

601ST TANK DESTROYER BN.

★ ALGERIA

★ TUNISIA

★ SICILY

★ NAPLES FOGGIA



ROME ARNO ★

S. FRANCE ★

RHINELAND ★

E. GERMANY ★



HISTORY

AN INFORMAL HISTORY OF
THE 60¹ST TANK
DESTROYER BATTALION

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This is the history of the 601st Tank Destroyer Battalion but in a larger sense, it is the composite history of four years out of the lives of some 1800 men who fought the Kraut from Arzew to Berchtesgaden, from D-Day in Africa to VE Day in Europe. It is the history of a "regular army outfit" that gradually became more and more civilianized until, at the end, the "old soldiers", were but an infinitesimal minority. It is the history of a group of men who turned in one of the great performances of this war, or any war, despite the fact they hated war and violence and killing and destruction fully as much as they hated the enemy.

The famous First Infantry Division looms large and important in the early history of the 601st. As a matter of fact, at least half of the original personnel of this battalion was drawn from "Big Red One". The 5th, 7th, 32nd and 33rd Field Artillery Battalions contributed most of the men and officers and the 16th, 18th and 26th Infantry Regiments, the remainder.

"D" Battery of the 5th Field (the old Alexander Hamilton Battery and the only American Army unit with a history of continuous existence since the Revolutionary War), came over almost intact, to become our "C" Company.

The "601", then known as the 1st Provisional Anti-tank Battalion, made its first appearance as a unit, at Fort Devens, Mass., on 19 August 1941 but it was not until 15 December 1941, that the Battalion was officially activated by the War Department and designated: "The 601st Tank Destroyer Battalion".

Kind chance sent the 601st, a Commanding Officer in the person of Major Hershel D. Baker, a two hundred and twenty pound, rolly-polly, cherubic looking, foghorn-voiced ball of fire. The Old Man was a battle wise veteran of World War I, a showman, something of a martinet with his officers but proud-as-hell of his outfit and 100% for his men. From the first day, the 601st was "Baker's Outfit" and it was not long before it had taken on much of the Old Man's hell-for-leather personality.

It may or may not be significant that on the very first day of its existence Colonel Baker scheduled a battalion beer-party at the expense of "D" Battery of the 5th.

Old Timers say that the 601st began to make history almost from the day of its creation but most of that early history was made by individual members, on trips to Boston, Lowell, Fitchburg, New York and, most often, the Lincoln Hotel in Ayers, Mass.

Late in the fall of '41, the "1st Prov. A-T Bn" participated in the VI Corps and Carolina Maneuvers. Breathes there the man who hasn't heard of the Carolina Maneuvers: of the cold and the rain and the dust and of the misery of no-sleep and no-rest and of the great Pee-Dee River crossing.

The 601st Anti-Tankers "destroyed" a tremendous number of tanks with their imaginary shells fired from towed, "thirty-sevens", which were then, our super-duper anti-tank guns. Now that the misery of the maneuvers is but a distant memory, those who participated speak, almost fondly, of the orange flags that meant, "Gun is firing", and of the umpires who rang the "You are under artillery fire", cowbells and of the silly looking, old type helmets and of the fantastic traffic jams. They even have a kind word for the "C" rations that were issued for the first time, with instructions that they were not to be eaten except on order of the Bn. Commander.

Many a veteran of the Carolina Maneuvers learned to heat "C" rations on the manifold of his truck and a good percentage also learned that, an "overdone" can of meat and beans would stick to a motor worse than a coat of glue. After the maneuvers, the "Veterans" returned to Devens. En route, Pop Senuta sang, "I Don't Want to Set the World on Fire", and accompanied himself on a guitar while a runaway gas trailer burned down part of a house in Frederick, Maryland.

In February 1942, the Battalion prepared to move to Camp Edwards. After the advance details had cleaned and polished the new barracks and policed the areas, the Edwards bound convoy was halted about mid-way, on a freezing cold day, and returned to Devens to prepare to go south with the First Division.

