

535TH ANTI-AIRCRAFT ARTILLERY BATTALION

Battalion from the Mojave

*History of the 535th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion from
1942 to July 25, 1944*

BY TED VAN ARSDOL

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Recruits destined to join the 535th soon trek along a coastal area near Camp Callan, California. Clarence Bonk, who loaned photo, labeled this "a long, long trail a-winding."

FOREWORD

In even such detailed accounts of World War II action as the official histories of Utah Beach and the Battle of the Ardennes, the 535th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion (Automatic Weapons) rates no mention.

This obscurity is the fate of many small units which participated in that war. A large share of the smaller organizations will remain practically unknown to history; some have told their own stories although in generally brief printed outline.

Yet even a small unit could boast an often-complex and varied routine, as geared into the huge military effort which was required to defeat the Axis forces on the several continents.

The experience of those wartime days could be as simple as the feel of the sun which warmed the GIs of the 535th on the Mojave desert of California or in Tennessee, or listening to Ella Mae Morris singing the "Cow Cow Boogie" on a juke-box record in a post exchange. At other times it could be merely a guard scanning the sky and scudding clouds, from his position behind a machine gun in a dug pit, or watching a convoy of massive guns moving up on the snowy Belgian border, past foxholes and dugouts, on a day so cold that it seemed that even the heavy gray metal gun barrels must be frosted through.

On a broader scale, the story of the 535th also is a partial history of some of the major campaigns of the Western front, particularly the Invasion of Europe and the Battle of the

Bulge. Although a battalion of under 850 men lacks the well-known military personnel and the unit fame of some large organizations, individual members nonetheless were provided with what proved to be "front row" views of some notable events of the era.

The 535th was organized in southern California and after training there and in Tennessee and North Carolina was shipped overseas, where the GIs participated in the campaigns of the Western front, later served briefly in the occupation of Germany and then were sent to LeHavre, in France, to guard prisoners of war, before being shipped back across the Atlantic.

Even today a consideration of some of the vast movements of which the 535th was a part, and the implications and effects of the tides of war are likely to boggle the mind of an individual participant.

Fat Lee, a D Battery Pfc., recalls that a chaplain put the issue simply at a religious service attended by Lee, outdoors, during the Battle of the Bulge. The chaplain suggested a question that the men could ask themselves-- "Is this trip necessary?"

And the chaplain said he would try to answer the question for them. Yes, the trip was necessary, the chaplain asserted. In his view, the men of the 535th were there because God had sent them to help shape history.

♦ ♦ ♦

Aside from philosophical issues involved, some members of the 535th recognized at an early date that a record should be preserved of the 535th's involvement in World War II. The

first printed efforts were the B Battery history and a booklet of prose and poetry by Pvt. Donald Allen. Near the end of the combat period, Lt. Col. William H. Francis, the Battalion commander, and Lt. Thomas Elliott, the 535th's adjutant, "planted" the idea of a written Battalion history by suggesting to T/Sgt. Ted Van Arsdol, a former short-term sports writer, that he prepare the account. This project was not completed in Europe.

However, the proposed author had sent home numerous detailed letters outlining his observations during more than three years in the Battalion, and these formed the nucleus of a historical record which he began compiling when he returned home from the war.

In the part-time research since that time, numerous other individuals have been of great assistance. Only a few of these can be mentioned here, but names of most are included in the text of the book or in the bibliography.

Art Imwalle of Salinas, Calif., visited the author and provided his own personal collection ranging from photos and notebooks to colored slides dating from a revisit to Bullingen, Belgium. Fat Lee of Los Angeles, Calif., was one of the more prolific correspondents in an extensive amount of research involving former members of the 535th from throughout the United States.

W.E. Hughes of Naples, Fla., former commander of C Battery, provided dates from a diary kept in the United States, as well as a personal account of some key activities in C Battery. A Battery's commanding officer, Robert Bricker of Oak Valley, Calif., was interviewed in person and offered pertinent documents. Myron Meixner of Owatonna, Minn., and Edwin Lacy

of Kiowa, Okla., loaned copies of the *D Battery Journal*, Bernard Lamson of Los Angeles sent the small booklet *War* and other material, and Kim Bell of Van Wert, Ohio, made the published *B Battery Journal* available (this is afterwards referred to as the *B Battery Journal*), as well as giving verbal information during a visit to Portland, Ore.

Diaries are a scarce but valuable item, and an especially interesting document of this type was loaned by Bob Koerber of Oakland, Calif. His diary extends in time from Camp Shanks, N.Y., until his return to the United States and discharge.

The National Archives in Washington, D.C., gave valuable assistance in the form of photos, a copy of the *A Battery Journal* and a microfilm roll of miscellaneous 535th documents.

Special mention should be made of encouragement and a number of helpful suggestions from retired Army Col. William H. Francis of Pacific Grove, Calif., over the years.

The 535th reunion association, which was spearheaded in its formative stages by James E. Long of Quanah, Tex., has been a morale booster, in the interest shown in successful completion of the history.

Photos were loaned by former members of the unit and by the various armed services. Steve Small, photographer with the *Columbian*, newspaper at Vancouver, Wash., performed an excellent and vital service in copying and enlarging numerous borrowed photos in preparation for their use in the book.

In presenting the following history, the author feels that he should note it is only a cross-section of the story of the 535th, in many instances. Numerous former GIs of the Battalion have vivid recollections of a variety of episodes of the

wartime years, some of which could well have been included in a book of this type.

Some of the material can be collected in the future for the 535th association's records, and at least part of the reminiscences could be printed in the group's newsletters.

Much of the material that is not footnoted in the following chapters was written originally in letters from the author, or was gathered in interviews or from letters of former 535th men.

Attempt has been made to show the origin of all other written or printed material used. As much as possible, contemporary information or material written within a short time after the actual events has been given priority in use.

Source of most pictures is indicated. These are not necessarily the names of the photographers, but it is believed that credit should be given to the persons who loaned the pertinent pictures from their collections.

Several years ago the author had planned to include the entire history in one volume. However, the manuscript grew to bulkier size and numerous additional photos became available. Breaking down the history into two publications seemed more feasible from the standpoint of cost to the writer as well as convenience in assembling the pages.

The second book, as yet untitled, will contain the story of the Battalion's firing at buzzbombs, the Battle of the Bulge as viewed by the 535th, the Remagen bridgehead, guard duty at LeHavre and other material. Some appendix material is included in *Battalion from the Mojave* and more will be inserted in the second paperback book.

TED VAN ARSDOL

Vancouver, Wash., Nov. 17, 1970. Typing by Carole
Hildermann, Vancouver, Wash.

California Days

The men who made up the 535th Coast Artillery Battalion came from many parts of the nation and through several camps before reaching the unit in southern California. One of the Reception Centers was at Fort Lewis, Wash., where draftees and enlistees were being received in large numbers in October 1942, marching from special buses in a double file, carrying suitcases and herded by a hard-looking sergeant who was yelling continually to "get moving" and to "wake up." Draftees grumbled to each other what they would like to do to that "big meathead."

With the group in which the author of *Battalion from the Mojave* arrived was a fellow so drunk that he had to be carried from the bus to the receiving station, through the door topped by a sign saying, "Through this portal pass the finest servicemen in the world."

At the Reception Center the future members of the 535th learned to sweep and mop in the morning, and found out with scores of other young men, destined for varied other scattered units, that a whistle meant to fall out, learned how to make a neat bed and that orders were orders. Once when one of the new recruits complained to the buck sergeant, "We already mopped the floor this morning," he bawled back:

I don't give a damn how many times you mopped it this morning.
You're moppin' it again.

In the night Special buses were disgorging even more men. And every day-- about a week after they arrived-- the men marched away in uniform with barracks bags on their shoulders.

In a short time, the group destined for the 535th was loaded on a troop train with other new GIs, and the train headed south. Out of the windows we saw a lot of countryside and a number of railroad stations, as we traveled along. We napped, read the *Master Detectives* belonging to a corporal who had been sent along to keep us in line, and slept at night in bunks the porters fixed for us, a short-lived luxury. Some of the newspapers then available told the latest developments in the great battle of Stalingrad where the Hitler forces were attempting to crack the Russian lines.

Our enemies, the Japanese and Germans, still had a strong military grip on conquered lands at the time and appeared very tough to dislodge. Shortly before, on Sept. 30, the newspapers had recounted that the German fuehrer had bragged at a Nazi party rally in Berlin that he defied the British to invade the continent, that "they can deem themselves lucky if they stay for nine hours on the continent, as at Dieppe, for we have made thorough preparations to welcome them."¹



The new contingent for the 535th received its introduction to the Battalion at Colton, Calif., outside San Bernardino, where trucks, drivers and officers were waiting. The newcomers were loaded into olive-drab colored trucks like a bunch of cattle, or so it seemed to us then.

The drivers pulled away from Colton and soon were wheeling up winding mountain roads in the night at 60 miles an hour. A truck would edge up and rub bumpers with the truck for a moment, slip back a short distance and then repeat the process as the drivers attempted to give the rookies a scare. Jammed together in the trucks and blinded by the headlights, the draftees from the Pacific Northwest told each other, they're crazy.

Finally the small convoy arrived at camp, and the new arrivals were given a couple of cookies each. The Battalion was short of food, the new contingent was informed. Apparently this was an additional part of the "initiation."

The Fort Lewis group was bunked down in huts, and in the morning after we got up we looked out on the most desolate place most of us had ever seen, the end of the world, it seemed then-- Camp MAAR (Mojave Anti-Aircraft Artillery Range), a few dozen huts in a desert that stretched for miles in every direction. In the distance we newcomers saw some bare mountains. Wind blew continually across this sandy waste, 35 miles from Death Valley.

Already the 535th was in business-- this was evident from the more-acclimated hut dwellers who put on green fiber helmets that gave them a strange and warlike appearance and went out to drill in the morning.

The new men were ordered out and as their names were called they joined the 535th's batteries-- Headquarters, A, B, C and D-- represented by five men, each with an orange-and-red guidon.

Infantry drill at MAAR was directed by a young, tough-talking buck sergeant from Chicago who seemed to the new

arrivals to be quite an experienced military man. A fellow named Red was the slow man in a new bunch of recruits, and the sergeant always was shouting: "Get in step, Red"; "Dress it up, Red!" Gradually, as the days went by, the marching of the newcomers improved, and they also received lessons in handling a rifle, getting instructions in 100-degree temperatures. At night in the desert, the Northwesterners learned, the thermometer plummeted sharply, and it was wise to wear the GI woolen underwear to bed to keep warm in the small hutments.

Then as now, the MAAR area was considered an ideal area for a combat training center. At most other posts in the United States, large caliber weapons are restricted to a narrow field of fire but even today at Irwin the area is so remote that a gunner "can fire his gun in almost any direction and at its maximum elevation," according to a post publication.²

But the MAAR area was only part of a vast training country in World War II, "a waste of land that only the Army could want," a place of heat, extinct volcanic cones, jagged mountains and dusty dry lakes where water holes were scores of miles apart. Entire campaigns could be laid out and rehearsed full-scale. By summer of the following year seven major camps, dozens of other establishments, nine airdromes, 42 landing strips and five major hospitals were reported operating in the Desert Training Center, biggest Army training center in the nation, in the area from Los Angeles suburbs east to Phoenix and from the Mexican border to Boulder City, Nev.³

After five days at MAAR, the new men and GIs with longer time in the 535th were trucked to Camp Haan, near Riverside, Calif.

This camp was less than two years old and rather barren appearing, had expanded rapidly and extended for three and one-half miles along Route 395. Haan, we were advised, was only 60 miles from Los Angeles and glamorous Hollywood. The climate "is strictly Chamber of Commerce-- warm and dry, with the nights crisp and cool. Rain falls only during the winter months, and only enough to make you remember rainbows."⁴

Troops were told that their first four weeks were to be taken up by a basic program, a course preparing them for gunnery or searchlights. The guns in use were the 90mms, which could hit targets up to six miles away, the 40 mms, and the .50-caliber machine gun, which could pour out 500 shots a minute.⁵

Although the desert figured prominently in the 535th's California history, Haan was the home base of the Battalion.

The 65th Coast Artillery (AAA), which provided the cadre for the new Battalion had been a pioneer at the camp. The 65th, which had been at San Francisco, moved to Camp Haan early in 1941, and was the first outfit in the new installation outside of a National Guard unit, according to Robert Vice, who served as the 535th's sergeant major during most of its wartime existence.⁶ Vice recalled that the camp was "complete mud" in the earliest period, and the GIs pitched tents for temporary habitation.

Later the camp expanded into a major post, and antiaircraft units proliferated.

The birth of the 535th in 1942 apparently was little noted at Haan outside of the small group of Army men involved. On July 6 the 535th Coast Artillery Battalion (Anti-Aircraft), later renamed slightly, was constituted into the United States Army, and on July 15 the unit was activated at Haan.⁷



In mid-October 1942 the 535th had about 400 men. Full strength of the new outfit was to be 800 men and 39 officers. Many of the Battalion's men were 40 to 45 years old, some were troubled by poor legs, rheumatism and heart trouble, or were otherwise handicapped. After recesses, after a rough-sounding sergeant in OD helmet had herded them through drill, they dropped onto their cots and claimed they were "done in" or made similar comments. One fat Southerner, nearing 45, wailed that there probably would be another war in 30 years-- "I'll probably be too old for that one."

A much-circulated joke at Haan was that the test for eligibility for the Army was whether your body was warm or cold, "If it's warm," GIs said, "you're drafted." But the Army already was weeding out some of the older men, sending them to limited service. Not all of them wanted to be taken out, however. One cigar-smoking Italian violin maker in a Headquarters hutment liked the Army routine, the marching on the parade ground, the music of the band.

"You know, it gives you the shivers, makes you feel proud," he said.

In early November 1942 the Battalion received more than 400 men from Camp Callan, bringing the unit up to full strength. We heard stories from the new men about a Callan major who was an enthusiast for cliff climbing, 20-mile hikes and other strenuous activities and who drilled the men until, to hear them tell it, even the biggest and beefiest specimens dropped out.

We were receiving immunization shots, which did not hurt as much as watching the fellow in front get his.

Two Medical Detachment privates grabbed him tightly, one from each side. The recipient twitched as each Medic drove a large needle into his naked biceps almost simultaneously, and after they had let him loose the GI walked through the door flexing an arm in circles, violently, as if to revive it.



On a morning later in November, after we had returned to the Mojave desert, one of the Headquarters men muttered, as he crawled out of his cold bed into the colder morning, "I can see right now that only the best of us are going to leave here."

The nights were icy cold and we bundled up with everything we had in our tents. With a sleeping bag, three blankets, an overcoat and several sweatshirts, a GI could keep out the cold and manage fairly well.

Extra wardrobe was not needed during the daytimes, when the temperature climbed rapidly to 90 to 100 degrees.

The 535th's tents were pitched near Death Valley 12 miles east of Camp Irwin (old Camp MAAR) in a desert consisting

of powdery dust and scrubby vegetation; there was nothing else on all sides of us.

In the entire Mojave desert, most of the flora grows no more than two feet high, except for Joshua trees and greasewood bushes, so our camp site was typical of much of the regional terrain.⁸

We shaved and washed in the morning in a helmetful of water, and our laundry took three weeks for return. Occasionally we got a chance to ride trucks into Camp Irwin to take a shower and visit the PX, where we could buy soda pop, writing paper and other materials.

One of the big attractions at the PX was a large jukebox which played the latest hits including "Mr. Five by Five", "Der Fuehrer's Face", "I'm a Prisoner of War (on a Foreign Shore)", "Born to Lose" and "No Letter Today." The prisoner song was an especial favorite; the GIs played it over and over, and sat on benches nearby drinking soda pop and listening to the melancholy song very thoughtfully.



In Headquarters, GIs were awakened at 5:15 a.m. by 1st Sgt. Russell McLain blowing a whistle and yelling, "Let's go, let's go!" We could hear the A Battery first sergeant, a tough, stocky, tobacco-chewing fellow reminiscent of a real movie type, shouting at his sleepy men: "Let's go! Let's go! Come outta those holes!"

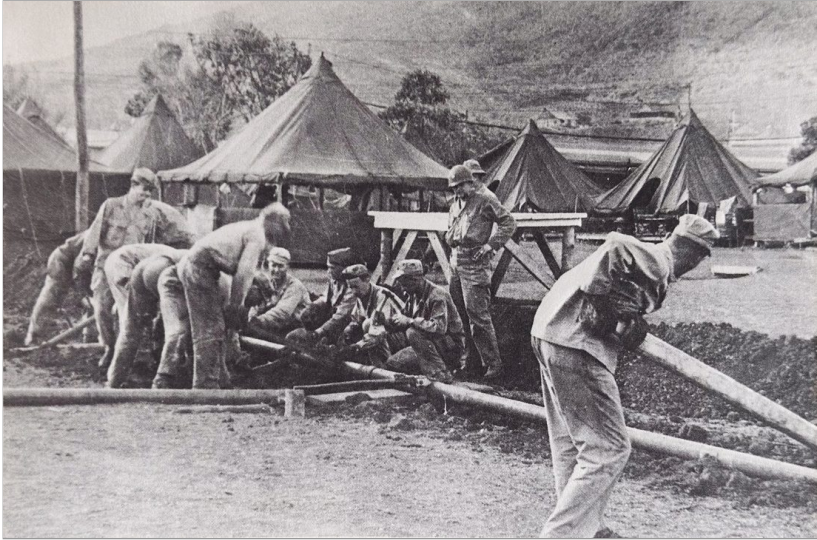
The 535th men were receiving basic training that included infantry drill, lectures, rifle firing and sneaking up on a machine gun nest. This last activity consisted of capturing a pile of rocks-- the "machine gun"-- by running and crouching,

traveling zigzag style from one clump of brush to another, flopping in the sand behind a bush and also crawling partway on our stomachs.

The 535th rolled out on maneuvers in late November and early December, with its 40mm guns and .30-caliber machine guns, and occupied a "strategic" point, usually a dry lake "airport", where they set up anti-aircraft defense. For these "dry run" exercises, field orders were issued, map overlays were prepared showing proposed sites of guns, and other procedures were followed that would also be used in a combat zone.

On a typical day, Nov. 30, with most of the Battalion gone, the camp during the day was practically deserted except for sick and guards. The weather was starting to get hot at 10:30 a.m., and fires in front of the mess hall tents were smoking. C Battery "street" was empty at 10:30 except for a kitchen worker chopping wood.

At 3 a.m. Dec. 6 during a bivouac, the batteries staged some surprise attacks among themselves and one attacking party used tear gas.



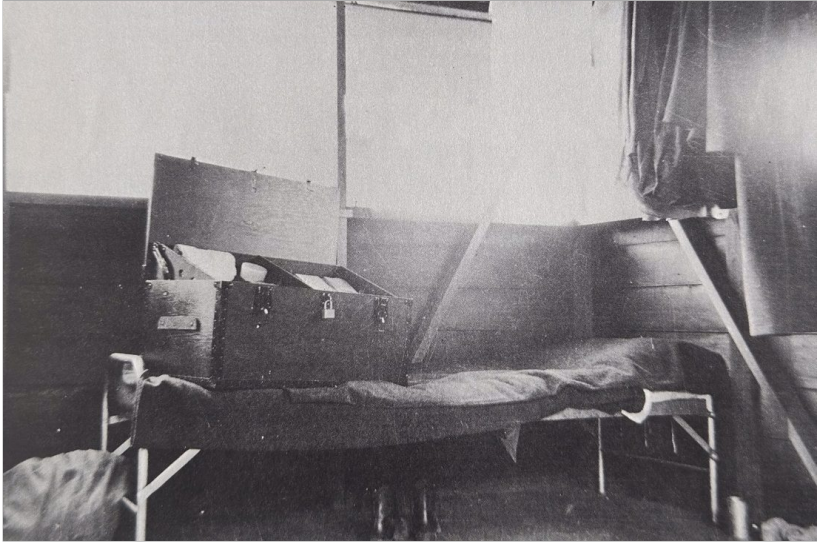
Troops install new facilities at Camp Irwin during World War II. Living conditions improved from more primitive conditions. On one later trip to the desert, the 535th found 5,000 troops quartered at Irwin. —U.S. Army photo



"Camp Dusty" was appropriate name for this early habitation of the 535th on the bleak wastes of the Mojave Anti-Aircraft Artillery range. The Battalion's trucks are parked at left. New recruits of the 535th maneuvered at dry lakes and other places in this area. —Ted Van Arsdol picture



This is one more "dry run" but filled sandbags for protection against shrapnel and proper camouflage procedure are considered essential in the training program. The gun unit is No. 1 section of D Battery, at the Mojave Anti-Aircraft Artillery Range. —Photo from Marshall Botbyl



Inspections are a frequent part of the training program, and foot lockers and beds are required to be in proper order. This photo of Robert Koerber's living area at Camp Haan is typical interior view in 1942, shortly after the 535th was organized. —Robert Koerber photo



Scene along D Battery "street" in Mojave desert shows typical pyramidal tents of the time, with stovepipes sticking out of tops. Lister bag in the center provides cool drinks for the troops. —Marshall Botbyl photo



Soldiers of the 535th "break in" on a variety of weapons. Ed Neol of D Battery is trying out a M1 rifle, in foreground. Troops on the horizon are equipped with a machine gun and a 40mm anti-aircraft gun. The 40mm was the Battalion's main weapon at first; later the halftracks with quadruple machine guns were added. —Koerber photo



Robert Spencer, former member of the 535th, stands amid the ruins of old Camp Haan, near Riverside, Calif., in 1970. The Army post once was a bustling training center for anti-aircraft units. —Spencer photo



Some of D Battery's troops line up with packs and blankets near hutments at Camp Haan, Calif., home base of the 535th. Leggings of the type worn by the GIs here were abandoned later for combat boots. —Robert Koerber photo

B Battery attacked Headquarters, which had only a few men around at the time, captured the guards and swarmed into the tent occupied by Lt. Col. Joseph Kelly, the Battalion's commanding officer.⁹ The CO, however, balked at being hauled out into the icy wind blowing at that time of the morning, and told the invaders to take the next tent, that he wanted to sleep. B Battery GIs captured three lieutenants at the other tent. Another lieutenant, we heard, was found crouched behind a small bush in the nearby desert.

The B Battery troops also rounded up a few Headquarters privates.

About the same time A, C and D batteries were having a little "war" too, a practice for more serious actions at some later date.

Yet there was a considerable feeling too that the 535th might never be tested in combat-- a large number of the Battalion's GIs thought the war was as good as over after the Americans landed in North Africa. Big newspaper headlines proclaimed that the U.S. troops were "smashing" forward and closing the "trap" on the Germans. A considerable number of troops even were anticipating an end of the war by Jan. 1, 1943.

Although these contentions were overly rosy, the Allies were gaining, and the anti-aircraft armament and training were a definite assist. Troops were getting more and better guns, and the tide definitely had turned in favor of defense on the land and sea as early as September 1942, according to one writer.

The 40mm such as being used in training by the 535th on the desert was one of the key weapons in the antiaircraft

arsenal-- this automatic cannon, using high-explosive tracer shells, could be fired at the rate of up to 120 rounds per minute and the shells were fused to explode on contact with any part of an airplane. One shell could rip off a wing section or blast apart an aircraft engine. The 40mm had its own power supply, also a mechanical director-- a mathematical computing machine.

One writer stated that hitting a fast-moving target with one of the 40mms was not as easy however, as might appear-- it was, he commented, "about as hard as using a pea shooter to knock down a bumblebee across the street." He described the training:

Each gun crew gets plenty of instruction before it sees active combat. The men fire, both night and day, at sleeve targets that are towed at various altitudes. They learn to whip their guns around in a hurry and then steady them as they begin to lead the target. They fire bursts at radio-controlled miniature airplanes that are in effect scale models of full-sized aircraft flying at higher altitudes, and they fire at rocket targets that whiz past them overhead at speeds of up to 400 miles per hour.

The even-faster firing .30-caliber machine gun, which the 535th also was using, sent its bullets traveling at the rate of 2,700 feet per second; the armor-piercing slugs could penetrate a half inch of steel.

An advance which already had shown up in combat and which was to affect the 535th later was in offensive tactics. In North Africa in November, Gen. George Patton had improvised a mobile ack-ack battalion to go forward in fighting with the armored forces. Automatic anti-aircraft weapons had been placed on self-propelled mounts-- vehicles of vari-

ous types. The switch to automatic weapons reached its apex in the development of great numbers of halftracks mounting multiple machine guns. Before the Normandy Invasion, the 535th was equipped with some of these, but on the Mojave desert the Battalion had only the 40mms, which had to be towed by truck, and quadruple machine gun mounts on trailers. One of these was supposed to accompany each 40mm gun. The 32-cal. machine gun trailers were taken away in England.¹⁰



After a month at Irwin, the 535th convoys moved out on Dec. 20, 1942, on a 400-mile, three-day route to Camp Haan.

The first civilization we passed through was the town of Barstow, an oasis in the Mojave, a very ordinary town actually but quite impressive to us after Mojave desert; it was great to smell the smoke from the train yard beneath the Barstow Bridge and to hear the locomotives screaming and their bells ringing.

On the first night we camped at a rock corral in the desert, and on the night of Dec. 21 at the Salton Sea. On bivouacs and convoys such as this our practice was to toss our sleeping bags out onto the sand for the night, and to dig a hole to sleep in-- a slit trench for protection against "shrapnel and strafing."

On Dec. 22 we rolled into Camp Haan with our vehicles and guns.¹¹



In early January we learned that the training period for anti-aircraft units had been changed by the Anti-aircraft Command from 13 to 22 weeks. This apparently meant that we would be at Camp Haan for at least 10 more weeks.

The rumor at Battalion Headquarters in January was that in a couple of weeks we were going to join an armored division at Camp Young, a big desert camp southeast of Haan. Most of the outfits that left there went to North Africa, we were informed.

Some of us were taking training in the jobs we were to hold in the 535th. A number of GIs were getting NCO stripes. One of the new corporals in Headquarters Battery said he was at a table where a 10-day rookie "cinched"-- finished off--the turnips. The custom was for the soldier who cinched the food to go after more. So the corporal blurted, "---- --- you, get up on the balls of your feet and go get some more turnips!" He said it certainly made him feel good to be able to yell at rookies in that manner. But the novelty of getting stripes usually wore off, and the average NCO settled back to normal in a short time.

In late January the 535th received 400 new men, most of them fresh from a reception center with no training. Majority of the men over 38 years of age had gotten discharges. But you could not tell what was going to happen next in the Army. One fat fellow in the Battalion, who was known as "Dumbo" after an elephant of the same name, had been anticipating a discharge any day because he was 48. But on Feb. 8 he was shipped to an overseas unit.

Most of the battalions and regiments that had been at Camp Haan in October were gone by early February, but nearly twice as many units had sprung up.



On Saturday night, Feb. 13, just before the Battalion returned to the desert, many of the 535th men celebrated. The GIs knew they would not get a drink of booze or see "civilization" or a woman for five weeks. By contrast with the desert, Haan was luxurious, with its leaves, post exchanges, service club and library, chapels and camp theater. The PX was the mecca for many that last night-- the PX where "a surprising number of world problems are solved each night between the hours of 5 and 10 when beer is sold," according to the booklet on Camp Haan.

When this writer entered his barracks on Saturday night two fellows were sitting cross-legged on the floor drinking PX beer and others were saluting madly. In the shower room some of the GIs were being tossed in the showers. Capt. Richard Meroney, the Battery CO, finally came in and broke up the shenanigans. The last noisy tippler quieted down about midnight.

At 2 a.m. Sunday the whistle blew, the signal to crawl out. A GI of Russian descent in the barracks slept on for 10 minutes, until we jerked him out. The men-- shouting non-coms and grumbling privates with loaded, bulging barracks bags-- milled in the glare of truck headlights. At last they were all loaded except for the Russian, who wandered up and down wondering what truck he was to ride in, and where was "a red cap" to carry his baggage. A technical sergeant had forgotten a typewriter, so he detailed a corporal to

get the equipment. The corporal detailed a private, and the private did not have anyone to detail, so he had to go himself. At four in the morning the convoy finally rolled out of the camp.

Air guards on the various vehicles took 30-minute turns watching for airplanes, and truck tarpaulins were rolled back so they could get a good view. The guards stood with rifles, one looking front and one back.

At the start of the convoy there was a great clutter of stars in the sky, and the towns were dark and asleep. The last part of the trip was in daylight, but the towns were quiet and not many people were stirring, as usual on Sunday mornings. The stores, houses and lawns seemed unreal and out of our kind of world, far from the life of the barracks, drill field and Army truck, a long way from this ack-ack battalion. On Cañon Pass, through which the convoy traveled, there was snow on the mountains, and the weather was icy cold, especially with the canvas off. Once again, Barstow was the end of civilization. The convoy rumbled through the town's main street and over the smoking trainyards and then we were in the desert again.

The trucks hauled us to a new area of Camp Irwin, a mile from the PX and small theater, both of which we found were jammed. Five thousand men were in the camp at the time.



A steady routine of training now ensued, for the new recruits as well as for GIs who had been with the 535th for several months.

One of the new men was Pvt. Fat Lee, who had come to the United States from Canton, China, in 1938. An incident recalled by Russell Hollowell of D Battery later was the first time he saw Fat Lee. Major Lee Burnham called the roll early one morning, when Lee was standing next to a heavy-set Indian. When the major called out "Fat Lee," Hollowell thought for sure "that a big guy would step out but somehow a little guy about 155 pounds, 5 feet 3, stepped forward." Hollowell added:

"Boy, what a surprise, and the biggest laugh of my life."

In February 1944 Lee's most vivid impression of Irwin on his arrival there was not the heat of the day but the cold of the region-- "I didn't have any long johns with me."

The first time Lee went on maneuvers, Sergeant Jenkins decided that he was too small so he used all the others to dig holes for the 40mm gun, and used Lee for guard. That way, he assumed, he could get ready quicker for the captain coming around for inspection. Lee remembered:

I got so cold every time the wind blew on me that my legs hurt, so I went over to Sergeant Jenkins and told him, "I want to dig a while." He said, "No, you go back on guard."

Lee crawled into a trailer where he had his blanket. Then the sergeant came over and asked what he was doing there. Lee told him he was too cold, and would rather dig a little and keep his body warm.

"But nothing doing," Lee remembered. "Well, I carried my blanket out there on guard."

Sergeant Jenkins usually called Lee "Confucius Said" and he dubbed the truck driver "Foxhole Bill." Lee remembered

that Jenkins "could sleep anywhere," in a movie even, also on the desert despite climate or terrain. He said:

Out there in the desert one morning the rain was pouring down. Sergeant Jenkins' feet were out of his tent and some of the blankets and clothes were wet but the sergeant was still sleeping like a log.



