



# Sgt. Hulon B. Whittington

MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENT

## This Month In NCO History

### July 29, 1944 — Taking Command At Grimesnil, France

*By Pablo Villa — NCO Journal*

**S**gt. Hulon B. Whittington didn't flinch when 2,500 German troops overran the roadblock he was manning near the village of Grimesnil, France.

Whittington was 23 years old and serving with the 41st Armored Infantry Regiment of the 2nd Armored Division seven weeks after D-Day. The clock had trudged past midnight on July 29, 1944, when a 100-vehicle Panzer unit reached the outskirts of town. The unit was part of the last vestiges of a hasty German retreat from Coutances to the northwest that American forces had secured the previous day. The Germans were headed south on orders to block any further American advance to Avranches. They had suffered huge losses on the Cotentin Peninsula because of the Operation Cobra. The Allied offensive was punctuated by a four-hour air barrage that destroyed more than 350 tanks and other vehicles that were halted during a stalled retreat near Roncey.

That meant the German troops who ran into Whittington and his fellow Soldiers in the early morning hours were tired, desperate and defiant. They fought as such, parlaying their frustration into a near rout of the American defenders. But Whittington was undaunted,

and by the end of the attack his actions would be worthy of the nation's highest honor.

With his platoon leader and platoon sergeant missing in action, Whittington took charge, according to his Medal of Honor citation. The attack in full swing, Whittington reorganized his unit's defensive perimeter. He then crawled between gun positions to check on his fellow Soldiers while under heavy German fire. Suddenly, a German Mark V tank, famously known as a Panther, at the head of the convoy made a beeline toward Whittington's line. He jumped onto an American tank that had been immobilized and shouted through the turret to direct fire for the crew inside. The crew fired point blank at the Panther, destroying it. The resulting wreckage left the rest of the German column at a standstill.

Whittington then led a bayonet charge against the stalled Germans. The Americans followed him, using hand grenades, bazookas and tank fire to destroy more of the enemy vehicles as they went. Eventually, artillery units joined the fight and the destruction of the German convoy was completed.

But Whittington wasn't done. After learning that his unit's medical corpsman was struck by enemy fire,

Whittington administered first aid to the wounded. His impact during and after the battle was a stellar display of “the dynamic leadership, the inspiring example, and the dauntless courage,” worthy of the Medal of Honor. Whittington was decorated with the medal April 23, 1945.

Whittington was born July 9, 1921, in Bogalusa, La. He enlisted in the Army in August 1940 in Bastrop, La. Whittington became a commissioned officer in 1949 and reached the rank of major in 1960. He died Jan. 17, 1969, in Toledo, Ohio. He is buried at Arlington National Cemetery. ■



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