

**WORLD WAR II  
OFFICIAL COMBAT RECORD  
of the  
802nd TANK DESTROYER BATTALION  
JULY 1944 – APRIL 1945**

*802nd Tank Destroyer Battalion  
Veterans Association  
1946 - 2000 PLUS  
1941 - NORMANDY - 1945*



*Battalion Commander  
Lieutenant Colonel John H. Montgomery*

*Company Commanders*

*Headquarters Company  
Captain Charles G. Wagner*

*A Company  
Captain Jean M. Varda*

*B Company  
Captain William R. Kessler*

*Reconnaissance Company  
Captain Daniel C. Mooney*

*C Company  
Captain James J. Boyle*

A few of the reasons that you came to this reunion are to renew old friendships, tell old war stories, and, above all, to have a good time with people you spent 3, 4, or 5 years with, sometimes in most unusual and difficult circumstances.

There is no doubt that everybody has met everybody else . . . it is obvious that everybody is having a good time – but what about the old stories? As time goes by . . . over 42 years . . . it is only natural that memories, facts, and remembrances become somewhat faded and cloudy, so let us “look into the past” and relive a few of the old war stories. Some of you will wish to know, after all this time, how can we “look into the past” with any degree of accuracy? Army regulations require that each unit in combat submit monthly reports to higher headquarters concerning the units actions. These are known as “After Action Reports.” These reports are now filed in the National Archives, Washington, D.C., and have been declassified.

Although the Battalion’s were, for the great majority of the time, attached to various other units, the Battalion headquarters prepared these detailed reports depicting the overall daily actions of each 802 unit. Battalion headquarters did an outstanding job. Thus the information you are about to hear is the official combat history of the Battalion.

As each one of you just knew about your own platoon or company activities, this may be the first time that you have been exposed to the “Battalion’s Big Picture.” You will be extremely proud of what you and your buddies accomplished in combat.

The main body of the Battalion embarked from England just before midnight on June 29, 1944, and came ashore in France a little before noon on July 1st. According to the Army calendar this was D plus 25. It is interesting to note that



Company B and the medical detachment landed in France one day before the main body. The entire Battalion assembled in the vicinity of Foucasville late in the afternoon of July 1.

On July 3rd, the Battalion moved into position in the vicinity of Carentan, attached to the 83rd Infantry Division. The weather was terrible, rain, fog, and overcast. Early on the morning of the 4th of July you conducted your own Independence Day celebration by dumping tons of lead on the German positions. No doubt your firing had excellent results 'cause Jerry came back and knocked out two half tracks and wounded 6 troopers. This was your introduction into combat. July 5th and 6th were bad days. The Battalion suffered its first 2 men killed in action: 21 more of you wounded, plus the loss of 2 guns due to enemy artillery and mortar fire. You quickly discovered that France was much different from the Louisiana-Carolina maneuvers. However, you learned fast. You continued to execute a considerable number of both direct and indirect fire missions . . . Co. B destroyed 2 enemy tanks and an ammo dump . . . Co. A knocked out a machine gun emplacement . . . Co. C neutralized 2 enemy OP's . . . in just a couple of hours Co.s A & B fired over 615 direct rounds . . . 2 Jerry POWs were taken . . . however, in the early hours of a dark night a Co. C patrol was ambushed. You broke out of the hedgerows on the 25th of July and started to move. On August 1st you joined Patton's newly formed Third Army.

During August the Battalion assisted in the capture of the St. Malo area. This was a very active time. Early in the morning of August 8th the 1st platoon, Co. A was attacked by a strong enemy patrol. The Jerries were wearing overcoats and were singing German songs. They approached within 30 yards of the 1st platoon's position, they discarded their overcoats revealing

automatic weapons. With point blank fire the 1st platoon repulsed this attack, causing 39 enemy casualties while suffering the loss of 4 killed and 14 wounded. 11 prisoners were taken and, when questioned, stated that they were a group of 50 handpicked paratroopers of the 11th German Regt. This patrol, led by 1 Major, 2 Captains, and 2 Lieutenants had the mission of destroying Co. A's guns whose fire the day before had been devastating the German position. They failed.

Late in the afternoon of August 9th the 3rd platoon Co. A moved their guns within 30 yards of a German Blockhouse and with 50 rounds destroyed it, killing 6 and capturing 206 Germans.

