

Jap in the face with his empty tommy gun. This Jap then charged at Sergeant DeWitt, who turned and struck him in the face with his helmet knocking him down the slope. This action seemed to demoralize the enemy as they picked up their dead and wounded and withdrew.

Sergeant DeWitt displayed extraordinary heroism throughout this attack. His action in stopping the gap which had been left by the wounded men undoubtedly saved the company from much heavier casualties and possibly the loss of the position. He acted entirely beyond the call of duty with complete disregard for his personal safety throughout the engagement.

3. The terrain over which this engagement was fought has been generally described in the preceding paragraph. The main mission of the company was one of defense, to prevent the enemy from entering and taking the position. Thus, fighting was conducted from fox holes for the most part. Visibility of the defending force was limited. The attack came at dusk, and observation was impeded by underbrush which provided cover for the Japanese. In the later phases of the attack Company I resorted almost entirely to hand grenades to repel the Japs. Enemy observation of our position was somewhat better, since there was little cover in the defended perimeter. The morale of Company I's troops was high although some of the men were unnerved by the tenseness of the situation. The morale of the enemy seemed high as demonstrated by the determination of their attacks. Enemy troops appeared fresh and well equipped. The weather at this time was extremely hot and damp, though there was no rain and the ground was fairly dry.

4. Proposed citation:

Sergeant Leonard C. DeWitt (20933467) Infantry, United States Army. For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty near Boise, New Guinea on 28 July 1943. When his company was attacked by a superior Japanese force and one sector of the defensive perimeter ran dangerously low of ammunition and grenades, Sergeant DeWitt voluntarily left his fox hole and carried ammunition to the heavily pressed flank across open terrain swept by enemy machine gun and mortar fire. Upon reaching the position bearing the brunt of the attack he found that a soldier had become panicky and was firing blindly into the air. He directed his removal and then upon checking two adjoining fox holes found the men to be wounded. After ordering their evacuation he hurried back to the position weakened by the removal of the three men and found the enemy was massing in an attempt to break through at this point. Picking up a BAR which had been left by one of the wounded men he fired at the enemy only five yards distant until the ammunition was exhausted. He then grasped a tommy gun and stood fully exposed on the edge of his fox hole emptying the gun into the enemy position. Throwing his remaining grenades he slipped down the slope toward the enemy, hitting a Jap with his empty tommy gun. In attempting to get back to his fox hole he was attacked by this Jap and beat him in the face with his helmet, knocking him back down the slope. This demoralized the enemy who picked up their dead and wounded and withdrew. The fearless acts of Sergeant DeWitt in exposing himself to enemy fire in order to save the position were beyond the call of duty. Had it not been for his action the Japanese would have been able to break through at one point of the perimeter causing heavy casualties and perhaps the loss of the position. Sergeant DeWitt's extraordinary heroism and coolness under fire are worthy of the highest recognition.