

# Roy Duncan in WWII

US Army 1941-1945

229<sup>th</sup> FA Bn, 28<sup>th</sup> Inf Div

## Introduction

My grandfather Roy Duncan served three years and ten months in the Army between December 1941 and October 1945. While the first half of his service was spent training in the United States, he spent the second half in Europe as part of the European Theater of Operations (ETO) during WWII. Beginning in October 1943, he spent nine months training in England before entering combat. From July 1944 to May 1945 he fought against the Germans in France, Luxembourg, Belgium, and Germany. By the time he was honorably discharged in October 1945, he had received five campaign medals with bronze stars, the American Defense Service Medal, the Good Conduct Medal, and a Purple Heart.

## Training

Roy Clifford Duncan was inducted into the Army at Fort Bragg, NC, as a private on **11/27/1941**, one month shy of his 22nd birthday. After just five days, he was honorably discharged and reassigned to the 28th Infantry Division, 229th Field Artillery Battalion on **12/2/1941**.

This division had been organized in February 1941 at Indiantown Gap, PA. In August, the group participated in maneuvers at A. P. Hill Military Reservation in VA. From September to December, the division participated in North and South Carolina maneuvers, while stationed at Fort Bragg. While the division was returning to Indiantown Gap, they received news on **December 7** that Pearl Harbor had been attacked. In **January 1942**, the outfit was sent to Camp Livingston, LA, where it remained until November to train for war.

Soon after Roy entered the Army, his oldest brother Wilson died of Tuberculosis in California on **December 24, 1941**. It could have been days or weeks before the news reached him 3,000 miles away. His mother had died when he was five; his older sister when he was eleven; and his father when he was seventeen. All had died of the same disease, Tuberculosis.



This picture was taken when Roy first entered service in December 1941.

# Honorable Discharge from The Army of the United States



TO ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

This is to certify, That \* ROY C. DENHAM

34175117, Private, (SS) Reception Center, Fort Satter, N. C.

THE ARMY OF THE UNITED STATES, as a TESTIMONIAL OF HONEST AND FAITHFUL SERVICE, is hereby HONORABLY DISCHARGED from the military service of the UNITED STATES by reason of 1st. day of December one thousand nine hundred and forty-one this

Said ROY C. DENHAM was born in Pulaski County, Virginia in the State of Virginia. When ~~physically~~ he was 21-10/12 years of age and by occupation a Truck driver. He had Brown eyes, Brown hair, Ruddy complexion, and was 5 feet 5 inches in height. Given under my hand at Fort Bragg, North Carolina

Wm. H. Peters, Jr.  
Lt. Colonel, Infantry,  
Executive.

## ENLISTED RECORD OF

Private  
34175117  
ROY C. DENHAM  
Enlisted November 27, 1941, at Fort Satter, N. C.  
Completed 0 years, 0 months, 5 days service for longevity pay.  
Prior service: None  
RECALLING OFFICE, FORT BRAGG, N. C.  
Re-enlisted in the Regular Army for a period of three (3) years, by me this date, 5 DEC 9 1941  
PAID IN FULL THIS DATE DEC 4 1941  
Amount paid \$ 1.50  
Wm. H. Peters, Jr.  
Captain, Infantry  
WYTHE W. PEYTON, JR.,  
Reorganizing Officer  
Never  
Noncommissioned officer: Never  
Qualification in arms: Not mounted  
Army specialty: None  
Attendance at: None attended  
Battles engagements, skirmishes, expeditions: None  
Decorations, service medals citations: None  
Wounds received in service: None  
Date and result of smallpox vaccination: November 29, 1941  
Date and result of all typhoid-paratyphoid vaccinations: None taken  
Date and result of diphtheria immunity test (Schick): None taken  
Date of other vaccinations (specify vaccine used): None taken  
Physical condition when discharged: Good  
Character: Excellent  
Remarks: No time lost under AY 107. Not entitled to travel pay.

Signature of soldier: Roy C. Denham  
Signature of Ass't Adjutant: Robert Robbins  
1st. Lt., P. A.



Form 104-10, 1-28-40. (Under name of "John J. Doe", company, principal, or firm or person, as "owner", "operator", "Company A, Inc.", "Sergeant, Quartermaster Corp.", "1st. day of December", and number, date, and source of order or full description of authority, name, rank, grade, and number of days lost under AY 107 or W. D., A. G. O. Form No. 52 April 26, 1941)

Honorable Discharge dated 12/21/1941

His older brother Watts served in the Marines during the war. Back home he had his step-mother and six younger half-brothers and sisters.

The pictures at right were probably taken during training at Camp Livingston, LA, in 1942. It appears to be winter, so perhaps the pictures were taken soon after his arrival there by train in January 1942. It was at this time that the 229th Field Artillery Battalion was formed.

The name on the sign refers to Lt. Col. Harlow Wilbur Higby. He was born in NY in 1896 and was the commanding officer for the 229th FA Bn.



A look inside the barracks.



Camp Livingston, LA, in early 1942.



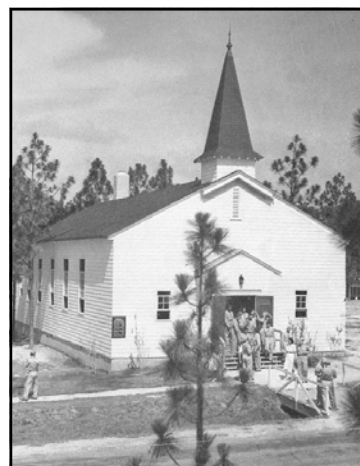
A line outside one of the movie theaters at Camp Livingston.



A close order drill by the 28th Division during an inter-regimental drill competition in June 1942.

The 229th FA Bn was part of the 28th Division, the oldest division in the US Armed Forces. The division's roots can be traced back as far as 1747 when Benjamin Franklin organized his "Battalion of Associators". In 1878 the Pennsylvania National Guard was formed from remnants of that battalion. The 28th Division was officially formed in 1917 before being deployed to France in WWI.

The red keystone emblem is symbolic of the Keystone State of Pennsylvania. However, the Germans did not call it the "Keystone Division" during WWII. They called it the "Bloody Bucket Division" due to the heavy casualties they suffered after fighting against the 28th.



One of the many chapels on the base at Camp Livingston.

After about six months in Louisiana, Roy must have gotten a leave in the **summer of 1942**. Back home in Wilkes Co, he is seen holding Leroy Thomas Wood who was born on 4/21/1942. He was the younger son of Richard and Ruth Wood, with whom Roy had been living for the three years prior to his joining the Army. Their older son Reuben Wood, Jr., was born on 6/13/1937. The Wood family lived in Fairplains, just north of Wilkesboro, NC, at the intersection of Hwy 18 and Mtn. View Rd.



Roy with (L-R) Leroy Thomas Wood, Ruth Wood, and Reuben Wood, Jr.

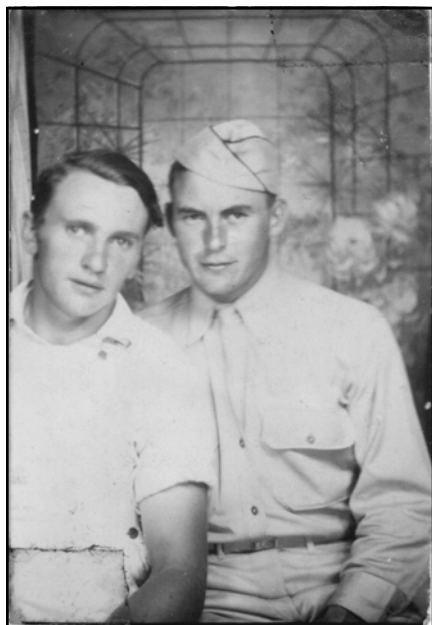


This clipping from a Wilkesboro newspaper was likely taken during his leave in the summer of 1942. The date needs to be verified, but at this time, he was still a private, and not yet a PFC. The caption reads:

*"The army and the navy got together for this picture here when both were on furlough last week. On the left is seaman Claude Stone who has returned to his station at Norfolk, Va. On the right is Pvt. Roy C. Duncan, of Traphill, who is stationed at Camp Livingston, La."*

Nothing is known about the picture of Roy below except that it was probably taken during training, and therefore must have been in either 1942 or 1943. It could have been taken in Louisiana, or Florida, or possibly back home in Wilkesboro, NC. The only clue that it may have been at home is that the man on the left does not appear to be in uniform, so perhaps he is a hometown friend.

Camp Livingston was located near Alexandria, LA, and was originally called Camp Tioga. As Camp Livingston, it served as a training center for more than 14,000 troops during WWII. After the war it held German and Italian POWs. Today it has been abandoned, but it is included within the southern tip of Kisatchie National Forest, 10 miles northeast of Alexandria, or about 80 miles east of TX.



Roy with an unidentified man.



This man is also in another picture and may have been an officer in the 229th FA Bn.



Roy with officers of the 229th FA Bn at Camp Livingston.

The slogan of the 28th Division was “Fire and Movement”. Several of these pictures deal with the “Fire”, or artillery, part of the slogan.

In the picture shown below, each officer appears to be grading about five soldiers as they shoot at targets seen in the distance at the far right.

The soldiers were taught four positions from which to fire: prone (lying down), sitting, kneeling, and standing. They were also taught not to shoot until they could see the target. However, when they reached the beaches of France in 1944, they found out that it wasn't quite that simple. The thick brush and constant enemy fire coming from camouflaged positions didn't allow for such a methodical approach. Soldiers quickly learned that often the only way to inflict damage was to fire as much as possible in the general direction of the enemy.



Roy poses in salute in front of an office building on the base.



At the “firing rifle range”, Roy may be the man sitting second from the right.



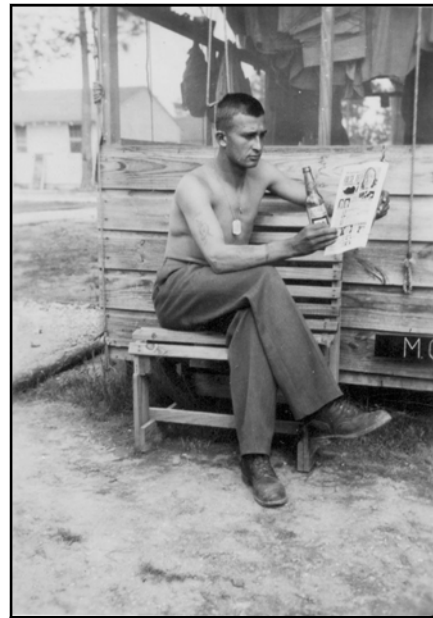
At the rifle range, Albert Werry may be the man standing in the center. Perhaps it is lunch time.



According to a notation on the original (L-R): Duncan, Zukoski, and Werry in Leesville, LA. Leesville is located 60 miles west of Camp Livingston, and is home of Camp Polk. Both bases were used for training purposes.



During training at Camp Livingston. The man on the left is wearing a T-shirt that says "Camp Livingston, Louisiana".



At Camp Livingston. The back of the magazine this soldier is holding says "False Teeth" at the top.



At Camp Livingston. The letters at the bottom of the building are "M. G. Sec..." Roy is in the front on the left.



During training at Camp Livingston.



During training at Camp Livingston.

While many of these pictures depict the lighter side of Army life, many important lessons were being learned. During this training period, the men were learning more than how to use weapons and handle equipment. They were building relationships that would be crucial in battle. Each man had to know just who he could count on when his own life depended on the performance of his fellow soldiers. What are his strengths? What are his weaknesses? The bonds that developed during training would prove invaluable in the months to come. But first, let's go to the zoo.



"City Park", Alexandria, LA.

While stationed at Camp Livingston in 1942, Roy and his Army buddy Albert Werry visited what is now called the Alexandria Zoological Park. Founded in 1926, today it encompasses 33 shady acres and is home to more than 600 animals. It is owned and operated by the City of Alexandria, Louisiana.



Albert Werry at "City Park".

