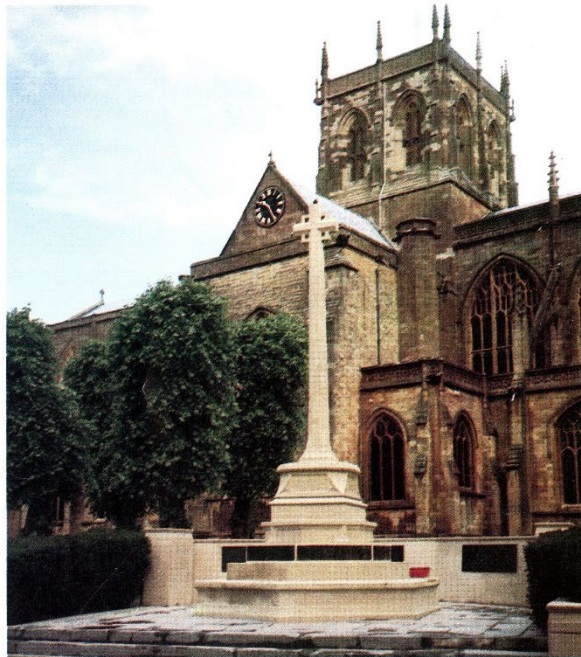


294TH ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION

UNITED STATES ARMY



*IN MEMORIAM
JUNE 6, 1989*

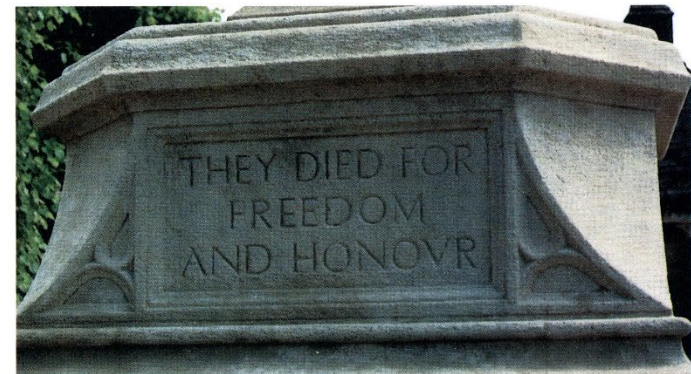
On June 6, 1989, the 45th Anniversary of D-Day, in Sherborne, England, members of the 294th Engineer Combat Battalion and representatives of the Town dedicated two plaques.

One was in memory of the 29 C Company men killed in Sherborne by the antitank mine explosion which occurred during a training exercise on March 20, 1944.

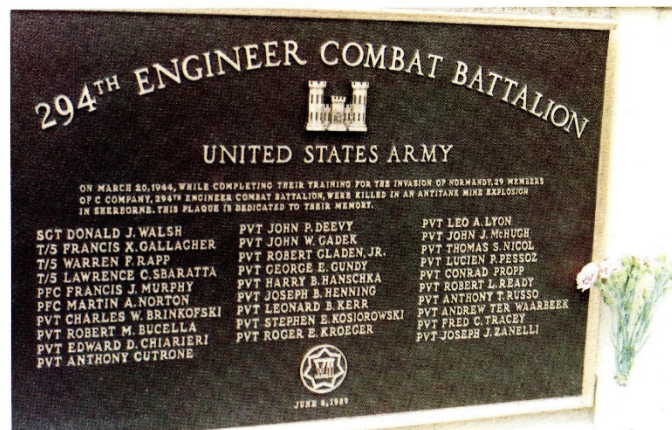
The second was in memory of the Battalion's men killed during the campaigns on the Continent of Europe.

Sherborne was selected as the site of these memorials because 29 men lost their lives there and because, from February to June 1944, while enjoying the friendly hospitality of the people of that ancient and beautiful town, the Battalion completed its final training for the Invasion and for the campaigns which were to follow.

This commemorative booklet is dedicated to the Battalion's members killed during the War.



In Memory of Those Who Died in Sherborne

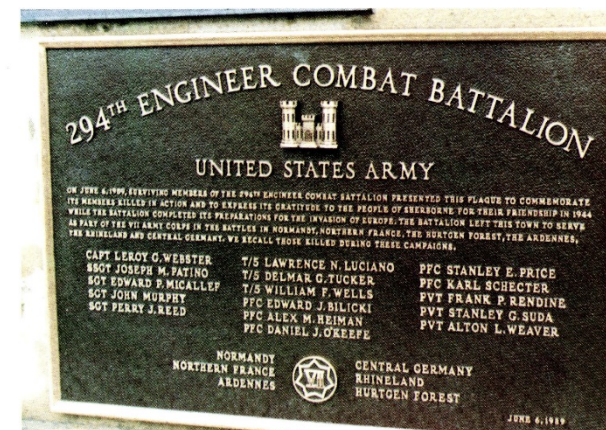


On March 20, 1944, while completing their training for the invasion of Normandy, 29 members of C Company, 294th Engineer Combat Battalion, were killed in an antitank mine explosion in Sherborne. This plaque is dedicated to their memory.

SGT Donald J. Walsh
T/5 Francis X. Gallagher
T/5 Warren F. Rapp
T/5 Lawrence C. Sbaratta
PFC Francis J. Murphy
PFC Martin A. Norton
PVT Charles W. Brinkofski
PVT Robert M. Bucella
PVT Edward D. Chiarieri
PVT Anthony Cutrone
PVT John P. Deevy
PVT John W. Gadek
PVT Robert Gladen, Jr.
PVT George E. Gundy

PVT Harry B. Hanschka
PVT Joseph B. Henning
PVT Leonard B. Kerr
PVT Stephen E. Kosiorowski
PVT Roger E. Kroeger
PVT Leo A. Lyon
PVT John J. McHugh
PVT Thomas S. Nicol
PVT Lucien P. Pessoz
PVT Conrad Propp
PVT Robert L. Ready
PVT Anthony T. Russo
PVT Andrew Ter Waarbeek
PVT Fred C. Tracey
PVT Joseph J. Zanelli

In Memory of Those Who Died in Action



On June 6, 1989, surviving members of the 294th Engineer Combat Battalion presented this plaque to commemorate its members killed in action and to express its gratitude to the people of Sherborne for their friendship in 1944 while the Battalion completed its preparations for the invasion of Europe. The Battalion left this Town to serve as part of the VII Army Corps in the battles in Normandy, Northern France, the Hurtgen Forest, the Ardennes, the Rhineland and Central Germany. We recall those killed during these campaigns:

CAPT Leroy G. Webster
SSGT Joseph M. Patino
SGT Edward P. Micallef
SGT John Murphy
SGT Perry J. Reed
T/5 Lawrence N. Luciano
T/5 Delmar G. Tucker
T/5 William F. Wells

