

DECLASSIFIED
Authority NN0735017
By KR NARA Date 9/26/09

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ANNEX "P"

HEADQUARTERS
645th TANK DESTROYER BATTALION

12 September 1944

SUBJECT: Destroyed Enemy Materiel

TO :

1. One M-10, A Company, situated on high ground vic 196794 (Sheet 15J) took under fire 2 Mk IV tanks mounting long barreled 75 mm guns, moving on road vic 195804 (Sheet 15J) at 1715B 10 September 1944. The first Mk IV was stopped by one round hitting the right sprocket (APCBDF). The second was stopped by one round hitting the front hull. A total of 8 rounds APCBDF and 12 rounds HE were expended at 1100 yard range until the two tanks burned. There was no enemy infantry with the tanks. The tanks were not firing. No other fire was being put on the tanks, and the M-10 drew no return fire. From its position, the M-10 was looking down on the Mk IVs. The terrain in the M-10s position was good and firm. Sight used was M-70. Weather was clear and visibility good.

2. Personal inspection disclosed penetrating hits shown on the attached diagram. The rounds entered at an angle of 60 degrees. The tanks were completely burned out and there was no trace of enemy tank crews in the vicinity and none were observed in the tanks. Front, above section where hits are shown, was blown out in each tank. The machine gun of the first tank was blown out and was lying on the ground.

JAMES H. LEGENDRE, JR.
Captain, FA
S-2

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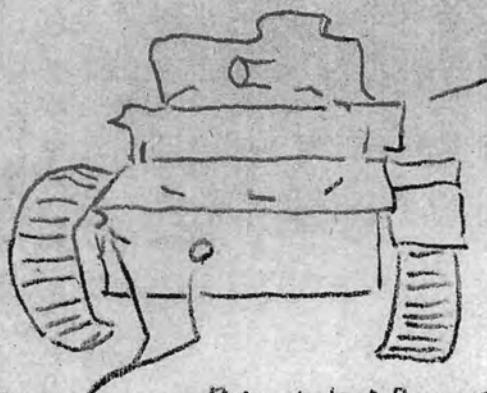
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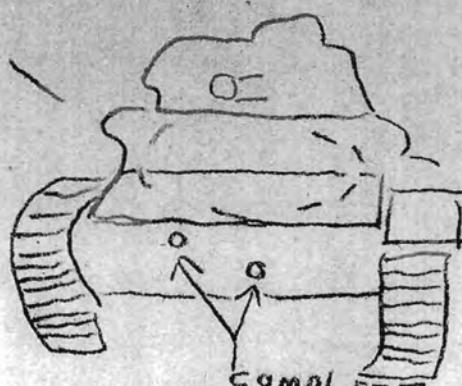
1ST TANK



PENETRATED BY 2 Rds APC BDF
Rd. ON LEFT BENT SPROCKET
AND KNOCKED TRACK OFF -

(BECAUSE OF BURNED OUT CONDITION OF
TANKS, OTHER ROUNDS NOT SPOTTED)

2ND TANK



P=K W MK IV-FRONT VIEW

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ANNEX "Q"

HEADQUARTERS
645TH TANK DESTROYER BATTALIONAPO 45, U S Army
1 October 1944

SUBJECT: Destroyed Enemy Tank

TO : Artillery Section, 7th Army, Attention Anti-Tank Officer

TYPE: Pakw Mk V

PLACE: Vic AUTREY; exact location is 22756720 (Sheet 15 G)

TERRAIN: "Tank is at the bottom of a small valley bogged down and about 20 yards off the road. Terrain is swampy."

EVENTS: On the night of September 29, 1944, an estimated five (5) enemy tanks came down the road toward AUTREY from the NE. The tank destroyer was in the vic of 22606685 and an M-4 tank was nearby. The time was approximately 2230A. The enemy tanks were heard but could not be seen. Both the tank destroyer and the M-4 fired in the direction of the sounds (tank destroyer fired 7 rounds APC) and the enemy tanks fired 4 rounds in return. The tank destroyer and M-4 changed position slightly, as enemy fire was perilously close and prepared to fire again. Some enemy tanks were heard to move off and also some to 'thrash around' in the valley. Enemy infantry was moving in (tank destroyer took six prisoners) and no other firing was done at night. At dawn, 2 enemy tanks were discovered in field at 22756720. The tank destroyer and M-4 moved to a higher position and each took an enemy tank under fire and set it on fire.

