

**One Hundred and Fifty-Eighth  
Field Artillery**

**“Casualties of War”**

**“First Reprint Edition”**

**John T. Jenson**



For the organizational archives of the  
**158th Field Artillery Battalion**



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## **PREFACE**

A casualty is a person in military service that was killed in action, killed by disease, disabled by injuries, disabled by psychological trauma, captured, deserted, or missing. A soldier who sustains injuries that does not prevent them from fighting is not a casualty. The usage of the term “casualty” sometimes is misunderstood to mean “fatality”, but non-fatal injuries are also casualties. During times of combat the major consideration used to determine casualties is simply the number of soldiers no longer available for the immediate battle.

Upon the writing of this monograph, I have decided to concentrate on two of the types of casualties that the 158th Field Artillery was exposed too during World War II and the Korean War; the “Killed in Action” (KIA) and the “Prisoner of War” (POW).

This volume compliments the twelve volume series of the first one hundred years of service of the 158th Field Artillery which can be found at the Morris Swett Library, Fort Sill, Oklahoma; or the U. S. Library of Congress Control Number 2018957292.

Throughout this volume I have inserted portraits of some of these soldiers who were classified as KIA or POW, so that their service shall not be forgotten. It is not a complete collection and they are depicted in alphabetical order.

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**WORLD WAR II KILLED IN ACTION**

| <b><u>Date</u></b>      | <b><u>Rank</u></b> | <b><u>Name</u></b>         | <b><u>Serial No.#</u></b> |
|-------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 15 July 1943.....       | Tec. 4 .....       | John C. Athey .....        | 20830709                  |
| 17 July 1943.....       | 1 Lt. ....         | Capers R. Wactor.....      | O-1170594                 |
| 18 July 1943 .....      | Pfc.....           | Lonnie B. Nobles .....     | 20830347                  |
| 2 August 1943 .....     | Tec. 5 .....       | Woodrow C. King .....      | 20830595                  |
| 19 August 1943.....     | Tec. 5 .....       | Louis P. Pool.....         | 20830994                  |
| 14 September 1943 ..... | Pfc.....           | Lawrence C. Sparkman ..... | 38017351                  |
| 15 September 1943 ..... | Pfc.....           | Melvin Marshall .....      | 35109137                  |
| 5 October 1943.....     | Cpl.....           | Willis N. Jarboe .....     | 38023598                  |
| 16 November 1943.....   | Pvt.....           | James H. Ballman .....     | 35109156                  |
| 17 November 1943 .....  | Pfc.....           | Melvin W. Davidson.....    | 33076007                  |
| 8 January 1944 .....    | Pfc.....           | Philip A. Kelley .....     | 32371908                  |
| 18 January 1944.....    | Pfc.....           | John H. Priest.....        | 34303066                  |
| 29 January 1944 .....   | Tec. 4 .....       | Albert M. Schoelen.....    | 38017382                  |
| 29 January 1944 .....   | Tec. 5 .....       | Rudy W. Bohn .....         | 19074386                  |
| 29 January 1944 .....   | Tec. 5 .....       | Curtis H. Davis .....      | 20830734                  |
| 29 January 1944 .....   | Pfc.....           | Ernest C. Cain.....        | 20830730                  |
| 29 January 1944 .....   | Pfc.....           | Donald K. Harvey.....      | 35168648                  |
| 29 January 1944 .....   | Pfc.....           | Lucion J. Hicks.....       | 20830863                  |
| 29 January 1944 .....   | Pfc.....           | Paul N. Davis .....        | 20830735                  |
| 29 January 1944 .....   | Pfc.....           | Aime W. Vezina .....       | 31116662                  |
| 29 January 1944 .....   | Pvt.....           | Hartwell E. Wolgram .....  | 20830768                  |
| 30 January 1944 .....   | Pfc.....           | Charles W. Daffara .....   | 36049565                  |
| 1 February 1944 .....   | Pvt.....           | Nathaniel P. Bailey.....   | 36550990                  |
| 13 February 1944 .....  | 2 Lt.....          | Eldon A. Miller .....      | O-2055867                 |
| 18 February 1944 .....  | Sgt.....           | Lawrence Shea.....         | 20830821                  |
| 18 February 1944 .....  | Pvt.....           | Clarence F. Swope .....    | 35352845                  |
| 22 February 1944.....   | 2 Lt.....          | George T. Robinson.....    | O-1178952                 |
| 29 February 1944.....   | Tec. 5 .....       | Francis H. Pownall.....    | 38023282                  |
| 13 March 1944.....      | Pvt.....           | Benjamin A. Kowalski.....  | 32774654                  |
| 30 March 1944 .....     | Pvt.....           | Joe Curley .....           | 38017433                  |
| 3 June 1944 .....       | Pvt.....           | John V. Blake.....         | 33479433                  |
| 3 June 1944 .....       | Pvt.....           | Clement C. Ward .....      | 11078830                  |
| 8 June 1944.....        | Cpl.....           | Willie V. Stinson.....     | 38018445                  |
| 15 August 1944.....     | Pvt.....           | Stanley F. Novak.....      | 35292229                  |
| 15 August 1944.....     | Pvt.....           | James Ditonna.....         | 32918145                  |
| 20 August 1944.....     | Tec. 4 .....       | James F. Shuck.....        | 35168996                  |
| 21 August 1944.....     | Pfc.....           | John Charmo .....          | 32348489                  |
| 4 December 1944.....    | Tec. 5 .....       | Arthur A. Rosenthal .....  | 32899011                  |
| 10 April 1945 .....     | 1 Lt. ....         | Harold Bernstein.....      | O-1179295                 |
| 30 April 1945.....      | Pvt.....           | Leonard P. Nelson.....     | 34208331                  |

## **WORLD WAR II PRISONERS OF WAR**

| <b><u>Date/Place Captured</u></b> | <b><u>Rank</u></b> | <b><u>Name</u></b>         | <b><u>ASN</u></b> | <b><u>DAYS</u></b> |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| 14 July 1943/Sicily.....          | Tec.4 .....        | Bernard Griffith.....      | 35131811 .....    | 738                |
| 14 July 1943/Sicily.....          | SSgt.....          | Robert E. Shipman.....     | 20830758.....     | 716                |
| 23 February 1944/Italy .....      | Sgt.....           | Thomas C. Grigg.....       | 34104926 .....    | 464                |
| 23 February 1944/Italy .....      | Pvt.....           | Nicholas Hernandez.....    | 38017377.....     | 516                |
| 23 February 1944/Italy .....      | Tec.4 .....        | Charles A. Locke.....      | 33255985 .....    | 467                |
| 23 February 1944/Italy .....      | Pvt.....           | Leonard K. Shoemaker ..... | 34303222.....     | 504                |
| 23 February 1944/Italy .....      | Tec.4 .....        | Robert L. Silver.....      | 38023432.....     | 484                |
| 23 February 1944/Italy .....      | Cpl.....           | William L. Willsey .....   | 20830529 ...      | 496                |
| 11 September 1944/France          | 2 Lt.....          | Francis E. Liggett .....   | O-465104 .....    | 263                |
| 21 January 1945/France ...        | Pfc.....           | Robert K. Albright.....    | 33589636.....     | 43                 |
| 21 January 1945/France ...        | Cpl.....           | Kenneth O. Beck.....       | 33424206.....     | 272                |
| 21 January 1945/France ...        | Pfc.....           | William A. Broughton.....  | 35791442.....     | 275                |
| 21 January 1945/France ...        | 2 Lt.....          | William M. Colby.....      | O-1998701....     | 202                |
| 21 January 1945/France ...        | 2 Lt.....          | Hubert M. Gilliland.....   | O-1998702 ...     | 361                |
| 21 January 1945/France ...        | Tec.4 .....        | Wayne D. Hickman .....     | 35155913 .....    | 87                 |
| 21 January 1945/France ...        | 2 Lt.....          | Ralph H. McMahan.....      | O-1180258 ...     | 214                |
| 21 January 1945/France ...        | Pfc.....           | Joseph R. Roubideaux ..... | 38017425 .....    | 304                |
| 21 January 1945/France ...        | SSgt.....          | Fred W. Schomaker.....     | 20830829 ...      | 415                |
| 21 January 1945/France ...        | Cpl.....           | Henry E. Stoneback.....    | 36265048.....     | 214                |
| 21 January 1945/France ...        | Pfc.....           | Howard M. Zacharias.....   | 36173923.....     | 279                |
| 21 January 1945/France ...        | Pfc.....           | Walter J. Ziobron .....    | 31049342 .....    | 270                |

## **WORLD WAR II : SICILY CAMPAIGN**

On 11 February 1942 while mobilized at Camp Barkeley, Texas the 158th Field Artillery Regiment and its elements are reorganized and redesignated and the 1st Battalion of the 158th Field Artillery Regiment is now reorganized as the 158th Field Artillery Battalion (158th FA Bn) with Lieutenant Colonel Russell D. Funk commanding and assigned to the 45th Infantry Division (45th Inf Div) as a Direct Support (DS) artillery unit to the 157th Regimental Combat Team ( 157th RCT) with the mission of providing close support artillery fire for the 157th RCT when and as needed through artillery Forward Observer (FO) teams located with the leading elements of the RCT. This direct support relationship is important in the fact that the 158th FA Bn shadows the route movements of the RCT from Sicily, to Italy, France and finally into Germany. This movement ascertains the geographical logic of the casualties.

On the 20th of April 1942 the 158th FA Bn is moved to Camp Edwards, Massachusetts to practice amphibious operations. It is here is that they are introduced to the army's six wheeled drive, dual tandem rear axle, amphibious truck known as the "DUKW" where they commence with amphibian training. Then on 8 November 1942 the battalion is moved to Pine Camp, New York for a possible deployment in December 1942. Here they spend Thanksgiving and Christmas waiting for their deployment orders which never

come. Then in early January 1943 they are moved to Camp Pickett, Virginia for an intensive three month training program and finally they were moved with the rest of the 45th Infantry Division to Camp Patrick Henry, Virginia, for departure for destinations unknown.

U.S. Navy ships had “combat loaded” the 45th Inf Div at Hampton Roads, Virginia and on 8 June 1943 they departed the United States. Soon the naval convoy passed through the strait of Gibraltar landing in Oran, Algeria on 23 June 1943. It was here from North Africa that the Allies would assault the soft underbelly of Hitler’s Europe. “Operation Husky” was the code name for the large amphibious assault of Sicily by two Allied armies. The Commander-in-Chief (CNC) was General Dwight D. Eisenhower with Task Force 545 (TF 545), led by General Sir Bernard Montgomery and Task Force 343 (TF 343) led by Lieutenant General George S. Patton, Jr. TF 545 consisted of the British Eighth Army and TF 343 was the U.S. Seventh Army. The U.S. VII Army consists of three infantry divisions organized under the II Corps, commanded by Lieutenant General Omar Bradley; they are the 1st, 3rd, and 45th Infantry Divisions. They also had the 2nd Armored Division designated as a “floating reserve”.

