

## A HISTORY OF THE 712<sup>TH</sup> RAILWAY OPERATING BATTALION

In the month of October 1943 at Camp Pluche, Louisiana, then Camp Harahan, there was born out of the old Fifth Provisional Battalion an efficient Transportation Team, designated the 712<sup>th</sup> Railway Operating Battalion, Transportation Corps, U.S. Army.

In order to give the nonprofessional a comprehensive view of the scope and mission of such a Transportation outfit, it will be necessary to explain the idea for such an organization. Due to the necessity of moving rapidly, large quantities of supplies necessary to keep a modern Army fighting, it was most urgent that existing railway facilities were kept open, and if necessary new tracks laid. It would have been impossible to depend on civilian railroad personnel of the occupied territory. That unit had to be capable not only of operating the railroad, but to have been able to protect it as well, and make running repairs. Thus, it was obvious that these men comprising the personnel had to be able to fight, and also perform skilled tasks. Most of the men come straight from civilian roads that sponsored the Battalion. This Battalion was sponsored by the Reading Company of Pennsylvania.

The Battalion comprised four units as follows: "A" Company – this unit was responsible for bridge building, maintenance of way, communications and the motor pool. This Company was for a long time under the command of CPT Arthur C. Palmer, 0-273736, of Pottstown, Pennsylvania, a former employee of the Reading Company. His assistants were 1LT Reginald M. Cheney, 0-490035, of Brooklyn, New York. 1LT Cheney was formerly with the Brooklyn Manhattan Transit Company, and had charge of the Signal Crew. 2LT Benjamin E. Perry, 0-105566, also from Brooklyn, New York was in charge of the motor pool. He was formerly with the Baker Platinum Company. 2LT Henry V. Plank, 0-491417, of Reading, Pennsylvania had charge of the Bridge and Building Platoon. The 1SGT of the Company was William W. Doyle. This outfit had a strength of 219 enlisted men and five officers.

"B" Company – Commanding this Company was CPT John S. Fennell, 0-424501, of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. His assistants were 1LT Edgar E. Cavany, 0-529941, of Ashley, Pennsylvania, who was in charge of the Engine house Platoon. 1LT Cavany was formerly connected with the Reading Company and the Central Railroad of New Jersey. 1LT Richard E. Dufner, 0-521446, was also from Reading and the Reading Company. 1LT Dufner was in charge of the Car Repair Platoon. 2LT Robert C. Westley, 0-533092, also came from the Reading road and country. 2LT Westley was the Mechanical Engineer. 2LT Stewart W. Bertram, 0-530544, was the assistant to the Master Mechanic. Company "B" lost 2LT Bertram in England, because he was made Mess Officer. The 1SGT of this Company was Wilber F. Powers, 34821109, with no previous railroad experience whatsoever. This Company had a strength of 140 enlisted men and five officers.

"C" Company – 1LT Peter J. Pirrall was the Commander of this Company. 1LT Pirrall, 0-521229 was a native of Norristown, Pennsylvania, and a former employee of the Reading Company. His assistants were 1LT Frank B. Davis, 0-446307 of New York, and the New York Central Railroad. 1LT Davis was in charge of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Operating Platoon. 1LT James B. Van

Natta, 0-509393 came from Elizabeth, N.J., and was formerly connected with the Central Railroad of New Jersey. He was in charge of the 1<sup>st</sup> Operating Platoon.

2LT Marvin L. Peters, 0-1132679 came from Tulsa, Oklahoma. 2LT Irwin A. Todd, 0-474792, of Lanstale, Pennsylvania, completed the officer personnel of "C" Company. The 1SGT of this outfit was William D. Oshlo of Council Bluff, Iowa. "C" Company handled the actual operation of the trains.

