

DESTINATION
—— BERLIN!



THE TRANSPORTATION CORPS
"Furnish the necessary transportation!"

Name _____

Date enlisted _____

Assigned to T.C. _____

Date arrived ETO _____

Awards _____

Citations _____

THIS IS THE SECOND OF A series of G. I. Stories of the Ground, Air and Service Forces in the European Theater of Operations, as published by the Stars and Stripes, a publication of the Information and Education Division, Special Information Services, ETOUSA... Maj. Gen. Frank S. Ross, the Chief of Transportation (ETO), lent his cooperation to the preparation of the pamphlet, and basic material was supplied to the editors by his personnel.



It is with pride and emotion that I indorse this story of the Transportation Corps in the European Theater of Operations. This story is your story; it is the story of your aching muscles, long and arduous hours of unsung labor, and your devotion to duty. It is the story of the unsung stevedore working in the holds and on the quay sides. It is the story of the weary truck driver with his load of precious cargo moving to the front along strange roads with lights blacked out. It is the story of the duck driver, ferrying vital supplies amid mine-infested waters.

It is the story of train and engine crews moving over unknown paths to strange destinations with that same spirit the American railroad man has shown for generations. It is the story of the weary but alert dispatcher, humble section hand, switchman and dispatch rider, each doing a vital part.

It is the story of the back shop, round house and harbor craft repair crews: grimy, faithful, essential. It is the story of tug boat crews in strange and dangerous waters, and the story of the RTO at outlying dumps, control points, and stations. It is the story of men and women working long and arduous hours at desks throughout the Theater. In short, it is your story; it is a tribute to you, and you may well take pride in it.

Let it serve to inspire you to still greater efforts. The sole reason for the existence of the Transportation Corps is to carry to the fighting man at the front what he needs. If we do that, we will have accomplished our mission. If we fail, we will not have kept the faith. Let each of us remember that our individual efforts are capable of swelling into a stream of men and supplies moving steadily and relentlessly to the front. Let us resolve to increase constantly this stream until Victory is ours and until we return to our homes. Carry ever in your hearts our slogan that "The Transportation Corps will furnish the necessary transportation."

Major General, U.S. Army
Chief of Transportation

The Story Of The Transportation Corps

MILLIONTH YANK LEAVES SOUTHAMPTON

OCTOBER 25, 1944: Infantry Replacement Pvt. Paul Shimer of Chambersburg, Pa., adjusted his field equipment, turned for a last glimpse of England, straightened, and walked to the waiting LSI.

When he approached the gangplank for his cross-channel journey, Sgt. Murray Ley of the 14th Port pulled him aside to point out that he was the 1,000,000th Yank embarked from Southampton since D-Day.

Upon arrival at Cherbourg, Shimer's outfit boarded the "Twentieth Century Flyer," pride of the 729th Railway Operating Bn. By nightfall it was well on its way to the front.

At an advanced railhead a fleet of trucks met the "Flyer." Shimer jumped into the nearest. It was an old "6x6." Soon the last lap was over and Shimer and his buddies were engaging the Germans.

Shimer's trek is essentially the story of the Transportation Corps. Speeding on the seas, roaring on the rails, rushing down the highways, the TC knows every corner of the European Theater of Operations and then some:

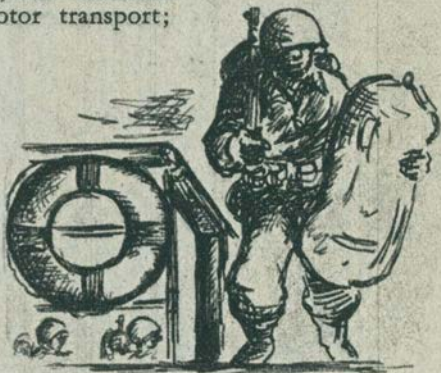
the stifling Persian and African deserts, the snow-laden Elburz Mountains, the ice-packed Klondike and Yukon, the back country of Australia, the tropical southwest Pacific, the jungles of Burma, the farthest parts of China.

Although June 6 always will signify its start, in reality the invasion was launched when the first boatload of Yanks left New York Harbor.

Departure from the U.S.A. likewise marked the beginning of the TC's job. Prior to D-Day that job fell into three classes: movements of men and material to the United Kingdom, within the UK, and out of the UK.

There were hundreds of preparatory matters and projects: the unloading of millions of soldiers and tons of cargo in English ports; the direction of traffic—rail and motor transport; training at Seamills; railroad car assembling and locomotive conditioning; barge building at Totnes; supervising ports and marshalling areas; pre-stowing of vessels.

Then came the all-important planning for the operation on the continent—rail, motor transport and marine.



A TEXAN RUNS THE SHOW

SUPERVISING the UK operation was Maj. Gen. Frank S. Ross of El Paso, Tex., who, as a colonel, flew to England on May 12, 1942 to take over the infant set-up which presently was to become a continental organization.

Guiding all movements of water, motor and rail was the RTO with the red brassard of the TC on his left arm—the Railway Traffic Officer. To men who had just come 3000 miles to a foreign country, the presence of the US-RTO was most welcome. It was his task to make sure that Yanks didn't get lost in the web of British railways, for there was always one guy out of a trainful who would end up in Liverpool asking, "Is this Edinburgh?" Later, in June 1944, Port Per-



sonnel, brothers to the RTO, embarked thousands of craft loads at the hards. The RTO was a familiar figure at the Marshalling Areas. Yanks met him again at Cherbourg, St. Lo, Paris and...

