

163rd Engineer Combat Battalion
A Short History: May 1943 - Aug 1945
Ray I. Brasaemle

5 May 1943, that date will be recorded in history, this one at least, as the date the 163rd Engr. (C) Bn. was born of the Mother War Department and cast adrift to make its way in the world of khaki and steel. The infant first saw the light of day at Camp Van Dorn, Miss., near Centreville, and probably didn't like what it saw.

On that date the cadre arrived (from Plattsburgh Barracks, NY), four 2nd Lts. and some sixty EM's (enlisted men). Already on hand were Capt. Theodore J. Jakim, the CO (Commanding Officer), Capt. Ray I Brasaemle, the Exec. Off., and 1st Lt. Lester D. Reed, Jr. With the cadre were 2nd Lt. George I. Levitus, H&S Co., 2nd Lt. William F. Garrity, Co. A, 2nd Lt. Durward C. Hulce, Co. B, and 2nd Lt. Nevio Petrini, Co. C. Within the next two weeks the Medical and Dental Officers, 1st Lts. Faber and Blaker had reported and were ready to care for any broken bones and other ailments.

By 25 May the glitter of shiny gold bars around the 163rd area could be seen as far as Centreville as Class 29 of the Engineer OCS (Officer Candidate School) at Fort Belvoir, VA sent 20 hopeful 2nd Lts. to the young Battalion. Assignments were made as follows:

HQ:

S-1 - 2nd Lt. Joseph P. Bree

S-2 - 2nd Lt. William H. McCloud

Asst. S-2 - 2nd Lt. James C. Sides

RCN (Reconnaissance) Off. - 2nd Lt. Garland T. Byrd

S-3 - 2nd Lt. Woodrow W. Brown

Asst. S-3 - 2nd Lt. Achilles M. D'Amico

S-4 - 2nd Lt. George I. Levitus

Liason Off. - 2nd Lt. Richard P. Lepke

H&S (Headquarters & Service) Co.:

CO - 2nd Lt. Nevio Petrini

Motor Off. - 2nd Lt. Charles Rybeck

Co. A: 2nd Lts. William F. Garrity (CO), Harry F. Allen, Jr., Leland H. Bishop, Arthur B. Cadwalader, and Mark F. Gardner

Co. B: 1st Lt. Lester D. Reed, Jr (CO), and 2nd Lts. Baker, Thomas E. Bennett, Paul Castleberry, and Clay.

Co. C: 2nd Lts. Durward C. Hulce (CO), Fay O. Bloomfield, John De Lorenzo, Bertram Ferber, and Hanson

Also joining the unit about this time were three WOJG's (Warrant Officer, Junior Grade): John J. Lyons as Asst. S-4, Orvill C. Clark as Asst. S-1, and Charles F. Cure as Asst. Motor Off.

With its officer personnel completely filled, the Battalion began to receive enlisted personnel. From 15 May to 15 June they poured in from Fort Oglethorpe, GA, Fort McPherson, GA, Fort McClellan, AL, Fort Bragg, NC, Camp Shelby, Camp Lee, VA, and New Cumberland, PA. A more

bewildered bunch of rookies probably never tread upon God's green earth, but most of them had one thing in common: acute home-sickness.

By the first of June enough of the fillers had arrived that basic training could be launched, and so it came to pass. Basic training with its day and night work, no equipment, and no facilities for training, but plenty of training schedules. Gradually the motley collection of rookies began to shape up. They slowly learned the difference between right and left, how to hold a rifle, to read maps, to creep and crawl, to salute and to soldier. From dawn to dusk they drilled under the unrelenting Mississippi sun. It will be a long time before anyone who experienced basic training with the 163rd will forget the "experience."

Camp Van Dorn, too, will long be remembered. Remembered for its state of semi-civilization. Roads were carved out of the jungle and pushed through the swamps. Evenings were spent building duckboards, working around the area, trying to make it seem a little like home; remembered also for its heat. What was a cool breeze at Van Dorn felt like something from a blast furnace. Hades itself couldn't have been much warmer.

Then there was Centreville, that lovely little spot where nobody could go. Passes weren't unheard of. Everybody heard of them, it was just that nobody ever got one. Centreville was off-limits, so we stayed in camp. And then the troubles, let us say misunderstandings, with our colored brethren were lessened. No, Van Dorn will not be forgotten so easily, although its memories weren't particularly pleasant.

