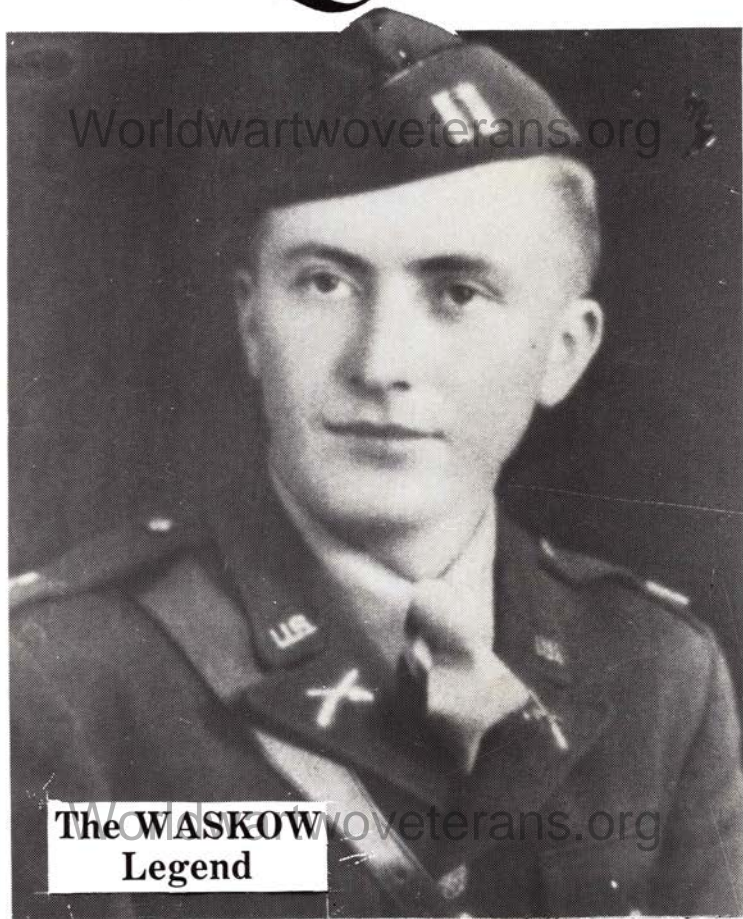


*The Fighting 36<sup>th</sup>*  
HISTORICAL  
**Q** *Quarterly*



**The WASKOW**  
**Legend**

**Vol. IV No. 4      Winter 1984**

Published by  
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36th DIVISION ASSOCIATION

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# The Fighting 36<sup>th</sup>



HISTORICAL QUARTERLY



THIRTY SIXTH  
TEXAS  
DIVISION ASSOCIATION

Vol. IV No. 4



Winter 1984



**Service Record  
of the  
36th Infantry Division  
in World War II**

Activated 25 November 1940 at Camp Bowie, Brownwood, Texas, they were the first American troops to invade Hitler's Europa at Salerno, Italy, 9 September 1943.

The division made two other amphibious assault landings at Anzio and Southern France.

The 36th Infantry Division participated in SEVEN (7) European CAMPAIGNS:

- **Naples-Foggia**
- **Anzio**
- **Rome Arno**
- **Southern France**
- **Rhineland**
- **Ardennes-Alsace**
- **Central Europe**


The 36th suffered over 27,000 casualties, third highest of any World War II division.





OUR THANKS to Colonel Vincent M. Lockhart, 36th Division Historian, for setting the record straight, after all these years.

Vol. IV No. 4

Winter 1984



*The Fighting 36<sup>th</sup>*  
 HISTORICAL  
Quarterly  
*Texas 36th Division Association*



The Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly is published for the members of the 36th division in World War I and World War II. It contains the best of new stories by the men who served, and reprints of previously published great stories of the exploits of the T-Patchers in both wars. It is available only on a subscription basis, to 36th Association members and all interested war buffs.

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1836-1986  
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# CONTENTS

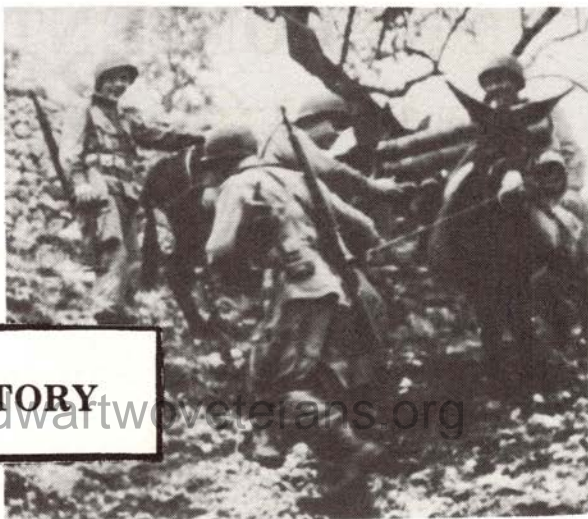
Vol. IV No. 4



Winter 1984

	Page
1. COVER STORY . . . the Waskow Legend . . . . .	6
2. The Day of the Locust and Things, by Del Kendal . . . . .	20
3. J. D. Vickers, by Julian H. Philips . . . . .	24
4. "Sir. You're Nuts . . ." by Joe Dine . . . . .	30
5. Orby Ledbetter's POW Wartime Diary . . . . .	44
6. "Another Bad Start" by George Kerrigan . . . . .	56
7. Warren Toney's Engineer's Diary . . . . .	60
8. I Remember - Company E's D-Day in France by William Hartung . . . . .	68
9. "Short One Burro, Over One Jackass" by Chum Williamson . . . . .	72

**Mud,  
Mountains  
and Mules . . .  
and Death**



**COVER STORY**

## **The WASKOW Legend**

Over the years, your poor reporter had talked with Tidwell many times at the reunions (mostly late at night) and with no tape recorder at hand, many of the details were meshed into a mixture of questions yet to be answered.

Putting together a story of this magnitude . . . included many items: Waskow the man, Ernie Pyle, the journalist who became famous for his story about Waskow, and then later, the movie "G.I. Joe," a great epic of War in Italy with Capt. Waskow as the most publicized hero, because of the devotion he had from all of his men.

Riley Tidwell had said for years, **"he was my BIG BROTHER."** Tidwell was only 20 at the time and Waskow was at least 25 years old, and a man whom all his men respected and admired.

There were many captains of infantry companies who had the same attachment of loyalty from his men, but some how, the feeling that Capt. Henry Waskow had, is the keynote to 'why' Ernie Pyle chose this story to write, which later gave him fame. Pyle had a feeling about this kind of wartime relationship between an officer and his enlisted men, and it shall live on for years, as the GREAT story of the combat infantry man in World War II.



# Goodbye To Captain Waskow

*Beloved by all who knew him, wrote Ernie Pyle.*  
Michael L. Lanning

**W**as at the foot of the mule trail the night they brought Capt. Waskow down.

"The men in the road seemed reluctant to leave. They stood around, and gradually I could sense them moving, one by one, close to Capt. Waskow's body.

"One soldier came and looked down, and he said out loud, 'God damn it.'

"That's all he said and walked away.

"Another man came. I think he was an officer. It was hard to tell officers from men in the dim light, for everybody was bearded and grimy. The man looked down into the dead captain's face and then spoke directly to him, as though he were alive, 'I'm sorry, old man.'

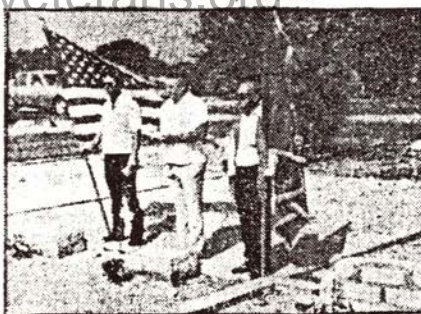
"Then a soldier came and stood beside the officer and bent over, and he too spoke to his dead captain, not in a whisper but awfully tenderly and he said, 'I sure am sorry sir.'

These words, written by World War II's best known correspondent, Ernie Pyle, described the sad farewell of men of the 36th Infantry Division to Capt. Henry T. Waskow. Nearly three decades later the captain's men and friends are still paying their respects and bidding sad goodbyes to their beloved leader.

In Waskow's home town of Belton, Texas, his friends and family gather

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS  
MAY 1981/VOL. 68 NO. 8

Circulation 1,900,000



*Belton, Texas, Post 4008 holds Memorial Day services for Capt. Henry T. Waskow at the Belton North Cemetery. Leading the ceremony is Marvin Splawn, center, who was with Waskow the night before he was killed.*



*Capt. Henry Waskow's memorial in the Belton, Texas, North Cemetery. It is here that family, friends and former fellow soldiers still bid farewell to the young hero.*

## Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

each Memorial Day at a modest monument in the Waskow family plot in North Cemetery to commemorate that winter's night in the Italian hills. While the crowd is mostly made up of family and former soldiers, often visitors who knew Henry Waskow only from the writings of Ernie Pyle are in attendance.

Pyle's news story first appeared in the New York World Telegram a few weeks after the young soldier's death, which occurred a few days before Christmas, 1943. The column was later carried by the Scripps-Howard News Service and appeared in papers around the country. It was eventually republished in Time magazine as well as the Reader's Digest. By the time it was printed in Pyle's 1944 book, *Brave Men*, the death of Captain Waskow had become one of the best known individual stories of the war.

night before he was killed. Splawn related that they didn't get to talk much because it was so hot (in this case he was not talking about the weather), but it was obvious that soldiers received encouragement by just being near the captain.

Another soldier who served with the captain, Dale Sartor, of Killeen, remembers Waskow as never raising his voice, but his men were always ready to do his every bidding.

Ernie Pyle's story of Capt. Waskow's death has been compared to the Gettysburg Address in its stark, unforgettable simplicity. Indeed, it is one of the few accounts that is always remembered as being much longer and more detailed than it really is. It is one of those scenes so vividly written that it remains pictured in your memory.

---

***In Ernie Pyle's account of that night in Italy he wrote, "You feel small in the presence of dead men." In the presence of Henry Waskow's memorial one does indeed feel small—and grateful.***

---

Pyle began his account:

"In this war I have known a lot of officers who were loved and respected by the soldiers under them. But never have I crossed the trail of any man as beloved as Capt. Henry T. Waskow, of Belton, Texas."

At the most recent Memorial Day farewell, retired Col. John Oliver, of Belton, who served with Henry before they were shipped overseas, perhaps best stated what the soldiers felt: "Pyle wrote an honest-to-God true story . . . Waskow was an unusually fine, clean young man . . . a Christian . . . as fine a lad as I have ever known."

Marvin Splawn, also of Belton, recalled that he was with Henry the

This is reinforced by the portrayal of the story by Robert Mitchum in the epic movie of Pyle's life appropriately named *G.I. Joe*.

Capt. Waskow has not only been memorialized through the writings of Pyle and the subsequent movie. V.F.W. Post 4008 in Belton is named after the soldier. The National Guard Armory in nearby Mexia, where many of Henry's men were from, also bears his name. In Killeen a street bears the young hero's name. It is appropriately just outside an entrance to the free world's largest military post, Fort Hood.

## The WASKOW Legend

### Waskow As Student at Trinity College, Hitch-hiked Weekends from Waxahachie to Belton to Attend Drills

Henry T. Waskow was born on a farm near Nordheim in DeWitt County, Texas, but his family moved to Bell County where Henry attended the Belton Public Schools. He graduated from Belton High School with honors in 1935.

Waskow worked his way through Temple Junior College. He graduated from there in 1937 after winning second place in a statewide oratory contest. He then enrolled in Trinity College in Waxahachie from which he received a bachelor of science. His first job was as a substitute teacher in his old home town.

As a student at Trinity, young Henry had joined the Texas National Guard. Frequently on weekends he hitch-hiked from Waxahachie to Belton to attend drills.

In 1940 Waskow's unit, Company I, 143rd Infantry, 36th Infantry Division, was mobilized. By the time the unit reported to Camp Bowie, Texas, he was already a corporal. His first sergeant was his older brother, August, a professional soldier who would later retire from the Army after 30 years' service to his country.

August was soon to be calling his younger brother "sir", for in 1941 Henry attended OCS and was commissioned a second lieutenant. Because of his new rank the young officer was transferred from Company I to Company B of the same regiment.

Just before the Division went overseas, Henry was promoted to captain and became company commander. His last pictures showed him in the uniform of a lieutenant. His sister, Mary Lee,

presently residing in Killeen, had a Belton photographer add the second bar to display his proper rank.

The commander also told of his belief in God and his country. His letters also reflected his homesickness and near the end proclaimed that he "hoped to soon hear the Belton Court House clock strike again."

On a cold, foggy night in the mountains of Italy on Dec. 14, 1943, Capt. Waskow remarked to one of his men, "Wouldn't this be an awful spot to get killed and freeze on the mountain?" A few moments later an enemy artillery shell landed in the midst of the soldiers and the captain received a mortal chest wound.

A few hours later, at the base of the hill, the farewell to Capt. Waskow by his men was recorded by Ernie Pyle. Soon, the most "loved and respected" commander the correspondent had met was also the best known.

The telegram from the War Department informing the Waskow family of the death was delivered on Dec. 29. All death notices had been held up until after Christmas. Mary Lee was called to the Belton telegraph office to receive the message. She and her brothers and sisters had asked that if anything happened to Henry they be informed first because of their mother's poor health.

Mary Lee later related that all during the Christmas season Mrs. Waskow had repeatedly expressed extreme concern about Henry. She sensed that he had been either seriously wounded or had "already gone to be with God."

## Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

According to Mary Lee, her mother had been very ill and when she learned the news of Henry "she just gave up and died." At Mrs. Waskow's funeral service in the First Baptist Church in Belton in February, 1944, a memorial service for Henry was also conducted. Several of Henry's men and fellow officers who had been wounded and were convalescing at the Temple McCloskey General Hospital attended the services. Their words of eulogy for their great friend and leader echoed those of Pyle.



**Captain  
Henry T. Waskow  
1918 - 1943  
Belton, Texas**

Over the succeeding years, Waskow family members received frequent letters and phone calls from men who had known Henry on the battlefield or had come to know of him through the pen of Ernie Pyle. Many sent copies of Pyle's article. Mitchum met with family members while visiting Temple.

Shortly before the 14th anniversary of Capt. Waskow's death, his father, F.C., died. He, too, was buried in the Belton North Cemetery.

---

### Waskow's Last Will & Testament

In 1959 the family released a copy of Henry's last will and testament. Final words about this young American were best written by himself:

"If you read this, I will have died in defense of my country and all that it stands for—the most honorable and distinguished death a man can die.

"I made my choice, dear ones. I volunteered in the Armed Forces because I felt it was my duty to do so. I thought that I might be able and might do just a little bit to help this great country of ours in its hours of darkness and need—the country that means more to me than life itself—if I have done that, I can rest in peace, for I will have done my share to make this world a better place in which to live. Maybe when the lights go on again all over the world, free people

can be happy and gay again."

Capt. Henry T. Waskow surely rests in peace for he did more than his share for all of us.

In accordance with Capt. Waskow's last will and testament, he was buried with other members of the 36th Division. His grave is in the Allied cemetery at Nettuno, Italy, surrounded by other fallen heroes of the invasion.

Waskow's memorial in the Belton cemetery rests beside the final resting places of his mother and father. Here too, the captain is in good company. The nearest grave to the Waskow family plot belongs to a highly decorated casualty of the Korean War. Nearby are graves of other Americans from the Civil War to the conflict in Vietnam.

## The WASKOW Legend

### “I Was The Captain’s Runner”



Riley Tidwell shown here with a photo of his beloved 'Big Brother' Captain Waskow... memories include combat badge, watch band, a folder from Isle of Capri and other items.

**Excerpts from HOUSTON POST**  
**April 12, 1958**

Riley Tidwell only a few feet away from Capt. Waskow when he was killed leading 36th Division company to battle positions in the mountains behind Cassino.

A shard of mortar shrapnel was the captain's ticket to eternity, Dec. 14, 1943.

But it was not until three nights later, Tidwell said, that he took the captain's body down the trail to the farewell scene witnessed by Pyle.

In the captin's pocket, Tidwell said, was the last will and testament which was disclosed only two weeks ago by Capt. Waskow's family.

**IN THE WILL**, written on rough field paper, the captain prayed for “**strength of character and courage to lead these magnificent Americans.**”

## Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

The legend of Capt. Waskow was later inscribed in a film, "The Story of G.I. Joe," starring Robert Mitchum.

Tidwell, who towers 6 feet 5 inches tall, said his captain was a small man whose head came about to his runner's armpit. He was a quiet man.

### **"The Captain Really Loved Toast"**

The ex-runner said he still remembers his captain's last words to him, spoken as they sat under the hill where Capt. Waskow died.

**"He liked toast awfully well,"** Tidwell said, **"and he tole me, Tidwell, when we get back to the States I'm going to get me one of those smart-alek toasters where you put the bread in and it pops up."**

### **Waskow Always Looked After His Men . . .**

What made the captain so beloved to his men?

**IT WAS A LOT** of things, Tidwell said, like the time he tried to requisition turkey for his company the Christmas before he died. A supply sergeant said no.

**"But he just pulled out his pistol and said his men were going to have turkey."** Tidwell recalled. **"We got the turkey."**

Tidwell still has an old wooden ration box filled with keepsakes of Capt. Waskow.

There is a frayed New Testament which "the captain carried all the time," a broken metal watch band that Capt. Waskow was wearing when he died, the captain's blue combat infantryman's badge.

There is also a post card folder of the Isle of Capri which Capt. Waskow brought back to his runner after a week's leave on the island.

