

Sergeant Robert D. Lightsey (1911–1944)



Robert D. Lightsey in 1941 or 1942 (Courtesy of Walter Veasey)

By Lowell Silverman

Author's note: Delaware's World War II Fallen occasionally highlights men and women without any known connection to the First State. This article incorporates some text from my articles ["1st Lieutenant John S. Jarvie: Jack in the Alice Griffin Letters"](#) (published at the 32nd Station Hospital website), ["Captain William W. Galt: 'Always Out In Front'"](#) (published on the Congressional Medal of Honor Society website), and ["Baker D. Newton"](#) (published at TankDestroyer.net).

Home State	Civilian Occupation
Florida	Driver or chauffeur
Branch	Service Number
U.S. Army	34051486
Theater	Unit
Mediterranean	Company "C," 894th Tank Destroyer Battalion
Military Occupational Specialty	Campaigns/Battles
652 (section leader)	Tunisian campaign, Italy (including Cassino and Anzio)

Early Life & Family

Robert Durward Lightsey was born in DeSoto County, Florida, on November 14, 1911. He was the son of R. T. Lightsey (Robert Tooms Lightsey, a farmer, 1885–1950) and Olive Lightsey (Roxie Olive Lightsey, née Story, 1889–1984). Census records indicate that Lightsey went by his middle name. His nephew, Walter Veasey, recalled:

My grandparents moved to Okeechobee either 1918 or 1919, settling near the mouth of the Kissimmee River and were some of the first people to move into this area. Durward and the family pretty much lived off the land for a while. My grandfather had a few cows on small ranch, raised and canned their vegetables and even traded with the Indians in that area, vegetables for deer or turkeys. He was also a commercial fisherman, as there was a large demand for Okeechobee catfish in the North. One thing Okeechobee had in abundance, besides catfish, was alligators and there was an equally large demand for their hides. From what I am told, Durward was pretty active in alligator and frog hunting, even as far down into the everglades.

The Lightsey family was recorded on the census on April 23, 1930, living on the family farm along State Road 29 (now Florida State Road 78) southwest of Okeechobee, Florida, between Eagle Bay and the Kissimmee River. The Kissimmee flowed differently in those days, prior to a postwar Army Corps of Engineers project that straightened it.

When Lightsey registered for the draft—the card was undated, but it was presumably on or around R-Day, October 16, 1940—he was self-employed and living with his parents in Okeechobee.

Paperwork in Lightsey's Individual Deceased Personnel File (I.D.P.F.) described him as standing five feet, seven inches tall and weighing 146 lbs., with brown hair and gray eyes. His enlistment data card described his education as four years of high school and occupation as "Semiskilled chauffeurs and drivers, bus, taxi, truck, and tractor." His military paperwork stated that he was Baptist.

Service Stateside, England, & North Africa

Lightsey was drafted before the U.S. entered World War II. He joined the U.S. Army at Camp Blanding, Florida, on April 10, 1941, and was assigned to the Infantry branch. Later that year, Lightsey married Laura Belle Cochran (later Collins, 1921–1978) in Okeechobee on December 18, 1941.



Sergeant Lightsey's wife, Laura (Courtesy of Betty Ann Lamb McLellan)



Lightsey and his wife (Courtesy of Walter Veasey)

After December 25, 1941, and prior to July 3, 1942—when he appeared in a company photograph—Lightsey had been promoted to corporal and joined Company “C,” 894th Tank Destroyer Battalion at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. As a corporal, he was likely a gunner, though he had become an assistant section leader by the summer of 1943.



July 3, 1942, photo of Company “C”, 894th Tank Destroyer Battalion at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Note the M3 tank destroyers. (Courtesy of the Newton family)



*Corporal Robert D. Lightsey in a detail from the above photo
(Courtesy of the Newton family)*

Lightsey went overseas to England with the rest of the 894th Tank Destroyer Battalion. The battalion shipped out from the New York Port of Embarkation aboard the British transport *Andes* on August 6, 1942, arriving in Liverpool, England, on August 17, 1942. On the night of January 5, 1943, Company “C” boarded a train at Chiseldon Camp, arriving at Liverpool at 1115 hours the following day. The 894th Tank Destroyer Battalion sailed for North Africa on January 8, 1943. Their ship arrived in Oran, Algeria, on January 17, 1943. Allied forces had taken Morocco and Algeria from the Axis-aligned Vichy French forces during Operation Torch, beginning on November 8, 1942.