EFFECT OF FIRE: Enemy tank was still burning at time of close inspection. One hole approx 5" in diameter was found in under hull of front (armor around hull was cracked). Two gouges of approx 1½" in depth and 4" long were observed on glacis plate, two nicks approx 1½" deep were observed on left front corner of turret, left track was knocked off, and a ricochet had knocked the tooth off the right sprocket. No enemy personnel were found around tank. (10 enemy personnel were captured around house 75 yards from tanks shortly after the firing).

ANGLE OF FIRE: 0 degrees obliquity (head on)

10 degrees (approx) vertical (looking down on enemy tank)

RANGE: 300 yards

SIGHT: M-51

ROUNDS FIRED: 10 rounds APC.

*Another Mk V is 35 yards east of this tank and was knocked out by an M-4 tank.

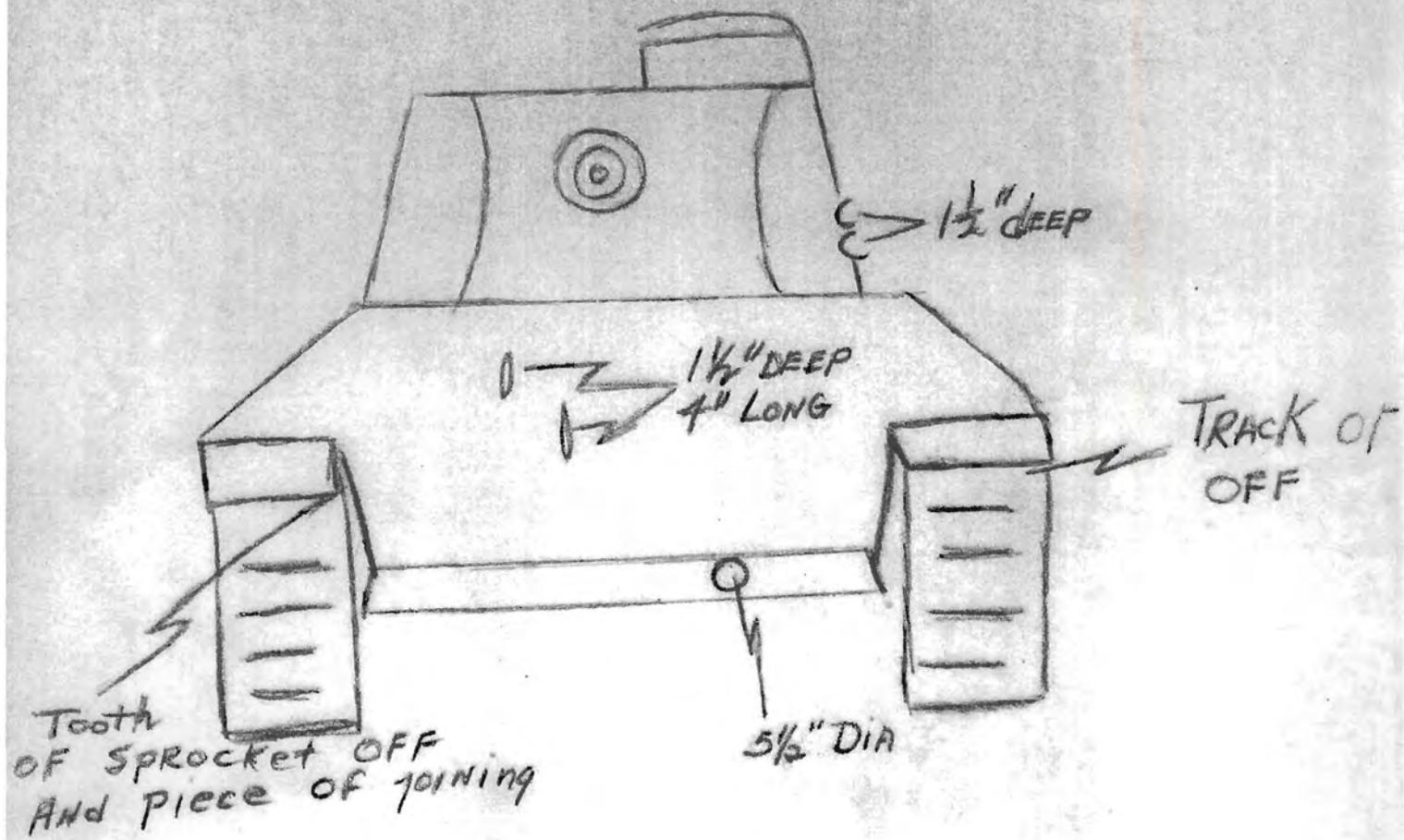
JAMES H. LEGENDRE, JR.
Captain, FA
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P=KW MKIV