"The leave was a prize for being chosen the best company commander in the regiment after the first Italian campaign," Tidwell said.

**AFTER HIS** captain was killed on Dec. 14, 1943, Tidwell fought on northward through Italy until he was sent home a year later, wounded and half crippled by trench foot.

Even when Tidwell made the hike down the mountain, his damaged feet had been wrapped in gauze.

### **"He Could Lead His Men Anywhere" . . .**

Back in the United States, Tidwell became something of a celebrity. He appeared with Actor Mitchum on a tour with the film "G.I. Joe." He was on the Vox Pop radio program, and took part in a Washington memorial ceremony honoring the slain Ernie Pyle.

The bullets and ballyhoo are past now for Tidwell, but not his shining memory of Capt. Waskow.

**"He was a man,"** Tidwell said. **"He could lead men anywhere, and with him out front, you never wanted to stay behind."**

## The WASKOW Legend



TIDWELL

For a man who towers above most all mortals in his presence, (6' 5") might give the impression of being a bully. Not true.

Riley Tidwell is calm, steady, soft spoken, courteous, gentle and appreciative of his fellowman. This is probably why he was the first EM to take over as President of the 36th Division Association - in 1968. He set the pattern for 'growth', and was succeeded by Amil Kohutec in 1969 and the rest is history.

**Some of the philosophy of Henry Waskow must have rubbed off on him.** Biog printed below is from the T-Patcher Nov. 1968 issue.

RILEY TIDWELL joined the Texas National Guard, Company B, 143rd Infantry in 1939 (age 18) at Mexia, Texas. He mobilized with this unit on Nov. 15, 1940, and sent to Camp Bowie, Brownwood, Texas.

Tidwell was an extra large individual, towering a 6'5" and all muscle. He made the landing at Salerno and fought through the winter Italian campaign. . . wounded in 1944 at Florenzo, Italy and sent back to the states in Sept. 1944. Got married in December of that year, was discharged from the service Sept. 25, 1945.

He toured with Robert Mitchum, star of Ernie Pyle's "G.I. Joe," a popular movie of those days. . . and his story is included in this Legend of Captain Waskow.

Riley knows his way around with celebrities - take Jimmy Carter shown here at the 1983 Dallas Reunion who was in attendance (or was that Ed Behler?).

Both of these T-Patchers served with 143rd, Ed Behler lives at Elm Mott TX, and **Riley Tidwell, now gets mail at: P. O. Box 102, Gallatin TX 75764.** (that's about 8 miles from Rusk, the County Seat of Cherokee).







## The WASKOW Legend

### Riley Was Logical Choice To Tour With Mitchum

DALLAS, July 4th 1945 — We did a dramatized version of the 'Story of G.I. Joe' on the state broadcasted over Texas State Network. The Variety Club of Dallas sponsored a TURTLE RACE for Mitchum and me. I can't recall who won.

#### Dallas Police Escort Bob & Riley

At this time, Mitchum and I were being transported back and forth by the Dallas Police Department. The patrol car we were in broke down, so Mitchum and I found us a beer joint down the street. IT TOOK the police two hours to find us.

#### We Visit With Waskow Family In Belton

BELTON TEXAS, Mon. Aug. 11th 1945 — Robert Mitchum and I attended aluncheon with the WASKOW family and their friends. I knew one of the brothers who served with Co. I 143rd, and met his sister — MARY LEE BARR, and two more of the brothers at the luncheon.

AUSTIN, Aug. 12, 1945 — A breakfast meeting with members of the Press, then left for Houston.

HOUSTON, Aug. 12, 1945 — Starts with a Press Breakfast, then a radio broadcast on KTRH.

#### We Celebrate "V-J" Day In San Antonio

SAN ANTONIO, Aug. 14th — Press breakfst, as usual, then made four (4) shows at the Majestic Theatre, and personal appearances after each show . . . celebrate V-J DAY!!!

DALLAS, Aug. 15 — More of the same . . . Appeared several times with appearances after each show.

FORT WORTH, Aug. 16th — This winds up my exciting tour with Robert Mitchum — same song, same verse . . . took the Rock Island Zypher to Teague, and then hitch-hiked to my home in Fairfield (County Seat Freestone County) (pop. 3,000) thus ended a most fabulous time, but it was great to be home!

#### What Kind of Guy Was Mitchum ???

One of my questions to Tidwell, was "just what kind of a guy was Mitchum, had overnight-stardom gone to his head?"

His reply: "Bob was most kind, considerate and a real pleasure to be with. All we did was travel together, rest of the time, he had his room and I had mine."

# "Dogface" Ernie Pyle:

## HE BEGGED THE BULLETS TO FIND HIM

He was the GIs best friend—a "typewriter commando" whose smile hid an inner torment that drove him on into his last battle



ERNIE PYLE

OFFICIAL FIRST DAY COVER  
honoring  
Ernie Pyle

INDIANA  
1900

• GASA



Ernie Pyle



Pyle visited the 36th Division during the winter campaign and the San Pietro battle. He later gave wide coverage to the story about the 143rd's Capt. Henry T. Waskow.

His column syndicated Jan. 10, 1944 was probably one of his greatest. T-Patchers will confirm that. The opening line of that story starts:

"In this war I have known a lot of officers who were loved and respected by the soldiers under them. But I never crossed the trail of any man as beloved as Capt. Henry T. Waskow of Belton, Texas."

# 'Ernie Pyle' salutes war columnist

By Holly Glass

*Scripps-Howard News Service*

December 15, 1983

WASHINGTON — The dimly lit stage is empty except for a few props. There is a soldier's tin cup on top of a makeshift desk that is cluttered with papers. A man dressed in Army fatigues sits on a

sniper's bullet while on assignment on Ie Shima Island in the South Pacific. The small-framed roving reporter from Indiana died at age 44.

Windom put together his tribute to Ernie Pyle seven years ago, after a similar one-man show about writer James Thurber waned in popularity.

"Aside from the works of James Thurber, the only thing I ever took seriously was World War II," he said prior to the first of two shows he performed last week.

"While I was researching the war for show material, I stumbled upon Pyle's wartime books (of columns), and I said, 'Who needs all those fiction writers? This guy Pyle has it all down.'"

As the production grew, so did Windom's admiration for Pyle.

"He reminded me a lot of Thurber and my father. They were all about the same age, they all drank too much, they were all brilliant guys and they all had the same qualities of charm and doom," he explained.

"THEY WERE PART of the lost generation like Fitzgerald and Hemingway."

## **THEATER**

stool and reads from a notebook filled with personal accounts of war and death. His voice is laced with anguish:

"Dead men had been coming down the mountain all evening, lashed onto the backs of mules. They came lying belly-down across the wooden pack-saddles, their heads hanging down on the left side of the mule, their stiffened legs sticking out awkwardly from the other side, bobbing up and down as the mule walked."

THE MAN WHO wrote the detailed account was Ernie Pyle, the Pulitzer Prize-winning Scripps-Howard newspaperman whose daily chronicles of World War II were syndicated in 400 papers and read by millions in the 1940s.

The man reading Pyle's stark account of war is actor William Windom. He is seated before a standing-room-only crowd at the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery here.

## Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly



Pyle first won fame for lucid battlefield reports from Italy and France. Here, clad in long woolen underwear, he washes feet in steel helmet after making 1944 D-Day landing in Normandy.

After all the reports are in, and the ballots are counted, we feel sure that ERNIE PYLE, the G.I. soldier's best-booster will have to come in FIRST, as the best war correspondent in World War II. Yes, there were many hundreds of journalist in all theatres of war, but Ernie was-in-early, and wrote about the man-in-the-foxhole more than the brass who glorified themselves in their own ego.

Every man who wore the T-Patch should be thankful that Ernie wrote his immortal story about Captain Henry T. Waskow of Belton Texas. We can all be proud that there were such men as Waskow - who had all the qualities of GREAT SOLDIERS - like the heroes of Texas Fighting Men that takes you back to the ALAMO !!!!

### NEVER FORGET THE DAY I SAW ERNIE:

During combat, the big brass, news men and visiting senators and big wigs always came by the G-2 tent for a briefing from Colonel Crowther, before moving to battle sites.

The Div. Hqs. CP was on the friendly side of Mt. Maggiore, during the S. Pietro battle (mid-Dec. 1943). I was working the "day shift," drawing the daily SITUATION MAP . . . that gave line of demarcation — plus all IN-COMING artillery.

A non-descript man (about 135 lbs.) with no identification walked in the tent, "I'd like to see the Colonel." Did not identify himself. We asked him to have a set , he chose one across from where I used a drawing board to make the daily map.

He didn't say a word. He had a handful of nuts, took out his knife and started pounding away. It was rockin' my table, and making it difficult to chart.

I thought to myself, who the hell is this guy? Minutes later, the canvas door opened, Col. Crowther, with a big smile and hearty greeting, said: "come on in, Ernie."

I went into shock. I had just blown a chance of a lifetime to get to 'talk' with the greatest war Correspondent of World War II.

(WEJ)

## The WASKOW Legend

### Biggest Hero In Our Little Town . . .



## BLACKIE SHERROD

Commentary

If Mr. Perot is saying that football is overshadowing the main purpose of high schools, it says here he is right again. There was a time, before other interests were available, when Texas towns were focused solely on their high school football teams. It was the rally flag. The smaller the town, the more emphasis. The high school coach was the most important figure in the community, the most admired or most maligned.

Blackie Sherrod is the dean of all sports writers in the State of Texas (maybe, the USA), and he's an old hometown boy from Belton.

This appeared in Dallas Times-Herald, Nov. 4, 1984 during the flack stirred up about, "No Pass, No Play" rules for Texas schools.

As a super words-smith, he expresses his opinion of Henry Waskow as — "BIGGETS HERO OUR LITTLE TOWN EVER HAD."

After 25 years at Dallas T/H, Blackie moved to Dallas M/News on Jan. 1, 1985.

The high schooler became popular and respected in direct proportion to his talent as a football player. Not basketball, understand, nor saxophone nor physics, but football. Players acquired exaggerated ideas of their own immanence. They became overbearing. If a lad did not play football, he was a second-class citizen, a role he seemed to accept. He was tolerated maybe, but not admired as was the halfback who scored twice in the district play-off, despite the fact he was an 18-k crumbum.

Perhaps it's not that way anymore. In my little Texas hometown, too late we became smart. We eventually learned that football talent does not necessarily make big men. The biggest man we had, it developed later, was a Czech lad, quiet, fair, short and slight of build. He wasn't around too much, because he hurried home after the last class to grub on his pa's farm until dark. He joined the National Guard, not from any sense of patriotism but because it paid \$2 a week for the drills and \$2 was a bundle.

He was mobilized with the 36th Division. Ernie Pyle, the correspondent, was there when they brought his body down from a mountain in Italy and wrote a story about him and the story won a Pulitzer and somebody made a movie out of it, with Robert Mitchum. Henry Waskow was the biggest hero our little town ever had and he couldn't, or didn't, throw a football from here to there, and that's how it should be.

# THE TIME OF THE LOCUST



WorldWarVeterans.org

## AND THINGS

By Del Kendall  
A/T 143rd

### THE SPELL OF MOROCCO

The Company was leaving Rabat, as the Capt. Jeoped past the convoy at the roadside shouting, "**Crank 'em up men, lets go.**" The nine halftracks, combat-loaded and towing guns, headed down the road toward Casablanca, in a cloud of dust. You were on patrol duty between the two cities, guarding power plants, bridges, aqueducts and just about any approach from the Spanish Frontier; just in case Hitler decided to move some of his troops across the Straits of Gibraltar, and bottle-up the Mediterranean.

The African countryside was sizzling under a merciless hot sun, and heat waves danced about, distorting your view as you convoyed along. Here and there a few houses clustered together, showed in the scrub covered hills, and as the road edged toward the sea, you could spy a bright painted villa thru a clump of trees, nestling beside a sandy stretch of beach.

It was **the time of the locust**, they were everywhere, great swirling clouds of them, pelting you like hail. Stretches of the road so covered with the swarming hordes, the vehicles would slide about as if on an icy road in wintertime. The great crawling armies of them, eating everything green in its path, leaving nothing but bare branches and stubble in its wake, a plague since ancient times.

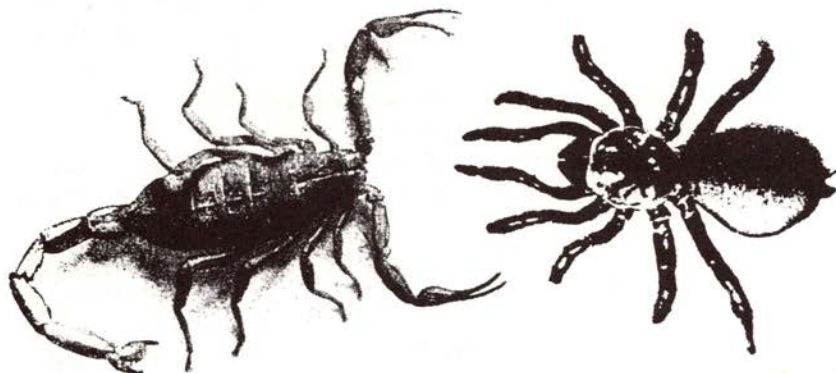
## The Day of The Locust

The Platoon was given a sector to cover. You soon had a gun-emplacement set up on a sandy ridge, facing the sea, and with the camouflage net spread over some giant agave plants, you had perfect cover. You shared the area with a number of Armadillos, that always seemed to be digging in, or out of the sand, along with the ever present scorpions.

There was also many spiders about, as the men took to watching their strange antics. They were about three inches in diameter with a bright, fuzzy-hairy body and a hard parrot like beak for a mouth. He would scoot for his hole pulling a pebble over himself after he entered, hence the name, Trapdoor Spider, and it wasn't long before someone figured out what to do with them.

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### A New Crap Game . . .



You found out soon enough, as the next day you came upon, what you thought was a crap game. But the men were shouting crazy things, like, "C'mon Red let's get 'im." Somebody else hollered. "Go to it Stinger, ya got 'im now boy." In the center of the cheering crowd, sat an overturned metal helmet, inside of which a fight to the death was being wraged by a scorpion and a hairy orange colored spider. The men were frantic as bets changed hands. The fight never lasted more than a minute or two, as the combatants, unable to climb the slick sides of the helmet grappled with each other.

The scorpion, sometimes winning with a quick-slash of his flicking tail, into the body of the spider, or the spider coming out on top, bidding the head of the scorpion off with his powerful, parrot-like beak. The gamblers had found "a new game in town," as the quarters and francs, dollars and Algerian bank notes changed hands. You wandered up to the top of the ridge.

## Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

Thru a thick growth of cactus, you came upon a small Ay-rab cemetery looking, abandoned and long forgotten in the noon day sun. Some of the tombs half covered by the ever drifting sands, others tilted at crazy angles and falling apart. You now stood on the rim of a steep sided crater, that ended about 20 feet below, in what looked like a small rectangular swimming pool; in reality a flooded old tomb that had sunk out of sight. Your feet slipped from under you, and down you went, You weren't sliding rapidly, but you couldn't stop yourself.

Small pebbles under you acting like so many ballbearings, carrying you along. There was nothing to grab, and as you thrashed about, you saw a number of small snakes, slither down the slopes and blop into the pool, one after the other. You almost froze with the thought, how the hell would you get out of there, if you fell in? It would be like climbing out of a funnel, there wasn't any time to the pool, a straight chute into a pit of Vipers.

With your one leg under you, your boot buckle caught something and held. You were about a foot from the pools edge. You sat there, hardly daring to breath, as you turned your head, eyeing the path your fall had cleared thru the loose pebbles. You slowly turned, and like an inchworm on your belly, worked your way to the top very carefully. For a moment you sat there, shaking and cursing yourself in no uncertain terms, and as you stood up, dusting yourself off you heard womens voices.

Following a small path from the cemetery, let you to the edge of a palisades, looking down on the road, about a hundred feet below. In the bright stillness of that July noon, the womens voices carried up the walls of the palisades. You stood there, a silent observer, taking in the scene like you were watching a stage play unfold before you.



There below you stood three houses, side by side, each neatly fenced in and running back to a small grove of trees. The three housewives, with each, a basket on her arm, had just closed her garden gate and met at the roadside. They stood there now, chattering away, looking down the road at times, obviously awaiting someone. One woman, impatiently, checking her wristwatch. A few moments later you heard the clomp, clomp of horses hooves and the rattle of a wagon, coming down the road. The women looked, checking their purses and ad-



## The Day of The Locust

justing the baskets on their arms as a street peddler came into view.

The horse was a mangy, skinny looking beast, as he slowly clomped along paying no attention to the shouts of the peddler, or his snapping reigns. He'd come this way countless times before, and knew just where to stop coming to a halt before the three women. The peddler got down from the wagon, and after greeting the women set about weighing vegetables on a hanging scale. Two of the women selecting fruit from the assorted boxes. With each purchase the peddler would dump the fruit or vegetables in the proper basket, setting beside the road, as they all continued to talk, probably of local news. The buying done, the women turned to leave as the peddler in the drivers seat, snapped the reigns, and hollered at the horse.

The animal took one step and collapsed, like his legs had been shot out from under him. Breaking the harness in its fall, the horse now lay there flat out on the hot pavement, not moving a muscle. The peddler for a moment sat there dumbfounded, then quickly jumped from his seat, hollering at the horse. The women turned, looking at the downed animal and then at each other in total amazement, as they set their baskets down and rushed to the peddlers side. The peddler grabbed the head harness and tried to pull the animal up, swearing at him all the while. It was no use. The head flopped back lifeless, to the hot pavement, as the man, in a towering rage now screamed, "**Mon Dieu, il mort! il mort!**" The women stood there not believing, what they had heard, as they looked at each other questioningly, then back to the peddler and then to the horse. The peddler paced back and forth with his head in his hands, and then abruptly straighted up and smashed a fist into the side of the wagon, cursing, as the women took a frightened step backward.

