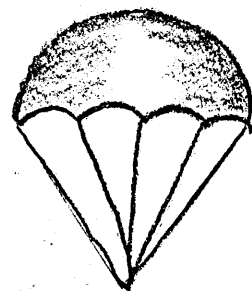
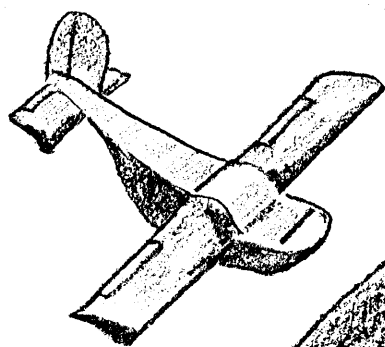


AIRBORNE



A SHORT HISTORY

of

BATTERY "A"

680TH GLIDER FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION

HISTORY OF ABLE BATTERY

SHORT ACCOUNT OF BATTERY "A", 680TH GLIDER FIELD ARTILLERY BN.

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THIS HISTORY WAS

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Commanding Officer, Battery A, 680th Glider FA Battalion.

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to all the men who have died, since the activation of this battery. Their names are:

Capt.	John H. Featherston
Sgt.	Sylvester F. Bobovnik
Sgt.	Alvin P. Hymel
Cpl.	Frederick B. Cannon
Pfc.	Arthur H. Westby
Pfc.	August C. Teresi
Sgt.	Charles J. Schoepf
Pvt.	Joseph C. Brisach
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Pvt.	Doyal Kincade
Pvt.	Alpha A. LaFavers
Pvt.	George F. Seibert
Pvt.	Harry J. Mancini
Pvt.	Ruppert L. Minnear
Pvt.	Curtis E. Robertson
Pvt.	Thomas H. Williams

The following names are names of men who were assigned to Btry. A, 680th Glider FA Bn. at the time of it's deactivation. The names of some of the original men also appear. The only ones that do not appear here are those of the deceased and those of some of the original men whose records were lost when our plane crashed in France. Those addresses were lost.

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HISTORY OF THE BATTERY

Sometime during the year 1942, the United States Army decided that two Airborne Divisions would not be enough to do the job and bring victory to our arms and destroy the enemy in the long and bitter struggle ahead. Accordingly, plans were made to activate two more Airborne Divisions--- the 11th and the 17th. On April 15th, 1943 an officer cadre, drawn mostly from the 88th Infantry Division, and an enlisted cadre from the 101st Airborne Division, gathered at the training area which was the then partly built Camp Mackall in North Carolina, and the 17th Airborne Division was activated. And here begins the history of Battery A, 680th Glider Field Artillery Battalion.

The first officers and enlisted men to arrive at Camp Mackall and be assigned to Able Battery were these:

Capt.	George C. Wight	Sgt.	William W. Buckworth, JR.
Lt.	Albert C. Zimmerman	Sgt.	Marion G. Blansett, Jr.
Lt.	Emil J. Geimer	Sgt.	Frank J. Kirchner
Lt.	John B. Maxey	T/4	Harold S. Robinson
1/Sgt.	Frank J. Kudla	T/4	Arthur Ellis
S/Sgt.	Maurice F. Hickay	T/4	Arthur J. Hurst
S/Sgt.	Joseph R. Maleckar	T/4	John H. Smith
S/Sgt.	James C. Cathey	Cpl.	Charles J. Schoepf
S/Sgt.	Walter L. Blake	Cpl.	Alvin P. Hymel
Sgt.	Sylvester F. Bobovnik	T/5	Rudolph H. Dahl
Sgt.	Tom J. Smith	Pfc.	Kenneth L. Booth
Sgt.	Joseph Blume	Pfc.	James R. Bell

These were the men whose job it was to first organize and hammer into shape the battery which was ultimately to help stop the enemy in the grim winter BATTLE OF THE BULGE, to cross the frontiers of Germany, to make the famous Airborne crossing of the RHINE, and to take part in the final great victory in Europe by helping to clean out the tough resistance in the vast Ruhr pocket in Northwestern Germany.

But back to those early days of 1943, much had to be done to prepare for the victorious days ahead. Men came to Able Battery from induction centers scattered throughout the United States-----arriving after long slow train rides at Hoffman, North Carolina, that thriving metropolis of a railroad station and a few dilapidated buildings along a highway. During our ride from the station to Camp Mackall, we were told we were now members of the 17th AIRBORNE DIVISION. A new AIRBORNE DIVISION! Parachutes and gliders and C-47's It sounded like the real McCoy. It might be tough, but that's what we're in the army for. There's a big job to be done, and it's a good deal to be doing it the Airborne way. We started. The next twenty-four hours we had our first taste of double time as we went to our organization, soft, untrained civilians in uniform, and there was many a sore back and shoulder among us as we came to a halt at Battery "A", 680th Glider F.A. Battalion.

