

Battle Heroes Turn Pale, Tremble When Cited

By NOLAND NORGAARD.

With United States Forces in Tunisia, March 13 (Delayed) (AP)—On the same battlefield where only a few weeks ago it helped stem a sudden German attack in one of the most furiously fought actions of the Tunisian campaign, an entire company of a tank-destroyer battalion was commended today for gallant action and six members of the battalion were awarded Silver Stars.

The company, commanded by First Lieut. Ramsey Oakes, Leesville, La., was cited for beating back a German force that flooded through Kasserine Pass on February 20 until United States infantry could be withdrawn from an exposed position.

"The bravery, keen judgment and skill of the officers and men of this company undoubtedly prevented heavy losses to troops withdrawing along the road, and, in repulsing the German attack, they gained valuable time that was needed to reorganize our troops in the rear," the citation said.

Taken Off Guard.

Lieutenant Oakes was one of those decorated with the Silver Star. His citation noted that his company failed to lose a single man in the action.

He and the others were taken off guard by the ceremony, since there had been no advance notice of the awards. Corp. James Hulse, Murrayville, Ga., and Pvt. Julian Wilson, LaFayette, Ga., both turned pale and trembled when the commanding general called them from the ranks to receive their medals.

It was a reversal of the form they had shown in battle, when they raced 100 yards through the dark under intense enemy cross-fire to wipe out a machine-gun nest that was preventing the proper placing of their platoon. After covering half the distance the two men found the enemy was firing heavily directly at them, but they continued on to within fifteen yards of their objective and then wiped out the post with hand grenades.

Helps Save Infantry.

Others awarded Silver Stars were from other companies, Capt. Noble Abney, who, like Oakes, comes from Leesville, La., was cited for moving his company into an open area under heavy enemy shelling so it could cover the withdrawal of the American infantry and then lending the infantry vehicles to assist in the retreat. Abney's action was credited with having saved a substantial portion of the infantry, which might otherwise have been overrun.

Corp. Alex Steinberg, Newark, N. J., was decorated for his heroism in dismounting from a vehicle on the fireswept battlefield and carrying a wounded man to safety.

The other Silver Star went to Second Lieut. John Foos, Gibsonburg, Ohio, for gallantry in driving two miles ahead of his mortar platoon in a light truck to determine enemy positions. German machine guns blasted at him, one

bullet creasing his helmet and another knocking the bayonet off his rifle, which was beside him in the car.

Chases Nazis Back.

Foos returned to his platoon with information that enabled it to silence German guns and permit American infantry to advance without difficulty.

The citation for Oakes' company came as a result of one of the most spectacular episodes of Marshal Rommel's recent push through Kasserine Pass. The company, part of a battalion commanded by Lieut. Col. Charley Eastburn, Meridian, Miss., was assigned to hold a road above the pass.

Expected relief failed to arrive by midnight and two hours later the company heard troops approaching. It was unable to establish the identity of the force until it was only fifty yards away. Then it blasted away, destroying three German armored vehicles, wiping out two machine-gun squads and compelling the survivors to retreat.

Only yesterday, Oakes' gunners rushed to their .50-caliber guns when they saw four Messerschmitts coming and shot one of them out of the sky.

Hitler Insane? Nazis Deny It

London, March 14 (U.P.)—Germany denied in radio broadcasts today that Adolf Hitler had gone mad or that Marshal Henri Philippe Petain of Vichy was near death.

Berlin broadcasts said Propaganda Minister Paul Joseph Goebbels, receiving Swedish newspapermen Saturday, claimed to have seen Hitler only three days before at the Fuehrer's headquarters on the Russian front and that Hitler had never been "in such good condition physically or spiritually."

Goebbels said also that both Reichsmarshal Hermann Goering and Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop were in the best of health.

Answering reports that Petain was near death, Berlin broadcast that he watched the mounting of the guard from the balcony of his headquarters today and looked "extraordinarily fit."

Noel Coward Suffers Relapse.

London, March 14 (AP)—Noel Coward, who is ill with influenza at Torquay, had a relapse today. The playwright fell ill last week.