H & H Company – Originally under the command of CPT Buchanan, but passed to 1LT Richard H. Shedley, 0-511248 of North Wales, Pennsylvania, and the Reading Company. Another change was made in France, and command of this Company passed into the hands of CPT Arthur C. Palmer, formerly with "A" Company. The other officers of H & H Company were 1LT Elbert T. Dewitt, 0-525561 of Elkins Park, Pennsylvania and 1LT John C. Boston, 0-247908 from the Missouri-Pacific Railroad. 1LT Boston assumed command of "A" Company while in France. The 1SGT of that unit was Wade S. McGuire of Donnison, Ohio.

The Medic 1 Detachment attached to "H & H" Company was under the command of Major Carroll E. Krichbaun of Montclair, New Jersey. His assistant was 1LT Benjamin (could not read it), 0-527930, a dentist from Brooklyn, New York.

Also attached to Headquarters Company were 1LT E.W. Enerick, who was invalided home while they were in France. 1LT Naughton served as the Adjutant. 1LT Port was the Assistant Supply Officer. Major (could not read it) C. Shafer was the Executive Officer until illness dictated his being returned to the States. Major Shafer was a man who had the admiration of both the officers and the enlisted men of the Battalion. The Commanding Officer of the Battalion was Lt Col Frederick W. Birtz, who was transferred to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Military Railway Service in November 1944. Lt Col Doud of the 706<sup>th</sup> Rwy Grand Div assumed Command, and CPT Harry P. Campbell assumed the duties of Executive Officer displacing CPT Arthur C. Palmer, who took over the Command of "H & H" Company.

Activation took place on 25 October 1943 at Camp Plauchon, LA. This Camp was located five miles from New Orleans. It nestled alongside of the great Huey P. Long Bridge, one of the Engineering feats of that age. After several weeks of intensive military training, including one week on the rifle range at Slidell, the Battalion left for Camp Claiborne and a period of technical training.

On 1 December 1943, the 712<sup>th</sup> took over the operation of the Claiborne-Polk Military Railroad, relieving the 725<sup>th</sup>. That stretch of railroad had been the subject of much writing, and was affectionately known as "Old Crime and Punishment." Due to the very wet weather prevalent in that territory, the roadbed was not firm at all, which resulted in unstable track, and frequently was the cause of derailments.

Following extracts from the Diary of CPT (could not read it) and Sgt Singer: "One day an engine went off the track just outside of Camp Polk, and settled in the soft oozy mud. On the way to the derailment, they decided to stop for chow, as the PX was still open. They also decided to get some beer, and a bottle of Coca Cola for "Betsy," a very large example of the Porker family.

Arriving at the scene of the accident, they found it necessary to cut the engine off the relief train to go for water. In the meantime, the Wrecking Crew removed the block that they had to use for Jacks. Because of the single track, they could not get around the derailed engine. Using 6 X 6" blocks that would settle in the mud, they finally struck bed rock. From there on out, it was no easy matter. The total time consumed was approximately twenty four hours. A shining example of devotion to duty was shown by their Mess Sergeant, SSG Frank H. Grunewald, who borrowed a Weapons Carrier and brought hot coffee and sandwiches all the way from Claiborne to the men on the Wrecking Crew. Sgt Grunewald, affectionately called "Pop," was invalided home from France. He served in the US Army for over a decade and was a Veteran of the First World War. K. P. in his kitchen was not a duty, it was a privilege.

Sgt Grunewald did himself proud at Christmas Dinner. Among the guests present were LT and Mrs. Westley, Sgt and Mrs. William K. White, Spc 5 and Mrs. Leon Green, Sgt and Mrs. James McCandless, Pfc and Mrs. Joseph Skerotes, CPT and Mrs. John S. Fennell, LT and Mrs. Marvin Peters, Sgt and Mrs. Arthur Albrecht and Sgt and Mrs. Louis Hayman.

The days spent at Claiborne were enjoyable ones, as the last taste of Domestic Life was had by the married personnel before being shipped overseas. The 718<sup>th</sup> Railway Operating Battalion relieved the 712<sup>th</sup> on 14 March 1944, and at 1500 on this day the second Troop Train of the 712<sup>th</sup> left for Camp Myles Standish, Mass., the port of embarkation.

