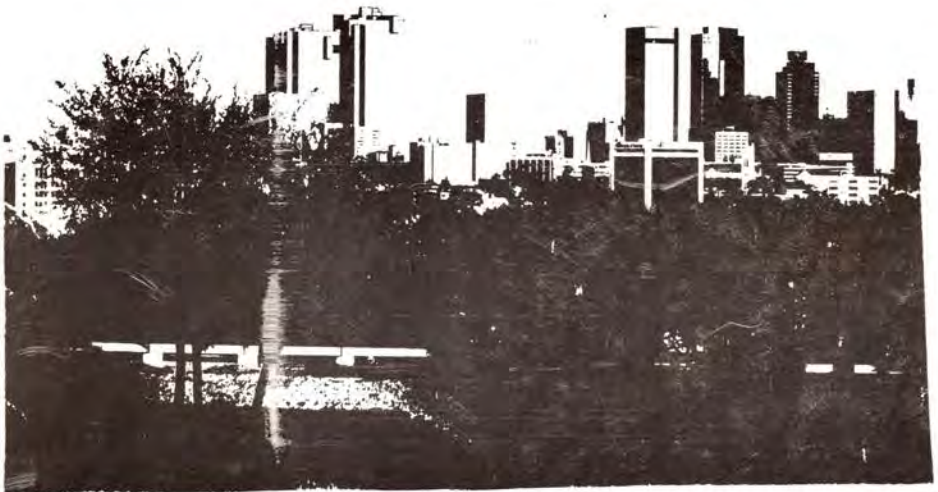


*The Fighting 36<sup>th</sup>*  
HISTORICAL  
Quarterly

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**FORT WORTH**



Worldwartwoveterans.org  
**65TH Annual Reunion**  
**AUGUST 29-SEPTEMBER 2, 1990**

**Vol. X, No. 3 Fall 1990**

Published by  
36th DIVISION ASSOCIATION

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HYATT REGENCY  FORT WORTH

36th DIVISION "NATIONAL" REUNION

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**THE FIGHTING 36th  
HISTORICAL QUARTERLY**

**Think of it as a      In Four  
320 Page Book –      Installments**

Each member of the Division has at least two or more good stories that would be of interest to others. They can range from humorous to sad or tragic involving either training periods or combat situations. If you are unable to write it yourself, enlist the help of a family member or good friend. **BUT DO WRITE IT** — you will feel good about it and proud to see it in print.

Stories for the Historical Quarterly should be forwarded to: **HICKS A. TURNER, Editor, Rt. 2 Box 236, Clyde, TX 79510.**

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Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly  
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# *Our Last Cowntown Parade*

*by Curt Walthall*

CATTLE RAISERS MUSEUM



It was cold that Armistice Day in 1940 and Company B, 144th Infantry was parading for the last time in Fort Worth, Texas.

Company B and other components of the 36th Infantry Division, and the 56th Calvary Brigade, all Texas National Guard units, marched up Main Street to the Tarrant County Court House and with two left turns, then down Houston Street to the Texas and Pacific depot. Along the route at 1100 hours we paused to honor the dead of World War I. Veterans of that war, watching the parade, shed tears as we seemed to be marching straight out of 1918 wearing khaki NP breeches, wool shirts, campaign hats, wrap leggins, and the re-soled hand-me-down high top shoes from the regular army.

Our fingers, clasped around the butt plates of 1903 Springfield rifles, turned as blue as the T-Patches on our left sleeves as we marched to the music of the 111th Medical Regiment Band. In two short weeks we would cease to be citizen-soldiers as we were scheduled to be mobilized for federal service on November 25th.

As usual we marched behind Troop A and B, 124th Cavalry Regiment, with an occasional loose wrap leggin dragging through the horse manure.

We thought our position in the line of march was decreed by the fact that this city was still referred to as "Cowtown," but actually it was because of army tradition.

Other units marching that day were: Headquarters Detachment, 1st Battalion, Headquarters, and Service Company, 144th Infantry Regiment; Company D, the band, and Headquarters, and Service Company, 111th Medical Regiment; Battery B, and Headquarters Battery, 1st Battalion, 133rd Field Artillery Regiment.

We were not aware at the time that this was the 144th Infantry's last parade in Fort Worth. Had we known, we might have marched a little more proudly, and kept our lines straighter, so the old home town would remember us as a great marching unit. We did march pretty good for a group of weekend-warriors in loose-fitting World War I uniforms as we were already in this year of 1940 veterans of nearly 60 drills and three weeks of tough training in the Louisiana Maneuvers.

A small army of carpenters were hastily building Camp Bowie at Brownwood, but we remained at home stations until January 1941. Several hundred men of the 144th could not all live in the two-story armory, and there was a shortage of pyramidal tents. (Factories were work-



FRONTIER IMPLEMENTS, FURNISHINGS AT LOG CABIN VILLAGE IN FORT WORTH

ing overtime on this and other supply problems which erased the last vestiges of the long depression years). The Army chose to billet some of the freshly mobilized troops in the small hotels on lower main street. This presented a problem as these hotels also housed girls of ill repute and being many years before the sexual revolution, coed barracks were frowned upon. Army Regulations did cover this situation and the girls were mov-

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ed to the top floor, which was immediately put off-limits to the troops. Experience dictated that a few would violate the regulations, and possibly the girls, so a pro station was thoughtfully installed in the ground floor latrine and the 111th medics were able to start their basic training at these locations.

Some of the purer troops complained of having to sleep in rooms formerly occupied by these girls as the odors of their dime-store perfume remained. Later, at Brownwood, girls living in small hotels would present a problem, especially on payday, and the Provost Marshal solved the problem by stationing MPs outside the hotels. Not to keep the troops away, but to keep the waiting lines straight. Some of these girls from Fort Worth, already experts on army regulations, transferred their business site to Brownwood.

Company B erected a mess tent across from the Armory on the Texas and Pacific RR reservation and the chow line soon became a quagmire. A local contractor donated bricks and First Sergeant Bryan G. Chick found some "volunteers" to make a sidewalk. One artistic GI even fashioned a B Company emblem from the bricks.

We maneuvered and did close order drill within hearing distance of the local business organizations on Lancaster Street and the hundreds of passing motorists. The train crew always waved to us as they passed by and one of those frequent wavers, J.T. Hitt, joined us at Camp Bowie in the first load of "draftees". We were cautioned to call them "selectees."

One rainy day in January, the GI's checked out of their hotels, struck a few tents, loaded first the kitchen and supply equipment, then themselves on 1½ ton trucks and traveled out Camp Bowie Blvd. (Appropriately enough as this was the site of the 36th Division's training camp in WWI) towards Brownwood. There were no bands, nor public clamor—just a few tearful wives, girl friends, and mothers waving damp handkerchiefs after departing troops. The kerchiefs dampened as much by the steady rain as the trickling tears.

Officially the 144th Infantrymen were to be gone for a year, but for many it was five. For others it was forever.

## The Heroes





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# *From Paestum To Cassino*

by Earl Mansee  
36th MP Company

Worldwartwoveterans.org



This MP remembers the day of the invasion of Italy after some forty-two years. The news that the Italians had surrendered, and we had hopes that it wouldn't be quite as difficult for us. Oh, were we in for a **BIG SURPRISE!** We were given order to disembark in the afternoon of Sept. 9, 1943. Just before leaving the ship, *U.S.S. FRED FUNGSTON*, I saw one of the first casualties being returned to the ship. The man's insides were exposed as he was lying on the stretcher. As we disembarked from the landing craft, the 88s were landing close. We didn't waste too much time on the beach but headed inland, following a ravine for awhile. There wasn't much sleep for this soldier! The concentrated chocolate bar tasted good at first, but it soon became too rich and I was unable to eat all of it. On Sept. 10, I was at the intersection of the road, leading to the tobacco warehouse. (The date stuck well with me, it was my birthday). Just a short distance from where I was stationed, were four German

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tanks that had been knocked-out the day before. The tobacco warehouse served as our CP for the 36th Division. Nearby the *Grave Registration* crew was working full time. I can still remember the dead Germans who lay there and didn't get buried until our own men were buried. The smell was sickening! Nothing smells as bad as a human corpse. Near us was a barn, with hay in it, which some of the men used. *I remember the mites crawling all over us!* It was several weeks before we had an opportunity to bathe in a lake nearby. What a relief! While we were staying in the barn we received a rumor that the Germans were using gas and so we started wearing our gas masks, until the rumor was proven false.

The 101st Parachute troops were going over during the dark of the night. The planes were so low that we had no trouble seeing them, even in the dark. While on duty at the warehouse junction, I saw load after load of 6x6 *ARMY DUCKS* bringing matting wire for the Airport being built across the road from Division Headquarters. They were loads of fifty-five gallon drums of aviation gas. The airport was being built on the second day of the invasion. *Our sister division, the FORTY-FIFTH*, was beginning to move in by now. It made us feel much better to know we were not in this thing alone! It wasn't long until the *P40s* were beginning to land and reload for another mission. The planes were raising their landing gears and sliding their canopy tops closed as they flew over our



heads. One of Jerry's planes got into the circle as our planes were trying to land, when our men saw what was happening, they let him have it!

It wasn't too long after this that I was moved down the road to Altavilla, where *I was standing near a Crucifix*. The Italians kept doing a *Cross-their-heart* as they walked into town. Not being a Catholic, I began to wonder why they did this as they passed by me. I finally questioned one of my buddies and he told me that I was standing in front of a Cross and this was done when they passed the Cross!

It was at Altavilla where the town was so destroyed. The roof of many buildings were blown off. I questioned the Italians in a very crude way, not being able to speak their language, was it airplanes that had done this? They replied, no, it was the Navy Shells that had reached that far inland. There were shallow graves all along the road where bodies had fallen.

The stinch was terrible and the people were wearing rags over their noses. It was also here that I was trying to heat something to eat and I had some gas in a *C RATION CAN*, with it burning. I thought I could smother the fire after I had finished by stepping on it with the heel of my shoe. The can's edge was very sharp and cut into my rubber heel and it stuck to my shoe. I became nervous and tried to shake it off and the gas splashed upon my leggins, catching on fire, one of the other MPs had to roll me on the ground to smother the fire out. I never tried that trick again!

Speaking of food, I have never forgotten the beautiful crops of tomatoes and bell peppers that we saw. Lots of the crops had been gathered and were in baskets, spilled out on the ground, as if the pickers were rushed out of the fields.

Winter was getting close by now. Italy, I am sure, had been a beautiful place but war brings out the worst. I was living in a Pup Tent with *R. L. MAYHEW* and during a storm the lightening was really playing havoc. The lightening struck a tree in the area and one soldier was killed. This made us realize we had better move out from under the tree. It was about this time of the year again, when I was sleeping, and in a dream the words came to me, *THOUGH YOU WALK THROUGH THE VALLEY OF DEATH, I WILL BE NEAR YOU*. I know now that God was telling me I would make it! I had a compact Bible which I had carried in my left shirt pocket all this time. I have always been very thankful for the assurance I received from that dream!

At one time when we were on top of a hill, the name of the town I do not remember as this has been so long ago, the British Troops were stationed near us. The hill was called the *MILLION DOLLAR HILL*. This was the hill we were taking. The British were pounding away with their "16" Pounders. The hill had a very long muddy incline. An American Jeep was coming up the hill and had messed up his Rear Defferential, was having to pull strictly by the front end. A British soldier saw the jeep slipping and sliding by the front wheels but still making it, remarked, "You Americans." The British were not too good with vehicles. The Italians had decided to help with the war effort at this time also, and they were using a four wheel drive vehicle, single tires, no duals. They also steered by the front and back axles. Having only black-out lights and moving in the dark, it did give me the creeps.

On another occasion we were staying in a house, overlooking the *LIRI VALLEY*. We were using an empty five gallon bucket, that we had put

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charcoal in, using this to toast bread. The floor of the house was concrete. The charcoal can get things pretty hot. Suddenly we heard what we thought was a shell exploding, the charcoal flew up into the air and was landing on our blankets where we slept. One coal landed on *GEORGE BLANTON'S* neck. Boy, did he do a flip over to get this hot coal out of his shirt. It was fun to everyone *BUT* George. It was from this hill we could see the flying Fortresses drop bombs on the *ABBEY*. Even after the bombing, I later saw tracker bullets coming from out of the ruins. The building was indeed a Fortress!

Our Division was pulled out of action shortly after this. It was here that I left the Division. The heavy concussion was so severe in my ears that I was deaf in one ear. I had been offered a transfer while in *AFRICA* but turned it down as *I WANTED TO REMAIN WITH MY OUTFIT, THE 36TH DIVISION.*

The invasion of *SOUTHERN FRANCE* was being readied as I sailed through the *STRAITS OF GIBRALTER*. I saw a great *ARMADA OF SHIPS* getting ready! *IT WAS GREAT TO BE SAILING FOR THE GOOD OLE U.S.A.!!*

Just before the bombing of the Abbey at Cassino, a couple MPs and myself were sent to a cross road, in view of the Abbey, to direct traffic. There was a small cement block building, by the crossroad, just big enough for the men. I was sitting inside the building when a round of some kind exploded outside the block building wall slapped my back! Boy, did we get out of there. We were able to watch as the bombers came over the Abbey and drop their loads. An unforgettable sight! After the big bombers did their job, we could see the bombs the dive bombers let loose. After the bombing was over, it was quiet and when darkness came, we could hear the "Screaming Meemies" start up. What a peculiar sound. Frightening also. A couple of days later, we moved on and after we got home I saw pictures of the Abbey. Nothing but hunks of concrete. Can't remember who was with me. Maybe some of our buddies can help.



Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly  
*The Blast of War*

A Regimental Reunion Scrapbook

by Sam F. Kibbey

K-143rd

*Dedicated to those with whom I served.*



This is not a story. This is a remembrance...

"My name?" "Sam Kibbey."

"Where am I from?"

"Kentucky."

"Where am I going?"

"To Waco, Texas."

"What am I going there for?"

"To attend my Regimental Reunion, the 143rd Infantry."

"Really?", the person sitting next to me on the Boeing 737 said devoid of enthusiasm.

She was a rather pretty girl, forty-four going on thirty-five. She had dark hair and the kind of blue eyes you see mostly out of doors. She wore cowboy boots and a bit of a skirt (not much, but a bit.) Her face had plenty of country sunshine upon it. The skin was lightly blistered, but becomingly so. When she talked she had a yodel in her voice.

"Are you from Fort Worth?", I asked.

"My, now, how did you guess that?"

"I just know about girls, I reckon." I replied, reminding myself that most girls with a yodel in their voice are either from Nashville or Fort Worth.

We were in flight from Nashville to Fort Worth—Dallas Airport, I had boarded a Delta 737 in Lexington, Kentucky being escorted to the Airport by my daughter, Carol, and my three year old granddaughter, Shelly. Having grandchildren is one of life's pleasures, an antidote for aging. A cure for self-centeredness. Enjoyable disquiet.

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The "737" cautiously crept through the skies at 31,000 feet. At 31,000 feet an airplane drones like unambitious bees going in and out of a run down bee hive. At 31,000 feet, one senses the endlessness of time, the infinitude of the human soul. One can almost hear hymns being sung through the open air valves over the seat. Clouds go by aimlessly and almost anonymously. Airborne, we grind our way toward our destination, impressed by the grandeur that is God's.

In 1943 the United States was at war: generically speaking, World War II. I became 18 years old on September 5, 1943. Four days later, on September 9, 1943 the Thirty-Sixth Infantry Division, a Texas National Guard outfit, invaded the mainland of Europe by making a landing at Salerno, Italy. This represented the first allied troops on European soil in World War II. This was four days before my 18th birthday. It was about nine months before the landings at Normandy. It was also nine months before I joined Company K, 143rd Infantry as a replacement.

After I became 18, I signed voluntary enlistment papers. I had a 17 week basic training course at Camp Wolters, Texas, which I recall now as something of a bleak prairie, a throw-back to when cattle were driven by calloused cowboys to Fort Worth, sometimes beyond.

I had a 17 day leave home on the way overseas. (Mom fought back the tears. I did, too.) I joined the 36th North of Rome, going all the way through the War and coming home as a T-Patcher on a Victory ship in December, 1945. I was a Staff/Sergeant at discharge by dint of casualties. A 20 year old Staff-Sergeant. I missed the tough slugging in Southern Italy. I have pride that I later soldiered with some GIs who did battle with the mud, mules and mountains in Southern Italy.

The 36th Division was mobilized into service on November 25, 1940. Certain units were splintered from the 36th, notable the 2nd Battalion, 131st Field Artillery. The remainder of the 36th went overseas in early 1943. At Salerno, Italy on September 9, 1943 the T-Patchers became the first American troops on European soil. The Division suffered 27,000 casualties, the third highest of World War II. The Division men earned 15 Congressional Medals of Honor, 80 Distinguished Service Crosses, 2354 Silver Stars, 5407 Bronze Stars, 10 Presidential Unit Citations.

At Salerno the untried troops of the 36th Division fought gallantly. Company K, chock full of Waco boys, was outstanding at Altavilla. So was Charles Kelly, who won the first Congressional Medal of Honor awarded in the ETO Command. Commando, you are remembered.

My reverie was interrupted as I discovered the plane was descending. Just moments before I seemed to be brushing against time and eternity. My very being and my innermost feelings had seemed to be suspended. Now, the plane was swooping toward the ground like a half-starved chicken hawk.

Alvin Amelunke is a fine representative of Waco. So is his wife, Janice. I met Alvin and Janice several years ago at a National Reunion in Dallas. The Amelunkes are very popular in the 36th Division Associa-

tion. Alvin was an officer in M Company. He came back to Waco with the Silver Star, and excellent combat record, and a keen desire to help others.

"Hey Kibbey," Alvin half shouted, "glad to have you with us. Where you staying?"

"The Sheraton," I replied.

"I'll give you a lift in," Alvin said.

The person with Alvin I later learned to be Bob Hand who now hails from Colorado. Alvin had looked Hand up in Colorado last summer. Now Bob would see men at the Reunion he hadn't seen for over 44 years. Bob had been the C.O. of M Company. He went overseas with the 36th and after Italy pushed across France and Germany as a T-Patcher.

On the way in, Alvin tried to give us a little commentary on the city of Waco. We passed the suspension bridge famed throughout the U.S. which was built in 1870. It looks like a fortress or a castle. He told us about the low water dam that had formed Lake Brazos. Lake Brazos is the new centerfold of the revitalized community of Waco.

We made a fast stop at the Monument site. We watched a few "run throughs" directed by amiable Bob Hawkins. Julius "Duney" Phillips was there. Phillips is from Houston. He is the Executive Secretary-Treasurer of the 36th Division Association. He travels many miles every year in the interest of veterans, but especially T-Patchers.

Arriving at the Sheraton, I met with Col. Henry Gomez of San Antonio and his wife, Mary Louise. Hank has been a Past President of the 36th Division Association. Later, we shared part of the evening with Len Wilkerson and his help-mate, Frances, of Malenkoff, Texas. Wilkerson is as down to earth in attitude as he is dynamic in spirit.

Most of the guys in the outfit are older than I am. Many of the men are in their 70's now. "Hank" Gomez, age 78, told me, "I went away for a year. Stayed 22." That brings to mind the early World War II song about the mobilization, "I'll be back in a year little darling." With most, it took much longer than a year to get back.

In my motel room, I became contemplative. The plane rides out, one high and one low, my first exposure to Waco and the sizzling hot sun at Fort Fisher, plus my usual late afternoon kaput-ness, forces me into the prone position on the motel bed, clothing askew.

Back my mind fades to Grosetto, Italy. It is 1944. For five days now we have tried to "catch up" with the 36th Division as replacements. We had been assigned to the 36th Division.

I had 28 days on a Liberty ship going over. I had touched down in Africa for several days. Those Repple Depples were for the birds. Yeah, buzzards. Then I was frisked across the Mediterranean from Oran to Count Ciano's farm. Just one more repple-depple to cross.

