

## 811TH TANK DESTROYER BATTALION

### TRADITION AND HISTORY

Our Motto, "Ferox Inimicis" (BOLD AGAINST ENEMIES) may we always uphold it.

The functions of the 811TH TANK DESTROYER BATTALION are allegorically based upon the fable and historic strength of St. George slaying the dragon, slaying the tough hide ferocious, fire spitting, dragon single handed.

On our shield we have gules, a knight in armor, with spear and shield, mounted on a horse salient, trampling a dragon regardant, wings extended, argent, breathing fire proper, the spear thrust through the neck of the dragon.

In order to know the back ground of the 811th, let us go back over the years to the origin of our parent organization, the Sixth Infantry Division.

The Sixth Infantry Division as it was organized by the War Department Order on November 17, 1917, was comprised of the 11th and 12th Infantry Brigades and commanded by General James B. Erwin.

The Sixth Division was transported overseas in late June and July, landing at Glasgow, Liverpool, Southampton, Le Havre and Cherbourg. The Division Headquarters was established in the 9th Training Area in France, in Chateau Villian. It was here that Major General Walter H. Gordon assumed command August 2, 1918.

The division occupied sectors in Alsace, and late in October the divisions supported the 89th Division in the Meuse-Argonne offensive. In November the division relieved the 82nd and moved into the Verdun-sur-Meuse Area.

While in France, the 6th Division hiking from sector to sector earned the soubriquet of the "Sight-Seeing-Sixth".

The division was ordered to join the Army of Occupation in Germany when about half the troops were entrained for the trip to the docks.

During 1921 various units were inactivated and on September 30, 1921, the 6th Division passed from the list of active divisions.

When expansion of the army began in 1939, the Sixth Division was re-activated. It was organized as a triangular division on October 12, 1939, at Ft. Lewis, Washington. Its components were 1st, 3rd, and 30th regiments of Infantry, the 1st and 80th regiments of Field Artillery, the Headquarters and Military Police Company, the 4th Signal Company, the 8th Medical Battalion, the 7th Quartermaster Battalion and the 6th Engineer Battalion.

The 1st, 3rd and 20th Infantry and the 1st Field Artillery date their histories back to 1784, 1783, 1812, and 1792 respectively. Each of these regiments has a long record of battle achievements.

In 1940 the division had several units removed and others redesignated.

In 1941 the division consisted of the following organizations: 1st Infantry, 63rd Infantry, 1st, 51st, 53rd and the 80th Field Artillery Battalion with the usual division service units.

January 26, 1941, Major General Clarence S. Ridley commanded the division at its new permanent station, Fort Leonard Wood, Mo.

The 1st, 51st, 53rd and 80th Field Artillery units furnished the cadre for the 6th Division Provisional Antitank Battalion which was later redesignated the 606th Tank Destroyer Battalion. The Cadre from the 606th left Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, in order to arrive at Camp Gordon, Georgia, on April 10th, 1942 and under the command of 2nd Lt. March, the 811th Tank Destroyer Battalion was activated.

Now let us look into the history of the units that furnished the cadre of 6th Division Provisional Antitank Battalion.

#### FIRST FIELD ARTILLERY

This unit was organized from the 1st Battalion at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, the 2nd Battalion at the Presidio of San Francisco, California, in May, 1907, consisting of Battery A, organized 1901 as the 30th Battery, Field Artillery; Battery B organized 1901 as the 19th Battery; Battery C organized 1898 as Battery D, 6th Field Artillery; Battery D organized 1792 as Porter's Company of Artillery; Battery E, organized 1812 as Ogdon's Company, 3rd Regiment of Artillery; Battery F, organized 1861 as Battery D, 5th Field Artillery.

In the War of 1812, Battery E fought at the Battle of Stony Creek, Canada, on June 6th under the Command of Captain Towson. Batteries C and E fought in the Seminole of Florida War, 1835-1842. In the Mexican War, 1846-1848, various batteries fought both as Infantry and Artillery. As artillery Battery E fought



at Palo Alto, Rosoca de la Palma, Matamoros, Monterey, Buncia Vista. Units of the 1st Field Artillery played a leading part in the battles of Cotonas, Cheroubusco, Chapulotec and various other engagements. "Stonewall" Jackson, then a lieutenant, was a member of the regiment. During the latter engagement more than 21% were killed or wounded. The years 1855 and 1856 saw numerous engagements with Indians in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas.

During the Civil War, 1861-1865, the batteries were scattered along the Rio Grande and Battery D was located at Fort Sumter.

Most of the regiment served in the Army of the Potomac as light artillery. D Battery, as it is now known saw service in many battles, notably the Eleven Days Battle around Richmond in June, 1862, and took part in the Second Battle of Bull Run, August 30, 1862, Antietam, September 17, 1862, Gettysburg, July 3, 1863. Battery E fought in the engagements of Seven Pines, White Oak Swamp, Bull Run, Williamsburg, Virginia, 1862 and Antietam, September 16-17, 1862. Battery F was practically annihilated at the first battle of Bull Run; on its reorganization, it took part in the battles of Gaines Hill, Malvern Hill, Antietam, Gettysburg, and Hanover Court House. Over seventy engagements were taken part in by the Batteries of the 1st Field Artillery during the Civil War.

In the Spanish-American War, Battery D took part in the battle of El Caney in Cuba, and E and F took part in the campaign in Porto Rico. Battery D was sent to the Philippines in 1899, participating in eighteen engagements.

