

HISTORY OF THE 819TH TANK DESTROYER BATTALION

This is a duplicate of the original history written in October of 1945.
(Author Unknown)

On 1 June 1942, the 819th Tank Destroyer was activated at Camp Chaffee, Arkansas, by authority of General Order #44, from the Second Army which was then commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth F. Pughe, formed the nucleus of the new battalion. The enlisted cadre was furnished by the 705th Tank Destroyer Battalion, Camp Cooke; California. Lieutenant Colonel Pughe and Major Joseph F. Palmer came to Camp Chaffee directly from Tank Destroyer School at Camp Hood, Texas. Seventeen of the officers were assigned directly from the Infantry School, Fort Benning, Georgia, while the remaining five of the original group were cadre officers from the 705th.

In addition to the usual difficulties which confront a new unit, neither the officers nor the enlisted men had been especially trained in forming units, but they set out determined to show themselves and the Army that they could do it and do it well. The battalion as it stood on V-J day will show how well they succeeded.

At the start, all personnel were assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company because they were too few to fill in all companies, and they began immediately to prepare themselves to receive and train fillers. On 19 June, 1942, all companies were assigned personnel and the real work and trouble began in earnest. The command was as follows:

Battalion Co ~ Lt Col Kenneth F. Pughe ~
Executive Officer ~ Major Joseph F. Palmer ~
S-1 ~ 1st Lt. Harl G. Douglass ~
S-2 ~ 1st Lt. Leroy H. Sample ~
S-3 ~ 1st Lt. Ray A. Murry ~
S-4 ~ 1st Lt. William W. Owens ~
Hq Commandant ~ 1st Jack M. Pace ~
"A" Company Commander ~ 1st Lt. James L. Long ~
"B" Company Commander ~ 1st Lt. Merritt E. Overton ~
"C" Company Commander ~ 1st Lt. Charles V. Kappen ~
Reconnaissance Company Commander ~ 1st Lt. Roy M. Muller ~
Battalion Surgeon ~ 1st Lt. John E. Klinge ~

Of the above assignments only two officers remained with the battalion on 2 September, 1945--Captain Jack M. Pace as S-3, and Captain Merritt E. Overton as Company Commander of Company "B". In addition Captain Robert L. Dauterman as S-4, Captain

Lloyd B. Simmons as Headquarters Commandant, and Captain Lawrence A. Wickline as S-2 were with the battalion on activation date and remained on 2 September, 1945.

Of the original enlisted cadre, the following men were still on duty with the battalion on V-J day:

M Sgt Aloysius E. Coan
M Sgt Newton E. Dykes
1st Sgt Robert E. Denbow
1st Sgt Irvin Kozeluh
1st Sgt Ira L. McNees
1st Sgt Charles W. Wilson
T Sgt John Brndiar
T Sgt Argie E. Douglas
T Sgt Roger C. Reed
S Sgt Bennett Brooker
S Sgt Earl J. Buchheit
S Sgt William F. Budrow
S Sgt Paul J. Foster
S Sgt John C. Grady
S Sgt Raymond A. Howard
S Sgt George A. Jordan
S Sgt John P. Mackey
Sgt Edgar D. Ashley
Sgt Lydle B. Dickson
Tec 4 Amos H. Brown
Tec 4 Henry E. Bryan
Tec 4 Albert T. Weese
Cpl George L. Dorsey
Tec 5 James R. Roberts
Pfc Clay H. Crisp
Pfc Hokey A. Hammack

No one company had enough personnel to act as a unit so it was necessary to pool all resources, of both personnel and equipment. All members of the battalion continued to prepare themselves for the job ahead by daily classes, drills, study, work, and even classes outside drill hours and on Sundays.