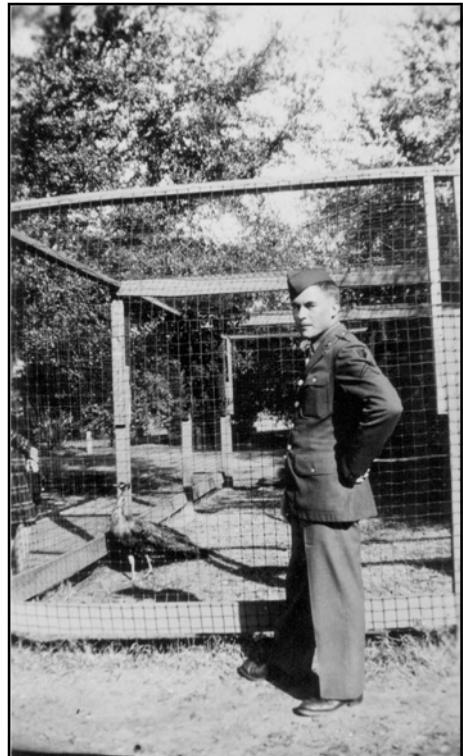


Roy standing outside "City Park".





Roy and Albert Werry at "City Park".



The wildlife at "City Park" included a monkey (left) and a peacock (right).

The 105mm Howitzer was a much used field artillery weapon during the war. The gun was usually mounted on a mobile carriage and shot four inch shells weighing 33 pounds.

The 105mm Howitzers were usually carried by a 2.5 ton truck while the 155mm Howitzer was towed with a 5 ton truck.



Both pictures were labeled: "Werry, Duncan—Leesville, La.—Nov. 23, 1942"



(L) "Duncan — Leesville, La — Nov. 24, 1942. 105 shell — gun camouflage 4 foot in the ground"



Through the trees, Roy is manning a 105mm Howitzer gun.



A modern picture of a 105mm Howitzer shell before being fired.



The gun crew practices maneuvers with the 105mm Howitzer.



Ten members of the gun crew. Albert Werry is sitting in the center of the picture. Roy is standing left of him.



A nice picture of two Howitzers in use during training.

Roy served as a truck driver in Europe during the war. He was certified as a “Truck Driver Light”, meaning that he drove a 1.5 ton GMC truck to transport personnel. He drove at night, during blackout, and under camouflaged conditions.

In early December, the 28th Div left Louisiana. By January they were in Florida beginning amphibious training. It is not clear where they were during the month of December, so perhaps they got a few weeks off to spend time at home for the holidays.



Roy is sitting at the back of a personnel transport truck.



Roy in a transport truck, probably during training.



Roy is standing in the back. The man on the right has more than one stripe, meaning he must have had a higher rank. The writing on the right reads “2nd Sect.”



Roy at the barracks with another soldier.



“APO 28 Camp Livingston, La—Nov. 30, 1942”.

In **January 1943**, the division moved to Camp Gordon Johnston in Carrabelle, FL, located 60 miles SSW of Tallahassee, to begin training in amphibious warfare.

The 28th Infantry Division had about 15,000 men at any one time. There were several different battalions and regiments within the division. One of them, the 229th Field Artillery Battalion, was comprised of about 800 men who were divided into the six batteries mentioned on the previous page.

After spending the first five months of 1943 in Florida, the division moved to Fort Pickett in rural VA, located 40 miles SW of Richmond. While stationed there, the division completed two weeks of amphibious exercises jointly with the Navy in the Chesapeake Bay at Norfolk. The division also conducted maneuvers in the mountainous terrain of WV. After several inspections, the division prepared for overseas deployment as the **summer of 1943** came to an end.



Perhaps the bus station before heading to the next base.



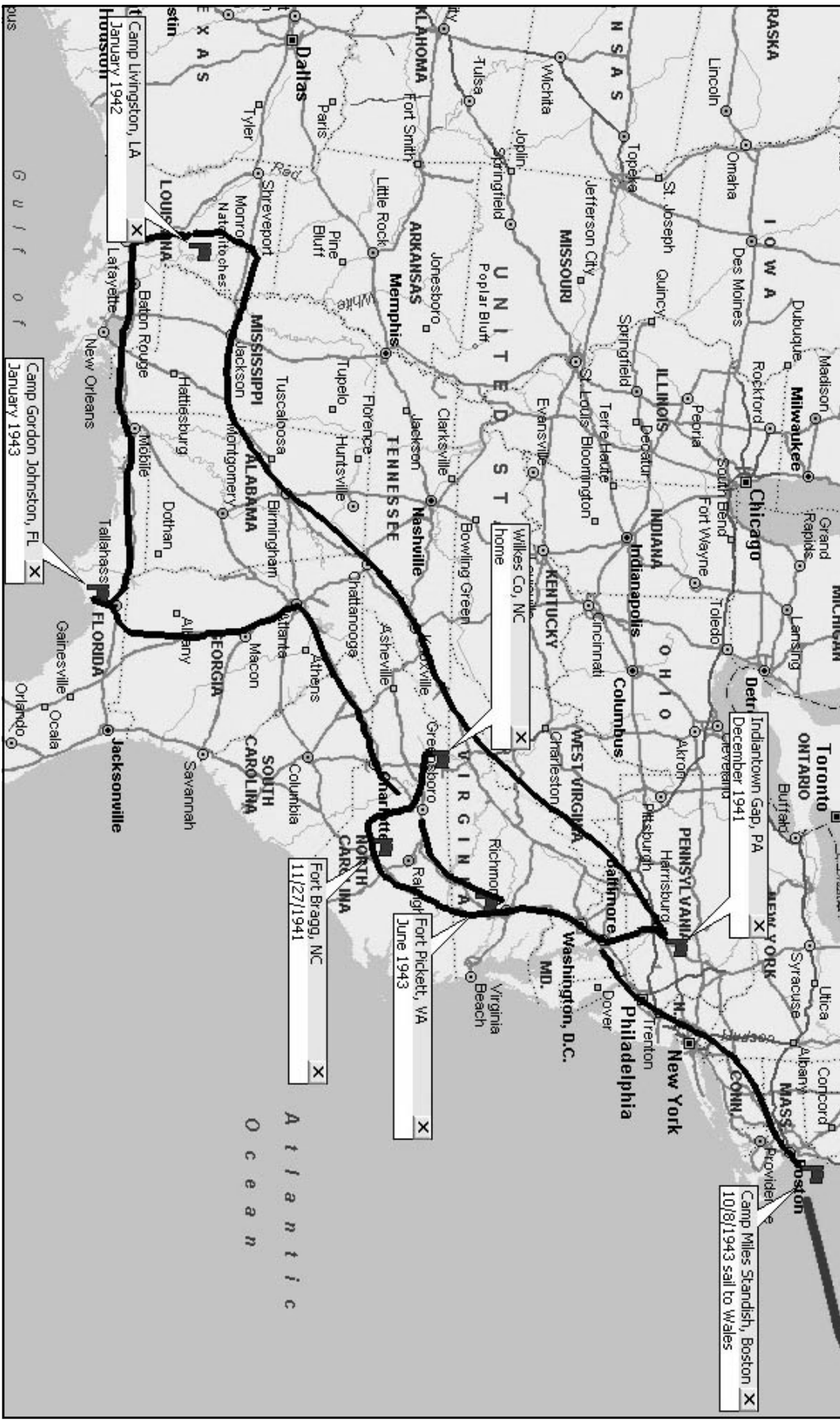
A base during training.



Roy with Albert Werry either in Louisiana or Florida.



Roy with another soldier standing by a sign that reads "Btry. A, 229th FA Bn, Capt. W. Kohn, COMOG". Perhaps they were in Battery A. There were six batteries in the battalion: A, B, C, HQ, H, and Service. The A, B, and C batteries were 105mm Howitzer units.



From November 1941 to October 1943, Roy had travelled from NC to PA, down to LA, over to FL, up to VA, and finally to the sea port in Boston, MA. He had been in the Army for 22 months before leaving for Europe.

Off to Europe

The 28th Division left Camp Pickett, VA, at the **end of September 1943** and traveled to Camp Miles Standish in Boston where they boarded transport ships on **October 8**. They arrived in Wales ten days later, entering the European Theater of Operations (ETO) on **October 18, 1943**.

The division remained in South Wales and SW England for several months. During this time, the men trained with both British and Scottish troops as well as with other US divisions. In **December** and **January** the division trained at the Assault Training Center, near Braunton, Devonshire, England. One training exercise, known as "The Hedgehog", involved the entire rifle battalion attacking a perimeter of pillboxes under overhead supporting fire from artillery, mortars, tanks, and air bombardment.

In **February** each infantry regiment underwent rigorous training including a cross country march of over 100 miles through the Welsh Mountains.



This picture was taken at the Assault Training Center in England. These officers are observing night troop landing practice in preparation for the invasion of France. The letters on the front bumper read "ASLT TRG CTR".

Name <u>Roy C. Duncan</u> Army serial No. <u>34175117</u> Grade <u>Pfc.</u> Years of service <u>1 YR 5 Mo 27 DAY</u> (On date of opening this book) Insurance, amount and class <u>\$ 10,000</u> Insurance premium, monthly <u>\$ 6.60</u> Allotments, amount and class <u>\$ 20.00</u> Compulsory allotments, amount and class <u>\$ 20.00</u> Pay reservation, class A <u>\$</u> Technician grade _____ Additional pay for _____ Person to be notified in case of emergency: <u>Richard C. Wood</u> (Name) Friend _____ (Relationship, if friend, so state) Route # <u>1.</u> (Number and street or rural route, if none, so state) <u>Wilkesboro, North Carolina</u> (City, town, or post office) (State or country) Date of opening this book <u>May 29, 1943</u> (Signature of enlisted man. Name, grade, and arm or organization of above facts and _____)		CHANGES AFFECTING PAY STATUS <u>C. E. discontinued</u> Entered Foreign Service on <u>8 Oct/43</u>  CASUAL DATA Date reported or picked up: _____ (Do not enter organization) Name, grade, and arm or service _____ only of personnel officer or commanding officer
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This pay record was opened on May 29, 1943. By this time, Roy had been promoted from Private to Private First Class.

O. O. Form No. 7360  
 (Approved Dec. 7, 1942)  
 (Old Q. M. C. Form No. 228)

10 January, 1944  
 (Date of issue)

Roy C. Duncan  
 (Operator's signature)

