

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



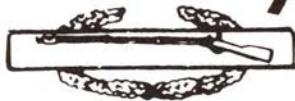
General Walker's Classic Stratagem  
- Plan For Velletri Opened gate to Rome

Vol. VIII, No. 2,  
Summer 1988

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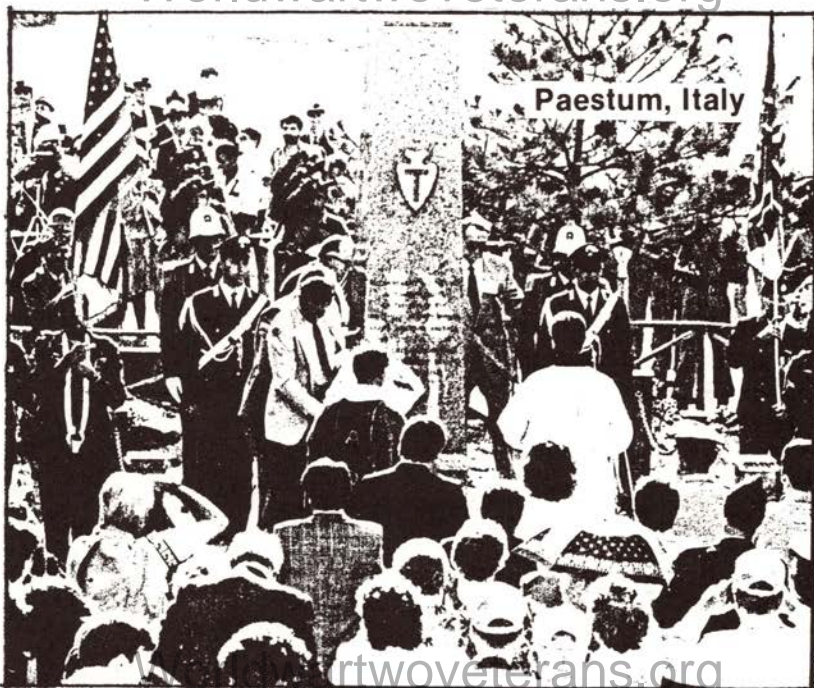
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# The Fighting 36<sup>th</sup>



HISTORICAL

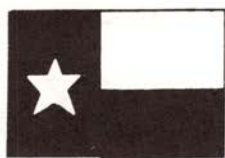
QUARTERLY



A Monumental MEMORIAL  
45th ANNIVERSARY OF THE INVASION  
DEDICATED SEPTEMBER 9, 1988

Vol. VIII, No. 2,  
Summer 1988

**36<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division Association**



**“Grizzled gladiators”  
of 36th Division  
in World War II**

Worldwar.twoveterans.org  
**Tragedy, intrigue, heroism**

**Service Record  
of the**

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

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

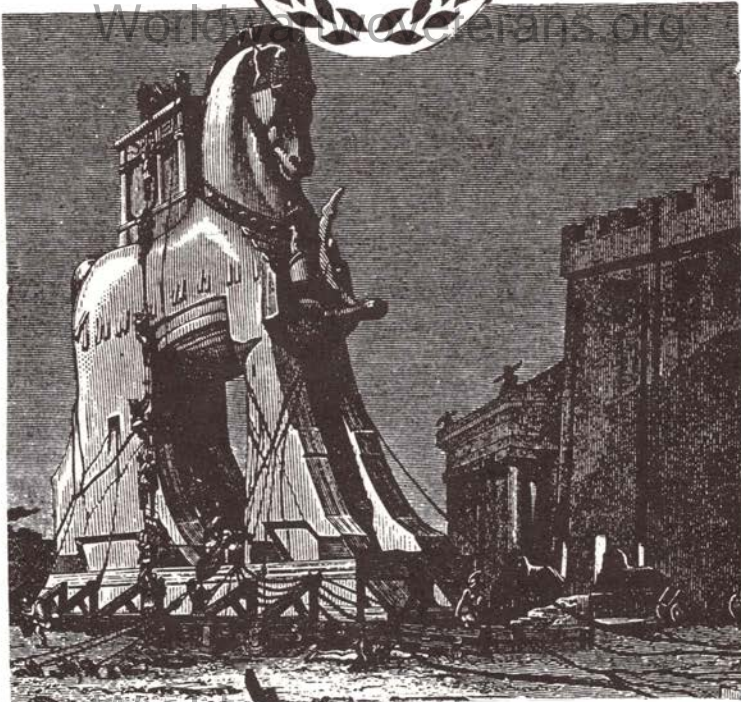
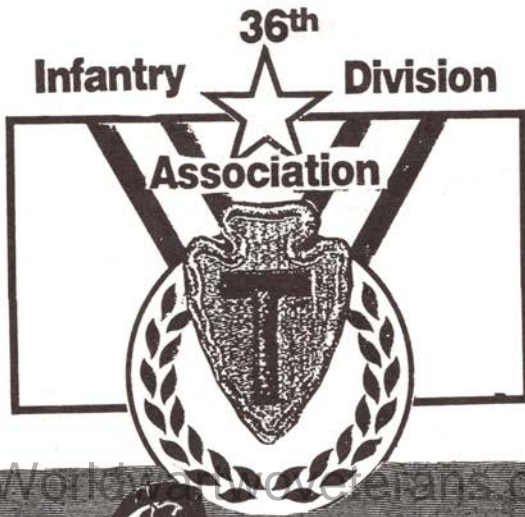
The famed 36th (T-Patch) Division was mobilized into active federal service on Nov. 25, 1940. The division trained at Camp Bowie, (Brownwood) as a square division up until Pearl Harbor Day (Dec. 7, 1941.) Two units, the 144th Infantry and 2nd Battalion, 131st Field Artillery were quickly dispatched to defend the West Coast area in event of an invasion. The 2nd Battalion, 131st Field Artillery was sent on to the South Pacific and were later captured in Java. The men who survived spent over two years as POWs in Burma and Japan.

The remainder of the 36th Division departed for overseas in early 1943 landing in North Africa. The division was the first American unit to invade Hitler's European Fortress, by landing at Salerno, Italy

on Sept. 9, 1943. The division later captured Rome, Italy on June 5, 1944 and made the Southern France invasion on Aug. 15, 1944, and fought through France and Germany until the war's end on May 5, 1945.

The 36th Division suffered over 27,000 casualties, the third highest of any World War II division. The men earned 15 Congressional Medal of Honor, 80 D.S.C.'s, 2,354 Silver Stars, 5,407 Bronze Star Medals for Valor and 12 Presidential Unit Citations.

It is the only military unit known to have had fighting men in the Pacific and Europe at the same time during WW II, as military records were never changed to relieve the 2nd Bn, 131 F.A. from the rolls of the 36th Division.



The Trojan Horse, used by the Homeric Greeks in the Siege of Troy, beginning of 12th Century, B.C.

**Vol. VIII, No. 2,**  
**Summer 1988**



A Monumental MEMORIAL DEDICATED SEPT. 9, 1988  
45th ANNIVERSARY OF THE INVASION

*The Dallas Morning News*

Thursday, September 8, 1988

## 'Texas' Division WWII vets to reunite in Italy

*Associated Press*

AUSTIN — World War II veterans of the 36th Infantry "Texas" Division — the first U.S. Army division to invade Nazi-held Europe — will return to the beach in Italy where they landed in 1943 to dedicate a memorial to their fallen comrades.

On Friday, more than 200 members of the 36th Division Association will commemorate the 45th anniversary of the amphibious assault at Paestum, south of Salerno. The ceremonies will include American and Italian officials.

Ceremonies also are scheduled Saturday at San Angelo, where the 36th Division struggled to cross the Rapido River; Sunday at the American cemetery at Nettuno; and Wednesday at the tomb of the Italian unknown soldier in Rome.

Originally composed of Texas National Guardsmen, the 36th Division was mobilized into the U.S. Army on Nov. 25, 1940, at Camp Bowie, Texas.

In 19 months during World War II, the division fought in five major campaigns, captured 175,806 prisoners, and was awarded 10 Presidential Unit Citations and 15 Congressional Medals of Honor.

The 36th's casualty list — the third-highest of any American division — included 3,974 killed, 19,052 wounded and 4,317 missing in action, according to the Texas Army National Guard.

HISTORICAL  QUARTERLY

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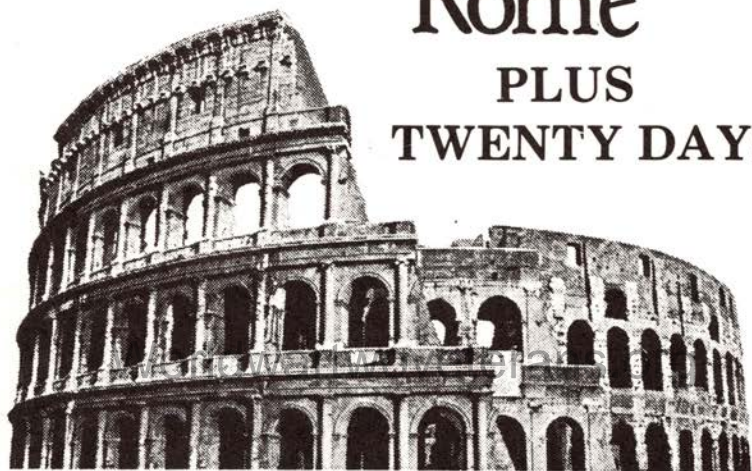
# Cover Story

General Walker's  
Plan for Velletri  
was the classic  
stratagem that opened  
the gates to ROME

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# Rome

## PLUS TWENTY DAYS

by Julian 'Duney' Philips



On 3 June 1944, Major General Fred L. Walker, the Commanding General of the 36th Division, looked back on the past few days with great pride in his division.

General Walker had assumed command of this National Guard Division during Louisiana Maneuvers of 1941. He trained, worked, practiced and tested these Texans month after month. He also checked this division as they maneuvered against other divisions in the swamps of Louisiana in the summer of 1941 and the sand hills of North Carolina in 1942. Always with the knowledge that someday they would have to go to war against the Germans or the Japanese.

General Walker sailed with his men to North Africa in April 1943, where he continued to supervise their training. This Texas Division was tested time and again to make sure they were ready to face the Germans who had been at war since 1939.

When the division received their orders in North Africa, from VI Corps and 5th Army Headquarters, General Walker realized there would be no Air Force or Navy bombardment on the beaches of Paestum, Italy, to support his division. The General questioned the orders, Ref.: "No Beach Bombardment,". But was told the landing of the 36th Division would surprise the Germans and the men could be put ashore by the Navy unnoticed.

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General Walker was proud to wade ashore on the beaches of Paestum, Italy on 9 September 1943 as the Commanding General of this Texas Division. There would be no shelling of the beaches even though the British, landing to the North at Salerno, asked for and received it.

He wasn't happy when 5th Army took the 2nd Battalion, 143rd Infantry and placed them under the command of VI Corps on 12 September 1943.

Lt. Col. Hal Jones, moved his Battalion into the Sele-Calore area where the 179th — Infantry Regiment of the 45th Division had been mauled the day before by the Germans 26th Panzer Division. His Battalion, now Corps Troops, were defending an area where a regiment had been badly beaten just twelve hours before. **There was no support from VI Corps.**

Around noon the German 26th Panzer Division made it's move. There tanks overran the Infantrymen on the outpost, then continued their drive through the battalion, killing or capturing most of the men in this inexperienced unit. **Again, there was no artillery, naval or air support for Col. Jones' Battalion.**

Lt. General Mark Clark placed the blame of this blunder on the shoulders of Major General Ernest J. Dawley, VI Corps Commander. He was relieved of his command and returned to the states as a Col., his regular Army rank.

**The men and officers, who were wounded, captured or killed, had affected General Walker because he considered them family and friends.**

Alert orders arrived at 36th Division headquarters in early November 1943, that stated the Division would move back into the line in mid-November. **The names, Maggiore, Sammucro, Camino, Hill, 1205, Lungo and San Pietro, were burned into the memory of the men of this Texas Division for the next thirty nine days.**

When the 36th Division was pulled off the line in late December 1943, General Walker's heart was heavy. He had obeyed orders and had seen his beloved division cut to pieces again, taking it's objective while they were learning to fight a war against a good German Army.

In early January 1944, the 36th Division received replacements and started training new men in anticipation of going back into the line. They had been off the line less than two weeks when orders came from corps and 5th Army Headquarters that the division

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would prepare for a river crossing. General Walker studied the orders and realized his Texas Division was going to be hit hard again. **The river was the Rapido. It's name will never be forgotten by the men who fought on 19-23 Jan. 1944.** It turned out to be a disaster. The Germans, in their dug in defenses, cut the two Infantry Regiments to pieces. Still Corp Headquarters wanted more blood. Their orders were to attack again the third night and to take their objective, San Angelo.

When the 36th Division was pulled off the line, in the latter part of February, 1944, rifle Companies were like squads and the battalions were down to platoon size in strength.

General Walker had carried out orders from Corps and 5th Army Headquarters on three different occasions since landing at Paestum, Italy on 9 September 1943. **The first time it was September 1943, second, 15 November to 24 December, then on 19 January to 26 February 1944.** Even though mistakes, foul ups and disasters had taken place he shouldered the responsibility as the Division Commander.

Men of this Division had heard rumors and reports that were being published on the Italian peninsula, that the 36th Division was a hard luck division and wasn't ready for combat.

In March 1944, the 36th Division received replacements to help bring the division up to combat readiness. Training was carried out and by the end of April, the division was ready to face the Germans again.

General Walker received alert orders from 5th Army Headquarters in early May 1944, to prepare his division for a move to the Anzio beachhead. When they arrived at the beachhead, **General Walker realized that Corps and 5th Army had no faith in this hard luck division.** The 36th Division was placed in VI Corps reserve, the 3rd would lead and the 36th would follow.

**Fifth Army was made up of a hodge-podge of Nations, as England, New Zealand, Australia, France, Poland, Brazil, Italy and the U.S.A.** Politics played a big part in this Allied Army. It was always a problem just supplying their needs.

Politics of a different nature came to the surface when **Lt. General Sir Harold Alexander (an Englishman) Commanding General of the 15th Army Group,** ordered Lt. General Mark Clark, 5th Army Commander, **to take Cisterna, then continue moving last to capture Volmontone.** This maneuver would cut off the withdrawal of the

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German 10th Army from the Cassio Area in the south. This would give the British 8th Army the honor of capturing Rome.

**General Clark had visualized his 5th Army capturing Rome, which would put him in History Books as the General who took Rome in WWII.**

General Clark studied the possibilities of his orders and as the 3rd Division engaged the Germans in street fighting in Cisternia, he turned the 45th, 34th, 1st armored and the 36th Divisions north to breach the German defenses on the Caesar Line in the Alban hills. He also knew the intended date of the Normandy Invasion (code name, "Overload") which would take place sometime in early June 1944. He targeted the 5th Army to capture Rome before that date. No matter what the cost in men and materials.

**When orders arrived at 36th Division Hqs. it was clear to General Walker that Corps or 5th Army did not believe in this Texas Division.** The orders stated the 36th Division would move into a position behind the 34th Division to wait for another unit to break through the German defenses.

General Walker went over the orders way into the night, knowing this wasn't the job for his division that he was so proud of. His eyes were heavy from lack of sleep when he realized only a flanking maneuver was the logistical solution to this problem. **He decided to submit his plan for the capture of Velletri to Corps Headquarters,** hoping he could save lives of the men in his division, if it was accepted.

Lt. Gen. Clark, had again relieved one of his Corps Commanders for not being aggressive enough. **This time it was Major General John P. Lucas, who was sacked and sent home in shame.** His replacement as Commanding General of VI Corps was Major General Lucas K. Truscott who had commanded 3rd Division through Africa, Sicily and Italy.

When General Walker talked to General Truscott, Ref: his method to capture Velletri, he was put off with, **"Fred, I'll get back with you in about an hour."**

**"Fred, Your Velletri Plan, OK" — Truscott.**

General Truscott called General Walker and said, **"Fred, I've talked to Clark and he has okayed your proposal. You are authorized to cancel the orders to move to your left and to go ahead with your plan, but you had better get through."**

General Walker's plan for taking Velletri from the rear is history. It will be recorded many times in years to come as a brilliant, tac-

## ROME — Plus Twenty Days

tical maneuver, or the best Tactical Maneuver during the Italian Campaign.

Eric Sevareid put it best when he wrote, "Many outfits deserve the credit for the whole operation, but those of us who were present will always remember the men of the 36th Division climbing silently in the night behind the enemy, armed with little but their American Competence and a personal faith in their quiet, retiring General, who never let them down. If Generals Alexander and Clark received the key to the City of Rome, it was General Walker who turned the key and handed it to them."

Worldwartwoveteran



Kesselring was really ticked-off at his commanders when the Tactics at Velletri opened the door to Rome.