Fillers were received in July, 1942. There was no problem as to which company to assign these men to--they were only three and trained for medics. Fillers continued to arrive in small numbers, and as a result the training program was very difficult to arrange and sometimes a bit confusing. V-J day found seven men still with the battalion from these first small filler groups:

T Sgt James W. Miller
T Sgt Vaughan G. Papke

T Sgt William E. Sherrill
S Sgt Lewis W. Harris
Tec 4 George A. Lollich
Tec 5 Lloyd L. Cohee
Pfc Sixten E. Ekstrom

In spite of all difficulties the battalion did continue to function as a battalion and made remarkable progress. Inspectors from the second Army were pleased with the work being done. At Camp Chaffee Major Palmer was relieved from assignment to the battalion and Major James F. Wooster, (then Captain) was assigned and became executive officer.

The first company competition on rifle marksmanship was completed on the Camp Chaffee Rifle Range in October, 1942, with Company "B" winning high honors. A chance to participate in the Armistice Day Parade at Russellville, Arkansas, was their reward.

On 15, December, 1942, the battalion was relieved from the Second Army and sent to Camp Bowie, Texas, where it was assigned to the Tank Destroyer Center and placed under Basic Unit Training Center (BUTC) for training. It was not until January, 1943, that the battalion began to receive fillers in large numbers. All companies were at full strength, and soon the battalion had too many men. We found that having too many men in some ways was worse than having too few.

It was decided to forget the different stages of training of the groups of men and start all over. The latest fillers were received direct from Reception Centers and had had no military training. The entire battalion began training all over, and the new men learned faster for competing with men partially trained, though it did not seem so at the time, all men benefited by the review.

It was at Camp Bowie, Texas, that the battalion was first assigned to a Tank Destroyer Group for training, and while the relationship between Group and Battalion was never clarified at Bowie it was, for the most part, pleasant and beneficial to both. Shortly before leaving Bowie the battalion was attached to the 11th Tank Destroyer Group, whose Commanding Officer, Colonel Devine, is well remembered by all who knew him.

From Bowie the Battalion moved to Camp Hood, Texas, for advanced training with Advanced Unit Training Center (AUTC). We were stationed at Shell Camp #1 for the first part of our stay at Hood. Here the battalion trained as a unit rather than by separate companies. Emphasis was on tactics and combat operations. And the battalion got acquainted with the commando course, of which they had heard many and varied stories.

The dread with most of the battalion thought of the course turned to respect when the battalion moved to the course for one week.

At Shell Camp Lieutenant Colonel Pughe was relieved from assignment to the battalion, and shortly thereafter the battalion moved to Camp Hood proper where Major Albert J. McCurdy was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel in May, 1943, and is still in command of the battalion.

At Camp Hood the battalion was reorganized. Having been a self-propelled battalion since activation, it was now made a tow battalion. Reconnaissance Company was disbanded and the other companies adjusted to the new table of organization. This reorganization involved problems of personnel as well as of training, equipment, and new tactics. The change was completed, however, and the passing of numerous Army Ground Force Tests proved that the battalion was ready for something bigger.

From Camp Hood the battalion moved to Ibis, California, on 25 July, 1943, and was assigned to Desert Training Center. We were in tents again and remained so until ready for foreign duty. Desert maneuvers presented their own problems, which were many and difficult--but the battalion mastered them all, and earned the respect of ally and enemy alike on maneuvers.

The training program consisted mainly of short, fast, conditioning foot-marches, two and three day bivouacs with movement to and from the area under blackout conditions, and the preparation for and firing of tactical problems. No one could deny that the training was of benefit, however, when the battalion found itself in its first desert maneuver with the 9th Armored Division. Preparation and conditioning is absolutely essential for a week's continuous engagement with an armored division, and none of those present will forget the day-and-night chase from 9 September to 16 September, 1943.

After a well-earned 3-day rest at Ford Well Camp and Camp Coxcomb the battalion continued the maneuver by working field problems with the 85th Infantry Division until they were alerted for move from the dessert. The period was concluded with an administrative motor march back to our permanent base, and even the tent camp at Ibis looked good after almost continuous battle with tanks and Infantry in addition to the scorpions, snakes, and spiders encountered on the dessert.