During all this time, as the hot sun beat down on the tragedy unfolding below, not one person or vehicle had passed by to witness the strange happening. You turned and followed the small path, down to your area below, wondering how it would all be resolved, and just what in hell would you do with a dead horse.



Del Kendall is head of the Fawn & Flora, Nature Study Department of Muskegon (Mich.) School For Wayward Girls, and this is only one of the many lectures he offers to his students. He has our thanks for the enlightenment he gives of visits to exotic foreign lands.

# *The Saga of* **J. D. Vickers**

## **Short In Stature, But Big As Life as a Real Soldier . . .**

by Julian H. Philips

From the time Co. G., 143rd. Infantry mobilized on 25 November, 1940 until it left Camp Edwards in 1943, many men had left the company for one reason or another.

One of these men was **J. D. Vickers from Houston, Texas**. He attended school with Ruby and myself and we all graduated from Milby High School in June 1940. He wasn't a large man (standing only about 5 feet 5 inches). He was **street-wise and as tough as they came and wasn't afraid of anything or anyone**. You had to understand him to like him and since we had grown up in the same neighborhood, I considered him a friend.

I recall an instance that happened at **Camp Bowie, Brownwood, in 1941**. This will give the reader a better picture of what this small man was really like. The company had received it's first recruits early that year and we had gone to work making soldiers out of them. These men were from every walk of life. . . some farmers some college graduates and others were ex-service personnel caught up in the first draft.

### **"Pass The Peas, Please"**

One day at the evening meal the mess hall was full and there were ten to twelve men at each table which made our meals a bit more personal. That night I was sitting just across the table from J. D. with John Lewis on my right. **John Lewis was also a Milby High School graduate and we knew him well**. Everything seemed to be going fine, after a long tiring day of training we were ready for a good meal. Somehow J. D. had not taken a serving of English Peas when they were passed. Seeing that they were at the far end of the table, he asked **"Pass the peas, please,"** he seldom said **"Please"** but this time he did. The peas were passed to the recruit just to the left of J. D. and the recruit served himself before passing them on to J. D. As J. D. took the large bowl half full of peas he stood up to his full 5 ft. 5 in. and turned the bowl upside down on the recruits forehead, saying, **"You wanted peas, so take them all."** You could see the anger in his face and when he said **"don't ever short-stop food when someone else asks for it,"** you could tell it in his voice. The recruit was well over 6 ft

## J. D. Vickers

and outweighed J. D. by fifty or sixty pounds but he only stared in disbelief as he brushed the peas off his lap. In just a minute Sgt. Higgins was standing at the end of the table. He very seriously said, **"we don't short-stop food in this mess hall. You will find a mop and bucket in the kitchen and told the recruit to clean up the mess."** As the recruit got up to go after the mop bucket, J. D. very politely said, **"K. P., bring us another bowl of peas - please,"** which the K. P. did.

### J. D. Joins 82nd Airborne

In 1942 when I left for Officers Candidate School, J. D. transferred to the 82nd Airborne Division and John Lewis left to go to Lt. Col. Darby's 1st Ranger Battalion.

In 1943 the 82nd Airborne Division and 1st Ranger were also in Italy doing their jobs just as we of the 36th were doing ours. From time-to-time when we were off the line we would get together and catch up on news from home as well as talk about our encounters with the Germans.

Knowing J. D. as we grew up in the East End of Houston, I never remembered him ever going to Church or Sunday School. I asked him one day in 1943 if he ever prayed very much in combat. I recall as the German artillery and mortar fire become very heavy I felt I had done more than my share of praying. I had expected this to be the way of most soldiers when they were in a barrage. Everyone I knew turned to the Lord for his help during these times and without shame.

J. D. got quiet, he hesitated, then he said nearly apologetically, **"Duney, I guess I pray as much as the next man."** Then I asked him if he could remember his first prayer in combat? His chin was on his chest and he didn't say anything right off. When he looked up he said, **"Yes, I remember my first prayer. We had jumped behind the German lines in North Africa. It was a successful jump and my company had taken a number of prisoners in the initial operation. It was late in the afternoon when the platoon Sgt. told his men that the company had to get rid of the prisoners."** They just didn't have enough men to guard them and still carry out their mission. He reminded them that they were behind the enemy line and a lot of firing of weapons would give their position away. He went on to say that each man would go to the C.P. and pick one German soldier and eliminate him without firing a shot.

J. D. looked me in the eyes and said, **"Duney, when I got to the C.P. they gave me a prisoner as big as you are. He was all man. Up until then I hadn't thought of how I would do the job, but I walked him on down behind the hill and all of a sudden 'it' hit me. I gave him a butt-stroke with my M-1 rifle and as I stood over him jamm-**

## Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

ing my rifle butt into his head, I prayed for that S.O.B. In my prayer I asked God to have mercy on him." Then he stopped talking. I looked him in the eyes and said "J. D. knowing you as well as I do that's just the kind of prayer you would say."

Vickers had been a Sgt. with Co. G., 143rd back in 1941 and 1942. He was only a private in the 82nd Airborne Div. and I was always trying to get him to work for his stripes. His answer was always the same. "As long as we have this company commander I'll be a private."

### S/Sgt. J. D. Visits the Red Cross

In April 1944, I was in Naples, Italy to pay our men in the hospitals who had been wounded in the Rapido crossing and the Cassino battles that hadn't been transferred stateside. I was with Lt. Joseph Kulik and our company mail clerks when I noticed a few 82nd Airborne men on the street. Up until then I was under the impression the 82nd was still on the line at Anzio.

I turned to Joseph and excused myself by saying that I was going to the University of Naples where the 82nd was always billeted when they were off the line. As I turned on Via Roma heading to the motor pool, there in front of me was S/Sgt. J. D. Vickers, with a grin from ear to ear. I spoke first by saying, "I see your C.O. didn't make it." J.D. came back saying, "the bastard never made it off the boat. The Germans sunk it as we started in." I never questioned him as to the difference of opinion between the C.O. and himself. I fell in stride with him as we went west on Via Roma not asking where we were going. We swapped stories back and forth for about six blocks until we came to a building that houses one of Naples Officers Clubs. The Red Cross Hdq. was also in this building. J.D. marched right in and still I didn't ask what we were doing there. He walked up to the Red Cross door and we went right up to the counter.

### Vickers Gives a \$20 to the Red Cross

There was a man on duty and J.D. dug into his wallet and handed him a \$20.00 bill. He only said this is a donation I didn't say anything until we were back on Via Roma, then I turned to him and said "what was that all about? You don't even send money home to your mother... what in the hell are you giving the Red Cross twenty dollars for?"

### J. D. Finds a Queen At Anzio . . .

He came right back and said, "Duney you aren't going to believe this but the day before we were going up to Anzio I ran across a Queen. Everything about her looked great... she was better than anything I had seen in Italy. She wanted \$10.00 for all night and I was flat broke. She kept saying she needed the ten dollars if I was going to spend the night. I was desperate and I didn't want to

## J. D. Vickers

loose her, so I walked to into the Red Cross. I told her to wait by the door while I went inside for a few minutes and all the time I was worrying that some damn officer would pick her up before I got back."

He added, "you know that's a damn officers club in there." He went on by saying that the man behind the counter was the same one who had given him ten dollars in the first place. "Duney, I told him I had found the best-piece in Naples, and the next morning I would be leaving with the 82nd Airbone for Anzio. I told him I was flat broke and the girl wanted ten dollars for me to stay all night. Without blinking an eye or asking my name or having me sign anything, he handed me \$10.00 and said he hoped I enjoyed it." J.D. turned to me and said, "the twenty dollars was paid in full . . . plus a little extra . . . just in case there was ever another soldier in the same situation I was in. The money would be there for him."

### J. D. Departs For Normandy Invasion

The 82nd. Airborne Div. had pulled back from Anzio so it could be transferred to England for the Big Invasion. At that time we didn't know it would be called - Normandy.

I had asked J.D.'s commanding officer if J.S. could visit us for a few days before they boarded ships for England. Permission was granted, so we had some good times talking of home. I showed him pictures of my daughter who was born in Nov. 1943 and he just couldn't put them down. I was the only one of the group married at that time.

J.D. loved children and said someday he would marry and have a family. A few days later some of us from Co. G. drove J.D. to the University of Naples to pick up his combat gear. Then we traveled on down to the docks where his unit was loading on ships for the trip to England. I thanked his commanding officer for letting him stay with us for a few days and I told him I hoped he and his company would come through the big jump in good shape.

As we neared the gangway where his 1st Sgt. was checking the mens names as they boarded the ship, J.D. took my arm and we walked a few stips away from Mitchell Woods and C.L. "Tiny" Tompson, neither of us saying anything for a few seconds. Then he said very low, just for my ears, "Duney, I'll never jump into combat again. I'll go to England, but I'm not going to jump anymore."

J.D. had been lucky so far, he had two planes shot from under him and a landing craft going into Anzio beachhead. He was an excellent soldier and had been through his share of close calls.

I knew if he refused to jump he would be courtmartialed. I dropped his gear that I had been carrying and placed both of my hands on his

## Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

shoulders. Looking into his eyes I said, **"Your name is J.D. Vickers, you are one hell of a good soldier and you won't tarnish that name or your damned good record by not jumping. When the time comes for the 1st Sgt. to say, 'hook up,' you will be in that plane and ready to jump again."** He dropped his chin on his chest and said, **"Duney, I don't think I can jump from another plane."**

By then Mitchell and Tiny had heard some of the conversation and knew what we were talking about. As I looked into his eyes, Tiny and Mitchell both placed a hand on his shoulder and we were all trying to convince him that he was going to jump and he would come through alright. He had jumped before and would do his duty and jump again when the time came.

### He Made It . . . ! He Was Helluva Good Soldier

Each time we had been off the line together in Italy I had asked J.D. for his original jump wings and each time in the past he had refused to give them to me. I knew how much he cherished them. As the 1st Sgt. called his name to board the ship we shook hands and patted each other on the back. I tried to convince him that everything was going to come out alright. He reached up and without saying a word unpinned his jump wings and placed them in my right hand saying, **"Duney, these are my original jump wings and they will mean more to you than anyone I know."** I got a lump in my throat and told him I had always wanted them, but not under these conditions. I tried to hand them back, but he insisted I keep them.

We handed J.D. all his gear which weighed nearly as much as he did and he started up the gangway. His 1st Sgt. checked off his name as we boarded. We stayed until his ship pulled out into the Bay of Naples and then we drove back to our company area just before daylight.

We took Rome on the 5th of June 1944 and as we moved north the morning of June 6 there were people passing out the Stars & Stripes, our official paper. The headlines stated the Big Invasion across the English Channel had begun. The troops were hitting the beaches of Normandy and the 82nd was one of the Airborne Divisions to jump early behind the German lines. They caused disruption in communications as were able to hold key positions of bridges and cross roads.

On the 11th of June I received a V-letter from France. It was from J.D. and he had made the jump with his company and was O.K. The company had more casualties than expected but J.D. Had made it like the veteran he was.

As I passed the word around that J.D. Vickers had made the jump in France and was alright, I felt pride for him. I had a lump in my throat

## J.D. Vickers

because Mitchell Woods who had been with me when we saw him off in Naples had been killed a few days earlier at Velletri.

J.D. fought well in France and as they battled in the Netherlands he was hit his last time. A machine gun cut across his lower body . . . then a German tank blew a house in on the Aid Station as they 'worked' on him. **The Dutch people dug his body out of the rubble three days later.** He was still alive and was sent to the hospital and finally arrived stateside as a war casualty.

In 1945 he was released from the hospital and went by to see Ruby and our daughter, Julie Ann. Ruby wrote that he walked bent forward from his wounds. By the end of 1945, when I returned home he was standing straight . . . looked good and was ready to face the world.

### Worldwartwoveterans.org Philips Still Has His Jump Wings

J.D. went to work for an Oil Company as a scout. He married a Houston girl and they had a lovely family, three girls and a boy. On Dec. 25, 1957 J.D. passed away after eating Christmas dinner with his family. His wife told me that he raised to a sitting position as a heart attack hit him. As he lay back he was dead. He had fought in North Africa, Sicily, Italy, France, Belgium and Holland. Had two planes and a ship shot from under him. **He was one hell of a good soldier and he was my friend.**

J.D.'s wife raised the children . . . sending all of them to college. I called her a few years ago and as we were talking she said **"If J.D. is looking down on us now I know he is proud of his children because they've all turned out good."**

I still have J.D.'s jump wings that he wore so proudly. I cherish them as I do my own Infantry Combat Badge and medals. I hope to place them in the museum someday with a note saying, "These are the original jump wings of J.D. Vickers who was one hell of a good soldier with the 82nd Airborne Division, but who started with Co. G. 143rd, Inf. from Houston, Texas in 1940.



### Worldwartwoveterans.org

Julian H. (Duney) Philips has a long career in the military, is one of our most devoted workhorses. Has been a member of the board for 10 years, and still serves as Treasurer.







## “Sir, You’re Nuts”

danger like a petulant girl. Yet he looked like a leader, with tin, erect figure, military bearing and piercing eyes.

He was a fast man with a decision and just as fast to change it. He had no common sense, just a lot of authority. He relished his role as commander of nearly 1,000 battle-tested infantrymen, but it was a dream role, and he resented combat as if it interfered with the joy of command.

### Nightmare Started Sept. 15th 1944

The battalion’s nightmare started on the night of Sept. 15, 1944, in France. I commanded F Company 143rd Infantry and, with the other company commanders, was standing idly in a French farmhouse that had become the battalion command post. Blankets were nailed over the windows to hide the pale candlelight.

In the center of the room was a large kitchen table, with a map spread out on it. We all stood staring vacantly at the map, kidding each other, waiting for our old battalion commander.

He arrived with a stranger whom he introduced as “**Colonel Mann, your new battalion commander.**” We all felt the tremor that comes with such a disclosure. If this man is a fool or a coward or both, we thought, our chances of getting killed are even greater.

So we looked him over carefully while we were supped to be studying the map. I must admit I liked what I saw. He looked grim and tough—good qualities for a battalion commander. I did notice some concern that he wasn’t wearing a combat infantryman’s badge, but I only learned later that he had never been closer to combat than a supply job with another division.

### Vesoul Was Next Objective

Our old battalion commander, **Lieutenant Colonel Charles Denholm**, had already started briefing, in his usual crisp and expert manner. He had all the qualities of a good officer. He was brave, smart and tough, yet somehow he was also gentle. Perhaps he was a great officer because he made us all look good.

With Mann looking on, a slightly superior smile twitching his mouth, probably because of Denholm’s simple language, we heard this:

***“The next corps objective is Vesoul. This burg is of vital importance because as you can see it’s the hub of several important roads. The second thing that makes it important is this high, conical hill, Hill 401, that hangs over Vesoul.***

***“We have to have that hill in order to take the city. That’s our job. Report here at 0600 hours tomorrow for on-the-ground reconnaissance. That’s all for now.”***

The next morning Colonel Denholm took the four company commanders and Colonel Mann to the top of a hill we had captured the day

## Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

before. We walked single file up the path, past the GIs in foxholes who started at us with frank apprehension. They knew that their officers didn't go on reconnaissance looking for a picnic area.

Just before we reached the top of the hill we began to crawl, slowly and carefully, through some bushes near the crest. *We wanted to get just below the crest on the forward slope* but we didn't want the Krauts to see us because they would have fired on us or they would have realized what was up, or both.

Denholm pointed out **Hill 401** in the distance, and while we were staring gloomily at it, he told us that we had to take and hold the top of the hill and keep the Germans off while the rest of the division attacked Vesoul.

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Lt. Col. Charles J. Denholm  
Commanding Officer  
143rd Infantry Regiment  
as published in  
April 15, 1945 issue  
of The T-PATCH



I had the feeling Mann was having difficulty suppressing a high-ranking sneer. Anyway, the next day **Colonel Denholm left us to become regimental commander** and Mann officially took over.

He called for the company commanders and gave us a very long briefing. He was quick and decisive and very positive when he changed his orders, which he did several times.

He informed me that a platoon of Maquis (French Resistance fighters), with their lieutenant, would be attached to Fox Company for the attack. They would help me find a gap in the German defenses through which I would lead the company and the battalion.

However, before we got to the hill, he said, the battalion would move on trucks to a point three or four miles from the objective, a **village named Minot**, which would be attacked by Goerge Company supported by tanks, tank destroyers and the regimental cannon company. Then my company, Fox, and Easy Company would move through Minot and attack Hill 401 with a platoon of .50-caliber machine guns supporting us.

He took a long time to tell us that, and then I walked out of the briefing with **Captain Dave Hanrahan**, who commanded the light machine-gun and mortar company in our battalion.

"I'm not sure," Dave said, "**But I think he talks a little screwy.**"

## “Sir, You’re Nuts”

### ATTACK ON HILL 401

I left him and went back to my company. The men were spread out, sleeping, and while the first sergeant assembled them, the platoon leaders were guided to me by their runners.

In the darkness I quietly told them the situation and gave them their orders. Then I walked back to the road to wait for the trucks that were to take us forward.

I tried to anticipate the problems of the attack on Hill 401, but Mann kept blotting out my thoughts. Before I could think any more about it the trucks arrived and we loaded up.

When the George Company trucks moved out I looked at my watch because Mann had told me to leave ten minutes after them. Five long minutes had passed when someone came running up to the head of the column.

