

MEMOIRS OF
WILLIAM O. TOWNS

December 1, 1944

to

July 5, 1945

89TH CHEMICAL MORTAR BATTALION



Dedicated to the men of the 89th
Chemical Mortar Battalion
in memory of William (Bill) Towns.

As you read this, may the memories
that it rekindles remind you of
a time when one's life depended greatly
on the camaraderie of the outfit,
the support of friends,
and the will of God.

Here's to friendships everlasting.

Sincerely,

Jackie Towns

Members of 2nd Plt., Company C
Plt. Hq.

1st Lt.	William F. Kanasky	PA
1st Lt.	Marvin L. Ritzman	ND
S/Sgt.	William O. Towns	NY
CPL	Arthur R. Amling	ILL
CPL	Arthur R. Hazard	OHIO
CPL	Mack Crow	TEXAS
T/5	Glen E. Harvey	IOWA
PFC	Woodrow W. Yeary	VA
PFC	Lee P. Browning	KENT (KY)
PFC	Donald O. Hornstein	PA
PFC	Larry A. Clark	PA
PFC	Sylvester H. Hainley	PA
PVT	Olin D. Easler	
PVT	Arthur B. Davis	OHIO

1ST SQUAD

2ND SQUAD

SGT	Leslie J. Goodding	MO	SGT	William V. Ludwico	PA
CPL	Milton Q. Jewett	UTAH	CPL	Carl C. Strayer	PA
PFC	Donald A. Nothacker	PA	PFC	Michael Smolak	PA
PFC	John M. Mathews	VA	PFC	Kenneth E. Lewis	OHIO
PFC	Albert C. Sherwood	MD	PFC	John E. Metzler	MD
PFC	Charles B. Van Epps	CALIF	PFC	William Smith	UTAH
PFC	Robert M. Turner	SC	PFC	William R. Allender	OHIO

3RD SQUAD

4TH SQUAD

SGT	Paul L. Hoff	ILL	SGT	Joseph C. Hales	VA
CPL	Thomas Henderson	KY	CPL	Robert P. Robertson	IND
PFC	Robert F. Robach	ILL	PFC	Dorice Hood	MD
PFC	William B. Ericson	LI	PFC	John Dobogai	ILL
PFC	Dale C. Howe		PFC	Milton W. Farlee	NEV
PFC	Bruce Lamb	VA	PFC	James L. Mahoney	PA
PFC	Arnold D. Olson	UTAH	PFC	Joseph J. Phillips	MD
PFC	John C. Pigott	PA	PFC	Maurice F. Mullins	CALIF
PFC	L. H. Shackelford	VA			

- FORWARD -

Due to strict censorship regulations on keeping diaries, etc., in combat, I am going to try and re-write my old day-to-day notes and add the names and dates of incidents wherever possible.

I think I shall start this little memoir off by returning for a few moments to Camp Miles Standish near Taunton, Mass. This was our staging area before our long trip to the so-called "E.T.O."

This camp was one that any normal person was very willing to leave even if he knew his next trip was to the P.O.E. It rained nearly every day, our quarters were the worst I've ever encountered in the good old U.S.A. The chow was the very best that I have ever had anywhere. Yes, I enjoyed a couple of trips to Boston along with all the rest of the boys. Al Hoselton, our Company Mess Sgt., John Carson, Platoon Sgt. of the 1st Platoon, and myself spent one last night down in a 15 cent beer joint on Schollay Square. It was quite a drunk but we sure had one hell of a good time so no one regretted the big heads the next day.

On November 30th we boarded a troop train headed for the P.O.E. at Boston. We arrived at the boat about 1300, had donuts and coffee from the Red Cross, and up the old gang plank we climbed. I've never had such an empty feeling in all my life and from the expression on the rest of the mens' faces, I don't think I was alone. Everything one has done, seen, and been through in the good old U.S.A. seems to rush into one's mind.

Yes, things were really screwed up and everyone was just a little bit touchy and nervous. The worst part of the boat was our sleeping quarters. Men were crowded into a large spacious hold with all their equipment. It was really a mess but a little later things seemed to straighten out a little.

We left Boston about 0200 on December 1st, 1944 on a converted tanker called the Marine Wolf. It turned out to be about the best riding tug in the whole convoy when the sea got rough. There was a large liner in the convoy which was believed to have been loaded with Army Nurses.

Most of the trip was quite peaceful except for most everyone aboard having his share of seasickness. The weather was very nice especially up in the Gulf Streams. I ventured out on deck during the night on many occasions just to see the moon watching over our large convoy. It's really a beautiful sight to see the great, foamy, white caps under a large, bright full moon. About two days before we were to dock we were attacked by submarines but our escort soon ended the menace. This was actually our only alarm on the trip.

Time went by pretty slowly on board but that has to be expected under the circumstances. There were several boxing matches daily, a ships library open to all personnel, a movie almost every night, plus a rag-time orchestra formed by some of the boys. These all helped to pass many lonely, long hours for us all.

On or about December 13th we docked at Southampton, England. We stayed aboard ship for about two days before we unloaded and headed for a little place in central England called Stone.

Our trip to Stone, made by train, gave us our first view of the war. We went through parts of London that had been completely destroyed by the Nazis blitz. It sort of opened our eyes as to the type of people

the English really are. They seemed to have taken it with a grain of salt and swore that Germany would pay for it before the war was over.

We arrived at Stone about 1600 on the 15th of December. It was a dead looking little town although much larger than we had expected. After a good hot meal, our company headed for it's area which turned out to be the best received by any of our other companies. They were nisson huts, with living quarters for about twenty men in each situated well within the limits of the town.

Much time was spent here in Stone repacking equipment and doing training that was necessary before we could go into combat.

Yes, we had enjoyable times, too, and plenty of good old-fashioned drunks. The ale is really good stuff but the best is called a "Black and Tan". I have suffered many a hangover because of said beverage. One of my favorite spots was the Station Hotel in nearby Stafford. It was a very clean, attractive little hotel run by a Mr. & Mrs. J. Holt. I spent two three-day passes there and a weekend every so often. The food and drinks were darn good and the price was very cheap. Lt. Kanasky, Ritzman - my old Watertown friend - Hoselton, and myself spent many merry times there.

During our eight week stay our T/O was also shifted, giving each gun squad eight men instead of six, and giving Plt. Hq. a total of thirteen men. Our 3rd Plt. was broken up and the men sent every way they were needed. S/Sgt. McLennand was sent to the new Hq. Co. as a leader in the ammo section. We received in it's place the 3rd Plt. from D Co. under the guidance of S/Sgt. Gillespie and 1st Lt. MacDowell. It took quite some time for everyone to get used to these changes but we all got used to it - sometimes not too willingly.

We finally left jolly old Stone on January, no February 15th and headed for Weymouth Harbor. We were loaded on L.C.M.'s and L.S.T.'s and headed for the continent. On February 17th we landed at Le Havre, France and unloaded on the beach.

I'm going to stop here to describe the ruins in this great French city. This was our second chance to see what war meant, this time by the Allies. Block after block was just completely leveled off by the constant air raids by the R.A.F. and A.A.F. There were craters here and there that were unbelievably large. Yes, this was war, but this time it was to put Hitler's boys on the run.

After a ride of about sixty miles outside Le Havre, we arrived at our marshalling area. It was called Camp Twenty Grand and was situated in a large wooded area. We had six and eight man tents and we lived in these for about seven days.

On or about March 1st, we received our orders to head for the front. Our assignment was with the 9th Army so we knew we had to go almost directly east. We traveled through Belgium which is really quite an up-to-date country. One of the larger cities we passed through here was Charleroi. It had several traces of the war but no serious damage had been done as far as one could see by passing through it. Our trip also took us across Holland, another quite modernistic country.

On the night of March 9th, we arrived at a small town about five miles behind the front lines. We were in Holland, the firing was in Germany. Our quarters was a war torn old house but everyone was tired enough that sleeping on the ground would even have felt good. We spent two days here and finally Charlie Company got orders to move up with the 35th Division on March 11th.

From this point I can use my old notes to complete this little memoir. This book was started on a beautiful Sunday morning in Schwerin, Germany. I am acting as liason officer for Charlie Company. We are now attached to the 8th Div., 121st Inf. Regt., 2 Bn. who are in turn attached to the 21st Army Gp., the British 2nd Army, commanded by Sir Bernard L. Montgomery.

MARCH 11

Yes, we are actually in that thing called "combat" but due to our attachment, the day was pretty soft. Our mortar positions are in a little town just over the German border. We are attached to the 35th Division and are being used as artillery support mainly. The boys are really ready for sleep tonight as they really slapped up some good gun positions. The strain of expecting enemy shellfire also was very tiring. We did no firing as the doughboys have really got Jerry on the run.