After another period of training, much the same as that prior to our first maneuver, the battalion was alerted for a second maneuver. During this one, (the 4th Corps) the 819th was attached to the 93rd Infantry Division for the entire time, from 22 November to 11 December, 1943, and we got our first experience at being a "division orphan". Defensive tactics were employed in Palen Pass during the early part of the period, and for the first time the men of the unit learned to live underground. It was proven that towed 3" make good offensive weapons too when a company of Tank Destroyers was attached to each of the 93rd Infantry Division Regimental

Combat Teams for the last part of the maneuver. No member of this battalion will forget the long night marches prior to employment in Palen and Styx Pass, nor the experience of depending on the regiment for gasoline, water and rations. Those were things to expect in war, and we were fortunate to learn them.

At seven months at Ibis the battalion was notified to prepare for overseas duty, and in spite of the work this brought about it was the most welcome and eagerly order the battalion ever received. All deficiencies in training were corrected. All equipment was brought up to date and into serviceable condition. Everyone received leaves and furloughs at last. All limited service personnel were transferred from the battalion. In addition, for the first time since activation, the battalion was brought to table-of-organization strength, neither over nor under.

The battalion left Ibis and went to Camp Stoneman for staging. Our stay in Stoneman was longer than we expected, but we got the job done to the satisfaction of others and ourselves. On the 15th of March, 1944, the battalion left California aboard the USS George O. Squier for an unknown destination. Our trip was a source of education and pleasure for all. It was not all pleasure, however, as there were duties to be performed on the ship which were not all to our liking. Nevertheless they were performed.

The battalion arrived at Hawaii, 24 March, 1944, and although more than a little disappointed at having the "Baptism by Fire" delayed again, the battalion learned to enjoy Hawaii very much. Upon arrival the battalion for the first time ceased to be quartered in the same general camp. Battalion headquarters, along with Headquarters Company, was moved to an area on Waianuenue Avenue within the town of Hilo. "A" company called home the camp on Kanoelehua Street, just south of Hilo. "B" company's new permanent station, if there is a permanent station in war time, was Camp Kawaiiani. All were not destined to remain intact however as the greater part of "C" company was assigned to sectors for patrolling and manning of OPs. Lieutenant Moll with Sergeant Fuchsen and the 1st section of 3rd platoon were assigned to Kohala Sector, on the northeast side of the island. Lieutenant Hergen with Sergeant Dulin and the 2nd section of the 1st platoon were assigned to Kau Sector, on the southern tip of the island. Lieutenant

Van de Walle with Staff Sergeant Brooker and the 2nd section of the 3rd platoon were in Kona Sector on the west side of the island. Observation Post 58 at Kalapana was manned by Corporal Huddleston and his squad while Sergeant Competus and his squad were at observation Post 76. Onomea Arch, one of the scenic wonders of Hawaii, was the location of Observation Post 87E manned by Sergeants Ogle and O'Mara. Captain Charles B. Shorter (then 1st Lieutenant), commanding "C" company, had his headquarters at Camp Wiakea within the city of Hilo.

Until the month of May, when a new company was assigned to the sectors, the balance of the battalion was busy improving areas, doing twenty-five mile forced marches, and going through refresher training of all kinds.

The month of May found "A" company, commanded by Captain Robert L. Dauterman, guarding General Lyman Field on the outskirts of Hilo. "C" company returned to its camp at Wiakea in Hilo and "B" company, commanded by Captain Merritt E. Overton was assigned to sector duty. Lieutenant Duncan with Staff Sergeant Budrow and the 1st

platoon were in Kau, Lieutenant Duncan with Staff Sergeant Budrow and the 1st platoon were in Kau, Lieutenant Moak with Staff Sergeant Bell and the 2nd platoon were in Kona, and Lieutenant Lillie with Staff Sergeant Russell and the 3rd platoon were in Kohala. Sergeant Pierce had a squad at Black Sand Beach, Observation Post 58; Sergeant Wilson a squad at, Observation Post 76; Sergeant Pritchett a squad at Observation Post 87E; and Sergeant Marley a squad at Observation Post 201.