Sgt. Donald Beeman, who had charge of the D Battery mess, wanted to make a cook out of Lee, but "my idea was I didn't like to serve anybody," Lee said. "I wanted to be with a fighting unit." However, when Lee did go into the kitchen he usually ended up with plenty of food, as a couple of pals were cooks for D Battery.

At first Lee was even afraid of the sound of a .22 caliber rifle at Camp Haan. Then at Camp Irwin the harsh chatter of a .30-caliber machine gun was unsettling. But like the other gunners of the 535th he got adjusted to this and also to the 40mms, which were "too noisy" at first-- "I couldn't hear for almost half an hour the first time I fired." In North Carolina later and in England Lee and the numerous other gunners received considerable practice in actual firing, so that they were ready for the real action, against the Luftwaffe in Europe.

Another of the numerous new 535th men in 1943 was James Decker of Headquarters, who had joined in January.

Of the desert, he recalled that the sunsets on the desert were "magnificent-- just beautiful." He had "never felt better in my life," he said years later.

Decker was impressed with the strict discipline on water in the Mojave, the little amount in use, just a helmetful for washing, as an example.



One job of the Headquarters Operations section at Irwin was making a boxkite, which was towed behind a jeep, for the 40mm guns to "track" (follow), as practice for tracking enemy planes.

We continued to participate in various training programs including calisthenics, on the desert, and there were the usual maneuvers, with make-believe warfare.

On one two-day maneuver while the Battalion was defending an "airport" (dry lake) a few miles from camp, the Sergeant Major, Robert Vice, Operations Sgt. J.E. Clark and this book's author were sitting in the CP tent, and Lieutenant Colonel Kelly suggested that we should go out and capture one of A Battery's machine guns.

We went out looking for a machine gun, could not find one and finally sneaked up on a truck and tried to drive it off. The guard, 100 yards away, ran wildly in our direction when he heard the motor. We could not get the truck moving in the mud, and finally climbed out. The guard by now was sticking us with his bayonet and told us to "Go on-- go on-- go on!" to the A Battery CP. Two more soldiers rushed over to help him, and they herded us to the CP, where a lieutenant had us searched for weapons and sat us on the ground with three guards standing by and dug-in machine gun turned on us. Whenever we looked over at the machine gun pit, the machine gunner would swing the ugly nose of his weapon at us.

Finally the A Battery men marched us to the Battalion CP, under guard, to the S-2, and he turned us loose. We said we had been nabbed while attempting to steal a truck.

"The guard struck me in the rear end with a bayonet," Sergeant Clark said.

The CO, Kelly, said that reminded him of a story, but he was in a hurry to inspect some positions, so he would tell us later.

Our basic training was scheduled to end March 25. We were on "alert" in early March for overseas shipment. Second step in this process was to be the "warning" and the third was to be "movement," to Europe or Africa probably.

At Irwin, considerable talk was circulating about the 535th probably being shipped to Tunisia, and many of the soldiers were taking out insurance for the anticipated hazards to come.

The CO, chewing on a cigar and whacking his short whip against one thigh as he paced the CP tent, advised the 535th's master gunner, this writer, that we had better get together all the maps of Tunisia we could find.

On a three-day maneuver in the desert, we moved in the night to various "airports" and "truckheads" where we set up with our guns and other equipment, camouflaged our positions and dug foxholes. In the daytimes we dug our holes deeper, did more camouflaging and jumped into our holes when we received an alert notice.

Reports were going around that we would be attacked by "paratroopers" or some other kind of enemy.

Moving into position on the second night, sitting in the cold, black, jiggly back of a truck, GIs in Headquarters Operations section were all tired and unhappy. One suddenly remembered in a sickish voice that we had to dig our foxholes too after we set up and camouflaged the CP.

"I'm going to stand at attention and let them drive me into the ground," he said.

When we were unloaded we were met by a freezing wind and by Captain Meroney, who was rushing about shouting that the hillside was swarming with "enemies". One of the foes, already captured, was stretched out on the ground guarded by a clerk. The captain told the clerk that if the prisoner tried to make a break to knock him over the head. It made us sick to think how far away we were from morning, when we could get some warmth, and the invaders would be gone out of the desert brush. Headquarters personnel were up all night guarding, and threshing through the sparse foliage for enemy. We captured 25 including a captain, also a jeep, cans of a kind of smoke, also tear gas. The "enemy" had planned to gas and smoke us and make off with Lt. Col. Kelly.

Two of them escaped back to Irwin, and we rounded up the twenty-eight, cold and scared-looking, later in the morning.¹²

Such maneuvering inspired the 535th's "theme song," sung to the tune of "The Wabash Cannon Ball." A couple of sample stanzas from the song ("Simulated Cannon Ball"):

*Start digging in the evening,
And dig all through the night,*

*Keep it up 'til morning,
Until it gets daylight.*

*We get the gun in position
In the bottom of the pit.
Communications gives March Order--
There's a trail we got to hit.*

The song goes on to tell how the 535th men stayed on the Mojave desert for weeks at a time-- "we never got a furlough and couldn't spend a cent." The 535th simulated the target and the line, also the firing and the Battles on the Rhine, even the chow at times, but "to simulate the digging they never would allow."

A final stanza advises:

*So take it all in all, boys,
If you don't want to get gigged,
You simulate everything
But the holes you have to dig.¹³*

♦ ♦ ♦

Lieutenant Colonel Kelly was a rock collector, and added specimens from the desert. These were piled on his desk in the CP.

A nature lover, he had picked up a turtle someplace and was poking the creature with a stick to make it come out of

its shell. The colonel wondered aloud where desert turtles got water.



At night, after blowing out the candle, a GI in Headquarters could lie in bed and hear a Medic ("pill roller") in the tent behind us singing, in a sad voice, melancholy songs about "little darling," the Wabash Cannon Ball, and his desire to be "taken back" to Dalles. Enlisted men in other tents were yelling "Cut out that stuff, Slim," and making groaning noises, but the complaints did not appear to disturb the singer.

On March 14 the 535th returned to Camp Haan, traveling through the green San Bernardino Valley, past orange groves and along palm-lined highways, past bike-riding youths and walking people-- even the service stations "were beautiful", after the dreary Mojave.¹⁴

Lieutenant Colonel Kelly walked out of the 535th's CP four days later and never returned.¹⁵ The Battalion got a new commanding officer, Lt. Col. William H. Francis, a West Point man.

Even the new CO's chauffeur, Joseph Kelly, no relation to the former CO, could not get much of a line on the newcomer, we heard. The only time that Lieutenant Colonel Francis talked for a long time was to give orders.

Overseas orders still hadn't arrived. In late March the Battalion performed a night march under blackout conditions with Major Lee Burnham as convoy commander, and set up ack-ack "protection" for an ammunition dump near Haan.¹⁶ A notable 50-mile hike started on in the early afternoon of

April 8, and troops carrying packs arrived in the bivouac area at Lake Elsinore at 11 p.m. On the following day the troops trekked back.¹⁷ A "meat wagon" truck picked up stragglers.

The 535th convoyed to Irwin on April 13, for a shorter stay this time, 10 days. "Red" forces were operating from Nevada, and one of the 535th's duties was to defend an "airport" at Drinkwater Lake (dry). Two other Coast Artillery battalions, the 462nd and 413th, were with us on this exercise. Code names for units, blackout for night driving and various other simulated combat procedures were in use.¹⁸ We participated in some wild rides over dirt roads during five days of maneuvers. Once Headquarters trucks had to go sailing off through the brush at terrific speed. Hanging onto the safety belts and seats, we still bounced violently off the truck's ribs. One of the GIs cried: "We're being attacked by Messerschmitts. Take to your parachutes!" All of us had a great time, except for one 40-year-old who had a bad stomach.

Also at Irwin, we struggled through an "infiltration course," crawling 200 yards through gassed brush toward three machine guns firing over our heads. Whenever the officer in the tower spotted a soldier with his seat in the air, he would cry, "Burn him!" and the machine-gunner would let fly at the GI to make him flatten out.



When we returned to Camp Haan we got another chance at passes, and many soldiers as usual headed for Los Angeles. You disembarked from the bus or streetcar on the smelly Main street, lined with beer parlors ("Service men

welcome," the signs stated), tattoo shops, noisy penny arcades, all-night movie theaters, pawn shops and a couple of burlesque houses including one featuring Dagmar the Exotic in her "electrifying dances." On a typical evening, a bystander could observe Spanish-Americans with long hair and zoot suits, soldiers, sailors and marines, some with women, and such "standout" characters in the crowd as an inebriated cowboy on a curb playing a guitar and shouting, "Let's have a square dance!" and an old fellow in a baggy suit playing a fiddle.

The Los Angeles area provided many opportunities for sightseeing and everywhere we went other military personnel, many of them and all types, were on view. At the boardwalk at Ocean Park on a weekend in late April a large crowd was gathered where several soldiers were trying to knock a civilian off his perch into a tub of water by hitting the right spot with baseballs that cost 25 cents for three throws. The civilians called the GIs "yardbirds" and "Okies", and they called him "draft dodger" and "4-Fer." This apparently was just a business proposition to the fellow on the perch, but the soldiers were irate at being called "shepherders" and other names.

♦ ♦ ♦

One final trip to the Mojave was made by the 535th, on May 10, for the 40mm crews to wind up their training firing.

We knew now what our jobs would be, to defend strategic points such as airports and troop concentrations against dive bombers and low-flying level bombers, but we did not really know where we were going yet. Numerous rumors were circulating, and some of the buck privates even were quoting

the Camp Haan commanding general about what he thought of us and where he was going to send us.

Roses were blooming in yards in the town when we convoyed back to Camp Haan on May 14. In the trainyards we saw puffing locomotives, and boxcars with interesting names-- Wabash, New York Central, Denver and Rio Grande Western, Great Northern, Santa Fe-- reminding a person of the vastness of the country and of all the places, towns, cities, plains and rivers, that many of us would like to see and that we might see while in the 535th.

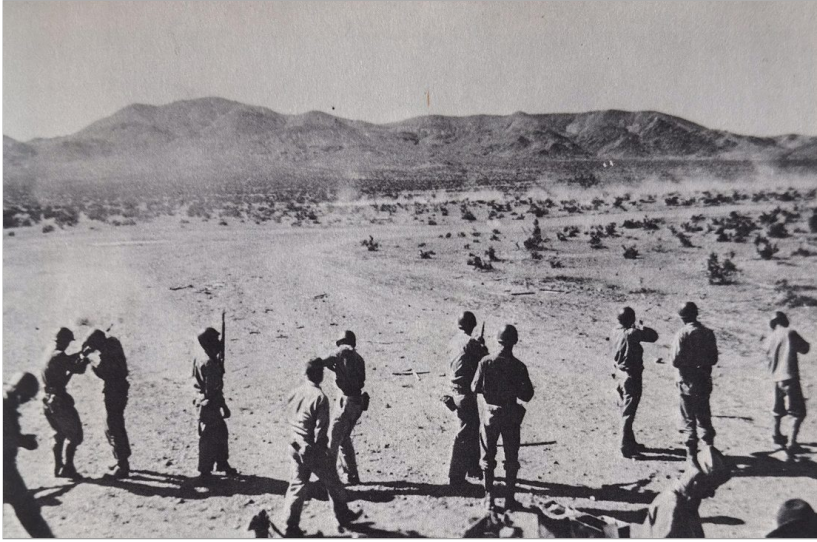
♦ ♦ ♦



Dug in on sandy wastes of the Mojave, a C Battery 40mm crew is ready for the "enemy." Robert E. Lutz, one of the trainees from Colton, is seated at the weapon. Other GIs, from left, are Russell Hedrick, Eugene Rolfingsmeyer and Edward Gorlock. —Robert E. Lutz photo



Pyramidal tents seemed “elaborate” as compared with this type of habitation, the individual pup tent. This was another part of extensive desert training program planned for 535th troops. In background is water bag, essential part of any Mojave camp. —Art Imwalle photo



The desert provided plenty of space for Army activities, such as rifle firing. Getting acquainted with small arms was one of the essential phases of the 535th's training. —Herman Boykin photo



Camouflage net spread over a Headquarters 535th installation in the Mojave is part of simulated combat "atmosphere." At the time it was believed that 535th might see action in the deserts of North Africa. —Van Arsdol photo



Long line of 535th troops wait to clean mess kits in Mojave Desert.



A 535th group in the Mojave is clustered around a piece of gun equipment. H.N. Boykin, who loaned both pictures on this page, said Sergeant Jenkins, Clarence Richter and Adolfo Velasquez are among GIs on the canvas.

The day after we arrived back in Haan we were redesignated the 535th Anti-aircraft Automatic Weapons Battalion.¹⁹ Coast Artillery had seemed like a misnomer for some time. In mid-1943 the Anti-aircraft Command was one of the fastest growing arms of the military service. Originally organized under the Coast Artillery, Anti-aircraft by summer 1943 far exceeded the size of the parent organization.²⁰

California to Atlantic

Rumors were circulating that the 535th was going to guard prisoners of war for "the duration", and that the battalion was to be converted into Rangers. This kind of talk got started from reading of newspaper stories of POWs and Rangers at Camp Atterbury, Ind., which was to be our next camp.

On the 535th's last night at Camp Haan on June 9, 1943,¹ carpenters worked by spotlight until 11 or 12 at night--sawing, hammering, building "combat" boxes for equipment and supplies. Lying in beds, the troops still could hear the noisy saws and hammers. Footlockers and beds had been turned in, and the 535th men had stuffed all their possessions in two barracks bags each, ready for a quick move.

The following day we loaded on a train at a railroad siding for the trip which was to take five days and five nights, and soon the train began rolling east, taking the battalion for the last time from the familiar scenes of its first training days. Early on the trip, the desert was in view, with nothing in considerable of the desolation except for an occasional lime mine or railroad station.

Deeper in the continent, in the Great Plains, sandstorms swirled on the horizon, and wind rustled the top fringes of roadside grass and fields; farmhouses were lonely and far between.

The troop train rumbled through Salt Lake City, Denver and smaller communities. It was a poor way to see the cities; the train thundered through the little towns with whistle screaming, and in the bigger cities we saw only the Hoovervilles and warehouses.

Waving at everybody along the way was great sport. Anyone would do-- sweaty section hands along the track, farmer plowing, barefoot girls standing on porches along the river near St. Joseph, Mo.

The men were unloaded for 10 minutes of calisthenics daily on a railroad station platform, and then were given five minutes to wander in and about the station, bathless and sooty, while civilians crowded around to look at us.

Most of the fellows in a Headquarters car had breakfast in bed, but not in the same style as bright-eyed actresses we had seen on movie screens being served their breakfast in the boudoir. A pair of hairy legs dangled from an upper berth, and a GI in a lower berth was frowzy, stretched out in shorts and with mussed hair. Grumbling KPs stumbled down the aisles with heavy pots of food for the car's occupants. Some of the men gambled during the day, others read True Story and Startling Detective or listened to Headquarters Battery's guitar player:

Born to lose

And now I'm losing you...

(and)

...When the whistle blows

I gotta go

Oh Lordy

I guess I'm never going to lose those Freight Train Blues...

The train carrying the ack-ack outfit clickety-clacked across murky Midwestern rivers, which were flanked by muddy and puddled banks, and GIs watched the wooded countryside of Missouri flash by outside the cars. They also had some teasing glimpses of St. Louis and Indianapolis before being unloaded at Atterbury, 30 miles south of Indianapolis.



Weather was hot and humid at Camp Atterbury in mid-June but this was a pleasant camp, on a grassy plain. This would have been a fine camp in which to spend a war. But wars are never won in good camps.

The Battalion was attached to the Second Army, and we were told we were heading for Second Army maneuvers in Tennessee when we got our trucks and other vehicles to replace those taken from the 535th at Camp Haan. Movement orders came through in a short time, combat boxes were re-nailed and loaded, and shirtless privates dragged beds and mattresses downstairs and wrestled them into trucks to be hauled back to Post Headquarters.

Most of the Battalion left Atterbury by motor convoy for Tennessee and some rode in an old train.

Soot whisked in through open train windows, and train smoke blew over the fields, hay mounds and green corn.



In early July the convoys of the 535th Battalion moved out for the first maneuver of eight that were scheduled to wind up Aug. 28. Lt. Col. William H. Francis, the Battalion commanding officer, was in charge of the 535th's phase of these new training exercises, and the batteries were commanded by Capt. Richard Meroney, Headquarters, Capt. Robert Bricker of A, Capt. George Dickerson, B, Capt. Robert McWaters, C, and Capt. Victor White, D. Capt. Stanley Lowe was CO of the Medical Detachment.

Traveling south with the 535th on the highway on July 5 to meet the "enemy", the Blues, were other units of the first "combat" Army to which we had been attached-- the Reds. Thousands of gray-jacketed infantrymen, carrying rifles, bazookas and other paraphernalia, marched in file down each side of the road. There were tank destroyers in long columns-- smelling of gas-- convoys of trucks, field artillery guns, jeeps carrying dour-appearing officers. The jeeps were topped by radio aerials that jiggled with the movement of the blocky little vehicles.

The ensuing three-day battle ended rather indecisively, with the Red Army capturing the Blues' main town, and the Blues sneaking around the Reds to take our big town, Lebanon. The 535th's Operations truck was strafed by a P-39 but there were no umpires at the scene, so the vehicle escaped being credited for any "casualties."

* * *

On July 12 and 13, the 535th's Headquarters was camped on the Cumberland River, a short distance southwest of Hartsville.² The S-3 section's two ground observers, as al-

ways, were posted on a hillock to watch for hostile planes. When they fired three shots, the men of Headquarters Battery were supposed to hit the ground or jump into foxholes. One of the observers commented that the circling P-39 fighters of the enemy reminded him of "angry bees." On July 13 he counted a convoy of 49 lumbering C-47 transports crossing our flank to drop Blue Army parachutists in our rear areas.

Paratroops were something new for the U.S. Army. In late June, these new-style fighters had made news on the Tennessee Maneuvers. An entire airborne division was used in a tactical operation-- paratroops and glider-borne infantry carried out the attack from Fort Campbell, Ky., 100 miles northwest of "the battlefield."³

About the time the transports were seen on July 13, word was received that the 535th would have to retreat along with the rest of the outnumbered Red Army. Thousands of Blue paratroops were rumored behind our lines. After loading tents and other equipment, Headquarters men stretched out in the grass waiting for the march order, watching fireflies that resembled little helicopters in the dusk, and later, in the dark, were brief sparks as they flitted here and there.

All of the batteries met at a designated rendezvous point except for A, which had been surrounded by paratroops. C Battery had been defending Division and Group CPs, while B and D had been providing anti-aircraft protection to pontoon bridges which the Reds had to cross to reach the north side of the river. Fifteen minutes after Headquarters arrived at the rendezvous, word was received from Group that the Blues were near and that we should get out.

The No. 1 truck, with the guides who were to direct the convoy at road junctions, pulled out in the lead, soon met 30 to 40 tank destroyers, and after one had forced the truck into a ditch, the 535th driver stopped for each of the armored vehicles. The fragile truck waited like a scared rabbit, motor palpitating slightly, hugging the bank, as the big ugly machines rumbled by. They reeked diesel oil and wafted a fog of dust over roads and fields.

Further on, tough-talking Blue paratroops stopped the guides' truck, but they wanted only an empty to ride in, and let the 535th vehicle go. On one of the retreat roads, Headquarters vehicles passed infantrymen of the 83rd Division, still marching at 2 a.m. As the blacked-out truck crept through the two files slowly, the "foot sloggers" were muttering, "Oh my feet" and "This is the worst hike I ever been on" and cussing the "goldbricks" riding in the passing truck. Even in the dark, some of the trudging soldiers could be seen faltering. They had been withdrawing since the middle of the day. After that, the hard truck seat felt better.

At 6 a.m., after much stopping and going, and reconnaissance by the Colonel, Headquarters wound up on a hillside. The men were sleepy, dirty and lacking water. In the lull, picking blackberries and waiting for the cooks to prepare breakfast, everyone made remarks such as, "I'm drawing my pay today and looking for another job." At such times, a GI wished more than usual that the war was ended, that he was a civilian again, bathing every day, not being awakened each morning including Sunday at 4 or 5; it would have been nice to be almost anyplace out of what seemed a cramped, unimaginative routine.



But by the time we were launched on our fifth maneuver in early August, we were largely accustomed to the gypsy-style life, the chow, the customary heat, the work and sleeping on the ground. When a 535th soldier got a helmetful of rainwater, from a sag on the roof of a tent, to use in shaving, it seemed as if he had been doing that forever.

We were stuck with the same companions each and every day. In Headquarters, for example, this extended from early morning, when the soldiers crawled mussily and painfully out of their sleeping bags-- while First Sgt. Russell McLain and his helpers hollered "Let's go, let's go" and "Get on the gol-danged ball"-- to nighttime, falling asleep to the putter and talk of the radio ("Umas 1 this is Umas 2. Umas 1 this Umas 2. Over.") Even in a GI's dreams, the parade of variegated humanity continued.

In the battery an observer could see-- how could he avoid it?-- his comrades' cruelty, dejection, pleasantness; the dark brooding while sitting after getting a verbal rousting-out; the pride of the cowboy singers in their guitars ("Sure is a tough old guitar. It's lain in the sun and rain, and been to the desert three times"), and hear the boasting over women they had picked up, the complaints about who was getting the NCO stripes, the knowing discussions about the vast war, the reminiscing about their homes scattered across much of the United States. They could be seen, dirty and sweaty, digging foxholes in the lush Tennessee woods, and, on weekends, going to town in clean suntans, most of which had at least a slight "barracks bag crease."

But there was not too much time to philosophize about troop attitudes or situations. The 535th GIs would be starting to take down tents and pack up other gear, to move to a new position.⁴



"I was detailed as Battalion liaison officer with the 43rd Infantry Division headquarters-- a raw second lieutenant as Division Artillery anti-aircraft officer," Lt. Thomas Elliott recalled. He also said:

The Division CO informed me that he had read where the AA had a secondary role of anti-tank or tank destroyers, so on the next problem we would act as the "point" on the advance, and our first objective would be to take a town and hold it for the infantry. I tried to explain to him that we had truck-drawn guns and that we were not fitted for that type of a mission. He wouldn't listen to me.

I informed Colonel Francis of the mission and he blew his top... But we still were used as the "point." When the umpires got through with us, there wasn't much left. I so well remember the critique after the problem and the way that General Bull lit into the Division CO for the patent misuse of the anti-aircraft artillery, especially after he had been told that his own staff officer had informed him that it was not according to the manual.



Mrs. Harding Braun, who was able to stay with her husband, a C Battery sergeant, for a year in the States before the 535th went overseas, said that while the 535th was in the Lebanon area her husband could come home only on weekends-- after an airplane flew over blowing a whistle or alarm to let the troops know that the "war" had ended for a week.

While on a maneuver, Sergeant Braun had written his wife a letter, threw it off a truck in Lebanon and hollered at a passerby to mail the letter, please-- which was done. In the letter, Mrs. Braun stated, Harding wrote, "I sure hope and pray we get bombed so we will be out of this war for the week." Later, Mrs. Braun learned that the troops were bombed with a sack of flour.

On one weekend when the GIs could not come into town, Sgt. Ed Parker-- killed later in Normandy-- came into town to pick up Mrs. Braun and two other Army wives, told them to get their pajamas, "you're supposed to go out to camp."

"So we all went out to camp and had a cook-out for supper and we all slept on the ground in sleeping bags and got to spend the weekend with our husbands after all."



About 5:30 one morning after fifth gun section of A Battery had just finished digging a hole in a farmer's field, the farmer came out and said that "breakfast is ready", but that the troops would have to take turns at the table. The 535th men informed him that their chow was coming and not to go to any trouble, but "he would not take 'no' for an answer," Pfc. George Cook said.

So the soldiers went in, several at a time, for a nourishing repast of ham and eggs, hot biscuits, jam and "the works." The farmer turned down payment that was offered. But before the gun crew got march order the GIs chipped in and gave money to the farmer's daughter, a child of about nine. The girl took the names of all the soldiers and wrote to them for some time afterward. The money was used to buy two

pigs, which were raised by the girl. Last information to A Battery was that she had sold the porkers and made a good profit, Cook said.



Sights and sounds of the Tennessee Maneuvers-Near Lebanon, on the night of payday, the gambling games were under way. A dozen men would be crouched around a blanket, and a flashlight beam would follow the brief roll of the dice, like a stage spotlight.

"Hup, what do we say, dice?"

Another group would sit listening to a guitarist and harmonica player serenading the ack-ack men with "Beautiful Dreamer," "Pistol Packin' Mama" and other tunes, the usual offerings. But in the night, on the cricket-noisy Tennessee meadow, it was somehow different and strange, pleasant yet melancholy too, seeming to carry more than a hint of the transient nature of humans and their pleasures.

A half-dry creek, populated by waterbugs and crawfish, was the setting for more than one makeshift GI laundry that summer. Hillbilly types in overalls would come down to the creek or spring to squat and watch the goings-on.

The business district of Nashville was crowded with soldiers. In an old section of that city, a GI could walk past brick and wooden houses, gray with age, abandoned long since by whites to the Negro populace. Negroes sat on the porches, and their youngsters with long, bare legs played in yards and weedgrown lots. It was a doldrum kind of place seemingly full of haunts; the bird song in the trees seemed out of place with the desolate appearance of the neighborhoods.

Up in the hills, men of the 535th discovered the original "Dog Patch," simply a country store on a dusty hill-country road, with an old gas pump in front and a few weather-beaten and unpainted houses nearby.

Near Flat Rock, Tenn., on Aug. 14, Headquarters was camped in woods, during the sixth maneuver, with two more slated. An oinking band of smelly little pigs waddled down the hill past the CP tent, toward the kitchen, where KPs kicked at them and sent them oinking back up past the CP.



Intelligence and supply were among two key operations of the Battalion, but not above oddball situations at times.

James Decker, who was assistant supply sergeant to Sgt. Victor Dunne in Tennessee, remembered a day when rations were broken down for each battery in a field, and messengers were sent to each with information on location and breakdown. But the guard for the rations slipped up in his duties, and when the first weapons carrier arrived and lights were turned on the scene, the rations were found to be scattered over an area about four times as large as originally. Hogs had been rooting around in the supplies, had scattered potatoes all over the field, ripped open cartons, tipped over cases and smashed eggs. "We had to tighten our belts for a while," Decker stated.

The supply man said that as far as he was concerned Tennessee was more demanding physically than Europe. In Europe later there was danger of being killed, but Decker never worked as hard there as Tennessee. The troops were always moving in Tennessee, and the rations had to be

broken down and made available at designated points. Sometimes march order would be received before contact could be made to pick up the rations.

The 535th's Intelligence unit was getting a workout in preparation for more serious work at some later date. A coop full of pigeons had been requisitioned from the Signal Corps, and on the supposition that such birds might be useful some day, soldiers in S-2 and S-3 tied messages to their skinny legs and the birds were supposed to go flapping over the trees toward 11th Group, which was the Battalion's immediate superior headquarters. At least the theory sounded good. But Lt. Elliott, Intelligence officer at the time, recalled:

We set them loose only to have them fly to the nearest tree and sit there. We tried sticks and stones but got no messages through. Then we couldn't get the damn birds back into the coop.

A radio, scratchy with static, provided us with flash messages from observers for the 535th and other units, such as:

Flash-- flash-- Blue infantry approaching our position from the South. Over.



On a Sunday in mid-August the men of the 535th received passes to Cookeville, with thousands of other soldiers.

Three eating places were open, and two of these were "off limits" with MPs patrolling at the front doors, keeping away prospective "dogface" customers. The town's two movies were closed by Sunday law. If a soldier tired of — walking around and around the town square, he could wait in line at one of the restaurants or sit on the stone fence at the old

courthouse, swinging a key chain, maybe, looking about and thumping his heels against the fence.

One of the older and more experienced drinkers commented, "I can usually smell it (whisky) as soon as I step off the truck," but he could not do so this time, and had to hunt for four hours before finding a bottle in the colored section of the community.



The 535th was on its eighth and last maneuver in late August, and a string of Battalion trucks had departed for Camp Atterbury to get barracks bags and other gear that had been left behind.

Headquarters CP closed near Bradley on Aug. 26 and moved to the Portland area. On Aug. 29, A and Headquarters moved to the edge of Portland, near the town dump, waiting to board a train. B, C and D batteries were to follow later.⁵

Late on Aug. 30 the train carrying Headquarters and A batteries began rolling out of Portland, through Tennes—see.

The train cars passed the big, peaceful Tennessee River and Chatanooga. This train did not have the glamour of the "choo choo" celebrated in a popular song of that period; there was no "certain party at the station", no boy to shine our shoes, as in the fabled "Chattanooga Choo-Choo." Air conditioning temporarily was defunct, the windows could not be pushed up, and the soldiers sat with their shirts off, faces and arms glistening with perspiration, and beads of sweat coursing down their chests.

On reaching Atlanta, the train was stalled for a while in the grimy, smoking trainyards, and GIs sent Negro boys chasing after cookies and bottles of soda pop. Engines shuttled about singly, in our vicinity, or labored with lines of boxcars, reefers, coal cars and tankers.

After leaving Georgia, the train charged northeast through the Carolinas, and the ack-ack men saw black water rivers and swamps, brown withered corn, scrawny forests and run-down Negro houses. A few Negroes were picking in cotton fields, and bales of cotton were in view on warehouse porches and the "cotton platforms" of the Atlantic Coast Line railroad.

Most of the men spent their time gambling or reading tattered magazines on the trip which ended late on Sept. 1 when the train arrived at Camp Davis after a trip that had lasted two days and two nights.

B, C and D batteries arrived early Sept. 5.

After unloading, the 535th began leading a barracks life again, with beds for the first time in two months. The new stop also meant passes, 15-cent movies, showers and PX, where the jukeboxes blared out with the now-much-familiar "Pistol Packin' Mama" and with Glenn Miller's orchestra and other topical musical fare. The troops soon learned that the camp consisted of three main parts-- an airport, training center and the Anti-Aircraft Artillery Officer Candidate School. Unofficially, the section where we were quartered was known as "Mosquito Hollow." The soldiers said the mosquitoes were so big that a flight of them sat down on the Camp Davis runway and the attendants there were about to refuel them before they discovered they were not P-47s.

Across the fence and highway from Camp Davis was Boomtown, with a short main street made up of beer parlors and stores selling Army clothing, gaudy souvenir pillows and other typical wartime merchandise. Wilmington, 35 miles distant, was the only town of any size nearby.