On January 22, 1943, Corporal Lightsey was hospitalized at the 7th Station Hospital. He returned to duty at 1730 hours on February 9, 1943. On February 14, 1943, his unit headed east to join the Tunisian campaign. At the time, the battalion was equipped with the M3 Gun Motor Carriage, a halftrack equipped with a 75 mm gun.

In a letter to his family, 1st Lieutenant (later Major) Baker D. Newton (1918–1961), then the Company "C" executive officer (and later company commander), recalled the unit's baptism by fire during the Battle of Kasserine Pass on February 20, 1943. A few miles from the front, Company "C" was leading the 894th Tank Destroyer Battalion when they began encountering demoralized American infantry heading the other way. Soon after, three enemy armored cars approached.

Then all hell broke loose from our guns – all firing too hastily. We hit one of them, the others escaped back into the pass. By this time we were taking somewhat of a shellacking from artillery and machine guns which had moved along the sides of the valley on our flank.

About a month later, the 894th Tank Destroyer participated in the Battle of El Guettar. Shortly thereafter, on April 9, 1943, Lightsey was promoted to sergeant. The 894th Tank Destroyer Battalion led Allied forces into Bizerte on May 7, 1943. This, together with the capture of Tunis the same day, effectively ended the Tunisian campaign. With those ports in Allied hands, all Axis forces remaining in North Africa were forced to surrender within days.

REMARKS

12 PVT M. BECKEL, WILSON AND PVT LUCAS, SEALS, JACKSON ASSD AND 3d Co.
4000 4-12-43 (107)

3d Co. 110-SONBACK HARPER, LIGHTSEY PROMOTED TO GR OF SGT PER 32-4-9-43. PVT L. LONG, PVT S. SANDERS, MCGLYNN PROMOTED TO GR OF
CP-5 PER 32-4-9-43, PVT L. DAVIS, PVT MITCHELL, GRANT PROMOTED TO
15 PER 32-4-9-43. (107)

13 NO CHANGE (107)

14 NO CHANGE (107)

15 NO CHANGE (107)

16 NO CHANGE (107)

17 PVT SPECIA ADJ SK (EVACUATED) TO DUTY 1400 4-12-43 (107)

Morning report which mentioned Lightsey's promotion to sergeant (National Personnel Records Center)

At the end of May 1943, the 894th Tank Destroyer Battalion arrived at the Fifth Army Tank Destroyer Training Center near Sebdou, Algeria. There, the unit began converting from the M3 Gun Motor Carriage to the 3-inch Gun Motor Carriage M10.

The M10's M7 3-inch gun was capable of dispatching most contemporary German armored vehicles, although the newer Panther and Tiger tanks were a greater challenge (especially at longer ranges and in instances the enemy could only be attacked from the front, which was protected by heavier armor). The Tiger's armor was approximately three times as thick as an M10's and its powerful 88 mm cannon could have knocked out an M10 from any combat range, regardless of the angle. The M10 was similarly mismatched against the Panther.