PFC Stanley E. Price
PFC Karl Schecter
PVT Frank P. Rendine
PVT Stanley G. Suda
PVT Alton L. Weaver

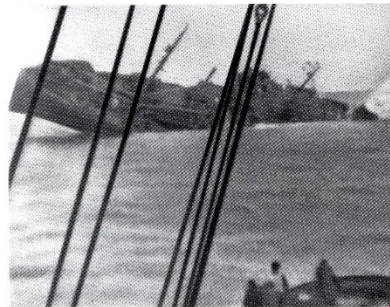
During the years after World War II, many members of the 294th Engineer Combat Battalion returned to Sherborne to visit friends there and to visit the scenes where they had trained before the Invasion. One of these visitors, Jim Orrico of A Company, conceived the idea of erecting a memorial to the C Company men who had been killed during the training accident. Upon communicating this idea to the Sherborne authorities, they suggested that such a memorial become a part of the Town's own memorial to its World War I and World War II dead. Soon the project was expanded to include a memorial to the members of the Battalion killed on the Continent of Europe after the Invasion.

Sadly, Jim died before completion of the project, but his work was carried on. The names of the men who were killed were obtained from the Department of Defense. Funds for the plaques were raised. A sculptor, Helene Massey-Hemmans, designed the plaques and oversaw their casting in bronze.

Two ceremonies were conducted to dedicate the plaques. The first was held in Jersey City on March 12, 1989, approximately 45 years after the antitank mine explosion. The second ceremony was held in Sherborne on June 6, 1989 — the 45th Anniversary of D-Day.



The fields in front of Sherborne Castle where the March 20, 1944 training accident costing the lives of 29 members of C Company took place



June 7, 1944 — The final moments of the Susan B. Anthony which transported the 294th Engineer Combat Battalion to Ullah Beach, and from which the members of the Battalion were able to escape to destroyers or landing craft.

St. Paul's Roman Catholic Church

Service in Memory of
Members of the 294th Engineer Combat Battalion
Who Were Killed in Europe
During World War II

Organ Prelude Alan Quinn

Entrance

Scripture Sentences

Prayer

Rev. Joseph Slinger, St. Paul's

Greeting

Remarks

Dickinson R. Debevoise

Reading of Plaques

John M. Carroll

Solemn Blessing of the Plaques

Lessons: Nehemiah 4:15-18
Hebrews 12:1-2

Rev. James MacNaughton, Jr.

They which builded on the wall, and they that bore burdens, with those that laded, every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon.

For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side and so builded. And he that sounded the trumpet was by me.

Memorial Prayer

Hymn: *Eternal Father, Strong to Save*

Benediction

Rev. Joseph Slinger

Taps

Alan Quinn

Recession

(American Legion Honor Guard and Congregation)

REMARKS

*St. Paul's Roman Catholic Church
Jersey City, New Jersey
March 12, 1989*

Father Slinger, on behalf of the 294th Engineer Combat Battalion, I thank you and St. Paul's Church for receiving us today.

It is fitting that we meet in this Church in Jersey City on the border of Bayonne. The nucleus of this Battalion first came from here. There were a few of us, less favored, who came from such places as Eva, Alabama, Brooklyn, New York or even South Orange, Trenton or Rutherford, New Jersey. But we soon learned where the Marion Section was, that all things radiate from Journal Square.

The Battalion was last together in the shattered, starving City of Berlin in the Fall of 1945. In this Church the Battalion's living and its dead are reunited in the presence of family and friends of those in whose memory we meet.

We are not here to mourn. That was completed many years ago. Rather, we are here to remember; we are here to celebrate what we accomplished together; we are here to fulfill the vision which led to this occasion and to the events which will follow in Sherborne on the 45th Anniversary of D-Day.

First we recall the 29 C Company men who were killed in the tragic antitank mine explosion in Sherborne. Let us retrace their route there.

Almost 46 years ago to the day most of these 29 men traveled to Fort Dix along with thousands of others selected to report that day. Prior to inoculation for every disease known to man, they, like the rest of us, were warned by every 2, 3, 4-day veteran to "Watch out for the Hook". They were roused at 5:00 a.m. their first morning. Shivering in the cold, damp air, lined up at ragged attention, still without uniforms, they and the other saviours of Western civilization faced a lean, leathery buck sergeant who greeted them: "You tink you soldiers. You ———". And here the sergeant used a scatological term suitable for Fort Dix but not for St. Paul's.

By some trick of fate this group of men and about 800 more of us were selected from the new recruits at Fort Dix, loaded onto a railroad train and sent to Camp Gordon in Georgia. There we were met by a cadre of officers and non-coms. This scraggly group, joined from time to time by others, was to remain together for nearly three years and become the 294th Engineer Combat Battalion.

During the next three months on the hot, sandy soil of Georgia, on its muddy lakes and in its piney woods this group learned many things. It practiced close order drill. It learned how to blow things up and how to strip and reassemble in the dark an M-1 rifle and various caliber machine guns. It learned how to build bridges and how to deal with different kinds of barbed wire. It learned how to dig ditches, peel potatoes and wash pots. It learned the location of every beer joint in Augusta.

In June of 1943 the Battalion loaded into trucks and left Camp Gordon. The trucks rolled down Peachtree Street in Atlanta, wound beneath Lookout Mountain in Tennessee and came to a halt at a chicken warehouse near the Chickamauga-Chattanooga National Park. Next day, after a night bedded down in chicken manure, the Battalion moved into the Tennessee maneuver area. This was in the State's northern hill country.

For a time we rebuilt the barbed wire fences of farmers whose fences had been destroyed in earlier maneuvers. The farmers seemed unimpressed by the fact that we were trained engineers. They requested that we leave the barbed wire with them so that they could do the job themselves.

When the maneuvers took place we performed the various mysterious roles assigned to us. This took us through a wholly rural countryside. Who can forget the kindness of the simple people living in those hills. Poor as they were, they brought us fried chicken, biscuits and pinto beans. The pinto beans were a strange food to the city folk from Hudson County, but the gentle kindness with which they were given spoke a common language.

Maneuvers completed, the Battalion was loaded onto a railroad train and proceeded across the vast expanse of the Southwest to arrive at Camp Pilot Knob in the Mojave Desert. There, as an example of Army logic, we were to undergo desert training. The Mojave Desert was truly far distant from Hudson County in more ways than one. Camp Pilot Knob itself was a small city of pyramidal tents set in the desert. In the distance, mountains seemingly made of piles of rock rose from the desert floor. Tarantulas, scorpions, and sidewinders moved along the sand and occasionally under the blankets of sleeping soldiers. Jackrabbits were the size of hound dogs. Sandstorms swept the area for days at a time.

