

THE HISTORY OF THE 818th TANK DESTROYER BATTALION

The 818th Tank Destroyer Battalion was activated on December 15, 1941 at Ft. Sill, Oklahoma. This battalion was designated as a GHQ unit and attached to the 18th Field Artillery Brigade for administration and training. It was possibly originally formed to fight the tanks of the brilliant German Field Marshall Erwin Rommel, the "Desert Fox". Although the 818th never reached Africa it did land at Normandy about one month after "D" Day. Major John E. Buxton of Little Rock, Ark. was the Battalion Commander at the date of activation.

Most of the personnel were members of the 18th Antitank Bn. (provisional) commanded by Lt. Col. Ross B. Warren, and participated in the Third Army Maneuvers conducted in Louisiana and the First Army Maneuvers held in North and South Carolina from August 10, 1941 to December 1, 1941. While engaged in these "mock wars" the 18th Antitank (provisional) won widespread recognition of being a fast-moving, hardhitting, and powerful outfit. In fact during the war, the 818th was the spearhead unit of the Fifth Infantry Division, which was Gen. George S. Patton's spearhead division that lead the Third Army from Normandy across France. At one time the 818th was advancing so fast across France that Gen. Patton ordered the 818th to slow their

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advance because it was about to burn up his tanks trying to keep up with our Destroyers, which had diesel engines.

The 818th Tank Destroyer Battalion was composed of a Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Reconnaissance Company and three Tank Destroyers Companies, known as A, B, and C Companies. The authorized strength of the Battalion was 35 officers and 884 enlisted men.

The Battalion was formed from anti-tank and anti-aircraft Batteries and platoons of other Ft. Sill units, all of which had been on extensive maneuvers in Louisiana and the Carolinas. The organizations from which they were drawn were the 77th Field Artillery Regiment, the 70th, 71st, and 83rd Field Artillery Battalions and the 142nd Field Artillery Regiment.

On February 5, 1942 a permanent change of station was ordered by the War Department, Lt. Col. John M. Reynolds assumed command on that date and supervised the movement from Ft. Sill, Okla. to the new station, Camp Bowie, Texas.

It was temporarily away from Camp Bowie for training and maneuvers at Camp Hood, Texas from June 5 until July 28, 1942 and at Mansfield, La. from July 30 to September 1, 1942 when it returned to Camp Bowie.

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On or about this date, Lt. Col. Clebert L. Hail, a West Point officer, assumed command of the 818th T. D. Bn. and was the commanding officer all through World War II.

On June 15, 1943 the unit left Camp Bowie, Texas and arrived at Camp Pickett, Virginia on June 18, 1943 where it remained until September 1, 1943 except for amphibious training at Camp Bradford, Virginia from July 10 to July 17.

It was stationed at Ft. Dix, N. Jersey from September 2 to October 13, 1943 and Camp Shanks, N. York (N. Y. port of Embarkation) from October 13 to October 21 when it departed for overseas service.

The 818th T. D. Bn. arrived at Belfast, N. Ireland on November 1, 1943 and moved to Dundrum, N. Ireland where the unit was attached to the 5th Infantry Division and was in training there until May 10, 1944.

On May 14, 1944 the 818th T. D. Bn. moved to Pewsey, England for organization and training. On July 11, 1944 the 818th T. D. Bn. left England and landed at Utah Beach, France on July 14 and moved to assembly area. July 16, 1944 the unit was committed to combat near Balleroy, France (which was about 15 miles northeast of St. Lo) and offensively engaged in the break-through in Normandy.

After the break-through of Normandy at St. Lo, France, the 818th T. D. Bn. gave support to the 5th Infantry Division, which was

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a unit of Gen. Patton's Third Army. When the First Army broke through at St. Lo, Patton's Third Army poured through the opening in the first of an unprecedented series of advances that in the end carried it across France, Germany, Czechoslovakia, and into Austria. Patton's forces went so far ahead of their supplies that they had to be supplied by plane.

The 818th T. D. Bn. made rapid advance across France to Verdun, via Arranches, St. James, Vitre, Angers, and St. Calais. Continued advance but met heavy resistance via Chartres, Fontainebleau (Aug. 23), Negent, and Rheims (Aug. 31).

The attack was slowed down west of Metz, France and the 818th T. D. Bn. with the 5th Infantry Division then developed a static defense holding a bridgehead across the Moselle River south of Metz.

On November 2, 1944 the Third Army resumed offensive, and the 818th T. D. Bn. aided in the fall of Metz on November 20, 1944. December 20, 1944 the 818th T. D. Bn. was attached to the 26th Infantry Div. and moved to the vicinity of Klienbattingen, Luxembourg to join in the Battle of the Bulge. Engaged German's in Northern Luxembourg on Dec. 20 and moved south of Nothum by Jan. 1, 1945 and on Jan. 28, 1945 the unit left Wiltz, Luxembourg for Berus, Germany.

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The 818th T. D. Bn. supported the 26th Infantry Division offensive into Saar Palatinate and attacked toward Kisserlautern, Rhine River (March 25), Mannheim and Darmstadt.

On April 1, 1945 attacking aggressively toward the Czechoslovakian border, the unit moved northeasterly to Fulda and Suhl, Germany. They then moved southeast toward Sonneburg, Bayreuth, Chan, Deggendorf, Tittling, Germany and Linz, Austria. This period was marked by rapid advances with occasional resistance. The 818th T. D. Bn. reached the Danube River on April 30, 1945 and then pushed on into Austria and Czechoslovakia and made contact with the Russians.

May 8, 1945 was the end of the European War and all of the unit moved into Czechoslovakia and remained there until sometime in July and then moved to the vicinity of Lauf, Germany (near Nurnberg) to prepare and wait for our return to the states.

The 818th T. D. Bn. won 5 battle credits for Normandy, Northern France, Adrennes, Rhineland, and Central Europe. The 818th T. D. Bn. was cited in the order of the Day of the Belgian Army for its action in the Ardennes, and the First Platoon of Co. A. is entitled to the Distinguished Unit Citation for action in Luxembourg (non-displayable).

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In October 1945 the 818th T. D. Bn. moved to Camp Shanks, New York and was inactivated October 30, 1945. On February 26, 1947 the 818th T. D. Bn. was converted and redesignated as the 323rd Mechanized Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron and allotted to the Reserve.

March 10, 1952 it was withdrawn from allotment to the Army reserve and allotted to the Regular Army and redesignated the 818th Tank Battalion and was assigned to the 11th Armored Division February 25, 1953.