From thence we were sent to the Anzio beachhead. All we did on An-

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zio was dig in and catch strafings. The 36th had left Anzio toute de suite. Thanks to a brilliant piece of Engineering by the 111th Engineering Battalion under Col. Oran Stovall of Bowie, Texas, and some good soldiering by the line companies, the 36th broke through at Velettri.

As we were taken forward in Army trucks we saw evidence of a war. Not as much as the 36th men would see later in 1944 at Montelimar in France where the "T"-Patchers had given the Germans 19th Army a terrific thrashing.

My time on the line in Italy was brief. I was assigned as an ammunition bearer in the 4th Platoon, Company K, 143rd. My graduation from High School at 16 and attendance at college on a basketball scholarship at 17 failed to impress anyone. I know. I tried to tell them about it.

Suddenly, it was August 15, 1944. We had boarded the landing ships near Naples. The Mediterranean seemed as vast and mysterious as the ocean. Apprehension was prevalent but fears were concealed.

The night before we went in Ben Foster, a machine gunner from upstate New York, sang with a nice clear voice, some of the popular songs of the day.

The Navy excellently laid down an early dawn bombardment of gigantic proportion on August 15, 1944 in Southern France. On the Beach, where Company K, 143rd landed, there was only sporadic opposition to our landings. We moved inland being admonished to "not get too close together. One shell will get you all."

That afternoon, following the attack plans, we cleared the hillsides around St. Raphael. I saw one Jerry whose bicycle was blown one way and what was left of his body blown another. Undoubtedly, a direct hit.

That night we captured St. Raphael. Some resistance, but not much. Two fatalities in Company K. Ben Foster was one of them. He was the first buddy I lost to death in combat. He was not to be the last.

Fort Fisher is one of Waco's show places. Here is housed the Texas Rangers Hall of Fame. This is appropriate as the Rangers were organized here in 1835. As the Monument is on the grounds of Fort Fisher, that fact alone makes me proud.

At Knox Hall, tables had been set by Units. You just visited with folks you hadn't seen for years. I had not seen "Bo" Moore since 1945. "Bo" had been Company K's Mess Sergeant and probably the best Mess Sergeant in the E.T.O. He received a Purple Heart in trying to do his job well. A most unique person.

Then there was Porky Schlichting, who was our Supply Sergeant. Easily recognizable to me. I don't think either "Porky" or "Bo" recognized me. I weighed 100 pounds more than I did when I was overseas. I, also, have become a bottled-scarred veteran down through the years.

I saw Ray Waller. Ray was Company K's Aid Man. Ray Waller was one of the bravest soldiers I knew. I observed his valor on several occasions. Notably at Bitschofen where Ray lost a foot, but received a well-deserved Silver Star.



And, of course, Carl Vierege and John Wheelis, were there. Both of these men served as my sergeants. Carl took me in tow when I first got with the Company. John Wheelis was everybody's favorite. The best thing I liked about John was that he didn't treat me like a kid. Back then, that was important to me.

The Reunion was conspicuous by those I missed seeing. Boyd "Private" Morgan (he was actually a Tech-Sergeant) was not there from East Texas. His brother Norris, who lives in Garland, would not be attending. Norris had become ill and learning the nature of the illness almost took me to the ground. Two subsequent phone conversations with Norris allayed my fears considerably. We all hope Norris will be able to be in Houston with us come September at the National shindig.

Ed Will is gone. I had learned of Ed's death in the T-Patcher Newspaper. (Bill Jary of Fort Worth, the Editor of the T-Patcher, a truly great one, has also died in January of last year.)

It is written that he who has achieved success is one who has "lived well, laughed often, and loved much." In truth, they "do not die in hearts they leave behind."

Ed Will had God's grace about him in war and peace. He was a Machinegun squad Sergeant; and later Machinegun Section Sergeant. He was a quiet man, of deep humility. Few people have served this country and the city of Waco as well and as unceremoniously as Ed Will.

At Camp Edwards this handsome Texan met his wife, Virginia. They married before Ed went overseas. Then Ed came home. Virginia left her native New England and they came to Waco where she still lives today. Theirs was a happy and productive marriage.

Virginia was there in the auditorium. It was obvious she was trying to hide the hurt she was experiencing. She and Ed have made many of these Reunions together. She had supported Ed in the great work Ed did at VA Hospitals and with the VFW to which Ed, John Wheelis, and Carl Vierege belonged. As she walked by I squeezed her arm. She squeezed my arm back. There was no need for words.

Virginia, if life is indeed a shadow, all our good wishes for you lengthen as each of our suns descend. Ed's memory is sacred to us. Sacred and real.

Bet you never heard of Task Force Butler? After the invasion of Southern France on August 15, 1943 elements of the 143rd did an "end round play" on the German Army. We ran Northward toward the Alps. Say, this was the way to fight a war! Riding on trucks. Liberating town after town. Southern France. The champagne campaign. War's hell, uncork another bottle of vino.

The Zenith of this historical military maneuver was attained at Grenoble, France. Grenoble is a city fifty miles from Geneva, Switzerland. The City as, I recall it, was a smaller city then, but a joyful town nonetheless.

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The happiness of a Frenchman freshly freed from Nazi tyranny flashes to mind.

The paper in Grenoble had the following front page welcome:

*"Welcome!" Shouted the town's newspaper on the first page.*

*"Yesterday, without warning, we saw them suddenly rising up at the far end of the Cours Jean-Jaures...those well-built boys in kahki, those strong, calm fellows who in 1918 had shared with the Poilus in horizon blue all the sufferings of battle, all the joys of victory..."*

*"Welcome to you all! You who have come from the distant providences of Illinois, Ohio, Alabama, or Texas...Welcome to the citizens of New York and San Francisco, you all who have come after a stage in our North Africa to help France get rid of a nightmare which has lasted four interminable years, and to aid her to rediscover her true soul.*

*"Welcome to Grenoble, our town. Welcome to the Dauphine, our province!"*

Even now, forty-four years later, I can recall the happy faces and spirited songs of that long ago on that memorable day. Precious memories, how they linger...

From Grenoble the 143rd made some forays. It was at Montelimar that a minor Armageddon occurred. Task Force Butler was positioned above the 18th German Army. The 18th German Army was retreating from Southern France. At Montelimar a battle ensued.

This was actually my first exposure to fierce combat. I had ducked a piece of shrapnel or so in Italy. I had evaded small arms fire in Southern France. St. Raphael's capture was a feather in our cap. But Montelimar was the real test.

Lt. Stephen Gregg of Bayonne, New Jersey received a CHM for his activity at Montelimar. I lost a good friend, Ken Blish, there. I became acquainted with Ken at Fort George Mead. He was from Buffalo, New York. He was a Radio Man in Company K. He and I had gone swarming in Baltimore together. We had drunk an inestimable amount of beer together one day. We were shipped overseas together and both came to Company K together. We were at Montelimar together. Now, Blish is gone. It hurt me, then as now, but big soldiers don't cry.

The dedication of the Monument was at 3 p.m. that steamy Saturday, June 3rd. We walked from the Hall to the Dedication site. The Texas sun on all burners, its heat permeated Fort Fisher including all areas the 143rd stood, awaiting unveiling. Some of the wiser ones scurried for the shade. I took a seat in the Fort Fisher Section in one of the folding chairs facing the stage. Hard working Bob Hawkins was the M.C.

The program was well-planned and colorful. Colonel Richard M. Buraage, who was reared in Waco made an award to Wiley W. Stem, Jr. of Waco. The 36th today is an active National Guard Unit consisting of G Company, 143rd Infantry Airborne, headquartered in Houston with a detachment in Austin.

Billy E. Kirby of Clifton, Texas is probably one of the best known guys who ever served in Company K, 143rd Regiment. Billy was a machine-gunner who had been hit in Southern Italy. He was gone when I joined the weapons Platoon of Company K several months later. Back then, his name was often mentioned. He is National Commander of the D.A.V. Everybody in Texas should be extremely proud of Billy.

On this day—June 3, 1989—Billy was in Waco—back with his war buddies, back in his native North Central Texas, where Brazos meanders and the Bluebonnets bloom. To Bill goes the honor of unveiling the Monument. After a short dedication from Kirby the parachute covering the Monument is raised. There is a large T within an arrowhead at the top of the Monument; a bluer than blue insignia of the 143rd Infantry with its motto “Arms Secure Peace.” Then on the Monument the words chiseled thereon:

**143rd INFANTRY 36th DIVISION  
DEDICATED IN REVERENT  
MEMORY OF AND TO PROUDLY  
HONOR ALL WHO SERVED**

**June 3, 1989**

On the back side of the Monument is a listing of all the home towns of the units of the 143rd Infantry and all the Campaigns the 143rd fought in during World War I and World War II.

This beautiful Monument was designed by Glen Rucker of Dallas. His Uncle, Payne Rucker, who now lives in Dallas, served in the 143rd Infantry in wartime. Payne has served well in various capacities in the 36th Division Association. The Monument approaches true art and has a proper blend of simplicity and magnificence.

The dedication address was given by George R. “Bob” Scott of Waco. It was a touching tribute to some great American Soldiers. It was an intelligent appraisal of the price of liberty and why we pay it. There were times during the address that a lump arose in my throat. My tear ducts became incontinent at times. (Oh, God, a broken and contrite heart, Thou will not despise.)

The dedication ended. Eyes were dried. Pride prodded us forward. “Life must go on...”

***“So we are saying goodbye to them all.***

***As it’s back to the barracks we fall.***

***There will be no promotions***

***This side of the Ocean***

***So, cheer up my lads, bless them all.”***

This familiar old World War II song ricocheted in my mind as we “fell back to the barracks” at Knox Hall on Fort Fisher awaiting a dinner to be catered and a dance to be endured.

## Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

The chat I had that day with Ray Waller will long live in my memory. We talked quietly and confidently about the day Tech Sergeant Clyde "Tack" Walker and Sergeant Francis Crowe were killed. I can still hear the sound of the German burp guns. "Tack" and Crowe had just gone around a curve, on foot, seeking, as I recall, how Tack's weapon platoon and Crowe's rifle platoon should position themselves. This was in the Vosges Mountains, near Bruyeres, France.

Ray and I talked on as soldiers do when discussing those they honor and respect. Buddies who are lost in battle. Ray mentioned the white parachute scarf "Tack" was wearing and the black gloves received recently from home. These, too, "Tack" wore. It is guys like "Tack" Walker and Sergeant Francis Crowe that I think of often when I hear the phrase "supreme sacrifice."

"Tack's" sister is Lelia McDugal. Her husband, Archie (now deceased), once headed the 36th Division Association as President. I met him back then. Lelia is here at Fort Fisher. Upon arrival, she was instantly met by friends of "Tack's" and Archie's. The face of "Tack" Walker swims before me. That prairie gruffness, that Texas pride, that individualistic twist—the wearing of the white parachute scarf and the black gloves received from home. And Crowe? Well, he was a bold leader, too. (God be with you—both of you—till we meet again.)

The outstanding victory at Montlimar won for the 143rd Infantry a Presidential Unit Citation. Much of the credit for the fast advance in Southern France must go to the Marquis—the famous French Forces of the Interior. The Marquis was unrelenting in its desire to have France free of the dreaded "Boche."

After Montelimar, the 36th Division had a "blitzkrieg" all its own going. There were some sharp fights along the way to the Moselle River which was reached on September 21, 1944.

As Colonel Vince Lockhart in his excellent book, "T-Patch To Victory" points out many of the French in the Vosges and Rhine Valley were Germanic citizens of Southern France. Thus, after huge artillery pounding by our forces we were met with cold, icy stares and not with the warmth or the grateful glances we received in Southern France.

That cartoonist—genius of World War II, Bill Mauldin—captured this fully. Bill was in the 3rd Division, a native of Oklahoma, and he was to win the Pulitzer Prize for his World War II cartoons.

Mauldin showed Willie and Joe going into this French town. A chateau had been demolished. The lady of what used to be her house was looking defiantly at Willie and Joe. Willie said, "Don't blame us, lady. We didn't start this war."

The 143rd Infantry rubbed elbows with elements of the 3rd Infantry Division. Besancon fell and the 36th and 3rd both moved Northeast where at Vesoul a torrid battle was pitched. On the 16th of September the 143rd captured Luxeuil-les-Bains. Zeb Sunday, then corporal, and my

good buddy from Pasadena, Texas acquitted himself well under some trying circumstances and was responsible for the location of the bodies of thirty-two Frenchmen who had been executed by the Germans. The way Zeb made the German Captain talk is representative of the grim humor of combat as experienced in the E.T.O. during the Second World War.

At the Moselle the Germans, backed to the wall, decided to make a determined stand. Remiremont was taken after fierce fighting.

Next, came Bruyeres, Laval, LaChappelle and Belfontaine. Near Bruyeres another Regiment was added. That was the 442nd combat team, composed of Nisei troops. The story of how these brave men rescued the survivors of the "Lost Battalion" of the 141st and been cut off. The Japanese-American bravely brought the "Lost Battalion" to safety.

The campaign in the Vosges Mountains began to resemble the fighting in Italy. I would be the first one to tell you in no way was it as rough, but plenty rough enough. In Southern Italy—at Cassino—was disaster. At Rapido and San Pietro the Jerries were always looking down the T-Patchers throat. At least here in France, despite the rain then the snow, the 36th was on the move. We had the offensive, even if we had to counter-attack a time or so to sustain it.

Ahead loomed all the important Alsace Plains.

*"Deep within my hear lies a melody,  
A song of Old San Antone,  
It was there I found beside the Alamo,  
Enchantment strange as the blue above  
...my Rose of San Antone."*

The dance floor was not crowded. The young band playing for the 143rd Infnatry Reunion knew a surprising number of songs of the 40's and 50's. Gradually, as if testing the water, a few couples would take to the floor. I think I danced once to prove that just because I'm getting too old to cut the mustard, that, now and again, I still try to be a hotdog.

On the dance floor, personifying true love, to me, was Julian Phillips and his wife, Ruby. They are tireless workers and, I assume, tireless spouses. That's quite a feat these days.

Bill Kirby and his wife, Emelyn, mingled with us onlookers at the dance. Kirby is top drawer in any league.

Sam and Ruth Petty were very much at the dance. I don't specifically recall seeing them on the floor, but they seldom took their eyes off each other.

Zeb Sunday was cutting a rug with his permanent side kick, Eloise. (The tempo for me on cutting a rug is "Rock of Ages.")

Near the dance's end Alvin and Janice Amelunke danced by, both regal Texans exemplary of what teamwork can do.

## Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

I think about my buddies and their wives.

We live in an Acquisitive Society. People are judged, or motivated too much, by what they have, not what they are. This constant struggle for vanity and status has fathered a plasticity of promiscuity in this land.

We live in a world of sperms and germs. Life these days is mostly a "throw away." Permissive sex is the way it generally goes these days. To my mind, permissive sex is tawdry and cheap and is as temporary as a Turkish Bath.

Everywhere you look you see "gimme" eyes. You see "gimme eyes" in an airport, in a bar, or at the horse races. The male with "gimme eyes" no matter how nattily attired cannot hide his avarice. As far as the gals, well with some their "gimme eyes" is their performing art.

Sitting there listening to the very good music (my kind of music), I think back of how many of these couples went through the war together, either married to each other, engaged to each other, or fated to meet after the war.

To me, these true-blue gals were (s)heroes of World War II. If we didn't have a wife or girl friend, we mostly had mothers or sisters or a high school chum that you had a crush on and who cared, at least, enough to write you while you were overseas. "Mail call" in combat brought a little sanity to the war.

This Acquisitive Society has begat people who are so vain they believe there are four members of the Holy Trinity. Oh, I see them everyday at lunch or seated at a bar or a pew in church just trying to impress everyone with their superior airs which they haughtily call "Class." Some have affidavit faces. Some have prayer meeting smiles. All of them are sanctimonious. Many of them are so heavenly that they are no earthly good. These are the kind of people who speak most eloquently when their mouth is shut. Just about all of them are the people you like the least the more you know them.

I read once in an Encyclopedia that the human female egg necessary to produce four billion people would not fill an empty chicken egg. All the sperm needed to fertilize those eggs would rest on a pin's head. Tennis anyone?

The dance ends. (The dance seems to end earlier each year.) I am shuttled back to the Sheraton, not only proud of the fellowship I've found in the 143rd Infantry Association. I'm proud of the gals, too; those (s)heroes of World War II. Thank you, T-Patchers, thank you, T-Patchees.

The title of this little piece? From the Bard of course. It bears repeating here:

*In peace there is nothing so becomes a man  
As modest stillness and humility  
But when the blast of war blows in our ears  
Then imitate the action of a tiger.*

After the dance I caught the "shuttle bus" back to the Sheraton. The lobby had more than its share of men wearing 143rd Infantry caps with pride and a feeling of togetherness. Many of the hats had been sold by Thruman Moore of Waco who served in M Company along with Amelunke and Bob Hand. I remember M Company from my combat days. Super soldiers!

Time was many of we bottle scarred veterans would have rehashed the war into the wee hours. Old age has been said to be a regret. Whoever said that didn't have grandchildren. We Senior Citizens realize our limitations. Regrettably, so do people about us.

Again, Dahlquist dauntless doughboys went to their wheels. The Germans were wanting to retreat to the Belfont Gap, its proposed passway to the Fatherland. The T-Patchers made advances of from 25 to 40 miles each day.

The 36th Division pushed and wheeled it to the Doubs River near Besancon. The 111th Engineers, Stovall's Spaders built a 120 foot span in 22 hours which you might say cut off a lot of Jerries before they got to the pass. Colonel Oran Stovall of Bowie, Texas remains to this day to be one of the most revered men in the 36th Division Association. Indeed, he was a Bird Colonel with the look of an eagle.

Then the beat went on, Vesoul was taken. In the face of growing resistance Luxeuil fell. It was September 15, 1944 then. The 36th has come a "fer piece" since the August 15, 1944 landing on the Rivera.

The Moselle River was near. A challenge which promised to be a plum ripe for taking. On to the Moselle!

Actually the crossing of the Moselle was easier than expected. The water was about waist high where the first crossing was made. Finally, the city of Remiremont was taken on September 23rd.

There still was no respite for the 36th. In the army it seems if you have a good work horse, work it.

The Vosges foothills was of that "old bog-down" variety which the 36th Division had found in Southern Italy. And, like Italy, it was something of a forgotten front. The fighting was on ridges, again reminiscent of Italy but, in my opinion, not as rough.

With the 442nd Regimental Combat Team aboard the 36th now had four Regiments.

With the added strength the 36th captured Bruyeres to the height overlooking the Meurthe River. "K" Company, 143rd Regiment participated in the capture of Laval. Then there came Biffontaine. The Vosges I shall never forget because of the cold rains and the combat fatigue that can grip one like a strangler at your throat.

As I write this I am removed in point of time by over forty-four years from the hardship I endured. Forty-four years removed from pain I experienced in losing buddies—and by the time we reached the Vosges Mountains this had increased—exposure to seeing people dead, both American and German, some as if taking a siesta but many mutilated by

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artillery or mortar fire. Death is always a tragedy. All things are devoured by death. Most of us are apprehensive about death from childhood. We seek to solve the mystery or escape its finality.

Fears, faith and death: three important considerations.

I have no answers, "pat" or envisioned. I only know this: Seeing death in a war and experiencing it in the family or with a friend brings to my lips this song to sing:

*"I fear no foe, with Thee at hand to bless  
Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness  
Where is death's sting, where, grave thy victory?  
I triumph still if Thou abide with me."*

We assembled at 8 o'clock at Knox Hall for it was billed as an old fashioned G.I. breakfast. It was a good one. I believe Bob Scott said it was "good" enough to make a man to re-enlist. (Now come on, Bob.)

After the breakfast was a short but very symbolic Memorial Service which consisted of lighting seven candles. One for each U.S. War. The last candle lit sort of brought a mist to my face. The last candle was for all our Association who had died in the past year. They read their names.

I was sitting with John Wheelis. When the names of those dying—including Ed Will—were read. John softly said, "There were twenty of them." My thoughts, too, sped to Bill Jary of Fort Worth, a Public Relations man of great mind and vigor. "Bill" edited the T-Patch Newspaper and The 36th Division Quarterly, probably a one-of-a-kind publication in the U.S.A. Bill encouraged me to write. He encouraged others to write. Bill to me personified the spirit of Texas.