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ARMY - D

COMPANY "A"

645TH TANK DESTROYER BATTALION
AFG 45, U. S. ARMY

14 September 1944

My name is Cpl. Clifford E. Riley, 14070578, Co. A, 645th TD Battalion.

On the night of 30 August 1944, we moved into position at VALBONNE. There were four tanks, M-10s, and one half-track, M-3. The tanks moved into positions, two in front of town, and two in the center of town. My half-track was along side a building in the center of town.

While there, on 31 August 1944, the report came in that German infantry was preparing to enter the town. Then an additional report stated that five German tanks were seen moving rapidly toward the town. Sgt. Ernewein opened fire with his tank, and knocked out a German tank. The Germans countered with some weapon, thought to be an anti-tank gun, and knocked out Sgt. Ernewein's tank. Cpl. Gould was killed, and Sgt. Ernewein was seriously wounded. Cpl. Delaney was later captured, and the remaining two crew members were sent to the hospital (Pfc Bell and Pvt Hoover).

On the right of the town on a hill, (1 Sept 1944), was Sgt. Hradka's TD. It opened fire on the German tanks coming up the road. He stopped two tanks, when the report came in that the Germans were attacking with another column of tanks from the left flank, thought to be 10 or 12 tanks.

In the meantime the center of the village was under intense mortar and machine gun fire. The American Infantry was steadily being pushed back out of the town. At this time, the American Infantry was very badly disorganized, and the few remaining in town, were loaded on my half-track, and evacuated the town, along with three of our TDs, to the outskirts of MERIMEUX. There, we went into position, covering the road we had just returned on.

A Captain from S-3, who stated he was defending the town, ordered one of our TDs to another position (Sgt Bailey's TD). We didn't know the officer, and though our Platoon Sergeant tried to keep the TD in town, this officer took it away to some other area. I never saw this TD again. This left us with two TDs. Sgt. Hradka's and Sgt. Volner's, also my half-track. We had only been there a few minutes when we heard a large column of tanks moving up to our position from the left flank. Some of our men were under the impression they were our own tanks moving up to reinforce our position. This conclusion resulted in our letting them get almost into our position. They pulled up openly, to within about 400 yards of us, and open fire on us. They first burst blew up my half-track, parked beside a low wall. The half track carries 3" ammunition, approximately 150 rounds, and five or six boxes of .50 caliber ammunition.

Our two destroyers were covering the road, and had to change their positions, in order to fire on the tanks, which they did. They opened fire on the German tanks, knocking out five of them. Two blew up and three were disabled, with a possibility of three more disabled.

Behind these tanks the Germans pulled a number of half tracks loaded with infantry which they unloaded and surrounded our position on the outskirts of the town. We pulled the TDs back about a thousand yards to a large dwelling, which we called the "Castle". There, we destroyed the radios, pulled the firing pins in the guns, and destroyed the Gun Sight.