Those first few weeks we were more of a labor battalion than a field artillery unit, because Camp Mackall in those days was only half finished and it was our first job to finish it. But in due course the area was cleared, the last shelves nailed up in the barracks, the work KNOCK painted on the door of the orderly room, and on May 6, 1943 we began our thirteen weeks of the well know Basic Training. Calisthenics, dismounted drill, weapons, military courtesy, interior guard, care and cleaning of material, road marches, reveille, retreat. MAY, JUNE, & JULY in North Carolina. The heat was terrific. There were twenty-five mile hikes, five-mile-in-an-hour hikes, nine-miles-in-two-hours hikes, regulation afternoon road marches, marches to the Fort Bragg range and back. Marches here, Marches there, Marches everywhere. Our Aching backs. We began to feel strange if we weren't marching---and we were supposed to be Airborne. But one thing we were, we were getting tougher, we were learning the life of a soldier, we were learning how to take care of ourselves in the field and to endure bad weather and cold nights on the ground. And, most important, we were learning to take it all on the chin and grin.

By August of 1943, the job was done. The reward----furloughs----our first chance in months to eat a home-cooked meal, to show the best girl how swell we looked in a uniform with the Golden Talon insignia on the shoulder and maybe a stripe or two on the sleeve---and our first chance not to hear that blasted whistle at 5:30 in the blasted morning. But the days shot by and before we knew it we were back with the battery, or if we didn't know it, a Sunday on KP soon wised us up.

There were passes to nearby towns to relieve the Army routine, passes to Rockingham, Southern Pines, Hamlet and Pinehurst, and football season brought weekend trips to Charlotte and Durham. But we kept our eyes and minds and bodies on the main job. There was a war to be won, we were soldiers, and in fact the most important part of our training lay just ahead--- the advanced training before combat which turns a seasoned soldier into a specialist able to do his own job well and fast and at the same time, be able to understand what each of his soldier pals is doing, and why, and what it all means in the big picture of his section, his battery, his battalion, his division and his Army. And the game grew more and more interesting to us as we went out on field problems, more real to us as we began to fire our howitzers and see the rounds burst in the target area, as we began to see how important every cannoneer was in getting the rounds out, every instrument man was in directing a fire, every wire and radio man was in getting the necessary information through, every driver in getting us where we were going, every cook to see that we got enough to eat, every supply man to see that we got enough to wear, yes, and every clerk to see we got our pay as well as our KP Duty.

And with the passage of the months each man became more skilled and efficient at his job, some men learning several skills and, thus, being able to substitute for another man when the combat days of the future rolled around. The variety of subjects studied was great, yet each and every angle was vitally important in the overall design of victory that we were weaving, and cannoneers hop, communication practice, Code school, survey classes, use and nomenclature of the howitzers, machine guns, carbines and other equipment were subjects dealt with every day until

they were fast becoming second nature to us. Nor did the coming of winter and bad weather slow down our operations. They were carried on in rain and snow with the same intensity as had been our earlier basic training in the summer heat, and the battery proved over and over again in Battalion tests that Able Battery was the pride of our Divisional Artillery, to be counted on to put the fire in fast where it was needed most.

The time in fact had come when the Golden Talon Division was considered in shape and fit for bigger things and greater efforts than ever, and the end of January, 1944 was spent preparing to leave for the big Tennessee maneuvers. Equipment was crated, all was made ready, Able battery's area left neat as a pin, and with the "BATTLE OF GUADA-MACKALL" over, we rolled out to Tennessee.

Looking back on that phase of our army lives spend at Camp Mackall, we see it with mixed feelings. In some ways it was the toughest, in some ways the most interesting and important period in our entire Army career. It was there we first learned the business of soldiering and to swallow our homesickness and keep our eye on the game of war. And it was there that Able Battery was born and grew up into a tough and husky GI JOE. Whatever might happen in the future would change us, but it was at Camp Mackall that we became us, that we became Able battery.

Nothing stays absolutely the same for long in the Army, and even during our training at Camp Mackall a good many changes took place amongst us. And it was during this period that the following men left us for other assignments with different outfits and are now scattered over the world.

William Beckworth	Wilmer Knight	Walter Simonson
James Bell	Francis Joy	LaVern Smith
Marion Blanscott	Delmar Livesy	William Steele
William Bottol	Virgil Long	J. Suttle
Frederick Bond	Howard MacHenry	John Trembelas
John Brown	John MacHugh	Johnny Vaca
Kenneth Cantrell	Fred MacLeod	Lowry Wasson
James Clark	Russel Moss	Charles Watson
John Derbish	Joseph Rudler	Edgar Wood
Matthew Gordon	Henry Sass	Daniel Zaccerrine
Carl Harris	Matthew Sebastiano	Lt. Maxey
Arthur Herst	John Selvaggio	Lt. Russell
Joseph Hoff	Marvin Shefler	Lt. Knudsen

While men transferred to ASTP on August 30th, 1943, were:

Carl Carlson	Robert Paramentor
Donald Crawford	Benjamin Powell
Joseph Granzier .	Jay Rhoads
Kenneth Holloway	Francis Taylor
James Kinder	Thomas Ellis.

