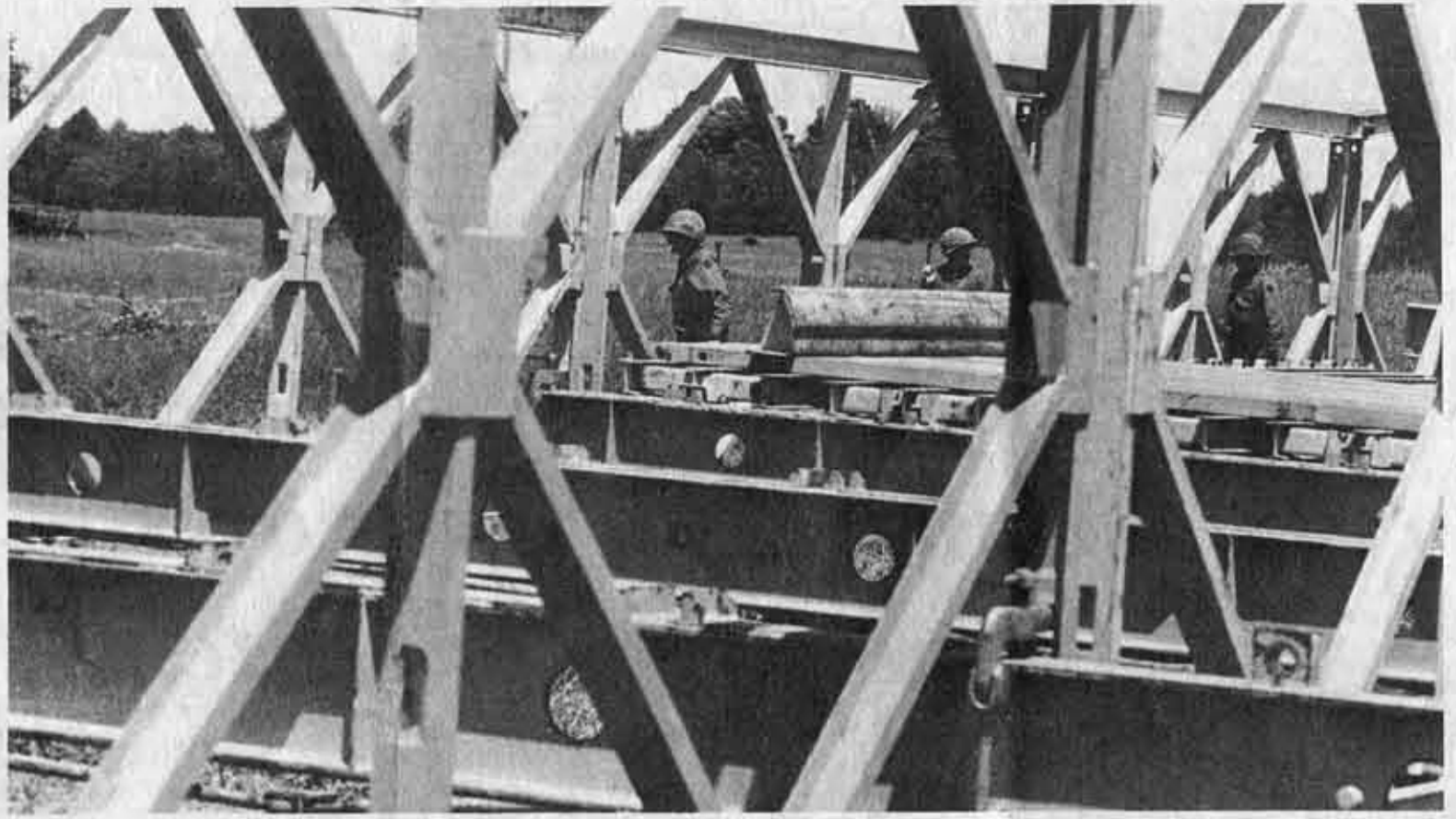




THE SIGHTS are sharpened on a tank by the men of Troop G at a mini-range adjacent to the arsenal.



THE BAILEY BRIDGE, termed a "giant erector set" by one of the engineers.

