

# PART ONE

## NORMANDY AND FALAISE BATTLES

### THE BUILDUP

At 0130 June 17, 1944 (D plus 11 forward) the Headquarters Company Forward and Company A, 607th Tank Destroyer Battalion, landed on Utah Beach, the beach on the East Coast of the Cherbourg Peninsula of France – Companies B and C were unable to land until June 23 due to the roughness of the weather. After de-waterproofing the vehicles and equipment at St. Germain de Verraville, the Battalion, less Companies B and C, moved up to support the 9th Infantry Division, Company A, with the 2nd Reconnaissance Platoon attached, employed in the vicinity of Canville, and was given the mission of protecting the Division, as it advanced toward Cherbourg, from an attack from the south and southwest. While on this mission Company A captured its and the Battalion's first prisoner. The Battalion CP had moved successively to Ste. Mere Eglise, Pigard, Ste. Sauveur Le Vicomte and Blandamour during the period. Orders were received on June 19th relieving the Battalion from attachment to the VII Corps and the 9th Infantry Division and attaching it to the VIII Corps which faced to the south. Company A was attached to the 82nd A/B Division and the Battalion, less Company A, to the 90th Infantry Division.

Company A joined the 325th Glider Infantry, 82nd Airborne Division, two and one half miles south of Pont l'Abbe and was immediately emplaced to reinforce the divisional antitank defense. The Battalion CP moved to Ste. Colombe and on the next day to Cretteville via Vents and Picauville.

On June 23 Companies B and C landed in three feet of water and de-waterproofed in the vicinity of St. Germain de Verraville. Company B was attached to the 357th Infantry Regiment, 90th Division, joined them in the vicinity of Besneville and went into position at St. Lo d'Ourville. Company C moved to the TD'S secondary mission – that of indirect fire – in the vicinity of Cretteville and fired the first rounds from a 3in. gun of this Battalion on French soil. During the period of June 24 – July 5, they fired 5994 rounds interdicting roads in the enemy's rear areas. The enemy counter-battered several times; the first on June 24, causing no casualties but some damage to materiel.

Company B went into indirect fire positions two miles east of Cretteville in support of the 357th Combat Team on June 30th. Three days later, July 3rd, Company B and Company C each placed one platoon in direct AT support of the 358th Infantry and the 357th Infantry, respectively, while the remainder stayed in general support of the Division Artillery.

The next day all of Company C was placed in direct AT support of the 359th Infantry in the vicinity of Ste. Suzanne. Company A and Company B returned to Battalion control and were placed in general support of the Division Artillery, Company A having been relieved from attachment to the 82nd A/B Division.

The Battalion CP moved from Cretteville to a field one mile south of Pretot on July 5th.

The next day, July 6th, Company B joined the 357th Infantry Regiment at St. Jores and was placed in direct AT support of them. Company A, remaining in general support of the Division Artillery, from Vindefontaine, fired over 3000 rounds during the week into the enemy's rear areas.

During the period of July 7 to 27 the Division advanced very slowly, especially in the areas around Foret de Mont Castre or Hill 122 (where Company C received heavy mortar fire), on the approaches to the island of Seves, and at Beau Coudray.

On July 12, 1st Lt. Raymond P. Nash, 1st Lt. Edmund P. Harrison, S/Sgt. Noriega and Pfc. Spears were ambushed and captured by the Germans while on reconnaissance for gun positions.

