

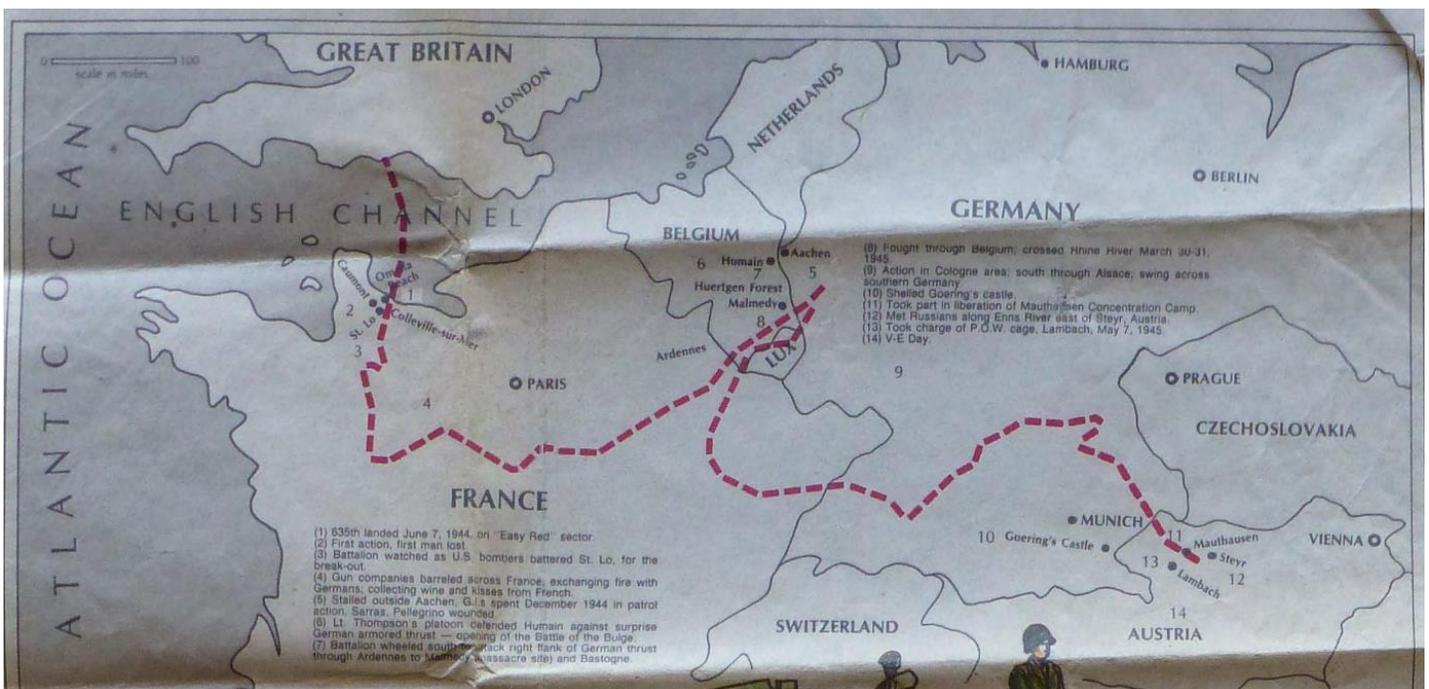


Duane S. Rock  
6<sup>th</sup> Armored Division  
635<sup>th</sup> Tank Destroyer Battalion  
Feb 19, 1941 - Oct 1, 1945



Duane S. Rock from Hope Kansas served in the 635<sup>th</sup> Tank Destroyer Battalion, Towed, from Feb 19, 1941 - Oct 1, 1945. The 635<sup>th</sup> was established 15 December, 1941, at Camp Robertson, Arkansas, from the 35<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division Antitank Battalion (Provisional). Many of the members were activated Kansas National Guard. The battalion arrived in Liverpool, England, on 19 February, 1944, Boarded their LSTs on 2 June and after seven days on the English Channel, enduring bad weather and observing the early coastal attack, landed 8 June on Omaha Beach, Fox-Green portion. Some of the vehicles were landed by LSTs and Rhino barges. "C" Co. landed their vehicles by LSTs right up to the beach and drove off at low tide.

Duane was assigned duty as a supply truck driver as many farm boys were. They already knew how to drive a grain truck. He didn't talk much about his experiences but we knew what he saw was horrific. He said there were bodies everywhere on the beach that he drove around as he drove his truck off the beach. The other surviving story is that one night a rocket hit the cab of his truck and destroyed it. He normally slept in the cab of his truck but fortunately that night he wasn't. After Normandy, his division advanced through northern France and Belgium. Operated in Roetgen-Aachen sector and Hürtgen Forest during autumn. Transferred to Belgium on 22 December during Battle of the Bulge. Returned to Aachen area in January and supported the drive toward the Rhine River near Cologne. Transferred to Seventh Army and almost immediately to Third Army on 1 April, 1945. Crossed Rhine at Mannheim and advanced through central Germany to Austria. Supported: 1st, 71st Infantry divisions; 4th Cavalry Group. On VE Day, Duane was assigned to the 6<sup>th</sup> Armored Division.



## The Omaha Beach Landings - Fox Sector

It was on this four and a half mile stretch of sand that the two American Assault Divisions accompanied by two Battalions of US Rangers and ten thousand US Army Combat Engineers landed in the face of withering fire on June 6th, 1944. D-Day. That fire was coming from the German defenders, shooting from their well protected positions in concrete bunkers that had been largely untouched by the pre-dawn D-Day bombardment which had fallen as much as three miles (5km) off target.

Narrative  
a. The 635th TD Bn Towed landed on 8th June and upon arrival was attached to 1st US Infantry Division Artillery. The order of landing was Cos A, B, and C. The Battalion landed on Omaha Beach. Part of the vehicles were landed by LSTs and Rhino barges. C Co landed their vehicles by LSTs right up to the beach and drove off at low tide.



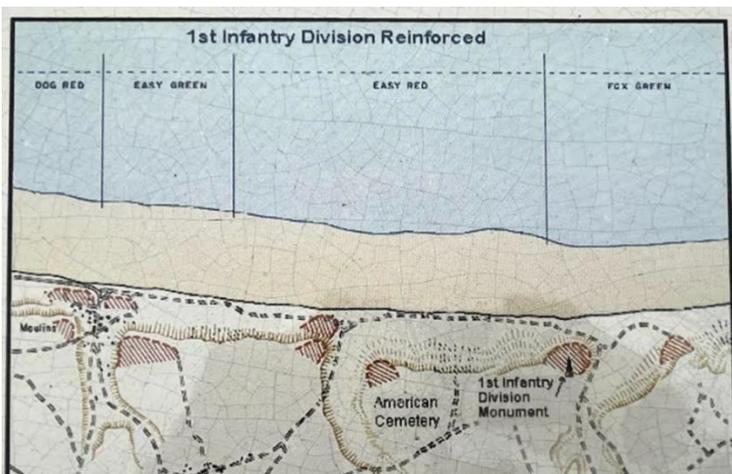
**FOX-Green portion** - upon arrival at the beach, the 635<sup>th</sup> battalion was taken to Transit Area 4 and from there to the vicinity of the 1<sup>st</sup> Division Artillery.

### OMAHA BEACH - CAUMONT - JUNE 6 (D-DAY) THROUGH JULY 24, 1944

On Omaha Beach, to your front, assault troops of the US First Infantry Division led the attack of V Corps, landing at 6:30 AM on June 6, 1944 (D-Day). The BIG RED ONE soldiers encountered beach obstacles and fierce enemy fire from the bluffs which stopped their advance at the water's edge, an operation even more difficult than expected. Slowly, with support from naval gunfire, the Big Red One infantrymen advanced, with heavy casualties, to the top of the bluff on your left by late morning. At day's end, V Corps had a tenuous toehold 1 1/2 miles deep on the Normandy coast.

During the next week, the First Infantry Division attacked south some 23 miles to capture the high ground around Caumont which it held until late July, when the successful breakout operation was staged.

Medals of Honor for conspicuous heroism were awarded to three men for June 6<sup>th</sup> and to two more for June 10<sup>th</sup>. The names of 627 soldiers on this monument remind us of the heavy cost of that victory. Again, the Big Red One lived up to its motto - "No Mission Too Difficult, No Sacrifice Too Great, Duty First."





Fox-Green Sector

April 2023

The following photos of landing ships 55, 381, and 393 were used to transport the 635th Tank Destroyer Battalion that Duane was in. He could be driving any one of the supply trucks shown coming off the ships or on the beach. They landed on FOX-GREEN portion of Omaha Beach.

LST 381 - Normandy, France - June 1944





USS LST-393 stranded by retreating tides on the beach at Normandy in July 1944. She made 30 round trips to Omaha Beach, bringing varied equipment and supplies to France and returning with wounded soldiers as well as thousands of German prisoners. She is one of only two LSTs to survive in original configuration; 1,051 were built. She is now a museum ship in Muskegon, Michigan.



US 2nd Infantry Division advancing up the bluffs behind German Resistance Nest WN65, Omaha Beach, D+1



US Supply Trucks moving up Exit easy-1, Omaha Beach, Early June, 1944

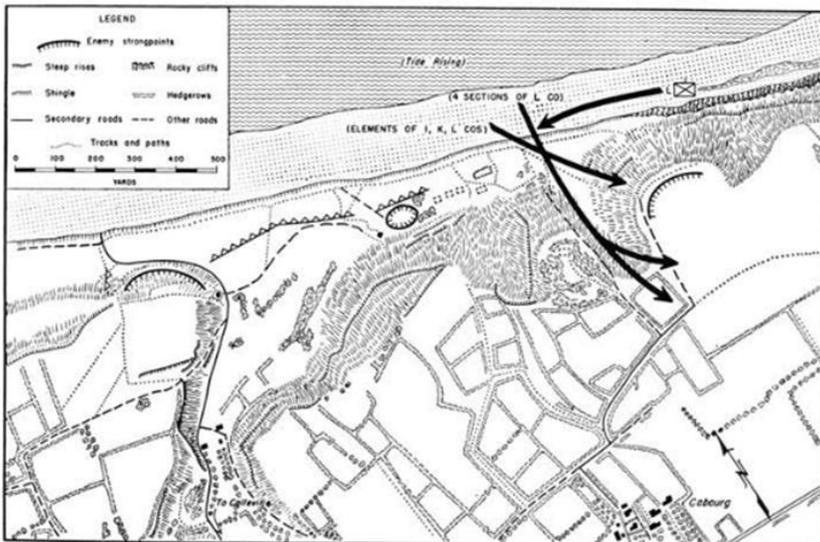


Looking east down the length of Omaha Beach from Wrecked 88mm Gun Bunker, German Resistance Nest WN72, Dog Green Sector, Omaha Beach ('Saving Private Ryan' landing position)

