

HQ & SV TR DIARY

23 February 1945-Ohee, Holland

The early morning following Washington's birthday was celebrated by a rousing display of artillery pyrotechnics. Men on guard at about 0245 reported a tremendous barrage from the front. Many of the men told of being awakened as the buildings in which we are billeted shook and window panes rattled. The Ninth Army's new offensive was off to a roaring start.

Security regulations changed last night and the men appeared this morning with the old familiar triangular patches on their left sleeves once more.

Maintenance men were busy painting Division and Squadron markings on vehicle bumpers, using "C" for Cavalry, instead of the former "R" for Reconnaissance. We are no longer anonymous.

A warn served as the theater for the training film "Your Job in Germany." The message: "Don't Fraternize".

Radio nets were opened today and the high-pitched squeal of transmitters and receivers was heard in the clear air.

Three kegs of beer were consumed in the evening. The local cafe was the scene of the gathering, but the Troop itself secured the beverage. Numerous canteen dups were raised to celebrate the end of drought.

24 Feb. 1945-Ohee, Holland

Airplane traffic, which has been heavy in this area ever since our arrival, assumed Times Square proportions today. Bomber and fighter formations were numerous all day. Many of the men, with a new personal interest in aircraft identification, spent many moments scanning the skies.

"Personal maintenance" is the training schedule term. In practice it meant a truckload of men off for showers at a nearby coal mine. They reported tiled floors and walls, and individual foot baths in the shower room.

Capt Hughes purchased four kegs of beer for the evenings & cafe session, he also returned with a number of pipes for men who feared a possible recurrence of the cigarette famine.

Spring-like weather prevailed today.

25 Feb 1945-Ohee, Holland

To the members of our tank crew goes the honor of firing the first HQ & SV Troop shots to land in Germany. The tank went out for a "moist run" to zero in the gun. A town on German soil, from which the members of the master race had raced before advancing American troops, was chosen as the target. Twenty-five rounds were fired by Tec 5 Ralph W. Hoyer, gunner, Lt Earl Lewis, and Lt Cpl Tracy B. Harrington, who accompanied the crew. Others in the tank were Tec 5 Clayton Howell, Cpl Jack Lowell, Jr., and Pvt Erwin Snodgrass.

A number of the Catholic men attended Sunday mass with the civilians in this predominantly Catholic province, in the evening, a special Service movie, "Dragon Seed", was shown in the barn. A story of China, the pictured caused some to speculate if it were a hint of things to come.

The weather was cold and clear. During noon chow, a formation of well over 100 flying fortresses, accompanied by fighters, passed overhead.

26 Feb 1945-Ohee, Holland

Usual garrison duties. Nothing new to report. Mail deliveries, both letters and packages, have been much more prompt of late. Some

"V" mail has been arriving in a week. The sound of artillery fire grows less distinct here as the Allied offensive inside Germany rolls forward.

27 Feb 1945--Chee, Holland

Word came today that we would be moving out. At 1700, Mq & Sv Troop joined the march column and began the movement into Germany. The rate of march was slow, with frequent stops.

Results of the flooding of the Roer River were seen during the night as we traveled over muddy, sodden roads in some areas. The Roer at the point we crossed, was too narrow to be termed a river. However, it was obvious, even in the dim pre-dawn light, that the stream was flowing very swiftly.

During the course of the march, the Troop passed through several towns which had been taken the previous day. Signs of battle were obvious in the wrecked buildings and rubble strewn streets.

28 Feb 1945. Golkrath, Germany

Arriving at Golkrath at about 0900, we were billeted in farm buildings. Evidence of the fighting in this area were seen in shattered trees and buildings. ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ and in freshly dug slit trenches. The once feared Wehrmacht, which blitzed its way across Europe, was represented by the carcass of a horse, which was lying in the back of an army wagon. German equipment was scattered all about the place. Our squadrom wrecker was pressed into service to dispose of the dead animal.