The 36th Division moved through the Vosges Mountains. At this point the 36th Division who had no relief in *ninety-eight consecutive days* was give a subsiding role. The rest was short-lived. The 36th Division jumped back into action by making a bridgehead across the Meurthe. A prominent actor in that drama was Lt. Col. James Minor of Post, Texas, who was Commander of the 1st Battalion 142nd was the youngest Battalion Commander in the 36th Division—he is one of the great ones who survived the war but is now gone.

On December 2, 1944 the 36th entered Selestat. The 36th Division had the role of taking Ribeauville. The Alsace Plain had become flooded and swampy. The Germas struck back. Selestat was successfully defended. This counter attack almost succeeded. The fighting became ferocious around Bennwihr, Mittelwihr and Riquewihr. I still have a picture of Mittelwihr in my mind. The town had been "blown to smithereens." This had become almost house to house fighting.

After 122 days on the line the 36th was relieved. We weren't sent home folks. We switched positions with the 3rd Division which had been "garrisoning Strausbourg." Here we were just across the Rhine from Germany. We were there five days!



After the Ardennes offensive proved unfruitful for the Jerries, and the Bulge was being reduced to a less critical situation, Hitler and his brain trust turned on the 7th Army as a possible way to pull their chestnuts out of the fire.

At midnight on New Year's Eve 1944, der Fuhrer sent his troops, in force, to push the Yankees back south of Bitche. There was much confusion because of the tactics now being used North of us where Germans wore American uniforms and other acts of deception.

When this flurry by the enemy failed the Krauts switched its heavy armored attacks to positions North of Haguenau.

At Haguenau there was encountered Panzer Units. But we had Texans—damn good Texans with men from every state in the Union working with them in solid team work. Soon these towns were either captured or recaptured. Names like Bischwiller, Weyersheim, and Drusenheim became familiar. Also "Bowden Woods" became a place of which all were proud. Here, Lt. Col. Marion P. Bowden, Commander of the 2nd Battalion 143rd Infantry staged a counter attack that killed 83 of the enemy and captured 176 of Germany's crack troops.

Now, the move was on to the Rhine. It was no picnic. House to house again. Oberhoffen and Rohrwiller. The enemy concealed itself in woodlands near the towns in this area. The Germans over-ran us in Oberhoffen. It was the only time I remember when the 143rd retreated in France.

There followed a lull but, indeed, a lull before the storm. It took four hard days to clear what was called the Gamsheim pocket. I remember the rest we had briefly again. Thank God for the Red Cross girls.

On March 15, 1944 Company K, 143rd of which I am very proud to have served in spearheaded the jump off at the Moder River. Lt. Col. Charles Denholm's 143rd Infantry was superior in their efforts. No Company in the 143rd out stripped the effort of Company K at Bitschhofen. One of World War II's truly great heroes, O'Dean Cox of Waco, as a First Lieutenant (later Captain) directed Company K. Cox was later killed in Korea as he stayed in the Army. In World War II he went overseas as a private and came home as a Captain. Why he was never awarded a CMH remains a mystery to me.

The war was winding down. We crossed the Siegfried line, once considered unimpregnable, and onto Victory rolled the Fighting 36th.

On Monday, June 5, I toured Waco with my good friends, John Wheelis and Carl Vierrege's car, a Fifth Avenue Chrysler, just happened to be magnetically drawn to Post 2148 VFW, located at 321 Tennessee Avenue. Vierrege has been Post Commander of this Post, which has won "All-American" Post Awards several times. John Wheelis is proud to be a life member. Ed Will was a "wheel horse" in post activity. His loss is sensed.

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The Brazos River, and its offspring, Brazos Lake are murky looking, nonchalant waterways that, when not enraged, move as silently as Indians in moccasins. In the past this River has unleashed its fury wreaking death and damage to the citizens of Waco. The full name of this river is Brazos de Dios, which means, "Arm of God." Lake Brazos just hangs around Waco all day, dusky and serene. Along Lake Brazos one senses a new spirit extant in Waco.

"The River Walk", along Lake Brazos, is there asking you to ingest the history of this place, to become intoxicated by its beauty and its charm. These days songs of success fill the air in Waco, Texas. The tragic tornado of 1953 has left its scar on the psyche of this city. However, there is a newness of spirit, a resoluteness of purpose that is everywhere you look.

Carl Vierrege received several awards for his long combat service going from the Purple Heart to the Silver Star. In 1945 in the midst of the war, Carl actually was rotated back to the States for a furlough! He rejoined Company K later in Germany.

John Wheelis, another Waco native, would never have been a Sergeant stateside. He was then, and is now, too nice-of-a-guy.

I started working on this epistle on the way out of Waco. Somehow, someway I wanted to say, "thank you" to Waco for allowing me to be a part of your history.

I was encouraged in this by Roger Cannon. Cannon is a "one of a kind" guy.

He and his wife, Ruby, have been married humpteen years. They have left their stamp on Waco.

Ruby and Roger have proved that Buddyhood makes for good Spousemanship.

Waco, Texas like Phoenix (not Arizona) of old has risen above the major catastrophes it has suffered.

Let the word go forth: *"Waco is on the move!"*

Carl and John drove me through Waco. One sees the empty spaces where imposing buildings once stood before the tornado of 1953. The tornado was a staggering blow to Waco: 114 dead and \$57 million in damages. 1953 was a time of travail and solemn prayer in Waco.

Carl drove through portions of Baylor University's Campus. Baylor is the largest Baptist School in the United States. My Mother would have been delighted that we drove through the Baylor Campus. Mom never saw a Baptist she didn't like.

One gets the feeling that the forward moving spirit that seems now to possess Waco has somehow extended to motivate Baylor University. As you drive along the Brazos you almost hear a chant in your ears:

*"We have a team and we don't care*

*You just can't beat the Preachers and the Bears."*

Alfred Lord Tennyson wrote:

*"And time, a maniac scattering dust  
And Life, a Fury slinging flame."*

Tennyson sort of caught the treachery of "time" in a departure from his usual laudable verse.

Any way you slice it, time moves on and whether you view it philosophically or religiously, time remains a fleeting thing. In a sense, a vapor.

Forty-four years!! Once I helped liberate towns, a brash Kentucky basketball brat, a "payday poker" kind of a guy. Now I am old and fat and grey. What's your problem?

I prepared to check out of the Sheraton. There was time on my hands. Outside the Texas sun was almost too hot to handle. On the Baylor Campus resides the Armstrong-Browning Library with many kudos to Robert Browning. My great teacher, my beloved Aunt Clara, had drilled English Literature into me. Therefore, I'm familiar with Browning.

Life has its stresses and strains. It has its temptations. We do not just live our own life. We share the lives of others. Then, suddenly, your life and mine is old.

I am impressed that the motto of Texas is "Friendship."

I thought of the friendships I had made overseas in the 36th Division and those many more friendships added to that at National Reunions and Reunions of our strong Mid-West Chapter. It is said that what we find at the end of a perfect day is the soul of a friend we've made.

I walked to the lobby of the Sheraton. The desk was being wo-manned by two very pretty girls, one short and one very tall. As I said before, bless 'em all.

The Waco paper had already been sold out. I was disappointed. I retrieved a sensation oriented paper published in Florida. What fools we mortals be!

I recalled some of the guys I'd seen at the Reunion: Marvin Steitle, the President of the National Organization was there. He and Posey arrived from San Antonio and fraternized well with the members. Euel Fuller President of the 143rd Regiment Association and his wife, Helen, were there from Temple, Texas. Euel Fuller has had a very successful year as top kick of the 143rd.

Bert Carlton and his wife, Clara, had arrived from the Big D area with Payne Rucker and Liz Rucker. Carlton is a razor sharp guy. He now heads the T-Patch Newsletter as Editor. It seems that so many of my favorite friends live in the Dallas area.

I had seen Roy Goad at the Reunion. Goad is a good one. Roy was in D Company and lives in Temple, Texas. Andy Simonton, who served with Fuller, was there. Gene Jameson who also served in D Company, was there. Gene is a popular T-Patcher. He hails from Dallas now and swears he has no connection with the "Ewings."

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My friends, Riley Tidwell and Erwin Teggerman, Past National Presidents, attended the Reunion. Both staunchly support the 36th Division Association. Tidwell, as the youngest regular T-Patcher overseas, earned his laurels at San Pietro in Italy.

Rufus Cleghorn of Waco was there. I can still picture Cleghorn as he looked overseas. Rufus was a Standard Order of Procedure guy, very imbued with a desire to do his job in a military manner. The work he has done in the 143rd Infantry's Flower Fund shows how deeply he reveres his wartime comrades.

I am taken to the airport in Waco in the Courtesy Car of Sheraton's. The *humongously* happy Hispanic makes me more cheerful as faces like "Tack" Walker's and Ken Blish's kept coming to mind.

I asked the driver about Bluebonnets. "Mostly here and gone," he said. "They leave about this same time every year."

The Bluebonnet is a wild flower with frail blue blossoms, dressed in a silk leisure jacket giving it a look of casualness. In Springtime, the Bluebonnet carpets the fields of Texas, bringing a profuse and hauntingly beautiful floral display. Then the Bluebonnets are gone. They had disappeared, for the most part, when I was in Waco on June 2-4. The Bluebonnets burrow into the earth once their season is over.

Are the Bluebonnets dead or sleeping? It is, perhaps, a distinction without a difference because early next Spring the Bluebonnets will come again, sprouting forth from the earth in the starring role in God's nursery out Texas way. Each Spring the Bluebonnet shakes the sleep out of her tassels and comes forth all abloom.

If we could solve the mystery of the Texas Bluebonnet perhaps we could solve the mysteries of the universe.

Alvin Amelunke and Bob Hand were at the Airport. Bob and I were catching the Commuter to the Dallas-Fort Worth Airport. I was getting scorching hot again at 1 p.m. They announced the flight.

I had said this will be a "once in a lifetime" trip.

"Come back, next year, Kibbey," Alvin said.

Spontaneously I said, "I will." You know, I think I shall.

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**Protect  
Our  
Flag**



*Excerptps from*  
**“Seek Strike  
And Destroy”**

*By Tom Sherman*

Worldwartwoveterans.org

On Dec. 13 the Battalion S4 picked up some mules to be used to haul supplies. The roads were such a mess you could not get through with anything else. The mules were a sorry lot—most of them had been picked up after the Germans left them behind because they were too worn out or crippled to be of any further use to them. A detail from Company “A” hauled rations on the mules one night and when they got back I noticed John Voss’s hand was swollen badly. When I asked him what happened, he said, “I carried that mule and the rations both up the mountain, then he fell down, I helped him up and he kicked me. Then I hit him and broke my fist.”

Lt. Bob Graham, Gerold Sharpe and I were manning the “A” Company OP. The OP had been a German bunker blasted out of solid rock on the side of the mountain and then covered with railroad ties with more rock on top of the ties. The Germans had evidently left in a hurry or surrendered because there were a couple of their rifles and a lot of ammunition laying around. When the artillery barrage that preceded the attack started, I told Lt. Graham I was going to help out. I gathered up a rifle and a lot of the German ammo, found a place where I could get a clear view of San Pietro and started firing. I aimed at the windows of the houses and shot as fast as I could. While I was firing an American Major walked up and asked me what I was doing. I told him I was just helping out. He replied “Give them hell but quit when the artillery does.” The rifle got so hot I could hardly hold it, but kept firing until the artillery let up.

When we had first located the German bunker I had been told to check it out for booby traps. I had checked it all out and found nothing. I had picked up one of the rifles and checked it out then loaded it and set it in a corner where it would be handy in case we needed it. It was still sitting in the corner of the cave when two radio men came up from battalion to check our radio. Lt. Graham, Sharpe and I were sitting outside the dugout when there was a loud bang inside and one of the radio men came out like his tail was on fire I thought “Oh no” thinking I must have miss-

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ed a booby trap. The second man came out of the bunker and I asked him what happened. He said "I picked up the rifle flipped it off safety and pulled the trigger to see if it was loaded. I guess that was sorta foolish." I replied "I think it was damned dumb." The first man had slowed down enough now so that we found out that the bullet had ricocheted around inside the rock walls until it was almost flat before lodging in his buttocks. Too bad it didn't hit the one who pulled the trigger.



Paratroopers of the 504th Parachute Infantry (part of the 82nd Airborne Division) on the road to San Pietro on December 17. The 504th, which lost fifty men killed in the fighting for Monte Sammucro (Hill 1205), took over from the worn-out 1st Battalion of the 143rd 'T-Patchers' after the battle for the village was over (US Army).



*Above:* The War Cemetery on the slopes of Monte Lungo where 974 Italians lie buried in stone tombs. The cemetery was opened on December 14, 1963 and ex-Lieutenant Sergio Andreanelli, of the Genova Cavalleria, stands on the same spot as he did when a cadet with the inaugural Guard of Honour.

# *Prisoners of War Southern France 1945*

*by D. L. Faulkenbury  
36th MP Company*

We handled a lot of prisoners while we were in France. Hauling them to POW enclosures and NOT ONE OF THEM EVER ESCAPED!

We hauled them by two's, dozens, and fifty at a time—sometimes marching at least three hundred of them in during the last days of the war.

We had one prisoner who was a Mongolian. He had very long hair, which was unusual for those days, and acted like a real savage. We were close to the Division Stockade and for some reason we decided to deliver him on foot! We tied a rope around him. During the trip we had to cross a big creek, or river bed. Several times he tried to lay down on us and would also try to bite us. He acted like a WILD MAN! We had a very hard time reaching the stockade with him. J.L. HINES was with us on this unforgettable trip.

## **ANOTHER DAY—ANOTHER WINNER**

One day I was sitting in the back of a Weapons Carrier, actually I was sleeping, when JAMES O. HARRIS came and woke me up! They were bringing in four or five prisoners. I threw my mattress out on the ground, loaded the prisoners—tied the curtain in the back of the vehicle, and we were off to the stockade. We always preferred to take prisoners to the POW so we would not have to guard them! As we got out of the Carrier I untied the curtain, reached to let the tail gate down—SURPRISE, and I DO MEAN SURPRISE, I discovered that I had not removed my rifle from the back of the vehicle! I was sure hoping that the prisoners would think this was a trick, and the Weapon wasn't loaded. Without any further problems we completed our mission.

## **SHELLS WERE FLYING**

We received about eight or nine prisoners on this particular day. Among them was a Captain with the Medics. He could speak very good English. He began to beg for us to let him go back to his unit. Said he had a lot of wounded men that needed attention. JACK HOOVER was the soldier in charge of our unit at this time. He informed him that he could not let him go but at the Division Stockade they might.

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It was beginning to get dark as we loaded the prisoners in our vehicle. On the outside of the carrier there is a place you can sit-up above the running board. We placed the Captain there so we could keep an eye on him. But the time we had loaded all the prisoners it had gotten very, very dark! As we were driving down the road HOOVER said to me, "WATCH OUT FOR THE SOLDIERS WALKING ALONG THE ROAD." The thought ran through my mind, I must be losing my eyesight, I don't see any soldiers, and made this remark. HOOVER jabs me in the side with his elbow, indicated that he wanted me to be quiet! All this time I am thinking, "WHAT THE....IS GOING ON!" Later Hoover told me that the Captain was getting restless and that he, Hoover, wanted him to think we had other soldiers with us. The Captain jumped off the carrier into the ditch. Hoover started emptying his pistol into the ditch. With our flashlights we began searching for the Captain. We thought we could find him right away BUT WE DIDN'T! However, as soon as the lights finally hit him, he was lying on the ground, he began screaming, "DON'T SHOOT ME, I HAVE SIX KIDS BACK HOME WAITING FOR ME." Hoover had shot him in the leg, between the knee and hip, and it looked as if he might have broken a bone. WHAT A SIGHT! We stood by the road and waiting for help. An ambulance came soon and between the lights we had been flashing, and the flashing of the ambulance lights, the KRAUTS GOT WISE...The shells began to fall all around us, AND the Captain! The Captain was HOLLERING AND ALL THE PRISONERS IN THE TRUCK WERE HOLLERING. Someone said, "LET'S GET THE....OUT OF HERE." And we all agreed this wasn't a bad idea. We loaded the Captain in the ambulance without any further damage and took off amidst all the shells and keeping our record in tact—NO PRISONERS ESCAPED.

### REST AND RECUPERATION

The greatest thrill I received during the war was when ARNOLD ASHBY (now deceased), and a couple of more guys were on R&R in France. The 45th Division was near us and we went over to visit with my brother, who was in the Infantry. This was a precious moment for me. I still remember when I left him and he said, "The next time you see me I will be in a bed sack." Thank God that never happened. A few days later he became ill with appendicitis and was returned home. He never rejoined his unit. Many years later, after I was discharged from the Army, I was fortunate to see some of the guys one more time. GEORGE BLANTON, BOYD DUNCAN, ROSS GRADY, and TRAVIS VEAL. I visited with Travis when I lived in Wichita Falls. I met HANDSOME GEORGE at a football game between Denison and Wichita Falls. Imagine how shocked and glad I was to see George Blanton after the football game in the parking lot. He was wearing his BIG WHITE HAT, and had a 45 HANGING FROM HIS HIP! He was Sheriff for Grayson Co. at that time. We had a nice visit but did not know that would be our last visit. Boyd Duncan came to see me twice and Ross Grady a couple of times.



I am glad we have the 36th Division Group so we can keep in touch with each other. It is kind of sad though when the guys you thought were your close friends, you never hear from them.

**PRIVATE J. L. "BUCK" HERRON**

**—AID TO A STORK WITH THE FIFTH AMERICAN ARMY, NORTH AFRICA.**

Three of the Fifth American Army's Law Enforcers are convinced today that the letter "MP" on their Arm Bands also stands for "MATERNITY POLICE"

Recently Sergeant JAMES CAIN, Gilmer, Texas; PVT. FIRST CLASS JESSE "BUCK" HERRON, Sweetwater, Texas; and PVT JOHN O. CRAFT, Anacoca, La., were on Motor Patrol when an excited Frenchman stopped them and indicated by gestures, and the use of a few French words, that his wife had to be taken to the hospital because she was about to give birth to a baby.

They rushed the French couple to a Municipal Hospital and made it just in time! Later they saw a Buddy MP, who reported that just about an hour and a half previous he had a similar call only his STORK HAD NOT BEEN TOO "FLEET OF WINGS" AND THE BABY WAS BORN IN HIS ARMY JEEP.

*EDITOR'S NOTE: Above story was one of many clippings from a scrap book "Bucks" sister kept for him during the war years.*

**BEHIND THE LINES**

We were in the Voges Mountains in Bryais town—had the POW in an old house that was being shelled every day. B.T. Marchbanks, Lem Jones, and myself, were upstairs—the German shells started coming close! I looked around and B.T. and Lem were crawling across the floor. They got hung against the door jams and couldn't get out. I said, "Get up so you can get through the door." You would have had to see them for this to be funny.

I would like to come to Waco but I don't have anyone to stay with my Dad anymore as my brother passed away about a year ago and this leaves no one but me to take care of him. He is 93 years old. So I don't know when I will be able to make one.

**ROBERT R. "BOB" ROUNDY**  
**1916-1990**

Robert "Bob" Roundy joined the Silver Taps Corps when he suffered a massive heart attack while conducting a meeting at the VFW Winfield Scott Post 2193, of which he was Post Commander.

Bob held many varying positions in Civic Groups and functions in his home town, Maywood, Illinois.

Bob prided himself as having been a member of "Texas 36th Inf. Division" during World War II. His pride and joy was being a member of the 36th Inf. Div. M.P. Family Association Platoon. He attended many reunions in Texas and was very supportive of both associations.

After being discharged from the Army at Ft. Sam Houston on October 22, 1945, Bob returned to Maywood, Il. to pick-up his civilian life and carry on. He returned to his job as a Senior Clerk with the Railroad and retired 39 years later on January 4, 1979. Not being happy with retirement he became a School Crossing Guard for 11 years after his retirement.

