under the sill board, and this area became our built-in hide-out bar. Our new address was now Section H, ASTU 3858, McFie Hall, State College, New Mexico. I figured it out-- I was 36 hours from home.

I was issued 11 books and a slide rule, told that we will get our laundry done here for \$1.50 a month. Classes will be trigonometry, algebra, chemistry, physics, english, history, geography and dictionary. Classes and study are held from 7:00 am to 10:00 pm. Went to town on the 6th to look around--not much of a town. The commanding officer, Major R.D. Bell, gave us a welcome speech in the form of a threat, saying we would probably only be here six weeks, that there would be continuous pressure and that if we flunked one subject we would be washed out of ASTP. It got me thinking it might not be a bad idea, but then I made up my mind that no chicken crap officer like Bell was going to beat me. We soon found that the entire officer staff were carbon copies of him.

February 11th saw us doing the G.I. polka, scrubbing and waxing floors, polishing the furniture, dusting each nook and cranny, washing windows inside and out, straightened out the closet and polished our shoes. We agreed that this cleaning was the first since Billy the Kid went to school here. The major inspected later in the day, including shoes and uniform, which resulted in a new pair of boots and a set of new ill-fitting suntans.

For the next week we were pushed hard by the officers and non-coms, we're sure they want us to wash out. Went to Mesilla on the weekend. Its claim to fame is the Billy the Kid Museum. Went back to Las Cruces for a good meal at the Del Rio Cafe, our favorite cookery where a steak dinner with all the fixin's cost \$.90. Came back and had a few drinks from our bar in the window sill. The powers knew we had it but never found it. When we left A&M, we left a full bottle, unopened, dangling on a string. Hope the people who tore that shack down found it and had a drink on us.

The officers and non-coms are really putting the chicken-crap on us now. We were told on the 20th that ASTP was closing down and we wouldn't be here much longer. Studying fell by the wayside immediately, we stopped immediately. Next day the official word came down that the program would be shut down by April 1st. We were told that we would be assigned to the ground forces. We threw the books in the rack for the last time--what could they do--send us to the ground forces?



The pressure is off but they are working us now with drills and other basics. On the 23rd Jones scrounged up 2 dozen doughnuts, we'll have coffee and doughnuts this evening. Everything is routine basic now, chicken, but no pressure. Odd things are happening, bedspring ropes nearly severed on non-com beds, paint spilled on the major's step, all in the night. On the 26th we were quarantined for measles, a couple of girls had caught them. We agreed that it was no problem to us, we had no unsupervised contact with the fairer sex. This happened just before pass time. They told us to study but we decided to write letters and play cards. Even in quarantine they made us go to class but little was done. We were required to attend a G.I. show put on by the officers, non-coms and coeds, it was an exceptionally bad show with our buddy, the major playing a part. Chicken crap is resuming. Officer of the Day has orders to check our room every half hour. We gave him plenty to check! Amazing how one of the four must use the latrine just as the OD reaches the door.

We are told by Lt. Morelli that there will be no furloughs and that we probably would be sent back to the branch of service we were in before ASTP. So I might be going to Ft. Bliss in the Anti-aircraft. Mead's girl friend visited and replenished our liquor supply with a bottle of tequila and a bottle of whiskey. Good thing, we were almost out!

On March 7 six boys were caught in bed at 9:30 am and the officers are making it hot for all of us. Old Chicken Crap is on leave. We got off quarantine this week and now we are restricted. Tequila in the dark tonight, lights-out moved up two hours. Tex got into an argument with an officer, he wanted a pass to go home and he was refused. Tex sleeps below me. I decided to rest on his bunk. He came in mad and jumped into my bunk and kept bouncing, the bunk broke and I was suddenly under Tex, bed and all. We knew we had to dispose of the bunk in a hurry. Jones and Mead went down to an empty room and procured a good bunk. Tex and I took the broken bunk down to the room. We tied the bunk together with string and put two mattresses on it, hoping no one would find it before we left. On the 8th we had a scrumptious scrounger's supper, roast chicken and dressing. We traded for two dressed chickens from the supplier that served the college, he wanted a pair of army boots and we wanted chicken. We scrounged up an old pair of boots and the deal was on. Now Jones and Mead could talk the woman at the canteen into fixing the chicken for us. It was great! We got gigged this morning and have two hours extra detail to do before Saturday noon.

On the 10th our buddy, old C.S. himself came back. He paid us a visit and asked, "if you fellows were to stay here, what subject would give you the most trouble?" We sure would have liked to have known what he meant by that. They are trying to make us study now by saying we were assigned to ASTP as if we were assigned to any other unit and that studying is our assigned job. We regarded this as a joke and quietly laughed. Our section was restricted on the 13th for a little pugilistic



disagreement that the major happened to be told about. Just another bump in the road.

We were apprised of the fact that we have no income tax worries, that there was a \$1400 soldier's exemption. My pay was only \$600 annually so I dismissed it from my mind.

March 15 and I have shipping orders. Going to Camp Barkeley, Texas to the 12th Armored Division. It was located near Abilene, Texas. Tex said it was in a "nuthin but paradise" part of Texas and he would be "next door" to home. It sure made him happy. The rest of us figured it's got to be better than we've had. The major has lifted the restriction on the order that we be model soldiers until we ship out. There is a party tonight for the ASTP given by the college and Las Cruces residents. I can't go--I'm on Charge of Quarters--the major likes me. One thing good came of the situation, the phone rang and when I answered it was Mom asking to talk to me! I had a great time talking to mom, Ruth and my sister and brothers. If I hadn't been pulling C.Q., I'd have been at the dance and missed the call. The major had done one for me!

March 16th started routinely. At mid-morning a formation was called and Major Bell had memorandums handed out to all of us. The memorandums read as follows:

**HEADQUARTERS  
ARMY SPECIALIZED TRAINING UNIT NO. 3858  
NEW MEXICO COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND MECHANICAL ARTS  
STATE COLLEGE NEW MEXICO**

**MEMORANDUM TO EACH TRAINEE:**

The following telegram from the Secretary of War is quoted for your information.

"You were assigned to the Army Specialized Training Program because it was felt that the courses of instruction scheduled would materially increase your value to the military service. You have been working under high pressure to master as quickly as possible those essentials of college training of greatest importance to your development as a soldier. The time has come for the majority of you to be assigned to other active duty to break the enemy's defense and force their unconditional surrender. It is necessary to hit them with the full weight of America's manpower. Because of this imperative military necessity most of you will soon be ordered to field service before the completion of your normal course. The Army Specialized Training Program will be reduced prior to 1 April 1944 to 35,000 trainees which include 5,000 pre-induction students and advanced medical, dental and engineer groups, the USMA prep courses and certain language groups. Most of you released from the ASTP will be assigned to the Army Ground Forces for duty with divisions and other units. Your intelligence, training and high qualities of leadership are expected to raise the combat efficiency of those units. The thousands of ASTP



trainees who have already been assigned to field service have set high standards for you to follow.

By order of the Secretary of War."

We all figured "so-be-it" until the good Major Bell deemed it necessary to bid us farewell. He said the usual things but made a bad mistake, a mistake that only a chicken bastard like him could make, he made the following statement, "in the year to come, when the invasion of Germany and Japan starts, you will be in it and one out of four of you will be killed." An immediate growl came out of the formation, forcing him and his officers to leave. It was the time when no more discipline was to be enforced. We discussed this among ourselves and decided it was only his talk, but we did not see any officers for the rest of the time at A&M., non-coms made the contacts with us. I never forgot that time. By the way, it snowed that night.

March 17 and orders are that we will move out tomorrow for Camp Barkeley on a troop train. We spent a lot of time on this day and night making guesses about what the future held for us and promising not to get out of touch with each other. We were also given our diplomas to send home which I did immediately. Also went and said goodbye to Dr. Jett, my mechanical engineering professor, he was a real nice guy you couldn't help learning from. He never forgot us and kept close track of us during the years to come.

Saturday, March 18th, 1944 and we were up, packed and ready early. This was shipping out day! We took our barracks bags and musette bags downstairs and outside to the edge of the driveway and went to breakfast, I didn't want to run on empty again. After breakfast we were formed up for roll call and informed that the trucks would be here right after dinner, so we knew we were still in the army--hurry up and wait. We loafed around, playing cards and reading until noon mess. Went back to McFie and the trucks arrived shortly thereafter. The order was given to load and we did so in record time. As soon as we were loaded the trucks took off to the railroad station. I looked back with no regrets. After the short trip we were loaded on the train, it wasn't long and we were ready to head for Camp Barkeley and our new life

The train pulled out and we ran south to El Paso and picked the men we had left there on the way to Las Cruces before going east and northeast. It was late when we left El Paso, we would stop more times as we went to pick our fellow ASTPers. The scenery was typical southwest; mountains, desert, adobe huts, and small towns. Some of the towns were Sierra Blanca, Van Horn, Pecos, Odessa, Midland, Big Spring, Colorado City and Sweetwater. We had a helluva time with Tex as we went through the latter three, he wanted to get off and see mama. The trip was pretty much uneventful and we were anxious to see our new home. It would be another chapter in my Army career.



## SHACKS AND SAND

By Kenneth G. Bradstreet

Camp Barkeley near Abilene, Texas - the end of a February 1944 move from ASTP at New Mexico A&M College at Las Cruces, New Mexico. The Army had closed out the Army Specialized Training Program and we would-be civil engineers were now part of the 12th Armored Division. We hoped that the parting words of Major Bell, CO at A&M would not come true, quote, "within a year three out of four of you men will be dead."

Camp Barkeley met us head on! There it was, a sprawling Army outpost built on the west Texas desert sand. Arriving in the late evening we could not see too much of the camp. We were ushered into a typical large wooden army messhall and fed as soon as roll call was finished. Then to the classification buildings to be assigned to units. After being questioned by several non-coms and officers I was assigned to B Co., 714th Tank Bn. along with several others. I didn't understand the assignment, an artilleryman in the tanks, the only thing I could deduce was that the officer was tired and decided to fulfill his quotas in a hurry. It didn't make much difference to me as long as it wasn't foot infantry. A guide led us to the company area where we were met by the 1st Sergeant and the Officer of the Day. They assigned us to our billets and we were taken to our barracks.

The barracks were single-story plywood and tarpaper shacks with two doors in the east wall at each end. Nineteen men were quartered in each shack with steel cots lining the walls with the foot to the middle aisle. Narrow open-front lockers for uniforms were between the cots at the cot head. There were loose-fitting windows placed in all walls. Mops, brooms, dust pans and buckets were in a rack outside the door. Each cot was furnished with a mattress and we were given a cotton mattress cover, two sheets and two wool army blankets to make us comfortable.