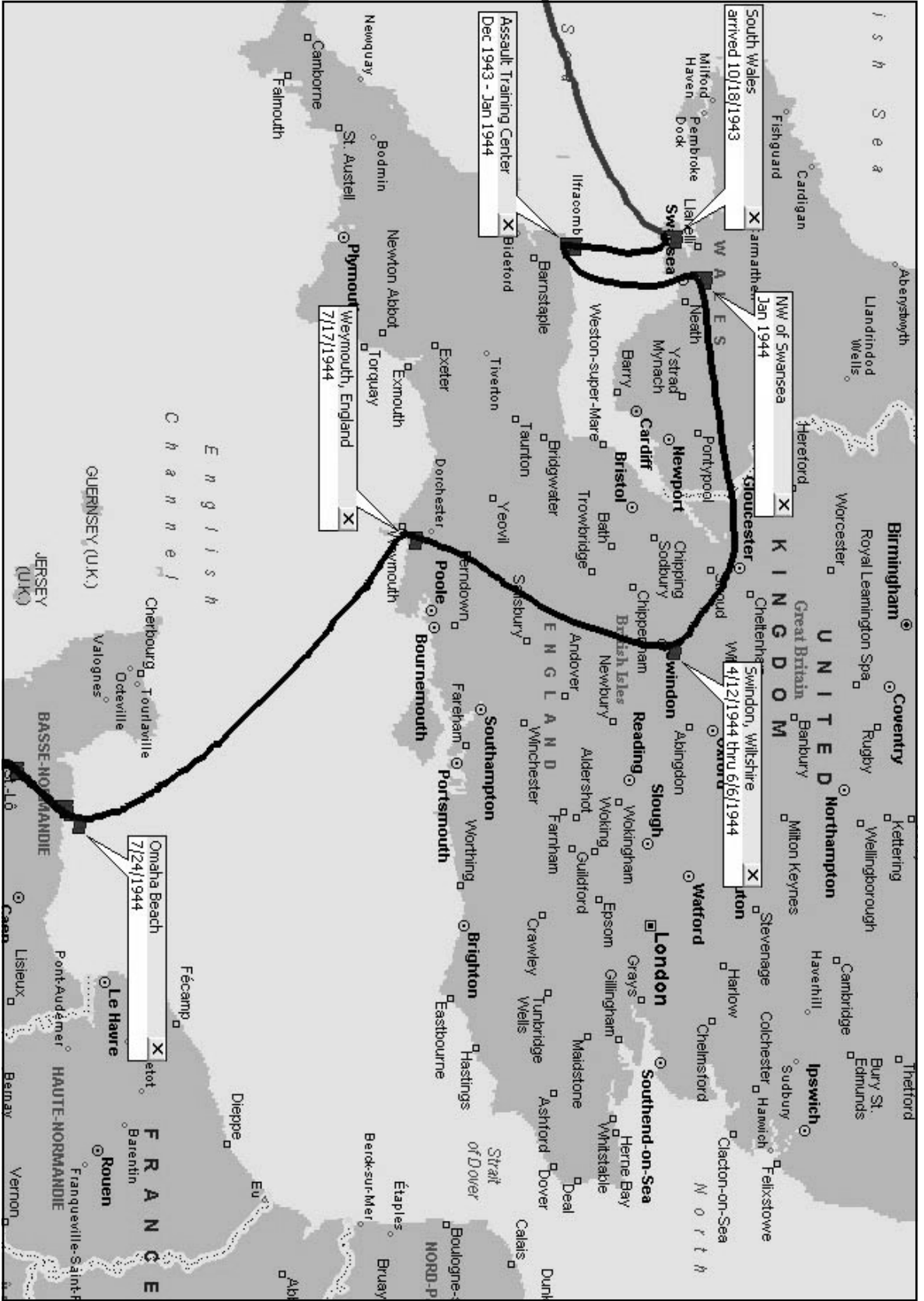
I CERTIFY THAT Duncan P. F. C.  
 (Name and rank)

has demonstrated proficiency in driving (par. 16, A/R 850-15) the types of vehicles listed below as per signed authentication.

TYPE VEHICLE	AUTHENTICATION (Signed by a commissioned officer)
Car, halftrack	<u>EJC</u>
Car, passenger	<u>Chas. J. Chapman Lt. St.</u>
Motorcycle	<u>EJC</u>
Tank, heavy	<u>EJC</u>
Tank, light	<u>EJC</u>
Tank, medium	<u>EJC</u>
Tractor	<u>EJC</u>
Truck-tractor (semitrailer)	<u>EJC</u>
Trucks, cargo, 1/4-3/4-ton	<u>Chas. J. Chapman Lt. St.</u>
Trucks, cargo, 1 1/2-2 1/2-ton	<u>Chas. J. Chapman Lt. St.</u>
Trucks, cargo, 4-ton and larger	<u>EJC</u>
Trucks, amphibian (all)	<u>EJC</u>
Vehicle, wheeled, combat	<u>EJC</u>
Special	

Hq SOS USAPP:10-43/100M/15496

As shown by his Motor Vehicle Operator's Permit, Roy was certified to drive three classes of vehicles as of **January 10, 1944**: passenger cars, 1/4 to 3/4 ton trucks, and 1.5 to 2.5 ton trucks.



The 229th FA Bn spent nine months of battle training in England and Wales.



On **April 1, 1944**, the 28th Division received a visit from General Dwight D. Eisenhower, the Supreme Allied Commander. On **April 11**, the division moved by vehicle 160 miles east to the vicinity of Swindon.

On **May 11 and 12**, the 28th Division and the 101st Airborne Division conducted exercise “Eagle” as a rehearsal for the D-Day assault. The 229th Field Artillery Battalion (in which Roy was a private), provided ground defense for the paratroopers. However, when D-Day arrived on **June 6**, the 28th Division was still engaging in practice exercises in Wiltshire, England.

## Combat Begins

The call came on **July 17, 1944**, for the 28th Division to prepare for movement to an undisclosed location. They would begin moving by vehicle at 5am the next morning to the coast which lay 60 miles to the south. After nine months of relative safety in England and Wales, the Keystone soldiers surely had mixed emotions. On the one hand this was the moment for which they had been training since their days back at Camp Livingston, and now was the time to finally put that training



Army vehicles are seen being unloaded off of an LST at Normandy. Only a few miles inland a fierce struggle ensued.



The hedgerows of Normandy proved to be a hazardous area for the troops.

to use. On the other hand, the uncertainty of battle must have been frightening. They had heard stories about the powerful German forces, and the men knew that some of their fellow soldiers would not return.

They arrived at Omaha Beach on the coast of Normandy, France, on **July 22, 1944**. They set up headquarters about a mile inland. As the men of the 28th tried to get some sleep that first night, they heard the sound of German planes flying overhead for the first time. It was a sound that would be all too familiar over the next ten months.

Allied troops had first stormed the beaches of Normandy a month and a half earlier so that by the time the 28th Division arrived, the immediate shoreline had been secured. In fact, the Normandy Campaign officially ended on **July 24**, just two days after the Keystone Division arrived on the scene.

On **July 29**, the 28th Division entered the hedgerow struggle north and west of the town of St. Lo. The term “hedgerow” refers to the growth of hedges and small trees that were found in embankments of dirt and roots. Mounds of dirt and thick brush stood between three and ten feet high. These

natural barriers were common in Normandy, often growing near small roads. They acted as a natural fortress, making it not only very difficult to advance against the enemy, but very dangerous as well. The Germans often hid just behind the hedgerows, poised to ambush the Allies.

On **July 31**, the Keystone Division met its first organized resistance. Positioned just north of the town of Percy, the division had suffered numerous casualties the night before as the German Air Force conducted a heavy raid over the 28th assembly area. It was at this time, during the division's first major battle, that Roy was injured. According to his discharge papers, he was wounded on **July 31, 1944**, for which he was awarded the Purple Heart on **August 5**. While there were certainly tougher battles to come, Roy appears to have survived the rest of the war without injury.

The 229th Field Artillery Battalion played a critical role on **August 4** in taking the town of St. Sever-Calvados, just nine miles southeast of Percy. They were largely responsible for driving back the counter-attacking force of the Germans.

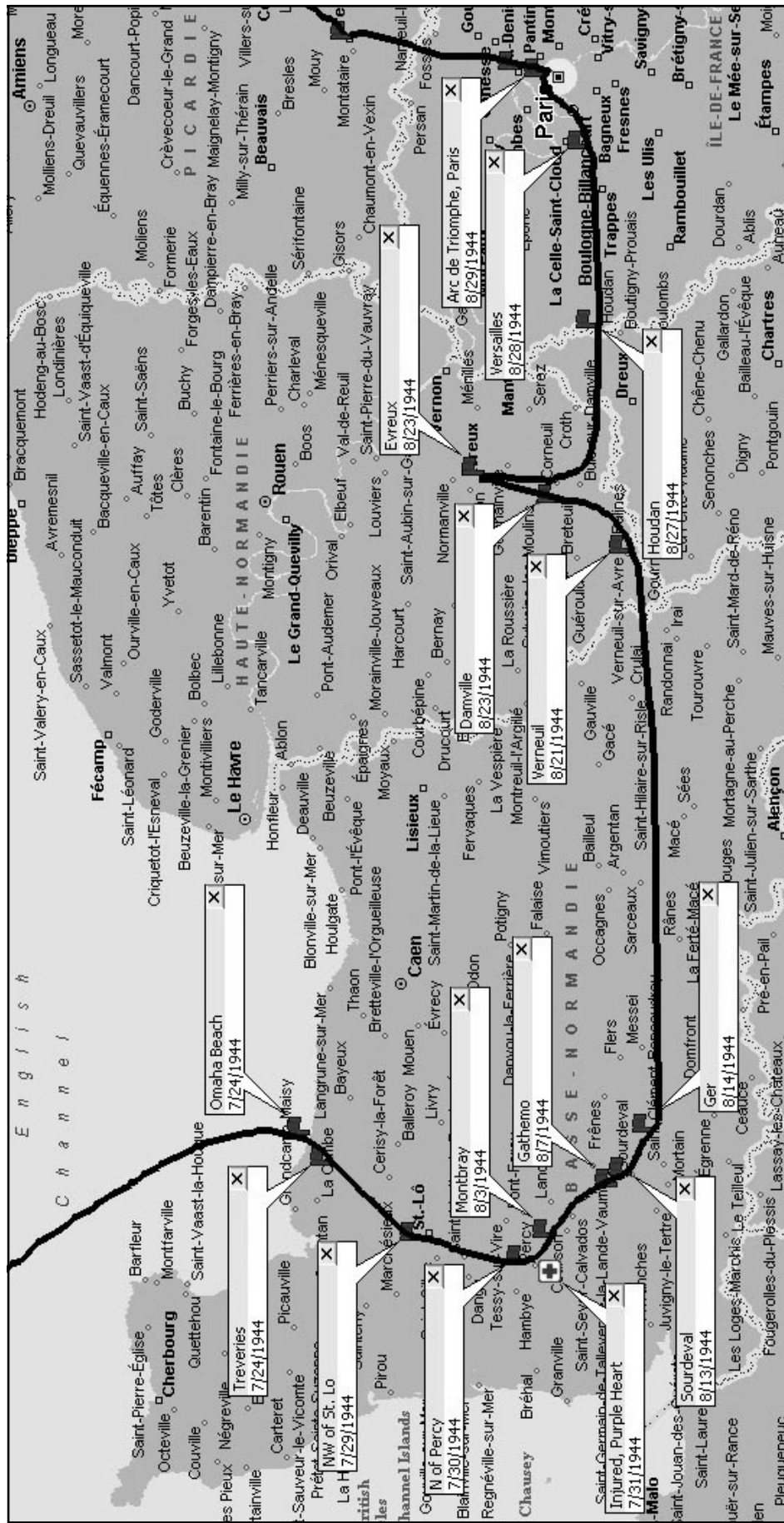
At Gathemo on **August 7**, the division began the bloodiest battle they would fight during the Northern France campaign. Normally, the town only contained about 500 people, but it was being heavily defended by the Germans. The 229th FA Bn was responsible for supplying artillery fire to prevent the enemy from using the roads. The town was taken from the Germans on **August 10**.

Top: The town of Percy sustained heavy damage before being liberated by the Allies.

Middle: The town of St. Sever-Calvados suffered significant damage. In some areas not one house was left standing.

Bottom: Troops of the 28th Division guard the newly taken town of Gathemo.





When the 28th Division had initially landed at Omaha Beach, they were five weeks and 150 miles away from Paris.

In **mid-August**, the 28th Division welcomed a few days to relax and check their equipment. The hedgerows were beginning to disappear, replaced by smooth highways. As the division proceeded east, it broke off to the north toward Evreux to clean out a pocket of resistance. The task proved more difficult than expected, lasting about four days.

On **August 28**, they were just outside Paris in nearby Versailles. It was here that planning began for a parade in celebration of the liberation of France.

On **August 29, 1944**, the Keystone Division paraded through the streets of Paris. As the men marched down the Champs-Elysees, crowds of French citizens lined the streets cheering the troops in appreciation for their country's liberation.

The men had only been in combat for five weeks, and they were already being treated as heroes. Many soldiers thought that this war wasn't so bad after all. There was confident talk among the troops that the war would be over by Christmas, but they were wrong. The Germans still posed a serious threat to be reckoned with in the days to come. It would be no easy task.

As the 28th Division left Paris, they still had 230 miles to travel before reaching the German border. In the days immediately following the parade, the Keystone troops met relatively little resistance. On **September 2**, certain components of the division met unforeseen trouble at St. Quentin. In this skirmish, the Germans suffered 125 casualties while the 28th suffered only 15. The division was briskly moving east toward the Belgium border, averaging 17 miles a day. On **September 7**, the division fired its first shots into Belgium, and by the end of the day, all combat components of the 28th had crossed the Meuse River from France into Belgium.

