

VICTORY^{TD}

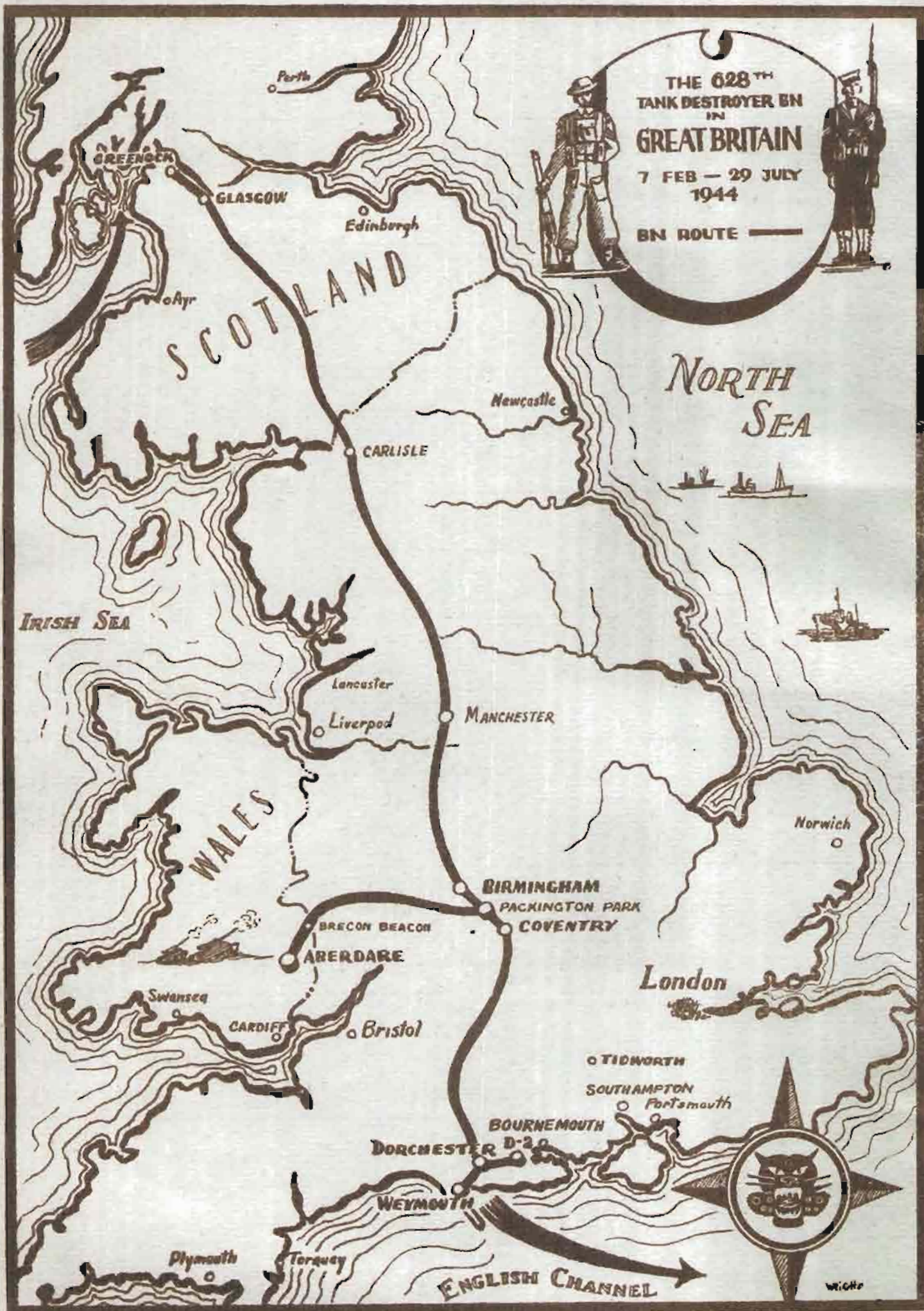
628

NORTHERN FRANCE..ARDENNES..

RHINELAND..CENTRAL EUROPE..



8628 TD 102



THE 628TH TANK DESTROYER BN IN THE CONTINENTAL U.S.

Legend

- Indiantown Gap - A.P. Hill
- Indiantown Gap - N.C. Carolina
- Indiantown Gap - Camp Livingston
- Camp Livingston - Camp Hood
- Camp Hood - Camp Bowie
- Camp Bowie - Gordon Johnston
- Gordon Johnston - Camp Rucker
- Camp Rucker - Tennessee Man. A.
- Rucker - Pickett - Bradford
- Pickett - W.Va. M.A. - Fort Dix
- Fort Dix - Camp Shanks



PRESS CENSORSHIP DETACHMENT
P & PW, NINTH U.S. Army
APO-339

7 June 1945

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TO : Commanding Officer, Headquarters.
628th T. D. Bn., APO 339 U. S. Army

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A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "James A. Robbins". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

Capt., FA., Press Censor

VICTORY^{TD}



THE HISTORY OF THE 628TH TANK DESTROYER BN. IN
TRAINING AND COMBAT, PREPARED BY AND FOR THE
MEN WHO SAW ACTION WITH THE BATTALION IN FRANCE,
BELGIUM, LUXEMBOURG, HOLLAND AND GERMANY.



Dedication



*To those former members of this Battalion
who gave their lives that Freedom of Speech,
Freedom of Worship, Freedom from Want,
and Freedom from Fear might be attained
by the men of all Nations, this book is hereby
Dedicated.*



William J. Gallagher
Lt. Col., F. A.