The balance of the battalion found time for needed training and field problems, using "C" company and the two reconnaissance platoons (then a part of Headquarters Company and commanded by Lieutenant's Schley and Knight) in opposition to units of the 711th Tank Battalion. Some of the problems took the above units to Kau Desert, near the crater Kilauea or halfway up the slopes of Mauna Kea to the saddle area where direct and indirect fire could be combined with tactical operations.

On the 12 July, 1944, Lieutenant Colonel McCurdy left the battalion to attend school at Camp Hood, Texas, and Major Wooster took command. Major Wooster left on 6 August, 1944, to act as an observer during the Palau operation and Major (now Lieutenant Colonel) John P McFarland assumed command with Captain Overton as executive officer. Before the month of August was over two more officers left for school in the states, Captain Jack M. Pace to command and General Staff on 11 August, 1944, and Captain Lawrence A. Wickline to Advanced Tactics Course at Camp Hood, Texas, on 25 August, 1944. Also away at this time was Lieutenant Lowrie, who was attending Special Service School in the States.

"B" company, then commanded by Lieutenant Harold E. Merchant, relieved "A" company at General Lyman Field the first part of August. Captain Dauterman, commanding "A" company had his headquarters at the old 616th Coast Artillery Battalion area on Kukuau Hill and two three inch guns, commanded by Sergeant Walters and Sergeant Blow, with Lieutenant Robert E. Kaske as gunnery officer, replaced the 135s for harbor defense of Hilo. Lieutenant Henninger with Staff Sergeant Jordan and the 3rd platoon were sent to Kona Sector. Lieutenant Traxler with staff Sergeant Foster and the 1st platoon occupied observation posts and patrolled in Kohala Sector and Lieutenant Tepper with Staff Sergeant Evans and the 2nd platoon were charged with the security of Kau Sector at Naalehu. Outpost in Hilo Sector were changed to accomplish the mission of security with Sergeant Hardwig and squad at Observation Post 58, Sergeant Anderson and squad at Observation Post 76, Sergeant Christensen and squad at Observation Post 85B, and Sergeants Gross and Davis with their squads at Observation Post 84B. It was at this time that day and night firing was done by the guns surrounding Hilo Harbor with excellent results, considering the fact that this was the first time that our three inch guns had been used as coast artillery.

The months of August and September were busy ones with the usual training for what was expected when the unit should move to a forward area; but in keeping with the War Department policy of officer schooling, Captain Lloyd B. Simmons and Lieutenant James G. Hergen were returned to Motor School at Fort Knox, Kentucky, and Lieutenant

George H. Henninger was returned to Advanced Tactics Course at Camp Hood, Texas, during the month of September.

The month of October saw "B" company again returned to the sectors of Kau, Kohala, and Kona to man Observation Post and patrol, with additional responsibility of Observation Post in Hilo sector for harbor defense of Hilo. During the next two-month period "C" company was responsible for the security of the air base while "A" company could again resort to much-needed, but not well thought of refresher training.

From the early part of November on, rumors could be heard of a change in table-of-organization for the battalion, some of which may not have originated with the S-2, but nevertheless on 17 November, 1944, pursuant to directions in General Orders 176, Headquarters, Central Pacific Base Command, dated 11 November, 1944, the 819th Tank Destroyer Battalion was reorganized in accordance with Table-Of-Organization and Equipment 18-25, 15 March, 1944, and now consisted of the following organizations: Headquarters and Headquarters Company, company "A", company "B", company "C", reconnaissance company and medical detachment.

Replacing the towed three inch gun, M-10s became the battalion primary weapon and demanded changes in training, especially in tactics and drivers' and mechanics' training. Lieutenant Truman E. Roberts (now Captain) was given command of the newly-organized reconnaissance company.