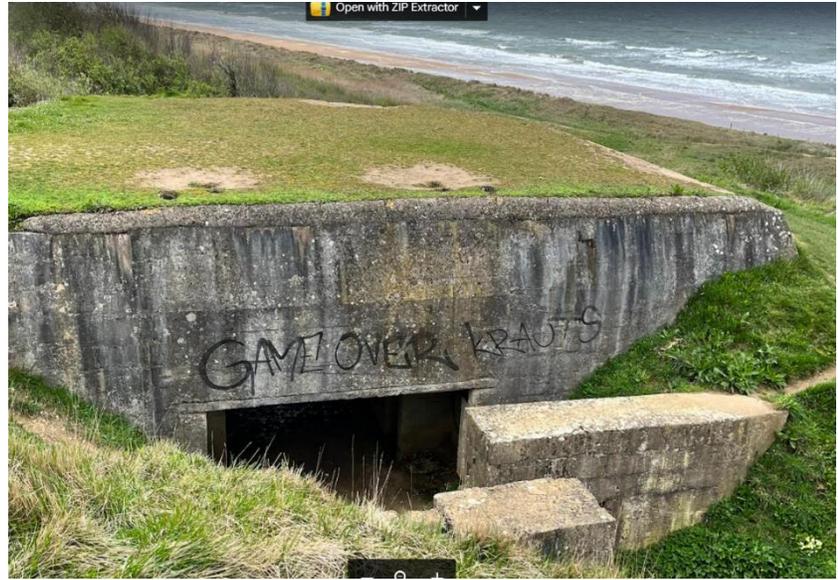


Fox Green fronted two exit routes: the fairly large valley (E-3) winding a mile inland toward Colleville and, 600 yards to the east, an area (F1) where the bluff front was only slightly interrupted by a shallow and steep draw. Two main enemy strongpoints, one just east of F-1 and the other near the Colleville draw, commanded the narrowing beach flat.

MAP NO. 5 { (Below) The Penetration at Fox Green. Aerial photo (above), taken 31 May 1944, shows approximately same area as the map.



1st Infantry Division Monument overlooking Omaha Beach



Graffiti on bunker overlooking Omaha Beach, April 2023, "Game Over Krauts!"

From 635<sup>th</sup> Battalion Captain Winters After Action Report.

b. Upon arrival at the beach the Battalion was taken to Transit Area 4 and from there to the vicinity of the 1st Div Arty CP and placed in bivouac. On the night of 8th June Companies A and C were attached to the 26th Inf Regt and Company B to the 18th Inf Regt. On 9 June Co A was relieved of attachment to the 26th Inf and ordered to report to the Commanding General, 2nd Inf Div, vicinity Formigny. On 17th June Co A was relieved of attachment to 2nd Inf Div and was re-attached to 1st Inf Div Arty, and placed in direct support of the 16th Inf Regt. After the companies were attached to their respective regiments each company was broken down by platoons to battalions and each platoon was attached to each battalion of the 26th and 18th Inf Regts. They were not under the 635th Battalion control but were part of each battalion and were used by the battalion commanders as antitank guns. While Co A was with the 2nd Div it served with the 9th and 23rd Inf Regts, and upon going to the 2nd Div, a section of the Reconnaissance Platoons, with one MB and two  $\frac{1}{2}$  tons, were attached for reconnaissance and used by the 2nd Div as reconnaissance elements.

c. During the advance from the beach to the present situation, the platoons attached to the battalions of the 18th and 26th Inf Regts advanced with their respective battalions, many times being with the front line troops and were constantly with the front line elements of each battalion. The companies attached to the 18th and 26th Inf Regts have been supplied with rations and other supplies from the regimental dump.

d. Number of casualties suffered by this Battalion are 4 enlisted men killed, 8 enlisted men wounded and evacuated, two died from wounds, and 4 enlisted men wounded and not evacuated.

Excerpts from OMAHA BEACHHEAD (6 June-13 June 1944) <https://history.army.mil/books/wwii/100-11/ch6.htm>

8 June - Enemy artillery and infantry were reported in some strength at Tour-en-Bessin, and the 26th Infantry at 0800 requested an air mission. Division notified the regiment that adequate fire support from artillery and naval guns would be available if the air mission failed. The air attack was made by fighter-bombers shortly before 0900; an armored patrol got into Tour-en-Bessin by 1140, reporting the town "empty and flat." **The 2d Battalion, reinforced by a company of the 635th Tank Destroyer Battalion** and Company C of the 745th Tank Battalion, waited on the advance of the rest of the regiment before moving into the town.

On the night of 8 June Companies "A" and "C" were attached to the 26th infantry regiment and Company "B" to the 18th Infantry Regiment.



8 June 1944: Formigny was liberated by elements of US 1st Infantry Division during the initial breakout from Omaha Beach.

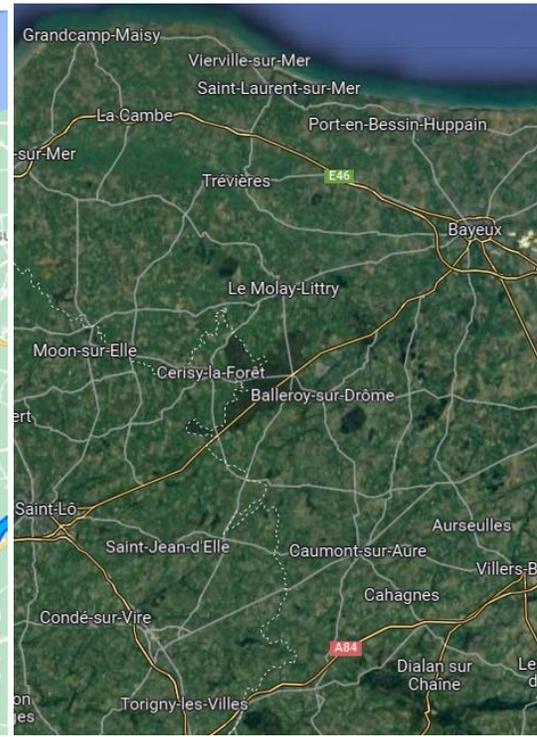
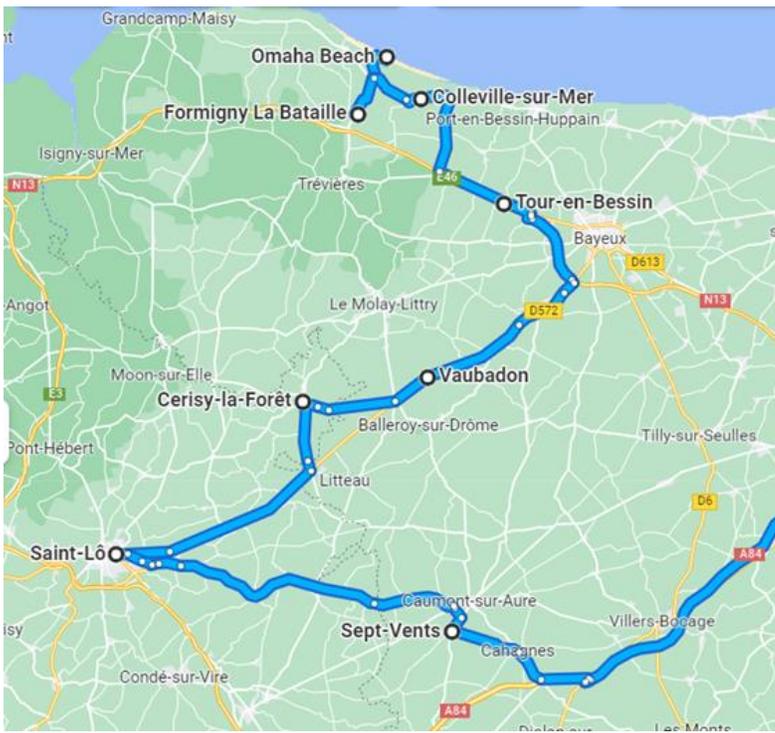
On the 9th of June **company B of the 635<sup>th</sup> was attached to the 2nd Infantry**, vicinity Formigny.

Photo: Field near Formigny, April 2023.

On 9 June Co "A" was relieved of attachment to the 26<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment and ordered to report to the Commanding General, 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division, vicinity Formigny.

The battalion spent the first few days spread around the vicinity of Colleville-sur-Mer not far from the beach, getting their legs back, cleaning the protective cosmoline from their weapons and patrolling for Germans.

9 June — By Field Order No. 36, the 1st Division planned its attack with two regiments abreast. The 18th RCT, with Company C, 745th Tank Battalion, Battery A of the 62d Armored Field Artillery Battalion, and **Company B, 635th Tank Destroyer Battalion, attached, and the 32d Field Artillery Battalion in direct support, was to advance on a front of about 4,000 yards, with Vaubadon and la Commune as objectives, on the Bayeux-St-Lo highway.**



Due to make the main effort with Cerisy Forest as its objective, the 2d Division was hampered by lack of weapons and equipment as the hour of jump-off approached. The 9th and 38th Infantry, scheduled to attack abreast in the Trevieres area, had no transportation by the morning of 9 June and most of the battalions lacked heavier automatic weapons, mortars, and communications equipment. Only two battalions (15th and 38th) of the divisional artillery were ready and in position: medical, signal, engineer, and reconnaissance units were only partially ashore. The 23d Infantry, designated as division reserve, had just landed the evening before and was assembling near St-Laurent by noon. Attachments to the 2d Division for the attack included a company each from the 747th Tank Battalion and the 635th Tank Destroyer Battalion.

### Advance to Caumont – 11 June

By Field Order No. 37, issued at 2400 on 11 June, General Huebner planned the 1st Division's attack in essentially the same formation used before: the 18th and 26th RCT's abreast on fronts of about 3,000 yards, with the 16th RCT in reserve, ready to assist either attacking regiment and to protect the flanks. The left flank was to be guarded by the 1st Reconnaissance Troop, and two troops of the 102d Cavalry Squadron were to patrol in advance of the attacking units. Each regimental combat team included a tank battalion; the 18th and 26th had each a company of tank destroyers from the 635th Tank Destroyer Battalion.

