

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE 635 TH TANK DESTROYER BATTALION, WORLD-WAR II,  
IN THE ETO COMMANDED BY LT COL WINT SMITH OF MANKATO, KANSAS.

The 635th Tank Destroyer Battalion was first activated at Camp Joseph T Robinson, at Little Rock, Ark. in June of 1941 and was known as the Provisional Anti-Tank Battalion of the 35th. Infantry Division. It was composed of elements of the 127th Field Artillery, the 135th Field Artillery, the 161st Field Artillery, and other elements of the 35th. Infantry Division. It included a Medical Detachment of 8 Enlisted Men, 1 Medical Officer (Lt. Lee R Martin), and 1 Dental Officer (Lt Duhurford). It participated in the Louisiana Maneuvers in the summer of 1941, supporting the Blue Forces. It was returned to Camp Joseph T Robinson, Ark. where it's name was changed to the 635th Tank Destroyer Battalion on 15 December 1941, as per General Order No.1 of the 635th TD Battalion. On 27 December 1941, the Battalion was transferred to Fort Ord, California, by Rail, and after 16 Days there, the Battalion was moved to Camp San Luis Obispo, California. At the time of it's activation at Camp Robinson it was composed of 16 Officers and 361 Enlisted men.

In April of 1942, the Battalion was given a Defensive Mission and was moved to Burbank, California, and in the next few Months served in that Capacity at March Field, The Lockheed Plant, Glendale, Ontario and at et-al Defense Areas and places.

The Battalion was relieved of part of Defense Mission in August of 1942, whereupon it engaged in Various Types of Battalion Training, when not assigned to same Defensive Mission in the Area on the West Coast.

The Battalion was moved on 15 January 1943 to Camp Hood, Texas. the Newly Constructed Tank Destroyer Training Center, by rail (two trains) and for the Next Year, the Battalion, and all of it's Units, under the Command of "WINT", our one and only Commander, engaged in very intensive and thorough training in all phases of a Tank Destroyer Battalion Mission, to fit it for it's Important Mission ahead.

The Battalion was moved from Camp Hood, Texas to Camp Polk, Louisiana, on 16 December 1943, to participate in the Louisiana Maneuvers. The Battalion, at the conclusion of the Field Maneuvers, was moved into the Camp Polk Cantonment Area on 30 December 1943 and from that date; the Battalion work and training consisted of preparing the Personnell and equipment for OVERSEAS SHIPMENT which was completed during the next several weeks at Camp Shanks New York. Movement from Polk to Shanks was by Rail.

The Battalion was shipped out of the New York Port Of Embarkation, from Camp Shanks New York on 9 February 1944. It sailed on the Ship ANDES without Convoy and arrived, without incident, in Liverpool England on 19 February 1944. The Battalion was billeted in a Nissen Hut encampment in Toddington, near Cheltenham England, untill 16 May 1944. During this time the Battalion entered into all phases of final Training before Combat. Physical Conditioning, all types of Gun and Vehicle Maintenance, complete equipping of Men and Vehicles as per. Table Of Organization, and bringing Battalion up to 100% Strength. Our Medical Detachment, during this final phase of training, received from Maj. Gen. Hawley, Chief Surgeon of ETO-USA a very fine and justly deserved letter of Commendation.

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After assembly at the Marshalling Areas, and further outfitting and equipping, the Battalion embarked from Falmouth and Plymouth England in 3 LST's Numbers 55, and 381 and 393, on 2 June 1944, for the invasion and assault of France on the Normandy Beachhead. The Battalion landings were made on the FOX-GREEN Portion of OMAHA BEACH on 8 June in support of the Three Regiments of the 1st. Infantry Division.

A Graphic description of the Initial Landings of the Assaulting Forces, and the terrific actions in connection with the Period of 6 June to 13 June 1944 are to be found in a Book titled "OMAHA BEACHEAD", which this writer secured from the Historical Division of the War Department. The reading of the Accounts, and studying the Attached Maps, will be interesting and informative, especially, to the Battalion Company Commanders and their Platoon Personnel. The 635th. TD BN is mentioned therein a number of times. The writer would be happy to share this Book with others who might be interested.

The Battalion supported the 1st. Division throughout the Northern France Campaign until 31 August, when it was assigned to the 4th. Cavalry Group as it continued to drive through Belgium to Butgenbach near Malmedy. From there the 4th. Cavalry Group was shifted to the Roetgen-Aachen Sector and assisted in the Drive Through the Hurtgen Forest.

After the Fall of Cologne, Germany, the Battalion was transferred from the 1st. Army to the 7th Army and assigned to the 71st Infantry Division. (Note: After the fall of Cologne, one of our Captains and 20 of our Enlisted Men were part of a Detail selected to raise the American Flag over Cologne.) The 71st. being a part of the 7th. Army. Two weeks later, on or about 1 April 1945, the 71st. Division, with this (635th) Battalion was transferred to the 3rd. Army. The Battalion supported the 71st. Division in its drive to and across the RHINE RIVER near Mannheim and on through central Germany to and into Austria. Elements of the 635th Tank Destroyers with the 71st. Division were among the Troops who advanced farthest East of any Western Front Troops.

