



Dedication

To those Officers and Men of the 771st Tank Destroyer Battalion who have made the supreme sacrifice and have laid down their lives in the defense of those ideals that we hold most dear so that we may live in peace, we dedicate this short history with a deep respect and a truly humble spirit.



Somewhere in Germany the American Flag flies proudly for the 771rds who gave their lives in the Fight for Freedom.

IN MEMORIAM KILLED IN ACTION

Private Edw. O. Baxter, Company C, 12 April 1945
 Cpl. Sidney Bernstein, Company C, 20 November 1944
 Sergeant Gerald J. Case, Company A, 4 April 1945
 Pfc. Michael Cimino, Company A, 27 February 1945
 Pfc. Clifford J. Clark, Company A, 27 February 1945
 Private Paul F. Dauer, Company A, 23 November 1944
 Tech V Louis DeCicco, Company A, 22 November 1944
 Pfc. Robert J. Egan, Company A, 18 November 1944
 Private Dean E. Glasco, Company C, 18 November 1944
 Sergeant John W. Hargus, Company A, 27 February 1945
 1st Lt. John W. Horton, Company A, 22 November 1944
 Private George P. Jebavy, Company A, 22 November 1944
 Private Robert J. Kemmet, Company A, 4 April 1945
 1st Lt. Robert C. Lemley, Company C, 9 April 1945
 Sgt. Anthony A. Masullo, Company C, 18 November 1944
 Corporal Arnold Polans, Company C, 2 March 1945
 Pfc. Alvah J. Prunty, Recon. Co. 4 April 1945
 Corporal Ray H. Richards, Company C, 26 February 1945
 Tech V Clyde H. Simmons, Company A, 27 February 1945
 Priv. Peter S.W. Sproule, Company A, 27 February 1945
 Private Charles E. Welch, Company C, 20 November 1944
 Private J. W. Whitworth, Company B, 17 December 1944
 Sgt. Issac E. Williams, Company C, 12 April 1945

DIED

Cpl. Frank A. Bergonzi, Company B, 22 January 1945
 Corporal John J. Cuneo, Company B, 22 January 1945
 Sgt. John C. Feminella, Recon. Co. 24 March 1942
 Tech V Joseph M. Gamble, Hq. Company 28 February 1945
 Private James Loscalzo, Company B, 12 May 1942
 Pfc. Rosario J. Maniscalco, Company B, 22 January 1945
 Tech. V Anth. J. Muscente, Company B, 22 January 1945
 Tech. V John G. Pinto, Company B, 22 January 1945
 Pfc. Frank M. Reese, Company B, 22 January 1945
 2nd. Lt. A. J. Romanelli, Company B, 26 March 1944
 Priv. Goudget T. Williams, Company C, 26 May 1943

THE 771st TANK DESTROYER BATTALION Wounded in Action Germany/Purple Heart Awarded

CO "A" Allan Kinder, 27 Feb. 1945
 CO "C" Dennis Desmond, 4 Apr. 1945
 CO "C" Angelo Basso, Nov. 1944
 CO "C" Joe Klein, 11 Nov. 1944
 CO "C" John H. Petersen, 18 Nov. 1945
 CO "C" Joe Perkowski, deceased, Bronze Star
 HQ. CO. Larry Guadamonte, 10 Apr. 1945
 Milton Peoples, 1 Dec. 1944

FOREWORD

This is the story of a Separate Battalion, whose main job is fighting - - - sometimes among themselves, sometimes with MP's, but mostly against the "Krauts". It has had its "ups" and its "downs", its good days and bad ones, but never has it failed to "deliver" when the "chips were down".

Since the day of its activation it has been a "lone wolf" battalion and it will probably continue to be; but its courage, loyalty, determination, and cock-sureness as a unit will never be surpassed.

It has traveled far and wide, at home, in the UK, and on the continent of Europe, but nowhere have its members failed to "find a home".

Its big task - - helping in the defeat of Germany - - has been completed. It may be called upon for other things. Of this we can be certain - the 771 can do and will do anything that is requested, and do it well!

IN THE BEGINNING

One sunny summer's day in June 1941, the 15th to be exact, there was a lot of whooping and hollering, and some confusion, too, around the Post at Fort Ethan Allen, Vt., as the Anti-tank Batteries of the 186th and 187th Field Artillery Regiments were hustled from the comparative comfort of their barracks areas and were cast forth into a tent area on the south side of the Post, known as the "National Guard" area. This conglomeration of New York National Guardsmen, and Selective Service Men, quickly formed a solid nucleus of what was there after to become the pride and despair of commanding officers, and higher commanders, the bane of existence to the Waco MPs and a cause of alarm to the "Krauts". Thus began the 771st Tank Destroyer Battalion - - - then known as the 71th Anti-tank Battalion - (Provisional).

Strictly speaking, all these goings-on were Top Secret and very hush-hush, not to be revealed until the large scale First Army maneuvers in the Carolinas, both North and South, in October and November of that same year.

The Sedan breakthru, Dunkerque, and the rapid collapse of the highly touted French Army caused by the so-called "blitz" tactics of the Wehrmacht in 1940, had the top commanders of all armies burning the midnight oil figuring out the best method of stopping attacks, large and small, by Panzer forces. Early in 1941, Lt. Gen. Hugh A. Drum, Commanding General of the First Army and the Eastern Defense Command brought

forth and won approval for the idea of hard-hitting, aggressive, highly-mobile, and powerful units whose primary task was to find and destroy enemy armor. This 71st AT Battalion (Prov.) was one of the small children of what was to come.

Lt. Col. Wayland Minot was ordered to the command of the new foundling by Brigadier General (then Colonel) Carl A. Baehr, commanding the 71st Field Artillery Brigade. Col. Minot's staff included Capt. Walter S. Mullins, Capt. Maurice Longstreet, and Lt. Donald Bigbee. The commanders of the original batteries were Capt. Alfred G. Seitz (G. 187), Capt. John Min-ton (H, 187), Capt. David DeG. Smith (G, 186) and Capt. Louis H. Ehrichs (H. 186). These batteries were later designated as A, B, C, and D in the order named above.

