

**NEWSLETTER  
MARCH 2023  
VOLUME 12- NO. 3**

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Patton Battalion - USABOT is a chapter of the US Army Brotherhood of Tankers and is a 501(c)3 Non-Profit.

Patton Battalion - USABOT covers Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky & Tennessee.

The Blood and Guts Newsletter covers events and activities within our area and USABOT National.

EIN:  
And registered with the state of Kentucky

**Patton Battalion - USABOT**

**Total: 93 paid members**

**24 Lifetime Members**

**53 Annual Members**

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# PATTON BATTALION - USABOT

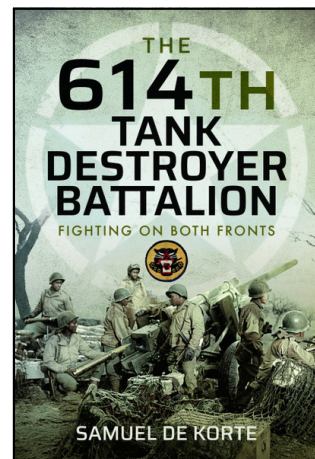
## ILLINOIS - INDIANA - KENTUCKY - TENNESSEE

We have two stories for Black History Month and yes I know I am a month behind but the Master Gunner History took longer than anticipated. We have two very important and probably unknown stories in this issue. Both were stories brought up to me by Joe Wilson, Jr who suggested I look into them. I guess he know it would get me stirred up to write about them.

The 614th Tank Destroyer Battalion (Towed) was the first unit to conduct action in combat to earn themselves a Presidential Unit Citation. This action occurred on December 14, 1944. Just a few days before the Battle of the Bulge. Now I have mentioned that the 969th FA Bn was the first African American unit to receive the Presidential Unit Citation in Jan 1945. This is true and the orders for the PUC for the 969th were first. But the action that took place was first done by the 614th TD Bn. I know this is hard to understand as we are looking at this through the rear view mirror. So sit back and learn about a platoon of the 614th and their battle at the town of Climbach, France.

If you want to learn more about the 614th TD Bn I suggest looking them up on the <https://tankdestroyer.net> website.

There is also a new book that has come out about the 614th. **The 614th Tank Destroyer Battalion: Fighting On Both Fronts**  
By Samuel de Korte  
Imprint: Pen & Sword Military  
Pages: 240  
Illustrations: 20 black and white illustrations  
ISBN: 9781399008686  
Published: 7th March 2022



The second story is about two men, Major Ketterman and Private Jenkins, who were in the Quartermaster Battalion and trying to find their trucks in the mad advance of the Third Army in the opening of Operation Cobra. There are two reasons for this story, one is to clarify that Private Jenkins was in fact in the 176th Quartermaster Battalion and not a member of the 761st Tank Battalion as he has been tagged in some other history websites and publications. And secondly to tell the story about this amazing feat which earned both men a Silver Star and French Croix de Guerre.

This also makes Private Jenkins one of the first Silver Stars for a African American in the early part of 1944. We have talked about the other 1SG who was awarded in August with the 969th FA Bn. We are still trying to find out more about Private Jenkins. We were able to find many newspaper stories on Major Ketterman but we have not been so lucky with Private Jenkins. We will be continuing to try and find out more about Private Jenkins.

One of the earliest Distinguish Service Cross Medals awarded to an African American seems to be the story of Private George Watson. Private George Watson's heroic story is one that the Quartermaster Museum is honored to be able to share with all visitors through the display of his Medal of Honor. Watson and other soldiers from the 29th Quartermaster Regiment were aboard a troop transport off of New Guinea when their ship was attacked by Japanese bombers on June 13, 1943. As the ship sank, Watson risked his life by assisting other Soldiers in swimming to life rafts. Weakened by his selflessness, he was dragged under by the suction of the sinking ship.

Private Watson was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, which was upgraded to the Medal of Honor in 1997 after a review of awards given to African Americans in World War II. As Watson trained at Camp Lee, his story resonates with the Quartermaster Soldiers who come through the museum during their training and see his medal.

KP Morris  
Patton 6

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## 614th Tank Destroyer Battalion - December 14, 1944

614<sup>th</sup> Tank Destroyer Battalion on 14 December 1944.

A good friend, Joe Wilson, Jr., pointed out the 614<sup>th</sup> to me and their action on December 14, 1944 which resulted in numerous awards for individuals in the unit and one platoon a Presidential Unit Citation for the platoon involved. We have mentioned that the 969<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Battalion was the first African American unit to receive the Presidential Unit Citation (PUC) in WWII. This is the thing, the 614<sup>th</sup> was the first unit to get the PUC but this was for a platoon, not the whole company. The 969<sup>th</sup> PUC was for the entire battalion. Prior to this unit the Tuskegee Airmen had a unit that had 2 PUCs in 1943. The 99th Squadron distinguished itself by being awarded two Presidential Unit Citations (June-July 1943 and May 1944) for outstanding tactical air support and aerial combat in the 12th Air Force in Italy, before joining the 332nd Fighter Group. The 332nd Fighter group would be awarded another PUC in 1945. (<https://www.tuskegee.edu/support-tu/tuskegee-airmen/tuskegee-airmen-facts>). But that would be Army Air Corps. This makes it all tricky when you're trying to say who is *FIRST*.

As I first started looking at this it began a quest to find documents covering the events. I first had to figure out the units involved so that I start looking. So here is the basis of the story.

Unit History: Activated on 25 July, 1942 at Camp Carson, Colorado. Reorganized as a towed battalion in May 1943. Arrived in England on 7 September, 1944, landed at Utah beachhead beginning 8 October. Deployed to Metz and supported operations against the Siegfried Line nearby in November and December. Shifted to Hagenau Forest area. Continued to support operations against Siegfried Line fortifications until late March, 1945. Performed occupation duties in early April, then joined race to Innsbruck, Austria, and Brenner Pass. Attached to: 95th, 103d Infantry divisions. History text from the book *The Tank Killers* by Harry Yeide. The 614th was one of the few African-American TD units.

<https://www.tankdestroyer.net/units/battalions600s/208-614th-tank-destroyer-battalion>

So on December 14, 1944 the 614<sup>th</sup> was attached to the 103<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division. I was able to locate the 103<sup>rd</sup> ID, 441<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiment Journal for December 1944. As I was reading the journal I was trying to figure out the route of march leading up to the battle.

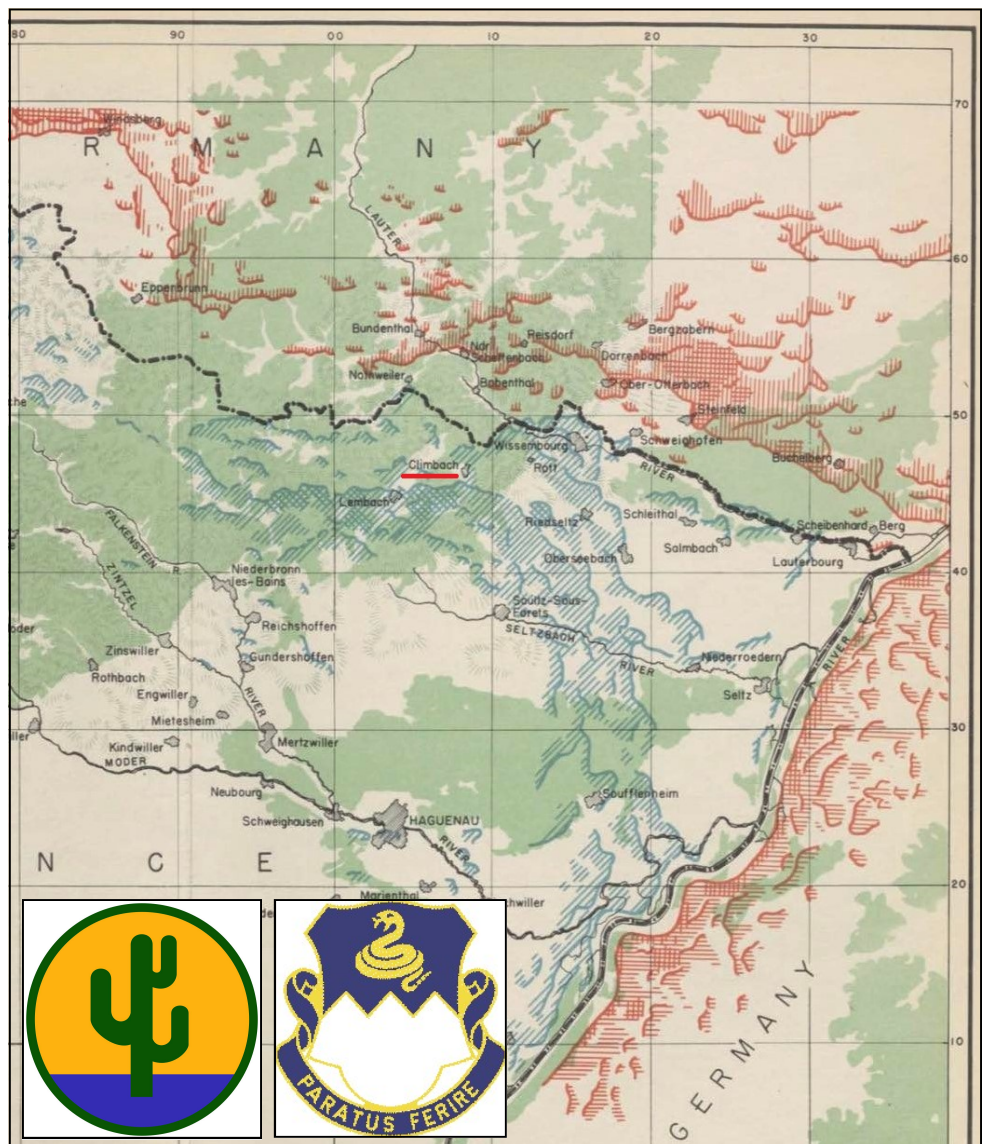
I also found an article by Captain Willie W. J. Barrios, Infantry, Advanced Infantry Officers Course, Class no 2, *The Operations of Company "F," 411<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment (103<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division) near Climbach, France, (Alsace), 14 December 1944 (Rhineland Campaign) (Personal Experience of a Rifle Company Commander).*

Another source is the book *"Invisible Soldier: The Experience of the Black Soldier in World War II,"* Compiled and edited by Mary Penick Motley. Published by Wayne State University Press, Detroit, 366 pages.

The 103<sup>rd</sup> ID (614<sup>th</sup> TD attached) with 14<sup>th</sup> Armored Division were pushing Northeast into Germany through France as part of the 7<sup>th</sup> Army. The town of Climbach, France is located just before the Germany border.

From the 411<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regimental Journal.

