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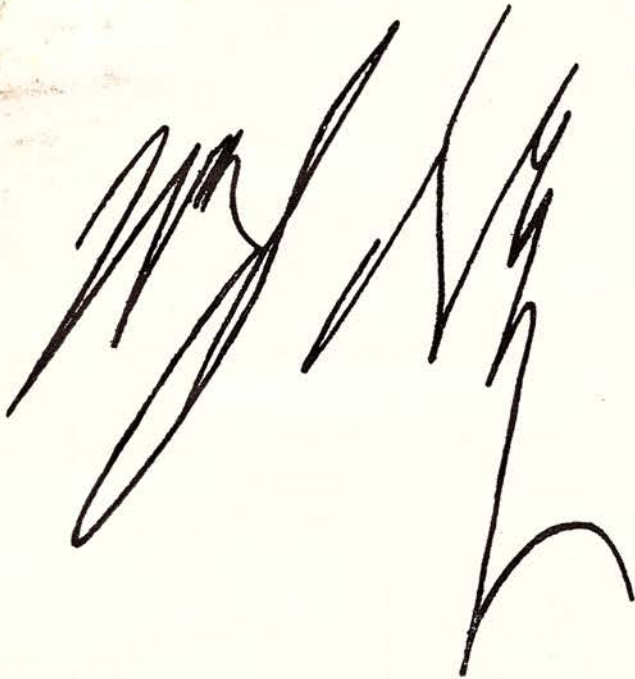
# THE FIGHTING FORTY-FIFTH

THE COMBAT REPORT  
OF AN  
INFANTRY DIVISION

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. . . readers in the future will  
search long before finding a  
chapter more brilliant than that  
written by the quill that was  
dipped in the blood of the  
Thunderbirds . . .





. . . *their crosses blaze the trail* . . .





## KNOW YOUR INSIGNIA

For many years, the shoulder patch of the 45th Division was a Swastika, a good luck symbol of the Indian Country from which the Division originally drew much of its personnel. When Adolph Hitler proclaimed the Swastika as the sign of the National Socialist Party in Germany, the Division abandoned it. That was one of the first things Hitler fouled up for us.

The Thunderbird, too, is a symbol from the Indian Country. As a matter of historical fact, most tribes from the Arctic Circle to Panama have used it in their crude painting and weaving. It was the "giver of rain" and, as such, was highly regarded by the Indians of the American Southwest. The Thunderbird was a gigantic creature who, according to Indian lore, not only brought the rain but also provided the thunder and lightning that accompanied it.

The method of producing these phenomena was simple. The lightning emanated from his piercing eyes, the thunder was caused by the flapping of the giant creature's tremendous wings, and the rain was a portable affair, being carried in the form of a lake on the great bird's back! When the bird was favorably inclined toward a certain territory, it would go into a wingover and the valleys below became fertile and green with abundant moisture.

Because rain was so essential to the dry southwest, the Thunderbird became a symbol of good luck and, because of its tremendous size and its capability of creating thunder and lightning, it was regarded with awe. It was wise to placate the Thunderbird since it could either prevent the fall of rain entirely or drop so much of it as to cause floods and destruction. (It is not official, of course, but wherever the Thunderbird patch has gone—Sicily, Italy, France and Germany—there has been nothing mythical about the "very unusual weather" that accompanied it. Any G. I. will vouch for that!)

The golden Thunderbird, set against the background of a red patch, is now part of the proud tradition of the 45th Division, and is a familiar insignia to friend and foe alike. Its military reputation, now almost legendary, has been earned by the blood, sweat and courage of fighting men.





# FOREWORD

The history of the Thunderbird did not begin with the chapters of this book. It is a long history, and a varied one, born in the days of early pioneers, when they moved across the wild and untamed plains into the great southwest. In those days of Indian warfare squads and platoons and battalions were little known to the skirmishes of the prairie-land. This history was born of the hardships and lifeblood of those men and courageous women who opened the doors to the west.

First conceived in the legislative assembly of the Old Territory in 1895, the units of Militia, Rough Riders and Vigilantes were developed slowly. Small bands of Volunteers, militiamen and Indian Scouts were gradually brought together to form companies, self-taught, self-led, self-disciplined, to maintain order and protect their families and their newly gained homes from Indian warriors and from lawless white men. The mutual need for protection held these loosely knit fibers together until the legislature of the new territories and states could build the framework of an organization that became the National Guard. This weaving together of various groups was scarcely begun when the Spanish-American war called for most of the officers and men of the active Guard units.

Then, upon the return of the men who had volunteered, there came a period of complete reorganization.

Those who had gained experience in actual war service re-entered the new organizations in sufficient numbers to largely increase its efficiency and morale. Under trained officers and an awakened public spirit, increased appropriations were made to obtain better equipment of all kinds from the Federal Government. During the years that followed the number of units was gradually increased, but,

except for occasional calls for service within the states, there was little change in status.

The National Guard as a whole made little progress, suffering from the usual inertia of peace and the public's indifference to and dislike of anything that savored of military preparation.

In 1916, the country was electrified by the call of the President for the immediate mobilization of the Guard of the country for service on the border of the United States and Mexico. This call galvanized the Guard into a live and active organization. To many of its officers who had long battled to keep alive the sacred fires of patriotism and volunteer service to their country, this sounded like the voice of great opportunity, and units were re-organized and new enlistments and assignments made while the mobilization went forward.

This tour of Federal service did much for the officers and men of the Guard. The campaign had been sufficiently monotonous and wearisome to serve as a test of men's patience and endurance in a service where "peace without victory" was the sine qua non, and in which all semblance of martial glory was smothered by desert sand storms or drowned in unusual and unexpected deluges and floods.

World events and the great war raging in the eastern hemisphere seemed remote and unreal—not only to the Guardsmen on the border of Mexico, but to millions of Americans in 1916—but with the defiant declaration of the German war lord that hostilities would re-commence against American ships in 1917, the events marched rapidly toward the bloody months of the "Greatest War the World has Ever Known."

So, in Federal Service again, for the second time in less



than twelve months, another chapter was written in the formative years, before these units were named a division. That chapter is indeed a glorious one. The story of the thousands of soldiers who fought during the crisis of '17 and '18 constitutes an epic that has been the inspiration for achievement, and can be read with a glow of pride in the knowledge that none braver nor more courageous have ever lived.

In March 1918, during those stormy days of war, the National Guard became of age. The organization became more complete as needed units were added. At a later date (after 1919) the General Staff of the Army made detailed plans for the complete military system, and two Infantry Divisions were allotted to the Southwest. These were the famous old "Thirty-Sixth" which was assigned to Texas, and the new "Forty-Fifth," to which troops of Oklahoma, Colorado, New Mexico and Arizona were assigned.

Few major changes occurred for many years to follow. The units of the division were frequently called to duty for State services and units were occasionally mustered out at one location and re-organized at another. Training was increased and improved, and the quality and efficiency of enlisted and officer personnel made steady advancement until August 31, 1940.

#### EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 8530

By virtue of the authority conferred upon me ..... and as Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States, I hereby order into the active military service of the United States, effective September 16, 1940, the following units and members of the National Guard of the United States to serve in the military service of

*A division review at Fort Sill during the early fall of 1940, just after induction.*



the United States for a period of twelve consecutive months, unless sooner relieved:

#### Forty-Fifth Infantry Division

.....  
.....  
.....

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

The White House,  
August 31, 1940.

Although the clouds of war had been gathering over the skies for many months, this proclamation came as an unheralded climax to the Louisiana Maneuvers of 1940.

On September sixteenth the National Guard units of the States of Colorado, Arizona, Oklahoma and New Mexico were mustered at home stations to begin a year of active military training. After a brief period of induction administration, the trains began to roll toward Fort Sill, Oklahoma, which had been designated as the home of the Division.

As the year passed the training became more intense, and the clouds became darker, so the year of service was extended, to become a settled period of preparation for war. The Japanese attack on December seventh proved that the training would not be in vain.

The Division worked in all kinds of terrain and weather. For nearly three years the training continued at Camp Barkeley Texas; Fort Devens, Mass.; Pine Camp, New York, and Camp Pickett, Virginia. Special maneuvers were conducted in Blue Ridge Mountains, Virginia, and weeks of amphibious training was held at Cape Cod, Mass. and in the Chesapeake Bay near Norfolk, Virginia. It began to seem that perhaps the Forty-Fifth was only a "trial unit," a "training and proving ground" for new ideas.

On March 16, 1943, the commanding general received the "Top Secret" alert for overseas shipment, and a notice that the division would participate in Operation Husky—the invasion of the little island of Sicily.

From that date on, activities of preparation were intensified to a fever pitch. Liaison was established with the Amphibious Force, Atlantic Fleet at Norfolk; and with the War Department General Staff in Washington. It soon became evident, from the increase in personnel and additional equipment, that the division would be organized as a "sub-task-force" of the invasion command.

On 9 April, the basic supply level for this sub force was set at Table of Basic Allowances plus special amphibious equipment and technical items supplementing TBA. Additional mine detectors; pack boards for use in mountain operations; signal equipment; angledozers for the shore engineers; substitutes of soft cab two and a half ton trucks for standard metal cab models; radio quarter-tons in place of three-quarter-ton command cars—these were a few of the long list of items that were changed and added.



Throughout this period of preparation, the division obtained excellent staff assistance from both Army Ground Forces and the Operations Division of War Department in the organization, equipping and planning. The Engineer Division and the Army Map Service printed and packed over 4,000,000 sheets of special maps for use by the invading forces.

During March, April and May, training went on at an increased tempo, for it soon became evident—such large scale operations are difficult to keep secret—that the division was scheduled to sail soon.

From Camp Pickett, the division and attached units moved to Camp Patrick Henry, near Hampton Roads Port of Embarkation where final administration and packing was accomplished. The last of the units loaded on 5 June, and sailed in convoy as "Cent Force" on 8 June.

The trip across the wide blue Atlantic was calm and uneventful. Many of the men were sailing the high seas for the first time. Many hours were spent standing at the ship's rail, watching the endless blue water and sky; watching the other ships of the convoy. Training aboard ship was limited to routine drills, physical exercise, orientation classes, and to cleaning of arms and equipment.

Land was again sighted on the 21 June, and the Rock of Gibraltar was passed at 1415. The next day at 1500, anchor was dropped in the harbor of MERS EL KABIR, near ORAN, NORTH AFRICA.

Then came the last of the "dry runs." A final practice landing was staged along the coast to the east of Oran. All troops went ashore, then set up camp in dry barren fields. Several days were spent in physical conditioning exercises while the final plans for the "pay run" were completed.



*Farewell review at Lawton, Oklahoma when the division began its move to Camp Barkeley.*



*Equipment of one of the Infantry Regiments at the parade at Camp Barkeley, Texas.*

*One of the last parades held at Camp Barkeley, Texas.*







## **MEN OF THE 45TH DIVISION WHO WERE AWARDED THE CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR**

### **CORPORAL JAMES D. SLATON**

Corporal James D. Slaton (Army serial No. 34278962), Company K, Infantry, United States Army. For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of life above and beyond the call of duty in action with the enemy in the vicinity of OLIVETO, ITALY, on 23 September 1943. Corporal Slaton was lead scout of an infantry squad which had been committed to a flank to knock out enemy resistance which had succeeded in pinning two attacking platoons to the ground. Working ahead of his squad Corporal Slaton crept upon an enemy machine gun nest and assaulting it with his bayonet succeeded in killing the gunner. When his bayonet stuck he detached it from the rifle and killed another gunner with rifle fire. At that time he was fired upon by a machine gun to his immediate left. Corporal Slaton then moved over open

ground under constant fire to within throwing distance, and on his second try scored a direct hit on the second enemy machine gun nest killing two enemy gunners. At that time a third machine gun fired on him 100 yards to his front, and Corporal Slaton killed both of these enemy gunners with rifle fire. As a result of Corporal Slaton's heroic action in immobilizing three enemy machine gun nests with bayonet, grenade, and rifle fire, the two rifle platoons which were receiving heavy casualties from enemy fire were enabled to withdraw to covered positions and again take the initiative. Corporal Slaton withdrew under mortar fire, on order of his platoon leader at dusk that evening. The heroic actions of Corporal Slaton were far above and beyond the call of duty and are worthy of emulation.



### **SECOND LIEUTENANT ALMOND E. FISHER**

Second Lieutenant Almond E. Fisher, 01323063, Infantry, Army of the United States, on the night of 12-13 September 1944, near GRAMMONT, FRANCE, in the darkness of early morning was leading a platoon of Company E., 157th Infantry, in single column to the attack of a strongly defended enemy hill position. At 0230 the forward elements were brought under enemy machine-gun fire from a distance of not more than 20 yards. Working his way alone to within 20 feet of the gun emplacement Lieutenant Fisher opened fire with his carbine and killed the entire gun crew. A few minutes after the advance was resumed heavy machine gun fire was encountered from the left flank. Again crawling forward alone under withering fire, he blasted the gun and crew from their positions with hand grenades. After a halt to replenish ammunition the advance was again resumed and continued for 1 hour before being stopped by intense machine

gun and rifle fire. Through the courageous and skillful leadership of Lieutenant Fisher the pocket of determined enemy resistance was rapidly obliterated. Spotting an emplaced machine pistol a short time later with one of his men, he moved forward and destroyed the position. As the advance continued, the fire fight became more intense. When a bypassed German climbed from his fox hole and attempted to tear an M1 rifle from the hands of one of his men, Lieutenant Fisher whirled and killed the enemy with a burst from his carbine. Some 30 minutes later the platoon came under heavy fire from machine guns across an open field. Lieutenant Fisher, disregarding the terrific fire, moved across the field with no cover or concealment to within range, knocked the gun from the position, and killed or wounded the crew. Still under heavy fire he returned to his platoon and continued the advance. Once again heavy fire was encountered from



a machine gun directly in front. Calling for hand grenades he found only two remaining in the entire platoon. Pulling the pins and carrying a grenade in each hand, he crawled toward the gun emplacement, moving across areas devoid of cover and under intense fire to within 15 yards when he threw his grenades, demolished the gun, and killed the gun crew. With ammunition low and daybreak near he ordered his men to dig in and hold the ground already won. Under constant fire from the front and from both flanks, he moved among them directing the preparations for defense. Shortly after the ammunition supply was replenished the enemy launched a last determined effort against the depleted group. Attacked by superior numbers from the front, right and left

flanks and even from the rear, the platoon in bitter hand-to-hand engagements drove back the enemy at every point. Wounded in both feet by close-range machine-pistol fire early in the battle, Lieutenant Fisher refused medical attention. Unable to walk, he crawled from man to man encouraging them and checking each position. Only after the fighting had subsided did Lieutenant Fisher crawl 300 yards to the aid station from which he was evacuated. His extraordinary heroism, magnificent valor and aggressive determination in the face of point blank enemy fire were an inspiration to his organization and reflect the finest traditions of the armed forces.



### **FIRST LIEUTENANT JACK C. MONTGOMERY**

First Lieutenant Jack C. Montgomery, 02055139, Infantry, United States Army. For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty on 22 February 1944, near PADIGLIONE, ITALY. Two hours before daybreak a strong force of enemy infantry established themselves in three echelons at 50 yards, 100 yards, and 300 yards respectively, in front of the rifle platoon commanded by Lieutenant Montgomery. The closest position, consisting of four machine guns and one mortar, threatened the immediate security of the platoon position. Seizing an M1 rifle and several hand grenades Lieutenant Montgomery crawled up a ditch to within hand-grenade range of the enemy. Then climbing boldly onto a little mound, he fired his rifle and threw his grenades so accurately that he killed eight of the enemy and captured the remaining four. Returning to his platoon he called for artillery fire on a house in and around which he suspected that the majority of the enemy had entrenched themselves. Arming himself with a carbine he proceeded along the shallow ditch as withering fire from the riflemen and machine gunners in the second position was concentrated on him. He attacked

this position with such fury that seven of the enemy surrendered to him, and both machine guns were silenced. Three German dead were found in the vicinity later that morning. Lieutenant Montgomery continued boldly toward the house 300 yards from his platoon position. It was now daylight and enemy observation was excellent across the flat, open terrain which led to Lieutenant Montgomery's objective. When the artillery barrage had lifted Lieutenant Montgomery ran fearlessly towards the strongly defended position. As the enemy started streaming out of the house Lieutenant Montgomery, unafraid of treacherous snipers, exposed himself daringly to assemble the surrendering enemy and send them to the rear. His fearless, aggressive, and intrepid actions that morning accounted for a total of 11 enemy dead, 32 prisoners, and an unknown number of wounded. That night, while aiding an adjacent unit to repulse a counterattack, he was struck by mortar fragments and seriously wounded. The selflessness and courage exhibited by Lieutenant Montgomery in attacking alone three strong enemy positions inspired his men to a degree beyond estimation.



### **SECOND LIEUTENANT VAN T. BARFOOT**

Second Lieutenant Van T. Barfoot, 01683485 (then technical sergeant) Infantry, United States Army. For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of life above and beyond the call of duty on 23 May 1944 near CARANO, ITALY. With his platoon heavily engaged during an assault against forces well entrenched on commanding ground, Sergeant Barfoot moved off alone upon the enemy left flank. He

crawled to the proximity of one machine gun nest and made a direct hit on it with a hand grenade, killing two and wounding three Germans. He continued along the German defense line to another machine gun emplacement and with his tommy gun killed two and captured three soldiers. Members of another enemy machine gun crew then abandoned their position and gave themselves up to Sergeant Barfoot.



Leaving the prisoners for his support squad to pick up he proceeded to mop up positions in the immediate area, capturing more prisoners and bringing his total count to 17. Later that day after he had reorganized his men and consolidated the newly captured ground, the enemy launched a fierce armored counterattack directly at his platoon positions. Securing a bazooka, Sergeant Barfoot took up an exposed position directly in front of three advancing Mark VI tanks. From a distance of 75 yards his first shot destroyed the track of the leading tank, effectively disabling it while the other two changed direction toward the flank. As the

crew of the disabled tank dismounted, Sergeant Barfoot killed three of them with his tommy gun. He continued onward into enemy terrain and destroyed a recently abandoned German field piece with a demolition charge placed in the breech. While returning to his platoon position Sergeant Barfoot, though greatly fatigued by his herculean efforts, assisted two of his seriously wounded men 1,700 yards to a position of safety. Sergeant Barfoot's extraordinary heroism, demonstration of magnificent valor, and aggressive determination in the face of point-blank enemy fire are a perpetual inspiration to his fellow soldiers.



### **PRIVATE FIRST CLASS WILLIAM J. JOHNSTON**

Private First Class William J. Johnston (Army serial No. 31341252), Infantry, United States Army. For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty in action against the enemy. On 17 February 1944, near PADIGLIONE, ITALY, he observed and fired upon an attacking force of approximately 80 Germans, causing at least 25 casualties and forcing withdrawal of the remainder. All that day he manned his gun without relief, subject to mortar, artillery, and sniper fire. Two Germans individually worked so close to his position that his machine gun was ineffective, whereupon he killed one with his pistol and the second with a rifle taken from another soldier. When a rifleman protecting his gun position was killed by a sniper he immediately moved the body and relocated his machine gun in that spot in order to obtain a better field of fire. He volunteered to cover the platoon's withdrawal and was the last man to leave that night. In his new position, he maintained an all-night vigil, the next day

causing seven German casualties. The afternoon of the 18th, the organization on the left flank having been forced to withdraw, he again covered the withdrawal of his own organization. Shortly thereafter he was seriously wounded over the heart, and a passing soldier saw him trying to crawl up the embankment and aided him to resume his position behind the machine gun which was soon heard in action for about ten minutes. Though reported killed Private First Class Johnston was seen returning to the American lines on the morning of 19 February, slowly and painfully working his way back from his overrun position through enemy lines. He gave valuable information of new enemy dispositions. His heroic determination to destroy the enemy and his disregard of his own safety aided immeasurably in halting a strong enemy attack, caused an enormous amount of enemy casualties, and so inspired his fellow soldiers that they fought for and held a vitally important position against greatly superior forces.



### **SECOND LIEUTENANT ERNEST CHILDERS**

Second Lieutenant Ernest Childers. 0-2055112, Infantry, United States Army. For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at risk of life above and beyond the call of duty in action on 22 September 1943 at OLIVETO, ITALY. Although Lieutenant Childers had just previously suffered a fractured instep he, with eight enlisted men, advanced up a hill toward enemy machine-gun nests. The group advanced to a rock wall overlooking a corn field and Lieutenant Childers ordered a base of fire laid across the field so that he could advance. When he was fired upon by two enemy snipers from a nearby house he killed both of them. He moved be-

hind the machine-gun nests and killed all occupants of the nearer one. He continued toward the second one and threw rocks into it. When the two occupants of the nest raised up he shot one. The other one was killed by one of the eight enlisted men. Lieutenant Childers continued his advance toward a house farther up the hill and, single-handed, captured an enemy mortar observer. The exceptional leadership, initiative, calmness under fire, and conspicuous gallantry displayed by Lieutenant Childers were an inspiration to his men.



## CAPTAIN JACK L. TREADWELL

Captain Jack L. Treadwell, 01703018 (then first lieutenant), commanding officer of Company F, 180th Infantry Regiment, Army of the United States, on 18 March 1945 near Nieder-Wurzbach, Germany, in the Siegfried Line, singlehandedly captured six pillboxes and 18 prisoners. Murderous enemy automatic and rifle fire with intermittent artillery bombardments had pinned down his company for hours at the base of a hill defended by concrete fortifications and interlocking trenches. Eight men sent to attack a single point had all become casualties on the bare slope when Captain Treadwell, armed with a submachine gun and hand grenades, went forward alone to clear the way for his stalled company. Over terrain devoid of cover and swept by bullets, he fearlessly advanced, firing at the aperture of the nearest pillbox and, when within range, hurling grenades at it. He reached the pillbox, thrust the muzzle of his gun through the port, and drove four Germans out with their hands in the air. A fifth was found dead inside. Waving these prison-

ers back to the American line, he continued under terrible, concentrated fire to the next pillbox and took it in the same manner. In this fort he captured the commander of the hill defenses, whom he sent to the rear with other prisoners. Never slackening his attack, he then ran across the crest of the hill to a third pillbox, traversing this distance in full view of hostile machine gunners and snipers. He was again successful in taking the enemy position. The Germans quickly fell prey to his further rushes on three more pillboxes in the confusion and havoc caused by his whirlwind assaults and capture of their commander. Inspired by the electrifying performance of their leader, the men of Company F stormed after him and overwhelmed resistance on the entire hill, driving a wedge into the Siegfried Line and making it possible for their battalion to take its objective. By his courageous willingness to face nearly impossible odds and by his overpowering one-man offensive, Captain Treadwell reduced a heavily fortified, seemingly impregnable enemy sector.



## CORPORAL EDWARD G. WILKIN

### MEDAL OF HONOR (Posthumous)

Corporal Edward G. Wilkin, Army Serial Number 31416626, Infantry, spearheaded his unit's assault of the Siegfried Line in Germany on 18 March 1945. Heavy fire from enemy riflemen and camouflaged pillboxes had pinned down his comrades when he moved forward on his own initiative to reconnoiter a route of advance. He cleared the way into an area studded with pillboxes, where he repeatedly stood up and walked into enemy fire, storming one fortification after another with automatic rifle and grenade, killing enemy troops, taking prisoners as the enemy defense became confused, and encouraging his comrades by his heroic example. When halted by heavy barbed wire entanglements, he secured bangalore torpedoes and blasted a path toward still more pillboxes, all the time braving bursting grenades and mortar shells and direct rifle and automatic weapons fire. He engaged in fierce fire fights, standing in the open while his adversaries fought from the protection of concrete emplacements, and on one occasion pursued enemy soldiers across an open field and through interlocking trenches, disregarding the crossfire from two pillboxes until he had penetrated the formidable line two hundred yards in advance of

any American element. That night, although terribly fatigued, he refused to rest and insisted on distributing rations and supplies to his comrades. Hearing that a nearby company was suffering heavy casualties, he secured permission to guide litter bearers and assist them in evacuating the wounded. All that night he remained in the battle area on his mercy missions, and for the following two days he continued to remove casualties, venturing into enemy-held territory, scorning cover and braving devastating mortar and artillery bombardments. In three days he neutralized and captured six pillboxes singlehandedly, killed at least nine Germans, wounded thirteen, took thirteen prisoners, aided in the capture of fourteen others, and saved many American lives by his fearless performance as a litter bearer. Through his superb fighting skill, dauntless courage and gallant, inspiring actions, Corporal Wilkins contributed in large measure to his company's success in cracking the Siegfried Line. One month later he was killed in action while fighting deep in Germany.

Date of award: 8 September 1945

Born: Burlington, Vt., 25 May 1917

Res at enl: Longmeadow, Mass.

Son: Master Robert J. Wilkin, Longmeadow, Mass.

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# SICILY

## OPERATION HUSKY

The invasion of EUROPE began in the early morning hours of 10 July 1943, when the 45th Infantry Division, under the command of Maj. Gen. Troy H. Middleton, along with other American and British Divisions, struck the south and east coasts of SICILY. It was, up to that time, the greatest amphibious operation ever attempted in history.

For the 45th Division this was the culmination of months of training, study, practice, and planning—planning within the Division as well as between Army and Navy, American and British. This was the day toward which all efforts had been directed. All plans were laid on success, for in this, the most difficult type of all military operations, there can be only one of two results—success or failure—there can be no halfway measure.

The general plan was for the First Canadian Division to land on the east coast of the island and gain contact with the right of the 45th; the Rangers and the First American Division were to land near GELA on the left. The zone assigned to the 45th extended from the ACATE (DIRILLO) River 45 miles east along the coast. As all of this area was not suitable for an assault landing, a front of about 15 miles of beach was chosen. The 157th Regimental Combat Team was to land just north of CAPO SCARAMIA with two battalions abreast. Their initial mission was to seize S. CROCE CAMERINA and the high ground northeast of COMISO; to assist the 179th Regimental Combat Team in capturing COMISO Airfield; to



*Lieutenant General Troy H. Middleton, who lead the 45th Division into Combat.*

protect the right flank of the Corps; and to contact the First Canadian Division at RAGUSA, maintaining contact thereafter. The 179th Regimental Combat Team was to land north of SCOGLITTI with two battalions abreast, capture SCOGLITTI and VITTORIA, capture and secure



COMISO Airfield with the aid of the 157th, and maintain contact with the 157th on the right. The 180th Regimental Combat Team, less one battalion in Corps reserve, was to land south of the ACATE River with two battalions abreast; seize the high ground a few miles inland, including the BISCARI Airfield; prepare blocks on the main north-south highways; and maintain contact with the 179th on the right and the First American Division on the left.

Joint plans worked out with the Air Force and Navy were to be put into operation. Warships were to shell the coast and enemy installations prior to the landing of the assault waves, and would continue to give fire support until Division Artillery could take over. The Air Force had already softened some of the enemy defenses by repeated bombings. It was planned that these bombings would be especially heavy on 9 July. It was planned that paratroopers, too, would be used, but their employment was not fixed or certain at the time the Division sailed from the coast of Africa.

That, briefly, was the plan. The details were set forth in numerous publications and plans of Corps and Army, and for the Division, were all incorporated into Field Order Number One, dated At Sea 262000B June 43. How these orders were to be carried out, and whether these exact plans would work under the fire of the enemy, would soon be proved—after the first shot was fired.

