

you will probably have at your finger tips more information about the overall Tank Destroyer picture as it evolved from the early Forties until the end of World War II. I have taken the time, resurrected old notes, battle maps and overlays, scanned through a History of the 36th Texas National Guard Infantry Division, title, 'THE FIGHTING 36TH' published privately by the 36th Infantry Division Association immediately after the cessation of hostilities in Europe, June 1945. I do not have a copy of the latest version of the Div history which is due to be marketed sometime this year, almost 40 years after the war. The original write-up made reference to existing first hand accounts and observations, unit S-3 and S-2 records still available, 5th and 7th Army records, records of the VI US Army Corps and many individual eye witness accounts of the Division's progress from the day of its reactivation until its last battle during the month of April 1945. Unit Historians tend to favor their own, quite often softening, slightly changing and sometimes 'overlooking' the mistakes and faux paux, which after action reports tend to gloss over because after all, "Who wants to make the 'ol Buddy look bad?" The higher in the military ladder one climbs, the more obvious are the half truths, the distortions and the make-believe when the unit histories are prepared for Posterity. I have been priveleged to serve as a small unit CO in what turned out to be a very specialized and much in demand Platoon. I have served as an S-2, a Recon officer and a line Company CO, the latter for a short few weeks during the action or combat phase. I will record certain events which directly involved the 636th Tank Destroyer Battalion units to which my Platoon was attached on a temporary basis. I shall make use of memory fired up by notes, maps, charts, and several books such as, 'Reader's Digest Story of World War II' 'Fifth Army at War' 'The American Heritage Picture History of World War II' plus several volumes published in France and Germany, each in the language of the country. In all these superb and informative books are a few photos which I shall try to have copied or reproduced. In all of these books there are fleeting notes which mention the Tank Destroyers. In most of the books the TDs are referred to as Recon units, Tank units and in one German volume as 'Automatische schnellfeuer Kannonen die Jagdpanzerjaeger' which in plain english translates to "Automatic rapid fire Cannon Tank Destroyers". The French misused and abused the M-10s which were given them by the score, blaming the machine rather than the ineptitude of the French soldiers assigned to them. I had the unique opportunity to command a small multi-lingual unit of very special soldiers skilled in the arts of warfare on a par with the best Airborne, Rangers, and Special Service Forces on our 'Side'. Therefore I did have an eyeball firsthand view of the 636th TD units in action. You will read the Historian's version of certain combat actions, with my own comments as pertains to the Tank Destroyer role which more than often was either dismissed, ignored or totally forgotten. The 636th TD Battalion originated from troops which had been integral to the line infantry Regiments, the 141st, 142d and 143d. Several men came from the Field Artillery Battalions, Engineer and Signal units. We did have a well represented cross section of the fighting Arms.

I am not writing a unit history of the 636th TD Bn. There has never been a unit history written and now after almost 40 years there will not be one written as it should have been so many years ago. The combat role for the TD Battalions varied with the individual Infantry Division to which ~~they~~ had been assigned. Many were used as Infantry Cannon Companies, some as Artillery, others as Recon units designated as Hvy, and some in very unorthodox ways which the Tank Destroyer Center had not envisaged. For after all the Tank Destroyer concept was dreamed up over night in a quick-fix attempt to bring into being a specialized type of mobile anti-tank organization which could fight in a tactical desert warfare style ala "Rommel" the over-rated Desert Fox. I like the British use of the devious understatement which gave the alleged "Fox" so much credit to actually disguise and conceal the British ineptitude in the use of Armor. The good English Brothers did very little but lose battles until we handed them our ~~sermons~~ ^{sermons}, but I'm not here to knock the Brits. Their infantry and Recon were first class all the way. No country is going to sell its fighting Forces short during a war situation, but they sure as hell did make a damn good effort to conceal their errors and mistakes- including our own!

I kept volimnous notes which I turned over to the 36th Infantry Division Association with their promise to properly edit and integrate them in the History of the Division's fighting units being written. Not a one of my notes, photographs was used and none were returned to me. One famous Reporter who wrote 'it as he saw it' was the late Ernie Pyle. He was not a part of the 'Old Boy Network' the officers and men who would return to civilian life as co-workers, neighbors living in the same towns and cities. Some of the things I write might be corroborated by members of my own unit, be they yet among the living. During later years my attempts to contact them proved futile and I gave up the idea.

In order to fully understand and appreciate the effectiveness of that very unique armored fighting vehicle, the M-10 Motor Carriage with its 3" rapid fire gun, diesel engine and unorthodox sloping armor, one had to serve as a crew member, be the driver, the gunner, and the TD commander who was usually a sergeant or Staff sergeant.

Four TDs made up a Platoon (equivalent to an artillery battery) and twelve TDs comprised a Company (equivalent to an artillery Battalion), with the TD Company CO a Captain or a First Lieutenant as opposed to the Major or Lieutenant Colonel of an artillery Battalion.

The Tank Destroyer officer and enlisted man was one of the true versatile soldiers produced during the Second World War, for he was an Infantryman, Artilleryman, Tanker, Engineer, versed in the basic qualifications for each of these combattant arms. The M-10 TD could carry a 10 man squad of infantry plus a 60mm mortar plus tow a $\frac{1}{2}$ ton trailer loaded with whatever you wanted to put in it. Normally we carried a three to four man crew inside the turret and hull. The 636th made full use of additional external armor bolted on, or logs and sand bags chained to the frontal sloping armor, plus a HB 50 cal MG mounted to the side of the open topped turret plus one or two 30 cal MGs. In addition, several machines in each TD company had

81 mm
H.25

clamped on the rear deck such things as mortar base plates which could mount a large chemical mortar tube. Most of the machines carried a small 60mm infantry mortar and several sacks of shells.

Each TD machine also carried the necessary aiming stakes, sighting and ranging instruments for use in indirect artillery fires, mostly of an interdictory nature at night. More about this later.

The principal drawback from the Infantryman's view point was that infernal black smoke spouting, screaming diesel engine which would draw enemy fire onto his poor achin' back, but they sure did love us whenever a road-block had to be taken out or a machine gun or heavy weapons bunker had to be eradicated, yes the TDs were the first thing they called for when entering a town supposedly cleared and suddenly a Tiger tank poked his ugly snout out of a supposedly cleared house or barn!

So I'll get on with this little project and you can add these pages to your file on the 636th Tank Destroyer Battalion which according to the Battalion S-3 accounted for more than 151 German tanks, over 1100 trucks, half-tracked Personnel and ammo carriers, plus uncounted other vehicles. I couldn't find these figures in official records although the Division Tank Company and Recon (Company) were credited with more vehicles than the truth merits.

Truop } often used depending on whose Report you read.

Re - Attached