

HEADQUARTERS
505TH ENGINEER LIGHT PONTON COMPANY.
A.P.O. 230, U.S.ARMY

SECRET
Auth: C.G. 7th US Army
Initials: *Mc*
Date: 16 April 1945

ACTION AGAINST ENEMY, REPORTS AFTER/AFTER ACTION REPORTS MARCH, 1945

CLASSIFICATION
CANCELLED

BY AUTHORITY OF THE ADJUTANT GENERAL

a. Original Unit: -

- (1) Designation - 505th Engineer Light Ponton Company
- (2) Date of Organization - 15 May, 1942
- (3) Place of Organization - Camp Gordon, Georgia.
- (4) Authority for Organization - General Order No. 15, Headquarters Eastern Defense Command and First Army, dated 15 May, 1942.
- (5) Sources from which original personnel were obtained.

(a) Officers

1. Company Commander - Captain Archibald E. Sutton, O-304319, C.E., by transfer from the Engineer Replacement Training Center, Fort Belvoir, Virginia.
2. Executive Officer - 1st Lt. Gerald L. Bilbro, C.E., by transfer from the 75th Engineer Light Ponton Company, Camp Beauregarde, La.
3. Platoon Commanders and Motor Officer - By assignment from the Fourth Engineer Officer Candidate School, Fort Belvoir, Virginia, as follows:

Francis F. Carnes, 2nd Lt., C.E. O-1100038
James J. Carnes, Jr. 2nd Lt., C.E. - O-1100039
Burrel D. Carney, Jr. 2nd Lt., C.E. - O-1100041
Francis M. Carson, 2nd Lt., C.E. - O-1100043

(b) Enlisted Men.

1. Enlisted Cadre of twelve (12) N.C.O.'s by transfer from the 75th Engineer Light Ponton Company, Camp Beauregarde, La. in May 1942 as follows:

First Sergeant - Morton Kamm - 6878116
Master Sergeant - George Underwood - -
Mess Sergeant - S/Sgt. John W. Pritchett - 6966756
Supply Sergeant - S/Sgt. William Blankenship -
Motor Sergeant - S/Sgt. Kenneth F. Whitehead - 33035175
Platoon Sergeant - S/Sgt. Carlton L. Allen - 6994429
Platoon Sergeant - S/Sgt. Thomas L. Beckham - 6971589
Platoon Sergeant - Sgt. Earl Northrup - 32033188
Mechanic - Cpl. Ival Cooper - 32035482
1st Cook - Pvt. Spec.3rd Cl. - Stanislaus J. Andersiak - R-2340718
1st Cook - Pvt. Spec.4th Cl. - J.B. Walker - 7008340
Co. Clerk - Cpl. Robert M. Mayo - 7086178

2. Two (2) Mechanics by assignment from the Engineer Heavy Equipment School, Fort Belvoir, Virginia, on 15 May, 1942, as follows:-

Pvt. Balmer E. Sinegar - 33118318
Pvt. Harold A. Geese - 38047063

3. Enlisted Fillers.

The first group of Enlisted Fillers consisting of eleven (11) Selective Service Privates were received on 29 September, 1942 by transfer from Co. "D" of the 82nd Ordnance Battalion, Camp Gordon, Georgia, per S.O. #54, 3rd Hq. & Hq. Det. Sp. Troops, 2nd Army, dated 29 Sept. 1942. The second, and principal group of Enlisted Fillers, consisting of 210 Selective Service Privates, were received by transfer from the 1222nd Reception Center, Camp Upton, New York, on 5 December 1942, per par. 1, S.O. 332, Hq. 1222nd Reception Center, Camp Upton, New York, dated 3 December 1942.

b. Changes in Organization During Period.