All this time the 163rd was assigned to 12th Hq, Special Troops, of Third Army, a fine organization which can best be described as "GI" (Government Issue) completely and absolutely. After 31 May we were under the protective wing of the 1135th Engr Combat Group, commanded by Lt. Col. Daly.

As basic training progressed, there were a few changes in assignments from time to time. On 18 June Lts. D'Amico and Castleberry traded jobs, D'Amico moving to B Co. and Castleberry taking over as Asst. S-3. Forty Three fillers drifted in from Camp Robinson on 24 July and began catching up on basic training. Finally at the end of August basic training was completed and the basic training test passed with a rating of satisfactory.

September was the beginning of unit training and brought with it promotions for the EMs and rumors of furloughs. Four 2nd Lts. joined the unit: Lt. Hogan to Co. B, Lt. Goldstone to Co. A, Lt. Rodgers to Co. C, and Lt. Bybee to Co. B. About this time Lts. Byrd and Lepke traded jobs in Hq and Lt. Baker took over Co. B. Lt. Reed took off for field officers school. 1st Lt. Waldron reported and went to work in the S-1 Section and a few days later 2nd Lt. Koch reported and was assigned as Asst. S-3.

Then on 15 September it happened: the chips (only red ones now) fell and the 163rd moved out for the Louisiana Maneuver Area. Thus began the Great Battle of Louisiana which had several interesting aspects. Bivouac areas were shared with the South's finest hogs. Movements were a signal

for the heavens to open up with one of their special maneuver rainstorms. Winter came early to Louisiana that fall, or so it seemed at least, for the nights were cold - - damned cold.

For the next nine weeks the Battalion moved up and down the maneuver area, crossed the Sabine River twice, and at least once lost a complete Engr Combat Group and left it scattered over a large section of Louisiana. Maneuvers were another of those experiences one is not likely to forget.

1 October saw considerable shuffling in the officer assignments. Lt. Levitus took over as CO of Co. C and Lt. McCloud assumed the duties of S-4. Lt. Bloomfield moved in as S-2 and Lt. Gardner as S-1, with Lt. Koch moving to Co. C and Lt. Bree to Co. A. Lt. Hulce went to Cadre School at Fort Belvoir. A few days later Lt. Bishop took over as CO of H&S Co. and Lt. Petrini assumed command of Co. B, with Lt. Baker going to Co. A. Promoted to 1st Lts. were Garrity, Levitus, Petrini, and Hulce. Lts. Goldstone, Bybee, Rodgers and Hogan were sent away to the hinterland. Lt. Faber developed a strange ailment and was transferred to a General Hospital, leaving the outfit without a medical officer. On 22 October Lt. Lepke was transferred to Co. C and Lt. Sides to Co. B. About the middle of October men in the 163rd could say "something new has been added." The CO sprouted leaves, a gold one on each shoulder, and started signing his name "Major Jakim." A few weeks later a second pair was being worn by Major Brasaemle. During the first month and a half of maneuvers, the unit was attached to the 1115th Engr. Combat Group commanded by Col. Underwood. Who can forget Col. Underwood? On 24 October a cadre to the 260th Engr. Combat Bn. was sent out. Lts. Waldron, Koch, Baker, and Clay going with the Cadre. The last half of the maneuvers the 163rd was part of the 1134th Engr. Combat Group commanded by Col. Fitch.

Finally on 17 November the unit moved back to Camp Van Dorn losing one truck on the way when it had an argument with a locomotive regarding the right of way. The next day Lt. Castleberry was transferred to Co. A and Lt. Byrd to Co. B. The Battalion got its only captain when Reed donned the double bars. Seven officers in the Battalion got 15-day leaves, with the rest of them scheduled to follow. Furloughs for the EM's also began.

All this time the unit was taking up where it had left off on the unit training program. Centreville was no longer off limits, and despite a rather full training schedule, the officers beat a path to Baton Rouge nightly. A goodly portion of the traffic between Camp Van Dorn and Louisiana's capital city would be accounted for by the officers of the 163rd. Johnny Hill's, the Heidelberg, and other of the "spots" often resounded with "The Barmaid from Baton Rouge," our own contribution to the world's fine music. In the meantime, Co. A was "vacationing" at Sharonville, Ohio, working with some steel trestle (bridge) equipage.