On 17 June Company "A" of the 635th Tank Destroyer Battalion was relieved of attachment to 2nd Infantry Division and was re-attached to 1st Infantry Division Artillery and placed in direct support of the 16th Infantry Regiment. After the companies were attached to their respective regiments each company was broken down by platoons to battalions and each platoon was attached to each battalion of the 26th and 16th Infantry Regiments. They were not under the 635th Battalion control but were part of each battalion and were used by the battalion commanders as antitank guns. While Company "A" was with the 2nd Division it served with the 9th and 23rd Infantry Regiments and upon going to the 2nd Division a section of the Reconnaissance Platoons, with one M4 and two ¼ tons, were attached for reconnaissance and used by the 2nd Division as reconnaissance elements.



One story shared was that Duane usually slept in the cab of his truck. One night a missile hit it. Fortunately, he had decided not to sleep there that night. In the after-action report there is no mention of supply trucks being hit. However, the following excerpt from the after-action report for June 1944 reports of 2 – half-track trucks being destroyed. These trucks were used to tow the anti-tank weapons. Possibly Duane drove one of those when not driving a supply truck.

5. The vehicular casualties of this Battalion to 30 June are as follows:  
1 Trailer lost by running over an enemy mine getting over the beach.  
1 Half-track destroyed by the enemy firing a bazooka or by a hand grenade being thrown into the vehicle.  
1 Half-track completely destroyed by burning after being hit directly by a mortar shell.



Supply truck at the Airborne Museum in Sainte-Mère-Église. It is a French museum dedicated to the memory of paratroopers of the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions of the United States Army.



Sherman Tank at the Airborne Museum

### Cimetiere Americain de Colleville-sur-Mer

At the top of the bluff overlooking Omaha Beach near Colleville is the American cemetery. It is the final resting place for 9,387 brave soldiers that gave their lives for our freedom.



### 22 June 635<sup>th</sup> After Action Report Excerpts

k. On the 22nd of June it was reported by the 18th Inf Reft that a German tank was to be seen some 2500 yards from one of our guns. A 57 gun was brought up to fire at this tank. It was reported that this tank had a mechanical failure and it was desired that fire be brought upon it. The 57 fired at the tank but was unable to hit it. Artillery barrage was called for but failed to hit the tank. One of our guns of the 2nd Platoon of B Co then fired 9 rounds at the tank, 6 of these rounds were seen to hit the tank. An Infantry officer of the 18th Inf reported from his observation that it was a Mark V. In attempting to get closer observation of this tank, Lt Johnson was killed and two members of his platoon were wounded. The effects of our fire on this tank was not learned. On 30 June, on order from the Regimental Commander, our gun section fired around the tank as once again enemy personnel were seen working around the tank and it was feared that they were preparing same for use as a harassing strong point. Enemy dispersed and their ammunition dump nearby exploded. The tank is still in the same position and has not been recovered by the enemy.

## July 1st- July 16th 1944 - The Hedgerow Countryside - Battle of the hedge rows



The fighting in Normandy's western sector soon degenerated into a series of huge individual firefights, with few soldiers being able to see more than one hundred meters in any direction, if that. It was countryside whose geography favored the defender; where an overwhelming superiority in tanks, armor and aircraft did not significantly alter the balance of power; where the best individual soldier or small group of soldiers won. This led to savage, close quarter fighting, where gains per day were measured in hundreds of yards, where the slightest rise in the ground could be a strategic goal worth hundreds of lives for the observation position it could give over enemy positions.



The small fields and pastures were bordered by heavy hedge, nearly impenetrable until American ingenuity modified Sherman tanks to cut through them.

The towed guns for the 635<sup>th</sup> were theorized to be a sound plan based on the British's experience fighting in North Africa. The hedgerows and narrow roads and bridges made them less than ideal for fighting German tanks in Europe.

Sherman tanks were modified and bulldozers used to move through the hedgerows. Adding to the challenges faced were the amount of cloud, wind and rain during June and July 1944 was this highest since records began in 1900.



### St Lô

The town of St Lô in the west of the landing zones was as important to the Americans as the town of Caen was to the Anglo/Canadian Forces in the east. Both towns were the main crossroad towns into Normandy through which all major road led. Without these towns and the road networks they give access to, the Allied Armies were going nowhere. The Germans recognized this and set up most of their Armored forces around Caen where the open countryside better suited their armor protection and longer range of their guns. The forces used by the Germans for the defense of St Lô were the 3rd Parachute Division and the 352nd Infantry Division. The German Parachute divisions were the elite infantry units of the German Army, showing the importance the attached to the defense of St Lô. SS units were not used as all the SS formations were armored and the terrain around the town did not lend itself to armored warfare. Experts in camouflage and trained to operate in small groups or alone, the German Paratroopers used the hedgerow

terrain expertly to their advantage and did everything in their power to exact a heavy price from the Americans for every meter of ground captured.



US Soldier outside St Lô, July 1944

For the First US Army, the town of St Lô was the door to central France. It had been an objective of the US 29th Division in the first few days following D-Day. However, with the German resistance to the landings being much stronger than anticipated, the American Army had been forced to concentrate all their resources to clearing out the Cotentin Peninsula and the port of Cherbourg at its northern tip. With no supplies available to continue operations towards St Lô the advance was halted on June 18th with the nearest US positions just two miles (3km) from the northern outskirts of the town.

A US Convoy passes through a ruined St Lo just below the Citadel



The church of St-Lo after the US bombardment and capture of the town and the restored church in April, 2023.



**Sept - Vents** From the 635<sup>th</sup> Battalion's Lt. Col. Wint Smith's 19 July 1944 after action report narrative. "The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 18<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment were being observed from a tower of a church at Sept Vents. The Battalion Commander requests that this tower be taken under fire by our guns. The tower was demolished by about 20 rounds of HE ammunition on the 24<sup>th</sup> of June. Corps artillery requested that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon of "B" Company fire at another church tower some 4,000 yards away but this was refused by the platoon officer because it would disclose his position and the range was too great. "A" Company of the Battalion fired 1,500 rounds of ammunition on indirect fire missions allocated by the Division Artillery."

Photo: Church at Sept Vents (Seven Winds) with repaired tower in April 2023.

m. We have been under direct orders of the 1st Division and have placed our guns in position upon the orders of the various battalion commanders to which the platoons are attached.

n. The 1st Battalion, 18th Inf Regt, were being observed from a tower of a church at Sept Vents. The Battalion Commander requested that this tower be taken under fire by our guns. The tower was demolished by about 20 rounds of HE ammunition on the 26th of June. Corps Artillery requested that the 2nd Platoon of B Co fire at another church tower some 4,000 yards away but this was refused by the platoon officer because it would disclose his position and the range was too great. A Co of the Battalion fired 1,500 rounds of ammunition on indirect fire missions allocated by the Division Artillery.

### August 1944 635<sup>th</sup> After Action Report Excerpts

2. The firing companies "A", "B" and "C" have been attached to the 16th, 18th, and 26th Infantry Regiments of the 1st U. S. Infantry Division respectively, and have been under the control of the Regimental Commanders and Anti-Tank Officers. The firing companies have been used to reinforce the organic regimental anti-tank defenses. Our firing companies have not fired at enemy tanks due to the nature of the operations and the disorganization of enemy tank units. Combat efficiency of this Command is very satisfactory; has all its equipment except one (1) M-8.

... believe we

UNCLASSIFIED  
SECRET  
REGRADED  
RESTRICTED

particular casualties of this battalion are as follows:  
MB damaged by enemy shell fire

e. Incidents: On 1st August enemy bomber formations bombed our areas killing ~~LORD~~ ~~SEE~~ ~~ARMY~~ wounding 1 officer and 13 enlisted men. On 2nd August our Company "E" captured 3 spies; 1 woman and 2 men. On 3 August a Company "C" officer accompanied by two officers of the 26th Infantry Regiment were fired upon by the enemy. On 4th August an "A" Company officer and 2 enlisted men were on reconnaissance in a 1/4 ton vehicle and were attacked in force. They escaped but one enlisted man was SWA. On 5th August two platoons of Company "B", in position in Mortain, were bombed. Casualties 2 enlisted men killed, and two enlisted men wounded and evacuated. On 7th August the 3rd platoon of Company "A", going into position ahead of two infantry outposts, were fired upon by the enemy with small arms and heavy shelling. Reconnaissance platoon's MB, on forward

~~SECRET~~  
-1-

~~SECRET~~

Report, 635th TD Bn. Towed, 4 September 1944, cont'd.

reconnaissance work for 1st U. S. Infantry Division, was hit by two enemy shells while in bivouac area. Vehicle taken to Ordnance for repair or replacement. Our Company "B" CP heavily strafed. From 13th to 15th August our Company "B" furnished half tracks and one officer and enlisted men to haul infantry forward to capture and occupy Juvigny, France. Our Liaison Officer, with 1st Division Artillery, assisted in observing and registering field artillery battalions in the destruction of an enemy column. On 16th August our 3rd platoon of Company "B" was fired upon and returned fire with small arms and 3" guns. 1st Platoon of Company "B", on order, fired 3" harassing fire into houses and area reputed an enemy strong point.



Photo: As the 635th moves through a town in France, the residents joyfully greet their liberators.



Photo: On 29 August 1944, American troops of the 28th Infantry Division march down the Champs Elysees, Paris, in the "Victory" Parade. Joyous crowds greeted the Americans as the entire division, men and vehicles, marched through Paris on its way to assigned attack positions northeast of the French capital.

The 635<sup>th</sup> was disappointed they did not get to march into Paris first. They loaned their uniforms and equipment to the French army, 2<sup>nd</sup> armored division so they could celebrate the liberation of Paris.



Sgt. Anthony Urkevich, of the 635<sup>th</sup> Tank Destroyer battalion, standing left front with his crew with their M3 half-track and towed 3 inch gun.

## September 1944 635<sup>th</sup> After Action Report Excerpts

2. On 1 September this Battalion was detached from the 1st U. S. Infantry Division Artillery and attached to the 4th Cavalry Group, Mecz., for the purpose of assisting the Group to fulfill their mission of securing the right flank and rear of the VII Corps in their advance from the Aisne River, and a comparable mission in the Corps' advance through southeast Belgium to Germany. The Commanding General, VII Corps, commended the Battalion for its part in this screening assignment in his letter of 14 September to the Commanding Officer, 4th Cavalry Group, Mecz.

