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REMARKS

Boyd,
 Members of the 561st FA Battalion
 (WV) will visit Fort Sill on
 4 May. They provided me this copy
 of their history. Thought you might
 like a copy for your files.

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the 561st

Field Artillery Battalion



A



THE 561ST FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION

ITS COMBAT HISTORY



Dec. 17, 1944: Defying the murky skies, the tiny liaison plane circled low as Lt. David E. Runden dropped a note in the battalion area. "German tanks are in Setz, heading our way", the message read.

The Battle of the Bulge was on!

Marshalling his crack troops for a last, all-out offensive, Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt wheeled his panzers west in a surprise move that was designed to split open the Allied forces, drive through to Liege and on to Antwerp.

The 561st Field Artillery Battalion was backing up the 106th Infantry Division at the exact spot where von Rundstedt chose to break through the line.

Charlie Battery, dug in atop a hill, poured direct fire on German tanks in the valley below. Lower and lower the tubes were depressed. Gun crews were forced to dig away the earth so the tubes could be dropped even further down.

Then came orders from Group to displace to the rear. Lt. Col. Robert C. White, battalion CO, told battery commanders to evacuate all guns, vehicles and personnel; to destroy all equipment that could not be pulled back in time.

Able Battery, with all of its vehicles at ordnance, was forced to leave all personal and organizational equipment behind. Charlie Battery, which covered the withdrawal for the remainder of the battalion, found it necessary to destroy three guns. Not only did the battery keep the 155s blazing until the last possible moment, but it was hopeless to move the guns in the mud. An incendiary grenade ruined one gun; the others were disposed of by firing them after a recoil nut was removed. This threw the tubes off the slides and ruined the recoil mechanism.

By 1200 hours, the battalion had moved back through St. Vith to Krompach. Two hours later, the "Close Station March Order" was given just as Baker Battery, which had withdrawn the previous night, received an urgent fire mission by radio from the 9th Armored Division, in position near Winterspelt, Germany.

Capt. Victor A. Woodling, relaying the fire commands from Fire Direction to his battery by radio, ended his commands with: "Battery 15 volleys, when ready, CSMO".

Without observation and through mud, cold and fog, men of the 561st grimly pulled back, taking up positions next at Neuville. The deadly game of keeping a jump ahead of the Germans was to continue for the next several days. Often, no more than half a mile separated the battalion from enemy forces. The next stop was Regert, the move getting underway just as a column of enemy tanks clanked down the road to the old bivouac area.

La Roche, Ranchampay and Bande also were stopovers as the withdrawal continued and the men yearned for the opportunity to crack back. The ration truck was ambushed—the battalion had only one

meal left at the time—in the afternoon of Dec. 20 near La Roche. Pvt. Leonard Maitland was captured while Pvt. William Kohl and S/Sgt. Eldon Hill, all three Service Battery men, were wounded. Kohl and Hill later were picked up by the 7th Armored Division and evacuated to the rear.

After moving on to Ochamps and Lambremont, the battalion was transferred to III Corps, Third Army, Dec. 21. Stockem, near Arlon, was the next bivouac area before the 561st hit Luxembourg and took up firing positions at Ospern.

This marked the beginning of the road back. However, it would be Feb. 4 before the battalion returned to positions it had left at the time of the breakthrough and there were multiple missions and hard work remaining before the German acceptance of unconditional surrender on May 8, 1945.

Thus went the Battle of the Bulge, the high point of the battalion's activities during eleven months of combat which began in June 1944 and fully reflected the battalion's proficiency and almost a year's thorough training.

The 561st Field Artillery Battalion was activated July 9, 1943, at Camp Joseph T. Robinson, Ark., with Lt. Col. James F. Kerr in command. Officers came from the Field Artillery Replacement Training Centers at Fort Sill, Okla., and Fort Bragg, N.C., as well as from OCS and older combat units. The cadre was comprised of men from the Divarty units of the 37th Infantry Division—the Ohio National Guard division which had served in the South Pacific for nearly a year.

Fillers arrived in two groups, Aug. 9 and 11, and the training and equipping process began immediately. Lt. Col. E. A. Nealy took command of the battalion in September as the training program got under full steam.

Following the completion of basic training tests, field exercises and the Army Ground Forces tests, the battalion moved to Camp Shelby, Miss., in early December where live ammunition was handled and fired in large quantities for the first time.

The battalion shifted its sights to the Louisiana Maneuver Area in February and had been at work only two weeks when orders arrived to pull the unit back to Camp Polk, La., in preparation for an overseas movement. Despite the short notice, the 561st made its way to the POE on schedule.

On April 7, 1944, the battalion with MEE only sailed from New York aboard the French liner, Ile de France. Men tasted previously unknown discomforts such as sea sickness, crowded and overheated sleeping quarters and inadequate mess facilities.

The sight of land on April 15 was most welcome as the ship docked near Greenock, Scotland, in the Firth of Clyde. For the majority, this was the first opportunity to set foot on foreign soil; it was a memorable occasion for those who merely wanted to stand again on just any soil.

Next followed the train trip to England where the 561st took up its new station at Doddington Park, near Nantwich. Additional training and the drawing of equipment was the program as the battalion was assigned to the 174th FA Group, VIII Corps, Third Army. During this period, the unit participated in two maneuver exercises in South Wales.

Transferred to First Army, June 21, the battalion moved to Llypiatt Park near Stroud where final preparations were made for crossing the English Channel. A week later, the outfit was broken up into three groups and loaded on LSTs at Southampton. The lead group, consisting of the Staff and Headquarters and Service Batteries, pulled out in convoy the following morning. By dusk, it was anchored off Utah Beach.

