

MARCH 5 (DELAYED)

17 officers and men of an American Field Artillery Battery and a Medical unit, who escaped capture when the Germans drove toward Sbeitia, attribute their luck to the Penchant of the Nazi soldiers for collecting pistols and watches. Among the 17 were 3 Indiana men; Major George Stipp of Indianapolis, Sergt. James Deark of Jeffersonville, and Sergt. Clyde Robold of Muncie. The men were at Headquarters and Medical vehicles close behind the guns when they attempted to withdraw, they were within range of the Nazi tanks. They deserted their vehicles when the enemy tanks opened up, and fled on foot but 5 German Mark IV tanks over-took them. Master Sergt. Clifford Hutchinson of Louisville, Ky., said. "Those tanks could have mowed us down. Instead they drove up and the tank man took our pistols. Some of our men held up their hands, exposing their wrist-watches. The Germans took those, too. I kept my hands down and they didn't see mine." Hutchinson said the Nazis told the Americans to go to a nearby Arabian village, apparently figuring that German Infantry would pick them up.

"The Arabs were extremely friendly," Hutchinson said. "One wanted to hide me under his robe. They told us to leave right away if we wanted to keep away from the Germans." Hutchinson said the party found an abandoned ambulance loaded with 2 wounded Americans found in the village, and drove through the German line with them. The other hiked 17 miles to rejoin their unit.

H.R. Gross  
W I S H

Saturday evening, March 7, 1943