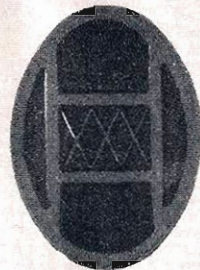


HEADQUARTERS 30TH INFANTRY DIVISION

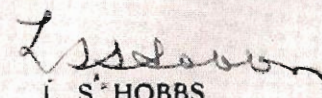
OFFICE OF THE COMMANDING GENERAL



OLD HICKORY

Battle Honors

Company A, 823rd Tank Destroyer Battalion, United States Army, is cited for outstanding performance of duty in action against the enemy from 6 August 1944 to 12 August 1944, during the battle of Mortain, in France. On 6 August 1944 Company A, 823rd Tank Destroyer Battalion, and elements of the 30th Infantry Division, were disposed in a defensive position, occupying the town of Mortain and the adjacent terrain. On 7 August 1944 the enemy launched the first of a series of attacks, in an effort to drive to Avranches and the sea and split American forces in France. Hostile forces were able to penetrate the entire area and succeeded in breaking through and overrunning positions. For six days hostile forces continued extremely heavy pressure, in many instances completely isolating groups of our forces. Company A, 823rd Tank Destroyer Battalion, with elements of the 30th Infantry Division, held in abeyance the might of a desperate foe. Though subjected to fierce attacks by day and night, by heavy enemy armor, and though casualties suffered were many, this brave group of men effectively blocked the enemy's advance, inflicting crushing casualties upon his personnel and destroying much of his equipment. Their supreme effort in the face of great odds materially contributed to the brilliant victory attained in this decisive action. Many individual acts of heroism were performed, and all duties were performed unhesitatingly and with utter disregard of personal safety. The courage and devotion to duty displayed by the members of Company A, 823rd Tank Destroyer Battalion, reflect the highest traditions of the Armed Forces.


L. S. HOBBS
Major General^{U. S. Army}
Commanding

HEADQUARTERS 30TH INFANTRY DIVISION


OFFICE OF THE COMMANDING GENERAL



OLD HICKORY

Battle Honors

Company B, 823rd Tank Destroyer Battalion, United States Army, is cited for outstanding performance of duty in action against the enemy on 7 August 1944, in the vicinity of St. Barthelmy, France. The enemy launched a determined counterattack in great strength by which they hoped to reach Avranches and the sea, thereby splitting American forces in France. Company B, 823rd Tank Destroyer Battalion, was in defensive positions giving anti-tank support to other elements of the 30th Infantry Division. Throughout the day the battle raged. An opportunity for honorable withdrawal was spurned, and despite heavy casualties sustained by the company, a desperate counterattack by the enemy was repulsed with heavy losses in both personnel and equipment, and the brilliant victory attained was climaxed by a general withdrawal of the enemy from the entire sector. The enemy never succeeded in penetrating the anti-tank defenses of the company, although the counterattack was supported by a considerable number of tanks and other armored vehicles. The indomitable fighting spirit exhibited by members of the company caused them to remain in position so long as personnel or equipment with which to fight were available. In the midst of unceasing fire and often in the face of certain death, duties were performed unhesitatingly and with utter disregard of personal safety. The courage and devotion to duty shown by members of Company B, 823rd Tank Destroyer Battalion reflect the highest traditions of the Armed Forces.


L. S. HOBBS
Major General - U. S. Army
Commanding



With the counter attack at Mortain fought off, the Battalion hit the offensive once more, driving the foe backward through France in a relentless dash across the country. At Domfront, France, a few days rest was permitted. Then, a rigorous black-out drive to Alencon where it assisted in closing the Falaise Gap and trapping the bulk of the remaining enemy force. With elements of the 30th Division it took Evereux, France, and moved up to the Seine River in the vicinity of Mantes, France. Here, the German Seventh Army had regrouped for another stand. The Battalion joined with the 2nd Armored Division in completing the rout of this vaunted adversary.

The terrain changed considerably from that which was left behind in the headlong pursuit of the foe. The narrow hedgerows of Normandy broadened into a rolling countryside that was divided by larger, well cultivated fields. More extensive tank warfare could now be engaged in. Company "C" moved to the South of Evereux. The Rear Echelon took up a position North of the town. An ammunition truck driver who mistakenly thought the town to be clear drove from the Rear Echelon through Evereux to Company "C", before any of the infantry units had entered the city. It was this six-by-six, with a detail of tow men, that "liberated" Evereux, France.

Using a hastily erected pontoon bridge at Mantes-Gassicourt, France, all of the Battalion elements succeeded in crossing the Seine River by 28 August 1944. The Germans attempted a defense from the East bank but their line was cracked, and the pursuit continued. It halted only when the Belgian border had been attained and there was no more gasoline with which to feed the rolling columns.

Company 'A', charged with the mission of protecting the South flank of the 30th Division, stopped in the border town of Cambrai, France. The rest of the Battalion pushed across into Tournai, Belgium. Thus ended what was later described as the fastest forced march in the history of modern warfare — 180 miles in less than 72 hours — through a civilian

population ecstatic with joy and celebrating as if the war had come to an end. They showered the troops with edibles and drink, and otherwise manifested the sheer joy of their deliverance. Captain George W. Sitz, Jr. and Captain Elbert R. Curtis, along with the Second Reconnaissance Platoon were among the first Allied soldiers to enter the country of Belgium. An unexpected fire fight ensued when the two officers had decided upon an old Chateau as a likely command post for the Battalion. 120 prisoners were taken from the surrounding woods, and 16 of the enemy killed.

Isolated pockets were left behind to be cleared up later. As the gasoline supply was replenished the troops moved on. Company "B" supported the 120th Infantry Regiment in seizing the supposedly impregnable fortress of Eben Emael. Then came the Albert Canal and the Meuse River. Company "A" crossed the Meuse at Liege while the balance of the Battalion went over in the vicinity of Vise. Company "C" moved up the river and joined with the 117th Infantry Regiment to drive the foe from the first large city of Holland—Maastrich. These were the first American troops to fight in the Netherlands. The occasion was appropriately observed at a later date when the towns-folk feted the troops that had liberated them.

The Siegfried Line, and Germany itself, were not far away. Herleen, Holland, was delivered from the foe and the Battalion established a defensive position within the environs while awaiting the final push. On 17 October 1944, elements of Company "B" and the Second Recon Platoon tread upon the soil of the Fatherland.

"D-Day" on the Siegfried Line was scheduled for 5 October 1944. It was preceded by an air strike, which failed to accomplish much, and a terrific artillery preparation. The entrenched enemy absorbed both blows. His back was to the wall now, and the Germans fought back tenaciously. His artillery concentrations were intensive and damaging. Lt. Neel said, "There wasn't enough room in the sky for any more." From the pill boxes came a steady stream of fire. Each one had to be attacked individually and reduced. Our own artillery made little impression upon the fortifications.