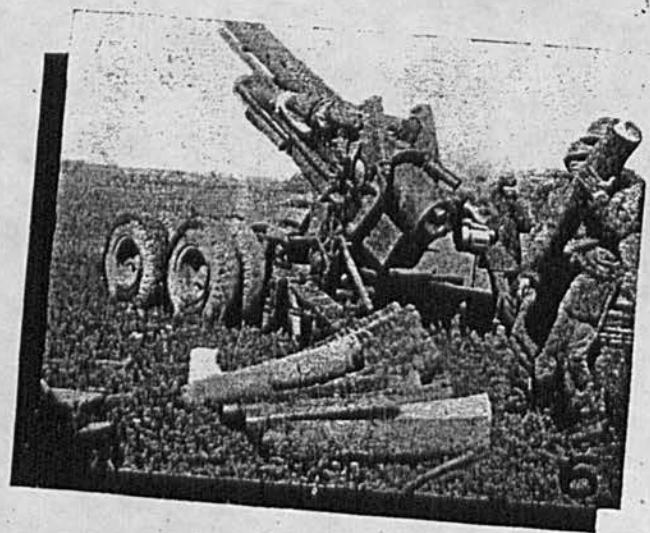
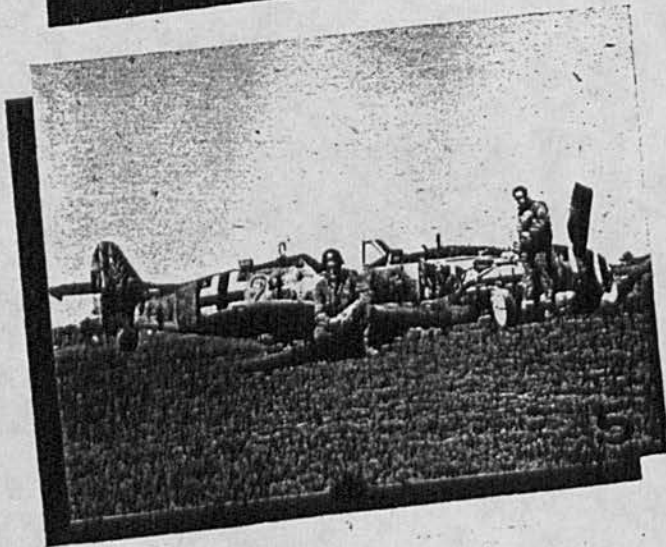
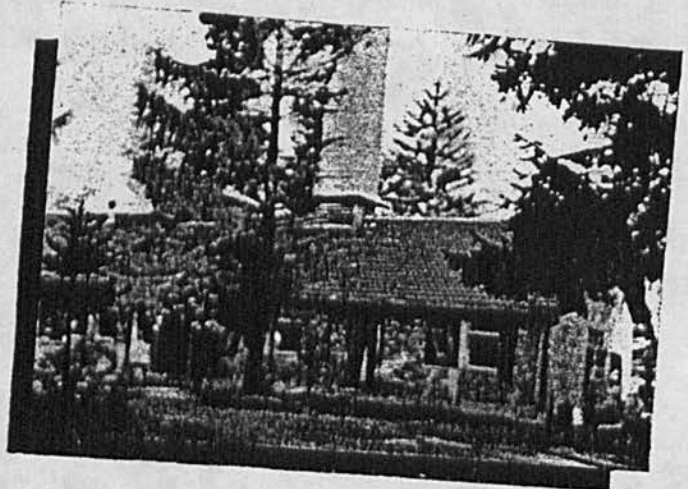
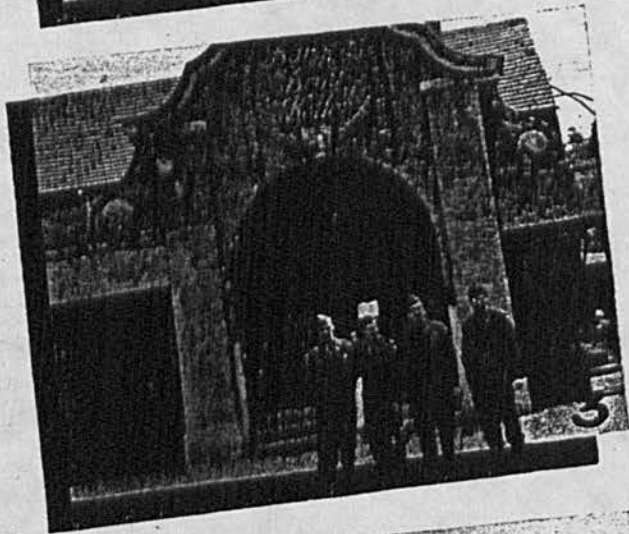
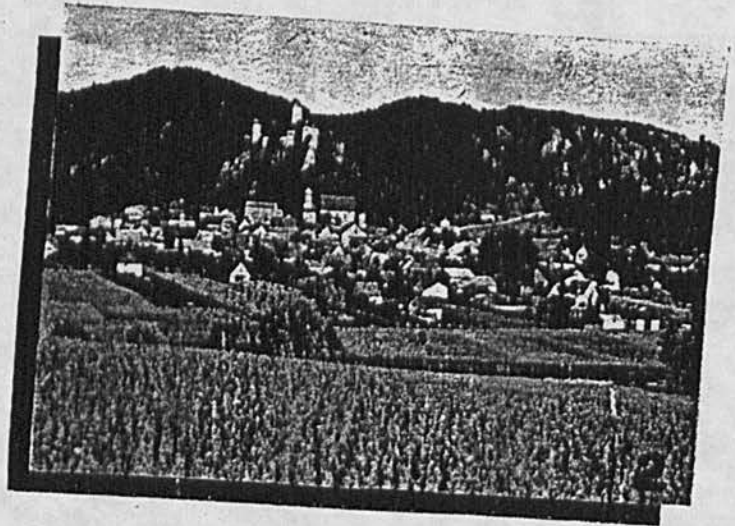
The first unit stepped ashore at 1100, June 30 (D plus 24), with the other groups coming along within the next 24 hours and proceeding to a de-waterproofing area at Les Mesnil, France.

By the next day, the battalion had moved up to its first position near St. Sauveur le Vicomte where it was in general support of VIII Corps and reinforcing the fires of the 79th Infantry Division.

July 3, 1944, 0515 hours: This was it—the McCoy! "Battalion five volleys" was the order and the 561st's 12 guns rocked the ground as their projectiles of death and destruction zoomed into the enemy.

This was the battalion's first action in World War II and excitement, coupled with pride, shone in all eyes as the first rounds whammed home. The mission was to soften up the opposition for doughs of the VIII Corps. The battalion fired from positions approximately five miles north of La Haye du Puits, each battery having a separate RJ. A continuous roar was maintained throughout the day. By nightfall, an even 500 rounds had been expended. Any troops that came on the line from this day on were recruits to the "veterans" of the 561st.

Promptly at 1200, July 4, all guns in France fired a volley at the enemy in celebration of Independence



- 1) Reichsautobahn
- 2) Kipfenberg, Germany
- 3) Hitler's Beerhall

- 4) Dachau Crematory*
- 5) Attached AA was on the ball
- 6) Stacking them up

Day. Forty-eight hours later, men began acquiring a good idea of what to expect in the many months of combat that were to follow.

Shoving ahead to a position near Hill 121, the battalion sat parked along a narrow road all night in the rain as one of Baker Battery's guns had slipped into a ditch. But all guns were in on schedule by 0800 the next morning. A heavy firing schedule of counter-battery, harassing and long range interdiction missions was resumed.

The first enemy fighter-bomber attack was experienced July 10. One bomb hit fairly close to the area but no casualties were incurred. The next night the fighters roared in again and one aircraft—it cracked up on Hill 121—was shot down. Every gunner within a radius of a mile claimed credit for the kill.

When the battalion moved within half a mile of La Haye du Puits, the Germans began returning the fire. Without direction or officer supervision, foxholes were dug deeper, made more elaborate. Once, during the excitement, Sgt. John W. Schmidt's section attempted to load two projectiles, one behind the other, in the same tube. During the 16 days in this position, the total missions were increased to 350 and total rounds fired to 6130.

Meanwhile, American lines had gradually advanced from hedgerow to hedgerow. Armored elements of the VIII Corps now were pushing ahead to a line east of Coutances as the enemy began to weaken and pull back to the south. The battalion's heavy counter-battery fire was changed to interdiction on road junctions and escape routes. Able Battery was attached to the 202nd FA Group on July 29 for a special mission and the remainder of the 561st shifted to La Queize.

One of the early casualties was sustained two days later when Sgt. John W. Calvin, Baker Battery, was killed by plane bombing. Calvin dashed into a field to put out a flare dropped by one of the planes and was struck by fragments of an anti-personnel bomb. Four other men were wounded during the same attack.

Assigned to Third Army, Aug. 1, the 561st shoved on to St. Aubin des Peaux, then ahead to an area east of Pontaubault where a group headed by Capt. Fred F. Huson, CWO Robert J. Burke and 1st/Sgt. Edward McCartney captured the battalion's first prisoners. "Bed Check Charlie" was making his nightly run over the area by this time. Also by now, Gen. George S. Patton's armor was well on its way across France.

