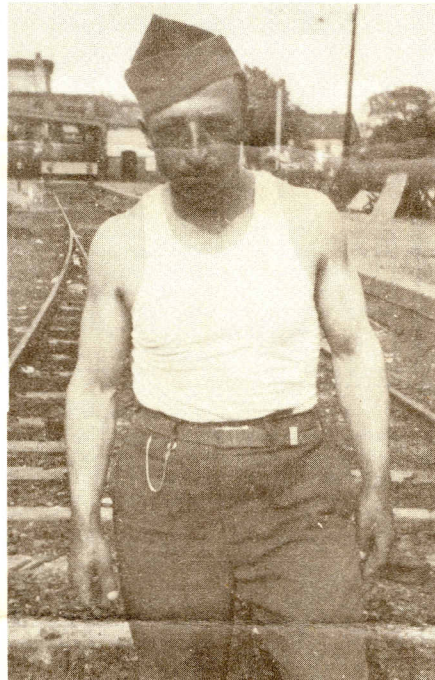
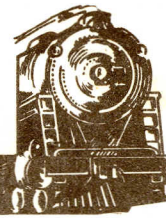




The Yankee BOOMER



Working together (top and bottom, left) Russian and American GI's repair German rail lines for final victory drive. These snapshots were taken by Pfc Watson, 733rd. At right is S/Sgt Michael C. Menna, foreman of the Allied labor gang. Photo by Lt. Seegmiller.

RUSSIANS HELP YANKS REPAIR REICHSBAHN

Two hundred Russian laborers, after being freed from a Nazi concentration camp, immediately went to work swinging picks and pounding mules on a ripped-up railroad in Germany, to aid the Allied cause in the final drive to end the war. Supervising their work was S/Sgt Michael G. Menna, Company "A", 733rd Railway Operating Battalion.

The Russians didn't understand the strange new language of their American liberators. But they did understand that their genial boss, "Black Mike" Menna, knew his railroading. With songs and hearty laughter they worked away on their first non-compulsory job in several years. The track they repaired led to the junction where their American allies reached out and joined with their Soviet comrades. Joyfully, the Red workmen helped to batter the common enemy, the hated SS troops who tortured and starved them only a few weeks ago.

"Black Mike" A Legendary Figure

Sergeant Menna, the Russian workers' popular foreman, won his title in the 733rd. Dark-skinned, with coal black hair and eyes, and a terrific capacity for work, "Black Mike" spent 13 years on the Lackawanna Railroad. With the 733rd in England, he supervised a track gang repairing robot-bombed railroads and laying new spurs, leads and storage

tracks. In France, "Black Mike" worked with his track platoon in combat areas from Normandy to Germany. He also dropped down to Southern France for an emergency. (Continued on Page 4)

BOXCAR TO BREECH: MRS CURB SERVICE

Now that the worst is over, the 732nd trainmen are joking about their "ammo excursions". They recall the first train of ammunition that rolled up the line past Dalstein toward Grindorf, in Mr. Hitler's Third Reich.

That was early on Valentine's Day, 1945. The infantry sergeant ogled the U. S. Army Transportation Corps' diesel engine 8129. It had hauled a trainload of ammo direct to his battery's door. "What the hell is this?" the combat sergeant said.

The placid reply came from Sgt. Harold Wombolt, Lansing, Mich., 732nd conductor. "These are the 240's you guys ordered. Where d'ya want 'em?" The incredulous infantryman slapped his helmet and laughed. "This is the first time I saw curb service in the army!"

Others on the 732nd store-to-door delivery train were: T/4 Carl R. Beck, Vandalia, Ill., engineer; T/5 Alfred H. De Bruhl, Los Angeles, Calif., fireman, T/5 Joseph P. Schmaeling, Pittsburgh, Pa., brakeman; Pfc Lowell E. Fox, Washington, Mich., brakeman.

BUT IT WASN'T "REAR ECHELON" AFTER ALL

The story of how reinforcements from the "rear echelon" reacted to their first glimpse of front line fighting has been told many times. Now here comes a word picture of the experiences of some combat men who were sent back for reassignment to service units such as the MRS.

Five combat soldiers were reclassified because of injuries last winter, and subsequently assigned to their new "rear echelon" outfit — the 733rd Railway Operating Battalion.

The five men were: S/Sgt. Spencer E. De Pauw, Geneseo, Illinois, T/4 Loren Crawford Kirkland, Humbolt, Tennessee; Pfc Alfred Bryan Combs, Jr., Raleigh, North Carolina; Pfc Thayles Eugene Maupin, Silver Lake, Kansas; and Pfc Stanley S. Koloski, from Quechee, Vermont. Koloski was the only one with former railroad experience, being a furloughed employee of the Central Vermont.

Headed Back Up Front

When they arrived at 733rd Headquarters, they were immediately assigned to Company "A" because of their engineering experience. But they weren't at Hq. long until they found themselves in one of their new company's halftracks heading east.

"Hey Driver," Maupin called out, "didn't you miss the road? You're heading right up front." The driver laughed and said, "No, that's where we work. Been just in back of Patton's front lines since we landed in France last August. ... And they drove on up the line to somewhere near Saarbrucken.

They pulled in at a bombed out railroad station near a little town "that wasn't there" and drove up the tracks. Soon they skidded to a halt in the snow beside a train of captured German coaches and box-cars. The driver said, "This is it. Your new home and work train."

Their Orientation Begins

The first sergeant came out to meet them and took them in to see the Company Commander, soft-spoken, smiling 1st Lt. Alexander Matthews, graduate and instructor from Ft. Belvoir Engineer, OCS and former employee of the New York Central Railroad.

The "old man" was surprisingly easy to get acquainted with. He told them what the company's mission was and just where they would fit in until he could tell more about their ability. In the meantime they were to be assigned to 1st Lt. John Hiner's Bridge and Building platoon. Lt. Hiner, they were told, was a graduate from Virginia Military Institute, and formerly employed by the Southern Railway. And then they began their railway orientation.

(Continued on Page 6)