

Interview with John D. Tuggle
B B7 127th EA
18 Feb 1989

When did you go into the National Guard?

Feb. 8 1937

into B Troop 114th Cavalry. Paul Connolly was the Regimental Commander. Brian Bently was the Troop Commander.

Was he from Coffeyville? (Connolly)

Negative. However, in 1939 he became personnel manager of O.C.S. manufacturing (now PARMAC) and until the time we were mobilized his residence was in Coffeyville.

How about the conversion from Cavalry to Field Artillery?

We were converted on the first of October, 1940.

And then we were mobilized December 23, 1940.

Had you had a chance to convert much of your equipment over?

No, we didn't have any equipment, we had no field artillery equipment at all. After we were mobilized we spent almost two weeks in Coffeyville. We were stationed at Memorial Hall, that's where we were quartered, 10 cots out on the basketball court.

On January 3, 1941, we entrained on a Friday night, by Missouri Pacific to Little Rock, Camp Robinson. They were passenger trains. We arrived in camp and the camp wasn't finished, they were still working on it. We were quartered in pyramidal tents which were erected on a wooden framework, and we didn't have any gas hooked up yet. The mess hall hadn't been finished yet. We were right next to the base hospital (along 26th Place) The anti-tank Bn, just to the north of the base hospital.

Approved on 4/15

There is a picture in the ~~base~~ ^{of the base hospital which} history ~~which~~ shows our [area]

The motor park was south between Ave A and Minnesota Ave between 26th and 27th

How long were you at Robinson before you started getting any artillery equipment?

A couple of months, at least, before we drew any equip.

What were you doing until then?

What they did was take our people over and give us some initial training at the 161st Field Artillery, on the "75's" ^{where} The Cannoneers got their first training.

I was in Communications so I attended Communications school along with the other field artillery units. I had two weeks of wire communications then I attended radio school for three months.

So is that why there are pictures of Battery E 127th with the 75's?

Well, Shoot, they were the only all Indian unit in the whole United States Army and they received special (attention) they show them with equipment they were even assigned to, like fifty caliber machinegun, they didn't have those, their battery had a couple of ~~Bar~~ Automatics and they had a machinegun sergeant and he just had a couple of men in his section. All they had were a couple of BAR's and they made a ground mount for them so they could mount them like an anti aircraft mount, using a BAR.

They had just been converted so they didn't have any equipment.

Yeah they were 127th just like us.

What happened to the Cavalry equipment?

It was turned in here (Coffeeville), you see, the horses, they sent them, I suppose to Fort Riley, the Cavalry equipment, saddles that all went to Fort Riley.

So they closed down the use of the stable and Forest Park?

That's right. They were closed down and shipped like horses out, so some of the equipment, the saddles, blankets, etc.

Were those men that left the unit when it was converted?

Negative, they just stayed there.

But they did close down the Medical detachment?

Well, what happened, I shoot, I'll tell you what. When the new clouds began to show on the horizon all the medical officers resigned their commissions the last part of the year. The medical detachment had to go to Tokyo. Our battery officers, troop officers, they stayed, but some of the old time sergeants got out (laughs) so then some of the younger, like those who had been corporals were promoted to sergeants you see.

So they felt like it was a good time to go?

1st Sergeant
OTTO C. BEESON

Staff Sergeant
Charles J. Lovett

The only two older NCOs that stayed were Sergeant Beeson and Lovett, who had been stable sergeant.

They were the full time guys.

They were full time but they were Civil Service. Lovett, instead of stable sergeant, he became the motor sergeant. He was a staff sergeant and he went with us to Little Rock and stayed with us there about six months and then got out.

Did he have any training for that job?

No, none of us really had any field artillery training.

Did you have any motorized vehicles in the Cavalry before it was converted?

Not one. Regimental Headquarters did have a few vehicles. Down here all we had were horse-drawn vehicles.

Did you have horses for all the men?

No. Even, I think our Troop strength was 54 enlisted men and we only had half enough horses for each man. In the summer time when we trained out at the Forest Park, half the men would be on a horse for one evening, the next week, the other half would have the horses. When we went to summer camp we drew what they call remounts. I recall my first summer camp, I was the shortest man in the Troop and I received the tallest horse and I couldn't mount him on the level (laughs) I had to go and get him in a ditch so I could.

Being arm's length short the stirrups were naturally up higher because the way you (adjust them), you placed your hand on the saddle and measured the stirrup and adjusted the stirrup to fit in your armpit.

