

BATTALION HISTORY

773rd Tank Destroyer

Battalion

The 773rd Tank Destroyer Battalion was born in July of 1941 at Camp Shelby, Mississippi. Prior to departure for the Third Army maneuvers in Louisiana, two Anti-Tank batteries from the 1st Field Artillery and the 166th Field Artillery Regiments, together with selected personnel from the 190th Field Artillery Regiment, all from the 73rd Field Artillery Brigade, were formed into the 73rd Provisional Anti-Tank Battalion. The 141st FA from Louisiana, was a National Guard outfit, with the 166th and the 190th FA Regiments coming from the Pennsylvania National Guard. These regiments had been inducted into the army on the 13th of January 1941, and began training immediately.

The 73rd Prov. AT Bn., a part of the 2nd Prov. AT Group, was commanded by Captain Frank G. Spiess. Today Major Robert L. Moore is in command of this battalion. Captain Spiess, later Lt. Col. Spiess, guided the unit through its training days and through all its combat, leaving the organization on the 27th of July 1945.

At the completion of the La. maneuvers, Army Ground Forces decided to hold the battalion intact and season them further on the coming First Army maneuvers in North Carolina. October of that year was spent in Camp Claiborne, La., re-equipping for the Fall maneuvers. After the N. Carolina sessions, the battalion returned to Camp Shelby just two days prior to Pearl Harbor and War. On December 15th the organization officially became the 773rd Tank Destroyer Battalion, (HV) (SP).

Four months training at Camp Shelby followed and then the move to Indio, Cal., and the Desert Training Center. It was the first TD Battalion to join the commander, with whom it served so ably in Europe, General George S. Patton, Jr.

After an eight month training period, including the Desert Maneuvers of September and October of 1942, a toughened 773rd departed for Camp Hood, Texas, the home of the Tank Destroyers. This course extended from December 1942 to April of 1943. Again on the move, this time to Camp Atterbury, Indiana, where we enjoyed the hospitality of the Hoosier state and the now poignant memories of Indianapolis.

The unit was ordered to Tennessee in June for its fourth large scale Army Maneuvers, this time with the Second Army, and the final seasoning of an already well trained and maneuver-wise organization. The Battalion's excellent record during July and August stamped it as a good outfit with prospect for overseas duty.

We returned to Camp Atterbury, Indiana and impatiently awaited an alert notice. On the 15th of January 1944, it became, "Good-Bye Indiana" and "Hello, New York". A short but busy stay at the P.O.E., Camp Shanks, N.Y. There - inspections, drills, shots, physicals, insurance and embarkation on the British liner "Acquitanian".

England

The relatively smooth Atlantic crossing on the former luxury liner "Acquitanian" was only slightly disturbed by the lone appearance of two Luftwaffe planes, which were driven off by the ships Ack-Ack.

The debarkation, cold and rainy, and the subsequent train ride from Gourock, near Glasgow, on the 7th of February, gave us our only glimpse of Scotland. Merry Old England (Probably best remembered by Bournemouth) the 48 hour trips to London, tours through Oxford, Cheltenham and the home of the Father of Hamlet, MacBeth and King Lear, - Shakespeare's Stratford-on-Avon. We remember too, the warm beer, the smooth scotch, the quaint pubs, their dart games and the lovely

English Lassies. Yes, England was all of these, together with the work that spelled, preparation for Combat.

In the scenic Cotswold section of Gloucestershire, near Stow-on-the-Wold, was Mangersbury Manor, the 600 year old crumbling house with it's one bath tub. However the new Lords and Earls of Mangersbury managed with the Niessen huts and tents. Walk out of the guard post and you were in Stow-on-the-Wold. Walk up the street and you were at the Unicorn, presided over by Mr. Lee.

Two weeks of indirect firing on the Brecon Beacons Range in South Wales supplemented our small arms firing and Battalion problems held with the 6th Armored Division.

In early April, the Battalion as a unit of the 6th TD Group was given three marshalling camps in the vicinity of Dorchester, Dorset County. The 6th TD Group controlled the Marshalling Area "D" and placed the Battalion in Sub-Area "W" - this consisted of Camp D-1 at Puddletown, Camp D-3 at Yellowham and Camp D-6 at Piddlehinton, commanded and staffed by A, B, Hqs-Rcn and C Companies, respectively. Here our duties were to clean, build, camouflage, staff and organize these camps for the purpose of feeding, supplying, entertaining, guarding and administratively administering to the 25,000 combat troops that were to pass through on their way to the continent and combat.

A month following "D" Day, and having a "Well Done" for our work at the D's, the Battalion repaired to the South of England for a two week refresher and sharpening of our gunner's eyes at Kimmeridge and Lulworth. This stay, on the Studland Range near Corfe Castle, and at D-1 at Lytchett-Minster, sufficed also to check our equipment and the final preparations for combat.