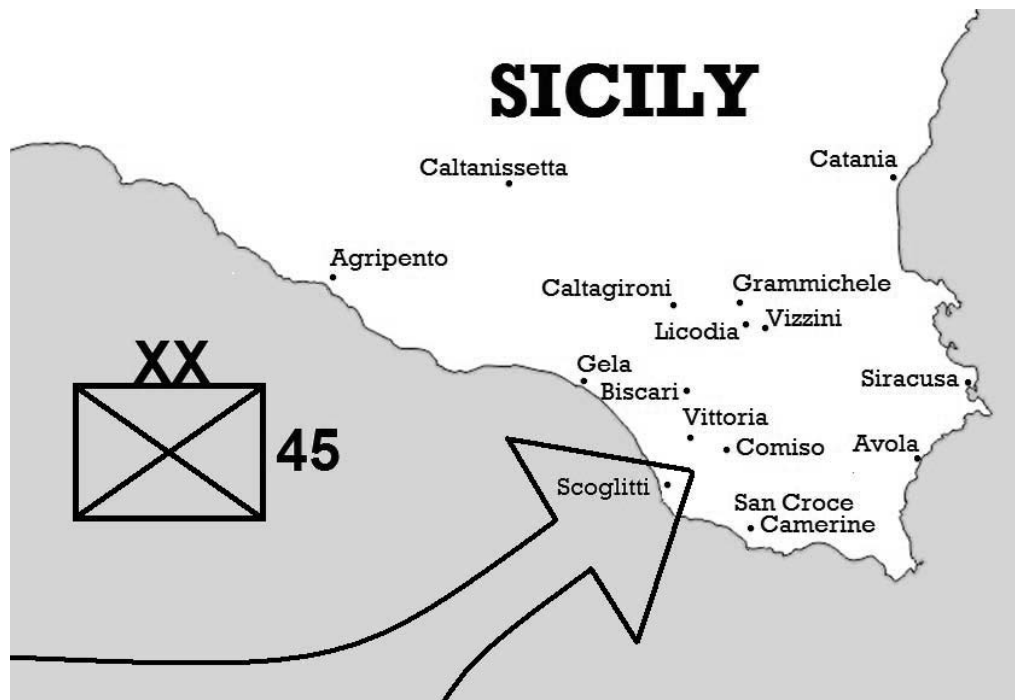


Once at Oran, repetitive amphibious training was conducted daily and when the soldiers weren’t training they were loading their own equipment onto specialized Landing Ship, Tank (LSTs) and Landing Craft, Tank (LCTs). These landing crafts were so new in the inventory that no one knew precisely how many men could be loaded onto them. On 4 July 1943, the 45th Inf Div loaded back onto the same ships that had brought them to Oran and re-embarked eastward through the Mediterranean where the 45th Inf Div was assigned a lead role in securing the southernmost U.S. objective. As this huge naval

invasion fleet departed North Africa, everybody on board was issued a copy of “The Soldier’s Guide to Sicily.” On 9 July 1943 they turned northward towards the tiny fishing village of Scoglitti, Sicily and they dropped anchor.

Debarkation Day (D-Day) was established as 10 July 1943 but the hour (H-Hour) was behind schedule and postponed one hour. Then at 0345 hours (hrs) 10 July 1943 naval bombardment from the USS Philadelphia and HMS Abercrombie supported the landings of the 158th FA Bn. Battery “A” came ashore at 0830 hrs, Battery “C” at 0915 hrs and Battery “B” at 1015 hrs. The 45th Inf Div came ashore encountering resistance from armored units of the Hermann Goering Division, but advanced towards its main objective of capturing the airfields at Biscari and Comiso.

The 157th RCT moved inland rapidly and by 1300 hrs 10 July 1943, the 1st Bn 157th RCT had occupied positions outside its first objective; the town of San Croce Camerine. An Italian garrison occupied the town and resisted but an artillery barrage from the 158th FA Bn persuaded them to surrender. The 157th RCT captured over 500 Italian prisoners and much military equipment. The 157th RCT continued pushing northward and by 1700 hrs 11 July 1943, had surrounded and captured Comiso and its airport, destroying over 100 enemy aircraft and several German tanks.



By the morning of 14 July 1943 the 157th RCT had a front, shared with the Canadians and marching on Vizzini. By 0830 hrs the 158th FA Bn moved to the vicinity of Licodia to support this action. It was during these actions that the 158th FA Bn Liaison Officers (LNOs) and Forward Observers (FOs); who were positioned with their respective DS infantry units; came under intensive enemy fire. Captain Breeding, LNO assigned to the 1st Bn 157th RCT requested fire to neutralize enemy 88mm batteries in the vicinity of Vizzini. By 1125 hrs the Battalion Command Post (Bn CP) was established 3 miles south

of Licodia (Universal Transversing Mercator [UTM] Grid 605387). Battery "C" was displaced forward (UTM Grid 591389) and immediately joined in the last stages of the heated fighting north of Licodia. By this time the 3rd Bn 157th RCT had pushed to the outskirts of Grammichele, but was soon ordered to withdraw south while the 1st Bn 157th RCT made a coordinated attack with the Canadians on Vizzini. As artillery support fires plans were being prepared for this withdrawal, Second Lieutenant Charles K. Fetzer Jr., and his FO party (***Staff Sergeant Robert E. Shipman, Technician Fourth Grade John C. Athey, Technician Fourth Grade Bernard Griffith*** and Private First Class Arthur Fowler) passed through the forward lines. They soon came under intense German machine gun fire from very close range. 2LT Fetzer and TEC4 Athey were both wounded from the ambush. The vehicle was stopped by the intensive spray of bullets and the FO party immediately dispersed and went into Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape (SERE) mode. 2LT Fetzer hid in an old mule shed and as darkness set in, managed to get away and return to his battery. SSG Shipman and TEC4 Griffith tried to evade from the Germans but they were soon captured. PFC Fowler was able to evade the Germans and return back to friendly lines. The Germans surrounded the vehicle and found the body of TEC4 Athey but darkness was approaching fast so they removed the radio and left in a hurry, leaving TEC4 Athey for dead.

As midnight 15 July 1943 came, TEC4 Athey was able to pull himself to the disabled vehicle, start it and then drive it back to the 1st Bn 157th RCT Bn CP and relate the tactical situation to CPT Breeding. TEC4 Athey was taken to an aid station to have his wounds dressed and he perished soon after. The Canadians were assigned the mission of taking Gramichele and as they moved westerly across the front, the 157th RCT was pinched out of this sector.

The Liberty ships (a class of cargo ships nicknamed "liberty ships" by President Roosevelt that were designed and built at a low cost to ship cargo and bring back "troops on liberty" to Europe), arrived in the Port of Gela and was scheduled to be unloaded on the morning of 15 July 1943. The Battalion Motor Officer, 1LT Robert E. Kelley, went to Gela with the drivers assigned to unload the vehicles off the Liberty ships and stage them for movement to their respective units. The 158th FA Bn received orders to move to Mazzarino and to support the 1st Infantry Division (1st Inf Div) reinforcing their Division Artillery (Div Arty) fires. At 2330 hrs 15 July 1943, "Close Station, March Order" (CSMO) was given and the battalion was soon on the march to Mazzarino to occupy positions 2.5 miles southeast of the town. The Bn CP was set up at (UTM Grid 171522); Battery "A" was positioned at (UTM Grid 170524), Battery "B" at (UTM Grid 168532) and Battery "C" at (UTM Grid 165530). Arriving at 0700 hrs 16 July 1943, liaison and communications were immediately established with the 1st Div Arty, and the firing batteries were registered, Observation Posts (OPs) established, but no fire missions were fired.

By 1800 hrs July 16, the 157th RCT moved into rendezvous one mile northeast of Riesi. The 45th Inf Div had been assigned a sector between the 1st Inf Div and the 3rd Inf Div. The 157th RCT, being the only regiment in the sector, would conduct the attack toward Pietroperzia. To provide supporting fires for the attack, Major Albert E. Huber; the





**Robert K. Albright**



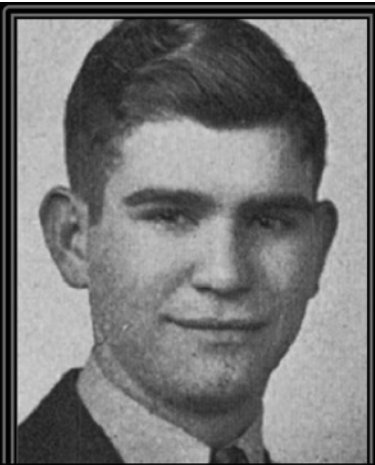
**John C. Athey**



**Nathaniel P. Bailey**



**Ernest C. Cain**



**Charles W. Daffara**



**Melvin W. Davidson**



**Curtis H. Davis**

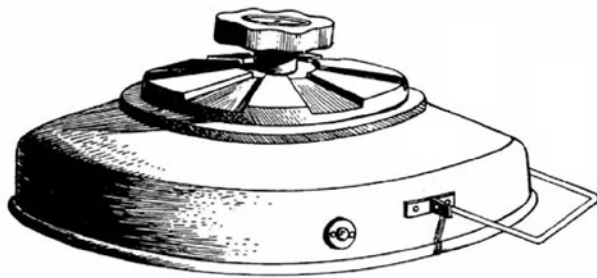


**Paul N. Davis**



**Earle S. Downes**

Battalion Executive (XO) along with all the firing battery commanders; conducted a reconnaissance of new positions approximately at 2030 hrs. Once the reconnaissance was completed the firing batteries started moving towards Pietroperzia.



M35 Anti-tank "Teller mine", with 200 lb pressure activated fuze, detonating 12 lbs TNT.

Enroute to the new firing positions, no resistance was encountered, but as Battery "A" was road marching to their new position, a bridge had been blown. They discovered a by-pass and as the "guns" started to maneuver through it the lead trucks right front wheel struck the pressure plate of a M35 Anti-Tank "Teller mine" detonating the High Explosive (HE) charge. **First Lieutenant Rufus Wactor**, Battery "A" XO, whom was

guiding the vehicle with his flashlight and riding on the fender, received the full charge of the mine. 1LT Wactor was seriously injured and died an hour later. Two enlisted men in the truck were also injured, but not seriously. At 0410 hrs 17 July 1943, the 158th FA Bn firing batteries were "In Position Ready to Fire" (IPRF). The BN CP was located at (UTM Grid 119647), Battery "A" at (UTM Grid 115545), Battery "B" at (UTM Grid 110543), and Battery "C" at (UTM Grid 117552). No rounds were fired from these positions as no resistance was encountered and again the firing batteries were ordered to displace to newly reconnoitered positions west of Pietroperzia. The Bn CP at (UTM Grid 112690), Battery "A" at (UTM Grid 114685), Battery "B" at (UTM Grid 110679), and Battery "C" at (UTM Grid 102686) with OPs on a hill 2.5 km west of Pietroperzia, and all batteries were registered on a common base point.



Before daylight on the 18 July 1943, the 158th FA Bn, was “on the go” again. The Bn XO went forward with firing battery commanders and selected positions just west of Caltanissetta. The 157th RCT had already moved to San Caterina, and very little resistance was encountered in on any of these road marches. The 158th FA Bn moved into position at 0800 hrs with the Bn CP located at (UTM Grid 038751), Battery “A” at (UTM Grid 046776), Battery “B” at (UTM Grid 044331), and Battery “C” at (UTM Grid 044754). Throughout the day there were sporadic “artillery duels”, where the Germans would “shell” a 158th FA Bn position with heavy artillery fire, and they in return would answer with 105-mm counter fire. During one of these exchanges, **Private First Class Lonnie B. Nobles** was killed instantly. By 1200 hrs Battery “B” was ordered to displace forward and the other batteries would follow on order. Batteries “B” and “C” moved into position by 1400 hrs and Battery “A” had just dropped their “trails” in its new position north of the railroad when orders were received that the entire battalion would move forward to the outskirts of San Caterina. The enemy opened up on the 158th FA Bn columns with heavy artillery fire and the artillery duels continued until after dark.