The road march from Devens to Camp Blanding, Florida, was a nightmare without blankets. The men had to dismount and run along beside their vehicles to keep from freezing. To top it all off, they even ran into "the first snow-storm in about a thousand years" at Ft. Bragg, in North Carolina.

In Florida, some brand new inductees joined the Battalion; Colonel Baker made two unusual honorary colonels at a formal Retreat Parade; there was a small scale war with the neighboring 36th Division over the question of standing at attention to the playing of "Deep in the Heart of Texas", and there were the Ocala Maneuvers on which the mighty 37's were towed thru a lot of swamp and pulled in and out of bivouacs to the click of Captain Asinof's stopwatch-when the men should have been sleeping.

After participating in the combined Infantry-Armored-Air demonstration at Ft. Benning, Georgia, in May 1942, the Battalion was coach-transported to Indian Town Gap, Pa., one of the early overseas staging areas.

Indiantown Gap was a beehive of activity, confusion and rumor: New recruits reported and immediately began to prepare for the unending showdown inspections. Some new equipment arrived: 75's an half tracks, "America's answer to the Mark VI", and the crews trained all day and stenciled, erased and restenciled all night. Visitors drove in and out of the "Secret staging area" by way of the main highway that ran through the middle of the camp. A and B bags were packed, unpacked, repacked, ad infinitum but grew ever heavier. "Over the Hill to New York" became an epidemic slogan. Doc Leiter's, "How do you feel?" Physical found everybody fit for overseas service and "Baker's Amnesty" to the AWOL's came just in time.

On the last days of July 1942, an overdressed, overloaded array of human beasts of burden began its trek to 58th Street and the Hudson River in New York City. Some of the men still can't explain how they managed to crawl up the ramp to the Queen Mary, loaded down as they were with A Bags, B Bags, overcoats, weapons, musette bags, pro kits and steel helmets.

After four days of waving at the civilians from the Queen's decks, the men were ordered below so that they might "sneak" out of New York Harbor, unnoticed.

On board the giant liner was the whole First Division together with all its attached troops. The Queen travelled alone, without escort, most of the way. She left New York Harbor on 2 August 1942 and zig zagged her way across the ocean to Gourock, Scotland in five rumor filled days. Men slept in their Bumpstead sandwich berths in shifts and seemed to spend the remainder of their time in either the chow or the PX lines. Dice and card games were everywhere;

dice and card games and guards who seemed to have no duty other than to keep repeating, "You can't stand there buddy!" The officers ate well prepared, nicely served meals. The EM's ate twice a day. Most of the 601st served as Ack Ack guards and were spared the necessity of swapping bunks. It was their first acquaintance with the chant, "The smoking lamp is out!" and it was a wonderful feeling to see the shores of Scotland.

The Queen's passengers were unloaded onto small boats, landed at Gourrock and then proceeded to Wishaw. The reception accorded "The Yanks", by the people of Wishaw has never been surpassed and seldom equalled. It was "open house" in every home in town. Nothing was too good or off limits!

After one day, the troops entrained for Tidworth, England. At the trainstops, uniformed British girls served hot meat pies and tea.

The battalion arrived at Tidworth, some sixty miles from London, during the night of 10 August 1942. It was introduced to a souped-up version of the British Blackout and nearly everyone managed to get lost.

The Tidworth Barracks were former British Cavalry Barracks: two storied, outside staired, old stone dormitories with "Ablution Rooms" and cold and colder running water. The mess hall accommodated the entire battalion in two sittings and the noncoms club, known as "the Swamp" had Henry VIII holding tight his laurels.

There was a Red Cross Club, that "Eleanor" visited; a church USO that featured darts and community singing; a horrible Drum and Bugle Corps and "Willie Wardwell's Wildcats".