Occasionally in the heat of late summer and early autumn each soldier was limited to one canteen of water a day for drinking and washing. There was very little washing. Mine fields were laid. There were reconnaissance trips through the desert. Each Company, in a night exercise, put a heavy pontoon bridge across the broad expanse of the Colorado River.

In the evenings the PX tent sold ice cream, Coca Cola and beer — a heady mix which never tasted so good before or since. For night life there was an occasional trip to Yuma, a city which I will not even attempt to describe.

In late December once again the Battalion was loaded onto a troop train. Traveling by way of New Orleans it exchanged the heat of the desert for the frigid climate of Massachusetts. From Camp Miles Standish outside Boston, the Battalion was loaded onto what must have been the smallest ocean-going vessel ever converted to a troop ship — the Excelsior.

She departed on January 19, 1944, crossing the Atlantic in convoy. The troops were packed 4 or 5 deep on canvas bunks. Those more prone to seasickness were urged to take the lower bunks.

Arriving in Glasgow, the Battalion was transported to Sherborne. There it was billeted in one-story barracks located on the outskirts of that lovely little Town. The Town itself could have been taken from a storybook. In the center was the ancient Cathedral, its predecessor started in Saxon times, later rebuilt in Gothic style. Next to the Cathedral was a boys' school whose students still wore the formal clothing characteristic of the English public school. The streets of the Town were narrow and winding. The shops and the homes were old and quaint. Beyond the Town lay rolling hills, woods and farmland.

Despite the hordes of American soldiers descending upon them, the people of the Town were uniformly friendly. They invited us into their homes. They opened us their equivalent of our USO, which they had organized for their own servicemen, most

of whom were then at far distant places. They organized dances and entertainment for us. It must be said that no matter how romantically we now look back upon those days, 800 plus engineers cannot have been an easy group to live with. But live with us they did. Sherborne was the closest thing to home which these men had known for some time. It was the closest thing to home they would know for a long time to come.

Yet despite the pleasantness of the place it was here that the world of make-believe ended. Here each forced march, each bridge that was built, each mine field laid, the exercises on the southern coast of England — each was preparatory for that as yet unknown day when the Battalion would land on the coast of France.

It was in the midst of these final preparations that there occurred the accident which cost the lives of 29 men — almost an entire platoon of C Company. At midday on March 20, after the platoon had laid a practice mine field, a truckload of antitank mines exploded. Of the 29 men, 24 came from New Jersey, 16 of these from Hudson County. The rest came from New York City, Pennsylvania, Louisiana, Missouri and Arizona. To their memory the first plaque is dedicated.

We also recall the 16 men who were killed on the continent of Europe after the June 6, 1944 Invasion.

Sobered and shaken after the antitank mine explosion, the Battalion nevertheless continued training in the Sherborne area. In late May it packed its equipment, loaded its trucks and proceeded to a marshaling area in Wales. On June 3 or 4, trains carried the Battalion to Newport at the head of the Bristol Channel. There the Battalion and other troops boarded a converted Grace Line ship, newly named the Susan B. Anthony.

On the morning of June 6 the Susan B. Anthony steamed along the southern coast of England. The night before paratroopers had dropped into Normandy and at that very moment troops were going ashore at two American and three British and Canadian beachheads. The 294th was scheduled to land at Utah Beach early in the morning of June 7.

The morning of June 7 was a memorable one. An early breakfast having been eaten, the troops were in the holds of the ship putting on their light packs and gathering their weapons. The ship struck a mine, listed and lost its electric power. There was no panic. The only exits from the holds were narrow companionways up which the men proceeded in single file. The upper holds were emptied first, followed by the lower ones.

The members of the Battalion left the stricken vessel, climbing down cargo nets into landing craft or destroyers brought alongside. As the scattered Battalion was brought to shore, the Susan B. Anthony, smoke pouring from it, sank beneath the English Channel.

Time does not permit me to recount the details of the Battalion's role in the campaigns which lay ahead. It built and maintained roads. It constructed bridges by the score — foot bridges, trestle bridges, Bailey bridges and pontoon bridges — sometimes under fire. It swept thousands of miles of roads for antitank and antipersonnel mines. It fought as infantry in outposts in the Hurtgen Forest. The Battalion worked in support of numerous divisions, including the First, the Third Armored, the Eighth, the Ninth and the 82nd Airborne.

The campaign in Normandy in June and July was succeeded by August's sweep across northern France, through Belgium and across the German frontier. For four

months — September till late December — the Battalion remained in the wet, dark and gloomy Hurtgen Forest. On Christmas Eve and Christmas Day in 1944 the Battalion was back in Belgium for the Battle of the Bulge, manning road blocks along the northern shoulder of the salient which the German Army had driven into the American front. February saw a return to the Hurtgen Forest and the assault across the flooded Roer River. In March and April the Rhine was bridged and the Battalion proceeded eastward into the heart of Germany.

Every Battalion member here today has vivid memories of these campaigns — times of fear, demonstrations of courage, and instances of failures, the absurd and the ridiculous and, yes, the occasional stupidity of which the Army is capable.

Most important of all, each Battalion member assembled here remembers his friends. What counted most day by day was the person who shared your pup tent, the persons with whom you divided and cooked the rations, the people in the outpost dugout with you, the men riding with you in the back of the truck as you proceeded to the next bridge to be built, road to be swept or to whatever else was assigned your platoon or your squad.

Inevitably as the campaigns proceeded some of these persons most important to us were killed — some by artillery bursts, some by small arms fire, some in Normandy, some in the Hurtgen Forest. There were sixteen in all — five from New Jersey, the rest from New York, Nebraska, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Indiana and Oklahoma. It is in their memory that this second plaque is given.

Let me conclude by describing the extraordinary process which has been underway for the past few years — a process which has brought us here today and which will lead to the June 6 ceremony in Sherborne.

During the years after the War many members of the Battalion have returned to Sherborne to visit friends and to regain a sense of all that had taken place there. One of these visitors was Jim Orrico from A Company. He conceived the idea of erecting a memorial to the C Company men who had been killed. He communicated with Mr. Digby on whose estate the accident had occurred. Mr. Digby put him in touch with the Town Council.

The Town Council and the Abbey authorities suggested that the memorial become a part of the Town's own memorial to its World War I and World War II dead. This memorial consists of a tall, very simple Celtic Cross located on the grounds beside the Abbey. Surrounding the base of the Cross are stone benches facing a wall which bears the plaques. Soon the project was expanded to include those who were killed during the campaigns on the continent.