MARCH 12

Did I say yesterday was our first day in combat? Well, let me correct that slight error! Yesterday was our first day as far as the records are concerned but when it comes to actual combat - today was it! We were ordered to join the 35th Div., 320th Inf. Regt., 2nd Bn., Able Company and prepare to support them in attack. Lt. Kanasky (whom I will call Jake from now on), my commo corporal, Hazard, and myself left for Able C.P. to act as Forward Observers. On arriving at the C.P., Jake received the "big picture" and he and Hazard took off, leaving me behind as Liaison Officer. They followed the Captain (Cary) all day and I followed the Co. C.P. group without ever knowing where Jake or Hazard was. I really got a bird's eye view of what our doughboys really go through, too. I also learned what a "burp gun" was, too, and got some idea as to their accuracy. I don't think they were shooting at me in particular but they sure as hell made me duck for a doorway along with the rest of the doughs nearby. I did contact Jake and Hazard about 2100 at night and we were glad to find each other, believe me. It was sort of a screwed up day for us all but one can't expect to learn everything the first day. I found that our platoon was displaced about 2500 yards to our rear which really made me feel much better. After talking over our first day in combat, we all are ready to sack up for the night. It looks as if tomorrow might be a long day as we are still with the same outfit. The first platoon is on our right flank, the third being held in reserve near our Company C.P.

MARCH 13

Hear ye, hear ye! Yes, I'm back to relate another day full of new experiences to us all. Jake, Hazard, and myself shoved off with Able Company at 0800 to start another advance. We walked about five miles right up within five yards of the leading tank. This is really Forward Observing in my estimation. Very little enemy resistance was met and except for an occasional burst of fire from the one and only burp gun, one couldn't have been safer at home. We did hit the dirt once, though, later to find it was one of our own tanks blazing away at us. Their ammo won't kill any quicker than Jerries though so why take any chances. The C.P. was finally established about 1000 so Jake decided to move our guns up to within 100 yards of this C.P. About an hour later I spotted the line of jeeps heading our way so knew it was our boys. Lt. Ritzman (Ritz for easy writing lingo) was going to bypass us but I damn soon stopped him. Just as the vehicles all stopped, those Jerry bastards started shelling the road with some big stuff. This was the first time they had ever had any shells hit near them so one can imagine what happened. They all started running in every direction which was absolutely the worst damn thing anyone can do under such circumstances. For the first time in my Platoon Sargeancy I let go a rather ungentlemanly remark - "Don't run, you damn fools, hit the dirt!" Seeing them all obey my order relieved me a whole lot. I realized then that I should have gathered up a little terra firma myself. The shelling ended almost as soon as everyone got settled on the good earth so I showed them their M.P. and returned to my F.O.'s position with Jake and Hazard. We proceeded to blow hell out of a big farmhouse under the watchful eye of Capt. Cary and an F.A. observer. Jake really did a grand job and the Inf. C.O. (Cary) was really sold on our 4 V's. He asked us to lay a screen around the same place so that the tanks and doughs could advance across the open field in front of it with as much surprise on Jerry as possible. We continued the screen for about 20 minutes, being very well satisfied with its effect. We then went over to the platoon, had a good hot meal, and proceeded to catch up with the doughs. We had Lewis drive us part way and were then stopped by a G.I. in a small house. He said there was a Jerry doing some sniper work somewhere nearby so we gladly piled out of the jeep. Lewis discovered he had a flat so he and Hazard started fixing it. After this was done, we all started watching a group of P-47's strafe hell out of a Jerry convoy in the town nearby. All of a sudden, Jerry dropped four big ones about 50 yards from where we were standing. I've never heard of four people going through a doorway at one time but I know it can be done now. Jerry dropped four more on the other side but we were all in the house except ole Lewis and he was tearing down the road to beat hell by that time. After a short time we decided to go forward but the burp gun and sniper changed our mind this time. He let a few go at the house but no one got hurt. When it was just about dark we headed back to the C.P. to get our orders for the next day. Capt. Cary was very well pleased with our work and commended us on the fine smoke screen. On arriving at the platoon we found that Ritz had fallen into a very messy cesspool along with two or three of the other men. He was pretty P.O. about it but couldn't help laughing. This has been a pretty full old day so guess I'll crawl into the old sack and get some much needed shuteye. So far, we have had no casualties and I sincerely hope and pray to God that I can say that on V-E Day. I think a whole lot of these guys.

MARCH 14

Today was another busy day but I've been running the guns which isn't too bad a job. We're with the 134th Infantry today so we have a new boss. Ritz, Goodding, and Yearly are up doing the F.O. work for the next couple of days. We sat around most of the day but old Ritz finally got us a few targets during which time we had to displace forward - this time by groups of three jeeps - no more bunching up for us. About 1530, Ritz sent us our first big mission. It seems that Jerry tried to pull off a nuisance counter-attack so old Ritz immediately let them have the works. We shot up about 100 rounds of H.E. plus 80 of W.P. before we received "Cease Firing". When Ritz came in that night he was really happy about it all and said the Inf. C.O. was much more so than he. Another day ended but old Charlie Company suffered two casualties today - Sgt. Lindenlaub who was acting as Mess Sgt. and Cpl. Mears who was running his gun. The shell that got them both - Lindy got it in the head and was unconscious when they got him to the Aid Station. Here's hoping they both pull through alright.

MARCH 15

We were pulled out of the line today and sent back to a Bn. assembly point. We were in place ready to fire this a.m. but due to our nearness to the Rhine (900 yards) we weren't allowed to fire. Guess that will come a little later by the looks. We loaded up and headed toward Bruggen to pick up the rest of the Bn. who have been sitting on their dead ends since we left for the front. We arrived at the C.P. about 1900, found our billet areas and bunked down for the night. Boy! it sure is peaceful back here!

MARCH 16

We are now in a very quaint little Holland town called Nuth. Our trip was about 40 miles which took us over two hours to make due to regulation speeds of 17 to 18 mph. The entire Bn. is here and are billeted in several parts of the town. Charlie Company is lucky enough to be in separate civilian homes. Jake, Ritz, Amling and myself are together in a very nice home. The luxury of running water, electricity, and a radio is something we all really appreciate. We are now attached to the 79th Div. who are preparing to cross the Rhine. It sorta looks as if we might see a good bit of the show.

MARCH 17

One more day of life in the E.T.O. gone by and we're still relaxing as much as possible. All the officers and Plt. Sgts. took a trip up to the Maas River L.C.M. Trg. Site to get some idea as to how the Rhine crossing was to be made. Jake and Ritz took off for Liege on a big bender tonight so Amling and myself are holding down the fort. I have a pass to Maastricht tomorrow so hope it's a fairly nice day. Guess old Ritz is going along to kind of keep things under control. He sure is a grand guy and is the best Officer I've ever met or worked with so far!

MARCH 18

Yes, I took my pass but I sure wish someone would kick my tail for doing it. It's absolutely the worst place I've ever been to and if it weren't for the A.R.C. it sure wouldn't be worth two whoops in hell. The beer tasted like water and the two shots of gin I had would sure make a good high-octane gas taste good. Got back to Nuth and found that Jake, Goodding, and Hazard had taken off on a practice landing group in preparation for the Rhine crossing. If I had known they were leaving I would have stayed away from Maastricht. I sincerely hope that Les doesn't get the idea that I'm yellow about F.O. work. It's my job therefore he shouldn't have to leave the platoon. I have the best darn quartet of squad leaders anyone could ask for and here's hoping they all get a chance for a promotion soon.

MARCH 19

The day has been quite uneventful but that isn't bothering anyone too much. Jake, Hazard, & Goodding got back from their "dry run" about 0800 and they were all pretty well P.O.'ed because all they got was a good nights sleep due to some slight "snafu" on someones part. Al Hoselton came back to the company as Mess Sgt. today which sure good news to us all. (He got switched to Hq. Co. in the shuffle of personnel in Stone, England). We expect to move sometime tomorrow so guess I'd better get to bed.

MARCH 20

The day has been spent in preparation for our move tonight at 2130. We are now with the 79th Div., 314th Regt., 2nd Bn. and will be attached to them until after we get across the Rhine. We were supposed to have moved out at 2010 but didn't get moving until 2130. During the morning, Ritz, Amling and myself whipped down to Maastricht and sent out orders for flowers for "Mothers Day" for the the platoon. Our little stay here in Holland has really been a pleasant one and one some of us won't forget for some time. These people never seemed to be satisfied unless they were doing something to make us just a little bit more comfortable. For instance, one old lady gave Hornstein several cheese and rye bread

sandwiches to eat on the trip. Those sandwiches really hit the spot allright. We're driving blackout now and that's really a tough job on these roads.

MARCH 21

We arrived at our destination about 0430 and everyone was really tired after such a long old drive. The house we are living in is quite large so the entire platoon is together. Most of the boys slept the day out but a few of us got up and had a few fried eggs and coffee. The Polish slave laborer that runs the place stole our bag of coffee and old "Hedgerow" Yeary quickly told him to return it or he might find his head loose from his body. Ritz took the Sq. Ldrs. up to their gun positions near the Rhine (400 yds.) before going to work on them tonight.

MARCH 22

The boys got back from the M.P. about 0230 already for a few hours good sleep. They are preparing their M.P. at night along with other units as Jerry can see too much during the daylight hours. The gang left here about 1900 and they have the guns with them tonight so guess the big day is near at hand. The rest of us are sitting around trying to concentrate on writing letters but everyone knows we have a big job ahead and it seems to linger in our minds. The sooner it's over the better we're all going to feel.