The 535th was informed that the unit would be at the camp long enough to fire its guns, fix up trucks, and salvage and clean clothes and equipment.

From Camp Davis, the 535th was shifted to another North Carolina installation, Fort Fisher, on a peninsula about 20 miles south of Wilmington. The Fisher period was notable mainly for target practice, furloughs and considerable speculation about the 535th's future.

On a sunny day near Fort Fisher, the Atlantic Ocean near the installation was blue and clear. Soldiers clawed in the wet sand for sand crabs for fishing bait, dodging back and forth as the foamy water slopped back and forth, and then fished off the pier for sea bass, drums, hogsheads and other sea denizens. The Atlantic was so huge that piers of Kure's Beach and Carolina Beach down the coast appeared tiny, poked out into the sea on skinny underpinnings. Standing there, watching the waves, a soldier could feel closer to other places on the edge of the same ocean-- New York City 500 miles to the north, the jungles and cities of South America, to the south; beyond the horizon eastward was the bloody continent of Europe.

Cold nights had nearly closed out business at the seaside resort of Carolina Beach. Some of the men used to go there to get somewhat "wine dumb" or slightly paralyzed on beer. Then even the ugly girls began taking on the aspect of

queens, and it was great sport to ride the dodge'em cars, jig in front of a jukebox, and hit Hirohito and Adolf on the wooden head with a baseball, three shots for a dime. But by Oct. 20 the beach was fairly well deserted because of the weather.

The fact that most of the men were on furlough in October was an additional major factor in the resort's deadness. The Battalion was operating with a skeleton crew, and even the camp was lonely.

The Headquarters officer-of-the-day helped break the silence during the lonely vigil on Oct. 28 by cracking his knuckles loudly. He and the charge of quarters, the writer of this book, listened to a violinist playing "The Blue Danube" and "Play Fiddle Play"-- this probably was the effort of a Medic next door-- and heard the wash of the ocean against the beach, as always, a faint rumble that came and went, came and went, on that dull evening.

Most of the men had returned from furlough on Sunday, Oct. 31. AWOLers dribbled in later. Rumors were continuing to circulate about the 535th's future, and many members of the outfit were wondering if they ever would cross the ocean. A considerable number thought we would police up Europe after the Armistice. "We'll go over and pick up the bones," one said.

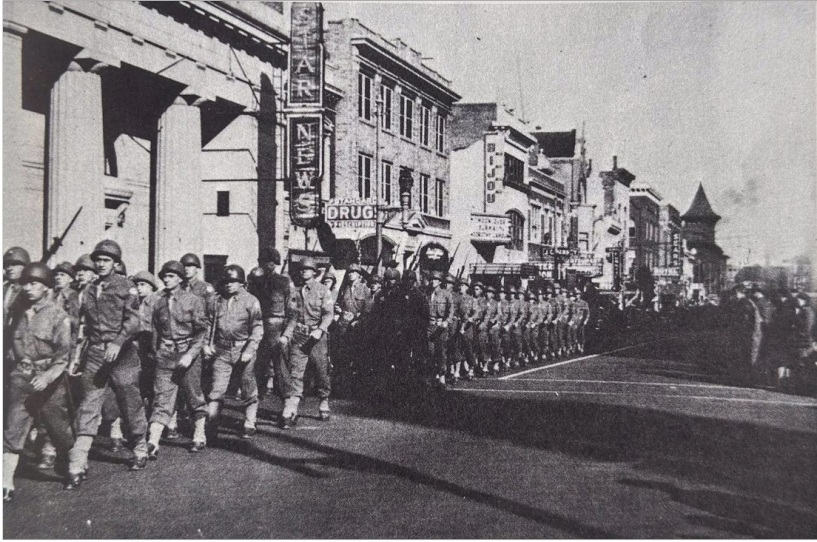
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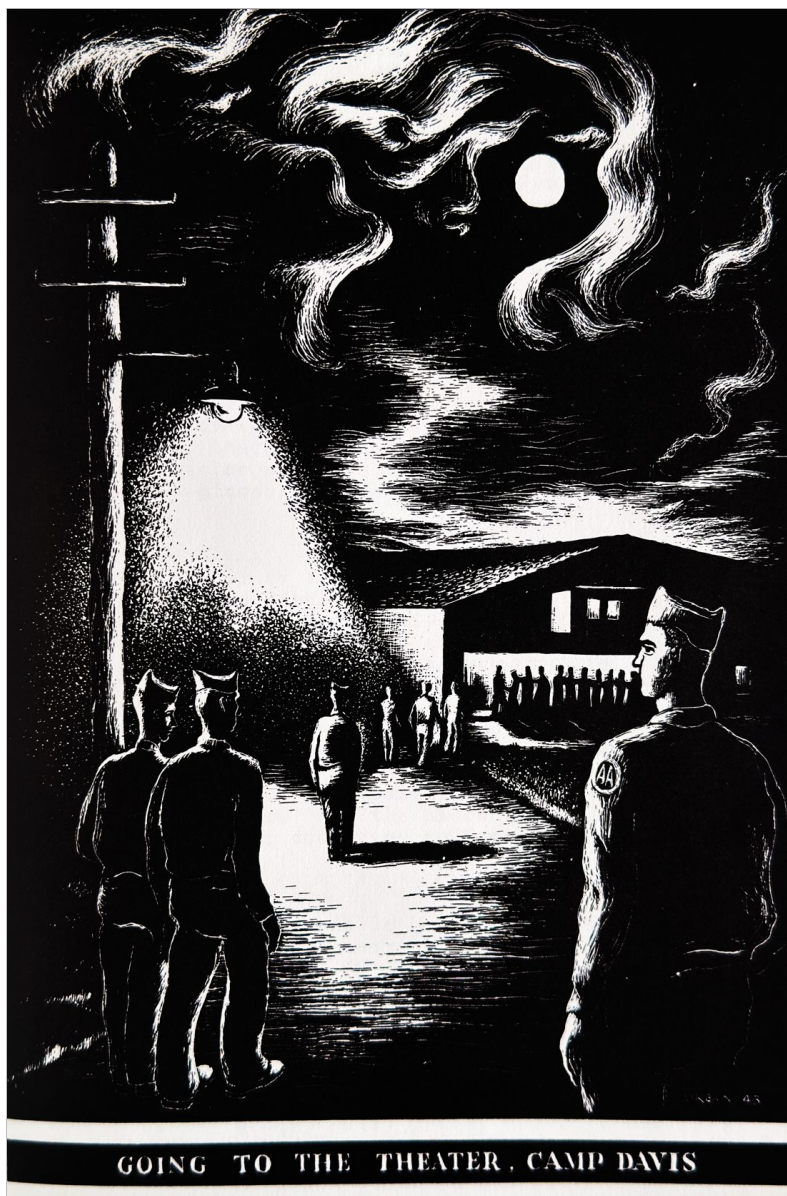
REVEILLE AT CAMP DAVIS — Non-commissioned officer reports in with battery personnel during reveille, under dark morning skies. Camp Davis artist has captured a well-known phase of Army life with this illustration done at the big anti-aircraft installation.



Halftrack with death-dealing machine guns sets up a bivouac near North Carolina, in this sketch by Pvt. Norman Nichols. Training of anti-aircraft troops was constant at Davis and at smaller nearby camp, Fort Fisher.



Following behind their battery guidon, GIs of the 535th step along briskly on Wilmington Street during Armistice Day parade in 1943. The entire Battalion participated in the parade, not long after arriving in North Carolina from the Tennessee maneuvers. —H.N. Boykin photo



GOING TO THE THEATER, CAMP DAVIS — Movies featuring pin-up star Betty Grable and other cinema celebrities of the time were popular fare with World War II troops. In a typical scene, lit by the Carolina moon, troops are shown heading for a theater at Camp Davis in 1943. Notice AA (for anti-aircraft) patch on soldier's arm.

On Armistice Day, Nov. 11, 1943, the 535th convoyed to Wilmington, passing seaside cottages with frosted roofs, woods of scrub pines and the black Cape Fear River, and the Battalion was unloaded in the city to participate in a parade. When the 535th lined up, the weather was brisk and sunny and the atmosphere was ideal for our first public parade, with the band in front of us blaring out lively Air Corps and field artillery tunes and other music, and crowds waiting along the sidewalks. The 535th marched up and down the cobbled streets, along Market Street where church spires rose above the trees, past the reviewing stand at the Court House, and along Front Street, where the crowds, spilling out into the street, clapped as the troops paraded by. This was the big effort so far for the men from the plains and Pacific Coast, parading in the old Southern town, and they did their best-- looking straight ahead at the helmets and leaving bayonets, stayed dressed (side by side) and covered lin file) and made their turns sharply. The one GI who kept looking around and waving at women was generally cussed afterward. The Battalion reacted in that stirring parade the way most of us thought we would to the threat of death and death itself in Europe. The men were tired of training over and over; they wanted something more than inspections and digging fox-holes against a simulated enemy. Sgt. J.£. Clark of Headquarters said the fellows of the 535th were "a rough, high-spirited bunch-- give 'em a rowboat and a bottle of whisky and they'll take it (the 535th) across."

With the weather generally dank at Caroline Beach, the main recreation was movies. On Nov. 13 the movie at Fort Fisher showed handsome Air Corps officers romancing a

beautiful blonde in the days before Pearl Harbor. The film included one enlisted man, a kindly old master sergeant, somewhat of a character, as they were portrayed generally in the movies of the time. While movies were recognized as entertainment, there was some feeling among the troops about a false impression conveyed, the creation of a fictitious Army in which glamour girls seemed to abound near the camps.



For a number of the married men of the Battalion, North Carolina provided the last sampling of a home-type life before going overseas. Wives from all parts of the United States followed their husbands to the Eastern coast. Mrs. Andy Davis, wife of an A Battery man, said a considerable number lived in Wilmington and also in beach houses at Kure's Beach. Her own experience included a short time upstairs above a beer joint at Carolina Beach. "I went to sleep to the music of the nickelodeon and woke up with the nickelodeon," she said. In Wilmington, she said, the service club at camp was "our salvation." The food was good and inexpensive there, and the place was warm. Wives spent a lot of time there, according to Mrs. Davis.



In late November and in December training of various kinds including some maneuvering, firing and inspections kept the Battalion busy. On Nov. 22 the men saw an artillery drill demonstration by an anti-aircraft battery from Great Britain. A morale film shown to the 535th on Dec. 15 at the post theater was "Desert Victory."⁶

The 535th had one hectic weekend at Fort Fisher during which Colonel Francis restricted the Battalion to camp for sloppiness-- shaggy hair, untidy barracks and other flaws. The men worked Saturday and Sunday and were inspected closely both days.

Rumors alleged that the 535th was going back to Tennessee Maneuvers, but many of the GIs believed we were likely to cross the Atlantic in time for the invasion. When hundreds of entrenching tools and a number of bazookas arrived late in December, the men got more excited. However, nothing was more certain in the Army than uncertainty. Nobody seemed to know what was going to happen.

Shortly after the first of the new year-- 1944-- the 535th was in Camp Davis again, getting ready for a trip to the Port of Embarkation. In addition to the regular training program, we received shots, went through inspections, lectures and firings, and turned in guns, trucks and other equipment. We were to get brand-new equipment at the Port of Embarkation. Capt. James Grazier was appointed packing and crating officer, and non-commissioned officers received instruction in waterproofing boxes. There was much else to do, such as picking battery censors and having AWOLers rounded up. And the men had to police up the area before leaving. An advance party was to leave for the Port of Embarkation Jan. 10.

During the month we were required to see a number of Army films boosting the United States' and Allied war effort. In the movies, Germany seemed to be about 40 per cent Stukas screeching down out of the sky and another 40 per cent soldiers in masses-- parachutists jumping, engineer troops

scrambling down a bank and other military men in action-- plus some attention to Hitler, who was shown in a rather comic light. The films were well-done and potent for their purpose, which was to indoctrinate the soldiers into the mood of the war objectives.

On convoy, standing in a truck and squinting into the wind, many GIs of the 535th had wondered what strange roads of the world they would travel in the same way. Now they could wonder again, as the time of departure neared. Most were glad they were going in their own outfit, instead of as individual replacements in units they did not know. There were drawbacks-- we had no personal life, sleeping in a room with a wide variety of other fellows, eating with scores of GIs, using the same showers. If a soldier was "called on the carpet" by the battery commander, acquired venereal disease or lost some money in an evening of poker playing, everybody knew about it, and sometimes the talk got a little catty. But the contacts paid off in knowledge acquired about the men. Months of acquaintance enabled a man to know the good points of the various soldiers, as well as their failings. In any battery, for example, there were always one or two "meatheads", as they were called, people who did not pay their debts. This information circulated rapidly and resulted in semi-ostracism for the delinquent parties. Anti-social attitudes were not condoned by the majority.

Some easterners and other new men were added to the Battalion at Camp Davis, as we prepared for the trip overseas. Some time would be needed for them to be really absorbed in the unit in the same way as the fellows who had been with us for more than a year.

The latrine at Camp Davis was the battery forum, where strategy, personalities and individual and collective woes were hashed over verbally. During the day you might encounter a couple of cooks or KPs there, taking "a break." The KPs complained about alleged rough treatment from the mess sergeant, and one threatened, "If they press vs enough, we'll put strychnine in the beans." At night, after the camp movie was dark and the PX beer counter closed, you could find usually three to twelve men in the latrine discussing the latest topic of interest. Two of the older enlisted men of Headquarters Battery, former "working stiffs", were in the Headquarters latrine one night debating, and one, swinging a rolled-up magazine, was telling the other, an anti-union type, that he and John L. Lewis should be "shipped back to the old country." The non-union man said he was not going to pay money to "some monkey smoking a cigar." When the unionist's opinion did not register with the other debater, he complained, "You're a little bit hard-headed and about 90 per cent veered up." The latrine talk covered almost every conceivable subject-- Chicago or some other city, the Russians, machetes, the officers. These were just a few samples. "Latrine rumors" were circulated here, and "guardhouse lawyers" handed out free advice. Guardhouse lawyers claimed to be authorities on military law, advised other GIs on their "rights," said that they could only be given this penalty, or some other-- they seemed always to have an answer-- for whichever offense was involved.

♦ ♦ ♦

When the time arrived to move out, the 535th was loaded on board a train at Wilmington and soon was rolling on.

The train passed through Washington, D.C., in the night, and on the following day the soldiers saw numerous old frame buildings near the tracks in New Jersey before arriving at our destination, Camp Shanks.

The 535th men were told that Camp Shanks Headquarters had promised passes to New York City if we cleared for shipment in a hurry, so we worked long hours and finished just in time to catch an outgoing ship convoy, failing to get the passes. Colonel Frances stated that the Battalion was alerted for movement to the ship about noon, just before passes to New York City would have been authorized.

To the “Jumping-Off Place”

The omnipresent Kilroy, a traveler who left his moniker at public accommodations and various other facilities all over the globe some years ago, might not have scrawled his name on our route yet, at the time we headed out of Camp Shanks, but we were now on the main route for several million young men of the World War II generation, civilian soldiers, as we passed through the Port of Embarkation. Many who had gone before us had carved their names, we soon discovered, on deck railings and in small latrines on The Duchess of Bedford, which carried us across the Atlantic.

But such idle activity as name-carving held no interest for 535th troops riding a ferry boat to the transport, now acutely aware of ties being cut, of leaving their own land. Shoulder straps from field packs pinched into GI shoulders as we gazed at the famous skyline and tall towers of America's greatest city, a scene that many of us knew only from pictures. New York City, just across the water from the ferry boat, seemed almost as remote as a colored postcard even then, for the Battalion from California was bypassing the siren lures of the metropolis to board the Euvrope-bound transport.¹

Some 535th men had gone ahead on Feb. 9 after three hectic days and nights of inspections, physical examinations and shots at the camp. T/3 Norman Bergstrom was with this group, with the Medical Detachment of 10 men, when they

strapped on field packs and gas masks, picked up bulging duffel bags and boarded a troop train that carried them down to the Hudson River for the ferry trip to the Duchess of Bedford.

On board the 20,100-ton, 16-year-old vessel, an Englishman led the 535th group down into what Bergstrom termed "the bowels" of the craft, to an area known as E-2, below the water line of the ship but just above the freight and luggage that was to accompany the troops on the voyage across the Atlantic. Three hundred men were crowded into this hold that was about 60 feet square, and occupied all parts except for a boarded-over hatch in the center of the of the room. A ship's officer told the GIs not to sleep there because if the Duchess was torpedoed the men could be hurt by flying planks. Only 12 bunks were available for the 300 men; most slept on floors, benches or tables and a few in hammocks. Loading of the vessel with 535th and other Army personnel was completed on the following day, according to Bergstrom. On a brief stop just before going up the gangplank, many of the ack-ack men were handed coffee and doughnuts by Red Cross girls. A band at dockside blared a goingaway serenade, and one tune that Pfc. Edward Barrett of A Battery remembered was about the gal who was not going to give "no love, no nuthin'... 'til my baby comes home." Also, supposedly to put us in the proper departure mood, the musicians sounded off with "Deep in the Heart of Texas," and GIs straining under the heavy loads wondered if the bandmaster thought we were Texans. At the top of the gangplank, soldiers were routed in two directions, and S/Sgt. Raymond W. Dixon of C Battery filed off with others to what had been a

salon or lounge of some type, previously. Some furniture had been removed. 7 Other furnishings were piled in corners.

"When we had filled the room completely, we were told to make way for 25 more men," Dixon recalled. "Somehow we did."

Then the jammed-in GIs were permitted to remove packs while some sleeping quarters were located for them.

Headquarters enlisted men slept mostly on hammocks, and some dozed on the cement floor or on tables.

The Duchess of Bedford was "double-loaded," Colonel Francis said. Twice the normal number of troops were put aboard. Half were supposed to sleep while the other half congregated on deck or in the passage-- wherever there was room.

What the accommodations for passengers might have been in normal times was a bit difficult to visualize. The Duchess had traveled out of Liverpool to Canada for the Canadian Pacific, and had been a popular liner.

We realized that the cramped quarters might be the least of our difficulties, as we faced a trip through an arena provide by German submarines, Two of the Duchess of for x zoe sister ships had taken the final plunge already. e Duchess of Atholl had been sunk by a sub in 1942, and the Duchess of York went down in an air attack off Morocco in 1943.

* * *

Late on Feb. 11, 1944, the "passengers" on the Duchess of Bedford noticed a new sensation, described by Bergstrom as "a sinking feeling," and they knew that the vessel was under way, headed out into the harbor and eventually to the Old

World. Many 535th men soon experienced seasickness of varying degrees of severity, and the sickest wished "that their friends and neighbors who had selected them to represent them, were there to enjoy the voyage."²

Those who were least susceptible to the rolling, lurching motions and others who had recovered from the initial bouts with queasy stomachs were able to enjoy the view from deck, the fascinating sea in all its moods, changing in coloring with the sky.

At times the Atlantic would be relatively calm, then rugged with huge waves, and wind-swept.

On all sides was a convoy of transports and their protecting escort, a cluster of naval vessels. Even the largest ships appeared small like toys tossing on the ocean.

Mealtime broke up the relatively-inactive routine, but was controversial in itself. Food served the enlisted men could have caused future hostilities between the United States and Great Britain, Bergstrom remarked-- "the less said about the food the better." Pfc. Koerber recalls meals in which liver was featured prominently.

Distribution of a small booklet on Great Britain served to point the soldiers' minds toward what might be awaiting us on the far side of the ocean. We were advised in the Army guide not to be "a show-off" or get in arguments with the British, and were given other advice in getting along, even were counseled against "swiping" a British Tommy's girl. We read interesting bits of information about our future host country, could study a glossary of British terms (such as "pram" for baby carriage and "fowl run" for chicken yard) and peruse a chart of British officers' insignia.³



Finally, on Feb. 22,⁴ some barren coast was sighted, a considerably welcome sight after seasickness and intermittent concern about the German subs.

The Duchess of Bedford moved into the Firth of Clyde, near "good solid mother Earth," as Bergstrom termed the land. This was Washington's birthday, and American naval ships accompanying the convoy flew a brilliant array of flags. Orders were given to police packs, but the men remained on ship until the night of Feb. 22.

Next morning, in the semi-darkness, small boats came alongside and the 535th men piled into these and headed for shore, while seagulls swooped and circled.

We were unloaded on a dock at Greenock, the port of Glasgow, Scotland, and with our field packs on our backs and each enlisted man carrying a full duffel bag we made a rugged, rushed march through a tunnel and onto a railway platform, where we were loaded onto a train, ending up in small passenger compartments of a novel-appearing British train. A Scottish band was playing cheerfully on the platform, and Red Cross girls moved along the aisles distributing coffee, doughnuts and the London edition of the *Stars and Stripes*.

"Those doughnuts were more welcome than a T-bone steak after a month's diet of C-ration stew," T/3 Bergstrom stated.

With our loads off, in addition, we felt much better, despite the fact, as *B Battery Journal* observed, that men and equipment were "oozing out doors and windows of the little compartments."

The train began rolling, gradually picking up momentum, and we were treated to a variety of new sights strange to the large majority of us who had never been out of North America-- British cities and towns and the surrounding green countryside. The small farms were neat, and old stone fences marked off hilly fields into multicolored checkerboard landscape.

At one typical stop we were greeted by some old "codgers" and grimy, emaciated-appearing kids, asking, "Any cigarettes, mate?" Some of us asked one boy at a stop in Leeds if he attended school. He said, "Lor', no!", that he and the others quit school to work on the railroad. Most of the employees at railroad stations, we noticed, were women. Youths all along the way, at stops, pleaded for cigarettes, candy, gum and even buttons off overcoats.

Dusk came, then night, as the train continued to roll southward, and the 535th was careful to maintain blackout. We knew that the German Luftwaffe still crossed the Channel, looking for targets.

The train carried us so far through what seemed to be an over-crowded nation and one that we knew from our booklet to be smaller than North Carolina or Iowa, that we started thinking we must be going to the Channel area to jump off for the Invasion-- we were not far wrong on that guess.

At last, about 2 in the morning of Feb. 24, the train ground to a halt at Bridgwater in Somerset County, and troops of the 535th were unloaded on the darkened platform. Looking into the clear sky, GIs were able to see the Big Dipper, and that at least was a familiar sight. We loaded in trucks, which moved out along the streets, and from the back ends we saw Bridg-

water as a lot of dark building fronts in a blacked-out community. Shortly thereafter the Battalion was unloaded at Brymore House, an old mansion. An advance detail of the 535th that had arrived earlier was on hand at Brymore, where we moved into tents. Some of us later moved into the "castle" of the estate.

Pfc Donald Allen heard the scuff of heavy shoes, shouting and some profanity as the Army moved in, over "once-waxed floors, unshiny now and rough." In a poem "Brymore Manor" he also commented in part:

*...Secret doors and panels;
Rumored tunnels far below,
Intrigue and fascination
Enclosed within the Manor
Stately trees surrounding;
A wide paved roadway
Where once brushed horses pranced
And ornate coaches rolled...⁵*

At Brymore began a routine which T/3 Bergstrom of the Medical Detachment recalled as "a series of reveille in the morning, sick calls, hikes to build us up-- as we were told-- and dehydrated eggs, potatoes and carrots." Inspections and infantry drill also were on the program, and "we even paraded in a nearby town and had to listen to some 'Lord' make a speech beginning a war savings drive," S/Sgt. Dixon noted.

Capt. John Heinke of the Medics remembered "plenty of cases of bronchitis and pneumonia during the first two

weeks while we were getting toughened up by the weather." Our printed guide already had informed, "At first you will probably not like the almost continual rain and mists."⁶

Naturally we had to explore the surrounding area too and get acquainted with the natives.

S/Sgt. Milford Stevens of the communications section and this writer went into Cannington, a village one mile from Brymore House, and were looking at an old church when a man walked up and invited us into his home, out of the cold. We accepted, and sat by his tiny fireplace as his wife fixed us tea, bread, pears with sauce and cakes (cookies). The four of us talked of the United States and England, the war and German raids. Our hosts told of bombs falling in fields around the villages-- but not a cow was hit-- and of flocks of enemy bombers droning past toward the cities, how they could see against the night sky the lights of fires and explosions in the far-away cities.

One of their own doors would not close after one raid in which bombs were dropped nearby, and the bomb that fell the closest caused the Englishman to lose his speech for a moment. He said it got so "we didn't know if we'd live through the night and if we'd have anything to eat for breakfast." The Cannington villager had become "a pessimist, a dismal Jimmy." In the days of the aerial "blitzes", he was a home guard and would stand watch on a lonely hill with a piece of pipe, but he said he did not know what he would have done if German paratroops had dropped from the sky..

The Englishman showed his house, 1740 clock, china and air raid shelter, a snug little cement dugout with bed and a

device which started brewing tea at a pre-determined time, and set off an alarm clock when the tea was ready.

He also showed us the insurance plate, 250 years old, on his house. In early days, each insurance company had a hose cart to extinguish fires in houses which they had insured, he said. If the residence was not theirs, they let the house burn. The Cannington man said he had a "parchment" telling what they were required to do if the house was not covered by them. A fireman placed his heels against the blazing building, walked out five paces, pointed his right arm at the house and said, "Let the bugger burn."

The couple's son was a draftee, they told us, and had been a Medic in the Royal Air Force for four and one-half years.



Although Cannington did provide some limited attraction, mainly at pubs and an occasional dance, Bridgwater was the leading town for GIs on pass.

Early in the evening in Bridgwater, on pass, a soldier could lean back against a railing maybe and enjoy the sights of that wartime town in early 1944, You could hear faintly the merry-go-round music from the fair (carnival) in the park, gaze at the old brick buildings, each with a slab of a chimney on top, and, sticking in the chimney hole, one to four little tubes, which the English called chimneypots. Crowds of people were out walking, and the traffic funneled across the bridge and tidal River Parrett. Some civilians wheeled along on bicycles, and many women pushed prams. British soldiers were mixed in with the throngs, but about half the crowd on

many evenings were "Yanks", some going in and out of pubs, many with English girls.

After dark there were no neons or other bright lights to drive away the gloom, for this was the time of the blackout. Seeing England go dark night after night, we were beginning to understand what it really meant for Americans to be able to have lights gleaming each night in their great cities-- on State Street in Chicago, on Monument Circle in Indianapolis where the fountains were ringed by bright shops, and in other noted metropolitan centers we had seen. But the blackout did not stop the crowds in Bridgwater. They continued to mill through the narrow, winding streets of the Somerset community. Some carried flashlights which they pointed downward in front of them. After our first passes in Bridgwater the GIs reported some unusual anecdotes involving the blackout. One had been out with an English WAF, drinking "arfs and arfs" (half beer, half hard cider) and was kissing her on the street but when a flashlight was turned on, he was holding a military policeman, he claimed. Another bumped into a woman with "a young voice" and almost had her "snowed" (a World War II expression referring to a convincing sales talk) when someone turned on a flashlight so the GI could discern his female friend's face. The aging Briton "looked like a sea hag," so the 535th man soon departed.

The pubs, or public houses, provided the Bridgwater night life, and could be identified in the blackout by a faint gleam or sliver of light from the door or blackout curtains. These pubs had been termed by our booklet on Great Britain as "the great place of recreation." While the beer was reported below peacetime strength, the booklet had informed us that it

was still potent enough to make "a man's tongue wag at both ends."

When a soldier pushed through door and curtains, he found himself in a lighted interior, where there was a bar, jammed with customers, several packed little rooms where patrons could sit and drink beer and cider, and a crowded hallway connecting it all up. The pub was merriment and confusion and noise, often with musical accompaniment, from piano-- somebody usually was pounding out the hits of the moment, "If I Had My Way," "Can It Be Wrong?", "Jealousy" and others. Patrons always were edging sideways through the crowd with their beers, and an arm would be jiggled and some of the beer slopped onto the floor.

The dim light and unHINGING effect of the warm beer made the English women look much better. Conversations in the colorfully-named pubs were interesting if not always overly enlightening.

"There'll never be an invasion," a little blonde told the writer of this book one night. "They're just bluffing old Hitler."

"Have you seen all the American convoys that have gone through here in the past few days?" was the reply. "We didn't come all this way for nothing."

"Well, I was wondering a little about that."

The young woman got 24 ration points each six months for clothes, she said. Her coat took 17 of that amount, and her frock (dress) cost eight. She earned the equivalent of \$40 a month in a war plant, which was pretty good for her, she said, because most girls of 19 received only \$36 there.

Anything which she liked was termed "smashing." One of the most interesting aspects of the English girls was their style of talking. Apparently there was a mutual curiosity. One English girl explained it, "I like to hear you Yanks talk."

The pubs were hectic from 7 to 10:15 each night when the soldiers were on pass. At 10, the pubs stopped selling beer, and the proprietor started shouting, "Time! Time! Come on, my lucky lads!" The Americans coaxed the proprietor, "Grandpa" or "Ma", or the barmaid for more beer. Fifteen or twenty minutes were needed ordinarily to clear out the GIs.

Another Bridgwater pastime was attending the cinema, where everyone had to stand at the end of the "flicks" for the playing of "God Save the King."

There was never time to get in much trouble. We always had to catch the last bus back to camp shortly after 10, or be taken in by the military police. Often the moon was orange and full over the silhouetted chimneypots of blacked-out Bridgwater when the GIs spilled out of the pubs and headed for the truck.



One of our Southerners had seen a woman of the pubs in the company of a Negro, so he wrote "nigger lover" on a piece of paper and slipped this onto her table at the pub. She was angry, and the rest of the evening she sat morosely, staring around, refusing beers and coaxing to forget the appellation. Ma, the proprietor, walked in with a tray to pick up empty mugs, a little later.

"Do you know who's in here, Ma?" said the southerner.

"No," said Ma. "Who?"

"Nigger lovers, the SOBs," said the southerner.

"The SOBs," Ma spat, and lifted her fists as if to do battle--she had been sampling her own stuff and was in a mood to agree with almost anything. "Where are they?"

The southerner looked around. "They gone," he said.

General Eisenhower had ordered that all soldiers were to have the same recreational privileges, whether they were black or white. Some white soldiers were startled when they saw white girls dating Negroes, and the southerners, accustomed to segregation, did not like to drink in the same pubs with them. But it was a changing world, and generally the racial problem was not too vexatious in England.

Many of the men could sympathize a bit with the colored soldiers. They had been drafted, mostly, and were looking for a little recreation in this foreign land, like the rest of us.



