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HEADQUARTERS, 36TH INFANTRY DIVISION

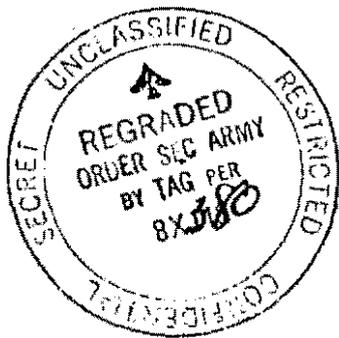
APO 36, U. S. ARMY

OPERATION "AVALANCHE"

9 - 21 SEPTEMBER 1943

ANNEX #10

131st FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION



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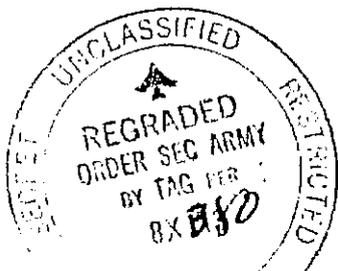
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INITIALS: *AMB*  
DATE: 24 September 1943

OPERATION - "AVALANCHE"

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THE INVASION OF ITALY

A history of the actions of the 131st Field Artillery Battalion during the landing of the 36th Infantry Division on the shores of Italy, and the subsequent establishment of a beachhead in the vicinity of Paestum, Italy.



HISTORIAN:  
MAIDEN P. HINER  
CAPTAIN, 131st F. A. Bn.  
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OPERATIONS OF 131ST F. A. BN. IN "AVALANCHE"

The 131st Field Artillery Battalion embarked from the port of Oran on the fifth of September, 1943.

Generally, the embarkation plan was as follows: Headquarters Battery, U.S.S. O'Hara, "A" Battery; U.S.S. Thomas Jefferson, "B" Battery; U.S.S. O'Hara; "C" Battery, U.S.S. Carrol; and Service Battery, H.M.S. Cronos. All 12 Howitzers of the Battalion were loaded aboard H.M.S. Thrusta. Battalion Headquarters was distributed among the various ships as were certain personnel of the Battalion, necessitated by the loading of special equipment on different ships. (See App. "E" for officers involved).

The first units of the Artillery ashore were the Forward Observer parties in the second wave and the Liaison parties in the third wave - other elements in succeeding waves with the remainder of the Battalion on priority. From the very beginning, the Liaison and F. O. parties were under difficulties - they were met on the beach by heavy fire from emplaced weapons supported by tanks and other armored vehicles. Part of the the F.O. section of "A" Battery was lost early in the fight when an enemy shell landed in the middle of the party, resulting in the death of Cpl. Michael J. Brobeck, Pvt. 1cl Harold E. Sarvis, and Pvt. Alfred R. Lundstrom, and completely demolishing their radio. Lt. Manary, the F.O., was about fifty yards to the right of the explosion and was uninjured. 1st Bn. Liaison section cleared the sand dune area without a mishap only to be pinned down in a ditch for eighteen hours by constant gun fire and mortar fire. The positions were too close for our own troops to permit artillery fire. 2nd Bn. Liaison and "B" Battery F. O. parties landed on yellow beach and gradually worked their way inland under constant fire - in the middle of the morning, Lt. Sample, L. O., secured an OP in the top story of a house and conducted naval fire on targets of opportunity in vicinity of Mt. Sottano. Later he neutralized a gun position and completed D-day's operation by registering on critical points in preparation for a night attack. Ensign Semple, U.S.N. operating from the same OP, obtained excellent results with Naval fire on enemy strong points paving the way for further advance on the 2nd Battalion front.

"C" Battery F.O. party landed with the second wave in order to conduct naval fire. They landed at about 0340 the morning of the 9th, under artillery and small gun fire. Lt. William G. Brown was in command of the party. It was almost 1000 before they managed to start firing, their first target being three large Railroad guns. Lt. Brown also conducted fire on tanks, breaking up an attack on our landing barges. This also drove off the tanks that were machine-gunning the beach, knocked out at least one tank and damaged several others. At times, the party was forced to leave the radio in order to get out from under their own naval fire, but it kept working.

3rd Battalion L. O., Lt. Ramey, and party landed at 0345 on yellow beach - the party was dispersed in order to get thru the wire entanglements with instructions to meet at a pre-designated point further inland. This meeting was delayed by constant sniping and when the party reorganized and established communications, observation was limited by fire on the OP. After some time the pressure lessened and the section advanced to place fire on a gun position, neutralizing it effectively. Contact with the enemy was lost shortly thereafter, and was not regained during the operation.

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Battery "C" was split into several parts for the invasion. The firing battery was aboard the British ship H.M.S. Thruster; other parts of the battalion were on the USAT "Carrol", and part of the drivers were aboard the U. S. S. "Winfield Scott".

The Battery Commander, Lt. Milton F. Riesen, came in on the fourth wave. On the way in, the landing barge carrying him and his party was rammed by another craft, but continued on to shore. Finding it impossible to go to the position that had been selected for the Battery on the map, the Lieutenant set up an OP inside a house until his Battery could land and come into an alternate position.

The four gun sections were to follow Capt. Ross Ayers, Asst. S-3, on to the beach. In a smoke screen that some small naval craft were laying, three of the sections became separated from the lead DUKW, and only the third gun section landed behind it. This section was the first artillery piece to land on the invasion, and it immediately went into action. Machine gun nests and other targets that were commanding the beach were neutralized by fire from this gun from its position at a point near the water's edge. During this time, a group of men were unloading ammunition from a DUKW on the beach under artillery fire. Pvt. Richard Ferris, the Battery recorder, was fatally wounded while helping with this task. Capt. Ayers went forward with a telephone, and Lt. George A. Fabian was in command of the gun on the beach. A German artillery piece was adjusting on the howitzer when one of the sergeants came back from the 111st Infantry C. F. and informed Lt. Fabian that the Infantry Colonel was requesting artillery fire. The Lieutenant had the gun turned around while Captain Ayers adjusted fire on targets. Lieutenants Fabian and Leslie L. Blackwell sighted the howitzer on tanks that the cannoners could not see, and Capt. Ayers directed fire against a tank on a nearby hill. The fourth section came in shortly afterward, and began firing immediately. A tank at the south end of the beach pinned everyone down for almost an hour, but naval fire neutralized the attack and the sections joined the rest of the Battalion.

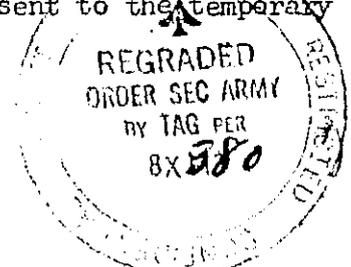
The first and second howitzer sections came out of the smoke screen onto the beach having been turned back from Blue beach because of the intensity of the fire there. They were with the rest of the Battalion and landed somewhat later than the third and fourth sections. These sections went into position about 500 yards from the water and commenced firing. Several German tanks were firing from just over a hill to their front, but these sections under Lt. George J. Cantrell, went into action with the rest of the Battalion.

The Battery Commander's part of Battery "B" landed with the 2nd wave at 0545 on yellow beach. As the landing craft neared the beach it was taken under machine gun fire, but the landing was made without casualty. The B. C. party pushed through with the Infantry about 800 yards inland where enemy tanks halted the advance. The gun battery was unable to occupy its predetermined position and it was necessary for the B. C. party to return to the beach and locate a temporary howitzer position.

The remaining personnel of "B" Battery aboard the U.S.S. O'Hara came in on call under heavy enemy fire. The landing was without casualty. As soon as all trucks and equipment could be pooled they were sent to the temporary howitzer positions.

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The gun sections of Battery "B" landed on Red beach at approximately 0800 September 9th, 1943. The 1st, 2nd, and 4th Sections arrived at an area approximately 1000 yards slightly to the south and directly in from Red Beach. At this position the 3 sections unloaded their own howitzers, and some belonging to "A" and "C" Batteries which were there, and a 57mm. anti-tank gun from another unit. During this time, a section manned a howitzer in the beach dunes and took under fire targets to the left flank from which the enemy fire was coming.

About 1100 the 3rd Section joined the Battery. By this time all guns were in position ready to fire. A limited number of missions were fired, principally at tanks.

About 1530, the Battery was moved from its original position to another position directly across the sand dunes from Yellow beach. From that time on positions were changed regularly. No firing, with the exception of one registration was done after D-day.

The F. O. party of "B" Battery landed in the second wave with "G" Company. Several tanks held up the assault and observation was difficult. About noon the Infantry was within 250 yards of the railroad. Here they spotted a couple of mortars and the F.O. party swept the track for two hundred yards removing this obstacle.

The history of "A" Battery on D-day is very much a repetition of the other two firing batteries. They experienced the same difficulties due to the confused landing - the guns were brought together early in the fight, and targets of opportunity taken under fire. In the course of the landing, Cpl. Carl E. Hargis received a gunshot wound in the side while helping man a cannon company section firing on tanks.

The Battalion position was organized around "A" Battery's guns in the early afternoon when they came under Battalion control.

Major Frank E. Fulgham, the Battalion Commander, and his staff disembarking from different ships, were widely separated in landing. They immediately set about to collect the units together in order to bring the Batteries under Battalion control at the earliest possible moment. This was accomplished around noon, and the Fire Direction Center began immediate operation.

Members of Headquarters Battery were scattered throughout the beached pitching in where a hand was needed - many helping in the gun crews and others aided in the setting up of a defense. Communications were good considering the nature of the operation and were maintained in spite of artillery fire and constant harassing fire from snipers.

Service Battery under Captain Norman K. Snodgrass, landed early in D-day. The following is an account of their operations.

On September 9th, 1943, four officers and 42 enlisted men of Service Battery came ashore. The majority of the battery came ashore from the British ship H. M. S. Orontes. This group consisting of Capt. Snodgrass, Lt. Hahn, and W. O. Odom, with 39 enlisted men landed at about 1500.

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The unit immediately started working it's way south to a given position between Blue and Yellow beach which had been designated by map as an area for Supply groups. This necessitated crossing Red, Green, and Yellow beaches, a distance of about one and one-half miles.

The Medical Detachment under command of Captain Hiram P. Hawk, landed by section with their assigned units and went into action with the batteries.

By nightfall on D-day, the 131st Field Artillery Battalion was dug in about 500 yards inland from Red beach and prepared to support the Infantry, by firing harassing fires during the night. (See Appendix "B").

Casualties for September 9th, 1943 were as follows:

1. Killed in Action:

Cpl. Michael J. Brobeck, Battery "A".  
Pvt. 1cl Harold E. Sarvis, Battery "A".  
Pvt. Alfred R. Lundstrom, Battery "A".  
Pvt. Richard Ferris, Battery "C".

2. Wounded in Action:

Cpl. Carl E. Hargis, Battery "A".  
Cpl. Theodore B. Mlotkowski, Battery "B".

3. Captured:

None.

4. Missing in Action:

T/4 John W. Raper, Battery "C".

D plus 1

Morning of the second day in Italy found the Battalion in much better order than it had been 24 hours previously. Aside from continuing the improvement of position the morning was spent in gathering together the stragglers, de-water-proofing vehicles, and countless other tasks that such an operation makes necessary. The air attacks on the beach continued throughout the morning - one bomb landing in the CP of a shore Battalion some three hundred yards away.

Early in the afternoon Major Fulgham selected a position (See Appendix "B") farther inland and the Battalion moved by Battery, completing the occupation of new positions by nightfall. No action was seen in this sector - contact had been lost early in the morning and never regained.

Casualty for September 10, 1943, T/4 John W. Raper of Battery "C" still missing in action.

D plus 2

Another night passed with one severe air attack in the early morning. Aside from registration, no firing was done on the third day. In a dusk air-raid Cpl. Cato R. McDaniel and Pvt. 1cl Arthur J. Stilwell of Battery "A" and Pvt. 1cl Wayne A. Humphries of Battery "C" were injured by falling AA Fragments. Observers stationed at P is commanding all avenues of

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approach, reported no contact with the enemy. Reconnaissance for new positions was made in the afternoon, and the Battalion displaced across the Solofrome River, under cover of darkness. (See Appendix "B"). Extra guards were placed to repel expected attack from enemy air-borne troops.

Casualties for September 11, 1943 were:

1. Killed in action:

None.

2. Wounded in action:

Cpl. Cato R. McDaniel, Battery "A"  
Pvt. 1cl Arthur J. Stilwell, Battery "A".  
Pvt. 1cl Wayne A. Humphries, Battery "C".

3. Captured:

None.

4. Missing in Action:

T/4 John W. Raper, Battery "C".

D plus 3

Early in the morning of September 12, 1943, Battery "A" was ordered to move to the north sector of the front where a strong enemy counter-attack was developing.

The battery left early in the morning and went into action near Imbrosta (Coord. 85.6 - 13.3). Early in the morning while adjusting his battery from a forward O.P., the Battery Commander, Captain John T. Kershner was killed by an enemy sniper. The battery continued throughout the day under the command of the executive, Lt. Fabian, firing in support of a Battalion of the 36th Engineers. At 1800, the Battery was released from this mission by the 6th Corps Commander and returned to Battalion control.

The remainder of the Battalion spent an uneventful day. There was an unconfirmed report that the enemy was using poison gas from airplanes. Except for the usual air attacks on the beach, the evening was quiet.

Casualties for September 12, 1943, were:

1. Killed in action:

Capt. John T. Kershner  
\* T/4 John W. Raper, Battery "C"

2. Wounded in Action:

None.

3. Captured:

None:



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4. Missing in Action:

None.

\* Sgt. Raper was found to be on the list of the GRC as having been killed on this date.

D plus 4

Around 1330 in the morning Lt. Fabian reported back from the northern mission with Battery "A". During the day, Lt. Kilian H. Mauz was placed in command of "A" Battery. Early in the afternoon the 111st Infantry was pulled out of its positions to be sent to the northern sector to meet a counter-attack. The 111st Infantry was to be replaced by a regiment of the 82nd Airborne Division, who were to land at dusk. These troops were needed in the northern attack however, and by nightfall, the only personnel on the eastern and southern fronts were the Liaison and F.O. parties of the Field Artillery. Reconnaissance was made for night displacement to the north side of the Solofrome.

Capt. Ayers, Lt. Brown, and Lt. Rich left for special duty with 36th Div. Arty., on the northern sector.

D plus 5

The Battalion displaced to its new position at 0200 and by daylight were completely dug in. (See Appendix "B"). Observers from the OP'S reported interception of enemy communications on their radio during the night. Around 0600 a Battalion of 531st Shore Engineers arrived to take over the sector. The remainder of September 14, 1943 passed uneventfully.

D plus 6

Early in the day reports of small British patrols began to come into the CP. The parties were actually elements of the British 8th Army whose exact location had been sought for some time. Little else of importance happened during the day.

D plus 7

Except for intermittent air attacks on the beach, September 18th was a quiet day for the 131st F. A. Battalion. Early in the afternoon a reconnaissance for a position in the northern sector was made.

D plus 8

Nothing of importance occurred on this date other than moving of the Battalion, less "A" Battery, into its new position (see Appendix "B") under cover of darkness. Battery "A" remained in place in the old position to support the 505th Infantry on the southern sector. Captain Ayers, Lt. Brown, and Lt. Rich returned to duty with this organization.



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D plus 9

September 18th passed very quietly with occasional shelling of the Battalion area - no rounds landed within a hundred yards of any installations.

D plus 10

Nothing of importance happened in the 131st Field Artillery Battalion on September 19th, 1943.

D plus 11

Early in the morning word was received that the 36th Division was going into a rest area - reconnaissance of the proposed area was made in the afternoon, and the Battalion alerted to move.

D plus 12

The 131st Field Artillery Battalion moved into its bivouac area, two miles southeast of Persona late in the afternoon on the 21st of September. The Battalion immediately began preparing for a period of intensive training for the next operation.

  
VALDEN P. HINER  
Captain, 131st F. A. Bn.  
S-2

NOTE: The following documents are attached to the original of this narrative:

- Exhibit "A" - Copy of Unit Journal.
- " "B" - Situation Map
- " "C" - Firing Chart.
- " "D" - Record of Firing.
- " "E" - Assignment of Officers.

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AUTH: CG 36 DIV ARTY  
INITIALS:  
DATE: 1 December 1943.

OPERATIONS IN ITALY

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NOVEMBER 1943

A history of the actions of the 131st Field  
Artillery Battalion during the month of November,  
1943 in the Mignano sector.

HISTORIAN:  
VAIDEN P. HINER  
CAPTAIN, 131st F. A. Bn.  
S-2

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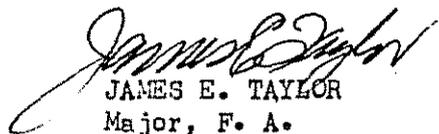
HEADQUARTERS 131ST FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION  
APO #36, U. S. Army

9 December 1943

SUBJECT: Transmittal of History of 131st F. A. Bn. for November, 1943.

TO : COMMANDING GENERAL, 36th Infantry Division, APO #36, U. S. Army.

1. Transmitted herewith the original and seven copies of the history of the 131st F. A. Bn. for the month of November, 1943, per instructions issued in Memorandum #56, Hq., 36th Inf. Div., dated 28 November 1943.

  
JAMES E. TAYLOR  
Major, F. A.  
Commanding

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Operations of the 131st Field Artillery Bn. In Italy, November, 1943.

Monday, November 1, 1943, found the 131st Field Artillery Bn., in the midst of feverish preparations for the operation "Tornado." This was the third (and last) alert that the battalion had drawn in as many weeks. This first operation was different from the two preceding alerts in that it was never intended to be carried out. Of course, only the very few people necessary to its planning and execution knew the intent, so preparations were made in detail. Early the next day, November 2nd, the loading of vehicles was completed, and all personnel, completely equipped even to rations, was aboard by noon. As soon as the shadows had covered the embarkation area sufficiently to screen activities from any local observation, the boats were unloaded, to the amazement of the troops, and all personnel and equipment concealed on the quay in a deserted seaplane hanger. While the convoy proceeded toward Gaeta, as per schedule, the empty decks hidden in the shadow of late evening, the troops were briefed on the plan of the operation. The battalion returned to the bivouac area under cover of darkness elated by the news that the purpose of "Tornado", namely to force a weakening of the central and western German line by withdrawal of troops to meet the invasion threat, had been successful.

Wednesday, November 3rd, was spent largely in de-waterproofing equipment and otherwise restoring to normalcy any changes that had been necessitated by the nature of the operation. Late in the day word was received that the division might go back into the line in the near future. With this in mind, the remainder of the week was spent in careful checking of materiel and equipment for possible last minute needs.

On November 4th, 1st Lt. William G. Brown, O-1166918, Essen Junction, Vermont, was awarded the Silver Star for gallantry in action during the Battle of Salerno. This same date, an advance party left for the central sector of the front to select an assembly area in anticipation of early entrance into combat. The battalion followed on the 6th and 7th, spending two days en route due to the extremely crowded condition of the roads, and went into concealed bivouac two miles southeast of Marzanello.

Here the battalion remained until the night of November 18th carrying on intensive training in spite of constant rain and deep mud that turned all roads into almost impassable bogs. Traffic was reduced to absolute minimum and supply alone became a tremendous problem. On November 10th, Major Fulgham left for a week on temporary duty at Sorrento, Italy.

On November 15th, the Battalion Executive with his party made a careful reconnaissance of the positions of the 39th Field Artillery Bn. in anticipation of relieving them at an early date. This change was delayed until a by-pass could be built around the existing roads as the original net was impassable.



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After dark on November 16th, the Forward Observer section of Battery "A" under the direction of 1st Lt. George N. Mamary, O-1167096, of Brooklyn, N. Y., accompanied the 1st battalion of the 141st Infantry to the front north of Mignano, Italy. T/5 Marion L. Perry, 20813380, of Monte Ray, Calif., was wounded in the back by a shell fragment and evacuated. Condition was not serious.

Major Fulgham returned from Sorrento, Italy, on the 18th to be assigned immediately to Division Artillery. Major James E. Taylor assumed command of the 131st F. A. Bn. on this date, and his first official act was to lead the battalion in its black-out drive through a cold drizzling rain to its new positions at the front. This occupation at positions was very difficult in that the temporary road built to evacuate the 39th F. A. Bn. was very nearly impassable by the time their last elements had cleared. Each vehicle of Headquarters, "B", and "C" Batteries had to be winched up a thirty foot muddy slope that was originally the side of a railroad cut. Finally, just before dawn, the bank itself became such a bog of mud that even light vehicles could no longer be winched up and many of the vehicles of Headquarters Battery had to be sent back to the rear to wait for a new road. In spite of these difficulties, the battalion was ready to fire by daylight and the first concentration was on the way at 0700.

The 19th was spent in improving the almost impossible positions (01.4-07.4). Reconnaissance was made throughout the day to find other routes out of the area but none could be found. Little activity was reported by the CP's and most of the 1,500 rounds fired were on prearranged targets. The battalion area was shelled three times during the day. S/Sgt. Willard M. Hinkle, 20813451, from Tuscaloosa, Alabama, was struck in the chest by a shell fragment while checking a wire line near the Battalion C. P.

The mission of the division was to hold the pass north of Mignano. With this in mind the 141st Infantry set up an intensive patrolling schedule as training for inexperienced recruits and also to develop the experience of leaders occupying new positions. With such a mission the supporting artillery is left with little to do other than constant observation and scheduled missions of harrassing and defensive fires.

The 20th of November might be considered a normal day for the battalion, occasional shells falling in the area but none in numbers. The usual harrassing missions were fired throughout the night. Wire lines began to go out, especially forward lines, due to almost constant shelling of the roads. All supply, including ammunition, was hand-carried from the highway across the deep railroad cut and to the battalion under cover of darkness. Ammunition especially presented a very definite problem. Rounds had to be carried separately down and up the sloping mud bank requiring ammunition sections to be augmented by other personnel. This in itself was no easy matter as the constant shelling was requiring double wire crews to maintain communications and all available men were already working overtime as gun crews in addition to other duties. As one of

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the battery commanders remarked when three calls for extra men came in at once "It can't get any worse, if we can get by this one, boys, we've got it licked."

The 21st marked the beginning of increased enemy artillery shelling. More rounds fell over longer periods. The area surrounding the 131st F. A. Bn. was being occupied nightly by more and more units. Several battalions of 155 mm. howitzers and one of 155 guns were nearby and naturally drew fire. To add to the confusion, several units of T. D. served as roving guns along the crest in front of us. There can be no doubt that these units are responsible for much of the counter-battery fire we received. Our positions were well camouflaged and all pieces had good flash-defilade, but no amount of this will save a position when all the surrounding area is filled with other artillery. Due to increased shelling of the area, all daylight traffic, with the exception of jeeps, was discontinued on Highway #6. Casualties for this date were: Cpl. Clyde Lindsay, 34191418, wounds in left hand and wrist; PFC John M. Boasa, 32335507, slight wound in left lumbar region; and Pvt. Roy W. Green, 39451346, wound in sacral region; all of whom were wounded by a shell bursting near where they were working on wire lines. Cpl. Lindsay refused to be evacuated until the wire was in, an example of the spirit that is being constantly displayed by all the wire crews.

The 22nd found still increased shelling of the area, fire fell almost continuously all afternoon sometimes in groups of four to six rounds, other times single shells at irregular intervals. On this date, Cpl. William D. Campbell, 13061789, was injured by a shell fragment while manning an O. P. at the front. Pvt. William T. Bareford, 13120869, received a shell fragment in his back from a burst near the C. P. S/Sgt. James O. Hall, 20813449, mess sergeant with Battery "B", was injured in the left forearm by a shell fragment while working in his kitchen. The cut across the railroad was filled by Engineers, greatly reducing the supply problem, but also increased the congestion in the already crowded area as two new battalions of artillery moved in on the left flank. While on a mission with the 141st Infantry, the S-2 reported a method of target attack he observed used on one of our neighboring batteries. The German observer first fired one round of HE on a house and followed it immediately with smoke. Then, he moved his fire to another house, well on the other side of the battery, and repeated the process. Then, within one minute, he dropped a battery concentration squarely on the gun positions. The original point of adjustment was about 400 yards to the left front of the battery and the second was a similar distance to the right rear.

November 23rd was unusual in that no shells were reported in the battalion area--very little activity was reported from the front. Late in the afternoon, Pvt. Ralph Craig, 34326770, was injured in the leg by a shell fragment in the vicinity of the 753rd T. D. Bn.

The usual harrassing fires were received on the 24th, some concentrations of six shells, others intermittently throughout the day. Observation at the front was difficult as the forward elements were under heavy fire much of the

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day. Late in the evening, San Pietro was bombed by American planes. Observers reported only one person seen in that vicinity afterwards. No casualties occurred on this date.

November 25th was the third anniversary of the 131st F. A. Bn. in Federal Service. All the old-timers would like to have made a "day" of it, but conditions required "business as usual." Enemy activity increased on the front--some small skirmish with hand grenades being repulsed without loss. Increased motor activity around San Pietro was observed during the night.

November 26th ran true to form. Early in the day advance parties from two more field artillery units arrived, looking for possible positions in our area! And, as usual, there was the daily shelling late in the afternoon. W. O. Bobbie M. Odom, W-2110389, received a head injury from a shell fragment while drawing signal supplies.

Very little happened on the 27th. Wire communications were constantly going out due to the shelling of all areas. The most notable thing was the increased amount of enemy fire and battery concentrations now fell where occasional rounds had been falling. Increased patrol activity was reported from both front line battalions.

November 28th became active early in the morning with twelve rounds of medium shells landing in the area. This fire was repeated several times throughout the day with lighter calibers supplementing. Such fires naturally result in casualties if normal activity is attempted. Sgt. Howard F. Coble, 20813007, was killed instantly when struck in the head by a shell fragment that pierced his helmet as he lay in a slit trench. T/4 Myrle O. Beckman, 37093607, was injured slightly in the arm, and Pvt. John J. McNulty, 32340468, received a slight facial wound when a shell burst in a tree in the motor park of Headquarters Battery. Four men of Battery "B" were injured when a shell burst in the battery position. T/5 James L. Hargrove, 20814017, received a lacerated leg and thigh; T/4 Guy D. Brown, 38060950, was injured in the back; PFC Joseph Uhrin, 33279414, was hit in the leg, necessitating its amputation; and PFC Elmer Jensen, 32301454, was struck by a fragment losing a finger. In Battery "A", shells landed in the gun positions, injuring Pvt. Andres C. Castillo, 38027527, in the left thigh. PFC J. E. Hashert, 38036110, received thigh and leg injuries while checking a line to Battalion. During this same day, two vehicles (3/4 ton weapons carriers), one 1/4 ton trailer, and one 37 mm. anti-tank gun were lost by shellfire. Despite this counter-fire, the battalion delivered the usual amount of fire.

November 29th was a repetition of the previous day with continuous shelling in intervals of comparative quiet. Casualties were heavy as on the day before. Again the motor park was shelled and five men, all of Headquarters Battery, were injured. It is interesting to note that all were engaged in 1st Echelon maintenance at the time the shells hit and their injuries may be due to the positions in which they were working which did not permit time to get in their slit trenches. These men who were performing duties that they

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could have shirked undetected were: PFC William J. Wynn, 13099876, fragment in left wrist; Pvt. Richard J. Herold, 37420533, shell fragment in right shoulder; Pvt. John C. Boyd, 34280188, fragments in left eye, neck and right side; T/4 Myrle C. Beckman, 37193607, fragment in left hand and left arm (this soldier was injured in the same area the day before while performing the same duty); and PFC Ernest F. Glodgett, 31046329, fragments in left shoulder and chest. In this same shelling, one vehicle (a 3/4 ton weapons carrier) was demolished by a direct hit. Two jeeps were partially destroyed by fragments and fire. Slight damage was done to other installations but none serious.

Preparations were made for delivering supporting fires to the 132nd F. A. Bn. in a planned offensive to break the deadlock in the Mignano sector.

November 30th was noteworthy for one thing if nothing else, that is: the troops were paid on time. In numerous other campaigns, quite a bit of complaint arose from the failure to pay on payday. This was the first payday for the battalion while actually in combat and the troops did not fail to note the extra effort it took to get them paid. This definitely makes for confidence in the higher echelons. Some occasional shells were received but nothing like the two previous days. Plans were completed for the support of the 132nd F. A. Bn. in the operation "Raincoat".

The last two weeks of November were characterized by constant rain, chilly winds and a morass of sticky mud in which all normal conditions had to be carried out on schedule. Naturally, supply was a problem as it is even in good weather. Particular commendation is due the train of Service Battery and to the 5th sections of the firing batteries for their round-the-clock flow of ammunition under the most extreme conditions. Rounds were carried separately "Bucket-Brigade" style across a steep railway cut that was under shell fire much of the time until a bridge could be put across the gap. Some idea of their effort can be obtained when one considers that well over 1,000 rounds were expended each night. Rations were handled in the same manner.

Communications, which are always a major problem, lost none of their difficulties in these operations. Everyone knows that wire must be policed off the roads, that no two lines should follow the same route, etc., but in this particular situation even normal precautions did not suffice.

Lines that were lifted completely off the road and up into branches of trees lining the way went out almost as frequently as those on the ground, primarily due to shell fire. However, many times wires were cut by vehicles leaving the road when turning into new areas--at no time were any of these lines repaired--units are seemingly callous to all but their own wire and make no effort to avoid damaging lines of other organizations. W 130 is unsatisfactory in mountains for two reasons: it is not sufficiently insulated to withstand the slightest pull over rocks, resulting in grounded circuits in wet weather; it is so limber that it kinks and breaks unless laid tight which is impossible in mountainous terrain, especially if wire is laid hurriedly under fire. W 110 stays in if laid well off the trail and away from roads



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where troops and pack trains do not follow. Radio communications are satisfactory though a marked decrease in the life of BA 40 batteries was reported. Some batteries issued as the only ones available were well past the expiration date. Particular attention needs to be paid to the number of linemen authorized by T. O. The conditions of this operation are not too extreme, and we must admit that the present strength does not provide even half enough linemen to maintain normal nets. Wire stayed in only because men were "stolen" from other sections to maintain a round-the-clock service. This results in inefficiency in the short sections and will seriously affect the operation of any unit if continued for any length of time.

Other outstanding work in this operation was that of the LO and FO sections who laid and maintained their own wire from the wirehead while carrying on their other duties<sup>as</sup> well. Frequently these lines were repaired under shell fire. Special mention too is due the Medical Detachment for their continued work under shell fire, which in several cases saved lives that would have been lost had they waited for the shelling to cease.

In spite of frequent periods of shelling, firing was never suspended for a moment throughout the operation. Gun crews worked day and night keeping their position free of water and in firing order, maintaining a 24-hour schedule of fires. For the first time, this unit employed high-angle fire and maintained an average of 1,400 rounds per day since going into action at 0700, 18 November 1943.

  
VALDEN P. HINER  
Capt., 131st F.A. Bn.  
S-2

NOTE: The following documents are attached to the original of this document:

- Exhibit A - Copy of Unit Journal
- Exhibit B - Situation Map
- Exhibit C - Firing Chart
- Exhibit D - Record of Firing

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UNIT BATTLE CASUALTY LIST

<u>NAME</u>	<u>RANK</u>	<u>A.S.N.</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>TYPE</u>	<u>RESIDENCE</u>
				<u>Headquarters Battery</u>	
Lindsay, Olyde	Cpl	34191418	21 Nov	SF, left wrist and hand.	Knoxville, Tennessee
Green, Roy W.	Pvt	39451346	21 Nov	SF, sacral region	Eddy, Washington
Boasa, John M.	PFC	32335507	21 Nov	SF, left lumbar reg.	Somerville, Mass.
Campbell, William D.	Cpl	13061789	22 Nov	SF, right deltoid	Butler, Pennsylvania
Bareford, William T.	Pvt	13120869	22 Nov	SF, post-scapular reg.	Ozeana, Virginia
Craig, Ralph	Pvt	34326770	23 Nov	SF, leg injury.	Knoxville, Tennessee
Coble, Howard F.	Sgt	20813007	28 Nov	KIA, SF, head.	Lubbock, Texas
Beckman, Myrle C.	T/4	37093607	28 Nov	SF, right arm.	St. Paul, Minn.
Mc Nulty, John J.	Pvt	32340468	28 Nov	SF, facial	New York, N. Y.
Wym, William J.	PFC	13099876	29 Nov	SF, left wrist.	Wilkes-Barre, Penna.
Herold, Richard J.	Pvt	37420533	29 Nov	SF, right shoulder	Calmar, Iowa.
Boyd, John G.	Pvt	34280188	29 Nov	SF, left eye, neck, rt. side.	Franklin, Tennessee
Beckman, Myrle C.	T/4	37193607	29 Nov	SF, left hand, comp. frac., left arm.	St. Paul, Minn.
Glodgett, Ernest F.	PFC	31046329	29 Nov	SF, left shoulder, blast of chest.	Barton, Vermont

Battery "A"

Perry, Marion L.	T/5	20813380	16 Nov	SF, back	Monte Ray, Calif.
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<u>NAME</u>	<u>RANK</u>	<u>A.S.N.</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>TYPE</u>	<u>RESIDENCE</u>
Castillo, Andres G.	PFC	38027527	28 Nov	SF, left thigh	Spoffard, Texas
Hashert, J. E.	PFC	38036110	28 Nov	SF, right thigh, left leg.	Grand Saline, Texas

Battery "B"

Hinkle, Willard M.	S/Sgt	20813451	19 Nov	SF, mid-thorax	Tuscaloosa, Alabama
Hall, James O.	S/Sgt	20813449	22 Nov	SF, left forearm.	Amarillo, Texas
Hargrove, James L.	T/5	20814017	28 Nov	SF, right leg and thigh.	Abilene, Texas
Brown, Guy D.	T/4	38060950	28 Nov	SF, back	Tokio, Texas
Uhrin, Joseph	PFC	35279414	28 Nov	SF, left leg. (amputated)	Latrode, Penna.
Jensen, Elmer	PFC	32301454	28 Nov	SF, left middle finger.	Falls River, New Jersey

Service Battery

Odom, Bobbie M.	W.O.	W-2110389	26 Nov	SF, head.	Lubbock, Texas
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CONSOLIDATED BATTLE CASUALTY LIST

131st Field Artillery Battalion.

KILLED IN ACTION

<u>NAME</u>	<u>RANK</u>	<u>A.S.N.</u>	<u>UNIT</u>
Coble, Howard F.	Sgt.	20813007	Hq. Btry.

WOUNDED IN ACTION

<u>NAME</u>	<u>RANK</u>	<u>A.S.N.</u>	<u>UNIT</u>
Lindsay, Clyde	Cpl	34191418	Hq. Btry.
Green, Roy W.	Pvt	39451346	Hq. Btry.
Boasa, John M.	Pvt	32335507	Hq. Btry.
Campbell, William D.	Cpl	13061789	Hq. Btry.
Bareford, William T.	Pvt	13120869	Hq. Btry.
Craig, Ralph	Pvt	34326770	Hq. Btry.
Beckman, Myrle O.	T/4	37093607	Hq. Btry. (Twice wounded)
Mc Nulty, John J.	Pvt	32340468	Hq. Btry.
Wynn, William J.	PFC	13099876	Hq. Btry.
Herold, Richard J.	Pvt	37420533	Hq. Btry.
Boyd, John C.	Pvt	34280188	Hq. Btry.
Glodgett, Ernest F.	PFC	31046329	Hq. Btry.
Perry, Marion L.	T/5	20813380	Btry. "A"
Castillo, Andres C.	Pvt	38027527	Btry. "A"
Hashert, J. E.	PFC	38036110	Btry. "A"
Hinkle, Willard M.	S/Sgt	20813451	Btry. "B"
Hall, James O.	S/Sgt	20813449	Btry. "B"
Hargrove, James L.	T/5	20814017	Btry. "B"
Brown, Guy D.	T/4	38030950	Btry. "B"
Uhrin, Joseph	PFC	33279414	Btry. "B"
Jensen, Elmer	PFC	32301454	Btry. "B"

Officers and Warrant Officers

WOUNDED IN ACTION

Odom, Bobbie M.	W.O.	W-2110389	Serv. Btry.
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HEADQUARTERS 151st Field Artillery

7 January 1944

SUBJECT: Transmittal of History of 151st F. A. for December 1943.

TO : COMMANDING GENERAL, 554th Inf. Div., AFM 348, Div., APO 356, U. S. Army.

1. Transmitted herewith the original and five copies of the history of the 151st Field Artillery Battalion for the month of December 1943, per instructions issued in Memorandum #39, HQ, 554th Inf. Div., dated 29 December 1943.

*James S. Taylor*  
 JAMES S. TAYLOR  
 Major, Field Artillery  
 Commanding

CLASSIFIED BY: [redacted] REAS: [redacted]  
 CA CANCELED  
 BY: [redacted] THE ADJUTANT GENERAL  
 Lt Bullis [redacted] (2 July 40)

*[Handwritten signature]*

JUL 3 1947

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OPERATIONS IN ITALY

\* \* \* \* \*

DECEMBER 1943

. A history of the actions of the 131st Field Artillery Battalion during the month of December, 1943 in the Mignano and Venafro sectors.

HISTORIAN:  
VAIDEN P. HINER  
CAPTAIN, 131st F. A. Bn.

**RESTRICTED**



Operations of the 131st Field Artillery Battalion In Italy, December, 1943,

The terrain north of Mignano is a peculiar arrangement of mountains and valleys with peaks rising abruptly from the valley floor. Two of these small hillocks (small in comparison to the tremendous masses on either side) namely, Rotundo and Lungo, form a natural stopper in the bottleneck of the Liri Valley. These two points had been occupied (completely in the case of the former and only partially in the latter) by the 141st Infantry in mid-November with the 131st Field Artillery Battalion in close support. No attempt had been made to enter the valley because the heights on either side were controlled by the enemy.

Late in November, plans had been completed to take the mountains on the left and the 131st Field Artillery Battalion was assigned the mission of rendering close support to the 142nd Infantry Combat Team reinforced by Special Troops.

The 1st of December found the 131st Field Artillery Battalion still in the support of the 141st Infantry but completing plans for the coming attack. The usual amount of enemy shells were received in the battalion area with no casualties reported. Little of note occurred other than the report from an L. C. that a Nebelwerfer had been located near San Vittore. Pvt. Ross Darnell, 34352182, of Btry. C, was reported injured in the foot by a falling rock while carrying supplies up Mt. Lungo.

December 2nd opened with a bang--enemy shelling began at 0143 and continued intermittently for two hours. This was repeated throughout the day resulting in the injury of Sgt. William L. Mc Callum, 34170792, of Btry. C, and the loss of two jeeps, one of which was the battalion commanders, the second he had lost within a week. PFC William G. Talley, 37208053, of Hq. Btry., was injured in the shoulder and chest by shell fragments while trouble-shooting the wire to his liaison section. In the afternoon, the tempo of artillery barrages on the enemy began to increase and large flights of bombers appeared to drop their loads over the objective in preparation for the attack.

The cannonading continued throughout the night and the attack jumped off on schedule to the tune of a "serenade". Early in the morning, reports of initial successes began to come back. The British took Hill 963 at 0100; Special Service Troops took Hill 960 at 0445. The 131st Field Artillery continued firing throughout the day, receiving heavy concentrations of counterbattery fire from the eastern sector.





. Most of the resistance on the eastern hills had ceased by dawn of the 4th. The western sector, however, was a different story. Hill 907 was taken by the Special Service Troops and as quickly lost. Hill 963 taken earlier by the British fell to a counterattack. Normal firing continued throughout the day, the only casualty being Pvt. John T. Leach, of Btry. B, whose cave in which he was sleeping collapsed due to the intense firing and suffocated him.

December 5th was rather quiet throughout with little or no activity; five ME 109's attacked our air-CP but no damage was done.

Early in the morning of December 6th, a freak accident occurred in Btry. B. A shell case ruptured and a small bit of brass shot from between the breach-block and barrel and pierced the chest of gunner Cpl. Wayne F. Driskill, 20813434. Reconnaissance was initiated for new position in the Venafro area to support a drive on the mountains to the east. During the afternoon, the ground lost the two days previous was regained and the area consolidated. Late in the afternoon, an air-CP was shot down by German aircraft, the pilot and observer escaping by parachute.

Most of the daylight hours of December 7th was spent in preparing for the night occupation, gun pits were dug, gun positions surveyed, and wire laid so that a minimum of activity would be required by night. For the first phase the battalion was in support of the 3rd Ranger Battalion and liaison was established with them early in the day. The battalion moved out under cover of darkness and reported ready to fire before midnight.

December 8th was uneventful, the 131st Field Artillery Battalion, remained in direct support of the 3rd Ranger Battalion. The following two days were equally quiet, the only notable occurrence being the arrival of six new officers, assigned as forward observers. The 91st Field Artillery Battalion arrived to reinforce the fire of the 131st Field Artillery Battalion.

December 11th dawned into perfect air raid weather and the Dutchmen took early advantage of the opportunity to bomb the valley in which the battalion was located. One bomb fell in the "C" Battery gun position, injuring 1st Lt. William B. Merchant, O-397121, in the right arm and Pvt. William K. Sullivan, 33525060, in the left leg. In "B" Battery, bomb fragments injured T/5 Carlos Arrington, 34141111, and T/5 James L. Hargrove, 20814017, while working in the kitchen; Pvts. Edward J. Walsh, 36247618, and George Davidson, 33275985, received similar wounds nearby. Pvt. Billy O'Neal, 20813528, and Pvt. Harold G. Goddard, 34352790, were injured by bomb fragments and flying rocks when enemy aircraft made a second run around noon.

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Late in the afternoon, a third raid over the forward area resulted in a head injury to Pvt. Thomas G. Cross, 20813205, of Hq. Btry., as he was joining the 3rd Ranger Battalion with the L. C. group.

The morning of December 12th passed uneventfully. Early in the afternoon, General Walker arrived and presented Legion of Merit Awards to Capt. Hiram P. Hawk, O-355991, for performance beyond the call of duty during an air raid in Cran, Algeria; to T/4 Dillon L. Wilkes, 34093568, for work done on an improved sight; and to T/5 Frank J. Kroemer, 32396845, for work on computer tables. Later in the afternoon, one of the forward OP's received a heavy shelling and 2nd Lt. Raymond A. Grossman, O-1176647, was injured in the leg. He remained at his post, however, directing fire on the enemy until the counterattack was repulsed. During the same shelling, Cpl. Richard Andrews, 38065256, was reported injured, but has been listed as missing in action since. He was one of the first selective service men to join the battery and was the senior FO member having been in the section since first organized.

The following day, Lt. Richard L. Brown, O-1169875, who replaced the FO injured by shell fire was himself injured in a similar manner when an enemy concentration was placed on the CP. Lt. Brown was the only survivor of a group of five officers occupying the OP at the time. The 3rd Ranger Battalion was relieved and the 131st Field Artillery Battalion remained in support of the 504th Airborne Infantry with the additional mission of supporting the 143rd Infantry on the left.

Enemy aircraft appeared again early on the 14th dropping bombs nearby with no damage to any of our installations. An extra issue of one blanket per individual was made in anticipation of cold weather. The following day, a P-51 jettisoned a bomb over "A" Battery, but no damage was done.

Little <sup>of</sup> importance occurred on the 15th other than the firing of propaganda leaflets and the arrival of Lt. Ubls with twenty enlisted men replacements. The 1st Battalion, 141st Infantry replaced the 143rd Infantry so that the 131st Field Artillery reverted to support of its normal Infantry Combat Team with the auxiliary mission of direct support to the 504th Airborne Infantry.

Nothing of importance occurred on the 17th of December.

Following a concentration of fire around noon, 18th of December, observers reported the enemy raised a Red Cross flag to stop further fire presumably to remove their wounded and dead. This was the first incident of this

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kind in this sector, though previous reports had indicated similar action in other fronts. The battalion was alerted to move to new positions.

The following day advance elements preparing the new positions were bombed and strafed, resulting in the following casualties: Capt. Milton F. Riessen, O-397297, injured in left wrist, thigh and leg; Pvt. Patrick Porcaro, 32770849, Btry. C, who died with bomb fragments in the back and leg; Pvt. James R. Page, 34170572, and Cpl. Horace T. Rabon, 34097019, Btry. C, who also received injuries from bomb fragments. The battalion survey team was working in the vicinity and received the following injuries from concussion and bomb fragments: T/4 Ralph Korn, 35230630, right thigh and abdomen; S/Sgt. Francis E. Howell, 38050817, compound fracture of left leg; PFC Franklyn F. Sandholm, 37420602, neck, right arm and pinneal region; PFC Dorsey L. Lynam, 32267596, left thigh; Pvt. William B. Eerdman, 16088202, thigh and head; T/5 Frank J. Kroemer, 32396802, legs and face. Late in the afternoon, elements of the battalion began moving into the new area. Due to congested traffic, occupation was delayed but all batteries reported ready to fire by dawn. Again on the 20th, the white flag episode was repeated. Observers reported Germans carrying a white flag seemingly evacuating an installation several thousand yards away. It could not be determined at the distance whether or not the white flag contained a red cross. The new area was inspected by the Division Artillery Commander early in the afternoon.

Around noon, December 21st, 2nd Lt. William K. Hofius, O-1175280, was injured by friendly artillery fire falling on his CP.

On the 22nd of December, the 131st Field Artillery was relieved from support of the 504th Airborne Infantry and began immediate plans to support the attack of the 141st Infantry on San Vittore.

Heavy rains continued throughout the next day making the handling of ammunition, which was already a problem, even worse. Much of it had to be hand-carried up muddy slopes as vehicles could not get off the road.

The day before Christmas dawned bright and clear as if in atonement for the previous week of almost steady drizzle. A few German planes made a half-hearted attempt at a raid and retired in confusion leaving one member a victim to our anti-aircraft fire.

December 25th was a beautiful sunshining day from the start, quite a contrast from the previous Christmas spent on Cape Cod where the men ploughed through knee-deep snow to eat the traditional turkey dinner. Despite the fact that everyone was far from home, the Christmas spirit and cheer was in everyone's heart. Services were held for all denominations

[REDACTED]



while many soldiers attended mass at local churches. Some units in better situations than others had small Christmas trees, but all indulged in the usual "turkey and trimmings" that Uncle Sam is so determined that even the front-line troops shall have. This wasn't the best Christmas that could be had, but under the circumstances, everyone was well satisfied. Normal firing continued throughout the day, no casualties being reported.

Upon the following day the clouds returned as if the respite had been just a break for Christmas--little activity was forthcoming. Late in the day, word was received that the unit might be replaced at an early date to give the troops a much needed rest and replace equipment.

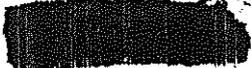
Orders were received upon the 27th to move back to the rest area and an advance party left immediately. An air raid occurred around noon--no bombs hit in the immediate area though one battery was strafed with no resulting damage. Early in the afternoon, the number 2 piece at "B" Battery was damaged when powder bags were ignited near the pit setting fire to the camouflage net and resulting in the explosion of ammunition stored nearby. The only casualty was PFC Russell Nicholls, Jr., 1307933, of Binchampton, N.Y., who received a fragment in the hand.

During the early morning of December 28th, the battalion began moving to the rest area near San Angelo by infiltration. Firing continued as long as one piece remained. Requests for artillery fire had decreased considerably since the withdrawal of the Germans in our immediate area on the 18th and 19th so that such a displacement was possible. The outstanding feature of the day was steak for supper.

The remainder of December was uneventful, much of the time being used in making camp and cleaning of equipment, and renewing inoculations that had become due during combat. During the afternoon, of the 31st of December, the entire battalion passed through the "de-lousing" showers, receiving complete new clothing in exchange, so that they were truly ready for a "new" beginning at midnight.

During this month of combat several facts have become evident. Much of our firing was long range which is not desirable for even short periods of time. To this was added the difficulty of high-angle fire which is also detrimental over extended periods. The combinations of these two resulted in some trouble where the left trail joins the equalizer.

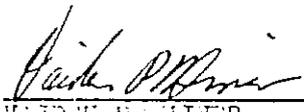
In terrain of this type where steep, rocky slopes must be climbed and often held under fire, LO and FO sections must carry only a very minimum of clothing and equipment in order to keep mobile. We found that one shelter-half and one blanket is all that can be taken as each person, including the officer, must be responsible for his own equipment. In addition to this each





man carries a raincoat and rations for two days. It has been found advisable to exchange the field-bag for an infantry pack as latter will accomodate the complete individual equipment allowing more freedom of movement while climbing. When radios are used a minimum reserve of one BA 39 and three BA 40 must be maintained. It is advisable to establish wire communications as early as possible so that maximum portage can be used for rations. These forward parties should be relieved at least every five days in order to maintain average combat efficiency. It has been found that equipment deteriorates rapidly under such conditions due to necessary rough usage and lack of facilities for proper maintenance of signal equipment. A pool of trained replacements for these parties is as vast as the normal reserve personnel is used in delivering necessary supplies to the sections.

High-angle fire must be used in terrain of this type in order to give close-in support. Flat-trajectory weapons invariably fired in friendly areas when attempting to place fires on close-in targets. Much closer control of attached units equipped with these weapons is desirable.

  
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VALDE F. HINER  
Capt., 131st F. A. Bn.  
Historian

NOTE: The following documents are attached to the original of this document:

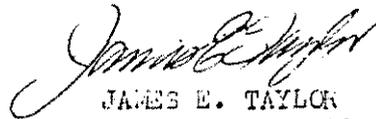
- Exhibit A - Copy of Unit Journal
- Exhibit B - Situation Map
- Exhibit C - Firing Chart Overlays
- Exhibit D - Record of Firing
- Exhibit E - Citations and Condensations
- Exhibit F - Copies of Hi-Bursta (Unit newspaper)

From the 1st to the 24th of December, 1950, this Battalion supported the 141st Infantry. As a result of this support, we were placed in direct support of the 3rd Ranger Battalion and remained in support of this Battalion until they were relieved by the 101st Airborne Infantry. We continued to support this force on Hills 1207 and 250, until relieved on December 28th.

Casualties during this period were caused primarily by air attacks. The most efficient remedy would be an adequate distant air-warning service for anti-aircraft units protecting installations. Local air-warning personnel cannot warn personnel in time to take cover. Nor does it give local anti-aircraft crews time to set on targets before the damage is done.

Lessons learned during this period include:

- a. Strip down personnel, vehicles and installations in forward gun positions.
- b. Arrange for at least 8-1/3 per cent of personnel to be at a rest camp during combat operations. This will reduce hospitalization rates and increase efficiency of combat units.
- c. Use air-OP's to register. The time required for observers to get in position is thereby saved. This sometimes saves four to six hours in registration.
- d. Aerial photography and C-2 information proves more satisfactory than map study of terrain in selection of targets for preparation and covering fires.



JAMES E. TAYLOR  
Major, Field Artillery  
Commanding

## SECRET

UNIT BATTLE CASUALTY LIST

<u>NAME</u>	<u>RANK</u>	<u>A.S.N.</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>TYPE</u>	<u>RESIDENCE</u>
<u>Headquarters Battery</u>					
Talley, William G.	PFC	37208055	Dec. 2	BF, chest and shoulder	Eureka, Kansas
Gross, Thomas G.	Pvt.	20813205	Dec. 11	BF, head	Buffalo Gap, Texas
Horn, Ralph	T/4	33230630	Dec. 19	BF, abdomen and head	Harrisburg, Pa.
Howell, Francis E.S/Sgt		38050817	Dec. 19	BF, left leg	Pasadena, Texas
Sandholm, Franklyn P.	PFC	37420602	Dec. 19	BF, rt. arm and pinneal reg.	Red Oak, Iowa
Lynan, Dorsey L.	PFC	32267596	Dec. 19	BF, left thigh	New Castle, Del.
Eerdman, William B.	Pvt	15088202	Dec. 19	BF, thigh and head.	Grand Rapids, Mich.
Kroeber, Frank J.	T/5	32396802	Dec. 19	BF, legs and face.	New York, N. Y.
<u>Battery "A"</u>					
Hofius, William K.	2nd Lt.	0-1173280	Dec. 21	SF, back, legs and arms.	Ventura, Calif.
Oneel, Billy (MMI)	Pvt	20813328	Dec. 11	BF, right thigh	Plainview, Texas
Goddard, Harold G.	Pvt	34352790	Dec. 11	BF, right leg	Woodstock, Pa.
<u>Battery "B"</u>					
Brown, Richard L.	2nd Lt.	0-1168875	Dec. 13	SF, right leg and hand.	Jackson, Tenn.
Leach, John T.	Pvt	36247889	Dec. 4	Smothered	Greenwood, Wis.
Driskill, Wayne F.	Opl	20813434	Dec. 6	SF, chest	Conway, Texas
Arrington, Carlos	T/5	34141111	Dec. 11	BF, back	Lebanon, Tenn.
Margrove, James L.	T/5	20814017	Dec. 11	BF, left leg	Abilene, Texas
Walsh, Edward J.	Pvt.	35247618	Dec. 11	BF, back	Lannon, Wis.
Davidson, George	Pvt	33275985	Dec. 11	BF, left wrist	Kensington, Pa.
Nichols, Russell	PFC	13079933	Dec. 27	SF, hand	Sinshampton, N. Y.
<u>Battery "C"</u>					
Merchant, William B.	1st Lt.	0-397121	Dec. 11	BF, rt. arm	Wichita Falls, Tex.
Grossman, Raymond A.	2nd Lt.	0-1175647	Dec. 12	SF, rt. leg	Chicago, Illinois
Riessen, Milton F.	Capt.	0-397297	Dec. 19	BF, lt. wrist and leg.	Wichita Fall, Tex.

