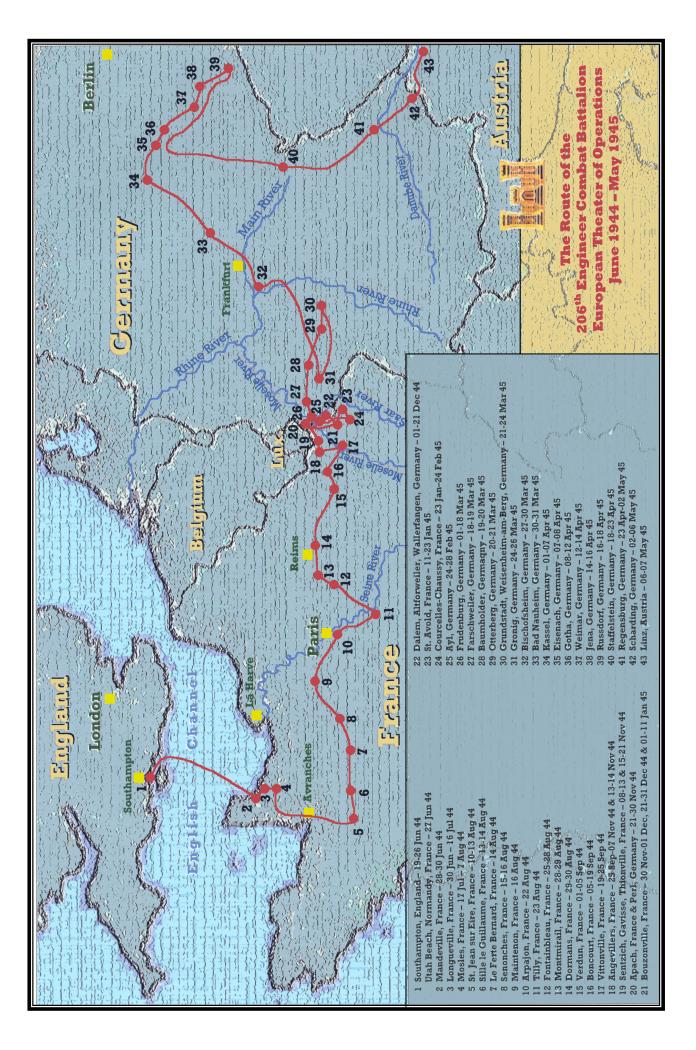


1st Lt. John G. Graham 206th Engineer Combat Battalion

Platoon Commander Company C 10 Jun 43 – 15 Apr 44 Company A 16 Apr 44 – 04 Sep 44 Company C 05 Sep 44 – 10 Jul 45

Company Commander Company C 11 Jul 45 – 30 Jul 45







The Third U.S. Army shoulder patch: The 206^{th} Engineer Combat Battalion was assigned to Third U.S. Army for the period 5 August 1944 – 28 May 1945, from the Normandy breakout to the surrender of Germany. The men of the 206^{th} Engineer Combat Battalion wore the Third U.S. Army patch on the left shoulder of their uniforms.



The Engineer Castle: The Engineer Castle is the insignia worn by the Combat Engineers of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The Army officially adopted the castle to appear on the Corps of Engineers Epaulets and belt plate, in 1840.



The European-African-Middle Eastern (EAME) Campaign Medal: The EAME Campaign Medal was awarded to personnel for service within the European-African-Middle Eastern Theater between 7 December 1941 and 8 November 1945 and who were in active combat against the enemy. The silver star on the ribbon signifies participation in five designated major campaigns in the European Theater of Operations: Normandy, Northern France, Ardennes-Alsace, Rhineland and Central Europe.



The World War II Victory Medal: The WW II Victory Medal was awarded to all military personnel for service between 7 December 1941 and 31 December 1946.



The President of the Provisional Government of the French Republic awarded the French Croix De Guerre Medal with Silver Star to the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion for its crossing operations in support of the 90th Infantry Division over the Saar River at Dillingen in December 1944. The citation begins, "A magnificent unit..."

GENERAL ORDERS) NO 43)

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY WASHINGTON 25, D.C., 19 December 1950

SECTION

LIST OF UNITS AND CITATIONS

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206th Engr Combat Bn

FRENCH CROIX DE GUERRE WITH SILVER STAR, awarded under Decision No 246, 15 July 1946, by the President of the Provisional Government of the French Republic, with the following citation:

A magnificent unit, which participated in numerous operations after the Normandy landing. It again distinguished itself in the region of Dillingen (Sarre) in the course of the combat of 6 to 22 December 1944. Ordered to establish a means of crossing the Sarre and subjected to extremely violent artillery fire, it nevertheless succeeded in laying out a route and brought up rafts, thus permitting the 90th Division to accomplish its mission.

(AG 200.62 (20 Nov 50)

BY ORDER OF THE SECRETARY OF THE ARMY:

OFFICIAL:

EDWARD F WITSELL Major General, USA The Adjutant General J. LAWTON COLLINS Chief of Staff, United States Army

A TRUE EXTRACT:

/s/Leonard J. Palumbo LEONARD J. PALUMBO Capt Inf 00 43



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his History, 206th Engineer Combat Battalion, has been compiled and dedicated in memory of my father, Captain John Gilmer Graham, Combat Engineer. As a 1st Lieutenant, he served as a Platoon Commander in Company A and, beginning in September 1944, Company C of the Battalion throughout the entire duration of its operations in the European Theater of Operations, United States Army (ETOUSA) in World War II. He and the men of the 206th experienced the Normandy invasion – landing on Utah Beach on 27 June 1944; the fighting and break-out in the hedgerow country of Normandy; General Patton's Third U.S. Army dash across France; bridging and ferrying across the Seine, Moselle, Saar, Main and other rivers; breaching the Siegfried Line; the drive into Germany; and ending the war in Linz, Austria. The 206th Engineer Combat Battalion supported many spearhead combat units of XX Corps, Third U.S. Army – 80th Infantry Division, 7th Armored Division, 90th Infantry Division, 10th Armored Division, 95th Infantry Division, 5th Ranger Battalion, 26th Infantry Division, 12th Armored Division, 65th Infantry Division, and others.

In addition to the dangers and hardships inherent in all combat situations, the winter of 1944-1945 was the coldest Europe had experienced in over 55 years. The rain, mud, snow, ice, flooding rivers and often heavy enemy artillery, mortar and machine gun fire, created extremely hazardous bridging and ferrying conditions. Also, supply problems obtaining fuel and equipment and the Battalion continually being under strength added to the difficulty of the combat operations and to the demands placed on the men of the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion. The Combat Engineers of the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion – in addition to performing their traditional combat engineering work of bridging, ferrying, demolition, clearing minefields and obstacles, building and repairing roads, etc – many times deployed as infantry to secure a bridgehead, man a roadblock, perform reconnaissance, clear an area of enemy troops or to provide security for bridgehead locations and other operations.

This history has been compiled from the *History, 206th Engineer Combat Battalion;* the January 1944 - November 1945 Monthly After Action Reports of the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion obtained from the National Archives and Records Administration; the personnel file of 1st Lt. John G. Graham; the field notes and other records kept by S/Sgt Don F. Wendling, Company A, 1st Squad, 1st Platoon, which were furnished to me by his daughter, Mrs. Jan Cruikshank; journals, photographs and newspaper articles provided by Mrs. Lynette Pirrung, daughter of





Lt. Col. Gilbert R. Pirrung; information furnished by Francoise Winieska of Rambouillet, France; and other sources.



S/Sgt Don F. Wendling, Company A

It is from S/Sgt Wendling's records that I first learned of the award of the French Croix de Guerre Medal with Silver Star to the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion. His field notes contained a daily log of the dates and locations of the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion as well as notations of events. These notes were used extensively in plotting the locations of the Battalion for the months of March thru May 1945. Additionally, S/Sqt Wendling recorded on audio cassette an oral account of his Army experiences. A transcript of his recording describing events during his service in the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion is contained in Appendix A of this history. The chronology he compiled from his field notes is also presented in Appendix A.

Mrs. Francois Winieska of Rambouillet, France, generously provided her time, assistance and information she compiled from her research into the 16 August 1944 ambush near Rambouillet, France of five men from Company C of the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion. Information from one of her letters and photographs of the men ambushed at Rambouillet from her book, *August 1944, The Liberation of Rambouillet, France,* is used to supplement the August 1944 After Action Report.

Mrs. Lynette Pirrung furnished photographs and copies of the journals kept by her father, Lt. Col. Pirrung, Battalion Commander, during the operations along the Saar River in December 1944. Additionally, she provided copies of newspaper articles pertaining to Lt. Col. Pirrung and the activities of the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion, and citations for the Bronze and Silver Stars awarded to him for his heroic leadership in the Moselle and Saar River crossings operations, respectively. Mr. Tim Pirrung recorded his recollection of several incidents told to him by his father. The transcript of these recollections is presented in Appendix C of this report. Mr. Mark Pirrung furnished a map depicting the route of the XX Corps across Europe, which was used with other information to construct the route of the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion in the European Theater of Operations.



Lt. Col. Gilbert Pirrung

Mr. Daniel Sheridan, whose father, PFC Alfred D. Sheridan, served in Company L, 3rd Battalion, 358th Infantry Regiment, 90th Infantry Division, which the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion put across the Saar River on 6 December 1944, generously furnished copies of *Tough* 'Ombres, The Story of the 90th Infantry Division; Peragimus, We Accomplish, A Brief History of the 358th Infantry; and Battle History, 3rd Battalion, 358th Infantry, 90th Division. Several pictures from these books and a description of the Saar River assault crossing at Dillingen, Germany are used in this History, 206th Engineer Combat Battalion.





Information from my telephone conversations with Theodore (Ted) Gordon, Albuquerque, New Mexico and Joseph L. Stangel, Oak Lawn, Illinois, both veterans of the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion, has been included in this report. Ted Gordon served in Company C while Joseph Stangel served in Company A of the Battalion.

Private Joseph L. Stangel, who made a career of the Army and reached the rank of Command Sergeant Major, was



Command Sergeant Major Joseph L. Stangel

awarded the Bronze Star for his heroism during the Saar River crossing operations in December 1944. His Bronze Star citation is included in this report.



Sergeant Ted Gordon

Joseph Stangel provided an original copy of the Yank Magazine article, *Letter to Von Papen*, which is included in this report following the December 1944 After Action Report, and an original of the citation awarding the French Croix de Guerre Medal with Silver Star to the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion.

Mrs. Wanda Cummings of Ponca City, Oklahoma, wife of 206th Engineer Combat Battalion veteran Francis Cummings, furnished a map prepared by the Battalion of the route of the 206th through France, Germany and

Austria. This map was used extensively in constructing the map, Route of the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion, European Theater of Operations, June 1944 – May 1945, presented in this report.

Appendix B of this report contains a transcript of a taped interview with William Sonnier. Private Bill Sonnier served in Company B, 3rd Platoon, 3rd Squad, of the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion from the time the Battalion was formed at Camp Swift, Texas on 1 April 1943 and throughout its operations in the European Theater of Operations. I had the privilege to interview Mr. Sonnier in his home in Elizabeth, Louisiana on May 25, 2002. Mr. Blake Sonnier arranged for me to meet with his father and to conduct the interview for this history.

Other sources of information used to compile this History of the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion include *Breakout and Pursuit*, *The Lorraine Campaign*, and *The Corps of Engineers: The War Against Germany*, produced by the United States Army Center of Military History; and *The XX Corps, Its History and Service in World War II*.

Due to the extensive use of military abbreviations and acronyms in many of the official reports and records, in this edition of the History, 206th Engineer Combat



Private William Sonnier





Battalion, I have made notations and minimal editorial modifications to these records in order to make them more readable. The contents of the records have not been modified in any way and diligent care has been taken in transcribing and checking these reports and records before including them into this history.

Beginning with the June 1944 Monthly After Action Report and ending with the May 1945 Report – except for July 1944 and October 1944 - maps have been added at the end of each report to show the general locations of the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion during that month. Photographs have also been inserted into the report to better illustrate the conditions, equipment and operations of the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion. Many of the photographs are not of the 206th; however, these photographs depict identical conditions, equipment and operations of the 206th. Engineer Combat Battalion. Where there is reasonable certainty that a photograph is of the 206th, this is noted in the caption below the photograph. The official Monthly After Action Reports contain neither maps nor photographs.

The search for additional information on the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion continues. As new information is discovered supplementary appendices or, as necessary, revisions to this History, 206th Engineer Combat Battalion, *"A magnificent unit..."* will be produced.

John Keith Graham July 2002



HISTORY

OF THE



206TH ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION APRIL 1943 – MAY 1945



The 206th Engineer Combat Battalion was born on the first day of April, nineteen hundred and forty three, at Camp Swift, Texas. Formerly the 2nd Battalion of the 146th Engineer Combat Regiment, the men of the 206th had completed two months training on their activation date.

Major Michael Messner was the first Commanding Officer, and under the Tables of Organization, the 206th was authorized 29 officers, 3 Warrant Officers and 632 enlisted men. Basic training was completed on 22 May 1943 and the Battalion entered upon Unit Training period.

Already familiar with the sand hills around Camp Swift from long hot marches under full field equipment, the men now began applying their knowledge learned in Basic Training as an engineer soldier; the knowledge that was in later months to give them good results in the forward push through France, Germany and Austria.

How to span that river in the shortest time, with the bridging at hand? because the Infantry which you rowed across last night must be supplied with heavier arms and equipment – now. How to make a ferry that will hold a medium tank? – because they must be gotten across even if it's too hot with enemy fire to build a bridge, or a well placed shell knocks the bridge out. How to place a demolition charge? – and in the right place. Assault a pillbox – or deploy as infantrymen, as engineers must do at times. Those were a few of the questions dealt with during unit training.

There was one interruption in the Unit training period. In June, the Arkansas River went on a rampage and overflowed its banks, leaving waste and wreckage in its path. The Army stepped in to help in a flood rehabilitation program. The 206th was sent to Spiro, Oklahoma, 420 miles away, and spent three (3) weeks draining farm lands, rebuilding homes and roads – then returned to Camp Swift and completed their training.

On 14 September 1943 came the news that every outfit was training for Alert for Overseas! On 16 September 1943, Major Gilbert R. Pirrung relieved Major Messner as Commanding Officer, and on 24 September 1943 movement was begun. The long weeks of training were behind, goodbyes were said and







the unit left Camp Swift, going by train to the staging area at Camp Myles Standish, Massachusetts – arriving there 28 September 1943. Hurried days and long hours were spent as final records were completed, checked and equipment supplied. Then on 7 October 1943 we loaded on the train, made the short run to the boat, immediately boarded and the next afternoon at 1630 hours steamed out of Boston Harbor¹ for an unknown, new and uncertain future – overseas duty had begun.

Not counting seasickness, overcrowded ships, and the fact that this was a first ocean ride for most,

Major Gilbert R. Pirrung the trip was uneventful. We arrived in Liverpool, England 18 October 1943 and disembarked the next day – proceeding to Delamere Park Camp, Cheshire County, (near Chester) England.

The Battalion was placed under jurisdiction of Western Base Section, SOS, European Theater of Operations, United States Army (ETOUSA), and our mission was to do general engineer work in the construction of camps and roads, making room for the thousands of American troops that would pour into that country in preparation for D-Day. We built Pettypool Camp, Knutsford Heath and Mobberly Camps (to house 1250 men each) in addition to many enlargements on other camps already begun.

And during that time, working with British soldiers and Civilians we got to know the customs of the people, their lives and the common interests that our countries share.

On 10 February 1944 the Battalion left Delamere Park Camp and arrived at Frilford, Waringdon, Berkshire (near Oxford) on 11 February 1944. The mission was now intensive training, with emphasis on Bailey bridging, hasty road construction, and mine warfare. During that time we exchanged personnel with the Royal Engineers on a temporary basis, for the purpose of promoting understanding and comradeship between the United States and British forces – many good friendships were formed.

A motor march for change of station took us to the U.S. Assault Training Center, Saunton Sands, Devonshire, England on 27 March 1944. While there we were engaged in maintenance of training courses and beaches, building of emplacements and fortifications for training purposes in preparation for D-Day. Also giving demonstrations of mines and booby traps, and building beach obstacles and under water demolitions.

¹ In a letter dated 22 May 98 from Joseph Stangel, Oak Lawn, Illinois, who served in Company A of the 206th, to Don Wendling, he stated that the name of the ship was the Santa Lena, an Argentinean vessel. Joe Stangel won a Bronze Star for saving the life of a wounded Officer near Wachern, Germany on 22 November 1944.





22 MH4 48 Don. As per our phone Conversation on 22 May here one some of the items I fund in my files. "A" Company departed Camp Myles Standish for Boston Harbor on 80stober 43 on the Santa Lena an Argentenia Vessel. Tooll us about 11 days to get to Liverpool England, dodging U-boats most of the way, Sea sick for a feal clays but happy to go ashore. Our Apo number was 515. On page 3 you mentioned the Snake. I had an article withe pictures of it if I can find it, and if I do I will forwand to you, Did the 206th ever have a Battalion Crest? Keep up the rood work keep up the good work -

Note: This letter is from Joseph L. Stangel to Don F. Wendling, who both served in Company A of the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion. This letter is from the records of Don F. Wendling.





HEADQUARTERS XX CORPS APO 540

GENERAL ORDERS)

14 January 1945

NUMBER 10)

SECTION 111 - Award of Bronze Star Medal.

III. <u>AWARD OF BRONZE STAR MEDAL</u>: Under the provisions of AR 600-45, 22 September 1943, as amended, the Bronze Star Medal is awarded to:

Private JOSEPH L. STANGLE, 36640343, CE, *** Engineer Combat Battalion, for heroic service in connection with military operations against the ememy in Germany on 22 November 1944. Private STANJEL was a member of a demolition crew engaged in destroying enemy pillboxes and other fortifications which were blocking the advance of elements of the 10th Armored Division northeast of WACHERN. Enemy fire became so heavy when the party approached the objective that the order was given to withdraw. While the severe bombardment continued, Private STANGLE discovered an officer who was wounded so badly that he couldn't move. Private STANGLE placed the officer on his back and by crawling on his hands and knees some 300 yards carried him to a sheltered position. He went for medical aid but unable to find an aid man, he acquired a small vehicle, and without regard for his personal safety, drove to the officer, carried him to and placed him in the vehicle and amid a hail of bursting shells, drove him to safety. Private STANGLE's courage, determination and personal concern for the welfare of his comrades reflect credit upon himself and the Army of the United States. Entered Military Service from Illinois.

By command of Major General WALKER:

W. A. COLLIER Brigadier General, General Staff Corps Chief of Staff

OFFICIAL:

ROBERT E. CULLEN Colonel, A. G. D., Adjutant General

> A True Copy Qubint C. Stand A) ROBERT P. BOYD JR. Major CE Acting Adjutant

Note: This copy of General Orders Number 10 was obtained form the records of Don Wendling.











On 15 May 1944 we moved to Badgemore Camp, Henley, Oxfordshire, England, where physical and tactical training was continued in preparation for overseas movement.



Normandy Beachhead, June 1944

Then on 18 June 1944 the forward Echelon of the Battalion left Henley for movement to Combat Zone, Normandy, France, arriving at the marshalling area at Southhampton – boarded ship on 19 June 1944, and anchored off Utah Beach 26 June 1944 – taking our first step in Normandy on the 27 June 1944.

The 206th was assigned to V Corps of the First United States Army, and maintained roads, doing general engineer work while our armies were building up power on the Normandy Beachhead for the initial drive that was to carry them to the gates of Germany. The orchards of Normandy were our homes, there came the appreciation for fox holes, the introduction to K rations (as a steady diet), the sounds of enemy planes, and bombs exploding at close range – also some muddy engineer work; the problem of keeping supply roads passable in rainy, sloshy weather, and under the constant pounding of unceasing traffic. French towns, and the hedgerow battles of the Infantry – bloody landmarks of





Normandy were familiar sights. St. Mere Eglise, Trevieres, Isigny, Avranches, St. Lo, Carentan – with fires still smouldering in the path of battle. The break-through at St. Lo - then the beginning of the dash across France.

On 5 August 1944 the 206th was assigned to Third U.S. Army and attached to XX Corps, remaining under the Headquarters of Third U.S. Army throughout the duration of the war in Europe. The first few weeks in Normandy were served under the 1103rd Engineer Combat Group, and on 10 August 1944, the 206th was assigned the mission to support the 80th Infantry Division. At Saint-Jean-sur-Eire on 11 August 1944 an assignment to the 1139th Engineer Combat Group, and the 206th was put in direct support of the 7th Armored Division on 14 August 1944. Line companies were put with combat columns - and removed enemy mines, obstacles and burned and wrecked vehicles from the path of our advancing tanks.

Sille-Le-Guillaume, Le Ferte-Bernard, Montieres, Senonches, Nogent, Maintenon, Arpajon – and other towns passed through too swiftly



General George S. Patton Commander, Third U.S. Army

to remember. By now battle sounds were familiar, enemy uniforms and planes were everyday sights; because every company had captured its quota of prisoners, and every man had watched a German ME-109 strafe his column.

The first assault crossing of a river under enemy fire was made on 23 August 1944, to establish a bridge head on the Seine River at Tilly, France, and the first casualties by enemy guns, then to Fontainbleau, bridges across the Seine River blown by enemy, two (2) Bailey bridges put across by the 206th at Champagne and Fontainbleau, furnishing their own security. Then on east to Montmirail, Dormans, Oranville, Reims, and Verdun. All the while moving fast by day and catching little sleep at night while the tanks were being refilled with gasoline.

Highlights of the drive included – Company A support of a company of tanks in establishing a cut-off of all roads and bridges leading out of Chartres. Deploying as infantry, they cleared enemy out of woods in the area, taking 47 prisoners.





Company B deploying as infantry, with platoon of tanks in support, were ordered to secure and hold Maintenon. They held the town until relieved by infantry.

Company C captured the airport at Reims and secured the area until relieved by infantry.

At Verdun intensive reconnaissance was conducted by the Battalion toward the east. Bridging materials were critical, as were all supplies. Due to the whirlwind advance, progress slowed, as enemy resistance became more determined. Mines and wrecked vehicles on the roads occupied engineers night and day.

East of Verdun to Conflans, Boncourt and Briey, the Battalion continued reconnaissance. Location of many enemy dumps helped relieve the critical shortage of equipment. Many contacts were made with the enemy by recon parties during this time. A bridging attempt was made by B Company on the Moselle River at Dornot. Heavy artillery fire forced a withdrawal, meanwhile Company C moved to the vicinity of Arnaville to operate a ferry on the Moselle River where another crossing was being made. Company A spent this time in patrolling and furnishing security for a large railroad yard at Conflans.

In early September the mission of establishing and maintaining roadblocks along the Moselle River was given to the Battalion as a security measure against an enemy break through – the zone extended through Hilly, Gravelotte, Verneville, St. Privat, and Boncourt. The men of all companies took their turns through the long, wet days and nights on the posts at roadblocks. Then further support of the 7th Armored Division in their crossing of the Moselle River at Arnaville, under intense artillery fire. An attempt was made on the night of 22-23 September 1944 to put a 40-ft. rolling Bailey bridge across the Seille River in the vicinity of Cheminot. This operation was not successful because a warp in the structure caused the load to become unbalanced and to slide off of the dolly on the move from the construction site to the river.

On 24 September 1944, the Battalion was relieved from support of the 7th Armored Division – the mission it had performed since leaving the coast of Normandy, and placed in support of the 83rd and 90th Infantry Divisions along with other units of the 1139th Engineer Combat Group. The bad roads were almost impassable for tanks, and now most of the push in this sector for the time being would be by infantry. Fuel shortage had also become acute and there was a necessary slow-down until supply lines caught up.

We moved back across the Moselle River and into barracks at Angevillers – our first time to sleep in beds since England. Our temporary home was an old French garrison formerly used by Maginot Line troops, and by the Germans – and well stocked with furniture and equipment left by the enemy.







Concrete Dragon's Teeth (shown above), pillboxes and other fortifications and obstacles were located along the Siegfried Line, a fortified line along the French-German border. This picture shows a breach made by U.S. troops in the Siegfried Line.

This period was used to get equipment back into shape, and for further training for the job on the other side of the Moselle River - the Siegfried Line. We built obstacles and fortifications, double apron fences; anti-tank ditches, pillboxes, and furnished demonstration teams on the division training courses to teach the doughboys how to breach the obstacles.

A further team was trained by the Battalion – 15 men trained as instructors in the use of the "Snake"

demolition. On 18 October 1944 an exhibition was conducted at which a 368 foot "Snake" with 14 ½ pounds of TNT per foot, was successfully launched with the M-4 Tank – total time consumed in building and launching the "Snake" took one hour and nine minutes. Engineers of four (4) Divisions attended the demonstration. A provisional assault team was also organized during this period and training coordinated with the Infantry. All methods of breaching the Siegfried Line were studied. Special observation missions were sent into First U.S. Army sector where the Siegfried Line was already being breached by assault.

On 31 October 1944, we began training with the 359th Infantry Regiment of the 90th Infantry Division in infantry assault river crossings, the infantry support raft and infantry support bridge, at a selected site near Pagny on the Moselle River. Following this all companies of the Battalion began day and night training in ferrying and the use of assault boats, a job they were to see plenty of in later weeks.

The assault on the Moselle River was planned for weeks. No crossings had yet been attempted in this sector and the enemy had had time for all the defensive preparation he needed. Constant rains had also aroused the Moselle to almost flood stage.

On the night of 7 November 1944, the Battalion moved into bivouac in a wooded area overlooking the Moselle River near Sentzich. The crossing was to be made in the vicinity of Malling two (2) kilometers to the north.

During 8 November 1944, final recon and preparations were made, and at dusk on that day a forward Command Post was established in the basement of a building at Gavisse and wire crews began laying wire to the assault sites. At





2330 hours, Companies A, B and C moved out of the bivouac areas to take up positions with the 359th Infantry Regiment to form boatloads of infantry troops for the assault. Each assault boat crew consisted of three (3) Engineers and one Engineer guide.

All work was done in silence, H-Hour was 0330, 9 November 1944, the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the 359th Infantry Regiment being ferried in succession. The assault was completely successful, the enemy being taken completely by surprise – one wave of infantry was rowed across before a shot was fired by the enemy.



A treadway bridge across the Moselle River built by Combat Engineers. Identical bridges were built by the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion across the Moselle and other rivers.

At 0430 hours the construction of a footbridge was commenced, but harassing machine gun and mortar fire made it necessary to abandon the attempt.

The construction of an infantry support bridge was begun and three fourths complete when a raft, ferrying a truck across the swelling river, ran into it and snapped the bridge lines holding the bridge, which was lost down stream at 1100 hours.

Upon the loss of the support bridge, salvage operations were started and also preparations begun to construct a treadway bridge at the same site. It was completed the next day at 1700, but the following morning 10 November 1944, enemy fire weakened the bridge, and later destroyed it, but not before many needed tank destroyers were put over. Another treadway bridge was built later.

During the past two days the Moselle River had risen to flood stage; even the approach road leading to the bridge was under fifty-five (55) inches of water. Only M-5 tractors, loaded with supplies for the infantry could ford the water on





the mud bed to the bridge. In the meantime every available man worked day and night ferrying supplies and men over and bringing back the wounded.



Three (3) types of ferries were used. Infantry support rafts carried weapons carriers, jeeps and anti-tank guns. Class 40 ponton² ferries transported medium tanks and tank destroyers across. Then, storm boats and assault boats, powered by out board motors, and powerboats carried rations and ammunition to the far shore and returned with wounded.

It was necessary to wade water five hundred (500) yards from Gavisse, the Command Post, to the bridge site, and during this time men worked constantly in water. All operations continued during flood stage, and on 11 November 1944 the flood reached its peak. The waters had washed out the approach road to the bridge, so as the water receded, it was necessary to construct a new road.

On 13 November 1944, this Battalion was relieved at Malling and from support of the 90th Infantry Division to enable us to return to Angevillers to prepare to support the 10th Armored Division.

The operation at Malling was the biggest test as yet to every man in the 206^{th} . Conditions were unfavorable from the start, as it was rainy and cold continuously. Operations were carried on twenty-four (24) hours a day. Nights were pitch black, with all men working from fourteen (14) to twenty four (24) hours without relief. Enemy artillery and mortar fire was constant. But the mission was successful. The 206^{th} moved troops, supplies and vehicles continuously, bridge or no bridge. The 10^{th} Armored Division commended our work – XX Corps recommended the Battalion for the Presidential Unit Citation – and we <u>still</u> wait for final approval.

With the 10th Armored Division until 30 November 1944, the 206th supported the drive between the Moselle and the Saar Rivers, assisted in the breaching of the Siegfried Line, and in maintaining roads and clearing minefields. Command Posts were Apach, Borg, Obernaumen, Besch, and Sierck.

² The U.S. Army Combat Engineers used the term "ponton" rather than the more familiar term

[&]quot;pontoon". A Class 40 bridge would support 40 tons of weight.

HISTORY OF THE 206[™] ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION APRIL 1943 – NOVEMBER 1945





On 30 November 1944 we were relieved from support of 10th Armored and attached to the 95th Infantry Division for the assault crossing on the Saar River in the vicinity of Lisdorf. The Battalion, then at Apach, Germany, proceeded to Bouzonville, France to prepare for the crossing. On 1 December 1944 a forward

Command Post was established at Dalem, with the line companies and Headquarters moving to that location Headquarters & Service while Company remained at Bouzonville. Recon was made and the necessary equipment was assembled; then, on 3 December 1944, the forward Command Post advanced to Alt-Formeiler, coming under artillery fire, which intermittently fell on the town. Then, under cover of darkness on 4 December 1944, the unit moved quietly into Lisdorf – the assault was to be at 0600 the next morning. Boats were laid out at points from which they could be carried to the river by the infantry.

The first wave jumped off at the scheduled hour, the Battalion ferrying the 378th Infantry Regiment of the 95th Infantry Division. The initial move met only sporadic rifle fire, but a few minutes later the enemy fired a red flare into the air apparently a pre-arranged signal and fire from weapons of all types was brought to bear on the town and From Sauerlauten³, on the river. enemy side, came direct fire from anti-aircraft guns as well as machine gun and small arms fire.

The building of an infantry support bridge was delayed temporarily by enemy fire, but a footbridge was constructed in defilade behind buildings and carried to the protected spot on the From the History of the 358th Infantry Regiment

The Saar

At quarter past four on the morning of the 6th of December 1944, the First Battalion with "B" and "C" Companies in the assault crossed the Saar River in the vicinity of Wallerfangen, Germany, home of Franz von Papen. Farther down the river, the Third Battalion, led by "I" and "L" Companies scrambled down the steep banks near Oberlimberg, Germany, quietly loaded into assault boats, and made its way across the Saar. The 2nd Battalion, crossing after daylight on a footbridge, faced heavy mortar and machine gun fire from enemy pillboxes commanding the river line.

Once across the battalions faced the fortified cities of Pachten and Dillingen, bulwarks of the Siegfried Line. The main thoroughfares took on names like "88" Street and "Purple Heart Avenue". It became a war against steel and concrete. Troops were raked by fire from pillboxes cleverly concealed in harmless looking barns and shops. Once again supply men and engineers battled against a river. The Regiment's supporting tanks and TDs and the guns of the Anti-Tank Company, had to be ferried across, for Jerry's heavy shelling prevented the construction of a bridge. Supply men pushed supplies of ammunition and rations across on every type of boat; alligators, ducks, assault boats and storm boats. Wiremen struggled day and night to maintain communications across the river despite a swift current and constant shellfire. For sixteen days and nights the battalions hit again and again into the enemy's fortifications. Continuously hammered day after day, the enemy was systematically blown out of one pillbox after another, as all three Battalions were employed to clear the major portion of Dillingen.

Then one day came the startling news of the great German counteroffensive in the Ardennes. Where they would strike next no one knew. During the hours of darkness on the 21st of December 1944, the Division quietly withdrew across the Saar, forsaking it's sizable dent in the Siegfried Line and moved to a defensive position in the Saar-Moselle triangle, facing the Siegfried Line again. The holidays were days of patrolling and constant alert for unusual enemy activity.

³ Known as Saarlautern from 1935-1945, the original and current name of this city is Saarlouis (pronounced 'zarloo'), Germany.





river. Infantry troops were crossing it by 0800.

At 0800 we were relieved from attachment to the 95th Infantry Division with the information that we were to cross the 90th Infantry Division over the Saar River just north of the 95th Infantry Division sector – and we were pulled back for a few hours rest. The Battalion Commanding Officer, Staff and Company Commanders left immediately for the 90th Infantry Division area. The Battalion rested during the day, reassembled and moved to Wallerfangen at 1900 the night of 5 December 1944, and established a Command Post. Plans had already been made for the crossing, which was scheduled for 0415 the next morning – less than 24 hours since the crossing at Lisdorf; which made a second assault crossing of the Saar, involving two different infantry divisions, at different locations, and with the vast problems of supply to be met at the moment.

The plan of action called for this Battalion to cross the 358th Infantry Regiment, at the selected sites just north of Wallerfangen – H hour being at 0415. A 90-minute barrage by our artillery at 2315 was scheduled to cover the sound of placing the boats in position. Rendezvous with the infantry was set for 0330 hours at a previously selected site some distance from where the boats were to be placed, so that the infantry troops could be formed into boatloads, with the engineer crew and guide, without arousing the attention of the enemy. The boats were to be concealed in the woods bordering the road, which ran along the riverbank in the selected area. The road was to be utilized in placing the boats, by idling trucks along the road as the boats were unloaded and spaced, the noise of the operation being covered by the pre-arranged artillery barrage. The infantry troops were to be guided down to the boats, together with their engineer crews, and at 0410 hours, pick up the boats, head for the river, launch the boats and go across without further signal or delay.

However, the supply of boats was delayed and the artillery barrage was postponed thirty minutes. When Company C proceeded up the road along the river where the boats were to be layed out, they found a road block, Belgium gate type, halting their progress. The road had been previously swept for mines and the gates had not been closed, so it was an unexpected obstacle and delay. An expeditious but noisy means of removing it was employed, by demolition. Then further down the road another block of the same type had to be removed – by the same means. But by 0219 Company C had their boats on line ready to go – and were waiting for H-hour.

In the meantime Company B boats were proceeding to the North site by another route. The lead truck struck a mine, and the road along the river was too narrow to turn around. Reserve boats of the Battalion were rushed to the site and were on line prior to H hour. There was some delay in the North sector at Hhour, but the Dillingen bridgehead had been successfully established by 0925, the infantry had reached their first phase line.





The enemy was in strong force along the east bank, and with good observation. Plans for bridging could not be carried out due to the intense artillery, mortar, and even machine gun fire that concentrated on the river when movement was detected. A heavy smoke screen furnished partial concealment, but shifting winds made complete secrecy of movement impossible.

Infantry support rafts were put into effect, ferrying over tanks and tank destroyers. At night, ammunition and supplies were ferried over by boats. The far shore was under water; the roadbed inundated by the floodwaters of the Saar River. Corduroy logs had to be cut and ferried across to make a road that would support the tanks to dry ground. Daily maintaining was necessary, and fierce



Troops of the 161st Smoke Generating Company, a Negro unit, provide smoke for the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion's ferrying operations across the Saar River at Wallerfangen. December 11, 1944. Rothenberger. 111-SC-197552.

fighting still continued in Dillingen, a few hundred yards beyond.

The Battalion Command Post had been moved into the mansion of Franz Von Papen, which over looked the Saar River from Wallerfangen. During our stay there, General Patton paid a visit and commended the Battalion for its work.

Due to the enemy counter-attack in the First Army Sector [the Battle of the Bulge], we were alerted to withdraw from Wallerfangen on 20 December 1944. The tanks and infantry were successfully brought back and withdrawal completed on 22 December 1944, and the Battalion established a Command Post at Bouzonville. On the same day, we were relieved from support of the 90th Infantry Division and placed in support of the 95th Infantry Division, with the mission of constructing a series of barrier zones in the 95th Infantry Division sector. Reconnaissance of roads, patrolling of barrier zones, and guarding of prepared demolition charges occupied the Battalion during the remainder of December and January.

Bad weather made roads partially impassable, and maintaining barriers in freezing weather was difficult. Especially the laying of mines in the frozen, snow covered ground.⁴

On 11 January 1945, we moved to St. Avold to support the 5th Ranger Battalion in a defensive plan in event of enemy attack. Defensive positions

⁴ The winter of 1944-1945 was the coldest Europe had experienced in over 55 years of record. The winter was extremely cold and severe.





were manned there until 23 January 1945 when we were relieved and moved to Courcelles-Chaussy.

Now a part of the 1152nd Engineer Combat Group, we were in support of the 26th Infantry Division and maintaining roads was the big problem. The situation in the First Army sector was well under control, and the big final drive into Germany was not far off.

The 26th Infantry Division was fighting in Saarlauten – Companies A and B built a fixed bridge and floating Bailey bridge, respectively, over the Saar River at Saarlauten during this time, while Company C built a fixed bridge at Vaudoncourt⁵.

On 10 February 1945, Lt. Colonel Pirrung was relieved of Command of this Battalion and transferred to the 312th Engineer Battalion, 87th Division. Lt. Colonel Henry S. Beeler of the 312th became our new Commanding Officer.

On 24 February 1945, we were relieved from the 1152nd Engineer Combat Group and reassigned to the 1139th Engineer Combat Group – moving to Apach, Germany and placed in support of the 10th Armored Division. The Division was making a crossing of the Saar River at Ayl. Companies B and C operated ferries across the river under intense enemy fire until 27 February 1945, when two bridges were completed at Saarburg.

The Battalion moved to Freudburg and resumed road maintenance and repair while new assault plans were being formulated. Company A had been completing work in the 1152nd Engineer Combat Group area and now rejoined the Battalion at Freudenburg. Bridges were built at Konz-Karthaus and Kruchingen, and then the Battalion supported the 26th Infantry Division in a crossing at Mettlach.

On 17 March 1945, we were relieved of support of the 26th Infantry Division and placed in support of the 12th Armored Division in its dash from Trier eastward to the Rhine River. Each company was in support of an armored combat command. Headquarters of the Battalion moved with Combat Command B and each day covered from 22 to 41 miles. This period was one of rapid movement and little enemy resistance; most of our operations were in clearing roads of demolished vehicles and barriers. Enemy strafing was heavy near Sausenheim, but enemy troops were surrendering by droves. Groups of platoon size and larger were frequently seen along the roads, carrying white flags and waiting to be picked up. American combat troops took no time to collect them but indicated Prisoner of War enclosures for them to report to.

⁵ In *History, 206th Engineer Combat Battalion*, this name appears as Vandoncourt. The Battalion After Action Report for February 1945 has the name as Vaudoncourt.







German prisoners are marched along the Reichs Autobahn as the U.S. Army advances through Germany.

The Third U.S. Army finished its mad dash for the Rhine River, and on 24 March 1945, we were relieved from the 12th Armored Division and pulled back to the vicinity of Gronig for regrouping with other units of the 1139th Engineer Combat Group. Then on 26 March 1945, we were off again in support of the 80th Infantry Division, which was to move eastward across the Rhine and Mainz Rivers to Frankfurt, then north up the Super Highway to Kassel. We rode across the Rhine River at Oppenheim on 27 March 1945 our first river to cross without having to assault or bridge. The column came under fire near **Bischofsheim**, but no casualties resulted.

We operated a ferry over the Mainz River during the

crossing of the 80th Infantry Division, then built an M-2 treadway bridge, 624 feet long; with little enemy resistance during the operation; then the rapid drive up the Super Highway through Frankfurt, Bad Nauheim, and Kassel.

The enemy was almost completely routed by this time and very little resistance was met. From Kassel, the route was straight east through Gotha, Weimar⁶, Jena, Gera, and on 16 April 1945, we reached Russdorf, near Chimnitz. There we were relieved from support of the 80th Infantry Division and went south in the general shift of troops that wound us up 179 miles below; where we went directly in support of the 65th Infantry Division, in the vicinity of Staffelstein. **During this phase**, movement was south and east, through Bavaria toward the Austrian frontier. By the end of April 1945, we had traveled 165 miles in support of the 65th Infantry Roads were inferior in this sector and Division. demanded much attention to keep them passable under the heavy traffic.



Buchenwald Concentration Camp at Weimar, Germany. Photograph from the records of 1st Lt. John G. Graham.

⁶ At Weimar, Germany, some members of the 206th visited the Buchenwald concentration camp. Buchenwald was one of the largest concentration camps built by the Nazis.





The Battalion engaged in one assault crossing during this time. Company A crossed the 261st Infantry Regiment over the Danube River at Kaffelburg, and Company B crossed the 260th Infantry Regiment at Gundelshausen – with only moderate resistance from the enemy.

The Battalion assembled in Regensburg on 28 and 29 April 1945. On 1 May 1945, Company A was placed in support of the 3rd Cavalry Group while the rest of the Battalion proceeding on with the 65th Infantry Division for the crossing of the Inn River, where we built our last bridge and crossed our last river under combat, at Scharding, Austria.

The end of the war found the 206th at Linz, Austria, a long way from Camp Swift, Texas and had enough memories for a lifetime. There were more weeks and months of waiting and more work to be done, but the job of the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion had been successfully completed.

The long, tiresome days from the beaches of Normandy to Linz were filled with experiences that were exciting and dangerous; as the Battalion almost constantly supported spearhead elements of combat commands. The writer of this short outline of events has made no attempt to describe the individual examples of heroism displayed in combat by men of this organization; or of teamwork in squads and platoons that worked steadily together under fire to accomplish their missions. Because words are a poor medium for expression, especially when remembering friends that were lost between the Seine, the Moselle and the Saar Rivers, and in other unnamed places where every job demanded your best. And every man that did his job during those days, whether he rode an assault boat toward an unknown enemy shore, drove a truck without lights on the blackest night, or evacuated a wounded comrade – all were a part of the teamwork that produced a Battalion we are proud to be a member of.

So the history of the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion is yours. We hope that this guide will be helpful to you in future days; when you tell the many parts we've had to omit. And may the best of luck go with each and every one of you.

This History of the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion, April 1943 – May 1945, was retyped from an original copy preserved in the records of 1st Lt. John G. Graham. This brief history was prepared by the Battalion Headquarters in May 1945 upon its return to France. Copies were furnished to the men of the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion.



206TH ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION



SUPPORT TO OTHER COMBAT UNITS



80TH INFANTRY DIVISION

10 Aug 44 – 14 Aug 44

The 206th Engineer Combat Battalion, while at St. Jean-sur-Eire, France, was placed in support and moved with the 80th Infantry Division to Sille-le-Guillaume and St. Georges area. The 206th built a Prisoner of War enclosure, performed engineer reconnaissance, cleared roads of obstacles and demolished vehicles, repaired and improved roads and fords across streams, and cleared areas of mines.



7TH ARMORED DIVISION

14 Aug 44 – 18 Aug 44

During the period, the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion moved rapidly across France, from Sille-le Guillaume through Le Ferte-Bernard, Montieres, Senonches, La Louviere, toward Rambouillet, Rochefort, and Arpajon to Ecrosnes, France in support of 7th Armored Division. The 206th cleared roads of obstacles and demolished vehicles and performed engineer reconnaissance. Company A cleared enemy troops from woods in the vicinity of Ecrosnes, taking 47 prisoners. The 206th took the first casualties from direct enemy fire when four men of Company C were killed and one wounded and taken prisoner in an ambush near Rambouillet, France.



23 Aug 44 – 24 Aug 44

Company B of the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion crossed the 48th Infantry Division over the Seine River by assault under heavy enemy fire at Tilly, France, and established a bridgehead and cleared roads on the other side. Company B and one platoon of Company A maintained security of the bridgehead at Tilly.



30 Aug 44 – 25 Sep 44

The 206th Engineer Combat Battalion was attached to the 7th Armored Division in rapid movement from Oranville, France, through Nauroy, Reims, Vouzieres, Autry, Verdun, Boncourt, Dornot, Latour, Jouville, Buxieres, Pagny to Vittonville, France. The 206th performed engineer reconnaissance to establish condition of roads and location of enemy; repaired bridges and roads; cleared roads of mines, obstacles and demolished vehicles; attempted a bridging operation across the Moselle River at Dornot but withdrew due to heavy enemy fire; constructed a treadway bridge over the Raine River at Autry; and maintained treadway and Bailey bridges at Pagny, France.



25 Sep 44 – 14 Nov 44

The 206th Engineer Combat Battalion was assigned support of the 90th Infantry Division at Vittonville at the time the command Post was moved to Angevillers, France on 25 Sep 44. During October 1944, the 206th conducted training exercises in support of the 90th Division. On 9 Nov 44, under cold and rainy conditions, the 206th ferried the 359th Infantry Regiment of the 90th Infantry Division across the Moselle River in an infantry assault crossing in the vicinity of Gavissee and Malling, France. The 206th also built a treadway bridge and conducted ferrying operations – taking equipment, supplies and ammunition across and bringing back wounded – in the vicinity of Malling under heavy enemy artillery, mortar and machine gun fire and under extreme river-flooding conditions.



25 Sep 44 – _____

The Monthly After-Action Reports do not specify the length of time the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion supported the 83rd Infantry Division; only that on 25 Sep 44 the Battalion was placed in support of the 83rd Infantry Division and the 90th Infantry Division. Accounts of the operations by the 206th subsequent to 25 Sep 44 mention only the 90th Infantry Division. It is possible that the support of the 83rd Infantry Division was only in conjunction with the move from Vittonville to Angevillers, France.



14 Nov 44 – 30 Nov 44

The 206th Engineer Combat Battalion moved in support of 10th Armored Division beginning at Thionville, France, traveled northeast through Apach, France and first entered Germany at Perl, Germany. During the period, the 206th swept for mines, filled craters, bridged anti-tank ditches, maintained roads, demolished pillboxes, and performed other engineer tasks while moving with the task forces and combat teams of Combat Commands A and B of 10th Armored Division.



95TH INFANTRY DIVISION

30 Nov 44 - 05 Dec 44

On 30 Nov 44, the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion was attached to the 95th Infantry Division at Bouzonville, France. Command Posts of the 206th were set up at Dalem, France, Altforweiler, Germany and then Lisdorf, Germany in preparation to conduct an assault crossing of the Saar River by the 1st and 3rd Battalions, 378th Infantry Regiment, 95th Infantry Division. The assault crossing was performed on the morning of 5 Dec 44. The initial wave met only sporadic rifle fire; however, the enemy fired a red flare into the air and immediately fire from large caliber artillery was poured into the town of Lisdorf, antiaircraft guns were leveled and fired across the river, as well as machine gun and small arms fire. The construction of an infantry support bridge was attempted but enemy fire was too intense. Sections of an infantry footbridge was constructed in defilade, transported to the river, and successfully put into place and used by infantry troops.



90TH INFANTRY DIVISION

05 Dec 44 – 22 Dec 44

On 5 Dec 44, the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion moved its command Post from Lisdorf, Germany to Wallerfangen, Germany to support 1st, 2nd and 3rd Battalions, 358th Infantry Regiment, 90th Infantry Division in an assault crossing of the Saar River and to establish a bridgehead at Dillingen, Germany. This operation required the 206th to conduct a second assault crossing of the Saar River, involving two different infantry divisions at two different locations in less than 24 hours. The assault crossing was successfully made on 6 Dec 44. The 206th then began construction of a treadway bridge across the Saar River, ferried supplies and equipment across on infantry support rafts and in storm boats, and evacuated wounded under extremely intense enemy artillery, mortar and machine gun fire. On the night of 8 Dec 44, the 206th also ferried the 359th Infantry Regiment, 90th Infantry Division across the Saar River. The 206th Engineer Combat Battalion conducted ferrying operations, corduroy road construction and maintenance of roads in the Dillingen bridgehead area until 21 Dec 44 when, due to the enemy counter-attack in First Army sector (Battle of the Bulge), the infantry units were ferried back across the Saar River. On 22 Dec 44, all units had been brought back across and the 206th withdrew to Bouzonville, France.



28 Dec 44 – 11 Jan 45

Support of the 95 Infantry Division in the vicinity of Bouzonville, France consisted of constructing a series of barrier zones. Obstacles consisting of abatis, minefields, and craters were constructed in areas designated as Bee Zone, Chow Zone, Nied River Zone and OPLR. The minefields consisted of both anti-personnel and anti-tank mines, and camouflage was extensively employed. Due to snow and ice conditions, in order to keep the roads open for traffic it was necessary to continually patrol the roads, sanding and de-icing, and removing the snow.



11 Jan 45 – 29 Jan 45

The 206th Engineer Combat Battalion moved from Bouzonville to St. Avold, France on 11 Jan 45 to support the 5th Ranger Battalion, 95th Infantry Division, in the defense of St. Avold in the event of enemy attack. This mission involved the manning of defensive positions and engineering work. During the period, additional defensive positions were dug in and barbed wire put up for the 1st and 3rd Battalions of the 379th Infantry Regiment, 95th Infantry Division. The construction of obstacles and maintenance of roads continued throughout the period in addition to work on the defenses of St. Avold. On 23 Jan 45, the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion Command Post was moved to Courcelles-Chaussy, France, while maintaining a forward Command Post at St. Avold.



29 Jan 45 – 24 Feb 45

Support of the 26th Infantry Division in the vicinity of Courcelles-Chaussy, France consisted of continuing road maintenance and bridge construction. The thaw the first of February resulted in the melting of snow and ice and the necessity of cleaning and maintaining drainage ditches, stockpiling of gravel, graveling of roads, and filling of potholes. The building of bridges was also accomplished during the period. On 1 Feb, Company C removed a Bailey bridge in the vicinity of Vaudoncourt, France and constructed a fixed bridge, which was completed on 22 Feb 45. On 5 Feb 45, a forward Command Post was established at Saarlautern, Germany for the purpose of supervising the construction of two bridges across the Saar River, a floating Bailey bridge and a fixed pile bridge. Construction on both bridges was commenced 6 Feb 45. The Bailey bridge was completed on 7 Feb 45 and the fixed bridge completed on 24 Feb 45. Sporadic enemy artillery fire fell on the site of these operations during the period.