I was ready to sleep when I got settled in. Revielle sounded at 0500 and the sun was coming up. The latrine and shower were in a separate shack at the end of the row. We stood revielle and roll call and went to breakfast. It was there I found that there would be no warm welcome for ASTPers in the 12th Armored Division. The resident Hellcats felt that we so-called "brains" had caused the transfer of their buddies, also that we would take their stripes. So the first silent treatment was endured. That morning there was hand to hand training and the first one picked for example by the trainer was yours truly. As I rose I decided that I didn't care if they court-martialed me, I wasn't going to be beat up as well as shunned. In Camp Callan I had a very good Black Belt instructor in hand to hand combat. Captain Crowell made sure you could do the job. It all started innocent enough with the show and tell part of where to place feet and hands and how to shift weight for maximum effect. But then the rough stuff began by me getting thrown to the ground, the instructor followed to pin me and show how to finish the enemy. When the dust settled he was on his back and my foot was on his throat. I told him that if he moved I would break his neck. The Lieutenant in charge saw what happened and asked me to let him up which I did. He asked me to wait for him in the Orderly Room. The 1st Sgt. asked me what happened but I kept quiet. Several officers came in and went into the CO's office and then the Lieutenant arrived and took the 1st Sergeant in with him. The sergeant came back, went to the files, took out a file which I took to be mine and returned to the office. About a half hour later, I was asked in to the office. I observed military courtesy and stood at attention as the CO spoke. He informed that I was to be transferred to another unit, that my records had not been thoroughly read and that I was much better qualified for the artillery. Then it was out the door and into a jeep and away to the 494th AFA area. I didn't even have to pack, my gear was already in the jeep. So it was that I became a member of A Battery, 494th Armored Field Artillery. In A Battery there was some indignation to my presence but it was manifested in my getting a steady diet of dirty jobs but there was no rough stuff. I kept quiet, did my job and listened. In a few days I found that A Battery had a lot of good men and a very tough topkick, one First Sergeant Truxton K. Clement.

I was assigned to the #4 Gun Section under Sgt. Robert French of Wisconsin who wasted no time in letting me know that his section was #1 and if I loused it up, I was as good as dead. The gun crew was



comprised of Gunner Jeremiah O'Neil of Oklahoma, SI man Phillip Galu of California, Loader Leroy Kirkpatrick of Kansas, Driver Richard Arnold of Illinois, AmmoMan Barnett Abromovich of Michigan and myself, AmmoMan extraordinary. I decided that this was the niche for me, no responsibility, just do my job. Here again, I thought no one checked my MOS number and I wasn't going to volunteer. I found that the CO knew but did nothing until we were overseas when he told me that if the situation called for his decision to use me, he would.

The barracks were a carbon copy of the first ones. They were real holes to live in. The Texas wind never stops blowing, only changes velocity. It brought sand from all over Texas and Mexico to our quarters. The loose-fitting windows and doors provided ready-made entries for the blown sand. We were continuously sweeping sand out of the door and shaking it out of our blankets. The tiny pebbles of sand also brought sand mites clinging to them and they kept us scratching. When we left camp to train in the field the sand almost inundated our billets. The sand lay so deep on our blankets we would team up, take the corners and sides of the blankets, carry them outside and dump the sand.

It was far better in the field, at least there was no half-way effort to assimilate the comforts of civil life. Then there were those officers who felt that the shacks should look like homey little cottages. They liked to wait until you were out in the field and then pull an inspection, it was a cinch gig. This let us come back to our shacks and spend all night scrubbing and polishing until the plywood gleamed like fine marble. I always have thought that the situation could have been handled better with gasoline and matches. There was sure no danger of a prairie fire. There are those who feel a certain nostalgia for Camp Barkeley but I am not one of them.

After departing Camp Barkeley and Abilene I made a pact with myself never to go back. Finally, after 50 years, I did return when the opportunity came to establish our 12th Armored Division Museum at Abilene.



## DEEP IN THE HEART OF TEXAS -- NO BUTTS ABOUT IT

By Kenneth G. Bradstreet 1944

It was all right to smoke cigarettes in our outfit but you had better know what to do when you finished smoking one. If you did not follow the correct S.O.P. there were certain dire consequences that took immediate effect.

After smoking the cigarette down the finger-burning point, there was a portion left called the butt. It was a cardinal sin to casually toss the butt away, S.O.P. demanded field-stripping of the butt. This was to be accomplished by tearing the paper away from the tobacco and scattering the tobacco on the ground, then rolling the paper into the smallest ball possible and grinding it into the ground with your boot sole.

Not complying with this procedure called for digging a six by six by six foot hole and burying a cigarette in the hole. This took time and effort for only the hardest rocky soil was chosen for this burial - just to make sure the instructions sunk into the unfortunate smokers mind. If caught a second time, the procedure was reversed, digging up the cigarette for reburial. Needless to say, it was usually a one-time offense which had its desired effect on both offender and on-looker.



## FURLOUGH    MAY 1944

By Kenneth G. Bradstreet

I was stationed at Camp Barkeley near Abilene, Texas. A lot had happened since I left home to soldier for Uncle Sam. I had taken my basic training at Camp Callan, California, went to ASTP in Ontario, California, to ASTP in Las Cruces, New Mexico and was now in the 12th Armored Division making final preparation to go overseas. It had been over 10 months since I last saw Sioux City, the family and Ruth. It was in my mind that I would be sent into combat without furlough and the chance to see Ruth and the family again. I was to the point of resigning myself to the fact.

On 2 May word was given that all men who had not had a furlough would receive a 14 day leave at home. I was overjoyed when I heard this good news. Then a demoralizing thought struck me; I had been sending my extra money to Mom and living on five dollars a month. I had to get money for train fare home. The fare was \$61 on the Katy Line roundtrip. This was over a months pay with no deductions! If I didn't get the fare, I couldn't go.

I didn't want to borrow from my buddies because they needed their money for their fares. I went to the Red Cross but they didn't consider me a hardship situation. I decided to call Mom and see if she had any of my money left. She said that she did and would wire it to me in a few days. She sent \$65 (I found out after the war that she borrowed it from Uncle Harry Harbeck). As soon as I had the money I bought my ticket and made preparations to go home. I got into a crap game with the extra \$4 and Lady Luck smiled; I won \$141! I knew then that I could eat going both ways, replace the \$65 and also have spending money at home.

The day of furlough came and I found that the Army was adding on four days so that I would have a full fourteen days at home! I caught the bus into Abilene, got to the TP Depot, boarded the train and was on my way. The train was full, packed with soldiers. We took turns sitting in the seats until we reached Dallas where the train north had more cars and a lot of the guys went in other directions. I settled down for the trip and thought about what I would do in my two weeks at home. The train seemed to inch its way to Omaha and from there it seemed that it was a turtle's pace to Sioux City. We pulled into the Sioux City depot and I got a taxi and headed for Ruth's home. I wanted to see her first and take her on out to Leeds with me.

It was great to see her again. I had made up my mind to ask her to marry me while I was home. I decided to wait a day or two, I had to buy a ring first. Two days later I went down town to Brodkey and Goodsite Jewlers and checked on prices, finding to my surprise that it would take a good portion of my funds to purchase a ring. I bought a ring and that night asked Ruth to marry me. She said she wanted to think it over and would tell me the next day. She gave me her answer, saying that she would not marry me until the war was over. I argued to no avail. She consented to marry me, I gave her the ring and we were engaged.

I went back to camp feeling good and knowing she would be waiting when I came home. I now had a future to fight for!→





## TROOP TRAINS, TROOP SHIPS AND MORE

By Kenneth G. Bradstreet

The 12th Armored Division left Camp Barkeley, Texas loaded on 25 or 30 trains that were headed east. It was a relief to know that we were not headed west! The trains took several different routes to foil enemy spies and to alleviate overloading already heavy traffic railroad traffic systems.

Troop trains, by now, were familiar to all of us, both soldier and civilian, during the World War II years. They were the one way that large numbers of troops and materiel could be moved efficiently across the United States. The trains could be seen with one or two huge over-the-road steam locomotives pulling cars loaded with soldiers or sailors every day. Troop trains moved slow, having to be worked into right-of-way schedules for regular passenger and freight trains. Troop trains were shunted onto sidings regularly to allow passage of regularly scheduled trains.

Our train, which carried the artillery battalions, left Barkely in the wee morning hours of September 10, 1944, moving northeast through Marshall, Texas. The train took us through Arkansas, crossing the Mississippi River into Memphis, Tennessee. Then through Dyersburg, Tennessee to Paducah, Kentucky and crossed the Tennessee River near Kentucky Dam. We moved on through Fort Knox, Kentucky, around Louisville, Kentucky and Cincinnati, Ohio, Dayton, Ohio, to Lima, Ohio where the train turned east, crossing Ohio and Pennsylvania into New York. If it didn't confuse the enemy, it sure as hell confused us!

The train stopped from time to time for water or coal, or to hook on a different engine. At these times we were subjected to periods of calisthenics, supposedly to loosen stiff muscles. Combining the sweat generated thusly with the grime from the locomotive smoke made greasy smoke-colored stinking individuals the norm on the trip. Finally we arrived at Nyack, New York and Camp Shanks at Orange, where the 12th would be staged for overseas shipment. We disembarked the train with our duffle bags and were formed to march with our gear about a half mile up a slope to our assigned barracks. It was a walk to remember with men falling down, tripping others as they fell, profanity was rife as men, helmets and bags writhed on the ground, confusion reigned. It was a helluva mess!

Final physicals, indoctrinations and vaccinations were given along with passes to New York City. Gear was checked and re-checked. We stood inspections and records and rosters were finalized. While we were in Camp Shanks a real honest-to-goodness hurricane hit the camp. It was an exciting night with windows being blown out and water coming in everywhere. What a farewell they were putting on for us!

Came September 19 and orders for us to move out for embarkation and overseas. Each of us had a number chalked on our helmets and we were given orders to stay in numerical order for the entire trip, even for seating on the train! We again shouldered our bags to stagger back down to the railroad tracks with the same results, except that you would gain ground rolling down the slope! We loaded onto a train that took us from Nyack and Camp Shanks to Weehawken, New Jersey where we again shouldered our bags for a little three quarter mile jaunt to the end of the ferry slip where we boarded a ferry boat. Then we crossed the Hudson River to the 47th Street pier where our troop transport was docked awaiting our arrival.

Unloading from the ferry, we moved inside the pier building. A band was playing somewhere while women there served coffee and doughnuts and also gave us little bags of toilet articles. Here again was a time when Army timing came into play; just as we put down our bags, accepted a cup of coffee and a couple of the doughnuts, the order was given to shoulder the bags again and move out. Needless to say, there was coffee and coffee cups marking our trail, but nary a doughnut was lost. We looked like GI chipmunks but we didn't lose a doughnut!