- (1) Relieved from attachment to VII Corps. and attached to Sixth Army Group, per par. 10, Troop Assignment #29, Hq. First United States Army, dated 21 March, 1945.
- (2) Attached to Seventh United States Army per par. 8, Unit Assignment Order #52, Hq. 6th Army Group, dated 20 March, 1945.
- (3) Attached to 1144th Engineer Combat Group for operations per par. 5, Letter subject, Assignment and attachment order, Hq. Seventh United States Army, dated 27 March 1945.

c. Strength: - Commissioned and Enlisted:-

(1) Officer strength at beginning of Period -

Francis M. Carson, Capt. C.E., O-1100043 - Company Commander
Gilbert F. Moore, 1st Lt. C.E., O-446357 - Executive Officer
Howard D. May, 1st Lt., C.E., O-1110097 - Platoon Commander
John A. Mc Donald, 1st Lt. C.E., O-1115692 - Platoon Commander
Randal Holden, 2nd Lt. C.E., - O-1114169 - Platoon Commander
William H. Meier, 2nd Lt. C.E., O-1592436 - Supply Officer

No Change During Period

(2) Enlisted Strength:-

- a. Beginning of Period: Present 192; - Absent 12
- b. Increase during Period - 3

Smoot, Ernest H. Pvt. 33529771 - Transferred in Grade to this organization per par. 2, S.O. 68, Hq. Third Reinforcement Depot, dated 9 March 1945.

Ferraro, Vincent P. Pvt. 31325667 - Transferred in Grade to this organization per par. 2, S.O. 68, Hq. Third Reinf. Depot, dated 9 March 1945.

Rivers, Joseph V. Pfc. 32575749 - Transferred in Grade to this organization per par. 15, S.O. 73, Hq. Third Reinf. Depot, dated 14 March 1945.

c. Decrease During Period - 7

Creveling, Jack Cpl. 35312134
Gallagher, James P. Pfc. 32642799
Martin, Ben F., Pfc. 18020831

Above Three (3) men transferred in Grade to 104th Infantry Division, per V.O. C.G. Hq. VII Corps.

Candelora, Patrick J. Pvt. 31327121

Non-Battle Casualty - Death caused by drowning during night assault boat training vicinity of Cologne, Germany, 13 March 1945.

Connell, Matthew Pfc. 32643582

Shannon, John A. Pvt. 33416724

Broderick, John P. Pfc. 32643373

Above three (3) enlisted men Lost to Hospital as Non-Battle Casualties.

d. Net Loss During Period - 4

Enlisted Strength at End of Period - Present - 187 Absent - 13.

Stations:

- (1) At beginning of period, unit was stationed in Duren, Germany, F-107464, Sheet 19, 1:50,000, GSGS 4507 Germany.
- (2) Moved by Motor Convoy to Quadrath, Germany, F-263607, on 4 March 1945.
- (3) Moved from Quadrath, Germany, by Motor Convoy to vicinity Luneville, France, V-0697 on 23rd and 24th March, stopping for night of 23rd to 24th March in Verdun, France.
- (4) Moved from Rehainviller, France, (vicinity Luneville) by Motor Convoy to Kaiserslautern, Germany, on 27th March.

OPERATIONS DURING PERIOD

The beginning of this period found the organization busily engaged in support of VII Corps' 104th Infantry, and 3rd Armored Divisions, along with the other units of the 1106th Engineer Combat Group, following the successful crossing of the Roer River and subsequent breakthrough to the Rhine, and capture of the third largest German City, Cologne.

On the 1st of March an 80' DS Bailey Bridge was delivered to the 238th Engineer Combat Battalion, and constructed by them at Sindorf, Germany, across the Erft Canal.

On the 3rd of March, a 60' Double Single Bailey Bridge was delivered to the 99th Division Engineer Battalion (324th) and constructed across the Erft Canal in the vicinity of Bedburg, Germany.

A 60' DS Bridge was likewise delivered on the 1st of March to the 49th Engineer Combat Battalion, and constructed over the Erft Canal at Glesch, Germany.

Also on the 1st of March, an 80' DS Bailey Bridge was delivered to the 237th Engineer Combat Battalion and constructed across the Erft Canal at Paffendorf, Germany.

On the 4th of March the Company moved on to Quadrath, Germany, and established in private homes in that town after having been ousted by the 3rd Armored Divisions' Ordnance Battalion from the first location selected by the quartering party.

On the 5th of March an 80' DS Bailey Bridge was delivered to the 237th Engr. Combat Battalion and constructed across the Erft Canal in Paffendorf, Germany. This bridge restored to use the last of the principal roads running East - West and crossing the Erft in the 104th and 3rd Armored Division sectors, all of the original

bridges having been demolished by the retreating Germans. From this point on, the Bailey Bridges constructed on the Erft in this locality by the 324th Engr. C. Bn. (99th Div.), the 329th Engr. C. Bn. (104th Div), the 23rd Armored Engr. Bn., (3rd Armored Div.), and the units of the 1106th Engr. C. Group, were removed one at a time and replaced with fixed timber trestle bridges by Army Engineer Units.