It was the doughboy, the tanker, and the TD who cracked "The Line" and broke through the vaunted defense system.

Exploitation of the break-through did not materialize so rapidly. The Germans still had plenty of power in reserve. Stalling for time in which to reorganize his badly clawed forces, the enemy commenced a series of furious counterattacks. Artillery concentrations were the heaviest of the war. The Luftwaffe increased its activity and even dared to make some daylight forays. There was little respite for the American forces entrenched along a solid front within sight of their last major goal.

The 823rd TD Battalion occupied positions along a line from Euchen, Wurselen, Bardenburg, Germany. Counterattack after counterattack was thrown against this line. For three consecutive days and nights Company "B" reinforced by the first platoon of Company "A" withstood the abortive drives of the foe. Company "A", which had been utilized for indirect fire purposes, was moved up to the line in order to strengthen and deepen the anti-tank defenses. Together the two companies knocked out twenty enemy tanks in two days of fierce fighting. Illustrative of the speed of the action was the record of Sergeant Ulibarri, of the first platoon of Company "B", who personally demolished four Panther Tanks with seven rounds of ammunition in less than sixty seconds. Another of the first platoon guns, which had exposed itself so as to cover two lanes of approach, accounted for seven German tanks before it was disabled. The crew attached itself to an adjoining destroyer and assisted in eliminating additional panzers. During the night of 12 October 1944, Private First Class Revis of Company "B", and an enlisted man from the 120th infantry, manning a Company "B" machine gun, fired 250 rounds at an enemy patrol that had penetrated their position, and killed ten of the foe.

By 13 October 1944, the fury of the German assault had subsided. Shelling remained heavy but little direct action was engaged in. As the battle lines became more static, necessary repairs and replacement of weapons and personnel was accomplished. On 13 October 1944, the Battalion Command

Post was installed at Herzogenrath, Germany. Nine days later, the entire XIX Corps was transferred from the First United States' Army to the Ninth Army. Company "B" fired at three German observation posts in the town of Euchen which drew a counter-battery barrage of unprecedented intensity. It was evident that the enemy intended to contest the battle for this important sector.

Aachen, Germany, had become the symbol of this determination. It was practically burned to the ground. For days the surrounding area was lighted by the blazing inferno. The ancient and historic community was doomed, yet it refused to capitulate. The 30th Division sealed its fate though by closing the gap from the North and thus completing the encirclement of the garrison that was still holding out. This was accomplished by a diversionary attack which caught the enemy completely off guard and covered the real purpose of the blow. All of Company "A" was shifted to the sector of the 120th Infantry. Company "C" remained with the 117th Infantry in order to support the feint to the Left. The Germans threw everything that they had in the direction of the fake attack. Artillery and mortar concentrations mounted in fury. Casualties among the doughboys were heavy. But the attack attained its primary objective. The 120th Infantry, with Company "A" in close support, closed the ring of steel around the beleaguered city, and the ground which had been Aachen fell to the American forces.

Now began the build up for the assault across the Roer. The river itself while not so formidable normally had been flooded by the Germans, and the enemy controlled the upper dams. From this strategic position they could cover the lowlands with several feet of water, and imperil the plight of those troops anywhere near the banks of the river. While waiting for the waters to subside, the 823rd Tank Destroyer Battalion (towed) started the process of reconversion to a self-propelled basis. It was to be armed with M-10's. Drivers and maintenance schools were set up. The Ninth U. S. Army which consisted almost entirely of the XIX Corps (the 29th and 30th Infantry Division, and the Second Armored Division) added two new Corps





—the XIII and the XVI.

All units remained in defensive fire position. Indirect firing was conducted periodically. Some shelling was received; however, damage to equipment and casualties were slight. Men returned from the hospital. Reinforcements were obtained. Regular turns were taken at Rest Camp for short periods. But the foe, too, had this opportunity for building up its defenses. Mines and booby traps were sowed throughout the area. On the afternoon of 16 November 1944, following a large scale bombing by heavies and fighter dive-bombers, the offensive commenced. The 117th and the 120th Infantry Regiments executed what informd observers termed as "the perfect infantry attack" by seizing Mariadorf, an Euchen, Germany, within the first hour of the operation.

To the South, at Wurselen, the 119th Infantry Regiment, to which Company "A" was attached, the attack ran into more difficulty. The defense of the town had been perfected, and mines and booby traps covered all of the approaches. Strongpoints had to be systematically reduced. Company "A" fired 237 rounds HE, 30 rounds CPA, and 9 rounds of German 75mm Pak 40 upon enemy troops, pill boxes, and other fortifications. Mines caused considerable damage, and the heavy mud also impeded progress. However, the men pushed on, and the town fell.

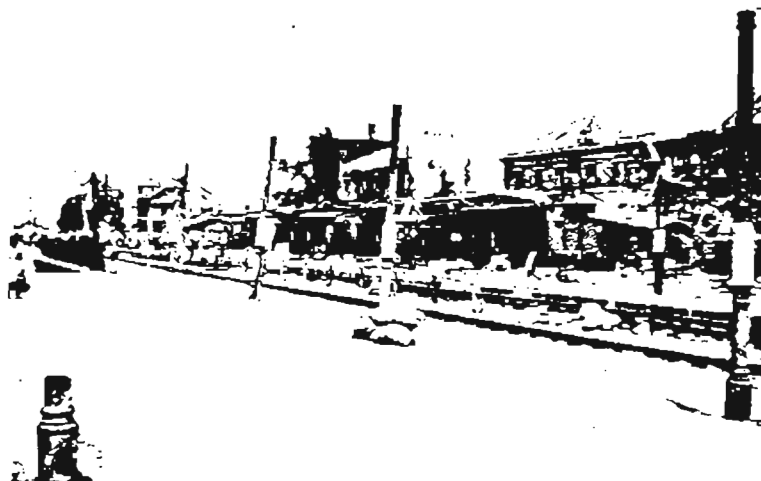
With the capture of Wurselen, the 30th Division front was narrowed. The 120th Infantry continued the drive to the South while the other two regiments, less elements detached to the 2nd Armored Division, went into reserve.

