

806th



TANK DESTROYER
BATTALION

THIS BRIEF HISTORY WAS COMPILED
FROM OFFICIAL WAR DEPARTMENT
RECORDS OF THE 806TH TANK DES-
TROYER BATTALION, EXCERPTS FROM
THE ITINERARY OF THE 806TH KEPT
BY LT. COL. FRANCIS F. SCHWEINLER,
SOME PERSONAL MEMORIES AND WITH
ASSISTANCE FROM "LLOYD'S REGISTER
OF SHIPPING".

Words and Phrases
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The surprising success of the German Armored Forces in France and the Low Countries in the Spring of 1940 set American Army Ground Force Commanders to thinking about some type of unit which could stop the powerful, but relatively slow-moving tanks, and thus prevent or at least impede their use. The device chosen for this task was a Tank Destroyer, a high speed lightly armored vehicle or combination gun and vehicle which could seek out enemy armor, when advised of their presence by air or ground reconnaissance, and destroy it. Thus the motto adopted by the Tank Destroyers, "Seek, Strike, Destroy". A number of units in Battalion strength were activated along with a Tank Destroyer Replacement Training Center at North Camp Hood, Texas, Among those units so activated was the 806th Tank Destroyer Battalion.

General Order No. 14 dated 11 March 1942 at Camp Gordon, Georgia, activated the 806th Tank Destroyer Battalion effective 15 March 1942, this Unit to be quartered at Camp Gordon, Georgia. An initial group of 31 officers from Camp Wheeler, Virginia, Infantry Training Center, were assigned to the new Battalion to be followed by a cadre of 37 enlisted men transferred from the 638th Tank Destroyer Battalion at Camp Shelby, Mississippi. These men were quartered in one barracks and attached to the Station Complement MP's for rations until the unit mess could become operational. The 638th Tank Destroyer Battalion was a provisional Anti-tank Battalion of the 38th Division, Indiana National Guard.

The first few weeks were spent in organizing the Battalion and in clearing the area of roots, grass and brush. During this time the Battalion had operated under only Headquarters Company. In April the four other companies were activated. Lt. Col. William H. Halstead arrived 11 April 1942 and became the first Commander of the new Battalion.

During the next 5 months, while the British and Germans carried on a campaign in North Africa, the 806th carried on company and battalion training. These were the days of shortages which made realistic training difficult. During this time approximately 600 men were added to the Battalion, most having been sent from the Reception Center at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. At one point, 4 September through 8 September, the Battalion engaged in a motor march to Fort Screven, Georgia. While at the Fort the men went on a 12 mile hike to visit a Civil War site at Fort Pulaski which was of interest. Training to that point had mostly consisted of classroom work in TD tactics, physical training consisting of cross-country marches, close order drill, and frequent use of an obstacle course which the Pioneer Platoon of Recon Co. had built.

A medical detachment was added to the Battalion during the spring of 1942, including a medical officer and 25 enlisted men.

Friday, 2 October 1942, after several days of preparation, the Battalion boarded two trains for movement to Camp Hood, Texas, as had been ordered by AGF headquarters in Washington. The trains arrived in Camp Hood five hours apart after a trip lasting from Friday afternoon to early Monday morning. Here the Battalion received a commendation for its efficiency in unloading the trains, the first train having been unloaded 15 minutes faster than any other similar unit to arrive in Camp Hood. The headquarters was opened immediately and the men went about getting settled in their new station. At this point the Battalion was attached to the 6th TD Group. The Battalion started training immediately on carbine, M-1 rifle and machine gun firing and whatever other equipment was available. It was at this time that the Tank Destroyer insignia, a black panther with a tank in its jaws mounted on an orange background was adopted. Piping on the overseas

cap became orange and black, prior to that time the Tank Destroyer men had worn the red piping of the Field Artillery. One, Colonel Perdue, visited the Battalion for a few days and gave lectures on the Libyan Campaign and on radio procedures as actually used in the field in Combat. A lot of Texas dust was the greatest problem of the men, a foretaste of the problems that would result in a few months when Texas rain began working on Texas dust, the result - Texas mud. Fortunately board sidewalks had been laid a few weeks earlier which helped some in keeping the mud from being carried on shoes into the barracks, but it didn't help the motor vehicles which were often sliding and more often stuck in the mud. During the week of 25 October 1942, the Battalion received some 75mm guns which were fired for the first time on 27 October. There was also an obstacle course ending with four platform jumps - the first, 5 feet - the second, 8 feet - the third, 10 feet and the fourth, 14 feet. They didn't call this 14 feet jump a man killer, but a few days later an officer fractured a vertebra making the jump putting him in the hospital for some time. That platform was removed.