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Then the TD crews, dismounted, and took their 50 Cal. Machine guns from their mounts, laid them across a low wall and commenced firing at the German Infantry which was closing in on us.

We pulled back under intense Machine Gun fire, about 800 yards, to another large building. The Infantry Officers ordered all the EM into the cellar of this building, and posted an outpost guard around it, while two or three Infantry men were sent back to contact another battalion of Inf to our rear. On returning to our position in a Jeep, these men gave away our position to the enemy, who then laid in a terrific barrage of mortar and Artillery fire.

The Infantry Officers told us that we would stay in the cellar, till the Battalion fighting below us came up the hill to rescue us.

In the meantime the German Infantry surrounded the hill, and came on up to capture the outpost guards. They were captured as were the guards sent to relieve the outpost.

Immediately after this the Germans sent a tank directly into the yard in front of the house. We evacuated the cellar and ran around to the rear of the house, and down a hill. We ran perhaps 25 yards when German Machine guns opened fire on us. The guns were about 40 yards in front of us when they fired over our heads.

They drove us back in the cellar, where they threw a few concussion grenades down after us.

There was no indication of any attempt to kill or injure any of the American Soldiers, but rather, a deliberate attempt to capture as many alive as possible.

The Germans then had us drop our weapons and come up the stair-way, with our hands over our heads.

They lined us up, and searched us, then sent up a red flare, to let their mortars and artillery know they had taken the hill. Next they took one of two men at random and questioned us briefly till about 1100PM that night.

They dressed our wounded, and laid our dead beside the door, and then lined us up and marched us across country in the direction of BOURG.

They marched us through a village, about two hours away, which was jammed full of German vehicles. About 25 or thirty personnel wagons loaded with German Infantry and about 12 tanks, all waiting to move on to the front lines. This seemed their reserves.

They loaded us all in a large bus, and headed out toward BOURG. The next village we went through, I noticed a large amount of personnel vehicles and German Infantry but no tanks.

The next morning we came into BOURG, and I noticed a large convoy of German tanks and half-tracks going through town. I am not certain whether they were heading to the front, or away from it, as the driver would circle around all the towns in an effort to confuse our direction.

From there, they took us to LYON. We stayed in LYON all that day, loading ammunition. That night we left LYON for BESANCON. The highways were jammed for miles with German vehicles and bicycles, and German Infantry, all moving out of LYON. We traveled all that night on ammunition trucks (8 men per vehicle).

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By *[Signature]* NARA Date 9/26/09

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ANNEX - D

That morning the American planes caught up with us (the convoy). The planes strafed and bombed this convoy all that day. The convoy was entirely stopped all day while the planes blew up all the ammo trucks, tanks, half-tracks, and strafed anything that moved.

We were allowed to dismount and lie in the ditch along the road, but we could go no further. It was in this foray, that PFC Mergese, one of the Tank Destroyer crewmen, was hit in the leg by a strafing plane. He was carried away by the German medics for medical care. I never saw him after that.

That night we started out again. In the early hours of the morning, they hid us in a town. They put us and the vehicles in various garages and barns, and during the day, the American planes bombed and strafed and thoroughly shot up this town we were in.

The next night we started out again for BEAUMONT. The highway was littered with burning vehicles and enemy dead. There was also a train well covered with brush camouflage, which started out very slowly from this small town. We reached BEAUMONT in the early hours of the morning, and as we entered the town, the 3rd Division (American) artillery opened fire on us. This was a total surprise to us, as we figured we were far from the front lines.

The Germans carried us to a Naval Garrison, where they proceeded to question us again. While we were there, they proceeded to burn all their papers and equipment. They also gave us soup twice that day. The first meal we had eaten since our capture. The French Red Cross, repeatedly tried to give us food, but the Germans always chased them off.

