

The Fighting 36th
HISTORICAL
Quarterly



From The First Shot To The Last,
Harold Bussey Was There

Vol. VI, No. 4 — Winter 1986

Published by
36th DIVISION ASSOCIATION

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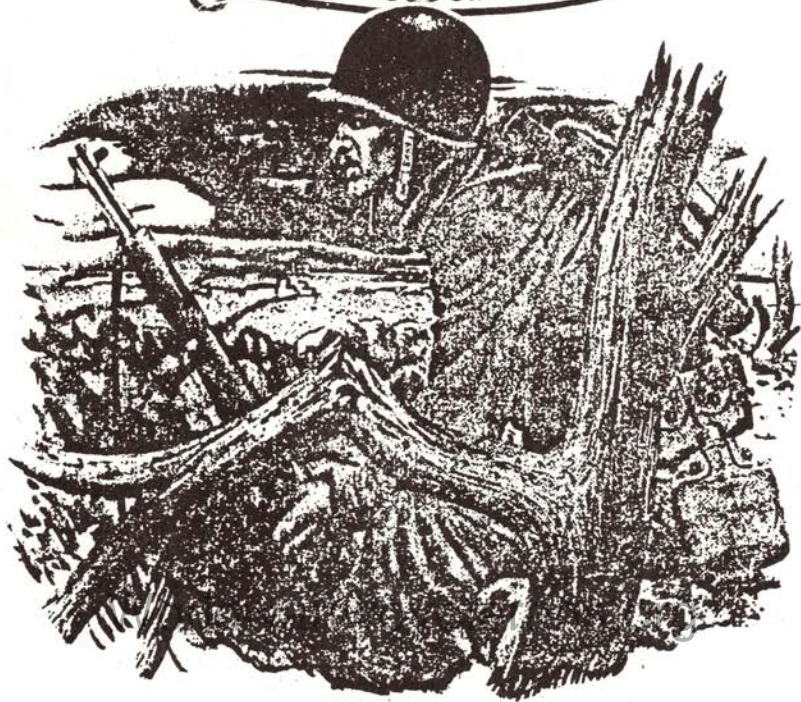
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The Fighting 36th



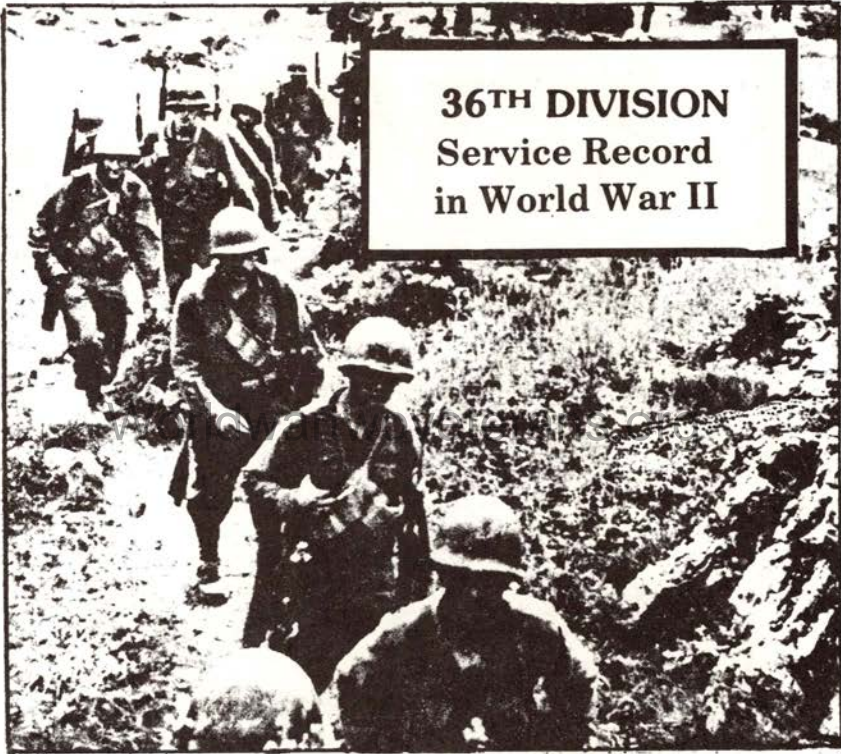
HISTORICAL

QUARTERLY



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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.



The swords of
Caesar's legions

**Strong blades
that won
an empire**

The Fighting 36th
HISTORICAL
Quarterly

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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**THE FIGHTING 36th
HISTORICAL QUARTERLY**



Vol. VI, No. 4

Winter 1986

CONTENTS

1. **COVER STORY — From The First Shot
To The Last — Harold Bussey
of 141st, Was There**
By Raymond C. Wells 6
2. **Das Todt Korps, Unmasked
Del Kendall Remembers..... 14**
3. **Quiet Veteran Has Story Told
For Him**
Courtesy Walter C. Evans..... 20
4. **The Soldier The Germans
Wouldn't Take**
By Julian (Duney) Philips 22
5. **Second Best Photo of WWII —
T-Patcher Receiving Wine..... 39**
6. **Barkeeper Basso Baffled By Bevy
of Medals At Surprise Ceremony**
From — Donald Scott 40
7. **The "First" Mr. Coffee**
By Lem Vannetta 46
8. **Part IV — "KREIGIE," Escaping
is the Greatest Sport**
By C. A. Chum Williamson 48
9. **"As I Recollect,"**
Ben F. Wilson, Jr. Tells of
A Tour With Lt. Col. Hal Reese 60
10. **We Conduct An Autopsy of FASCISM,
A Second Look At Big Mouth Benito 66**
11. **Headline Portrait: The Late Lt. Gen
Carl L. Phinney..... 74**

Cover Story

'Day of Infamy'



Forty years ago on a quiet Sunday morning, Japanese forces attacked the U.S. military fortress at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The toll: 2,341 U.S. servicemen killed, 1,143 wounded and 18 ships damaged. It is a day that lives in infamy.





**From
The First Shot
To The Last**

**An Incredible Story
About A Man Whose Own Initiative
And Dedication To Duty
Won A Trip To O. C. S.**

Harold Bussey

**“Boston Blackie” Became
The White Knight Of Co H 141st**

By Raymond C. Wells

December 7, 1941, a day none of us will ever forget. It's strange that memories from so long ago can be so vivid; as if they happened just yesterday. When I remember that day, my thoughts are filled with the aroma from the mess hall at Camp Bowie where I was on duty as a KP.

A Day That Will Live In Infamy

Thousands of miles away, Sgt. Harold Bussey was pulling his duty at Schofield Barracks on the beautiful Island of Hawaii. It was a quiet Sunday and many of the Officers and Men of his Company were off duty and on pass to town or at home with their families. Overhead, he heard the sound of planes, not unusual since the airstrip was near by. There was something different about the sound of these planes; they were flying lower than usual. Soon the low flying planes were followed by a swarm of others.

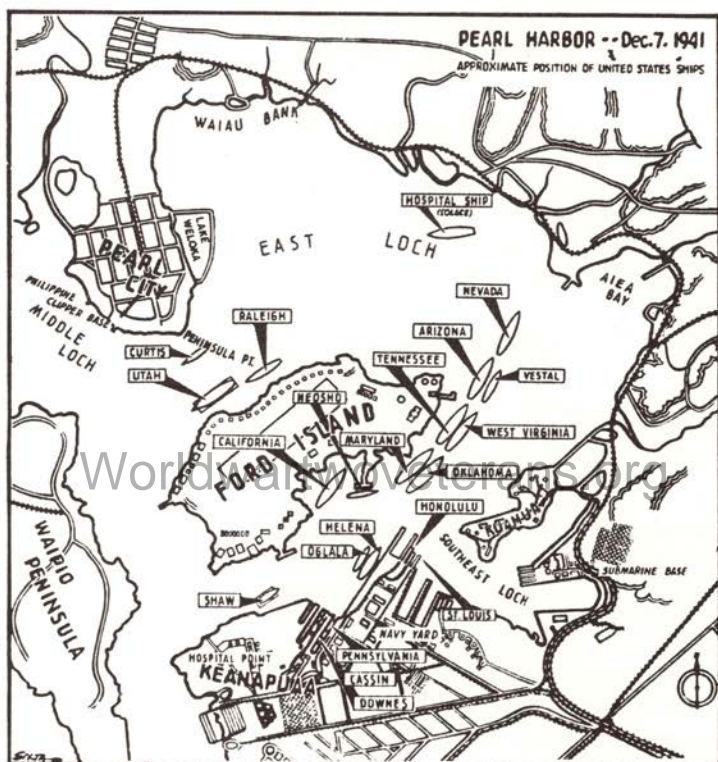
Presently came the unmistakable sound of bombs exploding and guns discharging. This was not a drill, we were under attack. Sgt. Bussey grabbed his rifle and routed his men while on his way out of the barracks. All were armed with rifles and machine guns, but

Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

without a round of ammunition, they might as well of had pea shooters. If they could get into the Supply room they could get the ammunition.

Bussey quickly led his crew to the storeroom where he encountered the Sgt.-in-charge. When asked for the needed ammo, the Supply Sgt. said "No way, not without an Officers authorization, I'm not sticking my neck out." That was not the response he wanted to hear so he told the Supply Sgt. that if he didn't unlock the *** door and issue the ammo, he was going to break down the door.

Still the bureaucratic Sgt. wouldn't bow to reason and told Sgt. Bussey that if he broke down the door he was going to press charges and demand a Court Martial for the destruction of Government Property. True to his word, Bussey proceeded to break the door down with a fire axe. The sought-after ammo was distributed to the troops and the men were able to fight back and do the job they were trained for.



From The First Shot To The Last

When the raid finally ended and the Japanese planes had returned to their carriers Bussey had time to think about his own situation. He had disobeyed the Supply Sgt., damaged Government Property and illegally issued ammunition. All night long he mulled the circumstances of his case. Maybe he would be court martialled but under the same circumstances would he do it again? YOU BET!

Dawn, the Day of Reckoning. A runner from the Company Orderly Room brought the order for Bussey to report to the C.O. Taking a little time to spruce up he doubled timed over to the Orderly room where he reported, as ordered. The Company Commander informed Sgt. Bussey that the Supply Sgt. had demanded a General Court Martial for Bussey's action on the seventh.

Being a fair man the C.O. wanted to hear Bussey's version before he made a final decision. Bussey told it like it was and also said that he would do the same again and let the chips fall where they may.

The C.O. didn't hesitate with his decision, he said, "We are going to be in a very long hard war and we are going to need Officers and Men who have the initiative and dedication, people who can take charge when it is needed and you showed that you have those attributes, and instead of a Court Martial you are going to OCS on the next boat to the States."

And with that Bussey saw that the door he forced open was a path to his future.



T-Patchers Were Using Sacks Of Flour For Bombs — When 2nd Lt. Bussey Joined Us On Maneuvers In North Carolina



A brand new 2nd Lt. joined the 36th Division while we were on the Carolina maneuvers. Lt. Bussey reported to the Company Commander of "H Company, 141st Infantry Regiment" among a bunch of Texans and here he was a yankee from Boston with the accent to go with it. "What have I got myself into now?" He thought he would never be accepted, but after a few weeks when the other officers teased him about being "Boston Blackie" he knew he was in.

Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

Bussey Was Hit Three Times

1st Lt. Bussey was wounded on three different occasions while he was with the 36th Division. The first time was during the attack on San Pietro. I was with him at the time when he was hit by three bullets. He was in the hospital for a couple of months and when he was released he was put in charge of about 100 replacements who were being sent to the 36th Division, at the Anzio beachhead.

They were transported by sea to the beachhead and when the boat arrived at the beach, incoming artillery was busy destroying the landscape. The boat headed straight in, the ramp was dropped, 1st Lt. Bussey, the first one off immediately, received his second wound, a piece of shrapnel in the head. Within 24 hours after being released from the hospital he was back at the same hospital with the same Doctor working on him.

The Doctor told Bussey that he was sick and tired of working on the same patient all the time.

The third wound he received was north of Rome and he was returned stateside for reassignment. When his short leave was over he reported to the Replacement Depot where he was informed that because he had been wounded three times he could pick a stateside assignment. Instead he chose to be returned to the 36th Division which was by that time in France.

Bussey never told his wife that he had volunteered to go back overseas until after the war. Anita, his wife, would of had him committed. It was several weeks before he could report back to the 36th, the Division was on the move and Bussey had to hitch-hike his way back to his home in "H Co." Bussey was with us until the last day of the war, so he has a record of being in the war from the first shot fired until the last shot in Europe.

Not only was his career guided by the initiative and leadership he proved he had during the attack on Pearl Harbor, but also to his dedication to his country and his love for the 36th Division.

The 36th Division was blessed with many men of his caliber, people who loved their country and their Division. I believe that is the reason the 36th Division Association is alive and well and getting stronger with each Reunion.

Raymond C. Wells
("H Co., 141st)
750 Wakeby Road
Marston Mills MA 02648

From The First Shot To The Last

T-PATCHER — AUGUST 1985 — Page 11

Wells and Bussey of Co H 141st Meet After 41 Years

Dear Editor:

It's great to meet with an old friend after 41 years, and recently an ex-T-Patcher, who lives only five miles away...- E. Sandwich, MA -

HAROLD BUSSEY and I got together and talked of the war years.



Lt. Harold Bussey was Executive officer of Co H 141st which was my outfit. What I shall relate is about his career in the army. He was a Sgt. in the army at Pearl Harbor when the bombs dropped on Dec. 7 1941. He later returned to the states and went to OCS, joined the 36th at Camp Edwards, fall 1942.

The last time I saw Harold Bussey was during the attack at San Pietro where he received his first wound. His second was at Anzio, and the third wound was after the invasion of Southern France. He was then sent back to the states for 30 days, and

then given an option of staying in the states OR returning to the 36th Division.

He chose the 36th and was with Co H until the last days of the war in Austria.

Bussey and I visit often and the feeling that combat veterans have for each other after many years is still there!

THERE'S NOT MANY - who can say- they heard the first - and last shot of World War II.

Photos From Bussey's War Album



CAMP EDWARDS on the Cape — Officers of Co H 141st — from left: 1st Lt. Robert D. Cable, address unknown, deceased; 1st Lt. Raymond C. Barnes, Corpus Christi, TX; Capt. James E. Glenn of San Benito, TX (KIA) and 1st Lt. Harold Bussey of Franklin, Mass.

Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly



Sunday March 28, 1943 — the last Sunday Bussey would spend at Camp Edwards prior to embarking via train to Staten Island for an ocean voyage to shores of North Africa — Oran, Algeria.

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ABOVE: Kitzbuhel, Germany at war's end, May 1945 — Capt. Dennis F. Blalock of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 1st Lt. Harold Bussey and Lt. James Carey of Minneapolis, Minn.

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Photo at left: Pfc. Michael Crenshaw of El Paso, TX, 1st Lt. James Carey and 1st Lt. Harold Bussey...late April 1943 in Germany.

From The First Shot To The Last



APRIL 1986

Anita Bussey shown here paying a visit to Harold during his stay at the Falmouth Hospital.



Dear Editor:

As an advocate to the well being of our Historical Quarterly, I enjoy finding a few items about the great men that I was privileged to know during the war.

The story about Harold Bussey seemed to be a very unique one — a man who heard the 'first and Last' shot fired in anger of WWII, and the fact that he personally was a fine officer and gentleman . . . should make a good story.

I hope you agree, and use all or any part in one of the future issues of your Quarterly. Also thanks for the two previous 'shorties' I sent in, and you used.

(Sept. 6, 1985) RAY WELLS.

Dear Editor:

I bring sad news — since you had advised that you would use the HAROLD BUSSEY story . . . please, if not too late, add this Obit:

**1st Lt. Harold Bussey of Cos H and E 141st
fought his last battle, this time with cancer,**

Feb. 2, 1987.

Sincerely, Ray Wells.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This one has been in the hopper for over a year. After much study, it seemed to have the qualities of a COVER story, and so be it. RAY WELLS submitted this manuscript last fall, and admitted he had help from his daughter, TONI COLLINGS . . . so we pass this message on to all who may need someone to assist in the writing and typing of a story.



For those who knew Harold Bussey, we know that his widow would like to hear from you. She supplied the photos reproduced herewith. Write to her: **Mrs. Harold Bussey, 6 Sugarbeet Street, Franklin, MA 02038.**



Das Todt Korps

Unmasked



Cap Badge



Collar Patch

Worldwartwoveterans.org
Del Kendall Remembers —

There were no flags of surrender showing in town on that morning in late March of '45. A short distance ahead, lay the Rhine river. You had already passed thru a few smaller towns where a blizzard of white surrender flags greeted you, along with a few sullen, blank faced, towns people. Not here though.