Camp Rpk
Minn 1940

I recall my last trip to summer camp in Minnesota. I had a wild horse, he bucked me off at least once a day. We used to be, if we were sent, like a half a dozen of us, the evening we were supposed to return to camp after being out in the field, you know on maneuvers during the week... They sent us someplace and of course the minute we got out of sight of the bivouac area we had the horses in a gallop. On the return trip we were in a gallop again mine bucked me off and then he proceeded to keep on bucking until he had all my equipment torn up. Of course if we had behaved ourselves, you know, and not got him above a trot I'd probably have been alright. I haven't been on a horse since.

Have you wanted to be?

I wouldn't mind it, but the opportunity never presented itself. I liked to ride, as far as that goes.

When you got back from summer camp in 1940, is that when you got the word that there was going to be a change to Field Artillery?

Shortly after that. It was about a little over a month we got back in August, you see. The last act, the last duty as a cavalry unit. Willkie, who was the Republican Presidential candidate that year, made his kickoff speech on the grounds of where the hospital is now (Coffeyville Regional Medical Center 4th and Buckeye). So we had to go be on duty to help take care of the crowds. That was our last duty as a cavalry unit. Was that done on horseback?

No, just on foot.

What was the general opinion of the men when they heard about the change?

The general opinion, ^{I think} ~~was~~ we were all for it. I know I was (laughs). Glad to get rid of a horse (thinking ^{that} a gun might be easier to take of). I would say we had it tougher on maneuvers in the cavalry than we did overseas in combat in day-to-day operations. I would hate to have been horse cavalry in combat.

Could you describe the uniform and equipment you had in the fall of 1940?

In the cavalry we wore breeches and boots. And after we were changed to field artillery of course, when we first went to Camp Robinson we still were dressed as cavalry were. Laced boots and then I think it was about two or three months before we drew slacks and we got rid of our breeches and then we wore leggings and when we were in the field we wore canvas leggings that laced up the side. Those were the D.D.'s. The breeches were

made of what we call cavalry twill, This is the same material that the officers uniforms were made of

Did you still have 1903 Springfields?

In the cavalry we were equipped with '03 Springfields and Colt automatic pistols. When we were changed to field artillery, they didn't have enough pistols to go around so they gave us the .45 Colt revolver. All the enlisted men, the officers still had the automatics. Then about the middle of '41 they decided that we would be armed with the carbine. Of course, they didn't have any carbines so they trotted out their old Model 1917 Enfields. The Enfield has a longer barrel than the Springfield so, let's see, from Corporal (down) the first four grades still carried the pistol, down to buck sergeant. Corporals, privates took the Enfield. So we didn't draw any carbines until 1943 which was exactly two years later, from the time they decided that we would be armed with the carbine it was exactly two years before we drew any.

Could you talk a little bit about the 155mm gun?

Howitzer 155mm
63
Carriage
M1918

Our 155 was the, what they call a Schneider from World War I. That's not a split trail and for traverse, they would shift along the axle and you couldn't traverse them very far. If we had a major change then the crew had to shift the trail spider out

Was that a heavy job?

That was a heavy job. Of course the later ones were split trail and they would pivot you didn't have to. And in fact the anti-tank guns that our anti-tank batteries had were split trail. The 130mm

and the 161ST still had the 75's with a single trail. They had to be shift-d. Of course, they were much smaller guns than the 155 and it was easy to do on them.

This takes a bag charge? oh yes [but]

The 75's had a cartridge. See when they actually got into combat they drew the 105 which is a brand new gun with split trail. It had a shell but it also had semi-fixed ammunition. They used a powder charge they could place with (?) depending on the powder charge that they needed. But then, from 155 and on up was a separate charge. I mean separate powder bags and no case.

When did you first get these? (The Schneiders.)

I would say, about two months after we arrived at Little Rock [March; April] If you will notice in the old picture they were solid rubber tires and a month after this picture was taken we drew modified carriages. The same guns, all they did was take this part, the tubes and recoil mechanism, this was removed and placed on a modified carriage. Ordnance did that [at Camp Robinson] 110th Ordnance Company

How long was it before you fired them?

Probably, about four months. We had ammunition from WWI that was Shrapnel. Most people have a misconception of Shrapnel. What most people refer to (as) shrapnel is the shell fragment. Shrapnel are lead balls that were in, part of the shell. We could fire Shrapnel in peacetime right out in the open with the gun placed. If you will notice in this picture, they're firing high explosive, which is actually a TNT charge, and you notice this enclosure that is built to protect them.

If there was a muzzle burst with it, the (the
enclosure) would protect them.

Did you ever know that to happen?