Our ship was the U.S. Navy transport, the "General Tasker H. Bliss." The Bliss was a "Victory Ship" displacing 10,000 tons and had a troop capacity of 3,600 men. We went onto the Bliss in late afternoon of the 19th. We were moved to the gangplank area, lined up by number, where an officer called out our surname and we answered with our first name and middle initial. We were then allowed to stagger up the gangplank with our gear. There were again some problems with falling men and gear. We were pushed, prodded, sworn at and treated like animals being moved to the slaughter. Come to think of it, I guess we were!

We were pushed through the various gangways and down ladders until we reached our area. The first man was led to a low bunk, pushed in and told to lie flat. The second bunk was pulled down and the second man installed, then the third bunk and the third man, until the area was filled. It was hot below decks, we were sweating and it became very close and hard to breathe. Confusion and bitching reached the highest levels, it was much more than a helluva mess! There was nothing we could do to straighten anything out so we did our best to heighten the confusion and drive the Navy people and our officers crazy as they tried to restore order. It would be a hell of a place to live during the voyage; another stage of instilling the combat mindset! After the troops were all loaded we started evening mess by compartments and then were allowed on deck to get some air and enjoy the scenery and night sounds.

We were told later that we would move out to sea before noon on the 20th. Some distance away from us the "Queen Mary" and "Queen Elizabeth", the English luxury liners, were loading troops for one of their unescorted trips across the Atlantic. They were faster than enemy ships and submarines and simply outran them. They towered regally above the other ships.

The Bliss moved out in mid-morning of the 20th past the Statue of Liberty. As we said our goodbyes, we asked ourselves if we would ever see her again. Fog became pea-soup thick after we passed the "Lady" and we could not see many other ships. We were informed that we were in a convoy of 50 other ships and that the Tasker H. Bliss was the flagship of the convoy. The "Empress of Australia" with the infantry battalions aboard was near us in the convoy.

Everyone wanted to spend as much time as possible on deck away from the stinking troop compartments. Many men suffered seasickness caused by the close, poorly ventilated compartments and not from rough seas. The food wasn't bad if you could catch it sliding past as the ship pitched on the Atlantic waves. A pack of cigarettes cost a nickel on shipboard, there was no tax outside the States. We were discouraged from spending too much time on deck at night but I had found a place to hide and sleep there. It was far more dangerous during the day with dive-bombing gulls making bombing runs over the ship. I was not apprehended until the 9th night of the 11 day cruise. I was sorely chastised and threatened, but what could be done to me? Send me to combat?

The Atlantic crossing was uneventful to most of us who spent a lot of time watching for whales. We were rewarded twice with whales moving in the midst of the convoy. Porpoises continually followed the ships. The days each had lifeboat drills that were not popular as there was a good chance you would lose your favorite spot on deck. Later we learned that the convoy had run around a pack of enemy submarines a couple days out from England. Many Hellcats spent their leisure time playing poker and rolling the dice on the first days out. Soon the games and participants became fewer as the money transferred into a select group's pockets. Then came the day when it was announced that we had crossed the 30th Meridian and we were in the European Theater of Operations officially and heading for England.

The convoy went into England landing on October 1st at Avonmouth in the Bristol Harbor area after we watched the Irish shore drift by the day before. The two "Queens" passed the Bliss in St. George Channel on their return trip to the states after unloading at Liverpool. We spent the night and the next day aboard ship. I spent the day observing the bustling activity on the dock and looking at the scenery and buildings. It was the land that my Bradstreet ancestors came from. We were disembarked at 2300 on the 2nd and were taken to Liverpool to entrain, moved through the city of Bath and on to Camp "A" at Newbury. The English trains were different, their engines with the squeaky piping whistle and the cars where every compartment



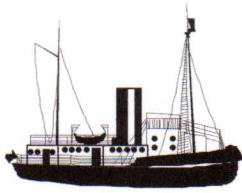
was entered individually from the outside. This was a Troop Carrier Command Base of the 9th Airforce. There we unloaded and were billeted in the hangers. The hanger was huge and cold but the chow was good. We wondered if we were going to be flown to the frontlines! The pilots had just returned from hauling airborne troops into Holland for Operation Market-Garden. It was here that our American money was converted into British pounds, shillings and pence. We immediately had to learn the value of each monetary denomination. We learned that a Pound = \$4, a Crown = \$1, a Shilling = \$.20, a sixpence = \$.10, a Thrupence = \$.05, a Pence = 1 2/3 cents and then there were oversize pennies and halfpennies. Another experience!

On October 5th we were loaded onto trucks and buses and taken to Windmill Hill near Tidworth, England and Tidworth Barracks, on the Salisbury Plain north of the Stonehenge. It was here that the English weather gave us an autumn example of rain, sleet, snow and fog, all in one day. We were billeted in army perambular tents with wooden floors and sides that were heated by a pot-bellied stove in the middle. We had to install the doors from a pile at the end of the street. The tent was furnished with one crude board table and two coal oil lamps. We were each issued a G.I. cot, a straw-filled mattress cover and four wool blankets. Six men were assigned to each tent. The area in front of the tents had wooden sidewalks bordering on a muddy so-called street. The weather was cold and rainy at Windmill Hill and much of the wooden sidewalk soon disappeared from the area to keep the Hellcats warm and purring. It was here that the battery began to receive some of our combat equipment

Latrines consisted of large wooden half-barrels outside the tents. When we moved in they had not been emptied after the last occupants. The stink emitting from these full-to-overflowing cesspools was overwhelming. One of the 495th artillery officers, Lt. Seitz, got up a detail to dig a dump pit and get rid of the mess. As the detail was digging, a British farmer drove up with his team and a honey-wagon to empty the barrels. He was infuriated with the officer, stating that it was illegal to dig a hole in the King's soil. The officer plainly told the farmer to watch closely and see how it was done. And it was!

While at Windmill Hill preparing for our trip to France and the frontlines we were given 36 hour passes to Salisbury and London. It was quite an experience sight-seeing in London at such places as Parliament, Big Ben, Westminster, Trafalgar Square, Nelson's statue, St. Paul's Cathedral with its whispering gallery, Marble Arch, Downing Street with its famous number 10 address, Picadilly Circus with its multitude of ladies of the night, and Buckingham Palace with its stoic guards dressed in their tall bearskin hats. I saw those things that I had read about in my school days and looked at them with utmost fascination. As we moved from one place to another we couldn't help noting the ruin to the city that had been caused by German bombing. It made me remember the radio broadcasts from London by Edward R. Murrow. I did not know at the time that I walked on the streets of my forefathers, that only a couple of blocks from St. Paul's was Bread Street from whence came the family name. The Stonehenge on the Salisbury Plain fascinated me. In 1935 one of my grade school teachers took a trip to England and the Continent. When she came to school that fall she had many photos and postcards, plus her vivid memories and proceeded to teach us history and geography in a manner that kept us coming back for more. I remembered the photo taken of her in the midst of the henge and so had one taken of myself in the same position as I remembered her. I had a print made for her which she, in her words, "would treasure forever." As I looked at the huge stones I tried to figure out how they could have been raised into place with none of today's equipment. I could not get used to the English warm beer and stout, though I learned to handle it. I found that "fish and chips" was edible, but would never replace mom's fried chicken and crisp fried potatoes. I tried "afternoon tea" in an English tearoom, I didn't pass the finger test, but the crumpets weren't bad. While at Windmill Hill I met one of our neighbors, Louie Hacker, who was in the 17th Airborne Division and stationed in the area. We spent a short time together in Tidworth before I left on the Advance Detail to France. Louie was one of two home town people I met while overseas. He lived across the alley from us at home in Leeds. I also met an English family, the Austins, who lived in Tidworth. They were very nice people.





## ACROSS THE ENGLISH CHANNEL 1944

By Kenneth G. Bradstreet

We had been at Windmill Hill for about a month when the Army brass finally got their crap together. Orders came down to make up and send an Advance Party to France to receive and ready the Division's vehicles when they arrived. Our original vehicles in France had been requisitioned by Gen. George Patton for his 3rd Army. New vehicles had to be sent to France for the 12th Armored Division. The Advance Party was made up of men picked from crews of vehicles and maintenance men in the division units. The rest of the 12th would come to France later as a group. A Battery was to send 1 officer and 45 men. I was one of the men selected to go.

On November 6th we loaded on trucks and left Windmill Hill to be driven to the seaport of Southampton where we would embark for France. When we reached Southampton, it was the usual confusion and delay. We stood in the dock area with our barracks bags and sidearms for sometime amid a flurry of action as supplies, vehicles and troops were loaded aboard ships for the trip to France and combat.

At last the order came to shoulder our bags and move to the ship. This part of the operation was made on foot carrying everything we owned. It was a good thing we only had to go about three-quarters of a mile and that it was kind of a downslope. It was a helluva mess, almost as bad as when we embarked leaving the States and when we disembarked in Liverpool. There were bags dropping, helmets falling off and rolling away to trip others, men falling down, and the profanity was something out of this world. We had wondered why and griped as we endured calisthenics and long forced hikes during training; we now learned exactly why, we had been trained as beasts of burden!

We struggled onward, becoming drenched with sweat, and finally reached our ship. She was an old sea-going tub of His Majesty's Navy christened the "Queen Emma." We found out later that she was of WWI vintage; having once been a German ship and captured during WWI. God, what a rust bucket!

It was the ultimate physical battle to climb the steep incline of the gangplank to reach the deck and another to climb down the narrow gangway stairs to the troop decks where we were to be quartered. We entered the troop hold where there were bunks, fold-up type, chained and bolted to the bulkheads. We were ordered to get into the bunks and stay there until all troops were loaded; same orders as when we boarded the U.S.S. Tasker H. Bliss for the trip to England. It was a two-fold task getting into the bunks, first getting the bags in and then yourself. The hold was the ultimate in odiferous quality; it stank like a pig sty, the air almost too thick to breathe. As we began to drench ourselves in sweat, it became worse as oxygen was quickly diminished. Several men became sick and vomited, which did not help matters and one man passed out. After what seemed like hours we were told that we could move around and go topside for a breath of air. There was an immediate rush for the door and freedom. We went up and watched the action on the deck, glad to breathe fresh air again, wondering what would happen next. Rumors were flying about like wild. We were to remain aboard Emma for two days before she put to sea on the 8th.

Chow call was the next thing for us to delight in! We had been told that we would eat two meals a day while on board the Queen. After the time in the hold we had visions of the unsavory food we would be served. We were formed in mess sections that would each eat at a separate designated time in the ships mess. I was in group 7, and so, would not be in the life or death experimental first groups. If the bodies were piled high, I could choose not to eat. As the section ahead of us came out, they seemed in good health. We went in through the door to meet our fate. The food was served chow-line style on trays. After the tray was filled with "food" you walked over to chest-high tables where you stood and ate. This was accomplished easily when the ship was at the dock but it was an entirely different matter when the ship was at sea and pitching.



Hash, runny mash potatoes, coffee, tea, hardtack and marmalade was the menu. It was better than nothing but that is all that could be said for it. It was not as bad as we thought it would be, but not as good as it could have been. Our other meals on the Queen were of the same quality and vein. By the way, we never had any officers as dinner guests.

