

HEADQUARTERS COMPANY
820th Tank Destroyer Battalion
A.P.O. 339, U.S.Army

AFTER/AFTER BATTLE REPORT
FIRST RECONNAISSANCE PLATOON
1 DECEMBER TO 31 DECEMBER 1944 INCLUSIVE

From 1 December 1944 to 9 January 1945 the 1st Reconnaissance Platoon of this Battalion was under the direct leadership of Lt. James M. Bricker, now in a hospital as the result of a back injury suffered during combat on or about 16 December 1944.

1 Dec 1944 - Route markers for battalion movement from Danville, France to Laon, France.

2 Dec 1944 - Route markers for battalion movement from Laon, France to Charleroi, Belgium.

3 Dec 1944 - Route markers for battalion movement from Charleroi, Belgium to Laafelt, Belgium.

4 Dec 1944 - Billeted in Laafelt, Belgium and cleaned equipment.

5 Dec 1944 - Motor maintenance, ammunition detail, and personal equipment maintenance.

6 Dec 1944 - Same schedule as the 5th.

7 Dec 1944 - Same schedule as the 5th.

8 Dec 1944 - Route markers for battalion movement to Weisten, Belgium from Laafelt, Belgium. Arrived Weisten approximately 1430 hours and billeted.

9 Dec 1944 - Vicinity of Weisten, Belgium on routine guard, final preparation for combat and daily maintenance being performed.

10 Dec 1944 - Same schedule as the 9th.

11 Dec 1944 - Same schedule as the 9th. 1st and 2d Reconnaissance Platoons attached to Company "A" this Battalion for disposition.

12 Dec 1944 - Moved from Weisten, Belgium to Krawinkel, Belgium and released from Company "A" control and attached to 18th Cavalry Squadron, 2d Platoon to stay attached to Company "A".

13 Dec 1944 - Disposed as ordered by 18th Cavalry Squadron. To take the positions and work of the 618th Tank Destroyer Battalion relieved. Work consisted of manning machine-gun positions and outposts in conjunction with patrols and positions of the Cavalry Platoon under constant but sporadic sniper

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and mortar fire - occasionally artillery.

14 Dec 1944 - Substantially the same as the 13th. Repairing and improving positions, and slit trenches. Familiarization with the terrain. Days were under fire but nights were quiet except for occasional flares, enemy and friendly. One friendly flare revealed an enemy patrol of estimated eight men. Small arms fire and hand grenades dispersed the patrol. Rest of night was quiet.

15 Dec 1944 - Same routine. Same as the 13th. No unusual occurrences. Night very quiet.

16 Dec 1944 - Enemy artillery barrage started at approximately 0530 hours and continued a heavy concentration for about one hour and a half. Then the barrage stopped suddenly and the German Infantry which had moved up close started heavy fire with small arms and automatic weapons. Enemy tried to move up mortar teams (estimated eighty (80) mm) to the American flank but each time the squads were either killed or too seriously wounded to move. Cavalry and Reconnaissance Platoon working together.

At 1152 hours the Reconnaissance Platoon was ordered to evacuate from Krewinkel and go to Manderfeld - this order was given by the Cavalry Commander at Krewinkel. Platoon acted as both advance and rear guard for the withdrawal. The Platoon Sergeant being in charge of the advance guard and the Platoon Leader in charge of the rear. Small arms fire was placed on the column. Arrived at Manderfeld about 1400 hours. Some of the 18th and 32d Cavalry Squadron got mixed together. At about 1600 hours the platoon leader went to the CP of the 14th Group and asked for orders inasmuch as he could find no trace of his originally assigned unit. Commanding Officer of the 14th Group told him to rejoin Company "A" at Herresbach. Arrived at Herresbach at about 1900 hours. One M-8 had been hit by shell fragments and lost all engine oil - the motor "froze" and the Cavalry destroyed the vehicle completely. In the vicinity of Manderfeld one (1) M-8 also injured by shell fragments "froze" on the hill leading into Herresbach. The Reconnaissance Officer attempted with the Platoon Leader to tow this vehicle in. It could not be moved so it was stripped of all stippable parts and other parts smashed. Losses this day totaled two (2) M-8 armored cars, one (1) $\frac{1}{2}$ ton, 4 x 4 - direct hit by artillery, no men, and two (2) $\frac{1}{2}$ ton, 4 x 4 vehicles with six (6) men missing, plus numerous items of personal equipment destroyed and unavoidably left in Krewinkel.

17 Dec 1944 - Moved from Herresbach, Belgium to Neider-Bunnels. Joined by six (6) men and two (2) $\frac{1}{2}$ ton, 4 x 4's reported missing. One "jeep" out of commission due to bullets in the motor - towed by the first "jeep". Platoon ordered to Battalion Rear Echelon by Commanding Officer, Company "A" to reorganize and re-equip. Platoon started to rear echelon located at Fontenaille. Spent the night at Vielsalm.

18 Dec 1944 - Left Vielsalm about 0830 hours and proceeded to Fontenaille.

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Met rear echelon on road. Turned around and joined column to Rendeux.
Billeted for night.

19 Dec 1944 - Returned to Vielsalm at 1430 hours with "jeeps" and machine guns and ammunition taken from rest of battalion. Attached to 14th Cavalry Group as security.

20 Dec 1944 - Guard and routine patrol. Escort of convoys and messengers. Reconnaissance under fire to location of guns, abandoned, and equipment.

21 Dec 1944 - Same as the 20th. Also furnished escort for artillery ammunition train to the front. Leaving at about 2130 hours.

22 Dec 1944 - Returned from ammunition convoy about 0400 hours. Same as the 20th for remainder of the day for guard and patrols.

23 Dec 1944 - Rear guard for movement of Forward CP from Vielsalm to St. Antoine at 0433 hours. Left St. Antoine at 2000 hours and arrived vicinity of Houpet at 2230 hours approximately.

24 Dec 1944 - Guard at south of town of Houpet, Belgium. Anti-aircraft security and maintenance.

25 Dec 44 - Moved to Belle Croix - attached to Company "B" as advance guard for move.

26 Dec 1944 - Security for Forward CP at Belle Croix.

27 Dec 1944 - Road reconnaissance. Road nets vicinity Belle Croix.

28 Dec 1944 - Same as the 27th.

29 Dec 1944 - Same as the 27th. Also armed escort and messenger service to Corps.

30 Dec 1944 - Same as the 29th.

31 Dec 1944 - Advance guard for Forward echelons, in move from Belle Croix to Esneux. Relieved of all assignment and re-attached to Headquarters Company control.

PAUL C. GAY
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Reconnaissance Officer
Acting 1st Platoon Ldr