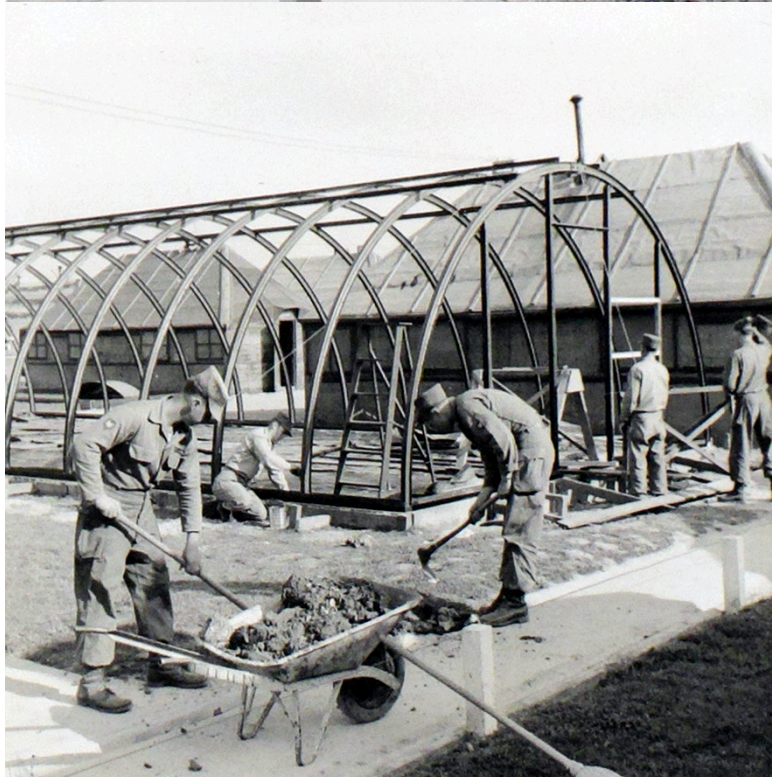


## HOUSING IN ADSEC HAS COME A LONG, LONG WAY



**Vassincourt: Visible progress of the first Quonset unit construction—phasing out the tarpaper shacks.**

(Replacement photos for the poor quality original, first unit photos furnished by LT Daniel Klinck, 1955-57.

SFC Everard A. Davis, veteran of WWII and the Korea War, was the platoon sergeant for LT Klinck's platoon. See Footnote ii.

By **JIM ANDERSON**<sup>i</sup>

*The Overseas Weekly*, page 6, Sunday, 16 September 1956

**VERDUN** – The northern part of France has been the background for three wars and it has come to look like a battlefield. Pockmarked, dirty little villages and scrubby field are punctuated by immaculate green-and-white military cemeteries. Off the main roads it's all mud.

Into this setting, more than five years ago, the U.S. Army dropped the business end of its Line of Communications. Advance Section COM Z [ADSEC] ("The Supply Line to the Front Line").

In those early days, much of the troop housing in ADSEC consisted of groups of tents surrounded by seas of mud. The battle cry then was "Get the troops out of the mud."

For a progress report on ADSEC housing, an OW reporter toured some of the installations last week and talked with scores of men.

In a sentence, the ADSEC housing has come a long way but there's still a long way to go.

The ADSEC showplace is a modern concrete building here which houses the 23d Engr Co (Fld Maint). The new, spotlessly clean two-story barracks is on the regular VIP tour route, and the biggest complaint of the men living there is that there's nothing but inspections as the VIPs are paraded through. Unfortunately, the barracks is not typical of ADSEC housing at the moment.

Less than a block away from the 23d's new barracks is the troop housing area for Co C, 97th Engr Bn—a row of tarpaper shacks. Between the two extremes—the tarpaper shacks and the modern barracks—are the barracks of the type, which predominate in ADSEC, the Quonset hut. They're warm (when the stove is working) and fairly easy to keep clean. The biggest drawback is that the latrines and shower rooms are located in separate buildings.

