

# Tank Destroyer Unit Pulls Down German Panzers

## Battalion Knocks Out 30 Jerry Tanks; Stop Nazi Push

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(Stars and Stripes Staff Writer)

### WITH THE AMERICAN FORCES FASTLY ADVANCING

Against advancing American troops on the Gafsa-Gabes road, Marshal Erwin Rommel last week sent the armor of his prize 10th Panzer Division. Rommel had hoped to checkmate the American push while his own forces evacuated Gabes and the Mareth Line. Instead, at the end of the day, he had on his hands 30 tanks that weren't working any more. One of the reasons these tanks stopped working was that, nearby, we had a tank destroyer recon battalion of 75's mounted on halftracks.

The steamroller wave of enemy tanks started toward the American positions at 0530. Concealed in the curves of the foothills, in front of the flat plain, the halftrack employe Jerry tanks rolling out of their own smoke screens. Almost immediately Lt. Charles Munn, Jackson, Mich., reported three hits by his platoon. But the other German tanks, unhit, kept coming.

### SAD MISTAKE

Soon after, mortar fire started blistering Munn's position and one Jerry made the sad mistake of stepping out of his MK-III to get a clearer picture of the action. Sharp-eyed Sgt. Milford Langlois, North Bangor, N. Y., spotted him and opened up with a .50 caliber. Curiosity killed another cat.

Just then the Nazi boys took time out for a short intermission while they regrouped their forces. Act II began at 1030 when Hal Segit, Buffalo, N. Y., reported hits on three. Later, Sgt. Allen Breed, Memphis, N. Y., counted up six that he and his gunner had knocked out. Breed's gunner was Cpl. John Sawkis, La Jolla, Calif. (armor piercing) shells at an MK-IV machine gun out, but with sharpshooter Sgt. Langlois around, they didn't run very far.

Munn's position soon got tough. An adjoining unit withdrew, cutting them off completely, and then the German 88's found their range, knocking out another half-track.

### 'PAS BON'

"Our position was pas bon," said Munn.

It became more and more 'pas bon' at about 1500 hours when they only had one gun left and Axis artillery and dive bombers started bothering them. But they still stood fast, working in relays to keep up a steady fire with their single gun.

The time finally came when ammunition officer Lt. John Perry, Ithaca, N. Y., had to radio headquarters and tell them that there was no more ammunition to pass. The order then came back, "Wait until dark and try to bring out your vehicles. If it gets too hot, destroy the vehicles and come out on foot."

It did get too hot. With one gun, no ammo, all the artillery, mortar and tank fire in the sector coming right at them and a strong German infantry force moving up, they decided to clear out, but fast.

A small squad of volunteers stayed behind to destroy the one gun plus some other vehicles. One of the boys tried to run for it with a halftrack, but didn't quite make it. "One of my best men, too," said Munn. The remaining 25 made for the hills, skirting the ridges like goats, hiking six miles

## They Did Their Job



CAR. MICHAEL PAULICK, an ex-coal miner from Covarralle, Pa., maps out the next move while some of the men in his reconnaissance platoon relax on top of the halftrack. That day their tank destroyer section lost 18 halftracks but knocked out 30 Jerry tanks. —Photo by U. S. Army Signal Corps

past Nazi outposts and finally reaching their main line without losing a man.

"All of us were pretty happy about getting back but we were still pretty sore about one thing," said Paulick. "There was a German tank that we had to fight for an hour and a half. It was a half-track carrier. The boys would have given a month's PX ration if they could have recaptured that jeep."

Not too far away from Munn's boys, at the same time, was another platoon led by Lt. John Yowell, Houston, Texas. Yowell's group, last to leave the battle area, chalked up six Nazi tanks in the win column.

One half-track crew, in the short-lived fighting life of ten minutes, blasted two enemy tanks. The chief of section, Sgt. Adolph Raymond, Cranston, R. I., holding a position, 300 yards in front of the field ar-

tillery, had a giant MK-VI for his first customer. Five rounds bounced off like babies but the sixth hit the tank below the turret and started it smoking. In a quick swing to the left, at the same time, Raymond's crew shot up a half-track which rained fast.

Then suddenly, the half-track was hit, throwing the crew into the air, badly shaken. Luckily, nobody was hurt. The crew included T-5 Milton Jones, Mechanic Falls, Maine; Pvt. Alexander Rybski, Watertown, N. Y.; Pfc. Charles Moore, Apollo, Pa., and Pvt. Leonard Carreiro, Port Washington, N. Y.

Another half-track section also had a field day in that battle but theirs lasted longer. At 1,000 yards, this unit hit a MK-IV right beneath the boogie wheels, then blew it up a few seconds later with high explosive shells. They got another MK-IV with a first round. 30 minutes later, hit their third vic-

tim square and solid, watching it go up in flames.

Finally, when they were out of everything except smoke ammunition, Lt. Yowell ordered them to retire. Section leader was Cpl. Victor Hanel, Newmarket, N. H. His unit included Pvt. Adam S. Adams, Pa.; T-5 Vincent J. Vincent, Brooklyn; Pfc. T. W. Henry, Lenox, N. C., and Pvt. James Kennedy, of the Bronx.

There was a three-quarter-ton weapons carrier trying to evacuate a lot of wounded, attracting heavy enemy fire. Platoon sergeant Michael Stima, Troy, N. Y., started firing a .50 caliber machine gun at some German infantry 500 yards away, thereby drawing all enemy fire to himself and enabling the carrier to sneak through.

"Y'know," said Stima, "there were a helluva lot of Jerries in that one spot but after I was shooting awhile, they just seemed to disappear."