

Obituaries for November 5, 2003

## **Thomas Brasher**

World War II veteran

Thomas Brasher, 83, of Shelby died Nov. 1, 2003, at his home. He was born in July 1920 in Shelby. He was a member of the First Baptist Church of Shelby and served as minister of music for more than 40 years. He also taught the senior adult men's Bible class and discipleship training classes for 40 years.

He served in the U.S. Army's 10th Armored "Tiger" Division as a tech sergeant during World War II. He was a radio operator in the division, led by Gen. George Patton, and was once noted for leaping aboard a half-track and machine-gunning down a German fighter plane during the Battle of the Bulge in December 1944.

He also risked his life one night scouring the woods for Company B of the 132nd Ordnance Maintenance Battalion, which had gotten separated from the rest of the "Tiger" Division. Brasher never volunteered anything about his WWII days and would rarely even discuss his experiences like most heroes of that era.

However, at least a dozen books have been written about the famed Tiger Division and the exploits of its soldiers, who won nearly 1,700 medals including 217 Silver Stars and 1,400 Bronze Stars, the third and fourth highest medals the Army bestows. The 10th Armored Division was the first American armored division to sail directly from the U.S. to Europe without stopping in England. One ship in the convoy was torpedoed by German U-boats and sank on the way. The rest landed in France on Sept. 23, 1944, and went on to spend 124 days in combat, suffering 8,381 casualties, nearly 80 percent of its authorized strength.

The "Tigers" were often referred to in German dispatches as the "Ghost Division" because they surprised the Germans by appearing in so many different sectors, capturing 650 towns and cities and 56,000 German prisoners. Brasher was self-employed as an electrician, service and repairman. He was also an avid foxhunter since childhood, became a field trial judge and was honored as "Master of Hounds" on many occasions. Two brothers, also WWII veterans, Robert and Louis Brasher, preceded him in death.

He is survived by his wife of 57 years, Martha Addison Brasher; two daughters, Diana B. Smith and Karen Brasher; two brothers, Howard Brasher and Preston Brasher; four sisters, Elnora Black, Mary Nell Lee, Lanice Brasher and Joan Harless; three grandchildren, John D. Rowland III, Bradley Thomas Rowland and Langley Evan Rushton; and two great-grandchildren, Amber Nicole Rowland and Courtney Hope Rowland.

Service was Nov. 3 at the First Baptist Church of Shelby, the Revs. John Duncan and David Hand presiding. Burial followed in Shelby Gardens of Rest, Bolton Brown Service Funeral Home directing.