D-Day dawned and the greatest transportation spectacle in all history unfolded. Toward the beaches of France moved a mass of seacraft of all types carrying trucks of every description and railroad equipment sufficient to operate any Class I railroad in America.

The invasion was on!

THE BEGINNING OF TC

Now, time out to pick up the background of the TC! On March 9, 1942 the Transportation Service had been set up as a new division of the Services of Supply, and on July 31, 1942 the Transportation Service became the Transportation Corps.

All battalions assigned to railway transportation in the Corps of Engineers had been transferred to the Transportation Corps on Nov. 16, 1942, completing centralization of transportation functions. But Motor Transport had been a shifting service operation between the Quartermaster Corps and Transportation until July 11, 1943, when the TC—already developed into one of the largest of the Army's seven technical services—took over its operation.

Marine Operations

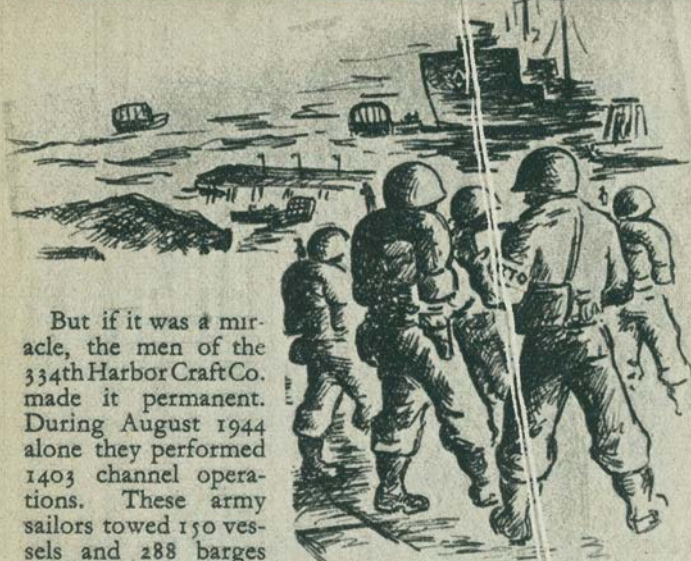
FIRST KEY TO HITLER'S DOOM

THE Nazis came, but Pvt. Bob Shafer and his 186th Port Co. buddies went on working. Time didn't count. Boxes of ammunition did. It was on the fourth day when the last ammo load had started for the beaches that enemy flak knocked Bob out. As he was placed on the LDUKW with its precious cargo, the men of the 186th moved to another ship.

Bob says his Purple Heart belongs to the 186th.

Without the loads from the ships there would have been no "battle of the beaches." Battles depend on ammunition, food, and POL—petrol, oil, lubricants. The men of the port battalions, LDUKW units and harbor craft gangs knew this as they shoved off early on June 6.

Behind the invasion headlines lay the "miracle" of the Normandy beaches. Miracle? No! Just blood and sweat. No miracle to the port battalion men who unloaded tons upon tons of material for the D-Day build-up! No miracle to that single battalion which worked 102 straight days and nights without time off! No miracle to another, which in a single night unloaded 1226 tons of hellish cargo!



But if it was a miracle, the men of the 334th Harbor Craft Co. made it permanent. During August 1944 alone they performed 1403 channel operations. These army sailors towed 150 vessels and 288 barges into harbors, made 117 ferry trips, and threw in five salvage expeditions for good measure.

The men who joined the June 6 armada had a UK background, and they also had mounted the North African invasion in the fall of 1942. As members of major U.S. port installations at Southampton, Bristol, Belfast, Glasgow and Liverpool, together with their respective subports, they had learned in the school of grimy sweat and aching muscles, for these ports handled the huge influx of men and cargo necessary for the pre-invasion build-up.

Once the invasion started, the supply problem on the beaches was second in importance only to the military effort to hack out the initial beachhead. The Germans reasoned that if they could choke the flow of our equipment to the continent, we would fall easy prey to counter-attack. So the Nazis hung on to the ports.

The 11th Port arrived in Normandy June 8. That unit was in reality a combat outfit, trained for fighting, chosen to carry out the TC's role in the initial landings. The vast Allied army still was exclusively dependent upon supplies that could be hauled across the beaches. To win the Supply Battle of the Beaches, it took the grit and nerve of the 11th Port and their willingness to work long hours to help weary soldiers in the struggle to enlarge the beachhead.

THE KRAUTS CLUNG TO CHERBOURG

CHERBOURG was our first goal. Its capture was delayed by stubborn German defense. Once it was taken, the burden on the beaches was not immediately relieved. The Germans had wrecked the port's installations. Water and land mines were a constant menace. Until the harbor could be de-mined and repaired there could be no relief for the beaches.

Other problems had to be faced. In peacetime, the port had been geared to passenger traffic rather than cargo. Now that had to be changed. Navy salvage crews and engineer gangs had to repair enemy demoli-

tions and adapt damaged installations to accomodate the ships that eventually would arrive. While this was being done the beaches continued to handle all the men and material flowing to the continent.

