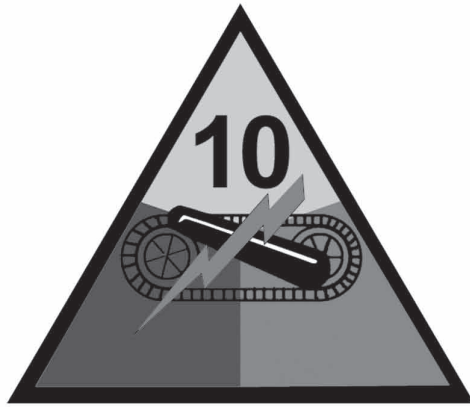


★ 162 DAYS ★

and a Bronze Star



by Dwayne Engle



Melvin C. Engle
1945

For Mom and Dad.
I'm proud to be your son.

July 2006

10th Armored Division Time Table

February 27, 1945 - Irsch, Germany
February 28, 1945 - Pellingen, Germany
March 1, 1945 - Trier, Germany
March 10, 1945 - Schweich, Germany
March 11, 1945 - Trier, Germany
March 16, 1945 - Zerf, Germany
March 17-19, 1945 - St. Wendel, Germany
March 20, 1945 - Kaiserslautern, Germany
March 21, 1945 - Annweiler, Germany
March 22, 1945 - Landau, Germany
March 23-27, 1945 - Ludwigshafen, Germany
March 28, 1945 - Worms, Germany
March 30, 1945 - Schwetzingen, Germany
March 31, 1945 - Speyer, Germany
April 2, 1945 - Bruchal, Germany
April 3, 1945 - Heilbronn, Germany
April 4-6, 1945 - Lauffen, Germany
April 7, 1945 - Assamstadt, Germany
April 8, 1945 - Crailsheim, Germany
April 10-11, 1945 - Bartenstein/Blaufelden, Germany
April 13, 1945 - Ohringen, Germany
April 16, 1945 - Schwabisch Hall, Germany
April 18, 1945 - Schwabisch Gmund, Germany
April 20, 1945 - Kirchem, Germany
April 22, 1945 - Ehingen, Germany
April 24-25, 1945 - Ulm, Germany
April 26, 1945 - Memmingen, Germany
April 27, 1945 - Kempten, Germany
April 27, 1945 - Imst, Austria
April 29, 1945 - Fussen, Germany
April 30, 1945 - Lermoos, Austria
End of War - Occupied Oberammergau/
Garmisch-Partenkirchen Area

10th Armored Division Chronology

Activated - 15 Jul 1942

Arrived ETO - 23 Sep 1944

Arrived Continent (D+109) - 23 Sep 1944

Entered combat - 2 Nov 1944

Days in combat - 124

Casualties

Killed - 710

Wounded - 3,400

Missing - 586

Captured - 1

Battle Casualties 4,697

Non-battle casualties - 3,684

Total Casualties - 8,381

Percent of T/O strength - 78.5%

Campaigns

Ardennes

Rhineland

Central Europe

Individual Awards

DSC - 19

Legion of Merit - 12

Silver Star - 217

Soldier's Medal - 23

Bronze Star - 1400

Air Medal - 13

DFC - 2

German Prisoners of War Captured - 43,208

10th Armored Division Organic Units

Headquarters Company

Reserve Command

3d Tank Bn

11th Tank Bn

21st Tank Bn

20th Armored Inf Bn

54th Armored Inf Bn

61st Armored Inf Bn

10th Armored Division Trains

132d Ordnance Maintenance Bn

80th Armored Medical Bn

Combat Command A

Combat Command B

90th Cavalry Rcn Sq (Mecz)

55th Armored Engineer Bn

150th Armored Signal Co

10th Armored Division Artillery

419th Armored FA Bn

420th Armored FA Bn

423d Armored FA Bn

Military Police Platoon

Band

B R O N Z E S T A R R E Q U I R E M E N T S

3-13. Bronze Star Medal

a. The Bronze Star Medal was established by Executive Order 9419, 4 February 1944 (superseded by Executive Order 11046, 24 August 1962).