So on December 14, 1944 at 0240 the Assistant S-3 called CO, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, to inform him that a Task Force was being



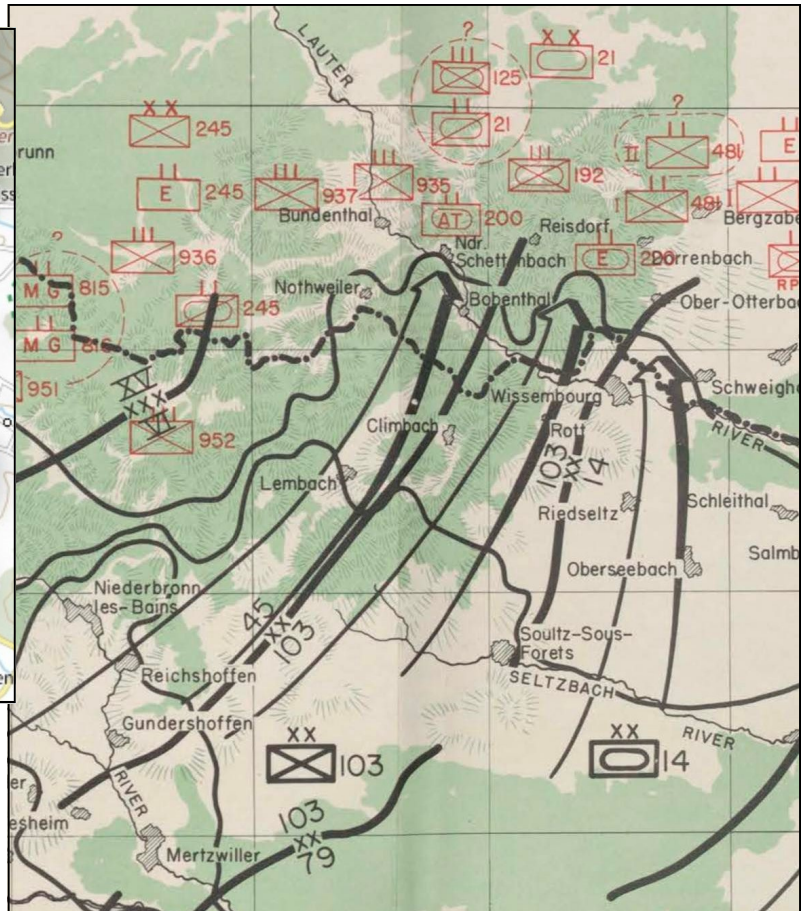
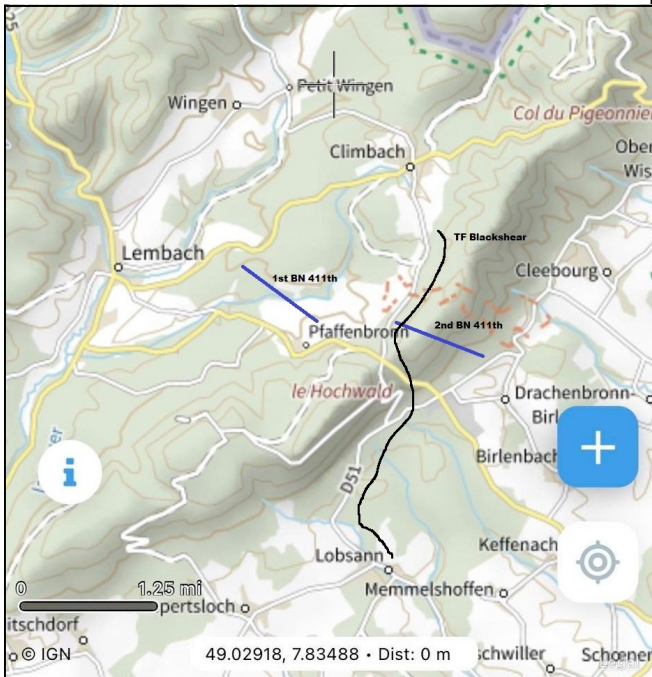
## 614th Tank Destroyer Battalion - December 14, 1944 - Cont.

formed for tomorrow morning and one company of 2<sup>nd</sup> battalion will need advance warning. 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn will move out at 0830 minus the one company.

0330 - To CO; Tank Co; From XO. 1 platoon of tanks to attack from (069-438) NW along road and break enemy defenses. Tanks to attack at 0800, seize Climbach and high ground surrounding town. Task force will consist of 1 platoon tanks, 1 full strength company (Co F), and 1 platoon of TD.

0422 - To S4; From XO. Send 10 trucks to Co F, strengthened to full strength of 187 men, to transport spot (069-438) and follow tanks N on that road from that point.

0425 - To CO, TD; From XO. TD will follow Infantry N on road from (069-438) help seize Climbach and surrounding high ground.



0445 - To XO, 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn; From XO. Co F, at full strength will be part of motorized Task Force (lead by LTC John P. Blackshear, Regimental, Executive Officer, 411<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment) consisting of 1 platoon of tanks (1<sup>st</sup> Platoon, Company C, 47<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion, 14<sup>th</sup> Armored Division), 1 Company of Infantry (Co F, 411<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, 103<sup>rd</sup> ID), and 1 platoon TD (3<sup>rd</sup> platoon, Company C, 614<sup>th</sup> Tank Destroyer Battalion). Task Force to assemble at (06.9-43.8) ready to attack. 4 tanks with 3<sup>rd</sup> Bn will cover route of advance from (08.4-45.5).

0446 - To CO, TD; From XO. Have one M20 in lead column.

0455 - To XO, 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn & Plt Leaders; From XO. Have 5 infantrymen ride on each tank to form flank protection if needed.

0510 - To Motor O; From XO. Have 10 trucks at CP at 0600. They will get in column with TDs and tanks at CP and move on order.

0540 - Comm O reported to S-3. Road black still on road to Climbach. Engineers have not started removing it. Cannot get wire thru to OP. Will take wire jeep with task force so they will have communication.

0600 - To Asst S-3; From G-3

"1<sup>st</sup> Bn Phase Line B at road

3<sup>rd</sup> Bn at Phase Line B and in contact with 180<sup>th</sup> Inf

2<sup>nd</sup> Bn vicinity (05-41)"

0607 - To S-3; From S-3, 3<sup>rd</sup> Bn. Engineers have been at road block 2 hours. Are clearing as fast as possible.

## 614th Tank Destroyer Battalion - December 14, 1944 - Cont.

0613 - Co, C, 147<sup>th</sup> Tank Bn reported to S-3. Co C, 147<sup>th</sup> Tank Bn to relieve present Tank Co attached to 411<sup>th</sup> Inf.

S-3 explained present situation of 411<sup>th</sup> Inf and the task force formed. S-3 ordered CO, tanks to relieve platoon of tanks attached to 411<sup>th</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> Bn, Tanks with TF would be relieved when present mission completed.

0625 - From XO; To Liaison Officer, 928<sup>th</sup> FA 928<sup>th</sup> FA. will have an observer riding on 2d tank to call for artillery as needed. Communication will be made to 928<sup>th</sup> FA by tank radio.

0750 - From S-3; To S-3, 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn. 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn Move out immediately and blow pillboxes captured.

0750 From S-3, 1<sup>st</sup> Bn; To S-3. No fire received from enemy front line. No enemy activity. 1<sup>st</sup> Bn ready to attack. 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Bn Commanders have coordinated their plans.

0816 - From CO, 1<sup>st</sup> Bn; To S-3. Engineers have demolished 1<sup>st</sup> road block and left without reducing 2<sup>nd</sup> road block.

0817 - From S-3; To Officer from Engineers. Demolish 2<sup>nd</sup> road block immediately.

0818 - From S-3; To S-3, 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn. 1<sup>st</sup> Bn and 3<sup>rd</sup> Bn demolish pillboxes immediately - then help reduce road block. Put guard on road, catch Engineers before they pass your area and send them to reduce 2<sup>nd</sup> road block.

0835 - From S-3 To S-3, 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn. 1<sup>st</sup> Bn and 3<sup>rd</sup> Bn attacked on time at 0830. Called G-3 at 0838. 3<sup>rd</sup> Bn on left attacking NE toward Climbach along ridge. 1<sup>st</sup> Bn on right attacking NW toward Climbach along ridge.

0846 - CO, Engineers reported to CO, Engineers now working on road block on route to Climbach. Should be through by 1000.

0849 - From CO, 1<sup>st</sup> Bn; To S-3. Road block will be blown out as soon as 1<sup>st</sup> Bn troops are clear.

0907 - CO, S-3, and Ops SGT left for Forward CP in Phaffenbronn.

0913 - From Asst S-3; To S-3, 1<sup>st</sup> Bn. 1<sup>st</sup> Bn advancing, no resistance encountered. Have encountered several undefended pillboxes.

0927 - From S-3; To S-3, 1<sup>st</sup> Bn. 411<sup>th</sup> Inf jumped off on time at 0830. 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn, 180<sup>th</sup> encountering resistance at Lembach

0950 - XO ordered XO, 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn to obtain 50 cal MGs from Service Co and HQ Co, and MGs and mortars from Co H, in addition to personnel and equipment previously assigned. Foot troops to be picked up at Co F CP.

1023 - Task Force Blackshear left CP with LTC Blackshear in command.

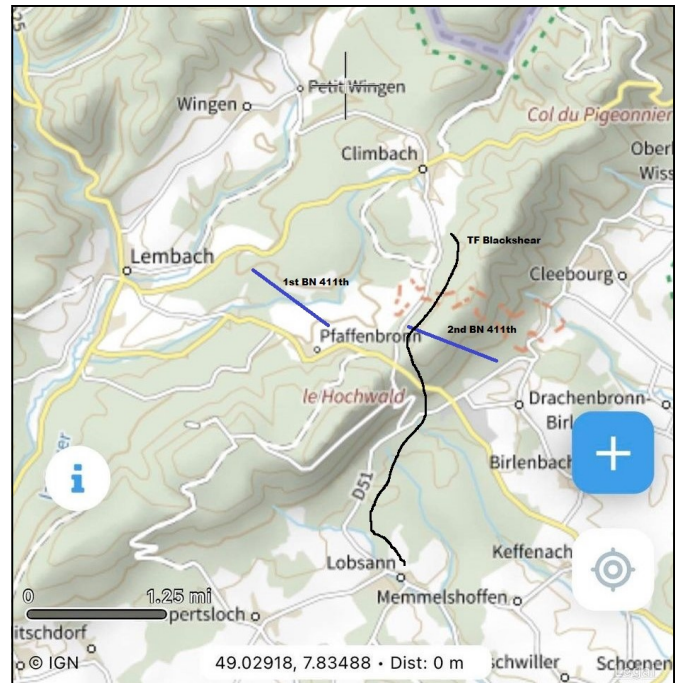
1034 - From CO, 411<sup>th</sup> Inf; To CG, 103<sup>rd</sup> Inf Div. Tanks TD's and Inf Task Force moved from Preuschdorf at 1024 to seize Climbach.

