

Jan. 18, 1988

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Mr. L. L. Gill
T.D. Ass'n Historian

Dear Lonnie:

Re: "Combat action- U.S. T.D.'s vs enemy tanks"
This is a follow up of my letter dated 11/17/87.
At least one more letter will follow this one.

Lawrence Otis, 1067 Urana Ave., Columbus, Ohio 43224.
Lawrence wrote me on action on three dates and phoned me regarding a fourth event. He writes "the ranges I gave are what I remember but could be wrong. I'm not certain about them".
The M-18's 76mm gun was, as we know, a high velocity weapon. Note reference to use of armor piercing shells.

Sept. 29, 1944: "The 3rd platoon received a message that enemy tanks were in the vicinity of Bathlemont, France, and were under attack by the Air Force. We were not far from there so proceeded there at once.

As we approached the town we could see several P47 fighter planes overhead.

Suddenly one plane spotted us approaching and mistaking us for German tanks, dived and strafed our column. He must have recognized us and pulled up just as he fired because no T.D.'s were hit. We moved into the outskirts of town and Sgt. Clifford Henne, gun commander of the #1 destroyer took a position alongside of a building. From there we could see several tanks in a wide valley that sloped gradually away from us.

I was the gunner on Sgt. Henne's T.D. Several tanks were knocked out but some were still moving, trying to escape the valley. I was given an estimate of 800 yds to one tank, a tiger. It was moving slowly so I lined up my sight with about a 1/2 lead and fired. The armor piercing shell struck the tank in the side, stopping it at once and it started to smoke.

I was then told to fire at another tiger that was moving at the same range. I fired and had another hit with the same results as the first tank. It stopped and started to smoke.

Sgt. Henne then pulled back to let another destroyer into position as this was the best place to fire from. The second T. D. had the same success as we had. None of the crews got out of the tanks that we hit."

Jan 9, 1945: "3rd platoon was attached to the support of an Inf. Regt. We moved into a forest where the Inf. was dug in. I was the gun commander. Thomas Atkins was my gunner. I had to dismount and lead my destroyer through the forest as the Inf. had covered their fox holes and fresh snow on top of them made it difficult for the driver to see them. We went completely through the woods to the other edge. There was a complete open space before us, the ground rising to a slight ridge in the distance.

Everything was quiet, no movement anywhere. We had been there probably an hour when a tank suddenly came over the ridge in the distance, turned and ran parallel to the ridge. I ordered the gunner to open fire at a range of 1000 yds. I was standing at the side of destroyer so the smoke would not obstruct my view. I could clearly see the armor piercing tracer as it struck the side of the tank, stopping its movement. A lot of smoke came from it but no fire was visible. None of the crew got out. The Inf. was quite upset with us as they thought we had given away their position but nothing more showed up the rest of the day or night."

Apr. 8, 1945: "We were moving behind our lines to a new position. As we rounded a blind curve we almost ran over a small German tank. My first thought was to get my gun in action, but then realized the tank had not moved its gun toward me. There was no one in it. Within minutes, S.Sgt Walter Alexander, our plat. sgt., came up to say it was empty and asked for a granade which he dropped in the gun to put it out of action."

Along with the above, Lawrence also wrote: "The 76 mm gun and gun sight were very accurate, even at long range. As gunner I hit a small recon. car or scout or staff car at 2800 yds with an H.E. Shell. It exploded in flame. In the gunsight it was not much bigger than a pin head.

The M-18 was faster and more maneuverable than anything I saw of the Germans. I saw 60MPH in our M-18's several times."

In a phone conversation, after receipt of the above, Lawrence said he recalled another incident that concerned the accuracy of the M-18 sight. "A German light tank, probably with a 37mm gun, was observed at a great distance. He estimated it to be 3000 yds and fired. It was "over" and 2 men got out of the tank. He dropped 200 and fired again. This round hit the tank, it exploded and went up in flames. It appeared the two men were killed."

Kindest regards,

Bert Oliver
Bert Oliver

Info . copy: J. Coulston