

After Action Reports of the 434th Armored Field Artillery Battalion (7th Armored Division)

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- Ruud Wilmsen of Harderwijk, The Netherlands - September-October 1944
- Nayda Colomb, daughter of Floyd Swonger of Company "C", 31st Tank Battalion - August, November-December 1944, February 1945
- Ruth Baugher, daughter of Lt. John Shafer of Headquarters Battery, 434th Armored Field Artillery Battalion – January 1945

Edited by Wesley Johnston, son of Walter Johnston of Company "B", 38th Armored Infantry Battalion. The original spellings and format are generally retained in the transcript. Word wrap in which a line of text continues to the next line is not necessarily as in the original. In some cases in the transcription, the font size is reduced from the original, in order to keep each page together. If there is any question of accuracy, please contact Wesley Johnston (wwjohnston@aol.com) so that the original scanned images can be checked to assure that the transcript does or does not match the original.

7th ARMORED DIVISION
APO # 257, c/o Postmaster
U S ARMY

AFTER ACTION REPORT
Month of August 1944

434th ARMORED FA BN,

Lt. Col. James G. Dubuisson
Commanding.

HEADQUARTERS
434th Armored Field Artillery Battalion

APO 257, U.S. Army
4 Sept 1944

SUBJECT: Letter of Transmittal.

TO : Commanding General, 7th Armored Division, APO 257, U.S.Army.
ATT: Division Historian

Transmitted herewith is "Battle Report 10-31 August 1944 inclusive" for the 434th Armored Field Artillery Battalion.

For the Commanding Officer:

(Signature)
PAUL A. SMITH
1st Lt, 434th Armd FA Bn,
Unit Historian.

S-E-C-R-E-T

HEADQUARTERS
434TH ARMORED FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION

APO 257, U.S. Army
4 September 1944

BATTLE REPORT
10-31 August 1944 inclusive

While waiting for the Battalion to close in the Marshalling Area near Vesley, France, the Battalion received its March Order from CG, 7th Armd Div, 2200, 10 August 1944, to become effective when the entire Bn closed. At that time only Bn Hq and Hq Btry plus the reconnaissance Section, Btry B, had closed in the Marshalling Area. Sections of the Batteries continued to arrive throughout the night of 10-11 August 1944, until 1030, 11 August 1944 when all had closed except the howitzer section, Btry C. The Bn CO, Lt Col James G. Dubuisson, went in search of the howitzer's, finding them at the IP, GONFREVILLE, on the Division route of march. The Bn CO, instructed them to remain there and to join the Bn column when it passed the IP. He then reported to Div Hq that the Bn was ready to move, and is used the following instructions to the Bn: The Div will assemble in the vicinity of FOUGERES to support the 1st Inf Div which is holding a 10 mile sector on the CAEN-MAYENNE-LeMANS arc. This Bn is in support of CC B and marches to CC B assembly area in the vicinity of LOUVIGNE. Order of march: CP, A, Hq, B, C, Sv, Med, Maint. Distance: 60 yds. Weapons: Half-loaded. Rate of march: 15 miles per hr.

Bn left vivouac¹ area 1630, 12 August 1944 and closed in assembly area 2 miles south of LOUVIGNE 0015, 13 August 1944. Route: TRIERS - COUTANCES - AVANCHES - LOUVIGNE - Assembly Area. Mileage 72. Roads: Excellent. Weather: Excellent. One M-7, Btry A, had to be towed to assembly area by Bn Maint.

0500, 13 August 1944 the Bn received a march order from Div. Arty Hq. The Bn RO and billeting party were dispatched and march order issued to the batteries. Friendly and enemy information: None. Bn CO and S-3 went to CC B to secure information as to the mission of the Combat Command and the Bn. The Bn left the assembly area 0830, 13 August 1944. Order of march: CP, A, Hq, B, C, Sv, Med, Maint. The Bn arrived in an assembly position 3 miles east of EVRON. Route: VILIER - LATANNIERE - ERNEE - LAVAL - Assembly area. Mileage: 70. Roads: Excellent. Weather: Good. The BCs were called forward one hour prior to arrival at the assembly position to receive the verbal order of the Bn CO for the attack. Difficulty was experienced in the preparation of the order as the Bn had not received sufficient maps of the proper scale. Verbal orders of the Bn CO: CC B moves to occupy 2d French Div objective, ARGENTAN - SEES. CC A on the right. Third Army on the left. CC B supports the attack in three forces: F1 (D/31, A/23, A/434), F2 (31-, B & C/23, 434-), F3 (CT/80th Div, TD Co, B/33). 434- in general support of F2, CCB. Lt Mincosky, Hq Btry, attached to A Btry as RO. Lt Moore, Hq Btry, assigned as FO2 to replace Lt Mincosky. FO's attached to corresponding letter Co's 31st. Ln O to CC B. Observed Fire Chart initially. Order of march: CP, Hq, B, C, one recover vehicle of Bn Maint Plat, Med. Trains to remain in present location. Dump duffle bags and extra gas here. At 1530 and oral message was received from CG, CC B that the Div plan for the attack was called off.

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¹ This spelling is as in the original.

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It was later learned that contact with the enemy had been lost. The CO, CC B then directed that duffle bags and extra gasoline cans be reloaded, 1st echelon maintenance of vehicles be performed and the men fed and rested. At 2000 a march overlay from CC B was received. Route strips were prepared for drivers by the Bn S-3. Friendly and enemy information: Little was known except that the proposed march was of a tactical nature to place CC B in position to continue the attack toward the SEINE River. Bn CO directed that previous attachments and assignments would remain in effect and the Bn would march on the designated route.

Bn left assembly Area at 2050 and arrived in an assembly position 2 miles NE of GORMES 0715, 14 Aug 1944. Route: EVRON - LeMANS - LaFERTE - BERNARD - GORMES - Assembly Position. Mileage: 88. Weather: Good. Roads: Excellent, but dusty. Despite preparation of route strips many vehicles were lost enroute due to the dusty roads. The Bn CO vehicle ran into a ditch, but the crew dug the vehicle out and rejoined the Bn. Bn CO was not in the vehicle, having led the column in a peep. All vehicles closed in the assembly position 1500. Some sniper fire was encountered enroute. Bn received march order from CC B 1500. Friendly and enemy situation: Little was known except that this was a continuation of the previous days march. Bn departed the assembly area 1535. The CC B column was cut at a road junction 3 miles east of COURGENARD by the left column of the 5th Inf Div. A conference of CG CC B and CT Comdr of 5th Inf Div straightened out the trouble and CC B moved on to a point 3 miles south of COURVILLE, where resistance², 200 German Paratroopers, was encountered, 2150 hours, by the point, F1, CC B. A Btry attached to F1 occupied position at once and fired 20 orienting rds for the observer before darkness. The remainder of the Bn in F2 was able to occupy position in the vicinity of A Btry before darkness and a position area survey conducted by the Bn RO in order that the Bn fires could be massed. The Bn outposted the position at darkness and awaited missions, from the observers. None were called for as the location of friendly troops were unknown. Pvt Louden, A Btry, Recon Section, was wounded in action when caught in an infantry squad action within COURVILLE.

The following morning, 15 August, the Bn CO went forward to CC B to secure plans for continuation of the attack on COURVILLE. It was decided to leave COURVILLE and march on CHARTRES. The Bn Maint Plat arrived in the Bn Area and the Motor O proceeded to repair the three M-10 ammunition trailers of A & B Btrys which were loaded in excess of marked load, 54 instead of 42 rds. At 0900 the CC B Tns arrived in the vicinity of the Bn position and the Bn was refueled. The Bn CO returned from CC B and issued the following instructions, 0930 hours, to assembled BC's and Staff Officers: CC B has mission of seizing CHARTRES, F1 from the NW, F2 (A/31, C/23, AG Plat/31,434-, B/814 TD, B/23, B & C/31, 193 FA Gp). A/434 in direct support of F1, 434- direct support F2. Lt McLemore, FO1, attached to A/31, Lt Davis, FO3, to march behind AG Plat/31, Lt Moore, FO2, to march with CP/434. Lt Kivett, Btry C RO, attached to C/23. Bn RO w/CP/434. Order of march: CP, C, Hq, B, Rec Vehicle Bn Maint Plat, Med. Evacuation along axis of advance. Communications SOP. Kitchen trucks to Tns. Tns to CC B control. Ln O 177th and 949th FA Bns of 193rd FA Gp reported to Bn Co 1000 hours and arrangements were made for communications and supply. The Bn left the COURVILLE position area at 1120 hours and occupied a position in an orchard 1340 hours 5 mi SW of CHARTRES to support the initial attack of CC B astride Route N 821 to CHARTRES.

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² This spelling is as in the original.

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Hq 434th Armd FA Bn 4 Sept 44 "Battle Report 10-31-Aug 44 incl" (Cont'd)

C Btry was registered by C Battery RO, 1430 hours and the Bn tied together by a position area survey. Two concentrations were fired on AT Guns, which were silenced. The Tank-Infantry Team progressed to a point 1000 yds S of CHARTRES outskirts and were halted to await a 10 min Arty preparation. This was fired, but the tanks had lost their momentum and did not move up under the Arty fire, which upon being lifted, an enemy AT Gun Btry opened up from another location. This was silenced by a concentration from the 193rd FA Gp, but the tanks pressed the attack no further and withdrew to formulate another plan of attack. At 2015 hours the tanks were ordered to make a night attack without Arty support. This was done, but the tanks were forced to withdraw upon reaching a mobile AT barrier which was used to separate³ the advance guard and the main body. The tanks again withdrew from the town and assembled. The Bn posted the security for the night and prepared defensive fires for the Force. In the meanwhile Btry A, attached to F1 supported the attack of that Force and once had to displace 2000 yds to avoid counter-battery fire. The Btry marched with the Force through the town of LEVES during the night attack on CHARTRES and it was directed that all .50 cal would be fired at second story windows to neutralize sniper fire. This action resulted in many ricochets, some of which wounded Pfc Karwoski and Pvt Mentas, Btry A.

In conjunction with the night attack of F1 and F2 a task force composed of B Co 23rd Inf and B Btry RO were dispatched around the right flank of CCB to attack CHARTRES from the S. The task force took a wrong turn at THIVARS and proceeded S toward the village of MARBOUE where an AT Gun fired upon the column destroying several vehicles including B RO, Lt Shafer's, peep. The personnel escaped during the night through the woods and rejoined the Bn the next day. Pvt Henson was wounded in the leg by a shell fragment.

The following morning, Wednesday, 16th August the Bn RO reconnoitered for a new Bn position so that fire could be placed beyond CHARTRES. During the reconnaissance the first prisoners, two, were captured by the Bn RO and his crew. The Bn displaced at 1145 hours but there was no firing from that position. At 1315 hours the Bn CO returned from CC B with plans for a march toward the SEINE River. The Bn CO joined the CC B column at 1430 hours. While marching toward the village of BONVILLE the column was subjected to intense sniper fire. A change of plans communicated to CG, CC B was being considered, in effect, to complete the CHARTRES battle with the assistance of the 5th Inf Div. Subsequently the Bn was placed into position near the village BRETIGNY to support the attack of CC B minus F1, who were to attack from the N. Targets of opportunity were immediately fired by the Bn Co and other FO's.

Thursday, 17th August fire was continued on targets of opportunity and many fires were massed with the Div Arty on known locations of enemy installations. Defensive fires were prepared that night and an overlay was submitted to higher Hq's. Messengers Lippelt and Timko while delivering the overlays apprehended a column of Germans attempting to escape⁴. Msgr Lippelt was killed in the action and due to the action of Msgr Timko 75 Germans were captured along with the relief of 6 American hostages. No fire the 18th as mopping-up operations were taking place in the town and Arty fire would endanger friendly troops. At 0830 hours Bn received two missions. One to support a Co of Eng and a TD Co on an OPLR near BELLVILLE to the E of the CC B; Two, the Combat Command was in receipt of tentative orders to march on DREUX.

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³ This spelling is as in the original.

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The latter was put into effect that evening and the Bn accompanied CC B. A Btry was ordered to join the Bn and marched from GASVILLE to join the Bn. Two men, Btry C were wounded by sniper fire while passing through CHARTRES. The Bn marched all that night and arrived in a bivouac position vicinity of CHERISY, N of DREUX, at 0840 hours 19th August.

The Bn spent the 19th of Aug in maintenance of vehicles. One mission was received: To support an attack of a detachment of tanks and infantry upon a wooded area in the vicinity of ABONDANT. The Bn was tied together with a position area survey and the registration of one Btry. No Arty fire was required for the enemy had retired from their position. Defensive fires were planned for the protection of the DREUX bridgehead that night and the following night, 20th August, when the Combat Command was given the mission of taking over the sector of CCA.

The mission of the Bn having been completed at DREUX, the Bn joined CC B in an assembly area about 1/2 mi S of DREUX preparatory⁵ to making a march across⁶ the SEINE River and attack MELUN. The necessary orders having been given, received, and information disseminated to all personnel the Bn marched out of the assembly area with CC B, Btry A marching with F2 and Sv Btry marching with Tns. The head of the Bn pulled out of the assembly area at 2125 hours marching blackout S and SE through VILLE-MAUX, NOGENT-le-ROI and EPERNON. The head of the column reached bivouac area in some open fields adjacent to the village of LE-BUISSONNET at 0010 hours 22 August 1944. Sv Btry bivouaced with Tns about 1/2 mile south outside the village of GAZERAN. The march had been well done and much of the journey was made on main highways - quite a treat for the drivers who though of high caliber never quite developed vision perfect enough to drive on a one way dusty lane with a feeling of absolute security.

The Bn remained in that bivouac during the day, 22 August, and the Btrys, although laid and ready to fire did not fire. Many personnel caught up on their washing, drying of bedding rolls, and bartered with the towns people for eggs. The rest after the strain of battle for the last few days was quite a contribution to morale.

At 1400 hours on 22 August the Bn CO issued his order for further march. The mission of the Div was to take MELUN. Advance guard to march at 1430 hours with the main body following at 1500 hours. Our Bn to march with the Main body, Btry A with the 23rd Armd Inf minus and CC B in Fl, the remainder of the Bn with F2, and Sv Btry with Trains. The 434th remained in CC B support and marched in order Co Grp, Btry B, HQ Btry, and Btry C. The Bn CO went to CC B at 1545 and marched out with CC B at 1615 hours. The column travelled east and southeast through RAMBOUILLET, CLAIRFONTAIN, BULLION, BONNELLEX, FORGES les BUINS, BRIIS, FONTENAY les BOIS, BEL AIR. A mine field had been located on Hwy Gc 97 and the column detoured from the planned route and continued through ALLANVILLE and ARPAJON. Some enemy troops and tanks were reported in and around ARPAJON and although the column was somewhat delayed continued through the town and on to LA NORVILLE, GUILLEVILLE, MEMROLLES, PLESSIS PATE and BONDOUFLE. The Adv Gd and Fl ran into some resistance but

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the remainder of the Bn marching with the main body had no trouble. The Bn CO bivouaced with CCB who pulled off the road about 1/4 mi E of BONDOUBLE, the remainder of the Bn bivouaced about 1/2 mi W of BONDOUFLE.

It had not been the mission of the Command to clean up this route and consequently on the morning of the 23rd August the Bn CO received new information and instructions, namely: CC B will travel SE from FONDOUFLE crossing the ESSONES River where it can find a bridge.

The Bn CO continued to march with CC B which pulled out of area at 1205 retracing the route through BONDOUFLE then traveling S through VERT-le-GRAND - BALLANCOURT - and NE to FORTENAY-le-VICOMTE where CC B went into an assembly area at 1345 hours.

These further instructions and information were received: CC A will cross the⁷ at PONTIERRY at 1500; CC R has troops in MELUN; 87th Recon is holding small bridge-head at BOISSISE-le-ROI; CC B is now in Div Res and will have mission of (1) supporting⁸ and passing through CC A, or (2) general support of CC R, or (S) joining CCA and with them support CC R and pass through MELUN. There are enemy troops with AT support at CORBEIL - one reason for our changing our last route of march. Enemy appears to be strongly holding out in several places although they are definitely fighting a delaying action.

The Bn CO bivouaced with CC B during the night of 23rd August 1944 departing for the Bn assembly area at 0705 24 August and leaving from there with the BC's and RO's at 0735 for reconnaissance. The route of the reconnaissance was S through BALLANCOURT E through CHEVANNES - AVERNEAUX - AUXONNETTE - JONVILLE - MOULIGNAN, back to AUXONNETTE. The Bn RO and CO went forward to TILLY to see what was going on at a bridge over the SEINE River at TILLY and then returned to join the BC's and Btry RO's near AUXONNETTE. The party waited there for the CC B column which arrived along the route at 1145. The Bn CO joined CC B as it came by and proceeded with it arriving in TILLY at 1200 and crossing the SEINE at 1225 hours on the bridge built by the Eng. The column proceeded very slowly through the woods on a road improvised by the Eng to the Hwy S of SEINE PORT where the head of the column encountered resistance. The Bn CO pressed forward continually and in the face of machine gun fire conducted fire; the batteries going into position in the vicinity of the bridge and "leap-frogging" forward a few hundred yards at the time. He delivered fire effectively in spite of the fact that we did not have the plane for observation and wet ammunition in Btry "C" falling wild due to its being wet. At 1900 the Bn was displaced to position 1 mi S of SEINE PORT and tied together by a position area survey and registrations of one Btry, after some difficulty due to lack of information of front line and vague observation.

At 0415 hours 25th August the preparations were fired in support of a Tank-Infantry attack on MELUN, which was successful. At 0800 th⁹ CO went forward and met the BCs and reconnoitered for forward Btry positions. The CO was always aggressive in order to give as much Arty support as possible and as a result the Btry psotions¹⁰ were often adjoining the area where Inf and Tanks were attacking. The Bn CO went forward to the 23rd Armd Inf advance CP, returned to the Bn CP which had displaced in the interim, then went to CC B at 0945 for further orders.

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⁷ The " the at" is as in the originally, probably omitting the word SEINE, thus "the SEINE at".

⁸ This spelling is as in the original.

⁹ This spelling is as in the original.

¹⁰ This spelling is as in the original.

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The Bn received march order at 1020 and began to move out at 1230 but halted on the Nwy just E of the railroad bridge 2 mi E of SEINE PORT because of further resistance encountered by the head of the column in MELUN. The Bn CO went forward and ordered the Btrys into position at 1400. C Btry took position just S of the Hwy E of the railroad and B Btry about 200 yds SE of C. The CP was setup about 1/4 mi W of the railroad crossing. Information was received as to the location of the enemy FA and CP and an air OP was sent up to adjust fire. This proved effective and the enemy artillery was silenced. at 1710 the Bn CO had a BC call and gave his order for the further march of the Bn to move forward in support of CC B. CC B was to move out at 1800. Fl under Allison to include A/31, Assault Gun platoon, 23 minus and A/434; Troops to consist of 434 minus, Hq CC B; F2 to include 31 minus, B/33, Trains and B/814 TD. We are to move with CC B into an assembly area just west of MELUN at one, preparatory to a march through and beyond MELUN - order of march to assembly area HQ, A, C, B - order of march from assembly area - C, Hq, B. At 1730 the Bn moved out to CC B assembly area and immediately upon arrival continued counterbattery missions sent in by FO's and the air OP. At 2015 the Bn Command Gp moved out to the assembly area to march eastward but were halted immediately by fire falling on advance elements of the CC B column. The Bn was again placed into position on the west edge of MELUN and prepared to fire in defense of the Force.

The Bn moved out by echelon beginning 0700 of the 26th. The CO went forward, stopped at A Btry position about 2 mi E of MILUN¹¹ then continued eastward slowly with the column traveling with the Command Gp of the 23rd Armd Inf - route through CHATILLON-la-BORDE on N 446 at 1450, la CHAPELLE GAUTHIER - FONTENAILLES, and NANGIS at 1830 taking route N 19 eastward. The advance elements were meeting some resistance and the march of the column was slow. Arty was displaced by echelon at 200 yds and was continues throughout the day reducing 3 strong points on route of advance to allow uninterrupted movement of column. Bn bivouaced off the Hwy about 1 mi E of NANGIS FOR THE NIGHT, the Bn Co returning and spending the night at the Bn CP.

At 0800 27th August the Bn Co left the Bn area again returning to the head of the column to travel with the column Commander so as to give close Arty support when necessary. The column continued steadily eastward on Hwy N 19 through MAISON-ROUGE at 1000 and VULAINES. About 1 mi E of VULAINES Pvt Nazworth of A Btry Recon Section was killed in action by a direct hit from an enemy mortar while A RO, Lt Mincosky, was gallant by conducting Arty fire while being subjected to a mortar barrage to extricate men and vehicle from an ambush in PROVINS. Progress was still being held up by enemy Anti-tank guns and small arms and the unit was meeting more resistance than had been counted on. again the Commanding General made the decision that we must by-pass resistance so he gave our Bn CO his order at 1215 and the column continued on a different route at 1415 turnig north at VULAINES and traveling on secondary and cross country roads most of the afternoon by-passing PROVINS by taking a route through GIMBROIA and VOULTAN and also by-passing VILLIERS St GEORGE detouring S and E through BOUCHY-le-REPOS, les ESSARTS to an assembly area about 1/4 mi E of les ESSARTS where the Combat Command assembled and reformed under intense sniper fire.

At 2000 hours the CO went to CC B for his orders and returned and ordered the Bn to be ready to move out toward REIMS. The Bn CO again

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traveled with the CG, CC B, moving out at 2030. The column moved along steadily through SEZANNE and northward on Hwy N 51 and halted there at 0315 the head about 1 1/2 miles S of CHAPTON.

The column was serviced by Tns vehicles the following morning, 28th August, and continued the march northward at 0815. Some small arms fire was encountered along the Hwy and some Hq Btry personnel and one of the FO Tanks had some shooting with snipers. The Germans paid with their lives and in addition the tank did some firing upon a German column of trucks sighted on a parallel Hwy attempting to escape. The column took a route through SOIZY, St PRIX, PAYE, MONT-PERTIUS, CHAMPAUBERT. Some sniper fire was encountered throughout the trip and 1st Sgt Gruner was wounded by an explosion of a defective .50 caliber round while he was firing on the enemy at about 1125. The progress of the column was slow and the column was halted for the major part of the afternoon while the advance elements were held up in the vicinity of VANDANCOURT. The Bn CO acted as Arty advisor to the CC, CC B who had set up his CP just W of VANDANCOURT, moving forward into EPERNAY to get a picture of the situation and the enemy's strength.

For the march on EPERNAY the Bn had been divided into three forces with units of the Combat Command. Btry "C" was to support the left column, Btry A was to support the center column and Btry B was to support the right column. All columns were to converge on EPERNAY with the mission of seizing the town and the bridge over the MARNE RIVER and to secure a bridgehead on the north bank. At 1800 hours the attack began to seize the bridge and cross to the other side. Btry A went into position at VANDANCOURT to support the attack of the center column. The 274th Armd FA Bn was also in position in the vicinity of VANDANCOURT to support the fire of Btry A. During this time Capt BERYLE B. BOSSMAN, CO of Btry C who was with the left column was killed in action 2500 yds east of EPERNAY while directing fire of his Btry. Btry A was ordered by the Bn Co to displace forward into EPERNAY. Heavy resistance was met at the bridge by the center column and an emergency mission requested by 2d Lt McLemore was fired by a Btry of the 274th Armd FA Bn through the radio of the Bn Ln O. At 2400 the Bn was in EPERNAY with Hq Btry and Btry A in the center of the town and the other two Btrys just outside. The CG, CC B then ordered a withdrawal from the town and the Bn CO who was still with the CP, CC B ordered Hq Btry and Btry A to return to their old areas. Hq CCB remained in the town overnight. The howitzer Btrys remained attached to their respective Force Commanders. The Bn CO left the town with Hq CC B at 0715 29 Aug 44 and moved to the original position at VANDANCOURT. At 1300 the Bn CO returned to the Bn CP with orders to prepare the Bn for a march across a pontoon bridge across the MARNE at CHATINNON. The CO then returned to Hq CC B to march in that column. The Bn moved out at 1315 with Combat Command still marching in three columns with Btrys of the Bn in the same force as the attack on EPERNAY. At 2400 29 Aug 44 the head of the cwnter¹² column was at CILLERY. All columns were on the march at this time.