Next day, they told us they would load us on a train bound for Germany. That night they marched us down to the railway, but when we got there, the Free-French had blown up the train. For this, the Germans set fire to all the French houses, up and down the road in that vicinity. They blew up all the bridges in the town, and blew up all the tall buildings, for a road block across the highway. They then marched us cross country for a few hours, until we hit the road leading into ROUGEMONT. They marched us all that night; and, some time during the next day, after some more strafing, we reached the town of ROUGEMONT. All along this highway, the Germans would commandeer any wagon or vehicles they chanced upon. Near the town of ROUGEMONT they were finally all riding some type of vehicle, and the prisoners were all walking. They told us we could sleep for two hours and then we were to resume marching, toward BELFORT. Again the French Red Cross tried to feed us, but the Germans refused to let them. From there the Germans stated they would have vehicles to transport us to BELFORT, and later to GERMANY. After our two hours rest, and no food, they marched us clear on until about three o'clock the next morning, when we reached the outskirts of VILLESEXEY. There was a German Vehicle blown up and burning, at the side of the road. In the confusion of detouring around this vehicle, I lay down in the ditch and let the rest of the column march on.

After waiting a while I started off in the direction of our Artillery flashes. By this time, I was wet, sick, and feverish, and I stepped in at a friendly French house, where they put me to bed, fed me, and dried my clothes. I stayed there all that night and the next day.

The following day, the Germans unloaded about 600 Infantry men in the little village I was in.

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ANNEX - D

The next five days, I stayed hidden in a barn in this village. I was in contact with the FFI and was in civilian clothing. For four days, the American and German forces were fighting for this village. I was subjected to intense Artillery, Mortar, and Machine Gun fire, and it was extremely necessary to keep well hidden, and under cover.

For the days I kept three German Soldiers from rejoining their unit. I spoke to them thru interpreters, as a Free Frenchman, and not as an American Soldier. I told them it would be much more beneficial to them, to surrender to the American Soldiers than to rejoin their outfit. They seemed to agree, and stayed there with me.

On the night of the 12th of Sept 1944 the German forces, evacuated this village, and in the morning, I saw an American Jeep enter the far side of town.

I went out and reported to the Lt. in the Jeep, and told him I had three prisoners in the barn. I identified myself, went back to the barn, dug up my uniform, then went in and announced myself as an American Soldier to these three Germans. They were very much surprised, and surrendered very willingly.

The prisoners and I were loaded on the Jeep and transported to the 189th FA CP, from there we went to the M.P. CP, where I turned the prisoners over to the MPs.

From there, I went to the 45th Division CP and started my experiences. From there I went back to my own outfit.

I neglected to mention, in the first part of my story, that, after Sgt. Ernewien's tank was hit, I heard him calling on the radio for help! After some debate, a medic from the 179th Infantry and myself, went back into the town, and got him out of the tank. Cpl. Gould was dead and we left him there.

I might add, that much credit should be given to the FFI and our Air-Force, for the splendid work they did during those 13 days I was captured, and away from my outfit. While we were in LION, we saw another man, Sgt. Senter, from our Company, brought in as a prisoner. This brought the total prisoners from my unit, to 13 men, whose names are: Lt. Ernest Hurdman, S/Sgt Alvin Newman, S/Sgt George Senter, Sgt. Clarence Volmar, Sgt. Frank Rmodka, Cpl. G. de Delaney, Cpl. Thomas McManus, T/4 Albert Trager, PFC Duane Heckman, Pvt. Edward Ross, Pvt Albert Morgese, and Pvt George Butler.

s/s CLIFFORD E. RILEY
 t/s CLIFFORD E. RILEY
 14070578, T/5
 Co. A, 645 TB Bn.

REPRODUCED by Headquarters 645th Tank Destroyer Battalion, 4 October 1944.

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Authority NN0735017By KR NARA Date 9/26/09

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 HEADQUARTERS
 645TH TANK DESTROYER BATTALION
 APO 45, U. S. ARMY

16 September 1944

SUBJECT: MEXIMEUX, Tank Action, 1st September 1944.