During the operation an improved plan for supporting fire was perfected. When a town had been taken, TD's, tanks, and anti-tank guns were moved up to provide direct support for the following objective. There was no lost motion and the attacking force could always count upon strong support. The enemy fought back vigorously. His artillery grew both in volume and intensity. A savage counter-attack against Fronhoven, Germany, forced an overnight withdrawal. An equally vicious attack at Lohn

cost the enemy dearly, but failed to dislodge the friendly forces. During the encounter, Lohn was termed "the hottest little town in the ETO." Company "A's" third platoon lost two platoon leaders and its platoon sergeant in one day's activity. Company "C" knocked out its first German tank at Fronhoven. The next day it accounted for three Mark IVs. The first was a radio controlled Mark II. When this "Doodle-bug" was destroyed, at a distance of about 400 yards, it caused such a tremendous concussion that damage resulted therefrom within the battalion lines.

The following day, 23 November 1944, was Thanksgiving. But, for the front line units it could hardly have been called a holiday. Company "C" was in position at Lohn. Casualties reduced the gun crew below the required minimum, and the Third Recon Platoon had to be called upon for assistance. Elsewhere the pincers upon the foe began to squeeze him into submission. Enemy activity slackened. The second platoon of Company "B" reinforced the third platoon of Company "C", and at 1900, 24 November 1944, they closed into Pattern.

With the banks of the Roer in sight, German resistance stiffened once more. Inclement weather, and thick, sticky mud, played in their favor. On the approaches to Altdorf one gun struck a quagmire from which it could not be removed. The only entrance into the town was a marshy and shell-pocked road within full view of the foe. By 1200, 28 November 1944, the fourth platoon under Lt. Jerry DeRosa of Company "C" succeeded in setting up three of its guns on the outskirts of the village. In order to keep their supply lines open the men had to borrow a weasel. When Altdorf fell, the 120th Infantry was relieved by the 17th Cavalry Squadron, and Company "C" took up positions with units at Altdorf, Pattern, and Lohn. As other elements of the 30th Division were progressively released from the line of active duty, the Battalion Command Post made its first withdrawal since the landing in Normandy. It went into reserve near Hongen, Germany, along with Company "B". Company "A" moved into an Assembly Area at Vorweiden. Company "C" continued its defense of Lohn and Pattern, Germany, with the adjustments necessary to cover the areas



exposed by the withdrawal of Companies "A" and "B". Additional units were converted from towed to self-propelled. Four M-10's were obtained for each company. Training in driving, maintenance, gunnery, and tactics with the new vehicles were conducted.

The 104th Infantry Division assumed the responsibility for the 30th Division sector while the latter organization engaged in resting its men. The 823rd Tank Destroyer Battalion deployed some of its elements in support of this newly-activated group. On 15 December 1944, the General Order was received from the Ninth U. S. Army which officially transformed the group into a self-propelled tank destroyer battalion—as of 18 December 1944. Permission was granted to withdraw all units from their front line positions and close into an Assembly Area. This was the first time since 18 August 1944, that all of the battalion units were out of the front lines. The next day, an official notice was received that the Battalion would be converted to M-10's, 100%, so plans were inaugurated to commence full company training at once.

It was during this apparent lull in front line activity that G-2 reported under "Enemy Capabilities": "The enemy can: Counter-attack from the East or North-east in strength of seven battalions of infantry, 100 tanks and assault guns, supported by thirteen battalions of artillery."

The 30th Division was holding down an extended front, from Schaufenberg, to Wurselen, Germany. A strong counterattack could be expected against the entire length of it. Rumors began to permeate through the lines, too, of a Sixth SS Panzer Army which was being formed East of the Roer.

On 16 December 1944, two flights of FW190's passed over Hongen without creating too much suspicion. During the night the Luftwaffe displayed its greatest strength in months. Bombs were dropped at frequent intervals all over the area. Roads were strafed. There was an evident attempt to sever communications and supply routes. The following morning, word came through that Von Runstedt had pierced the American lines in the Ardennes, and that the enemy had made considerable progress in a full scale counter offensive.

To reinforce the V Corps, and to help seal the gap that had been torn in the U. S. front, the 30th Infantry Division, and the 823rd TD Battalion, were relieved from attachment to the XIX Corps, Ninth U. S. Army, and attached to the V Corps, First U. S. Army. Within five hours after this emergency transfer had taken place, all units, under Battalion control, were on the march.

"The Bulge"

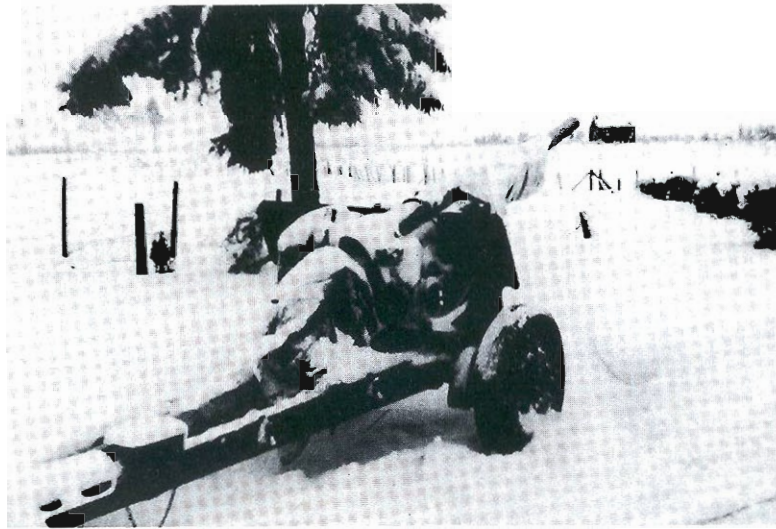
The convoy weaved its way South, through Aachen, Germany, to the vicinity of Eupen, Belgium. It was a cold, dark night. No one knew what to anticipate. The Germans helped light the road with flares. Their aircraft hovered constantly overhead. American ack ack, which had for long been silent at night, opened up a furious assault against all attempts to intercept the convoy. But, a new apparition also streaked through the skys emitting a raucous, unfamiliar sound. It was the new enemy weapon — a robot bomb—V-1.

Upon arriving at its destination, the entire Battalion was attached to the Second Battalion, 119th Infantry Regiment. Direct fire positions were assumed at once. They were changed later in the night, and Company "C" was attached to the 114th RCT which had been ordered to move on to Malmedy, Belgium. At 1100, 8 December 1944, Company "A" was attached to the 119th RCT, and proceeded in the direction of Stoumont. Company "B", with the 120th RCT, took up a position on the Southern outskirts of Stavelot.

The situation was extremely fluid. A thick blanket of snow covered the entire area. It was bitter cold. The enemy was utilizing captured American equipment and clothing. Paratroopers were dropped behind the lines to add to the uncertainty, and the confusion. Higher headquarters reported that Malmedy had been taken by the Germans and friendly aircraft bombed the town for three consecutive days. The only casualties were the occupying American troops and the hapless civilians. The enemy failed to make any further progress in this direction once the 117th Infantry Regiment, and Company "C" of the 823rd Tank Destroyer Battalion, had arrived upon the scene.

