



97

1941 BLANDING
1942 ALASKA
1944 NEW GUINEA
1946 PHILIPPINES
1948 LEONARD WOOD
1951 FRANCE
1967 GERMANY
1968 FORT RILEY

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JOURNEY ENDED - JOURNEY BEGAN

The journey to Ft Riley began on 20 Dec 1967 with the official public release that the 97th Engr Bn would participate in Operation REFORGER. It was a long and arduous journey. But the nearly 5,000 miles traveled were the shortest stretches of the movement. The trip from a 40% deadline rate with worn-down and obsolete equipment to a probable REFORGER high prep rate of 93% acceptance was a very long stretch indeed. This trip took us through three 7th Army Support Command CMMI's. The first CMMI came while we were still trying to finish several projects.

While maintenance of our equipment was the longest trip, there were other, sticky courses with tedious barriers to be overcome. Proper preservation of sets, kits and outfits required careful management. The package of Mission Essential Equipment for shipment demanded forethought. But all of the planning and hard work were rewarded during the month of the smooth repositioning's in REFORGER. The 5th Maintenance Bn, commanded by MAJ Henry, accepted 93% of our equipment in a cooperative and professional manner.

Our higher HQs, the 24th Engr Gp (Const) bid us official farewell on 3 Jul 1968 with a parade and reception in Kaiserslautern. Group Cmdr, COL Glenn E. Ingwersen acknowledged our performance on such projects as the Pruem Mess Hall, the roadways at Zweibrucken, and the Open-Storage facilities in Pirmasens, and then came D-Day. On 15 Jul 1968, the troops were awakened at 0400 hrs. For the first time since anyone can remember everyone was up on the first call. The happiest and final stretch of the journey was about to begin. We journeyed by bus to the Frankfurt Rhein-Mein International Airport. From there the battalion was flown at an altitude of 30,000 feet to Forbes Air Force Base, Topeka, KS. For some, it was a 10 hr non-stop flight. For others there were stops at McGuire AFB in NJ.

Our new Group Commander, COL Frank A La Boon was at Forbes AFB along with his wife to greet us. At the end of our bus journey to Ft Riley, a band

sounded a spirit-raising welcome in front of the King Field House. As we passed through the gym doors to begin in processing, a journey ended and a journey began. Those who achieved it will not soon forget the journey ended. The new journey to a respected and meaningful position in Ft Riley. Life offers a new challenge but challenge is the spice of life. There is little doubt that those who met the challenge in Europe blended with the 300 new members of the Bn will prove once again that "No Task Too Great."

[DID NOT TYPE 'NICE TO KNOW,' AS NO 97TH HISTORICAL VALUE.]

[DID NOT TYPE 'VIOLENCE OR A VOTE,' AS NO 97TH HISTORICAL VALUE.]

BUSY WORKERS

By 1LT Marion G Workman

The 2nd Const Platoon of Co D, 97th Engr Bn is presently engaged in the razing of building #1786 on Camp Funston. The purpose of this project is to supply material for the renovation of the existing buildings and the construction of three new buildings at the Combat-in-Towns at Range #29. Due to the condition of the lumber and the care being taken by the troops, the dismantling of the building is behind its estimated completion date. Presently the roof is off and the sides are almost stripped. The next step will be to rip up the floors. As the floor is coming up, the 20 ft, 2" x 4" studs will be taken down. The climax of this project will be the destruction of the chimney.

24TH ENGR GP BIDS ADIEU

Kaiserslautern, Germany – On 3 Jul 1968, the 24th Engr Gp bid a formal adieu to its "NO TASK TOO GREAT" construction battalion. The ceremonies, which were held in Kaiserslautern, Germany began with a review by members of the 97th Engr Bn of their sister units in the Gp and terminated with social activities at the NCO Club for the NCO's and the Officers Club for the officers of the Bn. During the course of the review, the 97th Engr Bn was presented a

Dept of the Army Certificate of Achievement for our efforts during the period 27 Feb 67 to 15 Jul 68. The certificate cited the Bn for it's many construction projects and specifically mentioned the Pruem Mess Hall, the conversion of the old warehouse at Hoehmuelback, and a refrigeration storage shed at the Bn's home station in Pirmasens, among others. Also, a memento of the Gp and its subordinate Bn's was presented by COL Glenn E Ingwersen, CO of the 24th Engr Gp. The departure gift bears the Groups numerical designation below which is displayed the crests of all three Bn's. The center piece is held in place by two Engr turrets and set on their own pedestal on either side of the turrets are two scale model D-8 "Cats." This memento was designed and built in the 3rd Shop of the 293rd Engr Bn for the Gp and is presently on display in the Bn HQ. The Bn was also presented a three star plaque for the consolidated mess hall. Following the trooping of the line by LTC Albert A Dupont, escorted by COL Ingwersen, the officers and NCO's were guests at receptions held in recognition of our departure at the respective clubs and hosted by our sister battalions.