1103 - To G-3; From Asst S-3. 1<sup>st</sup> Bn midway between phase line B & C. 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn in assembly area just below phase line B. 3<sup>rd</sup> Bn at phase line C at 0940. No word from Task Force.

(At about this time the TF ran into an unidentified road block consisting of heavy trees felled across the road. No bypass was available. No mines or booby-traps were present. Tanks were employed to reduce the roadblock, using tow cables to drag the trees clear of the road. Clearing this obstacle took approximately thirty minutes.)

1109 - To S-3, 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn; From Asst S-3. Our CP is located at 080437. Task Force has not passed yet.

1129 - Asst Div Commander entered CP. Asst S-3 gave him positions and outline of elements of



## 614th Tank Destroyer Battalion - December 14, 1944 - Cont.

Task Force.

1143 - Asst Div Commander left CP.

1203 - From CG; To CO

Task Force RJ (080-436) at 1200. Moving to attack Climbach.

1245 - TF cleared 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn area at 1245. Enemy shelling crossroads at (080-436)

(The column proceeded quickly from Point B to a point 200 yards north of Pfaffenschlick Pass. It was here that the first fire was received from the enemy. The crossroads at Pfaffenschlick Pass and the road for some distance north of the Pass was under observation by the enemy. Direct fire weapons apparently had been previously registered on this target. The enemy allowed several vehicles to proceed beyond the Pass before making any attempt to stop them. The first indication that the enemy would contest the use of the Pass was ten or twelve rounds of high explosive and armor piercing shells striking in and around the column simultaneously. Several casualties were sustained at this point, among them was CPT James J, Barden, S-3 of the Task Force. The One-quarter ton truck which the Company Commander, "F" Company, had been riding received a direct hit and was completely disabled. The Company Commander joined the TF Commander in his vehicle and accompanied him for the remainder of the motor march. After this brief halt at this point, the TF was ordered to resume march at increased speed. Sporadic artillery fire was received by the TF but much of its effectiveness was lost because of the increased speed and dispersion of the vehicles.)

1250 - To G-3. 1<sup>st</sup> Bn reached phase line B at 1100 encountering small arms and MG fire.

1257 - To S-3; From S-3, 928<sup>th</sup> FA. 1<sup>st</sup> Bn requested 928<sup>th</sup> FA to lift fire on Climbach. This was done, however fire is still falling on Climbach. It is not 411<sup>th</sup> Cannon Co.

1303 - To Asst S-3 From 928<sup>th</sup> FA. Artillery no longer falling on Climbach. 1<sup>st</sup> Bn, 411<sup>th</sup> Inf patrolling toward Climbach.

1307 - To Asst S-3; From Asst S-3 Forward. 1<sup>st</sup> Bn on Phase Line C. 3<sup>rd</sup> Bn in front of Phase Line C. Co K on road at 0940. Task Force Blackshear running into small arms and automatic rifle fire. At 1300 TF 500 yards South of Climbach.

1345 - To Asst S-3; From S-3, 1<sup>st</sup> Bn. 1<sup>st</sup> Bn parallel with Climbach between Phase Lines C & D. Artillery fire being received. CO, 1<sup>st</sup> Bn reports Artillery fire coming from Wingen. Counterbattery needed. Co's B and C on line. Casualties light.

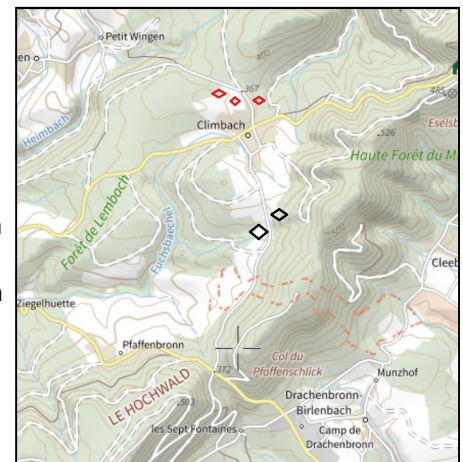
1400 - To CG; From CO. Request artillery on possible enemy OP located (0605-4685) in zone 180<sup>th</sup>. Request clearance through 45<sup>th</sup> Div Arty.

1400 - To Asst S-3; From Air Officer. Large flight of medium bombers to bomb 5 miles north of critical point # 82 (137.352). Observe area and report to Div Air Officer.

1410 - To Asst S-3 From S-2, 928<sup>th</sup> FA. Task Force Blackshear 800 yards south of Climbach. Unknown number of German halftracks and self propelled artillery were knocked out by barrage of 928<sup>th</sup> FA in Climbach. Enemy mortar fire is falling on left flank of phase line B in 3<sup>rd</sup> Bn zone.

1423 - To Asst S-3; From S-3. At 1400 Task Force Blackshear was attacking astride road. 1<sup>st</sup> Bn due east of Climbach at 090-962. 3<sup>rd</sup> Bn along road at 086-457 waiting to move to phase line D when Climbach is captured. LTC Blackshear commanding task force reported 1 M-20 destroyed with crew and TD CO wounded. Enemy tanks on right flank moving NE toward Rott/ 1<sup>st</sup> Bn in position to give task force fire support. 3 enemy tanks in Climbach, TDs firing on them. Heavy casualties in 1<sup>st</sup> Bn. Enemy artillery being received on road bend. (086-451)

(The M-8 scout car which was leading the column halted at the edge of the woods affording it some concealment from the enemy. An enemy artillery concentration was being laid down just beyond this point. Troops dismounted from the tank decks and personnel carriers and sought available cover and concealment. It was believed by the TF Commander that the village of Climbach was unoccupied by foot troops, and that artillery fire was being used by a delaying force to harass and impede the forward movement by the TF. He ordered the troops to mount the vehicles and ordered the commanders to proceed in column as before. This being accomplished, the column advanced approximately one thousand yards before it was halted abruptly. The M-8 scout car topped the high ground immediately to the front (south) of Climbach, a mine planted in the road exploded which disabled the vehicle, and anti-tank fire was immediately placed on it killing or wounding all of its occupants. The road leading to Climbach was a two-lane road, and the scout car was stopped in the center of it.)



## 614th Tank Destroyer Battalion - December 14, 1944 - Cont.

1542 - From LNO Div; To Asst S-3. 1<sup>st</sup> Bn and TF Blackshear jumped off at 1500.

1546 From LNO DIV; to G-3. TF and 1<sup>st</sup> Bn renewed attack on Climbach at 1500, TF going directly into town and 1<sup>st</sup> Bn on flank. Lead vehicle and TD CO have been lost. Heavy MG, mortar and small arm fire received. 3<sup>rd</sup> Bn is coming to bypass area to its rear. Crossroads still under fire.

(The shoulders of the road were extremely muddy and made vehicle passage exceptionally difficult. The drivers of the tanks were not willing to attempt passage of the disabled vehicle and continue the attack on Climbach because of the presence of mines and direct fire from anti-tank guns still firing on the approach of the village.

As the column came to a halt, the troops dismounted from the personnel carriers and were assembled near them, awaiting orders for the continued attack on the objective. The TF Commander and the Commander Co F moved forward to the vicinity of the M-8 scout car. Their reconnaissance revealed the presence of enemy foot troops defending the town supported by tanks and self-propelled guns on the high ground behind (North) of the town.

The platoon of tank destroyers was ordered into position on the forward slope to eliminate direct fire weapons inflicting casualties on our troops. One platoon of infantry was ordered to support the employment of the tank destroyers and provide security for the guns. This mission was for 3<sup>rd</sup> platoon.

A brief reconnaissance by the TD platoon leader which found one suitable position on the left of the road and the three remaining guns were placed on exposed forward slope on the right of the road. The guns were moved into place. This action began around 1330.

The three guns on the right side of the road were in action for nearly an hour before they were silenced by the enemy. The gun on the left side of the road, having some protection, remained in action most of the remaining day, although the crew did suffer casualties.

Third platoon was led by SGT Charles Henrikson which provided security for the crews on the right. SGT Henrikson gave the following report: "A few yards ahead was a German machine gun nest, but they weren't expecting us from this direction and we surprised them. They were going to open up when Myers (PFC Richard Myers, BAR man) gave a burst. There were two on the gun. One was dropped and the other took off with a light bipod machine gun. Well, this was just the beginning. The German went for reinforcements. Meanwhile, Myers and I jumped in the hole left by the Krauts. This was located just outside woods. I saw action in the woods and couple of Krauts surrendered. I sent Myers to the rear with the prisoners. I was now left alone and some Germans noticed this and saw their chance, so they thought. They started to set up another gun in the woods and each time I saw them setting up I let them have it. It was getting twilight and no one around except two black soldiers with their legs off at the knees. The anti-tank gun was knocked out. I kept taking my ammunition out of my bandoliers and putting it in front of me because I thought this was my last moment. Just as I was running I out of ammunition the company entered the town."

A map and terrain study indicated the likeliest positions for enemy direct fire weapons as hills 435, 376 and 378. High ground to the southeast of Climbach appeared to be unoccupied by the enemy, and offered excellent positions for the support of a frontal assault.

In a conference with the artillery officer, the Company Commander requested that artillery support be to effect the neutralizing of enemy fires. Excellent results were obtained by the liaison officer who received three battalions of Corps Artillery to support the organic medium artillery of the Division and one battalion of light artillery in direct support of the Regiment. The Corps Artillery was given targets on hills 435, 376 and 378. The medium battalion was assigned the rear (Northwest) section of Climbach and the direct support battalion was given the forward (southeast) section of Climbach. All fires were to be brought down on order and all targets hit simultaneously. The direct support battalion was to lift on call, the remaining of the other battalions, after all guns had fired five volleys. No smoke was employed.

As first platoon was in position, second platoon would assault through third platoon and lead the attack into Climbach. It was assumed that the platoon of tanks would participate, but the invitation was, vehemently, declined by the tank platoon commander. (It should be noted that the tank platoon did not engage during any of the above action claiming the situation was too hot.)

The artillery preparation did as it was intended. The fires from the 928<sup>th</sup> FA Bn were dropped approximately 75 yards in front of the third platoon positions. The liaison officer lifted these fires in one hundred yard increments as the troops advanced. The foot troops followed the receding artillery and were not delayed by enemy fires. The artillery concentration had accomplished the purpose of inflicting casualties on those exposed, and forcing others to seek shelter. Before those who took cover could reorganize for the defense, they were greeted by the business end of an infantryman's weapon.



## 614th Tank Destroyer Battalion - December 14, 1944 - Cont.

1617 - CO, Co C, 47<sup>th</sup> Tank Bn entered CP. TF still fighting for Climbach at 1555.

1715 - 2 platoons of Co C, 47<sup>th</sup> Tank Bn left rear CP to relieve elements of 756<sup>th</sup> Tank Bn on the line.

1727 - From CO; To CG. Climbach captured at 1720. Mopping up. 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Bns enroute to phase line F.