The 30 mile march across the southern tip of Belgium last only about two days.



Officers of the 229th FA Bn standing beside a Command Car in front of the Palace of Versailles. (L-R) LTC Fairchild, ?, ?, 1Lt Gene Mullane, and 1Lt Joe Kopin.



This award-winning picture shows members of the 28th Division marching down the famous Champs-Elysees in rows of 24 men.

However, there were many bitter engagements along the way as several small towns were liberated. By **September 9**, the division had entered the tiny country of Luxembourg. Preparations were made for attacking the Germans inside their own country for the first time. Within the borders of Germany, the enemy would be on its home turf giving it an added advantage. This created a certain degree of uncertainty about what to expect from the Germans. The division fired its first shot into Germany on **September 10** as it crossed the border.

The 229th FA Bn initially remained in the vicinity of Luxembourg City as part of the 5th Armored Division to prevent the city from being retaken by the Germans. But on **September 14**, they too moved east, entering the German border town of Wallendorf in an effort to create a diversion from the main thrust further inside Germany. However, the diversion quickly became a serious battle resulting in Wallendorf being burned to the ground in only a few days and the 5th Armored Division retreating back to Luxembourg City.



The Germans set up "Dragon's Teeth" in an effort to slow the Allied pursuit. These concrete obstacles were easily eliminated by direct fire from the tanks.

On **September 29**, the division received orders to travel north about 60 miles to Elsenborn, Belgium, near the German border. The move was begun on **October 2** and was completed on **October 5**. After establishing defensive positions, the Keystone Division remained stationary for a few weeks. This time gave the troops a chance to reorganize, dry their clothing, calibrate their weapons, and begin an intensive training program. Many soldiers went to Paris on leave, while others stayed in Belgium to train new replacement troops. On **October 11**, Army Chief of Staff George C. Marshall addressed the division, commenting that "You are doing excellent work over here." The Keystone soldiers would need all the encouragement and courage they could get. They had no idea that they would soon begin their bloodiest battle of the war.

## The Battle of Hürtgen Forest

On **October 25**, the division moved about 18 miles north, to an area just east of the town of Rott, Germany. Their mission was to attack in the area of Hürtgen Forest with the support of air force armed reconnaissance on October 31, then advance further into German territory. The troops were given favorable intelligence reports indicating that the Germans held only a thin line and had suffered significant damage from the 9th Infantry Division. However, as the 28th Div moved in to replace the 9th, no words were needed to understand the truth of the situation. The Keystone men passed by the haggard and exhausted men of the 9th Div before entering the forest where they found water-filled shell holes, abandoned helmets, and blood-soaked field jackets. The bodies of American and German troops laying by the roadside served as warnings that the forest was a dangerous place. The morale of the Keystone troops suffered significantly as the men realized

what they were up against. Their hopes of being home for Christmas had suddenly been replaced with hopes of simply living to see another Christmas.

The terrain in the forest was very difficult with thick brush and dense tree coverage, and there were virtually no roads by which to transport troops or supplies. The men would be extremely isolated, meaning that air support would be especially important. On the day before the scheduled attack, bad weather moved in, delaying the mission for three days.

Foot troops within the division entered Hürtgen Forest on **November 2**. While these troops encountered significant enemy resistance on that first day, everything went according to plan. On the following day, the lack of roads and the difficult terrain prevented many tanks from moving through with the foot troops, making advancement much more dangerous. On **November 4**, the situation worsened. Early in the morning, a sector of the division met extremely heavy artillery near the villages of Schmidt and Kommerscheidt. Entire platoons were cut off and left isolated to fight the Germans. Heavy fighting continued for two weeks with neither side able to gain any ground. Finally the Allies pushed the Germans back and conquered this area of about 50 square miles. In the process, more than 24,000 Americans and about 28,000 Germans were killed.



GIs of Co E, 110th IR, 28th Inf Div move through the forest near the Raffelsbrand road junction in Hürtgen Forest.

The following words are from a soldier with the 4th Infantry Division who fought in this battle.

*Show me a man who went through the Battle of Hürtgen Forest and who says he never had a feeling of fear, and I'll show you a liar or a fool. You can't get all of the dead because you can't find them, and they stay there to remind the guys advancing as to what might hit them. You can't get protection. You can't see. You can't get fields of fire. Artillery slashes the trees like a scythe. Everything is tangled. You can scarcely walk. Everybody is cold and wet, and the mixture of cold rain and sleet keeps falling. Then we attack again and soon there is only a handful of old men left."*

Many veterans of both the D-Day invasion and the Hürtgen Forest battle agreed that the latter was by far the bloodiest fight they had encountered. These men lived, slept, ate, and fought in a combination of freezing snow and slushy mud. Since they were often within fifty yards of the enemy, they could not build fires to keep warm for fear of alerting the enemy to their positions. Food was eaten cold and stale, and frostbite was a serious concern. There was a sharp increase in the number of cases of respiratory colds, pneumonia, and trench foot. Adequate winter clothing such as boots and thick coats were in short supply, forcing the men to sit, shivering in a wet foxhole. They sat in the cold, in the dark, on guard, waiting for the next German attack; all while enemy fire persistently blasted through the trees, night and day, seemingly coming from every direction. This unfortunate combination of circumstances created a strong sense of isolation for the

troops. For many, they began to lose site of their actual mission as they fought to simply stay alive.

The following article was published in the **November 18, 1944**, edition of the Philadelphia Inquirer, and was reproduced by Headquarters, 229th Field Artillery Battalion immediately following the Hürtgen Forest battle.



Troops marching on one of the few roads in the forest.

### **Grim Hürtgen Forest Heroic 28th Division Great Unsung Battle No Quarter Asked 14 Days Of Sacrifice**

Hürtgen Forest, Germany, Nov. 16 (Delayed)

In the Hürtgen Forest, that gloomy expanse below Aachen, where the trees, terrain and weather, even without entrenched Germans making formidable opposition, and mudsluiced roads and clinging snow penetrate like a plague in the bones, American troops fought a great but unsung battle.

They were soldiers of the 28th Division, Pennsylvania's own, men who are destined to be overlooked as a greater campaign resumes, but whose 14-day sacrifice as they butted their heads against steep hills and the blazing muzzles of Tiger tanks may one day be appreciated by military historians who know what they attempted to achieve.

In a broad sense, the division, known to the Nazis as the "Blutig Eimer" (Blood Bucket) after its crimson Keystone patch and the ferocity of its onslaught near Mortain, attained its objectives.

It killed, captured or wounded 4000 enemy troops. It took and held Vossenack and Germeter and considerable of the wood land surrounding them. It crossed, without benefit of roads, the ridges protecting Kommerscheidt and Schmidt, seizing those two villages, and holding both for a time.

It destroyed 36 enemy tanks and self-propelled guns and three Messerschmitts and wrecked a whole series of pillboxes and blockhouses. Its very mission, to distract and occupy as many German troops as possible, indicated the nature of the assignment.

Survivors sat silently staring straight ahead and if there were heroics to recount, someone else had to talk for them. The men of the 28th would not.

Too many of their companions remained behind, too many were missing or wounded. If they never saw the Hürtgen Forest again, it would suit them.

If they never traveled its fragrant ravines or pitched another tent or

new-hewn hut to ward off fragments and falling treetops, if they never saw a timbered slit trench or smelled the tangy odor of burning cones and felt springy bed needles that carpeted the forest, they wouldn't care.

They hate Hürtgen Forest, where the stately Douglas firs with their epaulets of snow ranged like frosted grenadiers, close-ordered on the hillsides, immutable, impenetrable and cold.

It was Nov. 2 when the 28th Division churned over the plateau from Luxembourg to try to negotiate the thick barrier that lies between the Siegfried defenses and the plain of Cologne. The mission was not easy and the staff knew it, enemy artillery zeroed upon every narrow road, enemy mortars dropped on all exposed turns and openings.

The enemy knew each captured pillbox and could shell with card-index certitude while the Germans also realized that the loss of Schmidt had definitely isolated whole sections of the lower Siegfried line. The Hun would fight for Schmidt with all he had--and he did.

From the Nazis standpoint the whole idea of the Rhineland stands has been to contain the Americans in this western fringe of homeland. If they can keep our troops from reaching the Rhine, if they can force winter upon the Allies and bolster their slave-built defenses, if they can muster secret weapons for spring as each soldier has been promised, they may yet escape punishment. Schmidt and Hürtgen Forest are strong links in this chain of reasoning.

When the 28th attacked on Nov. 2, there were strong enemy infantry forces before them, plus light and medium artillery batteries and 88mm guns, only a few 105mms, and no tanks.

When the 28th completed its fortnight's battle, the Germans had thrown in many troops, heavy artillery and tanks, of which some were Mark VI's. There was a complete flak regiment, engineer battalions of 890 men, a fortress battalion which immediately attacked and lost 480 men, and the German guns were firing eight to 10 rounds a minute for periods of 26 minutes on a 24-hour-a-day basis, to keep our troops from advancing. Hitler's best troops had retaken Schmidt under orders to restore the line at all costs.

On Nov 3, a regiment commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Carl Peterson, of Bradford, Pa., struck towards Vossenack, overran Germeter and took both places before nightfall. Things looked good.

One of the prisoners taken at Vossenack couldn't understand why the Yanks were coming through the forest. "Why take Vossenack? The road leads nowhere," he said. But the Germans fought like fiends to retake it, and it's worth your life to show your head there today.

Lieutenant Colonel Richard Sieg's engineers built a road around the shoulder of a steep hill so tanks could cross, but when he finished and three vehicles traversed it, the rock gave way and the remainder couldn't pass.

By then the attack of Colonel Peterson's regiment had turned on Schmidt,



and the engineers had to reopen the road. They hauled away the disabled vehicles and blasted away the debris to clear the route. Meanwhile, Schmidt had fallen and been retaken by the Germans, and that in itself was a story.

Colonel Ripple was assigned to lead a task force to take back Schmidt in a spear heading operation, pending arrival of a regiment to relieve it. It was composed of one battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Bill Tait, of Indiana, Pa., a composite of tank destroyers and two companies of a tank battalion.

The task force left its bivouac at 2 AM on Nov 4. It was frosty in the woods at that hour.

On the way Colonel Ripple's elements reached Kommerscheidt, where five big enemy tanks were overrunning the village. The commander left the regimental dugout just 10 minutes before a Mark VI rumbled forward through light arms fire, straddled the command post and stayed there, shooting on the dugout like a prehistoric monster, spitting slugs through our men.

Everyone was exhausted by now, for it was 24-hours-a-day fighting as the enemy increased his strength steadily and hurled more tanks into action. Tanks were sneaked up at night, and when daylight came, they fired their cannon at 200 yards point blank into G.I.'s foxholes, or sprayed them with their machine guns.

Three officers were in one slit trench when it took a direct hit. One was killed and the second had his arm blown off. He said, "They winged me, but haven't got me." He demanded a tourniquet, walked to the first aid station unassisted.

It was the first combat for Ripple, who has a wife and children in Bethesda, Md. He directed the fight against the tanks.

Captain Bruce Hostrop, commanding the tank company, ran through heavy artillery and small arms fire while trying to dislodge the Mark VI from the command post. He's from Port Clinton, Oh, and showed extreme courage, but the enemy tank refused to budge. Eventually the remainder of our men in the dugout had to surrender.

Lieutenant Ray Fleig, platoon leader, kept the battle going. They called him "General Fleig" because he directed three tanks as if he had an army behind him. Fleig was walking ahead of the tanks with Sergeant Spooner of Alton, Ill., a section leader. All three vehicles were under heavy mortar and artillery fire. The first tank hit a mine, was disabled and blocked the road, but Sergeant Spooner with a cable, used the lead tank for an anchor and hauled the others through. Lieutenant Fleig jumped in, rode through intense artillery fire to Schmidt, where the infantrymen were so happy to see him that several almost cried. "There are Heinies with lots of tanks over that hill," they told him, to which Lieutenant Fleig said, "I'll do what I can, boys."