With D-Day set at last, and the final practice run complete, the Division and the attached units loaded into 19 ships at ports near ORAN. The AKA 1 (ARCTURUS), AKA 2 (PROCYON), AKA 3 (BELLATRIX), AKA 7 (ALCYON), APA 8 (BIDDLE), APA 9 (NEVILLE), AP 10 (LEE), APA 12 (WOOD), AKA 15 (ANDROMEDA), APA 28 (CARROL), APA 30 (JEFFERSON), APA 32 (CALVERT), AP 67 (DOROTHEA DIX), APA 70 (NIGHTINGALE), APA 72 (ANTHONY), APA 76 (ARUNDEL), APA 89 (FUNSTON), APA 90 (O'HARA), and the command ship ANCON sailed with a naval escort made up of fighting ships from BRITAIN, the UNITED STATES and the NETHERLANDS.

Other vessels, battleships, cruisers, destroyers, LST's, and LCI's totaling almost 2,000 sailed from ORAN, BIZERTE, and other ports, to converge into one huge convoy with its destination the little Mediterranean island.

The days were sunny, the nights clear, the sea calm. As the convoy sailed past PANTELLERIA and MALTA, maps were broken out and studied with great care. The men spent the days checking and cleaning weapons, sharpening knives, testing gear. The ships were moving fast, but time seemed to drag as tension and anxiety mounted. Plaster models of the landing area, exact and detailed

copies of photos and maps were laid out aboard some of the ships so that every man could be briefed and could study the terrain. These were worked over carefully. Squad and Platoon leaders tried to memorize the landmarks so they would be able to find their way in the darkness of the pre-dawn landing.

On 8 July, while the huge convoy was still sailing eastward, the weather changed. A breeze began to blow from the north, and a few clouds appeared in the sky. During the night the wind increased, until the water began to show white caps, and the waves increased in size. By midday of 9 July, the sea was being whipped into choppy water by a strong wind. As the gale increased, so did the tenseness among the men who were crowding against the ships' rails. It seemed peculiarly significant to them that the water which had been so calm all during their long voyage from the States, had now, at the zero hour for which they had waited and practiced so long, become more and more rough and treacherous.

On the command ship ANCON, there was discussion by both Army and Navy as to whether it would be possible to launch landing craft over the ship's side if the waves did not subside before the appointed H-hour. As D-Day, H-Hour, had not yet been announced to all personnel, it was thought by some that postponement was possible. However, as the ships reached the transport area only a few miles from the coast at 2200B on the night of 9 July, it was agreed that to delay would increase the possibility of heavy losses. H-hour was announced for 0245.

From the unit journal of the 45th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop:

**"9 July 43, 1600B. Verbal orders from Captain USS SUSAN B. ANTHONY: Send four scouts, enlisted men, with designated Naval officer, to locate Blue Beach and report any beach installations. Time of departure to be given later."**

Cpl. William Hill, Cpl. Patrick Cyr, PFC. Daniel Husted, and Pvt. William Hrybko were selected to go. These men had been trained as amphibious scouts. Dressed in navy "raider suits"—blue-black coveralls, tennis shoes, and helmet—equipped with compass, canteen, .45 caliber pistol, map, wire-cutters, and one hand grenade each, the men blackened faces and hands and stood by for the order to debark. The remainder of the scouting party consisted of the naval officer in charge, coxswain, motor mechanic, radio operator, and Captain Bishop, observer.

The boat which was to take them close in to shore was a 30-foot Higgins-type control boat, equipped with a special sounding device and two-way radio for communication with the command ship. Two two-man rubber rafts were provided for landing the scout teams from the control boat.





*General view of the beach between Gela and Scoglitti, Sicily. This section of the beachhead was formed by 45 Div.*

The command to lower the boat came at 2320 hours. The small craft crashed into the side of the ship in the stiffening gale as it hit the rough black water. The waves were so steep against the side of the ship that rope ladders were of no use whatever. The raiders and the crew of their control boat solved the problem by lowering their two-man rubber rafts into the boat, then jumping in pitch darkness, a leap varying, with the rise and fall of the tremendous waves, from 15 to 40 feet.

The scout party was to receive detailed orders for their mission from the USS CARROL. Their craft was maneuvered close along side and the orders were shouted through a megaphone. The voice of the CARROL'S officer could barely be heard above the sound of the wind and waves:

**"Reconnoiter for off-shore obstacles Green II Beach, look for underwater wire, mines, or sand bars that will ground landing craft. When finished with Green II, proceed to Blue II Beach, look for beach defenses and find a road leading off Blue II. H-hour 0245 hours. Radio silence until H-hour. Report results of reconnaissance on normal radio channel. Be prepared to guide assault forces over any obstacles found. That is all."**

The slow, silent trip from the transport area to within sight of the beach was filled with tension and suspense. Every eye was strained to catch sight of any light, or movement of other small boats. Only a few minutes after leaving the CARROL, anti-aircraft tracers were sighted from guns far enough distant to appear about midway of the island. "Some of our planes must be giving them

hell," one of the men remarked. This fire was of short duration. Having "found" the shadow of land in the light of these tracers, it was fairly easy to keep sight of the high silhouette.

The appearance of the land ahead was surprisingly familiar after the study of the terrain model aboard ship. However, a similarity in the rock formations of the coast made positive identification of any point impossible, until the Ensign ordered the boat turned south and the high rocks of POINT BRACCHETTA were reached. This Point, according to intelligence, was a potential strong point, with pill-boxes and dug-in machine-guns. With caution, to prevent undue noises, the scouts began to search for sand bars.

Due to the heavy surf this task was more time consuming than had been planned, and H-hour was not far off when the crew reached the end of their assigned sector. So far, the only obstacle found was the outcropping of rocks at the center of the beach area. Upon close examination, it was determined that the rocks were more rugged and extended over more of the beach than had been plotted on the maps.

On the second run, the coxswain steered the boat in to the 25-yard line, and, in spite of the rough water, held a southerly course. Before more than a few yards had been covered, the Ensign signaled H-hour minus ten minutes—time for the naval barrage to start. The boat was moved off shore to be out of danger from the fire of the big naval guns.

The minutes ticked by like very slow hours. After 0245 passed it was evident that something was wrong. Radio





*The surf was greater than reports and studies had indicated. This resulted in the beaching and putting out of commission many of the landing craft.*

silence was to be broken at H-Hour, so the operator tried to contact the command ship for instructions. It was discovered that the set had been damaged and was useless.

The scouts and the crew were puzzled by the continued silence. The lack of naval gun fire on the beaches could be interpreted a number of ways: postponement of H-Hour? a last-minute decision to dispense with the ten-minute barrage? or a cancelation of the entire invasion? To these men in the small craft sitting like ducks on the water in the silence of the dark night, it could mean any change of plan that would further endanger their position.

Knowing their mission was not yet completed, they decided at 0250 to run the risk of being caught in the fire and to continue the reconnaissance by using the rubber rafts. The boat was again moved inshore to within 100 yards of the beach (and less than 300 yards from POINT BRACHETTA). On order from the Ensign, the scouts prepared to launch the rafts.

By the GI watch strapped to Corporal Hill's wrist, it was 0330 when the first great burst of fire came from the sea. Within 30 seconds the beach, which had been deathly silent, was torn by a series of explosions as fury-in-flames burst directly ahead on the shore.

Too late then to continue reconnaissance. In the white light of the bursting shells the men could see the shadows of the first wave of invasion forces heading for the beach. H-Hour had been delayed by the heavy seas.

**"From the ships in the transport area, we stood watching the boats form up and move off to the line of departure. There had already been some**

firing toward GELA. Destroyers moved in with assault waves. As they reached the line of departure, the destroyers moved to the flank and soon opened a terrific bombardment. SCOGLITTI, ZAFAGLIONE, and previously plotted positions of suspected defenses were blasted by gun fire. The cruisers also opened at the same time, and the ABERCOMBIE, a British monitor. The shells of these guns showed bright red traveling lazily through the air. The ABERCOMBIE'S gun's trajectory was nearly as high as it was long.

"At frequent intervals, as the destroyers and cruisers continued their fire toward the shore, air alarms sent AA fire streaming into the sky. Red tracers searched the air for probing enemy aircraft. Bombs fell into the sea and sent up geysers of water. Unfortunately our own airborne units were probably landing men at the same time. We hoped they were well over the land."

At 0425 the first assault troops of the 45th Division hit the beach. The long ride in the landing crafts from the big ships was dark and rough. The climax of tension and the rolling waves took their toll in sea-sickness. Men vomited, cursed, gripped their weapons tighter. Some of the boats, twisted by the heavy surf, struck the sand at an angle, so they became broached and useless on the beach. Some of the coxswains, eager to get the troops unloaded, lowered the ramps before the boats hit sand, and many of the men jumped into the water to wade ashore. To the individual, the landing presented every aspect of chaos



and confusion. Many units were split up; platoons, companies, even battalions were landed on the beaches of adjacent units. In the rush and whirl of hundreds of small boats racing for the beaches, many of them misguided. And the first casualties of the Division occurred when one craft struck the out-cropping of high jagged rocks and over-turned.

Later, some of the transports estimated their losses of landing craft at 50 per cent. Fully 20 per cent of all landing craft were damaged beyond salvage: their corpses lay along the beach half buried in the sand.

Dawn began to break. One beach reported: "Landing successful. Meeting machine-gun fire." Unit headquarters were established ashore. Soon reports were received that elements of all assault battalions had landed. Initially, gaining exact information and coordination of units was extremely difficult for the commanders because of the shortage of transportation and wire lines, and the loss of radios and equipment in the beach area.

Two factors contributed greatly in overcoming the first difficulties. One was the long and thorough training of the Division which enabled the men—even when they were separated from their units—to fight through the dangerous beach line and to continue to fight until they could rejoin their own organization. The second factor was the initial Italian resistance, which was not as strong as had been anticipated. Italian units had been formed indiscriminately, and consisted mainly of coastal troops and "Nuclei Celeri," or Home Guard. The former surrendered immediately, and in many instances stood with bags packed, ready to be taken prisoner. The first day of the war in EUROPE had begun.

The warships kept up their shelling of enemy installations after the three assault waves had landed. The 45th Division established its first command post approximately five miles north of SCOGLITTI at 0800 hours on 10 July, and at 1700 hours it advanced to a new location three miles west of the town of VITTORIA.

The battalions of the 157th RCT were somewhat confused by being landed on the wrong beaches. E and F Companies lost some men and considerable equipment when their boats crashed into the rocks. The coastal defenses were rapidly overcome, however, and the Regiment was generally reorganized by mid-morning and ready to continue toward its objective. For example, the 2nd Bn. had all its staff officers present by 1010, and shortly thereafter was in regular communications with the Regiment. The most serious resistance met the first day by the 157th Infantry came from pillbox fire. A series of these fortified points, located in low craggy hills commanding the roads

a few miles inland from the beaches, provided a barrier to the Regiment's advance. Some of these were quickly and effectively reduced by Cannon Company.

The village of S. CROCE CAMERINA, the first major objective of the team, was defended by a small force. Heavy weapons were set up, and artillery support of the 158th Field Artillery—firing at close range on fortified buildings and concrete installations—reduced the resistance. This captured town gave the Regiment a good foothold on its sector of the beach.

The 179th Regimental Combat Team, landing several miles north of the 157th, likewise encountered light, but occasionally persistent, opposition. After crossing the wide belt of deep sand and mopping up their assigned part of the beach, the 1st Bn. continued along the shore to attack SCOGLITTI by a flanking movement from the north. One company proceeded down the beach to clean out pillboxes and other beach defenses. The remainder of the Battalion maneuvered against POINT di ZAFAGLIONE which dominated SCOGLITTI from the north, and which proved to be well-fortified. Outmaneuvered from this unexpected direction, the POINT soon capitulated, surrendering a garrison of some 70 prisoners. SCOGLITTI, the town, when entered by troops of the Regiment, produced only 25 enemy, who surrendered as soon as the outlying defenses collapsed. The 1st Bn. then turned north, where it soon met a strong defense of machine guns and artillery. Having reached its objective, it held its position awaiting orders and coordination.

The 3rd Bn., meanwhile, had marched directly to VITTORIA. The resisting Germans and Italians fell back along the route. Infantry troops stopped the advance on the outskirts of the city, where they were met with rifle fire supported by self-propelled guns. Then the 160th Field Artillery went into position west of the city, and mortars opened a heavy fire on the southern edge of town where enemy resistance seemed to center. A conference between Brigadier General McLain, the Artillery Commander, and Lieutenant Colonel Taylor, the 3rd Bn. Commander, brought the decision to rush the town. Two half-tracks of the Cannon Company, and a group of jeeps with mounted machine-guns drove rapidly into the city with the men of the Battalion, returning the fire of snipers as they proceeded. The battle was a short one; the enemy withdrew toward COMISO Airfield; the mayor and other town officials fled. Thus the first large city of SICILY was in American hands.

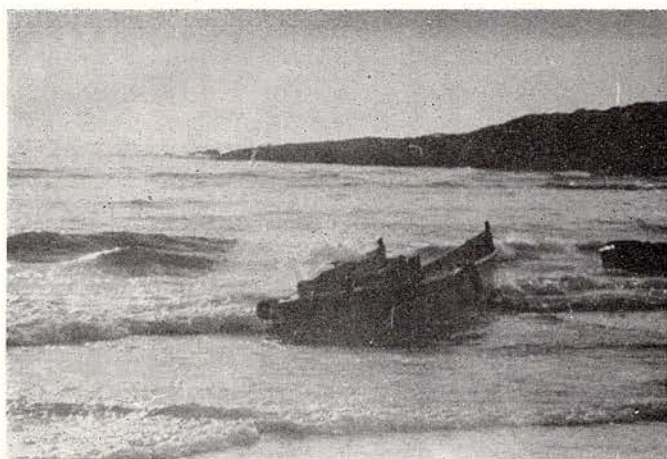
Meanwhile, the 180th Regimental Combat Team, which was scattered over a front of approximately ten miles, was meeting even tougher and better organized resistance. The



Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon was landed on the 179th Infantry beach; the Cannon Company was delayed several hours, and two-thirds of it landed on the wrong beach; the 1st Bn. was scattered over a five-mile stretch between GELA and SCOGLITTI, and many men were landed on sandbars 500-600 yards off shore, being forced to abandon all their equipment in order to reach dry ground.

The 2nd Bn. was landed mainly on the 179th Infantry beach. The 3rd Bn. lost some of their vehicles and much equipment in deep water, and was landed on a front of several miles. The Commander of the Regiment and his staff were debarked in the American First Division Sector, 4,400 yards northwest of the assigned area.

During the afternoon of D-day the Regiment was partially assembled, and stopped below the high ground just north of Highway 115, where it came under enemy fire



*Sunset D-day plus one, the sea continued to pound the "casualties" that were half buried in the sand.*

from machine-guns, mortars and artillery. The 171st Field Artillery Battalion, delayed in landing, got into position late in the afternoon and began counterbattery and harrassing fire against the enemy positions. Contact with the 1st Bn. Commander, Lt. Col. William Schaefer, was lost, and it was later learned that he and one of his captains had been captured by the Germans.

Lieutenant Colonel Cochran, with parts of E and F Companies reached their position across the ACATE, where contact was lost for a time, but he maintained his position and accomplished his initial mission. A part of D Company crossed Highway 115 on the right of the zone. Confusion and disorganization brought about by the erratic landing increased the anxiety and indecision. Even the following day, 11 July, the Regiment was unable to advance, and a night attack also failed to put the Regiment across the highway toward BISCARI.

It was dusty in SICILY in July. The men and vehicles were quickly plastered with the fine white powder. Shoes, leggins, and trousers—wet from wading to shore—became caked with a layer of dust as they dried. The heat of the sun, the clouds of white earth, and the loss of sleep all combined to give the island an unreal, stage-like appearance in the eyes of the men. The fighting was real enough. The shells from enemy artillery; the crack and ping of rifle bullets; the roar of our own guns and the sounds of ack-ack and strafing planes—these were real. And so were the dead that lay, still and dust covered, along the trails and in the fields.

There are few roads in the southern island. There were old trails, narrow and winding, that had served a few small carts, and donkeys with water jars for generations. Few of these trails had seen a motor vehicle before the jeeps began to move along between the high cactus hedges. Every wheel raised more dust, which drifted and settled over the leaves of the sparse, dry olive trees and vineyards.

This was the first day. As it ended, and the sun went down, the air became chilled—like the desert, turning from burning heat to cold.

About an hour after dark the Division command post came under a heavy shelling from the direction of the beach, unquestionably a naval concentration from erroneous coordinates. All throughout the night the Navy was under bombardment, and the sky was full of the red tracers and bursts of anti-aircraft fire. It was a terrific sight, and the following nights were much the same.

Both the 2nd and the 3rd Bns. of the 179th, which had come up on the left flank, bivouaced north of VITTORIA. They began the advance on COMISO Airdrome early the following morning, July 11, meeting some resistance and gathering prisoners as they went. The presence of German troops in increasing numbers indicated that resistance would be greater. The 3rd Bn. took the road leading into the southwest corner of the airport, the 2nd Bn. followed a road leading into the northwest corner. The 3rd Bn. of the 157th was to close in from the direction of the town of COMISO to the southeast.

The 157th Infantry, with all units organized for the drive on COMISO and the airport there, marched on the town of RAGUSA to gain contact with the Canadian 1st Division. They withdrew when the Canadians began to drop shells into the town, but established contact at 1600 hours. The 157th Infantry captured the town next day, when they took over the telephone exchange and listened with great amusement, and considerable profit, to the Italians excitedly relaying news of the Invasion to MODICA and demanding food and reinforcements.



# 45<sup>TH</sup> Division News

JULY 13, 1943

VITTORIA, Sicily

VOL. IV

## DANCE IN DIRT CAPTURES PRISONERS

Early in the invasion, when you didn't know whether the next foot of beach belonged to you or to the enemy, 1st Lt. Thomas E. Akers and his driver, Pvt. Weaver went on a reconnaissance. They found themselves in Scoglitti, but the soldiers they saw were Italian!

"Oops," said the lieutenant, when he realized his spot, "Turn around, Weaver." They retreated until they found 25 of our men, then went back into the town.

"I went to the center of the square, and drew a swastika in the dirt," the lieutenant reported. "Then I stamped it out with my foot. The people came running out of the houses waving white handkerchiefs, and soon the soldiers came, too. They threw down their guns and surrendered."

"We brought back about 50 of them, and they all seemed glad to be with us."

Not all the enemy surrendered, though, because there was fighting in the town later.

## TEN MAJOR CITIES OURS

Along an arc of about 100 miles on the Sicilian front the Allies have captured at least 10 important towns and ports, and smashed seven Axis counter-offensives, an Allied communique has announced to the people back home.

Gen. Montgomery's Eighth Army sped for Catania after taking Syracuse, and plans going on to Messina straits - 2 miles from Italy. Morocco radio reported Catania airport has fallen.

Gen. Patton's forces, the report added, turned back the stiffest counterattack from the enemy's main party.

Airfields captured are being used by our planes.

"The Italian fleet," said one observer, "is still beating its way to the Alps."

The German Radio, claims the Allies have been driven into the sea, and that our armies never got beyond the beaches.

## SOVIETS HOLD THEIR GROUND

The greatest battle in history, raging 14 days on the Russian front, has left the lines about as they had been.

German claims to capture of 38 miles of Soviet territory mentioned no names of places, and the Russians said no serious breach has occurred.

Russia claims to have taken toll of 2,500 tanks and 2,068 planes in 14 days.

## JERRIES TOUGH

Jerry hasn't been underestimated. He's using every trick he's learned in three years of Warfare. The boys who come in contact with him have quickly learned not to give him any quarter. Burial parties, removing grenades from bodies of our men, found the pins removed and the handles pressed against the bodies in such a way that the grenades would explode when the bodies were moved. Time after time, medics, with their armbands showing, have been cut down.



## NO MANEUVER

"Too many men are taking this for another maneuver," Col. James B. Styron warned today. "They are shooting at every plane they see in the sky, wasting ammunition and giving away our positions."

Colonel Styron also warned that we have our own artillery observation planes up, over our lines, and they must not be fired upon.

## DON'T CHUM, SON!

A general today warned against fraternizing with the Italian prisoners. Whether or not they talk pleasantly, they are still the enemy, he said.

Soldiers must not drink wine, whether they buy it, or whether it is given to them.

Both offenses, fraternizing, and drinking, are punishable by court martial.

Italian uniforms found in the area, it was learned today, indicate some Italian soldiers may be in civilian clothes — another reason for not fraternizing with the population. Wave and smile, but keep your distance.

Pfc. Wilburn Welch is a hero — but easy. Ten Italian soldiers came up and surrendered to him on a Vittoria street.

## CHUTE TROOPS BID US WELCOME

45th Division men know the paratroopers as the boys who met them at the beach — in some places.

St. Sgt. Donald Moxley; one of the men who nyloned in early, tells this story of a dozen of them.

"We came down closer together than usual — a sign we had jumped faster. I gathered my squad, and we started down the road. Pretty soon we came to a road block. Twelve of the enemy were in a concrete trough, and we were challenged. We opened fire, getting three one with a rifle and two with a grenade.

"We left them, they didn't follow, and we went toward the beach, where we occupied a little hill. We sure were glad to see you guys. We joined your boys, and attacked a house, where there were 14 enemy soldiers. We fought a while.

"Then Pvt. Cloyd Wriggle shot the German officer, and the Italians soon surrendered.

Your medics treated their wounded and two of your own men, and the Italians fell all over us — wanting to hug and kiss us. One mi-

## LABORATORY LOB

A captain from G-4, was narrowly missed by a sniper in Vittoria. He spotted him in a public latrine on the street, grabbed a bazooka from his peep, and let fly.

"Did you get him?" somebody asked the captain;

"Couldn't tell," was the reply, "there was too much other apray flying around."

## IL POPOLO DI 45 TH

This, so far as we know, is the first United States Army Newspaper to be published in the European invasion. We hope it is. The Division News was the first paper of the "National Emergency," and this new "first" was our ambition.

Don't blame us if it isn't our best effort. We, like you, have been bombed, strafed and sniped at. We're printing in a Sicilian print shop where the printers don't know a word of English, and the press must be run, temporarily, by hand.

We'll print as often as we're able.

nute they were trying to kill us, and the next lo Kiss us. I don't get it.



The taking of COMISO Airdrome was an operation calling for accurate coordination and delicately adjusted teamwork between the 179th and the 157th Infantry Regiments. In a situation where contact was as yet irregular and imperfect with the Division and among units, perfect teamwork figured largely in the reduction of a dangerous point.

At 1000 the CO of the 157th ordered Company C, 753rd Tank Bn., to seize COMISO Airport and hold it until the arrival of infantry; the company moved out immediately in an advance-guard formation with the Company Commander in the lead. While crossing the bridge west of COMISO, the Commander sighted five Italian Renault tanks. At a range of 200 yards, he opened fire and destroyed all of the enemy vehicles. This was the first time that any part of 753rd engaged in action with the enemy.

The place was defended with spirit and bravado. The attacking elements, the 179th Infantry and the 3rd Bn. of the 157th, brought the situation under excellent control in the final phase when advance radios of the 158th and 160th Field Artillery Battalions, now supporting the attack from different directions, came into range. Fires were ordered to continue on the field and intensify up to 1630 hours, when they would lift over the heads of the attacking infantry for the combined assault.

However, at 1610, resistance to the front of the 3rd Bn., 179th Infantry, had ceased. Lieutenant Colonel Taylor, Battalion Commander, announced by radio that he was closing in. The artillery fire lifted, and his Battalion and the 3rd Bn. of the 157th Infantry closed in swiftly. The defenders had moved into the north end of the airfield trying to escape and had been trapped. They ran head-on into Lieutenant Colonel Weygand's 2nd Bn., and a sharp, vicious encounter took place, continuing until 1625. An enemy plane took off from the field at 1622, keeping low so that fires could not be adjusted upon it quickly. In the meanwhile Col. Charles Ankorn, Regimental Commander of the 157th Infantry, and Lt. Col. Dwight Funk, Commander of the 158th Field Artillery Battalion, personally directed the supporting fires of the artillery from a combined command and observation post to knock out, with counterbattery fire, the guns firing on the 3rd Bn. of the 157th Infantry.

Lieutenant Colonel Weygand had emplaced his mortars to blast buildings from which enemy fire had been coming when the enemy plane took off. Five minutes later he saw other troops of the Division enter the field from the other side and lifted his mortar fire just as the first round dropped and proved to be a dud. The day following its capture by the Division, the airfield was heavily bombed and strafed by the enemy.

A number of planes and a large supply of parts and equipment and literally acres of bombs, together with other valuable material, were captured at COMISO Airport and in the vicinity.

"The route towards RAGUSA from COMISO climbs a steep slope with a very winding walled road. About five miles up at a road junction I found Charlie and his headquarters and had a talk with him on the situation. He took me out on a point where we could see the whole plain below, extending from COMISO across VITTORIA and on to BISCARI on the banks of the ACATE. Further across we could see the location of the BISCARI Airport; one of our objectives not yet taken. It was probably 20 miles air line from where we were. Further to the north at a distance we could see CHIARAMONTE and LICODIA, which Charlie was to take later. . . . There before us was a magnificent landscape, overlooking the entire Division sector, and the sea in a distance to the left with the mountain range to the right. Here was the key terrain to the whole area.

"Then we saw the German planes bombing VITTORIA, and the smoke rising from the town; we could also see them strafing COMISO Airport. I do not believe the English who were to take it over had yet moved in. Perhaps a few of our Engineers were on it."

All day of the eleventh, enemy air activity continued. Command posts and artillery gun positions were bombed and strafed, and the number of German planes over the beach area increased. A warning was sent out from Army and Corps headquarters that it was possible for the Germans to use paratroopers behind us, and all should be alert for them. As darkness fell, the play of red tracers and flares started over the sea, as the naval ships fired on enemy planes. The firing lasted longer and recurred more frequently than on the previous night, as plane after plane roared over the area.

The largest flight came over at 2230 hours. Planes seemed to be approaching from every direction, flying very low.

Anti-aircraft batteries, taking their cue from the naval gunners on the ships off shore, were firing on the planes. Confusion mounted as bomber after bomber roared over the area. Several planes caught fire in the air, and sailed burning into the sea. One crashed near one of the Division Artillery battery positions. At 2300 the first chutists were sighted and fired on by riflemen. Groups of artillerymen were sent out to engage the supposed enemy and round



them up. It was then discovered that they were a part of the American 82nd Airborne Division.

At another point, the flight of troop-carrying ships came in with a flight of enemy bombers. In the darkness, noise, and confusion of the bombing, paratroopers lost their lives in the exchange of fire, each believing the other to be the enemy, and men of the Division were killed in the crossfire.

An attack was set for July 12 by the 180th Infantry, and got under way at 1600 hours. The Germans began to fall back rapidly, and a strong and immediate pursuit was carried out, with the 3rd Bn. leading. This race continued all the way to the fortified town of BISCARI on the ACATE River. There a vicious contest took place with I and L Companies, some of the heavy weapons, and Cannon Company engaged.

The Germans hid among the vaults of a walled cemetery flanked by a large stone building, which was combed by fire as the mortars were brought up and thrust into place. Company L closed in rapidly from the north in narrow file through the cactus-lined alleyways, and I Company moved up from the south. The Germans withdrew rapidly to the east, leaving their casualties lying in the cemetery.

The 180th Infantry then turned north toward BISCARI Airport, opposed by an estimated two infantry companies reinforced by a platoon of Mark VI tanks, one of which was destroyed on Highway 115 and another in the town of BISCARI. Among the enemy encountered in the area were infantry elements of the Hermann Goering Division. From documents and the questioning of prisoners, it was established that a company of the Hermann Goering Reconnaissance Battalion was operating south and southwest of the town of VIZZINI. The Regiment had encountered the left flank of the Goering Division in its counterattack toward GELA.

