The Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

Across the Vosges

By Vincent M. Lockhart
T-Patch To Victory

VOL. XII, No. 3 Fall 1992

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The Fighting 36th HISTORICAL Quarterly

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EDITOR, HISTORICAL QUARTERLY:
Hicks A. Turner (Jamie) 111th Engr. Bn.
Rt. 2, Box 236
Clyde, TX 79510 (915) 529-3579

EDITOR, T-PATCHER NEWSLETTER:
Bert D. Carlton (Clara) 144/143
806 Aransas Dr.
Euless, TX 76039 (817) 267-7864

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Tribute to Col. Vincent M. Lockhart

In 1977 Col. Vincent M. Lockhart and his wife, Helen, moved to El Paso from a timber farm in West Virginia. The Board of Directors of the 36th Infantry Division Association asked Vince to write the untold story of the Fighting 36th in France and until the end of the war. His book, T-Patch To Victory, resulted.

It is fitting that this phase of the history of the Division be told by Vince, who was there, and who had the vantage point of not only being in Division Headquarters, but of being the Division Historian (in addition to his other duties) during the French-German-Austrian campaigns.

Col. Lockhart has 14 battle stars on his campaign ribbons, one bronze arrowhead, and was awarded the Bronze Star Medal in Italy and the Legion of Merit in Vietnam. He enlisted in the 36th Division Texas National Guard at age 16 in 1931. He was commissioned in 1940 and spent all of World War II with the 36th.

Basically a newspaperman and writer, Vince added to his military qualifications by graduating from the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth. He served for 19 years in the Central Intelligence Agency before retiring.

He served as editor of the 36th Division Association's newsletter, the T-Patch, in 1948, and published it quarterly at Canadian, Texas and used the Lockhart Publishing Company of Canadian to print the news sheet.

Copies of Col. Lockhart's book, T-Patch To Victory, can be had by ordering from Vincent Lockhart, 10236 Ridgewood Drive, El Paso, Texas 79925. To honor this great work the editor of the 36th Historical Quarterly hereby extracts one small chapter of his book for inclusion in this volume of the Quarterly. We hope our readers and members of the Association choose to purchase Col. Lockhart's work.

And, to Col. Lockhart, this editor wishes to express his sincere appreciation for his services to America, to Texas, to the 36th Division Association and for his having made such great contribution during a period when most of us feel we served with the greatest military unit of World War II.

Signed: Hicks A. Turner
Editor, 36th Historical Quarterly

Arrow pointing at the enemy, as described by the chroniclers of the 442nd, was

also an apt description in the month of October for the 36th Division. Its flanks were almost always in the rear of its center effort. Initially, the 3rd Division on the right never seemed to be able to get past Le Tholy, and the French did little better for several weeks after they took over.

But the worm was to tum in November. Both flanks were to make exceptional progress, and the 36th Infantry Division was to be the first combat unit in history to cross the Vosges from west to east against a determined enemy.

Meanwhile, the life of the soldier in the front line was miserable. The weather was cold alternating between snow, sleet and rain. The woods not only concealed a clever enemy, but artillery striking the tree branches brought down a rain of death. Diabolically placed mines were more plentiful than ever before. The days passed slowly and painfully.

One of the best descriptions of life in the front lines at this time comes from a young second lieutenant, arriving for his first combat on 25 October 1944.

Second Lieutenant Richard B. Blackwell of Washington, D. C., arrived on the scene in October and was given seven days of preparatory training in the rear by Lieutenant Colonel Charles J. Denholm. Blackwell was impressed that his lieutenant colonel instructor was "29 years old." As a matter of fact, on 20 September 1944, Denholm was 30 years old.

A year later, still serving in the Army of Occupation, Blackwell hit upon the idea of drawing upon his memory and his notes to reconstruct his actions and his thoughts on a day-to-day basis, during his first combat experience.

Excerpts are presented here, not because they offer a unique story, but because they offer a detail of combat life with which every man who served in the front lines will be able to identify.

He starts his story on October 25th when the "past seven days" had been spent in a special Division school for replacements, run in Docelles and conducted, in this instance, by Denholm.

"The school itself wasn't anything new," Blackwell recalled, "but it afforded an opportunity to talk with officers who had been in combat and who could give me an idea of what to expect. First Lieutenant Russell J. Darkes of Lebanon, Pennsylvania, was my squad leader. He had always been with the division-since Salerno. I was impressed by the way he operated-never grumbling about getting up in the morning, never complaining about wet feet, just took things in their stride. This was a trait I eventually learned, I think, and a habit that makes everything easier.

"Early this morning we packed our equipment, bed rolls and all, and were lined up by regiment. A captain called out names of officers to go to different companies. I hoped to go to a heavy weapons company, because in the first place I preferred the 81 mm mortar and the heavy machinegun, and in the second place, I thought it was safer. My name was called to go to Company B, a rifle company. We loaded onto a 2 1/2-ton truck and headed for the battalion CP. On the way we were introduced to Colonel Paul D. Adams, the regimental commander. I had a very sick, lost feeling while riding in front. My dilemma was eased, however, by talking to Captain

George E. Chambers of Milwaukee. He had been in the school, too, and here he was about to take over a company, and I only a platoon.

"At the company kitchen we were greeted very cordially by James E. ("Cotton") Blankenship of Mexia, Texas, the mess sergeant, and by the cooks. They advised us as to what to carry with us to the company. They helped us tear through our huge amounts of baggage and prepare rolls containing two blankets and one shelter half. The kitchen was four miles behind the lines and set up in an old barn.

"We left there by jeep and rode to the battalion aid station. At the aid station we were met by a company runner, Private Horace L. Lovejoy of Dover-Foxcroft, Maine. He led us on foot to the company location.

"Our walk ended, for the time, at a group of five or six soldiers sitting around a fire. Among them was First Sergeant John W. Parker of Groesbeck, Texas, and we found out from them that the company was relieving another in a defensive position near Jussarupt.

"The men were a rough looking crew. They all had long, shaggy hair, a few days' growth of whiskers, dirty combat clothes and a great interest in the new officers.

"As we sat there, a wornout looking soldier limped up through the woods. He had on new shoes and one was obviously not comfortable. He moaned to the first sergeant for a while, after being introduced to us. Only a bit later did I learn he was to be my platoon sergeant, Sergeant George A. Shoops of Flint, Michigan. He discussed the relief with the First Sergeant, pointing out that the Third Platoon would have to cross about 100 yards of open space. They decided to go ahead and relieve before dark.

"I explained to Shoops how I was going to follow him for a few days and for him not to let me interfere with his regular activity. Before we left, a lieutenant came up out of the woods, so excited he couldn't talk straight. He went through the motions of ordering chow for his men, then went off grumbling without knowing where he and his men would eat, or where they would pick up their rations. I thought to myself: 'Just give me a couple of weeks and I'll be as goofy as he is.'

"After Shoops had made a very orderly, sensible arrangement for getting rations, he and I went off to meet the platoon. We arrived at a group of 20 or 30 beat-up looking Joes. They were lying and sitting around in an old house in Herpelmont. There I was introduced to the men and the noncoms.

"Felix Petrowski, the platoon guide, was a sober sort of guy, not over 20. Sgt. Cyrus E. Pine looked like he might possibly be a squad leader. Staff Sergeant George Andrasi looked a little bit promising, at least he spoke up in a friendly way. The third squad leader, Thomas Zeke Nicholson (call me Nick) was a hopeless looking case. He was small, one shoulder was inches lower than the other, his wool knit cap hung below his helmet at a ridiculous angle and his red eyes were running. I learned later that he carried as much as any two other men.

"By now I had lost the squirmy feeling I had had on the truck, but I had acquired a new feeling of hopelessness. Shoops explained to the men that we would move in single file with ten yards interval out of town, up the hill, and into the woods

occupied by Company E, 142nd Infantry, the unit we were relieving. Off we went, hoping we wouldn't draw artillery fire as we went up the hill. We didn't. At the top of the hill we stopped while Shoops arranged with First Lieutenant Weldon M. Green, commanding officer of Company E, 142nd Infantry, for the relief.

"We then took the squads, one at a time, and put them into position. It was a lonesome feeling, knowing there was no one between us and the Jerries. The platoon set up was contrary to all the training I had had. The book says a platoon of 40 men should cover a 150-300 yard front. Our 28-man platoon had a front of at least 700 yards. I didn't feel a bit secure, but I realized, even then, that we couldn't always go by 'The Book.'

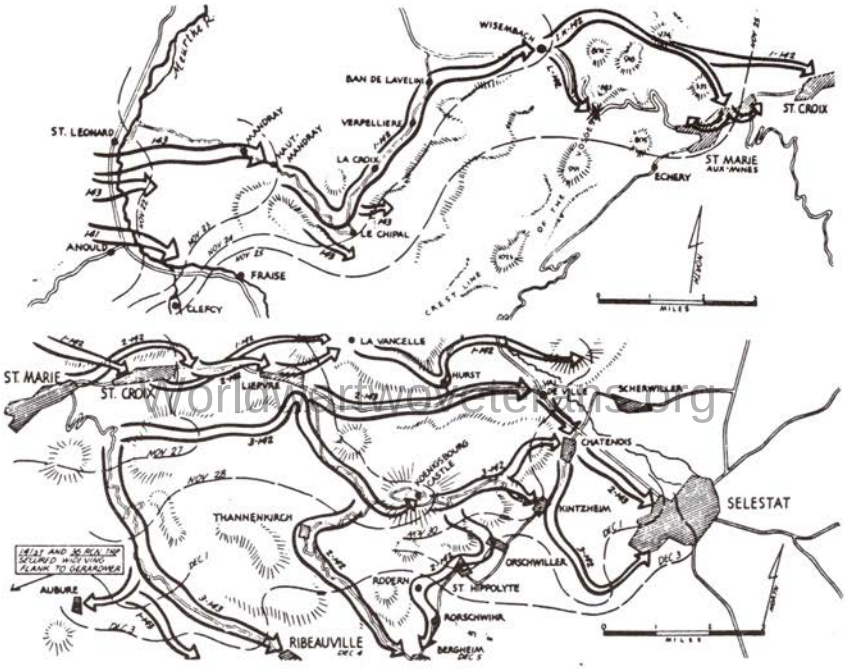
"After a German Artillery barrage, which seemed to bring no concern to anyone, Shoops and I set ourselves up in a good hole which had been vacated by Green. It was large enough for one to kneel. The roof consisted of two-inch sticks laid side by side, covered with cardboard and a foot of dirt. The roof would probably have withstood a direct hit by a mortar, but no more. That hole proved to be above average. The walls were lined with blankets and a radio battery furnished a dim light. "Pete" Petrowski and Homer Reeve set up in a nearby hole. Homer was one of the original Texas boys. He was 38 years old, had a 'bad belly,' and was slightly grouchy at times, but was a sharp soldier. He didn't miss a trick and had a memory like an elephant. He was the platoon runner, my messenger and bodyguard. Homer carried an M-1 and scoffed at my carbine, because he had hit a man twice with a carbine and the fellow got up and ran away. They don't do that when hit with an M-1.

"On October 26, just after daylight, Shoops and I set out to visit the squads. We had trouble finding the way to two of them-that's how spread out they were. On the way we passed a dead Jerry. I was very curious, as it was my first look at a dead soldier. He was lying on his back looking straight up. He had evidently been dead quite a while, as he was swollen and green. I turned to Private William R. Shoener and told him that it was the first I had seen. I'll always remember the very sickly look Shoener gave me when he said, 'Me, too.' Shoener turned out to be an excellent soldier. He was 35 years old, had been trained for message center work, had never even fired a rifle on a range. He had no stomach for combat, but as much as he disliked it all, he was always right on the job and could be depended upon not only to hold up his end, but to talk to other men and help them along.

"To get on with the story, we visited the squads and returned to the CP to eat breakfast. We were eating 10 in 1 rations. That is the best of emergency type ration. A box the size of a Campbell soup box contains food for 10 men for one day.

"On Friday, the 27th, we ate breakfast then went out to check the squads. Homer and I set off through the woods and after much circling around, hit all the squad positions. I was favorably impressed by Nick, who was on the ball concerning his position and its possibilities. He had his men located so that in event of a night attack, they could simply roll grenades down an embankment into the enemy. Pine's squad had tied cans to wires as a raffling, warning system of night approach.

"Our situation at the time wasn't too bad. Our company set on two hills and



occupied Jussarupt, a small town between the hills and about 300 yards in front of the hills. A small river, about 15 yards wide and three to six feet deep, ran through the town and in front of our position. The Germans occupied the high ground 800 yards to our front.

"We weren't bothered by enemy patrols, but in the daytime they directed artillery on our positions. They were on higher ground than we, with good observation. We were in a good spot as long as we remained there, but we faced an un-favorable situation should we be ordered on the offensive.

"Friday afternoon Captain Chambers phoned me and told me to come down into Jussarupt after dark so we could talk and get acquainted. He emphasized the point that I should wait until dark. Second Lieutenant John A. Nattress, with whom I had attended OCS and with whom I had worked at Camp Blanding, went from the Second Platoon to visit the captain at noontime and while returning was hit by an artillery shell. It was touch and go as to whether he would lose a leg, but he didn't and was evacuated to England.

"We had orders to send a patrol that night to gather information about the enemy on the hill. Shoops named Nick to lead the patrol. Pete came to me immediately and said that Nick and he had always worked together on patrols, and that he wanted to lead the patrol and let Nick go along with him. There are few men who would ever volunteer for the dangers of a patrol. Men usually make themselves inconspicuous when they know a patrol is going out.

"Both the patrol and I went into Jussarupt that night, I to talk to the captain, and the men to be oriented for the patrol. They were given instructions by use of an aerial photo. They left the company CP and made the patrol. I sweated out their return while getting acquainted with the captain. He seemed to be a pretty old man to be with a rifle company; his hair was white; I thought he must be at least 40 years old. Nick, who is 28, told me that an old fellow like the captain could never last long in combat. Nick and I were both surprised to find that Captain Chambers was only 27 years old.

"The patrol returned in an hour, bringing information as to where some of the enemy were, but not how many. They had been within 30 yards of a German who had walked to the edge of the woods, listened, and left. That was pretty good information, anyway, and we went back to our platoon position and went to bed.

"Next afternoon I was walking around in the woods alone, congratulating myself on how well I was finding my way around. A white phosphorus mortar shell hit in a tree top not 30 yards from me. I dived into a convenient hole and waited while others landed around me. I didn't know what was happening. I figured if it were an enemy mortar that they were screening our position preparing to attack. Then I noticed they were hitting on our side of the trees, so I knew it was our own stuff.

"When it eased up, I ran back to the platoon CP and phoned the battalion switchboard and told them to call Company D and also the artillery, and tell whoever was firing to quit it or increase their range. Half an hour later a lieutenant came up the hill from his observation post and asked if we had seen any phosphorus hitting nearby. I could have shot him. He explained that he suspected the enemy had an outpost in a factory just across the river from Nick's position and that he had been firing at it. I was 300 yards behind Nick when the shells hit me.

"It was several days later--about the 30th, I believe--that I was ordered to send a squad across the river to the small factory and house that were thought to be German outposts. Shoops and I went on reconnaissance and decided how best to accomplish our task. Nick, who was to lead the squad across, liked our idea. He had only about 300 yards to go and most of his route offered good cover and concealment. They would have to wade the river.

"The squad packed their rolls and set out in a column. On this side, Pete got out a Browning Automatic Rifle and took a position to cover all the windows of the target building. We had a bird's eye view of the maneuver. The squad crossed the road in front of their own right flank, went through the bushes on the other side, waded the river then moved through the bushes on the opposite bank.

"At the edge of the bushes, they set down their light packs, observed the buildings, moved into them without being fired upon. Everyone was greatly relieved. Pete and I then set out to reconnoiter our left flank. We didn't know for sure what was there, though we had been told not to worry about it. In our travels we found a dead GI. He had evidently been killed taking the hill, but had not been taken away by the Graves Registration Officer (GRO). We had him taken away that night. That was my first dead GI.

"When Pete and I got back to the platoon CP, Shoops told us what had happened after Nick got into the houses. There were four Jerries asleep in the factory. They

woke up looking into Nick's tommy gun. I was disappointed because I had missed the prisoners that Private First Class Lilio J. Gentili and Private Charles V. Calhoun had brought back to the platoon CP. Nick remained in the factory, with several others.

"After dark, the jeep came as usual with our rations. Gentili, Calhoun, Pete and I set out to take rations to Nick's squad and to string a wire to them. While crossing the river, Gentili fell and floated about 15 yards downstream, but he never let go of those rations. He cussed the river as only he could do. It was three feet deep where we crossed, so the rest of us got pretty wet, too.

"When we hooked up the phone, Captain Chambers told me to send a patrol toward Aumontzey, a town 700 yards to the front, occupied by the enemy. The patrol was to check a big building about 300 yards further down the road. Pete, Nick, William F. Seago, Private First Class William F. ("Shorty") Dunn and I were the patrol. We went to the building and found no one there. In the cellar was a room that was being used as sleeping quarters for soldiers. There was straw for beds, a box of grenades, and several cans and jars of food. We hid the grenades and left.

"When Pete and I waded the river to go back to the platoon CP, we took with us two brand new machineguns. We were tempted to keep them for our own use, but knew it would be dangerous for us to shoot a foreign weapon, as our own troops might mistake us for Germans. Nick gave me a good compass he had taken off one of the prisoners.

"I went to bed with wet feet that night, but the socks dried out during the night. I had learned from Darkes that wet socks get very warm and are even hot if worn to bed.

"During the night Nick and Seago were standing guard at a hole in the factory wall, and Shoener and Walter B. Schlaves were asleep in the room. Nick heard hobnail boots walking down the street toward the house. Nick and Seago awoke the others and hid them in a dark corner and told them not to move if shooting started. Nick and Seago let the Jerries pass the corner of the house and then went out the hole in the wall and followed the Jerries around the house, through the door, and into the room again. That left six German soldiers in the middle of the room, two American GI's in the corner, and Nick and Seago in the doorway. The Germans dropped their weapons without protest.

"Nick, who did the talking and the thinking, said he was more frightened than the Germans were. The squad had done a pretty good day's work. Not only had they taken out a threat to our position, but they had captured ten enemy. From that time on they thought they were the best squad in the company, and they probably were, too.

"The next night Pete and I waded to the outpost again. The men were dry by now and Pete and I took rations to them, so none of them had to wade the river that night. I had instructions to send a patrol to clear five houses along a road that ran off to our left front. Again, Pete, Nick, Shorty, Seago and I made up the patrol.

"There was a French family living in the house connected with the factory. I arranged for the man and his son to go on the patrol with us. They assured us there were no Germans where we were going. The GI's and I crept along the river bank.

The French walked down the road in a casual manner. The scheme was for them to find out if any Germans were there, then report to us. The system worked fine. The boy would run back to us and report all clear. We would search the house and send the Frenchman on to the next. Each time we'd wait anxiously to hear the klomp of the wooden shoes coming down the road.

"At the last house we were greeted by an excited Frenchman. He warned us to be careful, then went on with his story. I noticed during this time how well Pete handled the men. Everytime I stopped to talk with a Frenchman, Pete sent a man about 15 yards in each direction for all around security. That is always taught and seldom followed. By this time I had come to realize what a perfect soldier Pete was.

"The excited Frenchman pointed across the field to a railroad bank where he said there were two machinegun positions. I didn't know whether to try for the machineguns. My assigned mission was complete. The approach to those machineguns afforded no cover or concealment. I made my first real decision in combat. I decided my mission was complete and I would not go after the machineguns. I was new then, and not cautious enough. If the same thing had happened a few months later, I would not have given a thought to going after those guns.

"This had been an interesting Halloween." An interesting sidelight to this story of the development of a combat officer is that he went back to the site 34 years later. He could clearly see where his platoon foxholes had been, ground only eight inches depressed, but a clear outline of the old "hole." He also met again with the "boy," Poirot Roland, and has kept up correspondence with him.

Blackwell was wounded on 22 November, but returned to action in January. He retired as a lieutenant colonel.

Every rifleman knows what the term "point" means--that man who walks, or sneaks, or furtively moves, toward the unknown in search of the enemy, never knowing when a sudden shot will ring out. Sometimes that shot ends the war for the "point."

The 36th Division was the "point" for much of the Seventh Army drive in the autumn of 1944. Sladen's diary (as division G-3) has a number of entries which point out that units on the flank of the division were not moving up as fast as these Americans from all walks of life, and all states, who were "The Texas Division." Rarely was Sladen critical of those adjacent units--like his old division, the 3rd--but he would simply remark on lack of progress on the left or the right flank.