After eating each meal we returned to the deck and did more watching, voicing our thoughts about what lay ahead in our future. Finally, after an eternity of waiting, the good ship Emma wallowed out of port to take us over the choppy waters of the English Channel. It would be a trip of about 40 miles. The Channel is never calm but it seemed that it gave us an extra shot of the old rough. Emma rolled, slopped, pitched and wallowed through the Channel waters during the night as we tried to get some sleep. Early in the morning the motion stopped and word came that we had arrived in the port of Cherbourg, France.

Excitement started to build! We were ready to set foot in France! We were not allowed on deck until after chow and trying to digest another meal of the Queen's cuisine. Then came orders to form in groups in our hold area and wait orders to begin the struggle back up those stairs with our tons of gear. But word did not come until almost noon and then we pushed, pulled and swore our way up to the deck to again wait for orders to disembark on November 9th.

We stood there, looking at the shelled and bombed out, war-torn city of Cherbourg, France. The damage was massive but the action on the dock below was like ants in a hill as the dockers scurried to unload ships. At last it was time to disembark, trucks had arrived and waited to take us to our area. We went down the gangplank and struggled a short distance to the trucks. We threw our bags aboard, climbed on after some more G.I. crap and the trucks moved out. It had rained the day before but luckily had quit or we would have drowned for there were no tops on the trucks. "Viva La France! Lafayette, we are here!" We had finally found the mud of France!





## LAFAYETTE -- WE ARE HERE!

By Kenneth G. Bradstreet

After we loaded up on the trucks at the Cherbourg docks, the ride began! G.I. truck drivers were a special breed, they live by their own driving rules and habits; vary speeds by sudden use of the brakes, never turn a corner without careening, never miss a bump, stay on schedule even if you lose a passenger or load, be sure white knuckles of passengers are showing on the siderails of the truck, listen for the impact of flying bodies in the truck box and make sure all profanity falls on deaf ears.

We traveled through the streets of Cherbourg noting the war damage to the city and moved northeast out into the countryside. The route through the Normandy countryside also showed the effects of battles fought not long before, with the residue of war strewn about. We passed through the small village of Valogne, France. There were few walls over five feet tall in the village. The Germans had made a stand there trying to keep the Allies out of Cherbourg. Artillery and bombs had forced them out by flattening the town.

The ride through the hedgerows was not too long but was through deep mud in many places. We finally reached the area called, "Camp Ennis" which was named after Gen. Riley F. Ennis, CG of CCA and in command of the advance party. It was a rolling landscape with trees and grass growing up through the mud. We were billeted in shelters called "Doghouses"; an A frame standing about 3 foot high at the center with a wooden floor wide enough for two men to lay side by side. We buttoned our shelter-halves together and stretched them over the frame for a roof. They offered some shelter to us unless it rained, which was nearly every day we were there at sometime in the day or night.

Hedgerows (Bocage) made boundaries for the fields and the so-called roads running through them were lower than the field surface. These roads were dirt, not much more than cowpaths, and with rain they became a runny morass of deep mud. It was seldom that you found the authentic French mud less than ankle deep. We had much to say about English mud, but it wasn't even in competition with French mud.

We were sent to France to take over the new division vehicles, tanks and artillery tanks. The days were spent in cleaning the grease and cosmoline off the vehicles and making them ready for combat. It seemed that each vehicle had enough grease and cosmoline on it for all the vehicles in the war. The people in the States who readied them for overseas shipment must have wanted to get as much of the two preservatives to Europe as possible. Of course they didn't care; they didn't have to work their butts off cleaning it all off. The salt air and water couldn't have got to the equipment if the ship had been sunk! We worked our tails off, thinking that the sooner the job was done, the quicker we would get out of there and back with the outfit. It was a big job, in the mud and rain, cleaning up the vehicles, removing cosmoline, grime and rust from the guns. After cleaning we calibrated and test fired the weapons, firing them out over the Channel. It took 18 days in all from the time we set out from Windmill Hill till we were again back with the rest of the division.

While on this detail we were introduced to one of the finer embalming fluids in France; it was called "Calvados." It was a very high proof alcoholic French liquor. Now, this is not your every-day, down-to-earth, sippin' and smackin' moonshine white mule! Oh no! This stuff came right out of the Devil's own still. It was nice to look at, so crystal clear, so enticing to the eye. Calvados was Eve's apple to G.I.'s who were thirsty for the alcoholic tastes of days gone by. Later we also found that it also worked well as fuel for cigarette lighters!

Now, just down the soupy mud road was a crossroads and at this crossroads was a French tavern. So the problem; G.I. + French Tavern = What? Well, as all G.I.'s with a thirst do; they did solve the problem. A



few at a time would slip down to the tavern while the others covered for them, ostensibly to peruse the drinking habits of France in the late afternoon hours. .

They were not thinking in a practical manner after they arrived at the tavern. Not asking for instruction in French imbibery, they proceeded to study while doing. This was not good! They should have hired a French professor of toxology to instruct them in method and procedure. Had they observed the regular French patrons of the establishment, they would have noted that they were sipping their Calvados from tiny thimble glasses with long stems. Connoisseurs of the Devil's own, they took only a lip-wetting sip, and only now and then. They did a lot of talking and smoking between sips.

Our buddies, who were now in throes of anticipatory joy and ecstasy, decided that they would show the French that they had couth and would not grab the bottle and drink from it. They called for several bottles and unlimbered their canteen cups from their cartridge belts. In this manner they would be able to also stick out their little finger while imbibing; Bostonian lend-lease etiquette to say the least!

Well, let the games begin! They filled their cups half-full, each cup amounting to half a bottle of Calvados, and proceeded to enjoy the refreshments. The Frenchmen looked on with disbelief! The first gulp took their breath away, welded their tongues and trickled down to galvanize their guts; it was a wondrous new drink! After the proper plumbing had been done to their G.I. bodies they proceeded to empty the cups. Needless to say, a state of intoxication set in, a very strong cloud nine type.

They realized that they had to leave this beautiful French den of imbibery and get back to Camp Ennis as the afternoon shadows fell. As a group they made the attempt. Here again the Devil himself appeared to guide them back. Instead of taking them along the higher shoulders of the road, as they had come, Satan led them up the knee-deep muddy road. Being sober and trying to walk in such a morass is one thing but after imbibing of Calvados, it was a trial of doing the impossible. They slipped, fell and slid; they could not climb the banks. It ended with all of them lying half in and half out of the muddy road in various stages of consciousness.

They were missed at evening mess call although we knew they had slipped away in the afternoon. Soon the search was on. They soon were found and a truck brought to haul them back. A rope was used to drag them from the mud. They were so drunk they were stiff and it was not hard to throw them into the truck. Lt. Walsh muttered that they were good men and was sympathetic to an extent. He had us lay them out on the hillside and clear their mouths. He had the water wagon and a hose brought up and personally washed them down. When the cold water hit them, they shuddered, tried to raise up, fell over and vomited. The medic took over and got them going again. They came to life but remorsefully so! From that day on nothing was said about the incident, but our imbibing buddies were given every crap job that came around; plus all the guard duty and kitchen duty. It was a day and night situation for the culprits. I never liked Lt. Walsh but he never let the incident go any farther. The punishment went on until we rejoined the division.

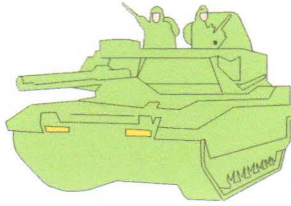
While we were on Advance Detail the remainder of A Battery was alerted on November 9th and made ready for the Channel crossing to France. On November 10th the Battery left Windmill Hill by truck and went to Weymouth, England to load on ships. When the men arrived they were given coffee and doughnuts by the American Red Cross. They then loaded onto LSTs (Landing Ship, Tanks) for the journey to the continent. The journey was made in good time and Able Battery minus the Advance Detail moved up the Seine River and docked at Le Havre, France without mishap. The battery remained on board until the morning of the 13th when orders for disembarking came. Able was loaded on trucks and moved to billets at Gonneville, France to await further orders. They remained there for five dayys and on the 18th moved to a new location at Belmesnil, France where they were joined by the Advance Detail on November 24th, rolling in with the M-7s and halftracks.

When we left Camp Ennis we drove the vehicles north to rejoin the 12th at Belmesnil, a French estate near Auffay, France. On the way we moved from south to north through the areas where the bitterest fighting of the invasion had taken place. It was a sobering ride. We reached our destination and were glad to be back with our buddies. I settled down with my buddies in an aromatic old barn that had recently been used as a goat shed and again thought about what might be coming next.



The next day, the 25th, work began on the rolling stock to make it ready for the trip to the front lines and combat. On the 28th the tanks were loaded with ammunition for the big guns and small arms ammunition was issued to the men. The moment of truth was fast approaching for the Redlegs of A Battery, 494th Armored Field Artillery.





## **TO THE FRONTLINES AND BEYOND**

**By Kenneth G. Bradstreet**

On 29th of November, we started our sojourn into the unknown, traveling east through Rheims, France. We passed directly in front of the world-famous Cathedral of Rheims. It was beautiful and I was getting to see it in person, if only I could have went inside. The convoy moved on to Soissons and the Soissons Cathedral came into our sight and it too impressed us with its beauty. Other sights, with no beauty, also impressed us; the knocked-out vehicles and tank hulks with holes in them and burned out. It gave all of us a shudder and brought deep thoughts. The column moved on to Metz and the war scenery now had dead animals mixed into it from the recent battles here. The convoy moved on through Luneville where the last big head-on tank on tank battle was fought on the Luneville Plain just out of the town. Our A Battery contingent arrived at Baccarrat in the afternoon of December 1st and was billeted in the Baccarrat Barracks, an old French cavalry post. It was an interesting place with its huge horse bath where the cavalymen washed their mounts. Able was billeted here until December 5th when orders came to move into the line.

When the order came down to prepare for movement into action on December 4th, I was like thunder struck, this was it, this is what I had been training for, this was the moment of truth! After a few minutes I decided that with God's help I would be up to this horrible challenge of life and death. I got out my prayer book and prayed for His aid through this time of hell on earth. I did not get much sleep that night, I was not scared, but I was nervous and apprehensive. I noticed that everyone else was in the same attitude. I could hear the guns and see the flashes on the horizon. I realized that the war was only a few miles away which did nothing to change my feelings. It made me realize that I would have to accept what ever came my way and do my best with His aid, even if it ended in death. It would soon be time to go.