On March 11 the 535th troops convoyed to the Cornwall coast, to Penhale Point, for more training including target practice. The gunners fired at a white sleeve target towed over the water by a plane, and on March 19 the men blasted at moving dummy tanks on a target range. Airplane identification and physical training including a rugged hike in sand dunes also were on the program.⁷

"The commanding officer of the camp, ruddy and self-assured, and quite Hollywood in his breeches and boots and bemedaled jacket, shook his riding crop at us and gave an interesting talk," according to S/Sgt. Dixon, who added that the training and instructions at Penhale were "thorough and very helpful."

The sergeant commented:

On one occasion, after a period of rough and tumble and English exercises that brought into play

muscles we didn't know we had, we were finishing with a series of push-ups and were just about exhausted when the English sergeant said, 'Now one more for me.' That was okay so we strained out one more. Then the sergeant made the mistake of saying, 'Now let's have one for the King.' Some one in the group sounded off with, 'To hell with the King,' and the party was over."⁸

In spare time, the 535th men had a chance to roam over the rocky coast, near the gray ocean waters. Although the camp was small, a movie and Naafi were available-- at the latter installation tea and two cookies could be purchased for four pence. One movie shown at Penhale was typical Hollywood fantasy, full of spies chasing each other in the night and intrigue in Turkey. George Raft was our hero, the tough American who foiled the Nazis and saved Turkey. As the brutal Nazi stooges escorted him down to the dungeon to "work him over," the Nazi chief said that now he would hear him scream and yell, and Raft snarled, "That's what you think!" And he didn't either. The Nazi leader made the mistake of all movie villains of that time who leered over the would-be victim instead of shooting him, delaying until he was outwitted or the hero was rescued.

On a typical night in the Penhale barracks, a couple of fellows might be hitting each other on the muscle, several would be writing letters, a group might be huddled around a bed playing poker. You could hear talk about cards and the

jingle of English coins. The Headquarters Battery guitar player would be going through his melancholy repertoire, frequently offering his theme song about "my home in San Antone."

Returning from Penhale on March 20, the 535th convoyed through Exeter which had been hit during air raids. Blocks were flattened except for a wall or two, and in the little jumbles of bricks were signs stating which business firms had been there, and, if they had moved, where they could be found presently.



Lt. Col. Francis surmised that the Battalion had been selected to take part in the invasion of Europe when the 535th was not placed in the anti-aircraft defenses of England. The availability of the unit could have been a factor in selection of the 535th for the role. Another reason, the colonel believes, could have been that the Battalion had participated in the Tennessee Maneuvers.

Official word of the 535th's coming invasion role was received before the Battalion's directors were replaced by Stiffkey sticks and prior to the issuance of the M16Bs-- with quad .50 machine gun mounts-- to the Battalion.⁹ The Maxson multiple mount, which could be used against low-flying strafers, was carried by a half-track in a mobile "wasp wagon," a term used in publications but not in common usage in the 535th. This "mobile pillbox" carried a gunner, two cannoneers, a driver, and a squad leader.¹⁰

Colonel Francis commented on the invasion preliminaries:

I think it was April that I was "Bigoted"-- that is, given security clearance that permitted me to have access to the plans for the invasion. To see these plans, I had to go to Weston-Super-Mare, to Brigade headquarters, the nearest place a set was available. The plans were inches thick so I concentrated on the portions which would affect the Battalion. However, I did have the general picture of what was planned at Omaha Beach and the British beaches.

Problems in preparation that faced the 535th were changes in equipment, more target practice, waterproofing instructions, embarkation training, beach landing training, establishing a state of discipline so that the men would react promptly and properly in case of emergency. By discipline I don't mean punishment; I mean an attitude, a mental state, that distinguishes the true soldier.

And of course there was the problem of position selection from maps, photographs, and terrain models of the far shore. As I was the only one having a BIGOT clearance, the preliminary work had to be done by me alone. (This was upset when Utah Beach was, during the actual landing, sideslipped from its planned position.)

Also, there was the problem of planning the detailed placement of vehicles on the various vessels that were to carry us across. Here again, because of clearance, I had to do most of this alone. For both of these I had to go someplace other than Brymore to do the work. It was a place set up by higher Headquarters for this work specially, but I have forgotten where.¹¹

Major Burnham, the executive officer, was in charge of administration during this pre-invasion period, as he had been in the past, and continued the same role during the combat period in Europe. Major Thomas Janney, as S-3, the operations officer, was to have supervision of the actual fighting role of the 535th. In this job he worked in a team with the S-2 (Intelligence) officer, Capt. James G. Craig. Both were from

Virginia, had attended Virginia Polytechnic Institute, and had known each other for several years.

Commanding officers of the line batteries who had vital roles during the Invasion preparations and who led their men to France were: Capt. Robert Bricker, A Battery; Capt. George Dickerson, B Battery; Capt. Robert McWaters, C Battery; Capt. James Grazier, D Battery. Capt. Stanley Lowe headed the Medical Detachment, and Capt. Richard Meroney had charge of Headquarters Battery.

Before the Invasion the 535th's field-grade officers, Colonel Francis and Majors Janney and Burnham, attended a gathering of field officers, including those of battalion level, in a theater in Plymouth. Francis recalled:

General Montgomery made a pep talk in which he said the war would be over by Thanksgiving or Christmas at the latest. I didn't agree with him, didn't think it was possible, so when I left I told Janney and Burnham to forget those remarks and to not repeat them to anyone in the outfit. At that stage, I couldn't say to a GI that General Montgomery says so and so but I don't agree with him. Thus I thought it better to omit all references to any predictions when the war would be over.

♦ ♦ ♦

Long, gray convoys of the 535th streamed out on March 22 to the Assault Training Center at Woolacombe on the west coast of England for waterproofing instructions, preliminary landing training including loading on LSTs and LCTs, and unloading on the beach, also work with explosives. T/3 Bergstrom described this activity:

The men were quartered in pyramidal tents and ate in a central mess. Here we learned the fine art of handling mines and booby traps. After proper instruction in handling the infernal machines, the men were divided into small groups and we cleared mine fields, as well as laid mine fields.

For our practice work with mines and booby traps, the regular explosive charges had been removed but replaced with enough powder to produce a loud explosion as well as a nasty burn. The medics did a land-office business of treating minor burns of the hand and face. The truck drivers practiced loading dummy LCTs and LSTs.

After this, all vehicles were waterproofed and the trucks were driven through the surf. Late one afternoon we boarded a British LCT and sailed around for a few hours. At the proposed time of landing the vehicles and men, the surf was too rough for the LCT to hit the beach. This necessitated us going out to sea again and finding a beach that was suitable for landing. We finally made a landing about midnight. We got our supper about 1 a.m. after a chilly ride back to our camp.

S/Sgt. Dixon rode in a LCT several miles along the coast. When the boats grounded near the beach and let down their ramps, C Battery raced ahead under full acceleration and "we had little trouble." The operation seemed simple.¹²

On trips to and from the Assault Training Center the 535th troops saw much new scenery. In addition to riding the convoys, some of us were able to ride around the area in jeeps and other vehicles. We saw scrubby moors, the sea, hedged-in fields, and villages and towns, where in the mornings you always could see the women out on their hands and knees scrubbing the doorsteps. Roads were narrow and winding, and the traffic was strange by ordinary American standards--a flock of bicyclists, U.S. Army trucks, sometimes a band of

sheep, a load of hay with the hay dribbling down onto the road from the underside, and maybe a bicyclist riding herd on a dozen cows.

On most nights while at the Assault Training Center we got passes from 6:30 to 10:30 p.m. Barnstaple and Ilfracombe were the pass towns, and the main attractions were pubs, a dance, several cinemas and restaurants with only scanty menus, but a change from the GI chow.



Spring was returning to England.

At one of our tents at the Assault Training Center on Sunday, March 26, warm sunshine came through the open door and in it could be seen floating dust particles and curls of smoke from cigarettes of the poker players who were squatted around a corner cot, whistling and talking. Lone Wellington bombers hummed through the sky far above us. In the clear air of the past few days, people with telescopes on the Dover cliffs had been able to see, across the Straits, the time on the Calais town clock, the bustle in and around town, and the fields of the Continent beyond. We read that in one of the London newspapers.

At Brymore House in early April (we had convoyed back to the old mansion on March 29) birds were singing outside, the fields were like lawns, green and neat, and the bare trees were starting to bud. Days recently had been fine, some quite warm. But the finer the day, the more a GI felt the uneasiness and uncertainty. This was like no other spring in the lives of the soldiers here, for warm weather meant Invasion and war.

There was reassurance, however, in the size of the American armies in southern England, and the vast amount of equipment that had been marshalled. There was a confidence in final victory, and a feeling that preparations were being made carefully so that there would be a minimum of "snafu."¹³

So the April days passed, the trees turned greener-- and the 535th waited, hopefully but in uncertainty.



Bridgwater was tumultuous at times during the day when convoys rumbled through. The traffic-- jeeps, trucks, military police on a bunch of moaning, growling motorcycles, guns, more trucks and jeeps-- rolled through without let-up at those times. The town's sidewalks and main street were very narrow, and traffic got snarled when monstrous supply and engineer trucks rolled in; they had to creep along cautiously so they would not scrape anything along the edges of the street. A Headquarters Battery weapons carrier was stalled with other vehicles one day while big trucks eased past carefully in the other lane. A shoe store man rushed out and pushed up his awning so that it would not be ripped off. One old lady, about 80 and bewildered, stepped into the street; a truck squealed its brakes, and a man grabbed her back onto the walk. Shoppers stopped to stare at the traffic and soon the jam on the walk was as bad as the tieup in the street. Prams added to the difficulty, because they were hard to get around. In the midst of the moving line of traffic was a yellow milk cart pulled by a pony. The trucks in front of this vehicle began to pick up speed, and the pony driver whacked his animal on the rear to gain more momentum.

The Headquarters weapons carrier managed to get out of this traffic snarl, but then almost ran over a British sergeant walking down the middle of the street, and Donald Anderson, the driver, had to slam on the brakes to avoid hitting a black cat. Captain Meroney yelled, "Whup!", leaped up and waved his carbine and the cat bolted off.¹⁴

On another day, a convoy of tanks passed through Bridgewater, roared along the main street. Spectators could well be worried about whether a bicyclist, a pram-pushing mother or some other person wandering by would be smashed by the metal monsters from the United States, as the walks were so narrow that pedestrians spilled over onto the streets. Helmeted heads of the American tankmen were visible above the turrets. The strength of the tanks, the roar and the American faces could evoke a patriotic feeling-- it was not difficult to think then of the promise and potential of America, and of those soldiers going into battle like crusaders. When the German divisions were defeated, the American government would follow through to make the victory effective, a bystander might muse. At other times a soldier could get cynical and think-- it's just another war. But even then, before we had been on the continent of Europe and known the realities of combat, there was a deep hope among many of the youths of the 535th that the nations would be able to get together and solve their problems so that there would be a lasting peace after the ultimate victory of the Allied armies.

The American soldiers everywhere, the guns and convoys, the sight perhaps of a formation of B-24 bombers heading south in the direction of France, and all the brand-new equipment of various kinds were impressive enough, but what

made the biggest impact on most of us was that this material-- there was so much that one journalist said it seemed likely the island would sink beneath its weight-- was brought by ships across 3,000 miles of ocean. The supply job was tremendous.

Villagers in England that spring commonly referred to their country as "occupied England" and accepted routinely "the masses of armor stacked along the village streets and occupying their erstwhile cricket patches," according to the *Illustrated London News*. Thousands and thousands of war vehicles also were parked on tree-lined arterial roads and elsewhere "ready to be flung into the greatest military adventure of all time."¹⁵



The 535th was building up for an even-larger effort, and in England this culminated in the maneuvers at Slapton Sands known as "Exercise Tiger."

"To me," said Capt. Eugene Lash, the Battalion S-4 (supply officer), "the most interesting feature of the preparation for the Normandy Invasion was the efficiency-- in retrospect-- with which men, weapons and supplies were all gotten together in time for the 'Tiger' exercise. During those hectic months from January to April, our Battalion supply people had worked frantically to do their part, and the amazing fact was that, despite many apparent inefficiencies, we got what we were supposed to have, and in time to use it."

Individual GIs had to prepare too, and on April 21, Pfc. Robert Koerber wrote: "Packing and loading for unknown trip. Issued 85 rounds 30 cal. ammo and 18 cans C rations."

On the following day the 535th combat group or at least a good part of it traveled to the marshalling area.¹⁶

Troops involved in Exercise Tiger, the most ambitious of all the practices, were to embark from Dartmouth, Torquay, Brisham and Plymouth. British police and American MPs had sealed off the entire area to civilian traffic. Force U, of which the 535th was a small part, was at Plymouth. This was the VII Corps seaborne operation which was destined to go later into Utah Beach in Normandy. A duplicate of the invasion beaches had been set up at Slapton Sands, a gravelly beach on a shallow lagoon south of Torquay. The armed forces had taken over a number of towns in their entirety and the inhabitants had been evacuated. Engineers had put in pillboxes, had strung barb wire and duplicated minefields that reconnaissance units would find in France.¹⁷

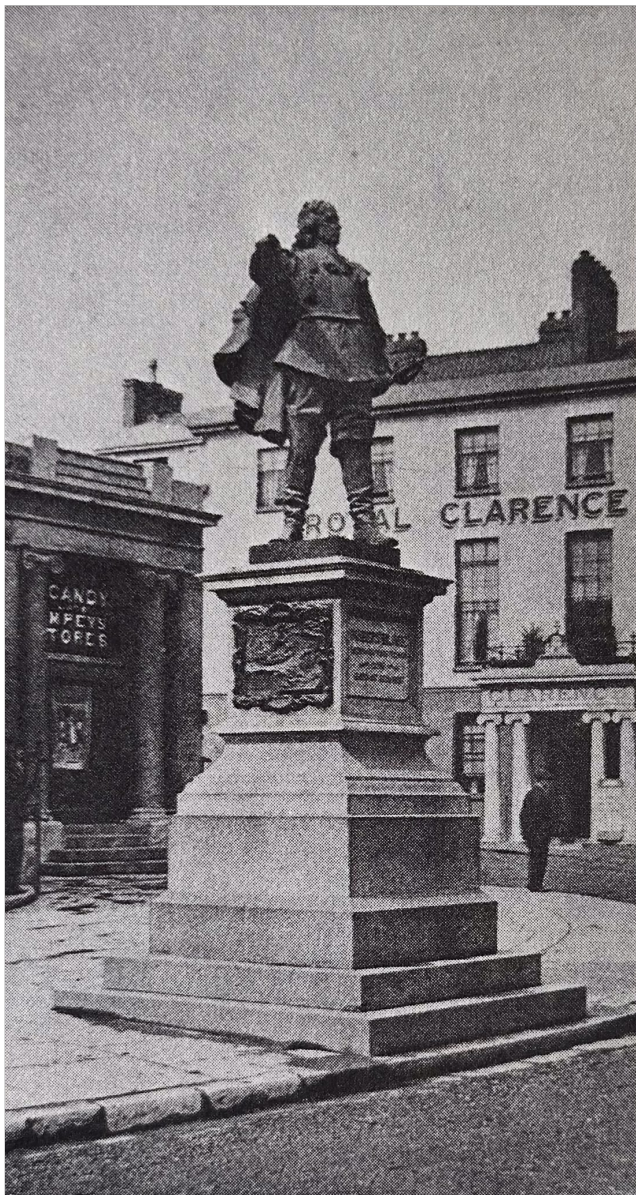
The assault forces moving from the marshalling area assembled at their ports of departure in late April.¹⁸

In the convoy going to the practice invasion in the night, the Battalion's reconnaissance jeep was following the red tail lights of the vehicle ahead, with blackout lights dimly feeling out the road. Cpl. Orrin Enger was behind the wheel, and Colonel Francis seated beside him was sleeping with his helmeted head flopped onto his left shoulder so that he wouldn't overbalance and fall out the door to the right. W/O Warren DuBois, the reconnaissance officer, and this writer were cramped in the back with gas cans, camouflage nets, packs and boxes of C rations. The night was soft and full of stars at first, but later a cold wind cut all the way through a GI's clothing, even the successive layers of overcoat, field jacket, fatigues and long johns. The convoy was held up for

two hours in the wailing, lonesome-sounding wind, so a person had plenty of time to get out, walk on the dark road and wave arms, trying to get warm. One thought that cropped up was that right then it was 9 p.m. in California, where we had trained, the bright lights were shining, the people were in theaters and malt shops and other places, warm and happy. But thoughts such as that did not last long. Most of the 535th personnel had become fatalistic, felt themselves swept along by forces they could not "get at"; they griped and complained but largely accepted what they could not prevent anyway.



Robert Blake statue in Corn Market at Bridgwater (top) is reminder of previous wars and England's long-time Naval supremacy. Building at left housed a Naafi, where 535th troops could buy tea and crumpets. Troops of 535th were hauled back nightly to Brymore House after passes in Bridgwater.



Peter McLoughlin, C Battery, stands guard at Brymore House, which was headquarters of the 535th in England. The old building near Cannington now is a boys' school. —Ted Andreyka photo



Tents housing troops of the 535th are pitched on the green lawns surrounding Brymore House. The Battalion went directly to this old-time estate after a train ride from Scotland in the late winter of 1944. —Thomas P. Elliott photo



At Cannington Village. This is another view of the well-known Brymore House, from which troops headed out on pass to Cannington and Bridgwater. Rain fell frequently after troops arrived, but the weather improved later. Pat Addison of Cannington sent the photo.



They're ashore in the practice invasion. Troops of First Infantry Division shuffle past ruins of an abandoned building at Slapton Sands on April 28, 1944, after unloading from an LCI. This was a routine sight for men of the 535th, also participating in the simulated Invasion. —U.S. Army photo



Small boats rock along edges of River Parrett near the bridge and quay at Bridgwater. Men of the 535th and some troops of other units thronged this Somerset town on pass during late winter and spring of 1944 before leaving for the invasion of the European continent.

The troops and equipment of the various participating units in Exercise Tiger were loaded mainly in the same ships they would use in going to France. On the night of April 26-27 the vessels moved through Lyme Bay, with mine craft sweeping ahead of them as they would later, in crossing the Channel. Unloading started on April 27 and continued that day and next.¹⁹

On the morning of the simulated D-Day, the LST carrying Headquarters of the 535th eased down its ramp, and we drove out onto a long, slow Rhino ferry, where we sat for hours. If German planes had been in the vicinity, they would have found us a set-up target, some of us pondered.

The day was sunny, and the sparkling water was like spangles on the gowns of the actresses who decorated the

screens in movie houses we had patronized in England and across the United States.

At last the Rhino moved in toward Slapton Sands to unload. The beach was a scene of great activity, swarming with thousands of ant-like figures. Metal mats had been laid to make a fairly smooth road for tanks, trucks and other vehicles.

After landing, Headquarters Battery established its command post in a grove. The infantry added a little realism by firing an occasional rifle shot or two, although this was not sanctioned officially. Villages in the area, which had been vacated in earlier months, had been shot up by the soldiers in this and other practice sessions.

D Battery followed Headquarters in by one day, and came close to not arriving at all. The LST carrying D Battery was maneuvering in Lyme Bay about midnight April 27-28 when flares were observed-- it was believed these were part of the exercises-- but gunfire broke out astern and nine German E-boats from Cherbourg which had dashed in past patrol ships without being recognized fired torpedoes at the convoy. Shortly after 2 a.m. the LST behind D Battery's LST was hit, and about the same time the LST in front also was hit. Both craft burst into flames and sank. A third LST also was hit and a dozen men were killed but the vessel managed to reach port later. The five landing ships remaining afloat exchanged fire with the torpedo boats for about half an hour, and the enemy boats also were engaged by two British destroyers of the covering force but escaped through use of smoke and high speed.²⁰

Lt. Herman Boykin of D Battery said he was "in the sack" at the time of the action, and thought the noise he heard outside was the rattling of chains coming down over steel, and that preparations were under way for unloading.

Pvt. Fat Lee was awakened from a dream by Pfc. Clarence Dahlman, who told Lee to put on his life jacket. "What's up?" asked Lee, still half asleep. "Air raid," Dahlman said. Lee laid back down to continue his sleep but the talk around him continued, and some one said the LSTs were being attacked by boats. Lee got up quickly, and headed up on deck with other D Battery men. He saw that the moon had come out again, and that the Channel was lighted up after being hidden previously behind the partial cloud cover. Lee saw two 535th men firing a Navy gun in the Battalion's first combat action, and saw two torpedoes, one in front and one in rear of the LST. The ship's skipper turned the craft sharply to avoid being hit.

Pfc. Koerber took over one of the LST's guns and fired it at the E boats. A sailor hollered at him not to shoot the gun because he had just painted the weapon a few hours earlier.

One of the gunners told Private Lee that he had joined the Navy only three months earlier, and never thought he would have to use a gun on the LST.

Even after the E-boats had sped away, trouble was not over for the LST. The craft sailed into a mine field, and 535th men could look over the side and see mines under the water. In the morning a British escort showed the LST the way out of the danger zone. Finally, D Battery landed safely on April 28.²¹

Published casualty figures on Exercise Tiger losses vary. Samuel Eliot Morrison in the official Navy history puts the total loss of life at 197 sailors and 441 soldiers, more than were lost by Task Force U in the actual invasion. An Army source states that approximately 700 lives were lost in the E-boat attack. Most of the GIs who died were engineers.²²

* * *

On the morning after Headquarters CP had been established near the beach, some of us awakened after a night in brown United States blankets, on twigs and rotting leaves, and saw infantrymen filing out of a turnip field and across the edge of the grove where we were staying. They were Sad Sacks-- most were homely, none smiled, and one grumbled--about being stirred out of his sleeping place so early.

"Watch out and don't step on those turnips!" one of the troops advised.

"---- the turnips!" another blurted.

These typical soldiers were so different from the heroes of the movies, and the sleek, cut-to-formula stories in the Saturday Evening Post of that era. The girl in the stories we read was a dream, like nothing we had ever encountered in Nashville, Carolina Beach or England. If the male was not a returned hero, he was a "USO soldier" of such proportions that he naturally would wipe out a dozen machine gun nests or knock down 10 to 15 fighter planes when he was in a combat zone. Always the story ended with love triumphant. And the writers even tried to get down to our "level" in language. For instance, in describing the girl that a Marine hero of the Post-- Private Johnny-- met, the author commented: "She

didn't look like any old girl, she didn't. She looked kind of soft, with big brown eyes and brown curly hair. She was sure cute."

That was the story. But reality was something else. The authentic infantryman, like other "dogfaces", might drink some beer or cider in town until he was a little unsteady and might get acquainted with a girl, often completely unspectacular. And it was never, or hardly ever, true love as in the magazines.

In the field, as at Slapton Sands, the infantryman walked part of the time and stretched out on the ground part of the time, and ate cold C rations from cans. The magazines we got from "the States" never spoke of death for the hero, in their fictional stories, but this occurred with little dramatics and messily at times for real-life soldiers.



On our long convoy returning to Brymore House from Slapton Sands and a final bivouac in that area, we rode in open trucks on one of the most beautiful days we had seen, a spring day filled with sunshine and color-- the green of woods and hedged fields, purple of lilacs in yards, great masses of pink and white blossoms in the orchards along the way.

In town, boys in short pants and little girls in summer dresses formed V's with their fingers in Churchill style and yelled for gum and candy. Americans walked and talked with girls on the streets, and women wheeled prams along. The soldiers of the 535th waved at the kids, young women and various persons leaning from second-story windows,

and everyone felt great with the beauty and friendliness of that pleasant day.

The Camp and Fleet

In early May the 535th was preparing for "the real thing," the Invasion of Europe, after the series of training sessions in the pleasant English countryside.

Most of the outfit was to participate, but a small rear echelon was left behind to join the invasion group later.¹ D Battery, except for two sections landing on the Isles St. Marcouf, also was scheduled for a delayed departure. Because of loss of the LSTs in Exercise Tiger, Battery D personnel were re-scheduled for movement via transport. The 40mm guns and vehicles were to be carried to France in another vessel. D Battery was scheduled to land on Utah Beach during the "build-up" phase.

The final work at Brymore included waterproofing of all vehicles. This involved sealing of ignition, fuel system and lubrication including oil pan. Exhaust was provided above water level by an upright tube attached to each vehicle. Some waterproofing also remained to be done in the marshalling area.

Members of the invasion group ate a last meal at Brymore, to which we had all grown somewhat attached.

"The talk," Capt. John P. Heinke of the Medical Detachment recalled of one small assemblage, "was of where we were going, when the invasion was coming off and multiple small talk. No conclusions were reached, but there was some speculation, which I found out later was taboo."

As the drivers in our convoy turned on the ignition preparatory to moving out of Brymore estate for the last time, in mid-May, the evening was turning dark. All our vehicles were loaded with equipment and supplies, and all of us were in battle gear, clad in gas-proof togs, with rifles slung over our shoulders. Tramping duffel bags into place in the crowded trucks and other vehicles, two men sometimes were needed but the bulky bags generally gave way.²

Captain Heinke recalled the final trip out of Brymore:

As we departed from the camp the remainder of the unit lined the drive waving us goodbye and yelling various bits of information and advice, most of which I think was not good. The English civilians lined the streets of villages through which we passed, giving us the fingers or thumbs-up sign. Convoys passing through their town were pretty much old stuff for them, but this time they greeted us.

As night fell it became quite chilly. The tarpaulin of the truck was down so we all slept, as best we could, under the stars. It was no new thing and was quite accepted. About 1 o'clock a truck came by with some sandwiches composed of bread, cheese, and, I believe, spam. It was dark, and no lights were allowed. Tomorrow the truck would look like a short-order house after a busy Saturday night.

Sleep finally came to us. The chaplain was wedged in between two crates, so was little affected by the rolling and pitching of the truck. I was awakened at an ungodly hour by Capt. Stanley Lowe who told us to get our bedrolls and duffel bags and follow him. The camp was only about a mile down the road. After about fifty yards of this I discarded the duffel bag but maintained a firm grip on the bedroll. I completed the march but the price I paid in fatigue and an aching back was more than I care to remember. We had a hot breakfast and then unrolled the bedrolls and began to sleep scientifically.

In this invasion marshalling area which was to be our home until we departed to board the craft that would take us to France, vehicles camouflaged by nets seemed to be lining every road.

We were in the Force U sector, part of the seaborne units of VII Corps which had been gathered in the Tor Bay area and east of Plymouth. All troops were "sealed in" at the marshalling areas behind barbed wire, and 2,000 Counter Intelligence Corps men were maintaining a close guard. The entire coastal area had been closed to visitors since April, and the camps also were isolated from any contact with the surrounding countryside. Camouflage was more strictly enforced during this time than in the following actual operations. The Germans did not know the details but they had a somewhat generalized picture of the situation, as shown by this comment of a radio reporter in Germany shortly after the 535th had arrived in its camp:

The ports of England are bristling-- crammed to bursting point-- with all the invasion equipment which will have to be ferried to the Continent overnight.³

The men of the 535th were quartered in tents, and among the small Headquarters group, in the days that were to follow, there were several lively speculative discussions about what fate might await us on the far shore and how we would react to the German "reception." We had no radios and could not hear some of the alarming comments that were aired, reportedly by the German propagandists talking in English, and picked up by a number of the Allied personnel in southern England.

"Radio silence was maintained in the marshalling area to avoid disclosure of the troop concentration," Lt. Col. Francis said. "Also, I think the larger units that ordinarily used radio communications left radios in their old locations to simulate normal radio traffic. Such wasn't necessary in our case."⁴

Not far from the Headquarters tent was the 11th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Group's BIGOT tent, with a guard always at the door.

Captain Heinke's narrative continues:

There was little to do at this place except sleep and eat. At intervals we read. We turned in all our British money, so evidently it was a certainty that we were leaving the United Kingdom. It was hot and cold running water only 400 yards away, fur-lined latrines and showers. The food was excellent and present in abundance. I ate as I had never before in my life, since I was well aware that such a thing could not continue. We were issued small volumes on how to speak the French language-- another clue, something that tended to confirm our suspicions that our destination was France.

Classes in the French language were held daily by officers who had been exposed to it at some remote point in their life. How remote none of us could determine. They would carry on talking through their noses and obviously mispronouncing words as anyone could plainly see by correlating the spelling of the word and the way they pronounced it. About four days before we departed this spot two naval lieutenants came to camp with their following.⁵ These two officers were billeted in our

tent and a welcome addition they were. One of them was from Pennsylvania and the other from Arkansas. They were slightly hurt but happy from prolonged inactivity. Max was proficient in the singing of a tearjerking ballad entitled "Hobo Bill" and Ed gave a rendition of "Turkey in the Straw" on a pencil placed between the teeth. Not to be outdone I played "The Arkansas Traveler" and "The Pennsylvania Polka" on the harmonica.

But such a life of ease was not to be continued.

One day all officers were instructed to report to a certain building at a certain time. According to all reports we would learn our destination. At the prescribed time we marched to the designated building which was well guarded by soldiers with fixed bayonets.

They would give you a fishy stare as you passed as much as if to say, "Stay in line and don't look to either side or we'll let you have it." I had no ideas of getting out of line or looking to either side.

After being seated in the building the commanding officer entered, carrying many maps. These maps were hung on the wall, facing us, but all identifying marks were covered, which tended to increase the mystery when we expected to be enlightened.

In a slow, hushed voice, the Colonel began a dissertation in which he briefly reviewed the history of the war up to this point. Finally he brought the war to us by stripping the coverage from the maps. There stood France, and on smaller maps, various subdivisions of that country. "Gentlemen, here is where we go in." And he pointed out the spot to us. He then proceeded to enlighten us as to the strategy to be used, which I did not comprehend but sounded very good. After multiple questions and answers the conference was at an end.

As I walked from the building I looked from side to side as if some person might snatch the secret from me. I hoped there were no Dunningers in the camp or the secret would be lost. I noticed that everyone else seemed to act the way I felt so it must have been a common sensation. The feeling passed away in due time and I became my relatively normal self again.

When the BIGOT tent was visited by the 535th's staff officers, it contained a map of France and a map of a much smaller area, a section of the coast not identified by a tag. Lt. Col. Francis explained to his aides that this was the area below Cherbourg in Normandy, and that the VII Corps was to attack at Utah Beach on D-Day and paratroops were landing inland. British forces were to go ashore near LeHavre.⁶

Francis had been the only member of the Battalion to be "Bigoted" previously, and had not been free to disclose any of the information until reaching the marshalling area, where the wraps were lifted. He had discovered that the invasion plan was quite similar to one of the problems given at the anti-aircraft artillery school at Camp Davis, N.C., except that in the problem the invasion took place on the other side of the Cherbourg peninsula. When briefed in the marshalling area, Major Janney also recognized the similarity.