But in November, the French moved bravely on the right and the XV Corps moved aggressively on the left. The French broke through the Belfort Gap and reached the Rhine River at Rosenau, just south of the Swiss border, on 19 November. By 28 November they had included Mulhouse in their victories. On the left, both French and American troops stormed the Saveme Gap and by the 23rd Major General Jacques Leclerc's French 2nd Armored Division was in Strasbourg.

In 1976, retired Major General George E. Lynch, who commanded the 142nd Regimental Combat Team for all the action covered in this book, wrote an article for "The T-Patch," Division Association publication, on the capture of Ste. Marie Pass.

"The assault and seizure of Ste. Marie Pass," he wrote, "leading from the Vosges Mountains into the Rhine plain, on 25 November 1944, has been compared in importance with the 142nd Infantry's attack on Mount Artemisio near Velletri, Italy, in May of 1944. The Italian action received wide notice because it led to the fall of Rome to the Fifth U. S. Army. Seizure of Ste. Marie Pass received no attention, as it was merely a battle for one of the many exits from the Vosges into the Rhine plain.

"The 36th Division had reached the end of its drive from the beaches of Southern France to the foothills of the Vosges Mountains by the end of September 1944--a stunning and exhaustive effort. We crossed the Moselle River at Remiremont and ground to a halt. The 142nd Infantry received replacement vehicles and weapons and about 800 new men and officers."

Throughout October and early November, the battle was slow, arduous, physically debilitating and unrewarding. Slowly against the bitter odds of weather and terrain, the 142nd fought down the valley of Les Rouges Eaux. The clearing of the Foret Dominale de Champ was the scene of hard sustained wilderness action. Around Corcieux the enemy became elusive in retreat, leaving a wake of charred destruction. As Lynch saw it, "we saw our first 'scorched earth' towns. St. Die flared brightly at night. Roadblocks at every conceivable spot kept engineers busy."

While the 142nd was in rest, expected to be a week, but turning out to be three days, the 143rd began to inch across the Meurthe River at St. Leonard and Anould. Then came new orders to the "I'll Face You" boys.

"VI Corps assigned the 36th Division the task of seizing the high pass near Ste. Marie aux Mines," Lynch wrote. "We were then to debouch into the Rhine plain at Selestat and Ribeauville. The 142nd was chosen by Division to seize the pass."

Staff Sergeant Richard A. Huff of Dearborn, Michigan, the regiment's operations sergeant, records the beginning of the battle in the After Action Report for the 142nd for November.

"The 1st Battalion was brought up in trucks to Mandray and dismounted at 2200 hours on 23 November. They struck out on foot, passing through the 143rd Infantry just east of Mandray, to follow the wooded trail to the Le Chipal-La Croix road. They were then to turn left, follow that road, and proceed to Ban de Laveline.

"A continuous skirmish on the dark Le Chipal road forced the Germans to abandon a 20mm flak wagon and two artillery pieces. The battalion marched on through the night and by 0800 had entered La Croix. Forty prisoners were taken during the night. Beyond La Croix no further engagement took place and the battalion entered Ban de Laveline at 1300 hours 24 November.

"The 3rd Battalion, which had been ordered to follow, was held up by mortar and machinegun fire which seriously interdicted the Le Chipal road. There was a northern route, in the 103rd Division sector, through St. Marguerite.

"At about 1830 hours on 24 November, the 2nd Battalion began to roll over this northern route through St. Marguerite, thence east to a point short of the railroad crossing near Raves. With the railroad bridge out, a wide detour had to be made, north again, through Nedervillers and then south through Bertrimoutier to Ban de Laveline, closing at 2040 hours.

"When the delay in passing the 3rd Battalion through Le Chipal lingered, Lynch ordered the 1 st Battalion to continue on from Ban de Laveline to Wisembach. Here the Battalion closed at 1830 hours 24 November with incident nil. After dark, the 3rd Battalion was able to slip by the hot corner at Le Chipal, and entered an assigned assembly area at Verpelliere for the night."

Let us leave the 142nd Infantry for the moment, and tell the story of the wounding of the Division Engineer, Lieutenant Colonel Oran C. Stovall. It was his custom to spend most of his time in the forward areas. It is a miracle that he was not wounded, or even killed, long before the action at Ste. Marie Pass. And even this wound did not put him out of action, although it brought pain and suffering to him for the rest of his life.

He tells his story in his diary:

"25 November 1944: This begins our fifth year in service, and it came near being the end for me. I went out early with Company B (111th Engineers) and the 142nd Infantry in the attack of the mountain pass. I had finished a forward reconnaissance and was with Major Clifford M. Cliburn, the S-2 of the regiment, in the forward command post near the edge of Ban de Laveline. A shell hit the window of the room where we were standing. Cliburn was killed instantly, I learned later, and I was hit by small fragments and rocks. Full damage is not known, but I was cut and bruised nearly over all my body. One of the fragments caused a bloody scalp wound.

"I regained consciousness sometime later when the French woman who lived in the house was dragging me down the cellar steps. I don't know how long I was out, but other troops had arrived when I got back upstairs. My driver, Corporal Roland A. ("Cotton") Allen, was also slightly wounded in the barrage.

"After we got cleaned up a little, we went forward to supervise the attack on the pass. We were most fortunate to save the road, and late in the day cleared the roadblock at the top of the pass.

"In the early evening, I stopped at the aid station operated by captain Dollinger and got patched up."

Lynch's own story of the Ste. Marie action was written in 1976, and picks up as the attack was about to begin.

"The offensive moved slowly and then gathered speed as the 142nd entered Wisembach, the last town before ascending to the high Ste. Marie Pass. The pass itself, at 2,547 feet (772 meters), was simply a narrow, hard-surfaced road cut into the side of the precipitous mountain whose peak rose 3,214 feet (974 meters). Heavily wooded as well as precipitous, travel off the road was a matter of climbing and clambering on foot. The pass, with timber barricades, was defended by antitank guns and about 100 infantrymen.

"By this stage of our advance, it was clear that the Germans were no longer defending, just delaying our advance wherever the terrain offered an advantage. So there was no question of linear defenses. Road blocks and delaying along principal arteries became the pattern of German tactics at this time.

"A map study showed a dirt cart trail (probably an old lumber road) leading northeast out of Wisembach, crossing the high saddle of the mountain north of the pass.

"A plan was devised to have the 3rd Battalion divide into two forces. One element was made up of Company L, reinforced by a platoon from Company B, 753rd Tank Battalion, and commanded by Major Ross Young of San Antonio, the battalion executive officer. This force was to attack the pass frontally, up the road approach, as a diversion.

"The remainder of the battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel A. Ward Gillette, a Wisconsin native and the battalion commander, was to mount on trucks, follow the dirt trail northeast out of Wisembach. They were to go as far as possible mounted, and after crossing the saddle, dismount and attack the town of Ste. Marie aux Mines on foot,

"I reconnoitered the dirt cart trail toward dark on 24 November. I satisfied myself that the trail would support our loaded 21/2-ton trucks and that the grade of ascent was negotiable.

"On the surface, trucking infantrymen right into the German lines would appear too risky to undertake. But, in view of the pattern of German delaying actions, as previously described, the risk seemed justified.

"At daylight on the morning of 25 November, the men of Gillette's 3rd Battalion (less Company L) mounted their trucks and moved out of Wisembach up the dirt trail and disappeared into the forest without incident or interruption.

"The attack of Young's diversionary force against the fortified pass itself was delayed until the 132nd Field Artillery Battalion could complete its move to firing positions. Into place, they laid a generous amount of artillery fire on the fortifications while Young's force advanced up the road.

"While the fortifications were still under our artillery fires, the tank platoon attempted a frontal attack against the pass. With this approach denied to us, Company L deployed into a shallow envelopment around the north (uphill) side of the pass. After many hours of tortuous climbing, this force descended on the pass and at 1815 hours completed its capture, with 28 prisoners and 30 dead.

"The 3rd Battalion, meanwhile, had passed over the saddle, two miles north of the pass, and had continued mounted on trucks toward the town of Ste. Marie. At 1320, having dismounted, the battalion entered the town and captured a stunned German garrison of 150, while suffering only two casualties--both just light wounds.

"As the battalion came down on the town, the Germans were riding about on bicycles, attending to their daily affairs, and they offered little resistance. The town was fully under control by 1800 hours.

"The 111th Engineer Battalion cleared the obstacles from the pass by 2240, and the 142nd Infantry closed into Ste. Marie during the night."

As the attack had progressed, Lynch ordered the lst Battalion to take the same route the 3rd Battalion had taken, over the saddle, with the objective of moving further on through the woods and pass through La Bouille and come down on St. Croix, east of Ste. Marie, from the northwest. Again, to save foot power, trucks were used as far as possible.

But the surprise element was gone. The Germans in St. Croix were warned by the Ste. Marie battle, and when the 1 st Battalion came down on the town, they were greeted with heavy fire. They even brought in reinforcements.

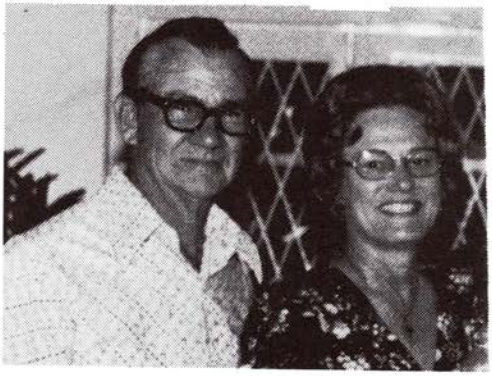
The 2nd Battalion, which had come through the now open pass, marched down the road toward St. Croix and made contact with Company B of Major James L. Minor's 1st Battalion.

But George Lynch did not want to lose the momentum gained, so he ordered the 2nd Battalion, under Price Middleton, to by-pass St. Croix, take the ridge line to the north, and attack Liepvre. The 143rd RCT came through, and moved off to the right flank.

The Vosges Mountains, at one of their highest points, had been successfully crossed. George Lynch called it:

"A truly remarkable action for which the 3rd Battalion and its attached troops received the Presidential Unit Citation."

EDITOR HICKS A. TURNER



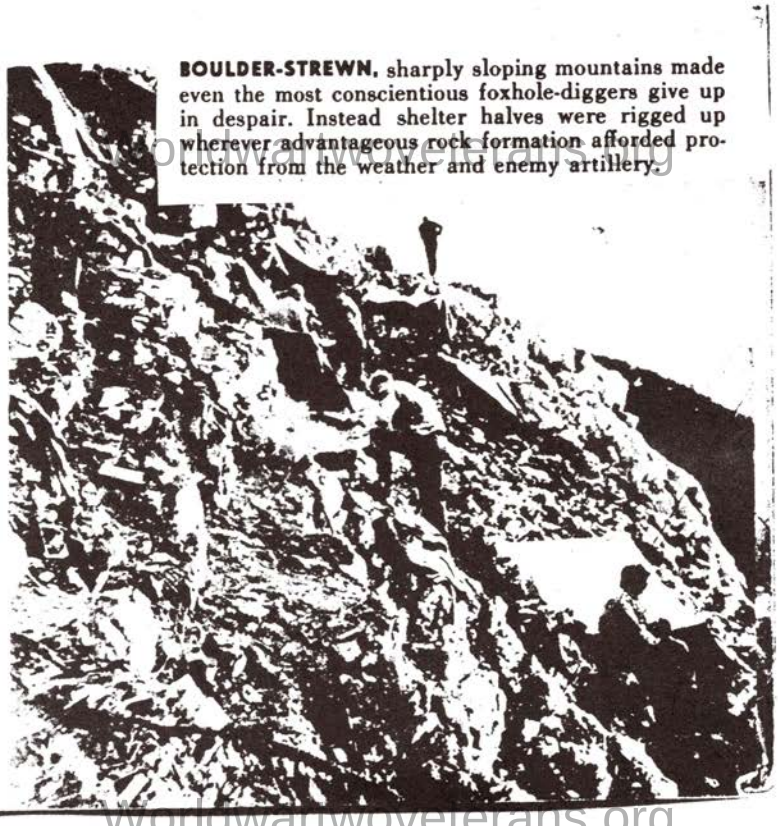
FIGHTING 36th HISTORICAL QUARTERLY

Our inventory of stories for the Quarterly is getting low at the present time. **Every man in the 36th has at least one or two good stories to tell — humorous, tragic, combat situations and others. NOW is the time to tell it. If you are unable to write it on your own, solicit the assistance of a relative or good friend to help you with it. Just be sure to write the story and forward it to the Association.**

Most of the Associations mail is sent through **Leonard Wilkerson, P.O. Box 2049, Malakoff, TX 75148.** He does a very good job in getting the mail he receives to the proper person.

You may, if you wish, forward stories for the Quarterly direct to: Hicks A. Turner, Rt. 2 — Box 236, Clyde, TX 79510.

HILL 1205 — SAMMUCRO



BOULDER-STREWN, sharply sloping mountains made even the most conscientious foxhole-diggers give up in despair. Instead shelter halves were rigged up wherever advantageous rock formation afforded protection from the weather and enemy artillery.

The most serious obstacle impeding the capture of San Pietro was Mt. Sammucro, 4,000-foot Hill 1205. This mountain, one of the steepest heights scaled by Allied troops during the war, descends to the village of San Pietro on its southern slope. Along its icy trails and treacherous cliffs the Germans had craftily organized a formidable chain of mutually supporting pillboxes.

For the December 8 San Pietro assault, Colonel William Martin ordered the 1st Battalion, 143rd Infantry, to attack the summit of 1205. Upon achieving its objective,

it was to attack along the ridge to a point northwest of San Pietro. The 3d Ranger Battalion was to seize Hill 950, another feature of the Sammucro hill mass. The 2nd Battalion, 143rd, was to drive over the olive orchards northeast of San Pietro. The 3rd Battalion, in support, was to follow the 2nd at a distance of 400 yards.

As night fell our artillery hammered powerfully at the enemy's main line of resistance. It was raining at H-Hour when the 2nd and 3rd Battalions crossed the line of departure. Some 200 yards forward they encountered mines and automatic fire from German pillboxes. German mortar and artillery fire were deadly by reason of excellent observation from enemy-held Mt. Lungo, overlooking our advance.

The 3rd Battalion was committed. But the advance never gained more than 600 yards. Our initial assault on San Pietro had been repulsed with heavy casualties.

On 1205, however, the 1st Battalion attack succeeded brilliantly. The 1st Battalion, commanded by Lt. Col. William W. Burgess, began an exhausting five-hour climb up rugged Mt. Sammucro at 1500. Under cover of darkness the men crawled up the slopes, sometimes on all fours, sometimes chinning themselves over the sharp rocks that cut into their shoes, sometimes using their ropes as lassoes to pull themselves over the otherwise impassable cliffs. Doing without overcoats and blankets, they still perspired freely on a night that neared the zero mark—it was work to climb that mountain. When the Germans sensed approach to the summit they rolled man-sized boulders over the top. Occasionally our own men, struggling to keep going, slipped on the ice and loosened other rocks. These boulders, gaining momentum in their descent, caused as many as a dozen casualties on one downward journey.

But Lt. Rufus Cleghorn's A Company gained the summit before the strongly-entrenched enemy fully realized that an assault was upon them. The infantrymen, summoning every last measure of their strength, stealthily crept up to each successive pill-box and neutralized it until the Germans withdrew stunned.

To the right the 3rd Ranger Battalion also had captured its objective, but only after successive attacks and costly casualties. For on Hill 950 the enemy had been alerted.

Counterattacks were expected. They follwed quickly, seven of them in the first day. Maj. David Frazior, who had replaced the wounded Col. Burgess, and his battalion checked the Germans as they struck back with unceasing violence. The slopes of Hill 1205 were strewn with the dead of both sides.

Prisoners captured by the 1st Battalion stated that they had been ordered to retake Sammucro at all cost.

Four days later the 504th Parachute Battalion reinforced the 1st of the 143rd which threw its entire remaining strength into the push along the ridge. The attack gave out one hundred yards short of the objective when severe losses in this extreme effort forced a halt. But San Pietro was soon to fall.

It has been said by military men of wide experience that the physical discomforts of Washington's Army at Valley Forge could not have been compared to those suffered by the foot soldier in the Italian mountains. Hill 1205 substantiated that opinion. For ten days at an abnormal altitude the men fought on without blankets, overcoats, or raincoats. Under these conditions, freezing temperatures made sleeping dangerous. Even for those who stayed awake frozen feet was common. Then, too, for the first three days food and water were inadeqate—only a single K ration unit per man during the period and a single veedon of water for a squad. If it was difficult to bring up supply, it was also difficult to take down the wounded. To negotiate Sammucro required considerable stamina even without packs or rifles. To climb it carrying a box of rations or to come down it with a litter demanded maximum effort.

Below Mt. Sammucro the 2nd and 3rd Battalions twice again attempted to break through the olive groves toward the town. Both times they met heavy German fire and were stalled. Volunteer patrols made desperate attempts to reach enemy positions and reduce the strong points but not a single member of any such patrol ever came back alive.

San Pietro had not yet fallen, but the capture and securing of strategic Sammucro threatened the German position all the way to San Vittore.

Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

Battalion Bloodbath

Robert F. Spencer
The Rapido River Crossing
Company F, 2nd Battalion, 143rd Regiment

A few days before January 20th, 1944 the 2nd Battalion 143rd Regiment was ordered to proceed to a staging area near the Rapido River. Prior to this move the C.O. of F Company, a Captain, went to the hospital due to illness or a wound leaving the company with only three Second Lieutenants, King, Zebroski and myself.

Needing a Company C.O. the Battalion Commander assigned me to take over. This was not an unusual move during combat operations as replacement officers were always in short supply due to the high casuality rate of officer personnel.

When we arrived at the staging area I had very little knowledge of the 36th Division battle plans; however on Jan. 20th the Battalion C.O. called a meeting of all Company C.O.'s and advised us that the division was to make an attack across the Rapido River and break through the German lines.

The plan was such that others in the division would make the initial crossing and that our Battalion would follow as they gained a foothold on the other side.

On the nights of January 20th and 21st the first attack was launched; from our location we could hear a tremendous amount of artillery and small arms fire. Imagine my consternation when I learned that the initial attack had failed with the attacking unit suffering extremely heavy casualities.

On the evening of January 21st I was again called to a briefing this time held by the Regimental Officers. The officers were noticably nervous and upset, emphatically telling us that we were to launch another attack across the river the next morning and that we would succeed in breaking through the German lines. Failure would not be tolerated!

(After reading General Walker's article in Volume I No. 2, Summer of 1990 I can only guess the pressure that Generals Clark and Keys applied to General Walker and his Staff.)

This pressure then passed on to the Company C.O.'s who had to lead their men into such a disaster. The morning of January 22nd was cold, damp, and foggy, and our artillery had covered the area with smoke shells making visibility near zero.

Sometime before daylight I was ordered to lead Company F across a narrow footbridge and engage the enemy along with the units who proceeded us a short time earlier. At this time German mortar and artillery and small arms fire were extremely heavy. After crossing the footbridge we proceeded toward the German line, coming to a small barbed wire fence. Luckily an artillery shell had made a small hole which lst Sergeant Jones and I expanded, continuing to move forward.

Shortly aferward I came upon men from a preceeding unit whose casualities

JUST 100 YARDS FROM THE TREACHEROUS RAPIDO, INFANTRYMEN

TAKE COVER BEHIND ROCK-CONSTRUCTED STABLE.

were so numerous that many in the foxholes were afraid to move. The terrain over which we were attacking was level with no physical depressions to use for protective cover, and the Germans had their machine guns coordinated for defensive fire about two feet above ground. In addition their Mortar and Artillery were zeroed in just in front of their lines making it impossible to conduct an organized attack. Things were even more complicated because of poor visibility and merging with the other unit during which I lost contact with part of my company.

I discovered a Lieutenant from another company and with his assistance we began to move all able bodied men forward, knowing that remaining in the area would mean certain death. As we moved I could hear Germans in the distance yelling to each other. I was anxious since I could not tell how close we were to their positions. The cold and the darkness added to the terrible feeling of not knowing what could happen next, or where. Suddenly I was knocked unconscious by a head wound.

When I came to I was dazed, sick, and scared. As I lay in the cold not knowing how badly I was injured or what would happen to me, my head throbbed and I was afraid to move, or touch my wound. Luckily Sgt. Jones discovered me, bringing an aid man who bandaged me as best he could. Sgt. Jones offered to locate some men to carry me to the rear but I declined due to the heavy fire. I had seen men suffer further injuries or death during an attempt to get them to a safer area so I advised Sgt. Jones to leave me and take care of himself. Eventually a G.I. came by, and seeing my submachine gun, asked if he might use it as his was inoperative. Since I was also inoperative, I gave my consent!

