

## Lt. Detweiler Tells How Nazis Were Cleaned Out of Struth

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On April 6, 1945, two days before the official announcement of the war's end in Europe, wires of the International News Service carried the position of all the Allied armies on the western front. Reporting on the U. S. Third Army, the news dispatch read, "gained seven miles northeast of Teula to points within 125 miles of Berlin, but lost the town of Struth, 12 miles southeast of Teula in a strong German counter-attack."

Now, fully two months after Germany's capitulation, the real story of the battle and capture of Struth is told by 1st Lieut. Charles H. Detweiler, Battalion Surgeon's Assistant in the 3rd Battalion Aid Station of the 65th Infantry Division of the 3rd Army which supposedly lost the German town under a fierce counter-attack.

The story begins on the afternoon of April 6, when the regiment pulled into the town of Struth to clean up the remaining Nazis who might have escaped the pounding of our big guns. After taking a few prisoners, the men prepared to spend a quiet evening and in no time the town was sleeping but for the guards. Four a. m., April 7, the sound of German burp guns, rifles and machine guns cut through the



LT. CHARLES H. DETWEILER

stillness. The men were ordered to defend the town at all cost for this was going to be the big counter-attack.

"What a battle," recalls Lieut. Detweiler. "A tank, neatly camouflaged, pulled up in front of the building used as an aid station and headquarters both. No one paid any particular attention to it for a platoon of tank destroyers was with us and all thought one of the tanks was taking this position to give added protection against possible attacks by enemy tanks. We soon found that it was an enemy tank for after a few seconds it pulled away and shortly thereafter we heard two very loud explosions outside. Glass splattered all over the large room we were treating the wounded in, shrapnel flew in all directions and men ducked or ran for safety. The explosions were caused by enemy satchel charges put there by the enemy tank. Seems odd that an enemy tank should know exactly where headquarters and the aid station were located. Not to us, for those Heine soldiers who had so quickly become civilians directed the tank to our exact location.

"I assure you the tank didn't get very far for just about 100 yards down the street stood one of our tank destroyers, faced in the opposite direction, but through the alertness of a crew member of the destroyer, wheeled its gun around and fired point blank at the enemy tank and destroyed it completely by setting it on fire and killed all its occupants.

The battle continued with more enemy tanks trying to blast their way into town and infantrymen trying to shoot their way through. They had no success whatsoever for our anti-tank guns and bazookas and tank destroyers knocked out the enemy tanks while our infantrymen and machine guns cut down

the enemy infantrymen. We finally also received some help from the field artillery who dropped well-placed rounds of artillery shells into dug-in enemy positions along the edge of a wooded area several hundred yards away. Help also came from the Air Corps when several P-47's came along and fired rockets and strafed the enemy positions.

"While this was going on outside we moved our aid station from the first floor to the basement for at any time we expected to receive enemy artillery fire in the town and the first floor of a building is no place for an aid station. Wounded men were being brought into the station continually and upon receiving treatment were placed in a safe spot awaiting evacuation to the next higher unit of medical care, the Collecting Company.

"How many men were injured or killed I am unable to tell but rest assured good men were lost in both instances and we are the ones who supposedly lost the town of Struth. I assure you we did not lose the town of Struth in a strong German counter-attack but whipped them badly as figures would show would it be possible for me to give them to you on German casualties, prisoners and equipment destroyed or captured. The town also took a terrible beating for the greatest portion of it no longer stands. It has gone the way all of Germany should go."

Lieut. Detweiler, husband of the former Anna Hartigan, is a former employe of the First National Bank and Trust Company. He entered the service in April, 1943, and received his first lieutenant's commission at Camp Shelby, Miss. His

parents are Mr. and Mrs. Robert Detweiler of Trumbauersville.

According to the latest reports, he is now stationed "somewhere in Austria."

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