

HEADQUARTERS  
825TH TANK DESTROYER BATTALION

RDF/jje

Camp Campbell, Kentucky  
1 March 1944

Subject: History of Organization.

To: The Adjutant General, Washington 25, D. C.

Through: Commanding General, XXII Corps, Camp Campbell, Kentucky.



1. In accordance with Par. 11b (1) AR 345-105, the following history of the 825th Tank Destroyer Battalion for the year 1943 is submitted:

a. Original Unit:

(1) Designation: 825th Tank Destroyer Battalion

(2) Date of Organization: 10 August 1942

(3) Place of Organization: Camp Gruber, Oklahoma

(4) Authority for Organization: Letter, War Department, AGO, AG 330.2 (30 April 1943) MR-MG-N, dated 5 May 1942, constituted the 825th Tank Destroyer Battalion (Hv, Self Prop) on the inactive list. Letter, Headquarters, Army Ground Forces, 330.2/39 (TD Units) GNOFH (5 May 1942) 5 May 1942, authorized for its activation.

(5) Sources from which personnel was obtained: Officers' Cadre, OCS, Fort Sill, Oklahoma; Enlisted Cadre, 774th Tank Destroyer Battalion, Fort Jackson, South Carolina; Inducted Enlisted Personnel from Fort Devens, Massachusetts, Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, and Fort McPherson, Georgia.

b. Changes in Organization: The 825th Tank Destroyer Battalion was reorganized 12 July 1943, at Camp Hood, Texas in accordance with T/O 18-35, dated 7 May 1943. Authority: Letter, File Number 330.2/012-GHEDC, Headquarters, TDS, Camp Hood, Texas dated 8 July 1943, Subject: Reorganization of Tank Destroyer Battalions.

c. Strength, Commissioned and Enlisted:

(1) At beginning of Period: Officers                      Enlisted Men

38

861



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(2) Net increase each Month:

	<u>Officers</u>	<u>Enlisted Men</u>
Jan	1	10
Feb	10	113
Mar	0	0
Apr	0	0
May	0	4
June	0	0
July	0	0
Aug	0	0
Sept	0	3
Oct	1	0
Nov	0	0
Dec	5	0

(3) Net Decrease each Month:

Jan	0	0
Feb	0	0
Mar	1	56
Apr	1	35
May	2	0
June	1	26
July	4	42
Aug	1	19
Sept	1	0
Oct	0	7
Nov	0	11
Dec	0	3

(4) At end of Period:

<u>Officers</u>	<u>Enlisted Men</u>
45	796

d. Stations (permanent or temporary) of unit or parts thereof.

(1) STATION

	<u>Arrival</u>	<u>Departure</u>
Camp Gruber, Okla (Permanent)	10 Aug 43	26 Jan 43
Camp Bowie, Texas (Permanent)	27 Jan 43	24 Mar 43
Camp Hood, Texas (Permanent)	24 Mar 43	17 July 43
Camp Phillips Kans (Permanent)	19 July 43	11 Aug 43
Devils Lake, N.D. (Temporary)	14 Aug 43	20 Sept 43
Camp Phillips, Kans (Permanent)	23 Sept 43	9 Nov 43
Tenn Maneuver Area (Temporary)	11 Nov 43	31 Dec 43

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## e. Marches:

On the morning of 10 August 1943, the 825th Tank Destroyer Battalion set out from Camp Phillips, Kansas, on a long journey to North Dakota; leaving only a skeleton crew behind. (Authority: Par. 16, Special Orders 189, Headquarters, Camp Phillips, Kansas dated 9 August 1943). The battalion had been assigned the task of relieving the enormous shortage of civilian labor by lending assistance to the harvesting of the 1943 wheat crop. It was not the first time that members of the armed forces had been pressed into service in order to relieve the critical problems of production which have arisen by virtue of a national crisis; and the men accepted their assignment in the true spirit of the American soldier: "To be ready for any and all emergencies".