There were training problems on the plains of Salisbury and Col. Baker's eternal war cry was, "Where's your alternate position?" The alternate position was often in an out of the way, countryside tavern!

There were passes to London, Brighton and Dover. Men learned to sleep in the baggage racks of the British trains. At least one soldier reported, disgustedly, that "D'White Cliffs of Dover ain't nuthin' but a cliff"! The London blackout was impressive, frightening and almost unbelievable. There were the mighty pub to pub races against the Scotch-rationing system. And, of course, there was the Picadilly!

Capt. Paulick walked into the Tidworth Barracks one day and John Leedom did "Present Arms" with a broom. Leedom always did like to dig holes and he dug 'em!

On October 21st, the Reconnaissance Company, with Captain Paulick in command, separated from the Battalion to accompany the Fighting First to Africa. They landed at Arzew on D-Day and participated in the defeat and encirclement of the garrison at Oran. Off the record, the Recon boys admit that they expended most of their ammo, shooting at one another as they ducked in and out of hallways, hunting snipers. "Hi-Ho Silver", was the password and within a day, every little Arab in Oran was shouting "Hi-Ho Silver! Away! Bon-Bon! Cigarette! Choo-gom!" "Chief" Gomez, Recon's First Sergeant thought the pass word too undignified and was nearly shot because he wouldn't shout, "Away!" when challenged.

The landing on November 8th was a little different from the later landings and many a man got hung up in the rope nets that led from the SS Latita to the smaller, assault boats. The first night in Oran, our troops slept on the sidewalks and were awakened in the morning by the whack of falling oranges that the natives were dropping out the windows by way of "Welcome".

Recon "guarded the II Corps CP" and enforced the "entertainment" curfew and the "off limits" edicts in Oran while the rest of the Battalion was enroute to Africa.

The men who made the trip to Africa with the 601 will never forget the sight of Spanish Morocco, ablaze with lights on the shore of an otherwise pitch black Mediterranean; or the friendly planes dropping flares to light the way past "the Rock". They shall also remember the prices they paid the ship's crews for pies and sandwiches and the Chaplain who intoned, "Men, we have much to be thankful for this Thanksgiving Eve!" and ran!

On debarking, the men lugged their fantastic loads up a steep hill to a group of trucks. (No one has ever found out why the trucks couldn't have been driven down to the docks.)

The next day, the Battalion was bivouaced in the town square at St. Lucien, Algeria, surrounded by prowling, Vino peddling, cigarette-buying natives and howling native dogs. The local Gendarmerie demonstrated its quaint custom of persuading a man to move by rapping him with a whip.

Col. Baker threw a big party for his buddies, Generals Allen and Roosevelt.

"B" Company, aboard the Duchess of Bedford was taken to Algiers, by mistake.

On December 17, 1942, the Battalion began its eight hundred mile trek to Tunisia. For the 601st that was the real beginning of the African Campaign: The Carolina Maneuvers with live ammunition!

The tactical march through the grim vastness of the Atlas Mountains with long, windshield-down, blackout-drive night-marches on tortuous, precipice-bordering roads, was nerve wracking and exhausting but otherwise, almost uneventful. It rained or snowed at least once a day, every day, and the nights were freezing cold and long, very long! "Bom-Bom, Cigarette, Choo-Gom" moochers turned up in the most isolated, out of the way places and at the most ungodly hours and every little Arab three years old seemed to know enough to accompany his mooch-chant with the Churchillian V-for-Victory handsignal.

During that march, the Old Man drove at least four times the required distance. He was forever dashing up and down the length of the convoy, chewing that certain portion of the anatomy of those drivers and car commanders who were careless enough or tired enough or indifferent enough to violate any one of the million sacred rules for road march discipline. At least one sergeant became a private, VOCO, within ten seconds after his half track passed Col. Baker's jeep and more than one second lieutenant wished that he had never been born. The Old Master added a touch of drama by vowing that, "Anyone who passes this convoy does so over my dead body!"