The battalion maintained its heavy firing schedule as it turned, Aug. 5, to the Brittany campaign. Still in general support of VIII Corps, but now reinforcing fires of the 83rd Infantry Division, the 561st focused its attention on the coastal town of St. Malo.

Four days later, The Citadel was the only strongpoint in the area and the outfit moved up five miles to La Motte where it shifted guns 400 miles left to fire across the estuary on the town of Dinard.

Lt. Everett W. Andrews, pilot, and Lt. Robert L. Ravey, observer, were killed Aug. 10 when an enemy shell struck their aircraft. Andrews' plane then veered into another liaison aircraft which was flying alongside and both planes crashed near Tremeruc.

The battalion centered its attention on The Citadel Aug. 14. Baker Battery moved Sgt. Otis Keadle's and Sgt. James R. Williams' gun sections forward for direct firing on the strongpoint, while Sgt. Laverne Diebel's gun section, Charlie Battery, approached the estuary from the St. Malo side.

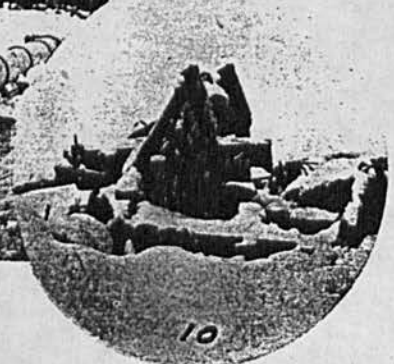
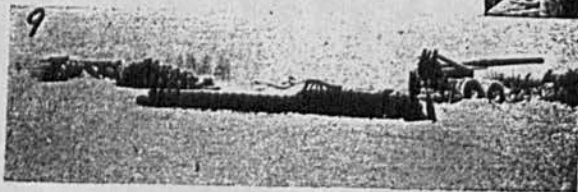
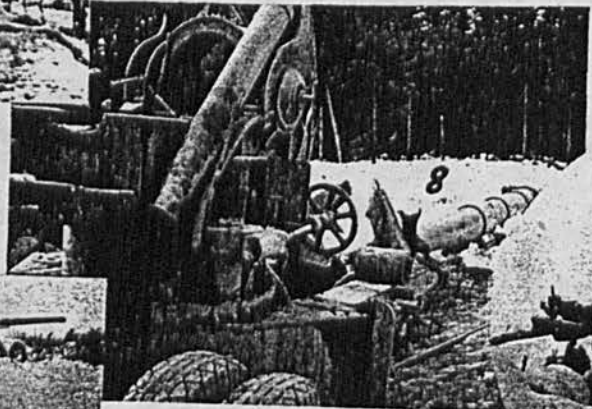
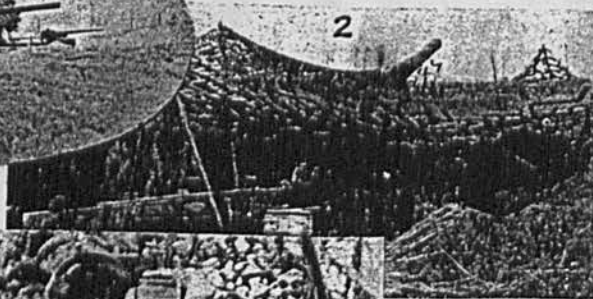
Beginning at 1000 Aug. 17, the three sections fired a total of 188 rounds at the massive doors and gun emplacements. The Citadel surrendered early that afternoon. In a letter of commendation to Lt. Col. Nealy, the commanding general of the 83rd Infantry Division wrote:

"I desire to commend most highly, yourself and those officers and men who participated in the emplacement and firing, by direct fire, of the three 155mm guns before The Citadel of St. Servan. The task set was a dangerous and difficult one and the energy and enthusiasm shown by all was of the highest order. The effect the guns had on the fortifications was tremendous and I am sure that their fire played a great part in causing the surrender of The Citadel before the final assault of the Infantry. With this achievement behind you, I hope that all your future actions will be characterized by the same enthusiasm and zeal."

A sidelight in conjunction with this action was written by Francis Chase, Jr., in a July issue of the Saturday Evening Post:

"During the reduction of The Citadel at St. Malo, the besieged Nazis within the fort radioed for air support and got it. The first night Jerry came over, I was billeted with a 561st Field Artillery Battery in an old wooden house at the edge of town. Next to me, in a similar wooden house, lived a large French family, seemingly impervious to the war all about them. Boys from our battery used to visit the family and drink the hard cider that the old Frenchman would bring out of hiding for them.

"The first Nazi flight let go with butterfly bombs, anti-personnel affairs which flutter down in a



- 1) Jodenville, Belgium
- 2) Dug in
- 3) Buzz bomb
- 4) Faster than loading tray
- 5) Approaching the Siegfried Line

- 6) As powerful as its name
- 7) Too hard to dig in
- 8) Destroyed to prevent capture
- 9) Ste. Marie
- 10) Schlierbach

hundred little packages of sudden death. They landed all around our battery. The next flight was loaded with incendiaries. They set our roof afire in twenty different places and we had a bad half hour putting out the flames. Then someone noticed that the house next door was burning hopelessly, with roof timbers already beginning to crash and fall.

"We rushed over to see if we could help the family and saw the old man and one or two of our soldiers yelling and pointing to the burning house. Then we heard the voices of two more soldiers inside. 'Ready heave!' they were shouting, and again, 'Ready heave'.

"It was easy to figure what was happening. A blazing roof timber had fallen and trapped some member of the family inside. The boys were trying to raise it and free the luckless victim. We rushed inside too. Flaming wood and falling plaster rained about us. At any moment we expected the roof to come tumbling in.

"And then, by the light of the fire—the only light there was—we saw our two cannoneers, stripped to the waist, black and shining with mingled soot and sweat. 'Ready heave!' they yelled again, in unison—and the barrel of cider they were so busy rescuing from the basement cleared the last step up to the ground floor.

"From there they rolled 15 barrels out of the house easily, and we saw then that the family was all safe, as they gathered around to cheer the rescuers and kiss them on each blackened cheek."

Moving out Aug. 19—now attached to the 333rd FA Group—for the march to Brest, Baker Battery turned over a gun and had to leave it behind. The column, however, boasted two additional vehicles, a German ambulance badly needed by the Medics, and a bus later converted into a kitchen for Headquarters.

Two nights later, the battalion moved to Landerneau and began firing counter-battery missions on Daoulas Peninsula and Brest the following morning. First Lt. Charles R. Turner, S Sgt. Wilbur Bolton and Pvt. Albert Sawyer of the Survey crew were wounded when their jeep was hit by a mortar shell as they were surveying for an advanced OP.

The main attack on Brest pushed off Aug. 25. An estimated 30,000 enemy troops were strongly entrenched in the city. At 2245 hours on the night of the jump off one of Able Battery's guns blew up, killing Cpl. George Smith and wounding nine other members of the crew.

An 8-inch gun battery from the 243rd FA Bn. was attached to the battalion Aug. 27 as Charlie Battery displaced forward approximately 3000 yards. Three days later, Daoulas Peninsula was kaput and the remainder of the outfit shoved forward to positions near Charlie.