The new Battalion started at once on an intensive period of training, of developments, and ingenious improvisations. Every member of the unit from Col. Minot to the latest joined private "wrote the book". Never has been seen such a collection of sand-table tacticians, scratch-pad doodlers, kindergarten ordnance enthusiasts, field experts, and fire-control inventors. The need for improving a rapid method of sighting and tracking brought out the best, and worst in improvisations and inventions. The towed 75's of the batteries sprouted forth appendages that would make Rube Goldberg blush, and the arguments as to their merits became long and acrid. As August turned up on the calendar so did a moving target range on the Underhill Artil-

lery Range, at Sweeney Farm, some 14 miles from the Post. Here the arguments gave way to blasts of gunfire. Competition was violent. C Battery's Plumber's pipe special, D Battery's twin panoramics, and B Battery's mirror equipped ration cans, each had its test, and each had its cheering section. None of the arguments were settled, but the people who repaired the target sleds finally gave up in complete exhaustion. The shooting was "super".

II

THE GIPSY BATTALION

With the end of August the Battalion started off on the first of a series of moves that gave it the name of the "Gipsy Battalion". These moves which were to take the Battalion more than 15,000 miles by road, rail, and ship, thru 23 States and the District of Columbia, Canada, and six foreign countries - - - from the banks of the Winooski River to the Elbe, via Cowhouse Creek and the Rappahannock, were signaled by a small start from Ethan Allen to the maneuvers at Fort Devens, Massachusetts. Here under VI Corps the Battalion spent three busy and profitable weeks.

Here it first came face to face with rapid changes of position, night movements, map reading and orientation as taught by the ever-present Good Humor man. Here, too, the word "SNAFU" was born. Here it saw its first, but far from last, tank attack; and won such memorable battles as East Pepperell and Shirley Rd. It set new records for mobility from a sleeping start and received its first commendation, being mentonied in

glowing terms by Major General Karl Truesdell, VI Corps commander, at the final critique.

But Gipsies we were, so while the parent 71st Brigade went back to the hills of Vermont, the Auslanders took off for Camp Edwards, Mass. to practice direct fire technique on the new moving target range. Modesty prevents a full account of what took place, but this new 10,000 dollar range project was closed for repairs for a period of six months after two days of the Battalion's shooting.

Then it was back to Ethan Allen for an all too short week, and then away on a four day trek by road to North Carolina for the First Army maneuvers, and two months of the rugged life midst the pines, and dust, and snakes of the McKinney Lake area, and a goodly portion of both north and south Carolina. During this period Col. Minot was taken ill and was followed in the command of the Battalion by Colonel Michael Fibisch, and then by Major Donald McGrayne, who came from the 187th Field Artillery Regiment.

It was on these Carolina maneuvers that the Battalion first cemented its reputation as a "Hell-Bent-For-Leather" unit. The first maneuver month saw the Battalion receiving further training in its AT role, and it became a part of TA 2 (a Tank Attacker Group commanded by Brigadier General (then Colonel) Charles M. Busbee). General Drum gave these groups top road priority, and hurled them with screaming sirens against the armored forces of General George S. Patton, which had been committed on the "Red" side. Rapid and conti-

nuous movement became the order of the day; the populace of Chesterfield and Ruby became old acquaintances; PeeDee River, Cheraw, Southern Pines, Rockingham, Ellerbee, and Chapel Hill became familiar names and places.

Then came the first week of December and the first of the many heartbreaking farewells to be said by the Battalion to the "locals", and the long road march back to frigid Vermont started. Making 250 miles a day, the Battalion swept northward until it struck Hagerstown Maryland. There it met General Mud in all his worst, and a horrible night was spent in dragging trucks and guns into a field, only to wind them out again to the accompaniment of tired, cursing, and snapping shear pins. The next day the mud was strewn for ten miles along the highway, and it was a mighty tired crew that drove onto the Susquehanna flats at Binghampton that night. The last day's journey, a mere 350 miles, was a jaunt, the home stretch, for at the end of that cold long ride awaited the families and sweathearts left behind more than two months before. The welcoming crowds on the streets of Burlington and Winooski and the happy families had nothing on the men over 28 years of age, for they were to be released before Christmas. The following day, Sunday December 7th 1941, started as one of complete rest. Then came the terse radio flashes, "Japs Attack Pearl Harbor". Stunned silence followed initial disbelief, and as more complete reports filtered in the men over 28 quietly started to unpack, for they knew, as all did, that "this

was it". The more or less exuberant training of the past was replaced by dead earnest, for we were faced with grim reality now.

Eight days later came the War Department order activating the 771st Tank Destroyer Battalion, and the dream child suddenly found himself grown up. Thus on December 15th Battery A became Company A, Battery B became Company B, Headquarters Battery became Headquarters Company, and C and D Batteries were split up to fill A, B, and Headquarters and to form Reconnaissance Company. C Company was not to be activated until nearly two months later. To bring the Battalion up to strength, officers and men from the AT platoons of the Headquarters Batteries of the 186th, 187th, and 258th Field Artillery Regiments were transferred. A Medical Detachment was formed under direction of Captain (then Lt.) Louis L. Lobes who was transferred from the 186th FA.

A busy week followed during which personnel was shifted about, supply records were checked, and administrative people poured over the new T/O and E. The range firing started again, and once more the gunners proved their worth, cutting down many a tree with their trusty 75's, and ruining many a target and sled. One B Company section achieved fame by tossing out 25 rounds in one minute. The weather was sub-zero, the snow was deep, but the steaming gun tubes and the activity kept everyone warm.

The start of the year saw the beginning of scouting and patrolling exercises, cold and snow being no deter-

rents, and many a long hard sham battle was waged around ambushes and strong points all over the Underhill range. All types of training filled the time until the middle of February, and then again the Gipsies took off, this time on a crisp 40 below zero morning, for Camp Edwards via Fort Devens. Two days later the Battalion arrived at Cape Cod and found itself joined by the 626th and 629th Tank Destroyer Battalions, which formed a Group under the direction and control of Colonel B. Q. Jones, VI Corps Anti-tank Officer. Two weeks of training began featuring scouting and patrolling, night cross country marches, map work, and choice of positions. Here the motorcycles made their first appearance, and an eager group of tyros started to put mileage on tires and crash bars. The Ides of March found the Battalion once more on the road, back to Fort Ethan Allen, but not for long. Two weeks after this return to home station the Gipsies again packed their barrack bags, kissed their wives and sweethearts farewell, and took off for the A. P. Hill Military Reservation, Kingston, N.Y. treated the Battalion royally the first night, Frederick, Maryland the second night.