Here, as you entered, all was ominously quiet. You were waiting for a trap to be 'sprung' or a battle to be joined. Suddenly, from one of your SP guns in the rear, a couple of shells whistled overhead, smashing into the towns main street, sending a message to surrender or else.

Close by, a motor cycle roared into life. You looked, as the Kraut messenger came hurtling around the corner of a house going flat-out, as he headed straight for a Sherman tank parked two hundred yards up the stree. Was he crazy? Did he think those were Panzers? It was his only way out.

The tanks gun barrel depressed a bit, then fired 'BLAM.' The rider and motorcycle disappeared in a ball-of-fire and smoke. A few small pieces of metal rained down among you. All that was left when the smoke cleared, was a wheel rim, and high up on a wall of a street-side house, something was dripping down, a clot of something. A few moments later it fell to the street below. A severed hand lay on the cobblestones, it was all that remained.

Up ahead small arms fire broke out as the men fanned out, searching, house to house. A few tanks moved up, firing those new 90 mm rifles of theirs. It was music to your ears. Already a few Krauts were lined up and marched off down the street to a temporary PW enclosure.

Das Todt Korps Unmasked

You had entered their town at the wrong time. In several of the houses, lunch was on the table, and it sure didn't look as if they were on short rations. Were they in some way making this their farewell meal, before being hauled off to a PW cage? You wondered about that.

As the GIs leap-frogged down the street, more Krauts were taken, and marched off. In the area of row-houses, one had to be careful say, to not fire thru the side door, as those bullets would go right thru into the next house, all of them being aligned and of the same floor plan. Unbeknownst you might hit a buddy a few houses away.

The firing died down, as more of the Wehrmacht came in. They knew their chances of surrendering would be far greater, than once on the other side of the Rhine. As they were marched off to a PW cage, they could see, Allied planes, strafing and bombing the town up ahead. At that moment an ammo dump went up, with a mighty roar, setting some houses ablaze.

About that time, you and a BAR man, took off down a long alleyway, coming out on a sidestreet, who's houses faced open farmland. There on the farmland side of the road, stood this low ramshackle house, with a few out buildings close by.

In the front yard of all this, stood about twenty people lined in orderly rows. Some were soldiers, others farmhands a few women-folks, and behind them, a strange sight. Here was gathered about six, elderly Burgers, dressed to the nines in their hunting regalia; knickers, Loden capes, Tyrolian hats with the Gumsbart (a stags beard) brush, stuck in the side.

A few even were smoking Calabash pipes, ala Sherlock Holmes. They seemed to be enjoying the encounter, as they no doubt had, had a few schnapps, at the first sound of gunfire, the others, stood tense and ill at ease as you took all of this in.

One soldier at the end of a line, held a shoe sized box which he handed over to you as you approached. The BAR man covered the group, while you stepped to one side, opening the box. You wanted to see with your own eyes, what could be delivered to its troops in these hard pressed times.

The box was no doubt a birthday present, and held a few items, which in todays war-torn world, amounted to luxuries. There was an Italian cigar, looking much like a dog turd. A small writing tablet, the size of your hand, along with a short wooden pencil. Scattered in the box, lay a handful of coffee beans, a real luxury; and a white

Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

handkerchief. Was this "white," handkerchief, a subtle suggestion from the homefront, you wondered?

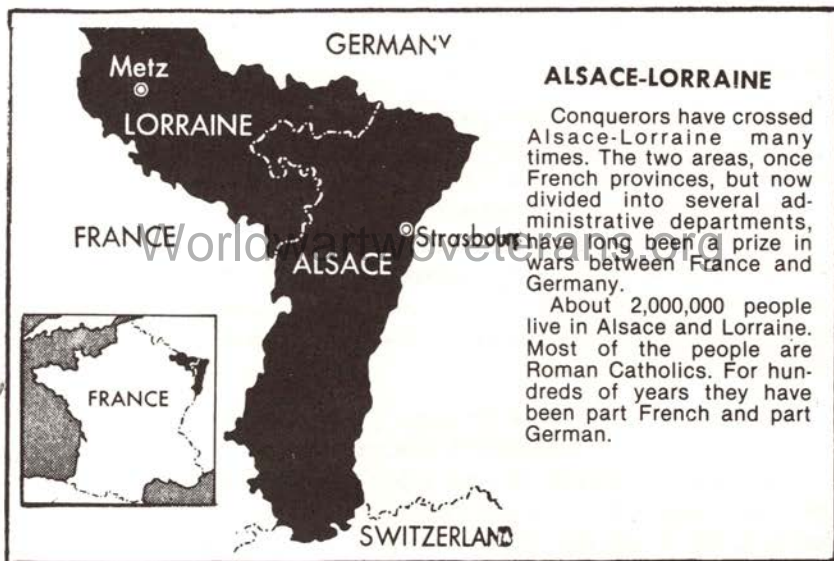
You shot a quick glance at the boxes rightful owner, and noticed a small jerk of his head, back to, eyes front. He had been watching you. Without further ado, you quickly tied up the box, walked over to him and shoved it under his arm, with that he seemed to stand a bit taller. You walked over to the front of the group again, and noticed someone new had joined.

A young lad, possibly thirteen or fourteen, stood in the front row. He looked pretty nifty in his military uniform. His insignia told you he belonged to TODT KORP, or (Death's Head Division), an elite unit of the Wehrmacht.

Dressed To "Kill," A Teenage Hotshot

He was spotless, in black twill piped with silver. His black leather belt and pistol holster shined like new, as did his sleeve insignia, plus two silver Death Heads on both collar tabs. He was literally, dressed to kill, and if looks could kill, you were already dead. You had never seen such glaring hatred, as in the face of that, boy soldier, as he stared at you thru his metal rimmed glasses.

Here was truly a product of the THIRD REICH. You almost felt a shiver go thru you, thinking about the twisted mind in that boy soldier, and yes, you had noticed the pistol holster was empty. Nothing foolish now you hoped.



Das Todt Korps Unmasked

You now got back to the business at hand, sorting out this group before you. As you glanced up, you noticed the only attractive woman in the group. She was signaling with her eyes. Without moving her head, she glanced at you and then to the left. Back to you and then to the left. She kept repeating herself. That was it, eh? She was telling you there were more soldiers in the barn. You nodded in recognition, and her act of kindness, had gone unnoticed by the others.

As you headed across the barnyard, you felt all eyes were on you. All was quiet, except for the crackle of flames from a few burning houses close by and shouting in the distance. The barn was a rickety old place, and you felt easier, when you spied a lock on the door that had not been snapped shut.

As you poked open the door with your Tommy gun, you shouted for all to hear "RAUS, RAUS, Mach schnell, NIX SCHEISSEN." It was then you spotted their rifles stacked close by, and at least a dozen soldiers lined up against the wall. You motioned for them to follow you out, and had the BAR man halt them where he stood.

As the prisoners filed past you, someone tapped you on the shoulder. Turning, there stood a giant of a man, at least 6 foot 6" with his coal-scuttle helmet, still on his head. You motioned for him to throw it away. He also pointed to a couple of potato mashers tucked behind his GOTT MIT UNS belt, which you relieved him of. He hurried on to close ranks with the rest of the soldiers from the barn, who now stood on the street awaiting orders.

From the remainder of those standing in the ranks, you motioned for several to join the men on the street. You noticed the young boy soldier, look at you, then at the passing men, soon to march off to a PW cage. He was frustrated as he searched for an answer to all this from one of the passing prisoners, their faces a mask of indifference. No one spoke.

His face was pure rage as he grimaced at you. You could see his world was coming apart. He approached and stood before you, eyeing you as though you were some strange being from another world. His lips curled as if ready to speak. Suddenly, you swept him up and deposited him in line with the last of the departing soldiers. Not a peep left his lips, but as he turned his head, his face was a look of sheer amazement, as he stumbled on.

"What Dumbkoffs, They Be . . ."

You did hear a stifled cry, and looked to see a woman in the now thinning ranks, throw her arms up in despair. She was seeing her son, in his Deaths Head uniform, marched away like an ordinary soldier.

Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

When she saw you eyeing her, she quickly dropped her arms to her side and stood stock still, with eyes staring straight ahead. She had learned the NAZI code alright, she knew how to endure. You thought, what DUMBKOFFS, they be.

You knew damn well, the little bastard would be turned back to his Mother before it got dark. But then again, he just might luck-in, and get to spend a night in a Prisoner of War compound, a prospect you were sure he would be looking forward to. This was something they never practiced in school, he'd be more than thrilled at the whole idea. This was an experience he would never forget.

In later years he could boast of the time, he was indeed, a very young POW, of the AMIs in that March of 1945. Even if it was for just overnight.

D. W. Kendall
1665 Jefferson
Muskegon, MI 49441

Del Kendall and Archie Goodwin



Archie Goodwin pays a visit to Kendall and writes: "My wife Helen and I journeyed to Michigan last July to see my old buddy, and she took fotos of us, I hadn't seem him in over 40 years and we had a great time."

Archie continues, "Del is a warm, courteous gentleman and a real regular guy... we went over our buddies, one by one, remembering forgotten names of people, places and events during our service with Anti-Tank Company 143rd Infantry."

Das Todt Korps Unmasked

Del Kendall, the Mystery Mahatma of Musekgon, Michigan and the master of the Word Processor... can crank out a ton of great war stories, and numerous essays on Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness... has been the most loyal of all contributors — whose tales of 36th in WWII have appeared in 19 of the 24 issues of the Quarterly.

OUR SPECIAL THANKS to Archie L. Goodwin, Rt. 2, Box 125, Yellville, Arkansas 72687 for getting this rare photo of Del Kendall at his home in Muskegon, MI. Del has been reluctant to provide one, so now we have a NOW photo to relish this great, witty writer of WWII folk lore.

The TITLE of a story — can make or break the readership, like the illustration on the dust cover of a novel. Over the years, Del Kendall always had a real GUTTY header.

The title he selected for this one — was, “A RITE OF PASSAGE.” OK, but your editor asked him to give a few more, to see if we could arouse the troops. We knew in our heart that he could come up with an alternate.

A few days later he replied: “Yes, I too thought maybe, A RITE OF PASSAGE was a bit fly-blown and too dicey for our readers. You can never tell, so here are a few to choose from:”
HOW ABOUT...

- “THE NASTIEST NAZI”
- “HE WAS SOMETHING ELSE”
- “THE LAST ONE IN THE BAG”
- “DAS TODT KORPS UNMASKED”
- “EENY, MEENY, MINEY, MOE, CATCH A NAZI AND



GOODWIN and KENDALL

It's About TIME... This cover photo will soon appear on an issue of TIME some time during the coming year, so say the editors of this popular weekly News Magazine. Stay tuned.

EDITORS NOTE:

Kendall is not only a great reporter of our War, but he always sends in his CRITIQUE covering stories in each issue, and has done so since the beginning.

His comments, warts and all, are most welcome. He also takes time to drop a line to most all of the troopers who send in a story. That's good, and these guys appreciate it. We know, cause they write and say, “I got a fan-letter from old Kendall.” BULLY!

LET'EM GO”

- “THE LAST ROUND-UP”
- “THAT LITTLE S. O. B.”
- “HITLER'S JUNG TRUP-PEN”
- “THE CATCH OF THE DAY”
- “A SOLDIER AT LAST”
- “ALLES KAPUT.”



Quiet veteran has

Mon., Nov. 10, 1986 A-3



The Telegraph/JOHN BADMAN

Oscar Oller of Wood River tries on his World War II uniform.

This news clip about OSCAR OLLER is the result of a story that was printed in Vol. V No. 3 Fall 1985 — sent in by WALTER C. EVANS of Co F 143rd, (page 72-73) about "Three Great Men of Co F 143rd."

Evans sent a copy to Oller, who is a 'quiet' guy, somehow found its way to Mary Brase of The Telegram, Wood River, Illinois.

This is just one more time that a story in the 36th QUARTERLY has produced a news story for all to read in that man's home town.

By MARY BRASE Of The Telegraph

Oscar Oller has never been one to tell old war stories, particularly of earning medals for running from the enemy, but a recent edition of *The Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly* did it for him.

The former first sergeant was an infantryman in World War II, serving with Co. F, 143rd Reg. of the 36th Infantry Division. He joined the troops in Naples, Italy, for the drive up through France to Germany.

The incident described in the article took place somewhere in France — "I couldn't tell you the

story told for him

name of the town but I remember the vineyards" — sometime in December, 1944, Oller said.

The tale tells how Oller, then a squad leader, sent his men running down a hill to cover in a vineyard to avoid capture by German troops surrounding their position.

Walter Evans, now a psychotherapist and counselor in Clinton, Miss., was one of those men. He said he thought Oller was right behind them, but when dawn came, he was still on the hill — alone.

"As it turned out, he remained and held our position alone. When it was light enough to see, he had killed every German that could be seen," Evans wrote.

About 29 Germans, Oller remembered, but some surrendered.

Oller, now an Alton Box Board retiree from Wood River who winters in Florida, said he intended to run with the rest but got caught in the trap.

"They attacked from three sides. I told everybody to fall back and I intended to fall back with them, but I got surrounded before I could get out.

"There was nothing left to do but fight. I had an M-1 rifle and grenades — I was good at throwing them then."

Oller later received the Bronze Star for his efforts, but it should have been at least a Silver Star, Evans said.

"The Bronze Star seems to have about the same significance as The Ruptured Duck," he wrote.

"If anyone earned The Medal of Honor, Sgt. Oscar Oller did."

Oller said he shares the pride and the memories of the T-Patchers who were almost wiped out as a Texas outfit before he joined them as a replacement.

"We spent 300 days on the front line before we were relieved," he said.

"I'm proud, but I wouldn't like to do it again."



OSCAR OLLER, 681 E. Penning Street, Wood River, IL 62095 is quite like many modest T-Patchers who feel they should not "tell their story." So when someone else "tells it for them" then we can capture a great story, that otherwise may never be recorded.

WALTER EVANS, A Orthomolecular Psychotherapist of 102 Midway Drive, Clinton, Mississippi 39065 (F/143) a loyal T-Patcher has also filed data about another great 36th — **SHELBY SPEIGHTS** — featured as a cover story in Vol. V, No. 2 1985 issue — titled "Five Stars For Speights, All Silver."

Shelby Speights was also a 'shy' guy...but the citizens of his hometown — Purvis, Miss., gave him a great bang-up celebration in his honor on Memorial Day 1985. Now — go back, get that issue and re-read it.

Without men like **WALTER EVANS**, both of these stories would be lost — from our records of the men of the 36th who did what they had to do — in their own way... true grit!



The Soldier The Germans Wouldn't Take

By Julian "Duney" Philips

Joe Biggs and his wife Mina, were like so many East Texas farmers after the turn of the century. They were young, happy and in love.

Joe's dream was to be a successful farmer, so he would have something to leave his children. Little did he know that in just two short years after he was married, war clouds would begin to form. Europe would explode into a conflict that would eventually pull many nations into a war, that history was to call World War I.

On October 3, 1914, Mina presented Joe with their first son and they named him Charles. Joe was very pleased because strong sons were what every farmer hoped for. Charles was everything Joe and Mina had prayed for. He was the first of four healthy children they would be blessed with.

During the years from 1914 through 1918, as the war raged in Europe, Joe and Mina would read the papers about the young men being killed or wounded in France and Belgium. Then both sides started using chemical shells. The gases affected the eyes and lungs of the young soldiers. Those who weren't killed, would suffer from the effects long after the war was over.

Mina told Joe many times how happy she was that the war would be over before their son, Charles, would be old enough to go.

Charles grew fast and started his farm chores by feeding the chickens and animals. He also had to look after his younger brother and sisters, so his mother could help her husband run the Biggs farm.



The Soldier The Germans Wouldn't Take

During the spring and summer of 1918, the German General Staff convinced Kaiser Wilhelm that he should ask for peace. They stated they had fought honorably and well, but with the fresh American troops and an unlimited supply of soldiers fighting with the English and French, it was time to ask the Allies for an honorable surrender.

At the eleventh hour, on the eleventh day, of the eleventh month in 1918, the great powers signed the Versailles Treaty. Newspapers throughout the world ran banner headlines that the great war was over. It would be known as the war to end all wars.

