

Stops Nazis, Proves Doc Wrong

Allied Headquarters, Naples, April 28. (Delayed) (AP) — Almost alone, Pfc. William J. Johnston had smashed a German attack, then single handed had covered one withdrawal of his platoon. But the Germans were coming in again and the medic said he was dying, so he had to be left behind.

"It's ok, fellows," he said when they left him on the ground with a shell fragment wound in his chest and his machine-gun nearby. "The Jerries paid for it and they'll pay more."

Soon after they heard the gun chattering. Ten minutes later it was silent again and the platoon back in a new position figured it was all over for the game fighting man from Colchester, Conn.

But the next morning an outpost saw a soldier struggling for the American lines. He walked a few steps, fell, then crawled, then rested.

Two men brought him in. It was Johnston, weak from his wound and his bare feet bruised and torn. The Germans had believed him dead when they found his prone figure beside his machine-gun and had taken his shoes.

He could barely talk but his first words told of the enemy's location and enabled American gunners to put down heavy fire on Nazi gun positions.

That was only the final of a remarkable one-man war that has earned a recommendation for citation for Johnston now recovering in an Army hospital.

It began under the heaviest barrage his company had ever suffered. Johnston crouched in his hole beside the machine-gun awaiting the

attack he knew must come up the gully it commanded.

At last by flashes of exploding shells he saw the enemy creeping toward him through the night 200 yards away. He squeezed the trigger.

The Nazi attack wavered then came to within hand grenade range before it broke and the survivors turned back. Johnston had dropped at least 30 men.

Daylight came but it didn't help. Snipers banged away at any exposed American helmet. Enemy artillery and mortars peppered the position and Nazi patrols probed its flank.

Johnston stuck to his gun all day. A German slipped in too close for effective machine-gun fire so Johnston killed him with a pistol shot. He borrowed a rifle from another soldier to bring down another German creeping up. Then an enemy bullet killed his rifleman. So Johnston moved the body aside and reloaded his machine-gun to get a better field of fire.

The situation was becoming too hot, however, and the company was ordered to withdraw. Johnston volunteered to cover the retreat and stayed at his gun all night killing seven Germans who crawled forward. He was the last American to withdraw.

The new position was just as hot. Enemy guns ranged in and Johnston got his wound from a shell that dropped ten feet away. It was then that a further retreat was ordered and Johnston was left behind because the medic, who had no idea how tough the Connecticut scrapper was, said he was dying.

Colchester Soldier Given America's Highest Award

Colchester, Conn., Aug. 29. (AP) — William J. Johnston of this town, a first class private in rank and in deed, has been awarded America's highest decoration, the Congressional Medal of Honor, for beating off two German counterattacks on the Anzio Beachhead. In the same action he was wounded severely, captured and escaped.

The 26-year-old soldier is now at Cushing General Hospital in Framingham, Mass., and, according to his young wife whom he visited here a few days ago, "feels just fine. You'd never know he'd been wounded."

The War Department announced the award last night.

Johnston, once an apprentice plumber in Middletown and more recently an employe of the United Aircraft Corporation at East Hartford, performed his deed of valor during a two-day period last February near Padiglione, Italy.

About 30 Germans charged the company after a half-hour, pre-dawn artillery barrage and Johnston mowed down at least 25 of them with his light machine gun, forcing the others to retreat.

That night the company dropped back, but Johnson remained behind to cover the retreat and the next day beat off a second attack, killing or wounding seven of the enemy.

When the company was ordered to withdraw a second time, Johnston again elected to cover his buddies and it was then that a fragment struck him above the heart.

Sergeant Robert O. Alexander of Idabel, Okla., went to his aid, but could not figure out a way to bring him back to the others.

"So I grabbed him under the arm and helped him onto a position behind the gun," Alexander recalled in relating the hard choice he had to make. "He said he was O. K. so I left."

Pretty soon the company heard Johnston's machine-gun machine w-dreadly chatter.

After firing for about 10 minutes Johnston tried to crawl back to his

company but encountered German gunners instead. They took him prisoner and put him in a house which Johnston's company had occupied a short while before.

The next day Johnston found himself alone, the Germans having pulled out, and he made his way to American troops nearby, bringing the War Department said, valuable information about the disposition of enemy troops.

Mrs. Johnston, living here with her year-old son, has known about the ward for a week, but, she said last night she was still "pretty much thrilled and excited about it," and that her husband felt the same way. "We really can't believe it. We just can't realize what it means," she exclaimed.

Private Johnston's father, John Johnston, lives in Amston.

Honor Chaplain Husband Of Employe Of Journal

Captain James H. Blackwood of Pittsburgh, Pa., chaplain of the "Thunder Dragons" group, has been authorized to wear four bronze stars on his European-African-Middle Eastern campaign ribbon for battle participation in French Morocco, Tunisia, Sicily and Italy, according to word from an air base in China. Captain Blackwood's wife and two children are living in Cheshire this Summer. Mrs. Blackwood is employed by The Journal. She will return early in September to her home in Germantown, Pa., near Philadelphia.

Capt. Blackwood's father is the Rev. James M. Blackwood, pastor of the Oak Grove United Presbyterian Church near Pittsburgh.

A veteran of 31 months of foreign service, Capt. Blackwood is on duty in China with Maj. Gen. C. L. Chennault's 14th Air Force. Besides the European ribbons, he has been awarded the American Defense and Pacific ribbon.

Early writers predicted the wild game of America would feed the whole world for eternity.

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Medal of Honor Soldier Will Go on Air Tonight

Pfc. William J. Johnston of Colchester, the first Connecticut soldier to receive America's highest decoration, the Congressional Medal of Honor will appear tonight at 6:45 o'clock on WTIC. He will be interviewed by George Bowe. He received his citation for beating off two German counterattacks on the Anzio beachhead. In the same action he was wounded severely, captured and escaped.

The 26-years-old soldier who was recently discharged from the Cushing General Hospital at Framingham, Mass., has since received his honorable discharge from the United States Army.

Johnston, once an apprentice plumber at Middletown, was employed just prior to his enlistment by the United Aircraft Corporation.

Memorial stone on the Veterans Green in Colchester, CT