Headquarters
628th Tank Destroyer Battalion
APO No 758 U. S. Army

9 May, 1945

TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE BATTALION:

As I write this little message to you, my comrades of the 628th, the war in Europe has just ended; and in my heart there is both joy and sadness. There is great joy for those of you who have gotten through this hell, sound of mind and body; but there is a deep sadness for our men and officers who have fallen. In all humility, I salute our lads who are no longer with us. In all instances, they died willingly, as do men for a cause that is just and right: and they died bravely as can only an American soldier. We, their buddies who served by their side, shall always remember them with a sweet reverence which can be felt only by comrades in arms. It is my earnest prayer that the peace, for which the Conference at San Francisco strives, will be so lasting and honest, that none of our splendid men shall have died in vain. And I salute, too, those of you who have gone through the many strenuous months of combat with this Battalion. The amazing amount of enemy materiel and men which you blasted out of the war is but a tribute to your courage and skill at arms. The Break-through in Normandy... the Falaise Gap... Eure-Seine Pocket... Compeigne Forest.... Sedan... Wallendorf... Hurtgen... the Ardennes... the Rhineland... the crashing offensive to the very banks of the Elbe River.... all these and countless minor battles and campaigns you can, in the years to come, remember with a quiet pride. Whether it is your destiny soon to return to civilian life, or to help finish off our one remaining enemy, the Jap, I wish you luck and Godspeed. Believe me, it has been a grand privilege and an honor to have commanded such a fine Battalion in combat. Again, I salute you all.... and I shall never forget you.



Lt. Col., F. A., Commanding



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LEST WE FORGET



"LEST WE FORGET"

. . . . The world will little note nor long remember. what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us -- that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion -- that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain -- that this nation, under God shall have a new birth of freedom -- and that government of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

Lincoln's Gettysburg Address



William M. Hernandez
O-191305, Lt. Col. F.A.
Killed in Action Dousins, France
Aug. 20, 1944

Lest We Forget



Pfc. Samuel A. Augustine
33028869 A Co. KIA
Werhomont, Belgium
7 Jan. 1945



T/5 William Mayers
34385822 B Co. KIA
Manhay, Belgium
7 Jan. 1945



Cpl. Herman Barth
20315041 C Co. KIA
Hurtgen, Germany
30 Nov. 1944



T/4 Donald F. Beck
36400303 A Co. KIA
Simmerath, Germany
30 Jan 1945



T/4 William L. Boswell
34173763 Hq. Co. KIA
Wallendorf, Germany
19 Sept. 1944



Pvt. Thomas W. Bowman
34371375 A Co. KIA
Osterath, Germany
15 March 1945

Lest We Forget



T/5 Clyde C. Broom
34386824 A Co. DOW
Douains, France
26 Aug. 1944



Pvt. Wellington E. Brundage
36400080 B Co. KIA
Conde, France
4 Sept. 1944



Cpl. Floyd E. Burge
33034922 A Co. KIA
Werbomont, Belgium
7 Jan. 1945



Pfc. Tandy B. Carpenter
34425461 B Co. KIA
Manhay, Belgium
7 Jan. 1945



Sgt. George A. DeLia
33161296 B Co. KIA
Haute-Bodeaux, Belgium
7 Jan. 1945



2nd Lt. John J. Devine, Jr.
0-1822679 A Co. DOW
Argentan, France
13 Aug. 1944

Lest We Forget



T/5 Louis P. Di Orio
20315035 C Co. KIA
Hurtgen, Germany
11 Dec. 1944



Sgt. Lawrence W. Elmore
20315803 B Co. KIA
Manhay, Belgium
7 Jan. 1945



Cpl. Henry Goffart
33161233 C Co. KIA
Bergstein, Germany
6 Dec. 1944



Pvt. Willie B. Greene
34371005 C Co. KIA
Hommerdingen, Germany
19 Sept. 1944



Pfc. Earl F. Higley
33161282 C Co. KIA
Horsdorf, Luxembourg
23 Sept. 1944



Pvt. Charles W. Hill
33161172 B Co. KIA
Manhay, Belgium
7 Jan. 1945

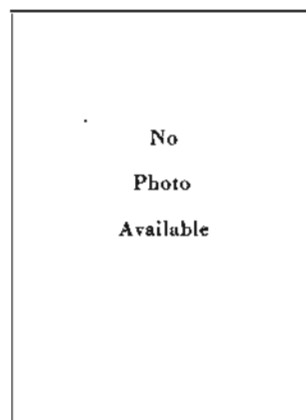
Best We Forget



Cpl. John A. Ilydu
33028902 C Co. KIA
Horsdorf, Luxembourg
23 Sept. 1944



Sgt. Gerald W. Joner
39396408 Ren. Co. KIA
Wallendorf, Germany
19 Sept. 1944



No
Photo
Available

Sgt. John Kalis
36015718 B Co. KIA
Stockem, Germany
17 Sept 1944



T/5 Peter Kowalchik
33161252 C Co. DOW
Bergstein, Germany
6 Dec. 1944

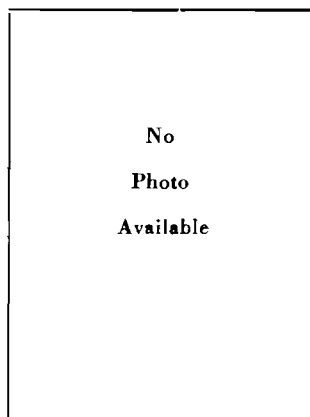


Cpl. Chester W. Kuta
36016238 B Co. KIA
Manhay, Belgium
7 Jan. 1945



Sgt. Stanley J. Lada
32071189 A Co. DOI
Kalterherberg, Germany
3 Nov. 1944

Best We Forget



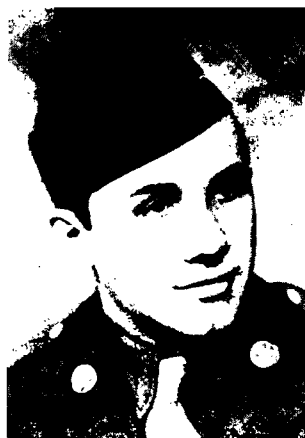
Sgt. Martin P. Lally
32084601 C Co. KIA
Werbomont, Belgium
7 Jan. 1945



