



With the Colors *Jan. 2, 1945*

Shipfitter Third Class Donald Tackitt on U. S. S. South Dakota writes:

"Just a year ago on Thanksgiving day we were in the middle of the Gilberts operation, eating K-rations, because on that day we had no time for our traditional turkey dinner. Since then we have traveled many thousands of miles and have added four stars to our Asiatic-Pacific ribbon for taking part in the Gilberts, Marshalls, New Guinea and Marianas campaigns.

"These four take us to May 19 and since then we have seen as much, if not more, action than during the preceding months. So there will be more stars and probably a year from now we can tell you about them. Since May we have knocked on doors close to Tokyo, at least it seemed to us that we were very near, and have seen a great deal of the enemy.

"At this season of the year—we hope that you have this letter for Christmas—we wanted to send some sort of greeting so that you will know we are well. Just in case you are wondering what happened to crew letter number six we can only say that it was written before we returned to the states. Since you probably have all the information first hand, that it could contain, we will not print it but keep our efforts in a 'stand-by' status.

"After leaving you and a glorious vacation in the states we came back to the 'wars'. We made one stop, It is not possible for us to tell you where it was but that won't make much difference so long as you know that during our stay there we had three different troupes of native dancers aboard to entertain us. Some of the ship's personnel also visited around and saw places of note on the island. For all, but particularly for the new men, the native dancers were intriguing.

"We learned that to appreciate a dance, the hula, for example: You must watch the story telling hands aid in interpreting the lyrics while the rhythmic swaying of the hips aids the narrator in getting 'in the mood.' But you must definitely, that is what they kept telling us, you must definitely watch the hands! For men who did not study philosophy there was a profound lesson: The distinction between theory and practice. In theory you watch the hands!

"We arrived out here in plenty of time to join the ships that were going to give the Japs a little diversion before General MacArthur proceeded to give the 'monkey-man' in the Philippines a headache. And we were no aspirin tablet. We saw considerable action prior to the landings but not at any time did we have the opportunity to unlimber our big guns. All of the shooting was done by our anti-aircraft batteries at those planes coming in marked with the little red circles on the wings. After our first strike we dropped back to fuel and then hit in again.

"From that point on we seemed to be the shuttle train working between Times Square and the Grand Central station and we sure did travel. Twice during that time we were annihilated—said the Japs—but because we are burning vitamin pills in our boilers the ship came right back again after each annihilation. If you have heard that expression 'in again, out again, on again, off again, Finnegan' then you have us properly pigeon-holed.

"Some time ago we were under attack by torpedo planes. There were several of them and they were closing fast. The men in the repair party, the fire fighters, hospital corpsmen and those not directly concerned with firing the guns, were ordered to lie flat on the deck. The planes kept coming in and our guns kept grinding out a kettle drum symphony of noise and exploding steel. Still they came and now were very close. Suddenly the firing ceased abruptly, and the loud speaker announced that the remaining planes had turned away. There was a moment of silence as we picked ourselves up off the deck. Then a youngster, he was not more than eighteen, turned to the chaplain. 'You know chaplain, they say that this doesn't give you religion out here, but it sure as hell improves what you have.' To that all we could add were two words: 'Amen, brother!'

"We have seen a great many things during the past few months that must wait for our trip home to be told. You have read, we know, of the sinking of the U. S. S. Princeton. That made us feel particularly sad as we have operated with her so much. The Princeton had a splendid crowd of boys and its pilots were second to none. Time and again over our public address system it was a comfort to hear 'Princeton fighters have just

splashed two bogies.' The word will come no more, but we do know that on the fateful day when we could not assist them, a great many men heard echoed in the court of heaven the word from the Supreme Commander in Chief: 'Stand by to receive Princeton fighters aboard.' From Him, we know, they received a welcome and a highly merited 'Well done'."

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Sixth Army Group, France.—The 397th Infantry regiment of the 100th "Century" division is one of the newest units fighting on the United States Seventh army front in Eastern France—but its members have the satisfaction of knowing they played an important part in the "squeeze play" so thoroughly applied to the German Nineteenth army.

While French troops spearheaded drives through the Saverene pass in the north and Belfort gap in the south, both routes leading to Strassbourg and the Rhine, the principal part of the Seventh army fought relentlessly against the thousands of Nazis caught in the middle. With the French holding the enemy in on the sides, the 397th—and other units of the Seventh army—drove piston-like against the middle.

