

Captain Thinks Ithacan Is Prisoner

Circumstances relating to the present status of First Lt. Wallace C. Forbush, now listed by the War Department as missing in action in Italy, have been received in a letter to his wife, Mrs. Jessie Rankin Forbush of 201 Williams St.

The letter was written June 18 by the lieutenant's commanding officer, Capt. Baker D. Newton.

Graduated from Cornell in February, 1942, Lieutenant Forbush was commissioned a second lieutenant in the U.S. Infantry and was called to service the following May. Going overseas in August, 1942, Forbush was stationed for a time in England and then participated in the North African campaign before going to Italy. With the U.S. Fifth Army, he was with a platoon of M-10 tank destroyers, and was reported as missing in action in early February. No other details have been learned by the War Department.

Evidence Encouraging

Saying that he had purposely delayed writing in order to learn further details about Lieutenant Forbush, Captain Newton wrote that the little that he has discovered seemed to him to be encouraging. Remarking that he had "no proof whatsoever," the captain said he believed Forbush was a prisoner of war, and he then gave the circumstances of Forbush's disappearance as follows:

"Early in the month of February, on the Anzio Beachhead, Wally took his platoon of M-10 tank destroyers to assist another platoon which was very hard pressed and practically surrounded during a German counterattack. He immediately led his platoon toward three German tanks, which were attacking our right flank. Just before coming into their sight, Wally left the protection of his own vehicle and went to the top of a small hill to locate the enemy tanks.

Leading Tank Hit

"He saw them and ran back and warned his crew; then jumped off to the outside of another M-10 and was giving instruction to his sergeant when the fight started. Wally's leading tank was hit and the blast of the explosion knocked him unconscious off the second M-10.

"After all the enemy tanks were destroyed, the sergeant worked his way back to Wally and looked him over. He said that there appeared to be not one mark on him; but it was impossible to get him out because a dash of several yards had to be made across open ground under machine-gun fire to get to and from the little draw where Wally was. Within a few minutes the Germans had taken that ground and our units were pushed back."

Adding that that particular piece of territory had not been retaken until the first part of June, the captain went on to tell why he thought Forbush was a prisoner.

Wounded Given Care

"Whatever other faults the Germans may have, I know that they, when time permits, take care of our wounded and dead. If a soldier is found wounded they give him medical treatment; if dead, they bury him and mark his grave."

Then the officer told how he had spent 2 days searching for any marks of a grave, and added that he had discovered no evidence of such. "Therefore," he wrote, "I believe that Wally was, if injured, evacuated; if uninjured, then taken prisoner."

The captain praised Forbush as being a "wonderful guy, and one of the bravest men I have ever known."

Claiming that "no number of medals or decorations could do full credit to that one self-sacrificing act of heroism of exposing himself instead of his whole vehicle and crew in order to locate the enemy," the captain said, "it was not foolhardy but common sense and it required more cold courage than most men could claim."

Captain Newton's final remark was, "Wally is one of my best friends, and I am awfully anxious to know he is safe."