CONSTRUCTOR

The Constructor is an authorized Army Newspaper published monthly by HQ, 97th Engr Bn, Ft Riley, KS 66442, under the staff supervision of the Information Officer. Contributions from readers are solicited but publication depends upon the discretion of the editor. Views and opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of the Dept of the Army. Commanding Officer: LTC Albert A Dupont Information Officer: 1LT Gary S Burgin Editor: SP5 Donald Fullman Assistant Editor: 1LT John H Lacey Const Photographer: SP5 Donald Fullman & SP4 Harold Franklin Artists: 1LT David H Jernigan & SGT Donn R Tolls Staff: 1LT David H Jernigan, SGT Donn R Tolls, 1LT Gary S Burgin, SP4 Ronald Scher, 1LT Barry N Clayton, 1LT Edmund R McCarthy, 1LT John L Brown, 1LT George Serencko, CWO Daniel Fisher, SGT Dan Reichert & SP4 Jesse Anderson

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THE 97'S HOLE

The Bravo Co Engr's have proven again that there is "No Task Too Great." What was the task required? Nothing too complicated, just build a practice putting green, and make repairs and improvements on the Ft Riley Officer's Club Golf Course.

Nothing was too complicated until the company requested a front-end loader to start excavation of the green. The 97th Engr's had no loaders and Ft Riley was short the much needed piece of equipment. B Co was finally able to scrounge a loader for a few days, just long enough to create an unsightly mud hole. Meanwhile, the men were busy lowering water faucets, installing new water lines and repairing tees on the course.

A front loader was borrowed again and construction of the putting green progressed. There should have been no more serious problems to interfere with construction, however, further investigation into golf green construction indicated that the quality of materials used had to meet the highest standards. This caused a slight problem to the NCOIC and Project Officer in selecting materials required. Continuous analysis and inspection of materials was necessary to maintain the standard of excellence typical of Co B construction.

As time and effort went on, the green started taking shape. Peat Moss, Sandy Loam, Fertilizer (4 different types) and sand were tilled for final preparation before seeding. "Blue Top" was raked and rolled eight times before it was ready to be seeded. One small, 15 pounds, \$115.00 sack of special "Bent Grass" was sown over the prepared soil, engineer tape was placed around the area, and B Co men crossed their fingers. Five days later, Co B actually had a "green" putting green. The men are now "negotiating" to see who will get to mow B Co's 97th Hole.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY AGAIN

On 28 Sep, the 97th Engr Bn (Const) will celebrate its 35th Anniversary. The Birthday Party will begin at 0800 hrs with a parade at Patty-Flint Field. There will be competitive events with prizes for the winning companies. Eight events are planned including a pie-eating contest, a chariot race and an egg-throwing contest. Engineer construction equipment will be on display and plenty of good food and drink will be available. Entertainment will be available for the kids, such as tank rides and movies. An orderly room, mess hall and barracks building will be open to the public.

The battalion originally appeared on the rolls of the Regular Army on 1 Oct 1933 as the 56th Engr Bn (Separate). Over four years later, on 1 Jan 1938, the unit was redesigned as the 97th Engr Bn (Separate) and it has retained this numerical designation ever since.

The battalion was first activated for full military service at Camp Blanding, FL on 1 Jun 1941 as the nation was preparing for the war, which was soon to include the United States. Two designations occurred within 13 months: on 22 Feb 1942 the unit was reorganized as the 97th Engr Regiment (General Service) and on 1 Aug 1942 the official designation became the 97th Engr General Service Regiment.

At this time the regiment had been in Alaska a few months and was beginning to construct the Alaskan portion of the world famous Alcan Highway. From this tough but successful mission, the unit redeployed to New Guinea for the duration of WWII. For these operations in the American Pacific Theater during the war the regiment earned the Meritorious Unit Streamer.

After the war, the unit was reorganized as the 97th Engr General Service Bn in the Philippine Islands where on 15 Mar 1948 the unit was deactivated.

With the outbreak of a new war in Korea just two years later, the newly designated 97th Engr Const Bn was activated at Ft Leonard Wood, MO on 1 Oct 1950. Within a year the battalion was notified for overseas shipment and on 23 Nov 1951 arrived in Europe.