From time to time, Mina read articles about casualties the war had left. She would occasionally see ex-soldiers without an arm or leg. Once again she would realize how lucky she was that Charles had been too young to go. As she knelt to pray she found herself thanking her Lord that her Charles would never have to go to war. She would pull Charles upon her lap (in the early twenties) to sing him a song that had become popular after the war. She sang "I never raised my boy to be a soldier, to carry a musket on his shoulder, to kill some other mother's darling boy." The verses went on and on telling the dread most mothers had of losing a son in a war.

In the early thirties, East Texas was experiencing the Great Depression. Even though Joe Biggs was able to put plenty of food on his table he could not sell his crops. People had no money and he and Mina knew the luxuries and toys enjoyed by many of the children in town, couldn't be had by Charles and the other children.

The farm habits of rising early and working late got to be old for Charles. He knew his father needed him more and more with the farm duties, so bank loans and farm mortgages could be met. Charles wasn't surprised the day his father told him to drop out of school, so he could help with the harvesting of the crops. He was in the 10th grade and he always thought if he got an education he could leave the farm to make it on his own. Dropping out of school was only one of the things Charles blamed on the farm. He had lived on his father's farm all of his life and he knew he didn't want to be a farmer when he grew to be a man.

Just three years after Charles Biggs left school in 1931, Adolph Hitler came to power in Germany. In 1936 he was hosting the World Olympics which let him show the world how he had built Germany's Army, Navy and Air Force into one of the best.

The Versailles Treaty meant no more to Hitler than the parchment it was written on. The politicians of France, England and America turned their heads or shut their eyes, every time Germany violated another part of the treaty. By the late thirties he started his move for world conquest. America saw him as a world threat and the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended to Congress to upgrade the Armed Forces. Laws were passed in 1939 to mobilize all National Guard Divisions for a period of one year of intensive training. Congress also passed a law to implement a compulsory draft that would begin in 1940.

Charles Biggs was 27 years of age, single and still on the farm. In late 1940, he received a letter from the government that read, "Greetings, you have been selected by your Government." Charles had wanted to leave the farm for many years, but hated to leave because he knew he was needed. Now, Uncle Sam was giving him a way out and he could leave with his parents' blessing and prayers. Instead of waiting to be drafted, he took his draft papers to the U.S. Army recruiting station and enlisted. He would get his wish to leave the farm by enlisting and figured he could send his mother a few dollars each month.

Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

Charles was a few years older at 27 years of age, than most of the recruits who reported to Camp Bowie, Texas in early 1941. He was strong, in good shape and eager for each day to begin, because it seemed like fun after life on the farm. He was fortunate in his assignment to F Company, 143rd Infantry, 36th Division.

1st Sgt. Red Andrews blew his whistle for the recruits to fall in for a company formation, so Capt. Sam Graham, of Huntsville, Texas could welcome them. Little did Recruit Biggs know that this Captain was to be like a second father to him. Before Capt. Graham finished his welcoming speech, he went on to explain, that with the unrest in Europe, caused by Hitler they all had a job to do. It would be his job to take these young recruits from every walk of life and turn them into soldiers. He would up by telling them that if any member of his company had a problem and needed help in solving it, his door was always open, no matter what the hour.

From that day on, Recruit Biggs would feel a bond between himself and Captain Graham. He worked hard to do his job.

Over the next two years, Charles would see many Commanding Officers come and go in Company F.

In late spring of 1941, at Brownwood, Texas the 36th Division would maneuver against the 2nd Division from Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio. The 2nd Division was a very good regular army Division, but the 36th Division held their own with its new recruits.

The summer of 1941 found the 36th Division going to the Louisiana Maneuvers for more training. It was while on these maneuvers that P.F.C. Biggs would be present when a Capt. acting as a maneuver umpire, tried to explain a problem to Major General George Patton. The problem being, that he couldn't use a bridge across the Sabine River, to move a column of tanks from the Texas side of the river into Louisiana. The Captain was trying to explain that the bridge had been destroyed by the 36th Division Engineers. General Patton informed the Captain, that the damn bridge was standing and he was moving his tanks over it — and so he did.

After the 1941 Louisiana Maneuvers, it was apparent the training would never stop. Rifle ranges were no problem. Everyone in Company F qualified as a marksman. All the company needed now was to be tested.

Charles was in Brownwood, during summer of 1941 and met Dorothy Helen Schick. He thought she was the most beautiful young lady he had ever seen. He courted her and they were married on February 10, 1942.

The Soldier The Germans Wouldn't Take

The 36th Division was moved from Camp Bowie, in early 1942, to Camp Blanding, Florida. By this time the company was low on personnel and the new recruits came from New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. At that time the company was commanded by Captain Edgar Ford from Rusk, Texas. He was an excellent commanding officer and all of his men respected him. Pfc. Biggs did his part to help train the new men of the 2nd squad of the 2nd platoon in Company F. The officers and sgts. had to be satisfied, because Pfc. Biggs had developed into an excellent soldier.

During the summer of 1942, the Division was off to the North Carolina Maneuvers for still more training. When these maneuvers were over, the men of the 36th learned they were to move North to Camp Edwards, Mass.

During the fall and winter of 1942-1943, the division continued to train as hard as ever. That winter in Massachusetts was a new experience for Biggs. He had never been in such cold weather before. When orders came down that the division would go into invasion training, Pfc. Biggs led his men ashore time and time again. Each time he would gather a group of his men together so he could explain what would be expected of them when they were tested in combat.

Pfc. Biggs became a 'father' to his squad. When one of his men approached him for advice, Charles found himself enjoying his position of advisor, squad leader and confidant. Being a few years older and their acting corporal, his men turned to him time and again. Most of them wanted to know what they would do when they got into combat. The nagging question was "Corporal, when I get into combat, will I be able to kill a man?" or "Corporal I was raised in a Christian home and grew up in the church. Tell me how I will handle the Ten Commandments where it says Thou shalt not kill." Corporal Biggs answered his men each time, explaining that he too was raised in a Christian home. He also had questioned the Ten Commandments. With our nation at war with Germany, we are expected to do our duty as soldiers. When we get into this war we will have to kill or be killed — it's just that simple. Corp. Biggs consoled, counseled and settled arguments always trying to keep his men's spirits up.

During the spring and summer of 1943, in the hot North African climate there were times he wasn't sure he was right on the advice he had given his men.

The men of the 36th Division realized that war was just a few hundred miles across the Mediterranean Sea, where American soldiers were dying in Sicily.

Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

The Armed Forces Newspaper, the Stars & Stripes, ran stories about the war to include the Pacific Theater and the Russian Front. Corp. Biggs was only interested in what was happening in Sicily and how soon the 36th Division would go into combat.

Orders were received to prepare for an invasion. They did not designate what country the invasion would take place in. There were many guesses and theories given as why they would land in a certain country, now that Sicily had fallen.

The division was loaded on all types of ships for the invasion. The 2nd Battalion, 143rd Infantry was on the USS Stanton. Five hours after the convoy sailed, the officers opened their orders. The 36th Division would lead the Fifth Army onto the beaches of Paestum, Italy, a small town on the Bay of Salerno.

"D" DAY — "H" HOUR

As the sun set over the Blue Mediterranean Sea on the 8 September 1943, Capt. Carl R. Bayne from Yokum, Texas and 1st Lt. Julian Quarles from Nashville, Tenn. were still going over their orders and maps of the area. Company F was to make it ashore on Italian soil on Sept. 9, 1943.

The nagging feeling was always there, that the German observation planes that had checked the convoy each day, knew where the Allies were landing. The planes had been in the sky since the ships left the beaches of North Africa.

It had been approximately two years and ten months since Company F was mobilized into Federal Service. The long days of class room study, the weeks of field work, the twenty-five-mile-marches, the maneuvers in Louisiana and North Carolina and invasion training at Camp Edwards, Mass. were only memories to this group of seasoned soldiers.

The next morning, Capt. Bayne would lead his men ashore to confront Germans who had been at war since 1939. He hoped and prayed the men could hold their own against these seasoned troops.

It had been announced on the afternoon of 8 September 1943, that Italy had withdrawn from the Axis and would not use force against the Allied invasion forces.

The few men who were able to sleep on the night of the 8th and 9th, were shook awake at 0200 a.m. for breakfast. The meals the Company had while on board their ships left a lot to be desired, (the men were hoping for eggs, bacon and jams). As they began to line up with their mess kits, word came down the line that breakfast would consist of navy beans, bread and coffee.

The Soldier The Germans Wouldn't Take

Corp. Biggs let the menu roll through his mind before he stepped out of the line and said, "if that's all Bob Nowell is serving, I think I'll pass." He headed back for his rifle and gear to prepare for loading the landing crafts.

As the men came back to pick up their gear, they too were complaining about the Navy beans for breakfast. They were still complaining when they were jerked back to reality at the sound of the loud speakers. "Now hear this, now hear this. The first wave will prepare to load." Yes, these young Americans of the 36th Division were now so far away from home . . . this was their final test.

Each man went over in his mind what he was to do and each prayed in his own way as the time drew near to climb down the nets into the landing crafts.

As a landing craft was loaded, it would move off from the ship and circle, until all the crafts in the first wave were ready to move toward the beach.

Platoon Leader, Lt. Hauck was pressed against the ramp as he spoke to his men. "Keep your heads down." Everyone was straining to see the beaches of Paestum and wondering what would be waiting for the men of the 36th Division when they hit the beaches.

With daylight breaking the landing crafts stopped circling. The 36th Division was finally heading for the beaches of Paestum, Italy. They would have the honor of being the first American troops to land on the shores of Europe in WW II.

Men could see landing crafts on their right and left, and no one was saying a word. A quiet had fallen over the men of the 2nd Platoon. Some were praying, others were letting their minds wander back through their lives. Some gripped their rifles as they heard in the distance the first German artillery as it fired on the advancing crafts.

The shrill sound of artillery projectiles heading toward the wave of landing crafts, affected all the men. The hills behind the beaches of Paestum were alive with flashes of artillery fire, pouring shell after shell on the landing crafts.

As the men strained to see the land and artillery flashes, Lt. Hauck spoke again to his platoon that he was so proud of. "Keep your heads down and remember to head inland when we hit the beaches. Lets get off the beaches as soon as possible."

The landing crafts were just a short distance from the beach when the men heard the German machine guns open fire.

The German gunner was firing short bursts and these men of Co. F., 143rd Infantry, knew that each burst of the machine gun plus ar-

Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

tillery fire could mean death. Then the silence was broken when the Navy coxman spoke. "Brace yourself and prepare to land." As the men felt the Navy craft touch the sandy beach of Italy, the coxman said, Stand back, the ramp will be lowered."

Lt. HAUCK WOULD BE THE FIRST TO DIE

The artillery mortar and machine gun fire seemed to be on all sides as Lt. Hauck raised his voice and said, "follow me and get off the beach fast. Let's go men." These were the last words Lt. Hauck would utter, as he turned to lead his men ashore on the sandy beach at Paestum. He had only taken a few steps when the 88 projectile burst to his front. No one had heard it coming. The German gunner was on target. As the shrapnel tore through the Lt.'s body, he was dead as he slumped to the sandy soil.

Corporal Charles Biggs couldn't believe what he had seen. He was just a few steps to the right of the Lt. when the shell exploded. He realized for the first time just how near death was in a war.

Death was never discussed during training, because everyone thought it would never happen to them. The men of Company F had grown to love and respect Lt. Hauck and his death would linger in their memories.

Then Corp. Biggs heard a recording that repeated over and over saying, "Clear the beach. Don't stop on the beach. Keep moving." Signal Corps had set up the recording to help save lives.

Biggs was saddened by the Lt.'s death, but he had men behind him who were depending on his leadership, so he turned his head over his shoulder and yelled, "Let's clear the beach." He saw a large gully about 300 yards to his front and he made up his mind to get to it, if he could.

The German rifle and machine gun fire wasn't concentrated on Co. F, so the men made for the gully. Corp. Biggs knew he had to get to the railroad tracks, which was the company's objective. After a short rest he moved east with the men he had left.

The officers in Company F were trying to keep the men moving inland, knowing that each time a mortar or artillery projectile burst, there was a chance of losing another man. A few men would freeze and not be able to move.

It didn't take long to pick-out the 88's from the other German artillery. A soldier could hear an artillery piece fire, and follow the sound of the projectile until it exploded with plenty of time to get down on the ground. Not so with the 88's. You couldn't hear it coming. There is no sound until after the shell explodes.

The Soldier The Germans Wouldn't Take

As the first flight of German fighter planes came over the mountains from the east, the whole company froze. Captain Bayne yelled for everyone to hit the dirt. The planes dropped their noses toward the ground. The pilots started their strafing run on American troops. The planes were gone as fast as they came. Company F was lucky. The planes hadn't caused any casualties, but the men were having a hard time getting off the ground.

THE QUEEN OF BATTLE — The INFANTRY All Alone, Taking Ground Without Tanks or Artillery Support

The Fifth Army Commander, Lt. Gen. Mark Clark, withheld Naval and Air Force bombardment for the American beaches overriding the request by Corps. and Division. Further north, the British 10th Corps asked for and received it.

While the 36th Division was hitting the beaches of Paestum, men were dying carrying out the orders from the Fifth Army. Lt. Gen. Clark was well off-shore seeing that his German Shepherd dog was comfortable. The General had violated an old Navy order which read, "No pets or animals on Navy Ship."

The first objective for Company F, was to cross the railroad tracks. Capt. Bayne and Lt. Quarles were there assigning platoons to certain areas. They were also trying to find out how many of the men were missing or wounded.

As Corp. Biggs moved his men into the area he had been assigned, he placed them in a defensive position and told them to dig in as fast as possible. He had seen shrapnel kill Lt. Hauck and he knew if his men were below the ground, they would have a better chance of survival. He was pleased he hadn't lost a man.

It was late in the afternoon of September 9, 1943 and up until then the American troops had taken everything the Germans had thrown.

The German 109 Messerschmitts had continued barreling in from the east throughout the day. Mortar and artillery kept firing at a target of a few men gathered together. From time to time, the German M-34 machine guns could be heard firing from both sides and from the east of the railroad tracks.

Just as Corp. Biggs and his men finished digging their foxholes, word came down to prepare to move out. The company was to move to its next objective, Hill 586 and take up a defensive position.

Charles Biggs had seen American officers and men killed that day, that he felt would still be alive, if the Fifth Army Commanding General had permitted a Naval and Air Force bombardment before

Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

the Division was put ashore. Late in the afternoon, Company F started moving toward Hill 586 in a column of platoons. It had been a beautiful clear day so everyone could see for miles. The sulphur smoke from bursting shells covered the beach area with a thin haze.

The air-raids came one after another just a few minutes apart for the rest of the afternoon. As darkness took over, the German planes dropped flares that lit up the area as if it were daylight. During the night the planes seemed to concentrate on the ships and landing crafts, instead of targets on the beaches.

The division artillery, plus the regimental cannon and Anti-tank companies, moved ashore and started finding targets to fire on.

The first night, as Corp. Biggs and his squad took up their defensive positions on Hill 586, along with the rest of the 2nd Battalion of 143rd Inf., he had to be pleased with his men. They were still intact, without casualties. The months of training were finally paying off.

Charles Biggs had seen his whole life pass through his mind in the last twelve hours. He reminisced of his early childhood on his father's East Texas farm and somehow wished he was back there instead of here on the southern coast of Italy. Then his mind moved on to the small schoolhouse in East Texas where he stood each morning as a child for the Pledge of Allegiance to the most beautiful flag in the world. His thoughts went on, as he remembered the men who had died to keep that flag flying over a free country. He knew it was his job to do his part to keep that flag flying over a free country. He knew it was his job to do his part to keep it free, so for generations to come other school children would enjoy that freedom.

That first night in Italy wasn't a night for sleep. The German planes kept dropping flares, so their dive bombers could see the ships and landing crafts moving men and equipment ashore. The waves of planes came back time and again, trying to put a stop to the supply ships as they headed for the beaches of Paestum with supplies for the 36th Division.

When rays of light appeared above the mountains to the east and as targets presented themselves, the German observers began calling for fire. There were always targets in the Bay of Salerno — landing crafts, barges and army ducks were still heading toward the beaches with the telltale make of white water trailing to their rear.

The sun hadn't reached the rest of the mountain when three German 109's came over and dropped their nose for the strafing run.

