

RAMBLINGS

I have done a fair amount of reading over the years about the war in Europe and recently have come across references to ASTP, its cancellation and the assignment of thousands of young men to various infantry divisions. I have come to the conclusion that we were lucky(!) in a manner of speaking to be assigned to a regular outfit. We came from Providence College which had a relatively small contingent, 368 at the time we left P.C. We had been together for six months by the time the ASTP unit was closed down, we knew a lot of the other guys by that time and we knew what everyone looked like. So we were not strangers as were those who went through replacement depots.

We were taken to Camp Forest near Tullahoma, Tennessee to join the 26th Division. When we were assigned to Companies and platoons, there were a number of us still together and we knew each other. We lived in the same hutment as a squad and trained together. We also spent our off time together going to the service club or the movie in the evening. Some of us went on pass to Columbia together. In other words we really got to know each other. This no doubt was a big help when we finally went into combat. Each squad was a team.

Compare this to what could have happened. Apparently some ASTP'ers were not assigned to a regular unit but were sent to a training outfit to be used as a replacement! If this had happened to us, there would be no friend or buddy to go overseas with or into combat. So if you look at it that way we were lucky to be in a unit with people we knew. The only way we would have been better off would have been to flunk out of ASTP and be sent back to the branch of service we came from which in a lot of cases was the Air Corps.

An excellent book has recently come out, "Citizen Soldiers" by Stephen Ambrose. He writes about how the US was using its young men as infantry replacements, cannon fodder, in Europe. When ASTP closed, there were 120,000 men available and they all went to the Infantry! Also he says the Air Force released 70,000 air cadets as they had enough pilots so there were 190,000 men available, enough for 10 Divisions he says. If I remember right one had to be under 22 years old to get into ASTP. Probably the same with air cadets. Another good book is "Battle of the Bulge" by Danny Parker. It is a big book, cost about \$35.00 when I bought it. It gives detail about most of the actions by unit, both German and American.

If you read enough about some of the other actions in the ETO, you can feel glad we weren't in some of those spots. First of all there was D Day. That must have been a thrill to have the ramp of the landing craft lower and see some water to wade in with a nice flat beach to cross if you could get that far - or there may have been a cliff to scale. Then there was the hedgerow fighting, one pasture at a time. Next was the preparation for the breakout at Avranches with the saturation bombing supposedly of the Germans. However there got to be so much dust and smoke, the aiming line was not visible so the 4th and the 30th Divisions took a lot of casualties. One general was killed. He was up to observe how effective the saturation bombing was going to be. Talk about short rounds! The Hurtgen Forest was a hopeless and bloody affair. The battle for Aachen was bad too. Also some of the action to capture the forts around Metz was a terrible thing.

The two highpoints that I remember before we were sent to Metz was the Moncourt Woods and Hill 360 just before we were relieved by the 87th. Then of course there was the Bulge for those of us who had survived up to that point. The Bulge is the biggest battle the US Army ever fought. So you see it could have been worse. It was worse of course for the 24 that were killed in action.

I read an article in Yankee Doings about the 101st Regiment. That fellow wrote that they landed in England first and then were ferried over to Utah Beach. The 328th of course went direct to Utah Beach.

I think we were well trained. They threw a lot of things at us at Jackson. We had to crawl under live machine gun fire on one course; we threw live hand grenades 2 or 3 different times, I remember operating a flame thrower on another course. The whole company qualified for the Expert Infantry Badge (and the extra \$5.00 a month). Then after a time in combat we were awarded the Combat Infantry Badge (an extra \$10.00 a month). Does anyone know if we then got \$15,00 a month or only the \$10.00? It seems like it was only \$10.00. Maybe the Army owes us some back pay?

4/19/98

Bob Madson

Some statistics about Company I, 328th Infantry Regiment, 26th YANKEE Division, WW II

From roster dated Sept 7, 1944

192 Enlisted Men

6 Officers

198 TOTAL (of the company that boarded the Henry Gibbons for the ETO)

Plus about 4 Medics not listed on 328th roster (one per platoon)

Of the original 198

43 were from the Providence College ASTP (as near as can be determined)

7 of the 42 were killed in action.

Company I in combat

The Company was committed to combat on October 5, 1944 near Pont A Mousson Northern France at a position 3 1/2 miles NE of the village of Atton according to a log kept by 1st Sgt Hover. Company I was the first Company of the 328th Regiment committed to combat by the 26th Division. The Regiment relieved elements of the 80th Division, 319th Regiment. Company I relieved Company E. Committing of the 328th in this sector has some historical significance in that the 328th in World War I (being a part of the 82nd Division at that time) was committed at about the same place and time.

First casualties were October 7, 1944 when Raymond Conley and Paul Foley were killed instantly when a shell landed in their foxhole. Conley and Foley were from the Providence College Army Specialized Training Program known as ASTP.

62 total were killed in action.

28 of the 62 were from the original Company.

34 of the 62 were replacements.

3 of the 62 were Lieutenants.

59 of the 62 were Enlisted Men.

A booklet, The Story of Company I in World War II, written by 1st Sgt Hover, T/Sgt Mike Salata, and (rank not known) Robert Rodie has a roster listing 522 names of Officers and Men plus 11 Medics. These 533 were at one time assigned to Company I.

469 listed with address

53 address unknown

522

11 Medics no address

533

Company Commander - Capt. John B. Dumaine

Fort Jackson to approximately December 15, 1944

(Hospitalized for varicose veins)

Lt. Paul W. Buchanan

December 15, 1944 to January 4, 1945 wounded

Capt, David H. McGill

January 4, 1945 to end of the war

Platoon Leaders - Original

First - Lt. Paul W. Buchanan - Wounded in Luxemburg Jan 4, 1945

Second - Lt. Eugene R. Hardwick - Wounded in Moncourt Woods Oct 28, 1944

Third - Lt. Thomas C. Bowman - Killed on patrol Oct 30, 1944 near Moncourt

Forth - Lt. Maurice H. Suttle - Killed Jan 6, 1945 near Nothum Luxemburg

BOB MADSON