

S. S. Montclair Victory Shipboard Newsletter August 6 & 8, 1945

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August 6 issue transcribed from the copy owned by Peyton Mooneyham (Company B, 38th Armored Infantry Battalion, 7th Armored Division). August 8 issue transcribed from the copy owned by Edward Kaminski (Company C, 38th Armored Infantry Battalion). Both transcribed by Wesley Johnston (son of Walter G. Johnston, Jr., of Company "B", 38th Armored Infantry Battalion).

The original spellings and format are generally retained in the transcript. Word wrap in which a line of text continues to the next line is not necessarily as in the original. If there is any question of accuracy, please view the PDF files of the images of the newsletter. The footnotes were not in the original; they have been added where subsequent information of sufficient interest is known.

The original August 6 issue was a two-sided mimeographed page.

The original August 8 "souvenir issue" was a mimeographed copy on both sides of 3 legal-sized sheets, folded in the middle, so that there were four pages on each sheet, which were combined into a booklet.

Historical Context (© 2008 by Wesley Johnston)

Following the end of combat in Europe, a point system was used to determine the future direction of the men who fought the war in Europe. Points were given to a man for his time in service, his time in combat, awards he received, etc. High point men were those first in line for discharge. However, it was the lowest point men who were first in line for transportation by the limited number of ships available. These men were destined to be brought home for training for the invasion of Japan.

In mid-July 1945, low-point troops from several Divisions were transferred to special detachment as the first step in this journey. For example, the low-point men of the various elements of the 7th Armored Division, then in southwestern Germany, were transferred to Infantry Division Reorganization Detachment K on 14 July 1945. (Note that the history of Detachment K in the newsletter says that they moved out on July 12, but this is not the date that the Morning Reports of 7th Armored Division show.) They were taken by truck to a railhead and then by train to Camp Lucky Strike, near St. Valéry-en-Caux near the west coast of France. After a brief stay at Camp Lucky Strike, they were trucked to Le Havre, where they boarded the S. S. Montclair Victory on its first voyage as a troopship.

The ship carried similar low-point men from other divisions. They sailed, under ship Captain Charles Braca (see page 10 of the newsletter for the complete list of ship officers), from Le Havre

on August 1, 1945, knowing that they were destined for the war against Japan, even though they would have a stop at home for training with a division to which they would be assigned.

The first atomic bomb was dropped on the city of Hiroshima, Japan on August 6, while they were at sea. The newsletter of that date was printed before they knew of the bombing.

Near the end of the voyage, the Montclair Victory was passed by the faster ship Augusta , carrying President Harry Truman home from Europe, where he had met with Churchill and Stalin about the future of post-war Europe. Dressed in a white suit, the President came on deck to wave to the jubilant troops as his ship passed.

On August 9, 1945, the Montclair Victory docked at the International Pier in Boston. It was the same day that the second atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, Japan. The men were given 30-day leaves and ordered to report to Camp Chaffee at Fort Smith, Arkansas at the end of their leave. At Boston, they were placed on at least two trains, one headed west and one headed south. The men were placed in cars based on where they lived. When the northern train that was headed west stopped at Detroit, and the cars with Detroit area men were unhooked, and the train went on. At Chicago, the Chicago cars were unhooked, and so on, until the much smaller train finally reached Washington state.

While on their 30-day leave, the war against Japan ended. But in order to be fair to the high-point men who were still overseas, the low-point men remained in the Army and had to go to Camp Chaffee, where they were assigned to the 44th Infantry Division. Most men wore the 44ID patch on one sleeve and their original division patch on the other sleeve. They were there simply to wait for the high-point men to come home and be discharged so that they could then be discharged. For most of them, their turn finally came in early 1946: they were discharged and could finally go home to stay.

The S. S. Montclair Victory was eventually relegated to the “Mothball Fleet” which still exists at Suisun Bay, off of the San Francisco Bay. The ship was sold to an Oregon firm in the early 1970’s and was scrapped.

Monday August 6, 1945 Issue

[Sketch: Farewell Mademoiselle:]
[The S.S. Montclair Victory Takin' Us Home]

S.S. Montclair Victory

6 August 1945

VETS TO BOSTON THIS WEEK:

10,000 returning veterans of the ETO are expected to reach Boston, Mass, sometime this week. The 20,000 vets who arrived aboard the Queen Mary and several other vessels in New York last week left Camp Kilmer Sunday for 22 reception centers near their homes.