On 24 November, 1944, Lieutenant Colonel McCurdy returned from Camp Hood and assumed command of the battalion. In the first part of December Major Wooster, Captain Overton and Lieutenant Moak left for the Gunnery School at Camp Hood, Texas. Our island defense was terminated 10 December, 1944, and when "B" company was relieved of sector duty the battalion was, for the first time in many months, again all available for training. The fact that few driver and maintenance personnel were acquainted with M-10s made it necessary for motor officers and enlisted men alike to learn tank maintenance. As a result there was continuous traffic of 819th motor personnel between Hawaii and Oahu for schooling.

When packing and waterproofing of boxes began later in December, speculation rose once again as to our new destination. Perhaps the New Year would find the battalion in a forward area, many miles from Hawaii. Christmas and New Year's were just around the corner, however, so the Company's mess sergeants went to work on what might be their last chance for some time to put out a good holiday dinner.

After one or two cancellations of orders, on 12 January, 1945, the battalion, less seven officers and one enlisted man left Hilo at 1600 hours aboard the USS Eastland for its new station, enroute to Honolulu Harbor and arriving at 1515, 13 January, 1945. Lieutenant Colonel McCurdy, Captain Pace and Captain (then Lieutenant) Roberts left the unit at Honolulu Docks and proceeded by air to Peleliu as advance party for the battalion. Major Harold J. Krauter assumed command of troops aboard ship.

The USS Eastland left Honolulu Harbor at 1400, 17 January, 1945, we crossed the International Date Line, and the time and date became 0530, 21 January, 1945; we changed from west to east longitude, thereby eliminating morning reports for 21 January, 1945. On 25 January, 1945, we saw the first land in seven days--Eniwetok in the Marshall Islands. Everyone was glad for a stop long enough to refuel and a chance to get his first good look at an island taken from the Japs. The convoy of which we were a part left Eniwetok at 1430, 26 January, 1945. On 30 January, 1945, the convoy passed Ulithi Atoll, and we could see units of the Pacific Fleet in anchorage there.

At 0716, 1 February, 1945, we arrived at Peleliu, Palau Islands, our new permanent station, after having travelled by water a distance of approximately 5,000 miles. The battalion less company "C" disembarked from the USS Eastland at 1000 hours and proceeded to its assigned area. Company "C" disembarked at 1130 and went by LCTs to Angaur where they were assigned island defense duties under Headquarters, Army Garrison Forces, APO 264. The battalion less company "C" was assigned island defense duties on Peleliu under Ground Defense Force (111th Infantry Regiment).

The following week found the gun companies drawing their M-10s and getting acquainted with them for the first time. For "A" company on Peleliu and "C" company on Angaur the selection of gun positions to fire their anti-boat missions was of primary importance, as two Diahatsu had landed Jap troops on Peleliu the month before, and the enemy was capable of attempting another counter-landing at any time. At the same time "B" company was selecting positions and surveying them for indirect fire data on targets on and around Peleliu, especially the air strip and northern Peleliu. While one platoon of Reconnaissance Company was to act as Joint Operations Center guard, the company had as primary mission, with M-8s as their chief weapon, the defense of the airstrip against air-born attacks.

On 10 February, 1945, "C" company, commanded by Captain Shorter, made the first of daily patrols in search of enemy stragglers on Angaur; and it was this day that Pfc's Bartz and Holley captured the first Jap prisoner. Patrols were continued, as several Japs were believed to be still on Angaur, and on 25 February, 1945, Private Stacy and Corporal Worcester routed out two Nips, one of whom Staff Sergeant Brooker shot and killed when he attempted to escape.