1730 - Asst S-3 reported that TF Blackshear had received heavy artillery fire during the day. At 1200 a meeting had been held of the CO's of units in the TF at (080-436) Artillery fire was received during this meeting causing heavy casualties and disrupting communications.

### CERTIFICATE

I certify that: I was the commander of a task force formed on 14 December 1944, for the purpose of storming and capturing the village of Climbach, France, where a concentration of enemy and armor constituted a menace and decided threat to the foot elements of the 411<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, who were advancing on the town from the southeast. This task force was composed of one platoon of Company C, 614<sup>th</sup> Tank Destroyer Battalion (Towed); one platoon of tanks from the 14<sup>th</sup> Armored Division; and one company of Infantry reinforced by a platoon of heavy machine guns and 88mm mortars. As the two anti-tank guns and the M-20 Scout Car in which the tank destroyer platoon commander was leading the attack reached high ground three hundred yards southeast of the town they encountered heavy direct fire from enemy antitank units and tanks at the range of seven hundred yards. Despite several casualties, one which was the platoon commander, being inflicted in the initial burst of enemy fire, the two antitank guns were immediately put into position and effectively returned the enemy fire. So fierce and accurate was the fire of these two guns that the enemy guns withdrew temporarily to defilade positions, and then attempted to overrun the gun positions with combined armor and infantry attack. At this time one antitank gun had been knocked out, and the two guns which had been interspersed in the column, which had halted well to the rear, were moved forward to exposed but effective positions against the new threat of a combined attack of the enemy. Despite the fact that one gun crew had been reduced to a lone cannoneer alternating between the use of small arms and his gun, the remaining gun crews alternated between the use of small arms and their guns as the threat of the close pressing infantry and the harassing tank fire became respectively paramount. One cannoneer, alternating between an antitank gun and a .50 caliber machine gun mounted on a burning halftrack, was largely responsible for repulsing an enemy attack in force against the gun positions. Undaunted by the failure of the tank support mired down too far to the rear to be effective; undismayed by the numerous casualties they were sustaining, which reduced their gun crews to skeleton size and eliminated completely their ammunition chain; but inspired by such individual actions as the driver of an ammunition truck who deliberately drove his vehicle into the open toward the gun positions until it was mired down, and then personally carried the shells to the guns; this small group of determined fighters held off superior enemy force until foot elements could be deployed to relieve the pressure of the enemy infantry, and artillery could be registered on the enemy armor. The unflinching determination of this group constituted the most magnificent display of mass heroism I have ever witnessed.

John P Blackshear  
LTC, 411<sup>th</sup> Infantry,  
Executive Officer

(Ltr, 614<sup>th</sup> TD Bn, 2 Feb 45, sugj: Recommendation for Unit Citation, 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon, Co C, 614<sup>th</sup> TD Bn, contd.)

- 1-Certificate, LTC John P. Blackshear
- 1-Statement, CPT Barrios, 411<sup>th</sup> Inf.
- 1-Statement, CPT Guthery, 411<sup>th</sup> Inf.
- 1-statement, CPT Pultz, 928<sup>th</sup> FA BN.
- 1-Statement, SSG Eisenmenger, 411<sup>th</sup> Inf.
- 1-Statement, SSG Henrickson, 411<sup>th</sup> Inf.
- 1-Statement, SGT Pfister, 411<sup>th</sup> Inf.
- 1-Statement, SSG Torkelson, 411<sup>th</sup> Inf.
- 1-GO #68, Hq, 103<sup>rd</sup> Inf Div, 28 Dec 44.
- 1-GO #88, Hq, 103<sup>rd</sup> Inf Div, 27 Dec 44.
- 1-The Stars and Stripes, 1 Feb 45 (Nancy).
- 1-Yank Magazine, 4 Feb 45, Continental Edition.
- 1-Enlarged overlay of Climbach, France.

War Department General Order #37, 1945

### X. Battle Honors.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon, Company C, 614<sup>th</sup> Tank Destroyer Battalion, is cited for outstanding performance of duty in action against the enemy on 14 December 1944 in the vicinity of Climbach, France. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon was an element of a task force whose mission was

## 614th Tank Destroyer Battalion - December 14, 1944 - Cont.

to storm and capture the strategically important town of Climbach, France, on the approaches of the Siegfried Line. Upon reaching the outskirts of the town, the task force was halted by a terrific hail of fire from an enemy force firmly entrenched in the surrounding woods and hills overlooking the route of approach. The only position available for direct fire upon the enemy was an open field. As the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon moved into position, its commander and several men were wounded. Undeterred by heavy enemy small arms, mortar, and artillery fire, which was now being directed against their position, the men of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon valiantly set up their 3-inch guns and delivered accurate and deadly fire into the enemy positions. Casualties were mounting; two of their four guns were knocked out; nevertheless, the remaining crew members heroically assisted in the loading and firing of the other guns.

At the height of the battle, enemy infantry converged on the positions from the surrounding woods, threatening to wipe out the platoon's position. While a few members of the gun crews remained firing the 3-inch guns, others manned machine guns and individual weapons, laying down a devastating curtain of fire which inflicted numerous casualties on the enemy and successfully repulsed the attack. During the firefight an ammunition shortage developed, and gun crews were reduced to skeleton size, one man loading, aiming and firing, while other men repeatedly traveled a distance of 50 yards through a hail of mortar and small arms fire to obtain shells from a halftrack which had been set on fire by a direct hit from an enemy mortar shell. Heedless of possible injury men continuously exposed themselves to enemy fire to render first aid to the wounded. In this engagement, although the platoon suffered over 50 percent casualties and lost considerable material, its valorous conduct, in the face of overwhelming odds, enabled the task force to capture its objective. The grim determination, the indomitable fighting spirit, and the esprit de corps displayed by all the members of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon, Company C, 614<sup>th</sup> Tanks Destroyer Battalion, reflect the highest traditions of the Armed Forces of the United States.

CHARLES LEROY THOMAS

RANK: LIEUTENANT (HIGHEST RANK: FIRST LIEUTENANT)

CONFLICT/ERA: WORLD WAR II

UNIT/COMMAND: COMPANY C, 614TH TANK DESTROYER BATTALION

MILITARY SERVICE BRANCH: U.S. ARMY

MEDAL OF HONOR ACTION DATE: DECEMBER 14, 1944

MEDAL OF HONOR ACTION PLACE: CLIMBACH, FRANCE

CITATION

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty: Then Lieutenant Charles L. Thomas distinguished himself by extraordinary heroism in action on 14 December 1944. One platoon of Company C, 614th Tank Destroyer Battalion, was designated as the lead element in a task force formed to storm and capture the village of Climbach, France. Lieutenant Thomas, the Commanding Officer of Company C, realized, with the obscurity of information regarding the enemy and a complete lack of reconnaissance, the mission would be an extremely dangerous one. Fully cognizant of the danger, Lieutenant Thomas volunteered to command the selected platoon of his company and ride in the column's leading vehicle - a highly maneuverable, but equally vulnerable, M-20 scout car. Lieutenant Thomas knew that if there was a concentration of enemy armor in the village, as was believed, he would absorb the initial shock of the first enemy resistance. The task force left Preuschedorf, France, at 1023 hours, and proceeded to advance in column toward Climbach. Lieutenant Thomas in his scout car stayed well in front of the column. At 1400 hours, upon reaching the high ground southeast of the village, Lieutenant Thomas experienced initial contact with the enemy. As his scout car advanced to an exposed position on the heights, he received intense direct fire from enemy artillery, self-propelled guns, and small arms at a range of seven hundred yards. The first burst of hostile fire disabled the scout car and severely wounded Lieutenant Thomas. He immediately signaled the column to halt. Before leaving the wrecked vehicle, Lieutenant Thomas and the crew found themselves subjected to a veritable hail of enemy fire. Lieutenant Thomas received multiple gunshot wounds in his chest, legs, and left arm. In spite of the intense pain caused by his wounds, Lieutenant Thomas ordered and directed the dispersion and emplacement of his first two antitank guns. In a few minutes these guns were effectively returning the enemy fire. Realizing that it would be impossible for him to remain in command of the platoon because of his injuries, Lieutenant Thomas then signaled for the platoon commander to join him. Lieutenant Thomas then thoroughly oriented him as to the enemy gun positions, his ammunition status, and the general situation. Although fully cognizant of the probable drastic consequences of not receiving prompt medical attention, Lieutenant Thomas refused evacuation until he felt certain that his junior officer was in full control of the situation. Only then did Lieutenant Thomas allow his evacuation to the rear. Throughout the action, Lieutenant Thomas displayed magnificent personal courage and a complete disregard for his own safety. His extraordinary heroism spurred the soldiers of the platoon to a fierce determination to triumph, and resulted in a mass display of heroism by them. Lieutenant Thomas' intrepid actions throughout the operation reflect the highest traditions of military service.

Medal of Honor Recipient Charles L. Thomas

ACCREDITED TO: DETROIT, COOK COUNTY, MICHIGAN

AWARDED POSTHUMOUSLY: YES

PRESENTATION DATE & DETAILS: JANUARY 13, 1997

THE WHITE HOUSE, PRESENTED BY PRES. WILLIAM J. CLINTON

BORN: APRIL 17, 1920, BIRMINGHAM, JEFFERSON COUNTY, AL, UNITED STATES



## 614th Tank Destroyer Battalion - December 14, 1944 - Cont.

DIED: FEBRUARY 15, 1980, WAYNE, MI, UNITED STATES

BURIED: WEST LAWN CEMETERY (MH) (D-1-231), WAYNE, MI, UNITED STATES

LOCATION OF MEDAL: MICHIGAN HEROES MUSEUM, FRANKENMUTH, MI

Headquarters 103<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division  
General Order No 88, 27 December 1944

### Award of the Bronze Star Medal

Private First Class Whit L. Knight, 34450873, Field Artillery, Company C, 614<sup>th</sup> Tank Destroyer Battalion. For heroism in action. During the day of 14 December 1944, in the vicinity of Climbach, France, Private Knight, a member of a task force in the attack, skillfully sighted, loaded and fired his three-inch gun single handedly directly into approaching enemy forces. The area surrounding him was constantly blasted by intense enemy small arms and artillery fire but with undaunted courage and with utter disregard for his life, he remained at his post. Realizing his gun was inadequate to impede the progress of the onrushing enemy, he dashed courageously to a nearby machine gun directing devastating fire into their midst. Private Knight's outstanding valor assisted in forcing the enemy to withdraw, enabling our infantry to push forward successfully toward their objective, Residence: Kingston, North Carolina.

