

## 44<sup>TH</sup> TANK BATTALION

### HISTORICAL RECORD AND HISTORY

The 44<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion was redesignated on 11 November 1943 near Watertown, Tennessee in the Tennessee Maneuver Area, as a unit in the 12<sup>th</sup> Armored Division (authority: G.O. #36, Hq 12<sup>th</sup> Armored Division, dated 11 November 1943). Prior to redesignation this unit was known as the Second Battalion, 44<sup>th</sup> Armored Regiment, 12<sup>th</sup> Armored Division. Lt Col TOM H ROSS, Cavalry, O-263-496, was placed in command of the new unit. Its strength at this time was 48 officers, three warrant officers and 803 enlisted men.

On 15 November 1943 the unit entrained at Watertown, Tennessee for rail movement to permanent station at Camp Barkeley, Texas, arriving there 17 November 1943. November strength increase or decrease: Plus 21 officers; minus 15 enlisted men.

#### DECEMBER 1943

December strength increase or decrease: Plus eight officers; minus 31 enlisted men.

#### JANUARY 1944

The unit was alerted for possible overseas shipment on 25 January 1944, Tux Hq A.G.F., 20 February 1944 was designated as readiness date. January strength increase or decrease: Minus 12 officers, plus 32 enlisted men.

#### FEBRUARY 1944

February strength increase or decrease: Minus 35 officers; minus 66 enlisted men.

#### MARCH 1944

On 7 March 1944 at 1500 the unit entrained for the Port of Embarkation, Portland, Oregon, arriving there at 0700 on 11 March. Upon arrival at the Portland POE the unit passed from control of the 12<sup>th</sup> Armored Division and became a separate tank battalion.

On 22 March 1944, after dark, the unit boarded the U.S.A.T. Kota Baroe, a Dutch vessel, and sailed from the Portland POE for an unknown destination in the southwest Pacific area.

Ship stopped at Los Angeles, California on 26 March 1944 for fuel and minor repairs. Left the following day at 1600. On this date when well out to sea our destination was announced: Finschhafen, New Guinea.

March strength increase or decrease: Minus one officer.

## APRIL 1944

Arrived at Milne Bay, New Guinea, 21 April 1944. The crossing was completed without incident. Pfc George Rusin, 32187724, Hq Co, died on board ship of natural causes 27 April 1944. Buried shore.

April strength increase or decrease: Minus one enlisted man.

## MAY 1944

Arrived at Oro Bay, New Guinea at 0700 on 7 May 1944. Left Oro Bay at 1300 on 9 May 1944.

Arrived at destination, Finschhafen, New Guinea at 0800 on 11 May 1944. Disembarked from U.S.A.T. Kota Baroe at 2000 on 11 May 1944.

Pursuant to authority contained in par. 1, General Order No. 62, Headquarters, Sixth Army, APO 442, 7 April 1944, this unit was assigned to Sixth Army effective upon arrival in Southwest Pacific Area.

Pursuant to authority contained in par. 2, General Order No. 68, Headquarters, Sixth Army, APO 442, 24 April 1944, this unit was attached to XI Corps, APO 471.

Tec 5 Hershel A Lyle, 35498429, Co. A, died from drowning 15 May 1944.

One company alerted on 31 May 1944 for combat duty. Company C was selected, commanded by Capt Samuel M Hanff, Infantry, 0-1 010 093. Company C alerted by M/O Hq. Sixth Army, AG 370.5c, 1 June 1944, for movement to Horlick (code name) in combat area, to be attached upon arrival to 41<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division.

May strength increase or decrease: Minus three enlisted men.

## JUNE 1944

On 1 June 1944 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon and four tanks of 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon, Company C, total 9 tanks, 48 enlisted men under 2<sup>nd</sup> Lts Milton Starn, Infantry, 0-1 016 473 and William Westphal, Infantry, 0-1 017 141, ordered to load on Clarence King, destination Horlick (code name).

On 9 June 1944 destination of Company C was changed to Topheavy (code name).

On 23 June 1944 balance of Company C moved to Topheavy (code name) by L.S.T. Company clerk joined company 2 July 1944 with records, traveling by air.

Pvt Wilbur L Spaul, Company C killed in action at Arara, Dutch New Guinea, 27 June 1944. Pvt Louis Magnani, 32220122, Hq Co, LWA, 20 June 1944, Biak Island.

June strength increase or decrease: Minus one officer, plus 36 enlisted men.

### JULY 1944

On 12 July 1944 Company B alerted, authority VOCCG, Sixth Army, 12 July 1944, for movement from Washstand (code name) to Persecution (code name), reporting on arrival to Commanding General, Sixth Army.

13-14 July 1944, Company B loaded on L.S.T. #171 and sailed 15 July 1944. On 17 July 1944, Company B arrived at Persecution (code name) at 0800.

July strength: 41 officers, 764 enlisted men. No change in strength for officers; plus 18 enlisted men.

### AUGUST 1944

During the latter part of July and the month of August, incomplete information indicates that Company C operated with the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiment in the Snaky River-Naffin Drome Area in Dutch New Guinea.

Casualties:	2 <sup>nd</sup> Lt Russell L Hunt	0-1019124	LWA
	Sgt Claude A Ryer	36005325	LWA
	Pfc Kenneth L Boucher	15323069	LWA
	Pfc David W Duncan	131677658	LWA
	Pvt Edward F Busta	36684212	LWA
	Pvt Andrew N Voytas	33759866	LWA

August strength: 42 officers (plus one); 762 enlisted men (minus two).

### SEPTEMBER 1944

11 September: As of 24 August 1944, the 44<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion, less Companies B and C, is attached to X Corps. Authority: Letter, Hq X Corps, 11 September 1944, File 319.26-F, Subject: Change No, 2 to Station List No. 1, Hq X Corps.

19 September: The 44<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion less companies B and C were ordered to move from Washstand (code name) to Teacup (code name) for staging. Authority: Letter, Hq X Corps, 19 September 1944, file 370.50E, Subject: Movement orders.

21 September: unit boarded the S.S. Marcus Daly at 2000.

22 September: The S.S. Marcus Daly with unit aboard sailed from Washstand (code name) at 0615.

23 September: The U.S.S. Marcus Daly arrived at Teacup (code name) at 0800. The voyage was completed without incident.

25 September: The unit disembarked at Teacup (code name) at 0800 and set up permanent camp in Nokerang Plantation.

September strength: 40 officers (minus two); 746 enlisted men (minus 16).

#### OCTOBER – NOVEMBER 1944

The 44<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion, less Company C, staging at Los Negros, Admiralty Group, was alerted for Operation King II, Leyte, P.I., operation on X Corps order. The 44<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion was attached to the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division for the operation. Company B, 44<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion, staging from Ataipe, New Guinea, was also attached to 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division and the Commanding Officer, Company B, 44<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion, came to Los Negros by plane for briefing. Company C remained in New Guinea attached to Sixth Infantry Division and did not participate in King II operation.

The Battalion Commander and staff, and the commanding officers of Companies A, B and D, were briefed on subject operation at Los Negros by the staff of the First Cavalry Division. Terrain and map studies of Leyte were disseminated. Field Order No. 1, Hq, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division (copy attached) dated 2 October 1944, attached Company A to support of 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade Combat Team and Companies B and D to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade Combat Team. In turn, Brigade field orders attached Company A to 12<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment. Companies B and D were attached to the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment. Tank section of Battalion Headquarters (six tanks) were attached to 8<sup>th</sup> Cavalry (Division Reserve).