Then he proceeded to knock out three German tanks at 75 yards and another at 900 yards, until Sergeant Spooner and the other two tanks

joined him. The three tanks then beat off the German infantry and tank onslaught and secured a ridge at Kommerscheidt.

When the Nazis came with 12 tanks, Lieutenant Fleig radioed his commander, "We can hold them," and he did. Every time the Germans showed face, our fellows beat them back, getting one probable, until by Nov 4 they joined with the infantry setting up defense until Lieutenant Dick Payne came with five more tanks and defended the left flank.

On the next day they repelled four counter-attacks and not until the enemy sent overwhelming numbers of tanks at them did they retire and relinquish Kommerscheidt. And that was only one of the 28th's facts in Hürtgen Forest.

A few days later, on **November 20, 1944**, the following note was sent out to the troops by Headquarters, 229th Field Artillery Battalion.

To: All Officers and Men.

The last month will never be forgotten by those of us who were "There". You know where I mean. Nor will we ever forget the officers and men of the battalion who were lost in that action. Every one was a superior man and soldier. Perhaps history will provide us with some of the details still unknown.

Our combat team made the main effort to capture an extremely well defended objective. During the action it developed that there were three divisions against us, plus elements of two more. In addition the enemy had considerable strength in armor and artillery--and he used it to the best advantage.

The support given by this battalion made all phases of the action possible. Our fires broke up counter-attacks and inflicted known heavy casualties on enemy personnel and material. We fired more effective missions than any other battalion in the division and corps. To the best of our knowledge we fired more rounds over a given period than any other battalion in the army. On November 5 we fired 3949 rounds. Also, from 020600 November to 090600 November (one week) we fired 16,892 rounds.

All of this was possible only because everyone did his job and did it well. And by this I mean every man in the battalion. It was a case where one slip-up would have meant a break-down. But there was no slip-up, and as a result our battalion literally "saved the day".

You men did a superior job, as usual. And that fact is known all along and up the line. No battalion in the army can equal us.

[signed] John C. Fairchild  
Lt. Col, 229th FA Bn  
Commanding

The division's visit to Hürtgen Forest was their toughest and probably most frustrating battle of the war, but there was still a rough road ahead.

## The Battle of the Bulge

By **November 19**, the division had moved 50 miles south to hold a 25 mile sector along the Our River in northern Luxembourg, east of the town of Wiltz. Since the Hürtgen Forest offensive had caused such a tremendous turnover in personnel, large scale reorganization and training took place over the next few weeks. During this time, the Keystone Division had very little interaction with the enemy -- a very welcome change after such a terrible battle.



Wiltz, Luxembourg, was covered in snow in November 1944.

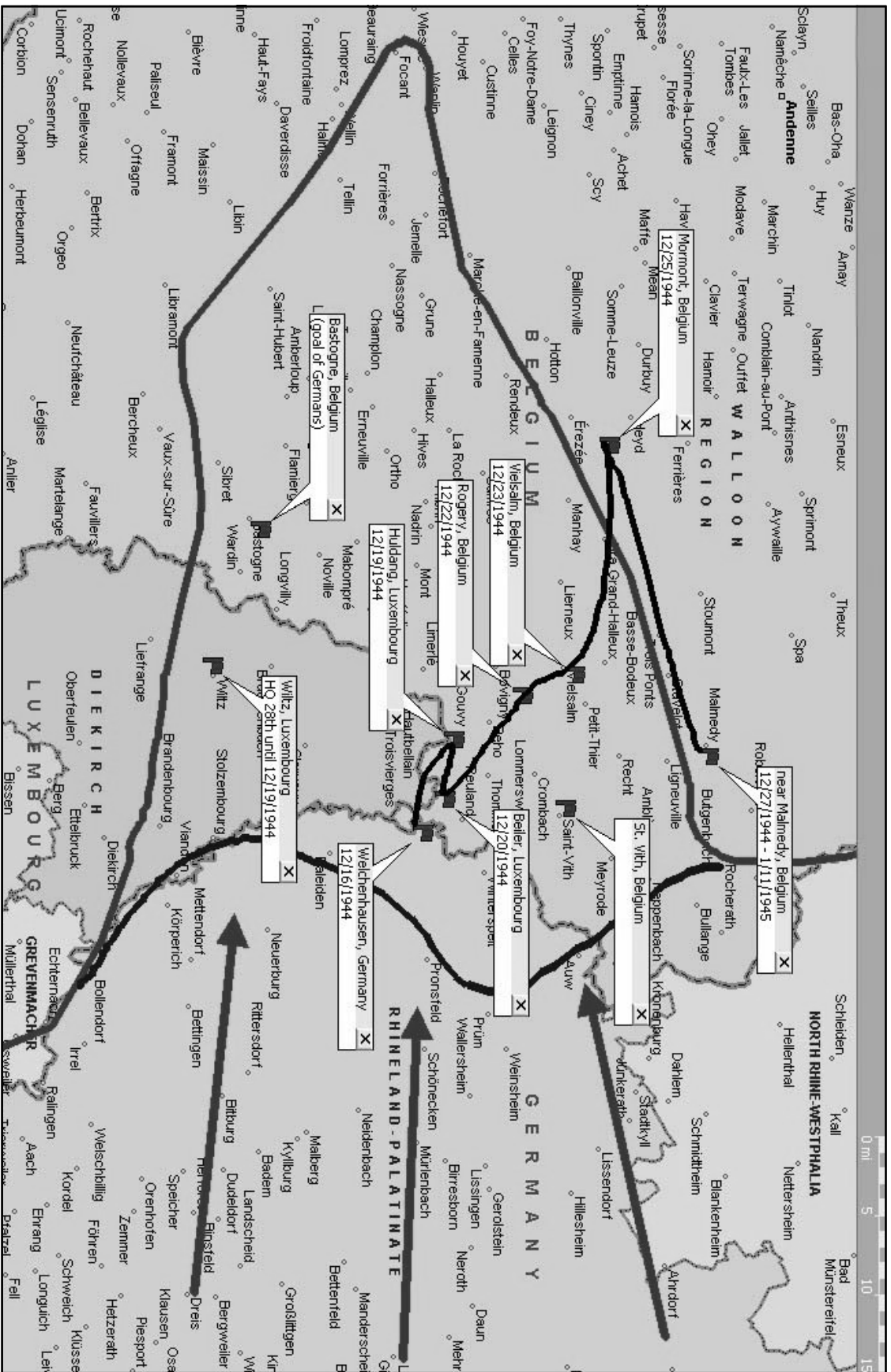
But this was only the calm before the next storm. On **December 16, 1944**, German forces began breaking through the Allied line in the northern section of Luxembourg. German Col. Von Rundstedt was beginning his great counter-offensive toward the west by making heavy thrusts along the entire 25 mile defense line of the 28th Division. The 229th FA Bn was located on the northern flank of the 28th Division and was directly in the path of the oncoming Germans whose goal was to take the snow-covered city of Bastogne (20 miles beyond the Allied line) by nightfall. Von Rundstedt planned to reach the sea within a few days, cutting off the Allied troops to the north, making it impossible for them to withdraw. The initial German attacks were made by groups of between seven and 30 tanks plowing through the Keystone line, isolating many companies from their battalions. The Allies were shocked and stunned by the intensity of the German attack.

This German attack in the Ardennes Forest became known in US Forces journals as “The Battle of the Bulge”. Its name came from the fact that the Allied line bulged due to German attacks, but never broke. For ten days, the Germans progressed deeper and deeper into the Allied line, with most of the 28th Division fighting on the southwestern portion of the bulge. However, the 229th was as much as forty miles away, isolated from its division, attacking on the northeastern edge of the bulge, largely fighting in place using all available personnel. The persistence of the entire 28th Division (and other divisions) considerably threw off the enemy’s timetable of westward movement.

By **Christmas Day 1944**, the Germans had taken Wiltz and Bastogne in the south, and St. Vith in the north, but the Allies were slowly beginning to retake these towns which had suffered considerable damage from the fighting. By mid-January, the Allies had retaken nearly all the ground that had been lost and continued to advance further. The Battle of the



A signal station in Bastogne.



The left-most line shows the extent of the bulge at its peak resulting from the German attacks coming from the east. The right-most line represents the Allied defense both before the bulge developed and after it was contained. The thinner line in the middle shows the location and movement of the 229th FA Bn. Initially they were in the center of the attack, but eventually they were able to move to the north into Belgium.

Bulge officially ended on **January 16, 1945**, and lasted one month. Over 500,000 Germans participated in the battle and 100,000 of them were either killed, wounded, or captured. Over 600,000 Americans fought in the battle, with 81,000 soldiers killed, wounded, or captured. Of those 81,000, there were 19,000 Americans who died, making it the worst battle of the war in terms of losses.

The Battle of the Bulge was not only a violent military struggle, it was also a battle against the weather. The winter of 1944/45 brought the coldest, snowiest weather “in memory” to the Ardennes Forest of Belgium and Luxembourg. Many of the same factors that made Hürtgen Forest so miserable, were making an encore appearance here. Freezing temperatures, snow, slush, and mud only added to the difficulties the men faced in battle. The American commanders had thought the Ardennes was the least likely location for a German attack, so they chose to only keep a thin line in that area, moving other forces further north and south. However, three powerful German armies had plunged into the region and surprised the Americans. Amazingly, the American line never broke and within three days, reinforcements arrived making the Germans’ seemingly easy goal suddenly very difficult.

As for the 229th FA Bn during this battle, officially, it was detached from the 28th Inf Div from the middle of December until January 11, 1945. During that time it was considered part of the 30th Division. The 229th FA Bn had been working with the 112th Infantry along the northern flank of a six mile sector on the German bank of the Our River, near the town of Welchenhausen. The terrain consisted of grassy, snow-covered hills outlined by heavily wooded pine forests. The trees made long distance observation very difficult, facilitating the surprise attack by the Germans.

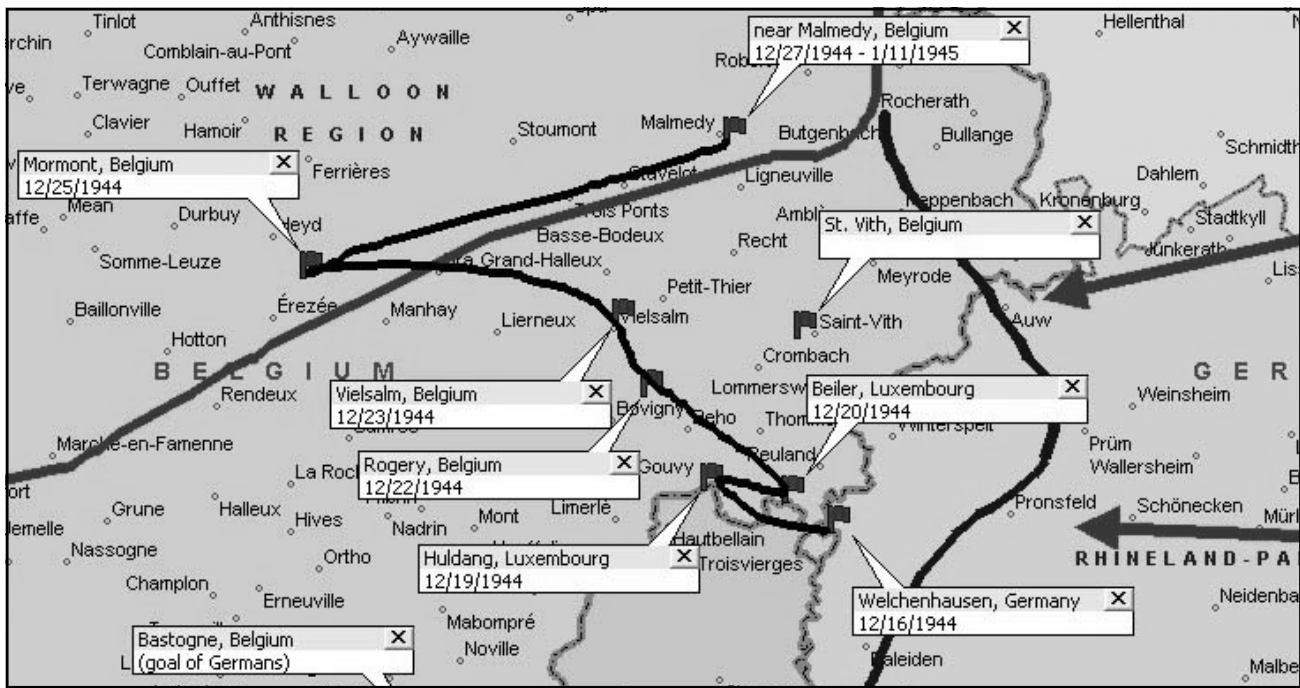
The 112th Infantry and the 229th FA Bn were split apart from the rest of the 28th Division in the initial German onslaught on **December 16**. On that first day, the men were able to hold their position fairly easily even though their line of communication with the division had been cut off. For the four days that the battalion was isolated, the men fought desperately in their own war to repel the Germans. During the chaos, the regimental commanders were forced to act on their own.



