

Holton, George E.

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Italy"; lower right, Byron R. Kelley, driving an ambulance for the Service in India.

# Bethlehem Quartet Drives Ambulances

## Volunteer Ambulanciers in American Field Service Winning Laurels Under Enemy Fire

With dispatches reporting the activities of the armed forces making the headlines these days, sight is often lost of the unsung heroes of the many other services which follow the armies and do the thousand and one jobs the soldiers are too encumbered with the business of fighting to find time for.

Among the numerous volunteer organizations thus engaged is the American Field Service, overseas ambulance units composed of young men from all walks of life who willingly risk their lives to bring back from the jaws of death the wounded of their own and the enemy forces.

Four Bethlehem men are now enlisted in this service, and one of them, George E. Holton, has been recommended by the British Eighth Army command for a citation for his work under fire. The other three are Oliver M. Barres Jr., James Gerhardt and Byron R. Kelley. Barres is with Holton in Italy and is attached to his section with the Canadian forces. Gerhardt is also in Italy but his actual whereabouts is not known by his family. Kelley is in India, station also unknown.

George Holton is the son of Oliver W. Holton of Santee Mill Road and Mrs. William H. Johnstone, of Saucon Valley. He enlisted in the Field Service in August, 1942 and went overseas in September. He was assigned to the Eighth Army under Gen. Montgomery and went through the entire No. African campaign up to the fall of Tunis. When the Eighth went into Italy, Holton went along.

In a letter received a day or so ago, Holton reported that he has been given a non-commissioned rating and a section to command and that he has been transferred to the Canadian sector from the British troops near Termoli. He also said that Barres is among his drivers.

Oliver M. Barres, son of Mr. and Mrs. Oliver Barres, Sr., 942 Linden Street, enlisted in the Service last June and went overseas in August. He signed up for Middle East duty and was next heard from in Italy. He was almost a month at sea and wrote home that he went over in convoy, as he said, "to join his barber's family," which gave his family their first clue to his whereabouts. He writes regularly and says he finds the work satisfactory.

Jim Gerhardt, enlisted in May, 1942, and signed up for Middle East assignment in November but did not land overseas until February. He was in Syria three months in training, served with the Free French when they took Effiadville, and since has been in Italy. His father and mother, Mr. and Mrs. R. B. Gerhardt, 41 East Market Street, have not heard from him for several weeks. They presume, however, that he is now in Italy, since that

is where the heavy fighting is, and there is where the Service is most needed.

Amateur thespians of the Lehigh Valley will remember Byron R. Kelley as the promoter of numerous dramatic ventures. Now, however, he is engaged in a real life drama of gigantic proportions. He arrived in India about September 5 after an uneventful trip and so far has not been permitted to reveal his actual station, even to his parents, Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Kelley, 1721 Sycamore Street.

Nevertheless, according to his family, he writes interestingly of experiences and when the lid is off will no doubt have many a tall tale to tell.

According to a cablegram received recently by the Field Service and passed on to the Globe-Times by Holton's father, the events leading up to the recommendation for his son's citation came about on the Termoli front, about 100 miles from Rome, where the British Eighth Army was slugging it out with the Germans.

Holton and others of his section endured 44 continuous hours under fire during the battle between the "Tommies" and the Nazi troops to take the town of Termoli. In shuttling back and forth from the front lines to the dressing station in the rear with his loads of wounded, Holton was at one time between the opposing troops, both armies firing across the road along which he was driving.

His ambulance was knocked hors de combat when a mortar shell blew out the tires and perforated the engine. With a commandeered ammunition truck, young Holton continued his work, loading the vehicle with wounded and removing them to the rear, only to find the third floor of the dressing station riddled with shells.

Members of the section asked to be allowed to continue their work but the medical officer in charge refused permission. Eventually, the British took Termoli and the Service unit was showered with cigarettes, food and even a few chickens picked up by a commando raiding party.

According to the cable, when Holton was told he would be cited, he remarked, "Baloney, that's silly. I didn't do any more than the rest. I know mighty well I shouldn't get a citation for any thing that easy.

It was just doing the job we were supposed to do.

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