

LT. BILL MUNSON RECOVERED FROM WOUNDS REC'D IN ITALY

Was With Attacking Force at Monte Porchia on Road to Rome

Lt. Orville O. (Bill) Munson, son of Mr. and Mrs. Emil Munson of this city, U. S. army engineer, is reported fully recovered from an arm wound received in the Italian theater of the European war, and is in active command of his unit again. News of his experiences are being told, at least in part.

Homer Bigart, in a copyright article in the New York Tribune, tells of a small band of combat engineers fighting their first action as assault troops when they led the opening attack on the south slope of Monte Porchia, in Italy, to add another page of glory to the record of American engineers.

Under First Lieutenant Orville O. Munson, the road-builders left their trucks and bulldozers and grabbed rifles and machine guns when the order came to act in conjunction with infantry in that sector.

Stories in the dailies have told of one Richard Stern, a German refugee of New York, saving the lives of his fellow American soldiers by talking six German machine gunners into surrendering, telling them they were surrounded. Bill Munson was in Stern's outfit.

Machine gun bullets greeted Stern's argument which was rather overdrawn, for Munson discovered that the force to his right was down to seven men, while his left flank was open and swarming with Germans. So Munson's men retired down the slope with enemy flares lighting their path, signals for a mortar barrage. On the way down, Munson and his men ran right into a forward machine gun nest, Munson ordered his men to drop and fall back. The Germans threw grenades.

"The first whizzed right by but the second nicked me in the arm," said Munson. "It then dawned on me that my only chance was to play dead. I could not fire back. I had no ammunition. I dropped to the ground, moaning and putting on an act

"The machine gun to my left was still occupied and pointing my way, so I did not dare move. I could see the Germans were watching me pretty closely. I think they thought someone was coming after me, so they were getting ready. For a long time I lay there, wondering what the outcome would be. . . .



LT. ORVILLE O. MUNSON

"I never moved a muscle. I lay there on the cold ground, sweat running from my forehead, and still I was not what you would call afraid; just that every muscle was so tense I could not even bat my eyes.

"Soon they came out of their nest and said something in German and gave me a kick, took my sub-machine gun, and left me for dead. It did not take me long to start moving out. At first I crawled so I would not make so much noise. Blood from my arm was soaking through."

Munson picked up an abandoned carbine, forded a brook and came upon two unarmed Germans whom he took prisoner. They tried to argue that the field between the brook and the American lines was mined but Munson shoved them along and reached the position where his men had dug in.

First-aid men treated Bill and he was ordered removed to a hospital. While he was on the way, his men went back up to Porchia attached to a stronger assault

force and this time they stayed.

Munson's diary is quoted: "We were notified to move out in three minutes. It was a terrible mess, getting everything under control. Several shells landed as we moved out, killing two men and wounding others.

"The men were so confused I had to lead off and act as point man. We arrived at the front and dug ourselves in shortly after dark. We didn't run into a bit of trouble there, outside of the cold. . . .

"Shortly after dark, a runner from headquarters told me to report as soon as possible. There they told me to take the company and support the attack on Porchia. What a job for engineers!

"It was hard to tell the men exactly what I expected of them. It was hard to ask anyone else to lead the company, so I did it myself, a foolish thing to do, but I wanted as many of them there as I could get, and I figured if they knew I was up in front they would be more apt to follow.

"The main line of infantry was then dug in 600 yards this side of Porchia. When I passed, they told me they thought the left side of Porchia was captured. We moved ahead through no-man's land, up to within about 200 yards of Porchia. Here I took two men and went ahead to see what was cooking."

Munson found no Americans on the south slope and sent one man back with the message. With another man, he went ahead until he saw a German coming down the path. "I halted him," wrote Munson, "but he made so much noise that I had to shoot him. It was too bad, for I would have liked to take him prisoner. . . .

At four o'clock, I noticed our left flank was lousy with Jerries. They had me pinned down so I had to holler for help. The Jerries were still coming in, so I decided to find out why — company wasn't giving me some help. Much to my surprise, I found only nine men on my right.

"We retreated orderly, evacuating the wounded and covering those on top with fire shells while we slid down between the rocks".