

UNDO

BAKER

COMPANY B
537th ANTI-AIRCRAFT ARTILLERY
AUTOMATIC WEAPONS
BATTALION

NARRATIVE OF THE COMBAT EXPERIENCES
OF BATTERY "B" 537th AAA AW BATTALION
DURING CONTINENTAL OPERATIONS

We first saw the coast of France on 14 June 1944. We debarked from our LST at 2145 and moved directly to our assembly area where de-waterproofing was immediately accomplished. We all noted with satisfaction the large numbers of prisoners penned up in corrals on the beaches. It was during the first night on shore that we experienced our first air raid – we did not go into action.

During the night and early morning, the unit which we were to tentatively support was contacted. It was the 344th FA Battalion of the 90th Infantry Division Artillery. We went into position offering them AA protection at 1600 on the 15th of June 1944.

The next few days marked bitter fighting between the well dug in Germans and our fighting doughboys. Ever present during the 24 hours was the sound of artillery and small arms – we all learned to recognize the sound of the German machine pistol whose high rate of fire earned it the nickname of "Burp Gun". During these days Jerry visited us in the skies – but only at night. We soon learned the folly of firing at him, as he sent decoys down to draw fire, while his bombers stayed up high to pin point the targets disclosed by our ring of flak.

Our path led us during our first weeks from Ste. Mère Eglise to the bloody fighting grounds around Amfreville and Gourbesville. At this point we changed direction and took up holding positions south of Cretteville while our Corps took Cherbourg.

On the 3rd of July we moved, marking the end of our static position south of Cretteville.

On 5 July 1944 we received orders to give AA protection to the 8th Infantry Division which was located north of La Haye du Puits.

On 11 July 1944 we suffered our first casualty. Pvt. Files was injured by shrapnel and evacuated. We have since heard from him and he is reported to be doing well.

During all this time the battery saw action several times. It was mostly at night and we made no claims. The Luftwaffe was very conspicuous by its absence, and we had not yet had a respectable target, although "Bed Check Charlie" – was over almost every night.

On 12 July 1944 we were reverted to the 90th Infantry Division and immediately joined our FA Battalion. At this time the 90th Division infantry was fighting the battle of the Forêt de Mont Castre – in which they were to be mentioned in many dispatches. One could easily notice the hard fighting that had taken place.

On 14 July 1944 we moved to Gorges, a small village 2 miles north of Periers, and had our first chance to rest up for weeks. The division set up showers near us and all the men were very pleased to be able to clean up after a month of "helmet bathing".

We sustained several artillery barrages during the coming weeks. Every section had its close calls. One night a shell landed about 20 feet from the C. P. tent but no damage was done to the personnel. B-10 had one casualty, Pvt. Culp, who was hit in the finger by shrapnel and evacuated.

On 17 July 1944 we received our first reinforcements, five men. Enemy air activity was increasing and we were seeing more action. These planes were mostly on reconnaissance flights though, so it was rare when they came in range.

On 19 July 1944 our sector was attacked by four aircraft, and we went into action. We shot one ME 109 down and damaged another. It was our first kill and we credited Section 5 with it.

We moved from Gorges finally on 28 July 1944, after witnessing the mighty aerial bombardment preceding the opening of the St. Lô offensive.

We moved south of Periers when the Germans withdrew because of the pressure on their right. During the next few days, many German reconnaissance missions were flown and we went into action against them, driving them off in a number of cases.

During the night of 1 August 1944 we made a long motor march to St. Hilaire du Harcouët (a town south of Avranches on the Selune river), and during the several days we were there, many German planes flew over. On the third of August a formation of sixteen planes and one of thirty-eight planes was fired at by our guns and we succeeded in scoring hits and several "probables" on them. We succeeded in breaking up their formation.

On 4 August 1944 we captured our first prisoner; three Germans who had been by-passed by our hard hitting armor were brought in by men from B-2.

On 5 August we were bombed by the Germans – there were no casualties to personnel or equipment. We rejoined the 344 FA Battalion and moved several times, during the day – finally setting up at St. Denis during our move south. We crossed the Mayenne River, between Mayenne and Laval, and continued driving southeast.

During the move on the 7th August after we had passed through Montsurs, our area was attacked by several FW 109's – one plane sustained several hits and large pieces were knocked from it. During these days we were moving constantly and morale was excellent. We all knew that Jerry was on the run. The whereabouts of our spearheads were obscure though, and news was scarce.

We continued in our thrust to the southeast – passing through St. Susanne, through the Forêt de Ste. Suzanne to La Quinte and proceeded to a position north of Le Mans in a grueling night march.

The next day saw us enter Le Mans and set up north of the city. The reception our outfit received while moving through was tremendous, and fruit and flowers, were showered on our vehicles. Our reconnaissance party captured five prisoners before the battery came into position.

On the 11th of August we started a drive north. We moved three times during the day toward Alençon.

We passed through Alençon and set up in a holding position on the 13th of August 1944 at Condé sur Sarthe. Our division was moved north to Nonant Le Pin and elements contacted the enemy. This was the start of the battle in the Falaise Pocket and was to become a nightmare for the Germans. Our artillery unleashed an unmerciful barrage.

On 21 August 1944 at 0630 an HE 111 flew over our positions and was brought under fire by our guns. He was immediately hit, set afire and crashed near us. Three of the crew were killed and two wounded very badly. The sections participating in the kill were B6, B1 and B12.

On 22 August 1944 the battle for the Falaise Gap had virtually ended, with complete destruction of German elements in the pocket. The division was then ordered into assembly areas for a well needed and well-earned rest. We had a chance for some maintenance of equipment and were fortunate to have a Red Cross Clubmobile visit us, as well as movies and a USO show arranged by special service.

On 23 August 1944 Pfc. Keller and Pvt. Lopez rejoined the organization. They had been left behind in England due to illness and we warmly greeted them.

On 26 August 1944 at 0800 we left in a motor convoy and traveled east a distance of 160 miles to the area of Fontainebleau; we set up at Samois sur Seine that night. On August 27th we crossed the Seine River and traveled forty miles to Chenoise where we set up defense, the next day we took off again and stopped short of the Marne River, in the vicinity of Condé en Brie.

We crossed the Marne on 28 August 1944 and proceeded north to Jonchery sur Vesle. We suffered our first extensive loss at this point.