The fight for BISCARI Airfield was long and bitter. In their initial assault the 180th Infantry destroyed five R-35 tanks, three smaller tanks, an ammunition dump, and a truck. The enemy resisted desperately, using every weapon of a reinforced battalion supported by tanks and artillery.

The battle for the Airfield proper began on July 13 when the 3rd Bn., from its position of the previous day, made a flank attack to the right, taking out enemy resistance along the ACATE DRILLO. The 3rd Bn. then bypassed the 2nd Bn. and continued the advance. One bridge was blown by the enemy, and there were several large craters in the road, but by-passes were quickly and efficiently constructed by Company C, 120th Engineers.

Nearing the Airfield, the Battalion was stopped by intense, well-placed artillery fire. At 2300 that night a re-

organization was made, and the Regiment renewed the attack, with the 1st Bn. on the left and the 3rd Bn. on the right. Heavy fighting continued throughout the night, and until early morning of 14 July, when the Airfield was reported clear. Considerable equipment and a large number of prisoners were captured.

Action of such intensity cannot be easily told in printed words. The sweat, the dust, the persistent danger, the sounds and sights cannot be translated into black and white. There are always examples of outstanding bravery, of courage and daring which merit the award of recognition. There are, too, always so many hundreds of examples of such fortitude that remain unseen, and unknown.

" . . . . as we topped the hill, there were three of our parachutists hiding behind a tree. In a short while, Private Bartolet and Private Ralph Geyer saw enemy tanks headed our way. The tanks spotted the paratroopers and fired in their direction—killing all of them. Harry and I took our bazooka, aimed at the first tank—a medium one. It was a direct hit which crippled the tank. Then holy hell broke out as enemy artillery began blasting all around us. We stuck it out until we saw our own tanks, followed by our men, move up to close in . . ."

Capt. Ellis Ritchie of E Company was another whose exploits made Division history before BISCARI Airfield capitulated. While leading one of his platoons, he was hemmed in behind a rock wall jutting out on the northwest side of the Airfield. A Mark VI tank fired at Captain Ritchie point blank from a distance of some 60 yards, with nothing between them but a tree. The shell lopped the tree off just above his head.

Without regard for his personal safety, he continued to direct observation for his platoon, with the result that the entire enemy unit was wiped out. The use of rifle grenades forced the tank to withdraw.

At 2100 hours on July 14, instructions were received at Division Artillery Headquarters which limited the line of fire to the south side of Highway 124 in the area, as the British were planning to advance on this road. During the following day the 171st Field Artillery and the 158th Field Artillery Battalions observed enemy vehicles and tanks moving toward our lines in numbers. During the period, fire could not be delivered upon the targets, which were well within range, due to the restricting Corps order. The 180th Infantry Regiment continued to advance toward the high ground generally running along Highway 124, which was the objective for II Corps at this time.

This high ground generally followed a line from CALTI-



GIRONE to GRAMMICHELE and to VIZZINI. Tanks and a mobile force estimated at a company in strength were driven back, and six tanks and a motor pool captured, this action enabling the British to enter GRAMMICHELE with comparatively little opposition.

The Italians seemed to have ceased fighting at this stage. As early as July 12 they were completely disorganized. The greatest problem where they were concerned was the gathering and guarding of immense quantities of arms and ammunition.

During the advance just south of CALTIGIRONE a platoon of H Company under the command of Lieutenant Baker spotted an enemy tank. Mortars were in position and one round of 81 millimeter high explosive light ammunition was fired. Then the tank was quickly bracketed with three rounds of heavy ammunition. One of these rounds landed on the tank or near enough to set its gasoline ablaze: the tank exploded, burned, and was completely destroyed. In the same engagement a Mark VI tank was knocked out by a 37 millimeter gun from the side, at a range of approximately 400 yards. Lieutenant Cartwright of H Company picked off the crew one by one with his BAR as they attempted to escape.

The 179th Infantry on July 14 assumed a defensive position along the Division objective south of CALTIGIRONE and the ridge. The Germans drove into the line there with artillery and mortar fire. Local attacks by enemy infantrymen accompanied by tanks penetrated some battalion defense areas. They were quickly repulsed, however, with considerable losses to the enemy.

During the capture of BISCARI Airfield the Regiment had the mission of reinforcing the 180th Infantry. This was done by maneuvering effectively against the flank of the enemy's route of escape.

The 157th Infantry meanwhile moved up to MONTE-ROSSO, and north of LICODIA, with the 3rd Bn. seizing and securing that town, then moving east to secure the ground commanding Highway 124. Near the town of VIZZINI the Regiment encountered considerable trouble. After thrusting out beyond their first objective north of Highway 124 the 157th was ordered back for the purpose of allowing the British to pass through to the front of the Division sector, moving westward along the highway.

The enemy, however, promptly moved up, with infantry and artillery in full force. Consequently, the British attack on VIZZINI was met with stiff opposition. When the 1st Canadian Division moved up to the line, they requested the assistance of the 157th Infantry Regiment in reducing that town.

Colonel Ankcorn was standing along the railroad tracks when the message reached him. He reached up, tore off a part of an old Italian waybill from the side of a boxcar and wrote: "Murphy, go help the British"—probably the briefest field order of the war. And Murphy did.

The 1st Bn., commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Murphy, was assigned to attack the town from the west. They moved up and charged in, capturing the heights west of VIZZINI during the night of 13-14 July, losing 30 casualties in the attack. At daylight on the 14th, the 158th Field Artillery Battalion placed heavy concentrations on the city, interdicting roads and generally disorganizing the enemy. This support continued until the 1st Canadian Division entered the city.

With the Division having gained its objective along Highway 124, contact with the enemy was broken all along the line to permit the 1st Canadian Division to move westward.

The quick and successful reorganization of the 45th Division after landing has already been noted. It was apparent by the second day of the operation that tactical surprise had been achieved. All evidence indicated that the Italians and Germans were hastily retreating from the coastal area under the persistent pressure of the troops. The loss of his weapons and equipment, and the incomplete destruction of even the most secret documents, indicated a hasty, unplanned retreat by the enemy without orders from higher headquarters. Great quantities of equipment—trucks, weapons, and munitions—were abandoned without being destroyed.

In this first five days of fighting more than 15,000 small arms were seized or destroyed, as well as more than 10,000,000 rounds of ammunition; 700 machine guns; 38 artillery pieces; 44 tanks of various types; 49 trucks; 160 aircraft, of which 126 were captured at COMISO Airport, where 40 were still operational. 220,000 gallons of gasoline were seized in the Division sector.

This, of course, is only a partial list. Many dumps that were captured were used by our troops and are not included in the survey.

In the landing operation, approximately 1,500 Italians were captured, about 100 were killed and 300 wounded. Up to 2100 on July 15, a total of 5,085 prisoners had been processed through the Division's PW Enclosure.

The morale of the Italian Coastal Units was very poor, as has been stated; in fact, with few exceptions, none of the Italian soldiers seemed to have a stomach for fighting. Isolated units gave up easily without a struggle.

The Germans fought much better. Generally speaking, they were cautious, and had had little experience, but



seemed to have good leadership. They fought desperately to keep from being captured. They said that they had been told Americans castrate and kill all prisoners. Some prisoners of war even suggested that we drop leaflets over the German lines telling them about the humane treatment of prisoners. German enlisted personnel talked freely and surrendered easily when separated from their officers. They seemed to fight more from fear of punishment than from patriotic zeal. Perhaps the feelings of the average German soldier toward us can best be summed up by a letter found on the body of a dead German by a member of the 179th Infantry on 12 July:

"Dear Parents and Sisters:

You must excuse the scarcity of my letters, but it is impossible to write, and our mail service did not function of late since we have always been and still are on the run. Things are now that bad, that each squad, 12 men, is given two PKW, on which we keep moving, moving, moving in retreat formation. I believe that the Americans will take care that our next stop will be Canada. The American is a snappy, fighting-mad person and not at all the ridiculous little fellow our leaders tried to make us believe he is. I do sincerely believe and hope the war will be over soon.

Much love, Your Son and Brother,

Hansi."

The Sicilian people, on the whole, seemed genuinely glad to see the American troops. In some cases they furnished units with valuable information as to enemy strength and dispositions. Many complained that the enemy deprived and robbed them of their scant food supplies; this charge was undoubtedly true. The generosity of the American doughboy with tobacco, chewing gum, and items from his rations won the hearts of many. Sometimes the gratitude engendered was so lavish as to embarrass the long-limbed grinning doughboys from the American West—or from Brooklyn or New England.

Many Sicilians had members of their traditionally large families in America and were inordinately proud of this fact. Some protested that they spoke not only American, but also, Buffalo, Chicago, or New Jersey. One emotional and good-hearted Sicilian proudly brought forth his deportation papers to prove that he had once lived in the United States.

### CALTANISSETTA

With its first objective in SICILY secure, and with more transportation and supplies arriving from the beaches, the 45th Division prepared for its next mission. On the night

*Caltanissetta, Sicily, captured by soldiers of the 45 Div. is left behind by troops marching toward new objective.*





of 15 July the alert order was received: Move from the line along Highway 124, across the rear of the 1st American Division, and take up positions near PIETRA PERZIA. Prepare to attack CALTANISSETTA.

"July 16, 1943. Division began move to area east of RIESI. 157th RCT and 189th FA Bn. starting at 0600B. 179th and 180th CTs held present positions until uncovered by British passing across front from east to west.

45th Cav. Rcn. Tr. and 753rd Tk. Bn. followed 157th Inf. At 2130B verbal orders were issued to CO 157th Inf. to attack at 0400B 17 July. Seize high ground north of PIETRAPERZIA, supported by 158th and 189th FA Bns. and with Co. 2nd Cml. Bn.; one Plat 45th Cav. Rcn. Tr.; Co. A, 120th Engr. Bn. and Co. C, 753rd Tn. Bn. attached."

The entire Division made the move of fifty-eight miles in fifteen hours. Then began a new problem of supply. It became necessary to haul, with limited transportation, from Army Dumps located as far as 80 miles from the new sector. This meant a round trip of 160 miles to supply the units of the Division with ammunition and food.

Division Artillery lost its first officer when the lead gun

pulled off the road to take position and struck its right front wheel against a Teller-mine. The battery executive officer who was riding on the fender directing the operation was killed instantly. From this point onward, the troops would continue to encounter minefields all the way.

CALTANISSETTA, important railway center with a population of 60,000, had been a stronghold of Fascist operations in SICILY. It had been severely bombed prior to the attack. Most of the civilian population had fled, and even the simple peasants hid out in the hills with their few household possessions and their children.

This former hotbed of Fascist activity yielded 14 locomotives and more than 100 freight cars, fully loaded and intact, and quantities of materiel of war.

Only once did the Italians attempt a serious delaying action. At a point north of the town of SANTA CATHERINA they had organized a strong point to protect a vital road junction at the town of ALIMENA. In reducing this strong point the Division captured six 90-milimeter self-propelled roving guns intact, and other war-like booty. The 157th Infantry effectively directed fire of the 158th Field Artillery Battalion to neutralize the enemy batteries and pave the way for a direct assault.

On July 19, at sundown over the dusty hills and groves,

*Italian Fascist Youth Headquarters in ruins. "Casa G. I. L. Bruno Mussolini" Soldiers of the 45 Div. take possession of the key city.*







*Soldiers of the 45 Div. march through Caltanissetta.*

Lt. Hilston T. Killcollins of the 158th Field Artillery called for three volunteers for a mountainous observation trip. They were to go ten miles inside the enemy's territory.

The party, Lieutenant Killcollins, Cpl. Swinz E. Hayes, Pvt. Chester J. Goralski, and Pvt. Frank E. Crazio, set out on foot across the mountainous rocky terrain and captured six prisoners before they reached an observation point, 300 yards from an enemy observation post, at dawn. By relaying commands in low tones of voice in order not to be overheard by the enemy, they brought down fire upon his installations.

When discovered and fired upon with small arms, the party returned the fire, inflicting several casualties, and pushed on to another observation post. When driven from there by automatic fire and forced to seek out covered positions, they continued their observation of enemy operations and communications and kept in touch with their own command post until darkness fell. Then they calmly proceeded to return to their own lines.

Northward across the island, the terrain became more rugged and mountainous. The roads were winding, rocky, dangerous. Some were old Roman roads.

The enemy took full advantage of this fact by blowing bridges, creating dangerous passes, and otherwise obstructing both transportation and the supply system. The fine white powdery dust of the Sicilian roadways rose in choking clouds under the continued churning of convoy after convoy of heavy trucks.

On July 20 the 180th Infantry relieved the 157th Infantry spearheading the Division effort and made an attack upon the outskirts of VALLELUNGA, where the 2nd Bn. surprised the enemy and overcame him in a brief but violent firefight. Ten French Renault tanks were disabled and two captured, together with two 75 millimeter field pieces. Three German and 120 Italian prisoners were captured.

The following day, Capt. Ben Billips of the 120th Engineer Battalion, with a small party, reconnoitered Highway 121 as far northwest as BOLOGNETTA, and infantry patrols were dispatched toward PALERMO.

The 179th Infantry moved from CALTAVURURO toward COLLESANO, meeting once more with German troops. Enemy resistance here was firmly established and determined to hold. Demolitions, mines, and long range artillery





*Lt. Gen. Omar N. Bradley driving thru Caltanissetta. Soldiers of the 45th Division resting in background.*

were employed as the 179th was engaged and kept in contact by reconnaissance elements of the 15th Panzer Division.

A tightening of enemy resistance was noted all along the line. Italian prisoners indicated that the Italian 26th Division had retreated eastward through this area.

On the evening of the 21 July, the Division attack was deflected to the right, and the new objective became the TERMINI IMERESE-CEFALU road. This turned the troops away from the fairly good Highway 121, and it became necessary to once more seek out the steep and narrow mountain trails, over the ridge of peaks to reach the northern coast. Near MONTEMAGGIORE the Germans had blown every trail through the hills—except one. Company C, 120th Engineers, constructed a by-pass about a mile south of the town. This by-pass is of particular interest as advantage was taken of an old Roman road which had been used but little for generations. Had it not been for this ancient Via (it had been overlooked by the Germans) passage would have been extremely difficult.

North of CALTAVUTURO, the 157th Infantry, now near-

ing the northern coast of SICILY, relieved the 179th Infantry in line. The 179th then moved out rapidly across the countryside to descend upon the town of COLLESANO, securing it and taking a large number of prisoners.

The 157th Infantry, making a swift night combat march from its positions in line near CALTAVUTURO, took the Germans completely by surprise. The Regiment, with the 2nd Bn. leading, had actually begun to pass the German sentinels before the first alarm was given and the enemy opened fire.

Had this advance been made by daylight it would have proved a costly one: the enemy held a powerful defensive position there in the rocky coastal area, and it was well manned. As it was, casualties to the Division were light. The Regiment, with the aid of well-placed artillery support, drove back the enemy and occupied the important strategic point of CERDA on the north Sicilian coast.

Late in the afternoon of 22 July, reports were received that patrols of the 180th Infantry had reached the outskirts of PALERMO without opposition.



## THE BATTLE FOR 'BLOODY RIDGE'

The 157th Infantry Regiment, followed by the 180th, now turned eastward along the northern coast of SICILY from CERDA toward the old city of CEFALU, mopping up the Italian coastal units, who fought no better here than on the southern coast, in the course of their progress.

On the 24th and 25th of July, the 157th Infantry occupied CAMPOFELICE and continued the attack toward STAZIONE di CASTELBUONO on the coast. Contact was established with elements of the 15th German Panzer Grenadier Regiment of the 29th Motorized Division just east of CEFALU. Resistance stiffened at once and became increasingly heavy.

Meanwhile, the 179th Infantry encountered some of the most difficult terrain in an exhausting and time consuming march to CASTELBUONO, on to CASTEL di LUCIO, and to MISTRETTA. The dry rocky hills were so steep that in places trails ceased to exist. In one location near CASTEL di LUCIA, the inhabitants of the ancient town had constructed a stone stairway of over 1,200 steps from

the valley floor up to their village. The rigors of that march called for all the toughened fiber and hard determination that the men possessed.

Aid rendered by the 120th Engineer Battalion in covering the difficult and hazardous route of march was indispensable. It also afforded some striking examples of the unflagging diligence and superior technical ability of the Engineers. The work of the reconnaissance troop assisted in planning and executing an envelopment that resulted in the capture of about 500 prisoners.

Incidents of that march will make favorite anecdotes for men of the Division for all time to come. There was the time when Capt. Robert Hensley of the 179th Infantry, hastening with his men to a new phase of the fighting, was met by a dignified and voluble major in the Italian Army who wished to surrender himself and 350 troops to the Americans.

The captain said, "Okay," but the Italian officer would not hand himself over: he insisted upon a formal ceremony of surrender, in which he could with pomp and fitting dignity subject himself to the proper authorities. Alarmed by the

*The 45 Div. marching thru Caltanissetta.*





time he was losing and the exhausted condition of his men, Captain Hensley made a hasty counterproposal. If the major and his men would come the following morning at 0900 hours, he said, their surrender would be accepted in a style suitable to the solemnity of the occasion. At the appointed time next morning they arrived and the surrender was accepted.

The 179th Infantry occupied positions north, east and south of CASTELBUONO with little opposition. The Germans withdrew as the troops appeared over the hills after a bombardment by the 160th Field Artillery Battalion.

During the night of the 24th, the 180th Infantry passed through the 157th Infantry near STAZIONE di CASTELBUONO and continued east. The regimental objective was the hills east of POLLINA, and the town of TUSA.

The 157th Infantry was now in reserve, patrolling and mopping up the north beaches and maintaining troops in position to defend against possible enemy attempts at landing from the bottom of the Italian peninsula. An enemy air reconnaissance passed over at dusk, and from the accuracy of enemy mortar fire and light artillery in the

sector, it was believed that enemy forward observers were actually behind some of the Division's forward elements at times.

Heavy artillery and mortar fire rained down upon the 180th Infantry on July 27, but the Regiment pushed forward, on to the hills east of POLLINA, to capture the stark, stony heights of TUSA. Lieutenant Colonel Cochran describes graphically the action at TUSA:

"We moved forward, maintaining contact with the enemy's rear guard, and when we occupied his position, the enemy soon shelled us with long-range, self-propelled guns and tanks. But from our observation posts on the heights we brought down our own artillery fire to destroy two tanks and to force the enemy to withdraw again, this time to the rear of the CASTEL di TUSA. We destroyed a large amount of enemy equipment, including two trucks, six tanks of varying sizes, one battery of field artillery, and numerous miscellaneous weapons and their ammunition; a completely loaded military train of eight cars, including four 90 millimeter

*With the backbone of Sicily broken, the 45th Division marches toward the north coast.*







*Tired and dusty GIs of the 45th Div. can still smile as they march toward the north coast of the island.*

guns ready to be transported, and several carloads of high explosives and small arms ammunition. We also captured six troop and supply trucks and six full tractors.

"The known enemy dead were 50. About 20 Germans and a large number of Italians were also captured."

Over this steep and bald ground the 157th Infantry quietly passed through the ranks of the 180th Infantry on the night July 26-27 to take up new positions on the high ground west of the TUSA River. In this cross-country march over the gashed and gullied hills, transporting the supplies was a problem of major importance.

To help relieve the difficulties, mules were obtained and pressed into service to assist the Heavy Weapons Company in transporting their arms and ammunition over rocky mountain trails. This led to some unique situations and resulted in much sweating (and swearing) on the part of the hard-pressed GIs.

Often the mules could not keep pace and "fell out." At the end of one march, an exasperated platoon sergeant from H Company demanded to know how many mules had made the march.

"There are two four-legged mules left and 42 two-legged ones, Sergeant," came back the prompt reply from the darkness.

The battle for Bloody Ridge was the last grim, and most determined stand made by an enemy fighting a rear guard action. Germans and Italian troops had retreated from the bombing and shelling of their strongholds in the south and west. Here, on this mountain, they must hold. The ridge on which the enemy was firmly entrenched north of MOTTA was a high, bare shelf of rock on the west, with a steep climb to the crest. The enemy was well dug in on both sides of the slope.

As the 1st Bn. of the 157th Infantry moved up to the north part of the ridge, they were opposed by a battalion of the Germans, who had the advantage of the higher ground. Their well-prepared fortifications were placed on the rocky thistle-covered backbone of the ridge. In the first fighting, two enemy pillboxes were destroyed, but the battalion was forced to withdraw from the enemy counter-attack.

The 2nd Bn., by a cross-country march during which it came under heavy artillery fire and suffered some casual-



ties, moved in and took PETTINEO, threatening the German position from the south. Thus, all elements of the 157th Regiment were moved into position for the attack.

Additional artillery was moved up in general support. Plans for coordinated attack called for a 30-minute concentration of three battalions of artillery on the German positions. This was reduced to a fifteen-minute pounding directly on the enemy entrenchments by all four battalions of the Division Artillery.

The men waited while the terrific barrage was poured down upon both slopes of the hill, then pushed forward as the fire was lifted. After gaining the rocky shelf, our troops were met by machine-gun, machine pistol, hand grenades and rifle fire. The Germans had to be forced from the foxholes and overcome in close fighting, sometimes in hand-to-hand combat, on the slopes.

To give further support to the infantrymen, General Patton ordered a United States Navy Destroyer, at anchor off shore, to fire on areas reported to contain heavy concentrations of German troops and materiel. Coordination of targets and adjustment of fire was made by a Naval liaison officer and shore fire control party, working directly with the artillery observers.

There are confused accounts concerning the number of enemy dead left on Bloody Ridge. It is certain that the German losses were heavy. Our own Graves Registration Service buried thirty-eight. Civilians reported that every man who withdrew from the height was assisting a wounded man. Few prisoners were taken in this action, but one German officer claimed that the fierceness of the fire exceeded any that he had ever witnessed.

After the expertly coordinated attack, which proved fairly costly to the Division, artillery fire directed from the Regimental CP was brought to bear upon a line of enemy troops approaching from the east along the road from SAN STEFANO. The line was quickly scattered and dispersed. Other attempts of the enemy to bring up reinforcements were made, but were frustrated by Division Artillery before the situation became dangerous.

The road toward SAN STEFANO was no "pushover," the men discovered coming out of their worst battle on Sicilian soil. The 2nd Bn. of the 157th cut across the countryside under enemy artillery fire to enter and occupy the town, after the enemy had withdrawn during the preceding night beneath a screen of artillery and machine-gun fire.

The enemy had mined the roads and town; every bridge and by-pass, every road and approach had been embedded with deadly, vicious, cunningly treacherous mines.

The Division's progress was complicated by more than

the Germans' rear guard action. The death-dealing, hideous Teller-mines were encountered all the way. Vast quantities of anti-personnel mines were planted on adjacent beaches and in the fields. All routes that might have served as detours for the Division were planted with tons of explosives.

As one soldier described it, "You can't fire at a mine-field—Jerry ain't there. But it sure gets you fighting mad for the next time."

The 45th Division was relieved by the 3rd Division on the last day of July, after 22 days of hard and constant fighting. Then came a brief breathing spell for rest and rehabilitation, repair and cleaning of the guns and vehicles and equipment. The Division would reorganize and receive replacements of its weapons and materiel in an assembly area near the city of CEFALU.

### THIRD OF YANKEES WITH MODERATE WOUNDS CUSS TO GET BACK IN FIGHT

By ERNIE PYLE

SOMEWHERE IN SICILY, August, 1942.—It was flabbergasting to lie among a tentfull of wounded soldiers recently and hear them cuss and beg to be sent right back into the fight.

Of course not all of them do. It depends on the severity of their wounds, and on their individual personalities, just as it would in peace time. But I will say that at least a third of the moderately wounded men ask if they can't be returned to duty immediately.

When I took sick I was with the 45th Division, made up largely of men from Oklahoma and West Texas. You don't realize how different certain parts of our country are from others until you see their men set off in a frame, as it were, in some strange faraway place like this.

The men of Oklahoma are drawling and soft-spoken. They are not smart-alecks. Something of the purity of the soil seems to be in them. Even their cussing is simpler and more profound than the torrential obscenities of eastern city men. An Oklahoman of the plains is straight and direct. He is slow to criticize and hard to anger, but once he is convinced of the wrong of something, brother, watch out.

These wounded men of Oklahoma have got madder about the war than anybody I have seen on this side of the ocean. They weren't so mad before they got into action, but now to them the Germans across the hill are all so-and-so's.

And these quiet men of the 45th, the newest division over here, have already fought so well they have drawn the high praise of the commanding general of the corps of which the division is a part.



arms, acres of ammunition and materiel were seized. The number of small arms and ammunition captured was so great that no accurate computation is available. Reports at the end of the campaign listed 167 pieces of artillery and anti-aircraft guns, 67 tanks, more than 200 trucks, and 162 airplanes of which some 40 were still operational.

Even with the enemy attempting to burn and destroy his installations, more than a half-million gallons of gasoline and allied products were captured, 433 new tires, gas and water tanks of a quarter million gallon capacity, 400 extra motors for planes, many locomotives and much rolling stock, and several hundred tons of quartermaster, engineering, and medical supplies.

The Division's losses in materiel and equipment were considered moderate in view of the amphibious landing and the difficult terrain over which long, strenuous, and exhausting marches were made.

In the 22 days combat in SICILY, the 45th Division counted the following losses: 15 officers and 260 enlisted men killed in action; 31 officers and 542 enlisted men wounded in action; 2 officers and 139 enlisted men missing in action.

The medical men, armed only with drugs and healing

medicines, accompanied the men who fought. Countless lives were saved by administration of First Aid under fire. Taking a typical case, S/Sgt. Bill Fillman, attached to the 180th Infantry, remained with a group of men wounded in the BISCARI area, attended to their needs, hid them from German patrols, and finally brought them all in safely, to rejoin their battalion. Corporal Caplan, attached to the 157th Infantry, remained alone to attend a group of severely wounded men in a minefield near SAN STEFANO. His efficient work and courage was credited with saving several lives.

Capt. Peter Graffagnino later administered First Aid to this group and directed their evacuation before the mines were removed. Many medical aid men were called upon to brave the treacherous minefields, as well as to give assistance under fire.

In the fighting south of CALTAGIRONE on July 14, Sgt. Samuel P. Jenkins, Pfc. Ralph B. Brown and Pfc. Harvey H. Durr, attached to the 179th Infantry, performed an act of daring and gallantry under heavy enemy fire. Several men were wounded and the companies to which they were attached pinned down by fire.

The men were not only too seriously wounded to crawl

*Maj. Gen. Troy H. Middleton, Commanding General of the 45 Div., Lt. Gen. Omar Bradley and Lt. Gen. George Patton in olive grove near the front in Sicily.*





out of danger, but were openly exposed to fire. With no regard for their personal safety, the three medical men left their comparatively protected positions, crawled forward at the height of the enemy attack, and treated the wounds of the men. Then they succeeded in evacuating some of the wounded under fire.

The Cavalry Reconnaissance Troops under the command of Capt. Delton Flanders labored tirelessly in feeling out the enemy's dispositions. Theirs was the task of making advance reconnaissance of the roads over which the Division must advance, and much of the rapidity with which that advance was accomplished was due to their expert work.

Naturally, they encountered some bizarre adventures. Lt. William Nolan and twelve men set out on the morning of July 13 on a mission to the town of SECILI to contact Canadian troops who were presumed to be holding that town. Capturing four Italian soldiers about seven kilometers northwest of the town, they discovered by questioning them closely that there were two companies of enemy infantry and some 24 machine guns on two hills just one kilometer ahead.