SECRET

- 7 -

## SECRET

<u>NAME</u>	<u>RANK</u>	<u>A.P.N.</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>TYPE</u>	<u>RESIDENCE</u>
Darnell, Ross	Fvt	54352112	Dec. 1	Crushed foot	Rabon Gap, Ga.
Mc Callum, William L.	Sgt	34170792	Dec. 2	SF, neck	Star, N. C.
Sullivan, William H.	Fvt	33525060	Dec. 11	BF, lt. leg	Richmond, Va.
Andrews, Richard	Cpl	58065255	Dec. 12	MIA	El Paso, Texas
Forcaro, Patrick	Fvt.	32770842	Dec. 19	KIA, BF, back and legs	Paterson, N.J.
Page, James R.	Fvt	34170572	Dec. 19	BF, back	Dunn, N. C.
Rabon, Horace T.	Cpl	34097019	Dec. 19	BF, rt. thigh	Lugoff, N. C.

SECRET

- 8 -

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CONSOLIDATED BATTLE CASUALTY LIST

Killed in Action

<u>NAME</u>	<u>RANK</u>	<u>A.S.N.</u>	<u>UNIT</u>
Leach, John T.	Pvt	55247869	Btry. "B"
Porcaro, Petrick	Pvt	52770849	Btry. "C"
Horn, Ralph	T/4	52250630	Hq. Btry.

Wounded in Action

Officers

<u>NAME</u>	<u>RANK</u>	<u>A.S.N.</u>	<u>UNIT</u>
Riessen, Milton F.	Capt.	0-397297	Btry. "C"
Merchant, William B.	1st Lt.	0-597121	Btry. "C"
Grossman, Raymond A.	2nd Lt.	0-1175547	Btry. "C"
Brown, Richard L.	2nd Lt.	0-1158875	Btry. "B"
Hofius, William K.	2nd Lt.	0-1173280	Btry. "A"

Enlisted Men

<u>NAME</u>	<u>RANK</u>	<u>A.S.N.</u>	<u>UNIT</u>
Talley, William G.	PFC	57208055	Hq. Btry.
Cross, Thomas G.	Pvt	20813205	Hq. Btry.
Howell, Francis E.	S/Sgt	38050817	Hq. Btry.
Sandholm, Franklyn F.	PFC	57420602	Hq. Btry.
Lynam, Dorsey L.	PFC	52257596	Hq. Btry.
Eerdman, William B.	Pvt	16088202	Hq. Btry.
Kroemer, Frank J.	T/5	32396882	Hq. Btry.
Oneal, Billy (M.I.)	Pvt	20813320	Btry. "A"
Goddard, Harold G.	Pvt	34352790	Btry. "A"
Driskill, Wayne F.	Cpl	20813454	Btry. "B"
Arrington, Carlos	T/5	34141111	Btry. "B"
Hargrove, James L.	T/5	20814017	Btry. "B"
Walsh, Edward J.	Pvt	36247618	Btry. "B"
Davidson, George W.	Pvt	35275985	Btry. "B"
Nichols, Russell, Jr.	Pvt	13079933	Btry. "B"
Page, James R.	Pvt	34170572	Btry. "C"
Rabon, Horace T.	Cpl	34097019	Btry. "C"
Darnell, Ross	Pvt	34352182	Btry. "C"
Mc Callum, William L. Jr.	Sgt	34170792	Btry. "C"
Sullivan, William H.	Pvt	34326060	Btry. "C"

SECRET

- 9 -

SECRET

Missing in Action

<u>NAME</u>	<u>RANK</u>	<u>A.S.N.</u>	<u>UNIT</u>
Andrews, Richard	Cpl	58065266	Btry. "C"

SECRET

- 10 -

February 1944

SUBJECT: Transmittal of History of the 1st F. A. Bn., For January 1944.

TO : Commanding General, 5th Inf. Div., APO 35, U. S. Army.

1. Transmitted herewith the original and six copies of the history of the 1st Field Artillery Battalion, entitled, "Operations in Italy, January 1944".

2. During the above period, there were no replacements of enlisted personnel assigned to this Battalion.

3. No members of this organization have received any citations or decorations during the month of January 1944.



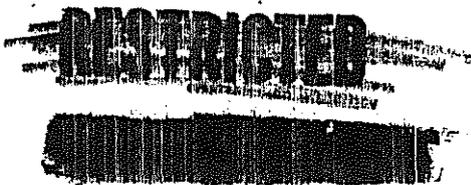
*James S. Taylor*  
JAMES S. TAYLOR  
Major, Field Artillery  
Commanding

336-FA(131)-03

JUL 8 1944

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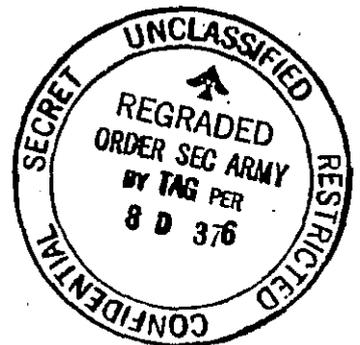


OPERATIONS IN ITALY

.....

JANUARY 1944

A history of the actions of the 131st Field Artillery Battalion during the month of January 1944 in the Venafro and Cassino sectors.



HISTORIAN:  
VAIDEN P. HIRER  
CAPTAIN, 131st F.A. Bn.



35



Operations of the 131st Field Artillery Battalion In Italy, January 1944.

1944 was greeted by the 131st Field Artillery Battalion with a mixed feeling of chagrin and elation--chagrined because there were lacking so many traditional items with which to usher in the New Year and elated because each man was determined in his own mind that this is The Year of World War II--the year that spelled utter defeat for the Axis machine.

This feeling of elation was somewhat squelched in the first few hours of 1944 when a terrific gale of sleet and snow struck the tent camp just as the Battalion was retiring after greeting 1944 with as much of a traditional ceremony as the situation permitted. The remainder of darkness was spent in trying to keep the tents from blowing completely away and daylight found hardly a half dozen tents standing in the bivouac area. Immediately the men set about putting things to order, some raising those tents which could be used, others scouring the country-side searching for wind-blown equipment and belongings. The "saddest sack" by popular acclaim was the mess sergeant of Headquarters Battery who arose to find the kitchen tent completely gone and the first real eggs in months scattered (and scrambled!) throughout the ration pile and turkeys that should have lost all aspirations for air navigation when they were plucked had surprisingly taken to flight. Despite these and similar handicaps, the Battalion sat down that day to a meal that rivaled the Christmas dinner a week previous--this in itself is a commendation to the resourcefulness of the kitchen crew.

January 2nd dawned bright and clear and no time was lost in spreading the water-soaked clothing and equipment out to dry. Tentage was drawn to replace that which was ruined by the storm and by nightfall, the bivouac area had assumed a reasonable degree of normalcy.

On the following day, plans for an extended period of reorganization and training were cut short with the receipt of orders to return to the front in direct support of the Special Service Troops in their attack on the heights before Cassino. Reconnaissance parties left early in the day and the remainder of the Battalion prepared to follow the next day.

The move back into the lines near Venafro was made early in the morning of the 4th of January and liaison was established with the 2nd Regiment of the Special Service Force for their attack on Hill 724. This objective was taken without opposition other than occasional artillery and mortar fire. During one of the mortar concentrations on the 5th, Bruno, 32257851, Headquarters Battery, was injured in the right leg while laying wire to his L. C. on Hill 724. In the late evening of the same day



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a gale of proportions similar to that of January 1st hit the area so that little enemy activity was forthcoming. During the night, the 2nd Regiment, Special Service Force, was relieved by Company "B" of the 142nd Infantry and our forward parties joined the 1st Regiment, Special Service Force, in their move on Hill 1109 the following day.

Observation during this time was limited due to snow flurries and clouds so that little activity occurred in the gun positions other than sporadic firing.

The story up front with the forward sections was different. Many difficulties appeared that had not presented themselves before. Due to the extreme cold, extra clothing was essential as well as additional blankets. Much of this was carried on the person, as all available mules were employed in carrying necessary ammunition and rations. Water supply was obtained very largely from melted snow.

On the night of January 6th, the attack by the 1st Regiment, Special Service Force, on Hill 1109 was frustrated by unexpected resistance encountered on an intermediate mountain. The force was compelled to take this barrier upon which they had not anticipated resistance, and so were far from their objective at dawn of the 7th. Due to the unexpected resistance at this point, many casualties had occurred, necessitating a withdrawal to the original IP for the purpose of reorganization and resupply. Fortunately, none of our forward parties were wounded. Late in the day, an additional Forward Observer section arrived and went into the attack at midnight with the 3rd Battalion, 133rd Infantry, the original section remaining with the 1st Regiment, Special Service Force. This attack resulted in the taking of the objective with little resistance, and by morning the positions were consolidated and prepared for defense.

During this time the Battalion had been firing Charges 6 and 7, so that the advances made it imperative to move up. Reconnaissance for new areas was completed late in the afternoon of the 9th.

Early in the following morning, survey was initiated in the new area and positions prepared with the aid of a bull-dozer from the Engineers. The positions were occupied after night-fall and the batteries reported ready to fire by midnight. Heavy mortar fire was being received in the forward areas late in the afternoon of the 11th. While manning an O.P. on Hill 1270, Pvt. Ray W. Glover, 20813445, Battery "B"; Opl. Burgin C. Gregg, 34170545, and Pvt. James H. Palermio, 34183260, both of Battery "A", were injured by mortar fire and had to be evacuated. The 36th Division Artillery was now in the line reinforcing the fire of the 6th Armored Field Artillery group.

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The new area was rather crowded, as a group of tanks that were supposed to have cleared were still there. The front lines were only 2,000 yards away but none of the expected counterbattery fire was received. Perhaps this lack of enemy fire was due to the fact that all vehicles were sent to the rear and all traffic was done under cover of darkness.

On January 12th, the Battalion was relieved of its mission of supporting the Special Service Force and returned to the normal mission of direct support of the 141st Infantry in their attack on Mt. Trocchio. During this time there were frequent air-raids along the front by both our own and enemy air forces, but no damage to our installations resulted. Much of the next two days was spent in perfecting plans for the assault. Early on the 15th, the attack had begun, and by noon, most of the objective had been taken. On the following day, the hill had been secured and consolidated. Plans were immediately made to move to a position well forward to support the forthcoming crossing of the Rapido River.

On the 17th of January, advance parties went to the new position area to clear it of mines and dig gun pits. Intense patrolling of the Rapido was begun near the sector in which crossings were to be made. Many small wooden mines were encountered with casualties to patrols.

Patrolling continued throughout the 18th with further reports of mines and booby-traps. Final preparations of positions near Santa Lucia was completed and the Battalion moved in under cover of darkness.

During the 19th, positions were improved and OP's established to control fires for the attack. Smoke screens were observed in the distance and some activity could be discerned through the haze; however, due to the distance the nature of their activities could not be determined. Further activity was noted in the vicinity of houses across the river indicating that the positions were strongly held.

The daylight hours of January 20th were spent in final preparations for the attack and crossing of the Rapido River. Liaison with the 175th Field Artillery Battalion, the 155th Field Artillery Battalion, and the 11th Engineers was established early and by nightfall, everything was in readiness. At dusk, demonstrations were begun by the units on our flanks in conjunction with the preparation fired by our own troops. These fires were answered by only moderate amounts of enemy fire, quite a few flares of various colors and some Nebelwerfer fires. By 2115 hours, the main body of the 1st Battalion, 141st Infantry was across the river.

  
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Much of the activity during this period was hidden by a mixture of smoke and fog which only thinned during midday and never offered even moderate visibility. Reports came through all night of the attempted crossings which were continued throughout the day under cover of the smoke. Late in the afternoon, of the 21st of January, there was considerable increase in the enemy firing. During an artillery concentration, Lt. Richard L. Brown, O-1169875, Forward Observer from Battery "B", was wounded in the face and right side by shell fragments. Pvt. Robert W. Kofahl, 32535096, of Battery "B" FO party, was reported missing in action. Crossings were made by boat with some casualties due to sinking. The foot bridge was finally in place and work started with a Bailey Bridge. During the entire proceedings, a heavy smoke screen was maintained on the river. In spite of all this, all work on the Bailey Bridge was stopped by small arms fire soon after dawn.

Early on the morning of the 22nd of January, 2nd Lt. Dale E. Barnes, O-1175033, Forward Observer from Battery "C", with the 2nd Battalion, 141st Infantry Regiment, was reported killed in action by a sniper while selecting places for his men to dig in. Troops across the river were held up by mines and wire so that both battalions were caught in a very restricted area. Counterattacks and enemy shelling were so frequent that the Battalion CP's withdrew across the river. Throughout the day, ceaseless mortars and artillery fires fell within the area. Enemy snipers with automatic weapons taking advantage of the smoke screen laid by our own weapons approached to points almost under their own fire and took up prepared positions very close to the estranged battalions. By late evening, most of the infantry officers had been killed and all communications were lost. Heavy shell fire on both sides of the river nullified any attempt to reestablish contact with the remnants of the battalions, and by nightfall the only contact with these units was from individuals who had worked their way out of the trap and swam back across the Rapido. Throughout this action, Artillery OP's on Mt. Trocchio were totally blinded by the smoke screen and consequently helpless to aid the trapped units either by locating hostile artillery or by rendering close support fires. Forward Observers and Liaison crews with the front elements were similarly blinded by the smoke and restricted by almost constant enemy shelling that was maintained on the troops. By nightfall, the last men escaping across the Rapido reported strong detachments of enemy troops crossing at the site of a previously sunken bridge. As there were no infantry troops available, the town of Santa Lucia was outposted by the 131st Field Artillery Battalion as their positions were behind Trocchio, only two thousand yards from the river.

The night passed uneventfully, however, and dawn of the 23rd of January found the sleepless artillerymen heaving a sigh of relief as they realized that a somewhat desperate situation had been met and overcome. One gun of

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Battery "B" was moved because several rounds had landed in its vicinity and the remainder of the Battalion set about improving positions that had been considered satisfactory before the previous night.

Very little of importance developed on January 24th. Due to the excessive losses suffered by the Infantry, orders were issued to go on the defensive. Harassing fires made up the majority of our missions with a demonstration to aid an attack by the 34th Division on our right as the major effort. All CP's were still blinded by fog and smoke.

The attempted crossings of the Rapido River by the 34th Division was frustrated by heavy artillery fire and extensive mine fields. Warning of an expected counterattacks in our area was received early in the morning of the 25th. This was dispelled, however, when the enemy asked for a time to clear the wounded and dead from the area. This was granted till 1530, and later extended to 1700. During this activity, Pvt. Robert W. Kofahl, 32333096, Battery "B", previously listed as missing was evacuated from the ditch where he had lain for three days, having been shot in both legs during the first crossing. Observation of the valley was still limited by fog and smoke.

Rumors flew fast and furious on the 26th when arctic clothing was distributed to the Infantry; the situation did not improve when the artillery received word to send for an initial issue. Enemy artillery suddenly became active and several small concentrations from long range guns fell in the vicinity. Forward areas received additional Nebelwerfer fire in the early morning and late evening when their flashes were hidden by fog. The 2nd Battalion, 6th Armored Infantry was attached to the 141st Infantry Combat Team as direct support and liaison was established with them at once.

Very little of importance occurred on the 27th, enemy long range artillery continued its intermittent firing begun two days previously and some Nebelwerfer fire was received. All this pointed toward a withdrawal but the patrols reported the enemy still there in force. Visibility was improved but still very limited. Demonstrations were fired in conjunction with other harassing fires during the early hours after midnight.

January 28th was marked by continued long range fire by the enemy. Targets seemed to be the Bailey Bridge on Highway 6 and some Tank Destroyer Battalions in position to our rear. His use of smoke at intervals suggested that the enemy had some observation. However, the accuracy of his fire was doubtful. No perceptible damage was done to the Tank Destroyers. One observer reported the enemy using AP on the Bailey Bridge--this was not confirmed. Engineers working along the river drew some small arms fire, and, at one instance, a heavy mortar concentration.



Enemy shelling slackened in our vicinity on the 29th of January with only occasional shells falling in the Battalion area. A very dense fog prevented any possibility of observation so that the majority of the firing was unobserved. Orders were received to prepare for another attempt to cross the Rapido River--this time the town of San Angelo was to be the objective.

Most of the following day was spent in planning for the assault on San Angelo. Preparatory fires were worked out and, though the operation was cancelled at dusk, the concentrations were fired on alternate plans called for a similar attack the next night. It is interesting to note that many of the concentrations along our MLR could be fired on by the 131st Field Artillery as they were below minimum range for Charge I.

The last day of the month is always a busy one with pay day and the usual paper-work involved; but this was unusually so due to the completion of plans for the impending river-crossing. Every one involved was more-or-less tense as such operations try even the best of troops and this attempt was ordered to be made by a unit already below half-strength in men. However, the operation was again postponed at dusk.

It has been said that the two most difficult military operations are the taking of defended mountain heights and the crossing of a fortified river. During the month of January, the 131st Field Artillery Battalion had the doubtful good fortune of participating in both types of attacks--needless to say some important lessons were learned. In the earlier phases, the firing was all high angle at extreme ranges, while in the later activities portions of the final defense line could not be reached as they fell below the minimum elevation for Charge II. In the firing batteries, little of importance was developed to note other than improvised methods for continuation of fire in extreme weather. Perhaps the groups who profited most by these activities were the forward sections.

While supporting the Special Service Troops in their mountain operations during the first two weeks of January, we found it necessary to double the size of the LO and FO sections in order to maintain normal operations. While actually climbing it was found that the issued parka over the wool OD uniform was the best clothing to wear. The combat suit was carried, tied to the pack and put on after reaching the top. Rest periods should be frequent but brief--just long enough for the breathing to return to normal. Bedding rolls consisted of two shelter halves and two blankets carried either on the infantry pack or on a pack board. All articles not absolutely necessary to existence should be eliminated (this is done automatically after the first mission) "K" rations can be removed from the containers and carried in various pockets. The squad stove is a necessity as melted snow is very largely the only water obtainable--the extra gas is carried in canteens. Mules should be employed to carry

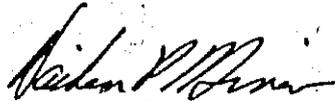
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the equipment if at all possible as the mere climbing is very fatiguing; especially to Field Artillerymen who do not normally make such moves. However, as is the usual case, the mules were needed for ammunition and other supplies so that it was necessary to plan on carrying all the sectional equipment on pack boards. Wire is out of the question in such operations so only a minimum is carried to maintain a remote control. Extra radio batteries in the ratio of one BA 39 to three BA 40's were carried with arrangements made to replace them every 24 hours. The 610 radio was carried in the two parts, one on each pack board. This radio while being an excellent set for work on or near a vehicle is very definitely not suitable for operation in mountainous terrain. Of twenty-six sets used by forward sections in these operations, nineteen had to be repaired or replaced due to malfunctioning--principally broken connections in the power cable. Other failures were: bad tubes, undoubtedly broken through rough handling; sets jarred out of alignment; poor condensers and others seemingly inoperative due to extreme cold. The 610 radio is entirely too awkward to hand-carry and could be condensed with no difficulty at all into a single case light enough to carry on the back. If the operation is not moving too fast, a base camp should be established to permit men to return for short periods to dry out and rest. This base also serves as an intermediate supply point.

The principal problem in the river crossing was maintaining wire communications as the approached to the river were under constant shelling. This makes it imperative to rely completely on radio. The main difficulty encountered was finding a covered place in which to set up as all approached to the river had been thoroughly cleared of all brush and defoliated spots were mined.

The 131st Field Artillery Battalion used quite a bit of smoke on the various phases of the river crossing. It is doubtful that any advantage was obtained--rather, the contrary according to some of the infantry. Not only were all our observers blinded but so were the troops; making it possible for enemy snipers with automatic weapons to approach very close to the positions and render very deadly fire on the pitifully crowded areas. Many of the infantry officers were of the opinion that the Germans laid the smoke themselves so effective was their use of it; they were seemingly ignorant of the fact that it had been ordered by their own commanders.

One other important item of note is that it is possible to have the direct support artillery too far forward. During most of the month's activities, the 131st Field Artillery Battalion was less than two thousand yards from the MLR. This quite often prevents fires on points that could be critical.

  
VAIDEN P. HINER  
Captain, Field Artillery  
Historian

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NOTE: The following documents are attached  
to the original of this document:

- Exhibit A - Copy of Unit Journal
- Exhibit B - Situation Map
- Exhibit C - Summary of Fires
- Exhibit D - Firing Chart
- Exhibit E - Copies of Hi-Bursta (Unit newspaper)



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CONSOLIDATED BATTLE CASUALTY LIST

Killed In Action

<u>NAME</u>	<u>RANK</u>	<u>ASN</u>	<u>UNIT</u>
Barnes, Dale S.	2nd Lt.	C-1175033	Btry. "C"

Wounded In Action

Officers

<u>NAME</u>	<u>RANK</u>	<u>ASN</u>	<u>UNIT</u>
Brown, Richard L.	2nd Lt.	C-1168873	Btry. "B"

Enlisted Men

<u>NAME</u>	<u>RANK</u>	<u>ASN</u>	<u>UNIT</u>
Bruno, Anthony A.	PFC	32257851	Hq. Btry.
Gregg, Burgin C.	CPL	34170545	Btry. "A"
Palermo, James E.	Pvt	34133260	Btry. "A"
Roberts, Jay D.	Sgt	39023281	Btry. "A"
Lawler, Tom C.	Pvt	32335502	Btry. "A"
Oneal, Billy (M.I.)	Pvt	20813328	Btry. "A"
Kofahl, Robert W.	Pvt	32333096	Btry. "B"
Glovier, Ray W.	Pvt	20813443	Btry. "B"



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From the 4th to the 12th of January, 1944, this battalion supported the First Special Service Force. From the 12th to the 31st of January, 1944, the battalion was in direct support of the 141st Infantry for its attack on Mount Trocchio and the Rapido River defenses.

Casualties during this period were caused by small arms, mortars and artillery fire. All personnel killed or injured were in Forward Observer and Liaison sections. Artillery observers cannot operate carrying heavy equipment, radios and wire and telephones, with assault infantry companies without high casualties. With the high percentage of losses in specialized personnel, requiring extended periods of training in communications and artillery fire control, it is doubtful that any real advantage is gained in having observer parties with assault companies during this kind of an operation.

Lessons learned during this period include:

- a. In an attack against defenses of unknown strength, such as a river crossing where the maintenance of wire communications is problematical, radio communications should be planned as the primary means. Personnel who would normally carry wire can carry additional batteries and other radio supplies.
- b. The use of smoke is of doubtful value at any time except to cover a withdrawal. It obscures observation from Forward Observers and static OP's, causes confusion among friendly troops, offers area targets for enemy mortars and artillery.
- c. Gun positions may be occupied by direct support artillery well-forward without serious counterbattery fire resulting if your guns are well dug in, camouflage discipline enforced and daytime traffic in positions restricted to a minimum. Our positions during this period have been approximately 2,000 yards in rear of MLR and no casualties in the position area have resulted.
- d. Preparation fires and protective fires during an attack should be controlled by direct support artillery Liaison officers and infantry commanders rather than put down on prearranged areas on a time schedule. Time schedule fires always move away from attacking troops more rapidly than they advance, giving the enemy an opportunity to work between protective artillery fires and the infantry making the artillery fires ineffective.



*James E. Taylor*  
JAMES E. TAYLOR  
Major, Field Artillery  
Commanding

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46

HEADQUARTERS FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION  
ArO # 36, U.S. ARMY

12 March 1944

SUBJECT: Transmittal of Historical Record

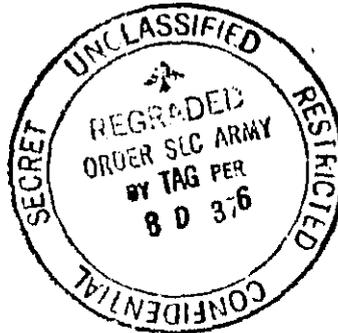
TO : The Commanding General, Thirty-Sixth Infantry Division,  
ArO # 36, U. S. Army.

Transmitted herewith Historical Record of this organization for  
the month of February, 1944.

For the Battalion Commander:

*Lewis J. Nelms*  
LEWIS J. NELMS  
W. O., Field Artillery  
Assistant Adjutant

1 Incl: Historical Record  
(7 copies)



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Operations of the 131st Field Artillery Battalion in Italy, February, 1944

February, a month traditionally cold and wet, proved mild and dry in contrast to the previous months spent in combat. The ruggedness of the country in which all action occurred, was our biggest barrier to reaching our varied objectives throughout the month, but despite occasional gales, sleet storms, rain and snow, all missions given to the 131st Field Artillery Battalion were successfully carried out.

The first day of the month proved to be a continuation of the activities the organization had been undertaking in January. The Battalion fired in support of the 141st Infantry. On February 2nd, the Battalion was notified that our observers were to be very alert for counterbattery missions on enemy guns firing at Cassino. Cassino was under direct fire, and orders were to fire on anything seen coming out of the town. A Battalion Observation Post had been established on Mt. Trocchio, and observation on Cassino was excellent. This observation post proved to be the best one the Battalion has had in the entire Italian Campaign, being equal to, if not superior to the enemy's. For the first time, our observers had a clear stretch of territory, and vehicular and enemy troop movement did not have the benefit of mountain terrain to guard them from observation. Our Liaison Officers reporting "F" company, 141st Infantry was being shelled by the enemy. The direction of fire was determined to be from the vicinity of Pignatora, and while out of range of our Battalion artillery, was under observation by our observation posts. In a situation of this type, larger calibre guns are at the disposal of our observers. During the day, the Division Artillery Commander, General Hess, inspected installations and gun positions, and commended the Battalion Commander on the excellent way in which the Battalion was functioning.

The Battalion was alerted on February 3rd to support an Armored Group on a mission they had been assigned. All arrangements were completed, such as alerting liaison and forward observer groups, and establishing communications with adjacent units. Observers reported that enemy concentrations, in the form of rolling barrages, were being fired on the valley between La Piata and Mt. Trocchio, moving toward our Battalion area. Fortunately, the firing stopped when it was within 600 yards of our positions. Prior to February 3rd, all artillery had been notified that no fire was to be directed at the Abbey di Monte Cassino. The monastery, founded in 528 as the home of the Benedictine monks, is an international shrine, and in line with the desires of the Allied governments, such monuments were to be spared at all times. Artillery fire had been directed on the Abbey, but a check of our records revealed it had not been our Battalion. Late that



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day, the Battalion was notified that the mission to support the Armored Group had been cancelled, and the Battalion continued harassing fires and on targets of opportunity seen by the observers. The Luftwaffe paid us the first visit of the month, but without causing any casualties or damage to installations.

February 4th turned out to be uneventful, though the observation posts noted much enemy firing and activity. The Battalion continued firing on targets of opportunity, causing much damage to the enemy. That night, the Battalion was alerted to the fact that a gale of 50 MPH was expected by midnight, and after much preparation, officers and men settled down for the night with the hope, it would pass without too much trouble.

On the 5th of February, much small arms fire was noticed in the town of Cassino by our observers, and it was obvious that our Infantry had entered the outskirts of the embattled town, which had proven so rugged an obstacle in the drive toward the Liri Valley. While not in direct support of the Infantry on any special mission, the Battalion was called upon to deliver many devastating blows during the day.

A large number of New Zealand troops were beginning to take positions in our area. Upon seeing this, we were led to believe that the Battalion was soon to be relieved. That afternoon the Battalion Commander left on a reconnaissance trip for new positions. Preparations such as alerting wire crews, ammunition sections, and other important installations were made in the event that we would be moving that night. Enemy shelling, within 500 yards of the Battalion command post, seemed to be getting closer. However, so far this month, no enemy shells had actually landed in the Battalion area. That night, several rounds landed around the area, one shell bursting between the No. 4 gun of "B" Battery, and the No. 1 gun of "C" Battery, causing three casualties, all of "C" Battery. Cpl. Joe B. Moore, 20814161, and Sgt. Richard H. Cox, 20814133, were seriously wounded, while Pvt. Raymond H. Renderman, 36247867, was lightly wounded. All men were acting as cannoners on the First Section gun of "C" Battery. The wounded men were immediately given first aid and evacuated by the Battalion medics. Soon after this unfortunate accident, the Battalion was notified that the movement planned for that night had been cancelled.

On February 6th, the Battalion was notified that Pvt. Troupe F. Griffin, 34242911, and Pvt. Dominick J. Cerrato, 20248062, both of Headquarters Battery, and part of a detachment of troops assigned to Detached Service with a 75mm pack-howitzer outfit, attached to the 155th Field Artillery Battalion, had been wounded in action when their outfit had been shelled the previous day. Many times during this day, enemy aircraft attempted to penetrate our installations, but were beaten off by our superior aircraft, which were on constant aerial patrol overhead. Our Battalion observation post was manned on a 24 hour basis for the purpose of observing gun flashes at night, and to select targets for fire missions the next day.

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For the next two days, the Battalion fired on many targets, causing damage to enemy installations and equipment. During February 7th, the Battalion was notified that Pvt. Cerreto, who had been wounded on February 5th, had died of wounds. This was our first fatal casualty this month. Communications were established with the New Zealand organization, and during the two days, the New Zealanders, intermingling freely with our troops, exchanged a good bit of good-natured raillery and bantering. The men were interested in the equipment and armaments of the men from "Down Under", and the frequent sounds of Brooklyn, Texas and New Zealand accents filled the air.

On February 9th, the Battalion was notified they would move to new positions that night, and a reconnaissance party left that morning to locate and reconnoiter for Battery positions. The area given us by Division Artillery was on the forward slopes of the hills southeast of Cassino, and over-looking the town. Later that day, the Battery Commanders conferred with the reconnaissance party to make final arrangements for the move. At 1715, the Battalion ceased firing, and one hour later, started the move for the new area by motor convoy. The route of march, across Highway 6, was accomplished without mishap, though the night was clear, and enemy firing had been encountered in this area during the day. Despite a strict blackout, and the curving, twisting roads, which made the trip extremely hazardous, the Battalion arrived in the new area at 2357 without any undue situations arising. A Battalion command post was set up, and the guns were put into position for any emergency missions which might arise that night. During the night gun positions were further improved, communications laid down, survey initiated, and all preparations completed within the minimum amount of time.

At dawn of February 10th, registration of the Battalion was accomplished, and very small corrections were noted. The area was reputed to be "hot", since it was on a forward slope, and the officers and men were busily engaged in digging foxholes, and improving their positions all during the day, in preparation for anything which might arise. The 2nd Battalion of the 141st Infantry was attached to the 143rd Infantry, and we sent Liaison and Forward Observer parties out to relay information to assist them in their missions. Communications at the start proved a problem, but those difficulties were overcome during the day.

Sixty-one replacements joined the Battalion on February 11th, and were ostensibly eager to carry on the traditions that the 131st Field Artillery Battalion had written during the Italian campaign. Although the new men had been overseas but a short time, they proved highly trained, alert and qualified to do any job they might be assigned. They were profusely greeted by the old-timers, and the question "Where are you from?" rang through the area.



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Cpl. James H. Christenbury, 34170361, Headquarters Battery, was seriously injured by the new type anti-personnel mine, while laying a wire to an outpost. Though suffering from serious leg and foot injuries, Cpl. Christenbury remained cheerful, and still had a smile, when medics reached, and evacuated him to the Division clearing station. The remainder of the day and night was taken up with the average number of rounds expended.

Due to the fact that the enemy had excellent observation of our positions, a large number of rounds were dropped in the Battalion area on February 12th. Pvt. 1cl Ray W. Glover, 20813445, Battery "B" was seriously wounded during this barrage and was immediately evacuated. No damage was inflicted on our equipment. At this time, it might be interesting to point out, that our observers had noted a great deal of enemy activity in the vicinity of the famous monastery, and it became ever clearer that they were using the Abbey as an observation post, and also had gun emplacements installed. Pvt. 1cl Harry M. Peterson, 37124483, Battery "B", was seriously wounded when he was shot by a sniper hiding in the monastery.

On February 13th, the 141st Infantry was relieved by the 4th Indian Division, but our Liaison Officers remained in position, serving in the same capacity with this new organization. The Battalion continued to fire frequently at targets relayed in by our observers. The monastery remained a point of contention, with much new enemy activity noted, and with much small arms fire seen and heard from that vicinity. Deep snows and extreme adverse weather conditions made forward observing difficult and dangerous, and much credit should be given these parties for their excellent work. Neither frozen hands nor trench foot caused by the bitterly cold positions they perforce must occupy, kept them from relaying information of the enemy.

February 14th saw the entire front erupt with artillery barrages from both sides. The constant clatter of small arms and machine gun fire, was lost in the deep shattering blasts of the artillery shells. The Battalion had assigned Liaison and Forward Observer groups to both the New Zealanders and to the 141st Infantry. During the day, many civilians loitering around our battery positions were questioned, and much vital information encompassing terrain and regarding the enemy was obtained. The reports were relayed to higher authorities, as they could not be checked from our positions. That afternoon, Battery "B" area was shelled, and communications were disrupted. They were immediately repaired by the ever-alert wire crews. No other damage was inflicted on positions or equipment, and no casualties occurred from the shelling. The new recruits who had been assigned to the Battalion on February 11th, were undergoing strenuous training in the Battalion rear echelon, preparatory to their joining the organization in the battle lines. The men responded with a vigor that evoked commendations from the officers in charge of the training.

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The use of the Abbey di Monte Cassino by the enemy as an observation post, and for gun emplacements, had made it a troublesome point to us. Orders forbidding artillery fire had been respected, though the Battalion had been firing on targets surrounding the monastery for the past several days. On February 15th, it was all too evident, that the monastery would have to be considered as just another point of resistance, so long as the enemy used it to their advantage. During the early morning, all restrictions against firing on the Abbey were lifted, and from positions we could see the concentrated bombing by heavy bombers, which soon reduced the entire top of Monte Cassino to a smoking mass of rubble. As the bombing lifted temporarily, and artillery fire was directed on it, German troops made repeated attempts to run from the Abbey to safer positions. This was conclusive proof that the Germans had used the monastery for military purposes. The German troops were cut down by accurate machine gun fire. As the line of battle progressed up the slopes of Monastery Hill, our forward observers were able to pick numerous targets which were relayed back to the Battalion Fire Direction Center. Fire was immediately brought to bear on these targets. All that day and night, harassing fires continued, and for practically the first time, the entire Battalion could follow the entire line of fire. It was a bird's eye view of the battle, and the shells could be followed from the point of firing to the point of impact.

Early on the morning of February 16th, a reconnaissance party left to find a rest area for the Battalion, and it seemed at long last that the outfit was to be relieved. With the exception of a breathing spell around the end of December, the Battalion had been in combat for 88 consecutive days, and both officers and men were hoping for days, spent so far from the lines, the chirping of crickets would be the only noises heard. The news, via the intangible grapevine, soon reached every man in the Battalion, and there was an added buoyancy to their step, as they went through the routine fire missions. Our Liaison and Forward Observer parties were under heavy enemy shelling, and observation was temporarily limited. It was noticed that enemy activity at the Abbey was extremely light after the devastating bombing and shattering artillery fire of the previous day. Apparently, the Germans would use any shrine or monument until the Americans made those locations untenable.

The next two days were uneventful in the sense that nothing outstanding occurred. The Battalion continued firing harassing fires, and during those two days, several Battalion concentrations were laid down on enemy machine gun nests and troops. Further liaison between the 4th Indian Division was found unnecessary, and our liaison officers were relieved from further duty with that organization.

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On February 19th, the Battalion rear echelon moved to a new area, which had been designated as the Battalion rest area, and were rapidly getting things in shape, so that when the Battalion was relieved, everything would be in readiness for them. An advance party of officers from the 88th Division, visited the Battalion area, and spent considerable time looking over battery positions, as possible gun positions for their own artillery. This lent further credence to the "grapevine rumor" that the outfit was to be relieved. Early in the morning, enemy shells landed in "B" Battery area, without causing any casualties or damage. The shells appeared to be coming from the hills between Cassino and Cairo, which led us to believe that the enemy had brought up artillery and reinforcements, since no fire had previously been encountered from that direction.

Time passed very slowly for the next two days, with little of importance occurring. The cannoneers, working methodically in freezing weather, and opposed by the worst possible weather conditions, still fired their missions with a nonchalance born of many months in combat. Much credit should be given to the gun sections of the firing batteries, for despite gales, snowstorms, knee-deep mud, and driving winds, they were ever on the job to make things unpleasant for Jerry. The men got a grim pleasure out of hearing the tale about German prisoners, who paid our artillery a left-handed compliment, by asking to see the "automatic" artillery. Since no such "critter" exists, it is a subtle way of patting our boys on the back for their ability to handle the guns.

February 22nd is celebrated throughout America as a day of remembrance for George Washington, but to Captain Julian S. Williamson, O-371233, it held a much more intimate connotation. For it was on that day, that Captain Williamson was notified he was to leave for the United States. He was the first member of the Battalion on the rotation list to find matters finally in a state of completion, and his departure was a "flaming sword in the skies" to all others on the rotation list that they might soon be following him. Many of the men had been nominated as long ago as November, and after the first sensation of emotion had worn off, they had been sweating out the passing of each day. But Captain Williamson's departure was a definite sign, and though everyone wished him a sincere goodbye, there were few who didn't repress a nostalgic yearning to accompany him.

For sometime the Germans had been adjusting on a landmark in our area, and today they again adjusted, firing approximately 23 rounds from the direction of Terrelli. Despite careful search, we have not been able to pick out the marker the enemy is using to register his guns. During those days when registration takes place, the entire Battalion sweats out the rounds falling in the area.



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Routine activities occupied the Battalion for the next three days. Our Liaison and Forward Observer parties spent considerable time with corresponding personnel from French units on our flanks, and this point was considered as additional evidence that we were to be relieved. A grim prank was played on these Allies, when reports were relayed to Battalion Headquarters that Forward Observers were under fire from enemy heavy calibre artillery. On the 25th of February, two Germans surrendered to outposts of the 2nd Battalion, 141st Infantry. A surprising bit of information arose from the fact the prisoners came from the 8th Army front. The Liaison Officers were very highly commended by the Regimental Combat Team commander for the superior services they had rendered with the 141st Infantry during this operation.

On February 26th, all rumors were squashed with the notice that the Battalion would move to a rest area on the following day. Preparations were instituted to prepare the Battalion for movement. The rear echelon which had been engaged in preparing the rest area for occupation by the Battalion recieved a jolt, when they were peremptorily informed that they would have to make a move to a new location. Heavy rainstorms offered additional obstacles, but the move was made without mishap. The new area turned out to be a sea of mud, and offered problems in engineering, since the only roads available, had to be improved before they could be used. However, with the perseverance which has become a byword with the 131st Field Artillery Battalion, all obstacles were overcome, and by nightfall, tents had been erected, and the area was ready for occupation by the remainder of the Battalion.

As the Battalion completed preparations for leaving the combat area, for a well deserved rest, enemy shelling caused two casualties. On February 27th, Tac 5 Lee R. Baldock, 20813688, and Pvt. Mario S. Luszyk, 36757531, both of Headquarters Battery, were lightly wounded when an enemy shell demolished their truck, which was parked in the Battalion area.

That evening the movement was started in a blinding rainstorm that made roads unusually hazardous. A complete blackout, where visibility was absolutely zero, added to the risks. The conditions of roads, and the manner under which the move was made, called for superb driving. After three and a half hours of steady driving, the Battalion column reached the bivouac area without mishap.

During the last two days of the month, liaison and forward observer parties drifted in to the bivouac area, mud-covered, dirty and tired, and luxuriating in the thought that for the first time in many weeks of combat, the following morning would find them far from enemy fire —, and,



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oh yes, observation! The area was being constantly improved, so that the men might be as comfortable as possible. The knowledge that showers were available, offset the presence of the thick mud, and many a man made a silent vow to get under the hot water soon! Payday was just another excuse for the men to line up to be paid, and though the rain still fell, the sight of lira notes, kept spirits from being dampened. And so February passed! A strange rumor that the Battalion would return to the front lines within a few days, was not confirmed. Ho hum!

Perhaps the outstanding event from our viewpoint, during the month of February, was the shattering of the Abbey di Monte Cassino. On February 15th, squadrons of huge bombers laid their bombs in intricate patterns, that covered the entire mountain top on which the ancient monastery stood. As the bombs dropped toward their target, the entire Battalion, watching from their positions on the forward slopes near Mt. Cairo, stood rooted. Despite the fact, that four months of combat had shown them many scenes of destruction, this was by far, the largest concentrated action, any of them had ever seen. As soon as the bombing would let up, intense artillery barrages were laid down on the Abbey, and on surrounding territory.

During the month, the Battalion had the privilege of testing and proving, the new time fuse, M-67. It was interesting to note that the time of burning set off on the fuse, was greater than the time of flight. Previously when firing high angle fire, the M-54 fuse could not be used, because of its short period of burning. From observation, this new fuse has great advantages, due to its 75 second time of burning, and much high angle time fire can be discharged.

In comparison to other months spent in combat, casualties were extremely light, and little damage was done to equipment. After approximately one hundred days spent in combat, with the exception of a breathing spell at the end of 1943, this rest period was both well merited and well deserved. The Battalion had set a record which could only be eclipsed by their own efforts when they return to the line. The commendations they had earned during these months, are evidences of the spirit and initiative they have shown from the early days of the Louisiana maneuvers to the invasion of Salerno, and all through the Italian Campaign.

*William H. Bright*

WILLIAM H. BRIGHT  
1st Lt., 131st F. A. Bn.  
Historian

NOTE: The following documents are attached to the original of this narrative:

Exhibit "A" - Copy of Unit Journal  
"B" - Situation Map  
"C" - Summary of Fires  
"D" - Firing Chart

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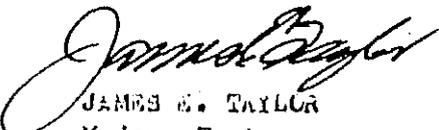
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During the entire period covered by this history, this Battalion supported the 141st Infantry.

Casualties were in all cases unavoidable. Two drivers were injured by enemy shelling. Other casualties were in the wire crews and forward observer parties and could not have been avoided without handicapping the operating efficiency of the Battalion.

Lessons learned during this period include:

1. In firing tests with the new fuze M-67 it was discovered that this fuze has identical ballistic qualities with the M-48 and adjustment may be made with M-48 impact burst and change over to M-67 time fire without range correction. Time of burning increases more rapidly than time of flight. Result at 8,650 yards, high angle fire, the time of flight is 56.5 seconds while the time setting for zero height of burst is 58.0 seconds. In low angle fire, reasonable fuze setting for M-54 may be used for M-67.
2. The value of meteorological messages was forcefully brought to our attention. Because of poor visibility and bad weather, daily registration was not possible. By using weather corrections to determine K-change on initial registration, accurate firing was possible as long as the same position was occupied. On one occasion, a target was fired upon well outside of transfer limits for range and deflection. K-changes were used to secure initial data. Changes of less than 25 yards were required to get on target. Every metro-message received from Division Artillery is figured as soon as received and current corrections are applied. In high angle fire (we used high angle during most of the period) weather is increasingly important.

  
JAMES E. TAYLOR  
Major, F. A.  
Commanding

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OPERATIONS IN ITALY

MARCH 1944

A history of the actions of the  
131st Field Artillery Battalion  
during the month of March 1944 in  
the Cassino sector.

HISTORIAN:  
WILLIAM H. BRIGHT  
1ST LT. 131ST F.A. BN.

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Narrative of the 131st Field Artillery Battalion for March, 1944.

As though portending the weather to be expected, March entered, a trifle wet, a bit bedraggled, and accompanied by an escort of mud. The chill, penetrating rain, had fields and roads a morass of mud, but morale remained high, and spirits soared, for we were just luxuriating in the first prolonged relief in months of arduous combat. There is a certain sensuousness in just knowing there will be no shelling or bombing; in being able to sleep an hour longer; in being able to rush the chow lines, without wondering whether a stray shell or two might come screeching over. The rainy weather proved a minor discomfort, for after days and weeks spent in the mountains surrounding Cassino, where rain was supplanted by snow, and finally both by mud, the men just shrugged or the wetness. A mental resistance is built up, until each clear day is greeted with surprise. There haven't been many fair days since we've landed in Italy. A Division joke which is carefully explained to replacements deals with our fight against the weather. At Camp Blanding we had the hottest summer in forty years, at Camp Edwards, it was the coldest winter in the memory of the Cape Codders, and here in Italy, where the average winter rainfall runs to eleven inches, the mark almost doubled the average. We can't blame that on Congress, though. To paraphrase Mark Twain, 'Everyone talks about the weather, but no one ever does anything about it.' And the prospect of eight inches of Spring rains, is not anticipated with any relish. The month brought a juxtaposition of volcanic eruptions, stinging sleetstorms, a short, sybaritic rest, and a short period of intense, fierce combat. March came in like a wet lamb, and roared out like a predatory lion.

For the first few days of March, the Battalion rested, re-equipped, and prepared. Showers and movies, good food and good shows; all the necessary prerequisites for good morale were in abundance. The inevitable annual shots for typhus, typhoid, and tetanus, the terrible "T's" were given on March 3rd, and as usual, more griping was done about sore arms than about anything else. But spirits were too high to be dampened by such inconveniences. The routine chores were palliated, and the men given as much free time as possible. They had earned their rest, and the excellent record they compiled in February, and in previous months of combat, gave them good reason to be proud of their Battalion insignia. On March 4th, the howitzers were fully inspected by Ordnance, and carbines and pistols cleaned and repaired. A visit from the Red Cross with their

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8/ doughnuts, gave rise to much hilarity, for the men were feeling lusty. In less than a week, they had recuperated from the strain of combat, and were alert and in the peak of condition.

On March 5th the Battalion was alerted for movement to a new rest area, and on the 6th, left the San Angelo bivouac area for Maddiloni, where an area had been prepared. The motor convoy reached their destination without mishap, and by 1600, the entire organization was bivouaced, and completing preparations to make things as comfortable as possible. Early the next morning the rumor sprang up that the Battalion was to move again. Though it eventually proved to be true, for a time it remained a bad guess. It is a matter of conjecture where these rumors come from, and would require the acumen of a Sherlock Holmes, plus the wizardry of a witch doctor to trace them to their source. Each man considers himself an arm chair strategist, and the conclusions reached from meaningless news items would amaze the High command.

Training schedules were installed, and informal discussions held, so that the outfit would have further efficiency when they returned to combat. On March 8th, the Battalion was notified to reorganize under a new Table of Organization, effective March 1. The new set-up further streamlined the organization, with the object of making it a more proficient unit in the arts of war. On the same day, a message was received that we would relieve the 152nd Field Artillery Battalion on March 13th, so that they could also reorganize. With that date in mind, preparations were started to prepare the Battalion for their re-entrance into combat. On March 9th, the Battalion was put on an 8 hour alert, and Liaison and Forward Observer groups left to join the 142nd. During the period we were to be in the lines, we were to support the 142nd Infantry. The Combat Team would be attached to the New Zealand Corps which were now in the lines, almost in the very same positions we had occupied before being relieved.

On March 11th, a Divisional Review was held in the vicinity of St. Clemente, and Lieutenant General Mark Clark, Commanding General of the Fifth Army, presented honors and awards to members of the Division. Technical Sergeant Charles E. Kelly, 143rd Infantry, received the Congressional Medal of Honor, the highest award the United States gives. Sgt. Kelly, who had been nicknamed, "The One Man Army", was further complimented when General Clark told him that his kind of soldier was what made the Fifth Army tick. There are many men like Kelly in the 151st Field Artillery. After presenting Sgt. Kelly with the Medal

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of Honor, General Clark, in an impressive ceremony, presented Silver Stars to 177 soldiers of the 36th Division. It was an action which spoke louder than words of the heroic deeds which the Division had performed since going into action. Our Battalion was well represented at the ceremonies, but Captain Ross Ayers, D-578526, and Corporal Clyde C. Lindsay, 34194180, Headquarters Battery, received Silver Stars for conspicuous gallantry in action above and beyond the call of duty. The Battalion was proud of its two heroes, whose exploits were recognized by their awards, and after much hand-shaking and cheering, the organization returned to the bivouac area, and completed preparations for the move back to the front lines the next day.

March 12th proved one of the glorious pre-spring days that added extra zest to the tasks that had to be accomplished. As the plan stood, the Liaison and Forward Observer groups were to remain in the rear area at Maddaloni, with the Liaison the alert, since the Infantry would not move up until a later date. The bivouac area was to be maintained, and only those elements essential for the efficient operation of the organization were to go forward. The ammunition sections, and miscellaneous sections, were established in an area near Cervaro, approximately five miles behind the gun positions. Service Battery, less the ammunition trains, set up gun rd details and provided the mess for the battery sections left behind. Immediately after lunch, the advance party and forward elements left for the combat positions, and late that afternoon, the Battalion pulled out on the long trip forward. The trip had been planned in such detail that the convoy was to make use of daylight between Maddaloni and the famous hairpin turn on Highway number 6, north of Mignano. Mignano was reached long after night had fallen, and from there until the actual positions were reached, the convoy moved in complete blackout. It was one of the blackest nights ever encountered in this campaign, and the convoy had to inch its way forward. There were two unfortunate accidents which occurred. One was the overturning of a Battery "C" wire truck but no casualties resulted from the accident, a fact which speaks well of the capabilities of the driver. The second was the colliding of a jeep occupied by Major Durl G. Lassetter, the S-3, and a British medium weighted truck. Major Lassetter suffered minor lacerations but remained on duty. Since the Battalion went into prepared positions, little diggins in of the guns was necessary, therefore within a short time, all guns were layed and ready to fire.

Early in the morning of March 15th, liaison was established with the French Division, 3rd D.I.A., whom we were directly supporting. Registration of the guns was completed, with the guns registering on the road leading to the Abbey on Montecassino. This day was to prove one of the most eventful of all those we had spent in combat. No sooner was registration completed than Jerry sent planes over. Anti-aircraft fire was fairly dense, but the enemy planes persisted, and it was believed that they were on photo-reconnaissance missions. The pictures they took must have been

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very quickly, for just as noon approached, enemy shellfire landed in the area, two bursts landing approximately 500 yards from the C.P. A luck hit direct on the Number 4 gun of "C" Battery was responsible for our largest number of casualties in any one day of combat. Cpl. Joseph Taylor, 51326172, Pvt 1st Aroldie C. Johnson, 17077262, Pvt 1st Edward D. Howard, 33202113, Pvt 1st William B. Henderson, 34109993, were killed in action, while S/Bgt. Walter W. Carr, 34052685, the section chief, Pvt John F. Garthright, 33634278, and Paul B. Levy, 14130881, were seriously wounded, and Pvt. Robert L. Hotchkiss, 35003715, and Pvt. Houston Durham, 34731205, were lightly wounded. Of all the shells which landed in the area, that one shell was the only one that did any damage. It is ironic that Jerry, at the time was aiming at the guns of another unit, and it was a "short" that did all of the damage. The gun which had been hit was immediately replaced. Despite the shelling, the medics immediately went to the assistance of the wounded men, and evacuated them under fire. The shelling became so intense that "C" Battery was ordered to cease firing their own guns, and take cover. As soon as the shelling ended, the Assistant S-2 and the "C" Battery commander, left on a reconnaissance to seek a new position. The reconnaissance proved fruitless, for a close search of the area in that sector revealed that the position the Battery was occupying was much better than the proposed new one. Further defensive measures were taken, and Battery "C" guns were dug in to their shields. At this time, it might be worth mentioning, the entire Battalion had clear observation of the Idri Valley, Cassino, Montecassino, and the surrounding hills.