On 5 November 1942, 282 men arrived from Fort Devers, Massachusetts, and were quartered in barracks which the Battalion had prepared. Since the 282 men were new recruits, they were kept separate from the rest of the Battalion to be given basis training. Three officers and 102 enlisted men of the 776th Tank Destroyer Battalion were assigned to the 806th for rations and were equally distributed among the 5 companies.

2nd Lt. Kenneth R. Williams was assigned to the 806th Company A, 12 November 1942. Before going to OCS, Lt. Williams had been a Sgt. in the 806th Headquarters Company - the first Battalion success story. Another officer, 2nd Lt. William H. Maxson rejoined the Battalion. Lt.

Maxson had been the Supply Sergeant in C Company before going to OCS - success story No. 2. On 31 December 1942, our Battalion received a new Commanding Officer, Lt. Col. W. W. Goodwin.

After another two months of routine training, field marches, overnight bivouacs, tactical problems, firing range and some 4 miles in 55 minute marches, orders came that the Battalion was to move to Camp Rucker, Alabama. Coincident with the move to Camp Rucker on 3 February the Battalion furnished a cadre of 5 officers and 77 enlisted men. The records do not indicate how or for what this cadre was used. Again the Battalion moved in two trains going via different routes, this time the move was begun on Wednesday and was completed on Friday. The Battalion Headquarters was set up immediately and within three days the organizational work had been completed and the Battalion settled down to training at Camp Rucker. The first real exercise at the new station was a Battalion march on seven miles around Camp Rucker. This no doubt served to acquaint the men with the location of the Service Clubs, Post Theatres, etc, so a double purpose was served. On 12 February, while most civilians were celebrating Lincoln's Birthday with a day off or overtime, the Battalion went on an unusual overnight hike. This hike began at about 1400 hours and lasted until 1115 hours the next day, a period of some twenty hours without food. This was specialized training and the men who participated were given the next afternoon off.

On 25 March 1943 the thirty-six M-10 guns began to arrive. This was the first time that the Battalion had equipment to really train in earnest. Twelve M-10s went to each firing company with some additional half tracks for the purpose of mobility.

On the morning of 1 April 1943 while the Battalion was engaged in tactical exercise a few miles from Andalusia, Alabama, T/5 Wendell A. Shurtleff hit a rut near the reservation boundary and was thrown from his motorcycle. T/5 Shurtleff died in the Post Hospital on 2 April. This was the first casualty of this Battalion.

The next two months of the Battalion history might be termed the Tennessee incident. About the middle of April, 1943, the Battalion received 21 half-tracks and had just about enough time to become familiar with the equipment when the Tennessee Maneuvers with the 2nd Army began. Except for the lack of bullets flying around and no live shells falling in the areas, the Maneuvers were probably as near to actual battle conditions as could be simulated. The men were in bivouac areas for the entire two months, most of the time under tactical conditions. No lights after sundown, steel helmets worn at all times and training continuing on through most of the eight weekends. The Battalion moved from Camp Rucker to the area roughly Northeast and Southeast of Nashville, the heavy vehicles moving by rail and the men and transport by motor convoy. The heavy equipment was unloaded in the town of Lebanon. The first day of the motor march took the Unit to Fort McClellan, a distance of 230 miles, on to Huntsville the following day and thence to the maneuver area in the vicinity of Christiana, Tennessee. There were some respites from the action from time to time and there were some passes given to Nashville and Murfreesboro. In addition the men were taken to Gallatin on several occasions for showers. After some ten tactical problems in two phases over 72 days, the Battalion returned to Camp Rucker by way of Fort McClellan, as before the tracked vehicles moved by rail and the remainder of the Battalion by a motor march. If a bitching soldier is a good soldier, there must have been some very good soldiers in the 806th during the Tennessee Maneuvers. The record

