

military service

FRANCIS E. WILTS

3-13-1941 Drafted into US Army at Peoria, Illinois
Assigned ASN 36051135
Basic training at Ft Funston, Kansas in the Horse Cavalry.
Assigned to Weapons Troop, 3rd Cavalry Brigade, 2nd Cavalry
Division

10-23-1941 Promoted to Corporal, Armorer

12-7-1941 Following bombing of Pearl Harbor, Weapons Troop was deployed to
Phoenix, AZ. and set up camp in Papago Park

? Assigned to Officer Candidate School, Horse Cavalry, Fort Riley
Kansas. Suffered a broken leg by being kicked by a horse and
after recovery was reassigned to OCS, Mechanized Cavalry

4-27-1942 Assigned to the SEVENTH OFFICER CANDIDATE SCHOOL, FORT RILEY,
KANSAS., MECHANIZED CAVALRY

7-18-1942 Commissioned 2nd Lt, Cavalry, ASN 01030316 per SO#106, Cavalry
School, Ft. Riley, Kansas

? 823rd Tank Destroyer Battalion activated at Camp Carson, Colorado

7-18-1942 Assigned to 823rd TD Bn. per SO #115, Cav.School, Ft Riley Kan.

7-31-1942 Assigned to B Co. 823rd TD Bn as a Platoon Leader, per SO #4,
823rd TD Bn.

9-?-1942 823rd is transferred to Camp Livingston, La. Lt. Wilts is
assigned to advance party per SO #5, 4th Hdqtrs Special Troops,
3rd Army, dated 8-28-1942

9-12-1942 Ordered to attend Officers Automotive Course, Tank Destroyer
School, Ft. Hood, TX. per SO #12, 823rd TD Bn.

12-5-1942 Graduated from Officers Automotive Course.

12-6-1942 Granted 10 days leave en route to return to duty station

12-10-1942 **MARRIED PAULINE JEANETTE FOERTER, while on leave and brought my
bride to Alexandria , La. outside Camp Livingston.**

12-19-1942 Promoted to 1st Lt. and given command of Co.B.

1-5-1943 823rd TD Bn is moved to Camp Bowie, Tx. to receive the balance of
its personnel and to undergo Basic Tank Destroyer Training.

4-13-1943 Bn. moved to Camp Hood, TX. for advanced training

8-2-1943 Bn moved to Camp Claiborne, La. in preparation for maneuvers

9-15-1943 Bn departs Camp Claiborne for 3rd Army maneuvers in Louisiana for a period of 2 months. Bn. worked with the 84th, 99th, 102nd & 103rd Infantry Divisions and the 6th & 11th Tank Destroyer Groups.

12-11-1943 Promoted to rank of Captain
The Battalion is now ready for combat and for the next several months engages in thorough preparation for overseas deployment.

3-9-1944 Bn. entrains from Camp Claiborne for Camp Miles Standish, NY., arriving on 3-12-1944

4-6-1944 Embarked on the USS Sea Porpoise at Boston Port of Embarkation

4-18-1944 Arrived at Newport Harbor, England, boarded trains for Hertfordshire, England. Quartered in private residences in the village of Hertford
823rd Tank Destroyer Battalion is attached to the 30th "Old Hickory" Infantry Division, (a Tennessee National Guard Division) XIX Corps, 1st U S Army. Co.B was assigned to support the 120th Infantry Regiment of the 30th Div. The Bn line companies were trained in indirect fire using their 3" towed guns, by the 30th Division Field Artillery. Firing with live ammo was conducted on the Salisbury Plains.

5-?-1944 Bn is moved to Oakridge Camp, Basingstoke, England.

6-5-1944 Major Gen. Leland Hobbs, Commanding Officer of the 30th Division, addresses the assembled Bn.

6-6-1944 **D DAY**

6-18-1944 Bn moved to marshaling areas and embarked on LST's (Landing Ship Tank) #14, #113 & #357

6-24-1944 Disembarked on Omaha Red Beach

6-25-1944 Co.B fired the first rounds at the enemy in an indirect fire mission for the 30th Division as part of a Battalion, 36 gun, mission.

7-7-1944 Crossed the Vire River in support of the 30th Div.