Firing Companies "A" and "B" were attached to the 24th and 4th Cav. Rcn. Squadrons respectively, and Firing Company "C" was placed in reserve attached to Group Headquarters for disposition. Company "C" was assigned the mission of guarding Corps CP from 11th September to 21 September. Employment of the firing companies was coordinated between Group, Squadron Commanders and Company Commanders, and they have been successfully used in repelling enemy counter-attacks and enemy patrol activity, combat patrols, OPs, road patrols, creating and protecting road blocks, and in general assisted in the elimination of German resistance in designated areas. Combat efficiency of this command is very satisfactory, has all its equipment except one (1) M8.

a. During the month the number of battle casualties suffered by this Battalion are 2 enlisted men killed, 5 enlisted men wounded and evacuated, and 1 officer and 1 enlisted man wounded and not evacuated.

e. Incidents: On 1 Sept. "A" Co. contacted enemy at Aubenton. On 3 Sept. Rcn. party neutralized two strong points. On 4 Sept. "B" Co. fired at strongpoint. "B" Co. made enemy contact. On 5 Sept. "A" Co. fired at enemy from hill and destroyed 3 halftracks and two GP vehicles. On 9 Sept. "C" Co. fired harassing fire at enemy. On 13th Sept. we recovered two members of a B-17 Fortress who had baled out due to mechanical difficulty, evacuated to rear. On 15 Sept. "B" Co. reported six incidents of contact with enemy not previously reported - enemy personnel and equipment knocked out. On 17 Sept. recovered EM taken prisoner by enemy - evacuated to rear. On 21st Co. "B" aided Cav. Squadron to repel attempted enemy infiltration. "B" Co. position attacked and this attack was repelled. On 24 Sept. "A" Co. aided Squadron repel infiltration of enemy behind squadron's elements. On 25th and 26th "B" Co. aided in repelling patrol attacks. On 30 Sept. "B" Co. reported action of their 3rd platoon not previously reported. Platoon contacted the enemy on four different occasions and sent out six combat patrols. (Refer to Excerpts from September Unit Journal attached for complete details)

f. Our firing platoons were subjected to considerable enemy shelling of heavy caliber.

h. On 13 Sept., the Commanding Officer was appointed Group Provost Marshal. From that date through the 30th, the following was accomplished:

- (1) Controlled the movements of civilian population.
- (2) 33 towns contacted by Provost Marshal Patrols, organized from forward CP personnel of this Battalion for the purpose of posting official proclamations, and outlining the rules to govern the future behavior of the populace.
- (3) Closed telephone exchanges and prohibited the use of telegraph in all towns visited.
- (4) Collected in all towns visited all available weapons, ammunition, explosives, flashlights, and cameras and turned these into the Civil Affairs authority in Malmedy.
- (5) Incarcerated eight (8) Nazi collaborators and four enemy soldiers in civilian clothes, believed to be spies.
- (6) Investigated and took action on looting complaints, loss of rations by our troops to civilians, and one case of rape.

635<sup>th</sup> supported 1<sup>st</sup> Division through Northern France until 31 August. It was next attached to the 4<sup>th</sup> Calvary Group through Belgium to Bugtgenbach



This American 76mm (actually the 3 inch, 76.2mm) towed gun of the 635<sup>th</sup> TD Bn was knocked out of action by fire from German tanks in the battle at Humin, Belgium.

Fifteen enemy tanks were destroyed in the same battle. Dec 28, 1944



3 inch M5 anti-tank gun towed by a half-track



Gun crew cleaning the breach of an M5 near Odrimont, Belgium.



U.S. Infantry anti-tank crew fires on Nazis who machine-gunned their vehicle, somewhere in Holland

## October 1944 635<sup>th</sup> After Action Report Excerpts

2. This Battalion has been attached to the 4th Cavalry Group, Meez, throughout the month, with "A" Company in direct support of the 24th Cav. Rcn. Squadron and the 4th Cav. Rcn. Squadron supported by "C" Company. The 1st Platoon of "B" Company had the mission of defending Roetgen, Germany, while the 2nd and 3rd Platoons of "B" Company were in indirect firing positions in support of the 87th F. A. Battalion. Our primary mission throughout the month was to hold that area in general support of the south flank of the VII Corps, and on 25th October, the Battalion was attached to V Corps for operations only; continuing our primary mission under Group control.

3. Employment of the firing companies was coordinated between Group, Squadron Commanders and Company Commanders, and they have been successfully used in repelling small-scale counter attacks and enemy patrol activity, for combat and observation patrols, OPs, creating and protecting roadblocks, and generally neutralizing German attacks and resistance in designated defense areas. Our firing companies were utilized as infantry because of military necessity, and often a platoon was employed where ordinarily a company of infantry could be used. The combat efficiency of this command is very satisfactory, and has all its equipment except one (1) M-8. Our platoons and patrols had 27 fire fights with the enemy, and aided considerably in the elimination of personnel and obstacle resistance with forward observation for the artillery. The following is a resume of the indirect fire mission by our firing companies and controlled by our own Fire Direction Center - fire was observed both by the 87th F. A. Battalion we supported and by our own officer and enlisted personnel:

- a. 9150 rounds 3" HE ammunition fired.
- b. 444 missions fired, of which 249 were interdiction, the remainder general support and harassing.
- c. Harassing and TOT missions were fired on the following enemy installations: 1 at Huppenbroich, 1 at Eicherscheid, 1 at Klaus, 1 at Woffelsbach, 1 at Ruhrberg, 1 at Einruhr, 1 at Rollesbroich, 5 at Kesternich and 4 missions at Steckenborn.
- d. 26 missions were fired on foot troops. Observers reported better than average results on most missions with many enemy dead and

wounded, but could not determine exact number of enemy put out of action. This Battalion does not take credit for enemy dead unless definite proof available.

- e. 7 missions were fired at OP houses and areas. Results - 4 OP houses destroyed and 2 OP areas neutralized.
- f. Vehicles: 1 Armored Car, 1 Halftrack and 2 Personnel Carriers destroyed.
- g. 4 CP houses destroyed.
- h. 9 enemy pillboxes neutralized.
- i. 1 enemy barracks destroyed - number of dead and wounded not observed.
- j. 4 mortar emplacements knocked out and 7 mortar emplacements neutralized.
- k. 1 enemy warehouse destroyed.
- l. 3 enemy machine gun emplacements neutralized.
- m. 1 B-17 bomber destroyed on Corps order. Our plane fell in enemy territory.
- n. 11 preparation missions were fired in support of feint attack by 4th Cav. Group elements to aid the 9th Infantry Division's drive to the south.
- o. 25 counterbattery missions S&F were fired. While results unknown, the enemy stopped firing on numerous occasions.
- p. 3 church steeples, OPs, were destroyed by direct fire.

4. a. During the month the number of battle casualties suffered by this Battalion are 9 enlisted men killed, 21 enlisted men wounded and evacuated, and 20 enlisted men wounded and not evacuated. Non-battle casualties for the months operations were 18 enlisted men evacuated.

## November 1944 635<sup>th</sup> After Action Report Excerpts

3. Employment of the firing companies was as heretofore coordinated between Group, Squadron Commanders and Company Commanders and they have been used successfully against enemy patrol activity, for observation patrols, OPs and roadblocks. Our platoons were dismounted and utilized as infantry. The combat efficiency of this command is excellent and has all its equipment. Our patrols effected 12 contacts with the enemy before closing in on the assembly area, and our patrols on harassing missions to draw enemy fire to disclose positions were responsible for the neutralization of machine gun nests and two pillboxes. 3" gun firing by our Company "A", exclusive of Company "B" guns in indirect firing positions, proved satisfactory with:

- 4 pillboxes neutralized
- 1 machine gun with personnel destroyed
- 1 OP building destroyed
- 1 CP building destroyed

Fire was also directed at enemy tanks with unknown effects. The following is a resume of the indirect firing mission of the 2nd and 3rd platoons of Company "B" through 1830 hours 10 November 1944 - firing was controlled by our own Fire Direction Center - fire was observed by the 87th F. A. Battalion, and by our own officers and enlisted personnel:

- a. 3564 rounds 3" HE ammunition expended
- b. 155 missions fired, of which 110 were interdiction; the remainder general support and harassing. 3 Registrations were fired with one registration made by FOB.
- c. 1 harassing mission was fired on the town of Binruhr, Germany, with no observed effects; the same applying to the town at coord 0218-2634.
- d. 15 missions were fired on enemy foot troops with good results with many known dead and wounded; however, since observers could not determine the exact number of dead and/or wounded, we are not taking credit for same. On one mission observers reported two squads foot troops completely wiped out, and on a mission against foot troops on the road to Schmid, the effect was observed by AOP who reported that dead and wounded hauled away for five hours.
- e. Two OP houses were destroyed.
- f. One vehicle destroyed.
- g. 6 counter battery missions S&F were fired. While results unknown, enemy batteries were stilled.
- h. 2 pillboxes were neutralized.
- i. 2 missions were fired on mortar emplacements with very good and excellent reported by observers.
- j. 4 missions were fired on CP houses; one house destroyed - unable observe 3 others due to heavy snow fall.

4. a. During the month the number of battle casualties suffered by this Battalion were five enlisted men wounded-evacuated, and three enlisted men wounded and not evacuated. Non-battle casualties for the month's operation were five enlisted men evacuated.

## Rhineland

The 635<sup>th</sup> transferred to Belgium on 22 December during Battle of the Bulge. The Battle of the Bulge, also known as the Ardennes Offensive, was the last major German offensive campaign on the Western Front during World War II. The battle lasted for five weeks from 16 December 1944 to 28 January 1945.

The 635<sup>th</sup>, dismounted and served as infantry, Roetgen – Aachen sector, Hurtgen Forest

The Battle of Hürtgen Forest was a series of battles fought from 19 September to 16 December 1944, between American and German forces on the Western Front during World War II, in the Hürtgen Forest, a 54 sq mi area about 3.1 mi east of the Belgian–German border. It was the longest battle on German ground during World War II and is the longest single battle the U.S. Army has ever fought.



The Battle of Aachen was a combat action round Aachen, Germany, between 2–21 October 1944. The city had been incorporated into the Siegfried Line, the main defensive network on Germany's western border; the Allies had hoped to capture it quickly and advance into the industrialized Ruhr Basin. Although most of Aachen's civilian population was evacuated before the battle began, much of the city was destroyed and both sides suffered heavy losses. It was one of the largest urban battles fought by U.S. forces in World War II, and the first city on German soil to be captured by the Allies. The battle ended with a German surrender, but their tenacious defense significantly disrupted

Allied plans for the advance into Germany.