In the meantime, Joe Luciano of B Company hosted a B Company reunion at Calamity Jane's in Kearny, New Jersey. He suggested that Jim Orrico invite a few A Company men. The few grew to 20. They included Jim Watson — A Company's commanding officer during the concluding months of the War. He had been leader of the 1st Platoon in Normandy and received the French Croix de Guerre with the silver star after his platoon bridged the Douve River for the 82nd Airborne Division. After the B Company reunion Eddie Mulhern organized an A Company event to which people came from as far as Massachusetts and Texas.

Sadly both Jim Orrico and Jim Watson died before completion of the project, but Angie Orrico has become its secretary and Jo Watson has become its treasurer.

A sculptor was needed to design the plaques. Helene Massey-Hemmans had worked for the United States Courts. Earlier the Military Academy at West Point had commissioned her to design a sculpture honoring the first Black graduate from West Point. She agreed to design our plaques and supervise their casting. You see her work here today.

Joe Luciano undertook to communicate with B Company's members; Joe Donnelly agreed to coordinate Headquarters Company. No one had appeared from C Company, but John Carroll rashly wrote saying he had organized a number of events in the past, so he found himself holding the position of C Company organizer.

George Jones is organizing a dinner and other activities in Sherborne. Other persons who have volunteered their services are listed in our program.

Once news of the project was disseminated, contributions began arriving. To date more than 70 people have contributed, with contributions coming not only from the New Jersey area but also from such distant places as Delaware, Georgia, Florida, Vermont, Michigan, Texas, New Mexico, Massachusetts, the State of Washington and Ohio. Contributors included not only members of the Battalion but also wives of Battalion members. One of these was Colonel Grennan's wife, Mary. She and members of her family are with us today. Though not asked to do so, friends and family of some of those who were killed also contributed.

We sought someone who could publicize this project, hoping to attract the attention of some who had not received word of it. By extraordinary coincidence John Carroll was a high school classmate of Betty Foley, a reporter for the Jersey Journal. In 1944 she was a cub reporter for the paper and wrote some of the articles about C Company men from Hudson County killed in the antitank mine explosion. The names had been released a few at a time for security reasons. This young reporter sensed a larger story but was not allowed to run it. She can do so now.

Most will not be able to go to Sherborne in June, and consequently it was thought appropriate to have a preliminary event here in the United States. What more appropriate place could there be than St. Paul's Church — the parish church of a number of the members of the Battalion.

We needed persons to conduct the service of dedication and recollection — who could be more appropriate than Father Slinger of St. Paul's and the Rev. Jim MacNaughton who, after service with A Company, entered the ministry.

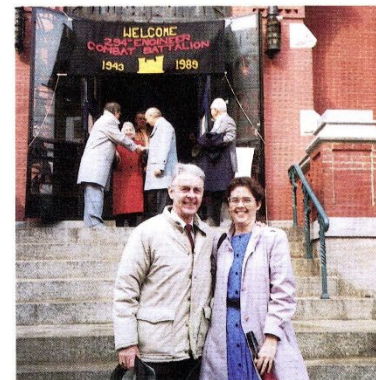
We of the 294th Engineer Combat Battalion have been brought together again by the bonds of our common experience. We have been brought together again by our continuing ties to our fallen friends.

The plaques which we are about to dedicate are outward symbols of what we feel in our hearts.

Jersey City — March 12, 1989



Joseph A. Donnelly, John M. Carroll, Angela Orrico, Johanna Watson, Dickinson R. Debevoise, and Joseph W. Luciano stand with the plaques at the reception following the service in St. Paul's Church.
(photograph courtesy of The Jersey Journal)



Joseph A. Donnelly and his daughter Eileen leave St. Paul's Church.



American Legionnaire, Mary Grennan, wife of the late Col. Charles Grennan, Joseph W. Luciano, and James Rio at reception after St. Paul's service.

Sherborne Abbey

*A Service
To Commemorate Men of
the 294th Engineer Combat Battalion
United States Army*

11:00 a.m. June 6, 1989

Welcome and Introduction by Canon Robert Willis,
Vicar of Sherborne

Hymn: *All people that on earth do dwell*

First Lesson: Isaiah 40:18-31 read by the Mayor of Sherborne
Councillor Cory Luxmoore

*But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall
mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and
they shall walk, and not faint.*

Hymn: *O God, our help in ages past*

Second Lesson: St. John 15:5-17 read by Carmault B. Jackson, Jr.

*Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life
for his friends.*

Remarks: by Dickinson R. Debevoise

Intercession

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn: *Mine eyes have seen the Glory of the coming of the Lord*

Act of Commitment

Anthem: *God save our gracious Queen
My Country 'tis of thee*

The Blessing

OUTSIDE THE ABBEY AT THE WAR MEMORIAL

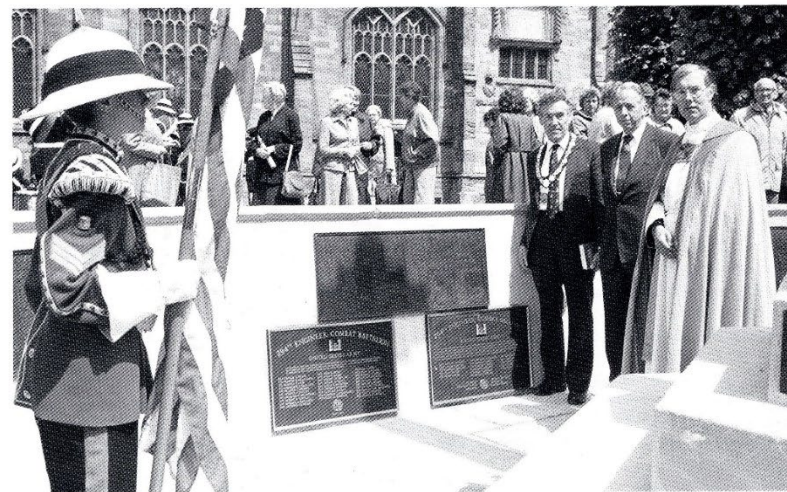
Prayer of Dedication: Canon Willis

Unveiling the Plaques

Reading the Names: James F. Finn

Taps and Last Post

Presentation by The Marabout Corps of Drums



*The Plaques Unveiled
(photograph by courtesy of the Western Gazette Co. Yeovil, England)*

REMARKS

Sherborne Abbey
Sherborne, England
June 6, 1989

Canon Willis, Mayor Luxmoore, Sherborne friends of the 294th Engineer Combat Battalion. First I must thank you on the Battalion's behalf for all that you have done to welcome us and to make this day a fitting tribute to the Battalion's dead. You have mounted the plaques presented in their memory; you have arranged this beautiful service and the ceremonies which follow; you have prepared a luncheon for us; and you have arranged for us to visit the scene of the March 1944 explosion. We are truly grateful for these and for other kindnesses which I shall mention in a moment.