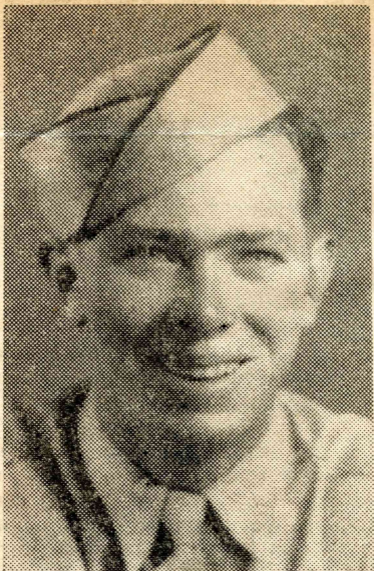
The 397th began its push, and its baptism of fire, in the dense forests of the Vosges mountains in the vicinity of Baccarat. The fighting conditions were as tough as any that any troops faced along the extended Sixth army group front—the group consisting of the American Seventh and the French First armies.

In addition to a fantastic enemy who fought with the ferocity of a trapped rat, the 397th faced innumerable land-mines, booby-traps, and well-prepared defense installations. The weather was cold, it rained frequently and mud was ankle-deep. The forest, covered with a heavy undergrowth, provided cover for Nazi snipers.

But stubborn slugging and skillful maneuvering enabled the 397th to push through Raon l'Etape, Senenes and other key towns leading, toward the Rhine and the eventual defeat of the last Germans in France.

Among members of the 379th are Private William C. Reed, recently reported wounded, and Private Urban K. Volk of Newton.

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Private Bernard A. Romack (top), who was wounded in action in Germany, December 10, and his brother, Corporal Harold Romack, who is in Italy. They are sons of Mr. and Mrs. Boyce Romack of Mattoon, formerly of Rose Hill vicinity.

Jan. 21, 1945
The Sailor's Prayer
Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray the Lord my soul to keep,
Grant no other sailor take
My shoes and socks before I wake.
Lord, guard me in my slumber,
And keep my hammock on its
number,
May no clews nor lashes break
And let me down before I wake.
Keep me safely in thy sight,
And in the morning let me wake,
Breathing scents of sirloin steak.
God protect me in my dreams,
And make this better than it seems,
Grant the time may swiftly fly,
When myself shall rest on high

In a snowy feather bed,
Where I long to rest my head,
Far away from all these scenes,
From the smell of half done beans.
Take me back into the land
Where they don't scrub down with
sand,

Where no demon typhoon blows,
Where the women wash the clothes.
God thy knowest all my woes;
Feed me in my dying throes.
Take me back, I'll promise then,
Never to leave home again.

Four Years Later—

Our Father, who are in Illinois
(heaven)

Please, dear Father, let me stay,
Do not drive me now away.
Wipe away my scalding tears,
And let me stay my thirty years.
Please forgive me all my past
And things that happened at the mist,
Do not my request refuse,
Let me stay another cruise. —Amen

—Dale King s 1/c



Mr. and Mrs. Ray Yager of Newton vicinity have received word their son, Seaman Second Class Raymond L. Yager, finished his boot training at the Naval Training Center Great Lakes in four and one-half weeks, and has been sent to Port Huemene, California, for further training as a Seabee. There were 300 boys sent from Great Lakes, all of whom have had experience in construction work. When his battalion is ready to ship, he will be sent overseas.

His new address is Raymond L. Yager S 2/c, 83rd Battalion, Company C, Platoon 2, care Fleet Post Office, San Francisco, California.

*Jan. 2, * * 1945*
Corporal and Mrs. Royal Brooks and baby daughter of Sioux City, Iowa, spent a few days of last week with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur E. Brooks of Rose Hill. He has just finished Engineers training in Iowa, and is being sent to Lincoln, Nebraska. Mrs. Zella Price and son Bobby, Mrs. Edith Brooks and Joe Cirino of Chicago came to be with Royal while at home.

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Technical Sergeant Marion Burcham Jr left Saturday for Scott field, Belleville, after having spent Christmas here with his wife, and his father, Marion Burcham of Newton. He recently returned from the Southwest Pacific area, where he spent two years, and after a furlough went to Miami, Florida, for reassignment.

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Staff Sergeant Robert Dillman is spending a two weeks furlough with his parents, Deputy Sheriff and Mrs. Dyke Dillman of Newton. He is stationed at Turner field, Albany, Georgia. He says many men from overseas are arriving back at his base.

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