During most of the day and all night, we were reminded of our proximity to the enemy by a battery of American artillery. The fired at frequent intervals from a position almost in our back yard.

~~in crossing the border into Germany held up our pay. ~~xxxxxx~~~~
Rolls made out in Guldens have to be transferred to Marks.

1 March 1945--Golkrath, Germany

Usual garrison duties were the order of the day. A detail went out to fill in the holes in the roads.

There was a return to the days of the horse cavalry as Capt Hardy, of Troop "E", reported to Squadrom headquarters on a model #1 hay burner. Several saddle horses were discovered in the Troop "E" area. Some members of the Troop were said to be fiding guard on the steeds.

Tec 5 Alfred Ricci and Cpl William Smith, in the course of their duties as peep drivers, today captured the first German prisoner collected by Mq & Sv Troop. They found their man hiding under a wagon while they were on a visit near the front.

At 2300, we moved again. This time close to the Rhine, The next stop was at Amern St George. During the night, we suffered our first casualties as three men were injured when the maintenance parts truck took a wrong turn in the road and struck a mine. M/Sgt Derilas Deane, Tec 4 "elnyk, and Sgt William Huff were all injured and evacuated to a hospital.

2 March 1945-Amern St George, Germany

We saw our first German civilians today. The town of Amern St George was virtually untouched and as a result, the population was still there. Many seemed surprised when they opened their shutters and discovered our vehicles parked in their alleys and driveways.

A prisoner taken today proved to be a soldier on furlough. It is believed that his C. U. will have to grant considerable additional travel time under the circumstances.

3 March 1945- Amern St George, Germany.

A billeting party under Lt Murray, Adjutant, and including M/Sgt Julius C. Shuffield and Tec 5 John Hanrahan, left for Stenden in the C and R car, accompanied by three peeps from the Troops. This was a slightly unusual assignment, for Stenden when they arrived proved to be in a front line area never before entered by American troops. The three peeps entered the town cautiously and flushed out twelve German soldiers who were taken prisoner. Their advance guard work finished, the party then went about the job of arranging for quarters.

Mq & SV Troop followed to Stenden and arrived in the afternoon after passing some Troop "C" vehicles which were on their way to the rear. Headquarters was set up in the local parish house.

4 March 1945-Stenden, Germany

Usual garrison duties. Prisoners came in from the troops for trans-shipment to the rear.

A different type of PX ration was issued today. A small German Army warehouse was found in town and the men received German cigarettes (verdict: flat and tasteless), Portuguese sardines, canned meat, cheese in toothpaste-type containers, and candy drops.

A number of Polish, and Russian, and Italian "slave laborers" were released from bondage by our occupation of the town.

5 March 1945-Stenden, Germany

Today, the Squadron, minus Troop "B", went out for the first time as a unit on a combat mission. Squadron Headquarters left Stenden at 0630 and proceeded to Lintfort, near the Rhine. Headquarters and Serviced Troop rear echelon groups followed later in the day.

Evidences of recent fighting were found as the column approached Lintfort. A still-smoking house, a burned out tank, and unburied German dead, as well as quantities of abandoned equipment, were all testimony of fighting not long before. As we entered Lintfort, small arms firing could be heard beyond the town.

Squadron Headquarters pulled off into a side street and began immediate operation, while the line troops continued straight on their assigned missions.

6,7 March 1945-Lintfort, Germany

The Squadron continued in battle during these two days and reports of successful actions came in to Headquarters. The Rhine River was reached and numerous prisoners were sent back for processing by the IPW team at Headquarters.

No longer on the secret list, the 8th Armored Division was mentioned for the first time in "Stars and Stripes" and civilian newspapers as part of the Sixteenth Corps of the Ninth Army. Mention was made of cavalry elements carrying out successful operations in our area, and although the unit designation was not used, the 88th was the outfit meant.