On the morning of 30 Aug 44 all columns were marching at 0800. The route had been through ABLOIS - VAUCIENNES - BOURSAULT - PORT a VINSON - CHAUMUZY - POURCY - CILLERY. At 1000 heavy resistance was met by the center column at WARMERVILLE. The Bn Co ordered Btry A to go into position and went forward to direct fire on enemy Inf and AT Guns.

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¹² This spelling is as in the original.

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The tanks and infantry of the center column moved forward under the fire of Btry A with a well coordinated attack and in a matter of minutes all resistance had ceased, and many prisoners were taken. While Btry A was firing the Btry was reinforced by two self-propelled guns of another Armd FA Btry which had become lost from their column and had attached themselves to the tail of Btry A.

After this skirmish all columns halted and were serviced by Tns near WARMERIVILLE. At 1500 the Bn CO arrived at the Bn CP with orders from the CG, CC B to march on VERDUN. The Bn moved out and arrived at an assembly area two miles east of St MASM S at 1800. Tns again serviced those portions of the Bn that were not serviced at the last area.

At 1755 the Bn moved out with Btrys still attached to Force Commanders with Hq Btry and Btry A marching with the center column. At 2400 the column halted and pulled off the road in the vicinity of ARDEUIL. The route had been through VETHENIVILLE - HAUVINE - St ETIENNE - SOOMMEPY - AURE - ARDEUIL. The column had traveled cross-country from HAUVINE to SOMMEPY. At 0830 31 Aug the column was moved off the road and dispersed in surrounding fields to await orders to move across the AISNE river when a suitable bridge could be found. At 1230 the Bn CO went forward on reconnaissance with Force CO of the center column. The Bn CO returned to the Bn CP at 1345 with orders to move out and cross the river. The column moved out at 1500 and at 1544 Btry A went into position to fire on enemy Inf and 88's opposing the crossing. The Bn CO arrived at the Bn CP at 2030 with march order and the Bn moved out at 2100, crossed the river at AUTRY on a pontoon bridge and entered an assembly area 1 mi north of BINARVILLE. All the Btrys of the Bn were assembled here and placed in position prepared to fire east to support troops marching through the ARGONNE Forest. The Bn was still in this position at 2400 31 Aug 44.

During the period 9 Aug 1944 to 31 August 1944, the 434th Armd FA Bn marched approximately 717 miles fired 5,035 rounds of 105 mm ammunition at the enemy. Morale: Excellent. Weather and roads were excellent and the civilian population was very friendly and generous.

Battle Report submitted by Serv Btry 434th FA in compliance with Par 2 Adm Memo No 31, Hqs 7th Armd Div dated 21 July 1944

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BATTLE REPORT (1 thru 30 Sept 1944)

Our unit disembarked from USS LST 980 and placed foot upon French soil for the first time at the lower eastern end of the Cotentin Peninsula at a point called Utah Beach somewhere between St. Mere Eglise and Carentan on 10 Aug 1944 at 2015 hours. The weather was calm and the water unruffled. Unloading was expedited with minimum delay and no enemy activity or opposition was observed. The initial route of march carried the unit thru St. Mere Eglise, west thru St. Jores and then southwest to temporary bivouac at Vesly, a community lying midway between La Haye du Puits on the North and Lessay on the south. The condition of the roads were poor. Approximate distance travelled was 35 miles.

Except for occasional isolated sniper fire our march east toward Chartres by way of Periers, Coutances, Avranches, Enree, Evron, Courville, was uneventful. On 15 Aug 1944 contact with hostile forces in some strength was encountered on the outskirts of Chartres. Reconnaissance elements were compelled to withdraw after discovering the enemy strongly entrenched in the western quarters of the outlying district. Enemy forces had been harassing us with their 88mm and 2 cm guns. On 17 Aug 1944 our 105 Howitzer Batteries shifted around to a semi-arc near Bonville to shell Chartres from the southeast. The Firing Batteries under Lt. Col. Dubuisson laid down a heavy concentration of fire that afternoon neutralizing enemy activity in part. By evening all major resistance was overcome. Our unit supplied the firing batteries adequately with the ammunition needed to accomplish the mission. Capt. William B. Sheveland, our commanding officer, is also our battalion S4.

From interrogation of prisoners captured it was disclosed that the force opposing us was known as the Comrade Battalion under the personal command of an officer by the name of Wendorf. The men comprising this organization were soldiers who had been separated from their various units, units that were slowly disintegrating and who banded together at the last moment to put in a bid to stem our forward eastward drives.

An ancient gothic cathedral remains unscathed in Chartres today. American artillery had spared it. Its lofty spires could have served the enemy well as an OP. Whether or not they did is a matter for speculation.

Combat Command B hauled in approximately 300 prisoners. During this engagement we suffered no casualties nor losses of equipment.

2 mi W of Bondoufle we took two German soldiers into our custody. Haggard and weary they surrendered willingly. At the time Lt. Louis C. Kjar in charge of a supply convoy was directing the vehicles back to our bivouac in Fontenay. This incident occurred 24 Aug 1944.

Tech 5 Tomas Flores and Pvt Regis Gallagher, driver and assistant driver of a 2-1/2 ton truck, disarmed and captured an officer in the vicinity of Thivars, 16 Aug 1944.

On 28 Aug 1944 Pvt Joseph Gossett and Pvt Charlie Hinds, their vehicle temporarily halted off Highway N51, 3 mi N of Sezanne identified a German vehicle approaching them. They immediately opened fire when resistance was offered and when one of the occupants tossed a grenade at them. They wounded two of the enemy and were responsible for the capture of five others. We sustained no casualties other than slight shock by Pvt Gossett.

CCB Train, of which our unit is a part, encountered scattered pockets of enemy resistance, in an enclosure near its bivouac area in the afternoon of 28 Aug 1944. Light tanks protecting the flanks of the Trains routed the enemy out of hiding and forced the surrender of about 30 prisoners. A large number of vehicles and enemy booty were seized.

Driving north from Villenauxe on route N51, 28 Aug 1944, Capt. Roger E. Wright, Battalion Motor Officer, with Tech Sgt Frank Sislo and in convoy with some supply vehicles of Serv Co. 23rd Amrd Inf Bn., met and clashed with more than a score of enemy. The enemy using two horse-drawn conveyances sought refuge in nearby woods. They resisted at first but our fire dislodged them. They fled after few exchanges of volleys. We pursued then, captured 12 and killed an estimated 10. During the skirmish Capt. Wright was wounded in the right ankle by his weapon accidentally discharged. We suffered no other casualties.

(signed)
S/Sgt Nicholas W. Zasorin
Unit Historian- Unit Reporter

WBS

S-E-C-R-E-T

HEADQUARTERS
434TH ARMORED FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION
APO 257, c/o Postmaster, New York, N.Y.

30 September 1944

Battle Report
1-30 Sept 1944 inclusive

At 0040 on 1 Sept the Bn Commander went to CC B for his march order and it was decided that the Combat Command would continue to march toward VERDUN in three columns, C Btry with Force Johanson, A Btry with Force Allison and B Btry with Force Erlenbusch. The columns met some resistance and the Btrys occupied firing positions where necessary in order to give artillery support to the forward elements. In the vicinity of EXERMONT C Btry found it necessary to put two of its M-7's in the most forward element of the column and bring direct fire upon enemy AT guns. Sgt Brown the chief of section and Lt Fitzsimmons the Btry executive officer showed a great deal of initiative in this action and were awarded Bronze Star Medals for their heroism.

At 1630 the Bn assembled in a CC B assembly area ½ mi North of BETHENCOURT where it was serviced. The plan was then to march on SEDAN and assemble in the vicinity of DIEPPE. The Bn moved on at 1820 hours and went into a bivouac 1 mi South of MARRE.

During the night enemy airplanes flew over apparently with the mission of bombing objectives in VERDUN but, having spotted the Combat Command bivouac area, they dropped bombs in the area of the 31st Tank Bn, one falling about 50 yards from our artillery observer, Lt McLemore, who was bivouaced with the tankers.

Inasmuch as the entire Combat Command was low on gasoline and the supply situation was so critical the plan for a CC B march on SEDAN was cancelled in favor of the plan of sending one task force on the mission. C Btry of our Bn had the greatest supply of gasoline on hand and was therefore selected as a part of the task force to advance with Force Erlenbusch.

Due to recent losses of Bn officers the Bn Commander made reassignments as follows: Lt Kivett from Btry C to Btry B RO, Lt Shafer from Btry B to Hq Btry FO and air observer, Lt Moore from Hq Btry to Sv Btry as Bn Motor Officer, Lt McKenna from Sv Btry to C Btry as Motor Officer and Asst Ex, Lt Ellis from Asst Ex to Ex in C Btry.

C Btry left the Bn area on 2 Sept to join Force Erlenbusch 1 1/2 mi E of MARRE. The force moved out during the evening and traveled northwest to vicinity of MOUNTFAUCON before their gasoline supply was depleted.

Enemy planes again were over the Bn area on the night of 2 Sept but no bombs were dropped.

On 3 Sept, 1400 hours, all Class A Agents reported to Trains area 7 mi west of VERDUN to pick up pay for Bn personnel.

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Hq 434th Armd FA Bn "Battle Report, 1-30 Sept 44 inclusive" (Cont'd)

The remainder of the day was spend in paying off the men and collecting money for PTA (Personal transmission of accounts). Payment was in France and as there had been little opportunity of spending money, PTA had considerable favor.

Planes were again in the vicinity on the night of 3 Sept but the bombing was confined to the VERDUN area.

On 4 Sept the Bn Commander was called to CCB for unit commanders meeting and upon his return he held an officers call and put out the following information and orders; Duffle bags will be sent to CHATEAU THIERRY for storage, knit caps will not be worn, bread is not to be purchased from civilians, the Bn will support CC B in a march on METZ or LUXEMBOURG, orange panels will be used instead of cerise ones.

At 1500 C Btry returned to the Bn area. At 2305, the field order for the assembly and march of CC B was received, Btry B being assigned to Force Erlenbusch and the 434th minus to Force Allison. However, it was not as yet definite whether the march would be on METZ or LUXEMBOURG.

The 5th of Sept found the Bn in the same area. Never since the beginning of our combat has the personnel had such a respite with time for getting their persons and vehicles into shape again. To help the situation, we received word on that morning that 28 shower heads were available for our use in VERDUN. The men took advantage of this first opportunity for real baths and thus again was morale raised a few points. Again luck was with us in the afternoon of the 5th when the Red Cross Clubmobile was ushered into our area. This was our first from the Clubmobile and everyone made the most of the visit. The "never dry" coffee urns and doughnuts were added attractions to the three efficient hostesses who spread their spirit of good cheer throughout the area.

The evening of that day say the end of the rest period or the waiting for gasoline period; the Bn prepared for march order and officers met for another officer's call and conference on Paragraphs 1070-1184 of "Operations of the Armored Force."

March order was not received until the following morning (6 Sept), however, all necessary preparations were made. The Bn Commander and Tec 5 Timko were each awarded the Silver Star by General Silvester at CC B for outstanding acts they had performed since the Bn had been in combat.

The Bn moved out at 1100 toward VERDUN, and on through VERDUN to the assembly area east of town. Inasmuch as the Inf Bn had not as yet received gasoline it was decided that the Combat Command would proceed without them and that they should join us when they could. In the absence then of Lt Col Allison, Lt Col Dubuisson was appointed Force Commander. The Bn moved out at 1325 hours travelling generally east. When it was learned that resistance was encountered by the head of the column at REZONVILLE, Btry A and C immediately went into firing position off the highway in the vicinity of MARS LA TOUR in order to give artillery support.

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The Btrys displaced by echelon at 1830 to positions 1 mi east of VIONVILLE. Lt McLemore's tank with the 31st was disabled when it hit a mine. The tanks found the resistance strong and realized the need for infantry assistance. At about 2000 the 23rd Inf arrived and Col Allison assumed command of the Force.

During the night of 6-7 Sept A Co of the 31st and the 23rd Inf with RO's of A and C Btry had worked their way to the MOSELLE River but crossing attempted in assault boats were beaten off by the enemy.

At 1100 on 7 Sept the Bn displaced by echelon cross country 2 mi to a position at REZONVILLE where better support could be given to the Inf who were attempting to establish a bridgehead on the MOSELLE. The Bn Commander and Btry Commanders went forward to the front lines to keep close liaison with the advance elements often and were subjected to enemy shell fire during each trip. The Bn fired missions of counterbattery fire and on the morning of 8 Sept at 0230 fired a preparation but assault boats were not available for the Inf to cross the river. At 0600 the Inf began an assault but were driven back by intense enemy fire. Lt Mincosky, C Btry, RO, was killed in action while accompanying the assault wave. Lt McKenna, Asst Btry Ex, went forward to take his place.

Liaison officers from the 558th FA Bn (155mm guns, SP) and the 274 Armd FA Bn (105mm Howitzers, SP) were with the Bn and our fire Direction Center coordinated the fire of the three Bns. Our fire during the day was primarily harassing although we massed with Corps Arty against a counterattack from the North again at the bridgehead at 0955 and silenced enemy AT guns firing on REZONVILLE from the left flank at 1730.

On the evening of 8 Sept at 1630 the Bn Commander and the CO of the 274th FA Bn went to the front lines. The CO of the 274th was seriously wounded and evacuated, but our own Bn CO escaped with two slight wounds.

On 9 Sept CC B was placed in support of the 5th Inf Div. The 7th Armd Div less CC B with a combat team of the 5th Inf Div was to attack METZ from the West and the 5th Inf Div was to attack from the Southwest. Liaison officers from the 274th and 558th were relieved for assignment elsewhere. The Bn remained in the same position and CC B continued its mission of aiding the establishment of a bridgehead on the MOSELLE River.

At 0800 on 10 Sept the Bn fired protective concentrations for the DORNOT bridgehead. At 1030 our liaison officer returned from CC B with march order tentatively effective at 1130 to march to assembly area prior to crossing MOSELLE River. The Bn left its area at 1200 and arrived in the assembly area 1.2 mi West of GORZE at 1240. The Bn was registered at once from the air and B Btry reverted to Bn control but remained in its present position south of GORZE. At 1420 the Bn CO returned to the Bn area with the information that the 11th Combat Team of the 5th Inf Div and the 23rd Inf Bn would be withdrawn from DORNOT bridgehead at darkness. The enemy fire had proved to intense and our elements had been unable to make advancement. Col Allison had been wounded and evacuated; our own RO, Lt McKenna had adjusted our Arty upon his own position in order to obtain effective protective fires but the enemy was well fortified and held his own positions.

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At 1700 the Bn massed fire with 5th Inf Div Army against a counter-attack on the ARNAVILLE bridgehead. At 2100 the Bn fired a protective smoke screen to cover the withdrawal of the 11th Combat Team of the 5th Inf Div and 23rd Inf from the DORNOT bridgehead. Again at 2130 that night and at 0625 the morning of 11 Sept the Bn massed with 5th Inf Div on counterattack against the ARNAVILLE bridgehead.

When the BC and RO of A Btry returned from the DORNOT bridgehead on the morning of the **11th of Sept** they reported that C RO, Lt McKenna had crossed the river but there was some concern of his present whereabouts. His peep driver, Cpl DeRemer who had stayed in the village of Le CHEVE¹³ was reported missing. Capt GAULKE had been forced to abandon his half-track in Le CHEVE due to the intense shell fire and rubble strewn streets.

At 1315 the Bn minus B moved from the position west of GORZE to a position near B Btry 1/2 mi South of GORZE.

At 1630 the Bn CO went to CC B to meet the new CG, General Devine, who returned and inspected our Bn area. Later in the evening at 1800 the Bn CO went forward with the BC's to select forward OP's and at 2030 he went to CC B for a conference on the joint operations of CC B of the 7th Armd Div, 10th Combat Team of the 5th Inf Div and CC B of the 4th Armd Div. Upon his return he assembled the BC's and gave the situation: The 31st Tank Bn will cross the bridge at ARNAVILLE when it is completed and assemble and make a diversionary attack around ARRY - MARDIGNY - LORRY - MARIEULLES, then return to assembly position. A task force consisting of the 11th Combat Team of the 5th Inf Div is to attack and clear ARRY by daybreak of **12 Sept** and assist in tank attack. The Inf of CC A of 4th Armd Div is to cross MOSELLE River in the vicinity of PAGNY, assemble and attack south toward VITTONVILLE. The armor of CC A, 4th Armd Div is to cross MOSELLE River and follow CC B of 7th Armd Div on its turn to the east and attack toward SILLEGNY. Our Bn will support CC B of the 7th Armd Div. When registered, heavy and medium Arty with 5th Inf Div will reinforce our fires on towns of MARDIGNY, LORRY, and MARIEULLES.

Harassing fires were fired until midnight and at 0200 the following morning protective fires of 5th Inf Div Arty were begun. The 31st was reported to have crossed the river at ARNAVILLE at 1430 and at 1530 B and C displaced forward a few hundred yards. The Bn continued firing protective fires for the 5th Inf Div until 2045.

Progress of advance elements was slow and the Bn remained in the position 1.2 mi south of GORZE throughout the night and during the next day (**13 Sept**) reinforced fires of 5th Div Arty on targets of opportunity. At 1500 the Bn Commander was called to CC B and the Bn was alerted for march order. B Btry was instructed to follow B/23 across the river and occupy position 1000 metres east of ARRY. It was expected that the rest of the Bn would follow B Btry, once B had registered, but at 1830 word was received that there was insufficient space on the bridgehead to accommodate CC B and that advance of the tanks to secure a larger bridgehead at that time was not advisable.

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¹³ This is probably actually "le Chêne", just north of Dornot, on the west bank of the Moselle River.

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B Btry occupied position 1 mi east of ARNAVILLE while subject to intermittent enemy shell fire. One man, Tec 5 Cyphers was wounded.

Lt Kettenring acting as air observer located an enemy Btry at dusk by the flashes from their guns. He adjusted A and C Btrys upon the Btry and silenced it. At 2130 the Bn massed fires with 5th Inf Div Arty on vehicles in ARRY.

The Bn less B Btry remained in position **the following day**. Our Fire Direction Center worked with 5th Inf Div Arty throughout the day. FO's of the 3rd FA Brigade (19th FA, 21st FA, 177th FA, 773 FA) reported, were briefed and dispatched to CP's of supported front line elements. Our own RO's, Lt's Richards and Galle also went forward to join A and C companies of the 23rd, respectively. The 3rd Brigade had the mission of reinforcing our fires.

During the day B Btry had continued to suffer enemy shelling and Pfc Huskey was killed.

Again at dusk our Bn RO located enemy Btrys and he was able to effectively adjust our fires on them.

On the morning of the 15th the attack was to jump off at 0900 and we fired as Arty preparation from 0845 to 0855. It was later learned that the Inf and tanks had crossed the LD at 0915. At 1230 the Bn began firing in support of the attack and roving guns were taken from B Btry to register from positions to be occupied by A and C Btry s upon their displacement across the river.

On 16 Sept the Bn prepared for the move across the river and while awaiting the final orders for movement massed fire with 5th Inf Div Arty on enemy targets. At 1230 word was received that B Btry was being shelled continuously and the Bn CO gave B BC permission to move to the position selected for C. B's casualties were Pvt Dawson LWA, Lucuk MIA. At 1640 the Bn CO was informed that the bridge was clear. The Bn moved out, crossing the pontoon bridge at ARNAVILLE and arriving in position 1/2 mi SE ARRY at 1732. The 177th FA was assigned the mission of reinforcing our fires and their liaison officer reported shortly after we occupied the new position. The medical aid station, Fire Direction Center, and Message Center were able to occupy vacated buildings where they carried on their operations quite successfully. The shelter from the weather was heartily welcomed by all personnel concerned. On the 17th a new mission was given to the 23rd Inf, our supported unit. The new mission was to support CC R in an attack east of LORRY. Our Bn offered support to the 440th for the CC R attack and began firing in support of the attack at 1230.

Next day (18 Sept) a new attack order was issued; namely, that CC B supported by a line company and Hq of the 48th Inf would attack at 1230 to seize BOUXIERES and LOUVIGNY together with the high ground E of BOUXIERES.

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Force Chappuis (48th Inf-, B/31) will attack BOUXIERES from The North, Force Fuller (23rd Inf, A/31) will attack from the West, and Force Erlenbusch (31st-, B/33) will be in reserve. Our Bn reinforced by 695 FA Bn (whose liaison officer, reconnaissance officers, 2 forward observers and Bn CO had already reported to our Bn CO) will support the attack. Liaison was established with supported units and observers assigned to both the tank and Inf units. At 1615 the Bn opened fire in support of the attack and continued fire until 1915.

The following morning (19 Sept) the 695th FAA displaced to a position 1 mi SE BOUXIERES and at 1345 our Bn occupied position vicinity of BOUXIERES. The firing batteries 3/4 mi NE BOUXIERES and the Bn CP 200 yards S of the town. Fire Direction Center occupied a position of a house and thus were able to have some shelter from the weather which, during the stay in this position, turned out to be very wet.

The Bn remained in position near BOUXIERES until the 24th of September firing (1) in support of the 23rd in their attacks from LONGUEVILLE in attempting to establish a bridgehead (2) harassing fires on enemy traffic vicinity LOUVIGNY (3) protective fires and preparation upon CHEMINOT.

During the time the Bn was in position at BOUXIERES it was subjected to more intense counterbattery fire than it had suffered at any other time. Headquarters Battery had no fire fall within their immediate area, however overs and shorts kept everyone alert. All the firing, batteries had fire sporadically in their areas, however only B Btry displaced from its original position. That displacement came after a direct hit on an ammunition trailer of one of the gun sections. The Btry Commander together with the aid of an M-7 driver undertook the dangerous task of returning to the gun and removing unexploded rounds from the carriage so that it could be safely moved to the next position. Two men had been killed and several had been wounded by the enemy fire but the Btry Commander was quite successful in being able to keep morale high. A Btry suffered the loss of 1 man, KIA, when there was a direct hit on his slit trench. In C Btry while none were killed, the maintenance section received some fire which seriously wounded the motor sergeant and a mechanic.

In general the weather during this period was bad; visibility was usually very poor throughout the morning due to fog which settled over the valley and the remainder of the day often brought rain which was of no help. It became apparent that this mission was not for armored troops and on the 24th orders were received to move to HAUMONT. The move was to be by unit at such time as enemy observation would be unable to detect the move. Our Bn moved out in order of B, Hq, A, C, beginning at 1800 and the head of the column reached HAUMONT at 2115. A portion of the march was over very narrow roads, the night was dark, and due to the recent rains the shoulders were quite soft, and consequently, several vehicles slipped into ditches and did not arrive in the Bn area until the following morning.

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The following day was another dismal one. Bn personnel had hoped to be able to get a few personal items taken care of but the weather was against it. Duffle bags were brought in by Sv Btry and due to the recent cold weather many men were glad to have a chance to get out some more warm clothing. Laundry which had gone out from the BOUXIERES area was also returned. Some personnel were fortunate enough to get the clothing back that they had sent out. Radio silence was put into effect until further notice. The Btry kitchens came into the Btry areas and prepared dinner and supper from B Rations - the first since arrival on the continent. Another bright spot in the day was the arrival of the Red Cross Clubmobile at about 1630. Doughnuts and Coffee were served and the hostesses did their usual job well and left the area with morale up a few points as a result of their visit.

The Bn CO held an Officer's call and put out the march order from the area. The Div is to march to XIX Corps sector in First Army area. Our tentative time of moving out is 2130 and our tentative destination is 5 mi NE HASSELT, BELGIUM about 175 mi distant.

The Bn moved out at 2140 and traveled generally north ward throughout the night and the following day. There was a 3 hour halt at RAMONT, BELGIUM where the kitchens served out hot chow. The march during the remainder of the afternoon was through some very rough country, the scenery was quite pretty in many spots, the roads were exceptional in many cases being concrete of a good 2 lane width. As night wore on, however, the drive became rather tiring, some columns reported being cut into by other columns, the destination was farther than originally expected and when the final bivouac report was made at 0530 the following morning one M-4 tank, two 3/4 ton trucks, four 2 1/2 ton trucks, the 10 ton wrecker, and two T-5 recovery vehicles were still out in addition to the gas section.