On the 10th through the 12th of August Co. C had a busy time . . . some of the actions they were engaged in were . . . 3rd platoon, firing into St. Malo destroyed 4 pillboxes . . . captured 162 Germans . . . knocked out a 20mm Ackack gun . . . destroyed 2 gun emplacements and an armored carrier, plus reducing a fortified strong point with bazookas fired from less than 70 yards. During the same period, Co. A & B fired on targets which included enemy OPs located in church steeples . . . gun emplacements . . . AA and artillery positions . . . railroad guns and trains.

In just 3 days, the 14th, 15th, and 16th the Battalion fired a total of 2308 rounds at targets in and around St. Malo and the Citadel. You fellows fired a round approximately every other minute for 72 hours straight.

Recon company was on the move during the entire month. They constructed a bridge in Dinan . . . destroyed an ammo dump . . . killed 8 unfriendlies . . . did considerable zone and area recon . . . set up ambushes, one which captured 16



Germans and 1 woman. However, on August 23rd the 2nd platoon was ambushed, losing 1 killed and 3 wounded.

As you have noted, August was a very busy month. Based on the official record, you did an outstanding job. Your efforts were recognized as the Battalion received another letter of commendation from the Commanding General, 83rd division.

Some of you may be upset that headquarters company and the medical detachment have received no credit for their combat activities. For some unknown reason neither of these units were mentioned in the "After Action Reports." All of us know that the other units of the Battalion could not function without the excellent work accomplished by both headquarters and medical personnel. Both of these units contributed to the overall success of the entire Battalion.

September was a very fine month. In less than 30 days you quickly advanced from St. Malo on the Atlantic across France into Luxembourg. In the main your daily actions consisted of recon a position, move to that position, Jerry pulled back, you recon another position, move to that position . . . over and over again. On the way you did some training, care and cleaning of equipment . . . defense against gas attack . . . attack on fortified towns . . . just like state side, only this time the training had some real meaning.

You arrived in the vicinity of the city of Luxembourg on September 24th. On the 25th the 3rd platoon Co. A fired 3 rounds into Germany . . . that's what you came to Europe for . . . to defeat Germany. During the evening of the 28th a patrol from the 1st platoon recon Co. was fired on by friendly units but had no casualties. (That unit could not shoot like the troopers of the 802). The 29th of September saw the 1st platoon Co. A fire

42 rounds into the so-called mighty Siegfried line.

During October you stayed put in Luxembourg. All 3 companies fired considerable indirect fire missions, although some days the visibility was extremely poor as it rained a lot. On the 17th and 18th the mud was so heavy that you could not move the guns. On another day the Battalion was immobilized due to the army-wide shortage of gasoline. Co. B, on the 7th of October, was ordered to form a search party and in cooperation with the Luxembourg police, to apprehend 13 suspected Nazi collaborators . . . results . . . 3 women arrested and considerable German equipment found in the homes of the 13 suspects. During the entire month of October the recon company was held in emergency recon reserve . . . however, they did establish OP's and conducted numerous patrols for the 83rd division. On the 20th of October some alert GI from Co. C arrested a civilian who was tampering with the telephones. He was searched and found to have 30 sticks of dynamite on him. He said that he was going to blow up houses to stop the American advance.

You are still in Luxembourg in November. Again, this was a busy month. During the afternoon of the 3rd, the 2nd platoon Co. B moved 90 yards out from the woods where they were under cover . . . set up their guns and fired 120 direct rounds on enemy strong points, caves, houses, and pillboxes. They made several direct hits on the caves, causing the entrances to collapse . . . they completely demolished the houses and pillboxes. They withdrew under heavy fire, taking losses of 7 killed, 2 wounded, and the loss of 1 gun. On the 10th of November the weather turned very bad but this did not bother Co. C because on the 11th they fired 1668 rounds on German troops holed up in small towns. That afternoon the Germans returned counter-



battery on Co. C's CP but inflicted no casualties. Recon company was busy on the 16th with patrols looking for enemy saboteurs who were concentrating on U.S. gas dumps. On the 18th of November the Battalion as a unit, fired a total of 6321 indirect rounds in a 20 hour period. This equates to about 316 rounds per hour . . . or a little over 5 rounds per minute. This was not an unusual day. The Battallion was awarded battle participation credit for the Normandy campaign on November 27th.