MARCH 23

Still awaiting the biggest day of our lives in the service yet and most everyone has had his daily fill of fried eggs and coffee. Due to a jeep accident last night on a return trip from the M.P., Sgt. Bynon and T/5 Harvey are in the hospital today. Glen E. received a fractured knee plus a fractured skull while Bynon got out with a few minor injuries. They were hit by a 6 x 6 which sure can put a nice dent in most anything. Amling and Thorpe, who were also occupants in the jeep, escaped with a few bruises here and there. Harvey is #1 lost in ye olde 2nd Platoon and I hope and pray to the good Lord above us that he is the last. I met everyone of these men when they came into the service, saw them become the best bunch of soldiers anyone would care to have, walked up the old gang plank with them, and now I sincerely hope I can walk off the boat at a home port with all of them behind me. The gun crews got back about 0345 all ready for some sleep which they are sure deserve. Ritz, Jake, and Yeary left about 1400 to register in #2 gun so guess the big push is just around the corner. Ritz is pretty well fagged out due to working almost night and day ever since our arrival here. I've been calling him the "swing-shift kid" and it sure fits him. During the registration some Jerry bastard let one go at the O.P. and old sad-pan Yeary says, "Who the hell is doing the registration here anyway, us or those German ----?" No one was hurt but the interior of that hole sure feels darn cozy. It sure

is funny how a persons senses can pick up an incoming shell so quickly. One can be darn sure of picking any kind of a spot to dive into regardless of size, shape, color, or smell. Mother Earth is sure a good protector for us all.

MARCH 24

Yes, the day for the big push has finally arrived and most all of us a darn well satisfied. Orders soon came to have the entire Company to their positions along the Rhine. Our platoon M.P. were about 500 yds. from the river which is pretty darn close. I saw my little platoon pull out about 1300 and in my mind I wondered how many of them I'd see again. Why wasn't I going? Well, Jake, Hazard, and myself were to be the F.O.'s for this "big operation" and this little job was one that took plenty of guts even if I do say so as the writer of this little episode. Jake, Hazard, and myself, whom I will refer to as "we" until the crossing is complete, sat around until 1500 then headed for the 79th Div., 315th Inf. Regt., 2nd Bn. Hq. On arriving we were told that the big show wouldn't start moving until 2330 or a little later. Jake sat around Bn. Hq. and Hazard and myself started looking for a place to bunk down for awhile. About 1900 we decided to "invade" Bn. and stretch out any place that was vacant. After laying awake wondering for awhile about the road ahead we both dozed off. About 2315 we were awakened by the sound of hundreds of big bombers going over the house. We went outside to see the sky a dull red from the boys hitting their targets and here and there one could see flak reaching out to destroy the planes. The target was the city of Wesel. This city and part of the Rhine was to be attacked by the British to coincide with our attack. Later tomorrow the Paratroopers are supposed to also launch an offensive. At 2330 we all loaded into trucks and headed for the river. At 2350 we unloaded and prepared to walk the rest of the way as it was a pretty noisy job driving trucks over a rough, gravel road. I, personally have never had such a queer sensation inside me and, by the expression on the faces of others, I don't think I was alone. Very few words were said and because of a "no smoking" rule there was no smoking - much! We just walked along wondering just exactly what was in store for us as we hit the other shore of the river. One could hear an occasional big gun let one go but that didn't seem to bother anyone the least bit. Yes, there were prayers a-plenty and a guy by the name of Towns did his share and really got some help from it.

Yes, we're still walking and just as sober as any bunch of men could possibly be. After stopping for a short break we hit the road once more. The doughboys were all loaded down with M-1's, Carbines, 30 cal. M.G.'s, and bazookas plus other various weapons of their desire. About 0115 our supporting elements started their initial firing. There was everything from a 30 cal. M.G. to a 240 mm gun giving those Jerry bastards a pasting. Never in all of my life have I felt the ground shake so much or hear so much noise. One could see the big guns fire by the bright flash in the moonlite sky and seconds later see it hit it's target a few miles away. At 0230 we arrived at the 16-man boats and started awaiting our turn to take off. No, it wasn't a damn bit peaceful and quiet either! Jerry decided he had better return some fireworks and he really started letting us have it. I never hugged old Mother Earth so tight or

dug so willingly in all my life. It was like waiting for someone to sneak up and hit you over the head. I don't see how any of the guys lived through it but not a man was scratched. At 0300 the 1st wave took off and the second wave (our baby) grabbed their boats and headed for the ride none of us will forget for a long time. We had our boat in the water before someone realized that it might be well if we awaited the signal. It came soon afterward and away we went in the slowest putt-putt I've ever had the displeasure of riding, believe me. The old moon was gone by this time and with the smoke drifting around us, visibility was very poor. On hitting the other shore everyone very speedily took cover and remained there until we figured Jerry had taken off. Our little F.O. party soon got together and then we started looking for "G" Co., as this was the group we were to contact. No one had seen any of their men so we took off across the open flats by ourselves. We ran into Jerry "burp-gun" fire quite a number of times, led a group of First Aid men around for awhile, but no "G" Co. Finally we found a platoon of "E" Co. all dug in in the side of a dike. They were lost completely so we decided to hole-up for awhile and await daylight (one hour away). After digging a very nice 3-man hole we all tried to get a few minutes shuteye. Not realizing that we were all soaked with sweat, it didn't take much time before we were all damn near frozen. Just as the sun started peeking over the horizon we spotted a long column of men winding up the flats toward us. Yes, it was "G" Co. and what a tired bunch of boys they were. Here's what happened: parts of the Co. had reached their objective then turned back to the river to get consolidated and that's where we met them - half way back to their objective. After getting pinned down a few more times we finally reached the original objective. Finally the Bn. C.O. decided to send us up to help "E" Co. out a little so off we went. Yes, we were tired and damn hungry but those infantry guys had the same feeling. About 1900 we finally stopped for the night. The name of the town was Dinslaken and it sure had been flattened by the air force and artillery. There were piles of dead, burnt civilians all over the place - all of them killed because they didn't have brains and common sense enough to evacuate when told.

MARCH 25

Up at 0700 and on our way again but feeling much better after a nights rest. There was very little resistance met for quite a few miles although some sneaking sniper would take a crack at someone now and then and get his tail shot off by one of our doughboys. About 1030, a flak-gun, an "88", and a big spotlight was discovered about 600 yds. ahead of us. The Inf. Capt. called on a tank to throw a few 90's at them. He told the 105MM F.O., and anyone else who desired to let them have the works. We F.O.'s went upstairs in a nearby house and prepared to register. Well, our guns were out of range, thank God for that. Jake told Hazard and myself to keep contact with the Co. and that he was going down to tell the Inf. Capt. he was out of range. I decided Art and I should take the radio downstairs as that damn "88" could very easily let one go, point blank, at that damn house. Well, it happened just as my foot hit the bottom step. That was too damn hot and just to keep it that way, Jerry let us have another. Believe me, I never saw a house empty of it's occupants so fast in my life. After thinking about it for a few minutes, every damn man that was an F.O. or radio operator realized that

someone sure must have said a lot of prayers or else someone in the bunch was a Christian. A miss is as good as a mile but I would gladly have been the mile. Very shortly we pushed through a thick wooded area and all had to do the old 150 yard dash to get away from another burp gun. One squad of the 1st Platoon of "E" Co. finally cleared the way much to the relief of everyone. Our objective was a little town about 1/2 mile away. On arriving we met other G.I.'s already there so thinking the entire area cleared the Inf. C.O. just kept going. Some Kraut started playing a very nasty tune with another burp gun so we all holed up. Jake, the Capt., and the 81MM F.O. went upstairs in the house nearby to take a look up ahead. Meanwhile, one of our tanks pulled up in front of the same house and started letting "90's" go at the sniper. Up went a white flag so our boys quit firing and started crawling out of the tank. Well, all hell broke loose right then and there. Those dirty Jerry bastards also had an "88" over there and they started using it on the tank. I saw two rounds hit the tank just about 20 feet away and I figured it was time to move. I ran to the back of the house and hadn't any more than got around the corner when one hit right on the corner of the house. Right in front of me laid one of the tankmen so I got him into a comfortable position then decided to look for Jake. Yes, he was in the house yet and that "88" had put two rounds in there. I crawled through the back window, not thinking that one more round might pay us a visit. When a guy realizes one of his best buddies are in trouble - danger is the after thought. I found him, covered with dirt from head to foot and he was holding his hands over his eyes. No, he wasn't hit, thank God, but he sure was shaken up a bit. He sat down for awhile then, after some persuasive talking, we caught the boys up ahead. Why did I say anything to persuade ole Jake to continue? Well our objective was only about a mile away for one reason. The big thing was this: Jake and I have been pals for months. He is darn hard to beat as an F.O. and a platoon leader. I knew that the shock of being in that house would wear off if he walked a little and got it out of his mind a little. It wasn't cowardice on his part - not by a damn sight. It was shock and thoughts of what might have happened. He'd do the same damn thing for me anytime. He wasn't hurt and that's a lot after a day like today has been. Old Hazard was right nearby when all this was going on but he wasn't touched either. We reached the objective, then called Capt. Landback and asked for a vehicle to come after us. The sight of that platoon was really one I'll never forget - believe me. We ate a meal of ham and eggs, Davis style, and told the boys that asked about our experiences. We found out that Ted Mollinedo had been killed today by a Jerry mortar shell. We were lucky and I thanked God like I've never thanked Him before for seeing us all through safely.