On 26 October, 1957, he and Alice Pekavd exchanged wedding vows. To them were born two daughters, Sandra Roundy Jarrett and Sharon Roundy. They have one grandson, Scott Jarrett.

Bob was buried at Memory Garden Cemetery in Arlington Heights, Il.

**BOB ROUNDY IS GONE BUT HE WILL NEVER BE FORGOTTEN.**

#### *Four Things*

*Four things a man must learn to do  
If he would make his record true  
To think without confusion clearly  
To love his fellowman sincerely  
To act from honest motives purely  
To trust in God and Heaven securely.*

*Henry Van Dyke*

*EDITOR'S NOTE: The above appeared in Bob's Funeral program.*



# *Tommy Guns and Gloves...A Bad Combination*



WorldwarTwoVeterans.org

*by David Arrizu  
B-143rd Infantry*

On the afternoon of November 20, 1944, I was ordered to take out a patrol and check out a bridge and road intersection for mines and enemy activity. For the past two days our battalion commander, David M. Frazier, had been running us "ragged" up and down the hills, night and day, checking for any isolated German units in the area west of Anould and Fraize in the Vosages Mountains of the Alsace Region of France.

We were all dog tired, in a bad mood, and a patrol mission was the last straw. To this day I do not know why I decided to borrow Ben Palmer's Thompson Submachine gun. I knew how to handle the weapon and was familiar with its capabilities. Maybe I was just tired and thought that the "Tommy Gun" would be easier to carry around than my M-1 rifle. I checked the gun and everything was working OK. I selected two magazines of ammo for the gun that had been taped together, plus one extra magazine tucked into my belt.

For the patrol I picked two men from my squad, trying to select those that were next up for patrol duty. Needless to say we were all tired, and certainly hoped to go out and get the job done and get back as soon as possible. By this time of the year the weather had turned cold and snow or drizzle could come down at any time. We hoped to get back from the patrol before the weather turned bad and certainly before it got dark, and settle down for the night and get some rest. Also, since the distance to the objective was less than 800 yards and downhill we did not expect to be gone too long. We were dressed warmly enough—long johns, wool field uniform and field jackets.

We started downhill, went through our outposts, and using a small draw with low shrubs for cover worked our way toward the bridge and

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road intersection. Halfway to the objective we stopped to observe for any enemy activity, and saw no movement or sign of the enemy.

To our right front was a small village of perhaps 20-30 houses. There was a very unusual appearance in the way all of the houses in the village had the roofs blown off, and the walls were still standing. There were two exceptions to this—the church and the house next to it were intact. I made a mental note of this and we worked our way closer to the bridge. I halted the patrol a short distance from the bridge, told the men to cover me and went forward to see if it was mined or rigged up with explosives. The bridge appeared to be OK and I returned to where the two riflemen were waiting.

The appearance of the houses in the village and the fact that only the church and the house next to it were intact aroused my curiosity. We found a good position to observe the village and began exchanging ideas as to the appearance of the village. After more discussion I proposed we go into the village, or at least close enough for a better look. The two riflemen agreed to the idea and we began to work our way along a man-made canal that ran parallel to the main street in the village. We worked our way to approximately the center of the houses on the opposite side of the canal. We took cover behind a control gate that went across the canal. This control gate was made of thick wooden planks bolted together, and could be raised or lowered to control the flow of water in the canal.

We saw no enemy activity and at this point curiosity got the best of my better judgement. I knew the bridge was OK, the road intersection could be checked on the way back to our lines and so far no enemy had been encountered. But those two intact buildings in the village kept nagging at me. Why only two buildings intact out of the whole village? Then I told the two riflemen, "We are going closer to the village and have a better look." They just shrugged their shoulders and nodded in agreement.

We slung our weapons over our shoulders and worked our way to the top of the control gate one at a time. There was a thick metal bar about waist high above the gate that was anchored at both ends. We held on to it and walking sideways on top of the gate, crossed the canal. Having crossed first, I took cover at the rear of a house close to where we had crossed the canal. After the men had crossed the canal they joined me at the rear of the house. At this point we began to talk about what we were going to do next. We decided we were going into the village and check out the two buildings that were intact. I would lead the way, and the men would follow when signaled to do so. I told the men that if we ran into any Germans we would immediately return to our lines using the most direct route.

We started out with me in the lead, by going around the left side of the house we had been using for cover. The two riflemen followed me one at

a time and joined me every time I stopped. I then moved forward along the side of the house until I came to a small alley and stopped. Again, the two riflemen followed one at a time and joined me. I peeked around the corner of the house to see if there was any activity in the alley and seeing none rushed across to the other side. The two riflemen rushed across the alley one at a time and joined me. Ahead, about half a block away we could see what appeared to be the main street of the village running parallel to the alley we had just crossed. We worked our way slowly forward and stopped a few feet from the large street.

At this time we were between two houses with just a narrow space of six feet between them. I whispered to the men that I was going to rush across the large street. The distance across appeared to be about fifty feet. I told them that once I was safely across I would signal for them to follow. They nodded indicating they understood.

Then I made a mistake! Instead of peering around to see if there was any movement in the street I was about to cross, I got up and made a mad dash forward to cross the street. I was going full speed and as I came onto the street I saw a squad of Germans coming toward me from the right, and walking on the left side of the street about 75 feet away. They had their rifles slung on their shoulders and some of them were carrying large canvas bags.

I came to a screeching halt in the middle of the street, leveled the Thompson submachine gun at them and yelled "Hands Up". The Germans were completely surprised, stopped, and just looked at me. Again, I yelled "Hands Up," and motioned with the submachine gun. I saw some of them begin to unslung their rifles slowly, and others dropped the canvas bags they were carrying.

I kept my eyes fixed on the leader in front. As he slowly began to unslung his rifle I noticed that the muzzle began to swing in my direction. Whatever this movement was, intentional or accidental, I will never know. I pulled the trigger—AND THE THOMPSON DID NOT FIRE! I pulled the trigger again, hard, and again, nothing! I then noticed that I was wearing gloves. The top of one finger of the glove was caught between the trigger and the rear of the trigger housing and the trigger was not being pulled far enough for the submachine gun to fire. I was desperate and gave the trigger a hard jerk, and this time the Thomson fired a burst of 8-10 rounds. All of this happened so fast that everything seemed to be moving in slow motion. I saw the leader drop his weapon, grab his right side and go down. At the same time the rest of the Germans hit the dirt. I wheeled to the right and took off in the direction we had come from and yelled at the riflemen—"Let's Go", and go we did!

When we got to the canal, into the water we went holding our weapons over our heads. The water was very cold, but fortunately only waist deep. Once on the other side we took off on the double directly toward our lines. The going was uphill but not very steep. By this time the out-

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posts had heard the shots I had fired and were on the lookout for us. As we passed the outposts I yelled at them to be on the lookout for any enemy that might be following us. But apparently the Germans had hightailed it back to their unit since they had been surprised to see American infantrymen in the village.

I was scared, fuming mad, cussing and disgusted with myself. I shoved the Thompson submachine gun into Ben Palmer's hands and told him that never again would I ever use one of those damned things. I do not even recall if I personally gave a report on what had happened during the patrol, or if someone relayed the information for me. Later on one of the riflemen (I believe it was Angelo Purrucci) who was on the patrol, said to me "Hey Zu, I had never seen a whiter-looking Mexican as you when you turned and saw the Jerries." I knew he was joking about it, but he was 100 percent right. I swore I would never, ever, wear a glove on my trigger hand when on a patrol again!

FOOT NOTE: Prior to my "memory" trip to France in June of 1988 LTC Richard B. Blackwell sent me a letter "jogging my memory" about the above patrol incident. I tried to find the exact location, and thought it might have happened in the town of Fraize. However, when I was in Fraize the area did not look familiar. In retrospect it may have happened in the village of Clefcy in the valley just west of Fraize.



HONOR IT!

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# Sanctuary

by R. K. Doughty



Worldwartwoveterans.org

Avellino, Italy, lying near Celsi where the 141st Infantry Regiment took up serious training again, after Monte Cassino, was to my mind one of the most beautiful cities imaginable. This was due, no doubt, to the contrast it represented to the grim environs of Monte Cassino but also to the institutions and people I encountered there. Its beauty was further enhanced by the fact that I had seen it from a vantage point high in the mountains from which no ugliness, if any existed, could be discerned. Before that view appeared however, there were a number of intervening stops deserving comment.

Once out of the combat zone our initial destination had been the small town of Pratella, an ancient beehive perched on a hill top. I was in charge of the advance party sent out to establish a bivouac and training area for the regiment. At Pratella, I took over one wing of a Dr. Manfredi Mancone's home lying outside the main town at the foot of its central hill. The house was large enough to accommodate my group and, in a separate wing, the doctor's family.

Worldwartwoveterans.org

The doctor, himself, was off visiting a sick patient at the time of our arrival and I had negotiated with his two daughters and a son, all of whom spoke French as a second language. In the early evening of the first day I learned a lot about Dr. Mancone for I was summoned to the front door of the house and there standing in freshly fallen snow was a slightly built man with a professional but somewhat humble look about him. He also spoke French and we stood and talked in the dooryard. Something caused me to look down at his feet and I saw they they had been cut and were bleeding through his shoes.

He invited me into his part of the rambling house where I met his wife who appeared frightened and tearful as she went about preparing dinner for the family at a wood-burning tiled stove. As we talked, I learned that the doctor had walked to his patient's home some thirty miles away, simply to be with her when she died. He had had to cross an ice-filled river in a leaky boat and, overall, had spent a miserable two days hoping that, somehow, he could alleviate her suffering.

He told me that German soldiers had taken all of his surgical tools and medical supplies when they left the area. He was concerned both for the civilian population and for our troops that no epidemic break out, now that so many people were to be crowded into the vicinity of Pratella.

A day or two later, I was awakened during the night by screams and rushed downstairs to the doctor's office where he had just opened a woman's infected arm without anesthesia and through use of an ordinary pocket knife for a scalpel. I had never seen a worse-looking infection and under the circumstances the woman was threatened with the loss of her arm if not her life.

Since we had no medics with us and I wasn't sure how long we'd be without medical assistance I felt it important to equip Dr. Mancone to take care of our needs as well as those of the civilians in the area. He agreed. I found some sulphur powder for the woman's arm that night and the next morning drove to the outskirts of Naples. I explained my situation to an Army medical supply officer to whom I was referred and he gave me what amounted to sufficient equipment to establish a small hospital at Dr. Mancone's residence, together with enough medical supplies to last several months. He also gave me a letter explaining the circumstances necessitating the use of a civilian doctor for military services and authorizing his use of military medical supplies.

Dr. Mancone, who had spent 18 years under the Italian system, qualifying as a doctor, took the next 24 hours reading all of the instructions accompanying many of the so-called wonder drugs which he had never used, I had helped him to translate much of what he read. With them he not only saved the woman's arm and life but was able to treat other patients who were suffering from diseases he had been unable to help.

All of this paid off, in a manner of speaking, a few days later when, as sometimes happened, one of our soldiers shot and killed himself. He apparently could not stand the release from tension that resulted from leaving the front lines. I took Dr. Mancone with me to certify, and detail the cause of death. He wrote it out in Italian. Together, we translated it to French and I re-translated it to English. We sent all three versions in multiple copies to higher echelons.

Higher headquarters commended us for the professionalism of the report and the Infantry School at Ft. Benning, Ga. cited us in its "Lessons Learned etc." for using ingenuity under unusual circumstances.

Since the Pratella area proved too restricted for our needs, we moved on March 5, 1944, to Maddaloni near Caserta, where we took over a large villa for Regimental headquarters and were entertained by several troops of actors and actresses, among them Jean Darling, formerly of the "Our Gang" comedies and Alfred Foye, Jr. Located in that area, too, was the 64th General Hospital, originally from New Orleans. A special affinity developed between the 36th Division members and those of the 64th General, not only because of their origin in neighboring states but because their respective members enjoyed each others' company.



Each organization held dances for the entertainment of the other, and in effect, provided oases away from the war for short intervals.

Opportunities arose, while we were in Maddaloni, to visit Caserta, where I met and talked with Irving Berlin at the Opera House. I also visited Pompeii and an orphanage in Naples where the children called each of us "Papa" and played on the floor with us.

On April 4th we moved to Celsi a small town just inland from Naples but reached by a road that, in those days, twisted and turned, corkscrew fashion, over the mountains. The terrain compared closely with that part of Italy, lying along the coast between Gaeta and Anzio, where we expected to re-enter combat.

I visited the officers' club at Avellino where I met several officers of the Royal 22nd "Van Doos" Regiment of Quebec, Canada. A Lt. Vincent, Capt. Piccard and Capt. Parquette and I, following an evening of popping champagne corks at Cherubims adorning the ceiling of the club's main room, repaired to the 22nd's supply room where a burly sergeant fitted me, exactly, to a regimental uniform with its Beaver insignia. Then, in a candle-lit ceremony in a military chapel at midnight, I was sworn in as an honorary member of the "Van Doos".

As a footnote to that event, I called the headquarters of the Royal 22nd when I visited Quebec City several years after the war and was given a conducted tour of the Citadel. It included the long bar where veterans gather daily to fight the wars again, the mess where the Queen's portrait is always ready for her visit and the holy of holies where the regimental combat history is maintained.

I could not remember the names of the officers who had inducted me at midnight for I had misplaced a journal I had kept when behind the lines. Subsequently, I found the journal and wrote to confirm my bona fides only to learn that two of the officers had been KIA shortly after my induction and another, having returned safely from the war, had disappeared into the wilds of Canada.

While training at Celsi was carried on each day, there was still time to do some sight-seeing, even if it necessitated setting up problems for the I and R Platoon. By conducting such a problem, I managed to visit the Santuario di Monte Virgine on a towering mountain overlooking Avellino. A Capucini brotherhood runs the sanctuary and in summer the brothers climb the mountain, via the seven stages of the Cross, in order to spend the warm months in the sanctuary cooled by perennial snows packed deep in a crevice behind the buildings.

Of all the beautiful places to be seen in Italy the Santuario di Monte Virgine was the easiest for me to relate to because it did not overwhelm me as did St. Peter's when I saw it, later, in Rome.

The approach to the mountain fastness that surrounds the sanctuary is fourteen miles up a winding, twisting road leading to a stronghold that has guarded its special occupants since the 15th Century AD. The sanctuary and all of its buildings are reached through an archway in solid wall. There were animals and poultry in the inner quadrangle whose

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southern side was open to a view that stays with me even now. It was springtime in Italy, when I first saw it and flowers and blossoming trees are the lasting impression that met my eyes as I looked down the hills and valleys stretching for miles below.

The mosaic work of the sanctuary, whose roof stands seventy-five feet above its floor, is unsurpassed in its artistry. As one approaches the altar it becomes even more beautiful with its designs and alternating colors in marble. There are patterns in roses, greens, violets, blues, milky whites and greys forming a scene unmatched anywhere, so far as I am concerned.

On either side of the main vault are lesser chapels and places of worship.

It was freezing cold in the sanctuary due no doubt to the black-encrusted snow lying at the rear of the building. I stopped a young monk and asked him if he spoke English or French. He spoke French and took me on a guided tour of the monk's living quarters. I learned that my guide was called "Pere Charles" and that, surprisingly, he was the head of the brotherhood.

During our tour of the living areas the monk pointed out a member of his order sitting at a library table hand-painting the pages of books. Many of the monks, my guide said, had taken a vow of silence, never speaking to anyone. This was such a man. He sat there, his face almost lost in a great mane of white hair that fell to his shoulders and a beard that disappeared below the table. A ray of light entering from a clerestory window, high above, lit up the rough texture of the robe he wore. He did not seem to move but, with head bent slightly, stared at the book in front of him. Beside his left hand, positioned on the table, were one or two more books.

According to Pere Charles the silent man was more than 90 years old, had joined the order many years before and spent his time illuminating the pages of old books. For all practical purposes, here was a man reduced to the most fundamental aspects of living. Beside him on the desk were the only remaining vestiges of all that his life had meant. I couldn't help but think to myself that for him, there was no war, no walls, only self.

While I had told Pere Charles that I was not a Catholic, he nevertheless spent a long time showing me some of the treasures of the sanctuary. In a drawing room were several solid gold vases contributed to the monastery by King Umberto I of Italy. In the main reception hall was an iron cross bearing Christ's figure. It was some 700 years old and the gift of Victor Emanuel, another Italian King. Although rusted the cross was delicately wrought and greatly prized by the monks since it had been found at the site of St. Peter's in Rome.

A painting in a small chapel where the monks gathered for morning and evening prayers, was of unusual composition. Seven feet high and three feet wide the "canvas" is actually hewn wood on which chip marks of an ancient tool are visible. Contributed in 1500 by the monastery's founder, Father Guillermo, the head and halo of the main figure protrude from the rest of the composition denoting that they had been carved in that relief before being painted.

I also learned that Pere Charles was heading a group that was caring for many of the Italian civilians who had been injured by the bombing of the Monte Cassino Abbey. They were located on the grounds of the brotherhood located within the city of Avellino.

My last view of Pere Charles was after he had taken me by the arm to look over a balustrade at the flowered landscape fading into the distance below us. "From here," he said, "we see only beauty." He turned and walked toward the sanctuary where vespers were about to be said. I moved slowly toward my jeep knowing there was no beauty like that where armies fought.



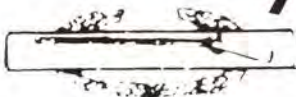
*Long May  
It Wave*



**T-PATCHERS - HONOR  
OUR FLAG - WE DON'T  
BURN THEM!**

Worldwarwoveterans.org

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



# *We Who Were There*

## *Part 2*

### *36th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop*

*History provided by Dan S. Ray*

The following is an edited account of the operations of Flying Column #1 and #2 second platoon.

#### FLYING COLUMN 1

Our unit, commanded by 2nd Lt. Terry A. O'Brien, was attached to the 1st Battalion, 141st Infantry. Our mission was to land on Blue Beach at N. Plus 140 (0550 hours). Move to highway 18, then south along highway 18 to Ogliaastro, left in Ogliaastro to the high ground southeast of the town. We were to remain in observation and report by SCR-510 radio to the battalion 11 action of troops moving along highway 18 south of Ogliaastro.

We loaded on the USS Jefferson the afternoon of Sept. 2 at Mers-El-Kebir Algeria, North Africa. Our ship left the harbor as part of a large convoy at 0730 September 5. During the four day voyage to our objective, we devoted considerable time to detailed studies of the tactical plan, and maps, and the excellent aerial photographs made available to us.

The morale of our troops was very high during the trip and remained so during the entire action. We approached our objective the evening of Sept. 8 which had been divided into four separate sections, from north to south. Red, green, yellow and blue.

At 0420 hours on the 9th we were loaded into two small landing crafts and moved through the darkness toward our designated beach. The landing craft circled about the naval control boat until the last lap to the beach. During the approach to the beach the craft and beaches were under heavy artillery and small arms fire. Two boats that carried column 1 hit the beach at 0510 hours. We immediately dispersed our vehicles to lessen the effect of enemy fire and then found that we had been landed on yellow beach which was about 50 yards to the left of blue on which we were scheduled to land. Lt. O'Brien then organized the section and we moved out for blue beach, but on the way one of the ¼ ton, the one with Sgt. Pemberton and T/5 Goodson, and Pvt. R. A. Smith, and Pt. Osborne in it became bogged down in the sand. We then deployed our vehicles and took cover because the beach was being heavily shelled at the time. We were on blue beach about an hour. During this time a German MK-IV tank moved to a position about 800 yards to our right flank and laid a heavy concentration of artillery and machine gun fire on us and the advancing infantry. Two of our men T/5 Horace O. Skinner and

Pvt. Casimir Tomczak, despite the rain of bullets and shrapnel, jumped to their 37mm gun and took the tank under fire, knowing all the time that they could not penetrate the tank armor at that range. The two boys did however drive the tank away. These men were driven away from their gun 3 times before the tank was driven away. T/5 Clifford M. Story then was able to contact Column 2 by radio (SCR-193) and Sgt. Bunch, leader of Column 2 reported his location which was a point on yellow beach. We moved our section, minus the ¼ ton which had bogged down, to the other column and Lt. O'Brien reorganized us and we started down a lane from the beach toward highway 18 and the town of Paestum.