With these elements of the battalion passing from control of the Battalion Commander to the attached units, the battalion headquarters, as such, ceased to function. The staff was assigned by the Battalion Commander to supported unit for liaison duties. Prior to embarkation the Battalion Commander issued Field Order #1 (attached), covering attachments of organizations to Cavalry units.

It was not until "A" plus three that line companies B and D reverted to battalion control and even then only a skeleton force of battalion administrative personnel had rejoined battalion. In nearly all cases, orders concerning employment of battalion elements from higher headquarters were oral, and not always confirmed in writing, and any thus received were usually after the actual employment had been initiated by the Battalion Commander.

These elements of the battalion were combat loaded on water transportation under control of supported units. The mortar platoon and battalion wheeled vehicles on last minute change due to shipping shortage, remained at Los Negros, for future shipment. One officer and 60 enlisted men made up this group. The King II Operation convoy departed from Los Negros Admiralties on 11 October 1944. Company B joined convoy at Humbolt Bay, New Guinea. The convoy arrived at Leyte, P.I. off landing beaches on morning of "A" Day, 20 October 1944. Scheduled landing at White Beach at H plus 30 (1030) was made without incident.

Missions: The tank missions were to support advance of ground troops to Regimental and Division Objectives in tank-infantry team combinations.

Company A was the only organization of the battalion continually employed through operation in tank-infantry team role. Company was initially assigned to support the advance of the 12<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment. They were employed from "A" plus 6 to "A" plus 14 in patrol activities of platoon and tank section strength on roads west and south from Palo, encountering no opposition. On "A" plus 15 they were relieved from 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division and assigned to the 24<sup>th</sup> Division and subsequently with the 32<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division. During this period they inflicted heavy casualties, including enemy infantry, armor and artillery. Their own casualties were five men wounded in action, including company commander and Battalion Executive Officer, one man killed in action (acting company commander), one tank destroyed by enemy action, and one tank destroyed by own forces to prevent falling into enemy hands.

Company B was employed in tank-infantry team role in support of the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment from "A" to "A" plus 3 day. Targets engaged were usually machine gun and mortar positions in the San Jose, Tacloban area, and the high ground west and northwest of Tacloban. From "A" plus 3 to "A" plus 41, Company B had no tank activity but personnel were employed under 1st Cavalry Division order in dismounted outpost positions and patrol activities in the Tigbao-Palo area, relieving elements of Cavalry regiments.

Company D's employment was similar to that of Company B. They supported 1<sup>st</sup> Squadron, 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment in accomplishing its "A" day mission – seizing the airstrip on Cataisan Peninsula. One platoon of Company B was attached to Company D for this mission and this platoon lost one medium tank on the airstrip. What is believed to be an aerial bomb of considerable size, buried along airstrip, completely demolished this vehicle. The entire crew was seriously wounded. Through "A" plus 1 and "A" plus 2 the light tanks were employed in the taking of Tacloban and ground north of Tacloban. One platoon of light tanks were attached to 8<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment from "A" plus 3 to "A" plus 42, but were not employed. On "A" plus 6, three tanks of this platoon crossed by LCM to Samar, but were withdrawn after three hours when Silaga River proved unfordable. From "A" plus 3 to "A" plus 41, Company D tank crews were employed in dismounted outpost and patrol activities except for one interval, from "A" plus 24 to "A" plus 29, when light tanks, on 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division order, were used for terrain reconnaissance to locate terrain suitable for tank employment in event of enemy breakthrough. They were also given an additional mission of seeking a pass through hill mass between Mt. Badian and Mt. Lao, west of highway #2 (Jaro-Carigara) that could be used for tank route to Ormoc Valley. As tanks neared foothills of range, terrain prohibited further advance and no mountain pass could be found along entire length of range from Mt. Badian to Mt. Lao inclusive. A medium tank section from Company B was dispatched on the same mission in area south of Mt Lao but was also turned back by rugged terrain. Terrain reconnoitered, was for the most part, unsuitable for tank operation.

Tank Section: The six tanks of Battalion Headquarters initially attached to 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division reserve were not employed and reverted to battalion control of "A" plus 3. On "A" plus 33 they were assigned to support advance of the 112<sup>th</sup> Regimental Combat Team, being in Regimental Combat Team reserve. The Battalion Mortar Platoon accompanied the tank section on this mission. On "A" plus 41,

tanks and mortars were relieved by 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division order and returned to battalion assembly area. They were not employed while attached to 112<sup>th</sup> Regimental Combat Team.

Summary: The greatest single factor that hampered the employment of tanks in this operation was terrain. In nearly every instance of tank employment, because of impassable terrain on both sides of the road, the tanks were road-bound and their front limited to the width of the road. Had the tanks been able to leave the road and employ tank tactics, enemy strong points could have been flanked and overridden, instead of attacked frontally on a road-wide front.

Hostile Opposition: Enemy opposition encountered by tanks of this battalion was in the form of dismounted groups in dug-in positions on dominating terrain; sniper fire against exposed tank commanders and leaders; enemy attacking tanks with satchel charges; land mines encountered numerous times (what is believed to be an aerial bomb of considerable size buried along airstrip completely demolished one medium tank); roadblocks reinforced with explosives; and enemy strong points of automatic weapons and field pieces; enemy armor encountered by Co A only.

Summary of lessons learned. Bridges were not strong enough to hold tanks in most instances. Corps engineers when reinforcing them made them only 15-ton capacity. It is essential that more consideration be given by the engineers to reinforce bridges to tank capacity. Tank companies when detached from battalion absolutely cannot supply itself in any way. Supported units did not give this consideration enough and tank company was greatly handicapped. It is absolutely necessary that the general purpose vehicles accompany the battalion. Battalion Standard Operating Procedure calls for attaching proportionate share of general purpose vehicles to company when detached from battalion. Very little is known about the use of armor by supporting infantry units. Medium tanks were used for reconnaissance on several occasions. Also tank companies were used for dismounted outposts necessitating being miles away from tanks. Oral orders to Battalion were not always confirmed in writing later. Tanks were sometimes used in a defensive role. This should only be done as a last resort. Tanks are a weapon of opportunity and should not be used until the opportune time. Tanks at times were sent out when there was no chance to employ them due to terrain. Tank grousers are a necessity. When tanks are used to develop situation, and when enemy does expose himself, it is imperative that infantry with tanks, either designate enemy targets by pre-arranged signals, or take immediate action to envelope enemy position. (This above is exception to rule that tanks do not lead in obscure situation.) When tank company is detached and assigned to support infantry combat team, company liaison corporal is not competent to handle tank-infantry liaison. Provisions should be made for tank officer with radio-equipped vehicle to function as liaison officer. Absolute necessity of assigning infantrymen for close-in terrain is not appreciated by some infantry commanders with the result that Company A suffered two unnecessary vehicular casualties. Tanks should not be left in exposed forward assembly areas when no immediate employment of them is contemplated, as crews cannot properly outpost their position, and necessary maintenance and servicing operations cannot be performed. When tanks are within hostile artillery range but still within our own lines, infantry should be kept well away from

vicinity of vehicles, as latter frequently draw artillery fire, which so far has proved ineffective against our armor but costly to dismounted personnel in proximity of tanks.