Yes, after we had been firing for about a week
after we arrived overseas, in combat, in Normandy,
a shell exploded after it left the muzzle of the
gun and killed two outright and injured three
seriously. It set the tires on fire the camouflage
net was on fire and they had to fight it so it wouldn't
get into the powder. On an eight inch howitzer, that's
the one we used overseas [997th FA Bn]. Incidentally
it was the most accurate gun used in World War
II.

How did you have the Schneiders?

We had the Schneider until fall of 1942.
We took them to California and the first of
March 1942 we had been removed from 35th
Division and became the 195th Field Artillery
[Regiment] 195th was to be equipped with 8 inch
howitzers and it was another six months before
we received the guns so in the meantime we used
the Schneiders.

Side Two
Tape One

After we became the 195th then they used
the cadre from the first battalion to form the
second battalion. and then we received replacements
from Camp Roberts [CA.] to fill it up. Second Battalion
received the 8 inch guns but they had been in existence
five or six months before they got the guns.

Was the lack of equipment (we type) at Camp Robinson a problem
for training?

Yes. The only modern equipment we had was the
vehicles and then we didn't have all the

vehicles we were supposed to have but we had

most. For instance the battery commander was supposed

to have a command car to ride in with him but we

had to use a 2 1/2 ton truck and later he received a

3/4 ton weapons carrier which is similar in size to a

pickup truck and carrying a civilian car and a

command car [means civilian car and command car similar in size]

when we first went on maneuvers in Louisiana

we had four 4 ton Diamond T trucks that

were used as a prime mover for the guns. Incidentally,

when we had the old solid rubber tires [on the guns]

we could only travel at the rate of seven miles per hour when

we took them out in the field. After we received

the modified carriages with pneumatic tires we could

travel at higher speeds, we had these by the time

we went to maneuvers but they wrecked one of them

and so we had to pull a gun back to camp Robinson

because we only had just enough. We were supposed

to have five Diamond T's so we'd have a spare.

[99715FABu]

Our first prime movers for the 8 inch howitzers

were seven-ton Mack's. We used these there at

Fort Ord and then we went to desert training in

summer of 1943 in California in the desert. In

August of 1943 we moved from there to Fort Leavenworth,

Missouri. There we received Tractors to

pull the guns with. Which resembles a tank

[M-5 high speed tractor]. Then we used the Mack's

for ammunition trucks. We had five of them for

ammunition trucks, one with the ammunition section

and the other four, we had one for each

gun crew because the cab of the tractor could

carry just half of the personnel of the gun crew.

So the rest of the personnel rode in the Mack truck.

There was one occasion during The Battle of the Bulge, The roads were icy, slippery, They could not use The Maulters To pull The guns. So They had To use The Marks To pull The guns. So They had a spare vehicle which could Tow The gun To move us from position To position.

What were The missions you were doing during The La. Maneuvers?

This was The largest peacetime maneuver That There has ever been in The history of The United States Army. We had Two full field armies, The Second and The Third maneuvering against each other. It was To Test us in as near combat conditions as possible without firing (laughs) We did not fire any ammunition, you understand. Mostly what we were doing was maneuvering, one side trying To get The best of The other side and They had umpires which determined who won (laughs). They had red forces and blue forces. The blue forces wore blue armbands and red forces, red armbands. I Think we switched once or twice. Sometimes we were blue and other times, red.

997th

Where did The 997th end The war?

It ended The war at a Town named Molson St. Jacob. It was located about 25 miles north of The Czech border.

~~When The reorganization of The 114th happened~~

~~3 battalions~~

~~1st Bn Jola, Colleyville~~

Pearsall

Lester
3086 Main
879-2445

M. L.
100 W 72
879-5282

a couple of fellows from Coney by the name of Pearsall(?) were in the band. They would train with us in the summertime at the Park and when we went to summer camp they were with the band. Each regiment had a band

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219th came out of the 161st
parts of the 130th [were changed to 154th - went
to Aleutians]

35th division was a square division until we arrived at San Luis Obispo. Four infantry regiments, they left two of them, 134th and 137th in the division then 138th and 140th formed a reserve division

When 35th division began to wear the patch again, were the patches color coded as to unit?

When we were first mobilized, the artillery units had red inside them, infantry had blue, the MPs had green.

The patch we had was all blue. They had this patch for about a year then they adopted the present one. They had this at Camp Robinson when they first arrived they had all these different colors and so they adopted this one (blue) and everybody had this patch for about a year. When we were first mobilized [we had the color coded patches] then they got rid of them and adopted this one (blue).