MARCH 26

Back at the old M.P. again and it seems pretty darn good after what has been happening during the past couple of days. We moved to a new position about 1300 as the 2nd Bn. was in reserve for a couple of days. We had a big fire mission about 1930 from Ritz. Jerry is believed to have started a counter-attack but a few of our HE shells damn soon changed his mind. We were on the alert all night as our G-2 reported an overdose of enemy patrol action plus a big possibility of another counter-attack during the night.

MARCH 27

About 0100 Jerry decided he wanted to blow out our bridge across the Rhine. Several attacks by his planes proved very ineffective due to our AA gunners in the whole area of the bridge. It's really a queer sight to see so much flak and .50 cal ammo all going up in the air at once. It sure must be hot as hell up where that stuff is going, too! After a reconnaissance, we moved to a new position on the outskirts of Wehofen. Our position was very safe as there were plenty of bomb proof shelters nearby for everyone. We all got ready to settle down for the night but received orders to move about 1900. Our new position was on the opposite side of Wehofen in a big farm yard. The boys were all ready for firing 15 minutes after their arrival but as usual, there was no more firing to be done. There has been quite a bit of Jerry air support around lately so guess old Adolf is trying to put on another show for his badly mauled thing called an Army. They sure aren't putting up much resistance right at present.

MARCH 28

Up bright and early, slopped a 10 in 1 breakfast down the old hatch and hit the road for a new M.P. once again. Those Jerry bastards sure must have had a good O.P. nearby because they started plastering hell out of us as we drove into our position. No casualties were suffered in personnel but they sure blew hell out of a couple of our tires, believe me! The name of this burg was Biefang - nice name, eh? Everyone sat on their tails till about 1700, then I took my "moving party" and started cleaning the civilians out of the houses we decided to use for the night. We had just started preparing our 10 in 1 supper about 1915 when we received a very urgent fire mission. Blue Pet and us were to fire a 48 rd. barrage at an enemy concentration just as soon as we were ready. We were ready at 2010 then came the firing. The boys got their 48 rounds away and we immediately withdrew to our quarters. Why? Well, we knew if Jerry had any observers nearby that our M.P. would sure catch hell and darn soon. We hadn't any more than hit the house when Jerry kept that date we expected. Flat trajectory stuff started pasting hell out of the whole damn area. I've never heard them come so fast and by such large numbers since we've been committed to combat. There was shrapnel flying around as thick as raindrops but naturally, one hell of a lot more dangerous. The ammo men came in during the whole show which sure took plenty of guts. When old Crow came in the house he told us that our former exec's position had one corner knocked off it. We had used it to direct fire from about 15 minutes before. After half an hour of hell everything quieted down and we all hit the sacks. No one hurt, thank God!

MARCH 29

Here for another day of combat and all it's troubles. The platoon fired about 200 rds at probable O.P.'s during the afternoon under the F.O. work of Lt. Cartledge. He seemed more than pleased over the firing. Some of the boys were able to go back to Bn. for showers which was a very

pleasant privilege. The rest of the day was spent in the usual way - writing letters, reading the Stars & Stripes, and generally giving old shep a real pushing around. We've been ducking plenty lately so it seems sorta good for a change.

MARCH 30

Naturally, we can't expect to stay in one place very long. We are now in a town called Engelbeg, but not for long - we hope. A few more of the boys returned to Bn. for showers and the rest of us sat on our dead ends for the day.

MARCH 31

Yes, we've moved and it looks like a pretty darn good spot. We're to set up a defensive fire plan and also fire a few rounds at any targets of opportunity we so desire. The city we are in is called Bottrop, one of the Ruhr Valley's larger industrial cities. Each squad has a very nice little house of its own and believe it or not, running water, electricity, and even a radio can be found in almost all of the houses. Everyone spent most of the day cleaning up, writing, and catching up odd jobs that have been left from time to time. Our mess hall is set up in a big barroom in which 7 barrels of beer was found. It wasn't much good but beer is beer. All these luxuries sure seem funny to us - just think - electricity - some life, eh?

APRIL 1

Yes, it's Easter Sunday but the war sure doesn't make one feel too religious at times. Just a few hundred yards away some Jerry rat is playing a very deadly tune with his burp gun. Every so often one can hear a big artillery shell burst nearby just to remind us all that the war is still leading the pages of our young lives. Ritz, myself, and Yeary went up to do a little F.O. work but had quite a bit of difficulty registering the guns as our maps were lousy and inaccurate as all hell. There were plenty of targets on all sides but not one could be absolutely identified on our maps. We blew hell out of one of the famous Krupp factories, fired at some enemy held houses then decided it was time to head back to the platoon as it was then 1700. We spent a very peaceful evening writing our usual letters and listening to the radio. A little music, at times, sure helps that thing called morale. Just to hear a good old American swing band makes one realize just what a grand time he really could be having. Oh! well, we'll all get back to it some day - we hope.

APRIL 2

Yes, we're still in Bottrop and enjoying every minute of this stop.

We are doing very little firing right at present so our ammunition problem is very easily solved. The boys are really enjoying the radio programs over the A.F.N. hook-up and they are all beginning to become a little more carefree and relaxed about it all. One can tell very easily when a man is working under some kind of a strain and it is also very noticeable when they begin to relax, too. Have written my daily quota of letters so guess I'll hit the old pad.

APRIL 3

"It's a beautiful day in Chicago, ladies and gentlemen!"! It may be but it sure is a regular old, rainy Spring day in Bottrop, Germany. That same burp gun is still out in the factory section so our boys evidently haven't tried to advance very much. The whole Ruhr is now one big pocket with the 1st Army holding one side, the 9th Army in the middle and foremost flank, and the British up north. There are about 30,000 Jerries in the bag if the pocket holds. I did a little F.O. work today with Jake and Hazard. Most of the boys got a chance to take showers and the rest wrote or slept most all day.

APRIL 4

"April showers bring May flowers," so someone told me once. Well, Bottrop ought to have its share after the rain that fell here today. That damn guy with that burp gun is getting more slap happy every day. Boy! somebody will knock his cock stiff before long - I'll bet money on that. Got up at 0615 and left for a little F.O. work with Hornstein at 0700. I've got to do a little F.O. work by myself so guess I'll have to break in a radio operator. "Horny" might be alright but he's too good a man back at the guns. No unusual happenings today so guess I'll write my honey and hit the sack.

APRIL 5

Yes, it has rained all day which sure hasn't helped this dismal life along too much. I went up and did a little shooting but due to very poor observation I had to quit. Major Lentz paid us a short visit during the afternoon. We received a small barrel of P.X. beer which sure tasted darn good to us all. Jake and Ritz sure are having an awful time trying to keep the mail all censored. If these guys got half as many letters as they write our Mail Clerk sure would be busy.

APRIL 6

Still in Bottrop and the weather man is still giving us plenty of dampness. I went up and did a little more F.O. work during the afternoon but observation was the biggest trouble again. I re-fired a mission that

Ritz fired during the morning and think I got five or six Jerries who were digging in some type of gun. Received a very nice package from my dear little wife and we all enjoyed the contents - especially those chocolate chip cookies. Have written my daily letters so guess I'll hit the pad.

APRIL 7

We have finally moved to a new M.P. in a town called Kurnap. The "brass hats" have decided to cut the Ruhr pocket in half which may turn out to be a pretty big job. Guess we had better practice up on our ducking ability once again. Ritz and Yearly have gone up to do the F.O. work and I sure hope they don't run into as much stuff as was met in spots during the Rhine crossing. The boys have to go across the Rhine-Herne Canal which may be a tough nut to crack. Jake is Liaison Officer so I am doing the job as Plt. Exec. Cpl. Robertson got back from his pass to Paris and Sgt. Hales' name was drawn for the next one. Guess I'll try to drop "my honey" a few lines and go to bed. Here's hoping Ritz and Yearly don't have any trouble during the crossing!

APRIL 8

This sure has been a darn long, busy old day for every man in good old White Plt. The infantry "jumped off" at 0300 and there was sure plenty of "big stuff" flying around our neighborhood, believe me. Blue Plt. who is right behind our M.P., had a round burst on one of their houses but no one was injured. We started laying a smoke screen with "Red" at 1420 and continued it through until 2115. Our guns sure took one hell of a beating due to the number of rings we were using. The least number was 18 1/2 and so on up to 25 1/2 and 26 rings. The boys fired well over 1600 rounds, the first squad firing some 487 rounds. The screen was about 2000 yards in length but due to the angle of the area it was a very hard screen to observe. We found that even a hard surfaced road won't hold the mortars for over 20 rounds firing between 19 1/2 and 22 3/4 rings, also! Pulling a baseplate out with a jeep is one hell of a big time saver, too! So far we have had only 2 elevating screws break, 3 badly bent locking forks and a spider plus a Y-spade working loose. It isn't a good idea to fire over 200 m in deflection for too long a period either - re-set the damn gun and fire it right! These babies will take a lot if they are treated correctly.