Pvt Edward F Busta, 36684212, Company C, died 9 November 1944 at Sansapor, Dutch New Guinea from injuries received in tank accident. Reported as KIA.

1<sup>st</sup> Lt Leo F Reinartz, who took command of A Co when Capt Van Winkle was wounded on November 11, was killed in action November 27 in northern Leyte in the village of Limon, between the hours of three and four o'clock in the afternoon. A large artillery shell landed near him and a fragment struck him in the back; he did not regain consciousness and died almost immediately. Temporary interment: one and one-half miles south of Pinamopoan overlooking Carigara Bay.

For men wounded and injured and Purple Heart awards, and for Battalion deaths, see accumulative record on separate sheets.

October strength: 42 officers (plus 2); 7345 enlisted men (minus 11).

November strength: 38 officers (minus 4); 721 enlisted men (minus 14).

Note: A copy or true extract copy of the order awarding Purple Hearts and other awards are attached hereto in a separate file.

#### DECEMBER 1944

Company A, 44<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion, was the only company employed during the month of December and the action took place in the vicinity of LIMON, PINAMAPOAN, LEYTE RIVER SECTION. This was a continuation of the action that started November 3<sup>rd</sup>. For full and complete details, refer to October-November History and "Diary Notes of Company A Action – K2 Operation, " which are attached. Company A was relieved from the 32<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division on 15 December 1944 by order of X Corps but due to road conditions the succeeding unit could not reach the scene of action and it wasn't until 21 and 22 December that the company returned to the Battalion bivouac area at Tunga, Leyte province, P.I.

During the K2 operation the battalion lost three tanks due to enemy action. These three were replaced and an additional tank was obtained for the use of the forward artillery observer. Casualties for the K2 operation were one KIA, four SWA, 13 LWA, and five LWA not hospitalized. (See attached accumulative list of casualties in this book for further information.)

The Battalion received a letter of commendation from the Commanding General, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division, for service during the King 2 operation. A true copy is attached in a separate file.

The officers and 100 enlisted men were absent from the battalion eight days during which they acted as loading and unloading detail for the Mindoro, P.I. invasion. This entailed traveling and landing with the invasion forces. Auth: Telegram from Commanding General, Sixth Army dated 9 Dec 1944.

The battalion (less C Company) was alerted for Operation Mike 1 by Troop Movement Order No. 103, Headquarters Sixth Army, 16 November 1944. The movement date was amended by message form signed by Commanding General, Sixth Army, dated 4 December 1944. The battalion was relieved from attachment to X Corps and attached to 13<sup>th</sup> Armored Group 15 December, by General Order No. 215, Headquarters, Sixth Army dated 7 December 1944.

The battalion (less C Company) spent its first Christmas overseas at Tunga, Leyte Province, P.I. During the afternoon and evening a very successful party and program was put on by the officers and enlisted men of the battalion.

On 31 December 1944 the battalion (less C Company), closing the year at Tunga, Leyte Province, P.I., was ready for movement by water transportation for the Mike 1 operation.

Company C, 44<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion, attached to the Sixth Infantry Division, staged for the Mike 1 operation at Sansapor, Dutch New Guinea. The company boarded LSTs on 26 December 1944 and left the harbor on 29 December 1944.

December strength: 34 officers (minus four); 696 enlisted men (minus 25).

#### JANUARY 1945

The battalion (minus Company C, attached to the 6<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division) landed on four LSTs at Red Beach, Leyte, P.I. for the Mike 1 operation on 3 January 1945 and stayed in the harbor until 0930, 6 January 1945, at which time the second convoy for Luzon departed.

The convoy made an uneventful trip in rough seas and arrived in Northern Lingayen Gulf the morning of 11 January 1946. Three LSTs beached but only one could complete unloading because of the rough seas. The unloading was completed next day. The fourth LST beached further south and unloaded on 12 January 1946 but did not join the battalion at San Jacinto until 14 January 1945. On January 20<sup>th</sup> the battalion moved to vicinity of Rasales across the Agno River. Rear echelon stayed at San Jacinto. On this same day one platoon of the 209<sup>th</sup> AAA was attached to the battalion. With the exception of road reconnaissance from 22 January to 28 January inclusive by the Reconnaissance Platoon, there were no missions for the 44<sup>th</sup> until 29 January 1945. Four light tanks accompanied the Reconnaissance Platoon on January 25<sup>th</sup>.

On January 29, D Company was ordered to Bayambang to secure bridge and this mission was accomplished at 0400, 30 January 1945. Late this same day they were released from mission and returned to the battalion on 31 January. On 13<sup>th</sup> Armored Group orders, the battalion had moved to Guimba area on 30 January 1945.

Effective 31 January at 0001 the battalion (minus C Company) was released from the 13<sup>th</sup> Armored Group by radio by CO, 13<sup>th</sup> Armored Group. FO 46, Hq Sixth Army, 30 January, attached the 44<sup>th</sup> (minus C Company) to the First Cavalry Division. GO Number 13, Headquarters Sixth Army, 5

February relieved 44<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion from 13<sup>th</sup> Armored Group and attached it to XIV Corps as of 31 January 1945. Assignment Order No. 6, received 18 February 1945, Headquarters XIV Corps, 18 February 1945, effective 31 January 1945, attached 44<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion (minus C Company) to XIV Corps, and further attached it to the First Cavalry Division.

Letter, Hq, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division, 31 January 1945, Subject: Organization of Reinforced Motorized Squadron, attached companies A and B to 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division Brigade Combat Teams and they moved to join these brigades the same day. The battalion (minus A, B and C Companies) reinforced with the 302<sup>nd</sup> Reconnaissance Troop, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry, were assigned the mission of reconnoiter routes of advance to Santa Rosa, destroying all enemy elements, and security all bridges. FO number 4, 44<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion, 31 January 1945 gave details of mission, route, etc and on 31 January 1945 the 44<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion, under the command of Lt Col Tom H Ross, CO, 44<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion, moved to assembly area vicinity of Aliaga, and was ready to start the drive on Manila on 1 February 1945.

During the month of January, company C, 44<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion was attached to the 6<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division and landed on Luzon in the Lingayen Gulf on "S" Day and first elements of the company landed at "H" hour plus 40 minutes. The company or parts of it remained in combat all month. The company took a leading part in the battle of Cabaruan Hills in the vicinity of Cablong and Catablan. Three tanks were lost here in the heavy fighting but all men evacuated safely from tanks. The company was fighting in this area when the month closed.

The only battalion battle casualties for January were in C Company, attached to the 6<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division and consisted of 11 men, all classified as LWA and hospitalized. Of these men, one man (Lee V Willis) died of wounds.

During the month of January, the 44<sup>th</sup> vehicles rolled on paved highways for the first time since leaving the States. On the morning of 18 January 1945, Pfc Roy K Carrington, Headquarters Company, was shot accidentally at San Jacinto, Luzon, P.I. and died at noon the same day.

January strength: 31 officers (minus three); 677 enlisted men (minus 19).