On the 21st, the convoy reached its temporary destination, Souk El Khemis, Tunisia, in the heart of "Stuka Valley". Several hours later, the Kraut planes came in fast and low and when the thunder of the fifties, the thirties, the 20 millimeters and the rifles, tommy guns and pistols had quieted down, Michael Syrko, a harmless little guy who asked nothing more out of life than a chance to go back to his farm in Pennsylvania, lay dead in the Tunisian sand. Ten minutes later, the enraged Tank Destroyers shot down their first Spitfire.

From Souk El Khemis, "A" Company was ordered to Pichon, "To train troops of the French XIX Corps". Its 37s and 75s were immediately ordered into the front lines to help keep the Germans out of Ousseltia. The first Kraut attack came just in time to spoil a long awaited Christmas dinner. "A" Company's "Pea-Shooters-On-Purple-Heart-Boxes" did a splendid job with the French but their



"Sunny Africa"
Algeria — N. Africa — 1942



"Room with Bath"
Tunisia — N. Africa — 1943

eight gun defense against an armored division cost them heavy losses. Captain Steele was killed by a German rifleman and Captain Fuller and Lts. Marcus and Stotts were cut off behind the German lines but managed to make it back after several days. For a while, Lt. Miner was the company's "sole surviving officer".

During this time, "B" Company's Destroyers were with the RAFF Force of paratroopers, protecting the American right flank in the vicinity of Fariana.

Except for the Stukas and Messerschmitts, there wasn't much Kraut activity in that sector. However, Nature, always the most persistent enemy in Africa, gave the men of Capt. Mitchell's company their fair share of misery.

"C" Company was at Medjez with the British for a few days then at Sbeitla and Fondouk Pass with the French. Its first losses were the kitchen and supply trucks!

After "A" Company had been in a terrific and costly struggle with the German armor attacking the French positions at Ousseltia, the remainder of the Battalion less "C" Company arrived with the First Armored Division and joined in the successful battle to keep the Kraut from pushing down the valley.

The entire Battalion minus "C" Company was near Sbeitla at the time of the great "withdrawal" through Sbeitla and Kasserine Pass to the plains east of Tebessa. Confusion was king that day. There was no communication between units, no traffic control, no organization and no order! It was every man for himself and the Heinie take the hindmost! Halftracks went sailing by jeeps as if the jeeps were standing still and M4s tore down the road, three abreast, in chariot race style! It was a sad day for the new, inexperienced American Army.

Some of the Battalion's units were among the last to leave Sbeitla and were almost overrun by Kraut and Italian soldiers in GI uniforms and jeeps. The CP radio track stalled and the driver stopped to clean the gas filter. With Kraut planes strafing up and down the road and guns firing and vehicles dashing madly by in everywhich direction, he held the filter up to the sun and said to Sgt Jagels, "Look at the dirt in that God damned thing"!



"Purple Heart Box"
Ousseltia — Tunisia — 1943



"Ready and Waiting"
Sbeitla — Tunisia — 1943

On a routine assignment with a British Recon Unit, Lt. Stotts borrowed an Arab robe and went off on a behind-the-German-lines reconnaissance. He has never been heard from since.

While all this was going on, Recon Company was screening the 200 mile front then held by the American forces in Southern Tunisia. For a Recon man, life in those days was one continuous, wild, wet, cold, blackout drive from danger spot to danger spot with hardly ever a halt for food or sleep. Because of the Kraut air superiority, the windshields and tops were removed from all combat vehicles, exposing the occupants completely, to the mercy of the elements. Capt. Paulick's wool muffler "Belly-Bands" were a life-saver.

After another march to Kasserine, this time with the First Armored Division, an attack by the Kraut and a successful counter-attack by our forces, the Battalion moved into the Bou Chebbka Forest for a much needed rest. However, even there, the Kraut, Stuka-flying "milkmen" came and dropped their flares almost every night.