7-8-1944 B Co. Captures its first enemy

7-25-1944 Bn supported "breakout" of 30th Div at St Lo

8-7/8-1944 Co. B awarded Presidential Unit Citation Honors for action against the enemy on these dates at Mortain/ St Barthelmy, Belgium

8-28-1944 Bn crosses the Seine R.

10-11-1944 120th Inf Reg & Co.B subjected to savage enemy counter attacks.
Sgt Ulibarri, 1st Plt knocked out 6 Panther Tanks w/seven rounds
within one minute of action. Capt. Wilts awarded Silver Star for
service in this action.

11-?-1944 Bn, with units still engaged in support of 30th Div, begins conversion from 3" towed guns to M-10 Self Propelled Tank Destroyers during brief pauses in combat.

12-15-1944 All units of 823rd TD Bn assemble in a common area near Wurselen, Germany for the first time since 8-18-1944.

Bn alerted to enemy breakthrough in the Ardennes. 30th Div & 823rd are attached to Fifth Corps, 1st U S Army. 5 hours after receiving orders, all units are on the road to the "Bulge". Upon arrival defensive positions are established in the Malmedy, Stoumont & Stavelot, Belgium area in support of 30th Div troops.

By the end of December the Bn is 100% self propelled without ever having been pulled from combat support positions.

2-?-1945 Bn reverts to XIX Corps control and returns to the Aachen area for R & R. White snow camouflage is removed from all equipment and vehicles.

2-?-1945 Bn moves to Durwiss, Germany and prepares to support 30th Div in crossing the Roer R.

2-24-1945 Roer R. crossed. As bridgehead expands, 30th Div & 823rd are withdrawn from front lines and begin preparations for crossing the Rhine R.

3-7-1945 Bn assembles near Birgdon, Germany and river crossing practice begins on the Meuse R.

3-23-1945 Bn moves to forward assembly positions near Wesel, Germany

3-24-1945 Rhine R. crossing assault begins and by 5 PM all 823rd units are across the Rhine. 30th Div & 823rd begin race to the Elbe R. and reach the Teutenburger Wald on 4-3-1945. Fleeing civilians in large numbers are encountered. Concentration camps are liberated. The Weser R. is crossed near Hamlin, Germany. (famous for Pied Piper tale)

4-11-1945 Braunschweig is captured. 30th Div crosses the Elbe at Magdeburg but withdraws and takes up defensive positions on the West bank of the Elbe awaiting the arrival of the Russians. B Co loses an M-10 & its crew in the fight to secure Magdeburg. These are the last B Co. combat casualties.

4-21-1945 Bn pulled from combat and assigned Occupation Army duties with Bn Command Post established at Eilsleben, Germany.

- 5-5-1945 War is Europe officially ends.** Bn is moved to the Colbitz-Angun-Rogatz area of Germany as Russian occupation troops arrive. Bn is then moved to Adorf, Germany; moved again through Provinces of Saxony & Thuringa as British troops take over occupation duties.
- 6-?-1945 Bn moved to Falkenstein, Germany to guard a "no mans land" occupied by German soldiers who had escaped from the Russian Army. When Russian troops take over the area, Bn is moved to Abenberg, Bavaria, near the Danube and is earmarked for redeployment to the US.
- 9-15-1945 Co. B entrained for Nancy, France & then convoyed by truck to Camp Detroit, 90 miles NE of Paris. Co. then moved by rail in WWI "40 & 8" (forty horses and 8 men) railroad cars for three days to Camp Calas, near Marseilles, in Southern France.
- 10-13-1945 Co. is embarked on the "Potomac Victory" in the Marseilles Harbor and at 5:35 PM weighed anchor for the US. 3 days later the Rock of Gibraltar is sighted and on-
- 10-23-1945 the Statue of Liberty is sighted and the Co. debarked for Camp Shanks, NY.
- 10-25-1945 823rd TD Bn is deactivated and all personnel are sent to Separation Centers in the US.
- 1-18-1946 Capt. Francis E. Wilts is relieved from active duty at Ft Sheridan, Ill. Separation Center.
- POLLY MEETS ME AT FT SHERIDAN, WE SPEND THE NIGHT IN CHICAGO AND THEN RETURN TO THE FARM AND HER FAMILY AT ROANOKE, ILL.**
- 10-28-1945 Appointed Captain, Armor, in US Army Reserve. Assigned to the 35th Armored Infantry Battalion, Peoria, Ill.
- 5-4-1951 Ordered to active duty for purpose of physical examination at Ft Sheridan, Ill. per Letter Order #5-40, Hdqtrs Ill Mil. Dist, Chicago, Ill.
- 5-31-1951 Ordered to 21 months active duty on 7-7-1951 with the 322 Tank Bn, Camp Polk, LA.
- 6-13-1951 Granted six months delay in call to active duty from 7-7-1951 (Requested by Caterpillar Tractor Company with my blessing)
- 6-19-1951 Assigned to the 5422 ASU, RC, FT Sheridan, Ill. & will report to C O on 1-8-1952.