As you look upon your American visitors, as you observe their greying hair and receding (or receded) hairlines, as you note their extended middles, their jowls, their furrowed faces, you must wonder — are these Americans really some of the 800 youths who descended upon this Town 45 years ago.

I need not remind you — *tempus edax rerum* — time devours all things. As the placid cow crops the meadow grass, time has munched a bit upon us.

But however munched upon you may find us, we are indeed a remnant of the 294th Engineer Combat Battalion. There is a greater remnant who also helped make this day possible. At this very moment in many parts of the United States that greater remnant is noting our observance here — an observance in a particular place, on a particular day which hold an abiding significance for the entire remnant.

On this occasion we recall those of us who did not return to their homeland and we thank this Town and its people who, for a time, provided them with something akin to a home.

Many of the people we knew here 45 years ago are no longer living. Some of you must be their children, or possibly, their grandchildren. So some background may be in order.

The Battalion which you befriended was activated in the State of Georgia in March 1943. Its commanding officer was Colonel Charles A. Grennan. Its nucleus was drawn largely from the New York metropolitan area and in particular from the City of Jersey City. During training and combat, replacements came from all over the United States, but the nucleus joined the Battalion at its formation, trained with it, served with it from the Invasion till the end of the War in Europe, and left it when the Battalion was deactivated in the shattered city of Berlin in the fall of 1945.

Before arriving in Sherborne the Battalion completed its basic training in the hot and sandy countryside of eastern Georgia; it participated in maneuvers in the sparsely settled hill country of northern Tennessee; it underwent desert training in California's Mojave Desert. It departed by troopship from Boston on January 19, 1944, arriving in Glasgow a short time later.

From there, 45 years ago last winter, we were brought to Sherborne, a part of the enormous military force assembling in southwestern England. To our delight we were to be billeted not in some dour, isolated spot, but rather in the midst of a lovely community of schools, shops, homes and friendly people. The friendly people, no doubt,

looked upon our arrival with some anxiety. I can imagine Mayor Luxmoore's and Canon Willis' predecessors admonishing their respective constituencies about Allied solidarity, Christian charity, and all that.

We too had been admonished. We were told that the English people had three criticisms of the American troops — they were "overpaid, oversexed and over here." We were told that we were not to provide further substance to the first two of those criticisms. I leave it to your historians to recall whether we observed those admonitions.

However that may be, we arrived in Sherborne and were assigned our various barracks. It was still bleak. The glories of an English spring lay some months in the future. But your welcome was warm. Your own sons and many of your daughters were serving in distant, often dangerous places, but you took us in as your own.

Your NAAFI, organized for your own servicemen and women, manned by volunteers from the Town, welcomed us. You organized dances and parties for us. In spite of wartime shortages you invited us into your homes for tea and whatever else was available. On our own initiative we found the pubs — and how we enjoyed them!

Needless to say, we were not sent here just for rest and recreation. The pleasant occasions which you provided were interludes in strenuous training for the Invasion of Europe, the date of which we did not know, but which had to be sometime that spring.

It was during this training that the accident occurred which cost the lives of 29 men — almost an entire platoon of the 294th's C Company.

As sometimes happens when a military unit is recruited from one locality, a battle or an event such as the March 20, 1944 antitank mine explosion strikes hard one town or one area. Twenty-four of the 29 men who were killed came from northern New Jersey, 16 from two neighboring communities in Hudson County. It is in memory of these 29 men that the first of the two plaques is being dedicated today.

The people of this Town treated this loss not only as ours but also as theirs. You spoke words of consolation. You provided the church where a requiem mass was held.

Training for the Invasion continued. From time to time the Battalion left Sherborne, traveling to the coast for landing exercises. In late May we left for the last time, proceeding to a marshaling area in Wales. From there we went to Newport at the head of the Bristol Channel to board the troopship Susan B. Anthony.

On D-Day, June 6, we sailed along the southern coast of England, listening to early reports of the airdrops and landings then underway. Early in the morning of June 7, as the Susan B. Anthony prepared to disembark its troops off Utah Beach, she struck a sea mine and proceeded to sink.

Once again English hospitality came to the fore, as many of us were rescued from the sinking vessel by a British destroyer.

As a footnote to history, the destroyer was one of the 50 overage ships which, before the United States entered the War, President Roosevelt turned over to the British Navy. That was when the Battle of the Atlantic was not going at all well. The President was roundly criticized at the time of the transaction, but on June 7 there were quite a few Americans who could appreciate the wisdom of the gift.

Time does not permit a lengthy recital of the work of the 294th during the campaigns which followed. That is recorded elsewhere. Suffice it to say it served with credit. It built bridges — foot bridges for infantry, vehicular bridges, four Bailey bridges across the Seine and a heavy pontoon bridge across the Rhine. It built and maintained

mile upon mile of roads, it swept for and removed antipersonnel and antitank mines. It fought as infantry in the gloom of the Hurtgen Forest. It manned road blocks on Christmas Eve during the Battle of the Bulge.

During all that time what was most important in human terms was the person who shared your pup tent, the persons with whom you divided and cooked the rations, the men riding with you in the back of the truck as you proceeded to the next bridge to be built, road to be swept for mines or to whatever lay ahead for your platoon or squad.

As the campaigns proceeded some of these persons most important to us were killed. Each of us has at least one good friend whose name appears on the second plaque we are dedicating today. At least two men in the Battalion lost brothers who served with them — a surviving brother, Joe Luciano, is with us now.

It is not surprising that after the War members of the Battalion have returned to Sherborne from time to time to visit the scenes of those former days and to visit friends here.

In an inspired moment after such a visit one of our Battalion members, Jim Orrico, wrote to Mr. Simon Wingfield Digby, owner of the site of the antitank mine explosion. Jim stated that the Battalion might like to mount a plaque at the scene of the accident. Mr. Digby conferred with the Town's Mayor and Council and forwarded to Jim a suggestion which has evolved into today's events. It was a particularly generous suggestion — that our memorial become a part of your own war memorial, that our plaques be mounted next to those which you maintain in honor of your own dead of World War I and World War II.

Jim Orrico died in an automobile accident before he could complete this project. We lost another person deeply interested in this venture — A Company's Jim Watson, who was its commanding officer at the end of the war. But the wives of each of these men took over their work and are here today.

Reflection confirms the appropriateness of this place as the site of our memorial.