Company C's 2nd Platoon being in position north of the Seves River southeast of Gonfreville, on the night of July 20th moved the first and second gun sections into positions to support an infantry attack across the Seves River to the island. The guns were unlimbered from the half tracks and moved by hand to positions well in front of the infantry's front lines. Under the cover of darkness the positions were dug in and camouflaged. At daylight there was to be an infantry attack preceded by a ten minute artillery barrage. Under cover of the artillery fire the three inch guns were to fire direct at the enemy installations in six houses and the surrounding woods located five hundred yards to the front. The attack was postponed 24 hours leaving the guns under direct enemy observation until 0620 July 22nd when the attack was launched as scheduled. The guns expended ammunition as fast as four man crews could put out for ten minutes. Though the infantry attack was temporarily successful, the three inch guns received heavy shelling by enemy mortars and artillery from very short range. For eight hours artillery pounded the guns, the crew members being saved only by their deep foxholes. Heavy casualties were reported to have been inflicted on the enemy by the direct fire. The Germans counterattacked and it was several days before the guns could be withdrawn.

## **THE BREAKTHROUGH**

Due to the bombing from St. Lo to the southwest toward Periers and the exploitation of the breakthrough that was subsequently forced, the enemy withdrew from the Division front on the night of July 27th. Light rearguard action, only, was encountered in the next several days. The 4th Armored Division moved southwest across the Division front to Periers and then south to and beyond St. Sauveur Lendelin on July 28th.

The Battalion moved south to the vicinity of the St. Sauveur Lendelin on the 28th July and assembled one mile east of the town.

During the month of July 15,424 rounds were fired indirect. The Battalion kept units in direct support of the AT defenses of the regiments and also in support of the Division Artillery. Platoons were rotated and the Companies displaced forward with the units they were supporting. All units received heavy enemy fire and suffered casualties.

On August 2nd the Battalion, minus Company A, marched south to the vicinity of St. Hillaire de Haurcouet via Coutances and Avranches. Company A was attached to the 357th Regimental Combat Team and moved to La Mancilliere (six miles northwest of St. Hillaire). The Battalion CP occupied Insigny (three miles northwest of St. Hillaire); Company B moved six miles south of St. Hillaire and Company C went into St. Hillaire.

## **ON TO LE MANS**

A breakthrough to the enemy's rear had been made. The rapid exploitation of it would trap thousands of Germans or make them withdraw across the entire front to their next defense line deep inside of France. Task Force Weaver, consisting of the 357th Infantry Regiment, 712th Tank Battalion, 344th FA, 345th FA, and Company A, 607th TD Battalion was organized and given the mission of securing the crossing of the Mayenne river at Mayenne and then to proceed to Le Mans. Company A, reinforced by the second section of the 2nd Reconnaissance Platoon, was the Battalion's contribution to the Task Force.

On August 5th the Task Force left La Condonniere. The 2nd Platoon of Company A marched with the flank guard through Buais, Fougévalle, Desartines, Goron and Mayenne. Light opposition was encountered at Gorron, but no armor was engaged. Company A, less the 2nd Platoon, marched with the main body and moved through St. Hillaire du Harcouet, Landivy, Ernee and Mayenne, a distance of about 50 miles. One enemy vehicle was destroyed by the 3rd Platoon at Mayenne. The next day, August 6th, the Task Force was ordered to march on Le Mans. Company A, less the 3rd Platoon, marched with one column, the route being Mayenne, Moulay, Commer, Montsurs, St. Suzanne, Viviers, St. Symphorien, Bernay, La Quinte and Le Mans. The 3rd Platoon, marching with the other column proceeded via Avon, Jublains, Evron, St. Suzanne, St. Dennis, Coulons, Charvaun, and Le Mans. No armor was engaged by Company A on this march.

The Battalion, less Company A reinforced, remained with the main body of the Division. However, Company B was attached to the 358th Infantry and Company C to the 359th Infantry throughout the drive. The TD companies supplemented the blocking of side roads leading to the main axis of the advance. A reconnaissance platoon was attached to Company B and a reconnaissance section to Company C. The reconnaissance platoon with Company B, cooperating with the Regimental I and R Platoon, made continuous forward and flank reconnaissance. Company C destroyed two enemy half tracks, the first armored vehicles hit by the Battalion, and killed or wounded four enemy troops at Montsurs. The Battalion CP moved from Isigny to Landivy to La Bigottiere to La Chapelle Rainsouin to La Quinte to the east edge of Le Mans, arriving there on August 8th amid cheering crowds.