Lieutenant Nolan decided to use persuasion first. He sent a message to the Italians to come out at once and surrender. The Italians promptly sent back one of their lieutenants who could speak some English. Lieutenant Nolan described what happened then as follows:

**"I told him we had many divisions of soldiers and artillery all around the area. I told him the artillery was getting ready to fire on the two hills unless the commanding officer of the Italian force surrendered himself and all his force."**

Although the Canadians were not in SECILI, and the nearest 45th Division troops were miles away somewhere west of RAGUSA, Lieutenant Nolan carried out his bluff. Taking two of his own men, the Italian interpreter, and the captain, he advanced into the town with great assurance. There he told the same story to the Italian Colonel in charge of the defenses in the entire district. The colonel raved a bit, and pounded his desk emphatically, but Lieutenant Nolan remained outwardly unmoved, even indifferent. In the end, the colonel gave up and surrendered all his command, numbering several hundred men. Ten American paratroopers were released from the city jail where they had been imprisoned, to help take over the town. They were left in charge of the Italian prisoners while Lieutenant Nolan's party made contact with the Canadians northwest of MODICA and informed them it was no longer necessary to shell the town—it had been captured.

Ammunition and kitchen truck drivers had ample oppor-

tunity to prove themselves under fire and past minefields. "Driving a truck through hell would be nothing to these boys," as one man remarked. In the battle for BISCARI, to take one case, the 2nd Bn. of the 180th Division was running low on ammunition. Sgt. Joe Smith and an unnamed private took their trucks and trailers through a hail of fire which riddled the vehicles, but got there with the new supplies. They continued to bring up ammunition until the operation was completed.

Special Services contributed to the well-being and morale of the 45th in SICILY in innumerable ways. Just three days after the Invasion began, "The 45th Division News" was published with material scraped together from local sources. Catering to the doughboy's insatiable appetite for news, the News was the first United States Army newspaper published in the European Invasion.

The work of engineer and signal corps was eulogized by all from high command points down to the individual gunner and truck driver, as they worked over fields and rock-bound hills, through littered streets and buildings that were little but pulverized masonry after the Germans had pulled out.

The work of the 120th Engineer Battalion under the command of Col. Louis G. Franze was notable. As General Patton put it, "The engineers performed prodigies in the construction and maintenance of impossible roads over impassable country." They paved the way for that phenomenal infantry advance by performing miracles of reconstruction on demolished roads and bridges and clearing miles of fiendish minefields. Their doggedness and sheer backbreaking work enabled artillery units to keep up with infantry units within supporting distance of the lead attacking elements. Often they had to put aside their tools and take up weapons to fight their way out of a "tight spot" or ambush.

On D-Day near SCOGLITTI, while the Invasion landings were taking place, infantry troops were fired on from a strongly fortified machine-gun position. Lt. Julian A. Yocum and Pfc. Lytton J. Ollie of the 120th Engineer Battalion crept to within 35 feet of the emplacement. With rifle fire and hand grenades, they killed two of the enemy manning the position, wounded five, and took nine prisoners, thereby wiping out the position and enabling the company to carry on the attack and reach their objective.

After the combat in SICILY had ceased, the work of the engineers continued. They removed thousands upon thousands of mines which the Germans had sewn throughout the 45th Division sector. Bridges had to be built across the dry Sicilian stream beds before the rainy season set in, as the Germans had demolished every bridge and pass.





*General Patton addresses officers and NCO's of 45th Division.*

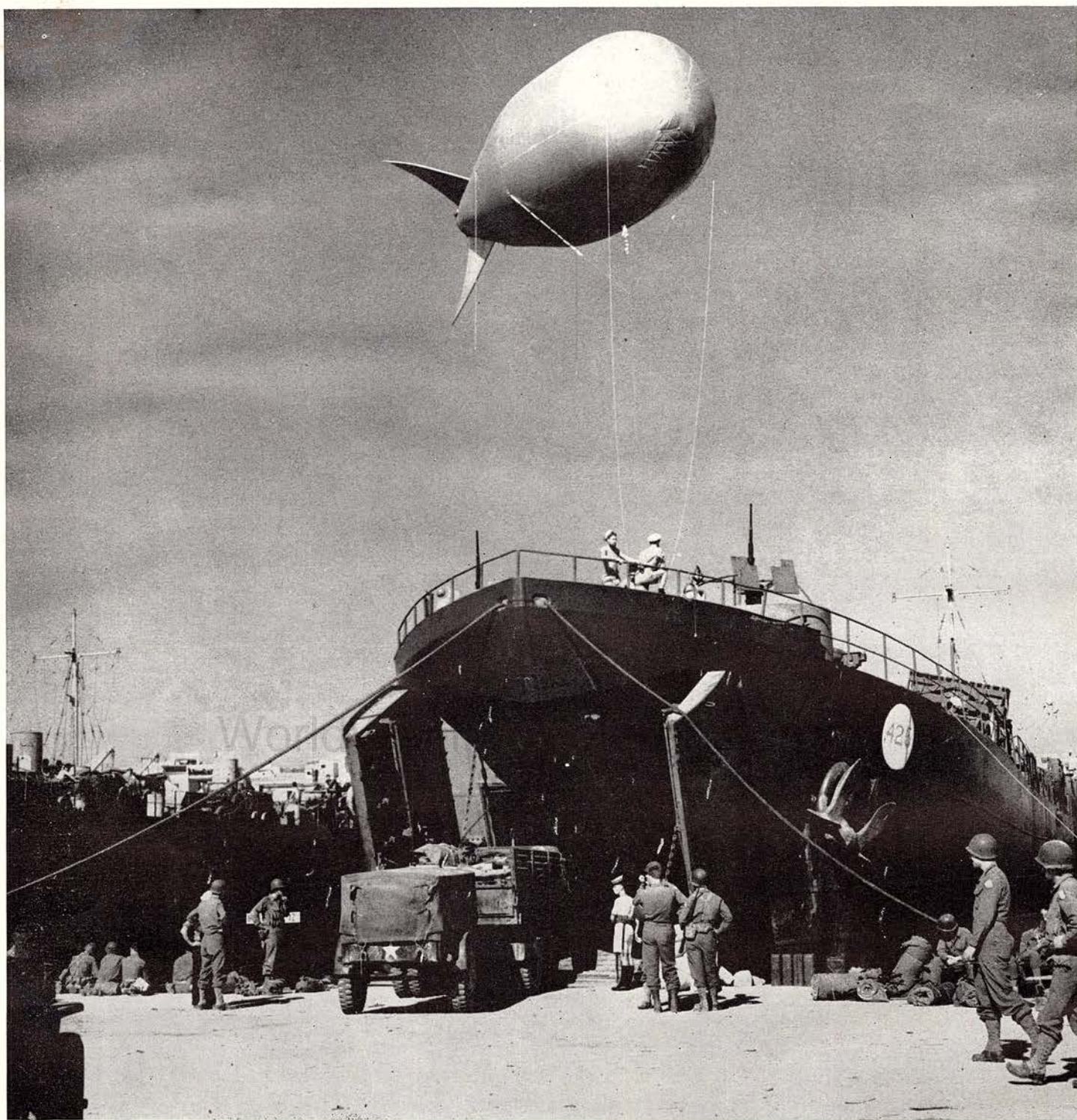
## **CLOSE OF GENERAL PATTON'S SPEECH TO 45TH OFFICERS AND MEN NEAR BAGHERIA, SICILY, AUGUST, 1943.**



*"You are still up against a resourceful enemy, but you, as Americans, are his superior. When you meet him, as you will someday, on the plains of Europe, you may expect him to throw large masses of armor at you. He will seek to drive through your center with a point of armor and once through will attempt to fan this point out, exploit it and strike at your flanks and rear installations. But, by god, this point will not get through you! When it strikes at you, you must be ready and strike it first—blunt it—hit it from*

*both sides—knock the hell out of it—take the initiative—hit and hit again until there is no point and nothing behind the point to oppose you. Your Division is one of the best if not the best division in the history of American arms. I love every bone in your heads—, but, be ever alert. Do not go to sleep at the switch—or, someone's liable to slip up behind you and hit you over the head with a sock-of—*  
*(left blank for the reflections of those who heard the speech)*  
*and that's a hell of an embarrassing way in which to die"*





*Doors of an LST being opened for the loading of vehicles prior to another amphibious operation. These troops are of the 45th Div. Docks at Palermo, Sicily.*

General Eisenhower, speaking of the work done by the Engineers in SICILY, summed it up briefly when he said: "Only through the Engineers has the end of the campaign come so quickly."

The world's attention was focused on the 45th Division from its first day of battle.

As early as July 14, the Associated Press was writing: "America's most thoroughly trained army division is now

in action against the Axis in SICILY. . . . This hard-hitting unit has gone into battle without any 'withdrawal plan' in case of reverses. One of its crack officers explained the meaning of this in these words: 'There can be no question of pulling out, no matter what kind of resistance we encounter. We are going to hit, hold, and advance. We have not even learned how to retreat or withdraw. The only way we know is forward, no matter



what we are up against. . . .’ Its commander, Maj. Gen. Troy H. Middleton, was one of the youngest colonels in World War I. He saw action during the major engagements in FRANCE. The Division’s Artillery commander, Brig. Gen. Raymond S. McLain, is another hard-bitten veteran.”

Cullen Johnson, one of the syndicate writers who covered the early days of the new American Seventh Army, declared to his readers: “The battleflags of the 45th were spearheading the drive to knock ITALY out of the war and open a path to BERLIN. . . . Chief of Staff is John H. Church, who was twice wounded in the First World War, and who wears the Distinguished Service Cross for action in FRANCE.”

Nowhere was the progress of the 45th Division watched with more heartfelt interest than in the American West, from which many of the Division had come and where they had long trained. Typical was a cablegram received from the mayor of the town of Abilene in West Texas and the president of the Chamber of Commerce: “The citizens of Abilene and West Texas extend congratulations for the magnificent work done in the Sicilian Campaign. . . . The

Division has written a great chapter in American history. May God be with you in your fight for Freedom.”

The long and singularly complete training which the 45th Division had undergone bore fruit from the first test in combat. The qualities displayed from the very first day of combat were those which distinguished the experienced fighting man. They showed from the first the characteristics of coolness under fire, of admirable sang-froid, of being easy-going yet quick-thinking, and ruthless once their ire against the enemy was aroused.

The 45th Division had a personality of its own. The Westerners in its ranks had given it a certain color which came to be recognized. The Italians, not without reason, accused them of violating all the orthodox rules of warfare by not stopping to sleep or eat.

The Silicians, on the whole, seemed glad to welcome the Americans, even if some of their towns and cities did have to be blasted to drive the Germans out. They did not cheer their liberators much: the great majority were apathetic. There were not many ardent Fascists.

*Members of the 45 Div. march thru the streets of Messina, Sicily Aug. 17, 1943.*





## SICILIAN END-RUN

On the morning of August 15, 1943, Combat Team 157, the 157th Infantry Regiment and 158th Field Artillery Battalion plus their attached units, loaded on LCIs and LSTs at TERMINI IMERESE to make a dash around the enemy positions by sea and in an amphibious operation make a landing behind the enemy's lines at the Sicilian city of MESSINA.

The loading was accomplished without undue incident, and the voyage was largely uneventful until an enemy reconnaissance plane spotted the convoy and dropped bombs, one of which barely missed an LST.

During the unloading operation, one LCV being "rail loaded" on a British LST, snapped its cables and broke from its moorings, dropping back into the sea. Twenty-one men were listed missing in this disaster.

When the combat team closed into its assembly areas, it became apparent that the enemy, wary of the end-run around their coastal positions, had pulled back inland under the threat from the sea plus pressure from the advancing Third Division in that sector. The landing actually had been made behind the lines of the Third Division. The combat team assembled near the coast and awaited further orders.

On August 16 at 1400, the Third Division received this message sent from Seventh Army Headquarters:

**"Utilize elements of the 45th Division in the capture of MESSINA. Signed, Patton."**

The Third Division asked the 157th Infantry to place one battalion at its disposal and dispatched a fleet of trucks to transport it. The 1st Bn. under the command of Lt. Col. Preston J. C. Murphy was selected to accompany the Third Division in its capture of the important Sicilian seaport, one of the largest cities on the Island, believed then to be strongly defended, lying beneath a mountainous region on the shallow coastal plain.

By a march which occupied the most of the night, with most of the men on foot, the Battalion reached the rocky crest of high hills which overlooked MESSINA, walling it on three sides. There commanding officers of the Third Division met Lieutenant Colonel Murphy and explained that, "since the troops of the 45th Division had walked most of the night and were probably tired," it would not be necessary for them to take part in the final attack upon MESSINA.

Lieutenant Colonel Murphy explained that his men wanted to take part in this final battle of the Sicilian campaign. He was informed that the plan was for each battalion in the Third Division and the 1st Bn. of the 157th to each send a patrol consisting of a reinforced platoon into the

city to determine the extent of the opposition which would be offered.

At 0430 on August 17 a platoon from B Company, commanded by Capt. Frank Glasgow, began the sharp descent into the city. The platoon was reinforced by a squad of 60 millimeter mortars from the weapons platoon.

Making their way down the steep and somewhat perilous mountainside, the patrol found themselves suddenly in the outskirts of what appeared to be a town of considerable size. The inhabitants, upon being questioned, insisted that the town was MESSINA. Astonished and somewhat disbelieving, for they had met no resistance in any form, the patrol went on into the city to discover that the enemy had departed just four hours prior to their arrival, by way of the STRAITS OF MESSINA into ITALY. When the men reached the center of the town they discovered, also much to their surprise, that they were the first Allied troops to enter that city.

There it was joined by the Third Division Reconnaissance Troop and British infantry and tanks moving up from the south. The Sicilian Campaign was ended.

## FROM THE WATERTOWN TIMES. WATERTOWN, NEW YORK

NEWS FROM OLD FRIENDS: So the 45th is in SICILY. That is the information which comes to us by way of Hanson W. Baldwin's column in the New York Times. Mr. Baldwin, being most cautious in his writing, is probably correct. He quotes a German broadcast and Berlin would have no reason for reporting this division in action if it was not so.

The 45th Division, as all will recall, was at Pine Camp for about two months. They came just as the leaves were departing from the trees in early November last fall and remained until the middle of January. They were a rugged, rollicking group. They made the 4th Armored which had preceded them, appear as docile as Dagwood Bumstead. It took us a few weeks to get used to them and frankly speaking, the town was considerably quieter after they were shifted elsewhere.

Raw November and December weather never cooled off their spirits. They cut high, wide and handsome capers on our streets. They broke up a tavern or two. They gave local police and MPs a real workout.

Yet we look back with affection upon the 45th. They were fighting men. Woe to anyone who fell in their path. Now, if it is true they are in Sicily, they will find conditions exactly to their liking. If General Eisenhower wants Catania taken, let him shove the 45th into battle. They will deliver any town, mugged up perhaps, but thoroughly conquered.







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## NAPLES-FOGGIA

### SALERNO

While the campaign of SICILY was being brought to an end, Italy was being eased out of the war. American and Italian agents had conferred in ROME and in PALERMO, arranging the surrender of all Italian land, sea, and air forces. On September 1, the British Eighth Army crossed the Straits of MESSINA and landed at the toe of the boot-shaped mainland. Two days later, American convoys sailed from NORTH AFRICA to begin the real battle for ITALY.

Plans for the part of the 45th Infantry Division in the Invasion of SICILY began on August 21, 1943, when Maj. Gen. Troy H. Middleton, commanding general, and members of his staff departed by plane for ALGIERS. They reported first to Allied Force Headquarters, then to the headquarters of the American Fifth Army, where General Clark and General Middleton discussed plans concerning the coming operation.

The 45th Division was then assigned to the Fifth Army, under VI Corps, and a new planning phase was begun. Engineers in SICILY rebuilt damaged airports for bases for fighter planes and bombers to support the new attack. The ports of PALERMO and TERMINI IMERESE were cleared and made ready to embark the troops of the Division on 7 September.

The 45th Division was told to be prepared to mount a combat team for the initial lift, then to mount the remainder of the Division for a combat landing as quickly as a lift became possible. The 45th would serve as the "floating reserve" of the Fifth Army in the operation on the beaches. The exact time and place of its initial employment would remain "purposely indefinite."

It would be another vast-scale amphibious operation like the landing in SICILY. Once more army and naval units would collaborate to pour an avalanche of men and supplies

across the sand to establish a beachhead, then fight their way inland.

Convoys of the Fifth Army would land far up behind the battle lines where the British were already meeting stiff resistance and pushing the enemy slowly upward. The actual landing would be made on the beaches at SALERNO, on a gulf some 40 miles below the great Italian seaport city of NAPLES. The troops would land at SALERNO rather than in the heavily fortified harbor of NAPLES, would establish a beachhead and fight their way up to quickly seize the BAY OF NAPLES, much needed as an Allied lifeline of supplies for the Campaign of ITALY.

Once more the transports would line up offshore in preparation for the surprise attack, and the small assault boats would churn their way inland to unload thousands upon thousands of men upon the beaches at one time, and thousands of tons of supplies, which would enable them to seize and secure a beachhead. This time, because the enemy would be alert, there would not be a pre-invasion barrage from the destroyers to give away the location of the landing, but naval gunfire would support the troops and aim at enemy installations and activities after the assault elements were ashore.

For reasons of secrecy and security, the 45th Division set up its headquarters in a vacant school building in the town of TERMINI-IMERESE, SICILY. The simultaneous loading of the LSTs for the voyage to SALERNO, which had been carefully timed and planned, was hampered by a severe Mediterranean storm which blew up on D-Day minus five and continued in a gale until the day before the invasion movement was to start. The shifting of sandbars reduced by half the number of LSTs that could be loaded at one time.

Due to lack of transportation and the necessity for close staff control of later movements, General Middleton was able to take only a small staff with him aboard LST 404





*Approaching the town of Eboli, Italy. The destruction of the town was such that the buildings were left as mere shells of walls.*

for the early and most critical days of the Campaign of ITALY. His staff included Lieutenant Colonel Reichmann, Division G-2, but now Acting Chief of Staff; Major Snyder, Acting G-1; Captain Bishop, Acting G-2; Major Reynolds, Acting G-3; and Captain Erwin, Acting G-4. The whole of the Division Artillery Staff—including Brig. Gen. Raymond S. McLain, Commanding General of the Division Artillery; Colonel Styron; Lieutenant Colonel Arnote; Major Gardner; and Captain Large—made the voyage on the first lift. Lieutenant Colonel King, Division Chaplain; Lieutenant Colonel Miller, Division Surgeon; Lieutenant Colonel Hort, Division Signal Officer; and Col. Joseph R. Russ, Army Observer, were also on the first lift. Colonel Paschal, Assistant Division Commander, went on the second lift with the 180th Infantry Regiment, as did Colonel Church, Division Chief of Staff. Lieutenant Colonel Martin, G-3; Lieutenant Colonel Cornish, G-4; Lieutenant Colonel Dobbyn, G-1; Lieutenant Colonel Roach, Adjutant General; and Lieutenant Colonel Hammond, Chemical Officer, also landed with the second lift September 14. Lieutenant Colonel Perry, Inspector General; Lieutenant Colonel Cook, Judge Advocate; and Lieutenant Colonel Routh, Finance Officer, waited for the third lift which landed September 15.

On D-Day, September 9, 1943, while the Division, loaded on LSTs, was in the transport area in the GULF OF SALERNO, it was necessary for General Middleton, Lieutenant Colonel Reichmann, and Major Reynolds to make

several trips to the ANCON because of the uncertainty of orders to land. Lieutenant Colonel Reichmann and Captain Erwin went ashore on D-Day to examine the beaches and to secure the latest information from the 36th Infantry Division, which had already landed. Colonel Styron, Division Artillery Executive, contacted on D-Day the Force Naval Gun Fire Officer aboard the ANCON to arrange for communication and naval gun fire support. He also contacted the Sub-Force Naval Gun Officer aboard the CHASE, at which time detailed plans were made for supporting naval gun fire.

### AMPHIBIOUS PHASE

Throughout the day and evening of September 7, lead elements of the 45th Division were loaded at TERMINIMERESE on 16 LSTs and 23 LCIs for the voyage upward to the GULF OF SALERNO, through which they would strike ashore at the shin of the Italian boot. These elements included the 179th Infantry Regiment (reinforced), the 157th Infantry Regiment (less the 2nd Bn.), Division Artillery Headquarters, and Headquarters Battery with the 158th, 160th, and 189th Field Artillery Battalions (less one battery) plus a battalion of the 540th Engineer (Shore) Regiment and a part of the 242nd Quartermaster (Service) Battalion. The Division Commander and his staff were aboard LST 404.

The convoy sailed at 0200 on September 8 and arrived



in the eastern portion of the GULF OF SALERNO early on September 9. During the voyage the convoy was attacked by enemy aircraft, but suffered no losses from the circling dive bombers, although, as one battery sergeant pointed out, "you can't dig foxholes on a boat." One huge bomb trailing clouds of smoke dropped in the convoy area.

Timed to have the greatest morale effect in conjunction with the attack came the announcement, at 1900, from Allied Force Headquarters, of the unconditional surrender of all the Italian Armed Forces. We had put ITALY, once and for all, out of the war.

The hope of those who planned Operation Avalanche had been that they would take the Germans by surprise by landing at SALERNO, then push on rapidly across the peninsula to seal off the German troops which the British were compressing from the south, then hold them in a vice. At the same time the Fifth Army would strike north 40 miles to NAPLES.

Despite the supposed secrecy of the operation, the Germans had discovered, in part, at least, the landing area. They moved Panzer units from the vicinity to ROME, south into the hills above SALERNO, and hid their tanks, with guns trained down upon that slender strip of beach. When the 36th Division moved ashore as the assaulting troops, the Germans waited. After the second wave of boats had hit the sand, the Nazi assault began.

The 45th Division, waiting in the transport area offshore, was bombed and strafed by enemy aircraft on September 9. Again, no damage was sustained. The 36th Division, which moved ashore first, had already met determined opposition as artillery of all sizes raked the tiny beachhead,

and the handful of troops tried frantically to dig in behind the shallow hummocks of the sand. It was later discovered that the Fifth Army's Yellow, Red, and Green beaches were clearly marked on captured German maps. Fire from the well-concealed emplacements for artillery, machine gun, and mortar positions took its toll. German propaganda leaflets described SALERNO as a "death trap." Artillery opened up on the assault barges while machine gun fire was trained upon debarking troops. More than 500 casualties were suffered by the 36th Infantry Division on the first day of invasion.

During the 0630 landing attempt, an LCT carrying part of the 191st Tank Battalion was hit three times; the first shell disabled the ramp mechanism. At 0642, another projectile, grazing off one of the tank turrets, hit the pilot house and killed two naval officers and one of the gun crews. At about 0645 the ship turned about, and while it was in a position parallel to the shore, another shell of heavy caliber went through the ship on the starboard side and penetrated the hull of Captain Peterson's tank. The driver and assistant driver were killed instantly, and the tank was set afire. Despite the efforts of Sergeant Guirano and his men, who in an attempt to extinguish the flames actually got inside the burning tank, the blaze proved to be out of control. It was decided to push the tank overboard. The ramp was lowered with some difficulty, and the burning vehicle was pushed by the tank behind it, over the ramp into the water. The damaged ramp could not be raised and the lower deck became flooded with two feet of water.

LSTs 379 and 389 were badly damaged by enemy shell fire

*Troops Arrive on Italian Beach.*







*45 Division "Doughnut Dollies;" left to right: Sarah (Sally) Stoffer, Elizabeth (Mimi) Peters, Elizabeth (Betty) Jones, Monica Woods. These girls joined the division in October, 1943, and all except Jones served with the Division until its return to the United States. Jones married in March, 1945, and returned to United States shortly after.*

when they approached the beach. Many others, as well as innumerable landing craft, were damaged—some sunk—as they drove toward the shore.

On the day of the landing, a force of approximately 50 men from the 3rd Bn. of the 157th Infantry Regiment was dispatched aboard the destroyer USS KNIGHT to capture a German force which had barricaded itself on the island of VONTOTENE in the GULF OF NAPLES. A Ranger force of 75 men had landed before daybreak and seized the Italian garrison. The Germans, however, blew up their installations and dug in. The Rangers, who had no heavy weapons, could not dislodge them.

The expedition was successful and the mission soon accomplished. The force returned with some 75 prisoners.

During the few hours previous to the 45th Division's landing, Headquarters Fifth Army had not yet definitely decided whether the troops were to execute the plan to land at TORRE di ANNUNZIATA, or the plan for landing at CASTELMARRE di STABIA—or still the third plan, which would place the Division on questionable and very dangerous beaches around the GULFO di NAPOLI itself. The fourth plan, which fortunately was only vague in the minds of the army staff, was to land the Division from LSTs at the mouth of the VOLTURNO River, far to the north.

Having proved themselves in the operation of SICILY, the men went ashore at SALERNO with greater confidence in themselves, their leaders, and their equipment. In many ways the two landings were similar: The noise and confusion; the wrecked boats; the enemy dive-bombers; the

explosions of artillery and tank fire; the sight of casualties—both vehicles and men—along the beach. The enemy's advantage of better observation and fields of fire for weapons was the same, too, but here the Germans were alert and ready. Their fire was more intense, their troops better placed to break the narrow and precarious foothold of the Allied troops upon the sand.

The name SALERNO has become synonymous with valiant fighting by men who narrowly escaped death—or died—in incredible feats of daring, with fighting spirit which equals that of great American battles of any war.

To safeguard the element of surprise as far as possible, no preparatory naval bombardment was used to destroy harassing installations and enemy strong points as in SICILY. Consequently, such installations and strong points had to be reduced by the troops as they advanced.

When the enemy's beach defenses were breached, he moved back to prepared defenses in the hilly ground which encircled and overlooked the area bordering on the GULF OF SALERNO. The Germans waited patiently behind the hills, then counterattacked in force again and again, meanwhile bringing up new battalions, new artillery, new tanks.

Boats of the 179th Infantry, first of the Division to land, grated on the beach in the early morning hours of 10 September. The enemy air attacks were largely concentrated on the small, uncertain strip of beach toward which the boats were moving, where, since the preceding day, men of the 36th Division had gallantly withstood the most intense bombing and strafing. Some bombs struck the water not far from the ships, and each time a plane came within range, the naval ack-ack guns sent a shower of shells skyward. Many planes were brought down in flames, or damaged so that they crashed at sea.

General Middleton also landed on the morning of the tenth and proceeded to VI Corps Headquarters, where he was informed that the 179th Infantry was directly under Corps control and would attack northeast along the SELE River, secure PONTE SELE on Highway 19 and the high ground to the northeast.

General Dawley himself had issued verbal orders to Colonel Hutchins, Commander of the Regiment, directing him to march his combat team without delay by two columns and to seize and hold the hills in the vicinity of SERRE, approximately 10,000 meters east of the town of EBOLI.

Colonel Hutchins formulated his plan at once. The 2nd Bn., with B Battery of 160th Field Artillery, would move on the route east from Highway 18, south of the crossing of the SELE River; northeast along the CALORE River from where it joined with the SELE, cutting sharply north to the objective. The second column, composed of the remainder of the combat team, would cross the CALORE River near where it joined the SELE, move north through PERSANO, northeast to Highway 19 and to the objective. The orders to Colonel Hutchins, from General Dawley, said that the British 10th Army would be on his left flank and he was to join with and relieve the British troops where the Highway 19 crossed the SELE.