#### Major Jim Gentle Was Battalion Exec.

I heard the impatient voice of **Major Jim Gentle**, the battalion exec. **“Where’s the captain?”** he asked.

**“Here,”** I said.

He came puffing up. **“What the hell are you waiting for? Goddamnit, you were supposed to move out with George Company.”**

**Colonel Mann told me to keep a ten-minute gap between George and the rest of the battalion,”** I protested.

**“When did he change his mind?”**

**“I wouldn’t know, Major,”** I said, feeling a little sick.

**“Christ!”** the major said.

I left him standing there and climbed into my jeep. The column of trucks moved out, following me.

We had just reached the detrucking point near Minot when we heard the too-familiar staccato sounds of a firefight up ahead. I realized that George Company had started to attack Minot.

My company detrucked and were lined up along the road by the sergeants. When the slackening fire told me that Minot had been captured—in those days I was so sensitive to battle sounds that I could usually distinguish between the end of a firefight and a temporary lull—I sent my runner down the road to alert the company.

He had just left me when there was a hell of an explosion in Minot. It sounded like a Jerry ammunition dump and suddenly the village started to blaze, lighting up the one winding street like it was a burlesque runway.

I radioed back to Mann for permission to hold off my move into the village until the fire died down—so we wouldn’t be seen by the German observers and snipers in the hills around the village. He snapped

## Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

a refusal on the radio and coldly pointed out that the fire would make it easier to see where I was leading the battalion.

I thought to myself, **Sir, your're nuts.**

With our French platoon in tow, we moved through the village, tensed with wondering where were the Germans who must be watching. Except for the crackling fires we were walking through, it was pretty quiet around us.

### Hill 401

A few hundred yards before we reached the base of Hill 401, I stopped the column, threw a squad around us a guards, gathered the platoon leaders, including our French friend, and reviewed the plan of attack.

We had been told that only the base of Hill 401 was occupied by the enemy and that our job was to get to the top without fighting if possible, and dig in to keep the Germans from using the summit as an observation post **to help the defenders of Vesoul, below.**

The Maquis lieutenant, using his 15-year-old brother as interpreter, told me he could lead the battalion up a ravine on the north side of 401 without going closer than several yards from the German outposts.

Once we reached the top the plan was for Fox Company and the Maquis to set up a circular defense with Easy Company. It sounded all right.

There was no sight or sound of Germans in the darkness as we started to climb the gently rising slope, through woods that grew sparser and we got higher. I stayed with the Maquis leader until he whispered to me that the head of the column was through the German defenses, then I stationed myself at the spot to check the column as it trudged past me, like a file of ghosts.

As I looked over each soldier, I made sure his weapon—rifle, carbine, machine gun, mortar base plate or tube—was being carried silently and carefully. The men all peered back at me, the old-timers with serious smiles and the replacements with tight mouths.

When the last men in the company passed me, I waited to check the first man from Easy Company, the **"connecting file."** Then I followed my column to the top of the hill. It was still ominously quiet.

The quiet continued while Lieutenant Hirman King, my executive officer, and I put the platoons into position, ringing the hill about 150 yards below the summit. As we checked the company to make sure it all tied together, King noticed something I had not seen in the darkness.

There was a wooded ravine slicing up the south (Vesoul) side of the hill right through our circle of defense, manned by the second platoon. I sent my runner to get our company mortars zeroed in on the ravine

## “Sir, You’re Nuts”

in case they had to fire on it in a hurry.

Suddenly, to our wide-eyed horror, out of the black of the night three red flares zoomed up from a point near the summit and exploded brilliantly above us.

I cocked my tommy gun as I raced toward the source of the flares. I was certain there were Germans within our defense perimeter and they were signaling for an attack to start from below.

*But it was the colonel!* I lowered my gun and I guess my jaw at the same time.

**“Don’t look so alarmed,”** he said, coldly, **“I told my CP before I left that when we were in position I’d fire three red flares. Now you get your men ready in case we’re attacked.”**

*“What do you mean, in case?”* I nearly screamed. *“If there was any chance the Jerries didn’t know we were here, you took care of that. And we are ready.”*

### UNDER FIRE

There seemed to be only a few minutes of darkness left and I broke into a pack of K rations, with little real hunger. I felt very, very tired, having managed only about three hours’ sleep in two nights. Thinking about our battalion commander didn’t help.

After eating a few glum mouthfuls, I noticed a change in the darkness over the eastern horizon. I put the ration aside just as Colonel Mann walked up to me as I stood at the little caretaker’s shack I was using for a command post.

**“How’s everything, Captain?”** he inquired, so pleasantly I figured maybe the war was over.

I told him everything was okay except that the Germans would probably start their attack any minute and blast us off the top of the hill. He chided me for being a pessimist and said he wasn’t so sure we’d be attacked at all.

I was thinking of a bright answer was a few rifle shots, then a tommy gun’s roar gave him a better one than I could have. It also gave me a chance to leave him, hastily.

Of course, it was a very hot fight and we were the cause of it. After about 15 minutes a runner ran into the command post and gasped that the Germans had already cut through the second platoon.

I turned to the lieutenant who commanded my reserve platoon and told him to get a good strong squad down there and try to plug the hold in the second platoon.

Mann grabbed my arm. I turned to him. His eyes were wide and staring. *“You’re splitting your reserve?”* he said, incredulously.

**“Yes, sir,”** I growled, and walked out to catch up with the reserve platoon leader. In military tactics you don’t do that, of course, but I

## Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

didn't think that was the worst thing we were going to face and I wanted a little left in case.

Anyway, split the reserve or not, the squad helped hold back the German attack at that point in our perimeter. I had just got back to the command post when a shell exploded near us with a terrible roar.

**"That was a tank,"** Captain Hanrahan snapped as he ran past me. All this time, of course, we were constantly under rifle and machine-gun fire in and near the shack, and suddenly Mann's intelligence officer pitched forward and moaned he'd been shot in the buttocks. (We all thought that was funny as hell).

I made my way around my platoon positions and the Maquis group and was told by all that the pressure of the attack was getting heavier. Soon it would be too strong to hold off.

Obviously, the Germans were sending more-and-more-men against us. The firing became more intense and then the explosions of hand grenades began. They were getting close.

### **"It Didn't Fit Into His Plans"**

I raced back to my command post to find out from Mann **why the division attack on Vesoul hadn't started**, which would have taken the pressure off us. I found Mann calmly smoking as though he had no part of the hell around us.

Hanrahan was there, pleading with Mann to order George Company to attack the hill as fast as they could get up from Niot. I joined him in pointing out that unless Mann committed his reserve we would soon be beyond saving.

But he refused, with the angry comment that it did not **"fit into his plans,"** turned his back on us and picked up a map.

I suddenly got an idea and motioned to Hanrahan to keep Mann there. Quietly walking out, I ran to where Mann's radio man was set up. I told him to call battalion and get tanks or tank destroyers up the hill as fast as possible.

Naturally, he assumed I was transmitting orders from Colonel Mann, but for a few chilling minutes he got no response from battalion. My heart sank as the firing grew even more intense below me. Suddenly, battalion came in and acknowledge the message.

**Within about ten minutes we heard the beautiful music of the tank destroyers grunting their elephantine way up the twisting road and a minute or so later we also heard the blessed artillery and mortar fire which signaled the start of the division attack on Vesoul.**

Immediately we felt the Germans attacking us begin to pull back. In another hour or so Colonel Mann might have been a hero who died or was captured fighting to the last man against hordes of Germans.

## “Sir, You’re Nuts”

I was stumbling weakly—now reacting to the emotional vacuum—back to my CP to await word from my platoon leaders that all the Germans had pulled back, when Mann strode up to me with the confident air of a man whose battle had turned out just as he expected. He briskly ordered me to assemble Fox Company and move back to Minot.

An hour or so later we were on the road, a spread-out column of men on each side, red-eyed and hungry but breathing prayers of thanks. It had been close.

It was about noon when we reached Minot. We had eaten no breakfast so I went hunting George Company’s kitchen to see if it was still around. But it had pulled out.

### Clean Shaven, Washed and Very Military

I was just about to tell the platoon leaders to try to get their men fed in individual homes, when Mann’s jeep pulled up and he stepped out, clean-shaven, washed and very military (everything I didn’t feel at that point), and asked why my company wasn’t ready to move out.

Angrily I reminded him where we’d been and what we’d been doing since the night before and asked him about food and ammunition. He replied that he had an executive officer to worry about such things and that I should stop griping and move my company to a certain crossroad up ahead and wait there for him.

Avoiding their eyes, I sent the platoon runners to bring their lieutenants to me. I briefed them quickly and we moved out.

About an hour later, after a tough, fast march, we reached the crossroad. I waved the company off the road and they dropped, exhausted, for their first rest since early the night before.

I heard a jeep coming down the road and stood up. It was Mann again and as he pulled up, I gave a startled look at the pistol he had in his hand. **“I always carry it at the ready,”** he said, curtly. His driver looked away in embarrassment.

Taking off his helmet so he could smooth down his long brown hair, Mann told me to continue moving along the road, to attack all roadblocks and to clear the way for a tank attack he had ordered for the next day. (It never came off.)

### A JOB FOR F COMPANY

I organized the company for such action and off we went, a column on each side of the road, with the scout squad up ahead and the connecting files maintaining contact with me at the head of the company.

We moved through the hot sunshine for a couple of hours before we hit trouble. The scout squad, about 100 yards ahead of me, suddenly received machine-gun and .20-millimeter fire. We all dove for the ditches on each side of the road and began to return the fire.

## Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

We needed heavier weapons, and fast, so I sent my runner back for the tank officer who usually stayed with Lieutenant King. A few minutes later he came crawling up to me and looked at me questioningly with his usual sour expression. From our position in the ditch at a slight rise in the road, I pointed to a big red barn about 600 yards ahead of us.

**"That's where it's coming from,"** I said.

I asked the lieutenant to move his first tank up the road to a point just below our rise, so that only his turret would be exposed, and to machine-gun and shell the barn to keep the Germans pinned down while I moved a platoon around to the right and attack it.

### **This Is "Fox Sun Ray"**

He had been gone a couple of minutes when the radio operator handed me the radio phone and said, politely, **"The colonel."**

When I identified myself with my code name, **"Fox Sun Ray,"** Mann asked why I was holding up the battalion, which, of course, was strung out in our rear. I told him we were pinned down by .20-millimeter fire and was about to explain the action I had taken when he snapped, **"Captain, can you move your toes?"**

By this time, of course, nothing he said surprised me, so I answered, simply, **"Yes."**

**"Then,"** he said, briskly, **"you aren't pinned down. Get moving."**

I gulped and replied, **"Yes, sir."** That's all I needed at that point, a nice snappy little line he had heard somewhere.

### **"Report To His Command Post"**

A few seconds later the tank pulled up beside me and started firing. Soon I saw our last rifle platoon moving in on the barn in a line of skirmishers.

When they took the barn after a short fight, we moved on again. The rest of the afternoon was about the same: We would move along the road until we hit fire or a roadblock and we'd organize and attack.

We were lucky, we had very few casualties. Our main problem was that we hadn't eaten since the night before or slept for two nights and we were terribly low on ammunition.

About dusk I started brooding about our problems. It had been several miles since our last roadblock and we were still moving—alert, but getting deep into German-held territory. Suddenly I thought, **Suppose that idiot is planning a night attack?**

I told my radio operator that I'd send up Lieutenant King and started back toward the rear of the column. I quickly told King that I was going back to see Mann. He went forward to take my place at the head of the column.

When Mann saw me approaching he started to unfold a map and



## “Sir, You’re Nuts”

said he was glad to see me because he had a job for Fox Company.

I told him coldly that my company could do nothing without ammunition, food and rest—in that order. He calmed with a promise (**unkept, as it turned out**) that all was being taken care of.

He drew a little circle around each of two towns and said, brightly, **“You will take these two towns, simultaneously.”**

I stared at the map, then at him, and said, **“But they’re about five miles part!”**

**“That’s your problem,”** he said. **“I give the orders—you just carry them out.”**

I protested, pointing out that I would have to attack each town with one of my three rifle platoons and split my reserve, the third rifle platoon, in half.

**“You’ll have no third platoon for this engagement,”** Mann said grandly.

After a minute or so I gathered enough strength to ask, **“Why not?”**

He pointed a bony forefinger to a hill on the map between and behind the two towns and said, **“Your platoon will be guarding my .81-millimeter mortars here. I’ll use the mortars in case (in case!) the Germans counterattack.”** As for my poor platoon, he went on, **“They’ll defend the mortars in case of a breakthrough.”**

I forgot my weariness and argued that the job could be done faster, better and safer if I could attack the towns one at a time.

**“That doesn’t fit into my plans, Captain. You have your orders, get moving.”**

My platoon leaders gasped when I told them of the plan for the next morning. They were exhausted, hungry and irritable, and they started to get pretty exciting until I quieted them down by telling them he might change his mind and cancel the whole attack.

He did.

We bedded down in a little village, just in time to save the men from complete collapse. **The French people fed the men.**

I had been sleeping, stupefied, for about an hour when I was awakened and ordered to report to Mann again at his command post. I found the other company commanders there, as dazed and exhausted as I was.

For the next two hours he harangued us about the new attack on a small city he had planned for the next day. He went over every detail such exasperating, obsessive care that at one time or another we all fell asleep for a short time.

He probably had four years at West Point instruction in tactics concentrated on that poor little map, with its lines and cross lines and crosses and arrows and gun positions and concentration areas and

## Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

routes of withdrawal, all prettied up in red and blue grease pencil.

We sat there all that time, alternately dozing and waking, staring at him through eyes bloodshot with exhaustion, yet somehow fascinated with the whole foolish, frightening scene.

### A Mad Man's Nightmare

Suddenly, he leaped to his feet, awkwardly drew his pistol and shouted excitedly, **"ALL RIGHT MEN, ON YOUR FEET! THEY'RE ATTACKING US BUT WE'LL DEFEND THIS COMMAND POST TO THE DEATH!"**

In spite of our exhaustion and the hypnotic drone of his silly rambling, we were all old combat men and we were on our feet instantly and alert—but all we could hear was the distant rattle of machine-gun fire.

**"Colonel,"** someone said, pityingly, **"that's a mile or more away."**

He didn't answer but yelled, **"FOLLOW ME!"** and, pistol in hand, charged out of the farmhouse—followed by no one.

### AN URGENT MESSAGE

We all slumped down again, placing our tommy guns on the floor by our chairs, as Mann quietly returned and resumed his unending orders.

In spite of the over-organized plan of attack, when I asked him if the bridge we would have to cross to get to the town was mined, his impatient answer was, **"That's your problem."**

When he finally finished, we returned to our companies with the distinct feeling that **we were all just actors in a madman's nightmare.** We organized our men for the attack, and jumped off gratefully in a beautiful fog that covered our approach from observation.

As we were moving down the hill toward the river and the bridge, with only a few soldiers visible on each side, Hanrahan came running down to me.

**"The colonel says to bring the company back to the line of departure."** (That was at the top of the hill.)

**"What for?"**

**"How the hell do I know?"**

**"Is he holding up Easy Company on my right?"**

**"How the hell do I know?"**

**"Does he know that if Easy continues the attack the C.O. will have nothing on his left flank?"**

**"How the hell do I know?"**

He stood by while I raised Mann on my radio to point out that the attacking companies were protected now from German observation in

## “Sir, You’re Nuts”

the town and that it was a break for us to be able to attack covered by the fog.

**“If you’re only going to postpone the attack,”** I continued, **“we’re better off making it now.”**

His cheerful voice came back, **“Permission granted.”**

Hanrahan walked back up the hill, giggling hysterically.

### **Easy and Fox Took The Town**

Easy Company and Fox took the town, without Mann’s crazy strategy, and by common agreement moved through it before he could louse it up. We secured it on the outer edge in a semicircle, with Easy holding a sector on my right and George in reserve, and also securing the part of the town we had attacked through.

We three company commanders decided among ourselves on this disposition of our companies to be ready for the almost certain counterattack. We knew we wouldn’t be ready if the troops sat around waiting for Mann to finish another War College lecture to his company commanders.

### **Luck Is About To Run Out . . .**

We decided something else, too. One of us had to get word to Colonel Denholm at Regiment to relieve Mann before he brought disaster on us all.

I was elected and I decided to send my first sergeant back by jeep. I wrote the following message on a V-mail form:

***“I know I could get court-martialed for this, but urgently request you check 2nd Bn. command situation. Have managed escape tragedy three days but fear luck may run out.”***

When the jeep was out of sight we separated to return to our companies. I had just reached my command post when word came in that German skirmishers were approaching. A few minutes later we heard small-arms fire begin.

I ordered the roads and fields in front of our position mortared, and with our machine-gun and rifle fire, the German attack slowed and the Krauts pulled back.

But they withdrew in such good order that I knew it was only temporary.

We remained alert, waiting for another attack, and waiting also for a sign from Colonel Denholm. After about an hour the attack started again and we laid down the same mortar fire that had been so effective before.

My right platoon reported a column of German bicycle troops moving toward our right flank and the Easy Company position. I sent a runner to warn the Easy C.O. In case he hadn’t spotted the column.

## Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

The runner came back in about fifteen minutes, white and panting.

**"Sir,"** he said, **"Easy Company isn't there!"**

I felt a little dizzy and stared at the runner. Then I ran out into the street to where I had seen Colonel Mann shortly before. He was still there, surrounded by a group of giggling French women who were plying him with fruit and wine, which he was modestly accepting.