Technician Fifth Grade, Robert W. Harris, 37376570, Field Artillery, Company C, 614<sup>th</sup> Tank Destroyer Battalion. For heroism in action. During the day of 14 December 1944, in the vicinity of Climbach, France, Technician Harris, a member of a task force in the attack, fully cognizant that his gun crews were running out of ammunition, brilliantly drove his truck over fire-swept roads to obtain vitally needed ammunition. When the truck was fully loaded with ammunition, he courageously drove forward toward his gun position. About half way to his objective, he was stopped by the task force commander and informed that if he went farther he was certain to be hit by enemy fire. With utter disregard for his life and displaying magnificent courage, he skillfully drove his vehicle to within 25 yards of his gun positions as intense enemy small arms, mortar, and artillery fire blasted his path. He unloaded the truck, uncrated the ammunition boxes and valiantly carried the ammunition forward to each gun emplacement. Technician Harris' outstanding valor in the face of devastating enemy fire materially assisted the attacking infantry troops in reaching their objective successfully. Residence: Marcelline, Missouri.

Technician Fifth Grade, James A. Perry, 34460951, Field Artillery, Company C, 614<sup>th</sup> Tank Destroyer Battalion. For heroism in action. During the day of 14 December 1944, in the vicinity of Climbach, France, Technician Harris, a member of a task force in the attack, skillfully manned his gun from an exposed position in order to fire accurately and efficiently into enemy strongpoints. The area surrounding his position was constantly blasted by enemy machine gun, mortar and artillery fire. In the face of this withering action he continued to fire directly into enemy positions with utter disregard for his life. In addition to neutralizing ferocious enemy activity to his front, he brilliantly directed enemy fire on an enemy machine gun nest close by, wiping it out. As a result of Technician Perry's magnificent courage, attacking infantry troops were materially assisted in advancing successfully to their objective. Residence: Louisburg, North Carolina.

Private Thomas C. McDaniel, 34321721, Field Artillery, Company C, 614<sup>th</sup> Tank Destroyer Battalion. For heroism in action. During the day of 14 December 1944, PVT McDaniel was a member of a task force assigned the mission of capturing the town of Climbach, France. The platoon of which he was a member, moved into positions in open terrain exposed to intense enemy machine gun and artillery fire. Keenly observing enemy grenadiers attempting to outflank his section, he, with utter disregard for his life, courageously manned a .30 caliber machine gun and successfully stopped their attack, inflicting several casualties. His heroic action, in the face of the heavy enemy fire, materially assisted the task forces mission. Residence: Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Sergeant Dillard L. Booker, 32811587, Field Artillery, Company C, 614<sup>th</sup> Tank Destroyer Battalion. For heroism in action. During the daylight hours of 14 December 1944, in the vicinity of Climbach, France, Sergeant Booker, on his own initiative, brought his three-inch gun forward into an advantageous, but exposed position. Being in advance of our infantry lines, he and his crew was unable to obtain supporting fire, but disregarding personal safety advanced forward. He was afforded excellent observation of the enemy by placing his gun in an open field but it enabled strong enemy forces to lay down an intense artillery and small arms barrage around the gun position. Undaunted by these harassing conditions, he courageously carried out his mission and



**614th Tank Destroyer Battalion - December 14, 1944 - Cont.**

destroyed numerous enemy strongpoints. His heroic actions so disrupted the opposing forces that our infantry was able to deploy around the flanks of the enemy and overwhelm them. This resulted in our forces successful advance and entry into Climbach, France. Residence: New York, New York.

Sergeant, William L. Tabron, 34460307, Field Artillery, Company C, 614<sup>th</sup> Tank Destroyer Battalion. For heroism in action. During the daylight hours of 14 December 1944, Sergeant Tabron was a member of a task force whose mission was to capture the town of Climbach, France. While approaching their objective the entire task force was pinned down by heavy small arms and artillery fire emanating from enemy pillboxes. Disregarding the intense enemy fire, Sergeant Tabron, with his crew, went forward with their towed gun and set up in an open field exposed to hostile fire. With utter disregard for his life, he courageously manned his .50 caliber machine gun to protect his crew, some of which were wounded, from enemy grenadiers attempting to flank their position. Unnerved by the wounds received in this action, he remained at his post until the infantry successfully pressed forward the attack. His devotion of duty and self-sacrifice was in inspiration to all. Residence: Wilson, North Carolina.

First Lieutenant Floyd J. Stallings, 0-1824814, Field Artillery, Company C, 614<sup>th</sup> Tank Destroyer Battalion. For heroism in action. During the daylight hours of 14 December 1944, in the vicinity of Climbach, France, Lieutenant Stallings, as a member of a task force in the attack, observed his company commander lying in an exposed position, wounded, the victim of enemy fire. With utter disregard for his life he courageously dashed 100 yards over open terrain under severe enemy machine gun, mortar and artillery concentration. Completely oblivious of the withering fire that raked his path, he succeeded in reaching his wounded commander's side. At great personal risk, he valiantly assisted his commanding officer to the nearest aid station. As a result of Lieutenant Stallings' display of magnificent courage, prompt and efficient medical attention was administered expeditiously. Residence: Sand Francisco, California.

Corporal Al Hockaday, Jr., 34459213, Field Artillery, Company C, 614<sup>th</sup> Tank Destroyer Battalion. For heroism in action. During the daylight hours of 14 December 1944, in the vicinity of Climbach, France, Corporal Hockaday, a gun commander, successfully placed his gun in a forward position where excellent observation was available on the entrenched enemy forces. The enemy, realizing the serious threat facing them, laid down a murderous artillery barrage about him. This terrific onslaught of enemy fire knocked out a nearby gun crew. With utter disregard for his safety, he fearlessly began sighting and firing the nearby gun. Despite the severity of the enemy action about him he courageously manned both guns single-handedly and successfully disrupted the enemy forces to such an extent that our infantry was able to move forward and seize their objective. Residence: Roanoke, North Carolina.

Technician Fourth Grade Paul Warner, 33316456, Field Artillery, Company C, 614<sup>th</sup> Tank Destroyer Battalion. For heroism in action. During the daylight hours of 14 December 1944, in the vicinity of Climbach, France, Technician Warner, a member of a task force in the attack, observed his company commander lying in an exposed position wounded, the victim of enemy fire. Realizing that immediate evacuation was necessary, he dashed to his vehicle and sped across 75 yards of fire-swept terrain to rescue his commanding officer. As he maneuvered the vehicle out in the open terrain, enemy small arms and artillery fire blasted his path but he continued on with undaunted courage and with utter disregard for his life. He remained under this devastating fire for over 15 minutes while he assisted in placing the officer in the vehicle. He again skillfully crossed the area of concentrated fire and reached the nearest aid station quickly. As a result of Technician Warner's outstanding valor in the face of intense enemy fire, medical attention was rendered expeditiously to his commanding officer. Residence: Crestmont, Pennsylvania.

Headquarters 103<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division  
General Order No. 89, 28 December 1944.

Award of the Silver Star.

Private First Class Leon Tobin, 34311075, Field Artillery, Company C, 614<sup>th</sup> Tank Destroyer Battalion. For gallantry in action. During the daylight hours of 14 December 1944, in the vicinity of Climbach, France, Private Tobin, a member of a task force in the attack, went into position in open terrain under severe enemy artillery and small arms fire to man a three-inch gun. Although his position was in direct line of enemy fire and full observation he brilliantly and skillfully directed fire into enemy strongpoints. The intensity of the fire became so severe that the area was blasted by hostile fire wounding and killing his comrades on all sides of him. In the face of certain self-destruction he gallantly stood at his post manning the gun with the assistance of one other comrade. He continued to pour fire into the enemy with such relentless furor and utter disregard for his life, that they became confused. When his comrade was killed he remained at his post unassisted until he was cut down by direct fire suffering excruciating pain from severe wounds. Private Tobin's display of gallantry and superior calmness in the face of devastating fire materially assisted the attacking infantry troops in reaching their objective successfully. Residence: Monroe, Louisiana.

## 614th Tank Destroyer Battalion - December 14, 1944 - Cont.

First Lieutenant George W. Mitchell, 0-1822712, Field Artillery, Company C, 614<sup>th</sup> Tank Destroyer Battalion. For gallantry in action. During the daylight hours of 14 December 1944, Lieutenant Mitchell as a second in command of a tank destroyer platoon, with a task force attacking Climbach, France, took command of the platoon, when his platoon leader was wounded. Constantly exposed to intense enemy artillery, mortars and small arms fire, he magnificently and efficiently directed the fire of his guns against enemy positions. Numerous times, with utter disregard for his life, he moved from gun to gun supplementing the gun crews as the complement of gun positions were reduced by enemy action. In one instance Lieutenant Mitchell gallantly manned a gun, loading, sighting and firing it single-handedly. He courageously exposed himself, to aid in the evacuation of the wounded from front line to places of safety and many lives were saved by this action. Lieutenants Mitchell's display of coolness under fire and magnificent courage, was an inspiration to all and contributed to a large degree in the successful capture and occupation of Climbach, with a minimum of casualties to the task force. Residence: Gary, Indiana.

Award, Posthumous, of Silver Star

Corporal Peter Simmons, 34513288, Field Artillery, Company C, 614<sup>th</sup> Tank Destroyer Battalion. For gallantry in action. During the daylight hours of 14 December 1944, in the vicinity of Climbach, France, Corporal Simmons, a member of a task force in the attack, went into position in open terrain under severe enemy artillery and small arms fire to man a three-inch gun. Although his position was in direct line of enemy fire and in full observation, he brilliantly and skillfully directed fire into enemy strongpoints. The intensity of the fire became so severe that the area was blasted by hostile fire wounding and killing his comrades on all sides. In the face of certain self-destruction he gallantly stood at his post manning the gun with assistance of one other comrade. He continued to pour fire into the enemy with such relentless furor and utter disregard for his life, that they became confused. As enemy bullet found its mark and Corporal Simmons fell mortally wounded. As a result of his display of outstanding gallantry and superior calmness in the face of devastating fire he materially assisted the attacking infantry troops in reaching their objective. Throughout this entire action Corporal Simmons' display of valor was in accordance with the highest traditions of the military service. Residence: Silver Street, South Carolina.

Private First Class William H. Phipps, 34459324, Field Artillery, Company C, 614<sup>th</sup> Tank Destroyer Battalion. For gallantry in action. During the daylight hours of 14 December 1944, in the vicinity of Climbach, France, Private Phipps was seriously wounded while driving his quarter ton truck through an artillery barrage. Private Phipps, with utter disregard for his life, on his own initiative, drove his platoon leader to a gun position without revealing his bitter wounds. He courageously drove forward in the face of the intense enemy artillery and bazooka fire, firing his weapon until he collapsed from his mortal wound. His valiant action assisted materially in the success of the infantry's mission. Private Phipps' outstanding valor and spirit of duty were in accordance with the highest traditions of the military service. Residence: Littleton, North Carolina.

The Certificate and awards were from the following link.

<https://tankdestroyer.net/units/battalions600s/208-614th-tank-destroyer-battalion>

CPL Peter Simmons, 34513288, Co C, 14 Dec 1944

PFC William H. Phipps, 34459324, Co C, 14 Dec 1944

Buried at the Lorraine American Cemetery, Avenue de Fayetteville, St Avold, France, Plot B, Row 31, Grave 29.