8 March 1945-Lintfort, Germany

Its mission successfully completed, the Squadron left the Lintfort area in the morning and moved to the rear. Hq & Sv Tr arrived at Glabach about noon and occupied billets in various parts of the village.

The move to the rear was welcomed as an opportunity to catch up on maintenance of equipment and clothing. There was a movie, "Wur Hearts Were Young and Gay", in the evening.

9,10 March 1945-Glabach, Germany

Housekeeping duties, such as laundry and showers, were the order of the day on both dates. The absence of battle sounds, except for the faint rumble of distant artillery during the nights, made for a restful feeling. The weather continued unfavorable, with gray overcast skies and bone-penetrating chill.

The February pay was finally distributed on the ninth. Rapid calculations were in order by men who had to repay in marks debts incurred in guilders and francs. With news of the crossing of the Rhine by First Army Troops, queries about the exchange value of the Russian ruble and Polish zloty were beginning to arise.

11 March 1945-Glabach, Germany

Sunday, and a day off for all those who could be spared from their official duties. There was the luxury of a late breakfast at 0800. Chow is always a subject of interest and today's source of comment was the presence of chicken on the lunch menu for the second successive day.

The Sunday calm was disturbed in the afternoon, when the Troop was lined up at 1600. One of the local women claimed that she had been raped by a G.I.; and the formation was called in order to allow her to point out the culprit. The men filed into the hallway of her house one at a time, halted before the doorway of the kitchen, in which she was standing flanked by members of her family, and then moved out the back door after a negative shake of her head. In the space of a few minutes, the whole troop passed in review, but no one was accused.

New adjustable sights were placed on most of the carbines by men of the 130th Ordnance during the afternoon. A movie, "Louisiana Hayride", was shown in the evening.

12 March 1945-Glabach, Germany

Usual garrison duties were supplemented by an inspection of all clothing and equipment.

13 March 1945-Glabach, Germany

A touch of home was provided by the dessert at supper- ice cream.

An exercise in crossing a pontoon bridge in darkness was scheduled for the early hours of the morning of the 14th. The purpose of the "dry run" was to assure that all future runs of this type would remain "dry". Drivers and car commanders were oriented on their duties this afternoon. After one postponement, the practice run was called off.

14 March 1945-Glabach, Germany

Carbines with the new sights were "zeroed in". A nearby pasture was used as the range and the guns were fired at targets placed against an earthen bank.

We were serenaded today by the Division band. A varied program of dance and march music was provided from a position on the road midway in the Troop area. The weather has turned clear at last. A sign of spring, even more definite than the first robin, was the sight of Headquarters personnel out tossing baseballs around rather gingerly. The high hard one will have to wait for a few days until winter-softened muscles round into shape.

15 March 194 -Glabach, Germany

Usual garrison duties.

16 March 1945-Glabach, Germany

A day of normal garrison duties was enlivened in the evening by a beer party. Members of the Personnel Section turned out in force from their haven at Division rear echelon. They were subjected to the usual joshing about 4F assignments, despite the fact that they have been closer to enemy bullets-from strafing planes-than most of the other members of the Troop.

17 March 1945-Glabach, Germany

Another definite sign of approaching spring came with the order to turn in winter clothing for storage. A record crop of goose pimples appeared as hardy souls bade farewell to their "long Johns",.

The air was filled with fighter planes all day long. A former German airport in the Squadron area was put into service by the 4 Air Forces and the roar of motors was heard overhead constantly.

The movie in the evening assured us that "You Can't Ration Love".

18 March 1945-Glabach, Germany

Church services were held in the morning. The day of rest was climaxed with a showing of "The Falcon and the Co-ed". A speed-up in the pass system today sent three men to Brussels, Belgium. The fortunate trio included T/Sgt Frank Howe, Cpl Edward Haynes, and Tec 5 -uke Goodyear.