And during this period too, we had the bad luck to lose one man, George Siebert, who died of blood poisoning. But on the other hand we gained a few officers and men while at Camp Mackall:

Lt. Freeman	Cpl. James Taylor
. Lt. MacFarland	T/5 Willie Boykin

And so we were set for the Tennessee Maneuvers, and on February 3, 1944, we took off for the hills of Tennessee. The motor convoy reached Portland a day or two ahead of the rest of the battery, which came in by rail. On February 5th the battery was assembled and all personnel present and accounted for. The task of uncrating equipment and setting up kitchen, supply and PX tents began, all in a sea of mud, for there had be rains before our arrival on the scene, and Tennessee mud is, well---- Tennessee mud. There's nothing else just like it---and we were soon to find out more and more to our sorrow, for in a few days Able battery hoisted packs, slung carbines, and set off with the look of seasoned soldiers in our faces and in our stride ---though with our packs well crammed with cigarette cartons and candy bars.

The 17th took part in the maneuvers with the 26th Infantry, the 78th and 106th triangular Divisions. These Maneuvers assumed the character of series of tactical problems three to five days in duration with a few days rest following in between--which were filled with pleasantly peaceful things like more rain, the shriek of whistles, and long hours sweating it out for a shower, clean clothes, chow and the PX. During these three-to-five day problems elements of other divisions joined in with us so that we might get used to the idea of working with a strange but friendly outfit as we would have to do in actual combat. Armoured units and the Air Force did much to add to our knowledge of modern warfare. Some of the things we

did seemed perhaps unnecessary at the time, but upon reflection they made sense, and so we made the best of it all, we managed to keep healthy, and if our morale floundered a bit from time to time in the Tennessee mud, it always came back with a bang when we hit a rest period, a change of clothes and a mail-call. And we came through with colors flying, tougher and wiser in mind and body---and soul. And we felt, considered it was our first experience of this kind, that Able Battery did a first rate job. The obstacles weren't to be sneezed at. Long marches over the mountains in torrential rains, eating cold rations continually, keeping together in a fighting and effective group while on the move, sleeping with no protection from the weather, in short, facing all the trials and problems that nature presents to a man in actual combat. And we'd like to add, with justifiable pride, that the 17th Airborne was the first Red Force ever to win a maneuver in the history of Tennessee---for we attacked and whipped the you-know-what out of our enemy from start to finish.

But it was also at this time that we lost sixteen men from Able Battery, who were called to the reassignment center at Camp Butner, North Carolina. They were as follows:

Pfc. Darwin Ashley	Pvt. George Brown	Pvt. Martin Heinert
Pvt. Oren Bamo	Pvt. Donald Crawford	Pvt. Browder Holland
Pvt. Kenneth Booth	Pvt. Raymond Haines	Pvt. Carrl Harris
Pvt. Anderson Fuller	Pvt. Glenn Kelly	Pvt. Edward Leonhart
Pvt. Steve Brodek	Pvt. Earl Johnson	Pvt. William Yeagy
and a short time after this,	Pvt. Horrome Kazorowski.	

At last, March 24, 1944, with the manouvers successfully ended, Able battery became motorized and rolled away to Camp Forrest, Tennessee, a real honest-to-God army camp, the first one the 17th had ever moved into without having to finish. It was really a beautiful, well kept Camp with all the facilities a man could want--and you can bet we wanted them. So the following days were kept busy with cleaning, scrubbing, painting and repairing equipment. And it was during those first few weeks at Forrest that we welcomed to our midst the following officers and men:

Lt. Frank Poole	Pfc. Daniel Goldberg	Pfc. George Meek
T/5 John Van Neste	Pfc. John Cox	Pfc. Clayton Fogwell
Pfc. James DeMars	Pfc. Oscar Frost	Pfc. Thomas Williams

Well, we were soldiers. We'd done our basic training. We'd done our advanced training. We'd been through maneuvers. But "dammit", we still weren't Airborne. So how about it? We're ready. How about it? What? You want to be paratroopers? You want to be Glidermen? Okay! But you'll be sorry! But Okay! Here it is.

One day late in May, 1944, out of a clear blue sky--but let us tell the story of jump-training in the words of one of our own lads who went through it, PFC STANLEY DUNALEWICZ. Here is what he has to say: "Well, one fine day Captain Wight called the battery together and announced that all men who had ambitions of becoming paratroopers would now get their chance. Hooray! Lured by the thoughts of shining boots, fifty dollars extra pay, and last but not least, those much coveted silver wings, our excitement ran high. For the next few days all you could hear around the camp was "Hey Jonny! Hey Jack! Are you gonna be a jumper? Enthusiasm spread like wildfire and when the first day of trooper training arrived, almost half the battery answered the call. And what a motley crew we were! Young, old, nearsighted, farsighted, and yes, even a few of the boys who used to ride the sick book-- but we all had one thing in common and that was enthusiasm.