It was here, of course, that 29 men lost their lives. It was here that the Battalion completed its training for the assault upon the European continent. It was here that the entire Battalion was the beneficiary of your kindness and friendship. For all of us this Town provided a welcome touch of home. For those listed on these plaques it was their last touch of home.

Perhaps equally important, the memorial stands next to this magnificent Abbey, this living embodiment of what is highest and best in our Western civilization. Time has not devoured it. It has stood here during times of great evil; it has stood here through the centuries during the never-ending struggles of men and women of all nations for truth and for justice.

It is very easy to forget the struggle in which these men were engaged. It is very easy to forget the terrible darkness which would have descended upon our world had it not been for them and the others who gave their lives in that struggle. This very spot keeps alive the memory of all noble struggles. Here our dead, like yours, share a hallowed, timeless place.

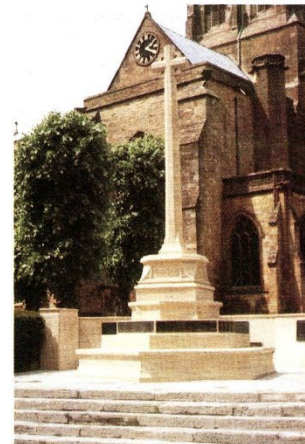
Your visitors of today, this remnant of the 294th Engineer Combat Battalion, will soon depart from Sherborne, perhaps truly for the last time. We leave in your care these plaques, these visible tributes to our friends and our brothers.

Sherborne

June 6, 1989



Sherborne Abbey



The Memorial which the Town of Sherborne erected in memory of its World War I and World War II dead. It now is also the site of the 294th Engineer Combat Battalion memorial plaques.



Entering Sherborne Abbey



The Abbey Sanctuary



The Marabout Corps of Drums



W.E. Trevo, Town Clerk of Sherborne



Leaders and members of the Marabout Corps of Drums who assisted at the luncheon



*Councillor Cory Luxmoore,
Mayor of Sherborne, and
Kathleen Luxmoore, Mayoress*

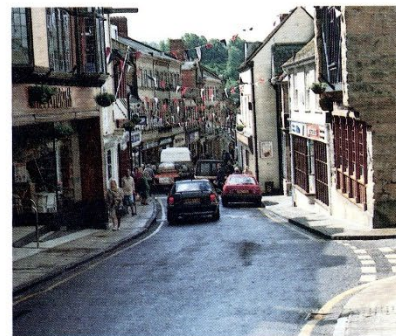


The luncheon in process



The Battalion Dinner, Sherborne, June 6, 1989

Back Row: Henrick Striker, Dave A. Balick, Eduard G. Verga, James F. Finn, Dickinson Debevoise, Joseph W. Luciano,
Carmalt B. Jackson, Jr., Anthony J. Russo, William G. Slemmer, Warren W. Buckingham, Eugene Chavak
Front Row: George H. Jones, Benjamin Jacobs, Angela Orrico, Johanna Watson, Simon P. Lovett, Eduard Mulhern



Cheap Street



The Half Moon Hotel, which faces the Abbey and War Memorial

Contemporary Account of Mine Explosion

Letter to the Western Gazette
January 9, 1987

SHERBORNE WARTIME DISASTER RECALLED

Sir, — From time to time in the Western Gazette and elsewhere mention is made of the terrific explosion and resultant heavy loss of life suffered by the American Forces at Sherborne Park in 1944.

As I was only some 500 yards away when this tragedy occurred, the following information may be of some interest.

Before being called up for military service, I was employed by the late Mr. Arthur Jennings, of Horsecastles Farm. During the war he was also required to cultivate 80 acres in Sherborne Park.

On the day in question we were threshing a corn rick adjacent to the private road directly in front of Sherborne Castle. American troops, with several large vehicles, were training in the next field. At about midday there was a tremendous explosion. One of the vehicles disintegrated and several others were damaged.

I was on the corn rick pitching sheaves onto the threshing machine and the Land Army girl who was bond cutting on the machine itself was hurled by the blast in a heap on top of me, a predicament I would have enjoyed under different circumstances. She was most fortunate not to have been impaled on a pitchfork. The threshing machine, a huge contraption, lurched against the corn rick then righted itself. Had the rick level been lower, the machine would have toppled over completely.

In the training field, American soldiers were running around everywhere and a jeep tore along the road past us in the direction of Haydon Park where the American camp was situated.

It shortly returned with several American field ambulances but, even then, in our shocked state, we hoped that we might possibly be witnessing very realistic "war games". It should be appreciated that during the war all sorts of inexplicable Army manoeuvres and explosions took place, although this was the loudest I had ever heard.

Our worst fears were confirmed, however, when, after the ambulances had returned to the camp, open lorries passed along the road directly beneath us. We could see the rows of mutilated bodies covered by their comrades, as best they could, with ground sheets, but nevertheless an appalling sight.

Strict censorship was imposed and, of course, careless talk was discouraged, but we were later told by the Americans that they were practicing mine laying when the lorry carrying the live mines rolled back over one which had just been placed in position.

The following day Sherborne reverberated to a further series of explosions as the Americans detonated the remaining mines.

From various reports I have read it would appear that relatives and friends of the casualties are, understandably, surprised and disappointed that no memorial exists. One explanation could be that, because of terrible losses being suffered in all theatres of war and the strict censorship, publicity was negligible.

I have no knowledge of where the victims were buried, I assume that they were

taken back home. The American Forces left soon afterwards for the D-Day invasion of Normandy. I feel sure that if the bodies had been interred locally a memorial would have been erected.

Several different locations have been suggested as to where the explosion actually occurred, but should it be of interest, I can point out the exact spot either on the ground itself or on an Ordnance Survey Map. — J D FROST, 99 Silbury Road, Aston, Bristol.

FOOTNOTE: Shortly after the explosion, a young Western Gazette reporter went to the scene and witnessed the devastation. Unable to gain any information there, he was directed to the U.S. Forces' spokesman, then in Priory House, Greenhill, and was informed that some 40 U.S. Servicemen had been killed — at that time believed to be the worst accident involving U.S. military personnel in wartime Britain. The story was subsequently submitted, under the voluntary censorship arrangements then operating, to the Regional Censor, Bristol. A brief report of the accident "somewhere in the West Country" was published in the Western Gazette.

— EDITOR.

The above letter and Footnote are reprinted by courtesy of the Western Gazette Co., Yeovil, England.