19 March 1945-Glabach, Germany

Usual garrison duties. A Troop formation was called after supper to provide further opportunity for discussion of the non-fraternization policy. Among other points, we were told not to visit the hen houses for fresh eggs. Troop maintenance came up with a delicate problem. In their case, Mahomet doesn't have to go to the mountain, for the mountain comes to him, in the form of a neighborly white hen who lays her eggs in a corner of the maintenance garage. Despite the hen's good intention, the eggs are still "verboten".

Tec 4 Floyd Craddock and Tec 4 Kenneth Watkins left today on pass for the big bad city of Gay Sarree. Oh-ly-ly!

20, 21 March 1945-Glabbach, Germany

Usual garrison duties were carried on in clear weather. The change of ~~we~~ seasons was celebrated by all members of the Troop when they lanned up at 0900 at the Dispensary to receive their spring tomics--typhus shots.

The Brussels pass trio returned from their two day visit full of praise for the Army Recreation Center set-up which provided a varied round of activities free of charge. Sgt Huwe visited relatives in the Brussels area.

22, 23 March 1945-Glabbach, Germany

Usual garrison duties. Two jiggers of brandy from a captured German warehouse were issued to each man on the evening of the 23d. There was a touch of home at lunch when Coca C~~as~~ were sold.

24 March 1945-Glabbach, Germany

The reason for the unusually large amount of air activity became apparent with the news that the Ninth Army was across the Rhine. As thoughts turned to the east, there was a flurry of excitement as six men from various Troops of the Squadron came to Headquarters on the first step of a trip home. Recent reinforcements to the Squadron, these men have been overseas for approximately two years and now have received rotation furloughs.

Another touch of home was provided by the presence of a Red Cross Clubmobile at noon. One of the girls served doughnuts at lunch.

The Squadron received its first mention in the "Stars and Stripes" with a feture article on some of its activities. Although the story purported to be the happenings of on day in the push to the Rhine, it actualla included events that dated back to our stay in France.

25 March 1945-Glabbach, Germany

Sunday was a quiet day. Many baseball and volley ball games took place.

26 March 1945-Glabbach, Germany

Word came during the morning to have all vehicles stowed. The Troop moved out at approximately 2145, headed for the Rhine.

27 March 1945-Bruckhausen, Germany

A major step in our combat history was made when the Troop crossed the Rhine River at 0740. The bridge, one of three visible along this stretch of the river, was a sturdy pontoon structure that caused much comment on the work of the Engineers. The approach to the bridge was by a dirt road hacked through the fields. Cables, apparently holding barrage balloons, stretched out disappeared into the gray overcast, looking like props for the Hindu rope trick. The crossing was swift and uneventful. There were few signs of combat on the east side of the river. After a total march 39 miles, we arrived at a small farm community, Bruckhausen, at 1000 and were billeted.

28 March 1945-Near Molt Hausen, Germany

We left Bruckhausen in the afternoon fot the forward area on a combat mission. We were to move with Troops "D" and "E" and Company "F" on the right flank of CCR as it headed due east above the

industrial Ruhr. The roads on which we moved were rutted and battle-scarred. We were obviously directly on the heels of the fighting. We billeted in farm buildings near Holt Hausen, surrounded by artillery which fired through the night.

Lt Karl R. Lewis and Pfc Harry Smith were evacuated to the 78th Medics after their jeep ran over a mine.

29 March 1945-Zweckel, Germany

The Troop proceeded to Zweckel, a march of four miles, in the morning. Fighting was still going on in the city as we moved into the administration buildings of a coal mine on the ww outskirts and set up headquarters. We heard firing by heavy artillery throughout the day and night. After crowded nights when floor space was at a premium, we slept in spacious quarters with plenty of elbow room.

