

RESTRICTED

**HEADQUARTERS
638TH TANK DESTROYER BATTALION
APO 339, c/o P.M.
New York, New York**

1 April 1945

SUBJECT: History of Operations for March 1945.

TO : The Adjutant General, War Department, Washington 25, D.C.

THRU : Commanding General, 84th Infantry Division.

1. Authority: Par 10, AR 345-105.

2. Introduction.

- a. Lt Col HAROLD L. DAVIS, O 359 292, FA, Commanding.
- Major JAMES D. MC CULLOUGH, O 227 185, FA, Executive.
- Major DICKSON G. HIPPI, O 297 135, FA, S - 3.
- Captain RECTOR PARKS, O 306 740, FA, S - 2.
- 1st Lt MONROE S. HALL, OI 168 700, FA, S - 4.
- 1st Lt FREDRICK A. KLEWIN, OI 822 585, FA, S - 1.
- Captain RONALD C. HARMON, O 249 645, Inf, Comdg Hq Co.
- Captain DONAL I. MEDLEY, O 397 029, FA, Comdg. Co. A.
- Captain ALONZO J. GOLDEN, O 393 003, FA, Comdg Co B.
- Captain ROBERT R. KLINE, OI 167 072, FA, Comdg Co C.
- 1st Lt ROBERT E. PARKER, OI 822 610, FA, Comdg Rcn Co.
- Captain ARTHUR FORST, O 419 121, MC, Bn Surgeon.

b. Not Applicable.

c. Period covered: 1 March to 31 March 1945.

d. Maps used during period: Germany 1:50000 Vello 8, Krefeld-Uerdingen 18, Duesburg 37.

3. Narrative.

a. Operations.

(1) Company A.

1 - 5 March 1945: On 1 March the company was attached to the 334th Inf Regt with the mission of providing Anti Tank support in the regimental zone of advance. The firing platoons followed to the infantry as they attacked, moving from the vicinity of Hebler, Germany to firing positions in the vicinity of Boisheim. The 1st platoon firing direct knocked out a machine gun nest and flushed troops out of the woods. The same platoon fired at a steeple suspected of harboring snipers resulting in the capture of one prisoner.

On the 1st March a destroyer of the 2nd platoon, Sgt Robert L. Stephan, car commander, was hit frontally three times by artillery fire. The gunner was killed and Sgt Stephan and the loader wounded. The sandbags on the forward slope of the vehicle had absorbed most of the effects of the hits and the carriage was still operational. Sgt Stephan although his wounds were extremely painful dismounted and led the destroyer into a cover position.

Handwritten notes:
100-100-100
100-100-100

Handwritten signature:
[Signature]

~~SECRET~~

RESTRICTED

Handwritten:
15/57
100-100-100

On the afternoon of 2 March the firing platoons resumed their advance in support of the infantry and moved to the vicinity of St Tonis. The 1st platoon captured 8 prisoners in the vicinity of St Tonis and 5 prisoners in the vicinity of Inrath.

On 3 March the company moved to the vicinity of Krefeld and that afternoon continued to the vicinity of Moers. On that afternoon the advance of the infantry at one point was delayed by fire from three dual purpose guns. Three destroyers of the 2nd platoon, led by Lt Otto Haas moved into firing positions while the enemy gun crews had taken cover because of protecting fire from infantry BAR men. Firing on predesignated targets the destroyers rapidly knocked out the three guns and the infantry moved in and took the crews prisoners.

On 4 - 5 March the company continued in support of the 334th Inf Regt. On the morning of 5 March the 1st platoon captured 5 prisoners. At 1330 on that day the company was relieved from attachment to the 334th Inf Regt and moved to an assembly area in the vicinity of Moers for maintenance, re-organisation, rehabilitation and rest.

6 - 31 March 1945: On 7 March the company moved to a bivouac area in the vicinity of Kapellen and continued the program through 12 March.