Shortly after the breakthrough to the Rhine River on the VII Corps Front, the III Corps on the right flank of the VIIth likewise broke through the enemy main line of defenses, and moved rapidly to the Rhine River. The large number of demolished bridges in that area caused a greater demand for Bailey Equipment than the 501st Engr. L. Pon. Co. (1111th Engr. C. Group - III Corps) could supply. Subsequently, on the 7th of March the two Bridge Platoons of this unit, carrying 260' DD Bridge, were temporarily attached to the 501st Engr. L. Pon. Co., and moved down with that unit to the vicinity of Euskirchen.

The Bridge equipment of the 1st Platoon was used the following day (8th March) to construct a bridge across the Erft River just East of Euskirchen. This 130' Bridge was built by the 299th Engineer C. Bn., and replaced a bridge of the same type which had collapsed the day before when two medium tanks got on it at the same time.

The Second Bridge Platoon remained with the 501st Engr. L. Pon. Co. until the 20th of March, although no necessity arose for the use of its equipment.

The Corps front now consisted of the Rhine River. For a few days no actual operations were engaged in, but an intensive assault stream crossing training program was instituted. This training was conducted, starting on the 10th of March, on a lake just outside of Cologne. The objective of the training was to familiarize the Infantrymen of the 104th Division with the use of the M-2 Infantry Assault Boat Ponton propelled by a 22 H.P. Outboard Motor. The training was under the direct supervision of the 329th Engineer Combat Bn. (104th Inf. Div.). The equipment and outboard motor operators were supplied by the Light Equipage Platoon of this Company, under the supervision of Lt. Mc Donald, the Platoon Commander.

The training scheduled one Infantry Battalion per day to cross with full equipment, first during daylight, and again at night. Stress in the training was laid on properly entering the boat, distribution of personnel in the ponton so that it would "ride" well, correct seating in the boat, and proper method of leaving the boat.

In addition to the training with the M-2 Assault Boat Ponton, a storm boat section of the 552nd Engr. Hv. Pon. Bn. was attached, and the Infantrymen were trained in the employment of the Storm Boat, propelled by a 55 H.P. Outboard Motor.

On the night of 13th of March, 1945 an accident occurred resulting in the loss by drowning of Ten (10) Infantrymen and One (1) Engineer soldier who was the outboard motor operator.

Though the reports of this accident seemed somewhat garbled, probably due to the excitement at the time, the following is a general summary of the circumstances surrounding this accident. From one cause or another, probably due to too many men being loaded too close to the front of the boat, some water was shipped on over the bow. Apparently the men on board became excited, and instead of remaining calmly in their places, got up or moved toward one side of the boat. This caused the ponton

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to overturn, although it did not sink. As there were other motors running on the lake, and as it was very dark, the cries for help were not too promptly heard. By the time the situation was realized and other boats reached the scene of the accident, only a few of the men could be saved. After a thorough search and check, eleven men were determined to be missing. The whole thing happened so quickly that even those who had been saved could hardly explain what had happened.

The lessons learned from this unfortunate accident are that men must be impressed with the necessity of keeping calm, sitting still, and staying in position when a boat ships a little water. This is extremely difficult to accomplish, as was evidenced on the following day when a similar incident occurred in broad daylight. Another boat, this time a storm boat, shipped a little water over the bow, the men again got excited and moved about, and in an instant they were all in the water. This time none were lost; but it clearly shows how easily men will lose their heads when they think a boat is going under. (Which it wouldn't have, had they all remained still). Secondly no more than six infantry riflemen with full equipment should be placed in the front half of an M-2 Assault Boat Ponton. False ponton bows will help prevent shipping water over the bow, thereby cutting down the chances of the probable cause of such an incident. Men must be made to unfasten all web equipment upon entering a boat, so all they have to do, should they go into the water, is slip their equipment off over their heads. An N.C.O. should check each man as he enters the boat to see that this is complied with. It may not always be practical or possible in actual combat, but it should certainly be S.O.P. in any training exercise. When the bodies were recovered after dragging the lake, most of the men appeared to have drowned while still trying to get out of their equipment.