30 March 1945-Zweckel, Germany

Artillery fire from positions near our location at the coal mine continued during the day. We had become so familiar with the sound of firing that no one paid particular attention when the noise came closer. Work went on at its normal pace until someone came in and reported that artillery shells were falling within less than a hundred yards of headquarters. A number of the men went outdoors to watch tree limbs being lopped off by the bursts. Inside, the CP was immediately moved to the basement. Lt Col Harrington gathered a patrol of twelve enlisted men and moved off to flush the gun crew out of a nearby patch of woods. No signs of the enemy were discovered by the patrol, but the firing ceased a short time later.

Something new in the prisoner line appeared when a German girl turned herself in as a military prisoner. Interrogation by Tec 3 Walter Schwarz of the IPW team brought out the information that she had worked for the Luftwaffe, although she had not been formally sworn in and had no uniform.

We knew that the coal mine stay would not continue much longer when elements of the 130th Ordnance Bn and 148th Signal Co moved in.

31 March 1945-Marl, Germany

The order to leave the coal mine came in the morning and the Troop moved out on a new mission. This time, we were to reconnoiter the area through Marl to the Lippe Canal and, if possible, to secure a bridge intact for the use of other elements of the Division and for the 75th Infantry Division, which was also in the area.

Wex stopped enroute in Zweckel proper at a private home for several hours. Noon chow was eaten there and then Squadron Headquarters proceeded to Marl. Troops "D" and "E" and Company "F" were in the column. We saw a sample of the devastation visited on German industry as we passed a large establishment which was almost completely razed. Headquarters was set up in Marl while Troops "E" and "D" continued on.

The rear echelon of the Troop followed later. During a stop at the edge of a town, they were subjected to artillery fire. The men poured out of the vehicles and commenced digging foxholes. Pvt Davis A. Sewell was nicked in the leg and suffered a minor wound. Later, rear echelon joined headquarters and the men were billeted in an emergency hospital in the basement of a fire station.

Clean sheets, water, and lights made this stop a comfortable one.

The Troops which had gone on ran into opposition and repulsed a counter-attack.

1 April 1945--Mari to Zelm, enroute to Delbruck, Germany

The opposition encountered on the approach to the canal caused a change in plans. During the early morning hours, we were assigned a new mission. This time, the Squadron was to swing back into XIX Corps territory and race eastward in the wake of the spearheading Second Armored Division. The plan called for a massing of the division strength in the forward area and then a surge to Berlin abreast of the Second Armored. Maps showing the route to Berlin were received. The immediate objective was to reach and secure a bridge over the Elbe River, on the road to the German capital.

At 0300 of Easter morning, the Troop left Mari and moved back to Dursten, where we crossed the Canal on a ponton bridge. Even in the dim light, it was obvious that Dursten was merely the shell of a town. Once across the Canal, we headed east again at a good sustained speed. Sunrise found us traveling through beautiful rolling countryside. The fields were green and well tended, trenches were seen, evidence of the speed of the breakthrough. Everywhere, the new symbol of Germany, the white flag of surrender, flew from house fronts. Well-laundered sheets and table cloths have replaced the swastika. Despite that, almost every billet we have occupied has given up store of weapons. On this trip, we saw newly liberated slave laborers trudging the road, the poured singly and in dozens. They sat in ditches and hay stacks, farmyards and woods, roasting potatoes and munching on bits of bread. At one point we passed the carcass of a horse, one flank cut away for its steaks. Later, there were just four legs, red house meat still clinging to the bones. The parade of men was a European League of Nations. Russians and Poles, in tatters, sometimes snapped to attention and saluted as we passed. Frenchmen, many in uniform, gave the sign with upraised fingers. All through the ride, the fixx flood of humanity swept past us.

Late in the morning, we stopped at a farm at Zelm. That evening, we were on the move again to reconnoiter ahead of the division in the direction of Delbruck. The Squadron, minus Troops "B" and "C" moved out together. We stopped for several hours on the autobahn--the four lane super highway--during the night and then continued on to Gelde where we paused until daylight. Reports later had in that the 110th Panzer Division was in the neighboring town while we slept in our vehicles. For the next few days, rumor had us playing hide and seek all over the map with this division.