#### FLYING COLUMN #2

This unit under staff Sgt. James D. Bunch hit the beach (yellow) at 0500 hours under heavy artillery and machine gun fire. The ¾ ton would not start; we had to improvise a gasket for the fuel line in the midst of everything. Then immediately after we unloaded the 37mm the ¾ ton bogged down at the edge of the water. We were forced to dig in at this point because of enemy fire. About 30 minutes later with the help of an engineer bulldozer, we managed to pull the ¾ ton up to the beach which had not been cleared, we had to cut wire to get off the beach. We then sent Pvt. Reany and Cpl. Kitchens to locate a path across the small ridge at the end of the sank line, which they did. We got as far as the ridge when we were stopped by the machine gun fire from 7 MK-IV tanks. We backed up and took up firing positions. Just at that time the 37 mm bogged down again so all we had was a dismounted .50 cal. mg. The tanks were on the left flank of yellow beach, Sgt. Bunch, Pvt. White, Pvt. Gibson and Sgt. Patton manned the .30 cal lmg and managed to knock the track off a MK-IV tank. Meanwhile Cpl. Kitchens and Pvt. Reaney left with a rocket launcher and a rifle grenade launcher. Cpl. Kitchens shot missed but Pvt. Reaney's grenade struck fairly only to break into three pieces instead of exploding. The 6 remaining tanks withdrew to a peach orchard about 600 yards off the beach, while we finished off the 4 man crew of the 7th. We then moved forward about 200 yards but had to return to pull out the mortar ¼ ton under Pfc. William H. Hobbs, who had taken the tanks under fire. We then contacted Column 1 by radio (T/5 Ablert J. Robertson, radio operator) and reported our location. Then we set up perimeter security for our section and awaited the arrival of Column 1.

#### Second Platoon (Flying Column 1 and 2)

On the way toward Paestum, we observed 7 MK-IV tanks heading for the rear of the 3rd Battalion, 141st Infantry, which we deployed in the vicinity of yellow beach, 1000 yards south of Paestum.

We immediately alerted the battalion, then contacted the anti-tank platoon of the battalion which immediately set up. We moved in on their left to add our fire power to theirs and to protect their flank. The tanks did not attack, however, but moved off to another mission.

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We remained near the CP of the 141st Infantry, vicinity Paestum until the next day, Sept. 10. At about 1700 hours on the 9th a shell from a German 88mm gun struck a tree about 5 yards from us and it rained shrapnel. Pvt. Buxton, Pvt. Reaney, and Pvt. Tomczak, Parese were hit. Pvt. Buxton and Pvt. Perese were hit seriously and had to be evacuated to the hospital ship which lay off shore. Pvt. Tomczak and Pvt. Reaney were treated by aid men on the spot and were able to carry on. T/5 Skinner remarked "Those ...'s must be zeroed in."

All night we provided security for the Regimental CP. At 0420 hours, the next morning a patrol of 2 ¼ ton, consisting of Pvt. Arsenault, Sgt. Patton, and Pvt. Leigh and Pvt. John left to reconnoiter along highway 18 and down to G Company 141st Infantry to locate Lt. Bass.

The rest of the platoon, less 3 ¼ ton under S/Sgt. Bunch moved to the new CP leading the way for Colonel Price.

The 3 ¼ tons under command of Lt. O'Brien moved out on a road reconnaissance along highway 18 and down to the front lines to locate Lt. Bass of Headquarters Co. S/Sgt. Bunch was in command of the remaining elements.

The results of the reconnaissance were as follows: We located the 1st battalion, 141st infantry on the bank of the Sele Frone River. This battalion had been out of contact with the 141st CP. We also contacted a company of tanks just west of highway 18. The CP of the tank company had orders to fire on a hill south of the Sele Frone River, but was unable to because the forward position of our infantry were not known. We located the infantry position and reported it to the tank co.

Lt. O'Brien left him with a ¼ ton with a mine detector to sweep aford at the Sele Frone River to get to a better position.

In the meantime, Lt. Gutterman who had been sent out from the troop assembly area had met 2 ¼ tons at the 141st CP and had brought them to the 141st CP south of the Sele Frone River and these vehicles rejoined the platoon.

We then returned to the new 141st CP and there received orders to move out without delay with a mission to seize and hold Ogliaastro and to push on to a bridge over the Alento River and to prepare this bridge for demolition. A squad of engineers with Sergeant in command was attacked.

We moved out at 1600 hours and on the way had to repair a crater in the road, this delayed us for about ¾ hour. We then proceeded to Ogliaastro and took the town.

During our search for the town for enemy, T/5 Story was wounded by one of 4 Italian policemen who were hiding in a building. Cpl. Houston flushed them out with hand grenades. The Italians claimed that they thought we were Germans. We disarmed them then and sent them back to the Division PW enclosure and evacuated T/5 Story to the rear.

The inhabitants of the town told us the Germans were about 20 minutes ahead. It was then dark and we decided to remain in Ogliastro for the night.

Lt. O'Brien contacted an officer from the Cannon Co. 141st Infantry who brought up 2 self-propelled 105's and by coordinating the self-propelled guns with .50 cal. mg's and 37mm guns from our platoon we set up a very substantial road block. We then withdrew the rest of the platoon to get local security and to allow some of the men to get some sleep.

Lt. Roger L. Gutterman contacted me at 2400 that night (10th) to find out our location and all information we had obtained. He again contacted me just prior to 0530, the next morning when he led G Company, 141st Infantry up to the town. Lt. O'Brien then reorganized his platoon and moved on down towards the bridge over the Alente River. On the way in passing through Rutino, we located some soldiers moving about a railroad station about  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile to the right of the road. Not knowing who they were, we moved our 37mm gun into position. The platoon leader led a section down to the railroad station where we found about 300 Italian soldiers, who laid down their arms, when they saw we were Americans. After checking these Italians we proceeded on without mishap to the bridge, while the bridge was being prepared for demolition by the engineers, we remained here for about 1 hour and then Capt. Wells came out and gave us another mission which was to move on down 5 or 6 miles further to seize and hold 2 bridges over the Alento River, while they were prepared for demolition.

Lt. Gutterman brought a Lieutenant from the engineers out there and proceeded to blow two of the bridges and a section of the bank to make an effective road block. This was done on orders of the Co. 141st Inf.

Lt. O'Brien then organized his platoon and then returned to the 141st CP to report all information. Here the Lt. was met by Cpl. Pearson of the first platoon, who proceeded to show Lt. O'Brien the location of the troop CO. Two miles from the CP, 3 men from the troop met our platoon in a  $\frac{1}{4}$  ton truck and let us to the troop CP. The following morning the 12th, Lt. O'Brien was called to the troop CO's car at division headquarters and I was given a mission which was to take his platoon plus headquarters platoon Fargo and move out to Altavilla to contact the battalion that was holding that hill, to find our composition and location and to tell the 3rd battalion 143rd Inf. which was to relieve them. This accomplished and we found that the battalion which was at Altavilla was driven off the hill and totally disorganized by the enemy artillery and our own artillery. Lt. O'Brien reported this to Capt. Lundy, S-2 of 143rd Inf. Lt. O'Brien then started on the second part of his mission which was to reconnoiter the area south and west of Altavilla. We then contacted the 3rd battalion, 143rd Infantry commander who was going into bivouac just south of Altavilla prior to attacking Altavilla. We then set up local

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security for this battalion for the night.

The next morning Sept. 13th, we proceeded to check the roads south west of Altavilla and were fired on by tanks from the town proper. We then proceeded on the second part of our mission which was to locate the 2nd battalion, 143rd Inf. CP and report their location. This we did, we then pulled out and started to look for a new route to Altavilla and ran into the 2nd battalion, 143rd inf. CP withdrawing because of a tank attack.

We turned around and reported this in and then pulled back out of artillery range to await further orders. Our next orders were to contact Gen. O'Daniel and attach our platoon to him. (Lt. O'Brien looked all that night before finding him). Our first mission came the next day (Sept. 14) when we were sent out to reconnoiter the area between our front lines and Altavilla. The platoon went into that area but were driven out by artillery and tank fire, we then set up the mobile reserve for added fire power in case of an attack. The platoon set up 3 light .30 cal. mg's on the left flank of the high ridge of hills just west of Altavilla.

The next morning (Sept. 15) we went on a short road reconnaissance beyond our front lines and located 2 German vehicles and about 200-300 German troops.

That evening we went out in front of the lines again as a listening post. Nothing happened outside of hearing a few German voices and several vehicles start up, all of which was reported.

The next day (Sept. 16) we went on another road reconnaissance up to Altavilla.

We set up a CP on the south west tip of the hill and then reconnoitered the whole area around there. We located 2 MK-IV tanks and two trucks moving towards highway 19. Lt. O'Brien sent in the location and asked for artillery fire. The artillery fire did not come. We remained up there in position until 2000 hours at which time we moved two listening post out into a prearranged position and remained there in position all night long.

We then returned to the 143rd CP the next morning (Sept. 17) and left immediately on another mission which was to move to highway 19 and patrol that area between the Sele River and Serre and Altavilla. We did this and then located the 1st battalion, 141st Infantry and reported their location. We then returned to the CP, next morning (Sept 18). We were released by Gen. O'Daniel to return to the troop control. We then returned to the troop area. Upon arrival Lt. O'Brien reported to Lt. Berg the troop commander. Sept. 19, 20, and 21 we remained at the troop area repairing our vehicles, checking radios and letting the men rest and clean up.

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*From Salerno to Anzio*

PART 3

by Wm. D. Broderick

142nd INF



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VIII—OFF THE LINE

The weather at this time, when not wet, was sunny and fairly warm for December. Finally we heard that we were to be relieved, and for once, the rumor was correct. Since we had heavier loads to carry, Lt. Donaho let the radio section start out ahead of time. We knew the way, because we were just going back to the creekbed where we had been before. For some reason I can't recall, only Bobby Cecil and I went on all the way to the intended bivouac area; the rest stopped off at Holland's dump, except Nick, who was being used as a guide. Bobby and I got to the place just as dusk began to fall. Before we set up for the night, we went over to the Regimental kitchen, about two hundred yards up the creek and got our first half decent food in a month. All they had left were beans and bread, but we ate plenty of these.

I recall dropping my pack on the ground near some rocks and later finding I had lost Rowell's razor, which I had salvaged from his pack. First Bob and I crossed the creek at a rocky point and almost decided to pitch a tent under a large tree, when, noticing the presence of jeep tracks, we decided against being run over in our sleep. So we re-crossed the creek and made ourselves a double sleeping sack on the sandy bank of the creek—far enough away, though, to keep from being flooded out. Meanwhile, the line companies and the heavy weapons company had come through on the way to their positions a little further up the creek. Next morning when we woke, everyone had either arrived, or was on his way. The kitchen was setting up a breakfast chow line. About 8:30 they began feeding, and we began eating—and eating—and eating. Powdered eggs and bacon, cream of wheat cereal, and bread and ersatz butter had never tasted so delicious. But our stomachs weren't going to take this unaccustomed rush of business without a struggle. At dinner time, I didn't feel well enough to eat, and after eating part of the supper I withdrew from the crowd and quietly vomited. Many others did likewise during the day. And it wasn't only caused by the Army chow. During the day all our

Christmas packages had been brought up and distributed, and everyone was having a very good time enjoying his gifts. I had three or four packages; some had as many as ten or twelve. The only sad ones were those who had received toilet kits, towels, and other inedibles. We spent most of the day sampling each other's goodies, and I was also delightedly hoarding a copy of H. C. L. Jackson's latest book, which Joann had sent me.

Static and all the other motor pool boys were now with us; the place was a beehive of activity. The place was a very difficult one to maneuver a jeep in and out of, being set quite a bit below the level of the road, which could be reached only by jockeying the jeep up a twisting and muddy trail. Nevertheless, plenty of jockeying was done. The kitchen was bringing in supplies; Mason, Gamble and Conroy were bringing in complete sets of new clothes for all of us, to replace those we had worn over a month. One time the supply room was strictly on the ball. Also Gamble was taking shoe sizes in order to get combat boots for us. It took him a couple of tries to get mine, 12B being a not too common size. There was a QM shower set up for us about a half mile down the creek, and we all had a chance to visit it and rid ourselves of our accumulated grime. During our time on the line the nearest we got to a complete wash was when we took what was impolitely known as a "whore's bath," taken out of a helmet; and it wasn't any too thorough.

Bobby and I pitched our tent in almost the same spot we had slept the night before, merely picking a slightly more suitable spot. I wasn't taking a very active interest in our tent pitching, as my vomiting was only the beginning of my worries. It was getting late and I was afflicted with a severe case of GI's (diarrhea to the uninitiated). Seven times during that miserable night I hurriedly evacuated the tent and tore up a little ravine to relieve myself. The eighth time I didn't make it; thus an onlooker might have seen me about four o'clock in the morning bathing myself in the creek. It was a fortunate thing that Gamble had equipped us with spare underwear. Since that time the situation has seemed funny, but at the moment I would not have appreciated any laughter.

Next morning when Bob tried to give me some more of his fruit and nut candies, I politely but oh, so firmly, refused.

We had one obstacle in getting to breakfast. The kitchen was across the creek so we had to ford it at every meal. Usually it was not too difficult, but at times the rain (which still continued) would swell the creek up to Mississippian proportions. Either we got wet or we didn't eat. Usually we got wet. One comic-tragedy occurred. Zero, the medics' jeep driver, was driving his jeep across a shallow spot in the swollen stream with a load of Red Cross doughnuts for our kitchen. The doughnuts fell in—Zero survived.

One night I stood guard at the kitchen, and made the best of it, though I had only a limited stock to choose from. Their main commodity was

cigarettes which I didn't smoke. In my simplicity I stood outside the kitchen during most of my 12 to 2 hitch, until I discovered there was a light inside and no one else was there. I spent considerable time scrounging; in fact it was the first and only time I ever woke up my relief fifteen minutes late.

#### IX—BACK TO THE FRONT

We had been here only three days when Capt. Brown, the battalion adjutant, broke the bad news to us—we were going back up to the line. Our purpose was to take Mt. Longo, a long low mountain past Mt. Camino, and situated just alongside highway six. Fortunately our battalion would be in reserve at least for a while. Another good thing from our point of view was the providing of mules to carry some of our heavy equipment. We were given one to carry the radio and spare parts. There was a mule skinner with him who adjusted the load and bed it on firmly. In all we had about sixteen mules, most of them carrying machine guns and mortars. This mule convoy was to leave ahead of the rest of the battalion and push on to a designated spot past which the mules couldn't be taken. Here the equipment would be dismounted, and when the battalion caught up we were to proceed on with them on foot carrying the stuff. I say we, because Nick and I were chosen to go with the radio section's mule. After packing up all our extra articles and storing them in the stone house which had been used for the CP, and eating early chow, we left about four in the afternoon. The skinner with our mule was the guide, so we were at the front of the column. Packed with my part of the radio, which I would have to carry when the mules quit, I had a blanket, a raincoat, and my 2 days supply of rations.

We were wearing our new combat suits which had just been issued to us to replace our overcoats. They consisted of a canvas, wool-lined jacket, with a high-necked wool collar, and tight wool cuffs on the sleeves; and overalls, also canvas and wool lined, which would be adjusted to different lengths through the shoulder straps. They were very practical suits, much more convenient than overcoats, but we learned that night they weren't the ideal thing for long and rapid marching. And rapid it was. Keeping pace with the mule on level ground wasn't too hard as he wasn't inclined to race; but going uphill, which we did a good part of the time, it was a different story. His objective seemed to be to reach the summit with the shortest possible delay; where there was any kind of a path he really went to town. On the way up we went along the same path we had travelled before, and rounded the same Dead Man's Curve, this time in complete safety. A little after this we started our steepest climb. The hill was almost a sheer precipice, and the trail wound back and forth across its face, gradually reaching the top. It was there that the mule really outstripped us. We practically ran all the way up, stopping only once for a break. Those behind us bitched about our speed, but who were we to argue with one of nature's finest creations, the mule?

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Eventually we made it and started a slight downward descent. By this time I was thoroughly confused, and had not the slightest idea where we were. Suddenly the load on our mule slipped to one side and slid right around underneath his belly. The skinner helped us get it back in position, and then tied it down tighter. Now our troubles were increased. The moon had gone behind a cloud as we were moving along a dark and very rocky section of the trail. Nearly every other step we would stumble, fall, curse, get up and go on. Even the sure-footed animals began staggering. In the darkness I couldn't see anything ahead; couldn't even tell if we were going in the right direction. When the rocky trail ended and led into a dirt trail, we passed a group of ghostly ruined buildings on our left. The skinner led us past these a short ways, then said that this was as far as the mules were to go. This started an argument about the actual halting spot, but anyway we unloaded our equipment onto the ground and sat down to wait. A couple of the machine gunners set up their guns just in case and everyone settled down. The moon was now out, and the night was clear and cool. After a while Nick and I walked back to look around the ruined buildings. Here we were surprised to encounter Rabbit, one of the runners, outside the door of a building. He told us that Capt. Wells and Capt. Hamby were inside, apparently planning their route. Soon after we heard the rest of the battalion coming up the trail, so we went out to meet them. Cecil, Cozby and Stratton were soon found and led up to where we had put the radio et al. It developed that we had a wait before starting off again, so we sat down, together with Motta from Message Center, who had lugged one of his Christmas packages with him, and helped him devour it.

The attack came off perfectly, without even having our battalion committed. The only casualty was in a line company, where one soldier was killed by a strafing German plane.

Our stay here was only three or four days. Part of the 3rd Division, whom we had relieved in November was coming up to take over. We were looking forward to a good rest. The plan for withdrawal was this; the 30th Infantry was supposed to arrive about midnight, and get their communications established, whereupon we would pull out. There were to be mules waiting to carry our radios and switchboards, etc., when we reached a certain spot. I don't think any outfit has ever been relieved on time; we weren't this time. Nearly everyone was sitting up waiting. The radio had to be kept in operation till the 30th arrived. About two in the morning almost everyone had dozed off. Bobby and I were supposed to be on guard, but we were huddling under a blanket trying to warm up. We heard someone approaching, then suddenly a voice said, "I say, are you there?" We rose and cautiously waited to meet them. They turned out to be two English soldiers, a lieutenant and a corporal on a patrol. Their job was to go down into the valley and investigate the condition of the railroad there. Very nonchalant about the whole thing, they carried only a .45 apiece, and no rations. After talking with us a few minutes,

they went on their way. A few hours later they came back by, their mission accomplished. They stopped off and smoked a cigarette with us on their way back. One difference between the British and American soldier is the way the Britisher ignores the consequences of showing a light in the dark. "Jerry knows we're 'ere, so why worry?" is his typical attitude. It sometimes leads to disastrous consequences, even if they do have warm rations or hot tea more often.

There was a lieutenant from the 3rd with us; he was part of the advance party. From him we learned some details of the new 5th Army Rest Center which had been established at Naples. According to him it was quite a place. A stay at the camp was five days, but this included travelling time to and from, so it was acutally four full days.

After five in the morning the 3rd Division finally began to arrive. We showed the radio section our positions, and donated to them our blankets and some good holes. Then the three of us, Cozby, Stratton, and I started off ahead of the rest. Since daylight had come, the mule train would not be sent up; the safety of the mules was more important than ours apparently. Due to our loaded condition, we weren't able to make very good time. Once we joined Capt. Brown leading one of the line companies back, but we weren't able to keep pace with them, and dropped out. I, for one, seemed to be affected with a strange loss of energy. Every few hundred yards, I had to stop and rest. Our route this time took us around the foot of Mt. Camino, instead of back over it. This caused us to walk part way through the open valley, but anything was preferable to climbing that mountain again. We ran into a taped off mine field at one spot; in another we were forced to cross a very deep ravine on a shaky log. While walking up a nearly dry stream bed we came across a dead horse, decaying in the sun. For the sun had risen during our march. About halfway back, I stopped and removed the overall part of my combat suit. It was tied on top of the radio and we went on. Cozby, who was carrying both generator and antenna bag, was just as tired as I was.

