

SUMMARY OF THE 3rd PLATOON, COMPANY "C" 609th TANK DESTROYER  
BATTALION ACTIVITY IN THE BATTLE OF THE BLUZE

The platoon arrived in Bastogne about 11 P.M. December 18, 1944. It was ordered to proceed to Noville at about 10 A.M. December 19, 1944 to support elements already in that town. The platoon arrived in Noville at dark under heavy ~~artillery~~ artillery fire. During establishing positions two (2) of our men were wounded Sgt Horton and SP-5 WILSON, THEY WERE EVACUATED to the hospital outside of Bastogne. This hospital was overrun by the Germans the next night December 20, 1944.

At about 4 A.M. December 20, 1944, Lt. Higgins ordered Sgt Pilon to follow him to a location on the other side of Noville. As we approached the intersection in the center of town, Sgt Pilon stopped his M-18 to get his bearing. Just as he stopped a volley of tank fire came from the left just missing Lt. Higgins. Lt Higgins dashed across the road and Sgt Pilon directed his M-18 to follow at full speed. <sup>WR</sup> MOVED to a position to the edge of town looking at a pine forest about 2500 yards from our position. Just as daylight was approaching, fog set in limiting visibility to zero. About 9 A.M. we heard vehicles and German soldiers approaching. They came within 100 yards of our position, overran our infantry outpost. We received an order "DON'T SHOOT UNTIL YOU SEE THE WHITE OF THEIR EYES". Sgt Pilon heard the American soldiers call for help so he turned his M-18 in the direction of the call and fired a few rounds. The Germans turned and retreated back in the direction that they came from. When the Germans got back about half way to the forest, the fog lifted exposing them. Sgt Pilon opened fire on two (2) halftracks destroying them and also opened fire on a group of German soldiers running to a small group of pine, Sgt Pilon fired some 76 MM H.E. also. some 50 Cal. We did not see any activity in that area.

After Lt. Higgins had placed Sgt. Pilon in a defensive position, he returned to the other side of town to find that Sgt. Beaster had engaged some German tanks. He fired at five of them disabling all five but was hit at the same moment that he fired the fifth round injuring Sgt. Beaster, McMannus, Adkins and killing Penswater. The battle for Noville was concentrated on the north and east side of Noville.

Periodically during the day the town was hit by American and German artillery doing very little damage. At about 3 P.M. the forces were ordered to regroup and return to Bastogne. Sgt. Pilon's M-18 was the rear defense of the column. When the group <sup>reached</sup> Foy a small town about two miles out of Noville the column came under German fire, there were German soldiers on house tops and in home firing at will causing the column to change its route through a field. While the column was stopped Sgt. Pilon observed some German tanks and jeeps entering Noville, He took them under fire and disabling one tank and injuring some soldiers for they could be heard calling for medics. The column finally got by Foy and proceeded to Bastogne. Sgt. Pilon was awarded the Bronze Star for Valor for his action in Noville.

About 10 A.M. Dec 21, 1944 S/Sgt Mays and Sgt. Pilon with the two remaining ~~M-18s~~ M-18s were directed to follow a Cavalry unit on the highway toward Neufchateau. About 9 miles out of Bastogne Sgt. Pilon's M-18 was hit three times by German anti-tank fire killing the driver and assistant driver, Sgt Pilon. Double and Calvert escaped unharmed. They had to crawl about 800 yards for they were under fire. S/Sgt Mays M-18 kept the area where the German fire was coming from under fire to protect the three returning from their disabled M-18. S/Sgt Mays and the rest of the men that survived returned to Bastogne.

On Dec 22, 1944 Sgt. Pilon established an outpost about two miles out of Bastogne on the road to Neufchateau. This was the outpost the Germans used to meet with General McAuliffe on the surrender. The outpost captured two German motorcycle scouts during the four days at this outpost. At about 6 P.M. December 26, 1944 the 4th Armored Div leading elements made contact with the outpost on the Arlon highway that was located across a field from our position. When sun came up the morning of the December 27, 1944 the field occupied by the large group of the 4th Armored Div. Sgt. Pilon returned to his unit in Bastogne.

On Dec 29, 1944 Lt. Higgins took one M-18 with Sgt. Pilon to a small town just west of Noville to support a unit of 506th Abn Inf. On approach to the command post we came under small arms fire and Lt. Higgins was hit in the arm. Sgt Pilon with instructions from the Inf Commander proceeded to a smaller <sup>town</sup> about half a mile north where the M-18 engaged a battle with some German tanks that were trying to get through the infantry positions. Sgt. Pilon with the M-18 destroyed five German tanks and observed one being towed away. On December 31, 1944 Sgt Pilon received orders to support the infantry proceeding north pass Noville. On January 2, 1945 the infantry engaged in battle approaching woods south of Houfalize, Sgt. Pilon's M-18 destroyed a German halftrack and an anti-tank gun.

January 2, 1945 at about 9 P.M. another tank destroyer unit (811th) relieved the Platoon (609th) who returned to Bastogne regrouped what was left of it and on January 4, 1945 motored to Metz to get replacements of personnel and equipment.

While in Bastogne battles the platoon lost 14 men and two M-18s, two M-20s and three jeeps.


Headquarters Platoon lost 4 men that were in a home converted into a hospital that was bombed by the German Air Force Christmas Eve. The building caught fire and burned. There many soldiers ~~that~~ perished in the fire. The 609th men were wounded while manning their gun during an air raid and artillery barrage on the American forces headquarters in the center of Bastogne.

Headquarters Platoon lost all their vehicles from hostile fire except one jeep one halftrack.

GEORGE: I would appreciate it if you would redo this to correct mistakes and condense it. The dates are as close as I can remember.

I compound fractured my right leg about 6 inches above the ankle Nov. 13. I hope it will not affect my dancing. I will be in a cast for a while longer. Hope you all had a joyful holiday season and will see you in Phil come Sept.

Sincerely

  
John Pilon

HEADQUARTERS 10TH ARMORED DIVISION  
APO 260 U. S. ARMY

26 January 1945

GENERAL ORDERS )  
NUMBER..... 22 )

E X T R A C T

AWARD OF BRONZE STAR MEDAL

By direction of the President and under the provisions of Army Regulations 600-45, dated 22 September 1943, as amended, and Circular Number 6, Headquarters Third United States Army, dated 26 April 1944, a Bronze Star Medal is awarded to:

Sergeant JOHN P PILON, 11046266, Field Artillery, Company C, Tank Destroyer Battalion, United States Army. For heroic achievement in connection with military operations against an enemy of the United States in BELGIUM on 20 December 1944. When an enemy force threatened to attack the town of NOVILLE, BELGIUM, the tank destroyer of which Sergeant PILON was gun commander, was placed in position on the edge of the town to assist in warding off the coming attack. Sighting seven enemy tanks approaching, Sergeant PILON, with utter disregard for his personal safety from the overwhelming opposition, courageously remained in his dangerously exposed firing position, firing round after round at the tanks until four were destroyed and the others routed. A short time later, observing enemy infantry forces moving towards the town, he fired at them so skilfully and efficiently that a large number were killed and the others forced to flee. Sergeant PILON'S action contributed immeasurably to the repulse of the enemy attack and merits high commendation. His display of courage and his loyal devotion to duty reflect high credit upon himself and the military forces of the United States. Entered the military service from Vermont.

By command of the DIVISION COMMANDER:

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