Section 1, when entering a field, struck a teller-mine and lost their truck Sgt. Hale, Pfc. Haney, Pvt. Tyler and Pfc. Kerns were injured. The first three were evacuated, but we were assured they would be all right,

We then moved from Jonchery to a point near St Etienne, north of Reims, where we set up in defensive positions supporting the field Artillery. The next day we moved a short distance to a point near Warmerville. Northeast of Reims, where we again set up in a defensive position preparing to move upon order.

We remained at Vandetre near Warmerville for six days. We had many loose ends to pick up. All equipment was checked and cleaned. Everyone had a chance to bath in the Suippe River which ran through our positions. Clothes were washed, payday was welcomed and the men all had a chance to see a few motion pictures held by special service. We organized trips into Reims, to visit the world famous Cathedral. Many souvenirs were purchased and everyone appreciated the chance to visit this beautiful city.

Two German prisoners were flushed out of a nearby wood, by Section 2 and were promptly evacuated. We were hearing all sorts of rumors, of Gen. Patton's, hard driving elements, before us and nobody seemed to know where they were. One thing was certain though, everyone was anxious to start moving again. We weren't disappointed long either, for on Sept. 6th, we did move east – 92 miles, passing through the famous scenes of previous wars.

We passed through the Argonne Forest and crossed the famous, Meuse River at Verdun, historic city of America campaigns of 1917-1918. We finally arrived at the vicinity of Eton a small town east and north of Etain. We were greeted by rain, which was a promise of wetter things to come.

Our infantry hopped off on the 7th of September, and we followed. They encountered resistance, and this coupled with the lack of good roads to our north, made it necessary to flank the enemy. In a day marked by numerous moves we finally settled down in Tucquiegnieux at 2150. We had excellent positions here – some observers at the gun pits could see for miles in each direction.

On the 8th of September, a German column which was trying to cut back to its own lines proceeded down our route of supply and was finally met and destroyed in Mairy, a scant 500 yards from our northernmost gun positions. It was quite a show, and not one German escaped death or capture. B-4, which was situated on a hill engaged some enemy infantry sighted in clumps of bushes some 1500 yds. away. Actual results are unknown, but 2 prisoners captured the next day stated that four wounded were taken out of the area during the night.

We left those positions on September 9th, and proceeded a short distance to Trieux, where we again set up. This town was the scene of heavy artillery barrages by our outfit, and they

exacted a heavy toll of the enemy. We captured another prisoner here. We moved the following day to a position just south of Fontoy. Our artillery unit was still shelling the Germans.

The next day we moved through Fontoy, which drew close attention, as we noticed that signs over stores and names of streets were beginning to show a prevalence of German. The people all spoke it, and we all realized that we were drawing closer to Germany. We set up on a plateau overlooking Fontoy, later in the day. The next day we moved to the vicinity of Volkrange, the scene of a battle the night before.

On Sept. 13th we moved to the vicinity of Veymerange, a town just short of Thionville which is on the Moselle River. Our infantry occupied the town and we were set up in holding positions pending orders from higher headquarters. We were subjected to enemy shelling – especially B2 and B3. We turned in many shel-reps, (shelling reports) and the FA fired quite a bit of counter-battery fire. We grew to realize why they call it “Sunny France” in these positions. It rained intermittently for over a week and most of our positions became quagmires. We stayed in the area for two weeks, and even though the weather was exceedingly poor for it, we did quite a bit of maintenance work.

Section 2's truck was hit by shrapnel for the second time within a week, but was not put out of action. We had two men transferred. Pfc. McKersie and Pvt. Laviolette to “D” Battery, and we acquired four men, Pvts. Pettite, Collins, Conley, and Colburn. Lt. Snow received his promotion to 1st Lt. on 22 Sept. and Pfc. Kerns received the Purple Heart Medal for wounds received in the explosion of B-1's truck on August 28th. We were fortunate enough to have motion pictures in the vicinity and we all had the opportunity to see them.

On the 27th Sept. we moved from Veymerange, and it was welcomed by all. We arrived at Vionville where we set up. Our position was about seven miles west of Metz, the German fortress our division was preparing to take.

We were told that we might remain in these positions for several weeks, so we went to work to make them as safe and comfortable as possible. The weather was turning colder and we received an issue of extra blankets and overcoats.

On 4th Oct. 1944 the Battery C. P. was shelled with no resulting casualties or damages to material. During our stay in the vicinity of Vionville we displaced once, moving 1500 yards nearer the target area. On Oct. 12th we went into action to drive off an ME 109, the first Jerry we had seen in several weeks. On Oct. 22nd the battery saw their first robot bomb (V-1) at close range. It flew over our positions and fell in the area to the south of us. On Oct. 30th a Jerry flew over our positions at dawn and hits were claimed by several sections.

During our stay at Vionville we were harried by cold and rain. There were but a few good days in our entire stay in that area.

On November 2nd we moved North and to the rear to Boudrezy for a training program. The 1st Platoon remained operational and set up a defense area around division installations, while the 2nd Platoon assembled at the training area.

We went through two days of a proposed training schedule, but the program was interrupted on Nov. 5th when we accompanied elements of the 90th Division in a blackout move to a position west of the Moselle River near Boler, where the division was assembling in preparation for an attack to establish a bridgehead on the east bank of the Moselle. The move was very difficult and several of our trucks went off the road. One truck and gun tipped over, but no one was seriously hurt. We bivouacked for the next day and moved into positions the

following night under orders NOT TO DISCLOSE OUR POSITION BY OPENING FIRE. We remained in these positions for over a week, while the assault was made and the bridgehead established. On November 14th we crossed the Moselle over the pontoon bridge constructed at Cattenom and went into position near Koenigsmacher. We moved the following day to a position slightly southeast near Basse-Ham, the move was made at night and great care was taken as there were several mine fields in the area. Lt. Snow was injured on Nov. 16th when he stepped on a Schu mine. His condition was serious and he was evacuated. It made us more mine conscious than ever and we all felt very badly about his wounds and subsequent evacuation.

We moved on Nov. 17th to Distroff, which the day previous had been the scene of a violent German counter attack. We saw visible signs of its ferocity, and how very definitely it was repulsed. We were moving often at this time, reminiscent of the drive through France, and morale was high. The division was flanking Metz to the north, and the Germans were said to be evacuating the fortress city.