APRIL 9

"Hit the road, ya bums", well, we dood it! About 1100 I left on a recon party with Charla 6 and the platoon leaders of Red and Blue. A civilian tried to put a hole through me but he sure was away off in elevation. I let one go out of my M-1 and it got him very beautifully. I went up to exam the bastard and he was dead as a stone statue. Yes - I killed a man but he was sure trying like hell to part my wig. I returned to the M.P., got the boys ready to move, and we moved out across a "Bailey

Bridge" across the Rhine-Herne Canal to our new M.P. in Barkhoferheide. Due to a slight change in plans we didn't use the M.P. I chose in the morning. They were changed because my original spot was only about 400 yards from the right boundry of the Bn. area. We set up, and immediately got a big, juicy mission of 12 rds. from two guns. It was a Jerry Self-Propelled "88" and the observer called back and said the "area was well policed after the 12 rounds." Guess I'll hit the sack as I have another recon in the morning at 0630! What a life!

APRIL 10

Well, can't say as I've had too much sleep today! Ritz awakend me at 0100 and said he had some information for me so I crawled out. It seems that our platoon plus one of Baker Companys' was to be detached from the Bn. for awhile. This, of course, meant a new sector, which meant a recon for me before we could move. Ritz showed me the spot on the map and we started trying to figure out the shortest route. After studying it out for awhile, I finally decided the route to be taken. Ritz said he hated to leave me holding the bag on such a move but there was nothing that could be done about it. I am sort of glad it turned out this way as I have a lot more confidence in my map reading now than I ever had before. At 0615 Hazard, Amling, and myself left on the little search which didn't take too long to complete. Ritz said he wanted the guns ready to fire at 0900 and I don't think he was too sure about our ability to make it on time. Well, we left the old M.P. at 0745, arrived at the new position at 0820 and was ready to fire at 0845. It sure made me feel darn good to get it all done so smoothly. Lt. Repschleger pulled in about 1100 and gave us the "big picture". We are now in "X" Company under Lt. Harvey. After laying around most of the day, old Ritz gave us a move order which didn't take too long. The boys are pretty damn tired tonight due to quite a lot of nerve-wracking mortar fire by Jerry on and off during the day. It doesn't get dark until about 2100 now so the days are pretty darn long ones.

APRIL 11

Mom always said there would be days like this but guess I wasn't in the mood to believe her or something. Everyone was awakened at 0700 due to an expected mission from old F.O. Ritzman. It came at 0745 in the form of a partially unobserved village target. He wanted WP and HE laid on the road junction and the village and right away. At 0800 the boys were letting them go - but fast. We fired about 60 rounds of each then came a big fat march order - so early to start running our tail off! Yes! I know there's a war going on in the ETO. "Rep" and myself make a recon and one hour later we were set up ready to fire. We passed our first target area and all got a good idea as to the destructive power of WP and HE both. The infantry was really well pleased over the job, too! At 1830 we received another move order and away we went on another recon. On arriving back at the M.P., we found the boys preparing a mission. We fired about 40 or 50 rounds and left for our new M.P., arriving at 2030. After setting in the guns and putting out our security we decided to eat

the hot chow that had just arrived. We have 44 men in the platoon and we didn't get enough for 20! Those damn fools back in that chow section ought to have their ass kicked and I sure would do my share of the kicking if they had been around. It's a damn good thing the farm we were at in the last position had a good stock of ham and eggs or someone would sure have gotten damn hungry. Ritz came in about 2300 and we are all just about ready to call it a day. What a life without a wife! Eh? Who said that?

APRIL 12

Can't say as we've done too much today except wait and wonder just what in hell is going on around here. The Bn. we have been supporting is in reserve so just to keep things going they put us in another one. We finally got some mail and our P.X. rations which was all brought up by Willoughby and Roselle. Yes, we moved again but we didn't unload a darn thing as we may have to move again before the night is over. Our billets are really nice and everything outside is really beautiful. The section of Essen (outskirts) we are staying in doesn't seem to have been harmed too much by the war. All of the fruit trees are in full bloom and it really makes a guy wish he were back where everything beautiful would mean home. The Germans know they are beat but haven't enough common sense to quit all this damn foolishness. I'm more convinced than ever that the German people themselves are just as much to blame for this damn mess as their leaders.

APRIL 13

Up bright and early and on the road once again. We moved into position, set up our guns and immediately started to set up housekeeping. We had a Jewish doctor come and ask us if we couldn't move our guns to another area because he had three small children. I made damn sure he moved out even though I had no intention of using his shack. About an hour later we had to move again. This time we could look right into Jerrys' back dooryard and he could see us just as plainly. Our M.P. was about 500 yards from the Ruhr River and in a very well-to-do part of the industrial section. We fired up about 300 rds. of ammo and put a lot of Jerries where they could do the most good - 6 foot under. After the day was over, someone in Plt. Hq. found a case of wine, all 1920 and 1930 stuff. We all tied on a good load and really raised hell. The Jerries across the river must have wondered just what in hell was happening. We Yanks are sure a care free bunch of bastards alright!

APRIL 14

"Boy! I've drank too much before but never had a head like this" -- that was the way most of us felt this morning. Yes, we moved again but it was one that was appreciated by everyone. We arrived at "Task Force" (X Co.) C.P. and laid around all day writing letters, eating, and sleeping.

We were supposed to have gone up past Dortmund but our infantry hit quite a bit of resistance so everyone stayed put. We received the news of Pres. Roosevelt's death today and everyone was quite surprised. Immediately the German Propaganda machine went to work and announced that he had killed himself because of the hopeless outlook of the war! Pres. Truman is sort of a dark horse to everyone so let's all hope he comes out on top of the heap. The name of Roosevelt and the United States sure has done a whole lot to bring this long war in the E.T.O. to a close and it's too bad he couldn't have stayed to be here when those dumb bastards throw in the towel.

APRIL 15

After slopping a "10 in 1" breakfast into our hungry guts we hit the road about 0700. We joined our Inf. Bn. column and headed for Dortmund then to places a few miles East of this war torn city. Due to several pockets of resistance we were unable to advance very speedily. About 1700 we reached our M.P. and immediately got ready for action. About 1830 we received orders to report back to Charlie Company so away we went. Due to very poor leadership on someones part we didn't get there and bunked down for the night just the other side of Essen. It's pretty damn hard to find roads driving blackout so no one received too much of a chewing for it.

APRIL 16

Well, we were up bright (?) and early this morning and headed for our Company assembly area. We arrived there at 0900 just in time for breakfast so everyone was pretty well satisfied. We are in a little town called Ickern and several places in it have sure felt the end of some of our bombers. Everyone kept pretty busy most all day cleaning junk out of the vehicles and trailers and also getting themselves cleaned up a bit. Several got a chance to get a shower so that helped personal cleaning a whole lot. Right at present things are sort of a big question mark as far as our outfit is concerned. If we stay in this Corps we will become part of the post war police force. The other if points toward the main front which is pushing on towards Berlin. The whole story is supposed to unfold tomorrow so "rumor" has it!

APRIL 17

"Here, boy - over here! That's the good dog"! What am I talking about? I'm just trying to hang onto the dog I've been pushing around all day - along with everyone else! The orders came down to get our vehicles ready for a long trip so that police force job doesn't look too good. If we stay in actual combat long enough, though, the "C.B.I." might not catch up to us quite so soon and that's a whole lot. Hales got back from Paris today so Jake and Farlee are leaving tomorrow. Boy! our supply of "schnopps" are sure dwindling at this stop!

APRIL 18

Yes, we're still awaiting that long trip but everyone seems to be enjoying every bit of it. According to news reports our 9th Army is only 34 miles from Berlin and the 3rd is about 6 miles from the Czech border so things look pretty good. I'm supposed to leave on the advance party any time now so maybe we'll be up there giving the boys a little help before too long. I sincerely hope our dear Bn. C.O. is pleased with this move. There are a few yet who haven't had a good scare yet so they are pretty eager. Once is enough for anyone with any common sense.

APRIL 19

I got up at 0400 to leave on the advance party but due to a slight "SNAFU" found that we weren't leaving until around 0900. I went back to bed for a couple of hours then got ready to leave. We left the Bn. C.P. at 0045 and those little jeeps sure did make time. Part of the trip was made on the Autobahn and this sure is a beautiful, 4-lane road and one can really make time on it. I've never seen such beautiful, level farm lands anywhere and every darn patch of ground available is planted. The German farmers sure do cultivate everything well and not a crooked row can be seen anywhere. As far as war is concerned, the country we rode through today is just as peaceful looking as anywhere in the U.S. The trip itself turned out to be about 280 miles long and very damn tiring. The town we were supposed to have gone to was cut off by a Jerry encircling force so we stayed in Arundsee all night. We are also in a pocket encircled by our Jerry friends but no one seems to be too upset about it all! The Company stayed at Buckeburg!