As time passed I began to think and feel better and decided to attempt to move to the rear on my own. Visibility had improved and I could see an irrigation ditch that appeared to head toward the river. I slowly crawled to it and tumbled in, ignoring the foot of water since the protection was well worth getting wet. I inched my way until I came to a barbed wire fence that prevented me from moving further. I peered out of the ditch and saw that there was a hole in the fence a few yards over; but there was heavy fire at this time and I had to work up the nerve to chance it. I scrambled on all fours out of the ditch, pushed through the hole, and flung myself into the ditch again. Again I followed the ditch until I came to the river where I could see the footbridge that we had crossed earlier. It was intact though most of it was underwater since the flotation had been hit by artillery. The river was cold and swift, and I was not capable of swimming to the other side. To reach safety I would have to cross the bridge.

I decided to crawl to the bridge, staying low to the ground as possible survial was within my reach and I didn't want to blow it.

I slowly crawled to the bridge, again I had to work up nerve enough to attempt crossing to the other side as the bridge was under water and the only way I could possibly make it across was to crawl, holding onto the bridge to keep from being swept away by the strong current of cold water. Still sick and somewhat confused I started across on all fours, how long it took I really don't know, I do know it was

the longest few minutes of my life.

With my energy almost gone I reached the other side, there I met a company CO who I knew (name I have forgotten) waiting to lead his company across when he recieved the order.

My appearance must have been terrible as I was bloody, wet, muddy etc. "My God, Spencer," he said, "what happened to you?" I filled him in on the situation and was then assisted t an aid station to have the wound treated. When I stabilized I was transferred to a field hospital and was later sent to a general hospital in Casserta. I spent the next seven weeks recuperating from my injury, which we referred to as a 'million dollar' wound since I missed some hard fighting with the 2nd Battalion around San Pietro. Upon release from the hospital I rejoined the 2nd Battalion.

On January 22, 1944 F Company consisted of three Second Lieutenents and 140 enlisted men. All of the officers had been wounded. Lt. Zebroski was hit seven or eight times in the leg with a machine pistol and had to swim the river the next day; Unfortunately, the casualities among the enlisted men were extremely large—only 15 or so made it to safety and most if not all were wounded, it was indeed a sad day for F Company.....

Robert F. Spencer
25 Bellewood Court
New Albany, IN 47150

Postscript

The last time I ever saw Sgt. Jones was in the field that day as I lay wounded. He was later killed at Rapido in the service of his country, an excellent soldier, a credit to the 36th Division and to his home state of Texas, and one of many good soldiers who made the ultimate sacrifice.

All Highways In Texas Will Take You To Houston Reunion

This message is directed to our great T-Patchers who reside outside the boundries of Texas! The foto above is courtesy Texas Highway Department, and markers are erected at major Interstate Highways as you enter Texas.

T-PATCH HISTORY TOLD BY JARY

By BILL JARY

The original T-Patch was a meager mimeo, news sheet born during the Carolina Maneuvers of 1942, to comply with VI Corps' request for a Public Relations Section. Lt. Mitchell C. Tackley was appointed PRO, James Farmer and myself were scribes, and unit correspondents were appointed throughout the division.

At Camp Edwards, security was tightened and the name "36th" could not be mentioned, but items about the men from Texas appeared in the Camp Edwards News under "Longhorn Lampoon." The T-Patch was resumed under Special Service, with Cartoonist Jack Burnett handling the stylus. These Cape Cod editions were tops in mimeo news sheets, the highlight being the Valentine 1942 edition, when PX perfume was mixed with red mimeo ink.

A ship's version of the T-Patch was published on the USS Brazil enroute to Oran, but the publication was not heard of again until a year later after the division had gone through Salerno, San Pietro, Rapido, Cassino and was bivouaced at Maddaloni. Here the T-Patch began to show signs of revival in full growth--a type-set 5 column tabloid newspaper.

Plans were put into motion by Capt. T. J. Nykiel, Ass't SSO, through negotiations with Lt. Col. A. B. Crowther and the division commander. In warravaged Italy, any publication was a precarious venture, loaded with shortages and heartaches.

With the assistance from the 45th Division News, arrangements were finally made in Naples, only to be canceled by the 36th amphibious move to Anzio. The next opportunity to print came after the liberation of Rome. The first issue of the T-Patch rolled off the presses in Rome, June 27, 1944, after a hurried job of editing out of a brief case, just in time to be delivered to the troops who had moved back to the Salernio area.

Three editions were cranked out in Naples by commuting, between Paestum and the Block House in Naples--and then, move again. This time, Southern France, the target. The PRO section headed by Capt. Dine anid Jumbo Wilson stopped long enough in Frejus to get out a miniature edition, claiming "The First Yankee Rag On The Riviera." The swith movement north made publication a complicated affair.

After Grenoble was cleared the Sept. 9, 1944, first anniversary edition of Salerno, was turned out in a hurry at the huge plant of Imprimerie Generale, Grenoble. But no time to linger here. Besancon had just been liberated, and the race was on. The Le Comtois in Besancon offered ideal facilities for the T-Patch.

Slow winter fighting in the Vosges made a move closer to the front impossible.

Beachhead News has taken over Epinal, and no other town near had a plant except Nancy, and the Stars and Stripes and 45th Division had it sewed up. A move to Strasbourg during Christmas was unsuccessful, and the T-Patch returned to Besancon. E:diting was handled at the Rest Camp in Bains Les Bains, but puiblication continued in Besancon. Add to this, the complications of having engravings made in Dijon, the nearest available engraving plant, 90 kilometers west.

Easter 1945 found the T-Patch in Strasbourg, under control of PRO, with Bob Seiger and John Hyman now active on the T-Patch staff, and Max Shaffer as official T-Patch photographer. On one occasion, news stories about the round-up of Nazi generals and bigwigs at the end of the war, were flown to Strasbourg via Piper Cub and made constant changes in the makeup of the front page necessary. Staff members labored all night to keep up with new captives, especially the surrender of Hermann Goering.

When Kaufbueren was occupied by the 36th, the T-Patch took over -a huge plant formerly operated by the Nazi Naval Intelligence, and additional members were added to the staff, including our own linotype operator. Many changes now took place in the staff as high-point men headed for the states.

Subsequent issues were published at Geislingen, staffed partly by ex-members of the 63rd Division who filled gaps left by 36thers who had already returned home, until the division returned to the states in November 1945 for deactivation.

-the T-Patcher NEWS LETTER

The Fighting 36th
THIRTY SIXTH DIVISION ASSOCIATION

FIGHTING 36TH

36TH INF. DIV. ASSN.
BOX 2049 MALAKOFF, TX 75148

Mule Barn

by William D. MacGibbons

This is the third extract taken from Bill MacGibbons' book, Mule Barn, the first in Vol. X, No. 1 and the second in Vol. XI, No. 1 and printed in our Quarterly. The author has given us real life glimpses of the men he knew and commanded in the Intelligence and Reconnaissance platoon of the 143rd Infantry Regiment. In the introduction to his book he remembers that it was S.O.P. for the platoon to have a base for their operation, either a barn, a house, or a cellar, or a jeep and wherever it was possible they would run a wire to the regimental C.P. so they could be reached immediately when needed. Invariably when MacGibbons called this base and Sgt. Buford M. Collins of Troutville, Virginia was there he would answer the phone, howling, "MacGibbons' Mule Barn, Collins Talking!"

This is BAKER. He was always away from the platoon so I never got to know him very well. We spent a lot of time trying to get Captain Cleghorne, the company commander, to let us have Baker back because we needed a jeep driver; but Baker was always driving for the colonel or someone else. At Port-Sur-Soane I had just finished discussing Baker with Captain Cleghorne when we started out on a patrol again leaving Baker behind.

We were to contact the 141st at certain control points on our right. We were moving in to our first point for the day when we drove past German foxholes and defenses along the road. So we had two scouts precede us into the town of Breuches. As we organized to move through this small village, Sgt. Stokes and his group followed. As we moved forward they collected eggs from the happy liberated townspeople. We always referred to towns by the number of eggs we got. This was the last time we really got any eggs. It was a "32-egg town".

We then moved to the vineyards north of the village and we could see B Company pinned down to our left. Some of our light tanks were out in the field to our front, stuck in the mud and abandoned. So we set up an O.P. behind the last row of grapevines, observing through the leaves. I then went back into the village and talked to the townspeople.

The Germans had left a few hours before we came in. Yesterday they had killed two Americans in a jeep and captured a civilian man and woman riding with them. (This turned out to be the lieutenant from the 141st that we were to contact the day before. He had come to this town the day before by mistake to contact us and the Germans killed him and his driver as they approached the foxholes outside of the

town). The Germans then shot and killed the woman and her companion. A Frenchman took us to a spot on a dirt road where he said the bodies were buried. We dug down with our hands about two inches in the loose sand and sure enough there were the bodies. Later in the day they were dug up and put in the local cemetery. We never could find what had happened to the bodies of the G.I.s.

Later in the afternoon, while sitting in our O.P., we saw a jeep with two G.I.s in it drive along a dirt road, past our O.P. and head directly for the German lines, not even noticing B Company men lying in the ditch along the road. They finally hit the main road and drove towards the Breuches River where the bridge was blown. They stopped and pulled back to row of trees and started firing rifles and a light machine gun mounted in the jeep. Then one of the men went forward and we lost his movement in the branches of the trees. We watched but he never came back.

At dusk we found out that it was Baker who had gone forward and had been killed by a sniper. Baker had climbed into the tanks firing their ammunition. He saw a German move down toward the bridge, so he climbed out of the tanks after firing all the ammunition, took a rifle and approached the bridge. He couldn't locate the German, so as he turned to walk back, the German raised up from under the bridge and shot him. We saw his body the next morning lying alongside a gallant French Maquis, sprawled out on the main road.

This is GRENDA. The next day after Baker was killed, September 16, we got across the river and into Luxiel Les Bains. As the regiment went into reserve, the platoon's groups were sent out with several blocking units to report the position of their road blocks and any enemy activity. The driver of one of the jeeps was Grenda. He was from Chicago and I always took him with me on patrols when we expected contact with the Krauts. Because I knew that if we ever got in trouble, while I was figuring out what to do, Grenda would have already done it. Through his leadership, courage and ability to make quick and sound decisions he soon became a sergeant. On this day as their patrol moved towards Fougerolles with the AntiTank Company to set up a road block, they ran smack into a German road block. The soldier manning the 50 caliber machine gun in the jeep froze. So Grenda knocked him off of the jeep and started firing the machine gun. Some antitank people were pinned by the Jerry fire but they were able to get out as Grenda eliminated several Jerries and made the others give up their positions.

Incidentally while resting in Luxiel Les Bains the regimental C.P. was in a roadside inn. We were continually bothered by G.I.s coming out from town, looking at the C.P., noticing the sign and turning back to town. We found that the C.P. was set up in a former house of prostitution and the townspeople had given that location to inquiring G.I.s.

This is MAQUIS JOE. We were always getting stuck with French guides and the night of 21 September, was no exception. The platoon was settled in a large warehouse in Mon Aix Bois and I went to the C.P. About 2400 I crawled into a corner, under the stairs, to get some sleep, as it was rumored that the regiment was going to cross the Moselle River in the morning. I was just getting warm and about half asleep when the S-2 called me and said to get ready for a patrol. He introduced me to three young Frenchmen that he assured me were guides and very familiar with this countryside. He wanted me to take the entire platoon, use these native guides,

and find a route down to the Moselle River so that we could lead the battalions down there in the morning. I argued against taking the entire platoon but the S-2 said to take them. So about 0100 in the black of night, we got into our jeeps and headed down the road.

Among these Frenchmen was Jean Topsent, a tall French kid, who rode in my jeep. His home was in Colmar and he had driven many times along the Remiremont highway. But as usual, he didn't have the real intimate knowledge of the countryside that one expects of a guide. We finally dismounted and headed through the woods.

Well, those three hours or more in the thick black woods were terrible. We had so many men we had to hold on to each other to keep from getting lost (we sounded like a herd of cattle going through the brush); and every Frenchman wanted to talk at the same time. Whenever we asked them something, they wouldn't whisper but yelled back their answer. At any rate we were sure there weren't any Germans on our side of the river because we had no trouble. They probably thought we had an entire army already assembled on the banks.

After returning to the regiment about 0500, We got rid of the other Frenchmen but kept the tall lanky kid, whom I dubbed "Maquis Joe." Cowboy Collins assured me that he would make a good hand, so we kept him.

Later that day we worked through the wooded hills across the Moselle from the village of Eloyes (we called it "Eloise"). Here Maquis Joe got his first glimpse of O.P. work. Our first battalion was attacking the outskirts of the town and the Krauts were rushing up reinforcements into the cemetery at the edge of town. (The Germans always put up a good battle in a cemetery. The high wall gave them protection as did the many tombstones.) We tried to get some mortars, near us, to fire into the cemetery but their observers said that we were seeing G.I.'s instead of Krauts. Our frustration was eased though when one of our Cannon Company mounts rolled up along the road below. They blasted away with 75's and 50 caliber machine guns at the Krauts moving along the outer wall of the cemetery.

We saw a squad of Krauts move along the walls and start climbing through a "mouse hole" in the wall. During the firing by Cannon Company, one man broke away from this squad and ran to the rear. This was the only time that we ever pulled for a Kraut. But as he ran a Cannon Company 50 caliber machine gun picked him up and the dust kicked up behind him as they tried to drop him. He stumbled and fell and got up again; we sure pulled for him. Finally he grabbed a bush and was ready to jump into an old river cut and safety, when he was hit. He fell into a bush on the bank and Cannon Company pumped a couple 75 shells into the bush. We were all pulling for the poor guy; but the odds were so against him. But c'est la guerre.

As the war progressed I became more interested in Maquis Joe and his education. He picked up English real fast and I tried to steer him away from cussing. But one day I noticed that he was swearing every other word. So I asked, "What kind of talk is that, Maquis Joe?" With a big smile on his face he said, "That's G.I.

American, sir." Well, when he left us several months later to go home, we all felt like we had lost a good friend. And, I guess we did. Because after the war I heard from Marley's mother that Maquis Joe and his family had been going occasionally to the American cemetery in Alsace and putting flowers on Marley's grave. Yes, he was a real friend.

On Mt. Maggiore, Italy

by Richard Manton
Co. F - 141st Infantry

Mountainous terrain confronted the Division in practically every phase of the Italian campaign. With it came the enormous task of getting supplies to the frontline forces and evacuating casualties. In the Mount Maggiore and Mount Sammucro sectors, pack animals carried the food, water and ammunition as far up the steep muddy trails as possible, round trips requiring eight to ten hours. Hand-carry was common and laborious. In addition supply routes were frequently under enemy fire and observation.

Somewhere around Thanksgiving Day of 1943 Company F of the 141st Infantry Regiment was stationed on Mt. Maggiore overlooking the Mignano Gap which ran between our location and Mt. Lungo, in Italy. From our position we could clearly see any activity that took place in the valley below. We had been sending out occasional night patrols and they usually came back to report no contact with the enemy, except occasionally to run into an enemy patrol and then there would be a short fire-fight. It had been raining steadily, usually a continual drizzle that seemed to penetrate everything. The ground turned into sticky, thick mud and slippery rocks. On Thanksgiving we had gone down the back side of the mountain, in small groups, to a place where steep rock cliffs offered protection for the field kitchen, and there we got a turkey dinner, with all of the trimmings. It was certainly a welcome change from the K and C rations we had at our front line positions.

I had dug a fox-hole up to my armpits for fighting and observing and beside it was my slit trench about six feet long but only eighteen inches deep, for sleeping — whenever the chance to sleep came along, which was seldom. I can recall sliding into the wet trench and wrapping a sopping wet G.I. wool blanket around me and as I lay back with my steel helmet on my head I could see the steam rise out of the blanket. Even wet it offered some warmth against the chilli night air. The signal men had strung sound power telephone lines from tree to tree so that our Company C.P. had communication with Battalion H.Q. One often had to duck his head to walk under the telephone lines.

On one occasion a lieutenant came up to my position and told me that he was a forward observer for the artillery, but I don't recall his name. This was an excellent location from which he could observe and direct artillery fire. He had a radio for that purpose. I warned him that we had been having daily enemy air raids. The enemy aircraft would fly in low, appearing suddenly from beyond the Mt. Lungo area. They would strafe our position with machine gun fire and drop some anti-personnel bombs, which would detonate before they hit the ground and scatter a multitude of smaller bombs, which would then explode only eight or ten feet from ground level. They were devastating.

I told the artillery lieutenant that if we got an air raid while he was there that I would take cover in the fox hole and he could take cover in the slit trench for whatever protection it might afford him. Sure enough, the daily air raid occurred,

STEADY PACK HORSES AND MULES HAD TO BE USED WHEN JAGGED PEAKS MADE MECHANIZED TRAVEL IMPOSSIBLE.

as expected, and the shout, "Air Raid, Air Raid" rang out and everyone headed for cover. The artillery observer came running toward the slit trench but just before he got there he ran into a telephone wire that was just about at the level of his nose. He was running full tilt when he hit the wire and it peeled the skin off his nose and right up his forehead. He slid into the trench on his heels and landed on his backside. The air raid lasted only a few minutes and when it was over he sat up in the slit trench and said to me, "I've been hit." I sprinkled some sulfa powder on his 'wound' and made an improvised dressing. Then I gave him directions to the nearest aid station which was in the same secluded site where the field kitchen had been.

A short time later he returned to my position with a new dressing on his nose and forehead and announced, "I got the Purple Heart." Well, he was "Wounded as a result of enemy action".

I do wish to report, however, that he did a wonderful job of directing artillery fire. He would call back coordinates for the location on which he wanted a round dropped. After it exploded he would call back adjustments in yards or feet over or short of the target and when it was pinpointed he would call for a salvo. The rounds

DOUGHBOYS HELP AID MEN CARRY A WOUNDED COMRADE DOWN THE TREACHEROUS TRAIL ON MOUNT MAGGIORE.

sounded like freight trains chugging over our heads as they flew toward the targets. Then the whole area of suspected enemy activity would seem to explode at once. I couldn't believe that anyone could survive a shelling like that. But the Germans were well dug in and had bunkers covered with railroad ties and earth. It would take a direct hit to do any damage. I am still amazed, though, that the artillery could be as accurate as it was.

Richard M. Manton
Weapons Platoon Leader
Company F, 141st Inf. Reg't.
November 1943

Mary *Roberts Wilson--*

An Angel at Anzio

By Thomas E. Turner Sr.

Assistant to the Chancellor - Baylor University

Retired Nurse Mary (Roberts) Wilson at her home near Dallas. These days her travels are much more enjoyable.

In the dry, official U.S. Army World War II records, it was spelled out as the 56th Evacuation Hospital.

It was usually known, though, as the Baylor Hospital Unit. Its core was a cadre of 29 doctors and 31 nurses from Dallas' Baylor University Hospital, Medical School, and College of Dentistry.

All volunteered to interrupt their civilian careers and take sizable pay-cuts, to do their part in America's last real patriotic war.

The unit compiled one of that war's most outstanding records of front-line medical service. It too, suffered tragic losses in dead and wounded.

One wintry day in Italy, the Baylor Unit's chief operating-room (tent, that is) nurse, 29-year-old Mary Louise Roberts, took a few minutes off from duty to make military history.

The short, reddish-haired lady from Dallas, nicknamed Pinky, because the first woman in the history of the United States to be awarded the Silver Star medal for bravery in battle.

There are currently 28 U.S. military combat decorations--a 'pyramid of honor" topped by the famous Congressional Medal of Honor. For that one, you almost have to be killed, or should have been. Next is the Distinguished Service Cross, for extraordinary heroism which falls just short of the ultimate award.

Then comes the third toughest to attain, the Silver Star. Highly coveted by male soldiers, nobody ever seriously considered it for a female--until January 1944, at one of World War II's bloodiest debacles: the Anzio-Nettuno beachhead.

The Anzio amphibious landing was one of those high-level brainstorms turned into a fiasco by reality.

For months, in 1943, Allied armies had slowly battled northward up the Italian "boot" in a dreary, costly winter campaign. Under one of Hitler's best generals, Alfred Kesselring, the veteran German forces waged a skilful defensive war, exacting a terrible toll for every mile yielded. Everything was in their favor--awful weather, endless mountain ranges, icy rivers and shorter supply lines.