After rounding the foot of the mountain, we were again under cover. Stopping at an old stone farmhouse which was formerly used as a British CP, we were given some bread and water by the old Italian couple who were there. This refreshed us a little, as did the fact that the end of our journey was now in sight. We were now crossing familiar ground. After dragging ourselves up one more rise, we came in sight of Haaland's dump. Here to our unspeakable joy, we found Werner waiting for us with a jeep. We fell upon him as long lost buddies. He was glad to see us, too. He told us that most of the others had already arrived, apparently having taken a slightly different route than we. Again my supreme moment came when I took that damned radio off my back.

We all clambered in and Werner started for the area. When we arrived we found, as he had said, nearly everyone there. Fletcher, communica-

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tions sergeant, told us that he and the wire section had left early too, hoping to catch us and assist with our load, but they had missed us. We must have blazed an entirely new trail.

### X— REST AND RECREATION

Cecil and I again put our tent in the same place, as we had re-occupied our former positions. After we had rested a while Stratton sent me around to the line companies to check on the working condition of the walkie-talkies. It was now only a few days before Christmas, and it looked as though, after eating wet jelly and chicken sandwiches for Thanksgiving, we were to get a good hot Christmas dinner. Before we got that dinner, though, we made another move, this one by truck, and for quite a distance. The day before the appointed one for our move was, as usual, a wet one, and especially gloomy. Before we could leave we had to pack the whole kitchen and its supplies up to the road, since mud had rendered the trail impassable for jeeps. Everything scheduled to go on trucks was carried out in this manner. It was no easy job fording the creek with an arm full of commodities or radios, and then toiling uphill through the mud to reach the road. After getting the radio up, Stratton and I managed to escape unseen to my tent where we tried to dry out a little. The day after reaching the area we received some replacements in the communications section, whom I was destined to know very well soon. They must have really felt miserable, coming alone to a new outfit, rain pouring down, living in the mud, only overseas a few weeks. One of them was about 6 ft. 3 inches tall, and I hoped aloud that he was a radio man, to relieve me of my constant backside companion. But Stratton disillusioned me. The tall one, Schwab, was a wireman. We received Steele, who was all of 5 ft. 7 inches, and weighed about 135 pounds. My disappointment was overwhelming. Message Center received Ivy Edgerton, a young dark haired fellow from Carolina, and Red Tanenbaum, a red-headed Jewish boy from Brooklyn. He was immediately dubbed "Christmas Tree."

The move was to begin early the next morning, with breakfast before leaving. Bob and I, wakened by the bugle took one look at the swollen creek, and decided to sleep a little longer. When we did strike our tent and begin to roll our packs, we were late, and Lt. Donaho asked why we were behind time. But the column didn't leave very rapidly, so we were right with them. We filled our canteens with creek water, dropping in a couple of halazone tablets to purify it. Then the march in the rain began, and continued till we reached the road and boarded the 6 by 6's which arrived shortly after we did. All of us stood up on the trucks; there weren't enough of them to allow for sitting space.

In this fashion we travelled over the none too smooth Italian roads, through the ruins of Mignano headed eastward. After some time, we turned off the main road, and rode up a narrower and muddier one.

Having gone up it about a mile, we reached a spot where stood two decrepit stone buildings. Here we dismounted, and waded across the muddy road to our area, which was at the foot of a medium sized hill. It wasn't anything to brag about, but we had been in worse areas. Bobby, Hooten and I picked a spot where we pitched a double pup tent. Then we again braved the mud to collect some hay from a stack by the road. Fletcher hailed me and told me that I had to bring up some hay for the officers. I was highly irritated by this and he sympathized with me, but gave me some advice. "They can't make you dog-rob for them, but they can make you wish you had." With this in mind I collected a shelter half full of hay. But when I arrived at the building the officers were using as the CP, they already had made their arrangements, and told me that they didn't need it after all. So I just made my own bed a little softer with it. About this time I saw Steele wandering around by himself, and resolved to invite him to be the fourth man in our double tent. But some detail called me away, and when I saw him again he was set up. He and Red caught K.P. the first day there, while I managed to hit guard. Unloading the kitchen and setting it up was a project which called for everyone's help. While helping I managed to scrounge a couple cans of salmon and fruit cocktail. John Brumley, a message center chief, did even better. He got a pound of butter and a loaf of bread.

We had arrived here on December 24. Christmas morning we had Mass at nine o'clock. It was a peculiarly appropriate setting. The Mass was said in the open air, a jeep hood serving as the altar. We all used straw as insulation against the wet ground. The old stone buildings nearby, the chickens running loose, the aged white-mustached Italian peasant, who knelt with us, all these were part of the strangest Christmas Mass I ever attended. After Mass and Communion (nearly everyone went) Fr. Phinney, our Catholic Chaplain, led us in singing some appropriate hymns. Fr. Phinney was a red-haired Bostonian whose hair was leaving him, though the Massachusetts accent remained. He could be, and was, very outspoken at times, but everyone liked him.

When we had finished, Chaplain Franklin held his Protestant service in the same place. After all church services were completed came the Christmas dinner, with turkey, dressing, cranberry sauce, fruit cocktail and Christmas candies. It was enjoyed by all.

Mr. Gray, the assistant Regimental communications officer, had been temporarily assigned to us as com. He was an old friend of Stratton's, so relations promised to go smoothly. The second day here, Hooten went to the hospital, and Fink, the company clerk, who had come up from personnel for a few days was with us. He told us that one man in the company was going home on rotation. Though he wouldn't say who it was, I guessed from something he let drop that it was Cozby. However, I kept my mouth shut about it. Too many things could happen, and I might be wrong.

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### XI—SAN PIETRO AND BEYOND

After being here a few days, we were told that we were going back on the line again. Several of the replacements in the line companies hearing this, and being pretty well frightened by the stories they had been told, took this opportunity to shoot themselves in the foot. We were to relieve the 143rd regiment and a paratroop battalion, and take up a defensive position on Mt. Summucro, past San Pietro, which had cost the 143rd a bloody battle in gaining it. After a four day stay we got ready to move again. I assumed the older familiar position with radio on back, as we boarded trucks, which were to take us part way. It was the 29th of December.

During the ride everyone was pretty gay, singing and talking. When the time for walking came, though, we had to keep silence. The last part of the ride had taken us uphill and we were on the outskirts of San Pietro, set on the side of the mountain about one-third of the way up. It was about eight o'clock, and very dark, as it was too early for the moon to come out. We got into formation, a column of two's, and started off. Stratton was carrying an even heavier load than I this time, since we had packed nearly everything but the kitchen doorknob into the spare parts bag. Its big disadvantage was not the weight, but the awkwardness, as it hung over the shoulder like a newspaper bag, throwing all the weight on one side. Capt. Brown and Capt. Hamby were leading the march. Capt. Wells had gone ahead with the advance party. The trail wasn't too steep as it ascended the mountainside, but it was rocky and narrow, making difficult walking in the dark. In some places we had to climb over rocks piled high on the trail. I was weary all the way; they didn't make the breaks often enough or long enough to suit me. Most of the others shared my sentiments. Both Capt. Brown and Hamby were notorious for getting themselves and all with them lost on night marches. One time Hamby had to call on Capt. Hughes, an old rip-snorter from I company, to come up and show him the way. (On this march I had the misfortune to break in my combat boots.)

After hours of walking, of stopping, starting, stopping, we met John Gregory, the operations sergeant, on the trail. He had come out to guide us. But he too got lost and only after great difficulty did we finally locate our positions. We had to go down below the trail, along a steep gravelly path to get there. Though we kicked a few rocks down the mountainside we made it without casualties. Stratton and Cozby, with the radio, paired off together, so Bobby and I began to search for a spot. I found a likely place beneath and slightly under a large boulder so without further ado, we brought out our blankets and went to sleep. In the morning we took a look around from our position. The top of Mt. Summucro pointed north towards the Liri Valley and Cassino, while it sloped to the east and west. We were on the western slope, and could look right across highway six to Mt Longo and our previous position. We were much higher than we had



been, even on Camino. The mountain seemed to be composed of solid rock with only a surface layer of soil. The slope was very steep, and a rock accidentally jarred loose would roll all the way to the foot. If we moved around much we were in danger of observation, so we kept pretty well out of sight. The line companies were on the eastern slope, and in much more danger of observation than we were. The focal point of the fighting at that time was San Vittore, at the base of Mt. Trocchio, a small but sheer mountain set in the open valley. From our vantage point we could watch the artillery shells bursting in the town. Past Mt. Trocchio, was the Liri Valley. By climbing to the peak of our mountain, one could see Cassino, cuddling back against a massive mountain range, including 5,000 foot Mt. Cairo.

According to two artillery observers who had been there a few days, the spot chosen by Bobby and me wasn't so ideal after all. First it had been used as a latrine, and secondly, a predecessor had been digging himself a place there back under the boulder when it suddenly started to move. So he abandoned it. Undeterred, we shovelled off the top layer of dirt, examined the rock critically, and stayed there. That day we received an extra blanket; a fresh supply had been sent up with the rations. As we prepared our breakfast K ration, we hit on something new, at least to us. Combining our two fruit bars, we mashed them up, added water, and heated them. The result was a delicious jam to spread on our horrid crackers. While I am speaking of K rations I venture to state that investigation would show that there are several million dextrose and malted milk tablets scattered over the Italian hillside from Salerno to Bologna.

Home was set up by buttoning two shelter-halves together, tying one end to the rock, and staking the other end to the ground. One open side we covered with a spare shelter-half, and the other, which was almost closed, with odds and ends. This wasn't very thorough protection, but it was the best we could devise. That night we regretted our lack of substantial shelter. It was New Years Eve, December 31, 1943, one of the two nights in my life I will never forget because of the utter misery and discomfort I underwent. During the evening it began to rain, and the wind began blowing. Once it blew off our cover, so we re-adjusted it more firmly. Both shelter halves were leaking; water was seeping down the side of the rock and soaking us. We huddled under the covers. Shivering and wet, we dozed off. Awakening in darkness a short while later, we were covered with snow from head to foot. Again our roof was gone. We fixed it again. The snow and wind continued. Now it was impossible to sleep. We concentrated on keeping our feet from freezing, for with the snow had come bitter cold.

When morning came we borrowed Stratton's and Cozby's Coleman stove, after they had finished with it. Now we heated breakfast and tried to warm up and dry out as much as possible. The rifle company boys,

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much more exposed than we were, must have suffered that night. In fact on that mountain began the sudden avalanche of trench foot cases, which till then was practically unknown in such a "tropical" climate. Lt. Donaho came around and had everyone get up and move about, to prevent frostbite. Now the changeable Italian weather benefitted us; the sun came out, drying up the snow, and drying out our clothes and blankets. I had a strange weak feeling which I couldn't account for; also I was constipated. This didn't stop Bobby and me from deciding to abandon our quarters though. We weren't able to find another place that day, so Bob crawled in with Cozby and Stratton, while I went up and squeezed in with Beasley. What a squeeze! There was no danger of freezing; he and I could just barely fit in when we both laid sideways.

We stayed that way for a time, then Beasley was called out on a wire line. When he came back it was just impossible for both of us to fit, so I moved out. I spread my shelter half and blankets on the flat ground near the switchboard, made from them a sleeping bag, pulled off my shoes, and went to sleep. Next day Bob and I secured a good hole when the artillery observers left. It was deep and sheltered from the wind. The weather remained good, so we weren't cold. It was about that afternoon that I noticed a numbness in both my feet from about the instep forward. I figured the cold had caused it, and it would soon pass. Then, too, I was feeling more lackadaisical all the time. When I went out to the slit trench latrine next day I noticed a large yellow blotch on my upper leg, and a small one on my arm. My urine was tinted a deep red. This scared my plenty; I talked to Cecil and Paulson, the bn. clerk, about it. They weren't sure about what it could be, but urged me to go to the medics. I waited a day and then did so.

The aid station was only a few hundred feet away, near the ration dump. I waited while the doctor was administering a bottle of plasma to a badly wounded man, then I told him my symptoms. He took one look at my eyeballs and said "yellow jaundice." I would be hospitalized five or six weeks, he informed me. After getting a medical card written up on me, I went back to the company to tell them where I was going, and to collect my meager personal belongings. Everyone wished me luck and I left, leaving rifle, blankets, etc. behind. My main feeling was one of happiness to be heading back towards the rear, no matter what the reason. I had to walk back down the mountain to San Pietro before I could catch an ambulance and the walk served to make my feet even more numb. On the way down I suddenly discovered that in my excitement I had forgotten to wear my helmet, so when I saw one lying along the trail I picked it up and put it on. I wore it quite a while till I happened to look and see that there was an officer's bar on the front of it. From there on, I was hatless.

As I was going down I ran into Chaplain Franklin coming up. He had news that we were to be relieved soon, since the 34th Division was planning an attack on Mt. Trocchio, and we, being in the middle of their area, were interfering with their plans. All we were engaging on was active patrolling, which could be plenty rough at times for those on patrol.

Naturally I got down the trail much faster than I climbed it. On the way down I passed some medical teams carrying stretcher cases down in relays. Arriving in San Pietro, I located the aid station, where I sat down to wait for an ambulance.

## XII—THE HOSPITAL

I was sent to the 16th Evac. Hospital, got a cot and several blankets and went to bed. Next day I told the doctor about my symptoms, and also my feet. He said the latter was trench foot; I was to soak my feet in cool water, massage them, and keep them exposed when I slept. Suddenly I got the GI's again, but my appetite was enormous. Twice I was alerted early in the morning to be sent further to the rear. Both times it was called off. We lived in long hospital tents, heated with GI stoves. One night a hillbilly nearly drove me nuts twanging a guitar and singing cowboy songs. After two weeks I felt much better, and was sent to the 3rd Convalescent Hospital, which had just opened at the small town of Pignataro. Part of it was up on a hill behind a monastery, the rest down below just outside the town. I was interviewed by one of the doctors, and assigned to a company.

The place was hardly a hospital at all. We lived in pyramidal tents, six men to a tent, slept on cots, and ate regular chow. Twice a week, on an average, we reported back to a certain doctor on clinic call, and he kept track of our progress. Our biggest trouble here was getting coal for our stoves. Only one truckload a day was brought in, and this led to a mad scramble with shovels, steel helmets, cardboard boxes, etc., every day as the truck dumped its load. My only diet restriction was to avoid fatty foods. At mealtimes here, we saw a daily sight which I had seen before, and would witness again. As mealtime approached, droves of ragged little Italian boys and girls carrying large cans or buckets with improvised wire handles began to assemble. Though children predominated, there were plenty of older people, mostly old, weather-beaten, wrinkled women, also with buckets and pails. When we finished eating, they would approach and ask us for the food left in our mess kits; or else they stood by the garbage can, and intercepted us before we could throw it away. It was a pitiful and moving sight to see these poor half starved people meekly asking for what we thought not fit to eat. All over Italy, wherever there was a GI mess, conditions were like this. The people were almost starving. No country I've seen since has been so destitute and ill fed as southern Italy.

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After two weeks I was moved to the lower section of the camp, near the town. While down here, I struck up a slight acquaintance with a middle-aged, crippled Italian singer who could speak some English. He was teaching himself. Every Sunday he sang at the high Mass at the monastery. His house in town had been all blown away save for two rooms; as had his tea shop in Naples. One day at his home he told me a lot of his history. First, he had once sung on the radio, till Mussolini required all entertainers to join the Fascist party. He lost his job. He was married, his wife lived in Pignataro, but the marriage was not a success, so he had been separated from his wife for some time. In Naples, where he ran his tea shop, he had a mistress, and she had borne him a son, who at the time he told me the story, was 6 or 8 years old. When the invasion of Italy came, he had given his mistress a large sum of money and sent her to a small town northeast of Rome with the boy. Meanwhile air raids and artillery had cost him nearly everything he owned, and he was worried about his boy, who was in the German zone. He showed me the town on the map and wrote it on his card which he gave me; I promised to look for the boy if I ever reached the town, though I pointed out to him that it would probably be in the British 8th Army zone.

The next week the doctors decided that my jaundice was cured, and since the numbness in my feet now only remained in the big toe of each foot, I was discharged from the hospital. My journey back to the company began. Before I left, some new patients came in, who told me the 36th attempting to cross the Rapido River on the night of January 21-22, had suffered terrific casualties. The invasion of Anzio by the 3rd Division had also just occurred. This didn't make me feel any too happy, but on February 4, I left the hospital.



THEN & NOW . . . Ernie E. Alexander, Co H 143rd shown above at the lister bag in North Africa, 1943. Here's Ernie relaxing at his farm up the road from Mineola (Wood County) near county seat of Quitman,

We were captured about five days after the invasion.

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# *The Mission*

by Dan S. Ray

*36th Reconnaissance Unit*

The day started out as a routine mission, as we had been on many since the landing at Southern France. It was always hurry, hurry, but as everybody knew their job and did it like clockwork, we figured that we had a better chance of a successful mission even though we knew that we had to go all of the way to Germany if we didn't find out where the Germans were hiding in ambush for us.

That is what a mission of reconnaissance is all about. We were called the eyes and ears of the Army. Our Lt. was Edward Morales, one of the most compassionate leaders we had since the start of the war. He had respect for all of the men regardless of rating or rank. Our Sergeant was Elmer Goodson, a Texan all of the way and a cowboy to boot. Both of these men were respected by all of the men under their command. There was Forrest Jahn riding shotgun on the Lt.'s jeep and there was one other jeep between our armored car and the Lt.'s jeep. It had a driver and two men in it.

My armored car had Gordon Finders as driver; I was the radio operator; Phillip Joannis was the assistant radio operator and assistant gunner. Alvin Diener was the gunner and the toughest and best man I ever called my friend. He should have been awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor many times over for his heroic deeds.

We had a 37mm cannon and a 30 caliber air-cooled machine gun and a 50 caliber machine gun mounted on the gun turret. We had liberated this gun from a B-24 Bomber that was shot down near us in Italy. It fired faster than our regular 50's and we liked it for that reason.

We mounted up and moved out of the area where we had spent the night which was on the right or northeast slope of the mountain ridge near the village of Rault, France. The village was located in the pass at the top of the mountain ridge at about 6000 ft. above sea level.

We would move for awhile and then stop and use our glasses to see if we could spot anything in front of us. Even though nothing was spotted that looked like the enemy, it took the greater part of the morning to reach Rault. When we reached the village all hell broke loose—the good kind. The girls swarmed all over the vehicles, hugging, kissing and giving us drinks of all description. They even had flowers for the occasion, which not too many of us noticed at first. We stayed there as long as we thought acceptable under the circumstances, which was really only a half hour. We would surely have gotten into trouble if we had stayed there longer.

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We then pulled out and went through the pass and started down the left or descending side of the mountain ridge. We hugged the inside of the mountain road, as we had been trained to do, so as to not be seen from the valley below. We did not see any sign of the enemy. When we reached the bottom of the mountain where the road flattened out, the Germans were there waiting for us in AMBUSH!

They opened up with a 20mm anti-aircraft gun and I really think that the first shot hit our Lt. Morales in the right chest area. I saw the projectile exit his body and saw him slump in his seat. I just knew that he was dead and it made me mad as hell. I was literally heartbroken from the thought of losing my Lieutenant and friend. I remember seeing Sergeant Goodson and Joe Kirkpatrick running through a hail of gunfire to get the Lieutenant out of his jeep which was also knocked out of action. The other jeep managed to get turned around on this narrow mountain road. It all worked like clockwork. They were all in the jeep that was undamaged and passed us going back up the mountain road in the direction of Rault.

Finders managed to get our armored car turned around and we followed the jeep up the mountain road. The armored car could not go over 15 miles an hour up the steep road, so we got further and further behind. I reported the whole episode to Headquarters and found myself literally crying at the loss of Lt. Morales. I thought he was dead. As we were nearing the halfway mark back up the mountain, my grief turned to anger and I told Finders to stop. I then explained to him that we were going to go against our training and engage the enemy on our terms. I had him pull over to the edge of the road just enough to be able to see over the rim with the 37mm gun. When we were in position, I told Joannis to get out and get up in my position, and I instructed Diener to move over to the other side of the gun turret and act as my assistant gunner.