(PHOTOS BY ROBERT SETON)

Ohio National Guard trains at arsenal

Playing 'army' keeps Company C combat ready

By J. F. MARCUSFIELD

They formally train two weeks out of the year, usually in the summer when the wind and cold are just a memory on a hot, dusty summer day.

The 612th Combat Engineer Battalion of the Ohio National Guard, Company C from Norwalk, men with wives and good jobs back home, are playing army this week in the woods, where wild berries grow, vultures hover over dead animals and deer run freely.

One hundred thirty-four strong, it is not the first time the men of Company C have refreshed their memories for building bridges, planting minefields and knocking down trees.

They are more familiar with being awakened in the middle of the night to help civilians like themselves cope with flooding rains or destructive winds. But today the task of dismantling a recently erected bridge seems just as familiar and important.

They've been up for three days but their spirits are still high. There is a sense of purpose — a job needs to be done and done well.

Companies from the Ohio National Guard train year-round at the Ravenna Arsenal, overlooking West Branch State Park, set between Windham and Paris townships with a main entrance on Ohio 59.

Robert Emerson, commander representative, said 20,000-man days are put in yearly at the arsenal by guard personnel who are required to practice warfare techniques two weeks every year.

It is the first time the men of Company C have been to the arsenal. But their two weeks of practice there is similar to anywhere else.

It is quiet at the arsenal. Except for an occasional explosives truck bringing munitions for one of the many underground bunkers at the arsenal, life at the munitions dump is peaceful. Contractors go in and out of the gate with relative ease. Rumors there abound that the Cubans will be housed here, or that stockpiling is going on in anticipation of trouble abroad.

But the place is deserted, the many cabins that used to house Army personnel are empty; a peaceful calm has set in at the arsenal since the early 1970s, at least for now.

The men of Company C have set up camp deep in the woods. Orders come over the radio to tear this bridge down or blow that one up or to dig an anti-tank ditch.

Company C is an engineer unit. The men assist both the infantry and cavalry by building bridges when rivers need to be

crossed. They are the ones who knock down trees in a crisscross pattern or plant minefields to slow the enemy down.

"We are just as effective as the infantry," Guard Captain Dale Liebenthal of Sandusky says, "If it doesn't stop them (the enemy) we are not effective."

The company has been on a 24-hour red alert for the past three days. Last night, the men were ordered to move camp.

It has rained here for two days. The ground beneath is beginning to dry but it is still soft. Trucks had to be towed out of the mud during last night's move.

The company is being rated this week by an Army general. The men have been told by Liebenthal to remain alert.

Most of the men of the company are patriotic. It will be the guard who during a time of war will assist the Army, Navy, Marines and Air Force if they are needed.

Most of the men say they want to do something for their country, that is why they are here; some readily admit that they are in it for the money. (A guardsman makes a minimum \$60 a month for attending one scheduled meeting).

But today the men have one thing in common. They have just been given orders to tear down a Bailey Bridge that they erected yesterday and the job needs to be done as quickly as possible. One day the quickness may mean life or death for a few hundred men.

The bridge is beginning to come down slowly. It will take at least two-and-a-half hours for the men to take the 2.76-ton bridge apart.

Sounds of dynamite blasting can be heard nearby. It is not another unit practicing but the realism is uncanny. The Department of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms is blowing up confiscated dynamite about two miles away.

The bridge is beginning not to look like a bridge. Sweat is pouring down the backs of the men. One man with dried mud caked on his boots is asked how he feels. He says he will be fine once he gets back to Camp Perry in Port Clinton. A shower is on his mind.

Tomorrow the unit will pull out. Most will be going home to their wives. An insurance salesman says the two-week training is like a vacation, except without the wife.

Another blast of dynamite is heard. Civilization is not far away. It is only a 15-mile drive to the main gate. The men know that. But deep in the woods, off one of the roads that tracks across the arsenal, life at home with the wife and children seems far away.



A MORTAR ROUND, on its way.



ENGINEERS AWAIT a lift to the bridge site.



THE MEN of Troop G of the 107th Cavalry from Warrens Heights practice tank maneuvers at the

Ravenna Arsenal. The troop was out at the arsenal a week before Troop C.