Bn personnel were now given some opportunity for personal maintenance, the kitchen fed B rations all during the stay in this area, duffle bags were repacked and dispatched to Div Service Park for storage at MAASTRICHT.

The CG, CC B held a meeting of CO's and Staffs at CC B Hq at 1430. He critiqued the march and projected operations were presented.

On the 28th BC's held inspection of small arms, personnel, and vehicles in their respective Btrys. At 1715 an informal ceremony was held at the CP and Purple Hearts were presented to Lt Col Dubuisson, 1st Lt Kivett, Pfc Karwoski, Pvt Mertes, Pfc Henson, Cpl Kreiser, Pfc Mead and a Certificate of Merit was presented to Cpl Nuvoloni.

At 1730 the Bn CO presented the situation to assembled BC's and Staff. The Div moves thru the 21st British Army Group to an assembly position for an attack from N to S to widen corridor established by 1st Airborne Army - CC's abreast, CC B on the left (E) flank. The move to the assembly position will be: a task force of light tanks and TD's, 87th Rcn, CC B, CC A, Div Tps, CC R. At 2300 the CC B march order was received - B/814, 31, Hq CC B, 434, 23, B/33. At 2315 the order of march was put out to the Btrys - Hq, C, B, A, Med, Maint.

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The Bn left the assembly area at 0840 and traveled generally north throughout the morning. The Bn checked off one more country covered in the course of operations thus far - Holland was entered and the people still seemed friendly, throwing apples to the men all along the way. At 1240 the Bn arrived in an assembly area at SCHOOTEIND, HOLLAND, and remained there the remainder of the day with plans to move out early the following morning. The Bn CO presented the latest plan: Our Bn will continue in support of CC B. The Combat Command will assemble in the vicinity of OOSTRUM, thence attack south in two forces, the Bn minus C being assigned Force Johanson with the 23rd minus, C of 31st, B of 33rd minus, and 3rd platoon of 814th TD. C Btry was assigned to Force Erlenbusch with the 31st minus, B of 23rd, 1st platoon of B/33, and B/814 minus. Force Johanson will attack on the right (W) route and Force Erlenbusch on the left. The initial mission was to take VENLO and then establish a bridgehead on the Canal De DERIVATION. After a later meeting at CC B the CO put out the route of march and details of the march order.

The Bn moved out at 0625 the following morning and arrived in the attack assembly position at St ANTHONIS at 0830. The Bn was registered by the Bn RO from an OP in the church steeple in St ANTHONIS. At 1530 the Bn began a preparation in support of the attack and continued in support upon targets of opportunity throughout the evening. Enemy fire fell around the Bn area during the evening and sporadically throughout the night, but there was no casualties and plans for dawn attack were made.

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Battle Report submitted by Serv Btry 434th Armd FA Bn in compliance with Par 2 Adm Memo No 31 Hqs 7th Armd Div dated 21 July 1944

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BATTLE REPORT (1 thru 30 Sept 1944)

Our unit left Ardeuil, France, on the evening of 1 Sept 1944 in clear weather under a cloudless sky to assemble in new bivouac area 2 MI N of Chattancourt. The condition of roads were exceedingly poor. The march was slow despite the moonlit roads. A large part of the unit movement was cross-country, on improvised roads over hilly terrain. After passing thru the villages of Apremont and Charpentry we drove into a withering hail of small arms fire from enemy ambushed in the hills. We emerged without harm. 2 Sept we moved to a locality 1/2 MI W of Marre where we remained till 6 Sept, the first real respite our battalion has had in more than three weeks of combat. During this temporary cessation, however, all units performed echelon maintenance on vehicles and weapons. Enemy planes flew ever sporadically.

In the afternoon of 6 Sept we proceeded from Marre to establish a salient over the Moselle and participate in an attack on Metz. Our combat command was to strike Metz in the midriff while the other combat columns were assigned the task of engaging and pronging into the left and right flanks of the enemy's citadel city. Metz the place where the aspiring Nazi officer candidate received his schooling in the strategy of war. The Moselle valley before Metz proved to be a formidable obstacle. The terrain was well known to the instructors. They worked out problems with their fledgling tacticians on the very ground that we were trying to penetrate. Over the past years they built up a network of strong fortifications, cached deep into the hills and well camouflaged. It was against these barriers we had to pit our armor. It was against the young stubborn, tenacious, zealous and fanatic Prussian scholar we had to tangle.

A few miles beyond Marre we passed thru Verdun, the fortress city of World War I. Human sacrifice was wholesale back in that time. Thousands upon thousands of soldiers, gallant allied warriors signed their death warrant in their own blood. The Meuse flows thru the core of Verdun. The yesteryear "Battle of the Meuse" like that historic "Battle of the Marne" remains only for posterity as do the remnants of the old and once mighty Maginot walls on the east side of the Meuse in Verdun. Verdun was liberated in the phenomenally short time of three hours when American troops stormed the old bastion. This singular achievement came to the 7th Armored Division. From Verdun our unit drove along Highway N3 (Verdun to Metz highway) to 1/2 MI SW of Gravelotte, a resident-less village 9-1/2 MI directly west of Metz. Strong enemy opposition was encountered across the Moselle by our forward elements. Their advance was halted by intense fire from troops lodged in the hills. Our unit was stalemated in the

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Gravelotte vicinity for three days. On the 7th and 8th of Sept our area was peppered with enemy shells, presumably 88's. We sustained no casualties.

10 Sept 1944 we left Gravelotte, drove by Gorze to Buxieres where we remained unmolested from the enemy for eight days. No news to report from this area. We moved from Buxieres 18 Sept after a quiet interlude, to 2 MI SE of Onville in a heavy mist with poor visibility. The next day in clear and favorable weather we left the Onville area, skirted the village Pagny-sur-moselle, forded the Moselle (Pagny Bridge) under a thick screen of artificially produced smoke without mishap; and bivouacked 1-1/2 MI N of Champey. In late evening inaccurate and scattered hostile shelling of area was observed. From the 20th to the 23rd of Sept the battery remained in the same bivouac and without movement. However, during this brief period of time the firing batteries deployed in the Bouxieres area sustained a total of 17 casualties: 14 wounded, 3 killed from enemy artillery.

On the 24th of Sept our unit left the Champey area, recrossed the Moselle in the brink of morning in inky weather and sloughed thru mire-filled roads along the west bank to Arnville and then to the vicinity of Xonville. 25 Sept 1944 we moved out of the Xonville bivouac to join the battalion at Haumont for a long night and day trek north to Belgium to group with the American 1st Army. The first leg of our journey was Mars-la-tour, Briey, Longuyen in France, Arlon Bastogne, Marche, Huy, St. Trond, Hasselt, over the Albert Canal to Eisden and then to bivouac area near Leut. We crossed the Belgian border at 1430 hours 26 Sept 1944. Distance traveled was well over 150 miles.

Our battery remained in Leut area 27th and 28th of Sept. On the 29th we started on the second and final leg of the march into Holland via the villages and communities of Eisden, Delsen, Rethem, Kinroy, Weert, Maarheeze, Geldrope, Mierlo, Helmonde to 1 MI S of Deurne. Approximate distance covered 52 miles. Crossed the Holland frontier at 1030 hours, 29 Sept 1944.

30 Sept 1944, our unit remained in Deurne area. In the evening a few enemy planes hovered overhead. No other enemy activity was observed. Operations of our combat commands in this Holland area seem to be designed to alleviate enemy pressure on the flanks of a vulnerable supply corridor the British Second Army has forged into enemy territory, also with an attempt by our forces to widen this corridor with an encircling movement so as to entrap resisting elements.

By S/Sgt Nicholas W. Zasorin
Unit Historian, Unit Reporter

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HEADQUARTERS
434TH ARMORED FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION

Battle History
1 Oct 44 - 31 Oct 44.

At 0001, 1 October 1944, the 434th Armored Field Artillery Battalion was in position west of St. Anthonis, Holland firing upon enemy positions in the vicinity of Overloon, Holland in support of CCB. Information was received that an enemy counterattack threatened to overrun our forward position. At 0010 RO's began to call for fires on counterattacking German infantry. The enemy was using heavy concentrations of nebel-werfers and artillery to support this attack. The battalion fired on all concentrations called for by the RO's and the enemy attack was broken up, but all during the day the enemy repeatedly attacked our forward positions only to be slaughtered by our fire. The forward observers with the 31st Tank Battalion reported one woods west of Overloon in which the fire of the battalion had been especially deadly. In the words of one FO "A dead German in every fox hole". In regard to nebel-werfers, these were the first the battalion had heard since going into action. The long, drawn out whine had a few men guessing as to what to do until several hit near the battalion area. After that, at the sound of the "screaming meenie" all personnel would promptly get under cover.

The tank of FO2, Lt Jones, struck a mine and was disabled. Lt. Jones evacuated his crew but remained on the spot to carry out his mission, narrowly escaping enemy mortar fire that seemed to be following him from place to place in his attempt to keep in communication with the battalion. Lt Kivett, Btry B RO, and Lt Galle¹⁴, Btry C RO, were slightly wounded in action being replaced by Lt's Chapin and Cahill respectively. Cpl Phillips, Btry B, then Pvt Phillips, who was a member of Lt Kivett's crew, took over when Lt Kivett was wounded and conducted fire very efficiently and effectively to hold off an enemy counter-attack before Lt Chapin's arrival.

The Bn CO returned from CC B at 1630 with a new plan of attack. The 31st Tank Battalion and B/23rd Infantry were to attack southwest of the railroad then east to Vortum. The 38th Infantry was to attack south between the railroad and the Maas River. Our battalion was given the mission of being in general support of both forces. The battalion FDC prepared defensive fires against possible enemy thrusts into our lines. Road blocks were put out and every man was told to be especially alert against attack by enemy armored vehicles. The men and officers of the battalion were tired, especially FDC personnel, FO sections, and howitzer sections, having fired 22 missions, expending 1192 rounds of 105mm ammunition during the day.

The battalion executive went to CC B at 0100 hours 2 October 1944 to secure a new plan of attack. He returned at 0230 with two tentative plans. Plan A was the same as the day before with the addition of the 23rd Infantry minus B to attack thru Lactaria Forest. B/87th plus one platoon B/814th were to attack and clear the northwest tip of this forest. B/33rd Eng to follow 23rd Infantry minus B and clear road of mines. B/31st to follow this road and fire along southern edge of forest to support attack south on Overloon. The 434th would fire a preparation on Mullen and Vortum and other targets on call from observers.

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¹⁴ This spelling is as in the original. The actual name was Galke (Gordon Moore, 26 Feb 2006 e-mail).

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Plan B called for a withdrawal of the 38th Infantry to assemble with the 23rd Infantry minus B to clear Lactaria Forest. B/23rd and 31st to withdraw north of canal. The 434th was to furnish fires on call from observers. At 0400 the order came to execute Plan B.

As the battle raged on into the night, the battalion S-3 was finding it increasingly difficult to fire on targets received from observers because of the extremely long ranges. The battalion executive and BC's were sent forward to select new positions so as to bring the battalion within range of all targets. But the situation did not permit displacing of the battalion as there was a possibility of an enemy counter attack at any time. The battalion fired 6 missions during the day, expending 104 rounds of ammunition.

The battalion reverted to control of Div Arty on the morning of 3 Oct 44. CC B was placed into Div reserve and CC R passed thru and continued the attack to the south on Overloon. The 434th was ordered to remain in position and continue to support this attack. Observers and RO's who had returned to the battalion were again sent out with various units of CC R. Defensive fires were received from the observers and the battalion fired 11 during the night on targets west of Overloon. Missions fired 3 October: 19. Rounds expended 3 October: 320. 3 Replacement officers arrived at the CP 3 October, namely 2nd Lts Foss, and Bundy, assigned to Btry C, and 2nd Lt Morse, assigned to Btry B.

The situation did not improve the following day to displace the battalion. It could not be given by the CO. The enemy seemed to be making an all out effort to drive our troops out of their positions. The battalion delivered fire on enemy counter attack after counter attack with the enemy supporting his attack with tanks and artillery. Despite heavy losses in personnel and equipment, the counter attacks kept coming one after the other. Observers would often catch an entire enemy company advancing in the open and blast them with fire. One favorite trick was to have friendly infantry fire all their small arms as if counter attacking. Then when the enemy came out of their dug outs to repel this attack the observers would be ready with a heavy concentration of artillery fire to greet them. The last attempted counter attack was dealt with by massed division artillery. This occurred at 1600 and after that and all thru the night harassing fires were laid down in the vicinity of Overloon. The battalion fired 60 missions 4 October 1944 expending 817 rounds of ammunition.

Enemy counter attacks were continued on the 5 October supported by heavy artillery fire. The battalion CO ordered air observers into the air to spot these guns. Two enemy attacks were repulsed by the battalion during the morning, and every one remained alert for a further continuation of these attacks. The battalion received another loss in the morning when the tank of FO3, Lt Shafer, was hit and burned by anti-tank fire. Only one man was wounded seriously, Sgt Lacefield, who suffered a broken arm and other injuries, and was evacuated. The bow gunner, Pvt Douglas performed an extremely heroic deed in returning under fire, to pull Sgt Lacefield out. For this deed, Pvt Douglas was awarded the Silver Star.

At 1730 5 October the Bn CO received from CC R plans for relief of CC R by CC B at 1845. Officers of the Bn were designated to report to various units of CC B as observers and RO's. The remainder of the day and night was very quiet with some firing of interdiction and harassing fire on enemy positions in vicinity of Overloon. The battalion fired 42 missions 5 October, expending 281 rounds of ammunition.

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The 105mm Assault Guns of the 31st Tank Battalion were attached to the Bn on the 6th October 1944 as reinforcing artillery. All personnel were ready to displace on order from the Bn CO. It was decided to displace in the evening and at 1730 a portion of Hq Btry and Btry B were moved to a forward position. However observers continued to call for urgent fire making it impracticable for the remainder of the Bn to move. That portion of Hq Btry which had been displaced forward, was ordered back to the CP, but Btry B remained forward so as not to be on the road when called upon for fire. During the night and morning of 7th October the Bn continued firing on enemy positions west of Overloon. Missions 6 October: 31. Rounds expended 6 October: 633.

At 0700 7th October the Battalion was ordered to support the British 11th Armd Div during relief of the 7th Armd Div and then displace to new zone of action with 7th Armd Div on line of Deurne, Asten, and Weert. BC parties were sent out of new area to select new CP and firing positions. The battalion continued to fire at all possible preparations were made for movement.¹⁵ Missions 7th October: 35. Rounds expended 7th October: 927.

At 0115 8th October the battalion moved out in black out to new position North of Deurne, Holland, marching 14 miles. During this march the peep of Lt Moore, Bn Motor officer, struck a mine laid by an enemy patrol during a gap in the battalion column. Slight cuts and bruises in addition to ear injuries were sustained by Lt Moore and T/Sgt Sislo, driver of the vehicle. Upon arriving at the new area the battalion was laid and as soon as light would permit the battalion was registered from the air by Tec 3 Vickers. The battalion CO arrived at the CP from CC B with missions of the 7th Armd Div in its new position. CC B was to defend Deurne-Asten sector with two forces. The 434th was to support Force 1, and in place medium tanks equipped with 76 mm guns as reinforcing artillery. Everything was made ready to repel any attempt by the enemy to break thru in our sector. RO sections were ordered to be ready to move at dawn 9 October, and firing batteries and battalion FDC were alerted for fire missions. Missions 8th October: 3. Rounds expended 8th October: 35.

At 0800 9 October observers were placed in various church steeples and windmills vicinity of Deurne and Zeilberg. Tanks from A/31st were laid in indirect fire positions and made ready to fire. An air of expectancy hung over the battalion as preparations seemed to be in progress for a large scale artillery barrage on the enemy. However the day passed with only light firing and all personnel were instructed to get as much rest as possible because a hard three or four days of firing was in prospect. Missions 9 October: 7. Rounds expended 9 October: 117.

The battalion did no firing on the 10th October but all other available tanks and assault guns in CC B were ordered to be placed in indirect firing positions by the Bn. The battalion FDC was ordered to coordinate all of this firing. In addition to this the battalion was further reinforced by the 774 FA Bn equipped with 4.5" guns. All of this entailed an enormous amount of work on various sections of the Bn. By noon 11th October all preparations had been made for a large artillery barrage to be delivered on the enemy on the call of the CG. At 1330 the battalion CO made known the reason for this barrage. A small

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¹⁵ This sentence is as in the original.

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force from CC B (2 platoons) was to feign an attack on the crossing of the Deurne canal supported by an enormous artillery barrage. The enemy thinking that a major attack was in progress would shift his forces into this area making it possible for the British to attack on the north with the objective of capturing and occupying Overloon. Each BC and the Bn S-2 was designated Bn commanders of various units of supporting artillery from the 31st Tank Bn, 17th Tank Bn, 814 TD Bn, 23d Armd Inf Bn, and 87th Rcn Bn. Each of these officers set up a separate fire direction center which was then tied in to the 434th Armd FA Bn FDC. Every one in the Bn felt at this place the enemy would get a dose of artillery he would not forget about in a long time. Missions (mostly registration) 11th October of Bn and supporting units: 30, rounds expended 420.

At 1100 12th October all attached artillery had been registered and fire was to begin at H hour (1208 hours). Fire began at this time and continued until 1400. The mission of the CC was accomplished without casualties. The battalion continued firing harassing and interdiction missions during the afternoon and night. Missions 12th October: Bn 82, attached artillery 105. Rounds expended 12th October: Bn 1794, attached artillery 2159. 6 projectiles filled with propaganda leaflets were also fired. In this barrage the battalion massed the equivalent of 5 battalions of artillery namely 54 105m howitzers, 13 M-4 76 mm guns, 10 M-4 75mm guns, 6 M-4 105mm howitzers 5 M-8 75mm, assault guns, and 12 M-10 3 inch guns.

Orders were received 13 October to repeat barrage of 12th October 1944. This was complied with at 0630. Morale in the battalion was high as a result of knowing that we were hitting the enemy hard and often. At 1400 word was received that the British had captured Overloon and were fighting toward Venray. CC B was given a new mission of establishing a bridgehead over the Deurne canal and then proceeding toward Venray. The 434th was given the mission of supporting this attack with attached artillery. The battalion operations section began planning artillery preparations for this attack. Missions 13th October: 56. Rounds expended 13th October: 777.

Battalion refired the barrage of 13 October at 0800 14 October and continued firing harassing and interdiction fires or selected concentrations. Also fired were more propaganda leaflets. Missions 14th October: 19. Rounds expended 14th October: 275.

Battalion CO returned from CC B on the morning 15th October and called a meeting of BC's and the Bn Staff. He discussed plans for an attack on Deurne canal crossing and Venray by CC B. The battalion with attached artillery will (1) deliver a preparation fire (2) deliver a rolling barrage (3) deliver fires on targets of opportunity. Information was then received that the enemy was withdrawing from the canal and a scheduled attack might begin at any time. The battalion was ready to support this attack though not much firing had been done during the day. Missions 15th October: 9. Rounds expended 15 October: 69.

At 1730 16th October the scheduled attack began without artillery support on orders from the CG, CC B. At 1930 firing was ordered to begin and continued all during the day and night. Missions 16th October; 36. Rounds expended 16th October: 1661.

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The battalion was still in position supporting the canal crossing on the morning of 17th October. All men involved in the firing were tired but ready to continue firing at the enemy. A rolling barrage was fired at 1020 in further support of the attack. The battalion continued firing at 1140 in support of a mission of CC B in clearing road in vicinity of bridge crossing of light enemy resistance. After this mission was completed the battalion was ordered with attached artillery to mass fires with the British 11th Armd Div for attack on Ljsselsteijn¹⁶. The capture of this town was reported at 1500 by the British. Observers and RO's continued to ask for fires the remainder of the afternoon and night. Missions 17th October: 28. Rounds expended 17th October: 2091.

On the morning of 18th October the battalion S-3 was again finding it difficult to fire on targets because of extremely long ranges. The Bn RO was sent forward to survey new position areas for the Bn. This was completed at 1100 and at 1330 the Bn RO took one gun from each Btry to forward positions for registration. The Asst S-3 and Com O were also in this party for the purpose of locating a CP and line routes. The guns were registered at 1430 and the bn began displacing by echelon at 1630. The Bn completed displacing and was in position north of Zijlberg ready to fire at 1930. Bn CO returned from CC B with orders for artillery preparation to be placed on Grindstveen¹⁷ 0730 to 0800 19th October, 23rd Armd Inf would then assault position north of town. The Bn operation sections began preparing concentrations for this firing. Miles traveled during displacement: 2.5. Missions 18th October: 19. Rounds expended 18th October: 838.

The Battalion fired harassing and interdiction fire in the vicinity of Grindstveen on 19th October until 0730 at which time the massed fires of the Bn and attached artillery were directed against Grindstveen for one hour as directed. After this preparation the Inf assaulted and took the town without opposition. The Battalion continued firing the rest of the day on enemy positions east of Grindstveen. Missions 19th October: 29. Rounds expended 19th October: 843. Missions and total rounds expended by the Bn and attached artillery in the campaign for the canal crossing 12-19 October: Missions 1142, rounds expended 20833.

On the morning 20 October orders were received that CC B would be relieved by CC R beginning at 0800. Mission of the Bn was to be in direct support of the 440th Armd FA Bn and be attached to CC R. The Bn fired to repulse a large scale enemy counterattack east of Grindstveen at 1215 and again fired effectively on troops concentrated in this area at 1500. At 2200 the attached artillery was relieved and returned to their organization. Officers of the Bn in charge of these groups returned to the Bn. Firing of interdiction and harassing fires on enemy positions east of Grindstveen was continued. Lt Moore, Bn motor officer, was evacuated because of impaired hearing due to mine explosion referred to previously. Lt Shafer, FO 3, was also evacuated due to battle exhaustion. Missions 20 October: 14. Rounds expended 20 October: 645.

The Bn CO recd instructions 21 October that the Bn would be in direct support of CC R in north sector. The Bn Ln 0 accordingly reported to CC R. During the morning and afternoon the Bn fired effectively on targets of opportunity as received from the observers. Lts McLemore and Davis former observers who had been evacuated due to wounds, returned to the Battalion and were made quite welcome inasmuch as they had made an excellent name for themselves and the battalion by their efficient work with supported elements. During the night interdiction and

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¹⁶ This is the town of IJsselsteijn, also spelled Ysselsteyn, east of Deurne, not to be confused with IJsselstein near Utrecht.

¹⁷ Griendtsveen

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harassing fires were placed on enemy positions east of GRINDSTVEEN. Missions 21 October: 22. Rds expended 21 October: 503.

Interdiction and harassing fires were continued on the morning of 22 October 1944. RO's reported the situation unchanged with not much activity. The CO of C/17th Tank Bn reported to the CP 0830 to implace his tanks in an indirect fire position. These were placed in position and tied into the Bn FDC. A message was received at 1100 that the BR II Corps Comdr Lt Gen Connor would inspect the Bn area on the 23d October. Btrys accordingly shined up a bit so as to be ready for such a high ranking guest. In addition to the Tanks of Co C 17th Tank Bn, assault guns, 105mm, of the 17th Tank Bn were reported to the CP of the Bn and placed in indirect fire position. At 1420 all attached Arty was laid and ready to fire and missions were prepared by the Bn FDC for these guns. A large number of rds were fired at 2230 on a suspected enemy counterattack following an enemy rolling barrage of 105 caliber. However, only an enemy patrol moved in under this fire and withdrew after encountering our forward elements. Interdiction and harassing fires on enemy positions was resumed at 2330 and continued throughout the night.

On 23d October 1944 the Bn was still in position north of Zijlberg, Holland firing on targets of opportunity. Information was received from the RO's that the situation was mostly quiet. However, a great deal of enemy activity was reported by the RO's and air observers and a large amount of fire was placed by this Bn. The morale of the Bn was lifted considerably by the showing of movies in the vicinity of the CP beginning that evening. Movies were shown on nights and mornings for personnel of Hq and Sv Btrys and in the afternoon and evening for personnel of firing Btrys. Enemy Btrys and targets of opportunity were fired on during the night by the Bn and the 774th FA. Missions 23d October: Bn; 41; AG/31, 12. Rds expended: Bn, 1033; AG/31, 72.