2 April 1945--Delbruck, Germany

In daylight, the Squadron proceeded to Delbruck, after headquarters had made a short stop outside town. The leading elements of the line troops went on through and met opposition. Headquarters was set up on the near edge of town. Reports on our findings were sent back and then CCB began to roll through. The inhabitants of Delbruck seemed properly impressed by the steady stream of armor.

During the trip to Delbruck, an incident took place which might have had serious consequences. Tec 5 Alfred Ricci was driving at the Col Harrington. Their jeep passed several men who seemed to be a part of the never ending stream of liberated slave laborers. As the jeep passed, one of the men stepped forward rapidly, said something that was unintelligible to the two riders, and threw an object into the jeep. The light was dim, and Ricci's first thought was, "hand grenade", as the object hit him in the back. He turned quickly, relinquishing his hold on the steering wheel. He grasped the "grenade" and threw it back. There was no explosion, only the sound of shattered glass, as a liquid tribute to the liberators was wasted on thankless German soil. There was no immediate sigh of relief, however, for upon turning his head once more to driving, Ricci found the jeep

was off the road, navigating unsteadily between two trees. He regained control of the vehicle, and as he steered it back onto the road, he observed Lt Col Harrington replacing his pistol in its holster.

When the troops rear echelon reached Delbruck, two long-lost members were with them-S/Sgt George Knittle and Cfc John Shebanic were back after a furlough in London. The papers said "seven days plus traveling time". In this case, due to military necessity and to the frequent movement of troops, the innocent phrase, "traveling time", added up to a total absence of twenty-eight days. They took a cook's tour of western Europe in the course of their search for our outfit. Of London, the report was that everything was highly satisfactory. The boys say that there are now so many G. I.'s on Piccadilly that an American passport is necessary to get through.

3 April 1945--Lippstadt, Germany

The military situation has caused a change in our mission. Two German armies have been encircled in the Ruhr by the function of the Ninth and First Armies. We have been recalled from a spearhead task to Lippstadt, where the pocket had been sealed. By far the largest community in which we had ever been billeted, Lippstadt was virtually undamaged. A report of German tanks in the general area led to active security measures when we stopped.

For once the whole Troop was billeted in the same building- a small hotel, with electricity and water still functioning. The majority of the men slept in beds with fresh linen, and bath tubs did a rush business. Two of the fellows were seen standing in a tub of cold water, with goose pimples the size of walnuts, singing and scrubbing away. Baths were such a luxury that they didn't bother to wait for hot water.

4 April 1945--Beckenforde, Germany

The set-up at Lippstadt was so comfortable that no one was surprised although all were disappointed- when we mounted our vehicles after only one day's stay. The march was a short one to Beckenforde, a distance of about three miles. Personal contact with the First Army was made as we took over quarters from a unit of the Third Armored Division.

Prisoner traffic was quite heavy throughout the afternoon as forty-nine were delivered. Their ages ranged from 16 to somewhere in the 60's. One group of four vigorous prisoners was directly chalked up to the score of our medics. Capt Owen Biele, Squadron Surgeon, noticed them lolling along the roadside in the course of a trip and reported the fact. A jeep commanded by S/Sgt William Billing, and manned by a rifleman, went out to pick up the men. They created a stir as the natty, blue uniformed prisoners were brought in, shepherded by Sgt Billing. The hypodermic needle is mightier than the sword.

5 April 1945--Ruthen, Germany

The pocket has contracted and we have moved to Ruthen, south of Lippstadt. Mortars in the neighborhood fired most of the day in support of American troops across the valley.

6 April 1945--Ruthen, Germany

Fighting continued across the valley. Nothing of importance to report.

7 April 1945--Near Echterp, Germany

We moved to Echterp further in the pocket. Prisoners were still being sent in and became a familiar sight.

8 April 1945--Echterp, Germany

Nothing to report.