12-27-1951 S O #262 revokes call to active duty.

1-10-1952 Letter order #1-83, Hdqtrs Ill Mil Dist revokes letter order #6-204.

4-1-1953 HONORABLE DISCHARGE FROM THE ARMY OF THE US.

STATISTICS

BATTLES AND CHAMPAGNES

NORMANDY, NORTHERN FRANCE, ARDENNES, RHINELAND, CENTRAL EUROPE

DECORATIONS AND CITATIONS

BRONZE STAR MEDAL, SILVER STAR MEDAL, DISTINGUISHED UNIT BADGE, AMERICAN DEFENSE RIBBON, EAME RIBBON W/5 BRONZE STARS, 3 OVERSEAS SERVICE BARS

UNIT CITATIONS

COMPANY B, 823RD T D BN., PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION

FOREIGN CITATIONS

823RD TANK DESTROYER BATTALION, CITED IN THE ORDER OF THE DAY of the Belgium Army, by decree No, 1939 20 November 1945 by Charles, Prince of Belgium, Regent of the Kingdom.

BELGIUM FOURRAGERE (1940) awarded under decree No. 1939, 20 November, 1945 by Charles, Prince of Belgium, Regent of the Kingdom.

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

A magnificent combat unit with high moral and possessing fine qualities of heroism. On 7 August 1944, at St 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 skillful maneuvering of its anti tank arms, checked the enemy infiltration.

FACTS AND FIGURES

823rd Tank Destroyer Battalion holds the First and Ninth Army record for the number of tanks destroyed in one day. Also the record number of vehicles destroyed in one day.

The Battalion destroyed 33 tanks in the Belgium Bulge, was the first TD Ban

to enter Belgium and also the first Armor across the Roer River. The Battalion fired 4,193 rounds of 3" anti tank ammunition in direct fire and 33,486 rounds of 3" HE ammunition in indirect fire. Of the 68 Tank Destroyer Battalions in the ETO, the 823rd lead them all in numbers of tanks destroyed.

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 TRUCKS, 22 OP'S, 6 PILL BOXES, 1 ARTILLERY PIECE.

All the preceding information is derived from actual copies of appropriate US Army orders, in my personal files and or from a book titled "823rd Tank Destroyer Battalion", written and compiled by Earl V. Williams, Co.C, S/Sgt. Hobart Churchill, Hqts, (deceased), S/Sgt Morris Symons, Hqts, (deceased), and S/Sgt Andrew Holmes, Hqts, in 1951. All were members of the 823rd TD Bn during the time covered by the narrative.

Other authoratative sources of information in my possession are the following;

TANK DESTROYER FORCES, WWII, Turner Publishing Co., Paducah, KY.

THE 30th INF DIV IN WWII, The Battery Press, Nashville, TN.

SAVING THE BREAKOUT, 30th Div Stand At Mortain, Aug. 7-12, 1944, Presido Press, Novato, CA.

SOLDIERS ALBUM, Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston.

2nd CAVALRY REGIMENT, 2nd CAV. DIV., Army & Navy Publishing Company, Los Angles, CA.

CONQUER, THE STORY OF THE NINTH ARMY, The Battery Press, Nashville, TN.

F. E. Wilts

March 9, 1999

Danville, CA.