

# Morris O Fox

Written by Sherwin Allred

Morris Odell Fox was born August 29, 1916 to Jesse W. and Mary Powell Fox in Lehi, Utah. He had two older sisters, six older brothers and one younger brother. His mother and father were born in Utah and his father worked as a farmer and laborer.

At the time he enlisted, Morris had finished two years of high school, lived at home and was working for the Union Pacific Railroad as a tinsmith and sheet metal worker. His younger brother Milo, also served in the ward. He and Sherwin Allred, also of Lehi, Utah, were drafted the same day, February 21, 1941. They were assigned to Company "K" of the 15th Infantry Regiment of the 3rd Infantry division of the Army and received basic training at Fort Lewis, Washington.



They were sent with the armed forces in the first invasion of Africa in 1942, landing in French Morocco. They served under General Patton and progressed from Morocco to Tunisia, then north to Sicily and on into Italy.

His friend Sherwin lived to tell the story of one of their most devastating battles on November 10, 1943. The following is a condensed version of his story.

Our company had been ordered to attack and take possession of an observation post occupied by the enemy. Our plan was to approach under the cover of darkness, then at the crack of dawn, rush in by surprise and take over their positions.

A night patrol was sent out to find a place we could wade across the Volturno River. When we reached the spot chosen to cross the river, we found the water too high. A bridge had been bombed the night before and backed up the river. We sent another patrol farther up the river to find an alternate place to cross.

While we waited, our troops pulled behind a hill. Once behind the hill we heard a plane coming from behind our lines and when it came in sight, we watched it follow the river. It was losing altitude as one of its engines was smoking. We assumed it had been on a bombing run behind our line and been hit by US anti-aircraft. The pilot turned his plane toward us. We ran to take cover in an irrigation ditch that ran along the base of our embankment. The ditch was dry and we all escaped the strafing.

The engine of the plane broke loose and rolled down the embankment toward us in a ball of flame. It landed on top of the battalion commander, killing him.

By now the patrol had returned after finding a place to cross the river. We crossed and began our attack. We lost the benefit of darkness and the element of surprise. The plane incident alerted the enemy that something was going on and they were ready and waiting for us.

We attacked as ordered. The result was we were suffering heavy casualties and had to let up on the attack and call for air support. After waiting a considerable length of time and seeing no sign of air support, we decided to attack again as we had been ordered to take the objective at any cost. We threw everything we had at them – mortar, machine guns, rifle fire, hand grenades and we were able to rout them from their positions.

Having just secured our positions we heard another plane. As it drew near, we saw it was one of our own; the one we ordered for air support. No one thought to call in to advise we had obtained our objective. The pilot had no way of knowing he was going to bomb his own men.

We all hurried to take cover in foxholes next to the hillside. A bomb hit and the dirt from the bomb was so thick it blacked out the sun. Those in the foxhole, being in the black, thought they were buried alive as I heard one cry out. “Oh my God, we’re buried alive! Everybody starts digging.” The bomb blasted a chunk off the hill which crashed down and covered every foxhole. It buried sixteen soldiers. As frantic as we tried, we were only able to dig out one soldier from each end of the foxhole.

Later that day we were relieved by another company. Of the 130-140 men who left our company bivouac that morning, there were only 29 remaining to walk down the hill. My buddy, Morris Fox, who was drafted at the same time as I, sent to the same unit and went through the war together with me had also survived. After we obtained our objective and were setting up security again in case of a possible counter attack, Morris was shot and killed by a sniper’s bullet.

When we went to Salt Lake they gave you a chance to sign up for insurance, anywhere from \$1,000 to \$10,000. We both elected to go for a \$1,000. Of course, \$1,000 back then was quite a bit, . We were shipped overseas to French Morocco and we were the first troops to land on foreign soil. And as we progressed through the country to Sicily and Tunisia, they changed the rules and allowed us to up our insurance if we didn’t opt for the \$10,000, we now could go for \$10,000. I remember that Morris didn’t want to sign up for the \$10,000. He says, “What if I get killed, it won’t make any difference.” I said, “What do you think it will do for your parents.” So I finally convinced him that he should sign up for it. And he was eventually killed. He was shot by a sniper and I know his mother and father got a check every month until they died. I often wonder how much anxiety she had every time she went to the mail box and got that check.

His body was returned to Lehi, Utah under the army war dead repatriation program and he is buried in the Lehi City Cemetery.

Thank you, Sgt. Morris Odell Fox. We honor the memory of your sacrifice for our country.

Sources:

Fold3.com

Familysearch.org

Ancestry.com

Personal story written by Sherwin Allred, family possession