The 494th AFA Bn. Moved to an area in the vicinity of Drulingen, France, attached to the 44th Infantry Division on December 5th. Able Battery moved into its first combat firing position in early morning darkness at Waldhambach. It was eery setting up in the dark, going out in the shadows to set the aiming stakes, wondering who might be there with you. We stayed in this position until noon of December 6th, firing only a couple missions. It was good to hear the roar of the guns and feel the recoil rocking the tank, it took away that uneasy feeling. Striking the position the battery moved seven miles forward to Butten, a small village on the western edge of the Bitche area of France, near the famed Maginot Line. We were supporting the fire of the 44th Inf. Div. Artillery. Able fired a few missions while remaining in the position until December 8th when we moved to Rahling, France in the Maginot Line. There were huge concrete pillboxes just a few hundred yards in front of our firing position. This brought home to me that I was now in a closer combat area for we were now firing our first heavy combat fire missions. It was at Rahling that A Battery, 494th AFA, fired the first combat round of any type ammunition in the 12th Armored Division. Striking the Rahling position on the 11th we moved to Rohrbach, France where A Battery fired the first 12th Armored Division rounds into Germany. The target for this



fire mission was Utweiler, Germany. I felt good about hitting the Germans on their own ground.

The firing position at Rohrbach was one I'll not soon forget for this is where we received our first deadly taste of counter-battery fire. The position was again in the Maginot Line and again there were two pillboxes forward of our position, one to the right on a slope and the other on the left near some woods. Rohrbach lay to the west at our rear about a quarter mile with some houses closer. It had been captured by our infantry at 8:30am on the 10th.

Early in the afternoon there was a commotion to the right of the left pillbox. My first thought was that we were being attacked by enemy infantry but there was no firing. I saw then that it was a group of civilians including women carrying back packs and suitcases. They came to the position waving and yelling, moved quickly through the position and on into Rohrbach. It entered my mind suddenly that we did not stop them or search them. It was too late, they had disappeared into town. Something caused me to be apprehensive of the situation.

It was about 1500 hours that all hell broke loose! German counter-battery artillery fire hit the position with a fury. Shells were hitting everywhere in the position. I took cover under the tank to ride out the maelstrom of iron. I found that I was late getting under cover, O'Neil and Kirkpatrick were already there! I sure had a deep feeling of helpless frustration, in fact I was scared, it was almost pants-crapping time. What if the enemy attacked with us unable to get topside to man the gun? The heavy fire kept up for an hour and a half, then slacked off to intermittent harrassing fire through the night. I couldn't help but connect the civilians with the incoming fire, though the box pattern was like it had been pre-set, a delay fire.

We left our cover to take stock of the damage and assess the situation. We found that we had suffered our first battle casualties. Hank Moritko had been hit in the shoulder by shell fragments and became A Battery's first man to receive the Purple Heart Medal. Obie Hill of the 572nd AAA unit attached to the battery was fatally wounded, becoming the first death with the unit in combat. It was a sobering time for all of us. No tanks or other vehicles had been hit or there would have been other casualties. I made up my mind that there would never be another unidentified person go through my area without challenge.

We were shelled just after chow in the evening, only a few shells this time, hitting like an observed fire being adjusted near the house being used for a CP. It was almost like a firing pattern was being sensed, through the tanks to the CP. I dug my hole deeper before settling for the night. I had the odd feeling that I was being watched. It was about midnight when word came to the guns that someone had indeed been directing fire on us and had been caught. The observer was in a house about 50 yards from the CP with an unobstructed view of the position. As I thought about it there had been no damage in that area and I had seen civilians moving out of the other houses near us. One of the guys had seen a glimmer of light, got help and went to check it out. They entered the house and went upstairs, finding the observer with a radio, talking in German. They captured the person and went to the CP. The lights of the CP revealed the observer to be a woman and it was found out when interrogated by a French officer that she had brought the radio when the group came through the position. She was an Alsacian and her sympathies were with the Germans as many were. The French took her away. The officer in charge said that she would be



charged and shot by a firing squad as a traitor to France. We had no more counter-fire on the position of any consequence.

On the 20th we displaced to a position at Bettviller and the next day to Hoelling. It was on the 22nd that our BC, Captain Brassell was wounded while looking for an alternate firing position and the EXO, Lt. Walsh took command. On the 23rd Able fired its first barrage of propaganda shells into the enemy lines and we saw the results walking in with hands up holding surrender leaflets from the shells.

It had been cold and rainy with lots of mud to endure since we went into the line and the weather now threatened snow. My thoughts now went continually to home and Christmas, thinking about the preparations being finalized; the trimming of the Pine tree that touched the living room ceiling, the presents under it, mom and grandmother preparing candies, nuts, pie and cakes, and other good things to eat on Christmas Day. I'm sure the folks at home did not know where I was due to the censorship of our out-going mail. It was a case of writing on one side of the paper only to keep from losing another part of the letter. I told mom to send our battery censor a paper doll cut-out book, which was not cut from the letter, which she did and signed her name with no message. I caught hell for both ends of the situation but it was worth it, taught them not to fool with mom!

December 24th brought a new Battery Commander, Capt. Lawrence A. Gobeille, a former BC of Able at Camp Campbell. It helped raise the Christmas morale. We had been told that our Christmas dinner would be turkey with all the fixings, the captain confirmed it. There were Christmas trees showing up all over the position, small Pines, a couple feet in height. Decorations consisted of ration can lids, colored paper and cloth, aluminum foil, cellophane and empty cartridge casings. Most were mounted off the ground so presents could be placed under them consisting of cigarettes, cigars, chewing tobacco, books, magazines, candy and other items to be exchanged. It gave us all a sort of yuletide feeling.

We awakened on Christmas Day trying to revive the Christmas Spirit so far from home in the midst of a war. Greetings were exchanged all around along with the presents and I was not the only one thinking of home, family and sweetheart. Guertin, Kie and Kooker were given special presents, they were promoted in grade. The mess crew fed Christmas Dinner consisting of roast turkey, mashed potatoes, cranberries, green beans, cake and coffee. It was hot and good, not like home, but good. Its funny how much thinking you can do while eating your Christmas Dinner from a messkit, in a war combat zone many miles from home, alone. It was not conducive to good morale.

On the 26th we struck the position and moved to a firing position near Zetting, France, working in general support of the 44th Inf. Division. It was a hot position with a lot of fire missions. Able remained in this position throughout the remaining days of 1944. New Years Eve, December 31st, and New Years Day, January 1st 1945, I'll not forget and the rest of the men of Able won't either. The Germans attacked, hoping to find us all in a festive mood. It was a fierce attack that was repulsed with the battery firing 574 rounds of ammunition. At 0600 on January 1st orders came to displace the battery and move to a new position across the Saar River to the rear and south of Zetting, a better position to support our troops and repulse the enemy. Here Able kept firing missions, targets were everywhere. Here the battery fired it's first rounds of the new Posit-Fuze ammunition. The fuze on the rounds could be set to burst different heights from the ground creating more efficient air-



**burst missions. We attained excellent results against the German attackers. This position saw A Battery fire the 494th AFA Battalion's 10,000th round in combat.**

**During December 1944 we were opposed by German forces consisting of the 111th Panzer Division with it's 119th Artillery Regiment, the 401st Artillery Regiment, artillery from the fortress of Bitche to the east, long range artillery from the 710th and 715th Railway Artillery and the 257th Volksgrenadier Division.**

**The 494th Armored Field Artillery Battalion received a commendation from the CG, 44th Inf. Div. Artillery, for the superior assistance furnished during the operations in which the battalion supported the attack of the operations of the 44th Inf. Division. It was for superior performance in this operation that the 44th and supporting units were commended by Lt. Gen. Jacob L. Devers, Commanding General of the 6th Army Group.**



## MEN AND TIME

By Kenneth G. Bradstreet 1949

I often go back in my memory to January 6-19, 1945 and the battle of the Gamsheim Bridgehead, one of the major battles of the Second Bulge. It was the result of a German offensive code-named "Nordwind." Their plan was to break through U.S. 7th Army and recapture the Saverne Gap and Strasbourg, France. Here the 12th Armored Division was committed against German forces consisting of the 10th SS Panzer Division, an SS Panzergrenadier Division and three Volksturm units.

The main area of combat was in a triangular area marked by the Alsatian villages of Weyersheim, Gamsheim and Herrlisheim. In this battle much blood was shed on both sides and many men died. The fields were littered with bodies and machines of war. It was a battle to the death and one wondered if the land would ever regain peace and serenity. In a time-span of just over three weeks hundreds of casualties were suffered. The 12th was relieved and moved back with sorely decimated ranks to regroup and fight again.

The war ended and in October 1945 some of us went back to that bloody ground. The guns were silent, the birds had returned and as we looked around we saw a French farmer plowing and tilling the ground amid the knocked out tanks and other residue of war where our Hellcat buddies and so many German soldiers had died in mortal combat. Both men and time had passed into eternity, peace and sanity now reigned where death and insanity once had plied their deadly deeds of inhumanity a few short months before.→



## LANGUAGE LESSON

By Kenneth G. Bradstreet 1947

It was as a member of the Advance Detachment of the 12th Armored Division in France that I received my first lesson in the French language. We were billeted in an area a short distance east and north of Cherbourg, France getting our new vehicles cleaned up for our coming combat against the Germans.

The Army had issued us French-English language handbooks so that we could possibly teach ourselves to be fluent in the French language in a matter of days; they told us that conversation was possible with a native just by studying and using the book...uh-hu, you betcha!

All during the time we were on the detail in the area there were French kids hanging around waiting for a G.I. to give them cigarettes, candy or chewing gum. They were also around at every chow call to get any food left on our mess kits. They were persistent and tried to attach themselves to a particular G.I. to be sure of a steady ration; for after all, who could eat all of his rations with hungry eyes watching intently as you took each bite.

There was this one young boy who attached himself to me, always trying to help and always getting in the way. I tried to tell him in gestures and English to get lost, but he was like a tick on a dog's back and wouldn't leave, just smiled and stayed a step or two behind me.

I decided to try out my book-French, and I do mean "book" for I had it in my hand. It was close to utter loss. The boy was about 9 or 10 years old and quite a man for his age. He was a dirty, tough, little skinny rowdy who must have spent most of his tender years shifting for himself during the German occupation.

He was a master of profanity, in English, learned from GI's before us, smoked and he could handle a carbine with confidence. He was small and slender with dark hair and shining dark eyes. Those eyes never missed anything! He wore a beret with an old dirty G.I. fatigue cap pulled over it, a thigh-length grimy black smock over short pants that were as dirty as the smock. Knee-length stockings with holes extended up from worn and scuffed, too-large hob-nailed shoes. Dirty skinned up knees stood out knobbily between the stockings and the smock. The clothing looked like and smelled like he had worn them since the war broke out and that he had never had them off. Everytime I looked at him I wanted to introduce him to soap and water; I'll bet that it would have been like giving a wildcat a bath. His name was Armand and I'll never forget him.

As I labored with the French words and phrases from the book, trying to make him understand, he would listen intently and laugh when I finished my effort. He then would answer with an English word or two punctuated with gestures and go back over what I had said, pronouncing the words correctly for me that I had said wrong. I'll remember Armand as long as I remember my days in the Army. He taught me a lesson in humility that day. I never did get my point across to him. He did, however, get his point across to me; that I was his as long as we were in his scrounging area and there was nothing I could do. I gave in and we were friends for the time we were there.