Generalfeldmarschall  
Albert Kesselring

Over on the German side, Field Marshall Albert Kesselring, Commander and Chief of the German Armed forces in Italy would release Col. General Gerhart Van Mac Kenser, Commander of the 14th Army for allowing the 36th Division to capture Velletri and break the defenses of the German Caesar Line.

The small town of Velletri, Italy will always be a favorite town for the men who fought with the 36th Division during May & June 1944. It was here in the Alban Hills below Rome that they found themselves.

This Division that had been branded "The Hard Luck Division," came to realize in May and June 1944, that the Germans were not super human and men from the 36th could beat them, as they had done here at Velletri, Italy.

General Walker always carried out orders that he received from higher headquarters to the best of his ability. He wasn't shy, so if something didn't sound right or was tactically wrong, he would always question his superior, plus would offer his suggestions as to how he thought an attack could be carried out.

All Allied  
Commanders Had  
Praise for  
His Clever Plan  
for Velletri!  
"He Did It His Way"

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Major General  
Fred L. Walker.  
*U.S. Army Photograph*



It was at Velletri, that VI Corps and 5th Army commanding Generals listened to this General leading the men of the 36th and gave him permission to use his tactics to capture Velletri. He took Velletri and as he looked back, he could say "I did it my Way."

Prime Minister Winston Churchill, Marshall Joseph Stalin and President Franklin Roosevelt, at one time or another had all considered the capture of Rome as the plum of the Italian Campaign.

#### "Hard-Luck" Division — No More!

It was 3 June 1944 and the 36th Division had just captured Colle Tand, north of Velletri. We were on a roll and would never be referred to as the "hard luck division" again. From there on it was considered one of the best combat divisions in Europe. That day we were caught up in the "Rat Race" for Rome and enjoying every minute of it.

It was 4 June 1944, Co. F., 143rd Infantry was leading this Texas Division on the way to Rome. We had walked every step of the way from Anzio and now we were told to get to Rome.

The sun was out and a very hot day, this wasn't a leisurely march. It was more like a forced march, but no one was complaining. If ever a division was on a roll, the 36th was.

When we left Grottoferrato, an armored Task Force pulled onto the highway. The tanks behind the Infantry that were in columns on each side of the road. It was around noon when the first jeep pulled through the column. We hadn't hit a German rear guard all morning — now jeeps,  $\frac{3}{4}$  and  $2\frac{1}{2}$  ton trucks were pulling around each other, racing for Rome. As they sped past the Infantry, no one in the

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vehicles had a rifle ready in case they hit a German rear guard. This wasn't a Sunday drive, this was war and death was very close. From time to time the large trucks would move too close to our men and they would jump in the ditch to keep from being hit.

Around 1400 hours I looked up and there was Rome in the distance. I couldn't believe the Germans had left without putting up a fight. Each step we took was taking us closer to Rome; but where were the Germans?

The tanks that had been following since they pulled on the road at Grottaferrato, couldn't stand it any longer. They had seen jeeps and trucks running ahead of the Infantry all trying to reach Rome first. When we were just 800 yards from Rome the lead tank pulled past me. I knew he must be thinking "I'm going to be the first American to reach Rome." When the tank pulled ahead of the Infantry he was followed by four more tanks driving toward the building on the outskirts of Rome. We were eating their dust and cussing every tank that ran past the walking Infantry.

Then it happened I was looking at the column of tanks racing for Rome when the metal armor flew into the air from the last tank as the German gunner made a good shot to block the road.

There were wheat fields on both sides of the road, ready for harvest, so I yelled for the platoons to move to the left of the road and dig in as fast as possible. Just then a scout car and two jeeps pulled up to where I was trying to get our men to dig their foxholes so they would be safe. The Captain got out of the lead jeep and walked toward the scout car as I heard the radio in the scout car receiving a message from one of the tanks. It was the tank platoon leader, in town, asking his Captain to get the Infantry to come into Rome and help get the Germans off their backs. The Captain knew I had heard the radio transmission, so he turned to me and asked, "Lt. are you with this Infantry Unit? I answered, I sure am." He answered, "My lead platoon has gotten themselves into a little trouble, how about taking your company and pull my men out?" Just then the second tank went up in fire and smoke. I acted as if I hadn't heard him. He spoke again, "Lt., would you take your company and help



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my platoon?" I answered, "The S.O.B.'s tried to push my men into the ditch when they pulled out to be the first ones in Rome. They wanted to be ahead of the Infantry let that Lt. get his own platoon out."

I turned to some of the men from Co. F who had moved up to hear the conversation and said, "You men get back to your platoon and dig in."

By now the Captain was raising his voice, he said, "Lt. would you get your men and pull my platoon out of Rome?" I answered, "go back down the road and find our Battalion Commander, or Col. Adams our Regimental Commander, I take orders from them. They will be the ones to tell me to pull your men out before I take these men into Rome!"

About that time the third tank exploded. The jeeps and trucks that had moved ahead of our Infantry earlier were now coming down the road like scared rabbits.

The tank Captain jumped into his jeep and drove south. I moved to the left of the road with our company and said to the men, "get under ground fast, those guns could turn on us any minute." We never moved, we spent the night of 4 June 1944 just south of Rome. The Germans had done a good job on a platoon of over anxious tanks.

When it was daylight, the trucks moved up into our area. By now we had received our orders, we were to move by trucks through Rome.

Rome was declared an open city. Hitler had issued orders not to destroy it, though everyone thought he would get pleasure from seeing it turned into a pile of rubble.

The 143rd Infantry reverted to division reserve and as we started through Rome, we relived a history lesson.

### The Eternal City is Free!

It was 5 June 1944, a beautiful bright sunny day. It was unbelievable the way the citizens of Rome came out to welcome conquerors from the south. They placed garlands of flowers around our necks and on the vehicles and passed out bottles of vino and bread to the men of the 5th Army.

During the day, crowds of people would surge into the streets and our drivers would have to slam on their brakes to keep from hitting someone. Thousands of bouquets and bottles of vino were thrust into the arms of these conquerors, as tanks, jeeps and trucks of every description and size loaded with American GIs crept through the streets of Rome.



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The Italian citizens were showing the world they were tired of the Facist and Nazi tyranny and welcomed the conquering American 5th Army.

As we passed the Roman Forum and Coliseum, my mind reverted back to my school days when I had studied Early European History in the 8th grade, as we crept through Rome we passed **Victor Emmanuel's Tomb** of white marble. It was a beautiful monument honoring the Italian unknown soldier. Then there was the **Arch of Constantine**, where all armies of past centuries had marched through on their return to Rome. Before we knew it we were at the Tiber River, all bridges intact. Hitler had told Field Marshall Kesselring not to destroy the beautiful bridges of Rome. Just north of the Tiber we saw the **Dome of St. Peter's Basilica** and the tremendous columns outlining St. Peter's Square. I had seen pictures of these Edifice at least a hundred times and they were as I had pictured them.

Rome had been conquered by armies before and it's own armies had returned from wars in the past centuries, but none could compare to the reception given by the citizens of Rome to the American 5th Army on 5 June 1944.

The column of trucks moved through the streets of Rome and into a bivouac area North of the City for a much deserved rest. We checked our men as to what they needed to replenish equipment and Ammo, so they would be ready to go back into the line when called.

The men pitched their pup-tents. The kitchen trucks pulled into the area while the kitchen tents were being put up. **S/Sgt. Robert Nowell Co. F, 143rd Mess Sgt. supervised as his men unloaded the kitchen stoves to prepare hot meals for these tired men.** In my opinion there was no other division in combat that was fed as the 36th Division was in WWII. Our kitchens had followed companies many times, as they attacked so hot meals would be ready when the objective was taken.

After breakfast, on the 6 June 1944, while the men were cleaning their gear, writing letters home and just taking it easy; I asked three of the men if they wanted to go back into Rome with me. I wanted to see more of this magnificent old city.

Four of us, from Co. F 143rd Infantry were seeing beauty beyond belief. For the last nine months we had seen Italian mud slush, sleet snow and dust as we made our way to Rome. Now we were taken back in time, as we viewed buildings, churches and masterpieces of art and sculpture.

**The Vatican was our first stop.** St. Peter's Basilica with the Sistine Chapel! where the great artist Michelangelo did some of his

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most magnificent works, was unbelievable. The Bronze Statue of St. Peter stands in the Basilica and the left foot is worn smooth from the kisses of the faithful.

Before we left the Vatican we went through a room which housed all the prized possessions of the Past Popes. It was a sight to behold and unbelievable, to know this much wealth and beauty could be displayed in such a small area.

We hesitated on the steps of the St. Peters overlooking the great square, when one of the men turned and said, "**Lt. Philips, my folks would have given their right arm to have seen what we've seen these last few hours.**"

I was not of the Catholic faith, but I had enjoyed every minute inside the Vatican. I came to realize that morning what it meant to a Catholic to see for the first time the beauty of the seat of their belief.

As we started across the square, I spoke to the men. "**Let's go see what the Coliseum looks like up close.**"

We saw everything Rome had to offer and had enjoyed some delicious food. We were not bothered by the rear echelon troops in their clean khakis. They seemed more interested in trying to find a billet than bother with four dirty men in wools from one of the combat units.

### Our Tour of Ancient Rome Ends

We stayed in Rome longer than I intended but we wanted to see as much as we could. As we walked into the mess tent the next morning, Sgt. Bob Nowell was feeding the men. I yelled at him to save me some breakfast while I went over to the C.P. to see what our orders were.

When I walked in, the Captain seemed to breath a sigh of relief and said, "**Duney I didn't think you were going to make it; how was Rome?**" I answered, "**great, but what do our orders read?**" He answered, "**Duney the regiment wants the 2nd Battalion to lead, moving down this road to the north. I picked up the orders and map saying, 'good, I'll read the orders while I'm eating breakfast. Tom have you eaten?'**" The Captain said that he had eaten earlier, but when I started through the mess line, I spoke to T/4 FLA HALL, from Pollacksville, N.C. one of our cooks serving eggs, "**Hall I'll have three eggs overeasy.**" Hall smiled and said, "**Duney, how was Rome?**" He placed three eggs in my mess kit as I answered, "**Great, it was everything I expected it to be.**"

The 143rd Infantry was lucky to have mess Sgts. like Bob Nowell from Co. F. Higgins from Co. G and all the others throughout our regiment.

## ROME — Plus Twenty Days

The 2nd Battalion would lead for the 143rd and we would follow Co. E in a column of companies. It would be companies E, F & G. Company H would move forward if needed.

**Captain Earl Higginbotham**, Co. G. C.O. had returned from the hospital after being hit in his C.P. on the outskirts of Velletri ten days earlier.

**Lt. Joseph Kulick**, from Shamokin, Pa. was executive officer of Co. F and **Cordus Thornton**, of Dallas, an old Co. G man, was the 1st Sgt. The C.O. from Co. E was a Captain fresh from the states, but I knew Lt. Kulick and 1st Sgt. Thornton wouldn't let Co. E get into too much trouble before they spoke up.

Co. F, was in the same boat. The Captain had never commanded a company in peace time, much less in combat. He had always held battalion or regimental staff jobs, since his uncle, our Division Commander had commissioned him back at Camp Bowie, in 1941. During attacks, he stayed at Battalion Hqs. they knew the situation existed, but did nothing about it.

While I was washing my mess gear, **Darold White**, my runner, came up and said "Duney, I've got everything ready to go and here is your mail from Mrs. Philips." He always called my wife, Mrs. Philips, but I was Duney.

I spoke, "Darold, let's start at the end of the company, they say Captain Higginbotham is back and this will give us a chance to visit. The company will follow Co. E until they hit something big, then we will go up with the 1st platoon.

### June 7th — Hot and Dusty

The Italian sun was murder on the 7 June 1944 and the dust got into our mouth and nose each step we took. We hadn't been on the road but a couple of miles when a cheer went up at the head of the column. I wasn't paying much attention as a jeep passed pulling a trailer. I was busy reading my mail and looking at pictures of my daughter, whom I had never seen, we could hear the conversation up the column and soon heard someone say, "They have crossed the channel into France."

### D-Day at Normandy, June 6 1944

By now I could see men at the head of Co. F passing out papers. These turned out to be the June 6, 1944 Edition of Stars and Stripes, telling the 5th Army personnel that General Eisenhower had given the OK for the Invasion of Normandy to begin.

A Sgt. from Stars and Stripes handed me a copy and I read where the 82nd Airborn Division had jumped earlier behind the beaches.

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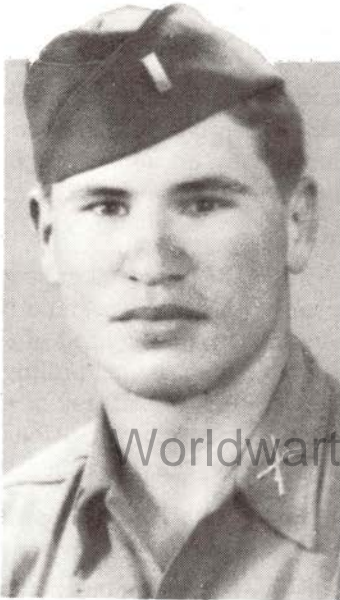
As I read on I kept thinking of the conversation I had with J. D. Vickers a few months before. J. D. had mobilized with Co. G, 143rd Infantry and had gone to school with me. Just before we loaded him onto a ship in the Naples harbor for the trip to England, he took me aside to tell me he had made up his mind he wasn't going to jump again.

He had been lucky on three other occasions. Two planes on missions, carrying troops had been destroyed and the ship that carried him to Anzio was shelled and sunk. Men in combat were always concerned about their friends when they were going back into the line.

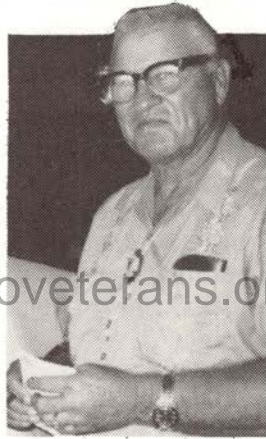
As I read on I found myself praying "Dear Lord, look out for J. D. while he is in France and don't let anything happen to him."

The articles in Stars and Stripes were all about the Invasion of Normandy and not how units were doing. J. D. would be on my mind until I got his V-Mail letter on the 11 June 1944 telling me he had jumped and was alright my prayers had been answered again.

To Be Continued . . .  
Part II will appear in the  
next issue: Vol. VIII, No. 3  
Fall 1988.



Julian H. Philips  
Secretary/Treasurer  
36th Division Association

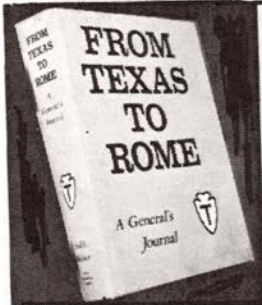


11017 Pandora Dr  
Houston, TX 77013  
Tel: (713) 673-7746



## Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

The T-Patchers Most Treasured Book  
A General's Journal



# FROM TEXAS TO ROME

**FROM TEXAS TO ROME**, a diary-type record of Walker's command of the 36th from Sept. 1941 to June 1944, is a hard-cover, 9x6", printed by Taylor Co of Dallas, and completed just days prior to the 1969 Reunion at Fort Worth's Blackstone Hotel.

Original funding of \$10 G was the efforts of Col. Oran Stovall and Col. Andy Price in 1968. Pre-Publication sale to the troops offered the book for \$7.50 (sale price \$10).

At the Reunion, a booth was set up for delivery for all whom had pre-ordered the Book. Gen. Walker sat at a nearby table and personally talked with and autographed each Book (those are now a real treasure).

Today — **FROM TEXAS TO ROME** is as scarce as hen's teeth. If you can find one, buy it!



1969 Reunion  
Fort Worth

Col. Oran Stovall, Bill Jary and two girls from his office who were faithful workers on Gen. Walker's book, "From Texas to Rome."



*With all good wishes*

*to Lt. Col. Fred L. Young*

*a brave and distinguished soldier  
of the Fighting 3<sup>rd</sup> Division under  
my command. Wounded four times  
in battle. Dubbed "Dynamite" Young  
by his Battalion Commander for his  
effortness in removing land mines  
planted by the German troops.*

*Fred L. Walker*

# In The Memory of Major General Fred L. Walker

From 1st Lt. Frederick L. Young,  
1st Battalion 143rd Infantry

Lt. Col. (Ret.) Julian H. Philips  
Secretary/Treasurer  
36th Division Association  
11017 Pandora Drive  
Houston, Texas 77013

Worldwartwoveterans.org  
My third Donation to the  
36th Division Monument Fund

My dear Colonel:

This is a followup to our recent tele-con reference the status of the **36th Division Monument Fund** and the progress of the monument construction at Paestum, Italy, commemorating our landing there 9 September 1943. I know that this project was of great personal interest to our late distinguished Division Commander, Major General Fred L. Walker.