This march toward SERRE was to start at 1800.

About the time these orders were being issued to the 179th Infantry, the 157th Infantry began to unload, through an error (which later proved fortunate) of the commander of the ships upon which it was carried.

The first 45th Division CP on Italian soil opened at 1500B September 10, east of Highway 18, and north of the ancient Roman town of PAESTUM. Division Artillery CP set up about eight miles north of AGLIASTO.

Every stage of the landing and unloading could be watched closely by the Germans stationed on the high hills completely surrounding the plains of PAESTUM. The enemy possessed every advantage of observation, including numerous agents in and near the Division's lines, whereas the landing troops were forced to rely almost altogether on aerial observation from cub planes.

While the remainder of the Division was landing and assembling, the 179th Infantry moved out for its attack. The march was continued throughout the night. The east column encountered several small detachments of the enemy; the west column found the bridge across the SELE River destroyed and burning. Early morning of 11 September, both columns encountered strong enemy groups of tanks and infantry, and the fight began for the securing of the river crossing. Throughout the day intense artillery fire from the high ground northeast made the positions almost unattainable. During the morning, a heavy attack was launched by the enemy from the vicinity north of PERSANO; the Germans succeeded in crossing the river and securing the town. Thus all of the tanks and tank destroyers, one section of Battery A, 160th Field Artillery, and all of the trains of the column were cut off by the enemy forces.

"I left the battery position," wrote Cpl. Charles F. Reynolds, "about midnight of September 10, with Lieutenant Fourte, to go on reconnaissance. Pvt. Ralf Stemm was the jeep driver, and T/5 Gilbert Wailes was radio operator. We accompanied the Battalion Commander and the rest of the reconnaissance parties to the new position areas, passing several infantry companies on the way which were moving up during the night. My party returned to the battery position after daylight.

"The Battery, which was all ready to move, pulled out a few minutes later with my party at the head of the column to guide them to the new position. We went up the same route we had used the night before. The bridge across the SELE was still burning, but the Engineers had built a crossing. The trucks moved up to a large Italian house beside the road some distance from the river, and halted.

"An Italian civilian from the house came down to the jeep and told me in French that there were still some Germans in the woods to our left. I told Lieutenant Fourte what the Italian said, then we led the column on up the road. A minute or two



*Before combat boots were issued to all the doughboys of the Division they began having them made—a pair of ordinary GI shoes, plus a piece of leather, and the local shoemaker. By signs and a curious mixture of languages they were made to understand what was wanted.*

later we heard machine-gun fire coming from near the river and received a radio report that the rear elements of our column were being fired upon by enemy machine-guns. We continued up the road until we were ordered into position.

"Only three of our guns had arrived, so the Battery Commander sent my party back to find out what was going on and what had happened to the fourth gun section and the remainder of the Battery.

"We went back to the Italian building and stopped in front of it. We were joined there by Major Jones, Battalion S-3. From there the machine-gun fire sounded very near. Major Jones, Lieutenant Fourte and I went inside the building and looked out through a rear window, but could see nothing. The three of us then went on foot down across the road and into the woods. We saw several Germans. We watched them for awhile. Lieutenant Fourte went back and got an .03 rifle. We lost sight of the Germans when they moved back into the trees.

"I was a few yards in front of Lieutenant Fourte, behind a large steel water tank of some kind. The Germans spotted me and opened fire with rifles. The first shots missed me, but then a bullet went through the third finger of my left hand.

"I returned the fire with my carbine, and probably hit one German who was about 75 yards away. Another shot got me in the upper left arm, although I was lying down. I figured that they could keep on hitting me as long as I stayed in that



position, so I ran back to where the Lieutenant was. A bullet tore a chunk out of my right side before I hit the ground and got under cover.

"The Germans opened up on us with a machine-pistol, besides rifles. We crawled 75 or 100 yards through the bushes and trees and reached the road, which was out in the open. Lieutenant Fourte ran across it first and was barely missed by rifle and machine-gun fire. An enemy machine-gun was firing straight up the road. I waited a few minutes and then ran across myself, but I was not fired at.

"Lieutenant Fourte had already gone back around to the jeep, thinking I was following close behind him. I went in the back door of the house, intending to go out the front way. Some Italian soldiers quartered there, seeing that I was wounded, insisted that I let their doctor dress my wounds. He was attempting to do so, although he had nothing but my first-aid kit, when the Lieutenant and the Major came in. They had come to look for me, thinking I had passed out.

"There were about 30 casualties at the aid station when I arrived. The men were talking about the enemy tanks that had broken through—saying that we were entirely surrounded by the enemy. The medics scattered some of the wounded along a dry creek bed for better protection, but the enemy tanks did not get that far. . . ."

In the meantime, the Germans' attack from the vicinity of SERRE, had advanced beyond the 2nd Bn., south of the CALORE River, and was engaging part of the 36th Division at ALTAVILLA. The west column of the 179th Infantry was completely surrounded by enemy forces in a pocket between the two rivers. All day long the 11 September, through that night, and on the next day, German patrols and combat units were pushed in against the Regi-

ment, by then organized into an all-around defense. So the positions held. The ammunition supply was rapidly depleted until firing had to be curtailed. Wounded men could not be evacuated, although the medics of the 120th Medical Battalion tried many times to reach them from south of the river. As each hour passed, the situation of the surrounded troops became more serious.

As soon as the remainder of the 157th Infantry was landed on 11 September, they started an attack along Highway 18, west of the 179th Infantry. They made contact with the enemy about four kilometers north of the SELE River. The 1st Bn. advanced northeast and met heavy machine gun and mortar fire from the vicinity of the road junction about a mile west of PERSANO. A series of strong-points, apparently the German outpost-line, lay across the front of the Regimental attack. Enemy tanks were supporting these strong-points, and were engaged by the anti-tank guns of the Regiment and by the 645th Tank Destroyer Battalion.

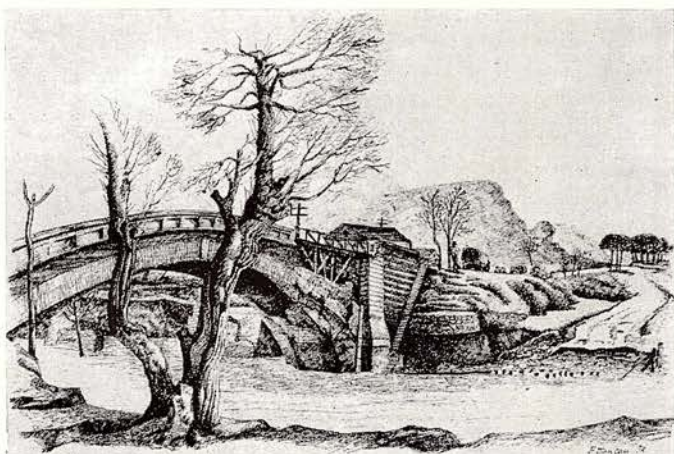
On the morning of September 12, the attack was continued, and patrols reached a position opposite PERSANO. The 1st Bn. met an attack by eight tanks with infantry on the right flank, and received heavy fire from the vicinity of the TOBACCO WAREHOUSE. The combined action of the 157th and 179th Regiments, with the 753rd Tank Battalion and 645th Tank Destroyer Battalion, supported by our own artillery, forced a passage through PERSANO to relieve pressure on the troops north of the river. The 2nd Bn., 179th Infantry, had been forced to withdraw during the night from positions north of ALTAVILLA to the ridge southwest of LA COSA Creek. On order to move forward again, the Battalion regained about three kilometers of the lost ground.

Action stiffened all along the line on September 12, as the enemy held the line from TORRE PALLADINO to the point called TOBACCO WAREHOUSE to the SELE River and PONTE SELE. The fighting centered around PERSANO, and became the most severe to be encountered in the 20 days fighting to secure the beachhead.

During these days of serious danger to the Allied position in the severe battle to maintain the narrow hold on the little piece of land, the fighting took on the character of individual combat. Although the superb teamwork between infantry and artillery, tanks, navy, air corps, tank destroyers, all combined to bring about the final decision, it was the fortitude and persistence of the individual and his little squad or section that formed the foundation upon which the victory was built. Every man became an important block in the line of defense; every casualty lost was keenly felt.

The Division was reduced in strength by the absence of the entire 180th Infantry Regiment during this critical time, for it was still in SICILY, being loaded to sail as the second lift; due to arrive on September 14.

During the night of September 12-13 the 179th Infantry was shifted to the left of the 157th Infantry Regiment. Its 3rd Bn. was relieved by the 2nd Bn. of the 143rd Infantry, 36th Division. The 2nd Bn. of the 179th was com-



By F. DUNCAN, JR.

Courtesy War Department

#### HIGHWAY 18 ACROSS THE SELE

*This bridge played an important part in the battle for the Salerno beachhead. Located on Highway 18, the main road for north-south traffic, it became the main route of supply for the 45th Division and for the Fifth Army during the initial drive into Italy.*





By F. DUNCAN, JR.

#### PERSANO, ITALY

Courtesy War Department

*Across this small stream and through this little group of buildings called Persano, the Germans drove the sledge hammer blow that almost cost the Allies the Salerno landing. So deep went the wedge into the fighting ranks that our Artillery units were ordered to leave their guns to fight as infantrymen.*

mitted in the line to the left of the 157th Infantry Regiment and was shelled with airbursts as it moved north on Highway 18 to the north of CANALE di BONIFICAMENTO, yet completed the movement and assumed a defensive position before daybreak.

Division Artillery, meanwhile, continued to fire on tanks, mortars, automatic weapons, and armored vehicles seeking to push the Division line backward off the Peninsula. Observation planes were extremely active, although forward observers were beginning to have better luck in sending in the locations of targets.

"At 0700 the 160th Field Artillery Battalion left the assembly area and started forward to take up positions in the vicinity of PERSANO. As we passed the blown-out bridge in the sector and moved on 2,000 yards up the road, the Battery A column was cut in two by machine gun fire and mortars.

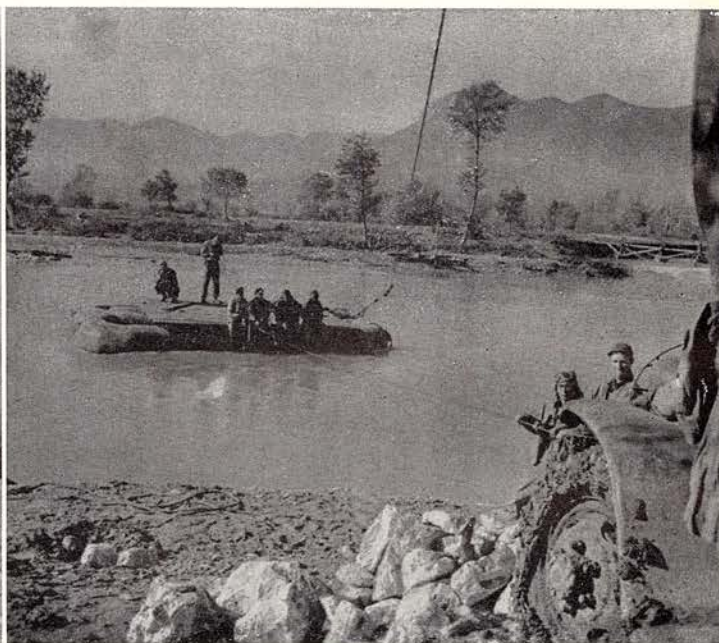
"Lieutenant Sherrick and I were in the lead vehicle, with the element cut off by the enemy fire behind us. The first round of mortar landed about 175 yards in front of our vehicle—Chuck kept driv-

ing. We then received fire from 20-millimeter machine guns, coming at us from three directions. We all left our vehicles and took to the shallow ditches on either side of the road, firing into the position of the nearest machine gun on the left, which seemed to be emplaced behind a large dead tree.

"Then we caught a ride on an M-10 and rode back as far as the bridge. Here we met General McLain. He turned the M-10's and the tanks around and said, 'The fight's up front, not back here.'"

General McLain ordered one battery of the 189th Field Artillery to pull back to the south side of the CALORE because of the constant threat of enemy tanks and infantry. A counterattack led by tanks developed northwest of PERSANO across the SELE River and was reported to be breaking through the Division lines when Colonel Muldrow and Major Autry went forward to check the numerous and conflicting reports. Dismounting at a river crossing just south of the town, they went on foot through underbrush to the river and crossed to the other side.





*The Engineers operate a ferry at the Volturno crossing in Nov., '43.*

There they were fired on by enemy rifles and machine guns, until two men set up a 50-caliber machine gun and a .37 anti-tank gun.

Sweeping the area with fire, the men, Staff Sergeant Snow and Corporal Peck, kept the entire enemy force down until the two officers had withdrawn across the river. They immediately placed all available men along the SELE with rifles, machine guns, and anti-tank guns. The 158th Field Artillery Battalion moved all its personnel in the advance lines, except the stripped-down gun crews, forward to the right of the skirmish line assumed by the 189th Field Artillery Battalion.

Several attempts were made by the Germans to cross the river. They were halted by small arms and machine gun fire and direct artillery fire upon the crossing. The situation was rapidly becoming critical. The Corps Commander called the Division Artillery CP several times to check the situation and to order this forward thrust of the German salient held at any cost. Successful penetration of the Division line here would cut the beachhead forces in two and split the sector down the center.

Firing was spectacular. One observer watched 40 Germans infiltrate into a house and called for five volleys. When the smoke had cleared, the house was leveled and only seven Germans left the area.

In another case in this coordinated effort to stamp out the attempts of the enemy to cross the river and slice through the beachhead, a patrol listed 40 German soldiers as dead only after counting the dismembered limbs in the area of a battalion concentration. An officer of the 158th Field Artillery Battalion called down concentration on six tanks. A moment later, five of the six were burning.

Fighting continued until 2100 on September 13. For many units this was one of the hardest days of fighting experienced. At least one company got so far out it

came under fire of its own artillery and had to withdraw. As darkness fell, the tanks and infantry were fighting at such close range that men inside the tanks were unable to distinguish their own men from the enemy in the thick of battle.

Typical is the story told by Sgt. Hubert M. Gilliland of Battery A of the 158th Field Artillery Battalion.

"I was mess sergeant, and in view of the fact that we were eating C and K rations, the duties weren't sufficient to keep all the section busy. I turned the section over to First Cook and assigned myself to the First Gun Section.

"In the late afternoon of September 13 we were informed that enemy vehicles were coming our way, approaching a bridge that the Engineers were finishing. This meant that our right flank was exposed.

"A truck driver and myself armed ourselves with a rocket launcher and six rounds of ammunition and went into position as a team in a bomb crater within plain sight of the bridge.

"Our observation plane flew over the first field piece and the observer shouted from the window that 25 enemy tanks were approaching the bridge. I turned my rocket launcher over to another and rejoined the First Section. We started throwing shells over into the trees behind the bridge, affording cover for the Engineers who were withdrawing. The 189th Field Artillery Battalion's anti-tank section were in position with their 37-MM guns. We threw a withering fire into the sector around the bridge. Two shells landed within 50 yards of our piece, but in the excitement they went practically unnoticed.

"By this time, the Battery's four 50-caliber guns



were in position on our skirmish line. All the Engineers' personnel and equipment was now in safety behind us except for one bulldozer and a quarter-ton vehicle. Our 50-calibers laid down a barrage while a corporal of the 189th sauntered down to the bridge and brought the bulldozer back intact. 'Tell the Engineers where this damned thing is,' he said and walked away. The driver of the quarter-ton saved his vehicle with equal coolness.

"We could hear machine gun fire and see where it was hitting. We couldn't see where it was coming from. The driver of the quarter-ton said he knew where it was coming from: he had seen the location of the house and could point it out through the trees. The chief of section asked him to sight down the tube and identify the target, then fired two rounds of fuse delay. He asked if they hit left or right of the target.

"If they weren't exactly in there, they were right,' the driver said. The Sergeant gave a Left 10 and then fired two more fuse delays. In a matter of seconds something was burning beyond the line of trees. We could hear small arms ammunition burning, punctuated by an occasional loud explosion. We never heard the machine gun fire again.

"I've never seen anything so perfect as the way those gun crews performed that day, or the way the 105s cut through the trees and branches. It looked just like a giant scythe lopping them off. No living creature could have withstood such fire.

"I returned to the bomb crater just after Captain Miller and our first sergeant had completed the establishment of an 'Infantry Line of Defense.'

It was made up of every man who could be spared without affecting the efficiency of the fires. They placed the line on the forward slope of the high ground overlooking the river in the direction of the line of the attack. That skirmish line turned the tide of the attack which might have cost us SALERNO. Anti-tank positions were arranged just in case anything went wrong.

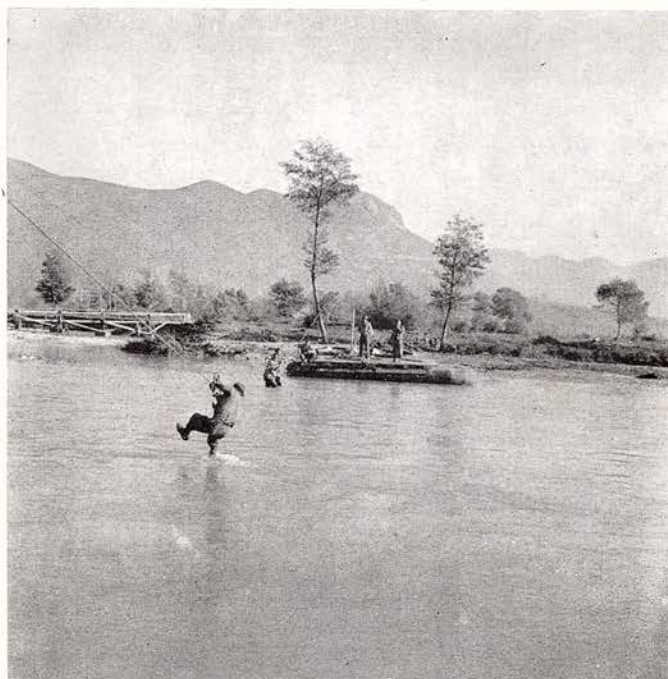
"I was up there all night. At about 2300 hours we were reinforced by a platoon of infantry out of the 179th. We left our 50-calibers and our gunners to reinforce the infantry. They told us our defense line was well formed by the infantry's standards. Then, for the first time in its history, Battery A of the 158th Field Artillery Battalion quietly withdrew 3,000 yards to the rear.

"General McLain came along and told us to dig in and prepare for anything. He looked solemn and we decided the situation was critical. We dug in, and those were the most elaborate installations we had ever had. I'm sure we could have withstood anything the enemy could attack us with, if they had broken through."

And indeed, the situation was critical. The pressure exerted by the continued, relentless drive of the German forces was felt in every corner, by every individual on the beachhead—from the front line soldier to the army's commanding general.

#### "SEPTEMBER 13

"At noon the enemy front line ran from northwest of TORRE PALLADINO north to the SELE River. This line appeared to the strong outposts screening the EBOLI-SERRE ground. The 64th and 79th Panzer Grenadier Regiments remained in





the vicinity to BATTIPAGLIA, attacking west and south; the 1st and 2nd Bns., 79th PGR, were opposing the 45th Division. Prisoners of war reported that the 15th PGR was southeast of EBOLI. Elements of the 16th Panzer Division were added to these German forces. During the 24-hour period to 1200B, the 157th Infantry Regiment destroyed five Mark IV tanks and captured and destroyed two 75-mm guns; the 179th Infantry Regiment destroyed one Mark VI tank and two Mark IV, and captured and destroyed one 88-mm gun.

"Tank and infantry movement started to develop in the enemy rear areas at about 1300B.

"The number of enemy dead and wounded were as yet unknown, though their losses were estimated as less than our own."

At 1600 hours on the 13th, the 1st Bn. of the 157th Infantry was hit hard by a group of ten or 12 tanks, followed by infantry in personnel carriers, of the 16th Panzer Division. The attack was supported by intense artillery fire, and developed against the right flank of the Battalion. For several hours the enemy fire grew in volume; the drive penetrated the Battalion positions and threatened the CP area. Tank fire was received from the east bank of the SELE River. This attack continued until well after dark, then seemed to lose its momentum. By midnight, the renewed efforts of the infantry had pushed one company forward to regain most of the lost ground of the original positions.

On the left, the 2nd Bn., 179th Infantry, which had received high velocity artillery fire during the morning, was simultaneously engaged by infantry led by five tanks, but it did not loose ground. Tanks, armored vehicles, and towed artillery crossed the SELE River just northwest of PERSANO and drove south almost to the junction of the SELE-CALORE Rivers. The Germans began infiltrating into the northwest and southeast of ALTAVILLA and into the ALBANELLA area. By dark a concentration of enemy tanks and infantry had moved further into the salient, adding increased danger to the security of the Division's position.

Orders were issued by VI Corps to establish a new defensive position by refusing the flank along the west bank of the SELE River. This action was accomplished by the 3rd Bn. of the 157th Infantry. The Division line, as occupied during the night of 13-14 September was right to left: 1st Bn., 179th Infantry, at the base of the salient; 3rd Bn., 157th Infantry, along the west bank of the SELE; 1st Bn., 157th Infantry; 3rd and 2nd Bn., 179th Infantry; 3rd Bn., 36th Engineers (attached to the 179th Infantry); then the 3rd Bn., 141st Infantry Regiment, 36th Infantry Division. The line extended from the junction of the CANALE di BONIFICAMENTO and SELE River to SAN LUCIA. The necessity for strengthening the line with all troops available left the Division without a reserve. The shifting and adjusting of troops was a means to gain the maximum effort of the battered and tired men who had been under constant pounding of shell and bomb four days.

So great was the concern for the protection of the beach-head from a powerful German drive that would succeed in breaking the defenses, the navy ships offshore were asked to "Stand-by for evacuation—just in case." The ghosts of Dunkirk were hovering over the ancient ruins of the TORRE di PAESTUM.

When word of this possible move to attempt a withdrawal reached the 45th Division, General Middleton realized that it could end only in bloody disaster and probably death for every man of every unit. His answer sounded the battle-cry that brought about the turning point in the furious conflict of the entire beachhead:

**"PUT FOOD AND AMMUNITION BEHIND  
THE 45TH. WE ARE GOING TO STAY HERE!"**

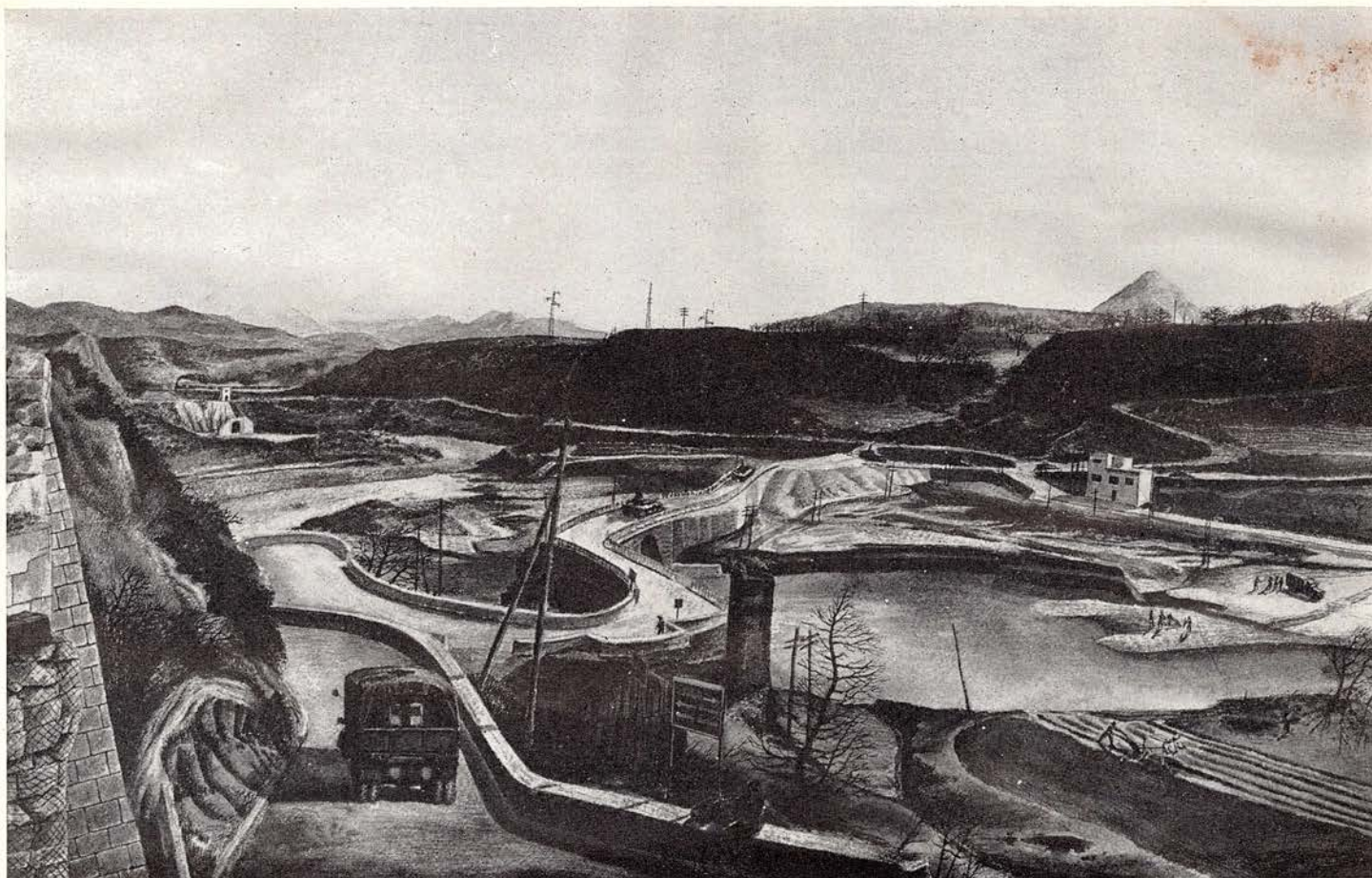
Enemy artillery and mortar shelling began at dawn on September 14, and by 1030, a coordinated attack by tanks and infantry began to develop. This new attack was an increased effort to penetrate the positions of the Division. It was the Germans' most forceful—and last—attempt to drive the Allied troops off the shallow plain. The attack continued throughout the day without let up. Moving south on roads from PERSANO and attempting to break through near the SELE-CALORE junction, the Germans met the fire of the 158th and 189th Field Artillery Battalions. The tanks of the 16th Panzer Division on the front of the 179th Infantry, which moved in with the early morning attack, withdrew to covered positions early in the afternoon, leaving 13 damaged or destroyed in the field. When the toll of enemy vehicles was counted, 23 tanks, six scout cars, and several 88MM guns were no longer usable.

Targets fired on by the artillery battalions, 45th Tank-Destroyer Battalion, and anti-tank guns of the regiments were innumerable. Often the fire was brilliant and spectacular, the roar of the guns almost continuous. On the 14th, 6,687 rounds of artillery ammunition were fired at the enemy. No one ever tried to count the rifle and machine-gun bullets. The positions held. By late afternoon it was evident that the back of the German's drive was broken.

About an hour after dark an enemy plane came from the north across the Division sector. Hit by anti-aircraft fire, it burst into flames as it crossed the SELE River, swerved upward and circled in a great arc, leaving a long trail of smoke and flame. Within a few seconds it crashed into a field about a hundred yards from the 120th Clearing Station. Flames shot high, and burning particles flew through the air.