"In my briefing I gave only general information as to the plans for the other beaches," the colonel explained. "No doubt this information was further reduced when Battery officers briefed their men. So my idea is that the average enlisted man had very little knowledge of what was to happen beyond his own immediate task. In my opinion, such limitation of knowledge is proper and in fact may help to maintain morale. As a result, our men were not worried because things were not going right on Omaha Beach-- they didn't know they weren't going according to plan. All they knew was that there was difficulty."⁷

S/Sgt. Dixon wrote that near the end of May the Colonel called a meeting of Battalion officers and noncoms and "told

us that we didn't have to worry about another dry run-- this was the real thing." Dixon also stated:

He thereupon briefed us in the part we were to play in the landing, gave us some last-minute instructions and advice, and wished us well. We were headed down a road from which there was no turning back, but we were proud that we had been selected to be among the first anti-aircraft troops to land, albeit a bit shaky. Now there was absolutely nothing to do but await the starting signal.⁸

In the marshalling areas one of the necessary jobs in the remaining days before the assault was to prepare the invasion orders, classified "top secret--BIGOT." Only 10 copies were prepared of the 535th's Field Order No. 1, dated May 26 and signed by Lt. Col. Francis.

For informational purposes the order included the assignments of divisions involved in the invasion plans in and near Utah Beach, including the airborne coming down at night, and the 4th Infantry Division which was to land at H-Hour.

The 535th, operating under 11th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Group, was to relieve elements of the 474th Anti-Aircraft Battalion (self-propelled) and provide protection against air attack for the beach areas, beached craft and the seaward approaches of the Utah area. "Incidental anti-aircraft protection" was to be given to Gooseberry No. 1.⁹ A and B batteries were to land on the First Tide ("wave" was another word for this) and take up gun positions shown on prepared overlays. Battery C was to land on the Third Tide, and all of Battery D but two units was to come in on D plus 2 days. The two remaining units of D were to land on Isles St. Marcouf on the Second Tide.

Assignments of batteries to vessels and a special job for a reconnaissance group also were provided for in the field order, and an intelligence summary on the Luftwaffe potential for D-Day, as obtained from higher headquarters, also was outlined.¹⁰

Administrative Order No. 3, dated May 26, stated that all personnel were to wear protective clothing over wool OD uniform and field jacket "immediately prior to departure from the marshalling area." The clothing had been impregnated with chemicals, as it was feared that the Germans might use gas. Other typed information stated that normal mail delivery was to be suspended at the time of the briefing. The 535th was to provide its own rations, and in addition, one K ration and one D ration were to be issued in the marshalling area, to be carried by each individual and reserved for emergency use. It was anticipated that rations would be available from the dumps on the far shore after the third day in France.

With all the necessary steps taken, the final movement order was awaited.



For the final lap, Captain Heinke was again a close observer:

Finally the word came for us to move out. We were issued extra rations, cigarettes, soap, etc., which we in some way managed to find room for. I was to go with one battery and Captain Lowe with another.

At 0400 in the morning we got out and partook of a hot breakfast. Following this we policed up the area and loaded our equipment on the trucks.

As dawn began to break we moved onto the road on our way to the port of embarkation. It seemed as if an entire army was on the move. Here were men on their way to battle, to victory and some to their deaths. The latter thought is rather disconcerting and is very seldom mentioned in any conversation. If anyone thinks of casualties that will occur the thought never enters his mind that he might be one of the chosen. Which is as it should be.

The trip was uneventful except for the jeep in which I was riding blowing a head gasket.

At the port were myriads of boats of all shapes and sizes. Barrage balloons were flying high, the sun was shining brightly and everywhere was a maze of activity, all of which seemed strangely purposeful.

Loading the LST was accomplished readily and we pulled out into the harbor with multiple other ships of all types. Some were loaded and others awaiting their turn to pull in and load up. Our guns were on the top deck and the crew stood by, evidently itching for something to show up so they could try their hands at the profession that had been chosen for them. I can't say that I shared their enthusiasm in that respect.

While two sections of D Battery were moving up to Dartmouth to load for their trip to the Isles St. Marcouf, a British bobby (policeman) remarked to them as they passed, "You lucky people." Pvt. Fat Lee recalled the Englishman at Penhale Point firing range who had called the Americans "the lucky people, with the American food and a big pay check." Despite the unusual circumstances on that early June day, on the road to Dartmouth, Lee now believed the "lucky people" aspect.

"Late one night," S/Sgt. Raymond Dixon of C Battery wrote, "we proceeded in a prearranged and highly intricate fashion to the 'hards' where we loaded on a waiting LST. One

of our trucks broke down on the dock, but another truck was rushed up and the loads shifted. We managed to get it aboard just a minute before the ship sailed. The Captain had orders to sail at a certain minute and he intended to do so, gun and truck or no gun and truck. The ship sailed down the coast to a prearranged rendezvous to await orders."¹¹

The 535th was moving by different routes and varied vessels for the trip across the Channel,¹² but we were all a part of Task Force U, which was made up of about 865 vessels and craft in 12 separate convoys. The force had to use nine different loading and sortie points, and all were reported "taxed to capacity."¹³

Evening of June 2 in Dartmouth Harbor, as we awaited sailing time, was sunny, the water under the boats was gentle and sparkling, and seagulls dove and hovered above the vessels arrayed along the Dart River, below the half-wooded hills of the harbor and the ancient town sprawled along the hillside. Strings of flags were flying from the invasion armada in the slightly breeze, and lively popular music blared from the public address system. The scene was like a festival or celebration. From LCT 664, about one hundred vessels could be counted in the embarkation harbor, anchored together in threes and fifty barrage balloons were seen hanging above the harbor and town. Headquarters Battery men and vehicles were packed into a LCT (Landing Craft Tank) which had one deck, two side walls, heavy machinery in the stern and a front that could be dropped so that vehicles could unload quickly on the beach. This type of boat, approximately 100 feet long, could carry a small number of tanks, or trucks, also soldiers.¹⁴



Who could have guessed at all the thoughts, deep-running or transient and shallow, the ponderings, worries, expectations under the helmets of the soldiers and Navy men in that historic armada? What was in the mind of the young British sailor, about six and one-half feet tall, apparently the skipper of his landing craft, as he stood on the prow not far from our LCT 664 gazing out over the banners and ships in the harbor? He was reminiscent of the statue of the Elizabethan sea captain, Robert Blake, that stood at the Corn Market at Bridgwater with his cloak unfurled behind him as if blown by the winds of the salty seas. Blake had been forgotten by even some Bridgwater residents including a young war plant worker, a girl who drank beer with some of the enlisted men in a pub; asked about Blake, she had dismissed him with, "Oh, he's long gone." We had seen a different England than most of us had read about, but the England of the books and tradition must have been strong in the consciousness of numerous GIs on that sunny evening in Dartmouth Harbor. The Britain of which many of us had learned in the history books of our youth seemed to be dominated by the giant symbol of Britannia, the proud claim "The sun never sets on the British Empire", and the world maps that showed the red of the colonial empire spread over lands throughout the world-- an empire that was cracking apart although we could not know how much on that June day in 1944. There was much to fascinate the mind in the vanished England, a heritage to the Western world. To those of us who had read the earlier writings, including those of the Elizabethans-- Shakespeare, Thomas Dekker and others-- there was a lot of relevancy in

some of the remembered words, a reminder that other men before had known cruel and sordid times and somehow managed and survived.

Many among that Dartmouth invasion throng surely thought of the numerous languages we had heard on the radios in Britain, and of the conflicting nationalities and loyalties of the people inhabiting the continent before us, across the Channel, of the music and tongues, known and unknown to us; in "Lanthorne and Candlelight", Dekker had told how the Master Workman of the Universe had determined to check the insolence of those who attempted to raise a pinnacle-- the Tower of Babel-- equal to His own, and had sent a messenger called Confusion, "swift of sight" and in appearance "wild, terrible and inconstant," driving the spirits Treason, Sedition and War in front of her, carrying storms in one hand, a whip in the other, and speaking in a million tongues, with a sound like "the roaring of many torrents." This wild messenger had confused the tongues of the workmen until they stared at one another, and their words and actions were "the noise of a thousand sounds, and yet the sound of the noise was nothing", and finally they got angry, thinking each was mocking the other, quit building Babel and dispersed into nations. In 1944 Europe had rarely been so full of confusion, warring and discord; were we of that great Allied force to add to the discord or bring some semblance of order over the long range?

At least one GI, this writer, remembered the poem "Hey Nonny No" by an early, anonymous Englishman:

*...Men are fools that wish to die.
Is it not fine to dance and sing
While the bells of death do ring?...*

If there were bells of death, they were ringing overtime that year of 1944 out beyond the mouth of Dartmouth Harbor and across the Channel, along the Russian front where massive armies were warring for the fourth year, in concentration camps where Jews and other peoples unwanted by the Nazis were perishing of hunger and gassing, and in cities where the ground shuddered, and buildings exploded and burned under the bomber fleets.

But our main thoughts of Europe that June afternoon and evening, for those who wanted to think of it, were mostly of the coast of "Fortress Europe" and of the big guns we had seen revolving in the giant turrets, of the goose-stepping German soldiers in the same movies, of the legions who had broken through the Maginot line and driven the British into the sea at Dunkirk in 1940.

In that Dartmouth flotilla, a part of the greatest invasion fleet that had ever been or would be assembled, it was not too difficult for most of us to sense, despite our relative youth and inexperience, that we were part of forces and social structures much older than ourselves and very much deeper than our understanding.

The day, the harbor were vivid enough and all-important for the scores of young men of our 535th Battalion who had crossed a continent and an ocean for this climactic water journey, but we realized we were only a small segment, obscure perhaps, in the minds of even the top invasion plan-

ners, involved in a vast undertaking with stakes that staggered the mind.



Leaflets were distributed to all the men on the LCT and we read the following:

SUPREME HEADQUARTERS, ALLIED EXPEDITIONARY FORCES

Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen of the Allied Expeditionary Force!
You are about to embark upon the Great Crusade, toward which you have been striving these many months. The eyes of the world are upon you. The hopes and prayers of liberty-loving people everywhere march with you. In company with our brave Allies and brothers-in-arms on other Fronts, you will bring about the destruction of the German war machine, the elimination of Nazi tyranny over the oppressed peoples of Europe, and security for ourselves in a free world.

Your task will not be an easy one. Your enemy is well trained, well-equipped and battle-hardened. He will fight savagely.

But this is the year 1944! Much has happened since the Nazi triumphs of 1940-41. The United Nations have inflicted upon the Germans great defeats, in open battle, man-to-man. Our air offensive has seriously reduced their strength in the air and their capacity to wage war on the ground. Our Home Fronts have given us an overwhelming superiority in weapons and munitions of war, and placed at our disposal great reserves of trained fighting men. The tide has turned! The free men of the world are marching to Victory!

I have full confidence in your courage, devotion to duty and skill in battle. We will accept nothing less than full Victory!

Good Luck! And let us all beseech the blessing of Almighty God upon this great and noble undertaking.

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

We did not know at the time that the Supreme Commander also had prepared a message of explanation in the event the invasion forces were smashed in the Atlantic Wall.¹⁵

✦ ✦ ✦

The weather had been giving invasion planners trouble. In May, for example, the weather-- traditionally fine in that month-- had been marked by sharp changes, ranging from day-long sunshine to overcasts and rain, and from calm weather to lively whitecaps in the Channel.¹⁶ The weather vagaries continued into June. But if D-Day was to be on June 5, most of the first convoys had to put to sea on the night of June 3, so the Supreme Commander gave the order on the afternoon for the initial convoys to sail.¹⁷

At 7 p.m., the boats that had been huddled together in the protection of the steep hills at Dartmouth began pulling anchor and moving out toward the harbor mouth. The turn came for LCT 664 and two English LCTs that had been snuggled in against our boat's metal sides, and we swung into the line single file. We could see some small figures in the town where it came down to the water's edge on each side nearer the harbor's mouth, and they waved at us as we passed; it must have been quite a sight-- a sizable part of the invasion fleet, dozens of LCTs and LCIs, jammed with men and vehicles,¹⁸ heading out to sea in line. When we reached the Channel, beyond the harbor's protection, we saw ships as

far as the horizon. A LCT convoy circled while LCTs from the harbor at Dartmouth swung out of line emerging from the harbor and joined them, three abreast in a column.

The sky and sea that evening were gray, and the weather was turning cold. Waves slapped the flat sides of LCT 664 and spray drenched us on the vehicles. Some of the men were sick. Brown water trapped in the groove by the front gate sloshed back and forth with the boat's motions, and the decks were so wet we had to sleep in any places we could find on top of the loaded trucks. Most of them were rough.

In the morning Pfc. Leonard Bass said, "I slept last night where very few white men and no Negroes at all would have slept."

On June 4, as we continued to maneuver in the Channel, approximately 100 ships, three abreast, could be counted in the LCT convoy of which LCT 664 was a part, and a Naval escort patrolled along the sides. This was only a small portion of the total invasion fleet. Task Force U, carrying the VII Corps, had loaded in five ports between Plymouth and Torcross and sortied from eight ports between Plymouth and Poole, where it was organized in 12 convoys to cross the Channel.¹⁹ Many more men and ships were being utilized for the proposed action at Omaha Beach and the British beaches. On the LST carrying B Battery, Captain Heinke observed that the number of vessels in the convoy was tremendous, and the assault ships were protected by naval craft in abundance. "Danger lurked above, below, and on either side and all of these places were being investigated thoroughly."

Waves buffeting the invasion craft on June 4 were three to five feet high, a wind of 16 to 26 knots was blowing and the sky was almost completely overcast. Predictions of strong winds and heavy seas on the following day, which had been scheduled for D-Day, caused Eisenhower to order the convoys to reverse courses.²⁰ A ship came by the LCT convoy that included 664 and a fellow hollered to our skipper through a megaphone that D-Day had been postponed for 24 hours and 30 minutes. Most of the troops aboard groaned at the news. None of us knew the time that had been scheduled for the actual Invasion, and we could only perch on the vehicles and wait while the convoy continued to maneuver in the rough Channel waters. Lieutenant Hughes, with two other 535th officers on a LST with the 474th ack-ack battalion, noted that everyone seemed tense on board. Submarines were reported chasing the convoy. The LST turned back toward port with the rest of the fleet.

On the morning of June 5 the assault convoys reassembled and sailed again toward the transport areas 22,000 to 23,000 yards off the French coast in the Bay of Seine. The convoys moved behind mine sweepers which cleared and marked 10 lanes through old minefields in somewhat choppy waters.²¹

""Tomorrow is the Day,' the word came down and with that word activity increased tenfold," Captain Heinke, who accompanied B Battery, said. "Rifles were cleaned and re-cleaned. Knives were sharpened although it is doubtful if anything more than K ration cheese was ever cut with them. I completed my packing and checked my medical supplies for completeness."

Lieutenant Hughes recalled that the storm had died down, and with the knowledge that June 6 was "the big day for all of us" the men on his vessel seemed "calm and determined."

On the evening of June 5, this writer sat on the tarp of the Motor Pool truck on LCT 664, next to the machine gun mounted on the truck cab, watching five ships traveling together in a file on our left flank. The speedy ships, camouflaged gray and black and appearing to be brand new, would outrun the slow-plodding, wave-bounced LCTs, then turn almost "on a dime" and cut through the water back toward the rear of the convoy for a while, smooth and strong.

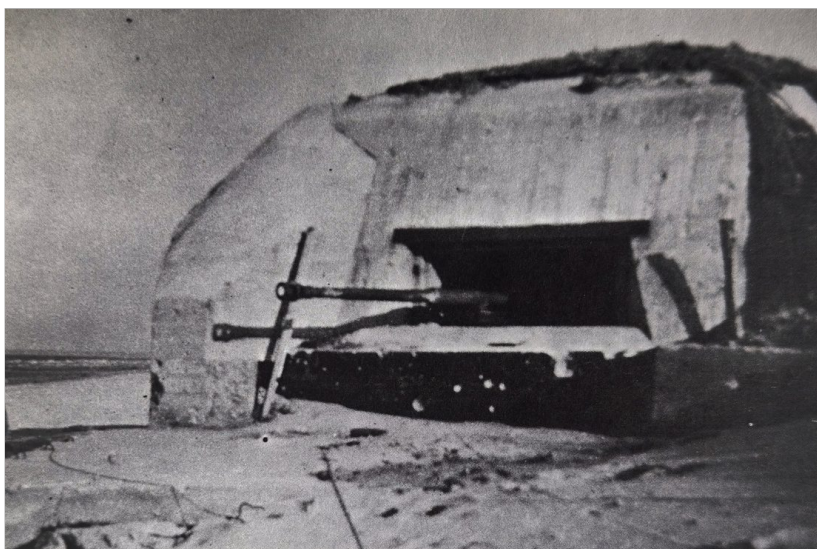
A roar started to fill the sky, and flocks of twinfuselage P-38 fighters began streaming over us, under the dark clouds, heading south. Hundreds of them were rocket—ing toward the Continent. P-38s were like old friends to us. We had seen many in California and also watched them swoosh over in England. Men of the 535th had yelled and clapped when they saw the planes in films of the North African campaign.

Several of us were looking back at the fast-running ships on the left flank for a moment, when one was enveloped in flames. We heard a boom over the waters, the ship stalled and smoke rolled up. Small armored boats began dashing around, most scurrying well out on the other side of the stricken ship. As the convoy moved on, the ship receded in the distance on the Channel and, the last we could see of it, was listing a little and still smoking, while several other ships stood by.²² We wondered how many sailors had been killed. It seemed strange the P-38s would continue barreling south,

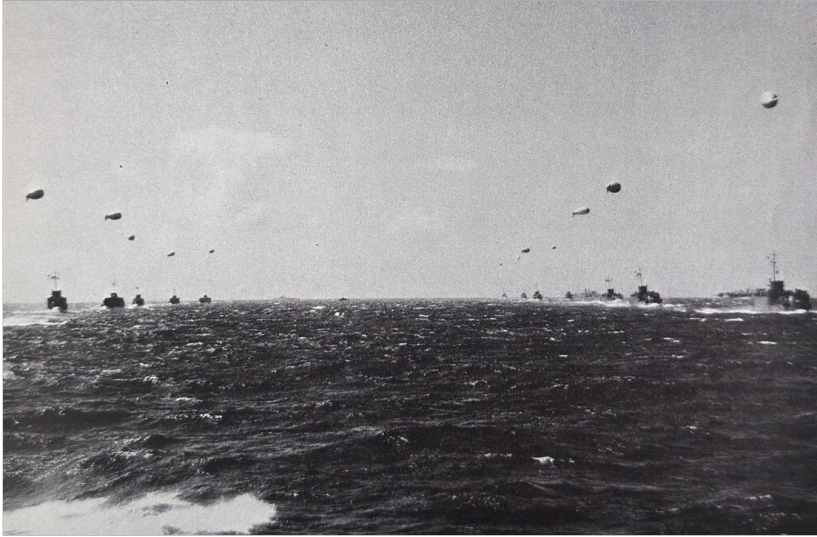
apparently unconcerned with the excitement down on the water.

One of the LCTs ahead of us quit running, and the convoy moved on, leaving the vessel steadily further behind, rocking with the waves, a LCT with five Sherman tanks and crews aboard, helpless in the Channel, still a long way from France, a depressing sight for those passing by.

The chaplain called a meeting after these incidents, and everyone on board turned out. We sang hymns the chaplain had chosen about the stormy seas, and he gave a long prayer asking God to help the invasion fleets and make the great undertaking a success. Silently, we all fervently seconded the chaplain's pleas.



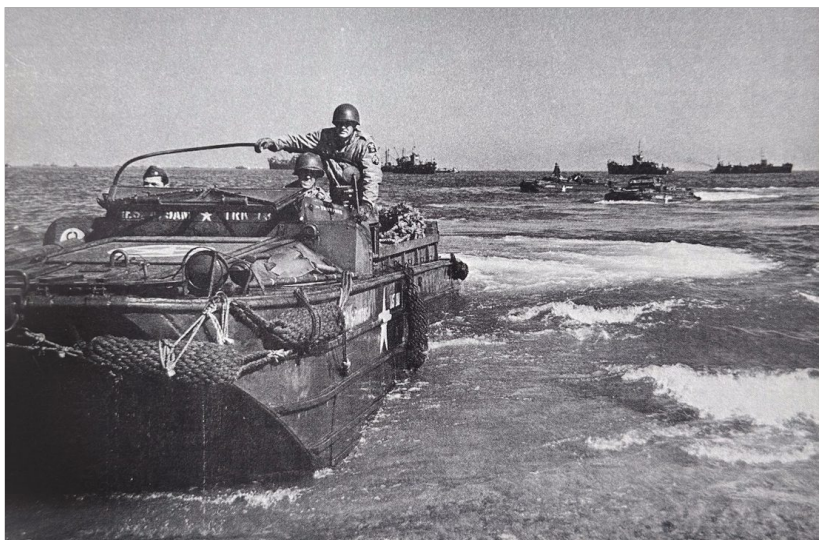
Germans in Normandy were well entrenched behind thick walls of concrete and other fortifications, waiting for any invasion troops. This is pillbox on Utah Beach. —Ted Andreyka picture



Convoy moves through the English Channel, heading for the shores of Normandy on D-Day. Barrage balloons provided protection from possible aerial attack. They received little use on Utah Beach, however. —Photo is from U.S. Navy



A Navy LST boat with its yawning doors is pictured in northern France unloading its supplies, vehicles and men to keep up the constant supply from England. Troops of 535th traveled on some craft like this in practice invasion as well as in the Normandy assault. —Air Force photo



"Duck" moves in close to shore on supply run from big ship further out. This type of vessel was familiar sight to 535th men, especially on the coast of Normandy. Scene here was snapped at Slapton Sands in Devon, England, April 28, 1944. —U.S. Army photo



Men and assault vehicles storm the beaches of Normandy as Allied landing craft make dent in Germans' west wall on June 6, 1944. As wave after wave of landing craft unload their cargo, men move forward and vehicles surge up the roads. — Air Force photo

The meeting broke up, and a short time later a big ship to the left began firing at some unseen horror in the middle of the convoy; tracers flitted across the waters in profusion only about 100 yards back of us. What now? A German submarine? Edgar McGraw, who had been playing his guitar, quit, and some fellows who had been talking and joking fell silent. The firing ceased in a short time, but everyone was glum. In a GI's dismal mind, the convoys could be seen as sunk and broken up before they could put the assault materiel ashore. Such a disaster would not have been unusual. The dark and mindless waters of the Channel had swallowed many other invasion craft, even entire fleets, over the centuries.

About 11:30 p.m. June 5, men on B Battery's LST were startled, Captain Heinke stated, by a general quarters signal, summoning personnel to battle stations. The captain's post was on the top deck where he had a good view of "the great outdoors." He wrote of this event later:

There was nothing happening in our immediate vicinity but ahead of us we could see a Fourth of July celebration in full progress; or what was the appearance of one. Streams of tracer bullets would arch lazily up into the sky and there either expire or burst with a flash. I could not see the target nor know who was doing the firing but we were certain that the firing was not target practice. We could hear planes going over but could only assume that they were friendly. It later turned out that they were. Later we would see formations of planes flying low over the water, heading for home. About that time I wished that I were going with them.

No sleeping was done that night. There was spasmodic AA fire all that night but we never determined the source.

The Channel waters were rough, and spray was flying, even up onto the machine gun above the Motor Pool truck

cab, on LCT 664, where Headquarters men were awaiting D-Day.

That night the author of *Battalion from the Mojave* lay in the truck alongside three other GIs, with a coarse tarp above to keep out the water and cold. He was lying on his back on several boxes and a large open can of waterproofing, too rough a "bed" for sleep, if he had been in the mood for it. Cpl. Thomas Wiseman was lying on his side, and the writer could feel Wiseman's bony knees against his legs; they were reassuring, a reminder that there was lots of company in the darkness that last night before the assault on Europe. The convoy continued to move on, but sometime during the night LCT 664 dropped anchor with other vessels.²³ Everything the skipper shouted through his megaphone on that dark night, as well as the ones preceding, was dramatic, and seemed at times to be full of foreboding. Once he shouted, "What is that?... It looks like a LCT." He seemed to be continually hollering for someone to watch out and not cut our anchor cable.

Captain Heinke in the early morning hours wished good luck to his erstwhile friend of the marshalling area, the naval lieutenant Max, just before he went down the cargo net. The other lieutenant, Ed, also departed via a small boat that had been readied along the LST with necessary equipment. "About that time," the captain stated, "all hell seemed to break loose from the large naval vessels of the convoy." He wrote:

A large blast of flames would project and then two or more fiery balls would go arching across the sky to be lost from view at about the apex of their course. This continued indefinitely, it seemed, as the war wagons marched back and forth parallel to the shore spewing large measures of death and destruction.

Shortly after this naval barrage abated somewhat we heard the sound of many aircraft, which again were our own. From the region of the shore we could see billowing columns of smoke and flashes of flame as our bombs and shells collided with the hostile shore. From the ship I saw one of our aircraft disappear in a flash of flame as an anti-aircraft shell found its mark.

Various ships and craft were weaving in and out on their way to the shore and on our ship, preparations were being made for unloading. Little of the activities on the shore could be seen even with field glasses, due to the smoke and haze.

The captain said that one-half of the ship was unloaded and then headed for shore. Heinke was instructed to go with the next load, but the orders were changed for the rest of the boatload and as evening came the captain still had not departed.

Where LCT 664 had been anchored, dawn lighted the sky on June 6 and the LCT moved out in convoy. We could see now that regardless of who fell along the unknown way that was ahead of the assault forces, the others would move ahead relentlessly to the final decision. We could see flashes and hear booming noises where Allied warships were shelling the coast. As we moved closer to France, we saw a long low gray land in the distance, smoking in several places. We anchored a considerable distance offshore, and could see ships in every direction as far as the eye could reach, all kinds of ships.

This same type of panorama also was seen by W.B. Courtney, a magazine correspondent, who wrote that in its midst

the mind was frustrated and "the imagination bemused" in studying the "ships, balloons, men-of-war, trucks, guns, tanks-- every lethal and destructive weapon and device and vehicle known to the science of legal mass homicide-- transports near and far whose open decks swarm with indistinguishable men in the battle dress of the United States Army, until each vessel seems thickly spread with mustard from bow to stern..." Courtney termed the armada and invasion the "greatest single adventure in the history of mankind" and predicted that "no one living in our time will see its like again."²⁴

The sun came out of the clouds, shown down warmly on us, and the Channel was a bright blue. We were surprised that we did not see any German planes over a sea filled with targets. In the Channel sunshine, men of the 535th were feeling much better, almost normal again.

LCT 664 waited in position for a couple of hours and it hardly seemed possible, from so far off, that the infantry of the First United States Army already had closed with the Germans in the Atlantic Wall, that many men were being maimed and killed on the beaches ahead in the culminating phases of history's greatest sea invasion.

A Battery was preparing for a landing on D-Day, and the Susan B. Anthony with D Battery personnel and other troops had moved out into the Channel where hundreds of ships could be seen.²⁵ C Battery also was marking time, on its LST. Personnel of this LST never had fired the 40mm guns with which it was armed, and the gunnery officer was apprehensive about the sailors' ability to hit a target or to recognize an enemy plane if one did appear, according to Lt. Thomas P.

Elliott, who was with C Battery. Captain McWaters offered to man the guns with C Battery gun crews, and finally it was agreed that there should be a sort of joint manning.

"However," Lieutenant Elliott recalled, "when we arrived off the coast of France, the gun crews from the boat insisted on manning the guns. Our gun crews had to forcibly hold them off as they would have fired on everything that flew."

S/Sgt. Raymond W. Dixon stated that except for three or four alerts C Battery's trip to the far side of the Channel was uneventful-- C Battery arrived off the French coast on June 7.²⁶

The Landings

As daylight came and H-Hour was passed, members of the 535th and numerous other units still were well out from the coast in the armada, but were aware of a bombardment under way. First glimpse of France for many was a long, gray land, smoking in several places. Enemy artillery had fired a few air bursts but otherwise there was no opposition at H-Hour at Utah Beach. German shelling of Utah Beach, our destination, intensified during the morning.¹

The sun came out warmly for a while and the ack-ack men felt almost normal again. Lack of German planes in the sky was a pleasant surprise. The sea was full of ships in almost every direction, offering no end of targets.

Men of the 535th on various scattered craft in the fleet had practically no conception of what was taking place. They did know, however, that by some involved procedure, formulated in the planning of this project, the Battalion was to get together again on the far shore in a coordinated defense of the beachhead.

During the night, two paratroop divisions, the 101st and 82nd, totaling 13,000 men, had begun landings by air on the peninsula. The German Seventh Army already had gotten reports of some of these landings. Five main beaches were being assaulted on D-Day by U.S., British and Canadian troops; Utah, where the 535th was to land, was the right flank of the assault. The 535th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion was

just one of approximately 200 individual units, ranging from a division of 14,000 men to a photographic team of two, scheduled to be among the total of 55,000 troops landing on June 6.²



A Battery of the 535th was one of the units running into some action on the first day, June 6, and some of the details were recalled by Lloyd Adamson, the communications sergeant for A. He said that after loading on the ship that was to take men to landing barges, "we spent a lot of time going all over the Channel."

"On this ship there was a great stack of English biscuits packed in tins. We were able to purloin a few of these which we finally got into our vehicle. They came in handy later on the beach because for some reason our supplies failed to arrive on schedule."

Sergeant Adamson recalled there was difficulty in the rough and choppy waters in "marrying" the ship to the landing vessels. Quite a number of large hawsers were snapped by the turbulence of the water, he stated.

"Finally ours secured, and we, as I recall, loaded on a LCT with a jeep, a gun section and weapons carrier. There may have been another vehicle. Anyway we passed a ship on the way in-- I recall seeing the shells it was firing into the town we were headed for."

The LCT should have been on Utah Beach in the morning, but considerably later in the day,³ the vessel moved in toward a beach near Carentan, Capt. Robert Bricker said. This was not the landing area and had not been cleared by the

sweepers. But the skipper wanted "to get rid of us," saw the beach, headed in for a landing and rammed into the sand. Bricker was suspicious of the coastline-- it must have been 15 miles from the beach, he said in later years.

The front ramp was dropped, but machine gun bullets were flying from shore already, and the 535th GIs sought cover.

"This isn't the right area!" Bricker told one of the men.

The tower used by the skipper had been hit by bullets, slugs ripped through Bricker's jacket and he felt the heat from them.

"The LCT was turned around and headed back out to sea," Adamson said. "This still left us all exposed to machine gun fire. The bullets whistled around like balls in a pinball machine.

