

The 314th FA Battalion in the ETO



A Footnote to History

FOREWORD

Back in the summer of 1986, John Beard suggested a novel idea for a 314 FA Bn. history. Why not contact all reachable former members and ask each one to write stories of the most memorable events during their days in combat. They could be heroic, tragic, humorous, or mundane -- just whatever they wanted to tell. John offered to do the contacting, assembling of responses, and integrating the personal stories with the Division and Battalion After Action Reports, if I would add details not contained in the After Action Reports and amend the draft so that it would be as accurate an account of events as we could make it.

I told John the task would be monumental, but if he wanted to undertake it, I would support it any way I could.

The response to the request for stories was beyond all expectations, so much that judicious editing was required to avoid repetition, to select stories with broad appeal, and to ensure the end product would not be twice as thick as the Manhattan Telephone Directory.

True, we should have done this years earlier when many now departed comrades could have told their stories too, and also when the years were greener and the memories sharper. But time won't reverse for us. In fact, four contributors to this volume have not lived to read the final results.

This is the story of the 314th FA Bn. as the men of the 314th tell it. In their telling are all aspects of combat, the fearful, the gruesome, the humorous, and the heroic. The stories are the observations, experiences, reactions, and conclusions regarding long ago, historic events as perceived by men holding a broad spectrum of duties and responsibilities at the time.

If, as you read this unique history book, you develop a different recollection of events, dates, locales, or people involved, as herein told -- well, who will argue, after all you were there too.

Daniel J. Minahan
Colonel, USA, Ret.

Ann Arbor, Michigan
25 Sept. 1988

PREFACE

THIS 1944 SPERRY GYROSCOPE TESTIMONIAL SUMS UP WHAT WE OF THE 314 FA WERE DOING



Few of the combat successes of United States Army ground forces in this war would have been possible without the tremendous supporting fire power of our Field Artillery.

Using new guns, new types of shells, newly developed techniques, it can pour out massed fire at a speed, intensity, and accuracy unheard of in the last war. And this has contributed mightily to the rout of the Axis.

But even the world's finest guns and equipment could scarcely speak with such devastating authority except for the sure skill and courage under fire displayed by our American Artillerymen.



For artillery fighting is a highly technical business—and a dangerous one.

As the big guns move into position, up into the Infantry front lines go the forward observers. Working directly with the supported unit, they spot enemy targets, call for fire missions, adjust fire—and are themselves fair targets for the enemy.

Up go the "grasshoppers"—the flying observation posts which brazenly seek out enemy installations, and radio their information to the

ground. Through enemy bullets and shell fragments move the wire parties, to lay the network of telephone lines through which the fires of many guns may be co-ordinated from a single center.



Meanwhile husky gun crews work with speed and clocklike precision to keep the shells screaming toward the enemy on a split-second schedule. And men of the service batteries toil and sweat—servicing motor equipment, and supplying the greedy guns with shells.

That the Field Artillery was ready with highly efficient weapons when war came, and that it has developed even better ones since, is a tribute to the foresight of our artillerists who have been constantly planning and experimenting to insure that our guns will be superior to those used by the enemy.

Changes also were made in the organization of the Field Artillery—in keeping with changes in the Infantry and Armored Divisions—the better to perform the artillery's twin missions: to give support to the Infantry, Cavalry, and Armored Forces . . . to give depth to the battlefields.



The results are evident on every battle front. Today, American Artillerymen smash in seconds targets that once took minutes, even hours. They achieve simultaneous massed fire of many battalions that amazes old timers—and confounds the enemy.

Every Artilleryman and every American may take pride in the fact that one of the great jobs in this war is being done by the Field Artillery.

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INTRODUCTION

The exploits of the 80th Division, as one of the spearheads and workhorses of Patton's Third Army, have been chronicled in numerous publications. It is not the intent of this narrative to duplicate or elaborate upon any of them. Rather, it is an attempt to assemble recollections the men of the 314th FA Battalion have of their march across Europe more than forty years ago.

