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AG 825K

TINY UNIT DELAYS TANK COLUMN SIX HOURS

By Hal Boyle

Associated Press Correspondent

18 Dec @Stavelot

A BELGIAN VILLAGE UNDER GERMAN ATTACK

DEC. 19 (AP).—The Lieutenant and two anti-tank gun crews knocked out four German Tiger "Royal" tanks yesterday in a flaming street battle which held up a Nazi armored column for six hours until American reinforcements arrived. The column was spearheading the counter offensive in that sector.

But for the battle wisdom of Lt. Jack Doherty, 27, of Latrobe, PA, and the valor of his gun crews, this fight would have been lost before it was well started, and the speedy German column might have been miles inside the American lines shooting up rear area outfits.

Doherty and his men, supported only by a single company of doughboys who would have been powerless to take on the tanks alone, bore the brunt of the sledgehammer thrusts by the vanguard of the German armored smash.

"It was still dark when I sent one of my three-inch anti-tank guns across the stream at the edge of the town to try to hold the wooden bridge there", Doherty recalled. "We did hold it until daybreak, when machine-guns drove us away, but we retook it by eight o'clock—and lost it again at nine. It was burning when we finally pulled back at noon.

"At ten o'clock, I got another of my guns up", Doherty continued. "Four Royal Tiger Tanks came moving down the street. With their first shots each of my guns set one Tiger ablaze.

"Nobody came out of one tank, and only two crew men got out of the other. They ran into a house and climbed to the roof—so we shot the roof right out from under them."

Another German tank was hit by both guns simultaneously, and a fourth Tiger backed along the road like a blind, trapped beetle. During the fight, another Tiger had moved out and found a better corner. "It had a better firing angle than we did—it could shoot at us, but we couldn't get back at it very well," Doherty said.

The Nazi monster tank knocked out Doherty's half-track and set his jeep on fire. Doherty ordered his men back. He managed to pull one of the guns with the help of Sgt. Louis Celanto, New Haven, Conn., Cpl. Roy Ables, Cleveland, Tenn., the gunner, and the rest of the crew.

To protect them, the leading gun, commanded by Sgt. Martin Hauser, of Los Angeles, Calif., and Gunner Cpl. Paul Lanzi, of Newark, NJ, continued to engage the well placed Tiger. Hauser and Lanzi then destroyed their own gun with an incendiary burst and made their way back afoot six miles to our headquarters.

The platoon sergeant, Kester O. Lowe, of Sarasota, Fla., remarked, "Hitler would be damned unhappy if he knew that the two guns which caused so much trouble were commanded by an Italian and a German—Celano and Hauser."

Thought you would be interested in a copy from an Army Times clipping that I found not long ago as a part of my WWII souvenirs. I had copies made because many of the boys in Co. C were interested in receiving them. but actually this is about Co. A. They happened to be right in the middle of the Battle of the Bulge when it happened. Co. C was in the southern sector when it happened. Lt. Jack Doherty has passed away not too long ago. I know that Mrs. Doherty has attended our last reunion. But I didn't. I was just coming out of the hospital.

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