While serving in France the Bn had Headquarters at Toul and Verdun, under first the European Command, Army Engr and then the Advance Section of the Communication Zone (ADSEC), U.S. Army Europe (USAREUR). Activities of the 97th primarily supported the mission of the Theater Army Support Command (TASCOM) in forming a chain supply posts linking the seaport towns of France with the main element of troops stationed in Germany.

After 14 years of continuous operations in France, the greatest duration for the 97th in any single location. Official notification was received on 1 Mar 1966 to relocate under U.S. Army Europe (USAREUR) to Pirmasens, Germany. While thoroughly engaged in construction projects necessitated by French Location (FRELOC), the main body of the 97th Engr Bn (Const) arrived in Germany in Mar 1967. Later that year, on 20 Dec 1967 the order to redeploy to Ft Riley, KS was received. On 15 Jul 1968 the main body of the Bn departed Europe from Rhein-Main Airport and arrived at Ft Riley on the same day.

OH FOR THE LACK OF...

When you read the articles in this newspaper concerning construction projects you'll notice a common problem running throughout the Bn. Alas! Everyone has had difficulty in obtaining equipment and materials for projects! The project, which you are now reading, was no exception. "The Constructor" has been faced with problems ranging from lack of multi-lith printing machine to lack of authorization. There are other "lacks" as well – lack of a photo lab, lack of paper, lack of typists, and the list goes on.

But all is not black. The co-operation of the companies in providing articles and information has been truly heartwarming. 1LT David Jernigan has given us invaluable help in the form of suggestions, the cover layout and the cartoon page. While we were

unable to find anyone to print 'The Constructor,' we did find a friend who was willing to print the four picture pages in the center of this edition. Names are being withheld to protect the guilty.

Because we were forced to use stencils our masthead had to be changed. The old masthead—you remember used shading for its effect. Artistic as it was, the old heading could not be reproduced on a stencil. Hopefully you will find our new masthead pleasing. If you and LTC Dupont do not find it pleasing, we'll probably find a new masthead for next month's edition. Our pride is at such a low ebb that we have not worried ourselves with meeting the challenge. We're just happy that we've challenged the challenge.

MOTOR PARK??

On 28 Jul 1968, D Co was assigned the task of building a Bn Motor Park for Engr and Ordnance equipment. The EM Platoon was given the directive stating the project would start on 24 Jul 1968. SGT Sidney E Austin was nominated as NCOIC and given a handful of men plus equipment needed. The project was slow starting.

The park is in an area 300x500 feet between the wash rack and the flood control dike. From three to four inches of topsoil had to be removed. This was done by windrowing the material with a dozer. To remove the stockpiles, they had to borrow a scoop loader from the 3rd Engr Bn and dump trucks from all the companies of this Bn. Also a 290 M tractor with scraper was graded and then compacted with a sheep foot roller.

The surface consists of crushed rock with a soil binder and is from four to six inches thick. The rock comes from a quarry approximately two miles North of the Rod and Gun Club. A round trip from the quarry to the project is 16 miles. All the companies in the 97th and 83rd Engr Bn's provided the dump trucks used for this haul. The equipment used to load the trucks consisted of a crane from the 55th Engr Co (PB), and a scoop loader from Post Engr's. All of this equipment was not used at the same time. We have used from five to 20 trucks a day. So far, about 600 loads of rock have been hauled. About 1,000 more loads of rock will be required to finish the project. The

rock is being compacted with a 13 wheel pneumatic roller and a 10 ton steel wheel roller.

SGT Austin says the Grand Opening day is to be on or about 30 Sep, but with all the delays caused from a lack of loading equipment, this is only a target date. It is hoped that they can complete the Motor Park soon because the Bn needs this new Motor Park badly.

HOME ON THE RANGE

SP4 Ocegueda of 2nd Const Platoon and SP4 Olivares of the 1st Const Platoon of Co D have completed the construction of six signs.

Three of the signs have inscribed upon them, "Home of the 138th Engr Gp (Const)." The other three inscribed upon them, "Home of the 97th Engr Bn (Const)." These signs will be hanging under the Camp Forsyth signs.

QUARRIERS QUARRYING

Since arriving at Ft Riley, the company has been give two projects. The first being the rock crusher site, located in the Milford Dam area on the Ft Riley Reservation which is currently being operated by the Quarry Section of the Equipment Platoon.