I would like to forward the enclosed small contribution (my third) in the memory of General Walker. How fortunate we were to have had someone as our Division Commander with such a brilliant technical mind, with extensive combat experience, with such a keen sense of battlefield timing, with a huge amount of common sense and good judgement, with deep concern for the welfare and thoroughness of training of his troops, and finally, one with a mind that could handle the wide range of details that the battle-field commander must cope with if the mission is to be accomplished and the casualties kept to minimal levels.

Worldwartwoveterans.org  
I left the active service in 1946, returned home to complete my undergraduate and graduate studies, entered the teaching profession, then was recalled for the Korean War, taking early military retirement in 1967, returning to teaching and retiring again in 1981 from the Georgia Technical School System. I declined the year course at CGSS in 1963 for personal reasons and the fact that I had to stop moving constantly if my son were to get a good high school and post-secondary education. Believe me, by 1967 (when I retired), the Regular Army, I regret to say, was a far cry from the fine World War Two, well-trained, self-disciplined, motivated Army of the United States that we both knew earlier.

## Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

I was treated well in the 36th. I had three great company commanders, three fine battalion commanders, and two top notch regimental commanders. My little multi-purpose platoon of pioneers was treated well as we moved about in the battalion zone of responsibility. I just wish that the people in my chain of command during my second period of service had all been as competent as those I served under and with in the 36th during World War Two.

My duties in the fifties took me to Washington, D.C. from time to time. **On one occasion I was the guest of my earlier Battalion Commander, Colonel Fred L. Walker, Jr. and Mrs. Walker.** On another, I had the honor of dinner with General and Mrs. Walker, presenting some of the 8mm movies that I had taken during the Italian Campaign, **movies that had survived the censor's "scalpel".** I suppose I was among the very few people in the three regiments who carried an 8mm camera in his pack in the field.

**If the American High Command had only given command of the Fifth Army to General Walker rather than General Mark Clark,** we could only speculate how much lower the total number of casualties would have been, how fewer the number of American cemeteries there would have been. In retrospect, what is amazing is that General Clark's bungling and ineptness was demonstrated again and again, chewing up fine regiments and battalions, resulting in great numbers of fine soldiers going to their deaths to no purpose.

What is truly amazing is that General Clark got away with this, that he was not relieved, and finally, that he had the gall to blame the valiant men who died because of his own blundering. **How else could the Rapido Disaster, his brainchild, be described? How else could one describe the Anzio landing but bungled, resulting in the destruction of the Ranger Force (our comrades-in-arms at Chunzi Pass).** How tragic that the U.S. Forces in Italy had to pay such a high price for the repeated blunders of the Army and Corps leaders and staffs.

My thoughts will be with the group at the unveiling of the Monument on 9 September. I had a heart attack last year and my doctor discourages me from flying.

I wish the party going to the ceremony a safe "landing," a pleasant visit, and of course, a safe return. Dashing ashore with my regiment that sunny morning forty-five years ago was one of the great experiences of my life. It was an honor to have served in the 36th, among the fine soldiers in the 143rd and the other fine regiments and battalions of the 36th.



## A Salute to a Great Man . . .

In my more than twenty years of active service, I never served under a better general than General Walker. He belonged to that very small group that could only be described as "the best of the best." I am honored to make this contribution in the memory of his distinguished leadership of the "Fighting 36th" in the Italian Campaigns of World War Two.

Salute from Georgia, July 1, 1988

### Dynamite

Formerly: 1st Lt. Frederick L. Young  
1st (Bn) Pioneers, 143rd Infantry Regiment  
Lt. Col. (Ret.) Fred L. Young, Sr.  
2985 Shelby Drive  
Augusta, Georgia 30906

## the Topatcher

OCTOBER 1972

Walker Portrait Unveiling at Reunion  
Featured On Four Dallas/Fort Worth  
Television Stations



The man responsible for the portrait of General Fred L. Walker: Col. Oran C. Stovall, Bowie, Texas shown above with his granddaughter Kathryn Keese Latham who did the unveiling at the Dallas Reunion general assembly, Sat. Sept. 2, 1972.

# THE UNCOMMUNICABLE EXPERIENCE



Worldwartwoveterans.org

## Jack L. Scott

Platoon Commander  
111th Engr. 'C' Battalion



There are many experiences that take place in the ordinary human's life, that one can describe in depth to others, either in private or publicly. One can explain just what happened, how it happened and expect those who are listening to fully or generally comprehend what's being said and draw a reasonable and logical conclusion as to the feelings of the story teller. There are multitudes of experiences in high school, college, business and even in the Army that are rather easy to describe and the people around listening can readily identify with you as you tell it. These include eating, drinking, working and social engagements among others. However, there are two experiences in this earthly life that are almost entirely uncommunicable except to a select few.

One is the experience of a woman having a child. Regardless of the number of times you attend a movie showing a woman in travail, a man never really understands. When you sit by the hospital delivery table and hold your wife's hand while your child is being born, you still don't really know what she is going through. If she tries to explain it to you, you become a little bored because it is simply over your head, like having a mathematician explain Einstein's theory.

## The Uncommunicable Experience

The second is the full tilt of life and death combat. I never cease to be amused at the number of old combat soldiers who refuse to discuss their experiences with either friends or family. The reason, however, is usually very simple, "you just can't explain it," so people will understand. If you try, you will be described as a bragging blow-hard ignoramus loud mouth or a little fuzzy between the ears. When the war was first over and 13,000,000 men had been in the service of which 3,000,000 had actually been in ground combat units or direct support combat units, it was not too hard to occasionally run into someone you could talk to and be understood but even your family didn't fall into that group.

One aside with regard to our Air Force and Navy comrades. Air Force personnel on the ground did not ever experience real combat. Pilots shot at each other from a far distance and occasionally hit each other but never really saw their adversary either dead or alive or see his shot up body where it fell. In the Navy, an occasional shell hit the decks causing casualties and boats to be sunk but Navy personnel rarely ever saw his adversaries' eyes. **No, gentlemen, the one experience that no man can describe nor understand if he hasn't been there is the life and death struggle of the ground combat soldier.**

My father was a volunteer in the Canadian Army (lived in Grand Rapids, Michigan) in 1915, not waiting for the U.S. to enter. While in France, he wrote to his mother, a letter published at that time in the local paper in which he said, "**Mom, don't complain about your circumstances in the U.S.A. People at home have no idea what suffering really is till they get to France. I have just been issued a brand new '03' rifle with bayonet and we go over the top in the morning. Don't worry about me, I'll be fine and I'll get a few Krauts before the day is over.**"

My Dad brought home a trunk full of trophies of W.W. I but he never said one word to me about his combat and I never thought of my Dad as a hero until I finished that first 30 days from Anzio to Leghorn. God knows how many times I wish he could have talked to me about it and I had had sense enough to know what he was saying. **I would love to know what was in his heart when he climbed up out of that trench and started forward.** He was an outstanding athlete and I have a deep seated confidence that he was unafraid and went hell bent to get that Kraut.

**How can you explain to anyone what it's like to jump on a Sherman tank in combat to direct its fire.** If you've never jumped on a tank in combat, it's pretty hard to explain. How did the Spartans

## Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

explain when they got home what it was like to swing those big swords and cut people in half. How did those weary soldiers of the cross, the Crusaders, return home and describe that hoard of Islamic sons of Mohammed bearing down on them with the long curved bladed swords.

Yes, how do you explain to someone how you felt and what jokes you were telling while riding that LCVP toward a D-Day, H-hour shoreline. **I had a full boat load of 36 men and I saw no fear in the face of any.** They were experienced combat soldiers and this was just another job. I was so busy checking men, going over my responsibilities, I was hardly aware of our location until almost to shore. How do you explain to anyone what its like to ride in or on L.C.V.P. to a hostile beach.

Well, let me explain what I have done which has provided me with a great outlet. **A fraternity brother of mine, Jack LaReese (we call him the Greek),** also an R.O.T.C. grad from Oklahoma A&M , was sent to Korea to the 2nd Infantry "Indian Head" Division. He commanded a platoon first and then his company through the Korean conflict. Jack is a typical, hot-tempered Greek who I visualize as a fearless Spartan of 2,500 years ago.

**In Jack LaReese, I have found a friend who I can tell any combat adventure I ever had and he knows I am neither lying or trying to impress him.** He can tell me how many Chinese were laying dead out in front of his position after an attack and I know that's exactly the way it was. This is the place that you can discuss combat and tell your true feelings without anyone trying to make more or less of what it really was. **Jack LaReese of the 2nd Infantry was a Julian Phillips of the 36th. A man dedicated to fight as hard for the welfare of his men as he was dedicated to killing the enemy.** It is too bad that all former combat soldiers do not have a close friend who had similar combat experience so that he could freely discuss that experience like two women discuss labor and childbirth who have each had four children.

I consider myself very privileged to have had that unique experience of offering everything including my life if necessary for the defense of my country and to insure victory over the enemy and still live. **All those who missed that experience are like the women who never have children and can only imagine what other women are talking about.** The zing of those bullets, the whish and crash of the artillery and the silent whisper before the wham of the mortar are

## The Uncommunicable Experience

sounds your mind will never forget.

Whether W.W. I, W.W. II, Korea or Vietnam, those sounds of combat are all the same to all soldiers and there is no such thing as one war being tougher than another. **Those unfortunate comrades who paid the full price tell all of us that when you die from combat wounds, one war is just like another.** The wounds, the medics, the evacuations, the evac hospitals and the general hospital is a routine played out by hundreds every day of the war but only those who have been through it really know what that indescribable experience is. My experience in combat was by far the most dramatic, yet stabilizing, serious, but humorous, and profound of my life and yet I would take nothing for it.

I believe that I have been to the top of the mountain and know what the troops of Genghis Kahn, Alexander the Great, Mark Anthony, and King Richard the Lion Heart, experienced when they drew up for battle. **As I look around, I realize what a small number of men have actually had that experience and that is why most combat soldiers do not talk about the war.** It isn't a mental block as some psychologists would like to believe nor is it a desire not to be reminded of the gory, deadly aspect of battle.

The real truth is that when I visualize the various battles I was in, seeing 600 dead Germans in a ditch where our tanks caught them or my own men blown up and cut up from shells and mines, I have no mental problem, I just can't explain it to someone who hasn't been there and have any hope of them understanding.

So, don't worry about the mental stability of the combat veterans' silence on his war time experiences. **He just can't express himself in a way that can be understood by those who haven't been there.**

Jack L. Scott



Jack and Donna Scott have departed their stay at Guthrie OK, are now residing at:

10420M Blue Spruce Road,  
Oklahoma City OK 73162

Jack was our Association president in 1980, was responsible for the joint reunion with the Go For Brokerz — 442nd/100 Bn Regimental Combat Team.



# “Zero”

**Nickname for an Ex-French  
Officer, GIRAUD de la GARDE, whose  
Military Expertise and His Men  
of the FFI Gave Great Assistance  
to the Our 36th Division**

By R.K. Doughty  
Mamaroneck, New York  
Former S-2, 141st  
and G-1, 36th Division

When the 36th Division invaded France at Le Drammont, where the monument stands today marking that event, it was accompanied by a number of French Liaison Officers whose job was to make contact with French authorities and resistance groups to gain their help in defeating the German forces there. That story would fill a book by itself. This tale is one of another French officer who joined the Division the hard way — under fire in the Rhone Valley.

We had landed successfully at Le Drammont in a column of regiments with the 141st Infantry leading the way across Green Beach. The lodgement had been made relatively easily due in great measure to the bold tactics employed by General John E. Dahlquist when he sent the 1st Bn. of the 141st Inf. into a small beach east of the main attack, to ascend the Rastel d'Agay and to knock out the German observation located there.

Hard fighting had ensued but the Division had moved steadily inland and in short order **Task Force Butler** was sent ahead as a flying column to exploit the confused situation caused the German High Command by General George Patton's slashing attack further north which threatened to cut off the whole Southern Front.

## **"ZERO" — Nickname for Giraud**

There came a day when the 141st Infantry was ordered to make an administrative, as opposed to a tactical, **move north of Digne**. The rest of the Division was heading out at a fast clip well beyond that city toward Grenoble and everything so far as was known seemed to be moving well for our side.

I went to the Division CP at Sisternon, north of Digne, with the C.O. of the 141st Infantry to learn our next mission. Our regiment was still some distance south of Digne where some units were just beginning to strike camp. We arrived at the Division CP at an inopportune moment for the Corps CG was there stomping up and down the situation room because someone, somehow, had not transmitted his orders, given the day before, to General Dahlquist. I heard the Corps Commander say, "I ordered a regiment of this Division to Montelimar last night. They could have walked in then. Now they'll have to fight their way in. But by God they've got to take it! That's the most important piece of ground in Southern France. We'll have the German 19th Army cut off by blocking the Rhone highway there."

By this time the General was very briskly slashing at a wall map with his riding crop to indicate the location of Montelimar. We heard a light plane land near the Division Hq. and went out to find General Dahlquist climbing out of it and not too happy about the fact that he had been misinformed about the enemy situation. He had almost landed at Montelimar, he said, and had been taken under fire by German anti-aircraft guns.

The 141st Infantry immediately became the focus of everyone's attention. A hospital column that just happened to be passing was grounded and its vehicles taken to provide transportation for the second battalion of the 141st which was swinging into view from the south at that time. The regimental C.O. took off with that Battalion for Montelimar.

I alerted the Regimental Exec of the 141st by radio about the sudden new mission and the need to get cracking tactically and started for Montelimar with the 141st I and R Platoon. Since the other two regiments of the Division were well to the north there was little hope that they could be brought into the situation quickly. It took several days, in fact, for them to close into the blocking site in the Rhone Valley.

## Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

The route from Sisteron to Montelimar was an unknown factor to the troops of the 141st Infantry. Because most of them would be driving it at night and under pressure of time I posted I and R guides at critical junctures. We drove from Aspres to Die to Crest and on to a place just short of Liveron. Remembering General Dahlquist's experience of the morning I stopped when I saw a group of FFI squatting around a small fire near the road and asked them about German troop dispositions. They told me that a German anti-tank gun was located around the next bend about half a mile from where we stood.

Having established more guides between Crest and a little town called Marsanne, I slept on the gravel driveway of a filling station until our 1st Bn. CD arrived at 0400. Our second Bn. was already in position to attack Montelimar by that time. The 1st Bn. rolled in at 0600 and was led to the point from which it would launch its attack on Montelimar as directed by the Regimental Commander. The 3rd Bn. was still enroute from Digne. It arrived and entered combat somewhat later.

The 36th Division History does not describe the tangled terrain and maze of roads of that area that baffled both our own troops and the Germans. As a result, the force available to block the Rhone route was insufficient even after the Division finally assembled at full strength there. In the meantime attack and counterattack were practically automatic and continuous, while a great stream of traffic continued to move north as the Germans tried to extricate their 19th Army from the trap. They were only partially successful and the cost in men and materials was tremendous. German dead and debris littered the landscape for 16 miles and the 19th Army ceased to exist as an effective fighting unit.

The cannonading that went on constantly in the Montelimar-Condillac area could heard as far away as Lyons. The fact that German Tiger tanks of the 11th Panzer Division joined in the fight against us added to the uproar. A French officer living in Lyons had been unable to get out of France when its government sued for peace.

### GIRAUD de la GARDE

He was a St. Cyr graduate and had fought with distinction in the early days of WW II. His name was Giraud de la Garde. Appointed a blackout guard by the Germans he had done his best to put up with conditions under the Vichy Government while looking forward to the day when he might again join the battle against the German Army.



## **“ZERO” — Nickname for Giraud**

As we were fighting at Montelimar, Giraud donned his French Army uniform and over that his civilian clothes, got on his bicycle after dark one night and headed south toward the sound of battle. A German patrol picked him up at the outskirts of Lyons for breaking curfew and packed him off to jail. For a short time, he later told me, he panicked as he sat in a jail cell awaiting discovery of his French uniform. That, alone, would have put him before a firing squad, he said. Suddenly he remembered that as a blackout warden he had a printed pass permitting him to be abroad after curfew.

He called loudly for the jailer and put up such a blustering outcry that the jailer, on seeing the pass, let him go. Without his bicycle, Giraud walked and ran and, upon evading the city road-blocks by stealth, proceeded to Montelimar. By that time he had removed his civilian clothing. As things turned out he was shot at by the Germans and by our troops when he first tried to get through our lines. He lay in a water-filled ditch for most of a day and at night finally managed to crawl past our outposts to arrive, soaking wet, at the 141st CP at Marsanne.

I met and talked with him and because of his knowledge and military background kept him as a liaison officer pending subsequent clearance with higher headquarters. He was a slim, patrician-looking officer who was so appreciative of any kindness as to be almost embarrassing with his profuse thanks. I arranged for some dry U.S. uniforms for him to which he could append his French insignia of rank as a lieutenant.