## December 1944 635<sup>th</sup> After Action Report Excerpts

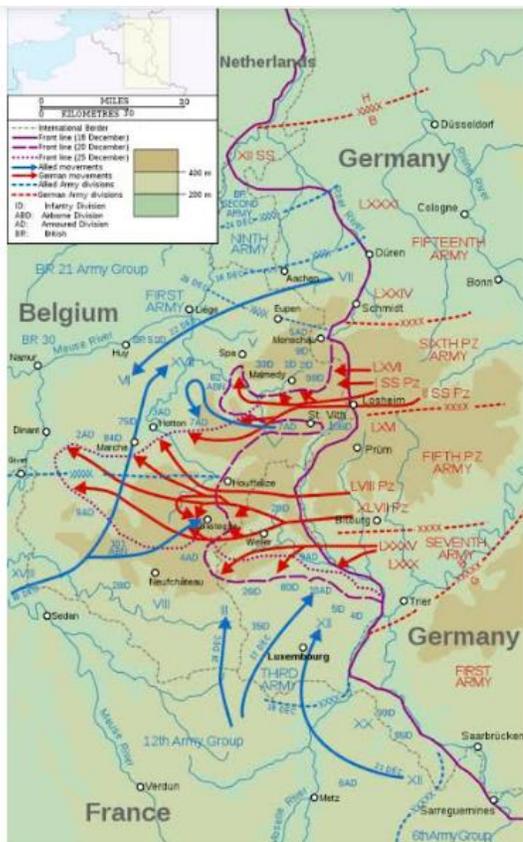
Co B reported: 10th Dec: Between 1730 and 1800 hrs an estimated 4 enemy planes bombed CP area. One 100# bomb fell 25 yards from CP and several anti-personnel bombs fell in 3rd platoon area. S/ Sgt Demanett hit in finger left hand and remained on duty. Tec 4 Ruth hit by bomb fragment and remained on duty. One 12-V battery was damaged, one 610 radio knocked out and 1 rifle damaged; 6 tires and one 2-1/2 ton cargo damaged superficially. Co. maintenance section took all damaged materiel to rear echelon for repair or replacement. 11th Dec: 1st and 2nd platoons committed forward to hold approx 300 to 400 yds high ground vic 070375, East of Kleinbau, Ger. Our troops went forward at 1300 hrs 11 Dec dismounted and to take place of infantry. The area they were assigned to hold was under enemy observation at all times and was heavily raked by enemy mortar and artillery fire; over 200 shells dropped in approx one hour, and not all the men were able to reach their positions. Shell fire came from the northeast. By 1700 hrs the following EM were wounded and evacuated by tank due to the constant enemy fire and muddy terrain: Sgt Stalpes shell frag r arm, Sgt. Harold Brown shell frags arm and leg; Pfc Albert Speaker shell frag r side of face and forehead, Pvt Amato WIA, Pfc Frank Mitschke WIA, Pfc James O Woodward BE. 44  
Following EM wounded but not evacuated: Pfc Carl M. Larsen grazing wound r side of

Following report received from Adv Fwd CP: Pvt Loop, Hq Rcn Plat KIA by mortar frags 1/2 miles west of Bogheim, Germany. Pvt Hood, Hq Rcn Plat SWA shrapnel left thigh and right arm - evacuated by tank. Pvt Gilbert, Hq Rcn WIA shrapnel upper right arm - evacuated. Pvts Rood and Gilbert were sharing the same foxhole when wounded. Gilbert immediately applied first aid to Rood, bandaging his wounds and applying a tourniquet to his arm and another on his leg, definitely saving Rood's life and disregarding his own wounds. Tec 5 Dunigan Hq Co WIA mortar frags right leg - evacuated. S/Sgt Allen LWA mortar frags face and hands - remained on duty. Pfc Lauffenberger Hq Co WIA mortar frags right side of neck- remained on duty. Pvt Francis R. Ryan, Co B, KIA by small arms fire. Pfc Degen, Co B, WIA 21 Dec two fingers blown off booby trap - evacuated.

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Co A left coord 029377 1 mile west of Grosshau, Germany, at 1715 hrs 22 Dec and arrived at coord 204888 1 1/2 miles NE of Haversin, Belgium, at 0330 hrs 23 Dec, distance traveled 76 miles. Enroute a halftrack crashed into a 3" gun in the darkness and due to the condition of the road. Pvt Nichols fell out of the vehicle and hurt his shoulder but remained on duty. One halftrack, one 3" gun, one 1 1/2 ton truck and two trailers were put out of action. A guard was placed on the wrecked equipment until the Bn wrecker and maintenance crew arrived from the newly established rear

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Map showing the swelling of "the Bulge" as the German offensive progressed creating the nose-like salient during 16-25 December

The 1st Army is shown on this map, moving from Aachen to Liege to near Huy, Belgium.

The 635th returned to Aachen area in January and supported the drive toward the Rhine River near Cologne.

Photo below: Troops of the US First Army picking their way through a ruined street, littered with debris, as they advance into the city of Cologne (Koln), March 1945. Members of the 635th assisted in raising the American flag over Cologne, Germany





332202  
 TANKMEN PARK NEAR A PILLBOX ON THE MAGNET  
 LINE IN THE VICINITY OF KAPPEL, GERMANY.  
 THE FORMER FORTIFICATIONS ARE USED AS  
 BIVOUAC QUARTERS BY THE TANKMEN. 1 DEC 1944  
 6TH ARMORED DIVISION, U. S. THIRD ARMY  
 SECTOR. GERMANY.



Two reconnaissance men of the 603d Tank Destroyer Bn  
 take time out for a cup of coffee.

339174. EABAY-LA-NEUVE, BELGIUM  
 Tanks of the 6th Armored Division enroute to  
 Bastogne.

29 December 1944



SUMMARY

The 635th Tank Destroyer Battalion Towed has been in the field since D plus 2 with no specified rest period other than in assembly areas, and a small percentage of officers and enlisted man on 48 hour and 72 hour passes to Paris, France, and Verviers, Belgium. During out attachment to the 1st US Infantry Division Artillery through 31 August 1944, our firing companies have been under the control of the Division's Regimental Antitank Officers and generally were used to reinforce the

the organic regimental antitank defense. Because of the nature of the operations, and the disorganization of enemy armor, we did not fire at any tanks. In many instances, our gun platoons found themselves either on the infantry front line or in position in front of the infantry. Our support of the 1st US Infantry Division entailed many fire fights with the enemy and we were subjected to considerable artillery shelling and bombing and strafing by enemy planes. We received favorable commendation for our services with the 1st US Infantry Division from CG, 1st US Infantry Division Artillery dated 24 October 44 with comparable indorsements by CG, 1st US Infantry Division, and CG, VII Corps.

Our attachment to the 4th Cavalry Group, Mezc, became effective 1 Sept 44 and we are currently attached to the same organization. Our firing companies have been employed by the Squadron Commanders on their screening missions, against enemy patrol activity, combat patrols, observation patrols, outposts, road blocks, and dismounted as infantry. Only during December in action against the enemy in Belgium were we able to prove our ability to perform our primary mission of destroying tanks. In the fire fight which ensued at Humain, Belgium, on 25 December, the 3rd platoon of Company A destroyed three (3) enemy Mark V tanks. We were responsible for killing and/or putting out of action against our troops many of the enemy, and in previous reports have taken credit only for those of the enemy we were actually able to verify ourselves. We are, however, positive we killed many more, particularly with our 3" gun fire. In one instance along during an indirect fire mission against enemy foot troops on the road to Schmid, Germany, ACP reported that dead and wounded enemy were hauled away for five hours. We took 116 prisoners up to 31 December and took credit only for those of the enemy we captured independently of assistance. Our 3" guns neutralized many enemy pillboxes and mortar batteries in action against our troops, destroyed machine gun nests, enemy armored and utility and horse-drawn vehicles, CPs, CPs, and houses occupied by the enemy. Our mission to destroy the enemy and his means of fighting our troops was effectively accomplished, and we enter the new year with the same purpose in view and with even greater determination to do our share and more to gain victory against the Germans. Battle casualties through 31st Dec. were as follows:

|                                 | <u>OFFICERS</u> | <u>ENLISTED MEN</u> | <u>TOTAL</u> |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|--------------|
| Killed in Action                | 1               | 23                  | 24           |
| Missing in Action               | 0               | 1                   | 1            |
| Wounded in Action-Evacuated     | 3               | 105                 | 108          |
| Wounded in Action-Not Evacuated | 3               | 68                  | 71           |
| Died of Wounds                  | 1               | 7                   | 8            |

Our officers and men distinguished themselves in action against the enemy and through 31 Dec 7 Silver Stars and 13 Bronze Stars have been awarded. Additional recommendations are at present being processed through channels.

The combat efficiency of this command is Excellent and on 31 December had all it's equipment excepting three (3) 3" guns which are reported not to be available in the First U. S. Army, two (2) halftracks which will be delivered to us as quickly as the 3" guns become available, and two (2) 1/4 tons. We have two officers and 44 enlisted men on requisition and as soon as these reinforcements are made available to us, we will be up to T/O strength.

## January 1945

Operated in Belgium throughout the month. 23 January was reported as the first day since committed to participate in the Battle of the Bulge the 635<sup>th</sup> Battalion was without contact with the enemy. On the 24<sup>th</sup> the Battalion moved into its first rest, rehabilitation and refitting since D-Day. After a 72-hour rest and no work, road marches to keep the personnel fit were inaugurated. Maintenance on vehicles and ordinance completed and training on small arms and guns. Men were given the opportunity to shower, received medical inspections and moving pictures and stage shows provided. Passes to "on limits" towns of Huy and Andennes were provided. Battalion went back to active duty on 4 Feb but due to the Roer River in flood stage was unable to depart Anchen until 26 February.



339198 BASTOGNE, BELGIUM  
Troops of the 6th Armored Division change the  
tracks on a large tank.  
January 1945

SC 339183 BELGIUM  
Tanks of the 6th Armored Division in position  
near Bastogne.  
11 January 1945



Photo: "The endless procession of German prisoners captured with the fall of Aachen marching through the ruined city streets to captivity."

After the fall of Cologne, the 635<sup>th</sup> Battalion shifted from 1<sup>st</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> Army assigned to the 71<sup>st</sup> Infantry

## January 1944 635<sup>th</sup> After Action Report Excerpts

### Summary:

The Battle of the Bulge brought to an end, the Battalion was out of contact with the enemy for the first time on 23 January 1945 since its participation in this campaign, and on the 24th of January the entire battalion moved into its first rest, rehabilitation and refitting period since D-Day. After a 72 hour "all rest and no work" period, road marches to keep the personnel fit were inaugurated. A high state of maintenance of vehicles and ordnance was conducted and resulted in a superior rating from the Inspection Team of the 516th Ordnance Battalion. Weapons classes, classes on indirect firing and FDC were conducted. All companies went to designated firing ranges and fired small arms, machine guns, bazookas, and Reconnaissance Platoons fired their 37mm guns. Personal equipment was checked and cleaned. Men were given the opportunity to shower at designated shower points and the Medical Detachment physically inspected all personnel as prescribed. Moving pictures and stage shows were arranged for, as well as passes to the "on limits" towns of Huy and Andarnes. In all, every advantage was made available to the personnel of this battalion during their rest period.