Hardly had the Battalion unloaded at the Corbin Corner bivouac than it started an intensive training period with its Camp Edwards playmates, the 626 and 629th TD's, all under the aggressive direction of Col. B. Q. Jones. The months of April, May, and June that followed were busy but happy ones. A hard work week was followed by an extended week-end; and with Washington, Richmond, Baltimore, and New York close

by, life could hardly be called "rough". High spots of this period were the interbattalion sham battles, the 40 mile an hour road reconnaissances, plenty of blank ammunition for the rifles, and the climax was reached with the dawn crossing of the Rappahannock River, aided, abetted, and observed by a large part of the graduating class of West Point. June brought the Battalion another change of command when Colonel (then Major) Beverly St. G. Tucker of the 186th FA took over the reins. Mid-July saw the Battalion make its first rail movement to Pine Camp, New York, and many a lesson was learned the hard way about how to chock and tie wheels.

At Pine Camp the Gipsies returned temporarily to the parent 71st Field Artillery Brigade and worked with it on several field exercises. Here also it took its first lessons in the newly developed tactics for TDs, Judo, and demolitions. Here, also, it had its first brush with armor in large quantities, as it fought up and down and across the immense reservation against the combat commands of the 4th Armored Division. The Battalion's showing in these sham battles was most encouraging to all of the TDs. All too soon the 71st Brigade returned to Ethan Allen and the Gipsies packed up again for another rail movement - this time down to the heart of Texas at Camp Hood.

III

WE BECOME OF AGE

Following a leisurely and pleasant Pullman ride to that thriving metropolis, Copperas Cove, Texas, the Battalion ate caleche dust over what seemed to be interminable miles ending at a most amazing hill-top of brush, caleche, snakes, and armadillos, known to the localites as Rattlesnake Hill, near Cowhouse Creck. The period between this day and the 18th of January 1943 was one never to be forgotten by those who went thru the various stages of training. The range firing, the problems, large and small, and all types of training were intensive and extensive. The fact that the Battalion was some 12 miles from the nearest habitation, not counting Pidcoke, added little to the enjoyment of the personnel. However, in spite of all, the Battalion became well known in Waco, Dallas, Temple, and many a lesser spot. During this period the unit underwent almost a complete change in its officer personnel because the older officers left for places "upstairs". New officers came in with great frequency, in great numbers, and for varying periods of time. Here too was received a large number of men fresh from the confines of Camp Roberts, California. If any part of the Camp Hood saga warrants special mention, it is certainly those days on the so-called Infiltration Course, days that were equally tough and interesting, and days that developed new skills and thrills. Here too we first became acquainted with what was to be the fighting weapon, the Tank Destroyer M-10, and the welkin rang with the roaring

of motors as the first drivers were taught the mysteries of the "big babies".

On the 18th of January 1943, Colonel Beverly St. G. Tucker (then Lt. Col.) left the Battalion to take over a TD Group and Lt. Col. (then Major) David DeG. Smith, Executive officer, took command of the "Gipsies". At once they lived up to their name, and true to the reports from Burlington, and in spite of rumors about School Troops, Desert Center, Overseas Duty, and Camp Lewis, Wash., the 771st again took to the Pullmans and headed back to the snow and the plenty below weather of the Green Mountains of Vermont.

In the two months that followed this periodic return to home station, to families, and to the parent Brigade, the Battalion demonstrated many of the more lively arts, to friends of the Brigade. All too soon good-byes were said to the Sugar House, The Black Cat, and the Park Cafe, and again the Battalion took to the roads headed back to our old friend, A. P. Hill Military Reservation. From the camp in the pines, the Battalion sallied forth both day and night, sham battling everything in sight. This period was marked by a great deal of individual platoon training, night movements cross country, and in the later months, incessant range firing with all calibres. May brought an A. G. F. Test, the second of its kind, resulting in a very high score. The Battalion held a formal parade to officially receive its new colors from the hands of Major General Schmidt. July saw the Battalion engaged in training for Indirect Fire missions, with officers and non-coms doing the spotting. Here it

was that Sgt. Migliore of "A" Company won the championship by getting a target hit with his first round. Busy days followed each other with amazing rapidity, and September 1943 arrived almost before the Battalion was aware of it.

September also brought with it the first step in the finale of all that the Battalion had been training for. Back in February it was first put on an "Alert" status for Overseas Movement, and each succeeding month brought a new "Alert". Now that September had arrived, and the air was full of rumors as to the next move of the "Gipsies", Pools grew in each company and the wagers on the next stop were large and found ready takers. A great deal of the shouting and laughter that had characterized the former months was gone and in its place was a new soberness. Yes, the Battalion had orders to move, but where? Enroute the column passed the busy docks of Baltimore and the sight of much shipping added a last sobering touch. Was it to take off from Baltimore without any chance to say good-bye? When the column finally cleared the city, there were many sighs of relief, but all realized that the 771st shipping day was close. Fort Dix next stop!

And now every man knew what the next step would be. The days were feverish with activity, new clothes for old, packing equipment to be taken, turning in that to remain behind. So great was the demand for new items of clothing that supply sections began to think there were 6000 to equip instead of 600. Not all of the activity took place in the daytime. There was hardly a spot of New Jersey, New York, and eastern

Pennsylvania which did not feel the impact of 771ers having a last homeland fling. Mid-September and Major Wilkins, Battalion Executive, Capt. Tyndall S/Sgt. Ferdin, and Corporal Gottman disappeared. No one knew where they had gone, but everyone guessed that they were the Battalion advanced party. "It won't be long now", was the thought in the minds of all, as show-down inspection followed inspection, almost daily.