Pvt. John I. J. Lawler
33028880 C Co. DOI
Hurtgen, Germany
10 Dec. 1944



Sgt. Charles A. Leo
35020246 C Co. KIA
Bergstein, Germany
6 Dec. 1944



Pvt. John P. Loncaric
33161105 Rcn. Co. DOW
Stockem, Germany
17 Sept. 1944



Cpl. Ashley C. Long
34386198 C Co. KIA
Bergstein, Germany
6 Dec. 1944



Sgt. Tames W. Luvender
20317374 C Co. KIA
Hurtgen, Germany
6 Dec. 1944

Lest We Forget



Pfc. Mario A. Mastro
33029156 B Co. DOW
Odrimont, Belgium
4 Jan. 1945



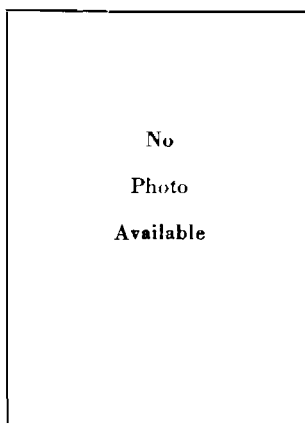
Pfc. James A. McClintock, Jr.
34386127 B Co. KIA
Bigelbach, Luxemburg
21 Sept. 1944



Pfc. Edward Mickacinih
33035715 B Co. KIA
Sedan, France
6 Sept. 1944



T/4 George F. Morgan
34110685 B Co. DOW
France
4 Aug. 1944



Pfc. Frank L. Mozina
33161228 C Co. KIA
Bergstein, Germany
6 Dec. 1944



Pfc. William Nicholson
33161356 Ren. Co. KIA
Stockigt, Germany
15 Sept. 1944

Best We Forget



T/5 Jesse A. Pannell
34425825 A Co. KIA
Osterath, Germany
15 March 1945



T/5 Floyd J. Robinson
32046621 A Co. KIA
Krefeld, Germany
3 March 1945



1st Lt. Ben J. Smith
0-1824384 C Co. KIA
Bergstein, Germany
6 Dec. 1944



Pfc. Theodore Spalte
32065342 B Co. KIA
Werbomont, Belgium
7 Jan. 1945



Sgt. Doyle E. Switley
36014268 A Co. KIA
Tangermünde, Germany
12 April 1945



Pvt. Leo Tovar
39564912 A Co. KIA
Werbomont, Belgium
7 Jan. 1945

Best We Forget



T/5 Thomas Vander Veen
38400270 C Co. KIA
Bergstein, Germany
6 Dec. 1944



T/Sgt. Nicholas Van Handel
32154633 A Co. KIA
Krefeld, Germany
3 March 1945



Pvt. William T. Walden
34370625 Ren. Co. DOW.
Odrimont, Belgium
4 Jan. 1945



T/5 William J. Walters
34386105 B Co. KIA
Maobay, Belgium
7 Jan. 1945



Pfc. Earl V. Ward
34071761 C Co. KIA
Hommerdingen, Germany
19 Sept. 1944



Pfc. Michael H. Welsb
33161369 Ren. Co. KIA
Neukirchfeld, Germany
4 March 1945

Best We Forget



Pfc. Cecil Wilson
34707801 A Co. KIA
Osterath, Germany
15 March 1945



Sgt. Woodrow W. Woods
34071626 C Co. KIA
Bergstein, Germany
6 Dec. 1944



Cpl. Casimer A. Wydrzenski
33161329 C Co. KIA
Hurtgen, Germany
26 Nov. 1944



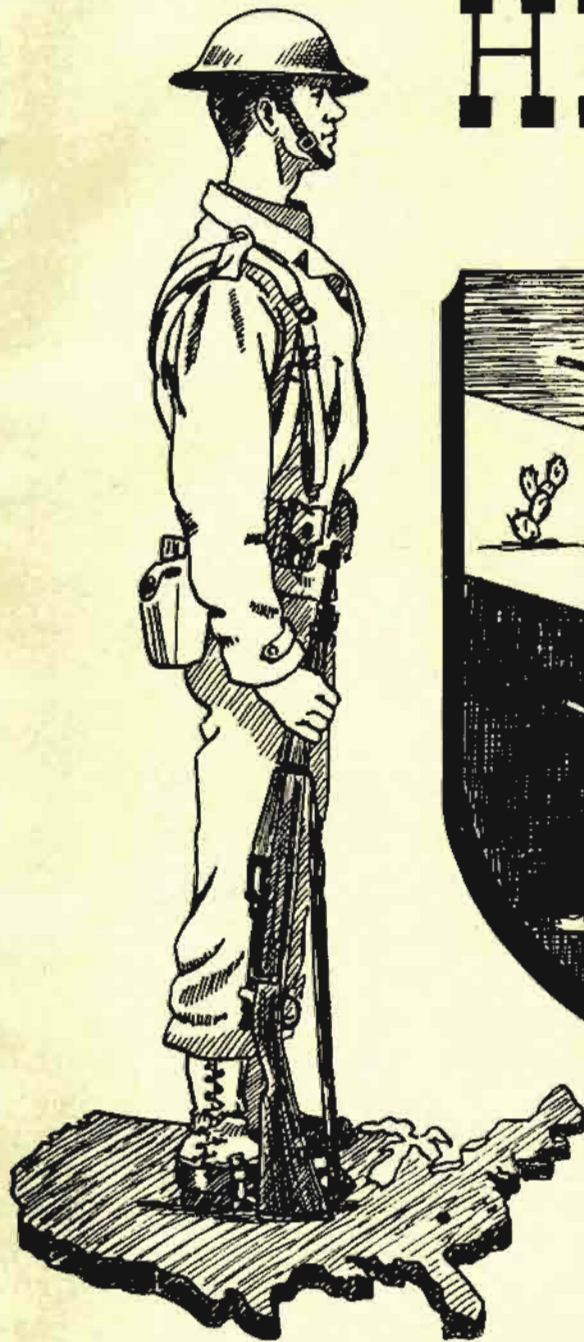
Pfc. Joseph G. Yakaitus, Jr.
31038937 C Co. DOW
Bergstein, Germany
6 Dec. 1944