b. The Bronze Star Medal is awarded to any person who, while serving in any capacity in or with the Army of the United States after 6 December 1941, distinguished himself or herself by heroic or meritorious achievement or service, not involving participation in aerial flight, in connection with military operations against an armed enemy; or while engaged in military operations involving conflict with an opposing armed force in which the United States is not a belligerent party.



c. Awards may be made for acts of heroism, performed under circumstances described above, which are of lesser degree than required for the award of the Silver Star.

d. The Bronze Star Medal may be awarded for meritorious achievement or meritorious service according to the following:

(1) Awards may be made to recognize single acts of merit or meritorious service. The lesser degree than that required for the award of the Legion of Merit must nevertheless have been meritorious and accomplished with distinction.

B R O N Z E S T A R R E Q U I R E M E N T S

(2) Award may be made by letter application to Commander, ARPERCEN, ATTN: DARP-VSE-A, 9700 Page Boulevard, St. Louis, MO 63132-5200 (enclosing documentary evidence, if possible), to each member of the Armed Forces of the United States who after 6 December 1941, has been cited in orders or awarded a certificate for exemplary conduct in ground combat against an armed enemy between 7 December 1941 and 2 September 1945, inclusive, or whose meritorious achievement has been other wise confirmed by documents executed prior to 1 July 1947. For this purpose, an award of the Combat Infantryman Badge or Combat Medical Badge is considered as a citation in orders. Documents executed since 4 August 1944 in connection with recommendations for the award of decorations of higher degree than the Bronze Star Medal will not be used as the basis for an award under this paragraph.

(3) Upon letter application, award of the Bronze Star Medal may be made to eligible soldiers who participated in the Philippine Islands Campaign between 7 December 1941 to 10 May 1942. Performance of duty must have been on the island of Luzon or the Harbor Defenses in Corregidor and Bataan. Only soldiers who were awarded the Distinguished Unit Citation (Presidential Unit Citation) may be awarded this decoration. Letter application should be sent to the Commander, ARPERCEN, ATTN: DARP-VSE-A, 9700 Page Boulevard, St. Louis, MO 63132-5200.

Copy of General Orders #107, 10th Arm. Div, 1945 awarding Melvin Engle with the Bronze Star Medal

*Private First Class Melvin C Engle 35907970, Company A, **Tank Battalion, United States Army, for heroic achievement in connection with military operations against an enemy of the United States at Hochenheim, Germany on 30 and 31 March 1945. Private First Class Engle, tank bow gunner, voluntarily remained with a wounded companion for a period of 9 hours in enemy infested territory and under intense hostile fire until medical assistance arrived. His exemplary conduct reflects great credit upon himself and the military forces of the United States. Entered the military service from Floyd Knobs, Indiana.*



*Engle family photo c.1937
Melvin third from right. Bud second from right.
Bob fourth from right.*

Preface

Let me say right from the beginning that this book is unapologetically about one man, my dad, Melvin Charles Engle. It recounts the events he experienced as a co-driver/machine gunner during the 162 days (hence the name of the book) from departing the United States, to his departure from Europe at the end of the war. These are things he did and things he may have seen as a member of Combat Command B (CCB) in the 11th Tank Battalion, 10th Armored Division of the Seventh Army during World War II, also known as the Tiger Division or Ghost Division. In my opinion, he is one of the most humble and honorable men to have served during that period.

If asked, he'd say he was just doing his duty, his part, as so many others say when asked about those times when iron will, a strong determination, and unnerving loyalty was required. He seldom talks about those years and most of the events that took place. I believe, on the other hand, that people should know about and continually be reminded of what he and so many others did for each and everyone of us who've never had a chance to show our appreciation.

Two things you have to remember while reading this book. 1) I'm not a writer, so please forgive any awkwardness. 2) Nor am I a historian. I've done my best to be accurate as to history, events, and places. But a great deal

of history has been lost both in physical terms and in the fading memories of the vets who participated in World War II. I've read recently that we're losing approximately 1200-1500 World War II veterans per day. Soon the only vehicle left to tell the story of WWII will be in the form of books, movies, and old news reels. Veterans' memories are fading exponentially with each passing year. The details become more dim. But that is to be expected. Think about it, what did you do on the second day of your vacation two years ago? Last year? Can't remember? Now, remember that we're talking about events that took place over sixty-five years ago. Yes, it's frustrating to lose so much information to the years. Unfortunate, but unavoidable.