For the next three days the 158th FA Bn would displace forward, supporting the 157th RCT as they maneuvered forward, slugging it out with the enemy in these artillery duels. Eventually most of the enemy artillery fire had been silenced as the 158th FA Bn moved forward they witnessed remnants of destroyed self propelled 88mm artillery pieces and several trucks and tanks blazing on fire. By 0640 hrs 21 July 1943, the 158th FA Bn, displaced to new positions 2.5 miles west of Vallelunga with Bn CP at (UTM Grid 801991), Battery “A” at (UTM Grid 815991), Battery “B” at (UTM Grid 810992), and Battery “C” at (UTM Grid 808988), with very little resistance was encountered. The 45th Inf Div was now to capture the Palermo-Termini Imerese-Cefalu road running west

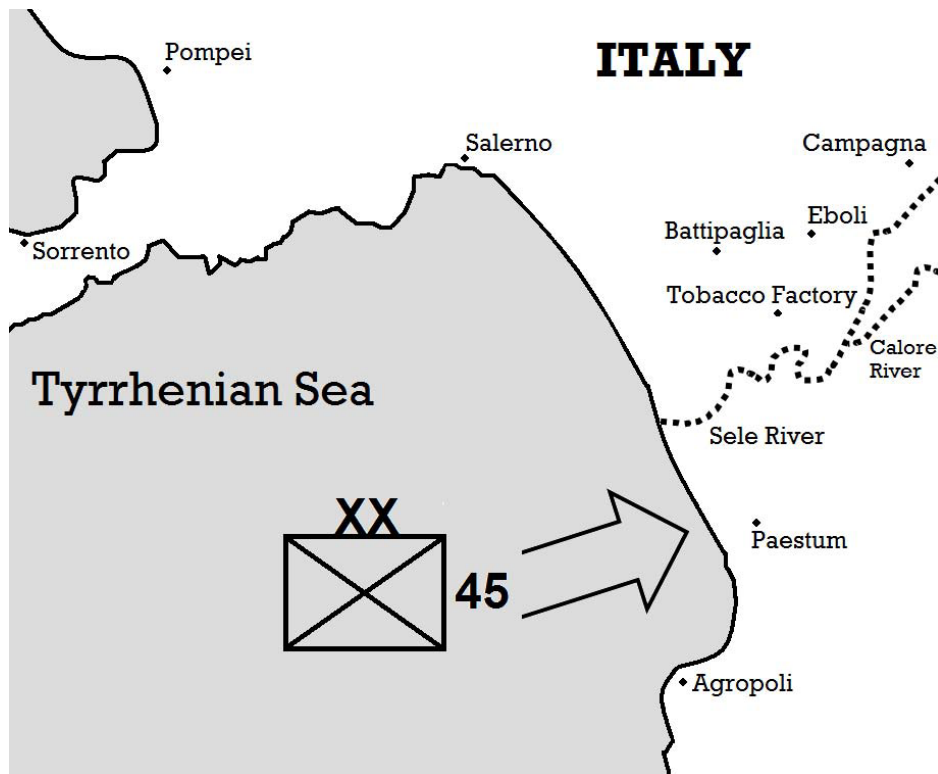
to east along the coast line, a patrol entered into the outskirts of Palermo; the capital city of Sicily; before the advance guard of the 2nd Armored Division (2nd AD). The 180th Regimental Combat Team (180th RCT) would capture the city of Termini Imerese and the 157th RCT would capture the railroad at Station Cerda, thus cutting the island in half. In the early morning hours of 24 July 1943, the 2nd Bn 157th RCT made visual contact with the station when the Germans ambushed them, but heavy artillery fire from the tubes of the 158th FA Bn repelled them back. The 157th RCT captured the station and drove on to capture the city of Cefalu continuing to attack until they pushed into and occupied San Stefano on the night of 30 July 1943. The enemy had already laid out anti-personnel minefields and had registered their mortars just hours earlier before the occupation so throughout the night they harassed the “dug in” soldiers. At 1530 hrs 31 July 1943, the 45th Inf Div was Relieved in Place (RIP) by the 3rd Inf Div and they were sent to a rest camp in Cefalu with the 158th FA Bn bivouacked five miles east of Termini Imerese. ***Technician Fifth Grade Woodrow C. King*** was in the rest area when an Unexploded Ordnance (UXO); always sensitive to disturbance; detonated in close proximity to Tec5 King and incapacitated him. He was immediately medevac to a field hospital where he succumbed to his wounds on 2 August 1943. For the next two weeks the battalion rested, washed clothes, wrote letters home, worked on equipment and bargained with the local Sicilians.

At 1200 hrs 15 August 1943, all personnel loaded on LCT's at Termini Imerese and all vehicles at San Stefano, where they set sail to a predetermined beach west of Spadafora, but behind enemy lines. At approximately 0200 hrs on 16 August 1943, all the craft beached and the firing batteries went immediately into their positions, west of point Milazzo; the Bn CP at (UTM Grid 020501), Battery "A" at (UTM Grid 020500), Battery "B" at (UTM Grid 021502), and Battery "C" at (UTM Grid 016501). The enemy had already fled to the Italian mainland so although there was no resistance encountered, the enemy heavily mined the beaches.

At 0800 hrs 19 August 1943, the 158th FA Bn returned to a new bivouac area six miles west of Termini Imerese at (UTM Grid 661338) near Trabia. Although every precaution was taken it was still a formidable road march due to the booby traps, minefields, and UXOs scattered throughout the area. It was on this day that ***Technician Fifth Grade Louis P. Poole*** encountered one of these undetonated mines that killed him instantly. Once at their new bivouac there was a big push to repair, re-equipped and retrain for another operation. Thus ended the Campaign for Sicily.

## **WORLD WAR II : NAPLES-FOGGIA CAMPAIGN**

On 3 September 1943, Major General Troy H. Middleton, 45th Inf Div Commander called a “Commanders” meeting to brief "Operation Avalanche". The 45th Inf Div's new order of battle would be in the Fifth US Army organized under the VI Corps; which was commanded by Major General Ernest J. Dawley. The VI Corps would consist of the 3rd, 34th, 36th, and 45th Infantry Divisions. The U.S. 5th Army would compose of the southern amphibious forces of the Salerno beachhead. The 158th FA Bn would land on the beaches along with the 157th RCT on D-day using British LSTs and LCIs; with the second lift on D+5 consisting of the kitchens, maintenance and support vehicles.



Detailed loading plans and passenger lists were submitted and at 1500 hrs 7 September 1943 the 158th FA Bn moved to the harbor at Termini Imerese and began loading prescribed ammunition loads, prime movers, howitzers and paxs onto their water craft. Anchors were pulled at 0420 hrs 8 September 1943, and the convoy set sail from Sicily and arrived at the Salerno Bay, Italy at 0400 hrs 9 September 1943.

The D-day hour for the 45th Inf Div to disembark was at 0300 hrs 10 September 1943; following the 36th Inf Div beach landings; but due to bad weather it was postponed to 1140 hrs. Although Italy for all practical purposes signed an Armistice with the Allies, there was a large German army occupying the Italian peninsula and they were in danger along the coastline. The long awaited order finally came and the 45th Inf Div started debarkation and by 1700hrs the 158th FA Bn CP was established at (UTM Grid 875113) and they were immediately thrown into the battle.

The Germans had assembled a large resistance force and they were determined to drive the 45th Inf Div back into the sea. As they threw all available men and weapon systems into the beachhead the 45th Inf Div formed a defensive perimeter and repelled the assault force. For the next couple of days there was savage fighting along the Sele and Calore Rivers. The Germans had brought forward tanks and their Nebelwerfers 41's or colloquially termed the "Screaming Mimi's" which relentlessly pounded the allies. The 157th RCT attempted to outflank the Germans by assaulting the "Tobacco Factory" which was fought at close quarters. Fighting the entrenched Germans meant with bayonet and hand grenades and the 158th FA Bn gunners were lobbing so many shells into the stone buildings that by 2400 hrs 12 September 1943, the battalion had expended 2,016 rounds, many of them "direct fire" at German tanks and any 88-mm



## The "Tobacco Factory"

field pieces or Nebelwerer multiple rocket launched carriages that were within range of their 105-mm tubes.

Over a two-day period the battles seesawed but soon the Germans started to weaken. On the morning of 14 September 1943, the Germans counter attacked hitting the front lines. A large number of enemy artillery shells were falling on the Bn CP and into the

howitzer gun positions along the perimeter. One shell landed and killed ***Private First Class Lawrence C. Sparkman***. The battalion retaliated by pouring interdiction and harassing fires into German positions, by firing 4,485 rounds into enemy gun and tank positions.

At 0240 hrs 15 September 1943, artillery fire was being adjusted by moonlight. On this day the enemy was employing self-propelled artillery pieces and the 158th FA Bn lost ***Private First Class Melvin Marshall*** in another exchange of artillery fires. By midnight the 158th FA Bn had fired a total of 2,281 rounds and it was becoming apparent that the enemy was withdrawing.

With the beachhead secure and German resistance weakening, the U.S. 5th Army began attacking towards Naples and Foggia. By 27 September 1943, they captured the airfields near Foggia and on 1 October 1943, they captured Naples. As the Allied army pressed forward up the peninsula they encountered the weather of fall rains, and their progress came to a crawl but they were within marching distance of the Volturno Line and southern Italy was in Allied hands. The Germans chose to fight delaying actions in a series of prepared defensive lines that would buy them time to complete the Winter Line, the backbone of their main defense.

By 2 October 1943 the 45th Inf Div was headed northwest to their objective of Benevento. The advance up the Calore River valley by the 158th FA Bn, beyond Benevento was to begin at 0300 hrs 4 October 1943; with a Passage Through the Lines (PTTL) of the 34th Inf Div; but did not get underway until the afternoon with Battery "C" IPRF at 1430 hrs, Battery "A" IPRF at 1500 hrs and Battery "B" IPRF at 1715 hrs. The 158th FA Bn was reinforced by the 171st FA Bn and the 189th FA Bn and their forward CP was established at 1715 hrs with the rear CP moving up at 2100 hrs. When the PTTL was completed new plans were being drawn up for interdiction fires requested by the 157th RCT as well as plans to move out again by dawn.

At 0400 hrs on 5 October a dense fog enveloped all the firing positions. At 0430 hrs the Germans started shelling the positions, but the batteries were pulling out enroute to new

positions just beyond Benevento, arriving there at 0655 hrs. By this time the fog was very thick and no visibility but in the distance the sound of vehicular movement and preparations of positions was very distinct. Observers spotted Panzerkampfwagen IV tanks in front of the firing lines. The 157th RCT was encountering stiff resistance ahead at a hill in vicinity of (UTM Grid 630890) so the battalion heavily shelled the area and by 1145 hrs it was decided to displace to new positions. The Panzer IV tanks were everywhere, plus self propelled guns with exposed flat trajectory weapons; and they were impeding any vehicle traffic activity.



Liaison Party No. 4; under the auspices of Lieutenant Harry W. Van Ness; was in this area and tried to gain higher ground for observation when they were strafed by crossfire from a 20-mm cannon fire and then 7.92mm machine gun fire. ***Corporal Willis N. Jarboe*** was killed in this exchange and another soldier was wounded. The observation post was never established and the 158th FA Bn moved to alternate positions expending 202 rounds throughout that day.