24 Feb 45 – 28 Feb 45

On 24 Feb 45, the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion moved the Command Post from Courcelles-Chaussy to Apach, France. Company C, later joined by Company B, was sent to Ayl, Germany to relieve the 179th Engineer Combat Battalion and to support the 10th Armored Division. Support of 10th Armored Division consisted of ferrying operations across the Saar River under heavy enemy artillery fire during the initial phases. Ferrying operations continued until 28 Feb 45 when two bridges opened in Saarburg, Germany that provided the necessary crossing facilities.



01 Mar 45 – 17 Mar 45

The period in support of the 26th Infantry Division consisted mainly of the routine tasks of road and bridge maintenance in a prescribed area of responsibility, as well as the marking and destruction of minefields and the removal of obstacles and barriers. Bridge construction was performed on several small fixed bridges over small streams to replace treadway bridges. Two treadway bridges were constructed across the Saar River at Konz-Karthaus, Germany and Keuchingen, Germany, respectively, in support of infantry crossings.



12TH ARMORED DIVISION

17 Mar 45 – 24 Mar 45

On 17 Mar 45, the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion was placed in support of the 12th Armored Division in its dash from Trier, Germany eastward to the Rhine River, with Company A in direct support of Command Column A, Company B in direct support of Command Column B, and Company C in direct support of Command Column R, the reserve column. Battalion Headquarters moved forward daily from 22 to 41 miles, following Command Column B. Operations during this period consisted of clearing roads of demolished vehicles and barriers, and maintaining roads. The period was one of rapid movement and little enemy resistance. On 24 Mar 45, the 206th was relieved from support of the 12th Armored Division and moved back to the vicinity of Gronig, Germany for regrouping with the 1139th Engineer Combat Group.



80TH INFANTRY DIVISION

26 Mar 45 – 17 Apr 45

On 26 Mar 45, the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion moved from Gronig, Germany to Wallertheim in support of the 80th Infantry Division, with which were to move eastward across the Rhine and Mainz Rivers to Frankfort, then north up the Super-Highway (Reichs Autobahn) toward Kassel. The Battalion crossed the Rhine River at Oppenheim, Germany on 27 Mar 45 and moved to Bischofsheim, coming under enemy mortar fire that damaged a dozer, trailer, and a motorcycle, but caused no casualties. The 206th constructed a 624 ft M-2 treadway bridge across the Main River simultaneous with a similar bridging operation across the Rhine River by the 160th Engineer Combat Battalion just north of where the Mainz River enters into the Rhine. There was some artillery and small arms fire in the early hours, but no damage was caused. The enemy withdrew at the approach of our infantry down the far shore of the river. The remainder of the period was spent primarily in moving northward along the Reichs Autobahn toward Kassel, the situation being a fluid and rapidly moving one. Engineer missions included maintenance of the Main Supply Route, including the construction of bypasses around blown bridges on the Reichs Autobahn, the construction of Bailey bridges to replace those blown by the retreating enemy, and the maintenance of the bridges. On 17 Apr 45, the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion was relieved of support of the 80th Infantry Division at Russdorf, Germany - the most northern and eastern point reached - and moved south, arriving at Staffelstein on 18 Apr 45.



65[™] INFANTRY DIVISION

18 Apr 45 – 07 May 45

Upon arriving at Staffelstein, Germany, the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion went into direct support of the 65th Infantry Division. During this phase, movement was south and east thru Bavaria toward the Austrian frontier. Movement was much more difficult in the southern sector as the roads were, in many cases, one-way graveled surfaced, which after a little vehicular traffic became almost impassable. The mission with the 65th Infantry Division was the maintenance of the Main Supply Route, which included filling in craters and blown culverts, removing demolished vehicles from roads, constructing corduroy mats, maintaining bridges, clearing drainage ditches, clearing debris from streets in Neumarkt, Germany and working on by-passes around blown bridges. Additionally, two Bailey bridges were built in the vicinity of Newmarkt and Deurling, Germany, respectively. Two Bailey bridges were also constructed over the Inn River at Neuhaus, Germany. The 206th constructed two infantry support rafts in the vicinity of Neuhaus and operated them until the completion of the Bailey bridges. Upon surrender of the enemy forces in this area, the 206th was relieved from support of the 65th Infantry Division on 7 May 45, having penetrated into Austria as far as Linz. The Battalion left Linz, Austria on 7 May 45 and returned to Scharding, Germany on the Austrian border, in general support of XX Corps operations.







The following Monthly After Action Reports of the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion for January 1944 through November 1945 have been re-typed from the original reports archived in the National Archives and Records Administration, Modern Military Records, Textual Archives Services Division, College Park, Maryland. Due to the extensive use of military abbreviations and acronyms in the original reports, minimal editorial modifications to these records have been made for this edition of the History of the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion, in order for the reports to be more easily read. No changes have been made to any of the information contained in the original Monthly After Action Reports. Footnotes have been added to provide clarifications. The original reports do not contain footnotes.

Beginning with the June 1944 Monthly After Action Report and ending with the May 1945 Report – except for July 1944 and October 1944 – large scale maps have been added at the end of each report to show the general locations of the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion during that month. Photographs have also been inserted into the reports for illustration purposes. Notations within the captions of the photographs describe whether a photograph is of an actual operation conducted by the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion or whether the photograph depicts an operation typical of those conducted by the 206th. The official Monthly After Action Reports contain neither maps nor photographs.





BATTALION HISTORY

206TH ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION

January 1944

I: STRENGTH, Commissioned and Enlisted:

	Officers	Warrant Officers	Enlisted
1. 1 Jan 44	29	3	636
2. Net Increase	0	0	19
3. Net Decrease	0	0	11
4. 31 Jan 44	29	3	644

II: STATION

- 1. Headquarters, Headquarters & Service Company, and Companies A and C located at Delamere Park Camp, Cheshire, England.
- 2. Company B located at Nobberly Hall, Cheshire, England.

III. PROMOTION OF OFFICERS

- 1. Following Officers promoted as indicated, per Paragraph 11, Special Order #1, Headquarters, European Theater of Operations United States Army (ETOUSA), dated 1 Jan 44, with rank from 1 Jan 44:
 - (a) 1st Lt. James C. Stinnett, 01102487, to Captain

 - (b) 2^{nd} Lt. Frank J. Green, 01110515, to 1^{st} Lt. (c) 2^{nd} Lt. James M. Lee, 01110611 to 1^{st} Lt.
 - (d) 2^{nd} Lt. Theodore C. Standish, 01113460, to 1^{st} Lt.

IV. CHANGE IN COMMAND

- 1. 1st Lt. Marion H. Patterson, 01110710, appointed Company Commander, Company C, vice 1st Lt. John E. Spalding, 01106492, relieved, per Special Order #9 Headquarters. 206 Engineer Combat Battalion, 20 Jan 44.
- 2. 1st Lt. Spalding, assumed command, 2nd platoon, Company C.

V. OPERATIONS

- 1. Quartermaster Depot at Winsford, Cheshire, England, completed 7 Jan 44.
- 2. Work continued on three summer tent camps.
- 3. Continued work on Northwich Group Reassessment Projects.





4. Accomplished 20 hours training in Bailey bridge, camouflage, and other engineering subjects.



Rows of Sherman tanks are stockpiled in England awaiting the Normandy Invasion and deployment to France. These photographs are from the records of 1^{st} Lt. John G. Graham.





BATTALION HISTORY (AR 345-105)

206TH ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION

February 1944

I: CHANGE IN ORGANIZATION, 7 Feb 44

Assigned to 1103 Engineer Combat Group, per letter 522/179 (c) Headquarters First United States Army (FUSA), 7 Feb 44.

II: <u>STRENGTH</u>, Commissioned and Enlisted

		Officers	Warrant Officers	Enlisted
1.	1 Feb 44	29	3	644
2.	Net Increase	0	0	5
3.	Net Decrease	2	0	14
4.	31 Jan 44	27	3	635

A. Officer Gains and Losses

- 1. Gains: None
- 2. Losses:

a. Major Paul J. Ford, 0-343529, Combat Engineer, transferred to 1277th Engineer Combat Battalion. 14 Feb 44 attached to 1128th Engineer Combat Group. Awaiting activation per Paragraph 1, SO 45, FUSA, 14 Feb 44.

b. 1st Lt. Theodore C. Standish, 01113480, Combat Engineer, transferred to 6th Engineer Support Brigade, 28 Feb 44, per Paragraph 2, SO 54, FUSA, 23 Feb 44.

B. Enlisted Gains and Losses

1. Gains: One (1) enlisted man assigned and joined from 347th Engineer General Support Regiment. Four (4) enlisted men reassigned from 10th Replacement Depot.

2. Losses: Two (2) enlisted men transferred to Detachment Pats 347th Station Hospital. Two (2) enlisted men transferred to Detachment Pats, 52nd General Hospital. Nine (9) enlisted men transferred to the 1277th Engineer Combat





Battalion, as cadre; attached to 1128th Engineer Combat Group awaiting activation. One (1) enlisted man transferred to 168th Station Hospital.

III. <u>STATION</u>.

- A. Left Delamere Park Camp, Chester, Cheshire, England 10 Feb 44, permanent change of station, per secret order.
- B. Arrived Beverly House, Frilford, Abingdon, Berkshire, 11 Feb 44, new station. Headquarters & Service Company, Company C, and one (1) platoon each of Companies A and B were located at Beverly House. Remainder of Company A located at Aston, Oxfordshire. Remainder of Company B located at Stanford-inthe-Vale, Berkshire.

IV. OFFICERS – PROMOTIONS AND CHANGES OF DUTY

- A. The following Officers promoted as indicated, per Paragraph 10, SO #22, Headquarters, ETOUSA, dated 1 Feb 44, with rank from 1 Feb 44.
 - 1. 1st Lt. James M. Deason, 01110452, to Captain
 - 2. 1st Lt. John W. Fick, 01106730, to Captain
 - 3. 1st Lt. Robert S. Greer, 01100125, to Captain
 - 4. 1st Lt. William L. Jones, 01110589, to Captain
 - 5. 2nd Lt. John G. Graham, 01113230, to 1st Lieutenant
- B. The following changes of duty were accomplished:

1. Capt. Kittridge A. Wing, 01100399, $S-2^7$ to Executive Officer, per SO #22, this Headquarters, dated 16 Feb 44.

2. Capt. James O. Stinnett, 01102487, ADE to S-2. per SO #23, dated 17 Feb 44.

V. <u>OPERATIONS</u>.

- A. One (1) Officer and 10 enlisted men on DS for 14-day period to 69th Field Company, Royal Engineers, Goole, Yorkshire, on exchange of personnel for purpose of promoting understanding and comradeship between U.S. and British forces. A like number of British were entertained at this organization for 14 days.
- B. The Battalion conducted 60 hours per week of intensive training in Bailey bridging, hasty road construction, and mine warfare.

⁷ The S-2 is the Intelligence Staff Officer of the Battalion.





BATTALION HISTORY (AR 345-105)

206TH ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION

March 1944

I. <u>STRENGTH.</u> Commissioned and Enlisted

	Officers	Warrant Officers	Enlisted
1. 1 Mar 44	27	3	635
2. Net Increase	0	0	0
3. Net Decrease	1	0	6
4. 31 Mar 44	26	3	629

A. Officer Gains and Losses

- 1. Gains: None
- 2. Losses:

1st Lt. James L. Wade, 01105243, Combat Engineer, transferred to Engineer Section, Headquarters First United States Army, Paragraph 4, SO 84, Headquarters FUSA, 24 Mar 44.

- B. Enlisted Gains and Losses
 - 1. Gains: None

2. Losses: The following non-battle losses were sustained. Three (3) enlisted men transferred to Detachment of Patients, Hospitals; two (2) enlisted men transferred to Air Force installations for ground crew duty; one (1) enlisted man discharged to accept appointment as Warrant Officer.

II. STATION.

- A. Frilford, Berkshire, England.
- B. Left Frilford, Berkshire at 0630 hrs, 27 Mar 44, by motor march for change of station.
- C. Arrived new station at 1730 hrs, 27 Mar 44, U.S. Assault Training Center, Saunton Sands, Devonshire, England. Distance traveled, 170 miles.





D. Temporarily located in tented camp, Area 3.

III. OFFICERS – SCHOOLS ATTENDED

- A. Capt. James O. Stinnett, 01102487, to Military Intelligence Course, Class No. 11, American School Center, Shrivenham.
- B. 2nd Lt. Rudolph M. Patryle, 01113386, to 3-day course for discussion leaders at London.

IV. OPERATIONS.

- A. At Frilford, Berkshire: Intensive training in Bailey bridging, hasty roads construction, and mine warfare.
- B. At Saunton Sands: Attached to U.S. Assault Training Center for administration and operational control. Engaged in maintenance of training courses and beaches, building of emplacements and fortifications for training purposes.



Lt. Col. Gilbert R. Pirrung England 1944



1st Lt. John G. Graham England 1944





BATTALION HISTORY (AR 345-105)

206TH ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION

April 1944

I. <u>STRENGTH</u>: Commissioned and Enlisted

	Officers	Warrant Officers	Enlisted
1. 1 Apr 44	26	3	629
2. Net Increase	0	0	3
3. Net Decrease	1	0	5
4. 30 Apr 44	25	3	627

A. Officer Gains and Losses

- 1. Gains: None
- 2. Losses:

Capt. Thomas J. Gammon Jr. 0373005, Combat Engineer, transferred to 1st Engineer Special Brigade, Paragraph 4, SO 106, Headquarters, FUSA, 15 Apr 44.

B. Enlisted Gains and Losses

1. Gains: Two (2) enlisted men assigned and joined from 10th Replacement Depot. One (1) enlisted man assigned and joined from Field Force Replacement Depot No. 4.

2. Losses: Four (4) enlisted men transferred to Detachment Of Patients, Hospitals; one (1) enlisted man transferred to Air Force installation for ground crew duty.

II. STATION:

- A. Moved from tented camp, Area 3, U.S. Assault Training Center, 8 Apr 44. Battalion Headquarters and Headquarters & Service Company located at Saunton Sands Golf Club. Companies A, B, & C located at Croyde Camp
- B. Moved from Saunton Sands Golf Club and Croyde Camp to Braunton Camp, Braunton, Devonshire 29Apr 44.





III. OFFICER CHANGES:

A. Promotions – The following named officers appointed 1st Lieutenant. per Paragraph 8, SO 92, Headquarters ETOUSA, 1 Apr 44, with rank from 1 Apr 44.

2nd Lt. Robert E. Musser, 01113373, CE 2nd Lt. Charles D. Zook, 01110911, CE⁸

B. Changes in Duty:

1. Capt. Robert S. Greer, Jr. relieved as Company Commander of Company A, assigned S-3⁹, Paragraph 1, SO 59, this Headquarters, 19 Apr 44.

2. 1st Lt. Austinn F. Langston, relieved as Platoon Commander, and assigned Company Commander, Company A, Paragraph 1, SO 59, this Headquarters, 19 Apr 44.

C. Special Duty:

Capt. Kittridge A. Wing, 001100399, Combat Engineer, attached to Engineer Section Training Division, Headquarters, U.S. Assault Training Center, ETOUSA, APO 553, Paragraph 3, SO 71, Headquarters, U.S. Assault Training Center, dated 19 Apr 44.

IV. OPERATIONS:

52 hours of training in technical and tactical subject: constructions of training aids; maintenance of assault courses at Assault Training Center, Woolacambe; maintenance of roads.

V. Alerted for Overseas Movement, 10 Apr 44, Secret Letter, Headquarters FUSA, Subject: "Alert Order" dated 10 Apr 44.

⁸ Lt. Zook, along with three (3) other men of the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion, was killed on 16 August, 1944 in an ambush near Rambouillet, France. A fifth man was wounded and taken prisoner by the Germans. See the account of this action at the end of the August 1944 Monthly After Action Report.

⁹ The S-3 is the Operations Staff Officer of the Battalion.





BATTALION HISTORY (AR 345-105)

206TH ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION

May 1944

I. <u>STRENGTH</u>: Commissioned and Enlisted

	<u>Officers</u>	Warrant Officers	Enlisted
1. 1 May 44	25	3	628
2. Net Increase	3	0	3
3. Net Decrease	0	0	6
4. 31 May 44	28	3	625

- A. Officer Gains and Losses
 - (1) Gains:
 - a. 2 May 44. 1st Lt. John R. Richards, 01111862, Combat Engineer, assigned and joined from Headquarters U.S. Assault Training Center, ETOUSA, APO 553, per Paragraph 2, SO 78, Headquarters U.S. Assault Training Center, dated 29 Apr 44. Primary duty, Platoon Commander, Company C.
 - b. 25 May 44. 2nd Lt. Edward J. Rhodes, 01114273, Combat Engineer, assigned and joined from Casual Detachment 20, 16th Replacement Depot, APO 129 per Paragraph 12, SO 77, Headquarters, 16th Replacement Depot, dated 23 May 1944. Primary duty, Assistant S-3.
 - c. 27 May 44. 1st Lt. Donald Sargent, 01107104, Combat Engineer assigned and joined from Headquarters. U.S. Assault Training Center, ETOUSA, APO 553, per Paragraph 3, SO 99, Headquarters U.S. Assault Training Center, dated 24 May 44. Primary duty, Platoon Commander, Company A.
 - (2) Losses: None
- B. Enlisted Gains and Losses

(1) Gains: One (1) enlisted man assigned and joined from FERD No. 4, one (1) enlisted man assigned and joined from 16^{th} Replacement Depot, one (1) enlisted man assigned and joined from 10^{th} Replacement Depot.





(2) Losses: Six (6) enlisted men transferred to Detachment Patients, following hospitals (non-battle losses):

Three (3) to 313th Station Hospital, APO 553 One (1) to 97th General Hospital, APO 647 One (1) to 185th General Hospital, APO 551 One (1) to 4105th U.S. Army Hospital Plant, APO 672

II. CHANGE OF STATION: 15 May 44.

A. Moved from Braunton Camp, Devonshire to Badgemore Tented Camp, Henley, Oxfordshire, by motor march. Distance traveled, 175 miles.

III. <u>OPERATIONS</u>:

- A. 1 May 14 May 44: One (1) platoon, Company C, giving demonstration of mine and booby traps at U.S. Assault Training Center, ETOUSA. Remainder of Battalion engaged in building beach obstacles and underwater demolitions at U.S. Assault Training Center.
- B. 16 May 31 May 44: Physical and tactical training in preparation for overseas movement.





BATTALION HISTORY (AR 345-105)

206TH ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION

June 1944

I. <u>STRENGTH</u>: Commissioned and Enlisted

	Officers	Warrant Officers	Enlisted
1. 1 June 44	28	3	625
2. Net Increase	1	0	4
3. Net Decrease	0	0	7
4. 30 June 44	29	3	622

II. OFFICER CHANGES:

- A. 2nd Lt. Robert G. Dunbar, 01316137, Infantry, assigned and joined 2 Jun 44 from Casual Detachment 53, 223rd Replacement Company, 15th Replacement Depot per Paragraph 4, SO 56, Headquarters, 15th Replacement Depot, Headquarters & Service, SOS, ETOUSA, APO 67, 30 May 44. Assigned as Administrative Officer, Company B.
- B. 1st Lt. Marion H. Patterson, 01110701, Combat Engineer, promoted to Captain, per Paragraph 22, SO 153, Headquarters, ETOUSA, 1 Jun 44 with rank from 1 Jun 44.

III. STATION:

- A. 1 Jun 44 to 17 Jun 44: Badgemore Tented Camp, 1 mi. west, Henley, Oxfordshire, England.
- B. 18 Jun 44: Forward echelon comprised of 10 Officers, Headquarters; 1 Officer, 53 enlisted men, Headquarters & Service Company (designated Detachment A); 5 Officers, 151 enlisted men, Company A; 5 Officers, 153 enlisted men, Company B; 5 Officers, 150 enlisted men, Company C; 1 Officer, 18 enlisted men, Medical Detachment, left Badgemore Tented Camp for movement overseas to Combat Zone, Normandy, France, by motor march. Arrived at marshalling area, Southampton, England, 1900 hrs.





- C. 19 Jun 44: Left marshalling area at 0230 hrs for port of embarkation (POE), Southampton. Boarded SS Charles D. Poston¹⁰ at 2030 hrs
- D. 20 Jun 44 to 26 Jun 44: Aboard SS Charles D. Poston. Hoisted anchor and sailed from Southampton at 0845 hrs, 26 Jun 44. Anchored off Utah Beach, France at 2100 hrs
- E. 27 Jun 44: Transferred to LCT (Landing Craft Tank) for debarkation. Left SS Charles D. Poston at 1300 hrs. Remained off beach awaiting proper tide for landing. Disembarked from LCT at 1850 hrs onto Utah Beach and proceeded to Bivouac Area (Area C-13)



Normandy Beachhead - June 1944

F. 28 Jun 44: Left Area C-13 at 1400 hrs by motor march and arrived at bivouac area located ³/₄ mi. east of Mandeville, Normandy, France, at 1900 hrs (M. Louis Esnault, owner of property)

¹⁰ The SS Charles D. Poston was one of a large number of liberty ships constructed during WWII and operated by the Merchant Marines to ship primarily equipment and supplies.







Five-gallon water cans loaded on a quarter-ton trailer being filled at an Engineer water point. The Engineers were responsible for the purification of drinking water and set up water points from which all units located in the area drew their daily supply.

- G. 30 June 44: Moved from Mandeville Area at 1800 hrs to a location ¹/₄ mi. north of Longueville. (M. Aristide Le Fouconnier, owner of property)
- H. Rear echelon remained at Badgemore Tented Camp, Henley, Oxfordshire, England.

IV. OPERATIONS:

- A. 1 June 44 to 17 June 44: Physical and tactical training in preparation for overseas movement.
- B. 18 June 44 to 30 June 44: Enroute to location in combat zone. The Battalion was assigned missions of repair and construction of roads and bridges in Army Area (First U.S. Army) in support of V Corps, engineer reconnaissance and operation of two (2) water points.

V. <u>COMBAT</u>:

The Battalion was not involved in action with the enemy. No enemy sea or air action was encountered while enroute to combat zone. Occasional enemy air activity occurred in small numbers after 2330 hrs, apparently reconnaissance; however, no bombing or strafing. Anti-aircraft fire from surrounding installations was observed.





INCIDENTS

6 June to 30 June 1944

4	500# American HE Bombs	Evacuated, defused, moved & blown
9	100# American HE Bombs	Evacuated, defused, moved & blown
127	20# American Fragmentation Bombs	Evacuated, defused, moved & blown
5	500# British HE Bombs	Evacuated, defused, moved & blown
2	1000# British HE Bombs	Evacuated, defused, moved & blown
2	Little Yellow British Bombs	Blown in situ
3	German 60 mm Mortar Shells	Salvaged
56	German Egg Grenades	Moved and Blown
4	German Anti Tank Grenades	Moved and Blown
5	American Rifle Grenades	Moved and Blown
1	American Bazooka Rocket	Moved and Blown
80	German Rocket Shells	De-booby trapped & defuzed
2	German HE Bombs 50 Kg	Evacuated, defuzed, moved & blown
13	German SD-1 Anti-personnel Bombs	Collected, blown
1	5" Naval Shell	Blown in situ
1	14" Naval Shell	Uncovered and defused
2	155 mm Artillery Shells	Blown in situ
120	88 mm Artillery Shells	Recovered and moved to dump
1	88 mm Artillery Shell	Blown in situ
9	Misc. Artillery Shells	Moved and blown
12	Vented Camouflets	Blown
45	German Teller Mines	Salvaged
100	German "S" Mines	Salvaged

During this period this unit checked numerous German ammo dumps for booby traps and clearing them of same. Also picked up from destroyed German vehicles a large quantity of 88 mm shells. Finally picked up a truckload of captured German material collected by a BD unit for salvage.





HEADQUARTERS 206 ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION APO 230, U. S. ARMY

REM/jds

20 Jul 44

SUBJECT: After Action Report – June 1944

- TO : The Adjutant General Washington, D.C.
- Maps: Sheet No. 10, Ordinance Survey of Great Britain, Scale ¹/₄" to 1 mile. Sheet 6 E/6, France, 1:50,000, Isigny
- 1. Unit Designation: 206th Engineer Combat Battalion. (Assigned to 1103rd Engineer Combat Group).
- 2. Commanding Officer: Gilbert R. Pirrung, 0315129, Lt. Col., Combat Engineer.
- 3. Strength: 29 Officers, three (3) Warrant Officers, 621 enlisted men. (T/O & E 5-15, 5-16, 5-17, 15 Jul 45).

4. Locations: 010001B Jun 44 to 181325B Jun 44¹¹: Henley, 1 mi. west, wL 1902¹², Britain.
181325B Jun 44 to 271850B Jun 44: Enroute to Combat Zone Normandy, (From Port Southampton via SS Charles D. Poston).
271650B Jun 44: Disembarked onto Utah Beach.
272100B Jun 44 to 281400B Jun 44: Area C-13, (T3939, Nord D' Guerre)¹³
281630B Jun 44 to 301830B Jun 44: Mandeville, ³/₄ mi. east, (T6783, Nord D'Guerre).
301830B Jun 44 to 302400B Jun 44: Longueville, ¹/₄ mi. west, (T605888, Nord d' Guerre).

- 5. Battles: None
- 6. Casualties: None
- 7. Mission: Engineer work in First Army Area in support of V Corps, and attached to

¹¹ The first two digits are the date, the next four digits are the military time (24-hour clock, the "B" means they are located west of Paris, France. The meridian at Paris was designated as zero degrees on the grid system used on the U.S. Army maps in Europe. An "A" would indicate east of Paris. This is read: 1 June 44, 0001 hrs, to 18 June 44, 1325 hrs, west of Paris, France.

¹² Map coordinates of the Battalion location.

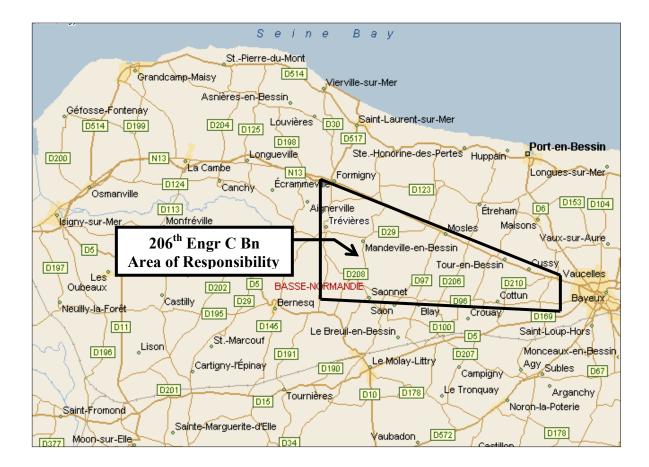
¹³ Map coordinates of the Battalion location.

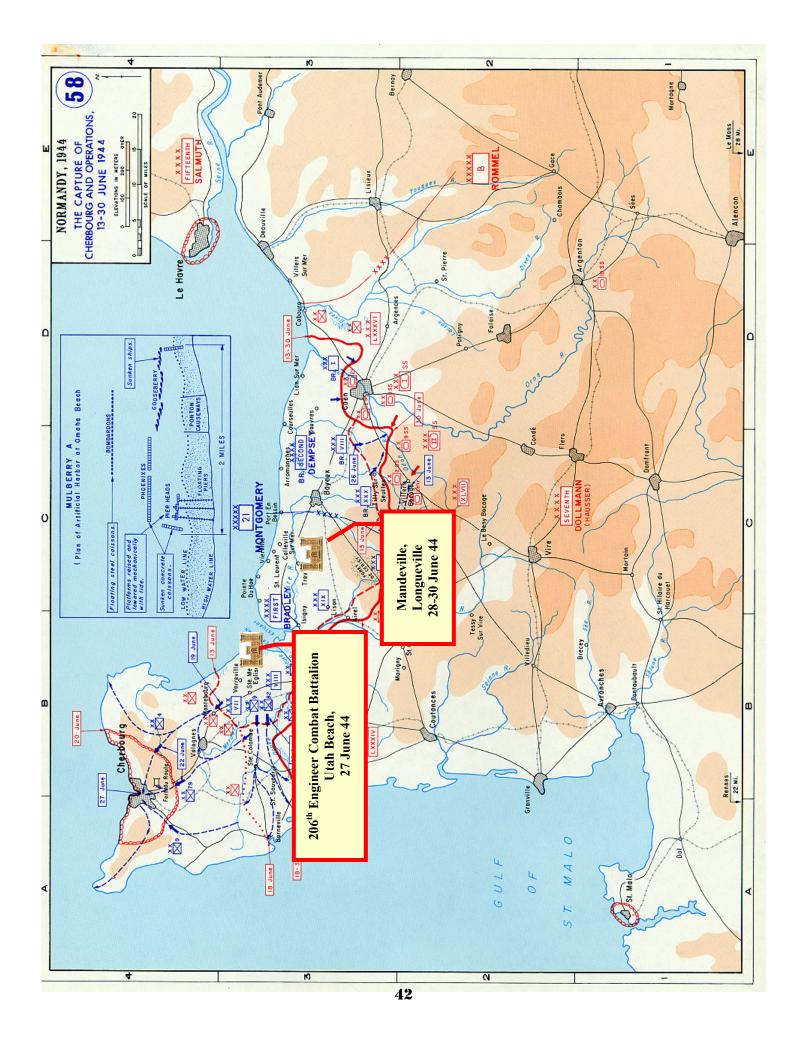




1103rd Engineer Combat Group.

- A. Boundaries of Area for which responsible:
 - 1. Highway N-13, Formigny Vaucelles
 - 2. Highway GC-30, Formigny Trevieres
 - 3. Highway GC-96, Travieres Vaucelles
 - 4. All secondary roads in area bounded by above three (3) roads.
- B. Began operating water point No. 12 at 644868, and No. 13 at 533843, 301800B Jun 44.









HEADQUARTERS 206 ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION APO 230, U. S. ARMY

REM/jds

1 Aug 44

SUBJECT: After Action Report - July 1944

TO : The Adjutant General Washington, D.C.

Maps: Sheet 6 E/6, France, 1:50,000, Isigny.

- 1. Unit Designation: 206th Engineer Combat Battalion. (Assigned to 1103rd Engineer Combat Group).
- 2. Commanding Officer: Gilbert R. Pirrung, 0315129, Lt. Col., Combat Engineer.
- 3. Strength: 29 Officers, 3 Warrant Officers, 616 enlisted men. (T/O & E 5-15, 5-16, 5-17, 15 Jul 45)
- 4. Locations: 010001B Jul 44 to 171200B Jul 44: Longueville, ¼ mi. west, T605888 Nord d' Guerre
 171200B Jul 44 to 312400B Jul 44: Mosles, 1 2/5 mi southwest, T695815, Nord d' Guerre
- 5. Battles: None
- 6. Casualties: None
- 7. Mission: Engineer work in First Army Area in support of V Corps, and attached to 1103rd Engineer Combat Group.
 - A. Boundaries of Area for which responsible:
 - 1. From 1 Jul 44 to 19 Jul 44:
 - a. Highway N-13, Formigny Vaucelles
 - b. Highway GC-30, Formigny Trevieres
 - c. Highway GC-96, Trevieres Vaucelles
 - d. All secondary roads above Area.
 - 2. From 20 Jul 44 to 31 Jul 44:
 - a. Highway N-13, Formigny Vaucelles
 - b. Highway GC-30, Formigny Trevieres
 - c. Highway GC-96, Trevieres Vaucelles





- d. Highway GC-208, Rubercy Highway GC-5
- e. Highway GC-5, Highway GC-208 Army Boundary (First United States Army, at 700778)f. All Secondary roads in above Area.
- B. Operated Water Points No. 12 at 644868, and No. 13 at 533843. (Discontinued operation of Water Point No. 13 at 051200B Jul 44, relinquished to 204th Engineer Combat Battalion)



Trevieres, France and surrounding area. The 206th Engineer Combat Battalion had the responsibility for road repair and maintenance in this area though July 1944.

8. Results of Operation:

a. Repaired and maintained roads bounded by highways in paragraph 7 above. Shoulders and ditches cleaned and repaired to assist proper drainage of roads. Rubble from destroyed buildings cleared from roadway. Highway signs constructed and erected for maintaining traffic control.

For the Commanding Officer:

ROBERT E. MUSSER 1st Lt., CE Adjutant





BATTALION HISTORY

206 Engineer Combat Battalion

August 1944

I. STRENGTH: Commissioned and Enlisted.

	Officers	Warrant Officers	Enlisted Men	Total
1 Aug 44	29	3	616	648
Increase for Month	0	0	1	1
Decrease for Month	2	0	14	16
31 Aug 44	27	3	603	633

II. STATIONS: See attached After Actions Report

- III. MARCHES: See attached After Actions Report
- IV. CAMPAIGNS: Western Europe, effective 6 Jun 44, Auth: par 2, War Department General Order No. 49, 1944.
- V. BATTLES: See attached After Actions Report
- VI. COMMANDING OFFICER: For total period; Gilbert R. Pirrung, 0-315129, Lt. Col.,CE

VII. LOSSES IN ACTION: Officers and Enlisted Men.

A. Killed:

- Frank J. Green, 0-1110515, 1st Lt, CE, On 23 Aug 44, killed by enemy Machine Gun fire on assault crossing of Seine River to establish Bridgehead, at Tilly, France.
- 2. Joseph H. Thomas, 36194749, Pvt. On 23 Aug 44, killed by enemy Machine Gun fire on assault crossing of Seine River to establish Bridgehead, at Tilly, France.
- B. Wounded:
 - 1. Sammy C. Tucker, 38397966 Tec 5. On 14 Aug 44. Wounded by mine fragments when truck he was driving ran over a mine near St. Georges, France.
 - 2. Conrad G. Heiman, 37521333, Tec 5. On 17 Aug 44, wounded by fragments of friendly hand grenade while "digging in" near Ecrosnes, France.





- 3. Richard M. Uba, 33798426, Pvt. On 23 Aug 44, wounded by enemy machine gun fire on assault crossing of Seine River at Champagne Sur Seine, France.
- 4. Harry C. Hampson, 13126719, Pfc. On 25 Aug 44, wounded by flying steel when demolished bridge was blown preparatory to building bridge across Seine River, at Champaign Sur Seine, France.

C. Missing:

- 1. Charles D. Zook, 0-1110911, 1st Lt., CE, on 24 Aug 44.
- 2. *Theodore J. Gordon, 39908424, Sgt., on 24 Aug 44.
- 3. Billy R. Richardson, 38429525, Tec 5, on 24 Aug 44.
- 4. Harold L. Grout, 39908206, Tec 5, on 24 Aug 44.
- 5. Luther E. Alexander, 38464051, Pvt., on 24 Aug 44.

On 15 Aug 44, above officer and four EM were sent to Senonches, France, to remove approximately 1400 lbs of explosive from a railroad bridge, which had been set by the enemy, but not used¹⁴. Above persons did not return from this mission and were dropped by the organization as MIA [Missing in Action] on 24 Aug 44.

* A & D Report, dated 3 Sep 44, received by this organization 6 Sep 44 showing Sgt. Gordon in 39 Evac Hospital. Slightly wounded in action¹⁵.

In addition five EM were lost to Hospital as sick; non-battle losses.

¹⁴ In a 23 January 2002 telephone conversation between John K. Graham and Theodore (Ted) Gordon, who is listed as missing in this report, he said they had been removing explosives from under overpasses, using only their hands. They did not want to use anything metal for fear that a spark would set off the explosives.

¹⁵ In the 23 January 2002 telephone conversation between John K. Graham and Ted Gordon, Ted said he and the other men from the 206th were traveling down the road in a truck through a wooded area when the Germans ambushed them. Ted was wounded in the leg and in the head while in the truck. Lt. Zook realized Ted was wounded and came to help him. When Lt. Zook got back to the truck, he was shot and killed. Three other men from the 206th were also killed. Ted was taken prisoner by the Germans and held in a German hospital at Reims, France. I asked Ted how the Germans treated him as a prisoner. He said that several of the German troops wanted to kill him with their knives, but a German Captain looked out for him and kept the German troops from killing him. After Reims was liberated, Ted was sent to a hospital in England then on to the U.S. Due to his wounds, he never returned to the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion or to the war.







lst Lt. Charles D. Zook Killed, 16 Aug 44



Tec 5 Billy R. Richardson Killed, 16 Aug 44



Tec 5 Harold L. Grout Killed, 16 Aug 44



Pvt. Luther E. Alexander Killed, 16 Aug 44



Sgt. Theodore J. Gordon Wounded and Captured 16 Aug 44

Note: These photographs were scanned from the book "August 1944, The Liberation of Rambouillet, France", written by Francoise Winieska.





HEADQUARTERS 206 ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION APO 230, U. S. ARMY

3 Sep 44

SUBJECT: After Action Report for August 1944.

TO : Adjutant General, XX Corps, APO 340 Attn: Historical Officer.

In compliance with letter, Headquarters XX Corps, dated 23 Aug 44, Subject: "Submission of After Action Reports", report is herewith submitted, in correct sequence of events, for month of August, 1944:

1 Aug 44 to 6 Aug 44:

In bivouac 1 2/5 mi. southwest of Mosles (T695815, Nord D'Guerre). Assigned First U.S. Army, Mission: Maintaining roads in First U.S. Army Area – Area of responsibility:

Highway N-13, Formigny – Vaucelles Highway GC-30, Formigny – Trevieres Highway GC-96, Travieres – Vaucelles Highway GC-208, Rubercy – Highway GC-5 Highway GC-5, Highway GC-208 – Army Boundary (First United States Army, at 700778)

5 Aug 44:

Relieved from assignment to First U.S. Army and assigned to Third U.S. Army. Auth: Letter 322(AG-0), Headquarters Twelfth Army Group, Subject: "Troop Assignment No. 8", dated 5 Aug 44.

7 Aug 44:

Attached to XX Corps, Auth: Letter AG 322-GNMCO, Headquarters Third U.S. Army, Subject: "Troop Assignment No. A-18", dated 7 Aug 44.



The 206th Engineer Combat Battalion repaired damaged roads caused by bomb and shell craters.







American troops drive through the ruins of St. Lo, France.

The Battalion left Mosles at 0600 hrs for change of station and assignment.

8 Aug 44:

The Battalion arrived at a new location at 1230 hrs The Command Post was established ¹/₄ mi south of Cornille (T485284, Nord d' Guerre), Lambert Zone No. 1. No events.

9 Aug 44:

The Battalion remained at Cornille and sent out engineer reconnaissance and cleaned and repaired equipment.

10 Aug 44:

One (1) platoon, Company A, attached to Headquarters, XX Corps.

The Battalion, less one (1) platoon from Company A, left Cornille at 0100 hrs, (X970407, Lambert Zone No. 1). The distance traveled by motor march was 47 miles.

The Battalion was assigned the mission to support 80th Infantry Division. Performed engineer reconnaissance.

11 Aug 44:

The Battalion located at St. Jean-sur-Eire.

The Battalion was relieved from assignment to the 1103rd Engineer Combat Group and assigned to the 1139th Engineer Combat Group.

One (1) platoon, Company C, was sent to the 80th Infantry Division to build Prisoner of War enclosure.

Performed engineer reconnaissance.





Three (3) prisoners were captured by Company C. They were taken from a farmhouse with no resistance.

12 Aug 44:

The Battalion remained located at St. Jean-sur-Eire and performed engineer reconnaissance.

One (1) enlisted man, Company A, LWA. Ran over mine with $2\frac{1}{2}$ - Ton truck.

13 Aug 44:

The Battalion left St. Jean-sur-Eire at 1100 hrs and arrived at new station 1300 hrs Established Command Post 2 mi. south of Sille-le-Guillaume (K155555, Lambert Zone No. 1). This move was in support of the 80th Infantry Division.

Company A constructed a ford and improved an old ford across a creek at St. Georges and swept area for mines.

Company B continued with column, clearing roads of obstacles and demolished vehicles.

One (1) squad of Company C went forward to clear mines at St. Georges.

14 Aug 44:

Assembled all companies with 1139th Engineer Combat Group.

The Battalion was removed from support of the 80th Infantry Division and put in support of the 7th Armored Division.

The Battalion left Sille-le-Guillaume at 0100 hrs and arrived at the new location at 0800 hrs The Command Post was established 2 mi. southeast of Le Ferte-Bernard (V757773, Nord D'Guerre).

The Battalion then left Le Ferte-Bernard 1930 hrs and established Command Post at 2300 hrs, 5 mi. northeast of Montieres (Q945117, Nord D'Guerre) The total distance traveled by motor march was 39 miles.

The Battalion was in support of Combat Command A, 7th Armored Division. Line Companies were interspersed in the columns to clear road of obstacles and demolished vehicles.







15 Aug 44:

The Battalion left Montieres at 0815 hrs and established Command Post at 0900 hrs, 5 mi. southwest of Senonches (Q988154, Nord D'Guerre). The distance traveled by motor march was 4.6 miles.

The Battalion then left Senonches at 1030 hrs, in advance east with Combat Command A, 7th Armored Division. 14 prisoners were taken along the route.

16 Aug 44:

The Battalion established Command Post at 0200 hrs at La Louviere (V932984, Nord D'Guerre) between Nogent and Maintenon. The distance traveled by motor march from Senonches was 13 miles.

The advance, which was scheduled for 0800 hrs toward Ramboullet, Rochefort, and Arpajon, was delayed by enemy artillery fire. The Battalion left the area at 2000 hrs in advance forward.

17 Aug 44:

The Battalion established Command Post $1\frac{1}{2}$ mi. northwest of Ecrosnes (R568122, Nord D'Guerre) at 0615 hrs

Company A, in support of a company of tanks from the 40th Tank Battalion, established cut-offs of all roads and bridges leading out of Chartres. The





Company also cleared enemy troops out of the woods in the area, taking 47 prisoners.

Company B was sent out to secure and hold Maintenon. The Company met slight resistance and took one (1) prisoner. Company B held the town until relieved by infantry troops on 18 Aug 44.

Two (2) prisoners were captured by a reconnaissance party, making a total of 50 prisoners captured by the Battalion.

18 Aug 44:

The Battalion left Ecrosnes at 2000 hrs and was relieved of support of the 7th Armored Division. The Battalion returned to and established Command Post 1¹/₂ mi. south of St. Georges (W291989, Nord D'Guerre) at 2400 hrs. The distance traveled by motor march was 39 miles.

19 Aug 44:

The Battalion left St. Georges at 1530 hrs for the vicinity of Dreaux for regrouping of Engineer units. The Command Post was established at 1900 hrs, 2 mi. east of Treon (R289275, Nord D'Guerre). The distance traveled by motor march was 21 miles.

One (1) man was lost to hospital because of sickness.

20 Aug 44:

The Battalion remained at Treon and sent out reconnaissance of roads and bridges in surrounding area. Company C was sent out to clear roads of wrecked vehicles and debris. The Battalion - together with 179^{th} , 136^{th} , and 160^{th} Engineer Combat Battalions - established a perimeter defense of the area.

Two (2) prisoners were taken.

One (1) replacement was received.

21 Aug 44:

The Battalion left Treon at 1100 hrs in advance through Epanon, Sonchamp, Claire Fontaine, Longvilliers, toward Arpajon.





22 Aug 44:

The Battalion established Command Post 5 mi. west of Arpajon (R880135, Nord D'Guerre) at 0030 hrs The distance traveled from Treon was 43 miles. The Battalion then left Arpajon at 1400 hrs in advance toward Melun.

Company C went forward to remove mines and obstacles along the route of march. The Company removed a demolished freight train across the road at Arpajon.

Prisoners taken: One (1).

23 Aug 44:

The Battalion established Command Post 6 mi. west of Melun and 1 mi. east of Moulignon (S215205, Nord D'Guerre) at 0800 hrs. The distance traveled from Arpajon was 30 miles.

Company C was dispatched to repair roads and remove obstacles from Chateau-Neuff to the Seine River. The Company removed a demolished railroad bridge across the road in Arpajon.

One (1) platoon, Company B, crossed the Seine River with the 48th Infantry Division on an assault crossing at Tilly to establish a bridgehead and clear a road on the other side. The mission was completed in the face of heavy enemy fire.

Two (2) men were killed and two (2) wounded.

24 Aug 44:

The Battalion remained 1 mi. east of Moulignon.

Company B and one (1) platoon from Company A maintained security of the Seine River bridgehead at Tilly.

Five (5) men listed as missing in action.¹⁶

¹⁶ This refers to the men ambushed near Rambouillet on 16 August 44. See the account of this action at the end of this Monthly After Action Report.





25 Aug 44:

The Battalion left Moulignon at 1500 hrs in advance toward Fontainbleau and established Command Post at 1600 hrs 3 mi. south of Fontainbleau (X323904, Nord D'Guerre). The distance traveled by motor march was 16 miles.

Forward element, consisting of the Commanding Officer, S-3, S-3 Section, and Company C, left at 1230 hrs and established forward Command Post on near bank of the Seine River across from Champagne-sur-Seine.

Company C cleared the wreckage of a blown bridge and surveyed and prepared for building a Bailey bridge across the Seine River. The Company completed the demolition of the bridge wreckage with 400 lbs of explosive and an acetylene torch. Sent in order for material for bridge. Cleared turn-around for material and established traffic circulation plan at bridge site for unloading material. One (1) man wounded by fragmentation when wreckage was blown.

One (1) squad, Company C, crossed the Seine River in inflated assault rafts on reconnaissance of the bridgehead on far side and established security of bridgehead. A total of 93 prisoners was taken.

Company B prepared to build a 279-ft. Double-Single Bailey bridge across the

Seine River on two (2) rebuilt piers at Fontainbleau (designated the North Bridge Site).

26 Aug 44:

Material began to arrive for the bridge at about 0600 hrs. Construction at Champagne (designated the South Bridge Site) of a 390-ft. Double-Double Bailey bridge, supported by two (2) rebuilt piers, commenced at 0645 hrs



An example of a Bailey bridge constructed by Combat Engineers.

At 0915 hrs, Col. Niles, commanding the 1139th Engineer Combat Group, gave orders to turn the construction of the bridge over to the 509th Light Ponton Company. Two (2) squads from Company C remained on the job building up piers in the river. The S-3 of this organization remained on the job to supervise construction.





Lt. Col. Gilbert R. Pirrung, commanding the 206th Engineer Battalion, Combat assumed command of, and established 6000-yard defense area on the far side of the Seine River. Defense units consisted of two (2) platoons each from Companies A and C of this organization, one (1) platoon from the 179th Engineer Combat Battalion, with automatic weapons from this organization and the 179th Engineer Combat Battalion attached, and one (1) Anti-Aircraft Battery of 90 mm guns from the 120th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion and one (1) company from the 714th Tank



Lt. Col. Gilbert R. Pirrung Battalion Commander, 206th Engr C Bn

Destroyer Battalion. Lt. Col. Frey of the 120th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion consulted with Lt. Col. Pirrung on employment of Anti-Aircraft Battery in the defense of the area. No enemy activity was encountered in the building of the bridge. Company B completed the bridge at North Bridge Site at 2400 hrs this date.

27 Aug44:

The Battalion remained at Fontainbleau. The Battalion was relieved of responsibility, including security, of the South Bridge Site. All units were sent to the bivouac area except Company B, which remained at the North Bridge Site maintaining security of North Bridge.

28 Aug 44:

The Battalion left Fontainbleau at 1000 hrs in advance toward Montmirail. Company A remained behind to maintain and secure two Bailey bridges and a treadway bridge at Fontainbleau.

The Battalion established Command Post 1 mi. southeast of Montmirail (S950381, Nord D'Guerre) at 1600 hrs The distance traveled by motor march was 60 miles.

Companies B and C cleared roads of obstacles and of demolished vehicles and made reconnaissance of the area around Montmirail.





29 Aug 44:

The Battalion left Montmirail in advance east at 1215 hrs and established Command Post 3 mi. southeast of Dormans (T004565, Nord D'Guerre) at 1400 hrs. The distance traveled was 17 miles.

Companies B and C performed reconnaissance of the area and cleared obstacles from roads.

30 Aug 44:

The Battalion left Dormans at 0815 hrs and established Command Post $2\frac{1}{2}$ mi. south of Oranville (T300899, Nord D'Guerre) at 1315 hrs The distance traveled from Dormans was 48 miles. The Battalion then left Oranville at 1900 hrs enroute to Verdun. The 206th was attached to 7th Armored Division during this move.

Company C was sent out as infantry to secure and hold the airport at Reims. No resistance was encountered.