## February 1945 635<sup>th</sup> After Action Report Excerpts

### Summary:

1. The Battalion continued its first rest, rehabilitation and refitting period since D-Day until 3 Feb. 1945, and on 4 Feb. 1945 moved to a new assembly area in Aachen, Germany. Due to the flood stage of the Roer River, our line companies did not depart Aachen until 26 February 45. During the 22 days in the assembly area, a high state of maintenance of vehicles and ordnance was continued. Personal equipment was once more cleaned and checked. Moving pictures and a stage show were attended by Battalion personnel. Paris, Brussels, and Verviers passes were continued and a quota of enlisted men for furlough to the United Kingdom was filled. In all, during the waiting period, the Battalion was advantageously occupied. A Company B gun platoon dug in its guns and security machine gun nests for Air Corps personnel on an inspection tour of the ground forces, and the platoon was repaid for its muddy task by the prizes received for their work - none of the visiting Air Corps officers and enlisted men could locate any of the gun positions, and confidently stated the positions were well enough camouflaged to evade detection from the air. A number of our officer personnel spent two days with Air Corps fighter-bomber groups to familiarize themselves with their operations and to create a better understanding between air and ground forces. On 25 February elements of the Battalion crossed the Roer River and immediately went into action against the enemy. Our Company A was credited with knocking out a Tiger VI tank in Esch, Germany.

2. The Battalion Commander, in his capacity of Provost Marshal of 4th Cavalry Group and attached units sent a small group of officer and enlisted personnel to register the civilian population of Esch, Germany - to pick up all arms - arranged for CIC personnel to screen the population; German and non-German for former members of the Wehrmacht and Party members.

3. The 635th TD Bn-Towed is on the way to the Rhine River -- and to cross it!

## March 1945 635<sup>th</sup> After Action Report Excerpts

### Summary

The Battalion continued to reinforce the 4th Cavalry Group, Mezc in its contested advance to Cologne with the VII Corps until Group Reinforced was pinched out at the western bank of the Rhine River north of Cologne. Battalion continued to guard the Rhine River in the sector we occupied until 10 Mar when we were advised the Battalion was relieved of attachment to VII Corps and 4th Cavalry Group Mezc to which organization we were attached since 1 September 1944, through France, Belgium and Germany and back to Belgium for the Battle of the Bulge; and further attached to Seventh Army upon arrival their area.

Prior to departure for France and the Seventh Army, the Battalion Commander, in his capacity as Provost Marshal of 4th Cavalry Group Mezc and attached units sent small groups of officer and enlisted personnel to register the civilian population of the towns in group zone - to pick up arms, etc., arranged for screening by CIC of population and transported displaced persons to authorized CP camps.

Our attachment to the 71st Infantry Division became effective with our arrival, and attachment to Seventh Army. Our line companies are under the control of the Division's Regimental antitank officers and generally are being used to reinforce organic regimental antitank defenses. Because of the nature of the operations, and the apparent disappearance of enemy armor, we have not fired at any enemy tanks since our arrival for campaign Southern France. We have employed our troops as infantry in patrolling activities and have captured 152 prisoners between March 15th and 31st. We were responsible for the regiments capturing many more.

The 635th Tank Destroyer Battalion, Towed, crossed the Rhine River on 30 and 31 March 1945.

### **The 635<sup>th</sup> Tank Destroyer Battalion, Towed, crossed the Rhine River on 30 and 31 March 1945.**



Photo: American Army troops crossing the Rhine River

1 April 1945 – Transferred to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army along with the 71<sup>st</sup> Infantry in the drive across the Rhine River near Mannheim and advanced through central Germany to Austria.

The 71st Infantry Division was deployed to the European theater of operations in February 1945. After disembarking at the French port of Le Havre, the "Red Circle" division advanced to Alsace-Lorraine. The following month, it crossed the Rhine River and drove southward, taking Coburg (April 11), Bayreuth (April 14–16), and Regensburg (April 27). By war's end, the "Red Circle" division had entered Austria, where it met up with advancing Soviet forces/Russian Army at Steyr Austria

## April 1945 635<sup>th</sup> After Action Report Excerpts

### Summary:

The battalion continued to closely support the 71st Infantry Division in its successful progress across Germany. The Battalion Command Post and the Command Posts of the three gun companies completed 92 marches during April 1945.

Although the gun companies were to be used to reinforce organic regimental antitank defenses, they not only accomplished their primary mission by destroying three (3) enemy tanks in April, but supported the advance of the infantry with direct fire missions eliminating enemy opposition during the swift advances. Our gun platoons sent out combat patrols, neutralizing enemy strong points, had many small arms fire fights, took over 1500 prisoners of war and assisted the infantry in taking many thousands more; however, no official credit was taken unless prisoners were actually taken unassisted. A sole bridge crossing of the Vils River was secured by our Company A by capturing an enemy strong point with three heavy machine guns and its personnel after a brisk fire fight and one of our officers, without aid, attacked an enemy machine gun nest holding up an infantry advance, neutralizing it, killing two enemy and taking the remaining of the enemy gun crew prisoner.

Prior to crossing the Danube River, elements of our Company C were responsible for knocking out many enemy vehicles attempting to escape the city of Regensburg to the east, firing from well-chosen positions in the vicinity of Tegenstein with 3" guns. The Commanding Officer of Company C was in Regensburg with the Commanding Officer of the 14th Infantry Regiment when arrangements were made with the Commandant of the Regensburg Garrison for the surrender of that city. One 3" gun section, 3rd Platoon, Company "C", were in position in Regensburg at that time.

### May 1945

Liberated Mauthausen, a Nazi concentration camp on a hill above the market town of Mauthausen ~ 12 mi east of Linz, Upper Austria. It was the main camp of a group with nearly 100 further subcamps located throughout Austria and southern Germany

On 5 May 1945 the camp at Mauthausen was approached by a squad of US Army soldiers of the 41st Reconnaissance Squadron of the US 11th Armored Division, 3rd US Army. The 635<sup>th</sup> was attached to the 3<sup>rd</sup> US Army.



Photo: New prisoners awaiting disinfection in the garage yard of Mauthausen



Photo: Medical corpsmen of the US 71st Infantry Division, 3rd US Army look on as captured German soldiers remove bodies from inside a barracks in Gunskirchen. In the foreground, a Jewish girl lies huddled in the straw on the floor of the barracks. Gunskirchen, Austria, May 7, 1945.



Photo: Lambach Camp (Austria) May 6, 1945: After the liberation of the camp by the 71st DI of the 3rd US Arme, children and women survivors of the camp in the crowded barracks.

The 635<sup>th</sup> was in Lambach, Austria on (VE) Victory in Europe Day, 8 May 1945. Their role shifted from combat to Guarding, Feeding and Administering prisoner of war cage – up to 60,000 prisoners.

### May 1945 635<sup>th</sup> After Action Report Excerpts

V-E (Victory in Europe) day found the Battalion in Lambach, Austria, and after 11 months in the line in action against the Enemy with only one 10-day rest period immediately after active participation in the ARDENNES Campaign, the Battalion took over its assigned duty of ~~the~~ guarding, feeding and administering the Prisoner Of War Cage in Lambach. When our Battalion Commander "WINT" took over the supervision of the Cage on 7 May, it had within it's confined, 19,160 Prisoners of War. After discharging 10,483 Enlisted Men and 575 Officers, 792 Volksstrum and 67 WACS through the 31st of May, on that day we still had in the PW Cage 785 Officers, 20,392 Enlisted Men and 92 Political Prisoners, and in the Hospitals under our Supervision were 82 Officers, 1,182 Enlisted Men and 418 Displaced Persons. In a segregated Cage under Special Guard were 65 SS Officers and 2,540 SS Troops. The displaced Parsons we organized under Officer supervision processed 2,341 persons for shipment to their homes and on 31 May we still had 3,905 Displaced Persons on hand. Prisoners were screened by CIC Personnel before discharge and those within walking distance from Lambach were rapidly released. All means of Transportation were utilized within Prescribed Regulations to send Prisoners and Displaced Persons to their own Homes.

The Battalion was awarded the Bronze Service Award for participating in the initial assault for the Normandy Beachheads, and throughout the entire campaign on the Continent maintained the Highest Combat Efficiency.

Battle Casualties throughout the WW-2 Campaign were 1 Officer and 29 Enlisted Men KILLED IN ACTION. 1 Officer and 8 Enlisted Men DIED OF WOUNDS RECEIVED IN ACTION, making a TOTAL OF 2 OFFICERS AND 8 ENLISTED MEN MAKE THE SUPREME SACRIFICE. 5 Officers and 15 Enlisted Men WERE WOUNDED IN ACTION and EVACUATED. 3 Officers and 79 Enlisted Men WERE WOUNDED IN ACTION BUT NOT EVACUATED.

The Battalion participated actively in the following WW-2 ETO Campaigns: NORMANDY, NORTHERN FRANCE, RHINELAND, ARDENNES, and CENTRAL EUROPE. We took 4,639 PRISONERS OF WAR, and KNOCKED OUT 11 TANKS. We fought sometimes as Infantry and supported all actions of the Organizations to which we were assigned or attached. Generally the Firing Companies were under Divisional Control and used in support of Organic Anti-Tank Defense. While attached to the 4th Cavalry Group, the firing Companies were used for screening missions, road patrols against enemy patrol activity, combat patrols, outposts, road blocks and dismounted as Infantry in the Battle of the Hurtgen Forest. Our attachment to the 71st Infantry Division resulted in a series of swift marches with considerable use of our Battalion 3" Guns firing to assist the Infantry to advance through Wooded Areas and Towns. Our Battalion captured Towns, secured Bridge Sites and Dams, knocked out Tanks and Generally supported every action the Infantry Regiments participated in.