Meanwhile there were changes in the organization of the battalion. On 9 February Captain Dauterman left company "A" to become battalion S-4, and Captain Roberts was transferred from Reconnaissance Company to "A" as company commander, leaving Lieutenant Ervin L. Schley in command of reconnaissance. Captain Pace, formerly S-4 of the battalion, was shifted to S-3. On the 25th Captain Simmons returned from school at Fort Knox and took command of Headquarters Company, replacing Captain Wickline, who had become battalion S-2 a short time before. On 12 March Lieutenant Henninger and Lieutenant Hergen also rejoined the battalion and were assigned to "A" and reconnaissance companies respectively.

During the entire day and night of 15 March and most of the day of the 16th, the 1st battalion of the 111th Infantry Regiment conducted a patrol operation on Bloody Nose Ridge, with the mission of combing out any enemy troops remaining in the ridges running north, south, and east of the main north-south highway. From our battalion, Captain Simmons, Captain Wickline, First Lieutenant William F. Duncan, First Lieutenant Lloyd W. Knight, First Lieutenant Sol H. Tepper, and First Lieutenant (then Second Lieutenant) Robert G. Stevens were assigned to accompany the infantry as observers. All those officers, on their return, gave favorable reports on the action, and stated that they had learned something about the characteristics of the Jap and methods of combating him. All were given letters of commendation for their work as observers.

In accordance with the avowed island policy of carrying the war to the remaining Japs in the Palau group, "B" company on 3 April moved by LOT to the small island of Ngeregong, some ten miles northeast of Peleliu, approximately half a mile square, and the northernmost outpost held by American forces in the Palaus, to deliver indirect fire on the large Jap-held islands of Eil Malk and Urukthapel. Observation was by "Cub" spotter airplane, with Lieutenant Duncan observing, and by LCI, with Lieutenant Lawrence N. Duffany observing. More than a thousand rounds were fired and the results were reported as excellent by both observers. The company returned to Peleliu on the 5th, but on the 21st returned to Ngeregong as a garrison force, less one platoon which was left on Peleliu under the command of Lieutenant Stevens to carry out the company's indirect fire mission there. Lieutenant Merchart, commanding "B" company, became also island commander of Ngeregong. The defense of Ngeregong was organized into a system of observation posts, searchlights, machine-gun positions, and direct and indirect fire positions for the three inch guns, by means by which any attempt at an enemy attack could be spotted and destroyed. Aid in this mission was given by the flotilla of LCI's, generally anchored in Schonian Harbor just west of Ngeregong. No full-scale attack ever developed, but there were some abortive attempts by small groups, all of which were quickly crushed.

On the morning of April 13th we were stunned, like the entire nation, by the news flash regarding President Roosevelt's death. On the day of his funeral there was a battalion formation during which five minutes' silence was observed in token of our common bereavement.

From 30 April through 8 May "A" company conducted a continuous program of indirect fire from Ngeregong on the enemy islands. Eil Malk and Urukthapel were again shelled, in conjunction with the "Long Toms" of Battery "B" of the 48th Coast Artillery, also stationed on Ngeregong. From the 5th, "A" and "B" companies both delivered scheduled fires on the islands of Eomogan and Abappaomogan, six thousand yards northwest of Ngeregong, in preparation for a reconnaissance in force made by these islands by elements of the 111th Infantry regiment on the 8th and 9th. Major Krauter, Lieutenant Hergen, and Lieutenant Lowrie accompanied the infantry as observers on the operation and these officers too stated that the gain in experience was great.

For "A" company, the firing of April to 3 May on Eil Malk and Urukthapel was done by the third platoon under Lieutenant Henninger; that of 3 to 6 May, on Eli Malk, Urukthapel, Eomogan, and Abappaomogan, by the first platoon under Lieutenant Kaske; and that of 6 to 9 May, on Eomogan and Abappaomogan, by the second platoon under Lieutenant Tepper. "B" company's firing was also on Eomogan and Abappaomogan, and was done with crews made up from men of the two gun platoons on hand, under the command of Lieutenant Merchant. On 4 May the first platoon of "A" company, while delivering unobserved fire on the southern part of Urukthapel, saw a B-24 downed by Jap anti-aircraft fire from Koror, farther to the north.