Not many VIP tours get down to the Vassincourt sub-installation, although it's only about an hour's drive from Verdun, just eight miles outside of the city of Bar-le-Duc. Vassincourt is not typical of ADSEC housing but it represents one extreme.

As you drive up to the sub-installation you are reminded of old photographs of the California gold-rush camps. The six-man tarpaper shacks are lined up in straight rows, but a collection of tarpaper shacks, no matter how arranged, cannot look neat. You get the impression that the installation was built last week, and it's a shock to learn that the installation has been here for five years.

The rows of tarpaper shacks are separated by board sidewalks and gravel roads, but it's a losing battle against the mud. Traces of mud are everywhere, on the vehicles, on the buildings, on shoes and on trouser cuffs.

It was a moderately cool day outdoors, but even the feeble sunlight of northern France beating down on the black tarpaper made the heat inside the shacks nearly unbearable. The doors on the ends of the shacks were open and a light breeze wafted in a layer of fine, brown dust.

But housing isn't the biggest complaint at Vassincourt. Says the Installation CO, **Capt. H. E. Peterson**, "The worst thing, of course, is the latrines." They're field latrines, completely primitive, without a sign of running water. In summer they're only an annoyance but on a cold winter day they're much worse.

One Vassincourt NCO, asked if he would transfer to Germany if he had a chance, shouted, "*Would I! I already have a request in for a transfer to a combat engineer outfit. It's not the housing, either. It's this place. You're out here in the mud with no place to go, nothing to do.*"

Vassincourt has a small Post theater, a PX, a small beer hall and a library. There are infrequent buses running to nearby towns and occasional weekend buses to places as far away as Nancy.

Another GI, asked what there is to do at Vassincourt, answered, "You read. You can go to Bar-le-Duc or some of the other towns around here, or you can go to then movies, or you can drink beer, but mostly you read."

Another Vassincourt NCO, **SFC Everard Davis**,<sup>ii</sup> Co A, 97th Engr Bn, agreed that housing wasn't the worst thing about

Vassincourt. *“The housing isn’t so bad. I was in France during the war, so I’ve lived in worse. Of course,”* he added, looking at the dust blowing in through the open door, *“I’ve lived in better, too.”*

You hear the same complaint all over this part of France. Says **Pvt Fredric W. Bevis**, at Trois Fontaines Ord Depot, *“That’s the worst part, the part of France we’re in. It’s rained here for the last five days.”*

As he talked, a sudden shower came to an end outside and the sun came out. Within a half an hour the dust was beginning to blow.

At Vassincourt, the nearest towns are Bar-le-Duc and Revigny. Both are gray, dull and medium-size, and offer very little for the average GI. A trip to Bar-le-Duc is a project if you don’t have a car. Sometimes the Army runs buses to Nancy, where the only on-limits swimming pool in northern France is located.

**Sgt Robert Davidson**, stationed at TFOD, also said he’d transfer to Germany if he had a chance *“The barracks are warm and comfortable and the duty is good. I just want to get out of this part of France.”* He and all the other troops actually living at TFOD live in new and fairly comfortable prefabs.

*“It’s the off-post housing that’s the biggest problem, I think,”* **Davidson** said.

At Vassincourt, one noncom living in a two-room apartment for which he pays nearly \$50 a month, described the start of his average day:

*“Every morning, before I come to work, I have to take the toilet pot out, dig a hole and bury the contents. If it were just my wife and myself living here it wouldn’t be so bad, but with two kids it’s impossible. We’re going to have to move.”*

*“Where will you move to?”* he was asked by *OW’s* reporter.

*“That’s the question,”* the sergeant replied.

But not everybody in ADSEC would transfer to Germany if they had a chance.