March 14th was spent in routine activity. All vehicular movement during the daylight hours was banned from the battalion area, as the forward slope positions we occupied were under direct enemy observation. A hill just behind "B" Battery was used as an observation post, but little activity was noticed. The building which was being used for the Fire Direction Center and Command Post, proved an excellent observation post.

The morning of March 15th dawned clear and brisk. Bright sunshine blazed down over the country-side, and gave little men of what was to come. The heavy drone of motors roared and echoed through the mountains, as planes of all types, medium and heavy bombers, flew straight at their target. The once famous town of Cassino, besieged so long from the ground, was to undergo the most concentrated and devastating bombing of all history. From 0630 until mid-day, the rain of bombs continued. The city of Cassino was to be taken and in an exemplary portrayal of air-ground cooperation, it must necessarily be destroyed. Planes flew over constantly. For over three hours they seemed to fill the sky with the awful blast of bombs, and the deep throated roar of motors absorbing all other sounds. High clouds of smoke and dust arose from the shattered city, but still the winged death poured down. A grand-stand seat was provided for the Battalion for, from their positions, they could follow the course of the bombs from the moment they left the bomb-bays, until the moment of impact. An over-enthusiastic bombardier changed many grins to frowns when he inadvertently touched the button too soon and the bombs fell

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into our rear area. Pvt. 1st Eugene P. Satterthwaite, 34170696, Pvt. Herbert P. Leimbach, 32536544, and Pvt. Donald F. Bach, 38432017, all of Battery "A", were lightly wounded as the result of the bombing. Medics immediately came to their aid but all that was necessary was first aid, and the men remained on duty. Several vehicles were damaged, and motor crews were kept hopping to repair the damage. Immediately after the last echo of the bombs had died away, a solid, terrifying blast thundered through the valley as every artillery piece in position opened fire. Guns of all calibres and sizes roared their angry defiance and there was no period of silence that day or night. Our firing batteries, working smoothly, fired constantly, prearranged firing data being used during the day and harassing fires imposing damage on the enemy during the night. The astounding total of 4116 rounds were expended in the twelve hours from noon to midnight. It was the largest total of rounds the Battalion had ever fired in any like period. New Zealand troops who were making the attack on Cassino, and surrounding territory also, were being supported by our Battalion. No liaison or forward observer parties were with the assault troops, so little information could be obtained regarding the results of the intense barrage which had been laid down. During all this excitement, Captain Ralph S. Phelan, O-378415, reported to assume his duties as Battalion Surgeon. Hew was given a warm welcome!

A definite dislike for all air arms became obvious during March 16th. After the bombing of our own installations the previous day, there was a natural anxiety each time planes were heard droning through the sky. Enemy planes visited us in strength during the morning, and anti-personnel mines dropped all through the area. A hasty rush for foxholes, just before the bombs hit, proved necessary and effective, for no casualties occurred. The men were naturally leery though, and as soon as a plane was sighted, a slow movement began toward slit trenches and fox holes. About noon, a forward observer party left for an observation post on Mt. Castellone. The fact that they were re-occupying the very same observation post used a month before showed how fierce the fighting was in the Cassino district. It was as though two huge machines were engaged in a tug of war with inches counting, rather than miles. The thin slices of ground which had changed hands gave no indication of the fighting. Mid-afternoon saw squadrons of Mitchells come over the area in an attempt to reduce Cassino that nothing could exist there. For a few moments the Battalion watched from the Battery positions as the planes went into their bomb runs, but soon they were diving into any available cover for, as the last echelon flew over, their bomb-bays opened wide, and the ponderous deadly missiles flew toward our own positions. Soon the resounding blasts from our rear areas echoed through the hills as the weighty steel jacketed carriers of death reached the ground. No one knew how many bombs fell, for the entire organization crouched low in fox holes. It was bad enough to have the enemy constantly striving to reduce you to dust, but it was difficult indeed to reconcile yourself to the same treatment from your own planes.

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Things quieted down for the next two days. From our positions, several of the ever-present Hebelwerfers could be seen to fire and those men who had never before encountered them spent interested minutes watching them fire and maneuver. The big push for Cassino and the fire on the Abbey, as well as the fighting in the streets, and the fire on the streets and the surrounding hills, were lessons in reality of what war is like. With the inevitable counterattacks that followed the push to take Cassino, several small units of our troops were isolated. To meet the problem of keeping these men supplied with food and ammunition, planes flew over just after noon and dropped all these necessary items by parachute. As these parachutes settled slowly onto "Hangman's Hill", a small knoll on Monastery Hill, a solitary infantryman would dash to where they landed, for these supplies were vital to them. All this unfolded before us and showed a new side of our air force. It was a mission of mercy, in contrast to the sorties of death they had brought to Cassino and Montecassino. Our Mt. Castellone observation post reported the location of large enemy artillery pieces which were believed to be the guns that had shelled us all through the time we had been in the lines, and counterbattery fire was immediately directed at their positions in Belmonte Valley.

The missions of the New Zealand Corps were completed on March 19th, and our Battalion once again was in direct support of the French 3rd D.I.A., therefore plans were made and liaison established so that they would have complete knowledge of our capabilities. That morning Division Artillery informed us that they were leaving for a rest area and the departure held a special significance for us. The 131st Field Artillery Battalion was the only unit of the 36th Division which remained in the lines. The small taste of relief we had had in the early days of March was not forgotten, and though our fate was accepted philosophically, a hope arose that we would be joining the rest of the Division soon.

For the next three days, the enemy seemed to derive much satisfaction from seeing how often they could make us hit our foxholes. Shelling was frequent and heavy, and air raids took up the slack periods. No casualties resulted from either source, and damage on installations and equipment was extremely light. The rear area, where maintenance was located, reported slight damage.

Despite the continued heavy shelling, on March 23rd, S/Sgt George C. Fox, 20813070, Medical Detachment, Pvt Olan Parker, 38132009, Battery "A", and Pvt Lloyd E. Cahler, 38062418, "C" Battery, left for the long trip home as part of the Battalion complement on rotation. Although all our fire missions had been in direct support of the New Zealand Corps and the French 3rd Division, our original mission to support the 142nd Infantry still remained, and that infantry regiment, continued on the alert in the rear areas where we still maintained liaison and forward

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observer parties. Late that afternoon, six officers reported for temporary duty with the Battalion, for the purpose of observing and training under actual combat conditions.

March 24th saw a resumption of heavy enemy shelling, with many shells falling within the Battalion area. The house that was being used as the wire section's quarters received a direct hit, and though an entire corner was demolished, no one within the house was hurt. Many of the shells falling within our area proved to be duds, and on many occasions a silent prayer went up that so much of the enemy's ammunition prove faulty. Wire crews were kept busy throughout the shelling as inter-communications were constantly being damaged. With an imperturbability built up from many similar days in combat, they disregarded the shelling and made their repairs. Communications were rarely out for very long.

Little of importance occurred during the next two days. Due to the fact that all movements were made at night and that supplies and ammunition was also brought up under cover of darkness, shelling waned in comparison to what we had been getting. This was additional proof that the Battalion area was under direct enemy observation. On March 26th, a British party visited the Battalion area on a reconnaissance of our positions. Rumors immediately arose that we were to be relieved.

The Battalion was notified on March 27th that they would be relieved by the 17th R.A. of the British 78th Division on the following day. The good news spread throughout the area like wildfire. A party was sent to the XIII Corps to obtain road clearance, and despite occasional shelling, preparations were started for the move. Late that afternoon, the message was received that road clearance had been granted and plans for the move were completed.

British personnel reported during the morning of March 28th to relieve our Liaison and Forward Observer parties. Final preparations were made and, after dark had fallen, the long move back to the bivouac area at Maddaloni was started. Although the move was made under blackout conditions, nothing occurred and the convoy arrived at Maddaloni without mishap.

The elements of the Battalion who had been left behind when the organization returned to combat had kept the bivouac area in excellent shape and little additional work had to be done. For the last three days of the month the men took full advantage of their well earned rest. Recreation periods were abundant and shows, showers, and good food were made available. The last day of the month was pay day, and for the first time in almost three months, the personnel section was on hand to pay off. So ended March!

Despite the short period of time the organization had been in combat, March proved a fierce month. The constant shelling, the intensive bombing both from enemy and friendly planes, the forward slope positions occupied

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the fact we were under direct enemy observation, all made up to a position that was like a seething cauldron. New honors were added to the standards of the 151st Field Artillery Battalion. New evidence was given in proof of their excellence and efficiency, for all missions given to them were carried out with enthusiasm and zeal.

*William H. Bright*

WILLIAM H. BRIGHT  
1st Lt. 151st F.A. Bn.  
Historian

NOTE: The following documents are attached to the original of this narrative:

Exhibit "A" - Copy of Unit Journal  
Exhibit "B" - Situation Map  
Exhibit "C" - Summary of Fires  
Exhibit "D" - Firing chart

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During this period this Battalion was in direct support of the 3rd D.I.A. (French), and reinforced the fires of the New Zealand Corps for the attack on Cassino; firing over 4,000 rounds in one twelve hour period.

Casualties were due largely to a direct hit in a gun pit during the occupation of position and before digging in had been completed. They could only have been avoided by having the opportunity to prepare positions in darkness before occupancy.

Lessons learned during this operation include:

1. Absolute control of camouflage and daytime movement will prevent casualties even though position areas are swept with artillery fire occasionally. This position was occupied for 10 days and ten casualties were suffered the first day but not a man was injured in the position area during the following 10 days.
2. Motor maintenance personnel must be located in a position to work 24 hours a day when necessary. Vehicular casualties come all at one time (11 in one day) and, in order to remain mobile, rapid repair is essential.
3. During the period, a gunnery school for officers was held, using a roving gun from "A" Battery. This is possible in a defensive position where observation posts are available for static C.P.'s and offers valuable training for replacement officers.

  
JAMES E. TAYLOR  
Major, P.A.  
Commanding

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RECORDS OF THE 100th AIRBORNE DIVISION

<u>NAME</u>	<u>GRADE</u>	<u>NO.</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>TYPE</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>
<u>1st Airborne Division</u>					
Cark, Fred B.	1st Lt	3435072	Mar 24	BF, rt hand	Chatanooga, Tenn.
Warren, Fred L.	1st Lt	34351021	Mar 16	Bomb frag, hand	Frankfort, Ind.
Zembruski, Theo J.	1st Lt	34350798	Mar 24	Sh. Concussion	Albany, N.Y.

Battery "A"

Bach, Donald F.	1st Lt	34452717	Mar 15	Bomb frag, buttocks	Honey Grove, Tex.
Leimbach, Herbert	1st Lt	34355544	Mar 15	Bomb frag, hand	N.Y., N.Y.
Newby, Otis G.	1st Lt	24015375	Mar 25	BF thumb, l. hand	Los Angeles, Calif.
Gattorthwaite, Eugene	1st Lt	34170596	Mar 15	Bomb frag in chin	Tarboro, N. Car.

BATTERY "B"

Carr, Walter W.	1st Lt	34052895	Mar 15	BF L. l. & l. h. nose, abdomen l. leg, rt arm.	Grimsville, Fla.
DeCamp, William	1st Lt	36247042	Mar 20	BF frag, l. knee	Saukville, Wis.
Garthright, John	1st Lt	34634278	Mar 15	BF, lt leg	Richmond, Va.
Durham, Houston	1st Lt	34751205	Mar 15	BF shoulder, face neck, rt foot	South Pittsburg, Tenn.
Henderson, Wm. B.	1st Lt	34109993	Mar 15	BF in back	Madsworth, Ala.
Hotchkiss, Robert	1st Lt	34605715	Mar 15	BF legs, abdomen	Northfield, Ohio
Howerd, Edward D.	1st Lt	35202115	Mar 15	BF rt chest, hd.	Baltimore, Md.
Johnson, Archie	1st Lt	17077262	Mar 15	BF in neck	Maducah, Ky.
Levy, Paul R.	1st Lt	14130881	Mar 15	BF rt leg & hd.	Madison, Wis.
Taylor, Joseph	1st Lt	15001727	Mar 15	BF top of head	Hickson City, Pa.

  
CONSOLIDATED BATTLE CASUALTY LISTKilled In Action

<u>NAME</u>	<u>RANK</u>	<u>A.S.N.</u>	<u>UNIT</u>
Henderson, William B.	PFC	34109993	Btry "C"
Howard, Edward D.	PFC	33202113	Btry "C"
Johnson, Archie C.	PFC	17077262	Btry "C"
Taylor, Joseph	PFC	13081727	Btry "C"

Wounded in Action

Bach, Donald F.	Pvt	38432717	Btry "A"
Carr, Walter W.	S/Sgt	34052885	Btry "O"
DeCamp, William	Pvt	36247042	Btry "O"
Durham, Houston	Pvt	34731205	Btry "O"
Garthright, John F.	Pvt	33634278	Btry "O"
Hotchkiss, Robert L.	Pvt	35603715	Btry "O"
Leimbach, Herbert	Pvt	32335544	Btry "A"
Levy, Paul B.	Pvt	14130881	Btry "O"
Newby, Otis G.	Pvt	20813375	Btry "A"
Park, Fred B.	PFC	34365072	Hq. Btry
Satterthwaite, Eugene P.	PFC	34170696	Btry "A"
Warren, Fred L.	PFC	35361021	Hq. Btry
Zembrunsky, Theo. J.	Pvt	32850798	Hq. Btry

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HEADQUARTERS, 131ST FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION

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A. P. O. #36, U. S. Army

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9 June 1944

SUBJECT : Transmittal of Battalion History.

TO : Commanding General, 36th Infantry Division, A.P.O. 36, U. S. Army.

Transmitted herewith, History of the 151st Field Artillery Battalion for the month of May, 1944, in the Minturno, Anzio, and Vallettri, Italy, sectors.

For the Battalion Commander:

*Burl G. Lassetter*  
BURL G. LASSETTER  
Major, Field Artillery  
Executive Officer

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OPERATIONS IN ITALY

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MAY 1944

A history of the actions of  
the 131st Field Artillery  
Battalion during the month  
of May, 1944 in the Minturno,  
Anzio and Velletri sectors.

HISTORIAN  
WILLIAM H. BRIGHT  
1ST LT., 131ST F. A. BN.

MAY 2 1944

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Narrative of the 131st Field Artillery Battalion for May, 1944.

Out of the dust and grime of stagnant months; out of the memories of mud and rain and bitter fighting, the month of May brought new developments. Through the long poignant days, when the intensity of battle showed little gain, we had lain under enemy observation, always hoping positions could be reversed. We knew we were better than he, but the odds had been against us. Now in May, the full throated boom of our guns touched off the spark that initiated two onslaughts. And those onslaughts led to a gigantic offense that rolled like some tidal wave. Nothing could stand against it, and nothing did. Each mile that passed beneath our constantly rolling wheels was a mile nearer to final victory. It was very warm for May—but only for the enemy.

The Battalion continued to luxuriate in days of rest for the first four days of May. Combat was afar off thing, but lurking in the depths of each ones' mind was the certain knowledge that soon we would be at the front again. It was a matter of time. On May 1, reconnaissance and advance elements from the batteries left for forward positions on the Minturno front. Previously, most of our combat on the southern front had been in the Venafro-Cassino sectors, but now, as part of an over-all plan, the Division was shifted. Stressing secrecy, the T-patch, emblem of our individual fame, was removed from all garments. Organizational markings were deleted, and soon the Battalion represented some mysterious unit, for there were no signs to show it was part of the fighting 36th. Even "Berlin Sally", who has taken a proprietary interest in the 36th was puzzled as to our whereabouts.

A field problem occupied the Battalion for May 2nd and 3rd. It was a tune-up, to shake off the cobwebs which had formed throughout our month of rest. On the 4th of May, the Battalion was alerted for movement to a new bivouac area, and on May 5th, moved into an area at Qualiano, which was within striking distance of the front. During the first seven days of the month, the advance elements which had gone to the Minturno sector on the 1st of May, had worked digging gun positions. All work was done at night, for the utmost secrecy was observed. Since the entire allied area was under German observation, all positions had to be dug in so deep, that barely the tube would jut out. The spot for the OP was so deep, that hardly an inch of tent showed. On May 7th, Liaison and Survey parties left for the front,

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AND returned the next day, after establishing contact with adjacent groups. The Battalion broke bivouac on May 9th, leaving just before dusk fell. By 0124, in the early minutes of the 10th, the new positions had been reached. During that day, communications were established, registration completed, and liaison established with elements of the 85th Division, which we were supporting, and with the 756th T. D. Bn., which was to reinforce our fires, if necessary.

On May 11th, six enemy rounds landed several hundred yards from the O.P. Little did the Germans realize what a reply those few searching rounds would bring. All through the day, the S-3 section was busy drawing up fire plans in preparation for the assault which had been planned for that night. "H" hour was at 2330; at 2300 hours the entire valley erupted in a solid sheet of flame. As fast as the guns could fire, shells were fed into them, and the terrific and deafening roar of thousands of tons of explosives reverberated throughout the mountains. The darkness was dispelled by the constant blasts of light, and as the Infantry rose up for the assault, the ferocity of the fire heightened, until the valley seemed engulfed in one thunderous roar which obliterated all other sounds.

All through the dawn hours of May 12th, the Infantry advanced, and as morning broke, many of the initial objectives had been captured. With the stubbornness, which they have ever shown, the enemy counter-attacked ceaselessly. But the continuing artillery fires, and the inspired sweep of the troops, thrust them back time and again. The advance couldn't be stopped. After months of stagnation, our forces were rolling in an enveloping cloud, which excluded failure. The intensity of the attack had communications disrupted time and again. But the wire crews and communications sections with superhuman endeavor surmounted all difficulties. No man lagged during that initial attack. Jobs were intermingled, and there was no time for anything but the business on hand. In less than four hours after the assault had started, 1700 rounds had been fired. Not even in the worst days before Cassino, had this record been approached. The density of the fire defied description as gun after gun roared and re-roared its defiant challenge. No area was left untouched by the constant pounding of our artillery, and soon reports filtered in of numerous enemy tanks and armored vehicles being wrecked by direct hits. Accuracy, as well as speed, had to be stressed, for our fires were falling just in advance of the Infantry, in the form of a rolling barrage. The terrific number of rounds expended had ammunition handlers overtaxed, for well over 6500 pounds had winged their destructive way to the enemy's installations. In the midst of the day, the Battalion was notified they were on a 24 hour alert. The Battalion Transport Quarter-Master Officer began plans for a sea-borne movement, destination unknown.

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May 13th saw all first phase objectives taken and consolidated, and in contrast to the constant activity of the 12th, the day seemed quiet and uneventful. Firing continued all through the day, observation was good, and as soon as enemy activity was noted, immediate fires were brought down on him.

On May 14th and 15th, harrassing fires continued. The attack advanced in rapid assaults. Even as reports came in of the imminent capture of towns and hills, a follow-up report would verify its falling into Allied hands. The Battalion remained on a day to day alert, and much conjecture arose as to what and where our destination was. Rumors were rife, but the success of the offensive overshadowed everything else. The enemy was on the run, reeling and staggering from the devastating bombardment, and as wave after wave of fire swamped him, he had little opportunity to regroup for counter-attacks. In the face of the blasting, blistering attack, his forces bogged down, and his retreat slowly took on the resemblance of a rout.

Early in the morning of May 16th, the Battalion pulled out of position to return to the bivouac area. As the Battalion column rolled along, a messenger dispatched from Division Artillery, brought orders rescinding the move, and the organization immediately returned to the positions just vacated. The Battalion remained on a continuous alert, ready to displace forward or return to the rear. In so flexible a state, rumors mounted rapidly, but there were no facts to support any of the conjecture.

At noon on May 17th, the Battalion again left its positions at Minturno, for the bivouac area at Qualiano. This time, the move was completed without interruption. The long dusty ride to the rear area occurred without mishap, and by dusk, all vehicles had reached their destination. The Battalion remained on a tight alert, and maintenance of equipment and trucks was carried through, so the Battalion would be prepared for any exigency. A Battalion rear was established at Qualiano, and only those men necessary for a successful completion of any emergency were alerted. The turmoil, and the paradoxical orderly confusion of a unit stripping for action over-laid all activity. All excess equipment and personal belongings were stored at Qualiano. Only the bare necessities were to be taken on this next move, and many of the men were seen standing in indecision, as they reluctantly had to forego things which they had carried with them ever since arriving overseas more than a year ago.

On May 18th, the Battalion cleared the bivouac area at

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Qualiano, for the staging area at Pozzuli. All rumors were stifled as the word "Anzio" spread throughout the organization. That was to be our destination, and everyone wondered whether an attack at the beachhead was in the offing, for the Battalion hadn't missed one yet. Loading on LST's commenced late that evening, and on the afternoon of May 19th, the Battalion left for Anzio. A boat ride wasn't new to the outfit, for after Salerno, and the consequent campaign through Italy, we had tasted everything. Stories of "Anzio experiences", and particularly the thought of beer, took some of the sting out of the ride. Few were enthusiastic about any cruise, for Salerno remained vivid in our memories.

Early in the morning of the 20th, the convoy reached Anzio, and debarking was expedited. The harbor stretched in front of the convoy, and unloading was facilitated through the ease with which the LST's approached the shore. The Battalion congregated in an assembly area, and a rear area was established. Reconnaissance parties were sent out to locate the forward positions which had been prepared prior to our arrival. Communication parties left for the forward area to complete installations. On May 21st, the FDO and OP moved to the forward position, to complete preparations when the Battalion moved into position. Liaison was established with the 141st Infantry, which we were to support; with two observers assigned to each Infantry Battalion.

Early on the morning of May 22nd, the firing batteries started to move to the forward positions, and by 0430 were in position, ready to fire. Approximately twelve rounds landed in the vicinity of our forward CP, causing fourteen casualties among Infantry personnel, but not damaging any of our installations. Private Robert D. Buirley, 34866834, Headquarters Battery, was lightly wounded in the leg during this shelling. Enemy shelling continued intermittantly throughout the morning, but without causing any further casualties. Communications were disrupted, and temporarily, wire crews could not repair them, due to the heavy shelling. Radio silence was ordered, and Division Artillery notified of conditions. At this time, our guns were not firing or even registering, since orders were that no shells from these positions were to be fired, prior to "H" hour. Communications were established with 141st Infantry CP and with the Battalion rear OP, and lines between the FDO and the firing batteries were repaired.

The radio net remained closed on May 23rd. Preparations continued all during the day. For the first time, our guns were registered by planes, due to the low, flat ground, and poor visibility. Liaison parties were with the most advanced elements, and information of enemy activity was constantly being reported. Enemy tanks and heavy armor was seen in several sectors. Enemy prisoners were being reported by all units. Targets of opportunity were being fired on all through the day, and many rounds were expended. German heavy armor was being pumelled by our accurate artillery fires. Late that night, the

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Battalion was notified that we were to be in support of the 151st F. A. The 534th A.A. had been displaced around our positions as anti-aircraft protection, and throughout the period the Battalion was in the Nettuno area, did an excellent job, keeping enemy planes from causing damage to our installations. Barely a night passed without a severe air-raid, and the 534th gave perfect protection.

During the first six hours of May 24th, the Battalion expended over 2500 rounds. At no time was the intensity of the fire lessened, and whining shells out a continuous path to enemy positions and targets. During the day, the 36th Division Infantry was committed to battle, and we immediately went into support of their activities. Our Forward Observer and Liaison parties with the Infantry kept a constant stream of targets flowing back into the OP. Liaison with the 463rd F. A. was discontinued and formed with the 151st F. A. Bn. The attack was moving so swiftly, reports kept a constant shifting of the area upon which we were firing. As yet, the two fronts had not met. No firelines were being reported constantly. The Divisions on our flanks were making rapid advances, while our Infantry had taken, and pushed past their first phase objectives. The enemy was in a general retreat, and over the entire front, the thunder and roar of our artillery gave full throated evidence of the damage that was being inflicted upon them.

During the day of May 25th, the Battalion moved to new positions. Infiltration methods were used so that a continuous stream of fire could be used to cover the move. As one battery moved to its new position, the remaining batteries covered it with harassing fires. In turn, each of the other batteries covered in the same way, moved into position, and commenced firing as soon as possible. Towns and cities surrounding the beachhead area were falling into our hands constantly. The attack was moving ahead as planned, and all elements were reaching and passing objectives. Late that afternoon, the Battalion was notified that Lt. Col. James E. Taylor, O-376731, Battalion Commander had been awarded the Silver Star for gallantry and intrepidity in action. At this time it might be interesting to note that forces from the beachhead and the southern front had made contact, and that both fronts were now joined. Air activity was noted all along the lines, and our forward observers relayed countless messages of German motor convoys being strafed and bombed with heavy damage inflicted on their materiel. Harassing fires continued in support of Infantry operations, and all targets reported by our observers were fired upon.

A new plan of attack was scheduled for May 26th, and the Battalion was to be in support of the 68th F. A. Bn., and to indirectly support the 1st Armored Division. The offense was rolling so fast, that positions had to be changed constantly to keep the enemy within range. Early in the morning a reconnaissance party left to find new positions, and shortly thereafter the Battalion left by motorconvoy for the advanced positions. Using air observation, the guns registered on Highway 7, leading into Velletri. Enemy resistance had strengthened in this area, and Velletri, and surrounding hills were pounded and blasted by our artillery. Our Liaison and forward observer parties continually relayed reports of columns of German armor and tanks. All targets were taken under fire, and soon a heavy pall of smoke and haze hung over the target, momentarily lighting up as shells cut their way through the dust. As hill after hill fell, and the city was being surrounded, our field of fire was narrowed, and our guns fired a steady stream of shells into enemy positions inflicting severe damage on their installations. Just at midnight, flares were dropped overhead by enemy planes, but no bombs fell and aside from the excitement, nothing eventful occurred.

By noon of May 27th, enemy resistance in Velletri was slowly breaking, and their retreat was carrying them on the road to Albano. Harrassing fires continued on the roads leading out of Velletri, but it was sporadic, and few rounds were expended. Mopping up by Infantry continued all through the area south of Velletri, and in the surrounding hills, with many hundreds of prisoners being taken. With their usual methodical deviltry, the enemy had sown all the roads and shoulders with anti-tank and Teller mines. Enemy prisoners seemed almost glad to report where the mine fields were located, and soon Engineers were out clearing paths for our armored vehicles and for the Infantry. During that date, the rear elements at Nettuno moved up to a new position. Since the Battalion was moving so rapidly, it was difficult for the rear echelon to maintain constant communications. Those elements of the Battalion which had been left at Qualiano, landed at Anzio, and rejoined the organization. Late that night, the attack on Velletri was started, with the enemy counter-attacking all along the line.

At dawn of May 28th, the offense picked up in intensity, and sporadic forays between patrols of both sides were being reported constantly. Our left flank was being covered by the 34th Division, and reconnaissance was sent out to establish contact with the 3rd Division on our right. Mines and booby traps were being encountered all along the line. Our Liaison and forward observer groups reported target after target. Groups of enemy personnel, enemy equipment and vehicles were being pounded both by artillery and by our planes. The enemy continued a slow withdrawal toward Velletri, and as our

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Infantry contacted their rear guards, fierce battles were fought. No fire lines were being reported, and as the advance continued, the enemy began counter-attacking in force. Obviously our fire was finding its mark, for the enemy began to smoke the area, cutting down observation. Artillery fire was extremely effective throughout the day. Because of the flexible lines, firing was spasmodic, but there were few replies from enemy guns. Enemy tanks were encountered at many points, and intermittent fire told of close contact between opposing groups.

In the pre-dawn hours of May 29th, the Battalion continued firing rounds in support of the 133rd F. A. Bn., to stop a counter-attack in their sector. All during the morning, our Liaison parties relayed targets which were taken under fire. Enemy tanks were being hit repeatedly. As the enemy threw more and more reinforcements into the line, the counter-attacks picked up in intensity, and a continuous barrage fell from our guns, halting them before they could get underway. In mid-morning, time fire was requested over Velletri, as the city was teeming with enemy troops and equipment. No fire lines were still being reported. Because of this, it was difficult for Fire Direction to learn the disposition of the enemy, as the lines were in a constant state of flux. Numerous targets were continually being reported by Liaison and forward observer groups. A reconnaissance party advanced to seek new positions, since the Battalion all through this engagement was only approximately 3000 yards behind the Infantry. The OP deserves especial mention for keeping informed of how conditions stood, since the Battalion was moving so rapidly, we were continually running off the available maps. But all these things were surmounted, through the drive and force which everyone gave to the plan of attack. An enemy assembly area reported by our observers was fired upon with excellent effect, causing great damage to enemy installations, and injuring many of the Germans. Late that evening, it was reported that enemy counter-attacks had been broken up, and their tanks dispersed. The rumble of artillery continued all through the night.

On May 30th, the Battalion moved to new positions approximately 2000 yards south of Velletri, by infiltration. Continuous fire was laid, and the batteries moved under protecting fire from the 133rd F. A. Bn. Enemy targets were constantly being fired upon, and all targets of opportunity relayed by our observers, were taken under fire. Communications were immediately established. At no time during this offense had the Battalion had time to dig in. The line of battle moved so fast, that barely could they get into position, and fire, before new plans were being made for advances.

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Firing increased to a screaming crescendo of sound on the last day of the month, as more and more targets were taken under fire. From our positions, not only Velletri, but also the roads leading north were within range. There was no limit on the number of rounds the Battalion could fire on observed targets, and all through the day, the crashing roar, and resounding echo of the shells boomed through the hills. As fast as the guns could fire, shells were fed into them, until late in the afternoon, orders were received to abate all firing, merely keeping an intermittent harrassing fire. Just after dusk, German snipers were reported in the Battalion area, and information was received that an enemy patrol had infiltrated into our area. Security patrols were immediately sent out, but the snipers could not be located. The proximity of the Battalion to the front lines, was further evidence of how quickly the lines were advancing, and in what a constant flux they were.

May had been almost a complete month of combat. The strain of battle, of fighting day and night was evident on the men, but the emotional upsurge caused by our progress on the Road to Rome, palliated and eased the strain. We were on the move, chasing the enemy, and giving him no time to consolidate. Wherever he was, we found him, and our guns sent a continuous stream of destruction toward his lines. All else was forgotten in the surge to victory.

*William H. Bright*

WILLIAM H. BRIGHT  
1st Lt., 131st F. A. Bn.  
Historian

NOTE: The following documents are attached to the original of this narrative:

- EXHIBIT "A" - Copy of Unit Journal
- EXHIBIT "B" - Situation Map
- EXHIBIT "C" - Summary of Fires
- EXHIBIT "D" - Firing Chart

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During the period from May 11th to 18th, 1944 found the Battalion in support of the 85th Division line in the Minturno area. On the 19th of May, the Battalion loaded on LST's for Anzio, landing there on May 20th. The Battalion reinforced fires of 463rd F. A. in the initial attack which opened on May 25th. The Battalion supported the fires of the 68th F. A. on May 26th. Following this, our Battalion was in direct support of the 141st Infantry and the 157th Infantry until the end of the month.

Lessons learned during these operations include:

1/ Strict camouflage discipline does pay dividends both in protection and surprise. During the occupation of positions in the Minturno area no enemy fire was directed toward our area.

2. The Battalion should be prepared at all times for a quick change of assignment. The Battalion must be able to move rapidly with limited transportation.

3. In fast moving operations, much of the communications must be carried on by radio. This demands the closest attention to the servicing of sets and equipment. Relay stations must be pushed forward by the Battalion positions to ensure contact with forward observers. Air observations is of utmost value at this time.

4. In rapidly moving situation, the Infantry many times has to depend upon self-propelled guns or tanks for supporting fires.

*Burl G. Lassetter*

BURL G. LASSETTER  
Major, Field Artillery  
Executive.

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UNIT BATTLE CASUALTY LIST

<u>NAME</u>	<u>RANK</u>	<u>ASN</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>TYPE</u>	<u>RESIDENCE</u>
Buirley, Robert D.	Pvt	35866834	May 22	SF, left leg	Dayton, Ohio

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OPERATIONS IN ITALY

UNCLASSIFIED

JUNE

1944

A history of the actions of  
the 1st Field Artillery  
Battalion during the month  
of June, 1944 in the Velletri,  
Rome and Grosseto sectors.

336-FAL(131)-0.3

UNCLASSIFIED

HISTORIAN  
WILLIAM H. BRIGHT  
1ST LT., 1st F. A. BN.

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131st Field Artillery Battalion

Narrative of the 131st Field Artillery Battalion for June, 1944.

Up from the blazing death of Velletri, on through the pomp and beauty of Rome, racing along highways clogged with the decorticated remnants of the enemy legions, past rolling farm lands, and picturesque hills, the Battalion chased the enemy. With the song of victory rising ever louder before us, we speeded along hoping for a contact, finding the flurries with enemy rear guards, merely appetizers. The Germans kept barely one step ahead of us, but the burnt and blackened tanks and vehicles which marked the road, the huge number of prisoners who were captured daily, showed more eloquently than anything else that our deadly nagging was taking its toll. June was a month which brought to its highest point, our combat against the enemy; combat which proved them unable to stand against us; combat which increasingly showed our greater strength and effectiveness and courage. It was a month when all the bitter disappointments of Cassino, the Rapido River, Mignano and Venafro were avenged. The supercilious smugness which the enemy had expressed before us was blotted out by his disordered retreat. His superciliousness was first tinged with fear, and then wiped off as disaster after disaster met him.

The drive from the Anzio beachhead, started in the last days of May, rose to a high-pitched crescendo, as more and more pressure was directed at the enemy lines. The resounding boom of tremendous barrages filled the quiet summer air. Fighting desperately, Jerry fell back from one defense line to another, hoping to stop the all enveloping attack. But nothing could stand against it. The first day of the month found our unit's guns barking their deadly growls of death near Cori. Smarting under the sting of constant defeat, Jerry fought like a cornered animal. But matching his animal ferocity was an unsurpassed courage, and a brilliant strategy. Constant reports filtered in from our liaison sections reporting enemy guns and vehicles destroyed. A direct hit from our guns was greeted with a earth-shaking explosion, as a German ammunition dump went up in flame and smoke. As the Infantry reached objective after objective, the Germans slowly withdrew, and as their equipment rolled along the roads, our guns laid down concentrated barrages that brought reports of "two enemy tanks knocked out here", "four enemy vehicles destroyed there", "enemy troops dispersed by shell fire", "enemy field pieces hit at such and such a point". It almost seemed as though each shell we fired found a target. As the day drew to a close, trucks were loaded, and the Battalion prepared to move to new positions East of Velletri.

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Early in the morning of June 2nd, the Battalion began to roll and by 0535, guns were layed and ready to fire. The last two mountain barriers blocking the road to Rome and Northern Italy stood before us. But no barrier, no matter how strongly defended could stand against this offensive. The Battalion forward observer party which was working with the 141st Infantry, sharing the same dangers and risks, hit an unlucky spot, and our first casualties of the month were reported when a stray shell landed in the midst of their observation post. Lt. Charles N. Burian, O-1181557, Pvt. 1cl Dagoberto S. Chavez, 38636128, T/5 Durgin O. Gregg, 34705545, and Pvt. Frank O. Kelloch, 32368385, all of Battery "A" were wounded by shell fragments and evacuated. Cpl. Carter Wallace, 38051199, of the same party was reported as missing in action, but on June 15, his body was found, signifying that he had been killed in this action. The attack was moving so rapidly that isolated groups of Germans were going bypassed by the Infantry. As the Battalion moved forward, more and more of them were picked up, but occasionally one or two of the krauts, steeped in the fanaticism of nazism, remained hidden, sniping and firing until killed. As Pvt. Louis Marino, 38050459, Battery "C", walked through the battery area, he was fatally wounded by a conflux of rifle shots. Late that night, the Battalion was notified that one combat team of the 91st Division would be working with us, the 361st Infantry relieving the 141st Infantry temporarily. Our liaison and forward observer groups who were with the 141st Infantry would report to the 91st Division elements as soon as the change was made.

Early in the morning of the 3rd, forward echelons left to reconnoiter and prepare new positions north of Velletri, which were to be occupied by the Battalion that afternoon. The roar of battle resounded continuously, for even as the attack continued there was no waning in its ferocity. As each new position was reached, the disorder of the enemy was evidenced by the tremendous stockpiles of equipment and materiel which they were discarding. The fields and roads were covered with personal equipment, boxes of ammunition, guns helmets, and articles of every description which the enemy left behind, as they retreated in terror from our destruction and vengeance. In the after noon, the Battalion filed into the new positions, and as the guns were being layed, three enemy soldiers were taken prisoners. All the fight seemed to have disappeared from them. The offensive was resembling a juggernaut, which like an avalanche, swallowed all opposition.

As the last hill was cleared, on June 4th, and our Infantry passed through Marino, the Battalion remained under a constant alert, for the attacking was rolling in earnest. Our forward reconnaissance parties, like the intrepid rangers of early American history, raced with the Infantry to learn the disposition of the enemy, and to keep the Battalion notified if the Germans managed to stop their rout long enough to set up defense lines. Air observation was being used con-

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stantly, for the enemy was retreating so rapidly, the only way contact could be kept was by the use of our observation planes. They proved their worth time and again, as they radioed report after report of the activities of the enemy. Weather and hazardous ground winds were no obstacles, for the pilots and observers knew their jobs were of the utmost importance. As the Battalion prepared to move to new positions just south of Rome, a report was received that Cpl. Henry D. Ireston, Battery "A", 32300698, had been wounded by snipers on the day previous. Late that night, the Battalion reached their new positions, stopping just long enough to register the guns in the event the Germans attempted to defend the city. A new move was being planned even as the trucks and guns stopped rolling.

At dawn of the 5th of June, the Battalion cleared the area, and rolled down the road through the heart of Rome. No opposition had been met in the cosmopolitan city, and the men regretted that they could only catch a glimpse of the city they had been striving to reach ever since landing at Salerno, almost nine months earlier. As historical spots were passed, and the cheers of the thousands of Romans who lined the streets reached us, there wasn't a man who didn't wish the war would stop for a day or two, so he could stop there. The enthusiasm of the civilians was so gladdening, that the fatigue of battle fell away from the men, and the uplift in morale was noticeable. Flowers were tossed before the vehicles and to the men, and wine was held out. But not even an ovation could stop our march. There was a job to be done, and ruefully, Rome was passed. A humorous sight was to see signs "Off Limits to I.D.S., signed by the famous T-patch, and representing the combat trooper's feeling about the far rear echelon johnnies, posted all through the city. Just north of the City, the Battalion moved into position. A strong enemy delaying party was in position to defend the highways leading north of Rome, to give their main elements time to reach defensive positions. Although our position was well defiladed, stray shells fell in the "A" Battery positions causing several casualties. Pvt. Charles Porter, 34160246, "C" Battery was slightly wounded, Sgt. Carl E. Hargis, 38036288, and Pvt. Orville E. Bazzell, 34150813, were killed immediately, while Pvts. Earnard Revell, 39329114, Gustav R. Dirks, 35314339, Edward O'Grady, 38381219 and James H. Ainsworth, 32838869, all of "A" Battery were wounded and immediately evacuated by our medics. A report was received that "C" Battery forward observer group had been hit in Rome, near the Tiber River, and that Lt. Rudolph W. Helmick, O-117664, Pvt. 1cl Neil E. Duffy, 35408607, and Pvts. Warren Greitz, 33828977 and James H. Lee, 34107236, were all wounded and had been evacuated. Pvt. Henry H. Davis, 34352550, of the same section was reported missing in action, and on June 6th was reported to have been killed during this action. The offensive was causing many casualties,

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more than we had ever had in a similar period, but it just gave us reason to fight a little harder and to extract a greater measure of revenge. Enemy snipers were thick throughout the entire area, and a platoon of the 141st Infantry was detached to our Battalion to clear them from the area.

As the action moved faster and faster, Rome fell farther and farther behind, for the next four days from June 6th to 10th, saw the Battalion constantly on the move. At least one move each day was made, and slowly the towns were left behind. Rolling up Highway 2, we reached and passed Aluminaro, bypassing most of the smaller villages, and by June 10th had reached a point just beyond Montalto, almost eighty miles from Rome. At no time in the history of America had our Armies moved over so long distance in so short a time. As each new position was reached, reconnoitering parties moved forward to seek a new area. There was no time to dig in guns, for the action moved too quickly. Trucks could never be unloaded, for movement orders came in rapid succession. As the moves continued, the maintenance sections were called up from the rear to service the vehicles, for the long stretches of driving was beginning to show in the wear and tear of the vehicles. Countless prisoners were being reported, and contact with the enemy was spasmodic. All along the highways the wrecks of the Wehrmacht, showed the strength and destructive power of our forces. Constant bypasses were met with for every bridge for hundreds of miles had been demolished by our air forces. The bomb craters pock-marked the fields and areas around every bridge. Much credit must be given to the engineer groups for the rapidity with which they repaired every blown out place, though on one or two occasions, our outfit was located in advance of their elements.

During the course of June 11th, a severe pocket of enemy resistance was encountered. Early in the morning, the organization reached new positions just behind the supported Infantry. Barely had the guns been layed and registered, then a concentration fell within the Battalion area. Enemy fire continued to fall, and a slight withdrawal was made so that we could give better support to the Infantry. Jockeying for position occurred all through the morning. During the first of the shelling several casualties were reported. T/5 John R. Corkery, 33054002, Battery "C", Pvt. John F. Finnerty, Battery "B", 35060979, were wounded and evacuated, while Pvt. Russell W. Day, 33204229, "B" Battery, Sgt. Ralph V. Fry, 20814012, and Pvt. Marvin Amster, 32794374, both of "A" Battery were slightly wounded but remained on duty. Pvt. Aubrey L. Wilson, "C" Battery, 20814052, was reported missing in action. Pvt. James L. Morris, 34508207, "A" Battery was also slightly wounded by shell fragments. One howitzer and one truck was destroyed, and other vehicles were damaged in varying degrees. The Battalion moved four times during the day, finally reaching a position where the full fury of our guns could be brought to bear upon the enemy. At this time, we were so close, that constant sniping was being directed at our installations. Pouring round after

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round into enemy positions, the delay was broken and by late evening, all enemy elements had been routed. Spasmodic rifle fire from isolated enemy riflemen continued, but squads of infantrymen patrolling the area, cleared them out. As the Infantry continued to chase the enemy after breaking their defensive line, preparations were made for the Battalion to move further up. Pvt. Aubrey L. Wilson, who had been reported missing, reported back to his unit. He had become separated during the course of the first move, and had dug in during the shelling.

The Battalion continued its forward movement during the next two days, making one move each day. Slightly stiffer resistance was being met, but at no place was the advance being held up. Vehicular maintenance continued being made in between moves, for in so rapid an action, transportation facilities were of prime importance. The enemy's condition was due in a great degree, because of the tremendous number of vehicles that had been knocked out ever since the Italian campaign had started. As an illustration, there were several days when the outfit ate short rations, because the advance was so fast, it was almost impossible to keep supply dumps in forward areas. Late in the night of June 13th, several enemy shells landed in the vicinity of Battery "B", Pvt. Robert I. Gould, 30106109, Pvt. Frank Tutino, 334-33509, and Pvt. 1st James O. Kidd, 38153677, were all lightly wounded by shell fragments, but remained on duty. No damage was done to installations or equipment. Air observation was still being used, and firing was spasmodic.

On the 14 of June, The Battalion displaced forward in the direction of Scansano. At this time we were supporting the fires of the 133rd Field Artillery Battalion. The fatigue of moving, of going without sleep was taking its toll, but still the Battalion operated with the same efficiency it had shown ever since being committed to combat in 1943. The rout of the enemy continued, and through more and more resistance was being encountered, there was no doubt in our minds that our offensive could be stopped. It might be interesting at this time to note that a byword among American troops was that wherever the 36th Division was, action could be found.

A road block was organized to the south of the Battalion position on the morning of the 15th, for we were in hilly country, and there was some risk of the enemy attempting an ambush. Orders were received that afternoon that we were to move to new positions south of Murci. As the day drew to a close the positions were reached, and guns layed and registered. Constant contact with the enemy was being maintained by the Infantry, and our guns were doing more and more firing.

A small task force consisting of infantry, paratroopers,

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artillery, tank units and engineers had been drawn up for any special tasks which might arise. For the past few days, those elements of our outfit who were assigned to this force remained on constant alert. Sporadic firing continued through June 16th, and just before midnight, the Battalion moved to a new area.

The front, fluid as it was, continued to go forward, and in order to keep in support of the Infantry, moving was almost continuous. A new area had been reconnoitered just north of Grosseto, but the area was still under enemy fire, and it wasn't until the early dawn hours of June 18th that we displaced across a small river to the position. 1st Lt. Hubert W. Freeman, O-385180, was assigned to the Battalion from the 133rd Field Artillery Battalion, as liaison Officer. Although the 141st Infantry was not in combat from June 18th on, we remained in support of the 142nd, 143rd and 517th Parachute Battalion Infantry.

Between June 19th and 21st, three more moves were made forward, bringing us approximately 130 miles north of Rome. At no time has the tempo of the advance lessened. In the last position reached, observation was excellent. More enemy firing was being encountered, and light artillery, tanks and Infantry could be seen. Units on our flanks were subjected to enemy shelling, but none fell in our positions. The intensity of our fires picked up, as observed targets were taken under fire, and much damage was inflicted upon enemy equipment and installations. Vehicles and guns were damaged and destroyed, and several tanks were hit. Communications were becoming a problem, for the advance had been so rapid, supplies were difficult to obtain, and our wire supplies were running short. It finally became necessary to split wire crews into two groups, one to pick up wire from old positions, the other to lay and maintain new communications.

A Battalion observation post was established on June 22nd, the first one which we had used in over a month. Many targets were observed and taken under fire, with extremely effective results. Transportation was becoming more and more of a problem to the Germans, and many horsedrawn artillery columns were visible. They proved easy targets, for their slow rate of speed gave us ample time to fire concentrations. All during this time, we were hedge-hopping with the 133rd Field Artillery Battalion, with each Battalion covering the other as it moved forward. Both units were in support of the 143rd Infantry. The Battalion displaced forward early the evening of June 23rd, and before midnight, were layed and ready to fire.

The Battalion moved again on June 24th, continuing in support of the 143rd Infantry. During the night of the 25th, six German

prisoners surrendered to a group of "A" Battery personnel. Spasmodic firing continued at observed targets. Rumors were rife that we were to be relieved shortly. It was good news for the entire organization was tired and worn out. Parties from the 125th Field Artillery Battalion, 34th Division arrived to look over our positions which gave further credence to the rumor that we were to be withdrawn from combat.

Early in the morning of June 26th, the Battalion moved out of combat to a bivouac area, just south of Grosseto, and remained there until early evening when we left on the long march to a more permanent bivouac area just north of Rome. The new area was reached on the morning of the 27th and all activities were cancelled so the men could have an opportunity to rest up from the long drive.

For the last three days of the month, the men luxuriated in the complete rest they were given. Every man went to Rome. Few had ever expected to see the "Eternal City" again, for the drive had carried us well over 150 miles, and at the rate we were going, we all felt we would see Berlin sooner than Rome. There was much to see in the cosmopolitan center, and it was with a feeling of regret that more time couldn't be had. The men were paid a day early so they could have money for souvenirs. It was a strange contrast to the beginning of the month. The month of June will remain vivid in the memories of us all for many reasons.

The banners of the 131st Field Artillery Battalion received new honors during June. The breakthrough from Velletri, the capturing of Rome, the chase up the highway past Grosseto, the thousands of enemy that were captured, the countless vehicles and tanks and guns that were hit and destroyed, all stand as monuments to our driving efficiency. New glories have been written into the history of our Battalion, and everyman can be proud of the part he played in the drive. The chase from Anzio to the point north of Rome where we were relieved, a distance of over two hundred miles stands without peer in this war. It is a tribute to the courage and drive of the Battalion that all through this march, the efficiency of the organization remained at so high a level.

NOTE: The following documents are attached to the original of this narrative:

*William H. Bright*

WILLIAM H. BRIGHT  
1st Lt., 131st F. A. Bn.  
Historian.

- EXHIBIT "A" - Copy of Unit Journal
- EXHIBIT "B" - Situation Map
- EXHIBIT "C" - Summary of Fires
- EXHIBIT "D" - Firing Chart

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During this period the Battalion was in direct support of the 141st Infantry, 157th Infantry (45th Division), and in general support under Division Artillery control.

Casualties were due to mortar and artillery fire, and were unavoidable in a situation of rapid movement such as this Battalion operated in during this period.

Lessons learned during this operation include:

1. Fort Sill method of operation in fast moving situation works with dispatch and efficiency. Order of movement: Battalion Commander and Reconnaissance Officer, well forward with infantry, select tentative position area; Battalion S-3 with radio and Fire Direction personnel leads column; Battery Commanders and Survey Party follow at head of column; Firing Batteries, then Headquarters and ammunition train. Battery Commanders radioed forward so as to arrive in position area fifteen to thirty minutes in advance of batteries.
2. Only essential vehicles in advance position - wire vehicle, howitzers and prime movers, Battery Commanders' jeep, kitchen and one or two ammunition trucks, depending on volume of fire anticipated. Remainder of ammunition train and supply section follow Battalion four or five miles back, ammunition officer staying at Fire Direction Center. All other vehicles, equipment and personnel remain in rear area, fifteen to twenty miles to rear, under command of Battalion Executive. Move forward each two or three days.
3. Battalion was highly mobile. Maximum time allowed between firing and march order to move, one hour. Battalion Commander and/or Reconnaissance Officer constantly forward with advance infantry elements in contact with Battalion by radio.
4. Careful planning of displacement makes possible regular feeding of hot meals and five to seven hours rest for men each twenty-four hours. Rapid infantry movement ordinarily in daytime. Moves average three each twenty-four hours, one at last-light, one after dawn and one between noon and night.
5. Air OPs are of the utmost importance for registration and adjustment of fires. At least one plane should be in the air during daylight hours.
6. Book rules and long tedious operations were eliminated and survey was simplified in order that speed in the location of batteries could be effected. Registration corrected any errors and rapid delivery of fire was obtained.
7. Radio can be made to work by use of relay station. This station was SOP and went well forward into position ahead of Battalion. On displacement it was used as base set and old base set was moved forward as new relay. 608 radio and Q/R car was used.