Throughout the remainder of the month the advance was painfully slow, the continuous enemy artillery fire was inflicting many casualties, rough terrain, enemy contact and the mud and trench foot was depleting the ranks. Finally on 1 November 1943, the 45th Inf Div was on the banks of the Volturno River; the starting point of the Volturno Line: and started preparations to cross it, with the 34th Inf Div on its right flank and the 3rd Inf Div on its left flank. They crossed the river the next morning and throughout the ensuing days pressed forward in what turned out to be a battle of attrition against the rain, snow, and stubborn German resistance.

In the early hours of 16 November 1943, an enemy forward observation party penetrated the division perimeter and was discovered in the Pozzuoli area. They were calling in artillery fire on any targets of opportunity thus causing mayhem in the rear areas. A lone German artillery shell landed in Battery "A's" firing position killing **Private James H. Ballman** and wounding two gun sentries.

By 17 November 1943, enemy patrols were reported to be active on all fronts; and as the morning mist cleared the hills in front of the 158th FA Bn positions; the enemy was seen in the ravines and in the many dwellings and huts dotting the hillsides in front of them. They were immediately engaged with small arms and machine gun fire but sporadic rain showers were affecting the long range visibility. At 1610 hrs, 34 HE rounds landed in close proximity of Battery "B". First Lieutenant Charles K. Fetzer; Battery XO and **Privates First Class Melvin W. Davidson** and Miles L. Compton were caught in the barrage with PFC Davidson receiving large fragments in his thorax; killing him instantly; and 1LT Fetzer and PFC Compton being only slightly wounded. The 158th FA Bn fired a total of 432 155-mm rounds repulsing the penetrators.

Before December 1943 ended the offensive was at a crawl, the weather and terrains advantage was to the Germans. It became a daily struggle to seize the high ground and then hold it off from enemy counter attacks in the cold freezing rains only to do it again the next day by assaulting another ridge. The price in casualties and material was becoming too high. The formulation of plans for an amphibious operation around Rome was being drawn up. The area finally selected was a stretch of coastal plain near the town of Anzio, with U.S. VI Army Corps; under Major General John P. Lucas; leading the assault. The 3rd Inf Div would be the main assault force on Anzio and the British 1st Div the main assault force on with the 1st Arm Div and 45th Inf Div being the "follow on" forces. The 45th Inf Div started withdrawing from the front lines on 1 January 1944 and they would be RIPPING by the French Expeditionary Corps (FEC). They were being moved to the vicinity of San Pitito, order of the RIP would be the 179th RCT, 157th RCT, and then the 180th RCT.

On 8 January 1944 the 158th FA Bn was in the process of executing their RIP with the FEC and had just handed over the Fire Direction Center (FDC) when the enemy fired one nine round volley of "harassment fire" into the battalion's gun positions. They fired one volley of nine rounds "harassment fire" and then went silent. This volley wounded Corporal Charles E. Dean and Private First Class Robert A. Buchanan, but it killed **Private First Class Phillip A. Kelley**. Later in the afternoon all ammunition; except twenty rounds per gun tube; was transferred over to the FEC. This would be the last night "on the line" and the enemy ended the day with another one volley of fifteen rounds.

At 0830 hrs 9 January 1944, the order "CSMO" was issued and the battalion commenced to road march to the town of Amorosi, closing in at 1220 hrs and ending 121 days in combat. The next few days began the task of making themselves as comfortable as possible in their new pyramidal tents and resting.





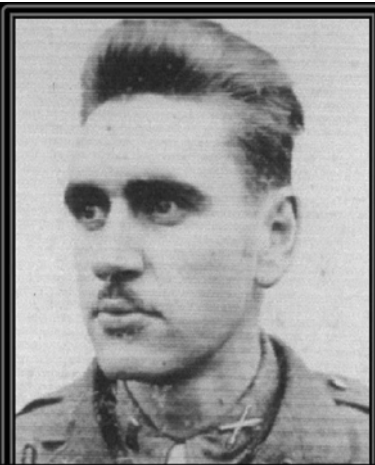
**Martin S. Eskin**



**Willis N. Jarboe**



**Woodrow C. King**



**Francis E. Liggett**



**Richard L. Mansfield**



**Eldon A. Miller**



**Francis H. Pownall**



**George T. Robinson**



**Arthur A. Rosenthal**

On 18 January 1944, the 158th FA Bn was tasked to provide “operational observers” to the 3rd Inf Div amphibious rehearsals that were being conducted near Naples. Captain Leroy Miller; battalion assistant S-3; was selected to support this rehearsal and he was required to bring along a 2 ½ ton truck, which was driven by ***Private First Class John N. Priest***. As 2 ½ ton trucks were in the process of being loaded onto the LSTs, a large swell partially capsized the LST causing all the vehicles, howitzers and DUKWs; that were chain “tied down” on the LSTs to shift rapidly, crushing PFC Priest in between 2 vehicles. PFC Priest and many other enlisted men were transported to a field hospital; and during the triage PFC Priest died; the causative agent to death was diagnosed as a collapsed thorax. After all the personnel and most of the vehicles and equipment were recovered; the exercises were aborted with added emphasis on the dangers of amphibious operations. Thus ended the Naples-Foggia Campaign.

### WORLD WAR II : ANZIO AND ROME-ARNO CAMPAIGNS



On order the 158th FA Bn road marched from Amorosi to the port at Casa Puzzano, arriving there at 1200 hrs 22 January 1944. Their rest was now completed; their howitzers and equipment were repaired, cleaned and inventoried and they had their basic loads of ammunition; on the same day, the 3rd Inf Div and the British 1st Div landed on Anzio beach with no opposition.

The 157th RCT and the 158th FA Bn arrived on Anzio beachhead on 29 January 1944. Battery “A” docked at 0700 hrs, unloaded and arrived at the Battalion Assembly Area (BAA) at 0900 hrs; Battery “B” d0cked at 0940hrs and reached the BAA by 1120 hrs. Battery “C” and Headquarters Battery arrived at the dock at 0900 hrs and reached the BAA by assembly area by 1200 hrs. The battalion then began the road march to new firing positions at 2115 hrs, in the order of “A”, “B”, “C”, Headquarters, and Service batteries. Luftwaffe aircraft were heard overhead at about this same time and they

dropped illumination flares and the vehicles immediately dispersed on exit roads and the men bailed out and sought cover. The bombs fell in rapid succession; and the bombing runs continued until the flares started to fizzle out and the enemy planes departed. As the battalion recovered itself and started accountability, it discovered that 6 trucks were disabled, including three howitzer prime movers, aiming circles, radios, and telephones were destroyed but the human toll from these aerial bombs was 9 men killed and 27 men wounded. Killed in Action were **Technicians Fifth Grade Rudy W. Bohn and Curtis H. Davis; Technician Fourth Grade Albert M. Schoelen; Privates First Class Ernest C. Cain, Paul N. Davis, Donald K. Harvey, Lucion J. Hicks and Aime W. Venzina, and Private Hartwell E. Wolgram.** Placement of guards was posted around the area and commencement of salvage operations would start at daybreak.

All of the known wounded were cared for and evacuated by 0400 hrs, 30 January 1944. Men from other batteries were placed on special duty to function in places formerly occupied by the wounded and/or KIA. The new firing positions were in flat scattered groves of trees which were excellent concealment from the air but it wouldn't protect you from artillery shellfire so guns were dug in. Before the day ended the battalion shot 285 rounds supporting the 36th Combat Engineer Battalion. **Private First Class Charles W. Daffara** who was one of the 27 wounded the night before, succumbed to his wounds and died this day.

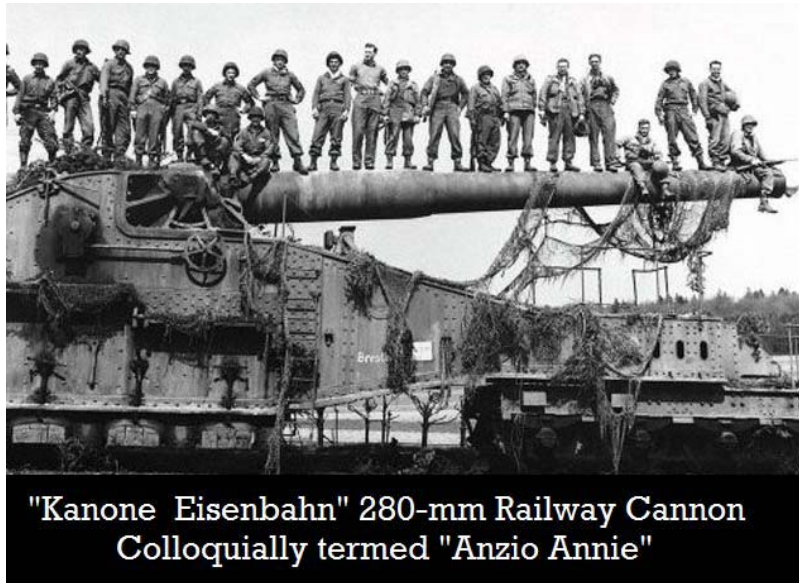


**US LST-77 Unloading at the Anzio Beachhead.**

On 1 February 1944, the U.S. VI Army Corps had established a beachhead 8 miles in width and 3 miles inland. On the left flank was the 1st British Division; who had penetrated 2 miles in depth; with the 45th Inf Div in the middle and the 3rd Inf Div on the right flank. Soon there would be over 69,000 men with their vehicles and equipment on this small beach and the U.S. VI Army Corps started fortifying their positions and stockpiling supplies. The 158th FA Bn fired a total of 581 ea 105-mm shells in support of ongoing operations as well as provides a Shore Fire Control Officer (FSCO) liaison

officer to the British 1st Reconnaissance Regiment and the Loyals Regiment who could call and direct their naval artillery fire. Before the day had ended news that **Private Nathaniel P. Bailey**; one of the men wounded from the Luftwaffe aerial bombardment; had succumbed to his wounds.

As the first week of February 1944 passed it became apparent to the Allies that the roles had changed and they were now the defenders. The Germans kept the beachhead under continuous artillery and aerial bombardment. Here they were introduced to the "butterfly bombs", "Bed-check Charlie" and "Anzio Annie". The "butterflies" were 60-



"Kanone Eisenbahn" 280-mm Railway Cannon  
Colloquially termed "Anzio Annie"

mm bomblet clusters that were released from their war head just a few meters over ground and once they impacted they sounded like popping popcorn. "Bed-check Charlie" was a lone aircraft that flew over the beach only during the night; hoping to draw fire for the German artillery spotters to call fire in on the allied positions. "Anzio Annie" was a 280-mm railroad cannon that fired a 561-pound shell into the beachhead throughout the day.

13 February 1944, ***Second Lieutenant Eldon A. Miller*** a FO; approached an abandoned shed that would allow him good observation on the "factory"; a group of four-story buildings that were once part of a agriculture settlement named Aprilia; but now occupied by the Germans. There was strong opposition at the "factory"; it was heavily defended with minefields surrounding it and anti-tank guns in it. As the battle raged around it 2LT Miller was able to occupy a small portion of the shed would partial observation of the "factory". An enemy sniper wounded him and as stretcher bearers attempted to advance to his position in the shed the enemy marked his position with white flares and unleashed an artillery barrage on his position. Smoke screens were shot in front of 2LT Miller's position and he was brought back to the BN CP where he died shortly after arriving.