#### FEBRUARY 1945

"The Flying Column" to Manila started on the night of 31 January and morning of 1 February 1945. The battalion and 302<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop, minus Companies A, B and C, under the command of Lt Col Ross, the Battalion CO, executed its assigned mission and entered Santa Rosa. The column proceeded to Gapan led by Co. Ross and Capt Kudrle, Battalion S-1. In Gapan they met heavy automatic weapons fire and the battalion CO was killed and the S-1 seriously wounded. Major William W Barksdale, Executive Officer, assumed command of the battalion. During that same day, Company B, under the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade Combat Team, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division, secured the river crossing at Cabanatuan and protected the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade Combat Team crossing. The company engaged in heavy street fighting and inflicted numerous casualties and destroyed many prepared enemy positions.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade Combat Team left Guimba on 1 February and the evening found them bivouacked in the vicinity of Cabanatuan. During this march Lt Frederick (then Staff Sergeant) led his platoon one mile east of Cebu and coming across 200 Japs in column, killed 150 and wounded others. A small amount of equipment was also destroyed.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of February another lightning march through Santa Rosa to Baliug was completed. The battalion (less Companies A, B and C) plus 302<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop, on February 2<sup>nd</sup> made a night march through the hills following the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade Combat Team Flying Column and arrived at Baliug.

The next day saw the continuation of the march into Manila. Company B secured the river crossing at Santa Maria. The tanks successfully destroyed vehicles and anti-tank guns and enemy strong points at Santa Maria and Novaliches. Company A left Baliug as the point of the 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry drive toward Santa Maria. In Bustas they encountered heavy sniper fire. The company proceeded to Angat where it encountered mortar and heavy machine gun fire. A bad bridge and no available ford caused the company to return to Bustas and they then proceeded to Pandii for the night where they joined with the 44<sup>th</sup> (less B and C companies).

At 1730 on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February, Company B, the leading element of the "Flying Column," entered Manila. The company proceeded immediately to Santo Tomas University internment camp despite heavy street fight. Tanks knocked down the gates to the internment camp, permitting the entry of 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division troop and the liberation of the internees. The 1st Platoon, Company B, continued fighting after the entry into the internment camp and proceeded to the Malacanan Palace (President's Palace) which it surrounded and guarded for the night of 3-4 February 1945.

At 0800 on 4 February 1945 the platoon moved to the Far Eastern University building where it neutralized Jap positions. The tanks had a variety of targets at the Palace including barges. Two were sunk costing the enemy an estimated 230 casualties.

The remainder of the battalion (less C and B Companies) had arrived at Novaliches and was given the mission of leading other elements of the 1st Cavalry Division drive on Manila set for the following day.

Meanwhile, the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> platoons, Company A, made a sniper sweep south of Pandii destroying Jap light and heavy machine guns and some Japs. They then joined the battalion at Novaliches. The battalion (less C and B companies) crossed the ford south of Novaliches at 0730 on the 5<sup>th</sup> of February. Light resistance was encountered until arrival at the Grace Park area. Resistance became heavier there and tanks were handicapped because they could not get off the road due to rice paddies. Here the column halted and intense enemy fire destroyed one M-8 and two jeeps. Another M-8 was damaged (these were not battalion equipment). Cavalry units later found 5-47mm anti-tank guns which had been neutralized by two mortars and two tanks. The march resumed, reaching the detrucking area without further incident.

On the 6<sup>th</sup> of February 1945 all units of the battalion except B Company passed to battalion control per VCOG, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry, for maintenance and reorganization in preparation for new missions. The battalion set up a defensive position at the railroad station near the race track. Company B, however, was not relieved from its mission so it did not rejoin the battalion.

On the next day the battalion moved to an area near the Grace Park air strip. At 0800 on 7 February 1945, one platoon of Company B was ordered to the 37<sup>th</sup> Division to sweep the eastern suburbs, continue south and advance west to the Pasig River. This platoon had had no time to perform maintenance. The platoon secured the Brigade assembly area without the aid of infantry and moved through Rosario Heights to secure the Manila Reservoir. Heavy resistance was encountered from 20mm and 5 inch naval guns and grenadiers with mines and Molotov Cocktails. The tanks destroyed pillboxes and bunkers and reached the reservoir but were forced to withdraw. Five tanks attempted to reach the reservoir along Balite Drive and gained a position within 500 yards of the objective. Heavy fire was encountered from two 5" naval guns and the tanks ran into mine fields and encountered many grenadiers. Three of the tanks were destroyed and the other two damaged. The two 5" guns were knocked out. All this action took place without the aid of dismounted troops. On the 8<sup>th</sup> of February 1945 at 0800 six B Company tanks moved to the reservoir but were forced to withdraw as Jap suicide squads attacked the tanks with Molotov Cocktails. At 1330 tanks with front troops reached the reservoir and secured it at 1500.

Company A on the 7<sup>th</sup> of February 1945 had joined Company D in the vicinity of the Society of the Divine Word. On \_\_ February 1945 the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon, Company A, moving on Gilmore Avenue, received four rounds of artillery fire on the lead tank from an enemy 5" naval gun. The gun and crew were knocked out by 75mm fire. The tanks advanced, neutralized bunkers and other positions. Heavy mine fields were encountered and one tank was lost when it hit a Jap naval depth bomb. There were 154 of these on the road. On the 9<sup>th</sup> the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon, Company A, left on an advance to the Pasig River. After blowing up two roadblocks, the river was reached.

On 9 February 1945 the battalion, per VCOG, 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade Combat Team, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division, was ordered to withdraw to Grace Park area for maintenance and to prepare for further missions. Two platoons of Company D were attached to the 1<sup>st</sup> Squadron of the 8<sup>th</sup> Cavalry (FO 25, Hqs 1st Cavalry Division) to support move south, southwest to Pasig River.

On 13 February 1945 Company B was attached to 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade Combat Team, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division and attached to the 12<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment. Company D supported the 1<sup>st</sup> Squadron, 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry in their advance to Fort McKinley. The company less one platoon encountered heavy automatic weapon and sniper fire from prepared positions. The 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon moved across Taft Avenue and attacked enemy positions in the LaSalle University Building, ballpark and gym. The advance was slow because of mined streets and because thick walls protected the enemy.

Company B with the 1<sup>st</sup> Squadron, 12<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, in the meantime moved forth along the beach to Fort San Antonio and found it unoccupied. They were held up at Dewey Boulevard and not allowed to advance. The company went into an assembly area on the beach in the vicinity of Fort San Antonio for maintenance and reorganization. On the 19<sup>th</sup> of February 1945 the company advanced along Dewey Boulevard making contact with the enemy at the High Commissioner's Building. The company engaged in heavy street fighting and shelled the building and hotel. Two tanks were lost, one by anti-tank fire and one by fire. On the next day the company advanced to the Army and Navy Club, knocking out two 40 foot concrete bunkers and pillboxes. The third platoon lost one tank when it pulled up to a building supposedly occupied by friendly troops and received two satchel charges. The company continued shelling the Manila Hotel, the University Hall and the Observatory building until it was relieved and assembled in the battalion area on 22 February 1945.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of February 1945 the Headquarters Company Tank Platoon was attached to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade Combat Team, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division and set up a roadblock one half mile northeast of Taytag on the Taytag-Antipolo road. The platoon remained with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade until the end of the month.

Company A had been attached to the 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division on 13 February 1945. From the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 22<sup>nd</sup> the company supported the 19<sup>th</sup> Regimental Combat Team in operations in the vicinity of Fork McKinley and in other areas. During this period the company lost one tank to 47mm anti-tank fire, one tank damaged in gun tube by 20mm fire, and two tanks damaged by land mines. On 23 February 1945 the company assembled at Las Pinas, Luzon, P.I. for maintenance and reorganization and remained there until the end of the month.