We moved three times the following day (Nov. 18th), through Metzervisse, Metzeresch, Maucy and a night move to the vicinity of St. Hubert. During the day 2 P-51's strafed friendly troops and we went into action as they were identified to have enemy markings. One was seen to crash to the west of us.

We moved again the following day through Vry and Charleville, and set up a defense for the final phase of the operation. Late that day we received word of a move back to Distroff which was accomplished, and we waited to move to a new area upon order. The men got a few days of rest at this point, and we gassed the trucks and checked our equipment. On Nov. 21 we moved north to Montenach where we set up a defense of the town, awaiting still further notice of a move.

November 22nd was a memorable day. The Battery entered Germany proper at 0958 and set up in the vicinity of Perl. A reconnaissance party had entered at 1700 on Nov. 21st and this was the first element of the 537th AAA (AW) Battalion to set up on German soil.

November 23rd was Thanksgiving and we were issued turkey. It was our 3rd Thanksgiving dinner in the Army. The weather continued to be very damp and the ground was soft, giving us quite a bit of trouble.

On 25th Nov. we displaced about 3000 yards to a position south of the town of Borg. The weather continued to be inclement and we left the Motor Pool and Supply sections at Perl. We were subject to counter battery fire and remained in these positions for 2 days.

We moved on Nov. 27th in a long move across the German border, to the town of Feurange, a French town, about ten miles SE of our previous position. This was a move which changed the employment of the Combat Team to which we were attached. We stayed in these positions about 5 days and had a chance to clean our equipment and check the Battery for trench foot of which we had no cases.

On Dec. 1st we moved to the vicinity of Fürweiler. This town is just inside Germany – in fact some of the gun sections were only a scant 100 yards from France. The weather was turning cold, and we had some difficulty with our trucks. On Dec. 2nd two men, Pfc. Pellegrin and Pvt. Haney who had been evacuated months previous, were returned to duty. Also on that day we observed large scale air attacks by B-26 American bombers. One was hit by German AA fire, and crashed in our area. All of the crew were seen to parachute to safety.

We moved under blackout on Dec. 4th to Guisingen to positions to support the Division's Saar River crossing. We received some of the heaviest concentrations of counter battery fire ever experienced by us in this position. We had no casualties, but adjoining units had several. The 1st platoon had several shells hit within a few feet of their gun emplacements

We had our first snowfall on Dec. 8th, a light flurry in the early evening. The weather was constantly cold and we had another snowfall on Dec. 10th. On Dec. 12th we moved two half-tracks, B-11 and B-12 to the ferrying site to provide AA protection. The shelling at that point was heavy and both sections dug in. We furnished a carrying detail of 1 officer and 10 men to the 357th Infantry to carry food and ammunition to troops across the Saar. We furnished details for the same mission for the next three nights of 5 men and 1 officer, 10 men, and 5 men each. It was rough going – the men were subjected to small arms, machine gun and mortar fire as well as artillery fire, and were often up to their waist in the icy waters of the Saar. We were commended by the Division for this assistance. We carried quite a bit of maintenance on in this area – checking and servicing all the 1st platoon guns.

On Dec. 17th we heard the news of the German counteroffensive in the 1st Army sector. We received very little information on it. The weather was cloudy and cold, but we noticed the increase of air activity by both sides in spite of it. We engaged several FW 190's which were on reconnaissance missions, but scored no hits, as they were very high. On Dec. 20th nine of our men were transferred to the 90th Infantry Division, to be trained and then join an infantry unit. They were Pfc. Squibb, and Pvts. Duchene, Bala, Nunez, Pagano, Colburn, Todd, Thomas and Musselman.

We moved Dec. 22nd during a mild snowstorm to set up defense around artillery units of the division which were withdrawn from Dillingen to set up a defensive line further north. The 1st platoon set up around the 241st FA Bn, in the vicinity of Biringen, Germany, and the 2nd Platoon and Battery Headquarters stayed with the 344th FA Battalion, once again in France, vicinity of Flatten. Christmas was spent in this position. We had a traditional dinner of turkey. It was interrupted by aircraft – 2 P-47's which bombed and strafed near us. We gave signals, but they persisted in attacking and we opened fire, driving them off. It was not known if the pilots were friendly or enemy. We made plans in this position to occupy alternates, and prepared them. This was built from a delaying plan of the division.

On Dec. 27th 2 P-51's, who pressed an attack after being challenged by flares, were engaged by section B-5. One was seen to crash to the west about 8 miles. Only 4 rounds were used to obtain a hit. Towards the last of the month we had more snow, and continued cold, the ground being frozen. The situation up north looked much better, and as the year ended our morale was excellent.

We saw the New Year in at our positions in Biringen, Germany, and Flatten, France. On the first day of the year, heavy air activity was reported on the entire Western Front. We saw several high flights of ME 410's and engaged some without obtaining any hits. Around the 1st Platoon area – action was heavy as ME 109's pressed repeated attacks, Section 4 hit one plane on the tail and claimed a Category I as they observed the plane to crash far to the Northeast. Sections 2 and 3 claimed several Cat. II's. On the following day the 1st platoon went into action against a FW 190 flying a high reconnaissance mission. Later in the day, the 2d platoon opened up on two P-51's and one P-47 who were committing hostile acts in our area. No claims were made. We were experiencing many attacks by friendly type planes, and it was known in some

cases that the pilots were German. On 4 January (1945) Colonel Recer, our battalion commander, came to the C. P. to award the bronze star to three officers and eight enlisted men for meritorious service against the enemy in the period 14 June-14 December (1944). The weather during this period had been cold but generally clear. There was a blanket of snow on the ground, but it wasn't enough to impede us.