One of the men yelled, "planes to the east." It looked like a family of prairie dogs running for their burrows. The American soldiers

The Soldier The Germans Wouldn't Take

were learning that his foxhole would save his life, if he used it properly. It only took a couple of seconds for all targets to disappear from view of the German pilots. The voice of Corp. Biggs was loud and clear as his men heard him say, "Keep your heads down."

As the planes flew over, heading towards the beaches, with their machine guns blazing, a truck burst into flames, sending a mushroom of black smoke skyward. One of the men yelled. "Corp. Biggs, it was carrying ammo."

As heads came out of the fox holes, one could see throughout the valley, thin trails of black smoke rising from a vehicle or tank that had been knocked out the day before. There were two ships with smoke rising from their decks, where a bomb had scored a direct hit. There were five landing crafts beached, with signs of smoke rising toward the sky.

As the sun rose in the sky, one of the men yelled. "Corp. Biggs, Corp. Biggs, there's five German tanks with Infantry following down in the valley, heading toward the beaches." All heads turned to the north. Sure enough the tanks were moving southwest, heading in the direction of the beaches. The squad, high on hill 586, was sitting in a large theater, with mountains to the east and the bay of Salerno to the west.

Landing crafts were heading toward the beaches. Trucks, tanks and jeeps could be seen coming and going in all directions in the valley. From time-to-time an American artillery piece would fire with that tell-tale ring of white smoke rising overhead. In the distance, one could hear that distinct sound of the German M-34 machine guns. Just twenty-four hours after hitting the beach, these American soldiers could tell the difference in sound, between the American and German machine guns.

As Charles Biggs cranked his phone to contact someone at the company C.P., his eyes never left the German tanks in the valley below. They were heading west and every now and then he could see one of the tanks fire its weapon. As the company C.P. answered, Corp. Biggs found himself saying, "I want to report five enemy tanks with Infantry about two miles to the north heading west." The voice on the other end said, "Yes Charles, we see them also, keep your men undercover and alert."

As Charles dropped the phone into its leather container, he heard a high scream. "Planes coming from the east." He turned his head to the southeast and saw three German 109 Messerschmitts topping the hill over the small town of Altavilla. Each plane dropped two small bombs, then dipped their nose to start their strafing across the valley and on toward the beaches.

Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

The actors were performing in all directions from hill 586. It was unbelievable what Company F, 143rd Infantry was witnessing that morning of 10 Sept. 1943. Then it happened. Charles Biggs turned toward the five enemy tanks just as the second tank was hit in the side nearest them. At first he didn't know where the shell was fired from. One of his men, with a high excited voice, yelled. "It's one of our cannon company self-propells. See it sitting in the stream bed, with just its gun protruding over the side of the embarkment." The cannon company self-propell fired the second time. The first German tank that was hit was not burning. Everyone on the hill saw the lead tank stop, as a puff of smoke billowed from its side. Charles found himself saying, "Look he's hit the lead tank."

By now the ammo in the first tank was exploding, sending black smoke and fireworks skyward. As the lead tank burst into flames the three remaining tanks stopped in their tracks. After viewing the situation, they began to withdraw to the northeast.

The Americans on Hill 586, began to cheer! It was just like being in a large theater, and without thinking, two of the squad members climbed out of their foxholes, to get a better view of the valley to the north. As the two men stood talking, they could see the burning tanks as the ammo continued to explode. No one had paid any attention to the muffled sound of a mortar shell as it left its tube. When the shell exploded, about fifty yards to the south of his men, Corp. Biggs yelled, "Get your butts back in your foxholes and keep your heads down."

The next three shells landed in the squads area, sending shrapnel whizzing over their heads. Biggs found himself yelling, "Those shells are coming in because the Germans saw you two men out of your holes. This goes for everyone, stay in your holes for the rest of the day. We were lucky this time, so don't give the Germans another target to shoot at."

It was early afternoon on the 12 Sept. 1943 when Lt. Col. Charles H. Jones, C.O. of the 2nd Bn, 143rd, received a message to report to Col. William H. Martin, his regimental commander. As Lt. Col. Jones got his map cases and prepared to leave, he asked Capt. Clarence Furgerson, his S-3, to accompany him to the Regimental C.P. He told the Capt. he had no idea as to why he had been asked to report to the Regimental Commander. When they arrived at HQs, Col. Martin welcomed them, then said to Lt. Col. Jones, "Hal, they have taken your battalion and made them Corps troops. You will move into the Sele-Colore River junction to replace the 179th Regimental Combat Team, who was hit pretty hard this morning. I had planned on

The Soldier The Germans Wouldn't Take

moving you over to the Altivilla area to support our 3rd Battalion. That's out now, because they want you to move out as soon as it gets dark."

As the conversation died down, Lt. Col. Jones knew the meeting was over. He extended his hand to his regimental commander, (they had been close friends for years), and said, "Goodbye William, I may not see you again." Col. Martin was stunned. He answered by saying, "Hal, it's not that bad." Jones answered, "anyway — Goodbye." The two Battalion officers moved through the Regimental C. P. as they shook hands and said their goodbyes.

Back to the Battalion area, there was lots to do before he would lead his men on a twelve-mile forced march. That night they had established a defensive position in the Sele-Calore before daylight the next morning.

It was late afternoon of 12 Sept. 1943, that Corp. Biggs got word to prepare his men for a forced march that night. His squad had been in Italy just four days and had seen enough combat to last them a lifetime.

All through the day, the German 109's were still coming on strafing runs and after dark, the planes dropped flares to light up the bay, making it easier to see the American ships ferrying supplies to the beaches.

It wasn't uncommon to see German tanks, here and there, trying to find a weak area in the American defenses. They wanted to drive to the beaches and split the Allies in half.

Company F, had been high enough on Hill 586 and Mount Soprano to have an excellent view of the whole battle area. Looking north, one could see the beach front town of Salerno where the British X Corps had landed with two divisions. They had support troops, consisting of Marines, Army Commandos and three battalions of the United States Rangers. Toward the northeast, one could see Altivilla perched on top of a small Italian mountain. To the south and east, one could see mountains occupied by the Germans.

As soon as it was dark enough to move a full infantry battalion 12 miles north, and across the beach head, Lt. Col. Jones ordered his battalion to fall into columns of companies. The battalion arrived in the Persano area between the Calore, Sele-Rivers around 0300 on 13 Sept. 1943. Capt. Ferguson showed the company commanders the area they were to defend.

As the sun rose on the Italian Beach head on Sept. 13, 1943, the 2nd Battalion of the 143rd Infantry had been placed under the command of Major General Ernest J. Dawley, who commanded the VI

The Soldier The Germans Wouldn't Take

The officers and men of the 2nd battalion were not aware of the position that VI Corps had placed them in. They had not been told, their battalion was replacing the three battalions of the 179th R.C.T.

By daylight, Charles Biggs had his men dug in and was placing grass and green branches over the new dirt to camouflage their position from enemy observers.

The battalion was deployed in a defensive position, with Co. F, to the left and Co. E. Co. G was out posting the front. If Co. G had to withdraw, they would pull back behind the battalion main line of resistance.

It was shortly after daylight, that Biggs, and the rest of the battalion heard the battle developing around the town of Altivilla. They could see the German artillery and mortar shells falling on the old hill top village. The battle was growing with shells bursting all over the hill. As the fire died down, no small arms or machine guns could be heard. Corp. Biggs found himself telling his men, that Altivilla had just fallen to the Germans and he added, "Col. Martin was going to move us up to support the 3rd Battalion." He went on, "If we had been there, maybe, maybe the Germans couldn't have taken it."

Corp. Biggs had his squad on the left flank of Company F. He observed the companys patrol moving to his left across the Sele, to contact units of the 179th R.C.T. When they came back around ten o'clock, they told the platoon they couldn't find one American, much less, the R.C.T., and the area north of the Sele-River was not defended by Americans.

It was after noon when men of the 2nd platoon reported seeing men to the left of the Sele-River, but couldn't identify them as Americans.

When small arms and machine gun fire was heard to the east, it was apparent that Co. G's outpost was being tested by a German unit, as to their strength.

It wasn't but a few minutes until five or six of the men from Co. G came down the Sele-River and crawled up the bank where the squad of Corp. Biggs was located. Biggs stopped the men and asked what had happened up front. The men were in shock. It was hard to get a straight answer. Finally, it came clear. The Germans had attacked with tanks and infantry support. One of the men reported, "They are very methodical in their movement. It won't be long before they are here. Let's pull back."

Charles Biggs stood to his full height before he spoke. "You men will go no further. Get into the line between my men. We will hold this position." One man from G Co. asked, "Corp, why aren't we getting

Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

artillery support?" Not one of our artillery shells were fired on the German infantry or tanks. Those tanks are moving forward with nothing to stop them.

As Biggs was placing the men in position, a Sgt. came from Co. Hqs. reported that Germans had been seen moving into the river bed and Biggs was to take two men with him to cover that approach.

As Biggs slid down the embankment, he saw a squad of Germans coming down the river bed. He fell to a prone position, snapped his safety off and fired. He had just fired the second round when everything went blank. When he opened his eyes, a German Medic was placing a bandage around his left jaw. He tried to sit but his body wouldn't allow it. His first thought was, I'm paralyzed, I can't move. He tried to speak to the medic who just shook his head, while he continued to adjust the bandages.

After dark, Corp. Biggs was placed on a stretcher and moved to a road just a short distance from where he had been hit, then was placed in a German ambulance and moved to the German occupied town of Scorzo. As he was moved into a German Aid-Station, an American Medical Officer stepped up to his stretcher and asked the medic to place him on the table.

The American Officer explained that he was Captain David L. Beavers from his regiment, 3rd Bn/143rd and he too had been captured by the Germans. The officer said he was being allowed to assist in the care of the Am-wounded. As he finished his examination, he looked into Charles Biggs eyes and said, "Charles you are very lucky to be alive. You have been hit in the jaw and I believe the bullet has hit your spine and is still inside your body. The Germans have no X-Ray equipment here, so we won't know how bad you are wounded until we get to a good German hospital." Then he went on, "Biggs, I'll try to make you as comfortable as possible, but you must realize we don't have much equipment to work with."

Capt. Kratka passed Charles' stretcher, Biggs asked, "Captain, where are the Germans? What's going on?" Captain Kratka stopped and with a smile on his face said, "Biggs, with your wounds, you would have been too big a problem for the Germans. They couldn't take you because they are being pushed back and don't need any more problems. We will try to get you to a General Hospital in North Africa, so they can take care of your wounds. I'm sorry I haven't been able to help you any more than I have, but you know we aren't sure what damage that bullet has done to your spine. You were hit eight days ago

The Soldier The Germans Wouldn't Take

and have lived this long and I believe this time next year you will be on your feet again."

Charles Biggs was a special case to the United States Medical Corps. No one in North Africa wanted to operate, so they told him, "you have lasted this long, so we are going to send you back to the States for the operations you need."

Charles Biggs was in a General Hospital in North Africa when he picked up a pen and started to write his wife the first letter after being hit by a German rifle slug. He started a number of sheets before he made up his mind to tell his wife, Dorothy. With reluctance, he told her where he had been hit and how bad his wounds were. That all the doctors who had checked him, wanted to put off operating until he could return to the States.

Biggs arrived at Deshon General Hospital in Butler, Penn. in early October 1943. This would be home for him for the next eleven months.

The German rifle bullet had entered his left jaw, clipped his spine in the lower neck region and came to rest under his right shoulder blade. Operations were needed to repair the damage the rifle slug had inflicted.

The Texas Newspapers were running banner headlines that the Texas 36th Division had led the Fifth Army onto the shores of Europe.

Dorothy Biggs had read every article, time and time again, trying to pick up something about the 143rd Infantry and especially the 2nd Battalion. She prayed that Company F had come out alright during the invasion. As she met the mailman on that October day in 1943, the postman said, "Dorothy, I have a letter for you from Charles." I had been weeks since she had received her last letter, so she welcomed it with happiness. As she tore the letter open she didn't want to believe what she was reading. She read on but her heart skipped a beat. Charles was wounded and had been flown back to North Africa where he was waiting for a flight to a hospital back in the States. As she read she began to wonder just how badly he had been wounded. All he said was they would operate after he arrived stateside. She wondered if he had lost an arm or leg.

Charles asked Dorothy in his last paragraph to inform his parents that he had been wounded and would be flown to the States for an operation.

As Dorothy picked up the telephone to call Joe and Mina Biggs, she dreaded to pass on the information she had received in the letter from Charles.

Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

Mina Biggs answered and heard Dorothy's voice, "Mother Biggs, this is Dorothy." Her voice trembled and she hesitated, "Mother Biggs, I have bad news, Charles has been wounded." (Mina's mind flashed back to 1918, during WWI, to the wounded soldiers she had seen throughout East Texas.) Mina soon found her voice, "Dorothy, how bad has my boy been wounded? Where is he? How did you find out?" She wouldn't give Dorothy a chance to answer. "Mother Biggs, they will fly Charles to the States for the operation." Mina went back to asking Dorothy questions that her daughter-in-law couldn't answer. Before long, each was crying uncontrollably. Mina heard Dorothy say, "Mother Biggs, when I hear from Charles again, I'll let you know."

Corp. Charles Biggs, was a patient at Deshon General Hospital in Butler, Pa., was discharged with a fifty percent disability. He arrived home before Christmas 1944, with his part of the war over. He had given his government everything.

Charles and Dorothy Biggs picked up their lives that Christmas of 1944. They visited his parents on the small East Texas farm so his mother could see for herself that her son was all in one piece.

On October 20, 1945, Charles and Dorothy Biggs had a lovely daughter named Linda, who has brought much happiness to their lives.

Charles and Dorothy never miss one of the 36th Division Reunions. They come for the fellowship we all enjoy. As they sit at one of the tables in the 143rd C.P. and someone starts to tell a story that happened at Paestum, Italy back in 1943, you can see his jaws lock and tears well into his eyes.

He lets his mind wander back to 13 Sept. 1943, when the 2nd Battalion of the 143rd Infantry was a 'Guinea Pig' for Generals who were trying to learn how to fight a war, and to a Medical Corps. Capt. who told him, "CHARLES BIGGS YOU ARE AN AMERICAN CASUALTY THE GERMANS DON'T WANT ...

YOU WOULD BE TOO BIG A PROBLEM FOR THEM!

Julian H. Philips (Ruby) 143 Inf
(713) 673-7746
11017 Pandora Dr.
Houston, TX 77013



Here's The 2nd BEST Photo Made In WW II — Features A Rondo Rifleman



T/Sgt. Joe Tradenick, 141st Inf. Received a Gift From 11 Year Old Girl - France, 1944



If this photo is 2nd Best of the millions made by official photographers in WWII... which one was FIRST? O.K., the dramatic freeze-frame from a movie camera of a few Marines raising the Stars and Stripes on a hill top at Iwo Jima... is Number ONE.

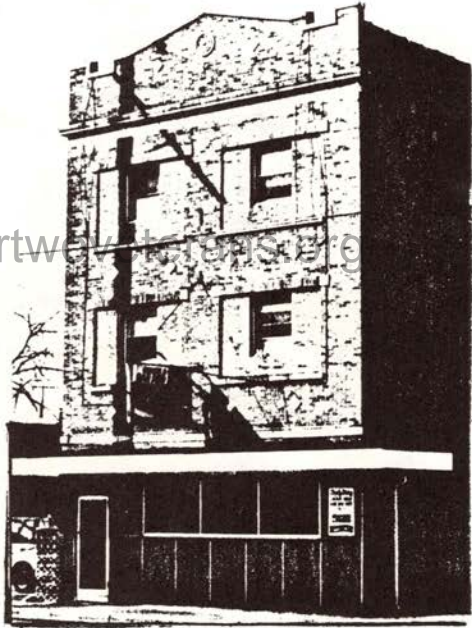
This great photo was used by your government as a symbolic action depicting VICTORY. A huge monument of this classic photo can be seen in Washington D.C.

You ask, WHY is this photo of a pretty little mamselle so great? Dramatic it is not. But it is a vivid expression of THANKS and LOVE the French people had for their liberators... and this T-Patcher of 141st Infantry just happened to be there at the right time.

Could it be — the French Government may some day cast a large bronze of this one to be erected at Luxiel. Stay tuned.

Barkeeper Basso Baffled By Bevy Of War Medals At 'Surprise' Ceremony

Grandson
helps get
citations
43 years later



Chuck & Irene's Tavern, Popular
Neighborhood Bar In Hammond Get Long-Lost
Story About Basso's Unknown Past

HAMMOND — A neighborhood tavern was the scene of an awards ceremony Wednesday that even Hollywood might not dare create because nobody would believe it.