Of course, there were classes and drills and practice ten minute alerts; and there was Captain Paulick's historic lecture on mines; and there were the great poker sessions at one of which Lt. Richardson beat the Old Man to the tune of 2500 Dollars.

The local citizenry dug up its loot and came to trade. Mattress covers were still worth a thousand francs or two hundred eggs and used, dried, repacked tea leaves had a ready market. Vino, rough, rugged Vino, turned up out of nowhere in fabulous quantities.

The next action involved the almost unopposed taking of Gafsa and El Guettar. Then, on the 23rd of March, 1943, the Kraut attacked at El Guettar. The story of the Battalion's part in that battle is adequately told by the official Presidential Unit Citation:

"The 601st TANK DESTROYER BATTALION is cited for outstanding performance in combat on 23 March 1943, near EL GUETTAR, TUNISIA. Filling a 2½ mile gap in American lines, the Battalion absorbed the shock of an all-out onslaught by the German Tenth Panzer Division, and materially assisted divisional and attached artillery units in definitely stopping two successive determined enemy tank attacks, launched in great strength. Although greatly outnumbered and outgunned, the Battalion traded shot for shot with the overwhelming enemy force. Doggedly holding its ground,



"The Wigwam"
Sbeitla — Tunisia — 1943



"Death Valley"
El Guettar — Tunisia — 1943

harrassed by enemy divebombers and long-range artillery, with ammunition running dangerously low, the Battalion prepared to hold out to the end despite the loss of 27 of its 37 guns. The German tanks approached to within 100 yards of its positions only to be thrown back with heavy losses. When the enemy reformed for a second assault in their first attack, the Battalion placed such intense fire on the advancing German soldiers that the attack was stopped before it could get well under way. The 601st TANK DESTROYER BATTALION contributed materially to this outstanding victory of the 1st Infantry Division, where in the 601st TANK DESTROYER BATTALION, the Division Artillery units and the 18th Infantry particularly, fought with such ferocity and intense determination that at least 400 enemy casualties were left on the field and 37 enemy tanks were known to have been destroyed and numerous other enemy armored vehicles were evacuated in a disabled condition."

There is room in neither the citation nor in this brief history for the hundreds of tales of individual heroism and adventure that might be told by and of the men who fought at El Guettar.

Those who were close enough to hear, will never forget the Old Man's "greeting" to the 899th when its M10s came rolling down the road to join in the battle.

After El Guettar, the Battalion was ordered to Thelpte; then back to Sbeitla with the 34th Division; then to Fiad Pass with the Williams Task Force and after that, to the forest at Morsott for another breather.

At this time they called him "Necktie Patton" and it was rumored that the G.R.O. wouldn't bury a man who'd been K.I.A. unless he was properly garbed in a necktie and leggings.

Suddenly, there came the shocking news that the Old Man had been ordered to return to the States. Capt. Austin assumed temporary command, pending the arrival of Major Tardy.

By this time, mid-April, 1943, the Germans had lost their aerial superiority and the Battalion was enabled to make its first long march, to Roum El Souk, in DAYLIGHT!

On April 26, Col. Tardy joined the Battalion and assumed command. It was clear, from the first moment, that he was the personality — opposite of Col. Baker.

The 601st was then detached from the 1st Infantry Division and attached to the Ninth. Recon dismounted and lugged its machine guns through the mountains to fill a gap between the Ninth and the French on the left. The gun companies followed the infantry in the hill to hill fighting but found little to do.

When they had reached the last mountains before the plains of Mateur, Recon broke loose and raced to Mateur and north, almost to Bizerte, to return with great news, "The Krauts are pulling out!"

The Battalion moved into Michaud in the valley and then, all German resistance in Africa collapsed! Thousands upon thousands of Nazi soldiers, many of them members of the once proud Afrika Korps, came rolling down the road in their own trucks, looking for someone to surrender to. On May 9, 1943, it was all over! Those were great days!