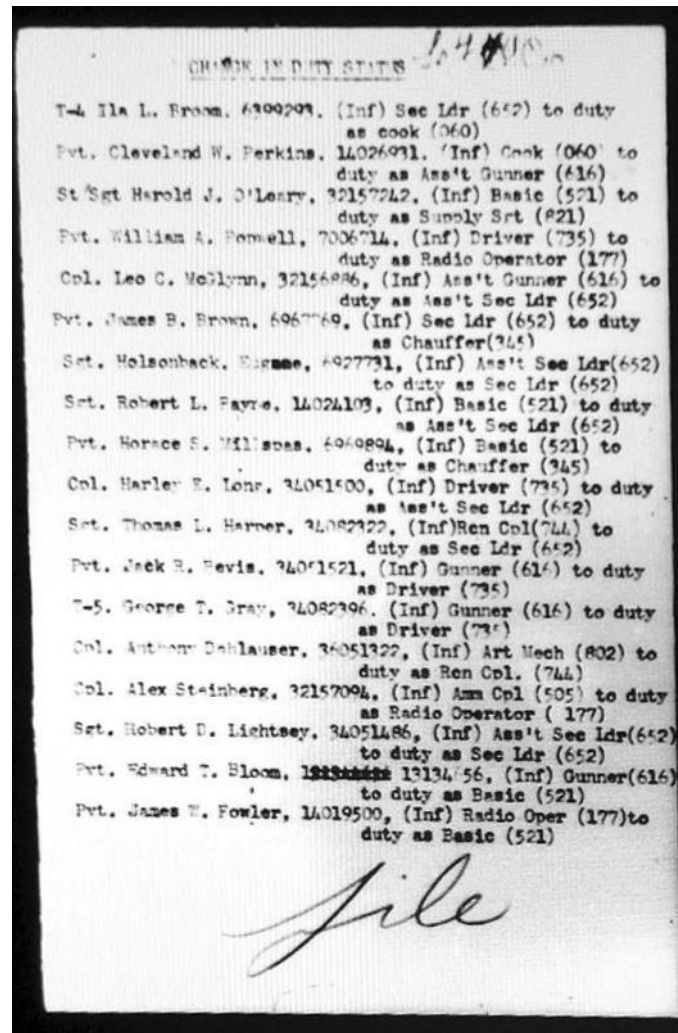


A 601st Tank Destroyer Battalion M10 tank destroyer near Anzio on February 29, 1944 (Official U.S. Army Signal Corps photo. National Archives, courtesy of TankDestroyer.net)

Compared to contemporary tanks, the M10 had several vulnerabilities. In addition to having light armor, the M10's turret had no roof and lacked periscopes—only the driver and assistant driver had them—making the crew far more vulnerable to artillery and small arms fire during battle. The M10 was usually equipped with only a single machine gun (a .50 caliber mounted on the rear of the turret). In contrast, the principal American tank, the M4 medium tank (now popularly known by its British nickname, the Sherman) had an enclosed turret. The M4 was also far better equipped to deal with enemy infantry since it was equipped with not only a machine gun mounted on the turret (usually a .50)

but also a .30 caliber machine gun in a co-axial mount with the main gun and another .30 mounted in the hull.

Although tank destroyers were designed primarily as a defensive weapon to counter large groups of enemy tanks, they were rarely used that way in combat. This was evident as early as the Tunisian campaign. In a letter home on May 17, 1943, Captain Newton—now Sergeant Lightsey's company commander—grumbled: "I'd like to be back at [Camp] Hood, so I could tell the brass hats what we need. They're preparing us to fight one way. We are used by higher authorities in every other way."



Document mentioning that Sergeant Lightsey had become a section leader (National Personnel Records Center)

A June 26, 1943, document indicated that Lightsey's duty had changed from assistant section leader to section leader. A self-propelled tank destroyer company had three platoons, each with four tank destroyers. Each platoon was subdivided into two sections, each with two tank destroyers. Thus, as a section leader, Sergeant Lightsey would have been in charge of two M10s.

Combat in Italy

On October 9, 1943, Company "C," 894th Tank Destroyer Battalion moved north from Sebdou to a staging area at Fleurus, near Oran, Algeria. The company was split into several groups for transport to Italy. A detachment of two officers and 87 enlisted men, including Sergeant Lightsey, left the main body of the unit on October 23, 1943. On the morning of October 25, 1943, they sailed from Mers-el-Kébir, Algeria, aboard the transport U.S.S. *Lyon* (AP-71). The ship arrived in the Bay of Pozzuoli on October 28, 1943. Lightsey and the others went ashore south of Bagnoli and rejoined the rest of Company "C" upon its arrival on November 10, 1943.



701st Tank Destroyer Battalion M10s serving as self-propelled artillery in Italy (Official U.S. Army Signal Corps photo. National Archives, courtesy of TankDestroyer.net)

On January 9, 1944, Company "C" was withdrawn in preparation for an amphibious operation intended to bypass the German Gustav Line: Operation Shingle. Most of the company arrived at the Anzio beachhead on the fourth day of the invasion, January 25, 1944.