There, at Chuck and Irene's Tavern, Charles Basso, co-owner of the popular family owned tap and restaurant, received World War II medals, badges, pins, and stars, which should have been his 43 years ago. His family, in on the surprise, wanted it that way.

The former staff sergeant was wounded during action in the European Theater of Operations. For this he had been awarded the Purple Heart.

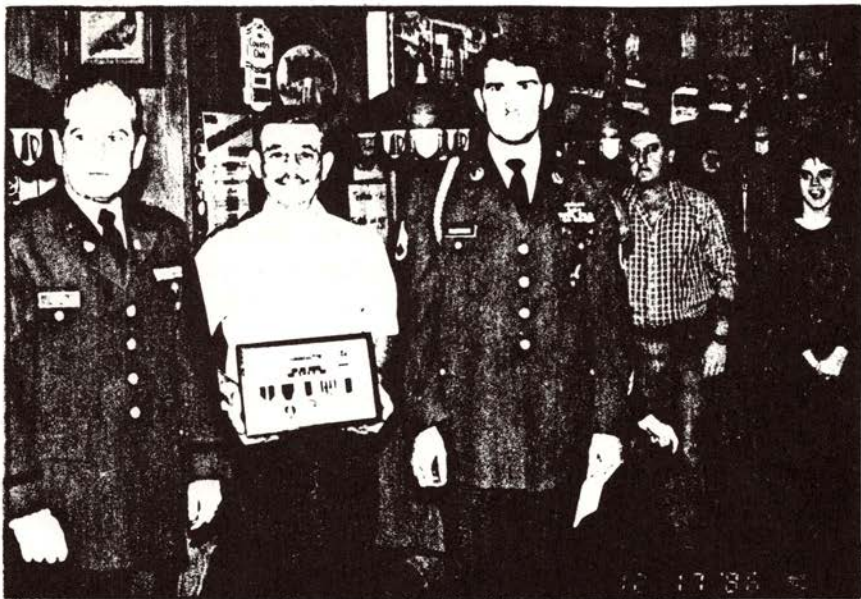
His combat action also brought him the Bronze Star, battle stars and medals.

Barkeeper Basso Baffled

Basso received his framed and mounted medals Wednesday. Army Major George S. Bone, of the 308th Paratroops in Homewood, and Staff Sergeant Randall Coapstick, from the Merrillville Recruiting Office did the honors.

The sound of a television game show was turned off for the brief ceremony as patrons who filled the bar and booths listened attentively.

Basso was presented the Bronze Star, a re-issue of the Purple Heart, four bronze battle stars, European Theater Campaign Medal, the Good Conduct Medal and World War II Victory Medal. They also presented him with a Marksmanship Badge, World War II Discharge Pin and the Combat Infantry Badge.



Standing at attention, Major Bone introduced Staff Sgt. Coapstick who read the Proclamation of Meritorious Achievement, signed by the Secretary of the Army.

The customers gave Basso resounding applause.

Basso was asked how it felt to get the medals after 43 years. He responded simply, "It's an honor." And, probably out of habit, added, "Would you like a drink?"

Basso said the whole thing was a surprise to him. "I am very flattered. I have no words for it."

Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

How the medals were obtained is another story.

Basso's grandson Tony is a student at Lake Central High School in St. John. His history teacher, Thomas Clark, is a war buff and curator of the Lake County Historical Museum in Crown Point.

He often displays war memorabilia at school's libraries, and was the spark behind the Vietnam Casualty Plaque which was dedicated at the high school.

Grandson Tony, Thomas Clark, A War Buff, And Artilleryman/36th MP Donald Scott Get Credit For Story

Clark said the young Basso said his grandfather had been in World War II and had been wounded.

He said the student brought in his grandfather's papers.

"When I saw the papers, I noticed he had been awarded the Combat Infantry Badge," Clark said.

Clark's research through the years paid off.

"I found out that individuals that got the Combat Infantry Badge were eligible for the Bronze Star. We wrote a letter to the U.S. Army Offices in St. Louis," he said.

Clark said the Bronze Star is the fourth highest medal given in combat. "And the Combat Infantry Badge is supposed to be the most coveted of the Army because the infantry is the one that took the brunt of the fighting," Clark said.

Basso, who was wounded on a mountain in Italy where he was with the 36th Division, said he spent one and a half months recuperating.

Upon learning of his grandson's efforts on his behalf he said, "We're proud of him. I owe a lot to my grandson and his teacher. They must have worked real hard to get these medals."

Irene Basso, at the prompting of the Times photographer, gave her husband of 40 years, not one, but two kisses. "After all of these years he never had anything," she said. "Our grandson asked for something of his to show at school. We had nothing except a pair of shoes, a swastika and a flag, and I gave it to him for the teacher to display."

Then, after offering refreshments to the Army servicemen and press, they went back to work, joining son and daughter-in-law, Anthony and Marie, behind the bar.

Barkeeper Basso Baffled

Here's
Looking
at You,
T-Patchers!



Medals winner Charles Basso catches buss from his wife, Irene



Here's Chuck and Irene Basso — giving a salute to all T-Patchers, and those who did this secret project to get the Medals that Chuck never received after his hitch with Co E 142nd Infantry.

Donald Scott, who sent in this news item about Basso had this foto made, per our request, a later date from the ceremony.

Don says, "Chuck & Irene's Tavern is by far the most popular tavern in the Hessville part of Hammond. He has a marvelous restaurant in the back end, where he serves excellent meals, great sandwiches and possibly the best TACOS and TOSTADOS in town."

"Basso's wife Irene and their son TONY and his wife work at the Tavern too . . . they are just a wonderful family," Scott adds.

OK — all you T-Patchers in 100 mile range of Hammond, you just gotta go by and visit with Chuck & Irene. Ya hear!



Where The Hell Is Hammond Indiana?



**War History Buff,
THOMAS CLARK
Did All The Paper
Work To Get This
Together . . .**

Chuck Basso's story about getting medals after some 40 plus years is not new. We have featured several of these, and most were 'dug out' over a period of years.

In fact, we are sure there are a few hundred T-Patchers who Never received their medals, because the Citation — which explains WHY they were awarded their medal, and or medals. . . is the REAL story and hence — did not bother to pursue it any further.

However — we recommend that IF a person is interested in getting these Medals — the U.S. Army Offices in St. Louis — IS the right place.

Look for another item about the procedure to obtain your long over-due medals in our T-Patcher Newsletter. . . and a few tips from THOMAS CLARK. He deserves great THANKS for his help to Basso's grandson.

Barkeeper Basso Baffled

Donald Scott, Sent In This Story, He's Now A Regular At Chuck's Tavern

Scott Served
With Btry B
155th Arty



And 36th
MP Platoon



Donald Scott sent in this news item about Chuck Basso, which we consider the proper thing to do, and hope others will follow when you find a lost T-Patcher living in your town.

Foto above: A young and handsome corporal at Mostaganem, nearby Oran, Algeria, during our amphibious training.

Top: We have one of many "Me and Marlene" special shots — taken when Deitrich brought her U.S.O. Show, a short drive from Naples, Italy. Believe she was featured in a previous issue of the Quarterly. Now go read it again.

NOW — Donald E. Scott shown here with his sister, Glendora at his residence in Hammond, Indiana (7629 Maryland Ave., 46232).

These fotos were borrowed from the files of William O. Wade, Arlington, TX, who edits the M.P. Platoon Newsletter. He has our thanks.



The First "Mr. Coffee"

By:
Lem Vannatta
143rd Service Co.



The Ammo section of the 143rd was a close knit bunch of goons. Some of us made the entire war hauling ammo. We had six trucks, two Sgts., a Warrant Officer, and a Commissioned Officer. We all worked loading and unloading trucks. Some of us even led a mule or two in Italy.

We had quite a bit of stolen equipment. We didn't steal anything. We called it "Five Fingering." Our prize possession was a field kitchen burner and a 3 gallon cast aluminum coffee pot. We were free hearted with our coffee when we made it. On our lucky days, we even served "Coffee Royale."

This all leads up to a new Col. we got in Italy named "One Blanket Adams," He was the best Colonel we ever had and we all respected him. Some of his orders and rules we didn't like, and were sure as hell going to disobey them.

One of Col. Adams rules was we truck drivers cut down to "one blanket" each and eat what the line troops did. No coffee makers were allowed. We tied the kitchen stove burner and coffee pot up under our trucks and managed to hide our cots and rubber mattresses.

In the drive out of Anzio, we began to make coffee again. After Rome fell, one night, we drove all night following our troops who were trying to catch up with the retreating Germans. We got into some hilly mountainous country.

We got cold and could hardly wait for a good cup of coffee. About dawn, our section pulled off the road into a rock walled courtyard. I got the burner fired up and made a good pot of coffee. We had all poured up a cup and were getting it cooled off to drink. Into our courtyard comes a jeep. Col. Adams was in it. We were sure we had lost our stove and pot. The Col. got out of the jeep, pulling his canteen cup out. One of us spoke offering him a cup of coffee. I did the pouring and was so shaky I almost dropped the pot.

Joe DiMaggio Was "Second"

Col. Adams drank his coffee and discussed the battle situation with our officer. When he finished, he said, "the coffee sure is good, whose ever it was, thanks." Then was when we all realized what a great man Col. Paul Adams was.

In later wars, Col. Paul Adams rose to the rank of a Four Star General. I have a brother who served under him as a Sgt. Major. He speaks highly of "One Blanket."

Lem Vannetta
Rt 12, Box 32
Longview TX 75605



Lt. General Paul DeWitt Adams, U.S. Army Retired, will be the guest speaker at the General Assembly at 1 PM on Sat. Sept. 3rd, at the 52nd Annual 36th Division Reunion, Royal Coach Motor Hotel, Dallas. General Adams was former commander of the 143rd Infantry Regiment. U.S. Army Photo NACOM Photo Lab, Frankfurt, 1959.



LEM VANNETTA send in these THEN & NOW photos, per our request, says he likes the "funny side" of the war best. Lem adds, "please note the T-two-stripe in the 1944 foto, I sucked ass for three years for that high rank." (applause.)



Part IV

"KRIEGIE"

Prisoner Of War In Germany

Oflag 64

Worldwartwoveterans.org
Escaping is the Greatest Sport

By Alan "Chum" Williamson

A. J. Evans, a British Tommy, was a prisoner of war of the Germans during World War I. He wrote a best-seller, "THE ESCAPE CLUB," in which he claimed, "Escaping is the greatest sport in the world."

Not everyone agreed. On 22 September 1944, two American POWs at Oflag 64 protested the tacking of an anti-escape poster to the administration building bulletin board. The poster was headed: "To all Prisoners of War! The escape from prison camps is no longer a sport!"

Lieut. Col. William H. Schaefer and Lieut. James R. Schmitz, charged with interfering with a German soldier in the performance of his duty, were tried in a Nazi People's Court and sentenced to death. However, they were liberated before the sentence could be carried out.

Worldwartwoveterans.org
There was a small group of Kriegies (from "kriegsgefangenen," prisoners of war) who would risk their lives to carry out an escape plan offering only a marginal chance of success. A larger group, most if not all of whom had personal problems back home, were content to remain POWs. They called those in the first group "escape hounds." Most Kriegies would attempt to escape if there was an opportunity that offered a reasonable chance.

At Oflag 64, a camp for American Ground Force officers at Altburgund, the German name for the old Polish town of Schubin,

Escaping Is The Greatest Sport

the chances were not inviting. Even after the cross-channel invasion, Allied forces were a thousand miles to the west. On the closer, eastern front, neither side took prisoners except in large numbers.

One Kriegie who agreed with Evans was Lieut. Frank N. Aten, of San Antonio, Texas. Frank knew the exhilaration that accompanies the first moments of a successful break for freedom. He also knew the apprehension, the fear that he might be seen by a guard and that moment might be his last.

Lieut. Aten was executive officer of Co. A, 701st Tank Destroyer Battalion, 1st Armored Division, near Sidi-bou-Zid, when the Afrika Korps blitzed at Kasserine Pass. He was nicknamed, appropriately enough, "Kid Nitro" by fellow soldiers. His hatred of the Germans was no doubt due in part to the death of a NCO, a close friend, who died in his arms.

As Aten and other captives were being transported out of North Africa, he saw the name "Roy Chappell" on the wall of a one-story brick schoolhouse in Tunis. Later, he jumped off a train in Italy, hoping to make his way to Switzerland.

Bayne and Quarles make clean 'escape'

Some six months later, T-Patchers Julian M. Quarles and Carl Bayne would successfully escape after leaping from a moving train in Italy. But in Aten's case, there were as yet no friendly troops in that country, which was still at war with the Allies.

He killed an Italian soldier who tried to recapture him. Later, when recaptured, he was suspected of the homicide but was not charged. An influential, pro-American Italian woman intervened on his behalf.

Emulating Roy Chappell, whom he would later meet at Oflag 64, Frank wrote his name on the wall of a jail in Bolzano, Italy. Upon arrival in Germany, he was interned in Oflag VII-B, Eichstadt. Oflag 64 was one of the few German POW camps designated with Arabic numerals.

Later, while being transported to Oflag 64, he jumped off the train as it neared Schubin. Again, his freedom was short-lived. Recaptured, he was taken to Oflag 64, where he was led directly to a cell block just outside the compound, where troublemakers were put in solitary confinement on bread and water.

As he approached the perimeter fence with his captors, a voice called out, "Are you Frank Aten?"

Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

Meanwhile, another Kriegie hit upon a way to get outside the wire with little or no risk. When the British enlisted orderlies, who performed the Oflag's fatigue details, were replaced by Americans and sent to a Stalag (Stammlager, base camp), he traded places with one of them.

The two completely exchanged identities. The British soldier donned the American's uniform and took over his bunk and possessions. He also received the officer's mail, and answered it. Since the two daily appells were simply head counts, the ruse succeeded for a while.

We later learned via the "Kriegie telegraph" that the officer did escape from a work detail, but was recaptured. The incident triggered a camp-wide identity check. A table was set up in the assembly area. As his name was called, each Kriegie was required to show his POW identity card, as his appearance was compared with the mug shot on file. The Britisher was exposed as an impostor and was taken away.

Aten, Chappell, Higgins, Van Vliet, and a fifth Kriegie, Dick Secor, planned another escape attempt. The small jail where troublemakers were incarcerated consisted of two rows of four cells each, facing each other, with a passageway between. At the far end was a window that led to freedom if the bars could be removed. As Aten had discovered, the cell doors could be unlocked with a bent nail. A hacksaw blade was obtained from a Polish workman for cigarettes.

There was a 9:00 P.M. curfew, at which time all POWs were required to be indoors. The quintet decided that the least dangerous way to get locked up was to pretend drunkenness and violate the curfew. They obtained some potato peeling wine from the small group of Russian prisoners billeted in a corner of the compound.

On 5 May 1944, at the hour of the curfew, they began the charade, which included some superb acting. The wine was foul smelling, and tasted even worse. But each did manage to drink a swallow or two. They also doused their clothing with it. When the guards paid no attention, they began to act boisterous — like drunks.

At last, an elderly guard arrived on the scene. Incredulously, he acted more like a character out of Hogan's Heroes than a German soldier. He ordered, begged, implored, pleaded with the five to go indoors. Finally, several guards and a squad of Panzer Grenadiers came and took them into custody.

Why the delay? We heard that Oberst Schneider, informed of the

Escaping Is The Greatest Sport

situation, sent Hauptmann Menner, an interpreter who was strongly pro-American, to ask Colonel Thomas D. Drake, the Senior American Officer, to intercede.

Drake, who was in on the scam, said, "I have no use for drunkenness. They are a disgrace to the uniform."

"Do we have the colonel's permission to lock them up?" Menner inquired.

"Yes."

The five "drunks" were taken to the cell block, where they were strip-searched. Since Secor was 'clean,' the only member of the group who had no escape record, the hacksaw blade and lock pick were taped to the soles of his feet.

He was the last to be searched. As the guard was about to examine his feet, he began heaving. Then he vomited on the guard.

Enraged, the guard hustled Dick into a cell. His fellow conspirators were locked in separate cells.

The date was 5 May 1944. That date was selected because the sentence was expected to be 14 days — it was — and on the last night of confinement there would be no moon.

Higgins had brought along a jew's harp, and Van Vliet a mouth organ, which they were allowed to keep. These noisemakers were used to drown out the sound of the hacksaw blade. Soap was used to deaden the sound. Cobwebs, plentiful in the cell block, were used to conceal the cuts. When a Kriegie gave the alarm of an approaching guard, the one doing the sawing would scurry back to his cell.