"John R. Martin, who was a wonderful bass singer, got hit in the foot and we later left him on a ship on the way back out to sea."

The machine gun fire had set some equipment on a truck on fire, and later when Captain Bricker's sheepskin coat was examined, several bullet holes were found.

The LCT had drifted out of range of the shore gunners, drifting through a mined area at high tide. A Battery personnel could see trees and brush along the shore, more vegetation than where the craft had landed.

After the LCT stopped at the ship to deposit Pfc. Martin, the captain and ensign went on board, Adamson said. "When they came back onto the LCT, the ensign seemed to know where he was to land us."

The ensign tried another landing area, and took a run at the beach. At a distance estimated by Bricker at 300 yards, the Navy man dropped the front gate where the A Battery men were supposed to land. A sounding was taken but no bottom was found. The ensign said he could not get closer and did not have the visibility in the darkness for a better approach, so the A Battery group spent the first night, June 6, on the LCT off Utah Beach.



Another landing effort on June 6, D-Day, was more successful. This was completed by two sections of D Battery, commanded by Lt. Herman Boykin, with Lt. Joseph Logsdon second in command. On this special mission they were to land on the Isles St. Marcouf, to provide anti-aircraft protection to the seaward side of Utah Beach.⁴

The D Battery men, who sailed from Dartmouth on June 2, were accompanied by two Medics, T/4 Allen Phillips and T/5 Kim Bell. The Medics had added some extra materials to their aid kits, as they were to be away from supplies for "a few days," they understood. However, the actual time turned out to be 30 days.

The islands for which they were headed were about five miles northwest of the proposed mainland debarkation area at Utah Beach.

St. Marcouf, the first saint of French origin, was said to have lived there in the sixth century, and the islands had been fortified at one time. On the main island, duLarge, was a granite fort dating from the second Empire, and an old square fort also had long been abandoned on deTerre, a plat-

eau rising above the water. The English had occupied the rocks in 1793, constructed a fort on one island and a barracks and magazines on the other.⁵

Around 5:30 a.m. on D-Day, 132 men of the Fourth and Twenty-Fourth Cavalry squadrons landed on the islands to deal with a suspected enemy observation post, but found none. However, the islands were heavily mined, and the cavalry men lost two killed and 17 wounded from mines, booby traps and a concentration of artillery that fell in the afternoon.⁶

About 2 p.m. on D-Day the LCT in which the Medics were riding with D Battery personnel pulled into Utah Beach under shell fire to let off some soldiers with a 4-by-4 vehicle and barrage balloon. A considerable time was spent maneuvering in close enough to unload the vehicle. One shell hit near the boat, convincing Bell that "we were not on an ordinary June outing." The pad stalled in the water, and the boat had to rescue the stranded men and take them back into the beach, while the incoming tide edged further up the truck. Several trucks that could be seen on the beach were afire.

The landing craft turned around, finally, and headed for the Isles St. Marcouf. The first island, where Phillips was to stay with some of the D Battery personnel, had been fixed up somewhat as a fortress but did not contain an actual fortified building of the type on the other island, Bell said. Some mines had been cleared but the area still was quite dangerous. The 535th men managed to unload part of a 40mm gun on shore, where some grass was growing along the water line, and troops were probing for explosives with long wires. Bell was standing alongside the 40mm when a Bouncing

Betty, in a round steel can, popped about three and one-half feet out of the ground, but did not detonate. Later, thinking about the dud, Bell broke out in a cold sweat, he said. One of the troops who had landed earlier said he had been in the Sicilian campaign and this was the worst anti-personnel mined area he had seen anywhere. The 535th men finally completed unloading, and soldiers who had landed earlier got aboard for the return trip.⁷

Bell and some of the D Battery men were landed on the other island with a machine gun. Here they found a big round, stone, barracks-type building, with grassy area inside, about 50 feet across. A couple of old cannons still were mounted on the flat roof. The beach sloped to a moat which was 20 to 30 feet wide at its broadest point and which completely circled the building. The machine gun was set up on the beach outside the moat. This fort apparently was the one constructed in the Second Empire.⁸

The island was stony, but there was dirt to grow some grass, and a kind of protective wall had been constructed in some places. The 535th men, who had some extra blankets, stayed and slept outside the moat. Although Channel waters reached the moat wall in places, there was 30 to 40 feet of the island in most areas outside the moat even when the tide was in. Troops on this and the other island were the most isolated of all 535th men in the early days of the Normandy invasion; they did not know what was happening in Normandy and elsewhere in the world, or where their buddies were. For company they had the gray and melancholy sea.

♦ ♦ ♦

First landing of a group of 535th troops on the mainland of France was completed in the later afternoon by some Headquarters Battery men, transported in LCT 664, which had crossed in a LCT convoy.

When the turn came for the LCTs of the Second Wave, LCT 664 moved in behind a pilot boat which headed toward Utah Beach through a lane that had been cleared of mines. Spray over the boat, and salt from the sea could be tasted on a GI's lips.

Ahead of the men, the land was increasing in size gradually, what could be seen of it.

The beach was gray, and sloped up to a ridge behind which nothing could be seen. There was no life, except for a tiny black form of a man that could be seen once in a while, and an occasional puff of black dirt or smoke. "Those are engineers blowing up mines," said a wise guy. Thinking later of that gray strand, the writer of *Battalion from the Mojave* thought of the beach as corpse-like-- death only slightly warmed over. The lifelessness of Utah Beach from the sea was particularly noticeable in contrast to the teeming practice invasion beach at Slapton Sands, with the metal mats for traffic and the large numbers of soldiers who could be seen on the shore.

LCT 664 passed the prow of another LCT sticking out of the water, and shortly before 5 p.m. reached the shallow waters near the beach, backed off and then worked into a more favorable position. Sailors let down the front of the boat. A jeep from a nearby LCT sank into deep water and stalled; it was humorous to see the plight of these GIs with

not much more than their heads sticking above water-- at least it seemed mirthful to people still securely on a LCT.

Infantrymen were in a nearby boat that had not shoved in far enough, and water was fairly deep where they were jumping off. An infantry first sergeant who could not swim was calling for help, swinging a brief case and trying to stay afloat. Most of Headquarters 535th men were too concerned with their own situation to pay much attention to him, but Roy McLean jumped over the side of the LCT into the water. Several nearby GIs wondered what he was doing, then noticed that the sergeant's briefcase had come open and French francs were floating over the Channel waters in bundles. McLean was trying to save the money. This "so-called entertainment," as S/Sgt. Maynard (Red) Amond termed it, helped a little in taking the minds of some of the fellows off the dangers of the landing and was the laugh of the communications section during the entire campaign.

Norman Wilkins' truck was first off into France on D-Day, followed by the Operations truck. The vehicles sank in deep water, almost stopped, then moved powerfully ahead and gained speed, heading up out of the water onto the dark beach on vehicle tracks, flanked by debris, keeping inside a lane that was taped off with white string. Several Headquarters vehicles stopped, while W/O DuBois and Sgt. Arnold Fritz walked ahead toward the ridge to reconnoiter. Three long terrifying whistles were heard, curving through the air, each a second or two apart, then three explosions sounded up and down the beach. A large group of Fourth Division infantrymen at another end of the beach fell to the ground, and shrapnel rattled against a stranded landing craft. Three more

blood-curdling shells whistled in, a startling additional introduction to combat, and 535th GIs began piling off vehicles and hitting the dirt. More shells fell, three at a whack, and black mud splashed some GIs. Capt. James Craig decided to move the vehicles up the beach, and troops who had clambered back on the trucks huddled against piled duffel bags for protection from bullets that popped and sang through the air, exploding from a burning GI truck nearby. The troops arriving near the sea wall found Sergeant Fritz and other soldiers crouched alongside. Warrant officer DuBois, hit by shrapnel, had been led away by Medics-- he was bleeding from the mouth and chest.

The men had gotten enough "feel" of combat in a few minutes to have some conception of what faced the American infantrymen who were to bear the brunt of the fighting, and of the long route of horrors that awaited them in the interior; the death and suffering were to be staggering, and how long would it last? If a person had ever felt in the mood to shed some tears, that would have been the time, realizing what awaited the First Army infantry.

Another whistle warned the new arrivals of incoming shells, and several of the GIs sprawled alongside two dead Americans, turning bluish in the face. Right then was no time for thinking, but later, remembering, it was saddening to think of the Yanks, whose gaiety and ebullience we had seen in England in contrast with the more reserved islanders, being cut down and killed by the hundreds.

Most of Headquarters Battery personnel present dug in along the seawall, on the advice of a lieutenant who said he was going ahead to try to find out what was happening. A

soldier from another outfit was crouched on his knees in a shallow hole with his face against the ground. "What state are you from?" this writer asked. "Ohio," he said. He was digging sand with his helmet and pouring it slowly against the top of the slanting hole but it cascaded back in each time. The sand-digger said the Germans had been shelling heavily since morning; he seemed half out of his head. Soldiers were trying to dig out some of the light sand below the seawall but it was hopeless. Shells continued to whistle in without much pause, three at a time, tossing sand about. Smell of the smoke from some could be whiffed. Scared troops were dug in as well as they could along the length of the seawall.

The 535th lieutenant returned and said we were moving inland. The 535th GIs dashed for the trucks, crowded in and the convoy moved beyond the wall. Sappers were working in the fields, and the roads were taped off. German mines, some painted with skull and crossbones, warned of mines. No shells now fell near the trucks, and it was apparent here that the German artillery was concentrating on the slender landing area. "If we ever come out of this," said T/4 Robert Gede, "I want you guys to all come up to my place for a chicken dinner."

The reception for the GIs from LCT 664 on the beach had been illustrative of the serious problem facing U.S. troops in the Utah Beach area. Although the initial landing has been widely publicized as meeting little opposition from the German batteries, most of the forts still were intact late on D-Day. Artillery fire, mortars and machine gun fire began hitting the beach soon after the second wave landed, and harassment was to continue for days. Some of the toughest fight-

ing in future days was to be on the north flank where the infantry had to attack and silence the well-dug-in fortifications.⁹



On the afternoon of D-Day the convoy from LCT 664 stopped nearly one mile inland, and GIs quickly dug holes in a green field. Capt. Eugene Lash, who had said he wanted to come on the Invasion because "it's the biggest thing that ever happened," explained as much of the situation as he knew. He told the men there had been "a snafu," and that Headquarters had landed before the line batteries.

A Medic from another outfit walked over and asked if he could borrow a shovel to bury some arms and legs. He said he would return the spade, but he didn't.



Seawall at Utah Beach is well known to 535th GIs. They moved ashore a short distance to dig in for the first time in Normandy. Holes in light sand provided a little protection from shelling during the initial landings. —U.S. Army photo



Utah Beach was a desolate-appearing section frequently during June 1944. Continued sporadic shelling encouraged GIs to stay away from the area as much as possible. —Ted Andreyka picture



Huge German forts near Utah Beach show signs of battering from American big guns, probably naval. The blockhouses were visited by 535th troops after they had been neutralized. —Thomas P. Elliott photo



American Liberty ships, deliberately scuttled off the Normandy beaches, provided make-shift breakwaters during early days of Invasion. This scene shows 13 Liberty ships formed into a protecting screen for the vessels unloading on the beach. —Air Force photo



Supplies pour ashore in Normandy for the invasion of France. Photo was snapped by a U.S. Coast Guard combat photographer from a hillside cut with the trenches of the ousted Nazi. —Air Force photo

Offshore, Navy ships were continuing to hammer the German defenses.

Digging in on that evening of D-Day above the beach in the firm ground of an open field, men of Headquarters battery were still so much in an unknown element that they might as well have been on the moon as merely a new side of the by-now-familiar Channel. They knew that the paratroops had dropped beyond, in the fields of Normandy, and that a big part of the Fourth Infantry Division was up ahead someplace, where we could hear the uneasy noise of guns. A causeway across flooded lands was the nearest link with the more westerly sections of Normandy, and the road was lonely and empty in the dusk. Information on what was happening out of sight of a GI's hole was almost non-existent. The Germans apparently were having the same difficulty getting information, and higher U.S. headquarters also had little contact with the forces on Utah Beach.¹⁰

German shells continued slamming into the beach in back of the 535th's newly-established CP until about 9:30 in the evening.

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More 535th men arrived in the evening on Utah Beach. The CO, Capt. George Dickerson, landed near LaMadelaine at 5 p.m., and at 8:30 or 9 p.m. the second platoon of B landed. The beach, according to the battery's journal, was "still under heavy enemy artillery fire." This was the first firing unit of the 535th to land on the beach. (B Battery's first platoon landed at 10 p.m. the following day.)¹¹

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The LCT which had taken Lieutenants Hughes, McKibbin and Williams off an LST along with other personnel and some equipment, was lying offshore in the night after failure of a D-Day landing. Hughes said that the skipper, a young ensign, could not find the landing area assigned to him and "we churned in and out of the melee until darkness overtook us and he decided to anchor a few yards offshore."

At daybreak on June 7, D plus one, the LCT moved into the beach, carrying a bulldozer in front and jeeps on either side of the ramp. Most of the personnel were from the Fourth Infantry Division, Hughes remembered:

On the first pass at the beach, the ensign ordered "down ramp" and it was then that the dozer took off and disappeared beneath the sea. We rescued the driver.

Another pass was made and the jeep on the right side was ordered off-- it too disappeared in the sea and again we saved the personnel.

As we were next to go, I asked our driver if everything was ready. He said "yes" and proceeded to try to pull the loading mechanism on his sub-machine gun that was in a holder mounted on the windshield post, putting holes in either side of the rubber tube.

When we were ordered to go, the driver roared off the ramp with me sticking my fingers in the bullet holes in the snorkel tube-- thus we went ashore. I could just hold my head above water, and the driver and other officers stood up and held on to their seats.

We hit the beach on the fly, rode over the sand dunes in the rear of the beach and came to rest in an area used for removing waterproofing from the vehicles. We were one of the first customers they had.

Lieutenant Hughes found "mass confusion" on the beach-head. The area was flooded, but the roadways were open.

Landmarks had vanished, but the officers were able to locate gun sites.¹²

The Allied landings at Utah Beach actually had been made about 2,000 yards south of where they were supposed to have been, according to the plan.¹³



On the same morning of Lieutenant Hughes' landing, June 7, while the B and Headquarters men ashore were getting more accustomed to their newly-excavated holes, some of D Battery's personnel who had gone to the top side of the P-72 (Susan B. Anthony) out in the Channel found the sky overcast and weather cool enough to make them shiver. Cold spray was flying from the sea, and on the waters many hundreds of vessels of varied types could be seen in the Invasion fleet.

The D Battery men were starting to put on field packs by 7:30 a.m. Shortly afterward, Lt. Roy W. Fox began to inspect the packs in a section of the ship occupied by the battery.

A sudden, jolting impact caused by the ship hitting a floating mine threw the men to the floor about 8 o'clock, and all lights were snuffed out.¹⁴ D Battery personnel were instructed to slip off their packs and stay where they were until it was learned what had happened. A few managed to get out flashlights, and the beams of light stabbing the darkness were a help.

By loudspeaker, the troops were instructed to leave for the deck, and all marched outside, where they were told to leave all equipment behind and remove helmets in event of an order to abandon ship.

Destroyers had trouble getting close to the damaged transport because of rough waters, but about 8:45 a British destroyer had managed to tie up alongside. As P-38s circled overhead, the troops from the Anthony began boarding the destroyer by debarkation nets. By 9:50 the D Battery men noted that one entire end of the transport was under water. In half an hour, the 8,200-ton ship slipped entirely beneath the waves, bursting into flames before going under. No lives were lost.

With the Anthony in its watery plunge went most of the personal possessions of D Battery GIs.

One of these men, Pfc. Robert Koerber, stated that he and others lacked rifles, steel helmets and packs when boarding the British ship.

As the destroyer cruised off the coast, large warships were firing shells into the German positions ashore. About Battery transferred from the destroyer to a LCM by means of a debarkation net, and landed at Utah Beach.

The troops, wet to about waist high, marched inland over the sandy beach under the bright sun and had gone only a short distance when they encountered Lieutenant Hughes.¹⁵ Hughes wrote later:

I recall meeting their first sergeant, Charles L. Arnold, who was barefoot, unarmed and quite upset. I recall him lying foot to foot with a dead paratrooper, to measure shoe sizes. They fit and we thus equipped him with shoes and small arms from the body.¹⁶

Pfc. Koerber said that "we picked up German rifles to have some fire power."

D Battery personnel dug foxholes after landing, with borrowed shovels. They had only six rifles and no rations, but were able to borrow food from an adjoining unit for supper.¹⁷

"All during the afternoon the Medics were bringing in the wounded and dead to the hospital which was near our bivouac area," the battery's journal writer observed.



This same day, June 7, A Battery also finally got ashore in Normandy. Adamson remembered that he and others arrived on the beach "amid the purple smoke of the shells that were being fired from farther back."

First section of A Battery touched down at 8:20 a.m., and was ready to fire by 8:35 a.m. All sections were ready to fire by 3:45 in the afternoon. A Battery got some action at 10:15 a.m., when three FW 190s swooped in across the beach bombing and strafing. Section 1 fired on the attackers. One FW 190 was hit and was seen to be smoking as it left the area-- later it was verified as having crashed.¹⁸

This was like "shooting ducks," Captain Bricker said. One of the bombs exploded on contact with the ground, he said. The explosion opened a fair-sized little crater and was said to have killed a major of the engineer corps.

The captain noted that 90mm guns and barrage balloons of other outfits already were in place. Ack-ack units had been arriving as early as D-Day.

Second air attack on the beach took place at 6:45 p.m. when four ME 109s roared in on a strafing attack.

All were shot down. The 11th AAA Group reported a total of 10 fighter-bombers took part in bombing and strafing missions over the beach during the day and claimed seven destroyed by anti-aircraft.¹⁹

In the evening, No. 8 gun section of B Battery suffered severe casualties when a mine exploded while the men were trying to emplace their 40mm gun. Townsend, Lones, Critchfield, Cannizzaro and Ballard were killed, and four others--Geiger, Jake, Doherty and Kroll-- were wounded.²⁰

The section's gun still could be fired and the men of Section 4 later manned the weapon until their own gun was ready. They found that equipment in the area of No. 8 gun had been riddled. Ball bearings from the explosive were strewn over part of the area, Pfc. Creed Wilson remembered.

Section 4's gun had been stranded in the Channel, and it was some hours before water could be removed from the equipment. Remaining B Battery gun crews had been coming ashore in the late evening of this second day of the Invasion, June 7. Pfc. Wilson was with this contingent, driving Gun Section 4 truck, which was transported to the coast of Normandy by ship, then transferred to a Rhino barge. Wilson remembered that wounded GIs from Normandy were being returned already, and were transferred to the vessel that was being emptied of its new arrivals. When the Rhino was unloaded at the beach, Wilson was at the wheel with Sgt. John Butts beside him, and 12 other men of the gun section were riding behind. A 40mm gun was towed behind the truck. The truck sank into the Channel waters, and when the Channel was running about waist high to the men in the cab the motor quit and the B Battery men had to swim ashore. The tide

was coming in rapidly, and Wilson had to swim back out and place a white flag on the submerged truck so that the vehicle would not be hit by oncoming vessels. On his return to shore, Wilson could see the flag waving in the breeze but there was no sign of the truck, now completely inundated. "I never saw anything raise so fast in my life as the English Channel," Wilson recalled.²¹ Wilson and other B Battery men dug into the French earth. As the tide was supposed to be at its lowest at 4 o'clock on the following morning, Wilson went back out at that time with another soldier, who was driving a tank, and the truck and gun were towed into shore.

June 7 had been a memorable day, and the biggest lift to morale had come in the morning, when a long line of English planes, towing gliders, roared in low from over the sea. They had cut their loads loose over the St. Mere Eglise area further inland where our paratroops were fighting, and turned back toward England, one after another. This spectacular reinforcement had helped to re-energize troops whose mood was a bit low after some of D-Day's depressing scenes.

Despite the help for our spirits, the glider buildup was not a success. Many gliders were wrecked, out of our sight, and losses were heavy.²²



As well as being eventful, June 7 also turned out to be very long, ending on a grim note. The 535th personnel were informed on this day that Americans at the other invasion beach (which we later learned was called Omaha) had run into unexpected opposition and were "hanging on by their

fingernails." They had not been able to move off the beach yet, we were informed.

At dusk, we got some additional unsettling news, from a VII Corps lieutenant colonel, who walked into the Battalion CP. He said Hitler reportedly had made a speech that day in which he had said, "Tomorrow there will not be a living Englishman or American in Europe," and the officer told 535th personnel to take extra precautions, especially against gas attack. Coming on the heels of the bad news about the other American landing area, this turned the beachhead into a place of additional eeriness and menace. We were still wearing the invasion clothing and shoes that had been impregnated against gas, and we kept our gasmasks close to us throughout the late evening. (General Bradley stated later that he was "vastly relieved" when D-Day passed without "a whiff of mustard," and said that the Allied commanders had speculated on the possibility of the Germans using gas in a risky bid by Hitler, for survival.²³)

A short time after midnight, a Junkers 88, outlined against the moon, added a lively touch, boring in on a bombing run. Thousands of red tracers flew through the sky. This writer was with T/Sgt. Stevens looking for a break in the telephone line between 535th CP and 11th AAA Group, and both of us fell on the paved road, not wanting to take the chance of possible booby traps in the ditch. Concussion of the plane's bomb threw us a few inches. Even after the plane had disappeared, a few nervous machine gunners still were firing, at stars, we figured. The guards at the 535th's CP had been doubled, and they stood in their holes watching.

It was difficult to understand how Hitler could make a statement that he did not plan to back up, and an uneasy GI could imagine a gas that would sear through his clothing and masks, or rocket guns capable of wiping out a square mile of beach. On the darker side, a soldier could assume that his "number was up" that night. But perhaps Hitler had some other meaning-- he may have been assuring his followers that the Allied armies would be driven into the sea in time? Once in the night we heard a guard:

What's that out there in the sky? It looks like a ring of gas around the beachhead.

The night wore on, mostly without sleep and the dawn of June 8, D plus two, came slowly over the beachhead. The men of 535th were still alive, and they felt increasingly relieved throughout the day.

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D Battery continued scrounging for supplies and improving its positions on June 8. Some rifles, also grenades, cartridge belts, mess kits and other equipment were obtained from a field hospital supply dump, and an engineer outfit provided five gallons of hot coffee.

Shells from an 88 were landing in D Battery area during part of the day, and the men stayed close to their foxholes.²⁴

Harassment of the beaches by the German forts continued. On the previous day, Gen. Lawton Collins had ordered the Fourth Division to continue its northward attack to seize coastal forts, but they were tough to crack.²⁵

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C Battery arrived on June 8. S/Sgt. Dixon, who accompanied this unit, wrote that on June 7 he had seen his first enemy plane, a ME 109 which was pounced upon immediately and shot down by a Spitfire. The sergeant also related:

At all times during the hours of lightness the skies were filled with Allied planes and we experienced no enemy air interference.

Our Navy was busy shelling shore installations and we watched the shells bursting as they sought out enemy strongpoints and other targets. Our dive bombers were also busy and we saw a beautiful explosion when an ammunition dump was hit.

On its return to England our ship was to be used as a hospital ship, so soon after June 7, mid-night, we saw our first battle casualties brought aboard. The odor of antiseptics and the sight of the wounded gave us our first real jolt as we waited transfer to a smaller boat and the trip ashore, into the unknown. The well-known "butterflies" had a field day...²⁶

The water-taxi which C Battery men had been awaiting did not arrive until the morning of June 8, and "with arrival of daylight, half our fears evaporated," S/Sgt. Dixon stated. He also observed:

In all directions the water was dotted with landing craft of every description, and on the beach the engineers quietly went about their job of guiding the boats in and giving directions in unloading.

The paratroops, the airborne troops and the assault troops had done their job well. The beach was quiet as Sunday on a farm.

With the exception of several of our vehicles stalling in the water, and subsequently being pulled out, we had very little trouble as we went ashore and took up our positions.

One ever-present danger that we faced was enemy mines and booby traps but we stuck to the roads and fields that had been cleared by the Engineers and suffered only a few casualties.²⁷

Lieutenant Elliott said that 19 tons of food had been loaded on the tank deck of the ship that brought C Battery to the coast of France. This was to be used while the ship acted as a hospital ship. When C Battery left the ship "at least 10 tons of that food left with us," the lieutenant recalled. The battery had canned cream and other varieties of edibles for months afterward.



Outside of the rear echelon, the last of the 535th's men to land on Utah Beach was a group from D Battery, bringing the unit's vehicles and guns from England. Lts. Sherwyn Ehrlich and Ellwood Ziegler were accompanied by 30 enlisted men on the Liberty ship Benjamin Hawkins, leaving Cardiff docks.

Attacks by the Luftwaffe at night, including some near misses by bombs, enlivened the trip. Unloading began on June 9 and was completed on June 10.²⁸



We had heard the noises of the front in the first several days but got little real news.

First batch of prisoners to pass along the road by the 535th Battalion CP on one of these first days was a small one. The POWs were halted for a rest and sat along the road, and 535th GIs stared at them. One guard, a loud fellow carrying a tommy gun, told of capturing one in a woman's house. "How old would you say that old geezer was?" he asked, pointing

at a man who appeared to be about 55. Some of the prisoners were teen-agers, about 15 years old maybe. A GI yelled for them to fall in, and they leaped to their feet and began shuffling along the dusty road toward the beach.

With most bands of prisoners were several in civilian clothes. The men wore black caps and baggy black peasant clothes, and the first woman with the POWs was a young, heavy-set female, a rustic-appearing type.

Except for such prisoners, Europeans were scarce in our immediate vicinity in the first days.

Build-Up at the Beachhead

The ack-ack at Utah Beach formed part of a heavy variety of armament helping ease the way for the supply build-up in Normandy in June 1944. Fighter planes provided cover over the beaches, while at sea naval vessels hammered German strongpoints ashore.

Luftwaffe activity continued light in the 535th area during the long, late spring daytimes. Two enemy fighters were fired on by the Battalion's guns on June 9, and one was smoking as it left the area. Two more fighters were fired on later the same evening.

The umbrella of Allied fighters and shortage of fuel were reported as a couple of the involved reasons why the German planes did not make more penetrations of the beachheads. However, small flights of from three to twenty planes were active over the area at irregular times, mostly during darkness. The raids were a nuisance and caused some damage, but were never of the scope which one ack-ack expert had thought might jeopardize an entire landing operation.¹

By June 10 the wind was dying off the beach, and landing of supplies was being stepped up. A strong force had been put ashore in 100 hours, but until the weather improved there was some concern among Army leaders as to whether sufficient supplies could be brought in for the fighting under way along almost the entire front. On June 11 the sea was

calm, and ferrying of supplies and their unloading went on at their highest rate so far.²

For hours, sunburned infantrymen supporting the assault moved down the road by the 535th's Battalion CP, toward the front that rumbled and boomed on the horizon.

They trudged by, thousands after thousands, wearily, not a smile in the bunch, each lost in his own thoughts and weighted down by pack, rifle or bazooka or BAR (Browning automatic rifle); sometimes an extra pair of shoes dangled from their pack. Mortar men shouldered the heavy pieces of their weapons.

An engineer recognized the red, white and blue shoulder patch on long files of infantry advancing slowly along the dusty road.

"The beachhead's safe now," he said. "That's the 9th Division from Africa."

(The 9th began to debark at Utah Beach on June 10, and the 39th Infantry was attached to the Fourth Infantry Division to assist in clearing the coastal area to the north, to Quineville. Remainder of the division was unloading rapidly enough to be ready for commitment on June 14.³)

In the 535th's area in Europe we were not to see again the columns of the 9th or the 90th Division (although the 90th's CP was near the Cretteville airstrip later, not far from the 535th's CP), which also came ashore on Utah Beach, or the 29th, whose platoons many of us had seen marching down a road on the English coast at the Assault Training Center. But they were difficult to forget. Shortly after the infantry "parade" on the beach, this writer typed in a letter, sent home:

I've seen the American infantry walking past our CP day after day, the road full of them, to the front and horrors which only those who have been through it can realize. They couldn't pay me \$1,000 a week to join the infantry, but of course if I'd been put in it I would go up and fight for the same reasons the rest of them do.

If the people at home get impatient, they should realize that hedges, high points and villages on the long road to Berlin have to be fought for and taken by foot soldiers from other foot soldiers who are well equipped and fight hard.

Watching the German PWs in blue-gray uniforms herded on long columns each day on roads to the beaches, you can see the strain on their manpower-- some look about 14, many are middle-aged. Quite a few are draftees from occupied countries. Our guys are practically all in their early 20s.

Sometimes 535th troops wondered if the Germans could drive the Allies back to the Channel, and what would be done then. But the flood of men and equipment went up the roads and did not return.

Through a captured German artillery observation instrument-- a periscope-type instrument set on a tripod-GIs at the Battalion CP could look inland, and through this a spire on the horizon, topped by a cross, loomed larger. Chimneys and red and gray village roofs among the trees were brought closer through the glass, and there were close-ups of engineers gingerly searching for mines in Normandy meadows.

A short distance inland, the 535th's immediate higher headquarters, 11th AAA Group, was camped in an orchard by a farmhouse. On a trip there, several of us saw two GIs standing at the gate with a girl of about 12 who read words from a French language booklet, after which they imitated her earnestly. She then would read another phrase. She was

thin and pretty, with a scar on her neck, and wore a blue dress, woolen stockings to her knees, and wooden shoes. In her eyes was a sadness rarely to be glimpsed in the eyes of a child.

Also away from the beach, and the first village many of the 535th troops saw, was St. Marie du Mont.

Homes there, typical of Normandy style, we learned later, were pearl gray and very foreign appearing.

In fields near the town were crashed gliders, well stripped of wood and anything else of value, apparently by soldiers.



On one of the isles St. Marcouf, an attempt to improve the position of a 50-caliber machine gun had a tragic ending on June 10.⁴

The troops who had preceded the 535th men to the island had placed a ladder on the fortified building there, but Lt. Herman Boykin and Sgt. Sam Ed Sanders, an Oklahoman ("He was a soldier if there ever was one-- the best," the lieutenant remarked of Sanders) wanted to find a way to the top of the structure so that they could place the gun on the roof without carrying it up the ladder. On the inside of the moat was a big archway in the center of the building, to the grassed area in the center, and a stairway spiraled to the second floor, which was the only way to reach the top and the cannons. Boykin and Sanders probed through the archway and were almost through. The lieutenant remarked "Well, here's a mine..." He also had one figured for another spot close by, when an explosive jumped about waist high

there, throwing shrapnel. Boykin recalled being knocked down.