APRIL 20

On the road for 90 miles more (so someone said) and it sure was a rough 200 miles all day. We got up and headed for our designated area, arriving at 1000. The Company Commanders picked out the billet areas and everyone seemed quite pleased. Just then Major Lentz drove in and told us we had better get out of there because our "doughs" hadn't taken this town yet. Yes, we were damn surprised and ready to move in nothing flat. He led us some 40 miles farther back to a town called Kakerbeck. Here we found the entire Bn. awaiting our arrival. "Charlie" found that we had been attached to the 29th Div., 175th Inf. Regt. and that we were to report to them immediately. Where? Why, in the same damn town we had just taken over! He took the Plt. Ldrs. ahead on a recon and left me to lead the Company into position. After passing the 30 mile mark we met him on the way back to give us some more bad news! The whole Division was going to move some 60 miles to break up some pockets of resistance and we had to tag along. About 2000 we arrived at a very large and dense wooded area and stopped. Were we to sleep in this place? They can't do this to us? To hell they can't, bud, you'll sleep here and like it! Yes - everyone was slightly burned but it couldn't be helped. To top the whole mess off, it started to rain and then things did start getting red and a little purple in some cases. After being awakened about a dozen times

concerning guard, bazooka teams and other things I got settled down about 0100!!!

APRIL 21

Up and at it at 0700 and everyone seems to be very disgusted with everything in general. Ritz went on recon at 0800 and he came back after us at 0845. We went through a little town and then all at once old Yeary took off like a big tailed bird. We stopped at our M.P. (No. 13 and 14 jeep) to find that we were alone. Here's the reason for all the trouble! Charlie gave Ritz orders to be ready to fire at 1000, and then showed him the M.P. Well, Ritz got up as far as a guard said he could go then took off. The guard told him that he was going through a Jerry pocket and that the roads were blocked but Ritz had orders to carry out so away we went. We didn't encounter any trouble all the way but Lt. Cartledge caught all the jeeps but ours and made them turn around and go back. He led them in the "safe" way and they were only 3 hours late. Here's the bad and good part about that move. Down at the end of the street that our little "Task Force" came in on sat a "T.D." with orders to fire at any vehicles that came down the road! Why didn't he fire? Well, one of the boys said that we looked and acted too damn much like G.I.'s! We fired about 50 rds. then laid on our tails till 1830 at which time we returned to a town called Klotze for the night. We took a lot of ribbing about the "Task Force" job but everyone took it in fun. Old Ritz was sort of "P.O.'ed" at Chuck but guess it will all blow over. Someday the truth will come out about those orders and someone will sure pull "his" neck in but quick.

APRIL 22

We're still in Klotze and no one seems to be too upset about it. There doesn't seem to be any information concerning our next job but, as usual, there are plenty of juicy rumors. Radio reports say that the Russians are in Berlin so everything looks pretty good. We all paid a visit to the Red Cross here in town, ate our fill of coffee and donuts and talked to some real American girls. One of them is Gary Brown's niece and was living in Utica for quite a few years. My wife used to work for him so I'll have to tell her in my letter tonight.

APRIL 23

Today is one day that any of us will have a hard time forgetting for a darn long time. Arrangements were made so that all who wished could visit Gardelegen to see one of the many German atrocities which have been discovered lately. It was an average size wooden barn filled with the charred, burned bodies of about 1100 German political prisoners. I've never seen such a horrible mess in all my life, believe me! The Military Authorities were making proven Nazis from Gardelegen come out there and dig separate graves for each one of those bodies and give each one a separate burial. This graveyard will be taken care of by the people in

Gardelegen from this date on so that they won't forget about it. If every man who saw this mess would write to his friends I'm sure the people back home would get a much better outlook concerning the type of people we are fighting. About 1900, I took Lt. _____ on a recon party for tomorrow's M.P. We are slated to help clean out another pocket about 10 miles from here. Those damn fools don't know enough to quit!!!!

APRIL 24

Lots of shooting today and very successful, too, from all reports. We fired about 200 rds. into another pocket of Jerries just to get them started on their way to the P.W. cage. The Russians are on a 60 mile front along one branch of the Elde River and our Armies are all along the East side. Old Hitler better start reaching for a white rag pretty damn quick or there won't be one within reach. We returned to Klotze about 1800, had a hot supper and everyone wrote his usual letters.

APRIL 25

Another day, another pocket! Yes, we're on the move to a new home. The boys had everything ready for a real mission but due to some "Snafu" in the higher echelon of the unit we were to support we were ordered not to fire. After sitting around most of the day we moved to our Company billet area in Grussendorf. We were greeted with the news that in 24 hours we would be a guard and security unit up north of here somewhere. Some liked the news while others sort of wondered just what kind of a job we were getting!

APRIL 26

Up quite early and on the old road as a Company convoy headed for the Bn. assembly point at Wustrow. On arrival, the C.O. received his orders and away we went - off by Company again. We arrived at a small country town called Gaddau and tried to get settled down for a short stay. Boy! I sure hope we don't stay around here long - what a lousy hole! The good old 2nd Plt. got the first tour of guard which amounts to a 22 mile vehicular report for a tour of 24 hours. Several of us were asked our views concerning a new cadre to be formed very soon. I didn't say "yes" or "no" as I've found it doesn't pay to stick one's neck out in the Army. "Charlie" finally admitted we had the best platoon in every way, shape, and manner. I have a chance for 1st Sgt. but I sure hate to leave this gang. We'll probably all end up in the "C.B.I." anyway so guess it doesn't make too much difference. Just wait till this war is over and see who gets the gravy end! I'll be damn lucky to hold the job I have the way politicians are working around ye olde 89th Cml. Mortar Bn.

APRIL 27

Several of us were able to take a good hot shower today and it sure felt good. The rest of the day has been spent writing letters, sleeping, over-eating, and generally pushing old shep around. I took a trip around the patrol route to try out a 300 radio for use on the patrol and found it worked very good. The C.O. is going to install a -610 now as it will work much better. I sat up until 0130 making out a Plt. Duty Roster so there wouldn't be quite so much confusion and bitching about guard. Boy! that old sack will sure feel good!

APRIL 28

Another days happenings ready to be jotted down although they are few and far between. Willoughby, Hoselton, and myself took an "egg" tour and also got a big keg of red wine. Jake and Farlee finally got back after being on their 3-day pass for 12 days. Guess they had one hell of a time catching up to us. Old Phillips left for Brussels yesterday so the 4th Squad sure is getting the passes. It's now 1230 or shall I say 0030 and I think the old bed has the old choke hold on me so guess I'll go hit it. Yes - nice clean white sheets, too! Some class, eh?

APRIL 29

Well, the biggest surprise is S/Sgt. Gillespie getting the acceptance on a commission today. It was sort of a surprise to some of us who might have expected the same. It sort of dug into me a bit for several reasons not needed to be explained. Old Carson is on pass and maybe it's a damn good thing as it wouldn't pay to have him and I together when such an astounding announcement is made. He and I have the best platoons and officers but Gillespie has the best nose and rotten politicians. I sometimes wonder just what in hell this damn Army is coming to when such things are done. I think if I ever had a recommendation put in for a commission I'd be proud enough to let my own friends and platoon know it at least. Oh! well, when one isn't too sure of his ability and must use politics to get ahead. The word has been sent down that we are going to move up across the Elbe tomorrow which means back into the line again. Boy! for a small outfit we sure do get around a whole lot. My jeep is well over the 2500 mark.

APRIL 30

"Hit the road, you bums"!!!! Yes, it's me again after a rather long day of riding around and a bit tired to boot. We were supposed to have joined the 8th Div., 121st Inf. Regt. but found that their forward elements had moved. About 2000 we got orders to move up which was a total of some 60 miles. We drove blackout for the last 20 miles, likewise across the Elbe River. Boy! all of us damn near froze due to moving to the North all day. Pulled into position at 0230 - a nice, big _____ field!

MAY 1ST

After about two hours of trying to sleep we all arose and moved to our M.P. along a dike. Boy! we've all been freezing most of the day! The doughboys met very little resistance so we moved once again. This time we were lucky enough to get a housed area. No firing was done so almost everyone stretched out on the floor for a few winks. Yes we moved again in readiness for a big push to the Baltic Sea. We had a big, damp, crusty cellar to sleep in but it's still better than the wide open spaces!

MAY 2

I think I'll remember this as one of the biggest days in my life. Today we saw the end come to Hitlers great supermen plus one of the most up-to-date cities we've seen as yet. We left the assembly point with the 121st Inf. at 0845, our jeeps all carrying three or four doughboys each. The column we were in contained some 55 tanks plus attached units. It was about 7 to 8 miles in length. There was a similar column on each of our flanks. There were P.W.'s coming in by the hundreds (I counted about 900 of them in an hour) and sure could have raised a lot of hell for someone if they hadn't given up. We hit the city of Schwerin about 1300 and they started coming in by the thousands in every way, shape, and manner. After sitting there for some two hours we got under motion once again. Shortly afterward a Stuka Dive-bomber came in over the column and was shot down almost as fast as his surprising arrival. We arrived at Rugensee about 1800 where we stopped for the night. Our original objective was Weismar but the Russians had already reached there when we pulled into Schwerin. These Jerries are so damn scared of the Russians that they don't know what the hell to do. I guess they have damn good reason to be this way after the destruction they left in Russia. We can never be thankful enough that this war has never reached our homes and families as it has all over Europe. Guess I'll write my daily letter to my dear little wife and call it a day. I have a very nice bed just waiting for someone to use it!!