For continuity and perspective, sections of the 80th Infantry Division After Action Report, the 314th FA Battalion After Action Report, and the 314th History or Diary that was kept by the Battalion Commander have been incorporated. It seemed the most expeditious way to provide a base point for the personal stories of the men of the 314th.

The 80th Infantry Division was activated at Camp Forest, Tennessee, on July 15, 1942. The Commander was Major General Joseph D. Patch. Brigadier General Horace L. McBride was the Division Artillery Commander. When General Patch left the 80th in March 1943, General McBride became the Division Commander and Brigadier General Edmund W. Searby became the Division Artillery Commander. At the time of activation Lt. Col. DeLoss H. Barber was the Battalion Commander of the 314th FA Battalion. When he left on a cadre in February 1943, he was succeeded by the Bn. Exec., Major (later Lt. Col.) Daniel J. Minahan, who remained Commanding Officer of the 314th throughout the war. Most of the men who served with the 314th overseas joined at the time of the Division's activation.

Under the Tables of Organization, the 314th and the 318th Inf. constituted the 318th Infantry Regimental Combat Team. Except for a few periods during combat, the 314th was always in direct support of the 318th.

The 314th's training period, 1942-1944, was highlighted by two major events. The first was its selection to fire the salute for President Franklin D. Roosevelt when he visited the 80th Division at Camp Forest on April 18, 1943. The second was its performance in the Army Ground Forces artillery tests about a year later at Iron Mountain in the California-Arizona maneuver area. General Leslie J. McNair, Commanding General of the Army Ground Forces, praised the 80th Division Artillery for attaining the highest score ever made by any unit taking these tests. Gen. McNair, a great artillery man, had designed the test himself. Col. Joseph E. Shaw, Executive Officer of the 80th Division Artillery commented:

"The 314th FA Battalion score in Test I, AGF test at Iron Mountain, was the highest received by any FA Battalion in the USA. The test's rules were concocted with almost devilish cleverness so that even to pass a battalion had to be better than good."

AGF ARTILLERY TESTS Final Grades

	I	II	III	IV
313th FA	86.03	93.25	74.30	84.90
314th FA	96.89	87.75	89.35	92.72
315th FA	95.06	83.30	79.75	88.29
905th FA	89.19	95.95	85.05	89.85

HEADQUARTERS
ARMY GROUND FORCES
ARMY WAR COLLEGE
Washington 25, D. C.

355.1/212 (FA)-GNGOT

10 Apr 1944

SUBJECT: Field Artillery Battalion Firing Tests of the 80th Infantry Division.

TO : Commanding General, XIII Corps, Fort Dupont, Delaware.

1. The results obtained by the 80th Infantry Division in Army Ground Forces Field Artillery Battalion Firing Tests, held 20-25 March 1944, at Camp Iron Mountain, represent the highest average grade obtained by any division artillery or non-divisional group since the inauguration of the new tests last November.

2. The grades obtained by this division indicate an excellent state of training in the artillery battalions of the division. Such a state of training reflects a high standard of leadership.

3. The officers and enlisted men of the 80th Infantry Division Artillery are to be commended for their excellent performance.

By command of LT. GEN. McHAIR:

s/ J. G. Christianson
t/J. G. CHRISTIANSON,
Brig. Gen., G.S.C.,
Chief of Staff.

353 (GNGMF)

1st Ind.

/lwj

HEADQUARTERS XIII CORPS, Fort Du Pont, Delaware, 12 Apr 1944.

TO: Commanding General, 80th Infantry Division, Fort Dix, New Jersey.

It gives me great pleasure to forward this commendation on a splendid achievement.

s/A. C. Gillem, Jr.
t/A. C. GILLEM, JR.
Major General, U. S. Army
Commanding

2. The personnel of the Division Artillery can well be proud of this outstanding performance. Other members of the Division can be assured that the Division Artillery is well prepared to furnish that artillery fire support so necessary for success in battle.

s/H. L. McBride
t/H. L. McBRIDE,
Major General, United States Army,
Commanding.