PFC Lucius Riley, 34460550, Co C, 14 Dec 1944

Buried at the Lorraine American Cemetery, Avenue de Fayetteville, St Avold, France, Plot B, Row 18, Grave 38.

PFC Shelton Murph, 34513226, Co C, 27 Dec 1944 (wounded on 14 Dec 1944)



**614th Tank Destroyer Battalion - December 14, 1944 - Cont.**

Lieutenant Claude Ramsey stated in *Invisible Soldiers*, "The victory at Climbach in December 1944 belongs to Captain Charles Thomas and the company he led into the valley where they would be clay pigeons in a shooting gallery. Charles had several things going for him. His men believed in him and they were proud of their unit and their ability. They were good, damned good. At Climbach speed and accuracy made the difference, plus guts, and these things they had to spare. Climbach was an important victory and it was made possible by a black captain and a company of black soldiers. More than fifty per cent were casualties, but they held that valley. In the process the company so engaged picked up fourteen medals: one DSC (Later made a Medal of Honor), four Silver Stars, nine Bronze Stars and a unit citation."

The enlisted personnel in the 614<sup>th</sup> completely destroyed the fallacy that illiteracy is a definite handicap to a fighting man. Many of the enlisted men in the 614<sup>th</sup> were barely literate, if not illiterate, but they were completely at home with weapons and under fire. Leadership makes all the difference." (pages 172-173)

Captain Charles Thomas would state in *Invisible Soldiers*, "Yes, I was conscious the whole time and in command until the officer arrived to relieve me. My men were getting their guns into position with the whole world erupting around them. They were doing it swiftly and in good fashion in spite of the casualties we were beginning to sustain. In just a few minutes they were returning fire.

They were functioning to a lesser degree, as I was, automatically. I knew it had to be done. That is why I would not leave or should I say allow myself to be evacuated until the officer to replace me was on hand and all our guns were firing.

They say men under stress can do unusual things, I imagine this was true in my case. I wonder how many men who earned medals can give you a detailed account of what happened? I know I hung onto one thought, deploy the guns and start firing or we're dead.

I would like to repeat, my men were a fine disciplined bunch and their deployment on my orders was as normal as breathing even under the heated circumstances. Normally, the one who gets off the first shot is the victor. We didn't have this advantage, but their speed and accuracy made up the difference." (page 174)

In the book it talks about Corporal Robert Harris, a trucker carrying ammunition, sitting in the back on the road with the remainder of the task force, sensed what was happening by the small arms fire. He climbed into his truck and started to move out. Colonel Blackshear forbade his action as sheer madness and an impossibility. According to his comrades' version of events, the corporal almost ran the colonel down as he tossed a few pungent words in the colonels' direction and headed, full throttle into the holocaust. He succeeded in driving his truck right up to the two guns and began to help unload. The timely arrival of this ammunition helped save the day. (page 175)

It is interesting to note that later in March 1945 the 761st Tank Battalion would pass through Climbach, France. From the Center of Military History Fact Sheet of the 761st Tank Battalion. The 761st Tk Bn as part of Task Force Cactus, with mission to uncover and penetrate the Siegfried Line, moved into Climbach, prepared to attack in direction of Bobenthal. Task Force moved to vic Gundershoffen to NE of Froeshwiller where it dissolved (18 Mar). Moved to vic Climbach (20 Mar). Task Force Rhine was organized (21 Mar), composed of 761 Tank Bn, 2d Bn 409 Inf Regt and an Engr detachment. Assembled near Riedsdorf. Moved thru Riedsdorf and attacked the hills surrounding the NE side; cleared out pill boxes. Resistance overcome, task force split into sections, one going N toward Birkenhorst, the other toward Bollenborn (22 Mar). <https://history.army.mil/topics/afam/761TkBn-2.htm>

I want to also take time to thank Joe Wilson, Jr. for his friendship and encouragement when it comes to writing about history. Joe is the author of three books, *The 761st Black Panther Tank Battalion in World War II: An Illustrated History of the First African American Armored Unit to See Combat*, *The 784th Tank Battalion in World War II: History of an African American Armored Unit in Europe*, *The 758th Tank Battalion in World War II: The U.S. Army's First All African American Tank Unit*.

I would also like to thank Darlene Humphrey Bailey for help on the story with MAJ Ketterman and PVT Ernest Jenkins. She has an ability to find things when you just cannot find anything else.

I would also like to thank Eric Van Slander with the National Archives and Records Administration. I cannot thank him enough for finding some of the very necessary items that we are looking for to tell a story.

## PVT Ernest Jenkins & MAJ Charles Ketterman

Joe Wilson also pointed out another little thing when we were talking about the 614th TD Bn, if you were to Google the name Private Ernest Jenkins, you will find a photo of him receiving a Silver Star from General Patton. It will probably state that Private Jenkins was with the 761st Tank Battalion. Well there lies the issue. We will explain that Private Jenkins was with the 176th Quartermaster Battalion Mobile during World War II.

When we were working on the 969th FA Bn we found information of a First Sergeant being awarded a Silver Star in early August of 1944. We wondered if this was the first Silver Star for a black NCO in WWII. We have not been able to verify that. So this could be the first black enlisted soldier to receive the Silver Star. Again, this is something we would like to verify. So lets set the record straight.

From the 176<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Battalion Mobile, from the After action Review for the month August 1944, had been operating with the Third US Army for the month of August 1944. They were attached to the 514<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Group Headquarters on 18 August 1944 and had the following companies attached to them.

442 <sup>nd</sup> QM Troop Transport Co	3583 <sup>rd</sup> QM Truck Co.
443 <sup>rd</sup> QM Troop Transport Co	3909 <sup>th</sup> QM Truck Co.
445 <sup>th</sup> QM Troop Transport Co	3968 <sup>th</sup> QM Truck Co.
448 <sup>th</sup> QM Troop Transport Co	3985 <sup>th</sup> QM Truck Co.
642 <sup>nd</sup> QM Troop Transport Co	3327 <sup>th</sup> QM Truck Co.
647 <sup>th</sup> QM Troop Transport Co	

The assignment under G-4 Transportation, from whom all dispatches were received through 514<sup>th</sup> QM Group, was made to provide mobility for any Army units at a moment's notice. In addition, companies of this Battalion were frequently dispatched on hauls for the Army Quartermaster and Ordnance Officers.

A new bivouac area was selected four miles NW of Brou, France. The Headquarters moved into the area on 20 August 1944 and the companies established their CPs in the immediate vicinity. It was from this bivouac area that Major C.W. Ketterman, the Bn CO and his driver, PVT Ernest A. Jenkins, departed on a routine reconnaissance on which they encountered enemy action at Chateaudun, France, and were instrumental in the liberation of that town. For their feat in knocking out an enemy anti-tank gun, killing three of its crew and wounding others, and capturing fifteen Germans, they have been recommended for the Silver Star.

In the 176th QM Bn AAR for September 1944, On 14 September 1944, General Order No. 56, HQs Third US Army, 10 September 1944, was received, awarding the Silver Star Medal to the Battalion Commander, Major C. W. Ketterman, and PVT Ernest A. Jenkins, his driver for their part in the capture and liberation of the city of Chateaudun, France.

On 15 September 1944, the Headquarters and it's attached companies moved their CPs to a location four and a half miles south of Etain, France, coordinates U-426658.

At a ceremony at Third US Army Headquarters, on 22 September 1944, Major C. W. Ketterman and PVT Ernest A. Jenkins, of this organization, were awarded the Silver Star Medal by LTG George S. Patton, Jr., Commanding General, Third US Army. The citation was read by Colonel Theodore J. Krokus, Commanding Officer, 514<sup>th</sup> QM Group. The ceremony was attended by members of LTG Patton's staff and of this organization.

Award of Silver Star – By direction of the President and under the provisions 32, Hq ETO, US Army, 20 March 1944, as amended by Sec I, Cir 56, Hq Third US Army, 27 May 1944, the Silver Star is awarded to the following named officer and enlisted man:

Major Charles W. Ketterman, 1576233, Quartermaster Corps, United States Army. For gallantry in action at Chateaudun, France, on 16-17 August 1944. Knowing of an enemy's presence there and at the risk of his own life, Major Ketterman entered Chateaudun, France, on 16 August 1944, and successfully attacked an enemy gun position. Accompanied only by his driver and in the face of a heavy artillery barrage upon the town by friendly troops, Major Ketterman patrolled through the northwest part of Chateaudun until the enemy gun position was located, advanced to within 100 yards of it, and opened fire. Three of the enemy were killed and a number of others wounded, and the gun silenced. As a result of this daring, voluntary numerous lives of our own troops were saved as they advanced on Chateaudun and the road previously under fire from this enemy gun. After silencing the enemy gun, Major Ketterman proceeded to a nearby cave in Chateaudun and captured 15 German soldiers. His courageous action, aggressive spirit and utter disregard for his own safety contributed materially to the capture of Chateaudun.

Private Ernest A. Jenkins, 32825565, 176<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Battalion, United States Army. For gallantry in action at Chateaudun, France, on 16-17 August 1944. Private Jenkins, while driving and officer, entered Chateaudun, France, prior to its liberation, and contributed materially in the location and destruction of an enemy gun position. Utterly disregarding his personal safety, Private Jenkins drove through Chateaudun until the enemy gun had been spotted. Private Jenkins then accompanied the officer to within 100yards of the enemy gun, from which they fired at the crew, killing three, wounding a number of other, and silenced the gun. As a result of this gallant action numerous lives of our own troops were saved as they advanced on Chateaudun down the road previously under the fire of this enemy gun. Later, in the vicinity of Chateaudun, Private Jenkins, aided the officer in the capture of 15 German soldiers found in a cave. By his courageous action in the face of a stronger enemy, and with complete disregard for his own safety, Private Jenkins notably assisted in the capture of Chateaudun

## PVT Ernest Jenkins & MAJ Charles Ketterman

176<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Battalion Mobile, Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment  
 Campaign Recognition  
 Normandy – Northern France – Central Europe – Ardennes-Alsac – Rhineland  
 They served in Occupation Duty from May 31 to October 1945 in Germany.

The photo to the right has the following notes from the National Archives website.

Photo: 111-SC-194836

NAID: 178140830

Date: 1944-10-13

Description: Original Caption: "Service Troops have their combat heroes, too. Lieutenant General George S. Patton, Jr. Third Army Commander, pins the Silver Star on Pvt. Ernest A. Jenkins (510 W. 174th Street, New York City), Quartermaster Corps. Entering Chateaudun, France, August 16-17, before the town was liberated and the officer he was driving, Maj. Charles W. Ketterman (Pasadena, California), located and knocked out an enemy gun position by killing three and wounding other members of the enemy gun crew. After silencing the gun Pvt. Jenkins assisted Major Ketterman in the capture of 15 German Soldiers found in a cave. Pvt. Jenkins was credited with assisting notably in capture of the city."

