

History of the 29th Infantry Training Battalion

With the inauguration of the Selective Service Act in the fall of 1940, and the realization of an Infantry Replacement Training Center at Camp Croft, South Carolina, came the impetus for the organization of the 29th Infantry Training Battalion as an integral unit for instructions in Heavy Weapons. The year 1941 found the 29th Battalion still in the embryonic stage and not until May 6, 1941, did the 29th Infantry Training Battalion become activated.

On May 6, 1941, Major Walter A. Buck assumed command and with First Lieutenant William R. Deignan as Adjutant, First Lieutenant Stanley J. Weston as Supply Officer, and a very small number of cadre and officers, he set about his task. Each day thereafter more officers and cadre reported for duty and diligently helped in the preparation for the influx of Trainees yet to come.

On May 16, 1941, Major Buck was relieved of command and assigned as Battalion Executive Officer. Lieutenant Colonel Russell F. Walthour joined and assumed command. By this time we find the administrative officers of the Battalion well organized as well as those of the four companies in the Battalion. Captain Lewis C. Amps joined and assumed command of Company A, Captain Earle W. McFadden in Company B, First Lieutenant Joseph D. Burke in Company C, and Captain John R. Leonard in Company D. The entire month of May was devoted to details necessary for the continuation of the program.

The 29th Battalion became the receiving Battalion for the Eighth Infantry Training Group on June 3, 1941, and this day received their first Selective Service Trainees for a period of processing and classification. Designed for training cycles of 13-week periods, the first training period began June 23, 1941, after approximately one week of orientation. Realizing the need for highly-trained specialists in Heavy Weapons, standards and specifications having been previously determined, instructions were enthusiastically given and received, Training schedules were prescribed giving ample instructions in the .30-Caliber Rifle, M-1903; Automatic Rifle Caliber .30; .30 and .50-Caliber Machine Guns; the 81mm. Mortar; Bayonet, Hand Grenade, as well as other correlated subjects for the Infantry soldier, rounding out a full curriculum for the allotted [sp] time. During the next 13 weeks, any soldier who kept a diary probably made the following entry: "Dear Diary: Another hard working day," while an entry in the Morning Report under Station and Record of Events probably carried ~ following remark: "Usual Camp Duties." To date, the 29th Battalion has completed two training cycles and is now on the third cycle. Out of these groups, nine enlisted men have been accepted for Officer's Candidate School.

In the summer of 1941 the 29th Battalion had their share in the extensive maneuvers of the Army in the Carolinas. A provisional Machine Gun Platoon was selected from the 29th Battalion for the defense of the Spartanburg Air Base of the "Red" Army.

August 25, 1941, Lieutenant Colonel Walthour was relieved of command and transferred and Major Jefferson B. Willis joined and assumed command, which position he holds at present. Major Willis was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel on September 15, 1941. The Table of Organization for the Replacement Training Center has allowed rapid and numerous promotions among the enlisted men. Outstanding abilities have been recognized and we have seen Privates make Non-Commissioned Officers as well as Non-Commissioned Officers advance in grade and become outstanding leaders. We have seen promotions among the officers of the 29th Battalion too. Captain Francis J. Purcell, Battalion Executive Officer, was promoted to rank of Major January 30, 1942; First Lieutenant William R. Deignan, Adjutant, was promoted to rank of Captain November 28, 1941; and Chaplain Thomas O. Hall was promoted to rank of Captain November 19, 1941. Today the battalion has many new men. Through transfer many of the old men have left. The battalion has been called upon to furnish cadres for many new units of the Army which have recently been activated.

Not forgetful of the old axiom, "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy," the 29th Battalion has carefully provided for recreational facilities of its men. They now boast of a Recreation Hall, an Officers' Club, a basketball court, a volley ball court, boxing ring, and baseball diamond. Under the leadership of a Battalion Recreation and Athletic Officer, events have been scheduled nightly for the entertainment and enjoyment of the enlisted men and officers of the Battalion including dances, athletic matches in all sports, movies, and stage shows. Extra activities of the Battalion include a weekly newspaper, an orchestra, athletic teams, a group of entertainers, and a Battalion School holding night classes for those who desire to continue their education while in the service.

Although the 29th Infantry Training Battalion is still in its infancy in age, it is most matured in its ability. Their goal is the same as with all other units - COMBAT EFFICIENCY.

Taken from "Historical and Pictorial Review, 29th ITB, 8th Training Regiment, Camp Croft, SC". Transcribed by Ron Crawley for the Camp Croft Home Page.