And so started our two weeks of rugged training. And did we double-time? We were soon even double-timing in our sleep, and instead of counting sheep we counted push-ups in our bunks at night, that is, we would have had we not been do dog-tired. The calisthenics we did every morning would have done justice to even the most hardened Commando. We were rookies again, dolled up in fatigues and fatigue hats. You could easily spot the Missourians because they all sported peaked caps. Our instructors were the best specimens of manhood available, each resembled a Charles Atlas, and they really clamped down on us! For example - Hey Jocko! What State you from? PENNSYLVANIA. Why ain't you from my state? Gimme 15. Ya better gimme fifteen for my uncle, too. Hey Jocko, what you laffin at? Gimme 15! Who killed Cock-robin? If you didn't know, you gave fifteen for being dumb, and if you did know you gave fifteen for being a wise guy.

And so our muscles hardened more than ever before and our wind lengthened. And soon we were practicing standing in the door, counting off, tumbling, getting into harness, manipulating the chute, body turns, preparing

for a water landing, etc., etc., etc.-and if we didn't get it right the first time, bingo! a few push-ups gave us inspiration. And then came the mock-up tower. It was only thirty-five feet high, but gazing down from it you felt that you were at least a thousand foot up. And of course at first we jumped every way but the right one, some of us executing beautiful swan dives that would have been a credit to the most acroit fancy diver but were way out of place among paratroopers.

And then came the big day of our first actual jump. Everyone tried to appear calm, but it was plain enough that we were sweating it out from head to toe. Then, a brisk double-time to the hanger, a main chute and a reserve tossed to each man, who nervously fitted and adjusted them with the help of buddies and instructors, assignment of a plane number, the big moment of loading into the plane, the take-off, each man fighting with himself silently to resist the desire to quit at the last big moment. The jumpmasters did their best to keep up our spirits, coaxing us to sing, shout, wise-crack. Then, standing at the door, the jump-master spots the panel which is the signal for us to get ready to mump. He shouts "Stand-up!" then "Hook up!", then "Sound off for equipment check"! And then he would ask "Are you happy?" and we would shout back, liars that we were, "Hell Yes"! And at last, after what seemed ages, came the big moment and the sharp order "Stand in the door"! As the number one man got the 'go' signal, we all started that famous shuffle toward the door, each man receiving a pat on the rear as he jumped out into the blue, counting "One thousand, two thousand, etc", or, if he seemed a bit hesitant, getting a little extra foot-work from the jump-master to help him on his way. Those few fleeting seconds before the chute opened were usually a blank, then you felt a terrific jar and automatically grabbed high for the risers and looked upward at that beautiful chute floating above you. What a relief!. Floating down for the first time in your life you realized that you had to come down to earth before you could land. To land - that was the most important part of the whole business and about which most of our jump training had centered. It seemed as though the earth were coming up to meet you and you had to be ready for it. And as you

relaxed your leg muscles in the prescribed manner at the right instant, you suddenly felt a sharp sting starting from your toes and working up through your legs. Then, sprawled on the ground in the tangles of your chute, you felt yourself to see if any bones had been broken, and, if you were lucky, you realized in a dazed sort of way that you had made your first parachute jump successfully. If you happened to be one of the unlucky ones, and of course there were some amongst us, you came through the ordeal with a broken ankle, leg, or even worse. That is the law of averages in a game like this. And for that reason, after we had made our jumps in the mornings, we spent our afternoons learning how to pack, fold and lace our chutes - and you can bet we were glad to have experts to show us how it should be done.

Our next four jumps went off smoothly enough, although each and every one was sweated out as much as the first one, and then came the best jump of the lot, a night jump - best because being at night it was the most uncertain and, therefore, the most interesting of our jumps, and besides it was the jump that put the finishing touches to us as qualified paratroopers and so, at last, we had earned those coveted wings. And we were a happy bunch of Joes that next day when General Miley addressed us and complimented us on the job we had done and the spirit with which we had come through our jump training, and presented us with our wings. When the boys looked down at their wings, they found that someone had made a mistake and they had been given sharpshooter medals'instead. But the General, grasping the situation at once, expressed his regret, took off his own wings and pinned them on the chest of the nearest man, assuring us that we would all receive our had earned wings that same day - which we did. And that night, believe me, we really spruced up and showed off. We knew we weren't supermen, but we were proud of ourselves and of the job we had done and were going to do."