This neighborhood in Bastogne, Belgium, was destroyed by mortar and tank fire.



A white sheet was used to camouflage this tank in the snow in Bastogne.



The 229th FA Bn was located just inside the German border near the town of Welchenhausen when the attacks began.

As they met other battered and broken Allied units in a state of disarray, they joined forces to create some semblance of organization.

On **December 17**, the 229th FA Bn, commanded by Lt. Col. Fairchild, came under heavy attack. Battery C was under direct fire from the German tanks, but the men held them at bay with their Howitzers at close range. The entire battalion fired on the German advance at Lutzkampen (located a mile southeast of Welchenhausen) as long as their limited supply of shells would permit. Soon fighter bombers arrived to provide air assistance which was tremendously effective. However, there were too few guns and too few planes to stop the enemy. At 2:00pm the regimental commander ordered the Howitzers and the artillery to retreat to the Belgian side of the river. During the move, no equipment was lost and the men quickly resumed their firing. The regimental commander said that the 229th gave such support to the 112th that it was the “best artillery in the Army”. Even though the men had lost ground to the enemy and had allowed them to cross the bridge into Belgium, they had made the Germans pay a high price for that real estate. During these two days, as many as 30 German tanks were destroyed, 186 prisoners were taken, and about 500 Germans were killed or wounded.

On **December 18**, the fighting was not quite as intense, and the 112th made contact with the last remaining regiment of the 106th Division a few miles to the north. (The other two 106th regiments had been completely surrounded by the Germans and were forced to surrender.) Early the next day, under heavy fog, the 112th Inf, the 229th FA Bn, and the 106th’s 424th Inf, all working together as the 112th Combat Team, regrouped near Huldang, Luxembourg, facing south. During the day they received conflicting orders: one to move southwest and help in the defense of Bastogne, and the other to hold their position near Beiler. Due to poor lines of communication with their division, the officers were faced with a dilemma. They decided to move east toward Beiler since traveling 20 miles to Bastogne would mean passing directly through the German advance.

During the chaos of relocating from one village to the next, the men of the 229th FA Bn often had to leave their big guns, pick up rifles, and work alongside the infantrymen in close fighting. When the batteries were forced to withdraw, the gun crews would pull the guns along with them. Since they did not want the Germans to know that they were displacing the Howitzers, they moved at night with the truck drivers following a white handkerchief and the roar of the enemy tanks drowning out the sound of the trucks. Since Roy served as both a gun crewman and a truck driver, these events were certainly very real to him.

On **December 20**, the men of the 112th Combat Team (which included the 229th FA Bn) slid back to the east to re-occupy Beiler and make a line through the towns of Leithum, Beiler, and Malscheid in defense of St. Vith. However, as the bulge grew, the 112th Combat Team was again forced to move north and west until they reached the town of Vielsalm, and eventually Mormont just west of St. Vith. The Germans took St. Vith on **December 21**.

As a result of their relentless efforts during the Battle of the Bulge, the 112th Combat Team received special recognition.



Snowy scenes in St. Vith, Belgium, in December 1944.

### Presidential Unit Citation

Awarded to the 112th Infantry Regimental Combat Team  
Officially Presented August 17, 1947, at Indiantown Gap

The 112th Infantry Regimental Combat Team consisting of the 112th Infantry Regiment with the 229th Field Artillery Battalion, Company C of the 103rd Engineering Battalion, Battery C of the 447th Anti-aircraft Battalion and Company C of the 640th Tank Destroyer Battalion attached is cited for extraordinary heroism, efficiency and achievement in action against the enemy from 16 to 24 Dec 1944.

On December 16, 1944, the 112th Infantry Regimental Combat Team from Lutzkampen, Germany, to Lieler, Luxembourg, was holding 6-1/2 miles of the front line sector assigned to the 28th Infantry Division. During the period 16 to 18 Dec 1944, despite repeated infantry and tank attacks involving the elements of nine enemy divisions, the 112th Infantry Regimental Combat Team held its ground. In this period it inflicted estimated casualties on the enemy of 1,600, including over 200 prisoners taken and successfully evacuated. All elements of the 112th Infantry Regimental Combat Team were involved in this action. The 229th Field

Artillery Battalion was engaged in direct fire on the enemy at a range of 150 yards. The Cannon Company of the 112th Regiment and Company C 630th Tank Destroyer Battalion, by direct fire, succeeded in disabling 18 enemy tanks. Company C 103rd Engineering Battalion together with the 2nd Battalion 112th Infantry Regiment, repeatedly counter-attacked enemy penetrations. The Headquarters, Headquarters Company and Service Company manned the lines and drove off by fire a number of groups of the enemy which had infiltrated into the rear areas. The kitchens being overrun on the night of 16-17 Dec. 1944, the kitchen personnel fought with rifles to recover the positions. All this was done under withering small-arms and artillery fire from enemy positions throughout the entire front. On the night of 17-18 Dec. 1944, under orders from higher headquarters, the 112th Infantry Regimental Combat Team was withdrawn to the high ground west of the Our River. This withdrawal was accomplished successfully in spite of strong enemy infiltrations throughout the entire sector. From 18 until 23 Dec. 1944 the 112th Infantry Regimental Combat Team was continually engaged in rear guard action covering the withdrawal of the right flank of the First American Army.

On the night of 23-24 Dec. 1944, the action of the 112th Infantry Regimental Combat Team was especially notable. Being ordered by higher headquarters to act as a covering force for units withdrawing to the American lines, it held its position under furious enemy infantry and tank attacks until the Regimental Headquarters and 1st Battalion 112th Infantry were surrounded. The 1st Battalion then fought its way clear to friendly lines, bringing with it a number of vehicles and personnel of other units. The gallantry under extremely hazardous and physically trying conditions, the stubborn defense of the sectors assigned to them, and the heroic conduct of all personnel of the 112th Regimental Combat Team, in nine days of continuous fighting, exemplify the highest traditions of the armed forces of the United States.

As the doors of the bulge began to close from the west, the 229th continued fighting in place at the point where the bulge had formed, almost as if they were herding the Germans back through the gate as they retreated eastward. After four weeks of continuous contact with the enemy, the 112th Combat Team was the last to rejoin the 28th Division on **January 13**.

It's difficult to imagine the extreme sense of responsibility and courage that these men exhibited under such extraordinary circumstances. Many groups of soldiers (including the 229th FA Bn) were completely surrounded by the Germans and isolated from the officers of their commanding division. During this battle, their every decision and action would mean the difference between life and death. Morley Cassidy, a war correspondent in a nationwide broadcast to America, said "The 28th Division has performed one of the greatest feats in the history of the American Army. Against nine divisions it has held so firmly that the German timetable has been thrown off completely."



"Hildenboard from Kentucky" is all that was written on the back of the original. This picture may have been taken while they were in Europe.



R E S T R I C T E D

HEADQUARTERS 28TH INFANTRY DIVISION  
APO 28, U.S. ARMY

GENERAL ORDERS ) 28TH ROLL ON 19 April 1945  
NUMBER 38 )

SECTION I: AWARD OF THE MERITORIOUS SERVICE UNIT PLAQUE  
SECTION II: AWARD OF THE SILVER STAR, MISSING IN ACTION  
SECTION III: AWARD OF SILVER STAR.  
SECTION IV: AWARD OF THE BRONZE SILVER MEDAL.

SECTION I: AWARD OF MERITORIOUS SERVICE UNIT PLAQUE.

Under the provisions of War Department Circular 345, 23 August 1944, the MERITORIOUS SERVICE UNIT PLAQUE is awarded to

E X T R A C T

The Service Battery, 229th Field Artillery Battalion, for outstanding devotion to duty in the performance of exceptionally difficult tasks during the period 1 November 1944 to 1 January 1945. During this period, a high standard of discipline was maintained, based on superior military courtesy, appearance of personnel and installations and equipment. The performance of this unit during the German counter-offensive in December 1944 was notably praiseworthy. At this time the battalion was detached from the Division and the accustomed facilities for supply of equipment and ammunition were inaccessible. Members of the battery displayed notable initiative and frequent individual bravery in seeking and obtaining both ammunition and rations from supply points which had been abandoned and partially surrounded by hostile forces. By fortitude and perseverance the battery put to good use vital items which would otherwise have fallen into enemy hands. The efficiency and enthusiasm with which members of the battery executed their orders contributed greatly to the services rendered. A superior record was also established by the Service Battery 229th Field Artillery Battalion, in submitting a negative report on venereal disease, men AWOL, conviction by courts martial and punishments under A.M. 104. The outstanding devotion to duty displayed by the officers and men of the Service Battery, 229th Field Artillery Battalion, under combat conditions, reflects great credit on its personnel and the Armed Forces of the United States.

BY COMMAND OF MAJOR GENERAL L. COTA:

J. L. GIBNEY  
COLONEL, General Staff Corps  
Chief of Staff.

OFFICIAL

P. H. KIENZLE,  
Lieutenant Colonel, Adjutant General Department,  
Adjutant General.

DISTRIBUTION: "C" plus Special.

TRUE EXTRACT COPY:

*Edwin T. Chapman*  
EDWIN T. CHAPMAN  
1st Lt 229th FA Bn  
Assistant Executive

R E S T R I C T E D

The Meritorious Service Unit Plaque was awarded to the Service Battery of the 229th FA Bn on April 19, 1945, for their outstanding performance in November and December 1944.

## The Liberation of Colmar

On **January 16, 1945**, the 28th Division was once again intact with the return of all of its regiments and battalions including the 112th Combat Team. It was relieved of its mission in the Meuse River area (along the border of Belgium and France) and would relocate 120 miles to the southeast at Luneville, France. On **January 18**, the division set up its command post at St. Marie-Aux-Mines, 40 more miles southeast and less than 20 miles from the German border. For the next several days, aggressive combat patrols were sent out regularly to exert continuous pressure against the enemy. The snow-covered mountainous trails and the abundance of both enemy and friendly mines made travel dangerous.

The city of Colmar, France, is located just ten miles from the Rhine River which creates the border between France and Germany. This area still had a large concentration of Germans and was known as the “Colmar Pocket”. With the aid of the French Army, the 28th Division began attack missions to take control of Colmar, the last major French city under German control, on **January 29**. The attack was made quickly enough that it caught the Germans by surprise. Compared with what the division had experienced in its previous battles, the city of Colmar was taken rather easily.

By **February 4** the city of Colmar and its suburbs had been returned to French control. The celebration was a smaller version of what the men had experienced in Paris over five months earlier.

The Keystone Division moved further east, across the Rhine River and into Germany. Along with other divisions, they occupied the eastern banks of the Rhine River until **February 12** when they were relieved, receiving orders to relocate to the northwest at Toul, France.



Keystone soldiers searched house by house for signs of the enemy.



The celebration in Colmar, France, was reminiscent of the scene in Paris.