31 Aug 44:

The Battalion established Command Post 4 mi. southeast of Nauroy at 0200 hrs. The distance traveled from Oranville was 28 miles. The 206th then left Nauroy enroute to Verdun at 1940 hrs

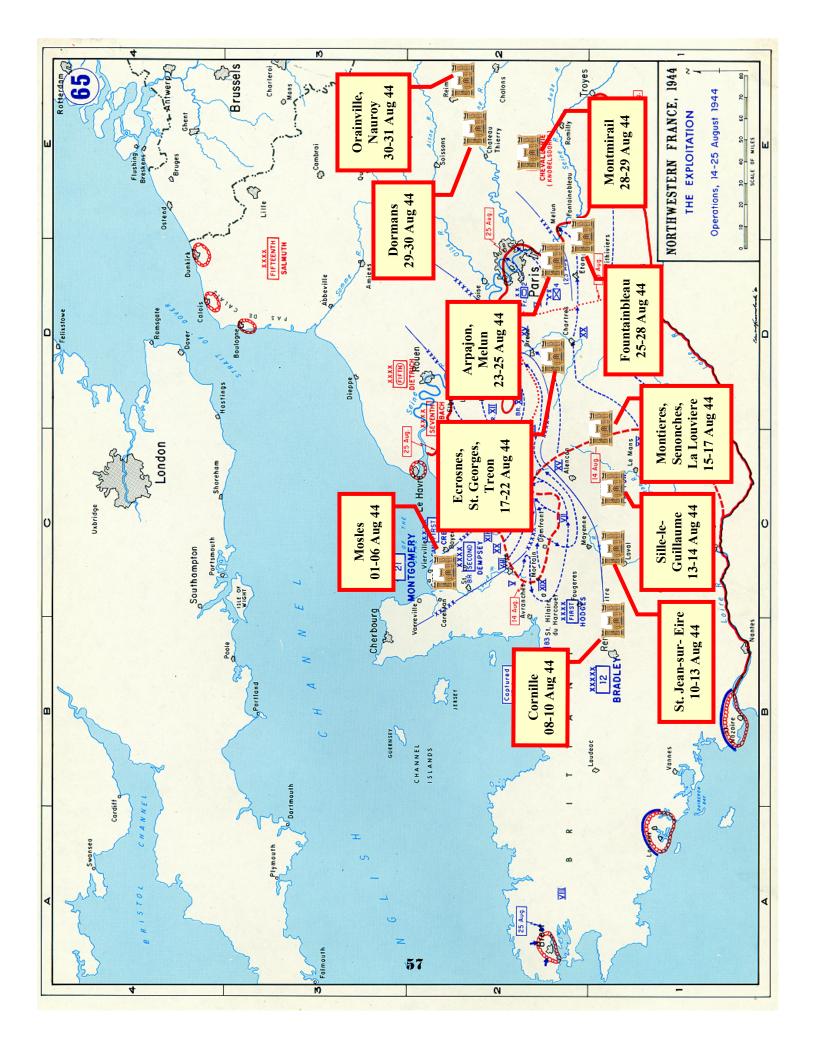
Company A joined the Battalion at Nauroy at 1830 hrs

Company B sent out three (3) reconnaissance parties consisting of one squad in a squad truck and a $\frac{1}{4}$ ton 4x4 each to cover the area from Vouzieres to Autry on the Seine River. The 87th Reconnaissance Troop was engaged with the enemy in this area and Company B reconnaissance parties became involved. One (1) man was wounded.

Company C was relieved from guarding the airport at Reims and sent to Autry to construct a treadway bridge over the Riane River.

For the Commanding Officer:

ROBERT E. MUSSER 1ST Lt., CE Adjutant







Françoise Winieska

78120 Rambouillet, France

4 December 1998

Mr. Don F. Wendling 206th Engineer Combat Battalion Association 21661 SW Rainbow Lakes Boulevard Dunnellon, FL 34431-4273 USA

Dear Mr. Wendling:

I am the lady who telephoned you from France on Thursday, December 3. Your name, telephone number and address were given to me by the American Legion Headquarters at Indianapolis. I regret the telephone communication was not good and that you could not hear me very well.

The reason I am contacting you is that, since 1993, I have been doing research on the liberation of Rambouillet by American troops in August 1944. Through National Archives in Washington and St. Louis, I have found reports related to several missions at Rambouillet by units attached to the XX Corps. In the course of these missions, between 16 and 18 August 1944, nine Americans were killed : Three were Troopers of the 43rd Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron killed in an ambush on 16 August; one a Lieutenant of the 7th Armored Division killed on 18 August; and a pilot of the 9th Air Force whose P-47 crashed in a field near the entrance of town on 18 August. The remaining four, whose names were communicated to me a little over a month ago, belonged to the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion, Company "C". They were (by alphabetical order):

Pvt Luther E. ALEXANDER T/5 Harold L. GROUT T/5 Billy Ray RICHARDSON 1/Lt Charles D. ZOOK

Rambouillet is located approximately 35 miles NE of Chartres and 35 miles SW of Paris, i.e. at an equal distance between the two cities. In 1944 it was a small town, I should even say a village, of about 6 000 inhabitants. The ambush took place at the time of the battle of Chartres (16/19 August) in which the 1139th Engineer Combat Group was involved.

The men listed above were killed when the truck they were riding was ambushed just before entering Rambouillet. There was another casualty: **Sgt. Theodore J. GORDON** who was wounded and taken prisoner by the Germans. The Germans brought him to a military hospital at Reims (Rheims)—100 miles E of Paris, where they attended his wounds. He was found there with other POWs when the 5th Infantry Division (XX Corps) liberated Reims on 29 August 1944.

Sgt. Theodore J. Gordon is still alive and Military Personnel Records Center, St. Louis, gave me his address. I have been in contact with him since November 1. Corresponding and talking with Mr. Gordon has helped me in this research, however, there is a point we cannot elucidate. It is the exact date of the ambush.





2

FW to DFW, 04DEC98 (cont'd)

The reports of the 206th ECB are not clear on this, listing their five Engineers MIA any time between 15 and 18 August, first in a M/R dated 24 August, then in the A/A report dated September 3. Mr. Gordon remembers being wounded in the ambush and Lt. Zook being killed. He then remembers being in a German hospital in Rheims for almost two weeks and finally the arrival of the tanks of the 5th Infantry Division who liberated Rheims. He believes the ambush occurred on 17 August.

I need to find out the <u>date</u> of the ambush. I know how it happened. A Frenchman, the late Joseph Chauvin, witnessed it and described it to me in details. He saw the truck coming down the road and being attacked by German fire. After being hit, the truck came to rest on the right side of the road next to Chauvin's field. Chauvin saw four Americans laying near the truck. There was no doubt in his mind they were dead. A wounded American was laid on a makeshift stretcher and brought in front of his house for about half an hour. The four Engineers of the 206th ECB—and also the three Troopers of the 43rd CRS killed on 16 August—were buried by the Germans in Chauvin's field. They were buried in two separate foxholes, the three Troopers in one, the four Engineers in the other. Their bodies were exhumed at the beginning of September and reinterred on 12 September in a temporary American military cemetery, in seven adjoining graves.

I need to know if the ambush of the 206th Engineers happened on 16 August, date of the ambush in which the squad of Troop "B" of the 43rd Cavalry Recon Squadron lost their three Troopers, or if it happened at a latter date on either 17 or 18 August.

Except for Lt. Zook, T/5 Grout and a certain CREIGHTON (spelled phonetically), Mr. Gordon cannot remember the names of the other men with him in the truck. He told me they could have been as many as thirteen, a regular squad, plus Lt. Zook. According to Joseph Chauvin, there were more than five men in the truck. Since no other names of MIA appear in either After Action or Morning reports, this would mean that some of the Engineers survived the ambush and were not taken prisoners. Creighton could be one of them.

206th Engineer Combat Bn reports and its History mention the name of the Commanding Officer of the Battalion: Colonel Gilbert Pirrung, that of the CO of Company "C": Captain Patterson, to which the squad belonged, and of other Officers of Company "C": 2/Lt Hammack, 1/Lt Richards and 1/Lt Spalding.

The only time Rambouillet is mentioned is in A/A report dated 16 August, which reads:

Established CP, 0200 hrs, at La Louviere, (with incorrect coordinates)

(Nord de Guerre) between Nogent and Maintenon.

Distance travelled by motor march from Senonches 13 miles. Advance scheduled for 0800 hrs toward <u>Rambouillet</u>, Rochefort and Arpajon delayed by enemy artillery fire.

Left area at 2000 hrs in advance forward.

17 August A/A report:

Established CP 11/2 miles NW of Ecrosnes (R568122, Nord de Guerre) 0615 hrs....

That coordinate is Epernon—8 miles W of Rambouillet—where QG for CCA/7th Armored Division had been established the previous night at 2100 hrs. In fact, it was not the town of Epernon itself, but a field at Jonvilliers S of Epernon. (General Patton came to Jonvilliers on 19 August.) Under control of CCA of the 7th AD were CCR/7AD and also (among other units) the 206th ECB from 14 August to 18 August at 2000 hrs.

On 18 August, CCR/7AD was sent on a reconnaissance mission to Rambouillet because of the ambush the 43rd Cavalry squad had fallen into on 16 August. They were to estimate the enemy force at Rambouillet.

I hope the above will help some of your 206th Engineer veterans remember why you suffered four KIA at Rambouillet on whatever date the ambush occurred: 16, 17 or 18 August.





FW to DFW, 04DEC98 (cont'd)

Nowhere in the reports is Rambouillet mentioned as the site of the ambush or neither the ambush, only that the men were MIA during a mission <u>near Paris</u>. There are no written orders.

I must tell you why I am doing this research, the results of which I am putting down in a book form that will be published by the Rambouillet historical society.

In 1947, the city of Rambouillet erected a monument—*The American Eagle Monument*—to the memory of the Americans who had fallen for the liberation of the region. There were no names on it. Senator Gérard Larcher, Mayor of Rambouillet, wanted to inscribe the names of the men who had been killed at the entrance of town in August 1944. In 1996, five names (four being the result of my work) were engraved on three plaques set on the monument. The unveiling of the plaques took place on 6 June 1996, in a ceremony attended by officials of the US Embassy, the American Battle Monument Commission, the US Air Force (who sent an Honor Guard), representatives of the American Legion, the VFW, the 7th Armored Division, the 3rd Cavalry Group (to which the 43rd Cavalry Recon Squadron belonged), also representatives of the French Government, officials of the city of Rambouillet, of the French Army, Veterans associations, townspeople and young school children.

At the time, I knew that I had not completed my work but could not progress any further. One truck in the whole US Third Army is no easy task to find! However, persistence brings results and I came to the conclusion that I should start looking into the Engineer Combat Battalions attached to the XX Corps. Thanks to the archivists at Military Personnel Records Center in St. Louis who were of great help in pursuing the search, reports of the 206th Eng Combat Bn were found with the names of the five Engineers last October. The report listing the names of the men KIA whose bodies were exhumed at Rambouillet confirmed that an action had taken place at Rambouillet. It also corroborated Joseph Chauvin's account as to four KIA and one WIA.

Upon receiving the information from St. Louis, I immediately wrote Senator Larcher, giving him the names of the four Engineers. He answered saying that he wants to add a plaque on the *American Eagle Monument* with their names. The unveiling of the plaque will take place during the annual ceremony held on 19 August, date anniversary of the liberation of the town by the Americans. The plaque must bear the name and rank of the men, their outfit and the <u>date</u> of their death.

That is another important reason for me to be able to correspond with veterans of Company "C" of the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion and try to unravel the story of the ambush and the exact date it occurred.

In order to send them an invitation to attend the ceremony on 19 August 1999, Senator Larcher will also need the addresses of the officials of the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion Association, and of any members of Company "C" who may have survived the ambush.

I thank you in advance for your help.

Sincerely,

Winiesta.





The text in English sturts on p. 149, Night after the illustrations - I hape

you have good glasses - the letter's are a bit small - The -

The documents you sent me were very helpful-

On 19 August 1999, the City -F Rambauillet held a cenemony to honor the nine Americans trilled on 16 and 18 August 1944 - seven on the 16th 4 two on the 18th. A total of 37 Aelatives representing Five Families were able to attend. For the Engineens were close relatives (widows, son, daughters, sisters, nephews & nieces of T/S Growt, T/S Richardson and 1/Lt Zoot. Best to you, Thanpooke W.





HEADQUARTERS 206 ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION APO 403, U. S. ARMY

3 Oct 44

SUBJECT: After Action Report for September 1944.

TO : Adjutant General, XX Corps, APO 340 Attn: Historical Officer.

1 Sep 44:

Location: 2 mi. southwest of Verdun (U240641, Nord D'Guerre), except, one (1) platoon from Company A, which was attached to Headquarters, XX Corps, since 10 Aug 44. The Battalion remained attached to the 7th Armored Division.

Two squads, Company B, guarded captured airfield ³/₄ mi. east of Verdun.

One squad, Company C, sent to Autry to guard ford across the Moselle River.

2 Sep 44: Verdun.

Two squads, Company B, guarded the airport east of Verdun.

One squad, Company C, guarded the ford across the Moselle River at Autry.

Tec 5 Bowen, Company C, was injured when he was run over by a jeep during the night while sleeping along the road. He was evacuated to the hospital.

3 Sep 44: Verdun.

Two (2) squads, Company A, sent on recon for bridging material.

One (1) squad, Company B, classified and posted bridges in the vicinity of Verdun.

Pvt. Riddles, Company A, sick and hospitalized.

4 Sep 44:

Company A sent out road recon parties in the vicinity of Verdun.





The Company B squad that was guarding the airport east of Verdun was relieved and returned to the Battalion bivouac area.

One (1) squad, Company C, was sent on road recon in the vicinity of Verdun.

One (1) squad, Company C, repaired a bridge in Verdun.

5 Sep 44:

Location: The Battalion left Verdun at 2100 hrs and established Command Post $\frac{1}{2}$ mi. east of Eix (U373673, Nord D'Guerre) at 2200 hrs. Distance traveled by motor march was 11 mi.

No further Events.

6 Sep 44:

Location: The Battalion left the vicinity of EIX at 1125 hrs and established Command Post at 1300 hrs at Boncourt (U613647, Nord D'Guerre). Distance traveled by motor march was 14 mi.

One (1) platoon, Company A, cleared mines in Chambley, removing five mines from the road, and one (1) platoon provided security for the Battalion area.

Company B sent out recon parties, cleared roads from Verdun to Conflans of wrecked vehicles, and provided guard for the railroad yard at Conflans.

7 Sep 44: Boncourt:

Company A removed wrecked vehicles along roads in the vicinity of Boncourt. Relieved Company B squad that was guarding railroad yard at Conflans at 1500 hrs One (1) squad, Company A, was sent on road patrol and posted signs along Rtes N18, N390, N3. One (1) squad made inventory of dumps in Conflans.

One (1) platoon, Company B, was sent on recon of railroad from Conflans to Verdun. One (1) platoon performing recon east of Conflans contacted an enemy cavalry unit and five tanks in the vicinity of Briey. Pvt. Herbert Able was wounded in the action and evacuated. He was the only American casualty. Known enemy losses: one (1) officer killed.

Two (2) platoons, Company B, left the bivouac area at 1300 hrs – followed by the other platoon at 1500 hrs – for Resonville preparatory to putting a bridge across the Moselle River at Dornot. The Company was forced to withdraw from the bivouac area due to heavy enemy artillery fire and returned to Boncourt. Sgt.





Stephen R. Walker, Pfc Thomas O. Collins, and Pfc Arthur J. Fisher slightly wounded by shrapnel but not evacuated.

Company C preceded Company B to the vicinity of Resonville, leaving Boncourt at 0900 to participate in bridging the Moselle River. The company was forced to withdraw and return to Boncourt. Pvt. James M. Massey and Pvt. Claudia Hood¹⁷ were wounded by shrapnel. Pvt. Hood was evacuated. One (1) squad, Company C, cleared mines in the vicinity of Resonville.

8 Sep 44: Boncourt.

The Battalion was relieved from attachment to the 7th Armored Division and attached to the 1139th Engineer Combat Group in support of 7th Armored Division.

Company A posted bridge classification signs along Routes N3, N18, N390.

Company B made recon of bridges and roads from forward elements back to Verdun and of the railroad from Chambley to Briey. Two (2) squads were sent out to clear roadblocks in the vicinity of Gravelotte.

9 Sep 44: Boncourt.

Company A sent out patrols on roads from forward elements back to Verdun. One (1) squad guarded the railroad at Conflans.

Company B also had out road patrols on the route north of Conflans.

Company C was held in bivouac area on 30-minute alert to construct treadway bridge.

10 Sep 44: Boncourt.

One (1) squad, Company A, at Conflans as guard at railroad yard. Remainder of Company A provided security for Battalion area.

Company B made sketches of and blacked-out German signs on surrounding roads.

Company C remained on 30-minute alert to construct treadway bridge.

¹⁷ These two names are hard to read. Reasonably sure of all but "Massey" and "Claudia."







11 Sep 44: Boncourt.

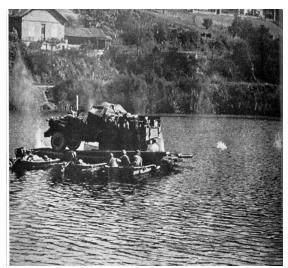
Company A sent one (1) squad with four trucks to Verdun to pick up bridge trestles. One (1) squad, Company A, on guard at railroad yard at Conflans. Remainder of Company A on Battalion security.

One (1) platoon, Company B, with all Battalion angle dozers attached, constructed emplacements for 240-mm howitzers in the vicinity of Puxieux. One (1) platoon worked on the airfield at Boncourt. Recon parties were sent out on routes from Gravelotte, Eionville, Ste



The 240-mm howitzer had a range of about 25 miles. Authorization from Third Army Headquarters was required before it could be fired.

Marie, and Auxchene to the Moselle River to continue as far as possible to establish the condition of roads and the location of the enemy.



Combat Engineers ferrying a truck across a river under heavy enemy fire. The white spots in the river are enemy rounds hitting the water.

Company C received orders at 1610 hrs to move to the Moselle River, in the vicinity of Arnaville, to relieve a company of the 204th Engineers.

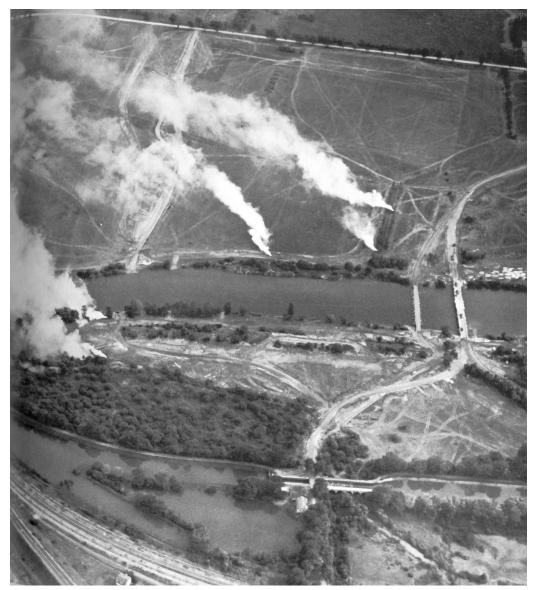
12 Sep 44: Boncourt.

Company A on security of Battalion area. One (1) platoon, Company B, was sent on road and railroad recon. One (1) platoon worked on the airfield at Boncourt, and one (1) platoon with dozers dug emplacements for 240-mm howitzers in the vicinity of Puxieux. Company C operated a ferry and maintained a ford across the Moselle River east of Arnaville. The work was

accomplished under heavy enemy artillery fire. Lt. John R. Richards, Sgt. Bill J. Cloud, and Pvt. Shropshire were wounded and evacuated.





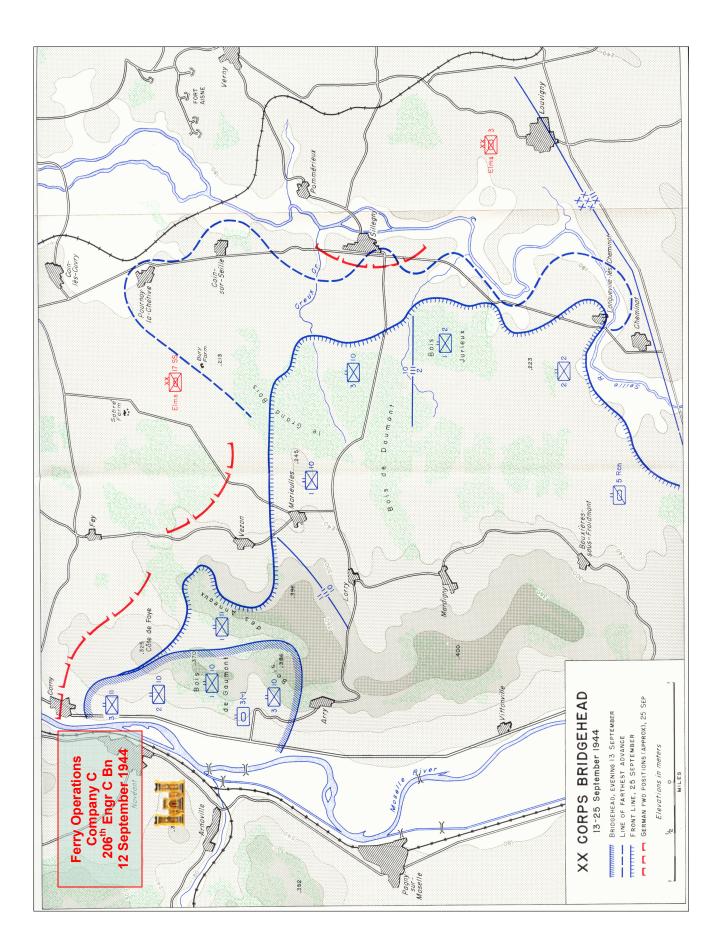


Aerial view of bridge and ferry site across the Moselle River east of Arnaville, France. Company C, 206th Engineer Combat Battalion, operated a ferry at this site. Smoke is from smoke generators used to provide cover for American troop and equipment movements.

13 Sep 44: Boncourt.

Two (2) squads, Company A, worked on the airfield at Boncourt. One (1) squad loaded mines at a captured enemy ammo dump in the Argonne Forest. One (1) platoon remained on Battalion security.

Companies B and C put up roadblocks and mine fields along the Moselle River. Heavy enemy artillery fire was encountered.







14 Sep 44:

Location: The Battalion left Boncourt at 2145 hrs and established Command Post ¹/₄ mi. south of Latour (U595558, Nord D'Guerre) at 2315 hrs The distance traveled by motor march was 8 mi.

Company B maintained roadblocks along the Moselle River; one (1) platoon at Verneville, one (1) platoon at Resonville, and one (1) platoon at St. Marcel. Company B was relieved by the 135^{th} Engineers and joined the Battalion at Latour.

Pvt. Lafitte, Company B, was seriously wounded by small arms fire and evacuated to the hospital.

15 Sep. 44: Latour

Pvt. Hartman was evacuated to hospital with a non-battle injury.

No Events

16 Sep 44:

Location: The Battalion left Latour at 1310 hrs and established Command Post one (1) mi northeast of Vilgey-sur-Trey (U718395, Nord D'Guerre) at 1500 hrs The Battalion then left Vilgey at 2000 hrs and established Command Post at Jouville (U701639, Nord D'Guerre) at 2300 hrs The distance traveled by motor march was 31 mi.

Company A was in bivouac in the vicinity of Waville.

17 Sep 44: Jouville

Company A left bivouac in the vicinity of Waville at 0845 hrs in close support of Combat Command R (CCR) and Combat Command A (CCA), 7th Armored Division, to cross the Moselle River. The company arrived at the river at 0915 hrs in the vicinity of Arnaville. Company A was under heavy enemy artillery fire while crossing the Moselle River. 1st Lt. Guy Edlin was seriously wounded by shrapnel and evacuated to hospital.

Companies B and C guarded road blocks, standing by to put them into place by Corps order in case of enemy break thru. The barrier zone extended from Hilly, north thru the vicinity Gravelotte, Verneville, St Privat to Boncourt.







The area surrounding Gravelotte, France. Gravelotte is the village located in the upper right hand corner of the photograph. The river is the Moselle River.

18 Sep 44:

Location: The Battalion left Jouville at 0820 hrs and established Command Post $1\frac{1}{2}$ mi. southeast of Buxieres (U605509, Nord D'Guerre) at 0915 hrs The distance traveled by motor march was 4 mi.

Company A was on the east side of the Moselle River maintaining roads in support of 7th Armored Division. The Company constructed a 60-ft plank tread road, removed an abatis, and repaired bomb and shell craters from Arry to Lorry. Mines were removed south of Champey on Route W57. Extra equipment attached to Company A was four (4) 6-Ton Brockway trucks each loaded with 30 feet of steel treadway attached from the 991st Engineer Treadway Bridge Company.

One (1) squad from Company B swept for mines on Route N52 northwest of the junction with IC28. One (1) squad cleared rubble from Route N52 at the site of a demolished railroad bridge in the vicinity of Fontoy. Work parties engaged in installing luminous markers on the bypass from Rembercourt to Thiacourt, posted signs and repaired the route.

Two parties were sent out by Company C at 1000 hrs on road recon.

Pvt. R. F. Loden, Company B, died of wounds (DOW) as the result of an accidental discharge from an M-1 service rifle.





19 Sep 44:

Location: The Battalion left Buxieres at 1830 hrs and established Command Post at 2000 hrs 1¹/₂ mi. northeast of Vittonville (V775436, Nord D'Guerre).

Company A in bivouac in the vicinity of Mardigny.

Company B remained in the vicinity of Buxieres and Company C in the vicinity of Champey. All of the Battalion, less Company B, was now across the Moselle River.

Company A, on the east side of the Moselle River, repaired roads in support of the 7th Armored Division.

Company B worked on the bypass from Thiacourt to Rembercourt and cleared debris from road caused by blown-out railroad bridge in the vicinity of Fontoy.

Company C moved to an area south of Champey. The Company filled in two shell craters and sent out road patrols in support Combat Command B (CCB), 7th Armored Division.

One enlisted man replacement was received.

20 Sep 44: Vittonville

Company A, in support of CCA and CCB, 7th Armored Division, maintained roads and filled in shell craters. Some enemy artillery fire was encountered.

Company B worked on the bypass from Thiacourt to Rembercourt.

Company C, in support of CCB, 7th Armored Division, maintained roads, filled in shell craters, and patrolled road in the vicinity of Champey. The Company also made recon of roads of Champey.

21 Sep 44: Vittonville

Company A, supporting CCA and CCB, 7th Armored Division, maintained roads, filled shell craters, cleared ditches, and widened roads from Arry to Lorry.

Company B removed debris from demolished overpass on Route N52 in the vicinity of Fontoy, hauled gravel from overpass to bypass under construction from Thiacourt to Rembercourt, patrolled Route N52 from Mars-Latour to Arnaville, and Route IC28 from junction of N52 to Thiacourt.





One (1) squad, Company C, patrolled roads in the vicinity of Champey. One (1) platoon practiced construction of treadway bridge and one (1) platoon practiced construction of Bailey bridge.

22 Sep 44: Vittonville

Company A constructed a bridge over blown-out culvert south of Champey; maintained Route GC49 from Arry to Lorry; cleaned up in Lorry; removed debris on Route GC43 from Lorry to Silligry; removed mud from above routes; and posted bridge and mine clearance signs.

One (1) platoon, Company B, patrolled Route N52 from Mars-Latour to Arnaville. One (1) platoon removed debris from overpass in the vicinity of Fontoy. One (1) platoon worked on construction of a bypass from Thiacourt to Rembercourt.

On the night of 22-23 Sep 44, one (1) platoon from Company C attempted to put a 40-ft Rolling Bailey Bridge across the Seille River in the vicinity of Cheminot. The attempt was not successful due to a warp in the structure and the load becoming unbalanced and sliding off dolly on move from site of construction to the river. (See attached report of this action)¹⁸.

One (1) platoon, Company C, patrolled roads in the vicinity of Champey.

Pvt. McCutcheon, Company C, LWA, and Pfc. Cook, Medical Detachment, LIA, evacuated to hospital.

One enlisted man returned.¹⁹

23 Sep 44: Vittonville:

Company A repaired and cleared approaches to bombed culvert south of Champey. One (1) squad maintained Route GC49 from Lorry to Arry. One (1) squad cleaned debris in Lorry and on Route GC43 from Lorry to Silligry. One (1) squad posted mine clearance and bridge classification signs.

One (1) platoon, Company B, worked on bypass, which is 90% complete, from Thiacourt to Rembercourt and cleared drainage ditches along Route N52 from Mars-Latour to Arnaville.

¹⁸ This report was not attached to the Monthly After Action Reports furnished by the National Archives and Records Administration.

¹⁹ This part of Monthly After Action Report starting with "Pvt. McCutcheon...." very hard to read.





Company C patrolled roads in the vicinity of Champey, swept for mines on the route from Buxieres to Pont-a-Mason, and posted mine clearance signs.

24 Sep 44: Vittonville:

Company A moved from the vicinity of Mardigny to the vicinity of Les Baraques²⁰, maintained bridge and approaches to bridge at Champey. One (1) squad maintained Route GC49 from Lorry to Arry. One (1) squad cleaned debris in Lorry and on Route GC43 from Lorry to Silligry. One (1) squad posted bridge and mine clearance signs where needed.

Company B maintained Thiacourt-Villegy-Pagny road to Pagny bridge across the Moselle River; completed work on Thiacourt-Rembercourt bypass; and patrolled Route N52 from Mars-Latour to Arnaville, clearing mud from road and opening drainage ditches. Two (2) squads put practice footbridge across the Moselle River in the vicinity of Pagny.

One platoon, Company C, took over maintenance of Bailey and ponton bridges in the vicinity of Pagny, with another platoon maintaining approaches thereto. One (1) platoon maintained Route N57 from Arry to Buxieres and cleared mud from road and posted bridge and mine clearance signs. Two (2) squads, Company C, put practice footbridge across the Moselle River in the vicinity of Pagny.

Company C moved to the vicinity of Jouville, arriving at 1730 hrs.

Tec 4 Guidroe, Company C, sent home due to sickness.

25 Sep 44:

Location: The Battalion was relieved from support of 7th Armored Division and placed in support of the 83rd and 90th Infantry Divisions along with other units of the 1139th Engineer Combat Group. The Command Post was moved from the vicinity of Vittonville to Angevillers (vU7889, Nord D'Guerre). The Battalion left Vittonville at 1700 hrs, arrived at Angevillers Garrison at 260030A Sep 44 and joined Headquarters of the 1139th Engineer Combat Group and attached units. The Battalion was garrisoned in an old French garrison formerly used for Maginot line troops. The garrison was well stocked with furniture and equipment left by enemy troops and comfortable living and administration quarters were established.

²⁰ This name hard to read. There is a village by this name in France.





Company A joined Headquarters at Angevillers, Company B moved from the vicinity of Buxieres to the vicinity of Jarney, and Company C moved from Jouville to the vicinity of Rombas.

Company A was relieved of maintenance of the bridge and approaches at Champey by the 160th Engineer Combat Battalion. The Company completed work on a bridge over a bombed-out culvert on Route N57 south of Champey.

Company B was relieved of maintenance of the Thiacourt-Villegy-Pagny road and Pagny bridge. The company also cleaned mud from Route N52 and maintained the road from Mars-Latour to Arnaville and posted bridge classification and mine clearance signs.

Company C was relieved of maintenance of ponton and Bailey bridges and approaches at Pagny.

Sgt. Hussey, Company C, sent to hospital due to sickness, non-battle.

One (1) Officer and one (1) enlisted man, $_AD^{21}$

26 Sep 44: Angevillers.

Company B moved from the vicinity of Jarney to Angevillers.

Company C began construction of a double-apron fence; constructed an anti-tank ditch and earthen pillbox to be used for assault training by the 90th Infantry Division.

All Companies present at Angevillers engaged in cleaning equipment, clothing, and barracks and policed the area.

27 Sep 44: Angevillers

Companies A and B cleaned equipment and provided work details for maintenance and police of garrison.

Company C built obstacles and fortifications in the vicinity of Fontoy on an assault training course for the 90th Infantry Division.

Two (2) enlisted men TTD^{22}

²¹ This acronym very hard to read. First letter unreadable.

²² This acronym very hard to read.





28 Sep 44: Angevillers

Companies A and B provided work details for maintenance and construction of the garrison.

Company C, less one (1) platoon, moved from the vicinity of Rombas and joined the Battalion at Angevillers Garrison. One (1) platoon remained at Rombas to continue work on fortifications for assault training of 90th Infantry Division in the vicinity of Fontoy.

One (1) enlisted man replacement received.

29 Sep 44: Angevillers:

All companies were provided details for operation and police of the garrison. One platoon, Company C, at Rombas, worked on fortifications for assault infantry training. Seven enlisted men with vehicles cleared wrecked German vehicles from Route IC25 in the vicinity of Roshinex, northwest of Ardun.

Pfc Pollard, Company B, was injured in a motorcycle accident and evacuated to hospital. Pfc Patterson, Company A, sick – hospital.

30 Sep 44: Angevillers:

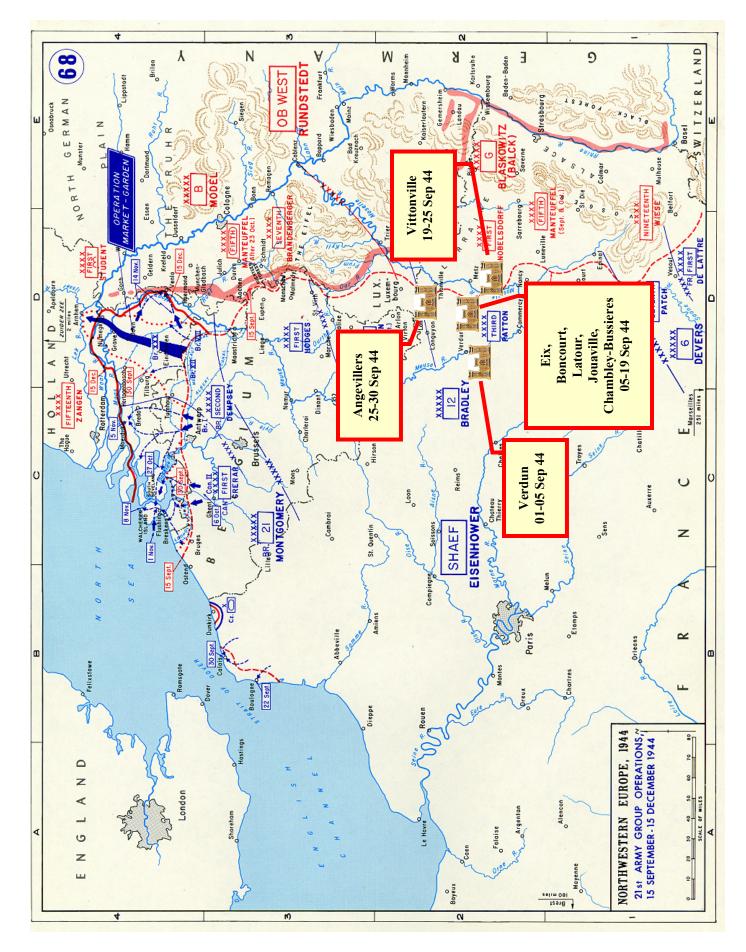
No change in events.

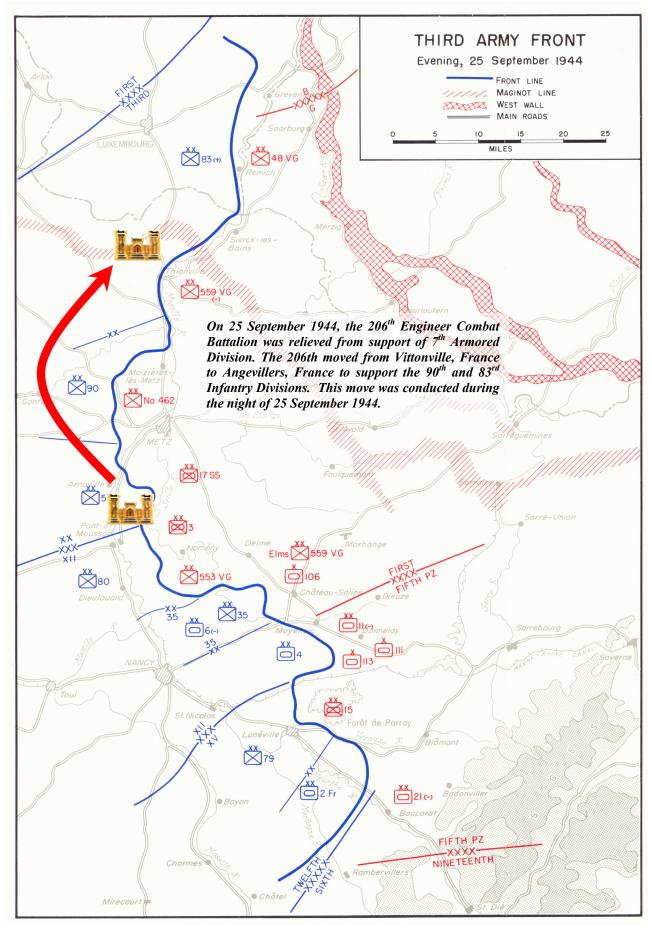
Pvt. Combs, Headquarters & Supply Company, was injured by shrapnel from the accidental explosion of a hand grenade. He was evacuated to hospital, non-battle injury.

<u>General</u>: During the period 1 Sep 44 to 30 Sep 44, both inclusive, Headquarters, and Headquarters & Service Company performed supply and administrative functions. Administrative installations during this period. Assigned Third U.S. Army; attached to XX Corps, attached to 1139th Engineer Combat Group. Commanding Officer for this period: Gilbert R. Pirrung, 0315129, Lt. Col., Combat Engineer.

For the Commanding Officer:

ROBERT E. MUSSER 1st Lt., CE Adjutant









NO AFTER ACTION REPORT FOR OCTOBER 1944

The 206th Engineer Combat Battalion spent the month of October 1944 at Angevillers, France preparing sites and conducting training exercises in support of the 90th Infantry Division.



Combat Engineers assemble a "Snake" demolition to be launched by an M-4 tank.

During October, 15 men trained as instructors in the use of the "Snake" demolition. On 18 October 1944 an exhibition was conducted at which a 368-foot "Snake" with $14 \frac{1}{2}$ pounds of TNT per foot, was successfully launched with the M-4 Tank – total time consumed in building and launching the "Snake" took one hour and nine minutes. Engineers of four (4) Divisions attended the demonstration.





HEADQUARTERS 206 ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION APO 403, U. S. ARMY

WCT/jds

4 Dec 44

SUBJECT: After Actions Report for Month of November 1944.

TO : Commanding General, XX Corps, APO 340, U. S. Army Attention: Historical Division.

1 Nov 44 to 13 Nov 44:

On 31 Oct 44, this Battalion began training with the 359th Infantry Regiment, 90th Infantry Division, in infantry assault river crossings, the infantry support raft and infantry support bridge. This training was conducted at a selected site on the Moselle River in the vicinity of Pagny. Training was accomplished by Companies A, B and C consecutively, each relieving the other at the training site, receiving day and night training. This training was completed on the night of 3 Nov 44.



Infantry Support Raft

Following the bridge training, the companies began day and night training in ferrying operations and the use of assault boats in the bivouac area. On the night of 4 Nov 44, Col. Pirrung conducted a class for Officers of the 359th Infantry Regiment. He discussed the technical phases of an assault crossing demonstrated and the

various types of boatloads designed to fit the infantry tactical organization. During the day of 5 Nov 44, at a site west of Errouville, Companies A, B, and C instructed the 3rd, 1st, and 2nd Battalions of the 359th Infantry Regiment, respectively, in the proper method of loading and carrying an assault boat. This phase of training brought together the Engineer Company Commanders and Infantry Battalion Commanders, as well as the Engineer Platoon Leaders and Infantry Company Commanders that were going to work together in the actual crossing.

A full-scale dry-run assault crossing was planned for the night of 6 Nov 44 at a site northwest of Crusnes that resembled the actual crossing area insofar as possible. This maneuver was successful in only one respect; it demonstrated the necessity for much more careful planning on the part of both engineers and infantry.





7 Nov 44 was spent in preparation by this Battalion, and at 1800A²³ hrs, the Battalion, less a Headquarters detachment, left Angevillers Garrison, moved out to establish bivouac in the vicinity of Sentzich in preparation to operating with the 359th Infantry in forcing a crossing of the Moselle River in the vicinity of Malling. The area was reached at 2330 hrs after moving 13 miles by motor march in total blackout. After the move to the vicinity of Sentzich, the Battalion marched five (5) miles to an area east of Bousse for the final dry run. Boats were not used but all signs and tracing tape were placed on specified azimuths. During the day of 8 Nov 44, final preparations and reconnaissance were made. At approximately 1800 hrs, a forward Command Post was established in the basement of a building in Gavisse and wire crews began laying wire to the assault sites. At 2330 hrs of 8 Nov 44, Companies A, B, and C moved out of the bivouac area to take up positions with the 359th Infantry Regiment to form boatloads of troops for the assault. Each assault boat crew consisted of three (3) Engineers from this Battalion as crew, and one Engineer Guide. Companies B and C of this Battalion operated 34 assault boats, and Company A maintained 16 boat crews in reserve, which were not used.



90th Infantry Division troops load into infantry assault boat with Engineer guides for an assault crossing of the Moselle River. Photograph from "Peragimus, We Accomplish, A Brief History of the 358th Infantry," courtesy of Daniel Sheridan.

H-Hour was 0330 hrs, 9 Nov 44, with Company B ferrying the first Battalion of the 359th Infantry Regiment and Company C ferrying the second Battalion. The operation was completed at approximately 0415 hrs, each Battalion of infantry being taken across in two (2) waves. Enemy resistance at the point of crossing was light, Company B getting one wave of infantry across before a shot was fired by the enemy. Later, at 0600 hrs, Company C ferried the 3rd Battalion across.

The assault was entirely successful as enemy forces were taken completely by surprise. Company C took 19 prisoners in the initial phases of the operation. In one instance, S/Sgt. Robert L. Harre, Platoon Sgt from McLeansboro, Ill., was paddling an

assault boat along the far shore of the river, when four (4) German soldiers stood up, handed their machine gun to him and climbed into the boat with him.

²³ Indicates 1800 Greenwich Mean Time, east of Paris, France.





A

At 0430, 9 Nov 44, Company A, this Battalion, with the 315th Engineer Combat Battalion, commenced construction of a foot bridge, but because of constant harassing machine gun and mortar fire, progress was slow and the attempt abandoned at about 0600 hrs. Construction of an infantry support bridge then began.

When this bridge was $\frac{3}{4}$ completed, an infantry support raft, ferrying a truck across the river, ran into and snapped the bridle lines holding the bridge. The bridge was thereby lost downstream at 1100 hrs on 9 Nov 44.



These could be 206th Engineer Combat Battalion troops constructing an infantry footbridge in the floodwaters of the Moselle River. Photograph from The Corps of Engineers: The War Against Germany.



Treadway bridge constructed across the Moselle River at Malling, France. These are likely 206th Engineer Combat Battalion men at work.

Immediately, upon the loss of the support bridge, salvage operations were started to regain some of the lost equipment. Preparations were then made to construct a treadway bridge at the same site. Construction began about 1800 hrs, 9 Nov 44, continued throughout the night and following day, and was completed about 101700 Nov 44. At 0655 hrs, 12 Nov 44, enemy artillery fire fell in the bridge area and five (5) pontons were reported punctured, thereby weakening the bridge. Traffic was temporarily suspended while repair crews work patching went to the punctured pontons and replacement pontons were sent for. Traffic was shortly resumed,

but at approximately 0755 additional shelling further damaged the bridge. A tank destroyer (TD), which was partially across at the time continued on across, but the bridge was weakened, and would not bear the weight of the vehicle. As the TD neared the far shore, the bridge sank into the water at an angle so that the force of the current, combined





with the weight of the vehicle, caused the bridge to break loose. This bridge was lost downstream at 0810 hrs, 12 Nov 44.

Salvage proceedings were immediately commenced, and preparations began to reconstruct the treadway bridge. Some delay was encountered in bringing up additional equipment as it was necessary to go to dumps as far away as Toul. Preparations of the abutments were commenced, however, and laying of anchor cables completed. The Battalion, less Company B, was relieved by the 160th Engineer Combat Battalion before this bridge was completed, however. Company B remained on the job, attached to the 160th Engineer Combat Battalion.

Because of the difficulty in bridging the river ferrying operations were maintained throughout the period. A ferry system was established operating three types of ferries. Infantry support rafts were operated by the 315th Engineer Combat Battalion, hauling jeeps, weapon carriers, and anti-tank guns. This ferry was instituted the morning of 9 Nov 44, was the one that knocked out the infantry support bridge, and in so doing, broke its own cable and was put out of operation.

A second type was a Class 40 ponton ferry, constructed of five (5) M-2 pontons and treads, powered by three power boats snubbed into the raft. This ferry was operated by this Battalion and transported medium tanks and TDs. By 1700 hrs, 12 Nov 44, a company of tanks and a company of TDs were crossed. In addition, a ferry system comprised of twelve storm boats with 55-hp motors, eight assault boats joined together in groups of two (2) and powered by four 22-hp outboard motors, and two (2) power boats was operated. This system commenced on 9 Nov 44, but was extended and put in command of Capt. James M. Lee of this organization at 0800 hrs, 10 Nov 44. These boats operated almost continuously, 24 hrs per day, stopping only when it was necessary to move or extend the pier due to changing water level. Two (2) platoons, one from Company A and one (1) from Company B, were kept to maintain the pier and act as stevedores in loading and unloading the boats. These boats carried ammunition, rations, and similar stores to the far shore, and evacuated wounded, which action alone won the commendation of the Medical Officer in charge of evacuation.

About the time of the assault, the water level began to rise, reaching flood stage. By the evening of the 10 Nov 44, the floodwaters had reached the edge of the town of Gavisse with a maximum-recorded depth of 55 inches on the road leading to the bridge. It was necessary, therefore, to wade 500 yds to the bridge site. The approach road to the bridge ended on an incline at the riverbank, so as to form an island at the bridge site during flood stage. For this phase of the operation, M-5 tractors were used to tow vehicles thru to the island so they could then go on across the bridge. The M-5s were also used to tow 8-ton, 16-ton, and 20-ton trailers, on which were loaded smaller vehicles and supplies, thru the water and across the bridge to unload on the other side. Two (2) cranes, one in Gavisse at the traffic control point, and one (1) across the river, were used





for the loading and unloading of the supplies. The crane across the river had been previously towed across by one of the M-5 tractors.

Bridging and ferrying operations continued during the flood stage. The water reached its crest at approximately 1200 hrs 11 Nov 44. Constant check of the water depth was made, as the movement of vehicles was dependent upon the receding of the water. The wading depth of



Engineer equipment and supplies are hauled to the Moselle River through the flood waters.

6-Ton Brockway trucks is 42 inches and of tanks, 30 inches. As soon as the water had reached to wading depth, the traffic control was notified as to when the vehicles could be sent thru. The bridge was completed and ready for use the evening of the 10 Nov 44; however, its use was prohibited by the flood water and it was not until the first M-5 got thru at 1500 on the 11 Nov 44 that the bridge could be utilized. Ten (10) Brockway trucks loaded with supplies and peeps²⁴, five (5) light tanks and three (3) TDs crossed the bridge before it was lost.



A bridge ponton being transported through the flood waters of the Moselle River.

The flood waters washed out parts of the approach road to the bridge, so, as the water receded, it was necessary to construct 100 ft. of hasty road. This was started about 1100 hrs, 12 Nov 44.

This Battalion, less Company B, was relieved at Malling by the 160th Engineer Combat Battalion

as of 1600 hrs, 13 Nov 44, to enable the 206th to return to Angevillers to prepare to support the 10th Armored Division. Company B remained at Malling, attached to the 160th Engineer Combat Battalion, until 19 Nov 44 at which time they joined the Battalion in support of 10th Armored Division at Obernaumen.

²⁴ Jeeps in World War II were also known as "peeps."





The whole operation was conducted under the most unfavorable conditions. Throughout the period, it was rainy and cold. It was necessary to work and operate equipment in water and mud. The overflowing of the river contributed to the already bad conditions. Operations were nonetheless carried on 24 hours per day, and night activity was conducted without the benefit of any light; the nights, due to stormy weather, were very black. Though the amount of resistance in the initial assault was light in the form of machine gun and small arms fire, it was not long before artillery and mortar fire was brought to bear on the bridge site and approaches, and continued throughout the operation. The flooding of the river greatly impeded our operations in that it made it necessary to extend the ferrying distance more than double its expected distance. It also made necessary the use of valuable equipment and materials that were badly needed elsewhere and it stopped all vehicular traffic from crossing the river for almost 24 hours and slowed it up for considerably longer. In addition, it caused men, already working under the most disagreeable conditions from 14 to 24 hours without relief, to work in water from knee to waist deep.

Casualties during the operation consisted of four (4) enlisted men killed and four (4) enlisted men wounded. One (1) man drowned when a boat overturned and one (1) man was killed and one (1) wounded by enemy artillery fire on the initial assault on the morning of 9 Nov 44. Two (2) men were killed and three (3) wounded by artillery fire on 13 Nov 44.

All types of engineer equipment and vehicles were used in the operation and drawn from all available sources during critical periods.

For this operation, the 991st Engineer Treadway Bridge Company, Company A of the 160th Engineer Combat Battalion, one (1) platoon of the 509th Engineer Light Ponton Company, and a platoon of the 161st Smoke Generating Company were attached to this organization under the command of Lt. Colonel Gilbert R. Pirrung, Commander, 206th Engineer Combat Battalion.

Despite the many difficulties encountered, the mission was accomplished. Troops, supplies, and vehicles were continuously moved across the river, bridge or no bridge, and the wounded were evacuated. That this Battalion played its part well may be concluded from the fact that the Division G-3 informally commended the Battalion to the Battalion Executive Officer for the good work done.

14 Nov 44 to 30 Nov 44:

After being relieved by the 160th Engineer Combat Battalion at Malling on 13 Nov 44, the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion, less Company B, returned to Angevillers. On the following day, 14 Nov 44, the Battalion, less Company B, left Angevillers to the vicinity of Thionville to move in support of the 10th Armored Division. On 15 Nov 44, the 206th moved across the Moselle River at Thionville in support of the 10th Armored







A column of M4 Sherman tanks.

Division; Company A moving in support of Combat Command A (CCA), and Company C in support of Combat Command B (CCB). Headquarters and Headquarters & Services Company moved in the latter column. From 15 Nov 44 to 19 Nov 44, the disposition the of Battalion's companies was as follows: Company А supporting CCA, Company C supporting CCB, and Company B attached to the 160th Engineer

Combat Battalion maintaining the bridge at Malling. On 19 Nov 44, Company B was relieved from support of the 160th, and joined the Battalion at Obernaumen.