The painful Allied push ground to a halt against the "Gustav Line," 70 miles south of Rome. Winston Churchill (who was fond of amphibious assaults) and other far-removed strategists conceived "Operation Shingle." A sneaky left-end flank landing behind the German line. Then a big breakout, with Allied forces crippling the Gustav Line and marching on to Rome.

An American-British force made the landing, on Jan. 22, 1944, with comparative ease.

Then the roof fell in.

The Nazis reacted swiftly and sealed off the beachhead. Instead of a brilliant surprise stroke, Anzio became a nightmarish four-month stalemate.

The 56th Evacuation Hospital (the Baylor Unit) arrived there after a harrowing trip on rough seas, a few days after the first landing. For 76 days, they would share the mud and the misery and the death, while working around-the-clock to save as many shattered bodies as possible.

The allied troops were pinned down in a half-moon-shaped marshy plain, ankle deep in mud. They were ringed by hills, which the Germans loaded with artillery. It included giant 280mm rail-mounted cannon 70 feet long, which could hurl 500-pound shells up to 50 miles. There were 20mm anti-aircraft guns leveled for use against the invaders, and hundreds of the famed German "88" weapon, the most feared of that war.

It was like shooting fish in a barrel.

The endless barrage of exploding shells (along with the bombs of the Luftwaffe) was no respecter of Red Crosses. The hospitals (two others joined the 56th) got the same deadly treatment from the explosions that raked every yard of the beachhead. (Even casualties buried in the beachhead cemetery were sometimes unearthed by the shelling.)

Like the GIs, the medicos lived in foxholes and dugouts. They packed sandbags and earth around the operating tents and medical wards, which provided only a minimum of protection.

On Feb. 10, 1944, Mary Roberts was in the operating tent, readying several wounded for surgery, when artillery airbursts riddled the canvas with a hail of shrapnel. The deadly spray lasted about 30 minutes.

Nurse Roberts' (before her marriage) Silver Star citation reads:

"The tent and its equipment were damaged and two enlisted men were wounded by shell fragments ... Lt. Roberts exhibited exceptional coolness and outstanding leadership, reassured the nurses under her charge and encouraged and urged them to greater efforts. Despite the impairment of facilities and the prolonged shelling, the vital work at three operating tables was continued under the inspiration of her conduct and example ... Her bravery and unfaltering devotion to duty and complete disregard for her own welfare are in the best traditions of the military service and reflect the highest credit on herself and the Army Nurse Corps."

She did not know at the time--in that operating tent with shrapnel ripping holes and buzzing around like angry hornets--that she was being heroic. Like the expert nurse she was, she was reacting instinctively to an emergency.

"Sure, I was scared," she recalls. "My first impulse was to jump under the operating table. But I couldn't do that."

She could have. Nobody would have blamed her. But first there were patients to look after--three badly wounded soldiers on litters, a fourth already on the operating table.

The Army's Silver Star . . . established July 9, 1918, revised Aug. 8, 1932 . . . "awarded in time of war for gallantry and intrepidity in action . . ."

Rallying-the- ashen-faced others in the tent, she placed the litters on the floor where it was at least a bit safer. Spotting a soldier's helmet, she laid it gently over his head.

Minutes after the shelling stopped, Nurse Roberts had the operating tent ready again.

It was just another hard day at the office to her, an extra-hectic incident in the endless days and nights of mud and shells and bombs and bloody soldiers.

Eleven days later, someone casually advised her that Maj. Gen. John P. Lucas was stopping by the camp that day to commend her. When the VI Corps commander appeared, he had more than just kind words.

He pinned on Mary a Silver Star.

Two other nurses from other units also got them. Being a first lieutenant, Roberts went first, thus putting her into the military history books by a matter of minutes. (The other nurses were 2nd Lt. Elaine A. Roe of Whitewater, Wis., and 2nd Lt. Rita V. Rourke of Chicago.)

The informal awarding of the Silver Stars to the nurses did not take more than 20 minutes. There was no fanfare or ceremony. That would probably have brought on more enemy shelling. The nurses were in their work uniforms.

"I remember I did cry a little bit," admits Mary Louise. "I guess I was a little emotional."

"It may sound a bit corny but my motivation in being there was strictly old-fashioned patriotism. I just felt an intense sense of responsibility to do my part, particularly since I was young and healthy then!"

The Baylor Unit's members earned a batch of awards at Anzio and elsewhere. The Silver Star probably is the highest combat decoration held today by U.S. women. During the Civil War, a Congressional Medal of Honor was given to a Union army surgeon. Dr. Mary Walker. In 1917, a special review board, concerned over early laxness in awarding the highest medal, removed 911 names from the Medal of Honor list, including Dr. Walker's.

The 56th Evacuation Hospital received a Meritorious Service Award for its great record. At Anzio, it had done the work of two hospitals. During its first 36 hours on the beachhead, it handled more than 1,000 patients. Anzio had a fearful casualty rate--the U.S. 3rd Division had 6,295 casualties in four months. (Another East Texan, baby-faced farm-boy Audie Murphy, won his first battle medal at Anzio. He went on to win every combat decoration the U.S. gives, some of them twice.)

During the Anzio stalemate, 203 persons were killed by shelling or bombings in the beachhead hospitals or medical stations. The dead included six female nurses, one of them was 2nd Lt. Ellen G. Ainsworth of the Baylor Unit.

"We didn't even have a box for her," recalls Mary Louise softly. "Everyone was buried just in a mattress cover. At the service, I can still remember seeing a bit of her hair protruding from the mattress cover."

In more than two years'of continuous overseas service, from north Africa to north Italy, the Baylor Unit provided speedy and often life-saving treatment for 73,052 patients. Its portable X-ray, sterilization equipment, generators and other technology were the most advanced of their day. But the hospital's greatest asset was an assemblage of dedicated medical talent any modern metropolis could envy.

Most of the time they worked literally under the gun--and the ever-present aerial bombs--in front-line areas. But Anzio Beachhead was their finest hour.

One of them, Lawrence D. Collins, a captain then and now a well-known Waco physician, wrote his wife a long letter from Nocelleto, Italy, soon after the 56th finally was evacuated from Anzio.

Collins wrote, prophetically:

"I think it is unlikely that any of us will ever again work such hours and at such a pace. Yet, the need for our services was so great we were as unconscious of fatigue as of fear, while at work. Not so after stopping each day. But very few grumbled and very few cried--in spite of the fact that a great many died. Least of all did the wounded men grumble, delayed treatments notwithstanding. You could read in their eyes they would not have traded their country, their comrades, their officers, their medics, their nurses nor their doctors during those hectic days--not for anything would they nor we have traded off the other. For those were days of complete commitment, cooperation, teamwork, and intense pride. Small wonder Churchill rated the ordeal of the English during the blitz as 'their finest hour!' I've no doubt our stint at Anzio provided what will ever remain as ours."

1st Lt. Mary Louise Roberts takes time off from her operating-tent duties at Anzio just long enough to be awarded a historic Silver Star decoration by Maj. Gen. John P. Lucas. (U.S. Army Photo.)

Sunday, Apr. 7, was the best Easter ever experienced by the members of the Baylor Unit--they were shipped out of what Life magazine and other media called "hell's half-acre."

Six weeks later, the Allied forces finally blasted their way out of the beachhead perimeter and helped capture Rome. It took heavy reinforcement of the beachhead troops. One of the new divisions thrown into the fray was the 36th Infantry, the "T-Patchers" from Texas which all Texans naturally regard as the major reason for the successful breakout.

The Baylor Unit accompanied the Allied push up Italy, in a long tough Po Valley campaign. When the Germans surrendered, the hospital was encamped in a spacious valley near Udine, Italy, between Switzerland and Yugoslavia.

There were other honors for Nurse Roberts. When Gen. George C. Marshall, the U.S. Army's chief of staff, visited the 5th Army in Italy he reviewed a female guard of honor composed of American, British and Polish women. It was commanded by Lt. Mary Roberts.

A few months later, England's King George visited the Italian front. Dressed in his military tunic and shorts, he strolled casually in front of a formation of nurses and stopped for a chat with Mary. He was a quiet, impressive and gracious man, she remembers.

The 56th handled its last wartime patient on Aug. 4, 1945. It then began training for service in the South Pacific but a strange new "atomic" bomb wiped out two Japanese cities and the war was over for the Baylor Unit.

A rare quiet hour at Anzio. The hills on the horizon, overlooking the 56th Evacuation Hospital, were full of German artillery. (Photo by Dr. Ben A. Merrick.)

Mary Roberts became a civilian again in January 1946. She went to work for the Veterans Administration Hospital in Dallas. It was a nostalgic assignment. She met a number of patients who had been at Anzio and other battle areas served by the Baylor Unit.

She served for several years as operating room supervisor at the Veterans Administration hospital. In 1957 she earned a bachelor of science in Nursing Service Administration. She kept up her Army Reserve status until 1964 when she retired from it as a lieutenant colonel. She retired from the V.A. in May 1972, finally laying aside the nurse's uniform she'd worn with pride for 38 years.

She was born in Hollyridge, La., but grew up in east Texas. She graduated from Lufkin High School and from the Hillman Hospital nursing school in Birmingham, Ala. She was operating room supervisor at Methodist Hospital, Dallas, when she became an army nurse with the 56th Evacuation Hospital.

(Baylor's medical center in Dallas provided top-notch military medical facilities in World War I, also. In that conflict, a Baylor medical and surgical unit, later designated U.S. Army Hospital Unit V, saw service in France, the only base hospital unit from Texas to do so.)

Through mutual friends, Mary Roberts met Willie Ray Wilson and they married in March 1961. He, too, is a decorated combat veteran of World War II. He entered service in March 1941 as a private, and came out a major in 1945. He flew a light observation plane for the 8th Corps artillery, a very dangerous occupation, at the Battle of the Bulge and other big battles. He was awarded an Air Medal with three clusters.

Today the Wilsons are busy travelers, mostly in a 28-foot travel trailer, throughout the west and east Texas. In June 1977, after Wilson's retirement as a computer analyst from the Vought Corporation, they made a 10,000-mile swing through the Pacific Northwest and Canada.

For Mary Roberts Wilson, Anzio now is an old but still-distinct chapter filed away in her memory. Her Silver Star still reposes in its case, undisplayed and unworn.

Says she, "I have always been aware that it was not just my work alone (that brought it to her), but a team effort."

Mary brings out the Silver Star only when asked, as she did for this story.

It's obvious that those terrible weeks on Anzio are still etched in her mind... the bleeding soldiers ... and a wisp of a dead nurse's hair showing from a mattress cover....

Men of Company E relive WW II battles

by Jim Pollard
Abilene Reporter-News

SWEETWATER — Survivors of the famous Company E of the 142nd Infantry Regiment, 36th Infantry Division, gathered in Sweetwater Friday and Saturday for their annual reunion.

The company has been headquartered in Sweetwater for many years, and was de-activated last month because of cutbacks in military spending.

The reunion began Friday evening with an informal gathering at the home of F.E. Healer. Activities concluded Saturday evening with a banquet.

The reunion was organized five years ago. At past reunions, Company E veterans from several states have attended. At this year's reunion, 31 had registered by late Saturday morning.

On Sept. 9, 1943, the 220 men of Company E joined others of the 142nd for the first invasion of Europe as they landed on the beaches at Salerno, Italy. Because of the soldiers' heroic efforts, Company E was the highly decorated company of World War II.

Gerald Stevenson, 83, is the oldest surviving member of the company, and he remembers the war years well. He reminisced about his past experienes, such as moving with his family by covered wagon in 1917 from Oklahoma to Colorado.

Stevenson joined the Army in 1931 because the Great Depression was on, and no jobs were available. He served for three years in the Philippines on Corregidor with the 59th Coast Attillery.

After his release from duty in 1934, he joined his family in Sweetwater. He joined Company E of the National Guard.

Company E was mobilized on Nov. 25, 1940 and spent the next 27 months in intensive training. In April 1943, the company landed in Oran, North Africa, and spent four months in desert and amphibious training, Stevenson said.

The landing at Salerno was supposed to be a surprise, Stevenson said. But as the landing craft got 200 yards from shore, "all hell broke loose," he said. It was 3:30 a.m. but the bullets and shells were so thick, many men were shot as the landing ramps were lowered.

By the end of the day, though, the company had completed its assignment and established a strong hold four miles inland. The company continued its advance on the enemy.

Stevenson obtained the rank of first sergeant, a rank he held until his discharge in 1945. All of the company's officers were dead, so he was the highest-ranking person in the surviving company.

KRIGGIE COMES HOME

(In German a kreigsgefangener is a prisoner of war)

by D. L. Rogers
Written by Lois Connick
Co. H - 143rd Infantry

The sound of artillery fire was music to our ears. As the allies neared Luckenwald, Germany, my buddy, Ernie Alexandra, and I waited anxiously for the Allies to appear at the gates of Stallag IIIA to free us of captivity.

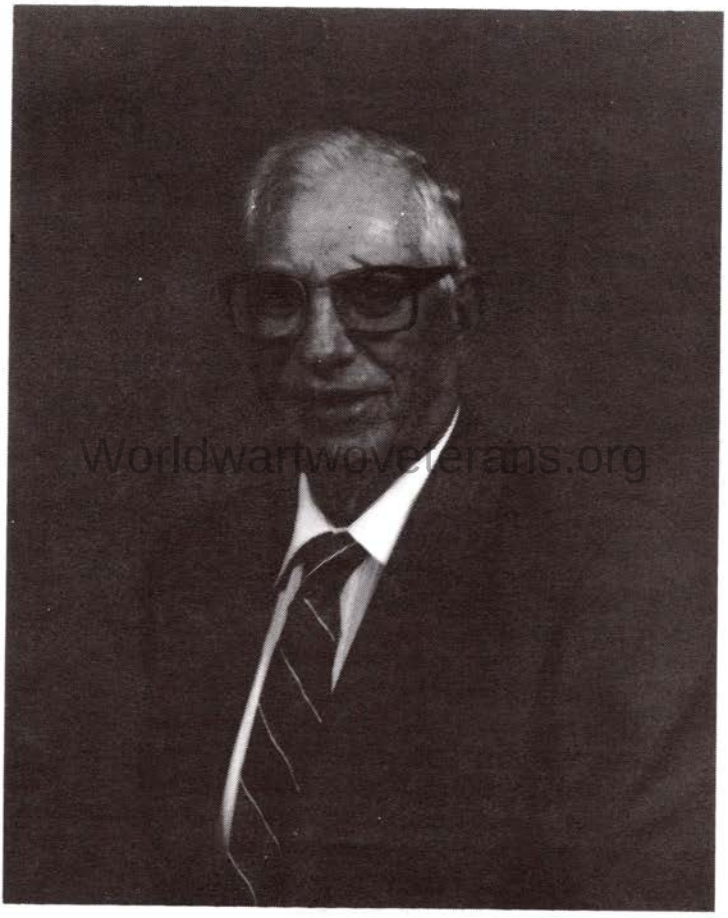
Gradually the artillery sounds grew closer. The German guards, usually cocky, showed nervous stress. A few days into April, 1945, the guards knew they had lost the war, but they did not acknowledge it. They were concerned about their safety. Particularly, they did not want to be captured by the Russians. The Germans had been extremely severe in their treatment of the Russian prisoners, whom they had almost starved. They were afraid of retaliation if they were taken by the the army of the prisoners they had most persecuted.

As the sounds of the bombs came closer, the excitement among the prisoners grew. We were relieved that the Allies were coming our way, but we were concerned about what would happen.

When we woke on the morning of April 21, 1945, we found that all the Germans had abandoned the camp during the night. We were glad they were gone, but terribly worried about what might happen to us. Some of the officers in the adjoining fenced area appointed advisors to encourage the men to wait in the camp for our liberators. I was one of the twenty or thirty men appointed. I don't know how the men were selected. We were told to make a white armband from a handkerchief, or whatever we could find, and wear it to identify ourselves.

We cautioned the men not to leave the camp. We advised them that many unknown dangers might await them on the outside and if they were running loose, they might not be recognized as POWs. Our concern was for their welfare, but we had no authority to physically stop them.

The Russian tanks arrived at about ten o'clock on the morning of April twenty-third. The first tank drove through the high, fenced gate and dragged it down. Other tanks followed and drove into the complex over the wide path the prisoners had made by walking around the inside confines of the fence. They parked



D. L. Rogers, today

the tanks in front of the tents.

We were overjoyed to see the liberators. When the Russian prisoners were released, some of them cried and we Americans felt like crying, too. If the liberators had been American, I know we would have wept, but under the circumstances we were elated, but reserved, and anxious about our welfare.

The Russian prisoners were given permission to return to Russia at that time, or to join the troops and march on to Berlin. Many of them climbed on the tanks or marched beside the tanks as they left. I would have happily joined them if I had been offered the option, both to seek revenge and to escape the confines of the camp. I had been held by the Germans for nineteen months.

We were very hungry as we had not received any food for the past two days. By the second day of liberation, the Russians had the bakery running. We were given a loaf of bread to divide among five men. The ratio was better than our allowance

from the Germans. The Russians confiscated peas, potatoes, and thirty to forty head of cattle from the nearby German farmers. They made vegetable soup with the meat. It was the first fresh meat I had eaten since I was captured. There were approximately five thousand men to feed. Some of the officers found some personnel parcels and Red Cross boxes in the German's offices. We had no idea how long they had been there.

On the twenty-third of April we could hear the artillery fire again, but this time it was moving toward Berlin and away from us. We still had received no word about the expected arrival date of the Americans. From the radios that our liberators provided, we knew that the Americans and Russians had not yet met on the battlefield.

By the first of May the Americans had not arrived and the men were extremely impatient and restless. Many thought the Americans had abandoned us. Although the advisors continued to caution them about the dangers of leaving, some of the men gathered their few possessions and walked out of the camp, heading west, toward France. Each day a few more men left. Since I had been appointed as an advisor, I felt it was my duty to remain in camp. The ones who left early thought they could get home faster on their own. It also was something constructive to do in lieu of waiting. Some of the men who left early were later arriving at the American lines than those of us who waited.

The men who stayed were confined to camp for their safety. Thankfully, we were fed twice a day and had a loaf of bread to divide among four men while we waited for the liberator's supplies to arrive.

Six days after liberation the Russians arrived with fifty trucks loaded with supplies. The Germans had taken all of the supplies for the camp when they left. The fifty trucks of supplies would keep us for about forty-eight hours.

The Russian officer in charge of the convoy did not have any new information as to when we would move out or if weld be taken West toward France, or East toward Russia. The men were concerned about going East because it would take so long to cross Russia and reach the Far East ports.

The men were beginning to loudly complain about staying in the camp. It was hard to reason with them and convince them to wait. When we heard that the Yanks and Russians had finally met in Berlin, we were relieved. We thought our delivery by the Americans might be expedited.

Each day more and more men left the compound. At first it was just a man or two, but later groups of four and five left together, until only about half of the men were left.

The Rear Echelon of the Russian troops came through the camp and started putting restrictions on the prisoners. We feared the Russians were going to take us through the East and we were worried that it would be a long journey and we were unsure of what would happen to us.

A few days later some news reporters came though the camp and told us the Americans were coming. They advised us to wait, but the rumors of being evacuated through Russia had become serious and no one wanted to travel the extra

three to four thousand miles to get home; so more men left.

Some of the POWs from the hospital left and caught up with the Russian troops. The Russians evacuated some of the German houses so the POWs could sleep in them.

On May third we received some good news. The Germans in Italy had surrendered and Berlin had fallen to the Allies.

On May fourth an emissary from the United States arrived at our camp in the late afternoon. He said trucks would be arriving that night or early the next morning to take us out of the camp. The men were exhilarated. I did cry and I was not alone.

Constantly I thought of my family. I had a baby son, born after I had left the states, which I had never seen and a wife I hadn't seen for over two years. I wondered how they were and how soon I would be with them.

The next morning twenty-three ambulances came in for the sick and wounded. They promised trucks would come for the rest of us the next day. We had waited from April twenty-third to May sixth to leave the detestable camp.

D. L. Rogers, 1942

Pilgrimage

I was fortunate to have a buddy who seemed to have an extra sense when it came to news. Ernie was the first one who heard the Americans were coming. Two or three times I wouldn't have known about available transport for our journey if he had not told me. We already had our few possessions packed. Mine included an overcoat, jacket and a blanket. The only clothes I had were on my back and the shoes

I wore were the same Military issue I had on when I was captured. Somewhere along the way I had lost my helmet.