We returned to Camp D-6 on the 6th of August 1944, this time as the processor, in place of our former roles as the processor.

We left Piddlehinton, loaded aboard two LST's and four LCT's at Portland Harbor, crossed the channel on the 7th, beautiful weather, and sighted and debarked on the Coast of Normandy.

France

Roster of Officers who landed in France on August 8, 1944

Battalion Headquarters

Lt. Col. Frank G. Spiess	(0-266094)	C. O.
Major Robert L. Moore	(0-387362)	Executive
Capt. John Maida	(0-397811)	S-1
Capt. Ellwood H. Furst	(0-374075)	S-2
Capt. George I. Blomquist	(0-404549)	S-3
Capt. Lynn F. Williams	(0-394177)	S-4

Headquarters Company

Capt. Kenneth F. Lantz	(0-420329)	C.O.
Mr. Ward C. Johnson	(W-2124401)	Pers. O.
2nd Lt. Richard D. Hagar	(0-1822394)	Executive

1st Lt. George H. Beckmann	(0-1167738)	LNO No. 1
1st Lt. Wm. R. Zheutlin	(0-1030635)	LNO No. 2
Vacant		Trans. O.
1st Lt. John Sharp, Jr.	(0-1821637)	Motor O.
1st Lt. John T. McMahon	(0-1823037)	Comm. O.

Reconnaissance Company

Capt. Howard R. Emhardt	(0-383514)	C. O.
1st Lt. Thomas M. Michaels	(0-4823328)	Executive
1st Lt. John O. Sharp	(0-1170189)	Pnr. Pltn.
2nd Lt. Leon M. Wood	(0-1824130)	1st Pltn.
2nd Lt. Walter E. Schewe	(0-1823652)	2nd Pltn.
2nd Lt. Charles Thompson	(0-1014884)	3rd Pltn.

Company A

Capt. Wilton J. Richard	(0-415804)	C. O.
1st Lt. Delbert G. Reck	(0-1821629)	1st Pltn.*
1st Lt. John W. Snider	(0-1168086)	2nd Pltn.
1st Lt. William J. Maus	(0-1823323)	3rd Pltn.
2nd Lt. Cyril A. Trust	(0-1166853)	Executive

Company B

Capt. Wm. B. Paterson	(0-304879)	C. O.
1st Lt. Benjamin W. Phillips	(0-1168414)	1st Pltn.*
1st Lt. Kenneth C. Sutter	(0-1822210)	2nd Pltn.
2nd Lt. Robert B. McKenna, Jr.	(0-1823325)	3rd Pltn.
2nd Lt. William J. Vargo	(0-1823374)	Executive

Company C

1st Lt. John J. Kelly	(0-443969)	C. O.
1st Lt. Joseph M. Michaels	(0-1169252)	1st Pltn.*
1st Lt. Charley H. Von Behren	(0-1170235)	2nd Pltn.
1st Lt. Nicholas V. Allender	(0-1030541)	3rd Pltn.
2nd Lt. Gus Sakellaris	(0-1822634)	Executive

Medical Detachment

Capt. John D. Singer	(0-312128)	Bn. Surgeon
----------------------	------------	-------------

* Second in Command

Wreckage of June 6th still littered the beaches as the unit landed. The battalion, minus C Company and part of B Company, landed on UTAH BEACH near St. Germain De Varreville at 2200 hours on the 7th. The remainder of the battalion landed at 1245 hours the same day, on OMAHA

BEACH near St. Laurent-Sur-Mer. Assembling at La Haye Du Puits, and with attachment to the 5th TD Group as part of the XV Corps, the battalion made a 91 mile march to St. Elliers Du Maine. At Avranches an enemy air attack during the night brought the war closer. Checked vehicles and guns and gratefully received from the Norman-French who wandered into our bivouac, eggs, crusty French bread and ... cognac. Services were held by a Protestant Chaplain and a French Priest. On the 12th, and 74 miles later, came Le Mans and the first prisoner of war, brought in by C Company. By the 14th the unit had closed in a few miles south and east of enemy held Argentan. Twice firing positions were taken, but it was not until the 17th that action in the memorable Argentan-Falaise Pocket began, and with it attachment to the V Corps of the First Army.

Argentan-Falaise

Into the rolling hills SE of Argentan, near Le Bourg St. Leonard, the 773rd destroyers took up positions on the south tip of the 'pincers' around an estimated 75-100,000 Germans trapped within an iron ring of armor. For one day, and until the 90th Division arrived, all personnel of the battalion including Headquarters Company, filled in the line. From then and until the 21st, furious fighting took place as the battalion held courageously and counter-attacked relentlessly against the overwhelming odds. As a result of the courageous determination and conspicuous heroism, so often displayed by each member, the 773rd was awarded the PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION.