#### Campaign Credits:

- Normandy.....Jun. 6, to Jul. 24, 1944
  - Northern France.....Jul. 25, to Sept. 14, 1944
  - Rhineland.....Sept. 15, 1944 to Mar. 21, 1945
  - Ardennes-Alsace.....Dec. 16, 1944 to Jan 25, 1945
  - Central Europe.....Mar. 22, to May 11, 1945
- 
- 11 months of war with only 10 days of rest after the Ardennes Offensive
  - 2 officers and 35 enlisted men killed during operations
  - 8 officers and 194 enlisted men wounded

Awards: Croix De Guerre (French or Belgium "Cross of War")

The 635 served in an infantry role alongside the 1<sup>st</sup> Division, 4<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, 7<sup>th</sup> Army, 3<sup>rd</sup> Army and 71<sup>st</sup> Infantry. However, since they were not an infantry unit they did not receive any awards for their service as infantry.



Photo taken Sept 14, 1942, Burbank, CA

### 635th Tank Destroyer Battalion

On 23 December 1940 the Kansas National Guard was mobilized for a year's training duty at Camp Joseph T. Robinson, Arkansas. Once there, elements of the Kansas, Nebraska and Missouri Guard would together form the 35th Infantry Division, reorganized to form the Provisional Anti-Tank Battalion of the 35th Division in reaction to German strategy in 1939-1941 and the success of German armored units in both Western and Eastern Europe that made the German panzer units seem almost invincible.

The American Army decided to counter enemy armor with high velocity guns which ultimately became known as Tank Destroyers. Tank destroyer units were to be fast moving elements which placed a bare minimum of their guns in fixed position and held a maximum in mobile reserve. The tank destroyer motto was "Seek-Strike-Destroy". The Anti-Tank Battalions were to be equipped with towed 37mm guns, in preference to self-propelled pieces.

The 35th Infantry Divisions Provisional Anti-Tank Battalion was formed in June 1941 under this concept from elements of the 127th, 135th and 161st Field Artillery Battalions. At the time of its organization, roughly 90% of the members of the Provisional Anti-Tank Battalion were from Kansas. At its inception, the Battalion was commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Wint Smith, formerly of Headquarters, 127th Field Artillery, Kansas National Guard.

15 December 1941, General Order No. 1 changed its designation to the 635th Tank Destroyer Battalion.

Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor among the units sent west for the coastal defense was the 35th Division and its newly created unit the 635th Tank Destroyer Battalion.

The Battalion reached Fort Ord, California on 1 January 1942, and remained there until the 19th when it was moved to Camp San Luis Obispo, California. It would remain at the latter location until April 23rd when it was relocated at Griffith Park in Burbank.



From Justin Rousselot: "I was doing some research and I came across your site about the 635th Tank Destroyer Battalion in Burbank. My Grandpa was with the 635th in Burbank and told me many stories of his time there (mostly about the starlets he met). I scanned this picture for you; it's of my grandpa (Ernie Rousselot) and Hollywood starlets!

From left to right: Donna Reed, Ernie Rousselot, Marilyn Maxwell, Earl Francis, Julie Bishop and Harold Senne. 635th Tank Destroyer Battalion, Burbank, CA, Summer 1942.

Some called the American forces in the area "Hollywood soldiers" due to their rather plush duty on the coast. In fact, some 635th personnel were randomly selected for roles in the movie "Washington Slept Here." 35th Division personnel also landed an appearance in the film "As Thousands Cheer." The 635th served in the coastal defense mission from January 1942 until August 1942.

Duane met his wife to be Velma Crawford at a USO dance in Pasadena. The dance was called the "Kansas Roundup." They realized that had grown up a short distance from each other – Hope and Moonlight (between Abilene and Chapman). Duane shipped out and they lost touch. When he returned from war he looked her up. Velma had come back to Kansas because her mom was sick. "I guess it was fate!" and "it's funny because he talked about her in his letters." His daughter Joleen shared.

The Battalion departed from California on 15 January 1943 for Camp Hood, Texas, the newly designated Tank Destroyer Training Center. Camp Hood, Texas provided the 635th with its first intensive training as a Tank Destroyer unit. In many respects the training was similar to other units, in that physical training was stressed for all battalion members. This required hours of physical conditioning and included a traditional army activity, marching. By this time, the battalion was fully equipped with the authorized 3 inch anti-tank weapon and emphasis was placed on training and proficiency with both individual small arms and crew served weapons. In addition, intensive training was given on vehicle and ordinance maintenance, both necessary skills for the success of the battalion in a combat environment. Vehicle maintenance was particularly important because the 635th utilized guns towed by trucks or White half-tracks.

The commander of the battalion during this period and during the entire war was Lieutenant Colonel Wint Smith, originally from Mankato, Kansas. A Highway Patrol officer in civilian life, Wint Smith had originally joined the Kansas National Guard in June, 1916 and had served in a number of capacities but served by and large in the cavalry until it was phased out in 1940. Wint Smith was a strong commander who expected and got a great deal out of the men in his command. He was ably assisted by his Executive Officer, Major Carl Harder who like Colonel Smith was a Highway Patrolman and a Guardsman of considerable experience (Harder joined the National Guard in 1921). Wint Smith wanted his unit to look sharp at all times and therefore required his men to wear their leggings and steel pots at all times. They were probably the only unit at Camp Hood that consistently enforced this requirement. When committed to combat, the habit of wearing the helmet at all times, developed through Wint Smiths' training, undoubtedly saved many lives.

The battalion, now wearing the distinctive Tank Destroyer patch, left Camp Hood on 16 December 1943 to participate in the Second Louisiana maneuvers. It had now been mobilized for two years and was fully trained and equipped as a Tank Destroyer Battalion. The 635th was sent to Camp Polk, Louisiana for the Second Maneuvers and upon completing its field duties, the unit moved into Camp Polk containment area on 30 December 1943.

The 635th was designated as one of the units which would take part in the invasion of German occupied Europe. Thus for the first part of 1944 a substantial portion of the battalions work consisted of training personnel and preparing equipment for shipment to participate in the invasion. Movement by rail to the point of embarkation began on 2 February 1944 and the 635th reached Camp Shanks on 8 February 1944. They embarked from the Port of New York on 9 February 1944 aboard a British vessel. The HMS Andes sailed without any type of convoy escort, but in spite of this, the voyage was without incident and the Andes arrived in Liverpool, England on 19 February, 1944. Once in England, the battalion was in a Nissen hut encampment.



Duane's Tank Destroyer Battalion patch.

**Divisions** have 10,000-to-15,000 soldiers divided in three-to-five combat regiments and a number of support units. **Regiments** have 3,000-to-5,000 soldiers and include several combat and support battalions. Each **battalion** has three-to-five line companies of 100-to-150 soldiers apiece. **Companies** break down into three-to-five **platoons** of 20-to-40 people, which in turn break down into **squads** of eight-to-12

Soldiers wearing the stripes and T were rank T/5 and as "corporal." Technicians represented a wide variety of soldiers with specialized technical skills, including medics, radio operators and repairmen, mail clerks, mechanics, cooks, and tank drivers.

The triangle 6 represents the 6<sup>th</sup> Armored Division. Worn on the left sleeve signifies the division served in during battle. The 3 "Hershey" Bars represent months in battle service. The grey strip represents years of active duty.



Jerry Moran recognized Duane and other survivors of the 635th at a ceremony at the Eisenhower Museum in 1998. Duane's son Marvyn is assisting him.

SERIAL NUMBER 1998 1. NAME (Print) Duane Sterner Rock ORDER NUMBER 149  
(First) (Middle) (Last)

2. ADDRESS (Print) RFD 1 Hope Dickinson Kansas  
(Number and street or R. F. D. number) (Town) (County) (State)

3. TELEPHONE 1 F 11 4. AGE IN YEARS 21 5. PLACE OF BIRTH Hope 6. COUNTRY OF CITIZENSHIP USA  
(Exchange) (Number) (Mo.) (Day) (Yr.) (Town or county) (State or country)

7. NAME OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS Mr Irvin C ROCK 8. RELATIONSHIP OF THAT PERSON FATHER  
(Mr., Mrs., Miss) (First) (Middle) (Last)

9. ADDRESS OF THAT PERSON RFD. 1 Hope Dickinson Kans.  
(Number and street or R. F. D. number) (Town) (County) (State)

10. EMPLOYER'S NAME Self 11. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS Hope Dickinson Kans.  
(Number and street or R. F. D. number) (Town) (County) (State)

I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE.

REGISTRATION CARD D. S. S. FORM 1

(over)

16-17105

Duane Sterner Rock  
(Registrar's signature)

REGISTRAR'S REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF REGISTRANT

| RACE     | HEIGHT (Approx.) | WEIGHT (Approx.) | EYES |      | HAIR  |       | COMPLEXION |      |      |        |       |       |      |          |             |            |       |  |  |
|----------|------------------|------------------|------|------|-------|-------|------------|------|------|--------|-------|-------|------|----------|-------------|------------|-------|--|--|
|          |                  |                  | Blue | Gray | Hazel | Brown | Black      | Gray | Bald | Sallow | Light | Ruddy | Dark | Freckled | Light brown | Dark brown | Black |  |  |
| White    | 5-9              | 165              |      |      |       |       |            |      |      |        |       |       |      |          |             |            |       |  |  |
| Negro    |                  |                  |      |      |       |       |            |      |      |        |       |       |      |          |             |            |       |  |  |
| Oriental |                  |                  |      |      |       |       |            |      |      |        |       |       |      |          |             |            |       |  |  |
| Indian   |                  |                  |      |      |       |       |            |      |      |        |       |       |      |          |             |            |       |  |  |
| Filipino |                  |                  |      |      |       |       |            |      |      |        |       |       |      |          |             |            |       |  |  |

Other obvious physical characteristics that will aid in identification.....

I certify that my answers are true; that the person registered has read or has had read to him his own answers; that I have witnessed his signature or mark and that all of his answers of which I have knowledge are true, except as follows:

Registrar for Hope Dickinson Kansas  
(Town) (County) (State)  
 Date of registration Oct 16 - 1940  
(Date)

LOCAL BOARD  
 OCT 21 1940  
 ABILENE  
REGISTRY OF PERSONS

The stamp of the Local Board shall be placed in the above space.