Twenty eight prisoners had been taken and several Germans had been killed or wounded by the Battalion. The companies remained in direct anti-tank support of the infantry regiments generally to the north and east of the town.

## **CLOSING THE TRAP**

Pressure by the British had prevented the enemy from standing fast near Falaise. Furthermore, the strong German attack at Mortain was beaten off. Because of these events on August 9th the XV Corps was given the mission of securing Alencon and eventually of joining the forces to the north.

On August 11th Company B was attached to the 358th Infantry and proceeded to secure the Division's left flank from Le Mans to Alencon, which had been taken by the 2nd French Armored Division, to the high ground north and east of the town.

The Battalion less Companies B and C moved north to Bellon and to Danguel, a distance of the 21 miles. On August 13th the 357th Infantry plus attached troops and Company A marched through

Alencon and secured three hills and Foret D'ecoures about six miles northwest of the town. Devastating fire was placed on the enemy in Longueuce. Following the companies, the Battalion CP moved to two miles northwest of Alencon. On August 15th Company B was relieved from attachment to the 358th Infantry and moved to an assembly area in the vicinity of the Battalion CP. On the same day the Battalion, less Company A, moved from the vicinity of Alencon with the 90th Infantry Division, less the 357th Combat Team, to relieve the 5th Armored Division in the general area of Le Bourg, St. Leonard-Exmes-Nonant le Pin-Chaillou. Company A and the 357th Combat Team arrived on August 17th.

The final effort to close the last gap in the Falaise pocket began. Initially, the 359th Infantry, manning the point of the threat where the enemy would try to escape, was reinforced by Company C plus one platoon of Company B. One platoon was placed in the vicinity of Le Bourg St. Leonard, one in the vicinity of Exmes, one at Nonat Le Pin, and one in the vicinity of Croiselles. Company B, less one platoon, and the Battalion CP were in Chaillou.

Company C made first contact with the enemy near Croiselles 0500 August 16th, destroying one half track and setting fire to the second. At 0800 a German infantry attack on Le Bourg St Leonard was partially successful but all the ground and equipment was regained by noon. A subsequent tank supported infantry attack was even more successful, but a determined counterattack nearly completely restored the American position at St. Leonard. During this attack, Lt. Colonel Harold S. Sundt, without regard for his personal safety, showed exceptional diligence in reconnoitering gun positions to best destroy the enemy tanks. At one critical action he personally manned a tank destroyer gun which was directly in the path of an enemy attack, assisting Sgt. Harold W. Scott and Cpl. Orlin L. Shirley, both of Company C. This action greatly assisted in the stopping of the enemy attack and the recapture of the town. This gallant action under enemy fire was an inspiration to both the infantry and tank destroyer personnel and facilitated in closing the gap at Chambois. For their gallantry in action Lt. Colonel Sundt, Sgt. Scott and Cpl. Shirley were awarded the Silver Star Medal. On the same day an enemy attack appeared from the woods near the St Leonard and approached the town. Cpl. Bertram S. Washabaugh and Pfc. Francis L. Hunsicker, both of Company C, upon their own initiative exchanged direct fire with the tank and succeeded in knocking it out of action. This was done in spite of continuous withering fire which had caused the gun crew and other troops in the vicinity to seek shelter. The Silver Star was their award.

On August 17th intense small arms, mortar, artillery and the nebelwerfer fire was received throughout the Le Bourg St Leonard area, extending fifteen hundred yards eastward. Tank fighting also raged in this area, climaxed about 1600 by an attack of six tanks launched eastward along the main road running through of Le Bourg St Leonard and supported by artillery fire. The attack was stopped by M-10 fire of the 773rd TD Battalion before it had reached a field of fire of Company C's guns which were covering that road. Company B relieved Company C platoons at Exmes and Croiselles, permitting Company C to concentrate on the Le Bourg St Leonard fight. Company B was in turn relieved by Company A when the 358th Infantry was shifted to the south and west of Le Bourg St Leonard.