The second lift of the Division, composed of the 180th Infantry Regiment and part of the Division Staff, arrived in the transport area during the afternoon. The Regiment was immediately placed in Fifth Army reserve, where it was held for four days, in the area northeast of PAESTUM. The 2nd Bn. took up defensive positions in this area, prepared to defend against a possible break-through by the enemy. The 3rd Bn., less Company I, was directly in rear of the 2nd to support them by fire and movement. Company I was sent to Fifth Army Headquarters to serve





By F. DUNCAN, JR.

Courtesy War Department

#### PONTE SELE

*In the quiet days, after the war had gone on to the north, Ponte Sele looked like this.*

as Command Post security. During the four-day stay in this area the Regiment was continually on the alert, prepared to move on short notice.

Throughout September 15, the Division improved its defenses with mines and wire. Some units were shifted to provide better command functions and to provide a Division reserve made up of the 45th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop. The enemy also continued defensive preparations, digging in with automatic weapons to organize strong points. Enemy tank activity was observed in the enemy rear areas, and many German patrols were pushed into the Division lines.

The exchange of artillery fire continued as on the day before. Interdicting fire and harrassing concentrations were placed on every position and along every roadway.

One observer, manning a static observation post, reported that twice during the day he lifted fire of his guns so the Germans could recover their dead and wounded, and again when a German burial party, displaying their lack of arms and their shovels, dug graves to bury the dead.

Action on September 16 was very much the same. During the night of 15-16 the lower part of the salient was pinched off, relieving the pressure on the 1st Bn., 179th Infantry. The exchange of fires became a steady artillery duel, taking a heavy toll of enemy troops and equipment. The remainder of the Division came ashore during this

time, and additional changes in the line were made to improve the situation.

There were first indications of an enemy withdrawal along the front on September 17. Our patrols were allowed increasing freedom of action, and enemy activity lessened. During the day, the American Third Division, then debarking, passed through the 45th sector to its bivouac area. The Division Military Police aided in guiding them through over alternate routes to avoid congestion of roads. The British X Corps remained on the left of the American VI Corps, and the 36th Division on the left of the 45th Division. Reconnaissance on the night of 17-18 indicated that the enemy, whose attitude had become completely defensive, had withdrawn the bulk of his forces from the front. All units were ordered to infiltrate forward to new positions just south of Highway 19.

The first advance from the beach began. SALERNO was safe. Contact with the enemy forces was broken, and the war became, once more, a relentless march through the hills in pursuit.

No contact was made with the enemy on September 19, as the withdrawal had been complete in the 45th Division's sector on the afternoon before. Reports of motor movement, dust columns, and motorcycles on the road north of CONTURSI indicated a withdrawal to the north. In the mountainous region the Germans were utilizing pack horses





*During prayer, the flag is lowered at outdoor Christmas Day services, Venafro, Italy, 1943.*

to help carry their guns and equipment. They sewed elaborate and extensive minefields in the wake of their withdrawal, and employed demolitions in an effort to slow the Americans' advance.

The 106th Anti-Aircraft Battalion now had a chance to total its score for the period of establishing the beachhead (September 9 through 18). They had destroyed five enemy planes, one other probably, and captured ten to 15 tons of engineer supplies and one 88MM gun.

Now, in its advance to new positions on September 19, the Division had entered the towns of PERSANO, EBOLI, and CAMPAGNA.

Near the town of CONTURSI, in a clear running stream, many of the men found time to bathe for the first time since leaving the island of SICILY.

Translation of a letter written by a German soldier and dated September 16 paid unintentional tribute to the air and ground fire of the 45th in its advance across the beachhead. It reads:

"My dearest little wife—

You will be amazed to read about our bitter fighting in the official Wehrmacht communiques. We are fighting in the EBOLI sector. Casualties are ever increasing. To add to the terror, the enemy Air Forces are bombing us relentlessly and atrociously. And with all that, an uncanny and perpetual artillery fire is scoring hits. Our fight against the Anglo-Americans requires more strength from us than our fight against the Russians. Many of us are longing to get back to RUSSIA, even

longing for conditions as they were as STALIN-GRAD."

The break from the beachhead was like a breath of fresh air after a long stay in a small prison. Moving up into the hills, after being confined so long on the plains, the 45th Division began the chase after the enemy into the mountains.

The next objective became the high ground just south of the OFANTO River, near SAN ANDREA di CONZA, and TEORA. The troops moved out on September 20, up the narrow valley between steep rocky hills, with the American Third Division on the left. Rugged and almost impassable mountains made chances of maintaining contact between the units extremely difficult.

The enemy had withdrawn, but had left mines and demolitions to delay the progress. Every stream crossing, every road bridge was completely destroyed, and approaches and trails were covered by mine fields. By mid-afternoon some delaying positions were encountered where 20MM gun, machine gun, and artillery fire hit the troops near the road. At 1600 the 45th Reconnaissance Troop was fired on by three light tanks.

The 45th Reconnaissance Troop also made contact with the hard-pressed British Eighth Army. The Germans had fought stubbornly to prevent Montgomery's joining forces with the American troops. They realized fully the importance of the meeting of the forces to the Allied operation and did everything in their power to stop it.

By the night of the 20th, it was evident that the enemy intended to make the best possible use of his advantages in the mountains. The ground was excellent for defensive fighting, for the rocky cliffs were themselves a barrier to an advancing force, and the Germans had full knowledge of the narrow roads and trails over which the Division would be forced to move. As long as the enemy held the key terrain features, he had superior observation. The main point of advantage was the ridge of rock at OLIVETO, which overlooked the entire valley where the Division was attacking.

On the morning of the 21st, the 2nd Bn., 180th Infantry, pushed into the German outposts and encountered the organized positions along the aqueduct west of OLIVETO. The Germans became more aggressive, more determined to hold back the Division's attack. The ridge of the aqueduct became of prime importance. Mortar and machine gun fire increased. The defenses were supported by well registered long range artillery.

The 180th Infantry continued to push forward toward OLIVETO on the unimproved road north of Highway 91. This ground was extremely rough, and it was defended by the bulk of a battalion of the 64th PGR. During the night of the 21-22nd, the 1st Bn. occupied positions immediately south of the aqueduct at 0430. After daylight, while under a heavy concentration of artillery fire, the 1st Bn. sideslipped to the left, and the 2nd Bn. was moved around to the high ground northwest of OLIVETO. Progress was being made slowly, and the count of casualties ran high.



Many of the German dead, including several officers, were found in foxholes after the objective was secured. The 2nd Bn. pushed on to the north, through the hills to the east of the valley. It was necessary to supply this Battalion entirely by pack-mule train, and only mules of the smaller type could negotiate the dangerous rocks. Under shell fire, along the narrow ledges, several of the animals lost their footing and plunged into the valley below.

At 1600, the 3rd Bn., preceded by two companies of light tanks from the 756th Tank Battalion and one company of medium tanks from the 191st Tank Battalion, attacked and secured the high ground about one-half mile southwest of the town. This action cut off much of the hostile observation, but a continuation of the attack to OLIVETO was prevented when the tanks ran low on gas and ammunition.

Preparations were made for the 179th Infantry Regiment to pass through the 180th Infantry's positions to continue the attack the following morning.

The enemy followed a well-planned rear guard action, continuing it on September 23. In the afternoon contact was made with enemy forces employing automatic weapons, mortars, and artillery in a well-coordinated volume, which forced the deployment of the Division's attacking elements. During the evening the infantry withdrew to the north leaving light machine guns to maintain contact with the advancing troops. Upon reaching COLLEANO at 1800,

the lead elements were met with small arms and mortar fire. Successfully assaulted and overcome, the enemy withdrew once more, leaving the Division troops to occupy the town and move on north to VALVA. The 16th Panzer Division and Motorized Infantry units formed the bulk of the defenders.

The enemy defended the area around OLIVETO and QUAGLIETTA with all the resources he had. The opposition offered was stubborn, brutal, and determined. When the enemy withdrew, it was only after the superior fire power and the skilled maneuvering of the Division drove him out. He did not give an inch until forced to do so.

Early in the morning of 24 September, the 157th Infantry captured VALVA and continued their advance to the northeast. Under constant observation and interdiction by enemy artillery, the progress was slow. During the day the troops succeeded in gaining about six kilometers.

Col. Charles Ankorn, Commander of the Regiment, was wounded by a mine explosion while going forward for reconnaissance. Col. John Church, the Division Chief of Staff, assumed command of the Regiment. Col. James Styron, Division Artillery Executive Officer, became acting Chief of Staff.

The advance of the Division continued on September 25, against artillery fire which was continuous throughout the day. The enemy kept the highway west of the SELE

*A German dud from a big gun is dug out of the ground near the 45th Division Clearing Station at Presenzano, Italy, Dec., '43.*





River and north of QUAGLIETTA under constant interdiction. They also interdicted the bridges along the river, attempting to slow the Engineers who were constructing by-passes there. Heavy and accurate machine-gun and mortar fire was received by our troops from the west side of the valley, and it appeared that a counterattack was to be formed shortly after 1730. Our artillery, however, fired several concentrations on that area, and the enemy became quiet.

"September 26

"The Division requested a bombing mission along Highway 7 from the road junction with Highway 91 to the west. This mission was flown by 24 A-26DB's at 0630A. The planes missed the target and dropped bombs on the area of the 2nd and 3rd Bns. of the 157th Infantry Regiment, destroying two mortars and wounding two men.

"During the afternoon the Division was informed by VI Corps that the 133rd Combat Team of the 34th Division would move through the 45th Division area to Highway 7 and on to the west. The Division was ordered to clear and mark the route. This route was a narrow, one-way road, the only usable route through the sector leading to the north. General Ryder, Commanding General of the 34th Division, visited the command post to coordinate details."

During the night of 26-27, a platoon of the 45th Reconnaissance Troop encountered a group of German vehicles on the road west of SAN ANGELO at about 2245A. The platoon withdrew under fire without suffering casualties and assembled near LIONI. Before daylight the enemy withdrew, and the platoon continued west along Highway 7 to the CALORE River, where they found the bridge blown and the approaches mined.

During the morning a heavy rain fell, making all by-passes very slick and delaying all motor movement. This was another ally for the Nazi Army. Mountain roads be-

*The Venafrò "Pool Table," also known as "Purple Heart Valley". Monte Samucro, Monte Croce, and Monte Corno in background.*



came impassable, dust turned into deep mud. The following night, the downfall increased, turning streams into torrents, washing out by-passes. This was the beginning of the long winter of war in ITALY, where not only the enemy forces and their mines and shells were against the American Forces, but the elements, too, took a heavy toll in each succeeding battle.

There were indications that the enemy was systematically posting or leaving behind small outposts or patrols to effect demolition of bridges, to construct roadblocks, and to generally harass the advancing troops by sniper fire in the rear areas. Patrols reported that almost all the bridges to the north had been demolished. Some bridges were arranged with demolitions with a small detachment left to guard them until a crucial moment for blowing them up. Germans were buying civilian clothes for the purpose of remaining behind to observe movement.

At the end of the month of September, the Division was preparing, in conjunction with the 34th Infantry Division, for another movement forward.

The first great crisis of the War in ITALY was over. The Nazis had thrown their finest Panzer troops, backed up by unlimited supplies, with the advantage of well-chosen and fortified positions, at the advance of the 45th Division, and had been unable to hold.

## THE VOLTURNO AND VENAFRO THE 45TH ADVANCES

In early October, the Fifth Army, moving up behind the retreating Wehrmacht from the Naples area, came up against the first great water barrier of the Italian Campaign at the VOLTURNO River. The Germans were preparing to dig in here and use the steep, rocky, northern bank of the river as a main line of defense. It took the Fifth Army seven days to break through the first barrier of the line and continue the pursuit.

The 45th Division did not have the role of making the assault crossing of the VOLTURNO River. Nevertheless, its operation from BENEVENTO to PIEDIMONTE during October played a vital part in the crossing of the river and constituted a threat to the enemy which hastened his withdrawal to the north.

For the first two days of October, the Division moved along with the 34th Division. Artillery battalions displaced and moved forward over the crowded roads as rapidly as the space permitted. Trucks shuttled the infantry troops toward BENEVENTO.

The movement of the Division on BENEVENTO planned to start at daylight October 2, was delayed by VI Corps with instructions to stop short of the CALORE River. One company of the 180th Infantry was already across the river when the order was received, and was left in position to protect the crossing. The 45th Reconnaissance Troop conducted extensive patrolling to the north and northwest, encountering a defended road block north of the MISCANO River. Many mine fields were found all along the route to BENEVENTO.

Continuing heavy rains made road conditions extremely



trying. Vehicles slid over waterlogged ground, through quagmire churned by lines of heavy trucks and weapons. On the afternoon of October 3, orders were received to pass through and effect relief of the 34th Division whose lead elements were now in the vicinity of BENEVENTO. From BENEVENTO, the Division would move to PIEDIMONTE and the VOLTURNO, then patrol and protect that sector while the assault crossing of the river was made. No relief would come yet for the men who had been fighting continuously in the line since their commitment on SALERNO BEACH. Not until they reached PIEDIMONTE would the weary, muddy men of the Division find an interval of rest.

The relief was to be effected by daylight on October 4. Although the 34th reported its advance to the north of the town, reconnaissance by the 120th Combat Engineers Battalion disclosed that a blown bridge southeast of BENEVENTO had no by-pass; the streets of the town were filled with rubble and debris which made the passage of vehicles impossible; and there was no by-pass on a blown bridge across the CALORE River north of BENEVENTO. Engineers began work on the first by-pass at once. VI Corps was notified that movement of the Division must be delayed until the streets of BENEVENTO could be cleared and the by-pass over the CALORE constructed.

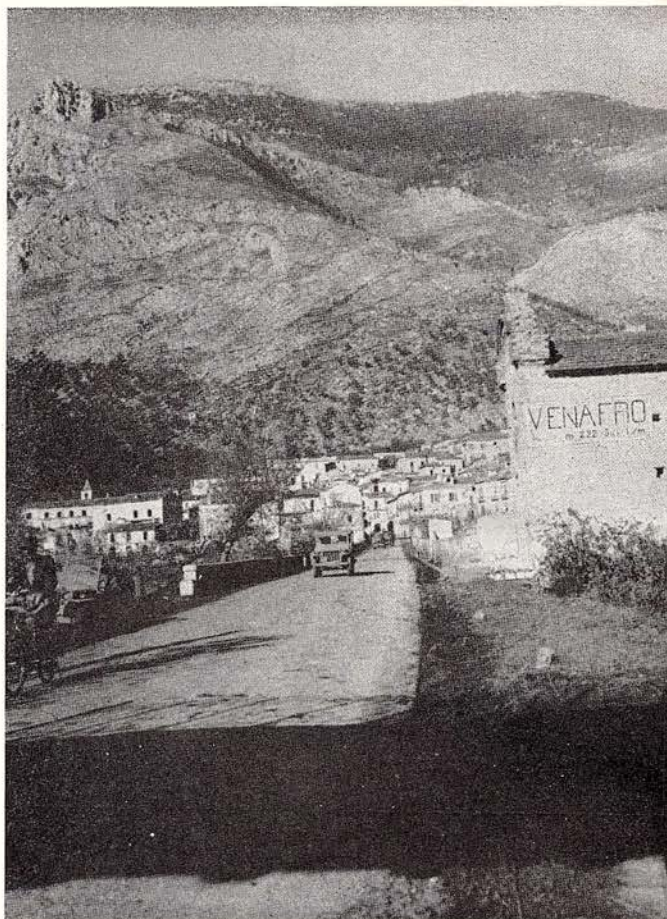
Troops in BENEVENTO and along the road from S. GIORGIO to BENEVENTO were under continuous harassing artillery fire throughout the afternoon, as the 158th and 189th Field Artillery Battalions established liaison with the 34th Division Artillery and prepared to support the advance of the 157th Infantry Regiment in that area.

Heavy rain, with an hour of pelting hail, fell all through the afternoon and night, seriously complicating movement on the by-pass. Aircraft with American insignia manned by Germans fired into the long column of trucks, wounding personnel and damaging materiel.

Leaving small groups to further destroy bridges and to fight delaying actions at roadblocks and minefields, the enemy moved on next day. All contact was broken for a time except for interdictory fire by artillery on road junctions, crossroads, and avenues of approach. All movement of VI Corps troops in the area came to a halt to await the construction of the bridge across the CALORE at BENEVENTO, with one company of the 34th Division across the river. Attempts to work on the bridge during hours of daylight brought down savage artillery fire.

In heavy fog, dampness, and cold, the Division began crossing the river on October 4, and continued through the night. The 1st Bn., 157th Infantry, moved northeast from BENEVENTO and established positions to block approaches from that direction. Two companies went into position near the Division boundary which ran just west of PIETRELCINA, and Company A established positions on the east side of 481, about five miles north of town. Enemy troops on the west side of this hill were causing the 2nd Bn. considerable trouble in its movement toward PONTE to the west.

In the late afternoon, Company A attacked these enemy



*In Venafro, at the foot of Mount Croce, engineers removed over 2000 pounds of explosives from mined buildings.*

positions, but was forced to withdraw. The 2nd Platoon, C Company, 191st Tank Battalion, then attacked around the left and forced the enemy to move out, leaving nine prisoners and a number killed.

During the night of October 5-6, two companies enveloped PONTE under heavy artillery and 20MM gun fire.

Artillery units were under heavy fire most of the day. At one time the 189th Field Artillery Battalion was being fired on at the rate of one round per minute.

This marked increase of artillery fire, plus continued rainfall, the demolition of all bridges in the area, the mining of roads and all probable by-passes, made going extremely hard for the weary men of the Division on October 6. The advance was continued with dogged perseverance despite the heavy odds, but the weight of adverse factors against the Division slowed progress.

The 3rd Bn. of the 157th Infantry moved cross-country to the west to relieve the pressure on the 2nd Bn. near PONTE and to clean out the enemy resistance south of the river which was preventing work on the blown bridge at PONTE. The 2nd Bn. was heavily engaged with the enemy as the 1st Bn. moved north to block approaches, lay minefields, and establish defensive positions. As the British Eighth Army was not moving up, and not closing in on the right, it became necessary for the 180th Infantry





*A Division MP solves the problem of how to keep dry while directing traffic in the rain near Venafro.*

to advance in the direction of FRAGNETO MONFORTE to protect the Division right flank. Advancing at daylight, they cleared that town and in the late afternoon repulsed an enemy counterattack supported by six Mark IV tanks.

The 2nd Bn. of the 157th remained heavily engaged near PONTE and the 3rd Bn. advanced against stiff opposition south of the CALORE River, while the 1st Bn. received heavy small arms and artillery fire throughout the day. Reconnaissance showed numerous blown bridges in the area of swiftly flowing streams branching throughout the Division sector. Hours of labor would be needed to bypass the blown bridges on the main highway from S. LUPO to the east and north, and an alternate route was taken.

On October 8 the 3rd Bn. of the 180th attacked toward the town of CAMPOLATTARO by daylight and declared the town secured at 1300. The inevitable enemy counterattack followed quickly, and was repulsed by 1730. The 1st Bn., following the 3rd, turned sharply west under cover of darkness and moved toward CASALDUNI, establishing road blocks there and patrolling to S. LUPO. The 157th continued its advance to the west with difficulties and pushed two battalions across the LENTA, securing high ground 2,000 meters to the west of the river. The 3rd Bn., operating to the south of the CALORE, found itself unable to ford that stream and was forced to move back to PONTE to cross by the bridge there.

The 179th, attacking through the 157th Infantry positions at daybreak on October 9 and moving west, was delayed by a blown bridge on its route of advance. The 2nd Bn.,

following the 1st, turned north along the road to S. LORENZO and occupied high ground west of the town, while the 3rd Bn. secured high ground north of Highway 87. A strong enemy counterattack forced one company to give up some of the ground which it had seized, but the Battalion, reinforced by a battalion of light artillery, a battalion of tank destroyers, and a company of medium tanks, established a defensive position and road blocks to the east and north, south of a junction at PANTELANDOLFO.

The 3rd Bn. of the 179th Infantry passed through at daylight on October 10 to attack in the direction of GUARDIA, enveloping the town from the high ground to the north, the 2nd Bn. remaining in position to support the attack by fire. Stiff opposition was met throughout the day around GUARDIA, but the town had been surrounded by dark. Troops prepared to enter at daylight next day.

Heavy artillery fires supported the slow infantry advance. Enemy bombing attacks struck the 189th and 158th Field Artillery Battalion areas and two planes were struck down. It rained throughout the day.

A battery had occupied positions one-half mile north of the Division Artillery Airfield at BENEVENTO Airport, the guns astride the road. German reconnaissance planes had been over twice that day. Some 18 or 20 of them slowly circled their position, then came in low, bombing the two guns to the left of the road. Apparently they had not located the two guns on the right.

They bracketed the left-hand guns with bombs. One ammunition truck was set ablaze. One man was slightly injured. One vehicle of a nearby observation group received a direct hit. The gunners, undaunted, merely asked permission to move their guns to the other side of the road.

GUARDIA was occupied without resistance on October 11 as the Battalion continued its advance toward CERETTO, slowed by artillery fire, steep hills, and three blown bridges in its path. The 180th Infantry also continued to move its front forward without opposition.

CERETTO was entered on October 12 at 1100 against slight resistance, but progress was again made difficult on the other side by a series of blown bridges. After dark the 1st Bn. of the 179th Infantry moved through the 2nd toward S. LORENZELLO. The 2nd Bn. of the 180th Infantry occupied the high ground north of TELESE against slight resistance, but received a heavy concentration of machine gun, mortar, and artillery fire from the west a little later, immediately followed by an infantry attack.

The four battalions of Division Artillery laid down a heavy concentration upon the attacking elements. Quiet ensued shortly, and no ground was lost. Patrols were active throughout the night.

Encountering heavy machine gun and mortar fire, the 1st Bn. of the 179th moved on FONTANA on October 13, and the 3rd was sent to MOUNT ACERNO where it encountered strongly fortified German positions on the eastern slopes. The 157th Infantry advanced by motor to a



new line of departure for the Division main effort along the high ground to the north of the PIEDIMONTE-FAICCHIO road. The 180th Infantry occupied high ground northeast of S. SALVATORE and sent out patrols to the south, southwest, and northwest, through flat lands. Fords across the VOLTURNO were mined and defended.

On October 15 the 1st Bn. of the 157th Infantry continued to advance to the north, meeting considerable opposition from isolated groups of Germans in well-dug-in positions. Five or six hostile tanks were active in the area to the northwest across the TITERNO River, firing intermittently on the Battalion, whose advance was hampered by the inability to get anti-tank weapons across the river to fire on tanks. The Battalion was also dive-bombed and strafed by 20 hostile planes which caused casualties.

The 1st Bn. of the 179th Infantry moved to envelope the town of FAICCHIO, next stronghold in the high ground of the Division's advance. Artillery and mortar fire was exceedingly heavy, and the troops were forced to withdraw to positions north of FONTANA.

Thus the first attempt to take FAICCHIO failed and the attackers withdrew under withering fire. The 180th Infantry was ordered to side-slip to the west and cross the TITERNO River with one battalion, then continue to the northwest on the left flank of the Division, advancing across the comparatively level ground of the valley floor.

During the night the 3rd Bn. of the 157th Infantry, having crossed the TITERNO River below the town, was to advance upon it from the rear while the 1st Bn. held the S. SALVATORE-FAICCHIO Road and secured the blown bridge across the river. Tanks and tank destroyers were to accompany the infantry into the town.

The 179th Infantry continued its attack against stiff resistance and under heavy machine gun, mortar, and artillery fire from the FAICCHIO area. A heavy artillery preparation was laid down upon the town, which was discovered to be heavily fortified. Attempts to enter the town were barred by heavy fire of all types, including self-propelled 150MM assault guns and the six-barreled mortar guns which the Germans called nebelwerfer and the doughboys referred to as "Screaming Meemie." These guns were first mentioned in reports on October 14, and they continued to be used throughout the campaign.

A crossing was found across the TITERNO River, and to screen the passage of the troops across the stream, the 158th Field Artillery Battalion fired 302 rounds of smoke in that area in 40 minutes. Two hours later American paratroopers approached the infantry command post and reported that there were no longer enemy troops in the town.

After a stiff fight west of the town, in which 23 prisoners were taken in close fighting, the enemy withdrew to the northwest.

The 2nd Bn. of the 180th continued to advance across the TITERNO and met no opposition until it encountered hostile tanks which fired on the lead elements later in the day. A thick concentration of mines had to be cleared from an old stream bed in the path of the advance.



Under cover of darkness, the 1st Bn. of the 179th Infantry moved to assemble in areas in the rear leaving Company G to occupy the high ground north and northwest of FAICCHIO. Patrols from this Battalion picked up 12 prisoners in the hills, indicating that the artillery concentration of the preceding night before the occupation of FAICCHIO had scattered the enemy troops into the surrounding hills seeking protection.

On October 17 the 3rd Bn. of the 180th Infantry Regiment passed through the forward positions held by the 2nd Bn. and continued the advance to the northwest, attaining its objective in the high ground some 3,000 meters southeast of the PIEDIMONTE-DRAGONI Highway and encountering only slight resistance.

The 2nd Bn. of the 157th passed through the 3rd Bn.'s forward positions and continued northwest along the highway, encountering no opposition until 1500, when artillery fire and fire from the enemy's six-barrelled mortar guns began falling heavily. Marching on the town of GIOIA, the Battalion reached the town, to be delayed there by demolitions. By late afternoon, however, the Battalion had reached positions west and northwest of AUDUNI. One company drove off a second enemy counterattack in the late afternoon.

A field order was received from VI Corps changing the Division left boundary, with the result that the troops were pinched out of the front line in the vicinity of PIEDIMONTE after the long and gruelling drive up and to the east from BENEVENTO. The 180th Infantry was pinched out in position and given the mission of patrolling the low ground to the front of the ALIFE-PIEDIMONTE Highway.





*Cathedral Duomo Benevento, Italy*

The 157th Infantry Regiment continued the advance at daybreak on October 18, meeting no opposition until 1000, when automatic weapons fire was received from the northwest. After that, heavy enemy resistance developed in their sector, and the advance was slow. The 3rd Bn. passed through the 2nd Bn. prior to daylight of October 19 and continued the advance to the northwest. The enemy had withdrawn during the night, and the only opposition which the attacking elements encountered was that of blown bridges, demolitions, and scattered artillery fire. The 3rd Bn. reached PIEDIMONTE at 1700 and organized defensive positions west of the town, also erecting roadblocks on the ALIFE Highway.

Division Artillery located some good targets around ALIFE, and also fired its first propaganda leaflets, the 158th Field Artillery Battalion doing the firing. One muzzle burst occurred just as the leaflets were fired. The Battery Executive surveyed the littered paper with disgust.

"I don't mind firing this—this propaganda," he said, "but I certainly hate to have it thrown back in my face."

The occupation of positions and patrolling around PIEDIMONTE were rendered hazardous by the omnipresent demolitions. Artillery fire was largely of a long-range interdiction nature. The area was outposted, and the 45th Reconnaissance Troop sent foot patrols into the S. GREGORIO and LAKE MALTESE area.

When the Division was officially relieved, it had seen 40 days of continuous fighting, usually under greatest hardships and difficulties of weather and terrain. At this time it was the longest period an American division in the ETO had been in line without relief.

When the units had closed into their respective areas, much-needed maintenance on motor vehicles and materiel was vigorously begun. Special teams were formed by Division Ordnance to check, inspect, and assist in the maintenance of motors and Ordnance materiel. Units got clean clothing and submitted requisitions for shortages in clothing and equipment.

