

ANTI-TANK COMPANY, 442ND RCT
By Tak Hattori

Many people, even within our own Combat Team do not know about Anti-tank Co. *unique* history both within and outside of the Combat Team.

Our days at Camp Shelby was much like all other members of the 442nd who trained there. We did the close order drills, the long marches, rifle and machine gun ranges, mortars and bazookas and all the rest including our 37MM anti-tank guns. Later we traded them in for the larger 57MM anti-tank guns.

Our "*uniqueness*" came after we were in combat with the 442nd about 3 weeks. We were given orders to withdraw and move to an area near Rome for Glider training. We were to be attached to the 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment. We trained in loading and lashing the British 6-pound anti-tank guns (similar to our 57MM), into the gliders. Loading and lashing Jeeps, Jeep trailers filled with mortar and high explosive ammo, and all our equipment needed for combat after we landed in enemy territory. We took training flights with our equipment loaded in the gliders and towed aloft with C-47s. Every member of the Anti-tank Company became qualified glider borne troops and entitled to wear the Glider Badge.

With our glider training completed, we were moved to an airfield to prepare for the invasion of Southern France. The plan was to have the paratroopers jump in and secure landing fields for the gliders. We would fly in with anti-tank guns, jeeps, troops, ammo and supplies. The paratroopers took off in the early morning light, and at 1600 hours the first of our 44 gliders assigned to us, took off without a mishap. The flight across the Ligurian Sea to the coast of France was uneventful, but confusion at the landing sight brought some surprises. The gliders were supposed to come in 3 waves, but all three waves arrived at once. Some flak was encountered as we arrived over the French coast, so the tow planes cut us loose at 3000 feet instead of 300 feet as was planned. That put the gliders in jeopardy from flak by being in the air longer. One of our gliders got some tail damage from flak, but landed safely. So pilots were heading down fast to secure landing sights before someone else beat them to it. Confusion reigned as gliders collided trying to land in the same spot, some had to find another spot at the last minute when someone beat him to his spot. With no motor to apply power and fly around, they only had one chance, and if they blew it they were in deep trouble. Very few gliders landed without damage, and many were totaled with fatalities. Nine Anti-tankers were injured, six were sent to the 517th Regimental Aid for treatment. The Anti-tank Company gave the 517th protection against tank and armored vehicles as they fought their way to the French-Italian border.

On October 20th, Anti-tank Company was released from the 517th. We withdrew and moved to a bivouac area on the outskirts of Nice. After a 2 days rest, we convoyed north to rejoin the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. Upon arrival, we were immediately committed to action. Due to the terrain where enemy tanks were unlikely, we were used as utility troops. Most of us were used as litter bearers, ammo and supply carriers, and front line riflemen. This is where our company suffered most of our casualties and KIAs. We had more casualties here than all of the other campaigns combined. Two enlisted men and one officer was killed, and 15 were wounded during the 3 weeks in the Vosges.

On November 12th, our Anti-Tank Company was honored as the Color Company at a citations ceremony held near Le Panges, France. Members of our company who served as color guards were S/Sgt. Kaminishi, Sadaoka, Yamane and Sgt. Kokubun. This photo is one of the most widely circulated photos of the 442nd.

After the Vosges campaign, the Combat Team's strength was down to almost half strength. So we were sent to the French Riviera in Southern France to hold the French-Italian border and wait for replacements to bring our strength back to normal. For the Anti-tank Company, this was "old home" where we were returning to many friends and acquaintances of the local citizens. It was while we were in this area that another "first" for the Anti-tank Company made history when members of the first platoon captured a one-man submarine in the bay of Menton. Two privates from our first platoon were looking for enemy movements when they saw what looked like a huge fish or whale entering the bay. Other members of the platoon rushed down with weapons drawn to capture this "fish". The fish turned out to be a one-man submarine. They removed the "bubble" and found a German who was lost and thought he was entering an Italian harbor. He was really puzzled when he saw oriental faces on the soldiers. He could not believe his captures were Americans of Japanese Ancestry.

The 100/442 Combat Team was sent back to Italy to participate in the Spring Offensive and break the Gothic Line that held off two divisions for six months. Again, where the terrain was difficult for tanks to negotiate, our company was used to evacuate the wounded, carry rations and ammunition, sweep the mines, man road blocks and guard the bridges. And where the terrain permitted, we gave our Combat Team anti-tank protection in the event of mechanized enemy attack.

This Anti-tank Company did its job not only at its primary function, but a multi-purpose jack-of- all trades for the Combat Team. We also assisted the 517th Parachute Regiment in the glider invasion of Southern France. We are proud of our record and what we have accomplished to help the war effort during WW-II.

Henry,

This is what I came up with on the Anti-tank story. I concentrated on what our company did that was *unique*, and what most of the other companies are not aware of. That what we did beyond traditional anti-tank duties. I tried not to be too dramatic or boastful, and concentrate on the facts.

If you have anything additional that might be used, please use the space at the end and back of the pages and send it back to me and I will add what you suggest.

5/18 Good send ~~for~~ NISHINARA.