indicates that a host of minor annoyances that would make any soldier, good or bad, bitch his head off took place. When the Battalion moved back to Camp Rucker, it was quartered in a new area at the other end of the Camp from the area in which it was located preceding the maneuvers. During the maneuvers the Battalion suffered its second death - on Friday, 13 August, while lighting a kitchen range in the bivouac area near Hillsdale, the range exploded and T/4 Claude M. Dowdy of A Company was badly burned. T/4 Dowdy died on 16 August. The Tennessee Maneuvers began on 28 June and the Battalion returned to Camp Rucker on 11 September 1943.

Captain Kenneth Whitaker arrived from the 8th Tank Destroyer Group on Monday, 30 September 1943, and assumed command of A Company. Lt. Col. Howard Ayres arrived on 7 November 1943 and assumed command of the Battalion replacing Lt. Col. Goodwin who was transferred to Field Artillery School at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. The Battalion moved to a new area in Camp Rucker across the street from the area where it had been, on 19 November.

Not long after the end of the Tennessee Maneuvers, Miss Laraine Day visited the Battalion and spoke to and with the men at the Motor Pool and had dinner with Headquarters Company, a boost to the moral, to say the least.

With the winds of winter came another change, on 15 December 1943 the Battalion was converted - this time to a 3" gun towed by a half-track vehicle. At this point Reconnaissance Company was inactivated and combined partly with Headquarters and the other Companies. Headquarters Company was reorganized to include a Reconnaissance Platoon.

Colonel Ayers was relieved as Commander of the Battalion on 19 February 1944 and Major Wilkes assumed command temporarily.

During one of the tactical problems on bivouac which occurred once

a week or so, sometime during the night of 7 March, Pvt. Willaim A. Ball of B Company died of asphyxiation when he fell asleep beside the exhaust of his jeep. This was followed a few days later by Major Wilkes giving a talk about precautions to be taken while sleeping in the field.

Lt. Col. Rolland E. George assumed command of the Battalion on 2 March 1944 and Major Wilkes, who had been the interim Commander for about six weeks, became Executive Officer.

At the end of March, 1944, the Battalion was at full field strength with 48 officers, 2 warrant officers and 798 enlisted men plus 20 enlisted men in the medical attachment. The Battalion was also up to full strength in guns having recently acquired eighteen 3" guns from the 630th Tank Destroyer Battalion.

Routine training had continued throughout the winter and spring. There were a number of tactical problems of from 2 to 6 days of bivouac in the field, also a number of marches of 4, 5, and 9 miles. In addition numerous trips were made to the various ranges for training in marksmanship and tactics.

On 10 May, 1944, 312 men were tranferred to Fort George Meade, Maryland for overseas shipment and then on 9 June the Battalion was notified that the 806th would be moving via rail and motor march to Camp Shelby, Mississippi. On 16 June the Battalion left Camp Rucker for Camp Shelby with a stop for the night at Bates Field near Mobile, Alabama. Upon arriving at Camp Shelby, the Battalion Headquarters was set up, barracks cleaned and made ready for occupancy and then as training resumed at the new quarters 77 more enlisted men were transferred to Fort Meade and at the same time 346 men were transferred from the TDRTC at Camp Hood to the 806th to arrive after a delay enroute. In addition 28 men were transferred 28 June 1944 from the

648th Tank Destroyer Battalion and another 81 enlisted men were transferred from the TDRTC at North Camp Hood.

The Allied Forces attacked "Hitler's Europe" at several points along the coast of Normandy on 6 June 1944 and all eyes were focused on this first really large scale invasion of the European mainland. Until the breakthrough at Saint Lo on 25 July however, the beachhead on the coast had been in a rather precarious position, then the Allied troops moved steadily inland. Weekly orientation classes were held, usually by S-2, to keep the men abreast of the armed forces action in Europe.