By Sept. 4, the 561st was pouring fire on Crozon Peninsula and Brest with counter-battery missions. Occasionally an enemy boat popped up to give observers practice in firing at moving targets. One boat was sunk by a direct hit. VIII Corps, to which the 561st still was attached, was taken over by Ninth Army Sept. 5.

Meanwhile, the battalion continued to fire on Brest and the peninsula. Brest finally surrendered Sept. 18 while Crozon collapsed the following day. The campaign had been rugged. Thirty field artillery battalions and four infantry divisions, the 2nd, 8th, 29th and 83rd, had participated in the battle. The 561st had fired 8757 rounds to boost its total to 16,976 and 933 missions.

From Brig. Gen. Van Fleet, Task Force B commander, came the following commendation to the 174th FA Group: "The 174th Field Artillery Group has performed in a highly commendable manner, executing innumerable fire missions for the corps and in support of the Task Force. The close support, counter-battery and harassing fires were very effective and constituted large factors in the rapid capture of the peninsula."

Col. H.W. Kruger, 174th CO, forwarded the commendation to the battalion with the following endorsement: "The excellent performance of your battalion contributed greatly to the effectiveness of artillery fire during this action. I desire to express my sincere appreciation to the officers and men of your battalion for their share in the excellent work which has earned this commendation for the 174th Field Artillery Group."

While in the "rest" area near Lanhourneau, the Battalion calibrated its guns, visited the submarine pens at Brest and relaxed. When the outfit shoved off Sept. 28, Baker Battery ran into trouble as the column passed through Dinan. The muffler on one of the prime movers became overheated and set the powder on fire. The heat from the powder and from the gasoline tanks which exploded, caused projectiles to explode. Fifteen men were burned, some seriously, along with the prime mover and gun.

Picking up the Red Ball highway, the 561st skirted Paris, Sept. 30, bivouacked at St. Quentin and crossed

the Belgian border the next day. Settling down just east of St. Vith, the battalion once more was getting set to contact the enemy.

Able Battery fired the first round into Germany Oct. 3 as the outfit took up positions near Schlierbach, east of St. Vith. The men hoped this was the beginning of the big push to Berlin, but other plans were evident when orders were received to dig in for the winter. Battalion Command Post, Fire Direction Center, Aid Station, Personnel Section and Service Battery took over buildings as the remainder of the battalion began constructing log cabins. Headquarters, Charlie and Able Batteries went in for section cabins, Baker settled for small huts.

Lt. Col. Robert C. White assumed command of the battalion Oct. 10, replacing Lt. Col. Nealy who was suffering from eye trouble. Firing now was limited to less than 50 rounds per day. Two OPs located on the Schnee Eifel ridge in Germany were surveyed in and bilateral charts set up for daily registration. Two alternate retrograde positions were selected and surveyed.

Training schedules, inspections, tests and police once again were the routine. Quotas for passes to Paris and to the rest center at Arlon were received occasionally. Trips to Bastogne were frequent and the battalion eventually set up its own rest area, modeling it after Duffy's Tavern. The hunting season officially opened early in the month when Charlie Battery bagged a couple of deer. Cpl. John Bratton, Charlie, was wounded in the elbow when he sprang a booby trap while going to an OP in the woods.

The 561st was reassigned to First Army in mid-October, about the same time it began sweating out heavy day and night buzz bomb traffic. Although several bombs fell in the area when the jet propelled mechanism failed, no casualties were incurred.

Baker Battery displaced forward about 3000 yards Oct. 26 and again dug in for the winter at Log Cabin Hill near Amelschied. Cpl. Charles B. Garey, Baker, stepped on a teller mine, escaping with minor wounds.

One shell fired by the battalion Nov. 3 sailed through the window of a school building and killed 35 Nazi officers attending a gunnery class. A German who was taken prisoner three days later told of the incident. VIII Corps Artillery then checked the time, coordinates, the concentration number, eventually determining that the shell was fired by the 561st.

As the daily ammunition allocation was increased to 75 rounds, two new guns were received to replace those damaged in France and were calibrated by a Photo Electric calibration team.

The first of many snows began falling Nov. 8. The lack of overshoes resulted in a constant fight against trench foot. In addition to the V-1's, which were constant companions by this time, V-2's were introduced. Although none exploded in the area, men watched the flying bombs head for the stratosphere whenever the projectiles were launched east of the Siegfried Line.

At 1100 hours Nov. 11, all guns fired a volley directed at the enemy in celebration of Armistice Day.

The next four weeks were spent in trying to keep warm and in the routine of static warfare. During this period, Lt. Robert J. Nielsen, an observer, had a microphone shot out of his hand while talking over the radio during a routine flight near Schnee Eifel Ridge.

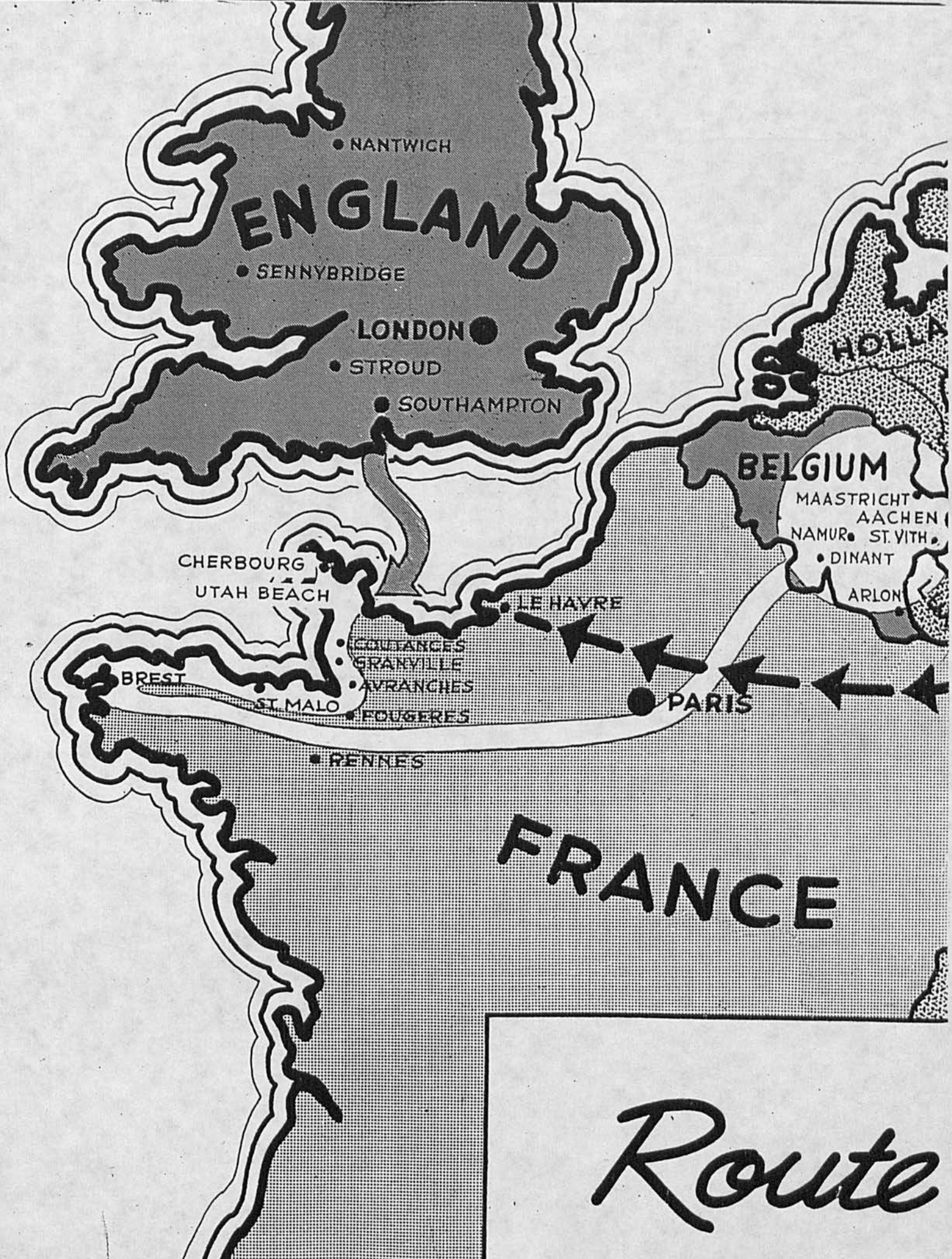
Early December, high headquarters learned the Germans were bringing additional troops to the corps front. In an effort to divert some of these reinforcements to the south near Luxembourg, a "ghost" force composed of small detachments from several corps units made preparations for a simulated attack to the east. The 561st's detachment moved to a wooded section near Arlon Dec. 9 where it removed unit designations from the bumpers and added false ones.