The weather was rotten all through June. On June 20 all hell broke loose in the channel. For three days while a storm raged the Allied supply line was knocked into a cocked hat. The DUKWs got off the waves. Heading out from the beaches, the piers wove and then buckled like accordions. Ships foundered. Derelict craft jammed the beaches. Vessels were pounded to pieces and capsized. Giant causeways, which had been towed across the channel in sections, were twisted beyond repair. When it was over our men had as big a mess to clean up as they had had in the early days after D-Day. The artificial harbor installations were wrecked, the sands were strewn with debris of smashed barges, landing craft and vehicles. But the men pitched in, and within a few days things were shipshape again.

Whatever the job was TC men attached to the engineer shore brigades tackled it!

When word arrived that a crewless ship was adrift in a mine field, W-O John Potter of East Windsor, Ont., Sgt. Joe Kohler of Ebenezer, N.Y., and Cpl. Henry Botwin of Houston, Tex., volunteered to save the craft. They did.

When the engineers lacked sappers to clear a working space for unloading, TC men cleaned up the beach space.

Under constant enemy fire from the top of a cliff, they helped the engineers remove bodies, wrecked vehicles and landing craft; and then they unloaded ships and got more cargo moving to the front lines.

There were no piers, only ships anchored in deep water far from shore. Stevedores from port battalions worked in the holds of the vessels, unloading supplies into landing craft, DUKWs, barges. The Navy piloted the landing craft into shore, while TC men from amphibian truck companies drove the barges, and "sailjers" of the harbor craft companies towed the barges to shore.

Other men from the port battalions unloaded the craft on the shore, stacked the stuff, reloaded it onto 2 1/2 ton trucks, and the trucks sped off to the dumps.

It was a nightmare to the men running the beaches. The swing shift found it difficult to determine the location of vessels. To get cargo moving, DUKW drivers often were instructed to go out and unload any ship



standing close by. They did—heedless of danger.

Enemy action took its toll. For example, five men of a single unit (Sgt. John Souza, Cpl. Don Nelson, Cpl. Mahlen Corsen, Cpl. Jim Parnham and Pfc Johnny Potter) were injured. But, before their Purple Hearts arrived, they were back on the job.

DUKWs were sunk when struck by submerged objects, or blown up by mines—and they were hard to handle.

By the time Cherbourg was captured June 27, tens of thousands of tons had been unloaded. *The first phase of the supply battle of the beaches was won.*

THE GERMANS MISCALCULATED

It took a number of weeks before Cherbourg could operate, and when ships did file into the harbor, operations were on a small but gradually rising scale. It had been anticipated that Cherbourg's tonnage load would be shared by the other ports—Brest, Le Havre, Rouen, St. Malo, Calais, Antwerp.

But the only points defended to the bitter end were the ports. For crucial weeks the enemy kept them out of our hands, and when the harbors finally fell, all but Antwerp were severely damaged. The Germans were sure that with only one major port and two strips of beach we couldn't supply an army of the mammoth size needed to sweep them out of Fortress Europe.

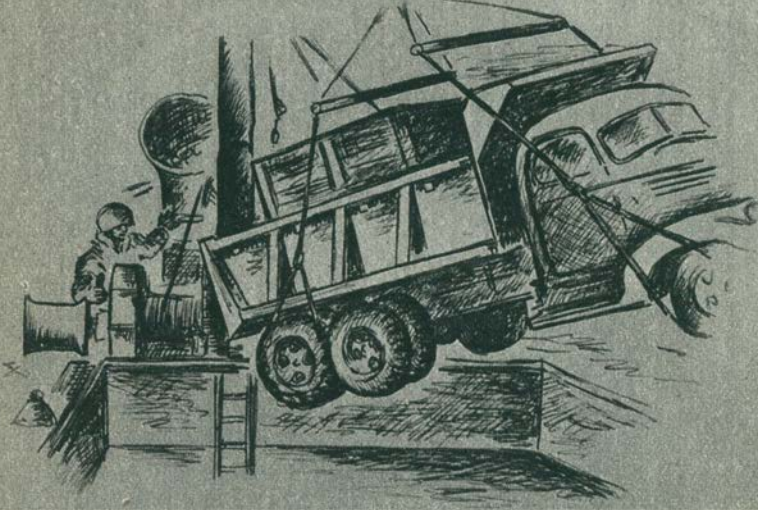
Until the first piers were rebuilt in Cherbourg, unloading operations were carried on in pretty much the

same way as they had been on the beaches. Veteran handlers like Sgt. Floyd Trotter of Portsmouth, Va., boosted the totals. Landing craft weren't used as much as at the beaches; the bulk of the cargo was dumped into DUKWs and barges. Work was twenty-four hours a day in twelve-hour shifts, seven days a week—no days off!

Unloading the ships, loading the trucks and flatcars often meant much more than twelve hours for the men of the port battalions. On the breakwater and on ships anchored in the harbor, they often spent another two hours going to and from work. Sometimes they were stranded aboard the vessels when ferry craft were delayed. The less experienced worked with oldtimers like the 109 men of 392nd Port Bn., all in their fourth year of foreign service, who had sweated out homesickness in Iceland and England long before Cherbourg.