On 20 Nov 44, Companies A and B moved in support of CCA and Company C remained in support of CCB, with Headquarters and Headquarters & Service Company

moving into the CCA column. This disposition remained until 30 Nov 44.

During this period in support of 10th Armored Division, the companies of the 206th swept for mines, filled craters, bridged anti-tank (AT) ditches, maintained roads. demolished pill boxes, and performed other engineer tasks while moving with the task forces and combat teams of the combat commands.



The 206th Engineer Combat Battalion bridged anti-tank ditches similar to those shown in this photograph in support of 10^{th} Armored Division.

As of 301200A Nov 44, this Battalion was relieved from attachment to the 1139th Engineer Combat Group, and support of 10th Armored Division, and attached to the 95th Infantry Division for an assault operation across the Saar River at Saarlautern.





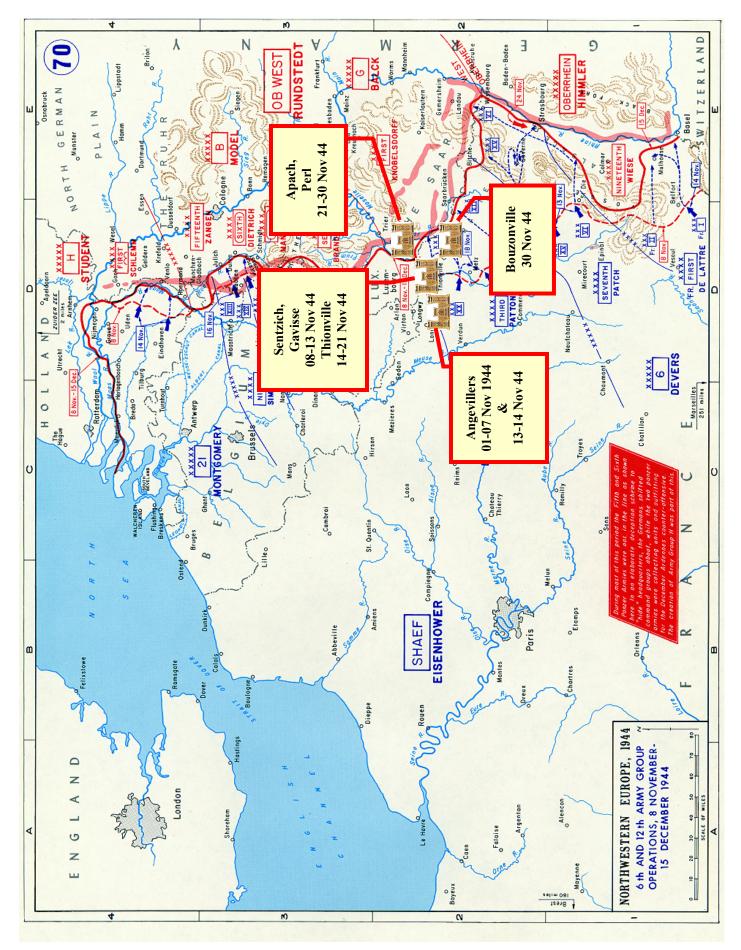
This organization first entered Germany on 21 Nov 44, when Command Post was established at Apach, in the vicinity of Perl. We again returned to France on 30 Nov 44, where we established a Command Post at Bouzonville, upon being attached to the 95th Infantry Division.

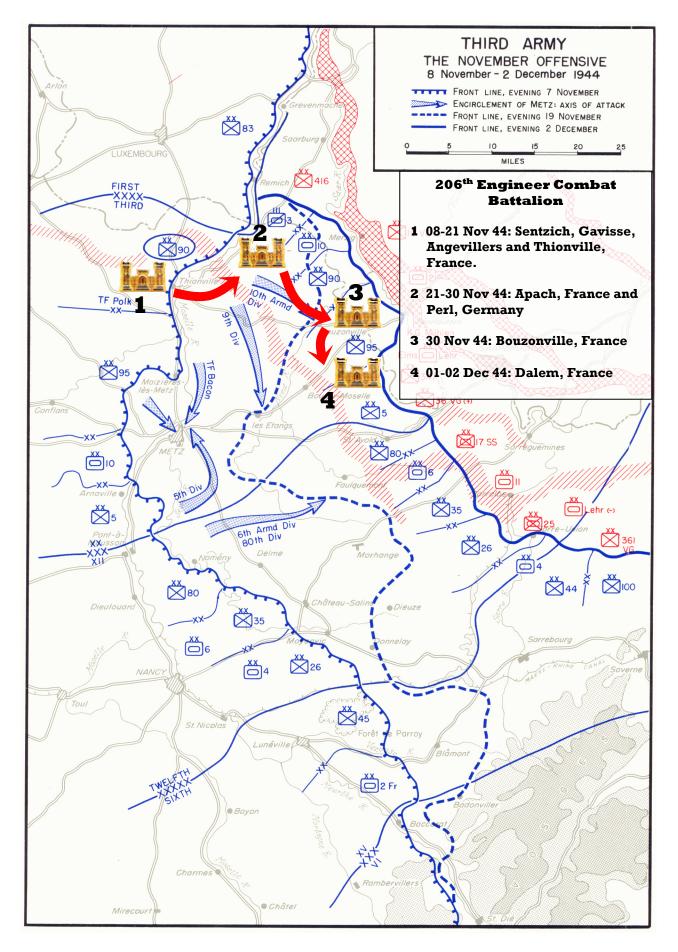
For the Commanding Officer:

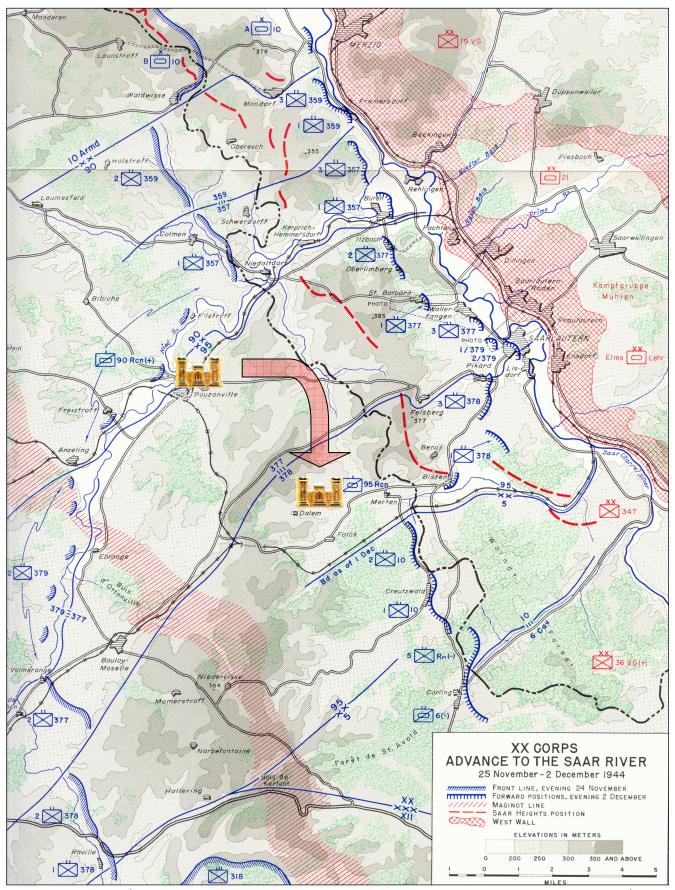
WILLIAM C. TROLINGER CWO, USA, Assistant S-1

3 Incls:

Incl 1: Unit Journal for Nov 44 Incl 2: S-1 Annex Incl 3: Overlays







Locations of the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion during the period 25 November – 02 December 1944. The 206th was located in Apach, France and Perl, Germany on 25 November 1944. These locations are off the top of this map. The Battalion moved to Bouzonville, France on 30 November 1944 and then to Dalem, France on 01 December 1944.



HISTORY OF THE 206[™] ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION APRIL 1943 – NOVEMBER 1945



HEADQUARTERS COMBAT COMMAND B 10TH ARMORED DIVISION APO 260 U.S. ARMY

2 December 1944

SUBJECT: Commendation.

TO : CO, 206 Engr C Bn.

1. During the period 7-30 November, various elements of your command were supporting Combat Command B and materially assisted us in our advance between the MOSELLE and SAAR RIVERS!

2. I wish to command you for your wholehearted cooperation and engineering advice, and further to command the Officers and men of Company C for their untiring efforts, disregard of danger and the truly remarkable total of bridges built and roads cleared of both mines and debris. Their motto might well have been "CCB" must move on.

3. The knowledge that the 206th Engr C En would support us in future operations would be most welcome.

s/ E. W. Piburn t/ EDWIN W. PIBURN Brig Gen. USA Comdg

AG- 201.22 HQ 10TH ARMD DIV, APO 260, U. S. Army, 8 December 1944.

TO: Commanding Officer, 206th Engr Combat Bat alion., APO 403, U.S. Army.

The Commanding General, 10th Armored Division, is pleased to forward the above letter .

For the Commanding General:

s/ F. J. Mallon t/ F. J. MALLON Lt. Col., A.G.D., Adjutant General. Reproduced by Hq 206 Engr C En., 13 Hay 45.

Note: This letter is from the personnel file of 1st Lt. John G. Graham.





BRONZE STAR MEDAL²⁵

Gilbert R. Pirrung, Lt. Col.

Serial 0315129

CITATION

For meritorious achievement in connection with military operations against the enemy in the *** [Moselle River crossing operations] between 8 November 1944 and 12 November 1944. Lieutenant Colonel Pirrung directed his men in the engineer phases of an assault crossing of the **** [Moselle] River near **** [Malling, France] to establish a bridgehead from which a treadway bridge could be constructed. Under his proficient guidance, the structure was speedily installed. When the initial span was destroyed by enemy shell fire, Lieutenant Colonel Pirrung energetically directed the construction of a second bridge. His continuous presence at the operations site inspired his laboring crews to an expeditious and successful accomplishment of their mission. Lieutenant Colonel Pirrung's organizational ability, determination and unswerving devotion to duty reflect credit upon himself and the Armed Forces of the United States.

²⁵ This Bronze Star Citation is typed from a copy of the original from the records of Lt. Col. Gilbert R. Pirrung, furnished by his daughter, Mrs. Lynette Pirrung. The information in brackets has been added. The original citation has only the asterisks shown, apparently for security reasons. The nature and locations of combat operations were classified information for several years after the war ended.





HEADQUARTERS 206 ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION APO 403, U. S. ARMY

3 Dec 44

Report of Action with 90th Infantry Division²⁶

The 206th Engineer Combat Battalion first became affiliated with the 90th Infantry Division on 26 Sep 44. On 25 Sep 44 we were relieved from support of the 7th Armored Division, which we had supported on their dash across France, and were placed in support of the 83rd and 90th Infantry Divisions along with the other units of the 1139th Engineer Combat Group. On 26 Sep 44, Company C of this organization began the construction of double-apron fences, anti-tank ditches and earthen pill-boxes in the vicinity of Rombas to be used for assault training by the 90th Infantry Division. This project was completed on 3 Oct 44.

During the month of October, intensive training was conducted by this Battalion in engineer tasks, with emphasis on assault of fortified positions, and day and night training in construction of Bailey and treadway bridges. An exhibition in the use of the "snake" demolition on 18 Oct 44, at which a 368 ft "snake" was successfully launched with an M-4 tank, was attended by the Division Engineer of the 90th Infantry Division.

On 31 Oct 44, this Battalion began training with the 359th Infantry Regiment, of the 90th Infantry Division, in infantry assault river crossings, the infantry support raft and infantry support bridge. This training was conducted at a selected site on the Moselle River in the vicinity of Pagny. Training was accomplished by Companies A, B, and C of the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion consecutively, each relieving the other at the training site, receiving day and night training. This training was completed on the night of 3 Nov 44.

Following the bridge training, the companies began day and night training in ferrying operations and use of assault boats in the bivouac area. On the night of 4 Nov 44, Col. Pirrung conducted a class for Officers of the 359th Infantry Regiment. He discussed the technical phases of an assault crossing and demonstrated the various types of boatloads designed to fit the infantry tactical organization. During the day of 5 Nov 44 at a site west of Errouville, Companies A, B, C instructed the 3rd, 1st, and 2nd Battalions of the 359th Infantry Regiment, respectively, in the proper method of loading and carrying an assault boat. This phase of training brought together the Engineer Company Commanders and Infantry Battalion Commanders, as well as Engineer Platoon Leaders and Infantry Company Commanders that were going to work together in the actual crossing.

²⁶ This report is very similar, and some parts are identical, to the preceding After Action Report for November 1944.





A full-scale dry-run assault crossing was planned for the night of 6 Nov 44 at the site northwest of Crusnes that resembled the actual crossing area insofar as possible. This maneuver was successful in only one respect, it demonstrated the necessity for much more careful planning on the part of both engineers and infantry.

7 Nov 44 was spent in preparation by this Battalion, and at 1800A hrs, the Battalion, less a Headquarters detachment, left Angevillers Garrison, moved out to establish bivouac in the vicinity of Sentzich in preparation to operating with the 359th Infantry Regiment in forcing a crossing of the Moselle River in the vicinity of Malling. The area was reached at 2330 hrs after moving 13 miles by motor march in total blackout. After their move to the vicinity of Sentzich, the Battalion marched five (5) miles to an area east of Bousse for their final dry run. Boats were not used but all signs and tracing tape were placed on specified azimuths. During the day of the 8 Nov 44, final preparations and reconnaissance were made. At approximately 1800 hrs, a forward Command Post was established in the basement of a building in Gavisse and wire crews began laying wire to the assault sites. At 2330 hrs of 8 Nov 44, Companies A, B, and C moved out of the bivouac area to take up positions with the 359th Infantry Regiment to form boatloads for the assault. Each assault boat crew consisted of three (3) Engineers from this Battalion as crew, and one (1) Engineer guide. Companies B and C of this Battalion operated 34 assault boats, and Company A maintained 16 boat crews in reserve, which were not used.

H-Hour was 0330 hrs, 9 Nov 44, with Company B ferrying the First Battalion of the 359th Infantry Regiment and Company C ferrying the Second Battalion. The operation was completed at approximately 0415 hrs, each Battalion of infantry being taken across in two waves. Enemy resistance at the point of crossing was light, Company B getting one wave of infantry across before a shot was fired by the enemy. Later at 0600 hrs, Company C ferried the 3rd Battalion across.

The assault was entirely successful, enemy forces being taken completely by surprise. Company C took 19 prisoners in the initial phases of the operation. In one instance, S/Sgt Robert L. Harre, Platoon Sgt from McLeansboro, Ill., was paddling an assault boat along the far shore of the river, when four German soldiers stood up, handed their machine gun to him and climbed into the boat with him.

At 0430, 9 Nov 44, Company A, this Battalion, with the 315th Engineer Combat Battalion, commenced the construction of a foot bridge, but because of the constant harassing machine gun and mortar fire, progress was slow and the attempt abandoned at about 0600; construction of an infantry support bridge than began.

When this bridge was three-fourths completed, an infantry support raft, ferrying a truck across the river, ran into and snapped the bridle lines holding the bridge. The bridge was thereby lost downstream at 1100 hrs on the 9 Nov 44.





Immediately, upon the loss of the support bridge, salvage operations were started to regain some of the lost equipment. Preparations were then made to construct a treadway bride at the same site. Construction began about 1800 hrs, 9 Nov 44, continued throughout the night and following day, being completed about 101700 Nov 44. At 0655hrs, 12 Nov 44, enemy artillery fire fell in the bridge area and five pontons were reported punctured, thereby weakening the bridge. Traffic was temporarily suspended while repair crews went to work patching the punctured pontons, and replacement pontons were sent for. Traffic was shortly resumed, but at approximately 0755, additional shelling further damaged the bridge. A tank destroyer (TD), which was partially across at the time continued on across, but the bridge was weakened, and would not bear the weight of the vehicle. As the TD neared the far shore, the bridge sank into the water at an angle, so that the force of the current in combination with the weight of the vehicle caused the bridge to break loose. This bridge was lost downstream at 0810 hrs, 12 Nov 44.

Salvage proceedings were immediately commenced, and preparations began to reconstruct the treadway bridge. Some delay was encountered in bringing up additional equipment, as it was necessary to go to dumps as far away as Toul. Preparation of the abutments was commenced, however, and laying of anchor cables completed. The Battalion, less company B, was relieved by the 160th Engineer Combat Battalion before this bridge was completed, however. Company B remained on the job, attached to the 160th Engineer Combat Battalion.

Because of the difficulty in bridging the river, ferrying operations were maintained throughout the period. A ferry system was established operating three types of ferries. Infantry support rafts were operated by the 315th Engineer Combat Battalion, hauling jeeps, weapon carriers, and anti-tank guns. This ferry was instituted the morning of the 9 Nov 44, was the one that knocked out the infantry support bridge, and in so doing, broke its own cable and was put out of operation.

A second type was a Class 40 ponton ferry constructed of five M-2 pontons and treads, and powered by three powerboats snubbed into the raft. This ferry was operated by this Battlion and transported medium tanks and TDs. By 1700 hrs, 12 Nov 44, a company of tanks and a company of TDs were crossed. In addition a ferry system comprised of twelve storm boats with 55-hp motors, eight assault boats joined together in groups of two (2) and powered by four (4) 22-hp outboard motors, and two (2) power boats was operated. This system commenced on 9 Nov 44, but was extended and put in command of Capt. James M. Lee of this organization at 0800 hrs 10 Nov 44. These boats operated almost continuously, 24 hrs per day, stopping only when it was necessary to move or extend the pier due to changing water level. Two (2) platoons, one (1) from Company A and one (1) from Company B, were kept to maintain the pier and act as stevedores in the loading and unloading of the boats. These boats carried ammunition,





rations, and similar stores to the far shore, and evacuated wounded, which action alone won the commendation of the Medical Officer in charge of evacuation.

About the time of the assault, the water level began to rise, reaching flood stage. By the evening of the 10 Nov 44, the floodwaters had reached the edge of the town of Gavisse with a maximum-recorded depth of 55 inches on the road leading to the bridge. It was necessary, therefore, to wade 500 yds to the bridge site. The approach road to the bridge ended on an incline at the riverbank, so as to form an island at the bridge site during flood stage. For this phase of the operation, M-5 tractors were used to tow vehicles thru to the island so they could then go on across the bridge. The M-5s were also used to tow 8-ton, 16-ton, and 20-ton trailers, on which were loaded smaller vehicles and supplies, thru the water and across the bridge to unload on the other side. Two (2) cranes, one in Gavisse at the traffic control point, and one across the river, were used for the loading and unloading of the supplies. The crane across river had been previously towed across by one of the M-5 tractors.

Bridging and ferrying operations continued during the flood stage. The water reached its crest at approximately 1200 hrs on 11 Nov 44. Constant check of the water depth was made, as the movement of vehicles was dependent upon the receding of the water. The wading depth of 6-Ton Brockway trucks is 42 inches and of tanks, 30 inches. As soon as the water had reached wading depth, the traffic control was notified so that the vehicles could be sent thru. Though the bridge was completed and ready for use the evening of the 10 Nov 44, its use was prohibited by the flood water, and it was not until the first M-5 got thru at 1500 on the 11 Nov 44, that the bridge could be utilized. Ten (10) Brockway trucks loaded with supplies and peeps, five (5) light tanks and three (3) TDs crossed the bridge before it was lost.

The floodwaters washed out parts of the approach road to bridge, so, as the water receded, it was necessary to construct 100 ft of hasty road. This was started about 1100 hrs, 12 Nov 44.

This Battalion, less Company B, was relieved at Malling by the 160th Engineer Combat Battalion as of 1600 hrs, 13 Nov 44, to enable us to return to Angevillers to prepare to support the 10th Armored Division. Company B remained at Malling, attached to the 160th Engineer Combat Battalion, until 19 Nov 44, at which time they joined the Battalion in support of 10th Armored Division at Obernaumen.

The whole operation was conducted under the most unfavorable conditions. Throughout the period, it was rainy and cold. It was necessary to work and operate equipment in water and mud. The overflowing of the river contributed to the already bad conditions. Operations were nonetheless carried on 24 hours per day, and night activity was conducted without the benefit of any light; the nights, due to stormy weather, were very black. Though the amount of resistance in the initial assault was light in the form of machine gun and small arms fire, it was not long before artillery and mortar fire was





brought to bear on the bridge site and approaches, and continued throughout the operation. The overflowing of the river greatly impeded our operations in that it made it necessary to extend the ferrying distance more than double its expected distance; it made necessary the use of valuable equipment and materials that were badly needed elsewhere; it stopped all vehicular traffic across the river for almost 24 hours and slowed it up for considerably longer. In addition, it caused men, already working under the most disagreeable conditions from 14 to 24 hours without relief, to work in water from knee to waist deep.

Casualties during the operation consisted of four (4) enlisted men killed and four (4) enlisted men wounded. One (1) man drowned when a boat overturned, and one (1) man was killed and one (1) wounded by enemy artillery fire on the initial assault on the morning of 9 Nov 44. Two (2) men were killed and three (3) wounded by artillery fire on 13 Nov 44.

All types of Engineer equipment and vehicles were used in the operation and drawn from all available sources during critical periods.

For this operation the 991st Engineer Treadway Bridge Company, Company A of the 160th Engineer Combat Battalion, one (1) platoon of the 509th Engineer Light Ponton Company, and one (1) platoon of the 161st Smoke Generating Company were attached to this organization under the command of Lt. Colonel Gilbert R. Pirrung, Commander, 206th Engineer Combat Battalion.

Despite the many difficulties encountered, the mission was accomplished. Troops, supplies, and vehicles were continuously moved across the river, bridge or no bridge, and the wounded were evacuated. That this Battalion played its part well may be concluded from the fact that the 10th Armored Division G-3 informally commended the Battalion to the Battalion Executive Officer, for the good work done.





HEADQUARTERS 206 ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION APO 403, U. S. ARMY

5 Jan 45

SUBJECT: After Action Report for December 1944.

TO : Commanding General, XX Corps, APO 340, U. S. Army Attn: Historical Officer

On 301200 Nov 44, the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion was relieved from support of the 10th Armored Division and attachment to the 1139th Engineer Combat Group, and attached to the 95th Infantry Division for an assault crossing on the Saar River at Lisdorf. The Battalion, then at Apach, Germany [France] proceeded to Bouzonville, France to prepare for the crossing.

On 1 Dec 44, a forward Command Post was established at Dalem, with Companies A, B, and C moving to that location and Headquarters & Service Company and a Headquarters detachment remaining at Bouzonville. Preparations continued during the day, including the gathering of the necessary equipment and reconnaissance, such preparation continuing throughout the 2 & 3 Dec 44. During this period, the companies were following the infantry advance, filling anti-tank ditches, sweeping for mines, and repairing roads on the Main Supply Route (MSR).

On 3 Dec 44, the forward Command Post was advanced to Altforweiler, at which time we came under enemy artillery fire, which intermittently fell in the town. No personnel or equipment losses were sustained at this time, however.

On 042000A Dec 44, the Command Post was moved forward to Lisdorf, all units moving in under cover of darkness, positions and making taking final preparations for the forthcoming assault, which was scheduled for 050600 Dec 44. Previous reconnaissance of the assault sites along the river having been made, the boats were laid out in the vicinity of the river, from which points they would be carried to the assault sites by the infantry. In reconnoitering his site, and preparing the



Infantry troops carrying assault boat.

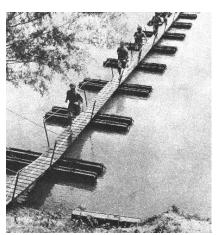
area over which he would have to carry his boats, Capt. Patterson, Company C, rounded up approximately 30 head of cattle and horses in Lisdorf and drove them across the area to clear the area of any S-mines.





The first wave jumped off at the scheduled hour, 0600, on 5 Dec 44, Company B ferrying the 3rd Battalion of the 378th Infantry Regiment on the left flank and Company C ferrying the 1st Battalion of the 378th Infantry Regiment on the right flank. Company A had one platoon standing by for reserve boat crews, but they were not used. The initial wave met only sporadic rifle fire, however at 0624, the enemy fired a red flare into the air, apparently a pre-arranged signal, giving the alarm, and immediately, fire from weapons of all types and calibers was brought to bear on the town and the river. Large caliber artillery was poured into the town of Lisdorf, antiaircraft guns were leveled and fired across the river, as well as machine gun and small arms fire.

One (1) platoon, Company A, was scheduled to build an infantry support bridge immediately after the assault waves were crossed, however, enemy fire was so intense, it was impossible to start the construction. However, a footbridge was constructed, in protection of the buildings of the town, in sections, and the sections hand-carried to the river and put in place. As this bridge site was in defilade, protection was provided from direct fire while putting the bridge in place. Construction of the bridge commenced about 0600 and the sections completed ready for placement by 0700 hrs. By 0746, the bridge had been built across the river, and infantry troops were moving across it.



Infantry footbridge

As of 050800 Dec 44, this Battalion was relieved from attachment to 95th Infantry Division and attached to 1139th Engineer Combat Group with the information that the Battalion was to cross the 90th Infantry Division across the Saar River north of the 95th Division sector. We were relieved at Lisdorf by the 204th Engineer Combat Battalion, and shortly after 0800 began to move our troops back to Alt-Forweiler by infiltration to get what rest they could prior to moving to support the 90th Infantry Division. The temporary Command Post at Lisdorf was closed at 1000, and established in Alt-Forweiler at 1015.

Col. Pirrung, Battalion Commander, had left Lisdorf at approximately 0100, after receipt of a message of reverting to control of the 1139th Engineer Combat Group, to go to Group Headquarters, and proceed on to 90th Infantry Division Headquarters, to get information on the 90th Infantry Division crossing and make necessary plans. In the early afternoon, he sent a message to Maj. Wing, Executive Officer, to send a quartering party to Wallerfangen with the Adjutant, and to send the S-2, S-3, Commanding Officers of Companies B and C, and an additional Officer from each company, and Capt. Greer to Gunsigen immediately to meet the Commanding Officer at Headquarters of the 358th Infantry Regiment. At 1700, the Adjutant returned, and at 1730 hrs, we cleared Alt-Forweiler and proceeded by motor march to Wallerfangen, arriving at 1900 hrs and establishing a Command Post in the basement of a school building.





By the time the troops arrived, the Commanding Officer [Battalion Commander] and Company Commanders had their plans formed for the operation, the assault sites selected, and had performed a daylight recon over the area in which they were to operate. Capt Greer, with the two additional Company Officers the Commanding Officer [Battalion Commander] had called for earlier in the day, had been dispatched, with trucks, to pick up the required number of assault boats from the 179th Engineer Combat Battalion at Niedeldorf.

The plan of action prescribed that Company B was to ferry the 3rd Battalion of the 358th Infantry Regiment, and Company C the 1st Battalion, at the selected sites just north of Wallerfangen; Company B on the left flank; Company C on the right flank; H-Hour to be at 060415 Dec 44. This required the men of this Battalion to effect a second assault crossing of the Saar River, involving two different infantry divisions, at two different



locations, in less than 24 hrs. A 90-minute artillery barrage by XX Corps Artillery was scheduled for 2130 hrs to cover the sound of placing the boats in position. Rendezvous with the infantry was set for 0330 hrs at previously selected sites some distance from where the boats were placed, so that the infantry troops could be formed into boatloads, with the engineer crews and engineer guide, without arousing the attention of the enemy. The boats were to be concealed in the woods bordering the road, which ran along the riverbank in the selected area. The road was to be utilized in placing the boats, by idling along the road as the boats were unloaded and spaced, the noise of the operation being covered by the pre-arranged artillery barrage. The infantry

troops were to be guided down to the boats, together with their engineer crews, and at 0410 hrs, pick up the boats, head for the river, launch the boats and go across without further delay or signal.

By 1955 hrs, however, no word had been received as to the location of the boats, so the Commanding Officer called the 179th Engineer Combat Battalion and talked to Capt Greer, being informed that one of the trucks hauling the equipment had a flat tire and was delaying the getting of the boats on their way. It was then decided to send the other trucks, hauling Company C boats, on ahead, and Company B boats to follow as soon as possible. Because of the delay, the artillery barrage, scheduled for 2130, was postponed till 2345.

By 2200, Company C boats arrived. They then proceeded up the road along the river to the place where the boats were to be layed out. However, the Company ran into a roadblock - Belgian gate type - halting its progress, as it was impossible to go around it.





This road had previously been swept for mines, and the gates had not been closed at that time, so it was an unexpected obstacle and delay. There were a number of German civilians living in caves along the river and it is believed one of them was responsible for closing the gate. Attempts were made to remove the obstacle as noiselessly as possible, with a hacksaw and pinch bar, however these attempts were futile and it was found necessary to use the more expeditious, but noisy, means of blowing it open with TNT. By 060155, this had been done, and the trucks continued only to run into another similar type obstacle further along the road. This was immediately blown at 060219, and, as by that time, the Company C boat line had been staked out, and boat crews standing by, it was apparent that Company C would be ready and waiting for H-hour.

In the meantime, the Company B boats had gotten underway and were proceeding along a north route (Company C had used a south route in bringing in their boats) to bring them into the north site. At 052345 hrs, 10 minutes after Company C ran into their obstacle, Lt. Rhodes, bringing in the Company B boats, reported in by telephone that the lead truck of his two (2) trucks, had struck a mine and was disabled. It being a narrow road, the disabled truck completely blocked the road so that the rear truck was not able to go around and continue with its load, nor could it turn around. These two trucks, and one trailer hitched to the lead truck, were hauling a total of 24 boats, the boats necessary for Company B to complete its mission. Lt Rhein, Motor Officer, was immediately dispatched with a wrecker and crew to turn around the good truck, hitch the trailer, and try to get it to the river by another route. This would provide 16 boats at least for the operation.

In the meantime it was determined to turn over to Company B the 14 reserve boats carried on a BSO trailer, and it was established that Company C also had 8 spare boats in their load, which were turned over to Company B, the 22 boats being enough for the operation. These boats reached Company B and were in place, ready for the



Infantry and Combat Engineer troops in an assault boat making a river assault crossing under fire.

operation, prior to H-hour. The boats, which had been delayed, did not arrive in time and when they did get in, were taken directly to the Battalion Command Post area as reserves.

Company C took the 1st Battalion of the 358th Infantry Regiment over in three (3) waves, jumping off at H-hour with the first wave. By 0447 hrs, they had completed the assault, and had started to withdraw with the exception of three (3) crews, which remained for evacuation purposes.





They had met little opposition and experienced no difficulty.

Company B, however, did not get under way at H-hour due to the inability of the engineer guides and the infantry to find each other. The infantry did not show up at the rendezvous point at the appointed time, and after searching for some time, were finally located by the Company B Commander and 1st Sgt, who with one of the Company B Platoon Commanders, immediately formed them into three (3) groups and guided them to the site where the boats were layed out. By 0552, the infantry had been organized at the boat sites, and the first wave taken across shortly thereafter, and the Infantry Battalion completely crossed by 0620 hrs. More opposition in the form of machine gun fire was encountered in this sector.

Soon after the 3rd Battalion of the 358th Infantry Regiment crossed, the 2nd Battalion (reserve) began arriving for crossing, and Company C crews were sent down stream to the Company B sector to cross the reserve battalion.

The Dillingen bridgehead had been successfully established and by 0925, the infantry had reached their first phase line.

During the day of 6 Dec 44, preparations were under way to build an M-2 treadway bridge and to start a ferry service for supply and evacuation. However, at 1930



Ferrying operations conducted by Company C, 206th Engineer Combat Battalion, in support of the 358th Infantry Regiment, 90th Infantry Division. Photograph from "Peragimus, We Accomplish, A Brief History of the 358th Infantry," courtesy of Daniel Sheridan.

Battalion hrs. the was informed to suspend any work on the bridge, as it would be 179th constructed by the Engineer Combat Battalion. Preparations for ferries continued however, getting boats, motors, and operators from other engineer units. Beginning at 1500 hrs, one squad of Company C began evacuating wounded by boat. During the night of 6 & 7 Dec 44, ferrying of supplies and evacuation of wounded, was carried on with 17 storm boats powered by 22-hp motors, involving one (1) platoon of Company C. All required ferrying was completed by

070700 Dec 44. It was necessary to suspend operations along the river during daylight because of the complete observation the enemy had of the Saar River, which was not completely obscured by the smoke. As it was, after the crossing was made, enemy





artillery and mortar fire was directed along the riverbank, and when any movement was observed, heavy concentrations of fire were directed at that point.

During the day of 7 Dec 44, preparations were made to construct and operate an infantry support raft the following night for the purpose of ferrying a minimum of three (3) jeeps and three (3) anti-tank guns across. This operation was not accomplished this night however, as what was thought to be an anti-tank ditch was found on the other side of the river. Ferrying of supplies with storm boats proceeded.

Further recon of the far shore showed the ditch was not an anti-tank ditch, and did not cross the road leading from the far side of the old civilian ferry site, which was to be used to move the vehicles inland.

Plans to operate two (2) infantry support rafts continued in preparation and further recon made during the night of 7 & 8 Dec and 8 Dec., two (2) platoons from Company A to build and operate them. By 082000 Dec 44, the first ferry was ready for operation and at 090500, the second ferry was ready, and the ferrying of jeeps, anti-tank guns, and tank destroyers began. Smoke protection made it possible for these operations to carry on during the day without being pinpointed by artillery, though enemy artillery constantly was thrown along the riverbank, and frequently became so intense, it was necessary to suspend operations. Also, the frequent and heavy shelling continuously punctured the floats, so that it was necessary to stop for repairs.



Soldiers of the 161st Chemical Smoke Generating Company, U.S. Third Army, a Negro unit, move a barrel of oil in preparation to refilling an M-2 smoke generator, which spews forth a heavy cloud of white smoke. These men are engaged in laying a smoke screen to cover the 206th ferrying operations across the Saar River near Wallerfangen, Germany. December 11, 1944. Rothenberger. 111-SC-197552.

In addition to the ferrying operations, during 8 Dec 44, one (1) platoon of Company C prepared for the demolition of abutments of a destroyed concrete bridge across the river in anticipation of walking tanks across the debris. Also, Company B, with one (1) platoon of Company C attached crossed the 359th Infantry Regiment on the night of 8 Dec 44 without opposition.

The ferrying operations, with infantry support rafts and storm boats continued thru-out the period of establishing the Dillingen bridgehead day and night, under artillery, mortar and machine gun fire, except for those periods when artillery concentrations were so intense, it was necessary to temporarily suspend activities. Many vehicles, including





tanks and tank destroyers were moved across the Saar River in this manner, in addition to regular supply and evacuation.



A tank destroyer is loaded onto an infantry support raft in the 358th Infantry sector by Combat Engineers of the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion. Notice the corduroy road constructed to the edge of the Saar River to prevent vehicles from sticking in the mud.

On 12 Dec 44, logs were cut from the wooded area bordering the river, and the construction of two (2) corduroy roads commenced. These roads ran from the far shore of the Saar River, where rafts unloaded, to the road running inland from an old civilian ferry site, to enable the vehicles ferried to transverse the mud to the road. А previously constructed plank road would not stand the moving of numerous and heavy The roads were vehicles. about 500 yds long, and the

construction and the maintenance of the roads continued daily.

Due to the enemy counter-attack in the First U.S. Army sector²⁷, we were put on a two-hour alert to withdraw from Wallerfangen on 20 Dec 44; however, no movement was

made until 21 Dec 44. On 21 Dec 44 we moved from Wallerfangen by infiltration and established Command Post at Bouzonville (wQ1378, Nord D'Guerre), with the exception of rear elements consisting of the Commanding Officer, Executive Officer, S-3 Section, and operating platoons, which remained to complete the withdrawal of the infantry. Most of the tanks, tank destroyers and vehicles had been brought back across the Saar River during 21 Dec 44; however, it was not until 220930 Dec 44 that the last of them were ferried back across. The foot troops were evacuated back across the river between 0400-0600, 22 Dec 44. The



These are likely 206th Combat Engineer and 90th Infantry Division troops aboard an infantry support raft during ferrying operations at the Dillingen, Germany bridgehead.

²⁷ This refers to the Ardennes Offensive by the Germans, or most commonly known as "The Battle of the Bulge."





ferrying operations were terminated as of 1000, 22 Dec 44 and rear elements closed in Bouzonville at 1130, 22 Dec 44.

On 22 Dec 44, this Battalion was relieved of support to the 90th Infantry Division and placed in support of the 95th Infantry Division and assigned the task of constructing a series of barrier zones in the 95th Division sector. Immediate recon of the areas was commenced and actual construction of obstacles commenced on 28 Dec 44 in areas designated as Bee Zone, Chowzone, and Nied River Zone. Obstacles consisted of minefields, abates, craters, and charges placed on the bridge ready for demolition. Construction of obstacles was continuing at the end of December.

In addition, a pile bridge was constructed at Eblange and guarding of bridges at Bouzonville and Bettange was a continuous function. Also, constant recon of roads in our assigned area for enemy demolition was performed as well as blowing of bombs and enemy demolition found in the area.

Out of our experience with the 90th and 95th Infantry Divisions in the crossings of the Saar River, it was determined that there were insufficient motor-boat operators, and many of those who were available were not sufficiently trained or experienced in operating under combat conditions where continuous day and night ferrying was



Combat Engineers construct a section of corduroy road. Corduroy road is constructed from poles cut from the woods and laid in mats to permit vehicles to travel along muddy roads.

necessary. Consequently, beginning 26 Dec 44, two (2) men from each company were detailed to attend motor-boat schools for three (3) days duration conducted by the 180th Engineer Battalion (Heavy Ponton), the 135th Engineer Combat Battalion, and the 179th Engineer Combat Battalion - a different group every three (3) days.

Also out of our experience with corduroy road in the 90th Infantry Division operation, it was determined that additional training should be had in the construction of corduroy roads,



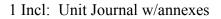


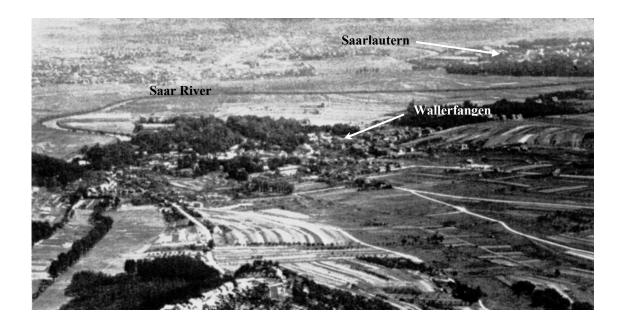
this school being conducted by one platoon of Company C^{28} this organization, 25-28 Dec 44. In addition, a gas school was conducted for two (2) days at this Headquarters, and a Brockway school for three (3) days, attended by the motor sergeant, two (2) mechanics, and two (2) men from each company.

As the period ends, construction of obstacles, patrolling and reconnaissance of roads and bridges, and guarding of bridges continues.

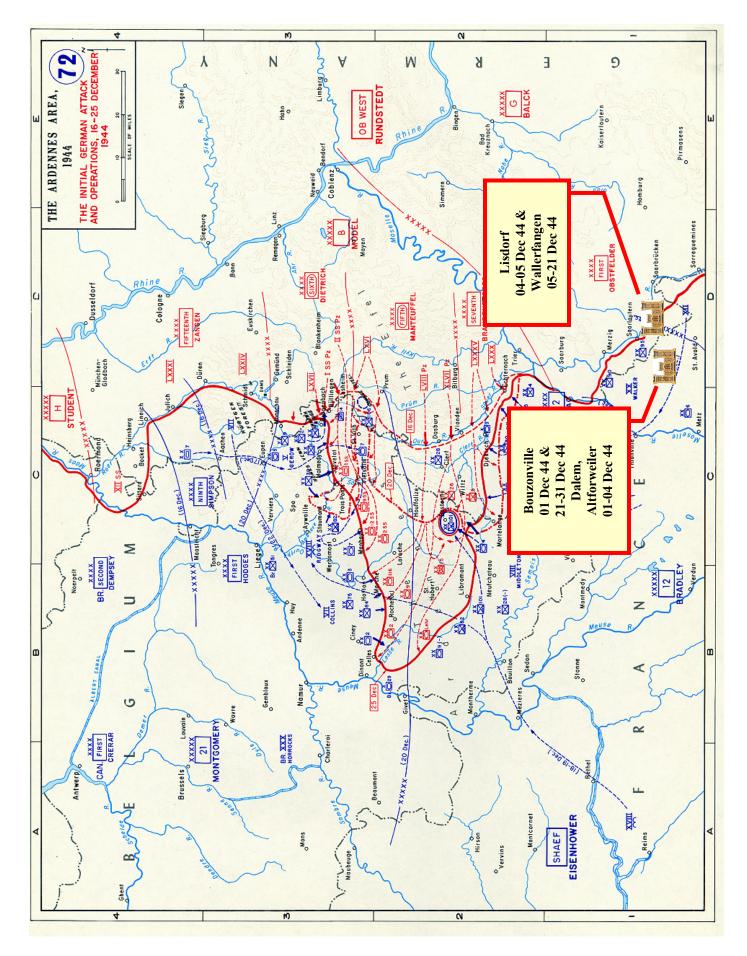
For the Commanding Officer:

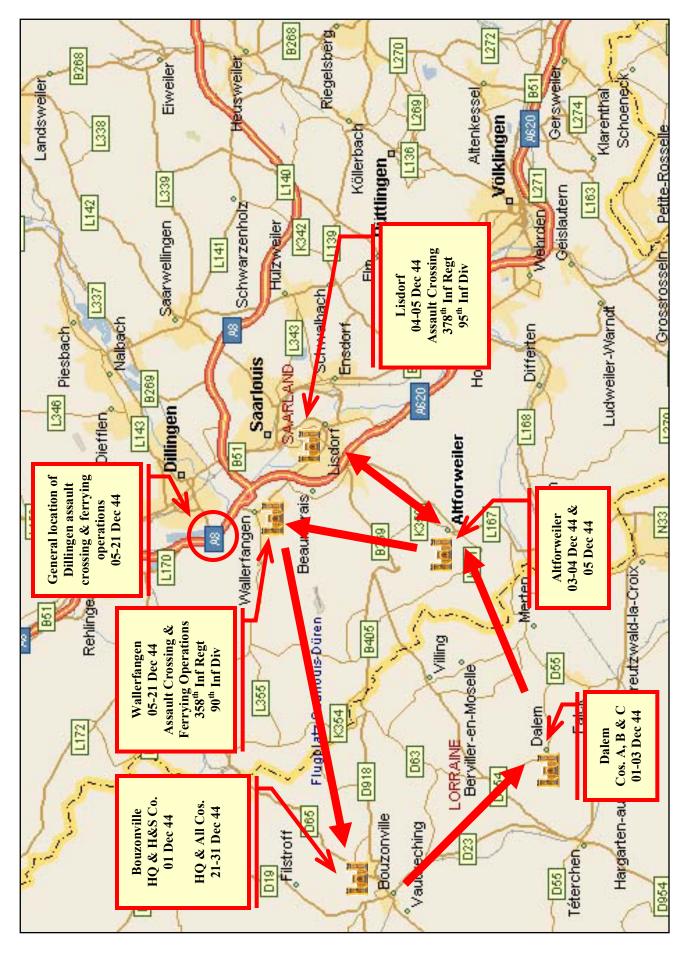
ROBERT E. MUSSER 1st Lt., CE Adjutant

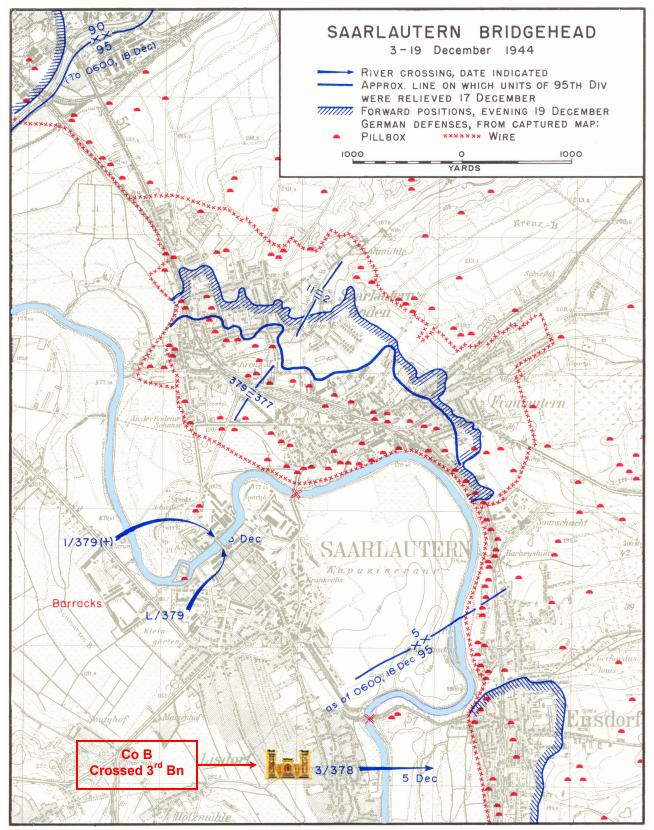




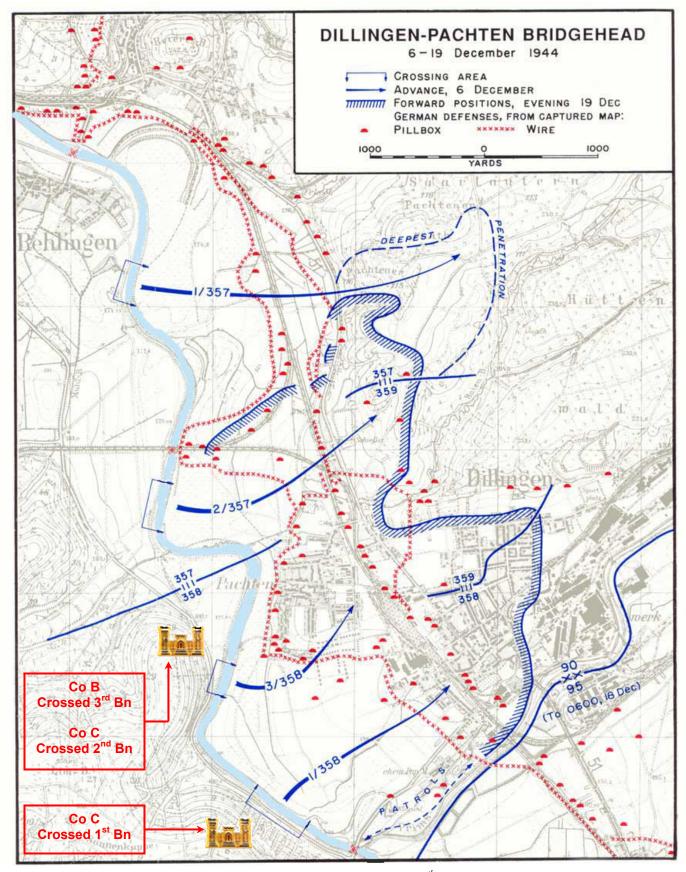
²⁸ 1st Lt John G. Graham's platoon, Company C, conducted the corduroy road school. Entries in the Daily Journal of the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion for 24 Dec 44 are: "*Msg* #1 - 0845 - Capt. Davis to Lt. Graham – Wants him to come over and pick him up and recon for site for corduroy trng. site. To Capt. Patterson – Same info.", "*Msg* #8 - 1020 - Capt. Davis – Returned from recon for corduroy road trng. site", "*Msg* #17 - 1503 - Capt. Davis to Lt. Richards – Wants info on demonstration by Lt. Graham. Thinks he will be ready to go by morning."







Location of assault river crossings conducted by Company B, 206^{th} Engineer Combat Battalion, in support of the 3^{rd} Battalion, 378^{th} Infantry Regiment, 95^{th} Infantry Division, across the Saar River at Saarlautern, Germany, on 05 December 1944. Company C crossed the 1^{st} Battalion of the 378^{th} upstream – to the right – of this location. The location of the Company C crossing site is off the bottom of this map.



Locations of assault river crossings conducted by Companies B and C, 206th Engineer Combat Battalion, in support of the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Battalions, 358th Infantry Regiment, 90th Infantry Division, across the Saar River at Dillingen and Pachten, Germany, 6 December 1944







Location of Company C, 206th Engineer Combat Battalion assault crossing of the 1st Battalion, 358th Infantry Regiment, 90th Infantry Division, on 6 December 1944, to establish the Dillingen-Pachten Bridgehead. The city shown at the top of the photograph is Dillingen, Germany. The small white circles in the photograph mark the locations of German pillboxes.







Location of Company B, 206th Engineer Combat Battalion assault crossing of the 3rd Battalion and, later, the Company C assault crossing of the 2nd Battalion, 358th Infantry Regiment, 90th Infantry Division on 6 December 1944, to establish the Dillingen-Pachten Bridgehead. The city shown at the top of the photograph is Pachten, which is located immediately west of Dillingen, Germany. The small white circles in the photograph mark the locations of German pillboxes. This site is about 1500 yards downstream (North) of the assault crossing site shown on the photograph on the previous page.