False gun pits were dug at Bach, wire lines laid, surveying accomplished and traffic circulated. A registering gun was borrowed from the 559th FA Bn. and with the fuzes set on "safe", several rounds were fired into a German-held town. The strategy was to inform the enemy of the presence of Long Toms in the vicinity.

The "ghost" force pulled out after dark, Dec. 14, blacked out the false numbers and returned to Schlierbach. The 2nd Infantry Division to the Battalion's front was replaced by the 106th Infantry Division at this time.

The Germans began firing considerable artillery, Dec. 16. Pfc. Jerome La Casse, Baker Battery aid man, was injured when a rocket and heavy artillery concentration centered on the area. Pvt. Henry W. Krause was killed and T/4 James T. Russel wounded by an 11-inch shell concentration in Service Battery's section. Baker Battery withdrew to retrograde position No. 1 at Krompach after dark.

Ammunition quotas were now forgotten and previously planned defensive fires put into effect. Zone



ENGLAND

• NANTWICH

• SENNYBRIDGE

LONDON ●

• STROUD

• SOUTHAMPTON

CHERBOURG ●
UTAH BEACH

• LE HAYRE

• BREST

• ST. MALO

• COUTANCES
• GRANYILLE
• AVRANCHES
• FOUGERES

• RENNES

● PARIS

BELGIUM

MAASTRICHT
AACHEN
NAMUR ● ST. VITH ●
• DINANT
ARLON ●

HOLLAND

FRANCE

Route



of the 561 st

fire on main inroads followed by Clam Brown Normal Barrage started the series. Next came Albany Series, Tiger No. 1 and Cynthia barrages, Robin and Duck series.

All hell broke loose Dec. 17 and the succeeding week was packed with harrowing experiences as the battalion pulled all the way back to Ospern, Luxembourg, in an attempt to keep ahead of the onrushing panzers.

It was snowy and cold as the 561st began heading north again Dec. 24. Divisions to the front were the 26th and 80th Infantries and the 4th Armored. Total rounds expended for the day totalled 612. Enemy planes strafed that night but no casualties were sustained.

Except for turkey, Christmas was just another day. Within the next 24 hours, the outfit had shoved on to Perle, located near the highway to Bastogne. At this time, elements of the 10th Armored and 101st Airborne Divisions were surrounded at Bastogne. Meanwhile, the 561st supported the 4th Armored and 35th Infantry Divisions whose troops hit the towns after the battalion's guns had softened up the opposition. Able and Baker Batteries each gave a gun to Charlie, all batteries then having three apiece.

Enemy planes swooped down to strafe positions twice Dec. 29. The ground still was covered with snow and the temperature was nine degrees above zero as the move to Tournay, Belgium, got underway. A brilliant moon made the blackout drive comparatively easy, but it also enabled the enemy to spot the column.

After passing through Arlon and Neufchateau, and undergoing two strafing attacks, the battalion watched a P-61 shoot down a German plane near the area. After riddling the German aircraft, the Black Widow thundered on, majestically silhouetted against the moon.

A salute to the new year was fired Dec. 31 as the snow and cold continued. The 561st began 1945 with a roar—806 rounds were fired Jan. 1, 803 the second day and 1008 on the 3rd. The ammunition sections, as always, were turning in an excellent performance. By now, six months of combat were behind the battalion and more than 25,000 rounds had been fired.

In bitter cold, the 561st supported the attack of the 17th Airborne and 87th Infantry Divisions which pounded northeast Jan. 4. Vehicles were white-washed for camouflage. Unless evacuated immediately, wounded men froze to death. While on roving OP duty, Lt. Charles B. Stegner picked up a 17th Airborne soldier who was crawling along on his elbows and knees. The dough's hands and feet were frozen. Patrols and local security guards were rotated more frequently.

The battalion's gun stopped an enemy tank attack near Bonnereau Jan. 7 by smacking the armor with plenty of ammunition. The tanks turned tail and fled.

As the skies cleared Jan. 12, American planes zoomed to the attack in large numbers. The outfit moved to Morhet and Jodenville and continued the "Battle of the Billets." Gun positions were easy to pick as the ground was frozen solid and most any field was suitable. Most positions were spotted at the edge of the towns in order that as many troops as possible could find houses for shelter. The T/O now included a highly important party, the Billeting Party.

The snow was so deep the road was barely discernable as the battalion pushed on to Senonchamps. Both Able and Baker Batteries turned over a gun en route. The "Phantom Gun," so named because no one ever did discover its location, popped up to plague all Corps Artillery units for several days. The 561st's mission consisted mainly of long range interdiction, harassing fires and pulverizing towns. Houffalize, a town thoroughly destroyed by the Long Toms to prevent its use to the enemy, was one of the principal targets.

Bastogne had been relieved and the Germans were slowly pulling back as Able, Baker and part of Headquarters Batteries went ahead to Compogne. Once a general requested that some distant unit handle the nightly harassing fire assignment; the 561st's guns were disturbing his sleep. Baker Battery succeeded in obtaining an additional billet when the occupants vacated a house after a gun had been parked next to the building and several rounds fired.

Fires during the day were mainly TOTs on towns and counter-battery missions. Wire communications continued to be excellent, but freezing weather hampered radio reception. Ice formed on the antenna insulators and mikes constantly froze.

Baker Battery's registering gun was set up between two 17th Airborne pack howitzers Jan. 25, which maintained the battalion's claim that it either was out in front of the infantry or breathing on the dough's neck. The first quota to send five men to the States on furlough was received as the 87th Infantry Division came up to relieve the Airborne troopers.



1) Empty shell case
2) Clipped
3) At ease overseas

4) Cooked
5) Contented
6) Impersonation

7) Survey crew, ready for anything

The Germans were pulling out fast as the battalion displaced to Huldange, then on to Thommen. Buzz bombs appeared for the first time in several weeks. Finally, on Feb. 4, the 561st reached the positions it had vacated at the time of the breakthrough. Although the Ardennes campaign officially ended Jan. 25, the battalion has always considered its return to Schlierbach as marking the end of the Battle of the Bulge.