The men of the harbor craft companies had a big hand in making Cherbourg a success. Harbor craft companies are an invention of this war and this theater. The first six companies were activated at the Charleston POE in May 1943. During the last war the Army depended on French civilian tugboats, but this time the enemy made that impossible. The Army had foreseen this situation and was prepared.

This is typical of what these companies were up against at Cherbourg: the crew of one ST-75 in a July 18 convoy from Southampton to Cherbourg was made up of men from the 328th and 335th Harbor Craft Cos. In a dense fog this ST-75 and five other boats became



separated from the convoy 'about midnight.' Fired on when he approached the shore on the following morning, the ST-75's ship's master set a course to the north. Before he could clear the Channel Isles, enemy shore batteries opened fire.

The first round took off the foremast. Seven of the crew went overboard. One soldier—sailor refused to abandon ship and went down. A sergeant was so badly injured that he later died. An officer was severely wounded in the leg. The survivors clung to a rubber raft until nearly dark the next day, when they were picked up by a British destroyer and returned to England.

"America's Secret Weapon"

TWO HANDS ON A STEERING WHEEL

SINCE D-Day the real American secret weapon on the continent has been two hands frozen to the steering wheel—white hands and black hands—driving 200 to 300 miles in a single day to get gasoline and ammunition and rations to the armies.

Truck drivers worked twenty hours a day, and when overcome by fatigue, stopped to splash cold water on their faces, and drove on. They slept on piles of ruins scarcely cool from the heat of battle. For months they went without mail.

But they got the supplies to the front, and some died with their hands still clutching the wheel.

On a single night, five 2000-gallon tankers were knocked out by enemy action. While on his way to a gasoline dump, a driver was killed at Gavray, when his loaded truck skidded off the wet pavement on a curve and turned over in a 20-foot ditch.

On Aug. 2, in the vicinity of La Haye Pesnil, the driver of a 2½ ton ammo truck, Pvt. Nathan Henry, 3613th QM Truck Co., enroute through a small town, was greeted

by machine gun bullets and fifteen Germans. His truck shot out of action, Pvt. Henry dismounted and escaped under fire. He found his way to friendly lines, bunked the rest of the night in a French home. By morning the Americans had captured the town. Pvt. Henry found his truck—a burnt-out wreck.

WHAT D-DAY WAS LIKE

Motor Transport Service units have destroyed the myth that trucking is rear echelon work. The advance detail of the 3683rd QM Truck Co. (TC) came in on D-Day. Here's what the men said:

PVT. WALTER PEARSON, JR.: *My truck drowned out and I had to swim ashore. I dug in on the beach but had to be dug out when it caved in. A couple of grenades were thrown at my truck while I was hauling ammunition. On D plus 3 a bomb fell in front of the truck and tore up the radiator and both front tires. Fragments killed several foot soldiers. I also hauled some wounded from the lines.*

PVT. THEODORE FRY, JR.: *My truck drowned out and a tractor pulled me in. I hauled dead Germans, ammunition, personnel and rations.*



Pvt. CHARLES EVANS: I believe we came in on the first wave on D-Day. After we landed in about three feet of water, my truck quit and a dozer pulled me out. The engineers kept telling us to get off the beach. In a couple of minutes the enemy came. I read my Bible at night. I kept reading the 23rd Psalm.

Pvt. ERIC T. DAVIS: I tried to sleep that first night but machine guns kept me awake. Next day the planes came in low after my truck.

Pfc. HARRY HILL: I was stuck in three feet of water and they were shelling us. On D plus 2 I was hauling dead Germans to a cemetery. Also hauled ammo from the beach to the dump, which was a quarter of a mile from the beach at that time. It was pretty hot during those short runs.

Pfc. ELMORE HOLMES: I was loaded with ammo when my truck drowned out. Soon as I got on the beach the Krauts started strafing. Every time I'd start to drive, they would come over and I'd dive for a ditch or a slit trench. A piece of shrapnel hit my right front tire.

Pvt. RANDOLPH DILLON: Landed during shell fire. My truck quit and I had to get pulled in. Slept on the beach. Hauled engineer equipment and ammo. When the enemy came over we took cover. On the second day a sniper fired at us. The sailor riding with me killed him.

The planning for this giant trucking enterprise on the continent began months before D-Day. When the liberation was being briefed, almost everyone in the UK was thinking about railroads and ports. But