Armand tried to stow away on the tank when we left to go north to Auffay, France near LeHavre to rejoin the rest of the division. I gave him my cigarettes, chocolate and a couple boxes of K-rations and made him understand he could not go with me. He stood alone in the road as we left, puffing on a cigarette and waving. I wonder what happened to him and pray that God blessed his life.



## UNCLE SAM'S FRONT LINE KOOKING WWII

By Kenneth G. Bradstreet

We did a lot of living in the front lines on Uncle Sam's Ration K in World War II. Ration K could be carried easily by fighting men being self contained in a waxed water-proof box measuring about 8 x 4 x 1 inches. It could be fitted into the pocket of a field jacket with ease. The rations inside were designed to give maximum energy and a certain amount of comfort to the G.I. when the banjo wagon (mess truck) could not bring up hot food. Eaten while griping and bitching they would keep you going until the next hot meal was available.

The Ration K Menus were as follows:

Breakfast....

- 2 packets of K ration biscuits
- 1 - 3 1/2 ounce tin of chopped greasy pork and egg yolks
- 1 fruit bar (like aged fruit cake)
- 1 individual 1 cup tin of soluble coffee 1 inch dia. x 1/2 inch
- 1 pack of chewing gum
- 1 pack of 4 cigarettes
- 1 pack 8 - 4" sheets toilet paper

Dinner....

- 2 packets of K ration biscuits
- 1 - 4 ounce tin of processed cheese with bacon
- 15 tablets of malted milk flavored dextrose tablets
- 1 individual 1 cup tin of lemon juice powder 1 in. dia. x 1/2
- 1 pack chewing gum
- 1 pack of 4 cigarettes
- 1 pack 8 - 4" sheets toilet paper

Supper....

- 2 packets of K ration biscuits
- 1 - 3 1/2 ounce tin of greasy corned pork loaf
- 1 - 2 ounce bar of vitamized chocolate
- 1 individual 1 cup tin of soup powder 1 inch x 1/2 inch deep
- 1 pack of sugar
- 1 pack of chewing gum
- 1 pack of 4 cigarettes
- 1 pack 8 - 4" sheets toilet paper

Each man also received...

- 1 Sterno heating unit
- 1 - 4 pack of water purification tablets
- 1 Field Ration D consisting of 3 - 2 ounce bars of specially fortified chocolate.→



## KIDS, CIGARETTES, CHEWING GUM, FOOD AND G.I.S

By Kenneth G. Bradstreet 1945

oving through wartime Europe, one could not help noticing the children as they stood along village streets and roads. Seldom did you see a child that looked well-fed, instead it was the norm that they seemed to be underfed. They were everywhere, in small groups, perhaps family, or as individuals. They had learned from their predecessors that there were valuable items to be had from the GI by a wistful face and unceasing begging. "Cigarette pour Papa" was heard wherever we encountered the children. Money was of little use when the war passed them by, but cigarettes were a prime bartering item. The "Ami" soldier had, in their eyes, an inexhaustable supply of cigarettes, and with proper begging procedure he could be parted from them. The American GI needed little to make him voluntarily throw cigarettes into the outstretched hands. There were also calls for "Caow Gummi" (chewing gum) and "Chocolade" (chocolate) which also, along with soap were prime bargaining items.

During periods when the mess truck crew cooked hot meals the underfed children gathered around, some refooted and without coats to protect against the cold and rain. I imagine the smell of the cooking food reopened their hunger. They came with little pails and empty cans to get any garbage scraps they could. Orders stood against feeding civilians from our rations. But no American GI could resist the pleading eyes of a child and so as we went through the line we held our messkits out for extra food. The mess crew obliged and the kits were filled. We would move to areas out of plain view and give the children our food. Some of the older members of the families would patiently wait for the cooks to dump the once-used coffee grounds which they scraped up to boil three or more times over in their own coffee pots.



## GREASE GUN

By Kenneth G. Bradstreet 1945

The .45 caliber sub-machine gun that was issued in 1944/1945 was quickly nick-named the "Grease-gun" due to its uncommon shape. It looked almost like a traditional greasegun used to grease machinery. It was short and thick with a stubby nine-inch barrel and had a pull-out extendable stock. The magazine clip held 20 rounds and when two magazines were taped together it doubled the load to 40 rounds. The gun had a spring door atop the receiver. When closed it had a notch that fit into a hole in the bolt and served as a safety. When open it allowed the spent shell casings to be expelled through the opening. It was also a safety hazard. If the trigger was pulled while the safety was on it would create a priority safety situation because when the door safety was lifted in combat, the gun would fire the first round without the trigger being pulled. It had a nasty tendency to go off on full automatic when handled a wee bit roughly which made it feared by all of us. If the gun were pointed in the wrong direction a fatal accident could result. The greasegun range was only effective close in, between 20 and 40 yards; too close for comfort.



## A MANUAL FOR SUMP-HOLE DIGGING

Researched By Kenneth G. Bradstreet Texas 1944

In all the history of Army logistics, no manual has ever been prepared on the proper method of digging GI sump holes.

My own experience with sump holes was the result of unofficial extension of a 48 hour pass. This was a vagrant, offensive and unpardonable sin for any and all buck Private Hellcats, as was pointed out to me by the First Soldier, with appropriate gestures and verbage stunning to the ear. After he explained my punishment in full I envisioned myself developing two advanced cases of steamshovel arm.

Permit me to state at this point that if you expect to dig for punishment, indulge and enjoy yourself to the utmost beforehand. In my case I had indulged to the fullest, perhaps being the reason for time to reverse itself almost 18 hours. This provides one with memories, and memories are damned important when you are breaking the Texas soil under watchful eyes.

Having disposed of the what-fors and where-fors, I can now begin on the hole proper and dispense the show and tell knowledge needed for the writing of the manual for sump hole diggers MIA1.

First, and one of the most essential steps in the digging of a sump hole is to confer with your equally guilty associate regarding the terrain, composition, etc., the methods of preparation and attack, and any problem relating to the proper state of mind of both parties involved. After such consultation, a fitting ceremony for ground breaking may be provided by the sound of trumpet fanfare, done with combs and toilet paper, tones being muffled so as not to attract attention of the Man of 3 Up, 3 Down and a PIP, who might be lurking about. Having removed helmet liner and undershirt, it is time to commence digging, remembering that it is best to avoid digging out the bottom or squaring off the sides until the next day when your energy has felt the rejuvenating effects of a hearty supper and a full night's rest.

Having an ASTP engineering background I have made the following computations to be applied in a Sump Hole Manual. A 6X6X6 sump hole means a displacement of 216 cubic feet of earth, if Texas soil may be called earth. Figuring four inches to the layer, the total number of layers to displace by digging is eighteen. Forty strokes of a pick properly swung by the numbers will break up a cubic foot of earth; ten scoops of a shovel will dispose of said earth. Applying some pretty advanced mathematics learned in ASTP, I estimate 324,000 strokes of the pick and 2,160 scoops with the shovel will complete the excavation job. (Note) This will vary with the stature and physical condition of the diggers, their ability to withstand fatigue, and their initiative and incentive.

When the hole has been sufficiently excavated in depth to provide privacy, workers should give themselves a 10 minute break at least every half hour.

At the four foot level, a few strokes of the pick should be invested to make steps on each side of the hole. These steps will greatly facilitate climbing in and out to make necessary trips for extra cigarettes and emergency jaunts now and then to the latrine.

At 1630 hours it is advisable to attempt returning your tools to the supply area, although it is more than certain that the noncom in charge will refuse to accept them without the First Soldier's approval. At any rate, you have given yourself, as a digger of note, another break which is all gravy. Such a break is needed for the long stretch in time between 1630 and evening mess call.

When twilight falls and darkness is nigh, diggers cannot be expected to work with quite as high a degree of diligence, so a greater portion of the time can be devoted to reviewing the events responsible for getting this detail in the first place, other than the First Soldier's complete lack of understanding of human frailties. (Second note) There is no feeling like the sensation of sheer satisfaction one experiences in the light of dawn next morning when you view the massive depths and clean-cut classic lines of your first sump hole. When the First Soldier peeks over the mound of Texas soil around the hole and asks, "Was it worth it?" --- suck in your gut and smile.

I have left the the problems of systemized handling, care and nomenclature of the equipment used in sump hole digging untouched in this outlaying of thought, also the lengthy summary on the types, grades and qualities of Texas soil in comparison to other states in which I have excavated numerous and varied types of holes.



The methods discussed in this treatise can be converted and used in other excavations such as field latrines, garbage pits, catholes and foxholes. All it takes is a little Army Specialized Training taught by a U.S. Army (you are a guest in my home) First Soldier.->



## PASS THE ANTIDOTE

By Kenneth G. Bradstreet

1945

It was one cold January night in Alsace, France when we pulled into a position near a small village I can't remember the name of. The people in the small village seemed friendly. We decided to take shelter in one of the nearby houses for the night. We found a family living in the beat-up stone-walled house we picked, a young woman, two children and an old man. They begrudgingly accepted the four grimy, unshaven, wild-looking G.I.'s into their home.

We brought C Rations and four loaves of black bread we had liberated, with us. We offered to share with the family and they in turn brought out wine and schnapps. We sat at a table and after eating, proceeded to soak up the warmth and imbibe of the spirits at hand. This went on well into the night after the family had long since retired to their beds. We left the house only to take our turn on guard.

After a while, the combination of warmth and spirits took its toll and we drifted off into sleep, or passed out, whichever it was, awakened only for our two hour stint of guard. These people had been under both French and German control for many years, claimed by both countries, and spoke both languages, sometimes mixing them in their speech. I could speak German and so carried the conversation between us.

In the morning I was awakened by the woman who was shaking and screaming at me. I could not make out what she was trying to say. In her screaming I could pick out the word "Benzine" every once in a while. I finally got mad and told her to quiet down and talk slower or I would not listen to her. She did, and I finally figured out what she was mad about; one or all of us had drank her bottle of benzine which she used for starting her stove!

Now, this did not set well with our stomachs, but we talked it over and decided that three litre bottles of wine and schnapps to one pint of benzine was probably a good dilution and starting thinking about a more important pair of matters; relieving ourselves and having breakfast.

We went out to the tank and filled two bottles with a gas and oil mixture and gave them to the woman. She was happy and most likely decided that these "Ami" G.I.'s were crazy and would drink anything. We gave the old man some cigarettes, the kids some chocolate and the woman some soap. They were still waving as they passed from our sight.→

## 12<sup>th</sup> ARMORED AMBUSHES A FLANKING GERMAN PATROL

Combat Command A of the 12<sup>th</sup> Armored Division was about to launch an attack on the village of Dinkelfink about 20K up the roadway. Command A sent out a small recon unit to go up the dirt road to the right of the main attack to see if the Germans would try to send a flanking group to upset the attack.