On the 28<sup>th</sup> of February 1945 the battalion less Companies A and C and Headquarters Company Tank Platoon was bivouacked at Quezon City near Manila, P.I.

During the month of February Company C continued to be attached to the Sixth Infantry Division, operating in the Munoz-San Jose area.

In the fighting in this area, the company ran into one of the strongest defensive positions on Luzon. One night during the month the company was attacked by a Jap armored column attempting to move from Munoz to San Jose. The company completely destroyed the column during a night battle and suffered only one man killed in action and nine wounded. During the month the company was credited with inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy. A minimum of 650 Japs were killed and equipment destroyed included 15 medium tanks, one light tank, four prime movers, five trucks, one 105mm gun, nine 47mm anti-tank guns, approximately 35 machine guns and other miscellaneous equipment. One tank was lost during this period.

On February 25 the company moved with the Sixth Division to the Novaliches Watershed area and supported the 63<sup>rd</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Infantry in mopping up this area.

The company was in combat during the entire month and this made 51 consecutive days of combat since the organization landed on Luzon on 9 January 1945.

During this month the battalion was engaged in some of the heaviest fighting in the Pacific Theatre and this was the first time the battalion had been used to spearhead a flying column. Nearly all elements took part in some action. The month saw the highest number of casualties of personnel and equipment since the battalion entered combat. These included Company C and were as follows: KIA 13; SAW 5; SIA 1; MIA 1; LWA 33; LWA not hospitalized 39; LIA 10; LIA not hospitalized 4. Total is 106 casualties. See separate sheet showing accumulative list of casualties. Entire battalion vehicular casualties during the month were one jeep and 90 tanks destroyed and numerous tanks damaged by enemy action. Confirmed figures showed 3882 minimum Jap casualties inflicted by the 44<sup>th</sup> during the month. In addition, many light machine guns, heavy machine guns, 37mm, 47mm, 5" naval guns, and a large number of bunkers and pillboxes were destroyed. Also destroyed were seven barges loaded with personnel and equipment and over 30 enemy vehicles.

During the month of February two men died of wounds and one man died of Methanol poisoning. A Silver Star was awarded posthumously to Lt Col Ross, Battalion Commander and Bronze Stars were awarded to 1<sup>st</sup> Lt Kenneth J MacDonald, Company A; Staff Sergeant Melvin E Barber, Company A; and Sergeant John T DiPasquale, Headquarters Company. Six enlisted men were promoted to 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenants with date of rank as of February 22<sup>nd</sup>. They were: S/Sgt Melvin Barber, S/Sgt Cary A Everett, S/Sgt Samuel R Frederick, S/Sgt Leo R French, S/Sgt James A Savadge and Sgt Samuel H Pedley.

The entire battalion was awarded battle participation credit for the New Guinea Campaign by G.O. 26, Hqs USAFFE, 11 Feb 45. The majority of the personnel of the battalion was awarded the Philippine Liberation Ribbon. This ribbon was authorized by G.O. 6, Commonwealth of the Philippines, Army Hqs, APO 501, 230 December 1944 and authorized for wear by U.S. Army troops by G.O. 23, Hqs, USAFFE, 5 February 1945. Bronze stars to be affixed to the ribbon were also authorized for fulfillment of certain conditions. Authorization orders attached in separate file.

February strength: 35 officers (plus 4); 627 enlisted men (minus 50).

Note: A copy or true extract copy of the orders awarding Purple Hearts and other awards are attached hereto in a separate file.

### MARCH 1945

The first of March found the battalion (less Hq. Co. Assault Gun Platoon, Companies A and C) bivouacked at Quezon City, Manila, P.I. The Assault Gun Platoon was still with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade Combat Team, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division, Company A with the 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division, and Company C with the Sixth Infantry Division. During the first three days the Assault Gun Platoon attached to the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment set up roadblocks on the road to Antipole one half mile east of Taytag. On 4 March 1945, in

offensive action, the Assault Gun lost two tanks. Moving up one and one-half mile northwest of Taytay, the tanks drew 37mm anti-tank fire which was returned. A Jap with a satchel charge blew off the track of one of the tanks and it was abandoned. A direct hit on the turret of the other tank killed the tank commander and the tank was set on fire by the Japs throwing white phosphorous. They also continued to fire on the abandoned tank. Nine men were either wounded or suffered burns. The offensive action continued and on the following day the tanks blew up bunkers and caves. On 9 March 1945 another tank was lost when it was blown up by a mine. It was abandoned and caught fire with the ammunition exploding. The platoon continued fighting until 1630, 11 March, when it returned to the battalion area per Operation Memorandum No. 8, Headquarters 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry, 10 March 1945.

On 3 March the battalion (less A and C Companies and Assault Gun Platoon) was designated as Division Reserve and Companies D and B alerted for movement within six hours' notice, but they were never called out.

On 2 March 1945 the 603<sup>rd</sup> Tank Company was attached for rations and assistance in maintenance work for a period of about two weeks.

Field Order No. 9, CG, XIV Corps, 11 March, put the 44<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion (less A and C Companies) as Corps reserve and on 15 March 1945 the battalion moved near Corps Headquarters vicinity of Canlubang, Laguna Province. Here Operations Memorandum, Headquarters XIV Corps dated 16 March ordered the 44<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion to make area reconnaissance in assigned area and destroy enemy therein. Road patrols were conducted twice daily but no enemy was contacted and the patrols were discontinued 31 March 1945.

In the meantime Company A completed its present mission with the 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division by firing area fire on 3 March but stayed in the Division area. On 20 March one platoon, Company A, in support of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 158<sup>th</sup> Regimental combat team, advanced twice in the vicinity of Alitagtag but were forced to withdraw because of intense enemy artillery and mortar fire and direct fire from medium caliber guns. The following day the platoon knocked out four pillboxes and killed 25 Japs. An inspection of Company A tanks on 26 March showed the need of 19 new engines and 16 sets of tracks. In spite of this they again supported Company G, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Para-Glider regiment of the 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division. One platoon destroyed pillboxes on the drive into Dita and another platoon fired area fire on southeast side of Mt Macolod, destroying 12 pillboxes, one ammunition dump and one machine. This area fire on Mt Macolod was continued the next day.

On 29 March, by VCOG, XIV Corps, Company B and Mortar Platoon, Headquarters Company were alerted but never moved out.

On 25 March the battalion S-3 visited G-3, 43<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division in regards to returning Company C to battalion control. This action was recommended by XIV Corps to Sixth Army. Company C was to move in the near future to Canlubang area and to pass from control of XI Corps to XIV Corps on order CG, XI Corps. The company at the beginning of the month until the 15<sup>th</sup> continued in support of the

Sixth Infantry Division in its drive in the Marikina Valley area. Two platoons fired indirect fire in this section. On 16 March the company moved to Antipolo and was attached to the 43<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division where it supported the 103<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Regiment in its move on Tereso and in its advance on New Borebaso. On 23<sup>rd</sup> March it was released from attachment to the 43<sup>rd</sup> Infantry and attached to the 754<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion and moved to Quezon City where the 44<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion had been bivouacked for a time. During the month the company completed 77 days of consecutive combat duty which is believed to be a record for armored units in the Southwest Pacific.