And, thus, ends the story of our jump training as told by one of the lads of Able battery who went through it. But he was far from being the only one. The following men of the battery completed this jump training and received their wings:

1st Sgt. James Taylor	T/5 Lowell Foster	Pfc. Peter Miller
S/Sgt. Tom Smith	T/5 Carl Meyer	Pfc. Richard Owens
Sgt. Howard Childers	T/5 Neil Wolf	Pfc. James Rice
Sgt. Kenneth L. Crisman	Pfc. Donald Copp	Pfc. Joseph Rodriguez
Sgt. Ralph Piosvig	Pfc. John Cox	Pfc. Rhinhardt Roth
Sgt. Dale Morris	*Pfc. Stanley Lunallowicz	Pfc. Victor Wansing
Cpl. Lyle Buscher	Pfc. Rudolph Dahl	Pfc. Edmund Wasielewski
Cpl. Frank Cotman	Pfc. Melvin Iwing	Pvt. Roy Brown
Cpl. William Crocket	Pfc. Meril Fisher	Pvt. Walter Chappell
Cpl. Vernon Holle	Pfc. James Jones	Pvt. Alvin Clauson
Cpl. Arlin Long	Pfc. Clayton Kirby	

Pfc. Stanley Lunallowicz is the autor of the above account of our jump training.

Due to injuries during the training we suffered some losses. You can't make an omelette without breaking eggs, and you can't go through jump training without breaking bones. And unfortunately, during our training a few of our pals, T/5 Tino Rockas T/5 Romaine Decker, and Pfc. Claude Ward received injuries and went to the hospital, never to return to us.

And also during this period we lost a few men who were transferred to other units:

T/4 Walter Blake	Pfc. Max Leach
1st/Sgt. Frank Rudla	Pvt. George Meek
S/Sgt. Seth Watkins	Pvt. Nicholas Colamio
Pfc. Lawrence Torreyson	Pvt. Ernest Betchy

Meanwhile another vital branch of airborne training was under way - the glider flights. In the days to follow nearly all the men of Able battery rode the blue in the flimsy craft = carrying full combat equipment = . and all qualified as glidermen and received their glider certificates. Although some people consider this branch of airborne activities less spectacular than the job of jumping in parachutes, the strategists, the boys who know, will tell you that in combat, in an airborne attack, it's the glidermen, coming in after the troopers as reinforcements, who give weight, effect, and staying power to the first brave and savage attack of the troopers.

Thus, through those beautiful summer months of 1944, as the roar and rumble of war mounted higher and higher among the hedges and fields of Normandy and on the plains of Poland, Able battery became one hundred per-cent airborne, preparing steadily for the fast approaching day when it would

take up the fight in the place of those who had fallen. And not only did we concentrate on Airborne training, modern war is a mighty complex business and we still had plenty to learn. We knew for example that when we did come to grips with the enemy it would no longer be far from his homeland but right on his doorstep, if not in his house. We could expect to meet everything he had, and especially mines. So, under the sponsorship of the Second Army, a mine school was begun in our midst and for a time we talked, ate, and slept mines and our battle cry became: "Reach, Grope, and Probe".

Also, for obvious reasons, there were many classes in tank and aircraft identification. And, in fact, everything we did took on a new and greater intensity. The long European war was mounting to a crashing climax and we knew we were bound to get in on it. Rumors began to float through the air like mist. Men looked thoughtful behind their laughter. There were little things! Key men were sometimes absent. Conferences were being held at Headquarters. Lights burned late at night behind blackout curtains. Something was in the wind. On August 14th, 1944 Able Battery packed all equipment and boarded a train for - an unknown destination.

On August 16th we arrived at Camp Miles Standish in Massachusetts, not far from the port of Boston. We were wrapped in a cloak of secrecy. Our movements were restricted. Censorship was clamped on, hard. Impregnated clothing against chemical warfare was issued. A final check of our equipment was made. A last shot in the arm was given us. On August 20, 1944 Able battery, together with the rest of the 17th Airborne Division, sailed out from the Port of Boston onto the broad Atlantic.

We sailed due east, most of us packed on one huge boat, the U.S.S. WAKEFIELD, and there was no doubt in any of our minds but that we were headed for ENGLAND. After a few days at sea the ship began changing her course every few minutes, and rumors began to fly thick and fast that JERRY subs were chasing us or JERRY planes had spotted us. But as it turned out, our trip across the drink was uneventful, for which we weren't sorry, and on August 28th we sailed with pennons flying into the port of LIVERPOOL on the west coast of ENGLAND.

We debarked the following day and boarded a train for Camp Chiseldon, near the town of Swindon in the pretty country-side of south-central ENGLAND. But we arrived before daybreak, August 30th, in a drizzling rain, so that our camp wore a rather dismal aspect at first sight. But we soon settled down and made ourselves at home, and about two weeks later, we began our training schedule of drill, classes and field problems. It was during this time that two good things happened to us in Able battery. First, our long-awaited glider pay came through to us, and second, we received the following men into the battery:

Robert J. Cullen	Rufus Tubby
Robert H. Krantz	Billy J. Vandomark
David I. Mayer	John Ventura
William Manteufel	Francis W. Wallence
Harry W. Noyes	Arlin J. Watson
Harold A. Richards	Charles J. Webber
Curtis E. Robertson	Robert A. Young
Warren Thomas	Gayle F. Pichler

Meantime, we began to look about and take stock of our new surroundings. We found the strange people around us friendly **and** we enjoyed the old-fashioned jolly atmosphere of the English pubs and the bright trim look of the English service girls - the ATS, the WRENS, the WAFTS, and the Land Army Girls who always gave us a cheery wave from the fields as we rode by in our trucks.