## The War Comes to an End

The division remained at Toul for four days before heading 150 miles north by train to Aachen, Germany. Their return to within ten miles of the horrors they faced in the Hürtgen Forest must have brought back some terrible memories for the troops. Nonetheless, they traveled east, toward the Rhine River. As they passed through Schleiden, Germany, on **February 21, 1945**, the soldiers found a town destroyed by the war.

As the Allies advanced east, the Germans were retreating. In **early March** the 28th was closing in on the enemy from the north, but they met only light resistance from small arms and artillery. While some infantries advanced fairly quickly, others were slowed by a thick network of mines that had to first be cleared. In mid March, east of Mulheim, Germany, the division took a few days to allow all its elements to regroup.

On **March 16**, orders were received to travel further east by vehicle. Without incident, on March 18, the division reached Niedermendig, 40 miles inside Germany. They traveled on to Koblenz the following day, again, without serious incident.

Over the next three weeks, the division fanned out, clearing towns to the north and east, leaving at least one platoon in each town. The 28th was now primarily carrying out routine patrols, keeping the peace, and rounding up stragglers from the German Army. On **April 6**, there was an elaborate flag raising ceremony at Fort Ehrenbreitstein, located across the Rhine River from Koblenz. By **April 10**, the division had relocated to the northwest to carry out a security mission. The 229th FA Bn was positioned in the vicinity of Stommeln, near Cologne. Nearly two weeks later, the division's occupation zone had shifted to the south. Troops were shuttled over 200 miles to Kaiserslautern.

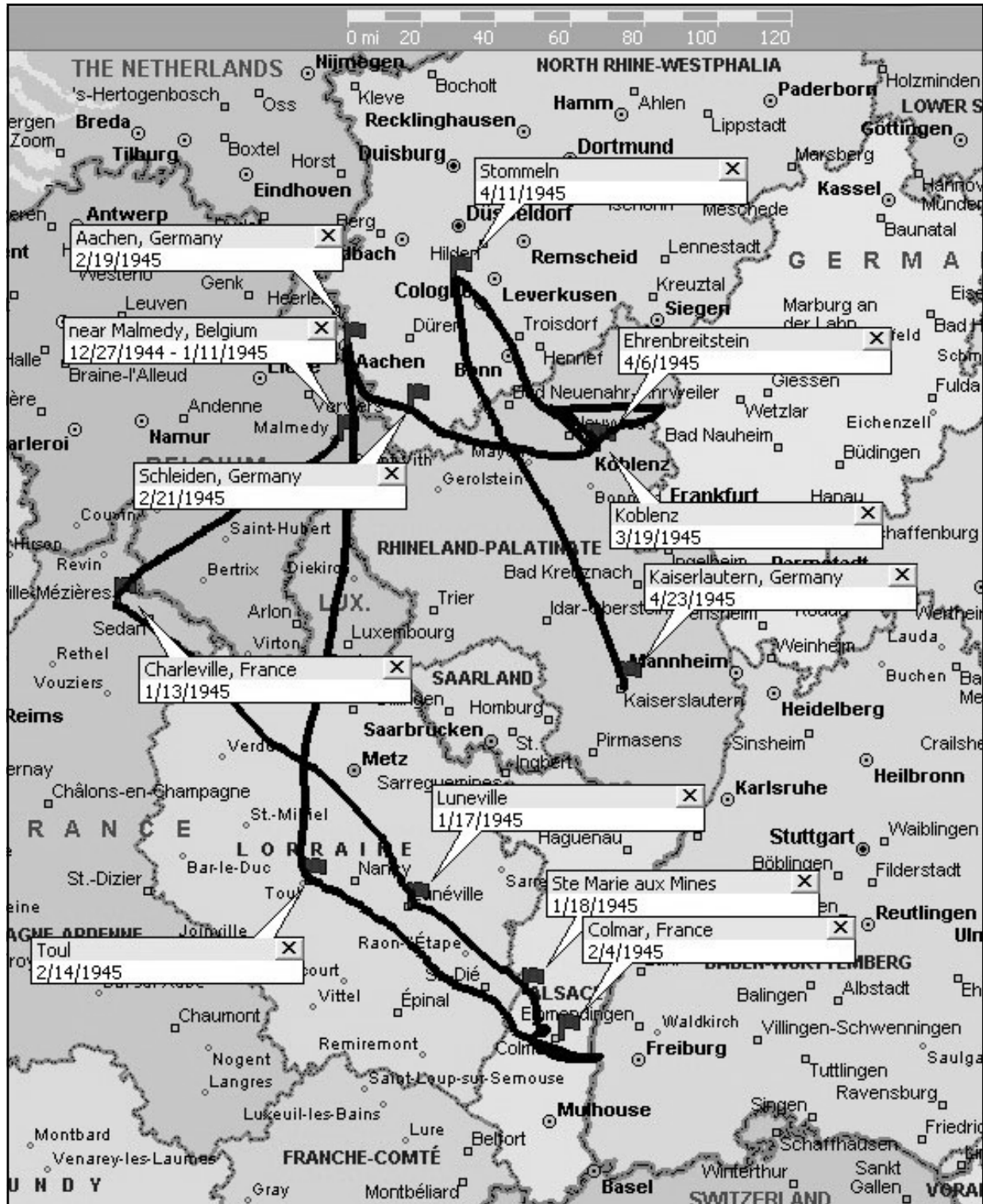
The division's mission of occupying, organizing, and governing the region lasted for two and a half months. Their major task was in dealing with displaced German, Russian, Polish, and Italian citizens. Seventeen camps were set up in the area to handle and process people who had been taken from their homes. By the end of May, trains were regularly scheduled to transport these people back to their own countries.



Most of the structures in Schleiden, Germany, had been either burned or bombed.



Near Koblenz, Germany, these men were part of the air section of the 229th FA Bn. On the far right is 1Lt John J. Scocchio.



After the Battle of the Bulge, the 28th Division moved south to fight at Colmar. They then traveled north to Aachen, Germany, and moved east to clear more German towns.

HEADQUARTERS  
229TH FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION  
APO 28  
U S ARMY

5 June 1945

The following article has been extracted from the magazine "Outfit" dated 23 April 1945

WHAT THEY'VE DONE

The opening shot of the 229th FA Bn was fired in July, 1944, when it set up business in the hedgerow country of Normandy. In its first eight months of action, it dumped 3,047,088 pounds of steel and TNT at the front doors of its Wehrmacht customers. Ironically enough, 58 members of the battalion are from America's great steel center Pittsburgh. The first shot into Germany was fired in September by I/Cpl John C. Fairchild, Chestnut Hill, Pa, a battalion CO. The target was a Siegfried Line pillbox. During the Ardennes break-through, the battalion temporarily abandoned its 105s and picked up rifles to work alongside the doughs in the close-in fighting. At one time, it supported the 112th Regt of the 28th Inf Div and helped break up a Nazi counter-attack. On another occasion, during the fighting near Schmidt in the Huergeren Forest, the battalion's howitzers were unable to reduce pillboxes that were holding up its advance. Working in close liaison with fighter-bomber planes, it fired smoke shells to spot the boxes. And the fliers did the rest. The battalion, supporting the 28th Div, struck the Rhine south of Cologne and continued to lend its weight to the opinion the Jerry has of American artillery.

This article was released by the HQ Battery of the 229th FA Bn on June 5, 1945. It summarizes the work that had been done by the battalion during the war.

While the hostilities were officially declared ended on **May 8**, the mission of the 28th did not change. They were located in the vicinity of Kaiserslautern, with the 229th FA Bn stationed just north of the city at least throughout the month of June. They continued their occupying duties even though the men began thinking about where they would go next. Would they be kept in Germany indefinitely? Would they be sent to the Pacific? Would they be allowed to return home? In order to "fairly" answer this question, the Army set up an Adjusted Service Rating (ASR) scoring system to determine who would be sent home first. Men with the least combat experience were to be granted a short leave before returning to duty to fight in the Pacific. Those with the most experience (ASR above 80) would be retained in Europe as occupational troops until they were discharged. The scoring system was set up as follows:

- One point for each month of Army service since 9/16/1940  
(1 X 41 months = 41 points)
- One point for each month served overseas since 9/16/1940  
(1 X 19 months = 19 points)
- Five points for each award received since 9/16/1940  
(5 X 6 awards = 30 points) [1 Purple Heart + 5 Battle Stars]
- Twelve points for each child under age 18 (up to 3 children)  
(12 X 0 children = 0 points)

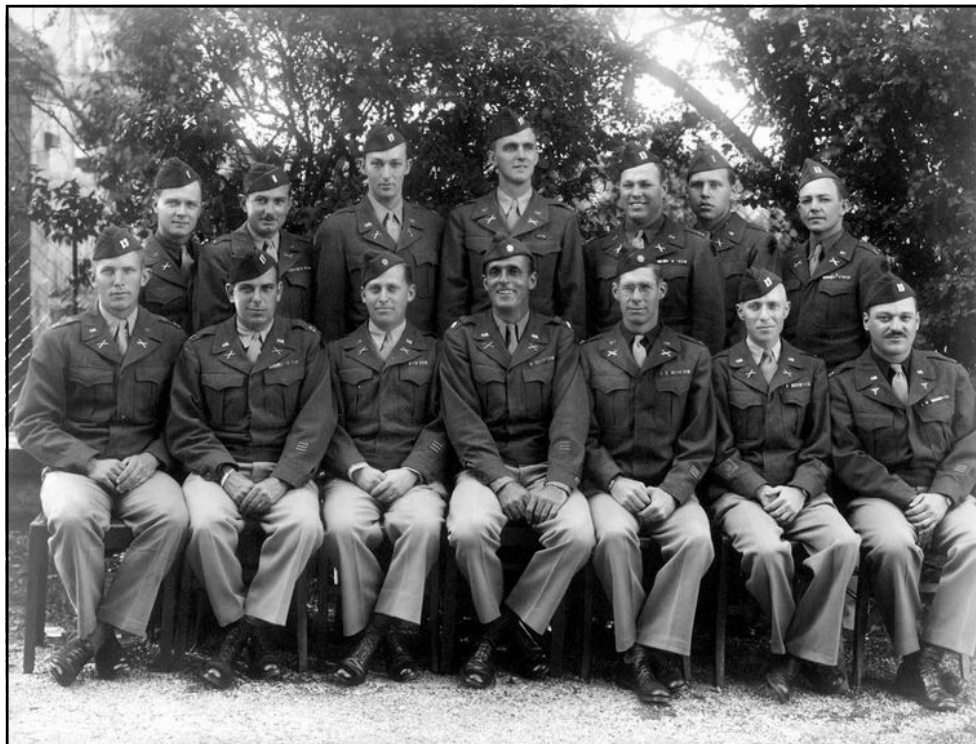
Roy Duncan's Total ASR Score was 90 points.

On **June 29, 1945**, many long-time Keystone men (those with high ASR scores) were transferred to the 106th Division to serve as occupational troops until they were transported back to the U.S. and discharged. In return, low ASR scorers were transferred from the 106th to the 28th. Roy was one of 2,766 Keystone men who had been transferred to the 106th by the **middle of July**.

The “rookie” 28th Division sailed to Boston or New York by the **end of July**, expecting to be sent to the Pacific within a few weeks. However, victory was declared in Japan on **August 15**, meaning that no more troops would be deployed.



Men still with the 28th Division began leaving Europe in late July 1945.



The Staff Officers of the 229th Field Artillery Battalion in 1945.

(L-R sitting) Capt. William Pettit, Capt. Charles E. Clark, Maj. James J. Wells, Lt. Col John C. Fairchild, Maj. William M. Reynolds Jr., Capt. Stephen L. Brown, and Capt. Delos R. Cozad.

(L-R standing) WOJG Eugene T. Shore, 1st Lt. John J. Scocchio, Capt. Neil F. Ferguson, Capt. William G. Mclaughlin, Capt. Edwin T. Chapman, Lt. James A. Haertlein, and Capt. William B. Young.