Total battalion casualties for the month were KIA one; SWA one; LWA eight; LWA not hospitalized, two; LIA three; and LIA not hospitalized, three. See attached accumulative list for complete information on casualties. One man died of wounds and on 1 March two men died of methanol poisoning. Vehicular casualties were three tanks of Assault Gun Platoon of Headquarters Company.

During March the battalion received a letter of thanks and gratitude from the internees of Santa Tomas University for the part the 44<sup>th</sup> played in their liberation. On 12 March a program at the University honored the 44<sup>th</sup> along with the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division and the 37<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. As a small token of appreciation, loving cups were presented to the three units and on the cup of the 44<sup>th</sup> was inscribed: "44<sup>TH</sup> TANK BATTALION IN HEARTFELT GRATITUDE FOR YOUR HEROIC RESCUE OF US SANTO TOMAS INTERNEES FEBRUARY 3, 1945, MANILA, PHILIPPINE ISLANDS. AWARDED TO THE FIRST TROOPS TO ENTER SANTO TOMAS, COMPANY B, 44<sup>TH</sup> TANK BATTALION." On March 14, Major Barksdale, who as commander of the 44<sup>th</sup> accepted the cup, presented it to Company B in an impressive ceremony in the battalion area. It was accepted on behalf of the company by Captain Jesse L Walters, its commanding officer, who stated that the credit was due to the officers and enlisted men of the company. A number of internees were present at the presentation and Earl Carrol, chairman of the Santo Tomas Internees, said, "The liberation was the greatest event in our lives." The letter and pictures of the presentation to Company B are attached in separate file.

During the month the battalion became eligible for its second Overseas Service Bar when it completed one year's service overseas on 21 March 1945.

On Special Order No. 42, Headquarters 12<sup>th</sup> Replacement Depot, dated 16 March 1945, the battalion was assigned three officers and 29 enlisted men as replacements. These men arrived on 22 March and were assigned to the various companies.

In a formal ceremony on 20 March 1945. Major General O. W. Griswold, Commanding General, XIV Corps personally presented Silver and Bronze Star Medals to 11 men of the battalion who were awarded the medals by the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division. The Silver Star Medal was awarded to Lt Burton E Howard, Company B (posthumously); Pfc Gilbert D Buyer, Company B; 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt (then S/Sgt) Leo R French, Company D; and 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt (then Sgt) Samuel H Pedley. Bronze Star Medals were awarded to Cpl Peter S Kristof, Medical Detachment; Pfc John F Cavey, Service Company; Pfc Frederick L King Sr, Medical Detachment; Pfc Lawrence Komoll, Service Company; Tec 5 Alexander Okemah, Medical Detachment; Tec 5 William R Price, Medical Detachment; 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt (then S/Sgt) James A Savadge, Service Company;

Tec 4 Alfonso Trujillo, Company B; 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt (then S/Sgt) Mervin D Herndon, Company B; Tec 5 Robert C Jenkins, Company B; 1<sup>st</sup> Lt Donald J MacDonald, Company B; Tec 4 Clarence Ferguson, Company A; and Pfc Joseph E Lawton, Company A. Following the presentation the troops passed in review before General Griswold and staff, participating officers of the 44<sup>th</sup>, and the men who were awarded the medals. The 131<sup>st</sup> Army Ground Force Band played for the occasion.

The following enlisted men were commissioned 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenants during the month, with date of rank as shown. 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt Kenneth W Lafont, 1 March 1945; S/Sgt Mervin D Herndon, 7 March 1945; Sgt Donald Rowley, 9 March 1945; Sgt Warren C Horton, 10 March 1945; and Sgt Charles H Wootton, 10 March 1945.

Company A received a commendation dated 25 March 1945 from the 158<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment with commendatory remarks by commanding officer, 158<sup>th</sup> Regimental Combat Team and the commanding general, 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division, in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> indorsements.

On 13 March the battalion received a letter of commendation from the commanding general, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division, for its outstanding work in the Manila Drive and in the fighting of the taking of Manila itself. Both these commendations are attached in separate file.

The battalion (less Companies A and C) was bivouacked in the vicinity of Canlubang, Laguna Province at the end of the month. At this area Special Service obtained a movie projector for the battalion and movies were shown three times a week. A softball league was started and a diamond constructed in the battalion area. A swimming pool was also available in the near vicinity. The battalion bivouac was a former residential area connected with the nearby large sugar refining plant and contained a water tower and pipelines which were utilized by the battalion to good advantage in its showers and in the washing of mess equipment.

March strength: 45 officers (plus 10); 655 enlisted men (plus 28).

#### APRIL 1945

On April 1, 1945 the battalion (less C and A Companies) was alerted for movement to a new area in the vicinity of Santo Tomas, Batangas Province, Luzon, Philippine Islands, and on 3 April moved from Canlubang to this area. Effective 2 April 1945 at 1200, Company C, assigned to Sixth Army, was relieved from attachment from XI Corps and attached to XIV Corps per message, Commanding General, Sixth Army. On this same day Company C moved from Quezon City to the battalion area vicinity of Santo Tomas and came under battalion control for the first time since June 23, 1944 when they left the battalion at Finschhafen, New Guinea for Hollandia, Tome, and Arara, Dutch New Guinea.

A warning order from G-3, XIV Corps alerted Company D and Headquarters Mortar Platoon on 3 April 1945 and the following day, after proper road and bridge reconnaissance, they closed in the vicinity of San Rafael at 1500 when they were attached to the 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division. The battalion executive officer was to act as liaison with the 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment. On 5 April after a

road reconnaissance from Santo Tomas to Santa Cruz by the Reconnaissance Platoon, Headquarters Company, Company D, with the Mortar Platoon moved from San Rafael through Pila to Santa Cruz and two platoons proceeded to Pagsanjan which was occupied with four tanks and mortar platoon against small arms and automatic weapons fire. The following day the Mortar Platoon fired 242 rounds of 81mm from Pagsanjan on nearby ridge with undetermined results. On 10 April Company D tanks, supporting A and C troops, 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry advanced toward Mauban and took the town and bridges against light resistance. The Mortar Platoon fired on prepared positions in this action. The company plus the Mortar Platoon moved to Antimonan from Luisiana and were not employed because of impassable roads. On 20 April D Company (minus one platoon) moved across the Calauag River and closed in the assembly area with the 1<sup>st</sup> Squadron, 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment. On 27 April Company D was given the mission of guarding the bridges from Calauag to Guinayangan. On 30 April they patrolled the road in the Flat Top area where they picked up one PW.

At the beginning of the month Company A was still attached to the 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division and supported elements of that division during the first eight days of April. One section attached to Company G, 187<sup>th</sup> Para-Glider regiment attacked towards Mt Dalaga. Enemy machine guns and pillboxes were destroyed along with one ammunition dump. Besides this the company hauled food and ammunition to forward troops and evacuated wounded men. Direct and indirect fire were also placed on Mt Macolod.

On April 5 Company B left the battalion area at Santo Tomas to relieve A Company and arrived at Lipa at 1415, and on 8 April one platoon relieved the 2<sup>nd</sup> platoon of A Company which returned to the battalion area at Santo Tomas. The balance of Company A moved from Tagaytay to the battalion bivouac area (rear) at vicinity Canlubang on 16 April 1945. B Company was not employed until 12 and 13 April when they fired on Mt Macolod in support of infantry.