I wanted to do the aiming and avenge the death of my Lieutenant. The first shot hit the Lieutenant's jeep in the transmission area. The Germans had swarmed all over the jeep getting the personal belongings of the Lieutenant, and I don't have to tell you what happened to them. It looked like a John Wayne movie scene. Diener and I fired every round that was in the turret and there was nothing moving at the road block when we finished.

I was so proud of Alvin Diener, Phillip Joannis and Gordon Finders. I reported this to our Captain and he seemed pleased that we had done a halfway decent job on this mission. I also found out that we were about five days out in front of Division forces.

I found out in 1987 that Lieutenant Morales was not killed and was living in San Antonio on the same street that he lived on before going in the service. I called him upon finding this out, and I couldn't keep the tears from my eyes from being so happy. He sounded so good on the telephone, and when I saw him at the '88 reunion in San Antonio, I was so happy. He is the same nice guy that he was way back then. I saw Joe Kirkpatrick too, and lots of my old buddies. We all spend a lot of time writing to each other now and can't wait for the next reunion.

I still get the shakes when I come to a curve in the road at times. It seems that the Lieutenant had been blaming himself all of these years for leading us into the roadblock. I assured him that was definitely not the case. He also seemed pleased to learn that we knocked out the roadblock after he was wounded. Dieter's dead, can't find out anything on Finders; Joannise has retired from the railroad and enjoying life; Forrest Jahn is married to the sweetest lady and enjoying life; I am married to Jeanette and we have five grandchildren to show for our forty-three years together. Goodson is still a cowboy and comes by Joe's place in El Paso about once a year.

*T/5 Dan S. Ray 34686706, Hahnville, LA, was with the 36th Division, 36th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop, and served in Africa, Italy, France and Germany during World War II. He was wounded September 14, 1944.*

*Lieutenant Edward B. Morales 01031347, San Antonio, Texas, was wounded on August 21, 1944.*

*Sergeant Elmer Goodson 20800987, Eagle Pass, Texas, was wounded September 10, 1944.*

*Forrest Jahn 36283444 was wounded September 24, 1944.*



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"Hey Joe. You from  
Texas?"



# *My Tour of Duty* *1939-1990*

*by Leonard Wilkerson*  
*Membership Secretary*

Late in 1939, the war clouds were gathering in Europe. Hitler was on the move and the free world knew that soon it would be another World War.

Military posters were in front of the Post Office downtown Dallas of the Army, Navy and marine Corps asking for you—a picture of Uncle Sam pointing to you. In the news was the talk of the draft and soon you would be called to serve your country.

At the time I was attending old Technical High School and had a Dallas Dispatch paper route in the downtown office buildings. Being seventeen and a few months of age, I wanted to join the Regular Army or Marine Corps as a friend of mine had just joined the Regular Army and was stationed at Grand Prairie, Texas in a communication unit which is now part of the Signal Corps.

Walking home one day I noticed the recruiting sign in front of the Army National Guard Armory on Akard and Ross Streets. The sign stated "AVOID THE DRAFT, JOIN YOUR HOMETOWN UNIT AND SERVE ONE YEAR." My mother signed for me to enlist in the 144th Infantry, 36th Infantry Division. Since I had some ROTC training at Tech High School, the First Sergeant Fred "Pop" Gassaman assigned me as Ass't. Squad Leader to help teach drill before we left for Camp Bowie, Texas.

After mobilization I was asked if I wanted to learn to be a cook, I was sent to Cook's and Baker's School, Fort Sam Houston, Texas for four months. After graduation I was promoted to Tech 5th Grade and assigned as 2nd Cook, Co. E 144 Infantry.

On December 7, 1941 (Pearl Harbor) I was in the Camp Bowie hospital for a strained knee that was injured on a night exercise near San Saba, Texas.

Upon release from the hospital I was told the 144th Infantry had left for overseas and I was then assigned to Headquarters 141st Infantry. Word soon came that the 36th Division would be leaving Camp Bowie. I was called to the Regimental Personnel Office and asked if I wanted to stay in the 141st Infantry or return to the 144th Infantry, I elected to return to the 144th Infantry.



I was put on a train and headed for Portland, Oregon Headquarters of the 144th Infantry. After arriving in Portland, I was reassigned back to Co E, 144th Infantry stationed at Salem, Oregon guarding the Air Field.

In 1942 our unit moved to Santa Rosa, California. There I met my wife, Frances Lee Wilkerson, who is in California visiting her brother and sister-in-law. On October 17, 1942 we were married. I was then a Tech 4 making \$54.00 per month.

In early 1943 the 144th Infantry Regiment moved from the West Coast to the East Coast, Co E 144th Infantry was then stationed at Charleston, S.C. Later in the year I volunteered for Airborne training and was sent to Fort Benning, Ga. After three weeks, due to my injured knee I was released from Airborne training and sent to a Replacement Center at Fort Meade, Maryland. I was then put on Overseas orders and assigned to Co B, 377th Infantry, 95th Division.

Upon arriving in Sarraurten, Germany on the Sarr River, the Company was holding the only bridge in that area. The First Sergeant assigned me as an Assistant Squad Leader, Third Platoon. My first action was a German 88 Shelling the bridge and several of them hitting the house we were holding up in.

In December the 95th Division moved to Belgium to take part in the Battle of the Bulge. In early 1945 the 17th Airborne jumped across the Rhine River, the 95th Division crossed on Tanks of the 2nd Armor Division. On VE Day the Division was in the Rhur Valley and assigned as Army of Occupation Duty. The Division was then alerted to go a 30 day leave and then be shipped to the Pacific Theater. During our leave at home we received word to report back to Camp Shelby, Miss. for discharge.

Upon discharge I returned back to Fort Worth, Texas and joined the Army Air Corps at Carswell AFB. After only a year or so the Army Air Corps was to be a unit of it's own called the US Air Force. Since I had the Combat Infantry Badge I was asked if I wanted to stay in the Air Force or go back into the Regular Army. I choose the Army and sent to Headquarters 11th Infantry, 5th Division, Fort Jackson, SC. as an 014 maintenance section, since I had some OJT in the Air Force Transportation Section I was assigned as Chief Dispatcher and promoted to Staff Sergeant. One year later I was promoted to Tech Sergeant and on my way to Okinawa to the 808 Avn Eng Bn. I was assigned as First Sergeant of Co C, 808th EAB.

On June 25, 1950 (One week before I was due to come home) the Korean War broke out. The 808 EAB was sent to Korea to build a 6000 ft. air strip for the Air Force so fighters could move from Japan to Korea. After 15 months in Korea I was rotated back to the USA and then stationed as Sergeant Major of the Southwestern Signal Corps Basic Training Center at Camp San Luis Obispo, California. When Camp

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San Louis Obispo closed, I was assigned to the Army Reserve Advisor Group in Seattle, Washington then after two years was assigned as First Sergeant, Co K, 13th Infantry, 8th Division in Fort Carson, Colorado and Ulm, Germany. After three years in Germany I rotated back to the states and was assigned as Sergeant Advisor for the South Dakota National Guard and was stationed in Brookings, South Dakota.

After two years in South Dakota I re-enlisted for US Army Recruiting Service and stationed in Tyler, Texas. In 1964 I was then reassigned as the Career Counselor for I Corps Headquarters in Korea. After my tour in Korea I was assigned back on Army Recruiting as Supervisor of the Albuquerque, New Mexico recruiting area.

After one year, in 1966, I was assigned to the 10th Transportation Battalion, Camp Ran Bay, Vietnam. The unit moved to Saigon, Vietnam and I was assigned Sergeant Major of the 48th Transportation Group. I returned home in 1967 and stationed at Fort Bliss, Texas as Post Transportation Supervisor. In 1968, I applied for ROTC Duty in Texas and was assigned to Duncanville, Texas High School. While on duty as a ROTC instructor and Supply specialist I retired after 27 active years and three years as National Guard and Reserve time. Upon retirement from the US Army I continued on as a ROTC instructor until 1980.

In 1974-1975 I started helping Amil Kohutek with the membership of the 36th Division Association. In 1977 I was elected Executive Vice President and in 1978 was President of the Association with our Annual Reunion in San Antonio, Texas. The Executive Vice President, Julian Quarles, started revising the Constitution and By-Laws of the Association. The new Constitution and By-Laws was completed by Julian Quarles the year he was President in 1979. In 1979 my friend Amil Kohutek resigned as the Membership Secretary, I was then asked if I would do the job.

In the past eleven years, I have met the best people in this great country of ours either in person or my mail. I have attended most Chapter meetings and reunions at one time or another and have enjoyed each and every one of them. I now consider all T-Patchers a dear friend.

So with 30 years service with the US Army, 10 years ROTC duty and now 11 years as Membership Secretary of the "Fighting 36th Division" my TOUR OF DUTY is near completion. All I can say at this time is I have loved it all—the good and the bad. I will continue to serve as Membership Secretary as long as I am needed. I'll do my best as I have done in the past.



Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly  
*See Naples and Die*

by Richard M. Burrage

Part IV



Honorary Colonel of the 143rd Inf. Reg.  
Worldwartwoveterans.org

**TAKE AND KEEP THE HIGH GROUND!**

Upon the arrival of the 1/143 Inf. at Maiori, LTC Walker gave his orders to the assembled Company Commanders. He ordered Captain Joseph M. Peterman of Beaumont, TX, commanding Company A, to take the hills on the west of the road to Chiunzi Pass and establish contact with the Rangers on the left. He assigned Captain Henry T. Waskow, of Belton, TX, commanding Company B, to take the hills on the east of the Chiunzi Pass road, and maintain contact with the Commandos. This was the most rugged area in our sector and was much wider in the distance to be defended. Company C, commanded by Captain Gerald P. Elder of Greenville, TX, was to be in reserve. Company D, commanded by Captain Elton E. Geeslin, of Goldthwaite, TX, was ordered to support Company A and Company B each with a machine gun platoon. The mortar platoon, commanded by 1LT Roy D. Goad, of Temple, TX, was instructed to establish mortar positions to cover our front and devise a network of observers where they could monitor the entire front. This required an elaborate network of telephone lines whereby requests for fire support could be received and fired with a minimum of time. Captain Cowing, our Artillery Liaison Officer, working out of Battalion Headquarters, would coordinate all requests for artillery and naval gunfire. 1LT Steiglitz was to establish an observation post to locate targets and adjust fire on same. The Battalion observation post was to be established well forward with the rifle platoons where they would have an overview of our entire front.

At 0800 hours, after the Company Commanders had briefed their troops, the column moved out of Maiori on the road to Chiunzi Pass. About 1000 hours, our column came under hostile small arms and mortar fire. We had one officer killed, 1LT Orlando D. Greenly, from Delaware. LTC Walker ordered a platoon from Company C to route the enemy and he sent a platoon of Company A to make a flanking move-

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ment to neutralize the enemy fire. Company C, with support from a machine gun platoon of Company D, led by 1LT Richard W. Dashner, of Bellmeade, TX, moved out and routed the black-uniformed German paratroopers. Much assistance was given to Company C by the fire and movement by the platoon of Company A. This was our baptism of fire—first time we had received enemy aimed small arms fire. 1LT Greenly was our first KIA on the Peninsula. The column continued the six-mile climb to the top of the mountains without incident. The balance of the day and night was spent in preparing and occupying our positions; making range cards, running telephone lines and the many other tasks necessary to defend the high ground.

At the end of that day, General Schmalz, commanding the Hermann Goering Panzer Parachute Division, recorded in the divisional war diary that his troops had arrived at Cava but could not get any further forward. His troops attempting to dislodge the Americans and British were met with vicious plunging fire. Many ravines in the mountains caused his companies to be dispersed and the naval gunfire caused heavy casualties among his troops and transport. At best, he could only send out organized assault parties to face the defenders on the summits of the hills who were denying him artillery observation posts.

Back on 11 September, Captain Herbert Scheftel, USAAF, controller of the 64th Wing of the 12th Technical Air Command, was responsible for operation of radar units which had to be placed in such position as to permit them to identify German planes when they took off from the Naples area airports. The hills surrounding Salerno made it impossible for the units to operate effectively. He took his units and started along the coastal road from Vietri towards Maiori and points west. His group came under blistering mortar and small arms fire several times, especially when they crossed the deep ravine just west of Vietri. He finally made his way to Maiori and Colonel Darby's headquarters. There, he asked Colonel Darby where his front lines were. It is said that Darby replied, "At this moment I haven't the slightest idea. You'd better go and find out for yourselves." Captain Scheftel started west and finally found a Ranger sergeant and a group of his men on a hill just northwest of Amalfi. The Ranger sergeant was in full control of this area. He had even locked up the Mayor and Chief of Police in the Amalfi city jail because of their lack of cooperation. The sergeant, pleased to have visitors from outside the Ranger Force, offered them presents ranging from a huge Mercedes automobile to entertainment from some of the belles of the town. Captain Scheftel and his group decided there was not much hope to set up their radar arrays in that area and moved into the town of Amalfi on the coast. The citizens of this famous seaside town seemed unaware that a war was raging just over the hills to the east. Rich Italians put the group in the best luxury hotel. They ate exotic meals served on fine china and

table settings of sterling silver. The headwaiter personally served their table. They were so overcome with this style of living that they sent one course back to the kitchen, explaining that it was not suitable. The hotel chef came out and apologized profusely and made everything right. They spent the night between clean sheets. After enjoying a luxurious breakfast the next morning, they forced themselves to mount up in their vehicles and returned to Maiori. The Captain asked Colonel Darby if he could use the landing craft at the beach to transport his group back to Salerno. Darby, with a smile, refused the request, stating that the craft must remain in case he had to evacuate his troops from Maiori. The Captain then continued his trip back through Vietri to Salerno without incident, reporting to his commander that no suitable site had been located. Subsequently, most of them were transferred to the Isle of Capri where they were able to cover the Luftwaffe airfields in the Naples area.

An interesting confrontation took place on 10 September before 1/143 Inf arrived. We were told that Ranger Staff Sergeant Altieri's platoon arrived at a naval observation post near Vietri. Guns were seen in position on the roof. He divided his platoon into small fire teams and the battle was on! Rocket gunners and BAR men pounded the position for over an hour with constant fire before the position was overrun. So intent were the Rangers to take the position that all seven Italian soldiers defending the position were killed as the Rangers charged into the post. This is the only time that any of the American troops in this area encountered Italian troops fighting alongside the Germans.

Colonel Darby spent much of his time driving up to Chiunzi Pass in his jeep, which was outfitted with a caliber .50 machine gun on a pedestal mount. He was usually up front with his troops, encouraging them and seeing they were cared for with whatever was available. I well remember that on one occasion when Darby was in his headquarters in the San Francisco Hotel conferring with our staff when his driver rushed into the room and told Darby that one of their men had been badly wounded and the other Rangers had moved him to the ditch alongside the road down in front of Chiunzi Pass. The driver and Colonel Darby raced to the vehicle and left in a hurry up the road towards Chiunzi Pass. Going down the road, Colonel Darby started spraying .50 caliber cartridges on both sides of the road towards suspected enemy positions. They arrived at the area where the wounded Ranger was lying. While Colonel Darby continued his firing, the driver put the Ranger in the back of the jeep. The driver then started in reverse back up the hill, with Colonel Darby still blazing away with his machine gun. He passed the blockhouse in Chiunzi Pass in a cloud of dust and continued on down hill, still in reverse, to the local monastery in Maiori where the 10th medical Unit (Br) was located. This was typical of Colonel Darby's support of his troops. They believed in him and knew that if they got in trouble up there in the hills, he could and would come to their assistance.

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While 1LT Goad's mortar platoon was firing missions around the clock, 1LT Derryberry was almost burning out the tubes of artillery pieces. Our heaviest fire support came from the two British Cruisers laying off the coast. The observer would spot a target; then relay the coordinates through our headquarters or the Ranger headquarters to Captain Thompson of the Royal Artillery. He had direct radio contact with the cruisers and it would only be a few minutes until their 15-inch shells would be screaming over the mountain tops down to the target area. Their accuracy was uncanny. The most unnerving thing about our naval gunfire was the rumbling and whistling the shells made as they passed over our heads towards the target. It seemed as if they had a log chain tied to their rear as they went clanking on their way. To my knowledge, we never had a fire mission refused at the ships. They might have to change their positions in the Gulf, but the mission was always fired. They were especially effective against the nebelwerfers (screaming meemies) which was a multiple rocket weapon. Our soldiers and the Rangers would follow a target for several minutes and then call for the Navy. The naval gunfire became so intense on the Naples-Pagani highway below that soon all vehicular traffic was stopped by the Germans in the daytime. They did have better conditions at night to move their transport, but took the chance of being hit by our artillery who fired interdiction fires at night.

Shortly after our arrival at Maiori on 13 September, our Battalion Supply Officer (S4), 1LT Claude H. Osburn, of Abilene, TX, was evacuated because of an ear infection. We were very fortunate to have 1LT Rudy Pollock, of Temple, TX, our Transportation Officer, take over the duties of Battalion S4 in addition to his assignment as Transportation Officer. A big headache was with our Class I-rations. We used British 10-in-1 rations. Each box contained 3 meals for 10 men. That was fine for the British who had 10-man squads. However, our squad structure was different and we had to be careful in reporting our ration requirements. The British rations were different from our C-rations. We had lots of kidney stew, plum pudding, Yorkshire pudding, and tea laced with powdered sugar and lemon.

We could not use the ammunition from British supply dumps. The calibers were different. This included small arms, artillery and mortars. That meant that 1LT Pollock and his assistant, SSG Melvin F. Patterson of Houston, TX, had to go about 70 miles towards the east end of the beachhead to get some of these special items. Some supplies were sent by small water craft but most of the time they were sent by trucks. The supply trucks had to run the gauntlet of fire as they crossed the deep ravine just west of Vietri. The supply personnel spent the day getting requirements from the units and the nighttime to go back, load up and make the run back to Maiori, hopefully arriving before daylight. To make matters worse, it started raining on 14 September and kept it up for over two days.

One of the most beautiful drives in the world is the Amalfi Road. It starts at Castellammare and continues on south to the point of the peninsula and bends around the cliffs end and continues on through Maiori to Salerno. The Germans made no use of this road because they had bad memories of what happened in Sicily when they had several convoys caught on the same type of coastal roads and American and British naval gunfire picked them off like it was a shooting gallery. They had intended to use the road through the Tramonti Valley to the Chiunzi Pass, then to Maiori, as well as the road from Pangani through the mountain pass to Vietri. That was the reason that our mission was so important. The Germans must stay down below until the British broke out of the mountains and make their dash to capture the prize—Naples and the port area.

On the 15th of September, I accompanied our Battalion Executive Officer, Major Land, and our Operations Officer, on an inspection of our front line positions. As we neared our western boundary with the Rangers, we saw that the 4th Ranger Battalion had secured Mount Pendolo. We continued on to the top of that mountain and as we looked towards the northwest, we could see Mount Vesuvius on our right, down below was Pompeii. Farther to the west, we could see the Gulf of Naples and the entire city of Naples. The view was inspiring, but a somber note was struck when Major Land said, "SEE NAPLES AND DIE." I heard that phrase from him several times later. It was sad when that prophecy became self-fulfilling. It was here, on Mount Pendolo, that the Commander of the 4th Ranger Battalion told about one of his patrols which had pushed down the cliffs on the north side of the peninsula. They had made several attempts to scout out Castellammare but the town was heavily defended by German troops. This last trip, the 4th Ranger Battalion patrol had slipped quietly down the mountain into Castellammare, strolled through its large square and caught the street car and rode several blocks before dimounting at an ice cream stand and buying some ice cream. The natives did not seem to notice them and their uniforms. Although the town was still occupied by Germans, they were no where to be seen on the streets. They returned to the Ranger Battalion with sketches of anti-aircraft gun positions. They also told Major Murray that "the ice cream was good." Having been around the Rangers for some time, we had no reason to doubt the story that Major Murray told us.