On the night of February 3–4, 1944, German forces launched an attack intended to crush the Campoleone salient, where Company "C" was supporting the British 1st Infantry Division. Some of Company "C,"—likely including Sergeant Lightley's platoon—were briefly trapped behind enemy lines and barely managed to escape encirclement.

After setting up new positions, Companies “B” and “C” of the 894th Tank Destroyer Battalion were instrumental in defeating German forces near Aprilia (“The Factory”). According to the S-3 periodic report written by Captain (Later Colonel) Paul A. Baldy (1918–2008) covering the afternoon of February 3, 1944, through the afternoon of February 4, 1944:

The enemy counterattacked very strongly during the period. “B” & “C” Companies participated very actively in repulsing the attack. “C” Company destroyed four (4) Mark VI [Tiger] tanks. These have been confirmed by the British. One towed AT [antitank] gun was destroyed while its crew was attempting to get it into firing position. Two destroyers held off the German infantry with their 50 cal. for two hours. Many casualties were inflicted. We lost two M 10’s– destroyed and one captured in this action. Two enemy occupied houses were also fired into by “C” Company.

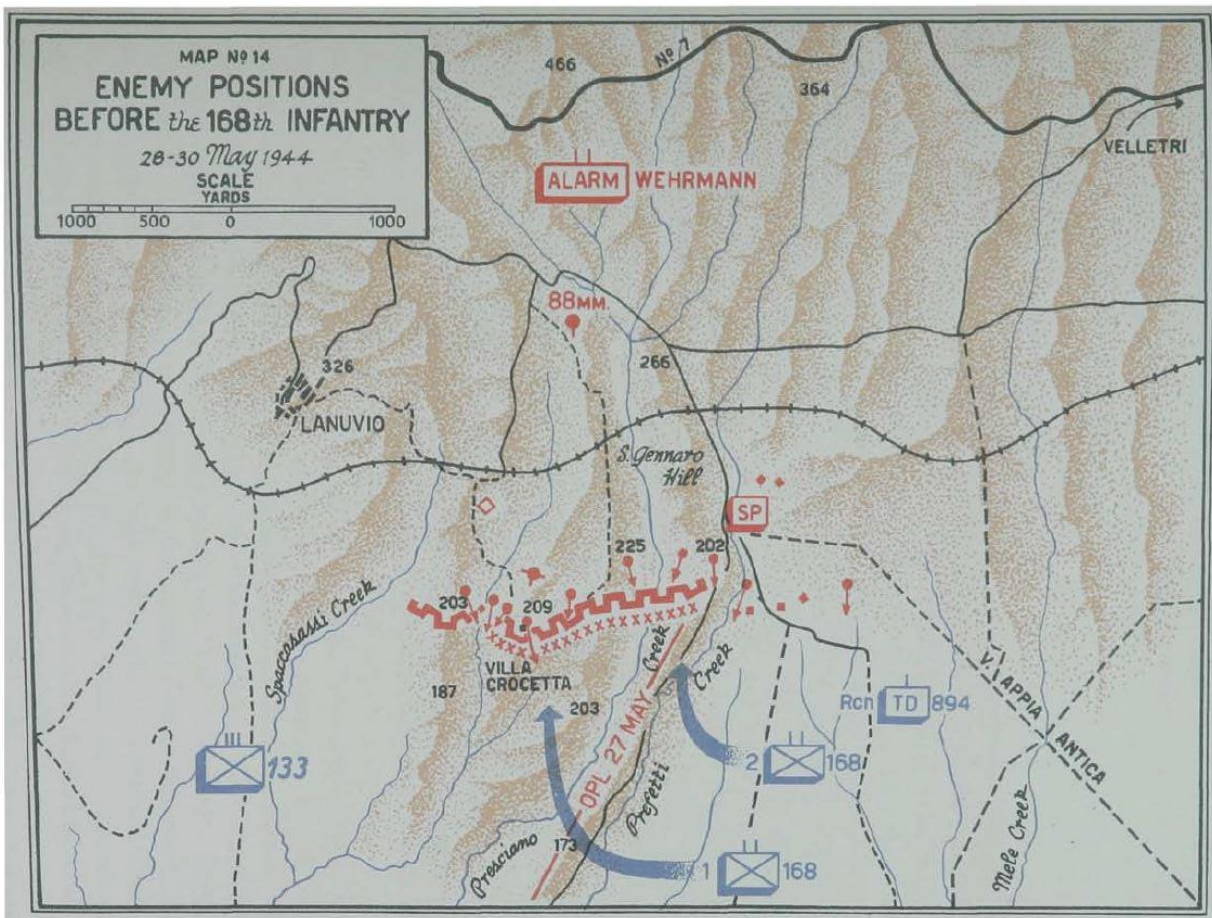
After the failure of the German counterattacks, months of static warfare followed. The Anzio beachhead was a miserable and very dangerous place. Even when the front lines were quiet, the Germans constantly bombarded the Allied positions, often employing powerful railway guns, as well as aircraft armed with the deadly antipersonnel weapons known as “butterfly bombs.”