On the morning of 13 March the company moved to the vicinity of Hochstrab and relieved Company B. Registration was made that afternoon and indirect firing with harassing missions was conducted using time on target method at targets located across the Rhine in Duisburg and vicinity as follows:

<u>Date</u>	<u>No of Missions</u>	<u>No of Bds</u>
13 March	12	143
14 "	12	142
15 "	12	144
16 "	5	59
17 "	9	108
18 "	12	144
19 "	15	179
20 "	10	84
21 "	11	131
22 "	12	146
23 "	9	124
24 "	22	448
25 "	27	514
26 "	14	215
27 "	10	120

On the evening of 29 March the company was relieved of its indirect fire mission. On the 30 March the company moved to an assembly position in the area of the 333rd Inf Regt and at 0600 on 31 March was attached to that regiment.

(2) Company B

1 - 5 March 1945: On 1 March the company was attached to the 333rd Inf Regt with the mission of providing Anti Tank support in the regimental zone of advance. The platoons followed the infantry closely as they advanced. The 1st and 3rd platoons moving from the vicinity of Fischeln, Germany and the 2nd from the vicinity of Hosteri, Germany to the vicinity of Dulkan. The 2nd platoon fired 1 round of Shell HE fuze delay at a snipers' nest in a building in the northern portion of Dulkan and knocked out the nest while the building was demolished. The same platoon fired 1 round of shell HE fuze delay at a building which was thought to be suspicious and resulted in a general display of white flag in buildings in that area.

RESTRICTED

On 2 March the 1st platoon moved to vicinity of Holder, the 2nd platoon to vicinity of Vorst and the 3rd platoon to vicinity of Oedt supporting the infantry battalions of the 333rd Inf Regt in their advance in the vicinity of St Peter on 3 March the enemy had two MG's emplaced in woods. Nearby was equipment and MG's belonging to our infantry and lost in battle on the previous evening. The 1st platoon fired 5 rounds of Shell HE fuze quick, obtaining tree bursts which resulted in the flushing out of 30 prisoners, capture of the enemy MG's and recovery of our equipment.

On the morning of 4 March the company moved to vicinity of Krefeld and that evening moved to vicinity of Moers to assist the infantry in mopping up operations in that area.

On the afternoon of 5 March the company was relieved of attachment to the 333rd Inf Regt and reverted to Battalion control.

6 - 31 March 1945: Until the afternoon of 7 March the company was employed on maintenance, reorganization, rehabilitation and rest.

On the afternoon of 7 March the company moved to indirect fire positions in the vicinity of Hochstrab. The 2nd and 3rd platoons registered on a water tower across the Rhine in the vicinity of Duisberg. Firing was conducted using time on target method at targets in Duisberg and vicinity as follows:

<u>Date</u>	<u>No of Missions</u>	<u>No of rds</u>
8 March	25	282
9 "	26	322
10 "	17	267
11 "	13	227
12 "	15	324

On 13 March the company proceeded to a bivouac area in the vicinity of Kapellen and was employed on a program of maintenance, reorganization, rehabilitation and rest. On 14 and 15 March the company commander and platoon leaders performed reconnaissance for direct firing positions in the zone of the 353 Inf Regt to support possible future river crossing operations. On 16, 17, and 18 March during the hours of darkness the company prepared direct fire positions along the West bank of the Rhine.

At daybreak from 19 to 22 March the company executed direct fire missions from the vicinity of Hochemmer at targets across the Rhine in the vicinity of Duisburg as follows:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Plat</u>	<u>Target</u>	<u>Results</u>	<u>Rds</u>
19 March	2nd	Cabs on Crane	Heavily damaged	
"	"	Grain Elevator	"	
"	"	Smokestacks	"	145
"	"	Brick Bldg OP	"	
20 March	2nd	Smokestacks	"	
"	"	Water tower	"	149
"	"	Blockhouse	"	
21 March	2nd	Two large smokestacks	"	220
22 March	3rd	3 large smokestacks-	2 demolished 1 damaged	220