The Bn CO ret'd from a unit comdrs meeting on the 24th and assembled Btry Comdrs and Bn Staff to pass on to them the information he had received. After informing them that CC B would relieve CC R on 25 October and that the Bn would be prepared to displace on order, administrative notes were discussed concerning tops of vehicles, Div history book, and reassignment of officers. Reassignment of officers effected: Lt Shively to Btry A, and Lt Smith, P. F. to Btry C. Col Martin, the Div Arty Officer, stopped by and commended the battalion on its work in the current operations, instructing that such commendation be passed on to all EM. Information was sent to the Btrys concerning Div history book and considerable enthusiasm was in evidence throughout the Bn about these books. The Bn CO and Bn RO went forward at 1500 to select new positions areas. The survey of these positions was completed at 1750. The Bn had continued firing all during the day on targets of opportunity, but firing was decreased considerably from the preceding day by lack of enemy activity. Missions 24 October: 27. Rds expended. 24 October: 392.

Very little firing was done on the 25 October by the Bn thru lack of enemy activity except for a few targets of opportunity called for from observers. Morale in the Bn was high due to the fact that most of the men were rested and receiving hot meals. Movies were still being held at the CP and football games between batteries were scheduled and the first game was played in Deurne between Hq and A Btrys in the afternoon. Nights were sometimes spent rather anxiously due to the presence of a few enemy planes and one aircraft generally considered to be a flying bomb. Missions 25 October: 26. Rds expended: 220.

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On the 26th October the Bn fired a preparation for reconnaissance in force by 23rd Inf thru woods SE of GRINDSTVEEN. At 1100 all supporting Arty of 17th Tank Bn was held by corresponding units from the 31st Tank Bn. The morning and afternoon passed rather quietly but urgent fire missions were received from B RO at 1815. Considerable enemy activity was being reported at this time and the Bn was prepared to move on short notice in case of attack by our forces or the enemy. Missions, Bn:, 26 October: 25; AG/31, 1; B/31, 1. Rds expended, Bn, 26 October: 404; AG/31, 7; B/31, 18.

A large amount of enemy activity was reported on the morning of the 27 October. RO's began calling for fire on enemy positions. Counterattacks were being reported and it appeared that the enemy was moving up a large number of troops for an attack. Information was received at 0900 that the enemy had retaken Meijel and that the Bn would be ready to move on call in that direction. Information continued to pour into the CP concerning enemy activity and an air patrol was placed along the canal on orders from the Div Arty Comdr. The Bn CO ordered the Bn RO and BC's to move south to vicinity of Liesel to select and survey new positions. The Bn was instructed to support relief of CC B by elements Br Inf and then displace to vicinity of Liesel. The Bn CO assembled the Bn Staff and BC's and made known to them the seriousness of the situation. The enemy had crossed the Deurne canal in force between HOOGEBURG and Meijel with tanks and had driven our forces from these towns and they were rapidly extending the bridgehead thus gained. CC B had been ordered to move to this area and counterattack the enemy bridgehead. Movement of Bn was discussed and plans were made for Arty support following arrival at new position. The Bn moved out at 2120 and arrived at new position at 2145 traveling 8 miles. Upon arrival at new position all personnel began preparation for a hard fight because it was becoming apparent that the Germans were attacking with a large number of tanks and Inf with objective of overrunning our position.

Preparations were continued on the morning of 28 October 44 for it was rapidly becoming apparent that this fight was to be one of the toughest yet experienced by the battalion and the division. The battalion commenced firing in support of an attack by CC B at 0605 and after the first mission no gun crew in the battalion or the FDC received any rest during the remainder of the day because of fire missions being called for by everyone from, CG CC B to the Btry RO. All ammunition in trains was brought up to the battalion area and gun crews poured round after round into the chambers of their guns. From intelligence reports and reports from FO's and RO's it became apparent in the middle of the day that our forward elements were having a tough time of it and the enemy was attacking on their positions but despite superior numbers the forward elements continued to repel these attacks assisted by fires of the battalion. Ferocity of the fighting did not lessen during the night and the battalion continued firing concentration after concentration on enemy targets including infantry mortars, tanks, and enemy batteries. Heavy enemy artillery fire was landing intermittently in and around the battalion area all during the day and night. An air attack was witnessed by the battalion at 1900. This was the first attack of this sort the battalion had seen since the bombing of Verdun in France and was considerably closer than anything ever experienced.

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But due to excellent black out discipline the battalion area proper received no bombs or strafing. Protective and interdiction fires were prepared by the FDC and sent to Btrys and the 774th FA. All personnel were informed to be especially alert during the night against infiltrating enemy patrols and tanks as the enemy was doing his utmost to penetrate our position. A tremendous amount of firing had been done during the day, the battalion firing 44 missions and expending 1523 rounds of ammunition. The battalion continued firing in the early morning of 29 October and the situation continued to be very serious for all units under the combat command. Fire missions continued to pour into the battalion FDC and the guns of the battalion were never cold during the night of 28 October and the morning of 29 October. All personnel were tired but were ready to continue firing at the enemy because everyone understood the seriousness of the situation. Considerable strength was taken from the enemy attacks on the morning of 29 October by attacking British planes. By 0900 it became apparent that the battalion would have to displace a short distance to the rear because of the nearness of enemy tanks to firing battery positions. All batteries had been firing with only charge one all morning. The battalion CO ordered the battalion to be displaced by echelon and battery and a portion of Hq Btry moved out to new positions 2 1/2 miles NE of ASTEN at 0930. The remainder of the battalion was displaced to this position during the day, but displacement was very difficult due to the fact that fire was being called for continuously. At least two batteries were kept firing at all times however and displacement of the battalion was completed at 1630. The fires of the battalion were being reinforced by British artillery and forward elements were being relieved by elements of British infantry and tanks. The fire was continued in the new position to support this action and interdiction fires was placed on enemy positions all during the night and into the morning of 30 October 44. The howitzer crews of the battalion had had another busy day firing 75 missions and expending 2005 rounds of ammunitions

Two more enemy air attacks were experienced by the battalion during the night of 29 October 44 with several bombs falling in Sv Btry area but again no bombs fell in the battalion area proper. All men remained alert and ready for anything that might develop, because it was made known to all personnel that the enemy force consisted of at least two divisions of tanks and panzer grenadiers. Lt. Jones, "A" Battery, RO was seriously wounded and Tec 4. Hyden was killed in the action of the early morning of 30th Oct. by some short friendly artillery concentrations. This fire however was determined as not having come from our battalion.

Orders were received 30 October 44 that the battalion would move from its present location to an area vicinity of Weert, Holland to support an attack together with other units Div Arty by CC A and CC R on the enemy's southern flank. The battalion moved out at 1100 and arrived at new position north of Weert, Holland at 1350. Route: Asten, Heeze, Marheeze, position. Distance traveled: 26.3 miles, on good roads. Batteries were laid and ready to fire, Bn FDC was set up and all preparations were made for the battalion to begin firing on orders of the Div Arty Comdr. But immediately, following this the battalion CO ordered the battalion to prepare to move out to a new position because the battalion could not accomplish its mission in that area. The leading vehicle moved at 1600 and the battalion cleared into new position south of Weert, Holland at 1635. Route: Weert, position (E590945). Distance traveled: 4.6 miles. After arriving in new area preparations were again made for firing of the battalion in support of the contemplated attack.

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Battalion was registered and harassing fires were placed on enemy positions during the night. Again considerable firing had been done by howitzer crews with 12 missions expending 1094 rounds of ammunition.

After the battalion had been laid and registered on the night of 30 October, firing of harassing and interdiction missions was commenced and continued into the morning of the 31 October. The battalion S-3 began preparation of a fire plan for demonstration by CC B and at an hour to be announced later. A large number of concentrations were plotted and placed on an observed fire chart and an overlay of these was sent to various units of CC B to be called for if and when needed. Most of the men in the battalion had received much needed rest in the present position of the battalion because although considerable firing was in progress the action had slowed down considerably from the two preceding days. All men were given time to take care of themselves and their equipment. A movie was shown at the CP in the evening with a large number of men attending. It was not finished due to a fuse being blown in the projector. The battalion settled down for the night with one thought paramount in every one's mind, "How are the British doing at Liesel".

The battalion had traveled during the month of October 58 miles, and fired 878 missions, expending 21763 rounds of ammunition. This figure did not include missions fired and rounds expended through the battalion FDC by attached artillery and tank units. Casualties for the battalion during the month were fairly light; one man killed in action, one man seriously wounded in action, six slightly wounded in action, one slightly injured in action, three injured (NBC), and 10 sick (NBC). 32 replacements were received during the month and 9 former members of the battalion were returned to duty from various hospitals. Morale remained excellent despite adverse weather conditions, with most of the month being cold and rainy. Action by observers was also curtailed considerably by the weather also. At 2400 31 October the 434th Armored Field Artillery Battalion was in position 1 mile south of Weert, Holland firing at the enemy, ready and willing to continue until the fight was over.

Our unit stayed near the shrapnel-torn village of Vlierden 1 MI SW of Deurne 1 Oct and 2 Oct. During these evenings enemy planes reconnoitering dropped a series of bright flares over the far outlying areas of our positions. 3 Oct unit moved north up toward an allied peninsular strip of land to Ledeaeker through Oploo and St. Anthonis. From 4 to 7 Oct we remained in Ledeaeker where we watched rocket-firing Typhoons blasting at and strafing enemy installations in the vicinity of Overloon. 5 Oct we observed a huge armada of British Lancasters heavy bombers returning from missions over the Arnhem and Nijmegen areas. We witnessed one plane burst in flames from flak over enemy territory. The firing batteries quickened the tempo of their shelling and hurled thousands of rounds of ammo at the enemy from positions in the St. Anthonis area. In the early morning of 8 Oct the enemy stealthily crept up to the roadway traversing Milheeze and Deurne and planted a group of mines. This incident occurred shortly after units of our battalion marched over this route. Tec Sgt Frank Sislo and 1st Lt Gordon E. Moore were left behind the columns to retrieve a disabled vehicle. They were driving a jeep and had just left Milheeze going south when their vehicle struck an exposed mine. The enemy had their guns zeroed in on that point of the road. Sgt. Sislo and Lt. Moore were not fired on. They extricated themselves with light injuries only. Lt. Moore went to Milheeze and solicited help from some British engineer units who came down to clear the mines off the path. Their job was an incomplete one. One undetected mine cost the lives of two of their men. 8 Oct unit shifted back down to 1 MI W of Deurne and paused in that locality until 28 Oct. Enemy activity east of Deurne and especially southeast near the Peel of Helena Canal between 8 and 28 Oct consisted solely of small harassing patrols, skirmishing probing thrusts and ineffective artillery fire. Opposition seemed disorganized in this sector. Their aggressiveness was lukewarm. Alien troops with weak affiliation for Wehrmacht were reported to be fighting against us. Surrender pamphlets were dumped over enemy positions by our artillery. Results from these tactics were negligible. 28 Oct unit shoved down to Asten. Firing batteries established positions east of Asten to engage enemy elements filtered across the canal and dug in near Liesel. Enemy resistance was fierce in this sector. The savageness of their assaults threw our units back 1000 yards. At dusk a Jerry plane strafed and sowed Asten with anti-personnel bombs inflicting a number of casualties. In the afternoon 29 Oct some enemy shells ricocheted and whined over our heads. A few of the armor piercing projectiles dropped in our area. No casualties. Pvt Peter A. Velotta removing the clip from his carbine accidentally discharged it boring a clean hole through his foot. 29 Oct our unit really caught hell. We were unharmed in the first enemy air raid. We got our baptism with the second and last air attack which came at 1040 hours in a clear, cold night. We reeled under this stinging aerial blow. A bright moonlight helped to illumne the targets for the attackers who probably sought to knock out gun emplacements north of Asten. Artillery was wedged in on all sides of us. Our CP was an annex of a

large, two-storied brick warehouse which received a direct bomb hit. The attack though lasting a couple of minutes was furious. The Nazi raiders used a Stuka dive-bomber and 4 ME 109's. One end of the building was completely demolished and turned to rubble. Pfc Freemont Meabon slept a twilight sleep. He miraculously escaped death. He slept under the nose of that bomb. He was showered with debris and spun around. That projectile was so close that it tickled his toes. The only thing Pfc Meabon suffered was a numbing cold standing around too long in his drawers before he could retrieve his senses. In the room adjoining Meabon's slept 6 other men. A dud pierced a neat hole through the roof, cut through the floor above and buried itself only a few feet from the heads of these men. St. Peter was with our boys that night. A large part of our area was raked with anti-personnel bombs. Our casualties were minor despite the intensity of the enemy assault. S/Sgt Joseph E. Evens had his back wrenched from the bomb-concussion. Tec 5 Elmer R. Shepard incurred a severe stomach wound from splintering fragments. 30 Oct unit left for new bivouac 1 MI S of Weert passing through Heeze, Leende, Maarheeze. 31 Oct unit rested in Weert area. Skies were overcast and a light rain fell.

S/Sgt Nicholas W. Zasorin
Unit Historian

Summary of Personnel Data October 1944¹⁸

Losses:

Killed in action	1
Slightly wounded in action	6
Seriously wounded in action	1
Slightly injured in action	1
Injured (Non Battle Casualty)	3
Sick (Non Battle Casualty)	<u>10</u>
Total losses	22

Gains:

Replacement recieved	32
RTD (former men ret'd to duty)	<u>9</u>
	41

Assigned strength 1 Oct 1944	495
Gains	+41
Losses	<u>-22</u>
Assigned strength 31 Oct 1944	514

T/O strength 521 (8 EM short, 1 officer over)

Paul A. Smith
1st Lt, 434 Armd F.A. Bn
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¹⁸ This short page is entirely hand-written.

S E C R E T

HEADQUARTERS
434TH ARMORED FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION
APO 257, U. S. ARMY

2 December 1944

SUBJECT: After Action Report, Month of November 1944.

TO : The Adjutant General, Washington 25, D. C. (Through Channels)

November first the Battalion was in general support of the 4th Armored Brigade (Br) from positions one mile south of WEERT, Holland (590945). Reconnaissance Officers Richards, Bundy, and Shively were attached to dismounted troops astride the WEERT - ROERMOND railroad and highway. Forward Observers Davis and Klein were attached to armored troops and Reconnaissance Officer Groco attached to dismounted troops dispersed along the canal south of WEERT.

At 0730 hours the Commanding Officer, 7th Armored Division Artillery, advised the Battalion Commander that the Battalion would be released from its mission when the 48th Armored Brigade (Br) was relieved by the 158th Welsh Brigade (Br). The Battalion to move to position northeast of WEERT. The Battalion Commander, Battalion Reconnaissance Officer and Battery Commanders left immediately for a reconnaissance of the assigned position area. Relief of the 4th Armored Brigade (Br) was effected 1900 hours and the Reconnaissance Officers and Forward Observers were recalled. The Battalion marched by moonlight on improved roads to positions north of WEERT (5895) without incident. Battalion closed in position 2230 hours. Distance four miles.

After a conference with the Commanding Officer, 7th Armored Division Artillery, the Battalion Commander oriented the battalion staff and battery commanders at the CP. Combat Command "A" was to attack south along the WILLEN CANAL, Combat Command "R" to support the attack from positions west of NEDERWEERT. 489th Field Artillery in direct support Combat Command "A". 440th Field Artillery direct support Combat Command "R". 434th and 774th in general support, reinforcing the fires of the 489th Field Artillery. Liaison Officer to the 489th Field Artillery. Two Reconnaissance Officers to act as Liaison Officers to the 48th and 38th Infantry. Lt Richards and Lt Morse were assigned that mission.

The morning of second November was foggy, but the Battalion was able to fire all missions by applying metro corrections to map data. The fog lifted in the afternoon and the Battalion was registered from the air by Tec 3 Vickers. The Battalion Motor Officer began a 6000 mile maintenance check of wheeled vehicles. One half-track and one jeep to be sent to the maintenance section daily, beginning with vehicles in Headquarters Battery.

During the night of 2-3 November the Battalion assisted in a program of harassing the enemy by fire from single guns or a battery volley every fifteen minutes on likely traffic routes and installations.

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After Action Report, 434th Armored Field Artillery Battalion, Nov 44 (Cont'd)

The third of November the Battalion was used extensively when massed fires of the Division Artillery was placed on enemy strong points in the vicinity of HORIK, HOLLAND. This strong point was reduced, and the supported infantry passed through and continued to the objective, CANAL DU NORD, after which the troops turned to attack MEIJEL to the east. At this time the Division Artillery Commander directed the Battalion to displace to positions east of NUDERWEERT. The battalion Commander, Battalion Reconnaissance Officer, and Battery Commanders went forward on reconnaissance of the new position area.

The intensity of harassing and protective fires was increased the night of 3-4 November due to reported enemy activity on the right flank, south of the CANAL DU NORD. "A" Reconnaissance Officer, Lt Richards, was required by the supported units as an observer and was attached to A/48th Infantry. Lt Morse continued in the role of Liaison Officer with the 38th Infantry.

At 0930 hours 4 November the Battalion moved to selected positions east of NEDERWEERT vicinity of HORID, HOLLAND (631038). The route after crossing the Baily bridge at NEDERWEERT was over unimproved roads through the lowlands. Difficulty was experienced in getting all vehicles into position due to soft soil and the Battalion recovery vehicle was used extensively in pulling vehicles through the soft spots. Additional hazard was the uncleared mine fields. Staff Sergeant Durham, "A" Battery, was seriously injured when his peep struck a mine while on reconnaissance of perimeter defense positions. Battalion closed in positions 1030 hours and registered by the Battalion Reconnaissance Officer from the air 1300 hours. The Battalion resumed firing requests of Divisions Artillery, 489th Field Artillery, and the "A" RO, on enemy positions West of MEIJEL.

The Divisions SSO PX truck arrived in the Battalion area and was sent to each battery area where personnel purchased their allotments of sweets and tobacco. The battalion movie projector was set up in a barn in "B" Battery area and films were shown to small groups of men from A, B, and C Batteries during the afternoon and evenings.

A new experience for the Battalion occurred the night of 4-5 November, when the enemy photographed the area using photoflash bombs. Accordingly an alternate position for the Battalion was selected the following day and swept clear of mines.

Although the attack of the supported units had progressed satisfactorily, it became apparent by the fifth of November that the enemy's indiscriminate use of mines had slowed the attack to a snails pace. Consequently artillery fire was lifted to a bombardment of MEIJEL and all routes leading thereto to impede the movement of enemy supplies and reserves.

The night of 5-6 November harassing and protective fires were directed on enemy approaches from the south and east. "A" RO Lt Richards was relieved by Lt Shively, "A" Asst Ex. Weather became more disagreeable and torrents of rain fell upon an already sodden land making the roads almost impassible and movement of vehicles within the battery positions almost prohibitive. Service Battery was to be commended for their usual service to the Battalion in spite of muddy roads.

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S E C R E T

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After Action Report, 434th Armored Field Artillery Battalion, Nov 44 (Cont'd)

During the day of 6 November reconnaissance elements of British troops appeared in the area and word was received that the Division was to be relieved in this sector. This was confirmed 1900 hours when two billeting officers were directed to report to Division Headquarters. Lt. Smith and Lt. Kettenring were dispatched on this mission.

0900 hours 7 November instructions were received to displace to positions West of NEDERWEERT and support the relief of our troops. The Battalion Commander and Battery Commanders proceeded to the new area on reconnaissance, while the Battery executives reconnoitered for suitable routes out of the positions. The Battalion was ordered to move across the bridge at NEDERWEERT by 1300 hours and began movement in order B - A - C - Hq - Medics - and Bn recovery vehicles at 1045 hours. Movement out of the position was eventful in that a British Spitfire pilot bailed out of his disabled plane in vicinity of "A" Battery's area. The Battalion closed in the new positions vicinity of BOEKET, HOLLAND (597012) and covered the relief of the supported units with continuous fire from single pieces or platoon volleys, during the night of 7-8 November.

The relief of the supported units completed, Reconnaissance Officer Morse and Shively returned to the Battalion the morning of 8 November. The Battalion was directed to move to an assembly position north of WEERT in preparation for a march to a Division Assembly area in the vicinity of MAASTRICHT. The Battalion moved out at 1230 hours and closed in the assembly position vicinity of HUSHOVEN, HOLLAND (578982). Weather continued cloudy and cold with scattered rain. During the campaign for MEIJEL 214 missions were fired expending 6178 rounds.

The ninth of November the Battalion prepared for the march to the Division Assembly position. Vehicles were marked with the convoy number, and serial CO's were briefed as to convoy regulations and the route. The Battalion Commander held a formation and awarded the Silver Star to Capt Irland and Pvt Douglas, and the Purple Heart to T/Sgt Sislo, S/Sgt Rosenkrans, and Sgt Collins; Pfc's Brinkley, Kovensky and Whitis; and Pvts Douglas, Pugh and Whillock. The Battalion moved out 1312 hours in order Hq - C - A - AB - Sv - Med - Maint. The Battalion closed in the Division Assembly area vicinity of GRONSVEL, HOLLAND (589479) at 1730 hours. Route: WEERT, KINROY, MAESEYCK, MAASTRICHT, HEER. Distance: 38 miles. Roads: Improved. Weather: Cloudy and cold. Snow fell for a few minutes during the first minutes of the march.

The 10th and 11th of November was spent in maintenance of personnel, vehicles and weapons. The Battalion movie projector was put into operation, passes were granted to one officer and 15% of the enlisted personnel to MAASTRICHT, and shower bath were available to the unit, personnel being transported in trucks from Service Battery to the shower point. The Battalion Motor Officer located his maintenance section in a barn and the program of 6000 mile maintenance check was continued. The Battalion S - 3 drew up a training plan for the Battalion based on requirements set by S - 3, Division Artillery.

Sunday 13 November marked another new experience for the Battalion, and particularly for Battery "B", when a flying bomb hit in the vicinity of the battery area. The resulting explosion was felt throughout the entire battalion. Fortunately there were no casualties and damage to "B" Battery's command post was confined to shattering of windows. Religious services for both those of Catholic and Protestant faith were held, and scheduled training and maintenance continued in effect.

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After Action Report, 434th Armored Field Artillery Battalion, Nov 44 (Cont'd)

A lecture on military government was held on 13 November, and attended by all Officers and the NCO's of the first three grades. Brigadier General Hasbrouck, the new commanding General of the 7th Armored Division, addressed the assembly as to conduct in Germany. In the afternoon the Battalion area was visited by the Red Cross clubmobile and doughnuts and coffee were served to members of the Battalion. Movies were held in the CP during the evening and a large representation from all Batteries attended.

During the 14th and 15th of November the Battalion continued its scheduled training and maintenance, however the pass policy was regulated by Division Artillery changing the time to read from 1200 to 2030. This change was effected to allow the men to eat the noon meal before departing to Maastricht, where food restrictions were stringent.

At 1330 of the 14th, Lt. Cahill, Battalion Motor Officer, attended a demonstration of the M-1 Treadway, in the vicinity of EYSDEN, HOLLAND, and upon returning, reported the results of the demonstration to the Battalion Commander. Later in the afternoon, at a ceremony held in the CP, the Battalion Commander presented the Bronze Star Medal to the following personnel of the Battalion: Lt. Fitzsimmons, Lt. Ellis, S/Sgt Phillips, Sgt. Brown, Sgt Levites, Tec 4 Frolich, Cpl. Olivieri, Tec 5 Lewis, Tec 5 Brace, Pfc Dailey and Pfc Rams. Certificates of Merit were presented to Sgt. Ealer, Tec4 Garber, Tec 4 Wagner, and Pvt. Motto.

On Wednesday the Battalion CP was visited by Col. Matthews, the new Chief of Staff of the Division. During the day the Battalion Commander presented Bronze Star Medals to Capt. Gaulke and Tec 5 Bagshaw, and was himself presented with the Bronze Star. At 2000 hours the Battalion Commander returned from Division Artillery Headquarters bearing information that the Battalion was to participate in the initial action of the XIII Corps in the GEILENKIRCHEN area. The Battalion Commander directed that the Battalion Reconnaissance Officer in the company of the Battery RO's set out and reconnoiter the Division Artillery Assembly area which was to be in the vicinity of NUTH, HOLLAND. The entertainment program continued with the showing of movies in the CP. However, it is to be noted that the popularity of the cinema increased, with both performances playing to capacity. This may be attributed to the fact that the show place was quite comfortable and the film current.

