

the Spirit Lives

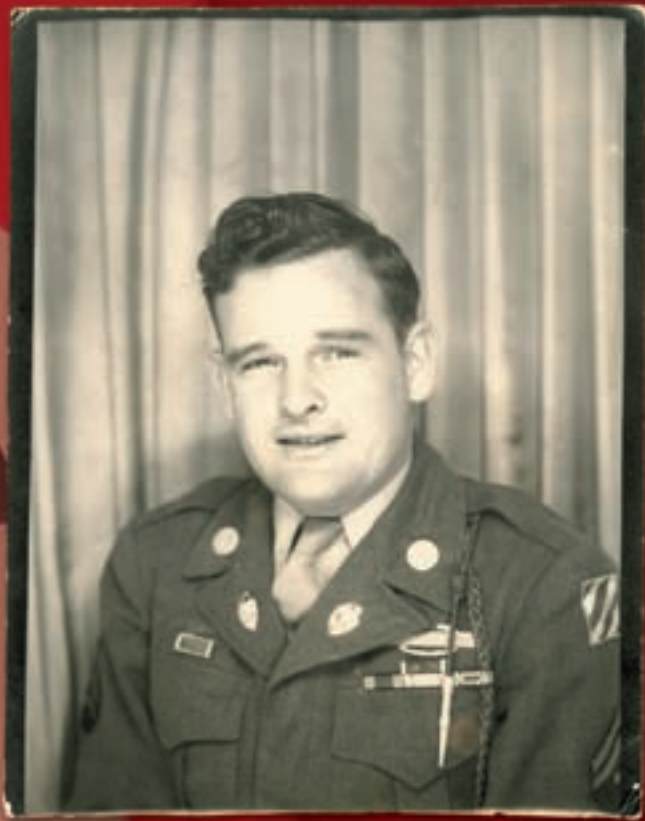
*One mans account of the attack
on Nazi Germany which
earned him an incredible three
Purple Heart awards.*

The mission of Operation Torch was to secure French North Africa for the Allied forces in order to conduct operations on the European continent. One significant problem was that most of the landing areas were defended by French troops who had declared loyalty to Germany after France fell. This meant that the Americans, British, and Free-French forces would have to fight their former allies. The invasion was scheduled for November 1942 and would take place in three places. First would be Casablanca, an Atlantic port city on Morocco, followed by the capture of the Algerian port cities of Oran and Algiers.

The 3rd Division, under the command of Maj. Gen. Lucian Truscott, was given the task of capturing Casablanca. The 3rd Division embarked aboard transport ships and sailed directly from America to Morocco in what would become the longest sea voyage preceding an amphibious landing.

On November 8, 1942, the 3rd Infantry Division stormed ashore at Casablanca supported by 400 ships and 1,000 aircraft. The invasion was a complete surprise and the 3rd Division quickly established their beachhead but the French forces fought back bitterly. For three days, the American fought the French forces until finally, the French agreed to a cease fire and joined the Allied forces. With Casablanca secured, the Allies could now move men and materiel into the Mediterranean Sea without fear of the Straights of Gibraltar being sealed off.

I entered the Army in February 1940 – two days after my 17th birthday and trained with the 3rd Infantry Division as a combat infantry soldier. At this time I was



Vyron Drake
United States Army
3rd Infantry Division
World War II

*I was with the 3rd Division
all the way from the
invasion at Fedela,
French Morocco, Africa,
Tunisia, Sicily,
Italy at Salerno,
the Casino Front,
the Anzio beachhead,
Rome, then to
Southern France and into
Nuremberg, Germany.*



MEMBER
106
MILITARY ORDER PURPLE HEART

Byron Drake

MILITARY ORDER
PURPLE HEART

COMBAT WOUNDED



It is better to regret something you did, rather than to regret something you didn't do.



Vyron Drake at the wheel as a wounded comrade is evacuated.

also schooled in intelligence, reconnaissance and demolition.

I was with the 3rd Division all the way from the invasion at Fedela, French Morocco through North Africa, Tunisia, Sicily Italy at Salerno, the Casino Front, the Anzio beachhead, Rome, then to Southern France and into Nuremberg, Germany. I was involved in 10 major campaigns and four amphibious invasions.

I received my first wound in action at the edge of Rome. I was driving a Jeep carrying the battalion adjutant, leading battalion point in the attack on Rome – our final objective bridge number 2 across the Tiber River. We made a wrong turn and came out at bridge



This map shows the area covered by Vyron Drake while he was with the 3rd Infantry Division in World War Two.

number 1. The adjutant. Captain Addison Farrell held the battalion point consisting of one tank destroyer, one medium tank and one platoon of A company at bridge number 1 while I ran recon to find a way to reach bridge number 2 across the Tiber without having to cross the river.

I went down a narrow road parallel to an old railroad bed going toward the river. The road I took led into and through a rock quarry. I went through the quarry to where it exited onto the road and saw that the road was clear to bridge 2. so I returned to the platoon. Captain Farrell started the Battalion point down the road; I started back towards the quarry following the path I had previously taken.

As we were in route to the quarry we were stopped by an Italian civilian and informed that the road from the quarry to bridge 2 was mined so we stopped and waited for the for the platoon to catch up so we could sweep the road for mines. While we were waiting we climbed the banks alongside the road so that we could look across the river. As we were doing this, we spotted a Tiger tank and troops along side a building across the river. Upon sighting the tank and troops we yelled to warn our platoon of the potential danger so they would have time to get into the cut. As we did this, the Tiger tank cut loose at us, and four machine guns opened up from alongside the old railroad bed wounding some of our troops and knocking out our radio. They had us bottled up. A Co. set up a light machine gun in a tunnel that led from the quarry – parallel to the road and about thirty feet away – but the enemy made it too hot for them so they abandoned their weapon leaving our flank unprotected. I ran out and grabbed the air cooled 30 caliber and one of the A Co. guys scooped up the ammo. I set up the machine gun in a 12x12 cave that had been dug into the side of the cliff and opened fire. Captain Farrell came in with his binoculars and was spotting for me while the enemy opened fire with a self propelled 88. Captain Farrell yelled, "Let's get the hell outta here," as the 88 was swinging our way but we didn't have enough time. I rolled to my left to get up when the shell hit the back wall – I was blown out the front wall. Somehow, I managed to get out of the debris and back into the tunnel. Captain Farrell had six bad hits in his legs but no broken bones. I