

Santa Paula, Ca.
3-28-85

Thanks for your informative letter of March the 4th, some of it interesting and some of it perturbing. However, things can not always be to our particular liking. In reference to this Major [redacted] of the F.A. In his very first paragraph, quote, "Fundamental doctrine suffered a sea change between Camp Hood and Sbeitla." The theory of "Seek Strike and Destroy" became "Hide Hit and Maneuver" The main T.D. lesson from the Tunisian Campaign. In no uncertain terms, I will say this, here and now, that this " JERK " does not know what the hell he is talking about. In the first place, the 601, whom was the major battle authority at the battles of Ousseltia, Kasserine, and El Guettar, was not a graduate of Camp Hood. I believe that we were about the only ones of the T.D's that was not from there. The 601 was originally formulated out of units of the 1st. Infantry Division located at the time at Fort Devens, Mass. on Aug. 19th. 1941 and then known then as the " 1st. Provisional Anti Tank Bn. *Regular U.S. Army.

People like him are the cause of history not being interpreted like it is or correctly, and it brings out the ire in the ones that were there.

Now, to answer your questions, one at the time, here goes. Yes, the "Y" emblem was painted on the T.D's. At first it was painted on the sides of the "Purple Heart Boxes " as they were called but later that was revised, and was replaced by the white star and the big white circle. The Y was then put on the right front and left rear bumpers. The Black "Y" was stencilled on a bright Yellow background approximately four inches by four inches, with the particular company designation letter in the lower right hand corner of the yellow square.

In the A A section of each platoon, it was the old reliable, the 50 caliber mounted on a tripod, in the bed of a 3/4 ton truck. The so called light platoons, became the recon. company and got rid of the 37's all together. The 75's on m3's were the T.D's. and Recon Company did a marvellous job and did just that, reconnaissance.

After the smoke had cleared at Sbeitla, and the (unglorious march) of the Kasserine valley that ensued after that of which we made the British at "Dunkirk" look silly as it was observed that there was, actually some 2 1/2 ton GMC's that were passing up jeeps, on this retreat. Nonetheless, there was still a large carnage of german equipment that was devastated and left burning on the field after the approximated 120 tank assault by the German 10th Panzer Division. We accurately counted some 37 armored vehicle of one kind or other left smoking out there in the desert, after that skirmish. The 601 had made a good account of itself that day. That day was January 21, 1943. I was there and it is still as vivid in my memory as if it were yesterday.

To the claims that the 601 was "dispersed ", Yes we were, . One must also realise that we at the time were still somewhat of "Green Peas " and that we still had a lot to learn about the seasoned German veteran of about 4 years of combat under his belt at that time.

The exact date of the Ousseltia conflict, as I recall, was 1620-43, the day of the week I do not remember, besides it is of no consequence. Our reconnaissance had no idea as to the toll of enemy casualties, as they were as busy as we were, trying to keep out of the enemy's sights . However, I don't think that they were as grave as ours.

As for the radio code name for the 601 used throughout the campaign, I believe that we constantly used the systematic code used by the Division Headquarters all the time. No specific code was used by each unit in the Division, but the code kept changing every day at midnight. If a person known to be carrying the code was captured during that particular 24 hour period, the alternate code automatically came into play, without any delay.

Some day I hope that we get to meet, then it will be much easier to convey what it was all about.

In the intrim, I remain

yours,


P. Ray Desfosses