

fantry Regiment, 102nd Infantry Division also crossed the Elbe at Ferchland, but were promptly taken prisoner by a German battle group. He also described the Xeroxes from my history book as a "fascinating set of materials relevant to our unit's crossing the Elbe." Now after 52 years perhaps our unit and support units will get the distinction we deserve.

I had just noticed in my 83rd Infantry Division history book that the 2nd Armored Division made an attempt to take and hold a bridgehead south of Madgenburg but had more opposition than we did. They later crossed the "Truman Bridge" and helped reinforce the bridgehead and supported the 329th and other support troops.

Another documentary shown on the Discovery Channel entitled "Great Fighting Machines of World War II" segment "Allied Armor" was also in error as the narrator states in the last few minutes "All of the Allies had their sights on Berlin but this final goal went to the Russians. The Allies halted at the Elbe River. With the defeat of the Nazi's just over the horizon, Hitler committed suicide. A week later on 7 May 1945, Germany surrendered to the Allies. Europe was liberated at last" unquote. I had written to the Discovery Channel and sent them Xeroxes from my history books also, but they apparently are not in the same class as WQED.

I Remember

Submitted by Wilmer V. Phillips

We assembled in the Hurtgen Forest after we relieved the battered 22nd Infantry of the 4th Infantry Division. The 329th (Buckshot) Regiment of the Thunderbolt Division was to continue through the forest and seize the west bank of the Roer River. It was a forest filled with death. The Jerries (Germans) were armed with burp guns, machine guns, mortars and booby traps. They hid in the trees and planted mines on the ground between them. The Heinies artillery shells were fired so they would explode near the top of the trees and send fragments of steel flying in all directions. We lost many men before reaching the Roer River on 18 December 1944. "Company I broke through and captured the town of Birgel. Birgel was soon under American control. We took prisoners as we searched the houses.

As I opened a door to a dwelling, rifle at port, I anticipated the enemy's presence. My adrenaline pumping at full speed made my trigger finger ready to fire on the enemy. I saw the shape of a man and almost fired. I stopped myself in a split second and a relief fell over me as I realized I was looking into a full-length mirror.

During the night, we were ordered to maintain positions in the buildings. Several German soldiers arrived in the street that night thinking the town was theirs. At daylight they found out the hard way that only dead Jerries were there.

The 453rd AAA (AW) Battalion

Submitted by Fred C. Pearson

On 1 August 1942 the organization was activated at Fort Bliss, TX, as the 453rd Coast Artillery Battalion, AA Automatic Weapons. The command of the group was given to a cadre of officers and enlisted men from various other artillery organizations.

The battalion was composed of four gun batteries and a Headquarters Battery. Each gun battery was assigned 40mm Bofers anti-aircraft guns, mounted on a four-wheeled device that could be lowered on pads for stability when being fired. They were also assigned 50 caliber water cooled machine guns, along with the necessary trucks and vehicles to make the unit a semi-mobile organization, battalion man power about 850 men.

After basic training at Fort Bliss, TX and

effective training with our new found "toys," our training was completed with an exercise that rated the 453rd the best qualified 40mm outfit in the command.

Due to the extra ordinary qualifications of the 453rd, the battalion was selected to become a demonstration unit attached to an armored forces command. After some personnel changes the organization was shipped off to Fort Knox, KY. (No we didn't get to guard the Gold Reserve.) The 453rd was the first anti-aircraft battalion to be recommended and accepted to become a demonstration unit to work with the Armored Forces in trying to develop a more mobile unit of operation. At this time a new group of inductees from the West Coast joined the battalion to bring our unit up to the required man power level. At this time our coast artillery designation was dropped and changed to anti-aircraft artillery.

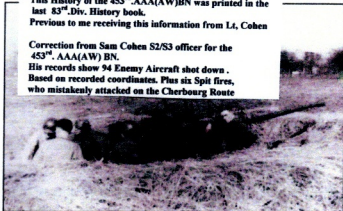


50 Cal Water Cooler Machine Gun. Sgt. Hammer "B" Battery 1943.

This History of the 453rd AAA(AW)BN was printed in the last 83rd Div. History book. Previous to me receiving this information from Lt. Cohen

Correction from Sam Cohen S2/S3 officer for the 453rd AAA(AW) BN.