THE POINT SYSTEM AGAIN:

The latest report about the Army Point System indicates that the 85 points will remain until the first of the year and when it is changed it may be higher instead of lower! At that time credit may be given for service after May 12th. Congress is divided on the point system 70% in favor, 25% against and 5% undecided.

FOREST FIRE IN OREGON:

The forest fire threat in Oregon is serious. All possible fire fighting equipment is being rushed there. In the last month 200,000 acres have burned.

NAVY ASKED FOR POINT SYSTEM:

The Vets of Foreign Wars asked that the Navy establish a system of discharge on points for Marines, Coast Guard and Navy.

WAR CRIMINAL TRIALS:

The Palace at Nurnberg has been chosen as the site for trial of Goering and other famous war criminals. It is now under repair.

In Vienna 3 SS men will be tried for murder of 102 civilians and a scientist will be tried for sabotage of valuable laboratory equipment before the city was taken.

POLISH PROBLEM:

London reveals that there is still a strong anti-Jewish feeling in Poland, as much so as when Hitler controlled the country. Only 83,000 Jews are still alive in Poland.

FINI:

The Persian Gulf Command has been dissolved.

WARNING TO JAPS:

12 more Jap cities have been warned by B-29's scattering 700,000 pamphlets that the inhabitants better either "scram" or be bombed out. To date such warnings have been followed within 24 hours by bombs.

[Cartoon: Put your money where it will draw the most interest: Soldiers Deposits]

46TH AMERICAN SUB LOST:

The U.S.S. "Snook" is long overdue from patrol and must be presumed lost, according to Navy announcement. It is the 46th lost.

HOW LONG A WAR:

A former marine general of the Pacific Area predicts the Jap war will be finished in about 6 months.

MADRID REPLIES:

The Madrid radio reply on the decision of the Big 3 not to admit Spain to the United Nations is that the Big 3 were unjust and arbitrary.

BASEBALL: (Results of Saturday's games)

Chicago Cubs 3, Cincy Reds 4, breaking the Cubs 15 game winning series. St Louis Cards 6, Pittsburg Pirates 5. Brooklyn 1 & 0; Boston 4 & 1. New York Giants 5, Philly 4. Detroit 2, Chicago 3. Washington 4 & 4; Boston Red Sox 15 & 6. New York Yanks 5, Philly 1. Cleveland 2, St. Louis 8.

REDEPLOYMENT STEPS: -- :AT THE RECEPTION STATION:

The Reception Station will process you within 24 hours. While you are there---

1. You will be given orders for 30 days temporary duty for recuperation to the place you have selected. This 30 days rest will NOT be charged against your leave or furlough credit. Travel time will be added to the orders.

2. You will be furnished transportation to your destination and back to the reception station. If you desire you may elect to pay for this transportation. In this case, you will be reimbursed after arriving back at the Reception Station. You will also be given per diem allowance for the actual travel time and will be paid in advance a monetary allowance for rations or be given meal tickets to cover your travel period.

3. Your pay account will be brought up to date as far as possible. In any event, you will be given a partial payment so that you will not be broke when you arrive home. However, unless it is an extreme emergency you cannot draw money you have on deposit while you are here.

4. You will be given the clothing you need to make a good appearance while you are at home. You can secure insignia and the ribbons to which you are entitled.

5. There will be a medical inspection at this station.

6. Your orders will tell you when to report back to the Reception Station.

It is your responsibility to arrange your return transportation so that you will arrive back at the Reception Station at the time prescribed.

- ANNOUNCEMENTS -

1. All Special Service equipment including library books will be turned in to the Special Service Office in Hold #1 Tuesday, at either 9-10, 1300-1400, or 1900-2000 hours.

2. Winner of the "name for the paper" contest was Tec 4 T J Kelly of Hq, 13th Abn Div. Call at Special Service Office Tuesday at 0900 for the prize.

3. The PX will be open tonite from 1800-1900 for officers limited purchases.

4. Lt Bright, The Ship's Personal Affairs Officer, will be at the 1st Sgt's desk on Platform #4 between decks from 0830-1130 hours Tuesday to answer any questions on personal affaris.