The ride to Myles Standish was an enjoyable one. The 712<sup>th</sup> passed through New Orleans, Atlanta, and in Virginia, one of the boys, Sgt Shackelford was fortunate enough to see his parents while the train stopped for water. They arrived at Myles Standish at 0700 hours, 17 March 1944. It was very cold, and they had to hike to the barracks situated about a mile away. They remained here for nearly three weeks, being processed and awaiting convoy. Here 72 hour passes were given, and it was a job finding enough men to furnish their quota of K. P. personnel. The time spent at Myles Standish was enjoyed too, although the territory was distinctly Yankee. The heavy snows had not been seen in the erratic weather of Louisiana.

At 0645, 7 April 1944 they left the port of Boston after a short train ride the day previous. The "Excelsior," their ship, picked up the convoy the following day, and they headed for the British Isles. Standing majestically in the center of the convoy was the mighty battleship "Texas." This ship was later to become an important part of the Normandy invasion Armada. It was an awe inspiring sight to see the many merchant ships, transports and naval vessels plodding through the Seas. Easter services were held aboard ship, on the decks because it was a very lovely day. During the trip several details were furnished by the enlisted men of Co "D," and the ship's employees were so impressed by their efficiency that efforts were made to have them transferred into the Merchant Marine Service, but those efforts were in vain.

On 16 April 1944 they dropped anchor in the harbor of Gourock, Scotland. The harbor was filled with ships of all types. Battleships, Aircraft Carriers, Destroyers, Transports and smaller craft. Gulls flew by in large numbers, picking up the refuse thrown off by the ships. Debarkation did not take place until the following day, when they boarded a train for Kirkham, England. They arrived there about Midnight. At Kirkham, they were broken into small

detachments for depot work in various parts of England. During this period, the Battalion reorganized under a new T/O & E. During this period also, Sgt Russo was killed, and Sgt McKinney was critically injured. Both men were of the Medical Detachment, and were very popular. The largest detachments were located at Sudbury, and Haincull, England.

At 0400, 12 July 1944, the various detachments began to gather at Stockbridge, Hants, England, the Concentration Area. Stockbridge was in V-1 area, they remained there until 9 August 1944. On the 9<sup>th</sup> August they departed via Truck for Nightengale Woods, not far from Southampton. This was the Staging Area.

On the 13 August 1944, they embarked on the HMS "Empire Cutlass" and moved out into the Channel. Many beautiful scenes were passed, including old castles. Down this same channel had moved many of the famous sailors that had made England great.

Together with the other ships of their convoy, they arrived off the coast of France early in the morning of the 14<sup>th</sup> August 1944, and cruised slowly up and down the shore line searching for their particular landing place. Many ships lay just off the shores, waiting to unload their cargos, and many barrage balloons floated lazily in the sky. Overhead passed numerous planes, on their way to unload destruction on the now retreating Germans. Small boats, mostly amphibious craft, scuttled from the boats to the beach, where they dumped their leads and returned for another load. The beach was the scene of feverish activity. It was a beautiful sight, and one never to be forgotten. On several occasions, barrage balloons would break away from their moorings, and drift away into the sky, to menace many passing planes. It would not be very many minutes, however, until Fighters Plane would rise to shoot it down. With the burst of fire from the plane, the balloon would become a mass of flames that quickly fell to the earth trailing long plumes of smoke.

Because of the heavy seas, it was not until 16 August 1944 that they debarked from the Empire Cutlass. Carrying their duffle bags, full field pack and arms, they hiked to the receiving area not far from the beach. There they left their duffle bags and walked on to area 34, Transient Area B, Utah Beach and bivouacked for the night. They left Utah Beach on 18 August 1944 via US Government Vehicle for Dol, Brittany, France. After arriving there, they pitched camp in an orchard just outside of the town. The next day, they moved into an area nearer the Engine house, which had been bombed to a shambles prior to the invasion.