On Sunday night, May sixth we left Stalag IIIA with the Americans. There were five trucks for twenty-five hundred men, but we piled into the trucks and stood shoulder to shoulder to make room. We traveled about sixty miles and saw several villages that had been destroyed by the war. A rumor was circulating that we were going to fly home. The fastest way was too slow for us. We had one thought, and that was to get home as soon as possible.

We arrived at Magdeburg, Germany, which had been almost obliterated by the bombing. There were big piles of brick as high as a house. We spent the night in a small tourist court. We laid on the floors since there was not enough room on the beds.

On May seventh we climbed onto the trucks again and drove about one hundred ten miles. We went through the Russian lines and began meeting American GIs along the way. They told us the war had ended. We were thankful and happy.

We hoped that the news meant we would soon be home. I had been overseas for twenty-five months and five days.

We arrived in Hildesheim, Germany. The American forces had taken over the former German Air Force Base there. We heard that we were going to fly to La Havre, France. When we unloaded from the trucks we were instructed to line up and pull off our shirts to be deloused. We were sprayed with D.D.T. all over our bodies. We spent a miserable night with lice crawling all over us, trying to get away.

The next morning we were taken to the showers. It was such ecstasy to stand under the stream of water as long as we wished. In the camp we only had a shower once every two or three months. When we did go to the shower, a guard would regulate the water. He would turn it on so that we could get wet, turn it off while we lathered with soap, and turn it on again so we could rinse the soap off. There were only ten shower heads in a small open room, and four to six men had to share each shower head. It was impossible for all of us to get the lather rinsed off before the water stopped. At Hildesheim we had showers each day for the two to three days we were there. We were no longer bothered by lice and the showers were pure luxury.

After we showered we went downtown. The German wives and mothers had heard that the war was over and were very concerned about their sons and husbands. They had no news regarding the war and didn't know what was happening.

At Hildesheim we had the first chance to send word to our families that we had been liberated. The Red Cross sent telegrams to our families saying we had been liberated and we were alive and well.

Several of the boys from my Company had made it to Hildesheim. I hadn't seen them since I left IIB. Two or three times a day I would walk down to the Red Cross building to meet some of the boys I knew and to get coffee. When I saw Germans working in the American camp, I wished I was in charge so I could have revenge for the cruel treatment we had received from the their government's military.

There was a small airport in the country, where the men waited for planes to

come in. When a plane arrived, the men would help unload it and fly out with the pilot. The small planes held twenty to twenty-five men and usually traveled a distance of one hundred to one hundred fifty miles. it was worth the effort to help unload in order to catch a flight, as it brought us one step closer to home.

There was nothing organized after we left the camp. No one took names or tried to corral us. We were on our own. However, no one tried to stop us when we boarded a truck or plane.

Two days after our arrival in Hildesheim, Ernie wanted to go for breakfast, but I was afraid we would miss a plane. Ernie said, "D.L., you'd have gone if this were three weeks ago, wouldn't you?" I had to agree with him, and we went for breakfast. The mess sergeant said we could eat, but he instructed us to clean our dishes when we were finished. We heard some planes coming in and we left our half eaten food in the dishes on the table and ran. We arrived just as the last plane was leaving. The date was May tenth and it was my first plane ride.

When we arrived in Reims, France we lined up for showers and were issued new clothes. Then we were instructed to go to the back of the holding area. There were four to five thousand POWs there, scattered over a quarter mile distance.

We laid down for awhile; then Ernie went back to the front of the compound. Two trucks came in and Ernie came to get me. I had taken out some German newspapers and magazines I had confiscated over the years as souvenirs. When he called me, I threw them down, grabbed my coat and ran. The papers and magazines were no longer important to me. I was going home and every time I had a chance to get one step closer, I took it.

We went by truck to another small camp and were lucky enough to get a flight to the French coastline. From there we took a truck to a collecting point the G.I.s called Lucky Strike. We were told we would be processed there and would leave in four days to two weeks. I hoped it would be four days.

Hospitality tents were scattered around the compound to serve coffee and hot chocolate to the POWs. Each tent was set up to serve approximately one thousand men. Ernie and I spent a good portion of our time walking from one hospitality tent to another drinking hot chocolate, which was a special treat to us. We had not had anything so sweet and good since we had left the states.

Occasionally we went into town. On one occasion I met a fraulein who wanted me to come to see her. I talked to her awhile, but I had no time for women. I just wanted to get home.

Thanks to Ernie's extra sensory perception, we arrived in France before most of the other men from Stalag IIIA, but the others began arriving while we were waiting. We were among the forty to fifty thousand men at Lucky Strike who were waiting to go home. Most of them had been there for over a week.

We were provided canteen supplies while we were at Lucky Strike. The supplies were the first I had received since I had left Africa to take part in the second invasion of Italy, where I was captured.

I was happy to see my friend, Lieutenant Graham. He had been my friend and mentor since we trained in the Carolinas. He had to walk out of Germany.

The waiting was painful and trying. We spent our time walking, writing letters

to our families, and visiting with other POWs. We were all impatient to be on our way again.

I began to gain back some of the weight I had lost in the camps. At Lucky Strike we were fed boiled chicken and mashed potatoes, possibly because we were unaccustomed to eating very much and heavier foods might have made us sick. It was wonderful to have regular meals again.

On May twenty-second we moved to "D" block for processing. When we were finished with the process and all the paperwork had been completed, we only needed clothes, money and a shipping tag. We expected to leave that week.

We were moved to a camp near La Havre, on the coastline. We went to town occasionally, but we didn't have much money and it wasn't much fun. I was still writing several letters to my family each day and each time I mailed one, I prayed that I would arrive home before the letter did.

While we were in La Havre, the military offered to allow us a delay to go to Paris or London and be processed there. Many of the unmarried men accepted, but the married men rejected the offer. They would have had a hard time forcing me to go as I didn't want to stay in Europe for even one more day. I had only one desire, and that was to go home. We had waited so long.

On May thirty-first we boarded a transport ship, but since I was part of the advance party, I knew it would be a couple of days before we actually sailed. On the ship we were assigned duties. We no longer had stripes on our uniforms and our rank no longer counted. Some of the men were given K.P. duty and I was assigned guard duty. I would stand guard for four hour shifts and have twelve hours off. The assigned jobs were for the duration of the trip.

The next day we were still in the harbor. Another large group of men had been processed and were ready to be loaded. The ship was already crowded, but an informal election had been held and the men had voted for crowding and inconvenience rather than comfort, so that more men could go home. There were rumors that the ship would sail the next day. My feelings were totally different from the last ship I had been on, which had taken me to war in Italy. This ship was taking me home. I was one step closer.

We sailed from France in the afternoon of June third and crossed the English Channel. We arrived at the English harbor in the wee hours of the morning. There we united with several other ships for the voyage to America. Some of the ships were renovated freighters and tankers. There was no escort of battleships or PT boats. Eight ships sailed as a fleet at four o'clock that afternoon carrying POWs from Germany, Poland, and Yugoslavia. Our ship carried twenty-five hundred men. The eight ships carried seven thousand three hundred and fifty-seven men.

Since there were more men than accommodations, we ate and slept in shifts. It was crowded, but the food made up for the discomfort.

The only altercation I had on guard duty was with a Merchant Marine. He did not want to take orders from a soldier. He sat on the ledge of the dome over the kitchen. The tarp covering had been rolled back to let heat escape from cooking, and it was my duty to keep the men from sitting on the ledge for safety as well as sanitation in the kitchen.

I asked the marine to move, but he refused; so I moved him. He tried to hit me,

but I put my arm around his neck and held his left hand. I told him if he would behave I would let him go, but he argued; so I hit him over the head with the billy club in my hand. I didn't hit him very hard, but I did hit him two or three times. Someone called the Captain, who ordered the man to leave. I wasn't proud of myself, but I had followed instructions.

Luckily, we didn't have any rain during our crossing, but one day we had some very strong winds, which caused extremely high swells. The ship would go down below the wave and we could see nothing but walls of water around us, and then we would rise on the crest of the swell and we could see the other ships around us. We were thankful that we did not take on any water.

HOME

On June tenth the Captain told us we would arrive in New York on the following day. I was anxious to get home, but I wished I could contact my wife before we landed. I had been eating well on the ship. Finally I could go through the chow line and even throw some food away. I didn't think I could do that so soon.

On June eleventh we could spot land and then the skyline of Manhattan, and finally the Statue of Liberty in New York harbor. We wanted to shake hands with her. A victory yell went up among the men. Everyone was jumping up and down, yelling, and hanging on to whatever they could in order to see. We felt like we were home.

My ship docked at Staten Island. There was a small army band on the pier, Red Cross volunteers were handing out coffee and donuts, and about 100 people waited to greet us. Some of the men had family there to greet them and it made me more lonesome for my family, but it was a pleasure to watch them enjoy being together again.

Even in our winter uniforms the sun felt good because it was shining on American soil. I had a long way to go to Texas, but I was another step closer to home. Our sea voyage had taken about ten days.

The army took us to Camp Shank, where I had my first real American breakfast since I had left the states. It tasted fabulous. Next morning we caught the train to Illinois, Missouri and Texas. I heard that the train would be going through Sherman, Texas, where my wife, son, and some of my family were.

Although I knew it was against all military regulations, I went to the train's conductor and asked if we would be stopping in Sherman. I told him my wife and baby boy were there and asked if he would tell me the expected time of arrival. He advised me that since it was a troop train he could not give out that information.

I pushed for an answer. I told him I was a POW and I had never seen my son, who was now eighteen months old.

The conductor quietly considered my request; then he looked back at me and said, "I'm going to give you the number of this train and estimated time of arrival."

He gave me the information and I thanked him and returned to my seat. The train

was just coming into St. Louis and I quickly wrote a note, wrapped some money in the paper and hurried out of the train and into the station. A factory was just across a fence from the station, and two hundred to three hundred women were scattered along the fence, talking to the soldiers from the train. I approached the fence where some of the women were standing and asked if one of them would send a telegram for me. They agreed and I tossed the note over the fence. Someone picked it up. I was so grateful I could have cried. I don't know who the lady was, nor if I gave her enough money for the telegram, but I will be eternally grateful to her.

When we arrived in Sherman, Texas, my wife, son, and sister were waiting for me. It was almost time for the train to arrive when they received the telegram and they rushed to the station. I suppose the woman at the factory had to wait until after work to send it. When they arrived at the station, they found that the train was going to be late arriving; so they went home and fried chicken and made pies for me and brought it back to the station. The station master told them where to stand, and when I stepped from the train they were waiting there for me. It was the first time I had seen my son, and I had not seen my wife for over two years. They looked beautiful to me, and I felt complete again for the first time since I had shipped overseas. Ernie took my baby son and showed him off to all the men on the train.

After the short visit at the railroad station, the train carried us on to Ft. Sam Huston in San Antonio, Texas, where I was granted a 60 day leave. On the way back to Sherman, Ernie and I parted at Dallas. It was the first time we had been apart since we were captured. He went to Mineola and I went North to Sherman.

When I arrived in Sherman, my wife and son were waiting for me. I now had the answer to my prayers: All the food I wanted, my family beside me, and I was home, the most precious place on earth.

CONCERN AT THE RAPIDO

by Joel W. Westbrook
Hq. 143 Infantry

This particular ordeal began at the Rapido River--my ordeal, the ordeal of Captain Richard Burrege (of Waco, Texas and post-war BG, I believe), the ordeal of the First Battalion, 143rd Infantry.

Because I had previously visited the First Battalion's Rapido sector I was detailed by the Regimental Commander, Col. William H. Martin (later MG, now deceased) to take down there the reserve LTC X as replacement for the wounded First Battalion Commander Major (later BG) David Frazior.

So LTC X and I went down in the dark, very dark night. Much of the path's white tape had been trampled out of sight; so we often had to crawl and feel the path's existence.

On the way we talked, and I learned the uncomfortable facts that COL X had had no troop experience, no combat experience. Of course this was mainly true of the new 2LTs we were receiving. However, these were not being assigned to command battalions.

We reached the First Battalion CP as the dawn was slowly opening. MAJ Frazier, weak but lucid, briefed us on the situation — tragic, chaotic.

Tragic: all rifle company commanders and Battalion XO MAJ Milton Steffen were KIA ... I was assigned as the new 9-3 (operations officer) to the new battalion commander. (My memory fails respecting the fates of MAJ Frazior's S-2, S-3 and S-4.)

Chaotic it was when I took COL X down to the River. Soldiers were wandering aimlessly in no apparent formations. Most were replacements for our recent costly San Pietro losses, and had little sense of unit identity.

Shelling was desultory. COL X was inert.

I would gather in a random lieutenant and tell him that he would from now on command "B", or "C", or whatever, and I would send him random soldiers to belong from now on to "B" or "C".

I gave a trembling adolescent a rifle and shoved him toward "B", I think.

A while later I came across him in his same place, rifle dangling from his hand, sobbing.

I sent him to the rear to keep him from being a bad example.

The shelling stepped up. COL X left for the Battalion CP to "straighten things out."

When I later in the day arrived at the CP, the Adjutant (S-1) Captain Burrage took me aside. "Joel, you've got to do something. This man X is driving everybody crazy. Every time there's a loud noise, he calls an alert. He hits the deck when our own artillery comes over."

"Dick," I said, "don't say another derogatory word to me or to anyone else about the Commander."

That was the militarily correct position to take, but I became more and more uncomfortable with it.

Day by day, hour by hour, COL X would exhibit in front of the troops the fears all of us felt and concealed as best we could, as well as some fears we didn't even notice.

When higher headquarters passed down the word that the Germans might now counterattack us, COL X used up all the Battalion Headquarters troops, and then called on pitiful remnants of line troops, to put a security cordon around the CP.

When we were ordered to move laterally along the River to new defensive positions, he gave me instructions for deployment of the line companies, without any personal reconnaissance by him, into positions I believed were wrong.

I reconnoitered the new sector and I knew — I knew COL X's deployment was wrong — unsound, unsafe.

On our right the ground sloped rather evenly to the River, with good fields of fire for machine guns. On the left, the ground was broken with ravines and lots of brushwood.

COL X had instructed me to put Baker Co. (with the most numerous Rapido River remnants) on the right, where machine guns could have advantage, with less riflemen needed, and Co. C (a pitiful platoon-size) on the left.

(NOTE: I may be off in my company designation details — a near fifty year old memory, yet this was the essential situation.)

Therefore, in disobedience of COL X's orders, and without telling him, I changed the deployments.

A day or so later we were ordered into a reserve position below Mount Castellone (near above Cassino), and then directed to counter attack to restore a position thought lost to a furious German attack.

As we started up the mountain, some desultory artillery fire came in (the previous night it had been hideously intense).

COL X hit the deck, the only soldier in our column to do so.

"Westbrook," he said, "go on up and establish a forward CP."

I looked at LT Mitchell, new Baker Co. Commander, "Mitch," I said, "Let's go."

He shrugged, and the troops shrugged, and up we went.

A day or so later, I was wounded and was carried down to Regimental Aid by a Ghurka soldier.

The mortar fragment was not arge, but its penetration was deep.

After a few weeks I requested discharge from the Naples General Hospital and

returned to the 143rd.

I bad been back only a few days when I was ordered to report to the Regimental Commander (then COL Paul D. Adams, later Four Stars and Commander after the War of our first Strike Force at McDill AFB in Florida.)

"Westbrook, there's something wrong in the First Battalion, What do you know about it?"

"Sir," I responded, "I would be reporting adversely on a superior officer."

"Shoot," he said.

So I told him. Just facts, including my disobedience of COL X's deployment orders. I didn't really want to talk about this because this was court-martial stuff for me. Yet, I realized it was important to a full comprehension of COL X's command conduct. Court-martial? COL Adams was a Regular and tough, very tough.

Next, day not to worry. COL X was relieved and sent on his way, and I was not court-martialed.

Footnote: After the War, General Adams told me COL X had commented about me: "Westbrook is not afraid of anything, but he knows no tactics." COL X was wrong about that also — 180 degrees wrong!

Joel W. Westbrook

Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

A Small Peace on the Mountain

by Martin J. Tully
Company C, 141st Infantry

To phrase it mildly, he was very deeply troubled; the young officer concerned was much more to the point. He stated loudly, without fear of contradition, "I'm pissed off, and won't take it anymore."

In Italy, on top of Mount Summocro, at Christmas time, in bitter cold, the Brass[1] decreed that this small unit must continue the attack. "Fight on", they said, and prove to these inhuman creatures, in no uncertain terms, that you're the boss." Somehow, it seems that war has a way of showing that these slogans are just talk, and won't hold up under fire. Well directed fire was always with them, and there always was too much of it. Like a pencil in a sharpener, the ranks depleted daily when held there far too long.

The dead were stacked up neatly in the open; no one could ever hurt them anymore; the wounded and the dying, lined up by chance of survival, were given any little shelter that there was. The number grew. Wrapped in their single G.I.[2] blankets, those who could no longer fight were now three times as many as the ones who could.

"Why do they do this to these men?" the lieutenant muttered. "Why do they do this to me?", he complained. And he really meant it; he believed it, for he knew it wasn't fair. These soldiers had all done their best and hadn't much more left to give.

Repeated pleas for assistance, made through channels, went unheeded; no Medics came up from san Pietro to help the wounded who just lay there and suffered, or they died. The fighting men declared that Medics were not soldiers, but cowardly, misfits who refused to do their share. The lieutenant thought so too, and vowed to bring the slackers up the trail at gun-point, if that was what was needed.

To his surprise, he met with no resistance from the Medics. There was some bitching, but most seemed willing - even glad to go. And they were patient under orders, appearing as worn out and weary as his men up there on the hill. Down here, it was no bed of roses either; frequent incoming shell charged the usual toll.

When it was pitch dark, he was awakened. The Medics, four to a litter, were all set to go without a single weapon among them. They placed their faith, their very lives, upon the Red Cross flag. They also put their trust in the lieutenant; he learned a few hours later that this trust was not deserved.The awful truth hit him like a ton of bricks right in the stomach; he had misguided those who depended on him, had led them up the trail toward hill 1205 instead of hill 765 where his men hung on in desperation.

When informed of the mishap, the grizzled, overaged sergeant, leader of the Medics, in perhaps the longest statement of his lifetime, said "You screw up pretty good, even for a shave tails[3], but keep your pants on. You done your best, I guess, but your best ain't too damn good. My guys jest volunteered to try to do the job in day light, and we hope to hell the Jerries[4] go along."

Then came the long march in the darkness, down to where the wrong turn was made. At dawn, one call to the Medic headquarters with instructions, a red, smoke airburst just above the, trail, the rescue mission started upward, each man praying that Jerry had agreed to "go along".

By the grace of God they made it; before the down hill movement got going, the old sergeant told the young lieutenant, "You ain't too much, but you're all that these men got: Don't do any dumb things, and then maybe they won't need us to haul them down this goddam hill." He gave a "single finger to the eyebrow" salute, softly said, "Good luck!", and he was gone.

The young lieutenant, feeling suddenly much older, held his best OCS[5] salute for longer than prescribed by army regulations. He knew he was not returning a salute--he was proudly giving one to a fellow soldier.

1. Higher Command
2. Government Issue
3. Disrespectful term for a new 2nd Lt. (Material cut from E.M. shirts made officer epaulets
4. Germans-Term considered to friendly by the Brass
5. Officer Candidate School (Training facility for "90 Day Wonders")

Hellfire and Brimstone at Rapido

ROBERT MEHAFFEY

-Breckenridge American--THURSDAY, AUGUST 7, 1986

This article was written by Roy Roddy, free lance writer and former agriculture writer for *The Dallas Morning News*. It first appeared In T*he Fighting 36th, Historical Quarterly* and is reprinted here by special permission.

The following footnote appeared in the magazine along with the story: This story was sent in to your editor by James W. (Buck) Sheppard of Co. L, 142nd of Breckenridge, Tex.

His own story was featured in Vol II, No 3, 1982, issue of *The Quarterly*, and Buck, has quite a record himself. See pages 20 to 28, *Two Gun Cowboy From Texas*, a nickname he earned the hard way.

Sheppard first met Bob Mehaffey when he joined Co. L, 142nd, at homebase, September, 1940, when Bob was a "first Louie." Buck says, "After mobilization date of Nov. 25, 1940, we moved to Camp Bowie, Brownwood, in January, 1941. After Bob finished his course of rifle and heavy weapons, he came back to Co. L"

"Mehaffey was a fine officer, and all the men loved and respected him, and we hated to see him leave our company. But I kept up with him during the war," Buck adds, "and in post war days we lived in the same town and became close friends."

"In 1960 we organized the Company L Reunion Association, and I served as president until 1975, and then Mehaffey, was president of our unit."