Recon set up a musical comedy PW Camp near Mateur. The prisoners outnumbered the guards about two thousand to one and the fences, where there were fences, were chicken wire and such.

Then, the Ninth cited Capt. Paulick and Recon Co. for their splendid performance; Cy Cobb got a DSC and a Battlefield Appointment; the Battalion drew M-10s in place of the old Purple Heart Boxes; the officers built a beautiful clubhouse at Port a Farina and used it one night — and Vino flowed like water!

There were warm, pleasant days on the beach at Bizerte; crowded, busy days in the staging area near that same city; fine meals and good movies at the Seabee Camp — and the Vino flowed like water!

There were regular Kraut air raids over the harbor that brought beautiful pyrotechnic displays and nervous indigestion; history making jaunts to Tunis, Carthage and Ferryville — and the Vino flowed like water!

The "Going home" rumor grew stronger and stronger and many a man thought he'd "Heard the President say so!" The waterproofing on the M-10s finally put an end to that dream. Everybody got malaria — and the Vino flowed like water!

So much has been omitted: The 125 Dollars that Recon paid for lumber at Mateur because somebody decided to play "Black Shadow"; Col. Baker's portable privy that had to be set up all over Africa; the S-3 who nearly killed himself diving into a fox hole at Maktar

and later received a Purple Heart; the water-buffalo hunts as the uninvited guests of the Bey of Tunis; the "Joe Blow" who drew the entire Battalion's ration for a day and never showed up; the tired, dirty Tank Destroyers swimming in the Ancient Carthaginian sulphur pool at Gafsa with British Spitfires providing overhead cover; the famous C P tent that Leo Petitbon knocked down with the Old Man still in it; the Vino filled canteens on the French troops and those poor, beat up, little burros and last, because this must end somewhere, that Recon Lieutenant's getting lost in *one*-street Sebeitla.

On the 28th of July, nearly half of the Battalion personnel took off for Sicily. Those who travelled on LCIs had a very, very rough trip and most of them were mere middlemen between the outfit that cans the "C" rations and the fish that swim in the Mediterranean.

Some of the men remained in Sicily for as little as one day and came right back on Liberty Ships full of prisoners. Others stayed on, in some cases, until after the Salerno Invasion.

Fortunes were made at Agrigento. A bar of chocolate was worth a Leica camera; a pack of cigarettes, all the Francs or Liras that a prisoner could lay his hands on. There was more than a little dirty work at the QM dumps. One of the PW guards, "out of another unit", "found" a case of "cigarettes", lugged it all the way back to his bivouac area, opened it and found it packed tight with prophylactics!

At Agrigento, a man's home was where he dropped his bedroll and nearly everyone had a personal kitchen with two or three PWs "to help out". Grappa was the potent, popular, local drink and women were everywhere — and friendly! (The change from Africa was almost too much!)

At Licata, many of the men were frequent and welcome guests at "Longhorn House", the home of a large, important, Sicilian family. At Palermo, there was little to do beyond policing the local bread-lines. Had it not been for the flies and mosquitoes and sticky fingers of the friendly natives, everyone would have stored up enough sleep to last for the duration.

Some of the men got off the PW-filled Liberty Ships at Bizerte and loaded right back onto invasion bound LSTs, the same night. They were in time for one of the longest, gaudiest air raids that ever hit Bizerte. That was the night of September 6, 1943.



"D Day"
Salerno — Italy — 1943



"Beautiful Italy"
Mignano — Italy — 1943

It was a beautiful trip across, spoiled, slightly, by the fact that the Kraut bombers came out to sea at night and dropped flares among the convoy. They must have done some bombing but all the ships carrying 601 personnel reached Paestum, undamaged.