Today, 1 August 1944, 228 more enlisted men were transferred from the Battalion. Also on 1 August 1944 the Battalion moved up the street to a new area, the one which had been occupied by the 609th Tank Destroyer Battalion which had left for overseas duty. On 15 August Allied Armies stormed ashore on the Southern coast of France seeking to link up with forces pushing in from the coast of Normandy.

Lt. Colonel Francis F. Schweinler assumed command of the battalion on 30 October replacing Colonel George. On 10 November in anticipation of the Battalion being changed from a towed gun to a self-propelled gun (M-18) unit, the Battalion held a parade at the Shelby parade ground, the last parade with the towed guns. Colonel Silliman reviewed the parade.

Again a self-propelled gun unit 15 November, 1944, the Recon Co. was again officially activated with men from Headquarters Company/Recon Platoon plus a number from each of the other companies. Thirty-six M-18 "Hell Cats" arrived by train and were uncrated by the firing companies. The new 76.2mm gun required some additional training and the M-18 gun carriage with its radial engine was also new to the men who serviced the engines and kept the units in running order.

The Battalion was alerted on Monday, 11 December, and orders came for a rail movement to Camp Callan, California. Preparations were being made for the movement. The preparation was short-lived however, as late in the evening the movement order was delayed and preparation was continued on a very limited basis. A few days later the movement order was cancelled.

On 24 February 1945 a parade was held with all 2nd Army special troops reviewed by Brigadier General Halloran and Colonel Peek to accompany a ceremony where a Bronze Star was given to a Medical Corp Captain for action above and beyond the call to duty while serving in Guadalcanal in 1943.

Then on 28 February another parade and presentation was held, this time being the posthumous presentation of a Distinguished Service Cross to a former Camp Shelby medic.

Histories are always written in retrospect and viewing from the past is seldom in error. Whether it had always been intended to be so or whether it had just happened that way, the 806th, from the time of its activation in March, 1942, until the late fall of 1944 (30 October) when Lt. Col. Schweinler assumed command, the 806th was a training battalion. Material, equipment and men would be added to the unit and training in its use would be carried out for a few months only to have up to half of the personnel transferred to an Overseas Replacement Center or to various organizations needing trained men for their work. The last groups to leave our Battalion en masse occurred on 1 August 1944 when 200 men were transferred from the 806th to various Engineer Battalions and again on 12 December 1944 when 125 men were transferred to an Infantry Training Unit.

During the late fall and winter of 1944 and into the spring of 1945, the Battalion engaged in field maneuvers with the 65th and 69th Divisions in the area of the DeSoto National Forest. Even in the

sunny southland winter can be winter and on occasion the weather, particularly at night, was very cold.

Just before Spring of 1945 (27 February), the Battalion was again converted, this time to Gun Carriage M-36 bearing a 90mm gun. This conversion caused no change of personnel, but the workings of the M-36 were quite different from those of the M-18 which caused some considerable change in the training and schooling of those responsible for the maintenance of those rigs.

Most activities were halted or curtailed somewhat to honor the memory of Franklin D. Roosevelt, the 32nd President of the United States, who passed from this life on 12 April 1945. There were memorial services in the Post Chapels and the Battalion was quiet for a time.

Early in April orders came for the Battalion to prepare for overseas shipment. An advance party was sent to New York and much of our equipment was sent to the Port of Boston. However what appeared to be the end of the conflict in Europe caused a cancellation of this movement and the advance party returned on 24 April followed by the heavy equipment which was returned on 28 April. Routine training resumed, this time with a bit more emphasis toward conditions that might exist in the Pacific Area. Everyone paused for a time to celebrate VJ day which occurred on 8 May. On 13 May a parade was held at the 65th Division parade ground, reviewed by Colonel Peek and a short celebration was held. A few days later all men were required to see the film "Two Down and One to Go".

The Battalion took time out on 25 May to entertain 50 young ladies from Natchez. These ladies were invited to have dinner with Headquarters Company and then a Battalion dance was held in Service Club No. 2. The next morning our guests had breakfast with

Headquarters Company and were given rides in jeeps and the M-36, then at 1400 another Battalion dance was held at the Service Club.