RESTRICTED

14

RESTRICTED

On the evening of 23 March the company occupied previously prepared direct fire positions along the West bank of the Rhine and executed missions in support of crossing by other units as follows:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Target</u>	<u>Result</u>	<u>Rds</u>
24 March	Smoke Generator	Destroyer	19
	Floating drum	Sunk	
	Mortar position	Neutralized	
25 March	Boat	Sunk	16
	Crane	Damaged	
26 March	Smokestack	Damaged	14
	2 Gun emplacements	unknown	
27 March	Boat	Sunk	18
	Installations	Unknown	

The company did not fire any further missions. AT 2000 on 30 March the company was relieved of its direct fire mission and assembled in the vicinity of Kapellen. On the morning of 31 March the company was attached to the 334th Inf Regt.

(3) Company C

1 - 5 March 1945: On 1 March the company was attached to the 335th Inf Regt with the mission of providing Anti Tank support in the regimental zone of advance. On the evening of 28 Feb - 1 March the company was in support of an attack on Engerath by the infantry. In the advance the destroyers fired at numerous targets, flushing the enemy from the woods and cellars of buildings with Shell HE reinforced with 50 cal MG's and small arms. An ammunition dump was destroyed, 3 MG nests knocked out and 32 prisoners were taken.

On the afternoon of 1 March the 1st and 3rd platoons moved from the vicinity of Waldhler to the vicinity of Dulkan and the 2nd platoon to the vicinity of Suchteln. Seven prisoners were taken at Dulkan. On 2 March the company moved to the vicinity of St Tonis, capturing 2 prisoners at that location. On 3 and 4 March the company continued in support of the infantry battalions in attack moving to the vicinity of Krefeld on the 3rd March and to vicinity of Moers on the 4th of March. The movement was accomplished by "leapfrogging" the platoons and in close proximity to the infantry. Heavy mortar and small arms fire was received during this advance. At Moers the company took 9 prisoners. On the morning of 5 March the company captured 7 prisoners in the vicinity of Moers. At 1330 the company was relieved from attachment to the 335th Inf Regt and reverted to Battalion control.

6 - 31 March 1945: The firing platoons continued to provide support to the regiment until the morning of 6 March when the company rallied in the vicinity of Moers and was employed on maintenance, reorganization, rehabilitation and rest. On the morning of the 7 March the company moved to the vicinity of Kapellen and continued the same program. At daybreak from 9 to 23 March the company executed direct fire missions from the vicinity of Lohmannsheide on targets across the Rhine in the vicinity of Duisburg and Alsum as follows:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Plat</u>	<u>Target</u>	<u>Result</u>	<u>Rds</u>
9 March	1st	Smokestack	Damaged	20
		Oil Tank	Unknown	20
		Gasoline filter plants	Unknown	40

RESTRICTED

15

RESTRICTED

<u>Date</u>	<u>Plat</u>	<u>Target</u>	<u>Results</u>	<u>Rds</u>
10 March	2nd	Smokestack	Damaged	20
		Blockhouse	Partly destroyed	20
		Barracks	Partly destroyed	20
		Smokestack	Damaged	20
11 March	3rd	3 Buildings	Destroyed	19
		RR Oil Tanker	Destroyed	20
		Building	Destroyed	20
		Monument	Destroyed	20
		Factory & chimney	Partly destroyed	30
		3 Concrete emplacements	Destroyed)	30
		Large Dugout	Destroyed)	
12 March	1st	Dugout	Destroyed	7
		Lookout tower	Partly destroyed	13
		Smokestack	Partly destroyed	10
		Building	Set Afire	20
		OP	Destroyed	21
13 March	2nd	4 Buildings	Partly destroyed	80
16 March	2nd	Smokestack	Damaged	21
18 March	1st	10 Barges	4 Sunk; 3 set afire)	99
			3 damaged)	
		1 Crane	set afire)	
19 March	3rd	2 Barges	Damaged	34
		Tower	Unobserved	4
		8 Buildings	Partly destroyed for future use	65
20 March	2nd	Bridge	Obtained data for future use	35
22 March	1st	MG Position	Destroyed	5
		Barge	Sunk	7
		Aircraft hanger	Damaged	24
		House (OP)	Destroyed	11
25 March	3rd	12 Buildings	Damaged	60
		Gun position	Unknown	28

It was observed in one instance that Shell HE with fuze delay obtained penetration against brick structures where shell HE with T-105 was observed to hit and be deflected with little effect.

