

'B' BATTERY 922 F.A. BN.
97th INFANTRY DIVISION

The 97th Division left Camp Cook California on February 6th, 1945 for Camp Kilmer, N.J. and arrived at the N.J. Camp six days later, after having made the trip through the central part of the United States. The trip was made in troop sleepers. During stops, we were often required to take calisthenics.

From the warm sunshine of California, we found the snow and cold of New Jersey uncomfortable. Many men were able to spend a few evenings at home while at Kilmer, and most everyone had an opportunity to visit New York City. New York is the home of B.T.O. Michael Zerkel.

We left Camp Kilmer for our debarkation port of Staten Island, New York and ferried by the Statue of Liberty enroute.

On Sunday night, February 18, 1945 we left the States on the merchant marine ship 'Marine Wolf'. During our trip to France, many became sea sick, P.X. rations were hard to get, the food was terrible, and the ship was overcrowded. We landed in Le Havre, France on March 3, 1945. From here we were transported by truck to Camp Lucky Strike which is located about twenty miles from Fecamp, France and three miles from St. Savian.

At Camp Lucky Strike we were processed for combat. We attended classes on German uniforms, arms, booby traps, and how to behave when captured. We were allowed pass privileges to the surrounding towns, and even though not allowed, we did buy or trade for french bread. The liquor was very poor. Brooklyn was declared one of our Allies.

A forced motor march from Camp Lucky Strike to Ralshoven, Germany took us through Dieppe, France as well as many cities and towns of Belgium and Holland. We passed through Aachen, Germany at night a few hours before reaching Ralshoven. We entered the small town on the night of March 28, 1945 and slept in houses. Recent classes pertaining to booby traps made us very cautious. This was our first position for looting, we moved to Nievenheim on the 31st of March, and the first howitzer section of Battery 'B' fired the first round against the Germans for the 922nd Field Artillery. Walt Calvert blushing pulled the lanyard. At Nievenheim we suffered our first casualty. We witnessed some poorly placed harassing fire from German 88 guns, suffered our first infiltrating patrol scare, and acquired more loot, which was to be discarded later for something better. Viette and Wibel managed to get a German motorcycle in running order. We relieved the 95th Division.

From Nievenheim we moved to Viede by way of Cologne and Bonn, crossing the Rhine on pontoon bridges at Bonn. Viede is only a short distance from Bonn, and the barrage balloons which helped protect the bridge from enemy aircraft were visible from our position. Our nights at our gun position were made easier because of the artificial moonlight provided by huge searchlights. We relieved the 78th Division, and from their cooks, we learned how a line outfit supplemented its meager food rations. At Viede we fired over 3000 rounds in support of the 387th infantry's crossing of the Sieg River, and in the shelling of Siegberg as a part of Corps. Artillery. A German 'chow line' received enough rounds one evening to discourage what was left of those trying to get some food from returning. We learned how to fire from a muddy position, and how to sleep in a house shaking from the blasts of our Howitzers. It was here to, that Cpl. Lukash first discovered that it was necessary to light a flash light at night to see the time on a radium dialed watch.

On the 11th of April we moved into Bierken, chopped down a few fruit trees, fired a few rounds, acquired additional loot, and after being wrenched out of our position moved on the following day.

We moved to Gerber on the 12th of April and arrived at our position just in time to put our sufficient rounds to prevent a company of our infantry from being destroyed by the Germans. We had stopped in Munchen Seifen earlier for chow. On April 14th we passed through Toringen, and on April 15th went into position at Feffenhenne.