MAY 3

Didn't do too much during the day except watch the endless columns of P.W.'s heading for the Schwerin enclosures. We got a move order at 2200 and everyone was pretty well disgusted about it. We had to guard a P.W. camp which isn't too bad a job but the damn cold and sleeping outside is what spoiled the job. I set up the guard posts, got the reliefs straightened out then decided to try and get a little shuteye. I enclosed the jeeps with shelter - halves and still it was damn chilly!

MAY 4

Well, here we are, right back in the home we left two nights ago. The C.O. decided to let one platoon take it for a 24 hour shift and then return to their billet areas in Rugensee which suited us all just fine.

Radio reports say that Denmark, Holland, and all of Northwestern Germany will surrender unconditionally to Montgomery tomorrow at 0800. Slowly but surely the entire Nazi war machine is folding up and every man, woman, and child in the Allied World will thank God when this war is completely over.

MAY 5

Yes, we've been sitting on our dead cans all day and it doesn't seem to be bothering anyone too much so far. I received the job as Liaison Officer for the Company down at 121st Regt. so I'm in on the inside track of all rumors now. Browning is down here with me and he's pretty happy about the job. We are in a medium sized apartment very well furnished, overlooking Lake Schwerin. It's a real nice set-up all the way around. Guess I'll drop my little wife a few lines then hit the sack!

MAY 6

Everyone is really enjoying life around here and getting plenty of rest, too. The war news is excellent and the announcement of the complete capitulation of Hitlers Supermen should come most any day now. I've written several letters today and got plenty of sleep to boot so I can't kick too much. I've been sitting here for the past hour watching several G.I.'s flying around Lake Schwerin in motor boats. It's just like something one would see at home on some of our big lakes.

MAY 7

Can't say as I've been overworking again today but neither can anyone else around here. The news the whole world has been awaiting finally arrived this afternoon. The war in the E.T.O. will be officially over at 0001, 9 May. This has not been announced to the press or the public although the radio admits expectations of it. There are lots of celebrations going on back in the U.S. already I suppose. Thank God this part of it is over and let's all pray that Japan will wise up and quit soon. Maybe then we can all settle down.

MAY 8

It's been another grand day here in Schwerin, one that makes a guy wish he were home with his loved ones. The company moved today to take over a job in guarding and moving P.W.'s. The 3 Great Powers announced the end of the war this afternoon at 1500 so there is some real celebrations going on all over today. I helped some of the boys drink a quart of red wine which was pretty good. The big questions now are - where do we go from here - how soon - and the biggest question - which way are we going?

MAY 9

Not much going on today - not even any good rumors to sort of give the boys something to talk about in their spare moments. The company is still herding P.W.'s around from one place to another. I am still sitting around 121 Inf. Regiment relaying all the late rumors and other "poop" to Charla Company. I have written my usual allotment of letters, had a few drinks of wine, so guess I'll hit "ye olde" sack for the night. What a life, eh?

MAY 10

Another nice day in old Germany and still not much to do - no, I'm not kicking a bit! There was a rough old thunder and lightning storm about 2300 which hit a Jerry ammo dump nearby. It caused quite a bit of excitement especially among the Germans. They thought the Russians were coming after them just as sure as hell. Guess we are going to move sometime tomorrow to some town about 200 miles South of here.

MAY 11

This has been a pretty long day although a real nice one. We arrived here in the little town of Bortfeld about 1900 all ready for a little cleaning up as the roads were pretty dusty. We passed through much of the territory we inhabited some time ago - Velzen, Salzwedel, Bergen and Gardelegen. After sitting around and talking over the days happening we all headed for bed which really felt darn good for a change.

MAY 12

Everything is quiet and peaceful here and everyone is enjoying the little vacation. Care and cleaning of equipment has been the big item as far as the Army is concerned. No big picture as to our future as yet - here's hoping the near future gives us a good look at the U.S. We got a small platoon ration of wine, cognac, and champagne this afternoon but it disappeared very quickly. A real "Tom Collins" would sure hit the spot right about now! Quit dreaming, Towns!

MAY 13

Still sitting around trying to amuse ourselves as much as possible. Everyone seems to be catching up on his letter writing and also sleep. Crow found a place to buy some beer so each squad has had a few beers to add to it's diet.

MAY 14

Nothing new today - not even this barnyard smell so prevalent around here. The latest rumor is that we'll be in the good old U.S. for the 4th of July. Boy what a real thrill that would be.

MAY 15

Yes, another day has gone into the past and still not much to do. All our vehicles are to be painted sometime soon so all the drivers are pretty busy cleaning the rust and crap off them. Nothing important has occurred so guess I'll close.

MAY 16

Another day, another dollar! It's quite cool here today but the sun is shining so it's not so bad. The rumor about home keeps getting hotter every day so maybe there's something to it - we all hope and pray!

MAY 17

Back in the Army again today! Why we even had that strange thing called reveille today. The rest of the day has been spent pushing old shep around. I wrote my usual letters about an hour ago so guess I'll hit the pad.

MAY 18

Another very dull day although no one is kicking too much about it. Some more of the boys leave on pass tomorrow so I have to pinch hit for Lucian B. tomorrow. What a life! -- without a wife!

MAY 19

Charlie 4! Charlie 4! Charlie 4! I swear I'll be saying that damn phrase in my sleep tonight! Have had a regular training schedule today - at least on paper. Bynon brought in some brandy and cognac today so I indulged in a little tonight.

MAY 20 - 27

Nothing new took place in these few days except an occasional rumor, painting of vehicles so why waste paper, ink, and --- energy!!

MAY 28

We are now in a very secluded spot with no one to bother us but the Bn. Staff and plenty of visiting firemen. Where is it? In a woods near the town of Nidda - some 18 miles from Friedsberg. Morale hit it's lowest when we got here but Lt. Cartledge told us that we are definitely going home so it quickly went to the highest it's ever been. Jake is on pass to Brussels and Ritz is down to the Riveria so I'm pinch hitting once again.

MAY 29

Most of the day has been spent building sleeping quarters log cabin style and generally getting our area straightened up so it's liveable. Naturally, there is plenty of talk about that future trip home, too. It's almost unbelievable but it sure is the best news we've had in many months. It sure will be grand to spend a good long furlough with our loved ones and it will do us all a lot of good. Let's hope that nothing happens to spoil all the thoughts of home!

MAY 30

Another day spent in preparation for coming inspections. The boys are really doing a grand job getting the area cleaned up throughout the whole company.

MAY 31

Still busy getting things lined up although there have been swimming, shower, and movie quotas throughout the day to sort of break the monotony of it all. Jake came back today all worn out from his 3-day pass and Crow in the same shape.

JUNE 1

Nothing new to talk about except the mail shortage in the past couple of weeks. Everyone is pushing old shep to the limit although we do have a training schedule to follow.

JUNE 2

Big inspection coming up the 6th so all of us have been shining things up today. These big wigs sure do cause a lot of unnecessary work for us all. Oh! well, I'll do most anything to get back home for a while.

JUNE 3

Another nice Sunday even if we are out in the woods. Church services were available to all today but the usual run of G.I. Church Services aren't too good so very few attended. Most of us sat around and talked about our trip home, wrote letters, and even drank a few beers. I sure hope we start getting a little mail pretty darn soon. I have had three letters in about three weeks.

JUNE 4

"No news is good news", so they say, so I won't bother carrying this days happenings another word farther.

JUNE 5

Boy! did I ever get the good news today! Capt. Charlie called me over to the C.P. about noon and told me I was on the advance party to the States and to be ready to leave at any time. I guess the home rumor is really true and right now I'm the happiest guy around here, believe me! We're all set for the big inspection tomorrow - even I've gone so far as to shine my boots!

JUNE 6

Well, the brass came bright and early, got their good look of the 89th along with our Bn. Staff. Colonel Yanka (our Bn. C.O.) was so well pleased that he wrote up a big, juicy "Commendation" with hearts and flowers spread all over it. The boys did a grand job so we have tomorrow off - chow at 9-1-5! Some life, eh!

JUNE 7

What have we done today? Well, it has been a holiday so I'll let you guess. Several of the boys were able to go for mineral baths, some went for a swim, and others played ball. It was just a real lazy day if I ever saw one. The boys have been reading this little book today and they all seem to think it's something worth having. Guess I'll have a cup of coffee and hit the pad for a good nights sleep in the backwoods of Germany.

JUNE 8

Well, can't say as it's been such a nice day as it has rained most all of it. I went into Badnuheim and took a good bath in an honest to

goodness bath tub tonight. Boy! it sure was a big treat and sure makes a guy feel darn good!

JUNE 9

It's been a fairly nice day here today although quite cool right at present. Nothing too much to relate as most of us have set on our tails all day writing, sleeping, and generally pushing old shep around.