Finally, on a drab Sunday morning, October 11th 1943, a column of QM trucks pulled up at the Battalion camp and rapidly took on its cargo of men and barracks bags. Away went the gypsies but this time not in their own transportation, and again speculation was rife as to the destination. Several hours later unloading took place at Camp Shanks, N. Y. and the Battalion found itself plunged into the very midst of the hurly-burly of overseas shipment. Two days of final inspections, physicals, shots, "must" movies and then those last evening passes to New York. On Saturday all hands were restricted to camp. "A" Company moved out of camp on the 19th followed the next evening by the balance of the Battalion. That was, indeed, a never to be forgotten trip. The long walk to the train under heavy packs, the black-out train ride with much forced hilarity, the trek from the train to the ferry boat, a short boat ride down the Hudson and then the pier with the Union Castle Liner, "Capetown Castle", looming up against the light of New York will always be vivid memories. Aboard we climbed and found bunks, double loaded, of course, and everyone went to sleep with varied and mixed emotions. The next morning found

the ship still at the dock, but as the clock touched high noon it steamed slowly out of New York Harbor, past the Statue of Liberty, and out into the open sea, which was to start a new chapter in the history of the 771st Tank Destroyer Battalion.

IV

OVERSEAS SERVICE

The ship-board days passed with a swift monotony, and after the initial tremors about subs and seasickness proved unfounded, the Battalion lined the rails daily to bitch about the food, the double loading, the daily boat drills, and the lack of adequate toilet space which in the days of emergency, pork days, caused many a helmet to become a "total loss". Then one morning we awoke to find the coast of Ireland off the port side and life began to look better. There followed a night trip thru the Irish Channel and a two day wait for the Liverpool fog to lift, and then up the Mersey we went and docked at Liverpool. Finally it was the 771st's turn to unload, and off to a train and away thru the English Mid-lands, the border mountains and finally deep into Wales. Off the train into inky darkness, relieved only by the blessed Red Cross Clubmobile with most welcome coffee and donuts; then into trucks and away again thru wet darkness, and finally thru ankle deep mud to the Nissen Huts which were to be the Battalion home for a short time. Came the dawn, and the 771 rolled out to take a look at Wales. Rain, mud, Nissen Huts, and Picton Castle were all that were visible. Spirits drooped for the moment.

It came to be known that the 771 was assigned to First Army, and attached to V Corps and the 28th Division. Then started the drawing of new equipment, and the inevitable rumor of when the big day, "D" day was to be. The 771 was here, so lets go! November passed and December was well under way when the Gipsies hoisted anchor, bade farewell to Tenby and Haverfordwest, shook off the mud of Pembrokeshire and road marched to Wenvoe, at Barry, near Cardiff, in the shire of Glamorgan. "A" Company together with a "B" Company advanced party were at the Saunton Training Center, for Assault troops, but joined the Battalion at Wenvoe for Christmas. "A" and "B" Companies later moved to St. Mellon's Camp.

The 771st Tank Destroyer Battalion, to its intense disgust, had been chosen (a great honor it was assured) to be the troops to train all Tank Destroyer troops in the Replacement System in the ETO. The end of December and early January found the Battalion madly planning courses, training instructors and assistants, building training aids, searching for firing ranges, and making up schedules, with the evenings being well spent in "finding a home". The people of Barry and Cardiff turned out to be most cordial and wedding bells started to ring in the distance. January, February, March and April passed with never a dull moment; and included training classes at camp, range firing expeditions to black Mountain, firing at the AAA site at Barry Island, taking an unintentional shot at His Majesty the King, and long cross-country scouting and patrolling exercises over fields and thru hedges. Tremendous maintenance and building

programs were begun, and all the time growing almost beneath our feet were the preparations for the coming Invasion. The British AA guns and rockets, the searching lights at night, the "Alerts", and an occasional Kraut plane were all a part of the scene, as much so as the ever-present barrage balloons. Then came the first of May, and the 771st once again turned to the Gipsy life and it was away to Saunton, in Devonshire.

This road march turned out to be one of the 771st finer trips; even the weather was exceptionally fine, something different for English weather, and the drive thru Glamorgan, Monmouthshire, Gloucestershire, Somerset and Devonshire was one thru a springtime countryside bright with apple blossoms, fragrant with lilacs. The new camp at Saunton Sands was something else again. Where the rivers Taw and Torridge meet just before plunging into Bristol Channel, Mother Nature had over the past centuries piled up a huge mass of sand dunes. This sand blew hither and yon with every wind. We got the sand coming and going and the wind blew all of the time with varying, but always sand carrying, intensity. There upon the fairways of the famous Saunton Golf Course the Gipsies pitched camp. Now it will Take Ten yeans to rebuild the famous golf course.

The next two months of May and June were devoted to getting the old 771 back into fighting trim, and no replacement training entered the picture as a quick MTP review was followed by exercises on the boggy moors of Withpool Common, Indirect fire in the blowing

mists of Exmoor, and direct fire midst that fog drenched bit of loneliness known as Dartmoor. It was on the trips to these places and to the range at Minehead that the Battalion did its part in running up the reverse-land-lease score, as the narrow streets of medieval English villages were widened by the unyielding sides of the M-10s. These months of selftraining passed, all too soon, and with July came a resumption of "reple-deple" training. This time we were directed to use the destroyers in the training, and so the maintenance crews were kept busy replacing front ends, transmissions, and mountains of track, a job admirably accomplished under most trying conditions of supply and working facilities.

On the 27th August, "A" Company packed up and departed to act as the battalion advanced party on its move to the continent. The balance of the battalion moved out on the 15th of September, road marching, complete with all cots and canyas, down to the sea. We staged for the short sea voyage at a place with the intriguing name of Piddlehinton, this place being a suburb of Dorchester; then away to the loading "hards" on the famous Bill of Portland. LCTs were boarded and after a night ride dumped the Battalion at the famed Omaha Beach, dunking one of the destroyers in the process of the unloading.

Transient Area No. 2 at Vierville became the battalion home for three days while we endeavored to find the location of the next stop. Then the 771 started off to blaze the "Gipsy Trail" thru the heart of the bathtub

Calvados section, and skirting Paris arrived at Fountainbleau to set up the 771 Special, a tent camp in the woods. This trip took the unit thru much of the late combat area, and it was a much more sober group that arrived at the Fountainbleau "way station". Replacements were in the offing so the Battalion was back to the salt mines. One Saturday evening Col. Smith was called out of a "B" Company party; and with Cpts Petersen and Graeber took off at high speed for Belgium and the Ninth Army Hq.

Wednesday a battalion meeting told the whole story which was short and to the point. The 771 was needed at the front and at once; and there was no time for any refresher training nor time to get-together after the dislocations of "school troop" work. Part of the destroyers were loaded on transports, part on trains, and at the week's end, away went the Gipsies to start a new chapter in the already lengthy history of the Battalion.