### **“Zero” Was Great at Montelimar**

Almost immediately he proved his worth. This was during the early moments of the fight at Montelimar before the full Division closed into position there. Giraud, who said his nickname was “Zero” because the French pronunciation Giraud and Zero is much the same, asked me to go with him to a nearby road junction to talk with an FFI officer.

It was black dark when we arrived at our meeting place but Zero, as he asked me to call him, introduced me to the FFI leader who was using an assumed name. I later met him in this country and learned that his name was **Father Fraise, a French Priest**. He was also a St. Cyr graduate who had turned to the priesthood but, once the Germans occupied France he took to the hills and became the leader of 8,000 maquis, as the resistance fighters were called.

## Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

Father Fraise agreed to extend our flanks by posting his men as observers to warn us of any approach by the Germans from the flank or rear. **This, of course, added considerable security to an otherwise vulnerable position**, even though it was understood that the FFI were not trained as regular soldiers and were not expected to stand and fight in the Montelimar situation.

There is no way of knowing at this date, either, whether the German decision to run the gauntlet of the Rhone route, when we first threatened to block it, rather than to envelope our flimsy position was influenced by the presence of thousands of maquis. From information supplied by prisoners of war we knew that the main reason for the flight of the German 19th Army was to try to reach defensive positions being prepared for them in the Vosges mountains as quickly as possible.

Zero had an outstanding background of military education and experience as well as an awareness of the complex political situation within his country. At the Montelimar site he went with me, too, to another resistance unit he learned of, where we talked with its leader who was dressed in a French colonel's uniform. **This man wanted to bargain with us:** his forces would assist us in return for which they would keep all weapons and ammunition left on the battlefield. Zero gave me a sign to leave the house where this group had its headquarters and as we drove away in a jeep he said, "FTP." Since I had not previously heard of such a designation he explained that it meant "**Francs Tireurs et Partisans**" which, he said, was the Communist oriented underground in France. According to Zero, the **FTP had been organized to try to take over Provincial governments wherever possible and to cut Allied communications if our armies failed to stop where the Red Army drew the line at war's end.**



veterans.org

## THE FRENCH RESISTANCE

*FFI soldier guarding a square  
in Chartres, July 1944.*

*(Robert Capa, Life Magazine)*

## “ZERO” — Nickname for Giraud

A short time after we moved north from Montelimar I was on a hilltop overlooking Lyons at dusk. In a neighboring jeep, as Corps observer, sat the late **Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge, then an Army colonel**. As we watched we saw the Rhone River bridges being blown to bits by the retreating Germans using aerial bombs as explosives. It looked as though we might have a lot of trouble resuming the chase and Col. Lodge was about to make that report to his headquarters when Zero, who had been nosing around a railroad station where a group of French people had gathered, came up. He had found the head of the local resistance group and already had things moving toward re-building a bridge at a dam site close to where we were standing. **Heavy planking had been removed and hidden by the FFI several weeks earlier in anticipation of the need to provide a crossing of a tributary flowing into the Rhone.** The bridge was intact by the time our troops were ready to cross.

### “They Gave Us Positions of Nazis”

On other occasions, Zero caused the arrest of two civilians who were trailing the 36th Division and in all likelihood reporting its objectives to enemy agents. In other instances he was instrumental in setting up our Regimental CPs in spectacular chateaux whose owners broke out some of the world's best wines saved for the occasion. He also found a civilian who knew of an undefended weir in the Moselle River where a battalion of the 141st crossed at night by wading.

At that time, too, he arranged for a retired French Naval Captain, who was then **mayor of the small town of Raon aux Boix** to lead our attacking elements to the weir at night through woods over mountainous trails. Without the guide our troops would not have found the crossing place. As it was, the first battalion made it all right; the third battalion, following in trace, lost contact in the woods and was heavily damaged when it tried to cross at a defended ford. **The second battalion did not cross the river, initially, but laid down a base of fire at a re-entrant at the town of Eloyes.**

### “One Man Army” — a Walking Arsenal

Zero also brought to our regiment, one day, **another French officer who had assumed the nom de guerre of LeClerc**. We called him the “**One Man Army**” because he was a walking arsenal with guns, pistols, grenades and ammo distorting his shape in all directions. He lived in a small town in the Vosges Mountains and as a truck driver had been licensed by the Germans to drive throughout Alsace-Lorraine during the German occupation. **His business enabled him to direct the sabotage efforts of a band of FFI that savaged the Germans for years.** LeClerc obtained a number of woodsmen

## Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

who knew the Vosges Mountains well and on an occasion when the weather closed down all aerial observation for a long period of time, four of the woodsmen, carrying radios on their backs, infiltrated the German positions.

They had been given a code to use in reporting their sightings but the German build-up had been so great that the men in their haste to report signaled us in the clear. **They gave the positions of artillery units displaced well forward, and infantry by the thousands.** There was little doubt in anyone's mind as we transmitted this information to Army and Army Group that a heavy counterstrike was about ready to hit us. A U.S. air strike already enroute to another German target was diverted and what it didn't do by way of damage to horse-drawn artillery and infantry, the reinforced artillery of the Division completed. Since our Division was over-extended at that time, a serious attack by the Germans would have been disastrous.

### **"ZERO" — a French Nobleman**

Zero stayed with us until the 141st reached the German border late in the war. Because of the need for trained officers to enter Germany with the French Forces both Zero and LeClerc were ordered to duty with them. Zero continued to write even after his transfer and we maintained contact for a long time after the war.

It wasn't until after he left the Division, however, that I learned he was a Marquis with all of the trappings, landed estates and wealth of a French nobleman.

**R.K. Doughty**  
815 Stuart Avenue  
Mamaroneck, NY 10543



## The French Resistance Troopers Were Worth Their Weight In Gold

Dear Editor:

I don't want to overdo these tales of combat but thought this one might throw some light, not only on a fine French liaison officer who assisted the 36th Division in many ways, but also on the situation surrounding the blocking position in the Rhone Valley when we cut off the German 19th Army.

Most of the Division had moved well north at the time that the Corps C.G. came to the Division CP at Sisteron, France and lambasted everyone in sight for having failed to send a regiment to Montelimar a day earlier. Col. John Harmony was the C.O. of the 141st Infantry at the time but I have not identified him as such, first because I'm not sure that he's still alive and have found no way to check. I would want his OK if I could get it. He and I have exchanged Christmas letters every year since the war ended except when he or I was fighting in Korea. Last year I did not hear from him and I do not know his daughter's married name to write to her in California. Secondly I left out a lot of names in order to make the primary character stand out more clearly. Mrs. Harmony died several years ago leaving Jack inconsolable.

The fact that the 141st was ordered to make an administrative move under the circumstances I've reported was indicative of its need to gain a day or so of added rest after taking the brunt of the landing. The whole thing, of course, blew up in our faces when we had to change so suddenly to a tactical move and charge off 60 or 70 miles to the west to block a German Army.

Col. Harmony was badly wounded at Montelimar, by the way, and was shipped to a hospital in Naples for several months. I wrote and told him that it was doubtful that he would be reinstated as regimental C.O. based on the scuttlebutt out of Div. Hq. He got my letter, believe it or not, after the war ended! In the meantime he went AWOL from the hospital, bummed his way by ship and truck to our CP in the Vosges Mts. and there learned that he had been permanently replaced.

When I attended the Strategic Intelligence School in D.C. after being recalled to active duty for the Korean conflict, the Army G-2 in a lecture to all of us, many of whom were about to go out as military attaches, held Harmony's intelligence reports from Yugoslavia on the USSR armies as exemplary for all to emulate. Harmony retired as a major general.

I might add for your background information that Giraud de la Garde died last year. Paul Lefort, the chief French liaison officer whom you may have known at Div. Hq. sent me a copy of Giraud's obituary. He was quite a guy. He married, after the war, a woman who was one of the wealthiest in France and together they spent much of their time and fortunes in educating French children in special ways.

Giraud spent his life after the war in and around Lyons where, as I recall it he was a publisher of some kind.

R.K. Doughty  
815 Stuart Avenue  
Mamaroneck, N.Y. 10543



## The Medics at Mittelwihr



### And Darkness



By **Rex Harrison Jr.**  
Medical Det.  
Co. L. 143rd Inf.



Field Hospital  
X-Ray Station,  
Rex Harrison, 1944

The night of 11 December 1944, Company "L", 143rd Infantry Regiment, 36th (Texas) Infantry Division, part of a larger force, was marched from its staging area to prepare and occupy positions at **Mittlewihr, a small village in the province of Alsace-Lorraine, France.** Our mission was to prevent an enemy breakthrough from the city of Colmar to cut our lines of communication to Strasbourg.

The village school was located on the outskirts of the town. It was built in the shape of a large, flat block "T". The top part of the "T" was the class area; it was on concrete stilts from three to five feet above the ground and was a single story building about thirty feet in width and fifty feet in length.

The bottom part of the "T" was a three-story building with a basement about twenty feet in width and forty feet in length. Connecting the two buildings was a passageway about ten feet in width and thirty feet in length. The passageway was raised above the ground and had a single opening under the school end; however, there wasn't any opening of this tunnel into the main building. These fortress type structures had concrete walls nearly a foot thick.

The First Platoon Sergeant, **Tech/Sgt Hadley Ethridge**, placed two squads on the forward slope of a small hill about two hundred yards from the classroom building. His third squad was deployed in the same area about two hundred yards to the rear of the other squads in a line formation stretching from the top to the bottom of the hill.

## The Medics at Mittelwihr

The two Light Machine Guns attached from our Weapons Platoon were emplaced with the two squads along the forward slope of the hill. He established our Platoon Command Post in the tunnel running under the passageway between the two buildings; from this position, visual control could be maintained over his command area.

The Second Platoon, **Sgt. Hayden R. Pierson** placed one of his squads along the outside edge of the wall on the side of the "T" facing Colmar and the other two squads in the three-story building. The section of Heavy Machine Guns from Company "M", 143rd Infantry attached to his Platoon were also assigned positions within the building.

Worldwartwoveterans.org  
Everyone started digging in. As soon as it became light, the enemy began a heavy mortar barrage and sniper harassment upon our positions on the forward slope of the hill. Sometime that morning, during the heaviest part of the shelling, I was sitting in the opening of our tunnel watching out over the area when suddenly from one of the emplacements dug on the forward slope of the hill **Sgt. Windell L. Jinks** jumped up and out of his hole and started a mad dash toward our position.

He made it to our "little hole-in-the-wall" and blurted out that there had been a near hit on one of the two-man holes near him. He had a short conversation with one of the men, **PFC John H. Smith**, who told him that his buddy was dead and that he was badly hurt. I looked at **Hadley**, he looked toward the ground, and said, "It's really bad out there."

I started running toward the positions, but had to stop at the base of the hill to catch my breath and give my jumping nerves a little pep talk about where we would go in the next leap forward. After searching the holes for what seemed hours under shelling that appeared to increase in density, I finally found the wounded man. He was one of our three squad leaders, all named **Smith**. I was scared to death by then, but I had to keep up the appearance of bravery.

I examined **Smitty** and found that he had penetrating wounds of the right arm and leg and that both limbs were broken. **His buddy was dead**. I couldn't do anything in that crowded space. I told him that I would hurt him when I pulled him out, but he said to go ahead. I managed to drag him from the hole, but this effort, together with all of the running had completely exhausted me. We were both lying on top of the ground. Small arms fire was splattering us with mud. One mortar round exploded a short distance from us.

## Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

Smitty suggested that we get back underground. I rolled him back into the hole and jumped in after him. I then told him that if we didn't get out, he would most likely die. I then called out if anyone would help me, and only one man answered, **PFC Clyde Lulham**, who said, "I'll help you, Medico." I grabbed Smitty by the shoulder loops on his field jacket, Clyde grabbed his legs, and we proceeded to get the hell off that hill to the comparative safety of the big building where the Second Platoon's Command Post was located. I asked Smitty if he wanted any morphine; he said that he was so glad to be out of that shit storm that he wasn't in pain at that moment. I dressed his wounds, splinted his arm and leg, covered him with a blanket, and waited.

We used the Artillery Observer's radio to indirectly contact our Aid Station to send us a stretcher team. Since our exact position was unknown to them, I volunteered to lead the group to our building. I went back through the town at a high lope between and through buildings, doorways, alleys, and so forth until I met the four team members. After leading them back to the building, they carried a still conscious Smitty to safety.

Later on that day Hadley was hit in the arm, seconds after pushing me out of my viewing position in the tunnel entrance. He evacuated himself to the Aid Station. Sergeant Pierson now had two rifle platoons to lead.

Another soldier was wounded in the leg. Since it didn't look too bad to me, I suggested that he start hobbling toward the Aid Station. He said that he couldn't, so we called for the stretcher team again. The shelling was quite heavy by then and darkness was approaching. I told the team leader, **Sgt. Tim Long**, that he would be better off to leave while it was still daylight and that maybe the enemy wouldn't shoot at them since they would be able to see the Red Cross painted on their helmets.

He said that he would wait for dark since the wounded man didn't seem to be in much pain. I told him that if he was going to wait that long he might as well go with me to see if any more were wounded on the hill. He said that he would take his team to the base of the hill — after me, after dark.

A meeting was held by Sgt. Smothers of "M" Company, the Artillery Forward Observer Lieutenant; "**Red**" **Gordan**, the Second Platoon Aidman, Sgt. Pierson and me. We decided to pull the First Platoon back and have them "**dig in**" around the buildings. I then led the stretcher team back to the base of the hill and started to



## The Medics at Mittelwihr

crawl, for there was still mortar and small arms fire into the area.

After I had rached and searched the holes on the forward slope, I heard voices and found the enemy had set a machine gun in position on the crest of the hill, I could hear them talking and pounding their hands to keep warm. **Finally I found the top hole where Smitty had been.** I pulled out the sound-powered phone and crawled to the bottom of the hill. All of us then ran back to the large building.

The litter-bearers were **PFC "Moustache" Ethridge of Pahokee, Florida**, with whom I had served for nearly two years, **Sgt. Tim Long of San Francisco**, a recent replacement along with the other two soldiers. The team loaded the guy with the wounded leg on the stretcher and started back toward the Aid Station. I heard that they walked into a machine gun position and that two of the team were wounded and all four taken captive. The soldier with the "**wounded leg**" escaped; he jumped from the litter and ran to the safety of another of our positions in the town.

The next morning we were being attacked by the enemy from all sides. We radioed for help and were told to hang on, help was on the way, don't worry, continue to fight. The enemy was shouting, "**Babe Ruth is a son of a \*#@\*%.**" I haven't figured out how the "**Babe**" got into the act, but I guess they thought that would make us so mad that we would come out and show ourselves. Hell, we stayed under cover and fought like the rats we were.

Sometime that morning we saw five of our soldiers jump from their holds in the line position on the hill and start running toward us in the house. Someone hadn't given them the word to move back the previous night. What prompted them was a squad of Germans led by an officer moving down the hill while he fired his pistol into the occupied holes. In the third trench, the bullet penetrated the front area of the man's steel helmet, passed between the liner and the steel pot and exited at the back of the helmet.

The man played dead; after the group had passed, he pulled the pin on a grenade, held it for a short count and rolled it into the middle of the enemy. There were no survivors from that patrol. The Assistant Squad Leader, **Sgt. Bernard Wallin**, and his men were welcomed into the building.

We held another council of war, and "**Red**" **Gordan** said that he would take a reel of telephone wire and attempt to establish communications with our parent unit. Our radio had been hit again and we knew that with a direct contact we could get closer artillery and mortar fire support. Even though we didn't have any direct communication, our support groups were continuing to fire into

## Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

previously established concentration areas. Gordan didn't make it.

By the next morning all of us knew that positive action must be taken. Our ammunition and food rations were rapidly diminishing; our automatic weapons had been destroyed by enemy fire; two of our comrades were dead, three were wounded, but ambulatory, and the remainder of us were exhausted from lack of sleep and constant bombardment. We held another meeting. The artillery lieutenant enumerated our "have nots" and suggested that we wave the "dirty undershirt" (surrender). Sergeants Pierson, Smothers, and I voted "no". I couldn't explain why I seemed to force each of them to vote with me.

Personally, I thought that we couldn't go on any longer to hold our positions. I was sure that at any moment, a German would enter the room in which I was caring for the wounded and spray it with a machine pistol. I moved my wrist watch above my elbow so that I would have some trading material with a guard in the event of capture.