In 1917 the regiment was assembled at Fort Sill, where its permanent stationing remained until May, 1941, when it joined the 6th Division at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri.

Ten battle streamers, authorized by the War Department, are carried on the regimental standard.

#### THE FIFTY FIRST FIELD ARTILLERY

The 51st Field Artillery Battalion was constituted an inactive unit of the Regular Army October 1, 1933, and designated as the 51st Field Artillery Regiment. It was redesignated the 51st Field Artillery Battalion and made active at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, October 1, 1940, receiving personnel and equipment from the 2nd Battalion of the 1st Field Artillery Regiment. The Battalion came to Fort Leonard Wood in 1941.

#### THE FIFTY THIRD FIELD ARTILLERY

~~The 53rd Field Artillery Battalion was constituted on the active list at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, on October 1, 1940, as an integral part of the 6th Division. The officers and enlisted men were obtained by transfer or reassignment from the 3rd Battalion of the 1st Field Artillery Regiment.~~

The Battalion was stationed at Fort Sill for nearly eight months and then moved to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, on May 27, 1941.

#### THE 80TH FIELD ARTILLERY

The 80th Field Artillery, a World War unit of the 8th Field Artillery Brigade, 8th Division, was organized as the 22nd Cavalry at Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia. On November 1, 1917, the 22nd Cavalry was redesignated the 80th Field Artillery. The regiment served overseas from August 22, 1918 until June 20, 1919.

On September 10, 1921, the 80th Field Artillery was made inactive. On October 1, 1933 the regiment was reconstituted. The 3rd Battalion, 80th Field Artillery, was made active by transfer of personnel from the 3rd Battalion, 17th Field Artillery, which was made inactive. There is no historical connection between the 3rd Battalion, 17th Field Artillery and 3rd Battalion, 80th Field Artillery.

The 80th Field Artillery joined the other units at Ft. Leonard Wood in May, 1941.

As you can see the units that furnished the cadre for the 606th, which in turn furnished the cadre for the 811th, have a long and courageous history. With representatives of these units and the replacements that now make up the 811th we should make our mark in the histories that are to come.

The 811th was stationed first at Camp Gordon, Georgia with Lt. Col. Lewis W. Haskel as the Commanding Officer. While at Camp Gordon the Battalion was one of four battalions attached to the 1st Army Corps Tank Destroyer Group on June 2, 1942, per GO 23. On May 12, 1942, this Battalion was attached to the Second Army. On the 13th of July, 1942, Lt. Col. Haskel was transferred to the AGF GS. The Battalion Executive Officer, Capt. John Fleisch assumed command and on the 22nd of July, Lt. Col. E. A. O'Hair joined the battalion and assumed command.

While at Camp Gordon, 1st Lt. Charles C. Kissinger joined the battalion and activated the Medical Detachment. A cadre of six enlisted men from Ft. Jackson, South Carolina were the first to join the detachment.



From the 1st to 3rd of October the battalion prepared for a temporary change of station. On the 4th of October the Battalion started their three day trip to Camp Hood, Texas.

At Camp Hood the Battalion was assigned to the 6th Tank Destroyer Group of the Advanced Unit Training Center.

While at Camp Hood, the battalion established new records and broke most of the old records. The battalion was used to demonstrate tactics for visiting General on several occasions.

Headquarters and Headquarters Company on the 28th of December received a letter of commendation from Colonel Purdue, the commanding officer of the 6th Tank Destroyer Group for the completing of the Army Ground Force Physical Fitness Proficiency test with the high score of 147 out of a possible 166.67, or 88.23 per cent.

The 811th made a higher score in the Army Ground Force Proficiency Test than other Tank Destroyer Battalions. This test consisted of tactics, firing for both separate companies and the Battalion as a unit.

At the end of the three months course at the Tank Destroyer center, 411 recruits came to the battalion. In order they might have the advantage of training under ideal conditions afforded Tank Destroyers at Camp Hood, the stay at Camp Hood was extended. This permitted the men to go through the Tank Hunting Village which was of immeasurable value to them.

At the final review at Camp Hood, Texas the recruits joined their companies in an impressive ceremony. It was at this review, February 27, 1943 that Lt Col Edgar A. O'Hair announced that he had received orders to report to Camp Bowie, Texas and assume command of a Tank Destroyer Group. The Battalion Executive Officer, Major Albert R. Brownfield then assumed command of the Battalion.

The battalion was again on the move on the 16th of March. This time the move was a permanent change of station from Camp Hood, Texas to Camp Carson, Colorado. Again the 811th Tank Destroyer Battalion came through the time loading the train and pulling out of Camp Hood in record breaking time.

The arrival of the battalion at Camp Carson created quite a bit of excitement inasmuch as it was the first Tank Destroyer Battalion completely trained ~~by the 811th Tank Destroyer Battalion~~ in its stride and after a few hours was settled and at home in its new quarters. A few days after arriving the battalion held a County Fair at which all TBA equipment was displayed. Invitations were sent to all military personnel on the post. Unusual interest was shown and about five thousand guests availed themselves of the opportunity of viewing our equipment.

About the first of April the 811th was host to a group of National Newsmen and radio correspondents.

As you have seen the 811th is a unit that always goes beyond what it is required to do. They are never satisfied with being as good as other battalions, but always strive to be the best.

Prepared by the S-2 & S-3 sections.