JUNE 10

Well, old shep got another good whack again today and a fairly nice day to do such work in too. I went into the city of Badnuheim for a very nice mineral bath this morning and got my tail wet in the return trip. The Red Cross really have a nice set-up there - one of the nicest I've ever seen anywhere. Ritz got back from the Riviera this morning full of "hairy" tales about the luscious French women. I am very capable of awaiting a certain little woman in upstate N.Y.

JUNE 11

I don't feel too much like putting an entry in my little book tonight. Jake got orders to move to an F. A. Bn. tonight and no trip to the States either. Boy! some of these two-faced bastards around here ought to feel damn proud of themselves after a trick like that. The advance party leaves sometime tomorrow so guess we are finally getting on our way to the good old U.S. via the "Lucky Strike" staging area. Ritz and I drank a quart of Cognac so guess I'll hit the pad now.

JUNE 12

Left Camp Cartwheel at 0845 and hit the road leading to Rouen, France or places nearby. I drove "C2" with Charla 5, Sgt. Cawthon and Ritchie as occupants. It has rained almost all day but right at present it is fairly nice. We arrived in Luxembourg City about 1800 and slept in a Transient Lodge. Sam Cawthon and I went out to see the town and found it very dull. We did get a slight buzz on but not anything serioU.

JUNE 13

On the road at 0815 to continue our little journey. It has rained on and off all day and has also been pretty darn chilly. We arrived in St. Quentin about 1500 and continued on to Amiens, arriving there at 1800 to find it "off limits" to Ground Forces as far as billeting is concerned. Who did it? The Air Corps, believe it or not? We are now in

Camp Lucky Strike ready for a few hours good sleep after riding about 325 miles today.

JUNE 14

Well, we the Advanced Party, have been pretty darn busy today in getting our Processing done. Things are really full of a darn lot of red tape in this so-called staging area - much more so than dear old Camp Miles Standish. We expect the main body to be in here sometime tomorrow. Wood, Cawthon, and myself went into Cany and bartered for a couple of quarts of Cognac tonight which is "kaput" now!

JUNE 15

Everything is pretty well settled as far as the A.P.'s Processing now. The Battalion got here about 1300 so the boys are all pretty darn busy getting their stuff handed in and packed up. Don't know as yet when any of us are leaving but guess anytime will suit most of us. Sat around tonight and shot the breeze as only a G.I. can shoot it. Everyone is making plans for that big furlough and I hope and pray to God it all comes true.

JUNE 16

Well, we are still sweating it out and wondering when that trip will come our way. I was able to see some of the old gang tonight from our days together in Sibert. Old Vin Sauer (86th) is the same guy as ever and has a score of 85. I sincerely hope he gets out of this mess as he sure has seen plenty. I also saw Cooney, Keith, Capt. Hochstetler, and some more of the old gang in the 97th. Boy! what a reunion for C.W.S.

JUNE 17

Off hand, I'd say the idea of an A.P. doesn't look too good. There is a chance that we may leave tomorrow - we hope. I was over to see Sauer again tonight along with Laney. Before going over I ran into Hogan (93rd) who was a Plt. Sgt. in old "Co. D." We saw Vibbert, Bagwell, Kates, and Joseph out of the 94th, too, so most of us are seeing lots of those old familiar faces. It sure seems darn swell, too, although a few are missing. C'est la guerre!

JUNE 18

Well, it is now 2200 and it's still bright as a dollar outside. Yes, the A.P. is still awaiting that trip and we are all getting ready to take off in a rowboat most anytime. I got a good sunburn this afternoon which gives me something to think about anyway. Maybe we'll all get on the way in a couple of days and that will suit me fine. Honey - I'm on the way - Be careful!

JUNE 19

Nothing new to relate - not even a decent rumor. It has been a real hot day here and all of the boys have been getting their daily dose of sunshine. Sure hope we get out of this place soon.

JUNE 20

Another hot old day and pretty dusty, too. Spent part of the day playing poker with poor results. Have to take a trip to Le Havre in the morning so guess I'd better hit the pad a bit earlier tonight.

JUNE 21

Up at 0530 today and on the road to Le Havre at 0630. Saw the boat the A.P. is leaving on and can say it's not a bad looking tub at that. Got back to Cp. Lucky Strike at 1300 to find a nice stack of mail waiting for me. Guess I'll sack up early tonight as two nights of playing cards and two early morning rising is "nix goot for soldaten".

JUNE 22

Nothing new to relate but have expectations of leaving here sometime tomorrow for home!!

JUNE 23

I am now on board the General O. H. Ernst, heading for the good old U.S. We left Lucky Strike at 1700 in a big trailer and arrived at Le Havre and the dock at 1930. We finally got aboard about 2000 and found our quarters and believe me, we all got a surprise. The bunks are only 3 high and have springs and mattresses with pillows on them. What a luxury! In the same compartment is a very well equipped wash and shower room with plenty of hot and cold water. Guess I'll take a shower and hit the bed!

JUNE 24

We're on our way with 3418 miles ahead of us. We laid in the harbor all day and finally pulled out on the hour of 1915. None of us can yet realize that we are on the way home. So far the meals have really been swell and here's hoping they stay this way. Rumor has it that we will dock sometime next Sunday at Norfolk, Va. I was in hopes that it would be New York but anywhere in the U.S. will suit me fine!

JUNE 25

Now we have about 3400 miles to go! It has been pretty chilly although the sun has shone part of the day. I got up this a.m. feeling the effects of our first night at sea, but it has worn off quite nicely due to plenty of fresh air and good food. Not much to relate except that everyone is anxious to get this trip over.

JUNE 26

It has been pretty cold and foggy most all day so I've spent a good share of the day reading on my back. The boat (ship) stopped today to pick up a seriously ill sailor off a Swedish liner this a.m. The old sea is pretty rough tonight and the old General is sure doing his share of the bitching right now.

JUNE 27

Another foggy old day is on it's way out and we are at the half way mark on our trip. It has been fairly warm today but foggy as hell most of the time. Guess I'll read for awhile and hit the mattress for another day.

JUNE 28

No unusual happenings again today. It has been quite warm all day and our quarters are very uncomfortable due to the heat. Saw an Amateur Show tonight which helped to pass quite a bit of time.

JUNE 29

Another warm old day and still warmer in our compartments. Had my pocketbook stolen last night which contained a total of \$93.00 plus pictures and other odds and ends. Boy! some guys sure are darn low to pull a trick like that. I sure hope my wife has cashed in some bonds.

JUNE 30

Well, we're getting closer to the good old U.S. every hour. This boat really does travel along at a pretty good clip. Saw several flying fish and some porpoises and later this afternoon we saw a whale. We are supposed to dock at Norfolk sometime Monday so times getting short.

JULY 1

Boy! it sure is hot and everyone is doing his share of the sweating. Had to type some forms for Lt. Cartledge this p.m. because we left some of our records at Cp. Lucky Strike.

JULY 2

Well, at last we are in the good old U.S.A. We saw the first sight of land about 0650. We circled in around Cape Charles, Va., and into Chesapeake Bay - docking at Newport News at 1130. Our A.D. debarked at 1430 and boarded a train to go to Fort Patrick Henry. Arrived at this station about 1600. We were given a short welcome and then marched to the Mess Hall. Boy! what a meal! Steak, mashed potatoes, peas, beans, rolls, butter, lettuce, cake or pie, and fresh milk. We drew a suit of khakis and are all set to go to our Sep. Ctrs. - then home!

JULY 3

Another warm day gone by and I'm on my way on the train to Ft. Dix. Left Cp. Patrick Henry at 1745 with about 1800 other guys. Sent a telegram to my wife about 1445 so she at least knows I am in the U.S. anyway. After a 30 day furlough I have to report to Ft. Jackson, South Carolina. I sure hate to go down South again but the Army is still leading me around as well as millions of other guys. I'm sure going to try my level best to forget all about it all for the next 30 days, though!

JULY 4

Arrived at Ft. Dix about 1030 after a long, drawn out trip. Things are slightly screwed up here but guess that's natural. Have been running around all day being Processed and am now sweating out my pay and furlough. I'd like it tonight but don't expect it until tomorrow sometime. Guess I'll clean up a bit and then get a decent nights sleep.

JULY 5

Well, today is the day that I've been awaiting for a darn long time.

I laid around Dix until 1645 at which time I received my furlough. I sweated out a 2 hour bus line but managed to get the 1930 train out of Trenton - bringing me in Penn Station at 2040. I took a cab to Grand Central, got rid of my bag and called the folks. I am now sitting on the N.Y.C. awaiting the final lap of my trip home! Here are the steps it took to get thus far. --

Friedburg, Ger. - Cp. Luck Strike
Cp. Lucky Strike - Le Havre
Le Havre - Newport News, Va.
Newport News, Va. - Cp. Patrick Henry
Cp. Patrick Henry - Ft. Dix
Ft. Dix - New York City
New York City - HOME

Thus I am ending up my travels as far as the E.T.O. is concerned. I am going to spend the next 31 days and try all the time to forget anything about the Army.

Next stop - Ft. Jackson, South Carolina - then ----!

T H E E N D

P.S.: Thank God I am here to finish this little memo.