Of much interest to the Rangers and 1/143 Inf was the stone blockhouse which was stationed at the east side of the road at Chiunzi Pass. This shell-pocked stone house had been used from the first day as an aid station by Captain Emil Schuster, the Medical Officer of the 3rd Ranger Battalion. Although shelled around the clock, Captain Schuster refused to move out. From this house, the wounded were trucked down to the monastery in Maiori which was used by the 10th Medical Unit (Br). This house in Chiunzi Pass was known under several names, i.e. "Schuster's Mansion," or "Forst Schuster" or "Land's Lodge." Col-

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onel Darby used it as a forward command post as did our own Battalion Commander.

The 18th of September proved to be a busy day for 1/143 Inf. That morning, LTC Walker approved a detailed plan for a raid into the valley in the vicinity of Nocera. The purpose of the raid was to probe and push and try to develop more information on enemy strength and dispositions. The raid was to be led by Captain Waskow and his Company B. H-hour was to be 2100 hours. That morning Company B had been relieved from their mountain top positions on Mount San Angelo by elements of the 325th Glider Infantry Regiment, from the 82d Airborne Division. This freed Company B for the operation that night. Company B's route led them through Company A's sector, over the ridge and down into the valley. Captain Geelsin had 1LT Goad and his mortar platoon to place a rolling barrage of mortar fire ahead of Company B. In spite of Company D's mortar fire, Company B reached the valley floor without any opposition. Since our arrival many days ago, shelling had been going on from both sides and I suppose the Germans thought it was just another fire mission from the Americans. On reaching the valley floor, Captain Waskow gave the mission to 2LT Gene L. Wilson of Salt Lake City, UT, and his platoon to investigate a large house near the outskirts of Nocera. About 100 yards from the house, 2LT Wilson's platoon began receiving intense small arms fire from several machine gun positions around the outside of the house. In the ensuing fire fight, Company B had three men killed, but killed three Germans and overran the gun positions. Under covering fire furnished by 1LT Richard Dashner's platoon of Company D, Company B was able to return back to our lines without further incident. Patrols sent back to the area next day by Company B reported that the Germans had moved out and left their weapons and much ammuni-





tion. From sketches furnished by the patrols we derived much good information to be used in planning our "push" down into the plains of Naples with the British.

Company B was not to stay in reserve very long. Early on 20 September, our Battalion Headquarters received an urgent call from the commander of the battalion of the 325th Glider Infantry Regiment that their positions were being overrun and they needed help. LTC Walker ordered Captain Waskow and his Company B to retake the hill. They departed the area at 1500 hours and by 1640 hours had reported back to Battalion Headquarters that the mountain was again in our control. Captain Waskow said later, "I think the men of Company B deserve a lot of credit for the successful counterattack. Previously, we had never scaled that mountain in less than three hours. This time we did it in less than one and one-half hours and not a single man fell out. I was more proud of my company that day than ever before or after. 1LT Charlie A. Griffin, of Queen City, TX, gave us the fire support that turned the tide. Griffin's platoon from Company D were really burdened down with their gear and weapons but kept up with the riflemen. By the time we reached the top of the mountain, the German's assault group had started retreating down the hill towards Nocera. We created enough of a fuss on our own to make them think we had a larger force. The next day a company of the 504th Parachute Battalion of the 82nd Airborne Division relieved me and we reverted to Battalion reserve."

About 1630 hours on 19 September, we were visited by General Mark Clark, the Commander of the Fifth Army and our next higher headquarters in the chain of command. He visited several positions on the mountain tops with Colonel Darby and LTC Walker and several other "strap-hangers" like myself. Clark was accompanied by Richard Tregastis, author of "GUADACANAL DIARY." General Clark seemed to be well pleased to see how the battle had faired up in the north end of the beachhead. He also corrdinate several matters in connection with our next operation which was to descend from the hills with the British and capture Naples. Clark congratulated Colonel Darby and LTC Walker on how professionally their command had carried out their mission of denying the mountain tops to the Germans. He left to go back to the east. Tregastis, after having made several entries in his notebook, also departed for Salerno.

About this time a new visitor arrived. It was Robert Cappa, a photographer from LIFE MAGAZINE. He was intrigued by Schuster's aid station in Chiunzi Pass and the half-track of the Ranger Force's Cannon Company. The company commander was Captain Chuck Schundstrom. This tracked vehicle, carrying a 105-mm howitzer, would pull up to the crest at Chiunzi Pass, fire a couple of rounds down on the plains and quickly back up until he was masked by the hill. Cappa stayed on with our Battalion and accompanied us all the way into Naples. He took many pic-

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tures—combat—transportation—medical care, etc. I have the article which appeared in the October 18, 1943 issue of LIFE MAGAZINE. It was remarkable that he could have had pictures in the magazine in about three weeks after he snapped them.

### *Part V*

#### *DEFENDING THE HIGH GROUND*

During the remainder of our stay on the mountains, we continued our operations, hoping to hear soon that the British were about to “break through” below.

Intelligence personnel had a difficult time in estimating troops to their front. This applied equally to both sides. On the American side, the troops had learned the necessity to “shoot and scoot.” One day the Germans in an assault would find Company B of I-143 Int on a hill. Next day they would find troops of the 82d Airborne Division. When Americans attacked or counterattacked, it was difficult to determine whether the force was platoon-size, company-size, or larger.

The Americans and British also had their problems determining German unit identifications and strengths. For several years, the Germans had mixed and mingled troops of several commands in order to tailor a force for the mission. They usually formed up assault or fire teams using elements of several regiments, even divisions, to tailor a force. As a result, after an engagement, the Germans had to re-group and shift troops back to their original command. This was not only true of the Naples operation, but throughout the Italian campaigns. Tailoring produced the firepower needed but the entanglement afterwards caused some delay in continuing operations.



We began to use this technique in many operations in Southern France. It is ideal when the troops are in a pursuit operation. In Southern France, Task Force BUTLER was a prime example. They did not have the "staying power" and had no organic logistical support. However, due to their firepower and mobility, they had the edge in a transient situation.

One evening we encountered a strange situation. Father Carucci, and most of the patients who were ambulatory from a sanitarium above Salerno, approached Maiori, coming from Vietri. They had been caught in the midst of pitched battles several times, when such battles between the British and the Germans were fought just outside of their buildings. The Father thought that the best action to take was to assemble the patients who could walk and try to use the coastal road to reach Naples. The group was stopped at the edge of Maiori about dusk by a Ranger sentry. The sentry called an officer from Ranger Headquarters. Father Carucci was told that they could not enter because they had no pass or authorization to move out of Salerno. The officer did dispatch a Ranger in a jeep back to Salerno to get authorization for the group to pass. By this time it was curfew. Father Carucci was advised by one of his patients that there was a large cave just below the road and they could spend the night there. Not having any other choice, Father Carucci had the patient to guide them down to the cave. They spent a most uncomfortable night in the cave, with all kinds of lizards, spiders, bats, etc. Although I spent some time in Maiori, I was never told of this cave; never found it but I have read in current travel directories that a cave is near Maiori, down on the cliffside, and is more spectacular than the Blue Grotto on the Isle of Capri.

Although the Rangers did prepare fighting holes (BG Wilbur said that "fox holes" were something to hide in) when they had established their front lines, they were seldom used unless they were out-gunned and could not break contact. The Rangers were always moving—our soldiers tended to use fighting holes or rock crevices. In the volcanic soil, it was easy to dig. We used a pick maddox, bayonet, knife or even an empty ration can. Unless we stacked rocks around the perimeter, it was of little use since enemy fire had much penetrating power in the loose soil. However, in all of the rocks, we had near misses zinging all around us, rock from rock, until they found a target—man or earth.

The Commandos had not been idle during these ten days. The Commando Brigade, lightly armed, had been badly mauled on D-Day and the two following days. They had secured the hill crests but were badly needing rest. General McCreery decided to relieve them to give them a chance to rest, clean weapons, replenish their ammunition, etc. The 6th Lincolns and the 2/4th King's Own Torkshire Light Infantry, the 6 Yorks and Lancs were sent up to take over. Colonel Kendrew took his battalion to the top of Commando Hill, where he had been told to relieve

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some of the Commandos. When he arrived, a grim sight met his eyes. The stark rocky hill was covered with British and German bodies and mounds of abandoned and wrecked equipment. Several of the bodies were still burning from a barrage of phosphorus bombs that had been poured onto the slopes from below. The smell of baking flesh and acid phosphorus clung to the ground and to their clothing. Kendrew then and there decided to defend the hill from the slopes and flanks and not from the peaks. But sometimes our best plans do not work out. The Commandos had hardly gotten back to Vietri when they were told that the Lincolns and Torks had been overrun. They wearily turned about and went back to the hills. The line had been broken in several places. One attack of the Royal Marine Commandos, led by Major John Edwards, made towards the left flank where the Molina Pass itself had been threatened. In a few hours the situation was clarified and the Germans were sent scuttling down the hill, leaving several of their comrades behind—dead on the battlefield. The other Commando Force, led by Captain the Duke of Wellington, on the right flank, slowly pushed the Germans down the hill while their 25-pounders were firing just over the heads of the Commandos. The Commandos regained all of the positions but in the firefight, The Duke of Wellington was killed. The troops were never able to locate his body.

A German account of this action by the 2d Parachute Battalion of the Hermann Goering Division, written by Paul Low, recorded, "What they accomplished will rank with the best performances of the war." The German attack against the Lincolns and Yorks was led by Captain Fitz, who wore the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross and the Gold Wound Badge. He had already been wounded seven times while he was serving on almost every European battlefield. He was a legend among his men. They attacked up the hills with the village of Dragonea, just north of Vietri, as their main objective. After four days without sleep under uninterrupted bombardment from land, sea and air, the Germans were shaken and confused. Yet, Fitz rallied his troops for a counterattack, and with screaming warcries swept through a fury of mortar and machine gun fire and into the positions held by the Yorks and Lincolns. Fitz was wounded but continued to lead the charge. Many of the British troops staggered from their trenches, hands in the air, and the Germans occupied the village, shooting at the retreating Englishmen as they ran down the hillside towards the Gulf of Salerno. The report claims that Dragonea was taken and held, preventing the Allied advance up through the pass. No mention is made of its subsequent recapture in quick time by the Commandos.

The Commandos seemed to have very short rest periods. On 15 September, when they had been pulled out of the line for a rest, the 46th Infantry Division (Br) had a serious counterattack in their area vicinity of Piegolelli. Brigadier Hawkesworth called for the Commander of the Commandos, Brigadier Laycock. He wanted White Cross Hill and the

village retaken. With little planning, one group was mounted on Sherman tanks and moved out. Almost immediately the first tank fell through a bridge and two others bogged down in the mud. The disgruntled Commandos dismounted and continued their counterattack. Number 2 Commando, under LTC Jack Churchill, advanced to take Piegolelli. He divided his small band into six groups and ordered them to shout "COMMANDO" at the top of their voices to make the Germans think they were faced with a larger force. Churchill led the group waving his huge sword, as was his custom in battle. They crept into the village and to their surprise, found a German machine gun position occupied but with the crew dozing. He leaped into the pit, shouting, "Hande Hoch!" and swinging his sword mightily. The crew, sleepy-eyed, obeyed and Churchill sped to another nearby position of the mortar crew and with his vigor, shouting and swinging his sword, took them prisoners without any problem. He picked out one of the more subdued prisoners and made him go down the street knocking on the houses in which Germans were stationed. All quickly surrendered. From there, they advanced to Pimple Hill, which had been a constant menace to the 46th Division soldiers. Most of the enemy soldiers, hearing the constant repetition of "COMMANDO—COMMANDO—COMMANDO" stayed quietly in their trenches on the hill but soon panic set in and they retired rather hastily further on down the hill. Reaching their objectives, the Commandos turned around and repeated the process in reverse. Upon arrival at their start point, the Commandos turned over 136 prisoners, more—up to this time—than the whole of the 46th Infantry Division combined. Churchill was awarded the DSO for the second time in his career. Unfortunately, later the 46th Infantry Division was driven back to Commando Hill and the Commandos were ordered back into the lines to retake the village of Piegolelli. This time, however, the surprise element was lost and every house and every street had to be taken by brute force from the occupying enemy. Troops swore and cursed, stabbing and hacking with bayonets, knives and rifle butts. The knuckle-duster knives served the Commandos well in this engagement. These knives were made by Wilkenson for the Commandos and was a combination of a dagger and "brass knucks." When ammunition ran out or weapons were lost, they fought with their bare fists. They took the village but could not take the Pimple Hill because the crews on their supporting artillery pieces were either fatigued or careless and the fire was not effective. One of the troops on the right flank, however, was out of radio contact with Commando Headquarters and had mistaken the artillery fire on their left to be their own artillery firing a walking barrage in front of the troops. This troop, led by Captain John Parsons, walked his troops to the top of the hill with no opposition. The rest of the Commandos were nowhere to be seen or heard. Hearing some voices speaking in German, the troop ad-

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vanced stealthily and quietly captured several enemy machine gun crews. This troop action is included to show that sometimes, determined troops, attacking with vigor, can take the objective with troops that could have only been termed a reconnaissance in force.

On 15 September we learned of a letter General Clark sent to General Eisenhower giving the first casualty report. The British X Corps in eight days (D-day thru D + 7? of nonstop fighting had suffered 531 killed, 1915 wounded and 1,561 missing. The American VI Corps, with only half as many troops involved in the battle, had 225 killed, 835 wounded and 589 missing. That seems to be a high price to pay for this 8-day period, but it was only the beginning of a larger price to pay throughout the Italian campaign.

We also learned that the Commandos had been relieved from the lines and sent to an area about 3 miles from Salerno. They had just gotten cleaned up and bedded down for the night, feeling comfortable being in the area of a regiment of 25-pounders. However, about midnight, the Royal Artillery opened up on a regimental shoot and the dazed Commandos ran around pitifully until they were assured the artillery was "out-going" instead of "in-coming". The Commandos had been used up entirely. No troops could have done more than they accomplished. The Commandos were relieved on the lines on 20 September and moved to a rest area. According to a later casualty report covering D-day through D + 11, the British reported a total of 5,211 killed, wounded or missing. The American losses for the same period, as best could be determined, was 2,600 killed, wounded or missing.

On 21 September, LTC Walker at his morning staff meeting read a letter of congratulations he had received earlier that day from LTG Sir Richard McCreery, commanding the British X Corps on our right. He extended his warmest praises for the conduct of the 1/143 Inf and their actions in this area.

Today, 21 September, we began making plans for our big push and our "decauchment on the plains" as Captain Newell, our Operations Officer, said. Planning continued daily until we had finished on 25 September. I cannot understand why the Germans suddenly started intense shelling on the night of the 21st of September and it was a nightly affair until the 26th of September. The Germans knew we were not down on the forward slopes—we had discontinued patrolling in force on the 21st of September.

On 24 September, Company A, Commanded by Captain Joseph Peterman, was relieved by elements of the 504th Parachute Regiment of the 82d Airborne Division. A very sad event happened this afternoon. Our Battalion Communications Officer, 1LT Messenger, had been laying and chasing telephone lines almost around the clock the last three days while the Germans had increased their shelling. Noting his exhaustion, he was told to go back to the battalion Message Center and find a

hole, crawl in it and get some sleep. He came over to the Message Center and selected a slit trench about 50 yards from the switchboard and began to enjoy the rest. After about 30 minutes, we had a barrage of mortar shells land in the area. A direct hit killed 1LT Messenger while he slept. We had no other casualties in that shelling. Events like that are unexplainable. I don't think God had anything to do with it. I don't think God has anything to do with war. It makes you wonder what would have happened if he had continued his work on the hills, or if he had moved his sleeping area a littler closer or a little farther away from the switchboard. I have never believed that a shell or cartridge has one's name on it. It just happens.

Today, LTC Walker received a request from LTG Sir Richard McCreery to extend our front lines farther to the east to include the road between Cava and Cammerele, even at the expense of thinning out our west flank. Due to the steep slopes of the road west of Cava, his request could not be accommodated.

Although we were concentrating on coordinating our plans, the half-track of the Rangers continued to pull out to the forward edge of Chiunzi Pass and fire a round or more, then quickly back-pedal to the reverse slope of the hill. Captain Shundstrom and his crew had never been injured or the vehicle disabled as a result of this harassing fire. The firing by the half-track must have kept the Germans nervous and their return fire must have caused a drain on their ammunition supply.

It might be of interest to know the background on how and when the Rangers acquired their half-tracks, one of which was being used in the Chiunzi Pass. The story begins back in Sicily.

The 1st Ranger Battalion had furnished cadres for two new Ranger Battalions. They furnished cadres for A and B Companies for the new 3d Ranger Battalion. They furnished cadres for Company C and Company D for the new 4th Ranger Battalion. In addition, they furnished cadres for Company E and Company F for their own "new" 1st Battalion.

This "new" 1st Ranger Battalion landed at Gela, Sicily, on D-Day, 10 July 1943, and held part of the town for almost two days despite numerous tank attacks by the Germans. On D+3, they and the 4th Ranger Battalion attacked Mount Delta Lapa positions of the Italians. The Italians were supported by two units of heavy artillery of the Italian Army. With tank support and bayonet charges, the Rangers took the heights and captured over 600 prisoners. Seeing the value of armored support, Colonel Darby took action to "beef" up his command.

The Ranger Force became a more self-contained force on 13 July 1943 with the addition of 18 SP howitzers taken from an armored artillery battalion in Sicily.

A few weeks later, the 7th Ranger Cannon Company was formed with six SP 105mm howitzers under Captain Chuck Shundstrom.

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Since the Ranger Force was in Italy with their new Cannon Company, the Company Commander himself, Captain Chuck Shundstrom, was handling the firing of their new half-track which was on the reverse slope at Chiunzi Pass until it moved forward and fired on the Germans down in the plains. As usual, the Rangers made the most of what they had or could get.

On the 25th of September, the 23d Armored Brigade (Br) started moving their tanks up the coastal road from Vietri towards Maiori and on up to Chiunzi Pass. We Americans continued to call it "88-Pass" because some passed over and some did not pass over.

The coastal road, hacked out of the tall cliffs during the past hundreds of years, was a two-lane road at best. There were no guard rails on the outside. With a Sherman tank pulled over against the cliff on the inside lane of the road, you can imagine the problem it was to pass a 2½ ton truck by the tank. It was close but it was done VERY CAREFULLY. The tanks of the 23d Armored Brigade were stacked up (and down) for miles back down from Maiori towards Vietri. Our Battalion was kept on constant alert. We had outposted our areas on the hills, with several observation posts.

The "plan" was for the 23d Armored Brigade with 1/143 Inf to go down the road from Chiunzi Pass to the plains vicinity of Nocera and time their arrival in the valley so as to meet the 7th Armored Division. The 7th Armored Division was to then proceed around Mount Vesuvius on the north side. The 82d Airborne Division and the 23d Armored Brigade, with 1/143 Inf, were to take the middle and coastal roads—all converging at Naples.

The attack was delayed several days because of the slow advance of the 7th Armored Division (Br) coming up from the south. Finally on the 27th of September, we were given the go-ahead. The Rangers were to take Bloody Knoll to the west and descend down into the valley and link up with the 82d Airborne Division. We had rumors that the British X Corps had lost contact with the Germans and we hoped this operation would turn into a rout. The H-hour for the Rangers was 1700. Ours was 1800. At that time, LTC Walker and his command group started down the road from Chiunzi Pass. Our Executive Officer, Major Land, followed with the troops and we started down that faint, rock, winding trail. Our first objective was to seize the town of St. Egidio. Then on order from the 46th Recon Co (Br), one of our companies was to move forward and seize the village of St. Lorenzo. The Battalion was preceded by Company A who was to outpost our assembly area vicinity of Nocera. Although we had guides posted all along the trail, some elements became temporarily lost and we did not close the forward assembly area until about 0400 hours. Although one of our patrols had been in St. Egidio the night before and found the town to be occupied by German soldiers, this time we found that the Germans had pulled back out of the town.







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