At Feffenhenne we watched our liason planes being fired on by 88's. At night we listened to the machine gun duels between the German's and our own infantry machine gunners. The cooks acquired some geese and chickens as the result of Higgen's, William's, and Mundt's efforts. From our position we could see parts of Cologne. Two dead Germans lay along the side of the road, which we took from Feffenhenne to Schmitte. We were in Schmitte on April 16th when the Rhur pocket collapsed. Chief 'Prone' Cyote gave five Germans attempting to surrender plenty of reason to think they had made a mistake. The following morning, still full of fire water, 'Prone' became very annoyed at St. Sgt. Smith. Old 'Bearcat, Super'Prone' Smith soon had the 'Chief' under the watchful eye of a guard. While at Schmitte we rounded up prisoners and collected loot. The 97th Division took more than 25,000 prisoners. We moved to Wolfrath on April 19th for a rest and more loot. During our stay in Wolfrath, we moved into better houses than we had had up until that time.

After our period of rest at Wulfrath, we moved to Steinmuller where we went into action again on April 24th. Siegen, and Giessen were among the bomb damaged towns we passed through. We stopped three times enroute to Steinmuller for sleep. Once on the 21st of April at Burg, where we spent the night in a barn, again on the 22nd of April, where we slept in apartment houses in the city of Meiningen, and again on the 23rd of April, in Marktredwitz. It was the original plan to spend the night in Hob, where our division Headquarters were located, but the city had been bombed the previous day. So we went on to Marktredwitz where several bottles of wine were liberated. Steinmuller was selected as a position for our occupation on the 24th of April because the town of Munchenreuth was still too hot a spot for us. We did however, move to Munchenreuth the following day, April 25th.

While at Munchenreuth we fired on the airport of Eger, Czech. which our infantry eventually took. Our Battalion Commander got pinned down a few miles outside of this town, but was freed by 65 rounds from 'B" Btry. At one time we were firing two missions at once. Another time we shelled a house in which a German machine gun squad was hiding. From the hill near the mess truck we could see our own guns firing and observe the hits. When the house became enveloped in flames, the Nazi machine gunners made a break across the open field for the woods. They were immediately cut down by our waiting infantry machine gunners. The Division Artillery General's driver was killed near Munchenreuth and several Medics of the 97th were captured by German's. On the 29th of April we moved from Munchenreuth to Deslarn, Germany. At this place the gun sections again had to sleep in a barn, (T.S.), we were high in the mountains and had plenty of rain, snow, sleet, hail, and wind. It was a good place to leave. St. Sgt. Smith was caught in the storm with our canvas shelter in his hands, and when the sleet and hail started beating him in the face, he wanted to know what he should do. His would be advisers had taken off for the nearest barn.

We entered Belanradb, Czech. on May 1st, a few hours after the Nazis had moved out. Mined road blocks were removed by civilians, in spite of their protests, so troops and vehicles could travel the roads. Twelve were killed removing the road blocks. We fired several missions from this position, and again had trouble with the mud. On May 3rd we went from Belanradb to Schonbrum, Czech. At Schonbrum we fired our last shot in the E.T.O. We passed through Tachau, Czech. and Beneschau, Czech., enroute to Schonbrum. We were in Kumpolet, Czech. on May 5th and in Konstantinovy (Konstantiskad), Czech. on May 6th and the morning of May 7th. German Soldiers passed through our lines at Konstantinovy on their way to surrender. The war in Europe was over.

The afternoon of May 7th we moved to Pernanec (Pernharz), Czech. where we were on V.E.Day On May 9th we moved to Perejor (Purchau), Czech. and passed through Mies, Czech. on our way. While at Perejor we got our howitzers in good shape. Swimming in a nearby lake was one form of recreation.

We moved through Barreuth, Germany to Schammelsdorf, Germany from Perejor. We made the move on May 15th. Two days after our arrival at Schammelsdorf we were ordered out of the houses and into the field where we had rain nearly everyday, inspections once a week and a regular basic training drill schedule. It was here we received the news that the 97th Division would be redeployed to the Pacific through the United States. We left our position in the field near schammelsdorf and headed for Camp Old Gold on May 28th. We arrived at Camp Old Gold on June 2nd.

This is a copy of our daily routine during our tour of Europe in World War two, 1945 compiled each day by Malcom H. Bruner.- 5621 N.Kerth Ave. Evansville, Indiana-47711.