The long motor convoy into the Northwest was accomplished without mishap, in a period of four (4) days. On the first day of the trip, the weather was clear and warm, and the fifteen (15) mile motor column traveled over hard surfaced roads. Generally speaking, these roads were in very good condition; but several stretches of paved highway were encountered, which showed evidence of neglect, by the existence of numerous holes and ruts, which in some instances made driving hazardous. At 1915 hours, the battalion arrived at Columbus, Nebraska, and bivouached on the outskirts of the city. The total number of miles traveled on the first day of the trip, was two hundred and thirteen (213).

The journey was resumed on the following morning at 0700 hours, with Madison, South Dakota, as the destination. As the convoy moved out of Columbus, the weather was comparatively mild, and the men were in high spirits. At 1000 hours however, the mercury began to drop steadily and high winds developed. By the time the column halted for the noon meal at 1300 hours, it had become bitterly cold, and the winds had reached gale force. After lunch, the convoy moved on once more with the combination of cold and high winds making driving conditions difficult for the men who were operating peeps and motorcycles. The elements did not dampen the spirits of the men however, and the cavalcade finally arrived in Madison at 1658 hours. It commenced to rain immediately upon arrival, and local authorities opened the State Armory, and turned it over to the battalion for the night in order that the men might be sheltered from the storm.

After a night of welcome rest, the battalion set out once more at 0700 hours, headed for Fargo, North Dakota. As on the second day of the trip, most of the roads encountered were dirt, and all of them were in excellent condition. It rained during most of the day; but the same high morale was clearly in evidence. At 1800 hours the convoy reached Fargo and proceeded to the Fair Grounds where hundreds of civilian spectators had gathered, watching the men pitch their tents for the evening. When this had been accomplished the men were dismissed for the evening, and set out to see the sights of this town, of which they had heard and read so much. The facilities of the YMCA were placed at their disposal for the evening, and several social and fraternal organizations hastily arranged an evening of entertainment for the men. The total mileage for the third day of the trip was listed as two hundred and thirty seven (237) miles.

On the morning of 14 August at 0700 hours, LT COL. RUDOLPH E. MIDDINS held a meeting of all members of the battalion and instructed them in the schedule which would be followed during the harvest season; impressing upon the members of the command, the tremendous importance of the task which confronted them and



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urging each man to give his best efforts in order to accomplish the mission in a manner that would bring credit to the organization. Immediately thereafter, the battalion was divided into companies and platoons and moved to work camps in five (5) different counties: Company "C" to Fenn, Starkweather and Edmore in Ramsey County; Company "D" to Gardo in Tower County and Relette in Relette County; thirty (30) miles from the Canadian border; Company "E" at Rugby in Pierce County; Headquarters Company at New Rockford in Nedy County and Madock in Benson County. The War Memorial Building in Devil's Lake was chosen as the site of battalion headquarters, and the military aspect of the harvest season was in full swing with approximately one million (1,000,000) acres of golden wheat, waiting to be sheared.

The men waded into their task with a vigor that belied their complete inexperience in the problem of farming, and their results soon amazed the veteran wheat farmers with whom they were working. The long hours of work and arduous nature of their job were soon forgotten as a spirit of rivalry was developed among the various groups of men working on different farms. This spirit was quickly rewarded by local business merchants and fraternal organizations, who added additional stimulus to the drive, by offering various prizes to teams which accomplished the most work. How well the battalion fulfilled their part of the harvest is aptly demonstrated by statistics which were compiled by the U. S. District Employment Agent.

Figures for the month of August released through LT. COL. MINNERS, Battalion Commander, showed that in the sixteen (16) day period from 16 August to 31 August the members of the battalion sheared a total of forty-seven thousand (47,000) acres of wheat. Breaking this down into terms of the individual, each man in the organization sheared eighty-three and a half (83½) acres. Further discounting Sundays and rainy days on which the men could not work, the soldiers of the 885th TD Battalion averaged just under two (2) acres of wheat per hour, or four per cent (4%) less than a worker with ten (10) years' experience could accomplish.

While the primary mission of the battalion was to assist in the harvest, they contributed their services in other fields of endeavor, which were to prove beneficial to the Government. In conjunction with the launching of the third (3rd) War Bond Drive, ten (10) enlisted men of the organization, under the capable direction of 1ST. LT. GUY A. BEAUDINE, appeared at the Lake Theatre for four (4) days, in an original stage production entitled: "Don't Let This Happen to Our Boys". The play, which depicted the possibilities of what could easily happen to our fighting men if they were poorly or inadequately equipped, attracted thousands of civilians to each performance. The grim reality of the scenes touched a responsive chord in each audience, and was directly responsible for the sale of thousands of dollars worth of War Bonds.