Additionally, many official records no longer exist. In the 1950's many WWII documents and files were destroyed intentionally by the government. They were deemed unnecessary to keep. And in July, 1973 a large fire consumed most of the military personnel records kept in a St. Louis, Missouri, warehouse. Records dating from World War I through the Vietnam era.

While I don't know the exact dates and locations of many of the events that Dad participated in, I've done quite a bit of research on the Seventh Army, 10th Armored Division, and with the help of what Dad does remember, I believe I can place many of the occurrences in, or very near, their proper place in history. Should anyone who reads this be able to correct any errors, I'd welcome the corrections.

I've sprinkled this with lots of historic background concerning the Seventh Army, but mostly the Third Army, which is the army that the Tenth Armored Division was assigned to during much of the time period for which this book is written. So at the very least, you'll get a small dose of history and hopefully learn something of the two Armies. The Third Army was under the direct command of General George S. (Smith) Patton. Actually it is very fortunate that his division, the 10th Armored, was assigned to the Third Army because General Patton and his command have probably had more written about them than any other general or army during World War II. That's why it has been much easier to research the events in this book than if the 10th Armored had been strictly confined to the Seventh Army during those months.

During the Battle of the Bulge (Ardennes Offensive) in December, 1944, to January, 1945, the 10th Armored Division suffered relatively heavy losses as did most American and Allied divisions. On Sunday, December 17, 1944, the Germans began their Ardennes Offensive which for all practical purposes became what we commonly call the Battle of the Bulge. The German plan was to drive an army east deep into Belgium and split the allied forces in half north to south. The 10th Armored was given responsibility to protect Bastogne, Belgium, and consequently the Third Army's left flank. Patton himself called for Combat Command B of the 10th Armored (later to be the Combat Command that Melvin was part of) to be sent to defend Bastogne. The 10th Armored was the sole combat

unit at the time, defending Bastogne against eight German divisions until the 101st Airborne Division, which was being refitted in France, could join them and dig in before the city could be completely encircled by German forces. For the duration of the battle, the 10th Armored Division was assigned to the 101st Airborne Division fighting as a combined unit.

In early February, 1945, General Patton required another armored division in order to initiate the attack on Trier, Germany, and make a run east straight through the Saar-Mosselle Triangle and the enemy. Patton again made an appeal to SHAEF (Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces) for either the 9th or the 10th Armored Division which was already held in reserve status. SHAEF, in the event you don't recognize the name, is the group of commanders and officers that you always see in the old war movies standing around a huge table in a dimly lit smoky room. The table usually has a big gridded map of Europe on it with all those tiny models of tanks and airplanes and replicas of divisions that they move from place to place on the map with a long paddle just as someone rushes in with an emergency communique.

On Tuesday, February 20, 1945, the 10th Armored Division was reassembled at Metz, France, and rejoined the XX Corps during its reserve period. For security reasons the 10th Armored, also known as the "Tigers," were ordered to strip all identification from their vehicles including tanks, and all shoulder patches from their uniforms. This order would remain in effect throughout the war.

The intended purpose was to hide from the Germans the true identity of which division they were fighting and where they could be located, causing the German army to nickname them the “Ghost Division.”

General Patton’s request for an additional armored division was answered by being granted use of the 10th Armored for the attack on Trier, March 1, 1945. However, there was one contingency. Since removing the 10th Armored from the reserve status would leave no armored division left in reserve, as required by SHAEF, Patton was granted the division with the agreement that the 10th Armored would be used only for the capture of Trier which was one of Germany’s major industrial cities at that time. Patton was to return the division back to reserve status as soon as Trier was safely in Allied hands, or until Sunday, February 25, 1945, whichever came first.

