

# 705 Tank Destroyer Battalion Given Highest Award

On July 3, 1945, beneath grey skies of the Austrian village of Mondsee the men and officers of the 705 Tank Destroyer Battalion were awarded a citation from the former President of the United States, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, for their valiant defense of Bastogne, Belgium, which was surrounded and besieged by ten divisions of Germany's most elite troops.

Undergoing bitter cold, outnumbered four to one, surrounded by two SS Panzer divisions, under constant artillery fire and attack by some six other crack German divisions, the tank destroyers succeeded in stopping every armored thrust made by a brave and determined enemy while the 101st Airborne division repelled an almost continuous tide of German infantry attacks. This action took place between the dates 19, December and 17, January 1945 and will go down in the annals of military history as one of the most outstanding military feats of all time wherein one division of paratroopers with a battalion of tank destroyers sustained the full weight of ten divisions of the world's best troops.

The fact that Bastogne did not fall was one of the major reasons for the failure of Field Marshall Gerd von Rundstedt's last winter offensive in the Ardennes.

So for those reasons Lt. General Koyes of the 2nd Corps, 3rd U. S. Army presented the Blue of the Presidential Citation, the highest award a unit can win, to the 705 Tank Destroyer Battalion and stood in review of an outfit whose job had been well done. A fifteen gun salute rocked the mountains and vales like old familiar music to the tankers.

Another factor entered into the solemnity of the occasion this day, for each man realized alone and to himself that the battalion was breaking up under the Army reorganization system, and with this thought in mind Battalion Operations Officer, Captain Bergen, asked the men to make this a special parade for the officers and men who died and in dying gave the best of themselves to make their Battalion what it was.

So neither rain nor mud nor drenched uniforms took the snap from their marching that day, and had old Cliff been there to see his boys march he would have been proud, mighty proud, for he was then and now and forever Lt. Colonel Clifford Templeton, Commander of the 705 Tank Destroyer Battalion.

Also present at the ceremony were Major General Taylor of the 101st Airborne Division, and Major General Dager of the 11th Armored Division.