Regular routine training ceased on 29 June when the Battalion was alerted and a movement order was received to place the Battalion in Camp Stoneman, California, on 12 July 1945.

At about noon on 8 July everything changed for the men of the 806th. This time they were going somewhere, probably beyond the confines of the USA. That morning we boarded two trains and about noon pulled out for the West Coast. One train went by way of Jackson, Tennessee, and the other via Memphis, but both were in St. Louis the following morning. Most of the men of the 806th had read how Abraham Lincoln had written his Gettysburg Address on the back of an envelope while riding on a train, but few of those men probably ever thought that they would be riding on a train just like the one Lincoln rode on, or at least one built about the same time. Few of us had ever seen rail cars quite as old--not even the men who had been in North Camp Hood and had ridden the SL&SW from Waco to North Camp. It soon became rumored about that Colonel Schweinler was also unhappy with the transport and further rumor had it that we would all be transferred to a better train at La Junta, Colorado. This came about and the westward trek through the mountains to Camp Stoneman (near Pittsburg, California) passed with perhaps some feelings of trepidation, some with adventure, but all in relative comfort.

Camp Stoneman was a sort of a wild place. All things were ready for our boarding the ship but delay followed delay. During the delay period, along with such things as gas mask drill and five mile marches in gas masks, the men were given three day passes and allowed to work in local industries. Johns-Manville's Fibreboard Plant, Mobile's Oil

Refinery at Avon and DelMonte Canning Works at Oakland were some of the places where our men were needed. Our men were eager to avoid some boredom and gather a bit of the rather loose money that was flowing into civilian pockets at that particular time. Many of the 806th men were thus working when, on 6 August, news came that the first atomic bomb had destroyed the City of Hiroshima. Perhaps future generations will tell a different story, but that day most of the men of the 806th felt that Pearl Harbor had been avenged and those that chanced to be in that City got what they deserved and had reaped the harvest sowed with seeds of ambition and greed.

Other alerts followed, then on the morning of 12 August all boarded the US Army ferry, "Ernie Pyle", and after a 4 hour trip down the Sacramento River, we entered San Pablo Bay and then San Francisco Harbor. Here everyone transferred to the motorship, "POELAU LAUT" and at about 1700 hours we were pulled from the dock by a tug and our journey on the ms "POELAU LAUT" began. As the ship sailed under the Golden Gate Bridge most of us did not know where we were going, but when we could see some sky between us and the bridge we knew our pay had gone up ten per cent.

At 1800 hours that Sunday evening we learned that the surrender of the Japanese was at hand. There was some seasickness the next day as we were rocked by ground swells off the coast of Southern California. One week later on Monday the 20th, we entered Pearl Harbor and anchored alongside of some Navy Transports and Personnel Carriers. Nobody (maybe 1 or 2) was permitted ashore at Honolulu, but some Hawaiian singers and dancers came aboard that evening and entertained us. The ship left Honolulu in the late afternoon of 22 August. A few days later we all skipped 28 August as we crossed the international date

line and sailed into tomorrow, 29 August.

The ms "POELAU LAUT" was a Dutch motorship of the Hamburg-American line. She was built in Amsterdam in 1929 and was powered by one of the largest diesel engines built to that time. It was problems with this engine that had caused our delay at Camp Stoneman and later at Eniwetok. The engine was an eight cylinder diesel which had a bore of 32-5/16" and a stroke of 56-11/16", at cruising speed it turned over at about 80 RPM. Doors opened into the side of the engine which could allow a man to walk in between the connecting rods. Bearings seemed to be the problem with the engine which probably had not been overhauled since being built in 1929. The engine was a direct drive and was started with compressed air applied to one cylinder while the exhaust ports were open on the other seven, the result was a shower of diesel oil all over the after decks.