V-E (Victory in Europe) day found the Battalion in Lambach, Austria, and after 11 months in the line in action against the Enemy with only one 10-day rest period immediately after active participation in the AACHEN Campaign, the Battalion took over its assigned duty of guarding, feeding and administering the Prisoner Of War Cage in Lambach. When our Battalion Commander "WINT" took over the supervision of the Cage on 7 May, it had within its confines, 19,160 Prisoners of War. After discharging 10,483 Enlisted Men and 575 Officers, 792 Volksstrom and 67 WACS through the 31st of May, on that day we still had in the PW Cage 785 Officers, 20,392 Enlisted Men and 92 Political Prisoners, and in the Hospitals under our Supervision were 82 Officers, 1,182 Enlisted Men and 418 Displaced Persons. In a segregated Cage under Special Guard were 65 SS Officers and 2,540 SS Troops. The displaced Persons we organized under Officer supervision processed 2,341 persons for shipment to their homes and on 31 May we still had 3,905 Displaced Persons on hand. Prisoners were screened by CIC Personnel before discharge and those within walking distance from Lambach were rapidly released. All means of Transportation were utilized within Prescribed Regulations to send Prisoners and Displaced Persons to their own Homes.



The Battalion was awarded the Bronze Service Award for participating in the initial assault for the Normandy Beachheads, and throughout the entire campaign on the Continent maintained the Highest Combat Efficiency.

Battle Casualties throughout the WW-2 Campaign were 1 Officer and 29 Enlisted Men KILLED IN ACTION. 1 Officer and 8 Enlisted Men DIED OF WOUNDS RECEIVED IN ACTION, making a TOTAL OF 2 OFFICERS AND 37 ENLISTED MEN MAKE THE SUPREME SACRIFICE. 5 Officers and 115 Enlisted Men WERE WOUNDED IN ACTION and EVACUATED. 3 Officers and 79 Enlisted Men WERE WOUNDED IN ACTION BUT NOT EVACUATED.

The Battalion participated actively in the following WW-2 ETO Campaigns: NORMANDY, NORTHERN FRANCE, RHINELAND, ARDENNES, and CENTRAL EUROPE. We took 4,639 PRISONERS OF WAR, and KNOCKED OUT 11 TANKS. We fought sometimes as Infantry and supported all actions of the Organizations to which we were assigned or attached. Generally the Firing Companies were under Divisional Control and used in support of Organic Anti-Tank Defense. While attached to the 4th Cavalry Group, the firing Companies were used for screening missions, road patrols against enemy patrol activity, combat patrols, outposts, road blocks and dismounted as Infantry in the Battle of the Hurtgen Forest. Our attachment to the 71st Infantry Division resulted in a series of swift marches with considerable use of our Battalion 3" Guns firing to assist the Infantry to advance through Wooded Areas and Towns. Our Battalion captured Towns, secured Bridge Sites and Dams, knocked out Tanks and Generally supported every action the Infantry Regiments participated in.

Another Item of Interest regarding the 635th. (of the many recorded items and actions of Interest) was after THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE was brought to an end, the Battalion was out of contact with the Enemy for the first time on 23 January 1945, since its participation in this Campaign, and on the 24th. of January the entire Battalion moved into its first rest, rehabilitation and refitting period since D-day. After a "72 HOUR ALL REST AND NO WORK PERIOD", road Marches to keep the Personnel fit, were inaugurated. A high state of Maintenance of vehicles and ordnance was conducted. All companies went to designated firing ranges and fired small arms, Machine Guns, bazookas, and the Reconnaissance Platoons fired their 37-MM Guns. Weapons Classes, classes on indirect firing, and FDC were conducted. All this resulted in a SUPERIOR rating from the Inspection Team of the 516th. Ordnance Battalion. Personal equipment was checked and cleaned. Men were given the opportunity to shower at designated shower Points and the Medical Detachment physically inspected all Personnel as prescribed. Moving Pictures and Stage Shows were arranged for, as well as passes to the "ON LIMITS" towns of Huy and Ardenne. In all every advantage was made available to the Personnel of the Battalion during their first justly earned "REST PERIOD" since the invasion of Normandy.

Following is the wording of one of the many letters of Commendation, received at the 635th. Bn. Hq. from Commanders of Higher Army Units to which we were attached:

201.22

HEADQUARTERS 4TH CAVALRY GROUP, APO 230, U.S. ARMY. 31 January 1945.

TO: Commanding Officer, Hq Troop, 4th Cavalry Group, Mecz & 80th AGF Band (Attd) 4th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, Mecz. 24th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, Mecz. 759th Light Tank Battalion 635th. Tank Destroyer Battalion (Towed) Company "C" 298th. Combat Engineer Battalion.

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