Losses inflicted on the enemy were staggering, and the organization had accounted for forty-one enemy tanks, eighty-two other vehicles of various types and many artillery pieces destroyed plus the hundreds of enemy personnel killed.

Close the Gap

On the 17th, Companies A and C were given the mission of moving North to cover the main roads into Le Bourg St. Leonard. Under concentrations of enemy artillery and mortar fire, two platoons of C Company supporting the 2nd Battalion of the 359th Infantry, attacked Le Bourg from the West, as A Company with the 1st Battalion of the 359th moved into town from the south. The town fell and a German counter attack was repulsed.

Passing through town, the 3rd Battalion of the 359th with the 3rd platoon of C Company in support, moved NW of Fougy with Hill 129 as one of the objectives.

Between 0900 and 1300 on Sunday the 20th of August, a desperate enemy made a futile attempt to escape SW of Chambojs near Hill 129. C Company's platoon ran out of ammunition and the 1st platoon of A Company was dispatched to relieve them. Nearing Hill 129 the 1st platoon unexpectedly came face to face with a mixed column of enemy tanks and vehicles. At point blank range and under a hail of fire, they slugged it out for three hours. Leading the platoon was 1st Lt. Delbert G. Reck and Staff Sergeant, later 2nd Lt. Edward J. Land, both of whom were to receive the DSC and the Croix De Querre with Star, for their leadership and bravery in this action.

When the din of combat had died down, 8 tanks, 16 armored vehicles and 120 other vehicles including, assault guns, A-A guns etc., had been converted to burning or exploding wrecks.

Farther north the 2nd platoon of C Company made their stand at Chambois. 1st Lt. Chancy von Behren, the platoon leader and T/4 Duane B. MacGregor were decorated for the action on the 20th that

resulted in the destruction of 11 Mark IV tanks, 3 Mark V tanks, 5 Mark III tanks, 3 SP Guns and 17 other vehicles, killing and capturing over 600 enemy.

Attachment to the XV Corps of the Third Army on the 22nd, and after a short rest at Chailloué, the battalion moved to the Seine River at Mantes-Massicourt. There Company B, Captain William B. Paterson commanding, and the 2nd platoon of Reconnaissance Company, were attached to the 79th Division. After the bridgehead was successfully established by the 79th and the 30th Divisions on the 27th, the battalion was relieved and moved S and E around Paris closing in at Bernay-En-Brie on the 30th. During a seven day rest and maintenance period in early September, every one had an opportunity to visit the newly liberated and joyously gay Paris.

Joining the 79th Division on the 10th of September at Thonnance-Les-Joinville on the Marne River, meant supporting the Corps effort on the Moselle River. "A" Company operated with Combat Team 3 (313 Infantry), B Company with CT 4, (314 Infantry) and C Company with CT 5, (315 Infantry).

Company C, commanded by Captain John J. Kelly, supported CT 5 as it swept through Neufchateau, Chatenois, Oellville to Poussay, by the 13th of September. Lt. Von Behren was commended by the Assistant Division Commander, Brig. General Greer, for personally leading the successful attack on Rourve-La-Chetive. CT 4 with B Company thrust East to Charmes, with the 2nd platoon entering the town at 1000 hours on the 20th. Heavy resistance from road blocks, mines and enemy machine gun nests was overcome and the town fell at 2000 hours that night. This platoon, under Lt. Kenneth C. Sutrer was highly complimented by the Division Commander and the Regimental and Battalion Commanders.

While B Company and C Company were fighting eastwards, A Company with CT 3 captured the towns of Puzieux, Poussay and Ramecourt to take and hold positions overlooking Damvillier and Mirecourt.

The important bridgehead over the Moselle at Charmes, was established and CT 4 and B Company crossed on the 15th clinging stubbornly to the small toe-hold on the east side, while the other TD Companies supported them by direct fire. Relieved, and a crossing to the North at Bayon on the 18th, led to Luneville. Fighting up and down hills and across minor streams with blasted bridges all companies closed in on Luneville by the 22nd. B Company forded the Meurthe River near Houdainville and moved into the town of Gerberviller on the 21st. On the 23rd, B Company increased their score, but this time knocked out an M8 that the Germans were using as an assault gun near Fraimbois.

Seldom fighting as companies and often with platoons split, the battalion rumbled on into Luneville, the one time capitol of Lorraine. Street fighting continued for days under a rain of enemy artillery.

On the 29th the XV Corps, passed to the command of the Seventh Army and the Corps was given the mission of cleaning out the Foret de Parroy. This vicious tangle of timber and dense underbrush was about six miles long and five miles wide. The forest, scene of Adolph Hitler's World War I service, lay just North and East of Luneville. An interesting fact, as disclosed by captured German Officers was, that no possible surrender of these woods could be expected for fear of the Fuhrer's displeasure, and summing it up briefly they said, "Berlin will fall before this Holy Ground will be taken."