Later in the evening of August 19th Lt. George W. King's platoon of Company C entered Chambois. Feeling very much put out because the other platoons had all the tank shooting to date, he personally requested his platoon, instead of the previously designated platoon, be given this mission. He certainly got all the excitement he had asked for and got two tanks and a very large self repelled gun.

Lt. Richard A. Reynolds placed his 3rd Platoon of Company B in positions from which his three inch guns, by accurate and effective fire, destroyed six tanks in the vicinity of Ste. Eugenie. During the course of action, one gun received direct hostile small arms and artillery fire which could not be

effectively returned from its concealed location, but Lt. Reynolds, with his crew members Sgt. James W. Bowman, Cpl. Russel L. Kunz, T/5 Homer E. Griner, T/5 Orville C. Zinc, Pfc. Harry W. Mowery, Pfc. Paul F. Benito, Pfc. Robert L. Davis, Pvt. Theodore Sekulski and Pvt. Charles W. Sowders, in the face of enemy fire, seized the trails of the gun and pushed it forward by hand to an exposed position one hundred yards from the enemy's line. From this position the gun destroyed an enemy tank, four other vehicles, and an enemy self propelled gun which had prevented the advance of our troops. For their heroic action Lt. Reynolds and all members of the crew received the Silver Star Medal.

On August 20th the enemy furiously endeavored to break out of the trap which had been closed when the Poles reached Chambois. The enemy was stopped dead at the northwest entrance to Chambois. In the 358th Infantry area, Company B, in position at Bon Menil, and Ste. Eugenie, continued to give excellent results with flanking fire.

On August 21st the operations consisted in mainly rounding up stray Germans who wanted desperately to give up. The trap had succeeded in destroying or capturing most of the German Seventh Army [See Fig. 1]. The remarkable record of the Jerry equipment destroyed during the battles of Le Bourg St. Leonard-Chambois by this Battalion can best be shown by figures. [Figure 2-1]

	Co. A	Co. B	Co. C	Total
Tanks, Mark and IV and V.	0	27	7	34
Self propelled guns	0	20	3	23
Armored half tracks	0	8	1	9
General purpose vehicles	6	54	4	64
Horse drawn Artillery Pieces	0	16	0	16
Total of all types	6	125	15	146
Prisoners captured 519.				

The Battalion CP had moved to Nonant Le Pin, one mile southeast of Le Bourg St. Leonard and back to a battalion assembly area at Nonant Le Pin. Here the Battalion remained in assembly until August 26th.

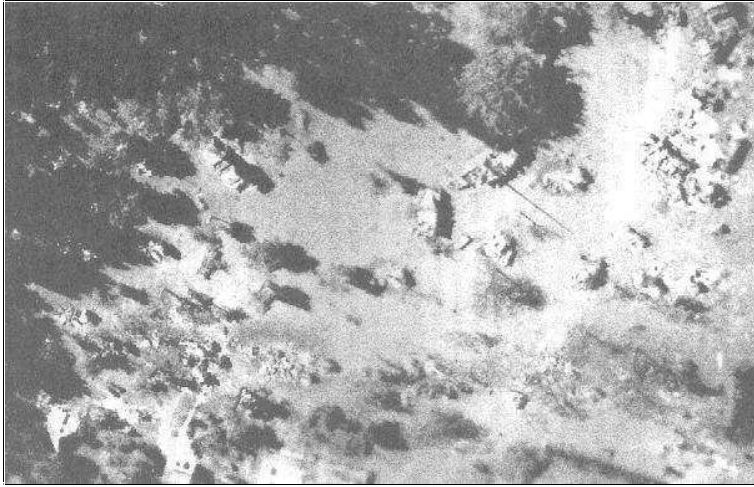


Figure 1  
Just a portion of the destruction at Chambois