

#1

Around the early part of March 1943 I returned to the 601 T.D. Bn. After a three week siege in the hospital with Amebic Dysentery.

I was very weak, so I voluntarily dug any sump holes or latrines that was needed around the area during our time in bivouac.

I was assigned to a new Crew on a brand new "M3", with Hill as the driver, Cordova the gunner, Herd the #1 Cannoner and myself at the #2 position with Sargeant Swartz in Charge.

We knew there was a rough time coming up when the quality of the Chow improved and especially when the Chaplains concluded their services with a prayer for those who wouldn't be with us the next time we got to gather.

We moved out on about the 18 of March there were only three guns in "A Co." the rest of them were assigned to

We moved up on the line with the 1st Infantry on the 19th. It was early in the morning and the Artillery laid down a barrage on the enemy positions and the foot soldiers moved in but they didn't meet any resistance for the position was held by Italians and they couldn't wait to surrender.

We spent all that day standing by while the Italians filed down out of the sand dunes and turned themselves in.

While the Artillery took up positions in the sand dunes and fired on the Gafsa - Gabes road, that was the only approach in that area, we were dispersed on the open plains approaching the sand dunes.

For the next three days we were the constant target of German dive bombers.

Our anti aircraft mounted to 30 cal. mounted in the back of jeeps or 50 cal. mounted in the back of $\frac{3}{4}$ ton weapons carrier.

We had a 50 Cal. mounted in the back of our "M3" but they didn't seem to bother the dive bombers at all for whenever they come within range of our guns, they had already released their bombs and we were very vulnerable to flying shrapnel being 4ft above the ground and the armor in the back of the "M3" wouldn't stop it.

Anyone manning a gun on the back of the Jeep or $\frac{3}{4}$ ton in the area of a bomb explosion had very little chance of not being hit.

During our bombing run the first day our C.O., "St. Marcus" was severely wounded and T4 Hitchbevitka was killed and T5 Porondo was wounded.

4.
St. Fred Miner came back to the
Co as C.O.

The night of the 22 of March we
moved through the sand dunes
and dug in the guns on the
other side covering the Gaps Gabes
road.

Just before day break the Recon
C.O. made contact with the 10th
Panzer division and for no reason
that I could ever come up with,
the "B Co" left the protection of
the sand dunes and went out
on the open desert to meet the
Panzer division.

St. Fred Miner notified us that
we were the only obstacle to the
tanks and their over running the
Field Artillery and cutting off
the supply lines to other key
Combat units. He also reminded us
we had run from the panzers at
Ovosseltia and Spitta but this
time we had to hold and

fight back no matter what 5
the odds were!

It's hard to describe what took place that day for what one person sees is like trying to photograph a marathon race starting with a narrow angle lens.

The Panzers started firing as soon as they came into range.

We fired back but the visibility was poor because of a fog that moved in with the dawn and also the Germans started laying down a smoke screen.

The 5th field artillery did a beautiful job following the attack in and laying down a pattern that was perfect for the situation.

I don't understand how the Germans who have always moved into a situation with military caution, could throw their infantry and tanks into an attack with such disregard for enemy resistance!

6.

Our gun, with Sargent Swartz in charge, was dug in about 30 ft. from the road entrance in front of the sand dunes.

We had spent most of the night digging the "M3" in so we were well-protected from any flat projectile fire.

The first couple of hours the concentration of fire on our position was unbelievable.

All during this, Swartz sat on the gas tank in the left rear and observed our fire through glasses and kept in touch by radio with Lt. Miner who was observing from a fox hole on top of the sand dune behind us. S/sgt. Jagulli was with the Lt. and relayed the orders to us.

When we shot off all of our ammo. and there was a lull in the action Sgt. Swartz climbed into the drivers seat and drove

the "M3," back over the sand dune ^{#:} and parked it in a place he thought was safe. He then got a jeep and drove back to the rear for gasoline and ammo.

We had a faulty Generator on the "M3" so the Maint. Crew came up and replaced it with a new one.

While I was waiting on Swartz to come back, I had to shovel out about a half ton of dirt out of the Ammo wells that had been tossed in by the morning action.

I dug a big fox hole near the "M3" for there were howitzer shells dropping in the Area and the dive bombers were still active.

When Swartz came back we gassed up and filled the Ammo wells.

About 2 P.M. we heard that another Panzer attack was due around 3 P.M., so we made ready to move back to our position in front.

8.

We had a few minutes before moving so I made myself a cup of coffee and was heating water on a can of gas in the fox hole for the other two men when a howitzer shell landed in the rig just near gas tank.

Cordova and Hird never knew what hit them.

I had been standing on the edge of the fox hole drinking coffee and the force of the explosion threw me into the hole. When I crawled out the inside of the M3 was like a blast furnace.

Pete Borow and I tried to get near the M3 but there was no chance.

It was pretty hot around that area for while for the smoke drew all sorts of enemy fire.

I hung around there for an hour or so and then a runner from H.Q. picked me up and took me back to the rear.

As we were going back to the rear the runner pointed out ~~at~~ a small crowd of people in a dugout on top of a high sand dune almost a mile from where we had our position and told me that was Gen. Patton and his press agents.

When I got back to the rear I couldn't make myself understood for all I could do was stutter and I was so exhausted that I fell asleep while trying to eat Chow.

One of my close buddies wrapped me up in his bed roll and I slept for about six hours when I was awakened by an officer who shoved me into a fox hole for the German bombers were dropping personnel bombs all through the area.

Early the next morning what was left of us were relieved by the 879 Tank Destroyer Bn.

After the Battle of El Guettar¹⁰,
I had trouble staying alert and
awake and then I don't much
~~of~~ of the rest of the African Campaign
that I can recall except I was
always very tired and disinterested.

Bob Capa, who was a Life
photographer at El Guettar put
out a book called "Slightly out of
Focus". In the book is a shot
of our M3 burning and a small
figure running away from it.

The small figure had to be me.

I hope you can make some
sense out of this. You would
probably get a little different picture
if you contacted Mike Dragon,
Raffael Jagulli, Fred Miner,
Fred Swartz or Dante Cappiello or
Harry Rogrove.

I don't understand why the
battle of El Guettar wasn't given more
publicity?

I was just on my way to
mail this when I received the
package from you so I'm
changing the last portion so
I can answer some of your
questions.

The black "Y" was painted in
a yellow square and was
located about the center of the
bed box about 2 foot square and
painted on both sides. That was
the Bn. insignia and all units
were the same. The different Co.
markings were on the front ~~front~~
and back bumpers of all vehicles.
The Bn. insignia was reduced
to about 4" square for the smaller
vehicles.

I think I placed the insignia
too far forward on the sketch
of the Sweitzer explosion.

Anything I send to you that
you think anyone else might
be interested in, you have my

12.
permission to do what ever
you wish with it.

I try to be as impersonal
as possible in these articles.

After I read the material
you sent me I'll probably have
a better understanding of what
and why. If I think of anything
else I'll send it to you. J

Tom Morrison

P.S.

Before I received your package
I had enclosed a self addressed
envelope for I wanted to know
if you were receiving these.

I'll leave it in there and you
can do what you want with it.

J.M.