



345th
Field Artillery Battalion

90th INFANTRY DIVISION

THIRD UNITED STATES ARMY

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IN MEMORIAM

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Dedicated

TO THE MEMORY OF OUR COMRADES WHO
MADE THE SUPREME SACRIFICE



THE BATTALION COMMANDER

LIEUTENANT Colonel Frank W. Norris was born October 21, 1915 in Wharton, Texas. Moving to Austin he attended Austin High School and the University of Texas in 1933 and 1934 before receiving an appointment to the United States Military Academy. The Colonel entered West Point in 1934 and graduated as a 2nd Lieutenant of Field Artillery June 14, 1938.

Just out of the Academy, he was sent to the 15th Field Artillery at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, where he served as Battery Executive until June 1939, when he returned to the Point on Pentathlon detail and went into training for the Olympic Games. However, it soon became evident with the outbreak of war that there would be no Olympics, and in November 1939, the Colonel went to Fort Hoyle, Maryland, as an Assistant and later Communications Officer in the 16th Field Artillery Battalion, then at Fort Myer, Virginia. The 16th moved to Fort Riley, Kansas and it was there that Colonel Norris received orders in January 1942 to report to the 90th Infantry Division which was being reactivated at Camp Barkeley, Texas.

The Colonel served as Division Artillery Headquarters Battery Commander and Division Artillery S2 before he was given command of the 345th in October 1947. The Battalion was very fortunate in having Colonel Norris as commander straight through the period of its most intensive training and later through combat itself. It is in action that a soldier discovers of what his commander is made. At the end of eleven months of strenuous and nearly continuous combat Colonel Norris has gained the respect and confidence of all men who have served under him.

MARCH 1942 – JUNE 2, 1944



THIS is a story of the 345th in combat. It is a story of success, for it is a tale of a unit which fought the Krauts for 332 days, and fought them well. Our narrative could not possibly include the tale of all the man-hours of work, sweat, anguish, anxiety, fear, joy, and pride that went into its making. Nor can it hope to do justice to the individual men who worked so hard and so long to earn the battalion its excellent reputation in garrison and in combat. This is an overall picture of our operations with a few events spotlighted for posterity. There were many more that will be known only by word of mouth and in the minds of those who were there. Back of our combat performance lay 800 days of training-days of confusion, of disappointments, of anger, of discomfort, and occasionally, of joy. Sometimes the training task appeared too difficult, yet we stuck to the job and became soldiers. The 345th came to life when the 90th Division was activated at Camp Barkeley, Texas on March 25, 1942. However, before activation, the cadre of officers and enlisted men who were to lead us through our first difficult period had spent months preparing to train us. Even now, forty months later, we owe much to that group of 79 enlisted men of the veteran 80th Field Artillery Battalion of the 6th Infantry Division and to the officers of the Reserve Corps, National Guard, and the regular Army who gave us our start. From March through December of 1942 we received our basic training, our unit training, and our combined training. In August we lost a number of our key officers and men when we sent a cadre to form the 155 Howitzer Battalion for the 104th Division at Camp Adair, Oregon; also OCS was a continual drain on our experienced personnel. However, each day we learned some soldier skill; and our selectees carried on well for the men we lost. Gun drill, calisthenics, lectures, close order drill, night schools, driver's training, carbine firing, day schools, athletics, service practice, survey work, wire laying, RSOP's, radio procedure, preventive maintenance, night exercises, 25 mile marches, reveilles, Saturday inspections, retreats, training films, proficiency tests, obstacle courses, parades – these and hundreds of similar activities kept us on the go. By the time we had completed our "D" exercises in December; we could march; we could shoot; we could communicate. We were artillerymen.

But, we were not ready for combat. We were not field soldiers; so off we went to Louisiana for maneuvers. There we learned how to keep ourselves neat and well-disciplined while living in the field. We put to practical use all of the technique and book-learning which we had acquired at Barkeley. Best of all, we became accustomed to the confusion which is a part of all military operations. We became flexible in mind and method. Appropriately enough, we celebrated our first birthday by winching ourselves out of the worst swamp in Louisiana. When our maneuvers ended in April, we were ready to fight real war against a real enemy.

"D" Day, however, was fourteen months in the future; so back we went to Camp Barkeley. From May to September, we polished off the rough spots which maneuvers had developed. Many men were trained in two or more duties, and we steadily improved our technical abilities. Service practice,

coupled with battery and battalion tests, kept our Schneiders busy. Each man learned to fire his carbine accurately and with confidence. We spent long and arduous hours in physical development; pushups, burpees, and obstacle courses were daily routine. Much of the work was repetitious of previous training, but each day prepared us better for the coming maneuvers in the California desert.

In September 1943, the 345th bade farewell to Camp Barkeley, and we moved to the desert where we set up a livable camp at Granite Mountain. During the next four months, we became desert soldiers, learning to breathe dust instead of air, and to eat “C” rations instead of the fresh foods we were used to. However, we learned much more than how to endure discomfort. For instance, the experience gained in making long, rapid movements was invaluable to us when we met similar situations in Germany and France. At Christmas time, just as we completed our desert training, we received the long awaited orders to proceed to Fort Dix, N. J.

Those orders meant only one thing – overseas service. Our period of maneuvers and training was drawing to a close: soon we would be playing the game for keeps. After a transcontinental train ride, we passed through Fort Dix and Camp Kilmer in a cloud of paper work. We had so many show-down inspections that even the tent pegs snapped to at the command, “Attention”; but we were certainly P.O.M. qualified when we boarded His Majesty’s transport, Athlone Castle, on the 23rd of March 1944. Each of us remembers the food on the Castle, but we expected no picnic. Some of us remember seasickness – ask Sgt. Hughes, Sgt. Parsons or Lt. Stanley. However, the trip across was without serious incident; we landed at Liverpool on April 5. Going straight to camp Davenport, near Wolverhampton, we received twelve brand new M1 howitzers, tractors, and complete new section equipment throughout the battalion. Here we completed our final training with particular emphasis on gunnery and physical conditioning for all men. Our last stop before Utah Beach was made at Camp Heath, where our equipment was waterproofed and loaded. Here, too, we were briefed on our part of the coming operations. Each of us was a more thoughtful man when we heard that we would hit the beach on D plus 2. Captain Hanna expressed our sentiments when he laughingly said, “Here I always heard that only supermen would be picked for the Invasion of France. What in hell are we doing in it?” We were not a cocky bunch, for too much of the unknown lay ahead of us; but we did have complete confidence in our training, in our arms, and in ourselves. Future events were to prove that our confidence was justified.