On 15 through 19 March, during the hours of darkness the company prepared dug in direct fire positions on the west bank of the Rhine in the 334th Inf Regt zone. On the evening of 23 March the company occupied the positions and executed missions as follows:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Target</u>	<u>Results</u>
24 March	Oil Warehouse	Set afire
	Building	Damaged
25 March	OP	Destroyed
26 March	Dugout	Unknown
27 March	MG Nest	Destroyed

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

On the evening of 30 March the company was relieved of its direct fire mission and assembled to the rear of its positions. On the morning of 31 March the company was attached to the 335th Inf Regt.

(4) Rcn Company

1 - 5 March 1945: On 1 March the 1st platoon was attached to Company A, the 2nd platoon to Company B, the 3rd platoon to Company C and the Pioneer platoon was in reserve. The reconnaissance platoons performed reconnaissance of routes and areas in the division zone of advance, assisting the firing companies. In addition the platoons maintained liason between the infantry battalions in attack and the firing companies, using for this purpose their $\frac{1}{2}$ ton trucks equipped with 610 radios.

On the morning of 1 March the 2nd platoon was given the mission of reconnoitering the eastern portion of Dulkan for clearance for Company B. No other troops had penetrated to that area at that time. The mission was successfully accomplished.

On 2 March the 3rd platoon was employed as the point in the advance guard of Task Force Parker, which was composed of tanks, cavalry, the 335th Inf Regt and Company C. The platoon acted as a point from Dulkan to Vorst and there was relieved of that duty and was employed in the advance guard reaching Baerl on the Rhine on 5 March.

The reconnaissance platoons continued on their missions until relieved at 1330 on 5 March having performed continuous road and area reconnaissance since they crossed the Roer River on 24 Feb until some of their elements reached the Rhine on 5 March.

6 - 31 March 1945: On 6 March the company rallied in an assembly area in the vicinity of Moers and was employed on maintenance, reorganization, rehabilitation and rest. On the morning of 7 March the company moved to the vicinity of Kapellan and continued the program.

On 9 March the three reconnaissance platoons established observation posts along the Division front on the West bank of the Rhine in the vicinity of and north of Homberg and observed for enemy activity and targets of opportunity. Among the targets observed were machine guns, train movements, factory smoke, dugout smoke, troop movements and flashes.

On the afternoon of 20 March 11 rounds of HE 37mm were fired at a dug in AA gun south of Duisburg and temporarily neutralized the gun. On 21 March the 2nd platoon fired at a barge and it was observed to sink during the night. On 24 March the 1st platoon knocked out a sniper and sank a boat with oil drums attached. The 2nd platoon destroyed 3 smoke generators; On 25 March the 2nd Platoon destroyed 11 smoke generators using 67 rds HE and 46 rds APC of 37 mm.

b. Enemy forces.

The terrains consisted of a flat open plain, well drained and passable. The ground although moist was sufficiently firm to enable cross country movement of armored vehicles. Between the Rahr and the Rhine there were no major water barriers. German forces identified as the 183 V8 Inf Div and 176 VG Inf Div operated in the 84th Div sector. Volksturm troops were encountered for the first time but they offered little determined resistance. From 3 March all enemy units engaged with the purpose of withdrawing

RESTRICTED

Defensive measures employed were largely road blocks such as tank ditches, craters, and blown underpasses. Mines were used in small quantity. Forces identified on the east bank of the Rhine in our sector were elements of the 23 Para. Regt, probably under the control of the 2nd Para. Div. German defense of the east bank was characterized by sniper and mortar fire and reconnaissance patrol activity. Evidence indicated use of enemy agents and screening of civilians disclosed soldiers. Air activity was of small extent and consisted of light strafing and bombing attacks and nightly reconnaissance sorties.

