

October 16/83

Sorry it's taken me so long to answer your note of Sept. 16 about the 656 TD Bn. I've been looking for a variety of misplaced items, some of which I still can't find.

I did, at least, find a framed map showing the travels of the 9th Armored Division in ETO.

The 656 TD Bn was attached to the 9th Armored Div at the Division's assembly area, Liege, Belgium -- occupied Feb. 23-27, 1945. (Prior to moving to Liege, the 9th Armored had been involved in the Battle of the Bulge and had been badly hurt.)

with the 9th Armored,

We (656) moved east/through Aachen and just beyond the Roer River to combat positions on March 1, 1945.

Company A, 656, was atchd to Combat Command A; ~~our~~ Company C was atchd to CCB; ~~our~~ Company was atchd to CCR. Our 656 Recon Company was divided up and atchd to our gun companies.

The mission of the 9th Armored was to serve as a spearhead for the 1st Army. Our 656 mission was mostly to provide close, front-line support for the infantry -- both the 9th Armored infantry and the infantry divisions with whom the 9th Armored was working. (I have forgotten the Infantry Divisions involved. At one time or another, we worked with the 1st, 9th, 78th, 104th.) We knocked out artillery forward observor posts and served as siege guns.

After seizing river crossings at the Roth and Erft Rivers, we got lucky on March 7 and captured the Ludendorf Railroad Bridge over the Rhine at Remagen. Co. C, 656, got a unit citation for sinking a barge loaded with demolitions, aimed at the bridge. (The bridge had been prepared for demolition, well in advance of our arrival, but a member of a Polish Slave Labor Battalion had cut the wires -- then tied them together to avoid detection of the break.) The book and movie, The Bridge at Remagen, gave accurate accounts of what happened.

Securing the bridgehead was hot work. The Germans hit us with armor and infantry -- and the first jets of WWII (to my knowledge). Plus a lot of artillery.

((Limburg to Warburg))

We left the bridgehead on March 24 and headed east, then north, in what became the drive to close the Ruhr Pocket, encircling some 375,000 Germans. ~~The 9th Armored, between March 27 and April 19, took 12,318 PWs.~~ The Ruhr Pocket was closed by April 9 and we headed east, encircling Leipzig and moving on to the Mulde River to await contact ~~with~~ with the "ussians.

We were relieved at the Mulde River on April 21. The Division was assigned to SHAEF RESERVE and headed down into Czechoslovakia. We were at Karlsbad when we received the order to cease all hostile action.

Sidelight: when we were ordered to stop at the Mulde, my large scale battle maps showed BERLIN at the side of the map and I figured we could have been there in a couple of days, because all opposition had crumbled. Stalin have sold FDR a bill of goods at Yalta. Had we gone on to encircle Berlin, later events would have been greatly simplified.

You said you had the 656 History. Before leaving Camp Hood in Dec of 1944, the 656 had served as school troops, which gave the battalion a lot of extra firing experience. We held all the records at Hood for both direct and indirect firing.

Lt. Col. John C. Meador was Bn CO throughout the existence of the 656. At the time we entered combat, company commanders were:

Hq - Capt. Clarence M. Thieme	
Recon - Capt. Tom Hanifen	(Sorry I can't give you an accurate
Co A - David Cleary (Capt)	list of our lieutenants. We took on some
Bo. B- Capt. Charles Driscoll	new ones just before shipping out, then
Co. C - Capt Richard Tuggle	had considerable turnover in combat.)

Dick Tuggle died a few years ago and Charlie Driscoll has been very ill. Tom Hanifen stayed in the service, was later CO of the 3rd Cavalry Regiment, and wound up in Viet Nam, ~~with~~. I have addresses for Hanifen and Thieme if you'd like them.

and M38s?

I forgot to mention that we trained with M10s/and M36s, went into combat with M18s, then got M36s after we moved away from the Remagen bridgehead.

The best combat experience I can recall was a toe-to-toe slugging match between two of our M36s and two German 88s. Sgt Sid Pittman commanded the section of two M36s. His men destroyed the 88s and their crew and Sid picked up a Silver Star. Write:

. His citation would be the best account of the action.

Note: I can give you addresses of at least a few lieutenants and platoon sergeants who could help you with more names. Just let me know your wishes.

Sorry the above account is so rough. You folks are doing a great job.

Sincerely,