The bars proved harder than expected. The task was not completed until the last day of confinement. Aten and Higgins went first, during the afternoon appell.

Chappell and Secor, who were to follow with Van Vliet, were unable to get the colonel's cell door open. They left without him.

Only a short distance away when the alarm sounded, they hid in a nearby field, lying down between rows of vegetation. Guards walked up and down the rows, narrowing the search area until the two were found. A guard almost stepped on one of them. He laughed and said, "I almost shot you!"

They were returned to their cells. Since the bars had been removed and it was known they could unlock the cell doors, their shoes and trousers were taken and a guard was posted inside the small jail.

One of the guards asked, "Why did you do that? We were going to turn you loose tomorrow." Of course he meant they were to be turned loose inside the Oflag.

Escaping Is The Greatest Sport

"Yes! Who are you?"

"I'm William Higgins. I saw your name on the wall at Bolzano, Italy."

After serving the standard three weeks for an escape attempt, Aten was billeted with earlier arrivals in the administration building. A large, three-story stone structure that had formerly been a Polish school for boys, the Germans called it "the White House." So did the Americans.

"Kid Nitro" met Roy J. Chappell, Jr. of El Paso, Texas, whose name he had seen on the wall of a schoolhouse in Tunis, and William Higgins, of Boulder, Colorado, a pilot. The three teamed with Lieut. Col. John H. Van Vliet, Jr., a graduate of the U. S. Military Academy, to plan an escape.

Oflag 64's 12-acre compound was enclosed by two parallel fences 12 feet high, with concertina in between. Machine guns and searchlights positioned in guard towers controlled the fences and the immediate areas on either side.

The would-be escapees found a spot adjacent to the White House that was not visible from a guard tower. As a negative factor, it was opposite the quarters of Oberst (Colonel) Fritz Schneider, the Oflag commandant, across the street.

Using a wire cutter obtained from a Polish workman, the intrepid quartet cut the wire during an afternoon appeal in early September 1943. As a diversion, fellow Kriegies created a disturbance during the head count.

Since Higgins was an Air Force pilot, he and Aten planned to go to Bromberg, 15 miles north of Schubin, and steal a plane from an airfield located there. Van Vliet and Chappell hoped to proceed 110 miles to the Baltic Sea, steal a boat, and sail 135 miles to Sweden.

Although the noise made by cutting the fence sounded like cannon shots to the escapees, they got outside the wire undetected. There, they were spotted almost immediately by a guard who just happened to be off duty. As he gave the alarm, the four darted into a nearby cemetery and hid behind the gravestones. After a brief, deadly game of hide and seek, they were recaptured. They were then given the standard three weeks "severe confinement on reduced rations."

The goon ration was so meager it could hardly be reduced. But friendly guards permitted fellow Kriegies to bring them food from the Red Cross parcels.

While in solitary, Aten discovered that he could pick the lock on his cell door. This formed the basis for his next planned escape attempt. Due to the onset of winter, it would not be carried out until May 1944.

Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

Aten and Higgins, headed for Bromberg, where they hoped to steal a plane, got some seven to ten kilometers away before being recaptured. The alarm had been sounded from Oflag 64, and men wearing white armbands were scouring the countryside. Two of them came upon the two escapees unexpectedly, so they had no chance.

Hoping to conceal his identity, Aten was wearing the "dog tags" of another American soldier. His captors were not deceived. One said, "You're Aten!" They were then turned over to men dressed in black, the dreaded Gestapo.

There were indications that the two were slated for execution. On the morning following the break, Kriegie Tom Rodgers got up early and happened to look out a second story window of "the White House." He saw a staff car stop in front of Oberst Schneider's quarters, across the street. Aten and Higgins were in the car, in chains. Schneider came out, apparently to identify the two. Then the car sped away.

Rodgers informed Colonel Drake, who then requested an interview with Schneider. He said, "I happen to know that Frank Aten and William Higgins are in the hands of civilian authorities. That is a violation of the Geneva Convention. I demand that they be returned here immediately!"

Schneider, who spoke no language except German, asked through an interpreter where Drake got the information.

"You know I can't tell you that," Drake replied.

Schneider denied knowing where the two were.

Drake said, "You know you are going to lose this war. If those men are not returned, when it's over I shall see to it that you are tried as a war criminal."

"This interview is ended!" Schneider shouted angrily.

Meanwhile, Aten and Higgins were taken to a concentration camp at Hohenzaltsa, where 38 Jewish women were incarcerated. All of the women's heads were shaved. The two Americans were locked in separate cells, across the compound from each other.

Ten days after the jailbreak, they were returned to Oflag 64 and put back in the slammer. In addition to three weeks for the escape attempt, they were sentenced to eight weeks for destroying property (the sawed bars) of the German Reich. All told, they spent most of the summer of 1944 in jail.

Lieut. Col. Van Vliet came out of the caper smelling like a rose. When the guards found the other four gone, he was still in his cell. He said, "I told those fellows not to do it. I told them I wanted no part

Escaping Is The Greatest Sport

of it." He was released next morning, having served 14 days for drunk and disorderly conduct.

During both World Wars, the classical means of escape from POW camps in Europe was the tunnel. It provided a means for large numbers of POWs to get outside the wire without being observed by guards.

Major Jerry Sage arrived at Oflag 64 on 17 July 1944, after a stay of some time at Stalag Luft III, a camp for Allied Air Force POWs, at Sagan. Jerry was there when the events occurred on which **THE GREAT ESCAPE**, a book and motion picture of the same title, were based. Jerry's job was changing the color of the dirt.

According to Jerry, three of the 76 Kriegies who escaped through the tunnel made it to freedom. 23 were recaptured by guards and returned to the Stalag. The remaining 50 were retaken by civil authorities and were executed. Their bodies were cremated, apparently to conceal the effects of torture.

Jerry said that Kriegies at Luft III used the ruse of starting two tunnels, one as a decoy, intended to be discovered. There were two NCO guards at the Stalag who were friendly to POWs. Arrangements were made for one of them to find the entrance to the decoy tunnel. The camp commandant rewarded him with a commission.

Wearing his officer's uniform and insignia of rank, Hans visited his friends in the compound where he found the tunnel. Next day, the other friendly guard visited them. With tears in his eyes, he pleaded, "Dig me a tunnel!"

Sage was commander of an OSS detachment when captured at Feriana shortly after the battle of Kasserine Pass. He was a colorful individual. Kriegies came from other barracks to look at him. Jerry took the scrutiny with good humor. He had pixie ears.

There were two main problems with tunnel projects: Concealment of the entrance and disposal of the dirt. Subsoil deposited on the camp grounds alerted guards to the fact that a tunnel was being dug. They then spared no effort in finding the entrance.

Lieut. William E. Fabian was a member of the 2nd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry, 82nd Airborne Division, when that unit, attached to "Slim Jim" Gavin's 505th regiment, participated in the invasion of Sicily on 9 July 1943. The mission was to block access routes to the beachhead areas on the Syracuse Peninsula.

There was a gap of several miles between lines of Allied surface vessels lying offshore, through which the C-47 transport planes could safely pass. Due to high winds, many of the planes missed the

Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

gap. According to Fabian, 21 planes were shot down by "friendly" naval guns.

Fabian's plane was one of those hit. He and three NCOs who were not wounded bailed out. During the next three days, the three NCOs became casualties and Bill was captured.

One of the early arrivals at Oflag 64 (his POW number was 164), he was billeted in "the White House." As outlying barracks were opened to accommodate additional arrivals, the tunnel project was planned.

There were four diggers: Bill Fabian, William Cory, Hill Murphy and Hervey Robinson. Membership in the project was limited to 60, and there was a waiting list. Many of the "tunneleers" were T-Patchers, including my bridge partner, Harold D. Craft. Lieut. Col. Doyle R. Yardley, CO of the 509 Parachute Infantry when captured at Avellino, Italy, was project commander.

The entrance to the tunnel was through a clothes boiler in the washroom that separated Barracks 2-A and 2-B. The Germans had given Lou Otterbein, the Oflag handyman, access to tools with which he constructed the set for the Little Theater. Lou gave his word that he would not use the tools to escape. However, he did not promise that he wouldn't use them to help others escape.

Lou made the tunnel cover, a false bottom to the clothes boiler entrance. Using the tongues of combat and jump boots, he fashioned a bellows type blower that forced air into the tunnel through a duct made of cans from Red Cross parcels. Hugh G. Hogan, of Owego, New York, spliced the metal cans together.

The entrance was a vertical shaft, 3' x 3', that went down 36 feet. The horizontal shaft, toward the nearest fence, was 24" wide by 30" high. Transfer points, where dirt was transferred from one sled to another, were 3' x 3'.

The dirt was packed in empty Red Cross boxes and stored above the ceiling of Barracks 2. Bed slats, donated by Kriegies, were placed across the rafters to support the boxes of dirt.

Bed slats and empty Red Cross parcels were used to shore the tunnel. Each Kriegie's bunk had about 14 slats. Six of these were donated to the cause, leaving eight, which was enough to support the excelsior-filled mattress. When the guards asked why so many bed slats were being used, they were told, "For firewood."

On one occasion, Sid "Mouse" Waldman was working above the ceiling during a dirt storage operation. He stepped in the wrong place, and his foot went through the ceiling and into Dick Rossbach's cubicle in Barracks 2-A.

Escaping Is The Greatest Sport

Col. Yardley exclaimed, "That does it! We're finished!" However, Lou Otterbein patched the break so it was almost unnoticeable, except during the first few days while the plaster was wet. Dick Rossbach and neighboring Kriegies rearranged their lockers and the gear on top of them so as to cast a shadow on the break. During a surprise Gestapo inspection a few days later, Rossbach, who spoke fluent German, distracted the black-clad sleuth who checked his cubicle.

The only means of access to the loft of Barracks 2 not visible from a guard tower was outside the end of 2-A. It was concealed from the direction of the assembly area by a tree. The dirt storage operation was accomplished daily, at dusk. Each Kriegie took his turn as a "stooge" (lookout).

Thanks to the Red Cross parcels and cigarette parcels from home, we had plenty of smokes. But they were in short supply on the local economy, like everything else. We had a joke, more truth than jest, that for the first time in history, guards were picking up cigarette butts thrown down by prisoners.

On one occasion, a guard looking for butts almost discovered the dirt transfer operation. Colonel Drake then ordered that containers of water be kept in each barracks for dousing of cigarettes. None would be thrown on the ground. The guards didn't say anything, but their looks told us they thought it was a cheap shot.

During the summer of 1944, Oberst Schneider announced at a morning appell that he had discovered we were digging a tunnel. He said explosive charges placed in holes dug around the perimeter fence would be detonated at ten o'clock. "Anyone in the tunnel at that time will be killed!"

The charges were detonated on schedule. They had no effect on the tunnel.

According to Bill Fabian, the Germans sometimes used listening devices that went down 12 feet and could detect the sounds of digging up to another 12 feet. For this reason, the horizontal portion of the tunnel was 36 feet below ground. Fabian believed Schneider had no listening devices. Knowing that the British POWs dug tunnels, he surmised that we might be digging one. The explosives were intended to discourage it. At any rate, digging continued and there were no further attempts to cave it in.

On one occasion, a tragic accident was narrowly avoided. The air pump stuck in a reverse position and was sucking air out of the duct.

Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

Bill Fabian was digging and his partner was Hervey Robinson. The diggers worked in pairs, as a safety precaution. Fabian remembered Robinson saying, "We have to get out! The sparrow is dead!" Then he passed out.

Robinson attached the pull rope for the sled to Fabian's ankle. He and a Kriegie named Burdolski, working in the next turnaround station, dragged Bill back to the vertical shaft and into the washroom.

The diggers worked naked. Fabian had been dragged on his stomach through the tunnel and through soot used to camouflage the entrance. As he was being revived, he heard Robinson say, "Bill's dead. His (penis) has turned blue!"

Lou Otterbein made a new air pump, fashioned like that in an air furnace. There was no further trouble with air supply.

By fall of 1944, the tunnel reached a natural drainage area some 75 to 90 feet outside the fence. It was not far enough to surface in moonlight, let alone in daylight. Also, Kriegie engineers advised that no more dirt could be stored above the ceiling in Barracks 2. An estimated 25 tons was already there.

Fabian said, "We were waiting for the dark of the moon to surface and go, when orders were received from the War Department (through clandestine channels) that the number of escapees in a single attempt be limited to four. Our plan was for 60 to go. Our escape committee decided not to risk the wrath of our 'hosts' for just four. The plan was put on hold. We four diggers asked to be left in the tunnel if the camp was moved. This was how we made it."

Earlier, in August 1944, Captains Clarence M. Ferguson and Lumund Wilcox, attorneys at law, were taken to Gniesen to defend three Kriegies charged with refusing to walk in the street. They were acquitted, no doubt because Mr. Franz, a representative of the Swiss government, our 'Protecting Power,' was present. Capt. Ferguson arranged a private meeting with Franz by bribing a guard with cigarettes and a chocolate bar.

Franz said, "Since the (July 20) attempt on Hitler's life, the Germans will kill any prisoners who try to escape. If you are digging a tunnel, dig to a point where it can be surfaced quickly in case of emergency. But don't surface it until necessary."

Escaping Is The Greatest Sport

Oflag 64 was evacuated on 21 January 1945. The Russians had crossed the Vistula River and begun their advance westward. The 1,557 officers and enlisted POWs were hastily examined by the American medical staff and the German doctor. It was agreed to leave behind 86 men considered unable to march.

The four diggers, Hill Murphy, William Cory, Hervey Robinson and Bill Fabian, hid in the tunnel and were left behind. Frank Aten finally made good his escape. On the pretext of filling his canteen, he hid in the Infirmary.

In 1970, a group of Ex-Kriegies revisited Oflag 64. The tunnel building was gone. Irving J. Yarock, said, "We looked for the contractor to learn what his reaction was when he dropped it and found tons and tons of dirt. We couldn't find him. The camp is again a reform school, which is what it was before we got there. We did meet the Pole who ran the honeywagon. You should have seen the appreciative smile on his face when we recognized him."

NOTE: Release of sensitive information in the foregoing was approved by the Chief, Access and Release Branch, Office of the Adjutant General, Department of the Army.

NEXT:

Forced March Out Of Poland.

Vol. VII — No. 1
Spring 1987



C.A. WILLIAMSON
12653 King Oaks
San Antonio, Texas
78233



“As I Recollect . . .”

Ben F. Wilson Tells Of A
Tour With Lt. Col. Hal Reese



When the 36th Infantry Division landed on the shores of Salerno Bay at Paestum, Italy, early on the morning of September 9, 1943 the Division's first C.P. was located in a large tobacco shed. (Not to be confused with the tobacco factory.)

General Fred L. Walker, who commanded the 36th Division along with various attached units, had his C.P. there, along with the General Staff Section's, the special staff and all their sections. The vicinity of General Walker's area was a bee hive of activity all the first day and all that night with a steady stream of people coming and going.

The G-3 was constantly at the situation map with the G-2. The G-1 was present and the G-4 was in constant anxiety over the supplies and lack of them.

All of the members of the special staff mostly just kept out of the way, as we had no office equipment or records to function with at this time.

Lt. Col. Hal Reese was the Division Inspector General and I was the Asst I.G. with Mr. (CWO) Flowe as the I.G. section administration officer. We set up a section location. Consisting of some old tobacco tables and benches within sight of the Commanding General's base of activity stayed there, holding ourselves ready for anything the General wished us to do.

PHOTO above: On cover of the Vol. 1 No. 3 Fall 1981 issue of the Quarterly about the "TRUCE" at Mt. Castellone, Italy February 1944. . . Lt. Col. Hal Reese with three Germans and Capt. Joseph T. Middleton, Exec. Officer, 1st Bn., 142nd Infantry.

As I Recollect — Lt. Col. Reese

Col. Reese stayed pretty much with General Walker as they were very good personal friends with an association going back to World War I when General Walker commanded an infantry battalion and Col. Reese was his battalion adjutant.

It was during this time that Col. Reese was awarded the Silver Star and Distinguished Service Cross, and also a Purple Heart or two. When General Walker's battalion came under artillery fire from their own batteries and the phone lines were all knocked out, messengers were unable to get through so that he couldn't call off the fire missions. Col. Reese went to the rear "through shot and shell" as saying goes and succeeded in getting artillery fire lifted.