Your editor knew of this medical record that was Mehaffey's cross to bear. At the reunion in the 1970s we urged Bob to put it on paper, but being a modest one, he just never got around to it. Then it seemed logical to ask Buck Sheppard to twist his arm, and that he did. Buck has made it possible to bring this great medical story into print.

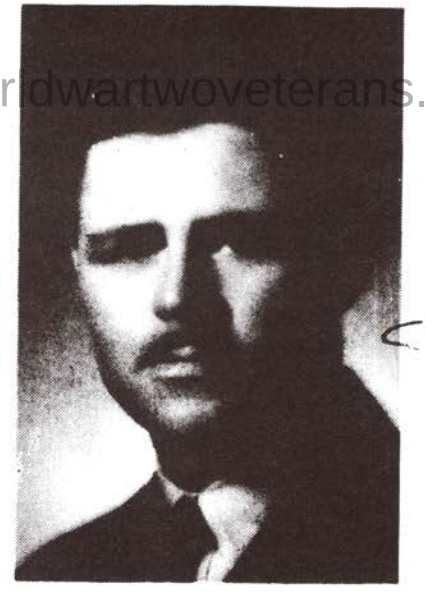
The hero in his case is Dr. Lyman A. Brewer III who improved and perfected the machine for treating the Wet Lung Trame Syndrom, a hi-tech machine now an essential hospital facility all over the USA.

A shell fragment that inflicted a near fatal wound on a Texas infantryman at Cassino, Italy, on January 22, 1944, in WW II sparked improvements in medical procedures and equipment that today are saving the lives of thousands of persons in hospitals throughout America and the world.

The infantryman who received the almost fatal chest wound was Major Robert E. Mehaffey, who was commanding the 3rd Battalion, 141st Infantry, 36 Division, whose home was--and still is--Breckenridge, Texas.

Major Mehaffey was leading the 3rd Battalion,' 141st in an assault on enemy positions across the Rapido River when he was hit. The shell fragment entered his left breast, split his breast bone, or sternum, shattered the second and third ribs on the right side, severely damaged the upper lobe of the right lung, and stopped just under the skin in his right arm pit.

In its course the shell fragment bore through a wallet in the Major's left shirt pocket, a miracle that deflected the metal from the Major's heart, thereby holding off death long enough for a highly trained thoracic or chest surgeon to assess the body damage, plan sustaining treatment and outline long term rehabilitation measures.



ROBERT MEHAFFEY

The surgeon was Major Lyman A. Brewer III whom Colonel Edward D. Churchill, Surgical Consultant to the Mediterranean Theater of Operations, had assigned to the American invasion forces at Salerno, Italy, to study and treat chest wounds in the invasion forces. The assignment was made because the Medical Service had judged that chest wounds were not being handled well in the forward hospitals; hence a thoracic surgeon was needed.

Major Mehaffey was retrieved from the battlefield and transferred to the 11th Field Hospita, Mignano, Mount Lungo, where Major Brewer found him in deep shock and disoriented and threatened by "Wet Lung," a dangerous breathing distress caused by abnormal amounts of body fluid in the lungs.

For some unknown reason the lungs and bronchial tubes increase their amount of body fluids when severe injury occurs to the brain, chest or abdomen. The breathing distress caused by this increase is known as the respiratory distress

syndrome. Major Brewer has described the syndrome in its early stages by rales felt or heard after a cough and in the advanced stages by signs of classic pulmonary edema.

The thoracic surgeon recognized the wet lung symptoms when he examined Major Mehaffey, and he ordered positive pressure oxygen therapy to be used, a therapy that had previously been used in the treatment of wet lung in pneumonia and poisoning.

Tbe positive pressure oxygen therapy called for the use of a portable anesthetic machine coupled with a gauge that registered the pressure of the gas so that excessive pressure, which might collapse the veins, could be avoided. Oxygen from a cylinder was fed to the injured person through the anesthetic machine and a tightly fitting face mask. The rate and force of the feeding was regulated by manually squeezing the rubber anesthetic bag.

Major Brewer devised such a machine for use on Major Mehaffey; and after the wounded infantryman had received ten hours of resuscitation the surgeon judged that he was recovering sufficiently from shock and disorientation to have his wound cleaned and dressed. When the tedious operation was over, the surgeon ordered the wet lung treatment resumed.

Among the unnamed heroes in this tragic war drama were the Medical personnel, the hospital orderlies, who sat by Major Mehaffey's bed and manually squeezed and released, squeezed and released interminably the rubber ball of the machine to regulate the Major's breathing and feed oxygen into his system.

And one of the named heroes is surely Major Lyman A. Brewer III who through the years has improved and perfected the machine for treating the wet lung trame syndrome until the machine is now electrically powered, a high tech modern creation of essential hospital equipment.

"From this initial effort has come a whole new specialty in respiratory therapy" Dr. Lyman A. Brewer III, M.D., Professor of Surgery at Loma Linda University in Loma Linda, California, wrote on October 31, 1980, to Major Mehaffey in Breckenridge. "It is most amazing," the Doctor continued, "to realize that practically every hospital in this country and the world has a respiratory department with an intermittent positive pressure breathing oxygenator machine."

And to be sure, the leading character in this drama is named -- Major Robert E. Mehaffey, of whom the Doctor writes, "I am, of course, devoted to you because of your gallant fight for survival in Cassinio; and it has been a source of hope to many people since then."

Major Mehaffey served this country for many years in the armed forces; He was a member of Company 1, 144th Infantry from June 17, 1931 until September 9,1932 and from February 1, 1933 until April 5, 1934. He was an original member of Company L, 142nd Infantry from the date of its organization in Breckenridge, Texas on June 30, 1934 until September 28, 1936 and from January 25, 1939 until July 17, 1939 -- at which time he was promoted from platoon Sergeant to 2nd lieutenant. He served as 2nd Lieutenant; Platoon Leader; until he was promoted to the rank of First Lieutenant -- Company Executive Officer -- on June 27th, 1940.

He was serving in this capacity when the 36th Division was inducted into Federal Service on November 25th, 1940.

Mehaffey attended and completed a refresher course for Rifle and Heavy Weapons Company Officers at Fort Henning, Georgia from January 2, 1941 until March 28th, 1941. He served as commanding officer of Company "K", 142nd Infantry for approximately 18 months. During this time he was promoted to the rank of Captain on March 30th, 1942. He attended and completed the Battalion Commanders and Staff Officers Course at Fort Benning, Georgia from June 1st, 1942 until August 28th, 1942.

He was transferred to the 3rd Battalion, 141st Infantry as Executive Officer and was promoted to the rank of Major on January 20th, 1943. He was serving as commanding officer of the 3rd 141st Infantry when he was wounded at the Rapido River in Italy on January 20th, 1944; after serving 4 months and 13 days in the combat zone.

General Walker saw fit to recommend Major Mehaffey for the Silver Star for the Rapido Action. While a patient at Brooke General Hospital in Fort Sam Houston, Texas, Major Mehaffey received a letter from the Adjutant General, United States Army dated June 12, 1944. The letter was signed by Charles A. Flemming, the Adjutant General, and states "By direction of the President of the United States, a Silver Star is awarded to Major Robert E. Mehaffey by the Commanding General of the 36th Division." The Citation Reads as Follows:

"For gallantry in action on 21-22 January 1944, in the vicinity of ****,Major Robert E. Mehaffey commanded the 3rd Battalion in the attack across the **** river. The attack was launched under terrific enemy artillery, nebelwerfer, mortar and small arms fire across the deep fast-flowing river and over ground further protected by mine fields, booby traps and barbed wire. Cover was negligible in the last seven hundred yards of the river approaches. Many men were killed and many boats were destroyed. Throughout this hail of enemy bullets and shrapnel, Major Mehaffey was ever present among his men, encouraging his officers and men and successfully leading them across the river in the night. Next morning he led his men forward, constantly improving their positions. While doing so he moved from group to group, utterly disregarding personal danger from the extremely heavy fire that fell on the area. His cool courage and fearless detemination to see that orders were carried out in the face of a great danger were a magnificent inspiration to his men. He entered the service from Breckentidge, Texas."

Major Mehaffey was awarded the Purple Heart by General Order #26, paragraph 1 of the 38th Evac. Hospital dated February 13, 1944. He was awarded the Combat Infantry Badge by General Order #3, Headquarters 141st Infantry, 36th Division dated January 21, 1944. He was also awarded the Bronze Star and The European Theatre Ribbon with 2 campaign stars and one amphibious arrow-head.

I asked Bob how he feels about his long years of service to his country, about his travel in battle, and about his months of suffering in military hospitals and his two plus years of recuperation from his wounds -- was it worth it?

"Yes, it certainly was worth it -- I did contribute to the destruction of Hitler's war machine. My wound provided a means for Dr. Brewer to initiate new procedures for the treatment of chest injuries; and also, through his experience with my wound he was able to cooperate with V. Ray Bennett to develop the Intermittent positive pressure oxygen machine."

Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

Life and Times of Howard W. Johnson

by A.F. Amil Kohutek

Pictorial History Book of the Fighting 36th shows Howard W. Johnson, Pvt., 309 Edna St., Weatherford, Texas. He was almost never called Howard, as many from Weatherford knew him by his nickname Ugg. The 1940 National Guard Book does not show Howard Ugg Johnson. He might have joined Battery C 132nd Field Artillery just before the Unit mobilized. The oldtimers in the Battery tell me that at one time there were three Johnson brothers and all were called Ugg - Little Ugg, Big Ugg, and Middle Ugg.

I joined the Battery January 1941, and there was only one Ugg. I never knew the other Uggs. Almost forty years later I met one at a Reunion in Oklahoma. He then lived in Arizona, was a used car salesman. He had at one time served in the U.S. House Of Representatives. Another brother lived in Fort Worth. All are now deceased.

The Ugg whom we knew was a soldier of the highest caliber., He might have been a better soldier than a civilian. He was at his best when the Battery was locked in combat. Ugg's soldiering was rated as the best. Ugg's problems multiplied when the Battery was in Bivouac, rest area, or in camp. He just never subscribed to the art of play soldiering. Seems that Ugg was always in some kind of trouble. Once he did not take the time to properly shine his shoes— they were more or less half shined. The toes past the leggins were shined, while the heels were not. The inspecting officer at retreat always walked in front, never in the back. But one time the officer inspected the back of men. This might have been unheard of. The only pair of shoes unshined were on Ugg's feet. For this Ugg spent days in the kitchen polishing pots and pans.

Other infraction of rules, always by Ugg, resulted in him digging garbage pits where none were needed, digging latrines where otherwise not allowed. Websters Dictionary does not describe garbage pits; perhaps Webster never dug one or consulted Ugg Johnson. It is a square hole in the ground, 4 ft. by 4 ft. by 4 ft., no more and no less. It has to be that size. It is dug through mud, sand, hard dirt, tree roots and rocks. Ugg Johnson dug more latrines and garbage pits than any other man in the Battery

Most of Ugg's garbage pit details were after hour, all night and sometimes every night. When tired, Ugg was observing his finished product. Some double ugly three stripe Sgt. checked it out, sometimes throwing a day-old newspaper or a cigarette butt, and a few times if superior officers were not present or seen, the Sgt. urinated in the pit, and then told Ugg to cover it up. Many a second garbage pit was dug, next to one already dug just to use the dirt from the first one. One time a pit was dug up again, because the Sgt. forgot to put a rubber band around it.

Just before the Battery moved from Bowie to Blanding, Ugg violated one of the many rules to proper soldiering. Every evening when the convoy stopped for the night, Ugg was the first to fall out and dig a garbage pit. Next morning he covered some properly, even when it was never used. Arriving in Camp Blanding, he told every one that he dug a blankety-blank garbage pit in every state except Georgia, and he wondered how the red Georgia clay took to a shovel. The Captain overheard this remark. This Captain carried a computerized storehouse under his tin helmet. Six months later, in North Carolina and manuevers, the first night in Georgia, Ugg was called front and center, and told to get a shovel and dig a garbage pit.

Many times the Battery was restricted to camp or quarters, because of some minor infraction of Ugg Johnson. One moon-less night during a punishment phase, the Captain bivouaced the Battery way off the beaten path. Ugg Johnson slipped out of the bushes into a clearing and could see the bright lights of Charlotte, North Carolina. Unknown to anyone, he was dancing with a cute blonde. North Carolina is noted for its beautiful women. Ugg preferred women with long corn-tousled, sikly hair. Ugg was a ladies' man, by all acceptable standards. He was always in the company of charming ladies, trait denied to many. The dance over, Ugg decided to walk his lady friend home. He never asked nor knew her name. Upstairs in a walk-up apartment, Ugg was about to enjoy the comforts of long, lonely night of dreaming. He also believed in total comfort. Sharing the same pillow with splashing long, curly hair. Ugg was about to enjoy the style of living he had dreamed about, when the room was flooded by a strong, overhead light. The woman whispered in his ear, "My husband." Ugg's whiskey brain was in neutral, and besides his clothes were not even close by. The husband started beating ole Ugg, while at the same time Ugg was trying to get into his clothes. He never made it. Seems that Ugg was bowled over the top of the stairs, still without his clothes. He rolled down like a Texas tumbleweed and sat on the bottom step. without benefit of shoes and clothes, holding his aching head in his hands, wondering "now what?" He heard a thump just outside the window. His shoes and clothes were thrown out. Ugg arrived in camp just before the Captain and First Sgt. started counting noses — roll call. He stood in the ranks like a Soldier he was, He had both eyes closed, black and blue, otherwise in uniform.

There were other times when Ugg was in a mess of trouble. The next comes to mind clear, as it involved "yours truly" in more ways than one. We were in the badly broken down tourist courts near the French city of Arzew, southeast of this North African town, sharing a room with First Sgt. Tanner, Joe Dodson and Walter Bush. I had just returned from a long tour of Guard Duty, around three a.m. In bed, when Tanner shook me alive, told me to get a jeep and go-to Arzew and get Ugg Johnson, that the Mps had him in the lockup. On walking out of the room, I asked Tanner whose name was I to use to release him. I will never forget his remark, when he said

"Yours, you damm fool." I was not about to put my John Henry on any release form. Now I had in the past, signed Captain Frank Fulgham's name to hundreds of trip tickets. This was agreed, and was also quite handy signing Mark Hodges' name. At the motor pool Charles Haskell was on guard. I told him my mission and he wanted to go with me. When I arrived at the MP station, I walked in, and a Corporal handed me forms to sign. Just before I was about to forge my name, I decided to use someone else's name; I merely signed it Phillip McClendon. Then, for the remaining few minutes waiting for Ugg, I was called Mac. They brought Ugg down a flight of stairs on a stretcher. When I saw him, I said "my god, why didn't you tell me? I would have gotten an ambulance." They told me he was alright. After they seated him in my jeep, I noticed he had a head bandage, looked like an Arab, and oh, so bloody. For some reason, blood and I are not on the friendliest of terms. I was already getting sick before leaving. I was told to first take him by the Aid Station. This was about a half mile from C Battery Biovac. I woke up a staff sgt Jackson. He took his time , but finally seated Ugg on a chair and proceeded to remove some bloody hair from his skull. I should not have been in the room, but curious, I wanted to see how badly he was cut. Seems that some French soldiers took a broken wine bottle to Ugg's head.

While I was too close by, the blood started spurting like a fountain. I fainted; I never knew what hit the floor first, my head or my boots. Next thing, Jackson and Ugg were bent over me. Ugg's blood was dripping onto my shirt. Somehow they got me up. Jackson told me to wait in the jeep, parked next to the water. The cool, ocean breeze might have helped me. As I pondered my sad plight, I asked myself, "Kohutek, you will soon go into combat and if you live, you may see lots of blood." I did live, and did see lots of blood. It never affected me like it did that night.

Soon Ugg arrived with a fresh bandage. I don't know if he suggested it, or if I just let him drive to the motor pool. When Charles Jackson saw Ugg he said he should shoot him and swear that it was an Arab who did it. My final mission was to awake Captain Hodges and report Ugg Johnson present. I never made it up the stairs. Seems that I was still on the ground when Ugg was knocking on the Captain's door. I never knew what punishment, if any, Ugg got. Likely dug a dozen or two garbage pits. Someone, long ago, coined the words that, "God created all men equal." Might have been in a religious vein, or a politician fine-tuning his way into elective office. Whoever it was, never met Ugg Johnson.

Early on in Camp Bowie, a meeting was held by the leaders of C Battery. The meeting was to determine who was best suited and or equipped to improve

performance of the Battery. No one below the rank of Sgt. was in on this. The rest of the men were like chickens in a coop. The butcher just reached in and grabbed a chicken. Someone in the know suggested Ugg Johnson had a good clear voice and that he should be in the radio section. Ugg's assignment in the Battery varied. He never was in the radio section, most of his tour was with the gun section, likely a number 7 cannoneer.

Later in combat, Ugg did tote an SCR 110 as a forward observer. Those who were with him said he was good at this. It is my misfortune that I never walked with Ugg in the FO section.

Battery C was out of the line, and biovaced near Naples. The first sgt detailed me to get a weapons carrier and go to the beach nearby and bring back a load of sand to be placed around the lister bag. My driver was Roy Terry, and the four men with shovels were Charles Haskell, Ugg Johnson, Dick Wyandt and Orie Lacy. The road from the biovac lead straight to the beach, some 4 or 5 miles west. Before we got to the beach, someone suggested that area was still a mine field, that the mines were not yet cleared. Instead, that the sand near Naples was better, or at least free of mines.

Not being of an arguing nature, directed Roy Terry to head in the direction of Naples. Arrived within sight of beautiful sand. We noticed a doghouse, the type that the MPs use, fully manned by an oversize 2nd Lt. He politely waves us to stop, and to state the nature of our trip. I think I put that over quite well. He then wanted to see Roy Terry's drivers license. As luck would have it, Roy claimed to have changed uniform, and could not produce a valid license. The over-weight Lt. then directed me to drive, but to turn around and go back to camp. I was about to shift gear when I looked in my rear view mirror, and saw the bumper of a command car. The letter plain #1 C 132nd. Inside, four Battery officers Curtis Chapman, Stout, Boles, and Cecil Walden, driver. I bailed out, made a half hearted salute, and told Captain Curtis in so few words what had happened. Next we knew, our four officers got the fat Lt. inside the dog house and sweated all over him. Next, the Captain told me to get the sand and return. Smart salute, and, yes sir. The plan was to let two men go and get some Vino, while two loaded the sand. Then two more would go and two others finish loading. I made a mistake as to who should go first, so Ugg and Haskell went first. They never came back. Sand was loaded and still no sign of Ugg and Haskell. Covered the sand with a tarp, waiting, we were about to leave without them when they both ran across the beach with two bottles of Vino, both corks missing. They had spilled most of the Vino running. I told Ugg I never wanted him on my detail again.

After the war, Ugg returned with the high point men. It is not known if he ever stayed in Weatherford. Once he called Steve Ruzicka collect from some place in New Mexico. He might have been married, briefly. Once he was driving from out west in his car. Out of El Paso he saw a couple of young, innocent-looking boys hitchhiking, one even knew how to drive. Ugg retired to the back seat with a bottle of Tequila and was soon sound asleep. He woke up in a ditch, the early morning sun was shining on his tender, naked body, the two hitchhikers gone. A friendly trucker saw Ugg, and with a borrowed shirt wrapped around his middle, was dropped off

at Eddy Johnson's Cafe in Monahans. Eddy Johnson, a longtime Battery C mess sgt. (no relation, or Eddy never admitted it), fed Ugg. He cleaned him up, completely outfitted him and gave him a bus ticket to Weatherford.

For a while Ugg was prosperous business man in Weatherford. He managed and operated a Greyhound bus station, and sold sandwiches to go. Somewhat later, he added whiskey bottles to his sandwiches and bus tickets. This might have resulted in customers going in the wrong direction. Greyhound bus people, for reasons unknown, frown on this practice.

Next job Ugg might have had was oilfield rough neck, and he might have been quite good at it. In time, he was promoted to pusher. To those not up on oilfield lingo, a pusher is a foreman of a gang of rough necks. This man sees that all rough necks are present and ready to take over when a shift leaves. Ugg's crew and rig might have been drilling a well in or near Charles Haskell's back yard, near Lamar, Colorado. In time, Charles might have been one of Ugg's rough necks. One morning the crew was ready to mount a rig. All were present except Ugg. Someone went to look for him, found him in his sleeping quarters. Ugg died in his sleep.

Many, many years later I met Ugg's brother who then lived in Arizona, at a C Battery Reunion in Oklahoma. He asked me what kind of soldier was Ugg. I told him Ugg was one of the best combat men in the Battery. I told him he was not and could not play soldier. It was just not his way. I did not tell him that a French soldier almost killed him in a bar in Arzew, possibly over a Mademoiselle.

