

## **A Brief History of The 453rd. A.A.A. (A.W.) Bn.**

On August 1st. 1942 the Organization was activated at Fort Bliss Texas, as the 453rd. Coast Artillery Battalion, A.A. Automatic Weapons. The command of the group was given to a Cadre of Officers and Enlisted Men from various other Artillery Organizations.

The Battalion, was composed of four Gun Batteries, and a Headquarters Battery. Each Gun battery was assigned 40 M.M. Bofers Anti Aircraft Guns, mounted on a four wheeled devise that could be lowered on pads for stability when being fired. They were also assigned 50 Caliber Water Cooled machine Guns, along with the necessary trucks and vehicles to make the Unit a semi-mobile organization. Battalion man power about 850 men.

After Basic Training at Fort Bliss Texas, and effective Training with our new found "Toys", our Training was completed with an exercise that rated the 453rd. The best qualified 40 M.M. outfit in the Command.

Due to the extra ordinary qualifications of the 453rd. The Battalion was selected to become a Demonstration Unit attached to an Armored Forces Command. After some Personnel changes the Organization was shipped off to Fort Knox Kentucky. (No we didn't get to guard the Gold Reserve) The 453rd. was the first Anti Aircraft Battalion to be recommended and accepted to become a Demonstration Unit to work with the Armored Forces in trying to develop a more Mobile Unit of operation. At this time a new group of Inductees from the West Coast joined the Battalion to bring our Unit up to the required Man Power level. At this time our Coast Artillery Designation was dropped, and changed to Anti Aircraft Artillery.

Quad Mount Air Cooled 50 Caliber Machine Guns mounted on Four Wheeled Trailers, were a direct result of this assignment. Later on these would change, and the Quad mount would be put on Half Tracks.

In mid Summer of 1943 we were transferred to Camp Stewart Georgia. (Camp Swampy, What a Hole.) Now, Fort Stewart. After

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living with the Alligators and Snakes, in Bivouac for two months, and many men being unhappy, a group of enlistees, along with an Officer or two, tried to get transferred into the Paratroops. No enlisted men were accepted, but the scanty records seem to indicate that one Officer was accepted. Immediately after this, "the powers that be", decided it would be prudent to grant Furloughs to the Battalion. By mid August 1943 The battalion was given orders to move to Lebanon Tenn. For Maneuvers. While in convoy to the Maneuver Area The Battalion had a stop over at Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, Home of the W.A.C.S. Needless to say it was Memorable.

The Battalion was relieved from Maneuvers in November of 1943 and reassigned to Fort Fisher North Carolina.

At Fort Fisher more men were assigned to the Unit to bring us up to strength again.

Two days after Christmas in 1943 we were reassigned to the Maple Hill section of Camp Davis North Carolina. This was an O.C.S. Training center for Anti Aircraft Officers.

The Camp has been torn down for many years, and is now a Housing development.

On February 1st. 1944, The 453rd., was shipped off to Camp Shanks, N.Y., were after a few days we boarded the 'Dominion Monarch', a British Refrigeration Ship that used to ply between Great Britain and the Caribbean. Instead of "Cow Beef" hanging in the Coolers, it was "Human Beef" sleeping in Hammocks. It was sure better sleeping in the Hammocks than in the Lace-up Bunks, that were provided to the guys who pulled duty in the 20 M.M. Gun Turrets. That was COLD DUTY. The ship landed in Liverpool, England, about twelve days after leaving Camp Shanks. From Liverpool the Battalion went to Camp Black Shaw Moore, just outside of Leek, Staffordshire, England. This is the Midland section of England, known for its Fine China. The facility was new, but still antiquated to our standards. Of course limited Materials contributed to much of the problem. Who can ever forget the "Floating Fires" traveling down the sewer pipe, that made up the Toilet facilities. Nor

the overflow at the end of the pipe when the Septic Tank would plug up, pity the poor G.I. who would be using the last couple of seats ? (To the British the, "W.C.") or Ablutions.

From Leek, we traveled to a small town in Southern England, Maiden Newton, in Dorchester County.

From this point we crisscrossed Southern England to various points for more intensive training to prepare the Unit for the coming "Baptism of Fire" that would be expected in the near future. One such place was Barnstable Bay, on the English West Coast, where we learned how to prepare our equipment by water proofing, for expected landing on the Continent. Upon returning to that site in 1994 the writer could distinctly see the similarity to the Terrain of that particular Beach and surrounding area to that of Utah Beach, where many of the Unit landed.

We were now assigned Quad Mount Fifties on Half Tracks to replace the Trailered Units.

( Note. "X" Battery, assigned to 4<sup>th</sup> Div.)

Our final preparations being made, we were ready for the trip to France, and set sail from Weymouth Harbor. (Some may have shipped from another port.)