Although the Enemy were subjected to several air bombings, and many heavy artillery saturations, the forest remained, a close Infantry-Tank Destroyer attack action. Due to the tangled undergrowth and dense woods it was not cleared until October 9th. It was here that Lt. John Sharp, Jr., Bn. Motor Officer, developed the M10 steel tops, to protect the men in the TD's from the unceasing air and tree bursts of the then frantic German artillery.

On the 13th of October the Battalion reverted to XV Corps reserve, and on the 16th moved some 85 miles North to Jarny to become Third Army Troops again. There we were attached to the XX Corps and further attached on the 25th to the 95th Infantry Division just in from the States, and moved South to a Division Assembly Area Point Southwest of Metz.

Another crossing of the Moselle was made, just south of the fortress city of Metz and this time we operated in the line but in positions of a defensive nature. On the 3rd of November, and after relief of Battalion positions in the bridgehead sector by the 818th TD Bn, we were attached to the 90th Infantry Division and moved North to join them, assembling in the general area, Higny, Preutin, Domprix, and Bertrameix. The following day the Battalion reorganized under a new T/O and T/E and made a blackout march to the North under adverse weather conditions to the vicinity of Boust. A week of indirect firing helped soften the Germans defenses across the Moselle.

Third crossing of the Moselle

Metz, the famed fortress city, which for Centuries had never fallen, had to be taken. Since frontal assaults proved too costly, the Corps attacks were to outflank the city and seal off the enemy garrison. Two crossings were selected over the rain-swollen Moselle at Cattenom and Malling under the frowning guns of Fort Koenigsmacher. The Infantry assault boat crossings were in dire need of armored support but the rushing waters repeatedly swept away the engineer bridges. On the 12th the ferry that had safely carried over the company jeeps and one destroyer of A Company was grounded by the slowly receding waters. A pontoon bridge at Malling was built and carried two M10s of C Company over before it, already weakened by enemy artillery fire, parted and dropped a 3rd Platoon M10 into the turbulent stream. The two TD's safely over arrived at Petite-Hettange just in time to roar Eastward down the road toward Kerling, spitting death and destruction and repulsing the strong German counterattack from that town. During the ensuing action approximately 300 Germans were killed by 3 inch HE and 50 cal. MG fire from these two destroyers, commanded personally by Lt. George Beckman. After the Engineers had rigged another ferry, and completed a bridge at Cattenom, the remainder of the Battalion crossed.

The Division attacked astride the impregnable line of Maginot Forts, and despite enemy mine fields, road blocks and anti-tank guns smashed South. On the 19th the 3rd platoon of B Company, led by Lt. Robert B. McKenna, made contact with the 5th Division troops south of St. Barbe, closing the last escape corridor of the doomed Metz garrison. At Bockange on the 21st, Task Force Spiess came into being and was assigned a covering mission of the long stretches of the Nied River around Bouzonville. The Division crossed and fought its way to the Saar River establishing a firm line on the west bank between Merzig on the north and Wallerfangen on the south.

Saar River and Dillingen

On a cold and rainy 10th of December, at 0400 hours, the first destroyers were ferried over the Saar in support of the small bridgehead the Infantry had established a few days earlier. The Germans strongly resisted this penetration of the formidable Siegfried Line and brought down a veritable storm of all calibers of artillery on our troops. The ferry crossing site received its share of attention, with a daily

quota of approximately 2000 rounds. In spite of this all destroyers had crossed the river and joined the hard pressed Infantry on the west edge of Dillingen, the “Pittsburgh” of the industrially rich Saar region.

The fight for Dillingen was on. On December 15th a coordinated attack by the 1st and 2nd battalions of the 358th Infantry crossed the fortified railroad tracks into the town proper. Lt. John T. McMahon led his 3rd platoon of B Company up the tracks in advance of the 2nd battalion as each destroyer took on previously assigned pillboxes and kept them buttoned up. The Infantry moved forward pillbox by pillbox to the accompaniment of earth shaking roars as the Engineers blew up the German strong points. Company C’s 3rd platoon and the one remaining gun of the 1st platoon of B Company used the same tactics while supporting the 1st battalion on the right.

Luxembourg - Ardennes

With regret we pulled back over the hard won Saar River. With Major More and Captain Williams riding the last vehicle to recross, on the 22nd of December. Due to the mounting German offensive and break through in the Ardennes Sector, it became necessary that additional troops be withdrawn, to stem the surge of Von Runstedt's crack Panzer Armies. And initially we settled and prepared defensive positions in the Saar-Moselle Triangle. But the alert for movement came about noon on a cold-cloudy sixth of January, and the Battalion moved out making a hazardous day and the Battalion moved out making a hazardous day and night march over iced roads to Saeul, Luxembourg. Throughout the next month, the 773rd was to encounter its bitterest weather in the mountainous snow-blasted country of the little Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. Mid-Winter with its heavy snow falls, knee deep drifts, and biting winds that cut at men’s faces made the already difficult job of fighting much tougher.