His records show 94 Enemy Aircraft shot down. Based on recorded coordinates. Plus six Spit fires, who mistakenly attacked on the Cherbourg Route



One of the 453rd AAA (AW) BN. AD. MM Bofers just outside of Nauss Germany. Rhine River.



40mm Bofors Anti-Aircraft Gun.

Quad mount air cooled 50 caliber machine guns, mounted on four wheeled trailers, were a direct result of this assignment. Later on these would change and the quad mount would be put on half tracks.

In mid-summer of 1943 we were transferred to Camp Stewart (now Fort Stewart), GA. (Camp Swampy, what a hole). After living with the alligators and snakes in bivouac for two months and many men being unhappy, a group of enlistees, along with an officer or two, tried to get transferred into the paratroops. No enlistees were accepted, but the scanty records seem to indicate that one officer was accepted. Immediately after this, "the powers that be," decided it would be prudent to grant furloughs to the battalion. By mid-August 1943, the battalion was given orders to move to Lebanon, TN for maneuvers. While in convoy to the maneuver area the battalion had a stop over at Fort Oglethorpe, GA, home of the WACs. Needless to say it was memorable. The battalion was relieved from maneuvers in November of 1943 and reassigned to Fort Fisher, NC. At Fort Fisher more men were assigned to the unit to bring us up to strength again.

Two days after Christmas in 1943 we were reassigned to the Maple Hill section of Camp Davis, NC. This was an OCS Training Center for anti-aircraft officers. The camp has been torn down for many years and is now a housing development.

On 1 February 1944 the 453rd was shipped off to Camp Shanks, NY where, after a few days, we boarded the *Dominion Monarch*, a British refrigeration ship that used to play between Great Britain and the Caribbean. Instead of "cow beef" hanging in the coolers, it was "human beef" sleeping in hammocks. It was sure better sleeping in the hammocks than in the lace-up bunks that were provided to the guys who pulled duty in the 20mm gun turrets. That was cold duty. The ship landed in Liverpool, England, about

12 days after leaving Camp Shanks. From Liverpool the battalion went to Camp Black Shaw Moore, just outside of Leek, Staffordshire, England. This is the midland section of England, known for its fine China. The facility was new, but still antiquated to our standards. Of course limited materials contributed to much of the problem. Who can ever forget the "floating fires" traveling down the sewer pipe that made up the toilet facilities, nor the overflow at the end of the pipe when the septic tank would plug up; pity the poor GI who would be using the last couple of (seats?) to the British, the "W.C.") or ablutions.

From Leek, we traveled to a small town in southern England, Maiden Newton, in Dorchester County. From this point we crisscrossed Southern England to various points for more intensive training to prepare the unit for the coming "Baptism of Fire" that would be expected in the near future. One such place was Barnstable Bay on the English West Coast where we learned how to prepare our equipment by water proofing, for expected landing on the continent. (Upon returning to that site in 1994 the writer could distinctly see the similarity to the terrain of that particular beach and surrounding area to that of Utah Beach where many of the unit landed.)

We were now assigned quad mount 50s on half tracks to replace the trailerized units. Our final preparations being made, we were ready for the trip to France and set sail from Weymouth Harbor. (Some may have shipped from another port.)

At this time the battalion was broken down into small combat units, consisting of a quad mount 50 on a half track, towing a 40mm Bofors gun and off we went to war. The small combat groups were scattered over a large territory and assigned to various combat groups as anti-tank and anti-aircraft protection. It is not known all the groups that were covered. Some landed at

Utah Beach to work with the 4th Division that was a part of the 1st Army. This combat group landed on D-Day+6. The balance of the 453rd landed on D+12.

There was not much air nor tank activity in the part of the Cherbourg Peninsula that we fell heir to, so our quad mount 50s and Bofors units were used for helping to clear out pillboxes in the hedgerows, so that the infantry had a better chance to gain ground. Later tanks with other types of equipment were used for this purpose.