S-1 ANNEX TO AFTER ACTION REPORT DEC 44

I. STATION LIST:

- 1. Headquarters, and Headquarters & Service Company
- 2. Company A
- 3. Company B
- 4. Company C

II. PERSONNEL – Gains and Losses:

1. Killed: Six

a. James M. Lee	Capt.	01110611	Headquarters	14 Dec 44
b. Robert L. Harper	Pvt.	38464029	Co B	14 Dec 44
c. Earl B. Dennis	Pvt.	38429098	Co B	14 Dec 44
d. James P. Tubbs	Tec 5	38429041	H&S	15 Dec 44
e. Chester A. Snodgrass	Pvt.	39419440	H&S	15 Dec 44
f. Travis F. Hill	Cpl.	38341162	Co A	14 Dec 44

2. Wounded and Injured in Action (Hospitalized)

a. Joe C. Gholson	Pvt.	38370360	Co B	6 Dec 44
b. James R. Hall	Pfc.	36569026	Co A	8 Dec 44
c. Paul V. Gomilla	Pvt.	38379174	Co A	8 Dec 44
d. Linvill H. Kirby	Pvt.	38341015	Co B	8 Dec 44
e. Frank Goldsberry	Tec 5	39279570	Med Det	5 Dec 44
f. James H. Robinson	Pfc	38399741	Co A	11 Dec 44
g. Glen R. Woodall	Pvt.	39364084	Co A	11 Dec 44
h. Oma E. Thomas	Pvt.	38387727	Co A	11 Dec 44
i. Frederick Lowsteiter	Pvt.	33714716	Co C	15 Dec 44
j. William K. Jensen	Pvt.	38463751	Co C	10 Dec 44
k. Clayton E. Peery	Pvt.	38397510	Co C	11 Dec 44
1. James D. Johnson	Cpl.	38307828	Co B	14 Dec 44
m. Leonard W. Tiura	Pvt.	36419698	Co A	14 Dec 44
n. William Bednorz	Tec 5	38366368	H&S	15 Dec 44
o. Henry B. Burkett	Pvt.	38370317	H&S	15 Dec 44
p. Austinn F. Langston	Capt.	01108796	Co A	15 Dec 44
q. Kenneth D. Moriarty	Cpl.	38473292	Co A	15 Dec 44
r. Leroy J. Christanson	Pvt.	39461370	Co B	14 Dec 44
s. Alexander F. Nelson	Pvt.	16074827	Co C	20 Dec 44
t. L. V. Dempsey	Pvt.	38429160	Co C	22 Dec 44
u. Nicholas S. Peters	Sgt.	20738715	Med Det	22 Dec 44

3. Sick and Injured (Hospitalized) Non-Battle.

a. William F. Biffle	Tec 5	38341117	H&S	1 Dec 44
b. Otto A. Little	Pfc.	38387982	Co A	4 Dec 44





c. Ralph Pagach	Pvt.	38428911	Co B	4 Dec 44
d. James H. McGraw	Pvt.	38388055	Co A	8 Dec 44
e. Everett W. Hopkins	Pfc.	38397654	Co A	8 Dec 44
f. Jack T. Replogle	Pvt.	38397582	Co A	9 Dec 44
g. Luke LeBlanc	Sgt.	38167543	Co B	9 Dec 44
h. Richard V. Morgan	Pvt.	38307799	Co B	10 Dec 44
i. Glen F. Blaha	Pvt.	38397511	Co B	10 Dec 44
j. John C. Muniz	Tec 5	38379161	H&S	11 Dec 44
k. Darrell W. Cook	Pvt.	38464706	Med Det	14 Dec 44
l. John H. Taylor	Pvt.	14033317	Co B	14 Dec 44
m. Robert L. Harre	S/Sgt.	36371247	Co C	14 Dec 44
n. Grover C. Robinson	Pvt.	38429088	Co C	14 Dec 44
o. Wallace C. Murray	Cpl.	38464308	Co C	14 Dec 44
p. Howard C. Adamson	Pvt.	38428976	Co C	15 Dec 44
q. Vergil W. Holloway	Pvt.	38366518	Co B	15 Dec 44
r. Don L. Fretwell	Pfc.	38379701	Co C	16 Dec 44
s. Leland L. Fox	1/Sgt.	7086175	Co C	16 Dec 44
t. Doyle S. Baker	Pvt.	38370222	Co C	18 Dec 44
u. Michael Marcinowski	Pvt.	42041955	Co B	20 Dec 44
v. Francis E. Penney	Pvt.	42092056	Co A	22 Dec 44
w. John L. Faust	Pvt.	38307838	Co B	23 Dec 44
x. James J. Corrigan	Tec 5	33467347	Co A	24 Dec 44
y. Elgy I. Herridge	Tec 4	38413681	Co A	25 Dec 44
z. Perlie E. Watts	Cpl.	38379499	Co A	25 Dec 44
1. Harvey C. Nelson	Pvt.	39615607	Co C	26 Dec 44
2. Mack Byles	Tec 5	38387810	Co B	28 Dec 44
3. Houston McFarland	Tec 5	38397260	Co B	29 Dec 44
4. Carl A. Chambers	Pfc.	39855689	Co C	29 Dec 44
5. Jack E. McKnight	Pfc.	38464707	Co C	29 Dec 44
6. Earl A. Rodrique	Pvt.	38379570	H&S	30 Dec 44
7. Loyd M. Watts	Tec 5	38341918	Co C	30 Dec 44
8. Jimmie S. Orum	Pvt.	38397168	Co C	31 Dec 44

4. TRANSFERS:

a. Ordell J. Cupp Tec 5 38397014 Co A 28 Dec 44 Transferred from Co A to Headquarters Sq IX Troop Carrier Command, APO 133 per SO 147 this Headquarters dated 27 Dec 44.

b. (30) EM transferred to 26th Infantry Division 16 Dec 44 per Ltr AG 220.01 GNMCA-3, Headquarters Third US Army, 6 Dec 44 as amended for retraining as Inf. riflemen.

c. (30) EM transferred to 95th Infantry Division 19 Dec 44 per Ltr AG 220.01 GNMCA-3, Headquarters Third US Army, 6 Dec 44 as amended for retraining as Inf. riflemen.





5. REPLACEMENTS:

a. Nicholas S. Peters	Sgt.	20738715	Med Det	14 Dec 44
b. James V. Trentadue	Pvt.	36660788	Co B	14 Dec 44
c. Frank L. Phillips	Pvt.	34703269	Co B	14 Dec 44
d. Tollie Nelson	Pvt.	34704864	Co B	14 Dec 44
e. Michael Marcinowski	Pvt.	42041955	Co B	14 Dec 44
f. Marion E. Copeland	Pvt.	34884639	Co B	14 Dec 44
g. Shelton Holt	Pvt.	33853046	Co B	14 Dec 44
h. Harvey Kirsch	Pvt.	32608507	Co C	14 Dec 44
i. William E. Working	Pvt.	32752791	Co A	14 Dec 44
j. John E. Clemons	Pvt.	34950911	Co B	16 Dec 44
k. Raymond H. Proctor	Pvt.	34917819	Co B	16 Dec 44
l. Richard O. Stiles	Pvt.	35841230	Co C	16 Dec 44
m. Willie S. Williams	Pvt.	34865522	Co C	16 Dec 44
n. Benson A. Foster	Pvt.	38668423	Co A	17 Dec 44
o. Frank J. Carbone	Tec 5	42014630	Med Det	28 Dec 44
p. Aaron Masur	Tec 5	42039328	Med Det	28 Dec 44
q. Ernesto Moreno	Pfc.	39120689	Co A	29 Dec 44
r. Wilmer E. Rodes	Maj.	0376507	Asgd not jd	23 Dec 44

6. RETURNED TO DUTY

a. Alvin Derrie	Tec 5	6973015	Co C	12 Dec 44
b. Elzie R. Beaird	Pvt.	38428580	Co A	13 Dec 44
c. Joseph P. Riddles	Pfc.	38397821	Co A	13 Dec 44
d. James E. Hathcock	1/Sgt.	6972456	Co C	13 Dec 44
e. Melvin C. Reese	S/Sgt.	39461330	Co C	13 Dec 44
f. Edmund Hartman	Pvt.	38413330	Co C	13 Dec 44
g. Alexander F. Nelson	Pvt.	16074837	Co C	13 Dec 44
h. Willie E. Manning	Tec 5	38387996	Co B	13 Dec 44
i. Charles A. Atkinson	Pfc.	38463809	Co B	13 Dec 44
j. Everett W. Hopkins	Pfc.	38397654	Co A	15 Dec 44
k. Glenn F. Blaha	Pvt.	38397511	Co B	16 Dec 44
1. Ralph J. Pagach	Pvt.	38428911	Co B	16 Dec 44
m. Frederick Lowstetter	Pvt.	33714716	Co C	16 Dec 44
n. Ira O. May	Tec 5	38463740	Co B	23 Dec 44
o. LeRoy J. Christanson	Pvt.	39461379	Co B	23 Dec 44
p. James V. Massey	Sgt.	38341045	Co C	23 Dec 44
q. Clayton E. Peery	Pvt.	38397510	Co C	23 Dec 44
r. Jack T. Replogle	Pvt.	38397582	Co A	23 Dec 44
s. Robert G. Lambert	Pfc.	38397545	Co A	23 Dec 44
t. Perlie E. Watts	Cpl.	38379498	Co A	28 Dec 44
u. Michael S. Marcinowski	Pvt.	42041955	Co B	29 Dec 44
v. Joe C. Gholson	Pvt.	38370360	Co B	29 Dec 44
w. Howard C. Adamson	Pvt.	38428776	Co C	30 Dec 44
x. Doyle S. Baker	Pvt.	38390222	Co C	30 Dec 44
-				





7. AWARDS AND DECORATIONS:

 a. Joe C. Gholson b. Linvill H. Kirby c. John W. Nichols d. Dillard L. Pruitt e. Edward O. Schumann 	Pvt. Pvt. S/Sgt. M/Sgt. 2 nd Lt	38370360 38341015 38340806 6972349 01108305	Co B Co B Co B H&S Co A	Purple Heart Purple Heart Bronze Star Bronze Star Bronze Star
f. Marion H. Patterson	Capt.	01110710	Co C	Bronze Star
g. Gilbert R. Pirrung h. Nicholas S. Peters	Lt Col Sgt.	0315129 20738715	CO Med Det	Silver Star Purple Heart
i. L. V. Dempsey	Pvt.	38429160	Co C	Purple Heart
j. John H. Hight	Pfc.	38307626	Co C	Purple Heart
k. Bennie L. Sroufe	Sgt.	38403829	Co A	Purple Heart
l. Willie M. Gillen	Sgt.	38428508	Co C	Purple Heart
m. Francis M. Babineaux	S/Sgt.	38267412	Co A	Purple Heart
n. Kenneth D. Moriarty	Cpl.	38473292	Co A	Purple Heart
o. Hubert L. Fenley	Pfc.	38428870	Co B	Purple Heart
p. LeRoy J. Christanson	Pvt.	39461379	Co B	Purple Heart
q. James M. Deason	Capt.	01110452	Co B	Silver Star





HEADQUARTERS 206 ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION APO 403, U. S. ARMY

1 Jan 45

ROSTER OF OFFICERS

NAME	<u>RANK</u>	ASN	<u>COMPONENT</u>	DATE OF RANK	POSITION
Gilbert R. Pirrung	Lt Col	0315129	CE, ORC	21 Oct 43	Battalion Commander
Kittridge A Wing	Major	01100399	CE, AUS	1 Jul 44	Executive Officer
Wilmer E. Rodes	Major	0376507	CE, ORC		Asst Executive O
Robert S Greer	Capt	01100125	CE, AUS	1 Feb 44	ADE
William L Jones	Capt	01110589	CE, AUS	1 Feb 44	S-4
Alfred Lopez	Capt	0482935	DC, AUS	17 Jul 43	Battalion Dental Officer
Leon Singerman	Capt	01690045	MC, AUS	2 Sep 42	Battalion Surgeon
James O Stinnett	Capt	01102487	CE, AUS	1 Jan 44	S-2
Harold J. St. Clair	Capt	025369	CE, RA	5 Apr 43	S-3
Cecil M. Davis	Capt	01104116	CE, AUS	8 Jun 44	Asst S-3
Robert E. Musser	1 st Lt	01113373	CE, AUS	1 Apr 44	S-1
Richard L Ferchaud	2 nd Lt	01639026	CE, AUS	16 Nov 42	Rconn Officer
		H	H&S COMPANY		
John W. Fick	Capt.	01106730	CE, AUS	1 Feb 44	Company Commander
John W. Rhein	1 st Lt	01107652	CE, AUS	2 Aug 43	Bn Motor Officer
William C Trolinger	CWO	W2121158	USA, AUS	15 Feb 44	Asst S-1
Dominic R Catrambone	WOJG	W2121169	USA, AUS	20 May 43	Asst Motor Officer
Jack B Coulter	WOJG	W2108736	USA, AUS	21 Apr 43	Asst S-4
			COMPANY A		
Donald Sargent	1 st Lt	01107104	CE, AUS	1 Mar 44	Company Commander
Edward O. Schumann	2 nd Lt	01108305	CE, AUS	23 Dec 42	Platoon Commander
Joseph N. Ridgely, Jr	2 nd Lt	01111664	CE, AUS	17 Mar 43	Platoon Commander
Luke N Rahrig	2 nd Lt	01061223	CE, AUS	7 Oct 43	Platoon Commander
Frederick Goldstein	2 nd Lt	01645604	CE, AUS	9 Apr 43	Mess, Mtr, Supply O
			COMPANY B		
James M. Deason	Capt.	01110452	CE, AUS	1 Feb 44	Company Commander
Dean R Isaacs	1 st Lt	01106846	CE, AUS	18 Jun 43	Platoon Commander
James L. Gasser	1 st Lt	01113218	CE, AUS	27 Sep 44	Platoon Commander
Robert G. Dunbar	1 st Lt	01316137	CE, AUS	29 Oct 44	Platoon Commander
Edward J. Rhodes	2 nd Lt	01114273	CE, AUS	28 May 43	Mess, Mtr, Supply O
COMPANY C					
Marion H. Patterson	Capt	01110710	CE, AUS	1 Jun 44	Company Commander
John R. Richards	1 st Lt	01111862	CE, AUS	1 Jan 44	Platoon Commander
John G Graham	1 st Lt	01113230	CE, AUS	1 Feb 44	Platoon Commander
David Geier	2 nd Lt	01107425	CE, AUS	8 Dec 42	Platoon Commander
Thomas S. Hammack	2 nd Lt	01109433	CE, AUS	20 Jan 43	Mess, Mtr, Supply O





SILVER STAR MEDAL²⁹

CITATION

For gallantry in action on 10 December 1944 in **** [the Saar River crossing operations]. Lieutenant Colonel PIRRUNG directed his men in the engineer phases of an Infantry assault crossing of the **** [Saar] River near ***,**** [Wallerfangen, Germany]. As soon as initial elements of the attacking force struck the enemy-held bank and drove inland to establish a bridgehead, ferrying operations preparatory to the crossing of supporting armor and troops were begun. Exposing himself repeatedly to the intense **** [mortar], artillery and small arms fire which swept the area, Lieutenant Colonel PIRRUNG personally supervised the construction of support rafts and treadway floats. While his engineers, laboring waist-deep in the icy water, were finishing the job, two of the floats were destroyed and the assault boats riddled by exploding shells. Undaunted by almost insurmountable obstacles, Lieutenant Colonel PIRRUNG, his courageous example inspiring his men to renewed effort, moved his construction crews and equipment to the opposite shore and, under scathing fire, directed the installation of a corduroy approach road, over 300 yards of which were flooded by the steadily rising river. When the first tank destroyer was ferried over the river, Lieutenant Colonel PIRRUNG guided it through the flooded area under complete blackout and a constant enemy artillery barrage. Lieutenant Colonel PIRRUNG's continuous presence at the operations site, his bravery under fire and unswerving devotion to duty reflect great credit upon himself and the Army of the United States.



Lt. Col. Gilbert R. Pirrung (right) is presented the Silver Star by an unidentified General.

²⁹ This Silver Star Citation is typed from a copy of the original from the records of Lt. Col. Gilbert R. Pirrung, furnished by his daughter, Mrs. Lynette Pirrung. The information in brackets has been added. The original citation has only the asterisks shown, apparently for security reasons. The nature and locations of combat operations were classified information for several years after the war ended.







Front (above) and rear (below) views of the Franz von Papen mansion in Wallerfangen, Germany that was used as the Battalion Command Post during the December 1944 Saar River operations. *I*st Lt. John G. Graham told of his stay in the mansion and described the fine blankets and quilts used by the men of the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion who were quartered there. These photographs are from the records of Lt. Col. Gilbert R. Pirrung.







The following is reprinted from an article appearing in Yank Magazine, which describes the occupants of the Franz von Papen estate – the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion – at Wallerfangen, Germany. Franz von Papen was a prominent figure in German political society and was well connected with Adolph Hitler and other Nazi leaders in Germany. The picture of his bust sitting on a mantle in the music room of his home was scanned from an original copy of the magazine article furnished by Joseph Stangel.

A Letter To Von Papen



Wallenfangen³⁰, Germany

Herr Franz Von Papen, Somewhere in Europe

Dear Sir:

Since you are very busy these days and reported to be in every neutral capital in Europe at the same time, I think you would be interested in learning something of the condition of your estate at Wallenfangen. First, a word or two concerning the house guests on your estate at the time of my visit. They were an Engineer battalion attached during December to the 90th Division. The Engineers were very busy in the first week of December last, bringing troops of the 90th Division across the Saar River to Dillingen. Dillingen, you must remember, is directly across the river from the estate. For several nights in a row the engineers ferried men and supplies across the river under cover of darkness. This was an immensely difficult operation at the time; no bridgehead had been established, yet the entire division was continuously supplied. And always German artillery fire was heavy.

You must understand how admirable this operation was. From certain relics found in your home, it is clear that you understand military operations. I refer particularly to that trophy of your old regiment, which listed the winners of the trophy in past years. I noticed on the inscription that you were described as being of outstanding military manner and courage. You were in great company as winner of that trophy, for it also listed Von Mackensen, who became a great German general. In fact all the names were Vons all of them aristocrats and all of them famous military men.

It was during this major operation of carrying over and supplying the division on the east bank of the Saar River that the engineers decided to use your estate for a kind of combination rest camp and command post. American soldiers, as you know, have no particular interest in great names, so it did not interest them very much that the house belonged to one of the biggest names in German political life. I regret to inform you that they showed no

³⁰ Wallerfangen, Germany





reverence or respect whatsoever for the reputation of the place.

By the time the engineers were settled on your grounds, the fighting in Wallenfangen, particularly artillery fire from your own German guns, had begun to destroy the estate. For a while the engineers had to live in the servants' quarters, but finally they took up residence in the main building. When I arrived as a guest of the engineers, most of the rooms showed signs of both shell and machine-gun The very fine mosaic floor in the fire. central lobby was chipped. Your bust on the mantel in the music room, which stands opposite the medium-sized grand piano, showed your nose slightly chipped by machine-gun fire. Herr Hitler's bust upstairs in the trophy and collection room lay on the floor in a pile of rubble.

Herr von Papen, your caretaker made a blunder, I think, in sealing up some of the rooms below the stairs. All soldiers are curious, and American soldiers are particularly curious. Besides, these soldiers were engineers, which made things doubly unfortunate. With tools of their trade at hand, they naturally blew and crowbarred open these sealed rooms and removed your stores of cognac.

The whole house showed evidence of battle. In fact, while I was there, a German shell came right through the library window and burst. You can imagine the result. But the bookcases and all your valuable library remained untouched. Alfred Weber's "Kultur Geschichte und Kultur Soziologie" was still there; so was Richard Kuhlmann's "Gedanken uber Deutschland." The big book on the history of Catholicism in France and all the other books had neither been hit by fire nor disturbed by soldiers. It was all as you must have left it. The engineers had a fire going in the grate. Some of the men were writing letters on one of your small desks. And resting on a big, comfortable lounge were Sgt. Harry C. Digby of Long Beach, Calif., and Sqt. Edgar L. Gearis of Westfield, Tex., who had made at least 20 crossings of the river between them that night.

Your collection of photographs shed a curious light on your interests. There was that set of pictures of American troops on bivouac, on parade, etc., which had been taken before and during your trip to Stockholm in more peaceful days. And there were pictures bring things more or less up to date. They showed you with Hitler, Goebbels, Himmler, Goering and other important figures in Germany.

Music must have been another of your absorbing interests. Capt. James O. Stinett of Abilene, Tex., executive officer of the battalion, took a great interest in your three pianos. He is a musician. None of the pianos had been damaged at all, but concussion undoubtedly put them slightly off tune. An engineer, passing by one piano, ran his hands over the keys. It did not sound like Wagner. What music particularly interested you, Herr von Papen?

The pictures of your daughters remained on the wall; also those of your Von Papen ancestors. Nor was the evidence of your hunting prowess disturbed. The elk and moose and deer heads which decorated the stairways and main entrances were still there, with inscriptions indicating you had hunted in the United States. Did you hunt these elk in the Rockies before or after the Black Tom explosion³¹, Herr von Papen?

The letters found by the engineers (evidently the caretaker had been unable to remove them in time) were purely personal and therefore of no interest to Americans. A glance at one or two, however, indicated that you were a widely traveled man, that you had standard family ties and at various times you and your family had been in Washington, Stockholm, Italy and other parts of the world. It was clear from an

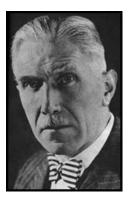
³¹ The Black Tom explosion was an enormous explosion that occurred in 1915 at the Black Tom pier, a mile-long pier opposite the Statue of Liberty in New York. This pier was used for loading fuel and munitions onto ships bound for Europe. It is suspected that the explosion was the result of sabotage by German agents. While he was never indicted, many suspect that Franz von Papen was involved or at least had knowledge of the plan to set off the explosions.





examination of your house, Herr von Papen, that you were a man of education, aristocracy and affairs.

In Wallengangen and Buren I made inquiries concerning you. What did they think of you, and how had you lived here in the Saar valley? The opinions varied somewhat, but I believe your reputation has declined. Of course it was mentioned everywhere that you had always been a man



of charity; that you made it a habit to give all the children in this vallev aifts for Christmas. The people pointed out that you lived here for a long time in the style of a country gentleman, and the *burgomeister* of Buren, who had met you at local affairs, said you were a courteous,

soft-spoken man and especially concerned with local benefit drives. When questioned about your political life, he said you had entered politics when Herr Hitler came into power only to soften the blow of Nazism. He thought that your venture into international politics was merely a side line and that your real life was in the bosom of your family in the estate at Wallenfangen. From the *burgomeister* and from several other people, I formed the impression that you were considered a home-loving, peaceable, well-to-do member of the "first family" of the Saar.

But other people seemed somewhat bitter. They were not at all sure you have been an innocent associate of Hitler; that you mixed deeply into Nazi politics merely to soften the harsher aspects. From them I gathered that you had used your reputation to bring many people, particularly the farming population of Germany, to complete support of National Socialism. The American phrase for this is "a front." Because they believed you were a front for Nazi-ism, some of them investigated your property and carried off some items. I wish in closing, to tell you that the trip to your home was very interesting. Who would have thought a few years ago, marching up the ramp at Penn Station into the Army, that the muddy shoes of American soldiers would ever tramp the stairs of the home of Franz von Papen? Will Herr Hitler's Berchtesgaden be like this?

The countryside around was very desolate while I was at your house. The few people remaining in the area slunk by like In empty villages only goats qhosts. pranced around. Cattle without masters lowed in muddy fields. Hour after hour artillery poured back and forth across the river. Toward evening the sky was filled with smoke and fire like a terrible painting of war. And across the river, Dillingen burned with bright fires where 90th Division soldiers pushed on in the steady, unglamorous, griping way the Americans are traveling through this war. Every once in a while a German shell from across the river descended on your house at Wallanfangan. It was clear that the Von Papen estate could not last much longer. And with its passing would go all the evidence of your life as a country gentleman. All that would be left would be the diplomatic side of your life in which you always seem to have been surrounded by bomb explosions and assassinations.

As I left Wallenfangan that evening, everything below in the valley was shrouded in battle smoke. Every time a shell burst, the sky lighted up and the whole valley seemed to heave as if Germany herself were heaving and dying.

Very truly yours,

(Signed) Sgt. Saul Levity YANK Staff Correspondent

P.S. For further particulars about your estate, I would advise you to get in touch with Lt. Col. Gilbert R. Pirrung, commanding an Engineer battalion, U.S. Army.





Ponton Treadway Bridge

Sequence of Construction

The following photographs depict the sequence of steps in the construction of a ponton treadway bridge – normally called a ponton or pontoon bridge. These photographs are of the 31st Engineer Combat Battalion, in support of the 100th Infantry Division, constructing a treadway bridge over the Neckar River during the assault on Heilbronn, Germany in April 1945. These US Army Signal Corps photographs were contributed by Ray Denman, Company L, 397th Infantry Regiment, 100th Infantry Division.

The 206th Engineer Combat Battalion constructed numerous ponton bridges throughout the European Theater of Operations. These bridges could be constructed much more rapidly and were adaptable for construction in many more locations than any other types of bridges, such as Bailey bridges or other types of fixed bridges. The ponton bridge, unlike all the other types of bridges normally constructed by the combat engineers, did not require the construction or availability of bulkheads, piling or any type of fixed support. The support for the ponton treadway bridge is provided by the ponton floats on the water.



A bridle line, normally a one-inch cable, is stretched across and anchored on both sides of the river. The bridle line, located upstream of the intended position of the treadway bridge, is used to hold the bridge in position. Other preparations include the grading of approaches to the bridge and may also involve the construction of corduroy road or other site preparation, depending on soil and weather conditions.







The pontons are inflated and readied for bridge construction, normally in a location sheltered from enemy fire and, if possible, out of the currents of the river. They are then either floated or hauled by truck to the bridge site, depending on where these preparations are made.



Combat engineer troops position the heavy steel treadways, measuring approximately 12 feet in length, using a crane truck. This operation is performed on the near side, or "friendly side", of the river.









Two steel treadways are pinned across each ponton. The treadways are spaced to fit the tread widths of tanks, tank destroyers, trucks and other vehicles. After the steel treadways have been attached to the ponton, the section is then tied to the bridle line, pushed across the river, and pinned to the previously constructed bridge sections. For added stability, bridge anchors, much like boat anchors, are dropped upstream of each ponton.



After the treadway bridge has been anchored and the approaches completed, the bridge is ready to be used by infantry, armor and other combat units.





HEADQUARTERS 206 ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION APO 403, U. S. ARMY

REM/jds

2 Feb 45

SUBJECT: After Action Report, January 1945.

TO : Commanding General, XX Corps, APO 340, U. S. Army.

The month of January 1945 was quiet in comparison to the previous month, in so far as enemy activity was concerned. The only enemy activity encountered during the period occurred on 1 Jan 45 in the vicinity of Differten. Company B was constructing an obstacle in this location and enemy artillery fired into the area and wounded five (5) enlisted men, four (4) of which were hospitalized.

During this period, activity consisted mainly of construction of barrier zones, deicing, clearing, and sanding roads, and preparation for manning defensive positions at St Avold.

Beginning 28 Dec 44, this Battalion, attached to the 1139th Engineer Combat Group and in support of the 95th Infantry Division, was assigned the mission of constructing a series of barrier zones in the 95th Division sector. Obstacles consisting of abatis, minefields, and craters were constructed in areas designated as Bee Zone, Chow Zone, Nied River Zone and OPLR. In the cases of abatis and craters, charges were placed in position without detonators, so that, on order, the obstacle could be executed by inserting the detonator and blowing the charge. The minefields consisted of both antipersonnel and anti-tank mines, and camouflage was extensively employed. The mines were covered with manure, and numerous dummy mines, consisting of tin cans similarly camouflaged were indiscriminately placed within the pattern, to cause confusion in breaching the field by the enemy. It had been planned to drive a flock of sheep thru the minefields to further camouflage the positions, however continued snowfall made it unnecessary.

The weather during January 1945 was cold, with snow and ice and to keep the roads open for traffic, it was necessary to continually patrol the roads, sanding and deicing, and removing the snow. A rotary oat sower was experimented with in the sanding of roads, but was found to be unsatisfactory, and the sanding was performed manually. Snowplows were fashioned onto the front of a 6×6 , $2^{1}/_{2}$ -ton truck, similar to the blade on a road grader. One truck per company was so adapted and used continuously thru out the period of road patrol in the respective company areas of responsibility. In the de-icing of roads, it was found expedient to obtain hot cinders from nearby mines and spread them over the road surface. The cinders quickly melted the ice and at the same time provided a non-skid road surface.





On 11 Jan 45, a change of station was effected, moving from Bouzonville by infiltration to St Avold (wQ 2557, Nord D'Guerre) establishing the Command Post in what had previously been a Gestapo Headquarters building, the purpose of the move being to support the 5th Ranger Battalion in defense of St Avold in event of enemy attack. The plan called for this Battalion to man the defensive positions around St Avold, relieving the 5th Ranger Battalion, which would be held as a mobile defensive, or counter-attacking force. Coordination between the two organizations was established, recon of the defensive positions made, and on 14 Jan 45 a "dry run" was held on the occupying of the defensive position by the Battalion. By this time, additional supporting troops were available for the defense of the town; the 359th Field Artillery Battalion, 359th Infantry Cannon Company, 607th Tank Destroyer Battalion, and the 3rd Battalion



Combat Engineers unload rolls of barbed wire to be used in constructing defensive positions.

of the 379th Infantry Regiment, which was to take over the defensive positions in the event the Battalion was pulled out. A second "dry run" was held on 29 Jan 45. During the week of 8-14 Jan 45, additional defensive positions were dug in, the barbed wire put up for the 1st and 3rd Battalions of the 379th Infantry Regiment. The construction of obstacles and maintenance of roads continued, in addition to work on defenses of St Avold.

An experiment was started with a Rolling Bailey bridge on 7 Jan 45, the bridge being constructed but not launched, as the move from Bouzonville to St Avold made it necessary to abandon the experiment. An I-beam platform was built on two 20-ton dollies in line, and a 70-ft double-single Bailey bridge was constructed on the I-beam platform. The assembly was well balanced and mobile, and is believed, had the experiment been concluded, it would have been entirely successful. At the same time, plans were drawn up for an experiment with a sliding Bailey bridge; however, change of station made it necessary to abandon the plan before any work was done on it.

The motorboat operators' schools, which had been started in December 1944, under the supervision of the 1139th Engineer Combat Group, continued thru-out January 1945, two (2) enlisted men from each letter company attending each class. The final class, Class No 6, was completed 28 Jan 45, 36 motorboat operators having been trained in the Battalion.





The bridges, which had been guarded by this Battalion, were turned over to elements of the French Army on 090800 Jan 45^{32} with daily inspections of the guard being made by this Battalion.

A radio school was started on 8 Jan 45 and was conducted by this organization to train radio operators within the Battalion on the ultimate basis of three (3) per each line company and 10 for Headquarters &Services Company. Originally, 14 enlisted men were detailed to attend the school, however several were found not to be adaptable to the work and were replaced. On 23 Jan 45, the Battalion moved from St Avold and established Command Post at Courcelles-Chaussy, (wQ0357, Nord D'Guerre) maintaining a forward Command Post at St Avold. This move, and necessity to maintain two Command Posts, made it necessary to split these communications personnel, so the school was temporarily suspended.

Aggressive recon was carried out during the month to determine desirable places at which to construct roadblocks and obstacles, and recommendations made on the basis of the recon. Also, continued recon was made over roads in area of responsibility to establish the road maintenance, snow removal and de-icing to be done.

On 7 Jan 45, Pfc Carl McCutcheon, Company C, and Sgt Stephen Walker, Company B, left the organization on temporary duty for return to the United States under the recuperation, rehabilitation, and recovery program.

On 11 Jan 45, this Battalion was relieved from attachment to the 1139th Engineer Combat Group and attached to the 1152nd Engineer Combat Group. The change in attachment did not alter the mission of the Battalion, however, and when the 95th Infantry Division was replaced by the 26th Infantry Division, 29 Jan 45, the mission remained the same in support of the 26th Infantry Division.

On 21 Jan, Col. Lovett, XX Corps Engineer, presented one oak leaf cluster to the Bronze Star, and 15 Bronze Stars to two (2) officers and 14 enlisted men of this Battalion in a ceremony at St Avold (see Daily Situation, 21 Jan 45, attached, for men awarded)³³.

Routine administrative and supply functions were accomplished without difficulty. The Commanding Officer thru out the period was Lt. Col. Gilbert R. Pirrung, 0315129, Combat Engineer. The Battalion continued to be considerably under strength, being two (2) officers and 75 enlisted men under strength at the close of the period. Reinforcements and returns received were just slightly greater than attritional losses.

 $^{^{32}}$ Read as 0800 hrs, 09 Jan 45. The first two digits are the day of the month, the next four the time in military time (24-hour clock).

³³ Daily Situation Report for January 1944 is not attached to this report.





As of 31 Jan 45, this Battalion is attached to the 1152nd Engineer Combat Group, attached XX Corps, assigned Third U.S. Army, and in support of 26th Infantry Division. Reinforcements are received thru 53rd Replacement Battalion, and evacuation is thru 436th Collecting Station.

For the Commanding Officer:

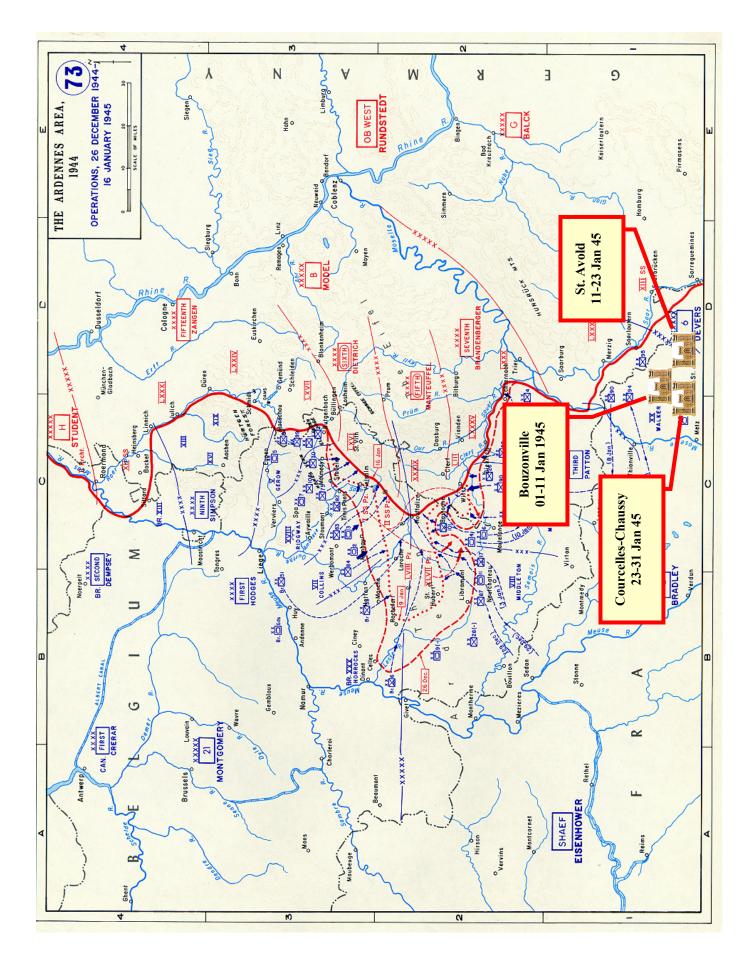
ROBERT E. MUSSER 1st Lt., CE Adjutant

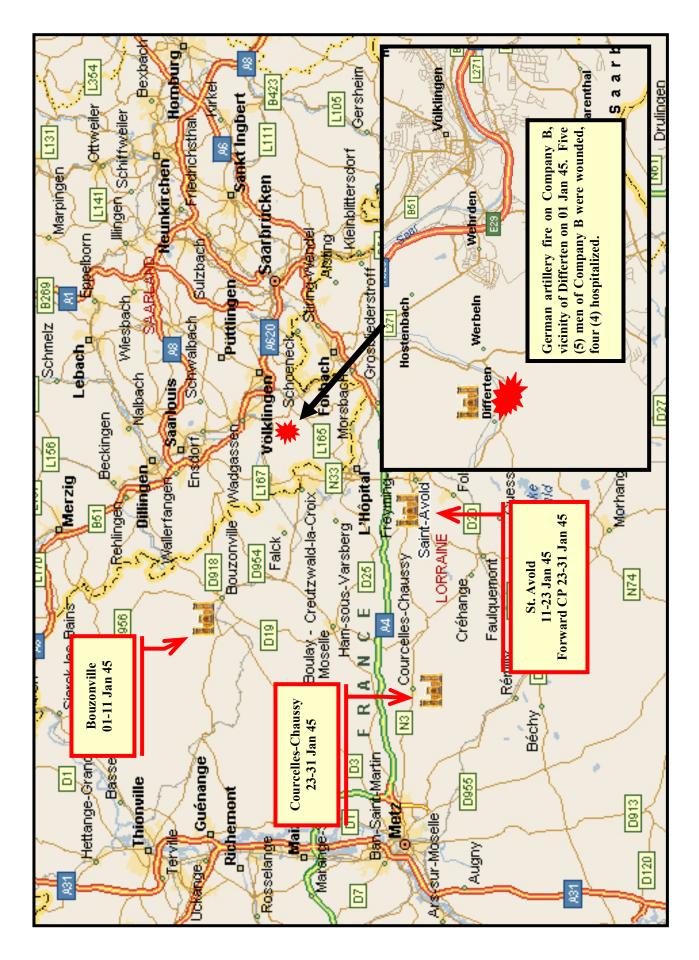
3 Incls:

Incl 1: S-1 Annex

Incl 2: Daily Situation (Journal) 1-31 Jan 45

Incl 3: Messages, 1-31 Jan 45









HEADQUARTERS 206 ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION APO 403, U. S. ARMY

REM/jds

3 Mar 45

SUBJECT: After Action Report. - February 1945.

TO : Commanding General, XX Corps, APO 340, U. S. Army.

At the beginning of the period, the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion, less Company B, was located in Courcelles-Chausay, France, Company B being located 1³/₄ km west in Pont-la-Chausay. The Battalion was engaged in routine engineer tasks of maintenance and repair of roads and bridges. The defense positions maintained by this Battalion during the most of January 1945 were turned over to the 289th Engineer Combat Battalion on 1 Feb 45.

Road maintenance was a continuing task throughout the period whereas the sanding and de-icing of roads was of primary importance during January 1945, the thaw the first of February brought the melting of snow and ice and the necessity of cleaning and maintaining drainage ditches, stock-piling of gravel and graveling of roads and filling of pot-holes. An aggregate plant was established in a warehouse building on the edge of Courcelles-Chausay, and road-patching materials were distributed from there. French civilians, in numbers from 20 to 70, were employed as laborers and supervised by Officers and non-commissioned officers (NCOs) of the Battalion.

The building of bridges also was accomplished during the period. On 1 Feb 45, Company C removed a Bailey bridge at Q065600, in the vicinity of Vaudoncourt, and constructed a fixed bridge, which was open for traffic 022030 Feb 45. This bridge had three (3) spans, 71 feet long, over a small running stream.

On 5 Feb 45, a forward Command Post was established at Saarlautern for the purpose of supervising the construction of two (2) bridges; a floating Bailey bridge and a fixed pile bridge. Companies A and B moved to Saarlautern as the construction force. Company A to build the fixed bridge and Company B to build the floating Bailey bridge. Construction on both bridges was commenced 6 Feb 45 and the Bailey bridge was completed at 071700 Feb 45.

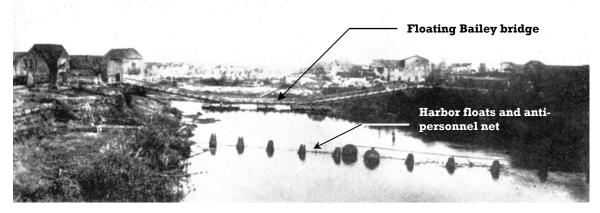
A 204-ft double-single floating Bailey bridge was constructed over a water gap of 185 ft; consisting of two (2) landing bays and two (2) floating bays, to supplement an existing concrete arch bridge and was built 300 yds upstream from the concrete bridge. The bridge was built at flood stage and due to high velocity current (8 mph), each ponton was anchored up and down stream with 100-lb anchors. Two (2) $\frac{3}{4}$ " guy lines, one affixed on each side of the river on the upstream side and attached to the bridge near the





center, were used for additional support. A 1-inch anchor cable supported the bridle lines on each float.

An anti-mine and anti-barge boom was constructed downstream between the Bailey bridge, and an anti-personnel net constructed downstream between the Bailey bridge and the concrete bridge. The anti-personnel net was constructed of British Admiralty net and harbor floats with several layers of concertinas strung above the net.



It is not certain whether this bridge is the floating Bailey bridge built by the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion at Saarlautern, Germany; however, this floating Bailey bridge is located at Saarlautern and fits the description of the bridge built there by the 206th. The bridge pictured here has harbor floats in the Saar River supporting an anti-personnel net downstream from the bridge. This photograph is from the book, "The XX Corps, Its History and Service in World War II."

No enemy fire was encountered during the construction of the Bailey bridge; however, on the day following completion, a number of artillery rounds were dropped in on the site and each day following, an occasional round and machine gun fire was placed on the bridge, making it unsafe for use for the first few days following completion.

Work on the approaches for the fixed bridge also began 6 Feb 45, it being necessary to construct 300 yds of road on each approach, followed by construction of the bridge, which was completed 251500 Feb 45. This bridge was built to supplement the existing concrete bridge and to replace the Bailey bridge described above, which was built only as a temporary measure. A previously constructed fixed bridge was 10 feet under water at the time construction began.

The fixed bridge, built 300 yds downstream from the concrete bridge, was 240 ft long, 12 spans, a one-way Class 40. Bents were all of five (5) piles, and all stringers 12inch I-beams. To provide greater stability, each bent was anchored on an upstream anchor cable. As it was, the high water level slowed the work on the bridge, as it made it unsafe for the pile driver, a $\frac{1}{2}$ -yd shovel with pile driver attachment, to move out on the bridge to drive piling, the bridge being so shaky. It also made it difficult to hold the piles down to drive them, nor could the bents be braced satisfactorily. The river, 27 feet at high stage, receded 12 feet by the time the bridge was completed.





The bridge site was not fired upon for the first two (2) days of construction. On the third day, however, a concentration of 20 rounds of enemy artillery fell on the site, and daily thereafter an occasional round, though the bridge site was such it could not possibly be under enemy observation.

On 24 Feb 45, this Battalion was relieved of attachment to the 1152nd Engineer Combat Group and attached to the 1139th Engineer Combat Group, (with the exception of Company A, which remained attached to the 1152nd Engineer Combat Group for the completion of the bridge construction at Saarlautern and road maintenance in the 1152nd area) and Headquarters, less S-1 and S-4 Sections, and Company B, Company C, and the Medical Detachment left Courcelles-Chaussy 240630 Feb 45 to establish a forward Command Post in the vicinity of Apach, with the object of maintaining roads in the 1139th Engineer Combat Group area, relieving the 135th Engineer Combat Battalion. However, the column was intercepted at Sierck by the Battalion Commanding Officer with change of orders, sending Company C on to Ayl to operate a ferry across the Saar River, relieving the 179th Engineer Combat Battalion and supporting the 10th Armored Division. S-2 Section and Company B remained at Apach to carry on road maintenance and supervise work of French civilians.

This Battalion relieved the 179th Engineer Combat Battalion at Ayl 241830 Feb 45, at which time, out of 17 floats in the water, only four (4) were good as the remainder had been damaged by artillery, small arms, and machine gun fire. At this time it was determined that the operation would require more personnel, so Company B was sent for, relieving Company C at 250900 Feb 45.

During the night of the 24-25 Feb 45, Company C got a ferry constructed, but the powerboats went out, so nothing was ferried across. When Company B relieved Company C at 250900 Feb 45, it was decided to build a bridge, as having no boats the ferry was useless. However, enemy artillery, small arms, and machine gun fire was damaging the pontons faster than they could be put into the water. More powerboats arrived at 1000 hrs, so another ferry was constructed. By 251330 Feb 45, the ferry was completed and a D-7 tractor was ferried across. Upon reaching the far shore, one motor quit running and the propeller of the other became entangled with rope, thereby disabling the second boat.

The ferry remaining at the far shore, the dozer went to work grading the far shore approach to a road 20 feet above and beyond the edge of the river. Six craters were blown between the riverbank and the road, and the debris graded toward the river, making the necessary incline.

When the ferry went out of operation, construction was again started on a bridge and repair also started on motors. Two motors were sent to Remich for repair and the two others were repaired at the site and sent over to return the ferry to the near shore. By





this time, 252000 Feb 45, Company C relieved Company B, and commenced ferrying vehicles across the Saar River. By this time, most of the enemy fire had been eliminated, so that ferrying was conducted with little interruption from this source. The first vehicle ferried across was a tank destroyer, and from this on, all types of vehicles, in addition to foot troops and supplies, were rapidly carried to the far shore. By 271300 Feb 45, 19 medium tanks, eight (8) tank destroyers, seven (7) assault guns, 43 half-tracks, 11 2¹/₂-ton trucks, seven (7) light tanks, and 131 other types of vehicles had been ferried.

Enemy fire during the initial phase of the operation was quite heavy, consisting of artillery, mortar, small arms, and machine gun fire. During the night of the 24 Feb 45 and the morning of 25 Feb 45, Company C lost five (5) enlisted men wounded and Company B lost three (3) enlisted men wounded. A machine gun encased in a pillbox several hundred yards from the bridge site gave a lot of trouble until knocked out about midday on 25 Feb 45.

Salvage operations were begun in the afternoon of 27 Feb 45 and completed on 28 Feb 45, the ferrying being brought to a halt 282030 Feb 45, as two (2) bridges at Saarburg provided necessary crossing facilities.

Upon completion of the ferrying, Company B moved to Apach and Company C to Freudenburg, and with Company A at Weiten, prepared to resume road maintenance and repair.

Routine administrative and supply functions were conducted during the period without difficulty. The Battalion, however, continued under strength, being two (2) officers and 62 enlisted men under authorized strength, a net gain for the month of 13 enlisted men.

Lt Gilbert Colonel R Pirrung. 0315129. Combat Engineer, was relieved of command of this organization and transferred to the 312th Engineer Combat Battalion, 87th Infantry Division, effective 10 Feb 45, and the former commander of the 312th Engineer Combat Battalion, Lt. Colonel Henry S. Beeler, 0286503, Combat Engineer, joined this Battalion as the new Commanding Officer. Between the time Col. Pirrung left on 9 Feb 45, until the arrival of Col. Beeler on 11 Feb 45, Major Kittridge A. Wing, 01100399,



Lt. Col. Gilbert R. Pirrung (right) with BG Frank L. Culin, Jr., Comanding General of the 87 Infantry Division, at the Moselle River following Lt. Col. Pirrung's transfer to the 312th Engineer Combat Battalion.





Combat Engineer, assumed command.

On 9 Feb 45, a ceremony for the presentation of awards was held at Courcelles-Chaussy where the XX Corps Engineer, Col. Lovett, presented one Silver Star, eight (8) Bronze Stars, 11 Purple Hearts, and one (1) Oak Leaf Cluster to the Purple Heart to Officers and men of this Battalion.

As of 28 Feb 45, this Battalion is attached to the 1139th Engineer Combat Group, attached XX Corps, and assigned Third United States Army.