Aprilia the "Factory" April 1943



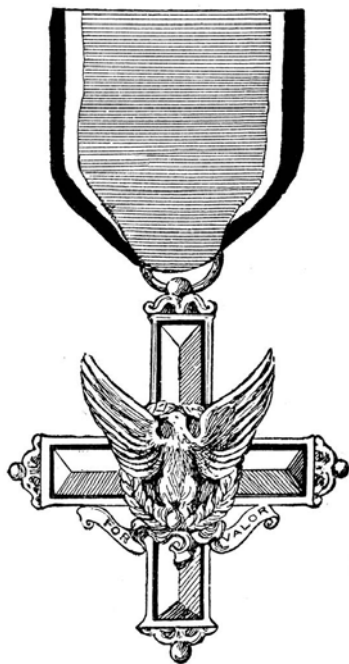
Aprilia the "Factory" April 1944

By now it became a matter of pride that the Germans drive the Allies back into the sea and off the beachhead. On 16 February 1944 the Germans started a major offensive with the focal point being the "factory". It started with a 30-minute nonstop artillery barrage then waves of assault troops supported by tanks. The area was covered by shepherd

caves carved into the ridge line; called the “caves” (UTM Grid 863286); and the fighting often ended in hand-to-hand battles and would become known as the “battle of the caves”.

On 18 February 1944 the battalion had established a new static observation post (UTM Grid 869268) which enabled them to repulsed attacks from every direction with the battalion guns reinforcing each other’s fires. A few of the Mark IV and Tiger tanks penetrated and were causing havoc but soon destroyed by Allied “tank destroyers”. On this days’ exchange of artillery barrages, **Sergeant Lawrence Shea and Private Clarence F. Swope** were killed in action by shell fire fragments. The battalion fired in total 7,220 ea of 105-mm rounds during the bloody fighting.

As the “battle of the caves” raged on the Germans were becoming more and more disorganized and as they continued to infiltrate into the positions they were beaten back and decimated. By 22 February 1944 it was quite noticeable that the offensive was weakening but there were still small skirmishes of fighting. **Second Lieutenant George T. Robinson** and his FO party were able to occupy a small rock shelter and elude detection from the enemy through this battle, but he was seen by German soldiers, who tossed a grenade into the window started a skirmish that lasted the remainder of the day. 2LT Robinson was later killed by a sniper but because of his tenacity Battery “C” was able to fire 457 each 105-mm HE rounds stopping many of the assaults.



For his actions this day 2LT Robinson was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, GENERAL ORDERS: Headquarters, Fifth U.S. Army, General Orders No. 102 dated 1944. CITATION: The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress July 9, 1918, takes pride in presenting the Distinguished Service Cross (Posthumously) to Second Lieutenant George T. Robinson (ASN: 0-1178952), United States Army, for extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations against an armed enemy while serving with the 158th Field Artillery Battalion, 45th Infantry Division, in action against enemy forces from 16 to 22 February 1944, he directed continuous field artillery firing missions against the enemy during the vicious German attack to reduce the Anzio beachhead. His observation post was located in a building well in advance of friendly troops and was subjected to constant sniper and artillery fire. On the second day the room from which he was observing was destroyed by three direct hits from German tanks. Unperturbed, he entered an adjoining room and

completed his adjustment of fire which forced the tanks to withdraw. The building later was demolished by artillery and mortar fire. That night he established his observation post in an adjacent house. During the next five days, he conducted firing missions until enemy infantry finally infiltrated into nearby houses and wounded three of his party. After an all night small arms fight with German troops, he barricaded his party in the building and continued to direct artillery fire until he was killed by a sniper. His

courage, tenacity of purpose and devotion to duty were responsible for the destruction of large numbers of enemy personnel and considerable equipment. Second Lieutenant Robinson's intrepid actions, personal bravery and zealous devotion to duty at the cost of his life, exemplify the highest traditions of the military forces of the United States and reflect great credit upon himself, the 45th Infantry Division, and the United States Army.

23 February 1944; started with what can be called an active defense; the Germans remained concealed yet unaggressive until they spotted daylight movement then they responded with an immediate artillery barrage. The 158th FA Bn CP sent orders down the line to "dig in" all the CPs, gun pits, and personnel shelters. Two FO parties composing of **Sergeant Thomas C. Grigg, Corporal William L. Willsey, Technicians Fourth Grade Charles A. Locke and Robert L. Silver, and Privates Nicholas Hernandez and Leonard K. Shoemaker** were with a forward element of the 157th RCT when they became encircled by the enemy. A patrol was sent forward to secure an escape route for the unit and soon 160 men and officers infiltrated back to the escape route but the FO parties became separated from them. Although radio communications were maintained with the beleaguered FO parties a last disparaging radio transmission from CPL Willsey, indicated they were destroying the radio to keep it out of the enemy's hand. As the FO parties tried to elude the Germans, they were encircled and captured.

The next few days were uneventful on the beachhead and it was what seemed to be working against the Germans was counter-battery fire in huge concentrations. This was depleting the Allied ammunition dumps. So a new tactic was developed where the artillery "ammo trains" would drive straight onto the docked LSTs; once filled they would back out into the bay; minimizing the exposure time to artillery fire. The LSTs would then transport the vehicles to Naples where each vehicle was resupplied with their respective artillery ammo. Then they would sail back to Anzio, re-dock and the vehicles would make a dash off the LST's to their Ammunition Resupply Points (RSPs). On 29 February 1944, the enemy's artillery became very active lighting the horizon with flares and phosphorous as they targeted the "ammo trains" and targeted troop concentrations. The 158th FA Bn spent most of the day firing a total of 1109 ea 105-mm counter-battery rounds. On this day during one of the enemy's artillery barrages **Technician Fifth Grade Francis H. Pownall** was struck and killed by artillery fragmentation.

13 March 1944, started out with everybody drying their blankets from the night before, the morning had poor visibility and a message came from 157th RCT to be on the lookout for about 50 "Fallschirmjager"; who were reported to have had parachuted in the night before. The Germans shelled the front lines intermittently throughout the day but once darkness set in, larger concentrations of barrages rained on the forward elements, and an air raid. **Private Benjamin A. Kowalski** was killed by aerial fragmentation from the aerial bombing.

The beachhead of Anzio was a daily struggle to stay clear of fragmentation from the constant shelling of hostile artillery. The enemy stayed concealed most of the day and

around 2120 hrs 30 March 1944, there were three high bursts in the vicinity of the “factory” and within the hour approximately 150 rounds of 88-mm high bursts were shot in the area. ***Private Joe Curley*** who was in the area of the high bursts was a victim of one of these blasts and succumbed to the blast fragmentation of one of these rounds.

The habitual routine forced the Allies to concentrate thousands of pieces of artillery onto the beachhead and then augment each other’s artillery fires. This tactic eventually broke the Germans back who relied on their armored forces to assault and penetrate lines of resistance. A Time-On-Target (TOT) fire mission; farthest tube timed impact to coincide with nearest tube impact so all shells impacted at same time; was implemented and refined on the Anzio beachhead. Finally at 0600 hrs on 23 May 1944, a huge breakout began and the Allies crept up the peninsula towards Rome.

On 3 June 1944, the 45th Inf Div was on the outskirts of Rome and advancing rapidly. At first there was stiff resistance but soon defensive lines crumbled and as units leapfrogged forward ***Privates John V. Blake and Clement C. Ward*** were killed instantaneously when an intense artillery barrage interrupted their road march southwest of the city of Ganzano. PVT Blake’s remains were never fully recovered and the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) classifies his status as: “Service Personnel Not Recovered Following WWII for the United States Army”. Soon many units crossed over the Tiber River and the “Eternal City” was declared secured. The next day the 158th FA Bn was moved to a rest area outside of Rome at (UTM Grid 6264) where everybody had ample opportunity to visit Rome, and it was here that they soon learned of the “Normandy Invasion” on 6 June 1944.

On 8 June 1944 ***Corporal Willie V. Stinson*** contracted an acute gastrointestinal infection from initial lapses in field sanitation and hygiene where acute enteric infections are often not reported and perceived by the soldier to be temporary and minor and he died in the rest area as a non-battle death. Soon the 158th FA Bn began a 209 mile road march to a training area at (UTM Grid 769293) near the town of Faiano. Although the Rome-Arno Campaign lasted until 9 September 1944, it was thus ended for the 158th FA Bn on the front lines because on 18 June 1944, the 45th Inf Div was pulled back to train for their next operation.

## **WORLD WAR II : SOUTHERN FRANCE CAMPAIGN**

“Operation Dragoon” was the code name for the landing of the Allied invasion of Southern France. The plan consisted of three divisions of the U.S. Army VI Corps; commanded by Major General Lucian K. Truscott Jr.; from the U.S. VII Army; commanded by Lieutenant General Alexander Patch; landing and securing a beachhead; occupying it by disembarking 50,000 troops and 6,500 vehicles; all on the first day. The operation started with the Sixth Army Group’s 1st Airborne Task Force parachuting in near Le Muy and then the main landing force consisting of the 3rd, 45th and 36th Inf Div’s with French and Canadian forces protecting the flanks.



**Albert M. Schoelen**



**Fred W. Schomaker**



**Lawrence Shea**



**Robert E. Shipman**



**James F. Shuck**



**Willie V. Stinson**



**Clarence F. Swope**



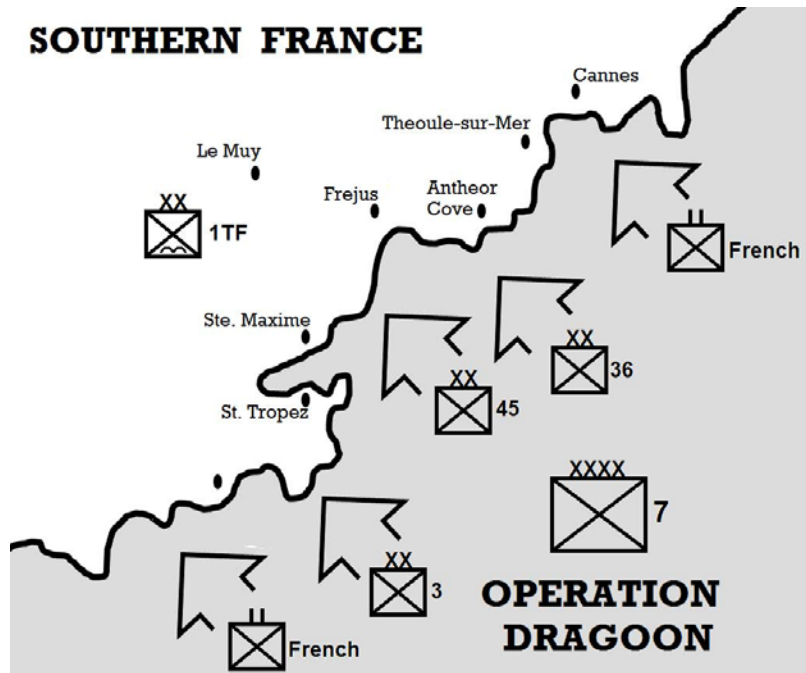
**Jack H. Taktakian**



**Aime W. Vezina**



## SOUTHERN FRANCE



The landing was made at 0800 hrs in daylight during the day of 15 August 1944, with the 158th FA Bn touching ashore in the afternoon. The 160th FA Bn and the 938th FA Bn were attached to the battalion and had the mission of reinforcing fire. There were only scattered pockets of resistance who would launch uncoordinated assaults as they withdrew northward. The Germans had placed snipers in strategic areas to cover their withdrawal and as the battalion road marched to seize its initial objective **Private Stanley F. Novak**