Another outstanding accomplishment of the battalion during their stay in North Dakota, was the formation of a Battalion Newspaper. The paper entitled Action Front was enthusiastically received by both the men and the civilian population, of the various cities and towns where the men were stationed. It helped to cement the strong bond of friendship that had sprung up between the soldiers and the citizens with whom they had come in contact. So great was the interest of the civilian population in the journalistic aspirations of the battalion,



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that as a parting gesture of appreciation, the business concerns of Devil's Lake voluntarily contributed funds in order that the first printed edition might be produced and left behind us as a souvenir. Thus the 825th TD Battalion became probably the first Tank Destroyer Battalion, to ever produce a fully printed and illustrated eight page newspaper. Action Front was founded under the supervision of 1ST. LT. ROBERT C. KASXON and is edited by Enlisted Men of the organization. The battalion was tendered a singular honor when the State Historical Library of the capitol of North Dakota, awarded the newspaper a permanent file in its archives in order to perpetuate the history of the 825th TD Battalion and in appreciation of the outstanding services rendered to the state in a period of national emergency.

The citizens, themselves, showed their appreciation in a much more personal manner. They opened their homes to every member of the organization and showered the soldiers with a sincere display of hospitality that will never be forgotten. Collectively, they staged many social functions in honor of the battalion, and individually they entertained small groups of the men in their homes. The local American Legion Post held a dance at the War Memorial Building for the men, the music being furnished by Wit Thoma and his nationally famous orchestra. A second dance was also held, under the auspices of the Devil's Lake Chamber of Commerce, with prizes being awarded to soldiers who volunteered their services as entertainers, for the evening. As a final gesture, the entire battalion was invited to attend the opening game of the local high school football season as the guests of the city.

On Sunday, 19 September 1943 the battalion acknowledged the hospitality of its gracious hosts by staging a parade and formal Retreat. The parade was witnessed by thousands of spectators who had come from miles around to extend a last fond farewell to the soldiers, whom they affectionately referred to as "Our Boys". With the last faint strains of "To the Colors", the curtain rang down on a pleasant chapter in the history of this organization.

On 20 September 1943 the battalion commenced their return trip to Camp Phillips, Kansas. Behind them lay the Harvest of 1943, and the knowledge that they had answered their country's call in an emergency. Their mission had been accomplished, and the men were proud of a job that had been Well Done.

The day of departure, was characterized by typical fall weather being brisk and clear. The return trip was very similar in all respects, to the original journey with the same stops being made in transposed order.

Following is the log of each day, with weather and road conditions outlined:

First Day - Devils Lake, North Dakota to Fargo, North Dakota - mileage 180 - weather brisk and clear. bivouac at Fair Grounds in Fargo, North Dakota at 1543 hours.

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**Second Day - Fargo, North Dakota to Madison, South Dakota - total miles 227 - Bivouac at Madison, South Dakota at 1500 hours.**

**Third Day - Madison, South Dakota to Columbus, Nebraska - arrived at 1556 hours - bivouaced at City Baseball Park - Mileage 212.**

**Fourth Day - Columbus, Nebraska to Camp Phillips, Kansas - arrived at 1900 hours - Mileage of 4th day 213 - total mileage of round trip 1686.**

**f. Campaigns: None**

**g. Battles: None**

**h. Commanding Officer in important engagements: None**

**i. Losses in action: Officers and Men: None**

**j. Former and present members who have distinguished themselves in action:**

**(1) Soldier's Medal was awarded 17 May 1943 to Corporal Sylvester M. Helf (then Private) 17064984, Company "C", 825th Tank Destroyer Battalion for heroism displayed at Camp Hood, Texas, on 24 August 1943.**

**k. Photographs of personnel, important scenes or events: None**

**For the Commanding Officer:**

**ROGER B. FAH  
Capt., 825th TD Bn.,  
Adjutant.**