For the Commanding Officer:

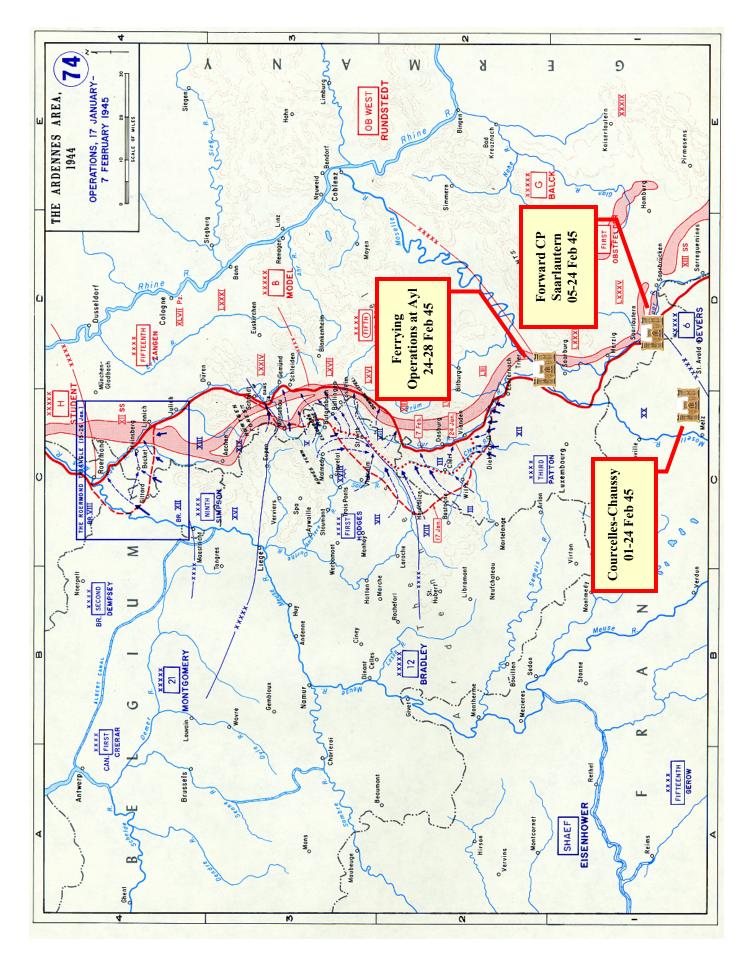
ROBERT E. MUSSER 1st Lt., CE Adjutant

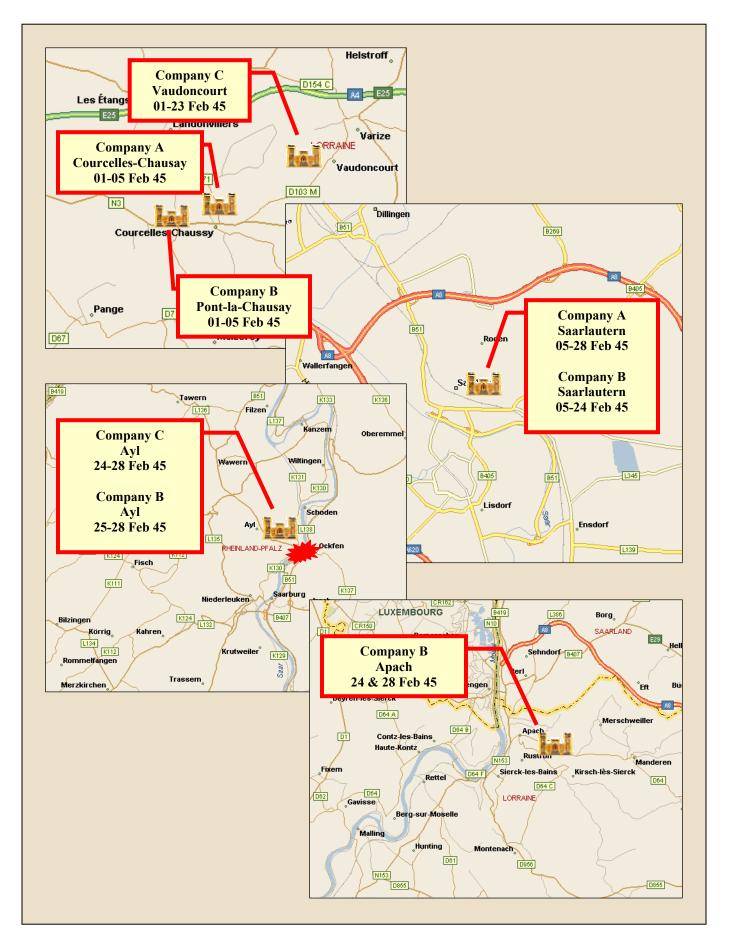
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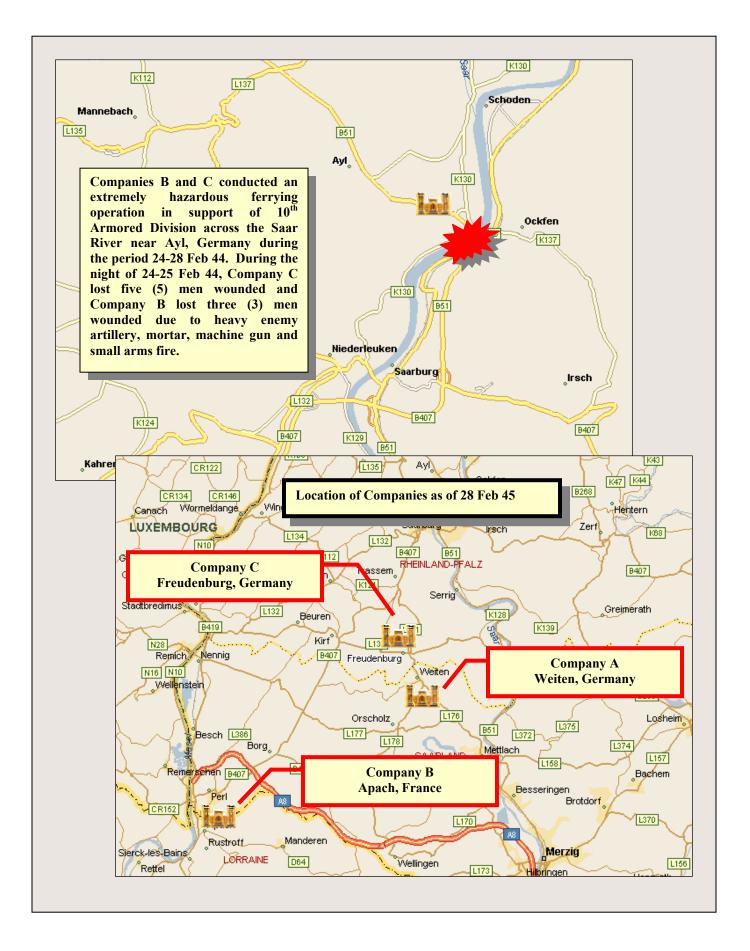
Incl 1: S-1 Annex

Incl 2: Daily Situation (Journal)

Incl 3: Field Messages











HEADQUARTERS 206 ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION APO 403, U. S. ARMY

REM/jds

3 Apr 45

SUBJECT: After Action Report, March 1945.

TO : Commanding General, XX Corps, APO 340, U. S. Army.

The operations for the month of March, 1945 consisted principally of three phases; I, support of the 26th Infantry Division, 1 Mar 45 to 17 Mar 45, incl; II, support of the 12th Armored Division, 18 Mar 45 to 23 Mar 45, incl; and, III, support of the 80th Infantry Division.

I. Support of 26th Infantry Division:

The period in support of the 26th Infantry Division consisted mainly of the routine tasks of road and bridge maintenance in a prescribed area of responsibility, as well as the marking and destruction of minefields, removal of obstacles and barriers. Roadwork was largely done by French civilian laborers and supervision was exercised over them.

In addition to the several small fixed bridges over small streams to replace treadway bridges, two (2) bridges were constructed across the Saar River in support of infantry crossings.

The first such bridge was a 335-ft M-2 treadway bridge on 7 Mar 45 at Konz-Karthaus, completed at 1255 hrs. No difficulty was experienced, though some enemy artillery fell in the vicinity of the bridge site.

The second bridge was built vicinity of Keuchingen on 17 Mar 45 and completed at 1900 hrs. This also was an M-2 treadway bridge 276 ft long. In this operation, it was necessary to cut and lay approximately 200 yds of corduroy to the bridge approaches.

Considerable planning and preparation took place prior to the second bridge operation. On 13 Mar 45, an observation post was established on the near shore of the river and the enemy constantly observed. A bridge site was selected after thorough reconnaissance, and after thorough planning the bridge was constructed without any difficulty. No enemy resistance was encountered as most of them retired when our infantry approached Mettlach on the far shore, the few remaining pillboxes subsequently surrendering.





II. Support of 12th Armored Division:

As of 171800A Mar 45, this Battalion was relieved of support of the 26th Infantry Division and placed in support of the 12th Armored Division in its dash from Trier eastward to the Rhine River, with Company A in direct support of Combat Command A, Company B in direct support of Combat Command B, and Company C in direct support of Combat Command R. This Headquarters moved forward daily from 22 to 41 miles, following the Combat Command B column.

Operations during this period consisted of clearing the roads of demolished vehicles and barriers, and maintaining roads. The period was one of rapid movement and little enemy resistance. The roads were strewn with debris and wrecked enemy vehicles and equipment, including many dead horses. The motor column was subjected to strafing by enemy planes on the 21 Mar 45, and the bivouac area at Sausenheim was frequently strafed on the afternoon of the 21 Mar 45 and the morning of the 22 Mar 45, so that on 22 Mar 45, Headquarters moved from Sausenheim to the protection of a forest near Weisenheim-am-Berg.

During this period, the enemy was surrendering in large numbers. Groups of platoon size were frequently encountered walking down the road carrying white flags. Small groups stood along the roadside, waiting to be picked up. Combat troops moving forward ceased to bother with the prisoners, indicating they should walk on back to established prisoner of war enclosures. Enemy soldiers came into the bivouac area, singly, and in groups of two and three, giving themselves up. Many prisoners were taken by the various units of this organization, but immediately turned over to Military Police or prisoner of war enclosures, so that only 32 prisoners, those taken by Headquarters personnel, were actually encountered.

On 24 Mar 45, this organization was relieved from support of the 12th Armored Division, and moved back to the vicinity of Gronig, for regrouping with the 1139th Engineer Combat Group.

III. Support of 80th Infantry Division.

On 260150A Mar, the Battalion moved from Gronig to Wallertheim in support of the 80th Infantry Division, with which were to move eastward across the Rhine and Mainz Rivers to Frankfort, then north up the Super-Highway (Reichs Autobahn) toward Kassel. The Battalion crossed the Rhine River at Oppenheim on 27 Mar 45.









This is likely the treadway bridge over which the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion crossed the Rhine River on 27 March 1945. This picture is of the second treadway constructed by the 150th Engineer Combat Battalion across the Rhine River in the vicinity of Oppenheim, Germany. This bridge measured 1007 feet long. An additional treadway bridge was located approximately 1000 feet downstream (North) of this bridge at a civilian ferry site.

The Mainz and Rhine Rivers having been reconnoitered during the day of the Mar 27 45 for possible ferry sites in the vicinity of Bischofsheim. preparation was made to build and operate a ferry and a bridge across the Mainz River. Moving up to Bischofsheim, the column came under enemy mortar fire, damaging a dozer, trailer, and а motorcycle, but causing no casualties.

Construction of the approach to the river

began 280430 Mar 45, consisting of 50 yds of plank road, upon the completion of which construction began on the M-2 pneumatic ferry. The ferry was completed 280845 Mar 45 and ceased operating at 281715 Mar 45, after crossing 85 vehicles.

Construction was then started on a 624-ft M-2 treadway bridge at 1000 hrs, being completed at 1845 hrs. This operation was simultaneous with a similar bridging operation across the Rhine River by the 160th Engineer Combat Battalion just north of where the Mainz River enters into the Rhine River. There was some small arms fire in the early hours and some artillery up to 0700, but no damage caused, the enemy withdrawing at the approach of our infantry down the far shore of the river.

The remainder of the period was spent primarily in moving northward along the Reichs Autobahn toward Kassel, the situation being a fluid and rapidly moving one.

Continuous supply and administrative functions were carried on throughout the period in the field. Use was made, wherever possible of buildings for Headquarters offices and billets. Most noticeable difficulty, during period of rapid movement, is in getting mail and reinforcements, as Army Post Office and reinforcement installations become so far behind. The Battalion remained under strength at the end of the period,





despite a net gain of 15 EM for the month. As of 31 Mar 45, we were 2 officers and 49 EM under strength (T/O & E 5-15, 5-16, 5-17, 13 Mar 1944 as amended)

Two battlefield appointments were made within the Battalion during the month on 4 Mar 45 when S/Sgt Ben B. Hightower and S/Sgt Ovie J. Ramicone, both Company A, were appointed 2nd Lts, AUS (Paragraph 7, SO 65, Headquarters Third U.S. Army, 7 Mar 45). Lt Luke N. Rahrig, 01061223, and Lt David Geier, 01107425, were promoted to 1st Lt as of 1 Mar 45 (Paragraph 10, SO 59, Headquarters Third U.S. Army, 1 Mar 45). Capt Harold J. St Clair, 025369, promoted to Major with rank from 16 Mar 45 (Paragraph 8, SO 74, Headquarters Third U.S. Army, 16 Mar 45). Two other Officers were lost during the month as casualties; 1st Lt Richard L Ferchaud, 01639025, 24 Mar 45, and 1st Lt James L Gasser, 01113218, 16 Mar 45.

On 29 Mar 45, a presentation ceremony was held at Bischofsheim, Germany, at which two (2) Bronze Stars and seven (7) Purple Hearts were presented by the Battalion Commander.

Three (3) enlisted men, two (2) on 1 Mar 45, and one (1) on 23 Mar 45, were returned to the U.S. on temporary duty under the recuperation, rest, and recovery program, making a total of seven (7) enlisted men returned to the U.S. to date.

Throughout the period, the Battalion was under the command of Lt. Col. Henry S. Beeler, 0286503, Combat Engineer, and attached to the 1139th Engineer Combat Group, attached to XX Corps, assigned Third United States Army.

For the Commanding Officer:

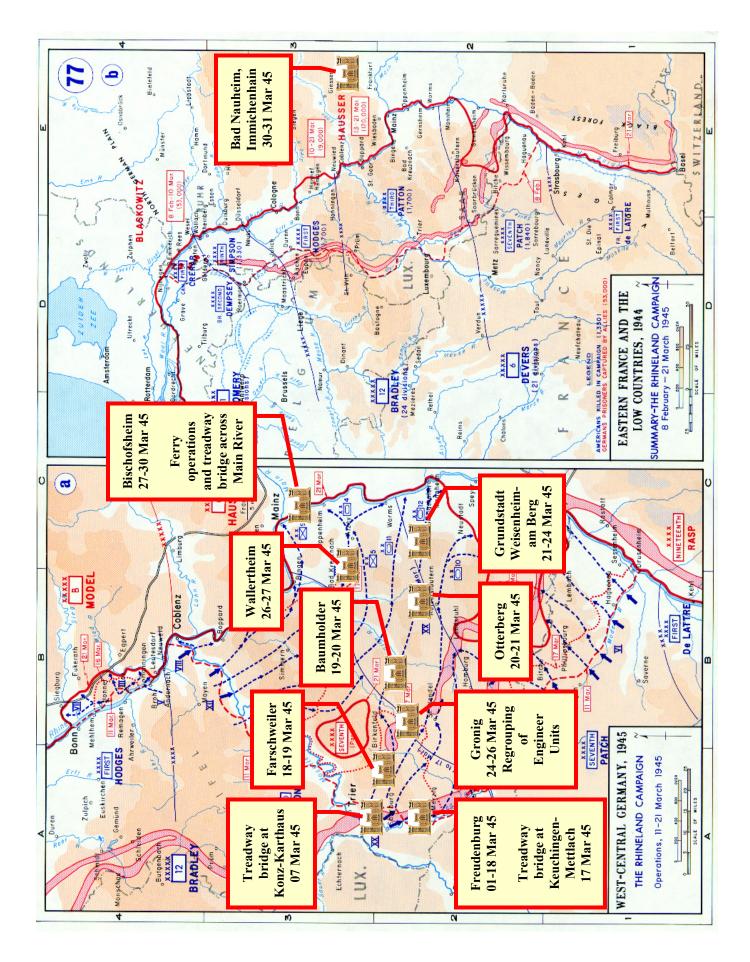
ROBERT E. MUSSER 1st Lt., CE Adjutant

3 Incls:

Incl 1: S-1 Annex

Incl 2: Daily Situation (Journal)

Incl 3: Field Messages and overlays







HEADQUARTERS 206 ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION APO 403, U. S. ARMY

REM/jds

6 May 45

SUBJECT: After Action Report, April 1945.

TO : Commanding General, XX Corps, APO 340, U. S. Army.

Operations during the month of April were of a general engineer nature, supporting two infantry divisions, maintaining the Main Supply Routes (MSR). It was a period of rapid movement during which 615 miles were traversed, and 47¹/₂ hours spent on the road.

At the beginning of the period, the Battalion was attached to the 1139th Engineer Combat Group, in support of the 80th Infantry Division. Movement during this phase was north and east along the super highway, covering 271 miles, involving 20 hours on the road. The mission was maintenance of the MSR, involving the construction of bypasses around blown bridges on the Super-highway, and the construction of Bailey bridges to replace those blown by the retreating enemy, and the maintenance of the bridges. In this connection the following Bailey bridges were constructed:

Bridge	Location	<u>Troops</u>	Date Completed
80 ft Double Single 50 ft Double Single 60 ft Double Single 50 ft Double Single 60 ft Double Single	vic MOTEDORF (J271605) J-380638 J-435669 J-462671	2 plat, Co A 1 plat, Co A 1 plat, Co C 1 plat, Co C	
oo it Double Single	J-495002	i piai, CO A	130013 Api 43

This Battalion was relieved of maintenance of the bridges 141500 Apr 45 by the 281st Engineer Combat Battalion.

In addition, a 190-ft (one 100-ft span, one 90-ft span) triple-single Class 40, was constructed over the Saale River (J-722594). The bridge was started 141600 Apr 45 and completed 151200 Apr 45.

Supplementary to the maintenance of the MSR, constant reconnaissance was conducted of roads and bridges, checking for enemy demolitions.

On 17 Apr 45, we were relieved of support of the 80th Infantry Division, and at 1900 hrs, left Russdorf (wK5061) the most northern and eastern point reached, and moved south, arriving at Staffelstein (wO3372) at 181100 Apr 45; a distance of 179 miles, taking 16 hours.







206th Engineer Combat Battalion troops in Staffelstein, Germany. This is a photocopy of a photograph from Don Wendling's records furnished by Joe Stangel. Although unreadable in this photograph, on the front bumper of the jeep is painted '3A 206CE' (Third Army, 206 Combat Engineers).

Upon arriving at Staffelstein, the Battalion went into direct support of the 65th Infantry Division, and on 21 Apr 45, we were relieved of attachment to the 1139th Engineer Combat Group, and attached to the 1126th Engineer Combat Group. During this phase, movement was south and east thru Bavaria toward the Austrian frontier. By the end of April, we had 165 traveled miles in support of the 65th Infantry Division, spending 27¹/₂ hrs on the road. Movement was much more difficult in the southern sector as the roads

were inferior, in many cases, one-way graveled surfaced, which after a little vehicular traffic became almost impassable.

As with the 80th Infantry Division, the Battalion mission with the 65th Infantry Division was the maintenance of the MSR, which included filling in of craters and blown culverts, removing demolished vehicles from the road, constructing corduroy mats, maintaining bridges, clearing drainage ditches, clearing debris from streets in Neumarkt and working on bypasses around blown bridges. In addition, the following Bailey bridges were constructed:

Bridge	Location	Troops	Date Completed
U	NEUMARKT (T-702828) DEURLING (U-045572)	1 /	232000 Apr 45 261900 Apr 45

The Battalion was engaged in one (1) river crossing in this period on 26 Apr 45. Company A crossed the second wave of the 261st Infantry Regiment over the Danube River in the vicinity of Kaffelberg (designated Site B) and Company B crossed the second wave of the 250th Infantry Regiment in the vicinity of Gundelhausen (designated Site A), H-Hour at 0200. No opposition was met in the Company B sector, however, Company A area was raked by 88 fire, a self-propelled gun, which kept changing position. All opposition was eliminated by 1400 hours.





On 28 Apr 45, Company A was detached to support the 3rd Cavalry Group.

Continuous supply and administrative functions were carried on throughout the period. The Battalion was brought up to T/O strength for the first time in a number of months by the receipt of a large number of reinforcements.

At an informal ceremony in Regensburg, the Battalion Commander presented the Bronze Star to Pvt Newton J. Lowe, and Tec 4 Roland A. Bernard, Sr., both of Headquarters & Services Company.

On 29 Apr 45, Major Harold J. St. Clair, 025369, our S-3³⁴, was transferred to the 87th Infantry Division.

Throughout the period, the Bn was under the command of Lt Colonel Henry S. Beeler, 0286503, Combat Engineer, and as of 30 Apr 45, attached to the 1126th Engineer Combat Group, attached XX Corps, assigned Third United States Army.

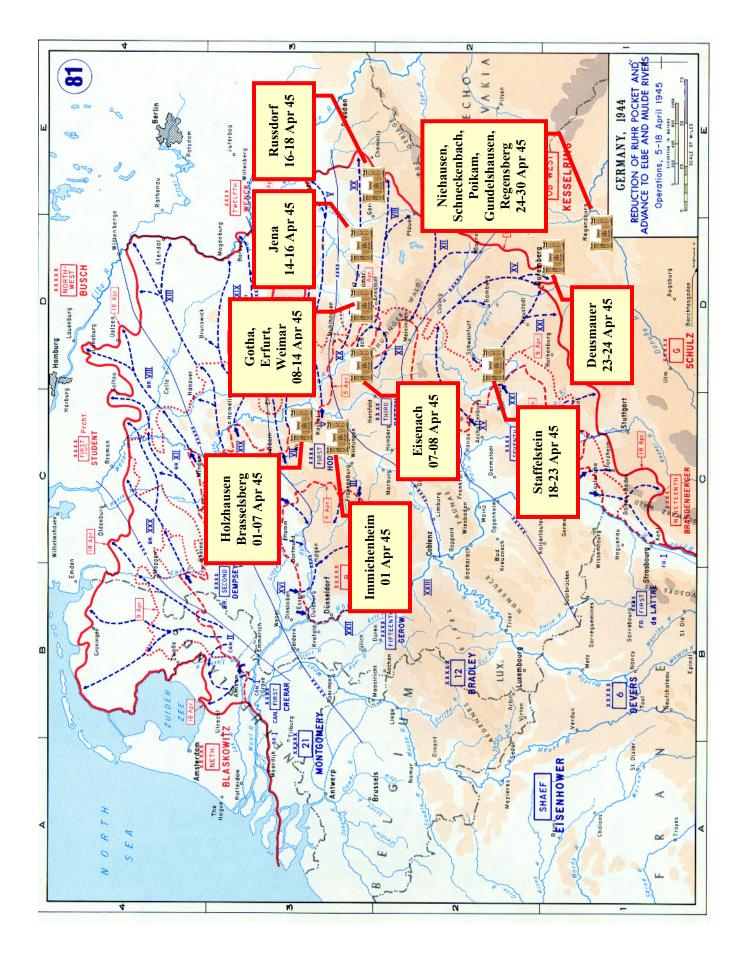
For the Commanding Officer:

ROBERT E. MUSSER 1st Lt., CE Adjutant

3 Incls:

- Incl 1: S-1 Annex
- Incl 2: Daily Situation (Journal)
- Incl 3: Field Messages
- Incl 4: Rcn Overlays

³⁴ The S-3 is the Operations Staff Officer.







HEADQUARTERS 206 ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION APO 403, U. S. ARMY

6 June 45

SUBJECT: After Action Report, May 1945.

TO : Commanding General XX Corps, APO 340, U. S. Army.

The Battalion, less Company A, began the period in support of the 65th Infantry Division, moving southeast through Bavaria into Austria. Two (2) Bailey bridges, one Double-Single 70-ft and one Double-Single 140-ft, were constructed over the Inn River, at Neuhaus (Q-200005) on 3 May 45, which we continued to maintain until relieved by the 1306th Engineer General Service Regiment, 080800 May 45. We also constructed two infantry support rafts in the vicinity (Q-200007) and operated them until completion of bridges 040900 May 45. Main mission during support of the 65th Infantry Division consisted of maintaining the Main Supply Route, clearing debris and guarding and maintaining bridges. Upon surrender of the enemy forces in this area, we were relieved from support of the 65th Infantry Division on 7 May 45, having penetrated into Austria as far as Urfahr. The Battalion left Urfahr on 7 May 45 and returned to Scharding on the Austrian border, in general support of XX Corps operations. During this period, 1 May 45 to 8 May 45, Company A was in direct support of the 3rd Cavalry Group, rejoining the Battalion 9 May 45 at Scharding, Austria.

During the remainder of the month, the mission consisted of general engineer operations: maintenance of roads and bridges and guarding of material dumps. A 90-ft Double-Single Bailey bridge was completed 182200 May at Obersteinberg (Z-670732) over the Inn river. Also, a two-way, Class 40, 147-ft fixed timber trestle bridge was started in the vicinity of Mettenhausen (U-668138), but were relieved by the 1252nd Engineers 211200 May 45, the bridge being 95% complete. Timber for the bridge was cut and milled by the Battalion.

Also, continuous reconnaissance was conducted during the latter part of the month for industrial plants, facilities, and materials.

The Battalion was relieved from attachment to 1126 Engr Combat Gp and XX Corps effective 28 May (Ltr Headquarters Third Army, file AG322-GN___, SUBJECT: Troop Assignment No VE-10, dated 28 May 45) and relieved from assignment Third Army (Paragraph 7, Ltr Headquarters 12th Army Group, file 322 (AG-0) 31 May 45, SUBJECT: Troop Assignment No 40) and assigned Oise Intermediate Section. On 27 May 45, the Battalion left Schierling, Germany and arrived 302030 May 45 at destination, Camp New York, Suippes, France, a distance of 547 miles. At the new





location, we were attached to the 333rd Engineer Regiment (SS) for the purpose of constructing assembly camps.

The coming of Peace 090001 May 45 brought no change in the operation of the organization, as engineer work remained to be done. Among the personnel of the command, peace was accepted quietly without any display of jubilation or letdown in morale.

During the period, routine administration and supply functions were conducted without difficulty. One (1) Officer and nine (9) enlisted men on temporary duty to the U.S. were dropped from the rolls on 21 May 45. Three (3) enlisted men were relieved from assignment of this organization 22 May 45 and sent to the 17th Reinforcement Depot for return to the U.S. under the Readjustment Regulations. Capt. John W. Fick, Headquarters & Service Company Commander, was transferred to Headquarters of Affairs Division on 20 May 45.

Throughout the period, the Battalion was under the Command of Lt Col Henry S. Beeler, Combat Engineer.

For the Commanding Officer:

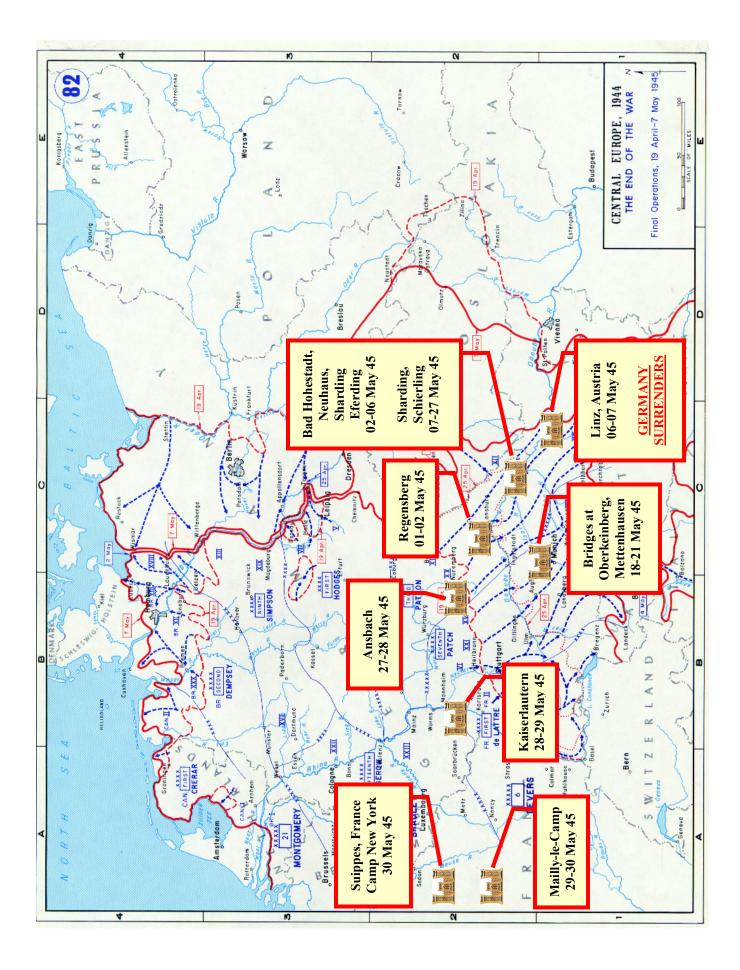
ROBERT G. DUNBAR 1st Lt., CE Adjutant

3 Incls:

Incl 1: Unit Journal (Daily Situation)

Incl 2: S-1 Annex

Incl 3: Field Msgs and Overlays







The following is a typed version of a three-page letter home written by 1^{st} Lt. John G. Graham, Company C, 206^{th} Engineer Combat Battalion, at war's end. A copy of the original handwritten letter follows this page. From the May 1945 After Action Report, this letter appears to have been written while the Battalion was in the vicinity of Mettenhausen, Germany.

20 May 45

Dearest Home Folks,

I hope this finds you all well. I am fine and in good health.

Well this part of the war has come to an end and I'm so thankful that I lived to see the end of it. There were very many that weren't as fortunate.

As yet we do not know what is in store for us. I am quite certain that we will go to the Pacific but I do hope we might come by home on the way there. It has been near two years since I was home isn't it. It seems more like ten years tho.

I was enroute to Paris France VE day. I got a three day pass there. We had a long way to go to get there. We were in Linz, Austria at that time. We were there when the war ended.

We traveled 920 miles to get to Paris going through parts of Austria, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Luxemburg & France.

The lights are on again over here. It seems very strange to see street lights, headlights on Army vehicles & we don't have to worry about blacking out the windows at night any more. We even put lights across a pontoon bridge across the Danube River the other day.

We had a very nice shower this afternoon. It was getting very dry and dusty here. The days are getting quite warm. You can see the Alps mountains from where we are, and the tops are always covered with snow.

How is Daddy getting along with the crops?

I got your box of candy yesterday. It was very good. Thanks very much. Well there is very little news here. I'm only hoping I might be able to see you again before we go to another war. Take care of yourselves and write soon.

Love to All,

Son



1st Lt. John G. Graham at Regensburg, Germany





20 May 45. per tolks finds 40 leaust Well Jan fine thin ood Treat Well this, part of the wow has come to an end. w to thankful that he end off it The See 1 Were Very many that w fortunate. I We do not know get we do not quite Certain ! wife go to the fac J do Morpe we migh home on the way ears since I was home ignel it. It Seeme more like ten years the. I was incoute to fairs Lance VE day. I got a the ong way to go to get there that time: We were the when the was ended





We Tre ed 120 miles going theought Seemany Checko RAC 19. K.C ydnee. au on ag Very Teret. Quel, Seems Street We encles leny Worn about The Windows We more. a ponton Ind 9. ube Ru The Other We had a very 2 Just petting ghe A alpsi ou we are, an di always Covend with s it the coop low Coop ong wil I got your bol of Candy esterday. It was very good hants Very much





Well there is very little news have The only Aging I be able to See you a be to see you a Ding I Migh, tore we g take Can War. 90 0 of yourselfs over to All





BATTALION HISTORY (AR 345-105)

206 Engineer Combat Battalion

June 1945

I. STRENGTH: Commissioned and Enlisted

	Officers	Warrant Officers	Enlisted
1. 1 Jun 45	27	3	602
2. Net Increase	0	0	15
3. Net Decrease	1	0	8
4. 30 Jun 45	26	3	609

- A. Officer Gains and Losses:
 - 1. Gains: None
 - 2. Losses:

Capt. Marion Patterson, 01110701, Combat Engineer, transferred to 312th Engineer Combat Battalion, 87th Infantry Division, Paragraph 1, SO #174 Headquarters Oise, Intermediate Section, European Theater of Operations, 23 Jun 45.

B. Enlisted Gains and Losses:

1. Gains: 15. 11 enlisted men assigned and joined this organization from 53^{rd} Reinforcement Battalion. Three (3) enlisted men assigned and joined this organization from the 1169th Engineer Combat Group. One (1) enlisted man assigned and joined from the 101st Evacuation Hospital.

2. Losses: One (1) enlisted man transferred to the 220^{th} General Hospital, four (4) enlisted men transferred to the 1169^{th} Engineer Combat Group, one (1) enlisted man transferred to the 361^{st} SS Regiment, one (1) enlisted man transferred to USA, one (1) enlisted man transferred to Loire Disposal Center.

- II. STATION:
 - A. Camp New York, Suippes France, (vT6866) Nord d' Guerre Zone.





III. OPERATIONS:

Construction of Assembly Area Camps. Camp New York, Project No OCE 415-GC-281. Prisoner of war labor utilized, assigned Headquarters Oise Intermediate Section, Com Z, ETO, attached 333rd Engineer (SS) Regiment for operations. Lt Colonel H. S. Beeler, 0286503, Combat Engineer, Commanding.

IV. MISCELLANEOUS:

- A. Awards and Decorations: None
- B. Schools Attended:

Capt James O Stinnett, 01102487, Combat Engineer. I & E Staff School, Paris from 25 Jun 45 to 30 Jun 45.

- C. Changes in Duty:
 - 1. Capt Cecil M Davis, 01104116 Combat Engineer, relieved as assistant S-3, this Headquarters, and reassigned as Company Commander Company C, this organization, effective 24 June 45, vice Capt Marion H Patterson, 01110710, Combat Engineer, transferred.





HEADQUARTERS 206 ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION APO 513, U. S. ARMY

30 June 45

ROSTER OF OFFICERS

NAME	<u>RANK</u>	<u>ASN</u>	<u>COMPONENT</u>	<u>DATE OF</u> <u>RANK</u>	POSITION
Henry S Beeler Kittridge A Wing James M. Deason Robert S Greer William L Jones Alfred L Lopez Francis A Mood James O Stinnett Robert G Dunbar Richard L Ferchaud	Lt Col Major Capt Capt Capt Capt Capt I st Lt I st Lt	0286503 01100399 01110452 01100125 01110589 0482935 0498809 01102487 01316137 01639026	CE, ORC CE, AUS CE, AUS CE, AUS CE, AUS CE, AUS CE, AUS CE, AUS CE, AUS CE, AUS	12 Aug 44 1 Jul 44 1 Feb 44 1 Feb 44 1 Feb 44 17 Jul 43 17 Oct 42 1 Jan 44 29 Oct 44 16 Jan 45	Bn Commander Ex Officer S-3 Liaison Officer S-4 Bn Dental Officer Bn Surgeon S-2 S-1 Rcn Officer
			H&S COMPANY		
Robert E Musser Edward J Rhodes William C Trolinger Dominic R Catrambone	1 st Lt 1 st Lt CWO WOJG	01113373 01114273 W2122258 W2121169	CE, AUS CE, AUS USA, AUS USA, AUS	1 Apr 44 16 Jan 45 15 Feb 44 20 May 43	Co Commander Bn Motor Officer Ass't S-1 Ass't Motor Officer
Jack B Coulter	WOJG	W2108736	USA, AUS	21 Apr 43	Ass't S-4
			COMPANY A		
Donald Sargent Joseph N Ridgely Jr Luke N Rahrig Ovie J Ramicone Ben B Hightower	Capt 1 st Lt 1 st Lt 2 nd Lt 2 nd Lt	01107104 01111864 01061223 02010326 02010325	CE, AUS CE, AUS CE, AUS CE, AUS CE, AUS	1 Jun 45 1 Jan 45 1 Mar 45 4 Mar 45 4 Mar 45	Co Commander Plat Commander Plat Commander Plat Commander DS to Co B (Plat Commander)
			COMPANY B		
John W Rhein Dean R Isaacs David Geier Edward O Schumann	1 st Lt 1 st Lt 1 st Lt 1 st Lt 1 st Lt	01107653 01106846 01107425 01108305	CE, AUS CE, AUS CE, AUS CE, AUS	2 Aug 43 18 Jun 43 1 Mar 45 1 Jan 45	Co Commander Plat Commander Plat Commander Mess, Supply & Trans Officer
			COMPANY C		
Cecil M Davis John G Graham Thomas S Hammack Edward C Patrick Frederick H Goldstein	Capt 1 st Lt 1 st Lt 2 nd Lt 2 nd Lt	01104116 01113230 01109343 01113879 01645604	CE, AUS CE, AUS CE, AUS CE, AUS CE, AUS	8 Jun 44 1 Feb 44 1 Jan 45 12 May 43 9 Apr 43	Co Commander Plat Commander Plat Commander Plat Commander Mess, Supply & Trans Officer





BATTALION HISTORY (AR 345-105)

206 Engineer Combat Battalion

July 1945

I. STRENGTH: Commissioned and Enlisted

	Officers	Warrant Officers	Enlisted
5. 1 July 45	27	3	618
6. Net Increase	7	1	227
7. Net Decrease	18	1	435
8. 31 July 45	16	3	410

A. Officer Gains and Losses:

1. Gains:

Following named Officers transferred to this Organization, Paragraph 16, SO No 68, Headquarters 333d Engineer (SS) Regiment, dated 16 Jul 45.

FRANK G CROW 0233119, CE	Lt Col
JAMES S LITTLE	Maj
0366518, CE JAMES A WESTERFIELD	Capt
0413308, CE RIENFI J MAYNARD	Capt
0299156, CE WALTER P CHRISTIAN	2 nd Lt
02011457, CE	
CECIL CROW 02011458, CE	2 nd Lt
CHARLES A MAC NEILL W2111437, USA	CWO
,	





2. Losses:

Following named Officers transferred to 1343d Engineer Combat Battalion, Paragraph 16, SO No 68, Headquarters 333d Engineer (SS) Regiment, dated 16 Jul 45.

HENRY S BEELER	Lt Col
0286503, CE JAMES M DEASON	Capt
01110452, CE FRANCIS A MOOD	Capt
0498809, MC John W Rhein	1 st Lt
01107653, CE DEAN R ISAACS	1 st Lt
01106846, CE ROBERT E MUSSER	1^{st} Lt
01113373, CE	1 20
DAVID GEIER 01107425, CE	1 st Lt
WILLIAM C TROLINGER W2121158, USA	CWO

Following named Officers transferred to 251st Engineer Combat Battalion, Paragraph 16, SO No 68, Headquarters 333d Engineer (SS) Regiment, dated 16 Jul 45.

THOMAS S HAMMACK	1 st Lt
01109343, CE	
RICHARD L FERCHAUD	1 st Lt
01639026, CE	

Following named Officers transferred to 277th Engineer Combat Battalion, Paragraph 16, SO No 68, Headquarters 333d Engineer (SS) Regiment, dated 16 Jul 45.

CECIL M DAVIS	Capt
01104116, CE	
LUKE N RAHRIG	1 st Lt
01061223, CE	



1st Lt Thomas S. Hammack





Following named Officers transferred to 19th Reinforcement Depot, Paragraph 60, SO No 206, Headquarters OIS, dated 25 Jul 45.

JOHN G GRAHAM	1 st Lt
01113230, CE	
EDWARD C PATRICK	2 nd Lt
01113879, CE	

Following Officer transferred to 1056th Engineer PC and R Battalion, Paragraph 1, SO No 192, Headquarters OIS, dated 11 Jul 45.

JOSEPH W RIDGELY Jr. 1st Lt 01111864, CE

Following named Officers transferred to 61st Engineer Combat Battalion, Paragraph 1, SO No 186, Headquarters OIS, dated 5 Jul 45.

EDWARD O SCHUMANN	1 st Lt
01108305, CE	
FREDERICK H GOLDSTEIN	1 st Lt
01645604, CE	

Following Officer transferred to 162nd General Hospital, United Kingdom, Paragraph 2, SO No 104, Headquarters 1343d Engineer Combat Battalion, dated 25 Jul 45.

JAMES A WESTERFIELD Capt 0413308, CE

B. Enlisted Gains and Losses:

1. Gains: 227 enlisted men assigned this Organization for Readjustment per ETO SOP No 60, dated 15 Feb 45 and Ltr Engr Section OIS, Com Z, AG 200.3, dated 18 Jun 45.

2. Losses: 435 enlisted men transferred from this Organization for Readjustment per ETO SOP No 60, dated 15 Feb 45 and Ltr Engr Section OIS, Com Z, AG 200.3, dated 18 Jun 45.

II. STATION:

A. Camp New York, Suippes France, (VT6866) Nord d' Guerre.





III. OPERATIONS:

Construction of Assembly Area Camps. Camp New York, Project No OCE 4k5-GC-281. Prisoner of war labor utilized. Assigned Headquarters Oise Intermediate Section, Com Z, US___, attached 333d Engr (SS) Regt for opns. Lt Colonel H. S. BEELER, 0296503, CE, Commanding.

Company B, 279th Engineer Combat Battalion, attached to this Organization for operations. Have established on the job training course in bulldozer operation.

IV. MISCELLANEOUS:

A. Awards and Decorations:

1. Following named enlisted men awarded (not yet presented) Bronze Star Medal, Paragraph 1, GO No 85, Headquarters XX Corps, dated 27 May 45.

Johnson, Edward M. 39557832, H&S Co	T/Sgt
<i>37337832</i> , 110 , 3 CO	35
38428887, H&S Co	
Lain, Lewis P.	Tec 5
38429239, H&S Co	

2. Following enlisted men awarded the Purple Heart (not yet presented)

Tec 5 J. W. Payne, 38390341, Company B, per GO No 13, this Headquarters, dated 17 Jul 45, for wounds received in action against the enemy in France, 11 Nov 1944.

Private First Class Cody E. Gilliland, 38463822, Company C, per GO No 14, this Headquarters, dated 23 Jul 45, for wounds received in action against the enemy in Germany, 24 Feb 1945.

B. Schools Attended:

1. Following enlisted men attending school in Army University Center, Sarbonne, Paris, France.

William E. Offerman M/Sgt 39408381, H&S Co

³⁵ Name and rank unreadable.





Aaron Masur	Tec 5
42039328, Med Detachment	
Walter T Daniels	Pvt
31285974, Co A	

2. Following enlisted men attending school of Architecture, London, England.

Richard J Crowley	T/Sgt
34673788, H&S Co	
Clarence F Wright	Tec 5
42090218, H&S Co	

C. Changes in Duty:

1. 1st Lt John G. Graham, 01113230, Combat Engineer, relieved as Platoon Commander, Company C, this Organization 13 Jul 45, vice Capt Cecil M. Davis, 01104116, transferred.

2. Capt. Robert S. Greer, Combat Engineer, relieved as Liaison Officer, this Organization and reassigned as Company Commander, Company C, this Organization, 30 Jul 45, vice 1st Lt John G. Graham, 01113230, transferred.





HEADQUARTERS 206TH ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION APO 513, U.S. ARMY

31 August 1945.

BATTALION HISTORY FOR THE MONTH OF AUGUST, 1945.

a. Original Unit:

- (1) Designation: 206th Engineer Combat Battalion.
- (2) Date of Organization: 1 April 1943
- (3) Place of Organization: Camp Swift, Texas
- (4) Authority for Organization: War Department Letter, AG 320.2 (3-24-3) OB-1, GNGCT N, 5 March 1945, and General Orders Number 4, 5th Headquarters, Special Troops, Third Army, Camp Swift, Texas, 29 March 1943.

(5) Sources From Which Personnel Were Obtained: Transfer from 146th Engineer Combat Regiment.

b. Changes in Organization: None.

c. Strength, Commissioned and Enlisted:	Off	WO	N	EM
(1) At the beginning of the Period:	16	3	0	424
(2) Net increase each month:	1	0	0	40
(3) Net decrease each month:	0	0	0	117
(4) At end of period:	17	3	0	357

d. Stations (permanent or temporary) of unit or parts thereof: Camp New York, Suippes, France (Vt 6866).

- (1) Date of arrival at each station: 30 May 1945.
- (2) Not Applicable.
- e. Marches: None.
- f. Campaigns: None.
- g. Battles: None.
- h. Commanding Officers in important engagements: None.
- i. Losses in Action; Officer and Enlisted Men: None.
- j. Former and present members who have distinguished themselves in action: None
- k. Photographs of personnel, important scenes and events: None.





HEADQUARTERS 206TH ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION APO 513, U.S. ARMY

30 September 1945.

BATTALION HISTORY FOR THE MONTH OF SEPTEMBER, 1945.

a. Original Unit:

- (1) Designation: 206th Engineer Combat Battalion.
- (2) Date of Organization: 1 April 1943
- (3) Place of Organization: Camp Swift, Texas
- (4) Authority for Organization: War Department Letter, AG 320.2 (3-24-3) OB-1, GNGCT N, 5 March 1945, and General Orders Number 4, 5th Headquarters, Special Troops, Third Army, Camp Swift, Texas, 29 March 1943.

(5) Sources From Which Personnel Were Obtained: Transfer from 146th Engineer Combat Regiment.

b. Changes in Organization: None.

c. Strength, Commissioned and Enlisted:	Off	WO	N	EM
(1) At the beginning of the Period:	17	3	0	357
(2) Net increase each month:	2	0	0	4
(3) Net decrease each month:	11	2	0	288
(4) At end of period:	8	1	0	73

d. Stations (permanent or temporary) of unit or parts thereof: Camp New York, Suippes, France (Vt 6866).

- (1) Date of arrival at each station: 30 May 1945.
- (2) Not Applicable.
- e. Marches: None.
- f. Campaigns: None.
- g. Battles: None.
- h. Commanding Officers in important engagements: None.
- i. Losses in Action; Officer and Enlisted Men: None.
- j. Former and present members who have distinguished themselves in action: None
- k. Photographs of personnel, important scenes and events: None.





HEADQUARTERS 206TH ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION APO 513, U.S. ARMY

31 October 1945.

BATTALION HISTORY FOR THE MONTH OF OCTOBER, 1945.

a. Original Unit:

- (1) Designation: 206th Engineer Combat Battalion.
- (2) Date of Organization: 1 April 1943
- (3) Place of Organization: Camp Swift, Texas
- (4) Authority for Organization: War Department Letter, AG 320.2 (3-24-3) OB-1, GNGCT N, 5 March 1945, and General Orders Number 4, 5th Headquarters, Special Troops, Third Army, Camp Swift, Texas, 29 March 1943.

(5) Sources From Which Personnel Were Obtained: Transfer from 146th Engineer Combat Regiment.

b. Changes in Organization: None.

c. Strength, Commissioned and Enlisted:	<u>Off</u>	WO	N	EM
(1) At the beginning of the Period:	6	1	0	73
(2) Net increase each month:	54	2	0	675
(3) Net decrease each month:	50	3	0	82
(4) At end of period:	10	0	0	666

d. Stations (permanent or temporary) of unit or parts thereof: Camp New York, Suippes, France (Vt 6866).

- (1) Date of arrival at each station: 30 May 1945.
- (2) Not Applicable.
- e. Marches: None.
- f. Campaigns: None.
- g. Battles: None.
- h. Commanding Officers in important engagements: None.
- i. Losses in Action; Officer and Enlisted Men: None.
- j. Former and present members who have distinguished themselves in action: None
- k. Photographs of personnel, important scenes and events: None.





HEADQUARTERS 206 ENGINEER COMBAT BATTLION CAMP KILMER, ASF, NYPE NEW JERSEY

23 November 1945

SUBJECT: Transmittal of Battalion History.

TO: The Adjutant General, Washington 25, D.C.

Transmitted herewith is the Battalion History of the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion for the year of 1945 up to and including the 28th day of November 1945. This unit is now being deactivated per GO 143, Headquarters Camp Kilmer, ASF, NYPE dated 27 November 1945. Therefore no further history will be forwarded by this unit.

For the Commanding Officer:

GERALD J. GROKOWSKY 1ST Lt., CE Adjutant





HEADQUARTERS 206 ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION CAMP KILMER, ASF, NYPE NEW JERSEY

28 November 1945.

BATTALION HISTORY FOR THE MONTH OF NOVEMBER, 1945.

A. Original Unit:

- (1) Designation: 206th Engineer Combat Battalion.
- (2) Date of Organization: 1 April 1943
- (3) Place of Organization: Camp Swift, Texas
- (4) Authority for Organization: War Department Letter, AG 320.2 (3-24-3) OB-1, GNGCT N, 5 March 1945, and General Orders Number 4, 5th Headquarters, Special Troops, Third Army, Camp Swift, Texas, 29 March 1943.

(5) Sources From Which Personnel Were Obtained: Transfer from 146th Engineer Combat Regiment.

B. Changes in Organization: None.

C. Strength, Commissioned and Enlisted:	Off	WO	N	EM
(1) At the beginning of the Period:	10	0	0	666
(2) Net increase each month:	25	2	0	0
(3) Net decrease each month:	0	0	0	18
(4) At end of period:	35	2	0	648

D. Stations (permanent or temporary) of unit or parts thereof:

- (1) Camp New York, Suippes, France (VT 6866)
- (2) Camp Twenty Grand, Le Harve, France
- (3) Final Station: Camp Kilmer, ASF, NYPE, New Jersey

E. Marches: Departed Camp New York for Camp Twenty Grand, Le Harve 1344 hrs, 10 Nov 45, arrived Camp Twenty Grand, 0740 hrs, 11 Nov 45. Departed Camp Twenty Grand, Le Harve, 18 Nov 45, Arrived Camp Kilmer, ASF, NTPE, New Jersey 27 Nov 45.

- F. Campaigns: None.
- G. Battles: None.
- H. Commanding Officers in important engagements: None.
- I. Losses in Action; Officer and Enlisted Men: None.
- J. Former and present members who have distinguished themselves in action: None





K. Photographs of personnel, important scenes and events: None.

L. Remarks: This Unit now being deactivated per GO 143, Headquarters Camp Kilmer, ASF, NYPE, New Jersey, dated 27 November 1945. We will be completed by 2359 hrs, 28 Nov 1945.



APPENDIX A

Transcript of audio tape produced by S/Sgt Don F. Wendling, who served first in Company A and later in the S-3 (Operations) Section of the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion

Chronology produced by S/Sgt Don F. Wendling from field notes.



The following is a transcript of part of audio cassette recordings made by Don F. Wendling describing his Army experiences. This transcript has been produced as accurately as possible from the recordings. Don F. Wendling, then a Tec 5, joined the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion on 25 November 1944, just prior to the Battalion's operations on the Saar River. The transcript begins during the final stage of his trip across France on a troop train and covers the period of his service with the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion until his reassignment to another Engineer Battalion after the German surrender. Any notations for clarification are contained in brackets within the transcript and are not part of the audio recordings.





Transcript of Audio Tape

S/Sgt Don F. Wendling

Experiences with the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion

Tape #2, WWII

[...] "Finally they put us back on the railroad again and made about two or three more hitches. [We went through] Lemans and we traveled, let's see it was, three days and we finally got into a little town of New Chateau, which is east of Paris, and they moved us into a, it was a great big, I think it was a cavalry base but it was a big barn – stable – it was a big area, cleared out. There wasn't a thing in there except the whole floor was covered with straw and the idea was, you know, you didn't have to have a mattress so you just get your blankets out of your pack and just throw them down and you just sleep on that straw, which is better than what we had. I think about the worst miserable time we had was back there at Omaha Beach – my, that mud and slop! But, there [at New Chateau] they issued us duffle bags and, too, they run us over to the - they had a barber shop there, a GI barber shop, and everybody had to go over there and get your hair cut. I mean, cut it off short. See, the idea was when you were going in up to the front lines they don't want you having long hair. You know, if you get a wound in the head, well they don't want long hair, it would be a problem.