Thanksgiving dinner was a big event and we began to look forward to Christmas with great interest, even though we were far from home, and many of us laid plans to go to SWINDON and LONDON for the coming holiday.

But war is no respecter of individuals and the plans of mice and men oft gang aglue. One week before Christmas the 17th Airborne was put on the alert. The secret teletypes in the back rooms of Army Headquarters were chattering out a grim story that only slowly and much toned down was released to the daily papers and the reading public. The German General Staff was making one last desperate effort to rally their nation and stave off ultimate defeat. With the famous Von Runstedt in command, vast panzer and infantry troop concentrations were rolling and driving ferociously back through BELGIUM and LUXEMBOURG in a mighty effort to strike through to the Channel coast, thus cutting off our great supply port of ANTWERP

and a vast body of our troops in the north. It was vitally important that fresh crack, well-trained troops be thrown into the breach to stop the German drive.

On the night of December 20th we hoisted our battle equipment and made ready to leave. At 0400 the busses finally arrived to take us to the airport near OXFORD. Soon at the field, we saw long rows of C-47's waiting for us. We set to work at once, loading jeeps, trailers, ammunition, guns, all our battle equipment. That night we turned in tired but excited by the thought of the morrow, when we hoped to be in the thick of the fight. But that next day we were doomed to disappointment. Our planes were needed to take supplies to the 101st Airborne which was trapped at BASTOGNE. We had no choice but to unload, and then to sweat it out (which we must admit we did do to some extent when the first planes returned that evening and we saw for the first time what enemy flak can do to a transport plane.)

The following day we lay around waiting for the planes to be repaired and ready to fly again. The morning of the 24th we were told to reload our equipment in the planes, that we would fly that evening. Our excitement reached an all-time high. By 1600 we were loaded in the already warmed-up planes. The engines roared. The propeller blasts swept the field. At 1615 we soared gracefully into the English sky - and in each man's mind were the same thoughts -----Where are we going?---Will we make it okay?

Flying southeast at several thousand feet, we looked down from our planes on the bright green patchwork quilt of the English countryside as we skimmed along like swallows. As the sun began to set, we saw a very beautiful sight, the WHITE CLIFFS OF DOVER with the blue-gray waves of the Channel beyond. Christmas Eve over the WHITE CLIFFS OF DOVER. There's something to tell your children about boys. We'll remember it a long time.

As we made the crossing, the planes of Able battery separated in the air and, around 2100, landed at three different airports, in central FRANCE, - Chateaudun, Orlean and Leon. We all agreed it was the smoothest ride we had ever taken, bar none. But the following morning, Christmas Day, after we took off again (for eastern FRANCE) we were not so lucky

as before. One plane, after climbing up and into our formation, suddenly turned her nose toward the earth and went down in smoke. It was our first taste of casualties and it was bitter. Each man sweated it out waiting to hear who it was that had been in that plane. At last, an official announcement was made - after we had landed at 1000 that morning at Laon in eastern France. On Christmas day of 1944 these men of Able Battery had given their lives for their country:

Pvt. Thomas W. Williams	Sgt. Alvin M. Hymel
Cpl. Frederick B. Cannon	Pvt. Alpha A. Lafavers
PFC. August C. Teresi	Pvt. Loyal Kincade

And, to add to our bad luck, after we had loaded onto trucks and arrived at the base camp of the 101st Airborne Division, we learned that our seaborne party had been strafed while motoring through France and our Mess Sergeant, Harry Noyes had been wounded and hospitalized.

These events brought home to us the grimness of the game ahead that we were soon to play. Very soon to play, in fact, because the next morning we took off in trucks to parts unknown, and after a day spent traveling forward through war-torn villages and towns and along roads strewn with burned-out tanks and smashed vehicles of all kinds, we arrived at the town of CHARLEVILLE, dug our foxholes and prepared our positions. We knew that we would soon be saying to ourselves, "This is it", and sure enough, around 2200 we heard the drone of a Heinie plane headed in our direction - who soon put us in our foxholes by strafing our position and plastering the town of CHARLEVILLE. But we soon got used to him and called him "Old Bedcheck Charlie", for he always came over about bedtime each evening to see if we were tucked away.

But we weren't there just to let Jerry come hunting us. We went after him. And on the night of January 2, 1945, we started on the trip up front. The convoy moved along in a complete black-out, German air activity being at that time particularly intense. . Jerry knew we were bringing up reinforcements and his nighthawks were out swooping down along the roads with machine guns and rockets, so we all had our fingers and toes crossed as we nosed ahead through the bitter cold. And was it cold?! If anyone ever asks you if you know what it is like to be really cold, just tell him "Do I"! Listen mister, I was in the BATTLE OF THE BULGE.