The 16th of November was notably marked by the visit of Major General Gillem, Commanding General of the XIII Corps. General Gillem in company with General Hasbrouck visited "B" Battery area, where conditions were found satisfactory. The Battalion Commander presented Cpl. Schultz with the Bronze Star Medal. Immediately following the presentation, the Battalion Commander issued orders for a Battery Commander's call. At the call, plans for the projected operation with Task Force Biddle (40th Tank Bn, 125th Cav Rcn Sq Mecz, 113 Cav Rcn Sq Mecs, A/814th TD, C/203rd AAA, 7th Armd Div Arty). Missions: Pass thru elements 84th ID and establish line LIWDERN - BEEK in order to protect a flank. At 1805 hours the Battalion was warned to prepare for march order at 1000 hours on the 17th.

At 1107 hours 17th November the Battalion marched out of Assembly position vicinity GRONSVELD, HOLLAND (589479) too new assembly area vicinity NUTH, HOLLAND (697592), marching in order HQ, A, B, C, Sv, Bn Maint and Medics. Battalion closed in new assembly area at 1330 hours. Route: HEER - VALKENBURG - HULSHUR - NUTH.

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S E C R E T

After Action Report, 434th Armored Field Artillery Battalion, Nov 44 (Cont'd)

Distance: 14 Miles. Roads: Improved. Weather: Cloudy, slight rain.

Prior to the departure of the Battalion, Capt Gaulke, "A" Battery Commander, was evacuated for treatment of a Thyro Glossol Cyst. A Civilian child in the company with Pfc Harville and Pvt Greco were likewise evacuated due to a fuel fire in the "A" Battery area.

The 18th of November the men adjusted themselves to the new experience of being billeted in private homes. This move was motivated by the inclement weather and hospitality of the citizens.

At a BC call the Battalion Commander called attention to a memorandum from the Commanding General, and indorsed by the Division Artillery Commander directing that special care be given to the feet of the personnel of the Battalion. The presence of Trench feet in the command necessitates such caution. The Battalion Commander stressed that frequent checks will be made by the Battery Commanders and the Medical Detachment.

A Division directive discussing military discipline was another subject brought up by the Battalion Commander. There have been too frequent infractions, and in the future they will not be tolerated. Remedial and corrective action will be taken.

During the day the Battalion Commander presented the Purple Heart to Tec 5 Federmack and the Bronze Star Medal to T/Sgt Malecki, Tec 4 Berman, Tec 4 Finkle, and Cpl Willard. At 2000 hours the Battalion Commander returned from a meeting Task Force Biddle with movement order Task Force Biddle.

Sunday 19 November was spent with religious services and maintenance. The Battalion Commander called a BC call in the morning and instructed the BC's as to the function of TF Biddle. Mission of the Battalion: Direct support of 125 Cav Rcn Sq. Btry RO's to observe for A, C, & F Tps. FO Lt Davis to 40th Tank Bn to coordinate fires of 40th Tank Bn on left of 125th Cav Sq. One platoon of A/203 AAA was attached to the Battalion for the contemplated march and one section was assigned to each firing battery.

At 1400 hours the Battalion Commander in company of Lt Shively, "A" Reconnaissance Officer, Lt Chapin, "B" Reconnaissance Officer, Lt Foss, "C" Reconnaissance Officer and Lt McKeon, Battalion Communications Officer departed for Headquarters 125th Cavalry Group for a conference on artillery support for the Cavalry Group. Upon his return the Battalion Commander called for the BC's and discussed with them the progress of the 2nd Armored Division. The Batteries were ordered to hold themselves in readiness for a march order TF Biddle. The Battery Commanders were also instructed to reconnoiter the route to the IP, TF Biddle.

Word was received that Lt. Alton had been presented an Oak Leaf Cluster to his Air Medal at Division Artillery and that Tec 3 Vickers had been approved for the Air Medal.

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After Action Report, 434th Armored Field Artillery Battalion, Nov 44 (Cont'd)

Due to the lack of a suitable site to show the movies, it was decided to allot the Projector to the batteries for individual showings, and in that way the Battalion personnel were entertained.

On Monday 20th of November, the Battalion was still in assembly area awaiting orders to march. Lt. Bundy, "C" Battery, was attached to "A" Battery for the duration of the operation. The Battalion Commander directed the Battalion Reconnaissance Officer to reconnoiter the Battalion area for possible assembly position for other units of the Division.

At 1630 hours the Battalion Commander returned from Division Artillery Headquarters and issued a call for all Battery Commanders to meet at the CP. At the meeting the Battalion Commander declared that due to the success of the attacks in this, and other army sectors there was an indication that Task Force Biddle would be dissolved. The Battalion Commander stated that the remainder of the Seventh Armored Division would assemble in this area and ready themselves to further the success of the Second Armored Division. A Division Memorandum dealing with the awarding of the Certificate of Merit was read by the Battalion Commander, and its import discussed. At the conclusion of the call, Lt. Richards "A" Battery, was presented with the Bronze Star Medal.

The Battalion S-3 was directed to draw up a training schedule which was to be effective the following day.

A training schedule of section training and news orientation was passed on to the Batteries by the Battalion S-3. The orientation lectures were prepared and delivered by the Battalion S-2, Captain Cheek.

During the day the CP was moved to a new location in the village, and it was there that Lt Kettenring, Lt Layton and Tec 3 Vickers were presented with the Air Medal, and Corporals Short, Peairs, and Meade with the Bronze Star Medal.

Showers were found available at the HOENSBROEK MINES, and arrangements were made to transport the personnel of the Battalion to the showers.

At 1130 hours on 22 November, Division Artillery warned all Reconnaissance parties to be available for movement on one hours notice, and once more the stir of impending movement was in the air. However, an hour later Division Artillery canceled its order.

The Battalion continued its training schedule as outlined by the Battalion S-3, and the news orientation lectures were received with enthusiasm.

Special orders from Ninth Army brought the news of the promotion to First Lieutenants of Lt Jones, now evacuated, Lt Chapin, B Battery, and Lt Ellis, C Battery.

S-E-C-R-E-T

S-E-C-R-E-T

After Action Report, 434th Armored Field Artillery Battalion, Nov 44 (Cont'd)

Thanksgiving day services were prepared by Chaplains Barth and O'Brien, with Protestant Services to be held at each battery position, starting at 0830 in Headquarters Battery. Chaplain O'Brien arranged for a Thanksgiving Mass to be celebrated in the village church of NUTH at 0900.

Staff Sergeant Leighton, in a ceremony held at the CP was presented with the Air Medal and Oak Leaf Cluster by the Battalion Commander.

Thanksgiving Day 1944, found the Battalion in a new environment and strange surrounds. The menu remained the same and the traditional turkey plus all the trimmings were served to the Battalion personnel.

At 1500 hours the Battalion was removed from Division Artillery control and placed under the control of CC "B". Liaison with CC "B" was established, and the liaison officer later returned with the composition of forces of CC "B"; Hq CC B, 31st Tank Battalion, 23 Armd Inf Bn, B/38th Inf Bn, C/814 TD, B/33rd Eng Bn, C/33 Eng Bn, 434th Armd FA Bn, and 440th Armd FA Bn. The mission of CC "B" was to be prepared to extend the LINNICH Bridgehead when established by the 102d Inf Div. Information was received that the 40th Tank Bn and A/814 TD were attached to the 2d Armd Div and the 17th Bank Bn was attached to the 84th Inf Div.

Friday, 24 November brought good news to some of the Battalion personnel, when Div Arty informed the Battalion Commander that one officer and 15 enlisted men were to be granted 48 hour passes to PARIS. The Battalion Commander promptly ordered that this information be relayed to the batteries, in addition the Battalion Commander expressly stated that only the most deserving men would be granted passes.

The Battalion plus the 440th and 489th Field Artillery's, plus Batteries A and C of the 203 AAA, were informed that they were once more under Div Arty control, and Div Arty reverts to control of XIII Corps, subject to call.

At 1830 hours the Battalion Commander, was called to unit CO's meeting at Div Arty. On his return, the Battalion Commander had information for the Battalion march to vicinity PUFFENDORF, GERMANY, with the mission of general support XIII Corps Artillery. The Battalion Commander then directed that all Battery Commanders be at the CP at 0745, the following day prepared to go on a reconnaissance of the area.

On Saturday 25 November at 0745, the Bn CO in company with the Bn RO, the Btry commanders and the Bn Com O, set out for a reconnaissance of forward positions in the vicinity of PUFFENDORF, GERMANY. Vehicles were limited to one peep per Battery. Lt. Snyder joined the Battalion and was assigned to Battery A.

In the afternoon, Staff Sergeant Leighton was commissioned Second Lieutenant at a ceremony attended by Brigadier General HASBROUCK, Division Commander and Colonel Martin, Division Artillery Commander. General Hasbrouck presented the gold bars to Lt Leighton.

Sunday 26 November was spent in training and religious services. Lt. Ejar was presented with the Bronze Star Medal at the CP by the Bn CO.

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After Action Report, 434th Armored Field Artillery Battalion, Nov 44 (Cont'd)

In the afternoon, at a Battery Commanders call held at the Battalion CP, the Battalion Commander discussed secrecy of movement among the civilian population, and stressed that effort would be made to maintain security. The Battalion personnel should be ready at all times for a quick march order.

In the evening a Special Service show was held in HOENSBROEK, and many members of the Battalion were in attendance. Movie for the Battalion was held in the Service Battery area.

Monday 27th November the Battalion Commander oriented the Battalion Staff and Battery Commanders. The 7th Armored Division Artillery to move to positions selected in the vicinity of BEGGENDORF, GERMANY to support the attack of the 84th Infantry Division and 40th Tank Battalion to secure high ground in the vicinity of LINNICH, GERMANY. The 17th Tank Battalion to support the attack from indirect fire positions under the supervision of the 434th Armored Field Artillery Battalion. 489th Armd FA Bn in direct support of the 40th Tank Bn. The 434th and 440th Field Artillery Battalions in general support. March details later. Lt Ketterring to forward position to survey battery positions. Lt McLemore, FO, to select and survey position area for the 17th Tank Battalion, Lt Layton, Pilot, to forward positions to locate an air strip. At 1300 hours the Battalion Commander and S-3 were called to CP, Division artillery for final orders and at 1830 hours the Battalion Commander issued his orders to the assembled staff and battery commanders. Battalion to move in order Hq, B, C, A, Med, Sv. Battalion to follow 489th Field Artillery at 25 min interval, head of column pulling out at 0744 hours, 28 November and crossing Div Arty IP at VOORENDAHL 0815 hours. Captain Workman, Liaison Officer, as Liaison to Division Artillery. Captain Cheek, S-2, as march liaison officer to 489th Field Artillery. Route markers to Division artillery IP to be posted by Battalion Executive at head of column.

Tuesday 28 November the Battalion moved out of assembly position NUTH, Holland, and marched to firing positions vicinity BEGGENDORF, GERMANY via NUTH - TENASSCHEN - VOORENHAAL - HEERLEN - WANBACH - RIMBURG - UBACH - GEILENKIRCHEN - BEFFENDORF. Distance: 22 miles. Roads: Improved. Weather: Clear and cold. Battalion arrived in position 0950 hours and registration was begun by Battalion Reconnaissance Officer from the air. Battalion Commander returned from a conference with Division Artillery Commander at 1430 hours and oriented the assembled staff and Battery Commanders. 84th Inf Div to attack 0630 hours 29th November to seize high ground vicinity LINNICH. 40th Tank Battalion to support the attack with direct fire beginning at daylight. Lt Foss, C RO, to Hq 102d Inf as 7th Armd Div Liaison. Mission to keep 7th Armd Div informed as to location of friendly elements. Lt's McLemore and Klein to conduct FDG 17th Tank Battalion. The fire plan of 7th Armd Div Arty was received 2230 hours and the tasks allocated to the batteries and 17th Tank Battalion by Battalion S-3.

Wednesday 29th November the Battalion Commander instructed Battery Commanders B and A to establish CP's at GERONSWEILER and APWEILER due to heavy enemy action. The attack of the 84th was postponed and the Battalion massed fires with the Div Arty on the enemy assembly for an attack.

Thursday 30 November the Battalion Liaison Officer delivered at 0530 hours the fire plan 84th Inf Div Arty for resumption of the planned attack at 0730 hours this attack succeeded in the capture of LINDERN and WELZ by 84th and 102d

S E C R E T

After Action Report, 434th Armored Field Artillery Battalion Nov 44 (Cont'd)

Inf Divisions and the high ground vicinity of LINNICH by the 40th Tank Battalion.

Sgt Peter Van Ecchaute, Belgium Military Mission, was assigned the Battalion by Ninth Army as an interpreter. During the day the Bronze Star Medal was awarded to Lt Kettenring, T/Sgt Guy, T/Sgt Rosenberg, and Tec 3 Vickers.

During the month the Battalion traveled 114 miles, fired 237 missions, and expended 6809 rounds of ammunition. Personnel data for the month: Strength (Officers and Enlisted Men) 514: Gains, replacements 17, R T D's 7, total gains 24; losses, slightly wounded in action 1, seriously wounded in action 1, injured in action 1, on battle casualties 12, total losses 15; strength 30 November 523.

JAMES G. DUBUISSON,
Lt. Col., 434th Armd F. A. Bn.,
Commanding.

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S E C R E T

1, 2 Nov unit encamped 1/2 MI N. Tungalroy, south of Weert. A light rain fell. Thick mists hung over the fields continually. The unit then moved north to 1-1/2 MI SE Maarheeze 3 Nov while the firing batteries shifted around to shell the enemy entrenched in Nederweert. Artillery and infantry assault drove the enemy out of Nederweert back across the canal. From 3 to 5 Nov our unit stayed in the Maarheeze area. Enemy V-1 weapons on the Holland Front were observed for the first time. When the firing batteries pushed across the Nederweert canal into mined positions left by the enemy we advanced to Laar, midway between Weert and Nederweert and remained here till 8 Nov. The Division withdrew from the Nederweert sector 9 Nov and traveled to an area southeast of Maastricht for rest. We bivouacked in the locality of St. Geertruid 10 to 16 Nov. The Flying Bomb traffic over this area grew in intensity. The whirring robots seemed to ride on schedule and in a lane directly over the heads of the troops. The missiles darted by with regularity. As long as the soupy weather lasted the pilotless planes were certain to be heard. The flights of these were checked and we noticed that almost every time they were beamed southeast, probably destined for the city of Liege. One morning (12 Nov) we happened to be watching the progress of a buzz bomb, suddenly its motor cut out, the nose dipped, plummeted down sharply and blasted a deep crater in a vacant beet field off to the edge of our bivouac. The terrific concussion shattered windows of homes more than 500 yards away. Casualties...1 dead crow. We enjoyed another interlude of rest 17 to Nov 27 at Hellebroek. The enemy gave us a little disturbance on 26 Nov at 2300 hours. 4 armed Nazi SS men on some sort of espionage mission interrupted our sleep with a little shooting. Dressed in American uniforms over their German togs with credentials pilfered probably from dead American soldiers, they sped wildly through Hellebroek in a jeep. They were detected in the vicinity of Hoensbroek, fired upon and fled. They dashed through Hellebroek, veered right and headed for Nuth. Their last ride. Alert Dutch Underground halted them. Quick investigation revealed their true identity. 28 Nov the unit moved to the Holland-German frontier town of Rimburch, close to the outer defenses of the already breached Siegfried Line. The Wurm River which cleaves both countries is fortified on the east by a series of bunkers plainly visible from our bivouac. Studded in among these bunkers is the Rimburch Castle now housing American troops formerly occupied by Baron Von Brauvitz. Our unit remained in Rimburch 28 to 30 Nov. Further east inside Germany, the firing batteries stand poised at Beggendorf waiting to thrust forward with other elements of the newly formed US 9th Army. 5 Panzer divisions are massed along the West Wall facing our troops ready to challenge any threat to the highly important industrial Saar Region. The 15th Panzer Grenadiers, the 9th Panzer Division have already been identified. The Germans have mobilized a larger part of their armor in northwestern Germany because he knows he cannot afford to suffer any reverses in the vital Saar Region.

S/Sgt N. Zazorin
Unit Historian

¹⁹ Most of the S and all of the v is obliterated by a hole intentionally punched in the paper. However, it can not be A nor C, since there is a flat bottom line clearly still visible. The fact that the flat bottom has a tail on the left, and the fact that Nicholas Zazorin appeared in the 7th Armored Division Association 2005 roster as member of Service Company confirm that the partially-visible letter was an S and not a B.

S E C R E T

HEADQUARTERS
434TH ARMORED FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION
APO 257, c/o Postmaster, New Your, N.Y.

31 December 1944

SUBJECT: After Action Report, Month of December 1944.

TO : The Adjutant General, Washington 25, D. C. (Thru Channels)

Friday 1 December the Battalion occupied firing position vicinity BEGGENDORF, GERMANY in general support of the 84th Infantry Division. The 17th Tank Battalion which had been placed under Division Artillery control for the purpose of indirect fire was released, and Division Artillery reinforced with massed fires the 40th Tank Battalion who were in support of the 84th Infantry Division.

At 0900, a muzzle burst in Battery "B" wounded Sergeant Pinelli and Corporal Ward, who were evacuated.

Lieutenant Richmond and Private Van Winkle of Battery "B" were presented with the Bronze Star Medal, and Staff Sergeant Kirchner of Battery "C" was presented with the Purple Heart by the Battalion Commander at the CP.

At 1220 hours, while the Battalion was at mess, eight FW 190's circled the area in attack formation, but the heavy antiaircraft fire of two sections of the 203rd AA Bn plus the 50 caliber machine gun fire in the batteries formed a defensive screen through which the enemy did not penetrate. One plane dropped two bombs, but they were wide of their target. As a result of the attack, Technician Fifth Grade Sims and Private Johnson of Battery "B" were wounded. Again at 1720 hours a lone enemy plane flew over the general battalion area, evidently on a reconnaissance, but the alertness of the battalion and the attached AA unit drove the plane away.

At 2130 hours the Battalion Commander returned from Division Artillery with information that the Battalion would displace to forward position to support an attack of CC "B", the mission to secure LINNICH. The Battalion Commander issued orders for the Battery Executive Officers, as the BC's were drawing pay at the rear echelon, to be at the CP at 0830 prepared to go on a reconnaissance for suitable forward positions.

During the 24 hour period 809 rounds were expended on 10 missions. Five missions were fired on enemy counterattacks; three missions on a preparation for attack; one mission on infantry and tanks. Once check point mission was fired, but not accomplished due to poor visibility.

At 0830 hours, 2 December, the Battalion Commander oriented the assembled staff and battery executives on the plan of attack CC "B". CC "B" to move to an assembly area vicinity of GEREONSWEILER, thence to attack and secure LINNICH. CC "B" to attack in two forces, Force Erlenbusch composed of two tank companies and two companies of infantry, Force Rae to be composed of one company of tanks and one company of infantry.

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S E C R E T

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Ltr, 434th Armd () After Action Report, 31 Dec 1944 (cont'd)

The plan of attack to first secure high ground north of LINNICH and then proceed on the town. One company of tank destroyers to prepare dug in positions on high ground east of LINNICH, and support the attack with flanking, direct fire. The 434th Armored Field Artillery Battalion to be in direct support of Force Erlenbusch, the 440th direct support Force Rae, with the 489th in general support. Directly following the orientation, the Battalion Commander, in company with the S-5, Bn RO, Bn Com O and the Battery Executives, set out to reconnoiter positions vicinity GEREONSWEILER.

Information that LINNICH had been taken by elements of the 102d Infantry Division was brought back by the Battalion Commander, notwithstanding the Battalion displaced to the forward positions, in order that effective time fire might be delivered upon request of Division Artillery.

The order to displace was given and the Battalion marched out in order, B, A, C, Hq, Medics, and Bn Rec Veh. Upon arrival at selected positions vicinity APWEILER, the firing batteries moved into position, however the areas selected for Headquarters Battery was found unsuitable. Further reconnaissance found a more suitable location in the vicinity of FLOVERICH. The roads traveled were improved, but were coated with soft mud. Upon arrival the Battalion Commander issued orders that all installations would be dug in and overhead cover provided. These orders were strictly complied with, and many comfortable and protective shelters were constructed.

On 3 December at 0800 hours orders were received from Division Artillery that the 434th Field Artillery Battalion was to emplace the 31st Tank Battalion in indirect fire positions. The Battalion FO's were directed to supervise the indirect fires of companies of the 31st. During the selection and occupation of positions, C/31st lost one tank from mines. At 1800 hours information from Division artillery directed that 31st Tank Battalion would not be used for indirect fire. FO's were ordered to return to the Battalion.

Fifty six rounds were expended on a total of three missions.

At 1300 hours on 4 December the Battalion Commander returned from Division Artillery with information that the Bn would man a forward OP, at coordinates (9506554). The Battalion Executive Officer accompanied by "B" Assistant Executive Officer, Lt Morse, went forward to reconnoiter for a suitable OP. They returned at 1700, and "B" Assistant Executive Officer was directed to man the OP, at daybreak of the fifth.

At evening mess, the enemy shelled the area of Headquarters Battery, with several landing in the vicinity of the kitchen truck. As a result of the action, Pfc Adkins and Pvt Stockton were lightly wounded.

During the period 4-5 December, 68 rounds were expended on two missions from Division Artillery.

G-1 initiated a pass policy, whereby two percent of the command would be transported to HEERLEN, where shower facilities and entertainment were available. The policy to continue in effect until cancelled by higher headquarters.

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S E C R E T

S E C R E T

Ltr, 434th Armd FA Bn, After Action Report, 31 Dec 1944 (Cont'd)

The Battalion was still in firing position vicinity FLOVERICH, GERMANY, 6 December, under Division Artillery control, firing all missions on call. At 1300 hours, the Battalion Commander returned from Division Artillery and issued a call for BC's to be at the CP at 1500 hours. At the meeting the Battalion Commander reoriented the BC's on the plan of attack CC "B", which had been previously discussed. There was a resume of recent intelligence reports, and at the conclusion of the meeting Lt Fitzsimmons was presented with his Captain's bars by the Battalion Commander.

Two hundred and six rounds of ammunition were expended on 7 missions, targets from Division Artillery.

At 0500 hours on 7 December, Pfc's Mayer and Forbes of Battery "A" were found dead in their dugout, which had caved in. Investigation showed that the deaths were accidental, caused by the shifting of the earth due to heavy rainfall and earthquakes from heavy artillery fire.

Staff Sergeant Phillips and Staff Sergeant Kirchner left the Battalion on temporary duty to the United States. The first two men to return under a quota assigned to the Division. Information from Division indicates that the policy will continue, with a quota assigned each unit every month.

The Battalion Commander returned from Division Artillery at 1630 hours, and to an assembly of the staff at 1800 explained in detail the plan of attack CC "B". CC "B" was to attack BRACHELEN in two forces. Force Erlenbusch, composed of 31st Tank Battalion, 23rd Armored Infantry and "B" Company of the 33d Engineer Battalion, to attack east from defiladed assembly area two miles west of BRACHELEN, the proceed north. Force Fuller, composed of the 38th Infantry Battalion to attack from a defiladed position south of BRACHELEN, then turn north. 434th Armored Field Artillery Battalion in direct support of Force Erlenbusch, and 440th Armored Field Artillery in direct support Force Fuller. Corps Artillery to assist in preparation on all known active enemy batteries, and four TOT's on phase lines in the town. Total artillery amounted to 2 Battalions of 4.5's, 2 Battalion 155's and 1 Battalion 8" plus 1 additional Armd FA Bn, the 83rd. This maneuver to be effected on Corps order when the dams at DUREN were secured or destroyed.

Information from Division artillery authorizing PARIS passes to 2 officers and 22 EM from the Battalion was received at 1800 hours. These passes to be effective at 1300 hours 9 December.

Seven missions were fired, with an expenditure of 189 rounds on enemy trucks, tanks, and infantry. Registration on Check Points 1 and 2 and a Base Point registration were included.

At 1115 hours 8 December, enemy aircraft flew over the general area, and were met with exceptionally heavy antiaircraft fire. Reports indicated that one of the attacking aircraft was shot down in the vicinity of APWEILER.

1730 Hours the Battalion Commander and Battalion Executive returned from Division Artillery, bringing with them the fire plan from Division Artillery S-3. This plan was immediately given to the Battalion FDC, who worked out the Battalion fire plan and passed it on to the batteries.