On February 23, General Patton realized that the best he could do was secure the 10th Armored for another forty-eight hours before he’d have to send another division back into reserve to replace it. On February 25 Patton had scheduled lunch with General Middleton, Walker and Gaffey. General Bradley had invited himself to the lunch meeting. In his typical fashion, Patton “coached” the other three generals as to what they should say during lunch in order to pressure General Bradley into letting the 3rd Army continue to use the 10th Armored Division against Trier. Bradley agreed to let Patton use the 10th until dark on February 27 if he would designate the 90th Infantry Division a reserve division in order to comply with SHAEF rules.

On February 27 the 10th Armored Division advanced to within just 5 miles of Trier with resistance from the German 2nd Mountain Division. With the deadline for retaining the 10th expiring, Patton called General Bradley at dark informing him that he was just outside of Trier and asked if he could keep the 10th for the duration of the attack. Bradley told Patton to keep going until he (Bradley) was ordered by higher authority to tell Patton to stop. Bradley then added that he himself would make it a point to be away from the phone. Such were the methods that General Patton would employ in order to shift the war in his favor and to advance forward, always.

On Thursday, March 1, 1945, at 2:15 p.m., General Walker, who was the forward general, dispatched a message to General Patton informing him that Trier, the oldest city in northern Europe, as well as the 2000-year-old Romerbrucker (Roman Bridge) had been captured.

That was over sixty years ago. To some it may seem like a very long time ago. To others like the veterans, I'm sure the emotions it evokes make it feel as though it happened just yesterday.

So much has changed over the years, especially our perspective on war and what is acceptable and what is not acceptable in terms of losses. Melvin was in combat from March, 1945, through VE day on Monday, May 7, 1945. During those last few months, Adolph Hitler became even more disturbed and desperate. These were among the hardest fought months of the war. To put it into perspective, in the past three years since the current Iraq

war began in March, 2003, there have unfortunately been 2700 total American soldier deaths inclusive of all the branches of the military. During World War II, casualties were an unbelievably higher figure. The Battle of the Bulge alone accounted for 77,000 allied casualties in only about 30 days. During the months just prior to the end of World War II, casualties reported for the Third Army alone were approximately 2000 per month. How many more marines, sailors, and airmen should be added to this figure? Here's the answer: there were 291,000 total US battle deaths in World War II.

During the last year of the war, the situation for Germany had become so desperate that even Adolph Hitler's highest ranking officers had made attempts to assassinate him. The famed German tank commander Erwin Rommel was just one of them. Upon being implicated in a bombing attempt against Hitler, Rommel committed suicide to avoid the tortuous fate of the eight others accused.

I believe the best way to demonstrate the nature of war during that period is to recount the famous speech presented by General George Patton to his troops on June 5, 1944, just one day before these troops were to board ships and transports of all types to cross the English Channel and land on Normandy beaches--D-Day, June 7, 1944.

You may think you've heard this speech, that you know it because you've watched the popular "Patton" movie where George C. Scott stands on a stage in front of that big American flag during the address at the beginning of the film. I assure you, the "movie" speech, while captur-

ing some of the flavor and flair of George Patton and his philosophy of war, was highly sanitized for a viewing audience. What follows is his entire unedited speech as delivered that day.

Imagine a clear fresh English morning somewhere near Stourport-on-Severn, England. You're sitting on a hillside with thousands of fellow soldiers all eagerly awaiting the famous General George S. Patton. A captain approaches the microphone on stage and orders that when the general arrives "the band will play the General's March and you will stand at attention."

Finally, a long shiny car arrives, and the general is escorted up to the stage. As in the familiar movie, he's wearing a gleaming helmet, shiny brown knee-high boots, and his Colt .45 pearl-handled Peacemaker in a holster on his right hand side.

He begins...

The speech given somewhere in England.

Monday, June 5, 1944.

"Be seated."

Men, this stuff that some sources sling around about America wanting out of this war, not wanting to fight, is a crock of bullshit. Americans love to fight, traditionally. All real Americans love the sting and clash of battle. You are here today for three reasons. First, because you are here to defend your homes and your loved ones. Second, you are here for your own self-respect, because you

would not want to be anywhere else. Third, you are here because you are real men and all real men like to fight. When you, here, every one of you, were kids, you all admired the champion marble player, the fastest runner, the toughest boxer, the big league ball players, and the All-American football players.