On 24 August 1944 they left Dol by trucks and arrived at Le Mans that afternoon. They struck their pup tents in a field about two miles from town. Here some of the men took their first swim since coming to the ETO in a nearby river.

The next stop was destined to be Chartres, France, and after another tip by truck they arrived at that city on 27 August 1945. Headquarters remained in Le Mans. In Chartres, they barracked in a former school building. That building also housed a group of German Prisoners guarded by French Colonial Troops. These colored soldiers were the most courteous troops that they had encountered. Chartres was an ancient picturesque French town and among the very interesting sights to be seen was the old Cathedral. There they met an Indiana lady who had married a

Frenchman in 1934. She was glad to see someone from her native country, and speak American slang once again.

They left Chartres by the old 40 & 8 troop train, and pulled away from Chartres 9 September 1944 and headed for Sezanne, France, 70 miles north-east of Paris. The trip was a slow one, and it was not until the next afternoon that they passed through Paris, a comparatively short distance away. On 11 September, they arrived at Sezanne, a small town of some 2,000 people. They took up their residence in another French school in the center of the town. They were welcomed by the people of Sezanne as friends. For four years these people had been under the domination of the Germans, and their appreciation upon being liberated was nice to behold. Here Co "B" fixed up German Box Cars as barracks. These cars were to be home to use for some time to come.

They left Sezanne on 28 October 1944 and arrived at Villeneuve St. Georges the same day. This town was ten miles from Paris. In Paris, there were many sights to see. The people of Paris were surprisingly well dressed.

Their stay at Villeneuve St. Georges was short-lived. They left there 13 November for Verdun, France, and arrived there 15 November 1944. Verdun is the scene of the greatest battle of the First World War. Here 800,000 soldiers of the French and German Armies lost their lives. The Hills surrounding this town were full of old forts and fortifications of all kinds. Detachments were sent from Verdun to Bar Le Duc, Conflans and Rheims. They were at this point when the Germans began the Bulge Offensive, and German Planes flew over each night.

On 4 February 1945, Co "B" pulled out of Verdun and arrived at Lumes, France at 1800 hours on the same day. Their stay at Lumes was not long, and on the 12 February 1945 they departed for Stockem, Belgium. The Enginehouse facilities at Stockem were in much better shape than any heretofore encountered. Headquarters was located at Longuyon, France. The American and other allied armies were beginning the last phase of the European War at this time. Daily great fleets of planes passed overhead headed for Germany. On 13 April 1945, they left Stockem, and arrived in Luxembourg City on the same day. Luxembourg City was a very beautiful town. Leaving this town on the 15 April, they headed for Hanau, Germany, about fifteen miles east of Frankfort on Main.

They arrived at Hanau on 19 April, after passing through some German towns that had been leveled by bombing. Hanau itself had received a heavy bombing attack that killed approximately 18,000 people.

The War in Europe ended 7 May 1945. Their work was not finished; however, because the job of evacuating the Prisoners of War, the Slave Labor and all the Displaced People had to be finished.

712<sup>th</sup>

Transportation Railway Operating Battalion

(second time around)

M. L. Werner, Jr

The Korean version of the 712<sup>th</sup> TROB started as a reserve unit sponsored by Reading Company, a Philadelphia based railroad. Similar units were in place on the Pennsylvania Railroad, (724<sup>th</sup>), and others who sponsored the 729<sup>th</sup> and a few others.

Members of the 712<sup>th</sup> were advised in late July or early August 1950 they were being “called-up.” The actual induction into active duty was 5 Sep 1950, with the unit leaving for Ft. Eustis on 7 Sep 1950.

At the time, the 712<sup>th</sup> was made up of 16 officers and 60 enlisted men. Most were from the Reading Railroad, a few from the Central Railroad of New Jersey, and a few with no railroad affiliation other than interest in railroads.

At Ft Eustis, while the cadre was training, fillers started to arrive to bring the battalion up to its T/O strength of 880. Many of these people had some railroad background and were quickly slotted into berths. Others were given “Block-Operators” training or for those who went to “C” Company; into T&E service, workouts on the Ft. Eustis railroad.