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S E C R E T

S E C R E T

Ltr, Hq 434th Armd FA Bn, After Action Report, 31 Dec 1944 (cont'd)

At 0900, the 9th December, the Battery RO's were called to the CP, where the Battalion Commander discussed the projected plan of operations, which had been previously outlined. A new plan of attack for Infantry - Tank combinations was brought to the attention of the RO's, since it would in a like manner affect their operating procedure. The Infantry would ride to the assault line in half-tracks and there dismount for the attack. The RO's to perform in the same manner. The tanks to assist any half-track which becomes bogged in the mud.

During the period 10-11 December, although enemy artillery activity continued, the Battalion was inactive awaiting orders to proceed with the planned attack CC "B".

It was also during this period that Division Artillery instituted a recreation camp policy, whereby 70 EM from each of the Artillery Battalions would be transported to EIGELSHOVEN, HOLLAND for a short period of rest and recreation. The policy provided for the quartering of the men in civilian homes, showers and other facilities of a recreational nature to be made available, with Division Special Service providing the entertainment. The problem of mess and administration to be shared equally by the three Battalions. Prior to final approval by the Battalion Commander, a Battery Commanders call was ordered to discuss the policy and also to ascertain whether or not the number of men eligible would incapacitate the effectiveness of the Batteries. A favorable decision was reached and final plans were completed.

The 13 to 15 December was spent in comparative quiet, there was very little firing with the exception of a few TOT's fired on the town of BRACHELEN. The enemy sporadically shelled our installations without any damage, the shelling amounting to nuisance value. On the 14 December, Artillery Annex No. 9 to Operations Instructions No. 7, 7th Armored Division was received. The XIII Corps to attack on H Hour D Day in conjunction with the British XXX Corps, the towns of MELLENDORF, WURM, and BRACHELEN. The 7th Armored Division Artillery plus its attachments to support CC "B" whose mission was to seize BRACHELEN. The 434th Armd FA Bn in direct support of the right column CC "B". The 489th Armd FA Bn, the 83rd Armd FA, 40th Tank Bn, the 472nd FA Group, 814th Tank Destroyer Bn minus "C" Company 82nd Chemical Bn in general support of the attack.

On 16 December at 0500 hours there was exceptionally heavy artillery fire on all friendly positions, and the enemy counterattacked in an effort to take the towns of WURM and LINDERN. However, the enemy counterattack was repulsed and part of the counterattacking force was encircled in the vicinity of WURM.

Later in the afternoon the Battalion Commander returned to the Battalion from Division Artillery, where he had received orders from the Artillery Commander to prepare for a march to the First Army sector where the enemy was attacking in force. At a Battery Commanders call the situation was explained as far as possible. The Enemy had struck the American VIII Corps composed of the 2nd, 28th, and 106th Infantry Divisions in the vicinity of ST. VITH, BELGIUM and was rapidly gaining momentum.

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S E C R E T

S E C R E T

Hq 434th Armd FA Bn, After Action Report, 31 Dec 1944 (cont'd)

The 7th Armored Division to march in two columns to assembly positions where its elements would form to stem the advance of the enemy. At the conclusion of the call, the Battalion Commander ordered the Battery Commanders to prepare their respective commands for a march order which would take place on the next day, details of the march would be disseminated as soon as received from the Artillery Commander. The Battalion RO was dispatched with advance detachments Division Headquarters to select the Battalion assembly area.

At 0600 hours on the 17th December the Liaison Officer arrived at the CP with Operations Instructions, 7th Armored Division Artillery, stating that Division Artillery would march to positions vicinity VIELSALM, BELGIUM. Artillery to march in order: 440th, Headquarters Battery Division Artillery, 434th, and 489th. The 434th to cross the IP at 1200 hours, route of march GEILENKIRCHEN, AACHEN, EUPEN, MALMEDY, ST. VITH and VIELSALM. The Battalion S-3 and Battery Reconnaissance Officers were dispatched at 0900 hours to select position areas, the Battalion S-3 to contact the Battalion RO who had left the night before with the Division Billeting Party.

The Battalion cleared position area in vicinity FLOVERICH, GERMANY at 1130 hours in order C, A, B, Hq, Sv, and Medics, crossing the IP at 1155 hours on its march to First Army sector.

On arriving vicinity MALMEDY, information was received that enemy tanks were at WAINES, 6 miles east of MALMEDY. The column was then turned west at MELMEDY with instructions to proceed to STAVELOT thence to VIELSALM. Traffic congestion at STAVELOT delayed the columns of Division artillery and rendered it vulnerable to tank attack. It was then decided to turn the column back to VERVIERS and intersect the 7th Armd Div west route then through STAVELOT to VIELSALM.

As darkness descended, the columns were still moving through dangerous territory in a blackout march which was unprecedented in the Division's history. The march was over mountainous roads made more hazardous by traffic congestion caused by the movement of service troops of the First Army to the rear areas. Several vehicles were cut off from the column due to road failures and misdirection. At 0900 hours the Battalion completed the final phase of its march through roads choked with withdrawing vehicles and occupied position vicinity VILLE DU BOIS, BELGIUM. Communication H/T, Maintenance 3/4 ton, and wire peep from Headquarters Battery plus the parts trucks, wrecker, ration truck, water truck, and ambulance were reported as not yet closed into the Battalion area. The Battalion immediately started firing on targets of opportunity and enemy installations. Lt Klein was dispatched to the 17th Tank Battalion as forward observer, the Battery RO's were dispatched to elements of the 14th Cavalry and 23rd Infantry, who had established a defensive line vicinity of PETITE THEIR. Lt Davis was sent out to establish contact with CC "B", via a southern route at ST. VITH.

At midnight the battalion was still in firing position, having fired 237 rounds on 11 missions.

Tuesday 19 December saw the return of the missing vehicles to the Battalion. The Battalion Commander and Battery Commanders went forward to reconnoiter firing positions in the vicinity of CROMBACH, BELGIUM.

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S E C R E T

Ltr, Hq 434th Armd FA Bn, After Action Report, 31 Dec 1944 (Cont'd)

Enroute Lt Davis who had been dispatched to make contact with CC "B" was met and led the party into CROMBACH, where positions were established. At 1645 hours the battalion closed into position vicinity CROMBACH. Route: VILLE DU BOIS - VIELSALM - BEVIGNY - MALDIGEN - CROMBACH.

At 1905 hours the Battalion Commander called for a meeting of the Staff, Battery Commanders, and Observers to explain the situation and stress the importance of the mission. CC "B" to occupy positions around ST. VITH, with the 434th Armd FA Bn in direct support of CC "B", coordinating the fires of the First Army Artillery, composed of the 275th Armd FA Bn and the 965 FA (155 mm Howitzer) located at HINDERHAUSEN and BRAUNLAUF respectively. Upon completion of the orientation the Battalion Commander assigned Lt Morse to the 38th Armd Inf Bn, Lt P.F. Smith to 87th Ron, Lt Bundy to 81st Combat Engrs, Lt's Davis and Klein to B and C of 31st Tank Battalion and Lt's Shively, Chapin and Foss to A, B, & C, 23rd Armd Inf Bn. Observers to return to their units to check their vehicles and communications to await guides to their supported units. At the close of the day all observers were in position with the supported units and had indicated protective fires. Information was received that the enemy was active in the rear areas, establishing road blocks at vital points on the Main Supply Route.

It was apparent that the supply situation was reaching a critical stage at this period, with all elements of CC "B" in dire need of ammunition and gasoline. Lt McLemore was dispatched to Service Battery with orders to bring up gasoline and ammunition. While enroute to Service Battery, Lt McLemore met Sgt Clark who was leading a party of four trucks of ammunition, and gave him the necessary information for locating the battery positions which he did at 1100 hours. At 1800 Lt McLemore returned to the battalion area with the gasoline section and ammunition after encountering small arms fire in the vicinity of SAMREE.

During the day the battalion and the companion Field Artillery battalions fired considerably on enemy positions in vicinity ST. VITH, repulsing enemy counterattacks which were growing in strength. At the end of the day 2439 rounds of ammunition had been expended on 71 missions, of all descriptions. Word was received that a road block had been established by the enemy at SAMREE with the result that Trains were cut off.

Information had been received from Division Artillery on the 20th December that the battalion should be prepared to operate for three days without resupply. As the food supply was running low in the battalion, it was decided that the Battalion Executive with Ammunition Tracks from A and C Batteries would set out for GOUVY to secure food at an abandoned Class I dump, which mission was accomplished and the battalion was resupplied with food.

At 1100 hours, 21 December the Battalion Recovery Vehicle departed for Division Artillery to received instruction for the recovery of abandoned 8" guns of the 740th FA Bn in the vicinity of POTEAU. Under direction of Mr. Wallbaum, the guns were removed despite mortar and small arms fire from the enemy.

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S E C R E T

S E C R E T

Ltr, Hq 434th Armd FA Bn, After action Report, 31 Dec 1944 (Cont'd)

At 1530 hours the Battalion Commander directed that the Battalion Executive and Battalion Rcn Officer set up the equivalent of a Fire Direction Center, inasmuch as our own Fire Direction Center could not efficiently operate its own FDC as well as the Group. This was accomplished at 1600 hours and the Group Fire Direction Center began its function. Communication was established with 9th Armored Division Artillery and fires coordinated on an enemy attack at the Division boundry²⁰.

All during the day reports indicated that the enemy was gathering his forces for an assault against CC "B" positions, and attack after attack was turned back by the massed artillery fires of the Group. At 2200 hours Lt Morse returned to the battalion on foot after having been forced from his OP by enemy action, first having destroyed his radio with his pistol. At midnight the Battalion Commander called together the Staff and Battery Commanders and informed them that the situation was critical, and that due to the vigor of the enemy's attacks on ST. VITH, the only alternative left was to prepare for a retrograde movement. Upon order Battery "B" would displace to positions in the vicinity of MALDIGEN and cover the withdrawal of Headquarters, A, and C to positions to the vicinity of COMMANSTER. The attached 965th and 275th Field Artillerys would displace to firing positions in the vicinity of COMMANSTER in that order.

At 0100 hours the 22nd December a message from the Artillery Commander instructed the Battalion Commander to send an agent to him for instructions, and also a guide to the 440th Armored Field Artillery Battalion vicinity of SALMCHATEAU for four trucks of precious ammunition. At 0500 the Battalion Executive and Lt Morse departed from the Battalion on the assigned missions.

Battery "B" displaced on orders at 0630 to firing positions previously arranged, and the start of the withdrawal of Armored elements CC "B" was begun. The CG CC "B" instructed that the armor of CC "B" fall back to a line HINDERHAUSEN-CROMBACH, while a small task force of tank destroyers and dismounted troops deployed south of the railroad²¹ vicinity of CROMBACH. The remaining elements of CC "B" to withdraw through this line and assemble in the vicinity of BRAUNLAUF. Following the displacement of Battery "B", the Battalion S-2 and Asst S-3 set out for COMMANSTER to set up Fire Direction Center, which would take over when the remainder of the Battalion displaced, following them in order the 965th and 275th Field Artillery Battalions displaced. The remainder of the Battalion began to displace at 1030 and was completed at 1100 when the last vehicle of Headquarters Battery cleared the town.

The Battalion closed into firing positions vicinity COMMANSTER, BELGIUM at 1300, and with the closing of the Battalion, the ammunition trains began arriving with sorely needed ammunition and the shortage was relieved²². The Battalion Commander then instructed Lt Shively to observe for tank destroyers and dismounted elements then south of the railroad at NEUNDORF. Lt Foss was dispatched to the 17th Tank Battalion as observer with the tank and communication furnished by the 17th Tank Battalion

Information was received from the Artillery Commander at 1305 that the displacement of the 275th and 965th Field Artillery's to vicinity of VIELSALM would be controlled by the Division Artillery S-3. This information was passed on to the Liaison Officers 275th and 965th and displacement of those organizations was begun.

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S E C R E T

²⁰ This spelling is as in the original.

²¹ This spelling is as in the original.

²² This spelling is as in the original.

S E C R E T

Ltr, Hq 434th Armd FA Bn, After Action Report, 31 Dec 1944 (Cont'd)

Later in the day the Battalion Commander issued a call for the Staff and Battery Commanders to assemble at 2000 hours at the CP. At the call the Battalion Commander alerted the Battalion for an impending march order which would place the Battalion in firing positions west of the SALM RIVER, presently defended by the 82nd Airborne Division. The Battalion to reinforce the fires of the 440th Armd FA BN at SALMCHATEAU, who were in direct support of Task Force Jones at BOVIGNY, to cover the withdrawal of elements of the 7th Armd Div, 106th Inf Div, 9th Armd Div, and the 28th Inf Div. At the conclusion of the call the Battalion Reconnaissance Officer was dispatched to select and survey positions in the vicinity of SALMCHATEAU. At 2400 march order was given for elements east of the SALM RIVER. The mission of the 434th Armd FA Bn to cover the rear guard of CC "B" composed of elements of the 87th Reconnaissance and 31st Tank Battalion. Battery "B" to remain in firing position until relieved by the covering force. The Battalion to march in order C, A, Hq, and B. The alternate plan in event that positions at SALCHATEAU were untenable provided for occupation of positions in the vicinity of LA CHAPELLE.

Prior to the Battery Commanders call, word was received that Lt Bundy, "A" Asst Ex was missing in action along with his driver Pvt Mann. Lt Shively "A" RO who had been dispatched earlier in the day as an observer was killed in action vicinity of CROMBACH. Lt Shafer, Sv Btry, was lightly wounded in action, and evacuated, while leading a column of ammunition trucks.

On 23 December at 0745, Lt Davis and Lt Klein who had been with B and C of the 31st returned to the Battalion. Lt Klein's tank was knocked out by direct fire of the enemy. Cpl Campbell, gunner of FO #3 Tank was seriously wounded and evacuated, while Lt Davis and Lt Klein and Tec 4 D'Andrea were lightly wounded in action.

At 0935 hours the Battalion displaced from positions vicinity of COMMANSTER as the enemy closed in. Battery "A" Command Track fell out as a road failure, and after all essential equipment had been evacuated, was destroyed to prevent falling into the hands of the enemy. The march was well disciplined and made without confusion, a tribute to the leadership provided by CC "B". At 1200 the Battalion closed into positions at HIERLOT due to the fact that positions at SALMCHATEAU were under fire, however at 1530 the Battalion displaced to more suitable positions vicinity LA CHAPELLE due to the inadequacy of supply routes at HIERLOT. The complete march was made over improved highways under excellent weather conditions.

Sunday 24 December found the Battalion in position when orders were received from the Artillery Commander to dispatch one FO and one RO to Force Carlson at MANHAY. Lt McLemore and Lt Snyder were assigned the mission and set out from the Battalion at 0800.

During the day there was considerable aerial activity both friendly and enemy. Several enemy planes flew over the area at low altitude, but were driven off by the fire of the 203rd AA.

Upon the return of the Battalion Commander from Division Artillery, where he had been called earlier in the day, the Battalion was alerted for a march order to positions vicinity FAGNE, where the fires of the 489th Armd FA Bn, who were then in direct support of CC "A", would be reinforced by the Battalion.

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S E C R E T

S E C R E T

Hq 434th Armd FA Bn, After Acton Report, 31 Dec 1944 (Cont'd)

CC "A" to defend MANHAY. At 1800 hours the Battalion displaced from its position at LA CHAPELLE and closed into its new position at FAGNE, BELGIUM at 2100 hours travelling 13 miles blackout over improved highways under excellent march conditions.

At 2200 hours the Battalion Commander briefed the assembled Staff, Battery Commanders and Observers on the seriousness of the present situation. The enemy had launched an attack on MANHAY driving elements of CC "A" back to a line south of MANHAY. CC "B" assumes control and reorganizes the defenses of the 7th Armd Div sector. The forces of CC "B" will be disposed for the defense with the 23rd and 38th Armd Inf Battalions situated east of the WERBOMONT-MANHAY Road, north of MANHAY, and elements of the 106th Inf east of the road. Road blocks to be established 4 miles NW of MANHAY, with two platoons of the 38th Inf and B/31st acting in that capacity. Lt Klein as observer for the 31st and Lt Snyder for the two platoons of the 38th Inf. Lt Morse and Lt Smith to the 23rd Inf, Lt Davis, Lt Foss, and Lt Chapin dispatched to road blocks established according to overlays received from CC "B". Information was received that Lt McLemore's tank had been knocked out by infiltrating enemy infantry. Lt McLemore and crew escaped unhurt.

Christmas²³ day 1944 loomed drearily for the forces of CC "B", with the information that the enemy had moved into MANHAY. The situation eased somewhat when plans for a counterattack were made known to the Battalion Commander. The counterattack to take place at 1400 with C/23rd supported by elements of 40th Tank Bn to attack south. B/31st with a platoon of the 38th to attack southeast. At 1400 the attack was effected, guided by Commanding General CC "B", from a Bn Ln airplane. The attack was supported by the 7th Armd Div Arty plus 275th and 229th FA and XVIII Corps Artillery. At 1700 word was received that the attack had been successful and MANHAY had been secured. At 1900 the enemy counterattacked and massed defensive fires by the artillery repulsed the enemy.

At the conclusion of the day, Lt Chapin and Lt Foss were no longer required as observers at road blocks and returned to the battalion. 1627 rounds were expended in 41 concentrations including preparation fires and repulse of enemy counterattacks.

The situation had stabilized to a great extent 26th December, and the Battalion fired on targets sent from Division Artillery, including the repulse of an enemy counterattack at 0800. On an inspection of OP's the Battalion Commander reassigned Lt Davis as RO for the 38th Armd Inf Bn.

Warning message from CC "B" altered the Bn to be suspicious of all vehicles, due to the infiltration of the enemy into our lines. As a result, all guards were instructed to halt all vehicles and ascertain the identity of the occupants.

At the time, elements of the 7th Armd Div and 106th Inf Div consolidated defensive positions at MANHAY. A paratroop combat team finally secured MANHAY, supported by 7th Armd Div Arty plus attachments.

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S E C R E T

²³ This spelling is as in the original.

S E C R E T

Hq 434th Armd FA Bn, After Action Report, 31 Dec 1944 (Cont'd)

At 0800 the enemy initiated a counterattack on MANHAY, and once more the massed artillery fires of Corps repulsed the enemy. Then at 1000 hours the 424th CT of the 106th Inf in combination with the 38th Armd Inf attacked to secure positions on the East-West road through MANHAY. The attack was a success and the positions secured with the fires of Corps Arty supporting the attack.

Following the attack Lt Foss and Lt Morse were relieved²⁴ as observers from positions east of the WERBOMONT-MANHAY road, the relief effected by the Artillery Commander who ordered that observation be coordinated by the 489th Armd FA Bn who assigned observers of the 275th FA the mission.

At 1600 replacements for those vehicles which had been lost in the recent action of ST. VITH began arriving in the Battalion. The Battalion was gradually recouping its losses with one half-track and two FO Tanks yet to be replaced.

At the close of the day the Battalion was still in position holding the defensive lines CC "B", which had now stabilized. During the 24 hour period 1462 rounds were expended on 27 missions including several TOT's from Division Artillery plus check rounds for protective fires sent in by the observers.

The period 28th through 30th of December brought little activity from the enemy. All artillery fire was massed on possible and known enemy assembly positions, thus denying the enemy positions from which to attack our forces in this sector.

At 1445 hours 29th December the Battalion Commander returned from Div Arty with information that the 75th Inf Div was to effect a relief of elements of the 7th Armd and 106th Ind Div operating in the MANHAY sector. Inasmuch as the relief was to be effected at night, it was decided by the Arty Comdr that the 291st CT of the 75th Inf Div would be supported by the 7th Armd Div Arty, until their organic Arty was established and able to carry the load. The 75th would be disposed with the 3rd Battalion west of the highway, 1st Battalion east of the highway. The 434th Armd FA Bn reinforcing its fire. The 489th FA Bn in direct support of the 1st Battalion with 275th Armd FA Bn reinforcing its fires, and the 229th FA Bn in general support. Accordingly, Observers Lt Klein and Lt Chapin were placed with supported elements 291st CT. Lt Davis with 38th Inf relieved.

The 30th December saw the 7th Armd Div and 106th Inf Div relieved²⁵ by the 75th Inf Div in front line positions. Div Arty remained in general support of the 75th Div while the remainder of the Division withdrew to the rear areas for reorganization. Lt Chapin and Lt Klein relieved by Lt Morse and Lt McLemore.

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S E C R E T

²⁴ This spelling is as in the original.

²⁵ This spelling is as in the original.

S E C R E T

Hq 434th Armd FA Bn, After Action Report, 31 Dec 1944 (Cont'd)

The last day of the year provided very little activity, due to the complete stabilization of the situation in the MANHAY sector and the assignment of the 7th Armored Division Artillery to general support of the 75th Infantry Division. A program of heavy maintenance work was sorely needed within the Battalion was initiated by Service Battery, and artillery pieces were inspected by 7th Armored Division Ordnance.

During the month of December the Battalion expended a total of 15,260 rounds, bringing the total expenditure for the year, since our commitment on August 14 to a total of 56,150 rounds.

Summary of personnel data for the month: Replacements, 2; RTD's, 10; Killed in Action, 1; Missing in Action 3; Slightly wounded in action, 1; Non battle casualty deaths, 2; Seriously wounded in action, 1; Non battle injuries and sickness, 10; Total gains, 12; Total losses, 24. Present strength: 30 officers, 2 Warrant officers, 478 enlisted men. During the month of December the Battalion traveled a total of 167 miles.

(signed)
JAMES G. DUBUISSON,
Lt Col, 434th Armd FA Bn,
Commanding.

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S E C R E T

HEADQUARTERS
434TH ARMORED FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION
APO 257, c/o Postmaster, New York, N.Y.

31 January 1945

SUBJECT: After Action Report, Month of January 1945.

TO : The Adjutant General, Washington 25, D. C. (Thru Channels)

News Years Day 1945, the Battalion was in firing position vicinity FAGNE, BELGUIM (526978), the 7th Armd Div Arty having the mission of reinforcing the fires of the 75th Inf Div Arty during the relief of 7th Armd Div by 75th Inf. Div. The Battalion was alerted for any possible counter moves of the enemy and maintained constant observation at a post set up at the CP of the 3rd Battalion, 291st Inf. Regt. Supplies were requisitioned, particularly chemical warfare equipment, which was found lacking following a survey of the Battalion.

Two Focke-Wulf 190s flew over our area and the adjoining friendly areas, but again the fire of the attached 203 AA Bn drove the enemy away. The holiday dinner was served late in the afternoon and was followed by religious services held in the Medical Detachment billets.

Tuesday 2 January word was received that shower facilities were to be available for the men of the Battalion at CHANXHE. The Battalion S-4 was directed to supply one truck per battery to accomodate the transportation needs of the Battalion. Tec 3 Best, Medical Detachment, was presented with the Bronze Star Medal by the Bn CO at the CP.

Word was received from the Battalion S-4 that woolen clothing would not be requisitioned until a check was made of the Battalion duffle bags. Accordingly, the Battery Supply Sergeants plus one assistant were directed to depart for MASTRICHT where all duffle bags would be searched for woolen clothing, the supply party left at 040800 January. Meanwhile those vehicles requiring ordnance work was directed to Maintenance Control Point located at LOUVEIGNE, where the necessary repairs would be effected. There were no rounds expended during the 24 hour period and there was a lessening of enemy activity in our sector.

At 0900 hours 3 January the Battalion Executive accompanied by one officer from each Battery departed on a reconnaissance of CC "B" assembly area positions. The Battery Commanders acting on instructions previously received departed for WERBOMONT to pick up payroll for payment of troops. March order was received from Division Artillery, and Capt Werkman, Liaison Officer to 3rd Bn, 291st Inf and Lt. Snyder, observer, were recalled to the Battalion. At 2000 hours at a Battery Commanders call, the Battalion Commander informed them that march order had been given by Division Artillery. Battalion would march in order A, Hq, B, C, and Medics, crossing the IP at WERBOMONT at 040930 January.

Ltr, Hq 434th Armd FA Bn, After Action Report, Month of Jan 45 (Cont'd)

The Batteries would be assigned those areas designated by the Bn Ex, who would proceed to the new area at 040830 Jan, accompanied by Btry guides.