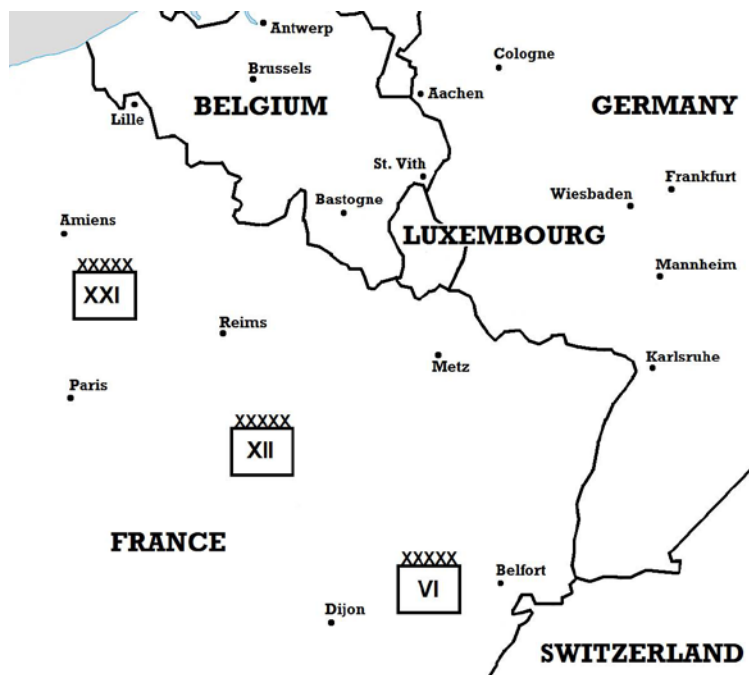
was shot in the chest and **Private James Ditonna** was shot in the abdomen. Both soldiers died from their wounds. The battle soon turned into a race, as the Allies were trying to catch and destroy the retreating Germans. In one move as the battalion jumped forward to a new location it surprised and captured 57 second-rate German reinforcements of mixed nationality who were aware of the Allied landings but were too slow in displacing from their positions.

By Sunday, 20 August 1944, the Bn CP had jumped forward to several locations as they moved in succession with the 157th RCT, finally they found themselves on the outskirts of the city of Peyrolles (UTM Grid 6155) in a defiladed position. Around 1715 hrs firing Batteries "B" and "C" started receiving long range mortar fire, causing several casualties. All firing batteries immediately swung their tubes to an azimuth of 5600m and returned fire, firing 18 ea 105-mm HE and warding off the attackers. **Technician Fourth Grade James F. Shuck** was killed during the mortar attack.

**Private First Class John Charmo** received large fragmentations to his arms, shoulders and his chest. He was treated by the battalion medic's and medevac to a field hospital and on the next day, 21 August 1944 he succumbed to the injuries he sustained. By the end of the month the battalion had moved north to a town called Amberieu En Bugey (UTM Grid 3210) a distance of approximately 465 kilometers northwest of the landing beaches that they came ashore at.

So as the month of September 1944 opened, the battalion would find themselves jumping forward as they supported the 157th RCT as well as reinforcing the fires of the 160th FA Bn, 171st FA Bn, 189th FA Bn, and the 976th FA Bn. The battalion jumped to Rossettes (UTM Grid 3023), then Bourg (UTM Grid 2634), then Cote-Brune (UTM Grid 0568), then finally crossing the Le Doubs River and setting up the Bn CP in the vicinity of Uzelle (UTM Grid 0980). The 3rd Bn 157th RCT was forward on 11 September 1944

and **Second Lieutenant Francis E. Liggett**, who was attached to them as a FO and manning the OP. The 3rd Bn 157th RCT commander; Major Merle Mitchell; and Captain Benry Huggins the Operations Officer; and the members of the Recon party were in front of the OP when they were ambushed by 20-mm machine gun fire. The party hit the ground immediately and 2LT Liggett who was sitting in a small depression in front of an abandoned rock shed responded by directing artillery fire and smoke to the front of the OP silencing the machine gun fire. As the Recon party dispersed the Germans were able to encircle them and the OP party, overwhelm them and take them captive. MAJ Mitchell and CPT Huggins of the 3rd Bn 157th RCT were killed, a radio man was wounded and 2LT Liggett was captured and taken as a POW.



By 12 September 1944, the U. S. VII Army, under the field control of the Sixth Army Group; commanded by Lieutenant General Jacob L. Devers; had advanced 400 miles into Southern France liberating Marseilles, Lyon, Toulon and now they found themselves in a town called Dijon. The left flank of the Sixth Army Group linked up with the right flank of the Twelfth Army Group whom already flanked the Twenty-first Army Group and now the allies had one linear front poised to enter the Rhineland and thus ended the Southern France Campaign.

### **WORLD WAR II : RHINELAND CAMPAIGN**

The Rhineland Campaign started 15 September 1944 and now the long awaited defeat of Nazi Germany was within grasp of the Allies and there was optimism that the war might be over by Christmas. Exposure, respiratory disease, trench foot, and infantry casualties had decreased the offensive strength of the Allies and caused a stagnant environment on the western front. This offensive would now consist of several operations along the front to break the back of the German armies. These included Operations “Market Garden”, “Veritable”, “Grenade”, “Blockbuster”, “Plunder” and “Varsity”.

The U.S. VII Army continued to grind away and now they turned east and pushed forward to the German border. The 45th Inf Div had to cross the strongly defended Moselle River, before entering into the Siegfried line. Once they crossed the Moselle River, they were in the foothills of the Vosges Mountains. The German resistance stiffened and every foot of ground was contested and the constant rains turned every path and road into quagmires. The 158th FA Bn was constantly displacing forward,

digging in, firing and then displacing forward. On 4 December 1944, while setting up firing positions at Zinswiller (UTM Grid 8935), the 3rd Bn 157th RCT; who was only 1,000 yards east of the city; met stiff resistance as they drew nearer to the enemy's home soil. The 158th FA Bn had the 693rd FA Bn and the 938th FA Bn reinforcing their fires and the exchanges of artillery fire lasted throughout the afternoon and by nightfall the enemy was forced to retreat. ***Technician Fifth Grade Arthur A. Rosenthal*** was killed in one of the artillery exchanges. Under the constant pressure from 45th Inf Div, the German strongpoint's started collapsing, and they soon breached the Maginot Line and then on 15 December 1944, they crossed into Germany where they captured the city of Bobenthal and thus ended the Rhineland Campaign.

### **WORLD WAR II : ARDENNES-ALSACE CAMPAIGN**

In order to stop the Allied advance on the western front the Germans launched a surprise counter attack in the Ardennes on 16 December 1944, now known as the "Battle of the Bulge". As units were moved across the three Army Group's Areas of Operations (AO) the 103rd Inf Div was moved and the 45th Inf Div had to fill in the void. It was on 21 December 1944, when Hitler's "Operation Nordwind" was launched and it seemed to be targeting the Saverne Gap of the Alsace region, 20 miles northwest of Strasbourg. The objectives of "Operation Nordwind" were unclear but intelligence had knowledge of troop buildups near Saarbrücken, so not many offensive operations were launched and the lull turned into a defense. On this date the 158th FA found they moving into position outside of the city of Wingen (UTM Grid 0547) and stayed there until Christmas day when they displaced back to La Verrerie (UTM Grid 0043) in order to provide adequate artillery support to the 157th RCT whom had extended defensive lines. A restriction of 3,600 rounds of "ammunition on hand" within the battalion was imposed during the month, and everybody seemed to settle-in and hold their positions as the Germans probed the lines through the first week of New Years 1945.

At 0700 hrs on 11 January 1945, the Sixth SS Mountain Division with attached elements of the 256th and 257th Volksturm Grenadier Divisions opened up on the 45th Inf Div defensive front with heavy concentrations of artillery, mortar and rocket fire. The temperature was subfreezing and the fresh German soldiers; secretly moved in from Finland and staged near Saarbrücken; attacked the front lines but were held and then repelled back by the 45th Inf Div. There were many repeated German assaults and the battles seesawed back and forth for the next several days.

By 19 January 1945, the 158th FA Bn was in the vicinity of Niederbronn (UTM Grid 9938) where the enemy had successfully infiltrated large number of troops behind the American lines. Reports started coming in of "cut communications wire" and small arms fire coming from the rear. Enemy artillery fire dumped rounds on road intersections making it difficult to get supplies and reinforcements to the forward units in the vicinity of Lichtenberg, Reipertswiller, and Picardy. The forward units of the 3rd Bn 157th RCT and elements of the 191st Tank Battalion suddenly found themselves surrounded. The 158th FA Bn responded with 2, 505 rounds of "over-lapping" artillery barrages as the trapped units maneuvered out of the trap but it was only momentary relief. The last contact was when the BN FDC received a message from one of the FOs on 21 January



1945 and it is presumed that his radio receiver batteries had died shortly after the transmission was received. Many of the forward units had been ordered to break into small groups and make individual breaks for the security of friendly lines. The 158th FA Bn reported the following casualties: **Second Lieutenants William M. Colby, Hubert M. Gilliland and Ralph H. McMahon, Staff Sergeant Fred W. Schomaker, Corporals Kenneth O. Beck and Henry E. Stoneback, Technician Fourth Grade Wayne D. Hickman, and Privates First Class Robert K. Albright, William A. Broughton, Joseph R. Roubideaux, Howard M. Zacharias and Walter J. Ziobron** as captured by the Germans and taken as Prisoners of War.

The next day the 157th RCT was pulled off the line and sent to an assembly area to reorganize and the 158th FA Bn displaced

back to Wingen and their mission was changed to DS to the 274th Infantry Regiment (Inf Rgt) thus ended the Ardennes-Alsace Campaign.

## **WORLD WAR II : CENTRAL EUROPE CAMPAIGN**

The month of January 1945 ended with winter weather of severe sub-freezing temperatures, and the western defensive lines became very static as everyone hunkered down trying to stay warm. Everyday there was sporadic fighting; mostly of patrol size; and besides harassment it kept the hypothermia from setting in. Eventually the 45th Inf Div was relieved by the 42nd Inf Div and sent to a rear area rest camp where they would prepare for the next and last campaign of their deployment. On 18 February 1945 the 158th FA Bn was sent to the Chatel Sur Noselle, Moriville, and Fortieux (France) triangle for rest, recuperation, and rehabilitation. The balance of the month was spent on a rigorous training program and restoring their equipment to its usual high standards of excellence, required in preparation for the siege of Germany.

On 11 March 1945, a “quartering party”, consisting of the Bn XO and all the battery commanders departed for reconnaissance in the vicinity of Weisviller (UTM Grid 5853), and on 15 March 1945 they re-entered action. In order to gain entry into the heartland of Germany the Siegfried Line had to be breached and within 48 hours the 157th RCT was skirmishing in the antitank dragon’s teeth. The Germans responded with furious counterattacks and the 158th FA Bn blinded them with immense smoke and HE artillery barrages as the 157th RCT pushed them back to their secondary positions. This time the 158th FA Bn hit them with continuous TOTs that consisted of the DS, R and all the GSR

fires, decimating the enemy. On 21 March 1945 the imminent break through occurred, the “Festungen Deutschland” (impregnable fortifications of Germany) had been breached and now it turned into an unrelentless pursuit.