The Importance of One Pocket Knife

by Maxine Thorward ASN A510005
Assoc. Member San Antonio Chapt.
Honorary Member 36th Division Association

The time is ripe when I must get this tale on paper while the vivid flashback memory is still with me.

For 45 years memories of my WWII experiences have been suppressed. Suppressed for several reasons. First, because I couldn't expect anybody to believe it could happen to a petticoat soldier, and as a member of JICA (Joint Intelligence Collection Agency) with a State Department contract and trained in MIS Pentagon, I still was so disciplined to a dual role, I automatically stayed in the role of a T/5 WAC with the AFHQ both in Algiers and Caserta.

It was during the period in which I **earned** the Rome-Arno battle star for that campaign that this episode began.

WACs by law were to remain unarmed. However, in the "Inner Sanctum" we applied "Know the rules. Obey the rules, but break the rules if you must. And on occasion I did.

On leaving the States I bought the largest pocket knife I could find in a PX. It had one very wide full length blade. In Africa it served me well to peel oranges and tangerines, which didn't help the cutting edge.

WAC basic training was not your basic training. A wise decision of the planners or there would have been no WACS. From day one I was nudged and drawn into opportunities to observe and learn. At Ft. Devens, Mass. my training battalion was next to some wide open spaces used by the men for their field training.

On the day they were to have bayonet training all the little girls were marched to the other side of the post for a morning of training films. I was to remain alone on guard duty at the end barracks as "fire guard". So I spent the morning inside the barracks at an open window with nose tuned to the smell of fire, but eyes and ears concentrating on an infantry company at bayonet practice: attached to rifle and/or hand held. Object: straw targets. I learned.

Now let's fast forward to the Rapido River - Cassino sector. I was really up a creek without a paddle on one of my "days off' from a drawing board as a map maker (Spec Nos. 070 & 076) legitimate duties assigned to a petticoat soldier.

I have trouble recalling the down dirty and damned difficult details of duties when I was outside the WAC limits of a radius of 25 miles from her WAC Shack. I exceeded that limit regularly on my "days off' - up to around 300 miles without bona fide orders or a pass to cover me. In the "Inner Sanctum" nothing was written on paper. I had only an AFHQ Class A pass good only in that restricted area. True, mine was coded in a manner I could never decode which I was to believe only

identified me as "G-2 Sect. AFHQ and not as a WAC.

On this particular job I sat down to rest at the edge of the road beside a 36th Division Sgt. (Ordnance) scared to death. I was too close up front for comfort, and began to regret, that before I left an officer took out of a hiding place a small Barreta and a handful of shells, put it on a table saying, "You may need this" and left the room. I could never be "ordered", I could only "volunteer" and if caught admit guilt as a WAC, take company punishment and keep my mouth shut. I picked it up. That little gun was neat! But better judgement made me put it back where I saw he had gotten it and left. I thought, it would be that I regretted no protection because in WAC basic we were taught, "If you need a man to look after you, you don't belong in the Army."

As I sat on the left of this handsome hunk of infantryman (rank on the right!) I spotted his T-Patch. In retrospect, I cannot remember if it was his actual patch or just the stitch mark outline of it. I was trained to "read" it either way. And I also had just seen a Bill Mauldin cartoon of Willie and Joe sitting beside an artillery piece with one of them on one of those crank up field phones saying, "Ordnance? My shootin iron won't work!" Ah! I pulled out that big bladed pocket knife, handed it to him and repeated, "Ordnance? My shooting iron won't work!"

The luck of the Irish has always been with me and I'm all German ancestry. He pulled out a whetstone and began sharpening it. He sharpened and he sharpened.

I told this part of the story to a T-Patcher at the Association Reunion in Austin in 1991 when I so proudly received the highest honor of my life: Honorary Membership in the 36th Division Association. He said, "T-Patchers are no fools. As long as a pretty young girl would sit there and talk to him he'd have gone on sharpening it to a toothpick! "

Later, when back in the safety of the "Inner Sanctum" I thought more seriously about my safety for which I was so generously volunteering and admiring the razor sharp edge of my pocket knife, I knew that to depend on it instead of the offered Barreta, I had better learn more about it than just observation of men in training when I was in basic.

The 205 MPs were the Palace Guards and traffic controllers as well as supervisors of the WAC Shack armed guards. (Our guards were infantrymen who had had just a bit too much, so for rehab they got tdy to a WAC Shack to guard us, where we pampered them back to self confidence again.) If you guys knew that, all 1200 WACs in the HQ would have had a personal body guard.

Or they began to put us in shape. As when an air raid alarm sounded, and no one got up to turn off the light in our 2nd floor latrine with an open window facing the gate. He shot it out with his rifle through the open window. So he was ready to go back to his unit.

One MP who had been Eisenhower's body guard in Africa, often was on duty in the "Inner Sanctum" at our General's door when I went in to take my turn on immediate updating of his situation map. I confided to this MP that I had a well sharpened knife as my only protection and had observed that he had a concealed bayonet under his pants leg with the point in his boot. Would he teach me something about how I could use a pocket knife like a bayonet effectively? He did.

But little did I know that there would be a sequel. If you are bored, stop here. The end of this story was just another close encounter with trouble giving me a deep sense of gratitude to T-Patchers and why I obligated myself to pay a floral tribute to men of the 36th at the 141st Rest. monument in downtown San Antonio each Memorial Day and as many of the other military holidays as I possibly am able - just to say "Thanks guys". It was not just the confidence I felt with the "weapon", but the night that without it I would have been too scared to go on.

After Rome, The German POWs were coming back into our rear echelon in such numbers that we had to find another place to keep them. One site chosen was Mondragone, on the Tyrrenean Sea between Naples and Anzio. It was a beautiful sandy beach which would have been a good alternative to Anzio, but unfortunately the Germans also thought we would land there, so the beach was extraordinarily mined with the little town jam packed with troops and all was well fortified, just waiting for us - so we didn't go there.

Instead we waited until we got a lot of choice prisoners, and made it a POW camp with lots of man power to clear out the mine field; then make it an R&R beach for Americans. As you captured German Cavalry and their beautiful but abused horses, we would use them for GI R&R. Why you even captured enough cavalrymen we had all the stable help to care for the horses.

Several areas of my specialties were emerging at Mondragone, during the setting up of this area for a combined use area. A couple Germans were going to alternate driving a shuttle bus route back to the AFHQ and later to the Replacement Depot known as the Racetrack - just north of Naples. 'Member it?

A dry run had been made carrying a load of GIs with a scheduled run at 2000 hrs., and then another scheduled run at 2200 hrs. to round up the strays. All went well on the first run, but I got caught out there on the night I opted to take the late truck as my work was not quite finished in time to make the early run.

At 2200 hrs. that night everyone had disappeared and I was alone with only the Duty Sgt. left and the Lt. had taken the keys to the armory, so I could not get an MP pistol. There were no arrangements for anyone to sleep there execpt the MPs. So - I got a quick lesson on driving a 2 1/2 ton before the Duty Sgt. went to the stockade to bring out the POW driver. In the meantime I got into the cab opened my well sharpened "weapon" and with it opened and in my right hand in my field jacket pocket the POW and I took off for a two hour ride over the back roads of Italy in absolute silence.

At five minutes to midnight curfew, the POW pulled up at the WAC Shack with the truck. I practically fell out at the feet of our guard and in front of some late late arriving WACS. I was weak from stress and my knuckles were stiff from the grip I had on my WELL SHARPENED KNIFE.

Thanks again T-Patcher Sgt. Ordnance, whoever you are.

A true story submitted by:
Maxine Thorward ASN A510005
Assoc. Member San Antonio Chapter
Honorary Member 36th Division Association

The "T" Patchers' Battle for Paestum

By: Eric Morris

Daylight had revealed that the British X Corps had a sharp fight on their hands. However, the first hours of that fateful morning were to prove even more of an ordeal for the Texans in the US. VI Corps. At first they were in a desperate plight. Of their four beaches, only Red Beach was safe from enemy small-arms and close-range fire. Even then, the bigger batteries inland were still zeroed in on the beach and salvoes slammed into the sand with frightening and depressing regularity. The watchtower at Paestum was making life extremely difficult for those troops trying to come ashore on Green Beach. The Germans were finally ousted when elements from the beach unloading parties, drawn from the 531st Shore Engineers Battalion, downed tools, picked up their rifles, and drove them out at bayonetpoint

Yellow and Blue beaches were to remain veritable death traps for some hours to come, swept as both were by enemy small-arms and artillery fire. The 141st Regimental Combat Team was still in a difficult situation. The 1st Battalion remained split, with the bulk of the rifle companies pinned down and isolated on the right. The 2nd and 3rd battalions had been able to move off the beach but could make little progress against the superior firepower of the Germans. Neither could the GIs contact the warships for fire support, though the radio operators tried for some time.

Heavier artillery was also causing mayhem in the sea lanes and the shore approaches. Landing craft and DUKWs, afraid to run the gauntlet of fire, milled around without purpose or direction, so that timetables and unloading sequences became hopelessly confused.

Daylight also allowed the Germans to throw their tanks and self propelled guns into the attack. At first they fought in small groups or even individually but were inadequately supported by the Infantry; however, their were no American tanks yet ashore to oppose the panzers.

The original plan had called for Shermans to be unloaded at 0630 hours on Blue Beach. As the LSTs approached the shore their neat formation was devastated by enemy artillery fire. Ships were damaged, and there were a number of casualties. The ships withdrew and were not able to land their tanks until 1330 hours, when they came in on Red Beach. Even then they had to be escorted in by a couple of destroyers, which engaged the enemy batteries and in the process offered themselves as targets.

Allied firepower, in the form of naval and some air support, became increasingly effective. At 0825 the British monitor H.M.S. *Abercrombie* opened fire in support of the Texans with her 15-inch guns at a range of 2,500 yards. Her guns were

directed by a naval spotter aircraft.

The cruiser *U.S.S. Savannah* made contact with her fire-control party ashore at 0914. She brought her main 6-inch batteries into action at a range of 17,450 yards and drove off a tank attack against the 141st above Yellow Beach.

Initially, however, the absence of tanks or artillery ashore meant that German armor had to be fought by the infantry, so there can be little doubt that if the Germans had launched more substantial and better-coordinated armored counterattacks the American beachhead would have been in desperate straits.

The reserve battalions of the assaulting infantry regiments together with the 143rd RCT and the supporting arms that landed that day still had to fight their way ashore against an enemy still entrenched in their defense positions. This was something they had not expected to do, since it was the task of the first wave to clear and secure the beaches. If they thought about it at all the GIs thought in terms of landing first and then later perhaps a battle. They were not mentally attuned to the inunediate assault role. So they took casualties and arrived late and invariably in the wrong place, which added to their confusion.

In all their training and preparation for Salerno very few soldiers really took the thought of combat seriously. Until they have experienced combat, it is not their nature to do otherwise. While their officers planned on the assumption that the enemy on the beaches would be Italians rather than Germans, the ordinary soldier felt it to be another training exercise.

The Italian capitulation had added to the air of unreality by causing confusion and misplaced optimism. The men *talked* about invasion and combat, but to a marked degree they were victims of their own propaganda. The soldiers were so indoctrinated that they really never doubted that the firepower of the Navy's big guns and the bombs of their invincible Air Forcc would "blow the hell out of the beaches" should the enemy attempt to stop them.

When the assault craft carrying Company K of the 143rd RCT approached the beaches, the trouble was that the firepower came from the land. Their landing craft milled around for some hours, and when eventually they headed inshore it was to land on Red Beach rather than the intended Blue Beach. By this time as they drifted in and out of the smoke screen amid the ghastly flotsam of war, the sense of adventure had faded and the grim physical realities of combat had taken its place.

All this was especially true for the younger soldiers. Pfc. George Bailey had just turned eighteen and had started off his military career in the National Guard as a bugler. He was now a radio operator, alone and frightened, as cocooned in their own fear, they moved through the enemy barrage and the landing boat grounded on the gravel. His eyes saw but his mind refused to register as the boat alongside took a direct hit and fell apart, spilling men and equipment into a frothing red surf.

They needed no urging to leave the landing craft; neither did the crew. The coxswain and his bowmen came with them. There was no way they were going to take their boat back out through that terrible slaughter.

There were people all over the beach; everywhere he looked George Bailey saw

confusion and pain. Another salvo of mortars stitched their way across the sand, and the men threw themselves down and buried their heads in their hands. The company first sergeant started to raise hell. "Get off this beach!" he yelled over and over again.

Discipline reasserted its control and Company K rose from the sand and ran inshore. With the others, George Bailey ran across the beach and away from that nightmare.

Ike Franklin landed with elements of the 3rd Battalion's Headquarters Company. Since the war began, he had gone up the ranks to sergeant and back down again, twice. He was now a medic, and it was his job to make sure that the radio link between rifle companies and the battalion aid station worked. He came ashore at Red Beach equipped with his walkie-talkie radio, a medical aid bag, and pouches, in which he carried his rations, a change of socks, and some extra bandages. There was a large red cross prominently marked on his helmet and his right arm.

Franklin owes his life to a German machine gunner. The landing craft grounded on the beach, and Franklin was the first to step off. He looked up, and there, just a hundred yards away in the sand dunes, was a German machine gunner. Before Franklin could react, the German pointed to his own helmet and arm and signaled him to hit the beach.

As if in a dream, Franklin hit the sand at the water's edge, and the machine-gun bullets ripped into the crowded landing craft. Eight men died in as many seconds before a chance shell took out the German. It was probably a German shell falling short that killed the gunner who had saved the life of an American medic.

He was thirsty, and so he took his canteen cup and filled it with the water from the ditch. Reaching for his pack, he took out a sulphur tablet, dropped it into the water, and gulped it down. There were some other soldiers in the ditch.

"Aren't you supposed to wait for that to work?" one asked.

"I may not be alive to have it then, but I'm thirsty now," Franklin said.

"I hadn't thought of that," the soldier said. He reached down and did the same.

Franklin moved across another field and then spotted a soldier he recognized as being with the signals outfit attached to the battalion's headquarters. The man told Franklin that he had seen the aid station in an olive grove less than a couple of hundred yards away. By the time Franklin had found the unit, the first wounded were already being brought in from the battle as it progressed farther inland.

Pfc. Arnold Murdoch was in Company K and came ashore on Red Beach a little later. At 28 years of age, this factory laborer from Corsicana, Texas, was older than most men in his squad. Arnold was a kind and gentle man who was totally and utterly bewildered by anything military, and a man already hit by tragedy, for his young wife had died before the division had come overseas. Though Arnold Murdoch even saluted corporals, because he didn't know any better, he had one saving grace: he was the sweetest shot in the company. They had given him the Browning automatic rifle (BAR) because he was a natural shot and had an affinity for this particular weapon.

The Browning automatic rifle, which had been used in World War I, was the US. Army's answer to the British Bren gun and the most excellent German MG34, and not a very good answer at that. Because an American infantry section was routinely equipped with rapid-firing automatic rifles, the War Department didn't see the need for the additional firepower of a light machine gun. The result was that the US. Army never had a decent light support weapon for use at squad level throughout the war.

It was Arnold's own fault that he was in the landing craft that particular morning. He had hurt his ankle in the final warm-up exercise in North Africa, when he had fallen down a hill. He had been offered the opportunity to come in with the transport later in the day. But Arnold believed it was his duty to stick with the squad, even though there wasn't going to be fighting. After all, the platoon commander had explained everything in his briefing on the ship. They would land on Blue Beach, march a short distance inland, and take up their positions on a mountain called Soprano. They would be there perhaps for a couple of days, and then they could expect the Germans to counterattack. Arnold couldn't remember what was supposed to happen next, but he reckoned that his ankle would be fine by then; so he elected to go in with his squad.

On the run into the beach Arnold and his assistant BAR gunner, Jack Partley, were constantly told to sit down, but neither could contain enthusiasm or curiosity for what was happening all around. "Murdoch," Jack yelled," them damned shells are landing out there! Stand up and look!"

Arnold ignored the stares of those around and stood up and looked out. He saw a shell burst in the water just a short distance away. The water went straight up in the air. For all the world it reminded him of the spray from an uncapped fire hydrant.

Ahead of their boat was a minesweeper, which they gradually overtook Somebody on her bridge had a bullhorn and talked to the landing craft as they passed.

"The beaches am dead ahead," the metallic voice boomed out "Good luck!"

Arnold wondered why he should wish them luck. Did the minesweeper know something he didn't?

By this time Red Beach was becoming so congested that the landing craft were having to wait in line and to jostle for a place to set down their ramps. Some started to unload a little way out from the beach.

Arnold Murdoch stepped gingerly off the ramp and splashed ashore. It wasn't too bad; the water came just up to his knees.

Shells were landing thick and fast on the beach. Murdoch's section looked for cover and huddled behind an armored bulldozer until the driver leaned out of his cab and yelled above the noise of the engine, "Don't hang around me, fellas! I draw flies!"

The squad moved across the beach and played it by the book. They ran a few steps, hit the ground, got up, ran a dozen more, and hit the ground again. But Arnold couldn't run properly, and by this time he was in considerable pain from his ankle.

Neither could he wait on the beach for a truck or jeep to give him a lift; the gunfire was too heavy, and his section needed him. So he stumbled and fell, stumbled and fell, all the way up the beach through the sand dunes and into the damp, marshy ground beyond. All the while salvo after salvo crashed into the ground.

War is a time-compressing experience, and men move from baptism to a veteran condition in a remarkably short period of time. One of the things that they learn very quickly is to identify the salvo directed at them in particular. Arnold was well into the marshy area, a little behind the rest with the exception of Jack Partley, when Arnold's instinct told him that the next salvo was more personal. He had been taught always to fall with his hand on his rifle. But on this occasion as he threw himself forward his injured ankle caught in some tufts of weed, his leg twisted under him, and down he went with the BAR falling from his grip. Arnold covered his head with his hand and tried to squirm his way into the soft protection of the marsh, but he knew he was going to get hit--he just knew it.

A shell burst in the air, and shrapnel slammed into the ground around him. One chunk almost tore his left leg off. Smaller fragments of shrapnel punctured his back and his arms.

At first Arnold felt nothing. He took a moment to gather his senses and clear his head after the numbing detonation of the shell. It was when he tried to scramble to his feet that it hurt. A wave of pain pressed him back into the earth, and he screamed out in agony.

Arnold lay there and hollered for help. Four times he called for a medic until he couldn't yell anymore because it hurt him so. When he yelled it put pressure on the injured nerves, and waves of pain coursed through him.

A medic (the Texans call them "pill-rollers") finally came up to him. "I heard you the first time," he chided.

The medic turned him over gently and examined the shattered leg. He quickly applied a tourniquet to the fleshy part of the thigh and rushed off to find help.

Arnold lay there for a couple of moments and then looked up to see Jack Partley bending over him. The same shell had sent fragments into his arm, and he too was in considerable pain.

"Do you want me to take the gun, Arnold?" he asked.

"Yeah, go ahead," Arnold said.

Partley bent down to pick up the BAR, and Arnold watched as his face froze. It was a lump of twisted metal and splintered wood, so misshapen neither could tell one end from the other.

"Forget it, Jack," Arnold said. "Get yourself off the beach."

Partley was clearly reluctant to leave his buddy, though his own wounds had him hopping from one foot to the other.

"Jack," Arnold said, "you can go back and find that pill-roller and send him back here."

"I can do that,"Jack said.

He ran back in the direction of the beach, still clutching his injured arm. Arnold

noticed that Partley had left his rifle behind, but he didn't have the strength to call after him.

With his good arm Arnold tried to reach across the front of his combat shirt for some cigarettes, but his hand came back a sticky red mess. Instead he reached into the other pocket and pulled out his New Testament. He opened the flyleaf and read what his wife had written shortly before she died: "I love you. I'll meet you in heaven."

Arnold started to pray--it wasn't something he did very often. He tried to remember how the Catholics made the sign of the cross, did something similar, and prayed out loud. "Well, listen, God, if you'll help me to get back and out of this, I'll try to be a better man, in Jesus' name. Amen."

He had heard the Catholics use the last phrase, and it did seem appropriate. Arnold kept repeating this simple prayer, over and over. In its own way, it did bring some ease to his pain.

How long he had lain there, Arnold couldn't tell; he seemed to lose all count of time. He did what the medic had told him to do and every so often, eased the pressure of his tourniquet.

The shells seemed to be falling with less frequency, and lines of troops picked their way inland. Some of the curious looked and stared; the others, the frightened, averted their eyes as they moved past the prostrate forms that littered the ground.

