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2 LT Irving Fromm

Class 67-43

ID: O1182578

Branch of Service: U.S. Army

Hometown: Westchester County, NY

Status: KIA 25 Jul 1944



Served with Battery B, 957th Field Artillery Battalion. Killed in bombing before St. Lo.



**The following is an excerpt from the End of Mission – the 957th Field Artillery Battalion
Concerning the bombing that took the life of LT Fromm.**

PURPLE HEART CORNER

Meeting the most stubborn resistance encountered anywhere in France, the battle for St. Lo developed during the next 10 days with German artillery pounding the battalion area regularly, almost matching blow for blow the rounds fired by Jealous. In the first such shelling the afternoon and evening of 19 July "A" Battery suffered two casualties as men were wounded by shell fragments and had to be evacuated.

Each morning and evening for the next six days heavy enemy artillery shells crashed into the battalion area. So compact were Allied troops in this sector that in order to accomplish its mission the 957th had no other alternative but to "stay in position" and "sweat it out."

No other battalion casualties were reported until the morning of 25 July — a day to be remembered as "black Tuesday at Purple Heart Corner."

Jerry opened up with everything he had early in the morning. Heavy 150s, 170s and 105s swooshed into Jealous positions accompanied by screaming 88s — starting promptly at 0700 hours in keeping with German custom to lay down barrages at meal time. It was intense for about 45 minutes as though in reply to the heavy tactical bombing administered to the enemy lines the day before by Allied aircraft.

Headquarters kitchen was struck by the "incoming mail" — killing Pfc Edwin V. Paul and seriously wounding two others. Meanwhile, the Medics and volunteers were treating the wounded and trying to bring order out of chaos.

Before that "mission was accomplished" there was another distraction. Allied fighter bombers started winging over the area enroute to their target a scant 1,000 yards away. One plane returned with a "wild bomb" dangling dangerously from the fastenings. Just as the plane zoomed overhead the wayward bomb flipped from the plane and swooshed over the heads of startled troops and exploded a few hundred yards to the rear.

This incident merely was a noisy prologue to the destruction and havoc which was to rain from the heavens on "Hell's Acres" a few minutes later — —

At 0930 hours great numbers of light and medium Allied aircraft appeared overhead at normal bombing height — all bound for the target area — the St. Lo — Periers Highway

2,000 yards in advance of the battalion's position. In the brilliant morning sun the planes presented quite a spectacle and troops swarmed out of dugouts and foxholes into the country courtyard to watch the bombings.

Out of the great horde of an estimated 3,000 planes one ship's bombs fell short of the safe line and they thudded and crashed directly into the CP and Headquarters Battery area — instantly converting that courtyard into an inferno of death and destruction.

Signal "smoke pots" immediately were placed in strategic positions to prevent a recurrence of the error and the survivors plunged desperately through wrecked buildings, seared foxholes and crushed dugouts removing the dead, the dying and the wounded.

As the 35 casualties, including 13 dead, were carried out for treatment and evacuation, a dark cloud of black smoke palled over the area — lending credence to a belief that other bombers might mistake the area for a priority target and also drop their bombs.

Even as this fear mounted a fighter bomber zoomed over the area beneath the droning heavies and mediums signalling the bombers that the target was ahead and not the smoking ruins below. It was then that with a sigh of relief that the survivors turned to the sorrowful task of counting the dead, the torn and the wounded — —

War continued and the big job ahead was the impending ground assault on the St. Lo defenses in which the 957th had an important part.

The few key men unharmed in the fire direction center plunged into the wrecked building and carried out valuable orders and "prearranged firing data" and in less time than the telling they were set up in Battery "B" area ready to carry out the battalion's "preparation" less than half an hour after the bombing.

(NOTE: The bombing casualty list will be found in the Killed in Action and Wounded in Action Sections.)

Without the slightest delay, although shocked, worn and tense from the bombing, the 957th carried out the "preparation" and all subsequent "missions" for the 9th Infantry Division — a feat of arms which later earned the battalion, its officers and men, the highest type of commendation from the infantry commanders. Col Collins, himself painfully wounded, moved quietly about the area directing the evacuation

and supervising the rehabilitation of battle-vital installation. Maj Weber, wounded while on duty as S-3, remarked to the remaining key men as he was evacuated: "Save some bullets for me to fire when I get back."

Maj Case organized the rescue work and hurried after more medical aid and Capt Joyer reorganized the disrupted battalion headquarters section with the aid of M/Sgt John Benz, who narrowly escaped death in a crumpled building. Risking life and limb throughout the bombing and earlier shelling Pfc Joseph F. Connelly, then a Headquarters Battery machine gunner, braved the shells and bombs to organize the treatment of the wounded until the badly wrecked Medical Detachment could be brought into service.



PURPLE HEART CORNER — Death rained down on 957th in this Les Champs de Losque Courtyard.

Scores of vital communication lines torn out by the blasts and numerous vehicles were destroyed along with valuable wire, which was needed almost at once to repair disrupted lines. Capt Harlin and the men remaining in the wire crews immediately set to work making necessary repairs, so that by mid-afternoon all lines were back "in" and the fire direction center could return to its former quarters.

S/Sgt Dudley (then Tec 5) was the lone remaining member of the Headquarters kitchen staff not killed or wounded in the shelling or bombing. He had twice reorganized his badly wrecked kitchen that day and by 1400 hours was serving the remnants of the battery a hot meal, thanks to help given him by the battalion's other units.

Despite the casualties suffered and the damage inflicted by shelling and bombing the battalion that day fired 855 rounds at the enemy in 12 preparation missions, six counter-battery missions, two close supporting missions and a number of harassing missions.

Originally buried in St. Mere Eglise Cemetery No. 2 and later relocated to Mount Pleasant Cemetery, Hawthorne, New York