Americans love a winner. Americans will not tolerate a loser. Americans despise cowards. Americans play to win all of the time. I wouldn't give a hoot in hell for a man who lost and laughed. That's why Americans have never lost nor will ever lose a war; for the very idea of losing is hateful to an American.

You are not all going to die. Only two percent of you right here today would die in a major battle. Death must not be feared. Death, in time, comes to all men. Yes, every man is scared in his first battle. If he says he's not, he's a liar. Some men are cowards but they fight the same as the brave men or they get the hell slammed out of them watching men fight who are just as scared as they are. The real hero is the man who fights even though he is scared. Some men get over their fright in a minute under fire. For some, it takes an hour. For some, it takes days. But a real man will never let his fear of death overpower his honor, his sense of duty to his country, and his innate manhood.

Battle is the most magnificent competition in which a human being can indulge. It brings out all that is best and it removes all that is base.

Americans pride themselves on being "He Men" and

they ARE “He Men.” Remember that the enemy is just as frightened as you are, and probably more so. Because they are not supermen!

All through your Army careers, you men have bitched about what you call “chicken shit drilling.” That, like everything else in this Army, has a definite purpose. That purpose is alertness. Alertness must be bred into every soldier. I don’t give a fuck for a man who’s not always on his toes. You men are veterans or you wouldn’t be here. You are ready for what’s to come. A man must be alert at all times if he expects to stay alive. If you’re not alert, sometime, a German son-of-an-asshole-bitch is going to sneak up behind you and beat you to death with a sockful of shit! There are four hundred neatly marked graves somewhere in Sicily, all because one man went to sleep on the job. But they are German graves, because we caught the bastard asleep before they did!

An Army is a team. It lives, sleeps, eats, and fights as a team. This individual heroic stuff is pure horseshit. The bilious bastards who write that kind of stuff for the Saturday Evening Post don’t know any more about real fighting under fire than they know about fucking! We have the finest food, the finest equipment, the best spirit, and the best men in the world. Why, by God, I actually pity those poor sons-of-bitches we’re going up against. By God, I do!

My men don’t surrender, and I don’t want to hear of any soldier under my command being captured unless he has been hit. Even if you are hit, you can still fight

back. That's not just bullshit either. The kind of man that I want in my command is just like the lieutenant in Libya, who, with a Nazi Kraut poking a Luger against his chest, jerked off his helmet, swept the gun aside with one hand, and busted the hell out of the Kraut with his helmet. Then he jumped on the gun and went out and killed another German before they knew what the hell was coming off. And, all of that time, this man had a bullet through a lung. There was a real man!

All of the real heroes are not storybook combat fighters, either. Every single man in this Army plays a vital role. Don't ever let up. Don't ever think that your job is unimportant. Every man has a job to do and he must do it. Every man is a vital link in the great chain.

What if every truck driver suddenly decided that he didn't like the whine of those shells overhead, turned yellow, and jumped headlong into a ditch? The cowardly bastard could say, 'Hell, they won't miss me, just one man in thousands.' But, what if every man thought that way? Where in the hell would we be now? What would our country, our loved ones, our homes, even the world, be like?

No, Goddamnit, Americans don't think like that. Every man does his job. Every man serves the whole. Every department, every unit, is important in the vast scheme of this war. The ordnance men are needed to supply the guns and machinery of war to keep us rolling. The Quartermaster is needed to bring up food and clothes because where we are going there isn't a hell of a lot to

steal. Every last man on K.P. has a job to do, even the one who heats our water to keep us from getting the 'G.I. Shits.'

Each man must not think only of himself, but also of his buddy fighting beside him. We don't want yellow cowards in this Army. They should be killed off like rats! If not, they will go home after this war and breed more cowards. The brave men will breed more brave men. Kill off the Goddamned cowards and we will have a nation of brave men.