The Mover

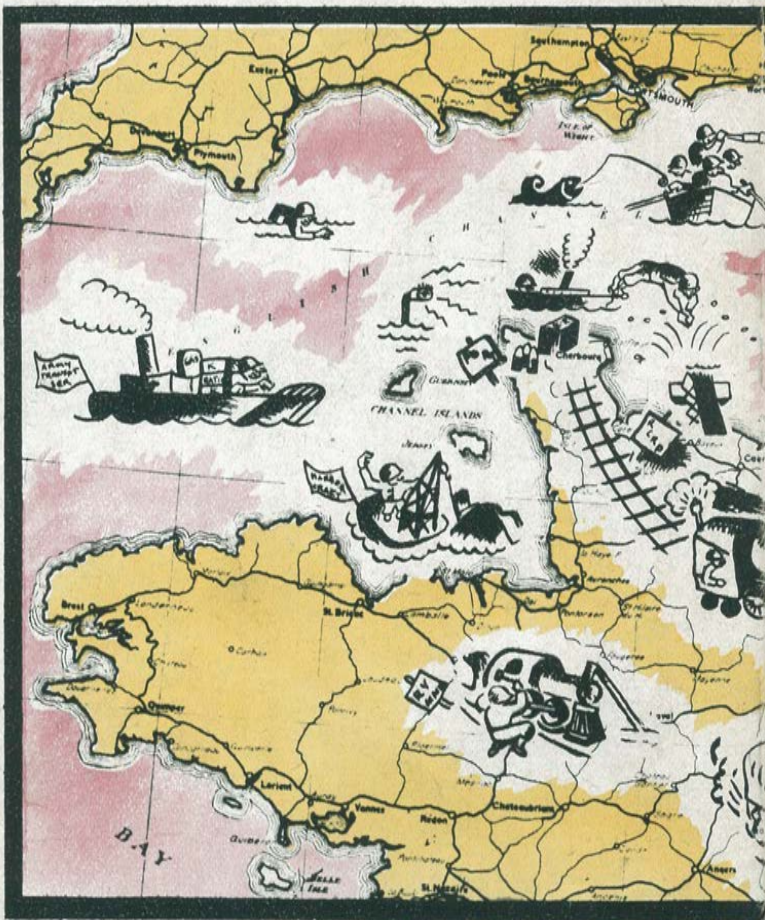
Gen. Ross
confers with
his rail chief,
Gen. Burpee

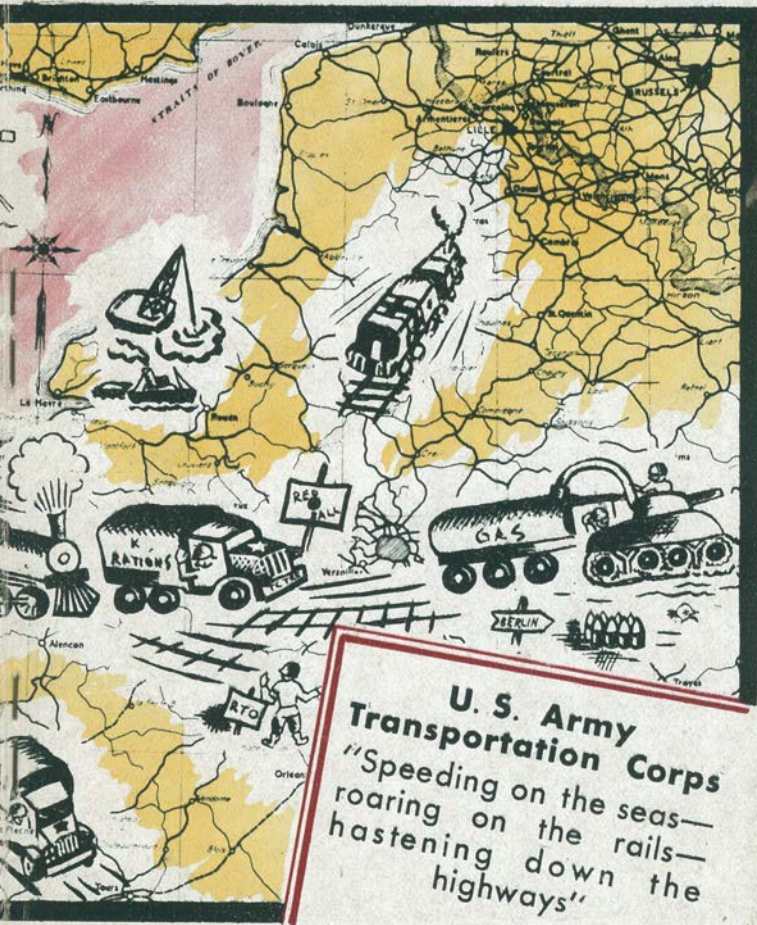


The Move

POL speeds
to the front







**U. S. Army
Transportation Corps**
"Speeding on the seas—
roaring on the rails—
hastening down the
highways"

CARGO

Life Blood
Of Armies

DUKW

King of
Beaches



Col. Loren Albert Ayers, the energy machine of the TC, foresaw the importance of general purpose motor transport. Known to his men as "Little Patton," Col. Ayers was mainly responsible for getting two drivers for every vehicle, for obtaining special equipment and for training port battalion personnel as drivers for short hauls, which released regular truck companies for long trips.

While our forces gathered strength in Normandy during June, Motor Transport had a relatively simple job in clearing the beaches and carrying supplies to dumps within easy reach of the ports. But when Lt. Gen. George S. Patton's Third Army began its drive down the Brest Peninsula and fanned out at the end of July, the real challenge to the TC began. After the breakthrough at St. Lo, on July 25, the trucks of the TC Motor Transport Brigade streamed along the highways day and night in order to keep up with the drive. Never before had such vast quantities of men and material been carried by motor transport. If lined up in convoy form, the trucks of MTB would have reached from Cherbourg to Paris.

Thereafter, the MTB was split two ways to take care of the First and Third Armies. Gen. Patton's Army presented the more difficult job, for its advance depended on whether the TC could deliver the POL. The combat troops could get by on local food or K and C rations and they weren't using much ammunition, but they had to have POL to keep going. It was then that POL rose to 40% of the total tonnage.

GASOLINE CAN BEAT ARTILLERY !

