

## ORIGIN OF THE STATIC LINE

by Bob Gillette

The origin of the 505th's The Static Line parallels the history of the formation of the Regiment itself. The regiment was activated July 6, 1942. During July and August Regimental HQ Company was filled with men assigned to one of three major groups—a demolitions platoon, a communications platoon and the S-2 Section. Other staff members of S-1 S-3 & S-4 were also in the company but drew some of their manpower from Service Company.

The S-2 Section had a T/O of eighteen men. Several of the original members of the S-2 Section had come from basic intelligence training in Company A, 87th Inf Training Bn of Camp Roberts, California, and remained together throughout the war. Most were assigned because of a background in languages, mapping, photography or related experience. Some of the communications platoon came from the communications company of that same basic training battalion. The “commo” people later became known for their gastronomical prowess; they even operated the company mess hall in Naples. Lt. Swingler (KIA-N) led the demolitions platoon. He along with Percy “Bobo” O’Neill and Irving Jones (KIA-N) were part of the cadre for what was to become the regimental boxing team.

The first S-2 officer was Captain Barney Oldfield. While nominally the S-2 officer, he saw his primary role to be a publicist, at which he excelled. Barney was pulled in other directions in his staff role so the section was self directed some of the time. Our basic training left us as well prepared as some of the officers initially assigned to us so we became largely self-taught. Barney gave us a book to study, S-2 In Action, a WWI instruction manual of dubious value. This led to our column, S-2 Inaction, in subsequent issues of The Static Line.

Bill Jenks had been a small town photographer in Vermont so he set up a darkroom. Linzee Prescott (POW-N) had drawn cartoons for the New Yorker magazine and it wasn't long before he was at work decorating the Officers' Club with his military humor. Ed Kullifay (designer of the original Panther insignia) claimed to have decorated Ann Miller's home in Hollywood, which made him the object of our envy.

By late August 1942 we had returned from post jump school furloughs. The inspiration and the charge to produce a newspaper came from Barney Oldfield who also assigned his S-2 Section men to do the work. The staff of the newspaper was self-appointed by mutual agreement. Surely someone was looking over our shoulder but we received neither direction nor criticism of our initial work. It was an enlisted man's effort pure and simple.

The name of the paper was developed from a list of parachuting terms such as the reserve, hooked-up, ripcord, twisted risers, meat wagon, malfunction, blown panel, puckered vent and static line. The Puckered Vent and The Static Line were the only titles to make the short list. We decided that The Static Line would have the better chance to be appreciated by the outside world.

We were able to publish the first issue of The Static Line on Oct 3 1942 it was printed on poor quality, 8'x13' paper, not the current 8-1/2x14" standard. By the time the first issue was ready, Captain Mulcahy had been named Special Services Officer. A notable action of the early Special Services office was to order 1500 pairs of men's athletic shorts, size 42. The rationale given was that the supplier used the average chest size for a waist measurement. That earned the usual GI reception.

Of the men identified in the first issue, Bill Moderhak (KIA-A) and Al Schroeter moved into the Medics, and Ed Stanley became a demolitions man. Bob Bales and Jack Gavin (KIA-H) accepted battlefield commissions in Sicily. Raymond Spafford became a supply sergeant, Bob Debnam, Ernie Lasley and later Joe Stanger, transferred into the Special Services Section. Others who contributed to the early success of the paper were Rollo Morris, Nick Kastrantas, John McGuigan (KIA-S), Doug Gabriel, Don Adrianson (POW-H), Bill Jenks and George Dixon, all of whom remained in the section. For a short period during those early months, Bachenheimer was a member of the S-2 section. He transferred to 504 where he became a legend for his exploits, especially at Anzio and until his disappearance in Holland.

Subsequent issues of The Static Line will indicate exactly when responsibility was relinquished to the new Special Services office.

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End: Copy of The Static Line, No.1, Vol. 1.