December came in like a lamb, but things began to happen. The blur began to rattle at least, giving signs of falling sometime in the future. There was a windfall of captains when Capts. Marshal A. Patch, Diboll and Tucker arrived. Fort Belvoir's Class 41 of the Engineer OCS contributed two new shavetails: Charles L. Harris and Robert L. (Sam) Carstens. 9 December brought another shuffling of officer personnel. Co. A, having returned to the fold, received Lts. Bishop, DeLorenzo and Carstens, Capt. Patch taking over H&S Co., Lts. Allen, Bloomfield and Castleberry moving to Co. C, Capt. Diboll was assigned Liason Off., Capt. Reed as S-2, Lt. Harris as RCN Off., Lts. Lepke and Sides as Asst. S-2 and Asst. S-3 respectively, Lt. Bree moved from Co. A to Co. B. Prior to this Lts. Allen, Bishop,

Bloomfield, Brown, Cadwalader, D'Amico, McCloud and Rybeck traded their gold bars for silver, and Lt. Gardner soon followed suit. There was much moaning to be heard as all leaves and furloughs were canceled and work began in earnest. The officers' Christmas party furnished one brief respite. It started out rather peaceably at Officers' Club No. 1 with a steak dinner, got a little bit livelier at No. 2 with a little dancing and quite a little drinking, and really got into full later on down at Baton Rouge. Baton Rouge's Liberty Belles will long remember this party if no one else does.

The new year came, and with it came fillers; fillers from everywhere, bringing the Battalion up to T/O (Table of Organization) strength: (29 officers, 3 warrant officers, and 632 enlisted men). Some were good and some were bad, with a preponderance of the bad. Lt. Lepke moved from headquarters to Co. B and eventually to the hospital. Leaves and furloughs were started again, and the morale jumped up a few hundred percent. Then there were tests: the Air-Ground Test and the Unit Training Test., both of which brought back memories of maneuvers and earned a rating of very satisfactory.

January brought more changes in personnel, four 2nd Looeys coming from the 164th Engr. Combat Battalion. Lt. Bruce H. Suter went to Co. A, Lt. David Busby to Co. B, Lt. William J. Burns, Jr. to Co. C, and Lt. Bernard S. Holzman drew an assignment as Asst. S-2. Capt Tucker was transferred out of the Battalion. By this time the key word was POM (Preparation for Overseas Movement), with range firing of all kinds, 25-mile hikes, reading of AR's (Army Regulations) and TC's (Training Circulars), packing and crating, and hundreds of administrative details to be checked. Training dwindled down to practically nothing as the 163rd began to get "hot." Lt. Blaker (Medical Off.) went to the hospital, and the medical detachment got new officers in the persons of Capt. Francis S. North, the Medical Officer, and Capt. George J. Einhorn, the Dental Officer.

The last few days at Van Dorn will be remembered for its football games and another officer's party at which the theme song was "Your Papa's Off to the POE (Port of Embarkation)." And so we were leaving, as anyone in Centreville could tell you, along with the exact date we were moving. Just before we moved Capat. Diboll lost (or perhaps won) the flip of the coin and was dropped as excess. Lts. Lepke and Sides went to Co. A and Lt. Bishop moved to Liason Off. and Lt. Carstens took over as Asst. S-3. Lts. De Lorenzo and Ferber were promoted and donned the silver bars of 1st Looeys.

Then on 17 February it happened: the 163rd said goodbye to Camp Van Dorn and boarded trains for the POE. Co. A on one train and the rest of the Battalion on another. Theoretically at least, no one knew where we were headed for, and a lot of us weren't sure when we got there. The signs said Camp Shanks, N.Y., so the next rumor to pop up concerned passes to the big city. Naturally, the day the passes were to start, the Battalion was alerted, and the next few days were spent at Shanks. On 25 February Headquarters, H&S Co., and Co. A moved down the Hudson by steamer and boarded the USA Cristobal at the port. B and C Co's came aboard the following evening. On Sunday morning 27 Feb 1944 the Cristobal shoved off and set out across the broad Atlantic.

Now the chips were *really* down, although the complexions of many of the men turned green as the ship began to roll. Seasickness became a common ailment, and filled canteens were mandatory items of uniform. Actually, however, there was little to worry about since the Cristobal was in the capable hands of the "voice" and his cohorts of the Transportation Corps. Then, too, the 163rd was running the ship. Maj. Jakim was troop commander, Capt. Reed, Provost Marshall, and Lts. Brown and

Holzman took turns as Troop Adjutant. Everywhere it was 163rd. All the MP's, KP's, cooks, in fact everyone who was anyone was 163rd. "The Fighting Evergreens" echoed and reechoed from the housetop to the engine room as the engineers entertained the nurses aboard the Cristobal. After 12 days of boat drills, air raids, poker and monopoly, and the omnipresent "voice" with his polka-dot tie, our ship tied up at Swansee, Wales. The next day, 10 March, the Battalion disembarked and moved to Fargo Tent Camp (on the Salisbury Plain) in Wiltshire, which turned out to be the bleakest, coldest, windiest, and most barren spot in all England.