After the cut off of the Cherbourg Peninsula, the small combat units returned to the Carentan area where they were reunited with the rest of the battalion. On 2 July 1944 we were assigned to the 83rd Division, part of the VIII Corps.

From this point on, the 453rd AAA (AW) Battalion was permanently assigned to the 83rd Infantry Division and saw service in every action the 83rd was assigned in their travels across Europe. Receiving campaign ribbons for Normandy, Brittany, Ardennes, Rhineland and Central Europe.

One of the memorable incidents on the way through France, being the time that "X" Batteries were formed to cover specific areas, such as patrolling the Loire River with a Provisional Battery of all track mounted quad 50s. There were 16 such units and the racket they made when all guns were called upon to open fire at the same time, to give a show of force to the enemy on the other side of the river. This was the in support of the operation that Lieutenant Sam Magill, from North Kingsville, OH, put together to arrange the surrender of 20,000 German troops. The largest number to surrender in a group up until that time.

Starting in October 1944, for a short time, part of the battalion provided Luxembourg radio protection. The 453rd suffered as many casualties at the Elbe River as the battalion did on their journey across Europe.

The 453rd AAA (AW) Battalion was credited with 44 German aircraft kills, although there were many more probabilities that were not confirmed.

The battalion was relieved of its combat command on 6 May 1945 and moved from Calbe to Kompißlatter, Germany. On 8 May 1945 it moved into Kries Blankenburg, where it was assigned a military government mission. After turning this area over to the British troops (and finally it was turned over to the Russians), the battalion moved to Munich, Germany.

The battalion was broken up in Munich with the men having the greater number of points being sent back to France to begin the trip State-side; the others were sent to various "low point" battalions to wait their turn to return home.

The following is a list of those killed in action from Normandy through to the Elbe River. This record may not be complete as no records are available to verify the number of deaths. This information was supplied by individuals directly associated with those that were killed in action.

Bayles, Leonard C.
Berger, Jack
Enman, Wesley
Fowler, Vernon
Gaston, Robert W.
Gluesing, Vernon E.
Jackson, Robert
??, Barry E.
Klen, Harry T.
Mantini, Henry C.
McGovern, Joseph
Ostrom, Russell J.
Rhow, Vastene
Ross, Bruce M.
Ross, ??
Rutola, Frank
Shaw, (Bill) Gareth L.
Shaw, James B.
Tyner, Herman

Hurtgen Forest
St. Malo
Elbe River
Brittany
Germany
France
France
Luxembourg
Germany
Luxembourg
Hurtgen Forest
France
Luxembourg
Normandy
Reported, but no area
Belgium
Calvados, France
France
Germany

After V-E Day the personnel that had been assigned to the low point outfits were set up as occupation troops until their time came up to be returned to the States.

The 453rd AAA (AW) Battalion was inactivated on 26 January 1946. The battalion was allotted to the Organized Reserves and assigned to the 2nd Army. Activated 22 September 1948 with headquarters at Fort Myer, VA. It was inactivated on 14 September 1950.

The battalion was then allotted to the Army Reserve and assigned as an organic element of the 83rd Infantry Division. Activated on 20 May 1952 with headquarters in Columbus, OH. Headquarters moved to Mansfield, OH on 23 February 1955.

The above information was compiled from scattered notes recorded by some of the 453rd members. Submitted by Fred C. Pearson, Reserve Coordinator, 453rd AAA (AW) Bn.

83rd Division Jeep

Submitted by James R. Swope

Vehicle data plate delivery date 30 January 1945, Willys Factory, Toledo, OH. Ironically, also 12th anniversary of the Third Reich and Franklin Roosevelt's 63rd birthday.

February 1945, jeep shipped to Liege, Belgium where Warren Rangnow, Les Wolf, and four other 783rd Ordnance members picked up new jeeps the first week of March 1945, as recounted in Rangnow's book, *Hat Two*.

Jeep hood number 20678560 served with the 83rd prior to and during the Rhine Crossing, the Central Europe Campaign, occupation duties, and then was turned in at Rheims, France.

Major Metro Bodnyk, USAAF purchased the jeep from the Office-Foreign Liquidation Commission, Paris for \$250.00 and picked it out at Rheims. According to Bodnyk, "The bumper markings read 83rd Division."