*James E. Taylor*  
JAMES E. TAYLOR  
Lt. Col., F. A.  
Commanding

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CONSOLIDATED BATTLE CASUALTY LIST

<u>NAME</u>	<u>RANK</u>	<u>A.S.N.</u>	<u>UNIT</u>
<u>KILLED IN ACTION</u>			
Bazzell, Orville E.	Pvt	341 50813	Btry "A"
Davis, Henry H.	Pvt	34352550	Btry "C"
Hargis, Carl E.	Sgt	38036288	Btry "A"
Moreno, Louis (NMI)	Pvt	38050459	Btry "C"
Wallace, Carter	Opl	38051199	Btry "A"
<u>WOUNDED IN ACTION</u>			
Clary, Louis H.	Opl.	38027542	Btry "B"
Ainsworth, James H.	Pvt	32838869	Btry "A"
Amster, Marvin (NMI)	Pvt	32784374	Btry "B"
Burian, Charles M.	2nd Lt.	0-1181557	Btry "A"
Chavez, Dagerto S.	PFC	38361698	Btry "A"
Clay, Roy (NMI)	Opl	35212425	Btry "A"
Corkery, John R.	Opl	33054002	Btry "C"
Creitz, Warren F.	Pvt	33828977	Btry "C"
Duffy, Neil E.	PFC	35408607	Btry "C"
Finnerty, John F.	Pvt	35060979	Btry "B"
Fry, Ralph V.	Pvt	20814012	Btry "B"
Gambino, Ben J.	2nd Lt.	0-1178804	Btry "A"
Gould, Robert I.	Pvt	36106109	Btry "B"
Day, Russell W.	Pvt	33204229	Btry "B"
Dirks, Gustav R.	Pvt	35314331	Btry "A"
Gregg, Burgin O.	Opl	34705545	Btry "A"
Helmick, Rudolph W.	2nd Lt.	0-117664	Btry "C"
Kidd, James O.	PFC	38153577	Btry "B"
Lee, James H.	Pvt	34107236	Btry "C"
Mieloch, Frank O.	Pvt	32368385	Btry "A"
Morris, James H.	Pvt	34508207	Btry "A"
O'Grady, Edward	Pvt	39391219	Btry "A"
Porter, Charles W.	Pvt	34160246	Btry "C"
Preston, Henry D.	Opl	32500698	Btry "A"
Rubell, Barnard (NMI)	Pvt	39329114	Btry "A"
Tutino, Frank (NMI)	Pvt	33433509	Btry "B"

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UNIT BATTLE CASUALTY LIST

<u>NAME</u>	<u>RANK</u>	<u>ASN</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>TYPE</u>	<u>RESIDENCE</u>
<u>Battery "A"</u>					
Ainsworth, James H.	Pvt	32838869	June 5	WIA SF Lt Flank	NY
Bazzell, Orville E.	Pvt	34150813	June 5	KIA Pen W. Lt Shoul.	Tenn
Burian, Charles M.	2nd Lt	0-1181557	June 1	WIA Shell Frag	Ill
Chavez, Dagerto S.	PFO	38361698	June 1	WIA SF Rt ELbow, chest	Mexico
Olay, Roy (NMI)	Hpl	35212425	June 11	WIA SF Rt Lg forehead	W. Va.
Dirks, Gustav R.	Pvt	35314331	June 5	WIA SF buttocks, arm	Chio
Gambino, Ben J.	2nd Lt	0-1178804	June 16	WIA LW Rt thumb	Mass
Gregg, Burgin C.	Opl	34705455	June 1	WIA Shell frag	N.C.
Hargis, Carl E.	Sgt	38036288	June 5	KIA Pen W. Lt chest	Texas
Mieloch, Frank G.	Pvt	32368385	June 1	WIA Shell frag	NY
Morris, James H.	Pvt	34508207	June 11	WIA SF Lower back	Texas
O'Grady, Edward	Pvt	39391219	June 5	WIA SF Rt Forearm	Cal
Freston, Henry D.	Opl	32500698	June 3	WIA GSW in leg	NY
Rubell, Barnard (NMI)	Pvt	39329114	June 5	WIA SF Buttocks	One from Rhode Isl.
Wallace, Carter (NMI)	Opl	38051199	June 1	KIA (No Information)	Texas
<u>Battery "B"</u>					
Olary, Louie R.	Opl	38027542	May 29	WIA Lt shoulder (SF)	Texas
Amster, Marvin (NMI)	Pvt	32704745	June 11	WIA SF Rt Knee	Texas
Finnerty, John F.	Pvt	35070979	June 11	WIA SF Lt Arm	Chio
Fry, Ralph V.	Sgt	20814012	June 11	WIA SF Lt Knee	Texas
Gould, Robert I.	Pvt	36106109	June 13	WIA SF Lt thigh	Mich
Kidd, James O.	PFO	38153577	June 13	WIA SF Lower back	Texas
Tutino, Frank	Pvt	33433509	June 13	WIA SF Rt Forefinger	Pa.
Day, Russell W.	Pvt	33205229	June 11	WIA SF Rt shoulder	Pa.
<u>Battery "C"</u>					
Corkery, John R.	Opl	33054002	June 11	WIA SF of buttocks	Pa.
Oreitz, Warren F.	Pvt	33838977	June 5	WIA SF Lt. side body	Pa.
Davis, Henry H.	Pvt	34352550	June 5	WIA (No Information)	Ga.
Duffy, Neil E.	PFO	35408607	June 5	WIA SF shoulder, arms	Mass
Helmick, Rudolph W.	2nd Lt	0-117664	June 5	WIA SF both legs	Chio
Lee, James H.	Pvt	34107236	June 5	WIA SF lt Knee	Ala
Moreno, Louis	Pvt	38050459	June 2	KIA SW lt & Rt Chest	Texas
Porter, Charles W.	Pvt	34160246	June 5	WIA SF Rt thigh	Ala

UNIT BATTLE CASUALTY LIST

<u>NAME</u>	<u>RANK</u>	<u>ASN</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>TYPE</u>	<u>RESIDENCE</u>
Bairley, Robert D.	Pvt	55866034	May 22	SF, left leg	Dayton, Ohio

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HEADQUARTERS 131ST FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION

APO #36, U. S. ARMY

10 September 1944

SUBJECT: Transmittal of Battalion History.

TO : The Commanding General, 36th Inf. Div., APO #36, U. S. Army.

Transmitted herewith Battalion History of the 131st Field Artillery Battalion for the month of August, 1944 covering operations in Southern France.

*William H. Bright*

WILLIAM H. BRIGHT  
1st Lt., 131st F. A. Bn.  
Bn. Historian

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OPERATIONS IN FRANCE

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AUGUST, 1944

L-1009

A history of the actions of the 131st  
Field Artillery Battalion during the  
month of August, 1944 in Southern France,  
from Dramont to Valence.

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HISTORIAN:  
WILLIAM H. BRIGHT  
1ST LT., 131ST F. A. BN.

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Operations of the 131st Field Artillery Battalion in France, August, 1944.

As though in repetition of the course which the 131st Field Artillery Battalion followed last year, August saw a new invasion, a constant race, and a triumphant advance that refused to be stopped. It wasn't now that we were facing a landing on Southern France, for training and preparations were thoroughly instilled during the first few days of the month. At last, these preliminary steps were ended and on August 6th, the Battalion loaded, for its first and last dress rehearsal. With howitzers lashed on DUKWs, and every eventuality minutely planned for, the Battalion spent two days of final practice, thrashing out the loose ends which always crop up despite the most detailed planning. On the evening of the 7th, the Battalion returned to its bivouac area near Qualiano. Critiques were held, final instructions given, and loading completed. It was ironic that the stopping off place for this new invasion should be just a few miles away from Pastoua where the organization first met the enemy in bloody, fierce combat. And now, just short of a year later, it was a peaceful, serene spot. It was at Pastoua, too, that the Battalion showed a mettle which has never been tarnished. Liaison and Forward Observer parties were attached to Infantry units, passes were discontinued for secrecy and security measures, Naval shore control parties attached to direct Naval fire, and in a last minute rush of loading the Battalion moved off on the evening of August 9th to load on ships waiting to carry them to the shores of the Riviera. Morale was high and as the large crowds of ships appeared in view, it rose even higher, for the water seemed dotted with a cover of bobbing boats of all types. It was a tremendous, impressive sight.

On August 10th, the ships sailed from Pozzuoli, Italy, and as the convoys took shape in the Mediterranean, a solid wall of boats moved in slow precision to a final assembly area on the lip of Naples harbor. During the next day, boats scurried across the open water, reaching their designated places, and then settled, rolling and swaying on the calm water. Late on the night of the 11th, the 131st's quivered and then, with an anticipatory strain slowly got under way for the four hundred mile voyage. The weather continued good, and on board the various 131st's, Navy personnel made available all the possible comforts. Not long after we had set sail, the secret orders were read, maps, overlays and air photos distributed, and unit discussions held. To the veteran's of Salerno, the invasion was just another step to be taken in stride, but to the replacements and newer members, it was to be an adventure. Old stories of Pastoua were rehearsed. Despite the memories of that hard fought for beach head, the men showed a high courage. They could not be stopped! All through the next two days intermittent discussions were held until each man knew his particular job thoroughly and had a comprehensive grasp of the overall picture. It was a lesson in minute planning, in exacting detail; a study of a step towards victory. There was no vestige of doubt of success. The usual abandon ship drills occurred with irritating regularity, and a few

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necessary duties taken care of, but on the whole, the men crammed themselves with knowledge of what lay ahead. Corsica drew into sight on August 14th and as the huge armada of ships sailed slowly by, the mountains and rugged crests set a strange background for the calm sea and seemingly motionless ships. Overhead friendly planes roared their defiant cry, covering the convoy, and searching ceaselessly for any sign of the enemy. But the Krauts remained hidden, either unaware of the avalanche that was bearing down upon them or afraid to show any fight.

Just after two o'clock in the morning on the 15th of August, the ships swung into line, and the creaking of davits as boats were lowered and the rattle of chains filled the air. Coffee was served at 0530, and shortly afterwards the small craft were circling the LST's waiting for the formation to be completed. With a sudden dreadful roar the huge guns of the naval escort opened fire, and sheet after sheet of destruction sped toward the shore. The beaches were covered with smoke, but occasionally a flicker of flame would streak upwards where a fire had been started by the tremendous shelling from the warships. As the naval fire settled down to a steady roar, the muzzle flashes cutting the false dawn, the thunder of hundreds of planes sounded overhead, and soon the engulfing din obliterated all other sounds as thousands of tons of bombs hit their destinations. It was a tremendous and aweing demonstration of power, surpassing anything similar in history. For an hour and a half, the sky was darkened with the drifting smoke of the thousands of shells that zoomed toward the shore and as the bombs thunderbolted their way toward enemy positions, the blasts set up reverberations that echoed and re-echoed from the surrounding hills. As soon as the air and sea bombardment lifted countless LCVP's darted in and let loose their loads of devastating rockets sending huge showers of rock and dirt into the air as their missiles hit the targets. For ten minutes the air was filled with the swishing sound of the rockets, and then in the ear-shattering calm that followed, the first wave moved slowly towards the coast.

Intermittant firing could be heard as the first wave hit. Liaison and Forward Observer parties embarked on the second wave, and soon the sea was filled with small craft as wave after wave moved solidly towards the beach. At 0920, the first DUKWs with howitzers mounted and lashed, ready to fire from the water if necessary, moved slowly ashore and within ten minutes the firing batteries and fire direction and OP personnel had landed. Machine gun fire rattled out over the water as the DUKWs approached the coast, but ended abruptly as though realizing the utter impossibility of ever stopping the immense wall which advanced toward it. A scattering of 88's splattered the beach as the wave landed, but no damage was done, and soon enemy firing was almost non-existent..

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With a minimum of delay, the Battalion moved off the beach to positions which had been picked out by the Battalion Commander and Battalion S-2 who had landed in the third wave. Signs had been posted and within an hour of landing the gun batteries had reached the positions and reported ready to fire. As yet no casualties at all had been reported, in strange contrast to the landings in Italy. The situation remained fluid with the Battalion firing its normal support for the Infantry. Liaison officers reported finding little resistance from the enemy and were moving forward to secure their objectives. By 1545 that afternoon all first phase objectives had been taken and drives for second phase objectives were underway. The situation was going so rapidly it was almost impossible to keep up with it. The invasion was a success that exceeded all expectations. Lt. Richard S. Fleming, O-1173946, Liaison Officer with the 1st Bn., 141st Infantry, reported that Tec 5 John R. Windsor, 34593752, Headquarters Battery, had been wounded by machine gun fire on the beach during the landing. Artillery restraining lines were set up by Division Artillery during the night and normal harassing and supporting shelling was fired. A weak reply of a half dozen rounds was the enemy's only answer. The beachhead was firmly established and, as the day ended, it changed from an invasion to a full front with the initiative on our side and success and victory hovering over us.

Early on the morning of August 16, a reconnaissance party left to find new positions for the Battalion, for the situation remained very loose and at no point had the attack been stalled. During the morning the organization moved up, with "A" Battery covering the move of the other two firing batteries. Constant fire was maintained in this way. Narrow roads branched off from the coastal highway winding torturously up to the mountains which fell in sheer drops almost to the very edge of the beach. At times the turns and curves were so sharp, it was necessary for larger vehicles such as prime movers to uncouple their guns before they could make the turn. Late that night two weak counter-attacks were attempted from the direction of Cannes, but heavy fire was brought down upon it, stopping it before they could get underway. The advance continued with only scattered resistance being met. By early evening all objectives had been secured and prisoners were being reported taken in droves. The wire crew of Headquarters Battery captured ten Germans, and the Battalion Commander Lt. Col. James E. Taylor, O-376731 and Captain Robert M. Ramey, O-364093, Battalion S-2, captured six more when they came upon an enemy mortar crew. The krauts showed little taste for the overwhelming power which was being thrown at them in every conceivable way.

Activity continued sporadic for the next three days with the Battalion doing just a normal amount of firing. A new position was selected on August 18th, and the Battalion moved in late that afternoon.

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On that day too, the enemy made a more determined stand, but his shells fell far short of our positions, though our Liaison and Forward Observer parties out on the surrounding hills reported meeting with some mortar and artillery fire. No casualties were met with and there was no damage to equipment. The new positions were well emplaced and dug in. Off to the right flank of the Battalion, our Forward Observers reported the Germans detonating installations in Cannes. The dull sound of the explosions reached our area, but it was impossible to see what damage was being done. Captain Raymond E. Kane, O-1165519, who had joined the Battalion in July, also reported explosions in Cannes and added that the Germans were apparently preparing to evacuate the city. Contact had been made with Paratroopers who had dropped in the forward areas, and information was obtained as to the disposition of the enemy. The hospitality of the people from the very moment of landing was heart-warming. The sincerity and open-heartedness; the generosity and friendliness was in direct contrast to all we had met in Italy and Africa. France was making us welcome, and for the first time we didn't feel like strangers in a strange land. On August 20, the Battalion was notified it would move the next day, and quartering and reconnaissance parties left for an assembly area near Draguignan. The Battalion continued harassing fires all during the day and night.

The front had cracked wide open and the chase began. On August 21, the Battalion moved from Draguignan to positions south of Digne, traveling over 43 miles. All during the next few moves, Infantry were being carried on our vehicles, for with so rapid a changing front, transportation was a problem. Little contact could be made with the enemy, and on August 22, the Battalion moved another 40 miles to an area south of Asperas, near Berrone. The enemy continued his wild retreat, offering little resistance and being harried constantly. He was given no chance to regroup his slim resources, and there was little threat of a counter-attack at that time. The roads were winding, twisting, curving paths cut through the heart of the Maritime Alps, rising up thousands of feet. Sheer precipices of solid rock towered on both sides of the road. August 23rd found the Battalion on the move again. Almost a hundred miles sped away beneath the turning wheels, and in the three days, the Battalion had covered 134 miles. Marsane was reached late that night and our Liaison party with the 2nd Bn., 141st Infantry reported enemy tanks and infantry counter-attacking. Reports were received of large enemy convoys, composed of all types of vehicles, moving on a highway west of the Rhone Valley. As the Battalion reached the outskirts of Marsane, Col. Matlock, Division Artillery Executive halted the head of the column and very rapidly led the firing batteries to the edges of the town and put them in firing position whereby they could direct lay on enemy tanks in the valley below. The remainder of the Battalion moved forward to prepare positions in readiness of the

return of the firing batteries. Battery "A" remained in defensive positions against the enemy tanks, while the two other firing batteries returned to the Battalion positions. Lt. Richard S. Fleming, O-1173946, while on an observation post with the Infantry was slightly wounded by shrapnel and was evacuated to the rear by our medics.

August 24th saw the enemy bare his teeth for the first time and like an entrapped rat, he made a tremendous, snarling effort to throw off his barriers so he could continue his escape. Girding his remaining strength, he counter-attacked with all the strength at his disposal. The terrain was in favor and our distended lines of supply and communication worked against us. Firing with a rapidity which we had never found necessary before, our guns thundered and roared their defiance and death. All that day the battle raged, until our ammunition had been completely expended and we were forced to withdraw to positions about three miles to the rear. The counter-attack was finally beaten off and Jerry withdrew to lick his wounds and ponder over the inevitable doom which awaited him. The entire operation can be better understood if some word is given of the overall picture. Three enemy divisions, battered and ragged were being pushed from behind by the 3rd Division, while the 36th was north of them, holding defensive positions to keep them in the trap. In their desperation to escape, for captured prisoners related that their orders were to reach Germany however best they could, the enemy units tried every conceivable maneuver. Marsano, which was a point of conflux of roads leading north was the logical spot where the trap could be sprung. The enemy continued counter-attacking all during the 24th and 25th, and fighting raged fierce and heavy. Enemy shelling was intense and our positions were under heavy fire. Early on the morning of August 26th, Lt. William C. Uhlis, O-1179659, was severely wounded and Pvt. 1st Elmer E. Ingle, 34170544, Battery "O", was killed when shells fell in the Battery positions. Enemy activity was feverish all that day with constant firing coming from both sides. Enemy tanks and personnel in great strength were noted on all sides, and late that evening it was necessary to displace "O" Battery to new positions. Shelling was so heavy that infiltration methods were used.

Shelling continued heavy all during the night, and early in the morning of August 27th, "A" Battery positions received several rounds. Pvt. Edward O'Grady, 39391219, of that battery was killed during this shelling. One dud fell directly between the trails of one howitzer without doing any damage. Later that morning, Thomas G. Posey, Pvt., 38359382, Service Battery was lightly wounded in action and immediately evacuated by the medics. The battle increased in ferocity during the day and ammunition supplies kept getting lower and lower. Firing was

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HELI BATTERY SERVICE LIST

<u>NAME</u>	<u>RANK</u>	<u>ASN</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>TITLE</u>	<u>RESIDENCE</u>
<u>HEADQUARTERS BATTERY</u>					
Windsor, John W.	T/3	54593752	8/19	HW rt leg	Salisbury, N.C.
<u>BATTERY "A"</u>					
O'Grady, Edward	1st	39391219	8/26	KIA	San Joaquin, Cal.
<u>BATTERY "B"</u>					
Fleming, Richard L.	1st Lt	O-1173946	8/23	SF ft thigh, calf	Phila., Pa.
<u>BATTERY "C"</u>					
Uhle, William D.	1st Lt	O-1179659	8/26	SF head	Holla, Mo.
Ingle, Elmer E.	1st Lt	34170344	8/26	KIA	Democrat, N.C.
<u>SERVICE BATTERY</u>					
Posey, Thomas G.	1st Lt	38559302	8/26	SF, rt shoulder	San Antonio, Tex.

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COMBINED BATTLE CASUALTY LIST

<u>TYPE OF CASUALTY</u>	<u>OFFICERS</u>	<u>ENLISTED MEN</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
KIA	0	2	2
DCW	0	0	0
LIA	0	0	0
SIA	0	0	0
DIA	0	0	0
LNA	1	2	3
SWA	1	0	1
MIA	0	0	0
POW	0	0	0

S E C R E T

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

JULY, 1944

2709

<u>NAME</u>	<u>RANK</u>	<u>ASI</u>	<u>UNIT</u>	<u>AWARD</u>
Gire, Kenneth P.	1st Lt.	0-1176637	Headquarters	Commendation Merit. Conduct
Mieloch, Frank O.	Pvt 1st	32768385	Battery "A"	Silver Star Medal

AUGUST, 1944

Ramey, Robert M.	Captain	0-364093	Headquarters	Bronze Star Medal
Sample, Ernest L.	Captain	0-380569	Headquarters	Bronze Star Medal
Sample, Ernest L.	Captain	0-380569	Headquarters	Commendation, Merit. Conduct
Kroemer, Frank J.	S/3gt	31396845	Hq. Battery	Bronze Star Medal
Rohn, Waldemer J.	Sgt.	36126498	Hq. Battery	Bronze Star Medal
Lee, Monte R.	1st Lt.	20813571	Hq. Battery	Commendation, Merit. Conduct
Cogburn, Willie L.	1st Lt.	38038578	Hq. Battery	Bronze Star Medal
Campbell, William D.	Cpl.	13061789	Hq. Battery	Bronze Star Medal
Windsor, John R.	1st Lt.	34593752	Hq. Battery	Bronze Star Medal
Lane, Johnnie D.	1st Lt.	34472782	Hq. Battery	Commendation, Merit. Conduct
Linder, Curtis L.	1st Lt.	37230183	Hq. Battery	Bronze Star Medal
Warren, Frederick L.	Pvt 1st	35361021	Hq. Battery	Bronze Star Medal
McCormick, Roy A.	Pvt	37073311	Hq. Battery	Bronze Star Medal
Ireland, Ronald E.	Pvt	37343475	Hq. Battery	Bronze Star Medal
Edwards, William D.	Pvt	16088202	Hq. Battery	Bronze Star Medal
Sheldon, Ernest L.	1st Lt.	0-1177631	Headquarters	Bronze Star Medal
Barnes, Johnnie A.J.	1st Lt.	34087493	Battery "A"	Bronze Star Medal
Fleming, Richard S.	1st Lt.	0-1173946	Headquarters	Bronze Star Medal
Hall, James O.	S/3gt	20013445	Battery "B"	Commendation, Merit. Conduct
Peterson, Harry M.	Pvt 1st	37124483	Battery "B"	Bronze Star Medal
Glover, Ray W.	Pvt	20913443	Battery "D"	Bronze Star Medal
Davis, John O.	Cpl.	34160257	Battery "G"	Bronze Star Medal
Duffy, Neil E.	1st Lt.	35408607	Battery "C"	Bronze Star Medal
Larsen, Kenith O.	1st Lt.	0-1166537	Headquarters	Air Medal
Baker, Jack E.	1st Lt.	20813093	Med. Det.	Bronze Star Medal

S E C R E T

131st F.A. BN.



OPERATIONS IN FRANCE

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SEPTEMBER 1944

L-1010

A history of the actions of the 131st Field Artillery Battalion during the month of September 1944 in Central and Eastern France.

UNCLASSIFIED

HISTORIAN:  
WILLIAM H. BRIGHT  
1ST LT., 131ST F.A. BN.



Operations of the 131st Field Artillery Battalion in France, September, 1944

Changing position ten times in the first eight days of September, the motors of the Battalion's vehicles throbbed almost constantly. Ever northeastward, the 131st Field Artillery Battalion moved nearer and nearer to German territory. The terrific pace which had begun with the landings at Dramont on the Riviera had continued without abating, and now as the month unfolded, the chase continued, past the famed vineyards of Romans, past the great industrial center of Lyons, past the world famous cheese factories of Besancon, past the internationally known spas of Luxeuil, Plombieres and Remiremont, and then at a slackening pace to the Moselle River. But not even the river could prove too great an obstacle, for as the month drew to a close, a crossing was made and expanded. And as the enemy found himself with his back to German territory, he fought tenaciously; fought with a viciousness which almost belied the pounding and beating that had been dealt to him for over 400 miles from the Riviera to the Moselle River. The battle of France was drawing to a close, but it was like a dormant volcano slowly arousing; warning with rumbles and thunders and smoke. So it was here, for the Germans in their first determined stand, fought fiercely and methodically, and as September passed, a growing tenseness could be felt; a tenseness abetted by the fatigue of almost fifty continuous days of combat; a tenseness which held a threat of sudden eruption. September was thirty days of combat, thirty days which found the 131st Field Artillery Battalion disregarding its weariness to deal a constant stream of blows to the enemy.

Leaving the positions northwest of Romans on September 1, the Battalion arrived at an assembly area near Oxyer, only to find a new march order awaiting them, for the battered remnants of the German 19th Army was still in full retreat. Late that day, the Battalion reached its destination north of Oxyer (041-650), but remained loaded ready to move. Almost in repetition of the 1st, the Battalion moved again, early in the morning of September 2nd, reaching a position at 154-867, near Mayzieux. All during these moves, Infantry was being carried on our vehicles. There was little action, for the enemy refused to put up much more than a shallow defense, and the Battalion did practically no firing at all the first seven days of the month. Occasionally the convoy would run into snipers, but these were immediately wiped out by reconnaissance and Infantry units. At 1845 that afternoon, the Battalion moved again to positions at 087-846. With the situation so fluid, constant contact between the 141st Infantry which we were supporting, was of absolute necessity.

On the third of September, 2nd Lt. Raymond A. Grossman, O-1176647, Chicago, Illinois, assigned as Artillery Observer, was notified he had been promoted to First Lieutenant ranking from August 30th. At noon,

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the Corps Commander ordered 5 2½ ton trucks to report to 36th Division Artillery, which left the Battalion extremely short of transportation. And when a march order was received early that afternoon, the transportation available was found to be barely adequate. The Battalion arrived at its new positions at 023-033, and guns were immediately laved, ready to fire. However there was no call for artillery fire, for the enemy continued to run. Just before midnight, the Battalion was alerted to move again, and the Battalion Commander, Lt. Col. James E. Taylor, O-376731, Kerens, Texas, left to contact the 141st Infantry for particulars of the move. At 0300 on the 4th of September, the Battalion moved out reaching new positions at 029-677 at 1700 that afternoon. The guns were again laved, but once again, there was no opportunity to do any firing, for the Germans were retreating so rapidly, they were constantly getting out of artillery range. As the day drew to a close, the Battalion was alerted for a new move the next morning.

Early in the morning of September 5th, two enemy soldiers turned themselves in to the Battalion CP. It was evidence of the tremendous pressure we were exerting on the Germans, and of the "unsuperman" actions they were resorting to. The prisoners were turned over to the Division Prisoner of War enclosure. At 0850, the Battalion was on the road, led by Captain Ross Ayers, O-378526, Waxahachie, Texas, Battalion S-3, and at 1336, reached new positions at 235-986. On the 6th of September, Gen. Hess, Div. Arty. Commanding General, visited the CP to discuss the situation with Col. Taylor, and advised him that the Battalion would probably move that morning. The march order came through, and all that day the Battalion was on the road, reaching new positions at 575-613 at 1527 that afternoon. Constant conferences were being held between the Battalion Commander, Col. Taylor, the Battalion S-2, Captain Raymond E. Kane, O-1165519, Norristown, Pa., and the Regimental Staff of the 141st Infantry, which we were supporting.

September 7th found another march order awaiting the Battalion, and that afternoon new positions were reached at 754-525. Captain Jack Richards, O-409694, Hearnes, Texas, Commanding Officer of "B" Battery, reported that a French woman had notified him that a home in his battery's area was occupied by Italian-German sympathizers, who were armed with small arms. This information was relayed to the 141st Infantry by the Battalion Commander. Captain Kane, Battalion S-2, reported Besancon had been cleared of the enemy, and that enemy columns had been observed at 68-45, moving in a north-eastern direction.

In the afternoon of September 8th, Gen. Hess, Major Giles, and Major Orrick, all of 36th Division Artillery Staff, visited the Battalion CP, and discussed the local situation, and firing possibilities with Colonel Taylor and Captain Ayers. Reports were being received

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from our Liaison and Forward Observer parties that more contact was being made with the enemy. Two CIO (counter-intelligence corps) men arrived at the OP to handle the suspects who had been reported in "B" Battery's area. For the first time since the month began, the Battalion occupied a stable position for twenty-four hours..

At noon of September 9th, the Battalion moved out again, and reached new positions at 711-591. Registration was done through our air OP and by 1600, the guns were registered and ready to fire. Enemy resistance was increasing, and slowly our guns began to bark their angry roar from the positions near Oisley. Enemy personnel, enemy guns, tanks, vehicles and self-propelled guns were all taken under fire with excellent results. Targets were covered and bracketed, and several direct hits were scored on self-propelled guns. Observation was good, and fire missions came in in a steady stream from our forward observers. Firing continued all that afternoon and night, with well over 600 rounds expended on observed targets. Our fires were re-inforced during the night by the guns of the 93rd F. A., and constant flashes of lightning distorted the darkness as round after round was sent at enemy positions. Early in the morning of the 10th, the Battalion displaced to new positions in a wooded area, near a river running on the outskirts of Oisley. All through the moves made during September, one Battery moved first to cover the subsequent move of the remainder of the Battalion. In this way, constant fire was brought to bear on the enemy, and artillery protection was assured for our own unit. At noon, Gen. Hess notified Col. Taylor that the Battalion would re-inforce the fires of the 132nd F. A., and to order a reconnaissance made for new positions near that unit. The Battalion reached new positions at 711-741 at 1545 that afternoon, and within an hour had guns layed and ready to fire. Over 400 rounds were expended on enemy targets; enemy personnel and armored equipment being the principle targets. Observation remained good, and the results of the firing ranged from satisfactory to excellent. The enemy continued his withdrawal, but at a diminished pace.

September 11th found the Battalion on the move once again. Leaving the positions south of Grandville (748-943), the Battalion reached their new positions at 824-946 in the vicinity of Andelarre.. The guns were immediately layed, but no firing was done at all that day, as the French patriots were preparing to enter Vesoul, and details had to be checked. The attack on Vesoul began early the next morning, and our guns supported the attacking Infantry and patriot groups. Enemy artillery pieces, vehicles, personnel and enemy mortars were taken under fire, with direct hits being scored. Three enemy guns were destroyed, six vehicles set afire, while numerous other enemy guns were either destroyed or neutralized. Observation remained good, and fire missions

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Called in by our forward observers called for an expenditure of over 750 rounds. Early in the morning, Major Luther E. Orrick, O-357391, Waxahachie, Texas, new Battalion Executive, reported for duty and immediately took up his duties. 1st Lt. Marvin H. New, O-1179553, Philadelphia, Pa., in charge of a forward observer group, was lightly wounded in action and evacuated by our medics. Captain Kane, Bn. S-2, reported enemy infantry and vehicles moving out of Vesoul to the east, and those roads were taken under fire by our guns. Late that afternoon, a new march order was received, and the Battalion displaced to new positions at 890-070, south of Flagey.

Early in the morning of September 13th, ten rounds landed in the Battalion area, approximately 300 yards from "A" Battery, without causing any casualties or damage to installations. Much small arms fire was being encountered by our forward observers. "B" Battery reported two rounds of enemy shell fire falling in their area, without causing any casualties or damaging equipment. Enemy targets were taken under fire all day. Direct hits silenced enemy mortars which were holding up part of the attack, and bracketing hits dispersed enemy vehicles and personnel. In the afternoon, horsedrawn artillery and troops were taken under fire with excellent results. Captain Sylvan A. Garfunkel, O-1166993, Savannah, Georgia, who had been transferred to Division Artillery from this organization in June, reported for duty and was assigned as Liaison Officer on the Battalion staff. That night the Battalion again re-inforced the fires of the 132nd F. A. Bn.

September 14th found the Battalion firing constantly as a profuse stream of targets was called in by our observers. Enemy artillery, personnel, mortars and self-propelled guns were taken under fire. Observation remained good, and results from our firing were excellent. Over 625 rounds were expended in silencing enemy artillery and mortars. That afternoon the Battalion moved to an assembly area at 941-103 near Mailleroncourt. The 141st Infantry had been pulled out of the lines for a breathing spell and until they were recommitted to combat, we would remain in this assembly area. Captain Richards, "B" Battery Commander was transferred to 36th Division Artillery, and 1st Lt. Stephen J. O'Brien, O-1170510, Roxbury, Massachusetts was relieved as Liaison Officer and assigned as Commanding Officer of "B" Battery.

Pvt. Charles J. Simmons, 32374034, Troy, New York was killed in action, and Pvt. Joseph G. Gudas, 33588464, Philadelphia, Pa., was captured when their jeep ran into an enemy road block in the vicinity of Villers-Les-Luxeuil, on September 15th. Little of importance occurred on the next day, and the Battalion remained in the assembly area. Early on the 17th of September, the Battalion moved to a new rendezvous area north of Luxeuil, only to find another march order awaiting them. The new po-

S E C R E T

Sitions at 034-278, on the road to Remiremont, were reached at 1930, and the guns laved and held ready to fire. 2nd Lt. John H. Hanson, O-1180032, Emmett, Idaho and 2nd Lt. James R. MacIvor, O-1167613, Hazel Park, Mich., reported for duty and were assigned to "C" Battery, commanded by Captain Henry A. Rich, Jr., O-416424, Salt Lake City, Utah. The organization was alerted that night and at 0345 on September 18th, moved to new positions near St. Valbert (039-250). 2nd Lt. Ralph B. Blonder, O-1180123, Kutztown, Pa. reported for duty and was assigned to "A" Battery, commanded by 1st Lt. Raymond E. Shea, O-1167214, Worcester, Mass. 2nd Lt. Nicholas W. Moreth, O-1176738 who also reported was transferred the next day to the 133rd F. A. Bn., along with 1st Lt. Raymond A. Grossman, O-1176647, Chicago, Illinois. The Battalion was again alerted to move on September 19th, and the transportation problem had become so acute, that Col. Taylor requested that the trucks which had been requisitioned by the Corps Commander on September 3rd, be returned. Major Orrick, Bn. Executive, notified Division Artillery S-4 that the Battalion could only move with 50% efficiency as our entire ammunition train was hauling ammunition for the Seventh Army.

Early on September 20th, the Battalion moved to new positions near Plombieres (073-393), barely getting into position before they were on the move again, heading for positions at Raon-aux-Bois (094-405), north of Remiremont. All that day, firing continued, and just after midnight heavy barrages were laid down all along the banks of the Moselle River, for the crossing had been set for 0045, September 21st. Observation was poor, for heavy fog shrouded the valley, and country around the river. As daylight showed, machine gun nests, strong points and enemy personnel were taken under fire. Heavy opposition was being met by the attacking Infantry, and continuous support was given them. The crossing was made, but due to the high river banks, temporarily restricted to a narrow bridgehead. Our guns thundered shell after shell at enemy gun concentrations and personnel assembled in reserve areas. Excellent results were observed. Air observation was being used constantly. In the afternoon seven propaganda shells were fired into enemy positions. Firing continued all that day and late into the night, with machine gun nests and automatic weapons being the principle targets. 2nd Lt. Johnny R. Hendley, O-2056285, Liaison Pilot, Palestine, Texas, was notified he had been promoted to First Lieutenant with date of rank from September 18th.

Nothing of importance occurred on September 22nd, but on the following day, the Battalion once again delivered devastating blows to enemy strongpoints and self-propelled guns. Late in the afternoon, the Battalion moved to new positions at 161-458 in the vicinity of Moulin. Almost 500 rounds were expended on observed targets with excellent results. The situation continued very fluid.

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Visibility was obscured on the 24th of September, and firing was restricted to some degree. Self-propelled guns and enemy personnel were taken under fire, and much harassing fire laid down. Mission after mission was called in by our forward observers, and enemy tanks, personnel, anti-tank guns, and enemy infantry positions were bombarded with shells. Over 1150 rounds were expended with results reported as excellent. German personnel hiding in a house in the vicinity of Eloyes were blasted by direct hits. Numerous reports of enemy activity were received. Reinforcements were reported in increasing numbers, and an increase in enemy artillery was noted. Prisoners reported that the artillery barrage had killed and wounded almost a hundred troops, and that it had been very effective around Eloyes.

On September 26th, a report was received from the 141st Infantry S-3 that our preparatory fires on St. Ane had knocked out 14 trucks, and enabled the attacking Infantry to take the town and capture 184 Germans and huge stocks of materiel without too much trouble. Heavy firing continued all that day and night with almost 1500 rounds being expended. Because of the long supply lines, ammunition could not be expended recklessly. Enemy automatic weapons, personnel, mortars and artillery were fired on with good results. Much harassing fire was laid down, but results could not be determined as observation was limited. Visibility was poor on September 27th and firing was restricted to harassing and preparation fires.

The Battalion was alerted to move at 0100 on the morning of September 28th, and moved out at 0900, reaching positions north of Eloyse (185-457) at 1342. Two German road blocks were taken under fire with excellent results, and much harassing fire laid down. Due to the move, firing was restricted. Comparatively little firing was done on September 29th also, with only 459 rounds being expended. Much of this was preparatory fires, in support of the assault on Houx and Lavoline doux Houx by our Infantry.

The last day of the month found the Battalion continuing its harassing of enemy strongpoints, guns and personnel. Over 400 rounds were sent screaming toward enemy targets with excellent results reported from our observers. The terrain was heavily wooded, rolling country, and as the Vosges Forests came within range, the enemy put up stiffer and stiffer resistance. Fierce battles were being fought all along the line. The thunder of our guns echoed along the valley as the hands of the clock ticked off the last minutes of the month.

Almost 8,000 rounds had been sent defiantly at the enemy. Not a huge total in comparison to other months in combat, but a symbol of our destructive might and retributive power. September saw the 131st Field Artillery Battalion in full chase of the enemy. September saw German territory come within reach. September brought the writing on the wall into full view, and brought victory beckoning to us from just down the road. All coordinates mentioned in this narrative can be found on the attached situation maps.

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From September 1, 1944 to September 30, 1944, the 151st Field Artillery Battalion was in direct support of the 141st Infantry and was in general support under Division Artillery control. Corps artillery was attached to this Battalion throughout the month and their fire was used to great advantages.

Casualties were in most cases unavoidable. One forward observer was lightly wounded while performing his duties with the infantry. One man from an observer party was killed and another reported missing in action when they drove into a German road-block.

Under combat control consisting of one regiment of infantry and one battalion of light artillery, fast moving situations and operations on a wide front can be overcome. Liaison and Forward Observer parties should live with the infantry, both in the line and out, in order to acquaint themselves with each other and create a firm understanding of one another.

Lessons learned during this operation included:

1. Location, by firing artillery. Many times, through the blackest and most perilous nights our infantry was doubtful as to their location. By firing WP on map coordinates they were oriented and could proceed on to their objective.
2. Communications between the head and rear of the Battalion, while on the march. A radio at the head and rear of the column with prearranged locations on a map can determine the time lengths of the unit as well as the time of arrival for a certain element and makes for better column control.
3. By detaching the Air O.P. from Division Artillery control and working on a separate radio channel, more benefits can be obtained and targets are of a nature to profit the battalion as well as our own infantry. More prompt air observation is available to the battalion.

  
JAMES E. TAYLOR  
Lt. Col., F. A.  
Commanding

S E C R E T

DECORATIONS AND AWARDS

JULY, 1944

<u>NAME</u>	<u>RANK</u>	<u>ASN</u>	<u>UNIT</u>	<u>AWARD</u>	<u>RESIDENCE</u>
Hendley, J. Johnny	1st Lt.	O-2056285	Hqs.	Oak Leaf Clus'r Air Medal	Dallas, Tex.

AUGUST, 1944

Orrick, Luther E.	Major	O-357391	Hqs.	Commendation Merit. Conduct	Italy, Tex.
Sheldon, Ernest L.	1st Lt.	O-1177631	"A" Btry	Bronze Star Medal	Johnstown, Pa.
Hall, James O.	S/Sgt.	20313445	"B" Btry	Commendation Merit. Conduct	Groom, Tex.
Williams, Robert H.	T/5	34170640	"C" Btry	Bronze Star Medal	Roanoke Rapids, N. Car.
Fensler, Boyd A.	Pvt.	35212421	Med. Det.	Bronze Star Medal	Mathias, W. Va.

SEPTEMBER, 1944

Blackwell, Leslie L.	1st Lt.	O-1175947	"C" Btry	Bronze Star Medal	Buffalo, N.Y.
Cantrell, George J.	1st Lt.	O-1175904	"C" Btry	Bronze Star Medal	Columbus, Ga.
Mamary, George N.	1st Lt.	O-1167096	"A" Btry	Bronze Star Medal	Brooklyn, N.Y.
Uhl, William O.	1st Lt.	O-1179659	"C" Btry	Bronze Star Medal	pueblo, Col.
Oakes, Edgar A.	Cpl.	38058543	"B" Btry	Bronze Star Medal	Houston, Tex.
Prindle, Charles A.	Cpl.	38035941	"B" Btry	Bronze Star Medal	Ft. Worth, Tex.
Lockheart, Harold J.	pvt.	20313464	"B" Btry	Bronze Star Medal	Amarillo, Tex.
Sides, Ralph D.	pvt.	20314041	"B" Btry	Bronze Star Medal	Memphis, Tenn.

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UNITED STATES ARMY LIST

<u>NAME</u>	<u>RANK</u>	<u>ASN</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>TYPE</u>	<u>RESIDENCE</u>
<u>HEADQUARTERS BATTERY</u>					
Gabeldon, Lawrence	T/5	5055742	8/15	SF rt butt'ks	Texas
Placks, Vincent H.	Pvt.	35790778	8/25	SF rt shoulder	Kentucky
<u>BATTERY "A"</u>					
New, Marion H.	1st Lt.	0-1179555	9/12	SF rt elbow, rt hand, rt leg, lt calf & lower lip	Pennsylvania
Barefoot, Kavis A.	Pvt.	34170710	8/25	SF Region of 4th vertebrae	North Carolina
Smith, Audrey D.	Pvt.	34150419	8/25	SF finger of lt hand	Alabama
<u>BATTERY "C"</u>					
Gudes, Joseph G.	Pvt.	55768454	9/14	MIA	Pennsylvania
Simmons, Charles J.	Pvt.	52574054	9/14	KIA	New York
<u>SERVICE BATTERY</u>					
George, John	Pvt 1 cl	35255248	8/25	SF mild contusion	Pennsylvania
Sobczyk, Matthews W.	Pvt.	32840150	8/25	SF lt arm	Pennsylvania

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CONSOLIDATED BATTLE CASUALTY LIST

L-1080

TYPE OF CASUALTY	OFFICERS	ENLISTED MEN	TOTAL
KIA	0	1	1
DOW	0	0	0
LIA	0	0	0
SIA	0	0	0
DIA	0	0	0
LWA	0	6 (August)	6
SWA	1	0	1
MIA	0	1	1
POW	0	0	0

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S E C R E T

SECRET

HEADQUARTERS 131ST FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION  
APO #36, U. S. ARMY

ROSTER OF OFFICERS  
SEPTEMBER

<u>NAME</u>	<u>ASN</u>	<u>RANK</u>	<u>ASSIGNMENT</u>	<u>RESIDENCE</u>
<u>BATTALION HQS.</u>				
Taylor, James E.	0-376731	Lt. Col.	Bn. C.O.	Kerens, Texas
Orrick, Luther E.	0-357391	Major	Bn. Ex. O.	Italy, Texas
Ayers, Ross	0-378526	Captain	Bn. B-3	Lubbock, Texas
<u>HEADQUARTERS BTRY</u>				
Ameg, Frederick F.	0-117923	Captain	O.O.	Union City, N.J.
<u>"A" BATTERY</u>				
Shea, Raymond E.	0-1167214	1st Lt.	O.O.	Worcester, Mass.
<u>"B" BATTERY</u>				
O'Brien, Stephen J.	0-1170510	1st Lt.	O.O.	Roxbury, Mass.
<u>"C" BATTERY</u>				
Rich, Henry A., Jr.	0-1175947	Captain	O.O.	Salt Lake City, Utah
<u>SERVICE BTRY</u>				
Snodgrass, Norman K.	0-405088	Captain	O.O.	Lubbock, Texas

HEADQUARTERS 131ST FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION  
APO #36, U. S. Army

10 November 1944

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SUBJECT: Transmittal of Historical records and History of Organization with Conclusions.  
TO : Commanding General, Thirty-Sixth Infantry Division, APO #36, U. S. Army.

1. Transmitted herewith is record of the 131st Field Artillery Battalion entitled "Operations in France", October 1944.
2. Conclusions drawn from the operation of the 131st Field Artillery Battalion during the period of October 1944, are set forth below. This operation consisted of the battles North of the Moselle River near Eloyes, the pursuit through the Vosges Mountains, the occupation of Belmont and the Dominal Forest. Most of these conclusions are ones which experiences of previous periods of combat have already indicated as correct:

a. One new idea was developed during the period. It was the shooting of supplies, medical and food, to isolated troops by artillery shell. By means of a special wrench, the base plate of an M34 smoke shell was removed and the smoke cannisters were taken out. part of the shells were then reloaded with six D-ration bars (in their cellophane wrapper) the cardboard box having been removed. Some were loaded with an assortment of medicinal supplies which included rolls of 3 inch gauze, rolls of 3 inch adhesive tape, iodine swabs, wound tablets, small Carlyle bandages, morphine syretts and halazone tablets. A typical medicinal package contains the following: One 3 in. adhesive roll (5 yds); 2 small Carlyle dressings; 4 boxes of wound tablets; 1 box morphine syrette and 2 packets of iodine swabs. The chocolate and medicinal supplies were firmly wrapped in about 1 sq. foot of burlap, securely tied on the ends and taped up all around. The package was then placed in the shell, the washers replaced and then the base plate was firmly screwed in by means of the base plate wrench. In firing the shells time fire was used. They were fired to burst 200 feet in the air at a range of about 8,000 yards. A 1-square smoke shell weighs 32.4 pounds. The supply shells weighed four pounds less than smoke. One square equals 0.6 pounds. The variation in range for each square at 8,000 yards was 4 yards or 6.67 yards per pound. Since the difference in weight of projectile was 4 pounds, the range variation was approximately 27 yards, or one probable error. Smoke was used in adjusting the fire.

b. An attempt was made to determine the most effective use of artillery in dense woods. The use of delay fuze has been considered most effective. No definite conclusion can be drawn

CLASSIFICATION CHANGED TO:

CANCELLED

BY AUTHORITY OF THE ADJUTANT GENERAL

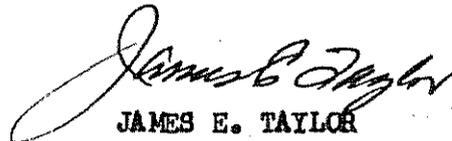
*J. D. Meyer*  
DOWNGRADING COMMITTEE 18 Mar 46

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2. (b) cont'd:

from the present, limited experimentations. A combination of quick and delay fuses on each concentration is now being used. Adjustment has proven extremely difficult. Ground Observers' visibility is limited. Air observers required Wp Smoke Shell, which has been a critical item. Sound adjustment was tried with questionable accuracy. The best procedure seems to be to make precision check point adjustments out of the woods, transfer fire to target area using this data.

UNCLASSIFIED



JAMES E. TAYLOR  
Lt Col, F. A.  
Commanding

UNCLASSIFIED

L-1021

L-1010

HEADQUARTERS 132ND FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION  
A.P.O. # 36, U. S. ARMY

7 October 1944

SUBJECT: Historical Records and History of Organization  
TO : Commanding General, 36th Infantry Division,  
A.P.O. # 36, U. S. Army

1. Submitted herewith the report of 132nd Field Artillery Battalion Historical Records and Histories of organization covering action of this Battalion during the period 1-30 September 1944. This report is submitted in compliance with letter dated 20 April 1943, Allied Force Headquarters, APO # 512, Subject: Historical Records and Histories of organization, wrapper indorsement dated 21 September 1943, Headquarters, 36th Infantry Division dated 28 November 1943 and letter dated 20 May 1944, Headquarters, 36th Infantry Division, Subject: Historical Records and Histories of organizations and letter dated 4 September 1944, Headquarters 36th Infantry Division, Subject: Historical Records and Histories of Organizations and letter dated 28 September 1944, Headquarters, 36th Infantry Division, Subject: Historical Records.

2. The first part of the month further substantiated the experience of August in France and June in Italy in that the combat team of an Infantry regiment and supporting artillery reinforced with a company of tanks and one of Tank Destroyers with a Reconnaissance Platoon; works well in pursuit and can operate over great distances and wide fronts without much attention to flanks other than road blocks at least as long as they be in a friendly country.

3. The latter part of the month emphasized the fact that an organized position should be attacked with coordination and in sufficient force.

4. Our Infantry soldiers were tired by the twentieth of September and well they might be. Upon running into organized positions, supported adequately by artillery, casualties were heavy due to wide fronts, difficult terrain and weary soldiers.

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L-1010

5. We were able to take some of the heat off the Infantry when the weather permitted the use of the Air O.P., but unfortunately many days of rain and fog prevented us from doing all we were capable of in the way of counter-battery.

6. On many occasions our Forward Observers adjusted fire by sound in the forest with satisfactory results.

7. Our officer strength is getting low due to casualties and transfers to other Battalions of the Division. Each direct support Battalion should have a T/O strength of 38 officers and should have at least 10% over strength attached to have experienced replacements immediately available. Two Forward Observers are at all times with each Infantry Battalion and we have two observers at the Air O.P. The Forward Observers and Liaison officers must be relieved from time to time and they should be sent to the rear for rest. This operating on a shoe string may be fine from the big picture but it is hard on the shoe string.

  
JOHN M. GREEN  
Lt. Col., Field Artillery  
Commanding

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OPERATIONS IN FRANCE

.....

OCTOBER 1944

A narrative of the actions of the 131st  
Field Artillery Battalion during the  
month of October 1944 in Central France.

UNCLASSIFIED

HISTORIAN:  
WILLIAM H. BRIGHT  
1ST. LT., 131ST F.A. BN.

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S E C R E T

A thousand boots sloughed through mud, advancing yard by yard in constant attack, as the 131st Field Artillery Battalion drew nearer and nearer to German Territory. October marked a month of combat; a month that brought to seventy-seven, the number of consecutive days our guns had thundered defiance at the enemy. Fiercely contesting every inch of territory, the Germans fought fanatically; making each village, each town and city a battleground. With the false courage of trapped rats, they tried every trick of warfare, and though momentarily they succeeded at some isolated spot, the advance continued; albeit at a snail's pace. Over heavily mined fields, through day after day of rain, working in positions churned to knee deep mud, we still advanced. Not in miles, but in kilometers and finally in yards, the advance was measured; but the advance continued as relentlessly as time. October saw a weary battalion doggedly fight onward on the long and torturous road to victory.

Located two miles north of Eloyes in the foothills of the Vosges Forests, with thickly wooded hills rising on all sides, the first day of the month found the battalion blasting away at enemy installations. Laveline-Houx, in the path of the 141st Infantry, which we supported all during the month, was relentlessly pounded by our guns. The month did not start auspiciously though, for that very first day there were two casualties reported. 1st Lt. Ernest L. Sheldon, O-1177631, Johnstown, Pennsylvania, while leading a forward observer party with the infantry assault was lightly wounded and relieved. 1st Lt. Eugene A. Bohlke, O-516555, Ft. Wayne, Indiana, while on liaison duty with the 141st Infantry was wounded and immediately evacuated. During the time the battalion occupied the position at Eloyes, elements of the 155th Field Artillery Battalion and 93rd Armored Field Artillery reinforced our fires, for the 141st Infantry was in constant attack. More and more German activity was being noted, and greater concentrations of enemy guns were reported. A momentary respite was taken in the midst of the battle as the men were paid, and the usual remarks about francs and dollars filled the air.

Due to the fact the infantry had obtained their objectives, and the battalion was beginning to get out of range, a displacement was necessary on October 2nd. Battery Commanders and Survey section went forward to new positions in the vicinity of Le Pange, and started laying down installations in preparation for the battalion which was moving in that night. The rear elements of the infantry were still clearing the area as the survey was being conducted, and positions selected. Driving

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over muddy roads, which rained continuously, under complete blackout conditions, with occasional shells falling on all sides, the move was completed. The added hazard of mines, the pitch-blackness, and the constant danger from unseen shellholes and battle wreckage had everyone on edge. It was one of the most perilous moves the battalion had ever made. The cannon company, 111st Infantry, which had previously moved into position in this vicinity, were attached to fire with the battalion.

October 3rd found the attack still going on, with Prey and Herplemont as the objectives. Numerous self-propelled guns, and scores of enemy personnel were taken under fire with excellent results reported. Our forward observer parties, advancing with the most forward elements of the infantry, sought only the most promising targets, for the battalion was limited on ammunition. The battle raged through the night, and as the morning of the 4th broke dark and threatening, the enemy hurled a strong counter-attack at the infantry positions. Fog and mist swirled throughout the area, and rain began to fall cutting observation to a minimum. Still our forward observers, with grim determination, sought targets, bringing round after round upon the enemy. Slowly but steadily the counter-attack was thrown back, and as the day waned to a close, both Prey and Herplemont fell to our forces.

Fighting fiercely on the outskirts of the two villages on October 5th, the enemy resisted with tenaciousness, contesting every yard. Countless fire fights, sharp and intensive, occurred as each hill was slowly dragged from the enemy's clutches. As the battle savagely progressed, four of our forward observers were reported wounded. 2nd Lt. John H. Hanson, O-1180932, Emmett, Idaho, Cpl. James M. Lindemuth, 16108912, Jackson, Michigan, Pvt. W. L. Jacobs Jr., 34637008, Hazlehurst, Mississippi, all of Battery "C" were immediately evacuated, while Pvt. Lawrence E. Hawkins, 38036279, Vernon, Texas was treated and remained on duty. All day fighting continued with no perceptible decline. Our guns shelled constantly, sending each shell at a specific target. October 6th found the battle still continuing. An enemy heavy weapons company was taken under fire with excellent results. Tank destroyers and tanks were released to the Division Artillery to be used for harassing missions during the night. Due to their unlimited amount of ammunition and the rapidity with which they fired, these attached elements proved their worth, and no doubt gave the "boche" many sleepless moments. Nightfall saw all objectives completely taken.

Despite the constant heavy fighting, which reached its peaks in the attacks and counter-attacks for definite objectives, just a few miles behind the front lines at Dolcelles, movies and showers were available for our men, and transportation was provided to allow a few moments of relaxation, from the strain of battle. The infantry continued its

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its slow progress during the next three days, and routine support was given them. On October 8th, Captain Killian H. Mauz, O-413791, Denver, Colorado, reported back to duty after a long siege in the hospital, and was assigned as Liaison Officer. Constant shelling disrupted communications, and our wire sections were on the go continuously making repairs. Gun crews worked ceaselessly to perfect the concealment of their guns. Each man handled his job with an adroitness that spoke of their many months in combat. The ammunition train made long hauls to keep a constant supply of ammunition available, and a system was worked out so that constant relief would be available, for the forward observers. No man could stand the constant strain and tension under which these groups worked.