When the enemy tried to break through, East and West of Stavelot, on the afternoon of 18 December 1944, Company "C" accounted for three Mark V's, two personnel carriers, from eight to ten Mark VI's hit and probably destroyed, and an additional Mark V was listed as probable. An enemy one-quarter ton truck and half-track were also demolished.

In order to centralize control of the sector, the Battalion was assigned control over some light tanks and wreckers of the Seventh Armored Division. Before daylight of 19 December 1944, German armor was heard maneuvering outside of Stoumont. In the darkness and fog there was practically no visibility. The infantry refused to grant permission for the firing of flares. As the pressure increased the foot soldiers were forced to



withdraw, and the TD gunners found themselves outflanked. Small arms and machine gun fire became intense. One Mark VI was knocked out by an "A" Company gun; and, the foe was held off for some time. However, all of the guns were finally neutralized with most of the personnel getting away to the North of Stoumont. Company "A's" first and third platoons then withdrew to Ramouchamps, Belgium, for reorganization while the second platoon remained in position North of the town. Company "C" continued killing Germans, and destroying their equipment East of Stavelot. Five Mark VI's, one half-track SP 75, and a weapons carrier were among the booty.

On 20 December 1944, the 30th Infantry Division along with the 823rd TD Battalion, were transferred to the XVIII Corps (AB). Elements of the 31st Tank Battalion serving with the 823rd TD's were released from this assignment to return to their own organization. The defense became stabilized and held fast. A light German counterattack in the early hours of 21 December 1944, was repulsed with the destruction of a Mark VI, and a quarter-ton truck full of soldiery. At 0600, enemy infantry attacked in greater strength, with substantial tank support, between the boundaries of the 117th and the 120th Infantry Regiments. It was impossible to see the foe because of the fog and meagre light. When some of the infantry units had to withdraw, the second platoon of Company "B" put all of their guns out of commission, and took up positions from which they could fight the enemy with small arms. Later in the day, several of the guns were reoccupied and placed back into operation against the foe. Battalion Command Post, and rear echelon personnel fought with the infantry and helped man defensive weapons. The third platoon of Company "C" alone knocked out one Mark VI, a Sherman Tank and an M-10 that the Germans had captured and were using, and two other tanks which were either Mark V's or VI's. Company "B" accounted for two more after knocking off a corner of a building in order to expose the hidden armor. One of the latter was a German Tiger Tank that had been camouflaged to resemble an M-10.

The "A" Company second platoon, and the First Recon Platoon, led by 1st Lt. Joe H. Bruton, Jr., were recognized for their heroic defense of the sector with The Presidential Unit Citation. It was the second such award won by the Company "A" platoon.

On 22 December 1944, the 30th Infantry Division, and the 823rd TD Battalion, were relieved from attachment with the First U. S. Army, and re-assigned to the Ninth Army. They remained in action, however, with the First Army.

The anti-tank defenses were strengthened materially by the arrival of two AAA Battalions, the 110th and the 143rd. These units comprised thirty-two 90mm guns, as well as innumerable 40mm Bofors, quad 50's, and other weapons. The 823rd TD Battalion was detailed the responsibility for planning and placing these gun positions. Three Mark V's, and an enemy aircraft, fell victim to their prowess in short order.

The German threat to the North flank of the line had now been obviated. It was securely held. Company "A" formed a road block East of Stoumont, and also helped protect the Stoumont-La Gleize highway from the North and South. It cooperated with Task Force Harrison in the sensational re-capture of both towns. When La Gleize was re-taken, Captain Crissinger and eight Company "A" enlisted men were freed. Three 3 inch guns, two half-tracks, a quarter-ton and a one and one-half ton truck were also recovered. 150 armored vehicles, in all were captured in the bold maneuver which also released many of the personnel that had been seized by the enemy in the initial stages of its last supreme effort to stave off the inevitability of defeat.

In the center of "The Bulge" Von Rundstedt's drive had made considerable progress, almost reaching Liege, Belgium, to the North, and the Meuse River, to the West. But, the flanks held. And, unable to extend its front, the German strategy failed. It now began to fall backward as the terrific toll of his men and armor expended the force of the blow. Christmas, 1944, was a rather quiescent period on the Western Front. The day was





clear but bitter cold. An excellent turkey dinner helped ease the rigors of the tactical situation. American aircraft continued to bomb too close—and often mistook their objectives. The men feared our own planes as much as they did the enemy.

Concern was also caused by the robot bombs that soared through the air with increasing regularity. Malmedy was on the direct route of the missile's objective. Aimed to hit Liege, Belgium, they occasionally fell short with a deafening detonation that shook the earth for miles around. Although the enemy foot troops had been routed artillery shelling remained heavy throughout the sector.

Toward the end of the year the threat had almost dissipated itself. "The Bulge" began to shrink. The Battalion took some time out for reorganization and re-equipment. Reconnaissance Company was organized with Captain Curtis as its commanding officer. The two AA Battalions were released from TD control. More M-10's were acquired by the Battalion, and it was now almost completely self-propelled.

The advent of the New Year witnessed the last large scale attempt of the Luftwaffe to hamper the mounting American counter offensive. Now, our own artillery began to take up the challenge. 155mm howitzers maintained a steady stream of fire upon the foe from nearby positions. On 8 January 1945, Company "C", 772nd TD Battalion, was attached to the 823rd TD's for employment in the sector held by the 630th TD Battalion. The unit assumed responsibility for the sector of the 424th Infantry Regiment, on 9 January 1945, and completed reorganization of its anti-tank defenses in the Division zone. Sporadic shelling was received without damage. The following few days were spent in consolidating positions, regrouping and maintaining an active defense.

In order to get into position for renewal of the attack, Company "B" deployed one platoon in the vicinity of Weismes; and, another, near Thirimont. Company "A" third platoon was used for direct fire support. Assisting to repulse a strong enemy counterattack from Thirimont to the West,

Company "B" first platoon destroyed a Mark IV tank.

The attack gained momentum on 15 January 1945, when the entire 30th Division jumped off from its Line of Departure South of Malmedy with the mission of seizing and holding the high ground West of St. Vith, and gaining contact with friendly troops on the West flank. The operation was conducted under most hazardous conditions. The terrain was rough and heavily wooded. Snow covered the roads and concealed the mines which the enemy had planted. A tenacious foe held on grimly. Among the defenders of Thirimont was the seasoned 3rd Paratroop Division.