The Fourth Assault on Villa Crocetta

On May 26, 1944, during the long-anticipated breakout from Anzio, Company “C,” 894th Tank Destroyer Battalion was assigned to support the 168th Infantry Regiment, 34th Infantry Division during operations against the Caesar Line in the Alban Hills near Lanuvio, Italy. Two days later, 1st Battalion of the 168th Infantry Regiment began a series of unsuccessful assaults on a German stronghold known as Villa Crocetta (located at approximately [41° 39’ 45” N, 12° 42’ 49” E](#) along the present day Via di Colle Crocette, southeast of Lanuvio). The *Fifth Army History Part V: The Drive to Rome*, summarizing the 168th Infantry Regiment history for May 1944, described the fortifications as follows:

On the right the 168th Infantry faced two particularly nasty strongpoints: Gennaro Hill and Villa Crocetta on the crest of Hill 209. As our troops approached either point, they had to cross open wheat fields on the neighboring hills, then make their way across the draws formed by the tributaries of Presciano Creek, and finally attack up steep slopes to their objectives. The German line was marked by a trench five to six feet deep which ran across Hill 209 and on past the southern slopes of Gennaro Hill. Based on this trench and its accompanying dugouts, machine guns were emplaced to command the draws, and mortars were located in close

support. At Hill 209 the enemy also had wire nooses, trip wire, and single-strand barbed wire to break the impact of our charge.



A map that illustrates the terrain around Villa Crocetta clearly. Company "C" was assigned to 1st Battalion, 168th Infantry Regiment (the unit icon at the bottom of the map). Two Hill 203s are labeled, though the one described in the action is to the west of Hill 209. (Fifth Army History)

According to the "History of the 168th Infantry Regiment for May 1944," by the afternoon of May 29, 1944, the men of 1st Battalion were close to exhaustion. They had made two assaults on May 28, 1944, and a third on the morning of May 29th. Most demoralizing was the fact that one attack had been going well until they were forced to retreat due to poorly coordinated friendly artillery fire.

Lieutenant Colonel Wendell H. Langdon (1908–1984) ordered 1st Battalion to make a fourth attack on Villa Crocetta, which began at 1315 hours on May 29, 1944. Unlike the previous three attacks, this one was made with the "support of four M10 tank destroyers and three light tanks" (the latter likely from Company "D," 191st Tank Battalion). Sergeant Lightsey's M10 was one of the tank destroyers.

That afternoon, Sergeant Lightsey shared the turret of his tank destroyer with two men: his platoon leader, 1st Lieutenant John S. Jarvie (1914–1944), and Corporal Elmer F. Park (1919–1944). Seated below and to the front of them in the hull of the M10 were the driver, Corporal John F. Perkins (1908–1984), and the assistant driver, Private Reamer H. Conner (1923–1998).

Lieutenant Jarvie had fought with Company “C” as a platoon leader in the Tunisian campaign before transferring to Headquarters Company on September 13, 1943. Early in the Anzio campaign, on February 3, 1944, Jarvie returned to Company “C” as a platoon leader after another officer was wounded.



Sergeant Lightsey’s platoon leader, 1st Lieutenant John S. Jarvie (left) with Captain Baker D. Newton (right) in Tlemcen, Algeria, during the summer of 1943. Captain Newton was Lightsey’s company commander from February 27, 1943, through March 31, 1944. (Courtesy of the Newton family)



Elmer F. Park, probably the assistant gunner aboard Sergeant Lightsey’s M10 on May 29, 1944 (Courtesy of the Newton family)



John F. Perkins, the driver of the M10 on May 29, 1944 (Courtesy of the Newton family)

If his platoon leader had not been aboard, Sergeant Lightsey would have been commanding the M10 and Corporal Park would have served as gunner. It is likely that with the platoon leader aboard, Sergeant Lightsey would have assumed the role of gunner, with Corporal Park moving to the loader's position.