The situation was progressing more rapidly and on October 10th, the cannon company, which had a limited range, moved ahead, so as to assure all-around support of the infantry. 1st Lt. Stephen J. O'Brien, O-1170510, Battery "B" Commanding Officer, was notified he had been promoted to Captain, ranking from October 7th. Routine activities took place during the next two days with an occasional enemy shell landing within the Battalion area. No damage was done to installations, and no casualties were caused. With the small amount of ammunition at our disposal only limited barrages could be fired on, and little harassing fire was done by our battalion. Reports were being received of intense enemy activity, with large numbers of reinforcements and artillery being brought up. The obvious inference was that a counter-attack would be thrown at our forces. There was no evidence of any inclination on the part of the enemy to relinquish any territory, no matter how small or unimportant, without serious opposition.

Rain fell steadily on October 14th and 15th, and observation was reduced to a minimum. Routine combat activities occupied the battalion for these two days, with little out of the ordinary occurring. The ground was soggy and muddy, and the weather was growing colder. An ominous undertone rumbled all along the front. This month had seen the war change from a "rat race" to a steady series of grueling contests of attrition.

During one of the infrequent shellings of our area, Corporal Charles Daish, 32371093, Scotia, New York, Hq. Btry., was lightly wounded in action by shell fragments, and after treatment by our medics returned to duty. Also on the 16th, Raymond Correa, 38027504, Austin, Texas, was seriously wounded in action while on duty as a forward observer with a group from Battery "C". Though immediately evacuated, Pvt. Correa, died while enroute to the hospital. Because of the great number of casualties which had beset the battalion, and the consequent shortage of officers, Sergeant Waldemar J. Rohn, 36126498, Detroit, Michigan, a Hq. Btry. liaison sergeant, was put in charge of a

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forward observer group, did such excellent work, that he was commended highly by all the came in contact with him. Though the frontline situation remained fluid, it had lessened to such an extent that it was now possible, for the first time since the division had been made on August 15th, for vehicles to be given full maintenance. Although there was still a shortage of transportation, schedules were so planned as to permit each vehicle to be completely worked over.

Targets remained plentiful, and reports coming in on October 17th told of the complete destruction of two large enemy ammunition dumps and one small one. This day was unusual in that it was one of the really good days, and our air observation worked constantly, selecting targets. Corrections were checked by further registration. Visibility was excellent, and all targets taken under fire were hit with good results reported. The advantage was evenly divided though, for the enemy had even better observation of our actions, and daylight activity had to be limited. All vehicular movement was restricted within the battalion area, and even routine activity had to be so scheduled that personnel were not out in open territory.

On October 18th, Bruyeres, which had been battered by our guns, fell to the infantry. Bruyeres will be long remembered, for it was the most viciously fought for town, we had yet encountered in our long march against the Germans. The enemy defended it house by house, giving up a yard, only when it became so untenable they could no longer hope to hold it. Rolling barrages of artillery preceded the assault, and even as the battle raged, artillery still thundered into enemy held positions. Our guns blotted out strongpoint after strongpoint, mercilessly seeking and destroying machine gun nests, entrenched positions and tanks.

1st Lt. Raymond E. Shea, O-1167214, Worcester, Mass., Battery "A" Commander, was notified he had been promoted to Captain on October 19th, ranking from the 15th of October. 1st Lt. William C. Uhls, O-1179659, Denver, Colo., in charge of a "C" Battery forward observer party, was wounded for the second time, and immediately evacuated. Another trick which the Germans slyly thought up, and which was immediately diagnosed was that of dropping artillery rounds short in our direction at the same time our guns fired, so that it appeared as though friendly artillery fire was falling on our own infantry. For pure innovation with a touch of the diabolical, the enemy could not be matched. His innovations rarely caused more than a momentary discomfort.

On the 20th of October, a report was received that Pvt. Henry J. Tokarczyk, 31332676, East Haven, Conn., HQ. Etw., had been wounded on the night before, and had been evacuated by our medics. Sensing the possibility of a move, the Battalion Commander reconnoitered for posi-

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tions in the vicinity of Hoppement, with unsatisfactory results. For the first time enemy air activity was seen, when two planes strafed the area near our positions. No damage was done, and no casualties were caused. One plane was reported shot down by anti-aircraft. Enemy aircraft had been conspicuous by their absence all during the fighting in France. Through a process of triangulation, from reports received by our forward observers, many gun positions were located and turned over to counter-battery battalions, who immediately brought fire upon them. This system has proved very satisfactory.

As dusk fell on October 22nd, the Battalion moved out to positions at Champ-le-Duc. Intermittent shelling added hazard to the move, and the area which was thickly sown with mines and heavily battered, was reminiscent of towns we had taken in the Italian campaign. All installations were layed during the night, for the positions were barely 600 yards behind the infantry. The guns were well dispersed and dug in, and all units well scattered, for with the enemy so near, and with observation in their favor, any movement would bring immediate fire from their guns. During the stay in this position, vehicular movement was very limited during daylight hours. Communications were a serious problem, for the town was continuously shelled by the Germans, and our wire crews were kept on the jump repairing wires and keeping lines intact. On the 23rd, registration took place. Straggling prisoners were picked up in the battalion area. Due to the rapidity with which the front lines were advancing, plans for another move were made.

Early on the morning of October 24th, the battalion started another move to the vicinity of Belmont. Batteries were moved individually so as to insure fire power at all times. Practically the entire battalion was housed in this area, which helped morale tremendously, for there had been so many days of rain, the ground was a morass of mud, and there had been little opportunity to keep warm and dry. As secure as the new positions looked, heavy shelling caused Battery "C" to move. The cannon company which was still attached to us, well proved their worth, and fired unlimited amounts of ammunition which was greatly appreciated by the infantry. Ammunition for our battalion was so limited that if we had been permitted, we could have fired the entire days ration in ten minutes. Such slow shooting was annoying to our cannonneers who remembered the days at Cassino when in one day over 6,000 rounds had been fired. Compared to that amount, our ration was barely enough to keep the tubes of the guns warm.

On October 25th, 1st Lt. William H. Bright, O-1175953, West Roxbury, Mass., Asst. Bn. S-4, Tec 4, Harold A. Pilgrim, 38036986, Breckenridge, Texas, Pvt. Raymond T. Carter, 38106291, Crossett, Ark., and Pvt. Ronald E. Irolan, 37343475, Stratton, Nebr., all of Hq. Btry. were

wounded by shell fragments. With the exception of Lt. Bright, who remained on duty, all men were immediately evacuated by our medics. Heavy shelling continued throughout the day, and the town of Belmont took a terrific beating. Early in the morning a report was received that the 1st Battalion of the 114th Infantry had been cut off and was isolated. The only communications between the isolated battalion and any friendly troops was the radio which our forward observer section, headed by 2nd Lt. Erwin H. Blonder, O-524094, University Heights, Ohio, had with them. A strong enemy roadblock had been set up and reinforcements poured into the valley behind the lost battalion. Assault after assault was made to contact the battalion, but so much enemy strength had been poured into the breach, each assault was hurled back time and again. For the next three days, under a tightening cloud of tension, all our strength was concentrated on getting relief to the battalion. Message after message was exchanged over that one slender line of communication, with Lt. Blonder guarding and coddling the radio, knowing only too well its importance. As their supplies and food ran out, and ammunition was almost fully expended, desperate calls were received for medical supplies, water purifying tablets, food and ammunition. On October 27th, 1st Lt. Ernest L. Sheldon, O-1177631, Johnstown, Penna., was wounded for the second time and evacuated. Pvt. 1cl Francis J. McKenna, 32333465, New York, New York, Battery "B", was wounded the night previously and also evacuated.

Instead of destruction our guns blasted out a volley of shells of mercy on October 28th. Loading chemical shells with medical supplies and chocolate bars, after removing the cannister, round after round was fired to the men in the isolated battalion. It was the first time that 105 mm Howitzers had ever been used for such a mission, yet despite the newness of the plan, it was successful. The airforce dropped supplies that day also, and the condition of the battalion was immeasurably improved. The assaults continued all that day, and slowly a path was being opened to the isolated troops. 2nd Lt. James R. Mac Ivor, O-1176713, Hazel Park, Mich., on forward observer duty was wounded and evacuated. 1st Lt. Richard S. Fleming, O-1173946, Philadelphia, Pa., returned to duty after a long stay at the hospital resulting from wounds received in early September. He was assigned as a forward observer.

For the next two days the battalion fired volley after volley into enemy positions, viciously attempting to clear a path for the attacking troops. On October 30th, 1st Lt. Thomas S. Brown, O-1180130, Kenmore, N. Y., a forward observer, was lightly wounded and after treatment returned to duty. Captain Ross Ayers, O-378526, Waxahachie, Texas, Bn. S-3, was notified he had been promoted to Major, ranking from October 27. An all out effort was being planned to be launched on the evening of October 30th. Allotments for ammunition were increased and much preparation was put into this onslaught, with hopes of relieving the pressure that the isolated battalion was under.

Tension was lifted somewhat as news came in on the last day of the month that contact had been made with the isolated battalion. Intelligence reports that the forward observers group returned to their units with little change in the lines of strain. Lt. Flonder, who had a last communication on an AM radio, was immediately evacuated to the Red Cross Hospital, Fort Porter, 34160376, Lexington, Ala., Battery 41 was killed in action, and Pvt. Carl L. Estanore, 30375779, Weston, was killed, and Pvt. 1st Lt. Alexander Trenadel, 3037521, Camp, was killed, and Pvt. 1st Lt. were wounded, bringing the month to a close with the same dead load that it had started. The last action of the month was the establishment of a Commander on a reconnaissance for new positions.

October was a month filled with dramatic moments. The positions north of Elmore, Camp, were almost under the very noses of the enemy. The positions had rolled under our feet, for the enemy was resisting more tenaciously than ever. Slowly, grudgingly, each yard was pulled back by the enemy. The defenses grew thicker and thicker as the advance of the enemy continued. But with the grim resolution which has characterized the actions of the 131st Field Artillery Battalion ever since their commitment to combat, they shall continue to press on.

William H. Bright  
WILLIAM H. BRIGHT  
1st Lt., Field Artillery  
WESTONIAN

S E C R E T

DECORATIONS AND AWARDS

OCTOBER 1944

<u>NAME</u>	<u>RANK</u>	<u>ASN</u>	<u>UNIT</u>	<u>AWARD</u>
Armitage, Samuel P.	1st Lt.	O-1175924	Service Btry	Commendation Merit. Conduct

CITATION OF UNIT

The 131st Field Artillery Battalion for exceptional performance from 26 May to 26 June 1944 in the monumental 29-day push from the Anzio beachhead area through Rome to the hills overlooking Pisa. The 131st Field Artillery Battalion greatly expedited the downfall of Velletri, last major enemy stronghold blocking the approaches to Rome, by pounding the town and the surrounding mountains with accurate shellfire, thereby softening enemy defenses before the attack. When the assault on the town was launched, the battalion, subjected to hostile counterbattery fire, continued blasting enemy troops and was successful in breaking up numerous counter-attacks. After Velletri fell, the infantrymen swept resistance before them as they advanced on Rome, and the speed of movement imposed numerous difficulties on the artillery battalion. During the drive through Rome to the north, personnel of the 131st Field Artillery Battalion braved many dangers and worked ceaselessly to render effective support to the infantry regiments, utilizing every opportunity to smash hostile troops in their spasmodic attempts to resist the relentless advance. The determination and accomplishments of the 131st Field Artillery Battalion were a vital factor in delivering the most crushing blow suffered by the enemy forces in Italy.

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REGISTER OF OFFICERS

October, 1944

BATTALION HEADQUARTERS

Taylor, James E.	O-376751	Lt. Col.	Bn. O. O.
Orriok, Luther E.	O-357391	Major	Bn. Exec. O.
Ayers, Ross	O-378526	Major	Bn. S-3
Ramey, Robert M.	O-364093	Captain	Asst. Bn. S-3
Kane, Raymond E.	O-1165519	Captain	Bn. S-2
Bright, William H.	O-1175953	1st Lt.	Asst. Bn. S-2
Garfunkel, Sylvan A.	O-1166993	Captain	Bn. L. O.
Mauz, Kilian H.	O-413791	Captain	Bn. L. O.
Sample, Ernest L.	O-380569	Captain	Bn. L. O.

HEADQUARTERS BATTERY

Amweg, Frederick F.	O-1175923	Captain	O. O.
Beckm, Murrel D.	O-1179786	1st Lt.	Btry. Com. C.
Hendley, Johnny R.	O-2056283	1st Lt.	Liaison Pilot
Higgins, Wallace T.	O-1173284	1st Lt.	Liaison Pilot

BATTERY "A"

Shea, Raymond E.	O-1167214	Captain	O. O.
Mamary, George N.	O-1167096	1st Lt.	Exec. O.
Gambino, Benjamin J.	O-1178904	2nd Lt.	Ron. O.
Lieb, Bernard	O-1184254	2nd Lt.	Arty. Obs.

BATTERY "B"

O'Brien, Stephen J.	O-1170510	Captain	O. O.
Giro, Kenneth P.	O-1176637	1st Lt.	Exec. O.
Cellier, J. B.	O-1173193	1st Lt.	Ron. O.
Barmann, Paul A.	O-1189802	2nd Lt.	Motor O.
Fleming, Richard B.	O-1173946	1st Lt.	Arty. Obs.

BATTERY "C"

Blackwell, Leslie L.	O-1175947	1st Lt.	O. O.
Gantrell, George J.	O-1175964	1st Lt.	Exec. O.
Brown, Thomas S.	O-1180130	1st Lt.	Arty. Obs.
Mohr, Norman F.	O-1184415	1st Lt.	Arty. Obs.
Sleat, Ernest H.	O-1179619	2nd Lt.	Arty. Obs.

SERVICE BATTERY

Snodgrass, Norman K.	O-405088	Captain	Bns. S-4 & O. O.
Armitage, Samuel P.	O-1175924	1st Lt.	Munitions O.
Larsen, Kenith O.	O-1166537	1st Lt.	Motor O.
Halm, Howard W.	O-1176650	1st Lt.	Bn. Motor O.

MEDICAL DETACHMENT

Cusson, Charles J.	O-1696811	Captain	Bn. Surgeon
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WARRANT OFFICERS

Nelms, Lewis J.	W-2104374	O. W. O.	Personnel O.
Watson, Billy	W-2131523	W.O.(jg)	Asst. Bn. S-4

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UNIT BATTLE CASUALTY LIST

<u>NAME</u>	<u>RANK</u>	<u>ASN</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>TYPE</u>	<u>RESIDENCE</u>
<u>HEADQUARTERS BATTERY</u>					
Daish, Charles (NMI)	Opl	32371893	10/16	SF, Rt Arm	New York
Tokarczyk, Henry J.	Pvt	31332676	10/19	SF, Lt Thigh, Rt Hip	Massachusetts
Carter, Raymond T.	Pvt	38506291	10/25	SF, Lt Temple Rt Thigh	Arkansas
Ireland, Ronald E.	Pvt	37343475	10/25	SF, Bk of head Lt side of back	Nebraska
Pilgrim, Harold A.	T/4	38036986	10/25	SF, Back and Lt Hand	Texas
Bright, William H.	1st Lt	0-1175953	10/25	SF, Rt Side	Massachusetts
Trznadel, Alexander	PFC	32037421	10/31	SF, Rt Wrist Rt Thigh	New York
<u>BATTERY "A"</u>					
Sheldon, Ernest L.	1st Lt	0-1177631	10/1	SF, Lt Eyelid	Pennsylvania
Sheldon, Ernest L.	1st Lt	0-1177631	10/27	GSW, Rt Hand	Pennsylvania
<u>BATTERY "B"</u>					
Correa, Raymond (NMI)	Pvt	38027504	10/16	DOW, SF, Lt side of head Rt Knee	Texas
Holton, Edwin R.	PFC	34665138	10/25	SF, Rt Leg Lt Cheek	North Carolina
Kenna, Francis J.	PFC	32335465	10/27	SF, Rt Chest	New York
Mac Ivor, James R.	2nd Lt	0-1176713	10/28	SF, Rt Butt- ocks	Michigan
<u>BATTERY "C"</u>					
Cantrell, George J.	1st Lt	0-1175964	9/13	SF, Rt Arm	Georgia
Bohlke, Eugene A.	1st Lt	0-516555	10/1	SF, Lt leg	Indiana
Strosnider, Glenn U.	Pvt	37207851	10/3	SF, Scalp	Kansas
Hawkins, Lawrence E.	Pvt	38036279	10/5	SF, Lt Side	Texas
Lindemith, James M. Jr	Opl	16108012	10/5	SF, Lt Arm	Michigan
Jacobs, W. L., Jr.	Pvt	34637008	10/5	SF, Lt Knee Lt Thigh	Mississippi
Hanson, John H.	2nd Lt	0-118032	10/5	SF, Back	California
De Ambrose, Joseph	Pvt	32987793	10/8	SF, Rt Hand & Nose	New York
Uhis, William C.	1st Lt	0-1179659	10/19	SF, Rt Shoul'r	Colorado
Detamore, Carl D.	Pvt	35375775	10/31	SF, Lt But'ks	West Virginia
Porter, Walter T.	T/4	34160376	10/31	KIA	Alabama
Brown, Thomas S.	1st Lt	0-1180150	10/31	SF, Rt Thigh	New York

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REPLACEMENTS RECEIVED IN OCTOBER

Lieb, Bernard	2nd Lt.	0-1184224	Newark, New Jersey
Mohr, Norman F.	1st Lt.	0-1184425	Huskegon, Michigan
Sloat, Ernest H.	2nd Lt.	0-1179619	Caribou, Maine
Reifschneider, Elmer L.	Tec 4	16074260	Belleville, Illinois
Sachs, Robert J.	Pvt.	35916864	Cleveland, Ohio
Precht, Harold J.	Pvt.	37701043	Boulder, Colorado
Detamore, Carl D.	Pvt.	35575775	Weston, West Virginia
Randolph, Zelah D.	Pvt.	3594760	Webbaco, Texas
Haegeler, Frank W.	Pvt. 1st	37312875	Hague, North Dakota
Battaglioni, Michael	Pvt.	32301926	Irvington, New Jersey
Ecker, Frank	Pvt.	3718097	Alexandria, South Dakota
Crawford, Champ C.	Pvt.	35132746	Cresb Crohard, Kentucky

SECRET

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CONSOLIDATED BATTLE CASUALTY LIST

<u>TYPE OF CASUALTY</u>	<u>OFFICERS</u>	<u>ENLISTED MEN</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
KIA	0	1	1
DOW	0	1	1
LIA	0	0	0
SIA	0	0	0
DIA	0	0	0
LWA	4	6	10
SWA	4	9	13
MIA	0	0	0
POW	0	0	0

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HEADQUARTERS 131ST FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION  
APO #36, U. S. ARMY

30 November 1944

SUBJECT: Transmittal of Historical Records and History of Organization with conclusions.

TO : Commanding General, Thirty-Sixth Infantry Division, APO #36, U. S. Army.

1. Transmitted herewith is the record of the 131st Field Artillery Battalion entitled "Operations in France", November 1944.

2. Conclusions drawn from the operation of the 131st Field Artillery Battalion during the period of November, 1944, are set forth below. This operation consisted of the contesting battles at Tendon, Rehaupel, Granges, Popet, Gerbepail, and Mandray. Along hazardous roads, over heavily mined fields, through day after day of rain and snow, working in positions deep with mud, the advance continued as relentlessly as time. November was thirty days of combat, thirty days which found the 131st Field Artillery Battalion disregarding its feariness to deal a constant stream of blows to the enemy.

a. The Cannon Company which had been attached to this Battalion has proven well their worth. They are moved with the Battalion and act as a fourth battery. A computer, located in the Battalion F.D.C. controls the firing under the direction of the Battalion S-3. The Cannon Company's allotment of ammunition is considerably large than that of ours, consequently this additional fire power can give more strength to missions observed and unobserved. This past month the Battalion had been in direct support of a large front, with each battery's field of fire covering, generally, 2400 yds. This added fourth battery makes it possible to cover such a sector and give all the support necessary.

b. Ever solicitous of putting out accurate fires and insuring the most effective support for the infantry, a system was devised whereby differences in elevations and the spacing of the individual guns in each battery can be compensated for regardless of shifts right or left of base deflection. To determine the necessary data, survey procedure has been expanded. After locating the base piece and laying out a line of direction for each of the batteries which will give the battery executive the data to lay the battery at the fire direction center the data to shoot

CLASSIFICATION CHANGED TO:

**CANCELLED**

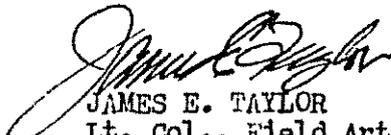
BY AUTHORITY OF THE ARMY SECRETARY

*Paul A. Meyer* *Cal. A. S.*  
DOWNGRADING COMMITTEE 18 MAR 56 ~~SECRET~~

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the battalion, each individual gun is surveyed in. Using the number 2 gun as the base piece, the other guns are located in relation to it. At the same time the elevation of each piece is determined. A chart is then prepared which graphically presents the information attained in the field. The base piece is placed in the center of the lower section of the sheet. A line is drawn representing the base line together with an arc through the center line with graduations of fifty mils aggregating shifts right or left of the GT line of 1600 mils in each direction. The other pieces are then plotted and the differences in elevations tabulated. With this plot, the battery executive can determine at all times his battery front and thus is able to converge his guns on any particular target with positive accuracy. By using a C obtained through Fire Direction Center, the executive is able to apply it to his difference in site. Regardless of any shift left or right the executive is able to converge his sheaf and make corrections for difference in elevation of individual pieces. This method although new, has proven well its worth and will be adopted in this battalion whenever time is available to complete this extra work.

  
JAMES E. TAYLOR  
Lt. Col., Field Artillery  
Commanding

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The battered forests of the Vosges Mountains lined the winding, twisting roads. Each village, each town that receded in the distance as our battalion rolled east, showed the marks of the bitter fighting that had occurred. Snow covered the peaks and trees, softening the shattered logs, and hiding the destruction which war brings. Slowly withdrawing, the enemy continued his fierce resistance; but despite desperate counter-attacks, despite the winter weather, despite the rain and snow and sleet and mud, despite the mines which were encountered in greater and greater quantities, our drive to the Rhine continued. It was as though some involuntary compulsion hung over us, which demanded that the pressure be maintained. November saw our battalion set another record. Thanksgiving eve marked the second time we had spent a hundred consecutive days in combat. In many of the towns we stopped at, German, rather than French, was the language spoken. We were fighting over territory that had been a battleground from the time of the Romans. We were battering, and breaking through, lines of defense that the Germans had thought impregnable. We were liberating cities and towns, whose people had been told constantly by the Germans that the Americans would never come. We were a fighting symbolic antithesis of six years of Nazi propaganda.

November 1st found the battalion occupying positions at Belmont. It was a "hot" sector, and for the first time since we had landed in France, the mournful sound of "screaming meemies" echoed through the area. The fields were heavily mined, and everyone assiduously followed only those paths which had been declared safe. A move was in the air, and early in the morning, a reconnaissance party left for Tendon to select new positions. The 111st Infantry, which we supported all during November, was in attack, and the plans to move were temporarily held in abeyance. During the 2nd, our guns supported local actions of the infantry.

In addition to our normal liaison, additional parties were sent to the French forces on our extreme right flank and also, along with a forward observer group to a company of infantry which was on the right flank of the Regimental boundary. Late in the afternoon of the 3rd, the battalion displaced by battery, to the positions at Tendon. By moving in this manner, constant fire was available at all times. Complete advantage was taken of terrain features, for at Tendon, the hills were terraced, providing good defilade, cover and concealment for the guns. Not battery was layed on the same azimuth of fire due to the large front to be covered. Each battery had its own sector to cover. In this manner the entire front could be covered thoroughly. Shortly after Battery "C" was in position, Tec 4 Arthur K. Hancock, 20813598, Lorenzo, Texas, of that unit, was slightly

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wounded in the shoulder by fragments from an exploded S-mine, and after first aid by our medicos, returned to duty.

During the period of our stay at Tendon, until November 9th, we operated as part of Task Force Stack. Ammunition was still strictly rationed, and comparatively little shelling was done. Routine activities occupied the battalion during these five days, with winter equipment being distributed and much necessary maintenance of vehicles being taken care of. The first snow of the winter fell on November 6th, adding one more hazard for it made roads slippery and dangerous, and hid trip wires and mines.

On November 9th, the Stack Task Force was disbanded, and the various units regrouped as combat teams under regimental control. Ammunition was restricted to five rounds per gun. In spite of the limited number of rounds at our disposal, many targets of opportunity, including enemy personnel, vehicles and strong points were taken under fire. Excellent results were reported by our forward observers. Under the circumstances, where there could be no wastage of ammunition, exceedingly little harassing fire was done. For the four days up to the 13th of November, every round fired by our guns was sent at a definite target. The Cannon Company, 141st Infantry, which had been attached to the battalion in October, still acted as a fourth battery of artillery. Their allotment of ammunition was much greater, and consequently gave increased fire power to all missions, observed and unobserved.

On November 14th, Battery "A" and Cannon Company displaced to Rehaupel, while the rest of the battalion remained at Tendon, until registration had been completed. A skeleton CP and fire direction crew moved to the new positions. The remainder of the battalion moved to Rehaupel on the 15th, arriving late that afternoon. There was a nervousness in the air, for though we kept moving ever ahead, the Germans were withdrawing with their usual craftiness. Rehaupel was one of the few towns we were in where we could observe the effects of our fires. The town was battered, for the Germans had defended it fanatically, and barrage after barrage had been layed directly on the buildings. Although the positions were not of the best, the firing batteries were well dispersed, with each gun in its own culvert. Much digging in was necessary for there was little defilade. Snow and mud proved troublesome as trucks were constantly bogging down.

The retreat of the enemy continued, but it was orderly and without confusion. Unlike the times above Rome and in the areas north of Marsane, when the roads had been clogged with abandoned enemy equip-

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ment, here there was little being left behind. Occasional convoys would be pounded by our artillery, but they were the only signs that the enemy was running from us. On November 16th, enemy positions were not completely known, and as combat patrols were sent out by the infantry to attempt contact, forward observer parties were instructed to accompany them. This was a direct variation from usual procedure, for it could not be readily ascertained how much could be accomplished. Liaison was still being maintained with the French forces on our right flank, and reports were being received constantly of their disposition. A reconnaissance was made on November 17th. Positions were selected at Aumontzev, but on the return of the reconnaissance party, the move was cancelled by higher headquarters. That night, reports were received from our observers of huge fires from the direction of Gerardmere, lighting up the sky and adding a lurid touch to the dark, threatening clouds which seemed part of the mountain scenery. The complete cooperation between the air corps and ground forces was further evidenced by their supplying us with air strips. These photos made terrain features stand out, enabling our forward observers and liaison parties to more easily recognize points.

Due to the fanning out of the infantry, it was necessary for us to occupy positions further north, in the vicinity of Granges. Still, in order to have all-around security, two batteries remained in position where they were. By late afternoon on October 18th, Cannon Company and Battery "A", which had displaced to the positions at Granges, reported layed and ready to fire. Early the next morning, the remainder of the battalion also moved to Granges, completing the move from Rehaupel. Not too much firing could be done, for the infantry was moving ahead so rapidly, and meeting so few blocks, that little artillery fire was necessary. The entire vicinity around Granges had been burnt and destroyed by the retreating krauts. They had followed a "scorched earth" policy all through this area, and it was only because of the quickness of the advance of our troops that they were unable to complete destruction of all the towns and villages.

Early on the morning of November 20th, Battery "A" displaced to new positions in the vicinity of Popet, near Arrentes. Late that afternoon the remainder of the battalion also moved to the positions at Popet. All during these moves, the shortage of transportation continued to be troublesome. Houses in these areas were thickly booby-trapped and the fields and areas just off the roads heavily strewn with mines. As the Germans fell back before our assaults, they depended more and more on mines to delay us. A new reconnaissance was made on November 21st, and plans were made for the battalion to move the following day. Early on the morning of the 22nd, the batteries moved to new positions in the vicinity of Gerbepal. Plans were made to support the attack of the infantry on Fraize the following morning, and an al-

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lotment of 350 rounds of ammunition was made to the battalion, with 700 rounds for the Cannon Company. Several stray Germans who had been by-passed by the infantry gave themselves up in this position. This had happened many times, for we were moving very closely behind the infantry, and enemy stragglers would hide in the woods until the cold and lack of food drove them to surrender. Late in the afternoon a report was received that 2nd Lt. Bernard Lieb, O-1184254, Newark, New Jersey, had been severely wounded while on duty as a forward observer, and had been immediately evacuated.

A hundred consecutive days of combat were marked up on November 23rd. It was our second entry into the "Century Club", for in Italy we had spent over a hundred consecutive days fighting the enemy. Our thoughts were not on a record but on Thanksgiving Day, our second overseas. It was a fiesta of turkey and good food. Forgetting the slurs which had been cast upon their ability to turn out the food, the cooks spent a full day roasting and baking, and when they had finished, the menu read like something presented at the Waldorf Astoria. The succulent turkey capped a meal which made all memories of stews and O rations and spam disappear. All that marred the day was rain. It is one of those paradoxes that no matter how often it rains, and during November, there were very few clear days, you never get used to being soggy and wet. Although the cannoneers still fired, their hearts were far away, for Thanksgiving is a sentimental holiday; a day of football games and intimate family gatherings.

On the 24th, a reconnaissance party left to select positions at Mandray and plans were made for the battalion to move. Captain Henry A. Rich Jr., O-416424, Salt Lake City, Utah, returned from the hospital and was assigned as commanding officer of Battery "C". The move was temporarily delayed since the roads were congested. Early the next morning, Battery "A" moved to Mandray, and after being layed, reported ready to fire. The remainder of the battalion then displaced to the new positions. The defenses which the Germans had been forced to abandon were reminiscent of the last war. Deep tank traps studded the area, and deep trenches ran down the sides of the mountains, crossing under roads and zig-zagging on to the next hill mass. Barbed wire was strung in orderly rows over an area a hundred yards in depth. The narrow, torturous mountain road which led to Mandray was dotted with piles of stripped lumber, which had been placed as road-blocks and for tank traps, and which had been rendered useless by encircling tactics and by the rapidity of our advance. The entire area was heavily mined by all types of mines, from the heavy ramp mines to the delicate Schu-mines. This day, too, commemorated an anniversary. It was exactly four years ago that the Division was Federalized at Camp Bowie, Texas. Those four years had seen the Division fight through the dark days, through the invasion at Salerno, up the Italian mainland to the hills overlooking Pisa. And

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then to another invasion at Dramont and across France to our present position just a few miles west of the Rhine. The 131st Field Artillery Battalion has a record the men are justly proud of. Pvt. Roy J. Jeffords, 20812853, San Antonio, Texas, Headquarters Battery, was slightly wounded by shell fragments, but remained on duty after receiving medical treatment. Casualties had been very light all during the month, though the battalion had been in constant attack. The enemy was showing occasional bursts of his old resistance, fighting fiercely to hold some relatively unimportant road, and then withdrawing along a complete sector. On November 26th, strong support was given the assaulting infantry, and the road between La Bon Homme and Gerardmere was cut. Late in the afternoon, a new reconnaissance was made in the vicinity of Bains de Laveline, but plans to move were deferred for an indeterminate period. Our guns still fired a limited amount of ammunition, shelling selected targets and doing very little harassing fire.

Once again on November 27th, a reconnaissance was made in the vicinity of Le Chipal, and once again, the move was held in abeyance. Observation was excellent on the town of Bon Homme, and much enemy activity was noted during the day. Our guns knocked out a self-propelled gun and dispersed enemy personnel. Stronger opposition was being met by the infantry and harassing fire was requested from the battalion. Our allotment of ammunition had been increased and this mission was consequently possible. November 28th found the same plan of operation in effect. The snows which had been falling throughout the past week, and the constant rain and mud had not hampered our operations, though they had made maintenance of vehicles more difficult. The bad weather made air observation difficult, but with a disregard for personal comfort, Tec 4 Monte R. Lee, 20813571, Lubbock, Texas, Headquarters Battery, air observer, made constant flights, reporting numerous targets.

November 29th saw a new reconnaissance made. The sweep of the French forces on our right had caught the Germans in a huge pocket which was continually being narrowed. As the "boche" were pressed back, we were changing position to keep them in range. It was a battle of annihilation. Lt. Ralph B. Bordner, O-1180123, Kutztown, Pa., heading a forward observer group with the infantry, was slightly wounded by a fragment from an enemy bazooka. After first aid by our medics, he returned to duty. Late that afternoon, Battery "A" displaced to new positions at LeChipal.

The last day of the month found the battalion still firing from Mandray. Battery "B" also moved to the positions at Le Chipal so that fire could be brought to bear on two sectors. It was pay day, which always makes morale a little higher. But morale was surprisingly good considering the long consecutive period we had put in the lines. The men were taking each day in stride, knowing it was one day nearer to the time when the Germans would bow before the might of America.

S E C R E T

November had been a mild month. We had been in attack, moving closer and closer to the Rhine River, and as the month ended, the hills of Germany were visible in the distance. It had taken fourteen months; fourteen months of fierce and steady combat; fourteen months of drive from the beaches of Salerno, through the Italian campaign and then from the Riviera to the Alsatian plains. November was a month that brought the last stretch of road before Germany within our grasp.

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WILLIAM H. BRIGHT  
1st Lt., Field Artillery  
HISTORIAN

S E C R E T

ROSTER OF OFFICERS

BATTALION HEADQUARTERS

Taylor, James E.	0-376731	Lt. Col.	En. C. O.	Kerens, Tex.
Orrick, Luther E.	0-357391	Major	En. Ex. O.	Temple, Tex.
Ayers, Ross	0-378526	Major	En. S-3	Waxahachie, Tex.
Ramey, Robert M.	0-364093	Captain	Asst. En. S-3	Penfield, Pa.
Kane, Raymond E.	0-1165519	Captain	En. S-2	Norristown, Pa.
Bright, William H.	0-1175953	1st Lt.	Asst. En. S-2	West Roxbury, Mass.
Garfunkel, Sylvan A.	0-1166993	Captain	En. L. O.	Savannah, Ga.
Mauz, Kilian H.	0-413791	Captain	En. L. O.	Arvada, Colo.
Sample, Ernest L.	0-380569	Captain	En. L. O.	Bryan, Tex.

HEADQUARTERS BATTERY

Anweg, Frederick F.	0-1175923	Captain	C. O.	West New York, N.J.
Boehm, Murrel D.	0-1179786	1st Lt.	Btry. Com. O.	Chicago, Ill.
Hendley, Johnny R.	0-2056285	1st Lt.	Liaison Pilot	Palestine, Tex.
Higgins, Wallace T.	0-1173284	1st Lt.	Liaison Pilot	Houstonia, Mo.

BATTERY "A"

Shea, Raymond E.	0-1167214	Captain	C. O.	Worcester, Mass.
Mamary, George N.	0-1167096	1st Lt.	Exec. O.	Brooklyn, N. Y.
Lieb, Bernard	0-1184254	2nd Lt.	Arty. Obs.	Newark, N. J.
Bordner, Ralph B.	0-1180123	1st Lt.	Arty. Obs.	Kutztown, Pa.

BATTERY "B"

O'Brien, Stephen J.	0-1170510	Captain	C. O.	Roxbury, Mass.
Gire, Kenneth P.	0-1176637	1st Lt.	Exec. O.	Pittsburg, Kans.
Collier, J. B.	0-1173193	1st Lt.	Rcn. O.	Lakeland, Fla.
Barmann, Paul A.	0-1189802	2nd Lt.	Arty. Obs.	Indianapolis, Ind.
Fleming, Richard S.	0-1173946	1st Lt.	Arty. Obs.	Philadelphia, Pa.

BATTERY "C"

Rich, Henry A. Jr.	0-416424	Captain	C. O.	Salt Lake City, Utah
Blackwell, Leslie L.	0-1175947	1st Lt.	Exec. O.	Buffalo, N. Y.
Cantrell, George J.	0-1175964	1st Lt.	Rcn. O.	Columbus, Ga.
Brown, Thomas S.	0-1180130	1st Lt.	Arty. Obs.	Kenmore, N. Y.
Gambino, Benjamin J.	0-1178804	2nd Lt.	Arty. Obs.	East Boston, Mass.
Mohr, Norman F.	0-1184415	1st Lt.	Arty. Obs.	Muskegon, Mich.
Sloat, Ernest H.	0-1179619	2nd Lt.	Arty. Obs.	Caribou, Maine

SERVICE BATTERY

Snodgrass, Norman K.	0-405088	Captain	En. S-4 & C.O.	Lubbock, Texas
Armitage, Samuel P.	0-1175924	1st Lt.	Ammo. O.	Lynn, Mass.
Larsen, Kenith G.	0-1166537	1st Lt.	Btry. M. O.	St. James, Minn.
Hahn, Howard W.	0-1176650	1st Lt.	En. M. O.	Dixon, Ill.

MEDICAL DETACHMENT

Cusson, Charles J.	0-1696811	Captain	En. Surgeon	Lyndonville, Vt.
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WARRANT OFFICERS

Nelms, Lewis J.	W-2104334	G. W. O.	Personnel O.	Lockney, Texas
Watson, Billy	W-2131523	W.O.(jg)	Asst. En. S-4	Slaton, Tex.

S E C R E T

UNIT BATTLE CASUALTY LIST

<u>NAME</u>	<u>RANK</u>	<u>ASN</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>TYPE</u>	<u>RESIDENCE</u>
<u>BATTERY "A"</u>					
Bordner, Ralph B.	1st Lt	O-1180123	11/28	SF, Chin (Slight)	Pennsylvania
Lieb, Barnard (NMI)	2nd Lt	O-1184254	11/22	GSW, Neck (Severe)	New Jersey
<u>BATTERY "O"</u>					
Hancock, Arthur K.	T/4	20813598	11/3	SF, Lt Shoul- der (Light)	Texas
<u>HEADQUARTERS BATTERY</u>					
Jeffords, Roy J.	Fvt	20812853	11/25	LW, SF, Rt forehead & Rt Cheek	Texas

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S E C R E T

S E C R E T

CONSOLIDATED BATTLE CASUALTY LIST

<u>TYPE OF CASUALTY</u>	<u>OFFICERS</u>	<u>ENLISTED MEN</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
KIA	0	0	0
DOW	0	0	0
LIA	0	0	0
SIA	0	0	0
DIA	0	0	0
LWA	1	2	3
SWA	1	0	1
MIA	0	0	0
POW	0	0	0

S E C R E T

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For 110 days the 131st Field Artillery had plunged across France. Slowly the fight had changed from a race across the rolling plains and sweeping hills to a series of battles of attrition. December saw us break through the St. Marie pass, enabling French forces on our right flank to sweep through and open the gateway to the entire Alsatian plain. With startling suddenness, the battalion switched from positions high in the Vosges to small towns in Alsace that were battered by the enemy. From cities and villages what were predominantly French, we moved to cities and villages, where speech, dress and customs were predominantly German. There were villages where the constant blasting of shells kept a roaring echo booming through the hills. There were villages where only an occasional shell from our own guns broke the silence. And as December drew to a close, our record kept mounting, until we had spent 136 consecutive days in combat. It was a record which had never been approached; a record that we were proud of; but which had been paid for in strain and weariness and fatigue. Over a third of the year had been spent in France and during that time the battalion had fired thousands of rounds at the enemy. The village of Hunawihr will long be remembered. It was there that the enemy infiltrated through, until they were but yards from our positions. It was there that they met a stonewall of resistance. It was there that our guns were almost useless because of the shortened range, and where every man became a rifleman. It was at Hunawihr, too, where four months of hard fighting were forgotten for the moment and where every man rose to meet the crisis.

The first day of the month found the battalion located at Mandray. Sporadic firing at isolated enemy positions took up our limited supply of ammunition. Part of the battalion was located at Le Chipal, and on December 2nd, a reconnaissance party left from there to seek new positions in the vicinity of Echery. At noon, the battalion was alerted, and late in the afternoon moved to positions in Echery, just south of St. Marie. Surrounded by high mountains, St. Marie nestled in a narrow valley, the western anchor to the last mountain barrier to the Alsatian plain. Huge tank traps, numberless road blocks and deep trenches running from one mountain across to another, covering every road, were part of the defenses which had been broken. It was a line which the Germans had depended upon, and which had been made untenable by the very ferociousness of our constant attacks. Now as we settled into our positions at Echery, we knew a new move was inevitable. Little firing was done, though one innovation

was putting an outpost high on the mountains which towered over the valley. Reports were being received constantly from our Liaison and Forward Observer parties of the disposition of the enemy, and as the infantry crossed the last peak of the Vosges, the battalion was alerted to move.

The 3rd and 4th of December found the battalion supporting the infantry attacks, using M54 fuze ammunition, and firing only on selected targets. Early on the morning of December 5th, a reconnaissance party left to seek new positions in Aubure. Moving by echelon, the batteries moved out, Battery "C" reporting in position and ready to fire by late afternoon. That day saw an exhibition of courage and sheer bravery which has rarely been surpassed in the annals of our Army. As installations were being laid down, Pfc. David J. Davies, 33071022, Battery "B", Pennsylvania, inadvertently stepped off the road while laying wire and was injured by a mine. All during the drive through France, we had been in areas thickly sown with mines, but in the fields around Aubure, they were so thick, it appeared as though they had just been scattered promiscuously. Responding to a call for help from Pfc. Davies, S/Sgt. August P. Younger, 38009241, Colorado and Tec Grade 4 Alfred V. Windham, 20813497, Texas, both of Battery "B", dashed to his aid. Although warned by Pfc. Davies that the area was saturated with mines, neither man hesitated. As they entered the field to aid the wounded man, both set off mines which gave them severe wounds. S/Sgt. Younger had his left foot blown off, and Tec Grade 4 Windham had both feet blown off. Dazed by their injuries, the men lay helpless where they had fallen. Rushing to their aid, Pfc. John E. Finnerty, 35060970, Battery "B", Ohio, in one of the most outstanding exhibitions of courage of the war, and with complete disregard for his own safety, showed no hesitation. Knowing the great danger which existed, and fully aware of the hazard, he walked fearlessly to the fallen men and applied tourniquets. His act undoubtedly was a tremendous factor in saving the lives of his comrades, for they were losing great quantities of blood. Realizing he could not move them himself, he sent for medical personnel, and then made the wounded men as comfortable as possible.

Tec 4 Jack E. Baker, 20813093, Texas and Tec 5 Archie Dennis, 32335520, New York, both of the Medical Detachment walked into the mine field to attempt to move the wounded men. As they reached the group, Tec 4 Baker stepped on a mine, fragments of which wounded Pfc. Finnerty. Despite his wounds, Pfc. Finnerty helped Tec 4 Baker to the road and comparative safety. And then, in an exhibition of magnificent courage, he returned to the wounded

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HEADQUARTERS 151ST FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION  
APO #36, U. S. Army

10 January 1945

SUBJECT: Transmittal of Historical Records and History of Organization with conclusions.  
TO : Commanding General, Thirty-Sixth Infantry Division, APO #36, U. S. Army.

1. Transmitted herewith is a record of the 151st Field Artillery Battalion entitled "Operations in France, December 1944".

2. Conclusions drawn from the operation of the 151st Field Artillery Battalion during the period of December 1944 are set forth below. This operation consisted of the contesting battles at Mandray, Le Chipal, Ste. Marie, Aubure, Hunawehr, Strasbourg and Kesseldorf. Along hazardous roads, working in positions churned to knee deep mud, over fields of mines, covered with snow, the advance continued as relentlessly as time. December was practically thirty days of combat, days which found the 151st Field Artillery Battalion disregarding its easiness to deal a constant stream of defiance in the direction of the enemy.

a. During the month of December this Battalion supported the 141st Infantry, 52nd Field Regiment (French), 2nd Battalion, and were part of a task force "Harrison" which consisted of elements from the 63rd Infantry Division. Ammunition was expended with the utmost care and targets were carefully considered before any rounds were fired. A large scale counter-attack, launched by the enemy around Hunawehr and Riquewihr, found the Battalion firing the maximum amount of ammunition and helped tremendously in bringing to a stop this threat. During this period, battery positions were constantly alerted for small arms and mortar fire. The men in the positions had their side arms at all times, with them.

b. There were two definite types of combat observed during the month of December. Positions in Hunawehr and around Riquewihr, the enemy no doubt, had his first team in the line. Fierce fighting, ceaseless hours of strain and continual tedious counter-attacks caused every man to exert all his power to beat back the boche. On the other hand, the battles at Strasbourg and Kesseldorf, where the jerry showed up with his poorer troops, fighting was of an instruction type where the men learned of his faults and had no trouble holding against the futile counter-attacks launched.

c. The Battalion after fighting continuously for 156 days finally received rest on the 26th of December. Before this time, much

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fatigue, especially in the forward observer and liaison sections, was noticed. Strain of battle, continually being shelled and endless hours at last began to show its effect. These men and others, did not let down, they held their heads high and the honors and record achievements still rolled forward. Combat efficiency was not decreased.

*Luther E. Orrick*  
LUTHER E. ORRICK  
Major, Field Artillery  
Commanding

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men, though he was fully aware of the tremendous danger which existed. As he attempted to carry out one of the wounded men, along with Tec 5 Dennis, Tec 5 Dennis stepped on another mine, blowing off a foot, and fragments of which further wounded Pfc. Finnerty. Again disregarding his own wounds, Pfc. Finnerty gave first aid. Then with the help of S/Sgt Joseph Hoffman, 32244966, New York and Pvt. Jack T. Fox, 14082612, both of the Medical Detachment, they carried all the wounded to waiting ambulances, making three separate trips into the minefield to accomplish this, and showing complete disregard for their own safety. Their action was in the highest traditions of the United States Army.

Reconnaissance parties made trips to St. Hypolyte seeking new positions on December 6th, but plans for a move were cancelled, and our battalion was ordered to support the French forces in our area. Early on the morning of the 7th, our guns fired preparation fires for the French attacking force, and the hills echoed with the sharp thunder of our howitzers. Orders to move were received on December 8th, and as dusk fell, the battalion displaced to positions in Hunawihr. Hunawihr was the first village on the Alsatian plain and the snow of Aubure was replaced by the milder weather of the Rhine plain. Far off in the distance, the hills of Germany could be seen. The enemy had been compressed into a bulge around Colmar and the entire area was filled with Germans and enemy equipment. The eighteen miles of territory to the Rhine River became a "no mans land". Our guns thundered continuously all through December 9th. Late that evening, Sergeant Bob E. Blair, 20813343, Battery "A", Texas, left to take over a forward observer party. This was a position usually occupied by an officer. Tec Grade 5 Ralph D. Sidos, 20814041, Battery "B", Texas, was reported seriously wounded by shell fragments as our positions were undergoing intermittent shelling by the enemy. Our medics quickly evacuated the wounded man.

The next two days were taken up by the usual battalion activities. Hundreds of rounds were fired in support of the 141st Infantry which we were reinforcing, and numerous targets taken under fire when reported by our air observer. Because of the flat land, increasing use was being made of air observation. Occasional shells were still falling within the battalion area, but no damage to installations had been caused. The enemy intensified their bombardment on the 12th of December, and our entire area was under concentrations of shells. Early in the morning the entire organization was alerted as Battery "A" reported small arms and mortar

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fire falling among their installations. Infantry reinforcements were being brought up, with Hunawir as the jumping off place, and our installations were receiving greater and greater fires from the enemy. To offset any possible infiltration by the Germans, the battalion was alerted, and security groups formed and posted. By noon the entire battalion area was under mortar, artillery and small arms fire. Reports were received that Germans were observed in adjacent areas, and that several had been picked up, wearing American uniforms.

The Cannon Company, 141st Infantry, which was attached to us and under battalion control received a direct hit on a gun position killing eight men and wounding two. Tec Grade 5 John R. Windsor, 34593752, Headquarters Battery, North Carolina, was wounded for the second time by shell fragments, when an enemy shell fell in the vicinity of the battery maintenance section. By noon, all wire communications had been completely disrupted, and the battalion had only radio keeping the units of the organization cognizant of changes in the situation. All during the early afternoon, our positions underwent a severe shelling. Mortar fire continued to fall within our area, and a small arms fight was going on to the west of our positions. The situation was critical. The enemy had infiltrated behind our positions and were attempting to set up a road block on the road between Ribbeauville and St. Marie. An enemy pocket was also established between our battalion and the 141st Infantry command post, and all wire communications between the two units were out. Sharp fighting continued all that night. With the advent of daylight on the 13th of December, our ammunition on hand was found to be less than a thousand rounds. Our guns had thundered their defiance all during the night and security patrols were constantly on the alert in the event of a German attack. 2nd Lt. Paul A. Barmann, O-1180802, Indiana, was killed in action when his forward observer positions were overrun by the enemy. Fighting continued fiercely all during the day. Our guns fired round after round in support of the infantry as they counter-attacked constantly to break up the enemy offensive. Slowly they succeeded, and as the afternoon drew to a close, occasional reports were received that the situation was growing less tense. The entire Division was committed to the drive to clear the enemy out of our area. The focal point of the German attack was Kayzersberg, which was approximately four miles from our positions. Alternate positions were selected on the 14th of December in the event the enemy pushed to our area, but as things turned out, never had to be used.

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Information was received from a prisoner of war that a group of Germans were to set out on a mission of destroying our guns the night of the 14th. Further security measures were taken and patrolling was redoubled. Shelling continued very heavy, with our guns roaring defiant replies. Concentrations of enemy shells fell with monotonous regularity, hitting many of the houses where our troops were staying, but without causing any casualties. As the day wore on mortar and small arms fire ceased, though sharp fire fights were going on just a short distance away. On December 15th, a civilian suspect was picked up in "C" Battery area and turned over to Counter Intelligence personnel. Unlimited ammunition was at our disposal and our guns threw shell after shell at enemy targets. The cannon company was released from our control on December 16th and reverted back to 141st Regimental control. By noon, our guns were firing in support of the 30th Infantry, reinforcing the fires of the 41st Field Artillery Battalion.

Much enemy movement was noted on December 17th, and numerous targets were taken under fire by our guns. 1st Lt. Richard S. Fleming, O-1173946, Pennsylvania, was slightly wounded in the neck, but after treatment by our medics returned to duty. Our troops had gradually taken over control of the entire area, and the enemy was being pushed back to his original positions. 2nd Lt. James R. MacIvor, O-1176713, Michigan, reported back to duty late that afternoon. Tension relaxed even more on December 18th, and the battalion was alerted to a possible move the next day. Firing continued sporadically all during the day and night with only targets of opportunity being considered. Early in the morning of the 19th, the battalion departed for positions in the vicinity of Strassbourg; a comparatively quiet sector after the fierce fighting at Hunawir.

Little of importance occurred during the next three days. Firing was spaced, and on the 21st the battalion demonstrated a new fuze. On the 22nd, the battalion was alerted for another move, and early the next morning displaced to positions at Kesseldorf. The battalion fired continuous harassing fire across the Rhine River on the 23rd and 24th, to make the enemy as uncomfortable as possible and to screen the activities of Task Force Harrison, of which we were a part. At this time, the battalion was supporting the 63rd Division. The battalion was notified that the 36th Division was to be relieved, but that our organization would remain in support of the 63rd Division temporarily and would be relieved a little later.

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Christmas Day found the battalion still firing harassing fires. It wasn't a merry Christmas, but we were at the Rhine, and there was a promise in the air that by next year, our final objective -- Berlin -- would have been reached. December 26th found the battalion rolling on the road to a new bivouac area at Arzwiller. The end of the year found training programs being prepared and the battalion enjoying some well-earned rest. For 136 days we had fought the enemy from the shores of Dramont to the plains of Alsace. For 700 miles we had nagged and harassed the enemy; had driven him back over tortured roads and steep mountains; across icy rivers and through thick forests. And we found German territory in sight as the year ended. We found the prize getting closer and closer. We found victory gleaming brighter. 1944 had seen new battle honors added to the battalion colors. It had brought an unit citation for valor and initiative at Velletri; it had brought smashing victories at Marsane, at Vesoul, at Belmont, at Remiremont, at St. Die, at St. Marie and at Hunawihr. It had seen our guns send countless thousands of rounds of destruction at the enemy; and too, it had seen death come to some members of our unit. The cream of the German Army had been met and ferociously battled. Only the Rhine River remained as a barrier. The last five days of the year were spent in rest. But even as the bells pealed out the old year and welcomed in the new, the battalion was alerted, for reports were received that paratroopers had been dropped. It was a year of combat which had seen the 131st Field Field Artillery Battalion drive over 300 miles in Italy to imposing victories; and after an invasion over 700 miles in France to the very borders of Germany. It was a year which saw us making a grim vow that the enemy would be conquered before many months went by.

