

COMPANY "B", 820th TANK DESTROYER BATTALION
APO #339, U.S. ARMY

BATTLE REPORT
11 DECEMBER TO 31 DECEMBER 1944 INCLUSIVE

11 December 1944. Company occupied positions in Infantry line at Winter-spelt, Germany, replacing 612th Tank Destroyer Battalion.

1st Platoon Coordinates - 923-767
2d Platoon Coordinates - 918-805
3rd Platoon Coordinates - 897-748

12 December 1944. First Platoon reported enemy machine gun fire, and shell fire - possibly 88mm.

13 December 1944. The Company was attached to the 424th Regiment, 106th Infantry Division for operations.

14 December 1944. Situation remained unchanged. The First and Third Platoons reported some enemy shelling in their areas.

15 December 1944. Situation remained unchanged.

16 December 1944. At 0400 hours, heavy enemy fire was reported in First Platoon area. Enemy fire consisted of 88mm, 81mm mortars and, believed, 105 mm fire. At 0600 hours, the house where first section, Second Platoon, was quartered received a direct 88mm hit. No casualties. At 0700 hours, the First Platoon reported continual mortar and small arms fire in their area since 0330. No casualties and no damage. The Third Platoon reported a concentrated small arms and mortar battle in their area, but their lines held firm and the attack was repulsed. No casualties. At 0715 hours, heavy long range enemy machine gun fire coming from woods to the east. Wires were cut and broken by shell fragments and falling debris, stopping all communication with 424th Regimental Headquarters and with First and Third Platoons. At 0800 hours, heavy fighting along entire Regimental front but lines continued to hold. At 1000 hours, very heavy mortar fire reported at Second Platoon area and stragglers from Cannon Company area - toward the front - came thru the Tank Destroyer area. The stragglers reported that the Cannon Company was almost entirely wiped out. The CP Group and the second section of the Second Platoon formed a machine gun and small arms line in front of the second section guns and were employed as Infantry under the command of the Company Executive Officer. At 1015 hours, the Third Platoon reported an undetermined number of enemy tanks were being used to carry Infantry into the town of Lutzhampen, two thousand yards to the southeast of their position. The actual count of tanks was eight, but more vehicles were being used. The tanks were not moved up to where their type could be determined, or any fire be brought to bear on them. The Third Platoon lines remained intact and all attacks were repulsed tho the fighting was heavy. Infantry of the First Battalion, 424th Regiment, marched thru the town to reinforce the Cannon Company line to the east. At 1200 hours, unverified reports - by stragglers - of enemy tanks to the north and to

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the east continued to come in. At 1400 hours, enemy shell and small arms fire was very heavy in Winterspelt and area, and the Company Executive Officer was ordered to withdraw the CP Group to the vicinity of St. Vith, Belgium. The Second Platoon remained in position until ordered to withdraw by order of Company Commander. The First and Third Platoons fired some high explosive shells four hundred to six hundred yards to break up enemy concentrations of troops and at general purpose vehicles. Fighting was heavy on the entire front. The Second Platoon reported three casualties; Corporal Steensma, Private Richardson, and Private Verbeke - they were evacuated to an aid station. At 1500 hours, the three inch guns of the Second Platoon were stripped of firing locks and abandoned as the enemy attacked, overrunning them. The Second Platoon then fought as Infantry. Private First Class Fitzgerald sustained a slight wound in the arm but was not evacuated. The First and Third Platoons held their positions under heavy enemy pressure. The Company Commander went to the 424th Regimental Headquarters to maintain contact with the First and Third Platoons. At about 1400 hours Private First Class Rosenthal acting as gunner, sighted five enemy tanks, an enemy ammunition truck, an enemy pill box, and two German occupied buildings at about 2000 yards. Private First Class Rosenthal put his gun into position and fired eighteen rounds of APC and HE shells causing complete destruction of the tanks, the ammunition truck, the pill box, the two buildings, and also inflicting ninety casualties on the enemy personnel. At 1630 hours, the Third Platoon also reported one enemy truck and one pill box knocked out. Heavy fighting continued, and the Platoon used their three inch guns and machine guns on enemy Infantry. No casualties were reported. The First Platoon used three inch fuse delay high explosive shells to clear the roads of enemy Infantry. The second section of the First Platoon used their machine guns and small arms to successfully hold their position in spite of severe closein fighting. No tanks were reported sighted. Fighting continued steadily thru the night but no casualties or changes in position were reported. The Third Platoon used up their supply of three inch ammunition. The Battalion Supply was notified and ammunition was brought up. The Company CP Group arrived in the vicinity of St. Vith, Belgium at 1930 hours and made necessary guard and readiness arrangements.