On January 7, we moved in a long convoy in a Combat Team of elements of the 90th division – to a position southeast of Bastogne, important road center held by the American forces during the Ardennes break through. The move started at 0615 and the firing units were displaced throughout the columns to afford AA protection to all the Combat Team elements. The weather was very cold, roads very icy, and driving was difficult. The Communication truck was wrecked when the trailer slid off the road, throwing the truck out of control. Sections 5, 9, and 3 had motor troubles of some sort or other but the whole battery was accounted for before the night was over. We made the move covering all organizational markings, and the division was secretly committed against the enemy to launch a powerful attack. We first set up a defense around the 344th FA in the vicinity of Leifrange, Luxembourg, where we relieved elements of the 26th Division. We were now in the III Corps – had been in the XX Corps since September, 1944. The next day we sent a composite platoon consisting of the four halftracks to defend a vital bridge in our area, which the division was utilizing to bring up supplies. On January 11, we moved northwest to Bevinge. We utilized a forward C. P. and a rear C. P. necessitated by the loss of our communication truck, and the crowded conditions of our new location. The next day we moved to Tarchamps the scene of a fierce battle the day previous. When we entered, buildings and wrecked transport were still burning. Wrecked equipment and dead littered the area. Here our supply and headquarters sections joined us, as well as the halftracks who were relieved of the bridge assignment. On January 16, we moved again, this time to the vicinity of Bras, Belgium, a road junction on the important east-west highway from Bastogne to Wiltz. On January 18 we received our first gun replacement. B-5 broke an axle, necessitating the exchange. All the men were issued sleeping bags, which were put to good use immediately as we experienced weather amounting to a blizzard. The resulting snow was knee deep in most places and hampered to some extent our mobility.

On the 21st of January, Lt. Woodard received his promotion to 1st Lieutenant. At this time the enemy started withdrawing from the area, leaving rear guards to delay our advance. We started moving fast once again to keep in contact with them. We moved twice during the 21st – first to Niederwampach, then to Oberwampach. On the 22nd we made a fairly long jump over crowded roads to Stockem; again in Luxembourg. A V-I bomb was observed over our area. On the 24th we displaced again, this time to Boxhorn – we were now driving east. During the night we experienced the heaviest shelling received in weeks. However, we had no casualties. On the 26th of January we moved again to Binsfeld, the scene of a fierce German counter attack the day previous. The German dead littered the fields, as well as many of their vehicles and field pieces.

We moved the next evening to Beiler, in a well-regulated convoy carried out at dusk. There was a full moon which enabled us to move into position fairly easily. We were only a few hundred yards from the front lines, and experienced sporadic shelling by the Krauts.

We received a truck from Ordnance the next day – and really welcomed it – as it simplified our moving. We moved again on January 31 to Weweler, again in Belgium. The division was occupying holding positions, protecting the right flank of the VIII Corps, to which we had been

newly assigned from the III Corps. Everyone was tense – listening and reading of the Russian gains on the Eastern Front – and waiting for a blow to fall from the powerful forces in the West – directed against the crumbling Wehrmacht. We received one remaining truck from Ordnance – and the Communications section was enthused and proceeded to again install the radio equipment. We were again up to strength in vehicles and ready for what we hoped would be the final phase of the War.

We remained in our positions at Weweler while the division built up strength to affect a crossing of the Our River. The crossing was made and on February 5 we moved across the river to the vicinity of Bleialf where we set up a defense around the railroad station. The weather was cold and we had continual rain. The roads were in very poor shape, in some spots impassable. Pvt. Canavey rejoined us on 7 February. He left us in August at St. Hilaire. On February 9 we moved up again. This time, through the Dragons Teeth barriers to the Siegfried Line town of Brandscheid. The town had been captured by our doughboys, after a hard fight, and many pillboxes had been destroyed by direct laying of our assault guns. The Battery C. P. was set up in a bunker, and several of the sections were using them for shelters. We remained in these positions until 17 February, while the division was preparing to flank the Siegfried defenses in a daring move to the South then turning to the East. We slipped to the south a few thousand yards to set up in the vicinity of Habscheid. It was another Siegfried line town; full of pillboxes, and the ever-present line of Dragons Teeth at its Western side. The weather had cleared considerably – and we saw great numbers of our aircraft operating in our area. They were mostly heavies with escort, and some German installations were certainly taking a terrific pounding. On February 20, three replacements joined us. T/4 Campion, Pfc. Sorter, and Pfc. Sanderson. Campion went to the Communication section, Sorter to B7 and Sanderson to B2, The 21st of February marked the start of our drive which was to eventually take us to the Rhine. It meant constant movement, but we welcomed it. We moved first to the vicinity of Ober Uttfeld, a small town in the midst of the Siegfried defenses. B1 was shelled by a self propelled gun when they arrived, and Pfc. Gaudet, and Plc. Kostanczuk were wounded when a shell hit on the parapet of their machine gun pit. They were both evacuated, but we were assured that they would recover. We moved the next day to Binscheid. The following day we went to Arzfeld, where we were relieved by the 6th Armored Division and placed in Corps reserve. On 25 February we moved to the rear in the vicinity of Walimerath. The 2d Platoon set up a defense of the area, and the 1st Platoon went into Bivouac. We were out of range of enemy artillery fire for the first time since mid-August. We had several movies, the men all had a chance to visit, play cards and clean up. All the guns were checked, and the equipment was cleaned and organized. Everyone had a shower at an army shower set-up a few miles from our position.

On March 1st, the 1st Platoon relieved the 2d Platoon in the defensive positions at the rest area. Everyone was enjoying the change, and we tried to take full advantage of the rest, knowing something big was in the wind. On March 2 three of our old men, previously evacuated, were returned to duty. They were Pfc. Bruce, Pfc. Knight, and Pvt. Culp. On March 4th we started on our offensive designed to carry us over the Prum and Kyll Rivers and to spring our armor loose to the Rhine. We left Wallmerath and followed a path leading through Pronsfeld, Dachscheid, Dingdorf, Seiwerath, Kopp, Hinterhausen and Pelm. We were moving very fast, and didn't stay in any position more than 12 hours. The 1st Platoon was detached at Hinterhausen, and sent to Birresborn to protect the Bailey Bridge over the Kyll River at that point. The remainder of the