Here the 163rd became part of the First Army and was attached to the 1109th Engineer Combat Group, commanded by Col. Sorley. The men moved into their tents and tried to get used to English money, weather, beer, and the blackout, and the thousands other things strange to Yanks. Less than a week later the 163rd moved closer to protective wings of Group and settled into Over Norton Camp (near Chipping Norton) in Oxfordshire.

Compared to the first camp on the Salisbury Plain, Over Norton was little short of heaven, but still short. Soon Chipping Norton was filled with engineers, and shortly thereafter Woodstock, Oxford, Banbury, and Stratford-upon-Avon began to feel the effects of our invasion. Then followed a series of stolen geese skirmishes with the "Open Rosko (?)," misunderstanding with the "American Indians" (colored troops), and a few other things that kept life from being dull. And then there was training. We built roads for all the farmers in the area, crossed the River Thames seven dozen times, laid mines, and generally got set for the invasion. Perhaps the biggest event was when the CO traded his gold leaves for silver and became "The Colonel."

The invasion finally came on 6 June, and the 163rd began to get warmer and warmer. Lt. Lepke went to the hospital with a bum leg and was eventually lost to the Battalion, so Lt. Lloyd K. Stalcup was transplanted from the Infantry and moved into Co. A. June brought several promotions as Garrity, Petrini, and a few days later, Levitus, donned the double bars of captain, and Lts. Bennett and Sides traded gold for silver.

By this time, pup tents were home, and the order of the day was to roll the bedroll every morning. Practice loadings followed, and finally on 19 June the rear echelon under Capt. Patch moved out for the marshaling area. They embarked the next day and lay off the coast of England for seven days until the storm on the English Channel subsided. On 21 June the forward echelon moved to the marshaling area, and after 5 days of sleeping and eating, loaded on LSTs (Landing Ship, Tank), C Co. on one and the rest of the Battalion on another. The trip across the Channel was uneventful, and on 26 June, D plus 20, the Battalion landed in France. The infant had become a man.

Now the 163rd was to receive a real test as to the effectiveness of those long months of training, drawing on lessons learned in the swamps of Louisiana and Mississippi. With mixed emotions men of the 163rd viewed their entrance into the combat zone, most of them looking forward to what most certainly would be a new experience, and not a few feeling, if not actually "scared," at least a little apprehensive. The first night spent in a transit area near the beach proved not too exciting, although a brilliant display of flares and ack-ack over the beach furnished a little entertainment. On the morrow, the Battalion moved out for the bivouac area about two thirds of the way across the peninsula from Utah Beach. Again there was no excitement, no mines, no snipers, and no sign of enemy planes. Although

no one knew it at the time, the route taken by the convoy passed within range of German mortar fire, but apparently the mere knowledge that it was the 163rd kept the Jerries' guns silent. On this trip we got a picture of some of the devastation wrought by the war which swept through this area of wrecked towns and field after field pock-marked by countless shell holes and bomb craters. Some of the towns, such as Port l'Albe appeared to have been lifted in their entirety by some huge bomb and dropped as one huge heap of rubble. Even without dodging any bullets, the horrors of war were pretty well brought home to all of us by this picture of destruction.

Our first bivouac was at Blandamour on the highway between Bricquebec and St. Sauveur-le-Vicomte. Here the 1109th Engineer Combat Group was given a mission in support of VII Corps. For the most part, the work was in roadway maintenance, patching, ditching, and clearing shoulders. Company C moved to newly liberated Cherbourg on 1 July and remained for two days helping to clean up the dock area, moving engineer materials left by the Germans, and hunting souvenirs. Cherbourg also furnished the Battalion with countless barrels of German tar, tar kettles, and a concrete mixer.

For thirty-five days the CP (Command Post) remained at Blandamour. It was here we became accustomed to the vinegar-like cider which furnishes the liquid component of the French diet, and the French cognac, which is apparently a mixture of alcohol and nitroglycerin. We settled down to the task of leaning the French language, most of us never getting any farther than saying "bon jour" and "au revoir."

