

Aug. 13. 1989

Dear _____

Three things have prompted this letter. The last T.D.A. Newsletter, the special insert about the publication of the "T.D. History" and a trip I'm about to make.

My wife and I are leaving Aug. 15 for France. I'll pick up a rental car, visit Omaha Beach and retrace the "Route of March" (I sent you a copy a year or so ago) of Co. A, 602nd Tank Destroyer Battalion, Omaha Beach to V.E. Day (a location which is now inside East Germany). I'll be returning Sept. 7th.

Over the past few years I've sent you many letters covering many subjects. What the above has done at this time is to get my mind to thinking "What was the one most significant combat action of Co. A, 602nd T.D. Bn. along that route of march?"

There are many, many actions that must be considered for that title but the one I have come up with is the day of Dec. 22, 1989.

As part of 3rd Army we came up from the Saar region of France on the night of Dec. 20, 1944 and morning of Dec 21st, went through Neufchateau, Belgium and headed east of the highway toward Bastogne. At Vaux les Rosieres/Petite Rosieres we came across personnel of the 28th In. Div., under the command of M.G. Cota, who were being formed into a defensive position there. The first platoon of Co. A joined this group.

Early on the morning of Dec. 22nd, while still very foggy, Germans in American vehicles (at very close range) were observed approaching this position from the east. They were wiped out by the T.D. fire. A light tank, a half track and two trucks were destroyed, estimated 30 Germans killed.

Later in the day, at dusk, five or six German tanks again attacked this position. They were repulsed by the T.D.'s as the T.D.'s covered the withdrawal of the 28th Inf. Div. troops to the west. Two German tanks were believed damaged. Four men of the 1st platoon were wounded.

The platoon leader, Lt. Robert Whitman, was awarded the Silver Star for this action on this date.

The Germans never advanced any farther to the west along the Bastogne/Neufchateau highway.

If you look at the map and reflect on that action that day, and the disposition of other troops that day, of greater significance is the fact that the Germans were denied access to Neufchateau and all the implications and ramifications that action would have meant.

It is also the basis of my contention that we well may have been the first 3rd Army troops to make contact with the enemy. From what I have read, the 4th Armored Div. that was attacking toward Bastogne to the south of the Bastogne/Neufchateau highway, did not make contact with the Germans until about noon of Dec. 22, 1944.

Kindest regards.



Bert Oliver
Ex-C.O., Co. A
602nd Tank Destroyer Battalion

cc: Ray Young
J. Orsak (Julius was the Platoon Sgt. in the action described above. Perhaps as a follow up of this letter, he'll send you some information of his personal experiences on Dec. 22, 1944.)