One of the bravest men that I ever saw was a fellow on top of a telegraph pole in the midst of a furious fire-fight in Tunisia. I stopped and asked what the hell he was doing up there at a time like that. He answered, 'Fixing the wire, Sir.' I asked, 'Isn't that a little unhealthy right about now?' He answered, 'Yes Sir, but the Goddamned wire has to be fixed.' I asked, 'Don't those planes strafing the road bother you?' And he answered, 'No, Sir, but you sure as hell do!' Now, there was a real man. A real soldier. There was a man who devoted all he had to his duty, no matter how seemingly insignificant his duty might appear at the time, no matter how great the odds.

And you should have seen those trucks on the rode to Tunisia. Those drivers were magnificent. All day and all night they rolled over those son-of-a-bitching roads, never stopping, never faltering from their course, with shells bursting all around them all of the time. We got through on good old American guts!

Many of those men drove for over forty consecutive hours. These men weren't combat men, but they were soldiers with a job to do. They did it, and in one hell of a way they did it. They were part of a team. Without team effort, without them, the fight would have been lost. All of the links in the chain pulled together and the chain became unbreakable.

Don't forget, you men don't know that I'm here. No mention of that fact is to be made in any letters. The world is not supposed to know what the hell happened to me. I'm not supposed to be commanding this Army. I'm not even supposed to be here in England. Let the first bastards to find out be the Goddamned Germans! Someday I want to see them raise up on their piss-soaked hind legs and howl, 'Jesus Christ, it's the Goddamned Third Army again and that son-of-a-fucking-bitch Patton.' We want to get the hell over there. The quicker we clean up this Goddamned mess, the quicker we can take a little jaunt against the purple pissing Japs and clean out their nest, too. Before the Goddamned Marines get all of the credit!

Sure, we want to go home. We want this war over with. The quickest way to get it over with is to go get the bastards who started it! The quicker they are whipped, the quicker we can go home. The shortest way home is through Berlin and Tokyo. And when we get to Berlin, I am personally going to shoot that paper hanging son-of-a-bitch Hitler. Just like I'd shoot a snake!

When a man is lying in a shell hole, if he just stays

there all day, a German will get to him eventually. The hell with that idea. The hell with just sitting back and taking it! My men don't dig foxholes. I don't want them to. Foxholes only slow up an offensive. Keep moving. And don't give the enemy time to dig one either. We'll win this war, but we'll win it only by fighting and by showing the Germans that we've got more guts than they have; or ever will have. We're not going to just shoot the sons-of-bitches, we're going to rip out their living Goddamned guts and use them to grease the treads of our tanks. We're going to murder those lousy Hun cocksuckers by the bushel-fucking-basket!

War is a bloody, killing business. You've got to spill their blood, or they will spill yours! Rip them up the belly. Shoot them in the guts. When shells are hitting all around you and you wipe the dirt off your face and realize that instead of dirt it's the blood and guts of what once was your best friend beside you, you'll know what to do!

I don't want to get any messages saying, 'I am holding my position.' We are not holding a Goddamned thing. Let the Germans do that! We are advancing constantly and we are not interested in holding onto anything, except the enemy's balls! We are going to twist his balls and kick the living shit out of him all of the time. Our basic plan of operation is to advance and to keep on advancing regardless of whether we have to go over, under, or through the enemy. We are going to go through him like crap through a goose; like shit through

a tin horn!

From time to time there will be some complaints that we are pushing our people too hard. I don't give a good Goddamn about such complaints. I believe in the old and sound rule that an ounce of sweat will save a gallon of blood. The harder WE push, the more Germans we will kill. The more Germans we kill, the fewer of our men will be killed.

Pushing means fewer casualties. I want you all to remember that.

There is one great thing that you men will all be able to say after this war is over and you are home once again. You may be thankful that twenty years from now when you are sitting by the fireplace with your grandson on your knee and he asks you what you did in the great World War II, you WON'T have to cough, shift him to the other knee and say, 'Well, your Granddaddy shoveled shit in Louisiana.'

No, Sir, you can look him straight in the eye and say, 'Son, your Granddaddy rode with the Great Third Army and a Son-of-a-Goddamned-Bitch named Georgie Patton!'

"That is all."



★ 1 6 2 D A Y S ★