Unbeknownst to the officers planning the assault, German strength was higher than anticipated. According to the 168th Infantry Regiment's S-3 journal, after the attack the battalion obtained intelligence indicating that the Germans had "8 tanks dug in at Villa Crocetta and a Bn [battalion] in strength defending with a Bn in reserve." Eight enemy tanks were simply too much for four M10s to reasonably handle.



William W. Galt, seen here as a lieutenant in the 168th Infantry Regiment on December 9, 1943, boarded Sergeant Lightsey's M10 during the assault on Villa Crocetta. (Courtesy of the Congressional Medal of Honor Society)

Compounding matters was the fact that according to the 168th regimental history, "After the failure of the third attack on the Villa, [1st Battalion's] Company 'A' and Company 'C' were approaching the point of complete demoralization" and most of them refused to advance. Only Company "B" made any significant headway against the objective.

In a statement reproduced in Sergeant Lightsey's Individual Deceased Personnel File (I.D.P.F), the M10's assistant driver, Private Reamer H. Conner, wrote that they had been attacking German infantry when they were notified by radio of an imminent friendly artillery strike. They withdrew and replenished their ammunition supplies from a halftrack commanded by Staff Sergeant West R. Lyon (1916–1988). The 1st Battalion, 168th Infantry Regiment's S-3 (operations and training officer), Captain William W. Galt (1919–1944), was observing the action with Lyon and accompanied the renewed attack.

Conner continued, "We moved up again and we were crossing a ditch and threw a track. We finally got the track on with a bar, Sergeant Lightsey put a new antenna on (broken one was shot off)." At some point—probably after the track was repaired, based on the survivors'

statements—Captain Galt boarded the M10, standing on the rear deck and manning the tank destroyer's .50 machine gun as they approached German-occupied buildings and trench line. The M10 also destroyed a German antitank gun spotted by an infantryman accompanying the assault, Technical Sergeant Ervin M. Frey (1919–1991).

Private Conner recalled that the M10 advanced through an olive grove and, spotting German soldiers in a trench, they “cleaned up the Infantry[.]” The German infantry took heavy casualties—at least 15 and as many as 80 were killed or wounded, depending on the account.

Then, around 1420 hours, disaster struck. According to the 168th Infantry history, the 1st Battalion intelligence officer observed

an estimated company of Germans, supported by four tanks, counter-attacking down the valley with bayonets fixed. One of the tanks pulled up behind the Villa and fired a shell through the turret of a tank destroyer, killing the battalion operations officer who had been firing the tank destroyer’s 50 calibre [sic] machine gun at the retreating Germans.

In a statement reproduced in Sergeant Lightsey’s I.D.P.F., Corporal Perkins recalled that

After we picked up this Infantry Captain, we travelled about one hundred (100) yards before we were hit. The Captain was standing on the back of the Tank Destroyer when he got killed. He was firing the .50 caliber. We were sitting still when the tank [sic] was hit. The shell came through the turret. I saw Lt. Jarvie and Sergeant Lightsey fall to the bottom of the turret. In about four or five seconds, the tank caught fire and I went out the turret on the left side after crawling over them (both of them). I’m certain that they were both dead.

Private Conner recalled that he was initially unaware that the M10 had been hit:

I thought it was a .50 caliber shooting in our turret at first. As the hot lead sprayed around, Corporal Perkins shouted that he was hit and told us to get out. I jumped out when it blazed on the Ass’t. drivers side. I went out the turret and started running. Perkins stopped me and put the fire out in my hair. Then we crept, crawled, and ran to get into a ditch. Then we crawled over a small hill to where the Infantry was in a wheatfield and then to the next wadi where the medic was. I don’t remember feeling anything. I had my eyes closed because it was blazing there and I didn’t want them burnt.