Sherborne Castle, which looks upon the scene of the March 20, 1944 training accident

Scenes from the Campaigns in Europe 1944 — 1945



Valogne, Normandy — June 1944



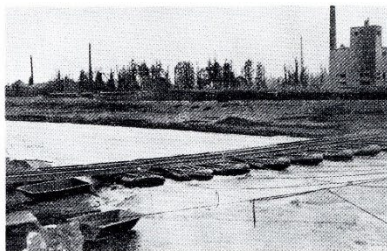
Breakout from Normandy — July 25, 1944



Sweeping for Mines



The Battle of the Bulge — Dec. - Jan., 1944 - 1945



Floating Steel Trestle Bridge across the Roer River
February 25, 1945



Berlin — July 1945



Building Bailey Bridge over the Seine
Melun, Aug. 28 - Sept. 2, 1944
(Also known as the "Dinah Shore Bridge")



Hurtgen Forest — Fall 1944



Bridging the Rhine
Bad Godesburg, March 18 - 19, 1945



JACKPOT BRIDGE
Total length: 1170 ft
Construction time: 16 hrs 45 mins
Man hours: 11725
Materials and personnel used in this bridge would make a convoy 30 miles long.
Built by Jacksnipe and Maypole
181, 86, 552
Courtesy of U.S.N.

CONTRIBUTORS TO THE PLAQUE FUND

Phillip W. Aaron	Phillip J. Dressler	Rocco Labato	Raymond J. Rybinski, Sr.
William Abbotts, III	William J. Dugan	Bennie Lotito	Anthony J. Russo, D.D.S.
Russell W. Baird	James F. Finn	Simon P. Lovett	Louis D. Salerno
Carlton A. Baker	John Forrester	Joseph W. Luciano	John E. Sauerwein
Louis Baldino	Joseph Furmanek	Richard J. Ludwiczak	Americo Savoca
Dave A. Balick	Amato Gatta	Thomas Macagnano	Arthur M. Scalise
Frank Barone	Robert Gertz	Rev. James MacNaughton, Jr.	Neil Sharkey
Ray A. Baudoin	William C. Getz	Charles Marsella	John Skunda
Viola Nielsen Bauer	Charles Giglio	John K. Marshall	Gus Solomon
(Wife of the late William Bauer)	Dante Giuliani	Gerald E. Martin	William G. Slemmer
Thomas Bender	Mary Grennan	Col. Valerian Martin	Henrick Striker
Frank Bilderback	(Wife of the late Col. Charles A. Grennan)	Harold J. Mascher	Morris Sunshine
Tony Bilicki	Deborah Grillo	Bernard McCarthy	Virginia M. Sweeney
(Brother of Pfc Edward J. Bilicki)	(Nice of the late James Orrico)	William P. McGann	(Sister of the late George P. Sweeney)
Walter B. Brookshire	Peter Gregory	John McLaughlin	Howard T. Thieme
Warren W. Buckingham	Clarence Hagen	Daniel McMurtrie	Stephen R. Tomko
Dominic Calello	John J. Hammill	Daniel McNulty	Edward Van Dorn
Dominick Campanile	Mary Hawkes	John J. Micallef	Frank J. Venezia
Louis Cardaneo	(Sister of S. Sgt. John Murphy)	(Brother of Sgt. Edward Micallef)	John Venezia
John M. Carroll	Thomas Henry	Edward Mulhern	Edward G. Verga
Robert D. Carson	Irwin M. Hersi	Joseph Napolitano	Frank Verga
Eugene Chwalk	Raymond A. Horn	Frank A. Nardi	Laura Verplank
Orlando V. Cilenti	Howard Hurwitz	Walter Noll	(Wife of the late Marcin Verplank)
Richard Clanahan	George J. Hyland	George H. Novak	Edmund Walsh
Albert S. Condio	Carmault B. Jackson, Jr., M.D.	Angela Orrico	(Brother of Sgt. Donald J. Walsh)
Philip N. Corvino	Benjamin Jacobs	James C. Pack	Thomas Walsh
Pasquale Costanzo	George H. Jones	Daniel Pagano	(Brother of Sgt. Donald J. Walsh)
Patrick J. Crowley Sr.	Jane G. Keller	Anthony Pasculli	Johanna Watson
James D. D'Agostino	(Sister of Pfc Robert L. Ready)	Ralph E. Pinnick	(Wife of the late James J. Watson)
Dickinson R. Debevoise	Sheldon Kerr	Kenneth Potter	Towner K. Webster
Joseph DeGaetano	(Brother of Pfc Leonard B. Kerr)	William T. Pritchett	Richard W. Weires
Alfred A. DelMoro	Walter J. Kleis	Bernard G. Radomski	Herbert Whitehead
Dominick De Tommaso	Stanley Kuchar	Richard L. Rice	
Joseph A. Donnelly	Alexander La Torre	Jack Rosenberg	
Paul Donnelly	Charles J. Liotta, Sr.	John Ruschak	
Dr. John J. Donohue			

THE MEMORIAL PLAQUE COMMITTEE

James Orrico, 1923-1987

Battalion Member who originated Plaque Project and was its organizing chairman

<i>Johanna Watson</i>	<i>Dickinson R. Debevoise, Company A Coordinator</i>
<i>Treasurer and wife of the late Captain James J. Watson</i>	<i>Joseph W. Luciano, Company B Coordinator</i>
<i>Angela Orrico</i>	<i>John M. Carroll, Company C Coordinator</i>
<i>Secretary and wife of the late James Orrico</i>	<i>Joseph A. Donnelly, HQ Company Coordinator</i>

<i>Warren W. Buckingham</i>	<i>Edward Mulhern</i>
<i>Robert Gertz</i>	<i>Edward G. Verga</i>
<i>George H. Jones</i>	<i>Herbert Whitehead</i>
<i>Simon P. Lovett</i>	

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In addition to the Memorial Plaque Committee members and the contributors to the fund, many persons helped make this project a success. Their names are set forth here, with apologies to those who may have been omitted.

THE SCULPTOR

Sculptor Helen Massey-Hemmans, was commissioned to design the plaques and oversee their casting. In 1977 the United States Military Academy commissioned Ms. Hemmans to sculpt the bust of Lt. Henry Flipper, who in 1877 was the first Black man to graduate from West Point. In 1983, at the request of the United States District Court, she sculpted the bust of Angelo Locascio, who for many years was Clerk of the District Court in New Jersey.

THE SERVICES

Rev. Joseph Slinger made available St. Paul's Roman Catholic Church for the March 12, 1989 service in the United States. He and Rev. James MacNaughton, Jr., of A Company planned and conducted the service. Alan Quinn served as organist and trumpeter. A Jersey City American Legion Post provided the honor guard. Joe Luciano made the arrangements with Father Slinger, and Joe and his wife Julie made all the arrangements for the reception which followed.

Canon Robert Willis, Vicar of Sherborne, planned and conducted the magnificent service in Sherborne Abbey and at the Town's War Memorial. The Marabout Corps of Drums, led by Ray Kemp, provided a bugler and gave a presentation at the unveiling of the plaques.