<https://catalog.archives.gov/id/178140830>

A relative for Major Ketterman was able to provide the photo to the lower right. I did reach out to the Still Photos of the National Archive and they could not find an original in the same series was the photo of Jenkins or any other listing for Major Ketterman.

As we are still researching Private Jenkins it turns out that the Major was a very interesting person. In one of the newspaper stories it describes the events as follows, "with his driver in a jeep, Colonel Ketterman was stopped on a road by French soldiers who told him about a group of about 85 Germans in a nearby wooded section. He returned to a command post, armed the jeep with a .50 caliber machine gun, and drove into the woods, where he succeeded in removing the three gun positions, and with his driver and the French soldiers killed about 40 of the Germans and captured 40 more.

Both men were awarded the French Croix de Guerre for this action. Both had received the Silver Star for the action also.

In this encounter, the fighting duo knocked out two German 88s by sniping the Nazi soldiers who manned them, then drove into the town of Chateaudun, killed 8 or 9 more Germans, captured 23, and by themselves captured the town."

It mentions that Major Ketterman had also received a French Croix de Guerre in WWI while fighting with the 18th Infantry regiment with the First Division. Major Ketterman had been a private when he enlisted at age 16 1/2. He was a private and by the end of the war was a Regimental Sergeant Major. He had stormed five machine gun nests in the war and had been wounded three times.

In a letter from Ketterman posted in the local newspaper he recounts the battles and experiences. In the letter he describes being in Company M, 18th Infantry Regiment in the Soissons-Rheims drive. After being knocked out from the concussion from an artillery shell he was removed from the battlefield by stretcher bearers and counted as missing in action. He mentions removing his pack to find four bullet holes through it, his coat had a button missing also, he states "That was pretty close." At the Bordeaux's hospital after being gassed he mentions a headache and a great deal of shock with gas to the eyes and lungs.



## PVT Ernest Jenkins & MAJ Charles Ketterman

In a newspaper article date April 11, 1919 he told the story of three events which he received citations for. In July 1918 the first was an attack on a machine gun nest where the 4 men advancing with him were killed but he was able to kill the machine gunner and his two assistants with a grenade and his pistol. On the fourth day of the advance he received his second citation for taking charge of 32 men, all that were left of my company of 250 men, (all of the officers having been killed.) We repulsed an enemy counter attack with great loss to them, and also 16 of the 32 men with me were either killed or wounded. On the 22nd while advancing against another machine gun position I was wounded in the leg by one of the bullets. I there received my third citation, which entitled me to the Croix de Guerre with the Bronze Star, which was presented to me in the Argonne forest October 9th.

Charles Ketterman was discharged in 1920 and returned to the service in 1930 where he served with the 12th Cavalry in Texas for 1 1/2 years. In 1936 he arrived in Pasadena, California where he was working in the electrical department of the Pasadena schools. There he served in A Company, 69th Quartermaster's Battalion at Ft MacArthur. He was the First Sergeant there when he opted to go to Officer Candidate School to become an officer. He served nine months in the Aleutians before receiving his commission. From there he was sent to Fort Lee, VA, commissioned only 45 days after training. He served 10 months as an instructor before being sent to England.

The following story of MAJ Ketterman and PVT Jenkins comes from Patton's Third Army at War by George Forty  
Arms and Armour  
Published by Ian Allan Ltd, 1978

From the SGT Saul Levitt story which appeared in Highlights from Yank which was published in 1955.

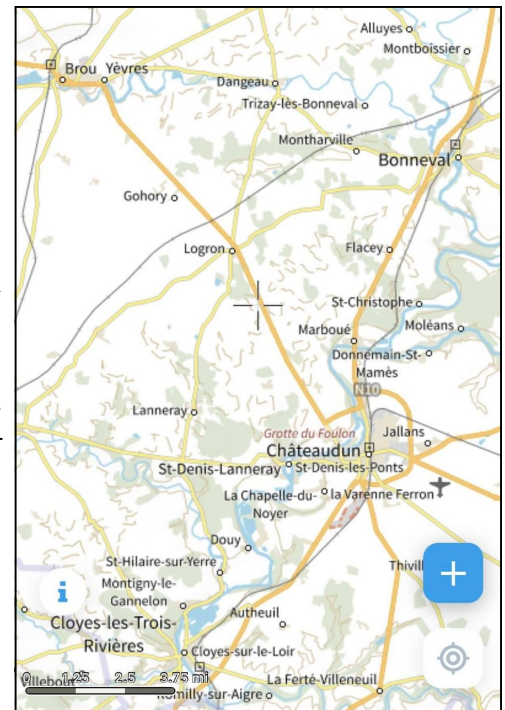
From the record itself, you realize immediately that Major Charles W. Ketterman of Pasadena, California, of the QM was a frustrated infantryman. He had been in the infantry in the last war and at Soissons had won the Croix de Guerre for knocking out a brace of German machine guns. But early in this war the Army had shoved him into a QM outfit, thereby blighting any combat plans he might have worked out for himself. As for PVT Ernest Jenkins, who drives the major, it is not clear what his outlook on combat was. He is a very close mouthed negro of 21, from New York City. He is a QM soldier armed with an '03 Springfield rifle. He had never said he wanted to kill Germans, and he'd never said that he didn't. Under the routine conditions of his job, the only way the Major could ever get close to combat was to have his jeep get around to the scene of action as often as possible, which he did. He always went with Jenkins at the wheel, and they picked up things like hand grenades which they held onto.

After the breakthrough of St Lo the majors QM battalion, following hard on the track of armor through France, was hard to hold together in one piece. It was the time of splendid confusion in France. The Major played tag with his battalion. Now he had it, now it was gone. It was in one of these periods, when his battalion was gone and he was looking for it, that the major and the private found themselves driving down from Brou towards Chateaudun on a day in August.

As the jeep went south it was very quiet, the kind of quietness that is disturbing to a soldier. The major was aware of the quietness, but that didn't stop him from going on. Maybe he was looking for something. They had both been without sleep for 24 hours. Along the road out of Chateaudun and coming toward them was a jeep rolling along at a pretty fair clip. The two vehicles stopped. "Where are you going, Major?" Asked one of the soldiers in the other jeep. "Through Chateaudun and south" said the major. "I don't think you're going through Chateaudun, Major," said the soldier, "because we're shelling hell out of that town, and what's more the Germans are in Chateaudun."

The Major considered that for a minute. If we were shelling it was probably to catch movement of the Germans eastward. Hell, he could probably slip around to the East of the town and capture some Germans. Maybe, however, he and Jenkins ought to have a little support. Between then they had only the '03 Springfield and a .45 pistol. Maybe the boys on the jeep, which mounted a .30 caliber machine gun, would like to help capture some Germans. The Major told them about his plan, and they were distinctly disinterested. In the end, however, they turned toward Chateaudun.

As they came over a rise of ground that showed Chateaudun below them, shells broke around them whistling from the other side of the Loire River and splattering the road. The burst had been aimed at them. It meant that the German guns covered the road with direct observation. The men in the jeeps got under cover of a stone wall at the side of the road. The men out of the other jeep stayed for a while and then thought of something they ought to be doing right away. They left. The major and the private were now alone in a garden behind a wall on the outskirts of town. An old Frenchman showed himself. The major was thinking fast. He had discarded the outflanking move to the east of town. What was more important was the German big gun on the other side of the river that covered this road. Americans coming this way would receive point blank fire. But if he could get close enough to the German gun to note its position accurately and report it back to our artillery...."Jenkins," said the major, "Yessir," "I got a plan." "Yessir."



## PVT Ernest Jenkins & MAJ Charles Ketterman

The major gave Jenkins the plan. “So we’ll go down to the river and look for that gun. How do you feel about that?” “It’s all right with me,” said Jenkins. The old Frenchman showed them a way down to the river through which they couldn’t be seen. They made it to another parapet on the edge of the river, and from behind the wall the major spores the gun. It was a big gun all right and camouflaged. They could see the Germans moving around the gun. It was a hundred yards across the river to the gun. They waited until dusk fell. And then it happened by itself. Our artillery was falling on the town, which made it fairly safe in a way, but not of the Germans saw the flash from the barrel. Jenkins had never fired the thing before except for the ordinary amount of target practice in basic training back in the states. The German stood up there clearly, and Jenkins let go and the German went down. “Jenkins,” “Yessir,” “Gimme that gun.”

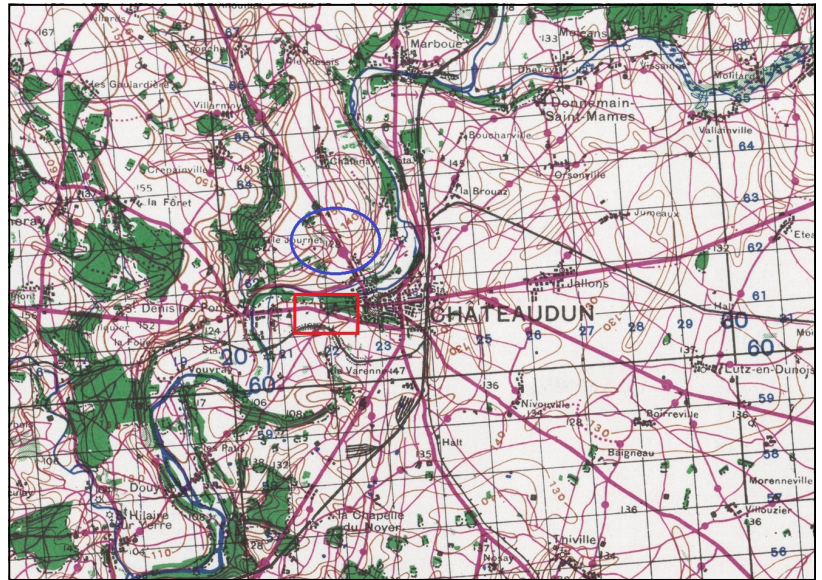
Jenkins handed it over. From behind the other end of the wall the Major fired. Around the gun now was a flurry of motion and the sound of voices. One man looked directly toward the wall. He looked at it steadily but that was all. It was now dark, but they had looked at the gun site for a long time. For three hours the ‘03 went back and forth between the major and the private. They were still there at midnight, a clear star-filled moonless midnight - 16 August. They knew they had killed and wounded men around the gun. And Now the movement began. The unmistakable sounds of motors. The in it was quiet again. “Jenkins,” “Yessir,” “How about getting across the river and looking around?” “It’s ok with me, sir.” In the darkness they tried to cross a bridge into the heart of Chateaudun, and halfway across almost fell in the river. The Germans had blown the center span.

The major and the private went back to the stone wall and slept until dawn, and when they awoke and looked across the river the gun and the men were gone. Some French people came out of the houses. The French said to the two Americans that they didn’t know who was in the town now. Undoubtedly there must be some American because they had heard rifle fire going back across the river toward the German positions. “It was our rifle fire,” explained the major. “Well, then,” declared the French, “you are the only ones here.” The major and the private now crossed to the other side of the river, walking carefully across a thread of bridgeway that still held in the center. As they reached the other side, crowds caught up with them. It was spreading through Chateaudun that here were the liberators, the first Americans to show.