The 168th Infantry Regiment history ruefully noted that the German “counter-attack, supported by tanks, was too strong for the twenty men left to hold the hill.” The surviving American infantry retreated.

It’s not clear if the same German shell that killed Lieutenant Jarvie and Sergeant Lightsey also claimed the lives of Corporal Park and Captain Galt (whose bodies were located next to the burned out M10), but Corporal Perkins and Private Conner were the only survivors of the crew. Corporal Perkins later told his family that he and Conner hid from the Germans for a time—close enough to them laughing—before they were able to escape back to American lines.

Aftermath & Repatriation

Private Conner was hospitalized for wounds to his head as well as his hands, and Corporal Perkins for wounds to his thoracic wall and hands. Both men were hospitalized until July 1944. After they were discharged from the hospital, both men rejoined the 894th Tank Destroyer Battalion and continued to serve through V-E Day. Captain Galt was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor, though it appears that the members of the M10 crew received no decorations other than the Purple Heart.

COMPANY MORNING REPORT ENDING 1 June 1944

STATION Three Miles S.E. of Lanuvio, Italy, APO 464
 ORGANIZATION Co. C, 894th TD Bn. FA

SERIAL NUMBER	NAME	GRADE	CODE
5957769	Brown, James B.	Pfc	27
Duty to MIA, 1255 hours, 31 May 1944.			
0338819	Jarvie, John S. (Inf)	1st Lt	17
Duty to MIA, 1420 hours, 29 May 1944.			
34051486	Lightsey, Robert D.	Sgt	17
34051507	Park, Elmer F.	Cpl	
3402317	Perkins, John F.	Cpl	
33457821	Conner, Reamer H	Pvt	
Above four (4) named Enlisted Men, duty to MIA, 1420 hours, 29 May 1944.			
6927731	Holsenback, Eugene K.	Sgt	
Duty to Abs SK ID 15th Evac Hosp, 1100 hours.			
32132730	Shaner, Harold W.	Sgt	6
Duty to US per Ltr., Hq. VI Corps, Subject: Orders, File P-O 300.4, dated 29 May 1944.			
Left Company 0900 hours.			
32341383	Oliva, Orlando L.	S/Sgt	
Abs SK ID 78th Sta Hospital to duty 0900 hours.			

OFFICER	FLD O & CAPT	1ST LT	2D LT	WO	PLT S
STRENGTH	PRESENT	ABSENT	PRESENT	ABSENT	PRESENT
ASSIGNED					
ATTACHED					
REPLACED					
ATTACHED TO OTHER UNIT					
TOTAL					

FLD O & CAPT	1ST LT	2D LT	WO	PLT S
PRESENT	ABSENT	PRESENT	ABSENT	PRESENT
ASSIGNED				
ATTACHED				
REPLACED				
ATTACHED TO OTHER UNIT				
TOTAL				

ESTIMATED NUMBER OF BATHS REQUIRED FOR DATE	DATE	TOTAL	STRENGTH
117	117	117	117

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COMPANY MORNING REPORT ENDING 1 June 1944

STATION Three Miles S.E. of Lanuvio, Italy, APO 464
 ORGANIZATION Co. C, 894th TD Bn. FA

SERIAL NUMBER	NAME	GRADE	CODE
35292960	Short, Oger G.	Tec 5	3
39605730	Wildin, Norman L.	Pvt	
Above two (2) named Enlisted Men DS with 525th Ordnance Co., to duty 1800 hours, 31 May 1944.			
One (1) Enlisted Man reld from atchd to Hq. Co. 894th TD Bn., for rations, 1100 hours.			
Four (4) Enlisted Men atchd to Hq. Co., 894th TD Bn., for rations 1800 hours, 27 May 1944.			

RECORD OF EVENTS

Pfc Brown KIA, when hit in the head by enemy shell fragments, 1500 Yards S. of Villa Crocetta Italy, 1st Lt. Jarvie MIA near Villa Crocetta, Italy, after a direct hit on M10 by enemy shell. Sgt. Lightsey, Cpl. Park, Cpl. Perkins and Pvt. Conner KIA near Villa Crocetta, Italy, after a direct hit on M10 by enemy shell. No changes in position.