*William H. Bright*

WILLIAM H. BRIGHT  
1st Lt., Field Artillery  
HISTORIAN

~~SECRET~~

S E C R E T

DECORATIONS AND AWARDS

<u>NAME</u>	<u>RANK</u>	<u>A. S. N.</u>	<u>UNIT</u>	<u>AWARD</u>
Taylor, James E.	Lt. Col.	O-376731	Bn. Hq.	Bronze Star
Placke, Vincent H.	Private	35790778	Hq. Btry.	Bronze Star
Hunter, Willie J.	Pvt 1cl	20814022	Btry. "B"	Bronze Star
Owens, Oscar H.	Pvt 1cl	35481760	Btry. "B"	Bronze Star

S E C R E T

ROSTER OF OFFICERS

BATTALION HEADQUARTERS

Orrick, Luther E.	O-357391	Major	Bn. C. C.	Temple, Texas
Ayers, Ross	O-378526	Major	Bn. S-3	Waxahachie, Texas
Ramey, Robert M.	O-364093	Captain	Asst. S-3	Penfield, Penn.
Kane, Raymond E.	O-1165519	Captain	Bn. S-2	Norristown, Penn.
Bright, William H.	O-1175953	1st Lt.	Asst. S-2	West Roxbury, Mass.
Garfunkel, Sylvan A.	O-1166993	Captain	Bn. L. C.	Savannah, Ga.
Mauz, Kilian H.	O-413791	Captain	Bn. L. O.	Arvada, Colorado
Sample, Ernest L.	O-380569	Captain	Bn. L. C.	Bryan, Texas

HEADQUARTERS BATTERY

Anweg, Frederick F.	O-1175923	Captain	C. O.	West New York, N. J.
Boehm, Murrel D.	O-1179786	1st Lt.	Btry. Com. O.	Chicago, Illinois
Hendley, Johnny R.	O-2056285	1st Lt.	Liaison Pilot	Palestine, Texas
Higgins, Wallace T.	O-1173284	1st Lt.	Liaison Pilot	Houstonia, Mo.

BATTERY "A"

Felder, Jesse W.	O-452540	Captain	C. O.	Oklahoma City, Okla.
Mamary, George N.	O-1167096	1st Lt.	Exec. O.	Brooklyn, N. Y.
Bordner, Ralph B.	O-1180130	1st Lt.	Arty. O.	Kutztown, Penn.
Carter, Charlie H.	O-1180842	2nd Lt.	Arty. O.	Sylacauga, Alabama

BATTERY "B"

O'Brien, Stephen J.	O-1170510	Captain	C. O.	Roxbury, Mass.
Gire, Kenneth P.	O-1176637	1st Lt.	Exec. O.	Pittsburg, Kansas
Collier, J. B.	O-1173193	1st Lt.	Ren. O.	Lakeland, Fla.
Fleming, Richard S.	O-1173946	1st Lt.	Arty. O.	Philadelphia, Penn.
MacIvor, James R.	O-1176713	2nd Lt.	Arty. O.	Hazel Park, Mich.

BATTERY "C"

Rich, Henry A., Jr.	O-416424	Captain	C. O.	Salt Lake City, Utah
Blackwell, Leslie L.	O-1175947	1st Lt.	Exec. O.	Buffalo, N. Y.
Brown, Thomas S.	O-1180130	1st Lt.	Arty. O.	Kenmore, N.Y.

SERVICE BATTERY

Snodgrass, Norman K.	O-405088	Captain	Bn. S-4 & C.O.	Lubbock, Texas
Armitage, Samuel P.	O-1175924	1st Lt.	Bn. Ammo. O.	Lynn, Mass.
Larsen, Kenith C.	O-1166537	1st Lt.	Btry. M.O.	St. James, Minn.
Hahn, Howard W.	O-1176650	1st Lt.	Bn. M.O.	Dixon, Ill.

MEDICAL DETACHMENT

Cusson, Charles J.	O-1696811	Captain	Bn. Surgeon	Lyndonville, Vt.
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WARRANT OFFICERS

Nelms, Lewis J.	W-2104334	C. W. O.	Pers. O.	Lockney, Texas
Watson, Billy	W-2131523	W.O.(jg)	Asst. S-4	Slaton, Texas

S E C R E T

UNIT BATTLE CASUALTY LIST

<u>NAME</u>	<u>RANK</u>	<u>A. S. N.</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>TYPE</u>	<u>RESIDENCE</u>
<u>HEADQUARTERS BATTERY</u>					
Windsor, John R.	Tec 5	34593752	12/12	L.W. Rt. leg & Rt. arm, L.W. lt. leg	North Carolina
Schuetz, Edwin J.	Cpl.	37207985	12/17	L.W. Rt. calf	Kansas
<u>BATTERY "B"</u>					
Younger, August P.	3/Sgt	38009241	12/5	WIA Amputation lt foot, Sv, new, Traumatic	Colorado
Finnerty, John E.	Pfc	35060979	12/5	WIA M.W. Face and hands	Ohio
Windham, Alfred V.	Tec 4	20813497	12/5	WIA Amputation both feet, Sv.	Texas
Davies, David J.	Pfc	33071022	12/5	WIA FC Rt. Foot and FS Rt. thigh, Sv.	Pennsylvania
Sides, Ralph D.	Tec 5	20814041	12/8	WIA IW and pen W of Rt. hand	Tennessee
Barmann, Paul A.	2 Lt	0-1180802	12/13	KIA GSW in head	Indiana
Fleming, Richard S.	1 Lt	0-1173946	12/17	Pen W of Lt. side of neck -S-	Pennsylvania
<u>BATTERY "C"</u>					
Ranella, Anthony R.	Pvt	33608075	12/12	WIA Pun. W. Lt. upper thigh and Lt. chest-S-	Pennsylvania
<u>MEDICAL DETACHMENT</u>					
Baker, Jack E.	Tec 4	20813093	12/5	WIA Contusion of both legs	Texas
Dennis, Archie	Tec 5	32335520	12/5	WIA Amputation Lt. foot, new, Traumatic, FS Metaspl Rt. Foot, Sv.	New York

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~  
HEADQUARTERS 131ST FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION  
APO #36, U. S. Army

31 January 1945

SUBJECT: Transmittal of Historical Records and History of Organization with  
Conclusions.  
TO : Commanding General, Thirty-Sixth Infantry Division, APO #36,  
U. S. Army.

1. Transmitted herewith herewith is the record of the 131st Field Artillery Battalion entitled "Operations in France", January, 1945.

2. During the month of January the Battalion operated over an extensive area which included the Montbronn, Lemberg, Goetzenbruck areas, as well as the Brumath and Kurtzenhausen areas.

a. The first of January found the Battalion in a Rest Area in Arzweiler, France. During the night of January 1st and 2nd the Battalion moved to Montbronn and occupied positions for direct support of the 141st Infantry. The Battalion remained in these positions for some 21 days, with both direct support and reinforcing missions. The weather was extremely cold and the terrain was mountainous. Several conclusions were drawn during this period of operation. First, it was proven that a complete combat team could be moved a distance of more than fifty miles in one night, committed to action, and repel an enemy attack of considerable strength the morning following the move. Second, it was emphasized that extreme weather conditions must be considered in effecting close support of combat infantry with 105 mm. howitzers. In our operation, vicinity of Lemberg, Montbronn and Goetzenbruck, the weather was extremely cold, the terrain mountainous, hence changes in weather with it's effect on firing was noted. Frequent Metro Messages are necessary in an operation like this and weather corrections must be figured and applied. It is concluded that the Metro Station should be located in close proximity of the artillery battalions. Even with good Metro data, frequent registration is necessary as K-Changes fluctuate daily.

b. During the night of January 21st - 22nd the Battalion was moved to vicinity of Brumath and guns placed in position. The mission was direct support of an infantry battalion with Liaison Officers and Forward Observers from another artillery battalion. Here the problems of communication and fire control were met and dealt with by this Battalion. It is definitely concluded that the S-3 of the Direct Support Battalion should control the supporting fires and that no more than one base or control radio set can operate on the same channel. For instance, this Battalion was in direct support of the 2nd Battalion, 142nd Infantry, with liaison and forward observers from the 132nd Field Artillery Battalion. A base radio set, with the 132nd Field Artillery assigned channel, was placed at the F.D.C. of the 131st Field Artillery Battalion. Fire missions came in to both base sets which proved unsatisfactory. The S-3 from both Battalions wrestled with incoming fire missions and confusion resulted. Solution, separate channels of radio communication were provided for each

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F.D.C. and each S-7 took over the missions pertaining to his direct support.

c. Two long, all night, moves were made by this Battalion in January, 1945, under extreme weather conditions and measures of precaution were taken to prevent frost-bite which is almost sure to occur. Extra blankets were provided for the men during these moves and troops were kept working or moving around when the convoy was halted. This Battalion suffered no casualties from these night moves and morale remained high, in spite of adverse weather conditions and fatigue. January ended with this Battalion in position to deliver fire across the Rhine River and the destruction of the German Army continues.

*Luther E. Orrick*  
LUTHER E. ORRICK  
Major, F. A.  
Commanding.

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It was a new year, but the same activities which had kept us occupied for over 135 days were still in store for us. Even as the old year was rung out plans were being completed to bring the outfit back to the lines. The rebounctious enemy, ever probing, had found an elastic spot in the Bitche sector and like the little Dutch boy who plugged the hole in the dike, our combat team was called upon to stem the tide. With monotonous regularity, the days followed each other with almost exact similarity, bringing new moves, and finding our guns blasting at enemy positions. Slowly, as the month crawled by, the "boche" were pushed back to the Rhine. Slowly, the territory around Strassbourg was cleared, and then the towns which had been in the news --Bitche, Hagenau, Brueth -- came within our scope and were cleared. Reluctantly the enemy was forced to withdraw. Like a snarling tiger, cornered and caged, he threw clawed paws in vicious thrusts. Each attempt was blunted, but with a persistence which showed his fanaticism, he refused to concede defeat. January was a month which saw the 131st Field Artillery Battalion continue its relentless drive towards its final objective - Berlin! January was a month which saw thirty-one days added to our combat record. January was a month which saw the battalion appear like a stern and avenging judge before the enemy.

Amidst the farewells to Lt. Col. James E. Taylor, O-371396, Texas, who was leaving to return to the United States to assume the duties of Senator in the Texas legislature, reconnaissance parties left for the vicinity of Mackwiller to seek an assembly area. The battalion had been out of the lines for exactly four days since August 15, 1944. Upon reaching the assembly area late in the afternoon of January 1st, plans were changed - as they so often are - when orders came from the Regimental Combat Team commander to move the battalion into position in the vicinity of Montbren. With the battalion already on the road, little time was available for reconnaissance; but parties were selected, positions surveyed and everything was in readiness for the battalion when it reached Montbren. The combat team's primary job was to reinforce the 100th Division, protecting their right flank, where already the enemy had penetrated deep into their lines. Upon reaching these positions, each man realized the seriousness of the task set for the battalion, and leaned all his weight throughout the night to prepare good positions. By the morning of the 2nd, registration was in the process of being completed, and the infantry had relieved a great deal of the pressure on this part of the line. Weather was clear, the skies were blue, and the air O.P.'s hummed overhead searching out the enemy throughout the day. Many tanks, armored vehicles and personnel were reported destroyed by our fires that day.

For the next three days the battalion fired continuously, giving the infantry strong support, as the enemy continued his searching thrusts. More and more artillery of all types was being brought up to help blunt the enemy's activities, and since our Division Artillery was

not located in the area, the Battalion CP was used as a clearing center for information. Heavy fighting was being encountered, as the enemy counter-attacked constantly, but despite his methodical and imaginative efforts, he met with no success. The lines were slowly being straightened and as the three day period drew to a close, we assumed support of the 142nd Infantry, which had relieved the 141st Infantry, which we regularly supported. On January 5th, we once again went under command of Division Artillery.

January 6th was an uneventful day. On the morning of the 7th, the new posit fuze was introduced and tried out in the battalion. This fuze, with its complicated mechanisms is fired as any other shell, but upon reaching its destination, automatically explodes approximately fifteen yards above the ground. Care must be exercised in handling this fuze because of its very sensitive, highly machined parts, such as tubes and a battery, that are about the size of a finger nail. It was tested, and although there were many premature bursts, those reaching their destination proved very devastating and had tremendous effect upon the targets. Late in the afternoon, Captain Robert H. Ramey, O-364093, Pennsylvania, 2nd Lt. Ernest L. Sleet, O-1179319, Maine, and 2nd Lt. Bernard Lieb, O-1184254, Washington, D. C., returned to duty from the hospital and were very welcome for the Battalion was operating on the minimum of officers and the pinch had been felt time and again.

Much snow had been falling and to aid in camouflaging positions, the guns were painted white. The freezing weather helped in several respects, for it eliminated the mud which had been becoming more and more of a barrier to effectiveness. It also aided in making observation much easier for our forward observer and liaison parties. Conversely, it helped the enemy in the same manner, and for the next three days much fire was encountered, though no damage was done to installations and no casualties were caused. The rolling country in which we were located stretched clear to the Rhine River. It was a fertile valley with numerous streams cutting through it. On clear days the forests and hills of Germany could be seen in the distance.

Reconnaissance parties were sent out on January 11th to seek new positions. Alternate positions were also selected, but no work was done on them, and installations were merely planned, but not put into effect. On the 12th, new parties were sent on reconnaissance in the vicinity of St. Louis, after a conference between Major Luther E. Orrick, O-357391, Texas, Battalion Commander, and General Hess, Division Artillery commander. During the afternoon, "B" Battery, commanded by Captain Stephen J. O'Brien, O-1170510, Massachusetts, moved to its alternate positions. The entire battalion was ranged near the center of Montbronn, but because of the possibility of the town being subjected to heavy shelling, Major Orrick felt it best to move all units to the outskirts of

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Montbronn. The moving of the other batteries was completed on the morning of the 13th. All during this time, numerous reports were received of enemy paratroops being dropped behind the lines at Enchenberg, and a report was received that a German patrol had broken through to the south of Montbronn. A sharp watch was kept and the battalion alerted, but no sign of either group was seen, and no verification was ever received. During the 13th, Captain Norman K. Snodgrass, O-405088, Bn. S-4, Texas, left for the hospital and 1st Lt. Samuel P. Armitage, O-1175924, Massachusetts, assumed command of Service Battery and S-4 duties. Late that night another report was received that troops had parachuted down in the vicinity of Mackwiller, but no verification could be received and the report was not authenticated. So far the month had been uneventful. Our guns had shelled enemy positions constantly with excellent results reported by our forward observers. Attempting to foresee any strategic move by the enemy, a defensive line of positions were selected and surveyed in, in the event the enemy broke through. At the same time, the positions which were in use and other targets in the immediate vicinity were surveyed and data compiled, so that in the event of a surprise attack by the enemy, our guns could automatically blast his positions. As it developed, the alternate positions were never used but the idea had much merit.

Little happened during the next two days. On the 14th, the battalion again took over direct support of the 141st Infantry. Three tank destroyers from the 636th T.D. Bn. were attached to the battalion for firing and were assigned positions in the vicinity of Enchenberg. On the next day, 2nd Lt. David W. George, O-553773, Oklahoma, Jerry W. Luptak, O-553281, Michigan, and Russell McFann, O-1052068, California reported as officer reinforcements and were immediately assigned. The usual routines occupied the battalion on the 16th. The entire battalion was constantly on the alert, for though we were located in Lorraine, the towns and people were too Germanic to be trusted completely. Late on the 16th, a suspicious person was observed in the vicinity of "A" Battery, commanded by Captain Jesse L. Fielder, O-452540, Oklahoma, but though fired upon by small arms, managed to escape.

During the 17th of January, notification was received that the Division had been alerted, less the 141st Combat Team, which would be attached to the 100th Division. On January 18th, ten enlisted reinforcements were received and assigned to the various units. Although the men had not been overseas very long, their morale was excellent, and their training seemed to be good. They were welcome, for new blood can always be used. Enemy shelling was regular, if not heavy all during this time. Late on the night of the 20th, Pfc. Charles D.

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Fretz, 33787803, Battery "C", Pennsylvania, was lightly wounded by shell fragments but remained on duty after being treated by our medics. This was the first casualty of 1945.

Positions were selected and surveyed for tanks which were to be fired in coordination with our guns on the 20th. Also, additional tank destroyers attached to the combat team fired in coordination with our guns during the night, but reverted back to infantry control during the day. Plans for the defense of Montbronn were drawn up during the day in the event of a break-through by the enemy. The situation was still in the balance, though not precarious. The specific purpose of the 141st Combat Team was to halt any offensive by the enemy. Early on the morning of the 21st information on the destruction of materiel in the event of imminent capture and instructions for the defense of Montbronn was disseminated to the various units. Rumors were rife that the 141st Combat Team was to be relieved from duty with the 100th Division, and were given further credence when a report was received that the positions we were using were to be taken over by the 375th F. A. Bn. The threat of a breath-taking sweep by the Germans in the vicinity of Montbronn was dwindling, and consequently the hard driving 141st Combat Team was no longer needed in this sector.

Early in the morning of the 22nd reconnaissance parties left to seek positions in the vicinity of Hagenau. The battalion was relieved by the 375th F. A. Bn. during the morning. Preparations for moving were completed during the day, but orders were received that the battalion was not to start on convoy until just after midnight. Heavy snow was falling, and the roads were slippery. It was as hazardous a move as any the battalion had ever made. The long tiring ride, made under the riskiest of conditions was completed without mishap. As usual, we knew that the positions that had been selected would be in a "hot" area, for wherever there is trouble that is where the 131st Field Artillery Battalion is assigned. Hagenau had been a stumbling block for weeks and had been the center of determined thrusts by the enemy. Now we were there to clear them out and push them back into the Rhine. At 0400, on the 23rd, the battalion reached positions at Brumath, just outside of Hagenau. The ground was frozen and it was difficult to dig gun positions. The deep snow and a bright moon gave excellent light, but served to target the positions. However, though shells were dropping in the general area, none fell on installations or caused any casualties. Once again, alternate positions were selected. A reconnaissance party left to select them in the vicinity of Reitzwiller, and an CP was established in Jurtzenhausen on the 24th. The next three days were uneventful. Daily reconnaissances were being made, for the front was very active. On January 26th, new posi-

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tions were reconnoitered for "A" and "B" Batterys so that fire could be brought to bear on Herrlisheim, which was a focal point of enemy activity. Late in the afternoon, orders were received holding the move in abeyance.

Little of importance occurred on January 27th. The next day reconnaissance parties departed for the vicinity of Kurtzenhausen to seek new positions. Slowly the lines were moving north. The enemy had been cleared completely from all French territory south of Strassbourg, and now with the Rhine River as one end of the line, there was a general move to compress the front into as small a sector as possible on the west side of the Rhine. The air was tense for there was a general feeling that something was building up, and oddly, rumors were scarce. That itself was so unusual, it was accepted that "something was cooking".

Battery "A" moved to positions near Kurtzenhausen on January 30th and a forward CP was established at Jurtzenhausen. The entire battalion was alerted for movement, but orders were received that all moves were postponed until further notice. On the last day of the month, Battery "A" was recalled and occupied its former positions. Late in the afternoon movement orders were received and at dusk, the battalion moved out to positions near Kurtzenhausen. It had been a comparatively quiet month. Only one casualty had been suffered, and that was not a very serious one. The battalion had been in constant contact with the enemy, and our guns had thundered and roared and a continuous stream of shells had poured on German targets. Despite the hard fighting which had occurred during the month, there had been no outstanding days. Steady, grueling combat had followed day after day. The four days rest which the battalion had received at the end of December had been the only break in almost 170 days of combat. It was a tired battalion, but one that could achieve anything asked of it. It was a battalion which had helped steady the "green" divisions which had just been committed to combat. It was a battalion which added new glory to its colors with each new day..

*William H. Bright*  
WILLIAM H. BRIGHT  
1st Lt., 131st F. A. Bn.  
HELSORIAN

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UNIT BATTLE CASUALTY LIST

<u>NAME</u>	<u>RANK</u>	<u>ASN</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>TYPE</u>	<u>RESIDENCE</u>
		<u>BATTERY "B"</u>			
* Prindle, Charles A.	Cpl	58035941	12/13	GSW, LW, Rt Thumb	Texas
		<u>BATTERY "C"</u>			
Fritz, Charles D.	Pvt 1st	33707803	1/19	SF, LW, back	Pennsylvania

\* December casualty

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CONSOLIDATED BATTLE CASUALTY LIST

<u>TYPE OF CASUALTY</u>	<u>OFFICERS</u>	<u>ENLISTED MEN</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
KIA	0	0	0
DOH	0	0	0
LBA	0	0	0
SJA	0	0	0
DIA	0	0	0
LWA	0	1	1
SNA	0	0	0
MIA	0	0	0
POW	0	0	0

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<u>NAME</u>	<u>A. S. NO.</u>	<u>REG. NO.</u>	<u>REG. DIST.</u>	<u>REG. DIST. NO.</u>
<u>BATTALION HEADQUARTERS</u>				
Crriek, Luther E.	O-357301	Captain	Bn. 3-1	Temple, Texas
Ayers, Ross	O-375226	Captain	Bn. 3-2	Waxahachie, Texas
Raney, Robert J.	O-364093	Captain	Bn. 3-3	Fenfield, Penn.
Kane, Raymond E.	O-1165319	Captain	Asst. Bn. 3-3	Norristown, Penn.
Rich, Henry A., Jr.	O-415124	Captain	Bn. 3-2	Salt Lake City, Utah
George, David I.	O-553773	2nd Lt.	Asst. Bn. 3-2	Cleveland, Okla.
Garfunkel, Sylvan A.	O-1166993	Captain	Bn. 1. C.	Savannah, Ga.
Sample, Ernest L.	O-380969	Captain	Bn. 1. C.	Bryan, Texas
Hauz, Kilian H.	O-413791	Captain	Bn. 1. C.	Arvada, Colorado
<u>HEADQUARTERS BATTERY</u>				
Anweg, Frederick F.	O-1175923	Captain	B. C.	West New York, N. J.
Boelan, Murrel D.	O-1179786	1st Lt.	3try. Com. C.	Chicago, Illinois
Hendley, Johnny R.	O-2052285	1st Lt.	Liaison Pilot	Palastine, Texas
Higgins, Wallace T.	O-1173284	1st Lt.	Liaison Pilot	Houstonia, Mo.
Sample, Ray T.	O-1184292	2nd Lt.	Liaison Pilot	St. Louis, Mo.
<u>BATTERY "A"</u>				
Fielder, Jesse I.	O-452540	Captain	C. C.	Bartow, Florida
Mamary, George N.	O-1167096	1st Lt.	Exec. C.	Brooklyn, N. Y.
Collier, J. B.	O-1173193	1st Lt.	Arty. Obs.	Lakeland, Florida
Lieb, Bernard	O-1184254	2nd Lt.	Arty. Obs.	Newark, N. J.
McFann, Russell E.	O-1052068	2nd Lt.	Arty. Obs.	El Monte, California
<u>BATTERY "B"</u>				
O'Brien, Stephen J.	O-1170510	Captain	C. C.	Roxbury, Mass.
Gire, Kenneth P.	O-1176637	1st Lt.	Exec. O.	Pittsburg, Kansas
Fleming, Richard S.	O-1173946	1st Lt.	Arty. Obs.	Philadelphia, Pa.
MacIvor, James R.	O-1176713	1st Lt.	Arty. Obs.	Hazel Park, Mich.
Luptak, Jerry D.	O-553281	2nd Lt.	Arty. Obs.	Lincoln Park, Mich.
<u>BATTERY "C"</u>				
Blackwell, Leslie L.	O-1175947	1st Lt.	C. O.	Buffalo, New York
Bright, William H.	O-1175953	1st Lt.	Exec. O.	West Roxbury, Mass.
Brown, Thomas S.	O-1180130	1st Lt.	Arty. Obs.	Aermore, New York
Sloat, Ernest H.	O-1175619	2nd Lt.	Arty. Obs.	Caribou, Maine
Carter, Charlie H.	O-1180842	2nd Lt.	Arty. Obs.	Sylacauga, Alabama
<u>SERVICE BATTERY</u>				
Larsen, Kenith C.	O-1166537	1st Lt.	C.C. & Bn. 3-4	St. James, Minn.
Armitage, Samuel P.	O-1175924	1st Lt.	Mon. Officer	Lynn, Massachusetts
Hahn, Howard W.	O-1176650	1st Lt.	Bn. Motor C.	Dixon, Illinois
<u>MEDICAL DETACHMENT</u>				
Cusson, Charles J.	O-1696811	Captain	Bn. Surgeon	Lyndonville, Vermont
<u>WARRANT OFFICERS</u>				
Helms, Lewis J.	W-2104334	C. L. C.	Parachut. C.	Lockney, Texas
Natson, Billy	W-2131523	C. (3-)	Asst. Bn. 3-4	Slaton, Texas



d. After many weeks of continuous action, combat units function in a routine manner to a certain extent and such was the case of the 131st Field Artillery Battalion in February, but weather conditions were somewhat improved over those of January and the end of the month found the artillery part of the 141st Regimental Combat Team, on the alert, with morale high, a keen sense of duty and that continued desire to place more HE on the enemy.

*Luther E. Orrick*  
LUTHER E. ORRICK  
Major, F. A.  
Commanding

February was a quiet month. In sharp contrast to the mud and rain and snow of July, the twenty-four days spent in combat this month were cooperatively mild and comfortable. The sectors our Battalion occupied were on the southern flank of the line; in a part of Alsace that was highly populated. Picturesque villages, their facades faded and warped by four years of war, still strove to maintain a modicum of normalcy. It was a sector not injured to war, but rather, resigned to a destiny which had made it a political plum. Rich in resources, it was a territory which had been bagged over by the Germans and French for generations. The cultures of both nations were inextricably juxtaposed. The patois of Alsace is a strange mixture of harsh French and doggerel German. It is a quaint province; one where parents who fought under the Kaiser now have sons fighting under the Allied banners.

This was the territory our Battalion had battled through from Hunewihr in the Colmar sector, to our positions in Bismillier in the Hagenau area. Occupying defensive positions during the month, our guns harried the enemy. Numerous targets; enemy personnel, tanks, anti-aircraft machine guns, and strong points were taken under fire, with excellent results reported. And, as the month drew to a close, the Battalion was relieved for a short period of reorganization and training. Our combat record continued to climb steadily. On February 24th, the day we were relieved, 375 combat days were on the credit side of the Battalion's ledger.

Occupying positions at Kurtzenhausen, the month began inauspiciously. Routine activities, carried over from the previous month, continued without variation. The weather, which had been cold, changed, and melting snows and unseasonal thaws made quagmires out of fertile fields. Many roads were under water, and maintenance of vehicles was made more difficult by the rough conditions. Alternate positions were selected in the vicinity of Gries, in line with the policy of being prepared for any eventuality.

February 2nd continued uneventful, but on the following day, the 141st Infantry, which we supported, began an operation on Herrlishausen. Though the enemy was not aggressive on this front, he was sensitive to any move on our part. Supporting the infantry attack, our guns fired over 600 rounds into enemy positions in the Herrlishausen area, with excellent results reported. As the attack progressed, a report was received that Pfc 4 James W. Taylor, 13080878, Battery "C", Pennsylvania, had been severely wounded while leading a forward observer party with the

advanced elements of the attacking force. Sgt. Taylor was given immediate medical attention and evacuated. There was also received that Pvt. Chester C. Hogen, 20070359, Texas and Pfc Thomas E. Wells, 20813522, Texas, both of Battery "A" had been slightly wounded on February 2nd, but after treatment had returned to duty. The attack on Herrlisheim was meeting with success though the enemy continued to resist very strongly. Although our troops had reached the southern edge of the town, a withdrawal was ordered. Our guns fired a protective smoke screen, so that movements would be hidden from the enemy. Leaving Herrlisheim battered, the attacking troops took up positions in Meyersheim, Briss and Zasting.

On the 4th of February notification was received that the impending infantry operations had been cancelled and that the combat team would move to a new sector. A reconnaissance was made during the day for positions in the vicinity of Weiderschaffolsheim, and positions selected and surveyed. The 501st AFA Bn. was to relieve us in this sector. Plans were made for displacing the battalion early the next morning, and all installations notified. Our normal support of the 141st Infantry was to be taken over by the 501st AFA Bn. so long as the infantry remained in the lines in this area.

Early the next morning, the battalion displaced to the positions at Weiderschaffolsheim. Each battery moved as a single unit, thus assuring constant artillery fire at all times. In addition to the normal forward observer quotas, we were instructed to man a battalion observation post. By mid-afternoon, all installations were reported laid, guns were registered and ready to resume their harassing of the enemy. A report was received later in the day that the entire 141st Infantry had been relieved in the old position and were moving into a new one.

The sixth day of the month found the Battalion following routine activities. The 50th AFA Bn. were to reinforce our lines and moved to positions in the vicinity of Weiderschaffolsheim. A report was received during the day that Tec 5 Richard H. Weidman, 55315625, Headquarters Battery, Pennsylvania, had been slightly wounded by shell fragments. After receiving treatment from our medics he returned to duty. Because of the long period of time for which we had been committed to combat, several rest centers had been set up throughout France in Nancy, Paris, Rain las Reins and at Brussels, Belgium. Members of the organization were lifted from the dirt and destruction and fogs of the front lines and placed in the cleanliness, comfort and safety of these centers. They were like three day vacations in the midst of a long, busy season, and each man looked forward to his chance to go.

Little of importance occurred during the 7th and 8th of February. A reconnaissance was made in the vicinity of Risenwiller on the 7th, and positions selected and surveyed. All during these moves, the battalion had been hampered by the flat, open terrain which existed. The roads were being constantly reconnoitered and many areas had to be skillfully bypassed because of the overflowing of small streams and the complete blocking of the way by snow which had fallen in January. Late in the afternoon of the 8th, Headquarters Battery displaced by infiltration to Gries where the Battalion Command Post was installed. The remainder of the battalion reached the new positions in the vicinity of Risenwiller before dawn on the 9th of February. Much difficulty was met with in moving the guns for the thick mud made it necessary to winch all vehicles and guns from the positions. Many winch cables were broken and it was found necessary to have heavier vehicles brought up to winch out the equipment. Temporarily, the battalion was to reinforce the fires of the 133rd Field Artillery Battalion, supporting an infantry attack on Drusenheim. All during this period we were fighting over a canal which had been in the path of the thrust of the German attempt to recapture Strasbourg. That attempt had been unsuccessful and now there was a steady battle underway to drive them from the western bank of the Rhine River.

On February 10th, we once again took over direct support of the 141st Infantry, which returned to the lines. An observation post was set up in Herrlisheim, which had been captured earlier in the month. On February 11th, the battalion command post moved from Gries to Hanhofen which was a more centrally located place. The 501st AFA Bn. was to reinforce our fires while the 133rd Field Artillery Battalion was to be in general support. Once again, these were considered defensive positions.

The next three days were routine and little of importance occurred. 2nd Lt. William Gold, II, O-341229, Nebraska, reported for duty on February 13th, and was assigned to Battery "Q", as Artillery Observer. The weather was very clear and much air activity was noted. During the day the battalion fired numerous smoke shells on Drusenheim to mark it for Air Corps attacks, and from our vantage points we could see the F-47's reel off, drop their bombs, and then return to strafe the general area. It was an impressive sight.

A demonstration of the Losit Fuze was made on February 15th by a party from Army Ordnance. Some enemy air activity was noticed and on the 16th enemy planes flew over the area and were taken under fire

by our supporting anti-aircraft. The planes did not attack our installations and their objective could not be ascertained.

The 701st AFA Bn. was relieved of reinforcing our lines on February 17th. All during this period the battalion was firing many missions covering the activities of infantry patrols. Numerous enemy guns and tanks and personnel were taken under fire with our observers reporting excellent results. Ammunition was still limited to some degree, and while firing was steady, the ammunition was not expended recklessly. The following day passed without incident. On the 19th, a reconnaissance was made in the vicinity of Heideratsdorf, relative to a new sector to be occupied by the Division. French forces were to relieve the 141st Regimental Combat Team of which we were a part, and preparations were to be made to move when they reported ready to occupy the sector. Many aircraft were observed over our installations on the 20th, and though the hostile planes did some strafing, it was not in our immediate area.

Rumors were thick that the battalion was to be relieved, and were given further weight when a report was received that the French forces had their artillery in position and were ready to cover the sector. Late that evening, notification was received that the 141st Infantry had been completely relieved by French forces.

A new reconnaissance was made on February 22nd for a training area, since the area assigned was found to be occupied. 2nd Lt. Harvey G. Puryear, Jr., O-1183950, Durham, North Carolina, reported for duty and was assigned to Battery "C" as Artillery Observer. Several reconnaissances were made during the day, and late that afternoon Vendenheim was selected as the best area. Rilleting parties were dispatched to arrange for the billeting of the battalion when it moved there. February 24th found the battalion completely relieved and ready to move. Complete plans were drawn up for training and for calibration of the guns. By midday, the battalion was settled in its new positions and reorganization was started immediately.

And so passed another month of combat. It was an unusual month, for it had been very quiet. Of all the 375 days of combat which our battalion had endured, these 24 days in February had been the calmest ---and consequently the ones best liked.

*Raymond E. Kane*

RAYMOND E. KANE  
CAPTAIN, 131st F. A. Bn.  
HISTORIAN

U.S. ARMY MEDICAL SERVICE

<u>NAME</u>	<u>RANK</u>	<u>ASN</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>TYPE</u>	<u>RESIDENCE</u>
<u>"A" BATTALION</u>					
Weidman, Richard H.	T/5	33215009	2/5	SF, Lt Hand Slight (Duty)	Pennsylvania
<u>"A" BATTALION</u>					
Wells, Thomas E.	PTC	20813592	2/2	SF, Lt Temple Slight (Duty)	Texas
Hogan, Chester C.	Pvt	30561559	2/2	SF, Lacerations of mouth & lower jaw. Slight (Duty)	Texas
<u>"C" BATTALION</u>					
Taylor, James H.	T/4	13080078	2/3	GSN, Lt Forearm. Evacuated	Pennsylvania

COMPLETED SALES OF ALLE LIST

<u>TYPE OF CASUALTY</u>	<u>OFFICERS</u>	<u>ENLISTED MEN</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
KIA	0	0	0
DOA	0	0	0
LIA	0	0	0
SIA	0	0	0
DIA	0	0	0
L/A	0	3	3
BWA	0	1	1
MIA	0	0	0
POW	0	0	0

*1 m 23*

2000

AWARDS AND DECORATIONS

<u>NAME</u>	<u>RANK</u>	<u>A.S.N.</u>	<u>AWARD</u>	<u>RESIDENCE</u>	<u>UNIT</u>
Lieb, Bernard	2nd Lt.	0-1184254	Silver Star	New Jersey	Hq. Btry.
Bohlke, Eugene A.	1st Lt.	0-516555	Silver Star	Indiana	Hq.
Higgins, Wallace T.	1st Lt.	0-1173204	Air Medal (5th Cluster)	Missouri	Hq. Btry.
Lee, Monte R.	Tec 4	20013571	Air Medal (1st Cluster)	Texas	Hq. Btry.

HEADQUARTERS 131ST FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION  
APO #36, U. S. ARMY

1 March 1945

ROSTER OF OFFICERS

BATTALION HEADQUARTERS

Orrick, Luther E.	0-357391	Major	Bn. Q. O.	Temple, Texas
Ayers, Ross	0-378526	Major	Bn. Exec. O.	Waxahachie, Texas
Ramey, Robert M.	0-364093	Captain	Bn. S-3	Penfield, Pennsylvania
Kane, Raymond E.	0-1165519	Captain	Asst. Bn. S-3	Norristown, Penn.
Rich, Henry A., Jr.	0-416424	Captain	Bn. S-2	Salt Lake City, Utah
George, David W.	0-553773	2nd Lt.	Asst. Bn. S-2	Cleveland, Oklahoma
Sample, Ernest L.	0-380569	Captain	Bn. L. O.	Bryan, Texas
Jessup, William J.	0-415050	Captain	Bn. L. O.	Houston, Texas
Flaming, Richard S.	0-1173946	1st Lt.	Bn. L. O.	Philadelphia, Penn.
Blackwell, Leslie L.	0-1175947	1st Lt.	Unassigned	Buffalo, New York

HEADQUARTERS BATTERY

Amweg, Frederick F.	0-1175923	Captain	C. O.	West New York, N. J.
Boehm, Murrel D.	0-1179786	1st Lt.	Btry. Com. O.	Chicago, Illinois
Hendley, Johnny R.	0-2056285	1st Lt.	Liaison Pilot	Palastine, Texas
Sample, Ray T.	0-1184292	2nd Lt.	Liaison Pilot	St. Louis, Mo.

BATTERY "A"

Fielder, Jesse W.	0-452540	Captain	C. O.	Bartow, Florida
Memary, George N.	0-1167096	1st Lt.	Exec. O.	Brooklyn, New York
Collier, J. B.	0-1173193	1st Lt.	Arty. Obs.	Lakeland, Florida
Lieb, Bernard	0-1184254	2nd Lt.	Arty. Obs.	Newark, New Jersey
McFann, Russell E.	0-1052068	2nd Lt.	Arty. Obs.	El Monte, California
Bordner, Ralph B.	0-1180123	2nd Lt.	Arty. Obs.	Kutztown, Penn.

BATTERY "B"

O'Brien, Stephen J.	0-1170510	Captain	C. O.	Roxbury, Massachusetts
Gire, Kenneth P.	0-1176637	1st Lt.	Exec. O.	Pittsburg, Kansas
MacIvor, James R.	0-1176713	1st Lt.	Arty. Obs.	Hazel Park, Michigan
Luptak, Jerry D.	0-553281	2nd Lt.	Arty. Obs.	Lincoln Park, Michigan
Bontrager, Avan J.	0-529805	2nd Lt.	Arty. Obs.	Cherokee, Oklahoma

BATTERY "C"

Mauz, Kilian H.	0-413791	Captain	C. O.	Arvada, Colorado
Bright, William H.	0-1175953	1st Lt.	Exec. O.	West Roxbury, Mass.
Brown, Thomas S.	0-1180130	1st Lt.	Arty. Obs.	Konmoro, New York
Sloat, Ernest H.	0-1179619	2nd Lt.	Arty. Obs.	Caribou, Maine
Gold, William, II	0-541229	2nd Lt.	Arty. Obs.	Lincoln, Nebraska
Furyear, Harvey C.	0-1183950	2nd Lt.	Arty. Obs.	Durham, North Carolina

SERVICE BATTERY

Larsen, Kenneth C.	0-1166537	1st Lt.	C.O. & Bn. S-4	St. James, Minn.
Armitage, Samuel P.	0-1175924	1st Lt.	Munn. Officer	Lynn, Mass.
Hahn, Howard W.	0-1176650	1st Lt.	Bn. Motor O.	Dixon, Illinois

MEDICAL DETACHMENT

Cusson, Charles J.	0-1696811	Captain	Bn. Surgeon	Lyndonville, Vt.
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WARRANT OFFICERS

Palms, Lewis J.	W-2104334	W. O.	Personnel O.	Lockney, Texas
Watson, Billy	W-2131523	W.O. (jg)	Asst. Bn. S-4	Slaton, Texas

SECRET

S E C R E T

UNIT: 131st F. A. Bn.

FROM: 1 February 1945  
TO : 1 March 1945

DATE	TIME	MISSION	PLACE	AMOUNT EXPEN.	RESULTS
Feb 9	1030-1130	Registration	158-198	51	Satisfactory
	1630-1652	Adj Prep Fire	158-187	15	Satisfactory
	1717-1730	" " "	159-190	5	Satisfactory
	1732-1754	" " "	163-197	9	Satisfactory
Feb 11	1020-1030	Registration	168-198	7	Satisfactory
	1300-1315	" "	168-198	11	Satisfactory
Feb 12	0830-0850	Adj Prep Fire	141-194	8	Satisfactory
	0850-1130	Registration	158-198	37	Satisfactory
Feb 14	0905-0910	Registration	168-198	6	Satisfactory
	1335-1345	" "	168-198	12	Satisfactory
Feb 19	1115-1130	Registration	168-198	11	Satisfactory
	1125-1145	" "	168-198	14	Satisfactory
	1220-1230	" "	168-198	9	Satisfactory
	1155-1200	" "	168-198	7	Satisfactory
	1435-1440	Chk Det. Fire	175-179	12	Satisfactory
	1435-1450	Chk Det. Fire	185-176	4	Satisfactory
Feb 21	1050-1110	Registration	168-198	11	Satisfactory
Feb 23	0900-0930	Registration	168-198	10	Satisfactory
	1030-1045	" "	168-198	25	Satisfactory
	1240-1305	Registration	168-198	16	Satisfactory

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S E C R E T

~~SECRET~~

HEADQUARTERS 151ST FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION

AFPO #36, U. S. ARMY

9 April 1945

SUBJECT: Transmittal of Historical Records and History of Organization with Conclusions.

TO : Commanding General, 36th Infantry Division, APO #36, U. S. Army.

1. Transmitted herewith is the record of the 151st Field Artillery Battalion entitled "Operations in France and Germany, March, 1945".

2. The operations of this Battalion were both defensive and offensive during the month of March, and the Battalion witnessed combat in both fluid and static situations. The first of the month, the first and second of March, were devoted to training, and on the 3rd, the Battalion moved into the line and occupied positions in the vicinity of Harthausen, France. Supporting the 141st Infantry Regiment, the situation remained defensive until the morning of March 13th, when the 2nd Bn., 141st Infantry established a bridgehead across the Moder River in Hageneau. Up until this time, the month was uneventful and practically nothing new occurred. But from the 13th to the 31st, new conclusions were reached and many old ones emphasized. The main offensive was begun on the 15th and after some three days of slugging with the enemy, Hageneau was retaken, the forest was cleared and we were on our way to the Siegfried Line. It was the retaking of Hageneau, the clearing of the Hageneau Forest and the penetration of the Siegfried Line defenses that gave us our principal conclusions for the month.

3. Conclusions from the operations are as follows:

a. Light artillery can be used in towns and villages to prevent movement and force enemy troops into basements; but medium and heavy artillery must be used for destruction. Such was the case in the offensive action in Hageneau. Light artillery was accurately adjusted before being used for close-in support. Results were the destruction of defensive positions.

- 1 -  
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b. Medium and heavy artillery must be used in attacking strongly fortified positions, such as the Siegfried Line fortifications. To accurately adjust this fire on strong points, the Air OP should be used, if possible, for the adjustments. Prisoners of War stated that many casualties were sustained from accurately adjusted medium and heavy artillery fired on concrete pillboxes.

c. Most important of all conclusions reached is the fact that medium and heavy artillery must be made available to combat troops on short notice. Medium and heavy artillery that is delayed twenty or thirty minutes because of clearing through Higher Headquarters will hamper any operation when the operation is dependent upon such support. If possible the anticipation of such needs and the prior allocation of the necessary artillery, on call by the direct support artillery, lends speed and prompt execution of the operation.

d. Emphasis should again be placed on an old conclusion and that is, the rapid exploitation of any break in a defensive line will pay dividends. Such was the case with the 141st RCT for the enemy was pursued relentlessly after breaking through the Moder River line defenses and again after the penetration of the Siegfried Line. The above mentioned exploitations resulted in the RCT reaching the Rhine River in ten days and the accomplishment of another mission by the 141st Regimental Combat Team had been attained.

e. The end of the month found us preparing for the occupation of German territory west of the Rhine River which has been our goal for many months. The destruction of the German Army, the occupation of Germany and the lowering of the curtain on another episode in modern warfare becomes a reality.

*Luther E. Orrick*  
LUTHER E. ORRICK  
Major, Field Artillery  
Commanding

The three days from March 26th to March 28th were routine. Little of importance occurred. Our infantry were being relieved for French forces were to use this sector as a springboard for a move across the Rhine. Complete relief was effected on March 30th. Billeting parties had been sent forward to the vicinity of Landau, and on the last day of the month, the battalion moved to the town of Oberhofen. We were well into German territory and our mission had been accomplished. Instead of the usual relief from combat, the battalion was to be used as occupation troops. On the last day of the month, reconnaissance and billeting parties left for Kaiserslautern. Officially we were out of combat, with a prospect of a long relief. After 400 days of combat, with almost 200 of them spent in France and Germany since 15 August 1944, the battalion was settling down. Ever since our landing in Africa in April, 1942, we had been pointing for the day when we would be fighting on German territory. Two years had gone by; two years which had seen the invasion of Salerno and all the bloody combat of Italy etched upon our record; two years which had seen the invasion of Southern France and the famous battle of Montelimar fall our way. Our guns had played a huge part in bringing the war to Germany. We had paid a price, but we had attained all our objectives. Now, for a short while, the ball was to be given to other units to carry. Our job wasn't done, but a solid groundwork had been built, and on what we had accomplished, -- in Africa and Italy and France and Germany---other units could follow through to final victory. And when that day does come, the guns of the 131st Field Artillery Battalion will be thundering their message of death and disaster at the Germans and at all aggressors.

*Raymond E. Kane*  
RAYMOND E. KANE  
Captain, 131st F. A. Bn.  
HISTORIAN

DECORATIONS AND AWARDS

<u>NAME</u>	<u>RANK</u>	<u>A. S. N.</u>	<u>UNIT</u>	<u>AWARD</u>
Taylor, James E.	Lt. Col.	0-376731	Bn. Hq.	Bronze Star
Placke, Vincent H.	Private	35790778	Hq. Btry.	Bronze Star
Hunter, Willie J.	Pvt 1cl	20814022	Btry. "B"	Bronze Star
Owens, Oscar H.	Pvt 1cl	35481760	Btry. "B"	Bronze Star

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ROSTER OF OFFICERS

BATTALION HEADQUARTERS

Orrick, Luther E.	O-357391	Major	Bn. C. O.	Temple, Texas
Ayers, Ross	O-378526	Major	Bn. S-3	Waxahachie, Texas
Ramey, Robert M.	O-364093	Captain	Asst. S-3	Penfield, Penn.
Kane, Raymond E.	O-1165519	Captain	Bn. S-2	Norristown, Penn.
Bright, William H.	O-1175953	1st Lt.	Asst. S-2	West Roxbury, Mass.
Garfunkel, Sylvan A.	O-1166993	Captain	Bn. L. C.	Savannah, Ga.
Mauz, Kilian H.	O-413791	Captain	Bn. L. O.	Arvada, Colorado
Sample, Ernest L.	O-380569	Captain	Bn. L. C.	Bryan, Texas

HEADQUARTERS BATTERY

Anweg, Frederick F.	O-1175923	Captain	C. O.	West New York, N. J.
Boehm, Murrel D.	O-1179786	1st Lt.	Btry. Com. O.	Chicago, Illinois
Hendley, Johnny R.	O-2056285	1st Lt.	Liaison Pilot	Palestine, Texas
Higgins, Wallace T.	O-1173284	1st Lt.	Liaison Pilot	Houstonia, Mo.

BATTERY "A"

Fielder, Jesse W.	O-452540	Captain	C. O.	Oklahoma City, Okla.
Mamary, George N.	O-1167096	1st Lt.	Exec. O.	Brooklyn, N. Y.
Bordner, Ralph B.	O-1180130	1st Lt.	Arty. O.	Kutztown, Penn.
Carter, Charlie H.	O-1180842	2nd Lt.	Arty. O.	Sylacauga, Alabama

BATTERY "B"

O'Brien, Stephen J.	O-1170510	Captain	C. O.	Roxbury, Mass.
Gire, Kenneth P.	O-1176637	1st Lt.	Exec. O.	Pittsburg, Kansas
Collier, J. B.	O-1173193	1st Lt.	Ron. O.	Lakeland, Fla.
Fleming, Richard S.	O-1173946	1st Lt.	Arty. O.	Philadelphia, Penn.
MacIvor, James R.	O-1176713	2nd Lt.	Arty. O.	Hazel Park, Mich.

BATTERY "C"

Rich, Henry A., Jr.	O-416424	Captain	C. O.	Salt Lake City, Utah
Blackwell, Leslie L.	O-1175947	1st Lt.	Exec. O.	Buffalo, N. Y.
Brown, Thomas S.	O-1180130	1st Lt.	Arty. O.	Kenmore, N.Y.

SERVICE BATTERY

Snodgrass, Norman K.	O-405088	Captain	Bn. S-6 & C.O.	Lubbock, Texas
Armitage, Samuel P.	O-1175924	1st Lt.	Bn. Ammo. O.	Lynn, Mass.
Larsen, Kenith C.	O-1166537	1st Lt.	Btry. M.O.	St. James, Minn.
Hahn, Howard W.	O-1176650	1st Lt.	Bn. M.O.	Dixon, Ill.

MEDICAL DETACHMENT

Cusson, Charles J.	O-1696811	Captain	Bn. Surgeon	Lyndonville, Vt.
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WARRANT OFFICERS

Nelms, Lewis J.	W-2104334	C. W. O.	Pers. O.	Lockney, Texas
Watson, Billy	W-2131523	W.O.(jg)	Asst. S-4	Slaton, Texas

CONSOLIDATED BATTLE CASUALTY LIST

<u>TYPE OF CASUALTY</u>	<u>OFFICERS</u>	<u>ENLISTED MEN</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
KIA	1	0	1
DCW	0	0	0
LIA	0	0	0
SIA	0	0	0
DIA	0	0	0
IWA	1	6	7
SWA	0	4	4
MIA	0	0	0
POW	0	0	0

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UNIT BATTLE CASUALTY LIST

<u>NAME</u>	<u>RANK</u>	<u>A. S. N.</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>TYPE</u>	<u>RESIDENCE</u>
<u>HEADQUARTERS BATTERY</u>					
Windsor, John R.	Tec 5	34593752	12/12	L.W. Rt. leg & Rt. arm, L.W. lt. leg	North Carolina
Schuette, Edwin J.	Cpl.	37207985	12/17	L.W. Rt. calf	Kansas
<u>BATTERY "B"</u>					
Younger, August P.	3/Sgt	38009241	12/5	WIA Amputation lt foot, Sv, new, Traumatic	Colorado
Finnerty, John E.	Pfc	35060979	12/5	WIA M.W. Face and hands	Ohio
Windham, Alfred V.	Tec 4	20813497	12/5	WIA Amputation both feet, Sv.	Texas
Davies, David J.	Pfc	33071022	12/5	WIA FC Rt. Foot and FS Rt. thigh, Sv.	Pennsylvania
Sides, Ralph D.	Tec 5	20814041	12/8	WIA LW and pen W of Rt. hand	Tennessee
Barmann, Paul A.	2 Lt	0-1180802	12/13	KIA GSW in head	Indiana
Fleming, Richard S.	1 Lt	0-1173946	12/17	Pen W of Lt. side of neck -S-	Pennsylvania
<u>BATTERY "C"</u>					
Ranella, Anthony R.	Pvt	33608075	12/12	WIA Pun. W. Lt. upper thigh and Lt. chest-S-	Pennsylvania
<u>MEDICAL DETACHMENT</u>					
Baker, Jack E.	Tec 4	20813093	12/5	WIA Contusion of both legs	Texas
Dermis, Archie	Tec 5	32335520	12/5	WIA Amputation Lt. foot, new, Traumatic, FS Metasal Rt. Foot, Sv.	New York

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S E C R E T

~~SECRET~~

UNIT BATTLE CASUALTY LIST

<u>NAME</u>	<u>RANK</u>	<u>A.S.N.</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>TYPE</u>	<u>RESIDENCE</u>
<u>HEADQUARTERS BATTERY</u>					
Bruno, Anthony A.	Pfc	32357851	3/22	KIA	New Jersey
<u>BATTERY "A"</u>					
McFann, Russell E.	2 Lt	0-1052068	3/19	WIA, SFW Lt Leg Bl, Lac W Lt. thigh, Slight	California
Baldwin, Sidney A.	Tec 5	35652961	3/19	WIA, SFW Rt Arm Upper 1/3 Frac Compound, Severe	West Virginia
Boone, James O.	Pfc	34170597	3/19	WIA, SFW Lt. Knee Bl, and Contusions of knee, slight.	North Carolina

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~~SECRET~~

HEADQUARTERS 131ST FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION  
APO #36, U. S. ARMY

1 March 1945

ROSTER OF OFFICERS

BATTALION HEADQUARTERS

Orrick, Luther E.	0-357391	Major	Bn. C. O.	Temple, Texas
Ayers, Ross	0-378526	Major	Bn. Exec. O.	Waxahachie, Texas
Ramey, Robert M.	0-364093	Captain	Bn. S-3	Penfield, Pennsylvania
Kane, Raymond E.	0-1165519	Captain	Asst. Bn. S-3	Norristown, Penn.
Rich, Henry A., Jr.	0-416424	Captain	Bn. S-2	Salt Lake City, Utah
George, David W.	0-553773	2nd Lt.	Asst. Bn. S-2	Cleveland, Oklahoma
Sample, Ernest L.	0-380569	Captain	Bn. L. O.	Bryan, Texas
Jessup, William J.	0-415050	Captain	Bn. L. O.	Houston, Texas
Flaming, Richard S.	0-1175946	1st Lt.	Bn. L. O.	Philadelphia, Penn.
Blackwell, Leslie L.	0-1175947	1st Lt.	Unassigned	Buffalo, New York

HEADQUARTERS BATTERY

Amweg, Frederick F.	0-1175923	Captain	C. O.	West New York, N. J.
Boehm, Murrel D.	0-1179786	1st Lt.	Btry. Com. O.	Chicago, Illinois
Hendley, Johnny R.	0-2056285	1st Lt.	Liaison Pilot	Palestine, Texas
Sample, Ray T.	0-1184292	2nd Lt.	Liaison Pilot	St. Louis, Mo.

BATTERY "A"

Fielder, Jesse W.	0-452540	Captain	C. O.	Bartow, Florida
Mamary, George N.	0-1167096	1st Lt.	Exec. O.	Brooklyn, New York
Collier, J. B.	0-1173193	1st Lt.	Arty. Obs.	Lakeland, Florida
Lieb, Bernard	0-1184254	2nd Lt.	Arty. Obs.	Newark, New Jersey
McFann, Russell E.	0-1052068	2nd Lt.	Arty. Obs.	El Monte, California
Bordner, Ralph B.	0-1180123	2nd Lt.	Arty. Obs.	Kutztown, Penn.

BATTERY "B"

O'Brien, Stephen J.	0-1170510	Captain	C. O.	Roxbury, Massachusetts
Gire, Kenneth P.	0-1176637	1st Lt.	Exec. O.	Pittsburg, Kansas
MacIvor, James R.	0-1176713	1st Lt.	Arty. Obs.	Hazel Park, Michigan
Luptak, Jerry D.	0-553281	2nd Lt.	Arty. Obs.	Lincoln Park, Michigan
Bontrager, Avan J.	0-529805	2nd Lt.	Arty. Obs.	Cherokee, Oklahoma

BATTERY "C"

Mauz, Kilian H.	0-413791	Captain	C. O.	Arvada, Colorado
Bright, William H.	0-1175953	1st Lt.	Exec. O.	West Roxbury, Mass.
Brown, Thomas S.	0-1180130	1st Lt.	Arty. Obs.	Kenmore, New York
Sloat, Ernest H.	0-1179619	2nd Lt.	Arty. Obs.	Caribou, Maine
Gold, William, II	0-541229	2nd Lt.	Arty. Obs.	Lincoln, Nebraska
Puryear, Harvey C.	0-1183950	2nd Lt.	Arty. Obs.	Durham, North Carolina

SERVICE BATTERY

Larsen, Kenneth C.	0-1166537	1st Lt.	C.O. & Bn. S-4	St. James, Minn.
Armitago, Samuel P.	0-1175924	1st Lt.	Munn. Officer	Lynn, Mass.
Hahn, Howard W.	0-1176650	1st Lt.	Bn. Motor O.	Dixon, Illinois

MEDICAL DETACHMENT

Cusson, Charles J.	0-1696811	Captain	Bn. Surgeon	Lyndonville, Vt.
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WARRANT OFFICERS

Nelms, Lewis J.	W-2104334	C. W. O.	Personnel O.	Lockney, Texas
Watson, Billy	W-2131523	W.O. (jg)	Asst. Bn. S-4	Slaton, Texas

- 10 -  
SECRET

S E C R E T

UNIT: 131st F. A. Bn.

FROM: 1 February 1945  
TO : 1 March 1945

DATE	TIME	SUBJECT	PLACE	AMMO. EXPEN.	RESULTS
Feb 9	1030-1130	Registration	181-198	51	Satisfactory
	1630-1652	Adj Prep Firing	139-167	15	Satisfactory
	1717-1730	" " "	139-190	5	Satisfactory
	1732-1754	" " "	163-197	9	Satisfactory
Feb 11	1020-1030	Registration	168-198	7	Satisfactory
	1300-1315	" "	168-198	11	Satisfactory
Feb 13	0830-0850	Adj Prep Firing	141-194	8	Satisfactory
	0850-1130	Registration	138-198	37	Satisfactory
Feb 14	0905-0910	Registration	168-198	6	Satisfactory
	1335-1345	" "	168-198	12	Satisfactory
Feb 19	1115-1130	Registration	168-198	11	Satisfactory
	1125-1145	" "	168-198	14	Satisfactory
	1220-1230	" "	168-198	9	Satisfactory
	1155-1200	" "	168-198	7	Satisfactory
	1435-1440	Clk Det. Firing	175-175	12	Satisfactory
	1435-1450	Clk Det. Firing	185-175	4	Satisfactory
Feb 21	1030-1110	Registration	168-198	11	Satisfactory
Feb 23	0900-0930	Registration	168-198	10	Satisfactory
	1030-1045	" "	168-198	23	Satisfactory
	1240-1305	Registration	168-198	16	Satisfactory

-11-  
S E C R E T

~~SECRET~~

CONSOLIDATED BATTLE CASUALTY LIST

<u>TYPE OF CASUALTY</u>	<u>OFFICERS</u>	<u>ENLISTED MEN</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
KIA	0	1	1
DOW	0	0	0
LIA	0	0	0
BIA	0	0	0
DIA	0	0	0
LWA	1	2	3
SWA	0	0	0
MIA	0	0	0
POW	0	0	0

~~SECRET~~

AWARDS AND DECORATIONS

<u>NAME</u>	<u>RANK</u>	<u>A.S.N.</u>	<u>AWARD</u>	<u>RESIDENCE</u>	<u>UNIT</u>
Lieb, Bernard	2nd Lt.	0-1101254	Silver Star	New Jersey	Hq. Btry.
Bohlke, Eugene A.	1st Lt.	0-516555	Silver Star	Indiana	Hq.
Higgins, Wallace T.	1st Lt.	0-1173204	Air Medal (5th Cluster)	Missouri	Hq. Btry.
Lee, Monte R.	Tec 4	20113571	Air Medal (1st Cluster)	Texas	Hq. Btry.

SECRET

HEADQUARTERS 131ST FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION

APO #36, U. S. ARMY

*L-1045*

10 May 1945

SUBJECT: Transmittal of Historical Records and History of Organization with Conclusions.

TO : Commanding General, 36th Infantry Division, APO #36, U. S. Army.

1. Transmitted herewith is the record of the 131st Field Artillery Battalion entitled "Operations in Germany, for April, 1945.

2. The operations of the Battalion for the month of April were different in many respects from those of previous months. The first part of the month was directed to occupation of that part of Germany west of the Rhine River, which had been cleared of resistance by units of the Seventh Army. This part of our operations occupied a major portion of the month and many problems were met and dealt with. Realizing that the proper impression should be made on the conquered peoples of Germany, the task of occupation, without adequate preparation on our part was begun and continued in the best manner possible. During the last few days of April, the Battalion assumed the role of combat and we were on the final lap of a race to destroy the German Army. This trek was similar in many respects to the one north of Rome and the one through Southern France, with one exception and that was the great distances covered each day. The 141st Regimental Combat Team moved great distances daily, the Artillery going into positions several times each day, firing from some positions at a rapid rate for a short period of time and then march ordering and moving to another position.

3. Conclusions from this month's operations:

a. Transition from the role of combat to one of occupation of enemy territory presents many problems and, if possible, combat troops should be thoroughly oriented as to their mission and

CLASSIFICATION CHANGED TO:  
**CANCELLED**  
*and A Meyer*  
*Cal 1030*  
*20 May 1945*

the best possible ways of accomplishing the mission.

b. Allied Military Government officials were not definite in their instructions to us and the necessary printed material were not made available to us immediately. This caused some delays and retarded the establishment of Military Government in the occupied areas.

c. Because of the Non-Fraternization policy, which this Battalion has strived to follow to the letter, occupation was rendered much easier than had there been no such policy. And with the proper explanation of non-fraternization to combat troops and the reasons for non-fraternization the troops of this Battalion have responded in an affirmative manner almost 100%.

d. No significant conclusions were drawn from our operations for the last three days of the month, but the troops of the 131st Field Artillery Battalion, after a rest from combat duties for some twenty-seven days, showed a keen interest, a renewed desire to end the fight with Germany, performing their duties promptly and with the realization that the end was near, the end of the month found the Battalion inside Austria and on the way to final victory.

*Luther E. Orrick*  
LUTHER E. ORRICK  
Lt. Col., Field Artillery  
Commanding

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

April was a month different from any other the 131st Field Artillery Battalion had spent overseas. For twenty-seven days, the Battalion occupied sectors of Germany that had been cleared of enemy troops. Sectors that we had fought over and had helped clear. Faced with a completely new situation and starting from scratch, the Battalion entered into its tasks with a show of energy that belied its 407 days spent in combat. Despite the fact that some German territory had been occupied, it was found necessary to devise specific systems and methods to encompass the screening, patrolling and investigating of the populated centers in our sector. Covering a wide area, it was found necessary to place from one-third to one-half of the Battalion personnel on these tasks. Training schedules were instituted, but Military Government activities were given priority over all else. There had been little time to prepare for the sudden influx of tasks given the Battalion. Operating under Regimental control and working in close cooperation with the Allied Military Government personnel, the Battalion was commended for the manner in which it handled all functions.

On April 28th, the Battalion was recommitted to combat, relieving the 861st Field Artillery Battalion of the 63rd Division. It was the entry to a "rat race" that far surpassed anything the Battalion had ever witnessed. Rolling along the roads, against disorganized resistance, the heart of southern Germany lay exposed before us. Tremendous power faced the crumbling enemy forces, and their delaying actions were weak attempts to defer -- but not stop -- the avalanche of vengeance that was heading for the last redoubt of Nazism!

French Forces had completed their relief of our positions on the last day of March. March orders were received on April 2nd, and the Battalion moved out from Oberhofen, Germany to Glan-Munckenhausen, Germany. The sector which was to be screened contained almost twenty-eight villages and towns in a circle around Glan-Munckenhausen. As the convoy moved along the road, four prisoners were captured by Major Ross Ayers, O-378526, Battalion Executive Officer, Waxahachie, Texas. This was the fore-runner of what was to come at the end of the month; for when the Battalion was recommitted to combat, prisoners were so numerous, some difficulty was encountered in handling them. During the period of occupation, the Battalion remained under control of the 141st Infantry. Immediately upon arriving at Glan-Munckenhausen, conferences were held and a basic outline drawn up as to how the occupational activities were to be handled.

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Screening teams were organized from each Battery, and the towns under our control, divided up, so that they could be systematically checked, and re-checked if necessary. The problem of guarding the huge area was solved by creating check posts on each road at the outer perimeter of the sector, and having roving patrols roam through the entire area at odd hours. Numerous prisoners of war were uncovered by the screening of the population and many suspicious persons turned in to counter-intelligence corps cages for investigation. One humorous sidelight was having every person questioned deny vehemently that he had ever been connected with the Nazi Party. All wooded areas were searched. Some hilltop fortifications, complete in every detail, and covering the entire valley, were located by one searching team. The advance had been so rapid through this part of Germany, that the enemy had never been able to make use of them.

Screening was completed on April 7th, and quartering parties departed on a reconnaissance in the vicinity of Schifferstadt (46-88). On the next day, the Battalion moved to Schifferstadt, and immediately upon arrival went into occupation activities. The local Burgomaster of each town was used as the spokesman and all petitions from the population had to be presented through him. Training schedules were instituted on April 9th, but were subjugated to the needs of occupation. Schifferstadt had been previously screened, and our work was that much easier. In addition to the mission of occupying the area west of the Rhine, the 36th Infantry Division was to be responsible for the security of the Seventh Army Rear. This meant more guard duty for the Battalion. The Battalion S-3, Captain Raymond E. Kane, O-1165519, Norristown, Pennsylvania, drew up guard posts, check points and patrolling routes and the Battalion settled down to the routines of occupation. On the 11th of April, the 443rd A. A. Bn. was relieved from attachment to this Battalion, as was Cannon Company, 141st Infantry. Both units reverted back to control of their organizations. A huge enemy ammunition dump and a large refugee barracks were uncovered in the Battalion sector and placed under guard.

On April 17th, one firing battery departed for a training area in the vicinity of Ransen (20-04) to work in conjunction with the Infantry. Despite the tremendous amount of work occupation had thrust upon the Battalion, training was effective. Informal retreats were held and military discipline emphasized. Non-fraternization was stressed. At no time were any personnel guilty

of violating any regulations in regard to fraternization.

Reconnaissance and quartering parties departed for Gollheim, Germany (23-10) on April 21st. Elements of the 28th Division were to relieve us in the Schifferstadt sector. Numerous problems had arisen throughout the period of occupation, and while no standard method of dealing with unusual cases which came up was possible, at no time was the Battalion faced with anything which proved insurmountable. Complete relief by the 28th Division was effected on April 22nd, and early the next morning the Battalion displaced to Gollheim, Germany (23-10). The Battalion was notified that it would move to an assembly area in the vicinity of Wericksheim, preparatory to returning to combat. The battle of Germany was drawing towards its close, and just as we had been in on it at the beginning, so were we to be there when hostilities ceased.

On April 25th, the Battalion held a full field inspection, and was highly commended for the condition of equipment, records and personnel. At 0600 hours, 26 April, the Battalion left Gollheim on the long ride to the front. The Rhine River was left far behind as well over 200 miles of Germany was covered. Rendezvousing in Langenau (76-92), further orders were received to continue rolling until relief of the 63rd Division could be effected. The enemy was in full retreat and the "rat race" was on. Barely pausing for sleep, the Combat Team harassed the Germans, until as the month drew to a close, hordes of them passed through the Infantry prisoner of war cages.

Early the following morning, the Battalion displaced from Langenau to a rendezvous area at Steinkirch, Germany. The situation was so fluid, and communications so strung out, it was almost impossible to keep informed of all that went on. The Danube River was the next barrier to be crossed. That, too, was left far behind as we rolled over miles of German territory. On April 28th, the Battalion assembled in Unter Moltigen (285-560), and relieved the 861st Field Artillery Battalion, which was part of the 253rd Regimental Combat Team. The 141st Infantry, which we supported during the period spent in combat, had also completed relief of the 253rd Infantry, of the 63rd Division. As evening fell, the Battalion displaced once again to Hurlach, Germany (29-51). It was here that we saw our first concentration camp, and the living wrecks which had

received. But even as the vehicles lined up in convoy order, the move was cancelled.

A strange month, April. For twenty-five days, the Battalion had forgotten the tension of combat. Occupation had not been a rest, merely a change of duties. The days had been full. The last three days had found the Battalion actively engaging the enemy. His days had been numbered ever since the break-through of the Siegfried Line, and as we pushed through Bavaria towards Austria, everyone felt that it was just "manana" until unconditional surrender would appeal to the defeated legions of Hitler. The 131st Field Artillery Battalion had come a long ways since the 2nd of April 1943 when it had sailed for Africa. The stories of Africa, Italy, France and Germany were emblazoned on its insignia. One one thing remained --- final Victory!!

*Raymond E. Kane*  
RAYMOND E. KANE  
Captain, Field Artillery  
HISTORIAN

by our supporting artillery regiments. The Germans did not attack our installations and their activities could not be ascertained.

The 131st AAA Bn. was called upon to reinforce our lines on February 17th. All during this period the battalion was firing many missions against the activities of infantry patrols. Numerous enemy guns and tanks and personnel were taken under fire with our observers reporting excellent results. Ammunition was still limited to some degree, and while firing was steady, the ammunition was not expended recklessly. The following day passed without incident. On the 19th, a reconnaissance was made in the vicinity of Heideraltorf, relative to a new sector to be occupied by the Division. French forces were to relieve the 141st Regimental Combat Team of which we were a part, and preparations were to be made to move when they reported ready to occupy the sector. Many aircraft were observed over our installations on the 20th, and though the hostile planes did some strafing, it was not in our immediate area.

Rumors were batch that the battalion was to be relieved, and were given further weight when a report was received that the French forces had their artillery in position and were ready to cover the sector. Late that evening, notification was received that the 141st Infantry had been completely relieved by French forces.

A new reconnaissance was made on February 22nd for a training area, since the area assigned was found to be occupied. 2nd Lt. Harvey G. Puryear, Jr., Wallingboro, Vermont, North Carolina, reported for duty and was assigned to Battery "C" as Artillery Observer. Several reconnaissances were made during the day, and late that afternoon Vendenheim was selected as the best area. Billeting parties were dispatched to arrange for the billeting of the battalion when it moved there. February 24th found the battalion completely relieved and ready to move. Complete plans were drawn up for training and for calibration of the guns. By midday, the battalion was settled in its new positions and reorganization was started immediately.

And so passed another month of combat. It was an unusual month, for it had been very quiet. Of all the 375 days of combat which our battalion had endured, the 24 days in February had been the calmest and consequently the ones best liked.

*Raymond E Kane*

RAYMOND E. KANE  
CAPTAIN, 131st F. A. Bn.  
HISTORIAN

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HEADQUARTERS 151ST FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION

APO #36, U. S. ARMY

9 April 1945

SUBJECT: Transmittal of Historical Records and History of Organization with Conclusions.

TO : Commanding General, 36th Infantry Division, APO #36, U. S. Army.

1. Transmitted herewith is the record of the 151st Field Artillery Battalion entitled "Operations in France and Germany, March, 1945".

2. The operations of this Battalion were both defensive and offensive during the month of March, and the Battalion witnessed combat in both fluid and static situations. The first of the month, the first and second of March, were devoted to training, and on the 3rd, the Battalion moved into the line and occupied positions in the vicinity of Harthausen, France. Supporting the 141st Infantry Regiment, the situation remained defensive until the morning of March 13th, when the 2nd Bn., 141st Infantry established a bridgehead across the Moder River in Hageneau. Up until this time, the month was uneventful and practically nothing new occurred. But from the 13th to the 31st, new conclusions were reached and many old ones emphasized. The main offensive was begun on the 15th and after some three days of slugging with the enemy, Hageneau was retaken, the forest was cleared and we were on our way to the Siegfried Line. It was the retaking of Hageneau, the clearing of the Hageneau Forest and the penetration of the Siegfried Line defenses that gave us our principal conclusions for the month.

3. Conclusions from the operations are as follows:

a. Light artillery can be used in towns and villages to prevent movement and force enemy troops into basements; but medium and heavy artillery must be used for destruction. Such was the case in the offensive action in Hageneau. Light artillery was accurately adjusted before being used for close-in support. Results were the destruction of defensive positions.

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b. Medium and heavy artillery must be used in attacking strongly fortified positions, such as the Siegfried Line fortifications. To accurately adjust this fire on strong points, the Air OP should be used, if possible, for the adjustments. Prisoners of War stated that many casualties were sustained from accurately adjusted medium and heavy artillery fired on concrete pillboxes.

c. Most important of all conclusions reached is the fact that medium and heavy artillery must be made available to combat troops on short notice. Medium and heavy artillery that is delayed twenty or thirty minutes because of clearing through Higher Headquarters will hamper any operation when the operation is dependent upon such support. If possible the anticipation of such needs and the prior allocation of the necessary artillery, on call by the direct support artillery, lends speed and prompt execution of the operation.

d. Emphasis should again be placed on an old conclusion and that is, the rapid exploitation of any break in a defensive line will pay dividends. Such was the case with the 141st RCT for the enemy was pursued relentlessly after breaking through the Moder River line defense and again after the penetration of the Siegfried Line. The above mentioned exploitations resulted in the RCT reaching the Rhine River in ten days and the accomplishment of another mission by the 141st Regimental Combat Team had been attained.

e. The end of the month found us preparing for the occupation of German territory west of the Rhine River which has been our goal for many months. The destruction of the German Army, the occupation of Germany and the lowering of the curtain on another episode in modern warfare becomes a reality.

*Luther E. Orrick*  
LUTHER E. ORRICK

Major, Field Artillery  
Commanding

For five long months; months filled with intensive combat; we had chased the Germans. Up from the Riviera, through the Maritime Alps, on through the Rhone Valley and across the Vosges, our trucks had rolled. At each place, the hills had echoed and re-echoed with the sharp booming of our guns as thousands upon thousands of rounds were fired at "Jerry". Several times the Rhine had been within our grasp. More than once we had felt that it was ours for the taking. And now, just as spring was making its entrance, the entire front erupted. With a viciousness born of almost eighteen months of combat, we dealt the Germans blow after blow, until they were reeling and disorganized and in full flight. It was an orgy of the vandals; a "rat race"; the kind of race where the "boche" are the rats and your guns pipe the fatal tunes like the legendary Fied Piper. Racing along with the Infantry, barely getting into position and firing before another march order was received, we speeded across the last few miles of French territory. Up through Haguenau and the dense forest which borders it; across the Moder River which had been so fiercely contested; up past shattered Scultz and Oberhof, to Riedsoltz and Wissembourg. The enemy made a last ditch stand there and poured fire into us. But we were on a triumphant march and not all his guns, nor all his pillboxes and stable defenses could stop us. The first bulwarks of the Siegfried Line were within reach, and as our infantry poured through the "dragon's teeth", our guns snarled and barked and pounded at the huge, emplaced, concrete forts. Barrage after barrage was laid down to open the way for the doughfeet, and though "Jerry" replied viciously, he could only stall us for a moment. With a final girding of strength we parried his strokes and gave him the death blow. A blow that ended his rule west of the Rhine River. We marched into German territory, through the shattered villages which were only rubble; past the "dragon's teeth", huge spikes of concrete that stretched for miles; the outer circle of a tremendous line of fortifications. Huge pillboxes, beautifully camouflaged, built into the ground, covered every road, every field, every approach. These were the defenses that "couldn't be cracked"---yet we had cracked them. These were the vaunted defenses that the enemy had vaingloriously boasted of for ten long years, and which had awed other armies. These were the incredibly strong fortifications which did look impregnable. Yet, we had smashed through them! White flags fluttered over many a pillbox, and as we came to those towns which had escaped the full fury of our fires, the houses were flag bedecked. Bedecked with white flags, symbols of their unconditional surrender, and signifying their utter defeat.

As the month began, the battalion was alerted for recommitment to

the lines. March 1st and 2nd were spent in completing the refitting of the organization. Late in the afternoon of March 2nd, 2nd Lt. Richard E. Dougherty, 01165383, Evanston, Illinois reported for duty and was assigned to "A" Battery, and 2nd Lt. Edson I. Gaylord, 0548449, Rockford, Illinois, reported and was assigned to "B" Battery. On the morning of the 3rd, a reconnaissance party left to seek positions in the vicinity of Harthausen. At 1630, all installations were closed and the battalion moved out. The guns were layed and ready to fire by 1755. On the 4th of the month, four 90mm tank destroyers from the 636th T.D. Bn. were attached to this battalion, which along with Cannon Co., 141st Infantry, gave a total of twenty-two artillery pieces at our disposal.

Routine activities occupied the battalion from the 5th of March to the 9th. The infantry were patrolling and probing all through the Hagenaue area, and our guns fired covering fire. The attack was building up, and the enemy was sensitive to all our thrusts. Heavy artillery was put at our disposal, so that targets and missions called back by our forward observers could be taken under fire. The fire direction was a beehive of industry, the nerve center of the organization. On March 9th, 2nd Lt. Bernard Lieb, O-1184254, Newark, New Jersey, Battery "A" and Pvt 1st Frank C. Mieloch, 32768385, New Jersey, Battery "A", were presented with the Silver Star for gallantry in action, and Tec 4 Joe H. Chambers, 20313430, Texas, Battery "B" was awarded the Bronze Star. A brief review and ceremony was held at 36th Division Artillery. 1st Lt. Kenneth P. Gire, O1176637, Pittsburg, Kansas, Battery "B" Executive Officer reported that his wire truck had been fired upon by small arms fire, and that the tarpaulin had been pierced by the bullets. No one was injured, and the truck was not damaged in any way. Technically, we were still on French territory, but many of the customs and cultures were German.

March 10th found the battalion supporting the infantry and firing numerous missions. Enemy mortars, machine guns, strong points and personnel were taken under fire with good results reported. Two direct hits on a German ammunition dump sent a thick cloud of smoke rising to the skies, and heavy explosions were heard for miles. Ammunition was not being expended recklessly, but targets were so available that each round fired was at a specific point. The 141st Infantry was preparing for an attack, and plans covering the operation were relayed by the Battalion Commander, Major Luther E. Orrick, O357391, Temple, Texas. Just before midnight the battalion was alerted for enemy paratroopers. As had happened so many times in the past, nothing materialized.

On the 11th of March, the battalion began to experiment with the new Pozit fuse. Although this fuse had been used for some time, there

were still kinks to be ironed out. An observation post was selected in Hageneau, and arrangements made for a demonstration on the following day. Late in the afternoon of the 12th, the battalion commander and party reached the observation post. The demonstration proved highly successful. That night, information was received that the 499th AFA Bn. and 938th FA Bn. were to reinforce our fires during the pending operations.

All hell broke loose on March 13th, as the guns thundered and roared. The infantry were stepping off. Target after target was called in by our observers. Enemy personnel, tanks, machine guns, mortars and vehicles were taken under fire with devastating effect. As the tide of battle swung back and forth, the kreuts threw counter-attack after counter-attack at the doughfeet. Each in turn was smashed by the accurate and deadly artillery fire. A bridgehead was forced across the Moder River, and the Germans fought ferociously to erase it. It was primarily the tremendous artillery barrages which finally stopped them and made all their efforts unsuccessful. Over 1500 rounds were fired in support of the attacks, and as the evening drew to a close, reports were received that primary objectives had been taken and passed. For a long while the organization had occupied defensive positions. Now we were to go on the offensive once again, and the enemy was feeling the full weight of our wrath. Just before midnight the Germans threw one last counter-attack that met a stone wall. Tanks and armored vehicles were taken under fire and the enemy offensive completely disrupted.

Severe fighting continued on March 16th. As territory was ripped from the enemy, our observers moved up closer to bring continued effective fire on enemy targets. All day the battle continued with our infantry inching forward, and our guns blasting at the enemy. Late in the evening, Cannon Co., which was attached to us, reported one enlisted man killed and two wounded by a direct hit on one of their guns. Our medical personnel were immediately notified and the wounded men evacuated. On March 15th, the enemy made his last attempt to hold back our forces. Cannon Company reported enemy shellfire falling within their area, and were ordered by the Battalion Commander to reconnoiter for new positions. The situation was slowly opening up, and our offensive was picking up speed. On March 16th, the Battalion Commander reconnoitered for positions in the vicinity of Hageneau. Permission had been given to move at any time, and immediately upon the return of the reconnaissance party, a conference of battery commanders was held and instructions given. The battalion displaced by infiltration, with the 499th AFA Bn. covering the move. By midafternoon the entire organization was in position in Hageneau, ready to fire.

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The enemy was in full retreat. On the 17th, the battalion moved again to positions on the edge of Hageneau Forest. The infantry was attacking in a flanking movement to the left towards Mertzviller. Our positions north of Hageneau could not give effective support for the battle lines were moving so rapidly, and the situation was so fluid, the enemy was constantly running out of range of our howitzers.

March 18th found the battalion once again on the road. Early in the morning, the positions north of Hageneau were left far behind, and the organization moved to Scultz. It was just a stopover, for as evening fell, all installations displaced to Oberhof. Reconnaissance parties were roving far ahead of the battalion seeking adequate positions in the vicinity of Wissembourg. By 2200 hours all installations were in position in Oberhof, and our guns were sending round after round at enemy targets. "Kraut" resistance was stiffening and the deep-throated roar of artillery from both sides rumbled through the hills and valleys. This was to be the enemy's last stand on French territory, for just beyond Wissembourg, the borders of Germany stood ready and waiting for our invasion. It was on this day too, that two concentrations were fired for effect on German territory. The first rounds from our guns to land on the "sacred soil of the Fatherland"---but not the last.

The following day the battalion moved again; this time to positions in the vicinity of Riedseltz. Daily reconnaissances were being held, and parties were sent further forward to the vicinity of Neuhoef. Mission after mission was called in by our observers, and countless targets were shelled. Late in the evening a report was received that 2nd Lt. Russell E. McFann, 01052068, California, Tec 5 Sidney A. Baldwin, 35652961, West Virginia, and Pfc James C. Boone, 34170597, North Carolina, all of an "A" Battery forward observer party had been wounded in action and had been evacuated to rear medical installations. These were the first casualties the battalion had suffered in March. As we crept nearer and nearer to German territory, the enemy was putting up more and more resistance. But we were riding on a wave of victory and nothing could stop us. As the day drew to a close, the battalion was alerted to move on the morning of March 20th.

The 20th of March found the battalion rolling again to positions in the vicinity of Altendorf. This spot was under enemy fire, and in his desperation to stop our advance, the enemy used rockets and all types of artillery. The entire country-side shuddered as our guns answered with thunderous volleys. Again the battalion was alerted for a move. Early in the morning of the 21st the organization displaced to positions in the vicinity of Wissembourg. This was to be our last stopping point on French territory. Over 2000 rounds were fired at enemy targets during the 20th and 21st. Slowly the infantry was reaching and clearing the pillboxes which comprised the main defense of the Siegfried Line. Our artillery opened paths for them where the cross-fire of the enemy was neutralized. Artillery was playing a huge part in this breakthrough. As the enemy broke in panic and began a disorganized retreat, our guns picked off target after target. Everything that came within the scope of our observers was smashed and battered.

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Death was in the air, but it was death for the Wehrmacht. All during the 22nd, our guns continued to pound at pillboxes and stationary defenses. As the first layer of pillboxes were cleared, resistance lessened. The formidable fortifications were crumbling before our assaults. Late that night, Pvt 1st Anthony A. Bruno, 32357851, New Jersey, Hq. Btry. Liaison party operator was killed in action by shell fragments.

German territory rolled under the wheels of our vehicles on the 23rd as the battalion moved ahead to Steinweiler. The battalion was moving so rapidly and the front was so fluid, that infantry had barely passed through the area before we were rolling over it. Steinweiler had been cleared barely three hours before we reached it. It was in villages like this one that the white flags of surrender made their appearance. There was no forcing of unconditional surrender upon these people; they accepted it. General Eisenhower had stated the policy: "We come as conquerors, but not as aggressors", and that policy was to be followed.

Once again the battalion displaced. March 24th found the organization in position in the vicinity of Rulzheim. The Battalion Commander's party, composed of Major Luther E. Orrick, 0357391, Temple, Texas, 2nd Lt. Edson L. Gaylord, 0548449, Rockford, Ill., Tec 4 Nils W. Persons, 32397371, Brooklyn, N.Y. and Tec 5 William J. Wynn, 13099876, Pennsylvania, captured 21 enemy soldiers in this area, when they had reconnoitered it. All in all, the battalion was to take over 70 prisoners during the last few days of the month. These were the soldiers who had been overrun by the swift advance and who were astounded by the power of our army. 2nd Lt. Bernard Lieb, 01184254, Newark, N.J. was notified that he had been promoted to First Lieutenant, effective 16 March 1945. Our vehicles were carrying infantry as we rolled along from position to position. At times, the column would stop and the infantry would go forward to check the area we were to move into. Contact with the enemy was uncertain, but numerous groups had been left behind, and it was these groups, thousands of enemy soldiers, which were being cleaned out. Late in the afternoon, a report was received that this organization would be alerted to man a line running from Speyer to Gernersheim on the west bank of the Rhine.

The last hold of the Germans on territory west of the Rhine was slowly being broken. They had been forced into a pocket south of Speyer, and were being whittled in a smaller and smaller group. On March 25th, the battalion moved to positions in the vicinity of Heiligenstein. Two enemy soldiers were captured by the 443rd Anti-Aircraft Bn. which is attached to us. After interrogation by the Battalion Executive, Major Ross Ayers, 0378326, Waxahachie, Texas, they were turned over to the 141st Infantry Prisoner of War Inclosure.

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The three days from March 26th to March 28th were routine. Little of importance occurred. Our infantry were being relieved for French forces were to use this sector as a springboard for a move across the Rhine. Complete relief was effected on March 30th. Billeting parties had been sent forward to the vicinity of Landau, and on the last day of the month, the battalion moved to the town of Oberhofen. We were well into German territory and our mission had been accomplished. Instead of the usual relief from combat, the battalion was to be used as occupation troops. On the last day of the month, reconnaissance and billeting parties left for Kaiserslautern. Officially we were out of combat, with a prospect of a long relief. After 400 days of combat, with almost 200 of them spent in France and Germany since 15 August 1944, the battalion was settling down. Ever since our landing in Africa in April, 1942, we had been pointing for the day when we would be fighting on German territory. Two years had gone by; two years which had seen the invasion of Salerno and all the bloody combat of Italy etched upon our record; two years which had seen the invasion of Southern France and the famous battle of Montelimar fall our way. Our guns had played a huge part in bringing the war to Germany. We had paid a price, but we had attained all our objectives. Now, for a short while, the ball was to be given to other units to carry. Our job wasn't done, but a solid groundwork had been built, and on what we had accomplished, -- in Africa and Italy and France and Germany---other units could follow through to final victory. And when that day does come, the guns of the 131st Field Artillery Battalion will be thundering their message of death and disaster at the Germans and at all aggressors.

*Raymond E. Kane*  
RAYMOND E. KANE  
Captain, 131st F. A. Bn.  
HISTORIAN.

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UNIT BATTLE CASUALTY LIST

<u>NAME</u>	<u>RANK</u>	<u>A.S.N.</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>TYPE</u>	<u>RESIDENCE</u>
<u>HEADQUARTERS BATTERY</u>					
Bruno, Anthony A.	Pfc	32357851	3/22	KIA	New Jersey
<u>BATTERY "A"</u>					
McFann, Russell E.	2 Lt	0-1052068	3/19	WIA, SFW Lt Leg Sl, Lac W Lt. thigh, Slight	California
Baldwin, Sidney A.	Tec 5	35652961	3/19	WIA, SFW Rt Arm Upper 1/3 Frac Compound, Severe	West Virginia
Boone, James O.	Pfc	34170997	3/19	WIA, SFW Lt. Knee Sl, and Contusions of knee, slight.	North Carolina

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CONSOLIDATED BATTLE CASUALTY LIST

<u>TYPE OF CASUALTY</u>	<u>OFFICERS</u>	<u>ENLISTED MEN</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
KIA	0	1	1
DOW	0	0	0
LIA	0	0	0
SIA	0	0	0
DIA	0	0	0
LWA	1	2	3
SWA	0	0	0
MIA	0	0	0
POW	0	0	0

SECRET

## AWARDS FOR MARCH, 1945

**SECRET**

<u>NAME</u>	<u>RANK</u>	<u>ASN</u>	<u>AWARD</u>	<u>RESIDENCE</u>	<u>ORG.</u>
Carter, Charlie H.	2nd Lt.	O-1180842	Silver Star	Sylaoauga, Ala.	Btry. A
Finnerty, John E.	Cpl.	35060979	Silver Star	Cleveland, Ohio	Btry B
Hendley, Johnny R.	1st Lt	O-2056285	6 o.l.c. to Air Medal	Houston, Texas	Hq Btry
Lee, Monte R.	Tec. 4	20813571	2 o.l.c. to Air medal	Lubbock, Texas	Hq Btry
Gire, Kenneth P.	1st Lt.	O-1176637	Bronze Star	Pittsburg, Kan.	Btry B
Sides, Ralph D.	Tec. 5	20814041	Bronze Star	Memphis, Tenn.	Btry B
Spiering, David A.	Pfc	33204398	Bronze Star	Greensboro, Md.	Btry B
Windham, Alfred W.	Tec. 4	20813497	Bronze Star	Amarillo, Texas	Btry B
Younger, August P.	S/Sgt	38009241	Bronze Star	Brighton, Colo.	Btry B
Fowler, John G.	Pfc.	36204034	Div. Commend.	Shullsburg, Wisc.	Btry A

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HEADQUARTERS 131ST FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION  
APO #36, U.S. ARMY

**SECRET**

31 March 1946

ROSTER OF OFFICERS

BATTALION HEADQUARTERS

Orrick, Luther E. 0-357391  
Ayers, Ross 0-378626  
Ramey, Robert M. 0-364093  
Kane, Raymond E. 0-1165619  
Rich, Henry A. Jr. 0-416424  
Jessup, William J. 0-415050  
Sample, Ernest L. 0-360569  
Flaming, Richard S. 0-1173946  
Blackwell, Leslie L. 0-1175947

Major Bn. C.O.  
Major Bn. Exec. O.  
Captain Bn. S-3  
Captain Asst. Bn. S-3  
Captain Bn. S-2  
Captain Bn. I.O.  
Captain Bn. I.O.  
1st Lt. Bn. I.O.  
1st Lt. Unassigned

Temple, Texas  
Waxahachie, Texas  
Penfield, Pennsylvania  
Norristown, Pa.  
Salt Lake City, Utah  
Houston, Texas  
Bryan, Texas  
Philadelphia, Pa.  
Buffalo, New York

HEADQUARTERS BATTERY

Alweg, Frederick F. 0-1175923  
Boehm, Murrel D. 0-1179786  
Hendley, Johnny R. 0-2056204  
Higgins, Wallace T. 0-1173204  
Benjamin, Max B. 0-1102512  
Sample, Ray T. 0-1104292

Captain C.O.  
1st Lt Btry. Com. O.  
1st Lt Liaison Pilot  
1st Lt Liaison Pilot  
1st Lt Liaison Pilot  
2nd Lt. Liaison Pilot

West New York, New Jersey  
Chicago, Illinois  
Palestine, Texas  
Houston, Missouri  
Wichita, Kansas  
St. Louis, Missouri

BATTERY "A"

Fielder, Jesse W. 0-452540  
Mamry, George N. 0-1157096  
Collier, J. B. 0-1173193  
Bordner, Ralph B. 0-1180123  
Lieb, Bernard 0-1184254  
Dougherty, Richard E. 0-1185383

Captain C.O.  
1st Lt Exec. O.  
1st Lt Arty. Obs.  
1st Lt Arty. Obs.  
1st Lt Arty. Obs.  
2nd Lt Arty. Obs.

Bartow, Florida  
Brooklyn, N. Y.  
Lakeland, Florida  
Kutztown, Pa.  
Newark, New Jersey  
Evanston, Illinois

BATTERY "B"

O'Brien, Stephen J. 0-1170510  
Gire, Kenneth R. 0-1176637  
MacIvor, James R. 0-1176713  
Luptak, Jerry D. 0-553201  
Bontrager, Avan J. 0-529806  
Gylford, Edson I. 0-548449

Captain C.O.  
1st Lt Exec. O.  
1st Lt Arty. Obs.  
2nd Lt Arty. Obs.  
2nd Lt Arty. Obs.  
2nd Lt Arty. Obs.

Roxbury, Massachusetts  
Pittsburg, Kansas  
Hazel Park, Michigan  
Lincoln Park, Michigan  
Cherokee, Oklahoma  
Rockford, Illinois

BATTERY "C"

Mack, Kilian H. 0-413791  
Bright, William H. 0-1175953  
Puryear, Harvey C. Jr. 0-1183950  
Brown, Thomas S. 0-1180130  
Sicat, Ernest H. 0-1179619  
Gold, William H. 0-541229

Captain C.O.  
1st Lt Exec. O.  
2nd Lt Arty. Obs.  
1st Lt Arty. Obs.  
2nd Lt Arty. Obs.  
2nd Lt Arty. Obs.

Arvada, Colorado  
West Roxbury, Mass.  
Durham, North Carolina  
Kenmore, New York  
Caribou, Maine  
Lincoln, Nebraska

SERVICE BATTERY

Iarsen, Kenneth O. 0-1166537  
Hahn, Howard W. 0-1176650  
Armitage, Samuel P. 0-1175924

1st Lt C.O. & Bn. S-4  
1st Lt Bn. Motor O.  
1st Lt Bn. Mun. O.

St. James, Minn.  
Dixon, Illinois  
Lynn, Massachusetts

MEDICAL DETACHMENT

Cusson, Charles J. 0-1696811

Captain Bn. Surgeon

Lyndonville, Vt.

WARRANT OFFICERS

Nelms, Lewis J. W-2104334  
Watson, Billy W-2131523

C.W.O. Personnel O.  
F.O.jg Asst. Bn. S-4

Lockney, Texas  
Slaton, Texas

**SECRET**

HEADQUARTERS 131ST FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION

APO #36, U. S. ARMY

*1-1045*

10 May 1945

SUBJECT: Transmittal of Historical Records and History of Organization with Conclusions.

TO : Commanding General, 36th Infantry Division, APO #36, U. S. Army.

1. Transmitted herewith is the record of the 131st Field Artillery Battalion entitled "Operations in Germany, for April, 1945.

2. The operations of the Battalion for the month of April were different in many respects from those of previous months. The first part of the month was directed to occupation of that part of Germany west of the Rhine River, which had been cleared of resistance by units of the Seventh Army. This part of our operations occupied a major portion of the month and many problems were met and dealt with. Realizing that the proper impression should be made on the conquered peoples of Germany, the task of occupation, without adequate preparation on our part was begun and continued in the best manner possible. During the last few days of April, the Battalion assumed the role of combat and we were on the final lap of a race to destroy the German Army. This trek was similar in many respects to the one north of Rome and the one through Southern France, with one exception and that was the great distances covered each day. The 141st Regimental Combat Team moved great distances daily, the Artillery going into positions several times each day, firing from some positions at a rapid rate for a short period of time and then march ordering and moving to another position.

3. Conclusions from this month's operations:

a. Transition from the role of combat to one of occupation of enemy territory presents many problems and, if possible, combat troops should be thoroughly oriented as to their mission and

IDENTIFICATION CHANGED TO:

**CANCELLED**

APPROVED BY THE ADJUTANT GENERAL  
*Srd A Meyer* *Calder*  
20 May 46

the best possible ways of accomplishing the mission.

b. Allied Military Government officials were not definite in their instructions to us and the necessary printed material were not made available to us immediately. This caused some delays and retarded the establishment of Military Government in the occupied areas.

c. Because of the Non-Fraternization policy, which this Battalion has strived to follow to the letter, occupation was rendered much easier than had there been no such policy. And with the proper explanation of non-fraternization to combat troops and the reasons for non-fraternization the troops of this Battalion have responded in an affirmative manner almost 100%.

d. No significant conclusions were drawn from our operations for the last three days of the month, but the troops of the 131st Field Artillery Battalion, after a rest from combat duties for some twenty-seven days, showed a keen interest, a renewed desire to end the fight with Germany, performing their duties promptly and with the realization that the end was near, the end of the month found the Battalion inside Austria and on the way to final victory.

*Luther E. Orrick*  
LUTHER E. ORRICK  
Lt. Col., Field Artillery  
Commanding

April was a month different from any other the 131st Field Artillery Battalion had spent overseas. For twenty-seven days, the Battalion occupied sectors of Germany that had been cleared of enemy troops. Sectors that we had fought over and had helped clear. Faced with a completely new situation and starting from scratch, the Battalion entered into its tasks with a show of energy that belied its 407 days spent in combat. Despite the fact that some German territory had been occupied, it was found necessary to devise specific systems and methods to encompass the screening, patrolling and investigating of the populated centers in our sector. Covering a wide area, it was found necessary to place from one-third to one-half of the Battalion personnel on these tasks. Training schedules were instituted, but Military Government activities were given priority over all else. There had been little time to prepare for the sudden influx of tasks given the Battalion. Operating under Regimental control and working in close cooperation with the Allied Military Government personnel, the Battalion was commended for the manner in which it handled all functions.

On April 28th, the Battalion was recommitted to combat, relieving the 861st Field Artillery Battalion of the 63rd Division. It was the entry to a "rat race" that far surpassed anything the Battalion had ever witnessed. Rolling along the roads, against disorganized resistance, the heart of southern Germany lay exposed before us. Tremendous power faced the crumbling enemy forces, and their delaying actions were weak attempts to defer -- but not stop -- the avalanche of vengeance that was heading for the last redoubt of Nazism!

French Forces had completed their relief of our positions on the last day of March. March orders were received on April 2nd, and the Battalion moved out from Oberhofen, Germany to Glan-Munckenhausen, Germany. The sector which was to be screened contained almost twenty-eight villages and towns in a circle around Glan-Munckenhausen. As the convoy moved along the road, four prisoners were captured by Major Ross Ayers, O-378526, Battalion Executive Officer, Waxahachie, Texas. This was the fore-runner of what was to come at the end of the month; for when the Battalion was recommitted to combat, prisoners were so numerous, some difficulty was encountered in handling them. During the period of occupation, the Battalion remained under control of the 141st Infantry. Immediately upon arriving at Glan-Munckenhausen, conferences were held and a basic outline drawn up as to how the occupational activities were to be handled.

Screening teams were organized from each Battery, and the towns under our control, divided up, so that they could be systematically checked, and re-checked if necessary. The problem of guarding the huge area was solved by creating check posts on each road at the outer perimeter of the sector, and having roving patrols roam through the entire area at odd hours. Numerous prisoners of war were uncovered by the screening of the population and many suspicious persons turned in to counter-intelligence corps cages for investigation. One humorous sidelight was having every person questioned deny vehemently that he had ever been connected with the Nazi Party. All wooded areas were searched. Some hilltop fortifications, complete in every detail, and covering the entire valley, were located by one searching team. The advance had been so rapid through this part of Germany, that the enemy had never been able to make use of them.

Screening was completed on April 7th, and quartering parties departed on a reconnaissance in the vicinity of Schifferstadt (46-88). On the next day, the Battalion moved to Schifferstadt, and immediately upon arrival went into occupation activities. The local Burgemeister of each town was used as the spokesman and all petitions from the population had to be presented through him. Training schedules were instituted on April 9th, but were subjugated to the needs of occupation. Schifferstadt had been previously screened, and our work was that much easier. In addition to the mission of occupying the area west of the Rhine, the 36th Infantry Division was to be responsible for the security of the Seventh Army Rear. This meant more guard duty for the Battalion. The Battalion S-3, Captain Raymond E. Kane, O-1165519, Norristown, Pennsylvania, drew up guard posts, check points and patrolling routes and the Battalion settled down to the routines of occupation. On the 11th of April, the 443rd A. A. A. Bn. was relieved from attachment to this Battalion, as was Cannon Company, 141st Infantry. Both units reverted back to control of their organizations. A huge enemy ammunition dump and a large refugee barracks were uncovered in the Battalion sector and placed under guard.

On April 17th, one firing battery departed for a training area in the vicinity of Remsen (20-04) to work in conjunction with the Infantry. Despite the tremendous amount of work occupation had thrust upon the Battalion, training was effective. Informal retreats were held and military discipline emphasized. Non-fraternization was stressed. At no time were any personnel guilty

of violating any regulations in regard to fraternization.

Reconnaissance and quartering parties departed for Gollheim, Germany (23-10) on April 21st. Elements of the 28th Division were to relieve us in the Schifferstadt sector. Numerous problems had arisen throughout the period of occupation, and while no standard method of dealing with unusual cases which came up was possible, at no time was the Battalion faced with anything which proved insurmountable. Complete relief by the 28th Division was effected on April 22nd, and early the next morning the Battalion displaced to Gollheim, Germany (23-10). The Battalion was notified that it would move to an assembly area in the vicinity of Werichheim, preparatory to returning to combat. The battle of Germany was drawing towards its close, and just as we had been in on it at the beginning, so were we to be there when hostilities ceased.

On April 25th, the Battalion held a full field inspection, and was highly commended for the condition of equipment, records and personnel. At 0600 hours, 26 April, the Battalion left Gollheim on the long ride to the front. The Rhine River was left far behind as well over 200 miles of Germany was covered. Rendezvousing in Langenau (76-92), further orders were received to continue rolling until relief of the 63rd Division could be effected. The enemy was in full retreat and the "rat race" was on. Barely pausing for sleep, the Combat Team harassed the Germans, until as the month drew to a close, hordes of them passed through the Infantry prisoner of war cages.

Early the following morning, the Battalion displaced from Langenau to a rendezvous area at Steinkirch, Germany. The situation was so fluid, and communications so strung out, it was almost impossible to keep informed of all that went on. The Danube River was the next barrier to be crossed. That, too, was left far behind as we rolled over miles of German territory. On April 28th, the Battalion assembled in Unter Meltingen (285-560), and relieved the 861st Field Artillery Battalion, which was part of the 253rd Regimental Combat Team. The 141st Infantry, which we supported during the period spent in combat, had also completed relief of the 253rd Infantry, of the 63rd Division. As evening fell, the Battalion displaced once again to Harlach, Germany (29-51). It was here that we saw our first concentration camp, and the living wrecks which had

been freed. The brutality of the Nazis was in complete evidence. Burnt huts and burnt and blackened bodies; bundles of bones held together by a thin covering of skin showed us what type of people we were in contact with. The roads were thronged with crowds of released prisoners and labor groups which the Nazis had enslaved. Always there was the happy smile, and the half timid wave as we passed by. It almost seemed as though they weren't sure whether we were friendly; whether they were at last to be released from the horrors which the Nazis had subjected them to for so many years. In the small towns we bivouaced in, they filled the streets, happy in their release, and waiting with resignation to find out what was to become of them. They presented a problem, for in the tactical situation, we were not equipped to handle their inquiries or their needs. The stories they told were pitiful, and it seemed almost inconceivable that the average German could have lived so close to the concentration camps and not have known what went on there. In all the months we had fought the Germans, through the battles from Salerno to the Rhine, nothing had so aroused the hate of the Battalion as the sight of these human derelicts. They were living evidence of the bestiality and brutality of the Nazis and the German people.

At every stop, the guns had been layed, ready to fire, but the front was moving so rapidly that our guns hadn't barked once. Now as the month drew to a close, the infantry was meeting up with fanatical groups that attempted to bar their way. Road blocks were being met with, and our guns tossed their missiles of death and destruction at the last remnants of the enemy forces. April 29th found the Battalion planning to move again. Almost 300 miles had passed beneath the turning wheels of our vehicles since leaving the west bank of the Rhine. The mounting excitement of the race was evident in everyone, and the feel of victory was in the air. Fatigue and weariness were forgotten, for there was the certain knowledge that each mile brought us that much nearer to the complete defeat of the enemy.

Early on the last day of the month, the Battalion began to move. At 0010 hours, it was on the road moving in a south-easterly direction. Late in the afternoon, Seeshaupt (665-204) was reached and the guns immediately layed. An enemy road block was holding up the advance of the infantry. Our guns served a dual purpose. Not only was the road block completely destroyed, but the artillery fire brought the enemy soldiers streaming out of the hills to surrender. As evening fell, a new march order was

received. But even as the vehicles lined up in convoy order, the move was cancelled.

A strange month, April. For twenty-five days, the Battalion had forgotten the tension of combat. Occupation had not been a rest, merely a change of duties. The days had been full. The last three days had found the Battalion actively engaging the enemy. His days had been numbered ever since the break-through of the Siegfried Line, and as we pushed through Bavaria towards Austria, everyone felt that it was just "muhana" until unconditional surrender would appeal to the defeated legions of Hitler. The 131st Field Artillery Battalion had come a long ways since the 2nd of April 1943 when it had sailed for Africa. The stories of Africa, Italy, France and Germany were emblazoned on its insignia. One one thing remained --- final Victory!!

*Raymond E. Kane*  
RAYMOND E. KANE  
Captain, Field Artillery  
HISTORIAN

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

UNIT BATTLE CASUALTY LIST

NOIE

UNIT BATTLE CASUALTY LIST



AWARDS AND DECORATIONS FOR APRIL, 1945

<u>NAME</u>	<u>RANK</u>	<u>ASN</u>	<u>AWARD</u>	<u>RESIDENCE</u>	<u>ORG</u>
MacIvor, James R.	1st Lt	01176713	Silver Star	Hazel Park, Mich.	Btry. "B"
Ayers, Ross	Major	0370526	Bronze Star	Lubbock, Texas	Bn. Hq.
Cusson, Charles J.	Captain	01696811	Bronze Star	Lyndonville, Vt.	Med. Det.
Gambino, Benjamin J.	2nd Lt	01178004	Bronze Star	East Boston, Mass.	Btry. "A"
Benjamin, Max B.	1st Lt	01102512	Bronze Star	Wichita, Kansas	Hq. Btry.

