

Lawrence Piercefield Receives Presidential Citation in Italy *Aug 17, '45*

With the Fifth Army, Italy.—Private First Class Lawrence Piercefield of Newton is a member of the 361st Infantry regiment's third battalion, which recently was awarded the Distinguished Unit Citation for gallantry, determination and esprit de corps in overcoming unusually difficult and hazardous conditions.

The battalion, a unit of the 91st or "Powder River" division, was cited for its part in fighting near Livergnano on the Fifth army front in Italy. Its action, the citation pointed out, set it apart from and above other units participating in the same engagement.

In a seven day battle, the battalion captured Livergnano, took 70 prisoners and killed or wounded 350 Germans, destroyed a self-propelled gun-an antitank gun, captured ten machineguns, two trucks and small arms, mortar and artillery ammunition. The Yanks suffered 271 casualties.

Repelled Counterattacks

"Unable to use supporting armor," the citation read, "because of the terrain and enemy demolitions on the highway, the battalion successfully repelled several strong enemy counterattacks, inflicting heavy losses on the enemy, and advanced continuously through the heaviest type of enemy mortar and artillery fire.

"In a skillful maneuver, one company knifed 1,700 yards through enemy lines, cutting the enemy's main line of communication and forcing the withdrawal of 300 enemy men and six tanks, which had been counterattacking other elements of the battalion. This small force of only 80 men gallantly repelled fanatical tank supported enemy counterattacks for eight hours, even after every machinegun had been destroyed by the terrific enemy fire and ammunition had been all but exhausted.

Fought into Livergnano

"Another company, attempting to take Livergnano, fought into the outskirts of the town and resisted enemy counterattacks until the buildings they were defending were crumbled in on them by terrific fire from enemy self-propelled guns, tanks and mortars."

"Advancing under direct enemy observation over rough, mountainous terrain," the recommendation continued, "which made it necessary to hand-carry supplies forward and made evacuation of the wounded a difficult, exhausting task, the men of the battalion overcame every natural obstacle and each fiercely defended enemy strongpoint, and succeeded in seizing Livergnano, keypoint in the enemy's so called 'Caesar line'."

Each man in the battalion received the Distinguished Unit badge.