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592nd Field Battalion
106th Infantry Division

The 592nd Field Battalion left Gloucester, England, crossed the English Channel on LST landing craft, then up the Rouen River to Rouen, France in early December, 1943.

We were a medium Field Artillery Battalion with full track prime movers pulling 155 MM Howitzers. Our destination was the front lines near St. Vith. We were to relieve the Second Division. Our march to St. Vith was to be three days.

The column moved out at 35 mph which, needless to say caused many problems with our steel track prime movers. The 592 Field Artillery Maintenance crew battled the 18 tractors for 3 days and 3 nights around the clock, replacing boogy wheels and one complete tractor that had been in an accident coming down the mountain.

The Battalion Maintenance Crew consisted of two maintenance trucks and a battalion wrecker, and six men. They did a fantastic job getting the battalion up into the line at Laudesfeld without the assistance of the Division Ordnance Company that was supposed to be supporting them. The Ordnance Company made the trip on schedule with all of their tools still packed in the shipping cartons the way they left the States.

After taking over the position of the Second Division in the line, which appeared to be a quiet sector, and we were assured that it was, all hell broke loose on the 16th of December. This was the beginning of the Battle of the Bulge.

Our position was shelled that afternoon, by a column of German tanks. We received considerable damage from the shelling and lost three men. An 88 got a direct hit on our kitchen where the men were. I missed that one, by the Grace of God, having been in the kitchen less than 5 minutes before.

Our kitchen was in an old barn that had been hit before and was without a roof. Service Battery had thrown an ammunition tarp over it for a roof. The kitchen was set up there inside out of the weather.

Intelligence started coming in to the effect that our Division Artillery Headquarters had been over run and was no longer functioning, that our Infantry Regiments and light Field Artillery Battalions were all but out of commission. Fire commands to our batteries were nil, meaning that our forward observers had been killed or captured.

We were extremely fortunate in that we had an excellent Battalion Commander in Colonel Weber. He realized we were sitting ducks without our Division Artillery Headquarters, or other support. He sent out Liaison Officers and moved our Battalion out under cover of darkness that night. The retrograde movement was successful except for our "All Battery making a wrong turn in Schoenberg which resulted in a loss of 40 men either captured or killed.

We moved into a wooded area near St. Vith that night only to be hit by small arms fire again the next day. This time, we pulled back a considerable distance where we

regrouped and went right back into action under a Corp Headquarters. We went into firing position right alongside the 101st Airborne. They had a little 75 MM Pack Howitzer in position and we had a 155 MN Howitzer pumping shots out right beside them.

It wasn't long after that when the tide seemed to change and we were reunited with the Division, and went into a reorganization. It was about this time that we were instructed to send our tractors into 4th Echelon Ordnance for a complete inspection. Our battalion received a letter of Commendation on the excellent condition of our vehicles. It was noted that the M-5 tractors, such as we had, were normally ready for salvage at the mileage ours were showing.

If memory serves me correctly, we were recommitted to action and I was ordered to draw a bulldozer from an Engineer Company so that we could dig the Artillery in for a more permanent and delaying action. The reason was to allow the Russians more time to take Berlin.

After this mission was accomplished, and the war was drawing to a close, our battalion was moved into Heilbron. We were detailed to care for prisoners that were surrendering in unreal numbers.

I was charged with feeding and clothing them which seemed like a monumental job. I was unable to get enough rations from the quartermaster to begin to feed them. My final solution was the Knorr Soup Factory in Manheim. We hauled large burlap bags of dry soup out by the truckloads.

I was fortunate in finding a factory warehouse that had large cooking vats equipped with fire boxes under them. One was put in each cell-block of 1,000 prisoners. We got firewood from a pulp factory in Manheim and, by the Grace of God, was able to feed them.

The problem continued to grow until we were caring for 108,000 prisoners.

It was necessary to have an Engineering Company come in and build enclosures. It was like building a city. We needed a hospital, a morgue, interrogation tents, and typewriters. The list goes on. I was able to get 50 typewriters out of the basement of a bombed out office building after a little persuasion with the German guard. The typewriters were German, of course and were difficult for our clerks to operate. It was only a short time, however, until the Interrogation teams turned out German clerks from trustworthy prisoners. They relieved the G.I. clerks and the German typewriters were fine for them.

After the prisoner episode was in operation for a while, we were relieved and sent to Karlsruhe where the entire division was ordered to Camp Lucky Strike enroute to the States. That is, all men with 85 or more points were eligible to go home.

This was where I received one of my worst heartaches. After serving the Division from its beginning at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, I was sent to the 478th Field Artillery Battalion who needed an officer with my M.O.S. number. I only had 84 points and could not go home with my Division.



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