The ship was of about 10,000 tons (slightly less), she was 494' long, 61'2" abeam and in peacetime had accommodations for from 12 to 16 passengers. She had Holland Dutch officers and a multifarious crew of Javanese and other Indonesian men. They all carried knives, which some looked like they would enjoy using. In addition to the Dutch and Javanese ships crew, there was also an American gun crew of about seven to man the 5"38 gun which the ship carried on the fantail. There was also an American Army complement of 10 or 12, including PFC Farley and a medical detachment. In addition to the something over 700 officers and men of the 806th, she had several smaller units for a total "passenger" list of about 1700. There was a leak of some sort causing the galley to smell of ammonia (?) which, in turn, imparted that smell or perhaps taste to the butter and meat and most any other food that was served. The ship also had some very cold salt water showers, the man

that invented salt water soap was a dreamer. Being of Dutch registry and flying the Dutch Flag required the crew to celebrate Queen Wilhelmina's birthday on 31 August. A special dinner was served that day complete with turkey (which tasted like ammonia (?)), while an extra large Dutch Flag flew from the masthead.

On Saturday, 1 September 1945, we entered the lagoon at Eniwetok Atoll. Sunday, 2 September, while at anchor on Eniwetok everyone heard the Japs sign the surrender on the deck of the USS Missouri.

The days on Eniwetok stretched from 1 week to 2 weeks to 3 weeks with an occasional visit to shore on Runit Island, where the beer flowed freely and one on Appari Island, both on the Atoll.

Then on 30 September the Battalion was loaded on board the Grace Lines ss "SANTA CRUZ" which had been "coming" for quite a few days. The ss "SANTA CRUZ" left Eniwetok for Manila at 1815 on 30 September. The ss "SANTA CRUZ" was quite an improvement over the ms "POELAU LAUT". She was quite a bit smaller but had better accommodations. She had burner problems in the boiler room which caused her funnel to belch forth black smoke, but there was no smell of ammonia (?) in the galley. The ss "SANTA CRUZ" was a ship probably of the C-2 class, she was 397'-2" long and 60'-1" a beam, and was a ship of slightly less than 7,000 tons. She was built in San Francisco in 1941 being first named the "CAPE SAN MARTIN" and was, in our time, being operated by Grace Line under contract to U S Army Transportation Service. She was powered by a steam turbine with double reduction gearing to the pre-peller shaft. Food was much better even though the ship was a little less stable underfoot.

Aboard the ss "SANTA CRUZ" on 7 October, we entered Philippine Territory through San Bernadino Strait, that water between the extreme

Southern point of Luzon Island and the most Northern tip of Samar. All day we traversed the Sibuyan Sea watching schools of dolphine playing in our wake or playfully circling the ship.

We entered Manila Harbor past historic Fort Drum and Corregidor Island on 8 October and anchored a mile or two off shore. Arriving in Manila on 9 October with a total elapsed time of 58 days aboard ship, allowed the men of the 806th to have more sea time than a good many Navy men.

The "SANTA CRUZ" moved to a pier (practically destroyed) on 10 October and the men were ferried by LST to the railhead in lower Manila Harbor. Once on shore we beheld the devastation that was Manila. Hardly a building remained intact. Up on the hill was a twin spired church (the San Sabastian Cathedral) which in someway had escaped with very little damage, but most everything else was in ruins.

Then came a ten hour ride on a narrow gauge railroad into the Central Luzon Plains to the town of San Jose in Nueva Ecija Province. Here within a few days the Battalion began various duties, Headquarters Company served as a service company and the other companies were assigned other duties such as Military Police, etc.

Almost immediately the Battalion began to lose men. The point system for return to the USA and discharge had been worked out, based on length of time in service and several other factors. Many of the men of the 806th had a great many points so were very soon eligible for return to the USA. Colonel Schweinler and Major Bean were transferred to the 140th Field Artillery for return stateside along with 54 men to this and other units. Major Nosun then assumed Command of the 806th. Major Nosun had been transferred to the 806th from the 21st Tank Destroyer Group on the day of our departure from Camp Shelby when Major Preble was forced to remain behind in the Shelby Station Hospital.

About this time the Army came out with a program to encourage men to re-enlist (offering considerable monetary incentive), and Lt. Holmes was appointed Recruitment Officer. During the next week or so, 27 men of the Battalion enlisted into the Regular Army. On 29 November 1945 the Battalion received a list of all men and their point standings.