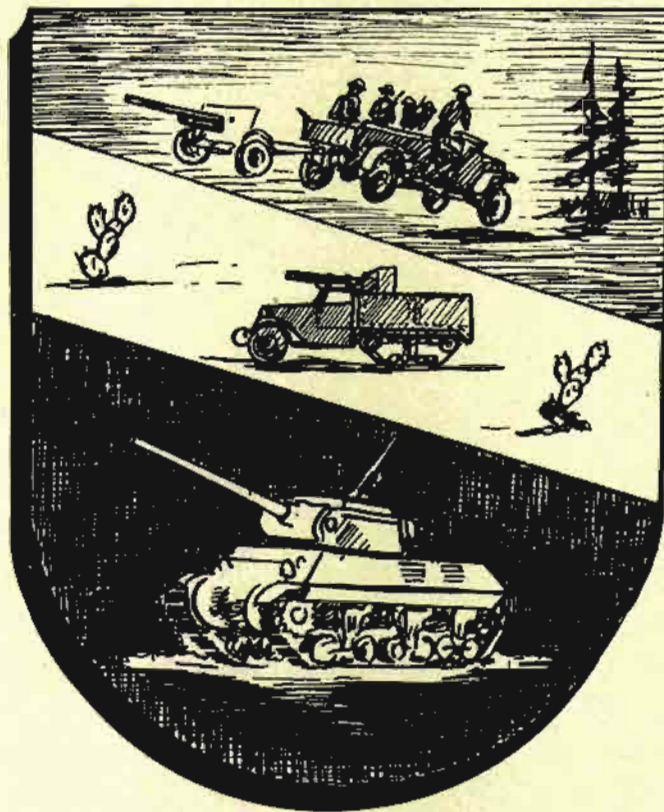
T/5 Arnold B. Zeigler
34425469 A Co. KIA
Werbomont, Belgium
7 Jan. 1945

Notes: KIA means Killed in Action, DOW means Died of Wounds, and DOI means Died of Injuries. Towns given above are approximate locations of where casualty occurred. For official information as to place of burial, it will be necessary to contact Graves Registration Office, Quartermaster Dept., Services of Supply, Washington, D. C.

BATTALION HISTORY



1941



1945



Battalion Color Guard

HISTORY OF THE 628TH TANK DESTROYER BATTALION

INDIANTOWN GAP PENNSYLVANIA

In 1941 General Drum, then Commanding General, First United States Army, decided to form six provisional anti-tank battalions for experimental purposes to be tested in the First Army Maneuvers held in North and South Carolina in October and November, 1941.

The 28th Infantry Division Pennsylvania's National Guard, Keystone Division, which had been federalized and on active service at Indiantown Gap Military Reservation since 17 February 1941, was one of the six Divisions ordered to form a provisional anti-tank battalion.

General Martin, Commanding General, 28th Infantry Division, issued orders whereby the personnel of the 53rd Field Artillery Brigade Headquarters, 107th Field Artillery Regiment, 108th Field Artillery Regiment, 109th Field Artillery Regiment, 109th Infantry Regiment, 110th Infantry Regiment, 111th Infantry Regiment, 112th Infantry Regiment, 103rd Engineer Regiment and 103rd Medical Regiment were transferred for this purpose. On 10 July, the 28th Division Anti-tank Battalion (provisional) was formed under the



T. D. Gun Crew. Carolina Maneuvers
October 1941

command of the then Major Carl L. Peterson, and moved into its first quarters at Tent City, Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania.

In addition to Major, now Colonel, Carl Peterson, 112th Infantry, as Battalion Commander, the original Battalion Staff was composed of Captain, now Lt. Colonel, William P. Davis, III, 108th Field Artillery, Battalion Executive Officer and S-3; 1st Lt., now Lt. Colonel, Thomas B. Roelofs, 112th Infantry, Adjutant and S-1; Captain now Lt. Colonel

John J. Gilfilan, Headquarters 28th Infantry Division Intelligence Officer, S-2; and 2nd Lt., now Captain William Young, 107th Field Artillery, Supply Officer, S-4.

Headquarters Battery was commanded by 1st Lt., now Major Joseph A. Patalive 108th Field Artillery, who was both Battery Commander and Battalion Communications Officer. Other officers were 2nd Lt., now Captain Richard H. Reeve, 108th Field Artillery, Battalion Motor Officer, and 2nd Lt., now Capt. Robert H. Meisenbelter, 108th Field Artillery, Battalion Personnel Officer.

"A" Battery had 1st Lt., now Major Marcus L. Hoover, 111th Infantry, as Battery Commander, with 2nd Lt., now Captain Eugene Swanheart, 109th Field Artillery, 2nd Lt. Robert L. Ivey, 107th Field Artillery, and 2nd Lt. Richard J. Fitzgerald, 111th Infantry, as Battery Officers.

"B" Battery was formed with 1st Lt., now Lt. Colonel Charles A. Corcoran, 107th Field Artillery, as Battery Commander, assisted by 1st Lt., now retired.



Indiantown Gap, Penna., Feb. 1941

Leonard Dotson, 108th Field Artillery, 2nd Lt., now Captain Daniel L. Thomas, 109th Field Artillery, and 2nd Lt., now Captain Jessie B. Schooley, 109th Field Artillery.

"C" Battery had 1st Lt., now Major Robert Gaynor, 109th Infantry, as Battery Commander, with 1st Lt., now Captain Thomas W. Scott, Jr., 110th Infantry, and 2nd Lt., now Captain John S. Wright, 55th Infantry Brigade Headquarters, as Battery Officers.



Crossing Pee Dee River
Carolina Maneuvers, Nov. 1941

"D" Battery included Captain, now Major Harry A. Overholtzer, 108th Field Artillery, as Battery Commander, and 1st Lt., now Lt. Colonel William J. Gallagher, 108th Field Artillery, 2nd Lt., now Captain James H. Lloyd, 108th Field Artillery, and 2nd Lt., now Captain John B. Stokes, 108th Field Artillery.

"E" Battery had Captain, now Major William B. Munhall, 107th Field Artillery, as Battery Commander, assisted by 2nd Lt., now Major Hampton C. Randolph, 108th Field Artillery, and 2nd Lt., now Captain James Clement, 108th Field Artillery.

Medical Detachment included Captain Donaldson, 103rd Medical Regiment as initial Detachment Commander, assisted by 1st Lt., now Major Eugene W. Hodgson, 103rd Medical Regiment, who later became Battalion Surgeon, and 1st Lt. Charles Perleman, 103rd Medical Regiment, as Battalion Dentist.

Early in the Battalion's history Company "B", 103rd Engineer Regiment



Camp Livingston, La, March, 1942

under Captain Maurada and assisted by 1st Lt. Forrest Bocoek and 2nd Lt., now Captain Stanislas Starzinski, were attached to the Battalion. In January 1942, Headquarters Battery, 109th Field Artillery was transferred in toto to the Battalion and formed the original Pioneer Company which ultimately was redesignated as Reconnaissance Company. Lt. Bocoek and Lt. Starzinski were also transferred to the Battalion in January 1942, and became Pioneer Company Commander and Company Executive Officer respectively.

Other officers who joined the Battalion shortly after it was formed were 2nd Lt., now Major Paul L. McPherran and 2nd Lt., now Captain Lawrence W. Merz, both Reserve Corps Officers, who were initially assigned as Liaison Officers, Headquarters Battery, also 2nd Lt. Benjamin C. Manderville 112th Infantry, initially assigned to C Battery, and 2nd Lt. Nathan N. Tyson, 108th Field Artillery, who replaced 2nd Lt. Meisenhelter as Battalion Personnel Officer when Lt. Meisenhelter was transferred back to the 108th Field Artillery.

A. P. HILL MILITARY RESERVATION, VIRGINIA.

At the end of July 1941, the Anti-tank Battalion moved to A. P. Hill Military Reservation near Fredericksburg, Virginia, for its first tactical field training which was a two week problem conducted by the entire 28th In-



628. T. D. Bn, Area
Camp Livingston, La., March, 1942



Leesville, La. Firing Range, April, 1942
Capt. Hoover, Capt. Hodgson, Major Davis, Lt. Col. Hernandez, Capt. Corcoran, Capt. Munhall



Morale Trip Bivouac Area, Monroe, La., May 1942

fantry Division. Equipment at that time consisted of $\frac{3}{4}$ ton weapons carriers as prime movers, with towed guns made out of miscellaneous pieces of pipe, wood, and other materials to represent an Anti-tank gun. No ammunition was expended, but the Battalion did raise a lot of dust on the back roads of Virginia, and soon became known as an up and coming organization that was going places, a prophecy, which was fulfilled as time marched on.

After Labor Day, 1941, the Battalion returned to Indiantown Gap, and then in the latter part of September 1941, moved with the entire 28th Infantry Division to the Carolina Maneuver Area, establishing a base camp near Wadesboro, North Carolina.

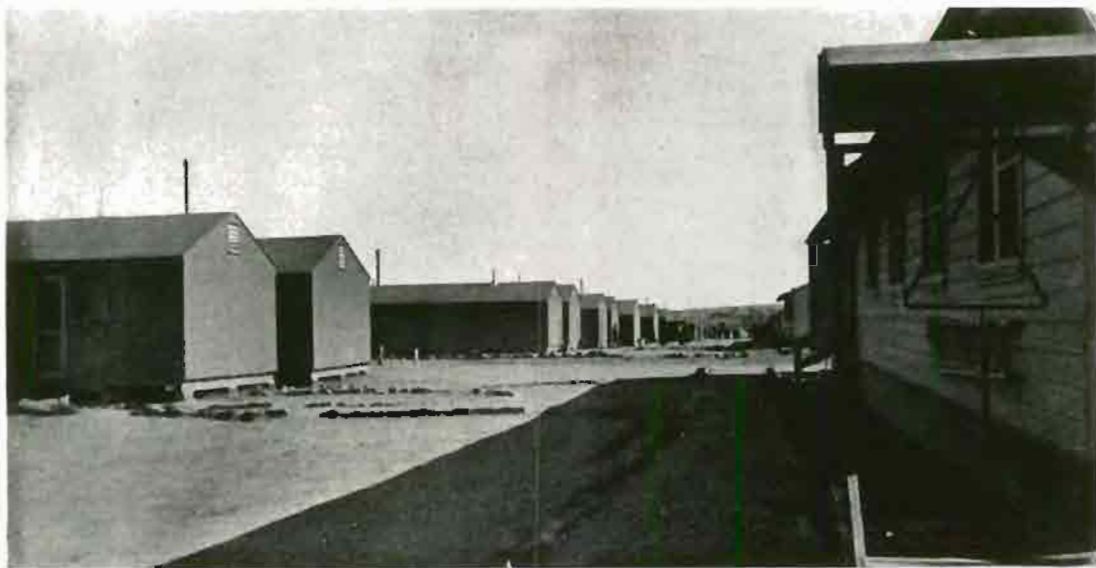
CAROLINA MANEUVERS

Early in November 1941, Major Peterson left the Battalion, and Major William M. Hernandez, 108th Field Artillery, assumed command. Carolina Maneuvers ended after two active months, and the Battalion was on its way back to the Gap when word was received on Sunday, 7 December 1941 near South Boston, Virginia, that the Japs had attacked Pearl Harbor and that War had been declared.

After returning to Indiantown Gap and enjoying a period of furloughs and leaves, orders were received to reorganize the provisional 28th Division Anti-tank Battalion as of 15 December 1941, into a permanent organiza-



25 Mile Hike, Camp Livingston, La., May, 1942



Camp Bowie, Texas, Dec. 1942

tion officially designated as the 628th Tank Destroyer Battalion. The reorganization involved absorbing D and F Batteries into A, B, and C Batteries, and redesignating all Batteries as Companies, effective 3 January 1942.

CAMP LIVINGSTON, LOUISIANA

Shortly after the first of the year 1942, the entire 28th Infantry Division moved by motor convoy from Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania, to Camp Livingston, near Alexandria, Louisiana, which at that time was regarded as one of the longest motor convoy movements undertaken by the Army.

In March 1942, the first group of new men totaling approximately 240, arrived direct from induction stations and were welcomed to the Battalion by the 300 "old men". A basic training program was established, and the work of whipping the Battalion into shape for combat began in earnest. Twenty-five mile hikes in the boiling Louisiana sun were merely a part of this training.



Camp Hood, Texas, Oct. 1942

CAMP HOOD AND CAMP BOWIE, TEXAS

In September 1942, the entire Battalion was moved by rail to the newly formed Tank Destroyer Center, Camp Hood, Texas, to undergo advanced unit training in Tank Destroyer tactics. After progressing thru the infiltration course, street and village fighting to platoon and company tactics, a Battalion field problem was finally held and successfully passed. It was

here in November 1942, after fifteen months of diligent training with dummy guns, that the Battalion gun crews had their first opportunity to fire live ammunition, using borrowed 75 mm guns on half tracks, the original TD vehicle and weapon. It was here also that the Battalion received its last large group of inductees, over 300 in all, for basic training and assignment in the Battalion.

Early in December 1942, the Battalion moved to Camp Bowie, Texas, for additional tactical training and for completion of the first Army Ground Force test. It was successfully passed after the most complicated "dead reckoning" motor march thru Texas sage brush ever experienced by the Battalion.



Village Fighting,
Camp Hood, Texas Oct. 1942

On January 3, 1943, the Battalion furnished a complete officer and enlisted cadre of about 85 men who later formed the 648th Tank Destroyer Battalion.

CAMP GORDON JOHNSTON, FLORIDA

On 8 January 1943, the Battalion entrained at Camp Bowie, Texas, and after one of its most enjoyable train trips, arrived three days later at Camp Carrabelle, sixty miles S.W. of Tallahassee, Florida, later designated as Camp Gordon Johnston. Here the Battalion returned once again to the control of



Camp Gordon Johnston, Florida, April, 1943



Arrival At Elkins, West Virginia, Nov. 1943

the 28th Infantry Division for intensive Amphibious Training in the waters of the Gulf of Mexico .

The Amphibious training was successfully completed by the end of March 1943, and after a period of leaves and furloughs, during which time the Battalion received its first combat vehicles, 36 M-10 Tank Destroyers. The entire Battalion moved to Camp Rucker, Alabama, in May 1943. Just prior to moving, however, the Battalion furnished a small cadre of eight men to the 645th Tank Destroyer Battalion all volunteers, who immediately left for overseas duty, the first members of the Battalion to enter combat.

At Camp Rucker an intensive period of M-10 driver training was initiated for all officers and enlisted men, and preparations commenced for the impending Tennessee Maneuver period which commenced July 4, 1943.

TENNESSEE MANEUVERS

Tennessee Maneuvers lasted until 28 August 1943, and furnished an excellent opportunity for the men to learn how to use the M-10's over various types of terrain, and simulated combat conditions. After the first few problems, the Battalion Billeting party and the Battalion Commanders party also learned how to avoid being captured, a well learned lesson.

After completing Tennessee Maneuvers, the Battalion returned to Camp Rucker for a period of artillery range practice, where both direct and indirect firing methods were taught and executed on the firing range.

Early in October, 1943, the Battalion moved to Camp Pickett, Virginia, and then left for Camp Bradford, near Norfolk.



Dog Island, Florida, April, 1943



Battalion Bivouac Area Mt. Canaan, Davis, West Virginia, Nov. 1943

Virginia, for a week of Amphibious training which was principally devoted to the technique of loading LST's.

After Bradford the Battalion returned to Camp Pickett and then within a weeks time left for the West Virginia Maneuver Area, arriving at a bivouac on top of Mt. Canaan near Davis, West Virginia early in November 1943. The purpose of this assignment was threefold, first, to have experience in mountain driving, second, to become toughened to winter conditions, and third, to take another Army Ground Force test. In due time all three purposes were successfully fulfilled, as the Battalion lived on a mountain and was completely surrounded on all sides by the Blue Ridge mountain range. Then almost immediately after the Battalion's arrival, it snowed and continued to snow most of the remainder of the time there, and finally after spending days building a corduroy road over swamps, the Battalion managed to move it's M-10's to the firing range and successfully passed its AGF firing test. In spite of these various and sundry difficulties, however, the hospitality of the people of Thomas and Davis, West Virginia was such that the men of the Battalion will long carry a warm feeling in their hearts for them.

CAMP DIX, NEW JERSEY

The Battalion left West Virginia early in December 1943, and proceeded to Camp Dix, New Jersey, the last Camp in the United States before arrival at a Port of Embarkation staging area. All heavy vehicle equipment was turned in, and new clothing issued,



Winterized Hut,
Mt. Canaan, W. Va. Dec. 1943

then after final leaves and furloughs over Christmas and New Years, the Battalion moved to Camp Shanks, N. Y., on 17 January 1944, awaiting shipment overseas on the H. M. S. Aquitania, which left New York on 29 January 1944.