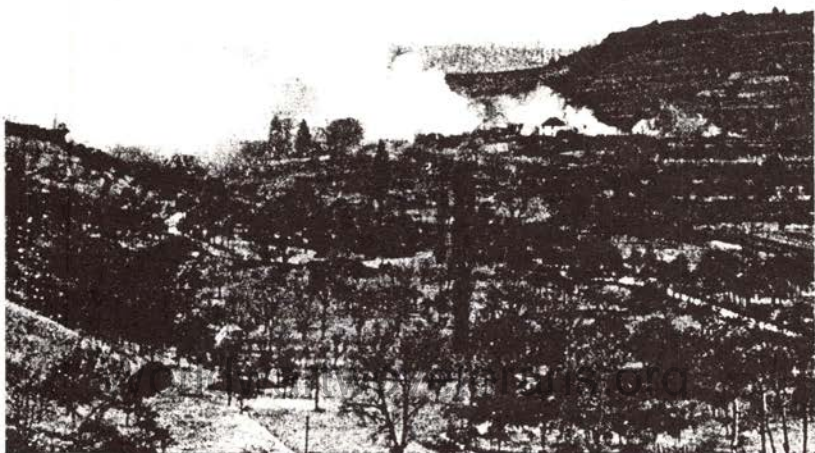
I threw my dice into a corner, started to throw away my deck of cards, and then put them back into my right shirt pocket to act as a shield. In the pocket over my heart I carried one of those small metal shield Bibles with the words, "May this keep you safe from harm," inscribed on it. This Bible was a Christmas gift from Paul Bass for whom I once worked at the Shreveport, Louisiana, J.C. Penney Store. I don't know what caused me to do it; however, I opened the Bible at random, and the first lines to strike my eyes were the words "and darkness descended over the land and they were saved."



### GOING HOME . . .

Camp Lucky Strike in France, here's T/Sgt. Smothers, and 2nd Lt. Rex Harrison, Sept. 1945.

## The Medics at Mittelwihr



SMOKE OF BURSTING SHELLS FROM DIVISION ARTILLERY RISES ABOVE  
MITTELWIHR DURING THE GERMAN OFFENSIVE.

Staff/Sgt Meyer had been in minor shock for two days. I shook him and told him that we were getting out of there. He looked at me as if I were crazy. I went to the door and told one of the soldiers in the hall that he was to pass the word for all to assemble in the first level hall within the next ten minutes as we were leaving.

It was then about two in the afternoon. When everyone was in the hall, I told them that we were moving out. No one questioned me. I told them to follow me as we were going about half a city block away to the barn where the Third Platoon was. From the barn we would deploy and rush up the hill in back of the building. I said that some might not make it; however, it was better than staying where we were and being taken prisoner.

I moved toward the door just as an enemy machine gunner was setting up his weapon to fire into the opening; Sgt. Smother snap shot him with what was probably the last round of ammunition in the group. We ran over to the barn through some small arms and mortar fire; however, no one was injured.

It still seems to me that we stayed only a few minutes in the barn; it had a wooden ceiling and was being knocked down about our knees by the enemy mortar fire. I stood up, hollered out, "Let's go," and proceeded to start running toward the hill behind the barn about one hundred yards away. I looked back; all were following.

As I started up the hill, it began to get dark. After another hundred yards it was difficult for me to see where I was putting my feet.

## Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

I continued to trot until I was challenged in English to halt. We were safe. I knew that we would be as soon as I read that passage in my Bible. Since then my courage and faith have never deserted me.

For his actions in the above engagement, PFC Rex Harrison, Jr., Medical Corp, was awarded the Army's second highest combat decoration, the Silver Star Medal for "Gallantry in Action."



Rex Harrison Jr.  
2807 Ambergate Road  
Winter Park, FL 32792



### BIOGRAPHY

- Born — April 12, 1921 Hope, Arkansas to Rex Sr. and Kathleen Elzy Harrison.
- Entered service 10 July 1942 at Shreveport, Louisiana.
- Basic training, MRTC, Camp Barkley, Texas.
- Assigned 11th Field Hospital, Camp White, Oregon.
- Surgical Technician training, Camp Carson, Colorado.
- Arrived Oran, North Africa, 11 May 1943.
- Eight campaigns, Sicily thru Central Europe.
- Awarded: Combat Medical and Infantry Badges, Silver and Bronze (V) Stars.
- Commissioned 2nd Lt Inf "L" 143, VOGC 7th Army.
- Retired through Reserve Program as LTC

- One wife, seven children, ten grandchildren and two great grandsons.
- Retired from Florida Gas Transmission Company 30 June 1983 as Manager of the Plant Accounting Department.



Discovered In Our T-Patch SCRAPBOOK,  
Clip Files from War Years 1943-1945

## Gallant Texans Long Will Remember Old Rock Wall

WITH THE 5TH ARMY, Italy (By Mail).—It's just an ordinary rock wall about three feet tall and 300 yards long used by Italian farmers to fence off terraces.

This particular wall extends across the slopes of Hill 1205 above the town of San Pietro.

From Dec. 8 to Dec. 10 it brought death and pain and glory to the 36th Division.

The division was assigned the mission of capturing San Pietro. The men advanced alongside Hill 1205 under concentrated shell fire until they reached the rock wall. One hundred yards behind the wall were German machine gun nests, firmly entrenched in pillboxes. A mile beyond was San Pietro.

American artillery fire was directed at the German gun positions and succeeded in softening them up. But the artillery was unable to knock out the machine gun nests. The infantry had to do the job, so the boys from Texas went over the wall.

The attack was not successful the first time. A solid curtain of withering machine gun fire forced the men back to the wall. They were shaken. The attack was not successful the second, third, or fourth times. Many Americans were killed, many wounded.

For three days the 36th continued the assault. In the regiment that bore the greatest brunt of the



SGT. HARRY R. MOORE.

attack, every battalion was strung along the 300 yards of the wall. At the end of three days the Germans were driven out of their dugouts by American bayonets and hand grenades.

In one regiment alone 10 Silver Stars were awarded men who had performed gallantly on the other side of the rock wall. Today it's just an ordinary rock wall again, fencing off terraces, but the members of the 36th who crossed it won't ever be able to think of it in quite that way.

Some Texans cited for action at the wall were: Tech. Sgt. Harry R. Moore, Fort Worth; Sgt. Claude E. Scott, Dallas; Staff Sgt. Paul E. Smith, Huntsville, and Pfc. Frank Zernicek, Bay City.

### Wounded Sergeant of 36th Division Is Here

Tech. Sgt. Harry R. Moore, 24, four times wounded in more than a year's service with the 36th Division in Italy, is in Fort Worth visiting his parents, Mr. and Mrs. J. R. Moore, 2907 Hale.

Veteran of the Salerno landing, the drive toward Naples and the Rapido River crossings, he holds the Purple Heart with three clusters, the Silver Star and an Infantry Combat Badge.

HARRY RAY MOORE of Co F 143rd, now retired Super-Market Manager — resides at: 3401 Lakeland St, Fort Worth TX 76111. 817/838-8456.



## The First Shots Fired On Salerno Beach

By Henry L. Ford  
Co. K 141st Infantry

*Ford*

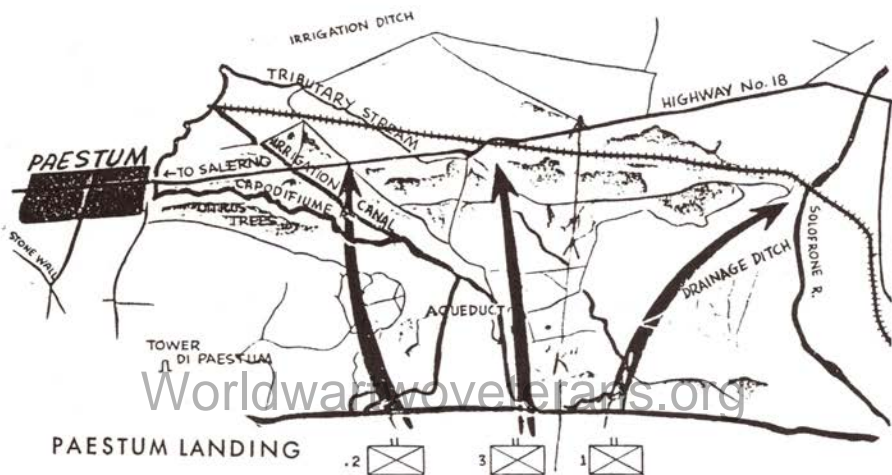
Forty five years ago today I was a buck private and "BAR" man (Browning Automatic Rifleman) in the 1st rifle squad. As we men of the 1st squad of the 3rd Platoon of **Company "K" of 141 Infantry Regiment of the 36th Infantry Division** were approaching Yellow Beach, we could see, many miles to the North, naval gun fire and the shells exploding on the beaches where the British 45th and 56th Infantry Divisions were making their invasion landings.

5th Army Commander, General Mark Clark had made no plans for naval bombardment to be laid down on the 36th Division's beach fronts. This permitted the Germans to have all their troops and communications intact and ready to push us back into the sea.

At 0330 hours on Sept. 9th 1943 when our landing craft arrived on Yellow Beach, there was a full moon that lit up the landscape almost like day light. There were occasional white fluffy clouds that would drift by and cover the moon for short periods. **There was no small arms fire or gun fire of any type on the 36th Division's beach areas at that time.** It appeared as if there were no German or Italian troops defending the beaches. I was one of many happy privates and soldiers at that moment.

The sailors who brought our landing craft in lowered the front ramp and we could see that we were about 100 feet short of the beach. In a column of two's we entered the water running for shore.

## First Shots Fired On Salerno



I fell down in the water and when I stood up my BAR looked like a log. I wondered if it would fire? It was covered with sand and sea weeds. After shaking it off it looked OK, so I ran on to the beach. **The first thing we saw was a triple coil, barb wire concentina only a few yards in from the beach and right in front of the few sand dunes.**

Without any hesitation, our Squad Leader, **Sgt. John Rightmer**, threw his body across the concentina and instructed his squad to run across his body to get through the barb wire. He told us to go just as far as we could and he would catch up with us. I did not see Sgt. Rightmer again until that night (about 16 hours) because of the confusion of battle. **Almost every one fought on-their-own that day.**

About 150 yards inland I came across a three man fox hole. This was a MG-42 machine gun position. The moon light shown down on the sides of the holes to a depth of about twenty inches. I could not see any one in these holes but neither could I see down to the bottoms of these holes. **I decided to continue on because no one had fired a shot so far.**

Two hundred yards further inland I saw a large white house with large trees around it that was about seventy yards to my left. A rock fence about three feet high extended from the white house across my front and toward a six foot high rock fence that I was following inland. I was keeping left of the six foot high fence with a fifty yard space between my self and this fence, in case some one tried to throw a grenade at me from this fence. I felt that I would have time to run away while a grenade was in the air.

## Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

I had not noticed that most of our rifle squad members were stopping off, here and there, to wait on our squad leader to catch up. I continued advancing, following the stone fence for 250 yards and then the fence turned to my right. I continued straight ahead fifty more yards to several large trees. To my right front I saw a second house about fifty yards, and several men standing out front carrying on a conversation. While standing behind one of these trees, watching these men, I heard Germans talking right behind the corner of the rock fence fifty yards to my right. **I decided to go back and get the other men of our squad.**

Retracing my foot steps about 150 yards, I found our "First Scout" PFC. Harold J. Benton from Tyrone, PA. (556 Washington Ave.). I asked him where the remainder of our rifle squad was?? He said, **"they are about 200 yards or so behind the last time he saw any of them."** I told Harold what I had seen and heard. Harold said, **"we should go back to the fence corner and take another look and then report back to Sgt. Rightmer."**

We returned to the trees where I had been before and saw the men at the second house moving around in the moon light. **They had seen us and were setting up a MG-42 machine gun for action.** The next thing we saw was a stream of tracers coming directly at us. These tracers were hitting the trees and ricocheting in all directions.

Harold called to me and said **"I AM HIT!"** I ran over to the tree that he was laying behind. I could see blood running down from a spot right behind his heart and beside his spinal column. Harold opened his shirt and showed me a bullet wound that appeared to be right in front of his heart. **He was lucky to be still alive!**

All at once every thing was dark black and we couldn't see any thing. A large dark cloud had drifted over the moon. We decided fast that this was our chance to get back to our squad. I helped Harold walk and crawl back to where some of our rifle squad was laying on the ground. Word was passed back toward the beach for our Platoon Medic to come forward!

Right after the Germans shot PFC. Harold J. Benton, there was all kinds of gun fire all over Yellow Beach and the others being invaded by our 36th Inf. Div. **The Germans had just been waiting and were ready to put us to the test of battle.**

When Harold and I returned to the area where other members of our rifle squad were, we found them pinned down by machine gun fire coming from the large white house to our left and the three foot



## First Shots Fired On Salerno

rock fence that ran across in front of us. At first the hay stacks appeared to be machine gun nests but when we saw our own tracer bullets bounce off, we realized they were tanks covered with hay.

Then they started firing their cannons at the incoming waves of landing craft and scoring direct hits on some of these craft. The machine gun tracer bullets being fired at us looked like they were going into our eye balls. **They must have been inches above our helmets.** We were in a large flat field with no place to take cover from this murderous fire. Thank God for that big dark cloud over the moon! That was the only thing that saved many of us at that moment.

S/Sgt. Cecil E. Hunter, Platoon Sergeant of the Second Platoon of Company "K" (He passed away June 28, 1986 of cancer at VA Hospital in San Antonio) heard German voices coming from behind the six foot stone fence to our right. Using his Thompson sub machine gun he fired one fifteen round clip of 45 caliber bullets down into the trees and bushes on the other side of the fence. Before he could get his head down, the Germans behind the fence sprayed the top fence with MG-42 machine gun fire and it looked to us like Cecil had been hit but he was lucky and they missed.

We were thinking, if we try to climb over the six foot fence, the Germans at the white house and the three foot fence would be shooting at our backs and we would make easy targets. We knew we must charge straight at the three foot wall in front of us with the tanks shooting at us from behind it. We didn't have much of a choice!! We must not hesitate!!

At that time the Medic arrived with our Assistant Squad Leader, Cpl. James G. Smith (Who now lives at Box 73, Prairie Lea, TX. 78661). The large dark cloud was still covering the moon. We could not see much except there was a steady stream of tracer bullets directed at us from our left when Cpl. Smith dove for the ground beside me. His rifle bayonet stuck into the lower leg of one of our men who was laying, as flat on the ground as he could, trying not to be hit by the machine gun bullets coming from the white house.

Now our Platoon Medic had two men needing his attention and evacuation back to the beach. In a matter of minutes there were many more, as mortar shells and artillery shells started hitting all around us.

S/Sgt. Cecil E. Hunter gave the order for "EVERY ONE — FIX BAYONETS — PREPAIR TO CHARGE!!!" This is how our battle of Salerno started.

## Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

Ten to fifteen minutes had elapsed from 0330 hours when we landed on Salerno Beach before PFC. Harold J. Benton was struck by the very first burst of machine gun fire.

I never saw or heard from Harold Benton again. I think our Medic put him on one of the landing craft that brought in the second wave. Maybe he made it back to the convoy, fifteen miles, out in the Gulf of Salerno. I hope he made it home! He was an excellent soldier! I am proud to have known him!

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## The National Order Battlefield Commissions

I am a Life Member now of "The National Order of Battlefield Commissioned. Our order is only about six years old and we have 560 members at last count.

U.S. Chief of Staff, Gen. John W. Vasey, Jr. who retired from the Army last October earned his battle field Commission while serving with 34th. Inf. Div. Artillery in Italy. His NOBC membership number is 0402.

We have many men in our 36th Inf. Div. who earned Battle Field Commissions who have never heard of the NOBC. So far there are only six active NOBC members from our Division.

One Honorary Member Shelby P. Speights who served with Co. "C", 142 Inf. Reg.. I recommended him after reading your articles about him in our "Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly".

The other 36 Div. members are as follows:

0457 Walter M. Howard, Co. K, 141

0232 Stewart T. Stanuell, Jr., Btry C 155th, FA BN

0458 Raymond R. Hawkins, Co. K, 141

0505 Milburn Derryberry, Co. D, 142

0310 Jack T. York, 36th CAV Recon Trp. 5th Army (France)



**HENRY L. FORD**, shown at right at the VA Hospital at Salisbury, NC on D-Day Sept. 9, 1986 when he had a visit from his old 141st buddy, Earl Fisher.

## First Shots Fired On Salerno

### FIVE STARS FOR SPEIGHTS, ALL SILVER

### An Original Hero



Vol. V No. 2  
Summer 1985

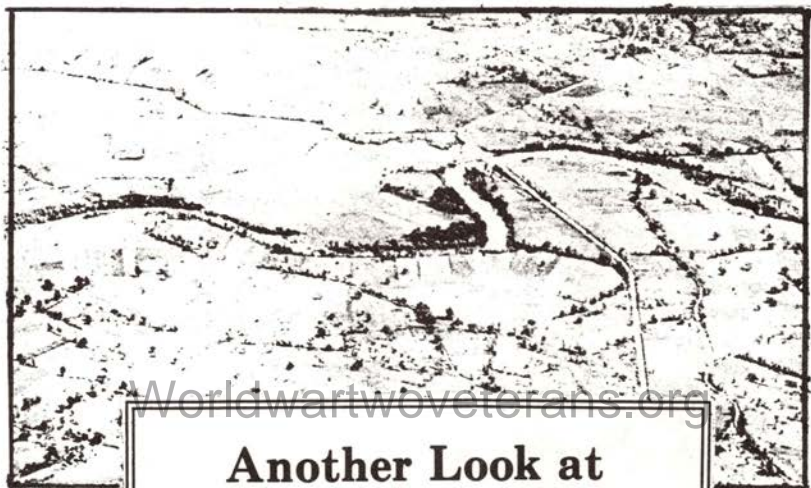
**SHELBY SPEIGHTS** of Purvis, Mississippi — was also praised by his CO of 142nd, General Lynch in a previous story in the T-Patcher. Shelby died before the Bronze Bust (shown here) was completed.