In all, 1104 rounds were fired on enemy-held islands from 30 April through 8 May. The firing, as often as it was observed, was praised by the observer. Captain Melvin H. Cleveland of the 48th Coast Artillery, who acted as air observer during most of the firing on Eomogan and Abappaomogan, was particularly enthusiastic over the speed and accuracy of the shooting.

12 May saw still further changes within the battalion. Major Wooster, Captain Overton, and First Lieutenant Moak returned from the Camp Hood Gunnery School. Major Wooster took over his old job as battalion executive. Captain Overton resumed command of "B" company and got an added duty as island commander of Ngeregong. Lieutenant Moak was assigned to "A" company, replacing Lieutenant Tepper, who in turn transferred to Reconnaissance Company. On 12 May also came the news, long-awaited and preceded by several false reports, of Germany's final collapse. It was received by the battalion rather quietly, but with gladness, and with hope for a quick end to the remaining half of the world-wide war.

Then began what was probably the quietest period during our entire stay in Palau-- from the middle of May to the middle of June. Duties were more or less routine, some training, improvement of our new battalion area, which we had just occupied, frequent large details of men to work stacking and re-stacking boxes at the island ration dump; and an occasional tour of duty on island guard. What spare time the men had was in most cases spent in making shell necklaces or other shell souvenirs to be sent home, or in athletics. We had not been long in these islands before the making of shell ornaments of all kinds became the hobby just as photography had on Hawaii. As for athletics, well-organized programs of softball, horseshoes, and volleyball insured a healthy amount of competition together with maximum participation.

On 17, June, men of "B" company on Ngeregong were surprised to run across a Jap, who had evidently been living for some time in the vicinity of their ammunition dump. He was caught after a short chase, and killed when he failed to surrender. 25 June saw Lieutenant Merchant leave "B" company to take command of Reconnaissance Company. Lieutenant Schley took his place on Ngeregong and on the 19th came orders from Headquarters, Western Pacific Base Command, to pack for an immediate move. Boxes were built, records checked, and firing brought up to date on all weapons (including the new style Bazooka, which we had not fired before). Every man in the battalion was mentally and

physically ready for a move--but on 8 July came a naval Dispatch of the 6th saying our orders had been canceled. We sighed and went back to work.

"A" and "B" companies changed places on 14 July in accordance with a field order from Ground Defense Force, "A" taking over the defense of Ngeregong and "B" the anti-boat defense in Peleliu. Lieutenant Heminger was left on Peleliu with one platoon of "A" company to man the alert indirect fire position on Bloody Nose Ridge, formerly the responsibility of "B" company.

It was at this time that the bulk of the battalion on Peleliu and "A" company on Ngeregong began building quonset huts to replace the wooden-floored tents, in which we had been living until then. On 1 August, former Staff Sergeant Forest R. Burch of reconnaissance companies a direct commission as second Lieutenant, field artillery, and was assigned to Reconnaissance Company. Two days later twelve men were received as fillers from the 33rd Replacement Depot on assigned to companies to fill existing vacancies.

The 2200 news broadcast on 14 August gave the forces of the Palaus what was probably the greatest news story in Military history--"The Japs are willing to accept peace terms!" There was celebrating of course, but not so much as might have been expected under the circumstances; the surrender was not yet final; it was still being sweated out by everybody concerned. But at this point our history begins slowly to close. The first faint signs of the final big break-up began to show even now. Men going home on emergency furloughs said good-bye earnestly, knowing they would not be back. The point-system for discharges was studied ever more carefully. And on 21 August Technician Fourth Grade Henry E. Bryan left the battalion, the first man to be sent back for discharge under the point system. He had 106 points.

Meanwhile on 17 August, in the very middle of the first surrender tension, "B" company relieved "C" company of their duties on Angaur, and "C" joined the rest of the battalion for the first time since we had arrived in the Palau Islands. For most of "C" company this was the first look at Peleliu, except from a distance.