On the 9th of January the Battalion launched its attack against the terrain protected south flank of the Enemy Bulge. Probably the hardest and most nerve wracking fighting in the Battalion's impressive history was to follow. Counting as gains, the passing of snow drifts, the reduction of the bulge continued despite the bitter weather. On the morning of the 12th, the 2nd Platoon of A Company, lead by Lt. Richard D. Hagar, took the town of Doncols, and moved on to Sonlez there to contact the 357th Infantry in that town. These towns were astride an important East-West road that the enemy planned to use as an escape route. With the taking of 120 Prisoners, this action was successfully completed without Infantry support late the same day. C Company was in position on the right flank, along the road leading southeast into Wiltz when an enemy armored column began to withdraw along this route. In the ensuing firefight that lasted all day, the enemy was cut to shreds by the accurate gunnery of the destroyers.

Three days later on the 15th, while helping to take the fiercely held town of Bras, Lt. John T. McMahon, B Company’s 3rd Platoon leader, found himself in charge of Company E of the 358th Infantry after all officers had been either killed or wounded.

Such was the opposition we met. On the 17th the decisive stand at Oberwampach took place. As the Battalion pushed ahead the enemy tried desperately to dislodge our troops from this town. Savage counter attacks by the elite 1st SS Panzer Troops aimed at the 90th Division positions in Oberwampach, were repulsed time and again by the accurate 3 inch gunnery. Enemy tanks destroyed in these actions brought the Battalion total to 102 marking the 773rd as the first American TD Battalion in any theater to exceed the century mark.

After failing at an 0400 hour attack and having his four “tank probes” dispersed by B Company guns, Jerry attacked in force with 10 to 12 tanks and supporting Infantry preceded by an intense artillery

barrage. Lt. Leon M. Wood commanding the 2nd Platoon of B Company, advanced on foot through the artillery, mortar and automatic weapons fire to lead one destroyer into position. Directing fire from his lone destroyer he kayoed 3 tanks. Two more tanks became smoking torches before the action subsided and the determined enemy tried again. This time he made a flanking movement at 1330 hours, sneaking 3 Mk V's and a battalion of Infantry in from the South. Having already directed our Infantry where to deploy in order to meet the attack, Lt. Wood together with S/Sgt. Pitcher, crawled up to a bank of the road and spotted the enemy tank positions. They then crept back to lead a TD into position. Two tanks were destroyed and the third knocked out. The TD then circled to enter the town from the southwest. The wounded were helped back to another destroyer next to a building. The enemy tank continued to fire at this TD and set the building on fire. Unable to reach the remaining tank and surrounded on three sides, the TD was destroyed by its crew before withdrawing into town. At this time Lt. Benjamin J. Phillips, B Company commander and temporarily in charge of the 3rd platoon, brought up two TD's and knocked out the last German tank.

Thus our forces were able to hold strategically important Oberwampach controlling one escape highway from the untenable Ardennes pocket. This also marked the turning point and the enemy began to hurriedly withdraw from the 'Bulge'.

The Siegfried Line again and the Rhine

The battalion moved to Biwisch on the 26th of January and was attached to the VIII Corps. Preparations for crossing the small, but stoutly defended Our River began. The frigid weather was now as bitter an enemy as the Germans as the battalion as the Battalion crossed the Our into Germany and the Siegfried Line again, on the 30th.

From February 7th on, the fighting was unusually bitter and the unit received its share of casualties, but in turn exacted a heavy toll on the enemy. Winterspelt, Habscheid, Brandsheid and Litenborn fell as the maze of pill boxes crumbled under the combined weapons of the the attackers. The Hard-won experience at 'Busting' fortifications in the Saar was put to excellent use.

On the 21st, Task Force Spiess was once more activated. This time it was composed of Bn. Hqs., 773rd TD Bn.; Rcn. Co.. 773rd TD Bn; 3rd Plat. C Co., 773rd TD Bn; One Plat. B Co., 315th Eng; One company (-) 602nd TD Bn; and the Anti-Tank Co. of the 358th Inf. Its first mission was to protect the Division's right flank as it pushed South and East between the Our and Prum Rivers.

Other Army units were slashing at the foe from the South and many of the towns and important hills taken by the Task Force aided them considerably in their mission. By the 25th TF Spiess had accomplished the mission and was relieved after taking 16 towns and much enemy equipment.

March came with its spring rains, making communications lines more difficult. The 90th and the 6th Armored were preparing to attack to the Kyll River. Small task forces were formed with units of the 773rd as a part of each. These task forces were to probe ahead of the Infantry and secure routes and important terrain features. How well they succeeded is evidenced by the rapidity of American movement, despite resistance.