At this time the Battalion was broken down into small Combat Units, consisting of a Quad Mount Fifty on a Half Track, towing a 40 M.M. Bofers Gun, and off we went to "WAR". The small combat groups were scattered over a large territory, and assigned to various Combat Groups as Anti Tank and Anti Aircraft protection. It is not known all the groups that were covered. Some landed at Utah Beach to work with the 4th Division that was a part of the 1st. Army. This Combat group landed on "D. Day" plus six. The balance of the 453rd. Landed on "D" plus twelve.

There was not much Air nor Tank activity in the part of the Cherbourg Peninsula that we fell heir to, So our Quad Mount Fifties, and Bofer Units were used for helping to clear out Pill Boxes in the Hedgerows, so that the Infantry had a better chance to gain ground. Later tanks with other types of equipment were used for this purpose.

After the cut off of the Cherbourg Peninsula, The small Combat units returned to the Carentan Area, where they were

reunited with the rest of the Battalion. On July 2nd. 1944 we were assigned to the 83rd. Division, part of the VIII Corps.

From this point on, the 453rd. A.A.A. (A.W.) Bn. Was permanently assigned to the 83rd. Infantry Division, and saw service in every action the 83rd. was assigned in their travels across Europe. Receiving Campaign Ribbons for Normandy, Brittany, Ardennes, the Rhineland and Central Europe.

One of the Memorable incidents on the way through France, being the time that 'X' Batteries were formed to cover specific areas, such as patrolling the Loire River with a Provisional Battery of all Track mounted Quad Fifties. There were 16 such units, and the racket they made when all guns were called upon to open fire at the same time, to give a show of force to the Enemy on the other side of the River. This was the in support of the operation that Lt. Sam Magill, from North Kingsville Ohio, put together to arrange the surrender of 20,000 German Troops. The largest number to surrender in a group up until that time.

Starting in October 1944, for a short time, part of the Battalion provided Radio Luxemburg protection.

The 453rd. Suffered as many casualties at the Elbe River, as the Battalion did on their journey across Europe.

The 453rd. A.A.A. (A.W.) Bn. Was credited with <sup>SEE CORRECTION - LAST PAGE</sup> (47) German Air Craft kills, although there were many more probables. That were not confirmed,

The Battalion was relieved of its Combat Command on the 6th. Of May, 1945. And moved from Calbe to Konigslutter, Germany. On May 8th, 1945 it moved into Kries Blankenburg, where it was assigned a Military Government Mission. After turning this area over to the British Troops, ( and finally it was turned over to the Russians) the Battalion moved to Munich, Germany.

The Battalion was broken up in Munich, with the men having the greater number of points being sent back to France to

begin the trip State Side, the others were sent to various 'low point' Battalions to wait their turn to return home.

The following is a list of those Killed in Action from Normandy through to the Elbe River. This record may not be complete as no records are available to verify the number of deaths. This information was supplied by individuals directly associated with those that were K.I.A.

Bayles, Leonard C.	Hurtgen Forest.
Berger, Jack.	St. Malo.
Enman, Wesley, LT.	Elbe River.
Fowler, Vernon.	Brittany.
Gaston, Robert W.	Germany
Gluesing, Vernon E.	France.
Jackson, Robert	France
Barry E.	Luxembourg
Klien, Harry T.	Germany
Manini, Henry C.	Luxembourg
McGovern, Joseph.	Hurtgen Forest.
Ostrem, Russel J.	France
Rhew, Vastene.	Luxembourg
Ross, Bruce M.	Normandy.
Ross, Herbert E.	Belgium. "C" Batt.
Rutola, Frank.	Belgium.
Shaw, (Bill) Gareth L.	Calvados, France. "B" Batt.
Shaw, James B.	France.
Tyner, Herman.	Germany. "B" Batt.

After V.E. Day the Personnel that had been assigned to the Low Point Outfits were set up as Occupation Troops, until their time came up to be returned to the U. S.

The 453rd. A.A.A. (A.W.) Bn. Was inactivated on the 26th. of January, 1946.

The Battalion was then allotted to the Army Reserve and assigned as an organic element of the 83rd. Infantry Division.

Activated on the 20th. Of May, 1952 with Headquarters in Columbus, Ohio.

Headquarters moved to Mansfield, Ohio on the 23rd. Of February, 1955.

The above information was compiled from some scattered notes recorded by some of the 453rd. Members.

Submitted by; Fred C. Pearson  
President of The 453rd. AAA. (AW) BN.  
5704 Middle Ridge Rd.  
Madison, Ohio. 44057-2838.

It is to be further noted that the 453rdAAA (AW) BN. was composed of about 90% of men from Ohio, West Virginia, Kentucky and Indiana. The balance of the men were replacements who came from the West coast in the Spring of 1943.

Correction From Capt Sam Cohen  
Received Sept. 2<sup>nd</sup>. 2008 He was  
S2/ S3 Officer for the 453<sup>rd</sup> AAA.  
His Records Show 94 Enemy Aircraft  
Based on recorded coordinates. Plus  
6 Spitfires who mistakenly attacked  
us on the Cherbourg Route.

History printed several years before  
I received his information.