16-17105

**TANK DESTROYER BATTALION, TOWED**

Designation: †\_\_\_\_ Tank Destroyer Battalion

|    | 1                           | 2   | 3   | 4     | 5   | 6         |
|----|-----------------------------|---|---|-------|---|-----------|
| 1  | Unit                        | Headquarters and Headquarters Company (T/O&E 18-36) | 3 Tank Destroyer Gun Companies (each) (T/O&E 18-37) | Total | Attached Medical Detachment (T/O&E 18-35 Med Det) | Aggregate |
| 2  | Lieutenant Colonel          | 1   |   | 1     |   | 1         |
| 3  | Major                       | 2   |   | 2     |   | 2         |
| 4  | Captain                     | 4   | 1   | 7     |   | 7         |
| 5  | Captain or First Lieutenant |   |   |       | 1   | 1         |
| 6  | First Lieutenant            | 7   | 3   | 16    |   | 16        |
| 7  | Second Lieutenant           | 1   | 1   | 4     |   | 4         |
| 8  | TOTAL COMMISSIONED          | 15  | 5   | 30    | 1   | 31        |
| 9  | Warrant Officer             | 2   |   | 2     |   | 2         |
| 10 | Master Sergeant             | 2   |   | 2     |   | 2         |
| 11 | First Sergeant              | 1   | 1   | 4     |   | 4         |
| 12 | Technical Sergeant          | 7   | 1   | 10    |   | 10        |
| 13 | Staff Sergeant              | 6   | 6   | 24    | 1   | 25        |
| 14 | Sergeant                    | 7   | 16  | 55    |   | 55        |
| 15 | Corporal                    | 3   | 17  | 54    | 1   | 55        |
| 16 | Technician, Grade 3         |   |   |       | 1   | 1         |
| 17 | Technician, Grade 4         | 18  | 12  | 54    | 2   | 56        |
| 18 | Technician, Grade 5         | 38  | 15  | 83    | 4   | 87        |
| 19 | Private, First Class        | 30  | 56  | 198   | 3   | 201       |
| 20 | Private, including          | 36  | 64  | 228   | 3   | 231       |
| 21 | Basic                       | (7)   | (9)   | (34)  | (1)   | (35)      |
| 22 | TOTAL ENLISTED              | 148   | 188   | 712   | 15  | 727       |
| 23 | AGGREGATE                   | 165   | 193   | 744   | 15  | 760       |

| 1  | 2   | 3   | 4     | 5   | 6         |
|--|---|---|-------|---|-----------|
| Unit   | Headquarters and Headquarters Company (T/O&E 18-36) | 3 Tank Destroyer Gun Companies (each) (T/O&E 18-37) | Total | Attached Medical Detachment (T/O&E 18-35 Med Det) | Aggregate |
| 24 Car, armored, light, M8, with armament              | 4   |   | 4     |   | 4         |
| 25 Car, armored, utility, M20, without armament        | 4   | 2   | 10    |   | 10        |
| 26 Carbine, cal. .30, M1                               |   | 120   | 360   |   | 360       |
| 27 Gun, 3-inch, M5 with carriage, gun, 3-inch, M6      |   | 12  | 36    |   | 36        |
| 28 Gun, machine, Browning, cal. .30, M1919A6, flexible | 11  | 7   | 32    |   | 32        |
| 29 Gun, machine, Browning, HB, cal. .50, M2, flexible  | 8   | 3   | 17    |   | 17        |
| 30 Gun, submachine, cal. .45, M3                       | 151   | 49  | 298   |   | 298       |
| 31 Launcher, grenade, M7                               | 11  | 24  | 83    |   | 83        |
| 32 Launcher, grenade, M8                               |   | 12  | 36    |   | 36        |
| 33 Launcher, rocket, 2.36-inch, M9                     | 26  | 15  | 71    |   | 71        |
| 34 Pistol, automatic, cal. .45, M1911A1                | 3   |   | 3     |   | 3         |
| 35 Rifle, U.S., cal. .30, M1                           | 11  | 24  | 83    |   | 83        |
| 36 Trailer, Ammunition, M10                            | 6   | 3   | 15    |   | 15        |
| 38 Trailer, 1/4-ton, 2-wheel, cargo                    | 1   | 1   | 4     |   | 4         |
| 39 Trailer, 1-ton, 2-wheel, cargo                      | 8   |   | 8     | 1   | 9         |
| 40 Truck, 1/4-ton, 4x4                                 | 18  | 15  | 63    | 4   | 67        |
| 41 Truck, 3/4-ton, 4x4, weapons carrier                | 6   |   | 6     |   | 6         |
| 42 Truck, 1 1/2-ton, 6x6, cargo                        | 1   | 3   | 10    | 1   | 11        |
| 43 Truck, 2 1/2-ton, 6x6, cargo                        | 14  | 1   | 17    |   | 17        |
| 44 Truck, wrecking, heavy, M1A1                        | 1   |   | 1     |   | 1         |
| 45 Vehicle, armored, utility, M39                      |   | 12  | 36    |   | 36        |
| 46 Detector Set (Mine) SCR-625                         | 5   |   | 5     |   | 5         |
| 47 Radio Set SCR-506                                   | 4   |   | 4     |   | 4         |
| 48 Radio Set SCR-608                                   | 8   | 2   | 14    |   | 14        |
| 49 Radio Set SCR-619                                   | 19  | 19  | 76    | 1   | 77        |
| 50 Telephone EE-8                                      | 5   | 7   | 26    |   | 26        |

Remarks:

† Insert number of battalion.

\* This table supersedes T/O 18-35, 7 May 1943, including C1, 28 March 1944, and C2, 28 April 1944.

\*\* Includes Changes No. 1, 24 January 1945.

This article about the Rock Family and the war effort appeared in the Capper's Weekly Newspaper in 1942.

## THEY WON'T DO IT ON 40 HOURS A WEEK.



The Irvin Rock family of Hope, Dickinson County, Kansas, is cheerfully tackling a job this summer that allows for no time out. In this family there are the father and mother, three sons and a daughter. They have a 786-acre farm.

Duane, 21, the oldest, is in the army. Robert, 20, expects to be called into service soon. Lyle, 14,

the youngest son, and Iris June, 16, are in high school. This year the Rocks will have 242 acres of wheat, 110 acres of barley, forty acres of oats, sixty acres of Atlas sorgo, forty acres of soybeans, eighty acres of corn, fourteen in alfalfa and thirty in fax.

"We are not worrying about a labor shortage," the father said. "We'll get along all right. If the

boys can do more good in the army, I want them there."

Mr. Rock said he planned to hire some high school boys and if possible a man too old for military service. Mrs. Rock has a big garden. Last year she canned 350 quarts of fruits and vegetables.

The picture shows Mr. Rock in the center with his son, Robert, on the left, and Lyle on the right.

## Miscellaneous 635<sup>th</sup> Battalion Information:

The Battalion was billeted in Neissen Huts situated on the Tracy Estate, Toddington, which was near the much larger town of Cheltenham and relatively close to the famous Shakespeare town of Stratford-on-Avon. The 635th T/D Bn. basketball team participated in the South England Tournament and progressed to the finals before elimination.

We stayed at Toddington until May 16, 1944. During this period between landing in England and May 16 we entered into all phases of combat training and physical conditioning and was outfitted with all TO vehicles and weapons which brought our strength to 100%. We then assembled in Marshalling areas for further outfitting and briefing. The Battalion then embarked from Falmouth and Plymouth, England on 3 LST's numbered 55, 381 and 392 on June 2, 1944 for the invasion and assault of France on the Normandy Beachhead. After several attempts to move forward to the beach the 635th landed at the FOX-GREEN portion on OMAHA BEACH on June 7 & 8, 1944 in Support of the three Regiments of the 1st Infantry Division. You will recall we had planned to land on June 4th but weather caused Gen Esienhower to back off until the 6th.

**After assembly at the Marshalling Areas, and further outfitting and equipping, the Battalion embarked from Falmouth and Plymouth England in 3 LST's Numbers 55, and 381 and 393, on 2 June 1944, for the invasion and assult of France on the Normandy Beachhead. The Battalion landings were made on the FOX-GREEN Portion of OMAHA BEACH on 8 June in support of the Three Regiments of the 1st. Infantry Division.**

The Battalion supported the 1st. Division throughout the Northern France Campaign untill 31 August, when it was assigned to the 4th. Cavalry Group as it continued to drive through Belgium to Butgenbach near Malmedy. From there the 4th. Cavalry Group was shifted to the Roetgen-Aachen Sector and assisted in the Drive Through the Hurtgen Forest.

After the Fall of Cologne, Germany, the Battalion was transfered from the 1st. Army to the 7th Army and assigned to the 71st Infantry Division. (Note: After the fall of Cologne, one of our Captains and 20 of our Enlisted Men were part of a Detail selected to raise the American Flag over Cologne.) The 71st. being a part of the 3rd. Army. Two weeks later, on or about 1 April 1945, the 71st. Division, with thas (635th) Battalion was transfered to the 3rd. Army. The Battalion supported the 71st. Division in its drive to and across the RHINE RIVER near Mannheim and on through central Germany to and into Austria. Elements of the 635th Tank Destroyers with the 71st. Division were among the Troops who advanced farthest East of any Western Front Troops.

The Battalion supported the 1st Inf. Div. throughout the Northern France Campaign until August 31, 1944. During this period you will recall the jump-off at St. Lo, the closing of the Falaise Gap, the sealing off of the Cherbourg Peninsula and the backing off of our Battalion's anticipated entrance into Paris wherein we were supplanted by the French 2nd Armored Division in our uniforms and our equipment. Needless to say we were disappointed. It was a strange coincidence that we entered Germany at the same place as the 1st Inf. Div. had in World War I. After August 31, 1944 we were assigned to the 4th Cavalry Group as it continued the drive through Belgium to Butgenbach near Malmedy. From there the 4th Cavalry Group was shifted to the Roetgen-Aachen Sector and assisted in the drive through the Hurtgen Forest. Who will forget the day of December 16, 1944. With our Battalion in the Hurtgen Forest overlooking the City of Duren across the Rohr River. The Germans started their ill fated counter-attack with the goal of capturing the port city of Antwerp and thus splitting the Allies Defenses. The Battalion was then rushed from the Hurtgen Forest to Belgium to help counter the German's attack. Some of us were wounded and evacuated at this time. You will recall this is the time the Germans were using our uniforms, guns and English speaking German Soldiers to penetrate our lines. I remember an MP stopping our ambulance asking several questions such as "was Babe Ruth a Halfback or Tackle". Our GI's would know immediately the answer. After Cologne fell, the 635th was transferred from the 1st Army to the 7th Army and assigned to the 71st Inf. Div. One of our Captains and 20 enlisted men were selected as part of a detail to raise the American Flag over Cologne. Shortly after or about April 1, 1945 the 71st Inf. Div. with the 635th were transferred to the 3rd Army. The Battalion supported the 71st in the drive across the Rhine near Mannheim through Central Germany and into Austria. Elements of the 635th with the 71st Inf Div were among the Troops who advanced further East than any of the Troops on the Western Front.