**Pfc Samuel Dunnig**, stationed at TFOD wouldn’t. *“The duty is good here. We’ve got a good CO and that makes the difference.”*

In Verdun, **Sp3 Harry Bolens** and **Pfc Jack Keefer** wouldn’t either. Says **Bolens**, *“You’re close to everything here, a couple of hours from Paris, Luxembourg, Stuttgart and Frankfurt.”*

Here is a thumbnail rundown of the housing situation in this area and elsewhere in France:

**Etain Trans Center** – Troops are housed in ancient French-built caserns. The buildings are old but fairly comfortable.

**Metz** – Troops using both old French Army caserns and prefabs. The biggest problem in Metz is that the troop housing is far removed from everything, including duty stations.

**Nancy** – Some tarpaper shacks still exist and many of the troops live in prefabs but they will soon move into new concrete barracks constructed by the Joint Construction Agency.

**Toul Engr Dep and TFOD** – Troops live in prefabs.

**Billy-le-Grand POL Depot** – All troops are housed in tarpaper shacks.

**Vassincourt Med sub-installation** – Troops are housed in tarpaper shacks, but these will soon be torn down and Quonsets will replace them.

**Sampigny** – Troops are housed in Quonsets and prefabs scavenged from the Toul-Rosieres AF base after the Air Force was finished with them.

**Verdun Installation** – Everything from old French caserns to tarpaper shacks to brand-new barracks exists in Verdun. The last of the tarpaper shacks are coming down and prefabs are going up.

In some respects, one officer in ADSEC Hq admitted the foregoing is not much to show for more than five years of work. He cited four major obstacles that have slowed progress in housing:

1. Normal Army inertia and red tape.
2. Congressional red tape and unwillingness to appropriate the necessary funds.
3. French governmental red tape. Building projects need French approval and sometimes that’s difficult to get. The classic example is at Trois Fontaines, where trees grow through the roof of a classroom because the Army couldn’t get French permission to cut them down.

4. In ComZ, the operational facilities had priority. For instance, at Nancy Ord Depot, while some troops were still living in tarpaper shacks the depot's inventory section was housed in a new, State-side-like office building.

The coming months will see some major improvements in ADSEC housing troop facilities. At Vassincourt, 46 Quonsets have been procured and the last of the tarpaper shacks

will disappear as an engineer task force goes through the camp tearing down the shacks.

When the last of the tarpaper shacks come down it will mean the end of an era for ADSEC. Not everybody is pleased to see the era end. One GI in Verdun, now housed in a new prefab, told *OW*, "*Actually, the tarpaper shacks weren't so bad. There weren't as many people and you could hide beer in the rafters.*"

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<sup>i</sup> *Transcribed by SP5 Larry L. Castleman, Co A, 97<sup>th</sup> EBC, (MAJ, Ret.), 1958-1960, from the actual article on file.*

<sup>ii</sup> *Soldier's Medal for Heroism Not Involving Combat:*



### **Davis, Everard A.**

Headquarters, Department of the Army  
General Orders No. 36 - 6 June 1969

Sergeant First Class Everard A. Davis, (then Corporal), United States Army, who distinguished himself by heroism at Kimpo Air Base, Korea, while a member of Company A, 811th Engineer Aviation Battalion, on 16 October 1950. While engaged in construction work at the end of the main runway Sergeant Davis saw a jet aircraft crash near where he was working. Accompanied by an officer and two other men he ran to the plane, which had landed upside down and saw that the canopy was embedded in the ground and that the pilot could not escape. Fully aware that the plane might catch fire and explode, Sergeant Davis, with complete disregard for his own safety, successfully helped to clear the earth away and removed the pilot. By his courageous action at the risk of his life, Sergeant Davis brought great credit upon himself and the military service.

**Editor's Note:** SFC Everard Aaron Davis, Male, Black or African American, Never Married, Methodist Churches aged 57, born 15 October 1910, at Jamaica, Queens County New York; died in Bien Hoa Province, Vietnam, on 13 January 1968, from a stroke and is buried at Long Island National Cemetery. He served in the United States Army for 26 years (1942-1968). He was awarded the World War II Victory Medal in 1945.