While the line of road at Ft. Eustis was not large, it had several miles of running track, a wye, grade crossings and other features.

At least, the T&E people could be taught; coupling and/or uncoupling cars and boarding, riding and/or alighting from equipment.

Mid November saw them starting to pack, and shaking out the persons who would not be going to Korea.

Automotive equipment was loaded on flat cars and a train departed for the coast with a number of “C” Company riders.

Early in December “C” Company moved to the west coast to be airlifted to Japan and then Korea.

Headquarters and the remaining lettered companies left Ft. Eustis by train for the coast on 7 Dec. They arrived at Ft. Lawton on 12 Dec and on 15 Dec left for Korea on the USS Gen. M M Patrick (a dependents ship which was fortunate as it had a large day room they turned into a battalion headquarters and continued to interview and slot late arrivals).

At this point they lost all contact with “C” Company. Later they learned when “C” Company arrived in Japan, some uniformed soul made a serious mistake when he attempted to assign these railroaders to an infantry depot. They had not reckoned with one William P. Houwen, Jr, CPT, TC (They never had a chance).

“C” Company moved through Japan to Korea and settled in the school grounds at SINDONG-(128.5 X 35.9), where, as was to become their custom, to further the lack of education of the locals by running them out of their schools and using the school as a military headquarters.

The balance of the battalion arrived Pusan 5 Jan 1951 and Sindong 6 Jan 1951.

At this point they became aware of the 714<sup>th</sup> TROB, reported to be a “regular army” unit. They were working along the Pusan-Taegu-Taejon Line, and to an extent around WONJU- (127.96 X 37.35). It was never clear when the 714<sup>th</sup> pulled out, but they seemed to disappear as an entity, and migrated toward 3<sup>rd</sup> MRS, (Third Military Railway Service), headquarters in Taegu and later Seoul.

Shortly after our arrival at Sindong, Block Operators were placed at some stations along, (what was known as) the East Coast Line.

A sub-division point for control of the East Coast Line, to provide a T&E base and oversee the operation was established at YONGCHON- (128.95 X 35.95). Block Operators were then placed at these locations:

- HWABON- (128.85 X 36.15)
- UPO- (128.8 X 36.2)
- TAPNI- (128.8 X 36.25)
- UISONG- (128.75 X 36.35)
- MURYONG- (128.7 X 36.5)
- ANDONG- (128.7 X 36.55)
- PUNGGI- (128.55 X 36.85)
- TANYANG- (128.3 X 36.9)
- CHAECHON- (128.2 X 37.15)
- WONJU- (127.95 X 37.35)

While this was happening, their spare people were set to work unloading box cars that had been placed on a siding at CHICHON- (128.55 X 35.85). These were cars that had been loaded by troops; army and/or marine following the collapse in North Korea when the Chinese entered the war (police action).

Any idea they nourished about war not being hell was rapidly dispersed as the cars were unloaded.

They were to unload and break the contents down into the several Quartermaster classifications and then the interested entity would come and gather up their belongings and either put them back into the main stream or junk them.

Cars would contain pancake flour, ice cream mix, arms, ammunition (of all sizes), truck parts, rations, little clothing, some Company or Battalion records, and on two occasions, a body, protected with cardboard, surrounded by a ring of frozen canteens, some empty, some not, some part consumed “C” rations. The sobering thought was that somebody or somebody’s tried to do what they could and this was their best shot.

This was an attention getter!

A week or so later, they put Block Operators into these locations:

WAEGWAN- (128.45 X 35.95)

KUMCHON- (128.1 – 36.1)

YONGDONG (127.75 X 36.2)

“C” Company in the meantime had been riding trains. The trains were operated by a Korean crew. One engineman, two trains were operated by a Korean crew. One engineman, two firemen, one brakeman and a conductor. Our people rode to keep things moving. It was hard to have a train make much progress toward the fighting, but they sure came back in a third of the time consumed by the up trip.