The second phase of the Rhineland campaign followed. Three guns were received and the complement once more was complete. Although the Nazis now were out of range of the 155s, the battalion stayed in position until Feb. 7, when it pulled out at 0345 for Frialdenhoven, Germany, and assignment with 202nd FA Group, XIII Corps, Ninth Army.

Rising temperatures had melted the snow and rainy weather prevailed as the 561st went into support of the 5th Armored, 84th and 102nd Infantry Divisions. The large scale offensive across the Roer was next on the agenda.

Firing was limited the next two weeks as ammunition—more than 3000 rounds were set aside for H-Hour—was conserved. Buzz bombs, shells, rockets and planes came over frequently. Pfc. Paul Martin was killed when enemy shells landed in Charlie Battery's gun position. Fire Direction Center moved into a cellar the day T/4 Robert Climer and T/5 Frederick L. Goldman established a speed record for coming down steps after a shell exploded on the roof of the building.

Feb. 23, 1945, 0245 hours : The earth reverberated as approximately 2000 guns unleashed one of the war's mightiest barrages. Forty-five minutes later, infantrymen charged ahead and crossed the Roer. Two hours after the 561st fired its first round, 524 more projectiles were tossed in the Germans' laps.

Next day, OP details crossed the river and the entire battalion spanned the Roer at Linnich to occupy positions at Koffern Feb. 25. For the first days of the operation, the outfit fired 832 rounds per day as it shoved forward to Rath after the 5th Armored Division cleared the way.

Winkeln and Anrath were other stopovers as the Germans hurriedly pulled back to the Rhine. Following positions at Feldar and Kapellen, the battalion prepared to fire across the Rhine into Duisberg March 4 from positions at Moers.

Maj. Gen. A. C. Gillem, Jr., XIII Corps Commander, pulled the lanyard on Sgt. Keadle's section's gun for the 150,000 round fired by Corps Artillery. The lanyard later presented to the general was made from the braid of German officers' caps.

Factories, railroads, oil dumps, warehouses and enemy batteries in the industrial sections east of the Rhine now were the targets. Observation was good and OPs were frequently used. Considerable enemy casualties were incurred March 8 when battalion guns plastered a German troop train as it pulled into the station at Duisberg.

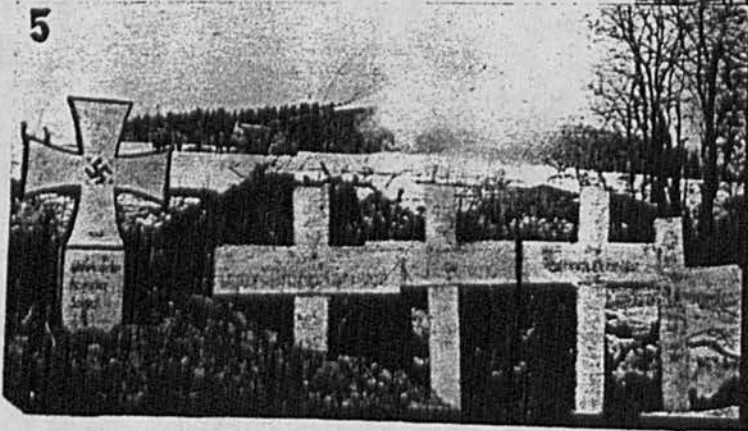
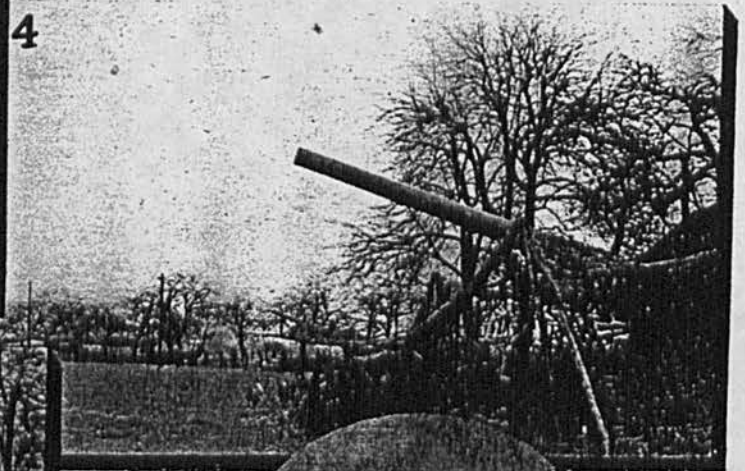
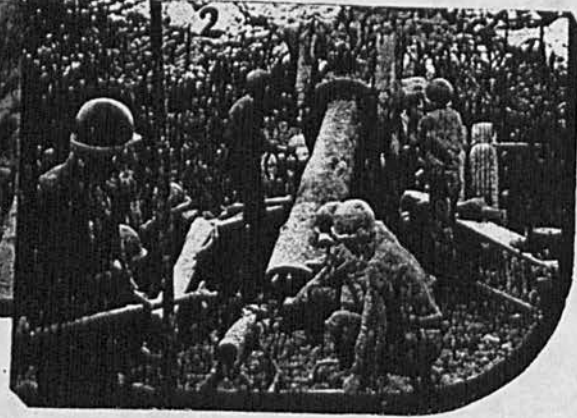
With a change in Corps boundaries three days later, the 561st jumped ahead to Uerdingen on the west bank of the Rhine. The Nazis frequently threw some heavy stuff over and "Bed Check Charlie" appeared nearly every night. Once, a friendly 90mm self-propelled gun battery to the rear miscalculated and hit a few rooftops in the town. P-47s adjusted Arty/R missions, which were fired whenever weather permitted. This part of the month was spent in preparing for the Rhine crossing. Total missions were 2,760 and total rounds 48,712 as the Central Germany campaign began.

March 24, 0300 hours: The Rhine crossing was on! From Uerdingen, the 561st maintained a volley every three minutes for four hours in support of XVI Corps on the left which pushed off to cross Germany's famous river. As XIX Corps on the battalion's right pulled around and followed XVI Corps across, the 17th Airborne Division, newly attached to XIII Corps, made a successful drop on Wesel to form a wedge across the river.

Nine days later, the battalion was relieved by elements of the Fifteenth Army and crossed the Rhine on a ponton bridge at Wesel to occupy positions four miles west of Munster, current objective of the 17th Airborne troopers. Munster surrendered April 4 and the outfit pulled out at 0330, heading east along the autobahn.

Corps Artillery, however, was bogged down by a blown bridge and the 561st turned to Isselhorst for bivouac. A large cognac distillery was located in this town, unguarded.

When the battalion reached Uchtdorf, just south of the Weser River, at 0730 the next day, a makeshift hospital containing 500 wounded Germans was located. The Nazis were promptly ordered to evacuate and go to Rinteln, which had been declared an open city. Thirty minutes after the last German pulled out, enemy shells peppered the battalion area; five men in Charlie Battery were injured. Only the river separated the outfit from the Germans at this point. The 84th Infantry Division was on the north side of the river, approaching the enemy from the west.



1) Maj. Gen. Gillem, Sgt. Keadle, at Moers, Germany

2) Collapsed

3) Winter in Belgium

4) Moers, Germany

5) One was an SS

6) Across the Rhine, Verdingen, Germany

At 0345 hours, April 10, the battalion pulled out, crossed the Weser River at Hameln and took up positions at Pattensen. A pocket at Arnum nearby had not been cleared and 88s were coming over in large numbers. Once again, along with four other artillery battalions, the 561st was without infantry. The five battalions formed a perimeter defense around the town.