And there were still Germans in the town – 15 of them, said the perfect of police, hidden in a dugout on the hospital grounds, and there was one German prisoner in the town jail. The Major brought his mind to bear on this military problem and concentrated, and then he consulted with his one-man army in the person of Private Jenkins. “Jenkins,” said the major, “I’ve got an idea,” “Yessir,” “We’ve got hand grenades, haven’t we, plus the rifle and the .45? I think we could take those Germans. What do you say?” “It’s ok with me, sir,” said Jenkins. Through an interpreter the Major explained to the German prisoner how he was to deliver from the Americans the ultimatum that grenades would be fired into the dugout if the Germans did not surrender.

The crowds lay on the border of the hospital grounds surrounding the dugout. The two Americans stood 25 feet in front of the dugout and waited. It was a long wait, a long five minute wait – and then the Germans came out – without arms. In the dugout lay some of their wounded. Three had been killed last night by rifle fire from some place, they said, and the others in the dugout had been wounded by the same fire. The 15 of them were in the rear guard left behind, the gun, and the other men had gone eastward out of town. Chateaudun swelled now with the joy of liberation, giving the two Americans that kind of welcome which always accompanies the first hours of freedom.

And that was long ago, in those ancient days of breakthrough after St Lo, as we charged through France. They shook Chateaudun from them, a little at a time, making their way out of town, the Major who had once been an infantryman and couldn’t forget it, and the private who had never fired a gun in anger. As the jeep drove out of town it was warm and they felt drowsy. “Jenkins,” said the major, “I’ve got an idea,” “Yessir,” “if we keep on going through Chateaudun we should hit that damn CP and get some sleep. How about it?” “It’s ok with me sir,” said Jenkins wheeling the jeep southward out of town. Pages 43, 44, 45.





## Taking Flight: The Nadine Ramsey Story by Raquel Ramsey & Tricia Aurand

Taking flight Raquel Ramsey

ASIN: B08LZV83Y4

Publisher: University Press of Kansas (October 28, 2020)

Publication date: October 28, 2020

Print length: 320 pages

### Description

In October 1944, Nadine Ramsey was thirty-three and she was flying the cutting-edge P-51 Mustang to New Jersey, its last stop before heading to the war in Europe. The irrepressible young woman from Wichita had long been determined to fly and the gathering storm clouds of World War II had provided an unexpected opportunity. Taking Flight is the inspiring story of a girl from Depression-era Kansas who overcame tremendous challenges and defied convention to become an elite pilot—one of the few American women to fly fighter aircraft during World War II.

Taking Flight follows Nadine as she became one of 1,102 women to join the Women's Airforce Service Pilots and one of only 303 WASPs to take to the skies in military cockpits, transporting aircraft to bases across the nation for use in the theaters of war. This book marks her milestones: the first Kansas woman to earn a commercial pilot license; among the earliest women to fly the US Air Mail; one of only 26 WASPs who flew the Lockheed P-38 Lightning, a fighter aircraft—and the first woman to own one; the only woman in the country to instruct male pilots to fly fighter planes after the war. Disbanded in late 1944 to make way for male pilots and barred from piloting for commercial airlines, the WASPs spent the next three decades fighting to win veteran status.

Taking Flight: The Nadine Ramsey Story is a profile in courage of a woman who helped clear the flight path for today's female combat and commercial aviators.

### Authors

Raquel Ramsey, a retired teacher, is the widow of Nadine's brother, Col. Edwin P. Ramsey, a decorated World War II hero, and the executive producer of his documentary, *Never Surrender: The Ed Ramsey Story*.

Tricia Aurand is a screenwriter. Both Ramsey and Aurand live in Los Angeles.

### Review

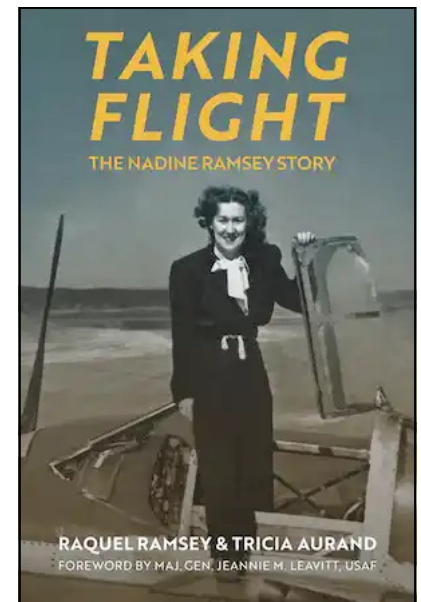
Taking Flight Nadine Ramsey was the sister to Col Ed Ramsey who was a guerilla fighter in WWII in the Philippines. While he was in his own struggles in WWII his sister being a woman pilot was facing her own struggles. As mentioned before I have been drawn to books on women who pushed the limits as a girl dad I have found that some eighty years ago there were some very brave women.

As you will learn researching them their recognition came many decades after the fact. Nadine is one of the older women to serve in WWII as a pilot in the Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron (WAFS) and Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASP). She bought a P-38 after the war and flew it in air shows and other events. She was a well recognized pilot among her fellow pilots. This is a story similar to that of Cornelia Fort but it picks up and covers the women pilots after the period where Cornelia died. The women air services were cancelled in December 1944 with nothing more than a thank you they were let go. No military recognition for their service to the nation in a time of need.

But a base commander at an Army Air Field released one of the women pilots with "a certificate similar to an honorable discharge" but since they didn't specify further, the commander gave her a regulation Army Honorable Discharge. A document that would come in handy some thirty years later when they lobbied Congress for recognition.

Nadine would suffer in her life from injuries in a plane crash from 1940 she would also struggle with a world that viewed women as a housewife and nothing more. She was unique among the women who flew in WWII that she would continue to support aviation and struggle to fit in.

The women who flew in WWII would struggle in to 1970s, 80s and into the 2000s to get their recognition, benefits and burial at Arlington National Cemetery. But at the interment for Elaine Harmon the flag would be handed to her daughter by Air Force Captain Jennifer Lee. The flag had been flown at various places around the country by female pilots. They created a log book and documented about what the WASPs contributions meant to them. The flag had been supersonic in an F-16 among other things. The work of these young women in WWII should be more well known and talked about. My daughters will learn about them and I hope you will to. WASP Archive located at the Texas Women's University, Denton, TX.



### Patton Monument Report for 2023

As of March, 2023, the Monument fund has \$26,637.00.

Total in Monument Account: \$26,637.00.

The Bourg Tee Shirts we have on hand. **(UPDATED)**

**Large:** Yellow - 2, **2XL:** Yellow - 2, Tan - 2, OD - 3, **3XL:** Yellow - 2, Tan - 2, OD - 1, **4XL:** Yellow - 1.

M4 Tee Shirt

**Large:** Tan - 1.

**2XL:** Tan - 1

**New Mugs!!!**

We now have the 15oz Red Ball Express mug and the new 15oz Treat'em Rough Mug!

**Lapel Pins**

We are looking at \$12 each for these.



**Patton Battalion Funds / Memberships / Dues**

The Patton Battalion, as of March, has 438 members on our battalion Facebook page. Out of those 451 members we are currently at 93 paid members. The Patton Battalion has \$0.56 in funds in the PayPal account. We have \$434.86 in the Patton Operating account. Battalions funds are \$434.86. There are no Monument funds in the Battalion account as of this time.

In order to be a paid member of the battalion you must be a paid member of USABOT National. Again, a paid first year membership of \$15.00 which gets you a free battalion patch. Since we now have the battalion patch in the larger size both in color and subdued you have a choice as to which one you want free with your paid membership.

Both patches are also available for \$5 EA.

Your annual membership renewal will be \$10.00 every year after that. ***Annual dues for the battalion are now due in June of each year!***

You can pay for your battalion membership through Paypal at: **pattonbattalion@outlook.com** or **patton.battalion@usabot.org**.

If you don't have a Paypal account you can send a check or Money Order to:

**Patton Battalion - USABOT**  
1432 Flood Road  
Shelbyville, KY 40065



**ATTENTION**

**USABOT Memberships can be renewed and purchased By mail at**

**USABOT**  
68 West Marion ST  
Doylestown, OH 44230

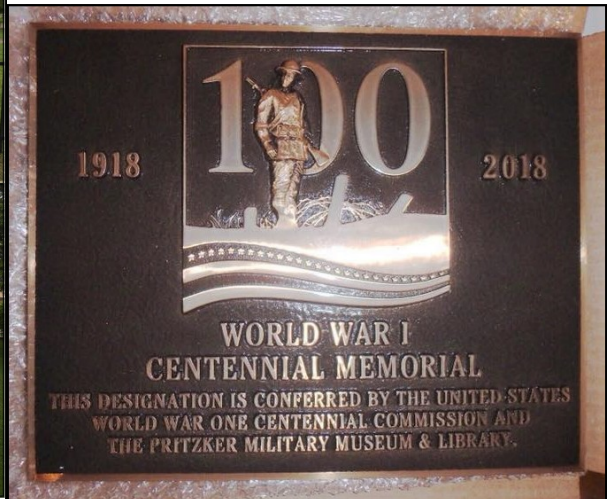
**Make checks payable to USABOT**  
**If at all possible try to go the USABOT Store Online and register there so that the G4 can track.**

**WWW.USABOT.ORG**

# Patton Joins the US Tank Corps Monument

The US Tank Corps shirts we still have few tees left!

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Be sure to check us out on  
Twitter @pattonbattalion



NATO eFP BG Poland, Battle Group Poland is a U.S.-led battle group, in partnership with The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Romania and Croatia.

Polish PM Mateusz Morawiecki and Defence Minister Mariusz Blaszczak met with soldiers of the eFP Battlegroup and their allies at Permanent Delegation of the Republic of Poland to NATO to see our vehicles and equipment. Civilians had the chance to learn military skills and discover more about. #WeAreNATO, #StrongerTogether. Mar 15, 2023

Coming up in the April Issue -

Upcoming Events

**US Cavalry & Armor Association Chapter Fort Knox** - Stable Call monthly meeting, 3rd Thursday of every month, Location TBD - Fort Knox, KY.

**Indiana Military Museum Schedule 2023**

- The Great War Event, April 1-2, 2023
- WWII Event Spring - TBD
- WWII Event Fall - TBD
- Vietnam War Event - TBD

**Eleventh Annual Tanker Homecoming** - Tucson, AZ. Dates TBD.

**Gainey Cup** - Ft Benning, GA, 1-5 May 2023.

**Operation Anvil - Battle for Southern France 1944-** Phil Moore Park, Bowling Green, KY.

**Patton and the US Tank Corps Monument** - Fort Knox - **TBD**