After six hours advance our convoy pulled off the road and into a woods for camouflage and protection against an air raid. Here we set up our kitchen and ate, while our dinner music was the roar and crash of American artillery laying it down heavy on the baffled Jerries, and the clash of the shellbursts

made a Northern Lights against the dark sky. It was a weird sight and made our blood tingle with excitement as well as with cold. We itched to move on, and soon we did - to the small war-blasted Belgian town of SIBRE, just south of famous BASTONNE. And it was there, in the outskirts of SIBRET that we went into our first position and fired our first round in the war.

German forces of tanks and infantry were counterattacking determinedly and were locked in a bitter struggle with our infantry for control of the town of MONTE a few miles ahead of us. We moved in, then moved forward to come to closer grips with the enemy. To make matters easier, a foot of snow fell at about this time. We went into position again, closer to MONTE, where meanwhile heavier fighting than ever was taking place. Some days we fired our guns almost continuously for hours at a time. It was in this battle and in this position that a shell came into Able battery's area, killing Asa Gannon and wounding Frederick Swartz and Wendell Rickert.

And at this point we want to stop and mention that it was at about this time Captain Dight, our former battery commander, was wounded twice on the same day. He was first hit in the forearm by a fragment from a mortar shell and walked back to an aid station to have the wound dressed. But on the way back, he was caught in an artillery barrage and received a serious back wound which caused him to be evacuated and hospitalized and ultimately returned to the States for operation and recuperation. Captain Dight had been promoted in England to be our battalion liaison officer, his place as Able Battery commander having been taken over by Captain Weatherstone.

Another thing we want to mention right here and now is the superb work done by the battalion medics attached to us. In the BATTLE OF THE BULGE, the two medics attached to us were T/5 Silber and PFC Ver Heyen, and later on, in the airborne mission over the RHINE, T/5 Miller took the place of T/5 Silber. These three lads were really on the ball and on the spot all the time and they rendered the very finest aid and service whenever they were needed which was plenty often. Thanks, boys. ABLE battery feels mighty lucky to have had you attached to us, especially at such a time.

In due course the infantry won their battle, with the powerful help of those thousands and thousands of rounds put out by Battery A, and soon we were moving up to and through the rubble-heap that was once the little town of MONTE. Nor did we stop there. In our sector the spearhead of the German

attack had broken against the Golden Talon of the 17th Airborne and a slow and stubborn but nonetheless sure retreat was begun by the enemy. We made our way slowly forward to GIVET, to HONFFALIZE, to MONEREY, pressing the baffled enemy hard and crushing his rearguard actions until we battered our way across the borders of LUXEMBOURG. On reaching the border we changed sectors, moving to BOCHOLTZ in LUXEMBOURG, then on to HOSENMEN a few miles behind the infantry which had established its line along the OUR river, which forms the boundary between LUXEMBOURG and GERMANY. And it was here that the 17th Airbourne first entered the tottering state of GERMANY, capturing the town of DOSBURG.

By this time the weather had turned much warmer, and of course, instead of two feet of snow we now had two feet of mud to contend with. It was early in February. The spring thaws were about to set in and Europe would be a mass of mud and for a time armies would have to be immobilized. The campaign was over-and our arms had triumphed magnificently. We had stopped the German onrush, we have turned it back, we had recovered all that had been lost, and now we were across the border and into Germaey itself: The BATTLE OF THE BULDGE was over. We felt that our mission was definitely accomplished and then some.

On the 13th of February we pulled out of the Bulge and went by truck to CHALONS, FRANCE, where we cleaned and repaired our badly beat up equipment, rested for **a time**, and then, as the first violets began to peep through the leaves of the French fields and valleys, we pulled in our belts and stared in on another training schedule.

Our classes proved to be very interesting to us, more so than ever in the past. Now we were tested and battle-wise troops, now we had a basis of personal experience from which to judge what we were doing and studying. It waw a game that gave us much pleasure, and we got a real kick out of observing our own self-development. And of course, like any really battle-wise veteran, we set out to improve over our past mistakes as well as pride ourselves on our past triumphs, so that we could do an even better job when our next mission rolled around.

And, of course, we were absolutely certain that it would roll around. Germany was not yet defeated. Her homeland was still intact, though badly battered by the Allied air forces, and the Allied armies were plowing

steadily onward up to a certain great natural defense barrier-the mighty river RHINE. Rumors began to fly in all directions at once, and the trend of events made it certain in our minds that we were to be called on for another big job, perhaps bigger than the one we had just finished - because this time it would be the kill.

On the 21st of March we left Chalons by train and soon arrived at a marshalling area. We saw at once, from the long lines of C-47's and gliders resting on the field, that our mission was to be Airborne. On the 23rd we were briefed, given maps, compasses, and sawblades to help us escape, in case we were captured, which could very conceivably happen, because, as we had learned, our airborne mission was going to carry us well behind the enemy lines - on the eastern bank of the RHINE.

By the morning of March 24th all was ready and we were in the highest possible state of tension. At exactly 0800 that beautiful early spring morning the first C-47 whirred, roared, and took off into the clear blue, towing two graceful gliders in it's wake. Then another plane rose, and another, and another - filling the sky with the magnificent sight as they turned east and headed toward the last natural defence barrier of Germany, the great river RHINE.