V

COMBAT DIARY

After a two day march which took the 771 thru Meaux, Rheims (where it spent a night in the rain and mud) Namur, Liege, Tongren and out to a small town called Groote Spouwen, the battalion pitched and dug a camp midst the apple orchards of Belgium. Here a new language was added to the battalion repertoire, Flamisch. This camp was right smack on the V-1 route to London and hardly an hour of day or night passed without

one of these robots zoming overhead to the sung accompaniment of "Buzz Bomb Keep these Motors Running". The song picked up a great deal of fervor after one came down to visit and landed within three hundred yards of Reconnaissance Company's camp area.

The Battalion equipment shortages were rapidly filled and almost before we were aware that we were ready, the 771 moved up into Holland to join the 102nd Infantry Division. Men of the Ozarks, who had recently arrived. It was on the 5th of November that "C" Company went north to Gangelt to join the 113th Cavalry Group in defending a long thin line, and the rest of the 771 moved into a patch of woods at Schinveld, Holland. On the 6th "B" Company moved up into the lines from Gilrath to Teveren, and "A" Company took over the rest of the Geilenkirchen salient from Scherpenseel to Warichen. The days that followed were busy ones for everyone; wire to be laid and kept open, patrol activity at night, gun positions to be dug. It was an easy introduction to combat. There were no seriously wounded and all hands got to know and recognize the sound of the famous "88" and the "burp" gun, and to tell with accuracy the caliber of the "incoming mail". Here the first direct fire missions were fired by "A" and "B" Companies, and the first Indirect Fire harassing mission was fired by the same companies. "C" Company had a rather rough time while with the cavalry for they were in a sector where the Krauts made themselves most obnoxious.

On the 12th of November the Battalion, less C Company moved to Heerlen, Holland to prepare for big

things. C joined the family two days later and the stage was set for what turned out to be a mighty rough party. A was assigned to the 405th Infantry, B was assigned to the 407th Infantry, and C was assigned to the 406th Infantry, starting what turned out to be a very fruitful and happy union. Reconnaissance assigned its Recon. Platoons to the Gun Companies, the 1st to "A", the 2nd to "B", and the 3rd to "C" (to remain attached Throughout the entire combat phase). The Pioneer Platoon became a part of the enlarged Battalion CP group. Hq. Co. (Better termed, the mighty and faithful servants) remained with Battalion Hq.

The 405th and 406th Regiments were assigned, with their attachments, to the Second Armored Division for the coming push; and on the 17th, "C" Company moved up into Immendorf to begin an action which culminated with the company knocking out 12 German tanks, and winning the Presidential Unit Citation for their courage and skill under the most difficult and trying conditions. That same day "A" company moved up into the lines with the 405th to begin an action which carried them thru to the banks of the Roer.

The 18th of November saw the 771 suffer its first battle fatalities when "C" company suffered two deaths and "A" company suffered one. There is not sufficient space in a short history to recall all that took place from the 18th of November to the 30th when Linnich was finally taken and our lines were firmly established along the line of the Roer River. We do not believe that any of those who were there will ever forget those days. Certainly the Officers and Men that are the 771st

Tank Destroyer Battalion did a job against the fanatical opposition of some of Germany's finest troops that needs no apology, for there was never a backward step, never a sign of faltering no matter what the task assigned. It will suffice to say that "A" company, "C" company, and "B" company, after their committment on the night of the 20th, and their attached Reconnaissance Platoons brought to their battalion the honor and respect of all who saw them and earned the undying gratitude of the infantry men who they were supporting. Apweiler, Gereonsweiler, Prummern, Wurn, Beek, Lindern, Puffendorf, Gereonsweiler ridge, Linnich, Welz, Ebern, Flossdorf, and Rordorf were taken. The 3rd Platoon of "C" fired 232 rounds in Indirect Fire in 15 minutes at one critical point; under the able direction of Lt. (then S/Sgt.) John A. Bertucci.

Without respite after this exhausting drive, preparations were speeded for the crossings of the Roer River, which crossing was scheduled to take place shortly after mid-December. The Battalion CP had moved up to Loverich, after a way stop at Palenberg. Hardly were these preparations nearing completion when the German Armies far to the South struck in the Ardennes and all plans for a December crossing of the Roer were abandoned. In their place arose plans for a defensive phase, for the 102nd was not going to give up such hard-won ground under any circumstances. December passed into January and February came along, with still never a dull moment for the 771, who were constantly firing both direct and indirect missions to the vast annoyance and detriment of the Krauts across the river. In the

latter days of January the 102nd together with the British on the left pulled off a perfectly planned operation to reduce the dangerous Brachelen salient, which included about 100 pillboxes and troop shelters, and took the ground almost without firing a shot. It was on this operation that the 771 had its first member taken prisoner when Lt. Woodward's "Cub" plane was shot down near the river. (Later rescued near Moosberg, Germany on April 29, 1945, by American forces over-running Germany).

The February days were doubly active. In addition to normal firing there were the new plans for the Roer River crossings to be perfected. On February 23rd. the crossings were made, and at midnight the destroyers of the 771st swarmed over in the order "A", "B", "C", the first armor in the XIII Corps to cross to support the Infantry. Four rough days followed, and then the German resistance broke and the 102nd swept on to Krefeld in record time. Many and varied were the missions which the 771 was called upon to accomplish, but as in the past, all were done and done well.

Now that the banks of the Rhine were reached the 771, which had received no rest time since 6 November, pulled back to Krefeld for maintainance and rehabilitation, plus some inspections. However, at once three platoons, one each from the gun companies, went into position to fire indirect missions, and within a week, direct missions across the Rhine were in order. As March ran out the battalion entered a new attachment and one which was to give it experience in a new type

of high speed fighting. On 30 March the Battalion reported to the 11th Cavalry Group.