The operating hour have been limited due to the lack of a crane on the site which is needed for loading blasted rock for crushing process. However, SSG Earl Adams, the NCOIC, has utilized the time to make necessary repairs on the plant and construct a building for storage of tools and equipment.

Maintenance is a large factor in preparing the plant for operation due to the fact it has been well over a year since it was last operated. Once the necessary equipment requirement is obtained, the rock quarry will be in full production.

The second project A Co has undertaken is to clean the wash rack and drainage ditch located in the rear of the motor pool parking area. Here, too, equipment has been a major factor in the progress up to this date. SSG Joe Bailey the NCOIC from the Construction Section of the Equip Platoon has put quite a bit of effort in trying to meet the completion date. The removal of waste material from the ditch area has been completed and some 70 yards of crushed rock have been hauled in

to formulate a solid ditch-bottom foundation. Our goal is eventually to use concrete in this area that will prevent the problem of bottomless muck, as now exists.

ARRIVAL

By Harold Rawlings

After nearly six hours of flight time, we had finally reached our native land, the USA. It wasn't particularly a hot day but the humidity unlike that of Germany made the weather very pleasant.

The English language was all around us and it added to the feeling of being right at home. It too was a relief to be able to go up to a door with round doorknobs. Now that we had witnessed some of the changes of the USA compared to those of Germany, it was time for us to really readjust ourselves to that American way of life.

While on leave many of us had the opportunity to visit most of our friends, they couldn't believe some of the experiences we had while in Germany. I explained how the 97th Engr Bn would go into the weeds of Germany and live there for weeks at a time. I went on to tell about the bridge training exercise we had. They were fascinated when I told them how we picked up our Bn Cmdr, LTC Dupont, and threw him into the alt Rhein River.

Even though there was the fun filled times for the 97th Engr Bn, we will always remember the hard and successful jobs that were completed, thus giving up the honor of being the most outstanding Engr Bn in Germany.

FORMAL MESS

On 13 Sep 1968, the Officers of the 97th Engr Bn held a Formal Mess. The honored guest was BG Linton S Boatwright, CG, 24th Inf Div and CG of Ft Riley. Other guests were COL Frank A La Boon, CO of the 138th Engr Gp; LTC James E Sibley, CO, 3rd Engr Bn; LTC Frederick P Reynolds, CO, 83rd Engr Bn; LTC Charles A Beitz, CO, 264th Maintenance Bn; and CPT David R Ford, Training Officer, HQ, Ft Riley.

The evening of festive officially began at 1900 hrs with a receiving line. The receiving line consisted of LTC Albert Dupont, President of the Mess; BG

Boatwright, Honored Guest and COL Frank La Boon, Guest. A cocktail hour followed with the junior officers of the 97th Engr Bn cornering the senior officers present to get answers to some of their questions about the Army. The junior officers seemed quite interested in explaining to BG Boatwright what the 97th Engr Bn can do and would like to do.

The call to dinner was at 2005 hrs. Mr Vice gave invocation. The dinner consisted of French Onion Soup, Combination Salad, Choice Rib Steak, Baked Potato with Sour Cream, Buttered Corn, Rolls with Butter, and Strawberry Shortcake. The dinner wine was Mateus Rose.

Following dinner the traditional, toasts were made. After the toasting, LTC Dupont introduced BG Boatwright. The general spoke on several of his experiences as a junior officer in the US Army and the challenges for the junior officer in the Army today. He also stated in his speech that he understood some of the problems that the 97th Engr Bn is experiencing in not having meaningful projects here at Ft Riley. He stated that by regulation most large-scale projects had to go to civilian construction companies. However, an effort will be made by Post Headquarters to find good construction jobs for the 97th Engr Bn.

2LT Varling was the next speaker who gave a speech on the 97th Engr Bn history. 2LT VanHole gave a very humorous speech on the Corps of Engineer and flood control in the state of Kansas. He told the membership about the conflicts that faced the Corps in the construction of local dams. 2LT Brown put forth a very enlightening speech on the equipment repositioning operation just completed in Germany.

The membership then moved to the pool table for the playing of Crud. Rules were explained and the judges, BG Boatwright, COL La Boon, and LTC Dupont were seated.

The company grade officer's Crud game came down to a blocking contest between 1LT Burgin and 1LT Kuspa with 1LT Kuspa coming out the Crud champ. The general and field grade Crud game was also full of fun and excitement. After BG Boatwright was eliminated, LTC Dupont and LTC Sibley were left to decide the winner. The Commander of the 3rd Engr Bn was finally victorious and declared the winner.