TANKS were gasoline-hungry. Early in September, a POL convoy had stopped at a TCRP and had been directed to its assigned dump, when a colonel halted the lead truck. He rerouted the convoy to a unit of the 4th Armored Division whose tanks had been stalled four days for lack of fuel. The tanks had been swapping artillery fire with the enemy. The appearance of the convoy was like water to a man dying of thirst.

Servicing the First and Third Armies meant standing by for any emergency. A single mistake might have meant the failure of a key tactical operation.

Motor Transport moved everything. On June 25, 1944, two 30-ton Diesel locomotives were hauled on M-19 tank transporters. On Aug. 11, the M-19 tank transporters were converted to cargo carriers for ammunition, carrying on each 45-ton trailer payloads of supply up to 30 tons.

On July 29 hundreds of thousands of gallons of gasoline were moved in five-gallon cans from the beaches to La Haye du Puits for the Third Army. On July 30 scores of 2000-gallon semi-trailers moved thousands of gallons of POL from Cherbourg to Beugeville, and a tremendous movement of gas in five-gallon cans from one beach to La Haye Pesnil for the Third Army was begun.

The daily commitment for hauling POL was raised from 300,000 to 600,000 gallons. An emergency haul of 100,000 gallons of Diesel fuel for the French 2nd Armored Division was completed Aug. 10. The figures indicate the tremendous amount of POL devoured

by Gen. Patton's and Gen. Hodges' armies. Without motor support, it would have been impossible to exploit Gen. Patton's breakthrough.

ON Aug. 25 the Red Ball Express, designed to haul supplies to the First and Third Armies, was instituted. The name "Red Ball" in pre-war days denoted railway transportation of very high priority. The red ball and the arrow were easy to follow—even at night.

The job of the Red Ball Express was to place 100,000 tons of maintenance and reserve supplies, made up exclusively of bulk POL, in the Chartres—la Loupe—Dreux triangle by Sept. 1, and subsequently to extend the supply line



eastward. Of the 100,000 ton total, an estimated 75,000 tons had to be moved by truck. A special route was designated for the haul, allowing only one-way traffic and restricted to trucks of the Red Ball Express.

Full headlights were used at night on the highway from St. Lo to the River Seine, but approaching the front line the drivers reverted to cat-eyes. On the first night that vehicle lights were turned on, an old woman in Alençon cheered. She thought the war was over.

On Sept. 5 a revised program for the Red Ball haul began. In the new phase the TC carried thousands of tons daily from ports and beaches to armies or forward destinations. In addition, Motor Transport daily moved 1800 tons of bulk gas from pipe line stations to delivery points.

TRUCKS FOLLOW THE BATTLE

The Red Ball Express constantly lengthened as our armies advanced. Originally the bivouac was scheduled midway between the loading and unloading points so that one driver could sleep while the other worked. Trucks were scheduled to operate 22 hours out of 24, leaving only two hours for maintenance. Another method was to allow one driver to complete a round-trip from loading point to destination.

The lightning advance of our armies made the bivouac temporary—Le Mans one week, Alençon the next, then Versailles! Always forward! T-Sgt. Clarence E. Miller of Port Washington, N.Y., whose duty was to locate adequate bivouac areas and supply overlays, became accustomed to the order, "Pack up! Office,

kitchen, clothing! We're moving. *Fifteen minutes!*" Once he started out at midnight and in six hours located and prepared an area for several companies.

The elastic nature of the Red Ball highway shifted the bivouac, but rapidly advancing armies created an even more serious problem in the identification of destinations. Cpl. John D. Madden, Jr., of Linden, N.J., was in charge of seven trucks and four trailers which were to pick up equipment at an engineer dump near Fourigny. He arrived at the loading point, secured his cargo and set out. Reporting to the TCRP at Chartres, he was dispatched to an engineer depot—but the depot had moved forward. Three successive locations disclosed that the line had moved up, taking the depot along. In a 150-mile sprint to Chalons the convoy reached the Sixth Engineer Depot and unloaded.

There it was told to gas up for the return trip. The supply was a German tank car on a railroad only two kilometers from the front lines. On the way back, the convoy panhandled rations and gas. Eight days later Cpl. Madden and his buddies reached their own outfit.

GI ingenuity has been the turning point in many military engagements. At St. Malo the German garrison retired to a seemingly impregnable harbor fortress and defied the GIs to fetch them. The island fort dominated the harbor, and both aerial and shore bombardment failed to budge the Krauts. Only a direct infantry assault, employing landing craft, could succeed. The nearest craft were 200 miles away.

On the next day, Aug. 25, a group of 40-foot semi-

trailers was driven onto the beaches of Normandy during low tide and then waterproofed. When the tide flowed in landing craft were floated and secured atop the submerged trailers. After the tide had ebbed, the semi-trailers were de-waterproofed and driven with their ingeniously loaded cargo to St. Malo, where the sea-craft were refloated. Loaded with infantry they were pulling out from shore when the German garrison surrendered.

Gasoline is a hazardous commodity, and handling it in forward positions calls for courage. What happened at Coutances proves that.