On Thursday 4 January at 0920 hours the Battalion displaced from positions vicinity FAGNE, BELGIUM (526978) to assembly area CC "B". The Battalion crossed the IP at 0930 hours, and closed into positions vicinity BOSSON, BELGIUM (538011) at 1330 hours, having traveled 2.7 miles over highways covered with ice and through a rather heavy snowfall. At 1500 hours the Battalion area was visited by Commanding General CC "B", Brig Gen Clark, who inspected the Battalion installations. Lt Davis was presented with the oak leaf cluster to the Purple Heart by the Battalion Commander at 1600 hours.

Information was received from Division Artillery that the Battalion had received a quota of 2 men for temporary duty in the U.S. Sgt Ealer, Hq Btry and Tec 5 Runke, Btry "A" were selected and departed the Battalion at 1700 hours. During the 24 hour period 345 rounds of ammunition were expended on harassing and interdiction fires on possible enemy positions.

The air section which had been located at HARRE, BELGIUM moved to an air strip vicinity Hq 7th Armd Div at ST. ROCHE on 5 January. Low visibility and ground haze prevented the section from joining the Battalion in its position.

At 0915 hours at a Battery Commanders call several points of a general nature were discussed. The Battalion Commander emphasized particularly that only water from the engineer water points would be used. Equipment would be cleaned and there would be no wastage of equipment. Personnel would be clean shaven and hair cuts obtained by all who need them. The Battery Commanders were also instructed to pass on to the troops the spirit of the offensive and in turn the Division Memorandum referring to the Division stand at ST. VITH would be read. Security was another point which was stressed, all men would be warned to be especially alert in the rear areas due to the infiltration tactics employed by the enemy. Immediately following the BC call, the Bn Comdr instructed the Bn S-3 to draw up a training schedule dealing specifically with points detailed in a directive from Division Arty S-3. This was complied with a Battalion training schedule was put into effect.

Arrangements were made with the Bn S-4 to have one truck assigned to each Battery to provide transportation to the shower point located at ROMSEE. This was accomplished and the entire Battalion availed themselves of the opportunity - meanwhile Lt Davis acting in the capacity of Special Service Officer made preparation to show movies to the Battalion. The projector which was in Service Battery was brought forward and movies were shown in a school building adjacent to Hq Btry area. Information received that Tec 5 Runke had been awarded the Silver Star at the Rear Echelon prior to his departure for the U.S.

Ltr, Hq 434 Armd FA Bn, After Action Report, Month of Jan 45 (Cont'd)

The Silver Star was presented to Lt Paul F. Smith and a Purple Heart to Cpl Stack and Pfc Van Winkle.

At 1800 hours a message from Division Artillery directed that the Battalion Gas Officer and NCO would attend a refresher course on defense against chemical warfare. Lt Kettenring and Sgt Mueller were directed to attend.

The Battery supply sections returned from MAASTRICHT and made available to the personnel the woolen clothing obtained from the duffle bags.

The training schedule instituted by the Battalion S-3 continued and classes were conducted throughout the Battalion. Due to inclement weather, the classes were held indoors and were confined to chemical warfare lectures, demonstrations, and drill, with news orientation a popular feature.

At 1430 hours in a ceremony held at CP, Bronze Star Medals were presented to WOJG Wallbaum, Cpl Stack and Pvt Werner. Tec 4 D'Andrea and Tec 5 Huss were presented the Order of the Purple Heart.

The replacement for FO2 tank was received, bringing up to strength all vehicle casualties sustained by the Battalion during the ST. VITH operation.

The Bn Comdr who had departed for Div Arty earlier in the day returned and issued an immediate call for all Battery Commanders at 1800 hours. The Bn Comdr explained to the assembled staff and BCs that elements of the allied forces in BASTOGNE were being severely pressed by the 6th Panzer Army and that the enemy had withdrawn its armored elements from our sector of the salient and replaced them with VOLKSGRENADIER Divisions. The coordinated attack of the XVIII and VII Corps was not meeting with marked success due to the icy conditions of the roads and the stiffened resistance of the enemy. This more so in the sector of the 3rd Armd Div. It was contemplated that one CC of the 7th Armd Div would attack south and then west in the 82nd Airborne Division sector to relieve pressure on the 3rd Armd Div. This would permit freedom of movement of all elements on the north side of the salient. He then instructed that all Batteries would maintain themselves on the alert for a possible march order to an area 1 mile north of LA CHAPELLE. Details of the march would be disseminated as soon as received. At 1930 hours word was received from Div Arty that the projected operation had been cancelled due to cutting of one of the enemy main supply routes by the 3rd Armd Div.

Sunday 7 January was marked by religious services for both faiths, with two Catholic services held at the village church of BOSSON. Protestant services were held in the Bn CP by Chaplin Berth.

Tec 4 Weedall was presented with Oak Leaf Cluster to the Bronze Star Medal and Lt. Klein presented with the Purple Heart by the Bn Comdr.

Ltr, Hq 434th Armd FA Bn, After Action Report, Month of Jan 45 (Cont'd)

Following a talk with the Div Arty Comdr, the Bn Comdr instructed Maj Fluke, Lt McLemore and Lt Chapin to prepare material for forward observation classes to be held for line officers of CC"B". These classes were motivated by lack of knowledge of proper forward observation methods by those officers. It was agreed that a few of these classes would give the officers a working knowledge of the proper methods thus enabling them to obtain the necessary fire when required.

On Monday 8 January the CP was moved to a new location in the village of BOSSON. The move was to larger quarters and provided more room for the administrative section of the Battalion. Shortly after the move Special Orders from the First United States Army arrived containing the battlefield promotion to Captain of Lt Richards, and the Bn Comdr presented him with his bars. A short while later Pvt Watts was presented with the Purple Heart.

The training program continued with emphasis placed on maintenance of equipment and defense against chemical warfare. The recreation program under the supervision of Lt Davis continued with the showing of movies, this proved very popular requiring three showings in order to accommodate the personnel.

At 1130 hours 9 January a message from Div Arty stated that all units were to be prepared to move assembly positions on 2 hours notice after 101000 January. The information was relayed to the batteries.

Orders were issued by the Battalion Commander for all officers of the Battalion to be at CP at 2030 hours for a meeting with General Clark. Accordingly, at the appointed hour the officer personnel presented themselves at the CP. General Clark first commended the organization for its outstanding work during the ST. VITH operation. Immediately he started on the projected operation and exactly what he wanted done to insure success. All vehicles to be maintained immediately and to be equipped with traction devices. Additional artillery including the 275th FA and undesignated Bn of 155mm howitzers plus two Bns of paratroopers would be attached to CC "B" for the operation, which was to out the German buldge at its base in the ST. VITH sector. The General clearly stated that agresiveness and offensive action must be instituted in the minds of all. Our object is not gaining of ground but the extermination of the German Army, which must and will be destroyed.

Prior to the arrival of CG CC "B" the Bn Ex and Bn MO departed for a demonstration of a field expedient to prevent skidding of full track vehicles. Following the demonstration, work was immediately instituted in the Bn, with the Bn welding crew supplemented by a welding crew from Div Ordnance.

The original alert notice was countermanded when directions were received moving the alert status up until 101800 January.

Ltr, Hq 434th Armd FA Bn, After Action Report, Month of Jan 45 (Cont'd)

Wednesday 10 January found the Battalion busily engaged in the maintenance prescribed by the CG CC "B". The welding crews who had started work the night before were split up and allotted to various batteries in an effort to speed up work.

The Bn RO accompanied by the Btry ROs set out to reconnoiter the route to the new area and to select billets for the Battalion. Upon their return word was received that the proposed move was cancelled for the day, however, in all probability the move would be made the following day. This gave the Bn more time to complete its work.

At 0900 hours information was received from Division Artillery to alert billeting parties for move out on one hours notice after 100930 Jan. Accordingly Lt Kettenring, Bn Rcn O, was informed and in turn notified the Btry ROs. At 1250 hours the billeting party departed on a reconnaissance of division assembly areas, returning at 1900 hours.

At 0800 hours 11 January the billeting detail was ordered to report to the CP CC "B" to proceed to assembly area and prepare for the Battalion occupation. Following instructions of the Bn Comdr the Bn S-3 dispatched Lt Foss on a reconnaissance of the route to assembly area and to contact Lt Kettenring who had departed earlier in the day.

At 1400 hours the Bn was alerted for movement at 1700 hours to assembly position vicinity of BECCO, BELGIUM (619134). Upon receipt of the information the Bn Comdr called the BCs to the CP for instructions. Prior to the BC call the Bn Comdr presented Bronze Star Medals to Tec 4 Johnson, Tec 4 Walton, and Pvt Stockton of Service Battery for their work in the recovery of abandoned 8 inch guns in vicinity of PETIT THEIR.

At 1700 hours the Battalion departed positions vicinity BOSSON, BELGIUM (538001) in order Hq, A, C, B, and Medics. At 1930 hours the Battalion closed into positions vicinity of BECCO, BELGIUM (619134) minus "A" Battery M-7; "B" Battery Ex and Maintenance tracks and the Battalion recovery vehicle which had fallen out on the march, however, at 2030 hours the vehicles were reported in position and the occupation BECCO complete. The march to BECCO was over extremely difficult highways covered with ice and snow, passing through HARZE, AYWAILLE, REMOVCHAMPS, and HUTREGARD²⁶.

Friday 12 January the Battalion Commander inspected the Battery positions and then at 1330 hours departed for CC "B". Upon his return a Battery Commanders call was ordered and at 1615 hours the BCs assembled at the CP, where the Bn Comdr informed them that the 509th Paratroop Bn had been attached to CC "B", and that the 30th Infantry Division was preparing to attack at 0830 hours 13 January to establish the LD for attack of 7th Armd Div on ST. VITH. The Bn Comdr also discussed the tentative plan, whereby CC "B" would be divided into three task forces, with an FO attached to each tank and infantry company, and the possibility of an FO being assigned to each task force commander as Ln O. Following the BC call, the Bn Comdr presented Silver Star Medals to Pfc's Martin and Nitkowski for their excellent work during the ST. VITH operation.

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²⁶ Remouchamps and Hautregard

Ltr, Hq 434th Armd FA Bn, After Action Report, Month of Jan 45 (Cont'd)

At 0945 hours 13 January Lt Swan reported to the Bn Comdr with instructions from the Arty Comdr that Division Artillery would occupy positions in zone of 1st Infantry Division prior to the movement of the supported units of the 7th Armored Division. Lt Kettenring was dispatched to accompany Division Artillery S-2, on a reconnaissance of positions southwest of WAIMES. At a BC, RO, FO and Staff assembly the Bn Comdr outlined the projected operations CC which was now taking form. Following the meeting Lt Deward Leighton was presented with the Oak Leaf Cluster to the Air Medal by the Bn Comdr.

At 1500 hours the Bn Comdr departed for Division Artillery and returned at 1845 hours with orders to march to positions vicinity of WALK, BELGIUM. A BC call was issued at 2000 hours and details governing the march were issued. The Battalion to march in order Hq, B, C, A, Medics, with the head of the column passing the IP at the RJ (716208). Rate of march set at 12 MPH. Service Battery to remain at BECCO, and Battalion S-4 to contact S-4 CC "B" with regard to joining CC "B" trains. The tank observers were instructed to join the respective tank battalions immediately upon release by Bn Maintenance. Upon arriving in the new area Capt Cheek to report to Div Arty as liaison. Radio silence will be maintained upon occupying positions the guns to be laid on a compass of 3000. Battery ROs were directed to report to Lt Kettenring at 0800 hours to precede Battalion to new positions. A and C Batteries to send peep to be used as route markers, to report to CP at 0915 hours, the route to be marked from IP to WALK, Division Artillery to march in order 440th, Hq Brty Div Arty, 275th, 434th, and 489th.

On Sunday 14 January 0930 hours the Battalion departed positions vicinity of BECCO, BELGIUM arriving in positions vicinity WALK, BELGIUM at 1430 hours, minus "A" Btry ammunition track and trailer, maintenance track and Battalion recovery vehicle. Prior to the Bn's departure, Bn Ln O from CC "B" arrived with the plan of operation CC "B" for attack on ST. VITH. The missing vehicles reported in at 2030 hours and Bn occupation was complete.

At 0900 hours 15 January Capt Cheek, liaison to Div Arty, reported with Field Order #16, Hq 7th Armd Div, plus the Arty Annex with overlays. The object of the 7th Armd Div, to attack and secure ST. VITH, passing through 1st Infantry Div upon Corps order. CC "A" to advance to the left (east), CC "B" on the right (west), with the 434th FA in direct support CC "A", with 440th reinforcing its fires. 987th FA in general support. Corps Arty reinforcing the fires of 7th Armd Div Arty, with 3 Bn's 155mm howitzers, two 8 inch guns, and 1 Bn 105mm howitzers.

Information was received at 1000 hours that one section of the attached 203rd AA Bn had been relieved. At 1030 hours the Bn Comdr accompanied by the Bn S-3 departed for Div Arty to attend a conference on Arty support for the forthcoming attack on ST. VITH, following the conference the Bn Comdr and S-3 set out for CC "B". In the meanwhile Lt Kettenring was dispatched to reconnoiter for positions southwest of WAIMES. The Bn Comdr returned at 1830 hours with the information relative to attack ST. VITH, and directed that all concerned be present at CP for briefing at 160800 Jan.

Ltr, Hq 434th Armd FA Bn, After Action Report, Month of Jan 45 (Cont'd)

At 0800 hours the Bn Comdr briefed the assembled ROs, Asst Exs, in addition to the Bn Comdr, S-3, and observers from the 275th FA on the plan of attack ST. VITH. Following the briefing the Bn Comdr assigned "A" RO and Asst Ex Lt Galle and Lt Snyder to A/48, "B" RO and Asst Ex Lt. Chapin and Lt. Morse to B/48, "C" RO and Asst Ex Lt Smith and Lt Foss to C/48, the three observers from the 275th were assigned to 509th Paratroop Combat Team. All observers were then directed to join the supported units. Shortly after the observers departed to join their units, the Battery Commanders and Staff were likewise briefed. The Bn Ex, Bn RO, and Btry Comdrs were instructed to reconnoiter and survey forward positions, and accordingly at 1045 hours the reconnaissance party set out, returning at 1300 hours with the information that positions had been selected in the vicinity of THIRIMONT. At 1600 hours orders were received from Div Arty to displace immediately. The march details were given to the BCs and the head of the column departed positions vicinity of WALK at 1645 hours, marching in order C, A, B, Hq, and Medics. At 1930 hours the Bn closed into positions vicinity BAUGNEZ, BELGIUM (8102), traveling 5.3 miles over icy highways. Shortly after closing into position the Bn Ex instructed the Bn Com O to establish wire communication with 2nd Bn of 23rd Inf, 2d Inf Div at THIRIMONT. This was accomplished as a precautionary measure, inasmuch as patrols had discovered evidence of the presence of an enemy strong point 1500 yards from the Bn positions.

CC "B" which had been expected to displace to positions in the Battalion vicinity sent word that they would not move inasmuch as unexpected enemy resistance had prevented establishment of 7th Armd Div LD.

Wednesday 17 January found the Battalion in firing positions ready to support the attack of CC "B". The Bn Ex who had departed for CC "B" earlier in the day, returned at 1430 hours with the information that friendly units were to secure the first objective of CC "B". During the night the Battery positions were shelled by enemy interdiction fire, there were no casualties and only slight damage to "C" Btry BC track.

The 18th January was spent quietly with very little enemy activity. The Bn Comdr visited higher headquarters, and while there word was received of a Unit Commanders meeting at Division Artillery. The Bn Ex accordingly set out for Div Arty and upon his return at 1715 hours brought information that the objectives of 7th Armd Div had been changed by Corps to secure the high ground north and east of ST. VITH. CC "A" to attack DIEDENBURG and organize the high ground to the east for defense. The 508th Paratroop Combat Team will then relieve CC "A". CC "A" to attack BORN and organize the high ground east and south for a defense. At 1745 hours word was received from CC "B" that they would remain in their present positions.

19 January was marked by the visit of Brigadier General Hasbrouck, Division Commander. Following the visit the Bn Comdr departed for CC "B" to attend a Unit Commanders meeting, returning at 1700 hours with the information the CC "B" was moving to assembly positions for the attack. At 1900 hours the Bn Comdr was called to Div Arty to review the fire plan CC "B" with the CG CC "B" and the Arty Comdr.

Ltr, Hq 434th Armd FA Bn, After Action Report, Month of Jan 45 (Cont'd)

At 0500 hours on 20 January elements of CC "B" closed into attack positions vicinity of WAIMES. The Forces of CC "B" were composed of the following elements: Task Force A (Lt Col Chappuis²⁷), A/48, B/48, A/31; Task Force B (Maj Tomasik²⁸), A/509, B/509, B/38²⁹; Task force C (Lt Col Erlenbusch³⁰), C/48, C/509, C/31. Following the closing in to attack positions the Bn RO H/T was dispatched to TF "B" to be used for communication purposes between TF "B" and CC "B".

The Bn Ex and Bn RO were instructed to go forward and reconnoiter for positions, and departed Bn at 1300 hours. At 1730 hours the Bn Ex and Bn RO returned to the Bn with the information that the road to MONTENAU and BORN were not yet cleared. There were not suitable positions north of MONTENAU due to poor defilade from the east. Force "C" had advanced to a point 1000 yards northwest of BORN and Force "C"³¹ was 1000 yards west of BORN, with CC "A" on the left to the high ground east of BORN. One platoon of C/31, with Lt Klein as observer was immobilized in the woods, due to the enemy mining the forest trails, anti-tank fire, and poor traction due to the deep snow.

At the close of the day the Bn had expended 512 rounds on 10 missions, including Bn registration and TOT's from Div Arty. The Artillery observers, and in particular "B" RO Lt Chapin had done much to coordinate the attack CC "B" and its attached units inasmuch as communication of the supported units had broken down while the artillery communication sustained.

On 21 January at 1000 hours the 275th FA, reinforcing the fires of the 434th, was directed to displace to new positions. "A" and "C" Asst Ex tracks were directed to accompany the 275th FA to relay artillery requests from the 434th observers during its displacement. During the displacement of the 275th FA, "A" Btry Asst Ex track was a casualty and was ordered to return to the Battalion.

Word was received at 1200 hours that Lt Chapin, "B" RO, had been slightly wounded and had been evacuated.

At 1500 hours the Bn Ex and Bn RO returned from a reconnaissance of forward positions with information that the attack had been carried to the eastern outskirts of BORN. C/38 had been attached to CC "B" and had moved to positions south of BORN. This move completed the encirclement of BORN by the 7th Armd Div. Artillery positions south of BORN were found untenable due to consistency of enemy fire. The road south of MONTENAU to BORN was in the process of being cleared of mines, and knocked out bridges over the Amel River³² were being repaired. The platoon from C/31 which had been immobilized had been withdrawn from the woods northwest of BORN to an assembly position vicinity of MONTENAU.

The Bn Comdr who had gone forward to the vicinity of BORN, presented Lt Norse and Lt Foss with their bars indicative of their battlefield promotions to 1st Lieutenants, and returned to the Bn and directed Lt Grieco, Hq Btry Motor Officer, to replace Lt Chapin who had been wounded, as "B" RO. The Bn Comdr the departed for Div Arty to consult the Arty Comdr for likely positions areas.

²⁷ Lt. Col. Richard Chappuis commanded the 48th Armored Infantry Battalion.

²⁸ Maj. Edmund J. Tomasik commanded the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion.

²⁹ This should have read B/31, since all other records indicate that Company B of 31st Tank Battalion was the only non-509 PIB unit in Task Force B.

³⁰ Lt. Col. Robert Erlenbusch commanded the 31st Tank Battalion.

³¹ Note that both references are indeed to Force C, although it is most likely that one of the two references actually should refer to Force B.

³² Amel was the German name for the river, which is called Amblève in French.

Ltr, HQ 434th Armd FA Bn, After Action Report, Month of Jan 45 (Cont'd)

Artillery fire for the supported units was a difficult problem due to disposition of troops surrounding the objective, BORN. 1910 rounds were expended on 26 missions including preparation, close support fire, and neutralization of small arms, mortars, infantry, and artillery.

On Monday, 22 January the Bn was still in firing position vicinity of BAUGNEE, supported the attack with telling artillery fire. At 0830 hours the Bn Ex accompanied by the Bn RO and Btry Comdrs went forward on a reconnaissance of position areas. At 1200 the party returned, having selected and surveyed positions vicinity of AM STEIN. Division Artillery was called for clearance march. But clearance was not permitted until preparation fires for an attack had been fired. The Battalion was alerted for impending march order and details of the march given.

At 1500 hours Div Arty permitted displacement of the Bn by echelon and at 1510 the CP displaced, followed by C, A, B, and Medics. The fire direction vehicles remained in position and displaced with their respective firing battery, and at 2030 hours the Bn completed displacement and closed into firing positions vicinity of AM STEIN (856965), traveling 8.8 miles over icy and at some points congested secondary roads. Prior to the final closing of the Bn, the Ln O from CC "B" arrived with the message: "Plan attack of ST. VITH tonight". At 2130 hours the Bn Comdr left for CC "B" forward CP to secure the prepared fires for the attack on ST. VITH.

Expenditures for the day totaled 707 rounds with 8 missions fired on preparation and harassing fires.

At 0930 hours 23 January the Bn Comdr departed for CC "B" and returned with the plan of attack ST. VITH, scheduled for 1400 hours. Task Force "A" to assemble vicinity NDR EMMELS³³ then attack southeast and then south securing the southern route to ST. VITH. Task force Rae³⁴, composed of 23rd Infantry and 1 company of tanks to assemble in the woods 1000 yards east of HUNNINGEN³⁵ to attack south and west and secure the northern routes of ST. VITH. 1 Platoon of 814 TD's to support the attack from direct fire positions 1000 yards northwest of ST. VITH. Artillery to fire 5 preparations on the objectives and interdict WALLERODE. Prepared fires to be lifted by forward observers. Inasmuch as the 275th and the 434th were only in position to support this attack and the 23rd was supported by the 489th observers, 3 observers were requested from the 275th for the 23rd Inf.

At 1400 hours, Lt Davis was presented with the Bronze Star Medal with Oak Leaf cluster by the Bn Comdr for his excellent work during the ST. VITH operation in December.

The attack against ST. VITH jumped off at 1400 hours and the objectives were occupied by the task forces by 1800 hours. There was little opposition from the enemy in the town. However, one strong point in town was reduced by artillery fire. 38th Inf occupied positions west of WALLERODE. At 1830 hours a battery of enemy artillery was observed moving on the road northwest on their way into ST. VITH. This target was fired upon by the Bn and Div Arty, using the new POZIT fuze, with excellent results.

³³ Nieder Emmels

³⁴ Lt. Col. Robert L. Rhea (the correct spelling) commanded 23rd Armored Infantry Battalion.

³⁵ Also called by the French name Hunnange.

Ltr, Hq 434th Armd FA Bn, After Action Report, Month of Jan 45 (Cont'd)

At 2000 hours the enemy attacked the defensive positions of the 38th Infantry with four tanks and 250 Infantry. The attack was broken up by massed fires of Div Arty, 275th FA, and 3 Bns of 155 howitzers. The reinforcing Arty was brought in on the adjusted coordinates of the 434th FA. At the same time the enemy struck from southeast of ST. VITH with similar force and the attack was broken up by the same employment of massed fires.

1324 rounds were expended during the day on 15 missions of various types, infantry, tanks, mortars, vehicles, artillery, with the effect ranging from good to excellent.

During the hours of 0400 to 0600 24 January two enemy counterattacks of sizable proportions were repulsed by the massed fires of Div. Arty.

At 1500 hours the plan for the continuance of attack CC "B" to the high ground south and east of ST. VITH was received. The 509th Paratroop Combat Team supported by C/31 to secure the high ground east of ST. VITH. The 48th Inf, 1 platoon 814th TD, and D/31 to secure the ground east of ST. VITH. The 434th in direct support with the 275th reinforcing fires. The 38th Inf relieved from attachment to CC "B" and observers from the 275th to coordinate the fires of the 509th PCT upon attack. Lt Morse and Lt Foss relieved as observers with the 38th Infantry.