Col. Reese remained in the Army of Occupation in Germany after World War I and between wars maintained a close friendship with General Walker.

Col. Reese was a real old war horse, and the hanging around the tobacco shed with no real duties to perform was about to run him nuts. (in his words)

About the fourth or fifth day after we landed and the Division C.P. was still in the tobacco shed, Col. Reese came over to our section area and said, "Capt. Wilson, lets go up and see whats going on at the 143rd Infantry Reg. Hqs.' I guess I looked at him like he was crazy or something, and he said we might be able to assist them in some way or bring a message to General Walker.

I knew we didn't have any business going to the 143rd C.P., wherever it was and told Col. Reese so, but he was my boss, he had the rank and was a good friend of General Walker, so with as much enthusiasm as I could muster I ordered us a vehicle from the motor pool. What we received was one of those old "Command Cars," large with a high silhouette.

I don't recall that we took any equipment with us or not, nor can I remember the driver and I suppose we had a map on board with us although I can't remember that either (forty three years is a long time for details). This was shortly afternoon that we mounted up and rode out to Highway #1 and turned right. This road was full of all types of vehicles and military equipment moving back and forth as we rode merrily along.

After some distance we saw men of the 36th Signal Co. laying wire so we stopped and asked directions to the 143rd C.P. The signal company men didn't really know, but said to go down about a mile

Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

and turn to the right and we would probably begin to see some signs or trucks with 143rd markings on the bumpers, so this we did.

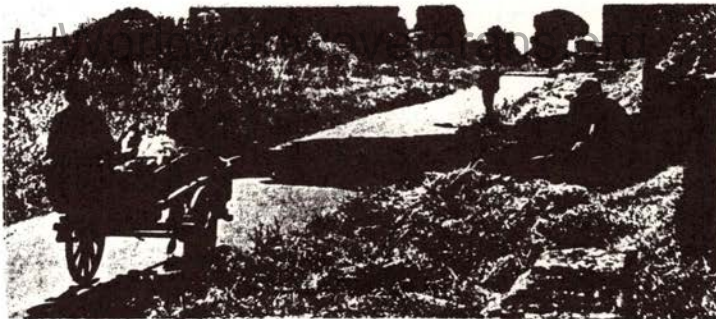
In a short while we were crossing an old bridge which crossed over an ancient Roman road which over centuries had worn down through the soft limestone rock underlying almost all of Southern Italy and from which most of the buildings here were constructed.

This old Roman road, much like a gully, was about ten feet deep at this point, and down in the bottom was General Wilbur with an informal command post set up; he had an A-frame with situation map, his aide, a sergeant, and a radio operator. His vehicles were around the corner in the old Roman road.

General Wilbur showed us the situation map he was keeping, and where the 143rd C.P. would be. He seemed very glad to see us and it was obvious that he was having the time of his life and very excited about the divisions operation. After spending a few minutes more in visiting with General Wilbur we resumed our search for the 143rd following General Wilbur's instructions and went flying down a dirt road raising a cloud of dust behind our vehicle.

After a mile or two we began to see shell bursts on a low line of hills to our right and it soon became clear that we were drawing fire. About this time a sergeant began waving us off the road, shouting "get that thing off the road and under cover." We did without further urging.

In answer to our question as to the whereabouts of the 143rd C.P. he just pointed across the road where a group of officers were clustered. Col. Reese and I ambled over to them and there was no formal C.P. set up here, just the regimental C.O., Col. William H. Martin, and his staff, radio operators, and a few essential personnel.



OLD APPIAN WAY. The "Queen of Roads" is peaceful now, lined with catacombs and ruins. Caesar's legions once marched here when they struck south from Rome.

As I Recollect — Lt. Col. Reese

Col. Martin was squatting down looking at the map with Col. Martin. Captain Wiley Stem was standing there along with the S-2 and S-3.

As we walked up Col. Martin looked up over his right shoulder and saw us, with a look of something akin to shock, surprise, bewilderment and annoyance at seeing two Division Staff Officers at this time and place, but being the gentleman that he always was he simply said "I'll be with you in a minute, gentlemen."

The 143rd staff stood there eyeing us while Col. Martin continued to study his map. Shortly, Col. Reese and Col. Martin visited and I stood aside and exchanged a few words with Wiley Stem. Col. Reese inquired about supplies of ammo and food and offered to take back to Division Headquarters any messages, information, or requests to General Walker.

About this time, my old friend and college class mate, Carlisle M. Stakes came walking out of the woods, where he had been checking the positions of the cannon company guns. When Carlisle saw me standing there he showed real surprise and said "Bennie Wilson, what in the hell are you doing here?" I replied, "Carlisle, that's a damn good question." We had a fine visit though, as we had not seen each other in a long while.

By this time it was around 4:00 p.m. and I asked Carlisle to help me get Col. Reese started back, so we walked over to where Col. Reese and Col. Martin were visiting and we advised them that it would soon be getting dark and we really should be starting back. The visit was concluded and we were able to make our way back to Division Headquarters without any difficulties.

Upon arriving back at the Division C.P. we released our driver and checked by the C.P. which was still in the tobacco shed and Col. Reese reported in to General Walker, who was upset when he found that we had been to the 143rd C.P.

General Walker took Col. Reese aside and informed him (in no uncertain terms) that even though he wanted to be close to the actual combat operations, his position was at Division Headquarters where he would be available for any assignment the general might designate for him, and was not to go to the forward areas unless instructed to do so. Fortunately, I was not held responsible for the trip and was not included in the conversation.

Col. Reese really wanted to be involved in some sort of combat situation and accompanied General Walker about the division when he could.

Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

On a number of occasions Col. Reese told me "that he lived through World War I and he didn't expect to make it through World War II." He seemed to be tempting fate.

Col. Reese was killed during the attack on Velletri, walking beside a tank, carrying a tommy gun and was hit by a shell fragment from a close by shell burst. He should not have been there, but that's where he wanted to be.

(Note: This story was written from memory,
as I could recall the events after forty three years.)

Worldwartwoveterans.org

Ben F. Wilson, Jr.

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Extracts from General Walker's
book, FROM TEXAS TO ROME,
A General's Diary, Pages 377-378
June 1, 1944

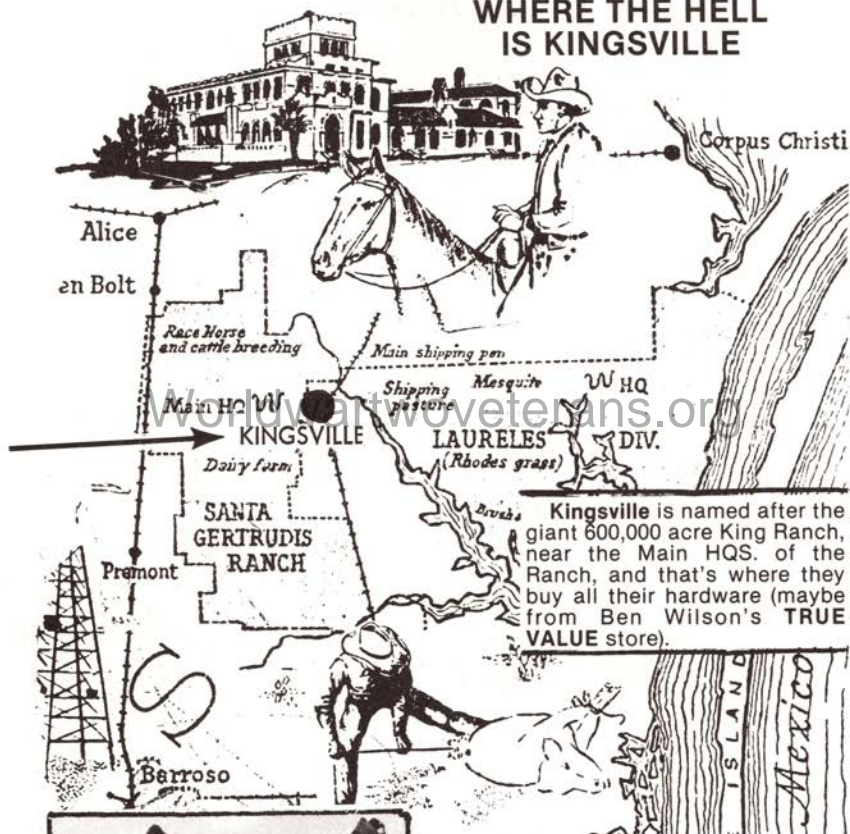
"I was with the 1st Battalion, 141st Infantry, all afternoon. It was on the Division left flank, advancing on Velletri. When there was a pause in the German fire, Hal Reese and I walked along the road behind the self-propelled cannon company vehicles of the regiment while the foot troops moved ahead through the cane and vinyards on both sides. As we approached the town of Velletri, the cannon company vehicles stopped at a bend in the road, Hal walked out beyond the bend, in front of the leading vehicle.

In a few minutes, Chaplain MacCombie came to me and told me Hal was dead. A German antitank shell and a mortar shell had simultaneously struck near the vehicle and tore away Hal's left side. He died instantly.

MacCombie said the men had carried Hal's body to the courtyard of a small house off the side of the road, but I did not want to see it. There was nothing I could do to help, so after I had overcome my grief, we moved on into Velletri.

I have written the circumstances of Hal's death to Julia, and asked her to go to Philadelphia immediately to tell Sue. Julia can get there before the official "Regret" telegram arrives. I am very, very sorry. I warned him twice not to get in front of the tanks. He was a grand person. I shall miss him."

WHERE THE HELL IS KINGSVILLE



Kingsville is named after the giant 600,000 acre King Ranch, near the Main HQS. of the Ranch, and that's where they buy all their hardware (maybe from Ben Wilson's TRUE VALUE store).



WAR'S END, here's a relaxed Maj. Ben F. Wilson hill-top high at Kaufbeuren, Austria with some of his fellow officers of Division Headquarters. Former Artilleryman, Wilson was Special Services Officer, 36th Division from spring 1944 to end of war.



COMING UP...Next — A follow-up on other Rest Camps... (Bains les Mains appeared in an earlier issue) during our tour of Italy, France and Germany — by Ben F. Wilson during 1987 Vol. VII editions.



We Conduct An Autopsy Of...

FASCISM

A Brand NEW Name For TERROR — Disguised
To Sway The Italians... Fascism Means —
8 Million Bayonets And "Mare Nostrum"
From The Warped Mind Of Benito...

MUSSOLINI



*The rise of dictators—in eight European nations in the past fifteen years!
—means that the people are shifting their burdens onto the backs of
“supermen” they hope will solve the overwhelming problems of the day.
Will these so-called strong men be able to turn the trick?*

The above — “The rise of dictators” was featured in a 1938 popular American Magazine, with a message... “will these so-called strong men be able to turn the trick.”

Of course, the peace-loving Americans were not quite tuned-in to this new movement.

BENITO MUSSOLINI was a bit ahead of the other guy (Adolph), cause he started his rabble rousing in 1919, only 5 months after the 11-11-18 Armistice.

We ran across an item, written by the late Sydney Harris, in his column — “Things I Learned Enroute To Looking Up Other Things.”

THAT fascism as a political term



An Autopsy Of FASCISM

was adopted by MUSSOLINI from one of Aesop's fables — showing that while sticks could be easily broken one by one, they were IRREFRANGIBLE if tied together in a bundle. (The Latin word for a bundle of sticks was 'fasces,' which were brandished by the victors of Ancient Rome as a symbol of AUTHORITY.)

MUSSOLINI asked his illustrators to ADD an axe blade inserted into the bundle of sticks. That was a subtle way of letting the dissenters know that the AXE BLADE would be used to cut off a few necks for all who may oppose this new form of AUTHORITY.

BIG MOUTH BENITO . . .

Speak in a loud voice, arouse the misfits that made up his original force. Most were street people, and some rejects from WWI, who wanted a loud mouth to lead these bully boys in their opposition to the Royal Family of the House of Savoy.

Benito's benevolence for his countrymen — he shouted loud and clear, "I'll make the trains run on-time, and see that Vesuvius and Mt. Etna pipe-down."

He saved the dirty work for later.



1929 — this little tidbit was printed in a humor magazine called LIFE — shows the kind of reception Mussolini was getting in the days prior to Hitler — who would surface in 1933.



Mussolini Won't Permit Competition from the Other Italian Volcanoes

Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

Look At LOOK Magazine — March 1, 1938 —
Benito Bilks Italians With Phony Propaganda



Ethiopians Greet Their Conqueror with the Fascist salute. This picture was posed to show that the Ethiopians were happy to be conquered. The Italian propaganda bureau released scores of pictures of violated corpses (too horrible for publication) purporting to show Ethiopian barbarism. The propaganda apparently was effective in Italy. Abroad it failed to convince many people.

Page 51—LOOK—March 1, 1938



Associated Press

1937—THE STRENUOUS LIFE



Associated Press

Mussolini: blight on a century Italy bore his fascist terror

By GWYNNE DYER

"I can tell you everything will be over by September, and that I only need a few thousand dead so that I can sit at the peace conference." So wrote Benito Mussolini to his army chief of staff in 1940, taking the decision to bring Italy into World War II at Germany's side.

Just under five years later Italy lay in ruins, and Mussolini was riddled with bullets and strung up by the heels, having been caught by Italian partisans as he tried to sneak out of Italy disguised as a retreating German soldier. On this 100th anniversary of his birth, Mussolini is universally seen as a bombastic and pathetic failure.

Yet he practically invented fascism single-handed, and for the first 20 years of his rule he was probably the most popular leader Italy ever had. He based his power on ringing appeals to his fellow countrymen's pride in being Italian, but he was privately contemptuous of their ability to cooperate in great projects. He once remarked, "It is not so much impossible to govern Italy, as pointless."



BENITO MUSSOLINI ... believed
myth of his own glory

"Il Duce" was probably the most complete egotist to gain control of a major country between Napoleon and the present: even Hitler and Stalin had some commitment to an ideology, however deformed, that extended beyond their mere personal vanity. But Mussolini's whole political technique consisted of cynically telling the Italian people the same flattering lies about their heroism, their special worthiness and their high destiny, that he actually believed when applied to himself.

Like many people who became fascists, Mussolini began as a socialist — indeed, he was named after the Mexican revolutionary Benito Juarez. He was born into a poor family in the village of Predappio in central Italy on July 29, 1883, the first child of the local blacksmith, who was also a part-time socialist journalist.

Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

Benito Mussolini was a violent youth, twice being expelled from school for attacking classmates with knives, and upon graduation he threw himself into revolutionary agitation on behalf of the coming Socialist Millennium. During the next decade he was in and out of jail five times, and at the outbreak of World War I he was editor of the official socialist newspaper *Avanti*.

But the war changed everything. Believing Marx's dictum that social revolution usually follows war, he founded his own paper to agitate for Italy's entry into the struggle. "From today onwards we are all Italians and nothing but Italians," he wrote. "Now that steel has met steel, one single cry comes from our hearts — Viva l'Italia."

And pretty soon he was believing his own propaganda. Italy duly entered the war in 1915, and Mussolini, having been expelled from the Socialist Party for his support of the war, went off to fight in it.

He was wounded but survived, and by the end of the war Italy was indeed ripe for social revolution: it had lost almost a million dead, and its gains were scarcely worth talking about. But the revolution that Mussolini now began to organize was no longer socialist. It was pure ultra-nationalism, decked out with some spurious chatter about the corporate state and a very explicit commitment to the principle of an all-wise, all powerful leader and given the name of fascism.

In 1922 his bully-boy Blackshirts marched on Rome, and the constitutional government caved in without a fight. Mussolini held power for the next two decades. But for all his rhetoric about Italy's "eight million bayonets" and his talk of the entire Mediterranean as "Mare Nostrum" (Latin for "our sea"), he actually concentrated mainly on the Italian economy for over 12 years: in the famous phrase, "He made the trains run on time."

Even his early imperial adventures were cautious attacks against almost helpless targets: the invasion of Ethiopia in 1935, the conquest of Albania in 1939. His decision to join Hitler's war in 1940 sealed his fate, however: the most noteworthy military accomplishment of his troops proved to be the art of mass surrender, and when the Allies invaded Sicily in 1943 he was removed from power by his own colleagues, who sought a separate peace.

Mussolini was rescued from his mountain-top prison by German commandos in a daring glider-borne operation, and spent the last year of his life leading a puppet government in German-occupied northern Italy. There is a certain horrible grandeur about the end of the Nazi regime beneath the ruins of Berlin in 1945 — even evil men can be strong in their convictions — but Mussolini had no convictions, and his end was mere squalor and ignominy.