TO.....: Artillery Section, Seventh Army, APO 758, U. S. Army
ATTENTION (Anti-Tank Officer)*L-1023*

1. Submitted herewith is the requested Tank action of the 1st Section, 2nd platoon, Company "A", 645th Tank Destroyer Battalion, on the afternoon, 1 Sept 1944.

2. 1st Lt JOSEPH P. DION, moved two (2) M-10 Tank Destroyers into the town of MEXIMEUX, on the reported threat of an enemy tank attack. The two Tank Destroyers were positioned near the center of the town, with approximately 100 yards between each destroyer. Both Tank Destroyers were partially protected by near buildings on the left hand side of the street, however, two-thirds of the vehicles remained in the street. At 1340H, approximately 10 minutes after the Tank Destroyers had taken up this position, the tank attack started. The main street of the town was very wide, and two (2) Mark V enemy tanks were observed moving up abreast at rapid speed, firing their machine guns and crushing anything that might be in their way. One Mark V moved ahead of the other

and had almost reached the center of town, near the "Y" intersection (See attached diagram), when the leading Tank Destroyer fired one round of APCBDF. This projectile hit the tank just above the right track, penetrating the right hull near the front. The range was approximately 75 yards, which immediately set the tank afire. The tank rolled for another 25 yards before it finally stopped. The gunner had the second tank in his sight and was ready to fire only a few seconds later. He fired at a range of about 100 yards, hitting the tank a few yards short of the first tank, hitting it almost identically in the same place. One round of APCBDF was fired, which set this tank also on fire. This second tank drove itself deep into a building, setting the building and adjoining houses on fire. The other three tanks were described as almost "flying" when they passed the first Tank Destroyer. The leading tank of these three was almost on the second Tank Destroyer before the T.D. fired. The range was reported as being 25 yards or less. One round of H.E. was fired at this Mark V tank, which immediately headed into a nearby building. The Crew attempted to evacuate the disabled tank, but were either killed or captured by our infantry. A closer inspection of this tank showed the driver's periscope completely shattered, and severe damage to accessories inside the tank. This tank did not burn, however, the projectile hit the center front, between the driver and 1st gunner's compartment. The armor of this tank showed no signs of penetration, but fragment marks covered the entire front. The fourth and fifth tanks passed the second Tank Destroyer at full speed, and one of the two stopped at a bend on the road, a proximately 50 yards away from the Tank Destroyer, to take it under fire. This tank turned around and began to move up to engage this Destroyer, when the T.D. fired a round of APCBDF, hitting the Mark V tank in the right track. This was the only part of the tank exposed to the Tank Destroyer when it fired, however this hit resulted in immobilizing the enemy tank. The tank was only able to move a couple of feet forward and backward. The Tank Destroyer continued to fire in the direction of the Mark V, to keep it from moving forward enough to return the fire. The Infantry began to lay 81MM mortar shells on the tank, and the crew attempted to evacuate, which resulted in their being killed or captured.

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ANNEX - II

3. The above Paragraph covers this odd and brief action. My own opinion is that the enemy tanks were surprised and somewhat confused, when engaged by our Tank Destroyers. I believe the last four (4) enemy tanks assumed the fire was coming from the street that the first Mark V enemy tank rolled down after it was hit, therefore, the remainder of the tanks, taking the street the Tank Destroyers were on, (See attached diagram)

4. I have written this report after talking to Lt. SIGH, and crew members of the two (2) Tank Destroyers. I also visited the scene of action on the following day, and it was described to me there. The two Mark V tanks on the same road the Tank Destroyers were on, were dragged to the outskirts of town later in the day. The Mark V tank that was hit first was also cleared from the road. Sergeant Robert B. Pitts, was commander of the first Tank Destroyer, Cpl. William B. McAuliffe was the gunner. Sergeant Wayne E. Menear commanded the second Tank Destroyer, and Private James F. Waldron was the gunner. The sight used was M70. It was a clear day and visibility was good.

s/s JOE T. CARR
t/s JOE T. CARR
Captain, FA
S-3

REPRODUCED: By Headquarters 645th Tank Destroyer Battalion, 4 October 1944.

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