About 2100 on the night of 31 March, the 771st Tank Destroyer Battalion again took to the road, this time under the direction of a cavalry group. Up along the Rhine River it marched, crossed at bomb and shell-flattened Wesel and went on into the province of Westphalia. Easter Day 1945 saw the Gipsies encamped in and around the towns of Darup and Nottuln. Hardly had the battalion come to a halt when orders were received attaching "A" company to the 36th Cavalry Squadron, "B" to the 44th. Away they went with the fast-moving cavalry setting a terrific pace for the heavy M-36's. Northward and eastward went the advance and at the end of the first day "A" closed in the town of Ostbevern, to be joined shortly by the cavalry headquarters and the 771 advanced party. The battalion CP and "C" company were frantically trying to get across the Ems river and finally made it about dark far to the south of Munster. The night that followed was one never to be forgotten by those who were in Ostbevern, and a hundred stories could be told of "that night in Ostbevern" when 200 German Infantry and 6 SP guns came to call. After Ostbevern the pace quickened and on ever eastward went the 771 providing AT defenses for the north flank of the Ninth Army and keeping contact with the British on the left. Over the Weser just a week after crossing the Rhine, on thru Hannover province and across the Leine River. Here an unfortunate artillery concentration caused heavy losses,

but on went the 771 until they were north of Hannover. At this point, at Oberende, a hurry call came from the 102 and the battalion, less "B" company who stayed with the cavalry, turned south, passed thru Hannover and joined the "Men of the Ozarks", and once again turned eastward on a drive that never slackened until the banks of the Elbe were reached. Here the battalion ground to a halt and started to replace the shredded boogie wheels and perform other most highly needed maintenance, as well as give rest to tired officers and men who had been hitting a terrific pace for two weeks. Special merit should go to the supply and transportation personnel who saw too it that the Battalion never ran out of gas, oil, or food, altho' at times they were going back nearly 200 miles to get the needed supplies. Two weeks after the 771 had crossed the Rhine, they were on the Elbe with Berlin just 45 miles away. At this time "A" company, less one platoon at Gardelegen, was in Stendal as was Headquarters and the CP. "C" company was some 20 miles north at Osterberg, and "B" company was taking a cure at the lake resort of Arendsee. The promised two weeks of rest came to an abrupt halt as the Gipsies again loaded up and took off late one night, after only two days rest, and headed north and west this time. The Krauts had formed a special Panzer Division and called it the "Clausewitz" Division. With a mission of "raising hell" in the Ninth Army rear areas and going on down to the Hartz Mountains this group of "Eager Beavers" started out and did succeed in cutting a large number of MSRs before they were brought to a sharp and fatal

halt near the Corps headquarters at Klotze. For this operation, appropriately named "Kaput", the 771 was attached to the 5th Armored Division. Here it worked in conjunction with the 628th TD, the latter commanded by the 771 alumnus Lt. Col. John Minton, former "B" company commander.

At the conclusion of this operation the 771 settled down to the long delayed and much needed maintenance work in the Neferchau — Wenze — Kussey area. A week passed and then the battalion again rejoined the 102nd Division and took up posts around the Gardelegen area with CP at Lindstedt. A week there and then another move to the north to the Calbe area. The war was rapidly running out and the Gypsies were hard at work getting the Krauts "shaped up" via Military Government lines when the German High Command finally threw in the sponge and V-E Day became a reality. The 771st received the news in a very sober spirit, realizing that this day did not mean the end of the war, and remembering those officers and men who had given their lives in the fight. On Sunday May 13th a special service was held for these men at both Catholic and Protestant Churches, and they were attended by all officers and men of the Battalion. Thus came to a close the combat diary of the 771st Tank Destroyer Battalion. During six months of combat, during which time the battalion was never out of light artillery range, it had made a fine record of accomplishments. Twenty-one of its destroyers had been lost, twenty-one of its men and two of its officers had been killed in action, seven other men had died, fourteen officers and

one hundred and one men had suffered wounds. On the other side of the ledger was a figure of several hundred of the enemy killed, an unknown number wounded, and severe losses inflicted by the sharpshooting gunners of the destroyers.

VI

"CONTROLLED BY THE 771st"

With the end of the combat phase in the ETO, the 771st settled down to the work of Military Government, continuing to reside in Kreis Salzwedel, and Kreis Gardelegen. With mid-May the Gypsies made another move. This time to Kreis Neuhaldensleben. The battalion was given the mission of administering to half of this Kreis and the battalion CP was set up in Eilsleben. "A" Company started to delve into the mysteries of making synthetic gasoline; Recon took over a Salt Mine, "B", "C" and Hq. Companies spent much time trying to "shape up" numerous Poles and Russians. It would not be the true 771st if it stayed very long in one place, and true to that tradition, the battalion moved again on the 1st of June going out of Saxony down into Thuringia to take over a section of Kreis Gotha. Here the towns were so small and poor that the companies again were wide-spread and as the military government duties slackened a training program was instituted. After some very realistic range firing with the 90mm guns at German tanks, the battalion received its category and found itself in Category IV, to be deactivated. This was changed a few days later to

Category II, for further service. At this point the old battalion rapidly underwent changes as the men with over 85 points went out to the 607th TD and were replaced by low point men from that unit. With the first of July came another move. This one took the battalion down into Bavaria where a tent camp was set up in the pine woods near Teugn. Next saw all of the men with point scores between 80 and 84 leave for the 607th TD and at the same time all of the officers with point scores of 85 or more left to join Category IV battalions. Thus a considerable percentage of the officers and men who had made up the 771 and who had taken such a prominent part in its activities during the more than four years since the days of its original birth left the old battalion. And here this short history closes. The 771st Tank Destroyer may go on to greater and better things, or it may join the ranks of those units who will be disbanded in the coming days of peace, but whatever its fate, the 771 will live forever in the memories and in the hearts of those who were a part of it. Those memories will never be erased by time.

THE 771st COMBAT COMMANDERS AND STAFF

Battalion Commander	David DeG. Smith, Lt. Col. FA
Executive Officer	Frank F. Wilkins, Major FA. Robert J. Petersen, Major FA
Adjutant S-1	James C. Altemus, Capt. FA
S-2	William A. Paddock, Capt. FA
S-3	Robert J. Petersen, Major FA James C. Altemus, Capt. FA
S-4	Charles E. Graeber, Capt. Cav.
CO of Headquarters Co.	Robert H. White, Capt. FA
CO of Reconnaissance Co.	John E. Clarke, Capt. FA
CO of "A" Company	Heber G. Winfield, Capt. FA
CO of "B" Company	Millard F. Randolph, Capt. FA
CO of "C" Company	Walter S. Beaver, Capt. FA (wounded in action 9 Apr. 1945) Kenneth H. Van Tassel, Capt. FA
CO of Med. Detachment	Louis A. Lobes, Capt. MC Corley W. Odom, Capt. MC