The “train-riders” argued their trains’ way through block stations, helped stuff GI soap in journal boxes, help pack wet grass in journal boxes, stopped the firemen from wasting time by stopping for water every ten miles, etc.

On 30 March 1951, the Battalion base moved to YONGDUNGPO- (126.9 X 37.45) and occupied the managers’ apartments of a large silk mill. There was a two story building used by Battalion Headquarters, the Medics and the barber. The rest of the complex consisted of 72 apartments of which 71 were habitable. There were several deep tubs and a beauty shop, all of which they converted to showers by “A” & “B” company, putting enough boiler tube together to reach the Han River – and a very large heavy duty pump.

They were in that base until the early May breakthrough at which time they loaded into boxcars and moved to HOEDOG- (127.4 X 36.45). A few days later, they moved into a schoolhouse in Taejon.

The breakthrough north of Seoul had been announced by the amount of British traffic moving south. First time a two-column convoy was seen was right over the Han River bridges, through Yongdungpo and on down the Suwon Road. Two people who had been working at TOKJUNG- (127.1 X 37.85) called before they left Yongdungpo asking for advice. They were told to hook up with anybody wearing blue braid. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Division was at the brunt of the attack and elected not to run through the gantlet the enemy had set up.

They returned to Yongdungpo on 6 Jun 1951 and a few nights later there came a call from the battalion switchboard. The operator was somewhat shaken when he tried to explain who was calling.

Turned out to be their two lost men. They had been living with an element of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division and after the fighting moved north they returned to their station (although mentioned earlier that it was Tokjung, it could have been YONGDUCHON- (127.1 X 37.9)).

Before they left they had buried their telephone and other equipment, had now recovered it and were back in the station, ready for work.

Paper work was initiated to have them awarded extra points for the period as well as the Combat Infantry Badge (they having been more than 30 days in direct combat).

Their station people and train riders were stretched thin, but in June of 1951, the 724<sup>th</sup> arrived and a month later when they were done building quarters, they were relieved of duties south of Taejon.

When the GM Diesel locomotives arrived, the 724<sup>th</sup> was able to convince somebody that they should be used south of Taejon so they would not fall into enemy hands. They were left with the steam equipment. Later the GM locomotives were used north of Taejon. By this time, the 712<sup>th</sup> had staffed more stations and terminals.

Early on they had established a "Courier Car," operated by James Pierce that when hooked to the Korean Locomotive PC5 11, was used to take mail, fresh food, freight and whatever to the men in the RTOs. They were able to service the RTOs on an every third day basis, and mail was carried by train riders to the RTOs so that their people would have the story from the home front.

About June 1951, Sgt. Vanover, who had been acting as the Korean Labor NCO, left for the states and his duties were assigned to one of the soldiers of the 712<sup>th</sup>. The Korean help had to be paid every fourteen days and in going around to pay them, the health of 712<sup>th</sup> could be checked on (or at least on the existence).

By this time the EUSAK Express had been introduced, and hospital trains were running from UIJONBU- (127 X 37.5), but they also came from a station further up, almost at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel.

There was a narrow gauge line running from YOJU- (127.6 X 37.3), through SUWON, and into INCHON. The 712<sup>th</sup> never had any active participation in its operation, though.

IRI- (126.9 X 35.95) was at the north end of an area they stayed out of by agreement with the guerillas. When Dug-Out-Dug had come in at Inchon, the North Korean forces were cut in two by his eastward drive. Many surrendered (and were put on an island south of Pusan where they later took Gen Dowd prisoner), or merged with the guerillas.

They serviced Iri and went to KUNSAN- (126.8 X 35.95). They did not venture south of Iri. However, a 3<sup>rd</sup> MRS Officer elected to show his disregard and took a Michelin Car (a self propelled passenger car, a forerunner of the present RDC) into that area against everybody's advice.

He had with him two enlisted men. One was badly wounded, and the other received his Purple Heart posthumously. The officer received the Silver Star. The call for blood came after dark and no Korean would operate a relief engine from Taejon to Iri, and that Yardmaster Lloyd McCarthy (Taejon) grabbed two guys to shovel the real estate into the fire box and took off.