The 158th FA Bn was jumping forward from Alsenborn, to Osthofen, ending up in Rohrheim (Germany) on 26 March 1945; preparing to cross the mighty Rhine River, by shuttling the howitzers across on DUKWs. The pursuit turned into a race to maintain contact with the enemy and by 29 March 1945 the 158th FA Bn was shelling the city of Aschaffenburg. The fighting here was house to house and street to street that required a lot of indirect fire support and the rapid advance was draining the ammunition supply stocks but the battalion trains were running 24 hour logistical runs keeping the firing batteries with ample stocks of ammo. For the next couple of days the 158th FA Bn rained down intermittent fires, they relentlessly shot TOTs on 22 strong points in the city, and by 3 April 1945, Aschaffenburg surrendered to the Allies.

The disorganized Germans fled the city and the pursuit started again, and was one of continuous movement was kept up without a halt advancing 15 to 40 kilometers a day, and the 157th RCT had the mission of blocking roads and protecting the left flank of the division which was moving rapidly against scattered pockets of resistance and road blocks. On 10 April 1945, ***First Lieutenant Harold Bernstein***; the Battalion Ammunition Officer on his ammo logistics resupply run; was killed by sniper fire. Although there was none or light resistance from the Germans it was not uncommon to be suddenly stopped by surrendering enemy soldiers who were bypassed by the pursuit

and desiring to be processed as POWs. The 45th Inf Div temporarily halted the pursuit and filled in the gaps and made adjustments and then renewed the assault on the fleeing Germans.

As the allies were maneuvering south and further into Germany, some of the forward elements of the 45th Inf Div were strafed by Germany's newest weapon, the Luftwaffe's "Messerschmitt 282 jet fighter", but it didn't stop or slow them down. On 13 April 1945, Nuremberg was surrounded by the 3rd Inf Div in the north, the 42nd Inf Div in the west and the 45th Inf Div from the east and as they assaulted the city the 158th FA Bn helped by crushing the Nazi 88-mm artillery fire by observed counter fire missions. Nuremberg surrendered on 20 April 1945.

It was becoming very obvious that the enemy was defeated and the push southward towards Munich continued. On 29 April 1945 the 157th RCT with a FO party from the 158th FA Bn encountered 49 boxcars filled with human corpses outside of a camp called "Dachau". Horror awaited them as they approached inside the camp to find more bodies, barracks, gas chambers and crematoriums. An element was left to liberate and secure the "concentration camp" as the 45th Inf Div pushed to Munich and attacked it the next day. On 30 April 1945, ***Private Leonard P. Nelson*** was killed by a sniper as the assault on Munich was being carried out. Munich fell in one day, and on 7 May 1945 the Germans surrender to the Allies and thus ended the Central Europe Campaign.

### **"THE FORGOTTEN WAR"**



The Korean War often referred to as "the Forgotten War" because of its lack of attention it received in comparison to World War I and II as well as the VietNam War; began on 25 June 1950. The adversaries; the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPPK) led by Kim Il Sung with belligerents of China and the Soviet Union and the Republic of Korea (ROK) led by Syngman Rhee with belligerents of the United Nations and the United States; signed an armistice on July 27, 1953. When the invasion began, Far East Command commanding general; General Douglas L. McArthur; now

superimposed with General of the Army of the United Nations Command and Lieutenant General Walton H. Walker the U.S. VIII Army commander were the field commanders but in April 1951, General McArthur was relieved of his command for publicly questioning presidential policy, and he was replaced by General Matthew B. Ridgway and General Ridgway handed the U.S. VIII Army over to Lieutenant General James A. Van Fleet. The 158th FA Bn entered mid-conflict and for this reason I will



**Capers R. Wactor**



**Clement C. Ward**



**Charles L. Warner**



**William L. Willsey**



**Hartwell E. Wolgram**



**Howard M. Zacharias**

briefly discuss the ebb and flow of the battle lines up to the point of the battalions RIP/Transfer of Authority (TOA) onto the battleground.

The Korean People's Army (KPA) crossed the border and drove into South Korea and the United Nations (UN) Security Council unanimously condemned the invasion with UN Resolution 83 recommending member states provide military assistance to the Republic of Korea. After the first two months of war, the KPA had forced the ROK and UN forces behind a defensive line known as the Pusan Perimeter. In September 1950, a risky amphibious UN counter offensive was launched at Inchon, cutting off KPA troops and supply lines. The UN forces now pushed the KPA back up to the Yalu River; the border with China; but on 19 October 1950, Chinese forces of the People's Volunteer Army (PVA) crossed the Yalu and entered the war and the UN forces retreated from North Korea and through more fighting eventually ended back up on the 38th parallel in a stalemate, on the original border.

## **KOREAN WAR II KILLED IN ACTION**

| <b><u>Date</u></b>   | <b><u>Rank</u></b> | <b><u>Name</u></b>        | <b><u>Serial No.#</u></b> |
|----------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| 16 June 1952 .....   | 1 Lt. ....         | Charles L. Warner .....   | O-064284                  |
| 2 July 1952 .....    | Sgt. ....          | Richard L. Mansfield..... | 56085673                  |
| 3 August 1952.....   | Pfc. ....          | Jack H. Taktakian .....   | 55075867                  |
| 25 August 1952 ..... | Pfc. ....          | Martin S. Eskin.....      | 55185922                  |
| 26 March 1953 .....  | 1Lt. ....          | Earle S. Downes.....      | O-1688327                 |

## **KOREAN WAR : SECOND KOREAN WINTER**

On 1 September 1950 the 158th FA Bn is mobilized and sent to Camp Polk, Louisiana under Executive Order 10145 and assigned to the 45th Inf Div with Lieutenant Colonel Charles W. Cleverdon commanding and assigned as a Direct Support (DS) artillery unit to the 179th Infantry Combat Team (ICT) with the mission of providing close support artillery fire. After the post mobilization training is completed at Camp Polk the 158th FA Bn boards the USNS General CG Morton at New Orleans and on 30 March 1951 they set sail for Hokkaido, Japan arriving there on 1 May 1951, then billeted at Camp Crawford where they would train and validate for combat operations on the Korean Peninsula.

On 22 December 1951 they conducted a RIP/TOA with the 61st FA Bn of the 1st Cavalry Division (Cav Div) in the vicinity of Chorwon, North Korea (UTM Grid 319267). In this AO is where the battalion would a majority of their time while deployed in the conflict. The battalion would shoot and reinforce fire plans into the centrally located complex known as the "Iron Triangle"; marked out by the towns of Pyongyang, Chorwon and Kumhwa. The AO lay twenty miles above the 38th parallel in the diagonal corridor dividing the Taebaek Mountains and containing the road and rail links to the port of Wonsan in the northeast and Seoul in the southwest.

On 17 December 1951 the Second Korean Winter Campaign had began and the battalion moved into DS of the 179th ICT and was positioned near Defensive Line Wyoming where they were immediately providing DS, GS, and GSR continuous artillery support for the orderly withdrawal of UN forces in prepositioned phases. Throughout the winter they shoot Fire Plans "Recoil", "Plan Dallas", "Plan Chicago", "Snatch", and "Plan Swap" and as friendly units displaced the PVA and KVA units attacked, and the battalion expended a total of 59,350 rounds in these defensive fires. At the end of April 1952 a "Line Consolidation" is registered and adjusted and shot on Defensive Lines Jamestown and Millet. On 30 April 1952 the 158th FA Bn displaces to (UTM Grid 303293) and thus ends the Second Korean Winter Campaign.

## **KOREAN WAR : KOREA, SUMMER-FALL 1952**

The new campaign starts on 1 May 1952 with the Field Artillery Battery of the 20th Battalion Combat Team, Philippine Expeditionary Forces to Korea (20th BCT PEFK FAB) attached to the 158th FA Bn, which extends its frontal responsibility another 7200



yards. Although the tactics were at a stalemate the Main Line of Resistance (MLR) was attacked or probed constantly and in May and June 1952, the battalion shot a staggering 50, 262 rounds in their sectors of fire. On 15 June 1952 ***First Lieutenant Charles L. Warner***, a FO on patrol with 179th ICT; was wounded when the patrol was caught in a 40 round artillery barrage, he was wounded and placed on a stretcher. He continued to call and direct artillery fire to the source of the artillery barrage until a mortar round landed directly on him, killing him.



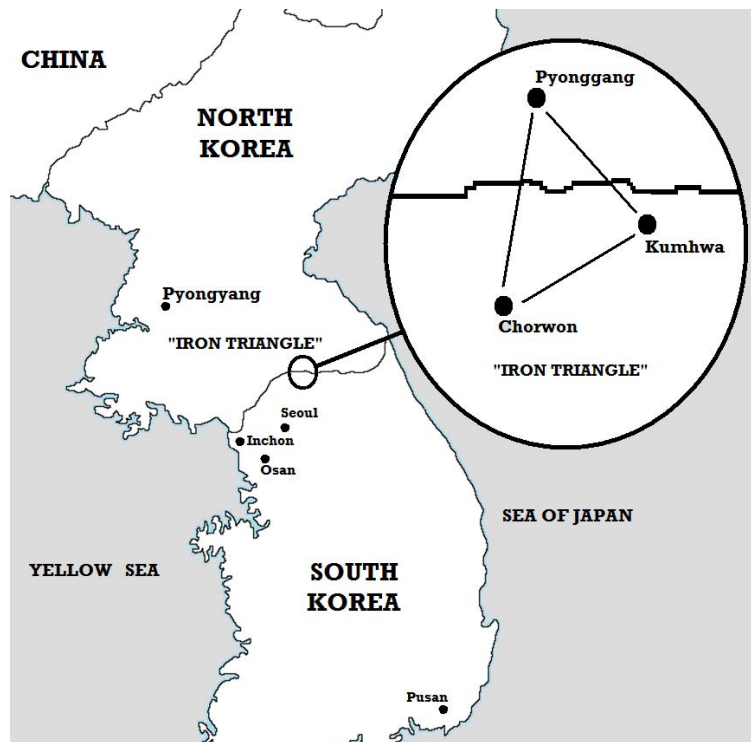
For his actions this day 1LT Warner was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, GENERAL ORDERS: Eighth U.S. Army, Korea: General Orders No. 597 (4 October 1952). CITATION: The President of the United States of America, under the provisions of the Act of Congress approved July 9, 1918, takes pride in presenting the Distinguished Service Cross (Posthumously) to Second Lieutenant (Field Artillery) Charles L. Warner (OSN: O-064284), United States Army, for extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations against an armed enemy of the United Nations while serving with serving as a Forward Observer of the 158th Field Artillery Battalion, 45th Infantry Division. Second Lieutenant Warner distinguished himself by extraordinary heroism in action against enemy aggressor forces in the vicinity of Tummyong-dong, Korea, late on the night of 15 June 1952. On that date, Lieutenant Warner was with an infantry company occupying a strategically located hill. Suddenly the company was subjected to an intense artillery barrage followed by a fanatical attack, by a numerically superior

hostile force. Despite the fact that he had been wounded early in the action, Lieutenant Warner remained at his post, adjusting artillery fire which inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy. With wave after wave of screaming enemy troops assaulting the friendly position, Lieutenant Warner's radio was destroyed by enemy fire, but he continued to call in fire directions by using the company's radio and relaying his adjustments through the infantry battalion. Wounded again, he still refused evacuation, but remained throughout the night in a shallow trench, relaying every request for supporting fire. Early the following morning it was discovered that he had received fourteen wounds, and he was ordered to a rear area for medical treatment. As he was being placed on a stretcher for evacuation, a direct hit by an enemy mortar killed him instantly.