771st UNIT COMMANDERS AND STAFF

Battalion Commanders

S-3

Lt. Col. Wayland Minot Capt. Walter S. Mullins
Col. Michael Fibisch Capt. David B. Gorman
Major Donald D. McGrayne Capt. David DeG. Smith
Lt. Col. Beverly St. G. Tucker Capt. Frank F. Wilkins
Lt. Col. David DeG. Smith Capt. Richard B. Wilder

Capt. Joseph V. Tyndall

Battalion Executives

Capt. Walter S. Mullins Capt. Kenneth H. Van Tassel
Capt. Alfred G. Seitz Major Robert J. Petersen
Capt. Louis H. Ehrichs Capt. James C. Altemus
Major Clifford W. Butt S-4
Major David DeG. Smith Lt. Stephen J. Porcari
Major Frank F. Wilkins Capt. Louis H. Erichs
Major Robert J. Petersen Capt. Joseph V. Tyndall
S-1 Capt. Charles E. Graeber

Lt. Donald Bigbie
Capt. Clifford W. Butt
Capt. James C. Altemus
Lt. John J. Fackler

S-2

Capt. Maurice Longstreet
Capt. Frank F. Wilkins
Lt. Hugh B. Speed
Capt. William A. Paddock

Reconnaissance Company

Capt. David DeG. Smith
Capt. Frank F. Wilkins
Capt. Clifford W. Butt
Capt. William A. Paddock
Lt. Albert Duckwitz
Capt. John E. Clarke

Company "A"

Capt. Alfred G. Seitz
Lt. Frank J. Campbell
Lt. Edward D. Foster
Lt. George L. Tayler
Lt. Frank J. Dillon
Lt. Joseph E. Fawk
Capt. Heber G. Winfield

Headquarters Company

Capt. Frank F. Wilkins
Lt. Edward D. Foster
Lt. Frederick Yoos
Lt. John Sanguinetti
Capt. Robert J. Petersen
Capt. Joseph V. Tyndall
Capt. Robert H. White

Company "B"

Capt. John H. Minton
Lt. Edward D. Foster
Capt. Richard B. Wilder
Capt. George A. Dick
Capt. Millard F. Randolph

Company "C"

Capt. David B. Gorman
Lt. Frank J. Campbell
Capt. Kenneth H. Van Tassel
Capt. Walter S. Beaver

Medical Detachment

Capt. Louis A. Lobes
Capt. Corley W. Odom

**771st TANK DESTROYER BATTALION
BATTLEFIELD COMMISSIONS**

The following enlisted men of the 771st were awarded battlefield commissions as 2nd. Lts. because of the efficiency, courage, and the qualities of leadership which they had shown on the field of battle.

Charles T. Hedrick,	"A" Company	15 December 1944
Thomas W. Cullen,	Recon. Co.	16 December 1944
John A. Bertucci,	"C" Company	23 December 1944
Frank A. Lindstadt,	"B" Company	25 December 1944
Patrick J. Creamer,	"B" Company	14 March 1945
Charles H. Hall,	Recon. Co.	25 April 1945
Wilbur K. Jacoby,	"C" Company	26 April 1945
Frank Hillgardner,	"C" Company	9 May 1945

771st TANK DESTROYER BATTALION

MASTER SERGEANTS —	FIRST SERGEANTS
SERGEANTS—MAJOR	"A" COMPANY
Robert A. Weingart	Philip W. Hanley
Thomas P. Kiley	John J. Lyons
Vincent Declementi	Robert J. Hinchcliff
Robert E. Doughten	"C" COMPANY
MASTER SERGEANTS —	Santiago Ruis
MOTORS	Frank Hillgardner
Arnold C. Frislid	Robert H. Jacoby
Michael W. Sarno	Max W. Braucher
Charles B. Nobile	
Harold R. Bjerneberg	

COMPANY FIRST SERGEANTS

HEADQUARTERS:	RECON. COMPANY
Joe Tracy	John E. Clarke
Albert Service	William J. Jacoby
Vincent Declementi	William W. Forget
Howard Petersen	Oral P. Longnecker
William J. Jacoby	Eugene T. McLaughlin
Robert E. Dunn	
"B" COMPANY	
Quentin R. Unger	
Frank T. Marchese	
Richard H. Holen	

CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF STATIONS

771st TANK DESTROYER BATTALION

Like all Tank Destroyer Battalions, the 771 passed thru several stages of changes of T/O and E and had many more changes in personnel. It is interesting that the battalion has had since its activation on the 15th of December a total of 2,034 men pass thru.

Headquarters Company	"Able" Company
Alumni 327	Alumni 283
Present Strength 116	Present Strength 126
Total 443	Total 409
"Baker" Company	"Charlie" Company
Alumni 303	Alumni 250
Present Strength 127	Present Strength 121
Total 430	Total 371
Reconnaissance Company	
Alumni 265	
Present Strength 116	
Total 381	

1941

June—August	Fort Ethan Allen, Vermont
August—September,	Fort Devens, Massachusetts
September	Camp Edwards, Massachusetts
September	Fort Ethan Allen, Vermont
September—December	McKinney Lake Area, North Carolina
December	Fort Ethan Allen, Vermont

1942

January--February	Fort Ethan Allen, Vermont
February	Camp Edwards, Massachusetts
March	Fort Ethan Allen, Vermont
April--July	A. P. Hill Military Reservation, Va.
July--September	Pine Camp, New York
September--December	Camp Hood, Texas

1943

January	Camp Hood, Texas
February--March	Fort Ethan Allen, Vermont
March--September	A. P. Hill Military Reservation, Va.
September--October	Fort Dix, New Jersey
October	Camp Shanks, New York
November--December	Picton Park, Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire

December

Wenvoe, Glamorganshire, Wales

1944

January--May	Wenvoe and St. Mellons, Monmouthshire
May--September	Saunton, Devonshire, England
September-October	Fountainbleau, Seine et Marne France
October-November	Groote Spouwen, Limburg, Belgium
5 November 1944	Entered combat in Holland and Germany

THE GIPSY TRAIL
STATES TRAVELED THROUGH

1941 — 1943

Arkansas	Connecticut	Deleware
District of Columbia	Illinois	Indiana
Kansas	Maryland	Massachusetts
Michigan	Missouri	New Hampshire
New Jersey	New York	North Carolina
Ohio	Oklahoma	Pennsylvania
Rhode Island	South Carolina	Texas
Vermont	Virginia	West Virginia
	Ontario, Canada	