battery was set up at Pelm with the 344th FA Bn in the bridgehead over the Kyll at that point. We stayed in these positions several days while the 11th Armored Division drove through us in their dash to the Rhine. It took two days for their column to pass us, and they were still going by when we received word that their spearhead was at the Rhine in the vicinity of Andernach. All during this period, our morale was soaring upon receiving the news of the exploits of our hard hitting armor – and we were anxious to follow them up to annihilate the Germans west of the Rhine. We heard of the 1st Army bridgehead at Remagen. Everything seemed to be going sensationally. On March 9, we were organized into a combat team with the 358th Inf., and prepared to drive east. We moved very fast, and the moves were long – very reminiscent of our drive through France, but now there weren't cheering, waving crowds – just mute-faced "Herrenvolk," all displaying white surrender flags. Our route took us to Bruck, Langenfeld, Saffig, and finally Münstermaifeld. At Saffig we were but 3 miles from the Rhine, B 1 and B2 could see the great river from their positions. Our move south to Münsterfaifeld placed us 3000 yards north of the Moselle River. All of us expected another crossing of the Moselle to be imminent. At Münsterfaifeld we lost a very good S/Sgt, but gained an excellent officer. 2d Lt. Lawrence Nelson received his gold bars – being the first man to receive a battlefield appointment in our battalion. We changed from VIII to XII Corps – making the 7th corps to which we were assigned since becoming operational!!

We had hints of bigger things to come in regards the Luftwaffe. Many flash messages were picked up north of us as the Germans were trying to knock out the Ludendorff bridge at Remagen. We saw two P-38's enter our area tailing an FW 190. They shot it down near our position. On the 13th of March, the 2d Platoon made a night occupation of positions at the Hatzenport crossing site of the Moselle. The Infantry crossed at 0200 on the 14th and we were in position. There was sporadic mortar and machine gun fire at the site, but none of our men were hit. Some damage to material was sustained, but it was quickly remedied. It was a rough deal and the situation was well-handled by the officers and men of the 2d Platoon. Later during the day, the FA moved to Morz, still on the near side of the river. We crossed later that night aided by artificial moonlight, and went in position on the far shore at Brodenbach. The situation became very fast moving, and the 1st Platoon (the 2d remaining at the bride site), drove southeast through Stabenhof, Offenhausen, Halsenbach, Birkheim, Erbach, Daxweiler, Stromberg, Burglayen – then across the Nahe River at Bretzenheim to Gensingen. It was here on the 19th of March that we had our first workout since Jan. 1. Several ME 262's – the first we had seen, attacked our area, and dropped several butterfly bombs in the vicinity. The 1st Platoon sections went into action, but the planes were too high for us to expect hits. We were dazzled by their speed. We continued to move the next day going to Neider Hilbersheim, where we again had a busy day – ME 109's and FW 190's accompanied the ME 262's to attack our area and adjoining units. We kept them high – and scored hits. Several planes were reported to have crashed. We continued to move that day to Schwabenheim and thence to Essenheim. The following day we were subject to another attack by the fast flying ME 262's. We engaged a very low flying plane his bombs were dropped inaccurately. We moved to Flinten and were within 6 kilometers of Mainz. The 90th Div. doughboys were mopping up the town and it was cleared on the 22d. We were shooting across the river. We noticed preparations for a river crossing – and were all eagerly awaiting the next phase of the battle. The 2d Platoon was relieved on the 20th

from the Hatzenport bridge – and convoyed down to the Nahe River bridge at Bretzenheim, where they set up a defense of the span.

On March 23rd the reconnaissance parties went out – and everyone wondered whether this would be the long awaited jump across the Rhine. The 2d Platoon was relieved from the Nahe River bridge at Bretzenheim, and assembled short of the Rhine preparing to defend the all important Rhine crossing sites. We heard rumors of the 5th Division crossing near Oppenheim. During the night of the 23rd the 2d Platoon set up the defense of the pontoon bridges, and the 1st Platoon and Btry Hq crossed with the F.A. column at 2000 on the 24th. There were many enemy planes over the area during our crossing, and the A.A. display was unforgettable. Our column was attacked but no casualties were suffered by personnel or material. We observed AA fire account for at least 4 planes in less than an hour. We settled for the night in an evacuated German Camp near Dornheim. On March 25th, we started in with a fast moving situation moving through Griesheim, Grafenhausen, and finally to Egelsbacher. There were some enemy A/C over very high early in the day. The second Platoon rejoined us at noon of the 25th. On the 26th, we moved from Dietzenbach to Heusenstamm thence to Obertshausen, went into action several times and captured 16 prisoners late in the evening. B3 turned them in.

On the 27th of March we moved twice once to Lammerspiel, and then to a clearing in the woods to the east of the town. We were within artillery range of targets on the far side of the Main River. The division made preparations to assault the river. At 0300 the 1st Platoon moved into position on the near side of the Main, around the Muhlheim crossing site. The move was well-executed, and no one was injured in the small arms and mortar fire present at the crossing. The 2d Platoon of Baker and 1st Platoon of Charlie Battery crossed the completed bridge at noon and completed the AA defense. The battery C.P. moved to Muhlheim. During the next few days the 90th Div. and the 6th Armored Division used the bridge, and a continual stream of equipment and men were flowing over the Main. On March 31st the bridge was attacked by a lone ME 262, but our volume of fire drove him away, with his bombs falling far from the target. On April 1st we were relieved by Corps AA. We were ordered to report to the 344th. F.A. and contacted them at 1300 in the vicinity of Sandlofs, after a 75-mile motor March. Our position was approximately midway between Fulda and Hersfeld. On April 2 we started a drive to the Northeast. We moved early and were attacked while in convoy, by 6 FW 190's. We fired from the wheels and B9 halftrack sank some 50 caliber shells into one bandit. It was observed smoking and we claimed and we awarded a Cat. II. We moved first to Wustfeld and then to Ausbach. On April 3, the 2d Platoon was assigned to the 343rd F.A. They joined them at Grossensee, in the north of the division zone. The first Platoon and Btry Hq moved to a position west of Vacha, a town 20 miles SW of Eisenach. The 1st Platoon went into action in the morning and claimed to shoot down one of two attacking ME 109's. We were awarded a Cat. II. At 1600 two ME 109's flew over again, B2, 3 and 4 all put shots in and one crashed 2 miles north of our position. At 1830 two ME 109's again came in, and one crashed in the vicinity of the 358th inf. CP causing considerable damage; the other was engaged by the 1st Platoon – the results unknown. We moved three times the following day – from Dorndorf to Kaiseroda and finally to Allendorf. The famous find of gold and treasure was made this day by the 90th Division. The vaults were in subterranean salt mines near Merkers. The 2nd Platoon remained with the 343rd, still in the north of the division zone. The following day we moved to Bad Liebenstein, a famous resort town. We were ordered to hold up at this point. The following day, April 6, we were