17 December 1944. At 0700 hours, during a heavy enemy barrage, one gun of the Third Platoon was destroyed by a direct hit by enemy mortar fire. No casualties were reported. At 1000 hours, Private Siekierka, a Third Platoon Cannoneer, received a bullet wound in the arm and refused evacuation. He returned to his post after first aid had been given him at a Second Battalion, 424th Regiment, aid station. The First and Third Platoons were engaged in heavy and small arms fire all day. The First half-track of the second section, First Platoon was destroyed by enemy fire. No enemy tanks or vehicles were sighted. At 1400 hours, Company CP withdrew in column with the Battalion CP Group to the vicinity of Vielsalm, Belgium, arriving there at 2030 hours. At 2100 hours, the First and Third Platoons withdrew to the vicinity of Burg-Reuland, Belgium, on Regimental orders. In the course of this move the First and Third Platoons lost two three inch guns and two half-tracks, and two three inch guns and one half-track respectively. The losses were due to the heavy concentration of fire, and that equipment was destroyed or rendered unserviceable before their abandonment.

18 December 1944. The Second Platoon withdrew from it's position and arrived in the vicinity of Vielsalm, Belgium at 1100 hours. The First Platoon took

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fire positions in the vicinity of 859-812 to cover approaches from Maspelt, Belgium, and from the east. The Third Platoon took fire positions in the vicinity of 870-791 to cover the river crossing to the east and the road to the south. No enemy contact was reported.

19 December 1944. The situation remained unchanged.

20 December 1944. At 0700 hours, enemy infantry, under protective fire, attacked from the northwest of the First Platoon positions. Enemy mortars and 88mm destroyed one three inch gun. At 1100 hours, on the orders of the Company Commander, the First and Third Platoons withdrew to the vicinity of Bracht, Belgium. At 1115 hours, Private First Class Wiacek, was wounded and evacuated, by Sergeant Lynch and Private First Class De Nio, when without orders Sergeant Lynch and private First Class De Nio returned, under heavy enemy machine gun, 88mm, and mortar fire, to former positions to try to effect the return of the injured man to an aid station. After having accomplished this hazardous detail, and obtaining first aid for Private First Class Wiacek, Sergeant Lynch and Private First Class De Nio again, under heavy machine gun, 88mm, and mortar fire, and without regard for personal safety, removed Private First Class Wiacek from the aid station to a clearing station. At 1300 hours, both Platoons engaged the enemy south of Bracht, Belgium and regained their former positions inflicting one hundred-fifty casualties on the enemy and also destroying numerous items of materiel. The said Platoons then held their positions until St. Vith was surrounded and withdrawal of the Platoons was ordered by the 424th Regimental Commanding Officer on 22 December 1944.

22 December 1944. The First and Third Platoons - with two 57 anti-tank guns borrowed from the 112th Regiment - formed a rear guard for the 424th Regiment, under the command of the Commanding Officer Company "B", 820th Tank Destroyer Battalion, in a withdrawal under heavy enemy artillery fire, to the vicinity of Maldange, Belgium. At this point the anti-tank guns were returned to 112th Regiment control and the TD guns took up anti-tank defense positions.

23 December 1944. The Company CP Group and the Second Platoon arrived at Esneux, Belgium and were billeted in the homes of the local people. The First and Third Platoons withdrew to the vicinity of Hoppe, Belgium and 820th Tank Destroyer Battalion control.

24 December 1944. Situation unchanged.

25 December 1944. On Battalion orders the First and Third Platoons were moved to Belle Croix, Belgium and remained there over night. No enemy contact was made.

26 December 1944. The First and Third Platoons moved into positions at 537-958 and 536-938 respectively. Both Platoons manned road blocks and covered mine fields. The First Platoon was also employed in indirect fire missions with 487th Field Artillery Battalion.

27 December 1944. Situation remained unchanged.


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28 December 1944. The First Platoon was attached to the 487th Field Artillery Battalion. Otherwise situation remained unchanged.

29 December 1944. Situation remained unchanged.

30 December 1944. The First and Third Platoons still in position. Two enemy thrusts were reported repelled in this sector. Withdrew to Battalion assembly point closing at Belle Croix, Belgium at 1630.

31 December 1944. The First and Third Platoons withdrew and joined the Company CP Group and the Second Platoon at Esneux, Belgium for Company reorganization, drawing equipment, and preparation for further action.


JOSEPH J. LANE
Captain, Cavalry,
Commanding Co. "B".