PACKINGTON PARK, ENGLAND

On arrival at Greenock, Scotland on 6 February 1944, the Battalion moved by rail to Packington, England, located midway between Birmingham and Coventry. New M-10's and other necessary equipment were received, and all men and officers were kept busy on all phases of military training, particularly field artillery indirect fire, as the secondary role of a T. D. Battalion in combat.

SUB-AREA X, DORCHESTER, ENGLAND

At the end of March 1944, the Battalion moved to the vicinity of Hirwaun, Wales, where it enjoyed two weeks of artillery firing on the Brecon Range. The Battalion returned to Packington Park early in April, and

on 11 April 1944, moved to Dorchester, England, on special assignment, to handle the Marshalling Camps for the invasion troops. The Battalion was assigned to Sub-Area X, Marshalling Area D, and from 15 April 1944 to 4 July 1944 operated Camps D-4 (Camehouse) D-7 M (Marabout) and D-7 P (Poundbury). It was in these camps that the troops of the 1st Infantry Division and the 29th Infantry Division lived 'til the time of their D-day landing on the Normandy coast.



Thatched Roof Cottage Near Packington Park



Packington Park, England, Feb. 1944

On 5 July 1944 the Battalion was relieved of its Marshalling Areas assignment and moved to Camp D-2, Piddlehinton, near Bournemouth, England. There, last minute preparations were completed and after celebrating the Battalions Third Anniversary at a banquet held in Bournemouth on 10 July 1944, the Battalion moved to Camp D-3, Puddletown on 26 July, and loaded on Navy LST's and embarked from England on 28 July 1944. After three years of training, the Battalion was finally on its way to combat.

BAPTISM OF FIRE:

Having landed on Utah Beach in Normandy, France, on 30 July 1944, this Battalion was peacefully bivouaced in an apple orchard near Le Valdecie, France until 1730 hours, 2 August 1944, when word was received that the Battalion was assigned to the 5th Armored Division, XV Corps, Third Army, and would prepare to move at once. At this time the Battalion was Assigned the Code name "Victory" which was used throughout the period of combat.

It was for this moment that the Battalion had trained since 10 July 1941, and once tactically committed on 2 August 1944, there were very few days when some members of the organization were not on a combat status in France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Holland and Germany, until the unconditional surrender on 9 May 1945.

Initially the entire Battalion was kept intact, however, as



Stream, Near Aberdare, Wales



Brecon Firing Range, Hirwaun, Wales, March, 1944



Camp D-4 Camehouse, April 1944

orders were received to commit one company after another, it became normal operating procedure to attach one Reconnaissance Company Platoon to each of the Tank Destroyer Gun Companies, which in turn were attached to each of the three Combat Commands, Co. "A" to CCA, Co. "B" to CCB, Co. "C" to CCR. Battalion Headquarters, Headquarters Company, Medical Detachment and Reconnaissance Company Headquarters, with Pioneer Platoon.

being attached to Headquarters 5th Armored Division Artillery. The Battalion Personnel Section was attached to Administrative Center in Division Rear Echelon.

The initial mission of the 5th Armored Division, given after the Battalion arrived in the Division rendezvous area at 2145 hours, 2 August 1944 in the vicinity of Perier, France, was the taking of Fougères, with the main objective Laval. Battalion route of march went thru Noirpalu via St. Martin to St. James. On 4 August 1944, Lt. John J. Devine, Jr., Platoon Leader, Co. "A", went on a Reconnaissance mission in vicinity of La Pelerne, France, and made the first contact by a member of this Battalion with an enemy force. Lt. Devine subsequently died of wounds received in the vicinity of Argentan, France on 12 August 1944.

The Battalion left bivouac near St. James, at 0930 hours, 6 August 1944 and proceeded thru Fougères, Vitre, Meral, Crosse-Le-Vivien to Hous-say, France. Near Meral the column was fired on with small arms by enemy snipers and three German prisoners were captured by the Reconnaissance Com-



Dorchester, England April 1944

pany, in vicinity of Crosse-Le-Vivien. The following day the march was through Poille, where an enemy machine gun nest was encountered and subsequently knocked out by direct fire from two M-10's from Company "A". From Poille, France, the column proceeded thru Louplande, Arnage, Maigne to Les Sommeres, in vicinity of Le Mans, France. At Arnage sniper fire and enemy 88 mm Artillery fire was directed against the column, and Maigne was the first of many towns to be seen completely on fire. Thus, at this early stage in its progress across Europe, did the Battalion receive its baptism of fire in combat, a baptism which continued in an ever increasing crescendo until the banks of the Elbe River in Germany were reached.



Corfe Castle, England, July, 1944

FALAISE ARGENTAN GAP

On 10 August 1944, still assigned to the Third Army, XV Corps, and 5th Armored Division, the Battalion moved out of the bivouac area in the vicinity of Le Mans, France, to participate in the attempt to close the Falaise-Argentan Gap. Route of column passed through Briosne, and Le Melse, arriving in the vicinity of Sees, France, at 2145 hours, 12 August 1944. During the march on 11 August 1944, 2nd Platoon, Company "A" was acting as rear guard to CCA's column. Sometime during the night an unidentified column approached the route of march of CCA's column from the west. S/Sgt. Koczan, Company "A" challenged the leading vehicle and when it failed to stop, S/Sgt. Koczan fired his .45 caliber pistol and killed the



Air Raid Over Dorchester, England, June, 1944



Weymouth Harbor, England

driver. He then destroyed the next two vehicles with hand grenades and brought .50 caliber and .30 caliber machine gun fire on the remaining five vehicles, while the M-10's opened fire on the rear of the column with 3 inch H. E. to prevent a withdrawal. In all, eight enemy vehicles and 240 enemy troops were destroyed. For this action, S/Sgt. Koczan was awarded the first Silver Star Medal presented to a member of this Battalion and subsequently was

decorated with the Croix de Guerre by the French Government, the only award from a foreign government received by any member of this unit.