Men were leaving the Battalion every day now, some to the 14th Antiaircraft Command, some to the 55th Field Artillery and some to the 198th AA Battalion. And so--the Battalion after being activated for something over 3 years began to evaporate.

But the 806th had yet another duty to perform, Troop Movement Directive No. 55, dated 27 November 1945, placed up to 774 officers and 19,234 men under the 806th for administration and processing for eventual return to the States. This personnel was subsequently reduced by transfer to other organizations until a unit of 607 enlisted men and 15 officers were assembled in the Batangas area and assigned stateside by the Liberty Ship, "AINSWORTH", which was to sail on 16 December. 16 December came and went but the ss "AINSWORTH" failed to materialize. Other units moved out and sailed for home while the 806th "stood fast". Finally on 21 December Captains Williams and Dworsky went to Manila and came back with word that the Battalion would now be sailing on 26 December on the ss "ADMIRAL SIMMS". On 26 December 1945 the men of the 806th (mostly from the other organizations) rode into Manila and boarded the ss "ADMIRAL SIMMS" bound for San Francisco. Advice was received 4 January 1946 at the point of debarkation would be San Pedro, rather than San Francisco, with immediate movement by rail to Camp Anza, Arlington, California. General Order No. 2 from Camp Anza, California, ordered that the 806th Tank Destroyer Battalion, Heavy (Self-Propelled) be inactivated at the earliest date practicable, 12 January 1946. Thus we come to the end of the 806th Tank Destroyer Battalion. Activated

at Camp Gordon, Georgia, 18 March 1942, inactivated at Camp Anza, California, 12 January 1946.

For many the adventure of the 806th continued four or five months more. A number of the men of the-806th who had been transferred to the 14th Antiaircraft Command took part in some inspection teams, others who had been transferred to the 55th Field Artillery were assigned guard duty over Quartermaster Dump No. 15 in Manila. Among the items stored in this Dump were 1,000,000 cases of beer. Discipline became a little less strict and the attitude of many of the officers was that we paid or are going to pay for all this stuff, so why not use it. Vehicles with plenty of gasoline were available for signing your names and beer in the Dump was available to any GI. The only admonition, "Do not sell any of it", take only what you can use and use that in a responsible and prudent manner.

In short, the men of the 806th, in effect, had a "Cook's Tour" and saw a lot of the world. Few of us would have been able to spend 7 or 8 months in a very different country, see a very different culture and then come home to a welcome such as a sign on the hills East of San Francisco, "WELCOME HOME, WELL DONE". Many of us used that opportunity to see and to observe as much as possible. In the 14th Antiaircraft Command everyone had Saturday and Sunday and half a day on Wednesday off. Other units may have been different. The half day off on Wednesday was for physical exercise, but we were told that we could walk into the city in lieu of the exercise, but we were admonished to at least get out of sight of Headquarters before we hitched a ride. Manila, what was left of it, was a very interesting city. There was little to buy and that at horrible prices, but the items for sale and the manner of doing business was new to the men of the 806th. During

the first days of our time in Manila, that peculiar smell, the odor of dead bodies emanated from many areas around crumbled buildings. That, however, began to fade as time went by. Some of us took trips to Corregidor, Fort Drum, Subie Bay and other areas, and some of us even enjoyed the Philippine Symphony, which was reorganized with aid from the Army Special Services. There were airplanes around belonging to Field Artillery Liaison Outfits complete with pilots who were anxious to get in enough flying hours to make them eligible for commercial licenses when they returned home. Many of them were only too happy to take some of the 806th and other GIs for rides here and there, like over Corregidor or over the famous crater on Mt. Tall, a mountain on an island with a lake in the middle, a mountain, which incidentally was a volcano, and erupted sometime in the 60s or 70s. Our days in the Philippines, after the 806th had officially been inactivated, were not unpleasant but were an adventure and education.

Although we (some of us) had been with the 806th for most of the war and although the 806th had never stormed a beachhead, participated in a battle or ever fired a shot in anger, even so the men of the 806th had served, as John Milton wrote, "They also serve who only stand and wait".