For a while, at least, souvenir collecting was the pastime, and the Battalion soon boasted a formidable collection of German ammunition and explosives. Lt. Gardner had a small arsenal of German rifles (actually only one), and almost every man in the outfit had something German. Mail service was good, rations weren't bad, and some apple fights that developed around our bivouac area actually rivaled the hedgerow fighting a few miles ahead in their ferocity. Fortunately, no casualties were reported.

About this time the divisions to our south were converging on La Haye-du-Puits, and much of the supporting artillery was set up not far from us. Some of the barrages laid down must have been terrifying to the Germans, for they frightened many of us until we became accustomed to their noise. Tents shook, the ground shook, and not a few knees shook as the 240's (240-mm guns) and Long Tom's thundered. Then La Haye-du-Puits fell, the war continued southward, and the ASCZ and the Third Army Hq. began moving in. Then we knew we were safe.

Still the order of the day was road work. Day after day it was the same: pitching and ditching and pitching. As the line companies kept the tar hot, H&S Co. kept itself busy bringing more tar, and painting signs proclaiming the necessity for saluting and wearing helmets. One long-awaited promotion came in as our S-3 donned the double bars and became Capt. Brown. On 13 July, Co. B took over the operation of a quarry on hill 121 north of La Haye-du-Puits, which kept Capt. Petrini and a couple of his men busy for several weeks. Four days later Co. A moved to a new bivouac area east of St. Sauveur-le-Vicomte and began work on a POW (prisoner of war) enclosure near St. Jores. The next day the job was completed and prisoners began to roll in, dejected specimens of the "master race." On 22 July, Co. A was assigned the operation of a quarry near Lithaire, east of La Haye-du-Puits and not quite out of range of the Jerries' artillery. The first few days were spent trying to find a generator and get the

elaborate French crusher in operation. A week later the 163rd was producing gravel and crushed rock from two separate quarries.

However, the majority of the Battalion was still working on roads. Co. B took down a Bailey Bridge at St. Sauveur-le-Vicomte, built a detour through a frantic Frenchman's garden just outside La Haye-du-Puits, and began work on a rotary in the heart of the same town. This last job furnished the only known instance of a D-7 tractor and dozer being used to retrieve cognac, when a stock of the potent liquid was unearthed in the course of clearing out shells of wrecked buildings. Otherwise it was still the same old story, ditching and pitching, pitching and ditching, day in and day out. It was more than a little monotonous.

Finally, on 1 August, the Third Army assumed the western part of the American sector, and the following day the 163rd moved eastward to a point near the Germans, northwest of St. Lo. Here it was pretty much the same story, pitching and ditching. Co. B operated a gravel pit, and Co. A removed a Bailey Bridge, but the rest of the time we kept the tar kettles hot. As the area of responsibility moved southward, A and C Cos. moved west of St. Lo, an area which probably had more dead cows per acre and which had the foulest odor of any place in France. Here they repaired the bomb-shattered roads leading into the city, which was the scene of what was probably the war's bloodiest campaign.

During this time the ever present rumor concerning our reassignment to Third Army began coming louder and louder, the authorities quoted becoming even more authoritative. Unlike previous rumors, this one came to pass. It was on the night of 7-8 August that the 163rd made its famous midnight ride 85 miles to Ernée and the Third Army. Starting just before midnight and riding all night we traveled southward through the territory that had just been liberated by General Patton's armored columns. After spending a day in bivouac near Ernée, we moved to La Lune, east of Laval, as the push moved eastward.

It was here that the war first began to prove interesting. The Battalion was attached to the XV Corps in support of the 79th Infantry Division and the 5th Armored Division. No mission was assigned, and all spare time was spent in searching for stray Germans bypassed by the divisions ahead. One result was three Russians who had been forced into labor by the Bosch and two Germans who had been taking pot shots at our water point. The second night in this area, a half dozen Tiger Tanks were reported to be heading our way, so out went the bazookas and .50 cal. machine guns. Their crews put in an all-night vigil but never did see anything German. Anyway the fighting seemed to be getting closer.

Still the big push continued eastward, and the day following the tank scare we moved again, this time east of Le Mans to Monfort-le-Gesnois, and the Battalion went to work again. Now the work was more to our liking. No more pitching and ditching. The tar was left behind. Filling in road craters and removing obstructions from roads, mine removal, in fact anything and everything to keep the lines of communication open and keep the supplies moving. Then, too, we would be operating nearer the front from now on. Yes, things were getting more interesting.

We moved again the next day, and the next, this time to Origny le-Roux, just east of Mamers. This was 13 August, unlucky 13th, and the Battalion was saddened as it suffered its first casualties from enemy action when two C Co. men were injured by a booby trap along a road shoulder. The same day

saw another first when a force of about 25 FW-190's bombed and strafed an objective not far away. Some C Co. trucks were caught in the attack and got some bullet holes, but the only other effect was to give everyone from the CO on down a pretty good scare, and to put foxholes on a voluntary basis. Far into the night the sound of picks and shovels could be heard as the foxholes grew deeper and deeper. The Battalion lost Capt. Reed here also as he was transferred to Corps Hq. and Lt. Bloomfield took over as S-2. The day before this Capt. Petrini was lost to the Battalion when he accidentally shot himself with a captured German pistol. (He returned in December or January).

During this time the XV Corps had been driving north to close the trap on a German spearhead which had driven for Auraindres. Now the drive swung toward the east and headed toward Paris, and on 15 August the 163rd began its march on gay Patee. Until 0130 the following morning we kept on moving, and it seemed like we would never stop. It was blacker than the inside of a whale's belly. What little light there was came from the fires of burning tanks in the distance on either side. Finally the Battalion pulled into a wheat field and posted its security. It was the same night that six men walking down the road in the inky blackness passed one of our guard, greeted him with a "hello," as they passed, to which one ever alert guard replied with a cheery "hello," as they kept on into the darkness, and thought nothing more of the matter. A few yards farther the same six greeted some more of our men, this time the Colonel. Maj. Brasaemle, and Lt. Bishop. The Major's voice could be heard in the darkness calling out, "Are you French?" By this time the Colonel had stuck his face in that of the nearest stranger, jumped a foot and shouted, "Cover ém, these guys are Germans!" and so they were; six of them fully armed and even carrying a machine gun. After they were well covered someone told them to drop their weapons. With the clatter of their hardware on the pavement Major "B" sprang into action and nearly breaking his neck (at least so the observers report) scrambled between their legs picking it up. The Third Reich was minus six more fighting supermen, we had six more mouths to feed, and the three officers were recovering from an acute case of being surprised, if not scared. They all recovered, however.

Came dawn, and the realization that we were much too close to where the front line should have been. As a result we turned around and moved into a bivouac several miles farther back. We stayed there only a few hours, but long enough to draw fire from a quartet of low-flying enemy airplanes and a sniper concealed somewhere in the town of Challet. A few hours later we moved again, this time to le Peage. Although the trip was only a few miles it took over an hour due to several interruptions from a pair of enemy planes bent on shooting up the 163rd. The net result was a beautiful ack-ack barrage and no casualties.

The Battalion spent three days here, the companies at work on their assigned missions. Occasionally our .50's would fire a few rounds at a stray plane, but otherwise there was no excitement. One change occurred when Lts. Bishop and McCloud got their promotions to Captain. At this time we were in direct support of the 79th Division operating directly behind the Division Engineers as that division pushed onward.

By 19 August, the 79th reached the Seine at Mantes and we moved up again, stopping at Tilly. At this stage of the game things got pretty exciting. The 79th had pushed a spearhead considerably in advance of the divisions on either side, and stuck out like a proverbial sore thumb. Our right flank was exposed like a fan dancer's bottom, and the left flank wasn't a whole lot better off. It was about this time

the bottled up Germans in the Falaise Gap were trying to break out, and we weren't too certain about our rear. And then there was frequently something German overhead. Yes, things were pretty warm.

On 20 August the 163rd made history as A and C Companies threw a treadway bridge across the Seine River, the first bridge constructed over this river by the Allied advance. This is the bridge that drew a place of honor with its picture in our *Stars and Stripes* (newspaper). It was here also that men from our outfit knocked down six enemy planes bent on destroying our bridge.

Meanwhile, Capt. Bishop and Co. B were having quite a time too, in support of the 106th Cavalry Group. They were helping to cover that wide open right flank. This was much like a game of hide and seek with superior German forces trying to find Co. B and the horseless horsemen and having them show up where they weren't supposed to be.

Transcriber's note: This is all that was written by the Major. There is no date on the paper, but it was in a packet that included the history of Company A. That history was written while he was billeted in Austria. The names and places are all foreign to me and I have tried my best to decipher this browned manuscript. I hope it brings back memories to retell late into the night. John Brasaemle, 26 July 1997.

Editor's note: First names of individuals, where known, have been added the first time they are mentioned, some spelling of place names has been corrected to the extent that they could be identified on maps, and some military abbreviations have been explained in parentheses for the benefit of our Grandchildren.

Mark Gardner, January 1998.