The fascist regime in Italy was based on force and the glorification of power, and it did kill people who opposed it openly. Nevertheless, by comparison with at least a dozen quite unremarkable right-wing dictatorships in the world today — not to mention an equal number of left-wing regimes — it was not even particularly ruthless towards its own citizens.

It was hardly any danger at all to the rest of the world. Italian soldiers can fight as well as anyone else, but they were not willing to die for Mussolini's preposterous dreams of glory. He spent his last days "thinking only of history and how he would appear in it," according to one of his ministers, but his place in history is secure. He was the greatest fraud of the 20th century.

Gwynne Dyer is a free-lance writer living in London, England.

An Autopsy Of FASCISM

Time Magazine — August 2, 1943 Presents
A Few Highlights Of Benito The Bizarre



Pictures Inc.
1922—CASTOR OIL DAYS



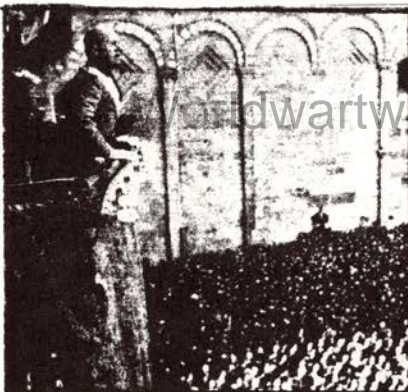
Pictures Inc.
1938—THE BIG SHOTS



International
1936—AFTER ETHIOPIA



International
1941—THE RUSSIAN FRONT



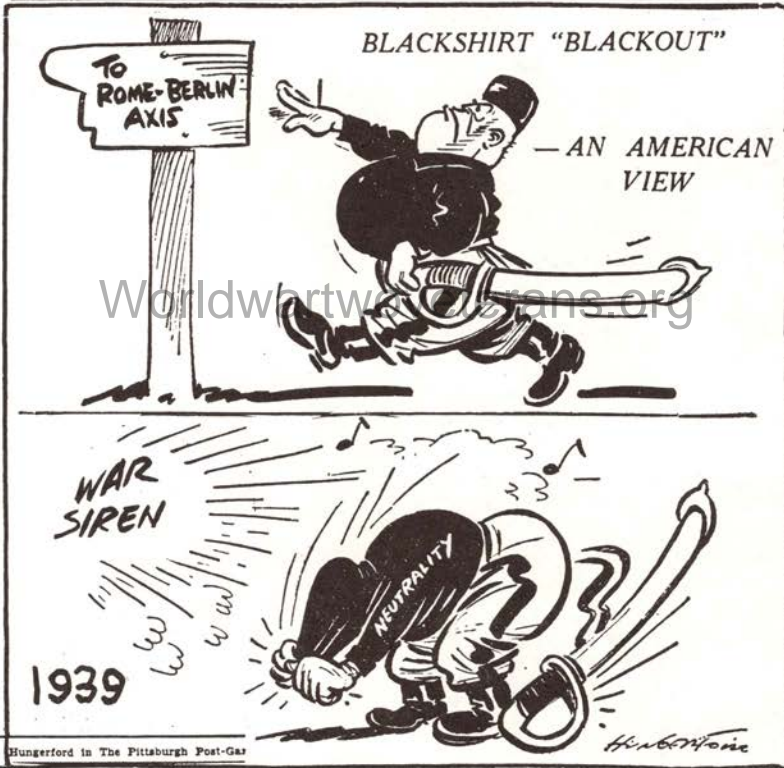
Acme
THE PEOPLE'S MAN



Associated Press
THE KING'S MAN
TIME, August 2, 1943

Cartoonist Have A Field Day . . .

THE NEW YORK TIMES, SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 1939.



So! Pulling a Knife on Me, Huh?



—From The Rochester Democrat and Chronicle.

An Autopsy Of FASCISM

A Suction Pump For The Commode — Clearly Depicts The Mixed-Up Mind Of Mussolini

44—Look—May 10, 1938



His Excellency Benito Mussolini consists of a wooden bowl, a bathroom suction pump and a pair of old shoes. His features are a hard-boiled egg, two prunes and a pickle. In his caricatures, Hirshman tries to use objects which not only look like the subject, but which also describe the subject's personality. Has he succeeded in his caricature of Mussolini?



LOOK Magazine, May 1938 used 8 pages to depict the news makers of that year, chose Benito for this classic example of how the media felt about this big-mouthed Despot . . . and yes, the creator did indeed capture his charming personality.



HEADLINER PORTRAIT: Lawyer-Soldier Wants to

DALLAS MORNING NEWS

AUGUST 27,

1950

By **REN BRADFORD**

At forty-five, soft-spoken Carl Lawrence Phinney of Dallas leads a double life.

As a civilian he is one of the Southwest's leading transportation lawyers.

As a military man he is a brigadier general and deputy commander of the National Guard's famed 36th Division.

By nature Phinney is a quiet, peaceful man. He loves his home and family. He believes in God and going to church, and in man's right to be free.

He believes in these things so strongly that he'll fight at the drop of a hat to protect them.

During World War II Phinney and danger became old acquaintances.

From the early September morning in 1943 that he waded ashore in Salerno's bloody waters until he caught stateside duty nearly a year later, Phinney held hands with death.

Yet today he is ready to return to the same hardships and dangers that tied his stomach in cold knots when the 36th marched in Italy.

And if he were in the driver's seat, he would insist upon it.

"There's just one way to defeat Communism and that's through force," Phinney told a friend recently. He finished signing a letter on the desk in front of him and added: "Once we are ready, I think we should get at it. The sooner we start, the sooner we can stop."

Phinney's lucrative law practice has its roots in the National Guard.

Back in 1925 young Phinney, then a sandy-haired lad of twenty-one, was doing his best, to work his way through the University of Texas law school. There were times it seemed his best was none too good.

A friend, Adj. Gen. Mark McGee of the Texas National Guard, offered a partial solution.



CARL LAWRENCE PHINNEY

McGee told Phinney that if he would enlist in the National Guard, he would give him part-time work in the adjutant general's office.

Phinney did and McGee did. So the young student managed to stay in law school until he completed the necessary courses for the bar examination. That was in 1927.

But Phinney didn't get around to taking the bar tests until 1931, two years after he came to Dallas as an insurance salesman.

One of the things that sidetracked him was his marriage in 1928 to pretty, brown-haired Louise Snow.

To support a new wife a young man needed more money than a rookie lawyer could make.

After passing the bar—he did it at one sitting—Phinney settled down to practice law in Dallas. Meanwhile, he kept his hand in on the National Guard.

Defeat Communism

When the 36th Division came into the Army in 1940 he was a major. He made lieutenant colonel in February of 1941, colonel in December of 1945. In 1948, after the 36th was detached from federal service, he was promoted to brigadier general.

Phinney was under fire almost daily when he was with the 36th Division in Europe. Yet he never got to shoot back.

As a member of Maj. Gen. Fred Walker's staff he was much too busy to do any shooting.

Like the day he hit the Salerno Beach. That morning he went ashore with Walker in the fifth wave. They pushed into the village of Paestum and set up headquarters in a tobacco warehouse.

Walker sent Phinney back to the beach for a radio-equipped truck so headquarters could establish communications.

While Phinney was gone German tanks attacked the warehouse in force. On his return Phinney and his driver had to run a gauntlet of fire from four tanks to get the truck to the warehouse.

The tanks were only 200 yards away and their gunners almost shot the truck from under Phinney and his young driver. The pair later won Silver Stars for gallantry under fire.

In Phinney's citation Walker wrote that the Salerno operation might have failed had Phinney and his driver not dared the German tank fire.

Phinney and the rest of Walker's staff were continually under fire because the general liked to be in the thick of things.

"The old man liked to be close enough to lean out the window, cup his hands and tell the men on the line what the heck to do," says Phinney.

Many things cut deeply into Phinney's soul during the Italian campaign. But the bloody and unsuccessful attempt by three 36th Division regiments to cross the Rapido River in January of 1944 left the deepest wound. Bitterness against Gen. Mark Clark for ordering the attack ran high.

The Germans inflicted 2,900 casualties on the 9,000 men who tried to breach their line. It was not until June that the Americans crossed the Rapido. Then it took elements of six divisions to do it.

Phinney has always been deeply religious. Every Sunday that he is in town, he and his wife and two children—Louise Snow Phinney II, and Carl Jr. attend Highland Park Methodist Church. He is a steward there.

"A soldier needs religion. God is a mighty big help to a fighting man. He can bring peace to a man's mind when the world is blowing up in his face," says the soldier-lawyer.

To the people in Phinney's Dallas law office he is an easy-going guy who has never lost his temper.

Leroy Hallman went to work for Phinney in 1939, later became a partner in the firm.

"We've been together eleven years and he hasn't chewed me yet," he said. "And what a lawyer. There isn't a man in the Southwest that can touch him on transportation matters."

Mrs. Phinney is also fond of the general.

"Carl's not perfect. But he comes pretty close. He's a courageous, honorable man, a wonderful husband, a fine father—and I'm still crazy about him after all these years."



CARL PHINNEY not only was a great leader in the military — but he was equally as outstanding in the corporate world. His specialty was being 'nice' to just about everybody. Your editor had admired this man for many years, that's why we chose this 1950 news story published in Dallas Morning News.

Photo at left; Audie Murphy and General Phinney at a dedication 1955, Camp Hood Texas.

Ex-National Guard leader to be buried Wednesday

Graveside services for Lt. Gen. Carl L. Phinney, 82, chief clerk of the state House of Representatives in the 1920s and longtime commanding general of the Texas National Guard, will be Wednesday in Austin.

Phinney, who rose through the National Guard ranks beginning with his enlistment as a private in 1925 to a three-star lieutenant general in 1961, died this weekend in Dallas after a lengthy illness.

Born in Marble Falls, Phinney attended school in Brownwood before entering the University of Texas law school in 1921 and graduating in 1927.



Lt. Gen. Carl L. Phinney managed the Lyndon B. Johnson Senate campaign in 1948.

While attending law school, Phinney served as chief clerk of the House and secretary to Gov. Dan Moody in 1927. In 1928, he married Louise Snow, who succeeded him as the House chief clerk.

During World War II, Phinney served with the 36th Infantry Division's quartermaster corps in North Africa and Italy. After the war he remained in the 36th Division as chief of staff and later as commanding general.

Dallas Times Herald Tuesday, January 13, 1987

Carl L. Phinney — Texas hero

Maj. Gen. Carl L. Phinney was not only a hero of World War II, he made quiet political history in Dallas. In the '50s and early '60s, when Democrats were considered the next thing to Communists in this city, Gen. Phinney went right on supporting Lyndon Johnson while conducting a downtown law practice and living in Highland Park, a neighborhood hardly hospitable to his brand of politics. When Lyndon and Lady Bird Johnson were roughed up by a mob of North Dallas matrons in front of the Adolphus Hotel in 1960 during the presidential campaign, it was Gen. Phinney and his wife, Louise, who drove them to the airport afterward.

In the days of citizen soldiers, Gen. Phinney was a leader of the Texas National Guard. He served with the 36th Infantry in North Africa and Italy during World War II and was awarded the Silver Star for successfully steering a jeep filled with radio supplies through enemy fire from five tanks.

Gen. Phinney was a patriot and an earthy man of politics. Frequent visits to Lyndon Johnson's White House changed him not one whit. To him, power was something to be used to get the right things done, not anything else. The Democratic Party could use several more Carl Phinneys at the moment. So could the country.

Brownwood TNG Armory Re-named To Honor Gen. Phinney



Dedication ceremony on Aug. 12, 1980, Carl and Louise Phinney accept a huge cake from SFC Frank Padron, Dining Facility Manager, 3/112 Armored Btn.

A proud moment for Lt. Gen. Carl Phinney and wife Louise.

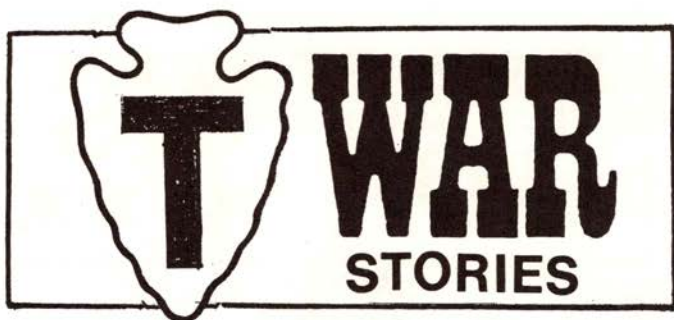
Photos from Lash Lashbrood, Brownwood Bulletin, and he has our thanks.

THE PHINNEY BROTHERS, THREE



The T-Patcher
JULY 1976
Page 27

CAMP MABRY, Austin, Texas, fall 1940, just prior to entering Federal Service Nov. 25, From left—Maj. Carl Phinney of Dallas; Capt. Robert Phinney of Austin and Capt. Temple Phinney of Dallas .



THE FIGHTING 36th HISTORICAL QUARTERLY

Worldwartwoveterans.org

This issue of the Quarterly is the 24th edition of our **SIX YEARS** of publication. That's 80 pages per issue, times four — 320 page — times six... that equals a total of 1,920 pages — **ALL HISTORY** — written by men who went through hell and half-of-Georgia to put the evil men of Terror and Devastation to an end.

The Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly has only one mission — to gather, compile, edit and publish stories written **BY** the men — who were there — in their own words. Plus, we have more and more from other T-Patchers who find news clips, and or write 'about' a buddy they liked and sent in their report.

“We Have Not Yet Begun To WRITE”

ALSO, of late we are getting many from — the **WIVES**, the **SONS** and the **DAUGHTERS**, and even a few **GRAND CHILDREN**, who took it upon themselves to “tell” the story for the T-Patchers, whom may have been reluctant (or shy) to tell about his exploits in Italy, France or Germany.

MAKES NO DIFFERENCE... the objective **IS TO GET THE STORY NOW**, from or about this man. **IF** you put it off... it just may be too late. (The sands of time are now running out), but you know that.

WE BEG of all men of the 36th — who wish to tell a particular time and incident that stands out in his memory... tragic, funny or what ever... it needs to be recorded and captured now — for the history books — and historians who will continue to write about WWII for the next 100 years.

THINK ABOUT IT.

RENEW

1987

Vol. VII

The Fighting 36th

HISTORICAL



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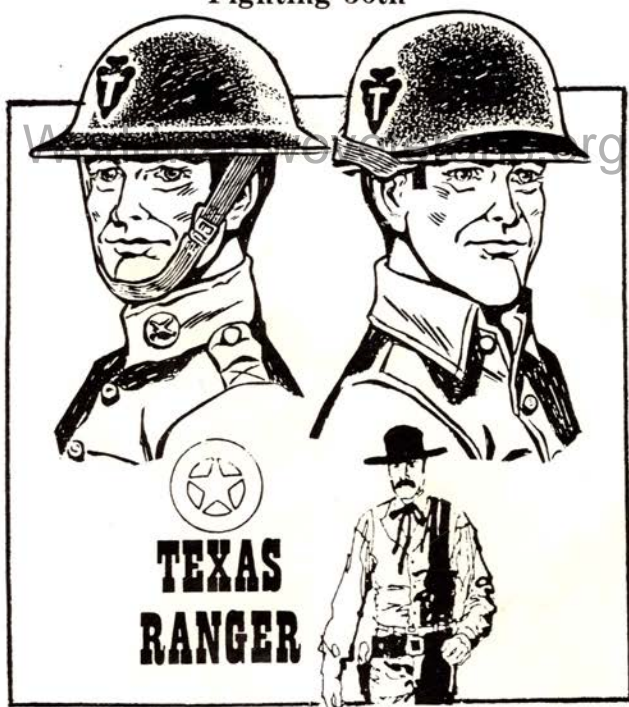
TEXANS ARRIVE ON TRANSPORT—Members of the 36th Texas Division, many of whom trained at Camp Edwards, arrived here from Europe today aboard the transport Brandon Victory. They boasted a flag (background) of the State of Texas, made by German war prisoners.



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Tradition Of The
TEXAS RANGERS
Carried On By The
Fighting 36th



The famous Texas Rangers have an old motto — coined 100 years ago: "ONE RIOT, ONE RANGER."

So as all red-blooded T-Patchers might add to this —

TWO WARS, "TWO MEN, the battered old "Fighting 36th" . . . got their share of Krauts of the Kaiser and Madman Hitler.