First reports of enemy tanks in the area were received on 10 August 1944, in the vicinity of Bonnetable, although no contact was made on this date. On 11 August 1944, however, S/Sgt. Flynn, Platoon Sergeant, 1st Platoon, Company "C", acting as gunner, engaged a Mark IV tank at 500 yard range in the Battalion's first direct fire duel in the vicinity of LeMesle, France, and successfully destroyed the first of a total of 56 enemy tanks credited this Battalion. Other successful tank duels followed in quick succession. At 0630 hours, 12 August 1944, Cpl. Koetje, Tank Destroyer Gunner, 2nd Platoon, Company "A", destroyed a Mark IV tank at 150 yard range in the vicinity of Ballon, France. At 1100 hours 12 August 1944, 4 miles northeast of Ballon, Cpl. Kee, 1st Platoon, Company "A", the Battalion's only Tank Destroyer Gunner from Chinatown, New York City, one of the best trained gunners in the organization, engaged two Mark



Utah Beach, Normandy, France, July 29, 1944



March Through Paris, France, August 1944

IV tanks at the same time at 1200 yard range and destroyed both enemy tanks with direct hits.

On 14 August 1944, while on Reconnaissance, the Battalion Commander's armored car was fired on by heavy artillery in the vicinity of Bourg St. Leonard, France, at 1345 hours, and at 1500 hours in the vicinity of La Corbette, this vehicle struck a German Tellermine at a curve in the road injuring T/5 Flora, driver, and Capt. England, the Battalion Surgeon. The Battalion Commander escaped injury. These were the first casualties sustained from enemy mines experienced by the Battalion. 1st Platoon, Company "B", attached to CCB knocked out one Mark VI tank at 300 yards at 1430 hours, 15 August 1944 in the vicinity of Vitre.

BATTLE OF THE SEINE RIVER

At 1730 hours, 15 August 1944, still attached to Third Army, XV Corps, 5th Armored Division, the Battalion left the bivouac area in the vicinity of Sees, and then moved east enroute to the vicinity of Dreux, France. After arriving in the vicinity of Dreux, all of the units then swung north to prevent the enemy from crossing the Eure and Seine Rivers. The Battalion left the bivouac area near Faymonville, France, at 1230 hours, 18 August 1944 and proceeded through Germainville and Le Hay, to Les Bossus. On 17 August 1944, 3rd Platoon, Company "B", working with the 47th In-



Compiègne, France, August 1944



Conde, France, on Belgium Border, Sept. 1, 1944

fantry moved north and crossed the Eure River near Bourg L'Abbe and knocked out two Mark IV tanks and one 88 mm anti-tank gun at ranges from 1600 to 1800 yards near Muzy, France, then returned south of the river. From Les Bossus, the Battalion CP was moved north to Cravent, arriving there at 1650 hours, 19 August 1944. The Battalion Commander, Lt. Col. William M. Hernandez, went out to contact Company "A" on 20 August 1944, and while directing indirect fire on enemy tanks was killed at 1630 hours near Douains, France. Major William J. Gallagher, Battalion Executive Officer, assumed command of the Battalion at 1700 hours same date. In the same action in which Lt. Col. Hernandez was killed, Corporals O'Brien and Tartaglia, 3rd Platoon, Co. "A", each destroyed a Mark V tank at 1700 yard range just west of Douains, while the Platoon had one M-10 Tank Destroyer knocked out. This was the first of 18 Tank Destroyer vehicles which this Battalion totally lost as a result of enemy action. Gun Companies attached to Combat Com-

mands continued to advance generally north, destroying enemy vehicles and personnel fleeing from the Falaise-Argentan Gap trapped between the Eure and Seine Rivers. On 21 August 1944, 3rd Platoon, Company "A" reported knocking out at 1800 yard range one Mark V and one Mark IV tank, one truck and one anti-tank gun four miles north of Douains. On the 23 of August 1944, the Battalion CP moved north from Cravent to Gallion, France. It then moved southeast arriving at a new biv-



Bridge Over Meuse River Near
Mezieres-Charleville, France, August 1944

ouac area at Guerville, France at 0200 hours, 25 August 1944.

Thus the Battle of the Seine River was completed, and for five days the Battalion saw no action except for an indirect artillery fire mission which "B" Company drew. This breathing spell was used well by the men. They got some much needed rest and also made the equipment ready for the next mission.

DRIVE TO THE BELGIUM BORDER

On 27 August 1944, 5th Armored Division, with 628th Tank Destroyer Battalion attached, was relieved of assignment to Third Army and XV Corps, and assigned to First U. S. Army and V Corps. On 30 August 1944, 5th Armored Division was given the mission of marching direct to the Belgium border with the least possible delay. The Battalion left bivouac near Guerville, France at 0730 hours on 30 August 1944, with CCB. It passed through the outskirts of Paris and continued on through Senlis, Compiègne Forest, Noyen, Guiscard, Villeneuve and Valenciennes arriving at Conde, France, on the Belgium border at 2330 hours on 2 Sept. 1944.

On arrival at the Belgium border, orders were changed and the Division was instructed to clear the area for the pending arrival of British troops. The Division was given the new mission to move south and seize Sedan, France and then east to capture Luxembourg. The Battalion left Conde at 1300 hours on 4 September 1944 and moved generally south to La Romagne, France arriving there at 2200 hours on 4 September 1944.

The entire Battalion was detached from CCB and attached to CCR on 5 Sept. 1944 and left the bivouac area at La Romagne at 1200 hours on



Mersch, Luxembourg,
Sept. 10, 1944



View North Of Diekirch, Luxembourg, Sept. 1944