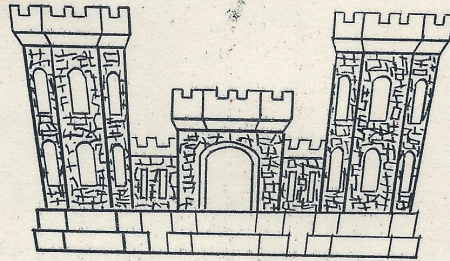


97TH ENGINEER BATTALION (CONS.)

1933



1957

24TH ANNIVERSARY



ASIATIC - PACIFIC
NEW GUINEA

ALASKA

PHILIPPINES

NEW GUINEA

FRANCE

HEADQUARTERS
97TH ENGINEER BATTALION (CONSTRUCTION)
APO 122 **US ARMY**

SUBJECT: Anniversary Greeting¹

1 October 1957

TO: All Personnel

1. Today, we are celebrating the 24th Anniversary of the activation of the 97th Engineer Battalion (Construction). The fine efforts of the Battalion are well known throughout the Communications Zone. We have accomplished many projects in a superior manner and met many deadlines. You are marking the birthday of a unit, which has carried a proud history to France, and is now enjoying the same fine reputation it held before.

2. During this Anniversary we must keep in mind that, even though our mission is to provide construction support to the Advance Section, we have another obligation to our country. We must conduct ourselves in the most proper manner, for we are ambassadors of our country. This is not a mission for a few; it includes officers, enlisted men and dependents. We must never relax from the daily role of maintaining cordial relations with the citizens of France. Remember that ours is a dual mission of construction and ambassadorial duties.

3. With these thoughts in mind I wish to extend to you my personal thanks for a job well done, and my best wishes for a most successful future.

s/Chester D. Brewer
CHESTER D. BREWER
Lt Colonel, CE
Commanding

Tp: Ver Mil 7398

¹ Transcribed and prepared by MAJ (Ret.) Larry L. Castleman for the history files, 97th EBC, from original documents provided by Steve Kocsis, Hqs Company, 97th EBC, Verdun, 1956-58.

HISTORY HIGHLIGHTS

The birthday of this proud organization was 1 October 1933. On this day the 97th was officially “born” as the 56th Engineer Battalion (Separate) on the inactive list of the Regular Army. It was redesigned as the 97th Engineer Battalion (Separate) on 1 January 1938, and was initially activated for full military service at Camp Blanding, Florida on 1 June 1941. On 22 February 1942, the battalion was redesigned the 97th Engineer Regiment (General Service) and was again redesigned as the 97th Engineer General Service Regiment on 1 August 1942.

During the wartime period, the 97th Engineer Regiment reported to Ft. Lewis, Washington, where it was organized and staged for a further move to Valdes, Alaska. At this station the Regiment constructed a road from Slana, Alaska, to Fairbanks, Alaska. This entailed round-the-clock operation during the summer with practically 24 hours of daylight and the overcoming of many obstacles. All types of bridges were necessary and thousands of tons of cut-and-fill, plus the additional problem of filling apparently bottomless bags of Alaskan tundra confronted them.

Next followed an assignment to a world-famous project – the Alcan Highway. The Regiment was assigned the northern end of the project, approximately five hundred miles of road, from Fairbanks, Alaska, to Whitehorse, Canada. Much of this territory had never been visited by man, much less surveyed or even explored. This project was finished, ahead of schedule, late in 1943. The Regiment returned to the States in the spring of 1943 via Valdes.

Upon return to the States, the Regiment spent about four months in training and then embarked through San Francisco for service in the Southwest Pacific, specifically at Finchaven, New Guinea, where the headquarters remained until the close of World War II. During this campaign, the 97th earned the Meritorious Unit Streamer for the American-Pacific Theatre.

After the war, the 97th moved to the Philippine Islands where it was reorganized on 30 June 1946 and engaged in the usual post-war activities. On 15 March 1948, the Battalion was inactivated while still in the Philippines.

On 11 September 1950, the Battalion was redesigned as the 97th Engineer Construction Battalion and was reactivate at Ft. Leonard Wood, Missouri, on 1 October 1950. During the period October 1950 – November 1951 the Battalion underwent the normal basic training with the ever-attendant lack of equipment, training aids, and adequate training sites. However, all these obstacles were overcome by the outstanding initiative, leadership and drive of the unit officers and NCOs and the willingness of the trainees to achieve their goal.

Early in November 1951, the Battalion was alerted, and embarked through New Orleans for Bremerhaven, Germany. Upon arrival in France, the Battalion was assigned to duty with

ADSEC, COM Z, with headquarters in Toul. During the period November 1951 to date, the Battalion has been redesigned several times and at present is identified as the 97th Engineer Battalion (Construction). During this period, there have been several unit moves, with Headquarters and Co "C" at Verdun, France, Co "B" at Toul, France, and Co "A" at Vassincourt, France.