Fotos of bronze subjects are almost impossible to get good clear pictures. This is the third time this bust of Speights has been made, and seems to be the best.

Shelby is no doubt, the most highly decorated WWII veteran in the State of Mississippi, and all T-Patchers share in his exceptional heroics with his family.

Henry L. Ford, Rt. 5, Box 1402,  
Northlakes, Hickory N C 28601





## Another Look at Rapido River Debacle

By James Gardner Erickson  
Co. E 141st Infantry

The war in Italy was not going well for the Allies during the cold and rainy winter of 1944. After the September landing at Salerno, spearheaded by the 36th Texas Infantry Division, there had been a slow and costly advance up the Italian boot as far as Cassino. The Germans were usually on the high ground and the Allies in the mud below. There was also the winding Volturno River in the hills north of Naples to contend with.

The strategy from Berlin was to make the U.S., English and other Allied troops pay dearly for any advance, while at the same time using a minimum number of German soldiers. They were needed on the more important Russian front.

However, the Germans, commanded by Field Marshall Kesselring and Von Senger under orders from Hitler, had decided to hold at the Gustav Line. It was anchored in the mountains around Cassino and the defense line was also protected by the Garigliano and Rapido Rivers.

A road called Rout 6 entered the Liri Valley which headed toward Rome. To reach it brought the Allies under the guns of the German defenders in the mountains. It was here that things bogged down

## Another Look at Rapido River Debacle

MARK WAYNE CLARK  
(1896-1984)  
Lt. General,  
Commanding U.S.  
Fifth Army  
Sketched by  
James Erickson



and any further significant advance toward Rome by the Fifth and Eighth Armies was stopped.

The U.S. Fifth Army was commanded by General Mark Clark and the mainly British Eighth Army by General Montgomery. Winston Churchill had decided the the stalemate could be broken by making an "end run" by landing troops behind the German units holding at Cassino. This was to take place at the seaport towns of Anzio and Nettuno on January 22, 1944. It supposedly would threaten the communication lines of the enemy and cause some German troops at Cassino to be rushed back to meet the Anzio threat.

The plan called for the Rapido River to be crossed, a bridgehead secured and then the army engineers would erect a tank-carrying bridge. After that, Allied tanks would cross the river and rush up the Liri Valley to link up with the troops at Anzio eighty miles away. It looked good in the script but nothing went right on the stage!

General Mark Clark gave the order for what has become known as "the Rapido River fiasco." He was the son of a father of English stock and a Jewish mother, and had graduated from West Point. In World War I Clark had been hit by shrapnel before gaining any combat experience. He spent the rest of the war in a rear-echelon job. During the 1930's he had been an assistant to General Bolles who was in charge of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). This organization ostensibly provided jobs for the unemployed young men. In reality, it has been suggested that it was to get future soldiers used to barracks life and to train cooks in preparation for the inevitable future war. Mark Clark quickly gained promotions over older and combat-experienced officers. At the time of the WW2 Italian invasion he was head of the Fifth Army.

## Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

Facing the U.S. troops on the German side of the Rapido River was the town of **San Angelo** about six miles west from **Cassino**. Deployed in the area was the **fresh and experienced 15th Panzer Grenadier Division**. To reach the river the American infantry had to cross a partially flooded marsh for a distance of from three to five miles in the open. The Germans had heavily mined both sides of the river, and on their side had placed barbed wire, machine guns as well as mortars in readiness. Camouflaged bunkers were manned by alert soldiers and the dreaded 88 millimeter guns were dug into the hills occupied by the Wehrmacht.

Only two U.S. regiments, the 141st and the 143rd of the 36th Division, were ordered to cross the swollen Rapido River and capture the heavily defended area. No wonder after the war, Kesselring, the German field marshal, in an interview in "U.S. News and World Report" (9-2-1955) stated, "From a military viewpoint it was an impossible thing to attempt."

A patrol was sent out on the night of January 17 led by Lt. Navarette (Co. E, 141 Inf.). It managed to cross the river but five of seven collapsible boats had capsized. Navarette himself was wounded, and reported on his return that "any attempt to cross the river was tantamount to suicide." The major who received the report discounted it.

On the fateful night of January 22 the troops started moving toward the river. Tolk O. Roberson (Co. L, 143 Inf.) was later quoted as saying, "When I saw my regimental commander (Col. Martin) standing with tears in his eyes as we moved up I knew something was wrong."

The 111th Engineers had cleared paths through the mine fields. German artillery and mortars were alerted by the noise and confusion. Then exploding shells scattered the white tapes which marked the routes. At the river most of the footbridges were destroyed before or after being installed. Rubber boats were overturned or sunk with machine gun bullets and shrapnel. Confusion reigned and officers directing the operation were often killed or wounded.

As daylight approached a smoke screen was used but this added to the confusion and lack of communication. Some soldiers had managed to cross and form a bridgehead but they were pinned down and were unable to extend it.

The next night orders came to continue the lost cause. This proved no more successful, and finally it was all called off. Those GI's on the other side of the river who did not try to swim for it were all killed or captured.

## Another Look at Rapido River Debacle

The U.S. dead, wounded and missing was almost 1700 men. The German losses were negligible.

On January, 1946, after the war, the 36th Division Association passed a resolution calling the attempted Rapido River crossing "one of the colossal blunders of WW2" and demanded a congressional investigation.

This resulted in hearings held by the Committee of Military Affairs during the second session of the 79th Congress on February 20 and March 18, 1946. It was inconclusive and hushed up.

Maybe someday a poem will immortalize the event as was done with the doomed charge of the 'Light Brigade' during the Crimean War.

James G. Erickson  
P.O. Box 9694  
Minneapolis, MN 55440



THEN & NOW — Here's James Erickson, who is a rabid war historian and a Proud T-Patcher. In post-war life, he attended a Commercial Art School and has spent 40 years with Pillsbury Co., and his own Sign Company.

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## COMPANY C



## TAKES A HOLIDAY

By Alan "Chum" Williamson



During the months before the 36th Division was mobilized on 25 November 1940, the authorized strength of a rifle company was increased from 3 officers and 65 enlisted men to 4 officers and 85 EM. **Captain Claude C. Owens**, commanding Company C, 143rd Infantry, Beaumont, Texas, had no difficulty recruiting the extra shavetail. Men who had to ask directions to find the Armory showed up to volunteer. Owens selected the company's senior eligible NCO.

He also had no trouble signing up the additional 20 EM. Under pressure of a peacetime draft, scores of young men applied for enlistment, preferring to serve the projected year of active duty with the home town company at Camp Bowie.

On M-Day, authorized enlisted strength would go to 109, an increase Owens could again meet many times over. At the same time, many of the company's veterans, including nearly all of the noncommissioned officers, married and with children, could ill afford to leave their jobs for the pay of a serviceman.

There was very little rank in the Armed Forces before World War II, and the pay was low. A squad leader was only a corporal, grade E-3. Platoon sergeants and platoon guides were "buck sergeants," grade E-4. A corporal was paid \$42 per month, a sergeant \$54, no family allowances. The only NCO of the first three grades in a rifle company was the "topkick," grade E-6.



## Company C Takes a Holiday

After mobilization, the grade of "recruit" was established. Below the grade of "buck private," renamed "private E-1," the recruit was paid \$21 per month.

There was only one warrant officer in the entire infantry regiment, the leader of the band. It was said that he was "neither fish nor fowl." He took his meals in the Officers Mess. But he could join neither the Officers Club nor the NCO Club.

Owens offered hardship discharges to all who wanted out. Of the 65-man cadre, 43 accepted, including all line NCOs except two sergeants and a corporal. Those discharged included First Sergeant Thomas F. Saxe, Jr., a member of the company since it was organized in 1926, and both platoon sergeants, Altman L. Bolling, manager of the Beaumont branch of Thom McAnn Shoe Store, and Louis D. Didrickson, brother of famed Mildred "Babe" Didrickson Zaharias.

However, the 22 veterans who stayed the course were good men. Their number included Sgt. Salvador F. Maggio, who was given a direct commission by Gen. Walter Krueger, the corps commander, for his alertness as sergeant of the guard during a field exercise. Cpl. Raymond Nunez and PFC Fred Costillo would both earn battlefield commissions in Italy. Lieut. Nunez led his platoon across the bloody Rapido, but was killed in action. Costillo retired on length of service in the grade of lieutenant colonel.

The men recruited also included brave men and true. Most became NCOs of the first three grades and some earned commissions, either direct or through OCS.

Orders mobilizing the National Guard and the Organized Reserve Corps called for one year of active federal service. Those inducted therefore based their plans on that assumption. There was a popular song with the words, "Don't cry, Dear, I'll be back in a year."

Graham S. Mallet, a Beaumonter who served more than ten years in Company C, received a reserve commission before M-Day. He was called to active duty as a lieutenant and assigned to the 45th Division at Camp Berkeley. Graham liked military life. He volunteered for service in the Philippines in return for a promise of two years of active duty instead of one. He survived the Bataan death march, but died aboard a Japanese prison ship.

Camp Bowie wasn't ready on M-Day. The men of Company C trained at the armory in Beaumont until 6 January 1941. The camp still wasn't ready, but they were moved there by truck, with an overnight stop Camp Mabry, the installation in Austin, Texas, that housed the headquarters of the Regular Army instructors.

## Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

At Bowie, the men found a sea of mud. The plan called for caliche roads and walkways, which had barely been started. Lieut. Col. John "Gotch-eye" Morley, commander of the 2nd Battalion, 143rd Infantry, formed details and assigned them the task of completing the walkways.

Most of the new men Captain Owens took to Camp Bowie were unmarried, had seldom been away from home for more than a weekend, and had never traveled 200 miles from the place where they were born. The neighboring town of Brownwood was much too small to provide recreational facilities for a division.

WACO SUSPENSION BRIDGE begun in 1866, the 474-foot span was officially opened to the public in 1870 and was the first bridge across the Brazos River.



Most units of the 143rd Infantry were from towns within easy driving distance of Brownwood. Waco, home of the largest contingent, was an hour-and-a-half away. Hillsboro, Temple and Belton were also near. Beaumont was 400 miles away, the furthest of any unit of that regiment. Considering the automobiles and the roads of 1941, this meant 18 to 20 hours driving the round trip for men of Company C who went home on weekends.

There was a shortage of vehicles for car pooling. To make matters worse, field exercises usually began on Sunday mornings, the soldier's day off.

There was at the time no provision for any type of furlough except emergency leave, verified by the American Red Cross. Homesick men began to take French leave.

An ingenious T-Patcher invented the "AWOL haircut," which enjoyed brief popularity among those qualifying for the dubious distinction. He had the barber run the clippers from his forehead over the top of his head, leaving a wide center part. A member of Company C showed up sporting one. "You look like a skunk!" Captain Owens remarked in disgust.

Of course there were units in other regiments with home towns as far, or farther away than Beaumont. Some men lived so distant they

## Company C Takes a Holiday

couldn't drive the round trip on a weekend, and were thus unable to visit their homes.

Colonel William C. Torrence, commander of the 143rd Infantry, was fully aware of the problem. When he brought up the subject at an officers conference, Chaplain (Major) Jonathan Stout said, "I want to talk to those men when they come back from AWOL."

"I want you to talk to them before they go AWOL," Torrence replied.

During a field exercise in early June 1941, Col. Torrence announced at a staff meeting that **Monday, July 3rd, would be a holiday as well as Tuesday, July 4th.**

Men of the Beaumont company were jubilant. Pooling their resources, they chartered a bus for the round trip. They wrote friends and loved ones, imparting the good news and announcing the times of arrival and departure.

But in confiding to his regimental commanders that July 3rd would be a holiday, MGen Claude V. Birkhead had reckoned without his host. **As the Independence Day holiday approached, word came down through channels that Monday, 3 July, would be a day of duty for all personnel.** The decision reflected concern at the highest echelon about the state of training of National Guard units and the fear, soon to be realized, that time was running out.

With obvious regret, Col. Torrence announced the change at a 143rd Infantry officers conference. Characteristically, he shouldered the blame for the premature announcement. **He simply stated he had believed July 3rd would be a holiday, but that he was wrong.**

**The news hit Company C like a bombshell.** Stunned disbelief was followed by resentment, anger. The cost of the chartered bus, no small sum considering the pay scale of 1941, had already been paid.

Three of the company's former M-Day officers had been reassigned to other units. 1st Lieut. Cecil C. Clark was acting company commander and the unit's only remaining officer.

**Cecil Clark was in appearance a textbook officer.** Handsome, debonair, charismatic, his uniform was immaculate under almost any circumstances. He looked as if he had just stepped out of a recruiting poster.

The chartered bus parked in front of Company C's orderly room at noon on Saturday, July 1st. Minutes later, the company clerk rushed in. **"Lieutenant Clark, the men are all getting on that bus to go to Beaumont!"** he announce breathlessly.

## Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

"Well, there's nothing I can do about it," Clark replied.

"I'm going with them!" the man blurted as he dashed out the door.

At Reveille on Monday, July 3rd, units of the 143rd Infantry reported in turn, "All present or accounted for, sir!" until Company C's turn.

"Company C! Sixty-four men absent!" Clark babbled.

"Make up your mind!" Lieut. Col. Napoleon Rainbolt demanded.

"Is it six? Or four?"

"Sir, that's sixty-four men absent!" Clark stammered.

"W-H-A-A-T?" Rainbolt shouted incredulously. In the ensuing pandemonium, Company D was unable to report.

The problem of trying 64 men for AWOL was solved by taking the names of the offenders from the Morning Report and sentencing them to 30 days confinement to quarters by administrative order.

"Quarters" consisted of pyramidal tents pitched on the drill field. The miscreants took part in normal training activities during the day. During off-duty hours they were confined under guard to the tent city that was facetiously called "Company J." They were given an unexpected reprieve when the Division departed Camp Bowie for the Louisiana Maneuvers before the time was served.

Lieut. Clark came out of the caper smelling like a rose. Col. Torrence agreed with Lieut. Col. Rainbolt that there was nothing Clark could have done.

Unauthorized absence was a continuing problem, but not among the men of "Company J." The Beaumonters had learned their lesson from the ignominy of punishment for mass defiance of orders.

MGen Fred L. Walker, who replaced MGen Claude V. Birkhead as Division commander on 13 September 1941, entered in his diary on 7 October: "Many men are absent without leave because the maximum punishment they will receive under the Articles of War is so light that they are willing to trade a good absence-without-leave for the punishment. Our records show 183 men now absent — the equivalent of one whole infantry company. This condition is not confined to this Division; all training camps and all new Divisions are cursed with it."

Walker didn't mention that a major part of the problem was the lack of provision for authorized leave. Army Regulations required that emergency leave be approved by a representative of the American Red Cross. And there had to be an emergency that required the soldier's presence.

## Company C Takes a Holiday

After having a request for emergency leave disapproved, the soldier tended to blame the Red Cross rather than the regulation. As a result, the Red Cross representative was about as popular among GIs as a skunk at a picnic.

In the German POW camps during World War II, Red Cross parcels meant the difference between a tolerable existence and complete misery. Far from being grateful, there was grumbling among the benefactors. An American interned at Oflag 64 claimed his wife had written him that the ARC was trying to get wives of POWs to pay for the parcels their husbands received. Of course the story was a fabrication.

During the latter part of 1941, after it was decided to extend the one year of active duty, an order came down offering ten-day leaves of absence. However, only two men in the 143rd Infantry got the full ten days.

They were NCOs assigned to the regimental Headquarters Company who were firm believers that any time "bennies" are offered in the military service, apply immediately. The offer may be withdrawn.

Sure enough, the ink was hardly dry on their leave orders when the authorization was reduced to five days.

The End



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# Japanese internment: books

## The saga of the heroic allies who bridged the River Kwai

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### LAST MAN OUT

By H. Richard Charles (Eakin Press,  
\$16.95)

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By William J. Teague

Most people with an interest in World War II history are familiar with the epic story of the British prisoners of war who built the "Bridge Over the River Kwai" in Southeast Asia. Not many know the equally valiant, tragic, yet ultimately heroic, saga of the allied servicemen who were also involved in this monumental endeavor — or of the brave, resourceful Dutch doctor who played such a pivotal role in the survival of the Americans who took part in the historic episode.