Bombed night and day, Coutances had been knocked to bits. Shells had pulverized the houses, and the town was a sea of flames. Just beyond were our armored spearheads whose advance spelled POL. A convoy of 13 double-bottom, 2000-gallon tankers had to get the gas to Gen. Patton. At a little more than normal convoy distance apart, and with a speed of 45 miles an hour, the trucks dashed through the pitted, rubble-heaped and flame-enveloped streets. One spark would have ignited the fumes on the cat-walks and in ten seconds the entire convoy would have earned a one-way ticket to heaven.

But TC came through with the POL!



All Aboard for Berlin

NOTHING DAUNTS THE RAILROADERS

THE Folligny yards in Normandy were covered by burned and twisted steel, charred railway cars, and rubble from blasted buildings. Bomb craters overlapped. The couple of skeleton buildings still standing became headquarters of the railroad battalion assigned to operate the line from Folligny to Le Mans...

Running the military railroads on the continent is the job of the Second Military Railway Service, commanded by Brig. Gen. Clarence L. Burpee, of Jacksonville, Fla., who came into the service from the Atlantic Coast Lines. The majority of his officers and men are also former railroadmen, and their railway outfits now operating in France and Belgium originally were sponsored by railroads back home. The ace alumni of 35 U.S. lines are currently represented in every aspect of Army railroading on the continent.

Military railways resemble civilian roads in organization. Headquarters of the Military Railways Service corresponds to the office of the general manager. Next come grand divisions, each of which is similar to the office of a general superintendent and operates a section

of line. Under the grand divisions are the operating battalions to run the trains, and the shop battalions for heavy maintenance.

Since D-Day, the 2nd MRS has done a whopping job of hauling supplies to the front by virtue of its extraordinary organization and administration set-up. Gen. Burpee's outfit inherited a railway system at a standstill. What our bombers hadn't smashed, the Germans had wrecked before they fled. The first job was to repair track, yards, telephone lines.

Most of the repairs of railway lines were handled by the Corps of Engineers. Since D-Day, their general service regiments repaired over 1500 miles of track, erected 100 railway bridges, rebuilt signal houses, marshalling yards, railway stations. One bridge thrown up by the engineers originally had been destroyed by American bombers, rebuilt by the Germans, smashed again by the R.A.F., and when finally captured was rebuilt once again by the engineers.

REPAIR, REBUILD, THEN OPERATE !

Tracks and railway-yard demolitions represented only the first problem facing military railroaders. In addition, engines and rolling stock needed to be placed in operating condition. The Germans had wrecked plenty of their equipment, but much could be saved. Everything from toilet paper to tin cans was used to patch up the cars. Sometimes, when boxcars had been damaged too severely, the sides were entirely cut out, and the cars converted into flatcars.

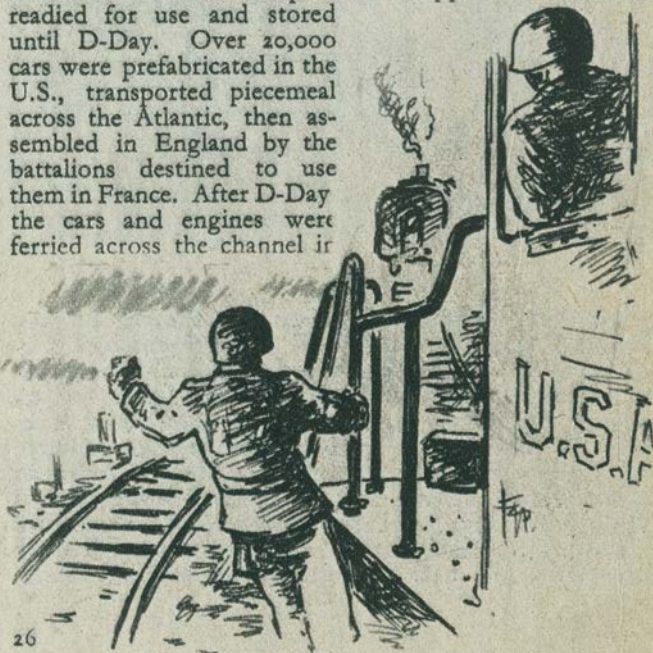


Captured rolling stock included French, Belgian, German, Austrian, and Czech cars. Streamlined passenger cars from the Cherbourg-Paris run were a particular prize. Some of the engines that fell to us had been manufactured in 1865, while the newest ones were marked 1944. In Cherbourg, twelve captured locomotives had been sent to France by the American Army during World War I. Their World War I duties over, they had been handed to the French for civilian use. They served the Germans during the occupation, but finally we got them back in World War II.

Captured equipment fell short of carrying the tonnage demanded of the railways. The bulk—both engines and cars—had to come from the States.

LOCOMOTIVES FROM THE U.S.A.

Planning for this "ferrying" program started back in 1942. Over 900 locomotives were manufactured in the States for continental operation, shipped to England, readied for use and stored until D-Day. Over 20,000 cars were prefabricated in the U.S., transported piecemeal across the Atlantic, then assembled in England by the battalions destined to use them in France. After D-Day the cars and engines were ferried across the channel in



seatrains, ocean-going freighters especially constructed to carry railway stock; in 300-foot steel barges; and in converted LST's.

After lines were repaired and sufficient rolling stock put in shape, other problems had to be solved by the army railroaders, who were obliged to follow closely behind troops. Trains ran on the heels of the engineer gangs repairing the tracks. These first trains were decisive, since their job was to deliver priority cargo to the troops on the move. They had to be dispatched down the line long before complete railway facilities could be installed. No time to wait for communication lines, fuel and water points!