One of the Medics, T/5 Bell, went to their aid and found that the lieutenant had dragged himself back. "Go see about Sergeant Sanders," said Boykin, who had several slugs in one foot. Bell unwrapped the sergeant-- unexploded grenades were hanging around his belt-- but found there was nothing he could do. He lived "only a few minutes," and he uttered nothing, Bell recalled. The explosive had bounced up under Sanders' raincoat, and he had taken almost the full impact. An unexploded Bouncing Betty was lying under his body.

Lieutenant Boykin, who had decided he was with "a suicide outfit" when he got the assignment to the islands, had to remain on the island all that night and into the next morning, and he was "pretty uncomfortable," Bell recalled. The Medic gave the lieutenant some morphine. There was no telephone communication with the other island-- an attempt had been made to string wires but this was not successful. However, the D Battery men did have flags and they signaled to the other island, which was closer to the beach.

Captain Lowe of the Medical Detachment recalled of this incident:

We received a message by radio that there were some injuries. However, the weather was stormy, and the Navy would not take me out there. I camped down at the beach urging them to take me out at the first moment. Finally they took me on a small personnel boat. It was really rough and I was soaked. When I arrived, I found Lieutenant Boykin badly injured and our Indian sergeant killed. A PT boat was called and we transported them to a hospital ship. The PT boat was fast, much steadier and very powerful.

Following the accident, D Battery men left the machine gun on the beach. They knew that numerous mines still were implanted in the island-- they had thrown stones inside the building and hit explosives.

The men took turns manning the gun on the island, on a 24-hour basis.

On the night that Sanders was fatally wounded the guns on both islands opened fire on two ME 109s. Navy ack-ack also was blasting at the raiders, and both planes plunged into the sea.⁵



At night, men of the 535th and other units on the beach could see the glow against the sky of fires from Carentan on the south and Montebourg on the northwest.

The night, too, was the time of the Luftwaffe, when fighter pilots who had protected the beachhead during the day had returned to some well-earned sleep in comfortable beds. Dusk arrived about 11 in that latitude, and around 11:30 at night the drone of the first bomber was heard.⁶

Some of the German planes had been dropping pressure mines, which lay at the bottom on the Channel and exploded from the pressure of a ship's hull passing over them. Vessels had to slow to four knots in the shoal water to avoid casualties from the mines.⁷

But the airmen were looking for potential targets too, and the Luftwaffe method was for a reconnaissance plane to drop a line of float lights as a guide to a bomber. Patrolling PT boats began to shoot at the flares as soon as they were seen.⁸ In the night, with German planes seeming to be constantly

above the beach in the darkness, the eerie flare of exotic and unwelcome German lights alerted the minds of thousands of men in holes along the beaches and on the nearby front, on vessels offshore, at halftracks and 90mm and 40mm positions and machine guns, alongside protecting sandbags.

There was an uneasy expectancy as the lights hung in the night skies, showing the way for the unseen observers high above, and giving them a look too at the impending doom of Hitler's empire which still stretched at that time from the Atlantic to deep inside Russia.

In those moments of weird, tension-rising, early-morning lights, with the once-famed Luftwaffe in a waning effort, there may have been some consciousness among the troops of the dimming powers and fading pomp of the Third Reich, a Reich familiar to us through the radio voice of Hitler that we had heard in earlier days exhorting his followers, and the crashing waves of vocal response, "Heil Hitler!" As the enemy lights hung suspended above the French coast, moving slowly, so the Normandy front in those days seemed partly frozen, a red line moving slowly on a situation map--yet time was relentless and as the lights must fade, so the line must break, the tanks would roll; time would not wait. But the symbolism was largely lost to the 535th's foxhole-dwellers in those June nights when time did seem almost frozen, with the lights, and the eyes of Luftwaffe pilots searched out targets in the Allied armada and dug-in land positions.

"It was a spectacle to watch the anti-aircraft fire when the Germans actually got over the beach area," according to Ernie Pyle, an observer at this time. He wrote:

All the machine guns on the ships lying off the beaches cut loose with their red tracer bullets, and those on shore did too. Their bullets arched in all directions and fused into a sky-filling pattern. The lines of tracers bent and waved and seemed like streams of red water from hoses. The whole thing became a gigantic, animated fountain of red in the black sky.

And above all this were the split-second golden flashes of big-gun shells as they exploded high up toward the stars. The noise was terrific. Sometimes low clouds caught the crack of those many guns and scrambled them all into one gigantic roar...⁹

The 11th AAA Group after-action reports show as many as 50 enemy planes fired on during some nights in early June. German communiques of the time made frequent claims of Allied ships hit in bombing attacks, indicating that the invasion fleet offshore was the main objective of these nocturnal raiders.

Worst raid in the 535th area took place early on June 15, when the AAA Intelligence Service reported 200 planes above the beaches at one time.

Several of the planes were hovering shortly before 3 a.m., lower than any others we had heard before at night. Then 535th men heard a maddened new roar, as one or two planes turned downward in a power drive and seemed headed directly for Battalion CP and adjacent areas. The roar increased in intensity and seemed to drag out interminably. When the plane was in range, the scores of machine guns and the 40mm crews joined the high-firing 90mms in pouring lead into the darkness.

Bombs shrieked through the night from the plane and landed near 535th positions with walloping crunches. The plane swooped out of its dive and was gone, but another

turned downward in a wild roar, and the entire process was repeated. The 90s continued to fire until Allied planes appeared in the north. Some of the fellows joked in the morning that "the weather was cold" last night-- "I was shaking." Others told of saying their prayers. Understanding how the Stukas had terrorized European populations in earlier periods of the war was a little easier after experiencing the dive bombing.¹⁰

♦ ♦ ♦

One bomb, troops discovered, had landed about 100 yards from Battalion CP, digging a hole six feet across.

Three smashed into the Battery C platoon area for which Lieutenant Elliott was responsible. Two evidently were duds, but the lieutenant found the third to be ticking when he placed a long metal rod against the explosive. He contacted the beach bomb disposal officer and they agreed that the answer would be to dig down to the hidden bomb and blow it up, if possible. The bomb disposal officer wired up several blocks of TNT to the uncovered bomb, and blew it up.

♦ ♦ ♦

Combat was the great leveler. The colonel's flesh was as soft as a private's; it could be torn by shrapnel, or the unsuspected Bouncing Betty could kill him. Chance could wing a bomb into his foxhole as easily as into ours. No mortal, whether he was a KP or major, would be spared if he were in the wrong place at the wrong time. The captains, majors and colonel on whom the troops had relied previously were not so much help in these contingencies, and the GIs began turning to "combat" religion.

Everybody was more friendly to others-- all of the fellows were buddies on the beachhead.

In England the enlisted men used to talk, jokingly, about getting rid of certain unpopular members of the 535th. They had a two-line song, "There's a splash in the Channel over there," with the second line providing the information "And ----- isn't with us any more." But the song was a quick casualty on Utah Beach, along with any talk about doing away with Americans.



In his book *Brave Men*, Ernie Pyle stated that the troops on the beachhead were in the habit of sleeping all night in their foxholes, and constructed dugouts to be safe from falling flak, which was a hazard along with possible enemy action.¹¹

Men of the 535th had fixed up good holes, and many of them were roofed over with planks and other heavy wood. In addition to protection against stray metal, the roofing kept out the wind and rain that had been plentiful in Normandy.

On a day when a soldier had some spare time, he might lie back in his hole on his blankets, listening to a sprinkle of rain hitting the planks above, and watch the breeze causing the grass roots on the side of the hole to shiver. The fuzz on a ridge of protecting sandbags above a GI's head was like the hair on a man's arm. Well up in the sky, but below the moving rain clouds, a GI might see a barrage balloon drifting in the sky, then move slowly out of sight behind the sandbags, then reappear.



One of the dignitaries who visited Normandy about this time was King George VI of England. He was on the beach-head on June 16 for the first time since inspecting the Maginot Line in 1939. Although he was not near 535th positions, apparently, his mimeographed message was received a short time later by the 535th, presumably along with the other varied units that made up the Allied armies then building up on the edge of the continent. The King informed us:

Today I have visited the beaches of Normandy which will be forever famous. All that I saw on my journeys and on the soil of France has moved me deeply. I have come home feeling an intense admiration for all those who planned and organized this vast project, and for the gallant and successful execution of it in all its varied phases by everyone of those engaged in this great battle.¹²



Further inland, the First Army infantry was making some grinding progress, gradually expanding the size of the beach-head.

Carentan, which had been captured June 12, finally was securely in U.S. control on June 14 after a German counterattack, and link-up with V Corps from the Omaha beachhead had been made. VIII Corps became operational on June 15, taking over 101st Airborne. On June 19 the 82nd Airborne and 90th Division also came under VIII Corps control.

On June 17 the Ninth Infantry Division cut the last highway escape route of the Germans who might want to flee south on the Cotentin peninsula, and on June 18 the Ninth's troops reached the west coast of the peninsula at Barneville-

sur-Mer. (The Ninth was to suffer more than 2,400 casualties by July 1).¹³



On Utah Beach meantime, Cpl. Albert Woodrow of C Battery of the 535th wrote to his buddy Fred Staab in England--under date of June 17-- that a lot of things had happened since the forward echelon had left England, and that "we've had a little bit of war lately" but everyone was okay and said hello-- "they all keep close to their holes."

Woodrow returned some money that Staab had sent to pay a debt, and stated:

It's no good over here. Don't worry about paying debts now for a while. Since I saw you last they took all our money, changed it and gave me \$4 French money (200 francs)...

We got a pretty good go here except for the nights. The jerries visit us every night. Got a couple of duds sitting within 200 feet from us now. Lots of excitement.

I'm the chief cook and bottle washer now, have been since we got here. Got a real kitchen, dug in and sand bagged pretty good. At least I sleep there, could be deeper. We have a different kind of rations here not much K and C any more...

Woodrow also told of visiting some German fortifications during the day and getting some equipment including leather pack. "Sure a mess," he added, apparently about the debris.



Wind and clouds were getting heavier in a raw-type spell of weather on June 17-18,¹⁴ a portent of bad climactic times ahead.

At midnight on June 18 a strong northeast wind, carrying along heavy rain, assaulted the beaches, and the sea built up so rapidly that by mid-afternoon on June 19 all unloading of Allied ships had to be halted.¹⁵ Landing craft could not get near to unload supplies without being whipped into the land, and some ships and boats already had been stranded. Sand and dust filled the skies over 535th positions. A supply trip by boat to the Isles St. Marcouf had to be called off because of the storm.¹⁶

The storm, the worst in 40 years in June on the English Channel continued June 20-21, with strong winds and very high tide. Many craft were driven ashore and smashed; wreckage was piling up on the sands. Most of the Gooseberry breakwaters at Utah Beach continued to hold up, along with the Gooseberry at Omaha, but the Omaha Mulberry was breaking up.¹⁷ More than 800 craft of all type were smashed during the storm. General Bradley stated that the desolation "vastly exceeded" D-Day.¹⁸

Supplies had not reached the islands since about June 14, and around two days later the D Battery men on one of the islands ran out of water.

T/5 Kim Bell, who was with them, said that the GIs had been trying to get supply boxes out of the water. Four of the men took a raft to the other island, while the waves were running toward the beach. A couple were skinned up when the raft banged on some rocks, Bell said. The makeshift "sailors" got cans of water but the waves were running too strong when they started paddling back, and they were not able to return for three days. Bell, Pvt. Fat Lee and Doyle Butler, who

were left behind, had C and K rations but were out of water for three and one-half days.

Butler could not stand the thirst any longer, took some oil-mixed water out of the gun chest, boiled this and drank it. Bell thinks that this could have been "curtains for a less stalwart individual." Bell and Lee passed up the oily liquid to wait for an aerial drop of supplies. Bell later kept among his souvenirs an undated clipping from the *Stars and Stripes* on the emergency flight:

One half hour after receiving an urgent request for fresh supplies, C-47 Sky trains of the Ninth Air Force Troop Carrier Command were on their way to an isolated anti-aircraft battery with 60 gallons of drinking water and other supplies.

Four or five parachutes of supplies were dropped, and the men on the island managed to retrieve two. One contained food and the other brought down three five-gallon cans of water banded together. Hitting the target was a bit difficult, as the supplies could not be dropped in the building or moat-- they had to land outside the moat.

A supply boat reached the islands finally on June 21, or possibly 22, around the same time as the parachute drop. Judging by Lieutenant Logsdon's later report, June 21 was otherwise memorable too on the islands. Four delayed action bombs exploded on one island but caused no casualties. On this day too some of the troops tried seagull eggs for diet variety and reportedly found them "a great relief" from K-rations they had been munching for 15 days.¹⁹

While on the islands, the 535th men pulled some corpses out of the Channel-- mostly Fourth Infantry Division sol-

diers. Some had drowned and came to the top of the water after two weeks. T/5 Bell always was interested in getting the "dog tags" off the bodies wherever he found them, for identification purposes.



On the mainland, life had to go on, despite the storm. Some of the men near 535th CP were outside in the chilly weather on June 21, taking half-baths in their steel helmets.

The latest *Stars and Stripes* which we had available included a pleasant photo of two soldiers in helmets and shorts frisking on a local beach. But it was much too cold and windy to be above ground with even summer clothes on, let alone in shorts and swimming in the icy Channel.



Wind was dying down along the beaches on the morning of June 22. Clearing work was started on the beach, where there was "millions of dollars" worth of damage, the *D Battery Journal* noted.

Debris washed in was scattered all along the gray sands. A great armada still lay out to sea, although many landing craft had been left on the beach.

On one gray day there was on view a dead soldier, lying on his back, with one leg drawn up, while the Channel waters washed around him, receded and then slopped against him again. Where were the parents of this youth, member of another Army unit, but who had known the same language and same type of schools and streets as the rest of the GIs on and near Utah Beach? Did they wonder where he was, the writer of this volume mused.



A popular place for Headquarters enlisted men when they had a little extra time was the communications dugout, where they could listen to the radios. The star performer, as far as GIs were concerned, was the sultry-voiced Midge--later labeled Axis Sally and convicted in the U.S. of treason--who tried to stir nostalgia by telling all the nice things about home and playing music in that mood-- "Home Sweet Home" and other records; some were of a more swingy variety.

The main German propaganda contention was that British and U.S. soldiers were dying "like flies" while evil businessmen and 4Fs at home got rich.

"They keep tellin' us we don't know what we're fighting for," T/Sgt. Milford Stevens said. "If they'd ask me we're here to whip Hitler and we won't stop until we get to Berlin."

German radio propagandists scoffed at our "pinpoint beachhead" and asserted there was no port of it that could not be reached by German machine gun and mortar fire.

Sitting in the dugout on June 20, a group of Headquarters GIs listened on the radio to British bagpipes in Rome. A quiz program came on; GIs heard honking and the sound of American traffic, and the announcer said in a cheery voice, here he was down on Broadway in New York City. All of the soldiers listening had to laugh because it seemed so funny. The radio played music and more music as if there was nothing in the world but music. Negroes in Hollywood sang "Pistol Packin' Mamo"; a U.S. orchestra blared out with "Paducah", and a girl at the Hippodrome variety in Bristol, England, sang "Silver Wings in the Moonlight," reminding 535th men of the sunny evening they were in Dartmouth harbor at

anchor and listening to Abe Lyman's orchestra from New York City playing the same song.



The French, who rode bicycles and two-wheeled buggies, gaped at the traffic parade beyond the beaches moving night and day toward the front-- jeeps, DUKWs carrying rations and ammunition and driven by Negroes, and all kinds of trucks and guns. The DUKWs appeared as insignificant as water bugs in the Channel swimming back and forth to ships of the invasion fleet, but on the road, viewed from close-up, they were large and awesome.

Sometimes there was a snarl up ahead, vehicles were stopped for a mile or more and military police sweated trying to untangle the lead traffic.

On a jeep trip north about June 23, several of Headquarters men returned the waves of French civilians, and an old lady shook a faded little American flag at us. The French tricolor dangled from the front of many residences, and signs in French, German and English could be seen on the main highway. Montebourg, which had been left behind three or four days earlier after the front-line violence had swept over it, was surrounded by fields and orchards and appeared to be just another pleasant country town as we headed down the hill toward it from more than a mile away; we did notice, however, that a chunk had been lopped off the church tower.

Closer to Montebourg, we saw a blackened German tank stuck in a ditch, and for stretches on the outskirts there was a potent stench, probably from several horses and cows killed by Navy shells or felled by shrapnel.

(Dead cows were a prominent feature of the Normandy landscape. One writer observed: "They lay in the fields with their four legs pointing stiffly in the air, like wooden cows discarded from a child's Noah's Ark, and their smell hung over the land as the dust hung over the roads. Men are smaller than the cattle and are always buried first..."²⁰)

Inside of Mountebourg we saw only two residences intact-- there may have been several more in back streets-- and a statue of Christ crucified; the rest was walls and rubble.

The highway had been cleaned, and a woman was shoveling debris in front of her house. French people were standing in three or four small groups looking at the ruins, the most sizable we had seen so far, although the town was not large.

"What will the French think of us?" asked John Kassales.

But the people waved at all the Americans passing, including us, and youths were running at the jeeps, reaching and hollering for chewing gum and "see-gas-rets."

Approximately 300 French civilians were reported to have emerged from the cellars after the last U.S. attack on the town June 19.²¹



On the evening of June 27, Lieutenant Hughes left on a jeep trip to Cherbourg with Sgt. Charles Arnold and Corporal Miranda. The arsenal had been captured in this major city of the Cotentin peninsula the same day, ending all organized resistance there, although outlying forts still held out. *D Battery Journal* reported of the visit:

Saw many civilians returning to their homes and a few dead Germans laying in the streets enroute. The Fourth Infantry at Cherbourg was celebrating their victory, consuming all the cognac available. There was a parade in Cherbourg... The town did not seem to be damaged to any great extent but the harbor had suffered considerable damage.



D Battery moved further north along the beach on June 26, a shift that was made possible by capture of the German forts and other strongpoints which had caused so much trouble for the American troops.

Size and number of the big pillboxes were "unbelievable," according to *D Battery Journal*. The strongpoints, which were visited numerous times by the men, "were stocked with much equipment including tons of ammunition," it was discovered.

Reinforced concrete blockhouses armed with artillery pieces and turreted machine guns were only part of the total picture; most of the forts had additional protection of wire, ditches, mines and outlying infantry pillboxes. Underground ammunition supply dumps, and interconnecting communications trenches added to their murderous efficiency.²²

On June 30, D Battery moved to new positions in Le Grande Hamoudes Dunes, and the Battery CP was established in an old house.

Red poppies bloomed in fields at this time, and, incongruously, many mines still were imbedded in the earth among the flowers; GIs were very careful about where they stepped. Engineers continued to blow up mines in the beach area.²³



Battery C ran into some bad luck on July 1. While digging a position for a kitchen at 11:55 a.m., Section 8 hit a mine, which exploded, killing three enlisted men and wounding one other.²⁴ Lieutenant Elliott, the platoon commander, had called for the beach mine removal squad to sweep a path for the gun and the kitchen. The squad taped while moving along, and cleared a space next to an old hedgerow. Sergeant Parker climbed on the hedgerow to adjust the tarp, and the explosion blew his body out of the cleared area into the mined area. The beach mine squad men refused to bring his body out, as they were afraid it was resting on Bouncing Betties. So, as platoon commander, the job became Lieutenant Elliott's. He cleared a path to the sergeant, gingerly tied a rope around his body and, using the kitchen dugout for protection, pulled his body out of the mine area. "Sergeant Parker was a good commander and I surely hated to lose him and his men," the lieutenant said. He added, "I cleared a lot of mines while on the beach-- and now as I think about it the gooseflesh comes over my skin."

Three days after the Battery C losses, an antipersonnel mine exploded in the same area, wounding one more of C's men.²⁵



On July 2 the rear echelon of the Battalion debarked from a ship into a landing barge and came ashore to join the Battalion. Cpl. Art Imwalle of D Battery shared with other newcomers an experience reminiscent of Tennessee and Mojave

desert days-- sleeping in a foxhole, this night near the CP. He also observed: "Rain, rain and more rain."

Imwalle rejoined D Battery on July 4, and picked up his mail-- 18 welcome letters from home. He also saw fireworks on the beach for the celebration of the Fourth of July, and learned, as other 535th GIs had known and would know, that liquor in a strange country can have some undesirable effects: "Indulged in some good French cognac. Results, a good sick spell during the night."²⁶

On July 5, the 535th Battalion moved from Utah Beach to new positions in Normandy, in the Cretteville vicinity to defend Airstrip 14. The 448th Anti-Aircraft Battalion took over defense of Utah Beach on July 5, and at 10 a.m. July 6 relieved the 535th's last units, the gun sections 1 and 6 of Battery D on Isles St. Marcouf.²⁷

Now the ack-ack men began to live a bit more "luxuriously," in an orchard area. Headquarters was dug in along a hedge surrounding an orchard, and also pitched pup tents under apple trees, and set up an improvised shower. The men were now getting Class B food-- such as white bread instead of crackers, mashed potatoes, string beans and fruit salad-- and received a daily newspaper, the French edition of the *Stars and Stripes*.

A group of 535th soldiers usually were at the airstrip admiring the P47s and watching them take off and return from bombing and strafing missions.

Engineer battalions of Ninth Air Force had been busy building air strips, not far from the front. A newsman who had been in the area stated that the fields were level and fairly smooth, covered with wire matting. Mobile control

towers operated on the fields, and crash wagons, fuel trucks and ammunition "dollies" buzzed around the perimeters, just as they did in England.²⁸



Carentan was typical of a number of battered towns "visited" by the 535th AAA members in Normandy. Rubble had been cleaned up so vehicles could move through. Date is July 1944. —Andreyka picture



Holes are not attractive but they are good places to be when Germans are droning over at night, or during the rare daytime strafings. C Battery member Ted Andreyka provided this photo of positions at Utah Beach.



Orchards in background are one tip-off that this is Normandy. Soldiers are on guard at dug-in 40mm gun. From left, they are Pete Kisko, Harry Slade, Francis Covey and Chesterfield Norman. The latter ex-GI loaned the photo.



First gun section of A Battery poses for photo in Normandy before the big Breakout. Chesterfield Norman identified the men, from left, as Roy Pizula, Joseph Furtado, Jr., Curtis White, Jr., Alfonso M. Argott and Oliver J. Tracy. — Norman photo



Machine gunners, too, can throw up a lot of lethal slugs at flying targets. In sandbagged pit in Normandy, Frederick LaFleur of A Battery, first gun section, gazes at sky. —Norman photo

At Cretteville, on infrequent days when the weather was clear and warm, planes droned and buzzed in the sky. Some days the troops were drenched with rains, occasionally accompanied by a sudden crackling of thunder that caused the GIs to look uneasily at the skies, half expecting FW 190s and ME 109s to swoop out of the overcast, strafing and bombing.

Night and day the artillery sounded off, battering the German lines, on rainy nights, nights so black that the men stumbled and groped and could not find their foxholes, and nights when the moon was full and white and the orchards misty and beautiful in the moonlight. Some of the sounds took a brief time to reach the ack-ack men, so the flashes along the horizon seemed to be detached from the rumbling and banging. Flashes of nearest guns lit up the orchards; the loud noise would take a GI by surprise, making him jump.

Shells were heard swishing toward the front. The night was full of flashes and noise, sometimes the long whistle and crunch of a German shell coming in.

At Cretteville too were reminders of the fighting that had moved a short distance to the south. Pvt. Donald Allen, on a walk, was impressed by "the cleverly-hidden foxholes of the Jerries, hidden by grass and leaves, and down among the protective briars, with a flooring of dried grasses."

He also saw "small Jerry canteens, shining dully, green wool clothing scattered about, gray blankets draped grotesquely from trees and bushes, old letters lying in the mud... all types of military equipment lying in its wild abandonment, proof of the enemy's wild flight."

There were "bits of bandage, bloody and dirty" and finally what had been a human being, sprawled on its back, the flesh laying back from the bones "creating a ghastly picture, the yellow and purple colored hands bent pleadingly as if clutching for something that could never be there." After viewing the enemy, "the unseen that we were fighting against... lying here, alone and without life because he stood in the way of making the world a free and democratic one," Allen turned and walked quickly away from "the once-beautiful valley, with its pitiful contents."²⁹

The 535th troops could reflect on other aspects of the war, too, as they listened to various radios within the unit. At three radios in Headquarters, GIs could hear music all day, American programs and bands, the BBC, the Germans propagandizing the Allied troops and the Europeans in many languages. Sometimes the hit song of the war was aired-- this was "Lili Marlene," which had originated in Germany:

*In front of the barracks, before the heavy gate
There stood a lamppost, and if it's standing yet
Then we shall meet there once again
Beside the lamppost in the rain,
As once, Lili Marlene, as once, Lili Marlene.*

*The lamppost knows your footsteps, so lovely and so free
For you it burns unceasing, but it's forgotten me
And if I don't return again,
Who'll stand beside you in the rain?
With you, Lili Marlene, with you, Lili Marlene?*

*Then we shall meet there once again
Beside the lamppost in the rain,
As once, Lili Marlene, as once, Lili Marlene.*

*The lamppost knows your footsteps, so lovely and so free
For you it burns unceasing, but it's forgotten me
And if I don't return again,
Who'll stand beside you in the rain?
With you, Lili Marlene, with you, Lili Marlene?*

What had happened to the fellow who left Lili? The song could recall for an American soldier some of the newsreels he had seen from days when then the Wehrmacht was in its days of glory, for example one of pre-war days, with soldiers

goosestepping along the streets of a town, and even a viewer of the film could feel the parade atmosphere and fierce pride of the troops and crowd. The soldiers in the newsreel had been young, 20 to 25, like the First Army GIs in Normandy. Lately, the 535th men had seen thousands of German prisoners in PW pens and in long lines on the beaches filing into the giant mouths of U.S. and English LSTs. Some seemed 14 to 15 years old; many were draftees from occupied countries, and great numbers of the prisoners were middle-aged, few 20 to 25. Hearing the song "Lili Marlene", it was easy to wonder about the fate of those goosestepping soldiers of the not-so-distant past, and to speculate about how many died on the vast expanses of Russia.

Midge the Wise American, known mainly in post-war publicity as Axis Sally, attempted via radio to disillusion 535th troops and anyone else among U.S. forces who might happen to be listening.

"If you had your choice, would you rather be here fighting with the British or home with Snooks?" she asked in her soft, pretty voice. She played melancholy American records, four, five and six years old.

"*Poor American youth,*" she sighed, "I feel *so* sorry for you."

The GIs enjoyed listening to Midge try to make them feel bad, but one night at Headquarters, she did upset one of them when she commented:

"Here you are in Normandy, and some 4-F is probably out with your wife, showing her a good time."

"I almost jumped over and busted that radio in half," the enlisted man, a married man, said.

The 535th men listened to William Joyce-- Lord Haw Haw-- in his 15-minute "news views" program telling about the flying bomb, the alleged havoc being dealt to the invasion troops, and of strategic plans and secret weapons. He said the beachhead would be smashed when it was out of range of Allied naval guns, stressed heavy Allied casualties, and called General Montgomery "the Bloody Butcher."

This writer went to VII Corps map tent daily to get the latest war information to mark up with wax pencils on the acetate covering Headquarters' large maps of Normandy, and was able to observe the little French towns and the swarming U.S. Army activity back of the front.

The roads were alive with supply trucks, hurrying jeeps, trailers, roaring dust-stirring tanks with names such as "Skonk Works" and "Heil Heel", scout cars, wreckers, DUK-Ws, steam shovels, big guns, tractors and all kinds of freakish-appearing vehicles.

Often a traffic jam developed; vehicles crept along, stopped, crawled along again and then halted some more, alternately for as long as an hour. Even after what a GI had seen in England, the amount of materiel that had been gathered by the Army was astounding. Fields were full of troops, vehicles and vast piles of ammunition, gas cans and other supplies. Gangs of engineers cleaned roadside ditches, patched holes in highways and graded country roads. Communication wires, 10 and 20 together, were strung on dusty hedges, along the sides of gray stone buildings, and were hung on high poles at crossroads.

DUKWs swam out to ships in the Channel for a big net bag of rations or ammunition and took the load to a lot

crowded with cranes. A crane lifted a bag out, twisted around and dropped it onto the back of a truck, which took off inland. As fast as the cranes and DUKWs worked, there still were waiting lines of empty trucks.

Near the coast, where the Navy shelled German strong-points, great holes had been torn in the ground, trees were rooted out, and rocks were strewn all over the area. There were broken forts and pillboxes along the beaches and near some of the towns. The thick skin of one pillbox we saw had been only chipped by shells; the rusting barrel of an .88 gun drooped out of the opening. Infantrymen, probably using a flamethrower, had finished that killer.

In St. Savuveur-le-Vicomte we stopped to ask an MP the way to VII Corps' new CP. Three youngsters ran up and coaxed for chewing gum and cigarettes, but we had none. They patted the bulgy pockets of our field jackets, to make sure. One said: "Anglay good! Ahmairican good! Boche no ---- good!" He made a face and drew the side of one hand across his Adam's apple to indicate slicing a throat.

We saw French people on the roads of Normandy walking back to their villages now that the front line had been pushed forward seven or eight miles. Two were pushing wheelbarrows piled with personal possessions including two geese in a box, and another pushed a baby buggy full of belongings. They waved at passing GIs. Further on, we passed through a partly-damaged village where these travelers might have been headed. Some residents who had just gotten together again, probably, were kissing in the street.

♦ ♦ ♦

On July 12 a personal message, one of several from higher commanders which was distributed to the 535th during the war in France, was received from Gen. B.L. Montgomery, commander-in-chief of the 21st Army Group. A copy of this message, apparently read by platoon COs to the gun sections, noted that "our gains have been definite and concrete, and we have held everything we have gained despite the desperate efforts of the enemy to push us back to the sea." More than 54,000 prisoners had been taken already, and "we have given the enemy forces a tremendous pounding," the British general asserted.

Lt. Col. Francis also had some comments for the Battalion three days later, on July 15. In a printed statement, he noted:

Today marks an anniversary of the activation of this Battalion. During its existence it has left a well-marked trail halfway around the world of sweat and tears and finally blood of fine and worthy men and officers whose untiring and loyal efforts have blended it into an efficient fighting machine that is playing its part honorably and well in the greatest war of all times.

Since this Battalion first came into being many men and officers have come and gone and were replaced by other officers and men. All have contributed their bit towards its betterment. Men will continue to come and go but the Battalion will live forever in our minds and hearts.