After the disastrous Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941, which left the once-formidable U.S. Asiatic Fleet crippled, American ships in the Far East — along with several British, Dutch and Australian warships — were grouped in January, 1942, into an allied task

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*Dr. William J. Teague teaches U.S. government and American studies at the University of Texas at Dallas.*

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force. Their mission was brief and simple: to slow the Japanese advance into Southeast Asia and Indo-China. It was also a veritable suicide assignment.

In February, 1942, the 15 ships of this fleet were attacked by 60 Japanese warships in the Battle of the Java Sea. The allied force, which was led by the heavy cruiser USS Houston, was virtually destroyed.

Less than half of the Houston's crew, along with other allied sailors and marines, were saved — only to be placed in a series of prisoner-of-war camps. Along with them were members of the Texas National Guard's 131st Field Artillery Battalion who had been captured on Java when the island fell. These sailors, soldiers and Marines became known — because their whereabouts was not ascertained for four years — as the "Lost Battalion."

From early 1942 to their liberation in 1945, these men were subjected to the cruelties of Japanese POW camps that stretched from Java to Singapore, from Thailand to Japan. But the singular event for which they have become known is

Continued on Page 62

# The flip side



*100,000 Killed prisoners of war died during World War II in Japanese slave labor camps. A vallant Dutch doctor saved the lives of hundreds, including the author.*

H. Robert Charles



"If we need to be continually reminded, as some people feel, of what the United States did to the Japanese (with the atomic bombs) at Hiroshima and Nagasaki . . . then the world needs to be reminded of what the Japanese did to Americans in Burma."



H. Robert Charles

## Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

### LAST MAN OUT

By H. Richard Charles (Eakin Press,  
\$16.95)

Continued from page 60

their work on the Kwai River bridge. Half of them died, and more would have perished had it not been for the miraculous work of Dr. Henri Hekking of the Dutch Colonial Army.

Born in Java of Dutch parents, Hekking had studied medicine in the Netherlands and then returned to practice in the East Indies. In addition to his surgery education, he had studied in depth native use of herbs, plants, and other remedies which constituted much of the jungle medical curriculum a physician

had to know in such a primitive environment.

Largely because of Hekking's ministrations, the majority of the "Lost Battalion" eventually survived and was liberated in 1945. The gallant and resourceful Dutch doctor continued on in military service, ultimately retired and now makes his home in The Hague.

*Last Man Out* tells this story of courage, endurance and spirit, capturing the quintessence of heroism at both the philosophical and gut level with equal facility.

H. Robert Charles was a marine machine-gunner aboard the USS *Houston* at the time it was sunk by the Japanese in Sunda Strait, March 1, 1942. He swam nine hours, was picked up off the coast of Java by the Japanese, and held forty-three months in slave labor camps in Burma, Thailand, and Saigon.

The prisoners in Saigon were repatriated at the end of the war by British paratroopers and Office of Strategic Services personnel. Charles was flown to a hospital in Calcutta, then home by Air Transport Command.

Born in Pitcher, Oklahoma, Charles grew up on a wheat farm and cattle ranch near Hutchinson, Kansas, and enlisted in the Marine Corps in June 1940. He was married to Mary Margaret Butler in 1946, two years before he graduated from Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism. After graduating, he served as advertising and publicity copywriter, account executive, and later vice-president for advertising agencies before joining the staff of *Parents Magazine* in New York.

**LAST MAN OUT**, hardcover, 223 pages, \$16.95 distributed nationally through Waldenbooks and B. Dalton Booksellers. Soon to be sold in England.

Author Charles — address:

379 East Chicago St, Coldwater MI 49036



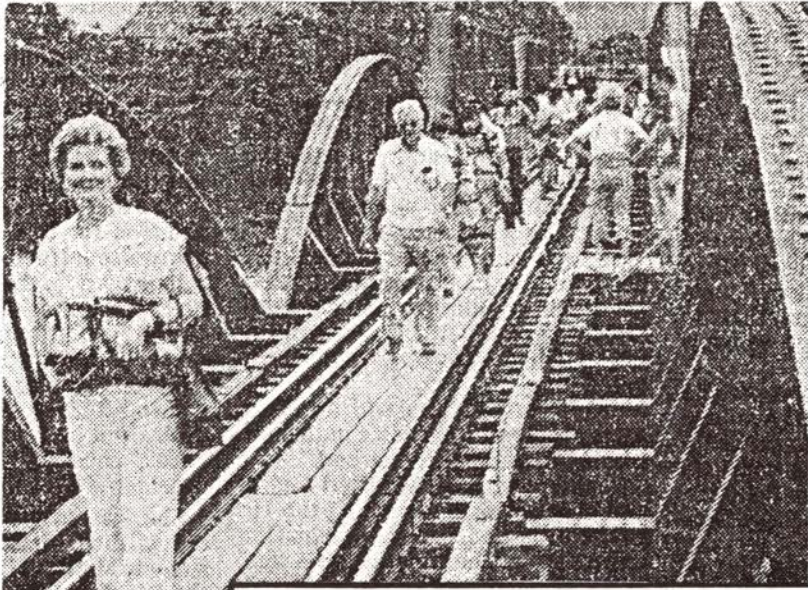
H. ROBERT CHARLES





# Lost Battalion masters its memories

By **KYLE THOMPSON**  
Star-Telegram Writer



**BRIDGE ON THE RIVER KWAI . . .**  
part of the "Death Railway" still in use

**131st 'Lost Battalion'**  
*POWs never  
forget war*

## 131st FIELD ARTILLERY

Journalist KYLE THOMPSON Writes Feature Story of Lost Battalion's Return 1981 Visit to Burma and Thailand and the "Death Railroad"



Not all of them were returned. The battalion lost nearly 30 percent of its men to jungle diseases, starvation and overwork during their long captivity.

It's always hot and humid in Java, unless one is fortunate enough to live in the few mountains there. If the equator were an actual, visible line, you could stand on the north coast of the island and see it plainly. That is, after wiping the sweat from your eyes.

The mother of one of the missing soldiers from Decatur wrote in mid-

1942 that "perhaps our boys, as the general belief is, are prisoners of war, but our hearts had rather believe that they are still fighting — because they are fighting men."

Another optimistic mother from Wichita Falls wrote then of her son: "Wherever he is, I know he's all right. He won't complain and he can take it. His only worry will be about his mother and father to whom he has been a blessing for 19 years. We can not help but believe that our boy, as well as the other members of the battalion, will be returned to their families some day."



*KYLE THOMPSON was a member of the 36th Division of the 131st Field Artillery Battalion, Texas National Guard, when it was mobilized in 1941. It was to become famous as the Texas Lost Battalion.*

*After a year at Camp Bowie in Brownwood, he was sent overseas en route to the Philippines when World War II started. Diverted to Australia, he ended up under the command of the Dutch government in Java in early 1942 and was captured by the Japanese when the Dutch surrendered on March 8, 1942. He was 19 years old.*

*For the next 42 months he was a prisoner of war, working for a year on the "death railroad" in Burma and Thailand. He was liberated in Thailand when the war ended, returned home and married Vivian Carter in 1946.*

*He worked for United Press International for more than 20 years, serving as chief capital correspondent and Texas political writer in Austin. He has been press secretary to former Gov. John Connally and Sen. John Tower and regional director for the Defense Civil Preparedness Agency, the federal civil defense agency with regional headquarters in Denton. He is now a business representative for an engineering company in Dallas and lives in Denton. He has three daughters, Linda Montgomery, whose husband, Dave Montgomery, is chief of the Star-Telegram Washington Bureau; Kay Thompson of Dallas; and Janis Thompson of Denton.*

*Thompson was one of a group of former POWs who this month retraced the route of their war-time ordeal, a trip that awakened deeply buried memories for most of the men. This special report by Thompson is a look at that emotion-packed journey.*

# Governor to honor the 'Lost Battalion'

By KYLE THOMPSON  
Star-Telegram Writer

Java is so far away, so hot and humid, and so alien to anything a bunch of scrawny, somewhat backward Texans who grew up in the 1930s had ever seen or heard of, that it's the last place in the world one would think of getting lost in.

But they did — nearly 600 of them. It was 40 years ago this week — the actual date was March 8 — that these Texans began their bit in World War II history. They were captured that day by the Japanese army, and became fondly known by family and friends back in Texas as the "Lost Battalion."

*"The men of the 131st  
are a rough and ready  
lot . . ."*

— *Star-Telegram*, 1942

To mark the passing of the 40th year of their capture, Gov. Bill Clements will sign an official memorandum Monday proclaiming March 8 as Lost Battalion Association Day in Texas.

Several of the survivors of that event and the succeeding 3½ years in Japanese prisoner of war camps will be on hand Monday for the formal ceremony in the governor's office at 10 a.m.

Clements will present the official document to Frank Fujita of Abilene, the current president of the association, which also includes survivors of the heavy cruiser USS Houston, sunk off the Java coast 40 years ago Monday, March 1.

Although 40 years have passed, the events that started that long and arduous part of their lives still are clear in the minds of the Lost Battalion survivors.

"My first thought was to take my .45 pistol and have it out with the Japs," said Crayton Gordon of Fort Worth. "I figured I would take some of them with me before they got me. But I quickly realized that was foolish and just threw my gun away."

Some of the group tried to find boats or a ship to get off the island. Others fled to the hills to hide out with remnants of the Dutch army there. But all wound up in POW camps.

The Lost Battalion was a unit of the Texas National Guard 36th Division mobilized late in 1940 as the European war spread. They were of the 2nd Battalion, 131st Field Artillery, and were detached from the main division a year later and sent to the Pacific Theater.

The Texas unit eventually was sent to Java to support the meager Dutch military forces there in a futile effort to defend what was then known as the Dutch East Indies. Java was a major invasion point by the Japanese and the small Allied contingent was soon overrun.

For nearly a year after their capture in early March 1942, it was as if a heavy, dark curtain had been let down over the fate of the small band of Texans.

Soon after they disappeared, the *Star-Telegram* began running a news column almost daily of bits and pieces of information furnished mostly by friends and families of the soldiers from across Texas.



JUD BENTLEY'S  
"The Days of Whine and Roses"

FLANAGAN FARES  
FIRST IN FOURTH



THE SHORTEST  
SUMMARY COURT MARTIAL  
IN MILITARY HISTORY

I have been showered with requests on  
"The Court's Martial of JOHN FLANAGAN,  
BM 2/c U.S.N."

It seems that this John Flanagan was charged with selling U.S. Navy mattress covers to unnamed A-rabs and thereby aiding and abetting G.I.'s who were inclined to go A.W.O.L. or desert under the guise of being A-rab women and you faced getting your head severed if you touched one. Flanagan even provided veils made from mosquito nets which weren't worth a damn.

Most A-rab women were small and quite petite. If you saw one that was about 6 foot 2 inches and Army shoes showing down below my best bet would that it was a Texan who chickened out or maybe from Mark Clark's staff. I do not go so far as to include Mark Clark.

From my records, JOHN FLANAGAN HAD BEEN OVER AT PEARL HARBOR IN DEC. 1941 and had been busted a couple of times. How the hell he ever got in our 4th Beach Bn. beats the shit out of me. I like to think back when we got replacements and the Navy cleaned out the V.D. wards and all of the incorrigibles they couldn't handle.

## "The Days of Whine and Roses"

One time our Bn. got 70 replacements from Brooklyn, N.Y. and all of their names began with MC and all were draft dodgers and a bunch of "Dead End Kids". Geez!

We usually got replacements only a few days before we got "the finger" to somewhere else with some other outfit. I would line them all up and read the "Riot Act" to them which went something like this:

**"GENTLEMEN, I find you under my command as an officer in this here now U.S. Navy. We are about to embark for the shores of an enemy of undisclosed nature. Whatever your trials and tribulations will seem trivial in our days to come. Stay close to the mates to which I have assigned you and God bless you as most of us are too "Pooped to Pray".**

By the time we had gotten around to trying John Flanagan we had been through a lot and did not feel up to hanging or shooting a buddy for something like that.

Anyhow our Chicken Shit C.O., Jimmie Walsh, ordered a Court's Martial (Summary). There was me, Ens. Connally, W.O. 1st Class Glenn Wizard (the Wizard of Arzew). That crazy S.O.B., Lloyd Crandall and the C.O. of our 2nd Co. — a shyster lawyer from Chicago, John Riley.

We were all seated, nice and proper, when the M.A.A. (Master at Arms) brought the culprit before us. We ordered the M.A.A. to read the charges. It was a list as long as our own arms.

John Riley, who was presiding, asked "Do you wish to make a statement before this board goes into session?"

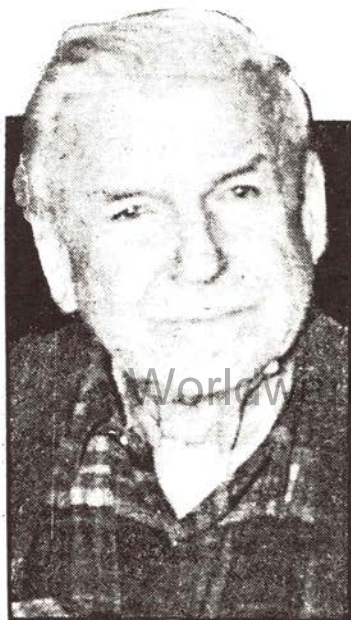
John Flanagan, with a big chew of tobacco, looked for somewhere to spit but swallowed it and said: "If it pleases yer honor, I have looked over the members of this Court and have served, side-by-side, with most, except John Riley. I have come to the conclusion that there isn't a man on this Board qualified to try anybody." We motioned to the M.A.A. and the accused was dismissed. We looked at each other and agreed with him.

**"CASE DISMISSED"**

**JUD BENTLEY**

A Navy Lieutenant  
Who Put the 36th Ashore at  
Salerno Landing...





**JUD BENTLEY**

U. S. Navy's  
Fourth Beach Battalion

**S.O.B**

Were Known as  
Bentley's Sons of The Beaches

Worldwveterans.org

### Lookin' Back . . .

A funny thing — when some of us got out to Oceanside with the Marines at Pendleton, the first guy I saw was John Flanagan. He was herding a bunch of P.W.'s and packing a 12 ga. Riot gun and a 45.

He stopped off long enough to spit a ½ pint of tobacco juice and asked me, "How do you like them apples, Mr. Bentley?"

I remember this old geezer — Capt. Simpson from the Naval Base in Oran. He looked like Capt. Wm. Bligh, played by Chas. Laughton in the "MUTINY ON THE BOUNTY."

He faced gale winds to pin Purple Hearts on us. There must have been three score or more. His assistants held him up long enough to get to John Flanagan.

John was a perennial Purple Heart getter and got them three times running and all from S. Mines (Bouncing Betties and Daisey cutters.)

In spite of his warnings to drop flat on the ground when he tripped one, he would get up and run and get hit. It's hard to tell an Irishman anything.

When this Capt. Simpson got around to Flanagan to pin another P.H. on him he noted that John already had two of the bastards. He

## Bentley's Sons of The Beaches

bumbled around and said, "Son, you must be proud to be serving in such a distinguished unit as — this."

Flanagan spit a load of tobacco juice, wiped his lips on his sleeve and said, "Sir! I would rather have a sister working in a whorehouse than have a brother in the 4th Beach Bn." We were all proud of John for expressing our collective sentiments. (or sediments, as Yogi Berra would say) **REAL E'SPIRIT DE CORPS.**

There was the Armistice Day Parade in ORAN in 1943. I was in the hospital in Oran and could not make the scene. I was given to understand that the rest of our 4th Beach got in the parade, right behind the French Foreign Legion and were in dress blues with full battle packs and bayonets shining bright. We picked up the Legionnaires who had fallen by the wayside and dished out quinine, etc.

It is hard to say your "Hail Mary's" going through the wire and mine fields but I am still here to tell about it. I have to laugh when I think of foiling Der Fueher with 5 cents worth of shingle nails.

Try as I might, I am at a loss to remember the last beach I went in on. I guess I am getting senile.



E. Judson Bentley  
1223 Minnesota St.  
Hancock, Michigan 49930

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James Q. Townley, Bigfork, Mont., Editor of the USN Fourth Beach Battalion Newsletter has this item — October 1988 issue of THE SANDWITCH...

### E. JUDSON BENTLEY

On September 10, 1943 (D+1 of the Salerno Invasion), twice-wounded Beachmaster Bentley made the decision (in the presence of still living naval personnel) that saved upwards of 15,000 lives of the 36th Division, of the British Forces to the north of us and to the south of us, and of our Fourth Beach Battalion.

Beachmaster Bentley advised Gen. Ernest J. Dawley and Gen. "Iron Mike" O'Daniel (who came ashore about noon on D+1 under heavy enemy fire) that...

(1) "To surrender would throw the total might of the German Armies on the British Forces, or...

(2) "To abort the invasion and attempt to evacuate our forces — certainly just what the Germans were hoping for — would result in a slaughter! Conditions were not ideal like they were at Dunkirk. But...