During the first 9 days of December the units of the Battalion fired a considerable number of direct and indirect fire missions. But from the 10th through the 15th you did not fire a round. On the 13th the Battalion was attached to the 4th infantry division. The morning of the 16th of December saw recon Co. assigned the mission to recon the road to St. Vith, Belgium and return to Luxembourg. Fate luckily intervened and you did not move to St. Vith . . . but this was the Battalion's first action in the Battle of the Bulge. At noon on the 18th the 2nd platoon Co. A was attacked and surrounded by an unknown number of Germany infantry . . . small arms fire was exchanged . . . the platoon was pinned down for 3 hours then withdrew with the assistance from a friendly tank unit . . . the platoon suffered the loss of 4 wounded. Also on the 18th two Co. A men in a jeep, moving along a small trail, were halted by a man in U.S. Army uniform. He requested a ride into Luxembourg City. The Co. A men became suspicious because the stranger was not armed, so they turned him over to the nearest MP, who determined that the fellow was a Nazi agent, as he had no positive identification. During the period 16th through 31st of December recon Co. was busy executing zone and area recon in wet, cold and snowy weather. On December 24th the 2nd platoon Co. B fired on an

8 man infiltrating patrol, causing 1 killed and 3 wounded. Merry Christmas in Luxembourg . . . you had turkey with all the trimmings, plus candy and cigars. It was cold and clear. No action was reported. However, on the 27th through the 31st you fired both direct and indirect fire mission on road junctions, convoys, woods, towns, and suspected troop locations, even though the snow was thick and heavy.

To welcome the New Year, all 3 companies fired indirect missions. You again had turkey and church services were conducted. Considering your last 6 months in combat, January was a very slow month. Your main enemy was the cold and snow, with the temperatures hanging around 8 degrees. Some men were able to take showers in the portable bath units. Every man received a new and much improved sleeping bag. All vehicles were coated white. A few lucky men received passes into Luxembourg City. On January 13th the Battalion was "4" years old . . . Col. Montgomery extended greetings and thanks to all of the original personnel. But on the 14th the U.S. Air Corps disregarded your "Happy Birthday" by strafing the 3rd platoon Co. C with P-47s causing a loss of 1 killed and 3 wounded. On January 27th the Battalion was detached from the 4th division and attached to the 80th inf. div. On February 1st you were still located in Luxembourg. The weather was a bit warmer but very wet. R&R 72-hour passes to Paris, Nancy, and Luxembourg City were being issued. On the 4th of February the Battalion moved into Belgium and was attached to the 95th inf. div. The vehicle white camouflage was removed as the heavy rains came down. During the entire month you were not engaged with, or in contact with the enemy.

March 1st was a big day . . . the Battalion moved into



Germany and was reorganized from a "towed" to a "self-propelled" unit. You received your self-propelled vehicles a few at a time. Much of your time was spent re-training. Very few missions were fired and you had very little contact with the enemy.

The Battalion crossed the Rhine River on April 2nd and operated in the Rhur pocket, giving close support to the infantry units of the 95th inf. Div. just like crossing France, your main actions were tactical marches, mopping up pockets of resistances, and destroying gun positions. On April 6th the 2nd platoon recon company captured 25 Jerries. On the 13th of April Co. C's 3rd platoon came in contact with a German column and wiped it out, killing a German General whose car was in the convoy. The honor of firing the last combat round went to Co. C from the vicinity of Backel, Germany (near Dortmund on the Rhur River) on April 15th, 1945. This mission concluded the World War II combat effort of the 802nd Tank Destroyer Battalion.

The next day the Battalion was assigned military government duties in the areas of Ahlen and Neider-Marsburg, in the Rhur Valley. The War was over on May 9th and soon thereafter the Battalion moved across Germany into Czechoslovakia where, in time, it was deactivated as the high point men went home or to England . . . and the low point men were assigned to other units.

In the 10 months of combat, you as individuals, and as members of the Battalion, achieved a remarkable and outstanding record. You accomplished every assigned mission. You conducted yourselves with dignity and intelligence. You proved yourselves to be both men and soldiers. In Europe you faced up

to a nasty but necessary duty with determination and courage. Then you came home . . . you held your head high. You did not suffer from depression. You did not fall prey to drugs and alcohol. You did not damn your country. To the contrary, you became good citizens, you became outstanding family men. You became a success in your chosen profession. You are proud of yourself, you are proud to be a member of the 802nd Tank Destroyer Battalion. You are proud to be Americans. There is no finer group of men anywhere than the men assembled in this room tonight.

God Bless You.

*Always in Comradeship*







ARMORED COMMAND CAR  
GERMAN ARTILLERY DESTROYED  
MINE THE FIRST DAY IN COMBAT



ARMORED HALF-TRACK, CREW OF FIVE,  
TOWED THE THREE INCH GUN



M-36 TANK DESTROYER PASSING A DISABLED TIGER TANK (GERMAN)  
DURING THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE