

HEADQUARTERS
702ND TANK BATTALION
APO 403, C/O POSTMASTER NEW YORK, NEW YORK

20 November 1944.

SUBJECT: Battalion History.
Period from 1 October 1944 to 31 October 1944.

1. Original Unit.
 - a. 702nd Tank Battalion (Medium).
 - b. Organized 1 March 1943.
 - c. Organized at Camp Campbell, Kentucky.
 - d. Authority for Organization: 320.2/53 (AF) (R)-ENGOT (1-2-43), and par 1, General Orders Number 14, Headquarters Armored Force, Fort Knox, Kentucky.
 - e. Sources from which personnel was obtained: The Cadre for the Battalion came from the 8th Armored Division, Camp Campbell, Kentucky, and the recruits came from the New Cumberland Reception Center, New Cumberland, Pennsylvania.

2. Principal changes in organization resulted from changes in Tables of Organization, and the activation of a light tank company on 19 October 1943. The designation of the Unit was changed from "702nd Tank Battalion (Medium)" to "702nd Tank Battalion".

3. Strength:

| | Commissioned | Warrant | Enlisted |
|------------------------------------|--------------|---------|----------|
| a. Strength: 1 October 1944 | 36 | 3 | 697 |
| b. Net increase to 31 October 1944 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| c. Net decrease to 31 October 1944 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| d. Strength: 31 October 1944 | 39 | 3 | 693 |

4. Stations of Units
 - a. 1 October 1944: Vicinity of Belleville, France, through 12 October 1944.
 - 13 October 1944: Vicinity of Ville-Au-Val, France, through 31 October 1944.

5. The purpose of all marches was to accomplish the tactical mission of the Battalion in connection with military operations against the enemy. Specific instances concerning marches given in the summary of operations by Battalion S-3 Report attached.

6. Battalion engaged principally in Third United States Army drive towards Germany, driving the enemy out of the towns and territory east of the Moselle River. The most important mission accomplished by the Battalion during this period was defending the bridgehead east of the Moselle River and driving on north to the Seille River, and consolidating positions west of the Seille River.

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7. As the month opened, the Battalion, attached to the 80th Infantry Division, supported the division in the maintenance and enlarging of the Moselle River bridgehead. During the defensive period from the 1st to the 7th, the Battalion had one medium tank company in support of each Infantry Regiment. Unit CPs were located as follows: Company "A" - Le Pont de Mons; Company "B" - Le Pont de Mons; Company "C" - Atton. Company "D", in support of the 80th Reconnaissance Troops, was located at Custines. Headquarters and Service Companies operated from the woods at U7626. The Battalion CP was located at Belleville. The only unit actively operating against the enemy, the Battalion Assault Gun Platoon (A), was engaged in firing interdiction fire under Battalion control.

During this period the enemy held Denicourt, Manencourt, Serrieres, Mount Toulon, Sivry, Mount St. Jean, and the Bois de Fourasse. The main enemy element contacted was the 553rd Infantry Division with approximately five thousand (5,000) men. The weather and terrain was generally unsuitable for the use of tanks. No actions took place until the division launched a coordinated attack on the 8th of October.

On the 6th a division plan for the enlarging of the bridgehead to the line of the Seille River was circulated. This was to be a coordinated attack, launched at H Hour on D Day, in two phases. In the first phase the Battalion minus Company "B" and Company "D", was to assault and capture Lixieres, Mount Toulon, and the north half of Mount St. Jean in support of the 319th Combat Team. Company "B", attached to the 318th Infantry, was to capture Denicourt and Clemery. Company "D", with the 317th Infantry, was to assault the south half of Mount St. Jean. For the operation Company "C", 602 TD Battalion was attached to the Battalion, and one platoon of this unit was placed in support of Company "B".

Prior to this operation the enemy had shown his tenacity in holding his position, and his aggressiveness in constant counterattacks. Both terrain and weather had been in his favor, with superior OPs on Mount St. Jean, and Mount Toulon, and with very soggy ground, softened by weeks of rain. Extensive minefields, both AT and AP, had been found in the Lixieres and Sivry sectors by Infantry Patrols. The enemy had well dug in positions with which he was familiar and had the advantage of interior lines of communication.

H Hour was 0630, 8 October 1944. The weather was clear, but visibility was very poor for the operation due to a heavy ground fog. The ground was suitable for tank operations.

Special communication measures developed to assure contact during the assault included two CPs with 506 and 508 radios established at St. Genevieve and Landremont hill, and staff liaison officers with each Combat Team Headquarters.

The Battalion Mortar Platoon had the mission of smoking enemy positions on Lixieres and Hill 340. Aided by the heavy ground haze the mission was accomplished satisfactorily.

The Battalion Assault Gun Platoon attached one gun to each medium tank company.

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Companies "A" and "C", and Company "C", 602 TD Battalion (-) assaulted each through the valley of Ville Au Val with Companies in column, until reaching the Seille River plain. At this point Companies fanned out, "A" Company on the left (North) before Lixieres, and "C" Company on the right, (south) before Serrieres. TDs covered the flanks and rear and remained prepared to engage any enemy tanks which might appear. CT 319 assaulted from the woods at U8530 in conjunction with the tank attack. At 0910 Company "A" had its first objective (Lixieres), and organized to continue to a support position west of the Bois de Fourasse to cover the division flank. At 1228 Company "C" had taken its first objective (Serrieres), but due to a delay in arrival of Infantry to join, did not move on to a support position with "A" Company. "A" Company lost three (3) tanks at Lixieres due to land mines. All were recovered and returned to combat duty.

Company "B", with one platoon, Company "C", 602 TD Battalion, attacked, assaulted north on Benicourt and Clemery with the first Battalion, 318th Infantry. The assaulting force had Benicourt by 0830, and moved north. Because of the heavy fog and a concentration of enemy smoke, the unit by-passed their objective at Clemery. They reassaulted Clemery and had all of the town except the chateau by 1228. Captain FORD, the Company Commander, was killed in action, and Lieutenant WILLIAM B. MILLER assumed command at 1325. The Company returned to a Combat Team reserve position at U857310 at 1600.

Company "D" assaulted through the gap at Bratte, north to the south slope at Mount St. Jean, and took up fire support position for CT 317 assault on the mountain and Sivry. The Company objective was gained at 0715. Company "D" was released to the Battalion at 1340 and commenced movement to Battalion assembly area.

The Battalion minus Company "B" assembled in the valley south of Landremont for resupplying and preparation for continuation of the attack, in the direction of Nancy in the morning. The only tank losses for the day were those by mines in Company "A". All assigned objectives were gained. Approximately one thousand eight hundred (1,800) prisoners were taken by the division, and the enemy in the area was badly mauled. Three enemy AT guns were destroyed. No enemy armor was encountered.

Phase Two consisted of a holding operation involving the whole Battalion. H Hour was 0600, 9 October 1944. At this time the Battalion tank companies were to be lined up on the west edge of the Bois de Fourasse and give fire support to the advance of the 319th Infantry through the woods. Company "A" was committed on the north, placing fire on NERENY and the area to its south. "B" and "C" Companies placed direct fire into the woods, and "D" Company covered the south edge of the woods and protected the right flank of the Battalion. The Battalion Mortar Platoon smoked the high ground east of Abaucourt and north of the Seille River. Company "C", 602TD Battalion was relieved from attachment as of H Hour. The Assault Gun Platoon operated in the same manner as the day previous. Communication was the same as before.

By 0737 the Battalion less "A" Company was in position: the latter Company having extended beyond its position to U902330. Companies were cautioned not to fire except on order due to the prevailing poor visibility. By 0826 Lieutenant SHORE, Mortar Platoon Leader, had completed his mission and

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received permission to withdraw.

"B", "C" and "D" Companies had very little action, but "A" Company became heavily engaged with enemy infantry and lost three (3) tanks to a German bazooka fire. On completion of their missions Companies returned to assembly area South of Landremont.

The operation was again very successful, with eight hundred (800) prisoners of war for the Division. The 553rd German Infantry Division was practically decimated and had to be withdrawn from the battle line. The heterogeneous collection of Combat Teams which had held sectors in the area were all practically wiped out.

From the 10th until the 31st of the month, the Division assumed a defensive position. The Division front line extended south along the Seille River from the Cheminot Road to the horizontal coordinate U32, and east along this coordinate to Letricourt. Enemy troops facing us at this time were elements of the 17th Panzer Gren. Division, the 1431st Fortress Infantry Battalion, and elements of the 48th Infantry Division.

On the 10th Company "C", was called out to repel a counter-attack developing on the Division right flank. The attack was successfully halted, but in doing so the Company had two (2) tanks bogged down in the mud. These tanks had not been recovered by the end of the month. On completion of their mission the Company took up a position at U905290 and remained in direct support of the 319th Infantry Regiment.

On the 13th Company "A" moved to a new location (US10345). "B" and "D" Companies remained at US27275. In compliance with the Division defensive plan each medium tank company supported its respective combat team as a reserve to be used as a counter-attack force only. Company "D" remained in Division Reserve. Headquarters and Service Companies moved to Landremont, and the Battalion CP was at Ville Au Val.

Due to the shortage of artillery ammunition, the medium tank companies and the assault gun platoon received a secondary mission to reinforce the fires of the division artillery. Fire control was exercised as follows: Company "A" - 512th Field Artillery Battalion; Company "B" - 974th Field Artillery Battalion; Company "C" - 905th Field Artillery Battalion; Assault Gun Platoon - 315th Field Artillery Battalion. There was no further action for the month.

8. The Commanding Officer in all engagements of the Battalion has been Lieutenant Colonel RALPH TALBOT III, Infantry. The Battalion was part of forces commanded by Lieutenant General GEORGE S. PATTON.

9. Losses in Action.

OFFICERS:

Ford, Francis P., Capt, 01015619

KILLED

ENLISTED MEN:

Saetta, Joseph P, S/Sgt, 33602128
Loughead, Bernard, Tec 5, 33596532
Murphy, Joseph F, Sgt, 33596660
Terzo, Lawrence, Pvt, 36685613

Battalion History - 1 Oct 44 to 31 Oct 44 Cont'd.

WOUNDED AND INJURED

OFFICERS:
None

ENLISTED MEN:

Heckard, Rudy J, Pfc, 37529033
Pellegrino, Recco S, Pvt, 32218401
Kelly, Robert L, Cpl, 33602114
Massington, Nicholas A, Tec 5, 33596721
Sabol, Joseph S, Pfc, 33596240
Murphy, Lashon H, Tec 5, 33596480
Barry, Thomas J., Cpl, 33596644
Starnes, Gerald O, Sgt, 33502831
Marcello, John P, Pvt, 31425550
Frey, Elmer W, Tec 5, 33621704

MISSING IN ACTION

OFFICERS:
None

ENLISTED MEN:
None

10. Former and present members who have distinguished themselves in action.

| <u>NAME</u> | <u>RANK</u> | <u>ACT</u> | <u>AWARD</u> |
|--------------------|-------------|--|-------------------------------|
| FORD, FRANCIS P. | Capt | On 8 October 1944 Capt FORD with complete disregard for his own personal safety and despite heavy enemy fire, dismounted from his tank and assisted a wounded Infantryman into the turret of his tank, and upon descending into the tank himself, he was fired on, hit, and died on the spot. | Silver Star (Posthumously) |
| Manning, John W. | Tec 5 | On 9 October 1944 while the unit to which he was attached was making an attack upon heavily fortified enemy installations Tec 5 Manning drove his tank to the vicinity of a disabled friendly tank and despite raking enemy fire and in full view of the enemy, dismounted and rescued a wounded comrade, returning him to safety. | Bronze Star |
| LeBreck, George E. | Pvt | On 9 October 1944 while the unit to which he was attached was making an attack on a heavily fortified enemy installation Pvt LeBreck drove his tank to the vicinity of a disabled friendly tank and despite raking enemy fire and in full view of the enemy, dismounted and rescued a wounded comrade, returning him to safety. | Bronze Star |

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b. Purple Hearts Awarded:

| <u>NAME</u> | <u>RANK</u> | <u>ASN</u> | <u>DATE OF WOUNDS</u> |
|-------------------------|-------------|------------|-----------------------|
| Heckard, Rudy J. | Pfc | 37529033 | 8 October 1944 |
| Kelly, Robert L. | Cpl | 33602114 | 9 October 1944 |
| Pellegrino, Rocco S. | Pvt | 32218401 | 9 October 1944 |
| Marcello, John P. | Pvt | 31425550 | 9 October 1944 |
| Starnes, Gerald O. | Sgt | 33502531 | 9 October 1944 |
| Massington, Nicholas A. | Tec 5 | 33596721 | 9 October 1944 |
| Barry, Thomas J. | Cpl | 33596644 | 9 October 1944 |
| Murphy, Mahlon H. | Tec 5 | 33596480 | 9 October 1944 |
| Preston, Kenneth I. | Pvt | 42029681 | 8 October 1944 |
| Shaulis, Clark F. | Sgt | 33757092 | 13 October 1944 |
| Frey, Elmer W. | Tec 5 | 33621704 | 23 October 1944 |
| Sabel, Joseph S. | Pfc | 33596240 | 9 October 1944 |

11. Photographs of personnel, important scenes of events not available up to 31 October 1944.

For the Commanding Officer:

William B. Jacobs
WILLIAM B. JACOBS,
Capt, 702nd Tank Bn,
Battalion Historian.