Trains were loaded, the five-man crew given a case of K-rations, and off they went with orders to keep going until stopped. Supply dumps might be three or four days away!

CASEY JONES AT MAINTENON

ON the way crews had to stop for stalled trains. It was not always possible to stop, which is what brought the ghost of Casey Jones to Maintenon. Now Casey Jones was an Illinois Central engineer who was killed in a head-on collision back in 1893. Before he died he told his fireman to jump.

There was quite a line-up between Rambouillet and Maintenon on the night of Sept. 5; despite the fact that our trains were supposed to run 30 minutes apart. At 0325 a blacked-out trainload of high octane gas roared

around a down-grade curve and crashed into the train ahead. The cars rocked and rolled on the rail under the impact of the explosion.

Of the three men on the colliding Diesel, the fireman leaped out of the window; the brakeman plunged through the doorway; the engineer followed last, hitting the ground as the second car of his train piled over him.

GASOLINE IS DYNAMITE

Gasoline cans burst a hundred feet in air. The little village 1000 yards away caught fire. The heat of the flames welded the Diesel to the rail.

A conductor, Sgt. Ralph Latronica of N.Y., got to within four cars of the burning Diesel, and at the risk of being sliced in half, uncoupled 15 cars.

Sgt. Frank H. Moore, of Granada, Miss. — an Illinois Central man from Casey's own railroad — was the conductor on the train that was rammed. He was on the head end of the collision, but he thought of the deadhead crew asleep in the caboose. The crummy was three cars ahead of the fire. Racing toward the back end, Sgt. Moore fell into a shell hole 20 feet deep — and bounced right up again.

At the same time Pvt. "Bugs" Edward Russel of Mansfield, O. — a New York Central brakeman — worked his way to the rear, hugging the sides of the cars to avoid exploding cans, whizzing by like 88's. When

he got to within three cars of the fire, he began to uncouple the cars.

That took courage, and that's the TC.

Crews had been told to use fueling and water points left by the Germans. These points were found all right, but usually badly damaged. For fuel, the men chopped up broken crossties, scoured the countryside for timber, and crammed their fires with furniture from bombed-out houses. They got water from local fire departments, creeks, and shell craters. They organized bucket brigades of farmers to tap a local lake. They grubbed coal from every damaged engine.

They dispatched trains by bicycle, jeep, radio, walky-talky and positive blocks, which are defined areas between stations where no train may enter until the preceding train has cleared. Railroad in blackout, they flagged with cigarettes, burning newspapers and matches. Crews of railway operating battalions ran blind at night, not knowing whether there were rails under them, or whether the tunnels were mined with TNT, or whether the bridges were bombed out.





The French language also could ball things up. One engineer thought he had received a highball from a French flagman. The hoghead went over a condemned bridge with his 42 cars of ammunition. The last 17 cars crashed with the bridge. The conductor jumped over the brakeman, as the iron pig buried its nose.

The work of the crews was planned so that the men could complete their run and get their rest within 16 hours. More often it was three or four days before they returned; sometimes crews went 12 days with only 16 hours of rest; and one group of men was out for 32 days. The First or Third Army would put an officer on the hand-

bomber, and he'd say to the hoghead, "You're taking this train through." The original crew would stick with the train from Normandy to its destination — over 500 miles away. Yet, however tough it was, the 16,000 men of the 2nd MRS kept troops moving and delivered supplies to the front.

GEN. PATTON NEEDED POL

ON Aug. 14 our front was at Mayenne. Gen. Patton said that if he could get 31 trains of ammunition and POL in 14 days, he could take Paris. The 740th Railway Operating Bn. arrived at Mayenne on Aug. 15. Trains, a quarter of a mile long — the equivalent of a 4-mile truck convoy — rolled toward Le Mans, with lights turned on. Snipers shot the windows out of the cars, and German machine guns peppered the boilers with armor-piercing shells, but the trains got through. First Lt. Benjamin "Company" C. Magee, of Gary, Ind. — an Elgin, Joliet and Eastern man — in charge of all movements through Mayenne, went five days without sleep, but the 740th gave Gen. Patton 36 trains in five days. And then on Aug. 30, the 740th took the first train into Paris. It was a fair bargain!

Since then there have been many first trains, and the 2nd MRS plans to take that first train into Berlin!

And now one last incident of TC courage and skill — Loaded with 300 American casualties and 60 wounded Germans prisoners, T-5 R.L. "Hot Rail" Ellington

and his crew made a wild run from Chartres to Le Mans for sulphanilamide and blood plasma. With no lights, the GI hoghead babied his train against the current of traffic, and made it! Wounded GIs appreciate a hoghead who applies his brakes gently and nurses his train along.

OUR story does not end here, for the greatest challenge is the final drive to Victory, and then the pay-off—taking everybody home.

When all of that is done, we will make the rails hum between New York and Chicago, we will rush across the highways to Kansas City and Denver, we will unload cargo at Charleston and New Orleans, we will navigate the Great Lakes.

But until then, there's still plenty to do. So let's get going!



THE TEAM :

Autographs



Harbor Craft



Convoy Coming