Our flight was smooth as a ride on the back of a swan - until we came to the RHINE. As we flew over the great river, all Hell seemed to break loose. Jerry threw everything he had at us, including the kitchen sink. The small-arms fire rattled through the gliders and transports like hail against a tin roof. The flak and smoke made such a solid wall around us that it was almost impossible to see the drop and landing zones below us. Then the green lights flashed, the troopers tumbled out like marbles out of a bag, the gliders cut loose and floated earthward, some being shot to pieces in the air but most of them landing miraculously on the ground, whereupon the men inside burst out, ran for cover, and began to organize in a hell of a hurry.

And that was when ABLE battery of the 680th really got on the ball. In less than three hours we had three guns in position and were putting out the fire plenty fast, our first time to be firing in combat our new 105MM Howitzers for which we had exchanged our old 75's back at Chalons after the BULGE. These new 105's proved to be excellent weapons and we put them to good use fast on that unforgettable day. By 1900 hours that evening we had five of our guns firing and three-fourths of the battery operating effectively.

We suffered a tragic incident, however. Our Battery Commander, Captain Featherstone, led a patrol of men out, shortly after we landed, to investigate some small-arms fire that was being directed at us from a group of nearby houses. As he approached the building a shot rang out and the Captain fell, mortally wounded. After clearing the houses, we discovered the sniper to have been a twelve year old German boy - who will never shoot another American soldier.

Nothing could have affected us more than the death of our brave leader. Ever since he had taken over Able battery back in England, he had commanded and led us bravely, firmly, & wisely. We would miss him - miss him deeply.

But in the midst of battle one has little time for the emotion of grief. It was our job to go on fighting, if for no other reason than to avenge our leader's death. But the more we attacked, the more the Germans seemed to melt away like the spring snows, falling back into their vast hinterland. And so, from Wessel we advanced upon Dorsten, then upon Haltern, and further on until finally we reached and infested the great city of Munster, one of the most important rail centers in all Germany. The enemy was fully aware of its importance and for a time turned and gave battle. But after a long and bloody engagement, they threw up the sponge and retreated again, leaving the city in our hands.

After we had re-established order in the city and turned to look about us and take a breather, we saw quite clearly that the mission of the RHINE crossing had been done so well, so magnificent, that not only was the final break-up of Germany impending, it was actually taking place before our eyes. Splendid reports of other units, divisions, and corps were coming in to us. . The British were striking far to the northeast toward HAMBURG and DENMARK. Patton's tanks were rumbling away into the unknown, in the direction of MUREMBURG and AUSTRIA. The dissolution of the German state and the mighty German army was under way. Great pockets were being carved out, divisions, corps, even armies of the Wehrmacht were being surrounded by our swift and gallant troops. The greatest of all these pockets was undoubtedly that comprising the industrial region of the RUHR river valley in northwestern Germany, one of the richest and most vital areas, not only of Germany, but of Europe and the world. Within this great pocket were caught elements of several German army groups, and the Lord knows how many Nazi bigwigs. The Golden Talon division was called in to aid in the reduction of this

vast pocket. We moved steadily from one triumph to another, taking BOTTRUP, MULHEIM, and finally DUISBURG, where at long last we were recalled from combat and assigned a mission of military government, the RUHR pocket having by that time shrunk to nothing and the army groups of the WEHRMACHT safely herded into PW cages to think everything over.

And so ended the war in Europe for the men of ABLE Battery. On the 8th day of May came the long-awaited armistice. The job that ABLE Battery had begun to prepare for way back in the early days of 1943 at Camp Mackall was now done. We had come a long way since those far-off days in North Carolina. We had lost a lot of comrades along the way. But those of us who remained had the great satisfaction of seeing our long effort at last crowned with victory.

And as we left the chaos of Germany for our rest camp near NEUFCHATEAU among the tall trees, and green meadows of eastern France, we began to wonder, what next? Where does our duty now lie?

But with our job in Europe done, it was determined by high authorities that the 17th AIRBORNE should be broken up, the high-point men of the division to go home and be returned to civilian life, the low-point men to go to the 82nd AIRBORNE and the 101st AIRBORNE and the 15th AIRBORNE Divisions, where they would serve out their time and duty in the Army.

It would be tough to say goodbye to pals and fighting soldier comrades who had come the long road with us -- tough to be parted and shipped out in different directions to the four corners of the world, perhaps never to see each other again. But there was no help for it. Orders are orders, and besides, our job was done. But we of ABLE battery had been together for a long time since those early days at CAMP MACKALL. We had been through a lot together, yes, a powerful lot. And this we all of us knew-----no matter what insignia we might in the future wear, no matter where we might be sent or what we might be called upon to do or to endure, the spirit of old ABLE BATTERY and the GOLDEN TALON DIVISION would stick with us and make us face up to it, and it would see us through. So Goodbye, Boys. Good Luck. And some day we'll be seeing you.