No sooner did the outfit take up positions at Lehrte April 12 than "CSMO" was given. The enemy was retreating rapidly. The battalion now was reinforcing the 5th Armored Division, which was maintaining a breakneck speed to catch up with the fleeing Nazis.

As the battalion moved on to Klotze the next day, the reconnaissance party pulled out ahead, followed by Capt. Walter Rogers and a registering gun from Charlie Battery. While en route, the recon group received orders that they were to make further reconnaissance east of Osterburg because of 5th Armored's rapid progress.

After passing through Klotze, the reconnaissance party was ambushed near Zichtau by a portion of the enemy that had been by-passed by the armor. A liaison plane spotted the Germans and attempted to warn the column by diving in front of the lead vehicle, but it was too late.

As the column approached a wooded section near the top of a steep grade, Germans opened up with machine guns and panzerfausts. A shallow ditch was the only protection the men had. Capt. Karl O. Holliday, 1st/Sgt. Andrew V. MacDonald, T/5 Floyd F. Smith and T/5 Lewis Szakacs, all of Headquarters Battery, were killed.

Some of the personnel in the rear of the column made a break and successfully escaped. Capt. Woodling, Baker Battery, was shot through an arm as he raised his hands to surrender; Pvt. John Eagen, Lt. Col. White, 1st/Sgt. Ronald Routhier, 1st/Sgt. Walter Hurford, S/Sgt. Arthur Forbes, Cpl. Louis Soukey, Cpl. William Lackner and T/4 Don McMannamy were captured. The Nazis took the men that evening to a paratroop headquarters and later to an airport near Gardelegen.

On a farm outside of this town, teen-age German SS troops massacred and burned hundreds of Polish, Soviet and Hungarian slave laborers. The SS troopers herded their victims into a barn and ignited the straw on the floor which had been saturated with gasoline.

Meanwhile, the registering gun party was halted after passing through Klotze and ordered to go into action, along with a registering gun from the 261st FA Bn. Soon afterwards, Lt. Robert Nielsen, piloted by Lt. Douglas Lord, registered on a town at a range of only 2000 yards. The gun section was forced to boresight between trees and occasionally knocked a few treetops off. Capt. William McKinzie, having escaped the ambush, stayed with the registering gun that night and helped organize a perimeter defense.

When the remainder of the battalion arrived at Klotze, it occupied defensive positions at the edge of the town. The 202nd FA Group, which had sustained heavy losses in officers and men killed or captured, went out of action the next day and the battalion became attached to the 472nd FA Group. The same afternoon, the outfit shoved on to Geinsenslage along the Elbe River.

All personnel who were taken prisoner when ambushed were freed April 15 when elements of the 102nd Infantry Division reduced the enemy pocket. Those not wounded were returned to the battalion. Having lost five peeps, the 561st now found it necessary to requisition civilian cars. Firing was limited to observed targets only as Soviet troops were expected at any time.

The battalion settled down to wait for the Red troops to arrive but the fireworks weren't over by any means. Able Battery was bombed and strafed April 16 at 2105. T/5 James P. Slowey, T/5 Jesse E. Curtis, Pfc. Burton Neal and Pvt. Henry H. Hutcherson were killed. Nine other men were wounded.

More trouble developed the next day as a German division commanded by Gen. Von Clausewitz swung down from Corps' exposed north flank some 50 miles to the battalion's rear. This move resulted in displacing to the rear two days later in order to reinforce elements of the 5th Armored Division.

By April 21, the 561st had gone forward to Tarmitz where it fired 700 rounds along the banks of the Elbe. While awaiting for the Allied forces to hook up, Baker Battery moved to Zadrau. Firing was limited to observed fires once more and the river marked the "no fire line".

Assigned to the 411th FA Group April 25, the 561st shifted to Kleiner Gusborn. The last of 3260 missions took place at Offensen, on the Elbe, May 6. The Germans unconditionally surrendered two days later.

On May 12, every battery took off in a different direction as the battalion was assigned to military government work. However, by June 17, the 561st was together again at Kipfenberg where it was put into

category 4. In early July, the battalion was en route to Le Havre where it was to settle down and sweat out the return trip to the States.

This was the end of the trail—a long and arduous route that brought those Long Toms over four countries and through five major campaigns. The men of the 561st Field Artillery Battalion could well be proud. Those 54,991 rounds the booming 155s fired were one of many shoves that pushed Nazi Germany to defeat for all time.

AWARDED THE PURPLE HEART

For wounds received as a direct result of enemy action

Capt. Victor A. Woodling	Logansport, Ind.	Pfc. William L. Scalf	Bennington, Okla.
1st Lt. Charles R. Turner	Russellville, Ark.	Pfc. John J. Curran	Philadelphia, Pa.
1st Lt. William A. Miller	Brooklyn, Mich.	Pfc. William H. McMahan, Jr.	Pittsburgh, Pa.
1st/Sgt. Wilbur M. Bolton	Piqua, O.	Pfc. Benjamin P. Haynes	Covington, Ga.
S/Sgt. Eldon A. Hill	Circleville, O.	Pfc. George Hinton	Shannon, Miss.
Sgt. Philip P. Accettola	Alliance, O.	Pfc. Mylo J. Aamot	Makoti, N. D.
T/4 Frank B. Edmonds	Baxter, Tenn.	Pfc. Frank B. Pascarella	Youngstown, O.
T/4 James T. Russell	Hopkinsville, Ky.	Pfc. Adolphus J. Cadeau	Baraga, Mich.
Cpl. Anthony Cudakiewicz	Harison, N. J.	Pfc. Howard W. Provose	Luffkin, Tex.
Cpl. Charlie R. Collins	Oak Park, Ga.	Pfc. Fletcher B. Hamby	East Tallassee, Ala.
Cpl. Forrest A. Garey	Bucyrus, O.		
Cpl. James F. X. May	Brooklyn, N. Y.	Pfc. George McCoy	Jacksonville, Fla.
Cpl. John E. Bratton	Carmi, Ill.	Pfc. Earley J. Benton	Bainbridge, Ga.
Cpl. William H. Fields	Collinsville, Ill.	Pvt. Bernard Johns	St. Louis, Mo.
T/5 Vollie Dickens Jr.	Mobile, Ala.	Pvt. Willie B. Timms	Blackwell, Ark.
T/5 Joseph L. Di Pardo	Lebanon, Pa.	Pvt. Voris C. Cearlock	Decatur, Ill.
T/5 Willard E. Eidson	Licking, Mo.	Pvt. Albert L. Sawyer	Baltimore Md.
T/5 Fred W. Christie	Dennison, Ia.	Pvt. Joseph Giannone	Madison, N. J.
T/5 Jesse E. Curtis, Jr.	Nashville, Tenn.	Pvt. William J. McGuigan	Bronx, N. Y.
T/5 William T. Dent, Jr.	Selma, Ala.	Pvt. James R. Pullinger	Philadelphia, Pa.
T/5 Donald E. Dunkle	Morrisdale, Pa.	Pvt. Harmon Stewart	Bruce, Miss.
Pfc. Jerome J. Tumis	LaGrange, Tex.	Pvt. William L. Black	LaGrange, Ga.
Pfc. J. W. Bowman	Oakdale, Miss.	Pvt. Philip P. Graziano	Brooklyn, N. Y.
Pfc. Henry Kholos	Pittsburgh, Pa.	Pvt. Wilton R. Sanders	Liberty, S. C.
Pfc. James B. Larson	Courtsdale, Pa.	Pvt. Earnest C. Shoemaker	Dalton, Ga.
Pfc. Walter W. Newnam	Eugene, Ore.	Pvt. Lewis S. Knight	Drakesboro, Ky.
Pfc. Richard Ross	Pittsburgh, Pa.	Pvt. John J. Egan	Jamaica, N. Y.
Pfc. Edwards Dietz	Lincoln, Nebr.	Pvt. Pete Falcomato	North Fork, W. Va.
Pfc. Thomas M. Kirk	Concord, N. C.		
Pfc. Albert Mitchell	Dalton, Ga.	Pvt. Michael F. Keady	Pittsburgh, Pa.
Pfc. Jerome H. La Casse	Detroit, Mich.	Pvt. William E. Kohl	Philadelphia, Pa.
Pfc. Fred F. Hudson	Condell, Ga.		