4. Annexes.

a. Personnel

(1) Reinforcements

- Hq Co: 1 EM MOS 645; 1 EM MOS 345
- Co A: 2 EM MOS 551; 1 EM MOS 610; 4 EM MOS 745
- Co B: 3 EM MOS 745; 1 EM MOS 802
- Co C: 4 EM MOS 475
- Recon Co: 1 Off MOS 1222
- 2 EM MOS 345; 1 EM MOS 553; 1 EM MOS 667; 1 EM MOS 405;
- 1 EM MOS 802

(2) 2 EM Killed; 8 EM Wounded

(3) 106 PW's captured.

(4) Awards - See Inclosures.

b. Supply and Evacuation.

(1) Ordnance:

- 1 Truck, $\frac{1}{2}$ ton, 4x4 - Replaced.
- 1 Pistol, U. S. Cal 45 - "
- 1 Launcher, rocket A.T. - "
- 2.56", M8A1
- 1 Carbine, U.S. Cal 30, M1 "
- 1 Carriage, motor, 76mm M18 "
- 1 Tool, Set, gen mechanics "
- 1 Mount, MG, Cal 30 M-48 "
- 5 Binoculars, M-15 "
- 15 Knife, trench, M-3
- w/scabbard, M3 "
- 5 Watch, wrist, 9-jewel "
- 1 Watch, wrist, 7-jewel "

(2) Quartermaster:

- 1 Kit, barber, w/case Replaced.
- 2 Outfit, cooking, one burner "

(3) Signal:

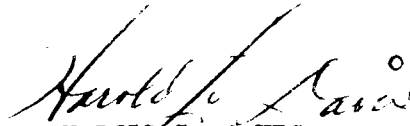
- 6 mi Wire, W-110 on Drum Dr-4 Replaced.
- 11 mi Wire, W-150-B on Drum Dr-5 "
- 1 Switchboard, BD-72 "
- 2 Telephone, EE-8 "
- 10 Tool Equipment TE-53 "
- 6 Mast Bracket, MP-50 "
- 4 Mast Base, MP-48 "
- 1 Radio Set, S.C.R.-610 "

c. Known enemy losses due to our operations:

<u>Destroyed</u>	<u>Damaged</u>
3 Dual purpose guns	5 Smokestacks
9 MG's	4 Barges
1 Ammo Dump	1 Crane
3 Smokestacks	1 Grain elevator
4 Buildings	13 Buildings
1 RR oil tanker	1 Water tower
1 Monument	1 Blockhouse
1 Concrete emplacement	1 Aircraft Hangar
7 Barges	
15 Smoke Generators	
4 Small boats	
1 Oil warehouse	
2 Observation Posts	

19- Incls:

- Incl 1 - Award Capt Donal I Medley
- Incl 2 - Award 1st Lt Royce F. Adams
- Incl 3 - Award 1st Lt Otto F. Haas
- Incl 4 - Award 1st Lt Sidney R. Drapkin
- Incl 5 - Award 1st Lt Maxwell E. Lee
- Incl 6 - Award 2nd Lt John A. Youngren
- Incl 7 - Award S Sgt Robert W. Richmond
- Incl 8 - Award 1st Lt Joseph F Silence
- Incl 9 - Award Tec 3 Samuel Stovall
- Incl 10 - Award Sgt Virgil L. James
- Incl 11 - Award Sgt Robert L. Stephan
- Incl 12 - Award Tec 4 Robert P. Wade
- Incl 13 - Award Tec 4 Clyde Bell
- Incl 14 - Award Cpl Roy J Figg
- Incl 15 - Award Pfc Thomas B. Herndon
- Incl 16 - Award Pvt Wilton S. Buckley
- Incl 17 - Award Pvt Arthur Cleveland Jr.
- Incl 18 - Award Pfc Thomas E. Blades
- Incl 19 - One Unit Journal


 HAROLD L. DAVIS
 Lt Col., FA
 Commanding