On the second day at sea, September 8th, the newsflash came, "Italy Surrenders!" There was tremendous rejoicing on board every vessel in the convoy and no one seemed to realize that the news would make little or no difference in the fighting immediately ahead. The Germans were waiting at Paestum and they took a heavy toll of British and American lives. By remarkable luck, the 601st made the landing without losing a man. The Battalion C.P. Command Track took off in "water over its head" and Col. Tardy got an unexpected swim. The Crew swam ashore and left Brady "on guard" with just his head showing above water, at least two hundred yards from the shore.

The 36th Division, to which the Battalion was then attached, had its own, 636th TD Battalion on the Beachhead and consequently, the 601st had no real mission in the first phase of the Salerno operations.

After a day and a half of waiting for an assignment, "A" and "B" Companies were ordered to load back onto LCTs for a landing at Maiori, in support of the Rangers. The Destroyers were loaded onto a British LCT and were then ordered to switch to an American vessel. The British Commander couldn't quite get his LCT close enough to the beach and after several tries, he got browned off and ordered one of the M-10s unloaded in about twenty feet of water. Luckily, all of the members of the crew were fair swimmers.

Their wasn't too much to do at Maiori and "A" and "B" Companies worked their way back toward "C" Company which was then protecting one of the 36th Division's flanks. On the trip back, they were attached to just about everybody on the Beachhead.

On the 6th day after the landing, the remainder of the Battalion arrived and took a fierce shelling on its way into the beach. U.S. Navy Destroyers were busily laying smoke-screens and shelling the hills. Planes were dogfighting, bombing, strafing and falling everywhere. The mosquitoes around Paestum were big enough and vicious enough to get into some of those dogfights. The Beachhead was still hardly the place for a vacation.

On September 19th, Colonel Tardy brought the glad tidings that he had managed to get the Battalion detached from the 36th Division and attached to the 3rd. Also he'd been assigned a mission. The 601st dug itself out of the mud and headed for Acerno.

Recon men still shiver slightly when they recall that the day before the Battalion got away from the 36th, General Wilbur had Mike Paulick's men all racked up to make an all-out dash for Foggia. And nobody's forgotten the great "gas!" scare that resulted from one imaginative truckdriver's use of his gas mask as a dustcatcher.

On the way toward Acerno, the Battalion passed through Battapaglia, a modern ruin that up the ancient ruins at Paestum to shame. In the other towns, "the gooks" were lined up on both sides of the road, making V for Victory signs and screaming "Cigarette! Caramelli!"

Recon ran into hard luck on the road to Acerno. Then, the Battalion was held up for a few days while the Engineers rebuilt a bridge that the Krauts had blown from over a huge chasm. When it was finished, it was just barely strong enough to hold the Destroyers.

Because of the terrible terrain and the bottomless mud that resulted from the constant rain, the Battalion could do little more than follow the Infantry up the main roads. Miraculously, the entire 601st got across the half blown bridge at Avellino without mishap, on a pitch-black night.

By this time, the fall rains had really started and everybody spent all his spare time trying to get dry or partially dry. As in Africa, there was still no sleeping in houses and it seemed almost impossible to remain dry for more than a few minutes at a time. And there is no mud in the world like Italian mud! It was the weather against Vino — the great Italian Antidote!

Lt. Rogers took his Recon Platoon to Linatola to contact a "friendly unit" and came back minus a jeep and, even worse, his brand new bedroll. Major Hinman got a Kraut slug through his helmet but his skull proved too much for the bullet. (He heard that one!)

Naples fell and many of the officers dashed there in jeeps to have a look. "Unofficially", the enlisted men were not far behind. At first, the Neapolitans were rather cold. The Allied air raids were

still fresh in their minds. However, it wasn't long before they were back to, "Cognac! Beefsteak! Figs!"

Vesuvius loomed large on the Battalion's heft and the first time the men saw it erupt at night, it was everything from "British Artillery" to "Battleships flying and firing". The King's summer palace at Caserta was only a short distance from the Battalion assembly area and Caserta had other interesting features too — many of them already "Off Limits" with MPs inside.