5. Movie Tuesday - "Heavenly Body" - #4 hatch at 2030.

- INSURANCE QUESTIONNAIRE -

Q. Can I convert my National Service Life Insurance policy, and if so, what types of insurance?

A. Yes. While your policy is still in effect, at any time after the first year but before the end of a 5 year term. As the law now stands, your insurance expires after 5 years and you have no refund. You can convert to only ordinary life, 20-pay life or 30-pay life insurance policies.

- end -

Wednesday August 8, 1945 Issue

[Front Cover]
[Sketch]

FAREWELL MADEMOISELLE

SOUVENIR
ISSUE

S. S. MONTCLAIR
VICTORY
8 AUG. 1945

[SKETCH: HEAVE HO -- FEEDIN THE FISH?]

EDITORIAL STAFF

EDITORS

Major Raymond D. Dopp
Captain Van Benschoten

Reportorial Staff:--- Cpl. Cessna Smith -- Pvt. John Parkiw
-- Sgt. J. J. Balch -- Pfc Donald Southworth -- T/4 Thomas Kelly
-- T/4 Donald Derr -- Lt. Warren -- Captain Sprague -- Captain
Rollman.

On behalf of the Transport Commander, the staff wishes to
take this opportunity to thank the transient officer and enlisted
personnel who gave so freely of their time and efforts to help
promote more efficient and successful operation of all the
transport duties aboard ship.

S.S. MONTCLAIR VICTORY

At Sea

8 August 1945

TO THE MEN ABOARD:

We are fortunate to have had such a speedy, smooth and interesting voyage. The Master and crew of the Montclair Victory have gone out of their way to make our journey as pleasant as possible.

While overcrowding has meant discomfort it has meant also that more men are now back across the Atlantic and fewer men await transportation in Europe.

Let us enjoy our visits at home and then return to our stations ready to complete the job. When this is done, may we be so fortunate as to find Captain Braca and his crew with the Montclair Victory awaiting to again return us to the U.S.A.

(signed)
H. M. MONROE
Brig. Gen. USA

[SKETCH: 13TH AIRBORNE]

The 13th Airborne Division was activated on 13 August 1943 at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. First Commanding General was Brigadier General George W. Griner, Jr. On 16 November 1943, Major General E. G. Chapman assumed command.

On 13 January 1944 the Division moved from Fort Bragg to Camp Mackall, North Carolina. Here it received almost all its training, including a one week airborne maneuver in September 1944 followed by ground maneuvers.

The Division remained at Camp Mackall until its departure for the Port of Embarkation in January 1945. It sailed in convoy from New York City on 26 January 1945, and arrived at Le Havre France on 6 February 1945.

Upon its arrival overseas, the division was assigned to XVIII Corps (Airborne), a component of the First Allied Airborne Army. On 1 March 1945, a consolidation of the 326th and 88th Glider Infantry Regiments took place and the battle-trained 517th Parachute Infantry, 460th Parachute Field Artillery Battalion and the 596th Airborne Engineer Company, joined the Division.

The patch of the 13th Airborne Division pictures a golden unicorn on a royal blue shield, topped by the caption "Airborne".

[SKETCH: 7TH ARMORED]

The 7th Armored was activated 1 March 1942 at Camp Polk, Louisiana. Its training and maneuvers carried the Lucky 7th from Polk to California to Fort Benning and then to prepare for overseas at Camp Miles Standish, Mass. From Massachusetts, the Division moved to Camp Shanks, N. Y., and stayed until 6 June - D-Day.

France first saw the 7th on 10 August when its troops disembarked on both Omaha and Utah beaches from England and assembled near La Haye du Puits. The unit spearheaded XX Corps, General Patton's 3d Army from the costly beachhead to Metz.

The Fighting 7th is officially credited with saving the entire British 2nd Army from possible disaster in Sept-October.

16 December, the Division got movement orders and it was on this move that an epic stand in American military history was in the making - St. Vith, in the face of Von Rundstedt's winter offensive.

Later, from St. Vith, it proceeded to cross the Rhine at Remagen. Under the 1st Army, the 7th drove to the outskirts of Limburg and then turned east to capture the Great Eder See Dam.