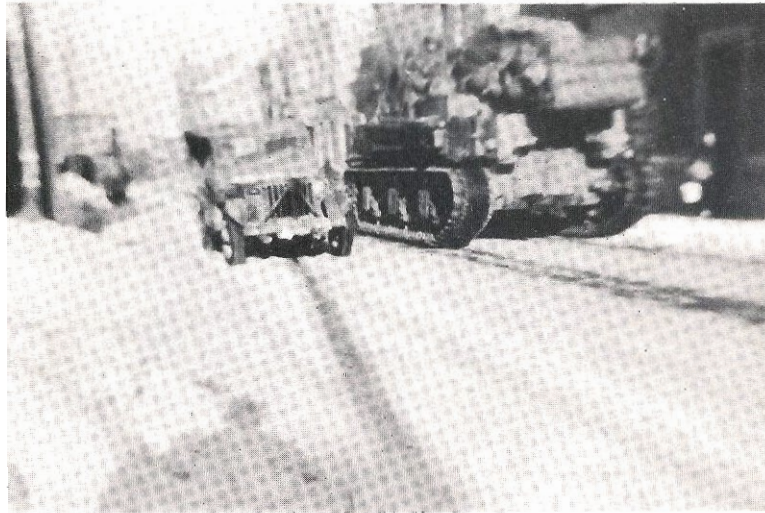
The first platoon of "B" Company led the way. It fired every round in its possession during the frenzied assault, reduced all resistance in the town, and was credited with killing about 800 of the enemy. Scores surrendered to the infantry. Three more Mark IV's were put out of action. Lieutenant Malcomsen was killed in action by a sniper as he personally led his M-10's into the attack. The "C" Company third platoon knocked out an additional Mark IV, during the attack on Rodt, when Corporal Harvey B. Flammer fired at opposing gun flashes on the distant side of the ridge.

With these strong points attained, the 30th Division pushed on to its final objectives, clearing all of the approaches into St. Vith, so that friendly armor could come in and take possession of the town.

The 823rd Tank Destroyer Battalion, along with the 30th Infantry Division, were then granted a short respite. They were relieved from the line, and the 823rd withdrew to positions in Bihain, Regne, and Fraiture, to begin a very welcome period of rest, maintenance, and reorganization. Despite inclement weather which developed into near-blizzard proportions the men were grateful for the opportunity of cleaning up and obtaining some relaxation.

Release from attachment to the XVIII Corps (AB) on February 1945, the Battalion once more reverted to XIX Corps control. Back to Aachen, Germany, went the troops—out of the frigid and mountainous Ardennes to the more flat and level country of the Cologne Plain.





Only a few days, however, was spent in the Aachen area primarily in general maintenance and removal of the white, snow camouflage with which the vehicles were bedecked. Then the entire Battalion moved to Durwiss, Germany. Here the balance of the M-10's were received, and plans for the long postponed assault across the Roer River were reviewed. On 13 February 1945, General L. S. Hobbs, Division Commander of the 30th Infantry Division, presented eleven Silver Stars and thirty-five Bronze Stars to officers and enlisted men of the Battalion. Lt. Colonel Stanley Dettmer, Commanding Officer of the 823rd Tank Destroyer Battalion, in separate formations, awarded Presidential Unit Battle Citation Certificates and ribbons to the personnel of "A" and "B" Companies.

All units laid the foundation for a new training program which was commenced, 18 February 1945. An unsuccessful experiment was conducted in order to ascertain whether an alligator would be able to carry a towed 3-inch gun. Had this been feasible it would have been possible to expedite the conveyance of large calibre direct fire weapons across the river in early stages of the attack. However, the gun proved too large for the carrier.

24 February 1945, saw the Battalion on the move again. The Battalion Forward Command Post was established in Niederzier, Germany, on the following day. The third platoon of Company "A" caught a column of German infantry on the road and was credited with annihilating 102 of the enemy. A Mark VI Tank, an anti-tank gun, and a quarter-ton truck were destroyed in addition by other elements of the company. Company "C" engaged in a fire fight knocking out two Mark IV's in the process.

Following a terrific artillery bombardment throughout the night of 23 and 24 February, in which thirty-six of the Battalion's guns participated, the attack jumped off as scheduled across the Roer. Lieutenant Pfaff, riding in an assault boat with the infantry, is believed to have been the first American soldier to land on the East bank of the river. Company "A" was the first armor across and also knocked out the first enemy tank on the other side of the Roer.

The organization had learned how to cross rivers by this time, and the operation was consummated with considerable speed despite harrasing artillery fire and the prevalence of mines and booby traps on both banks of the river. A gradual rise in the terrain favored the enemy too. It was a difficult, uphill battle, through the Steinstrauss Forest, and out into the great Cologne Plains. Company "C" knocked out a "Tiger Royal Tank" which later proved to be a secret enemy weapon. It was a monstrous self-propelled gun, mounted on an old square Tiger Tank Chassis, with a barrel fifteen inches in diameter and seven feet long. Firing a projectile of nearly 750 pounds, at a range of 3,000 yards, the huge piece was loaded with the aid of a chain hoist which consumed most of the inside space. It was able to elevate its tube, but traversing the gun necessitated turning the entire tank.

As the attack grew in velocity, and the bridgehead was expanded, the 30th Infantry Division was pinched out by the 2nd Armored Division. The 823rd Tank Destroyer Battalion was relieved from the XIX Corps, and attached to the Twelfth TD Group of the XVI Corps. This change caused removal of the organization to an inactive sector in order to prepare for the next river crossing — the Rhine.

Clothed in the strictest secrecy, the 30th Infantry Division and all of its attached units, moved North into Holland. The 823rd TD Battalion closed into an assembly area near Birgdon, on 7 March 1945. New river crossing tactics were practiced on the Meuse River. 20 March 1945, the unit moved to the vicinity of Horstgen, Holland. After a long march in total blackout, last minute maintenance checks were made and combat loads arranged. Forward assembly positions were reached on the 23rd. The attack commenced on the 24th with British Commandos assuming the initiative and attaining the town of Wesel, Germany, under the cover of darkness. They were followed by the Black Watch Regiment. Then the 30th jumped off to lead the American forces. From hordes of C-47's, troops of the 17th Airborne Division dropped on the opposite bank—East of Wesel. LCVP's were used to ferry





over the first elements of the Battalion. By 1700, all of the units had crossed, and were supporting the rapidly advancing infantry.

The crossing of the last important water barrier "on the road to Berlin" was accomplished in spectacular fashion, and with a great deal less opposition than had been anticipated. The bridgeheads were secured and enlarged. A few enemy strong points were wiped out. Pontoon bridges were erected in quick order. German aircraft made a night appearance, strafing the columns and endeavoring to destroy the bridge. Its action was hurried though, and little damage was caused by the frenzied effort.