At that time, the area in question was such that the ROK army used it for the final two weeks of their recruit training, saying it was a good way to get the feel of being shot at while being able to shoot back, not at a paper target but at a real target!

Early on, each train operated with two guard cars, one ahead of the engine and one behind the train. The cars were gondolas with about two feet of sandbags around the inside and level with the top of the car. There were sandbags through the middle of the car which made two pockets and there were mounted in the pockets .30 or .50 caliber machine guns.

These cars were responsible for the death of a lot of trees and bushes along the right-of-way, but who was to say there were not short, squatty gooks in the shadows. It was a miserable assignment. At one time there was thought to putting a flat car ahead of the guard car. The flat would have a layer of cross-ties, eight or ten pieces of rail and a keg of spikes and a few joint bars.

By the end of the summer of 1951, the mission was starting to become routine. A few more "messes" had been established.

"A" Company had overseen the relaying of some of the yards that had been destroyed by the enemy. The water points for locomotive water were all operational and the fear was gone of getting to a location and not being able to take water.

MOSs notwithstanding, it is funny how things worked out. "A" Company had assigned to it a group incorrigibles (all from West Virginia), many of which were cat-hole miners. If ever anybody ever understood one-lung engines and water pumps, that was the group. While one can look back at some of the problems they had with them, what is really remembered is how well they turned a bad situation around. Early on when water supply was questionable, a lot of time was wasted leaving every water point with a full tank, hauling water instead of cars.

Their best driver and one who chauffeured Col Palmer at times had been a tanker. A tanker was a man who ran through the dark of night with about 250 gallons of shine in a big tank in the backseat and trunk, with a slide to pull for quick release if the minions of the law were able to catch him.

"B" Company fine-tuned the operation in the shops. Early on they learned that a few dollars worth of gaskets to stop steam leaks could mean more cars per train. Furthermore, they examined the destroyed locomotives along-the-line-of-road or where they were caught in the shop, inventorying them for usable parts to repair "rip-track" jobs.

The Motor Pool in the early days was gradually making hanger queens out of their few vehicles. The Motor Pool Sgt, eating in the mess hall one night with some of the "Operations" people, learned there was a train of damaged motor vehicles moving south and would pass Sindong. The Motor Sgt quickly made a list of needed parts, shook his guys out, loaded them in a truck and intercepted the train just south of Taejon.

When the train arrived at Sindong, with all the world to see, there sat his people, each with a pile of windshields, tires, batteries, starters and a host of other goody things. From that day forward, all our vehicles were serviceable. Vehicles recovered from the "Bowling Alley," east of Sindong, were rebuilt and added to their motor pool.

In April 1952 the original 712<sup>th</sup> members were relieved and sent home. Mess Sgt Charles Brothers (a damn fine Mess Sgt) was appointed First Shirt for Headquarters Company.

Headquarters Company was hard on Commanding Officers.

Its first Commanding Officer was CPT Carlton Baum. He was sent home when his mother died. As a standby Lt. Leroy Benner was CO, in addition to Mess Officer, Motor Pool Officer, Movie Officer, VD Officer and whatever else.

He was relieved by Lt. Edward Anderson, Chief of the Operations Section. Shortly thereafter, Mrs. Anderson was in a car that ran into a pole and was seriously injured, and he was released to administer to her and the children.

CPT William P. Houwen, Jr., was next, and during this period it was finally settled:

A- Who was Company Commander

B- Who was REALLY in charge. Never had any trouble after that. However, a tragedy took place in Reading, PA., and CPT Houwen was released and went home.

The next was only the CO for a few days while the CID investigated two fires and one robbery in the PX Car. Then he was gone.

The next, and finest, and an officer who during WWII was battlefield commissioned. After WWII, he reverted to his permanent rank of MSG, and but re-commissioned for the Korean War. Curtis Williams, CPT TC, was a Missourian.