OFFICER	FLD O & CAPT	1ST LT	2D LT	WO	PLT S
STRENGTH	PRESENT	ABSENT	PRESENT	ABSENT	PRESENT
ASSIGNED		3	2		
ATTACHED					
REPLACED			1		
ATTACHED TO OTHER UNIT					
TOTAL		3	3		

FLD O & CAPT	1ST LT	2D LT	WO	PLT S
PRESENT	ABSENT	PRESENT	ABSENT	PRESENT
ASSIGNED				
ATTACHED				
REPLACED				
ATTACHED TO OTHER UNIT				
TOTAL				

ESTIMATED NUMBER OF BATHS REQUIRED FOR DATE	DATE	TOTAL	STRENGTH
117	117	117	117

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Morning report of June 1, 1944, stating that the M10 crew was missing in action as of May 29, 1944. The June 2, 1944, morning report corrected this one, stating that Perkins and Conner were seriously wounded in action, and June 3, 1944, morning report listed Park as killed in action. However, Jarvie and Lightsey's status would not officially be changed for months to come. (National Personnel Records Center)

The War Department was slow to supply Lieutenant Jarvie and Sergeant Lightsey's families with information. By October 16, 1944, the U.S. Army had a sworn statement from Corporal Perkins that he was certain both men were dead, but evidentially that alone was not sufficient grounds to change their status from missing in action to killed in action.

Lieutenant Jarvie and Sergeant Lightsey's remains, initially referred to as Subject Deceased Unknown 53531 (later as Unknown X-663), were buried at the U.S. Military Cemetery Nettuno, Italy on December 12, 1944, and had been tentatively identified by December 16, 1944. Even so, it appears that their status was not changed for another three months. The War Department Adjutant General's Office report of death for Sergeant Lightsey was dated February 14, 1945. His family may have learned his status around that time, though the earliest known newspaper report confirming his death was a casualty list printed in *The Tampa Daily Times* on March 26, 1945.

Sergeant Lightsey's widow, Laura, remarried to George F. Collins (1914–1970) in Okeechobee on February 6, 1948.

After the war, Jarvie and Lightsey were subsequently reburied at Arlington National Cemetery (Section 34, Grave 4845) on January 17, 1950.

Notes

Date and Place of Birth

Though his draft card stated that Lightsey was born on November 26, 1911, in Avon Park, Florida, it was listed as November 14, 1911, in DeSoto County on his Florida birth certificate. That date of birth is supported by two documents in his I.D.P.F., the Adjutant General's Office report of death and an application for headstone or marker signed by his mother.

Departure from Algeria

Company "C" morning reports stated that a detachment of two officers and 87 enlisted men, including Sergeant Lightsey, left the main body of the unit on October 23, 1943, boarded the transport U.S.S. *Lyon* (AP-71) at the port of Oran on October 24, 1943, and sailed on October 25, 1943, arriving in Italy three days later.

The U.S.S. *Lyon*'s war diary stated that the ship was in fact docked at the nearby naval base, Mers-el-Kébir, rather than the port of Oran. The war diary stated that 28 men from 894th Tank Destroyer Battalion boarded the ship on the afternoon of October 23, 1943, followed by another 432 men on the afternoon of October 24. Of course, this total included men from other companies. *Lyon* sailed on the morning of October 25, 1943, as part of convoy N.S.F.-6. The transport arrived in the Bay of Pozzuoli on October 28, 1943, and disembarked its passengers south of Bagnoli.

Duty in Final Battle

As section leader, Sergeant Lightsey would have been the M10's commander if his platoon leader was not also riding in the vehicle. Most likely, when Lieutenant Jarvie boarded, Lightsey probably moved to the gunner position and Corporal Park to loader. Sergeant Lightsey had experience as a gunner prior to being promoted to sergeant. However, there is a possibility that Corporal Park remained as gunner, in which case Sergeant Lightsey would have acted in the role of assistant gunner (loader). What is known for certain is that Lightsey, Park, and Jarvie were all in the turret during the fourth assault on Villa Crocetta.

Acknowledgments

Special thanks to Sergeant Lightsey's nephew, Walter Veasey, for contributing photos as well as information about Lightsey's upbringing. Thanks also go out to Laura Lightsey's niece, Betty Ann Lamb McLellan, and to the Newton family for the use of their photos.

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