

# Action of Ferriday Son Highlight in Battle

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(Associated Press Correspondent Representing the Combined American Press)

On the Fifth Army Beachhead Front, Feb. 5 (1:30 P. M.)—Plunging into the fiery center of German armored attacks on the northernmost salient of the Allied beachhead below Rome American tank destroyer crews knocked out four Tiger tanks, grateful reports from British infantry said Saturday.

The action of veteran gunners commanded by 25-year-old Captain Baker D. Newton of Ferriday, La., was one of the highlights in the repulse of the 16-hour-long attack by the 26th German Armored Division Friday during which the British straightened their line north of Carroceto village.

Three destroyer vehicles, which are an open-turret type armored fighting machine on a tank chassis with a high velocity gun and heavy caliber machine gun, were temporarily surrounded the previous night but two fought their way out under the command of Lieutenants Herbert M. Siercks, Fremont, Neb., and John S. Jarvie, Trenton, N. J., and they reached the road beyond Carroceto where they held fast despite German mortar, machine gun and grenade attacks.

Sixty-ton Tiger tanks and self-propelled artillery moved against the British after dawn and the two tank destroyers, reinforced by additional vehicles from another platoon, bore the shock of the assault.

The destroyer commanded by Sergeant Eugene Holsonback of Newbury, S. C., with Private Paul O. Elader of Miami, Fla., as his gunner, hit one Tiger at point-blank range as it reached the crest of a ridge. The gunner already had had one tank to his credit.

Lieutenant Siercks' destroyer, with Private James Keene of Georgia as his gunner, smashed another Tiger moving through the brush.

Sergeant Leo V. Dobson of Bos-cabel, Wis., in charge of another destroyer with Sergeant Orba Sumner of Georgia as his gunner, knocked out a third Tiger behind a house. The fourth enemy tank was wrecked by the combined fire of several destroyers.

"It was the roughest time we have had since Tunisia," said Captain Newton, "but we've been in the thick of it ever since we began supporting the British sector some days ago.

"Before yesterday we already were credited by the British with one Tiger, three Mark IV's, six anti-tank guns and 80 prisoners. My men were stationed with infantry outposts and when the Germans started overrunning these we fought back with everything we had. Our destroyers wiped out so many machine-gun nests yesterday that they lost count."

The British successfully foiled the furious German efforts north of Carroceto, between the beachhead and Rome.

Heavy artillery fire was believed to have inflicted considerable losses on the Germans when they temporarily broke through. Well over 100 prisoners were taken by the British when the battle was at its peak and became a confused scramble among British and German pockets of resistance.

Finally knocked back from a vi-

tal road by the continuous shell-fire, the Germans were unable to prevent the most advanced British units from establishing a solid contact with other northern sections of the beachhead front. The British brought back 100 Tommies who had been captured by the Germans the previous night and who then had been freed when their German escort attempted to steer them through an isolated part of the British line.

Only small German patrol action was reported early Saturday from the northwestern flank.

Captain Newton said no German tank, regardless of its size, has yet survived a direct hit by an armor-piercing shell from one of his destroyers' guns.

"Four days ago Sergeant John Shoun of Butler, Tenn., saw a funny looking thing moving around a farmhouse and hit it once with a high explosive shell which knocked off the camouflage and there was a Mark IV tank, naked as a baby. Sergeant Shoun then hit it with an armor piercing shell and made a hole big enough for a man to crawl through."

Newton said it was rare for a destroyer crew to be able to confirm its own victories because "that gun of theirs makes a terrific concussion and they have to move almost immediately from their position and don't have time to look over what they've done. Just like yesterday, however, our infantry tells us whether we were successful."

Newton's command mourned the loss of a heroic officer in yesterday's engagement. Scouting on foot in advance the officer saw a Tiger climbing a ridge and directed the fire by Sergeant Holsonback's vehicle which destroyed it when within ten yards. The officer was killed by return fire from another Tiger which had approached at an angle.

The biggest success credited to a single destroyer was achieved early in the week by Commander Sergeant West R. Lyon of Maryland. Mired down in the middle of a farm the crew stayed through the day and "fired at everything they could see." One target was believed to be a German vehicle park. The crew claimed no positive results but later after the destroyer had been towed out of the mud, a British infantry company confirmed that 48 American rounds had knocked out three medium panzers and four anti-tank guns.