



Joe Goepner, AAS, BScA, ScD
Dori Goepner

DORI-JOE ACRES

Quality Estate-Grown Fancy Fruit

IN REPLY RE: Chief Warrant Officer Joe Goepner
HQ USAMRDC, ATTN: SGRD-RML
Fort Detrick
Frederick, Maryland 21701

Mr. Marshall Hanks
Tank Destroyer Association (TDA)
P.O. Box "DG"
Tiburon, California 94920

Dear Mr. Hanks:

I note with great interest, your picture and caption in the February 1983 AARP News Bulletin regarding Tank Destroyer Units.

On 30 June 1940, I was serving in the Regular Army, Company I, 15th Infantry, Fort Lewis, Washington. On the next day, I was transferred as a Cadre to the Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 99th Infantry Battalion (Antitank) effective 1 July 1940, the date of activation of that unit. To my knowledge, together with Sergeant Fred O Chapman, we two were the first two enlisted members of the very first Antitank Unit formed in the US Army. At the same time, a LTC Paul L. Ransom was assigned along with an H. J. McCrystal, A Major, and a Captain named Harry W. Wheaton. I served with the unit until late in 1941 when I transferred to the Army Air Corps. We went through all the trauma of activation, staffing with members of the first draft in the fall of 1940. We were finally equipped with 1/2 ton trucks and 37 mm towed cannons. Went into the field and trained very hard for the years of 1940 and 1941 developing the Army's Tank Destroyer concept. In December 1941, the unit was redesignated as the 899th Tank Destroyer Battalion which it served as until its inactivation on 27 December 1945 at Camp Kilmer, New Jersey. It was redesignated as the 899th Tank Battalion on 23 July 1953, and reactivated 17 Jan 55 in Europe but was finally inactivated for the last time on 1 May 1958. During WW II, the Unit served in Seven major battles, Tunisia, Rome-Arno, Normandy (with Arrowhead) Northern France, Rhineland, Ardennes-Alsace, Central Europe. Unit was engaged specifically at Remagen Bridgehead, St Jean De Daye. Awarded Order of the Day of the Belgian Army, Belgian Fourragere, Distinguished Unit Citations and other awards.

I thought you might be interested in the real beginning of the Tank Destroyer unit in the US Army from the unit's first Operations Sergeant, Bugler, and Message Center Chief. I typed the first orders, daily bulletin and assignment instructions ever prepared by the unit sitting on one 30 cal Ammunition Box with typewriter sitting on another in a pyramble tent on 1 July 1940. None of the Companies had yet been assigned any personnel and the personnel named above were as best I can recall the only people arriving at that spot on that day.

Very Sincerely yours,

Joe Goepner
CWO Joe Goepner
USA

SEE OTHER
SIDE

for this unit;
I am the proud owner and possessor of a Unit Crest, an Enlisted Man's Tank Destroyer collar ornament, a Tank Destroyer Shoulder Patch (Tiger grushing a Tank in his mouth).

I considered my service with this unit a high point in my total service which has now extended for more than 40 years. to date. I have held every enlisted rank through Master Sergeant, Every Officer Rank through Lieutenant Colonel and every Warrant Officer Rank through Chief Warrant Officer, W-3 which I am now serving as.