From the Rhine River the troops advanced Eastward. There were frequent changes of location. It was evident that the enemy was demoralized, and reeling backward at a rapid pace. Their mines impeded progress, however, damaged a few M-10's, and caused some casualties among the men. There was little rest, and hardly any sleep for the troops as they closed in for the kill. On 29 March 1945, as the 823rd TD Battalion was preparing to continue its Eastward march, with the mission of mopping up behind the 8th Armored Division, word was received that the 30th Division had been placed in Corps Reserve. The guns remained in position protecting the flank.

Re-attached to the XIX Corps and the 2nd TD Group, the 30th Division and the 823rd TD's then began the race to the Elbe. By 3 April 1945, the fast moving columns reached the formidable Teutoburger Wald defense line. It was defended by a large group of Wehrmacht officer candidate students who fought fanatically with every weapon at their disposal. These zealots of a lost cause employed the panzerfaust against the ground forces with telling effect. The fortress was reduced only after a bitter hand-to-hand struggle. Company "A" cooperated with a 2nd Armored Division Task Force in liquidating another enemy strong point. Members of its second and third platoon were officially recognized as having destroyed a German ME109. The two platoons were setting up a roadblock Northeast of Schulerberg, Germany, when a small group of ME109's came in to strafe a column of tanks and TD's. On their second sweep over the installations one

of the planes fell riddled with bullets about 500 yards away. Private First Class Killian Brandenburger who kept pouring a steady stream of .50 calibre pellets at the German aircraft was credited with the kill.

The Recon Company Command Post group and the third platoon retrieved three 2½ ton trucks for Service Company of the 119th Infantry Regiment, and obliterated an enemy roadblock while doing so. The trucks had run into an ambush, and the CO of the unit filtered back through the German lines to seek aid in recovering his vehicles. Lt. Raney could not find sufficient transportation for all of those who volunteered. Loading two M-8's with members of the Pioneer Platoon, third platoon cooks, and KP's, task force Raney took off for the rescue. Sustaining no casualties of their own, the mixed party eliminated the hostile roadblock, killed thirty-two Germans, captured twenty-two but found two of the trucks burned and the other had disappeared.

The retreat to the Elbe left in its wake hordes of displaced persons who had been freed in the general advance of the Allied Armies. They cluttered the highways and the by-ways, individually and in groups, with all modes and methods of transportation. Most of them, on foot, marched deeper and deeper into the security of the American-held territory. Quite a few refused to leave their former place of serfdom, but took advantage of the confused situation by looting and imbibing generously of stocks of stolen liquors. German civilians begged the protection of their conquerors from those whom they had previously held in slavery.

East of the Rhine, the cruel treatment which the Nazis had meted out to the people of the world whom they had enslaved, became more manifest in all of its barbaric savagery. The stories that had been heard of German inhumanity were now being corroborated before the very eyes of the American soldiery. In Farsleben, Germany, not far from the Elbe Aiver, the Battalion Command Post Group over-ran a trainload of political prisoners who were being moved from one concentration camp to another. Crowded into boxcars were some 2,400 starving and diseased human beings. Mostly Jews,





BEFORE THE BATTLE AT MAGDEBURG

some of them had been imprisoned for as long as five years. Their condition had deteriorated to the lowest level imaginable. All common decency had been lost. They existed like animals, without food or water or any kind of sanitation.

Colonel Dettmer took immediate steps to alleviate the plight of these unfortunate victims of Nazi barbarism. He requisitioned food and shelter for them from a resentful local populace. Dr. Baranov established two hospitals which he conducted until a military government establishment arrived upon the scene and took over the responsibility for the hapless refugees.

The Weser River was traversed, in the vicinity of Hamlen, Germany, famous for the tale of the Pied Piper. Advance elements advancing to the outskirts of the large industrial town of Braunschweig endeavored to effect a surrender of the city with the commanding general of the German garrison.. Upon meeting with General L. S. Hobbs, Commanding General of the 30th Infantry Division, the leader of the enemy forces insisted upon the right to withdraw his troops from the beleaguered city. General Hobbs refused to grant him this opportunity, and the battle was resumed.

Braunschweig was captured on 11 April 1945, along with its commandant who had refused to capitulate the day before. A steady stream of prisoners overflowed the PW cages. They were being sent back to the Rear without guard, and were giving themselves up in increasingly larger numbers. It was apparent that the foe had lost his will to fight—that the war with Germany was entering its final stages. On the road between Angern and Rogatz, Germany, Private First Class Floyd B. Looper, and Sgt. Melvin Farris, of Company "C's" third platoon, knocked out a Panzerjaeger with seven rounds of APC and three rounds of AP. The Panzerjaeger is Germany's largest tank destroyer. It was the last piece of enemy armor for which the 823rd Tank Destroyer Battalion could claim credit, and made a total of 111 German tanks destroyed during the war.

Sporadic fire fights were encountered until the Elbe River was reached,

some forty miles away. Elements of the 30th Infantry Division succeeded in crossing the river, less than fifty miles from Berlin, in the vicinity of Magdeburg, Germany. But the small force was driven back, and the Division deployed itself along the West bank of the river. The metropolis of Magdeburg, Germany, was the last objective attained. This once beautiful city, on the banks of the Elbe River, had suffered irreparably from several Allied air attacks. There was not a great deal left worth defending. Nevertheless the remaining enemy forces had to be routed from the ruins in house to house fighting which continued for five days. A Company "B" M-10 was destroyed and three of its enlisted men killed in the last half-hour of this final engagement of the European conflict.

All of the units of the Battalion participated in cleaning up the area to the Elbe River; and, on 21 April 1945, the 823rd TD's were pulled out of the line and given the mission of organizing and occupying a sector of the territory which had become the responsibility of the 30th Infantry Division. A system of military government was established with headquarters centered in the Battalion Command Post at Eilsleben, Germany. Thus, the members of the 823rd Tank Destroyers Battalion were serving in an altogether different role when by official pronouncement the War in Europe came to an end on 9 May 1945.

The task which the Battalion assumed although relatively safe was fraught with complexity. Fighting the Germans was one thing—governing them another. The entire country was in a state of confusion and disrepair. Transportation had been disrupted, food supplies dwindling, public utilities lacking. Security patrols were established at once, but the German populace proved to be a subdued lot, and offered little violence to the governing power.