OUR ENGLISH HOSTS

It would be impossible to thank adequately the Town Council and people of Sherborne who did so much to make June 6, 1989 a memorable day:

Mr. Simon Wingfield Digby was serving in the British armed forces in 1944 but is now the owner of Sherborne Castle. It is he who responded to Jim Orrico's initial suggestion that a 294th memorial be erected.

For several years Sherborne's Town Clerk, W.E. ("Ted") Trew and his assistant, Monica Atkinson, attended to the countless details which went into the planning and execution of the event. They served as liaison between the American committee and Sherborne's Town Council. They furnished detailed information to the committee so that the plaques could be designed in a manner suitable to the site; they arranged for the many events which took place on June 6; they received the plaques in advance of the ceremony; they arranged to have the plaques mounted the day before the event; they were, in short, the control point for events in Sherborne.

Mayor of Sherborne, Councillor Cory Luxmoore, and his wife Kathleen, participated in the service in the Abbey and served as host and hostess to the American visitors throughout the whole of June 6. Other members of the Council attended and co-hosted these events.

One of Sherborne's historians, Mr. G.H.D. Pitman, until recently a teacher at the Sherborne Boys' School, conducted the American group on a tour, providing a succinct and entertaining history of the ancient structures and sites which occupy the center of Sherborne.

The Local Helpers of the Parochial Church Council, under the leadership of Daphne Hoddinott, provided the delicious luncheon served in the Day Centre on Digby Road.

Representatives of the Sherborne Branch of the British Legion and of the Dorset Old Comrades Association attended the service and the luncheon and extended greetings to their American counterparts.

After a bus carried the American party on a tour of Sherborne Park, the scene of the March 1944 antitank mine explosion, tea, with many filling embellishments, was served at Sherborne Castle. Mrs. Jean Treasure was in charge of the tea. In 1944, then 17 years of age, Mrs. Treasure worked as a clerk with the 228th Station Hospital located in Haydon Park, Sherborne, just a short distance from the scene of the explosion. The 228th received and tended C Company's wounded and dead.

THE MEDIA

Members of the media took a special interest in the Jersey City and Sherborne events. Thanks to their work long-lost members of the Battalion were found and relatives of men who were listed on the plaques learned of the activities being conducted in their memory.

Betty (A. Elizabeth) Foley was a cub reporter for The Jersey Journal in 1944 and wrote the Journal's articles concerning the Hudson County youths who were killed in the antitank mine explosion. The articles were spread over a two months' period, describing one or two deaths at a time so as not to disclose the extent of the disaster. No longer a cub reporter, Betty Foley covered the 294th's 1989 events in Jersey City and Sherborne for The Jersey Journal.

Matthew Schwartz of Channel 9 News produced a 1989 Memorial Day story covering the 294th Engineer Combat Battalion and plans for the events in Sherborne.

Dan Wakin of the Associated Press, Frances Burns of United Press and Guy Sterling of the Newark Star Ledger wrote articles concerning the June 1989 pilgrimage to Sherborne.

THE PHOTOGRAPHS

In addition to the Jersey Journal and the Western Gazette Co. of Yeovil, England, photographs of the 1989 events in Jersey City and Sherborne were provided by Trina Debevoise, Joseph Donnelly, Carmault and Lynda Jackson, Simon Lovett, Joseph Luciano and Henrick Striker.

The photograph of the sinking of the Susan B. Anthony was taken by a wartime photographer whose name is unknown to the Memorial Plaque Committee. A copy of the photograph was furnished to Jim Orrico by the Grace Lines which, before the War, operated the Susan B. Anthony (then known as the Santa Clara) as a cruise ship.

Certain of the wartime photographs come from the 294th Battalion History — Valogne, 1944; the Melun Bailey bridge; the bridge over the Roer.

Others of the wartime photographs appear in publications of the Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, such as Cross-Channel Attack (by G. A. Harrison) and Breakout and Pursuit (by Martin Blumenson). These photographs are Utah Beach, June 1944; Breakout from Normandy, July 25, 1944; and the scene of roadwork in the Hurtgen Forest in the fall of 1944.

The mine sweeper is a photograph of an original wartime drawing of S. Sgt. Rudy Wedow of Engineer Group Headquarters.

The other wartime photographs were taken by members of "A" Company whose names are not known to the Memorial Plaque Committee.



Utah Beach — June 1944

OTHER PARTICIPANTS

Eleanor Latka typed countless letters concerning the project, publicity releases, the newsletters to the Battalion and the copy for this booklet which was turned over to the printer.

Trina Debevoise performed editorial work for this booklet.

Ms. Paula Cohen-Schwartz and Ms. Marcia Aranooff, members of Senator Bill Bradley's staff, and the Senator himself facilitated communications with the Department of Defense as efforts were made to locate the records of the persons listed on the plaques in order to identify their next of kin and home towns. In addition, Senator Bradley arranged for a fitting tribute to the Battalion and recognition of the June 6 ceremony which appeared at page 55860 of the May 31, 1989 Congressional Record.

Lt. Colonels Leland W. Klein and Jeffrey D. Fletcher, Congressional Coordinators, and Colonels William E. Ryan, Jr. and Frederick C. Badger of the American Battle Monuments Commission expended time and resources to develop the necessary information concerning the Battalion's dead. This job was complicated by the fact that in the 1970's, a major fire destroyed a large portion of the pertinent records. In addition Colonel Badger assisted the Plaque Committee to obtain the requisite Battle Monuments Commission approval of the design and location of the plaques. Joseph Luciano, Jr., son of B Company's Joe Luciano, is an air freight consultant. He arranged to fly the two plaques to England, to clear them through customs and to have them delivered into the hands of Sherborne's Town Clerk, W. E. Trew.

George Jones of Headquarters Company organized the dinner held in Sherborne during the evening of June 6, 1989. It was attended by the members of the Battalion present in Sherborne, their spouses, two sons, a nephew, a grandson, Angela Orrico and Jo Watson.

Artist Frank Nardi, also of Headquarters Company, designed and prepared the banners used at St. Paul's Church and Sherborne Abbey, posters, drawings and the distinctive name tags which identified the American visitors in Sherborne.

Ellen Watson (Daughter of Capt. Jim Watson) provided valuable editorial assistance. Carolyn D'Arcy Hawks and Harold Samuel Hawks, III, of Eastern Shore Arts, Rock Hall, MD, are responsible for the superb layout and design of this booklet.

To all those mentioned above and to the others who contributed to the success of these 1989 memorial events the 294th Engineer Combat Battalion extends deep appreciation.



The final moments of the Susan B. Anthony