I grabbed his arm, swung him around and roared squarely in his face: **"WHERE THE HELL IS EASY COMPANY?"**

**"Why,"** he said, easily, pulling his arm free, **"I sent them back to reinforce George Company."**

**"What the goddamn hell are you trying to do?"** I roared. **"The fighting's going on right here, not back there."**

With a patient smile that was obviously for the benefit of his female audience, he said, **"That's right, my boy, but I'm certainly not going to be outsmarted if the Germans shift their attack. I'm keeping myself fluid."**

I let my runner lead me back to the command post. Just before we got there I told him to bring my reserve platoon up to cover as much of Easy's front as they could; I would be right over.

In the command post there was no word from Colonel Denholm. Nervously, I started studying Easy's area on my map.

Then Denholm strode in, his thin face dark with scowl. I was so happy to see him I shook his hand almost desperately – which must really have surprised him.

**"All right, Dine,"** he said coldly, **"what the devil's going on?"**

He stared with disbelief as I briefly filled him in. Then, fighting off a sudden wave of numbing exhaustion which came over me when I realized that our nightmare was about over, I said, **"Sir, would you please look out that window?"**

In two long steps he was there, with me at his side, and we could see my commanding officer raising a bottle of wine in salute to his circle of women, which had grown considerably.

A look of horror came over Denholm's sensitive face. He swung abruptly on his heel and strode out. I remained at the window to watch him walk in angry strides up to Mann and speak a few words.

Mann seemed to sag. He handed his wine bottle to one of the women and followed Colonel Denholm to his jeep.

I never saw him again. Major Gentle took over the battalion and we fought off the German attack that day. **By night the battalion was organized and the nightmare was over.**

Sometimes I think it really *was* a nightmare. But when I meet Hanrahan or one of the others and we fight the war again – and I realize it actually did happen.



## “Sir, You’re Nuts”

### Joe Dine

The author of this amazing story about a mad-man trying to command a bunch of old seasoned troopers, is not just an amateur at the art of Journalism. He has a folio of past performances a foot thick. We had used his story about Father Fintan Murphy in an early issue of The Quarterly. It had previously been published in The Infantry Journal, Jan. 1947.



PHOTO of Joe Dine at right was taken in 1956 at a meeting of the New York Chapter of the 36th, and below — a 1975 photo of Dine when he served with PBS in Washington.



The story you’ve just read, “Sir, You’re Nuts” is a classic in as much as a few characters like **CO. MANN**, at some time or other, showed up in all theatres of WWII. This yarn may jog the memory for many combat troopers who can recall such a similar case.

At present, Joe Dine resides in regal retirement at 55 Franklin Terrace, Box 2168, Vineyard Haven, Martha’s Vineyard, MA 02568.

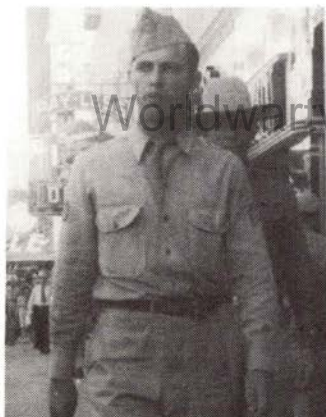
Everytime I hear from Dine, I recall the day when we “Invaded” Martha’s Vineyard (while stationed at Camp Edwards) and much to our surprise . . . Martha Was Not There!



# A RARE BOOK...

## P.O.Ws

## Orby Ledbetter's Wartime Log



THEN & NOW - Here's Orby as a young recipient of the Ruptured Duck at San Antonio in 1945 . . . and NOW - Orby and wife Alta Mae. They live in retirement at: 403 Cottonwood, Victoria TX 77904.

Orby served with the great Company L 142nd Infantry at Breckenridge Texas . . . is proud owner of a LOG that most ex-POWs didn't get back home with their copy. He did.



A rare document it is! Here's a book issued to all POWs by the American Red Cross as a means for the men to 'record' their most inter-feelings, words from home and a book to keep for posterity in their post-war years.

Finding such a book is not easy. Your reporter had never seen one. And, it was a great day when Bill Kirkpatrick (143rd) called to inform me he had a 'book' I ought to see! And so it was. This 6" x 9" — about an inch and a quarter thick, is covered with cloth from a discarded German uniform. Orby Ledbetter carefully wrapped it on his Wartime Log and made two latches with buttons for enclosure. The pages are now yellowed, but we have over a hundred with hand-printed poems, drawings, etc. (see his message — CONTENTS) . . . on page 47.

## Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

WAR PRISONERS AID  
AIDE AUX PRISONNIERS  
DE GUERRE  
KRIEGSGEFANGENENHILFE

GENÈVE (Suisse)  
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37, Quai Wilson

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Compte de Chèques postaux : 1.331

WORLD'S ALLIANCE OF YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATIONS  
ALLIANCE UNIVERSELLE DES UNIONS CHRÉTIENNES DE JEUNES-GENS  
WELTBUND DER CHRISTLICHEN VEREINE JUNGER MÄNNER

Worldwartwoveterans.org

July 7, 1943

Dear Friend,

As its title-page indicates, this "War-time Log" is part of a special remembrance from the folks at home. The other articles in the packet are more or less perishable, but this is intended to be kept as a permanent souvenir of the present unpleasantness.

If you do not want to keep a regular diary or even occasional notes on war-time experiences, these pages offer many other possibilities. If you are a writer, here is space for a short story. If you are an artist (some people are) you may want to cover these pages with sketches of your camp, caricatures of its important personalities, whether residents or authorities. If you are a poet, major or minor, confide your lyrics to these pages. If you feel that circumstances cramp your style in correspondence you might write here letters unmailable now, but safely kept to be carried with you on your return. This book might serve to list the most striking concoctions of the camp kitchen, the records of a camp olympic, or a selection of the best jokes cracked in camp. One man has suggested using the autograph of one of his companions (plus his fingerprints?) to head each page, followed by free and frank remarks about the man himself. The written text might be a commentary on such photographs as you may have to mount on the special pages for that purpose. The mounting-corners are in an envelope in the pocket of the back cover. Incidentally, this pocket might be used for clippings you want to preserve, or, together with the small envelopes on the last page to contain authentic souvenirs of life in camp.

Perhaps you will discover some quite different use for this book. Whatever you do, let it be a visible link between yourself and the folks at home, one more reminder that their thoughts are with you constantly. If it does no more than bring you this assurance, the "Log" will have served its purpose.

Yours very sincerely,  
WAR PRISONERS' AID OF THE Y.M.C.A.



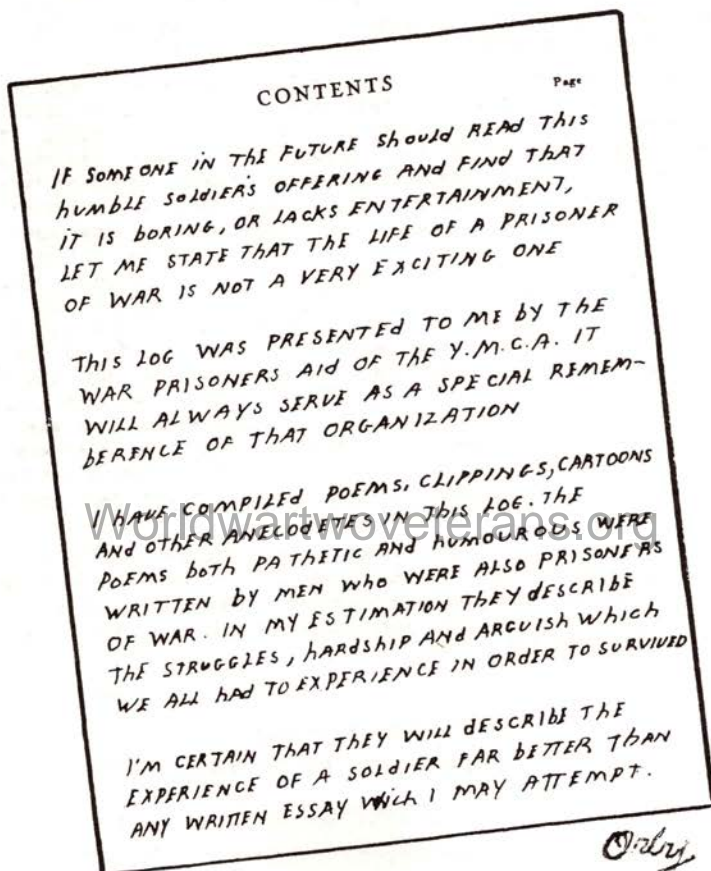
## Orby Ledbetter's POW Wartime Log

### "Not Too Many Got Their Book Home"

We contacted Orby Ledbetter after reading his WARTIME LOG — and here are excerpts from his reply: "The contents that fill the pages of poems and narrations were by many of the other fellow POWs in camp with me. Some were copied from newsclips and others when we met to work on your book. **I'm not that smart, so give credit to these guys.**"

"I have no idea how many of these "Logs" made it home. On Jan. 23, 1945 we left Stalag IIIB at Frankfort on the Oder River and **marched 110 miles through 2 foot deep snow to Stalag IIIA.** These 10 days of hell, made it necessary for some to jetsun any unnecessary weight, as we had to carry with us all our food. I somehow managed to save my 'book'."

"Yes, I agree, we do have a great story to tell. **It sure was not like the TV's "Hogan's Heroes."** The way time is going, I know we need to put some of these experiences on paper and/or tapes for our grandkids. I think what you are doing is GREAT!"



## SOME HIGHLIGHTS IN THE LOG . . .

PRISONER OF WAR . . . without a doubt, we have no idea how we will be received once we are librated, BUT we know in our hearts, we did our best.



# BOREDOM-

## BARBED WIRE STATISTICS

I had nothing to do lately, so I started counting the barbs on the rear fence. This is a sure sign of "STALAGISM" for msot people — ha, but NOT for me.

In the words of the immortal James Dawn: "I Ain't Crazy."

No. of posts . . . . .	60
No. vertical wires . . . . .	406
No. horizontal wires . . . . .	26
No. guard wires . . . . .	4
No. squares formed by wires . . . . .	2522
No. barbs on horz. wires . . . . .	32704
No. barbs on vertical wires . . . . .	42224
No. barbs on guard wire . . . . .	71456
No. barbs on warning wire . . . . .	9112
total barbs	<u>255,496</u>

I started to count the bricks in the barracks, planks in the air shelter, ect., but I noticed one man — who started counting the grains of sand in the compound . . . and what happened to him shouldn't have happened to a dog. So I gave up.



WorldWarVeterans.org  
"There is a saying that - no man  
has tasted the full flavor of Life,  
until he has known - POVERTY - LOVE -  
and WAR. Brother, I've had a three  
course dinner in the flavor of Life"

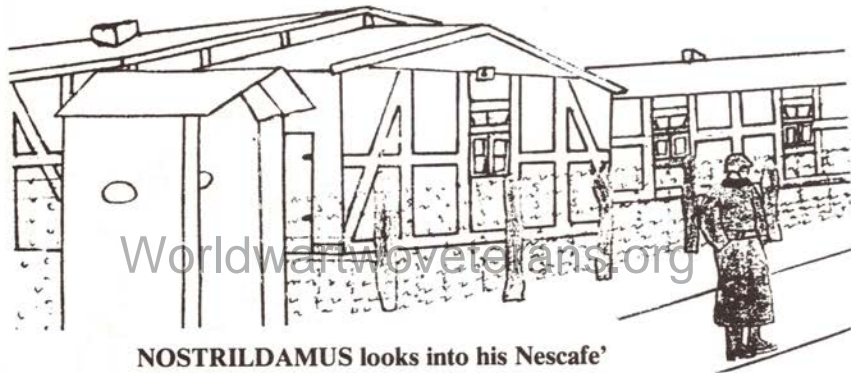
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THE GREATEST BATTLE THAT EVER FOUGHT,  
SHALL I TELL YOU WHERE AND WHEN. ON MAPS  
OF THE WORLD YOU FIND IT NOT.  
'Twas fought by the MOTHER OF MEN.

---

## Orby Ledbetter's POW Wartime Log

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, Son — My boy is two now in 1944. A young man that is plain to see. Happy Birthday, son; and do this for me — be happy, be strong, while I'm overseas. Your mother — love her, protect her, just for me. (Feb. 18, 1944).



**NOSTRILDAMUS** looks into his Nescafe' dregs and sees this omen . . . The War will be over anyday now. If not sooner, it will be over: (A) Tomorrow. (B) Next year. (c) Maybe it's over long ago. **WHY DON'T** they tell us these things?



*The Kitchen at Stalag III, B, Fürstenberg, Odet*

### **REST OLD BUDDY, REST . . .**

And here and here within the breast of  
Italy, A Son of Concord sleeps . . .

The cactus button prickling on his  
chest beneath a has box cross, but call  
this cheap if the winds of memory risen  
from the west . . . sleep.

## Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

### RECAP OF POW COMPOUNDS . . .

STALAG 7-A - Salerno, Sept. 26-28 1943  
 STALAG II-B - Munich, Sept. 29-Oct. 27, 1943  
 STALAG III-B - Frankfort on the Oder,  
 Oct. 27 1943 to Feb. 1, 1945.  
 (we walked for 8 days in snow foot-deep to get to  
 next stop . . . STALAG III-A).  
 STALAG III-A - Berlin - Feb. 1, to Liberation,  
 April 28 1945 by Russians.

**The Pledges Freed PWs He'll  
 Get 'Em Home—and Soon, Too**

By Charles F. Kiley  
 Stars and Stripes Staff Writer

ST. VALERY, France, May 23.—  
 Gen. Eisenhower yesterday told  
 more than 40,000 repatriated Amer-  
 ican prisoners of war that he was  
 personally doing everything to get  
 them home as soon as possible.

The Supreme Commander, speak-  
 ing over a truck, said he had  
 issued orders for America-bound  
 ships carrying liberated PWs to be  
 loaded to capacity even to the  
 extent of asking men to share in-  
 dividual beds and to sleep in shifts  
 in order to fulfill their wishes of  
 getting home soon "even if we  
 have to swim."

The repatriates, captured from  
 two months to two years ago, have  
 been here awaiting shipment home.  
 Some have been here only a few  
 days, others three weeks.

Gen. Eisenhower spoke personally  
 with more than 100 men during his  
 visit and joined one group for  
 lunch.

He reminded the men of the war  
 still to be waged against Japan.

"There is a great deal of activity  
 now in progress to take care of the  
 war with Japan," he said, "and if  
 we can't supply the shipping for  
 you immediately it is only because  
 we must also think of your fellow  
 soldiers fighting in the Pacific.

"Speaking for everyone in Amer-  
 ica, I want to express our gratitude  
 to you all in helping defeat Ger-  
 many. You men carried the ball  
 for us and we will not forget it."

These pictures were taken about 1940 and appeared in the "Historical and Pictorial Review of the Texas National Guard" at that time. Not pictured are 1st Lieutenant Charles G. Groseclose and 2nd Lieutenant Robert E. Mehaffey.



Bottom Photo: First Row: D.H. Booth, W.E. Pruitt, D.C. Livingston, G.E. Garrard, O.L. Campbell, W.A. Satterfield, D.H. Livingston, J.Q. Livingston, L.O. Doshier, H.H. Ennis, E.M. Sayre, R.F. Cullen. Second Row: R.R. Taylor, C.D. McDonald, W.D. Hood, J.A. Guill, Jr., L. Taylor, W.S. Williams.

E.W. Norvell, J.R. Boyce, M.E. Baggett, J. Crockett, R.L. Pennington, H.P. McKinney, C.E. Akridge. Third Row: O.C. Ledbetter, C.E. Dixon, W.J. Johnson, D. Chaney, L.W. Bowen, J.H. Noggle, L.H. Sullivan, W.D. Jones, E.D. Potter, S.W. Harris, F.O'Steen, W.S. Smyrl, C.G. Reves.



**STALAG III-A LIBERATED  
BY RUSSIAN TROOPS  
APRIL 28, 1945**



Worldwartwoveterans.org

Ledbetter's Log also included a bunch of snapshots, and we chose these four as the best to illustrate the JOY these 3,500 POWs in Stalag III-A (near Berlin) had when the Men of the RED STAR rolled in with their tanks.

We find the name: Jasper C. Finley of Marion N.C. on the back of each, so he had evidently sent a set to Orby after the war.



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## Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly



**We Walk to American Lines, Get  
There on V-E Day, May 8th!**



Ledbetter explains that about 150 members of the 36th Division were at Stalag III-A at the time of LIBERATION, April 28 1945.

When asked, "how many were with you from your own Co. L, 142nd?" Answer: "Seventeen (17)".

ORBY lived in Breckenridge, join the TNG Company L 142nd in 1937 . . . "I still have fond memories of those early days," he added.

Bob Mehaffey has been a great to us in this Stalag Story, and follow-up story is on the way for Company L 142nd . . . "The Pride of Breckenridge".

## Orby Ledbetter's Wartime Log

### Street Fighting in 'SHANTYTOWN'

**A** newsclip (with no date) about the SHANTYTOWN and House-to-House Battling was included in Orby Ledbetter's LOG. Like many other, I was unaware of this fantastic endeavor (I am sure it was a first) . . . so a letter to FRANK COKER had to be. A contact with Bob Mehaffey of Breckenridge was logical . . . he gave me the address of Coker (who still lives at Paint Rock), and here is his reply:

Dear editor — To try to help you with the SHANTYTOWN deal, makes my memory go — way back.

Co. L, 142nd Infantry was assigned to 5th Army Invasion Center, commanded by IRON MIKE O'DANIELS. He asked me to set-up a training center for street-fighting, pill box assault and close combat.