LAST TANK LOST AT MAGDEBURG



TANK CLAIM

Date 13 April 45

TO: G-2 30th Division

FROM: S-2 823 T.D. B'n

A. Unit claiming credit for destruction.
Co "C" 823 T.D. B'n

B. Date and hour of destruction.
13 April 45

C. Exact Coordinates of destroyed tank.
NW-MAGDEBURG, Germany 745 222

D. Type of tank destroyed and unit if determinable. MK II (PANTHER)

E. Weapon used in stopping and destroying tank. M-10 T.D.

F. Number of rounds fired, range, point of impact, penetration and effect.
6 Rds APC Destroyed Drive Sprocket

G. (When applicable) Name of individual primarily responsible for stopping or destroying. Pfc. Looper - Sgt. FARRIS

H. Names of organization of witness.
Capt. Swanson, Lt. Farley

I. Short description of our enemy action leading to destruction.
Tanks were covering Main Road - Acting as Road Block -

J. Tanks destroyed to date.

113

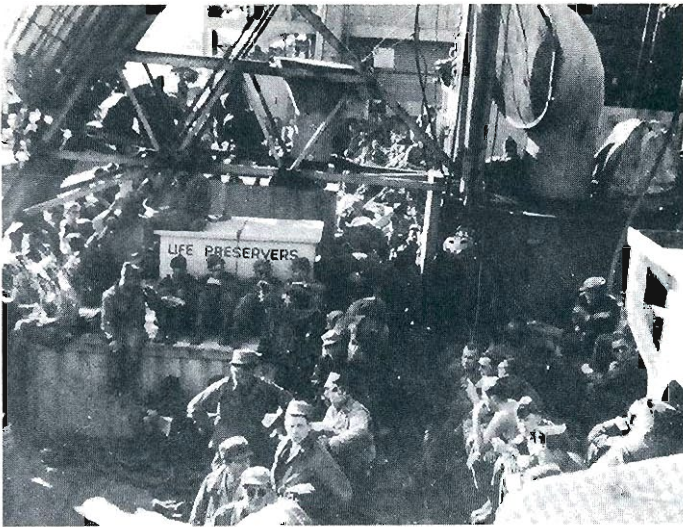
George W. Lefly
Captain
S-2

Nazi party members and soldiers of the Wermacht were culled from the civilian population with which they had intermingled themselves. Displaced persons were segregated. Food, clothing, and shelter was provided the refugees until arrangements could be made for transporting them back to their respective homelands. An inventory was completed of all communal resources. The control of food supplies was centralized and an equitable system of distribution commenced. Industrial and business facilities were surveyed; those capable of contributing to the general welfare started back into operation. Burgomeisters as well as other public officials were carefully scrutinized for past and present loyalties. At Eilsleben, the Battalion assisted in the operation of several banks, a railroad line, a refinery, and clothing factory.

The situation was progressing most satisfactorily when the Battalion was moved to the Colbitz - Angun - Rogatz area of Germany as the Russians came in to take over. Here, the same process was begun. Then the British arrived to relieve the Americans. Adorf, Germany, was the next stop in the itinerary of the Battalion as it travelled from one sector to another through the picturesque provinces of Saxony and Thuringia.

It was during the first week of June 1945, that the organization left this small village near the Czechoslovakian border traversing the short distance to Falkenstein. The job at Falkenstein consisted primarily of guarding a "no man's land" occupied by German soldiery who had escaped from the Russians. The area marked the boundary between the two Allied forces. When it was taken over by the Red Army, the Battalion proceeded to Abensberg, Bavaria, near the Danube River. Living in Squad Tents, in an open field, the unit was earmarked for redeployment to the United States. Men with less than 85 points were transferred to the 629th Tank Destroyer Battalion in exchange for some of the high point men from the latter group. At a later date, soldiers with the highest point totals were distributed among the 14th Armored Division and the 66th Infantry Division.





Homeward Bound

On 15 September 1945, the Battalion dismantled its encampment in Abensberg for the last move—homeward. Part of Company "A", and Companies "B" and "C" departed the day before by rail. The motorized convoy bivouacked near New Ulm, Germany, for the first night. The next day, the troops enjoyed the hospitality of the Camp at Nancy, France. Another all-day drive brought them to the intermediate destination—Camp Detroit—a reconverted airfield—about ninety miles Northeast of Paris.

After a miserable two weeks we received word that our next and final European trip would be to Camp Calas in the vicinity of Marseilles in southern France, where we would be processed and then wait for the ship.

This movement was made by rail and was worse than the "40 and 8" cars of World War I. After three long days and nights we arrived at our destination.

Processing was completed and after sweating out movement orders for more than a week we finally received word that we would embark 13 October.

The Battalion loaded at 0930 on the "*Pontotoc Victory*" in Marseilles Harbor and the ship left at 1735 hours. The trip was nice and smooth through the Mediterranean and on the third day at 0905 we reached the Rock of Gibraltar and went through the straights about 1600 hours and saw the coasts of Africa, Spain and Portugal.

The remainder of the trip was good except for two days which were foggy and rough.

On the afternoon of the 23rd we could see the good old U.S.A. at last. We were met by a yacht full of WAC's with music and dancing. At 1800 hours we finally saw the Statue of Liberty and New York City with all its lights. Then we were loaded on harbor boats and landed on the New Jersey side and sent to Camp Shanks. At midnight we had the much promised steak, French fries, sweet milk and all the trimmings.

After two days at Camp Shanks all records were checked and turned in and the 823rd Tank Destroyer Battalion was deactivated and the men were sent on their way to the Separation Centers nearest their homes.

Unit Citations

PRESIDENTIAL CITATION

Co. A, Co. B, Second Recon Platoon, Third Recon Platoon, First Recon Platoon.

PRESIDENTIAL CITATION (OAK LEAF CLUSTER)

Second Platoon Co. A.

FOREIGN DECORATIONS

823rd Tank Destroyer Bn (Atchd to 30th Inf Div) CITED IN THE ORDER OF THE DAY of the Belgian Army, by Decree No. 1393, 20 November 1945, by Charles, Prince of Belgium, Regent of the Kingdom (for citation, see "30th Infantry Division").

CITED IN THE ORDER OF THE DAY of the Belgian Army, by Decree No. 1393, 20 November 1945, by Charles, Prince of Belgium, Regent of the Kingdom (for citation, see "30th Infantry Division").

BELGIAN FOURRAGERE (1940), awarded under Decree No. 1393, 20 November 1945, by Charles, Prince of Belgium, Regent of the Kingdom.

823rd Tank Destroyer Bn, Co A—FRENCH CROIX DE GUERRE WITH PALM, awarded under Decision No. 267, 22 July 1946, by the President of the Provisional Government of the French Republic, with the following citation:

A magnificent combat unit with very high moral and animated by the finest martial qualities. During the German attack on Mortain from 6 to 12 August 1944, it was attacked incessantly. In spite of dangerous enemy infiltrations, which isolated the fighters, it dug into the terrain and frustrated the German attempt to cut communications between the Allied forces in Brittany and Normandy.