Upon this occasion I think that it is only appropriate to congratulate you on the fine results that have been attained since the landing in France. Happy Hunting!

D Battery Journal reported on July 18 that "a great number" of Third Army tanks were seen moving up to the front that day. Even back on the beach the GIs of the 535th had heard the report that Gen. George Patton ("Our Blood and His

Guts" was a common label for him) was coming in with armored division for the Breakthrough, and he was quoted as saying that he would go 40 miles the first day. The mental picture of swarms of Sherman tanks thrusting for miles each day made our spirits soar. The heavy vehicular traffic often seemed to bear out the Patton reports. On one night in late July, military police shut the road down the peninsula from Cherbourg to cross-traffic, which was stalled for a couple of hours. Streams of Quartermaster trucks driven by Negroes roared past, going in the direction of the front.



Weather continued to be often gloomy and miserable, as indicated by the following excerpts from *D Battery Journal*:

Rain fell the night of 20 July and continued throughout 21 July. The CP and foxholes began to fill with water. By night 21 July everything was quite wet and our CP was flooded with several inches of mud and water. Showers continued until early in the morning of 22 July. After the rain stopped the CP and foxholes were cleaned out. Dry sand was placed in them.

Planes of the Luftwaffe appeared only infrequently in the Cretteville section of Normandy before the breakout, and generally preferred night action. Several of the German planes were hit during the occasional firings.³⁰

One of the Luftwaffe pilots who attacked in Normandy and survived the war said that "to penetrate this hotly-defended stronghold needed great courage." In recalling a raid into the St. Lo area (which is near Cretteville) about the time of the Breakout, he described the American anti-aircraft as "terrifying... a raging inferno of fire." As in a gigantic fireworks

display, fountains of tracers crisscrossed each other, bringing out the sweat on the pilots' foreheads.

The Normandy beachhead gave the pilot "the uncomfortable feeling that it was a boiling cauldron which might boil over at any minute."³¹

While the front line had not been moving rapidly and there was somewhat of a lull around Cretteville except for a "Bedcheck Charlie" plane or some shelling, fighting had been rough in some sections. British and Canadian troops, as well as Germans, had been mauled in rugged combat in the Caen area on the east side of the beachhead. First Army had suffered ten thousand casualties in the battle for St. Lo, but on July 18 had reached the St. Lo-Periers road, and had driven the Germans from St. Lo. The Americans now held the ground to launch a big drive, a four-mile stretch along the St. Lo-Periers road west of the Vire. "The unequal struggle is nearing its end," the German field marshal, Gunther von Kluge, said.³²

APPENDIX

OFFICIAL STATEMENT OF LINEAGE AND BATTLE HONORS

535th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Automatic Weapons Battalion, Mobile (Inactive, Army Reserve). From U.S. Army records, Washington, D.C.

Constituted in the Army of the United States 6 July 1942 as the 535th Coast Artillery Battalion (Anti-Aircraft)

Activated 15 July 1942 at Camp Haan, Calif.

Redesignated 535th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Automatic Weapons Battalion, 15 May 1943

Inactivated 24 June 1946 in Germany

Allotted to the Organized Reserves, 29 October 1946

Activated 14 November 1946 with Headquarters at Indianapolis, Ind.

Redesignated 535th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Automatic Weapons Battalion, Mobile, 6 June 1950

Redesignated 535th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Automatic Weapons Battalion, 3 October 1950

Redesignated 535th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Automatic Weapons Battalion, Mobile, 1 April 1952

Inactivated 1 May 1959

HOME AREA

Northern Indiana

CAMPAIGN STREAMERS

World War II

Normandy (with arrowhead)

Northern France

Rhineland

Ardennes-Alsace

Central Europe

DECORATIONS

*Cited in the Order of the Day of the Belgian Army for action
against the Siegfried Line*

*Cited in the Order of the Day of the Belgian Army for action on
Elsenborn Crest*

Belgian Fourragere (1940)

535TH REUNION ASSOCIATION

A successful effort was made in 1967 to organize a reunion association of former members of the 535th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Association. Notices of a planned reunion at Quanah, Texas, were sent to former 535th men whose names were available at that time. James E. Long, a Quanah area rancher, was instrumental in organizing the 1967 get-together, and was picked as secretary-treasurer by the 535th men who traveled to Quanah.

Second national reunion was held the following year in Denver, Colo., and Maynard (Red) Amond of Blairsville, Pa., was elected president. Kim Bell of Holden, Mass., served as vice-president in 1968-69, and Long continued as secretary-treasurer.

Third reunion was scheduled in 1969 at Estes Park, Colo., and a total of approximately 150 persons including members of families turned out for the activities. Bell was elected president and Gene Lash of Santa Fe, N.M., was picked for vice-president. Long was re-elected secretary-treasurer.

St. Louis, Mo., was selected for the fourth annual reunion, to be held July 30-31 and Aug. 1, 1971. Bell reported that the 535th men and members of their families would gather at the Holiday Inn West, which is five miles from the airport and 18 miles from downtown.

ROSTERS WILL BE PRINTED

At least one roster of 535th AAA members will be included as part of the appendix in the second paperback his-

tory of the Battalion, which will be published at a later date. Numerous photos have been provided for the second volume, in addition to reminiscences from former members of the ack-ack unit. Major campaign to be featured will be the Battle of the Bulge.

A NOTE ON SPELLING

Anti-aircraft generally is spelled without a hyphen, but the typing of *Battalion from the Mojave* was started with a hyphen, so it was decided to continue in this style for uniformity. (An exception is where direct quoting is involved.)

SOURCE NOTES

CALIFORNIA DAYS

1. Associated Press story in Vancouver, Wash., *Columbian*, Sept. 30, 1942.
2. Introduction to Fort Irwin, California, U.S. Armor and Desert Training Center. "California Days" chapter puts Fort Irwin in the present tense but a check by telephone in December 1970, after completion of the manuscript, indicated that the military installation was just "a caretaker fort" at the time, with a skeleton crew. A letter to the post was returned by the Postal Department. The fort had published a newspaper, *Tank Tracks*, and on June 5, 1968, this publication carried a lengthy historical article on the 535th.
3. "America's Desert Legion," *Popular Mechanics*, June 1943, P. 82-7; *Time* magazine, July 19, 1943, P. 65-6; *New York Times*, March 2, 1943. The *Time* magazine article on the Desert Training Center was accompanied by a photo of some of the bleak Southwestern desert, and the caption, "After this, wherever they go, they'll be happy."
4. Camp Haan Antiaircraft Training Center, wartime booklet.
5. *Ibid.*
6. For some details on Haan history see: Tom Patterson, *Landmarks of Riverside and the Stories Behind Them*, 1964, P. 152; "Camp Haan is Achievement of Defense Program," *Riverside Daily Press*, Oct. 15, 1941; "Camp Haan, It's All But Gone," *March Field Press*, Aug. 31, 1961.
7. Official Statement of Lineage and Battle Honors, 535th. Lee Burnham, who had attended an officer cadre school at Camp Davis, N.C., and arrived with a cadre of 535th officers from Davis, stated that Major John Geegan was temporary commanding officer of the 535th until the arrival of Lieutenant Colonel Kelly.
8. Introduction to Fort Irwin.

9. Lieutenant Colonel Kelly was commander of a battalion of the 93rd Coast Artillery in June 1941 when W.E. Hughes was assigned to the regiment at Camp Davis, N.C., as a medic. Hughes' diary shows that the 93rd arrived at Barstow, Calif., and Camp MAAR on Jan. 10, 1942. These were the first troops assigned to Camp MAAR, Hughes said. The 93rd went overseas from San Francisco in mid-May 1942. Hughes remained behind to attend officer candidate school at Camp Davis, and left from Haan on July 21, 1942. He arrived back at Haan on Nov. 6, 1942, and was assigned to the 535th.
10. "Flak Unlimited," *Popular Mechanics*, April 1944, P. 48, 77-80; "Answer to Air Power," *Popular Science*, May 1943, P. 66-72; see also *Antiaircraft Defense*, Harrisburg, Pa. Colonel Francis, in a letter of Dec. 4, 1967, is source of information on the 535th's 32-cal. machine guns.
11. Dates are from Hughes' diary.
12. The 535th Journal lists the date of this early morning action as March 10, but states that only 15 "enemy" were captured.
13. Copy of song words from Joseph Schaefer of Chicago, Ill.
14. Quote from the author's letter of March 21, 1943, Camp Haan.
15. Date from Hughes' diary.
16. 535th Journal and other papers, in National Archives.
17. Dates here and later in the chapter from Hughes' diary.
18. 535th Journal and other papers, National Archives.
19. Official Statement of Lineage and Battle Honors, 535th.
20. *Popular Science*, May 1943, P. 66-72.

CALIFORNIA TO ATLANTIC

1. Dates on move from California and move from Indiana are from diary of W.E. Hughes, who was a lieutenant at the time.
2. 535th's S-1 Journal.
3. *Time* magazine, June 28, 1943, P. 59-60.

4. A sidelight of about this time was the authorization by the executive officer of separate parties, by batteries, commemorating the Battalion's first anniversary, July 16, and a dinner for the original cadre, on Sunday, July 18 (S-1 Journal).
5. S-1 Journal.
6. 535th Journal.

TO THE "JUMPING-OFF PLACE"

1. Material on the ocean trip and train ride to Bridgwater is mainly from Norman Bergstrom manuscript *My Travels in Europe*, the notebooks of Ted Van Arsdol, and a letter of Raymond W. Dixon to his sister, dated Jan. 26, 1945. Dates are from Bergstrom, also *A Battery Journal* and W.E. Hughes. Some *B Battery Journal* dates for the England period appear to be guesswork. Information on the Duchess of Bedford is from: Lt. Comdr. E.C. Talbot-Booth, RNR, *Ships and the Sea*, P. 399, London, 1941; C.R. Vernon Gibbs, RN, *Ret'd, Passenger Liners of the Western Ocean*, P. 261-2, London, 1952; Eugene Smith, *Passenger Ships of the World, Past and Present*, P. 81, Boston, 1963; Laurence Dunn, *Passenger Liners*, P. 51, Southampton, 1961. The Duchess of Bedford was reconditioned after the war, and was renamed *The Empress of France* in 1948. Author Dunn states that she was sold for scrap in December 1960.
2. Bergstrom's *Travels*.
3. *A Short Guide to Great Britain*, published by the U.S. Government Printing Office, 1943, for the War and Navy Departments.
4. Bergstrom's *Travels*; same date listed in *A Battery Journal* and by Hughes.
5. *Allen's War*. An 11-page history of Brymore House is contained in the booklet *The Story of Brymore* by A.W. Vivian-Neal, Somerset County Council, no date listed. A copy of this publication was provided to the author by Mrs. Pat Andison of Cannington, England, and a Xeroxed copy also is in the files of James Long, secretary of the 535th reunion association.
6. *A Short Guide to Great Britain*, P. 6.
7. Van Arsdol notebooks; Koerber diary.

8. Dixon letter, Jan. 26, 1945.
9. In explaining the equipment, Colonel Francis stated under date of Jan. 12, 1964: "The Stiffkey sticks were aiming devices on bars connected through linkage to the guns. There were rings on each side-- one for azimuth and one for elevation-- that served as the actual sights. Depending on the position and approach of the planes, the trackers chose portions of the rings as sights and tracked accordingly. And of course they had to be constantly changing the portion of the rings they used. We were issued these Sticks and the directors were taken away because we were chosen as one of the assault battalions. It was thought the directors were too cumbersome. The M16Bs were the halftracks. The quad machine gun mounts were taken from trailers and put on halftracks originally intended as personnel carriers. This more or less duplicated the standard M-16 issued to self-propelled battalions; hence the designation M16B. We had 16 of these and 32 of the 40s. There were also 16 single machine guns..."
10. "He Gave the Wasp Wagon its Sting", in *Popular Science Monthly*, May 1944, P. 84-6.
11. The 535th's commanding officer called a gathering of non-commissioned officers in the courtyard of Brymore House and informed them that the 535th had been selected to land on D-Day to protect the beachhead from air attack. Except for possible discussion with staff officers, the Battalion officers were not told much, if any before the NCOs got the word. Pfc. Koerber dates a "beachhead speech" on April 13.
12. Dixon letter, Jan. 26, 1945.
13. "Snafu" was a World War II abbreviation standing for "situation normal-- all fouled up."
14. Van Arsdol was a passenger in this vehicle.
15. *Illustrated London News*, May 27, 1944, P. 602-3.
16. Koerber diary; Hughes dates trip to marshalling area on April 21, but A Battery convoy as shown in *Journal* was on April 22.
17. *48 Million Tons to Eisenhower*, P. 126, 127; *The Invasion of France and Germany*, P. 64, 65, 66; *Operation Neptune*, P. 106.

18. Operation Neptune, P. 106, states that the assault forces assembled at their ports of departure on April 26. However, Robert Koerber states that D Battery left camp and boarded LST 499 on April 24, chained guns and trucks to the deck on the following day and pulled out into the Channel on April 27. A Battery loaded for the practice invasion April 27 at Dartmouth, according to A's Journal.
19. The Invasion of France and Germany, P. 65-6.
20. Ibid, P. 66.
21. Telephone conversation with Boykin, spring 1967; Fat Lee letter, June 16, 1967; Koerber diary; also Koerber letter, July 22, 1967. Since this chapter was completed in final form for *Battalion from the Mojave*, an interesting letter dated Dec. 15, 1970, was received from Doyle (Pop) Butler of Albion, Idaho, telling of his impression of the E-boat attack. The account follows: "One of the most horrifying experiences I had while in the war was just a month before we made the Invasion. ... We had our two trucks and guns and everything just like we were going in for the real thing, that is the Invasion, and we thought we were. We loaded onto an LST. The end opened and we drove the trucks and guns into the boat. I don't know how many men were on the boat but there were several different outfits. We pulled out of some little harbor in England about 4 o'clock in the afternoon and there were eight boats in the convoy. After we were sailing a while, I decided to take a shower, as it was the nicest place we had to shower all winter. I just got finished when the alert bell began ringing and we were all supposed to be on deck-- and the doors were locked. There were five or six of us in there, and believe me I was scared, down in the hole and maybe never able to get out. But as it happened it was only a practice alert. In about half an hour the door was opened and we got out and I said then, 'Boy, you're never going to catch me locked like that again.' That evening, just as I was getting ready to go to bed, the boat gave a big bump, and the alert sounded again, and I was the first one on top with life preserver and rifle. Soon most of the rest of the boys were on deck, and began complaining about having another alert, but I said, 'I think I'll just stay in the truck-- I'm not going to get caught down there again.' About that time we heard an explosion somewhere around us. It was so dark we couldn't see anything. We had not got any orders and did not know what was happening, but in a few

minutes there was another explosion, and a boat about 200 feet from us on our right side burst into flames. I believe that within two minutes the whole boat was aflame. We could see a few of the men through the flames, but I think none ever got off that boat. By this time our boat was zigzagging. I looked back and to the side of us and there were four boats going up in flames. I was sure we would be next, but the captain of our boat kept changing course, and we got out some way. When I saw what was happening, I got up on the front end of the port side of the boat we were on, and figured if a torpedo hit our boat I would try to get off in the water. I sat there about two hours. One time the captain of our boat started yelling to 'cut her to leeward,' and I looked out from where I was sitting and there came a torpedo. I could see the phosphorous shining as it came toward us. It wasn't going too fast and our boat swung away from it. That evening we ended up some place along the English coast, and found out we were supposed to be in a mock invasion, but it was all over when we got there. I never did hear anything of the boats or the men that were lost out there, but I shall never forget it."

22. The Invasion of France and Germany, P. 66; Cross-Channel Attack, P. 270; Operation Neptune, P. 108; 48 Million Tons to Eisenhower, P. 127.

THE CAMP AND FLEET

1. A small notebook belonging to Art Imwalle, who was in the rear echelon, shows that the group boarded a boat in England on June 29 and sailed for France on June 30.
2. *A Battery Journal* and W.E. Hughes list the departure date from Brymore as May 15; Koerber diary states that D Battery left for camp near Cardiff May 21.
3. Cross-Channel Attack, P. 269-70; The Invasion of France and Germany, P. 72; radio comment of May 18 as reported in *Illustrated London News*, May 27, 1944, P. 602.
4. Francis letter, Dec. 10, 1963.
5. Navy frogmen, according to Francis letter under date of Oct. 20, 1967.

6. Cross-Channel Attack states that troops in the marshalling areas were not briefed until the last week in May. All mail of persons taking part in the Invasion was impounded May 25 until further notice, according to The Invasion of France and Germany.
7. Francis letter, Dec. 1, 1963.
8. Dixon letter, Jan. 26, 1945.
9. This was taken from an official document but the exact source is not known.
10. Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, five officers, 29 enlisted men were to board LCT 664, Dartmouth; A Battery, seven officers, 121 EM, board LST 230, Dartmouth; B Battery, six officers, 119 EM, embark on LST 46 (or 45?), Dartmouth; C Battery, six officers, 119 EM, board LST 539, Plymouth; two sections D Battery, LST 581, Dartmouth. The advance officer, Major Janney, was to leave on USS Dickman at Dartmouth. A reconnaissance party of three officers--one each from A, B and C was to go ashore with the 474th, report findings to Janney and lead their batteries to selected positions when they debarked. Colonel Francis states that part of Headquarters was on LST 230 and transferred to a LCT, and Francis went with this group.
11. Dixon letter, Jan. 26, 1945.
12. W.E. Hughes said that he and Lieutenants Wayne McKibbin and Mason Williams of the reconnaissance party left by jeep May 31 to join the 474th, boarded LST 47 at Dartmouth June 1 and left on June 3. A Battery loaded at Dartmouth June 2 and left June 3 (A Journal). Most of B Battery's enlisted men left a marshalling area near Plymouth, boarded LCT 47 and left Plymouth June 4 (B Journal). The majority of D Battery departed from the marshalling area June 3 for Newport and boarded the Susan B Anthony, formerly the Grace liner Santa Clara, leaving June 4 (D Journal). The D Battery detachment with the guns and vehicles boarded the Liberty ship Benjamin Hawkins June 2, moved down Bristol Channel June 5 and into the English Channel June 6 (Ibid).
13. Utah Beach, P. 13. The Invasion of France and Germany, P. 77, says eight sortie ports were used.

14. Landing Operations, P. 633-4. P. 84 of The Invasion of France and Germany states that the bow was high and light and the LCTs were almost impossible to hold on course in a strong wind.
15. This is from a published book on the Invasion, but Van Arsdol could not find the exact reference when these footnotes were prepared. However, Charles B. MacDonald's *The Mighty Endeavor*, P. 279, states that Eisenhower "is reputed to have torn up a note he had written to be released if the landings failed."
16. Newsweek magazine, June 5, 1944. A photo in this issue shows a German soldier with field glasses scanning the Channel near some fortifications. "The Germans grew tired of waiting for the invasion and putting out propaganda pictures like this one from the French coast," the photo caption remarked.
17. Operation Neptune, P. 118.
18. White stars had been marked on all 535th vehicles. Shortly before the Invasion, the Allies announced that the white star had been adopted for all Allied invasion vehicles except for ambulances, which used a Red Cross, and Royal Air Force planes, which were marked with red, white and blue circles (Newsweek, June 5, 1944).
19. The Invasion of France and Germany, P. 77, 78.
20. Operation Neptune, P. 116, 118, 120; Utah Beach, P. 10; The Invasion of France and Germany, P. 80.
21. Cross-Channel Attack, P. 300; Utah Beach, P. 13; Operation Neptune, P. 124.
22. The ship which we saw hit must have been the minesweeper USS Osprey (AM-56), which blew up at 6:15 p.m. June 5. The vessel sank soon afterward with a loss of six men, first casualties for the U.S. Navy in Operation Neptune. (Letter from F. Kent Loomis, Captain USN, Retired, assistant director of Naval history, letter, Sept. 12, 1961.) See also *The Invasion of France and Germany*, P. 79, and *Operation Neptune*, P. 124.
23. Utah Beach, P. 13, states that the Bayfield, headquarters ship for Task Force U, anchored at 2:29 a.m. Primary and secondary control vessels took stations nearer shore. LCTs and some LSTs with Rhino ferries anchored a little further out.

24. Colliers magazine, July 29, 1944, P. 18.
25. Koerber diary.
26. Dixon letter, Jan. 26, 1945.

THE LANDINGS

1. Utah Beach, P. 44, 52.
2. Cross-Channel Attack, P. 278, 279; Operation Neptune, P. 102; A Soldier's Story, P. 224.
3. *A Battery Journal* states attempted landing was at 11:45 p.m. Also, the Journal mentions that the LCT was carrying Battery headquarters, first platoon headquarters and Sections 1, 2 and 3.
4. *D Battery Journal*.
5. Charles Merk, *The Normandy Coast*, P. 241-4.
6. Cross-Channel Attack, P. 304; *The Invasion of France and Germany*, P. 97-8; Utah Beach, P. 10, 43. On March 20, 1968, the *Army Times* (weekend) published an item about the retirement of Maj. Gen. Edward C. Dunn, Fourth Army chief of staff. Dunn, the paper observed, was commander of a task force that seized the Isles St. Marcouf off Utah Beach on June 6, 1944.
7. *D Battery Journal* states that the Fourth Cavalry unit evacuated 14 casualties in the LCT-- casualties were from mines and enemy shell fire. A paratrooper's body that had been washed ashore was evacuated too. Landing time on the islands is listed by the Journal as about 6 p.m. Guns went into position at 8 p.m. Three machine guns were placed on the Isle Du Largo and two 40MM guns and one machine gun were sited on the Isle De Terre.
8. *The Normandy Coast*, P. 241-4.
9. Utah Beach, P. 66, 67, 68, 69, 71; *Invasion of France and Germany*, P. 48, 101. The latter source, P. 48, states that even though the Atlantic Wall proved inadequate, it was "the most formidable barrier encountered by any amphibious assault in history" and except for the element of surprise might have been a fatal barrier.
10. Utah Beach, P. 56; Cross-Channel Attack, P. 278-9.

11. 535th after-action report; *B Battery Journal*.
12. Hughes' letter, March 26, 1967.
13. Utah Beach, P. 45.
14. *D Battery Journal* gives the time as 7:55, while *The Invasion of France and Germany*, P. 171, said the transport hit a delayed-action or sonic mine at 8:20 a.m. 48 Million Tons to Eisenhower states, on P. 15, in regards to sea mines at Utah Beach: "...The boat lane for the assault lay squarely across the minefield at Cardonnet Bank. The first sweeping of the area brought no mines to light, but later 124 ground mines and 77 moored mines were detonated or cut there. These mines were of the acoustic-magnetic type, with a delay mechanism which brought them into activity on pre-set hours or days. Mines of this type accounted for three United States destroyers and a few small vessels. But for the most part they were not accurately timed to rise and so failed to accomplish their purpose. Strangely enough, Omaha's approach waters were not mined."
15. *D Battery Journal*; Koerber diary; *The Invasion of France and Germany*; E.C. Talbot-Booth, *Ships and the Sea*, P. 467; Eugene W. Smith, *Passenger Ships of the World Past and Present*. *The Invasion of France and Germany*, p. 171, states that LCI 496 took off a total of 434 men in 15 minutes, and that various small craft were used in carrying the troops.
16. Hughes' letter, March 26, 1967.
17. *D Battery Journal*.
18. *A Battery Journal*.
19. 535th and 11th AAA Group after-action reports.
20. *B Battery Journal*. Colonel Francis said there were rumors that this was a short round from a Navy gun, but it was never proved.
21. On the Normandy coast the average range of tides is 18 feet and the maximum 25 feet. Beach gradients are very gradual, only about one foot in a hundred (*The Invasion of France and Germany*) P. 32-3).
22. *Ibid*, P. 91. See also *The Army Air Forces in World War II, Europe*, Vol. III, P. 188.
23. *A Soldier's Story*, P. 279.

24. *D Battery Journal*.
25. Utah Beach, P. 74-5; Force Mulberry, P. 149-51; Operation Neptune, P. 203; The Invasion of France and Germany, P. 162.
26. Dixon letter, Jan. 26, 1945.
27. Ibid.
28. *D Battery Journal*.

BUILD-UP AT THE BEACHHEAD

1. See "Anti-Aircraft Artillery in a Landing Operation," by Lt. Col. H.C. Dozier, Jr., in *Military Review*, April 1944, for pre-invasion assessment of enemy potentials. Reasons why Luftwaffe did not show up in more force are discussed in detail on P. 195 of *The Army Air Forces in Europe*, Vol. III, Europe. The First and the Last outlines the situation on P. 274, 275, 267-71. The 535th after-action reports list several firings in Normandy but all are not included in *Battalion from the Mojave*. Final After-Action Report of Twelfth Army Group, Vol. XI, anti-aircraft, P. 15, states that from D-Day to D plus 56 a total of 1,249 airplanes were reported to have attacked the U.S. sector. The Army group reported 171 destroyed and 130 probably destroyed by anti-aircraft.
2. New York Times, June 11, 12, 1944.
3. Utah Beach, P. 133.
4. *D Battery Journal* lists date as June 10, but later states that Sanders was killed on D plus 3, which would be June 9.
5. Bell interview; Boykin telephone interview; *D Battery Journal*. Boykin stated that the high school gym at Sallisaw, Okla., was named for Sanders and his brother, who were killed about one week apart. The brother died in Anzio. Sgt. Sam Ed Sanders was former first sergeant of C Battery.
6. *Brave Men*, P. 388-9.
7. The Invasion of France and Germany, P. 173.
8. Ibid, P. 163.

9. *Brave Men*, P. 381-3. Since most of the material for *Battalion from the Mojave* was prepared, Elbridge Colby's *The First Army in Europe*, 1943-5, has become available, and it provides the following additional comments on ack-ack at the beachheads: "...Our antiaircraft gunners were great protection and a great comfort, particularly at night when the limited facilities for controlling night fighters made us depend heavily on them... our air cover gave us high altitude defense during daylight, and our automatic weapons and antiaircraft protected us against low-flying planes. We created a heavy density of 90-mm. gun defense for protection against night attacks. At Omaha Beach the first antiaircraft troops landed at H plus 17 minutes; on Utah at H plus 30. Thereafter the buildup was rapid... This was probably the heaviest concentration of antiaircraft the world had seen for a comparable area... At no time was any air attack successful. No ship, dump, or other vital installation within range of the shore-based antiaircraft was seriously damaged or destroyed by the Luftwaffe."
10. 535th after-action report of June 15 reports flare dropping at 2:45 a.m., and dive bombings at 2:55, 3:15 and 4:20, plus strafing of beach 10 minutes later. Two JU-88s were identified as taking part in the first bombings.
11. *Brave Men*, P. 381-3.
12. Mimeographed copy of Message from the King, First U.S. Army, borrowed from a 535th member. New York Times of June 17 and 18, 1944, tells of the King's visit and his message.
13. *Utah Beach*, P. 87, 90, 92-3, 143, 149, 210.
14. *D Battery Journal*.
15. *The Invasion of France and Germany*, P. 177-9.
16. *D Battery Journal*.
17. *The Invasion of France and Germany*, P. 177-9.
18. *A Soldier's Story*, P. 302; *Operation Neptune*, P. 209, 210.
19. *D Battery Journal*. Colonel Francis said in an undated note that the half hour must have been from the time they got the order. He said he made several requests "without much action except comments on the weather."

20. A.J. Liebling in *New Yorker*, P. 32, Aug. 19, 1944. John D'Arcy-Dawson, author of *European Victory*, who visited Montebourg, thought the odor was "the smell of evil."
21. Utah Beach, P. 153-4.
22. Utah Beach, 66-7, 68, 69, 71. For more on the forts and difficulties with them see: *Operation Neptune*, P. 203; Utah Beach, P. 74-5, 104-5, 107-8, 108-9; *Force Mulberry*, P. 149-50, 151; *The Invasion of France and Germany*, P. 95, 167; *Cross-Channel Attack*, P. 386, 387.
23. *D Battery Journal*.
24. 535th after-action reports.
25. Ibid.
26. Imwalle notebook. The Battalion's rear echelon left Brymore House on June 24 for the marshalling area at Southhampton, boarded the vessel S.S. Lucy Stone on June 29, and arrived off the beach July 1, according to the *B Battery Journal*. B Battery rear echelon consisted of 58 enlisted men.
27. 535th after-action reports. Imwalle figured distance of the move at 10 miles.
28. *New York Times*, June 24, 1944.
29. Allen, War.
30. 535th after-action reports.
31. *Alert in the West*, P. 40-43.
32. *The Struggle for Europe*, P. 383, 388; also see 336-65 for "Caen the Crucible."

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Ted Van Arsdol was born in Lewiston, Idaho, attended schools at Clarkston, Wash., and was graduated from Charles Francis Adams High School in the latter community and from San Mateo Junior College, San Mateo, Calif.

He served all of his World War II duty in the 535th Anti-Aircraft Battalion after leaving the Reception Center at Fort Lewis, Wash., and was a technical sergeant in Headquarters Battery, working in S-3 (operations) under Maj. Thomas Janney. One of his main jobs was preparation of situation maps and of overlays to designate the positions of the 535th's guns so they would be properly located for fields of fire against hostile aircraft.

After his discharge from the Army at Fort Lewis, Wash., Van Arsdol attended the University of Washington at Seattle for two years, then resumed a newspaper career that had been started briefly before the war at the Burlingame Advance, Burlingame, Calif. He has been a newspaperman for the past 22 years at Yakima, Pasco and Vancouver, Wash., has written numerous articles on conservation, atomic energy, Pacific Northwest history and other subjects, including a number for magazines and metropolitan Sunday newspaper feature sections.

He is the author of three out-of-print booklets, *Hanford, the Big Secret*, *Dateline Hanford* and *Boomers on Wheels*, and a short proposal on development of the interior Pacific Northwest—*Richland Diversification*.

A COUPLE OF HELPERS

Practically all of the photos which were borrowed from former GIs of the 535th had to be copied, and enlargements made from the negatives. This kind of work for *Battalion from the Mojave*, as well as the second 535th history, still to be published, was done by Steve Small.

Small has been a reporter on several newspapers in the Portland, Ore., area, but has mainly been involved in photography work, mostly for the Vancouver Columbian. He published a limited edition of his own photos, *Small View*, in 1970.

Jim Shinn, Columbian artist, prepared the cover for this 535th history. The photo shows a 535th 40mm gun and some of its crew at the Remagen Bridgehead on the Rhine River.

Battalion from the Mojave was published by West Shore Publications in an edition of 600 copies in January 1971. This digital edition was newly typeset from a scanned copy of the original book for family reading; the original text and photographs are the work of Ted Van Arsdol.