Moving swiftly, the Unit found itself looking across the Moselle for the fourth time. Again an assault crossing was made as the 90th hacked a bridgehead in the stony vinyarded hills on the far bank. Through this bridgehead on the 14-15th, raced the 4th Armored, Southeast to meet the Seventh Army.

Again re-activated TF Spiess operated full swing helping to roll the enemy up along the Rhine between Boppard and Mainz.

On the 15th of March the battalion was attached to the XII Corps.

On March 16th, Major Moore the Battalion Executive Officer, was wounded while distinguishing himself against the fanatical 6th SS Mountain Division, while Col. Spiess, leading other elements of the battalion reached the Rhine, to place and fire the first guns across the river above it's confluence with the Moselle.

Germany

On the 23rd and the 24th of March, the Rhine was crossed at Nierstein, (Oppenheim) while our Ack-Ack shot down many of the desperate Luftwaffe planes making futile attempts to destroy the pontoon bridge. "A" Company rolled into a 'Hornet's Nest' at Erfelden, and while trying to contact the Infantry Capt. Lynn F. Williams found his CP surrounded. Leading his 1st platoon, he fought his way in, capturing those Germans that were not killed, and relieving the otherwise ticklish situation.

The next day TF Spiess was given the mission of capturing Darmstadt, a city, normally with a population of 100,000. Rcn Company took the city and excepting for a roadblock fight and some enemy bazooka and machine gun nests, the city was taken without difficulty. The TF then reconnoitered in front of the Division as it advanced Northeast towards the Main River. Frankfurt and Hanau, on the Main river, were captured and after crossing the Division had the job of mopping up resistance, bypassed by the rapidly moving 4th Armored. Northwards to Hersfeld with the Confused German Army giving ground more rapidly and with less organized defense ... the end was in sight.

Pursuit and the end

Everywhere the German Wehrmacht was falling - with increasing speed American armored units were racing ahead, encircling and isolating large sections of Germany. Despite all this the Germans kept buying time by desperate stands spotted along our advance. It fell to the Infantry units following the armor to clean out and destroy these pockets.

By April 1st the Division had reached Hersfeld and swung East towards Czechoslovakia. Daily some action occurred - sometimes against feeble resistance, and often against well dug-in Troop's. The overcast permitted the all-but-dead Luftwaffe, to get out on forays, and several times the Battalion was strafed with practically no casualties and with a loss of four planes to our .50 Caliber machine guns.

Vacha, Bad Salzungen, Zella Mehlis, Merkers, towns fell with clock like precision. A Company remained in Merkers to guard the much publicized Salt Mine, in which the major wealth of the German Reich, had been hidden. The bulk of the many millions consisted of about 100 tons of gold bullion, plus some 400 billion dollars in the currency of many nations.

On April 12th, the Interior Defense Come and was formed within the Division with the mission of protecting important installations and roads within the Division zone. With Colonel Spiess in command, the IDC was initially composed of Hqs. and Hqs. Co., and Rcn Co. of the 773rd, and the Anti-Tank and Cannon Companies of the 357th Infantry.

From that time and until several days after the war ended this command performed ably, under difficult and trying conditions, every mission assigned.

As part of the IDC, the Rcn Company escorted Division supply trains and kept the Division Main Supply Routes safe. B Company operating with the 2nd Bn. 358th Infantry, led the Division advance and performed the major share of the fighting, although in general, limited to smaller engagements.

By the middle of April the Saale River and the Lake region near Lobenstein had been cleared. On the 18th a 90th Division task force with the 2nd platoon of B Company, entered Czechoslovakia. This was the first penetration by American troops.

As the last week in April approached, the Division was advancing Southeast paralleling the Czech border, clearing the zone and protecting the XII Corps left flank. Daily the PsW count rose as opposition continued light except for some defended road blocks and enemy strong points.

May 3rd- Two more Mark VI's knocked out and the 11th Panzer Division surrendered intact to the 90th Division.

May 5th- After being in Corps reserve for 12 hours, the Division attacked south to seize the Regen bridgehead, through which the 4th Armored was to pass. On the 6th the attack swung Northeast into Czechoslovakia to the general vicinity of Susice and Petrovice, and there the drive halted as the softening war echo's died away.

May 9th- War in the ETO ended as of 090001B May 1945.

May 14th- The 773rd left Czechoslovakia for Tirschenreuth, Bavaria in Germany, to take up it's duties as occupation troops and Border Guards.