The recon unit went down the road through a partially wooded and field area that could be a place to flank our troops. The recon called Command A and said they were about 70K and had seen nobody. The recon unit was told to stay where they were for a while and to report any movement. Recon called in shortly after and said a German group was coming to flank our troops. The German force consisted of an assault tank, some halftracks and a Panther tank and troops equipped with machine guns and rocket launchers. Recon said that about 30K was a good place to set up an ambush and Command A needed to send troops right away.

Right next to Command A was an ordinance depot that repaired damaged equipment. There were four crews waiting at the depot to get some repaired units and to drive them back to their battalions. Three of the crews were from the 714<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion and one crew from the 17<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion – a total of three tanks and one halftrack with a quad mount. Command A determined that the repaired units had a full load of ammo and then instructed the crews and units to head down the road 30K and set up an ambush of the German units.

The three tanks and the halftrack roared down the road and at about 30K pulled off the road and hid behind the trees and bushes. The spot was across a ditch from the dirt road. The German patrol came into view down the road with the assault tank pulling a wagon full of ammo and supplies, then the halftracks and last the huge Panther tank. As soon as the German patrol got even with our hidden tanks and halftracks, our troops opened fire and destroyed the enemy tanks and halftracks. The enemy troops were either killed, wounded or captured. Our side suffered no killed or wounded. Our victorious troops reported to Command A and were told to bring in the captured enemy troops, any enemy weapons and vehicles they could and to destroy anything they could not bring in.

When the troops returned and after they turned over the enemy troops and things they brought in, they were instructed to return to the respective battalions. Command A said they would tell their battalion commanders what they had accomplished and awards would be forthcoming.



## SCHRAPNEL OF A DIFFERENT KIND

By Kenneth G. Bradstreet

It was cold, the snow was deep and we were miserable. We had halted in a small village for the night and found a house on the outskirts to catch a little rest in. It had the usual pot-bellied stove in the room we picked and it wasn't long until we had a roaring fire going in it. We put a can of water on to heat for coffee and settled down to soak up some warmth before taking off again.

After a short time, the pangs of hunger made themselves known. Kirkpatrick out to the tank to get some C Rations. He soon came back, shivering, with the rations. We were comfortable, sprawled out around the room drinking coffee and did not pay much attention to what Kirk was doing as he put the rations on the stovetop to heat.

About that time we decided to spread our mummy bags and blankets on the floor for more comfort as we waited for the rations to heat.

Everyone was comfortable close to the stove. All of a sudden there was a series of explosions! We all hugged the floor, not sure what was happening. There was something warm running down my face! I knew I had not been wounded. Everyone was swearing, the air was blue! The fragrance of pork and beans and hash engulfed us!

It was horrible! An overwhelming disaster of war! Kirk had put the rations on the stove without punching holes in the tops to let off pressure as they heated. The cans had filled with pressure and blown up! There were beans, pork and hash on the walls, dripping off the ceiling, sliding down the stove pipe, dripping off of us. It was a helluva mess! Luckily no one had been hit by the ration can schrapnel.

We talked it over and decided that Kirk must die for this unpardonable act. It would be a horrible way to go; scraping up beans, pork and hash, consuming them as he went, dirt and all, with no liquor to wash them down. Kirk played for time, groveling, promising, begging, knowing that in time we would relent and give in. Suddenly we had another thought; what if we had been standing and been hit by the jagged, sharp pieces of the cans? The death sentence was immediately re-instated. Poor Kirk would never get back into our good graces.

After a while we relented and commuted the sentence, set about cleaning ourselves up and cooking more rations. We never forgot the night of the C Ration shelling.→

## Mummy, M1A1

By Kenneth G. Bradstreet 1946

During Army basic training we were taught how to make a bed in the great outdoors. It was explained that we might as well be comfortable, uh-huh, as we spent the night on what was called bivouac. Each of us carried our equipment on our backs moving to and from these outings.

Part of the equipment was a piece of canvas called a shelter half which was half a pup tent. The shelter half had buttons down one side and button holes down the other. We also carried two Army O.D. wool blankets. The bedroll was made by laying out the shelter half, placing the blankets inside and buttoning it shut. In use, you slid into the blankets and prayed it didn't rain. It was noted that some non-coms and officers seemed to melt away in the direction of the unit vehicles as soon as it was dark. We found later that their bedrolls were almost like a bed and waterproof to boot.

Just after going overseas we were issued sleeping bags. They had a nylon outer cover with full-length zipper and an inner liner of G.I. wool blanket material. The bags were shaped like an old Egyptian mummy case. They promptly were called "mummy bags." The new sleeping bags were hard to get into, hard to zip shut and pure hell to get out of in a hurry. The bags were found to be handy in keeping warm while on guard during the freezing weather in the European winter of 1944/45. They could be used as a parka, pulling it up over your helmet from the rear.

Whatever the problems, our G.I. "fartsacks" had to suffice.→



## OUT OF THE MIST

By Kenneth G. Bradstreet 1952

Out of the mists in my memory they tread,  
The figures of my comrades - many years dead.  
Ghosts of war, they gave their all,  
Treading slowly - no sound - no shadows fall.

Each face, ashen grey, forever young will stay,  
No footsteps heard as they make their way.  
On Eternal patrol through the mist -  
These heroes whom death has kissed.

I call out - they move on with measured tread,  
Looking down, not one raised his head.  
I call again and wave my hand,  
They continue on, a brave and stalwart band.

And I realize they'll not speak to me again,  
Until that day when,  
I answer that last roll call and  
Am once more a member of that valiant band.

## TO DO OR NOT TO DO

By Kenneth G. Bradstreet 1945

A combat soldier is human, and as such, is subject to the same needs as civilians. He must eat and drink to keep up his health and strength. This, of course, causes the body to perform its natural functions; using the food and water to create energy and good health, but it also sorts out the waste material for excretion. In civilian life there is a private restroom in a warm house to perform such actions needed for this necessary function. A combat soldier does not have this luxury and must revert to methods of a more barbaric nature.

"How are these functions performed by a combat soldier?" a civilian might ask. The combat soldier answers, "It is purely a military function, always done by the numbers."

A. Make the decision by asking yourself:

1. Is it freezing weather?
2. What is the wind velocity and chill factor?
3. How deep is the snow? Is it glazed with ice?
4. How close is the enemy and what kind of mood is he in?
5. Will this function affect your well-being and how?

B. If the decision is affirmative, go on by the numbers:

6. Lay aside any equipment not needed for the operation.
7. Loosen or remove outer clothing for quicker action.
8. Move at double-time to the nearest sheltered area without exposure to the enemy.
9. Be sure your buddies are covering you.
10. Be sure you have paper or reasonable facsimile.
11. Kick a cat hole in the snow - fast.

C. You are starting to chill. Supreme effort now, by the numbers:

12. Loosen belt and fly.
13. Get firm grip on pants and long john waist band.
14. Straddle cat hole, be sure feet are firmly planted.
15. Prepare mentally for cold shock.
16. Push pants down, using care and making sure clothing is out of the way.
17. Get the job done, speed is now the password.
18. Use paper, drop in hole, quickly raise clothing.
19. Retreat like hell back to cover. Don't worry about fly or belt till you're back safely.
20. Settle down, finish dressing, wipe sweat off face, try to warm up.
21. Ask yourself, "Why?"

Yes, in zero degree weather with a wind blowing, even the most normal bodily functions are a supreme effort in combat. It is yet another of many episodes in the degrading life of a combat soldier.→



## ALONE

By Kenneth G. Bradstreet 1948

Clouds scud across the bright winter moon  
and the wind sings a funereal tune.  
The winter chill of the night air takes its toll  
on a weary soldier in his foxhole.

The clouds slip by and the moon glow  
shimmers and dances on the silvery snow.  
The soldier waits amid the glistening sheen  
and looks out upon no man's land between.

He waits in silence with bated breath,  
in the air, cold and heavy with death.  
In his heart he fights down fear  
as he thinks of those he holds dear.

The hands of time move slowly, weighted with lead,  
there in the foxholes among the dead.  
Today they lived, young and brave  
today the hand of fate reached from the grave.

The fingers, skeletal and stark,  
touched each one from the dark.  
Taking them, all ten, far from worldly strife,  
away to God's Eternal Life.

But one was left to await  
the return of the hand of fate.  
The soldier waits as the cold bites deep  
thinking only...if he could but sleep.

He dreams of home, the cottage small,  
surrounded by stately elms so tall,  
of his family and friends,  
where love and happiness know no ends.

He dreams alone, no comrade to tell,  
only God to turn to in this cold hell.  
His eyes fixed in a stolid stare;  
could something be moving out there?

He wipes his eyes with his grimy glove  
and says a prayer to Him above;  
"Keep me safe, Father, until the dawn,  
let me awake and the enemy be gone.

I must rest this night

so I at dawn may fight.  
For You, my Country, and all I love.  
Please give me Your help and strength from above."

The soldier's head was cradled on his hand  
when the enemy advanced across no man's land.  
They found him sleeping peacefully there  
cold winter frost adorning his face and hair.

His countenance held a smile of content  
for during the night, God had sent  
The Angels of Peace to take him from the strife  
and bring him home alone to Eternal Life.

Never again to be alone with fear  
though it is again unknown territory here.  
For the Father has brought him to His chair  
and there is no enemy there.→



## THE KNELL OF HELL

By Kenneth G. Bradstreet 1945

Amid the sounds of mortal battle  
comes the tank tracks rattle.  
Attracted by the unholy din  
of man's gravest sin.  
The bullets sing,  
the birds take wing.  
Big guns roar  
as away they soar.  
The sounds swell,  
a Knell of Hell.

Men scream and cry  
as amid the hell they die.  
Sounds of pain  
in a world insane.  
Blood, sweat and tears  
in a centrifuge of fears.  
Schrapnel, bullets, fire and smoke;  
the brave warriors choke.  
And heard as they fell,  
the Knell of Hell.

Life is cheap  
as men keep;  
Their rendezvous with fate,  
bathed each one in Satan's Hate.  
Men kill each other,  
world brother against brother.  
Each knows his cause is right  
in this terrible bloody fight.  
Sounding above those who fell,  
the Knell of Hell.

The schrapnel cuts the leaves from the trees  
and brings fighting warriors to their knees.  
The battle surges to and fro,  
the final end only God can know.  
Through the snow and mud  
laced with rivulets of blood.  
Men covered with grime,  
fight amid war's murky slime.  
Sounding amid the din of conflict and death's smell,  
the Knell of Hell.

Shadowy silhouettes appear in the fog and smoke,

tank guns weave and poke,  
Seeking out their prey,  
as they join the fray.  
Satan's machines onward grind,  
instilling fear in men's minds.  
Mere man cannot stand,  
against this iron band.  
They add their sound and oily smell  
to the Knell of Hell.