Found in a barn and restored in 1994 to 83rd markings. It's named in honor of Bodnyk's brother "Mickley," a P-47 pilot KIA in the ETO and now serves as a rolling 83rd memorial in

parades, museum and school events. Submitted by *anon.* James R. Swope, Reading, PA; teacher, Wilson High School, US History, 20th Century American Conflict.

Other Stories

Submitted by *Chen A. Riller*

Some bad things do work out for good but he could not see it in as he hoofed it toward Chester, England, after missing the bus! A car pulled up along side and gave him a lift into town. A lively conversation took place and as Sir Jeffery Dean stopped to let him out, he told Owen he would meet him there and take him back to camp. This was the beginning of a friendship. He and his buddy, George, were invited to the beautiful estate and given permission to come there on the grounds anytime they could. One day Sir Jeffery was giving him a ride in his beautiful mahogany carrol was chariot pulled by a beautiful horse (Petril) used only for official business. Sir Jeffery drove past Colonel Barndollar's headquarters just as he appeared. Of course, the private saluted the colonel!

Weeks later the private was soaking his tired feet in a beautiful trout stream after a rough day of live-ammo maneuvers in Trawsfynydd, Wales. Two fishermen came by seeking a fishing spot. One was Mr. E.W. Evans, the local druggist and optician, from whom he had bought his fishing license though he had been assured that Americans did not need one. The other was Mr. Jones, who owned the hotel and it was the only place in town where you could get a bath.

Later the two returned empty handed. One offered Owen his tackle to try his luck. He cast the bait to a spot where he had noticed some fish playing. Bingo! He had two trout on the

line! He turned them loose. Mr. Jones let it be known that he would have liked to have the fish. "Sorry, but they are still there and you'll have to catch them." Mr. Evans told Mr. Jones, "The bloody Yank had to come to show ye how to catch ye fish!"

Mr. Jones invited him to come to his house the next evening and his wife would have tea and crumpets waiting for him. Mr. Evans, not to be outdone, told him to come to his hotel and he would give him a bath and a steak in the dining area. Sure enough he had tea and crumpets. But when he went to the hotel for the bath, there was a long line waiting, seemingly lined up by rank with Colonel Barndollar at the head. Thinking his private first class rank made a bath impossible, he turned to leave when Mr. Evans spied him, gave him a big hug, saying, "My friend!" He had the privilege of the first bath! Colonel Barndollar later asked how he always managed to receive such a good deal!

Christmas Eve 1944

By *Cpt. Robert Bonness, Ex-Pat*

We were on a forced march from Limburg, Germany headed for Stalag IIIA and when night came we were housed in three huge buildings which looked like big warehouses. It was very cold and of course there was no heat or electricity. We were hungry and tired after walking many miles that day. The building was completely dark and empty except for a little straw on the cement floor. All we had was one light blanket each. Later that evening the Royal Air Force missed their target (the railroad yards) and bombed the building next to ours which happened to be the officers, killing about 50 of them. All of the windows were blown out of our building. I, along with many others, was near the window and suffered a concussion. I



Event coordinator Jim Swope's 83rd Division Jeep at the Mid-Atlantic air museum's annual WWII commemorative weekend.

THELMER ANDERSON CLINE, enlisted Nov. 7, 1942 in the Coast Artillery branch of the US Army at the US Army Recruiting and Induction Station #2, Chicago, IL. He was sworn in at Wrigley Field Stadium during the Green Bay Packer's game, and after watching the game went to Camp Grant, IL. He traveled by train to Camp Wallace, TX, then to Fort Bliss, TX, a training camp for the 453rd Coast Art. Bn. and where the battalion was being reorganized into the Anti-Aircraft Automatic Weapons Battalion.



From February 1943 to February 1944 he served at Fort Knox, KY; Camp Stewart, GA; Tennessee Maneuvers, Lebanon, TN; Fort Fisher and Camp Davis, NC; Camp Shanks, NY; New York Port of Embarkation.