Final Count

Enemy Tanks Knocked out	113
Enemy SP Guns Knocked out	25
Enemy Pill Boxes Knocked out	105
Destroyer rounds tired (Direct Fire)	8219
Days in Combat	254
PsW taken	1970
Battle Casualties	301
Non-Battle Casualties	55

Battle Route



ENGLAND

7 February - 6 August 1944

The battalion debarked from the AQUITANIA at GOUROCK. SCOTLAND on the 7th of February. After a months stay at MAUGERSBURY MANOR, STOW-ON-THE-WOLD near CHELTENHAM, extensive indirect artillery missions were fired at BRECON BEACONS Range in SOUTH WALES. During April, May, June and July this organization operated Sub-Area 'W' of Marshalling Area D' in the vicinity of DORCHESTER, processing over 25,000 invasion troops prior to, during and after D Day. Latter July and early August were devoted to pre-battle exercises and direct firing problems at SDUDLAND, KIMMERIDGE and LULWORTH Ranges near the English Channel, just west of BOURNEMOUTH. Marshalled through Sub-Area 'W' and embarked for FRANCE from WEYMOUTH on the 6th of August.

ROAD TO BATTLE

7 - 15 August 1944

The battalion, minus C Company and part of B Company, landed on UTAH BEACH near ST. GERMAIN LE VARREVILLE at 2200 hours on the 7th. The remainder of the organization landed at

1245 hours the same day on OMAHA BEACH near ST. LAURENT-SUR-MER. Assembling at LA HAYE-DE-PUITS, a 90 mile night march was made through an enemy air attack at AVRANCHES to ST. ELLIERS DU MAINE as part of the 5th TD Group, of the XV Corps. Thence through LAVAL to LE MANS and north on the 'End Run' that would eventually close the southern escape routes of the Seventh German Army. By August 14th the unit had closed in a few miles south of enemy held ARGENTAN.

ARGENTAN-FALAISE GAP
UNIT CITATION

16 - 22 August 1944

Here in it's initial baptism dogs fire, all elements of the battalion. including Headquarters Company, held a thin line of defense until the arrival of the, 90th and the 80th Divisions, the 90th on the following day. Assigned, to the V Corps, part of the FIRST ARMY, and in support of the 90th Division, the battalion fought day and night to cut through and seal off the last remaining escape routes between LE BOURG ST. LEONARD and CHAMBOIS. During this period and in the midst of such battle confusion, against overwhelming odds and many times surrounded, the battalion held and attacked relentlessly until the shattered remnants of the German Seventh Army had surrendered. As a result of the courageous determination and conspicuous heroism so often displayed by each member, the 773rd TANK DESTROYER BATTALION was awarded the PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION. The official toll taken by the battalion was 41 enemy tanks, 82 other vehicles of Various types and many artillery pieces destroyed. Hundreds of enemy personnel were killed or captured.

ON TO PARIS

22 August - 19 September 1944

Re-assigned to the XV Corps, THIRD ARMY. The battalion moved from LE BOURG ST. LEONARD eastward to BREVAL. There B Company took up gun positions reinforcing the 813th TD's in support of the 79th Division's bridgehead over the SEINE RIVER, north of PARIS at MANTES-GAS-SICOURT. Reconnaissance Company reconnoitered routes and gun positions throughout the bridgehead area. Two days later on the 28th of August, the battalion was relieved and alerted for further movement. PARIS fell and the battalion moved South and East to BERNAY-EN-BRIE in preparation for operations to the east. During this period the joys of newly liberated PARIS were shared by every one. On the move again rejoining the 79th Division at THONNANCE-LES-JOINVILLE on the 10th of September.

CHARMES-THEMOSELLE-FORET DE PARROY

10 September - 15 October 1944

The 79th Division with the battalion in support, one firing company with each of the three Combat Teams, 313th, 314th and 315th, drove eastwards to the MOSELLE RIVER. Though the fighting proved bitter, the drive gathered momentum passing through CHATENOIS. OELLVILLE. PUZIEUX and POUSSAY, with the goal, CHARMES, falling on the 12th of September. On the 18th all elements had made their first crossing of the MOSELLE, and by the 23rd of September the TD's were rumbling into LUNEVILLE, the one time capital of LORRAINE, a bid heavy artillery barrages and stiff street fighting. On the 29th the XV Corps past to the command of the SEVENTH ARMY and was given the nation of clearing the FORET DE PARROY scene of Hitler's World War I service. The Germans laced the treetops with extremely heavy artillery saturations in a vain effort to hold back the 79th Division. Against a fanatic enemy determination, the Infantry and the TD's inched forward through the dense under-growth and woods until, on the 9th of October all 30 odd miles of the forest-land had been cleared of the enemy.

METZ - MOSELLE

16 October - 19 November 1944

After a few days in Corps reserve, the battalion was re-assigned to the THIRD ARMY and moved north to JARNY. On the 25th the unit was attached to the XX Corps, re-attached to the 95th Division, and re-crossed a MOSELLE RIVER south of METZ, and took over defensive positions near the small town of ARRY. On the 3rd of November and now with the 90th Division again, the battalion supported their crossing of the MOSELLE with indirect fire from the vicinity of BOUST. On the 9th the first infantry elements made an assault crossing over the flood-swollen river. With several attempted bridges being washed away, ferries were rigged and two of M Company's M-10's successfully ferried over just in time to repulse a strong counter attack near PETITE-HITTANGE. Under the formidable guns of the MAGINOT LINE FORTS the battalion once more crossed the MOSELLE. Overcoming all resistance the battle moved south around Metz to meet the 5th Division completing the encirclement and the subsequent surrender of the garrison there. GENERAL PATTON described this act of the 90th as the "GREATEST MILITARY ACHIEVEMENT OF THE WAR".

