

## Tidbits

"Griff" is the Tommy's word for talk, the kind of semi-news, semi-gossip talk that military men indulge in during their idle moments. As this month's cover is a reproduction of the Griffin emblem of AFS 485 Company, some assorted 'Griff' on that unit appears below.

485 Company, or Coy, as it is designated in British abbreviated form, was born in Syria in the spring of 1943. AFS in the Middle East was divided into two Ambulance Car Companies which were given (apparently at random) the numbers 11 and 15. Then, for reasons of their own, the British commanders decided to re-arrange the AFS numbers in North Africa. AFS drew the numbers 567 (the Chicken Brigade) and 485. Men and cars from both 12. and 15 went into 485 in its babyhood. The first thing the new company did as a unit was to trek across the top of the African continent, on what was then the longest convoy trip to be undertaken by any part of the British Middle East Forces, driving from Baalbek, Syria, to Tripoli. In all there were 98 vehicles and they made the trip without a single mishap or road accident.

GRIFFIN

GRIFF

It was not until after the advance guard of 485, A and B platoons, had reached Italy however, that the men started talking of an identifying insignia of their own. Everyone wanted an emblem, but no agreement could seem to be reached on what device or design should be used. Finally it was decided to have a contest, the winner to get a \$25.00 prize to make the Coy a distinguishing mark of its own. The griffin was chosen because this mythical creature with its half eagle, half lion body, seemed best able to represent the fraternity and cooperation between the AFS men and the British troops they serve. Shortly afterwards, the ambulances and other sundry 485 vehicles had brightly painted griffins on their front doors.

It was at Casserta Italy, the first station that 485 had in Europe, that the design was originated, executed and where the majority of the cars were actually painted. While 485 was at Casserta the ambulance men were quartered in the town abbatoir and they set up a bar in the house that had been previously used exclusively to house Casserta's mad dogs; thus it got its name of 'The Mad Dog Bar'.

A and B platoons went to Italy from Tripoli and arrived at Salerno less than a week after the Allied landings, C and D platoons followed from Alexandria in December 1943. Members of D Platoon, 485 Coy, were the men who took part in the amphibious operations on the Anzio Beachhead and the ones who in rotation served there during the four months that the Nazis fought to push the invaders back into the sea. 485 has been the AFS outfit that has moved and shifted the most throughout its service in Italy, having at first had three platoons with the Fifth Army, then one platoon with the Fifth and three with the Eighth. Now the Coy has returned to its original status with the majority of the men attached to the Fifth.

From Casserta 485 Coy has moved northward along the Italian boot until it is now in Northern Tuscany. There is much griff as to how long the Coy will be staying in Italy, how much farther it will advance, and what sort of fighting it will be involved in. Naturally no one knows the answer to any of this, but, the ambulances with their Anglo-American griffins are and will be there as long as they are needed to see the 'show' to its conclusion.

J.B.

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