823rd Tank Destroyer Bn, Co B—FRENCH CROIX DE GUERRE WITH PALM, awarded under Decision No. 267, 22 July 1946, by the President of the Provisional Government of the French Republic, with the following citation:

A magnificent combat unit with very high moral and possessing fine qualities of heroism. On 7 August 1944, at Saint Barthelemy, Normandy, it was subjected to the brunt of the German attack which attempted to reach Avranches and to cut the Allied forces. In spite of heavy losses and under a rain of fire, Company B held courageously, and by the skillful maneuvering of its antitank arms, checked the dangerous enemy infiltration.

The 823rd Tank Destroyer Battalion, with its 36 three-inch or 76mm. antitank guns, possessed fire power equivalent to that of an artillery battalion in each of its three line companies. Its towed guns were replaced by

self-propelled armored carriers beginning in December 1944. The 823rd held the United States Army record for tanks destroyed by a TD battalion between June 6, 1944 and May 8, 1945, on the Continent, knocking out 111 tanks in addition to armored cars, self-propelled guns, and a variety of other items. In addition to its primary purpose and mission, the battalion furnished close support to the infantry against non-armored targets, especially after it became self-propelled. One company (twelve guns) was often used by Division Artillery for long-range night interdiction missions.

Facts and Figures

The 823rd Tank Destroyer Battalion was activated at Camp Carson, Colorado, at 1201 hours, 25th July 1942, under the provisions of Paragraph 2, General Orders No. 54, Headquarters Third Army, Smith-Young Tower, San Antonio, Texas; dated 23 May 1942. Deactivated at Camp Shanks, October 25, 1945.

BATTALION RECORD

Battalion holds the First and Ninth Army record for the number of tanks destroyed in one day. Also the record for the number of enemy vehicles destroyed in one day.

Companies "A", "B", and the 2nd and 3rd Rcn. Platoons received the Presidential Citation for the Battle at Mortain, France.

Second Platoon of Company "A" received their second Presidential Citation for their work at STOUMONT in the BELGIAN BULGE. And also the 1st Rcn. Platoon received a Presidential Citation for the same action. The Battalion destroyed 33 Tanks in the BELGIUM BULGE, was the 1st TD Battalion to enter BELGIUM and also the 1st Armor across the ROER RIVER.

Unit fired 4,193 rounds of 3" ammunition direct fire and 33,486 rounds of 3" ammunition indirect.

Meritorious Service Unit Plaque Headquarters Company and Medical Detachment. For Superior performance of duty in the execution of exceptionally difficult tasks from 24th June 26 August 1945 in France.

*Does not include 2 radio controlled Mark IV tanks loaded with explosives.

Of the 68 Tank Destroyer Battalions in the ETO the 823rd lead them all in number of tanks destroyed.

ENEMY EQUIPMENT DESTROYED BY "A" COMPANY

37 Tanks; 7 Half-tracks, 4 Motorcycles, 6 Armored Cars, 8 1/4-ton, 9 AT Guns, 1 Staff Cars, 15 MG Nests, 5 SP Guns, 4 Cargo Trucks, 18 OP's, 12 Pill Boxes, 22 Other Vehicles, 3 Artillery Pieces.

ENEMY EQUIPMENT DESTROYED BY "B" COMPANY

43 Tanks, 4 Half-tracks, 2 Motorcycles, 6 Armored Cars, 3 1/4 tons, 4 AT Guns, ?? Staff Cars, 22 MG Nests, 4 SP Guns, 3 Cargo Truck, 22 OP's, 6 Pill Boxes, 2 Other Vehicles, 1 Artillery Pieces.

ENEMY EQUIPMENT DESTROYED BY "C" COMPANY

30 Tanks, 5 Half-tracks, 2 Motorcycles, 1 Armored Car, 2 1/4 Tons, 5 AT Guns, ?? Staff Cars, 5 MG Nests, 4 SP Guns, 2 Cargo Trucks, 10 OP's, 7 Pill Boxes, 2 Other Vehicles, 4 Artillery Pieces.

ENEMY MATERIAL DESTROYED

TANKS

*Mark IV's	66
Mark V's	27
Mark IV's	18
Total.....	111
Armored Cars	13
Self Propelled Guns.....	13
Half-tracks	16
Anti-tank Guns	18
Motorcycles	8
Artillery Pieces	14
Cargo Trucks	10
Observation Posts	51
Pill Boxes	25
Machine Gun Nests.....	42
Staff Cars	2
Other Vehicles	15
Airplanes (ME-109)	15
Barge, River	1
ENEMY PERSONNEL CAPTURED.....	1342

OUR OWN EQUIPMENT
Damaged and returned to service

M-10's	31
Half-tracks	53
3" Guns	32
1/4 tons	13
1 1/2 tons	13
2 1/2 tons	10
3/4 tons	6

Destroyed

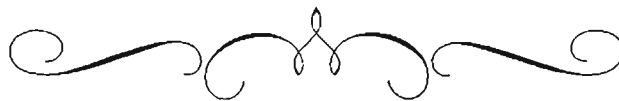
M-10's	5
Half-tracks	20
3" Guns	18
1/4 tons	7
1 1/2 tons	2
2 1/2 tons	1

AWARDS

"SILVER STAR AWARDS"	64
"BRONZE STARS"	178
"PURPLE HEARTS"	410

For the Commanding Officer:

GEORGE W. SITZ, JR.
Captain, Cavalry,
S-2



16 March 1946

Dear General Hobbs:

Now that I am leaving the service, I thought it might be well to give you the following information for whatever satisfaction you might derive therefrom.

I was historian of the ETO. Toward the end of last fall, for the purpose of breaking the log-jam of paper concerning division presidential unit citations, General Eisenhower instructed me to draw up a rating sheet on the divisions. This entailed in the actual processing that we had to go over the total work of all the more experienced divisions, infantry and armor, and report back to him which divisions we considered had performed the most efficient and consistent battle service.

We so did, and we named certain infantry divisions in the first category and same with armor, and we placed others in a second category and yet others in a third. The 30th was among five divisions in the first category.

However, we picked the 30th Division No. 1 on the list of first category divisions. It was the combined judgment of the approximately 35 historical officers who had worked on the records and in the field that the 30th had merited this distinction. It was our finding that the 30th had been outstanding in three operations and that we could consistently recommend it for citation on any one of these three occasions. It was further found that it had in no single instance performed discredibly or weakly when considered against the averages of the Theatre and that in no single operation had it carried less than its share of the burden or looked bad when compared with the forces on its flanks. We were especially impressed with the fact that it had consistently achieved results without undue wastage of its men.

I do not know whether further honors will come to the 30th. I hope they do. For we had to keep looking at the balance of things always and we felt that the 30th was the outstanding infantry division of the ETO.

Respectfully yours,
/s/S.L.A. Marshall

Colonel S.L.A. Marshall, GSC
Historian of ETO