So after about – let's see, it was three days there – a truck moved us up to Conflans – a town in, it was a couple hours – and it was a permanent French base. It was all masonry or stone buildings and they had marble floors and it was really comfortable and clean, you know, and good streets in this thing. We didn't do anything there except, I remember we could hear artillery – I don't know what town it was, Metz or Verdun or somewhere – rolling in the night. But, after about the second day – see, you never had any ammunition, you had a rifle but didn't, they called in, they called – my buddy, Joe Witherington, he goes up and in a little bit he comes back [and says] 'See what I got.' Well, they issued you two bandoliers of ammunition, that's the first element on the firing range when you had reason to have it. Then about two days later, why, the next day, I think, they called me up.

Well then, that evening, the trucks they came back, and it was the 206th Combat Engineer truck, came back and picked a bunch of us up. There must have been six or seven replacements and they hauled us up [to Apach, France]. They were staying in a big old brick house, the Headquarters Company, and when we rode in it was dark but we hadn't had our supper yet so they still had the chow line set up, so we got something to eat. They were still serving supper – whatever it was – outside and we got our mess kits out and ate.

The Commander of that Battalion was named Pirrung, Gilbert Pirrung, and he was, oh, he was GI, and, course, this was the Third Army we were in and he really loved Patton. He called each one individually down that night into his room. He had a room on the lower floor, and he had lights – well, I guess, he just had probably a gasoline lantern setting on the desk – and just talked to everybody, talked to each one of them privately, you know, 'What's your name?', 'What's your wife's?', and he made a few comments and he said, 'I see here, I think you've got an exceptionally high mechanical aptitude score.', and I said, 'Well, I don't know, I never saw my service record.' and I said, 'Alright.', and he says, 'Don't say alright, say yes sir.' He was a GI. [Laughing]

Anyhow, he turned me loose and I go back upstairs. We went back up, well, we were up in the attic where we stayed that night with the rest of the headquarters people,





and they were telling us, they were counting, 'course, there was artillery in back of us. You could hear the shells going over, and they would say, 'That's outgoing mail', and 'This is ingoing mail.'

The next morning they put us – one of the trucks went out and came in and we loaded. Oh, it was about six of us on them and [they] took [us] around and dropped guys off at each one [company], and I ended up in A Company. Well then they were quartered in – the officer, the Captain Langston, he was in the house but the rest of us was in a barn. It was all beat up, the roof caved in, and sleeping in a hay mow is what it was. He talked to, he interviewed everybody, you know. So, I think I was in the first squad, it was Company A, that's 206th Combat Engineers, which is in Third Army. You wore the Third Army patch, you know, the round red-blue patch with a white 'A' in it.

But, what we did then, while we were there, the main thing, you see, when the infantry went through, there was a lot of pillboxes they couldn't capture, so they just bypassed them and let the Krauts stay in there. So, we were trying to get these guys out of there. They were building up, I remember I spent a day, me and another guy, building up these - what do they call them? - pole charges. They'd take quarter-pound sticks or cans of TNT, it's about a two-inch square by four inches long, little square can, that's TNT, and had a hole in the end to put a primer. You'd take a whole gob of them and you'd build a big block by taping them all together as big as a great big automobile battery, and it was all taped together, and then you put a detonator, a cap, or a long-enough fuse on it and put that on a pole – any kind of a pole – and tape that to that. [The rest of us was] by putting fire, shooting, at the enclosures to keep them buttoned up, while a guy with a flamethrower and this guy with a pole charge would crawl up to the bunker door – they were steel doors – and he'd push that charge right up against the door and light that fuse and then crawl out of there as fast as he could. When that charge went off why, goodnight!, those Krauts inside they were goofy as could be, the ones it didn't kill. It was like hitting them in the head with a golf club.

I remember that night, I think that was there, we were outside, it was fairly clear, you see these V-2's taking off climbing up, you know, and they go right overhead and then they fizzle out, they get so high you couldn't see the flame from the exhaust side. They were headed for England.

We went to several towns around there. Let's see, we went to Apach, Customs House – we were getting up close to the German border then – and Marton, Dalem, Bistom, Altforweiler. The next day or so we, I guess they call it, we loaded my squad on a squad truck. Now, a squad truck was a GMC 6 x 6, they call it, six wheels, six pull, all of them driving, and with bows, canvas top, and the same way up at the front, just with a canvas top and they all had a scarf ring with a 30-caliber machine gun mounted on that. We drove through this little town and there was GIs all over the place, they had a mortar set up on the back of a half-track blazing away at some Hinnies over in a field across the way. The Germans would dig these anti-tank ditches, or anti-tank traps. They dig a great big ditch across a road. It would be, oh lordy, fifty feet wide and ten feet deep with some pretty straight walls, you know, then they'd build a little wood bridge across that so they could operate, you know, get over it. Well, when our forces came up, why, they just put a charge under it and blow that bridge off and you couldn't even cross it with a tank. So, we moved up to this one and I was down in the hole handing out some of this timber and, of course, the truck, every truck had a winch on the front and he was hooking on to some of this trash trying to get it out of there. What we were going to do, I guess, was probably throw a treadway across. We wouldn't be putting a wood bridge in, I'm sure, because that's too slow. All of a sudden the Hinnies saw us, evidently, and they started throwing 88's and everything at us. Our squad leader says, 'Get out! Let's get out of here! Come on!' We backed up and we run down the road and I fell down. Well, I stepped on a cable that quy was dragging in front of that truck. We ran into a barn right on the curve there. It was,





well, all of those houses had, well, the stables were on one side, then you had an open, just went clear through that you could drive through, then the house was on the other end. So, it was all in one building. There was some infantry boys in there, well, they were on foot and, boy, you could tell they had really, oh man!, they got that far-away look in their eyes. They saw us run in there and they hit that building on the top. I could hear, there was people upstairs hiding, because, you see, these natives, a lot of them, hid, and as soon as the troops went through, why, they'd try to get back in their houses. So we got out of it.

But, that next morning, then, the Colonel, he wanted me to make a drawing of the area – where every company was. I don't know what the devil he needed it for. So, I make the drawing and a guy come down and picked me up, that was it, he's a Sergeant in Headquarters Company and we go up the road and our guys were trying to patch some holes in the road, get some of the mud and stuff out of the way, and we get up to this one area and I don't know if we got off, I could hear tanks a-running and, 'course the Germans they could hear them too, and they started throwing 88's and here I am out in the middle of a mud hole again. All I know is get low. I don't know what happened to this Sergeant. I think he went behind the truck and hid or something.

When we got down there, I was mud from one end to the other again and that night, then, I was trying to get cleaned up, clean my rifle up, and I was upstairs in one room and all of a sudden I hear this, it sounded like an airplane engine, you know, blllump, blllump, bumpty-bump, bang, phizzzzt, phizt, phizt. And then it quit. Well, that poor guy, he's in trouble. Then, all of a sudden, kabang! That was the durndest explosion. It blew the, well, all the windows in those buildings had black-out screens, you know, that Haitian matting or black tar paper on wooden frames so that they could have light yet the light wouldn't be visible from the outside. We had a sentry, was a guy, one of the guys in A Company was down below there, standing in the door. I said, 'Something hit us. What the heck was that?' He said, 'Aw, a durn buzz bomb.' It was one of the old V-1's and what it had done it had malfunctioned and it was supposed to be on its way to England. Something happened and it fizzled and just lit back there in a field behind us.

By that time we were coming up to the Saar River. So, that next morning they loaded us on a truck and we take off for some little town – I don't remember what the name of it was. But, we are in a squad car, the whole squad, we run down this hill and all of a sudden this artillery started landing all around us, so the truck driver, he just stopped, and everybody got out and we run over to the, there was a stone fence, and got behind that fence. And, a little bit, here come a Lieutenant running up the road and he said, 'Come on, let's go. Get back in. Let's get out of here.' This road went down the hill and made a real sharp horseshoe bend at the bottom, in fact, it was an S-turn, and then it leveled out in the valley. The Krauts, you know, were trying to catch you, they were covering that. Well, all we could do was just get in the truck and all I could think of was I don't want to get - I always thought I didn't want to get hit in the head. All those Krauts down in there and he went bouncing down there and he made that curve and we rolled into town and it was the little town of, what is it, Altforweiler. I didn't realize it at the time but we had a crossing to make that night in the next little town, right on the river, of Lisdorf. There was one-five-five artillery [155-mm artillery] in behind us on back up there in an orchard and right across this road, then, right next to us there was one of those Piper Cubs, spotters, you know, they flew to direct the artillery fire.

So, anyhow, along that evening we loaded in the truck and they hauled us up to a little building and we wait in there and finally, just about dusk, we, 'okay move out!', we are walking in town and, man, all hell's going on in there. You never heard – I could hear slugs a-ricocheting, must have been, I don't know, big ones, big, broong!, you know. We walk into a street and we go left and we go down a street and go into an old building, go down, clear down to the basement and, heck, I think it was a vegetable, 'tater bin or something. We were to be in reserve and another company was going to do the assault. It





wasn't a, it was just a, put the infantry across on these little footbridges. I don't know how many people we lost, but finally, oh, along about midnight, well, they pulled us back out of there and we went back and got in our trucks and went, I guess, we went back up to the house we were staying in. We were just staying in any kind of house you could stay in. Once in a while we would get stuck out where you had to dig a foxhole, you know, and get out your sleeping bag.

But, we moved out of there the very next morning and we just went up the road about five miles, a little town of Wallerfangen. That was the 95th we put through the night before and then went up there and this was the 90th Division, and that was the one, I found out later, Joe Witherington was in the 90th Division, he was in their Engineering Battalion. We pull in and our squad was put in a house, we just moved to a house, there was a little town square and we had one-five-five artillery all around that square and, I think, we were only about a quarter of a mile from the river. And about two o'clock in the morning our artillery started, that artillery opens up and they really plaster the other side, they just, man they shell the heck out of it. You'd think if there was anything over there it wouldn't be standing up. And about four o'clock in the morning that's when usually you jumped off with the infantry. But, prior to that, the day before, we, they hauled out these old assault boats and we had to take them to a pond and see if they'd float. [Laughing] Who cares if they'd float? [Laughing] They'd been patched up. We had the boats, we had them on some of our trucks and they hauled them, went down to the start of the river and here's that big gate, like a railroad crossing gate, was supposed to have been taken care of, been blown, but it wasn't and so even though the Germans would figure out what was going on, why all you do is put somebody, put some TNT on it and blew that gate to get it open. And this is four o'clock in the morning. We were trying to be quite, you know, because the road ran downhill and then it just run parallel right along the river. It was only, what, a hundred feet from the river running north. The rivers, 'course, there are all running north. That was the Saar, and the Danube and the Rhine are all running north. So, we moved down there and we get the infantry across, we didn't really run into much trouble. The infantry came in over the hill, you know, came walking in down through these pine trees. Of course, these guys had these smoke generators going, so they had smoke on the site 'til, well, all the rest of that first day.

[After the infantry assault crossing, the 206th began construction of a treadway bridge] which we had never built before. But, that's what they were using over there, great big rubber pontoons like these rafts that they use in whitewater rafting, except they were much bigger than that and much heavier. They would blow [inflate] those things up and there is a wood deck that fits right on top of that and then these steel treads are, just big steel plates, with their opening about like a big heavy screen wire to those welded rods, so that any dirt, mud could fall right through it. And, same thing like a Bailey bridge, you can hook them all together, you know, and make a bridge. You have to have a bridle line across the river, a cable, to lash them to, every pontoon is then lashed to that cable. We couldn't get one in because they [the Germans] had so much artillery going, you get a pontoon blown up, pumped up, and along come a shell, a mortar shell, and punch a hole in it, so they gave that up and decided we could do it all with a ferry instead of a bridge. You get three pontoons blown up and put two sets of treadway panels on it and we had those big utility boats, they were inboard boats. The bridge companies furnished these, I think, because there were companies that handled nothing but the treadway bridge. They were big Brockway trucks with hydraulic lifts on the back, and you handle them.

And, 'course, we were working in shifts, like we were on from, well, eight to four in the morning, then, somebody else would take over and they work eight hours, then we go back on and it kind of shifts around. We got the infantry across and Captain of Supply got the tanks over. In a few days, the Krauts up the river, south of us, blew some dams and that flooded it and, lord, it was way wide. We had to put in some corduroy road. Captain





Deason of the B, Company B, I remember him telling that he went to a planning meeting and this General was up and said, 'Now we are going to this and this, and up here, now, if these dams are blown,' he says, 'this area down here will be inundated.' He [Captain Deason] said, 'I don't know what inundated means, but I figure somebody's going to get their butt drowned.' [laughing]

We were up there on that river for, oh lordy, about two weeks, I think it was, and shortly after this when the bulge started and they drew guys right out of our outfit and sent them up there, you know, as replacements to help get that thing stopped. Along about December the 5th the Headquarters Company, ole Pirrung, he moved into, had all the Headquarters, was in a great big mansion type building right in, close to the town square, was a big masonry building and, holy mackerel, a guy by the name of, you might remember, was Franz von Papen. He was a Hitler, one of his, I don't know, whether he was part of his regime. It was his home and while we were there, I remember, of course, picking up anything you could get. I got his riding crop with a silver head and his initials on it and I also got a pair of his riding boots, but somewhere along the line I threw them away. I didn't hang on to them. While we were there, and I think we were down river, Patton came up and made a visit. Of course, Patton and Pirrung, that's two, both of them, P's. They had found, somewhere in that building, a wine cellar and they split up all his silverware and his fancy linen, you know, it was pillage, loot and pillage. But, when we left, then we all hauled out of there, there was two or three guys stayed and they were given orders to blow that building. They planted TNT or dynamite, whatever it was, all over the building and touched her off and burned it down, or blew it, you couldn't burn it down because it was all, it was masonry.

I remember when I got transferred into there [into Headquarters & Service Company from Company A] – I'm going to backtrack here a little – they were having a meeting one night on the ground floor level and, I don't know, it was the S-3 people were in there and Pirrung and all the Company Commanders. I don't know whether the Germans, well, I don't think they had spys, you would know it, but anyhow, they threw a great big shell and it landed right in a window on the east side of, the enemy side, of this room and, oh lordy, it killed about four or five people, and my Company Commander, Captain Langston, he lost a leg. A guy by the name of Snodgrass got killed. I replaced him, he got killed and they transferred me to Headquarters Company, S-3 Section, which is Operations. Major St. Clair headed the S-3 Section.

So, when we pulled back then we pulled back into a little town of Bouzonville. When we got to the 206th there was another guy, name of – what the heck was his name, he was a German – Krueger, from Huntingburg, Indiana. He was a carpenter, that's what his MOS number was. We moved into kind of a little hotel in this town and, Major, no it was Colonel, Colonel – what the heck is his name? – Pirrung, he wanted, told us to send this carpenter in there, 'ole Krueger in there, to fix his light. Now what there was, there was windows and they were little tiny panes about four inches square and they were all like these hand-poured, you know, lordy, old stuff. And so, Krueger's in there, he's trying to fix it and he went out and got a bunch of these – tore down another window somewhere – got a bunch of these little glass panes and he's sitting there, he'd take one out and try to put another one back, or take a broken one out and try to put a new one back and he would break two more. [Laughing] 'Ole Pirrung says, 'Get that man out of here, he's losing ground!' [Laughing]

When we left Bouzonville, went back up to a little town of St. Avold. There was a – Intelligence seemed to think that the Krauts were going to try to pull something down there where we were, in that area, you know, make a break-through. We stayed down there about a week as I recall and we had a lot of armor around us. We loaded up to go back to Bouzonville, but just after we got orders in from Army to pull the 90th Division back across the river, so we spent a whole night hauling over demolition to those guys and about two





o'clock in the morning they touched it off and blew that little town of Dillingen they were in and then we brought them back across on a ferry, all their stuff and equipment, then we left town. I don't know where the 90th went from there.

But then there is something else I remember, just a few days after I had got to the outfit we were in one of those little towns and it was during the daytime, all of a sudden we hear a lot of ack-ack [anti-aircraft fire] going south of us, if I didn't have my directions mixed up. It was another V-1. He was real low and when he got down over where we were everybody in the outfit, man, they were shooting M-1's, 45's, 30-caliber machine guns, anything they had, they were shooting at this little 'ole thing, and all they would have done, if they'd have hit it, was just dumped it in their own laps. I swear, it looked to me like it was going north, which would have been the wrong direction to get to France. I don't understand it.

Tape #3, WWII

"[...] When we were there in Wallerfangen on the Saar, after we had made that crossing, put the infantry across, we got this ferry running. One night – we were working the night shift then, sometimes be working at night sometimes days, just kind of switch it around so that we had three companies doing the work – the river, they [the Germans] had dammed it up or had broke some of those dams and let the water spread out so that we had had to lay a lot of corduroy road – you know, cut logs and lay them down close together and you got a rail on each side and it's all nailed down. The squad leader said go up there. He says there was a raft – in fact, the day before, in fact, that day – evidently, they or whoever was operating that ferry, it got away from them and this ferry had a tank on it, a Sherman, and it drifted down and then it lodged – the river made a bend, a sharp bend to the right – it had lodged up against the bank. He said, 'Now, there's some nails, two-three bags of big spikes on that.' He sent me and another guy down there to get them.

Of course, it's dark and we were walking down the road and all of a sudden we hear somebody say - we hear somebody talking over to our left over in the edge of the trees. We challenged them and they said, 'Don't shoot, don't shoot, we're the smoke boys.' What it was, these guys, they were black, they were Negroes, that run these smoke generators and they are big apparatuses that you set up and, I guess, they put fuel oil or something in them and light them and they put out this fog or this smoke. They had them – course, they're noisy son-of-a-guns – when you fire them up you make a noise, and then all that smoke coming out of there, the Krauts then they would cut loose and start shooting everything you got at it trying to stop the smoke. So, they [the smoke generator troops] dig holes – man, they were about ten feet deep. But anyhow, we talked to them a little bit and then went on down and got on that ferry and walked out and found these nails and lugged them back to where the operation was.

Some of our guys had dug a great big deep hole and then they had found a steel plate somewhere and layed it over the top of it and made a dugout so you could go up in there and smoke cigarettes when they had to. When you get in there you couldn't see anything, it was dark as the dickens. It didn't amount to much.

But then, later on, must have been about the second week, a truck, one of our trucks, was going down a road and he hit a mine, blew the right front corner off the truck. Didn't hurt anybody. So, somebody give orders so I and three other guys – I had the mine detector – go down and sweep that road to see if we could find anything else. Of course, you got his mine detector and you got that little thing up there on your ear to hear. There's so much iron and steel and shrapnel laying around that it's hard to find – we didn't find any – but we hadn't been out there fifteen minutes till they saw us, I think, the Krauts saw us, what we were up to, and they started throwing 88s and we all run, we run. There was a little gully running up the side of the hill, we all jumped up in that gully and, man, you





learned to pray in a hurry. Some of those hit so close that – I don't know what they were – some of them exploded, they were contact bursts, but some of them, they were either armor-piercers or duds, they just 'whop!' and all you got was this dirt flying out of it. But, the Lieutenant Colonel Pirrung, Gilbert Pirrung, the Battalion Commander, he come walking up the road, you know, like, well, he wanted to get hit! I don't know – he was brave!

One of these guys that was with me, he didn't have a bayonet – he was from Indiana, he was a young kid – and so I loaned him my bayonet. You know, if you find something you was supposed to pick around and locate it and then dig it out of there and get rid of it. But, he lost my bayonet so I had to go – I don't know whether I just picked up one, another one, somewhere along the road.

So then, when we left Wallerfangen, we went back to a little town of ... Bouzonville and we stayed there a little while, I don't know, a few days, and that's when Kruger tried to put new window panes in the window. Then we went back up to the town of St. Avold. We had armor all around us, in fact, Intelligence seemed to think that they were going to try to pull something there, so, then about, I guess it was on December the 31st, we pulled, went back to Bouzonville and it was, oh lordy, it was snow and ice and was cold and the roads were icy.

Somehow we missed our weapons carrier that the S-3 personnel rode in and a guy by the name of Luftsteder – he took part of the pictures I got, he took basic at Belvoir because he was in some of those pictures of our outfit. His specialty was demolition, in other words you would take some special training - but anyhow, he and I were stuck so we got on a S-3, or was an S-4 supply truck, another big ten-inch 6 x 6 truck, climbed up in there – I don't know who was driving but there was a Warrant Officer of the motor pool. He was sitting with the cadre up front – we climbed in, it was dark by then. That son-of-a-gun truck was loaded with mines and explosives of all kinds. There was a big chest in the back that we were sitting on. I guess that was a chest full of blasting caps and detonators, but when we came up to a little town of - what the heck was the name of it? - Boulay, all of a sudden we were going downhill - we were in a convoy, see, and there's all the vehicles in the whole outfit are on the road - and I heard somebody yelling, 'Stop the truck!' It was icy, I mean, that road was just a layer of ice. What he was concerned about, in back of us, I guess, there was a big D-6 Caterpillar dozer with a big armored cab on it and on a low-boy and it was just right behind us and he was concerned about that. Whoever that was ahollering on the road there, I guess, why, he knew that the truck we were in was loaded with demolition and he was ready if they got into a wreck and that dozer had come piling into the back of that truck, it would be one big kaboom!

The truck in front of us pulled off the road, and we were right behind it, and all of a sudden I felt this guy get on the brakes and then 'kabang!' – man, Luftsteder and I, it threw us clear up in the front of the truck and I cut my shin on a shovel or something up in there, and it broke the whole, broke the spindle and the axle right off of that truck. So, the convoy, I guess it got straightened out, the ones that were ahead they kept on going. Well, it ended up the Warrant Officer and I and this other driver, we stayed. They said, well, go on and get in the building there. There was a 95th Infantry – this was on December 31st, coming up, you know, it was New Year's Eve – and here we are. I know one of those old doggies in the 95th Infantry, they had a piano in this big old hall, and he was playing 'I'll Be Home For Christmas' or something like that and, man, it was another sad night. But, then the next day, they came back and picked us up. We went back to St. Avold and spent another about sixteen days with armor all around us.

See, the weather was so bad, had so much snow, that everything kind of come to a halt. The Krauts weren't doing much and we moved around to three or four little towns and, in fact, during that time, this was in March, I got a pass into the little town of Thionville, just overnight, the truck hauling _____ up there and there really was nothing



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there. I think there might have been a theatre. Then we came right back to the outfit. We were at the little town of Freudenburg, which is between the Saar and the Rhine. Several of us went out, there was an outfit across the river from this town of Mettlach and that's where these fancy Mettlach pottery is made. They make steins and they make – later on I picked up a pitcher, a beautiful one that was made in Mettlach – but we went up there, right to this little town and there was observers set up. They were calling fire with a 240-mm – that's a great big artillery piece. They move that thing, it's setting, the breech and the running gears are hauled on one set of wheels and the barrel on another set and when they set that thing up and put it all together, they stay in one spot for weeks because, I think, they can fire that thing, a shell will go for 25 miles. This 240-mm, see, that's about 9 ¾ inches, I guess. To get fire from that, Battalion couldn't order it; it had to come from Army.

So, they were trying to get fire on a building over there and these guys were talking by radio and so they said they fired one for effect, and this guy over here said, 'They're on the way!' In a little bit we heard a whistling overhead and it landed in the yard. These Germans were out in the yard with mess kits lined up and, man, you ought to have seen them scatter, the coattails straight out behind them! Then they fired another one right in that building, but we came on back then.

When I was in the line company at A Company, we a few times had to be standing guard out along the road, protecting your outfit wherever it was bivouacked. We stood with two guys. We had an old water-cooled 30-caliber machine gun and we usually set it up down in a ditch, say, behind a culvert, so that you had a good view of what was coming down the road. Any vehicles coming down, why, you would challenge them and every night you had a password and it changed every night and it was kind of confusing because, see, we were down on the right flank of the Third Army and the Seventh Army was on our right flank. So, they had a password, those guys, and we had one so a lot of times we would have to know their password or we might be in trouble. They were weird passwords.

Then, when we were doing just guard duty around our Headquarters Company, the S-3 pulled it and, of course, S-4 people did, but it was cold, man, cold, standing out there in the wee hours of the morning. I noticed this one Sergeant, he had this overcoat on. He said, 'I found this down in supply.' Well, it was mine! When we went in as replacements to this engineer outfit, everybody had overcoats because you were infantry. But, in the engineers, you wore a mackinaw. It was a button-up wool thing like that, it was a mackinaw, shorter so it was easier to work and do things. So, it was my old overcoat, so we passed it around whenever you had guard. And, I had an old – I think it was Carolyn's dad's – they had sent me – I think they [the Army] took it. It was kind of a helmet, a cloth helmet, and, man, it would keep your head warm and so they used that, too.

So, along about the 20th of March [1945], we started moving, the weather started clearing up in the spring. I remember one night we bivouacked in a woods and everybody either got out a bedroll and layed it on the ground or dug a foxhole, whatever you wanted to do. There was three of us – myself and Krueger and must have been Luftsteder – we were on one round of guard, whatever it was, three hours. So, this was kind of a wooded country so we walked about 100 yards down into this woods and took sleeping bags, what we had, and threw them down on the ground. We sat there and talked and smoked cigarettes, or whatever we wanted to do, and finally they went to sleep and that left me up; and then I was going to wake one of them up to relieve me. I'm sitting there and all of a sudden I hear this – the branches a-crunching and people walking. I knew what it was because the Germans, see, the armor went through there so fast that they just went through them or around them and running over them if they got in the way. A lot of these German soldiers were trying to walk at night; they tried to get out and to get back to their outfits. So, of course, I had an M-1 that was loaded, so I stood up and hollered 'Halt!', and I could hear these guys grunting and hauling, so I shot two or three times in the direction where they were and I heard them





stumbling into trees. I don't think I hit anybody, I'm sure I didn't. And old Krueger, he comes and says, 'What in the Sam Hill is going on?' So I told him.

The next morning, then, when we got up and went back up for breakfast – the kitchen had, I imagine, then it was probably C-rations, had the cans all full of hot C-rations – there was an old, he was a Wehrmacht, an old man, a German soldier. He had walked into camp that night and I'm sure he wasn't one of these that went through the woods that I was after. You know, 'Komarade', and he gave himself up and he looked like he hadn't had anything to eat for days.

When we got up to the Rhine, it was on March the 27th. We were lucky, we didn't have to build a bridge across that one or make an assault. Most of them, they crossed on, in fact, this was the little town of Oppenheim – we crossed on a bridge built by the Engineers of the 80th Division and we just went north then on the German side, or the far side, of the Rhine to Bishofsheim, which is on the corner where the Mainz River runs in and we did have to put the 80th Division across there and build a bridge. Then it was just taking off like rats. Every day was running. We would go till - chasing the armor. We were in the Autobahn then, the big road, you know. Somewhere along the road in Gotha, I think it was, this guy Frank Foster, who was from Anderson, Indiana – he was a piano player, I think that's what he did, he played clubs or something – but he was a heavyset guy and old Pyle, another buddy of mine, we all took basic there at Belvoir and we were right together in the barracks there. He'd say, 'Ole bloat there, bloaty Foster.' He was in that Engineer outfit in the 80th Division and they were really G.I. When they went down the road, they were sitting there at attention in their trucks with their rifles between their legs, knees, you know. Then we went on up through the town of Gotha. I remember I found out while I was in there the 80th Division Engineers were in that town that night and Foster, he was in that outfit, so I inquired around and found out where he was in some old hotel they were quartered. I found him and we sat around and talked about an hour and I went back to our Battalion.

We went through, let's see, Gotha and Eisenach and through the town of Jena, where the Zeiss lenses were made for cameras, and then we ended up in a little town outside of Chimnitz and we found out, then, the next morning, Patton was really headed for Berlin and the Generals above him decided he was leaving too much open down on the south flank, so they turned us around the very next day. We went back west and then headed down into towards Austria.

That's a pretty good sized river [Danube River], you see, it's south of Regensburg, and we, our S-3 section, we went down into this little town, and it's right on the river. At night we were pulling our little trailer that's got the blackboard on it, got our maps and all our little files that you can carry around with what papers you need, and pulled down there – there's a house right there – and, I think, Captain Deason – by that time St. Clair had been moved out – he had transferred to an outfit that Pirrung had gone to, and Captain Deason, who was A Company Commander, took over the S-3, and he walked down to the river – and it's dark – just to look around and he's standing there and 'burrrrp!'. A German across the river had cut across with a burp gun and he [Deason] came running up there.

So, the infantry was supposed to come down there. We were supposed to build a bridge there. There was a railroad bridge right at that point that we went across the river and, of course, it had been blowed out, and finally he says, 'Well, let's move on down into town.' We were about 200 yards from the edge of this little village, which was right on the river. The driver gets in that truck and he was stuck. He had parked right in a manure pile. He got that thing stuck so tight we couldn't budge it. So, well, we grabbed what we could off the truck and took it down in there and we hadn't realized they decided, Dulles decided, that they weren't going to make the crossing there, were going to make it up, well, be down the river, north of us about two miles. So we were stuck there – of course, it was daylight by then. We, I think it was Luftsteder and I, we got what we could and, in the meantime, the Krauts they thought we were in the town yet, and they started shelling the heck out of it.



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We waited until it quieted down and we walked up the track and by then they had already got the infantry across when we got up there and they had built a big treadway bridge.

Our guys, during the day then, they knew there was some fish in that river. There was a little island just south of the bridge and somebody got out on that island with a whole bunch of hand grenades and they would throw a hand grenade in the river and when it went off, see, it was just like dynamite. It was killing fish. Well, there was guys in that area, just where the bridge was, would be out on the ends of these pontoons grabbing these fish out of the water and they had a pretty good mess. I don't know what kind of fish they were - they weren't trout, they were just, I think, it was some kind of trash fish. Anyhow, we cleaned them all and, man, we were going to have fish and chips that night! We took these fish back to this building we were in. They thought they could fry them in butter. Well, G.I. butter is like, ugh, it's different, it's like, ugh, I don't know what it's made out of. You can store it without refrigeration and it won't melt, and they put that in a skillet and it ended up, it just got like cheese. They said that don't get it, so they threw that out and you were in someone else's house! And they went to the kitchen truck and got two big cans of bacon. Now, bacon was packed the same way; in gallon cans, OD cans, and they got that out and then they used that grease, put some of that in the – grease that was in these cans, and they fried these fish and we sat around and thought we were eating high on the hog, but we really wasn't, and did these potatoes, fried them up.

Well, then on, we started out – we were there at Gundelshausen three days, that was the 65th Infantry, we were going down and, I think, made one more crossing – I forget what – the Isar River. But, when we got to Neuhaus, I guess, was the Inns River we put – I forgot what outfit we got – probably the 65th, and on the 6th [of May, 1945], then, we pulled into Lenz, Austria. Of course, we were in Austria then and off to the right, southeast, we see the Alps Mountains way down there, you know, snow caps on them. Well, then that's, when we got there, the Russians were on the other side of the river, so we knew the war was going to be over. In fact, they announced it that day, then.

And so we pulled back, stayed in a little town for three days and another one we stayed about seven days, the little town of Scharding, and on the 27th, then, we were all in a convoy. We were going to move back to France and we spent one night in Kaiserlautern – these were all bivouacs, you know, just sleeping in the trucks or on the ground – Bailey camps. On the 30th of May, then, we got up to Camp New York. Now these, they had camps set up for this purpose. There was Camp New York, Camp Boston, Camp Philadelphia, and up around La Havre we had the cigarette camps. There was Camp Philip Morris, Camp Lucky Strike, but they were all tent camps, so when we got in there our job was to kind of finish that part of the camp.

I remember hearing these 206th guys – these guys originally were mostly Texans, Oklahoma, Louisiana boys – and, in fact, one of the C Company truck drivers – his name was Red Carter – he was always singing, 'Ahhh Hawwww!', you know, Bob Wills, San Antonio Rose. I saw an article in the paper the other day, said that San Antonio Rose, down in Texas; that was really the national anthem during the war. And they were telling when the 206th was in England before they came to France – they were over there, I guess, several months – and they were building a camp and they put in the water lines, and when they got it all in – of course, there were trenches – but before they covered them up, they turned the water on. They said it looked like an irrigation system – water flying out of those pipes in all directions. They like to never got the leaks stopped. Good engineers they were.

Somewhere around in the middle of June or July, the 206th Engineers folded up. They sent all the paper work in and I was transferred over to Camp Boston, which is over around Mourmelon, to the 1343rd Combat Engineers. [...]"



ISTORY OF THE 206[™] ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION APRIL 1943 – NOVEMBER 1945



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APPENDIX B

Transcript of audio tape interview with Pvt. William Sonnier of Elizabeth, Louisiana, who served in Company B, Third Platoon, Third Squad, 206th Engineer Combat Battalion.

206th Engineer Combat Battalion, Company B photographs from the records of Pvt. William Sonnier.



The following is a transcript of an audio cassette recording of an interview with Mr. William Sonnier. The interview was conducted at his home in Elizabeth, Louisiana on May 25, 2002. Mr. Sonnier served with the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion from it's creation at Camp Swift, Texas in April 1943 through the end of the war. Any notations for clarification are contained in footnotes and brackets within the transcript and are not part of the audio recording.





Interview with William Sonnier, Private Company B, 3rd Platoon, 3rd Squad, 206th Engineer Combat Battalion May 25, 2002 Elizabeth, Louisiana

"[I don't know of any other Company] that trains together, goes overseas together, fights together, until the end of the war, and we did. We were 206 Engineers, Combat Engineers, and we trained there in Texas and we stayed there together until they shipped us overseas. We stayed together all through the war and when the war was ended I was in the same platoon and same squad that I went in. I was in the third platoon, third squad, 13 men on the roster – that I know. I don't know of any other Company that trained together, went in together, and stayed together and fought together under the same officers. The officers we trained with, we went overseas with and fought with. We trained three months, I think, in the States before we went overseas. We went to England first."

"[In England, the 206th] was building barracks for the soldiers coming in. We stayed there eight months. We shipped out of England [to go to France]. [The 206th was located in] It was in the north part. When we shipped out [to France] we were right next to the coast where we shipped out from for the invasion. The invasion was something else. The whole battalion went to France together. The first little town when we got on the ground [in France], there was one little shack left in that town, an outdoor toilet. That's all that was left in that town. They had shelled it out."

"The 24th day of July, that's my birthday. I can tell you what was the first thing I ate that day [24 July 1944, Normandy, France]. I got up that morning, I was sleeping under a crabapple tree, and I got me a crabapple and I ate it. And that was on my birthday. So, I can always tell you what was the first thing I ate for my 24th birthday. We were in France."

"You see, we made the whole drive through France mostly with the 7th Armored Division. Mostly through France, that's who we were attached to, 7th Armored Division. We were clearing roads and giving them support, we fought with them. We would be infantry when they needed it. That's what we did; whatever. But mostly, we would make the crossing, might be on the same river but different times and a different company [or battalion]. Of course, we couldn't put the whole armor [armored division] across in one night, wasn't no way. But, sometimes we would put two or three different companies across the river in the same week. Sometimes units would come in and we'd cross them and then go somewhere else, maybe a hundred miles from there, and go cross somebody else. But, that was mostly our job when we got to a river was to cross infantry across and that was the job because you knew somebody was waiting for you to cross the river. We had fifteen men to cross every time you crossed – three engineers and thirteen infantrymen with all their equipment."

"Our's [the 206th] wasn't in any Division, our's was just a bastard battalion. Wherever they needed us, that's where we would go. We crossed the infantry in boats, paddle boats. We had three engineers, thirteen infantrymen with all their equipment. We'd cross them and then go back and get another load. That's what it was. I don't know how we survived. I've seen my pant's leg from my knee down solid ice. I didn't think anything about it then."

"We supported infantry as they needed us. Sometimes we didn't; it all depends. We were there to support the infantry, that's what we were there for. Wherever they needed us, that's where we were. We didn't belong to a Division, no other Company; we were just one





Company [Battalion] together. We didn't particularly belong to any outfit. We were just a bastard Battalion; that's what we were. I don't know of any other Company that stayed together that way."

When you maintained roads, what equipment did you use? *Mostly, this was our equipment* [indicating his hands].

Were the Companies of the Battalion together most of the time, or spread out? "Most of the time we were together. But lots of times they'd take a squad [and send it to a different location to do a job]."

Were the Engineers always right at the front line? *"We were always on the front, just like infantry. We were on the front lines just like the infantry."*

Did you eat pretty good? If you wasn't on the front line. I have ate C-rations and K-rations for months. K-rations were potted meat and six crackers. That was one meal. The other meal we had a can of meat and six crackers. And for breakfast, we had a can of powdered egg with six crackers. And you better not eat both of them, or you ain't going to have any for the rest of the day. And, you ate that sometimes for months as long as you were on the front line.

"I fought under General Patton. I've seen General Patton that close together [indicating he was a few feet from General Patton]. I'll never forget one night [late in the afternoon], we were about 60 miles from Germany and he said, 'We're going to take Abaucourt by tomorrow night.' He said, 'We will take Abaucourt if it costs two loads of GI dog tags.' You know what that means. And, we were there at Abaucourt that night. I've seen him across the river, the Seine River, before there was a bridge, because, you know, the enemy, when they backed up, when we backed them up, they blowed their bridges so we would have nothing to cross."

"[We were] on the Seine River the night that I saw General Patton. He was across the river before there was a bridge built over it. He had one of those amphibious jeeps [DUKW³⁶]; swam it across the river. He didn't mind talking and he didn't mind the words he used. I've seen him several times because he was around us a lot. He didn't care how he spoke; he didn't care what feeling or the other. But, what he would tell you, he would do. He was on the front line many times and I'm sure he didn't have to if he didn't want to."

Where was the bridge built while the river was flooding? "That was at the Seine River. I believe that was on the Seine River³⁷. Most of the things that I remember around the rivers happened at the Seine River. They had a hold on us there at the Seine River. We lost more men on a river at the Seine River."

"You see, that was our main job was to build bridges. You take on the Seine River, you string a rope across the river and that's where you would put the bridge over. It was in sections, pontoon sections. I believe they were 12-foot sections. Anyway, you hook that to the bridge [section] and hook it to that rope leading across the river and push it until it got across. That bridge there, we had just built it and we had three tanks across. Then they attacked us and they blowed the bridge up. But, luckily, they didn't know how many tanks

³⁶ Pronounced "Duck". A DUKW was a 2 ½ ton amphibious truck.

³⁷ The bridging operations across the Moselle River in November 1944 were also conducted under extreme flooding conditions. There was also flooding on the Saar River in February 1945.





we had across, but we had three tanks across. They had got over the bridge before they blowed it up and that's what saved us from them coming on us. They didn't know how many tanks were there and we had three of them. That was the Seine River. That's where R. L. Williams, Houston, Texas, where we were going to relieve the other guards on the same bridge and before we got there a sniper spotted us. We were about half-way from the edge of the water and to the bridge and a sniper started shooting at us, so we jumped behind a tree. There was just one guy with a rifle. We could tell by the way he shot and that bark was flying all around that tree and we were behind the tree. I said, 'We are going to start counting the shots and after so many shots we are going to make a break for that house.' Because all the houses had cellars, and the doors were open. And, we did. When we entered that place [the house], the bullet strafed that doorway. That's how close! But, I was lucky, came back home alive, came back home safely."

Did you build any Bailey bridges? "That steel bridge [the Bailey bridge], we put them mostly as permanent through the war, we wouldn't take them down. The floating bridge, we did take them down."

"We were in a pillbox [and a German sniper would shoot at us]. Finally – he had a trench built – he would go back and forth. Finally, somebody shot him right in the butt and he gave up. And we were in that pillbox, we put him sitting down right in the door, right by the doorway, and, you know, there are some who say Americans aren't cruel – they are. Every time one of us would go by, we'd pick him up and [drop him]; make him sit down on his butt. That was in France around the Moselle River."

"They [snipers] are the ones who could hurt you. It took a long time for them [the Germans] to get ready for the war. The trenches the snipers would hide in, they would go from one place to the other. You didn't have to get out of it, that trench."

"You know, another thing that I hadn't thought about, was two good buddies, I mean, they were good buddies and they were out in the field cleaning rifles. One said to the other – and they were two real good buddies, close – one said, 'I think I ought to shoot you.' Joking, I knew he was joking to have said that. He [the other one] said, 'I dare you.' He pulled the trigger and there was a bullet in it. It shot him right here [in the chest], killed him right there. It was two, especially the one that killed the other, who should have known better. He drank all the time and he was our Company Sergeant. But after then, he was a Private First Class then."

"I remember one [story] that's kind of embarrassing to say. We were in a pillbox and I had loose bowels. And while I was in there, in that pillbox, I was too scared to go out and when I was outside I was too scared to take my pants down. So actually, what it comes to, I was too damn scared to shit."

What about the time you shot at German planes? "We were laying in a foxhole and decided to try it [to shoot down German airplanes]. It was over a airfield. The German aircraft were flying over. I was lying on my back there shooting at the planes with an M1 rifle. Every five bullets, you know, was a tracer so you could tell where you were shooting at. I guess I wouldn't hit any but I was shooting and having fun."

Do you remember Lt. Col. Pirrung or any of the other Officers in the Battalion? "You see, the Officer of our Company was Captain Lee and [later] Captain Deason. I can't remember the others. There was Platoon Officers and Sergeant Boyer, my Sergeant; he was something else. He was big as a cow, but he was alright. We had mostly Oklahoma and





Louisiana boys. When we started trimming down men overseas, they were replaced with men from different parts of the country. But, I'll never forget, because, you know, you didn't have any black people in your outfit. The first black outfit [I saw] was in France. I never saw anybody that scared. They [the Germans] started shooting and they [the black unit] were around us when they first came in. They were shocked to death. They'd hear a boom and they'd go wild. You know how a black guy is. They were scared to death. They didn't help us, until later when they got used to it. Right then, they were scared to death. Of course, I was scared too; don't get me wrong, because anybody who told you he wasn't scared, he was lying."

Who was the guy who took your place on reconnaissance patrol and got killed? "Oh, that was Thomas Mitchell from north Louisiana. He was a kitchen truck driver. We had to go out every night and spot where the enemies are and what they got. One night I was scheduled to go and he said, 'Can I go in your place?' I said, 'If they let you, I'll be glad to.' I didn't want to go. And, that's the night he got killed. Him and his wife and my wife – my wife has passed away – and I didn't want to go. And, when I came back, I found out. His wife and my wife would write to each other and I found out he had got killed that night. He was Thomas Mitchell. [We had to go on recon] at least once a week or more and mostly you would go out, take turns you know, they wouldn't send the same people out all the time. [The recon party would consist of] thirteen guys [a squad].

Would you recon on foot or in a jeep or truck? *"Foot. Most of the time you were gone all night. If you weren't back the next morning you probably wouldn't show back up."*

Do you remember building emplacements for the 240-mm artillery guns? "That barrel [on a 240-mm artillery gun] was as long as from here to the street. Two hundred and forty, that's what the shell was, 240 pounds apiece. They'd shake the ground when they fired that. They didn't move them around [like other artillery]. I'll tell you what, they had a long barrel."

"The man who I can mostly speak of and who I always admired – his courtesy, he was something else, he was rough and all that – was Captain Lee. I saw him when he was a 2nd Lieutenant, I saw him when he died about twenty feet from me, I saw where he was buried, him and his jeep driver side-by-side, after the war, and that man always comes to my mind when I think of that war because he was strict, very strict, but he meant to help. He got killed on the Saar River³⁸. We were guarding the bridge and he came in during the night and we sat there guarding. We were on one side of the river and the enemy was on the other side and they were strafing all through the night. He came in to check on us and when he came in we hollered at him and told him to get down, that they were strafing us [with machine guns]. He looked at us – he knew who we were – and he looked at us as if, 'You're crazy.' He walked maybe twenty feet, him and his jeep driver, both got killed right there in front of us. I can still see that shot right here [indicating across the stomach] – machine gun. He's always the one that I remember a lot – what happened, who you were with – when I talk about something like that."

"Captain Lee died at night. It was nighttime, about midnight. He was a tall, lanky man. Then we got Captain Deason, who was from the same state [that Capt. Lee was from, but could not remember which state]. Captain Deason lived through it as far as I know."

³⁸ Captain James M. Lee was killed on 14 December 1944 at the Saar River in Germany.





Here is a picture of the Saar River crossing site where Company B put across the 3rd Battalion, 358th Infantry, 90th Infantry Division. "The Saar River is here, the road was here, and it had a ditch right there, a mountain was here. In other words, the road ran right along side the mountain and along side of the river. And, that's where he [Capt. Lee] got killed. That road, it was a mountain or a hill, whatever, next to it."

Do you remember the incident where the ferry carrying a tank over the Saar River knocked out the treadway bridge across the Saar? "I don't remember exactly, but I know it did happen."

"The pontoon was nothing but rubber tubing. They were rounded on the ends just like this. And, right across there was a bar and on the end was where you hooked them up and shoved them across until you got a bridge across. That's how we make a bridge across. We put them [the 12-foot bridge sections] together in a woody area where they [the Germans] wouldn't see us. We'd put them together and trucks would bring them in to the river and we'd hook them up and push them across. Hook them to that rope across the river; hook them up just like you do it with a snap. Then, you take a big pin about this big [about 1 ½ - inch diameter], about this long [about 12 inches] and you join them together and when you stick that pin in, there's no way it could come out. The rope [bridle line] would hold it [the bridge] in place [keep it from floating downstream]. But you know, the swiftest river – and I've crossed several of them – I've crossed the Rhine River in a boat, I've crossed the Inn River in a boat, I've crossed the Saar River in a boat; but, the swiftest river was the smallest one, that was the Saar River. It was a swift river and it wasn't that big."

Where was that town where you had to blow up the tanks? "That was at the same place; on the Saar River. We had our tanks across the river and we had took about half of that town [Dillingen, Germany] that was across the river from where we were. I was a demolition man and we knew if we backed up they would use the tanks against us and we had, if I'm not mistaken, we had 98 tanks across the river in that town, which we still occupied. Half the town was ours, half the town was the Germans'. So we had until midnight to get rid of the tanks. We couldn't cross them back, no way. We demolitioned every tank, put demolition in it, and you could not blow them up until at a certain time. And, if I remember right, it was around two o'clock in the morning. And I was one of the engineers that were across putting demolition in. And, you had to combine them all together, you know; you couldn't demolition that one and just have one blow up and then have another blow up. We had to connect all 98 together right so they would all blow up. So, we could not light the fuse until right at that minute and then we had so many minutes – we were about a half mile from the river – you had so many minutes to get back to the river, which most of them could make it. At that time, we had to blow it up. It was blowed up with a fuse. You know how you light it so they wouldn't see the light? You took one of the old safety matches and split that fuse and put that match in there and scrape it. It wouldn't make that flare but it would light that fuse. I was the one that lit the fuse. Honest to God, two or three hundred yards from the river and I made it across safe. They shelled us all around but I managed to get across the river. I will never forget one of the officers said, 'The war is almost over.' Somebody said, 'Why?' He said, 'They are throwing a stove at us.""

How did you get back across the river? "I got back in a boat, because, you see, we had boats, paddle boats, to go back and forth."





Is this picture the Franz von Papen mansion in Wallerfangen? You know, I couldn't tell you for sure; but, we were in that town. I can't tell you if that's the building or not. We didn't pay any attention to buildings or whatever. But, we slept in one mansion, slept there, and it was one of the big German officer's mansion. We took it over and slept around there. Yeah, that's where the Germans made a break and pushed us back. They did push us back for a while.

Did you get wounded? I had a piece of shrapnel hit me right here [top of the forehead at the hairline]. It's the only thing. Oh, I got a piece of shrapnel in the back, on the same day, same time. I was on the Saar River and it was lunch time, whether it was supper or dinner or what I don't remember; but anyway, we had the mess kit and I went to the back, facing the Germans on the Saar River, because we were on one side, they were on the other side, and they were shelling and the door that I was standing in – I had gone to empty my mess kit – when I did, they shelled right beside that door that I was standing in. It was just like BBs where this shrapnel hit and the only place I got hit was right here and in my back. Seriously, how did I get out of it and not get more than that, I don't know, because that door was just like it had shot into it.

Was it a German 88? That's what it looked like. I didn't stay there to examine it.

"Most of the dirty work was at night. We fought at night and sleep the daytime wherever you can. But, most of the action was at night. Most everything that went on, it was at night."

"People say, how did ya'll manage, how did ya'll get out of there? You don't know, yourself."

"I have seen my socks on my feet, when I took off my shoes, I couldn't pull them off, they rotted off. Couldn't get some socks, there was no way to get socks. But when you'd get some, most of the time your socks were rotten on your feet. That's how it was. They'd dry on your feet; your clothes would dry on you. No, we weren't getting supplied with clothes and socks very well."

"People don't imagine what the soldiers went through. I know I didn't do any more than anybody else but I felt I had done my share. And, as long as I feel that way, I'm alright."

"You know, I've seen one thing that has always stayed in my mind, was those soldiers; our soldiers that got killed. They would load them in a truck just like you see pulp wood, stacked just as high as pulp wood, that's how they hauled them back to bury them, I guess. But, you couldn't imagine how many trucks you'd see every day. They were stacked up with dead people in the truck going back away from the front line."

"There was this one time that, I don't know why – I lost my Daddy – I didn't know nothing about it until – he died December the 19th [1944], I think – and I didn't know nothing about it until New Year's Day. The Red Cross; that's the reason I do not give to the Red Cross. They didn't help me none. They didn't put out the service that they should have. They'd come around when we were out there on bivouac away from the line. They'd come and serve us doughnuts, but sometimes that was not what we needed."

After the Saar River, wasn't the 206th just running with the armor through Germany? "On the drive into Germany, that's the reason the war ended when it did. They gave up. It would





be maybe two or three hundred men in line walking to give up. The one in front had a little white flag. 'I give up'. And, that was it. We didn't have to fight them after then."

When you were in Linz, Austria at the war's end, did you see any Russian troops? I don't remember seeing any.