An aerial reconnaissance of the northern Palau was made on 22 August by Lieutenant Colonel McCurdy and Lieutenant Merchant, command Reconnaissance Company would have some part in the occupation of these islands. "A" company, returned from Ngeregong to Peleliu on the 26th--a sizeable decrease in the garrison of Ngeregong, which was, in fact, withdrawn entirely soon after the war had ended. On 6 September the reconnaissance platoon that had been on duty at the airport under the direction of Joint Operations Center was returned to battalion duty. After President Truman had proclaimed 2 September as the official V-J day, the battalion went on a vastly different schedule. Mornings were spent in maintenance of weapons and vehicle, while afternoons were devoted solely to organized athletics. There were, of course, still a few labor details. On 17 September the pioneer platoon of reconnaissance company, under Lieutenant Knight, was sent to Ngeregong to dismantle the quonset huts left there. While they were at work several small groups of natives came across from the neighboring islands and surrendered

to them. These natives were brought to the battalion S-2 for questioning and later turned over to island G-2.

On 16 September the 819th Tank Destroyer Battalion received official notification that it had been awarded the bronze battle star for participation in the Western Pacific Campaign. The rest is anticlimax. As this record closes we are again packed and ready to move on, where or how soon we do not know, to eventual deactivation, probably. Already we have lost many officers and many enlisted men. Lieutenant Sol H. Tepper was evacuated 13 August with a serious leg injury. Captain William C. Dean left on an emergency furlough 15 August. Captain Jack M. Pace was transferred to the War Crimes Investigating Detachment, Army Forces in the Pacific, and left on 21 September for Manila--from where he has since written that he had a large part in the trail of the Japanese General Yamashita. Captain Albert H. Pearlman, the battalion surgeon, left 4 October on points. Captain Truman E. Roberts received an emergency furlough on 8 October. And, also on 8 October the battalion experienced the heaviest single drain of officers it has ever known, when Major James F. Wooster, Captain Merritt E. Overton, Captain Lloyd B. Simmons, Lieutenant Lawrence N. Duffany, Lieutenant James G. Hergen and Lieutenant Charles B. Lillie all left for discharge under the point system.

But no matter where its several hundred erstwhile members may eventually find themselves, no matter how hopelessly scattered they may become in a short space of years, the 819th will live as one of the prominent memories in each of their lives. The experiences, big and little, pleasant and unpleasant, that they shared here in the battalion will live as adventures to be told and retold, and cherished in the telling. It cannot be otherwise.

IN MEMORIAM

Although we have, as a unit, been spared the grief of large losses through casualties, there have nevertheless in our three-and-a-half years' history been those who died--some in the continental United States, some abroad. They died for their country as much as any man killed in battle; and they will be remembered always by the men with whom they shared their army joys and hardships.

So that we may not forget them: Private John C. Sharp of "B" company, a cannoneer, was drowned in the Colorado River three miles north of the town of Needles on 8 August 1943.

Technician fourth grade Harold Hill, a cook, and private First Class George D. Morgan, a cannoneer, both of "C" company, were both killed in a jeep wreck on the saddle road in Hawaii, 28 July, 1944.

Private Ignatius P. Juricio, a cannoneer of "A" company, was killed when the jeep he was riding in turned over on the road twenty miles south of Kamuela, Hawaii, 10 August, 1944

Sergeant Aaron H. Levy, the battalion message center chief, died of coronary thrombosis at Hilo, Hawaii, 4 November, 1944

Technician fifth grade Sigmund A. Kowalski, a cook in Headquarters Company, died of an artery disease at Hilo, Hawaii, 12 November, 1944.

Private Lloyd B. Crowe of "B" Company, the company's driver, died at Hilo, Hawaii, of injuries received in a jeep accident 5 December 1944.

Private first class Earl L. Buenderf, a driver of Headquarters Company, was reported missing while shell-hunting in the lagoon off the northern shore of Peleliu, 18 March, 1945.