SAAR RIVER CROSSING DILLINGEN

20 November 1944 - 6 January 1945

Still in support of the 90th the battalion turned East and by the 30th of November all enemy were cleared from the division zone west of the SAAR RIVER. Beyond this water barrier lay the thickest portion of the vaunted SIEGFRIED LINE the 'SAARBURG SWITCH'. After another successful assault boat crossing by the Infantry, and in the face of thousands of artillery rounds falling on the ferry site daily, the battalion crossed. From pillbox to pillbox the fighting continued until the towns of PACHTEN and DILLINGEN fell. A threatening salient had been driven into the SIEGFRIED LINE defenses before the Division was ordered to withdraw to the west bank on the 22nd of December, due to the mounting offensive in the ARDENNES and the threat from the North in the MOSELLE and SAAR Triangle.

LUXEMBOURG - ARDENNES

6 - 29 January 1945

To help stem the surge of Von Runstedt's crack Panzer armies, the battalion moved north to the snow-blasted mountainous country of LUXEMBOURG. On the 9th launched a fullscale attack against the terrain protected south flank of the enemy bulge east of BASTOGNE. Gains were measured in snowdrifts, as the unit fought on to the decisive stand at OBERWAMPACH on the 17th of January. During the savage counterattacks that followed. The battalion total of enemy tanks knocked-out Rose to 102, marking the 773rd as the FIRST AMERICAN TANK DESTROYER BATTALION to exceed the Century mark. On the 26th of January and now with the VIII Corps, they reached the OUR RIVER and again faced the SIEGFRIED LINE.

SIEGFRIED LINE - RHINE

30 January - 22 March 1945

On the 30th the Division crossed the stoutly defended OUR RIVER in the frigid cold of dead winter and crumbled the maze of pill boxes as it moved through WINTERSPELT-HABSCHEID-BRANDSCHEID and LITENBORN. TASK FORCE SPIESS was formed on the 21st to protect the Division right flank on the drive south. 16 German towns fell to the TF in four days of fighting. With March came the spring rains and thick mud, as the Division attacked across the KYLL RIVER to the MOSELLE. Again a 90th assault crossing of the MOSELLE and on the 14-15th of March, the 4th Armored and TF SPIESS raced through rolling the enemy up along the RHINE between BOPPARD and MAINZ.

GERMANY - CZECHOSLOVAKIA

23 March - 9 May 1945

On the 23-24th the RHINE was crossed at OPPENHEIM and the attack on FRANKFURT began. TF SPIESS captured DARMSTADT and shortly the cities of FRANKFURT and HANAU fell. During the last days of March the Division sped northwards to HERSFELD, through the weakening Wehrmacht defenses. Swinging East on the 1st of April the Division raced ahead with lightning thrusts, encircling and capturing large forces of the enemy. VACHA-BAD SALZUNGEN and ZELLA MEHLIS fell. The famous Salt Mine at MERKERS was captured with over 100 tons of gold bullion and billions in currency. "A" Company was placed on guard of this THIRD ARMY treasure that comprised the major wealth of the German Reich. On to the Lake region near LOBESTEIN and the first penetration of CZECHOSLOVAKIA by a small 90th Division task force plus the 2nd platoon of B Company. On April 12th The INTERIOR DEFENSE CORPS was formed, consisting of HQS and HQS Company of the 773rd, and the AT and Cannon Companies of the 357th Infantry. With LT. COL. FRANK G. SPIESS in command, they performed ably in protecting important installations and roads in the Division zone. As the last week in April approached, the Division was advancing southeast paralleling the CZECH to REGEN. Turning to the northeast and entering CZECHOSLOVAKIA the move continued until with the end of the war, all elements were in the general vicinity PETROVICE and SUSICE. May 3rd, two more Mark VI's were knocked-out. MAY 4th the 11th Panzer Division surrendered intact. May 9th, the war in the ETO ended as of 090001B May 1945. May 14th the battalion left CZECHOSLOVAKIA to take up it's new duties as occupation troops and border guards in TIRSCHENREUTH, BAVARIA.

FINAL COUNT

Tanks Kayoed	113
SP Guns Kayoed	25
Pill Boxes Kayoed	105
Rounds fired, Direct Fire	8219
Days in combat	254
Psw taken	1970
Battle Casualties	301
Non-battle Casualties	55