At 1800 hours the Bn Comdr returned to the Bn with plan of attack 7th Armd Div, the 424 CT, 106th Inf Div to attack and secure MEDELL and the high ground south. CC "A" to attack and secure WALLERODE. CC "B" to attack and secure high ground east of ST. VITH. 434th FA in direct support of CC "B". 489th direct support CC "A". 971st FA direct support 424th CT. 440th in general support, reinforcing fires of 434th. A 4.2 chemical mortar company attached to Div Arty to occupy positions vicinity of HUNNINGEN to support attack of 48th Infantry. The 434th to provide FM communications on Div Arty net, with "A" RO relay track providing communication.

Expenditure amounted to 971 rounds on 23 missions with 7 missions fired on enemy counterattacks.

Thursday 25 January the Bn supported elements CC "B", vigorously pushing the attack beyond ST. VITH, and firing all missions requested by Div Arty, in support of other sectors 7th Armd Div. At 1000 hours Lt Foss and Lt Morse returned to the Bn. At 1400 hours the Air CP, Lt Kettering, reported that an anti-tank gun had been knocked out by the fire of the Bn. At 1700 hours Lt Kaiser, Lt Finlayson, and Lt Dornfeld were assigned to the Bn. Information was received that the 7th Armd Div had secured all its objectives, zones of action CC "A" and CC "B", and assumed the defensive. A/31 committed to zone of action 509th Paratroop CT due to the heavy losses sustained, and the threat to 48 th's south flank.

Ltr, Hq 434th Armd FA Bn, After Action Report, Month of Jan 45 (Cont'd)

At the close of the day 1705 rounds were expended on 29 missions including 3 TOT's from Div Arty. Infantry and guns, infantry in the open, and infantry and tanks were targets of opportunity. The effect report was very good.

At 0800 hours 26 January 1945 the following officers were assigned to the Battery's, Lt Kaiser to Btry "A", Lt Finlayson to Btry "B", and Lt Dornfeld to Btry "C". Firing continued during the day and at 1600 hours the Bn Comdr returned from CC "B" with the information that the 7th Armd Div was to be relieved by the 82nd Airborne Division and transferred to the V Corps, and at 1700 hours B/48 and C/31 were relieved on the line and placed in CC "B" reserve. The observers with these company's were released.

822 rounds were expended on 50 missions, 24 of which were harassing. Air CP reported that as a result of the Bn fire five trucks were destroyed, Mission of counterbattery and against infantry in the open, woods, and houses were fired.

At 0030 hours 27 January the Bn Comdr was called to CC "B" for a conference on plan of attack CC "B" to secure the high ground 4000 meters east of ST. VITH. At 0330 hours the Bn Comdr returned with the fire plan. Force Tomasik (509 th Paratroop CT and 1 platoon 31 st) to attack east on Highway 2. 48th Infantry to attack east astride Highway 3. The Bn S-3 was instructed by the Bn Comdr to obtain supporting fires on preparation for the attack at 1000 hours. At 0530 hours "B" Asst RO, Lt Finlayson, and "A" Asst RO, Lt Kaiser, were called to the CP and briefed on the plan of attack, Lt Finlayson assigned Force Tomasik as forward observer and Lt Kaiser as Liaison. Lt Klein "C" FO was relieved by Lt Davis "B" FO with 31 st Tank Bn.

At 1600 hours the lead truck in a Service Battery ammunition convoy, carrying ammunition to the Batteries hit a mine partially destroying the truck and slightly injuring Sgt Clark who was in charge of the convoy. At 1700 hours information was received that the attack had progressed 1000 yards and had been stopped by enemy strong points consisting of road blocks supported by small arms and artillery fire. At 2100 hours the Bn Comdr returned from CC "B" with the information that the 38th Infantry was to pass through the 48th Infantry to secure the objective of CC "B". The observers assigned to the 48th would remain and proceed to the objective with the 38th. Lt Smith, "C" RO, was relieved due to extreme exhaustion by Lt McLemore, "A" FO. Artillery preparation fires were planned to no avail due to the 38th moving out without artillery preparation. 1470 rounds were expended on 36 missions, 14 of which were harassing and interdiction fires.

At 0200 hours 28 January the observers with the 38th reported objective CC "B" had been secured. At 1000 hours information was received that the 38th Infantry was to be relieved on the objective by the 87th Division, and the forward observers to be relieved and returned to the Bn. Forward observers from the 275th FA were attached to the 87th Division to coordinate Arty support.

Ltr, Hq 434th FA Bn, After Action Report, Month of Jan 45 (Cont'd)

At 1015 hours the PARIS party, for which a quota of one officer and seven enlisted men had been received, departed the Bn area under the charge of Lt Klein, Hq Btry. At 1100 hours information was received that the billeting parties would reconnoiter for billets in the Div assembly area. At 2200 hours word was received that the 87th Div was effecting the relief of the 7th Armd Div, and the observers were instructed to return to the Bn. At the end of the 24 hour period the Bn had expended 745 rounds on 14 missions on a variety of missions.

Monday 29 January the observers had returned to the Bn. Information was received at 0915 hours to prepare for a march order at 1400 hours to a Div assembly area vicinity VERVIERS. At 1130 hours the Bn Comdr called the Btry Comdrs together and discussed misbehavior before the enemy by personnel. Following the discussion orders for the plan of march were given. The Bn to move out at 1320 hours in order Hq, C, A, B, and Medics. The Bn RO officer to precede the Bn to alert the billeting party and to put guides at LIGNEUVILLE to prevent east bound traffic on the LIGNEUVILLE - MONTENAU road. The Bn Ln O was dispatched to the 275th FA for march liaison. All the vehicles to be marked with the march serial number B-51. Each battery to furnish one peep with 2 men for route marking. Rate of march: 8 MPH with a 15 minute interval from head to head of Battery's. Bn recovery vehicle to precede the Bn to LIGNEUVILLE to remove obstacles in the road.

At 1320 hours the Bn departed firing positions vicinity AM STEIN, BELGIUM(856956) on a march to positions vicinity VERVIERS, BELGIUM (6822). The journey was made especially difficult by the condition of the highways, and several vehicles were temporary casualties. The Bn closed into positions vicinity VERVIERS, BELGIUM at 1930 hours, having covered 30.7 miles passing through LIGNEUVILLE, BAUGNEZ, MALMEDY, FRANCORCHAMPS, TIEGE³⁶, and VERVIERS, where the Batteries were met by the billeting party.

The period 30-31 January was spent in the rest area vicinity VERVIERS, BELGIUM. A training schedule was prepared by the Bn S-3, and a program of maintenance of vehicles and equipment was instituted. A pass policy, whereby half of the Battalion would be permitted to visit VERVIERS was also instituted. On the morning of the 30th five enlisted men were given 48 hour passes to the V Corps Recreation Center in EUPEN. On 31 st January Lt Davis, FO #3, was transferred to CC "B", to assume the duties of Asst S-3 CC "B".

During the month of January the Battalion traveled at total of 89 miles, and expended 11,176 rounds of ammunition. Personnel figures as of the 31 January showed 7 reinforcements, 1 transfer out of the Bn, 19 RTD's, 3 IWA, 11 NBC, with Battalion strength at 34 officers, 2 warrant officers and 486 enlisted men.

(signed)
JAMES G. DUBUISSON
Lt Col, 434th Armd Fa BN,
Commanding.

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³⁶ This really is Tiège, Belgium, which is between Francorchamps and Verviers, and is not the much more well-known city of Liège.

HEADQUARTERS
434TH ARMORED FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION
APO 257, U.S. Army

28 February 1945

SUBJECT: After Action Report, Month of February 1945.

TO : The Adjutant General, Washington 25, D. C. (Thru Channels)

February 1, 1945 found the Battalion in rest area vicinity of VERVIERS, BELGIUM (6822). A limited number of Officers and men were granted passes to the Victor Recreation Center located at EUPEN. For those who remained daylight passes were granted to VERVIERS, and many attended the USO shows arranged by the Division Special Service. A program of training was instituted by the Battalion S-3, and a maintenance policy was initiated by the Battalion Motor Officer.

At 1130 hours 2 February the Battalion area was visited by the Division Artillery Commander, who with the Battalion Commander visited the various batteries and inspected the guns of Battery "B". At 1700 hours Tec 5 Bosserman and Pvt Farfaglia were presented with the Purple Heart by the Battalion Commander. At 2000 hours information was received from G-1 that the Battalion had been granted a quota of (1) EM for Temporary duty in the United States. This was brought to the attention of the Battalion Commander, who directed that the Battery Commanders submit the names of those men with the longest period of service overseas.

On 3 February at 0815 hours the Battalion Commander and the Battalion RO departed for Division Artillery, having been directed by the Artillery Commander to report to him before departing on a reconnaissance of forward positions. At 1000 hours the order alerting the Battalion was received from Division Artillery. The Battalion S-3 was directed to report to Division for instruction concerning the pending operation, and the Battalion S-2 began work on the preparation of maps for the move. At 1530 hours at a Battery Commanders call the alert order was given, and the BC's were oriented as to the general situation by the Battalion S-3. The 78th Infantry Division at present vicinity of LAMMERSDORF, GERMANY were to attack and secure the dams vicinity of SCHMIDT and RHURBERG. To accomplish this the 23rd Armored Infantry Battalion, 7th Armored Division to take over a defensive sector in zone of action 78th Infantry Division. The 7th Armored Division artillery to reinforce the fires of the 78th Division Artillery, with the 440th in direct support of the 23rd Armored Infantry.

At 1715 hours the Battalion Commander returned to the Battalion and issued order for a Battery Commanders call at 1830 hours, when orders for the march were given. The Battalion to march to the zone of action 78th Infantry Division in order, C, A, B, Hq, Medics, and Battalion Recovery Vehicle. Advance details to depart Battalion in order to reach position area vicinity LAMMERSDORF, GERMANY at 040700 February.

Ltr, Hq 434th Armd Bn, After action Report, Month of Feb 45 (Cont'd)

Upon arrival they will contact the Engineers and have the mines cleared from the position area of "C: and "B". At daybreak "A" Battery half-track and M-7 will depart to occupy position and to be registered on an u designated base point from the air. Upon arrival in position areas "C" and "B" will lay on compass 1800 and "A" on compass 2000. The Headquarters Battery Commander and Battalion Communications Officer to go forward with the advance detail to select and occupy Headquarter's installations. Service Battery to send gasoline truck to travel with each Battery and upon arrival in new area will refuel the Battalion vehicles. Service Battery will move to new position vicinity of KEITINIS (805290) upon Division artillery order. Radio silence to be maintained during the march.

On 4 February additional information as to the march was received from Division artillery, and the Battalion Commander directed that the Battery Commanders be at the CP at 1000 hours for further instructions. At the call the route was given and the order of march of Division Artillery, 440th, 275th, and 434th. The 489th having displaced on 3 February. Interval between Batteries 20 minutes head to head of column, Battalion IP to be Battalion CP. Each Battery will furnish 1 peep with 2 men and driver as route markers to report to CP at 1230 hours. Battalion Liaison Officer dispatched as march liaison to 275th FA.

At 1245 hours the head of Battalion column departed position vicinity VERVIERS, BELGIUM and closed into firing positions vicinity of LAMMERSDORF, GERMANY (968266) at 1630 hours, having traveled 29.7 miles over muddy highways through VERVIERS, EUPEN, ROTGEN, to positions vicinity LAMMERSDORF.

Shortly after arrival the Battalion Liaison Officer was dispatched to Division Artillery, and at 2300 hours returned to the Battalion with fire plan for attack of 78th Infantry Division and Combat Command "R". The attacking force to be separated into three forces to attack STRAUCH and STRECKENBORN frontally and to envelope the objective. The attack to jump off at 0300 hours with the frontal attack to take place at 0700 hours. General support artillery to support the attack with preparation fires beginning at 0645 hours and lasting until 0720 hours.

At 0700 hours 5 February information was received that the attacking force was meeting with little enemy resistance and several pillboxes were found abandoned by the enemy as a result of the preparation by the artillery was discontinued. At 0930 hours the Battalion Commander departed for Division Artillery, having instructed the Battalion Reconnaissance Officer to stand by for a reconnaissance of forward positions. At 1000 hours word was received from the Battalion Commander to await plans for displacement upon his return. Upon returning to the Battalion at 1200 hours the Battalion Commander instructed the Battalion Executive and Battalion RO to go forward to the vicinity of SIMMERATH and there contact the Battalion Commander of 307th FA, which was then in support of the 311th Combat Team, 78th Infantry Division, as to the securing of positions in which to place the Battalion. At 1315 hours the Battalion Commander and Battery Commanders went forward to vicinity of SIMMERATH, where the Battalion Executive and Battalion RO were contacted at position areas 200 yards east of KESTERNICH, which had already been surveyed.

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by the Battalion RO, however, the Battalion Commander found the position unsuitable due to the fact that the attack of the 78th Division had not progressed as well as planned, and inasmuch as defilade from enemy observation was not provided by the position. Further reconnaissance was instituted and positions north of SIMMERATH were selected and surveyed.

At 1800 hours the Battalion S-2 returned from the 307th FA where he had learned that the projected operation of the 78th Infantry Division had been postponed and that the general support artillery 7th Armored Division to remain in present location until further orders regarding displacement were received.

During the 24 hour period 500 rounds were expended on 15 missions of harassing fire sent from Division artillery in support of 78th Infantry Division Artillery.

On 6 February at 0920 hours Lt Paul F. Smith and eight EM departed for Paris on 72 hour passes, for which a quota had been received. At 1030 hour the Battalion Commander called the Battery Commanders together for an orientation of the situation. The plan of attack 311th CT, 78th Inf Div was discussed. The 311th CT to assemble north of SCHMIDT and to attack in conjunction with the 517th PCT in the vicinity of KOMMERSCHIEDT and to continue the attack east. CC "R" to secure HECHELSHEIB in conjunction with Company "L" of the 311th. At 1045 hours Pvt Ogg of Battery "B" departed the Battalion for Temporary Duty in the U.S.

At 1545 hours the Battalion departed position vicinity of LAMMERSDORF, GERMANY marching in order C, B, A, and Hq minus kitchen and FO tanks, arriving in previously selected positions vicinity KESTERNICH, GERMANY (995240) at 1645 hours traveling 3.3 miles over muddy and congested highways.

1021 rounds of ammunition was expended on 28 missions of harassing fire during the 24 hour period.

The Battalion Commander and Battalion RO who had departed earlier in the day on a reconnaissance of forward positions returned to the Battalion, and the Battalion was ordered to displace to positions vicinity of STRAUCH, GERMANY. Due to the great number of vehicles in the vicinity of STRAUCH, it was decided to establish a forward CP, and only the Operations Section displaced with the Firing Batteries. At 1300 hours the Battalion began displacement and final occupation of firing positions in vicinity of STRAUCH (998257) was completed by 1500 hours.

Prior to the Battalion departure, the Battalion S-2 was directed to reconnoiter for a suitable ground OP from which to conduct registration. He returned to the Battalion at 1500 hour with the information that a suitable OP was not available at the front lines vicinity of SCHMIDT. The air section which had been traveling with Division Artillery was moved to an air strip vicinity of LAMMERSDORF, but due to the change of wind, the planes were unable to take to the air.

Ltr, Hq 434th Armd Bn, After action Report, Month of Feb 45 (Cont'd)

The close of the 24 hour period the Battalion remained in support of 78th Infantry Division, having fired 2148 rounds on 75 concentrations of harassing and one counter-battery mission.

On Thursday 8 February at 0950 hours the remainder of Hq Btry displaced from positions vicinity of KESTERNICH, GERMANY joining the Battalion at STRAUCH. At 1315 hours Sgt Clark, Sv Btry, was awarded the Order of the Purple Heart by the Battalion Commander. The Division Inspector General visited the Battalion on his regular inspection.

Expenditure for the day was 1539 rounds on 44 missions, all harassing fires from 78th Infantry Division.

Friday 9 February found the Battalion completely in positions vicinity STRAUCH, GERMANY. At 0800 hours the Battalion S-2 was directed by the Battalion Commander to reconnoiter for suitable positions forward from which to press the attack. Upon completion of reconnaissance the Battalion S-2 returned with the information that the forward suitable positions were occupied by artillery of the 78th Division.

At 0915 hours the Battalion Commander departed for Division Artillery where he was presented with the Oak Leaf Cluster to the Bronze Star by the Artillery Commander. At 1300 hours the Battalion Commander presented Tec 5 Thomas with the Bronze Star Medal.

Information was received that the attack of the 78th Inf Div had progressed to the outskirts of HARSCHIEDT, 1000 yards northeast of SCHMIDT, to within 2 miles of SCHWAMMANUEL, the largest and most important of the dams controlling the flow of the ROER RIVER. The expenditure for the 24 hour period amounted to 1798 rounds on 31 missions of harassing fire and 2 missions of enemy battery.

On Saturday 10 February Service Battery instituted a program of maintenance and vehicles were dispatched from the batteries for repair. The old tracks were replaced on the vehicles requiring them. Due to the traffic congestion and condition of the roads, information was received from G-4 to hold supply and administration traffic to an absolute minimum. Accordingly this was acted upon and the information was sent to the batteries.

At 1400 hours, acting on instructions received from Division Artillery, a billeting party composed of a Battery Officer from each of the Batteries was dispatched to the area vicinity of VERVIERS, where the Battalion had previously billeted to determine their availability in the event of a move to the rear.

1222 rounds were expended on 18 missions of harassing fire and 2 missions on enemy mortar positions. Activity on the front lines was confined to patrolling and holding of the front line.

At 0930 hours 11 February the billeting party returned with the information that the area was free and ready for occupancy at any time.

Ltr, Hq 434th Armd Bn, After action Report, Month of Feb 45 (Cont'd)

Firing during the day was confined to harassing fires and activity on the front slackened considerably, as a result the Battalion started a program of personal maintenance and sanitation, with men going to Quartermaster shower point at MONSCHAU. The position areas were in need of draining and each Battery was instructed to start the project immediately. This was done and in a short while conditions were bettered.

Information was received from the S-4 that the Paris party had returned, but due to the conditions of the roads requested permission to remain overnight. The day closed with an expenditure of 811 rounds on 13 missions of harassing fire.

The 12 and 13 February were spent in quiet with emphasis placed on personal cleanliness and sanitation. Ordnance visited the Battalion area on the 12 February and inspected small arms and artillery pieces. A quota for one man to go on furlough to the UK was received and Pvt Anderson of Battery "B" was selected and departed the Battalion on 13 February. Information was received on 15 February that the 78th Division had completed its operation with the taking of the Dam and the surrounding towns controlling the flow of the Roer River.

On 14 February at 0830 hours one officer and 3 enlisted men departed the Battalion on 72 hour Paris passes. Maintenance work was continued with several vehicles being sent to Service Battery for a change of tracks and general reconditioning. Services for those of the Protestant faith were held at 0930 hours and 1030 hours at the Medics. Showers were made available to the personnel of the Battalion and at the close of the 24 hour period 12 rounds were expended on 1 mission sent from Division Artillery.

February 15 and 16 found little activity within the Battalion. Two officers and 20 enlisted men departed at 0900 hours on 48 hour passes to VRC, EUPEN. At 1500 hours on 15 February acting on orders from Division Artillery, Lt McLemore was dispatched to VERVIERS to maintain contact and hold billets ready for occupancy. During the two days 87 rounds were expended in the calibration of the howitzers.

On 17 February the Battalion Motor Officer accompanied by the Battery Maintenance teams set out for the 489th FA Bn to attend a demonstration for the application of camouflage materials to M-4 tanks. At 1000 hours an ordnance team arrived in the Battalion with two replacement tubes for Battery "B". There were no expenditures during the day.

On 18 February at 0745 hours one officer and 4 enlisted men left for BRUSSELS on 72 hour passes. At 0800 hours the Battalion Commander departed the Battalion on 72 hour leave to Paris. Religious services were held at the Medics by Chaplain Barth, Division Artillery Chaplain. During this period Service Battery continued its program of maintenance and the S-4 made arrangements for laundry to be sent to EUPEN and OD clothing was exchanged. 57 rounds were expended on 2 missions from Division Artillery.

At 1600 hours 19 February the Battalion Executive following orders from Division Artillery departed on a reconnaissance of forward positions in the area between SCHMIDT and HASSENFELD, returning at 1700 hours.

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The Battalion RO was instructed to make a similar reconnaissance on 20 February. The Battalion Motor Officer was instructed by the Battalion Executive to begin camouflaging the M-4 tanks, but due to the no availability of the material the instructions were rescinded until a later day. 52 rounds were expended on 1 mission.

At 0900 hours 20 February the Battalion RO departed on a reconnaissance of forward positions complying with instructions previously issued by the Battalion Executive. He returned at 1200 hours with the information that due to the condition of the ground and the prominence of the terrain suitable positions were not to be found. At 1330 the Red Cross Clubmobile visited the Battalion area and the Battalion personnel were served the usual coffee and doughnuts. A dental survey of the Battalion was held by the Division Dental Surgeon following the visit of the Clubmobile. Lt McLemore who had been in VERVIERS to hold down the billets was recalled. At 1430 Chaplain O'Brien held Catholic services at the Medics. Pvt Hair of Service Battery departed the Battalion on 30 day temporary duty in the U.S. The day closed with an expenditure of 34 rounds.

At 1130 hours 21 February a Battalion Commander from the 13th Armd Div visited the Battalion in company with Lt Col Millner, acting Division Artillery Commander. After looking over the area he departed promising that he would return at a later day for a longer visit. At 1900 one officer and four enlisted men returned from BRUSSELS. Expenditures for the day amounted to 256 rounds on 9 missions sent from Division Artillery.

The 22 February saw very little activity other than the maintenance of an air patrol which had been ordered by Division Artillery. There was considerably more firing on enemy installations than there had been in the past several days with the Battalion having fired 427 rounds.

At 1400 hours on the 23d February the Battalion liaison officer was dispatched to the 2d Battalion 311th CT of the 78th Infantry Division by the Division Artillery S-3, returning at 1500 with the information that the 78th Division Artillery was to support the Ninth Infantry Division in their attack. The 7th Division Artillery to support the defensive sector of the 78th Infantry Division. Communication was requested and the Bn Ex ordere3d the Bn Com O to lay wire to the Regimental CP of the 311th CT in the vicinity of SCHMIDT. A ground observer was also requested to meet the Bn Ln Officer at a prearranged location. At 1800 at a battery commanders call the success of the 104th Infantry of the VII Corps was discussed. Trip tickets were also explained and instructions on their use was given. At the close of the day 107 rounds were expended.

At 0800 24 February Lt Marshall of Battery B went forward to man the OP. Lt McLemore was ordered by the Battalion Commander to secure the movie projector from Service Battery and to locate a suitable building where movies could be shown. 408 rounds were expended on targets from Division Artillery.

Ltr, Hq 434th Armd Bn, After action Report, Month of Feb 45 (Cont'd)

Sunday 24 February the Battalion continued with the maintenance program instituted by the Battalion Motor Officer and all vehicles in need of repairs were brought to the Battalion Shop. Protestant services were held at the Medics at 1300, 1350 and 1400 by Chaplain Barth. At 1330 T/Sgt Guy and Tec 5 Kettel departed the Battalion on 7 day UK furloughs. 225 rounds were expended on targets from Division Artillery.

At 0800 hours 26 February the Battalion S-3 accompanied by the Battalion RO went forward on a reconnaissance of positions and returned with the information that there was still a lack of suitable positions. At 1800 hours at a Battery Commanders call the progress of the attack was discussed. The day closed with an expenditure of 523 rounds.

The 27 and 28 February were spent in routine work with the men being transported to showers at MONSCHAU and with movies shown in the afternoon and evening. In the afternoon of the 27th Lt Foss was presented with the Bronze Star Medal and Pvt Skeens with the Purple Heart by the Battalion Commander. There were 44 rounds expended on the 27th and there was no expenditure on the 28th.

During the month the Battalion travelled 33 miles and expended a total of 10, 857 rounds of 105 ammunition. Personnel figures for the month show an assigned strength of 35 officers, 2 warrant officers, and 487 enlisted men. Non battle casualties 6, transfers out of Battalion 2, LWA 2. There were 9 RTD's, 3 reinforcements and 1 MIA to arrest absent. The net gain in assigned strength for the month 2.

(signed)
JAMES G. DUBUISSON,
Lt Col, 434th Armd FA Bn,
Commanding