How did the civilian people of France and Germany treat the American soldiers? The Germans welcomed us more than the French. The French is the last people I want to live with. They're filthy, they lie to you. I did not have any use for the people in France. Germany was clean and they weren't sassy with you or nothing like that. The Germans were different people. I was the only one in my battalion that could speak French; the only one. Most of the time I was right close to the head of the [column], when we were traveling, and most of the time I was right up front. When they needed to ask something, it came in handy because lots of times nobody else could understand. But the French people are two-faced. They were! They'd lie to you, for one thing. You'd ask them something, they wouldn't tell you the truth. Sometime they would, I don't mean all the time, most of them.

But, didn't they put you up in their houses; let you sleep in their houses? They had to, because we'd run them off [if they didn't]. You know, when we'd get in town, we were so tired we wanted a bed. Whoever was in bed had to get up, or you'd sleep with them. Anyway, one night I just jumped in bed and I knew there was somebody else on the other side of the bed. I went to sleep and during the night I woke up and - all Germans had boots – and I rubbed those boots, they didn't feel right, I touched his hand and [realized] I was sleeping with a dead man. You talk about getting up from there! I got up from there! It was a German soldier because he had those boots on. We didn't wear those kind of boots, you know, they had boots up to their knees. He can have the bed!"

"There are so many things that I know that I don't remember sixty years ago. But, I tell you what, lots of people say, 'I have killed so many.' Whoever says that, most of them are telling a story. Because, who's going to stand out there and let you shoot at them? Nobody. And, I know for the fact, and I'm glad, and I wouldn't give that [up] for nothing that I don't know whether I have killed anybody. I know probably I have, with all the bullets I've shot, because you wouldn't shoot because you see them, you'd shoot in the direction of the enemy. That's where you'd shoot at. So, therefore, you didn't know if you shot anybody or what. I wouldn't give that thing for nothing; that I don't know that I shot anybody. Now, I have seen men shot at – that I have."

"When the war ended, we were scheduled to go down there [to the Pacific] and fight and, see, the war ended before in Germany than it did down there, and we were scheduled to go down there the next day or sometime soon, and the war ended. You talking about a bunch of happy soldiers, they were!"

"Did I tell you about finding Captain Lee's grave [in France]? After the war, I visited the cemetery – military – and the first two graves that I walked to; Captain Lee was buried there and his jeep driver was buried there. The first two graves! This was before I came back to the States. After the war, we'd take a jeep and go wherever you wanted to and one day to visit the cemetery – military – and that's how I know that most of our soldiers were buried. Where they were killed side-by-side, they were buried side-by-side. I'm sure they didn't stay there, I'm sure they brought them home. In the cemetery, I don't care what direction you looked, the crosses would be in line. It don't matter what way you looked."





"I had a pistol I had found – I didn't steal it – I had found while I was in Germany and the firing pin was on the bullet. It was just like a cap pistol. We got to Mississippi [Camp Shelby, where he was discharged] I had it in my duffle bag. They stole duffle bag and all. I wanted that pistol so bad, taking it home. The firing pin was on the bullet. I had a bunch of bullets I had brought. It was a six-shooter."

Did some of you stay in touch after you returned home from the war? "I didn't have nobody from right around here except that guy from Ville Platt, and he died about two-three years ago. But I visited him, I would go see him. But, otherwise, there wasn't nobody here close that I knew."

Do you know of any other living veterans of the 206th? I came back, one lives in New Orleans, we went together, we fought together, we came back home together. We separated in New Orleans. When I went into New Orleans, I've looked for that man in the phone book. I never could find him. There was one in Ville Platt there. He died about five or six years ago. And, there was one in Lake Charles – I lost contact with him when I came back home. There was one, he wasn't in the same outfit but it was amazing how it happened. After the war, we'd go to the Red Cross, you know, and sign our name, and this and that, eat doughnuts and drink coffee. I went and I signed the book and right above where I signed, I saw the name Woody [Camp?] and he was from Oakdale [Louisiana]. I went to school with him. So, I wrote my name and put where I was and the next night he came over. I had been there over two years, he had been there only eleven months, but he was going home the next day. I don't know what it was, he wasn't older than I was, he didn't have any kids. I don't know how the heck that happened, but he did. And, I told him to tell – he knew my mother – and I told him to tell my mother that I was still there and I would be home soon. And he did."

You are the only veteran of the 206th, other than my father, I have ever met in person. "They would be my age pretty near, and I'm 81. You know that guy I was telling you from New Orleans that I spent the whole time in service together was Anthony J. Mano. If you want his name, you may locate him, I don't know. And he may not be there no more. He was two or three years younger than I was. That's in New Orleans, that's where he was at that time."

"But, you know, when I came back to the States, we came back most of the men was with us all through the war and you know that's a heartbreaking thing when you separate. I cried, and I know I did. I knew those guys all the time I was in service. I've seen them get shot at, I've seen myself get shot at. It's amazing what kind of feeling it does to you when you separate with the guys you went in with and fought with. People don't imagine what kind of feeling it is."

"When I first came back, I'd sit on the porch and cry by myself. I'd think about what I went through and the rest of us went through. It'd be cold chill all over my body just from thinking about it. Nobody knows how bad it is. Lots of people say this and that. They never know unless they went through it. At first I wouldn't talk about it at all."

"I sure hope I've helped you some."

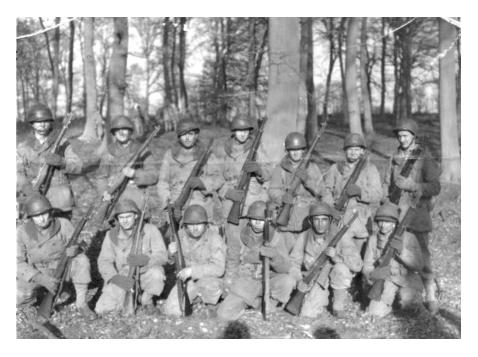




The following pages contain a collection of photographs from the records of Pvt. William Sonnier. These photographs are of some of the men of Company B, 206th Engineer Combat Battalion. The names of most of these men are unknown.



These are likely the men of the 3^{rd} Platoon, 3^{rd} Squad, Company B, 206^{th} Engineer Combat Battalion. In the photograph above, Pvt. William Sonnier is in the bottom row, second from the left. In the photograph below, Pvt. Sonnier is in the bottom row, third from the left.









Pvt. William Sonnier, bottom row, fourth from the left.



Pvt. William Sonnier, left.



Unknown Corporal 206th Engineer Combat Battalion







Trucks crossing ponton treadway bridge built by the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion.



206th Engineer Combat Battalion troops having a little fun.



Three unknown 206th Engineer Combat Battalion troops standing on a snow covered street. This picture was most likely made during the winter of 1944-1945 somewhere in Germany.



Unknown 206th Engineer Combat Battalion soldier.







These three unknown 206th *Engineer Combat Battalion soldiers appear to be manning a roadblock.*



Pvt. William Sonnier on a squad truck with a 30-caliber machine gun. Each squad of the 206^{th} Engineer Combat Battalion had a 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ -ton truck with a 30-caliber machine gun mounted on a scarf ring.







Unknown Tec5, 206th Engineer Combat Battalion.



Pvt. William Sonnier (left) and buddy with pistols they found in Germany.



Pvt. William Sonnier



APPENDIX C

JOURNALS

December 1944 and January 1945



Lt. Col. Gilbert R. Pirrung

This Appendix contains pages from two journals written by Lt. Col. Gilbert R. Pirrung, Commander of the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion. These journals appear to be notes taken by Lt. Col. Pirrung during the planning and preparation of operations involving the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion.

The first journal, presented on pages 197 through 199, contains notes pertaining to the Saar River crossing operations of the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion in support of the 95th Infantry Division on 5 December 44.

The second journal, beginning on page 201, contains notes regarding the defensive operations conducted west of the Saar River in January and February 1945.

Included at the end of this Appendix is a transcript of a tape recording by Tim Pirrung, son of Lt. Col. Pirrung, recalling descriptions of certain events as told to him by his father.





Lt. Col. Pirrung Journal

December 1944

The following pages from the journal of Lt. Col. Gilbert R. Pirrung pertain to the planning of the Saar River crossing operations of the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion at Lisdorf, Germany in support of the 378th Infantry Regiment, 95th Infantry Division, which occurred on 5 December 44. The entries into this journal were most probably made in late November 1944.

The first page of the journal starts with the notation "leave WP w/ 10 A Rear." The translation of this notation is, "leave water point with 10^{th} Armored Division in rear." The 206th Engineer Combat Battalion was relieved from attachment to the 10^{th} Armored Division on 30 Nov 44 and attached to the 95th Infantry Division for a planned assault crossing of the Saar River at Lisdorf, Germany³⁹. The journal contains information and describes the plans for the assault crossing: preparatory tasks, numbers and types of equipment needed, names of certain officers of the I, II and III Battalions of the 378th, and the plan for the assault.

The fourth page of the journal describes a plan to attack on 1 Dec 44 following an aerial bombardment. Alternative times and dates are also given in the event the bombardment did not occur as originally scheduled. This plan apparently is the original plan for the 95th Infantry Division to push the Germans from the west bank of the Saar River, cross the Saar and establish a bridgehead on the east side.

"...Although the enemy continued to evince considerable determination to keep a foothold on the west bank of the Sarre, the 95th Division prepared to buck through this delaying defense and strike immediately across the river... The plan of attack hinged on the effort to be made by the 379th, which was to cross the river near Saarlautern, establish a bridgehead, and then continue the attack by turning sharply north and clearing the east bank in the neighborhood of Rehlingenthus permitting the 90th Division to cross in that area. On the right the 378th was instructed to sweep the enemy from the west bank and then, on orders from the division commander, force a crossing in its zone and continue the attack to the east..."⁴⁰

"...The first hours of the 95th Division attack on the afternoon of 1 December showed that the German troops still west of the river intended to make a fight of it. The 377th Infantry met stiff resistance, but finally completed the job of clearing Felsberg about 1500. Colonel Gaillard then sent his 3d Battalion marching east toward Saarlautern. The 1st Battalion, on the north flank, was pinned down at St. Barbara in an action lasting all afternoon. Enemy tanks and infantry, supported by guns across the river, fought with much determination in the village itself. The 378th, attacking toward the high ground in its front and hampered by an open south flank, also found the going slow and difficult..."⁴¹

"...The 378th Infantry met "extremely bitter resistance" on 2 December. The troops on the left flank fought their way northeast and by nightfall held Pikard, only three thousand yards from the center of Saarlautern. This advance had been made against "some of the most severe resistance the regiment had yet encountered." The regiment now was extended along a very wide front,

³⁹ 206th Engineer Combat Battalion, After-Action Report, December 1944

⁴⁰ United States Army In World War II, The European Theater of Operations, The Lorraine Campaign, Cole, p 512.

⁴¹ Ibid, p 513.





with the southern wing aligned almost at right angles to the forward line. All attempts to bring the right forward through Falck and Merten were unsuccessful. The fighting of the past few days had taken heavy toll in the 95th Division particularly in the ranks of the 377th and 378th...⁴²

On 4 December, "...the 378th Infantry advanced to the near bank of the river on the southeastern edge of Saarlautern. Although the regiment had been engaged against the enemy in the southern suburbs as early as 3 December, its right flank was held in check for some hours. Lisdorf, the town south of Saarlautern from which the 378th was to launch a crossing attack, was not taken until 4 December. General Twaddle then ordered the 377th up from reserve, with instructions to relieve the rear elements of the 379th inside Saarlautern, as well as the troops of the 378th at the edge of the city. When the reserve regiment came up, the 378th assembled in Lisdorf, on the west bank of the Sarre, preparatory to an assault crossing set for the morning of 5 December. The 378th Infantry, using two battalions in the assault, made a successful predawn crossing as planned, receiving only a small amount of small arms fire. The German West Wall fortifications at this point did not extend as far as the river bank, but when the 3d Battalion, moving on the left, came up against the first belt of pillboxes outside the village of Ensdorf the enemy fire increased sharply. Nevertheless this first phase of the attack inland moved slowly ahead; by noon the 3d Battalion had penetrated the forward line of pillboxes and was at the edge of Ensdorf. The 1st Battalion, on the right, crossed the railroad line south of the village but here was halted by direct fire from concrete works whose weapons covered the open ground beyond. All told, the two battalions captured fourteen or fifteen pillboxes during the first day's operations-but the toughest sections in the West Wall yet were to be engaged..."⁴³

"...On 042000A Dec, the CP was moved forward to LISDORF, all units moving in under cover of darkness, taking positions and making final preparations for the forthcoming assault, which was scheduled for 050600 Dec 44. Previous reconnaissance of the assault sites along the river having been made, the boats were laid out in the vicinity of the river, from which points they would be carried to the assault sites by the infantry. In reconnoitering his site, and preparing the area over which he would have to carry his boats, Capt. Patterson, Co "C", rounded up approximately 30 head of cattle and horses in LISDORF, and drove them across the area, to clear the area of any Smines. The first wave jumped off at the scheduled hour, 0600, on 5 Dec, "B" Co ferrying the 3rd Bn of the 378th Inf on the left flank and "C" Co ferrying the 1st Bn of the 378th on the right flank. Co "A" had one platoon standing by for reserve boat crews, but were not used. The initial wave met only sporadic rifle fire, however at 0624, the enemy fired a red flare into the air, apparently a pre-arranged signal, giving the alarm, and immediately, fire from weapons of all types and calibers was brought to bear on the town and the river. Large caliber artillery was poured into the town of LISDORF, antiaircraft guns were leveled and fired across the river, as well as MG and small arms fire. One platoon, Co "A" was scheduled to build an infantry support bridge immediately after the assault waves were crossed, however, enemy fire was so intense, it was impossible to start the construction. However, a foot bridge was constructed, in protection of the buildings of the town, in sections, and the sections hand-carried to the river and put in place. As this bridge site was in defilade, protection was provided from direct fire while putting the bridge in place. Construction of the bridge commenced about 0600 and the sections completed ready for placement 0700 hrs. By 0746, the bridge had been built across the river, and infantry troops were moving across it. As of 050800 Dec, this Bn was relieved from attachment to 95th Inf Div and attached to 1139th Engr C Gp with the information were to cross the 90th Inf Div across the SAAR River N of the 95th Div sector..."44

⁴² Ibid, p 515.

⁴³ Ibid, p 556.

⁴⁴ 206th Engineer Combat Battalion, After-Action Report, December 1944





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Lt. Col. Pirrung Journal

27 January – 06 February 1945

The following pages from the journal of Lt. Col. Gilbert R. Pirrung contain information pertaining to the operations of the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion and the coordination of units during the period 27 January 1945 – 06 February 1945.

In late December 1944, due to the outbreak of the Battle of the Bulge, elements of Third Army pulled back west of the Saar River. The 206^{th} Engineer Combat Battalion established a Command Post in Bouzonville, France and, in support of the 95^{th} Infantry Division, was assigned the mission of constructing a series of barrier zones in the 95^{th} Division Sector. During the week of 8 - 14 Jan, additional defensive positions were dug in and barbed wire put up for the 1^{st} and 3^{rd} Battalions of the 379^{th} Infantry Regiment.

On 11 Jan 1945, the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion moved to St. Avold, France to support the 5th Ranger Battalion in the defense of St. Avold in the event of enemy attack. The plan called for the 206th to man the defensive positions around St. Avold, relieving the 5th Ranger Battalion, which would be held as a mobile defensive or counter-attacking force. Coordination between the two organizations was established; reconnaissance of the defensive positions made, and on 14 Jan a "dry run" was held on the occupying of the defensive position by the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion. On 23 Jan 1945, the 206th moved from St. Avold and established Command Post at Courcelles-Chaussy, France, maintaining a forward Command Post at St. Avold. A second "dry run" was held on 29 Jan 45 [noted in journal, page 194]. The construction of obstacles and maintenance of roads continued in addition to work on defenses of St. Avold. On 29 Jan 1945, the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion was relieved of support of the 95th Infantry and attached to the 26th Infantry Division.

Road maintenance was a continuing task throughout the period. The thaw the first of February brought the melting of snow and ice, and the necessity of cleaning and maintaining drainage ditches, stock-piling of gravel, graveling of roads and filling of pot-holes. An aggregate plant was established in a warehouse building on the edge of Courcelles-Chausay, and road patching materials were distributed from there. The building of bridges also was accomplished during the period. On 1 Feb, Company C removed a Bailey bridge in the vicinity of Vaudoncourt, France and constructed a fixed bridge, which was open for traffic by the evening of 2 Feb 45.

On 5 Feb 45, a forward CP was established at Saarlautern, Germany for the purpose of supervising the construction of two bridges; a floating Bailey and a fixed pile bridge. Companies A and B moved to Saarlautern as the construction force [noted in journal, page 212]. Construction on both bridges was commenced 6 Feb 45 and the Bailey bridge was completed on 7 Feb 45.

Lt. Col. Pirrung was transferred from the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion to the 312th Engineer Combat Battalion, 87th Infantry Division, effective 10 Feb 45.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ The preceding information is from the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion, After Action Reports, January and February 1945.





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HISTORY OF THE 206[™] ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION APRIL 1943 – NOVEMBER 1945



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HISTORY OF THE 206[™] ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION APRIL 1943 – NOVEMBER 1945



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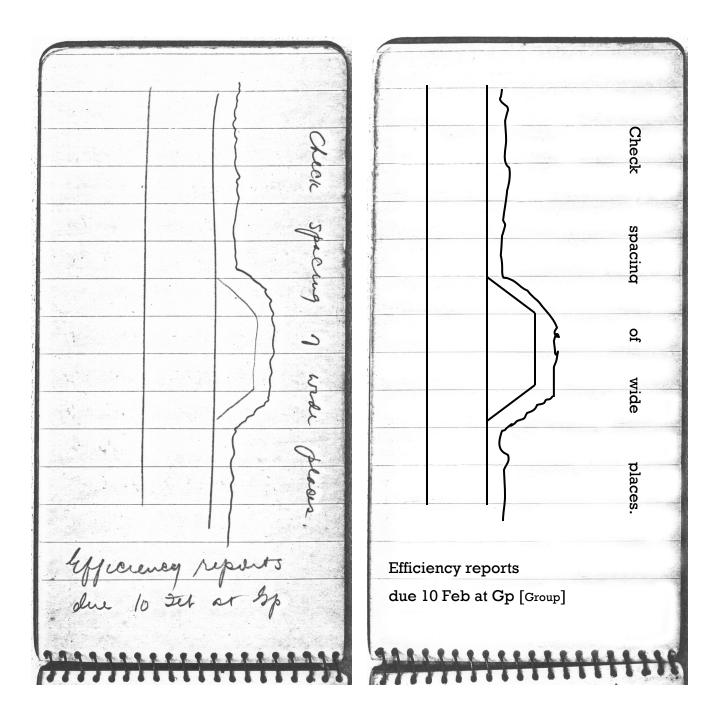


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HISTORY OF THE 206[™] ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION APRIL 1943 – NOVEMBER 1945



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HISTORY OF THE 206[™] ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION APRIL 1943 – NOVEMBER 1945



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Transcript

Tim Pirrung Audio Tape

The following is a transcript of an audio tape recorded by Tim Pirrung, son of Lt. Col. Gilbert Pirrung, recalling descriptions of certain events as told to him by his father.

"This is Tim Pirrung on May 1 [2002] recounting a story told to me by my father, Colonel Gilbert R. Pirrung, about his experiences during World War II. Please bear in mind that this is my recollection of his recollection, so this may not square with historical fact or others' recollections.

At any rate, Dad didn't typically talk a whole bunch about the war. It took some prodding sometimes or an appropriate occasion to get him to talk and this happened to be while we were driving to Michigan one time. It was just the two of us in a car and he told me about the grounds for receiving one of his medals. Apparently, his unit had been held up from crossing the Siegfried line and they were blocked by a river [the Saar River]. To be able to look for potential crossing points, he needed to be able to scout the terrain. Apparently, the best access was along a road which would, unfortunately, leave him exposed to sniper fire from across the river. He said, from his experience, a sniper would not reveal his position unless he was sure of making a hit and, obviously, they would be looking for any signs of identification that would identify an officer. So, he did two things: he made sure he had no clothing that identified him as an officer and, on his way, he would count to three and make sure he changed his way of moving drastically so that no one could draw a bead on him. Because, he said, it would take about three seconds for a sniper to really sight in and be sure of a kill. So, he would walk three steps, run three steps, fall down and roll, crawl, do whatever he could to change it up and make himself difficult to hit. And, obviously, that was a tough way to keep moving but that's the way that he could get from point A to point B until he could get to a point where he had some cover and could look around and get his bearings. What he found was that there was a reverse salient at a point in the river not far from where they were and he thought that would make the best point for the river crossing.

And then, he had people under his command scour the nearby towns for any maps they could find of the area. And, indeed, in one he found that there was an old brick roadway which had since been covered by water, either by a natural flood or an induced flood by the Germans as protection during their retreat. So, he managed to get bridges built which would connect to that roadway and then he had soldiers from his unit walking through chest-deep water carrying several poles with them, which they would tamp down onto the roadbed to find the edge, and then as soon as they found where the roadbed ended on each side, they would plant the poles so that the tanks would have almost a guidepost system to demarcate the roadbed. And then, that's exactly what they did; they drove the tanks straight through those markers and thus breached the Siegfried line.

Now, two other stories go with that. One of them is that in recognition of this achievement, there was talk that he might be eligible for an award higher than a Silver Star, but the Silver Star was the highest award that General Patton could give out. My father was hoping he would get the higher award, not the Silver Star, because he already had one of those. But, according to my father, General Patton never could resist a headline – or a headline opportunity, I should say – and so, as soon as he caught wind of all this, he rushed down





and pinned a Silver Star on my father. And, so, my father was never a very big fan of Patton because he thought he was a grandstander and more interested in his own glory as opposed to what was best for his men.

The other story that comes out of that is that after my father made his reconnaissance of that reverse salient along the river, he came back and made his report. Another officer said something about wanting to confirm or verify or see with his own eyes what my father had been talking about. This person did not use the same precautions that my father had about avoiding sniper fire and he was shot dead by a sniper within minutes of starting down that road alongside the river.

One last, somewhat related story, because it concerns the type of precautions needed to be taken to keep yourself alive during war. My father mentioned an occasion when several higher ranking officers needed to meet to discuss a particular subject and they made the mistake of stopping together on a crossroads to hold that discussion. Trouble was, on an obvious juncture like that one, the Germans had those coordinates down pretty tight. So, the Germans just lobbed a shell in and wiped out all those officers and the vehicles right in the middle of that crossroads, which was a pretty devastating hit."



APPENDIX D

United States Army Center of Military History

Excerpts from United States Army in World War II, The Corps of Engineers: The War Against Germany, by Alfred M. Beck, Abe Bortz, Charles W. Lynch, Lida Mayo and Ralph F. Weld, (1985, 608 pp., charts, maps, illustrations, bibliographical notes, appendixes, index). CMH Pub 10-22, cloth, GPO S/N 008-029-00131-4.

The following excerpts from United States Army in World War II, The Corps of Engineers: The War Against Germany, compiled by the United States Army Center of Military History, describe the participation of the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion in the Moselle, Saar and Main Rivers crossings operations in November 1944, December 1944 and March 1945, respectively.





The Moselle Crossings at Malling and Cattenom

The bulk of the effort to get third Army troops across the Moselle during the November attack fell to the engineers supporting the 90th Division. In rubber assault boats of the 1139th Engineer Combat Group, troops of the 359th Infantry were to cross near the village of Malling on the left (north) flank, supported by the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion. On the right, battalions of the 358th Infantry were to cross simultaneously near Cattenom, with the 179th Engineer Combat Battalion in support. At both crossings, where the water gaps were estimated to be 360 and 300 feet wide, respectively, the engineers also were to construct an infantry support bridge, a treadway bridge, and a floating Bailey bridge, while the 90th Division's organic 315th Engineer Combat Battalion was to build a footbridge, operate ferries, and undertake far shore work. As soon as the expanding bridgehead had cleared the far shore of Germans, the 160th Engineer Combat Battalion was to construct a double-triple fixed Bailey bridge at Rettel, northeast of Malling⁴⁶.

By the night of 8 November the engineers had trained with the infantry in preparation for the crossing. demonstrating the proper way to carry and load an assault boat. For each boat the crew consisted of three engineers, one a guide. That night the river began to rise, and by the time the boats of the attack wave shoved off in a drizzling rain at 0330 on 9 November, the infantry had to load in waist-deep water. In spite of a strong current the two leading infantry battalions were on the east bank of the Moselle by 0500. As they reached their destination the troops found that the high water had actually helped the crossings: extensive minefields the Germans had prepared on the far shore were flooded, and the boats

passed over without danger. Also, the enemy had abandoned water-filled foxholes and rifle pits dug into the east $bank.^{47}$

After daybreak, as succeeding infantry battalions crossed the racing yellow Moselle, enemy artillery fire fell so heavily on the east bank that many crews abandoned their boats after debarking their troops, allowing the craft to swirl downstream to be lost. But the infantrymen made swift progress. At Malling, where they achieved complete surprise, troops of the 359th Infantry captured the town by noon. The 358th Infantry, after crossing from Cattenom, faced a more formidable objective - Fort Koenigsmacker, which had to be reduced before further progress could be made. There too the 90th Division achieved surprise. Assault teams of infantry and engineers (from the 315th Engineer Combat Battalion) ripped through bands of barbed wire and reached the trenches around the fort before an alarm was sounded. Braving mortar and machinegun fire from the fort's superstructure, the teams reduced the fort, blowing steel doors open with satchel charges and blasting ventilating ports with thermite grenades or TNT.

By the end of November the 90th Division had eight battalions, including reserves from the 357th Infantry, across the Moselle. The division had advanced two miles beyond the river, overrun seven towns, and penetrated Fort Koenigsmacker⁴⁸. Next day, as German resistance stiffened, little progress was made, but by midnight, 11 November, the 90th Division's leading units held a defensible position on a ridge topped with the Maginot Line fortifications. The division had knocked out or bypassed many of the line's weakly held pillboxes

⁴⁶ Combat Interview 364, Opns of 1139th Engr C Gp (8-17 Nov), Crossing of the Moselle River, XX Corps files.

⁴⁷ OCE ETOUSA Hist Rpt 10, Combat

Engineering, pp. 116-17.

⁴⁸ The XX Corps: Its History and Service in World War II, p. 159.





and had forced the surrender of Fort Koenigsmacker with hand-carried weapons and explosives, a few 57-mm. antitank guns ferried across the Moselle, and artillery fire from the west bank. No tanks or trucks had yet been able to cross the river, and supply parties had to use rickety farm wagons and even abandoned baby buggies.

Attempts to bridge the flooding river, beginning early on 9 November, came to naught for two days. Before Fort Koenigsmacker surrendered, shellfire from the bastion had made the bridge site at Crittenom untenable and destroyed the equipment. bridging At Malling, harassing enemy machine-gun and mortar fire forced the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion to abandon its first attempt to build a footbridge. At 0600 on 9 November the engineers began constructing another and simultaneously put two ferries into operation. One, using boats lashed together and powered by outboard motors, carried ammunition and rations and evacuated the wounded around the clock. The other, using infantry support rafts to carry 57-mm. anti-tank guns, jeeps, and weapons carriers, was short-lived. A few anti-tank guns got across, but at 1100 a raft carrying a jeep ran into the infantry footbridge, broke its cable, and put the bridge out of action. The infantry support bridge, then about three-quarters finished, was carried downstream and lost.

of Recovering the some equipment, the engineers decided to build a treadway bridge at the site, and the 991st Engineer Treadway Bridge Company managed to complete the new span by dusk on 10 November. But the river's continued rise had had now put the road leading to the bridge under nearly five feet of water. No vehicles could get through until the following afternoon when the floodwaters, having crested at noon on 11 November, began to recede. At 1500 the crossings began again. Ten supplyladen Brockway trucks, some jeeps, and a

few light tanks and tank destroyers reached the far shore. Shortly after dawn the next morning German artillery fire repeatedly hit the treadway, so weakening it that it could no longer bear the weight of a tank destroyer. It broke loose and went off downstream.

While waiting for more equipment to come up so they could rebuild the bridge, the men of the 991st Engineer Treadway Bridge Company used bridge fragments to construct a tank ferry. Employing a heavy raft made of pontons and treads and tying powerboats to the raft, the engineers manned the ferry, crossing a company of medium tanks and tank destroyers by dark. This work earned the 991st Engineer Treadway Bridge Company the Distinguished Unit Citation⁴⁹.

Late on 12 November, the engineers were repairing the Malling bridge and building a bridge at the Cattenom site. But by now the XX Corps commander, Maj. Gen. Walton H. Walker, had decided on another site for heavy bridging to move his armored division across the Moselle. [...] General Patton...crossing the treadway under a smoke protecting screen, later pronounced the 90th Division passage of the Moselle "an epic river crossing done under terrific difficulties."50

Advance to the Saar

After envelopment to the north and south, coupled with a containing action west of the Moselle, Metz fell to XX Corps on 22 November. The lesser German forts in the area were left to "wither on the vine" (the last surrendering on 13 December) because scarce U.S. artillery ammunition had to be conserved to

⁴⁹ OCE ETOUSA Hist Rpt 10, Combat

Engineering, pp. 117-21; Cole, *The Lorraine Campaign*, p. 400.

⁵⁰ George S. Patton, Jr., *War As I Knew It* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1947), p. 172.





support the corps' advance to the Saar River.

The XX Corps was to make the main thrust, heading toward a crossing at Saarlautern, about thirty miles northeast of Metz at the strongest section of the Siegfried Line⁵¹. The XII Corps, coming up from the south, was to drive with the bulk of its forces to Sarreguemines, about forty miles due east of Metz, where the Saar swung south out of the Siegfried Line and into the Maginot Line. [...]

The plan was for the 5th Division to north and ultimately advance drive alongside XX Corps' 90th Infantry Division. The latter had not been able to follow the 95th Division over the river but had had to cross some miles to the north. Its main objective was Dillingen, on the east bank of the Saar and covering the right flank of the Saarlautern defenses. Two battalions of the 1139th Engineer Combat Group were to ferry the 90th Division across the Saar. Since no bridge existed, the division selected two sites for assault boat crossings. The 179th Engineer Combat Battalion was to ferry the 357th Infantry over the river on the left (north) flank; the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion was to cross the 358th Infantry on the right. The engineers were to operate the assault boats for the infantry and, after the landings, to bring over supplies and evacuate the wounded. The 179th Battalion also had to construct an infantry support bridge, an M2 treadway for tanks, other vehicles, or both, depending on the outcome of the assault. Late on 5 December the engineers brought the boats down to the riverbank as a ninetyminute artillery barrage drowned the noise of the deployment.

The first boats shoved off at 0415. Darkness protected them from enemy fire, but they had to buck a strong current in the river, which had begun rising the day before. Almost half of the boats the 179th Engineer Combat Battalion operated swamped on the way over or back and went off downstream, smashing into the debris of a blown railroad bridge. Most of the first infantry wave got across without mishap, but for succeeding waves the crossings were progressively more difficult. At daybreak the enemy spotted the boats, and smoke seemed only to attract heavier fire. When the engineers attempted to put down footbridges that first day, the Germans knocked out the spans almost as soon as work started⁵².

On the far bank of the Saar a strong band of pillboxes barred the way eastward. The 357th Infantry made some progress on the north, but to the south the 358th was unable to cross railroad tracks separating the riverside village of Pachten from Dillingen. At Pachten one of the engineers of the 315th Engineer Combat Battalion, Sqt. Joseph E. Williams, won the Distinguished Service Cross for gallantry in action. Volunteering to breach a pillbox, he was wounded before he could reach it but crawled on and fired his charge. He refused to be evacuated, advanced on another pillbox, and although wounded for the second time succeeded in taking sixteen prisoners⁵³. However, this and other acts of heroism by engineers and infantry were not enough to overcome the pillboxes. The only field gun the 90th Division had east of the river was a captured German 75-mm. piece. Frantic calls went back to the near bank for tanks and antitank guns.

To get the tanks and guns across the river the engineers tried to build M2 treadway bridges, but German artillery

⁵¹ Patton believed attacking the line where it was strongest not as foolhardy as it seemed, because "people are inclined not to occupy strong positions with as many men as they should." George S. Patton, Jr., *War As I Knew It* (Boston; Houghton Mifflin, 1947), p. 176.

⁵² Hists, 1139th Engr C Gp, Dec 44; 179th Engr C Bn, Aug, Nov, Dec 44; and 206th Engr C Bn, Jun-Dec 44.

⁵³ AAR, 358th Inf Div, 6 Dec 44.





knocked them out. So intense was the enemy fire that the powerboats used to ferry supplies and evacuate the wounded could be employed only at night; at times ferry operations had to be suspended entirely. Not until 9 December were the engineers able to get heavy rafts into operation. That day the 179th Engineer Combat Battalion crossed tanks and antitank guns on an M2 steel treadway raft, and the 206th Battalion got some jeeps, antitank guns, and tank destroyers across. Later, the 206th had sole charge of the crossing operation⁵⁴.

During the following week, despite chilling rain and snow, the engineers kept the vehicular ferry running, repeatedly repairing damage from heavy German artillery fire. As the river began to recede the engineers also built a corduroy road of logs on the far shore to keep the tanks from miring down when they rolled off the rafts⁵⁵. By 15 December, after the tanks as well as the 359th Infantry had crossed the Saar, the 90th Division was penetrating fortifications protecting Dillingen. Then the attack halted for several days to give the 5th Division time to relieve the 95th in the Saarlautern bridgehead and come abreast of the 90th. The advance resumed on 18 December. Resistance proved surprisingly light, and in three hours most of Dillingen was captured.

The Withdrawal

Next afternoon, on 19 December, General Patton ordered the 90th Division to give up its hard-won Dillingen bridgehead and withdraw west of the Saar. By that time German attacks in the Ardennes, beginning on 16 December, had been recognized as a full-scale offensive. After a conference with Eisenhower and Bradley at Verdun on the morning of 19 December, Patton committed to the American defenses the bulk of Third Army, including the 90th and 5th Infantry Divisions, leaving the 95th Division to hold the Saarlautern bridgehead – the only foothold left east of the Saar.

For the withdrawal the engineers had to depend on assault boats and the M2 treadway ferries because a heavy ponton bridge they had planed to erect was not yet in place. The first tanks and trucks went back west on the night of 19 December. After artillerv fire knocked out one of the ferries during daylight operations, the crossing continued only at The 206th Engineer Combat night. Battalion was in charge of the withdrawal. By noon of 22 December the 90th Division had recrossed the Saar and was headed north to take its place in the hasty defense against the last great German counteroffensive in the west⁵⁶. [...]

The XX Corps Crossing at Mainz

At Mainz the Rhine is almost 2,000 feet wide - one of the widest points. Directly opposite the city, which lies on the west bank of the Rhine, the narrower and slower Main River empties into the Rhine from the east. Parallel to the Main's north bank an excellent road ran to Frankfurt am Main and beyond, into the heart of Germany. Elements of the 4th and 6th Armored Divisions, having broken out of the Oppenheim bridgehead, tried to cross the Main near Frankfurt between 25 and 27 March. At three places railway bridges were found still standing, but the only one that would take tanks was at Aschaffenburg, fifteen miles up the Main from Frankfurt. Demolitions had so weakened the other two bridges that only foot soldiers could get across; heavy shelling from Frankfurt prevented engineers from repairing the bridges.

Although the width of the Rhine at Mainz would place a heavy strain on XX Corps' bridging equipment, the city had a number of advantages as a crossing site: the banks were flat, the enemy lacked high

⁵⁴ Hists, 179th and 206th Engr C Bns.

⁵⁵ Hist 1139th Engr C Gp.

⁵⁶ Hists, 1139th Engr C Gp and 206th Engr C Bn.





ground for observation, and buildings extending to the water's edge would protect the attackers from small-arms fire and shell splinters as they embarked in the assault boats. As at Oppenheim, boat basins with slips were available to provide concealment for launching naval craft.

The XX Corps decided on two assault crossings, both of which the 80th Infantry Division was to undertake. The division's 317th Infantry was to cross the Rhine at Mainz, where engineers were to build a treadway bridge; the 319th Infantry, using the Oppenheim bridge over the Rhine, was to cross the Main from Bischofsheim to Hochheim, three miles upstream from Mainz. At Hochheim, where the Main was less than 700 feet wide - a favorable circumstance in view of an increasing shortage of bridging material engineers were to build a second treadway, allowing more tanks to cross to reinforce the XX Corps' armor.

In the early hours of 28 March the 1139th Engineer Combat Group's 135th Engineer Combat Battalion paddled the first assault wave over the Rhine at Mainz. From an island in midriver and from the far bank came small-arms and machine-gun fire and some 20-mm. antiaircraft shells. The second wave, crossing in LCVPs and LCMs, encountered heavier shelling. During the assault crossing 10 men were killed, 18 wounded, and some 55 reported missing. Small-arms fire falling on the bridge site delayed a start on the treadway. Because there was no reserve bridging material, the 160th Engineer Combat Battalion was reluctant to run the risk of losing what equipment it had. But on orders from the XX Corps Commander, Maj. Gen. Walton H. Walker, the engineers began work at 0900.

At the Main River site there was little or no opposition to the assault crossings, which the 1139th Group's 179th Engineer Combat Battalion supported. By 0900 the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion's heavy rafts were ferrying tanks to help clear the far bank, and at 1855 the battalion completed a 624-foot bridge. Next day around noon, the Mainz bridge over the Rhine was ready for traffic. The XX Corps engineers were especially proud because they believed the 1,896-foot span to be the longest tactical bridge built under combat conditions in the European theater⁵⁷.

⁵⁷ Hist 1139th Engr C Gp, Mar 45; Third Army Rpt, vol. II, pp. Eng-32-33, *The XX Corps: Its History and Service in World War II*, pp. 331-33.



APPENDIX E

General George S. Patton, Jr.



Speech to Third U.S. Army

England

5 June 1944

The following is an original copy of the famous speech made by then Lt. Gen. George S. Patton, Jr., to the Third U.S. Army prior to the Normandy Invasion. This speech was made somewhere in England on 5 June 1944. The men of the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion did not hear this speech. At that time, the 206th was assigned to First U.S. Army. Copies of the speech were made and given to the men of the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion after its assignment to Third Army on 5 August 1944. This original copy of Lt. Gen. George S. Patton's speech to Third Army is from the records of Capt. John G. Graham.

"General Flaton's speech to his Third Army just before Invasion"

The Corps Chaplain gave the invocation to the men standing with bowed heads asking divine guidance for the great Third Army that they help speed wich toby to enslaved Europe. Major General Cook then introduced Lieutenant General Simp son, whose Army was still preparing for their part in the War,

"We are hore said General Stimpson" to listen to the words of a great man a man. who will lead you into whatever you might face heroism, ability and foresights, a man who has proved himself amid shot and shell.My greatest hope is that some day son, I will have my own great army fighting with him, side by side".

General Patton arose and strode swiftly to the microphone the men snapped to their feet and stood silently. Fatton surveyed them grimly. " Be seated" he said. The words were not a request but a command.

"Men, this stuff you hear about Americans wanting to stay out of this War, not wanting to fight. is a lot of bull shit: Americans love to fight traditionally. All real Americans love the sting of battle. When you were kids you all admired the champion marble player, the fastest runner, the big league ball player the toughest boxers. The Americans love a winner, and cannot tolerate a loser. Americans despise cowaris. Americans play to win- all the time. I wouldn't give a hoot for a man who loses and laughed. That's why Americans Have never lost and will never lose a war, for the very thought of losing is hateful to an American.

He paused and looked over the silent crowd, "You're not all going to die: only two percent of you have in a major battle would die; Death must not be feared. Every man is frightened at first in battle. If he says he isn't he is a god dam liar. Some men are cowards, yes, but they will fight just the same or get the Kell scared but of them watching men who do fight, who are as scared as they. The real here is the man who fights even though he is scared. Some get over their fright in a few minutes under Fire, some take hours, for some it takes days. The real man never lets the fear of death overpower his honor, his duty to his country and his innate mathcod. All through your carrer of Army life you men have bitched about what you call this "Chicken Shit Drilling". That is all for one reasons Instant obedience to orders creates alertness. I don't give a damn for a man who is not always on his toes. A man to continue breating must be alert at all times". If not, sometime, a German son-of-a-bitch will sneak up behind him and beat him to death with a sack full of shit".

The men reared. Fatton's grim expression did not change." There are four hundred neatly marked graves somewhere in Sicily "he cried"all because one man went to sleep on his job". He paused, and the men grew silent. "But they are all German graves," he said softly," for we caught the bastard asleep before they did".

The General clenched the microphone tightly, his jaw out-thrust."An Army is a team. Lives, sleeps, eats, fights as a them. This individual heroic stuff is a lot of crap. The bilious bastards who wrote that kind of stuff for the Saturday Evening Post don't know any more about real battle than they do about fucking.

The men slapped their legs and rolled with glee. This was the old boy as they imagined him to be, and in rare form too. He said it.

"We have the finest food, the finest equipment, best spirit and men in the world, Patton bellowed. He lowered his head, shot it pensively, Suddenly he slapped his head, facing the men belligerently,"Why by Good", he thundered" I actually pity those sons-of-bitches we are going up against. By God,I do". The men clapped and howled delightedly. There would be many a barracks tale about the old man's choice phrases . This would become part of a parcel of the Third Army's history.

"My men don't surrender", Fatton continued."I don't want to hear of a soldier under my command getting captured unless he is hit. Even if you are, you can still fight back. This is not bull shit either. The kind of a man I want is like a lieutement in Lybia, who, with a fuger against his chest, jerked his helmet off, swept the gun aside with the other hand, and busted hell out of the Roche with his helmet. Then he jumped on the Hun and went out and killed another German, By this time the man had a bullet through his shest. That is a man for you.

He halted and the crowd walted."All the real herces are not 'Story book combat fighters, either", he went on."Every man in the Army plays a vital part, every little jch is essential to the whole scheme . What if every driver suddenly decided that he didn't like the whine of shells and turned yellow and jumped headlong into a ditch? What if every man said, "They won't miss just one man in Thousands". What if every man said that?

"Where in hell would we be now? No, thank God, Americans don't say that. Every man every department, every unit is important in the vast scheme of things. The Ordnance men are needed to supply the guns, the "QM" to bring up the food and the clothes for us. For where we are going, there isn't a hell of a lot to steal. Every man in the mess hall, even the one who heats the water to keeps us from getting diarhea has a job to do. Even the Chaplain is important; for is he gets killed and we have to bury each other, we would all go to hell, Each man must think for not only himself, but think of his buddy fighting beside him. We Don't want yellow cowards in this Army. They should be killed off like flies. If not, they will go back to the states after the war and breed more like them. The Erave men will breed more brave man. One of the bravest men I saw in the African campaign was one of the fellows I saw on top of a telegraph pole in the midst of furious fire while we were plowing towards Tunis. I stopped and asked him what in hell he was doing up there at a time like this. He answered, "Fixing the wire, sir"."Isnt't it a little unhealthy right new, I asked" "Yes sir, but the god dam wire has got to be fi-xed." There was a man devoting his all to his duty. No matter how great the odds, no matter how seemingly insignificant his duty may have been at this time, you should have seen those trucks on the road to Babes."

"The drivers were magnificent. All the day they drove along those son-of-abitching reads, never stopping never diverting from their course, with shells bursting all around them. We not through on good American guts, Many of the men drove over forty consecutive hours".

The General paused, staring out over the silent sea of men; you could hear a pin drop anywhere on the vast hillside. The only sound was the breeze stirring the leaves and the animated chirping of the birds in the branches on the General's left.

"Don't forget", Patton barked, "You don't know I'm here at all. No words of the facts is to be mentioned in any letter. The world is not supposed to know what the hell they did to me. I'm not supposed to be commanding this Army. I'm not supposed to want them to raise upon their hind legs and howl, "Jesus Christ, Its the god dam Third Army and that son-of-a bitch Patton again

"We want to get the hell over there, "Patton yelled", "We want to get over there and clean the god dam thing up. Then we'll have to take a littl jaunt against the purple pissing Japanese and clean their nest out before the Marines get all the credit".

The crowds laughed and Patton continued quietly."Sure we all want to go home; we want this thing over with bu you can't win a war laying down. The Quickest way to get it over is to go get the bastards. The quicker they are whipped the quicker we go home. The shortest way home is through Berlin".

"There is one thing you all will be able to say when you go home. You may all thank God for it. Thank God that at least thirty years from now, when you are sitting around the fireside with your brat on your knee, and he asks you what you did in the Great War II.-You won't have to say that you shovelled shit in Louisiana."

5 June 1944, England .





ADDENDUM

1. <u>Reference Page 3, Letter from Joseph L. Stangel to Don F. Wendling</u>. The ship the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion sailed from Boston Harbor to Liverpool, England was the Santa Elena. The Santa Elena was of U.S. registry and prior to World War II was used to transport tourist passengers to South America and the Caribbean. This is probably why Joe Stangel thought the ship was Argentinean. The 206th Engineer Combat Battalion boarded the Santa Elena at Boston Harbor on 7 October 1943 and the next afternoon, 8 October 1943, sailed for Liverpool, England. On 18 October 1943, the Santa Elena arrived in Liverpool and the battalion disembarked the next day, 19 October 1943, proceeding to Delamere Park Camp, Cheshire County, England.⁵⁸ The 291st Engineer Combat Battalion accompanied the 206th Engineer Combat Battalion on the Santa Elena.⁵⁹ After departing Liverpool, England, the Santa Elena sailed to Gourock, Scotland and picked up 1,700 Canadian troops bound for the Mediterranean, en route to Naples, Italy via Phillipsville, Algeria. In November 1943, after passing through the "Gates of Hercules" into the Mediterranean, the convoy came under a combination Luftwaffe and U-boat attack. The Santa Elena and several other ships in the convoy were hit by torpedoes and sunk. Many of the Canadian troops carried by the Santa Elena were rescued.

The following information pertaining to the Santa Elena was obtained from various Internet sites.

"In 1930, the Grace Line decided to greatly expand its service to Latin America, and so built four ships, the Santa Rosa, Santa Paula, Santa Lucia, and Santa Elena. The ships were intended to operate from New York to Seattle by way of the Panama Canal, but this quickly proved to be unsuccessful, and the ships ended up being used to South America and the Caribbean instead."

"The ships were built in Kearny, New Jersey by Federal Shipbuilding. The Santa Rosa was completed first, in 1932. Designed by William Francis Gibbs, she bears some resemblance to his later masterpieces, the America and United States. She had some unique features for her day in her 9,135 GRT hull, including a midships dining room that could be opened to the sky. She had a large swimming pool and gym, and all of her first class cabins were outside twins with private bath."

"All were called to war duty in 1941, and the Santa Lucia (as the USS Leedstown) and the Santa Elena were both destroyed (the Santa Elena in November 1943). The Santa Rosa and Santa Paula returned to Grace Line service after a refit in 1946."

"We were 12 days out of Gourock, Scotland where we had embarked 4,700 crack troops and joined convoy KMF-25A along with 22 other U.S. and Allied troop transport ships, plus Naval escort vessels, en route to Naples, Italy via Phillipsville, Algeria. Having passed through the "Gates of Hercules" earlier that day accompanied by an escort of Spitfires and Mustangs, and

⁵⁸ History, 206th Engineer Combat Battalion.

⁵⁹ From the web page "1943 World War II Troop Ship Crossings" by Wesley Johnston.





being only 20 leagues from Phillipsville, it looked as though the voyage would pass without incident. Even the fighter escorts had long since left."

"It was then, just as we finished dinner that the chilling alert sounded over the PA and reverberated over the surprisingly blue waters of the Inland Sea as all hands scrambled to their battle stations. The alert was immediately followed by an eminent attack warning that escalated to three pulsing attack shrills, accompanied by the insistent growl of the Klaxon.4 This cacophony of alarms distinctly heralded the coming challenge of a combination Luftwaffe and Uboat attack on our convoy."

"Adding to the mayhem of the Luftwaffe torpedo and strafing runs screaming overhead at high speed and a cross-fire so thick you could light a smoke off the passing tracers, a U-boat torpedo narrowly missed our port stern. But to our port three ships were squarely hit – the Santa Elena, carrying 1,700 troops; the ill-fated Marnix Van Sint Adegonde, carrying 3,000 nursing Sisters and the Palestine Constabulary; and the destroyer, USS Beatty. We then spotted a periscope off our port fantail, at which we catapulted our supply of "ash cans". Thereafter, all that could be seen of that U-boat was an oil slick, for which the Monterey was credited with a "possible" kill."

"Survivors, numbering 1,664 from sunken ships, were rescued by the MONTEREY over a period of three hours in the Mediterranean during and after a convoy attack by a dozen German Luftwaffe fighters and bombers and a U-boat wolf pack. A further 24 survivors were taken from the water following the sinking of the Santa Elena."

2. <u>Reference Page 98 concerning the artillery barrage conducted prior to the 206th Engineer</u> <u>Combat Battalion 6 Dec 44 assault crossing of the 90th Infantry Division across the Saar River at</u> <u>Dillingen and Pachten, Germany</u>. *"At 0430, as the leading American infantry hit the enemy bank, the XX Corps artillery opened fire, laying counterbattery and neutralizing fire on thirtynine German battery positions which had been plotted earlier. A total of over six hundred guns (field artillery, tank destroyers, and regimental cannon) expended 8,000 rounds in forty-five minutes."*⁶⁰ Also see page 172 of this report for a description by Don F. Wendling of this artillery barrage. Apparently, the original plan called for a bombing strike, "A heavy overcast *precluded aid by the XIX TAC [Nineteenth Tactical Air Command]. Later in the day, however, the fighter-bombers struck at the roads in the enemy rear."*⁶¹ Also see Lt. Col. Gilbert R. Pirrung journal, pages 198 and 199 of this report, which contains notes concerning plans for a bombing strike.

⁶⁰ United States Army in World War II, The Lorraine Campaign, Hugh M. Cole, pp 561-562.

⁶¹ Ibid. Footnote, p 562.