ordered into assembly areas in the vicinity of Uebelroda – we did not know how long we were to stay in these positions. We didn't stay long – the next day we moved in a long motor march to Heidersbach, a small town north east of Suhl, famous small arm manufacturing town. On the 9th we moved to Schmiedefeld – and as the situation became a bit faster moving we moved to Frauenwald and Neustadt on the 10th. The 357th Infantry swung to our left, and the 2d Platoon with the 343rd were once again north and abreast of us. On the 11th we moved to Gross Breitenbach, and the 12th saw us move four times from Meuselbach to Neuhaus, to Lichte and finally to Gebersdorf. It was on this fateful day that we were all shocked by the radio message informing us of the death of President Roosevelt. There were many grim and sad faces that day, and the thought was universal that one had not only suffered the loss of the Commander in Chief, but of a trusted friend.

On the 13th we moved three times: Zopten, Steinbach, and finally Ossla. We moved three times the following day thru Lobenstein, Lichtenberg and Issigau. Five prisoners were captured during the day – the 2d Platoon still was with the 343rd F. A. We moved twice on the 15th – to Schelgel and then to Koditz. The security guards on B-9's halftrack, shot and killed a German soldier, when he failed to halt, at being challenged. The 90th Division infantry were now fighting in Hof. On the 16th of April we moved to Unter-Kotzau, a suburb of Hof. There were just a few snipers remaining in the city. On the 18th we moved through Hof to Kautendorf – the Division was now driving southeast – paralleling the Czech border. The 2d Platoon and 343rd were now the right flank while we were on the left. On the 19th we moved through Rehau to Schönwald. On the 20th we moved from Selb to Swaizteich and finally to Bergnersreuth, where we captured nine prisoners.

On the 21st we moved three times from Höflas to Mitterteich and then to Klein. Four more prisoners were captured. On the 22d we moved from Pirk to Schönfecht – four more prisoners were captured. Thence to Spielberg – one more prisoner. During the next day April 24th – we moved twice, to Pleystein, and to Burkhardtsrieth – one prisoner captured. The next day we moved to Eslarn and then to Schönsee. We received some M-51 machine guns and turned in our water-cooled guns. The next day we moved twice to Teifenbach and then to Trefflestein. The 2d Platoon went into action twice during the day. On April 29 the 2d Platoon captured three prisoners. At this time the Division was holding a long front on the Czech border. The 1st Platoon and Battery Headquarters were at the extreme north end, and the 2d Platoon was at the extreme southern end of the Division front. On April 30, the 1st Platoon displaced east a little to north of Waldmunchen. The 2d Platoon captured two more prisoners.

On May 1, the battery moved to set up near Haselbach just inside the Czechoslovakian border. Sections 2, 3 and 4 were in Czechoslovakia, B1 was in Germany. On May 3, we moved twice to Lam and then to Lohberg. On May 4, B1 captured 3 prisoners who wished to make terms to surrender a body of men. They were commanded by a Colonel, and Colonel Mason of the 357th Infantry accepted their surrender at Lohberg. It is believed that about 200-250 men were captured. We captured 63 additional prisoners that day. On the 4th, we moved to Tiesdorf, north of Viechtach, and on the 5th to Englmar, where we thought we would be sitting for a few days. We went out on reconnaissance again however, and wound up many miles to the northeast across the Czech border in Paseka. We were forming a bridgehead so that the 4th Armored Division could drive on Prague, the Czechoslovakian capital. During this all-important 1st week in May (1945) excitement was high, as we heard of the mass surrenders in other sectors.

However, we were still fighting, and on the 6th we moved to Rejstein on the River Otava – and heard the news that Mr. Churchill would announce V-E day within 48 hours. On the 7th, we heard the unconditional surrender was signed at Reims at 0241, 7 May 1945. We were very happy, and astounded at the number of prisoners captured. The day previous the 90th Division accepted the surrender of the 11th Panzer Division – personnel and equipment. We moved on the 7th to Zihobetz where we cleaned ourselves and equipment – observed V-E day (May 8, 1945) and awaited orders assigning us to a zone of occupation.

It is fitting that the history of the combat of the battery be brought to a close at this point. The ensuing months were to see the finish of the war in the Pacific, and the starting of the demobilization machinery. Consequently, men were transferred out, and any further log would be incomplete, inasmuch as the majority of the men who made up the unit had gone.

This history has ended, but each of us will carry the memory of our common experiences throughout our lives. May God continue to watch over us, as He did in this most eventful year of our lives, and may we, who have come to know the fearful price and full value of peace, cherish it forever.

HEADQUARTERS, 344TH FIELD ARTILLERY
BATTALION
APO 90, U. S. ARMY

3 December 1944

SUBJECT: Commendation.

TO: Commanding Officer, Btry. "B", 537th AA (AW) Bn.

Through Channels:

1. Your organization deserves special commendation for its excellent work and fine spirit, while your battery has been attached to the 344th Field Artillery Battalion, for protection of the Field Artillery against enemy air attack.

2. Battery "B", 537th AA Battalion has been attached to the 344th Field Artillery Battalion since our operations began in France. The fine spirit and cooperation of all the officers and enlisted men during the difficult months, in movements by day and night, has been effected in a splendid manner. This battery has in effect operated as an integral part of the Artillery which it protects. The efficient cooperation and splendid work accomplished by Battery "B", 537th AA Battalion, reflects credit upon all its officers and men.

(Signed) MERTON E. MUNSON
Lt. Col. , F. A. Commanding

1st Ind. BWR/da

Headquarters, 537th AAA AW Bn, APO 230, U. S. Army,
4 December 1944.

TO: CO, Btry "B", 537th AAA AW Bn, APO 230, U. S. Army.

1. Mutual understanding and the will to help supported units aids in the cooperated effort that is necessary for proper team work and the ultimate defeat of the German Army.

2. It brings great satisfaction to me to note in the basic communication and from my own observation that "B" Battery has been very successful during all these months of combat, in forming a fine team with the 344th Field Artillery Battalion and has carried out many efficient operations.