Onn 18 April, B Company led the attack on Brownie Ridge, Mt Macolod, in what proved to be one of the bitterest little battles on the island. Brownie Ridge was a natural defensive position for the enemy and this natural defense of caves and ridges and ravines was augmented by pillboxes, bunkers, trenches and foxholes in depth – in fact, covering the entire ridge. Previous attempts by infantry, after vigorous and concentrated support by air bombardment and artillery, had been repulsed. A tank-infantry-artillery team attack was then planned. In order to be able to use the B Company tanks it was necessary for the combat engineers to build a road through masses of trees and also to fill in a 100-foot ravine so the tanks could approach the first of four “steps” that led to the top of Brownie Ridge. This the engineers did courageously in spite of sniper and mortar fire, and in a few days had the road and fill-in complete.

At 0630, after a heavy artillery barrage, the tanks started up the slope to the first plateau. The first tank reached it and immediately machine gun and mortar fire was directed at it. Another tank reached the ridge and another, all of them answering and soon silencing the Jap guns that could be located. Infantry followed and wiped out small pockets of enemy, some as close as 25 yards from the

tanks. For four complete days of continuous fighting the tanks and infantry advanced from position to position, finally reaching and controlling the ridge. On the second day of the attack, seven tanks fired 313 rounds of 75mm and 10,000 rounds of .30 caliber in leading and supporting the 187<sup>th</sup> Para-Glider Regiment. Every possible position that could hold a Jap or a number of Japs was shelled or sprayed with machine gun fire, thus enabling the infantry to advance and clean up.

The natural and man-made defenses, and the determination of a fanatical enemy to hold these positions, gave the victors a tough fight, but practically all of the 550 Jap defenders were killed. The tankers in leading and supporting the attack suffered one man killed in action and 18 men wounded. U.S. infantry casualties were higher than usual in this bitter fight.

On 27 April the company attacked enemy positions in the Bunsulan Hills, destroying enemy machine guns and some Japs. This fire was continued until 30 April and caves were destroyed as the tanks fired both direct and indirect fire. An occupied roadblock was also destroyed.

During the month the battalion was still considered as Corps Reserve, and on 30 April three tanks with flame throwers were alerted to support the 8<sup>th</sup> Cavalry regiment on call. As the month ended, Headquarters Company and C Company were bivouacked in the vicinity of Santo Tomas, Patangas Province; Service and A Company were in the vicinity of Canlubang; B Company was with the 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division; and D Company was in the Flat Top area with the 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division.

Battalion casualties during the month were as follows: one KIA; one SWA; one LIA; 2 LWA not hospitalized; 7 LIA not hospitalized. The battalion was given battle participation credit for the Bismark Archipelago Campaign (Admiralty Islands) by General Order No. 100, Headquarters, USAFFE, 28 April 1945. (Order attached in separate file.)

Company B was given a letter of commendation by the Commanding General, Eleventh Airborne Division, for their outstanding work in the reduction of the Mt Macolod defenses (copy attached in separate file). Service Company was presented the Award for Meritorious Service by General Order No. 21, XIV Corps dated \_\_\_\_\_. This award was given for superior performance of duty and in part was recognition of the outstanding work done by the company during the Manila Drive and the Battle of Manila itself. Award attached in separate file.

On General Order No. 18, Headquarters XIV Corps, 6 April 1945, Pfc Deno A Tufares, 38533192, Headquarters Company, was awarded a Silver Star Medal. Order and citation attached in separate file.

During the early part of the month, the battalion received Special Order No. 27, Headquarters, USAFFE, dated 30 March 1945, announcing the promotion of Major William W Barksdale, Commanding Officer, to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. This was a battlefield promotion given because of his outstanding leadership of the battalion since the death of its late commander, Lt Col Tom H Ross, who was killed at Gapan on 1 February 1945.

On 22 April the battalion received 16 medium tanks as replacements for those lost during the Luzon campaign.

On 26 April, on verbal order from Colonel Dark, Sixth Army advisor on armor, nine flame throwers were to be installed in medium tanks of this battalion. The flame throwing tanks were to be distributed so each medium tank platoon would have one flame thrower.

April strength: 46 officers (plus 1); 659 enlisted men (plus 4).

Note: A copy, or true extract copy, of the orders awarding Purple Hearts and other awards are attached hereto in a separate file.

#### MAY 1945

The 44<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion had no contact with the enemy during the month of May as all units were reverted to battalion control after the conclusion of the campaign in southern Luzon conducted by the XIV Corps. D Company plus the Mortar Platoon was attached to the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division on May 2 and moved to vicinity of Pagbilao but on May 4 both elements were relieved from attachment per Operations Memorandum # 40, Headquarters 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division, 3 May 1945 and reverted to battalion control and moved to the battalion area at Santo Tomas. May 4 B Company was relieved from attachment from the 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division but remained in assembly area vicinity of Lipa. On May 7 Company B moved to the battalion area at Canlubang. In this area on 9 May details from all companies and numerous PCAU (Philippine Civil Affairs Unit) laborers started construction on a semi-permanent rainy season camp. Bamboo raised floors, sides and frames were erected for the tents of the individuals, mess halls, orderly and supply tents. On 18 May the battalion, less A, B and Service Companies which were already there, moved to the area at Canlubang. The battalion was still considered as Corps Reserve and assigned to tactical Group B for security of Calamba Sugar Central Area. On 19 May on XIV Corps order, 100 men and two officers with a ¾-ton and peep, and armed with nine machine guns and individual weapons, set up the perimeter defense for Corps and remained there for one week.

On phone call from XIV Corps, the Reconnaissance Platoon on 29 May investigated a reported three to ten Japs in the vicinity of Santo Rosa-Binan. Filipino guerrillas found one dead Jap but no contact was made with the enemy after a thorough search by guerrillas and reconnaissance men.

On 30 May one officer and eight enlisted men formed a firing detail for the Memorial Day Ceremony at the Batangas Military Cemetery.

There were no battalion casualties during the month. The fighting of the 44<sup>th</sup> during the Luzon campaign resulted in the following total casualties: 15 killed in action; four died of wounds; seven seriously wounded in action; one seriously injured in action; one missing in action; 52 light wounds in action hospitalized; 43 light wounds in action not hospitalized; 14 light injuries in action hospitalized; 14

light injuries in action not hospitalized. Total casualties for January, February, March and April (Luzon campaign) 147 (DOW included in injured and wounded). This is approximately 215 casualties.

Vehicular casualties for the Luzon campaign due directly to enemy action totaled 15 tanks and two ¼-ton peeps. One halftrack was damaged when a tank backed into it while maneuvering against the enemy, and it was destroyed to keep it from falling into enemy hands. In the landing at Lingayen Gulf, one light tank stalled in the water and was rendered unusable. One halftrack overturned due to the heavy seas when unloading and was also rendered inoperative. One medium tank was accidentally destroyed at ordnance by a gasoline fire in the engine compartment which ignited the ammunition. One medium tank was cannibalized at Grace Park Airstrip and Company C turned in two tanks completely worn out.

During the month five more tanks were received by the battalion and the work of installing nine flame throwers in tanks was completed.