HEADQUARTERS, 131ST FIELD ARTILLERY  
A.P.O. #36, U.S. Army

6 May 1945

ROSTER OF OFFICERS

BATTALION HEADQUARTERS

Orrick, Luther E.	0-357391	Major	Bn C.O.	Temple, Texas
Ayers, Ross	0-378526	Major	Bn Exec O	Waxahachie, Texas
Kane, Raymond E.	0-1165519	Captain	Asst Bn S-3	Norristown, Pa.
Rich, Henry A Jr.	0-416424	Captain	Bn S-2	Salt Lake City, Utah
Gaylord, Edson I.	0-548449	2nd Lt	Asst S-2 & Sur	Rockford, Ill.
Jessup, William J.	0-415050	Captain	Bn L.O.	Houston, Texas
Sample, Ernest L.	0-380569	Captain	Bn L.O.	Bryan, Texas
Blackwell, Leslie L.	0-1175947	1st Lt	Bn L.O.	Buffalo, N.Y.

HEADQUARTERS BATTERY

Amweg, Frederick F.	0-1175923	Captain	C. O.	W. New York, N.J.
Boehm, Murrel D.	0-1179786	1st Lt	Btry Com O	Chicago, Ill.
Stephens, Theodore J	0-1179746	1st Lt	Btry Mtr O	Chicago, Ill.
Hendley, Johnny R.	0-2055284	1st Lt	Mesison Pilot	Palestine, Texas
Higgins, Wallace T.	0-1175284	1st Lt	Mesison Pilot	Houstonia, Missouri
Benjamin, Max B.	0-1182512	1st Lt	Mesison Pilot	Wichita, Kansas
Sample, Ray T.	0-1184292	2nd Lt	Mesison Pilot	St Louis, Missouri

BATTERY "A"

Fielder, Jesse W.	0-452540	Captain	C. O.	Bartow, Florida
Memary, George N.	0-1160796	1st Lt	Exec O	Brooklyn, N.Y.
Bordner, Ralph B.	0-1180123	1st Lt	Arty Obs	Kutztown, Pa.
Collier, J.B.	0-1173193	1st Lt	Arty Obs	Lakeland, Florida
Lieb, Bernard	0-1184254	1st Lt	Arty Obs	Newark, N.J.
Dougherty, Richard E.	0-1165333	2nd Lt	Arty Obs	Evanston, Ill.

BATTERY "B"

O'Brien, Stephen J.	0-1170510	Captain	C.O.	Roxbury, Mass.
Gire, Kenneth P.	0-1176637	1st Lt	Exec O	Pittsburg, Kansas
Fleming, Richard S.	0-1173946	1st Lt	Arty Obs	Philadelphia, Pa.
Mac Ivor, James R.	0-1176713	1st Lt	Arty Obs	Hazel Park, Mich.
Blair, Bob E.	0-2011746	2nd Lt	Arty Obs	Plainview, Texas
Bontrager, Avan J.	0-529805	2nd Lt	Arty Obs	Cherokee, Oklahoma
Luptak, Jerry D.	0-553291	2nd Lt	Arty Obs	Lincoln Park, Mich.

BATTERY "C"

Mauz, Kilian H.	0-413791	Captain	C.O.	Arvada, Colorado
Bright, William H.	0-1175953	1st Lt	Exec O.	W. Roxbury, Mass.
Brown, Thomas S.	0-1180130	1st Lt	Arty Obs	Kemore, N.Y.
Gold, William II	0-541229	2nd Lt	Arty Obs	Lincoln, Nebraska
Puryear, Harvey O. Jr.	0-1183950	2nd Lt	Arty Obs	Durham, N.C.
Sloat, Ernest H.	0-1179619	2nd Lt	Arty Obs	Caribou, Maine

SERVICE BATTERY

Larsen, Kenith O.	0-1166537	1st Lt	C.O. & Bn S-4	St James, Minn.
Hahn, Howard W.	0-1176650	1st Lt	Bn Mtr O	Dixon, Ill.
Armitage, Samuel P.	0-1175924	1st Lt	Btry Mtr O	Lynn, Mass.

MEDICAL DETACHMENT

Gusson, Charles J.	0-1696811	Captain	Bn. Surgeon	Lyndonville, Vt.
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WARREN OFFICERS

Nelms, Lewis J.	W-2104334	C.W.O.	Personnel Off.	Plainview, Tex.
Watson, Billie	W-2131523	W.O.(jg)	Asst Bn S-4	Slaton, Texas.

HEADQUARTERS 36TH INFANTRY DIVISION

APO 364 U. S. ARMY

~~SECRET~~

AUTH: CG 36th Inf. Div

INITIAL: *[Handwritten initials]*

DATE: 20 JUN 1945

~~SECRET~~

*364-FA(131)-013*

OPERATIONS IN AUSTRIA AND GERMANY

11 MAY to 31 MAY, 1945

~~SECRET~~

*V-15*

HISTORICAL PROGRAM FILES  
HISTORICAL DIVISION  
HEADQUARTERS, U. S. FORCES, EUROPEAN THEATER

DECLASSIFIED  
tr. 5200.9, Sept. 27, 1958  
date: *[Handwritten]*

ANNEX 10

HEADQUARTERS 131ST FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION

~~SECRET~~ *L-1047*

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

From 10 May to 31 May, the Battalion was engaged in occupational duties. Immediately after the "cease fire" order and the official notification that the European war was ended were received, the duties of this organization multiplied rapidly. The primary objectives were the disarming of enemy troops, segregating and screening of captured troops, collecting of arms and ammunition, and guard and police duties to prevent looting, disorder or rioting. Situated in Austria, a huge part of the German Army Group "G" which had surrendered to the Seventh Army occupied towns and villages within our sector. In Brixen, where the three firing batteries were billeted, remnants of a SS Battalion were located. Occupation of our sector was completed on 10 May, guard details were set up, and all personnel billeted. Check posts were organized, and since our area contained numerous small villages and covered a large territory, two check posts were taken over by other units.

The German Commander of the area assumed responsibility for following the surrender terms. In Brixen the SS troops still strutted arrogantly. The civilians showed fear of them, and time and again when a civilian came to the Battalion Command Post, they mentioned that fear. A queer characteristic of the German people was their apparent eagerness to report their neighbors for violations of regulations. There seemed to be no sense of pride or fealty in these people. Stragglers and groups of enemy soldiers still passed along the roads heading for collection points. Numerous civilians requested passes for points as far distant as Munich. A surprising number of British subjects were found to be living in this part of Austria. Although they had remained in German territory voluntarily, they felt they should be treated differently from others. There was no discrimination, despite the different claims of nationality. Numerous stocks of arms and ammunitions, of all types, were collected. Lack of prepared plans and systems hindered our operations, with the problems of enemy soldiers and displaced persons being of the utmost importance. Apparently the problem was much greater than anticipated.

The speed of our drive had been so great, and the end of the war so sudden, the shift from full military procedures to screening and occupying caught everyone a little off balance.

Five boxcars of military photographic material were located on May 11th. After carefully inventorying, the contents of the cars were placed under guard to prevent looting. The following day, the operations instructions covering the pending move were received and elements of the 42nd Division relieved the Battalion guards. As the Battalion prepared to march order, the first group of men with point totals above the critical score, left for the United States. There were only 21 men in the group, but it was the start, and built up hope that we all would be seeing America soon after over twenty-five months overseas.

Westerndorf, Austria was left far behind at 1000 hours. Traveling all day over hilly country, Ottobeuren (917-300) in south central Germany was reached at 2100 hours. 186 miles were covered during the trip. Along the route, children of five and six, stood on the roadside, cheering and shouting "Heil Hitler" and holding their right arms in the stiff nazi salute. It mattered not that we were American troops. The doctrine of militarization had been so inbred in these youngsters, they automatically followed their enforced habits. As we passed out of the Tyrol, groups of men and women gathered at junctions and smiled and waved. The war had gone by too quickly for these people to have suffered. There was a deadly fear of Russia and France, and an all too evident relief that Americans were to do the occupying and not any of the other Allies. The hazy snow covered Alps were left far behind as we rode westwards.

Occupational duties were immediately assumed, and on the 14th of May, the Battalion relieved elements of the 451st AAA and 698th P.A. Bn. on various points in the new sector. The military problem was reduced in the area, for the great majority of enemy troops had been left far behind. Here in Ottobeuren, and the surrounding villages and towns, the displaced peoples --Russians,

Poles and Frenchmen--became the biggest problem needing solution. Training schedules were instituted on the 16th, and a small arms range located for the use of the Battalion. The schedule was so drawn that afternoons would be devoted to athletics. The day was spent in cleaning and care of equipment preparatory to an inspection to be held of organizational equipment on the following day. Captain Robert M. Ramey, O-364093, Penfield, Pa., Bn. S-3 returned to duty and was notified of his promotion to Major, effective the first day of the month. 2nd Lt. David W. George, O-553773, Cleveland, Oklahoma also returned to duty and was assigned to Battery "C" as Artillery Observer. Constant inspections were being held to bring all equipment up to standard, and to offset the laxity which combat had brought. As part of the athletic program, a swimming pool had been requisitioned, and after being drained and cleaned was put to use by the Battalion. Screening was started in the towns in the Battalion area. The entire organization displaced to more commodious billets on May 22nd. Requisitioning the large buildings in town, each unit was housed in its entirety.

The next five days were occupied with screening, guard and routine activities. On May 27th, the second group of men, eligible for discharge left for a separation center prior to returning to the United States. A huge percentage of men in the Battalion, almost all of them, those who had landed at Salerno and fought through every campaign, were eligible for discharge. Hope was held out to those men who had between eighty and eighty-four points, when an article was printed in the Stars and Stripes that an additional battle participation star would be awarded for the Southern Germany campaign. An excursion group left for Munich on an educational tour of that city. This was the first of many such trips planned.

On May 30th, the 2nd Battalion, 141st Infantry was awarded a Presidential Citation for their heroic stand and counter-attack in the Riquihr area in December, 1944. The Liaison and Forward Observer parties from this Battalion were also to be awarded the gold bordered blue ribbon for their work during that period. Captain Ernest L. Sample, O-380569, Sergeant James R. Graham, 38038629, P-5 Robert W. Thompson, 31040423, Pvt.

lcl George A. Michaelena, 32819615, and Pvt lcl Frank Haegele, 37312875, all of Headquarters Battery, the liaison section who had been present with the 2nd Battalion, and the forward observer party consisting of 1st Lt. Richard S. Fleming, O-1173946, Cpl. Frank M. Richards, 20813469, Cpl. Herbert W. Ramsey, 35407637, Pvt lcl John L. McDermott, 32334044, and Pvt. Samuel L. Huey, 20813454, all of "B" Battery, attended the ceremony for the award. It was an impressive review.

So ended May. The first ten days had been filled with dramatic hours: the last twenty, a gradual relaxing from the tension and excitement of combat. We still ducked when a plane buzzed low. It will be hard to break that habit. Even during the period of peace and quiet, there was the wonder of what the future held. The 131st Field Artillery Battalion had sent its last deadly round at the Germans. The accolades of the world rang loudly for the task we had helped accomplish. There was more to be done. But the solid days of combat -- 417 of them -- had brought a weariness that couldn't be denied. May, 1945 was an historic month: a month that saw the culmination of the efforts of the 131st Field Artillery Battalion on 9 September, 1943 at Salerno, Italy to 8 May 1945 at Westerndorf, Austria.

*Raymond E. Kane*  
RAYMOND E. KANE  
Captain, Field Artillery  
HISTORIAN



~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

HEADQUARTERS 131ST FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION

APO #36, U. S. ARMY

25 May 1945

**SUBJECT:** Transmittal of Historical Records and History of Organization with Conclusions.

**TO :** Commanding General, 36th Inf. Div., APO #36, U. S. Army.

1. Transmitted herewith is the record of the 131st Field Artillery Battalion entitled, Operations in Germany and Austria, for May, 1945. (May 1 to May 10 inclusive).

2. The operations of the Battalion for the first ten days of May differed in some respects from those in any previous period in that greater distances were covered, and the problems of released prisoners and the caging of German soldiers had to be dealt with. The Battalion did very little firing during this period, but strived night and day to be ready to deliver artillery support in case it was needed. Careful and continuous reconnaissance had to be made and the Battalion moved frequently. Here, we met the released prisoners of all nationalities who tended to rejoice and celebrate their liberation on the main roads and thoroughfares. Also, the long lines of German soldiers making their way back to the POW cages created a similar problem. But, to be a part of the force that brought Germany to her knees and caused the unconditional surrender was an unforgettable experience and one that brought delight to all soldiers that participated in the lowering of the final curtain on the German show.

3. Conclusions from the period's operations:

a. The 141st Infantry Regiment seemed to be the spearhead of the Division in the final phase of the war for the 36th Infantry Division, and many times due to the scattered pockets of resistance, the Regiment had to be divided up into Battalion combat teams. Often these Battalion teams were separated by considerable distances and artillery support became a problem. It is concluded that the Artillery Commander of the Direct Support Artillery for the Regimental Combat Team concerned in any such pursuit should allocate artillery to the Infantry Battalions because the Division Artillery is out of contact most of the time. In the final phase of this operation, the 141st Infantry Regiment had three artillery battalions for support, namely one light battalion and two medium battalions. The light battalion was kept with the most advanced Infantry Battalion because of speed, while the medium battalions were placed with the Infantry Battalions that were in more stable positions.

b. The above conclusion leads to a second and most important one. In pursuing a disorganized enemy force it was apparent that the enemy was trying to plan a delaying action. On several occasions by

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keeping the light artillery in very close support shock fire power proved invaluable in preventing such action. It was invaluable in that concentrated fire power prevented the enemy from establishing serious road blocks and defense lines of any recognizable depth.

c. Another point deserves mention and that is in very high mountains such as the Tirol Mountains, the cub plane was greatly handicapped. The relatively small valleys offered poor landing stripes, and clouds hovered over the peaks of the lofty mountains, making flying very difficult. Hence ground observers had to be on the hustle and when resistance was met, hasty establishment of ground observation posts was necessary.

d. Finally it is concluded that light artillery, used as direct support artillery has been an important factor in making the Regimental Combat Team the effective fighting force that it has proven to be in the European Theater of Operations. The 131st Field Artillery Battalion is proud to have been a part of the 141st Regimental Combat Team and we believe we have in a small way helped to end the fracas in Germany. We are proud of our accomplishments and we have very few regrets for we feel that we have been diligent, alert and conscientious about the winning of the war. The 131st Field Artillery Battalion stands ready and waiting for any mission that awaits us and we hope to be as successful in all future encounters as we were in the one just concluded.

*Luther E. Orrick*

LUTHER E. ORRICK  
Lt. Col., Field Artillery  
Commanding

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The race was over! The day for which we had fought for almost two years was at last here. The long, bloody road which had started at Salerno and wound its serpentine way through the mountains and valleys of Italy, past the rubble of Cassino and the red waters of the Rapido, past the battered, tired acres of Anzio and the littered hills of Velletri, past the pomp of Rome and the fertile valley which stretched up to the hills overlooking Pisa; up from the invasion shores of the Riviera, racing up the Rhone Valley driving for Lyons; the battle of Montelimar and the grim three days when the 141st Regimental Combat Team stemmed the 19th German Army and held them long enough to make their retreat a rout, held them even when they were hopelessly outnumbered, when ammunition was almost gone and all supplies were depleted, held them when the Germans had superiority in everything except courage and spirit; up past the cheering crowds of French, past the thriving cities and fruitful fields, in a drive which was only matched by the last ten days of the war when disorganization of the enemy forces had set in. The battles of Italy were behind us, the battles of France were history. The outer perimeter of the "sacred fatherland" was being shattered. After a short rest, the Battalion, which had landed the first artillery piece on European territory at Salerno, took up the chase once again. Across the Rhine our vehicles rolled. In one day the 131st Field Artillery Battalion traveled from the west bank of the Rhine River to a point just west of the Danube. Relentlessly we drove on. Bavaria unfolded before us, its gruesome concentration camps and slave labor stockades an incongruous antithesis to the beauty of the snow covered Alps. It was a drive that was to end with final victory!

Long lines of prisoners passed us as we rolled from Seeshaupt to Bad Tolz, the notorious Nazi vacation center, to Durabach, Osterhofen, Regau in Germany, and across the border through a hand hewn tunnel cut through the mountains to Neiderndorf, Austria. And there, on the 5th of May, the "cease fire" order came down to us. There, the race which had started years back at Camp Bowie, Texas and which had begun with a bloody baptism at Salerno, 9 September 1943, ended. The combat ended, but there was still much to be done. There was the excitement of victory which made for high morale and the sudden reaction two days later when the full realization that it was over fully sunk in. There was the blunt and mundane message from SHAEF "Effective 090001B May 1945 war in Europe is over including land, sea and air forces. All hostilities will cease immediately. Negotiations

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have been made and are being signed by Supreme Allied Headquarters and German High Command. Germans have signed unconditional surrender to all Allied forces, including Russia. Also there will be no movement of troops unless those occupied in occupational duties." Yes, an un stirring message for so momentous an occasion. The war was over! It was hard to believe at first. Difficult to comprehend and understand, for the German had been a tenacious foe; an enemy that was shrewd and arrogant and ruthless. His actions had built up a hate and that hate couldn't be dissolved because V-E Day had arrived. Actually, it was no surprise. The long lines of prisoners which filed into our cages, prisoners who were disarmed and sent back to collection points without guard showed us how quickly dissolution was happening. And as we "blitzkreiged" across Southern Germany and into Austria, we showed the German High command just how well their tactics could be used by our Armies.

The 141st Regimental Combat Team was spearheading the Divisional drive across Bavaria. Because of the rapidity of the situation, the 155th F. A. Bn. was in support of our fires. Although our firing was sporadic during the first five days of May, it seemed as though the fanatical elements of the SS troops were determined to fight for every cross roads. The Wehrmacht streamed in to our cages, and though the 131st Field Artillery Battalion was not a unit that ordinarily captured prisoners, so many of them were picked up that a sign mysteriously appeared on a door in the small town of Konigsdorf -- "131st F. A. Bn. POW cage" --. The list of targets taken under fire by our guns is repetitious: enemy road block, machine gun, personnel; enemy road block, machine gun, personnel. In the period from May 1st to May 5th, over 750 rounds were sent at enemy held points.

May 1st found the Battalion in Seeshaupt, Germany (665-204). The streets were thronged with released prisoners and slave workers. The war had come to Bavaria. Not with the destructive force which had brought ruin and desolation and death to Eastern France, but in an enveloping wave which swept through and touched only those places where the Germans chose to try to stem the tide. Early in the morning the Battalion march ordered. Beuerberg (75-21) Germany was reached at 1135. Stopping only long enough to eat dinner, the Battalion displaced late in the afternoon to Konigsdorf (803-200). Here a new problem was met. The displaced persons, -- released slave workers and people who had been caged in concentration camps -- were unruly in their new found freedom. The Military Government personnel were far behind us, and the problem was pressing. In an

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attempt to restore civil law, and to control the mobs, four civil policemen were appointed. Their only authority was to prevent looting and disorder, and was to be in effect only until Military Government officials could install the machinery of occupation. The 2nd of May found the Battalion moving again. This time, Bad Tolz (866-141) Germany was the location. The OP was set up in the former headquarters of the SS and Gestapo detachment and was complete with cells, loot and luxury apartments. It was a hospital city, filled with Germany's wounded and maimed. One of the incongruities of war was to see medical personnel meet on the street and salute each other with the Hitler salute. Even in defeat, their arrogance created dissension. That type of salute was forcibly discontinued, and their arrogance was matched by our contempt.

On May 3rd, a report was received that the Combat Team was to drive toward Berchtesgarden, Hitler's mountain stronghold. The southern redoubt where the Nazis had threatened to fight to the last man was crumbling under our assaults. The combat team was working as three separate task forces. The 155th F. A. Bn. was assigned to the 1st Bn., 141st Infantry, the 933rd F.A. which was also in support of our fires was assigned to the 3rd Bn., and our Battalion was assigned to the 2nd Bn. In this way, each battalion of infantry could have constant artillery support regardless of what type of obstacle was encountered. A march order was received late in the afternoon of the 3rd, and the Battalion moved to a rendezvous at Durabach (994-141). The bridge across the Lech River had been blown, and our advance was being held up until the engineers could construct a new one. Moving out from Durabach, just before midday on May 4th, the Battalion rendezvoused at Huasheim, and then as evening fell, displaced to Osterhofen (19-07). As the convoy reached Osterhofen, which nestled in a small valley between towering mountains, a platoon leader of the company of infantry we were carrying spotted enemy troops moving up the mountain side. Although they were about 4,000 yards away, he took them under fire with a sniper rifle. Major Ross Ayers, O-378526, Battalion Executive Officer, Waxahachie, Texas, immediately investigated the firing, and ordered two anti-aircraft vehicles into position in an open field where they could take the enemy troops under fire. One vehicle contained a 37mm piece, while the second had four synchronized .50 calibre machine guns. A withering fire was placed over the area where the enemy troops were climbing and within a matter of seconds, white flags were waved and the column began climbing down. Sixty-four SS troopers were captured, one of whom was wounded and carried down. Those who surrendered reported that others had been wounded and killed but had been left on the mountain.

The Battalion rolled through Regau (268-081) into Austria.

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on May 5th. As the guns went into position at Weiderndorf, Austria (35-05) enemy personnel and strong points were taken under fire. Slowly our guns built up to a crescendo of death, when with a suddenness that seemed impossible, the "cease fire" order was received. At 1939 hours, a radio message from General Hess, Division Artillery Commanding General, was received to cease all fire. Army Group "G" had surrendered to the Seventh Army effective 1200 hours 6 May 1945.

There was a perceptible relaxing of the tension we had been under on May 6th. The Battalion Executive Officer, Major Ross Ayers witnessed the firing of secret weapons which had arrived just as the war ended. On May 7th the Battalion received information we would displace further east in Austria to Brixen Tale, the following day. Ostensibly we were to go there to prevent looting and disorder, and to squelch any uprising. At 1620 on the 7th of May, the official telegram was received declaring the war in Europe to be ended. Late in the evening, the Battalion Commander, Major Luther E. Orrick, O-357391, Temple, Texas, was notified of his promotion to Lieutenant Colonel, effective 1 May 1945.

Moving to Brixen Tale, Austria (40-82) on May 8th, the town was found too small to billet the entire Battalion. The three firing batteries, "A", "B", and "C" were billeted in Brixen Tale, while the CP, Headquarters Battery and Service Battery were billeted in Westerndorf, Austria (373-798). German guards at dumps in the sector were relieved by our guards and guard posts set up to make certain enemy troops congregated in the collection points selected by higher headquarters.

The last two days, the 9th and 10th of May were occupied in the same fashion. Enemy soldiers and civilians were disarmed and weapons and ammunition collected. Military stores were placed under guard and protected from looting. The remnants of the German Army had to be rounded up and screened. Working in close cooperation with adjacent units, tasks were taken in hand. The month of occupation in the various areas west of the Rhine River had given the Battalion a groundwork and consequently the duties were not onerous. Austria was a beautiful country. The people cheered and waved, and reacted more like they had been liberated than conquered. All it represented to us though was a place where the war had ended, and where the Germany Armies had finally met defeat. Our pursuit of the enemy had found us traveling over hundreds of miles. From the training beaches in North Africa and the multitude of strange sights and customs we had battled the Germans through Italy, France, the

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Rhine provinces, Germany and Austria. The battle was ended in Europe. It had been a fight of endurance and strength and courage; a fight which we had won because we had belief in greater ideals. Victory was ours. The escutcheon of the 131st Field Artillery Battalion had never blazed brighter than at that historic moment on May 7th when the victory terms were announced. Great glories had been etched on our banners, and the names of battles we had fought through will ring through history. Our work, perhaps, was not ended, but the word "completed" had been written across the European phase of the conflict. The history of the 131st Field Artillery Battalion will long be remembered by every man who served so gallantry under the flying colors. It played the game with courage, sacrifice, bravery and with a full conception of deep devotion to duty, for 416 actual combat days.

*Raymond E. Kane*

RAYMOND E. KANE  
Captain, Field Artillery  
HISTORIAN

UNIT CASUALTY LIST

<u>NAME</u>	<u>RANK</u>	<u>A. S. N.</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>TYPE</u>	<u>RESIDENCE</u>
<u>BATTERY "C"</u>					
Sloat, Ernest L.	1st Lt	O-1179619	4 May	WIA Multiple SFW Rt & Lt Legs	Caribou, Maine

HEADQUARTERS, 131ST FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION

APO #36, U.S. ARMY

14 July 1945

SUBJECT: Transmittal of Historical Records and History of Organization with Conclusions.

TO : Commanding General, 36th Infantry Division, APO #36, U.S. Army.

1. Transmitted herewith is the records of the 131st Field Artillery Battalion entitled Operations in Germany for June 1945.

2. The operations of the battalion in June were similar in many respects to those of May 1945, that is May operations from the 11th to 31 inclusive. Occupation, rehabilitation, and policing were the principal functions of the battalion. Occupation in that villages and towns were screened for war criminals and their associates, German soldiers that have not been properly discharged, and Military Government installations, as well as military installations were made secure. Collection of military stores of food and equipment was continued and general police of the areas was carried out. Above all the will of the Allied Armies was imposed upon the Germans through occupation. The Germans were thoroughly impressed with the idea that the Nazi Regime was finished and the Allies were the conquerors. Rehabilitation in that the redeployment program was begun and soldiers with many months of combat credit were made ready for and transferred to Category IV units for movement to the states and ultimate separation from the Service. Also the American soldier was given the proper prospective regard, the victorious and the conquered. It is difficult for soldiers from democratic nations to understand the German way of life and this was emphasized throughout the month of June with all American soldiers.

3. Conclusions from the period's operations:

a. Experience thus far in an occupational role has proven that the overall plan for Allied Military Government of conquered Germany is sound and workable, but many administrators of the system are unwilling or incapable of adapting the plan to the local situation. Official administrators seem to have a clear picture of what is to be accomplished but how to accomplish the mission seems to baffle them. An exact system of handling displaced persons is lacking, a definite plan of imposing the will of the Allied Nations upon the Germans is lacking or maybe it should be said that the proper impression has not been made at all times and possibly a little favoritism has been shown certain individuals in various towns or villages.

b. It is definite that the Germans are ready and willing to admit defeat in all realms. They are receptive of the Allied will and can be given the proper prospective regarding their future and the destiny of their nation if the proper impression is made and they are dealt with on the spot and in a business like manner.

c. The redeployment program was begun in June and worked in a

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very efficient manner. Large groups of men and officers were transferred with lightning like speed. Old organizations were torn up and new ones formed in record time. Without a doubt officers and men with much combat service would have received the program much better and without the loss of much mental and physical energy if they had been more orientated as to their future in the army and military system. Generally officers and men have a deep feeling of responsibility and loyalty to their country and are willing to serve, but doubt and uncertainty are factors that should be removed in order to promote the highest degree of efficiency.

*Luther E. Orrick*  
LUTHER E. ORRICK  
Lt Col., F. A.  
Commanding

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For the first time in more than two years, the 131st Field Artillery Battalion spent a complete month away from war. Since landing in Africa, in April of 1943, the Battalion had either been in a constant state of alert for combat or had actually been engaged. June was a full month of "peace". However, not everyone had the opportunity to enjoy it with the Battalion, because the Army Redeployment Program was begun and shipments that ultimately transferred more than 50% of the enlisted and officer personnel got under way.

In a letter from 7th Army, dated 15 June, 1945, the 131st was officially notified that it had been placed in Category I (Occupational Duties) of the redeployment Categories. Although faced with many more moves, and with a terrific change of personnel, the balance of the men could look forward to duty in Germany for some time to come.

Hence the entire month of June was devoted to occupational duties, but the problems of occupation seemed to diminish as the Battalion became better acquainted with the routine. The primary objectives were the disarming of enemy soldiers, segregating and screening of surrendered troops, collecting of arms and ammunition, and security guards to prevent looting, disorder or rioting. Also the Battalion established check-posts on all main routes of travel to prevent the promiscuous travel of civilians. During the month many displaced persons were returned to their native land and pass restrictions were slackened in order to allow evacuees to return home, especially in cases where distances were not too great.

The Battalion occupied two areas during the month of June. The first being Ottobeuren, Germany, and its immediate vicinity. The first 13 days of the month were spent in and around the town and it was a very pleasant stay, because all of the Battalion was billeted in Ottobeuren in spacious public buildings or hotels. Recreational facilities were much more plentiful than in any other place the troops had been billeted. A swimming pool and theater were secured and arrangements were made for the troops to have ice-cream frequently. Retreat ceremonies were held in the town square and these Battalion formations seemed to impress the German civilians.

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A decided improvement was noticed in the military bearing and courtesy, and the uniform appearance of the Battalion. The procedure of having one Battery train, one screen villages in the sector, and two stand guard was continued. Training to polish up military courtesy and discipline was stressed, and an athletic schedule which affected almost every member of the Battalion was carried out. Routine occupational duties were continued without incident. Only once was the riot squad sent out to quell disorder, looting by D.P.'s, at Hewsungen, Germany, and this proved to be an easy task. All towns in our area were screened and all Germans who had been connected in an official way with the Nazi Party were sent to the C.I.C. for investigation.

On the 13th of June, the Battalion began its relief of the 100th ID in the second area we were to occupy during June. The move carried the Bn to the vicinity of Schwendi, Germany, where it remained for the balance of the month. In sharp contrast to combat days, two days were consumed in making this move of only about 20 miles. Gone was the hustle and disorder of a move in battle, and the guns were just a part of the equipment that had to be carried. The most important thing, now, was to get comfortable billets for the troops, and locate the units of the Bn. All of the towns in this area were small, and it was impossible to billet all of the troops in a single town. Each Btry was located in a separate town and each Btry Commander became a little governor in a little town. In keeping with the Division Artillery Commander's policy, the old man in each Btry had the best civilian house in each town for his and his officers' quarters. If possible, the big-wig Nazi leaders were displaced and his home taken for the Btry Commander, for it was usually the best in town. The largest public buildings and hotels were used as billets for the troops. Each town in which troops were billeted was screened in the usual manner. At this stage of the game, we were looking primarily for German soldiers who had not been properly discharged, SS Troopers, War Criminals, or people who were connected with War Criminals and their activities.

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The last 5 days of the month were exciting and anxious days for many members of the Bn, because the redeployment program began to materialize. On the 25th, the S1 of the Division gave the verbal order that all men and officers with 85 or more points would not leave the Bn area for any length of time. Hence men and officers alike began to speculate as to the future and its holdings. Officers with 85 or more points below the 85 mark were sad because of the thought of losing their buddies with whom they had served so long in so many different countries. Officers with 85 or more points, who had expressed a desire to remain in the service for the duration of the war, debated whether or not they had made a bad choice. Many those who were returning to the States began discussing civilian jobs, their families, investments, etc. Also those officers who put yes on their cards questioned their choice when various and sundry interpretations were given as to the exact meaning of the yes on W. D., A. G. C. Form 163-O. At least the majority of the yes men felt that they had not been properly orientated as to the army plan of redeployment for officers. Attached is a list of officers and men transferred during the month as well as a list of officers and men received from other units.

This the 131 F. A. Bn. carried on with the same slogan, "We Play The Game" and it was as appropriate in occupation and redeployment as in combat. More officers in the 131 F. A. remained with the division than any other artillery Bn. Those officers are loyal, devoted to duty, and with a keen sense of responsibility. The enlisted personnel, some 15%, that have been with the Bn. for many months will serve as the nucleus for an organization that will be as vigorous and proud as the old original 131 F. A. With many good men and officers from such outstanding divisions as the 63rd, 84th Inf. Divisions, and the 12th Armored Division, the future of this Bn promises to be as glorious as the past.

*Edson I. Gaybord*

EDSON I. GAYBORD  
1st. Lt., Field Artillery  
HISTORIAN

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HEADQUARTERS 36th INFANTRY DIVISION

APO #36, U. S. ARMY

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OPERATIONS IN GERMANY

JULY, 1945

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HISTORICAL PROGRAM FILES  
HISTORICAL DIVISION  
HEADQUARTERS, U. S. FORCES, EUROPEAN THEATER

ATTN: #10

HEADQUARTERS 1-1st FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION

Restricted Classification  
Excluded From  
Automatic Downgrading and  
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Headlines in the "Stars and Stripes" state proudly that redeployment is 50 days ahead of schedule. Infantry Divisions, along with elements of the Air and Service Forces are on their way home or are going directly to the Pacific Theatre. How does all this affect the 131st Field Artillery Battalion, which is slated for occupational duty? It means a number of things; first, the Battalion, in the month of July, underwent a change-over of personnel unequalled in the history of the Battalion; secondly, it means that the Battalion is continually taking over more and more territory and occupational duties; thirdly, it means the loss of old and dear friends. All men and officers with 85 points or more, and who had expressed the desire to be separated from the Army, left the Battalion in July. No attempt will be made in this month's history to describe the loss or gain of each separate officer and man. However, a list will be attached naming those men and officers who were transferred from and reported to the 131st.

At the end of the month, the Battalion Commander and two Battery Commanders, Capt. Larsen of Service Battery and Capt. Fielder of "A" Battery were the only remaining commanders who had seen action with the 131st. For the most part, our officers and men were transferred to the 63rd Infantry Division, and a roster of the 651st Field Artillery Battalion of that Division shows that four of its Commanding Officers are from this Battalion and the other two, from the 50th Division Artillery. The majority of the enlisted men also were transferred to the 63rd Division with the 12th Armored Division getting second choice. Some men in the Battalion with low points were transferred to units going to the Pacific.

It was the Division Artillery Commander's policy to spread the remaining officers of the 131st out to the other Battalions in Division Artillery. He felt that the 22 officers who remained in the 131st would do the Division Artillery more good if they were transferred to other Battalions who had fewer officers remaining from the old Division. Consequently, we lost practically every officer who was with the Battalion at the end of the war. It is impossible to record in a narrative form the disposition of all these officers and men. There is one officer, however, whose departure must be noted in this Battalion's history.

Major Ross Ayers, in keeping with General Hess' policy was transferred to the 155th Field Artillery Battalion on the fifth of the month. Shortly afterwards, he left to take up the Division Artillery S-2 job in the 1st Armored Division. Major Ayers had been with the Battalion since National Guard days before its mobilization to active duty. He served as a Junior Officer and Battery Commander in training and entered combat at Salerno as the Battalion Assistant S-3. In Italy, he took over the job of S-3 which he held until he was made Executive Officer in January 1945. His high regard for the Battalion and the men and officers in it, his complete knowledge of Field Artillery, and his great devotion to duty will always make him stand out in this Battalion's History as one of its greatest officers. It is hard to pick out one thing that Major Ayers did for the Division which stands out from all the rest. If it had to be done, it would probably be his work for the landing in Southern France. At this time he worked in conjunction with the Navy and was responsible for leading one combat team for the landing. The smoothness with which this landing and its subsequent operations were carried out is a direct reflection on the Major's ability to take over any task. Many other officers who have given long and faithful service to the Battalion and have now gone, will be missed greatly, but with Major Ayer's departure, we have lost one of the personalities who was characteristic of the Battalion.

Major Allan R. Greene has taken Major Ayer's place as Executive Officer. He came to us from the 100th Infantry Division. We welcome him to the organization and pledge him the same cooperation that was shown Major Ayers.

The first of the month found the Battalion in Ober-Balzheim where we had been for half of June. Here we had no guard duty. We screened one town a day and continued as much training as possible with the personnel available. On the 6th of July, we sent an advance detail of 65 men to Schwabisch Gmund to relieve the guards of the 100th Division Artillery. The following day, the remainder of the Battalion moved from the Ober-Balzheim - Wain area to the Gmund area. Originally, we had seven posts of 65 men,

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which required the duties of all available men in our reduced strength Battalion. In the 11th of July we were relieved of all our town posts by the 133rd and 135th Field Artillery Battalions and only a 40 man guard on the Displaced Persons Camp near Gmund remained. On the 12th of July, we started a week during which one Battery was alerted daily to be prepared to move out on one hour's notice to quell any uprising. This was not necessary, however.

It is obvious that during July, a great majority of the Battalion was engaged in guard duty, but all possible effort was put forward to bring entertainment and relaxation to those not on duty. Since there are many other troops in the Gmund area, including the corps headquarters, there were many movies and USO shows for the men to attend. Outstanding among this entertainment was the appearance of such stars as Jack Benny, Ingrid Bergman, and Matinee Girl, in Gmund. It wasn't until after the 20th of July, however, before enough men were on hand to carry on any sort of athletic program. At the end of the month each Battery had a softball team playing regularly, and a Battalion softball team had taken shape and was ready for any comers. The officers' team played three games, losing two, but showed promise for future victories. The men were billeted in either civilian homes or public buildings and the greatest effort was put forward by the Battery Commanders to make their living conditions as comfortable as possible.

On the 21st of July, just as the Battalion began to get some men available for training, operation "Tally-ho" was begun. This operation consisted in effect, of searching and screening every German adult over 16 years old in our area; of searching their homes; and of conducting show-down inspections for all of the troops in our area. Only 48 hours were allowed for this operation, and consequently, the Battalion worked from 0430 until 2130 for two days. The purpose of the operation was manifold. It was hoped that all firearms, all radio transmitters and all explosives which had thus far been overlooked, would be picked up. All German soldiers, without discharge, were to be turned in and any and all war criminals in the area

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to be apprehended. In addition to these tasks, the operation was designed to inform ALL soldiers and to detect any indication of black market activities.

The Battalion was divided up into teams led by the Battery Companies, Lt. Lantry, Lt. Major Greene, and they were each assigned a different sector in which to operate. They attempted to carry out the proposed program to the letter, but the lack of time made this impossible. For example, in Camp, itself, it was impossible for two Battalions (the 12th was assigned half of the town) to screen every adult in the time allowed. The psychological effect will perhaps be the most important consequence of this operation. The German people were surprised by the operation and the full meaning of General Eisenhower's proclamation that, "We come as conquerors, not oppressors" was brought home to them. Those among them who are looking forward to the third World War must despair their opportunity if such an occupation is continued. A significant fact of this operation is that it was carried out by only those units slated for occupation duties without a great deal of help from units in other categories. Therefore such an operation can be carried out to still by the occupation forces when other units have been redeployed. An S-2 report of operation "Tally-ho" is attached to this month's history.

In the month of July, there were absolutely no acts of espionage or any indication of the existence of clandestine organizations among the German people. There was, however, increased activity with respect to disorderly conduct and looting by the displaced persons. Although operation "Tally-ho" screened the displaced persons carefully, some guns and knives appeared when soldiers arrived to quell riots. Friction between the German people and the DPs increased and reached a head when three Germans were beaten and knifed one night and were all but dead when found the next morning. Many cases of looting were reported, and on the 29th of July, "B" Battery had to fall out its entire Battery to rout out the looters in their town. Increased effort was directed toward establishing a good guard over the camps and toward preventing further disorderly conduct.

As our leave ended on the 31st of July, three things stood out in my mind; the rapid and large turnover of personnel, the operations known as jolly-ho, and the disorders caused by the displaced persons in this area. A great deal was learned about routine occupational duties, and the Battalion began to get back to garrison soldiering. We lost a great number of men and officers who have served this Battalion well for many months, even years, for some. It was hard to see them go, but close behind their departure we acquired very able replacements from other divisions in the 7th Army. The Battalion is not yet up to strength by quite a margin, but there are continued rumors of men on the way. A few more months like July and the 131st should prove to be veteran occupational troops.

*Edson T. Gaylord*

EDSON T. GAYLORD

1st Lieutenant, Field Artillery  
HISTORICAL



On August 15, 1945, one year to the day since the 131st Field Artillery stormed across the San Raphael beaches into France, peace once more came to the world. The Japanese, after having their staying power severely taxed by the whole Russian army and a couple of atom bombs, decided to accept the news along with the rest of the world. That which the Battalion had trained and fought for since its activation on November 25, 1940 had finally been achieved.

The end came quicker than anyone thought possible. At the start of the month, it is doubtful if there was one man in our understrength Battalion who conceded the Allies a chance of finishing the Japs before Christmas. In fact, there was little said about it. Everyone was trying to decide what was to happen to himself, individually, in the redeployment. Most of our friends with high points had gone home and some with low points had gone on to the Pacific Theatre. Such questions as, "Will I fight again? What sort of an occupation duty will I have if I stay here?", were foremost in the minds of the men.

Our Battalion strength was 335 at the beginning of August. Our orders were to train, carry on occupation duties, and work towards a larger and better I & E program. With the number of men we had, the three were incompatible. The men were confused as to their primary duty; they were discouraged over the amount of guard duty; and they saw little chance to get home within a year.

On the 5th of August, replacements began reporting to the Battalion. They were indeed welcome, for it relieved our guard duties, and the S-3 section saw a chance to carry out the division's policies. A grand total of 132 men had reported by the time the month was half over. As the new men came in, they were, of course, very uncertain as to their status. They too, were discouraged about the future and confused about the present. That 30 day furlough in the States that men going to the Pacific were almost certain of getting, loomed large in the

minds of some - large enough to make them forget about the fighting that would follow. Therefore a number of men began discussing ways that they could get out of the 36th into a division that was not to occupy.

The attitude and morale of the men was not all that could be desired, and the officers could do little about it. They were being transferred so fast themselves that a definite program was hard to establish. A clear cut picture of any primary duty was lacking. One big question in everyone's mind was the exact permanent area that the division was to occupy. This question was overshadowed, however, by each individual's question of how long he would remain in occupation duty.

Then the picture began to change. The Russians following agreements made at Potsdam declared war on the Japanese and made large scale attacks in Northern Manchuria. The U. S. superforts dropped two atomic bombs on Nagasaki and Hiroshima, and the reports of their effect were unbelievable. The Japanese almost immediately opened negotiations for surrender. After a tense period of waiting, on August 15th, the official word was received that the surrender had been settled. The war was over; redeployment to the Pacific was cut; the discharge scheme was certain to change daily; and everyone except the very low point men looked forward to wearing civilian suits before another year was past. Everyone knew what occupation would require, and they believed in the necessity of occupation, but they also hoped that men who had not fought would be the ones to put in time in Germany and Japan.

Immediately rumors of more men leaving for home spread through the Battalion. The remainder of the month was spent in wild speculation as to each individual's chances for returning home. We lost two more groups of men with high points and one large group of officers, the names and disposition of these enlisted men and officers appear in the annex to this history. As the month drew to a close, Personnel assures us that we shall lose as many in September as we gained in August.

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If the history of the 131st Field Artillery Battalion were compared to a horse race, the records for September would be labeled "The Last Lap". The first of the month found the Battalion with an enlisted strength of four hundred twelve (412), twenty (20) Officers and two (2) Warrant Officers assigned.

The first fifteen days of September were days of promise. The caliber of the training improved, the I and E program was intensified, and the security mission of the Battalion was accomplished without mishap. The mission of the Battalion had been increased slightly in that a survey was to be made of all German Army and Air Force facilities and installations in the United States Zone of Occupation. This was accomplished in the 131st assigned area without difficulty, and air-raid shelters, gun pits, etc. were ready for destruction at the close of the month. The training for this period was sparked by small arms firing, talks on military justice, and close order drill in mass formations. Also, maintenance of materiel was stressed. Instruction in several courses was successfully being carried out and much enthusiasm and interest was demonstrated in the classroom work as well as in the daily orientation lectures. In spite of the rumors, the men and officers were convinced that occupation was the role for the time being at least, and were prepared to carry out a constructive program. The Division Review commemorating Salerno Day, 9 September 1943, was successful in that the men and officers of the Battalion were happy to be a part of such a celebration, and the day was well planned for the enjoyment and entertainment of the troops.

During the first half of September, the Battalion reinforced its recreational program by the addition of two clubs in Gmund. Formerly these clubs were operated by the 132nd Field Artillery Battalion, but were taken over by the 131st Field Artillery Battalion when the other battalion was moved out of town on the 10th of September. One of these clubs was designated the "Battalion Officers Club", the other, "The Ruby 105 Club" for enlisted personnel. These clubs were very unofficial and were operated very successfully for a period of one week. The clubs were officially opened on the 14th of September, and were closed on the 21st of September due to the shortage of personnel. The Battalion also had a very good athletic program in the making, which included basketball, touch-football and ping-pong, but all were completely disrupted by the wholesale transfer of personnel, which was effected on the 15th of September.

On the 15th of September the Battalion was notified that the Division had been placed in Category IV and was slated to go home for deactivation sometime in the near future. Thus began the transfer of large numbers of officers and enlisted men to such units as the 65th Armored Field Artillery Battalion, 551st Field Artillery Battalion, 1st Armored Division, 3rd Infantry Division, and the Delta Base Section.

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Rumors have it that the 36th is going home. The only thing "official" on it came from "The Stars and Stripes", which states that the War Department is doing everything to get the National Guard units back to their original states. It said however, that the personnel now in the National Guard Divisions would not be affected. Did this mean that the name of the 36th alone was to be sent home? As the month ended, nothing is certain except that World War II is over and eventually everyone will go home.

On the day that the surrender of the Jap forces was being fixed in Washington and Guam, a celebration was being held on The Riviera to commemorate the 36th Division's landing there. Lt. Col. Orrick and two picked men from each Battery represented the 131 at the green beach ceremony. They reported it to be a complete success and a grand tribute to those men who lost their lives with the division. A bronze plaque was unveiled as a permanent tribute to the Division from the French people, and plans for a much more elaborate structure for the same purpose were revealed.

The ceremony consisted simply of the playing of the National Anthem of U. S., France, England, and Russia, while American, British, and French Army and Navy troops stood at attention. Short speeches by the dignitaries present and the unveiling of the plaque completed the ceremony.

The 131st Field Artillery Battalion is proud to have been part of the expertly conducted assault at San Raphael. It will always be a highlight in the history of this Battalion. The pride we felt as the Battalion was cited and the general rejoicing of August 15, 1945 was not so great, however, as to overshadowing the feelings we have for men in this Battalion who lost their lives in World War II. It is with great relief that we realize the war is over and no more 131 men will pay the supreme sacrifice by enemy action. We shall not forget those who did. We are fully cognizant of our debt to them in continuing the fight to keep America free from aggressors.

The history of the 131st Field Artillery Battalion for the month of October might well be divided into three phases. The three main accomplishments of the Battalion were, (1) Reception of high point personnel from other units, (2) Continuation of security mission, and (3) Preparation for the movement home. Though each phase is discussed separately here, they were, of necessity, carried on simultaneously, within the battalion.

The history for September 1945 reveals how the low point men were transferred out of the battalion. This continued in the early days of October. On 1 October the battalion had a strength of 139 Enlisted Men, 17 Officers and 3 Warrant Officers. By 15 October the battalion had been built to a strength of 553 Enlisted Men, 36 Officers and 4 Warrant Officers. The number of transfers and assignments are too many to enumerate here. The ASR scores of the enlisted men assigned to the battalion from 1 October to 15 October were between 59 and 85. The officers assigned to the battalion during this same period had ASR scores between 80 and 100. Between 15 October and 31 October enlisted men having ASR scores of over 85 were transferred out of the Division to units having an earlier shipping date. During the same period enlisted men having ASR scores of less than 65 were transferred to units having a later shipping date. Enlisted men having 65 to 69 ASR scores were transferred to other units within the Division. This left the unit on 31 October with enlisted men having ASR scores between 70 and 80 and officers with scores over 80. The reception and assignment within the battalion of these men was complete successfully despite the fact that men frequently arrived on very short notice or with no notice at all.

Even though Alert Orders and instructions for movement to the port area were received 2 October this unit was not relieved of its security mission of GMUND and vicinity. Until 8 October this created a hardship on all personnel. Men were borrowed from other units to ease the situation. Our greatest disturbances were caused by Displaced persons raiding and looting German homes. One German civilian was shot in one of these raids near WALDSTETTEN. However on 8 October sufficient personnel had arrived to increase our guards and patrols to adequately cover the area. After this date, our disturbances were limited to curfew violations. On 15 October the 131st FA Bn was officially relieved of security of GMUND and vicinity by the 14th Armored Inf Bn of the 1st Armored Division but because of a shortage of personnel within that unit the 131st FA Bn still maintained the security of the Hardt Caserne. At this writing, the security of this Caserne is alternated weekly by this battalion and the 132nd FA Bn. On 16 October this battalion with the aid of the 132nd FA Bn and Co "C", 14th Armored Inf Bn pulled a "Tallyho" operation on the Bismark Caserne, which is the Polish Displaced Person Camp here. 300 men and officers participated in the operation, which was highly successful from a surprise standpoint. Approximately two thousand (2000) rounds of small arms ammunition was found and confiscated. Several unauthorized weapons were located, along with an assortment of American equipment, mostly clothing. Confiscated property was either destroyed, held as evidence, or turned in to the proper supply agency. People in possession of unauthorized property were turned over to the AMG Detachment for trial.

On 2 October Alert Orders and instructions for movement to the port area were received. A tentative readiness date for departure of this area of 15 October was given in these instructions. Preparation for movement to the port by motor was started immediately. Drivers training and motor maintenance were given priority in most cases. Physical inspections and dental surveys were given all the enlisted men. V D. Control and orientation was also stressed. Organized athletics

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These transfers were effected on the following dates, and the dates follow the order of units listed above: 15 September, 123 enlisted men, 16 September, 14 enlisted men, 21 September, 20 enlisted men, 22 September, 65 enlisted men, and finally 30 September, 29 enlisted men, all of which left the battalion with a critical shortage of personnel.

The security mission of the 131st Field Artillery Battalion was increased on the 21st of September by being made responsible for the town proper of Gmund. The XXI Corps had been responsible for the town proper until it became inoperative on the 21st of September, and hence the increased security mission. The decreased strength of the battalion made this enlargement of our mission difficult and the battalion went on record as reporting that our guard was inadequate. Very little was done about this because of similar personnel shortages in other units. We did have "J" Company of the 143rd Infantry Regiment attached, and some help from the other battalions, but our guard was proportionally enlarged and the situation was quite serious at the end of the month. The civilians in the area caused no trouble whatsoever, but the displaced persons were again guilty of looting, and even resorted to bloodshed to attain their ends. As each new situation arose, a new method of defense was tried, but the shortage of men we had, made our best efforts hardly adequate for the situation. A Seventh Army Inspection Team visited the battalion toward the end of the month and noted that the security guard furnished by this battalion was inadequate. Their inspection of the battalion, so far as is known, revealed that the battalion was in good condition, except for the shortage of personnel necessary to carry out its increased security mission.

During the last fifteen days of September, practically all of the organic equipment of the battalion was made ready for, and turned in to the appropriate supply agencies. Only the vehicles, arms necessary for guard duty, and kitchen equipment was left at the end of the month. The bulk of the equipment turned in was in excellent condition, and we were told by the various supply agencies that the equipment turned in by the 131st Field Artillery Battalion was the best in the Division. Just one more instance of superior performance by the men and officers of this battalion, which has been characteristic of this battalion since activation on 25 November 1940.

Of the few men and officers remaining in the battalion with enough points to go home, tickets for passage to the United States are being secured, and it is believed that this personnel will begin their homeward trek in October. Very few of the remaining sixty seven (67) soldiers with enough points to go home, 60 or above, have seen combat with the battalion. About all that is left of an old combat organization, known to many as the 131st Field Artillery Battalion is the name. The October history can relate how the name was returned to the United States.

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was not overlooked, even with many things to do prior departure. Division Artillery sent inspection teams through the battalion inspecting Administrative, Supply and Motors. All personnel records were personally inspected by each Battery Commander. Then on 16 October the readiness date for departure of this area was postponed for an indefinite period. Morale dropped of course, but not to the danger level. Athletic and other recreational activities were intensified. An intra Division touch football league was organized and to date the 131 FA Bn has won six (6) and lost none. An intra Battalion touch football league was also formed, as well as an intra battalion softball and volleyball schedule. An enlisted man's dance was held on 25 October and was a great success. However, preparation for movement to the port area is still going on. On 19 October Division inspection teams began inspecting personnel records. This was done under the supervision of inspecting authorities from the Assembly Area Command. There is much speculation as to what is going to happen and when this unit will be leaving. Next month's history should reveal many interesting things.

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