Following this one unfortunate accident, the remainder of the training went off smoothly, and was completed on 21st March. However the loss of the one Engineer Soldier, Pvt. Patrick J. Candelora, with the others on the night of the 13th was a sad blow to the Company. Candelora had not been with the Company for a long time, but had made many friends, and a fine impression by his cheerful attitude, his efficient performance of duty, and his military bearing.

On the evening of 10 March 1945, at about 2230 hours, the 1106th Engr. C. Group Executive Officer called Capt. Carson, the 505th Engr. L. Pon. Co. Commander and informed him that a major change was imminent for his Company. Col. Cofer stated that the matter was Secret, and of course could not be discussed over the telephone. He stated that there was nothing urgent about it and that Captain Carson could wait until morning to come up and discuss it with him, but that if his curiosity got the better of him to come on up immediately. The bit of information aroused Capt. Carson's curiosity to the extent that he immediately went up to Group Headquarters where he learned that the Company was to be attached to the Seventh United States Army, and was to move down by the 25th of March. Further instructions were to be obtained from Col. Black, the VIIth Corps Engineer Executive Officer the following morning.

Col. Black's information the next day confirmed Col. Cofer's remarks of the evening previous, and added instructions to the effect that Capt. Carson should proceed as soon as practicable to Seventh Army Headquarters for further information. Capt. Carson left on the afternoon of the 11th, with driver T/5 Callahan, and T/5 Moulder and Pfc. Thoren, and proceeded via Aachen, Liege, Marche, Bastogne, Luxembourg, Metz, and Nancy to Luneville, France, where Seventh Army Headquarters was located.

After obtaining necessary information relative to the Company's future expected operations during attachment to Seventh Army, Capt. Carson returned to the Company CP in Quadrath, Germany. After reporting information obtained to Col. Black, it was decided that the Company should leave on the 23rd of March.

One result of Capt. Carson's trip was to start a top-notch rumor as to the why's and wherefores of the trip.

It was 'authoritatively' circulated about the Company that Capt. Carson had gone up to Antwerp to make necessary arrangements for shipment of the Company to the Southwest Pacific or China - Burma - India Theater of Operation. In further substantiation of the evidence offered, T/5 Moulder (the Company Carpenter) had been taken along 'to obtain information regarding crating up the Company property - office and kitchen equipment, and so on.' Far fetched though it was, this 'authoritative' rumor had a wide following of believers within a very few days. Upon returning to the Company, the Enlisted Men who had made the trip were thoroughly pumped for information, but obeyed their instructions to a "T" and gave out none.

However, several days later when the First Bridge Platoon went down to the Army Engineer Depot to turn in their Bridge, the enlisted men of the Depot Company knew all the details of the "Secret" information, and subsequently, 'let the cat out of the bag.'

On the morning of 23rd of March the Company departed from VII Corps area in a motor convoy of four march units. The route of march was through Aachen, Liege, Marche, Arlon, Bouillon, and to Verdun, where an overnight stop was made at an Ordnance unit located in that city. The area through Liege and to about ten miles below that city was familiar territory to the Company, but the rest of the trip was through strange country. In perfect spring weather, the Company thoroughly enjoyed the trip through some of the worlds most historic and picturesque battlegrounds. The second day of the trip took the Company through Font-O-Mouson, Nancy and to the destination Luneville, arriving at about 1500 hours on the 24th of March.

The location picked out for the Company headquarters by Lt. May and the advance detail was in a large farm house just outside of Luneville. The line platoons were bivouaced in open fields, as indoor billets were not available.

The unit was immediately attached to the 1144th Engineer Combat Group and on the evening of the 24th of March was committed to support that Group in its operations of supplying the Seventh United States Army with Engineer Materials and Maintenance. The particular part the Company was to play in support of the Group's operations was in transporting Engineer materials from the Army Engineer Base Depot at Luneville, France, to the forward depots. Due to the rapid advance of the Seventh Army, this mission was quite a difficult task. The combat troops of Seventh Army had already reached the Rhine River, and a few days later forced a crossing.

On the 27th of March the Company moved forward to Kaiserslautern, Germany, establishing in five large private homes near the center of town.

The Company continued to support the Group operations by transportation of Engineer materials from the Army Engineer Base Depot to forward depots until the close of the period.

Francis M. Carson
FRANCIS M. CARSON,
Capt., C.E.
Commanding.