(Signed) BEO W. RECER,
Lt. Col, CAC Commanding

BATTERY ROSTER

Lorris J. Alexandry, Brusly, Louisiana
William E. Angousset, 5508 4th St. , Marrero, Louisiana
John A. Ashley, Cullman, Alabama
Charles E. Auerbach, 1700 Broadway, San Francisco, Calif.
Buel Bailey, Miller, Arkansas
Roy Baker, Rt. No. 2, Box 247, New Port, Arkansas
Theodore S. Bala, 225 Magnolia Ave. , Elizabeth, New Jersey
Robert K. Barton, Rt. No. 1, Box 312, Laurel, Maryland
Otto Bentley, Russellville, Arkansas
J. D. Bibb, Monette, Arkansas
Harvey H. Boisvert, 18 Bridgham Street, Providence, R. I.
Charley Bonano, Rt. No. 1, Baton Rouge, Louisiana
Joe L. Bonat, Rt. No. 2, Henryetta, Oklahoma
Wilson J. Bourgeois, Chacahoula, Louisiana
Harry S. Bratt, 1816 Miolano Ave. , Syracuse, New York
Doye O. Brown, Clarksville, Arkansas
Eugene L. Brown, Rt. No. 1, Delong, Illinois
William T. R. Bruce, Rt. No. 10, Gainesville, Georgia
Robert W. Burk, Rt. No. 1, Glencoe, Oklahoma
Robert L. Cable, 535½ N. Emporia, Wichita, Kansas
Robert D. Camenga, 310 Marshall St. , Syracuse 10, N. Y.
Stanley W. Canavey, 226 Messer St. , Providence, R. I.
Joseph T. Cancellieri, 503 Kossuth St. , Riverside, N. J.
Guy P. Cannon, Locksburg, Arkansas
Louis Carlino, Patterson, Louisiana
Vernon Carpenter, Rt. No. 2, Dover, Arkansas
Orlando A. Chavez, 1024 W. Bridge St. , Albuquerque, N. M.
Edward H. Clay, Rt. No. 1, Box 41, Alexandria, Louisiana
Elvin V. Clements, Rt. No. 2, Piedmont, Missouri
Edward D. Colburn, 6 Lexington Ave. , Glen Falls, N. Y.
Richard M. Cole, Huttig, Arkansas
Se1bert E. Collins, Rt. No. 2, Johnson City, Tennessee
George W. Conley, 542 Liberty Ave. , Dongan Hills, Staten Island, New York
Bertram D. Danver, Grampian, Pennsylvania
Oran R. Davis, Star Route, Marlowe, Oklahoma
Avery DeHart, Rt. No. 2, Box 48, Morgan City, Louisiana
Gilbert J. DeMonsabert, Jr. , 1730 Esplanade Ave. , New Orleans, Louisiana
Sidney J. Dickinson, Morganza, Louisiana
Vincent S. DiMattia, 952 Reddy St. , Baton Rouge, Louisiana
Joseph J. Dolan, 1621 51st St. , Chicago, Illinois
Emil P. Duchene, 608 N. Dallas St. , El Paso, Texas
Gregory Duron, 109 N. E. 3rd St. , Big Springs, Texas

James E. Eakes, General Delivery, Atkins, Arkansas
Raleigh D. Eschete, Rt. No. 2, Box 49-B, Houma, Louisiana
Joe Evans, Rt. No. 2, Woodstock, Georgia
Warren G. Everett, Rt. No. 1, Black Oak, Arkansas
Harry E. Frasher, Jr. , Cromwell, Oklahoma
Tony E. Freyta, 2741 Lawrence St. , Denver, Colorado
Herman L. Fulmer, Rt. No. 2, Jacksonville, Arkansas
Nick J. Gaudet, Port Allen, Louisiana
Carl C. Gioe, Chalmette, Louisiana
Fred J. Grantham, Rt. No. 1, Mendenhall, Mississippi
Clarence F. Grose, St. Bernard, Louisiana
Glen W. Hale, Grubbs, Arkansas
Francis J. Hallinan, 432 N. Hamlin Ave. , Chicago, Illinois
Harry H. Hammond, Rt. No. 10, Box 2394, Houston, Texas
Harry R. Hammond, RFD No. 1, Box 147, Fillmore, Calif.
Troy M. Haney, Agnos, Arkansas
Dolphy Hanks, Sunset, Louisiana
Edward J. Hastings, 46 Frederick St. , Framingham, Mass.
Crispin D. Hernandez, Box 453, Pearsall, Texas
Everett W. Hines, Foster, Missouri
Clyde J. Hollingsworth, Rt. No. 2, Shawnee, Oklahoma
Rufus Horton, Bayou Chene, Louisiana
John B. Howard, 399 Clifton St. , Camden, Arkansas
William L. Hunter, Lenora, Oklahoma
Bill Hurst, 1008 Magoffin, El Paso, Texas
Aaron H. Jacobs, 1824 Washington St. , New York, N. Y.
Albert Janofsky, 909 47th St. , Brooklyn, New York
James R. Jennings, Rt. No. 5, Holden, Missouri
Henri Johnson, Cooperstown, North Dakota
Murphy L. Johnson, Oakdale, Louisiana
Victor W. Johnson, Cedar City, Missouri
George Justus, 1472 Vyse Ave. , Bronx, New York
Edward H. Keller, 1140 Hornsby Ave. , St. Louis, Missouri
Jessie W. Kerns, 1510 Lincoln St. , Amarillo, Texas
Stanley W. Kostanczuk, 1659 Center St. , Whiting, Indiana
Albert Kouri, 14 W. Main St. , Henryetta, Oklahoma
Willard M. Kuehl, 211 4th St. So. , Moorhead, Minnesota
Joseph L. Lejeune, Centress, Louisiana
Harold O. Loeffler, Rt. No. 2, Clyde, Kansas
Jerry V. Lopez, Rt. No. 1, Box 26, Fort Lupton, Colorado
Ray R. Mabe, 141 W. Pine St. , Mt. Airy, North Carolina
Arthur L. Martinez, 4639 Baldwin St. , Denver, Colorado
Thomas E. McCarthy, 137 Orange St. , Manchester, N. H.
Otha McCracken, Box 452, Wills Point, Texas