I had served with the British Commandos and had been trained in this type of warfare. So, we built a small town, with the help of an Engineer Battalion of (negro) soldiers.

SHANTYTOWN was a street of about two blocks long with 10 to 15 buildings, on each side of the street. We called it — SHANTYTOWN (because it was) and located on a bluff overlooking the Mediterranean Sea.

We built the Pill Box in the sand dunes on the beach, and for the next six months, we trained men of 1st Armored Corps; the 36th Division; 45th and 1st Division and many special troops from some French units (Senegal), and all over — about 200,000 men through the SHANTYTOWN training in preparation for the Sicily and Salerno Invasions.

Company L 142nd Infantry was a fine group of young men from Breckenridge, along with many draftees (Yardbirds) made up the company. They all took PRIDE in this assignment and did an excellent job.

These men were commended by Gen. George Patton; Gen. George Marshall; British Gen. Montgomery, Gen. Ike Eisenhower and Gen. Mark Clark, and the King of England (that's a pretty good list).

I was awarded the LEGION OF MERIT for this assignment, but the entire company — should have been given a Citation. I'm glad old ORBY LEDBETTER Kept this newsclip about this project.

Yours in Arms,  
Frank C. Coker (retired)  
Box 11, Paint Rock TX 76866.

Orby Ledbetter was One of  
Captain Coker's Street-Fighters . . .

## *Texans Teach House-to-House Battling in Shantytown, Africa, Training for Sicily Invasion*

BY DON WHITEHEAD,

Associated Press Staff Writer.

AT THE AMERICAN ARMY'S  
INVASION TRAINING CENTER.

North Africa (Delayed) (AP).— American invasion troops learned the art of house-to-house street fighting in a pint-sized shanty town on the shore of the Mediterranean—a town riddled by bullets fired in hundreds of mock battles.

Day after day for months, squads of soldiers assaulted Shantytown's two rows of wooden buildings while machine gun and rifle fire whizzed by them or kicked up the dust around their feet.

Here troops were taught how to storm a city, building by building; how to enter doorways, windows and roofs; how to blast the enemy out of hiding places with bullets and grenades.

Gen. George C. Marshall, Gen. Harold Alexander and many other officers of the Allied High Command came to see the invasion training. Gen. Bernard Law Montgomery came over from the British Eighth Army and watched a street fighting demonstration.

"It's the best I've ever seen," he said.

### **Texas Shares Pride.**

Texas can take a share of pride in Monty's praise because a Texan directed the drills and a big section of his demonstration squad came from the Rio Grande country.

CAPT. FRANK CO. COKER, 230 pounds of bone and muscle from Paint Rock, who trained with the Commandos and Rangers in Scotland, was unofficial Mayor of Shantytown. Beside street fighting, Coker instructed troops in pillbox assaults and unarmed combat—

hand-to-hand fighting with the rules tossed out.

Professional football fans will remember Coker. After graduation from Daniel Baker College at Brownwood, Texas, Frank joined the Philadelphia Eagles in 1937 and then played with the Wilmington, Del., Clippers.

He was inducted into the service in November, 1940, and went to England in July, 1942, to get Commando and Ranger training.

"Professional football was soft compared to that," he said. "I lost thirty pounds working with those boys. You had to be tough to stay in the league. In one class of 500 picked men were chosen for training. Only half of them lasted through the course."

He came to North Africa in April to direct the Army's street fighting school.

Coker had a flock of Texans with him. Breckenridge was well represented with Sergt. John C. (Pete) Sikes, Sergt. Henry (Gunny) Gunlock, Pvt. Sydney (Blubber) Harris, Sergt. William A. Pruitt, Cpl. Clyde-W. Demasters, Cpl. Paul R. DeLong and Sergt. Orby Ledbetter.

"We all went into the Army about the same time and we've stuck together," Harris said. "I reckon we've had more than a hundred street fights ourselves showing 'em how it's done."

"None of us knew what training meant until we got into this," said Pvt. Raymond E. (Arkansas) Elms of Fort Worth. "Damn'd if I ever saw anything like it."

Arkansas was right. American



## Orby Ledbetter's Wartime Log

### Coker Was 1st Combat Commander of Co. L



**CO AND FIRST SERGEANT**— Company Commander Capt. Frank C. Coker and First Sergeant Thomas J. Turner pose at Camp Blanding, Fla. in 1942. Capt. Coker was Company L's first combat commander.

The above is a copy of an old copy of a story that appeared in the Breckenridge newspaper some year ago, which Bob Mehaffey is responsible for. Getting the original fotos of these oldies is almost impossible, so please understand. Frank Coker, now a retired Postmaster of his hometown, Paint Rock, Texas (Concho County). His story about SHANTYTOWN appears on the next page. You'll be informed about one of the best-kept secrets of early combat-training . . . and his personal contribution to man-to-man fighting, added greatly to the demise of the Nazis.

troops never had been trained in such a realistic fashion.

I watched them demonstrate one afternoon for a company just entering the school. While a machine-gunner poured a hail of bullets down the main street of shantytown and riflemen fired into the street, the Texans made their attack.

From the cover of underbrush, two men dashed around the corner of a building and, shooting as they ran, jumped into a doorway. Under protective fire, two others came from the other side of the street and leaped through the doorway of another building, a structure with one wall removed so observers could see how they operated.

The men swept the two rooms on the ground floor with fire and then climbed the stairs, jumping through doorways in a crouch while firing tommy guns from the hip. They signaled at a window when the buildings were clear.

Then in pairs others began running into the occupied buildings, and working their way down the street door by door under covering fire from those in the opposite sides of the street. The explosion of hand grenades and the crackle of gunfire added realism.

One man fell on his face in the bullet-swept street. The attackers who followed jumped over his body and continued their assault. I thought he was shot, but he was a mock casualty. A trooper with a Red Cross band on his arm dashed up to drag the man into the protection of a doorway.

The men must never stop to pick up a casualty, Coker explained. That's what the enemy wants. It exposes the men to fire, and if two men stop to pick up one wounded man, that means three men are out of the fight. They must leave the wounded for the first-aid men trained to take care of them.



# ANOTHER BAD START

By George Kerrigan



I joined Company A 142 on October 1st, 1943, near Altavilla, Italy. They were relieved to get replacements and retrain, after the Salerno Invasion, and to this day I am not sorry that I missed the big show. After all the battles I participated in myself, I'll still take my hat off to anyone that made that landing, and the terrible grueling days ashore. I salute you men.

So back to basic training, plus the **"British Battle Drill."** (Nobody ever figured it out, including the British.)

**As I was always the clown,** I rubbed some people the wrong way, but when in ranks I played soldier to a T. I had been a drill sergeant for eight years in the New York National Guard, and I knew what discipline meant (until I was given "At ease")

Being a Yankee, I had two strikes against me. So one morning my platoon sergeant, Jim Britt from Brownsville, Texas, called me out in front of the platoon and said, **"Hey, Big Mouth, let's see what you can do with close order drill. Maybe we can shut you up for a while."**

And he said, **"Yes."**

So I threw my M-1 at him and said. **"Take that musket, and fall in the rear rank."** He was shocked, but went along.

I gave a few commands, then gave them **"At ease"** while I demonstrated the Manual of Arms, with a **"few tricks"** thrown in, then started to drill, stopping at times to show them the fine points of close order drill while at the same time comparing them to the Cub Scouts, and even gave them the Gonorrhea March to top it off.

After thirty minutes of rubbing it in, I walked over to the sergeant and said, **"Okay, Rebel, I'll take my musket back."**

I expected Jim Bowie to appear and strike me dead, but I couldn't pass up a shot like that. Now all I could do was wait for his revenge.

## **"THE CAVE"**

The next morning a sergeant asked for **"Kerrigan."** when I answered, he said, **"Follow me."**

## **"Another Bad Start . . ."**

I asked where he was taking me, and he said, **"To the cave. They must want you in regards to your records."** When we got there, he said, **"Go in, I'm going to wait out here and smoke."**

There was only one fellow writing inside, so I assumed he was a T-5 company clerk. He had on a tanker's jacket, as we called them.

So I leaned against the cave wall, while he looked at me four or five times. Finally, he said, **"Well?"**

I said, **"Well, what?"**

Very indignantly, he asked, **"Who are you?"**

I replied, **"Joe Blow from Buffalo. Who the \_\_\_\_\_ are you?"**

Well, he jumped two feet in the air, then felt his shoulders, then felt for his helmet, which was on the floor, picked it up and put it on his head. I saw a Silver Leaf. Oh, boy! An ossifer, another nail in my coffin.

As I came to attention and gave him a highball, he said, **"Now, who in hell are you, and what do you want?"**

I said, **"Private George J. Kerrigan, Company A 142, Sir. There is a sergeant outside who was told to bring me here Sir, and he doesn't know the reason either, he assumes it has something to do with my records, Sir. And I'm sorry for my actions Sir, as there was no visible rank, I assumed you were a T-5 company clerk."**

When he cooled off a big, he thought for a while, then asked, **"Are you the fellow that 'A' Company is putting up for sergeant?"**

I laughed and said, **"Hell, no. If anything, those Rebels are going to court-martial me."**

He asked why, and I told him of how I took over the platoon after Britt called me a big-mouth Yankee.

So he went through his papers and said, **"I was right, you are the one."** I was shocked and so was he.

Then he asked, **"How long are you in the Army?"**

Immediately, I replied, **"Five months, three weeks and two days, Sir."**

He said, **"How could you figure that fast?"**

I said, **"As soon as I saw you were an officer, I started to add, as I knew you would ask me."**

I said, **"Don't feel bad, Sir, every officer does the same."**

Then he said, **"I am going to ask you a few questions."** But I interrupted, to tell him that I wasn't in combat yet. He said, **"I know that,"** and started to ask me about possible situations in combat.

After I answered his questions, he said, **"Kerrigan, you have more time than you said you had in the service."**

I said, **"Sir, I had eight years in the New York National Guard**

## Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

before the war, but the regulars looked at us with contempt so I don't mention it."

Well, he said, "I am a West Point graduate and I have all the respect in the world for the National Guard."

Then he put out his hand and said, "Good luck, Sergeant." As I shook his extended hand, he said, "Will you do me a favor, Kerrigan?"

I said, "Certainly, Sir, what is it?"

He said, "When you see that Rebel Sergeant, as you call him, shake his hand. He must be a pretty good man, to take what you did to him and then put you up for sergeant."

As I thanked him and saluted, I remembered who he reminded me of. "Colonel Devereaux." The part played by Brian Donlevy in the movie "Wake Island"--a true story of the Marines and civilians that fought against impossible odds, as the Japs invaded Wake Island early in 1942.

Colonel George E. Lynuch, Commanding Officer of 142nd Infantry Regiment — as published in the April 15, 1945 issue of The T-PATCH, a special edition headlining: 36th OVERSEAS TWO YEARS (published at Strasbourg).



Thirty-eight years later, at the Annual Reunion of Company A 142 in Muncie, Indiana, I had the pleasure of meeting that same fine officer again. He is Major-General George Lynch, Retired, now residing at Columbus, Georgia.

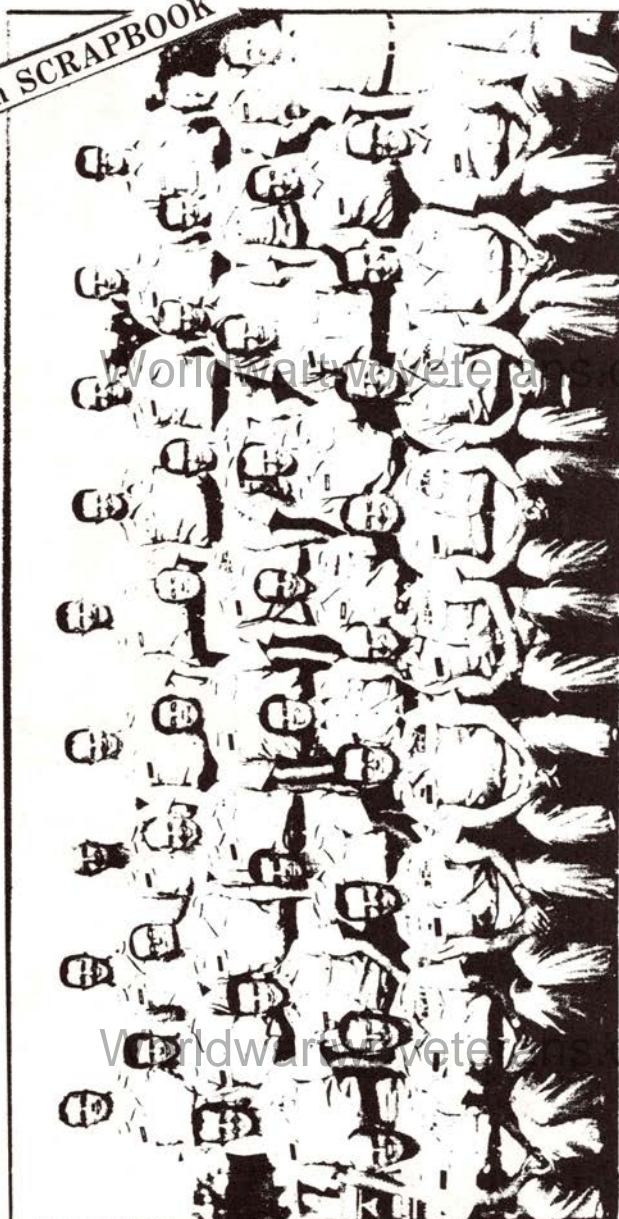
I am proud to have served under him, in the greatest outfit in the United States Army. We left our mark in the Big Scrap.



Not too many T-Patchers can show that they had an audience with his holiness, The Pope. But, George Kerrigan did, as shown with Pope John Paul II with Msgr. Bernard Roemer, former Chaplain, at the Vatican last October (1984).

The 'Last' 36th Division  
 Summer Camp . . . Fort Hood, Texas  
 1967

36th SCRAPBOOK



- |                        |                           |                      |                       |
|------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>FIRST ROW</b>       | <b>SECOND ROW</b>         | <b>THIRD ROW</b>     | <b>FOURTH ROW</b>     |
| FISHER, J. LTC         | CALHOUN, C. C. 2LT        | MOBLEY, R. L. CPT    | MCADAMS, K. R. LTC    |
| FRANCIS, M. LTC        | FLOCH, J. A. MAJ          | MARTZ, D. M. CPT     | WEESE, J. L. CPT      |
| BRACY, L. E. COL       | ANDREWARTHA, E. E. Jr LTC | LITTLE, H. V. MAJ    | BOSTICK, W. T. LTC    |
| SIMPSON, E. S. MAJ GEN | HOLLAND, H. LTC           | TAFOLIA, J. F. MAJ   | STEPHENSON, O. R. CPT |
| BLACKWELL, T. BRIG GEN | MEEKER, F. W. MAJ         | LAWRENCE, C. W. MAJ  | SALMON, D. A. MAJ     |
| BERGFELD, J. A. COL    | ANDERSON, R. T. 2LT       | WULFE, E. G. CPT     | CARROLL, H. MAJ       |
| GARRETT, J. B. LTC     | SWANBERG, F. L. MAJ       | WHRENHUNT, B. J. 1LT | HINTON, A. P. MAJ     |
| ROBINSON, J. O. LTC    | EVANS, J. F. MAJ          | CORBELL, L. R. MAJ   | SCOTT, J. G. MAJ      |
| BROWN, H. E. LTC       | BERNARD, R. T. MAJ        | TALLAS, L. T. CWA    | PATTERSON, T. R. 1LT  |

The 36th Infantry Division was de-activated on January 1968, and the colors and Traditions of the Division were passed on to the 71st Airborne Brigade on 15 Jan. 1968.

Photo above was sent in by Col. Jack Fisher of Austin — the front row is the commanding general and staff officers. We asked Fisher to give names of deceased members, and he reported: LtC. William T. Bostick and Maj. Alan P. Hinton. This is indeed a 'rare' photo, and Fisher has our thanks.

# ENGINEER'S

## Diary



By Warren A. Toney

### 111th Combat Engineer Battalion

Left states April 1st, arrived at Oran the 13th, 1943 on ship Henry Gibbons, went to Magenta. Stayed there six weeks, then rode on train to Rabat, 450 miles (four days). Stayed there two months. Had plenty of passes. . . gave demonstrations to the French at Port Lyantey. Back to Oran, left there to invade Italy. Ship (Funston) left Africa Sept. 5th, landed in Italy Sept. 9th.

Airplane landed near boat when we were landing. Pilot was saved by landing barge, then went to underwater proofing area, got shelled by 88's and went north two miles to a town of Pestum. Got in tank battle at 1 p.m. when they were knocked out by our artillery and large Navy guns. We laid mines ahead of the infantry two different nights. Put up barb wire obstacles several times by Sele River, before they left the area.

Our worst fighting was near Sele river and at Altavilla. Many lives were lost on both sides, jerry the most. We were the only division that landed except with special troops for mines, many of them just after the enemy had left the area. Altavilla was almost flattened like many of the villages were.

On D-4, we were put on the front to stop a tank battle (or assist in stopping one). We dug in (couldn't go deep enough). We saw everything that a person had ever learned and read about. We lost our weapons Sgt. Couch (swell fellow, very well educated). We were relieved by the 45, 35, and 3rd divisions.

We kept on repairing roads and bridges. Being engrsr., we were seldom idle. Oct. 1st entered Naples (1st troops to enter outside of paratroopers) who were posting guards at various places. We started to work at once on the docks.

Ships were coming in second day. We got praises for our fine and quick work, unloading ships, taking extra food in particular. Two and a half weeks, had a few passes. Could buy most anything for a song, but prices went up steadily. The people were grateful to see us come and treated us well. The city itself was a terrible wreck from bombs and demolitions from the jerry.