AWARDED THE SOLDIERS MEDAL

For heroism not involving actual conflict with an enemy

Maj. Andrew J. Gordon	McAlester, Okla.	Cpl. Forrest A. Garey	Bucyrus, O.
Capt. Victor A. Woodling	Logansport, Ind.	Cpl. Roy C. Maner	Limestone County, Ala.
1st Lt. Donald J. Harris	Schenectady, N.Y.		Gastonia, N. C.
T/Sgt. William W. Forman	Toledo, O.	T/5 Theodore C. Baucom	Chisholm, Minn.
Sgt. William M. Ward	Chattanooga, N. Y.	Pvt. Thomas W. Perko	

AWARDED THE BRONZE STAR

Lt. Col. Robert C. White Maj. Andrew J. Gordon Maj. Melvin W. Chesnut Capt. Rauni G. Lampe Capt. Norman W. Blessing Capt. Victor A. Woodling Capt. William E. McKinzie Capt. Fred F. Huson Capt. Harold P. Stetson 1st Lt. Douglas C. Lord 1st Lt. Charles R. Turner 1st Lt. Otto E. Scherz 1st Lt. James E. Regnier 1st Lt. Charles B. Stegner 1st Lt. Earl R. King 1st Lt. Alvin R. Lantz 1st Lt. David E. Runden 1st Lt. Virgil E. Donze 1st Lt. Hoben J. Rogers 2nd Lt. Fred J. Weaver CWO Robert J. Burke M/Sgt. Edward J. McCartney, Jr. 1st/Sgt. Andrew V. MacDonald 1st/Sgt. Walter S. Hurford 1st/Sgt. Roland A. Routhier T/Sgt. Charles E. Moore T/Sgt. Eldred G. Lustman S/Sgt. Ralph W. Craig S/Sgt. John F. Pickens S/Sgt. John W. Schmidt	Alfred, N. Y. McAlester, Okla. Shreveport, La. East Portchester, Conn. Buffalo, N. Y. Logansport, Ind. Virginia, Nebr. Doniphan, Mo. Waterbury, Conn. Medford, Mass. Russelville, Ark. San Angelo, Texas. Aurora, Ill. Amidon, N. D. Cleveland, O. Louisville, Ky. Kendallville, Ind. El Paso, Ill. Fort Smith, Ark. Dayton, O. Webster, N. Y. Youngstown, O. Brooklyn, N. Y. Alliance, Ohio. Manchester, N.H. Dayton, O. St. Paul, Minn. Marshallville, Ga. Homeworth, O. Sandusky, O.	S/Sgt. John S. Blawis S/Sgt. Charles W. Martin S/Sgt. Laverne G. Diebel S/Sgt. Roy V. Gannon T/3 Joseph M. Brightman Sgt. Andrew Petruf Sgt. Philip P. Accettola Sgt. Russell Kramer Sgt. Raymond J. Thomas Sgt. Wesley C. Isham T/4 Bernie R. Walicki T/4 Bill Wood T/4 Garland B. Ford T/4 Donald J. Graves T/4 Donald A. Egli Cpl. Louis J. Soukey Cpl. Donald F. Layman Cpl. Raymond P. Bair Cpl. Herbert Stump Cpl. Edwin Grube T/5 Leo J. White T/5 Vollie Dickens, Jr. T/5 Thomas G. Reedy Pfc. Marlin A. Hobbs Pfc. Bernard Johns Pfc. James J. O'Connell Pfc. Charlie B. Dickey Pfc. Jerome H. La Casse	Port Washing- ton, N. Y. Salem, O. Atwater, O. Spencer, Ia. Philadelphia, Pa. Pittston, Pa. Alliance, O. Jefferson, Pa. Belton, Tex. Emery Gap, Tenn. Jackson, Mich. Newville, Ala. Charlottesville, Va. S. Sioux City, Neb. Alliance, O. Utica, N. Y. Donnemora, N. Y. St. Paris, O. Kearny, N. J. Bergenfield, N.J. Seminole, Okla. Mobile, Ala. Philadelphia, Pa. Castleberry, Ala. St. Louis, Mo. Bronx, N. Y. Watervalley, Miss. Detroit, Mich.
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AWARDED THE AIR MEDAL

For meritorious achievement while participating in aerial flight

1st Lt. Everett W. Andrews 1st Lt. Robert L. Ravey 1st Lt. Douglas C. Lord	Helena, Ark. Amarillo, Tex. Medford, Mass.	1st Lt. William A. Miller 1st Lt. Robert J. Nielsen 1st Lt. David E. Runden	Brooklyn, Mich. Clinton, Ia. Kendallville, Ind.
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AWARDED THE CROIX DE GUERRE

Republic of France

Capt. Walter F. Rogers, Jr.	Jacksonville, Fla.	Pfc. Ellis E. Howry	Drew, Miss.
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MISSING IN ACTION

Pvt. Leonard M. Maitland	Dec. 20, 1944	Leavenworth, Kans.
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LEST WE FORGET

Pvt. Harry J. Malchiodi	July 21, 1944	Chicago, Ill.
Sgt. John W. Calvin	Aug. 1, 1944	Dayton, O.
1st Lt. Everett W. Andrews	Aug. 10, 1944	Helena, Ark.
1st Lt. Robert L. Ravey	Aug. 10, 1944	Amarillo, Tex.
Cpl. George L. Smith	Aug. 25, 1944	Roebuck, S. C.
Pvt. Henry W. Krouse	Dec. 16, 1944	Trenton, N. J.
Cpl. Edwin Grube	Dec. 25, 1944	Bergenfield, N. J.
Pfc. Paul I. Martin	Feb. 15, 1945	Kenton, O.
T/5 Charles R. Filby	March 22, 1945	Avella, Pa.
Capt. Karl O. Holliday	April 13, 1945	Coryden, Ia.
1st/Sgt. Andrew V. MacDonald	April 13, 1945	Brooklyn, N. Y.
T/5 Floyd F. Smith	April 13, 1945	Stanley, Wis.
T/5 Lewis Szakacs	April 13, 1945	Turin, N. Y.
T/5 James P. Slowey	April 16, 1945	Homestead, Pa.
T/5 Jesse E. Curtis	April 16, 1945	Nashville, Tenn.
Pfc. Burton Neal	April 16, 1945	Parkers Lake, Ky.
Pvt. Henry H. Hutcherson	April 16, 1945	Trenton, Ga.