From the Ruhr pocket, the 7th joined the XVIII Corps (Airborne) and crossed the Elbe River, then on a mad dash reached the Baltic Sea where elements of the Division made contact with the Russians. The war ended here after a glorious record that stretched 2260 miles a trail that led from the beaches of Normandy to the shores of the Baltic Sea.

[SKETCH: MEDICS]

119TH EVACUATION HOSPITAL (Semi-Mobile)

The 119th Evacuation Hospital (Semi-Mobile) is a 400 bed hospital. It was activated on 21 March 1944 at Camp Polk, Louisiana. I left Camp Polk on November 15 for Camp Miles Standish.

On December 2, 1944, the unit sailed from Boston on the Grace Line Steamer, Santa Paula, with a moderate sized convoy. After 48 hours at sea, a severe storm was encountered, crippling the engines and leaving our ship floating helplessly by itself with only a small cruiser escort to protect it. After 18 hours of constant apprehension, the situation was remedied, the Santa Paula caught up with the convoy, and the remainder of the trip was uneventful.

Soon after came our first assignment. We went to Suchteln, Germany. After a rough initiation at our first site, we rapidly moved with the troops to the Rhine in preparation for the big crossing. Our hospital was set up in tents and many were damaged by flak just before the Rhine crossing. Immediately following the crossing, our movements became exactly like that of the entire army -- continual rapid movement.

[SKETCH: 6 -- INFANTRY -- 9]

The "69th" Division is not to be confused with the equally famous "Fighting 69th Regiment" of the First World War.

Although plans were formulated for the 69th Division during the First World War, it was not activated until May 15, 1943 at Camp Shelby, Mississippi, where the original unit underwent eighteen months of training beneath the hot Mississippi sun.

The 69th sailed from New York in November 1944, arriving in England on December 1st. There, while the "Battle of the Bulge" was being waged on the Continent, the Division lost approximately 2300 men who were taken as reinforcements for other units already at the front.

On 1 February 1945 the 69th moved to the Eifel Forest Area in France. After helping to crash the vaunted Siegfried Line, the 69th now a battle-wise outfit, joined the race across Germany to Kassel. From Kassel the doughboys, riding tanks of the 9th Armd, began spearheading the First Army's "Blitzkrieg" drive into Leipzig.

Maneuvering into position the 69th attacked Leipzig on April 18th and in spite of stubborn resistance won complete surrender of that city in the record time of two days. At Torgau, on April 16th the history of the 69th was again highlighted when the Division met the Russian Ukrainian Army. Accounts of this unprecedented junction were given throughout the world.

Its ETO military mission accomplished the 69th is now being inactivated. Some members are joining the Occupational Forces, while others are being redeployed to the Pacific areas.

THE MONTCLAIR VICTORY

The "Montclair" Victory was built through the efforts of the citizens of Montclair, New Jersey, who subscribed over two million dollars in War Bonds for the construction of a ship. She was christened in November 1944 and sailed from Philadelphia laden with ammo on the 16th on her maiden voyage.

On this 57 day trip she encountered rough weather and the results were nearly disastrous, according to 2nd Officer Flynt, who is one of six person aboard who has been with her on every sailing. Gear went adrift causing damage and injury as waves broke over the boat deck. She made history as the first Victory to enter the Cherbourg Harbor. After a second voyage, she was ordered to the Shipyards in Baltimore to be converted into a troop carrier.

The present voyage, which promises to be a most eventful one, began in Philadelphia on July 5. The original destination was Antwerp but orders soon changed it to Bremerhaven, Germany. To get there it was necessary to travel in convoys thru dangerous mine fields.

After discharging cargo in Bremerhaven the "Montclair" proceeded to Le Harve where she was immediately boarded by 1900 odd ETO Vets Stateside bound for redeployment and reassignment. Leaving Le Harve Harbor, two mines were sighted but the ever-alert Captain and his crew avoided disaster. On August 2 at about 2100 we were thrilled by sight of the sleek cruisers Philadelphia and Augusta bearing President Truman back to the USA after conferences in Berlin and England. We even experienced the once-in-a-lifetime thrill of speeding to the urgent "SOS" of a burning freighter and picking up survivors.