The irony is that the “veterans” now with the 106th Division were still serving, while the "rookies" were being discharged at home. The 106th Division served six more weeks in Europe. They began arriving in the U.S. in New York on **October 1**, and the division was inactivated on **October 2**. My grandfather left Europe on **September 26**, and arrived in the U.S. on **October 3, 1945**.

The honorable discharge for Roy Duncan is shown on the following page. It was dated **October 9, 1945**. Highlights of the document include:

- Discharged from Btry B, 591st FA Bn (of the 106th Infantry Division)
- Civilian occupation was a log turner
- Served as a truck driver in the military
- Qualified with "SS CAL 30 CARBINE M1", (i.e. a 0.30 caliber M1 rifle)
- ASR score was 90 as of May 12, 1945
- Four different decorations

- ◇ American Defense Service Medal
- ◇ Good Conduct Medal
- ◇ European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal
- ◇ Purple Heart



## Conclusion

My grandfather spent two years in Europe, experienced some of the bloodiest battles of the war, and passed through at least six foreign countries including Wales, England, France, Belgium, Luxembourg, and Germany. The map on the following page shows the winding path of the 229th FA Bn while in Europe.

After the war my grandfather went back to Wilkes Co, NC. He worked for at least a few months at Coble Dairy in Wilkesboro before getting married in October 1948. They moved to nearby Elkin where he got a job with Elkin Furniture Company, again working with lumber like he had done before entering the Army. They had two sons Leroy and John. He lived and worked the rest of his life in Elkin before he died in October 1975. His nearly four years of service during WWII is something to be proud of.

**ENLISTED RECORD AND REPORT OF SEPARATION  
HONORABLE DISCHARGE**

1. LAST NAME - FIRST NAME - MIDDLE INITIAL <b>DUNCAN ROY C</b>		2. ARMY SERIAL NO. <b>34 175 117</b>	3. GRADE <b>PFC</b>	4. ARM OR SERVICE <b>FA</b>	5. COMPONENT <b>AUS</b>
6. ORGANIZATION <b>BTRY B 591ST F A BN</b>		7. DATE OF SEPARATION <b>9 OCT 45</b>	8. PLACE OF SEPARATION <b>SEPARATION CENTER FT BRAGG NC</b>		
9. PERMANENT ADDRESS FOR MAILING PURPOSES <b>RT 1 N WILKESBORO NC</b>		10. DATE OF BIRTH <b>31 DEC 19</b>	11. PLACE OF BIRTH <b>PULASKI CO VA</b>		
12. ADDRESS FROM WHICH EMPLOYMENT WILL BE SOUGHT <b>SEE 9</b>		13. COLOR EYES <b>BROWN</b>	14. COLOR HAIR <b>BROWN</b>	15. HEIGHT <b>5'5"</b>	16. WEIGHT <b>139 LBS.</b>
17. NO. DEPEND.	18. RACE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> WHITE <input type="checkbox"/> NEGRO <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (specify)		19. MARITAL STATUS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SINGLE <input type="checkbox"/> MARRIED <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (specify)		20. U.S. CITIZEN <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
21. CIVILIAN OCCUPATION AND NO. <b>LOG TURNER (6-31,980)</b>					

**MILITARY HISTORY**

22. DATE OF INDUCTION <b>2 DEC 41</b>	23. DATE OF ENLISTMENT <b>2 DEC 41</b>	24. DATE OF ENTRY INTO ACTIVE SERVICE <b>2 DEC 41</b>	25. PLACE OF ENTRY INTO SERVICE <b>FT BRAGG NC</b>
SELECTIVE SERVICE DATA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	26. REGISTERED <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	27. LOCAL U.S. BOARD NO. <b>2</b>	28. COUNTY AND STATE <b>WILKES NC</b>
29. HOME ADDRESS AT TIME OF ENTRY INTO SERVICE <b>SEE 9</b>		30. MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY AND NO. <b>TRUCK DRIVER (345)</b>	
31. MILITARY QUALIFICATION AND DATE (i.e., Infantry, aviation and marksmanship badges, etc.) <b>SS CAL 30 CARBINE M1</b>		32. BATTLES AND CAMPAIGNS <b>NORMANDY; NORTHERN FRANCE; RHINELAND; ARDENNES; CENTRAL EUROPE;</b>	

33. DECORATIONS AND CITATIONS  
**AMERICAN DEFENSE SERVICE MEDAL; GOOD CONDUCT MEDAL AR 600-68; EAMET CAMPAIGN MEDAL WITH 5 BRONZE STARS; PURPLE HEART GO 14 HQ 28TH INF DIV 5 AUG 44**

34. WOUNDS RECEIVED IN ACTION  
**EAMET 31 JUL 44**

35. LATEST IMMUNIZATION DATES		36. SERVICE OUTSIDE CONTINENTAL U. S. AND RETURN	
SMALLPOX	TYPHOID	TETANUS	OTHER (specify)
<b>20 AUG 43</b>	<b>19 JUN 45</b>	<b>20 JUN 45</b>	<b>YF 27 MAR 42 TYPH 5 AUG 42</b>
37. TOTAL LENGTH OF SERVICE		38. HIGHEST GRADE HELD	DATE OF DEPARTURE
CONTINENTAL SERVICE		<b>PRIVATE FIRST CLASS</b>	<b>8 OCT 43</b>
FOREIGN SERVICE			DESTINATION
YEARS	MONTHS	DAYS	<b>USA</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>3 OCT 45</b>

39. PRIOR SERVICE  
**NONE**

40. REASON AND AUTHORITY FOR SEPARATION  
**CONVENIENCE OF GOVERNMENT RR1-1 (DEMOBILIZATION) AR 615-365 15 DEC 44**

41. SERVICE SCHOOLS ATTENDED  
**NONE**

42. EDUCATION (Years)  
Grammar **7** High School **0** College **0**


**PAY DATA**

43. LONGEVITY FOR PAY PURPOSES	44. MUSTERING OUT PAY	45. SOLDIER DEPOSITS	46. TRAVEL PAY	47. TOTAL AMOUNT, NAME OF DISBURSING OFFICER
YEARS <b>3</b> MONTHS <b>10</b> DAYS <b>8</b>	TOTAL <b>\$ 300</b> THIS PAYMENT <b>\$ 100</b>	<b>NONE</b>	<b>\$ 172.24</b>	<b>1 A CALPESTRI MAJ FD</b>

**INSURANCE NOTICE**

**IMPORTANT** IF PREMIUM IS NOT PAID WHEN DUE OR WITHIN THIRTY-ONE DAYS THEREAFTER, INSURANCE WILL LAPSE. MAKE CHECKS OR MONEY ORDERS PAYABLE TO THE TREASURER OF THE U. S. AND FORWARD TO COLLECTIONS SUBDIVISION, VETERANS ADMINISTRATION, WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

48. KIND OF INSURANCE Nat. Serv. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> U.S. Govt. <input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/>	49. HOW PAID Allotment <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Direct to V. A. <input type="checkbox"/>	50. Effective Date of Allotment Discontinuance <b>31 OCT 45</b>	51. Date of Next Premium Due (One month after 50) <b>30 NOV 45</b>	52. PREMIUM DUE EACH MONTH <b>\$ 6.60</b>	53. INTENTION OF VETERAN TO Continue <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Continue Only <input type="checkbox"/> Discontinue <input type="checkbox"/>
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54.  RIGHT THUMB PRINT

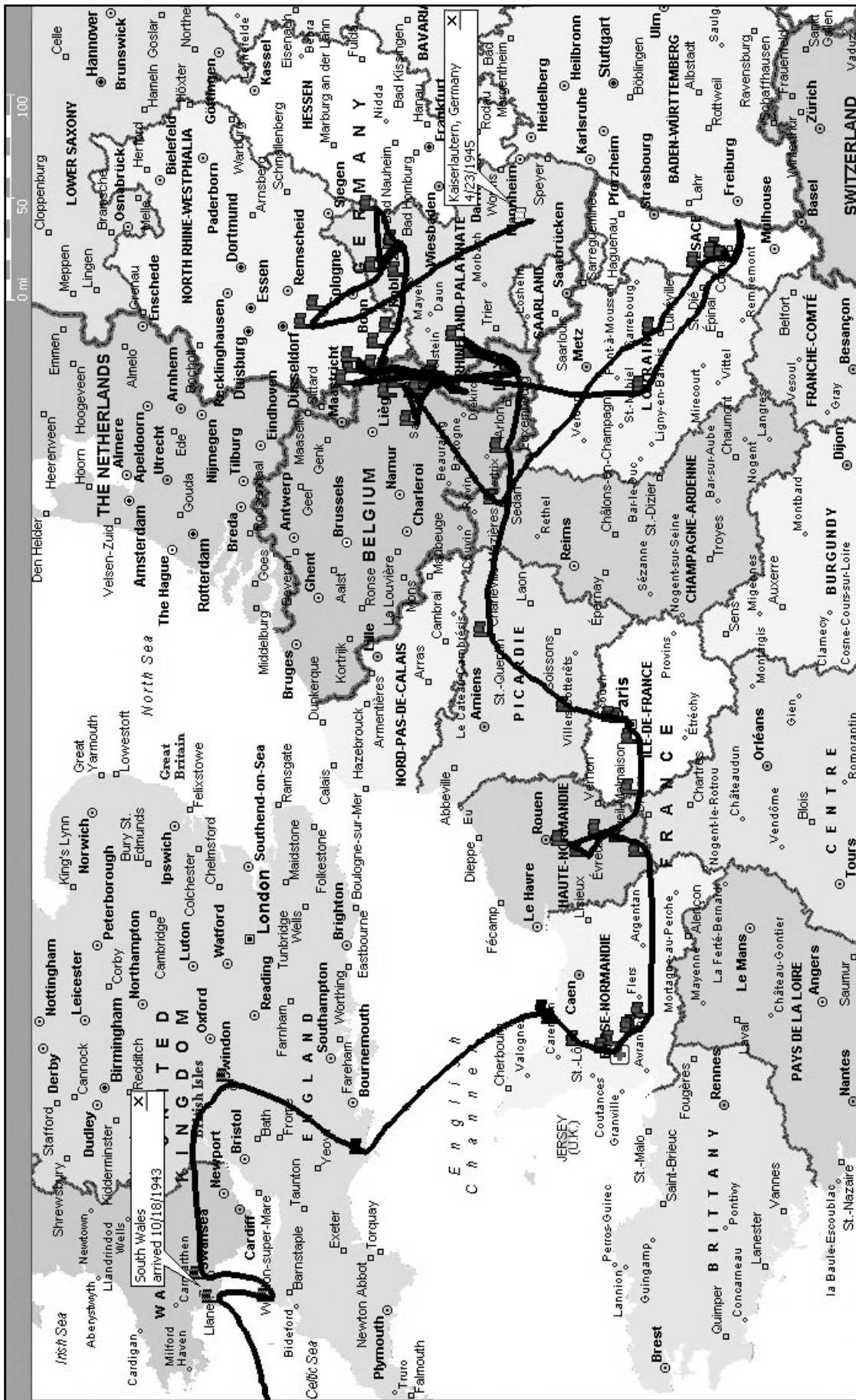
55. REMARKS (This space for completion of above items or entry of other items specified in W. D. Directives)  
**NO TIME LOST UNDER AW 107  
LAPEL BUTTON ISSUED  
ASR SCORE (12 MAY 45) 90**

56. SIGNATURE OF PERSON BEING SEPARATED <i>Roy C. Duncan</i>	57. PERSONNEL OFFICER (Type name, grade and organization - signature) <b>L V MORAN CAPT AUS</b> <i>L V Moran</i>
-----------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

WD AGO FORM 53, 55 1 November 1944 This form supersedes all previous editions of WD AGO Forms 53 and 55 for enlisted persons entitled to an Honorable Discharge, which will not be used after receipt of this revision. Recorded in Wilkes County Discharge Book No. 2, Page 486.

Honorable Discharge dated October 9, 1945.





My grandfather's journey with the 229th FA Bn began in December 1941 and lasted until October 1945.