Patrols moved out to reconnoiter roads and determine the enemy's strength and dispositions in the LAKE MALTESE-LETINO-GALA area. The men moved out on foot, with mules to carry their supplies and radio equipment. Carrier pigeons were taken to be used in case radio equipment became lost. The Medical Battalion, the Quartermaster Company, and the Ordnance Company now set up semi-permanent installations in the TELESE area.

A breakthrough of the enemy with tanks along the VOLTURNO River in the 34th Division sector called for an alerting of Division Artillery and two companies of tank destroyers as reconnaissance patrols were sent out, but the attack was brought under control.

Patrolling continued actively over narrow, treacherous mountain trails so poor that they could not be used for wheeled transportation of any sort. Reconnaissance also increased as VI Corps assigned the 45th Division a new assembly area in preparation for attack. Restrictions on artillery fire and radio were lifted. The Division prepared to cross the river into a new sector and a new phase of the War in ITALY.

## KESSELRING'S WINTER LINE

Coming up out of the hilly region of Southern ITALY, to the broad, low valley of the VOLTURNO River, the men of the 45th Division realized that their worst mountain fighting was still before them.

Three weeks of intermittent heavy rainfall which had saturated the countryside, became, on November 8, a continuous downpour. Between November 8 and November 30 there were only three days during which it did not rain, and these days were spoiled during the nights. The long periods of continual rainfall bogged down motor movement, and converted bivouac areas and motor pools into mud holes varying from four to 14 inches deep. Particularly sudden and violent wind storms blew over tents and wet equipment in spite of all precautions.

Four bridges over the VOLTURNO in use by the Division were washed out, and because of the enormous loss of equipment all along the river, in other sectors as well, replacements were painfully slow.

Added to the handicaps of inclement weather, the Division entered the rugged, bald, rocky mountain area around VENAFRO. Trails and narrow passes necessitated the use of pack mules, until the trails became so rugged that mules were no longer useful. Food and ammunition was carried into many of the positions by man-pack, with loads of a hundred pounds on pack-boards. Men who thought they had conquered mountainous terrain in SICILY and Southern ITALY discovered that they had only made a beginning.

Here, in the high wall of mountains west of the VOLTURNO Valley, the German engineers had prepared, well in advance, Hitler's WINTER LINE, and it became evident from prisoner's reports that the enemy troops had been ordered to hold this line at all costs. Huge boulders, rock ledges, caves, and reverse slopes provided excellent cover; and full advantage was taken to provide, with the assist-



ance of enforced civilian labor, deep, reinforced slit trenches and stone covered natural dug-outs.

Machine guns with alternate positions were emplaced where artillery had been registered, so that crews, when attacked, could fall back to protection, then the artillery or mortar fire could be placed on the attacking troops. Such terrain and such tactics forced the Division infantry to operate under very adverse conditions. Success in advancing depended upon going in under fire and ferreting out each enemy group, often finding a difficult position held by only a few men.

Always excellent at camouflage, the Germans had hidden their positions well. Along a mountain roadway, near POZZILLI, trees had been planted and branches wired over, to screen enemy movements from the valley below.

Superior observation, ever the Division's greatest concern in the fighting in ITALY, was enjoyed by the enemy throughout this phase of the campaign. When forced to give ground, the Germans withdrew to expertly chosen and prepared positions from which registration had previously been made on possible avenues of approach and possible troop areas.

Kesselring was determined to preserve the line as BERLIN had demanded. Strong enemy reinforcements were brought in from time to time, both as replacements for the many casualties suffered under the Division's artillery and mortar barrages, and as additional holding forces for the line.

Thus action rapidly became a duel by artillery. Proof of the effectiveness of the Division's weapons and fire came from prisoners who reported that their companies had suffered as high as fifty per cent casualties, and from evidence that all enemy supply movements were taking place at night.

The Division began digging in, too. Both in forward and in rear areas, the men dug in as the enemy's fire became more and more accurate, and as he employed more big guns. For the first time in many weeks, fire began to fall in and near the Division CP. Some of it was from 170MM guns, believed to be mounted on railway flat cars.

An increase in enemy air activity caused the men to dig in even deeper, while the artillery battle raged and forward advance was painfully slow or impossible. Enemy bombing and strafing of the Division's positions around the town of VENAFRO became a daily menace.

During the month of November, the 106th AAA Aircraft Battalion reported 25 flights of enemy planes over the Division area during the first 13 days and five flights after that. The enemy's losses over the Division area, caused by the anti-aircraft fire of the Battalion, during 25 engagements, involving 265 planes, were eight destroyed (confirmed), 21 probably destroyed, and 17 damaged by bursts observed on the plane.

November 1 found the Division continuing to move troops into the forward area in preparation for the crossing of the VOLTURNO River. On the right was the 34th Infantry Division, on the left the 3rd Division. On that day extensive minefields were encountered about blown

bridges and river crossings and on the routes of advance. Booby traps and S-mines were used extensively in such places as haystacks and darkened houses. The defensive-delaying action was maintained with long-range artillery fire and strong patrols sent out from positions along the general line from MONTE CAVALLO to MONTE ROTUNDA.

At dawn the 2nd Bn. of the 179th Infantry advanced to the high ground directly east of and overlooking the VOLTURNO RIVER Valley. The Regimental Combat Team was established in a commanding position along the entire east bank of the river.

Enemy artillery was emplaced along the high ground west of the VOLTURNO River and south of VENAFRO to cover the river crossings and the natural obstacles afforded by bridges and canals. Surrounding the gently enfiladed valley were steep snow-capped mountain peaks which caused additional hardships, increasing daily, from cold, snow, and sleet.

On November 2, patrols from the 2nd Bn. of the 180th Infantry crossed the VOLTURNO River and remained in position on the other side. On November 3, Company G of the 179th Infantry crossed the river, but met strong opposition from the enemy fighting a defensive action, and was forced to fall back.

The 180th Infantry's Company F crossed the river during the night and occupied positions in the vicinity of SESTO CAMPANO without making contact with the enemy.

The 179th Infantry next day began crossing the river and observed small arms fire just west of the river and a number of armored vehicles. The lead company was stopped by machine gun fire along a railroad and highway approximately 1,000 meters south of VENAFRO. A heavy artillery concentration by two battalions was laid down on a wooded area west of VENAFRO, after which the infantry entered the town and prepared for possible counter-attack. The high ground northeast of the town was occupied during the night. The 180th Infantry advanced toward its objective in the VALLECUPA-CEPPAGNA section of the enemy's line. Enemy opposition developed into three brisk counterattacks. The positions held, however, and numerous casualties were inflicted upon the enemy.

The Division penetrations in the area north of POZZILLI in the vicinity of CEPPAGNA and north of VENAFRO, was to continue north and seize the high ground west of ACQUAFONDATA and the hills south and east of CARDITO.

Engineers had worked feverishly throughout the day of November 4 to complete a pontoon bridge across the VOLTURNO. It was passable for light traffic early in the day, and by 2145 was pronounced capable of sustaining tanks and all other forms of transportation.

The Division's penetrations in the area north of POZZILLI seemed to strike a sensitive spot in the enemy line. During the early morning of November 6, reinforcements estimated at better than a battalion were brought into the area there, defended by the 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division.

Resistance remained stiff along the sector of the enemy line which had as its axis CONCASALE, VITICUSO, and



ACQUAFONDATA. Small arms, rifle grenade, machine gun, and mortar fire met elements attempting to penetrate forward in this area. Activity near CONCASALE was explained in part by the presence of an artillery park in that area.

Typical of the fighting encountered in the area was that of the attack on November 4 to capture the high ground north of ROCCA PIPIROZZI. The 180th Infantry attack jumped off at 0100 hours over steep and rocky ground where the men had to cling to rocks and underbrush to keep from sliding down the mountain. In the dark of night, maps had been of little use, and after climbing over and around rocks and boulders until daybreak, it was difficult to estimate the position. The Battalion Commander called a halt for reconnaissance. Captain Crye and Captain Dugger climbed to the top of the ridge; then, just over the top, they came upon a group of German officers. Captain Crye waved to them, and surprisingly enough, the Germans waved back. His plan for capturing the Germans did not work out, but the attempt started the first of the fight to capture the town of ROCCA PIPIROZZI. The Germans fought fiercely, and several counter-attacks were made to hold the ridge. This ridge enabled an artillery observer to make his way into a building at one end of the town where he could direct fire on the enemy. Soon after, a squad of machine gunners started up a street, which was narrow and winding and more like a stone stairway than a road, when two Germans jumped out of a doorway. The gunners dropped their machine-gun, whipped out their pistols in true Western style, and killed the two Germans.

Long before the town was completely cleared of enemy, a German officer was found in a building at the south end of town directing fire on the 180th Infantry, while, from a building on the north end of town a Division observer was directing fire on the enemy.

The state of the enemy's morale was indicated by a note from a diary found on a dead German officer after the capture of ROCCA PIPIROZZI on November 5. It reads:

"November 4. For three days now we have been like navigators on a dangerous sea. The only safe harbor: 'the cellar.' In the evening, with mules and on foot north of FRIELLO. In the last minute I get hold of a peasant's cart. Three days without communication to my battery. In the night we went to SAN PIETRO, and from there continued our way to ROCCA PIPIROZZI. Between 0300 and 0700, the infantry (3 Battalion, 6 Parachute Regiment) has heavy casualties. Firing is extremely difficult here. When I get ready to fire, communication interrupts. The Tommy is not far away. We are being surrounded. We are vegetating in a primitive hut. We are hungry, and kill a pig with a machine pistol. We eat the half-roasted . . ."

The diary ends there.

Capitalizing on his advantage of superior observation and the possession of dominating terrain, the enemy resisted

stubbornly throughout the day of November 6. His attitude remained defensive, with no indications of an attempt to counterattack, yet there was no sign of a withdrawal along the rugged mass of heights northwest of VALLECUPA on MOUNT CORNO and MOUNT CROCE. Wherever encountered, the enemy was well dug in. His positions on MOUNT CROCE, for instance, were protected by a system of S-mines, with the fields so arranged as to canalize the Division's advance against his machine gun positions. These positions received supplies, including hot meals, from VITICUSO by mule pack, no other transportation being practicable.

Nebelwerfers shelled the lead elements of the Division and during the night the monstrous 150 MM guns fired on ROCCA PIPIROZZI. Intermittent fire also fell on the CEPPAGNA-POZZILLI road, on November 5.

Artillery was employed extensively against troops, regimental installations, and main supply routes in the Division's forward areas. The enemy sought by the use of artillery to deny the Division the use of the highway through VENAFRO. The fire became particularly heavy from 1030 to 1200 on November 6. POZZILLI was shelled at 1235, 150 MM guns fired on VENAFRO at 1230, and heavy caliber artillery fell on the 179th Infantry area.

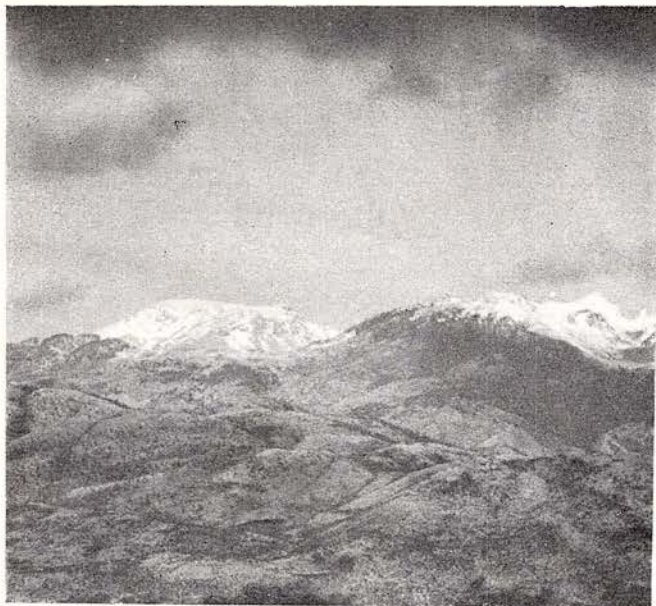
The 180th Infantry Regiment CP was shelled periodically throughout the day. Heavy concentrations of artillery fire fell from the direction of FILIGNANO. Twenty rounds of 105MM gun fire fell in the Division Artillery CP area at VENAFRO and caused casualties in headquarters battery.

Enemy air activity continued strong, with 35 planes dive-bombing the VENAFRO area at 1120, 30 to 35 planes bombing and strafing the area north of VENAFRO at 1455, 12 others engaging in dive-bombing south of VENAFRO at 1523, and an undetermined number of planes strafing and dive-bombing the 179th Infantry CP area east of VENAFRO. Enemy elements in contact were from the 3rd Panzer Division and the 103rd Reconnaissance Battalion, which seemed to have relieved the 1st Bn. of the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division.

Patrols from the 179th Infantry reported POZZILLI clear of enemy troops, although a pocket of 20 Germans well entrenched in commanding positions made a determined stand above the Regimental CP. The 180th Infantry advanced slowly against both exceedingly stubborn resistance and mountainous terrain, with the mission of clearing the enemy from a rocky and precipitous hill mass, so difficult to scale that not even the pack mules could reach the crest. The CP was interdicted by heavy artillery fire and forced to withdraw, displacing to a new position. An ammunition truck loaded with mortar ammunition was struck and destroyed.

One battalion of the 180th Infantry moved out in an attempt to outflank the enemy north of VENAFRO, another continued mopping up operations. As the enemy were cleared from the area around ROCCA PIPIROZZI and VALLECUPA, a roadblock was maintained on the passage in that area.





*Where the mountain training of Virginia proved of value to the soldiers of the Division—mountains of Italy near Aquafondata.*

Stubborn resistance continued throughout November 7 after the enemy had withdrawn slightly overnight to reorganize the troops manning the defense line. Enemy artillery was particularly active all day, with heavy concentrations of 150-MM fire falling at several points, including POZZILLI. Bombing and dive-bombing of Division areas occurred again. Large concentrations of tanks were reported moving from POZZILLI toward SELVONE.

The 180th Infantry, 157th Infantry, and 179th Infantry were committed in the Division line abreast in that order. The 179th Infantry advanced north from POZZILLI against determined resistance, over almost incredibly difficult terrain for fighting, through abundantly planted mines the removal of which made progress doubly tortuous and slow. The 180th continued to clear out pockets north of VENAFRO on a wide front and over the exceedingly precarious terrain of the ridge.

Getting supplies to the fighting men was a tremendous task in itself. Mules could be used to carry them more than half way. Beyond that, everything must be hand-carried. As a man had all he could do to climb the ridges and projections empty-handed, it seemed almost impossible to undertake the climb with a carton of K-rations. Yet one man, after a companion had fallen and injured his knee, shouldered both boxes and struggled on up the ridge.

Enemy defenses became aggressive and determined in all sectors on November 8. The reorganization of the day before, in highly favorable terrain with splendid fields of observation, was utilized to best advantage. The 29th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, 3rd Panzer Division, and elements of the 9th Panzer Grenadier Regiment of the 26th Panzer Division counterattacked twice. The counterattacks were repulsed, but enemy strong points in the 179th Infantry area continued to hold. Fire from small arms and automatic weapons increased steadily to reach a climax

of intensity at 1600 hours. Artillery shelling was heavy on forward elements, most of it coming from the direction of VITICUSO and S. PIETRO. The towns of POZZILLI and VENAFRO occupied by Division troops received severe shellings, and enemy planes remained active with bombings and strafings.

More than 50 prisoners were taken on November 8, bringing the total since D-Day on SALERNO BEACH past the 500 mark. Morale of captured Germans seemed surprisingly low in view of their advantages of position. A number gave themselves up voluntarily. Most stated that they had been out of contact with their units for two or three days. Many voiced the opinion that Germany had already lost the war in ITALY!

Considerable enemy artillery fire interdicted the roads into VENAFRO, and Division Artillery continued to fire heavily. A detachment of 45 Germans descending a sharp hill ran into one of their own land mines and a man was killed. 41 of them surrendered in the resulting confusion.

Isolated machine pistol positions in the mountains gave Division patrols much trouble. During the advance, the infantry squads also encountered entrenchments in the shelter of the rough terrain. One squad sent out to occupy a mountainside crest of land worked their way close to a position under supporting artillery fire, only to have the Germans walk out with their hands above their heads. Investigation of the position disclosed a dugout of surprising size, stocked with supplies including cured ham, preserves, potatoes, and fresh bread. Blankets and mattresses were found, together with a few pairs of silk stockings and women's underclothing packaged and ready to be sent to Germany. The surrender of the well-stocked and advantageously located position without a fight remained a minor mystery.

Well-provisioned shelters were the rule along the WINTER LINE, however. It was obvious that the enemy had come to stay. From his rock-bound positions in the line, it had seemed that he might stay forever, lobbing his fires into the Americans on the shell-pocked VOLTURNO Plain and VENAFRO Valley. If the Germans could have scaled the highest peaks before the Americans did, if they could have used the peaks to bring direct observation upon all the Division's artillery units instead of firing from the reverse slopes of the hills into the plain and valley, their plan might have succeeded.

The attack upon the mountain region between MONTE CROCE and MONTE CORNO was continued by the 180th Infantry Regiment on November 9, as enemy resistance in the mass of peaks northwest of VENAFRO held on, but showed some signs of indirection and lack of leadership. Lieutenant Cross, leader of the platoon which worked its way to the center of the Regimental attack first, encountered a well-dug-in pillbox and worked his way around the flank of the peak to a point from which he could not be observed.

As he reared himself to hurl grenades, an unobserved sniper several yards from the pillbox fired upon him point





*"The Pass" and "The Rock." Monte Croce and Monte Corno west of the Volturno Valley.*

blank, the bullet entering the left side of his face and emerging behind the left ear. The platoon leader calmly continued to neutralize the pillbox, then killed the sniper who had shot him.

A light counterattack upon the left flank of the 179th Infantry, followed by heavy concentrations of artillery fire along the Division front, began at 1630. The men knew now, by previous experience, that this signified an enemy withdrawal to a new position.

Engineers reported an ever-increasing use of mines. Not only were these found on narrow mountain trails and rocky passages where a few could block the advance of a large detachment of troops, but in fields as well. More than 150 of them were pulled from a single field north of the railroad near POZZILLI.

Enemy air activity suddenly decreased, but interdiction of the roads around VENAFRO by enemy artillery continued. Twenty rounds fell in the Division CP area and caused casualties.

All battalions of Division Artillery fired heavily on November 9. The 158th Field Artillery Battalion put a line of fire upon approaching vehicles and a tank with good effect. The 160th fired to repel a counterattack. Heavy concentrations of chemical mortar and artillery fire were placed upon a counterattack in the 3rd Infantry Division's zone, under the direction of Corps Artillery.

Some difficulty was experienced in locating targets and enemy positions accurately. This desolate country, beneath

great hulking mountains—their higher peaks bald and lower slopes covered with scrubby trees and vegetation, stone walls, and outcroppings of rock—was remarkably devoid of landmarks by which orientation could be accomplished quickly. As the enemy recurrently poured in fresh troops to hold the line of advance through the mountains, it was virtually impossible to interdict movements successfully with the insufficiently clear markings of roads and trails obtainable on the maps at this stage. Often the artillery targets lay on the far side of a mountain as the enemy had not yet reached the top, and shells burst over behind the craggy promontory of the ridge.

The Germans made full use of the natural advantages of the area for camouflage, and there were cases where an Italian civilian could recognize and point out an enemy installation or command post, through familiarity with the terrain, which had gone undetected by the Americans.

The enemy broke contact with the lead elements of the Division on November 10 and occupied a new line of defensive-delaying positions at VITICUSO, along the eastern edge of MONTE CAVALLO, at MONTE LA POSTA and the town of CERRETO, on the hill slopes to the east and south of the town.

Scattered small arms and mortar fire fell on the Division sector, largely toward the center, while automatic weapons commanded the approaches to strongpoints and artillery continued to interdict roads and troop areas. Two flights of 12 Focke-Wulf planes each bombed and strafed



parts of the Division area. Minefields were reported in literally scores of locations.

Wherever the enemy was encountered, usually on reverse slopes of hills, he was well dug-in and had made the most of his concealed positions. Less artillery activity indicated that the enemy's big guns were being displaced to the rear. Five rounds of artillery fire fell on the area of the 120th Medical Battalion. Five unidentified planes strafed the 179th Infantry Regiment.

On November 12 the enemy line followed an axis through ANNUNZIATA, CONCACASALE, Hill 410, Hill 640, LAGONE, and CERASUOLO, with probable organization of rear areas in the high mountains a few miles to the west. Enemy artillery had been withdrawn from the right flank to the CARDITO-CERASUOLO areas. The S. VITTORE positions, most advantageous for firing into Division areas, were maintained. Increased activity around VENAFRO and against the Division front lines indicated that the withdrawal was complete and that the guns were firing from their new positions. Division rear areas were harassed by fire from a 170-MM gun the exact location of which was unknown.

Along the FILIGNANO-ACQUAFONDATA Road and north of CONCACASALE, the enemy still fought stubbornly from well-organized hill positions, both on the crests and on the reverse slopes, supplying the troops at night by bringing the supplies to the end of each road by truck, then by pack to the front.

A company of the 157th Infantry Regiment seized and secured the enemy stronghold of Hill 640 and then engaged in mopping up operations with the aid of the following company. Patrols from the 157th Infantry pushed forward to take Hill 460 and to establish contact with the 179th Infantry.

Those moving on Hill 460 were halted twice by mortar and machine gun fire. Those fighting their way toward

the 179th Infantry Regiment sector encountered rough action all the way.

Division Artillery fired 2,475 rounds on November 12, one of the heaviest firing days of this phase of the campaign. One battery of the 189th Field Artillery Battalion lost all but one of its prime movers and much ammunition in a shelling by enemy artillery.

The 1st Ranger Battalion (2nd Bn. of the 509th Parachute Regiment, 83rd Chemical Battalion, and two mine-sweeping squads of the 120th Engineer Battalion) who were attached to the Division cleared the ridge in their sector on MONTE CORNO. They discovered evidence that the enemy had abandoned his fortifications hastily during the night, leaving behind considerable stocks of food, utensils, and ammunition, as well as their unburied dead.

Patrols sent to CONCACASALE reported they had observed one company of Germans leaving the town. Later, another company entered hurriedly, and a skirmish resulted. In the resultant confusion the enemy fled through his own minefields, causing casualties and even greater confusion. A heavy artillery concentration of artillery on CONCACASALE silenced mortar fire that had been coming from that point.

A strong enemy attack in force came on November 13 in the deep valleys lying to the east of MONTE CAVALLO, and was finally broken up by the 180th Infantry and the 4th Ranger Battalion. In his determination to hold prepared positions in that locality, enemy infantry supported by artillery counterattacked three times to regain possession of Hill 460 during the day and night and was thrown back each time.

One company of the 157th Infantry Regiment attempted to move from Hill 460 to Hill 470 and was hit by two counterattacks, which were beaten off. Extremely heavy artillery concentrations lasting for two hours caused heavy casualties and the company withdrew to Hill 460 and to the base of Hill 769. Another company was moved for

*Pack mules were necessary during the fighting in the mountains. For some units even mules were not good enough to carry the supplies up the steep hills.*





ward to block a reported movement of the enemy around the base of Hill 769. The 1st Bn. of the 157th Infantry consolidated positions it had seized on Hill 750.

During the night of November 12-13 the enemy assembled approximately 100 men on the reverse slope of one peak and 200 on the reverse of another. They were still in possession of most of the peaks and slopes of the defense ridge.

A heavy artillery and mortar preparatory barrage was placed upon the Division positions between 0600 and 0645. Six hundred rounds dropped in VALLECUPA within the hour.

At 0645, with the artillery still firing, a part of the German force attacked fiercely, swinging to the left up the ridge. At the same time, the group of 100 Germans on the other peak swung south down the ridge. Both the left and right flanks of the Division line were forced to give ground. The center remained firm.

Division artillery fired extremely heavy concentrations on the enemy forces, and eventually the attack was broken up.

The Germans attacked in waves of skirmishes, with men carrying mortars and machine guns following in the wake of each attacking wave. When enemy soldiers were hit, the groups following would pick up their weapons and continue the advance.

The full force of the assault was being felt at 0730, and the situation seemed about to become serious. The 4th Ranger Battalion was reinforced by a company of the 180th Infantry. Excellent effect was reported from the use of 4.2 mortars of the 83rd Chemical Battalion, which at times were placed within 100 yards of the Division troops.

The men developed amazing accuracy and skill with mortars, sometimes using methods which were innovations of their own in firing, but getting good results. Although it became proverbial among the mortar squads that their casualties were high, they operated with unabashed courage and daring close under enemy observation and with telling results.

By 1045 the attack had spent its fury and the arrival of another reinforcing company eased the situation. After darkness, the 4th Rangers could be relieved in the area. At the end of the attack, the change of position showed only an alteration of the line by a few hundred yards on the map. Yet it meant the loss of a rugged, steep, precarious, and hard-to-climb ridge line.

On November 14, the enemy's attitude remained passive and entirely defensive throughout the day. There were no reports of attempted patrolling by the enemy which might have pointed to a general reorganization and regrouping. A decrease in enemy artillery during the morning could be attributed to clouds and heavy fog which limited visibility. During the night enemy artillery fire landed in the Division CP area. The 1st Bn. of the 29th Panzer Grenadier Regiment of the 3rd Panzer Division returned to the line in the CONCACASALE area.

That afternoon a Division field order was issued covering the organization of defensive positions to be established

while preparations were completed for an advance to the northwest.

The 180th Infantry moved to retake the difficult stretch of ridge which the Germans had wrested from the Division in the fighting of the previous day. Hostile artillery was active on the position throughout the day.

Fighting for possession of the end of the ridge developed in the sector of the 1st Ranger Battalion, which now included the 4th Ranger Battalion, the 2nd Bn. of the 509th Parachute Regiment, the 83rd Chemical Battalion, and mine-sweeping squads from the 120th Engineer Battalion. Patrols sent to CONCACASALE during the night reported that the enemy were in and around that town in considerable strength. All approaches to the town were covered by machine guns.

When a green rocket was fired by the Division patrol, a great scurrying around of the enemy in CONCACASALE was noted, with blowing of whistles and shouting of commands. A captured artillery fire plan revealed that a green flare was designated to indicate that the Americans had broken through the lines.

The 4th Rangers, now attached to the 1st Ranger Battalion, patrolled the gap between that Battalion and the 180th Infantry Regiment on the ridge.

An extremely heavy rainfall on the night of November 14-15 continued throughout the next day, turning the VOLTURNO River into a raging torrent and washing out all bridges in use by the Division.

Hostile artillery was active throughout the period, especially at night. Heavy caliber shells fell in the area of the Division CP and the 120th Medical Battalion. Heavy interdictory fire fell on VENAFRO and the roads leading east and west, and on CEPPAGNA and POZZILLI.

The enemy's counterbattery fire became unusually accurate, indicating arrival in the area of German sound-and-flash ranging units. There was no apparent change in the enemy's front lines, but extensive night patrolling by the enemy indicated a regrouping and reorganization of the troops. Hills 1040, 850, and 831 of the ridge were still occupied by the enemy. Patrols reported the eastern slopes of MONTE SAMMUCRO occupied by Germans. Others were in organized positions along the southwestern edge of S. PIETRO near the 3rd Infantry Division sector.

On November 17 the 36th Infantry Division relieved the 3rd Division, and the 34th Division remained to the right of the 45th Division. Patrol activity and interdictory fire were the main enemy activities. Observed troop movements did not seem to indicate replacement of enemy troops or reinforcement, but a mere shifting to improve positions. Enemy tanks and mobile guns again showed signs of activity, and enemy planes made efforts at bombing.