An officer (Arnold thought he was a colonel but he wasn't sure) stopped and leaned over him. "Son," he said, "I wish I could help you."

"Sir," Arnold said, "I don't think you can."

At that moment the medic reappeared, accompanied by another one who carried a folded stretcher.

"Do what you can for the soldier," the officer ordered.

The medics gently cut away the leg and the sleeves from his uniform and eased him out of his clothes. Arnold braced himself and looked down at his leg.

Just below the knee it was hanging by a few threads of sinew and bone. It was almost literally torn off. "Well, that's that," Arnold thought and tried to imagine life on one leg. The medics poured sulpha powder on his wounds, placed a shell dressing on his leg, and bound up his arm and back. They took the rifle discarded by Partley, broke it down into two pieces, and used them to fashion a sprint for the leg. They gently lifted him onto the stretcher and then set out for the beach and straight onto a landing craft. There were other wounded, and gradually the deck began to fill up. Nearby was a German who lay white and still on a stretcher, a couple of shell-shock cases slouched nearby, oblivious on the deck.

Perhaps Arnold dozed, but it didn't seem very long before, with much bumping and scraping, the landing craft announced its return to a mother ship. Lines were attached, and the little boat was winched up its davits to the level of the main deck above. A couple of white-coated doctors scrambled into the boat. One turned to examine Arnold; he was then joined by an older man.

"Sir," Arnold said, "if you can save my leg, I sure would appreciate it."

"I wouldn't even think about losing your leg," the surgeon replied. Thus encouraged, Arnold relaxed. He felt the prick of the needle into his skin and nothing more.

While Arnold Murdoch was being prepared for surgery, the LSTs of Convoy FSS2, which had come in from Bizerte, approached the beaches. They gathered speed for their final run-in. Above their low bows the great doors were already partly open and the ramps down, for most of these craft had earlier released their cargo of DUKWs ("Ducks") for the shore. The vehicles are aptly named. There is almost a farmyard scene as they swim from the warm protection of the bow doors, their legs tucked beneath them.

Onshore the Germans, few in number, began to pull back toward the lower slopes of the hills inland. The GIs, seeking to maintain their pressure, thrust forward in a series of separate and uncoordinated small-unit actions. While the Germans tried to regroup their main forces, lighter screening troops turned at bay snarled into the counterattack, probing for the weak spots and trying to knock the Americans off their stride.

All the while the forward fighting formations of the Texans increased in strength, as troops singly, by pairs, or in small groups worked their way forward toward the railway line. This was the main point of reference, and from that they found their way to the battalion's forming-up area farther inland.

The battalion aid station was on one side of an olive grove, and the companies were deployed around the far side and beyond. After linking up with the battalion, Company X dug its foxholes at the forward edge of the olive grove and close to a dry stone wall. The ground was hard, and in the hot sunlight it was backbreaking work. Pfc. George Bailey and the others in his squad worked bare-chested. The men didn't make much progress because many regarded it as an unnecessary chore; after all, they were bound to move forward before too long, and all that effort would be wasted.

At the first sound of the tank tracks, there was a concerted rush for the half-completed foxholes; men grabbed shirts, helmets, and weapons and dived for cover. Bailey looked down into his foxhole and saw the battalion commander there. This wasn't the time or the place for military protocol.

"You're in my damn foxhole...sir!" Bailey screamed.

The colonel got out and went in search of his own.

As the noise of the tanks increased word came along the line, started no one knows where. From hole to hole the whisper was, "There are six Tigers heading this way. They have just cut the 142nd to hell."

A bazooka team of two men moved out and took up a position behind a stunted gnarled olive tree on the edge of the open field. Back in his foxhole, Bailey gripped his rifle a little tighter and wished, like so many others, that he had dug a little deeper.

Two tanks moved across the open field and began to drop shells into the olive grove. The first volleys whistled around the ears of the men working in the aid station. The medics had not even considered the need to dig foxholes.

Ike Franklin sheltered behind an olive tree with a couple of other men. He tried to raise some artillery on his walkie-talkie, but it was useless. The radio waves were full of crackling static, which, when it cleared, rebounded to the crowded calls of half a dozen stations, all fighting to be heard.

A second and third volley of shots burst over the aid station. One shell was directly above the tree under which Franklin crouched. The tree was split asunder by the blast, and the two men with him were mutilated, one decapitated. Franklin staggered away in blind horror and disbelief. There wasn't a scratch on him. "Dear Lord," he thought, "that is twice in as many hours."

By this time one of the tanks had strayed a little too close to the bazooka team, whose presence was still concealed from the panzers. The tanks had now spotted the main infantry positions and were about to open fire when the bazooka crew fired first.

The projectile hit the tank right on the bow machine gunner's position. Though it didn't penetrate, the shot did some damage. The tank reversed from the field, its retreat guarded by its still healthy but cautious brother.

After the excitement was over, the company moved to its allotted position, which was to act as the reserve force for the regimental combat team. The men dug in about 400 yards southeast of Casa Vannulo, where General Walker had already established his commmand post.

General Walker had stepped ashore on Red Beach with his command team a little after 0800 hours that morning. It had taken their landing boat more than 5 hours to make the 12 miles from ship to shore. Delays, uncertainties, and congestion in the sea lanes had all helped to prolong what should have been a short sea journey.

Maj. Armin F. Puck was with the general. Puck, known throughout the division as "the sheriff," was the provost marshal. Though only 29 years of age, he had crowded into his life a degree from the University of Texas and a couple of seasons as a Triple-A minor-league baseball player with the Kansas City Blues. War service had included escort duties for Gen. George Marshall and British F.M. Sir John Dill at Fort Blanding. This was not his first visit to North Africa and the Mediterranean. He had traveled as part of the escort for Sen. Henry Cabot Lodge when he visited North Africa and General Montgomery before Alamein.

Now as they moved in toward the shore, Puck could tell that all was not going according to plan. The enemy artillery was too heavy, and the volume of machine-gun fire indicated that the assault battalions ashore were still having diffculties.

The landing craft passed through the curtain of fire unscathed, though the young coxswain, like so many that day unnerved by the experience, had needed the steadying hand of the commanding general himself on the tiller over the last few hundred yards.

The coxswain wanted to come ashore with them. He had no desire to take his boat back through that hail of fire and said so in blunt terms.

General Walker was equally blunt. "No," he said, "I think you had better turn

that boat around and go back to your ship."

"I don't know where it is," the coxswain replied.

"You'll find it, son," Walker said.

The coxswain dropped the ramp, then unloaded his party into water that was waist deep. They had about 75 yards to wade to the shore. Clearly he had decided to run the gauntlet back out to sea while his nerves held, for by the time the command party had stepped onto dry land, the boat had gone.

Puck had waded ashore ahead of the main group. He was anxious to see how his military policemen were standing up to their baptism of fire on the beaches. Puck had first recruited and then trained the division's policemen. It was their task to keep the men and the vehicles flowing. Like the beach work parties, they had no opportunity to take cover from the bombardment.

Sergeant Wallis, one of Puck's top squad leaders was at the water's edge to meet the command party. Puck checked with him to be sure he knew exactly what was expected of the military police detachments. Their orders were to clear the beach of all traffic and troops. Then they were to move to the forward companies to provide traffic control as necessary and establish prisoner-of-war collection points.

Wallis pointed out the direction of the railway station at Paestum. "Sir, you're supposed to go that way," he said.

Puck moved briskly ahead of the main group. The beach was still under occasional artillery fire. He had just about reached the duneline when Puck saw a German Luger in front of him. It lay in the sand, right in his path.

"Don't touch it!" somebody yelled. "It's booby-trapped!"

Puck reached into his shirt and pulled out a K ration. He stood back a few yards and hurled it at the Luger. The ration hit the pistol squarely on the handle, and though it leaped into the air, nothing else happened. Puck reached forward and picked it up. He hadn't been in Italy five minutes and already had acquired a Luger.

It was about a mile and a half to the area that had been designated for the divisional command post. The path took them along the north side of the ruins of the ancient Greek settlement of Paestum which now showed the scars of this, its most recent military encounter.

General Walker set a quick pace and marched tight-lipped. He hadn't liked what he had seen so far and was anxious to reach the command post so he could exert some control on the battle. There had been too many landing craft milling around out to sea. The beaches were too quiet and devoid of the right sort of activity. He had expected to see the engineers laying the wire mesh trackways and clearing all the beach obstacles, but none of this had been undertaken on Red Beach. Most disconcerting of all, as they moved inland the battle was waging fiercely all around them. He had hoped that by this time the Germans would have been pushed back, well past the railroad.

As they came to the railroad station the party came under mortar and machine-gun fire. Charlie Walker, the general's son who was acting as his aide, stumbled over his own feet and fell. Puck and Carl Phinney (the supply officer) reached out, got

him by his arms, and dragged him for about 15 yards before dumping him down out of harm's way. Like all the officers in Walker's command, Puck would follow Walker into the very jaws of hell but he wasn't about to have "his butt shot off wet-nursing his baby boy." Another shell burst in the exact same spot where the son had stumbled.

The German barrage increased in intensity and volume. The command party crouched down behind a low stone wall as the mortar shells plowed into the ground around them. There was a tree growing out of the wall on their side, and Puck was holding onto it for dear life. The tree seemed to offer something solid--life and hope, perhaps--in a world of turmoil.

General Walker was also trying to grab hold of the tree, but Puck's vicelike grip would give him no room. Finally and totally exasperated, Walker said, "Puck, quit fucking around. Turn that tree loose and let me get a hold of it!"

Despite the intensity of the bombardment, Puck knew that if the Old Man said "fucking," that was serious!

After a while, the German bombardment eased. The command party ran the last hundred yards to the railroad station and regrouped. Walker climbed up the station stairs and viewed what he could of the battlefield. It is terrible for a general to be in the middle of his battle without any means to influence the events around him.

The railway line was completely devoid of Americans for as far as he could see, which was perhaps a quarter mile or less, for the morning haze still hung heavy in the air. Walker had heard over the radio, however, that battalions of both the 142nd and 143rd RCTs were inland and to the northwest beyond the highway and the railway. He could also hear and see something of the battle that was still being waged for the exits off Blue and Yellow beaches.

German tanks were making another drive for the beaches. Though his three battalions were ashore, Col. Richard J. Werner found that without heavy fire support there was little the 141st RCT could do. Even while his naval gun observer on the beach was still trying to call in naval support, five tanks managed to break through. The tanks overran an isolated company of the lst Battalion. Those men who stayed in their foxholes or got down in the irrigation ditches were unharmed, even though the tanks rolled over them. However, many tried to run for it and were either run down or shot.

The timely arrival of field artillery and the first naval shells finally helped disperse the German tanks. The GIs had been fortunate, for if the Germans had been able to mass their armor it would have been a different story.

General Walker and his divisional command group, which at this stage could offer to the battle no more than a combat patrol comprising a number of rather elderly and unfit officers, moved north along the railway line toward Casa Vannulo, a farm across Highway 18, which was immediately inland from the railway. Between the two was a low embankment and a ditch.

As Walker and his team approached the farm, the owner, Signor C. Vannulo and his family, all dressed in their best Sunday clothes, came out to meet him. Walker

established his command post among the substantial farm buildings, one of which was an especially large tobaacco warehhouse. There among the racks of drying tobacco General Walker prepared to exert his measure of control over the battle. Regimental liaison officers got to work immediately, and within a short while his unit commanders began reporting to him in person. Other staff officers concentrated on the situations map, which soon took shape.

However, before General Walker could get down to his job, he had a further ordeal to face. The Germans launched another tank attack. At about 1145 hours 13 Panzers--Mark IIIs and Mark IVs--came down Highway 18 from the north and moved against Casa Vannulo and the divisional command post itself.

Walker sent one of his officers back to the beach with instructions to bring up artillery posthaste; then he led his team across the road and into the ditch beside the railway. From there they watched the German armor come within range. Bazooka teams from the 142nd and 143rd RCTs kept the tanks at bay. Already the message seemed to have spread and the panzers were showing a healthy respect for these new weapons. In the meantime, help of a more substantial nature entered the fray.

It came in the form of the Cannon Company of the 143rd Infantry, or rather in one of its guns. The Cannon Company was equipped at this stage of the war with the old French 75mm of 1914 vintage, mounted on a White half-track. Their role was to give close artillery support to the infantry; they were not intended for the antitank role.

John Whittaker, a first lieutenant, commanded a platoon of three vehicles, but there was only one immediately available for action on the beach when word reached him of the tank threat at Casa Vannulo. One half-track had yet to come ashore, and the third sat forlorn and immobile with a vapor lock. In any case, even if its cursing sergeant could have coaxed some life into the stubborn motor, it still had to be dewaterproofed. This was a time-consuming but absolutely essential job before any of the ordinary vehicles (DUKWs, of ofcourse, were immune) could proceed into battle. Trucks and armored fighting vehicles had verticle exhaust attachments that allowed them to "wade" ashore under their own power. In order to protect the more exposed parts of the engine and other vital parts, a rubberized solution was used to seal the vehicle and make it watertight. After the vehicle had landed, this solution had to be stripped away; otherwise the engine would soon overheat.

Whittaker, a 23-year-old onetime semipro baseball player and law student, hopped aboard the only serviceable vehicle and rode it into battle. Once through Paestum, Route 18, tree-lined and straight as an arrow, stretched before him, but visibility was obscured by the heat haze and smoke that hung in the windless air. He moved through columns of infantry pledding down the highway and within a short distance came to a stop. Whittaker could just about make out the shape of a tank to his front. He jumped down and moved to the side of the road, where he could see some officers in the ditch.

A shell whistled between his head and the vehicle before plowing into the head

of the column of infantry some 200 yards behind. Those who survived the appalling mess moved quickly off the road. The left hand column jumped into the ditches between the road and the railway while the righthand column, unscathed, deployed in an extended line beyond the road.

Whittaker stood where he was in the highway and directed the fire of his gun. The French 75mm might be old, but it still could crack out a rapid rate of fire, three rounds a minute. They destroyed the lead tank, and this forced those behind to deploy into the field on Whittaker's right; as they did so, the panzers had to expose their vulnerable sides to Whittaker's fire.

Fresh support arrived in the form of a 105mm howitzer belonging to the 151st Field Artillery. This gun was towed into action by a DUKW, and it deployed on the track that led from the highway to Casa Vannulo. The combined fire of the howitzer and Whittaker's 75mm broke up the panzer assault; five tanks were destroyed, and the remainder beat a hasty retreat.

In the midst of the action Walker was amazed to see a DUKW come from behind the German tanks and bounce across the field and back onto the road where it roared at full speed into the safety of the American lines. It was carrying the radio set for use in communicating with Army headquarters aboard the *Ancon* in the harbor. Walker had sent Carl Phinney to the beaches to find it and rush it through to the command post. Phinney and the driver had lost their way and come in from the wrong direction; but fortune favors the brave, and they had driven into and out of the field of fire without a scratch.

By about this time the development of the division's beachhead was at last beginning to progress. This was despite the fact that only two (Red and Green) of the four beaches were open and able to receive landing craft, and artillery fire still was landing on all four. Men and materiel were coming ashore in substantial quantities, while inland control and discipline were bringing order to the earlier confusion.

Beachmasters used loudspeakers to encourage the landing craft milling at sea to bring their cargoes of men and materiel ashore. They probably shouted phrases such as, "Come on in, we've got you covered!" This is a rational and reasonable explanation of the earlier myth of the Germans "greeting" the first Americans ashore.

The only unit still in deep trouble was the lst Battalion of the 14 lst RCT, which was isolated on the right. The other battalions had at last started to move inland, backed by heavy artillery support. However, the 1st Battalion, its headquarters, and its scattered companies were destined to remain pinned down for the rest of the day, some still to the seaward side of the railway tracks.

In the early afternoon German tanks came swinging in from the south in one last attempt to reach the sea, only to be turned back by a desperate defense. Even then, some of the forward positions were badly mauled and troops isolated. A couple of squads' worth of men from Company B took cover in a ditch only to find that when the enemy tanks fell back they halted about 50 yards away. This effectively isolated

the small group from the remainder of the company. The heaviest weapon among them was a BAR, so Lieutenant Hill, the platoon commander, ordered them to hold their fire and not reveal their presence; their survival depended on it. One of the men, Pvt. Truman A. Rice, was seriously wounded, his legs and thighs rent by shrapnel. There were no medics with the group, and though in the most intense pain, Truman remained stiff and quiet. The slightest sound would have alerted the Germans to their presence. He died shortly after 1400 hours in great pain but without having uttered a sound.

German positions on Mount Sottane above the beleaguered troops made any movement impossible. Naval gunfire was able to help ease their predictament a little by screening some of the German batteries and preventing the enemy from launching further attacks. Until dusk, however, it was a stalemate for the 141st RCT.

Elsewhere, naval gunfire was beginning to make a bigger contribution to the land battle. As in the British sector, destroyers steamed close to the beach providing direct fire support. Naval parties ashore and spotter planes helped direct the guns of the cruisers farther out at sea. Much of the artillery that had managed to come ashore in the late morning was now joining the battle in support of the hard-pressed infantry.

The 105mm howitzer of Battery C, 132nd Field Artillery, was lowered from the assault ship into an LCM, and the six-by-six truck that was used to pull the gun came down after. The two were then connected up on the LCM. This was a complicated and delicate task, not made easier by the fact that it had to be done while it was still dark. It was well into the morning by the time the LCM came ashore on Red Beach. An LST was burning furiously on the beach alongside, so the men lost little time unloading from their LCM and driving inland. Military policemen directed them into an apple orchard just above the ruins at Paestum.

One of the great qualities of American soldiers is their ingenuity. They can throw away the rule book and function by sense or feel or "by the seat of their pants." It is no simple affair to bring a battery of artillery (which consisted of four field guns or howitzers) into action, and there are set rules and procedures to be followed. However, all of these take time, and that was in short supply on the American beachhead that day. The gun was in action before the trails had been adjusted or a pit dug. Forward observation officers had come ashore with the first waves of the 142nd infantry. Those still alive were already calling down fire missions.

The rule book went out the window in another sense too that morning. The LCMs bringing the guns and trucks ashore had the capacity to carry only one unit each. Though the craft left their mother ships in groups comprising a complete battery of guns, they soon became separated in the chaos and confusion of the shipping lanes and the mayhem at the seashore. So the guns arrived at the position individually and just extended the firing line. The first mission was fired in early afternoon, when there were nine howitzers in the battery.

Their target, was a group of tanks, which they attacked at a range of 3 miles.

Stripped to the waist in the hot afternoon sunlight, the six-man crews serviced their guns and smothered the enemy tanks in fire. The shells, each weighing 40 Pounds, were rammed into the breech. Firing at a rapid rate, the gun captains ignored using the plunger between rounds and instead employed the shortcuts that their training had tauught them. Of course, no howitzer is designed to fire in an antitank role. Neither, however, can panzers take the volume of artillery that such a battery can deliver. The Germans were forced to pull back, cursing their own impotence to counter such overwhelming firepower. Without the Luftwaffe to control the skies and the Stukas to dive-bomb such batteries, they had no answer to American artillery. Later the howitzers were switched to a counterbattery role as the forward observation officers tried desperately to pinpoint a German mobile 88 battery that was still this late in the day firing on Red Beach.

All the while the missing guns, crews, and the service and supply detachments arrived at the orchard. The supply detachments went into action without delay, replenishing the shells on the gunline. Nine further separate missions were fired in support of the infantry that day.

Later in the afternoon the first of the heaviest guns, the 155mm howitzers of the 155th Field Artillery Battalion, came ashore on Green Beach and moved to a position just a mile north of Paestum. Sergeant Ward Gable commanded one of these guns. He was just 20 years old and came from Fort Worth, Texas.

The guns did not fire that afternoon, but at one stage there was fear that some German tanks pressing the 142nd Infantry were on the point of breaking through. The order came down to swing the guns out onto a left traverse and to lower the barrels for a point-blank shot Gable listened over the headset as the battery commander issued his final instruction: "You'll see some tanks come over that hill, and they ain't going to be ours."

Gable thought it would at least be a novel experience to fire these monster pieces over open sights. Normally they can throw a 95-pound shell over 25,000 yards.

The master sergeant passed down the gun line and handed each captain a thermalite grenade as a precaution. This was a grenade about the size of a beer can with a pull pin at the top. It was an incendiary device that, when lowered down the barrel to the bottom would dissolve the block and breech. It was the easiest and at the same time the most effective way of immobilizing the gun.

Fortnately, the German threat did not materialize.

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