## Warren Toney's Engineer's Diary

We left Naples and moved towards the front. Nov. 15—(last Biv. area before moving up near capua on the Volturno River). Put up pup tent in the rain and mud eight miles from front. (rumble of artillery fire going and coming). Went out after supper to build bypass for quartermaster (cold and raining). Came in at eleven bells. I was sent back to get medicos. (We relieved the 3rd Inf. Division after 59 days of action).

Nov. 16th—Artillery shells were really flying over our heads all night not much sleep. Still raining on-and-off all day, laid in our tents but we did go out to repair roads and put out guides for the artillery who were moving up. Got in at midnight. Nov. 17th—Still raining, worked all day building a bypass around a bridge that had been blown out.

Just ahead was a mountain where our Inf. had jerries surrounded. Shells were flying and could hear the rattle of machin guns. The roads were bad and trucks were in ditches. We were hungry and cold, sure miserable to stay out with no dry place to go.

Nov. 18th—Sun came out a few hours but started to rain before night came on. Off today cleaning up our guns and equipment. Still fighting on that hill. Roar of our bombers (B 25's) flying overhead. Fighters patrolling all day. Seems like every hill is full of artillery weapons.

Nov. 19th—Sun shining first time in five days. Worked until 3 P.M. on bypass. Moved in some more artillery, not much sleep tonight. Nov. 20th—Started to rain again, repairing roads. Still haven't taken hill. Jerry is sure deep in all divisions waiting on our 142nd Inf. to take hill.

Nov. 21—Weather a little better. Aired out all of the blankets. Went to a little town next to us. Six M.P.'s were shot up at Venafro. Nov. 22—Sun shining for a change, worked all day on roads. A boy out of A Company got killed from booby trap in a cave. We could see shells falling on the jerry positions. Jerry Stuka strafed a road along side of us, sure made us hit the ground fast, no damage done.

Nov. 23—Raining hard out, still working on roads. Concusion from our big 155 long-toms, sure shakes our tent. Can't sleep, took second decent bath since being in Italy this evening. No change on front.

Nov. 25—Raining, hauled rock and gravel all day till after dark was taken up in a ravine where a bridge had been blown out. Still shelling it from miles back. Our artillery still giving jerry no risk shooting from 1 to 20 miles and it sure lays some terrible barrages down, makes the whole earth tremble.

## Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

Nov. 25 - Raining, sure miserable. Last year was on furlough at this time. (Thanksgiving) About all I can be thankful for that I am still alive and well. Had turkey for supper, sure tasted good for a change, (ate in downpour of rain). Our position is about the same, too much mud to expect much. Went out after dark, worked and guided 18th Art. Brigade along narrow places in roads where craters had been blown, got in at 2:30 A.M.

Nov. 26 - Raining, had a rest, wrote some letters, front unchanged. Saw some B-25 bombers go over (24). Nov. 27 - Misty in morning but cleared off before noon. Worked hard on bridge fill-in. Corderoyed it first then dumped rock and gravel on it. Worked until 9 P.M. We had gotten up that morning at 4 A.M., to get at bypass before daylight (real dangerous in daytime.)

Nov. 28th - Sun shine - swell day. Company went out, I stayed in, worked on pontoon tools. Company working on same bridge. Jerries laid down a barrage of shells just below here. Sure shook the ground, don't know if anyone was killed or wounded. Looked bad from here.

Nov. 29th - Weather fair, lull in the fighting, laid around for further orders. Have been in this area for 15 days now. Casualties are few at front mostly shell victims. Village next to us, Presezano, odd place, built on huge hillside no streets for cars, mostly steps.

Nov. 30 - Raining - here and there. Pay day, but no place to spend it here. Going to work at a bypass near the front tonight. Too dangerous in daytime, loaded all ten trucks with medium sized rock. Left area at 8 P.M. road blocked by truck which went over bank, one man killed. We ran into a convoy of tanks going up - I was left as a guide to direct our trucks to bypass one-half mile from front, pretty scary. Could hear machine-gun fire, plenty of mortars and shells falling.

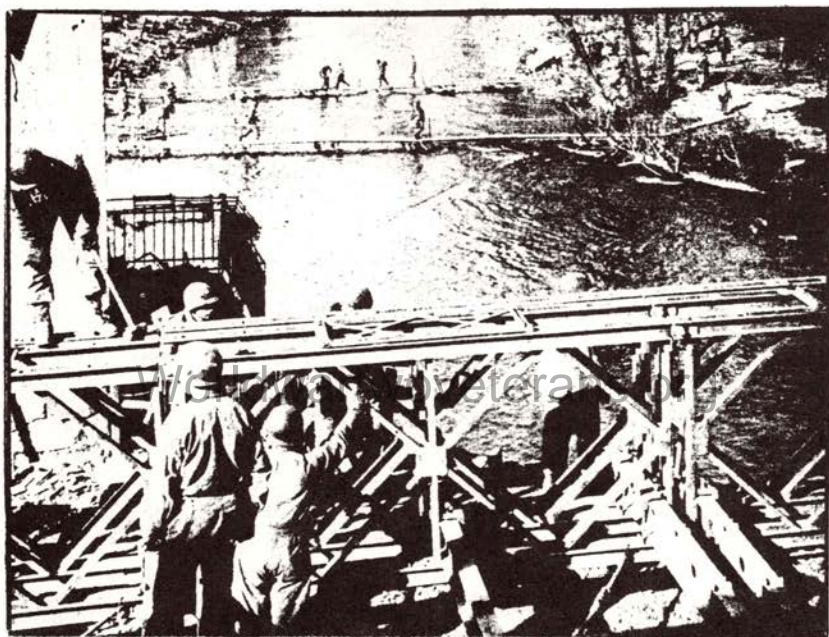
Dec. 1 - More rain! Most of the fellows are sleeping. Rangers tried to take city ahead, got surrounded, but broke out. Lost sixteen men. One squad from this Co., went with them to sweep roads for mines. All returned safe. We witnessed one of the biggest air and artillery barrages yet this afternoon.

Over 100 planes could be seen at a time dropping bombs and then diving down on the jerries strafing. **No word but hell - could describe it, for the artillery shells light up the sky most of the night, looked like New York.** Tents shook, couldn't sleep. I was Cpl. of the guard two hours-on and four hours-off for 25 hours.

Dec. 2 - Sun out, clear and real cool. Counted 84 bombers in the forenoon go over, besides those A36's. They carry both light bombs and machine guns to strafe troops called "dive-bombers." So Hitler is in for another bad day. In the afternoon I counted over 125 more bombers. Don't see how jerries keep going. Tonight an artillery barrage was laid down ahead of our Infantry - **hundreds of big guns**



## Warren Toney's Engineer's Diary



Typical construction of combat bridges by the 111th Engineer Bn., in Italy, France and Germany 1943-45. First, the foot bridge and/or boats for infantrymen, then followed by temporary by-pass and fixed bridges, often the (British) Bailey Bridge as shown above. From Oran Stovall, CO of 111th Engrs.

were blazing all night, biggest barrage that ever was given an enemy in any battle yet. Continuous roar of 203 and 155 rifles. One gun just below us fired 60 shells (20 lbs. each). The mountain that they were on looks like a big fire.

Dec. 3—Rain again. Troops are pushing forward. Cut small trees all day for corduroy of roads. No planes today, weather is too bad. I bet it sure a gruesome scenes up ahead. One can't explain that artillery barrage that our guns laid down last night. Some fellows are out working all night with bulldozers moving up artillery guns to the front. **We heard that there were 3200 artillery pieces firing last night.**

Dec. 4th—Raining hard. Hauled rock for fill-in all day. Continuous rain, advancing slowly. **Dec. 5th**—Our company started to build two Bailey Bridges (English). First Platoon got their in but we were shelled hard by jerry. One fellow was wounded, then two duds landed within a few feet of us. **If they hadn't been duds, we would have all been killed or wounded.** Then we left only to come back after dark, everything went good until mid-night.

Shells started to land near us. Not hearing them come, we were all

## Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

standing but by a miracle nobody was hit. We left the area in forty directions-disregarding mines. We arrived safely in camp but one fellow, who was wounded pretty bad in the left arm. We were all scared to death. (Fifteen shells in all!) Two of which landed in A Company's area whwere they had just moved into. Two badly wounded, one died.

Dec. 6 - All shakey yet from last night. Unloaded six semi's full of bridge down at H&S. Stayed in all night gave up bridge til they get that outpost in the mountains that is directing the jerry artillery on bridge and the village of Fendro.

Dec. 9th - Loaded ten more trucks of Bailey bridge to take out to bridge site tonight. We have orders it must be built regardless. You can imagine how we feel. Arrived at bridge at midnight, started at once. Worked hard all heavy steel sections, no shell fire, sure glad of that. They did put some in after day break. Closest ones were fifty yards away. Not too safe but it has to be put in. We completed it at 11 A.M., tired and hungry.

Dec. 10th - Sure tired and stiff. 2nd platoon is building one tonight, makes three bridges on the same short piece of road. Tanks etc, were moving over ours by noon. **Building bridges under shell fire is no picnic** - went to bed early - try to catch up on some sleep.

Dec. 11th - Air attack, 12 Nazi M-109's, none hit us, but troops near had 2 killed, many injured. Dec. 12th - cut poles for corderoying bypasses. Ran into old buddy, Tom Merreel of 755th Tank Bn. A wonderful reunion.

Dec. 13th - Got order to move, after 28 days in same area. Can see mountains where the Krauts are. We get plenty of shell-fire, plus Phosphorous shells, which are almost as bad as gas. Dec. 14th - First thing to do was dig a deeoer fox-hole. Lots of mules coming in for the mountain troops. Food and ammon are dropped in for some units. Near here is the 'Million Dollar Mountain.' 34th Division was relieved by a division of French troops.

Dec. 15th - Big push started this AM, our dive bombers worked on the Nazis all day. We had 2 retaliations but were driven off by our AckAck men. We had ringside seat - it lasted 2 hours.

Dec. 16 - Fighting goes on in the mountains, many B-25 bombers blasting away this AM, dropped pamphlets behind Krauts lines. Dec. 17th - San Pietro just fell this afternoon. We know our work will start soon.

Dec. 18th - Started sweeping for mines near San Peitro - many S-mines, Teller-mines and booby traps. The village is flattened, nothing left standing. We saw our first aftermath of a gruesome bat-

## Warren Toney's Engineer's Diary

tle! Many 36th buddies lay there dead!

Dec. 19th—Clear, but still sweeping roads for mines. Our A-36 Dive Bombers go down on the Krauts. Our luck ran out when 1 officer and GI were killed, when the Nazis retaliated, also 8 wounded... Lt. Evans and Pvt. Felix Guss and Yeager with arm blown off below elbow.

Dec. 20th—Got up at 2 A.M. to sweep road out CP, had 40 36th MP's as protection from snipers... got back at 5 P.M. Yesterday we had out pictures taken by AP and other war correspondents as first troops to enter San Pietro. The 141st 2nd Bn., had only 174 troops left after attack, they started with 700.

Dec. 21st—Showers, troops advancing slowly, we get many casualties. 35 men of 16th Engrs. are attached to us, from 1st Armored. Our mine-sweepers found mine fields, all were S-mines.

Dec. 22nd—Company idle today, drowned by combat suit to get it waterproof and windproof. Set for winter now. 3th troops fighting hard at St. Vittore and Cassino.

Dec. 23rd—Saw some of our men from 143rd come off the front line, a pitiful looking bunch. Met a long mule train loaded with rations going up the mountains, about 200 all lead by Italians. Our loses are unbelievable. Mines are thick as grass. We even found mines and booby traps in trees. The Krauts foxholes are 4 to 10' in the ground.

Dec. 24th—We hauled pals for corderoying the road to water point. Some Inf. companies are down to 20 men. Fifth Army is advancing, but troops still have bitter fighting.

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### CHRISTMAS - IN ITALY - 1943 MARK CLARK SAYS WE'LL ALL BE BACK HOME FOR CHRISTMAS - 1944. (Ha, Ha)

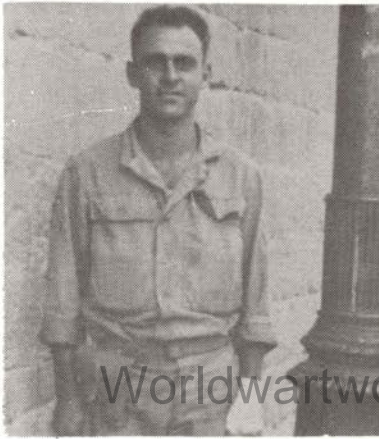
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Dec. 25th—Xmas in Italy... had afternoon off, took a bath and had turkey for supper, really tasted great, cause we had cranberries we got from the dock at Naples. We did not know how the Italians celebrated Xmas, all too scared. Mark Clark says we'll be back home by next Christmas. We see snow falling in mountain peaks next to us.

Dec. 27th—Drained ditches along road to San Pietro. Dec, 28th—36th Division is moving back for rest period and replacements, we move back about 30 miles, we were relieved by the 34th Division, and we take their rest camp. **We were on the front for 43 days.** Now we have some R & R and get new replacements. We had many wild experiences, and are **LUCKY TO STILL BE ALIVE!**



## Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly



**Warren A. Toney**  
**Box 254**  
**Sawyer, MI 49125**

Your editor contacted Toney shortly after receiving his day to day account of life with the 111th Engineers, from Salerno to Dec. 27th when the troops were pulled out of the line after 43 days of hard combat. Here's his bio:

Toney joined Co. C 111th Engineers at Camp Blanding in March 1942. Served from invasion until Naples and beyond, and was 'sent home a nervous wreck' (his quote).

Warren was born 1915 is retired from Michigan State Highway Dept. 1981, is a widower with 7 children, triplets and a set of twins and 2 singles. Is proud of his two Bronze Stars. He is active in Amer. Legion No. 518; VFW 1137 and commander of DAV Chapter 126 of Stevenville, Mich.

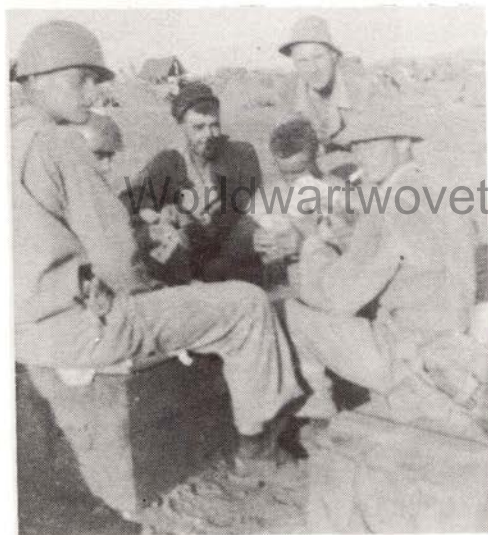
Look close at the marking on the front bumper 111 ENG here's one of their half tracks, and standing in back — Frank Pearce and Steve Sinchek.



## Warren Toney's Engineer's Diary



OFFICERS of Co C 111th Engineer Battalion: Italy, 1943 — Capt. Ernest L. Petrie, CO; Lt. William L. Woody, Lt. Thomas B. Guthier (KIA in France); Lt. Lee E. Bealher, of Colorado Springs, reg. Colonel with SDC in Korea and 1st Sgt. Cecil F. Clinton. From Warren Toney's photo album. Full name identification supplied by Col. Stovall.



The winners tell jokes, the losers keep hollering, Deal the Cards! here's men of Co C 111th Engineers: Red Brewer, Steve Sinchek, Bricen Hayden, J. D. Hatley and Frank Pearce. From Toney's photo album.

# War changed life for Ravenna vet



Bill Hartung Sr.

# Company E's D-Day...

**Writer recalls U.S. invasion of  
southern France beaches in 1944**



Record-Courier, Ravenna-Kent, Ohio, Wednesday, August 22, 1979

## A Big Heartache For Hartung

The 17th of August marked the 35th anniversary of the landing in southern France. For some reason or another there seems to be very little ever mentioned about it, but to the men of our company, the 143rd Regiment, 36th Division (Texas), it was a very rough time.

We were told the night before we were to go shore that because of the reputation we made in Italy, our company was given the job of clearing the beach, while the others went directly inland. This is a very dangerous mission, as the main thing is to get off the beach, because that is where they can really chew you up.

The next morning dawned beautiful and what a shock it was to see hundreds of ships of all kinds in all directions when the night before you were there alone in just the vessel you were going to hit the beach in. It was

unbelievable. After the shelling by the battleships, we started in.

We were the second wave and waded ashore at H-hour plus 15 minutes which was 8:15. We were all loaded down with extra ammunition and bangalore torpedoes — long poles with dynamite on the end — to blow up any barbed wire. You were lucky you didn't drown, because the landing craft only got in so far and we must have weighed about 300 pounds.

I was a company runner and stayed with the company commander getting messages to each platoon leader over a walkie-talkie. I had two of them, but they never did work. All I got was the fighter pilots talking to each other. I threw both away.

We were moving along the shore pretty good for awhile and then all hell broke loose.

## Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

There was a wall about three feet high that ran all the way down to the water directly in front of us. Behind that was a large house and the Germans were dug in there with machine guns and mortars.

On the French Riviera all houses are mansions and the gardens are very thick with huge trees and foliage. This is what hurt us most. Visibility was bad and the shells were exploding before they hit the ground, making them twice as effective.

We tried to get over the wall, but they were picking us off like flies and we couldn't see them to do anything about it.