On November 18 the rains continued. Roads were in extremely bad condition while the Engineers worked continually to keep the trails passable for supplies. The supply system was still maintained by the use of mule pack train, and the regiments were required to assign approximately 90 men and an officer to the pack train detail.

Following a report from civilians that the Germans





*Joe E. Brown at San Salvatore, Italy, in Jan., '44.*

were making use of quarters in buildings in VITICUSO, VI Corps fired all the guns that could reach the target on four great concentrations on November 16. On November 18, as the enemy was driven from cover on Hill 769 by artillery bombardment, they were fired upon with good effect. Next day patrols located two enemy listening posts on that hill.

Enemy artillery was active on November 18, firing three great concentrations upon the VENAFRO area at different times, with firing intermittently in between, and sporadic shelling of the forward elements.

Captured enemy documents revealed that the American phosphorus shells were extremely effective, particularly against enemy signal communications, burning radio equipment and telephone wires. Mortar fire also proved effective. The command post of the 2nd Company, 15th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, installed in a mountain cave near Hill 420 about three kilometers southeast of S. PIETRO, was destroyed by a direct hit by a mortar shell which also killed the company commander.

Division Artillery battalion areas and command post were shelled frequently during the day and night of November 18. In addition the command post received more than 100 rounds of 105-MM rifle fire. A loaded half-track received a direct hit.

On November 19, the enemy was using men from howitzer and pack artillery platoons to fight as infantry. Often the wounded were not evacuated during daylight to avoid disclosing positions, although every effort had been exerted by the Germans to improve and protect their positions during this period of comparative static warfare. Twenty-five motor transports were observed entering ACQUAFONDATA, and enemy artillery fire continued to be heavy. Di-

vision Artillery fired 2,478 rounds, largely on counter-battery missions.

"During the night of November 18-19, a jeep from the 34th Division hit a mine on the by-pass northeast of CEPPAGNA. An ambulance from the First Ranger Battalion, dispatched to pick up the injured, also ran into a mine. Engineers were called to sweep the area and they discovered two more mines and a prepared explosive charge. A prisoner of war, picked up by the 34th Division, claimed to have been with a 50-man patrol laying mines in our area during the night."

During these days of cold, wet, mountain fighting, the war at VENAFRO became a series of patrols and artillery fire. Patrolling was continuous, probing the enemy's fortifications on every slope of every hill, while the enemy operated only to counter these patrols and harass the stymied troops and their supply lines. Day and night the heavy guns of each side threw thousands of shells into the positions of the other. Reports of "heavy shelling" and "large concentrations" were too numerous to count, and much of the enemy's fire was never mentioned in official reports, for it became a matter of course.

A surprising attack at daylight on November 25, directed generally against the sector held by the Rangers, was broken up before it reached the area at which it was aimed. Following an artillery barrage, a second attack was launched, but was repulsed with the support of Corps Artillery.

Even these attacks and counterattacks became so routine that the infantry troops were kept constantly alert, and few of the clashes came as a surprise. After so many days of learning the tactics and habits of the German mountain fighters, forward troops and observers could sense the slightest change from normal.

A renewed attack into the WINTER LINE was begun at 0600 on November 29. The main effort of this drive was to clear the enemy from the bare rocky hill called Hill 769. For several days prior to this the troops of 179th Infantry and the enemy defenders had been so interlocked among the positions that artillery fire could not be effectively used. Observers were also hampered by the fog which obscured most of the hill. The enemy's immediate move to reinforce these positions in the face of the attack strengthened the entire line along the hillside, and the battle continued for several days before any progress was made in gaining ground.

There was strong indication that elements of the 44th German Infantry Division had arrived in the Division sector. Now that the enemy had ample reserves for offensive action, it seemed more likely that he would use them to rest his battered and depleted units who had been holding onto the reverse slopes along the MOUNT CORNO-MOUNT CROCE Ridge.

Should he attack, it was believed the offensive action would come from S. PIETRO and CONCACASALE, and would be an effort to take the great peak of MOUNT CORNO, with its vital observation of the VOLTURNO Val-





*The explosion of Vesuvius, in spite of its power and fire, was little more destructive than the war in Italy.*

ley. Should he secure positions on that peak the enemy could fire upon Division Artillery battalions with perfect observation and at will.

A decrease in enemy artillery fire was noted on November 30, except to the front of the Rangers, where a slight increase was noted. Mortar and small arms fire showed a marked increase on the 157th and 179th Regimental fronts. A presumed attack by the enemy from Hill 470 to Hill 460 at 0850 did not materialize after strong small arms and mortar concentrations.

It was evident that Polish soldiers within the ranks had been withdrawn from the line units of the 305th Infantry Division and sent to the rear because of a marked tendency to escape and surrender to the Americans. They were replaced with trained and seasoned German personnel.

On the night of November 30-December 1, the Rangers who had been serving as line troops in this vital sector were withdrawn through the 180th Infantry Regiment sector as their relief was completed.

Some 2,578 rounds of ammunition were fired by Division Artillery on November 30 in direct support of the attack and elsewhere. The artillery CP area was shelled again, a frequent occurrence while the enemy enjoyed good observation.

The Commanding General, Fifth Army, and Lt. Gen.

Courtney B. Hodges, Third Army Commander, had both waded through the mud to visit the Division's VOLTURNO positions during November.

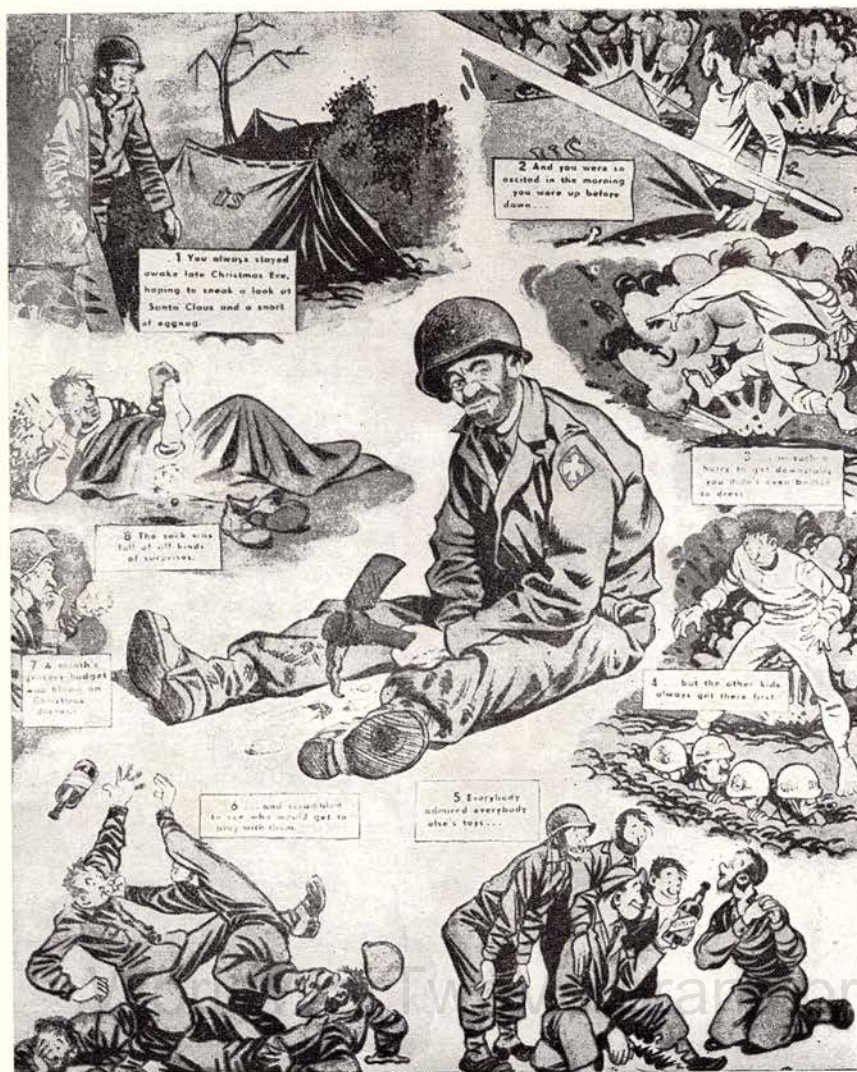
Maj. Gen. W. W. Eagles, former Assistant Division Commander of the 3rd Division, assumed command of the 45th Division on November 22 due to the illness of General Middleton.

On November 26, the first group of men and officers of the Division departed for the rest camp in Naples. There, men could lose a little of the tenseness and fatigue brought on by day after day of fighting in shallow, rocky foxholes over mountain trails, through mud so deep that it prevented the Division from exploiting its hard-won gains.

Sickness and exhaustion had developed among the troops in this fatiguing and heart-breaking fighting over rough terrain. Men grew taciturn, their faces grim and expressionless, under the constant scream and burst of firing which the mountain spaces seemed to amplify.

Up the rock cliffs that rose behind VENAFRO, a narrow path climbed among the scraggy olive trees and between the crevices, to the top of a shallow saddle known as the Pass. To the left, still higher, and still more rocky, stood the dominant crag of MONTE SAMUCCURO. To the right, sloping away to the north were the round, almost bald, peaks of MONTE CORNO and MONTE CROCE.





This saddle, the Pass, formed the only entrance way into the valley beyond, where the little town of CONCACASALE sat, far below.

The long, steep climb to the Pass required hours of exhaustive labor, but the 180th Infantry, with the 1st Ranger Battalion, observers of the 83rd Chemical Battalion, and mine sweepers from the 120th Engineers had cleared the Germans from the ridge and established a line between the peaks. These positions were very difficult to supply, as every item used was transported, usually by man-pack, up the narrow path.

There was one German position, however, that withstood the intense battering of artillery, mortar and rifle fire for many days. So placed that the enemy was protected by a cave behind huge boulders, it was inaccessible, hidden from observation except from the German's side of the mountain—and from one other position, the air.

To bomb this small German group in their almost impregnable fort would have greatly endangered the infantry and Ranger troops nearby, and the cave was so small even the most expert bomber would have found it with difficulty.

Throughout the last week of November the Ranger Commander, Lieutenant Colonel Darby, worked on a scheme to eliminate the 50 or so Germans that remained in the hole under the Rock. The order was issued that every man

who climbed the trail would carry at least one block of T.N.T. Eventually, stored in a sheltered place near the cave, near the top of the Pass, 800 pounds of explosive was accumulated.

During the night of November 29, an Engineer officer and his men prepared the charges; slung them on a length of rope, then carried them over the boulders up to a precarious point above the German position. In the rain and cold it took many hours to carefully lower the heavy charges over the top of the Rock, down, until they hung just over the opening, but out of reach, of the German cave.

At 1519A the explosion shook the few windows remaining in VENAFRO, and sent tons of rocks roaring down the mountain sides. Almost immediately the Germans fired an extremely heavy concentration of artillery and mortars onto the Ranger positions. Nothing was ever heard—or found—of the Germans in the cave under where the Rock had been.

During the first two weeks of December, intermittent heavy rainfall day and night across the mountains by no means halted activity, but it made every action extremely difficult. Combat patrols roamed the mountain passes. Continuous strong defensive measures were necessary to cope with the enemy's repeated counterattacks. The





*This photo isn't the civilian's conception of war, but war it is. The hill in the background is German-held. Smoke is from bursting 105-mm white phosphorus shells, thrown by a unit of the 45th Division near Venafro.*

enemy's slow withdrawal, with reinforcements of troops and materiel, was like a coiling spring. It was likely to spring back unexpectedly at any time, and with surprising force.

Enemy artillery, always accurate to a high degree because of the enemy's superior observation, increased its firepower and at times became almost staggeringly heavy.

MOUNT FIALLA and an adjacent draw, unoccupied the previous night, were found to be occupied by the enemy on the last night of November. Otherwise, the enemy held to his bunkers and combat trenches along the natural protective line from which he could withdraw when necessary to the next favorable position for observation.

On the 180th Infantry front was the 2nd Bn. of the 71st Panzer Grenadier Regiment, 29th Panzer Division. The 1st Bn. was on the Ranger front, and elements of the 71st Panzer Grenadier Division and of the 44th Infantry Division on the 157th Infantry front. On the 179th Infantry front were elements of the 67th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, 26th Panzer Division, and of the 577th Regiment, 305th Infantry Division.

During the night patrols infiltrated to Hill 460 and were cleaned off by patrols of the 45th Division occupying a smaller hill between Hills 460 and 470.

The 179th Infantry, attempting to advance on LA BANDITA, met small arms and machine gun fire from HILL 750 and the highway west of CERETTO and another company was sent to the crest of HILL 750 to mop up the machine gun positions causing the trouble. It was forced to withdraw when it came under a heavy concentration of mortar fire. Still another company was stopped by machine gun fire when it attempted to raid LAGONE.

A change in the enemy's position during early December gave them easier access to the road near MONTE FIALLA. The MONTE LATOSTA-LA BANDITA area was occupied

by numerous enemy machine gun positions. Eleven positions were believed to be manned at all hours of the day and night, but reports indicated that the enemy was withholding his fire during the night to avoid disclosure of his positions.

Farther up MONTE FIALLA the enemy had vacated his foxholes to move to the west near the CONCACASALE-VITICUSO Road where he had another line of well-prepared positions. Patrols also found HILL 770 completely occupied and well-manned by enemy troops.

The enemy front now ran generally along the line LA BANDITA-HILL 769-HILL 460 toward CONCACASALE, and his operations consisted largely of harassing and interdictory artillery fire. The high ground on the Division right flank was stubbornly defended.

HILL 750 was found unoccupied by enemy troops, but HILL 770 had to be taken under heavy artillery fire. The 179th Infantry, attempting to take HILL 855, met a superior enemy force and withdrew. Contact patrols were unable to get through because of heavy mortar concentrations. A Ranger patrol ran into a sharp fire fight with a German patrol.

Harassing and interdictory fire was heaviest in the FILIGNANO-POZZILLI area on December 3 and 4, as the enemy remained alert to attempts of the Division to move north or west. Enemy machine gun and mortar fire were placed upon positions there. Despite the heaviest rainfall yet encountered in the campaign, the enemy counterattacked three times in the vicinity of HILL 750 in an estimated force of two companies. Two were driven off, and HILL 750 was reported taken. The third, between HILLS 750 and 769, caused a withdrawal of the Company on that hill to HILL 700. The 189th Field Artillery Battalion was forced to displace for the sixth time in these positions by blasting enemy artillery fire.

Determined resistance was offered to efforts to retake HILL 750, both from that hill and from HILL 769. The enemy, firmly entrenched in many concrete bunkers capable of withstanding any fire except a direct hit—and that by artillery since 81-MM mortars had proved ineffectual—held the attacking companies to a line 150 yards below the crest. A counterattack was staged from the crest of the hill. Another counterattack on the slope of the hill made by approximately two platoons firing small arms and machine pistols was also repulsed. Division Artillery fired on targets—six-barrelled mortars, guns, troops, trucks, and suspected locations of enemy 75's and 88's.

Enemy fire on the hills became intensely heavy, and resistance remained firm on the northwest slope of HILL 769, with its bunkers and gun emplacements made of rock and wood mortared together. The final line of protective fire was made over natural rock formations and old stone walls. Much enemy activity was noted in CONCACASALE throughout this period, and enemy fire continued to fall on the FILIGNANO, POLLIZZI, and VALLECUPA areas.

The 179th Infantry began a mopping up operation on HILL 750, one battalion taking 40 machine pistols, 20 ma-



chine guns, 10 rifle grenade launchers, and 150 gas masks, and finding a number of enemy dead.

As the Division patrolled toward the LAGONE area, the enemy, always alert to prevent every movement, remained in close contact, but without aggressive action. The Germans frequently changed their outposts and machine gun positions. They used bunkers of stone and wood extensively for protection. Outposts in the vicinity of HILL 470 and in the LAGONE-LA BANDITA area fired on every target presented by Division troops. Enemy artillery continued to harass and interdict the Division's positions, movements, and troop areas.

This was the situation when the order came for a new major attack. The mission of the Division would be to seize the high ground to the east and southeast of CASALE, to maintain contact with II Corps and to protect the VI Corps' left flank. The Division sector was at the left of the Corps sector, and its immediate objective was the ponderous mass of hills ahead and the enemy-occupied towns.

Resistance to the attack was stiff in the Division sector, but no effort was made to counterattack. The enemy had so coordinated the fires of their artillery and mortars that they could cover, with fire, areas not occupied by their own infantry. Although there were no indications of a general withdrawal, the enemy was observed moving machine guns to the rear in the CONCACASALE area.

The 157th Infantry attack jumped off at 0630 to seize HILL 640 and go on to HILL 831. Hills contingent upon the line of advance had to be taken, and one company held its positions under heavy artillery fire on HILL 759, while another reached the crest of MOUNT FIALLA. The company engaged on HILL 770 encountered a sharp firefight.

The 179th Infantry advanced toward its objective on the great saddle-like ridge against many determined machine gun positions. The nose north of LAGONE was seized against stubborn resistance, and a little later there was street fighting in the town itself. Division Artillery fired 3,059 rounds of ammunition and more than 1,000 rounds on smoke missions.

By noon on December 15 the enemy had withdrawn from LAGONE and reestablished their positions on HILL 770 and MOUNT FIALLA. Resistance to the attack continued stubbornly, principally by fire from automatic weapons and mortars. Artillery fire, the bulk of which seemed to be from self-propelling guns, was largely confined to targets of opportunity afforded by advance elements. A heavy concentration was placed by the enemy upon HILL 769 during the afternoon.

The employment of tanks in the Division attack was apparently a surprise to the enemy, as no anti-tank fire was received. A counterattack on HILL 640 was repulsed, but when a strong attack on HILL 770 developed into a hand-to-hand combat with the enemy possessing all the advantages, the Division's troops withdrew under heavy fire.

The following morning, December 16, a strong attack was launched on MOUNT FIALLA and because of their isolated positions the troops there withdrew under the cover of smoke. In the CONCACASALE area, attempted reconnaissance in force developed into a firefight lasting an hour and a half, after which the enemy withdrew.

Two companies of the 157th Infantry had reached the top of HILL 640 against very strong resistance and repulsed a counterattack from the enemy dug in on the west slope of the hill. Fighting continued throughout the day

*Orderly room of the 45th Division ration dump Vairano, Italy.*



*Loading rations at the dump near Vairano.*







By S. RADULOVICH

Courtesy War Department

*Command Post 45th Infantry Division,  
Venafro, Italy*

and night on HILL 470. Three counterattacks were repulsed on MOUNT FIALLA after which the company holding that point was forced to withdraw to HILL 759. The enemy reinforced the defenses on HILL 850 during the night and launched a strong counterattack on HILL 770, forcing the company there to withdraw to HILL 759. Plans were formulated for an attack on HILL 770, the defenses of which were manned by at least 300 of the enemy.

Tanks moving to the forward area of the 157th Infantry knocked out several machine gun emplacements and were successful in firing on targets of opportunity.

A company of the 179th Infantry reached the crest of HILL 855, but the Regiment's position on HILLS 750 and 760 were heavily shelled by the enemy during the night of December 15, causing considerable casualties. The 3rd Bn. continued to operate around LAGONE and maneuvered with orders to attack the town from the north. Division Artillery fired smoke over CASALE to mark targets for American bombing operations.

Early on December 16 the enemy was active with his artillery against the Division's forward elements, making HILL 470 untenable by late afternoon. Then all activity seemed to cease except sharp patrol clashes and small group movements of the enemy near CONCASALE. Then the enemy evacuated MASTRO GIOVANNI and HILL 855. Artillery was confined to light harassing fire.

Artillery activity continued to decrease next day. A half-dozen hills were found unoccupied by Division patrols, and movement to occupy them was begun. No physical contact with the enemy was established next day, but indications pointed to defensive positions in the vicinity of ACQUAFONDATA. Large amounts of enemy materiel, including such items as eight machine guns and seven extra barrels, a mortar gun, three machine pistols, 15 rifles, thousands of rounds of ammunition of several kinds, rifle grenades, fragmentation grenades, "potato masher" grenades, and so forth, were captured.

The 157th Infantry occupied HILLS 460, 470, and 640, and reached HILL 831 and HILL 680. A platoon was reported on MOUNT CAVELLO, the main point of the Division objective, and platoons were sent to MOUNT FIALLA and HILL 770.

The 180th Infantry Regiment received heavy artillery concentrations throughout the day on HILL 970. A patrol found HILL 840 unoccupied. Division Artillery fired only 383 rounds, and these on harassing missions. Location of the enemy's new positions was not yet known.

On December 19 aerial photographs indicated enemy positions in the vicinity of VITICUSO and ACQUAFONDATA and other positions, possibly unoccupied, were on the forward slopes of HILL 990. Scattered artillery fire fell across the Division front and on MOUNT CORNO,



while enemy patrols harassed Division patrols and outposts with small arms, machine gun, and mortar fire.

The enemy had come to fear and dread the Division's artillery fire and patrol action, prisoners of war revealed again and again throughout this period. The artillery fire, which had a highly demoralizing effect, was claimed over and over to be "worse than RUSSIA." Captured Germans betrayed their fear of outpost duty because of the manner in which Division patrols operated, covering scrubby orchards and stony mule tracks, where the only shelter was in outcroppings of rock, without being seen. One German non-commissioned officer said that to the Germans, the infantry patrols seemed to "walk on air."

Consolidation of positions was accomplished with only minor changes in the line and minor action, until the 157th Infantry ran into a counterattack and heavy artillery fire in mopping up operations on the western side of MOUNT CAVELLO. On December 22 troop movements southeast of CASALE and in the vicinity of MOUNT MOLINO meant either a regrouping of the enemy lines or a withdrawal of outposted positions back toward the main line of resistance.

Christmas Day was spent in the Italian mountains above VENAFRO in a manner indicated by this extract from the journal of the 180th Infantry:

"The weather continued cloudy, with little change in temperature. Maintained contact with 157th Infantry on left and 5th Regiment, Second Moroccan Division, on the right. Extensive patrol activity was carried out to the west and northwest. It rained throughout the day."

Other units spent the day in much the same manner. Some 2,055 rounds of ammunition were fired by Division Artillery, largely upon troop concentrations and harassing missions.

On December 28 an increased movement of enemy troops was noted in the MOUNT MOLINO and MOUNT MAJO areas. When the Division attacked again, opposition had stiffened considerably. Division troops were driven from MOUNT MOLINO and MOUNT RAIMO. The enemy's dependency upon automatic fire power and mortar fire for defense of his positions was demonstrated by his permitting Division units to gain the crest of MOUNT MOLINO before attempting to drive them off with concentrated fires from HILL 960 and the southwest slope of MOUNT MOLINO.

Division Artillery fired 5,244 rounds on December 30, and 6,274 rounds the following day, continuing its attack against the enemy's strongpoints in snow and ice, rain and high winds. Active patrolling in early January indicated strong-

points at MOUNT MOLINO, HILLS 960, 1040, and 1115, in the northern part of the Division sector, with no change noted in the southern part.

New Year's Day was quiet, with a blustery wind blowing snow into the faces of the observers high in the hills. The valleys were swept with rain, and poor visibility accounted at least in part for the lack of activity. The enemy welcomed the new year with salvos of artillery fire on the Division lines, but he was otherwise quiet, the inaction being attributable to the weather.

Orders had been received for relief of the 45th Division in this sector, and on January 4 the units began infiltrating to the reserve area in the vicinity of LAGONE as the enemy remained passive. On January 9, the Division officially ceased its responsibility for its sector of the front line after 70 days of continuous combat. During the last days of its fighting in the line, the Division played so large a part in the entry of the French Expeditionary Corps into the line in ITALY, controlling the situation by its artillery fire and constant, implacable patrol action as the French took over, earning the award of the Croix de Guerre with Palm from the Provisional Government of the French Republic and a citation signed by General De Gaulle as chief of the armies.

The citation for the part which the Division played in the victory of the French Expeditionary Corps at ACQUAFONDATA in January reads as follows:

"45th Infantry Division, U. S.

"A magnificent Major Unit, its ardor in combat

*Townfolk cheer a vehicle of the 2d Chem. Bn., attached to the 45th Division at Lichi, Italy.*







By MITCHELL SIPORIN

Courtesy War Department

*New Years Day Near Venafro 1944*

and spirit of cooperation were particularly appreciated by the French Units of the French Expeditionary Corps at the time of their entering the line in ITALY, and when a portion of the infantry of that Division played a glorious part in the victory of ACQUAFONDATA, January, 1944."

The 180th Infantry Regiment was attached to the French Corps for this operation, possibly setting a precedent, for this war, of an American regiment attached to a French division. It became a part of the French force on January 10 and was relieved on January 15.

During the ten days from January 16 to January 26, the Division moved back to a concentration area near the city of NAPLES to prepare for embarkation. One regiment was kept alerted to assist the 36th Division in the crossing of the RAPIDO River, despite the necessity for rapid maintenance of equipment, rehabilitation, and preparation for departure to a new front.

January thus brought the end of the 45th Division's operation on the main Fifth Army front. From D-Day plus 1, September 10, 1943, to January 9, 1944, the Division had been in actual combat for 110 days of the 121 days of fighting.

Since the commitment to battle north of PAESTUM, with its ancient picturesque ruins and its deadly hidden tanks and snipers, and up to the relief northwest of VENAFRO, the 45th Division captured 992 prisoners of war. They fought troops of the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division, the 16th Panzer Division, the 26th Panzer Division, the 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division, the 44th Infantry Division, the 5th Mountain Division, and elements of the 305th Infantry Division and the 2nd Parachute Division.

From November 1 to January 9, the Division was in continuous combat. Division Artillery remained under Divi-

sion Infanteria Algerian control for several days before going to rest areas near PIEDIMONTE and TELESE for replacements in men and equipment, training and vehicular maintenance.

On the night of January 20-21, the 179th Regimental Combat Team moved to a staging area in the vicinity of QUALIANO, and passed under the control of the 1st Armored Division. The bulk of the Division was alerted for movement to a staging area in the vicinity of CIAVANO. After closing into the area, the Division was attached to VI Corps on January 26 and began moving to various concentration areas near points of embarkation at NAPLES, NISIDA, and PUZZUOLI.

The Division remained in concentration areas until the move to ANZIO began on January 28. Debarkation continued throughout that day and the next.

The following letter of commendation was received by the Division from General Mark Clark on January 6 as the NAPLES-FOGGIA campaign drew to an end:

## HEADQUARTERS FIFTH ARMY

Office of the Commanding General

APO 464, U. S. Army

6 January 1944.

SUBJECT: Commendation.

TO: Commanding General, 45th Infantry Div., APO 45, U. S. Army.

1. I desire to commend the officers and enlisted men of the 45th Division on the occasion of your relief from front line duty for a period of rest and refitting.

2. For the past 72 days the 45th Infantry Division has been engaged in continuous combat against strong enemy forces and under extremely adverse conditions. Subjected to bitter cold, wet, and almost constant enemy artillery and mortar fire, the 45th Division had added a brilliant chapter to the tradition of American Arms. Your courage and your endurance have been tested to the utmost and have been assigned. The effective performance of the Division is ample evidence of splendid leadership, training, discipline, and determination to win, which qualities are so necessary for our victory.

3. As your Army Commander, I am proud of your record and proud to have the 45th Division as part of Fifth Army. Everything possible will be done to make your period of rest a comfortable and profitable one.

4. It is my desire that the contents of this letter be brought to the attention of all members of the Division.

/s/ Mark W. Clark  
MARK W. CLARK,  
Lieutenant General, USA  
Commanding