**Sources:** <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=2652214>, <http://www.virtualwall.org/dd/DavisEA01a.htm>, <http://army.togetherweserved.com/army/servlet/tws.webapp.WebApp?cmd=ShadowBoxProfile&type=DecorationExt&ID=1900058>

**Decorations and Awards:** European African Middle Eastern Medal w/2 Bronze Service Stars; Asiatic Pacific Service Medal; WWII Victory Medal; Philippines Liberation Ribbon, American Theater Medal; Good Conduct Medal (3<sup>rd</sup> Award); national Defense Service medal w/1 Bronze Service Star; Korean Defense Service Ribbon; United Nations Service Medal; Soldiers Medal; Carbine (Sharpshooter).

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SERVICE RECORD: SFC Everard Aaron Davis, born 15 October 1910 SFC Everard Aaron Davis, Male, Black or African American, Never Married, Methodist Churches, aged 57, born 15 October 1910, at Jamaica, Queens County New York; died in Bien Hoa Province, Vietnam, on 13 January 1968, from a stroke and is buried at Long Island National Cemetery. He served in the United States Army for 26 years (1942-1968). He was awarded the World War II Victory Medal in 1945 and then served during the Korean War before his service in Vietnam. He was with Company A, 97th EBC and served as Platoon Sergeant of the First Platoon (LT Klinck's platoon) circa 1955-58; entered active 12 June 1943:

26 June 1943 – 7 July 1943:

- Company C, Special Training Battalion, Basic Training, Camp Claiborne, Louisiana

7 July 1943 – 7 November 1945:

- Headquarters and Service Company, 1310<sup>th</sup> Engineer General Service Regiment, Camp Claiborne, Louisiana

16 November 1945:

- Headquarters, 21 Replacement Depot, location unclear,

26 May 1946 – 6 June 1946:

- New York Port of Embarkation- to Bremerhaven for duty with European Theater of Operation

15 June 1946-16 September 1946:

- HQ Co., 7<sup>th</sup> Bn, 6975<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, APO 179 [Bayreuth, Germany]

Also contained in the files are copies of a report (and a response to it) of the Negro Newspaper Publishers Association's inspection tour "Troops and Conditions in Europe," a "Report of Investigation concerning Negro Troops Disturbances in Rotenburg, O.T., Germany," and a copy of a letter from an anonymous Negro soldier in the 6975 Infantry Regiment Provisional about conditions at the U.S. Army camp in Auerbach, Germany. He wrote, "two weeks ago 10,000 German prisoners were here, they moved out and left all the filth and disease that these places usually carry . . . it seems as though Negro troops are being concentrated here." Source: <https://www.archives.gov/publications/ref-info-papers/105/index.pdf> page 86.

Regiment Division AUERBACH. Germany Recently attached to the First Division (The Big Red One), the 6975th Infantry Regiment, under command of Col. C. M. Willingham, has been undergoing a five - week training period to take its place with occupation forces in ET [European Theater]. Source: <http://www.newspapers.com/newspage/40126309/>

17 September 1946-10 December 1946:

- Company A, 41<sup>st</sup> Engineer General Service Regiment, APO 172 (construction foreman): [The unit was the 41st Engineer General Service Regiment (Colored), the famous Singing Engineers. The 41st Engineer General Service Regiment (Colored) stayed around in Europe for seven more seasons. It was not formally deactivated in Germany until December 1946.]

The 41st Engineer General Service Regiment was given a first priority on the basis of excellence in training, with two white general service regiments following immediately behind it. The 92d, 93d, 94th, 95th, 96th, 97th, and 98th Engineer Battalions, all of which were to become general service regiments; the 76th and 77th Engineer Light Pontoon Companies, with six white pontoon companies placed ahead of them; and the 18th Field Artillery Brigade, with one white and one Negro regiment, were all considered ready to go. By 1 February, the 45th Engineer General Service, Regiment and the 184th Field Artillery and, by April, the 46th Field Artillery Brigade were among the units expected to be ready. Memo, ODCofS GHQ for G-3, 24 Dec 41, with Incl, GHQ 353 TnK. Source: <http://www.history.army.mil/books/wwii/11-4/fnch15.htm>