Since its arrival in France, the role of the Battalion has been that of a functioning engineer construction battalion. Among its many tasks have been: the construction and maintenance of hundreds of miles of roads in Northeastern France; erection of numerous quonset huts and filloids in installations within ADSEC; operation of such continuing projects as rock quarries and water points; construction of buildings, motor pools, rail road sidings, and other facilities; widespread erection of recreational facilities; and accomplishment of many emergency missions, such as the pumping of a quarry to recover parts of a B-24 and the bodies of five airmen lost during World War II, and the recovery of the body of an ADSEC soldier who had fallen to his death in a shaft at Fort Tavannes, France. Some of the projects, through, have not gone without special recognition. The Battalion, for example, was awarded a Certificate of Achievement by the Commanding General, US Army COMZ ADSEC, for construction of the AYA Center in the Beaux Housing Area, Verdun.

The present Battalion Commander, Lieutenant Colonel Chester D. Brewer, Corps of Engineers, assumed command of the Battalion on **20 November 1956**.

The citation on the USA EUROPE, COMMUNICATIONS ZONE, ADVANCE SECTION, Certificate of Achievement, which was awarded to the officers and men of this battalion by Brigadier General William R. Woodward, on 10 April 1957, is as follows:

In recognition of faithful and efficient performance of duty this CERTIFICATE OF ACHIEVEMENT IS awarded to THE OFFICERS AND ENLISTED MEN OF THE 97TH ENGINEER BATTALION (CONSTRUCTION) FOR OUTSTANDING SERVICE TO THE UNITED STATES ARMY IN RECOGNITION OF THEIR OUTSTANDING ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF AN AMERICAN YOUTH ACTIVITY RECREATION CENTER AT BEVAUX, VERDUN, FRANCE. IN THE AMAZINGLY SHORT PERIOD OF THIRTY-FIVE DAYS THE MEN OF THE BATTALION DID, THROUGH THEIR SUPERIOR ENGINEERING ABILITY, INGENUITY AND LONG HOURS OF ARDUOUS LABOR, CONVERT A DILAPIDATED WAREHOUSE INTO AN URGENTLY NEEDED AND HIGHLY DESIRABLE RECREATIONAL FACILITY. ALTHOUGH PREVIOUSLY ASSIGNED A FULL TIME PRIMARY CONSTRUCTION MISSION, THE 97TH ENGINEER BATTALION (CONSTRUCTION) ABSORBED THIS ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENT BY INSTITUTING A TWENTY-FOUR HOUR PER DAY WORKING SCHEDULE AND WITH THE INDOMITABLE SPIRIT OF THE ENGINEER CORPS ACCOMPLISHED BOTH MISSIONS IN A SUPERIOR MANNER. THE EXCEPTIONAL DEVOTION TO DUTY AND ESPRIT DE CORPS DEMONSTRATED BY THE OFFICERS AND MEN OF THE BATTALION REFLECTS GREAT CREDIT UPON THEMSELVES AND IS IN KEEPING WITH THE HIGHEST TRADITIONS OF THE MILITARY SERVICE.

BATTALION HEADQUARTERS STAFF

LT. COL. CHESTER D. BREWER – BATTALION COMMANDER

CAPT. RICHARD O. WESTPHAL - BATTALION EXECUTIVE OFFICER

CAPT. FRANK E. RIEGEL

LT. WILLIAM H. HUNT, JR.

LT. ROBERT L. SPEARS

LT. DAVID S. HANKE

LT. RUFUS B. SPRABERRY JR.

CWO JAY M. JONES

MSGT LEROY D. WERTZ

MSGT JAMES O. LEE

SFC JASPER G. MEAD

SFC STEVE DUBNANSKY

HEADQUARTERS AND SERVICE COMPANY

COMPANY A

CAPT. JAMES E. DUNDAS – CO

CAPT. FRANK M. O'QUINN - CO

LT. GARY R. HEFFNER

LT. THOMAS W. MONTAGUE

CWO CHARLES J. DEAN

LT. JAMES J. LACEY

MSGT ROBERT W. CALDWELL

LT. HENRY A. BERTI

MSGT NORMAN MIXON

COMPANY B

COMPANY C

CAPT. FREDERICK W. SHERMAN JR. – CO

LT. WETSEL M. BLANKENSHIP - CO

LT. DAVID F. FLETCHER

LT. RAYBURN L. WILLIAMSON

LT. FREDERICK E. MEYER

MSGT ROBERT R. SIEGEL

MSGT WILLIAM J. HEALY JR

LUNCHEON MENU

BAKED HAM

ROAST BEEF

POTATOE SALAD

MACARONI SALAD

SLICED CHEESE

RELISH TRAY

LAYER CAKE

COFFEE

CHOCOLATE

BREAD

BUTTER

