

Detroit Sergeant Wins Battlefield Promotion

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(Defender War Correspondent)

WITH SEVENTH ARMY IN ALSACE — A battlefield promotion from staff sergeant to second lieutenant went last month to Christopher J. Sturkey, Detroit, Mich.

Member of a fast-becoming famous Tank Destroyer Battalion, Sturkey won his bars the hard way.

No officer candidate school student, no fur-rubbing fair-haired boy, no math genius is Sturkey but conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of life above and beyond the call of duty was how he won his bars.

It was sometime in December when the TD unit first engaged the enemy. They had been ordered to relieve a self-propelled gun unit and as Sturkey cautiously, quietly moved his guns up to position, the noise of the self-propelled guns moving back attracted the attention of enemy guns.

German fire opened up with a withering blanket of machine gun fire, mortars, and small arms. Fellows receiving their baptism of fire got shaky and nervous. This was

it and this was what it was like they thought. But the guns had to be set into position in place of the vacated self-propelled guns.

Lt. Walter S. Smith, Bonner Springs, Kans., ordered his men to position but guns moved slowly. Sgt. Sturkey, like an old veteran, without regard for himself and utter disregard for his personal safety hopped up bolt upright in full view of the enemy fire in an effort to find gun positions.

Locating positions and source of enemy fire, he ordered squads to cover him and he led his men out into position while running a gauntlet of intense machine gun fire.

One man was lost going up but they wiped out the German position and the alertness and leadership shown by Sgt. Sturkey under the intense enemy fire for the first time won the respect of the men and also his bars.

And as TDs talk about that first night under fire you can understand that it's guys like Sturkey who have made this TD outfit the most talked of unit in Alsace.