16 January 1947 – 28 January 1947:

- 
- Bremerhaven Port of Embarkation- to United States

30 October 1947-25 November 1947:

- 9206<sup>th</sup> Technical Service Unit, Camp Stoneman, California

26 November 1947 – 31 May 1948:

- 6901 ASU Service. Det (Negro), Camp Stoneman, California (platoon sergeant, welder)

12 January 1949 – 21 February 1950:

- 573<sup>rd</sup> Engineer Pontoon Bridge (Bailey Bridge) Company, Fort Lewis, Washington (welder) [573<sup>rd</sup> Engineer Company Redesignated 18 December 1947 as the 573d Engineer Pontoon Bridge Company. Activated 27 December 1947 at Fort Lewis, Washington

10 February 1950– 26 February 1950:

- San Francisco of Embarkation- to Guam, Mariana Islands

22 February 1950– 18 December 1951:

- 19<sup>th</sup> AB Group, Haneda AFB, Japan (Attached). Then Company A, 811<sup>th</sup> Engineer Aviation Battalion, Inchon, Korea.

21 December 1951 – 19 January 1952:

- Return to CONUS: Camp Stoneman, California

20 January 1952 – 12 June 1952:

- Company C, 1902<sup>nd</sup> Engineer Aviation Battalion; Company B, 1902<sup>nd</sup> Engineer Aviation Battalion, Walters AFB, Texas.

4 September 1952 – 9 October 1952:

- Detachment 2, 1277<sup>th</sup> Army Support Unit, Camp Kilmer, New Jersey.

10 October 1952 – 14 December 1952:

- Enroute to Far East Command (FECOM)

15 December 1952 – 9 April 1954:

- Company A, 724<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion (Railway Operations), APO 973 Pusan, Korea

14 April 1954 – 30 April 1954:

- Enroute to Seattle, CONUS

9 July 1954 – 2 February 1955:

- Companies A, C, 973<sup>rd</sup> Engineer Battalion (Const), Fort Carson, Colorado

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3 February 1955 – 30 August 1955:

- Companu C, 88<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion (Const), Fort Carson, Colorado

“November 1955 – January 1956, Active duty Construction Foreman, 2 months, SFC, Engineer; January 1956 – May 1956, Combat Engineer, 5 months, SFC E-6, Engineer; May 1956 – January 1958, Utilities Foreman, 20 months,, SFC, E-6; January 1958 – October 1964, Construction Foreman, 81 months, SFC, E-6, Engineer.” [Specific units not indicated in this limited information service period, except in the previous quoted service record statement. At least two years of this time was at Company A, 97<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion (Const), Vassincourt, France].

5 October 1964 – 14 September 1965:

- Detachment 1, USA Engineer Service, USARSO, Fort Clayton, Canal Zone, Maintenance Inspector

15 September 1965 – September 1966:

- Detachment 2, USA Engineer Service, USARSO, Fort Gulick, Canal Zone, Maintenance Inspector

23 September 1966 – 28 December 1966:

- Patient, Watson Army Hospital, Fort Dix, New Jersey.

29 December 1966:

- Enroute to USARPAC (Vietnam)

6 January 1966 – 4 April 1967:

- Company D, 46<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion (Const), US Army Vietnam (USARV), Construction Supervisor

2 January 1967 – 5 September 1967:

- Company B, 46<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion (Const), USARV, Construction Supervisor

6 September 1967 – death (13 January 1968)

- 259<sup>th</sup> Replacement Company, 90<sup>th</sup> Replacement Battalion, USARPAC, Platoon Sergeant

*Service record entries transcribed from official copies of documents pertaining to SFC Everard A. Davis and received from the National Personnel Records Center, Request Number 2-14174886234, dated 4 November 2015, by Donald M. Ricks, Webmaster, 97<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion.*