He shipped out Feb. 11, 1944 on the *Dominion Mowbray* and landed at Portsmouth, England. He was to cross the Atlantic Ocean three more times on the Gen. Anderson on a NYU victory ship and on the *General Bowker*. He was very seasick on every trip. Landed June 6, 1944 on Utah Beach in the Normandy Campaign and joined the 83rd Inf. Div., July 7, 1944 at Carenton, France. The 453rd was assigned to the 905th Pk of the 33rd Inf. Regt. of the 83rd Inf. Div. He served in five major battle campaigns: Normandy, Brittany, Central Europe, Rhineland and Ardennes, ending at the Elbe River.

He can still remember the fierce fighting in the Hürtgen Forest, the bitter cold and deep heavy snows of the Ardennes. When they rescued the prisoners at Dachau and he was one of the guard over the SS prisoners. He also remembers meeting the Russians at the Elbe River. These are just a few of his memories of the war.

Awards include the Good Conduct Medal, Marksman Badge with Rifle and Carbine Bars, American Campaign, EAME Medal, WWII Victory Medal, Army of Occupation Medal, five Bronze Stars and the WWII Honorable Service Lapel Button.

Pfc. Cline was honorably discharged at Camp Roosevelt, France, Nov. 15, 1945 and re-enlisted the next day. After an extended furlough in December to the States, he returned to Germany, March 23, 1946 and was stationed in Munich and served as an European courier until he returned to the States March 25, 1948. Was stationed at Fort Belvoir, VA where he was honorably discharged Nov. 15, 1948 PFC. Regular Army.

Thelmer born June 13, 1924, Mingo County, WV, the son of Elias and Josie Cline. He married Oct. 30, 1948 in Alexandria, VA to Mary Edith Fox of Rathford, PA. He came to Pekin, IL the week of Thanksgiving, November 1948 and started working at the Corn Products Plant. In February 1951 he started working at the Caterpillar Tractor Plant in East Peoria, IL and retired in February 1983 as line inspector in building SS.

Thelmer and Mary live in Pekin, IL. They have done a lot of traveling and attending family reunions. They enjoy their children: Nancy Garant, Thelmer Jr. and Gayle Godbey; seven grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

FREDERICK C. PEARSON, born Aug. 8, 1920, Toronto, Canada. Entered the service in September 1942 and was immediately assigned to the 453rd AAA (AW) Bn. at Fort Bliss, TX. His time in the service was spent entirely with that unit. Before being shipped off to England in February 1943, the unit traveled to various posts in the States for extensive training. He was a tech 5 in charge of 1st Pl. Communications of Btry. B.



Landed on D-Day + 6 with small assault groups attached to the 4th Inf. Div. The Quad 50s were used to strafe pillboxes in the hedgerows. His unit was reassigned to the 83rd Inf. Div. on July 2, 1944. The remainder of the war was spent with various elements of the 83rd Div. on a variety of assignments from St. Lo through to the Elbe River. He was discharged in November 1945 and received all five campaign ribbons.

Married in 1946 to Irene and they have five children and six grandchildren. He was a general maintenance foreman and plant engineer until retiring in 1985. He resides in Madison, OH and still does some occasional contract work.

DONALD L. BREAKIRON, born Aug. 16, 1923, Uniontown, PA. Enlisted in the Army in March 1943 and was assigned to 453rd AA AW BN. Stationed at Camp Davis, NC; Fort Fisher, NC; England; France and Utah Beach.



Landed in ground support of 101st Bn. and became part of 83rd Inf. Div. July 2, 1943. Participated in action at Normandy, Brittany, Northern France, Battle of Bulge, Rhineland and Central Europe.

Monorable experience was coming upon a small group of men who had stopped their jeep on the road and were looking through field glasses at the Germans. Donald and his buddy watched them for a few minutes then continued on their way to headquarters. When they got there they learned that one of the men in the jeep was Gen. McNary, head of the Air Force, and that he was killed a few minutes after Donald and his buddy left.

Pfc. Breakiron was discharged Dec. 15, 1945. He received all the usual medals, ribbons, etc.

Married Josephine King in 1946 and they have three sons and one daughter. Josephine passed away in 1986. Donald worked 31 years for the railroad as a signal tower operator and is now retired.