The Third Division Infantry, accompanied by radio-lugging Recon Officers and EM waded across the icy, neck-deep Volturno before daybreak on the morning of October 15th. "A" Company fired observed fire across the river in support of the crossing. It's "418 rounds expended" accounted for at least two tanks, one SP, a personnel carrier and beaucoup Kraut. "C" Company was water-proofed and got across to help the doughfeet. The 601st had observers all over the hills and Col. Tardy had to buy radio time from Captains Paulick and Asinof who were working over some "yellow houses with pink roofs!"

That night, Capt. Fuller and Lt. Sanders went across on reconnaissance to select a Battalion assembly area. They fell asleep in a house located a few hundred yards from the kraut lines. Sometime during the night, Capt. Fuller "captured" a Kraut who proved to be a QM truck driver with a German accent.

The same night one of "A" Company's Destroyers fell off the pontoon bridge and drowned all but one of it's crew. The next day, October 15th, the remainder of the Battalion got across after a German air raid that missed the bridge but did some damage to the tightly jammed convoys on the road. The air raid missed General Montgomery by about ten minutes.

The Volturno River Crossing casualties were fairly heavy. Some of them were the result of very tough luck but to balance that, many of the escapes from death or injury were little short of miraculous.

On the 19th, Recon and "B" Companies moved to Dragoni in support of the 7th Infantry Regiment. The next day, Recon patrolled to the Volturno and the following day, ran smack into the Kraut at Letina. There was a helluva battle in which Mike Paulick's men lost a light tank and took many casualties. "B" Company moved up it's three-inchers and the Kraut armor withdrew.

Sometime that afternoon, Bill Desforge reported the coordinates of a Kraut tank. Capt. Paulick replied with his usual, "Are you sure it's the enemy?" and Bill calmly answered, "If it isn't, the S.O.B. ought to quit shooting at me!"

On the 22nd, Recon, ran into another fight and lost a second light tank at Beja Letina but very many Kraut paid for that tank with their lives. On the 23rd, "B" Company, together with a Company of the 751st Tank Battalion cleaned the Kraut Infantry out of the valley beyond Beja Letina.

Three days later, "A" Company went into position along the Roccoromana-San Felice road and "B" and "C" Companies moved to the vicinity of Pietramelara. It was some-where in the vicinity of Pietramelara that Captain Sundstrum said to Lt. Munn, "If that Kraut tank gets any closer, you'll have to go and get him", and "Esquire" Munn radioed back, "If he gets any closer, he'll be in bivouac with me!"

Recon had another stiff fight near Pietramelara. The gun companies moved up to Mignano to fire on Longo and Rotundo. It rained all day, every day, and not only rain but bombs, mortars, heavy artillery, tank fire, twenty millimeters, and various and sundry other little items of German manufacture. The Destroyers ran into a great Kraut mine field near Mignano and one 751st Tank was blown to smithereens. Rations had to be hauled across the river on a rope and pulley ferry. The Kraut was dug into the rock in the mountains and seemed ready to remain for the duration.

On the road march from Pietramelara to Presenzano, the Battalion didn't pay enough attention to Gen. Clark as he rode by and Col Tardy got an earful. On the General's return trip, Col. Tardy radioed a warning and everybody saluted, even the Italian KPs! Gen. Clark stopped the last vehicle in the convoy and asked, "What outfit?" He then told the driver, "Tell your C.O. that this is the best saluting outfit I've run across in Italy!"

Captain Paulick left the Battalion on November 11th. He went to the 15th Infantry: to rapid promotion, many decorations and finally, serious injury in the Siegfried Line. A week later, the 601st came off the line with the Division and set up tents in a mudhole called, Vicchiano, not far from II Corps infamous Traffic and Uniform Violations and Penalties sign.