Day turns to night,  
darkness quells the fight.  
The cold wind brings snow  
to gently cover the hell below.  
The snow is bright,  
accenting shadows in the night.  
Sleeplessness is rife,  
the cold cuts weary men like a knife.  
In the night, St. Barbara sings of fire and hell,  
within the Knell of Hell.

In pits in the frozen ground  
cold weary warriors hear every sound.  
The enemy is near,  
noise and shadows amplified by fear.  
Empty guts, little sleep,  
with an ever vigilant guard to keep.  
No stars, no moon,  
all praying for daylight soon.  
Night sounds cast a spell;  
prelude to the Knell of Hell.

Men dream of life  
at home with sweetheart or wife,  
Of Mom and Dad, sister, brother, grandmother petite  
and the little ones spoiled and sweet.  
The warriors pray to God  
to let them return to their native sod.  
Tired cold bodies shaking,  
the earth around them quaking.  
In their minds they know so well  
that again soon will peal the Knell of Hell.

The dawn sky fills with a ghostly aura of light,  
signaling the retreat of night.  
Night shadows slowly creep away,  
night fear passes away with breaking day.  
Comrades who yesterday fell on this Devil's ground,  
sleep now in a snow-blanketed mound.  
Stark reminders of the day past,  
the day that was their last.  
The Wind of Death did take them in its swell  
amid the sound of the Knell of Hell.  
Men rouse, wet, stiff and weary,  
looking up at skies grey and dreary.



Again starts the deafening din,  
    sending prickles over the skin.  
Servants of the Devil they must be again this day,  
    is there no other way?  
The foe also waits  
    to gamble again with the Fates.  
Thor again will cast his spell  
    under the Knell of Hell.

The day of insane madness begins with the choice  
    of St. Barbara's fiery chorus as it's voice.  
The hand of death is dealt,  
    fear in the players is felt.  
Each warrior must play his hand,  
    no bluff, no dropping out, all must stand.  
Odious to all,  
    nevertheless, they answer the call,  
Into Odin's cell,  
    accompanied by the Knell of Hell.

The dread hours go on and on,  
    until at last the foe is gone.  
The bit of earth for which they vied  
    and died;  
To the victors, a torn and twisted mass  
    of bodies, metal and morass.  
They have survived, they live,  
    how much more can they give?  
How long can they live in Satan's Hell?  
    Minds filled with the Knell of Hell.→

## ST. BARBARA'S SONS

494th AFA "Red

Leg" 1942

In Biblical days David didn't know it but when he lobbed a stone from his sling and felled Goliath, he conquered armor by artillery fire power. He demonstrated a method of wreaking destruction on the enemy from a distance and that method is still in use today though it has been highly developed over the years into a modern science of war. David's stone has developed into nuclear projectiles which have the capability of destroying the world.

St. Barbara is the patron saint of artillerymen and David was the first of her sons. Long lines of her sons stand behind David with lintel, lanyard or selenoid in hand. We stand at attention with pride in our service to her.

The history of artillery started with the sling which developed into the catapult which also used stones or boulders as projectiles. Catapults, which were the first simple howitzers, were used against the walled cities and were found effective against almost all fixed positions.

Knights in armor mounted on horseback swept armies on foot before them with their lances and swords until the invention of gunpowder and firearms when artillery defeated them at long range. Early artillery pieces were fuse ignited and projected solid shot as far as 1,500 yards wreaking havoc on the enemy.

England's Henry VIII formed a regiment of royal artillery and by 1750 there were artillery pieces firing 12 and 24 pound iron cannon balls. Napoleon developed the tactic of using horse-drawn artillery pieces and firing to prepare the ground for his infantry. This mass tactic helped him in his conquering sweep across Europe.

Over the years improvements such as rifled barrels, time fuses and machined breeches all increased the efficiency of artillery. To meet the defensive situation of troops entrenched behind breastworks the howitzer and mortar were invented which had high-trajectory for their projectiles. Having short ranges and little mobility the guns were soon put out of action by enemy counter-fire. Artillery became an exchange of shots by set guns behind the front lines, difficult to control and of limited tactical use. Until military men consented to sacrifice fire power to mobility, artillery could not fit into the tactical situation.

In World War I Britain introduced a new concept of fire power combining armor and mobility. The advantage gained was so great that when the tank was developed by the Germans in the years between wars and used tactically at the start of World War II, German panzers led through Poland, Belgium and France. These tanks, self-propelled and heavily armored against all but direct artillery fire, held a great advantage over set artillery. After opposing artillery had been silenced, these



heavy machines over-ran the enemy positions, disrupting communications and disorganizing troops.

To meet this threat of high firepower at high speed was the problem which confronted artillery men's minds. The vulnerability of fixed artillery was so apparent that self-propelled guns of heavy caliber were developed to meet the threat. Highly maneuverable, and with equal speed, these guns were more than a match for the German tanks. They were able to deliver a high rate of accurate fire both direct and indirect. Indirect fire was through a fire direction center which moved with the guns.

This new form of mobile artillery of which the M-7 SP 105mm Howitzer was a good example. It made truth of the statement that superior fire power always will win the battle.

(The name of St. Barbara was invoked after the breech was closed by the early English artillerymen. So we artillerymen will be always known as "Sons of St. Barbara."→

## IN RETROSPECT

By Kenneth G. Bradstreet 1961 after meeting one of my 494th friends

"Hi Buddy," is the greeting heard today  
It moves the curtain of time away  
Taking us back to days gone by  
When we left home and Mom's apple pie  
To answer Uncle Sam's call  
That our American freedom should not fall  
Amid the flame of young manhood  
We vowed we would be back as soon as we could  
"It won't take long," we cried  
"Freedom, Freedom," the conquered world replied

By bus and train across the nation  
To our assigned military installation  
Life for us began anew  
In spacious rooms with little view  
Bunks high and low along the wall  
Equal accommodations for all  
Reveille early to rise and Taps to bed  
The Bugler soon etched in our head  
The Drill field was aptly named  
A place for young lions to be tamed

Tired, weary, aching backs and feet  
What a place for buddies to meet  
We shared the good and bad days  
As we prepared in all the ways  
To meet combat's every test  
And prove that we were the best  
Buddies in all we shared  
Nothing hidden, all was bared  
The Iron Monsters awed us all  
And we must heed their every beck and call

Cannoneer's Hop  
We thought it would never stop  
Cadence - "Hut, Two, Thrup, Four  
Marching, marching - how much more  
KP, Guard Duty, Firing Ranges, Infiltration Course  
But never a thought in remorse  
Buddies together  
Buddies forever  
Back home to see the folks for a few days  
Then return to the Army ways

The rumor came on the desert breeze



We were soon going overseas  
Short days of preparation  
Then another trip across the nation  
To a ferry that took us to the slip  
Where rode tall at anchor a great ship  
U.S.S. General Tasker H. Bliss was it's name  
Army Troopship was it's game  
To take us far away to battle  
Hear the anchor chains clank and rattle

We passed the Lady with the Lamp  
In our floating Army camp  
Home is left far behind  
As we sail away to find  
World War II to fight  
And separate wrong from right  
For twelve long days  
Our time was spent in many ways  
Calisthenics, tossing dice, sleeping  
Loafing, playing cards and vomiting

Seasickness came to many with the ships motion  
Days of nothing to see but the waves of the ocean  
Then came the welcome sight of land  
The shores of Ireland and then England  
At Liverpool it was down the gangplanks again  
Overnight at an airfield and then entrain  
Taken to encamp at Tidworth and Windmill Hill  
On the Salisbury Plain in dreary fog and chill  
Passes to London, Winchester, Salisbury and Andover  
Did much for the sight-seeing rover

Thatch roofs, pounds, shillings, fish and chips, warm beer  
Bombed buildings, ruins, ack-ack guns, we were here  
Thirty days, they said, to get ready  
Our thoughts were emotionally heady  
To France on Advance detail  
In thirteen days we set sail  
The English Channel waves did a frothy dance  
As HMS Queen Emma wallowed across them to Cherbourg, France  
France, land of runny, knee-deep mud and never-ending rain  
Weather cold to add to the strain

Cleaning tanks and guns, getting them combat ready  
French Wine and Calvados, very heady  
Combat on every soldier's mind  
When we reach the front what will we find  
The clatter and rattle of the tracks  
Moving the tanks and halftracks  
Combat - How would it be  
In a few hours we will see  
Dreaming our individual thoughts as we roll on  
Through Rheims, and Soisson  
Metz, Luneville and Baccarrat  
Drawing closer to mortal combat

The sound of heavy guns and fiery flashes in the night  
Told us we were near the fight  
Buddies closer now as never before  
We were buddies now in the terror of war  
Thoughts of home, wife, mother, sweetheart  
We will go home as soon as we have done our part  
The thunderous roar of many guns, fire lights the sky  
Playground of the Devil, Good Lord, why

Cannoneers hop with deadly purpose  
Not a bitch or gripe from any of us  
Range, Azimuth, sight, charge, fire  
Not a man did waver or tire  
As each round the tubes fled  
We knew they would leave men dead  
Enemy shells howl and scream  
Bringing to us a fearful dream  
Men cry out and hide from their iron stream  
A nightmarish Devil's theme

The barrage did soon subside  
But one of our buddies has died  
Dear God, why  
In war men must die  
White snow and dark green pines bring memories  
Of home, Christmas, families  
The silvery snow covers bodies and ruins, the moon in the sky  
Looks down on men who came to fight and die, Good Lord, why  
A buddy, covered by red-hued snow  
We bow our heads and and on must go

Men fall, wounded and dead  
As we move, stop, fire, always victoriously ahead  
Old buddies back from the hospital reappear  
New buddies also, replacements from the rear  
Fight, fight, kill, kill - how long can the enemy hold on  
We keep barreling on and on  
As men die rumor says the war is almost over, can it be  
Oh Lord, let it be, Please Lord, let it be  
More of our buddies die  
And inside each of us we cry

How long can it go on  
We keep fighting and barreling on  
The spring flowers are now in bloom, blood on their petals  
Covering the scars of war, the soldier and his medals  
The word comes to us as we near the Alps..The war is over  
The War Is Over  
We quietly receive the word  
And suddenly in our silence we hear the song of a bird  
It breaks the stillness and shakes us into belief  
We sigh in thankful relief  
Thank You, Lord  
Thank You, Lord  
Our thoughts turn to our loved ones and home



Vowing nevermore to roam  
Praying for everlasting Peace  
That wars forever cease  
The time has come for buddies to part  
Going home, a life anew to start  
Promises to meet again  
Not sure just where or when

Promises to always write  
It is only right  
Promises to keep in touch  
Buddies who shared so much  
To share our new lives  
With each other and our wives  
And children through all the years  
Until we meet the One who quells our fears  
How can we say or do more  
Buddies for evermore.→