MULTI-FUEL ENGINES

The 97th Engr Bn has received multi-fuel engine trucks instead of the older gasoline engine trucks they had in Germany. The multi-fuel engine is a diesel engine. It has no sparkplugs like the gasoline job. Fuel is ignited by compression. A piston coming up on its compression stroke squeezes the air in the cylinder until it gets hot. About that time, fuel is injected into the cylinder under terrific pressure. The fuel is ignited and burns giving the power that drives the piston back down on its power stroke.

All the multi-fuel engines are pretty much alike as far as operating is concerned. The one important difference is the fuel filter setup. All four multi-fuel engines have three fuel filters, primary, secondary, and final, but the type of filter and the location is different in a couple of cases. One of your preoperational checks is to drain your fuel filters. This is the method in which you drain them. Turn on your accessory switch so the in tank fuel pump will run. Now open the drain cock on the bottom of your primary fuel filter. Drain out enough so you can see if there is any dirt or water in the fuel. If the fuel is contaminated, go to the secondary filter and check it in the same way. If it is contaminated, call a mechanic right away because your fuel injector could be damaged.

To start your multi-fuel engine, turn your fuel switch to ON. Push your clutch pedal down and press the starter button for not more than 30 seconds. If it doesn't start, wait two minutes and try again. If it doesn't start in three tries, call a mechanic. Never pump the accelerator pedals when starting a multi-fuel engine because it doesn't do any good and it can do a lot of harm. Before taking off, let the truck idle at least three to five minutes until the engine heat reaches 120 degrees. Idle between 800 and 1000 RPM. Before shutting down the engine let it idle for at least five minutes. This gives your cooling system a chance to cool the engine down and it also lubricates your turbo charger until it has a chance to slow down. When parking your vehicle at the end of the workday, put the gearshift in neutral and engage the handbrake. Drain your air tanks and fill up your gas tanks.

SGT TO SSG

By 1LT George Serencko

LTC Albert A Dupont awarded SGT James E Lane, SSG (E-6) stripes on 17 Sep 1968. SSG Lane is presently squad leader of the Embankment and Excavation Section of the Earth moving platoon in C Co.

SSG Lane entered the Army on 7 Jun 1943, at Camp Blanding, FL. He attended the Engr School at Ft Belvoir, VA, where he was trained as a power shovel operator.

He saw action during WWII with the 867th Aviation Engr Bn in New Guinea and the Philippines. At the end of the war he returned to civilian life and completed his high school education.

SSG Lane continued his Army career by joining the Army Reserves in 1951. While in the reserve, he served with the 446th Field Artillery Bn and the 674th Transportation Bn. His unit was called to active duty on 10 Oct 1961. IN 1962, he reenlisted for six years. Since then, he has served with the 489th Engr Bn and the 586th Floating Bridge Co. He served in South Vietnam with the 577th Engr Bn and the 35th Engr's. He joined the 97th Engr Bn on 7 Sep in Germany, and has been with the unit since then.

CARPENTERS ATTACKED

All right, so no one was killed or injured. That doesn't matter; D Co was attacked by infantry troops in broad daylight! Those carpenters were just doing their jobs, when out of nowhere, helicopters swept down on them! It wasn't planned training either!

D Co had the project of rebuilding the Combat-in-Towns range. It is a training city to teach, "Ground Pounders" how to fight in cities. The buildings are just shells. Frames with wood sidings. You're right. It's no big deal to repair some shell buildings. Like, no one even cares how big the doors are. But the point is that we were doing them a favor and they were actually shooting at us! I didn't hear any bullets strike. Maybe they were using blanks. It was just the idea of the thing. The OIC, 1LT Larry R Garner, and the NCOIC, SSG Elmer L Miller, were none to happy about it all.

[DID NOT TYPE 'GOOBLEY - GOOK,' AS NO 97TH HISTORICAL VALUE.]

CHAPLIN'S CORNER

Once there was a man who wanted to sell his house. He complained about it and decided he did not want to own it anymore. After consulting a realtor, he put it up for sale. The next morning as he read the paper, he came across the advertisement of his house. He called the realtor and stated that the deal was off. He said,

"All my life I have wanted a house like that, and didn't know I owned it until I read the ad in the paper."

How many of us are guilty of this very same thing - failing to count our blessings? We whine and gripe for things we already possess. Many times we over look such blessings as good health, the blessings of family and friends, and many other countless ones. Besides taking our blessings for granted and failing to count them, we also forget GOD, the giver. How grateful we should be for the things we have!

[DID NOT TYPE 'UNCLE SHORT,' AS NO 97TH HISTORICAL VALUE.]

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