Walter Meier, Rt. No. 1, Sommerville, Texas
Gilbert A. Menix, General Delivery, Lamesa, Texas
Anthony F. Miksche, 316 No. 5th St. , Breckenridge, Minn.
John R. Miller, Leechburg, Pennsylvania
Arthur J. Minnerup, Box 252, Wynona, Oklahoma
Curtis W. Moffett, General Delivery, Clarendon, Texas
Martin C. Mortenson, Underwood, Minnesota
Lawrence E. Nelson, 410 Andrews Ave. , Breckenridge, Minn.
Lyman G. Nelson, 416 South 8th St. , Forest City, Iowa
Joseph Niedzielko, Rt. No. 2, Box 231, Chetek, Wisconsin
James W. Nixon, Jethro, Arkansas
Charles J. Noullet, 2758 St. Peters St. , New Orleans, La.
Salvadore A. Nunez, 25-A Rio Grande St. , Smallertown, Tex.
Patrick J. O'Connor, 3925 Bowser Ave. , Dallas, Texas
Vernon R. Opheim, Cooperstown, North Dakota
Esequiel Orriz, 520 Hidalgo Alley No. 33, El Paso, Texas
Wayne P. Osbin, Rt. No. 2, Seminole, Oklahoma
Arnold Pace, Grays Knob, Kentucky
Armando E. Pagano, 113 Grove St. , Providence, R. I.
Walter J. Pawlicki, 1948 Georgia St. , Gary, Indiana
Oliver H. Pederson, 1103 1st Ave. So. , Moorehead, Minn.
Armond N. Pellegrin, Little Calliou Route, Houma, La.
Felipe Perales, Oden, Texas
Arturo M. Perez, 2216 Tampico St. , San Antonio, Texas
Felipe Perez, 1008 Monterrey Ave. , Laredo, Texas
Carl Perry, 204 S. Walnut St. , Madison, Indiana
William A. Phelps, RFD No. 1, Fairview, Missouri
Walter A. Pliz, 113 Prospect St. , Watsonville, California
Curtis S. Ponder, Shangaloo, Louisiana
John D. Power, 4 Elmire Ave. , Worcester, Massachusetts
James C. Praytor, Cleburne, Texas
Victor W. Preston, Box 695, Drumwright, Oklahoma
Charlie L. Rice, Box 132, Paris, Arkansas
Guy T. Richards, Cookstown Road, Ruston, Louisiana
Nolton Richards, Rt. No. 3, Box 135-B, Church Point, La.
Elmo G. Roberts, 300 N. McMaster St. , Amarillo, Texas
John J. Rogers, Garden City, Louisiana
Carlos Roman, General Delivery, Big Springs, Texas
Alvin E. Schultze, Rt. No. 2, Marion, Texas
John R. Scott, General Delivery, Milo, Oklahoma
Ross R. Scott, 2049 Olive St. , Indianapolis, Indiana
Jess W. Scullion, Rt. No. 2, Box 984-H, Battle Creek, Mich.
Roy R. Shanks, Rt. No. 1, Bell, Missouri
Odell H. Shatswell, Rt. No. 2, Lamar, Arkansas

Lee C. Shaw, Rt. No. 2, Homer, Louisiana
Carl A. Shepherd, 9060 Kleindan, Garden City, Michigan
Joe M. Shupe, Mabe, Virginia
Rivers F. Simoneaux, Box 123-A, Franklin, Louisiana
John A. Sirchia, Independence, Louisiana
Eli M. Smith, Box 23, Craigsville, Pennsylvania
Harrell D. Smith, Rt. No. 2, Fairfax, Oklahoma
Louis L. Smith, Rt. No. 1, Alpena Pass, Texas
Marion C. Smith, Rt. No. 2, Box 63, Plain Dealing, La.
Bernard D. Snow, 977 Highland View N. E. , Atlanta, Ga.
Emmett D. Sparks, Rt. No. 4, Russellville, Arkansas
Ralph J. Squibb, 2012 Perry St. N. E. , Washington, D. C.
Chester T. Sremba, 953 Innes, N. E. , Grand Rapids, Michigan
William H. Stack, 322 Riverside Ave. , Valley City, N. D.
Edward A. Stanaszak, 201 Ives Ave. S. W. , Grand Rapids, Mich.
Orvel M. Stanley, Calico Rock, Arkansas
Raymond L. Stantz, Rockville, Indiana
Nelson Stelly, Rayne, Louisiana
Eddie J. Strickland, Rt. No. 1, Kentwood, Louisiana
Alvin St. Romain, Plaquemine, Louisiana
Fred L. Strout, Bar Harbor, Maine
Andy S. Sziber, Rt. No. 1, Box 185, Hammond, Louisiana
Herbert Taylor, RFD No. 3, Arnaudville, Louisiana
Moise Thibodeaux, Branch, Louisiana
Albert B. Thomas, 503 Western Ave. , Shreveport, Louisiana
William E. Thomas, 544 W. 163rd St. , New York, N. Y.
Harmon I. Thompson, Rt. No. 2, Choctaw, Oklahoma
William E. Todd, Box 133, Silver, Arkansas
Magnus B. Torrance, St. Clair Ave. , Steubenville, Ohio
Ophie Trahan, Rt. No. 1, Box 61, Youngsville, Louisiana
Robert P. Turner, Rt. No. 2, Lewisburg, Tennessee
Donald J. Tyler, 320 Willow St. , Franklin, Louisiana
Gilbert S. Unger, 511 Lexington Ave. , Dayton, Ohio
Leo J. Vandette, 21 Lilley Ave. , Lowell, Massachusetts
Jose R. Vargas, Jr. , Box 347, El Paso, Texas
Brodie Vowell, Cotten Valley, Louisiana
Buford B. Widener, 814 Daughtry St. , New Smyrna Beach, Florida
Cortez P. Whitlow, Hodge, Louisiana
George L. Williams, Rt. No. 2, Elmont, Alabama
Monroe H. Williams, Box 205, Marlow, Oklahoma
Henry E. Wilson, General Delivery, Mapleville, Arkansas
Austin R. Woodard, 9 Forrest Ave. , Greenfield, Mass.
James E. Worsham, Rt. No. 1, Cherokee, Alabama
Raymond M. Wright, General Delivery, Ada, Oklahoma