On 26 June 1952 there was little opposition from the PVA except when they were intercepted by OP 10 on top of Hill 255 (Porkchop Hill) and by OP 11 on top of Hill 266 (Old Baldy). The contest for these strategically important peaks of observation would result in five ownership battles and 307 U.S. forces KIA and the 158th FA Bn decimating the top of Hill 266 with 105-mm HE rounds in such quantities that they received the moniker of the "Men Who Made 'Old Baldy' Bald!"

The U.S. military was confronted with a new and unusual disease known as Epidemic Hemorrhagic Fever (EHF), and it was characterized by the acute onset of headache and

nausea that progressed to blood leakage, neurological impairment, and kidney failure. On 2 July 1952 **Sergeant Richard L. Mansfield**, of Battery “A”, reported to sick call and told the medics that he woke up with severe headaches whereupon he was rushed to the 8228th Mobile Army Surgical Hospital (MASH) where he was diagnosed with EHF and admitted and later he died from the fever. It was ultimately determined that rodent-borne mites were the vector of EHF; specifically the striped field mouse; found throughout the battlefield due to rapid tactical deforestation.



On 3 August 1952 the battalion was in DS of the 21st Inf Reg (ROK) of the 8th ROK Div conducting prearranged fires in one area and simultaneously covering a friendly patrol action in another area with on-call fire. **Private First Class Jack H. Taktakian**; a “wireman” of Headquarters Battery and 4 Korean Augmentation to the United States Army (KATUSA) were running “commo wire” to a friendly outpost when one of the party members initiated a unrecorded land mine which mortally wounded PFC Taktakian and severely wounded the 4 KATUSAs. The same day the 158th FA Bn’s new mission was changed to DS of the 279th

ICT and shortly after this the KPA’s artillery harassed the battalion until the raining weather started, which didn’t stop for 4 weeks. The heavy rains hampered all operations and brought everything to a crawl. The flood bound bivouac area turned into a quagmire and the troops hunkered down in their shelters.

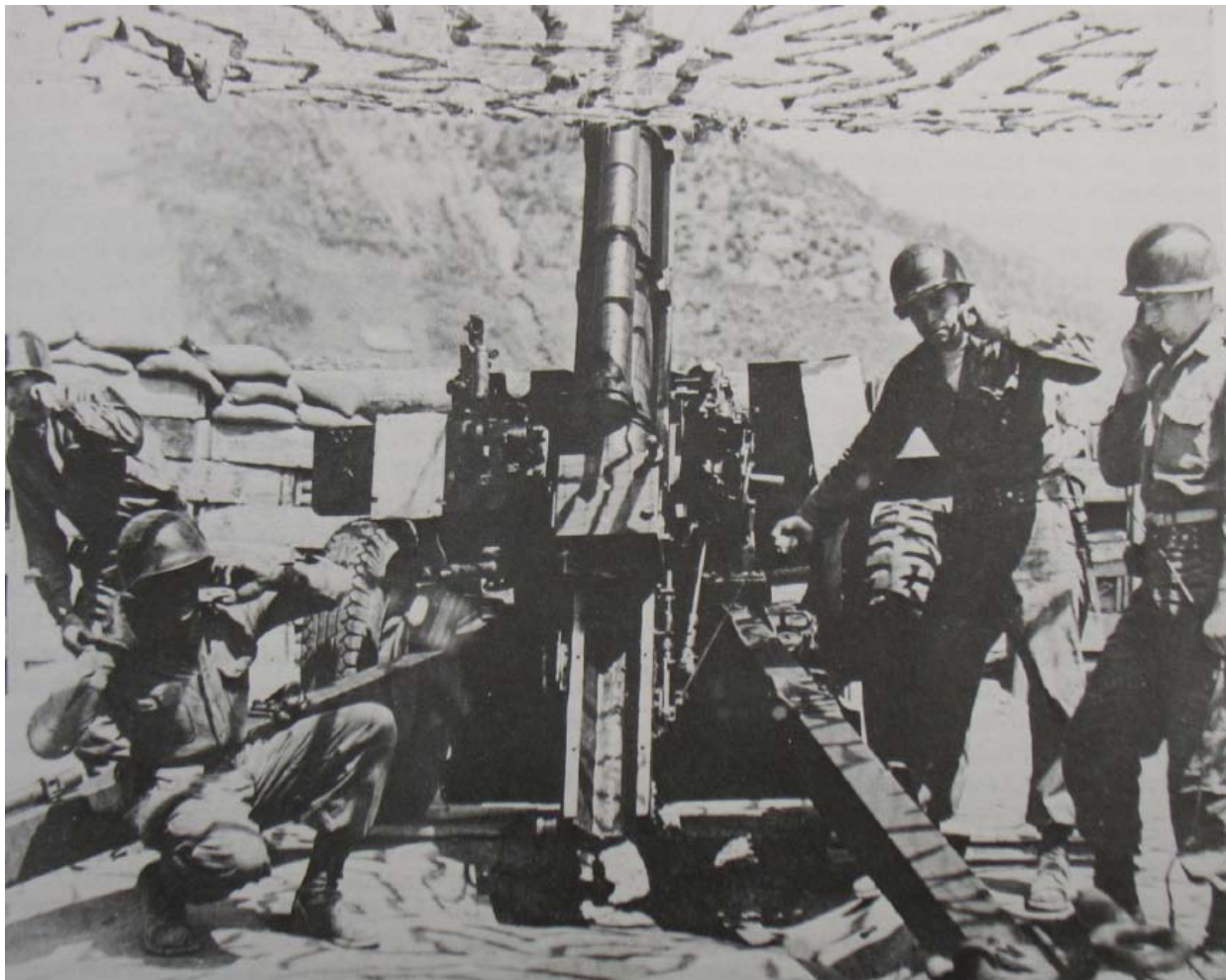
On 25 August 1952 an “accidental discharge” from a Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR) mortally wounded **Private First Class Martin S. Eskin** of Battery “C”. He was treated by medics in the battalion area and medevac to the MASH, however he succumbed to the wound and died. Once the rains stopped the 158th FA Bn jumps to a new position (UTM Grid 301489) still in DS of the 279th ICT and the battalion continues to provide robust fires to them, and as 30 November 1952 approaches the battalion has now expended 112,533 rounds in this campaign and thus ends the Korea, Summer-Fall 1952 Campaign.

### **KOREAN WAR : THIRD KOREAN WINTER**

1 December 1952 the battalion reverted back to DS of the 179th ICT and now the enemy assumed a posture of active defense where they were willing to expand large amounts of

ammunition only when profitable targets were observed. In the early morning hours of 25 December 1952, the PVA attacked the MLR in the vicinity of Hill 812 (UTM Grid 279466) and this skirmish lasted a few days. These types of active defense actions continued throughout the winter, with patrols and raids mixed in.

The bitter fighting never ceased as the frigid cold winter wore on, but the fire support missions change regularly with the tactical situations. In February 1953 the 158th FA Bn was DSR the fires of the infamous "Triple Nickels"; the 555th FA Bn; and then in DS of the 19th and 20th BCT PEFK FABs firing a total of 90,043 rounds in support of all the winter operations and the fifth and last battle for Hill 255; "Old Baldy".



**Battery "B" 158th Field Artillery shooting high angle fire into the Chorwon Valley during the Korean War.**

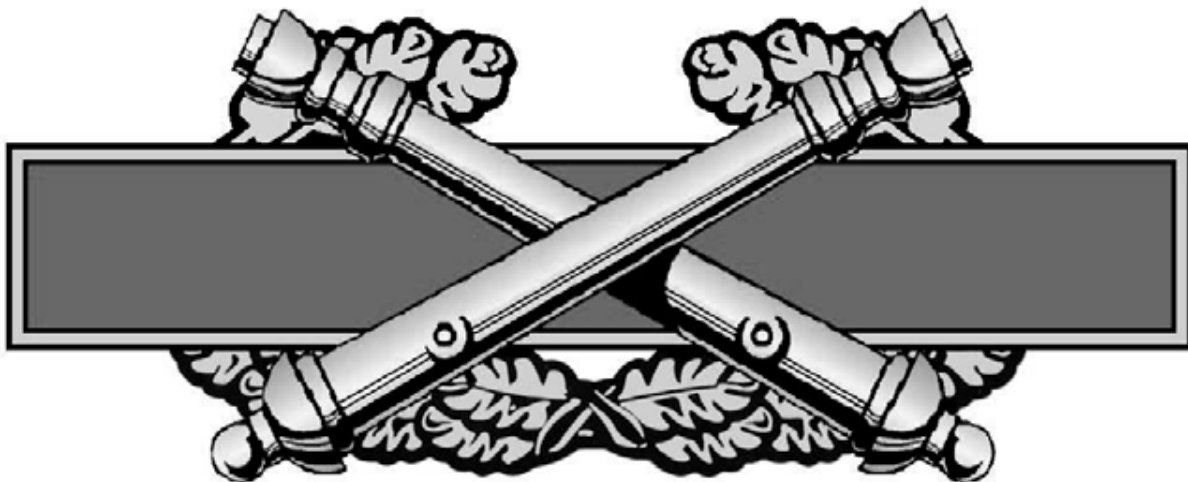
On 26 March 1953, ***First Lieutenant Earle S. Downes***; a Liaison Pilot; was returning from a routine flight from Hill 266 when his aircraft was involved in a collision, and he was killed instantly. He was immediately evacuated to Continent U.S.

(CONUS) for internment. Two significant fire plans were developed in the latter half of the winter and these were “Operation Plan Heartbreak” and “Operation Skyline”. Both fire plans were counter attack plans in the event of any enemy penetration along Heartbreak Ridge. But suddenly emphasis was placed on capturing a POW and for a few weeks, it was uppermost in everybody’s effort but in the frozen mountains of Korea it was a hopeless after thought and thus ended the Third Korean Winter Campaign.

### **KOREAN WAR : KOREA, SUMMER 1953**

1 May 1953 the battalion remains organic to the 45th Div Arty and still in DS of the 179th ICT and located at (UTM Grid 11003590), Battery “A” at (UTM Grid 11103589), Battery “B” at (UTM Grid 12083514), Battery “C” at (UTM Grid 11043573), and Service Battery at (UTM Grid 15502670). On 18 thru 25 May 1953, an estimated reinforced battalion of KPA attacked outposts on eighteen occasions requiring the battalion to shoot their DS fire plans to suppress these raids and as the month of May 1953 ended the 158th FA Bn had fired a total of 42,539 rounds. The month of June 1953 was highlighted with the attacks on Sandbag Castle and constant probing on the MLR requiring the battalion to shoot a total of 44,219 rounds in support of operations.

On 27 July 1953 the cease-fire agreement was signed which ceased combat operations and defined the Military Demarcation Line (MDL) or cease-fire line as it existed on the date of signing and pulled back the respective forces 1.2 miles along each side of the line creating a buffer zone commonly known as the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). The 45th Inf Div remained in Korea until it sailed for the United States in February and March 1954. They arrived at Staten Island, New York and were moved to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey for out processing, where most were given their final furloughs and discharged and thus ended the Korea Summer 1953 Campaign.



**158th**  
  
**Field Artillery**

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