I had to deliver each message in person to the platoon leaders — without the walkie-talkies — and it was not until around noon that I noticed that I had been running through minefields all the time. By then, I didn't care. The good Lord must have been guiding me.

We called up tanks and one tried to go through a big gate. It got shot at a few times and the men left and the tank was still there.

My best buddy, who was a wireman and knew nothing about tanks, climbed in and tried to ram the gate and wall. But the tank finally stalled again, he had to get out fast.

He was with the company from the landing at Salerno in Italy and thought he should be sent home on rotation. We had one Sergeant sent home like this. My buddy told me the only way out was the Congressional Medal of Honor and that is what he was trying for. About one and a half mon-



ths later he was killed by a sniper.

By this time we had two houses almost full of wounded and I don't know how many dead. The Battalion Commander finally showed up and wanted us to take this position no matter what. Our company commander refused to send any more men over the wall. He was relieved of his command and we never saw him again. We felt bad as he was well liked and doing the right thing. The Battalion Commander took over. He was shot off the wall on his first try.

By this time, about 2 o'clock in the afternoon, we only has 20 some men left, no officers. We started with more than 200 men in the morning.

We were finally relieved by a special task force and they took the position from the Germans at about 8 o'clock that night.

We moved inland about two miles and what was left of us spent the night in the basement of a house with more German soldiers behind us than in front of us.



## War Changed Life For Hartung

The next morning, all of the Germans were on the run and for the first time we enjoyed the sights of the beautiful French Riviera.

Thank God very little was destroyed and it stayed as beautiful and peaceful as before.

We had a reporter visit us from the stars and stripes newspaper and our company got a nice write up on the front. That's why it was called "Company E's D-Day."

Too bad those that didn't make it couldn't see it. But, that's a cheap price to pay for

what we accomplished. Then again, they could have gone through many more months of this hell and suffering and got it anyway — like my best friend and many more did. I was very fortunate in a way. I went through almost two years of it — from Italy to Germany. But, I think of it quite often, especially when times like this come up. I guess you never forget, as it gets too deep inside you.

You do often wonder why, though.

Bill Hartung Sr.  
Ravenna



Hartung received the Bronze Star and Purple Heart, and many others for service in Italy, France and Germany, and get'em 39 years AFTER the war ended in Europe. Better late than never.



NAPLES, Italy just before departing for Anzio, here's Bill Hartung, at left, and two buddies of Co E 143rd, but couldn't recall their names.



# SHORT ONE BURRO, OVER ONE JACKASS

Tales of the Texas National Guard  
By Alan "Chum" Williamson

## *How "G. I." Got It's Name...*

Since the days of Caesar's Legions and before, accounting for lost, damaged and destroyed property has been a worrisome problem for military personnel. Between the World Wars, the problem was particularly acute for T.N.G. units located in the cities, where there was a high turnover of personnel. Men enlisted, were issued uniforms and lockers, then disappeared, taking the uniforms with them. In the case of armories used for other purposes, thieves sometimes broke into the lockers.

A part of the problem was misidentification of items. Since the turn of the century, railroaders have told the story of the station agent who submitted an Over Short and Damaged Report that read: "**Short 1 Burro. Over 1 Jackass.**"

The property account for each unit consisted of a property book with a separate page for each line item. One item issued to every unit was the garbage can. Its nomenclature was **Can, Galvanized Iron, with Lid.** In the property book, this was abbreviated to read, "**Can, GI, w/Lid.**" It therefore became universally known as the "GI can."

Since the can was fabricated of sheet metal that didn't look like iron, the abbreviation "**GI**" was sidely misinterpreted to mean "**government issue.**" As a result, everything issued by the government was called "GI," eventually even the soldier himself.

The authorized methods of accounting for lost property included the Statement of Charges and the Report of Survey. However, most National Guard supply sergeants received little or no special training in supply. During visits by Regular Army instructors and the annual Federal Armory Inspections, the emphasis was on spit and polish. "**Eyewash.**" In some units, the commander collected the cost of lost items in cash. The money was then either pocketed or put in the Unit Fund. The losses simply accumulated until there was a change of commanders.

Fortunately, there was simpler means of making up shortages. Articles that became unserviceable through fair wear and tear were

## Short One Burro, Over One Jackass

listed on an **Inventory & Inspection (I&I) Report**. Upon the next visit of an Army instructor, they were presented for inspection and approval of droppage from the company property book.

According to regulations, the items were then to be destroyed by burning. During the burning process, most officers of the instructor staff looked the other way. But the ingenious supply sergeant could save some items under the watchful eye of even the most wary.

The incinerator would be filled beforehand with combustibles. And since the ritual was carried out at night, it was an easy matter to drop items enroute or to hide them outside the incinerator. Property thus saved was **"I&Ied"** again and again. Upon one occasion, an instructor remarked, **"This is the third time I've I&Ied this particular shirt. I don't want to see it again."**

### THE GRAVY BOAT

During the early days at Camp Bowie, junior officers had a joke about an officer of the U.S. Navy dropping a steamboat from accountability on his unit's Quarterly Droppage Report of mess hall chinaware. The joke was based upon the nomenclature of the serving dish for gravy, **"the gravy boat."** According to the story, the officer listed among other items, **"Boat, Gravy, 2 ea., Price 0.30,"** followed by, **"Boat, Steam, 1 ea. Price unknown."**

After one of the division's many field exercises, **Major Samuel S. Graham, 143rd Infantry S4**, called a meeting of the regiment's supply officers. He pointed out that there were shortages of tools issued with the regiment's motor vehicles, and which were a part of the On Vehicle Equipment.

**"These tools were lost during maneuvers,"** Graham stated. **"Such losses are to be expected — are unavoidable. I want each of you to inventory your vehicular tools and submit Reports of Survey. Let's get them dropped from accountability and replaced."**

**"Major Sam,"** as he was affectionately called, had formerly been commander of Company F, 143rd Infantry, Huntsville, Texas. He and the regimental commander, Colonel William H. Martin, were a study in contrasts.

Graham was of medium height, on the corpulent side, and plain as an old shoe. When trucks pulled up at the warehouse loading docks for supplies, Major sam pitched in and helped load them. A strong believer in loyalty down, he was a soldier's soldier.

**"Duke,"** the driver of Major Sam's **"recon"** car, idolized him. Duke liked to tell the story about the time he and Graham drove through a town where a county fair was in progress, with numerous refreshments for sale. Said Duke, **"And there was me and the Major, without a nickel between us."**

## Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

Colonel Martin was tall, broad shouldered, trim of figure, with the military bearing of a text book commander. He was firm, decisive, a strict disciplinarian. Although popular with the officers of his regiment, he had his critics, as is the case with all commanders. These claimed that his decisions concerning personnel were often based upon superficial information, misinterpretation or information, or biased by preconceived notions.

When the division was mobilized, **Colonel William C. Torrence**, long time city manager of Waco, Texas, and commander of the 143rd Infantry, announced that there would be no summary courts-martial in his regiment. Since the period of active duty was for only one year, all offenses of a nature too serious for company punishment would be tried by special or general courts-martial.

One of Martin's first actions upon assuming command of the regiment after Torrence resigned for health reasons was to bring back the summary court. Not an advocate of loyalty down, his stated philosophy regarding enlisted men was, **"You've got to pop their butts."**

At any rate, in directing the unit supply officers to submit Reports of Survey to get lost tools dropped from accountability, Graham had reckoned without his host.

Captain William R. (Ray) Lynch, of Huntsville, Texas, was commander of Service Company, 143rd Infantry at the time. He had come up through the ranks in Company F, and was a protege' of Sam Graham. Had he been a graduate of the U.S. Military Academy, there is little doubt that Ray Lynch would have attained 4-star rank. As it was, he rose from buck private in a National Guard company to brigadier general in the Regular Army. He would also become one of the very few authorized to wear the Combat Infantryman Badge with two stars, representing service in the Infantry in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam.

Service Company had the bulk of the regiment's motor transport and the most tool shortages. In due time, Lynch submitted his report to Captain Thomas H. Lundy, whom Martin had appointed surveying officer. Lundy had come on active duty with Company B, 143rd Infantry, Mexia, Texas. He later became the Regiment's S2, a staff job he held during the Italian Campaign.

A day or so later, Lundy returned the report without action. He said, **"Ray, I can't recommend approval of this. It doesn't show that the losses weren't due to the fault of the drivers."**

## Short One Burro, Over One Jackass

Nobody knew how, when or where the tools were lost. They had simply disappeared over a period of time, while the trucks were operated under field conditions. However, Lynch's supply officer revised the report, following the time-honored, sure-fire formula for Reports of Survey.

He created an imaginative set of circumstances designed to show the tools were not lost through the fault or neglect of anyone, that the losses were unavoidable. The drivers diligently searched the area where the loss occurred, to no avail. On the following day, they returned to the scene (**important!**) accompanied by the supply officer and made a further search, with negative results.

Lundy returned the report within the hour. He said, **"Ray, this is the most ridiculous thing I've ever read."**

Lynch held up his hands. **"Tom, what do you suggest? Major Graham told us to submit the reports."**

**"To tell you the truth,"** Lundy replied, **"Colonel Martin isn't going to approve any of these reports. He says the tools were lost through the negligence of the drivers, and they should be made to pay for them."**

How the other units of the 143rd Infantry made up their vehicular tool shortages is not a matter of record. In the case of the Service Company, one of the drivers took the list to the Salvage Yard. There, a friendly clerk in the Property Disposal Office game him a signed turn-in slip covering all the shortages.

**It was GIs such as these who won World War II.**



## His weapon is Smith-Corona

So says a title of a recent story in the San Antonio Express-News. Chum Williamson writes "Letters to the Editor," covers many subjects, the past and present, from Ronald Reagan to Agent Orange.

His Burro/Jackass story is just one of many stories of the 'early' days in the Texas National Guard, and more coming we hope. C. A. Williamson (143rd) gets fan mail at: 12653 King Oaks, San Antonio, TX 78233.



He ticks off a long list of liberal, conservative and moderate positions to prove that he is hard to pin down.

**STEVE WEISS**  
**Honored Again By Fellow Members**  
**of the French Resistance;**

**One of Eight Americans To Get**  
**The Medaille de la Resistance**  
**Francaise Organization**



Dear Editor;

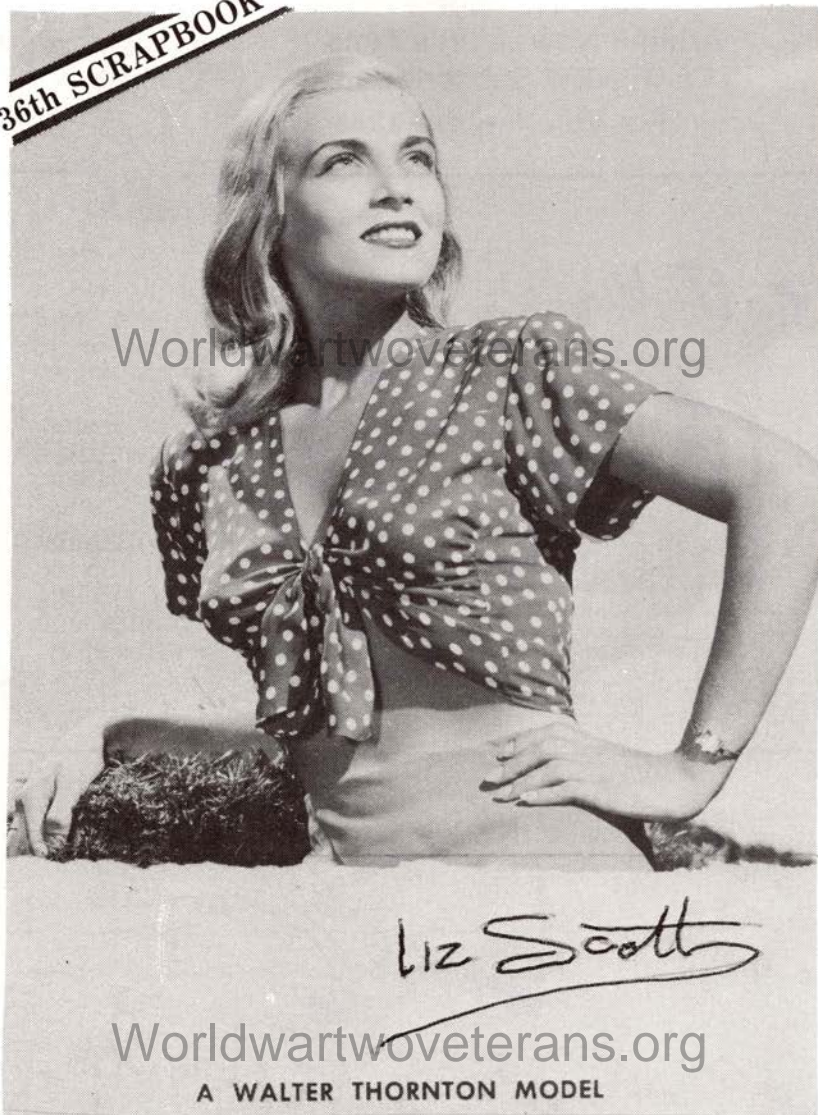
Here's a xerox of a photo that appeared in PARIS MAGAZINE commemorating the march up the Champs Elysees of my French Resistance comrades (of which I am a member).

We laid a wreath under the Arch of Triomphe. For me, it was a great honor (being the only American) and a dream come true. I'm third from right (front row) between a former member of the government and the head of the organization. Best regards,

Steve Weiss, 2767 Motor Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90064.  
Co. C 143rd Infantry.

Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

36th SCRAPBOOK



Of all the beautiful gals whose photos from the Walter Thornton Model Agency graced the pages of the Overseas T-PATCH, this is only one we can recall that went on to be a movie Star! **LIZ SCOTT** did, and sure enough, we still have the LOOK Magazine cover (July 22, 1947) when she appeared in living color and even more dazzlin' than the one above. Saw her movies but can't remember titles. But did know her real name is **EMMA MATZO** from Scranton, PA.

How 'bout that, movie fans? Oh, Liz, where are you now?

Let's Not Horse  
Around Now . . . It's Time  
To RENEW Subscription  
For Vol. V — for 1985



## The Fighting 36<sup>th</sup>



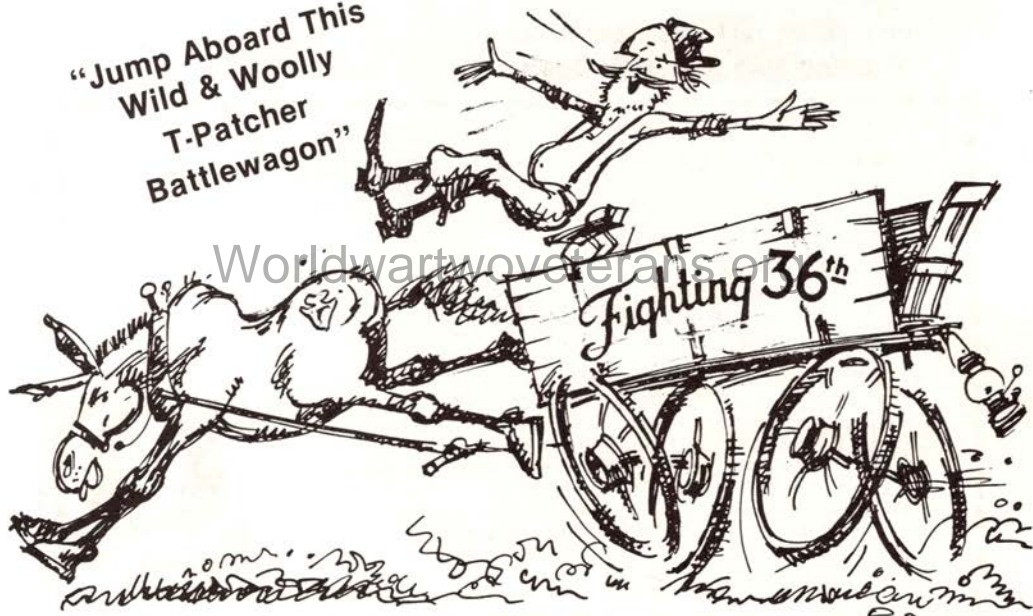
HISTORICAL QUARTERLY



This issue, Vol. IV, No. 4 winds-up four years, four volumes and a total of 16 booklets (each with 80 pages) — for a grand total of 1,280 6 x 9 pages of pure 36th History . . . which is equivalent to a hardback book, 3 x 3/4" thick.

Send your RENEWAL pronto — the Number 1 (Spring 1985) Vol. V is already in progress . . . to be printed late May, so IF you've got a story, we can use it!

"Jump Aboard This  
Wild & Woolly  
T-Patcher  
Battlewagon"





# The Fighting 36<sup>th</sup>

HISTORICAL



QUARTERLY



Us T-Patchers have a lot of pride. And, that's the way it outta be. OLD TIMER is asking for your help. We need to get more of our troops acquainted with the QUARTERLY . . .

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5-85



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to millions.

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# 1836-1986 TEXAS WAR SESQUI-CENTENNIAL



On the night of March 3rd the courier, Smith, crawling through the Mexican lines, carried Travis' last message to the delegates of the Texas Convention then meeting at Washington-on-the-Brazos. There, unknown to Travis, Texan independence was being declared.

On that same night Travis called his tired men together and with his sword drew a line in the earth. Informing them of the hopelessness of their situation, he offered them the choice of stepping across the line and joining him in a death stand or of taking their chances at escape by going over the wall. With one exception,

every man crossed the line. The exception was Moses Rose, a French mercenary, who decided to go over the wall. It is from him this story was handed down. James Bowie, too ill to stand, had himself carried across the line on his pallet.