Pertinent facts about the "MONTCLAIR" are:
ENGINE: 6000 HP steam turbine with reduction gear. Single screw. Cruises at 16.5 knots or 96 RPM's with top speed of 18.8 knots (with current) or 103 RPM's.
LENGTH 455.4 feet
BREADTH 62.15 feet

HISTORY OF DETACHMENT "K"

During the month of June, ten detachments totaling approximately twenty thousand officers and men were organized under War Department Order. These detachments were to be redeployed to the South Pacific by way of the United States and would join its division there after a thirty day furlough.

As one of these detachments, Infantry Reorganization Detachment "K", came into existence in the early part of July, when it was assembled at Camp 85 Points on the outskirts of Buchen, Germany. Many units of the Third and Seventh Armies were represented, among which were troops of the 7th Armored, 69th, 36th and 83d Infantry Divisions, as well as troops of several Anti-Aircraft Battalions.

On the morning of 12 July 1945 all of these troops were assembled and after four days of grueling travel, both contingents arrived at Camp Lucky Strike.

Due to lack of equipment as an organization, many difficulties had to be overcome, but after approximately a week of hard work the necessary processing was completed.

[SKETCH: DISCHARGE]

THE ROVING REPORTER

By

Cpl. Cessna Smith

Q. What do you want to do most on your furlough?

Pfc. DANNY LEVA, native of HOUSTON, TEXAS, with seven months overseas, is going to divide his time between Galveston & Houston. Desires to do deep sea fishing & surf bathing. Owns 20 ft launch.

S/Sgt LEONARD SUTTON of DETROIT, MICHIGAN will just "stay at home with his wife and 9 year old son." SUTTON celebrated 18 months overseas the day he boarded the "MONTCLAIR" for home.

After marriage to his fiancée from CHECOTAH, OKLA., T/5 GLEN THORNHILL, GILROY, CALIF., wants 30 days of steaks and "good whiskey".¹

Pfc LEONARD VENABLE, FORT WORTH, TEXAS, wants to soak up some good old home comfort after 8 months overseas. May even get married.

Pfc BOB FLEMING, PITTSBURG, PENNA., is going to treat himself to "BEAUCOUP" ice cream in the Alleghenies.

Sgt WINSTON R BURNHAM of LOS ANGELES, CALIF., when asked what he desired most just answered that "Raleigh and Dot are the objects of my undivided attention for 30 days."

After 14 months in the ETO, Pfc SCHWARZE, GREENWOOD, WISCONSIN, is going to do "all the things I haven't been able to do on the Continent."

[CARTOON: "He asked me what I had that his wife didn't--So I showed him!"]

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¹ This may be the William E. Thornhill (born 21 August 1921 in Oklahoma) who died 6 February 1984 in Ventura County, California.

[SKETCH: Orchids To]

The transport Commander, Capt. Frank J. Maxwell, his assistants T/Sgt. John A. Crum, Pfc Robert Collier and Pfc George Cannon for their most capable administration of troop affairs despite heavy handicaps imposed through 30% overload of personnel.

Lt. Bernie J Bjerck, Commissary Officer, and his assistant, Sgt Arthur Trece for the rapid and efficient distribution of PX items to the 1900 odd troops who were packed aboard.

Lt. Wm. J Claussen, S/Sgt Richard Bartelme and T/4 John Terpak of the Medical Staff for the excellent health measures they inaugurated to make our voyage a pleasant and safe one.

Chaplain (Capt) Oscar Ashburn, for his personal interest in the men and his daily devotional and religious services.

Capt. Van Benschoten and his ever popular assistant, Sgt John J Balck, for a well-planned, enjoyable program of Movies, recordings, quiz shows, jam sessions, I & E and personal Affairs programs.

Sgt Lewis Martin who so successfully operated the Troop Mess and maintained efficient meal hours for the troops.

Capt. and Master of the Ship Charles Braca, for our rapid and safe return across the Atlantic.

The following names officers and their crews:

CHIEF ENGINEER	- Harry Goodsell
FIRST ENGINEER	- Elmo Harrison
CHIEF OFFICER	- Lowman Guder
CHIEF STEWARD	- Allan Steinberg
ARMY STEWARD	- Homer Bartlett
PURSER	- Paul Meyer
CHIEF ELECTRICIAN	- James Callow
ASS'T ELECTRICIAN	- Richard Dillman

[Back Cover]
[Sketch]

BON VOYAGE,
MR. PRESIDENT

..."AND WE RECIPROCATE"
Mr. Truman