On 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division General Order # 86, 3 May 1945, Bronze Star Medals were awarded to Howard E Emmett, 36739099; Monroe T Gann, 38230182; Robert F Gernstner, 37345547; Roy J Jones, 39400387; and Wilbern Peden, 38533174, all of Company A, 44<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion.

May strength: 44 officers (minus 2); 666 enlisted men (plus 7).

#### JUNE 1945

During the month of June the 44<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion remained in its semi-permanent rainy season camp vicinity of Canlubang and Calamba Sugar Central Area and was still considered as Corps reserve.

On 7 June 1945 the battalion received six additional tanks. On 9 June 1945, 100 men and two officers, with a ¾-ton and peep armed with nine machine guns and individual weapons, again formed the XIV Corps perimeter defense for a period of one week.

On 11 June 1945 the battalion started phase I of training as outlined in TM #25, Headquarters Sixth Army.

At 0001, 15 June 1945 on F.O. #16, Headquarters XIV Corps, 18 June 1945, the battalion passed from control of XIV Corps to control of Commanding General, XI Corps. F.O. #20, XI Corps, 14 June and Letter, Sixth Army, 13 June, confirmed this.

General Order #40, Headquarters 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, 7 June 1945, awarded a Silver Star Medal to Captain Julian P Van Winkle, Company A.

General Order #42, Headquarters XIV Corps, 19 June 1945, awarded Silver Star Medals to 1<sup>st</sup> Lt Elmer F Balogh, Company C; Pfc Paul T Burton, Headquarters Company; Sgt Henry F Hignight, Company C; 1<sup>st</sup> Lt Milton B Stern (formerly Company C, returned to States); Technician Fifth Grade John P Thompson, Company D; and 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt (then Sgt) Charles H Wootton, Company C. The same order awarded

Bronze Star Medals to Lt Col William W Barksdale, Battalion Commander; Staff Sgt Edward L Lawrence, Company C; and Sgt Jacob Lettie, Company C.

General Order #41, Headquarters XIV Corps, 19 June 1945, awarded Bronze Star Medals to 1<sup>st</sup> Lt Elmer F Balogh, Cpl Herschel W Dillard, Tec 4 Ervine W Eastman, Sgt Henry F Hignight, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt (then Sgt) Warren C Horton, Tec 5 Peter E Lareo, Sgt John D Lathrop, Pfc Edward J Malinowski, Sgt Gordon K Smith, and Tec 4 Jesse L Viveretta, all of Company C.

General Order #53, Headquarters 38<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, 29 June 1945, awarded a Bronze Star Medal to Sgt Thomas D Dugan, 17176650 (assigned to us but never joined – hospitalized).

Seventeen of these men and ten others who had been awarded medals in previous months were presented with the medals on 27 June 1945 at a formal review held at the 44<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion Stadium. Colonel Joseph L Dark, Commander of the 13<sup>th</sup> Armored Group, made the presentations at the impressive ceremony. The 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division band played for the occasion. 1<sup>st</sup> Lt Elmer F Balogh and Sgt Henry F Hignight are the first members of this organization to be awarded both the Bronze and Silver Star Medals. These latest awards brought the number of medals presented to this battalion to 48. Of these, 13 are Silver Star Medals and 35 are Bronze Star Medals. In addition, 148 Purple Hearts have been awarded to men of this battalion.

A commendation was received from the Commanding General, XIV Corps, 20 June 1945, for exemplary service rendered the XIV Corps by this unit while serving under that higher headquarters.

On order from XI Corps, one officer and 20 enlisted men were detailed for XI Corps M.P. road patrols which started 18 June and continued throughout the month. The battalion also supplied two peeps.

Special Order #140, Headquarters 5<sup>th</sup> Replacement Depot, 6 June 1945, assigned 21 enlisted men to the battalion and Special Order #156, 5<sup>th</sup> Replacement Depot, 22 June 1945, assigned two enlisted men to the battalion and these 23 men were received and assigned to various companies.

Field Order #20, Headquarters XIV Corps, 28 June, withdrew specified units from combat in preparation for future operations and the 44<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion was included in this group.

On 30 June several men of the Reconnaissance Platoon went out to investigate reported Japs seven miles southeast of the battalion area but no contact was made.

The first men of the battalion to leave for the States via the Adjusted Service Rating system left during the month of June and were seven in number. In addition, 10 men who were eligible for discharge under Army authorization of discharge of men 40 years of age and over also left during the month.

During the month approximately 125 men were working on Army institute courses and classes with instructors were arranged for many. Hardball, softball, swimming, movies and stage shows continued to fill the spare hours of the tankers. A battalion recreation hall was also started by Special Service. Twenty-four passes to Manila were still being issued to the enlisted men and trucks provided for transportation.

June strength: 41 officers (minus 3); 659 enlisted men (minus 7).

Note: All orders awarding medals attached in separate file.

#### JULY 1945

During the month of July the 44<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion remained in its semi-permanent rainy season camp vicinity of Canlubang and Calamba Sugar Central Area under control of Commanding General, XI Corps.

Under Sixth Army orders the battalion continued its daily training program which included firing of small arms, demolitions, direct and indirect fire, tank-infantry teams, flame throwing with tanks, field problems and all other allied training of armored groups.

The following replacements were received during the month: Special Order #169, Headquarters 5<sup>th</sup> Replacement Depot, APO 711, 7 July 1945, assigned 84 enlisted men to the battalion. Special Order #175, Headquarters, 5<sup>th</sup> Replacement Depot, APO 711, 11 July 1945, assigned 15 enlisted men to the battalion. Special Order #13, Headquarters 29<sup>th</sup> Replacement Depot, APO 238, 15 July 1945, assigned 49 enlisted men to the battalion. Special Order #20, 29<sup>th</sup> Replacement Depot, APO 238, 20 July 1945, assigned 53 enlisted men to the battalion. Special Order #26, 29<sup>th</sup> Replacement Depot, APO 238, 26 July 1945, assigned 11 enlisted men to the battalion.

By VCOG, Sixth Army, 44<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion transferred 23 enlisted men to the 637<sup>th</sup> Tank Destroyer Battalion on Special Order #64, 21 July 1945 and 637<sup>th</sup> Tank Destroyer Battalion transferred 15 enlisted men to the 44<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion on Special Order #71, Headquarters 637<sup>th</sup> Tank Destroyer Battalion, 25 July 1945.

On 26 July 1945 six enlisted men and Lt Col William W Barksdale, Commanding Officer, left on redeployment to the States. Major William P Meredith assumed command.

On 28 July the battalion received six tanks with 105mm guns.

During the month the following men of the battalion were awarded the Bronze Star Medal: Major William P Meredith, 0323047, Battalion Commanding Officer (then executive officer); Captain Jesse L Walters, 01010455, Company B; Captain Grant F Cloud, 01290377, Battalion S-2 (then Company Commander, Company A); Captain Earle M Compton, 01011612, Service Co; Captain Samuel M Hanff, 01010093, Battalion Executive Officer (then Company Commander, Company C); Captain Kenneth L

Holderman, 0446033, D Company; Tec 5 Chester E Jablonski, 33393520, Service Co; Tech Sgt Merle B Jackson, 36038868, Company A; and Tec 4 Henry P Zywicki, 36702577, Service Co.

July strength: 41 officers (no change); 944 enlisted men (plus 185).

Note: All orders awarding medals attached in separate file.