COUNTRIES TRAVELED THROUGH

1943 — 1945

Belgium	England	France
Germany	Holland	Wales

THE "GIPSY" MOVEMENTS

1941	
August	Fort Ethan Allen to Fort Devens road
September	Fort Devens to Camp Edwards road
	Camp Edwards to Fort Ethan Allen road
	Fort Ethan Allen to North Carolina Manoaivers road
December	North Carolina Area to Fort Ethan Allen road
1942	
February	Fort Ethan Allen to Camp Edwards road
	Camp Edwards to Fort Ethan Allen road
April	Fort Ethan Allen to A.P. Hill Reservation road
July	A. P. Hill Reservation to Pine Camp rail
September	Pine Camp to Camp Hood . . rail
1943	
January	Camp Hood to Fort Ethan Allen . rail
March	Fort Ethan Allen to A.P. Hill Reservation rail
September	A. P. Hill Reservation to Fort Dix road
October	Fort Dix to Camp Shanks . . road
October	Camp Shanks to Liverpool England boat
November	Liverpool, England to Haverfordwest, Wales rail
December	Haverfordwest, Wales to Wenvoe, Walesroad & rail

1944
 May Wenvoc, Wales to Saunton, Devon-
 shire road
 September Saunton, Devon to Dorchester (Piddle-
 hinton) road
 September Portland Bill to Omaha Beach . boat
 Omaha Beach to Fountainsbleau . road
 October Fountainsbleau to Groote Spouwen,
 Belgium road
 November Groote Spouwen to Schinveld,
 Holland road

**771 TANK DESTROYER BATTALION'S
 COMBAT CP'S**

Schinvelt, Limburg, Holland
 Heerlen, Limburg, Holland
 Palenberg, Rheniland, Germany
 Loverich, Rheinland, Germany
 Gevenich, Rheinland, Germany
 Lovenich, Rheinland, Germany
 Rheindahlen, Rheinland, Germany
 Hoser, Rheinland, Germany
 Viersen, Rheinland, Germany
 Krefeld, Rheinland, Germany
 Darup, Westphalia, Germany
 Ottmarschbochot, Westphalia, Germany
 Ostbevern, Westphalia, Germany
 Melle, Hannover, Germany
 Lubbecke, Hannover, Germany
 Neiderwohren, Hannover, Germany
 Wunsdorf, Hannover, Germany
 Oberende, Hannover, Germany
 Lehrte, Hannover, Germany
 Gifhorn, Hannover, Germany
 Wenze, Sachsen, Germany
 Bismark, Sachsen, Germany
 Stendel, Sachsen, Germany
 Stockheim, Sachsen, Germany
 Neufferchau, Sachsen, Germany
 Lindstedt, Sachsen, Germany
 Calbe, Sachsen, Germany

771st TANK DESTROYER BATTALION'S
NON-COMBAT CP'S

Fort Ethan Allen, Vermont
Shirley Road, Fort Devens, Massachusetts
Camp Edwards, Massachusetts
McKinney Lake Area, North Carolina
A. P. Hill Military Reservation, Virginia
Pine Camp, New York
Camp Hood, Texas
Fort Dix, New Jersey
Camp Shanks, New York
S. S. Capetown Castle
Picton Park, Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire, West Wales
Wenvoe Camp, Barry, Glamorganshire, Wales
Saunton, Devonshire, England
Piddlehinton (Dorchester) England
Transient Area No. 2, Vierville, Normandy, France
Fountainbleau, Seine et Marne, France
Groote Spouwen, Limburg, Belgium

BATTALION CP'S AFTER V-E DAY
Eilsleben, Sachsen, Germany
Friederichswerth, Thuringen, Germany
Teugn, Bavaria, Germany

PLACES IN GERMANY THAT WE WILL REMEMBER

Palenberg	Geilenkirchen	Wenze	Gilrath
Gangelt	Loverich	Stendal	Wurm
Lindern	Immendorf	Bismark	Linnich
Welz	Gereonsweiler	Ederen	Brachelen
Hottorf	Lovenich	Erklenz	Rheindahlen
Hardt	Katzem	Wickrath	Viersen
Krefeld	Wesel	Darup	Nottuln
Greven	Ostbevern	Gotha	Melle
Lubbecke	Bunde	Munster	Buckberg
Niederwohren	Wunsdorf	Minden	Hannover
Lehrte	Oebisfelte	Oberende	Klotze
Neuferchau	Salzwedel	Tevern	Osterberg
Stockheim	Calbe	Apweiler	Lindstedt
Gardelegen	Eilsleben	Beek	Friederickswerth
Nordhausen	Langensalza		

AND THE RIVERS

Roer Rhine Weser Leine Wurm Elbe Ems

AND LET US NOT FORGET THE SIEGFRIED LINE!

MISCELLANEOUS STATISTICS

Losses inflicted upon the Enemy: Officially reported
and verified.

Tanks and Self-propelled guns:

Mk. IV	7
Mk. V	9
Mk. VI	2
S. P. Guns	<u>6</u>
Total	24

Half Tracks 5

Artillery Pieces

AT Guns	9
AA Guns	20
Rocket Guns	6
75 170 mm.	0
M.G. Nests	13

Total Large Caliber Ammunition expended: 20,880 rounds

Enemy killed: Approx. 500

Enemy captured: Approx. 1500

ATTACHMENTS AND ASSIGNMENTS WHILE IN THE U.S.A.

ARMIES:

1st.

CORPS:

VI; XIII;

BRIGADES:

71st.

T.D. Gps.

III; VII; V;

ATTACHMENT AND ASSIGNMENT WHILE IN THE E. T. O.

SHAFF

ARMY GROUPS:

XII; XXI;

ARMIES:

1st.; 3rd.; 7th.; 9th.;

CORPS:

V; VIII; XII; XIII;

DIVISIONS:

28th. Inf.; 102d. Inf.; 2nd., 4th., and 5th. Armored;

T.D. GROUPS:

VI; VII;

CAVALRY GROUPS:

113th.; 11th.;

GFRS (Ground Force Replacement System)

18th. Repl. Depot; 9th. Repl. Depot