(3) "To continue our invasion efforts with renewed vigor — and with reinforcements and heavier coordinated Naval bombardment — would change the tide of affairs and bring about success!"

These are the unembellished facts!

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## Vignette from Vannatta

Brief, Bold, and Bizarre...

**Morris S. Rosebaum**  
**"A Good Ole Jew Boy**  
**from Waco, Texas"**

**143**



Lem J. Vannatta  
Service Company, 143rd Infantry

It is January 8, 1988 here in Arp, Texas. We have been snowed in two days and I have cabin fever. I've thought all day about a subject for a story for the Historical Quarterly. Being a truck driver in Service Co. 143rd during the war, **I didn't see much fighting, so I can't tell of a close call or a heroic stand.**

My thoughts keep coming back to a Sgt. I served under in Italy. **He was my kind of Sgt.** He was fat, didn't believe in shaving and I never saw him with his shoes tied. **He wouldn't chase women and wouldn't get drunk with us, these were his main faults.**

I mobilized with Co. K 143rd in Waco on November 25, 1940. It was raining like hell when we showed up at the Armory on 11th or 12th. St. and Washington Avenue before daylight that Monday morning. My name starting with a V, I was lined up beside a fat guy named Rosenbaum. **We were both yardbirds.** Charley Young was top kick of K Co. **I noticed he got on Rosey and called him Jew boy.** I asked Rosey if he was going to put up with that. He laughed and said, **"I know what I am, Charley doesn't know what he is."**

We, K Co., moved on to Camp Bowie. Service Company was in need of truck drivers and supply men. **I had driven a bundle wagon at a thrasher so I qualified as a truck driver.** Rosey, being fat and a Jew boy, he qualified as a supply man. I asked Rosey later what he



## A Good Old Boy from Waco Texas

had done before going into the Army. He said, "Nothing, Mama had a job and I always talked her out of pocket change."

Well, we both learned our trade and when we invaded at Salerno, I was a T5 and Rosey was a buck Sgt. I was hauling ammo and Rosey was a Sgt. in the Regt. Ammo Section. Rosey had what it took, he knew ammo and all weapons, also he could handle us truckdrivers. He had six of us.

We all liked he because he would work like a dog. He never said the Capt. said do it when he gave an order. He would come up to a driver and say, "Little chum go to the ammo dump and get a load of (a certain kind) ammo and hurry back, no fooling around." We liked that kind of orders. Rosey was scared as any of us but was too lazy to dig a hole. He always slept on top of the ground, usually under a loaded ammo truck. We all dug in and stayed clear of the ammo trucks and piles.

At Anzio when the 143rd infiltrated behind the German lines to bring on the fall of Velletri, the troupes were armed with hand grenades only as they slipped through the German lines.

We carried three loads of grenades almost to the German lines and unloaded them. We left Rosey there to issue the grenades and caution the men not to fire their rifles as that would give the infiltrator away. Rosey did the job and came out unhurt. I thought he deserved a medal so I begin talking it up to get him a Bronze Star. I was doing some good until Rosey heard about it. He called me off and asked me to stop it. He said he would be the laughing stock of the Waco beer joints if he went home with a medal. I cooled everything off.

We at the Ammo dump cooked lots of good hobo stews, etc. to eat. Rosey was so damned lazy, he would wait until one of us had eaten then he would use our mess kit. That way he wouldn't have to wash his mess kit.

The winter in Italy was long and wet. We never had a dry shelter. The lifting of the Ammo crates told on all of us. Rosey was older than we truck drivers and worked harder, too. He got down in his back and walked bent over. So at the end of our tour in Italy, Rosey was put on order to come home.

He and I had become very close friends. I put off until the last minute to tell him goodbye. He saw me coming and hollered, "Vannatta, you S.O.B., don't come near me, I'll meet you at the Rendez-

## Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

vous on 5th Street in Waco." This was a popular bar where they served frosty mugs of Bud tap beer.

We moved to France without Rosey. We did our job but all of us missed Rosey. We had good Non Coms but we didn't have a fat Sgt. to work his Jew butt off with us to end the war.

I came home in July 1945 and was in Waco so I went to the "Rendezvous" on 5th St. for a beer. There on the front stool (his back turned on me) sat a big slob, his shoes were untied and he was telling the bartender how to run his business. I stepped around where he could see. He stuck out his hand and said, "It took you a helluva long time to get here." We had a great time reliving old times. I tried to pay for Rosey's beer but he said I always pay for my own.

We got together a few more times and I lost account of him. I heard last year he was dead. If Rosey is dead and there is anything like reincarnation, I bet somewhere in Israel there is a fat Ammo Sgt. with his shoes untied.



THEN & NOW . . . this one is Vannatta's seventh outing in the Quarterly. His down-home earthy humor makes war memories a real East-Texas classic folklore.

Old Lem has the world's shortest address — P.O. Box 2, Arp TX 75750. Coming next issue — Vannatta has a jewel of a tale — "The Summer of '43'.



T/Sgt. ALFRED H. CARNOT Receives  
Silver Star Award from Lt. Gen. Clark



Dear Editor:

Here's news clip and glossy foto of my brother-in-law, Sgt. ALFRED H. CARNOT who served with Hqs. Co. 1st Battalion, 141st Infantry from 1940 Mobilization in San Antonio.

His Silver Star was rewarded for his valor at San Angelo in Teodice, Italy during the Rapido River Crossing debacle, saving lives of many of his buddies trapped in the swift-flowing waters.

Alfred Carnot retired as M/Sgt at Aberdeen, MD in 1975, died on 25 Feb. 1981, buried at Arlington National Cemetery with honors. Hope you can use this in the Historical Quarterly.

I am a member of the 36th Association and also the great San Antonio Chapter. Thanks.

LEONARD N. JAIMES,  
1002 Mt. Kisco Dr,  
San Antonio TX 78213



# Beaches of Salerno

North Texas men recall WWII campaign



Virgil Duffy and Luther Ellis fought at Salerno during World War II.

By Carroll Wilson

Staff Writer

For years before, they trained so much they say they thought the "T" patch they wore on their sleeves and the sides of their helmets stood for "training."

For months before, they followed behind other divisions, waiting to put their training to use.

For days before, they hurried up and waited as they were shifted from one port on the Mediterranean to another.

The night before, the Italians surrendered, and they remember cheering, thinking it would all be so easy.

Just hours before, Allied commanders still hoped that if it would not be easy at least it might be sneaky enough to be a surprise.

And then it was 3:30 on the morning of Sept. 9, 1943, and Luther Ellis and Virgil Duffy, two kids from Wichita Falls, were with thousands of their Texas buddies on the beach at Salerno in southern Italy, part of an Allied force that was first to set foot on what was largely Hitler's continent.

And, as Ellis and Duffy recall it 45 years later, it was not easy at all. And it was no surprise.

Instead of Italians, Ellis, Duffy and those other Texans of the 36th Infantry Division ran into crack German troops — three Panzer divisions — who had experience and good weapons.

Here's how it was:

"It was the only invasion where not a shot was fired prior to landing," Duffy said. "Ordinarily, they would saturate (the landing zone) with guns.

But they figured it would be a sneak attack."

"We lost 72 percent of our men in 12 days," Ellis interrupted.

"We were fighting with bazookas and infantry rifles and that's all," Duffy said. "We'd dig in and move forward, dig in and move forward, dig and move. All the way, five miles inland."

"The LST I was on hit a sandbar and we had to get out," Ellis added. "They (the Germans) had the 88s lit up. By the time we got to the beach they were shelling it. We just dug in and moved."

He paused.

"It was awful," he said. "I feel very fortunate to be alive."

How long was it like that?

"Twelve days and nights,"

Duffy said. "No let up. Continuously."

Duffy and Ellis, who are both now retired, still remember it vividly. And so do others who had been Texas National Guardsmen mobilized along with them in November 1940. About 200 former soldiers were in Salerno over this weekend to dedicate a memorial to their buddies who died there. The weekend was to include the laying of wreaths at the Rapido River, the site of another bloody Allied assault, and a memorial service at a cemetery in Rome.

Duffy, who now lives in Henrietta, and Ellis, who lives in Wichita Falls, didn't make the trip.

But they recall well the friends they lost at Paestum on the beach as the 142nd Infantry Regiment rushed toward vine-covered mountains and beyond, toward Rome and Paris and eventually into the heart of Germany as the Third Reich began to crumble.

Their division fought five major campaigns, conducted two amphibious assaults and captured 175,800 prisoners and members were awarded 15 Medals of Honor.

Along the way, the division lost 27,343 men. Nearly 4,000 were killed, 19,000 were wounded and 4,300 were missing in action.

Both Duffy and Ellis were among the casualties. But not until they had spent hard months fighting the Germans for control of the mountains behind the Gulf of Salerno.

Duffy's war ended after the division rolled into Rome and beyond when he came down with pneumonia and trench foot.

Ellis's ended much sooner. He was a squad leader for a machine gun unit.

"I think I left two days before Christmas Eve," he said. "I had lost five men, my No. 1 gunner, and shrapnel and debris hit my eyes. I couldn't see for two days. Eventually, I lost my left eye. I lost five dead and I had part of another squad, flame-throwers. An airburst artillery tore us all up." "I never went back. Only one or two of the men lasted much longer."

But, said Duffy and Ellis, it could have been worse, or would have been worse, had it not been for their more than two years of training.

"We were ready," Ellis said. "If not, we'd never have held the beachhead. We had some good men."

"The ones that died were the heroes," he and Duffy agreed.

And Ellis asked, "How much more than life can you give for your country?"

NEWS stories like this appeared in many newspapers in Texas on the day of the 45th Anniversary of the Salerno Beaches, Sept. 9th 1988.



## Donating 36th Historical Quarterly To Public Libraries Catching On

Widow Donates 36th History Books  
In Memory of Her Late Husband

The Columbian,  
Friday, May 20, 1988



By DAVE JEWETT  
The Columbian

Stanek's late husband, **Frank Stanek**, was a member of the Third Division of Vancouver Barracks from 1937 to 1940, then a member of the 36th Infantry Division of the Army from December 1942 to 1944.

The Fighting 36th was the first U.S. infantry group to invade European soil during World War II and also was featured in "The Battle of San Pietro," a famous wartime documentary directed by John Huston.

Stanek is giving bound historical quarterlies of the Fighting 36th to the Prairie library.

**O**N BEHALF of her late husband and his family, **Caroline Stanek** of Vancouver has donated a pictorial history of the Fighting 36th Squadron to the Fort Vancouver Regional Library and the Prairie High School library.

She said she is eager that today's youngsters read about and remember the men who fought in World War II. Her generosity toward Prairie stems from the time her late husband did the floor covering when the school was built. Her son was one of the project architects.



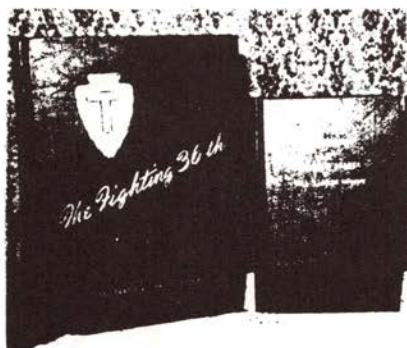
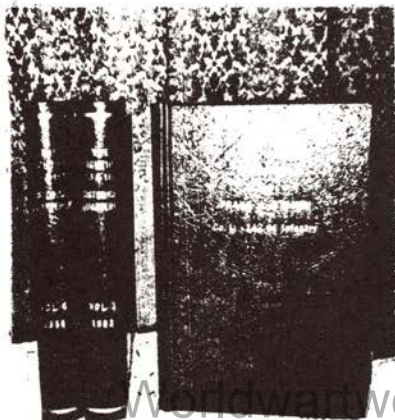
## CAROLINE J. STANEK

This is an amazing story about a widow who wanted to preserve the memory of her late husband, **FRANK A. STANEK** of Co. L 142nd Infantry. In January '88, Caroline Stanek ordered sets of the 36th Historical Quarterly. She told LENWLK she would give sets of this 36th history to: (1) Library of Prairie High School in Battle Ground, (2) and the public library of Vancouver, Washington.

For good measure she also gave the 1945 Pictorial History to each. As noted in foto above taken at the library, these sets have been "bound", and are beautiful.

We can't think of a better deed of benevolence, that'll live forever, **the Fighting 36th in print, in libraries**, all over America. Thanks to **CAROLINE STANEK**, 7802 N.E. 51st St, Vancouver WA 98662.

## Frank A. Stanek, Co L 142nd Inf.



### In Memory of Frank A. Stanek, Co L 142nd Inf.

The hard cover binding of the four 80 page issues of each Volume — are indeed, beautiful. This makes a permanent record of 320 page per each of the seven volumes . . . that's over 7" thick — and contains total of 2,240 page of "all history" of the 36th, each written by that man WHO was there!

The veterans of the 36th — in all 50 States of this great Nation — are loaded with Pride for their service with the Fighting 36th. Donating a few sets of the Volumes to your library — would be a most-worthy project. Try it.

Sunday, Jan. 26, 1986  
Vancouver, Wash.

### Frank Stanek

Frank A. Stanek, who stood guard over the Soviet airplane that landed here in 1937 after the famous transpolar flight, died Thursday in Portland. He was 66.

Mr. Stanek was born April 5, 1919 in Saskatchewan, Canada. A local resident for 53 years, he last resided at 7802 N.E. 51st St.

A member of the U.S. Army's Seventh Infantry at Vancouver Barracks prior to World War II, Mr. Stanek walked guard at the Russian plane the morning it landed. He later served in World War II, seeing action in North Africa, Italy and Southern France. He landed at Salerno, Italy, on D-Day.

Later, he was scheduled to come home, but his widow, Caroline, said "The Battle of the Bulge broke out, and they sent him to Bastogne (Belgium)."

For his efforts, Mr. Stanek received the Bronze Star, Purple Heart, Combat Infantry Badge and eight battle stars.

In Vancouver, Mr. Stanek worked as an installer of carpets and tile for C&L Interiors. He was a member of Union Local 1236 of the Linoleum, Carpet and Soft Tile Layers, and had served on the union's executive board. He was also a member of Smith-Reynolds American Legion Post 14

In addition to his widow, Mr. Stanek is survived by a son, Arlen of Vancouver; a daughter, Carole Lee White, Corrales, N.M.; a brother, James of Gresham; a sister, Florence Rowland of Vancouver and two grandsons.

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



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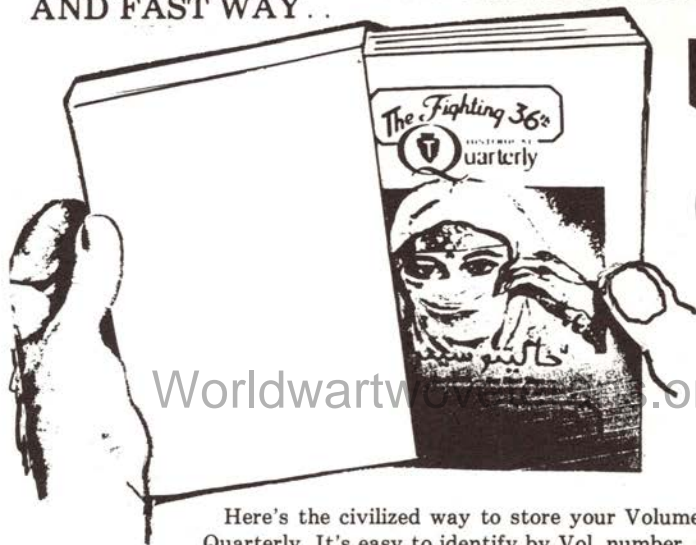


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## Faith helped Lincoln survive

By GASTON FOOTE

It is common knowledge that Abraham Lincoln, whose birthday we soon celebrate, was not a member of any church. But it ought to be said in the same breath that he was one of the most dedicated persons in the history of the United States.



FOOTE

Because of this apparent ambivalence in his life, he was one of the most beloved, and most hated Presidents in American history. Newspapers in both the North and South, almost without exception, vilified him in the most abusive and slanderous language at their command.

He was referred to as an atheist, agnostic, Christ killer, gorilla, country greenhorn, obscene clown, the baboon president and more.

But the sober reflections of history indicate an entirely different person against the backdrop of the passing years. He was deeply devoted to his mother and never seemed to get away from the truths he learned at his mother's knee. He regularly read the Scriptures.

As a youth he had few books, but the Bible was the one he prized most. He could quote many of the most meaningful passages in the Bible from memory. One day he said concerning it, "This book is the best gift God has given to man. All the good the Savior brought to the world was communicated through this book. Without it we could not know right from wrong."



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# Leadership:



*The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who knows the great enthusiasm, the great devotion, and spends himself in a worthy cause; who, if he wins, knows the thrills of high achievement, and who, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat.*

Teddy Roosevelt

